

NIJ Pretrial Research Meeting

What We Can Learn From Parole
and Probation Supervision

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Important Differences

1. Pretrial Supervision is much shorter
 - Probation = about 1-3 years
 - Parole = 1-5 years
2. Success rates are higher for Pretrial
 - Probation = about 60%
 - Parole = about 45%
3. Public Risks (crime) are much lower for pretrial release
4. Much less variance in FTA and Pre-trial arrest rates so much less opportunity to predict correctly
5. Larger number of false positives in Pretrial supervision

Probation and Parole Success Rates—1995-2003

Outcome Measures	Probation	Parole
Successful Completions		
1995	62%	45%
2000	60%	43%
2003	59%	47%
Reason for Failures		
Re-incarcerated	16%	38%
New Conviction and Sentence	5%	11%
Revocation	7%	26%
Other	4%	1%
Absconded	4%	9%
Other	22%	6%

Source: *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2003*. US DOJ. (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

Method of Release and Re-Arrest

Re-Arrest Rate	Unconditional Releases	Mandatory Releases	Discretionary Paroles
Unadjusted	62%	61%	54%
Adjusted	61%	61%	57%

What We Know

1. Recidivism and/or Success Rates for Probation and Parole Are Not Improving – even in the evidence based states/countries
2. Most of the parole and probation failures for are for multiple technical violations and/or drug and property crimes (85%).
3. Parolees with no supervision have significantly lower re-incarceration rates and similar re-arrest rates – some evidence that parole and probation are “criminogenic”.
4. No relationship between the period of supervision and recidivism – the process is the punishment
5. Sanctioned offenders criminal activity is declining -- Not Increasing
6. Two of the more intrusive forms of supervision (electronic monitoring and drug testing) have no impact on recidivism and public safety

What We Know

7. Informal (friends, family, community, religion) controls are more effective than Formal (government or state imposed) controls
8. Offense severity is inversely related to recidivism
9. Risk instruments with dynamic factors do identify high and low risk cases – but there are gender biases
10. Supervising low risk cases makes them worse – supervising/treating high risk works best
11. Greater or less use of parole or probation is not related to changes in crime rates
12. Significant reductions in parole revocations have been achieved via policy changes and financial incentives (staff and parolees).
13. Dangerousness cannot be predicted
14. Virtually no experimental studies have been done on parole and probation supervision – so we have no evidence to base our current policies.

Implications for Pretrial Supervision

1. Large numbers of pretrial detainees could be safely released without adversely impacting crime rates
2. A significant number of people who are not released will be placed directly on probation
3. Dangerous cannot be predicted due to low base rates agencies
4. Without risk assessment, you are probably supervising the wrong people at the wrong levels and have racial and gender biases.
5. Risk and needs assessment tools should be simple and not borrowed from other places
6. Pretrial agencies should be financially rewarded for lowering FTA and re-arrest rates.
7. Lack of sharing data with the jail and probation needs to be corrected
8. Experimental studies can be done quickly – short follow-up –but policy makers are unwilling to be tested