

Juvenile Recidivism

Oregon's Statewide Report on Juvenile Recidivism

1998 through 2002

State of Oregon 2004

State of Oregon, 2004

Oregon Youth Authority
(OYA)

Oregon Juvenile Department
Directors' Association
(OJDDA)

Published by:

Oregon Youth Authority
530 Center Street NE Suite 200
Salem, OR 97301-3765

YA ***** (11/2004)

Website: www.oregon.gov/oya
E-mail: oya.info@oya.state.or.us
Phone: 503-373-7205
FAX: 503-373-7622



Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary | i |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Purpose of this Report..... | 1 |
| Statutory Basis | 1 |
| Challenges of this Report | 1 |
| Defining Recidivism | 1 |
| Analyzing the Data..... | 2 |
| Basic Research Addressed..... | 2 |
| Criminal Referrals Defined | 2 |
| Recidivism Measured | 3 |
| Referral Rate..... | 3 |
| Frequency | 3 |
| Chronic Offender Defined | 3 |
| Data Source Information..... | 3 |
| Target Population | 4 |
| Data Limitations | 4 |
| Statewide Data - Tables and Charts | |
| Statewide Results..... | 5 |
| State of Oregon Recidivism..... | 6 |
| Statewide Indications..... | 7 |
| Prior Referrals..... | 8 |
| Offender’s Age | 10 |
| Control for Offenders Age 16 and Under | 11 |
| Issues by Gender | 12 |
| Race/Ethnicity..... | 14 |
| Perspective on Oregon’s Population to the Number of Offenders..... | 15 |
| Severity | 16 |
| Severity Scale | 17 |
| County Juvenile Recidivism Reports | 19 |

Table of Tables & Charts

Table 1 Offenders, New Criminal Offenders.....6

Table 2 Offenders, Prior Criminal Referrals8

Table 3 New Criminal Referrals as a Function of Prior Criminal Referrals8

Table 4 Offenders, Race/Ethnicity..... 14

Table 5 Juvenile Offender Rates per 1000 15

Table 6 Severity by Crime Classification - Averages 16

Table 7 Severity Scale..... 17

Chart 1 Offender Recidivism7

Chart 2 Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals.....7

Chart 3 Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals by Prior History9

Chart 4 Offenders Who Did Not Re-Offend.....9

Chart 5 Offenders with One Subsequent Referral9

Chart 6 Offenders with Two Subsequent Referrals.....9

Chart 7 Offenders with 3 or More Subsequent Referrals9

Chart 8 Age Comparison of Offenders Who Did Not Re-Offend..... 10

Chart 9 Recidivism of Offenders Age 16 and Under 11

Chart 10 Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals of Offenders Age 16 and Under 11

Chart 11 Female Offender Recidivism 12

Chart 12 Female Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals..... 12

Chart 13 Male Offender Recidivism 13

Chart 14 Male Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals 13

Chart 15 Offender Averages, New Criminal Referrals by Race/Ethnicity 14

Chart 16 Juvenile Offender Rates per 1000 15

Chart 17 2002 Population by Offender Group 15

Statewide Juvenile Recidivism Report

Oregon 2004

Executive Summary

Recidivism Measurement History

Oregon piloted the first report on juvenile recidivism in 1999. Data were gathered from 22 of Oregon's 36 counties using local data systems. Since that initial report, the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) was developed. JJIS is Oregon's statewide, integrated information system. With most counties converting their historical data to JJIS, the 2001 report expanded to 32 counties. By the time the 2002 report was produced, data from all 36 counties were available. The 2004 report continues to measure recidivism in all Oregon counties.

Recidivism measurement in the 1999 report was limited because the data came from independent systems and could not uniquely identify youth as they moved between counties. Therefore, recidivism could not be measured across jurisdictions. With JJIS as the primary data source beginning with the 2001 report, recidivism measurement recognizes all new crimes even when they occur outside the county of the initial crime.

Prior to the 2002 report, recidivism was measured at the "offense" level. Offenses represent the particular crimes of a single incident as documented in a law enforcement referral. Because a single incident often involves multiple reporting offenses, this method of counting can exaggerate the report reader's perception of the extent that youth are involved in criminal activity. Beginning with the 2002 report, recidivism is measured at the "referral" level. Note that counting by referrals rather than offenses *does not* affect the basic recidivism statistic relating to the proportion of youth that re-offend.

Findings

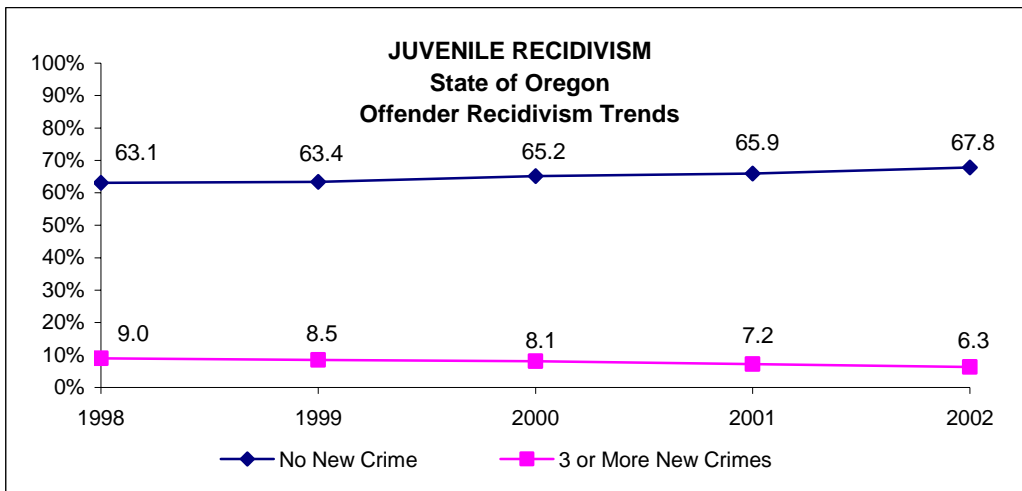
The 2004 Statewide Juvenile Recidivism Report analyzes five years of youth referral data – 1998 through 2002. Each annual cohort chronicles the same themes:

- A large majority of offenders do not re-offend within twelve months.
- A small proportion of offenders ("chronic" offenders) commit the majority of new crimes.
- Offenders with prior referrals are more likely than other offenders to re-offend.

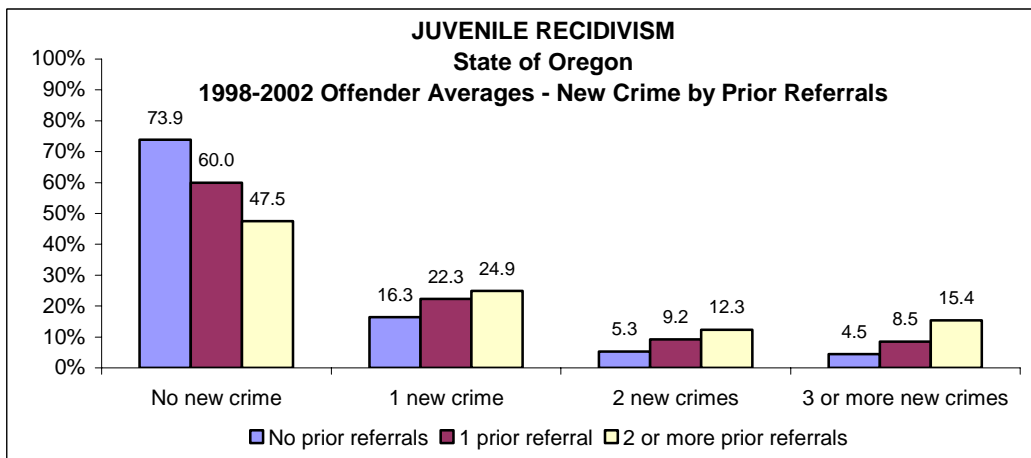
The study includes more than 19,000 youth offenders in each survey year. Overall, the data show a continuing decline in the number of offenders (13.9 percent fewer offenders in 2002 than in 1998) from an ever-increasing youth population (5.0 percent more youth in 2002 than in 1998).

Recidivism statistics are based on tracking every offender for twelve months after an initial referral. The data show that offender recidivism decreased each year during the period. In 1998, 63.1 percent of offenders *did not* recidivate. By 2002, recidivists represented less than one-third of offenders - 67.8 percent of offenders did not recidivate.

Along with improved overall recidivism rates, the data also show decreased re-offending by “chronic” offenders. Chronic offenders are defined as offenders who have three or more new law enforcement referrals within twelve months. Each succeeding year for the period shows decreases in the number of chronic offenders. In 1998, 9.0 percent of offenders committed three or more new crimes. The proportion of chronic offenders decreased to 6.3 percent by 2002.

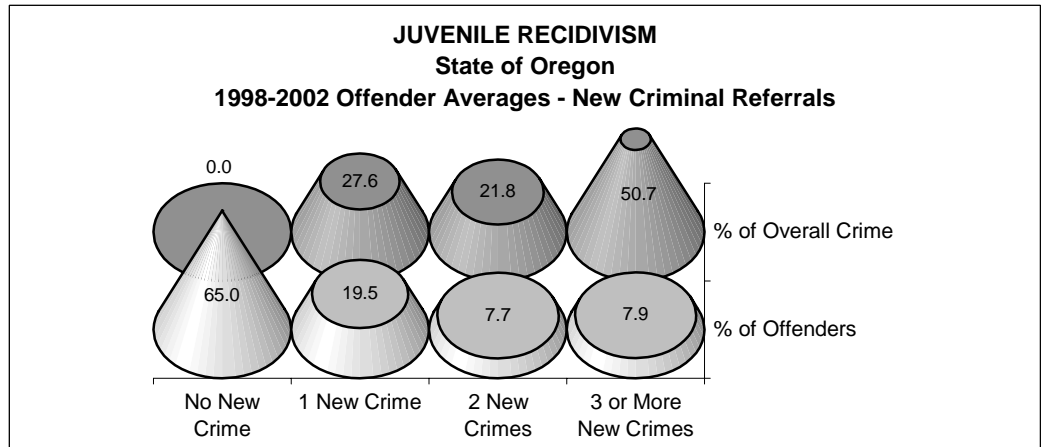


Reinforcing the chronic offender data are statistics relating to the number of prior referrals. As is intuitively understood, the data demonstrate a correlation between prior referrals and the probability that offenders will re-offend. Offenders with no new crimes tend to be youth that had no prior referrals. Conversely, offenders with multiple prior referrals are more likely to be involved in subsequent criminal activity.



The chart below documents offender recidivism averages for the five-year period. Note that under “no new crime,” 65.0 percent of offenders *did not* re-offend within twelve months. However at the other extreme, the 7.9 percent of youth categorized as “chronic offenders”

are involved in 50.7 percent of new crimes. For perspective, chronically offending youth represent 0.4 percent of Oregon’s youth in the 10-17 age group.



The full report contains additional statistical analyses with respect to age, gender and ethnicity. Readers are cautioned against making gross comparisons between local jurisdictions however, since local charging practices and policies, law enforcement resources, and other factors can influence data. Also, the small population of some counties may make those data trends unreliable.

This page intentionally left blank for printing purposes.

Introduction

Purpose of this report

July 1, 1995, heralded the beginning of significant change for Oregon's juvenile justice system. With the passage of Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), Oregon reiterated its commitment to protecting the public by investing in an accountability-based juvenile system designed to reduce juvenile delinquency and prevent further criminal activity.

As a means to assess progress of juvenile crime reduction and prevention efforts, SB 1 required that the juvenile justice community adopt a recidivism definition and statewide reporting system applicable to juvenile delinquency issues. This report is published in response to that mandate.

Statutory basis

Senate Bill 1 (1995) was Oregon's catalyst for creating a statewide, standardized definition of juvenile recidivism. Section 128 of SB 1 (codified in ORS 420A.012) established the mandate that the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), in consultation with the State Commission on Children and Families (CCF) and the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association (OJDDA), adopt a recidivism definition, develop a statewide reporting system, and publish annual recidivism reports.

Challenges of this report

Oregon was one of the first states in the nation to develop a common definition for measuring repeat juvenile crime. This has been no small task, however. Historically, agreeing on a recidivism definition has been elusive for both researchers and practitioners in the criminal justice community. There has been little agreement on the definition, and there has been less agreement on ways to accurately measure it. Researchers and practitioners alike typically create definitions based on what they want to learn about juvenile crime (e.g., measurements of violations, etc.). While these are all valid methods, the lack of consensus on a single definition and, therefore, a lack of consistency in approach, has rendered it impossible to make comparisons across studies and jurisdictions.

Defining recidivism

In the first year following passage of SB 1, the OYA convened a Recidivism Task Force comprised of representatives from the State CCF, OJDDA and OYA to develop Oregon's juvenile recidivism definition. Using SB 1 as the guiding protocol, the task force adopted a definition which considers measurements of both public safety (criminal arrests) and risk behaviors displayed by youth (status offenses). Oregon's definition of juvenile recidivism is as follows:

Definition

As a measure of public safety, recidivism is defined as a new criminal referral. A referral is a law enforcement report to a juvenile department alleging one or more felony and 1 or misdemeanor acts (offenses). Measurement of recidivism includes the rate and severity of new crimes and other relevant factors.

This recidivism report is based on the measurement of *criminal* activity as a gauge of community safety. The recidivism definition refers to new criminal *referrals* as the measurement criteria.

Analyzing the data

The 2004 Juvenile Recidivism Report is based on the population of youth with criminal referrals in the years 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002. All delinquent youth with a documented criminal referral during this period are included in the study. "Recidivism" is based on the occurrence of new referrals within twelve months of an initial referral.

Example: if a youth had criminal referrals on March 1, 2000, March 31, 2001, and June 1, 2001, s/he became part of this report. In this instance s/he is among the cohort of offenders represented in the 2000 and 2001 data. For the purposes of measuring recidivism in the 2000 cohort, the March 1, 2000, referral is identified as the initial (and only) 2000 referral. As no subsequent referrals are noted in the following twelve months, this youth is counted with the 2000 offender population that *did not* recidivate. In analyzing for the 2001 offender cohort, this youth shows two relevant referrals. The March 31, 2001, referral occurs first and is identified as the initial referral. Tracking for twelve months from the date of the initial referral reveals one additional referral on June 1, 2001. Therefore, the same youth is also counted with the 2001 offender population that recidivated (one new referral).

Basic research addressed

This juvenile recidivism report answers the following basic research question: of all juvenile offenders with a criminal referral during the years 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002, how many had subsequent criminal referrals within twelve months, and how many referrals did they have.

Publication of this report in 2004 means that recidivism measurements for offenders after the year 2002 are not possible. Data for measuring 2003 offender recidivism must be complete through the end of 2004.

"Criminal referrals" defined

Prior to the 2002 report, recidivism was measured at the criminal "offense" level. Offenses represent the particular crimes of a single incident as documented in a law enforcement referral. Because a single crime incident often involves reporting multiple offenses, this method

of counting can exaggerate the report reader's perception of the extent that youth are involved in subsequent criminal activity.

At the request of the OJDDA and OYA, the 2002 report calculated recidivism at the referral level. Every referral containing at least one criminal offense (criminal offenses do not include runaways, status offenses, or violations) is considered "criminal" and therefore is included in the recidivism database. The 2004 report *continues* the practice of measuring recidivism at the referral level.

Note: measuring by referrals rather than offenses *does not* affect the basic recidivism statistic relating to the proportion of youth that re-offend.

Recidivism measured

Oregon's juvenile recidivism is measured by the frequency of criminal behavior (new or subsequent referrals) and includes a recidivism rate.

Referral Rate

The referral rate represents the average number of new referrals per offender. Two rates are identified in the report. There is an overall rate for the entire group and a rate for a "chronic" group. The chronic group includes youth with three or more subsequent referrals.

Frequency

Because the simple referral rate is based on an average of re-referrals, it can be greatly influenced by extreme cases (e.g., youth with a high number of new referrals).

Frequency distributions are provided in this report to illustrate the number of subsequent referrals by offenders (e.g., youth who had no new referrals, one new referral, two new referrals...five new referrals, etc.). The distribution should be used in conjunction with the referral rate to obtain a more accurate description of juvenile recidivism.

"Chronic offender" defined

Chronic juvenile offenders are those offenders who have three or more subsequent referrals over twelve months. The data indicate that a small group of youth were involved in most of the new referrals. Data analysis indicates that this is verified at the level of three or more new referrals.

Data source information

The Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) is the primary data source for the report. JJIS was implemented in July 1999. Represented within its database are current and historical county offender referral records. At present, all 36 Oregon counties use JJIS.

Target population

The 1999 pilot report measured recidivism in 22 of Oregon's 36 counties. The scope of the 2001 report increased to 32 counties. Beginning with the 2002 report, all Oregon counties are represented.

Because each youth is uniquely identified within JJIS, recidivism measurement includes *all* referrals, even when they occur outside the county of the initial referral.

Data limitations

While this report includes an analysis of recidivism based on the statewide juvenile recidivism definitions, it does not offer an analysis of environmental and historical factors which may influence those data.

Local charging practices and policies, law enforcement resources, and other factors can influence the number of juveniles referred to juvenile departments for acts of delinquency. Because of these differences, readers are cautioned against making absolute inferences from the data.