

Research Department Report 60

Research on Violent Offenders

Outline

This study analyzed the trends of adult offenders who committed violent crimes (injury, assault, homicide, robbery, etc.), the results of special surveys, and the current situation of the treatment of such adult offenders. The special surveys were conducted with inmates of penal institutions and with offenders given suspension of execution of their whole sentence and whose probationary supervision period has been terminated.

Trends (Chapter 2)

The number of reported injury and assault cases increased drastically in 2000. After reaching its peak in 2003, the number of reported injury cases continued to fall until 2008. The number has been hovering around 20,000 since then. The number of assault cases has remained as high as above 30,000 since 2006. Meanwhile, the number of reported homicide and robbery cases has been decreasing after its peak in 2003. The number of offenders arrested and suspects prosecuted for injury, homicide, and robbery offenses has also been decreasing, while the number of offenders arrested for assault has either been on an increasing trend or stayed at the same level.

The number of offenders imprisoned for homicide, injury, assault, and robbery offenses were all increasing or on an increasing trend until they reached their peaks between 2004 and 2008. The figures have been decreasing after that. For all the crime categories mentioned above, the proportion of offenders aged 65 and above has been rising. The number of offenders who committed homicide, injury, or robbery who were newly placed under probation/parole supervision has been decreasing, while the number of offenders who committed assault and were newly placed under probation/parole supervision has shown repeated increases and decreases within a low range. The number of probationers granted full suspension of execution who committed injury has been decreasing, while such figures for probationers who committed homicide, assault, or theft have increased and decreased within a low range.

While the number of repeat offenders who committed injury has been decreasing, the recidivism rate has been generally increasing. Both the number of repeat offenders and the number of first-time offenders have been increasing regarding assault cases, with the recidivism rate hovering near 40%. The number of offenders re-imprisoned for injury has been decreasing. The

re-imprisonment rate has remained higher for offenders who committed assault compared to injury offenders. The proportion of offenders re-imprisoned for violent crimes to all offenders re-imprisoned within five years from their release was about 30% for injury cases and about 40% for assault cases, while the re-imprisonment rates for theft and violation of the Stimulants Control Act were also high. The re-imprisonment rate within two years from release has been almost at the same level for injury cases. While such rate for assault cases varies significantly depending on the year of release, the rates have been generally higher compared to those for injury cases and for all crime categories combined.

Special Surveys (Chapter 3)

1. Survey on Characteristics of Violent Inmates

In June 2016, a questionnaire survey with inmates of penal institutions across Japan was conducted to study their psychological characteristics (personality traits, aggression, social self-regulation, the risk of alcohol use disorder (AUD), and the severity of drug abuse). The results were analyzed in conjunction with the investigation results concerning the records of modes of crime and the background information of the subject inmates. The number of violent offenders who responded to this survey was 176 (159 males and 17 females). The analysis was also conducted with theft and stimulant offenders for comparison.

Compared to theft and stimulant offenders, the average age of violent offenders was lower and the proportion of first-time offenders, the proportion of offenders connected with organized crime groups, and the proportion of offenders with a history of protective measures were higher. The psychological characteristics were different between male and female offenders. Male violent offenders show lower agreeableness, higher aggression and higher risk of AUD, compared to theft and stimulant offenders. With female offenders, there was no significant difference in terms of aggressiveness and the risk of AUD among different types of offenders.

The modes of crime and background information of violent offenders were analyzed through correspondence analysis. The results indicated two axes: “non-domestic/contingent violence or domestic/frequent violence” and “behavioral problems in early life/adverse childhood experience.” The object scores of the two axes were analyzed through cluster analysis. As a result, the subject offenders were grouped into four clusters, including a cluster associated with reactive/expressive violence-related factors and another associated with instrumental violence-related factors. Moreover, the relationship between the number of criminal dispositions for violent crimes individual inmates have received and the characteristics, etc. of individual inmates were analyzed through decision tree analysis. As a result, it was discovered that the number of criminal dispositions was correlated with such factors as involvement in an organized crime group, unstable

work history, influence of alcohol at the time of the offense, use of weapons at the time of the offense, and whether the motive for the offense was related to an intimate relationship. Based on this finding, this study categorized offenders into six groups, for each of which the focus of required support was explained, such as employment support for those who left organized crime groups and correctional guidance on problematic drinking and drug abuse.

2. Survey on Characteristics of Violent Probationers Granted Full Suspension of Execution

Among probationers granted full suspension of execution whose probationary supervision was terminated in 2013, those whose main crimes were violent crimes were studied under the cooperation of probation officers. The probation officers were asked to describe the offenders' modes of crime based on the case records and the situation at the time of termination of probationary supervision. A total of 439 offenders (400 males and 39 females) were studied in this survey.

The results showed that the young age bracket of 29 and below accounted for approximately 40% in both male and female subject offenders. As for the type of offense, injury accounted for the majority, followed by theft for males and homicide for females. Looking at the reasons for the termination of probationary supervision, revocation/redisposition accounted for 28.9% (127 offenders). The proportion of subject offenders with records of drug abuse before the commencement of probationary supervision, of those with drinking problems at times other than the time of the offense, and of those with records of domestic violence were high, while the proportion of those with no delinquency records was low.

The modes of crime and background information of violent offenders were analyzed through correspondence analysis. The results indicated two axes: "non-domestic/instrumental violence or domestic/expressive violence" and "behavioral problems in early life." The object scores of the two axes were analyzed through cluster analysis. As a result, they were grouped into four clusters. Moreover, the relationship between revocation/redisposition and the characteristics, etc. of the offenders who received those dispositions were analyzed through decision tree analysis. As a result, it was discovered that whether the offender becomes subject to revocation/redisposition was correlated with such factors as history of protective measures, use of weapons at the time of the offense, drinking problems at times other than the time of the offense, whether there was frequent violence before the offense, and whether the offender was personally acquainted with the victim. In the same manner as the survey in 1 above, the offenders were categorized into six groups, for each of which the focus of required support was shown, such as correctional guidance regarding domestic violence, problematic drinking, delinquent groups, and drug abuse.

Current Situation of Treatment of Offenders (Chapter 4)

To illustrate the current situation of the treatment of violent offenders at penal institutions, probation offices, etc., an outline of violence prevention programs (VPPs) was explained. In addition, on-site surveys regarding the VPPs were conducted with multiple prisons, probation offices, etc. Ideas and challenges regarding program implementation were identified through interviews.

Conclusion (Chapter 5)

This Chapter gives a summary of the trends, the results of the special surveys, and the current situation of the treatment of offenders, followed by a discussion. While the number of persons cleared and persons prosecuted/not prosecuted is influenced by changes in the number of criminal cases committed by juveniles and elderly offenders and the increase in spousal violence cases, etc., these factors have limited impact on the number of prisoners and the reimprisonment rate. It is still very important to have effective recidivism prevention measures for serious offenders who have reached the correction/rehabilitation stage. Based on an understanding that there are different types of violent offenders and that each type requires a different kind of intervention depending on the psychological characteristics, this study made the following three suggestions with a view to contributing to the establishment of more effective correctional and community treatment for violent offenders: [1] the content of assessment and correctional guidance provided under VPPs at penal institutions and probation offices should be expanded so that they can address various needs in a more flexible manner; [2] organic coordination with other measures and information sharing among relevant institutions are needed regarding such aspects as employment support, treatment of AUD and drug dependence, etc.; and [3] further research is required to identify needs regarding the treatment of offenders of domestic violence and other violent offenses, which was not covered in this study.

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