

Research Department Report 59

A study on effective policies, practices and research to reduce recidivism

Outline

This study aims to offer new knowledge and perspectives as regards reducing recidivism to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Our report consists of the following findings: (1) a self-reported survey for inmates, (2) a cross-country survey on recidivism rates and (3) an international survey on policies, practices, and research contributing to reducing recidivism.

Findings

Finding 1: Results of survey for inmates on perceived factors that contributed to desistance

We conducted a self-reported survey for inmates (N=896, Figure 1) to explore their perceived factors that contributed to desistance. We divided respondents into two groups, namely first-time inmates (Group1) and repeat inmates (Group 2), and extracted two groups of respondents from Group 2 according to their period of desistance: those with less than 2 years (Group 3) and those with more than 10 years (Group 4). We compared their answers statistically between groups with x2test. The results indicated that inmates have diverse needs to achieve desistance, and re-imprisonment(s) during a short period of time may cause them to lose positive self-image, self-confidence and motivation to achieve desistance.

Figure 1 Baseline Characteristics of respondents (first-time inmates/repeat inmates)

Category		Group 1		Group 2		² value	p value
		Number	(%)	Number	(%)		
Sex	Male	354	(78.3)	376	(84.7)	6.01	.014
	Female	98	(21.7)	68	(15.3)		
Age	Under 20	128	(28.3)	32	(7.2)	89.06	<.001
	30 to 39	120	(26.5)	94	(21.2)		
	40 to 49	96	(21.2)	144	(32.4)		
	50 to 64	66	(14.6)	125	(28.2)		
	Over 65	42	(9.3)	49	(11.0)		
Most serious offenses	Theft	123	(27.2)	153	(34.5)	66.76	<.001
Focal incarceration offense	Stimulants Control Acts	71	(15.7)	145	(32.7)		
	Injury, Assault	68	(15.0)	58	(13.1)		
	Others	190	(42.0)	88	(19.8)		
Status at committing crime	Under parole	-		16	(3.8)	247.00	<.001
	Under suspension of execution of sentence (with probation)	37	(8.3)	6	(1.4)		
	Under suspension of execution of sentence	187	(41.8)	9	(2.1)		
	None	223	(49.9)	394	(92.7)		
History of suspension of execution of sentence	None	132	(29.5)	79	(18.6)	29.06	<.001
	Suspension of execution of sentence	257	(57.5)	243	(57.2)		
	Suspension of execution of sentence (with probation)	56	(12.5)	103	(24.2)		
	Partial suspension of execution of sentence	2	(0.4)	-			
History of juvenile delinquency	None	353	(79.3)	276	(64.9)	27.65	<.001
	Probation	40	(9.0)	43	(10.1)		
	Children's self-reliance support facility	2	(0.4)	3	(0.7)		
	Juvenile training school	50	(11.2)	103	(24.2)		
Occupation	Unemployed	276	(61.7)	309	(70.2)	10.16	.006
	Employed	167	(37.4)	131	(29.8)		
	Student	4	(0.9)	-			
Academic background	None	1	(0.2)	3	(0.7)	49.10	<.001
	Junior High graduate	116	(26.2)	187	(44.2)		
	High school dropout	119	(26.9)	125	(29.6)		
	High school graduate	146	(33.0)	81	(19.1)		
	University current/dropout/graduate	61	(13.8)	27	(6.4)		
Marital status at arrest	Single	184	(41.3)	155	(36.5)	4.18	.124
	Married	93	(20.9)	80	(18.8)		
	Separated	169	(37.9)	190	(44.7)		
Boryokudan	Non-member	434	(97.5)	366	(86.7)	35.42	<.001
	Member	11	(2.5)	56	(13.3)		

Note:

Group 1: first-time inmates

Group 2: repeat inmates

Highlights

Respondents were asked “What factor(s) contributed to your desistance?” by choosing from a range of given answers (multiple-response).

- Up to 60% of respondents in all groups selected “persons who needs them” (Figure 2, 3) as their answer .

• In comparison to Group 2, Group 1 selected answers such as: "under custody," "financial leeway," "physical health," "mental health," "no person who makes them get involved in crime," "rewarding job" and "objectives and hobbies to pursue (except job)" significantly more. (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Respondents' answers to "What factor(s) contributed to your desistance? "

(Comparison between Group 1 and Group 2)

Items	Percentage		χ^2 value	<i>p</i> value
	Group 1	Group 2		
Under probation/parole	10.0	6.6	2.70	.100
Under custody	2.9	8.4	9.94	.002
Stability of food, clothes and shelter	46.6	45.9	0.04	.848
Financial leeway	34.3	27.6	3.92	.048
Physical health	34.0	25.5	6.35	.012
Mental health	41.3	33.2	5.24	.022
Persons who need them	57.5	56.9	0.03	.872
Dependable/reliable persons	47.2	40.3	3.54	.060
Persons who they don't want to betray	40.8	34.4	3.12	.078
No person who makes them get involved in crime	36.1	26.0	8.66	.003
Stable employment	46.0	40.1	2.67	.102
Rewarding job	43.1	33.9	6.51	.011
Objectives and hobbies to pursue (except job)	38.7	26.8	11.85	.001
Future goals	33.4	28.3	2.24	.134
No time to pursue crime	18.2	15.6	0.90	.344
By chance	14.4	12.2	0.72	.397

Note:

Group 1: first-time inmates

Group 2: repeat inmates

• In comparison to Group 4, Group 3 selected answers such as "under probation/parole," "no person who makes them get involved in crime," "stable employment," "objectives and hobbies to pursue (except job)" and "by chance" significantly more. (Figure 3)

Figure 3 Respondents' answers to “What factor(s) contributed to your desistance?”

(Comparison between Group 3 and Group 4)

Items	Percentage		² value	<i>p</i> value
	Group 3	Group 4		
Under probation/parole	-	12.5	9.40	.002
Under custody	1.4	8.0	3.45	.063
Stability of food, clothes and shelter	54.3	42.0	2.34	.126
Financial leeway	30.0	30.7	0.01	.926
Physical health	30.0	27.3	0.14	.706
Mental health	32.9	34.1	0.03	.870
Persons who need them	64.3	56.8	0.91	.341
Dependable/reliable persons	45.7	42.0	0.21	.644
Persons who they don't want to betray	38.6	38.6	0.00	.993
No person who makes them get involved in crime	34.3	19.3	4.55	.033
Stable employment	50.0	29.5	6.88	.009
Rewarding job	42.9	28.4	3.59	.058
Objectives and hobbies to pursue (except job)	32.9	17.0	5.34	.021
Future goals	38.6	25.0	3.36	.067
No time to pursue crime	22.9	15.9	1.22	.269
By chance	7.1	21.6	6.32	.012

Note:

Group 3: repeat inmates with less than a 2-year desistance period in the past

Group 4: repeat inmates with more than a 10-year desistance period in the past

Respondents were asked “Do you think that you will probably commit a crime in the future, even if you could achieve the factor(s) that contributed to your desistance?” by choosing from a range of given answers (single-response) .

• In comparison to Group 4, Group 3 respondents selected ‘yes’ and ‘almost yes’ significantly more (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Respondents' answers to "Do you think that you will probably commit a crime in the future, even if you could achieve the factor(s) that contributed to your desistance?"

Comparison between Group 1 and Group 2

(%)

Group/Answer	No	Almost no	Almost yes	Yes	Total
Group 1	86.3	9.9	2.3	1.5	100
Group 2	71.4	18.6	6.8	3.1	100

Comparison between Group 3 and Group 4

(%)

Group/Answer	No	Almost no	Almost yes	Yes	Total
Group 3	60.0	20.0	14.1	5.9	100
Group 4	84.1	13.0	2.9	-	100

Note:

Group 1: first-time inmates

Group 2: repeat inmates

Group 3: repeat inmates with less than a 2-year desistance period in the past

Group 4: repeat inmates with more than a 10-year desistance period in the past

Finding 2: Results of cross-countries survey on recidivism rate

We conducted an internet survey on recidivism rate among countries. We found that the following countries published such data: Denmark, England/Wales, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United States, Canada, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. We focused on how they treat recidivism data in respective areas and countries such as England/Wales, the United States, South Korea and New Zealand (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Recidivism rates

Country	Cohort		Indicator of recidivism	Tracking period	Result
UK-England/Wales	2016	Persons convicted or released from prison	Reconviction (including a caution)	1 year	28.5%
United States	2005	Released prisoners	first arrest after release from prison.	1year - 9years	(1Y) 43.9% (2Y) 60.1% (3Y) 68.4% (5Y) 77.0% (9Y) 83.4%
South Korea	2012	Released prisoners	Reimprisonment	3month - 3years	(3M) 0.2% (6M) 1.4% (1Y) 7.5% (2Y) 18.0% (3Y) 24.8%
New Zealand	2016	1) Released prisoners 2) Starters on community sentence	Reconviction	1 year	1) 46.8% 2) 27.5%

Sources:

- England/Wales: Ministry of Justice "Proven Reoffending Statistics" (Released on 31 January 2019)
- United States: Bureau of Justice Statistics "2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014)"
- South Korea: Ministry of Justice "Annual Report"
- New Zealand: Department of Corrections "Annual report (2016/2017)"

Finding 3: Results of international survey on policies, practices, and research to reduce recidivism

We conducted an international field survey on policies, practices and research to reduce recidivism in the United States and New Zealand. We appreciate the consultation we received from the National Institute of Justice and from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in United States, as well as the cooperation we received from the Department of Corrections, New Zealand. The survey results indicate possible factors contributing to reducing recidivism in Japan. They are as follows:

- Effective strategies to enhance motivation
- Effective case management (tailored approach)
- Comprehensive approach among staffs in corrections.
- More successful models of desistance to be shared in the community.
- Developing coordinators to strengthen social supports.
- Diverse analysis approaches to visualize social impact and organization sustainability such as cost-benefit analysis and quantitative analysis.
- More communication/relationships between researchers and practitioners: the importance of the translational criminology perspective.

NAKAMURA Yoshio
Director
Research Department
Research and Training Institute
Ministry of Justice