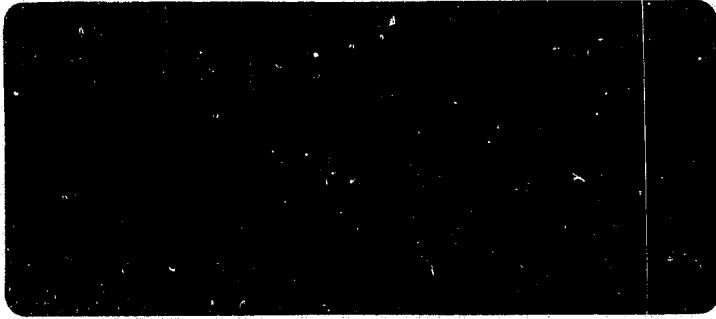


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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

MISSISSIPPI
AVERAGE RECIDIVISM RATES

FIVE COHORTS

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Introduction

Some time ago when it was still operational, the LEAA Atlanta Regional Office surveyed the eight southeastern states then within its jurisdiction in an effort to compare recidivism rates. The effort was shortly abandoned because uniformity did not exist either in defining recidivism or in determining its rates. Recently we canvassed our neighbors and found that the problem still exists. No doubt the same is true in other parts of the country.

Because this diversity obviously hinders comparative programmatic evaluation, and makes nationwide statistical analyses impossible, we are submitting this paper on Mississippi recidivism in the hope that NCJRS, having received similar studies from other jurisdictions, might put together and publish a report illustrating these differences and thus generate something resembling a national dialogue on the subject. It may not change many current practices and its chances of producing a uniform methodology are probably slim, but it certainly ought to be interesting.

The purpose of this document, then, is to:

1. State the Mississippi definition of recidivism and why we adopted it.
2. Review our methodology for determining its rates.
3. Present current results.

MISSISSIPPI
AVERAGE RECIDIVISM RATES

FIVE COHORTS

Three Month:

Rate = 2.3%

Six Month:

Rate = 4.8%

One Year:

Rate = 9.3%

Definition of Recidivism

By our definition, a recidivist is anyone who is released from incarceration in the Mississippi prison system and returns to the Mississippi prison system because he or she has committed a new offense or is guilty of a technical violation of release supervision. (No attempt is made to track Mississippi releasees who subsequently enter an out-of-state system.)

All types of releases are included: parole, work release, supervised earned release, suspension, discharge on expiration of sentence, or discharge with probation to follow. Persons who are returned to the prison system to await hearings on a release violation are not considered recidivists until such hearings determine that they will be retained in prison instead of being returned to community supervision.

Of a sample of 2,227 prisoners in the state system, 574 (26%) are recidivists. But 26 percent represents a ratio, not a rate. Rate implies time and recidivism rate implies the tracking of specific individuals through time. Therefore, in determining recidivism rate, a base cohort can be tracked at three month, six month, one year, two year, and three year intervals to determine how many of the cohort have returned to incarceration at different time intervals, thus producing a recidivism rate for each of these intervals. Several tracked cohorts may be averaged together to give a more accurate picture of the actual recidivism rate.

Methodology

The recidivism rate for any one of these time spans (expressed as a percentage) is determined by dividing the total number of persons returning to incarceration by the number in the base cohort. For example, of the 457 inmates released during the fourth quarter of 1978 (October-December), 11 returned within three months of that release quarter. Thus, the three month recidivism rate is determined as follows:

$$11 \div 457 = 2.4 \text{ percent}$$

The recidivism rate for each successive time span will be cumulative. Therefore, the number of persons who recidivated within three months will be included in determining the six month rate, and so on.

The six month and one year rates have been determined for some cohorts and are reflected here. Two and three year rates can be captured as those time periods elapse.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

RECIDIVISM RATES

	RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION	NUMBER RELEASED	RETURNED 3 MOS.		RETURNED 6 MOS.		RETURNED 1 YR.		RETURNED 2 YRS.		RETURNED 3 YRS.	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Cohort A	Oct-Dec 1978	457	11	2.4	21	4.6	37	8.1				
Cohort B	Jan-Mar 1978	305	9	3.0	17	5.6	32	10.5				
Cohort C	Apr-Jun 1979	440	11	2.5	18	4.1						
Cohort D	Jly-Sep 1979	475	11	2.3	22	4.7						
Cohort E	Oct-Dec 1979	416	4	1.0								
AVERAGE RECIDIVISM RATE				2.2		4.7		9.3				

END