

**Effect of Accelerated
Release
from Prison
on Public Safety:
*A Review of the
Literature***

National Council on Crime and Delinquency
(NCCD)
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Purpose of the Literature Review

- Examine accelerated release efforts throughout the United States and Canada, at different time periods and with different prison populations
- Identify the impetus for accelerated release and procedures used
- Assess the effect of accelerated release on public safety as measured by recidivism

Methods for the Literature Review

- Database used:
 - Rutgers University Don Gottfredson Criminal Justice Library
 - National Institute of Corrections Information Center
 - National Criminal Justice Reference Service
- Key Words used: (alone and in combination)
 - Early release
 - Prison population caps
 - Recidivism
 - Public safety
 - Effect
- Timeframe specified for studies
 - 1980-2007
- Type of publications requested
 - Articles published in peer-reviewed publications
 - Monographs
 - State Reports
- Jurisdictions
 - US and Canada

Literature Review: Article Screening

- Received over 30 studies, papers and monographs from Rutgers University Library, NIC and the NCRS
- Excluded studies not addressing accelerated release and recidivism in methods and results (ex: studies reporting on recidivism only)
- Excluded studies with unclear methods (ex: not able to identify population source)

Results from Article Screening Process

- 14 peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, state reports, and policy-related and national data reports were reviewed and are reported in this presentation.
- The cited studies and reports used data from 1981 to 2004.
- Examined accelerated release from prison in different geographical settings and at different times and its impact on public safety over the span of 22 years.

Literature Review: Overview of Geographical Regions

- Jurisdictions represented in the cited studies and reports

- US

- Washington State
 - California
 - Colorado
 - Texas
 - Montana
 - Wisconsin
 - Illinois
 - Michigan
 - Florida

- Canada

Literature Review: Overview of Study Goals

■ Impetus for Studies and Reports

- Most studies and reports reported the impetus for accelerated release (AR) was to relieve prison overcrowding.
- Some studies reported testing of risk assessment tools as a secondary goal for AR.
- Smaller number of studies cited testing collaboration with community programs as a third goal for AR.

Literature Review: Overview of Measures and Methods

■ Accelerated Release Time

- Studies reported accelerated release ranging from 60 to (approximately) 130 days earlier than actual sentence time.

■ Post-release behavior

- Was usually observed over a 6- and 12-month follow up period.

■ Public Safety

- Was measured through conviction of new felony offense, criminal parole violation, and technical parole violation.

Literature Review: Overview of Studied Populations

- Most studies targeted adult males.
- Only one study focused on adult women.
- Population selected for accelerated release were most often:
 - Non-violent offenders.
 - Offenders eligible for parole.
 - Offenders whose crimes could be addressed in community settings (usually substance abuse).

Literature Review: Findings

- Most of the cited studies and reports found:
 - *No significant difference* in rates of recidivism among accelerated release and full-term offenders.
- Some studies found:
 - *Lower recidivism rates* among accelerated releases than those who served a full-term in prison.

Literature Review: Findings

- For Example... Same rates for Accelerated Release
 - In Illinois, inmates released via the Supplemental Meritorious Good Time (SMGT) had the *same* recidivism rates as those inmates not released via the SMGT. (Study #9 in report).
 - In Wisconsin, *no evidence* was found that accelerated release extension from 90 to 135 days resulted in a disproportionate increase in criminal activity:
 - At 6-month follow up, only 7% of the 135-day Special Action Release (SAR) group and 6% of the 90-day SAR group had committed felony offenses for which they were convicted and sentenced. (Study#7 in report).

Literature Review: Findings

- For example... Lower rates among Accelerated Release
 - During an 18-month follow up, the Florida Community Control Program (FCCP) had *lower* rates of new convictions.
 - Only 19.7% of the FCCP group had a new offense, compared to 24.3% of new offenses among those offenders who spent 9 months in prison. (Study #11 in report)
 - In a study in urban jails in the northeastern US:
 - 78% of the offenders released to the community-based, substance abuse treatment program reported *no new convictions* in comparison to 66% of those early release offenders that did not participate in treatment. (Study #13)

Literature Review: Findings

- For example... offenders released to community settings (ex: substance abuse treatment needs)
 - In Canada, approximately one half of the offenders (52%) successfully completed their sentences in the community or had been successfully living in the community for at least one year post release when the follow up period ended. (Study #14 in report)

Crime in Study Sites

- NCCD reviewed annual crime rates throughout the different regions reported in the studies *during* the same time the studies took place.
 - Crime data in the states where studies took place show decreases even as accelerated release was being implemented.

Crime in Study Sites

■ For example...

- In Florida, the crime rates declined from 1,188 per 100,000 residents in 1993 to 1,137 per 100,000 in 1994.

Florida Statistical Analysis Center: FDLE, (1989-2005). Crime in Florida, Florida uniform crime report [Computer program]. Tallahassee, FL (Study #11)

- Crime rates in Illinois during the study period decreased from 959 per 100,000 population in 1993 to 886 per 100,000 in 1996.

FBI Uniform Crime Reports (Study #9)

Literature Review on Accelerated Release

What Worked?

- Selecting non-violent offenders for accelerated release.
- Designing AR as an incentive for non-violent behavior in prisons.
- Allocating probation officers to maintain contact with AR groups (accountability).
- Linking AR groups to community-based services and programs (e.g., employment, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment).

Policy issues raised in the literature on Accelerated Release

- Accelerated release versus systematic sentencing reform
- Equity concerns in the accelerated release process
- Victims issues
- The “Willie Horton” phenomenon
- Resource considerations