

ICPSR 9916

Crime Commission Rates Among Incarcerated Felons in Nebraska, 1986-1990

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 9916

Title: Crime Commission Rates Among Incarcerated Felons in Nebraska, 1986-1990

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Scope of Study

Summary: These data focus on rates of criminal offending obtained through the use of self-report surveys. Specifically, the study investigates whether two different types of self-report surveys produce different estimates of lambda, an individual's frequency of criminal offending. The surveys, which were administered during personal interviews with inmates in Nebraska prisons, differed in how respondents were asked about their frequency of criminal offending. The more detailed survey asked respondents to indicate their offenses on a month-by-month basis for the reporting period. The less detailed survey only asked respondents to indicate their offending for the entire reporting period. These data also provide information on the relationship between race and offending frequencies, the rates of offending over time and by crime category, and the individual's subjective probability of punishment and offending frequency. The specific crimes targeted in this collection include burglary, business robbery, personal robbery, assault, theft, forgery, fraud, drug dealing, and rape. All respondents were asked questions on criminal history, substance abuse, attitudes about crime and the judicial system, predictions of future criminal behavior, and demographic information, including age, race, education, and marital status.

Subject Term(s):	crime prediction, crime rates, crime reporting, criminal histories, felons, prison inmates, race, recidivism
Geographic Coverage:	Nebraska, United States
Time Period:	• 1986 - 1990
Date(s) of Collection:	• 1989 - 1990
Unit of Observation:	Individuals.
Universe:	Criminal offenders in Nebraska.
Data Type:	survey data
Data Collection Notes:	The column positions indicated on the data collection instruments are not the column positions in the raw data file.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study: In the late 1970s the RAND Corporation conducted a survey of inmates, which became known as the RAND Second Inmate Survey (SURVEY OF JAIL AND PRISON INMATES, 1978: CALIFORNIA, MICHIGAN, TEXAS [ICPSR 8169]), to estimate lambda, an individual's frequency of offending. The current study is essentially a replication of the RAND study, with certain modifications, and was designed to address criticisms of the original work and to provide more detailed information on rates of criminal offending. The principal investigators gathered data to address a number of issues. First, they wanted to determine if lambda, calculated from responses to a modified survey, differs from lambda determined by the RAND method. The modified survey differs from the RAND survey in that it contains more detailed calendars for reporting periods of criminal activity. The more detailed calendars are believed to provide better cues for recalling past criminal activity. Also, the RAND data were collected through self-administered questionnaires. The current data were collected through personal interviews with prisoners. Personal interviews were conducted to reduce the amount of missing and ambiguous responses found in self-administered surveys. A criticism of the RAND study is that missing and ambiguous responses may have led to inflated values of lambda. Next, the investigators explored whether the RAND study's results regarding race and individual offending frequencies could be replicated. Whether rates of criminal activity vary over time and by crime category were also studied. In addition, the investigators gathered data to investigate the relationship between an individual's subjective

probability of punishment and the frequency of offending. The results of the research should be useful in developing crime intervention strategies.

Study Design: A central purpose of the study was to compare lambda determined by the RAND study with lambda determined by the investigators' method. Seven hundred male prisoners in Nebraska were randomly assigned to either a control group or an experimental group. The control group was interviewed using the RAND method. The experimental group was interviewed using the investigators' more detailed month-by-month reporting method. Each interviewing method required determining the respondent's "street months." Under the RAND method, respondents were shown a 24-month calendar. Only the time period prior to their arrest for their current conviction was relevant. The interviewer crossed off any months during which the respondent had been incarcerated in that time period. The remaining months were the street months, the time available to commit crimes. The same procedure was used for the experimental group, except that a 36-month calendar was used. This was done so that a longer period of time was available to study variability in offending rates. For comparison of lambda based on the two methods, lambda of the experimental group was based on the 24-month calendar. Under each interviewing method, respondents were asked if they had committed any of certain target offenses (burglary, business robbery, personal robbery, assault, theft, auto theft, forgery, fraud, drug dealing, and rape) during their street months. With the RAND method, respondents were asked how often they had committed each target crime during the total street months. Under the experimental method, respondents indicated the specific months during which they committed the target offenses and their frequency of offending by month. In order to have a larger sample with detailed information, those in the control group were also given a supplemental survey after completing their original survey. The supplement asked the frequency of offense questions using the month-by-month method of the experimental group. The monthly data are available for 658 of the 700 inmates interviewed.

Sample: Cohort sample consisting of 700 inmates admitted to the Diagnostic and Evaluation Unit of the Nebraska Department of Corrections during a nine-month period.

Sources of Information: personal interviews

Description of Variables: Topics covered in the interviews include criminal history, substance abuse, attitudes about crime and the judicial system, predictions of future criminal behavior, and demographic information.

Response Rates: Interviews were conducted with 700 inmates admitted to the Diagnostic and Evaluation Unit of the Nebraska Department of Corrections. This represents 90 percent of the prisoners admitted to the unit during a

nine-month period. A total of 746 inmates were asked to be interviewed, and 700 (94 percent) agreed to participate.

Presence of Common Scales: None

Extent of Processing: Performed consistency checks.

Performed recodes and/or calculated derived variables.

Access and Availability

Note: A list of the data formats available for this study can be found in the [summary of holdings](#). Detailed file-level information (such as record length, case count, and variable count) is listed in the [file manifest](#).

Some instruments administered as part of this study may contain contents from copyrighted instruments. Reproductions of the instruments are provided solely as documentation for the analysis of the data associated with this collection. Please contact the data producers for information on permissions to use the instruments for other purposes.

Original ICPSR Release: 1993-10-02

Version History: The last update of this study occurred on 1994-02-17.

Dataset(s):

- DS1: Raw Data File
- DS2: SPSS Export File
- DS3: SAS Data Definition Statements for Logical Record Length Data
- DS4: SAS Data Definition Statements for Card Image Data

Publications

Final Reports and Other Publication Resources: A list of publications related to, or based on, this data collection can be accessed from the study's download page on the NACJD Web site or through the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/citations/index.html>. The list of citations includes links to abstracts and publications in Portable Document Format (PDF) files or text files when available.

Final reports and other publications describing research conducted on a variety of criminal justice topics are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). NCJRS was established in 1972 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, to provide research findings to criminal justice professionals

and researchers. NCJRS operates specialized clearinghouses that are staffed by information specialists who supply a range of reference, referral, and distribution services. Publications can be obtained from NCJRS at NIJ/NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, 800-851-3420 or 301-519-5500. TTY Service for the Hearing Impaired is 877-712-9279 (toll-free) or 301-947-8374 (local). The URL for the NCJRS Web site is:

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/>

NIJ Data Resources Program

About the DRP: The National Institute of Justice Data Resources Program (DRP) makes datasets from NIJ-funded research and evaluation projects available to the research community and sponsors research and training activities devoted to secondary data analysis. Datasets are archived by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan.

The NACJD maintains a World Wide Web site with instructions for transferring files and sending messages. Criminal justice data funded by the Department of Justice are available via the Internet at this site at no charge to the user. NACJD may be contacted at NACJD/ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1248, 800-999-0960. The URL for the NACJD Web site is:

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/>