

Long Prison Sentences and Parole Potential

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Note: This research carried out by Rev. Muller and members of Exodus at Eastern C.F. lead to the creation of the *Exodus Personal Growth & Parole Prediction Index*. Much of the research expressed below is highlighted in the "*Index*," while additional elements leading to parole success were added. Even though this research is somewhat dated, as of this publication, many of the statistics are essentially true today and parole success is still dependent on similar factors. (Gordon W Brown, the-rev.com contributor)

The following is a list of significant information which indicates that a person in prison who has served a long prison sentence (15 yrs. or more), and taken advantage of growth and support opportunities, has a high potential for parole success. Consider the following:

People who serve long sentences have the lowest rate of recidivism when released. A study conducted by The New York State Department of Correctional Services in 1999, indicates that those convicted of murder, manslaughter, and other homicides had a 19% return rate. This includes parole violations and new crimes. The Sentencing Project in Washington, D.C. in a report dated May 2004 stated: "Four of every five lifers are not rearrested. Of the lifers released in 1994, 20.6% were rearrested. compared to an overall rate of 67.5%."

People with significant educational advancement have a lower recidivism rate. Studies indicate that a GED earned in prison reduces the rate of return by 5%, (32% compared to 37%, DOCS study 2001). A Dutchess Community College Study indicated that a two year college degree resulted in a 15.9% return rate. A DOCS study indicates that a four year college degree cut the rate in half and a seminary study shows that a master's degree resulted in return rate of less than 9%.

Long term violent offenders have a lower rate of violence when released than do non-violent offenders. The Washington based Sentencing Project Report on Long Prison Sentences in Context and a DOCS study support this. The Sentencing Project Report states: "Lifers — 90% of whom are incarcerated for a violent offense — are no more likely to be rearrested for a violent offense (18%) than property (21.9%) or drug offenders (18.4%)."

People who have acquired significant vocational skills while incarcerated have a lower rate of recidivism. A DOCS study of the Wallkill Correctional Facility Optical Program indicated that over 36 months, a return rate of 20% was recorded as compared to 41% in the control group.

Strong spiritual development while incarcerated tends to support a lower rate of recidivism. Studies conducted by the Center for Research on Religion at The University of Pennsylvania and

The New York Theological Seminary study support this. In the first study the rate of recidivism was cut by 50% for those participants in a long term faith based program, and a seminary study indicated a 91% success rate for graduates with a Master of Professional Studies degree.

Long term prisoners who have maintained strong family ties tend to have lower rates of recidivism. Studies by DOCS indicate that participants in the Family Reunion Program have lower security infractions than the general population of a facility indicating that families have a positive effect even before release.

People who serve long-term sentences cost the state on the average \$69,000 per year (Mentioned in The Sentencing Project Report). In New York State each two year extension granted by the parole board could conceivably cost the state an additional \$138,000.

Norvill Morris of The University of Chicago indicates the longer the prison sentence the less significant are traditional "predictions of dangerousness."

Prison chaplains and other professionals who work in prisons, believe that people who serve long prison sentences are seldom the same people they were when they came to prison. Age, family ties, education, vocational achievement, spiritual growth, and community support all contribute to significant personal development.

Long Prison Sentences and Parole Potential (Summary of Research References)

The following is a summary of the research gathered relative to the Long Prison Sentences and Parole Potential listing.

The best document I came across which listed almost all the facts supported by the other research reports, is a study entitled: *The Meaning of "Life:" Long Prison Terms in Context* by Marc Mauer, Ryan S. King, and Malcolm C. Young, (May 2004). This was published by The Sentencing Project, 514 10th Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004. The report is 35 pages long. They may send it if you request it.

The following is a list of other reports and studies:

Recidivism and the Master in Professional Studies Program at Sing Sing Prison by Tom O'Connor at The Center for Social Research, Washington DC, and Victoria L. Erickson, Ph.D., Drew University, Madison, NJ. Indicates a very low recidivism rate of graduates.

The Center on Crime, Communities & Culture (Research Brief No. 2, Sept. 1997). Lists a large amount of information on the effects of education in the Texas system. It indicates degree holders had a 5.6% recidivism rate.

Criminal Justice Newsletter, Sept. 2, 2003 has a report on the effects of religious programs in prison on recidivism rates. It refers to a study by the Center for

Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania
The study was for the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) in Texas. The study indicated that IFI graduates were 50% less likely to be rearrested within two years of release than those in a matching comparison group.

Dutchess Community College Study on Inmate Education (1981) by F. Dennon Moody.
This study supports the effects higher education has on lower recidivism rates of people leaving prison. The report indicates: "During the first three years after release, DCC students return to the system at a significantly slower rate than do general population inmates."

Journal of Offender Counseling, Services & Rehabilitation, Vol. 8(112), Fall/Winter 1983
contains an article on the "Impact of Family Reunion Program on Institutional Discipline" by Howser, Grossman, and Macdonald.

New York State Department of Correctional Services Studies:

Analysis of Return Rates of The Inmate College Program Participants, (1991) by David Clark. Supports most other studies on the effects of college education.

Wallkill Optical Program Follow-up (September 1993). This study indicates the lower rate of return for men who have skilled vocational training. After two years the program graduates had a return rate of 11.80% while the comparison group had 30.93%.

Follow-Up Study of Offenders Who Earned GEDs, (May 2001)

Long-Term Inmates (1996)

1999 Releases: Three Year Post Release Follow-Up

Long-Term Inmates 1996

1992 Releases: Three Year Post Release Follow-Up

Men and Women Undercustody: 1987-200/

There are several follow-up studies on Family Reunion Participants.

The report dated May 1980 offers the following conclusion:

"The basic finding of this report is that Family Reunion Program participants appear to have lower than expected return rate." (Page 7)