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Recidivism of persons charged with community work service, suspended sentence, conditional release, and full-time deprivation of liberty: insights from the Latvian offenders study

The main goal of the recidivism study (N = 1767) was to explore and compare recidivism rates among four categories of Latvian offenders whose previous/last sentence expired in the period from June 1st till August 31st, 2009: community work service, suspended sentence, conditional release, and full-time deprivation of liberty. We included offender's gender and age in the analysis as control variables, and logistic regression was made use of to predict the probability of reoffending, choosing the suspended sentence group as the reference category. In the next step, we performed survival analysis to determine the time after which a 'failure' (that is, a re-offending event) occurred. For the empirical purposes of our study, we defined recidivism as the new offence committed during the measurement period lasting from June 1st, 2009 to November 3rd, 2011.

Regression analysis results indicate profound and significant differences among the categories. In terms of frequencies, those previously sentenced to jail committed a new offence in about 51% of cases during the measurement period, compared to about 26% rate among the conditional release group, 20% rates among the community work service group and about 16% with a suspended sentence. Predicted reoffending probabilities were 1.4 larger for community work service group, 2.2 time larger for conditional release and 6.2 times larger for full-time jail group than for the reference category, controlling for age and gender. Survival analysis results suggest that about two-thirds of previously jailed persons committed a new offence during the first year after their last conviction had expired, which contrasts sharply with the 'survival' of other three offender categories. On the whole probation clients are at relatively lower risk of committing a new offence than convicts who served full-time sentence in jail. Our findings generally concord with insights from other studies on the same subject-matter.

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