

# **Sexual Offenders: Risk, Recidivism, and Social Policies**

**Jill S. Levenson, Ph.D.**

**Lynn University**

**Boca Raton, FL**

**[jsljwm@bellsouth.net](mailto:jsljwm@bellsouth.net)**



# The problem of sexual violence

- Approximately 90,000 cases of child sexual abuse are confirmed in the U.S. each year (Administration on Children Youth and Families, 2004).
- Self-report victimization surveys have found that 23% of adults were sexually abused before the age of 18 (Finkelhor, Moore, Hamby, & Straus, 1997).
- 17-22% of women and 2-8% of men have been victims of sexual assault (Putnam, 2003; Satcher, 2001).
- The Incidence and Prevalence Survey indicated there are 78 sexual assaults per hour in our country (Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000).
- Because many cases of sexual abuse go unreported due to victim fear, shame, or loyalty to the abuser (Salter, 1995), documented reports of sexual assault underestimate the extent of the problem.
- The majority of sex crimes may go undetected (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Mittleman, Murphy, & Rouleou, 1987; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997).
- Some sexual offenders admit to committing many more sexual assaults than those for which they have been caught (English, Jones, Pasini-Hill, Patrick, & Cooley-Towell, 2000; Heil, Ahlmeyer, & Simons, 2003).



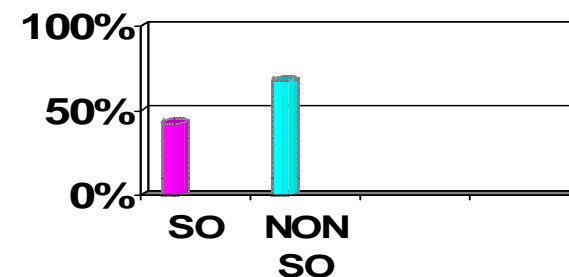
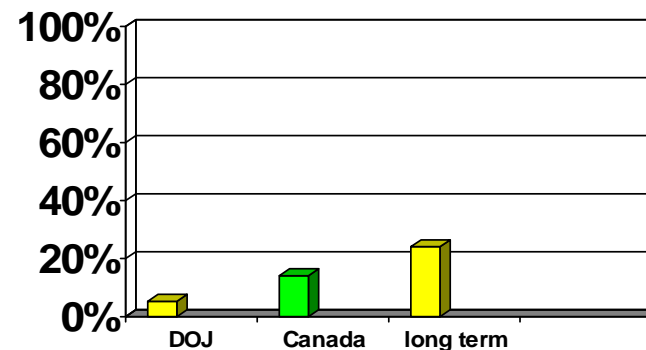
# Myth or Fact?

- All sex offenders reoffend
- Treatment doesn't work
- Stranger Danger
- Sex crime rates are on the rise



# Recidivism Facts

- US Dept. of Justice
  - 5.3% recidivism rate over 3 year follow-up
  - Sex offenders were less likely than non-sex offenders to be rearrested for any offense — 43 % of sex offenders versus 68 % of non-sex offenders.
  - Sex offenders were 4 times more likely than non-sex offenders to be rearrested for a sex offense.
- Solicitor General's Office of Canada (n = 29,000)
  - 14% recidivism rate over 5 years – all sex offenders
  - 13% - child molesters
- Long-term (15 years) follow-up have found recidivism rates of 24% (Harris & Hanson)



Source	Recidivism Rate	Definition of recidivism	Follow-up period	Sample size
<b>Hanson &amp; Bussierre (1998)</b> date/1998-RKHanson-SOrecid		Charges or convictions	4-5 years	<del>29,450</del> 28,972
All sex offenders	<del>14%</del> 13.4%			
Child molesters	13%			
Rapists	<del>20%</del> 18.9%			
<b>Hanson &amp; Morton-Bourgon (2005)</b> date/2005-RKHanson-SOrecid		Charges or convictions	5-6 years	<del>19,267</del> 29,450
All sex offenders	14%			
<b>Harris &amp; Hanson (2004)</b> date/200403-Harris_Hanson-SOrecid		Charges or convictions	15 years	4,724
All sex offenders	24%			
Incestuous molesters	13%			
Child molesters / girl victims	16%			
Child molesters / boy victims	35%			
Rapists	24%			
<b>Bureau of Justice Statistics (2003)</b> gov/US/fed/exec/DoJ/BJS/200311-BJS-SOrecid		arrests	3 years	9,691
All sex offenders	5.3%			

# Harris & Hanson, 2004

Table 2  
Sexual Recidivism (%) across Time and Samples.

Sub-Group		5 Years	10 Years	15 Years	Shown in Figure #
All sexual offenders		14	20	24	1
Rapists		14	21	24	2
Extended Incest Child Molesters		6	9	13	3
"Girl Victim" Child Molesters		9	13	16	3
"Boy Victim" Child Molesters		23	28	35	3
Offenders without a previous sexual conviction versus those with a previous sexual conviction	Without	10	15	19	4
	With	25	32	37	4
Offenders over age 50 at release versus offenders less than age 50 at release	Over 50	7	11	12	5
	Less than 50	15	21	26	5
Sex Offenders - offence free in the community for Five, Ten, and Fifteen years	5 years	7	12	15	6
	10 years	5	9	‡	6
	15 years	4	‡	‡	6


‡ = Insufficient data to compute reliable estimates



# Harris and Hanson (2004)

- N = 4,724; 15 year follow up period:
- “Most sexual offenders do not re-offend sexually over time. This may be the most important finding of this study as this finding is contrary to some strongly held beliefs. After 15 years, 73% of sexual offenders had not been charged with, or convicted of, another sexual offence. The sample was sufficiently large that very strong contradictory evidence is necessary to substantially change these recidivism estimates” (p. 17).





## Some sex offenders are more dangerous than others

- **pedophiles who molest boys: 35-52%**
- **rapists of adult women: 19-39%**
- **Incest offenders: < 10% - 13%**
- **Repeat offenders are more likely to reoffend than first-time offenders.**
- **Those who comply with probation and treatment have lower reoffense rates than those who violate the conditions of their release.**
- **Sex offenders who target strangers are more dangerous than those with victims inside their own family.**

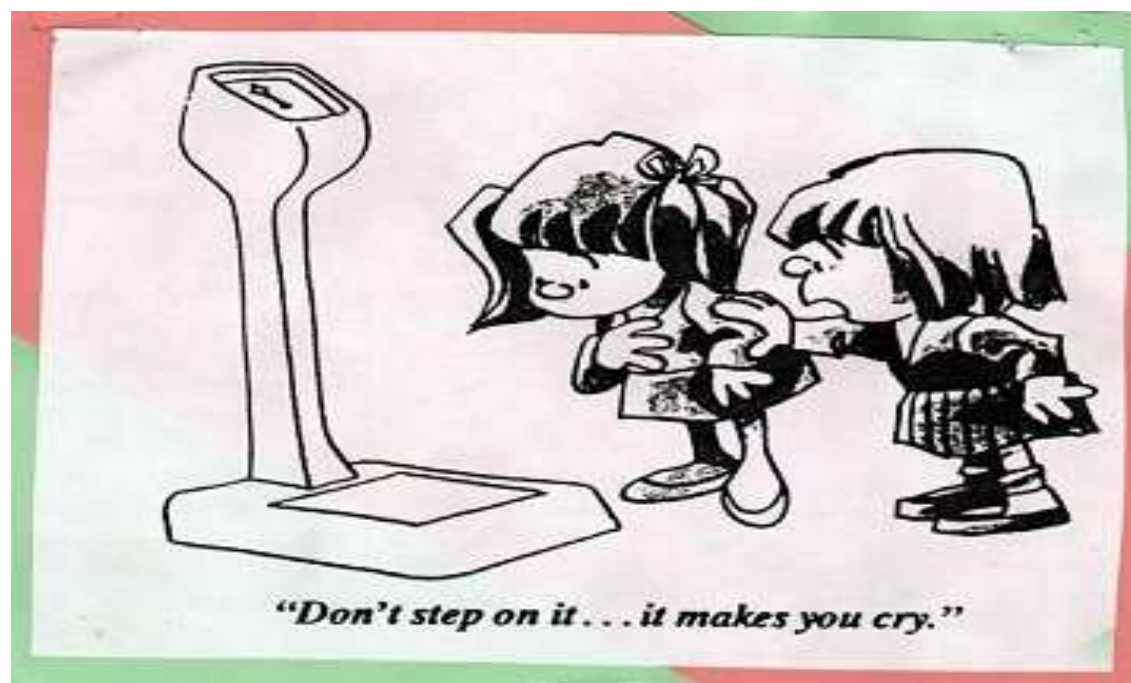


## Fact:

# Sex crime rates have declined.

- Sex crime rates, like other serious, non-sexual crimes (e.g., assault, robbery), have declined substantially over the past decade, based on both official crime reports and victim reports (Tonry, 2004).
- Rape arrest rates peaked in 1990 and have decreased steadily since 1991.
- The 2001 rate for forcible rape was 9.6 per 100,000, the lowest rate recorded since national record-keeping practices were implemented (Maguire & Pastore, 2003).
- Child sexual abuse rates also appear to be on the decline (Finkelhor & Jones, 2004; Jones & Finkelhor, 2003).
- It might be argued that the drop in crime rates is a direct result of increasingly aggressive crime policies, but sociological and criminological scholars assert that such trends are more likely a result of society's changing values and social norms (Tonry, 2004).

# Cause and effect can be misleading...





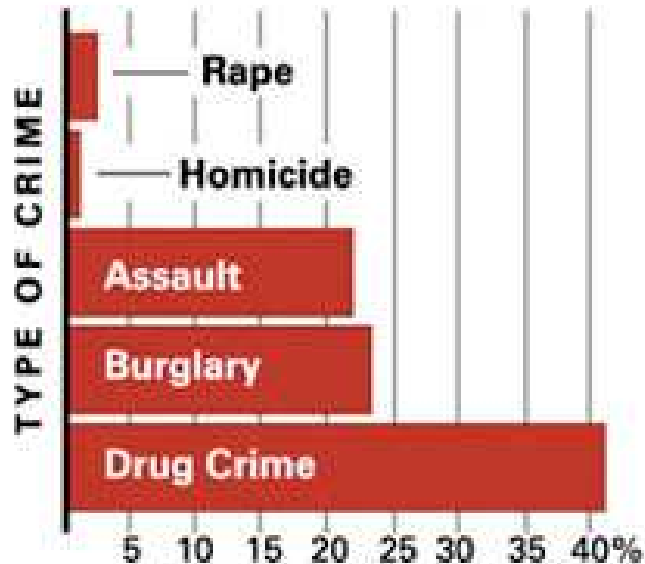
## Are sex offenders the most dangerous type of criminal?

- The U.S. Department of Justice (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).
  - burglary (74%)
  - larceny (75%)
  - auto theft (70%)
  - DUI (51%)
  - Sex offenders 5.3%



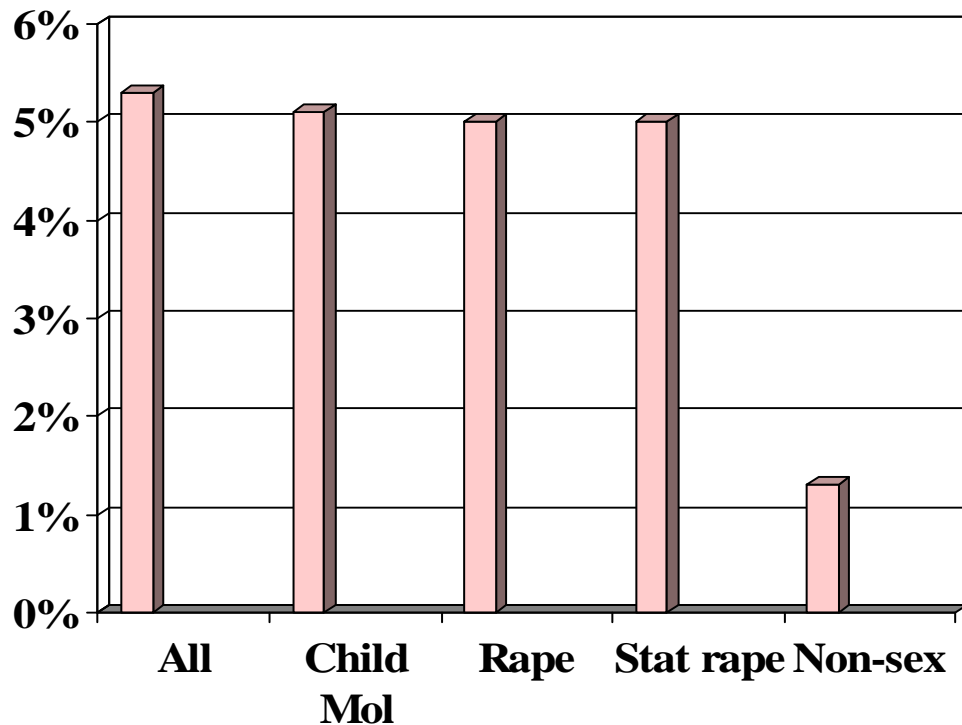
## Re-offense Rates Lower for Rapists

After being released from prison, convicted rapists were re-arrested at a lower rate than many other offenders over a three-year period, according to a 2002 U.S. Department of Justice report. Of more than 272,100 inmates released in 15 states in 1994, the following percentages were re-arrested on a similar charge:





U.S. DOJ (2003)  
Recidivism of over 9,000 sex offenders  
released from prison in 1994 (3 year follow-up)



517 sex offenders  
rearrested for new  
sex crime

3,328 non-sex  
offenders rearrested  
for new sex crime

Repeat sex offenders  
accounted for only  
13% of the 3,845 new  
sex crimes committed  
by inmates released  
in 1994





# Treatment Doesn't Work: Facts

- **Furby, Weinrott, & Bradshaw (1989).**

- Combined analysis of numerous studies that was unable to detect a significant treatment effect due to methodology variability.

- **Hanson, R. K., Gordon, A., Harris, A. J. R., Marques, J. K., Murphy, W., Quinsey, V. L., & Seto, M. C. (2002).**

- 17% untreated
- 10% treated

- **Losel, F., & Schmucker, M. (2005).**

- Recidivism reduced by nearly 40%

- Treatment failure is associated with higher recidivism rates.

- **SOTEP:**

Sex offenders who successfully complete a treatment program reoffend less often than those who do not demonstrate that they “got it” (Marques, Miederanders, Day, Nelson, & van Ommeren, 2005).






# Can they be cured?

- Treatment won't work equally well for everyone, and 100% success should not be expected.
- Sex offender treatments, like many other types of medical and mental health interventions, don't focus on a cure but on a reduction of symptoms.
- Men who get married do not stop being attracted to other women, they stop acting on it.
- Treatment for diabetes doesn't cure the disease, it manages the disease.
- Sex offender treatment teaches clients how to change their thinking and their behavior.



# Facts: Stranger Danger

- Perpetrators reported that their victims were strangers in less than 30% of rapes and 15% of sexual abuse (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997).
- A study reviewing sex crimes as reported to police revealed that
  - 93% of child sexual abuse victims knew their abuser;
  - 34.2% were family members and
  - 58.7% were acquaintances (BJS, 2000).
- Only 7% of the perpetrators of child victims were strangers (BJS, 2000).
- About 40% of sexual assaults take place in the victim's own home, and 20% take place in the home of a friend, neighbor or relative (BJS, 1997).
- About .7% of all murders involve sexual assault.
- The prevalence of sexual murders declined by about half between the late 1970's and the mid 1990's (BJS, 1997).
- About 75% of sexual murder victims are over the age of 18 (BJS, 1997).


- 
- Random acts of sexual violence, especially against children, generate enormous media coverage.
  - Sexual abuse causes great harm to victims, so our society is rightly concerned about it.
  - The media reports many inaccurate facts about sex offenders.
  - The public is largely misinformed about sex offenders, particularly about recidivism rates and the threat that strangers pose to children.
  - This misinformation leads to fear and urgency to create laws to prevent sex crimes.
  - Lawmakers act to serve their constituency, and policies are often enacted in the absence of empirical evidence.





# Registration and Notification

- 1994: Jacob Wetterling Act
  - Required sex offenders to register with local law enforcement so that such criminals could be tracked and their whereabouts known.
- 1996: Megan's Law
  - Amended the Wetterling Act, requiring all states to implement community notification.
- About half of the states assign offenders to one of three risk levels and notify differentially according to risk. They use risk assessment instruments with moderate predictive validity.
- Other states (such as Florida) employ broad community notification
- Upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003, in 2 cases (CT & Alaska)
- PROTECT amendment require all states to develop Internet registries by 2006.



Thus far, there is little evidence that community notification is successful in reducing sexual offense recidivism.

- Washington Institute for Public Policy (Schram & Milloy, 1995).
- Compared 125 released adult sex offenders who were subject to Washington's highest level of notification with a randomly selected control group of 90 offenders released before the law went into effect.
- Follow-up periods 1 – 4 years.
- No statistically significant difference in recidivism rates between offenders who were subject to notification (19% recidivism) and those who were not (22% recidivism).
- However, sex offenders who were subject to community notification were arrested more quickly for new sex crimes than those not subject to notification.
- 63% of the new sex offenses occurred in the jurisdiction where notification took place.
- The authors concluded that community notification had little effect on sex offense recidivism.



# Do they work?

- An interrupted time-series analysis involving ten states investigated the impact of registration and notification laws on sexual assault rates.
  - (Walker, Maddan, Vasquez, VanHouten, & Ervin-McLarty, 2005).
- Five states experienced an increase in sexual assault rates, with one of those states being statistically significant
- Trends in three states revealed a significant decrease in sex crime rates.
- The authors concluded that registration and notification policies did not appear to have a systematic influence on decreasing sex crime rates across the ten states as a group.



# Do they work?

- (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2005).
- After controlling for generally decreasing crime trends, sex offense recidivism rates dropped nearly 70% after 1997, when community notification procedures in Washington were standardized across the state
- While the authors acknowledged they were unable to account for other possible explanations for this reduction (e.g., more severe sentencing guidelines, or improved probationary supervision), they concluded that community notification has likely contributed to reductions in sexual offending.
- Notably, Washington reserves its most aggressive community notification for its highest risk “level III” offenders. Consequently, the results might be generalized only to those states with similarly crafted policies.



Levenson, J.S. & Cotter, L.P. (2005). The impact of Megan's Law on sex offender reintegration. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*. 21(1), 49-66.

Type of Consequence	Reported Yes N=183
I have <b>lost a job</b> because my boss or co-workers found out I am a sex offender.	<b>27%</b>
I have <b>had to move</b> from a home or apartment because <b>landlord</b> found out that I am a sex offender.	<b>20%</b>
I have <b>had to move</b> from a home or apartment because <b>neighbors</b> complained that I was a sex offender.	<b>15%</b>
I have been <b>threatened or harassed</b> by neighbors.	<b>33%</b>
I have been <b>physically assaulted or injured</b> by someone who found out I was a sex offender.	<b>5%</b>
My <b>property has been damaged</b> by someone who found out I was a sex offender.	<b>21%</b>
A <b>person who lives with me</b> has been threatened, harassed, assaulted, injured, or suffered property damage because I am a sex offender.	<b>19%</b>



# Results

- As the length of time on probation (and exposure to notification procedures) increased, so did the incidence of:
  - physical assault  
( $r = .19$ ;  $p < .05$ )
  - property damage  
( $r = .17$ ;  $p < .05$ )
  - consequences to household members  
( $r = .20$ ;  $p < .01$ ).



**Police crime scene tape is stretched across the driveway at the home of slain sex offender William Elliott, 24, in Corinth, Maine, Monday, April 17, 2006. Elliot and another sex offender, Joseph L. Gray, 57, of Milo, Maine, were shot to death in separate incidents on Sunday. (AP Photo/R. F. Bukaty)**



# Results

Social / Psychological Impact	Agree or Strongly Agree
Megan's law interferes with my recovery by causing more stress in my life.	71%
I feel alone and isolated because of Megan's law.	64%
I have lost friends or a close relationship because of Megan's law.	52%
I am afraid for my safety because of Megan's law.	46%
Shame and embarrassment due to Megan's law keep me from engaging in activities.	67%
I have less hope for the future now that I will be a registered sex offender for life.	72%
Sometimes Megan's law makes me feel hopeless – <i>“no one believes I can change so why even try?”</i>	49%



# Positive Consequences

Positive Impact	Agree or Strongly Agree
I am more willing to manage my risk factors because I know my neighbors are watching me.	36%
I am more motivated to prevent reoffense so that I can prove to others that I am not a bad person.	66%
I think that registration and notification help me to prevent offending.	22%
Because my neighbors know that I am a sex offender, I have less access to potential victims because people keep their children (or other potential victims) away from me.	22%
Megan's Law has helped me to be more honest with people.	26%
I find that most people who know that I am a sex offender are supportive of my recovery.	52%
I agree that communities are safer when they know where sex offenders live.	32%



# Indiana & Connecticut (N = 239)

	N	yes
I've lost a job because boss or co-workers have found out.	237	21%
I've had to move out of an apartment or house that I rented because landlord found out.	239	10%
I've had to move out of an apartment or house that I rented because a neighbor found out.	239	8%
I've had to move out of a home that I own because a neighbor found out.	236	3%
I've been threatened or harassed by neighbors.	239	21%
I've been physically assaulted or injured.	238	10%
My property has been damaged.	239	18%
A person who lives with me has been threatened, harassed, assaulted, injured or suffered property damage.	239	16%

# Indiana & Connecticut (N = 239)

	N	agree or Strongly agree
Megan's law makes my recovery more difficult by causing stress in my life.	239	62%
I feel alone and isolated because of Megan's law.	239	54%
I have lost friends or close relationships because of Megan's law.	236	50%
I am afraid for my safety because of Megan's law.	235	46%
Shame and embarrassment due to Megan's law keep me from engaging in activities.	236	58%
I have less hope for the future now that I will be a registered sex offender.	238	55%
Sometimes Megan's law makes me feel hopeless - "no one believes I can change, so why even try?"	239	44%



# Narrative Responses: Common Themes

- Many offenders pointed out that their victims were family members or acquaintances and that the threat of strangers is exaggerated by the media.
- They suggested the need for education to help families become more aware of the dangers posed by people they know and trust.
- The majority of responses focused on the need for a risk-level system of classification with differential notification for higher risk offenders.
- Another common theme was the unfairness of lifetime registration and notification.
- Respondents felt that notification should be altered after successful completion of treatment or probation, or that a mechanism to petition the court for removal from the registry should be provided after some extended period of law-abiding behavior.





# Registry reliability

- More than half the sample reported that the information on Florida's Internet registry was incorrect.
- Poor tracking of sex offenders has received national attention and reduces the credibility and effectiveness of notification.



# Registry reliability

- In 2003, the Boston Herald reported that the whereabouts of 49% of registered sex offenders in Massachusetts were unknown (Mullvihill, Wisniewski, Meyers, & Wells, 2003).
- An investigation of the accuracy of Kentucky's internet registry revealed that as many as 25% of the registered addresses might be incorrect (Tewksbury, 2002).



# Indiana & CT

**The information listed about me on the internet registry is correct.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	15	6.3	6.4	6.4
	disagree	9	3.8	3.8	10.2
	I don't know	89	37.1	37.9	48.1
	agree	98	40.8	41.7	89.8
	strongly agree	24	10.0	10.2	100.0
	Total	235	97.9	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.1		
Total		240	100.0		

**The information listed about me on the registry helps the public know how to protect themselves from me.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	47	19.6	19.9	19.9
	disagree	59	24.6	25.0	44.9
	I don't know	72	30.0	30.5	75.4
	agree	50	20.8	21.2	96.6
	strongly agree	8	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	236	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.7		
Total		240	100.0		



# Conclusions

- Little evidence to support that community notification prevents sexual abuse, reduces recidivism, or protects children.
- The unintended consequences of sexual abuse might disrupt the stability of sex offenders in ways that may be counterproductive.



# Residence Restrictions






# Residence restrictions nationally

- **As of 2004, 14 states had residence restrictions**
- **Since 2005, hundreds of cities have passed ordinances**
- **Two major cases have been heard in Iowa courts**
- **Seering v. Iowa, a district court declared Iowa's restrictions unconstitutional in 2003, resulting in an injunction preventing the enforcement of Iowa's 2,000 foot buffer zone.**
- **In July of 2005, the Iowa Supreme Court overturned the lower court's ruling, opining that the infringement on sex offenders' freedom of residency was superseded by the state's compelling interest in protecting its citizens.**
- **In a separate but related Iowa case, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals also upheld the constitutionality of the law in a class action suit against the state by sex offenders ("Doe v. Miller and White," 2004).**
- **The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to hear the case.**





# Forces pushing increased residence restrictions

- Common belief that this effort will make the community safer.
- Common feeling that punitive efforts towards all sex offenders are justified after hearing highly publicized single cases of child abduction, abuse and death.





# Does proximity to schools increase recidivism?

- Colorado found that molesters who reoffended while under supervision were randomly scattered throughout the study area, and did not seem to live closer than non-recidivists to schools or child care centers (Colorado department of public safety, 2004).
  - “It’s not where they live, it’s how they live.”  
-Kim English
- In Minnesota, sex offenders’ proximity to schools or parks was not a factor in recidivism, nor did it impact community safety (Minnesota DOC, 2003; n = 329).



# So do they work?

- There is no evidence that residence restrictions reduce recidivism, increase public safety, prevent sexual abuse, or protect children.



# Unanticipated Consequences

- **Push offenders out of metropolitan areas and into rural communities with few resources.**
- **Isolate offenders and limit access to employment opportunities, social support, social services, and mental health treatment.**
- **Prevent living with supportive family members.**
- **Require the re-location of family members.**
- **Overlapping restriction zones make it essentially impossible for sex offenders in some cities to find housing.**
- **Restrictions can lead to homelessness and transience, which interfere with effective tracking , monitoring, and close probationary supervision.**
- **May increase risk by aggravating the stressors (ex. Isolation, disempowerment , shame, depression, substance abuse,lack of social supports) that can trigger some sex offenders to relapse.**



# So what?

- Decades of criminological research have identified social support and stable employment as important factors in successful community re-entry and decreased recidivism.
- Policies that disrupt stability are likely to interfere with offender reintegration and increase risk for reoffense.

Levenson, J.S. & Cotter, L.P. (2005). The impact of sex offender residence restrictions: 1,000 feet from danger or one step from absurd? *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 49(2), 168-168.

Available at [www.floridaatsa.com](http://www.floridaatsa.com)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Yes (n = 135)</b>
<b>I have had to move out of a home that I owned due to the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>I have had to move out of an apartment that I rented due to the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>When released from prison, I was unable to return to my home.</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>I have been unable to live with supportive family members due to the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>I find it difficult to find affordable housing due to the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>I have suffered financially because of the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>I have suffered emotionally because of the 1,000 foot rule.</b>	<b>60%</b>



**Many offenders emphasized their need for social support and believed their risk increased with isolation from supportive family and friends.**

- **“I believe you have a better chance of recovery by living with supportive family members.”**
- **“What helps me is having support people around... isolating me is not helpful.”**
- **One reported concern at having to live alone because of the location of his family’s home, and several young adults said they were unable to live with parents and younger siblings after committing what they referred to as a “statutory” offense.**
- **Some respondents indicated that they had had to relocate several times, and one said he was forced to move to a “ghetto.”**



**The majority of respondents emphatically proclaimed that the 1,000-foot rule would have no effect on their risk of reoffense.**


- Many pointed out the need for internal motivation to prevent reoffense and said that if a sex abuser wanted to reoffend, the rule would not stop him.
  - “Has no effect at all on offending,”
  - “Does not make an impact on my life,”
  - “I follow the rule but it has had little impact,”
  - “It’s a childish rule,”
  - “You can walk as far as you want if that [child abuse] is what you’re after,”
  - “Living 1,000 feet away compared to 900 feet doesn’t prevent anything,”
  - “It doesn’t matter where a sex offender lives if he sets his mind on reoffending... he can just get closer by walking or driving. The 1,000-rule is just a longer leash, I don’t see the point.”



Some participants pointed out the Myth of “*Stranger Danger*”:

- “It doesn’t matter where you live; Most offenses happen with someone you know or live with.”
- “Most abuse happens in homes or with family or close friends, not at bus stops or schools.”





# Indiana (n=148)

---

---

Item	Valid	% answering yes
Had to move out of a house that I owned.	139	7
Had to move out of a residence that I rented.	139	11
When released from prison, was unable to return to home or apartment.	137	26
Unable to live with supportive family members.	137	37
Landlord refused to rent to me because I am a sex offender.	135	22
Landlord refused to renew my lease.	134	8
Have found it difficult to find an affordable place to live.	136	38
Was grandfathered in and did not have to move from a previously established residence.	132	3 (16% I don't know)

---



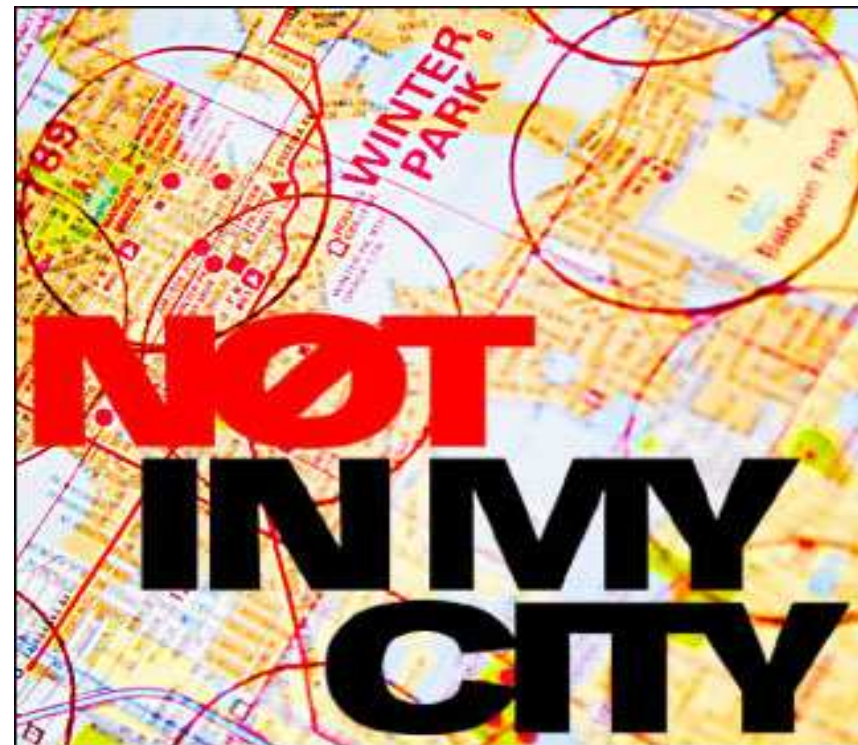
# Indiana

---

Item	Valid	% agree or strongly agree
Housing restrictions have led to financial hardship.	136	40
Housing restrictions make me feel hopeless, angry and/or depressed.	136	45
Because of housing restrictions, I live farther away from employment opportunities.	136	37
Because of housing restrictions, I live farther away from social services and/or mental health treatment.	136	25
Because of housing restrictions, I live farther away from supportive family or friends.	137	45
I worry that if I have to move, I will be unable to find a place to live.	137	64
I am more able to manage my risk factors because I cannot live near a school, park or playground.	135	26
Residence restrictions are successful in limiting my access to children.	134	26
Residence restrictions help me to prevent offending.	135	19
If I really wanted to reoffend, I would be able to do so despite my residence restrictions.	133	74

# New Trend: 2,500 Feet

- Virtually every independent city in Miami-Dade and Broward have passed ordinances.
- It is essentially impossible for sex offenders to find housing in metro-Miami and Ft. Lauderdale.





# Orange County, FL

## GIS mapping

- The most dominant zoning category in Orange County is low-density residential with 137,944 occupied properties, or 51.2% of all 269,428 occupied residential and combined use properties.
- 22.5% of these 137,944 potentially available properties in this zoning category fall within a 1,000 feet buffer around schools and 63.7% fall within a 2,500 buffer, reducing the number of available properties to 106,888 and 50,108, respectively.
- When considering all 5 restrictions combined, the number drops to 4,233 properties for the 1,000-foot buffer zones and to 37 properties for the 2,500-foot buffer zones.
- In addition, these numbers represent all existing properties and only a very small portion of these are likely to be available for rent or purchase at any particular point in time.
  - 5 restrictions: schools, parks, daycare centers, bus stops, theme attractions



- When considering the residency restriction categories individually, bus stops are the most restrictive (93.0% of potential properties fall within 1,000 of a bus stop and 99.6% within 2,500),
- followed by daycares (24.2% and 55.4%),
- schools (19.7% and 55.8%),
- parks (15.9% and 38.2%)
- and attractions (0.2% and 1.0%).
- These results clearly highlight the dominance of bus stops as a restrictive factor, and that daycares and schools result in roughly similar restrictions on the residency choices.



# Public statements AGAINST residence restrictions

- Iowa County Attorney's Association
- NAESV
- [www.naesv.org](http://www.naesv.org)
- [www.nacdl.org](http://www.nacdl.org)



# Recommendations for evidence-based policy

- Social policies designed to prevent sexual violence will be most effective when they are informed by scientific data about sex offense patterns, recidivism, risk, assessment, therapeutic interventions, and community management strategies.
- One-size-fits-all policies are not cost-efficient, nor are they likely to afford utmost protection to the public.
- Grove and Meehl (1996) warned that failing to apply research evidence to decision-making may have grave consequences for individuals and communities.
- They advocated for the use of empirical methods to inform the development of social policy and intervention services, and argued that to do otherwise is not only inefficient, but unethical (Grove & Meehl, 1996).

# The legislative process








**1. Risk assessment should be used to classify offenders into categories, with increased restrictions and more aggressive monitoring implemented for high risk offenders.**

- Research has identified risk factors correlated with increased risk, and instruments have been developed to assess risk.
- Broad policies dilute the public's ability to identify truly dangerous offenders.
- Broad policies are an inefficient use of resources.



2. Treatment programs should be a mandatory component or legislation designed to combat sexual violence.

- Treated sex offenders reoffend nearly 40% less often than those who do not receive treatment.
  
- Collaborative approaches to treatment, monitoring, and supervision (“containment models”) have been proven effective and cost-efficient in other states (CO).




3. Public education should focus on sexual abuse prevention and the steps that parents can take to enhance child safety.

- The myth of stranger danger leads to a false sense of security for parents.
- The vast majority of child sexual abuse is committed by friends and relatives, not by strangers lurking in playgrounds.
- Sexual violence prevention should include education about grooming patterns of offenders who use their position of trust and authority.



#### **4. The definition of a “*Sexual Predator*” should more clearly distinguish such offenders as discussed below.**

- The Kansas sexually violent predator act, for example, defines “predatory acts” are those “directed towards strangers or individuals with whom relationships have been established or promoted for the primary purpose of victimization”.
- In some states, the definition includes criteria involving the use of violence, weapons, or causing injury during the commission of a sex crime, or those offenders who have had multiple victims.
- Repeat offenders, and those who have committed abduction of children or adults for sexual purposes should be considered should be considered predators.
- Such definitions are more consistent with the term “sexually violent predator” as defined in civil commitment proceedings, which require a convicted sex offender to have a mental abnormality (DSM diagnosis) predisposing him to a likelihood of future sexually violent crimes.



## Evidence based social policy can lead to safer communities.

- Communities should be protected from repeat and violent sex offenders.
- Tougher sentencing laws will help keep dangerous offenders away.
- When offenders are released into the community, we should provide an infrastructure that facilitates successful re-entry rather than contributing to obstacles known to increase recidivism.
- Decades of criminological research tell us that stability, support, and employment are predictors of successful re-entry.