

Measuring and Assessing RECIDIVISM

RECIDIVISM refers to new criminal activity by an individual who has previously committed a criminal act. In deciding how to operationalize recidivism in your reentry program evaluation, there are many things to consider:

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Law enforcement, court, and corrections administrative records are often convenient sources of information on recidivism and reflect official data on incidents the criminal justice system responds to.

VS

SELF REPORTS

Self-reported data on recidivism collected via surveys can be more detailed and accurate because they reflect incidents that may not have come to the attention of the system.

BINARY MEASURES

Binary measures of recidivism capture whether an individual recidivates (yes/no).

Binary measures are useful for analyzing the probability that recidivism occurs within a well-defined follow-up period (e.g., 6 months).

VS

INCIDENCE

Incidence measures capture the number of recidivism events that occur within a specific time period.

Incidence measures are useful when the outcome of interest is less severe and may occur more than once (e.g., arrest, technical violation).

VS

RISK

Risk measures capture the average time until recidivism during a period of time when recidivism is possible.

Risk measures are useful when dates are available and when it makes sense to examine time until first arrest.

TYPE OF RECIDIVISM

In assessing recidivism, your program may also want to differentiate between different types of recidivism. For example, some programs might choose to study recidivism by offense type (e.g., new property crime arrest) or the severity of the re-offense (e.g., new felony conviction).

BEING MINDFUL OF RACIAL BIAS

When deciding how to measure recidivism, your program should carefully consider the potential for racial bias to impact these measurements, particularly for those based on administrative records. Implicit bias is present in the discretionary decisions of criminal justice stakeholders and is compounded at later stages of the criminal justice process. Be aware of the limitations with various recidivism outcomes, and consider measuring self-reported criminal behavior as well as broader measures of reentry success.

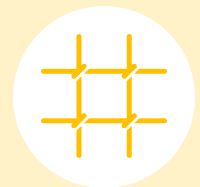
COMMON MEASURES OF RECIDIVISM



REARREST



RECONVICTION



RECONFINEMENT



SELF-REPORTED
CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

The considerations presented here are intended to guide decisions about reentry program evaluation activities. Second Chance Act grantees should be sure to follow BJA performance measures requirements for reporting recidivism for program participants.

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