

Reducing Recidivism

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Overview

This presentation is a literature review of studies which have shown significant evidence in reducing recidivism rates.

We will explore why recidivism is a pressing issue in the United States.

Then, what techniques are effective in reducing recidivism.

Followed by, what these studies mean for the current and future criminal justice system.



Recidivism: Why is it an Issue?

Recidivism as defined in this presentation refers to the returning of a previously incarcerated individual to the criminal justice system through rearrest or reconviction.

A study performed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics Statisticians Antenangeli and Durose (2021) found that in a ten-year study 82% of prisoners were rearrested.

The cost of recidivism is estimated upwards of \$100,00 per year per inmate.



History of Recidivism

- ▶ In 1960 the United States declared a “war on crime”.
- ▶ A study by Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks (1975) concluded “nothing works” in rehabilitating offenders.
- ▶ This study cast a dark shadow on rehabilitation efforts and research.
- ▶ There are rehabilitation techniques which work in reducing recidivism and this presentation will explore those.



What Works?

Educational
programming

Vocational
training

Therapy



Educational Programming

Educational programming has shown promising results in many studies to help lower recidivism by helping to prepare inmates for the outside world.

A study by Kelso, Jr (2000), showed that inmates who received college degrees while incarcerated recidivated at a rate of 10.8% after five years post release (Hall, 2015).

In South Carolina, a study showed a reduction in recidivism rate from 33% to just 4% with the attainment of a college degree (Magee, 2021).



Why Educational Programming

Educational programming has been shown to be effective through multiple studies largely because it allows for offenders to gain legitimate employment when released from prison.



Gaining employment is crucial to newly released offenders because it provides them with a source of income which outweighs the risk reward of committing crimes again.



Limitations of Educational Programming

Studies on educational programming although promising do still contain limitations which are important to be aware of.

The most apparent one is Self-selection bias. Educational programming is optional and those who choose to pursue it are often ready to make a positive change in their lives. This means they may have already been at a lower risk of recidivism regardless of whether they completed the program.



Vocational Training

- ▶ Vocational training has shown promising results in reducing recidivism. Vocational training includes learning applicable trade skills that can transfer to the outside world. These programs often include a certificate that the inmate has learned a trade. Allowing for inmates to earn these certificates helps them attain a job after being released with proof that they have previous knowledge of a trade.



Studies on Vocational Training

The Huttonsville Correctional center in West Virginia provided results from inmates in programs from 1990-2000. They collected data on inmates who completed vocational courses versus those who did not.

The recidivism rate of offenders who did not complete a vocational program was 26%.

The recidivism rate of offenders who completed a vocational program was 8.75%.

This is a significant reduction which demonstrates that providing vocational training can significantly reduce recidivism.

(Gordon, Howard, Weldon, Bracie, 2003)



Studies on Vocational Training Cont.

In Alameda County California a public health program was designed to teach previously incarcerated black women skills to become trained doulas. This program contained 16 women half were previously incarcerated and half were low-income women.

None of the previously incarcerated women recidivated after completing this program.

(Stanley, Sata, Oparah, McLemore, 2015)

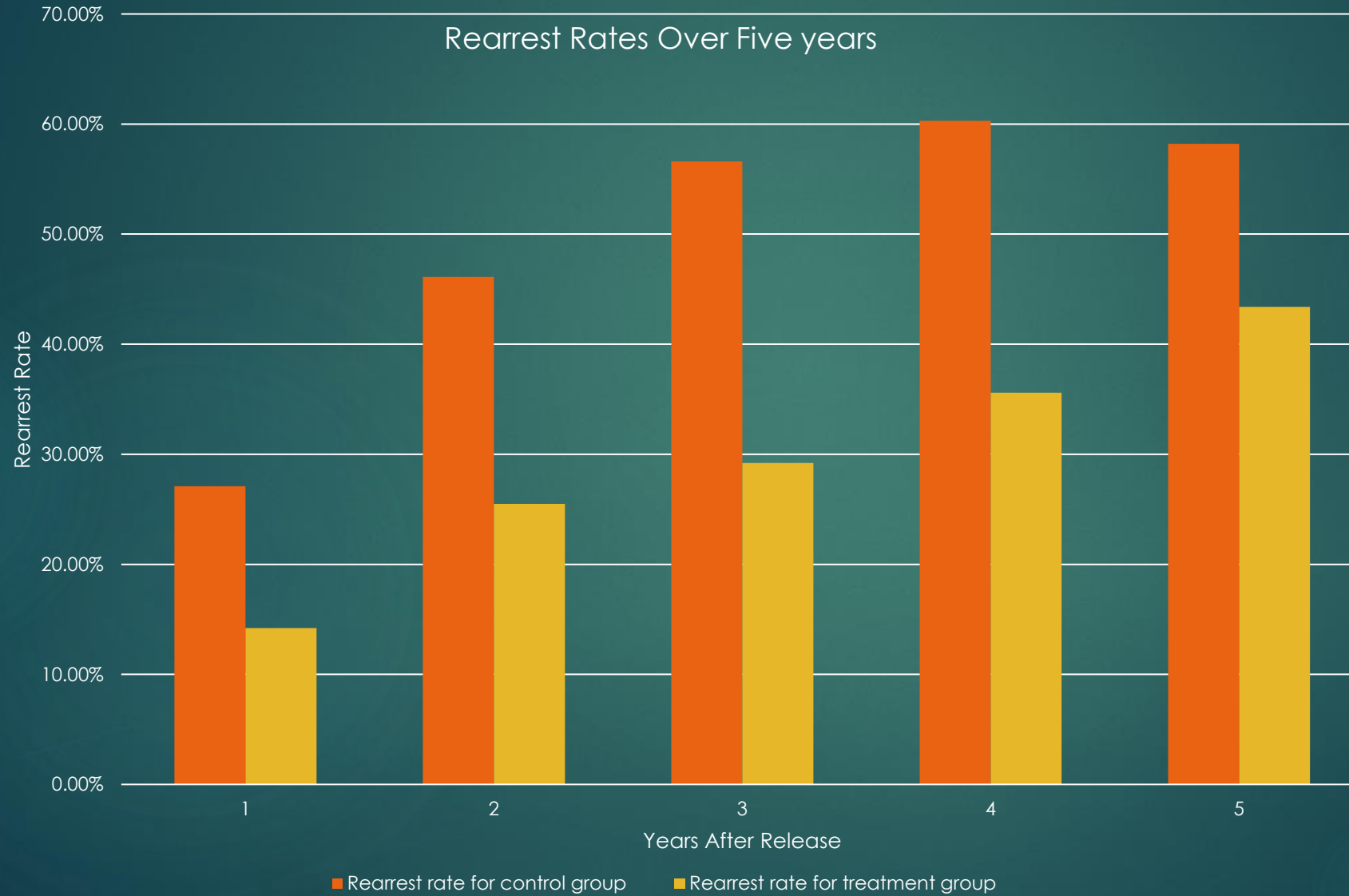


Therapeutic Approaches

A prison in Israel used different therapeutic approaches to reduce the recidivism rate of domestic violence offenders. These approaches included: psycho-educational, psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, and group therapy.

This study used a treatment group (n=277) to be compared to a control group (n=277). A chi-square test was performed which produced the results that individuals who completed therapy were 61% less likely to recidivate after one year. (Hasisi, Shoham, Efrat, 2016)





Therapeutic Approaches in Drug Treatment

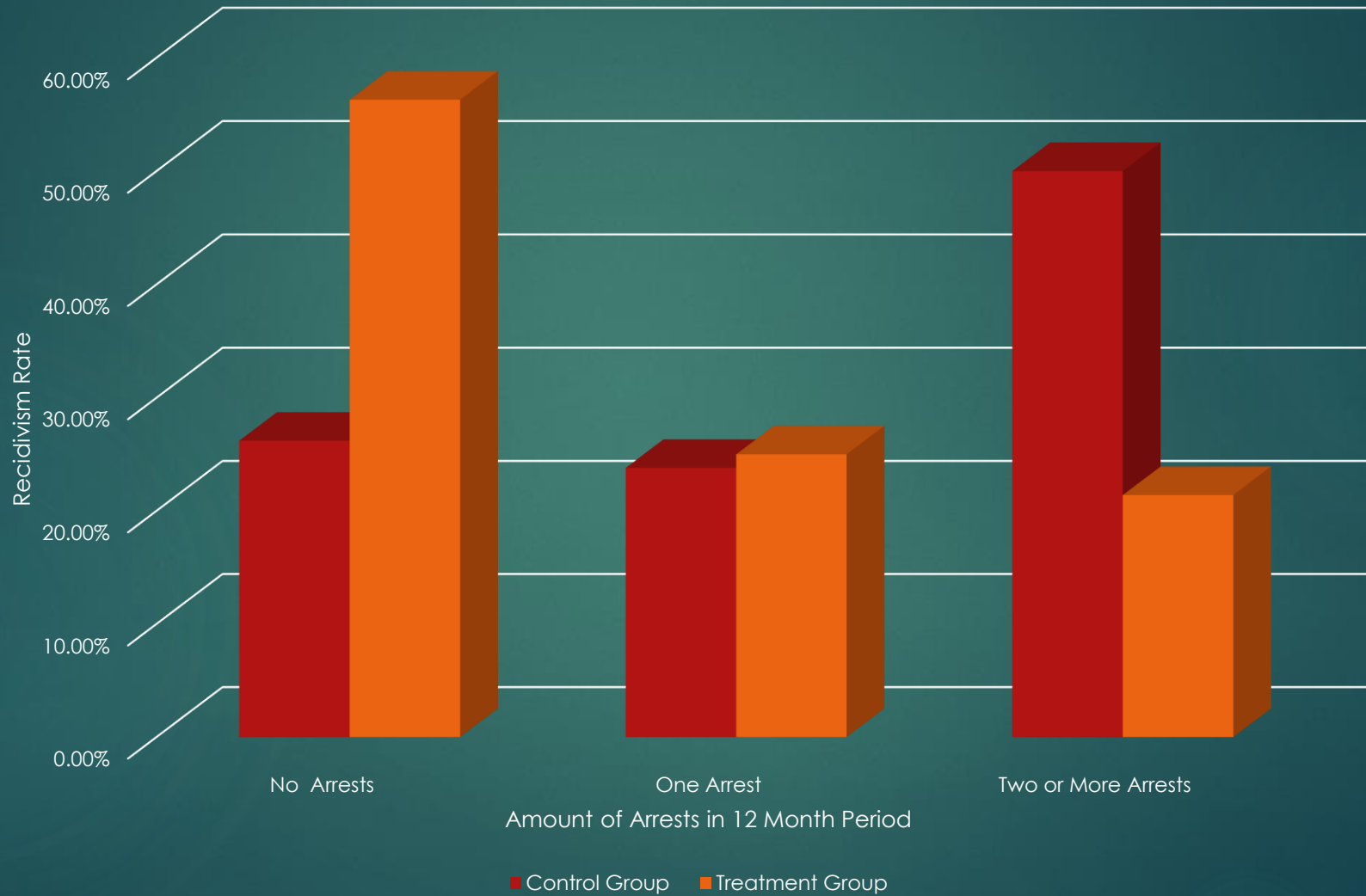
Many drug treatment programs incorporate therapy as a large portion of the programming.

A longitudinal study of a drug and alcohol treatment program in Monroe County, New York required participants to commit to 60-90 days of treatment with therapy a minimum of four times a week.

After one year of release only 43.7% of the participants were rearrested while 73.8% of the control group were rearrested. (Turley, Thornton, Johnson, Azzolino, 2004)



Recidivism Rate Over 12 Months by Amount of Arrests



What This Means For Corrections

- ▶ There is significant empirical data to support that there is hope to reduce the recidivism rate in the United States. This presentation highlighted some of the many ways prisons can approach recidivism. Prisons should provide voluntary educational and vocational programs along with provide opportunities for inmates to seek therapy.
- ▶ The implementation of these programs will require cooperation from outside sources such as local universities to provide education. The investment in these programs will pay out in reduced recidivism rates saving the taxpayer money along with freeing up prison beds.



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