

Recidivism among Homicide Offenders

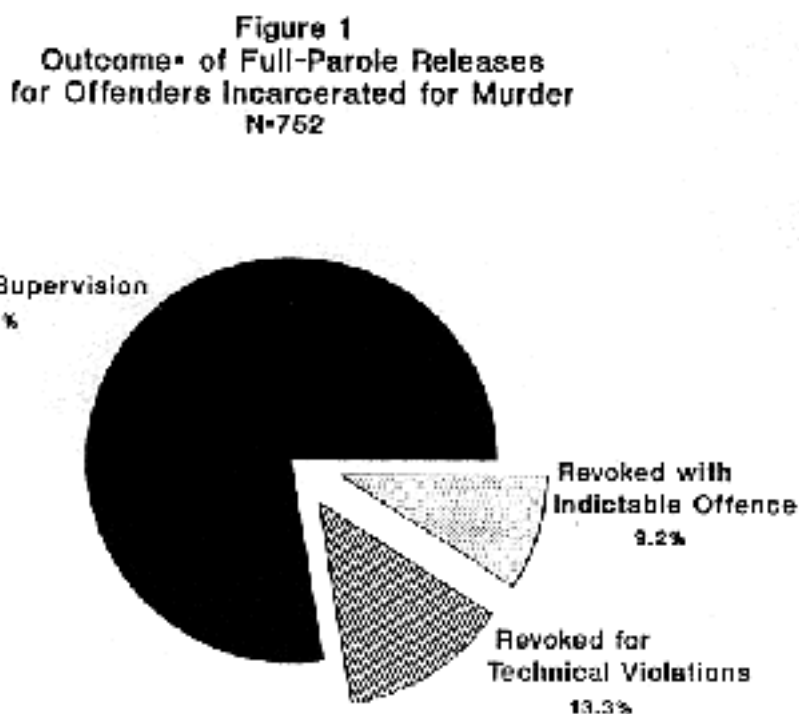
How well do murder and manslaughter offenders perform when they are finally released from federal prisons? This article presents statistics that may shed some light on the question.

Offenders Originally Incarcerated for Murder

A recent study followed murder offenders released on full parole between 1975 and 1990 to determine whether their time spent in the community on parole was successful or not. The length of the follow-up period varied - from up to 15 years for those released in 1975, to only a few months for those released in 1990.

Between 1 January 1975 and 31 March 1990, 658 murder offenders were released on full parole. Some of these offenders were released more than once for a total of 752 full-parole releases. As illustrated in Figure 1, more than three quarters of released murder offenders (77.5%) were not reincarcerated while on parole. Of those who were reincarcerated, 13.3% had their release revoked for a technical violation of their parole conditions and 9.2% for an indictable offence.

Figure 1



As of 31 July 1990

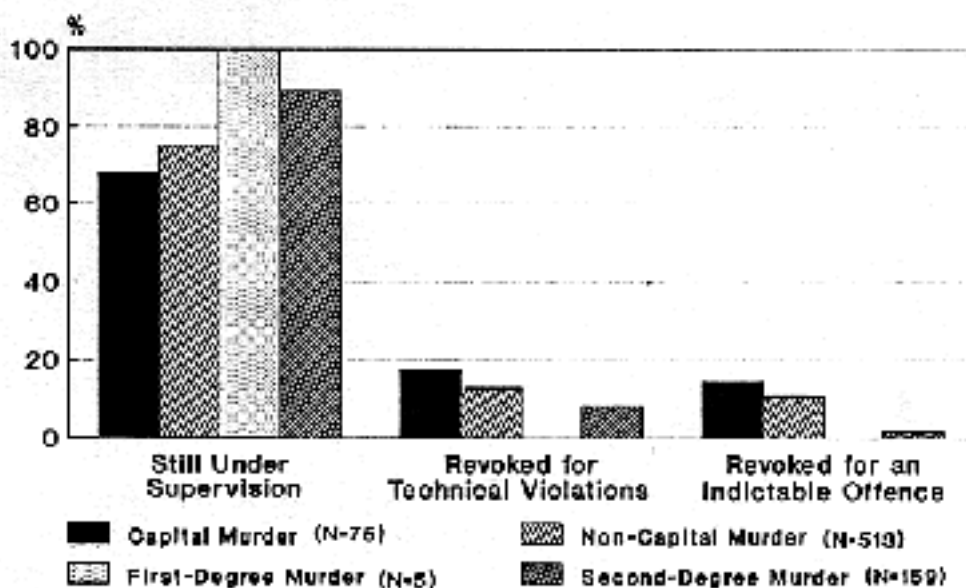
Of the 69 indictable offences committed by the released murder offenders, 30.4% ⁽²¹⁾ were offences against the person, 18.8% ⁽¹³⁾ were narcotics offences, 17.5% ⁽¹²⁾ were property offences, 8.7% ⁽⁶⁾ were robbery and 24.6% ⁽¹⁷⁾ were other *Criminal Code* offences.

Five released murder offenders (of a total of 658) were convicted of having committed a second murder while they were on full parole. Three of these were convicted of first-degree murder and two of second-degree murder. All five offenders had originally been convicted of non-capital murder. Besides these, no released murderer has been convicted of attempted murder or any other offence causing death.

Recidivism among murder offenders can be considered another way - murder offender groups can be divided into specific categories. In Figure 2, the outcome of the full-parole releases, as of 31 July 1990, is compared among those who were convicted of capital murder, non-capital murder, first-degree murder and second-degree murder.

Figure 2

**Figure 2
Outcome of Full-Parole Releases
by Original Offence**



• As of 31 July 1990

About one in 10 offenders convicted of second-degree murder, none convicted of first-degree murder, about one in three convicted of capital murder and one in four convicted of non-capital murder had their full parole revoked. Furthermore, 0.6% of second-degree murderers, no first-degree murderers, 2.7% of capital murderers and 3.5% of non-capital murderers committed an offence against another person while on full parole. Comparisons should not be made between these groups based on these data, since the size of some groups (e.g., first-degree murderers) is very small and the follow-up period was very brief.

Offenders Originally Convicted of Manslaughter

Between 1 January 1975 and 31 March 1990, 2,242 offenders originally convicted of manslaughter were released, either on full parole or mandatory supervision. Some of these offenders were released more than once, for a total of 3,172 releases. Of these, 222 (7%) were releases at warrant expiry (i.e., at the end

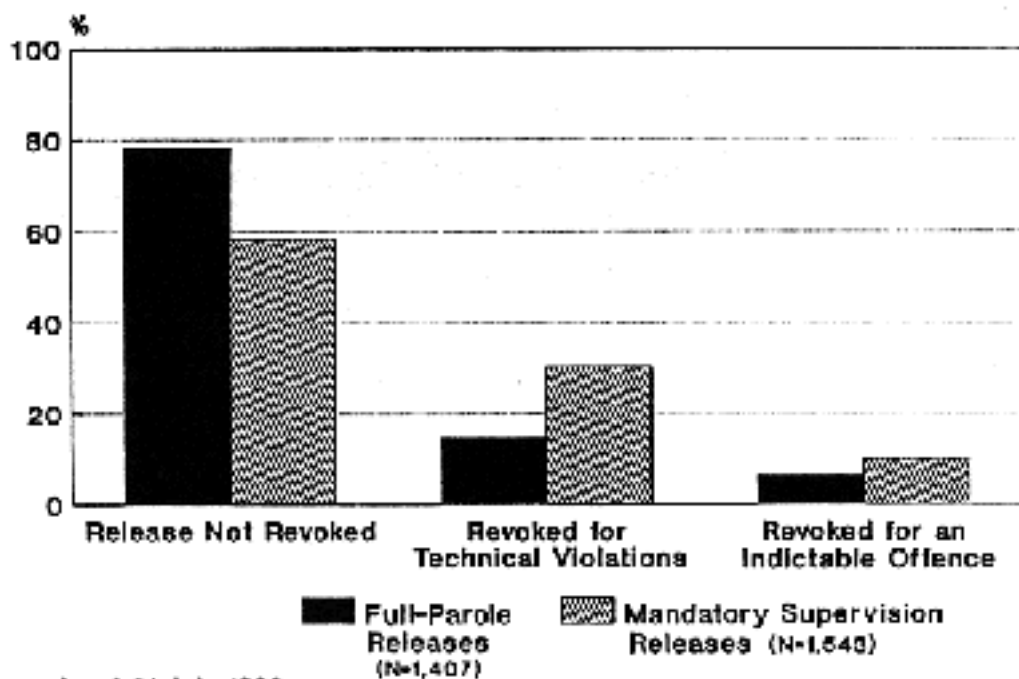
of their sentence) and, therefore, were not releases to community supervision.

Of the 93% of manslaughter offenders who were released to community supervision, 47.7% (1,407) were released on full parole and 52.3% (1,543) on mandatory supervision. These offenders were followed until 31 July 1990 to determine whether any had been reincarcerated while on release.

Of the full-parole releases, less than one quarter (21.7%) were revoked: 14.6% for a technical violation of the conditions of parole, 6.5% for an indictable offence and 0.5% for a summary offence. About twice the proportion (41.5%) of those released on mandatory supervision were revoked: 30.6% for a technical violation of the conditions of parole, 10% for an indictable offence and 0.9% for a summary offence (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

**Figure 3
Outcome* of Releases
for Manslaughter Offenders**



* As of 31 July 1990

Of the 92 (6.5%) full-parole releases of manslaughter offenders that were revoked for an indictable offence, 2.1% were revoked for offences against the person, 0.6% for robbery, 1.7% for property offences, 0.4% for narcotics offences and 1.7% for other Criminal Code offences.

Of the releases to mandatory supervision, 10% (154) were revoked for indictable offences: 3.2% were revoked for an offence against the person, 1.2% for robbery, 3.4% for property offences, 0.1% for narcotics offences and 2% for other Criminal Code offences.

Some manslaughter offenders released on full parole or mandatory supervision committed other homicide offences while on release. One person released on full parole committed second-degree

murder, and four others committed manslaughter. Two manslaughter offenders released on mandatory supervision committed first-degree murder, two committed second-degree murder, two committed manslaughter and two committed attempted murder.

These statistics suggest that manslaughter offenders released on full parole are less likely to have their release revoked or to commit further offences while on release than those released on mandatory supervision.

The Research and Statistics Branch collected these data, which were then analyzed and prepared by Greg Erwin, a Statistical Liaison Officer with the National Parole Board.