

Evaluation of the Impact of Participation in Ohio Penal Industries on Recidivism



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November 1995

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was designed to evaluate the impact on post-release recidivism of participating in an Ohio Penal Industries (OPI) job. The offenders used to examine this issue were the 744 inmates who were released from the Ohio prison system in Fiscal Year 1992 who had a meaningful experience in an OPI job while incarcerated. Highlights of the report are:

- Overall, meaningful participation in an OPI job appeared to produce reductions in recidivism approaching twenty percent. The recidivism rate for those offenders that had a meaningful OPI experience was 24.6%. The comparison group for these offenders had a return rate of 29.9%. Meaningful participation in an OPI job appeared to produce a 5.3 percentage point decrease in recidivism. The difference translates into a reduction in recidivism of 17.7%.
- The recidivism rate of offenders who had high skill OPI jobs showed a reduction in recidivism of one-half. The positive impact of having had a high skill OPI jobs remained substantial regardless of the offender's demographic characteristics or the characteristics of the offender's conviction offense.
- The OPI experience substantially reduced the large disparity in recidivism between Blacks and Whites.
- OPI participation seemed to have the most positive impact on males, Blacks, offenders aged 26 to 40 at release, those committed for crimes against persons, drug offenders, and generally the more serious offender (as measured by time served and whether the crime was violent).

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This study was designed to evaluate the impact on post-release recidivism of participating in an Ohio Penal Industries (OPI) job. The offenders that were used to examine the relationship between OPI participation and recidivism were the Fiscal Year (FY) 1992 release cohort. The analysis begins with a discussion of methodology, followed by a short description of the release cohort and the overall recidivism rates. Next, the major findings of the study are presented in an examination of the impact of OPI participation on recidivism. To help explore the relationship between OPI participation and recidivism, four types of variables were utilized: offender demographics, characteristics of the offender's conviction offense, the offender's criminal history, as well as an examination of the timing of the offender's participation in relation to release and the length of time the offender was involved in OPI.

METHODOLOGY

DATA SOURCES

Three sources of data were used to produce this report.

Inmate Progression System (IPS) - A download of the IPS data set was the foundation upon which this analysis was built. It, was used first of all, to determine who was released in FY 1992 and the method of that release (shock parole, parole, shock probation or expiration of sentence). The IPS data set also provided the information on offender demographics, characteristics of the conviction offense and recidivism.

Training, Industry and Education (TIE) - A download of the TIE data base provided offender information on OPI participation (job type, length of participation and date of last participation) and a grade level from a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) taken during the intake process.

Inmate Master Pockets - If information was missing from the TIE data base, the inmate's master pocket was used as a supplement.

OPI PARTICIPATION

OPI participation was defined as having an official work assignment in an OPI job which lasted for ninety days or more. If an offender had multiple OPI work assignments during his or her incarceration, the last assignment was judged to be most relevant to this study. This study focuses on the 744 releases who had meaningful OPI jobs while incarcerated.

JOB SKILL LEVELS

For analysis purposes the OPI jobs were classified into five categories: high skill, medium skill, low skill, entry level and clerks. Those with high skill level OPI jobs were considered to have OPI jobs that required the most advanced skills, followed by those with medium skill, low skill and entry level jobs. The operationalization of OPI jobs into categories was determined by OPI administrators (a list of jobs by category can be found in the appendix). Clerks were originally placed in the high skill level category. After the preliminary analysis began, it became apparent that the clerk return rates were clearly different (much higher) from the other offenders in the high skill level category. After discussing the issue with OPI administrators, it was decided that clerks would become a unique job skill category.

RECIDIVISM

For the purpose of this study, recidivism was defined as a recommitment to the Ohio prison system within two years of release. The reason for return to state prison was either a technical violation of the conditions of parole or probation or recommitment to the Ohio prison system for a new criminal conviction. It should also be mentioned that information with respect to arrests or convictions that did not result in imprisonment in the state system was not available. Knowledge of imprisonments in other states or the federal system was also not available.

COMPARISON GROUPS

Throughout the study are references to comparison groups. Comparison groups are composed of individuals who are similar to the "treatment group" members in important respects but who are selected in a non-random way and have not been exposed to the treatment, in this case, participation in OPI.

A comparison group was constructed for the OPI participants in this study. It was constructed with the use of one variable, a tested reading score at admission (TABE). There is only one constraint for inmates who apply for an OPI job: they have to have a TABE score of 6.0 or higher. For this reason, the comparison group consists of all offenders that had a TABE score of 6.0 or higher at admission that did not have any OPI experience. (The comparison group also does not include those offenders that did participate in OPI but for less than ninety days.) There were 7,839 offenders in the FY 1992 release cohort that met the criteria for the comparison group.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study examined every offender who was released in FY 1992 . It is therefore a study which examined a population (the statistical definition) not a sample. Because this study examined a population, there is not a need to report statistical significance. Statistical significance only applies to studies that are based on samples. This study is based upon a population and therefore the results are true and unbiased. Reported differences (or lack of differences), then, should be interpreted no other way than as real.

The major findings of this study are reported in multivariate format. That is, the tables in the study explore the relationship among two or more variables. The major tables in the study report: (1) the percentage of recidivists in a particular category, (2) the number of offenders (both recidivist and non-recidivist) in a particular category, (3) some sort of characteristic of the population (e.g., felony level, gender) and (4) at times, an additional characteristic of the OPI population (either OPI job skill level or OPI job type). Comparisons are made between the recidivism rates of the OPI participants and the comparison group controlling for specific offender characteristics. There are several items that need to be discussed with this method of reporting results.

-In each cell is the percentage of offenders in that specific sub-group that recidivated.

-In each cell the number of offenders in the sub-group is the total of both recidivists and non-recidivists.

-Some of the tables have highlighted numbers. These cells were deemed noteworthy and were mentioned in the text.

-Differences in the recidivism rates were reported two ways: (1) as a simple percentage point difference (e.g., the return rate for a particular sub-group of offenders who had an OPI job in prison was 20.0% and their comparison group had a return rate of 25%. The difference is 20% subtracted from 25% which will be reported as a five percentage point difference [or reduction]; and (2) as a proportional difference (e.g., using the same example, one would take the five percentage point difference and divide it by the comparison group return rate, 25%, which is '.2,' which translates into and will be reported as either a twenty percent or one-fifth reduction in recidivism).

CAVEATS

Many times in the analysis there are sentences with the basic format of: "the OPI participants had a 'X' percent lower rate of return than those in their comparison group." The reader is cautioned not necessarily to infer causation from OPI participation to a reduction (or increase) in the likelihood of return to prison (even though at times the text may be written to imply that). Other factors that were not measured might have been the real cause for the change in recidivism (e.g., an education program, a work assignment, a stronger support system). That noted, the differences in recidivism the reader notices, are real and unbiased differences.

The reader should be aware of cells with few cases in them. Even though this study was based on a population and the results reported in cells with small numbers are true, it is not prudent to make generalizations from the results of a few offenders. The analysis in this report generally did not emphasize findings in cells where there were fewer than thirty cases (unless they were part of some larger trend).

RESULTS

FISCAL YEAR 1992 RELEASES AND RECIDIVISM

There were 18,068 inmates released from prison in FY 1992. Table 1 shows the distribution of how the inmates were released. Over half (54.2%) of the inmates were released when their sentences expired. Just over a quarter (25.7%) of the inmates were released on parole. Shock probation releases accounted for 16.7% of the exits and shock parolees made up 3.4% of the FY 1992 release cohort.

Table 1: Fiscal Year 1992 Releases by Release Type

RELEASE TYPE	# OF INMATES	PERCENTAGE
SHOCK PAROLE	623	3.4%
SHOCK PROBATION	3,009	16.7%
PAROLE	4,642	25.7%
EXPIRATION OF SENTENCE	9,794	54.2%
TOTAL	18,068	100.0%

A first look at recidivism for all those released in FY 1992 by release type is presented in Table 2. The overall recidivism rate for those released in FY 1992 who were followed up for two years was 30.2%. Parolees had the highest return rate (38.3%) followed by shock probationers, (28.7%), expiration of sentence offenders (27.3%) and shock parolees (22.8%).

Table 2: Recidivism Rates by Release Type

RELEASE TYPE	RECIDIVISM RATE
SHOCK PAROLE	22.8%
SHOCK PROBATION	28.7%
PAROLE	38.3%
EXPIRATION OF SENTENCE	27.3%
TOTAL	30.2%

OPI PARTICIPANTS IN THE FY 1992 RELEASE COHORT

Of the 18,068 inmates that were released in FY 1992, 1,095 (6.1%) had an OPI job assignment while they were incarcerated. As was mentioned in the methodology section, it was determined that the study was going to examine those with "meaningful" (90 days or more) OPI participation. Because of this constraint, the study focused on the 744 (4.1%) offenders that had meaningful OPI job assignments while they were incarcerated. Table 3 shows the distribution of these offenders by the "job skill level" they had attained in their last OPI assignment (relative skill levels, as mentioned above, were determined by OPI administrators). Over two-thirds of those offenders with meaningful OPI participation were in the entry (30.2%) or low (39.4%) skill level categories. About eight percent (8.1%) of those with OPI jobs were in the highest skill level category and 11.6% of the offenders had OPI jobs with skill levels in the middle. Clerks accounted for 6.4% of those with meaningful OPI participation and the skill level of 4.3% of the OPI participants could not be determined. (A list that describes what OPI jobs made up each of the skill level categories can be found in the Appendix.)

Table 3: FY 1992 Releases with Meaningful OPI Participation by Job Skill Level

JOB SKILL LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HIGH	60	8.1%
MEDIUM	86	11.6%
LOW	293	39.4%
ENTRY	225	30.2%
CLERKS	48	6.4%
UNKNOWN	32	4.3%
TOTAL	744	100.0%

OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

Table 4 presents the major findings of this report. The recidivism rate for those offenders who had a meaningful OPI experience was 24.6%. The comparison group for these offenders had a return rate of 29.9%. Overall, meaningful participation in an OPI program appeared to produce a 5.3 percentage point decrease in recidivism. The difference represents a reduction in recidivism that approaches twenty percent (17.7%).

Table 4: Recidivism Rates for those with OPI Job Assignments and the Comparison Group

RECIDIVISM	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(N)	RECIDIVIST	(N)
RECIDIVIST	24.6%	(183)	29.9%	(2,340)
NON-RECIDIVIST	75.4%	(561)	70.1%	(5,499)
TOTAL	100.0%	(744)	100.0%	(7,839)

The recidivism rate varied for the OPI participants by the skill level of their OPI jobs. Table 5 shows that those with the highest skill jobs had a return rate of 15.0%, nearly half that of the OPI participant comparison group which, as noted above, was 29.9%. Those that had jobs in the low level skill category had a return rate approximately one-fifth (a 6.4 percentage points decrease) lower than those in the comparison group. Those with OPI jobs at the entry level showed a slight (3.2 percentage point) reduction in recidivism. Those with medium skill level OPI jobs and the OPI clerks had rates higher than those in the comparison group. (The OPI participants whose actual job assignments proved, for one reason or another, impossible to discern, actually had the lowest rate of return [6.3%]. The explanation for this phenomenon is unknown.)

Table 5: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants by Job Skill Level

JOB SKILL LEVEL	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
HIGH	15.0%	(60)
MEDIUM	31.4%	(86)
LOW	23.5%	(293)
ENTRY	26.7%	(225)
CLERKS	33.3%	(48)
UNKNOWN	6.3%	(32)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)

Before the analysis continues, a note should be taken of a subset of OPI jobs that appeared to have a dramatic negative effect on the recidivism results. Table 5A shows the recidivism rates for three OPI jobs and one OPI job skill level category. This particular group of offenders make up almost half (47.7%) of the offenders that were deemed to have experienced a meaningful OPI job. They had a combined return

rate of 30.4%, a rate marginally higher than the comparison group. A re-analysis of the data without this subgroup of offenders proved insightful.

Table 5A: Return Rates for Three OPI Jobs and One Job Skill Level Category

OPI JOB	SKILL LEVEL	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
QA INSPECTOR	MEDIUM	38.9%	(36)
SEWING MACHINE OPERATOR	LOW	31.5%	(89)
MATERIAL HANDLER	ENTRY	27.5%	(182)
CLERK	CLERKS	33.3%	(48)
TOTAL		30.4%	(355)

Table 5B presents the results reported in Table 5, without the quality assurance inspectors, the sewing machine operators, the material handlers and the clerks. The overall return rate dropped to 19.3%, a rate 10.6 percentage points lower than those in the comparison group. The difference translates into a reduction in recidivism of over one-third.

Table 5B: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants by Job Skill Level Without Quality Assurance Inspectors, Sewing Machine Operators, Material Handlers or Clerks

JOB SKILL LEVEL	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
HIGH	15.0%	(60)
MEDIUM	26.0%	(50)
LOW	20.1%	(204)
ENTRY	23.3%	(43)
CLERKS	N.A.	NONE
UNKNOWN	6.3%	(32)
TOTAL	19.3%	(389)

The rationale for presenting this reinterpretation of the data was twofold: (1) to show the dramatic impact on the summary recidivism rates of specific OPI jobs and (2) in the following analysis it will become apparent that certain subgroups of offenders seemed to have high return rates because they tended to be assigned to one of the "high return rate" OPI jobs (i.e., it appeared that certain subgroups had high return rates because they tended to have a large proportion of members that were assigned to OPI jobs as quality assurance inspectors, sewing machine operators, material handlers or clerks).

DEMOGRAPHICS, OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

The impact of a meaningful OPI experience in the context of offender demographics is the next focus of this paper. Table 6 explores the likelihood of return to prison between those that had an OPI job and those who did not, controlling for gender. Having an OPI job appeared to have helped male offenders reduce their likelihood of return to prison more than their female counterparts. Females had a marginally lower rate of return (1.1 percentage points) than those in their comparison group while males exhibited a more substantial (5.4 percentage points) decline.

Table 6: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Gender

GENDER	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
MALE	24.6%	(715)	30.0%	(7,601)
FEMALE	24.1%	(29)	25.2%	(238)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,839)

Table 7 shows the relationship between OPI participation, recidivism and race. At first glance, one notices the large disparity in recidivism between Blacks and Whites in all categories. (While not reported below, the return rate for Whites in the FY 1992 release cohort was 23.1% and the corresponding rate for Blacks was 35.9%. The Black return rate was 12.8 percentage points higher than the White return rate.) The important finding evidenced here is that having an OPI job for Blacks appeared to have narrowed

Table 7: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Race

RACE	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
BLACK	26.8%	(380)	36.5%	(3,962)
WHITE	22.3%	(364)	23.1%	(3,876)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,838)

Missing Case = 1

the large disparity between Blacks and Whites with respect to recidivism. Black offenders that had an OPI job had a 9.7 percentage point lower rate of return than those in their comparison group (which translates into a reduction of more than one-fourth). The rate of return for Whites with an OPI job was only marginally (0.8 of a percentage point) lower than that of their comparison group. To make the point

another way, Blacks who did not have OPI jobs (the comparison group) had a rate of return 13.4 percentage points higher than their White counterparts while blacks who did have OPI jobs had a rate of return only 4.5 percentage points higher than their white counterparts. The impact of having an OPI job appeared to reduce the large recidivism gap between Blacks and Whites by roughly two-thirds.

Further insight into the relationship between OPI participation and race occurred through the examination of the skill level of the OPI job. Table 8 shows that the only type of OPI job that substantially decreased the return rate for Whites was high skill OPI jobs (keeping in mind the return rate for the White comparison group was 23.1%). But Black offenders had lower return rates if they had high, low or entry skill level OPI jobs. Blacks who had high skill OPI jobs had a remarkable 24.5 percentage point decrease in recidivism, a difference that represents a two-thirds reduction in recidivism.

It is interesting to note, that even though the results showed that Blacks appeared to have been impacted much more positively (with respect to recidivism) by having had an OPI job than Whites, they did not have markedly lower return rates if they had a medium skill level (a 1.2 percentage point decrease) or clerk job (a 7.3 percentage point increase).

Table 8: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants by Race and Job Skill Level***

RACE	HIGH**	MEDIUM	LOW	ENTRY	CLERKS	C. G.*
BLACK	12.0% (25)	35.3% (51)	24.2% (153)	28.2% (124)	43.8% (16)	36.5%
WHITE	17.1% (35)	25.7% (35)	22.9% (140)	24.8% (101)	28.1% (32)	23.1%

* Comparison Group; ** The numbers in the parenthesis represent the total number of offenders in that category;

***The unknowns were purposely not included in the table

The impact of the OPI experience on recidivism with respect to age is presented in Table 9. Those offenders that were 26 to 40 years old at release appeared to have benefited the most from having an OPI job. Those in the 26 to 30 and 31 to 40 year old age categories had return rates 7.7 and 5.1 percentage points lower than those in their comparison groups. These differences represent approximately one-fourth and one-sixth reductions in recidivism. Those in the youngest and oldest age categories showed neutral or negative impact or the categories did not really have enough offenders in them to make generalizations. (These data were analyzed with respect to the OPI job skill level and one finding was noteworthy. For offenders who had high skill jobs, the return rate was lower at all age levels.)

Table 9: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Age

AGE AT RELEASE	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
15-20	40.0%	(15)	36.1%	(940)
21-25	31.7%	(126)	32.1%	(2,168)
26-30	22.1%	(190)	29.8%	(1,670)
31-40	23.7%	(274)	28.8%	(2,260)
41-50	23.6%	(110)	21.7%	(628)
51-60	15.8%	(19)	11.6%	(121)
61 OR OLDER	14.3%	(7)	11.1%	(45)
TOTAL	24.7%	(741)	29.9%	(7,832)

Missing Cases OPI = 3; non-OPI = 7

The return rates for inmates with a meaningful OPI involvement, by whether an offender was committed from an urban or rural county, are presented in Table 10. Rural offenders appeared to recidivate less than their urban counterparts but the impact of an OPI job on recidivism was roughly equivalent. Rural offenders who had OPI jobs rate of return was 5.1 percentage points lower than those in their comparison group while the urban offender rate was 5.7 percentage points lower.

Table 10: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by County of Commitment Type: Urban or Rural

COUNTY	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
RURAL	20.9%	(253)	26.0%	(2,955)
URBAN*	26.5%	(491)	32.2%	(4,884)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,839)

*The urban counties are Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery, and Summit

More insight into the relationship between OPI participation, recidivism and type of county was found when the skill level of the OPI job was examined. Table 11 reveals that, for the first time in this study, the impact of having been assigned to a medium skill level OPI job apparently had more than a marginal or slight positive impact on recidivism. Rural offenders with a medium skill level job had a

return rate moderately lower (4.8 percentage points) than those in their comparison group . Along the same lines (i.e., scant evidence of a positive impact on recidivism for those assigned to OPI clerk jobs), OPI clerks committed from rural counties had a 2.5 percentage point lower rate of return than those in their comparison group.

Table 11: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants by County of Commitment and Job Skill Level****

RACE	HIGH**	MEDIUM	LOW	ENTRY	CLERKS	C. G.*
RURAL	17.4% (23)	21.2% (33)	21.0% (105)	23.9% (67)	23.5% (17)	26.0%
URBAN***	13.5% (37)	37.7% (53)	25.0% (188)	27.8% (158)	38.7% (31)	32.2%

* Comparison Group; ** The numbers in the parenthesis represent the total number of offenders in that category;

***The urban counties are Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery, and Summit

****The unknowns were purposely not included in the table

One more finding is worth reporting. Having a high skill OPI job apparently helped the urban offender even more than the rural offender. The return rate for high skill urban offenders was 18.7 percentage points lower than for those in their comparison group which translates into a return rate reduction of nearly two-thirds (the high skill rural offenders had an 8.6 percentage point decrease in recidivism - a one-third reduction).

The impact of an OPI job on recidivism, controlling for the offender’s education level at intake, was also examined. The data are not reported because of a large number of missing cases (data on educational level are missing for roughly two-thirds of the release cohort). That noted, the available data were analyzed and the offender’s education level at intake did not reveal any noteworthy findings.

The impact of the OPI experience on reducing the likelihood of return to prison in the context of offender demographics can be summed up at two levels: (1) OPI jobs appeared to have the most positive effect on males, Blacks and offenders aged 26 to 40 at release; and (2) having a high skill OPI job appeared to have a positive effect on all offenders, the impact of having a medium skill job was substantially important only for rural offenders, low and entry skill level OPI jobs had the most positive impact on Black offenders and having an OPI clerk job appeared to have a positive impact on rural offenders.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONVICTION OFFENSE, OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

The focus on the impact of OPI participation and recidivism now turns to characteristics of the conviction offense. Table 12 explores the relationship between OPI participation, recidivism and the felony level of the crime for which the inmates were incarcerated. (The reader is reminded not to make generalizations from trends found in categories with a small number of cases. Because of this, nothing is mentioned about inmates that served life sentences.)

Except for one category of felony level, having experienced an OPI job appeared to reduce the likelihood of returning to prison. Those with first, third (both determinate and indeterminate) and fourth degree determinate felons all had return rates more than ten percentage points lower than those in their comparison groups. These differences translate into return reductions of at least one-fourth. Second degree felons had a return rate 5.6 percentage points lower than those with whom they were being compared. Fourth degree felons with indeterminate sentences who had OPI jobs had a return rate higher than those in their comparison group. Further analysis, not shown here (but reflected in results already presented), revealed that this particular group of felons had been assigned to two types of OPI jobs that had poor return rates. Of the 42 offenders in the fourth degree indeterminate category, 21 were either sewing machine operators (low skill level) or material handlers (entry level). The return rate for these 21 offenders was a combined 57.1%. The analysis suggests that the fourth degree indeterminate sentence offenders did poorly with respect to recidivism because they tended to be assigned to OPI jobs (sewing machine operator and material handler) whose impact on offenders with respect to recidivism was not positive (this issue is explored later in the text).

Table 12: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Felony Level

FELONY LEVEL	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
LIFE	0.0%	(4)	38.1%	(21)
1ST	22.9%	(223)	33.3%	(508)
2ND	26.1%	(245)	31.7%	(917)
3RD INDETERMINATE	31.0%	(87)	42.2%	(372)
3RD DETERMINATE	15.5%	(84)	28.1%	(2,227)
4TH INDETERMINATE	42.9%	(42)	40.6%	(261)
4TH DETERMINATE	16.7%	(54)	27.9%	(3,520)
TOTAL	24.6%	(739)	29.9%	(7,826)

Missing Cases OPI = 5; non-OPI = 13

How the length of an offender's time served in prison related to OPI participation and recidivism is the next focus of the analysis. Table 13 revealed that every category of OPI participants, grouped by the amount of time they served, had lower return rates than their comparison group. Those offenders that served the longest, two or more years, appeared to be impacted the most by having an OPI job. Those offenders that served four or more years had a return rate 16.5 percentage points lower than those in their

comparison group. This translates into a forty percent reduction in recidivism. Those in the three to four year and two to three year categories had rates 10.1 and 8.7 percentage points lower than those in their comparison groups. The differences both represent return reductions of more than one-fourth.

Those offenders that served one to two years only showed a slight improvement (a 2.8 percentage point decrease) in recidivism. Further analysis of those offenders revealed the same trend that was discovered in the analysis of OPI participants who were fourth degree indeterminate sentence offenders. That is, they tended to have the sewing machine operator and material handler positions. Of the 115 offenders who served between one and two years, 45 were either sewing machine operators or material handlers. That sub-group (the 45) had a combined return rate of 35.6%.

Table 13: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Time Served

TIME SERVED	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
6 MONTHS OR LESS	25.0%	(8)	31.1%	(3,037)
6-12 MONTHS	19.4%	(62)	24.4%	(2,562)
1-2 YEARS	27.0%	(115)	29.8%	(860)
2-3 YEARS	22.1%	(104)	30.8%	(400)
3-4 YEARS	27.7%	(130)	37.8%	(275)
4 OR MORE YEARS	24.3%	(325)	40.8%	(701)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,835)

Missing Cases non-OPI = 4

One other interesting finding is worth reporting. Although not reported in a table, those offenders that served four or more years and had experienced a high skill OPI job had a return rate of 12.9% (N=31). This return rate was 27.9 percentage points lower than the return rate of those in their comparison group (40.8%). The difference translates into a two-thirds reduction in recidivism..

Table 14 explores the relationship between OPI participation, recidivism and the type of crime for which the offender was committed. The offenders in three types of crime categories appeared to have moderate to large reductions in recidivism if they had participated in OPI. Those incarcerated for crimes against a person, a drug offense or a miscellaneous offense all had at least 6.9 percentage point lower return rates than those in their comparison groups.

(In the crimes against persons category the return rates of material handlers, quality assurance inspectors and clerks were still high, 31.2% [N=77], 38.1% [N=21] and 33.3% [N=21] respectively. Interestingly, the sewing machine operator return rate in this crime type category was a relatively low 23.1% [N=39]. The drug and miscellaneous type of crime categories were not dramatically influenced by the high return rate OPI jobs because there were relatively few of those offenders in the categories and/or those offenders did relatively well with respect to recidivism.)

Table 14: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Crime Type

TYPE OF CRIME	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
PERSONS	23.9%	(360)	30.8%	(1,386)
SEX	16.3%	(49)	16.8%	(370)
PROPERTY	32.8%	(198)	34.8%	(3,235)
DRUG	18.2%	(110)	25.7%	(2,373)
OTHER	16.0%	(25)	24.1%	(464)
TOTAL	24.7%	(742)	29.8%	(7,828)

Missing Cases OPI = 2; non-OPI = 11

The sex offenders that had OPI jobs showed scant improvement in the likelihood of returning to prison over those in their comparison group (a 0.5 percentage point decrease). Even though sex offenders had the lowest return rate of all the type of crime categories (this was true in for the entire FY 1992 release cohort, the comparison group and the OPI participants) it appeared that OPI employment did not impact the chances of sex offenders being returned to prison.

Property offenders showed a slight improvement (2.0 percentage points) in recidivism if they had OPI jobs. Neither an analysis of OPI job type or job skill level type provided additional insight into the lack of a more substantial reduction in recidivism. The property offenders showed little improvement in reducing their likelihood of returning to prison if they were involved in OPI.

Examining OPI participation and recidivism with respect to those incarcerated for committing violent crimes compared to those committed with non-violent crimes produced the finding that violent felons appeared to benefit more from the OPI experience than their non-violent counterparts. Table 15 shows that violent offenders had a return rate 6.3 percentage points lower than those in their comparison group while the non-violent offenders had a return rate 3.9 percentage points lower. These differences translate into reductions in recidivism of approximately twenty and thirteen percent. Offenders incarcerated for more serious crimes appeared to receive more benefit from being assigned an OPI job than the non-violent offenders.

Table 15: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Violent/Non-Violent Nature of Commitment Offense*

NATURE OF CRIME	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
VIOLENT	24.1%	(507)	30.4%	(2,296)
NON-VIOLENT	25.7%	(237)	29.6%	(5,543)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,839)

*As defined in Section 2901.01(I) of the Ohio Revised Code

The analysis of the characteristics of the conviction offense, OPI participation and recidivism can be summed up three ways: (1) there appeared to be evidence that the more serious offender benefited more from the OPI experience than the less serious offender (as measured by time served and whether the crime was violent); (2) sex and property offenders did not appear to be impacted by the OPI experience; and (3) there was at least some evidence that appeared to show that for a few of the inmate subgroups (fourth degree indeterminates and offenders that served between one and two years), the high return rate may be due to a large proportion of them having one of the four 'high return' OPI jobs (material handler, sewing machine operator, quality assurance inspector or clerk).

CRIMINAL HISTORY, OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

The impact of an offender's criminal history on the relationship between OPI participation and recidivism is the next topic of analysis. There was only one criminal history variable available in this analysis, the number of prior incarcerations in the Ohio prison system. Those data are presented in Table 16. The most remarkable trend one finds when looking at the data is how much higher the recidivism rates were as the number of priors increased. Although not presented in the table, it is worth noting that the FY 1992 releases as a whole without any priors returned at a rate of 25.0%. Inmates with one prior had a rate of 37.2% and offenders with two or more priors recidivated 48.4% of the time.

OPI participation appeared to help those offenders with short criminal histories more than those with long criminal histories. Those OPI participants with one prior showed an 11.0 percentage point decrease in recidivism and those without priors revealed a 5.8 percentage points decrease in recidivism. These differences translate into approximately one-fourth reductions in recidivism. OPI participants with two or more priors had a slightly (3.0 percentage points) lower return rate than those in their comparison group.

Table 16: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants and Non-OPI Participants by Priors

PRIOR INCARCERATIONS	OPI		NON-OPI	
	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)	RECIDIVIST	(TOTAL N)
NO PRIORS	19.0%	(462)	24.8%	(5,450)
ONE PRIOR	26.1%	(165)	37.1%	(1,425)
TWO OR MORE PRIORS	44.4%	(117)	47.4%	(964)
TOTAL	24.6%	(744)	29.9%	(7,839)

An examination of OPI participation, recidivism and priors controlling for jobs skill level proved insightful and is presented in Table 17. (The readers is cautioned not to make generalizations from cells with small numbers.) Once again, the offenders who had high skill OPI jobs showed remarkably lower return rates than those to which they were being compared. Those without any priors showed an 11.3 percentage point decrease in recidivism and those with one prior showed a 22.1 percentage point decrease. These differences represent, respectively, nearly one-half and two-thirds reductions in recidivism. Clearly, one of the major findings of this report is that if an offender had a high skill OPI job, his or her likelihood of returning to prison was greatly reduced.

Table 17: Recidivism Rates for OPI Participants by Priors and Job Skill Level***

PRIORS	HIGH**	MEDIUM	LOW	ENTRY	CLERKS	C. G.*
NONE	13.5% (37)	24.1% (58)	16.9% (172)	22.0% (141)	24.2% (33)	24.8%
ONE	15.0% (20)	16.7% (12)	25.4% (63)	32.1% (53)	62.5% (8)	37.1%
TWO +	33.3% (3)	68.8% (16)	41.4% (58)	38.7% (31)	42.9% (7)	47.4%

* Comparison Group; ** The numbers in the parenthesis represent the total number of offenders in that category;

***The unknowns were purposely not included in the table

Those offenders that had low skill OPI jobs had lower return rates than those in their comparison group for all of the prior incarceration categories. Those without any priors, one prior and two or more priors showed reductions in recidivism of 7.9, 11.7 and 6.0 percentage points respectively. The differences for those without any priors or just one prior incarceration translate into nearly one-third reductions in recidivism. Those offenders that had entry skill level OPI jobs with one prior incarceration showed a moderate (5.0 percentage points) decrease in recidivism while those with two or more priors showed a larger (8.7 percentage point) reduction. The evidence appeared to show that for offenders who had a prior incarceration, their return rate was lower than those in their comparison groups if they had a high skill, low skill or entry level OPI job (disregarding, of course, the high skill level and two or more priors category because of the low number of cases).

Overall, offenders with less serious criminal histories (one or no prior incarcerations) appeared to benefit more than offenders with more serious criminal histories (two or more prior incarcerations). However, in certain job skill categories, offenders with more serious criminal histories (two or more prior incarcerations) revealed at least moderate reductions in recidivism.

One more area of analysis necessitates exploration. The examination of OPI participation, recidivism and priors controlling for OPI job may help explain at least part of the mystery why the 'high return rate' OPI jobs (quality assurance inspector, sewing machine operator, material handler and clerk) had high return rates. As has been established, the more prior incarcerations an offender had the more likely that offender was to return to prison. In three of these 'high return rate' OPI jobs (sewing machine operator, material handler, and quality assurance inspector) there is possibly some evidence that offenders with more serious criminal histories (as measured by prior incarcerations) were more likely to get the 'high return rate' OPI jobs than those with less serious criminal histories. If certain types of jobs tend to be filled by inmates with more extensive criminal histories, it is likely that the overall impact of recidivism of those jobs might be inflated (i.e., compared to jobs that tend to get the offender with a less extensive criminal history). The most extreme example of this was that 29 of the 31 offenders who were in the entry level category that had two or more prior incarcerations were assigned material handler jobs. Perhaps, (and more research would have to be done to solidify this hypothesis) at least part of the reason why these 'high return rate' OPI jobs had high return rates was because they tended to be assigned to offenders that were more likely to recidivate.

THE TIMING OF OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

This portion of the study is focused on the OPI participants. Two issues will be explored: (1) if the length of time an offender was an OPI participant impacted recidivism and (2) if the length of time between the OPI participation and the offender's release date impacted recidivism.

Table 18 explores the relationship between recidivism and the length of time an offender participated in OPI. First of all, a reminder: the offenders in the less than ninety day category were not considered to have participated long enough to have a meaningful OPI experience. In fact, their return rate was the highest (35.0%). This gives credence to our definition of who had a meaningful OPI experience (90 days or more). Those that had OPI jobs but not long enough to be meaningful appeared not to receive any benefit from their OPI experience, i.e., that is a reduced return rate.

Once an offender had an OPI job long enough for it to become meaningful it appeared that it proved slightly more beneficial for those offenders that were OPI participants less than a year or three years or more (although generalizations made from the three years or more categories may be risky due to a small number of cases).

Table 18: Recidivism Rates by Length of OPI Participation

LENGTH	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
1-89 DAYS**	65.0% (228)	35.0% (123)
90 DAYS TO 365 DAYS	75.9% (360)	24.1% (114)
1-2 YEARS	72.8% (123)	27.2% (46)
2-3 YEARS	71.9% (46)	28.1% (18)
3-4 YEARS	83.3% (25)	16.7% (5)
4 YEARS OR MORE	100.0% (7)	0.0% (0)
TOTAL	72.1% (789)	27.9% (306)

**not considered to be meaningful participation in an OPI job

Table 19 looks at the time between an offender's last OPI participation date and his or her release date from prison (for those with meaningful OPI participation only). The first item that must be addressed is that there is quite a bit of missing data. This is a critical issue because this group (i.e., the "don't knows") of OPI participants had the lowest return rate. If their length of time between OPI participation and release could be computed it could dramatically effect the other length of time categories (perhaps they were all in the less than one year category). That noted, there appears to be no discernable pattern in the available data. The length of time between OPI participation and release did not appear to be a salient factor in this analysis.

Table 19: Recidivism Rates for the Amount of Time from OPI Participation to Release Date

LENGTH OF TIME	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
1 YEAR OR LESS	72.0% (221)	28.0% (86)
1-2 YEARS	74.8% (110)	25.2% (37)
2-3 YEARS	69.9% (58)	30.1% (25)
3 OR MORE YEARS	74.7% (65)	25.3% (22)
DON'T KNOW*	89.2% (107)	10.8% (13)
TOTAL	75.4% (561)	24.6% (183)

*Due to data constraints - length of time from OPI participation to release could not be computed even though length of time in an OPI job could be calculated

SUMMARY RESULTS: OPI PARTICIPATION AND RECIDIVISM

Overall, meaningful participation in an OPI job appeared to produce reductions in recidivism approaching twenty percent. OPI participation seemed to have the most positive impact on males, Blacks, offenders aged 26 to 40 at release, those committed for crimes against persons, drug offenders, and generally the more serious offender (as measured by the amount of time served and whether the crime was violent).

The impact of OPI participation varied by the skill level of the OPI job: those with high skill OPI jobs appeared to have benefited the most followed by those with low skill and entry level OPI jobs. Those with medium skill level or clerk OPI jobs appeared not to benefit from the OPI experience.

Perhaps the most remarkable results of this study were twofold: (1) if an offender had a high skill OPI job his or her likelihood of returning to prison appeared to be greatly reduced (on average one-half less likely to recidivate), regardless of the offender's demographic characteristics or the characteristics of the conviction offense; and (2) the OPI experience reduced the large difference in recidivism between Blacks and Whites.

APPENDIX

The appendix serves two purposes: (1) to provide a list of how the skill level categories were operationalized; and (2) proved recidivism rates for each particular OPI job. The rationale for putting the individual OPI job return rates in an appendix and not in the major part of the analysis was to emphasize the danger of making generalizations about the relative effectiveness of specific OPI jobs. In many, if not most, of the OPI jobs listed below, there were not enough cases to draw conclusions. The reader is strongly cautioned about making generalizations from specific OPI job types that have a small number of cases.

Table A1: Recidivism Rates for High Skill Jobs

JOB	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
ASBESTOS REMOVAL	77.8% (7)	22.2% (2)
AUTO MECHANIC	100.0% (5)	0.0% (0)
DENTAL LAB TECHNICIAN	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
DRAFTER	100.0% (9)	0.0% (0)
MACHINIST	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
MAINTENANCE MECHANIC	81.3% (13)	18.8% (3)
SPRAY PAINTER	81.8% (9)	18.2% (2)
TRAINER REP.	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
WELDER	71.4% (5)	28.6% (2)
TOTAL	85.0% (51)	15.0% (9)

Table A2: Recidivism Rates for Medium Skill Jobs

JOB SKILL LEVEL	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
FABRIC CUTTER	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)
FINISH REPAIRER	50.0% (1)	50.0% (1)
GRAPHIC ARTS TECH.	100.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
INSPECTOR QA	61.1% (22)	38.9% (14)
MACHINE OPERATOR	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
MACHINE PRESSER	100.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
MACHINE SETTER	83.3% (20)	16.7% (4)
MAINTENANCE REPAIR	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
PRINTER	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
TOTAL	68.6% (59)	31.4% (27)

Table A3: Recidivism Rates for Low Skill Jobs

JOB SKILL LEVEL	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
AUTO MECHANIC HELPER	100.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
BOX FACTORY	80.0% (4)	20.0% (1)
BRUSH FACTORY	100.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
CHAIR FACTORY	100.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
CUSHION MAKER	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
DESK ROOM	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
FABRICATOR	0.0% (0)	100.0% (1)
FURNITURE FACTORY	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)
GARMENT FACTORY	87.5% (14)	12.5% (2)

(Table A3 continued)

MACHINE FEEDER	77.8% (49)	22.2% (14)
SEWING MACHINE OPER.	68.5% (61)	31.5% (28)
TERMINAL OPERATOR	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
TEXTILE SHOP	50.0% (1)	50.0% (1)
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT	100.0% (9)	0.0% (0)
UNIT ASSEMBLER	79.8% (67)	20.2% (17)
WEASTEC	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
WEBBING TACKER	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
WOOD ASSEMBLER	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)
TOTAL	76.5% (224)	23.5% (69)

Table A4: Recidivism Rates for Entry Level Jobs

JOB SKILL LEVEL	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
IPIT	81.8% (9)	18.2% (2)
JANITOR	100.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
MATERIAL HANDLER	72.5% (132)	27.5% (50)
MATTRESS FACTORY	75.0% (3)	25.0% (1)
PORTER	70.8% (17)	29.2% (7)
SANDER	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
TOTAL	73.3% (165)	26.7% (60)

Table A5: Recidivism Rates for Clerk Jobs

JOB SKILL LEVEL	NON-RECIDIVIST	RECIDIVIST
CLERK	75.0% (3)	25.0% (1)
PAYROLL CLERK	71.4% (5)	28.6% (2)
PRODUCTION CLERK	69.0% (20)	31.0% (9)
TYPING CLERK	50.0% (4)	50.0% (4)
TOTAL	66.7% (32)	33.3% (16)