



Returning Home on Parole: Former Prisoners' Experiences in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas



URBAN INSTITUTE
Justice Policy Center

Research Brief
July 2008

**Jennifer Yahner
Christy Visser
Amy Solomon**

KEY FINDINGS

- Parolees reported positive relationships with their parole officers and most found their POs helpful with transition. At the same time, parolees received relatively little tangible assistance finding a job or drug treatment program.
- Parole supervision was associated with increased employment and reduced substance use among former prisoners.
- Parole supervision had almost no impact on self-reported crime or rearrest, but increased the likelihood of reincarceration—mostly due to technical violations.
- Younger property offenders with no prior revocations benefited more from parole supervision than older parolees with prior failures on parole.

Using longitudinal data from 740 former prisoners interviewed for the Urban Institute's study *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, this brief examines postrelease supervision experiences in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas from 2002 through 2005.

This analysis was funded by the generous support of the JEHT Foundation. Any opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Urban Institute, its board, or its sponsors.

To learn more about *Returning Home* and prisoner reentry, please visit our web site: www.urban.org/justice.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), nearly 800,000 adults across the United States were on parole in 2006, a fourfold increase from 1980. Most (88 percent) were male and nearly all (94 percent) had been sentenced to a year or more of incarceration (Glaze and Bonczar 2007).

Although intended to enhance public safety, parole supervision as widely implemented often falls short of this goal. Current practice relies heavily on surveillance, which has repeatedly been shown to have little impact on recidivism (Aos, Miller, and Drake 2006). Research using BJS data found that prisoners released to parole supervision across a number of large states were rearrested at rates similar to those who were released without supervision (Solomon, Kachnowski, and Bhati 2005). The implication of these studies is that business-as-usual supervision is not likely to impact community safety or the lives of parolees—for the better or worse. Additionally, a recent report on parole by the National Research Council (2007) concluded that much is still unknown about community reintegration while on parole and that certain types of offenders may benefit more than others from supervision.

Official statistics can take us only so far toward understanding the reasons for parole's success, or lack of success, at reducing crime. This paper explores life on parole from the perspective of 740 former male prisoners in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas.¹ Interviews were conducted as part of the multistate longitudinal study *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*.

We focus on addressing the following key questions:

- *What are the parole experiences across states of those being released from prison and returning home?*
- *How do experiences on supervision affect postrelease reintegration outcomes?*
- *Does supervision benefit some groups more than others?*

SUPERVISION PRACTICES IN ILLINOIS, OHIO, AND TEXAS

The *Returning Home* study focused on former prisoners in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas from 2002 through 2005 (see sidebar, next page). Prisoners in these states, like those across the nation, are released through either a discretionary or nondiscretionary process. With a discretionary release, once a prisoner has served the statutorily required portion of his sentence, a parole board, judge, or other releasing authority reviews the case to determine whether to release the inmate earlier than the date specified by the court. Nondiscretionary, or mandatory, releases are those determined by statute rather than a review board and occur when a prisoner has served the full term of his court-ordered sentence. The majority of prisoners in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas are released through nondiscretionary means: almost all are released this way in Illinois (94 percent); 71 percent in Ohio; and 62 percent in Texas (La Vigne and Thompson 2003; La Vigne and Mamalian 2003; Watson et al. 2004). However, the prevalence of mandatory release does not suggest minimal use of postrelease supervision, as such supervision requirements are built into many determinate sentences in these states.

THE RETURNING HOME STUDY

Launched in 2001 and completed in June 2006, the *Returning Home* study explored the pathways of prisoner reintegration, examining which factors contributed to successful (or unsuccessful) reentry and identifying how those factors could inform policy. The data collected included measures of reintegration (e.g., family support, employment, substance use) and recidivism (e.g., self-reported crime, reincarceration).

The *Returning Home* study targeted male prisoners serving at least one year in state prisons² and returning to the areas of Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; and Houston, Texas. Study samples were recruited from 2002 to 2003 in Illinois and 2004 to 2005 in Ohio and Texas.

In Illinois and to some extent in Texas, prisoners were recruited through preexisting prerelease programs in which groups of prisoners met. During these sessions, *Returning Home* interviewers held orientations explaining the study and distributed self-administered surveys to those willing to participate. In Ohio, interviewers scheduled their own times at preselected facilities to explain the study and distribute surveys.

The prerelease questionnaires were designed to capture respondents' experiences immediately before and during their current incarceration. After release, two in-person interviews conducted with all prerelease respondents captured experiences immediately after and during the year following release. For more on study recruitment and participation, see La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Visher, Baer, and Naser 2006; and La Vigne and Kachnowski 2005.

Of all three states, Illinois released the most prisoners to postrelease supervision (83 percent in 2001), compared with 62 percent of Ohio state prisoners and 55 percent of prisoners in Texas.³

ANALYTIC APPROACH

We begin this brief with a general description of respondents' supervision experiences before and after their incarceration. Although the data presented come from a pooled sample of Illinois, Ohio, and Texas respondents, footnotes indicate where states differed significantly ($p < .05$) and substantially from one another (see sidebar on methodology, last page).

Second, we focus on whether respondents' supervision experiences affect their reintegration outcomes. Using multivariate regression, we look at whether being on parole predicts postrelease family and housing outcomes, employment, substance use, or recidivism. In addition to parole status, we briefly look at whether parolee attitudes toward supervision generally or their parole officers specifically affect reentry outcomes.

All outcomes are self-reported and measured eight months after release with one exception: official reincarceration data cover the entire year following release. Each regression model includes controls for respondent characteristics (age, race, criminal history, preprison employment, education, substance use, marriage, children, early postprison drug treatment, and

time since release) as well as the state from which respondents came.

We also examine whether the effect of parole on recidivism outcomes varies across groups of respondents. Groups were defined using a number of respondent characteristics, including age, criminal history, and current offense type.

FINDINGS

Returning Home prisoners were 36 years old on average, with about a third of the sample (31 percent) under age 30 at release. For most, the current release was not their first: 68 percent had been incarcerated before. Following the present incarceration term, three-quarters (74 percent) of the 740 men were released to parole supervision. Parolees were no older or younger than others in the sample, and their racial breakdown mirrored that of the sample: 15 percent were white and 85 percent nonwhite (9 out of 10 nonwhites were black, others were biracial or of other racial descent).

What Were the Supervision Experiences of Former Prisoners in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas?

In this section, we describe the supervision experiences and expectations of *Returning Home* respondents both before and after the incarceration on which they were sampled.

Previous Experiences on Supervision

More than two-thirds (71 percent) of the respondents had been on parole or probation at least once before their current incarceration. Of these, 72 percent reported having a prior parole or probation revocation, with an average of 1.9 revocations. Overall, just under a third (30 percent) of the sample was serving their current sentence because of a parole or probation violation.⁴ Most cited a new crime (66 percent) rather than technical violation (34 percent) as the reason for this revocation.

Prerelease Expectations for Supervision

While still in prison, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the sample expected to be on postrelease supervision after their current sentence.⁵ Of these, half (52 percent) expected to talk to their supervision agent to find a job, 30 percent expected to find a job through other means, and 16 percent already had a job lined up. Only 9 percent expected to talk to their agent to find a place to live, 19 percent expected to find a place to live through other means, and 69 percent already had a place to live lined up.

Most (71 percent) of those expecting to be on supervision felt it would be easy to avoid a violation after release, though those who had been on supervision before were significantly less likely to feel this way (69 percent compared with 78 percent of those who had not been on supervision before). Regardless of prior supervision experiences, most (85 percent) expected their supervision officer to be helpful to their transition after release.

Supervision Experiences after Release

Respondents answered questions regarding postrelease supervision at two different times—two months and eight months after release. Descriptively, these data looked very similar, so we present only the eight-month data but note cases where two-month reports differed substantially.

As previously stated, approximately three-quarters (74 percent) of the respondents were released to supervision.⁶ Of these, more than two-thirds (70 percent) had seen their agent once in the last 30 days and nearly a fifth (17 percent) two or three times, according to the eight-month interview. Most (91 percent) met for 30 minutes or less each time, though a small fraction (8 percent) met for up to an hour with their parole officer. Phone contact was somewhat variable. Forty-five percent of those under supervision had no phone contact with their agent in the past month, 30 percent had talked once, and 22 percent had talked two or three times.

Recall that before release, half of the respondents had expected to talk to their parole agent for help finding a job. After release, only 19 percent had turned to their parole agent for help finding work.^{7,8} Further, less than 1 percent actually found their current job through their parole agent (others found it through different means (42 percent) or were still unemployed (56 percent)).⁹

Attitude toward Parole Officer after Release

On average, parolees thought fairly highly of their supervision agents eight months after release—scoring 3.1 on a scale that measured positive attitudes toward supervision officers and ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*.¹⁰ The individual items comprising this scale confirmed parolee's overall feelings. Nearly all felt their agent treated them with respect (93 percent) and acted professionally (92 percent). Eighty-seven percent believed their agent provided correct information and 82 percent that their agent was trustworthy. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) found their agent helpful with their transition.¹¹ Less than a fifth said their agent acted too busy to help them (18 percent) or did not listen to them (14 percent).

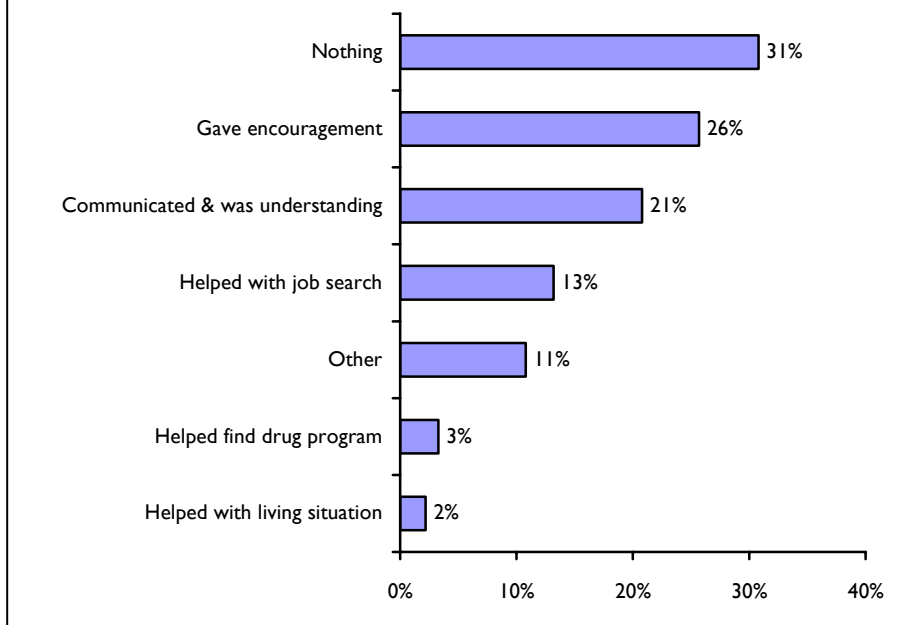
Parolees were asked to name the most helpful thing(s) their supervision agent had done for them, and a fair number said their agent had provided encouragement (26 percent),

communicated and been understanding (21 percent), or helped with their job search (13 percent) (figure 1).¹² A few respondents said their agent had helped them find a drug treatment program (3 percent), helped with their living situation (2 percent), and provided miscellaneous other types of help (11 percent). Nearly a third (31 percent) said their agent had done nothing helpful.¹³

A small percentage (6 percent) of the sample listed their supervision officer as a source of strength in helping meet their biggest challenges after release, which for most of these respondents were finding employment and staying out of trouble and prison.

Respondents were somewhat divided in beliefs about whether supervision would help them avoid recidivism. Two months after release, a majority felt being on supervision was a good thing (58 percent felt supervision would help them stay out of prison, 57 percent felt it would help them remain drug-free, and 59 percent felt it would help them remain crime-free). Eight months after release, less than half

Figure 1. Most Helpful Thing Parole Agent Had Done Eight Months after Release.



felt being on supervision would help them stay out of prison (46 percent), remain drug-free (42 percent), or remain crime-free (45 percent).

Supervision Conditions and Violations after Release

When questioned eight months after release, parolees listed an average of 10 supervision conditions with which they had to comply. The most common conditions reported by the sample were notifying one's supervision agent of a change in residence or arrest; maintaining face-to-face contact; random drug testing; avoiding places where illegal substances are used; not associating with others on parole; consenting to search of one's person, residence, or property; and not associating with gang members.¹⁴ Of those (15 percent) receiving drug treatment, 29 percent were doing so because it was required by legal mandate or their parole conditions (as opposed to voluntary participation or pressure from family and friends).

Eight months after release, about a quarter (24 percent) reported that they had violated a condition, more than twice as many who reported violating two months after release (11 percent).¹⁵ On average, parolees reported they were in compliance with 94 percent of the conditions imposed upon them. As figure 2 shows, the most commonly violated

conditions were not associating with other parolees (10 percent of those with this condition violated it); avoiding places where controlled substances were used (9 percent); getting drug/alcohol testing (9 percent); attending drug/alcohol treatment (8 percent); paying restitution, administrative, or legal fees (8 percent); submitting to random drug testing (7 percent); maintaining face-to-face contact with one's supervision agent (7 percent); and miscellaneous other conditions (10 percent), such as employment.¹⁶ Of those who reported violating a condition, more than two-thirds (70 percent) reported that their supervision agent was aware of their violations.

When asked specifically what was the hardest condition with which they had to comply, most parolees (57 percent) responded "none," though some cited maintaining face-to-face contact with their supervision agent (10 percent), employment (6 percent), and miscellaneous other conditions (13 percent). Compared with before release, an even greater share of respondents (84

percent) believed avoiding a supervision violation in the future would be easy (71 percent had felt so before release). However, those who had violated a condition already were more than twice as likely to believe avoiding a violation in the future would be difficult (28 percent compared with 11 percent, difference significant at $p < .001$).

Does Supervision Affect Reentry Outcomes?

A key question to policymakers and practitioners is whether any factors in their control can help increase public safety by helping former prisoners successfully reintegrate into the community. Toward this end, we examine how parole and parole-related factors (e.g., attitudes toward parole officers) influence reentry outcomes, such as postrelease family relationships and housing, employment, substance use, and recidivism.¹⁷

Family and Housing Outcomes

We began our analysis of reentry outcomes with an exploratory look at the relationship between parole and postrelease family relationships (e.g., emotional and tangible support, attachment to children, partner relationship quality) and housing stability (likely to live in current location a year or longer).

Eight months after release, both parolees and nonparolees reported fairly positive family relationships. On scales measuring family emotional support, tangible support, and relationship quality after release, respondents scored an average of 3.3 out of 4, indicating overall agreement with all items.¹⁸ Similarly, respondents scored 3.1 out of 4 on a partner relationship quality scale and 2 out of 4 on a scale measuring family conflict. Attachment to children after release showed a more middle-ground average of 1.1 out of 2, indicating that respondent parents spent *some of the time* involved in activities related to their children.

With regard to housing stability eight months after release, more than half (56 percent) of the respondents said they would likely live one or more years at their current location, while 44 percent said they would live less than a year.¹⁹

Regression analyses showed that parole had only a minimal effect on postprison family outcomes and no effect on housing stability. Table 1 shows that the difference in estimated²⁰ outcomes

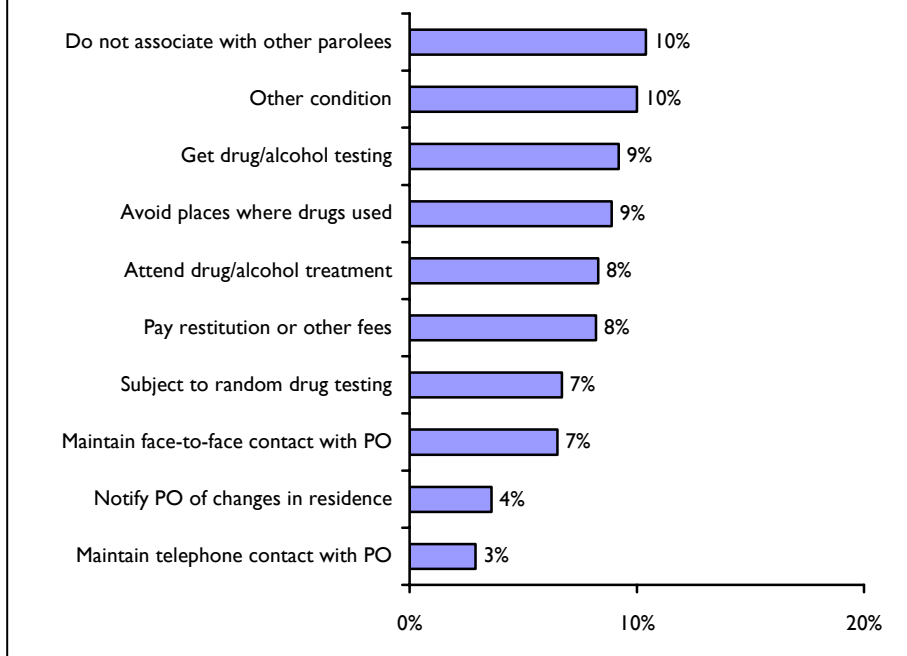
for parolees and nonparolees was substantively trivial (less than a 0.2 difference on a 4-point Likert scale).

Employment

Looking next at former prisoners' employment after release, we see that 45 percent had a job when interviewed eight months out. Of those, the average worker earned \$11 per hour, with most respondents (85 percent) reporting wages between \$5 and \$15 per hour. On average, all respondents (i.e., those on parole and not on supervision) spent 3.4 of the 8 months working at least *some of the time* and 2.4 of the 8 months working *most or all of the time*.

However, unlike the case with family outcomes, parole had a sizable effect on former prisoners' employment. **Respondents who were on parole were more likely to be employed when interviewed eight months after release, and they spent a greater number of months working since their release compared with those not on parole.** Eight months out, an estimated 48 percent of supervised respondents were employed, compared with 32 percent of unsupervised respondents (table 1). Supervised respondents had also spent more months working *some of the time* (3.6 compared with 2.7

Figure 2. Most Commonly Reported Parole Violations Eight Months after Release.



months) or *most/all of the time* (2.6 compared with 1.5 months) than did unsupervised respondents.

Substance Use

Eight months after release, a fifth (20 percent) of all respondents reported using drugs and 17 percent reported being intoxicated²¹ at least once in the prior month. When combined, more than a quarter (29 percent) reported drug use or intoxication, and nearly half (15 percent) said they had done so frequently (i.e., more than once a week). With regard to drug treatment, 15 percent of the sample said they had participated in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in the past 30 days or in an inpatient substance abuse treatment program since their release.

Analyses showed that parole supervision had a significant (p<.05) and substantial effect on substance use outcomes eight months after release (table 1).

Being on supervision more than halved the likelihood of drug use or intoxication eight months after release. An estimated 23 percent of parolees compared with 49 percent of nonparolees reported having used drugs or been intoxicated in the past 30 days, when asked eight months after release. Similarly, 11 percent of parolees compared with 23 percent of nonparolees had used substances frequently (more than weekly) during that time. This was true regardless of the respondent’s state, age, race, criminal history, and all other control variables included in the models.

Recidivism

Self-reported interview data from respondents eight months after release showed that 15 percent reported they had committed a new crime, 23 percent had been rearrested, and 16 percent of those on supervision had violated a condition since their first postrelease interview two months out. In addition, criminal records from Illinois, Ohio, and Texas state prisons²² were collected on all respondents in the year following their release. These records

showed that one out of five (21 percent) returned to prison in the 12 months after release—14 percent for supervision violations and 7 percent for new crimes. Of those who returned, the average timing of their reincarceration was eight months after release.

Similar to findings from intensive supervision probation/parole (ISP) evaluations, results show that parole affected the likelihood of reincarceration but no other recidivism outcomes (see, e.g., Turner, Petersilia, and Deschenes 1992).²³

Parolees were no more or less likely to report having committed a new crime or having been rearrested eight months after release than respondents not on parole. **Yet, respondents on parole were more likely to return to prison in the year following release.** Those on postrelease supervision were more likely to have been returned to prison (23 percent estimated return rate) within 12 months of release than those not on supervision (9 percent return rate). As shown in table 1, this finding is driven by parolees’ susceptibility to returns for technical violations rather than a higher rate of crime commission.

Thus, parole was associated with an increased likelihood of employment and reduced likelihood of substance use, but also with an increased likelihood of reincarceration due to supervision violations.

Does Parole Benefit Some Groups More Than Others?

Finally, to address issues raised by the National Research Council in their 2007 report on parole and desistance from crime, we looked at whether supervision benefited some groups more than others with regard to

our best recidivism measure: self-reported crime. Across many groups—such as those defined by race, preprison education, work experience, marital status, and children—parole had little

Table 1. Predicted^a Reentry Outcomes, by Parole Status.

	Parole	
	No (n=176)	Yes (n=564)
Family Support and Housing		
Family emotional support 8 months out ^b	3.3	3.3
Family tangible support 8 months out	3.2	3.3
Family relationship quality 8 months out	3.2	3.4
Family conflict 8 months out ^c	2.2	1.9
Partner relationship quality 8 months out	3.1	3.2 *
Attachment to children 8 months out ^d	1.1	1.0
Stable housing 8 months out	54%	58%
Employment		
Currently employed 8 months out	32%	48% *
Hourly wage earned 8 months out	\$13.72	\$10.02
Number of mos. worked SOME time 8 mos. out	2.7	3.6 *
Number of mos. worked MOST time 8 mos. out	1.5	2.6 *
Substance Use		
Any drug use or intoxication 8 months out ^e	49%	23% *
Frequent drug use or intoxication 8 months out	27%	11% *
Any drug use last 30 days 8 months out	40%	15% *
Frequent drug use last 30 days 8 months out	24%	9% *
Participated in drug programming ^f 8 months out	12%	15%
Recidivism		
Committed new crime 2 to 8 months out	15%	15%
Rearrested 2 to 8 months out	19%	24%
Reincarcerated 12 months post-release	9%	23% *
For supervision violation	0%	17%
For new crime conviction	9%	6%

^a Predictions from multivariate regressions controlling for state, age, race, criminal history, pre-prison education, employment, substance use, marital status, children, 2 month out drug treatment, and time since release.

^b Except as otherwise noted, family scales ranged from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*, with 4 equaling more positive feelings.

^c Scale ranged from 1 to 4 with 4 equaling greater family conflict.

^d Scale ranged from 0 to 2, with 2 equaling greater attachment.

^e Last 30 days.

^f Includes AA/NA or inpatient substance abuse treatment.

* Significant at p<.05.

impact on the likelihood of self-reported crime. Yet, among some groups, parole appeared to have a suppression effect on the amount of crime respondents reported having committed.

Younger (under 30 years old) property offenders with no prior revocations benefited more from parole supervision than did older, violent or other crime-type offenders with at least one prior revocation. Parole reduced the number of crimes committed after release more for younger than older respondents and more for property than nonproperty offenders (from 12 to 2 crimes for younger respondents and from 14 to 1 for property offenders). Also, parole reduced the likelihood of self-reported crime among respondents with no prior parole or probation revocation (from 21 to 14 percent)—while an increased likelihood was observed among those with one or more prior revocations.

Parolee Attitudes toward Supervision Officers

We also examined whether parolee attitudes toward their supervision officers appeared to influence reentry outcomes. Although parolees' broader outlook on life after release had some effect on reintegration outcomes (see sidebar, this page), parolee attitudes specifically toward supervision officers did not. Most parolees had a positive impression of their parole officer, and even those with a slightly negative view were no less likely to succeed at family, housing, employment, and substance use eight months after prison. The same was true of recidivism outcomes—self-reported crime, rearrest, and parole violations—with one exception. Parolees with a more positive impression of their supervision officer were less likely to return to prison 12 months after release (20 percent compared with 29 percent) than those with a less favorable view.²⁴

DISCUSSION

The *Returning Home* study was not designed to evaluate a particular approach to parole supervision but to provide insight into the supervision-related experiences of parolees in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas from 2002 through 2005. Even since data collection, parole and revocation practices in these states have changed as policymakers and practitioners continue to improve paroling strategies. That said, findings from this analysis point to several possible policy implications.

First, parolees had remarkably positive attitudes toward their parole officers—a finding that highlights the potential impact that parole officers could have in influencing parolee behavior. Yet, we did not find a link between these positive relationships and parolee outcomes, and relatively few officers provided tangible help with important reintegration issues, such as helping individuals find a job, locate treatment, or a positive living situation. At a minimum, parole officers should receive training on the availability of community resources (e.g., treatment, jobs, housing) and how to access them, so that they are better able to share this information with parolees.

In terms of parolee outcomes, being on supervision was associated with a mixed set of reintegration successes and failures. On the one hand, supervised respondents reported

more favorable employment and substance use outcomes, which have been linked in other studies to a decreased likelihood of future criminal behavior. These findings are encouraging and suggest that routine supervision practices and conditions that target substance abuse and employment may have a positive influence in these areas. However, these positive impacts did not extend to reoffending outcomes such as self-reported criminal behavior or rearrest; rather, we observed similar (albeit relatively low) rates of reoffending and rearrest among all releases whether on parole or not. That said, parolees were also—all else equal—more likely to be reincarcerated within 12 months of their initial release but, importantly, this was largely a result of supervision violations. Considering that parolees and nonparolees reported relatively equal levels of criminal behavior, this finding implies that incarceration was being used to sanction technical violations that may have been better—and more efficiently—addressed through community-based sanctions.

Finally, parole seemed to have significantly fewer benefits for older parolees in this study and those with more parole failures. This finding, consistent with prior analysis (Solomon, Kachnowski, and Bhati 2005), implies that parole officers have a better chance of positively influencing parolees with less serious criminal histories. While seemingly in conflict with the evidence-based principle of focusing resources on higher-risk cases, the authors would argue that while parole supervision did not impact the higher-risk cases in the *Returning Home* study, effective parole strategies geared to this population are crucial and other studies have shown enhanced success with the high-risk population. Parole strategies must continue to improve if they are to affect these high-risk groups.

New trends in supervision across the country acknowledge that simple monitoring by a parole officer does not reduce criminal behavior but that intervention strategies should be based on an assessment of parolees' criminogenic risks and needs and delivered in a manner that motivates change. As states continue to develop innovative reentry strategies, the role of parole supervision and the way it is practiced—including in these three states—continues to evolve. Over the coming years we hope to document and assess some of the innovations underway and community corrections' potential to contribute to positive reintegration outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Bill Burrell, Joan Petersilia, and Ed Rhine for reviewing an earlier draft of this brief and Jenny Osborne for her research contribution.

METHODOLOGY

The prerelease samples of prisoners interviewed for the *Returning Home* study were generally representative of all male prisoners in the relevant geographic areas in terms of race, sentence length, and time served. Within some states, differences emerged in

terms of age (Texas sample was about two years older than other releases), criminal history (Illinois sample had more prior incarcerations), current offense type (Ohio sample was less likely to have been incarcerated for a drug offense and Illinois for a technical violation), and prison housing security-level (Illinois and Ohio samples were more likely to be housed at medium-security). In addition, the Illinois and Ohio samples contained somewhat more supervised releases.

After release, following the sample prisoners was difficult and costly at times; yet, 61 percent of the 1,238 males interviewed initially were located for two postrelease interviews—one at two months out and the other at seven to eight months out.²⁵ The focus of this analysis is on the 740 respondents who completed both interviews.²⁶

To correct for differences between the final sample analyzed and the original prerelease sample, inverse probability weights (IPW) were used within each state.²⁷ Increasingly popular among economists and statisticians, IPW methods provide an intuitive approach to correcting for nonrepresentation by weighting sample members by the inverse probability of their being selected. In this way, IPW methods can be used to correct general forms of sample selection, attrition, and stratification problems (Wooldridge 2002; Hirano, Imbens, and Ridder 2003).

The analytic approach in this brief involved use of descriptive statistics and multivariate regression to describe parolee experiences and estimate parole's effect on reentry outcomes. Group differences were assessed through use of interaction terms, added one at a time to multivariate regression models. All analyses presented were weighted using the IPWs described above, though visual comparison of weighted and unweighted results yielded similar conclusions.

In addition to the findings presented, we conducted a few secondary explorations that ultimately indicated no impact on outcomes or no clear and consistent impact.²⁸

REFERENCES

- Aos, Steve, Marna Miller, and Elizabeth Drake. 2006. *Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Brooks, Lisa E., Amy L. Solomon, Rhiana Kohl, Jenny Osborne, Jay Reid, Susan M. McDonald, and Hollie M. Hoover. 2008. *Reincarcerated: The Experiences of Men Returning to Massachusetts Prisons*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Glaze, Lauren, and Thomas Bonczar. 2007. "Probation and Parole in the United States, 2006." *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
- Hirano, Keisuke, Guido W. Imbens, and Geert Ridder. 2003. "Efficient Estimation of Average Treatment Effects Using the Estimated Propensity Score." *Econometrica* 71(4): 1161–89.
- La Vigne, Nancy G., and Vera Kachnowski. 2005. *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- La Vigne, Nancy G., and Cynthia A. Mamalian. 2003. *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Illinois*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- La Vigne, Nancy G., and Gillian L. Thompson. 2003. *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Ohio*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

La Vigne, Nancy G., Christy Visher, and Jennifer Castro. 2004. *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Miller, William R., and Stephen Rollnick. 2002. *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

National Research Council. 2007. *Parole, Desistance from Crime, and Community Integration*. Washington, DC: Committee on Community Supervision and Desistance from Crime, National Research Council.

Solomon, Amy L., Vera Kachnowski, and Avi Bhati. 2005. *Does Parole Work? Analyzing the Impact of Postprison Supervision on Rearrest Outcomes*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Turner, Susan, Joan Petersilia, and Elizabeth P. Deschenes. 1992. "Evaluating Intensive Supervision Probation/Parole (ISP) for Drug Offenders." *Crime and Delinquency* 38(4): 539–56.

Visher, Christy, Demelza Baer, and Rebecca Naser. 2006. *Ohio Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Watson, Jamie, Amy L. Solomon, Nancy G. La Vigne, and Jeremy Travis, with Meagan Funches and Barbara Parthasarathy. 2004. *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Texas*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Wooldridge, Jeffrey M. 2002. "Inverse Probability Weighted m-Estimators for Sample Selection, Attrition, and Stratification." Institute for Fiscal Studies, Cemmap Working Paper (cwp 11/02).

NOTES

1. The importance of self-reported data to criminological research cannot be overestimated; only through self-reports can we examine offenders' attitudes and expectations, beliefs and personal understanding of their behavior and experiences. However, one key limitation of self-reported data is that—despite extensive interviewer training—it is impossible to distinguish between offenders whose responses are completely accurate and those who intentionally or unintentionally under- or overreport certain behaviors and experiences.
2. In Texas, prisoners from state jails were also interviewed.
3. The 55 percent in Texas reflects supervision circumstances of both state prisoners and inmates in the Texas state jail system, which houses individuals convicted of certain misdemeanors and third degree felonies for no longer than two years (and no less than 75 days). However, almost every state jail inmate (97percent) is released without supervision; accordingly, none in the current sample were under supervision when asked two months after release. To account for this fact, control variables were included in all models predicting supervision's effect on reentry outcomes and successfully represented state jail respondent variation in all but the employment models tested (although supervision lost its significant effect on employment when state jail cases were temporarily dropped, the substantive direction of these effects remained the same; thus, state jail cases were retained to avoid loss of predictive power in employment outcome models).
4. In Illinois, respondents were recruited through a prerelease program called PreStart that was primarily offered to prisoners incarcerated for new crimes. Thus, only 16 percent of the Illinois sample was serving time currently for a parole violation, nearly all of whom (96 percent) cited a new crime rather than technical violation as the reason behind it.

5. Ninety-one percent of Illinois respondents expected to be on supervision after release, compared with 76 and 48 percent of Ohio and Texas respondents, respectively.

6. The percent on supervision varied significantly across states. Most Illinois respondents (96 percent) were on parole, compared with 77 and 45 percent of Ohio and Texas respondents, respectively.

7. Fewer Illinois respondents reported talking to their supervision officer for employment help (1 percent) than did Ohio (36 percent) or Texas (21 percent) respondents.

8. Although 19 percent asked their parole agent for help finding a job, only 13 percent listed this service as the most helpful thing their agent had done (as shown in figure 1).

9. Notably, respondents who turned to their parole officer for job help after release were more likely to rate that parole officer as being helpful with the transition and as having listened to them than were those who did not receive job help.

10. Cronbach's alpha was 0.875.

11. More Texas respondents felt their agent had been helpful (80 percent) than did Illinois respondents (50 percent), compared with 69 percent of Ohio respondents.

12. Significantly more Texas respondents believed their agent had been communicative and understanding (37 percent) than did Illinois respondents (9 percent), compared with 24 percent of Ohio respondents.

13. Although the data do not reveal whether these respondents meant their parole officer had done nothing at all or simply nothing respondents found helpful, further analysis of this question showed that respondents who said their parole officer had done nothing helpful had shorter meetings and less frequent phone contact with their officers than did those who identified something helpful.

14. Far more Illinois (94 percent) and Ohio (95 percent) parolees had the requirement of consenting to search of one's person, residence, or property, compared with less than a third (31 percent) of Texas parolees.

15. The percentage who reported violating a condition varied significantly across states, from 12 percent in Illinois to 28 percent in Ohio and 39 percent in Texas.

16. Significantly higher percentages of Ohio respondents reported violating conditions of avoiding places where controlled substances were used (17 percent) and attending drug/alcohol treatment (17 percent) than did Illinois respondents (1 and 3 percent, respectively).

17. Recall that we used multivariate regression to conduct this analysis and included controls measuring respondent state, age, race, education, prior prison term, preprison employment, substance use, marriage, children, postprison drug treatment, and time since release.

18. A full list of scale items and Cronbach's alpha reliabilities (all above 0.70) is available upon request. Family scales ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree with 4 equaling more positive feelings.

19. Approximately a fifth of the sample was excluded from these percentages because they did not know how much longer they would live at their current location.

20. Table 1 shows estimated or predicted outcomes for those on and off supervision and for those who scored high and low on the parole officer scale. These estimates were calculated from regression models that statistically controlled for respondent characteristics and state.

21. Intoxication was defined as "drinking alcohol to the point of being drunk."

22. In Texas, criminal records were also collected from state jails.

23. Regression models analyzing recidivism outcomes controlled for two-month-out employment and substance use in addition to the controls described previously. However, even without these additional controls, parole's effect (or lack thereof) on recidivism outcomes remained the same.

24. Also, respondents who indicated that their parole officer had done at least one specific thing helpful to them (e.g., provided encouragement, helped with job search) two months out were less likely to return to prison in the year following release.

25. Actual interview times varied across respondents and states; thus, all multivariate results presented in later sections control for time since release.

26. This number excludes nine respondents who were reincarcerated before their first interview was conducted.

27. Weights larger than four were truncated to four to avoid skewness of results. When the final weights were applied, the analyzed sample showed comparability to the initial sample across all prerelease characteristics analyzed and on 12 month reincarceration data.

28. For example, we examined the extent to which substance abuse programming—while on supervision—affected recidivism outcomes. Although results implied that supervision plus treatment yielded the lowest rate of self-reported crime, this relationship only approached significance ($p=.06$) and was inconsistent: those who received neither treatment nor supervision also showed a low recidivism rate. Given that our measure of substance abuse treatment consisted primarily of AA/NA, rather than any regimented inpatient or outpatient treatment program, this finding was perhaps not so surprising.