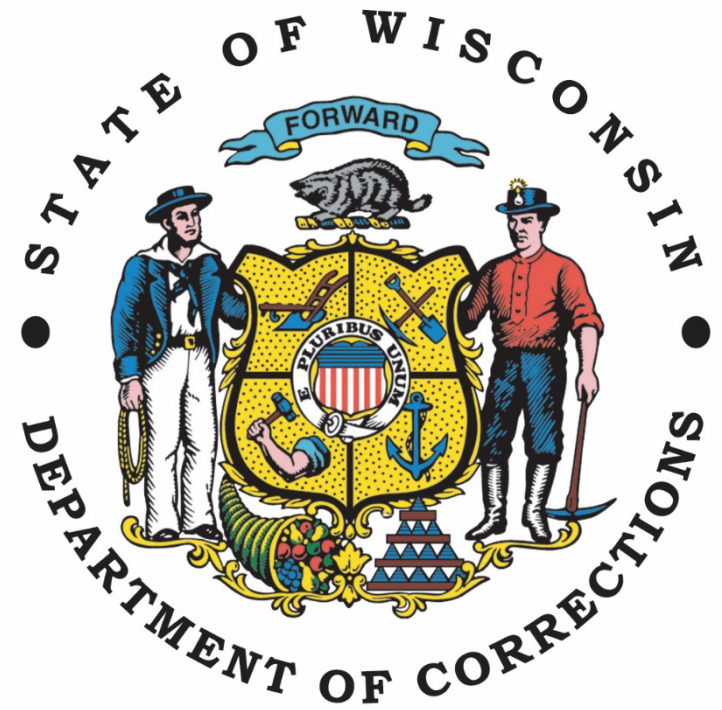
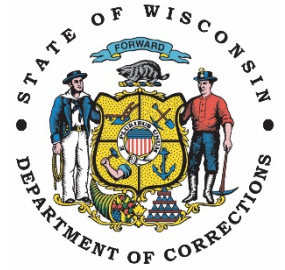


Explaining sex offender recidivism: *Accounting for differences in correctional supervision*

ZACH BAUMGART, CARISA BERGNER, MEGAN JONES

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS





An interest in sexual offending

There is a fundamental interest in reducing, preventing, and eliminating sexual offending

“In the contemporary United States, individuals convicted of committing sexual offenses experience a higher level and intensity of public condemnation, and a greater degree of stigmatization and forfeiture of their civil liberties, than any other type of criminal offender, nonviolent or violent”

- *(Pickett, Mancini, & Mears, 2013)*

Laws targeting sexual offending have been passed, then substantially strengthened in the 1990s

- Sex offender registration
- Community notification
- Civil commitment of violent sexual offenders
- Residency restrictions



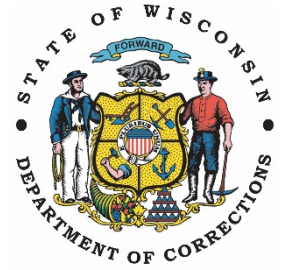
However, sex offenders are less likely to recidivate than non-sex offenders

Prior research has repeatedly shown a comparatively lower rate of general recidivism for sex offenders, relative to non-sex offenders:

- Alper & Durose (2019) found that 66.9% of violent sex offenders were re-arrested for a new crime within nine years, relative to 84.1% of all other offenders
- Tewksbury et al. (2012) found in a sample of New Jersey releases, the re-arrest rate was 58% for non-sex offenders, 23% for sex offenders
- Hanson & Bussiere (1998) found this trend to hold in a meta-analysis of 61 different studies

Sex offenders are **more** likely to sexually reoffend than are non-sex offenders

- Most recently, Alper & Durose (2019) found that, within 9 years, 7.7% of violent sex offenders reoffended with a new sexual offense, relative to 2.3% of non-sex offenders
- However, these rates are quite low relative to general reoffending, and in absolute terms, there are more non-sex offenders sexually reoffending than there are sex offenders

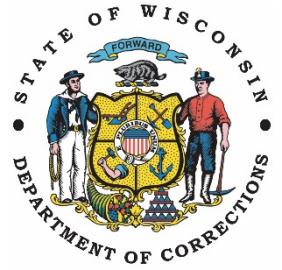


Why is this rate lower?

Explanations are limited

1. Sexual offending is easier to hide
2. Sexual offending is more poorly reported
 - Fisher et al. (2003) found that while nearly 700 students experienced some kind of sexual victimization in their lives, only 2.1% of those incidents were reported to police agencies

This project tests three explanations of this trend



Explanation 1: A demographic artifact

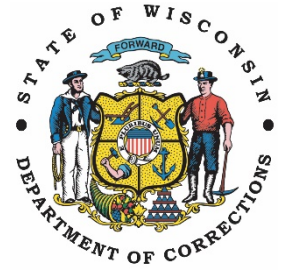
The relationship is the result of the statistically different characteristics between the two groups

Sex offenders, relative to non-sex offenders, tend to:

- Be more likely to be white
- Have a higher level of educational attainment
- Have a higher mean age

Prior studies have shown lower rates of criminal justice system involvement for each of these demographic categories

Hypothesis 1: Controlling for age, race, and educational attainment, there will be no significant difference between sex offender and non-sex offender general recidivism



Explanation 2: A difference in treatment

Treatment programming continues to drive correctional interventions within institutional settings

Differences in treatments are associated with difference in recidivism reduction by:

- Size of the reduction
- Characteristics of the offender
- Treatment area

In regards to sex offender treatment, fairly positive results found in terms of recidivism reduction (Schmucker & Lösel, 2015)

Hypothesis 2: Sex offenders who have completed SOT will have a significantly lower rate of recidivism compared to sex offenders who have not completed SOT



Explanation 3: A difference in community supervision

Sex offenders are supervised much more strictly than are non-sex offenders

- Legal statutes layered on top of correctional policies

As a part of this tighter supervision, sex offenders may be revoked more often than non-sex offenders

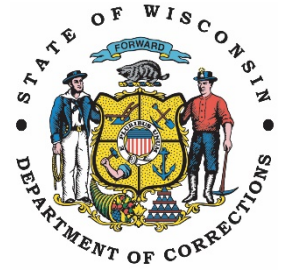
Perhaps this higher rate of revocation is related to reduced recidivism

- Through simple incapacitation
- Through sanctions that are applied before criminal behavior occurs
- Through some other mechanism

Hypothesis 3: When no-new sentence revocations are accounted for, there will be no difference in recidivism rates between sex offenders and non-sex offenders



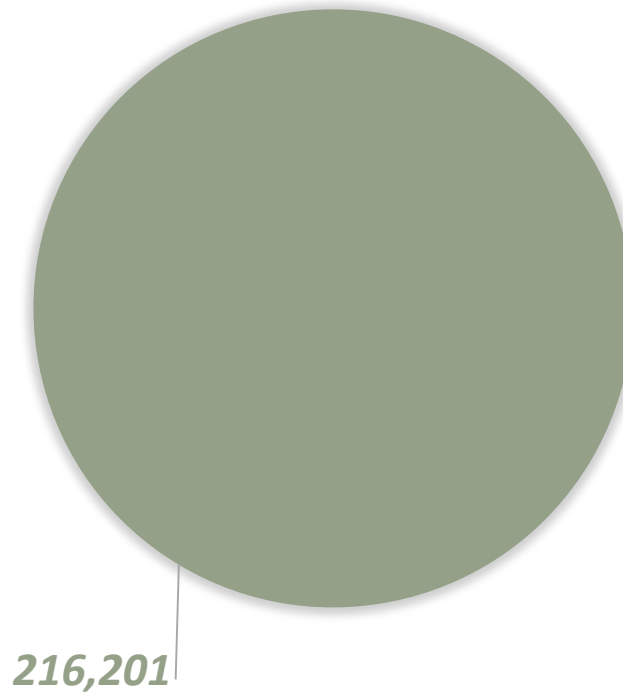
Methods

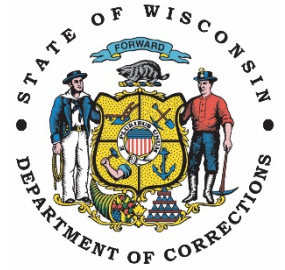


Sample of releases

All releases of men from
WIDOC institutions, between
1990 and 2013

INITIAL SAMPLE



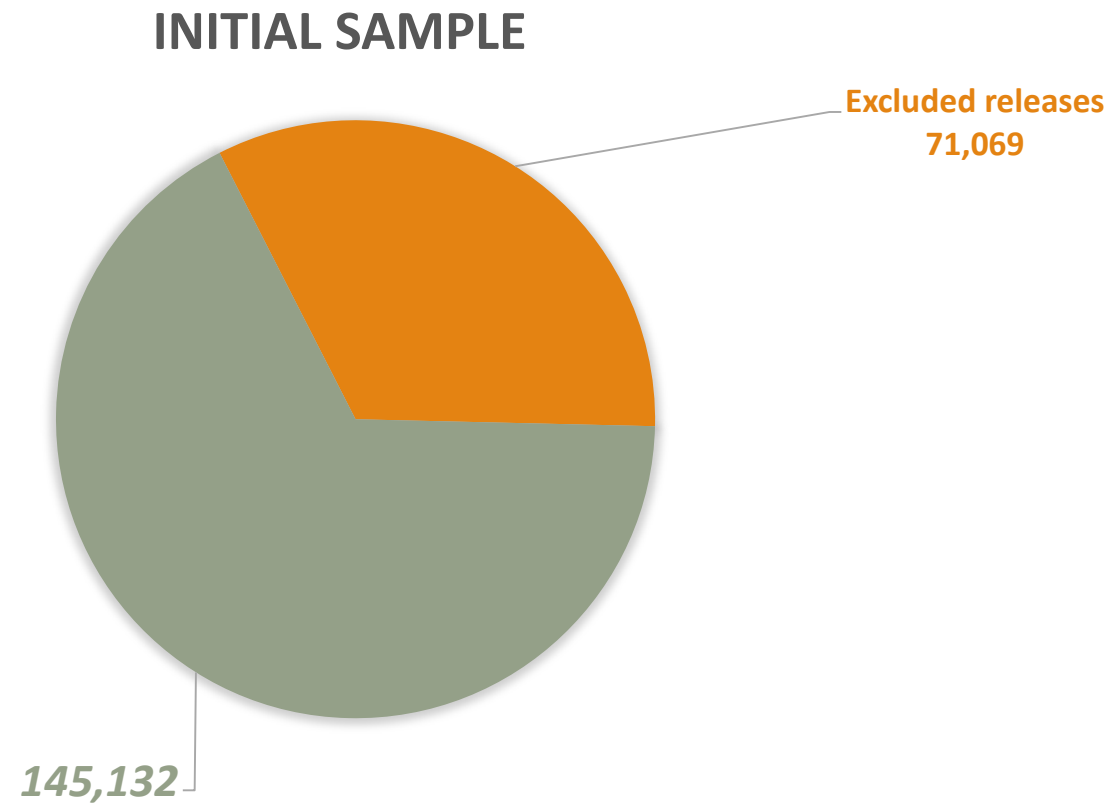


Sample of releases

All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations



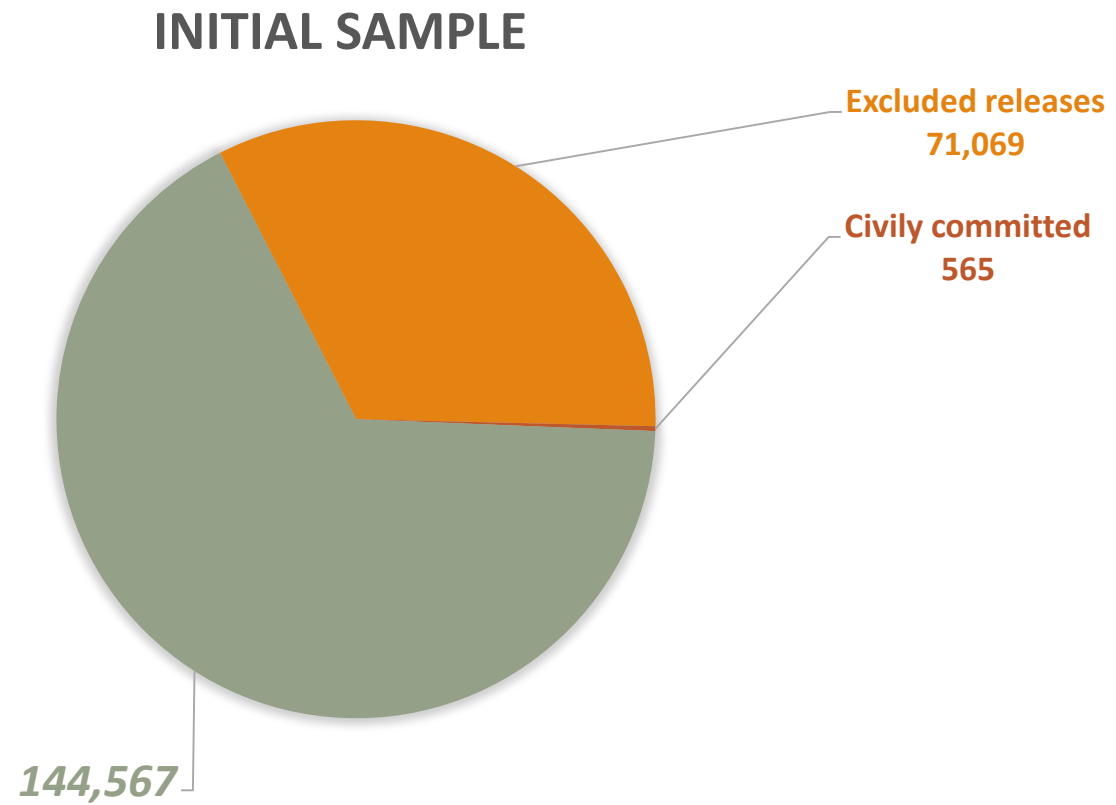


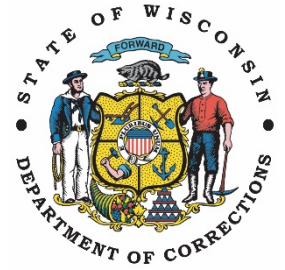
Sample of releases

All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations
- Civil commitments



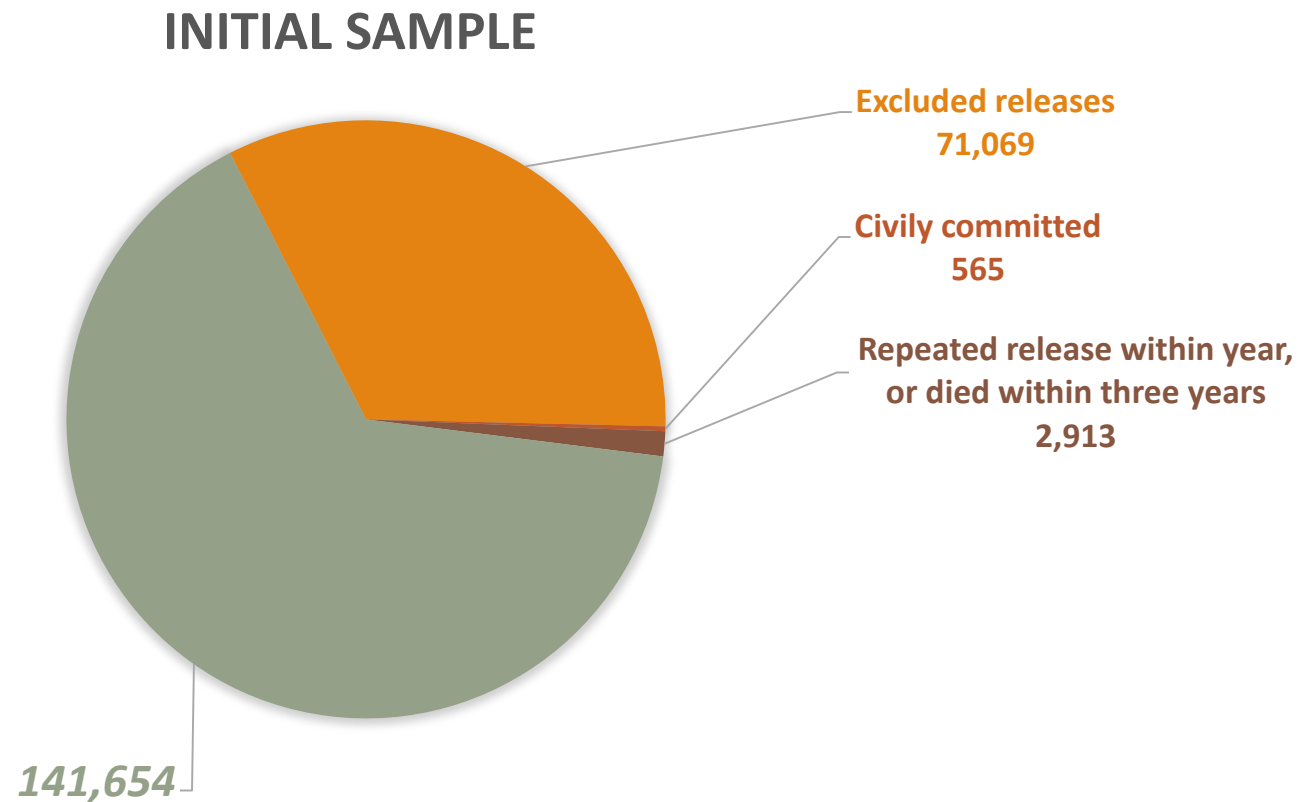


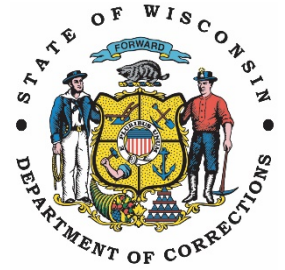
Sample of releases

All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations
- Civil commitments
- Multiple releases in a year
- Death within three years



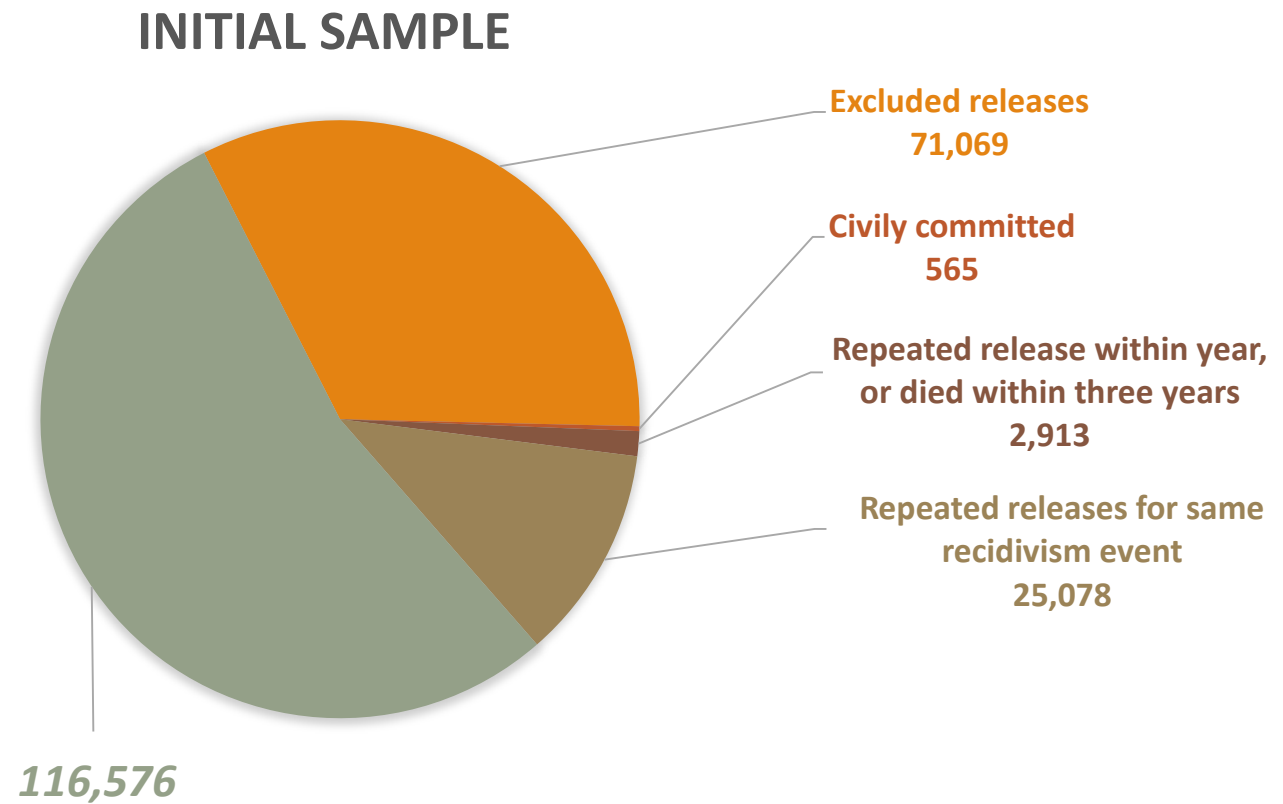


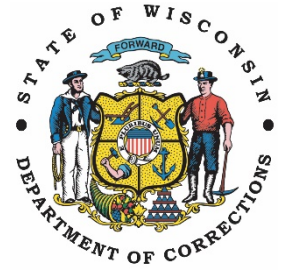
Sample of releases

All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations
- Civil commitments
- Multiple releases in a year
- Death within three years
- Multiple release for same recidivism event



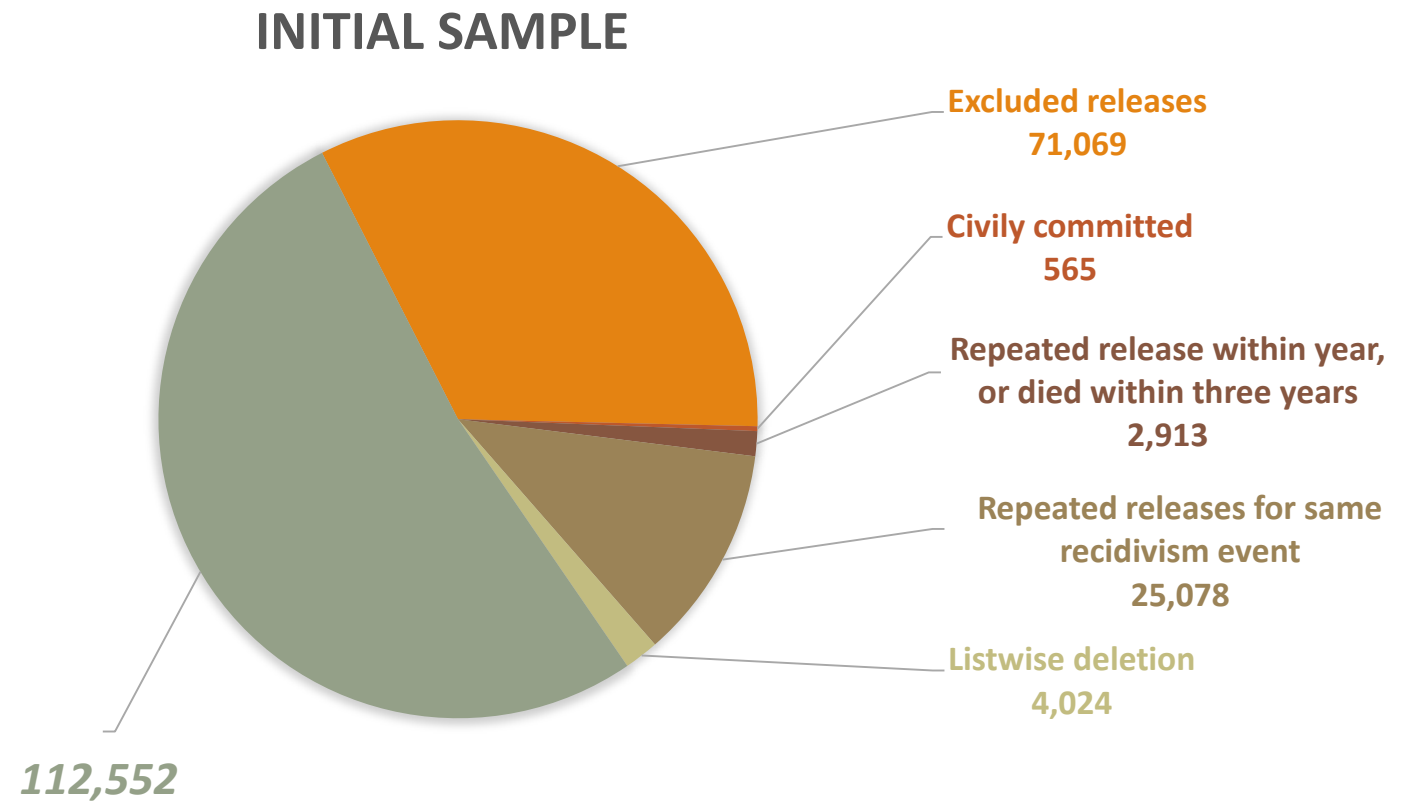


Sample of releases

All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations
- Civil commitments
- Multiple releases in a year
- Death within three years
- Multiple release for same recidivism event
- List-wise deletion





Sample of releases

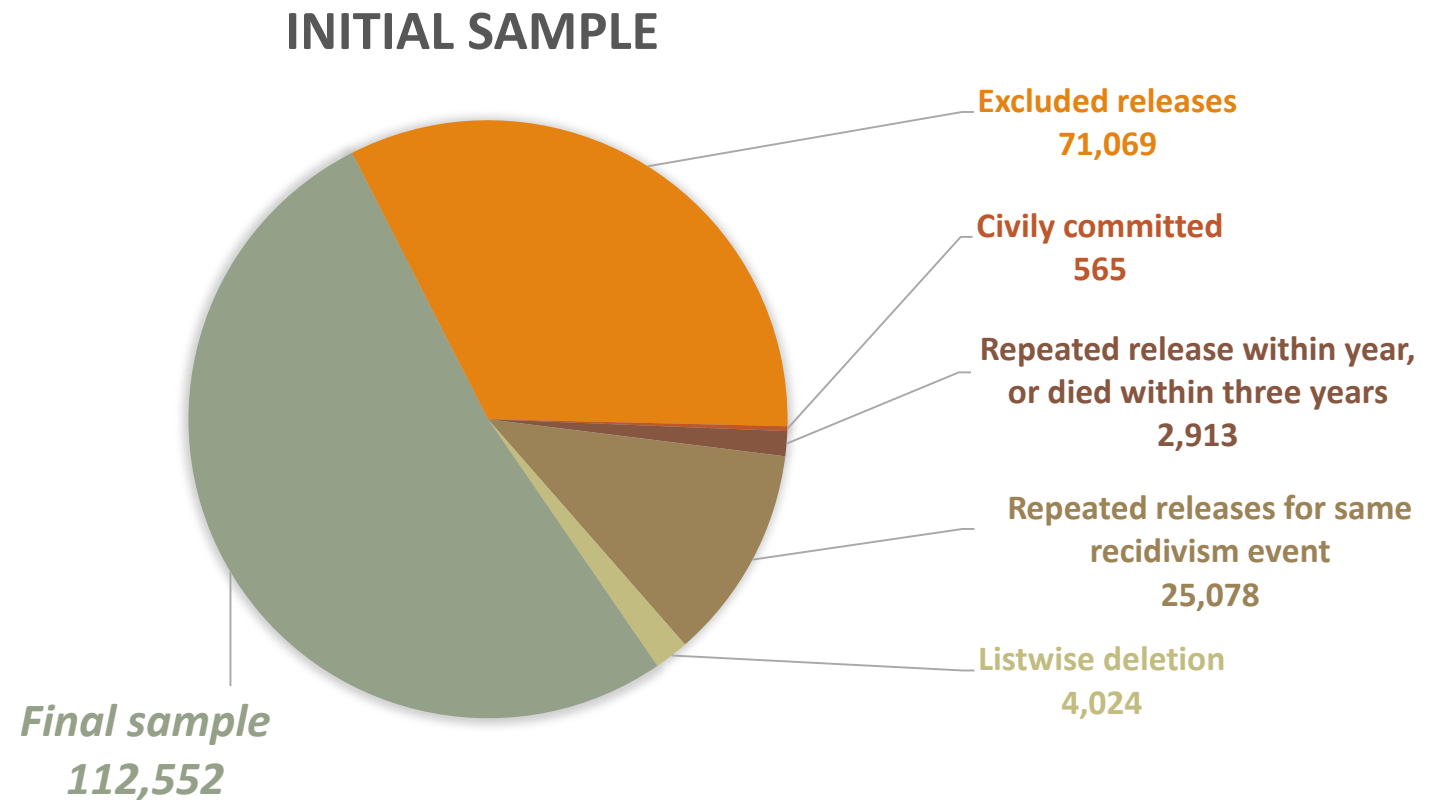
All releases of men from WIDOC institutions, between 1990 and 2013

Removals

- Releases from new sentences or from revocations
- Multiple releases in a year
- Death within three years
- Civil Commitment
- Multiple release for same recidivism event
- List-wise deletion

112,552 releases

- 76,905 unique offenders



Recidivism: as reconviction

- A. Release from incarceration
- B. 3 – 27 years
- C. 3 – 27 years
- D. Offense date, related to a conviction to WIDOC incarceration or supervision

General recidivism used over sexual recidivism

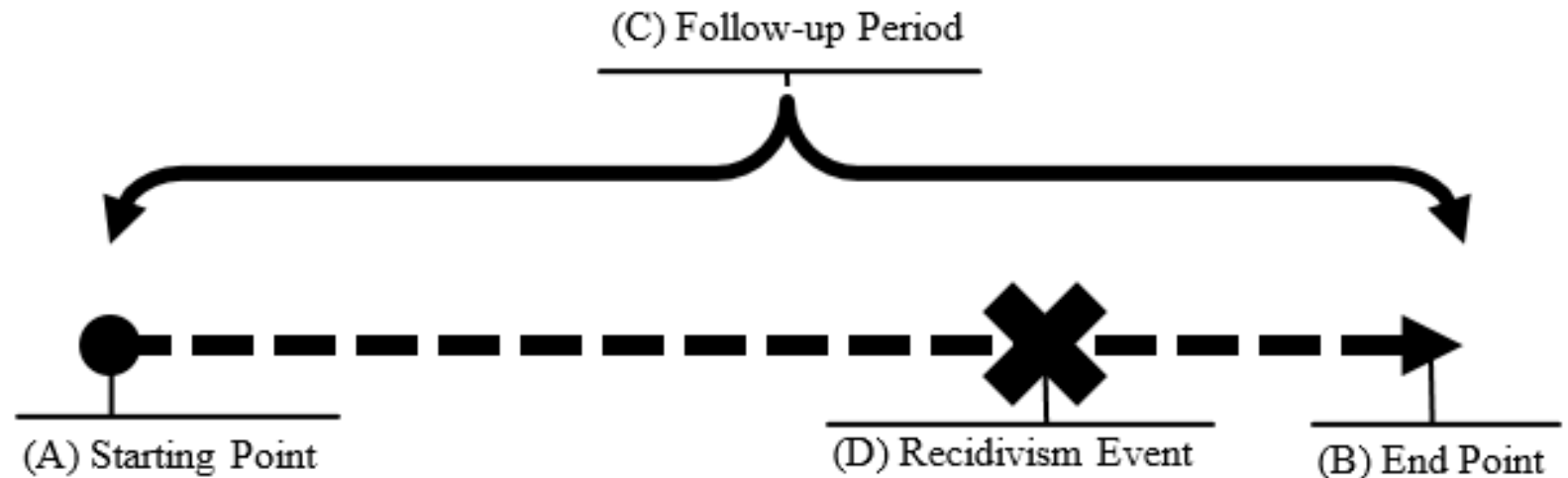
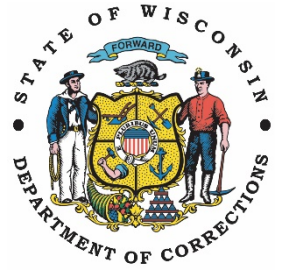
Sexual recidivism tends to be very low

They follow similar patterns

Also looked at two other measures, where only the recidivism event changes:

Reincarceration – a new admission to WIDOC incarceration

Rearrest – a new arrest in Wisconsin

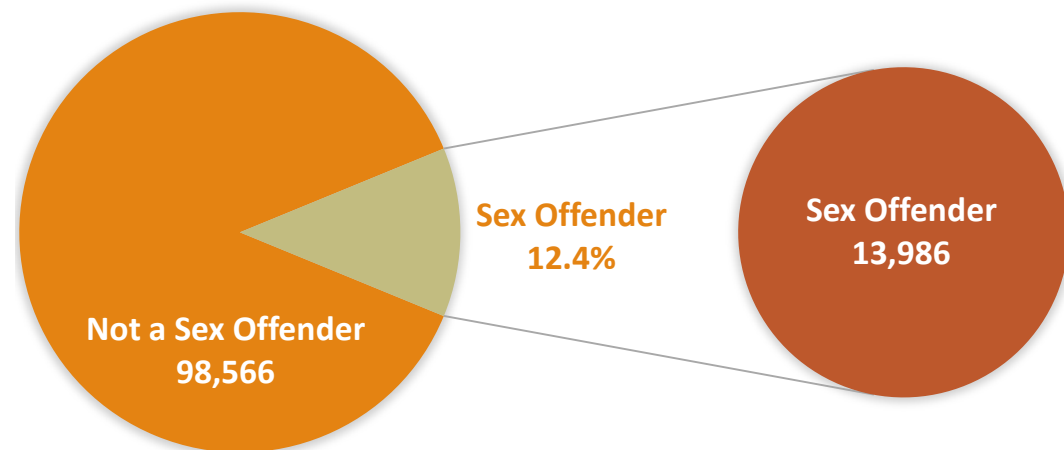


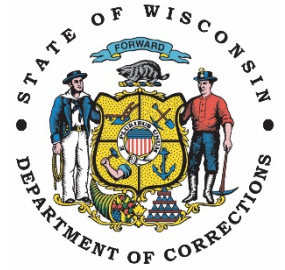


Sex offender status

13,986 releases

- 11,422 unique sex offenders





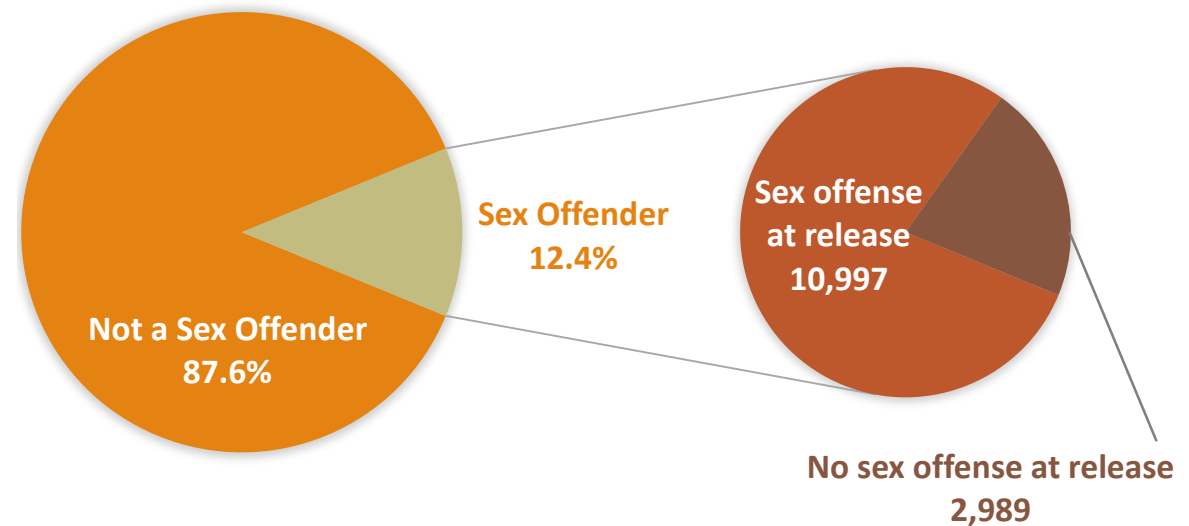
Sex offender status

13,986 releases

- 11,422 unique sex offenders

Sex offense at release

- Must have been released for an active sex offense
- Based mostly on UCR categories and WI registry offenses





Sex offender status

13,986 releases

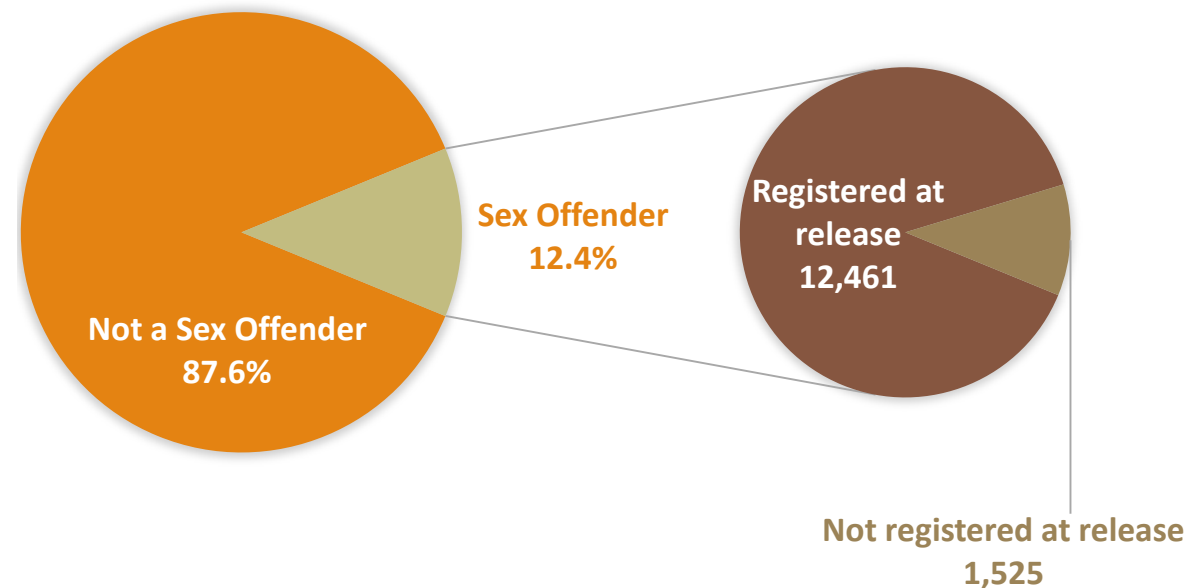
- 11,422 unique sex offenders

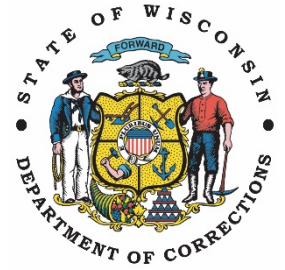
Sex offense at release

- Must have been released for an active sex offense
- Based mostly on UCR categories and WI registry offenses

Registered as sex offender at release

- Captures those missed by the first status
- Must have been registered within seven days after release from community supervision





Sex offender status

13,986 releases

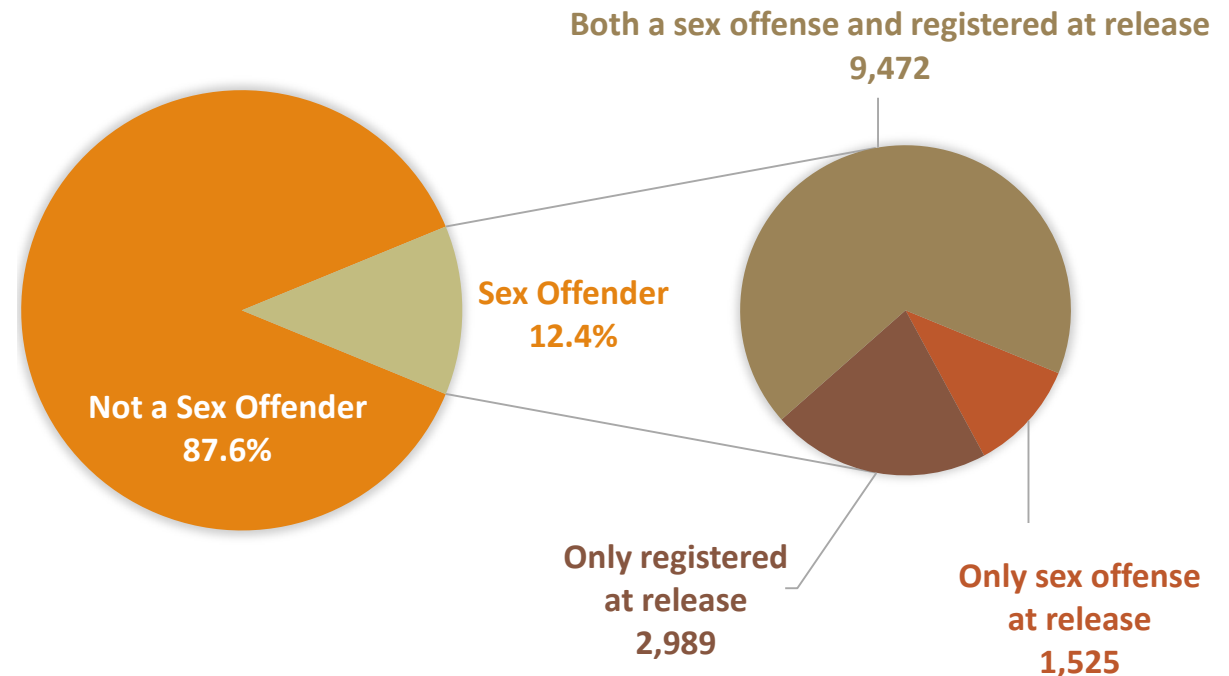
- 11,422 unique sex offenders

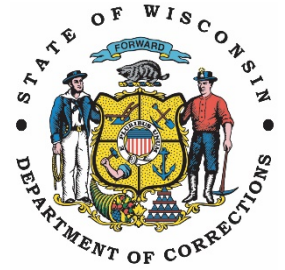
Sex offense at release

- Must have been released for an active sex offense
- Based mostly on UCR categories and WI registry offenses

Registered as sex offender at release

- Captures those missed by the first status
- Must have been registered within seven days after release from community supervision





Other variables

Sex offender treatment

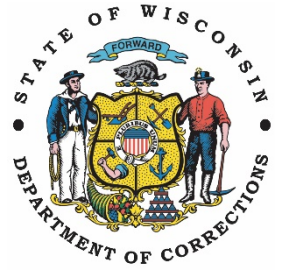
- Focus on 2010 – 2013
- Must have completed while incarcerated, prior to release
- Only tracking completion for a given release

Revocation

- As a type of reincarceration
- As a flag, some time after release

Features gathered at intake, from the offender

- Race, age, education level



Analysis technique

Survival analysis

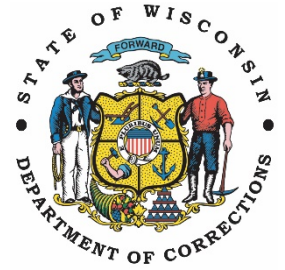
- Controls for differences in follow-up periods
- Controls for differences in when tracking begins and ends
- Standard for predicting likelihood of an event occurring at some point in the future

Logistic regression, with fixed follow-up periods

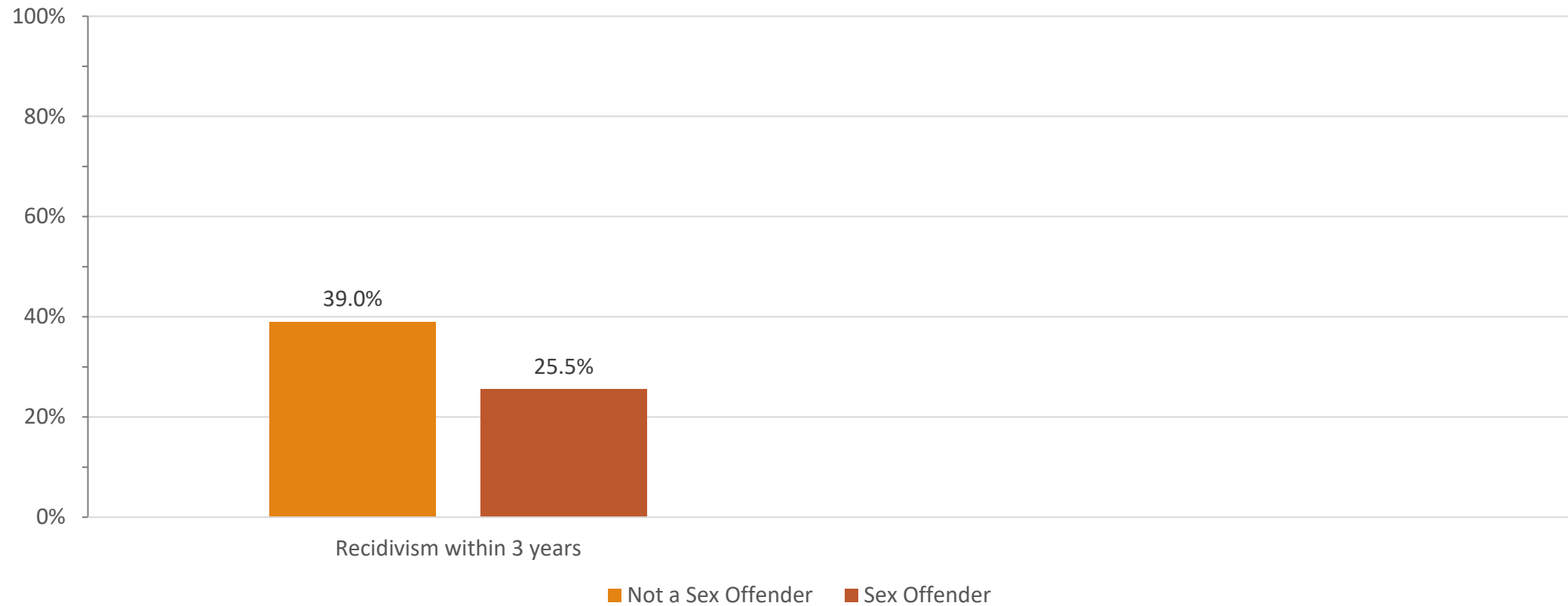
- As a secondary check on the robustness of the survival analysis
- Easier for interpretation



Results

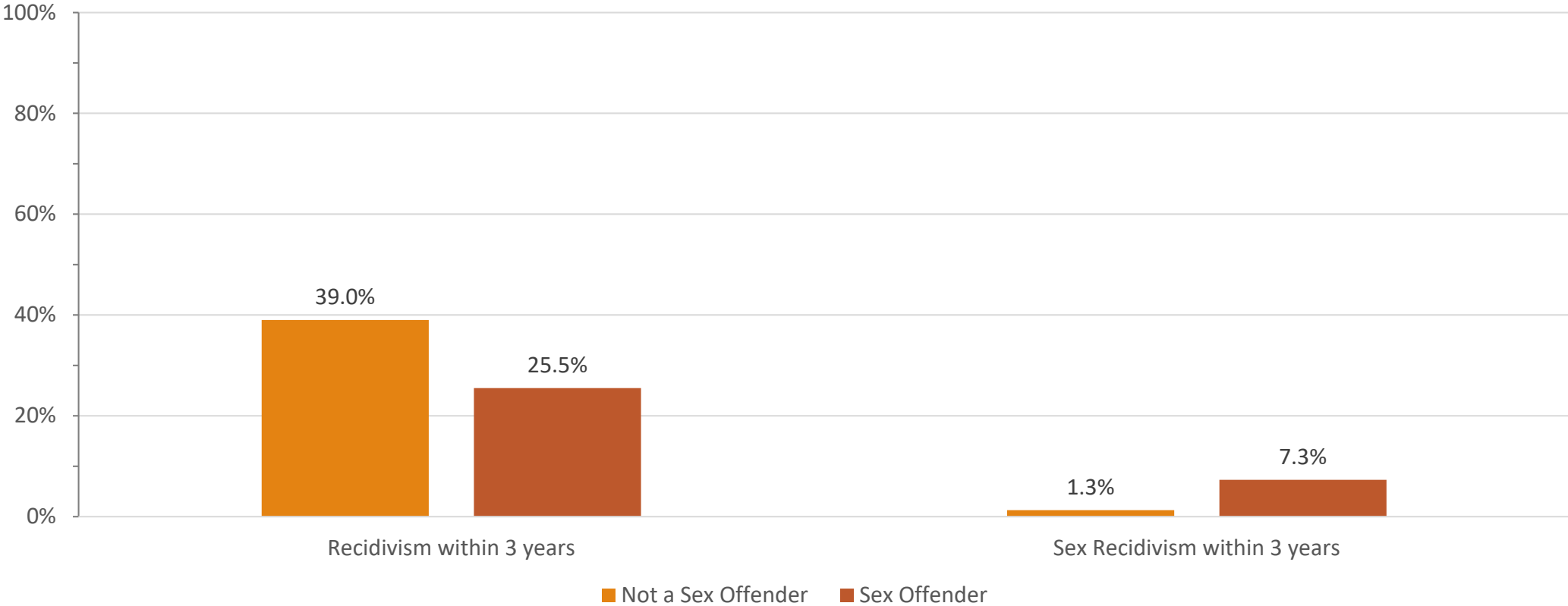


Difference in Recidivism





Difference in Recidivism



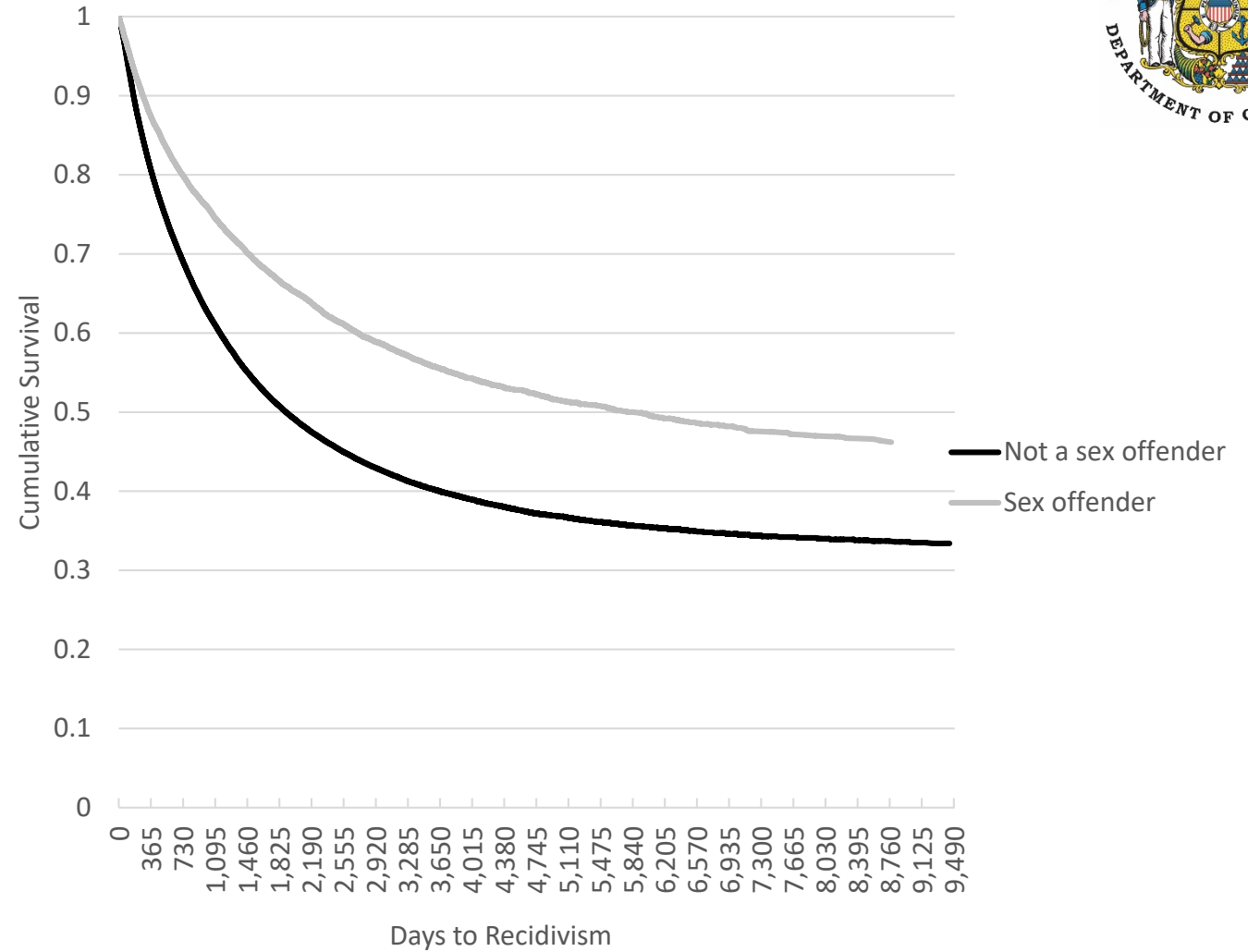


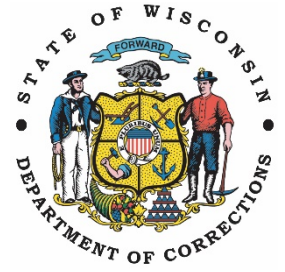
Kaplan-Meier Survival Curve of Recidivism

Very similar in size to what other studies had shown

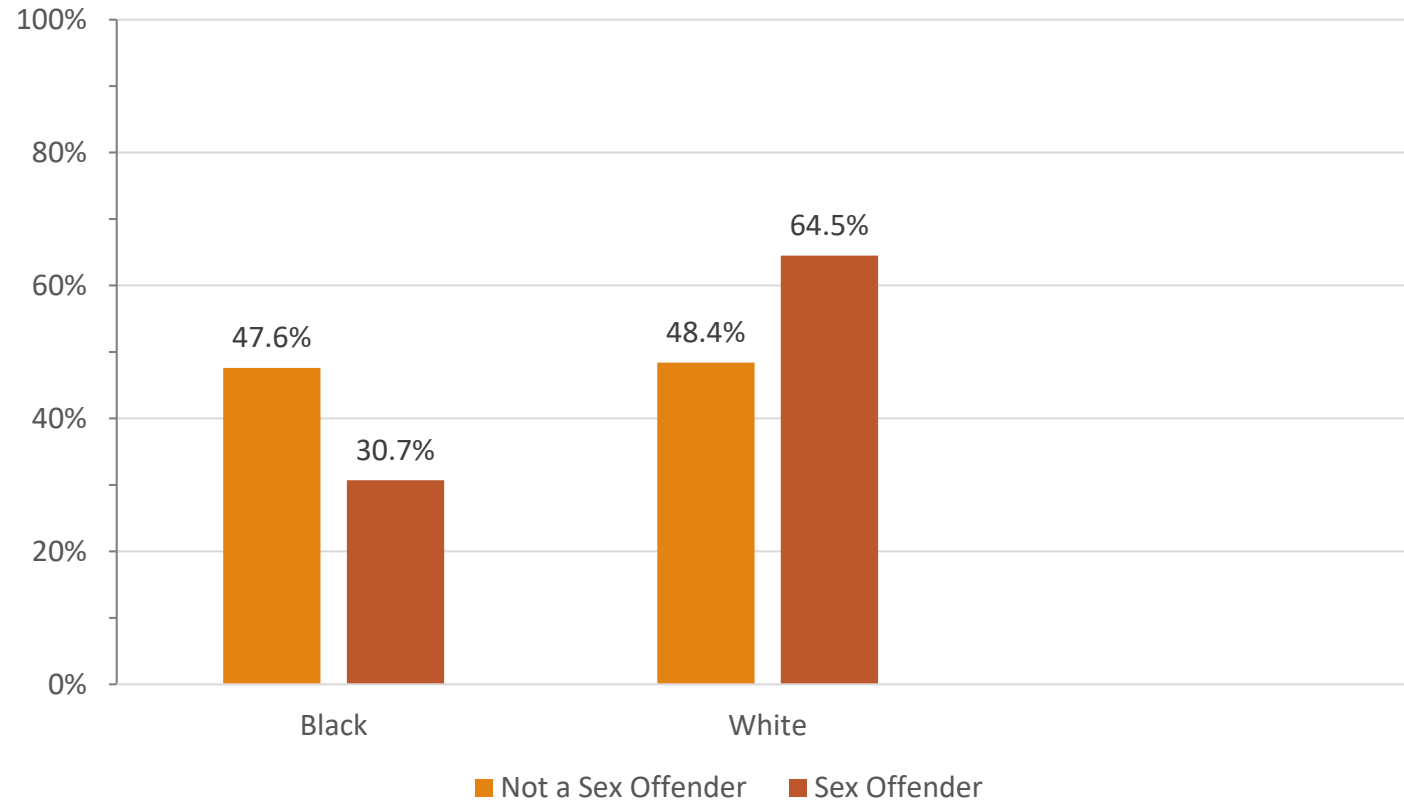
Risk to recidivate diverges sharply within the first few years, then stabilizes over time

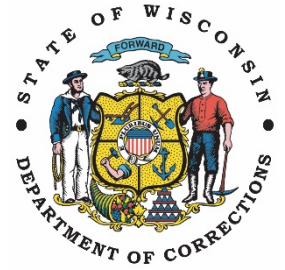
Sex offenders have a lower risk of recidivating than non-sex offenders, in general, over time



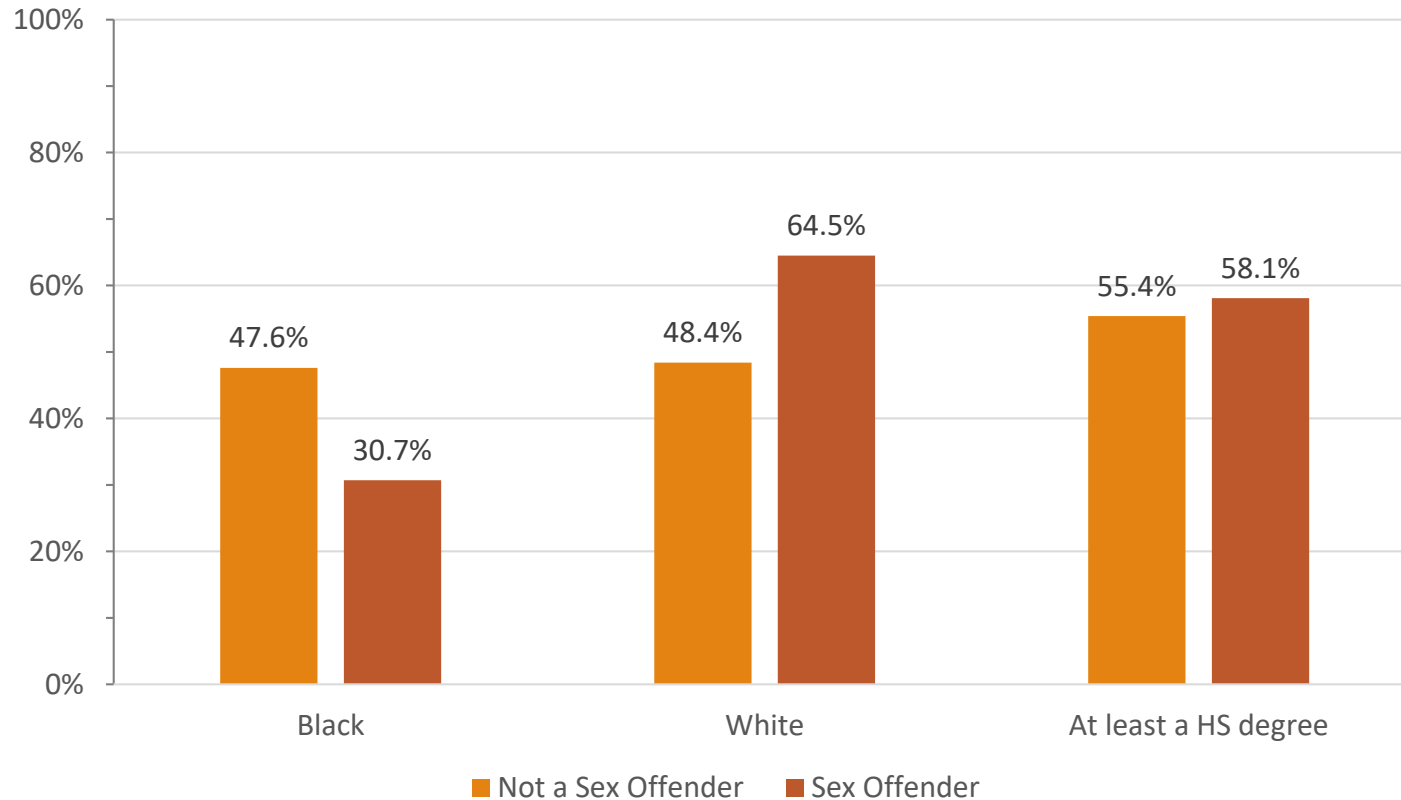


Explanation 1: A demographic artifact



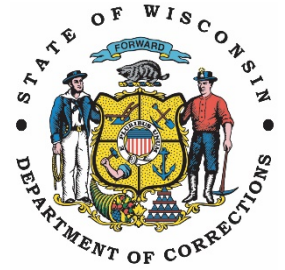


Explanation 1: A demographic artifact



Median Age

- Not a sex offender → 30
- Sex offenders → 33



Explanation 1

A demographic artifact

Sex offenders were more likely to be white, have a higher level of educational attainment, and to be older

Each of these effects were independently associated with the risk to recidivate

But controlling for these effects did not change the relationship between sex offender status and recidivism

Little evidence in favor of this explanation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Sex Offender</i>	-0.445*** (.013)	-0.346*** (.013)	-0.446*** (.017)
<i>Demographics</i>			
Age*		-0.027*** (.000)	-0.028*** (.001)
Race†: Black		.154*** (.008)	.169*** (.012)
Race: All other		.270*** (.019)	.270*** (.019)
At least HS Education		.055*** (.008)	.101*** (.012)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Age X Education			.006*** (.001)
Black X Education			-.067*** (.016)
Age X Sex offender			-.017*** (.001)
Black X Sex offender			.247*** (.028)
Model Parameters			
Log Likelihood	-727,256.08	-724,995.12	-724,857.78
df	1	5	9
N	112,552	112,552	112,552
DEV	1,454,512.16	1,449,990.25	1,449,715.55
BIC	1,454,523.80	1,450,048.40	1,449,820.23
AIC	1,454,514.16	1,450,000.25	1,449,733.55

* Age centered about sample mean.

† Race reference category = White.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Explanation 2

A difference in treatment

Focusing only on sex offender releases from 2010 – 2013

Individual effects have roughly the same relationship here as for the full sample

Sex offender treatment was negatively associated with general recidivism

However, only 13.8% of sex offenders actually completed SOT

There is a relationship, but unlikely to be driving the overall trend



	Model 4	Model 5
<i>Sex Offender</i>		
<i>Demographics</i>		
Age*	-.042*** (.006)	-.040*** (.006)
Race†: Black	.526*** (.111)	.512*** (.111)
Race: All other	.572*** (.128)	.565*** (.128)
At least HS Education	.152 (.090)	.162*** (.090)
<i>Interactions</i>		
Age X Education	.004 (.007)	.003 (.007)
Black X Education	-.159 (.142)	-.159 (.142)
Age X Sex offender		
Black X Sex offender		
<i>Rehabilitative Program</i>		
Completed SOT		-.794*** (.135)
Model Parameters		
Log Likelihood	-7,085.15	-7,063.31
df	6	7
N	3,069	3,069
DEV	14,170.31	14,126.63
BIC	14,218.48	14,182.83
AIC	14,182.31	14,140.63

* Age centered about sample mean.

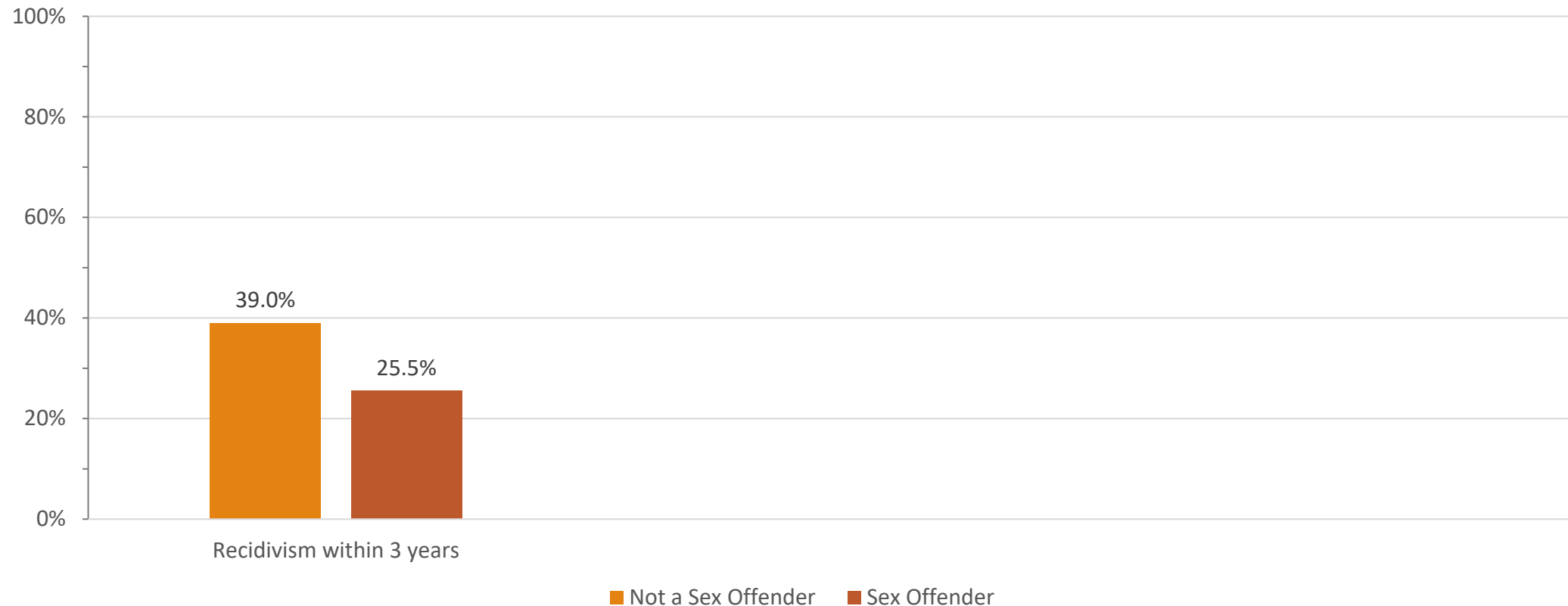
† Race reference category = White.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

ZACH BAUMGART - ZACHARY.BAUMGART@WISCONSIN.GOV

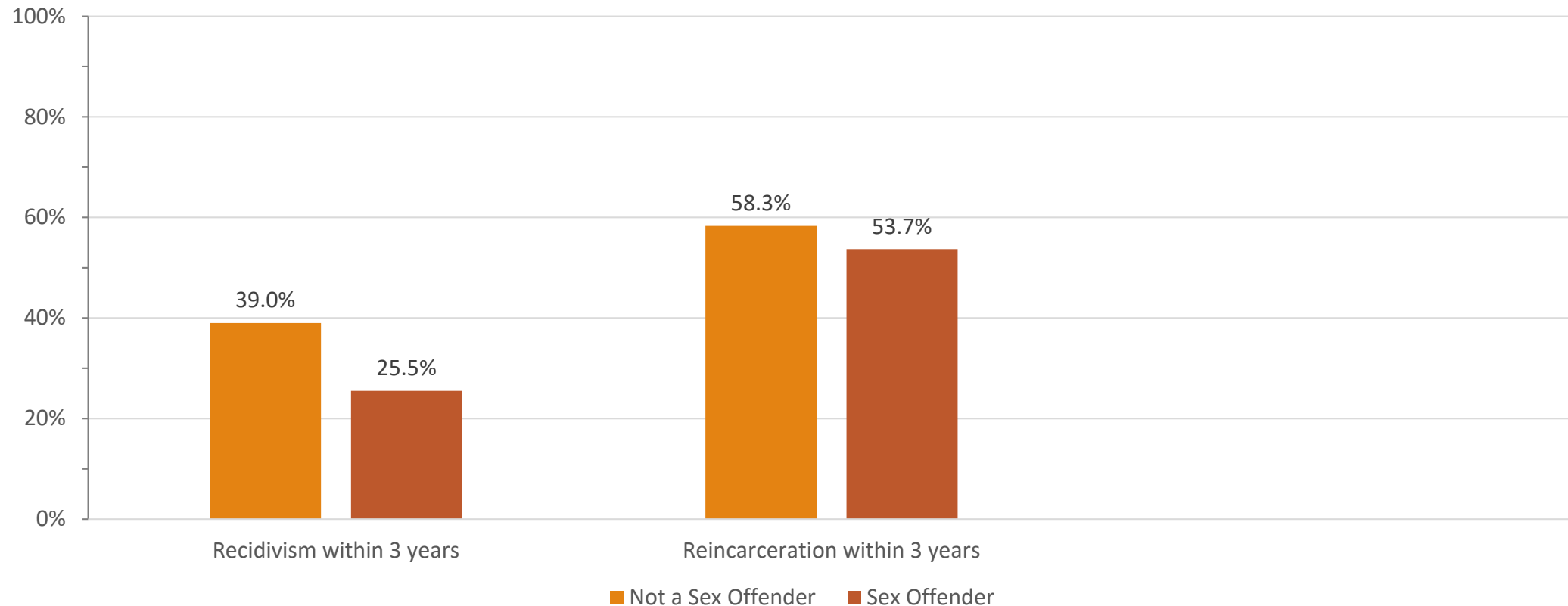


Explanation 3: A difference in community supervision





Explanation 3: A difference in community supervision

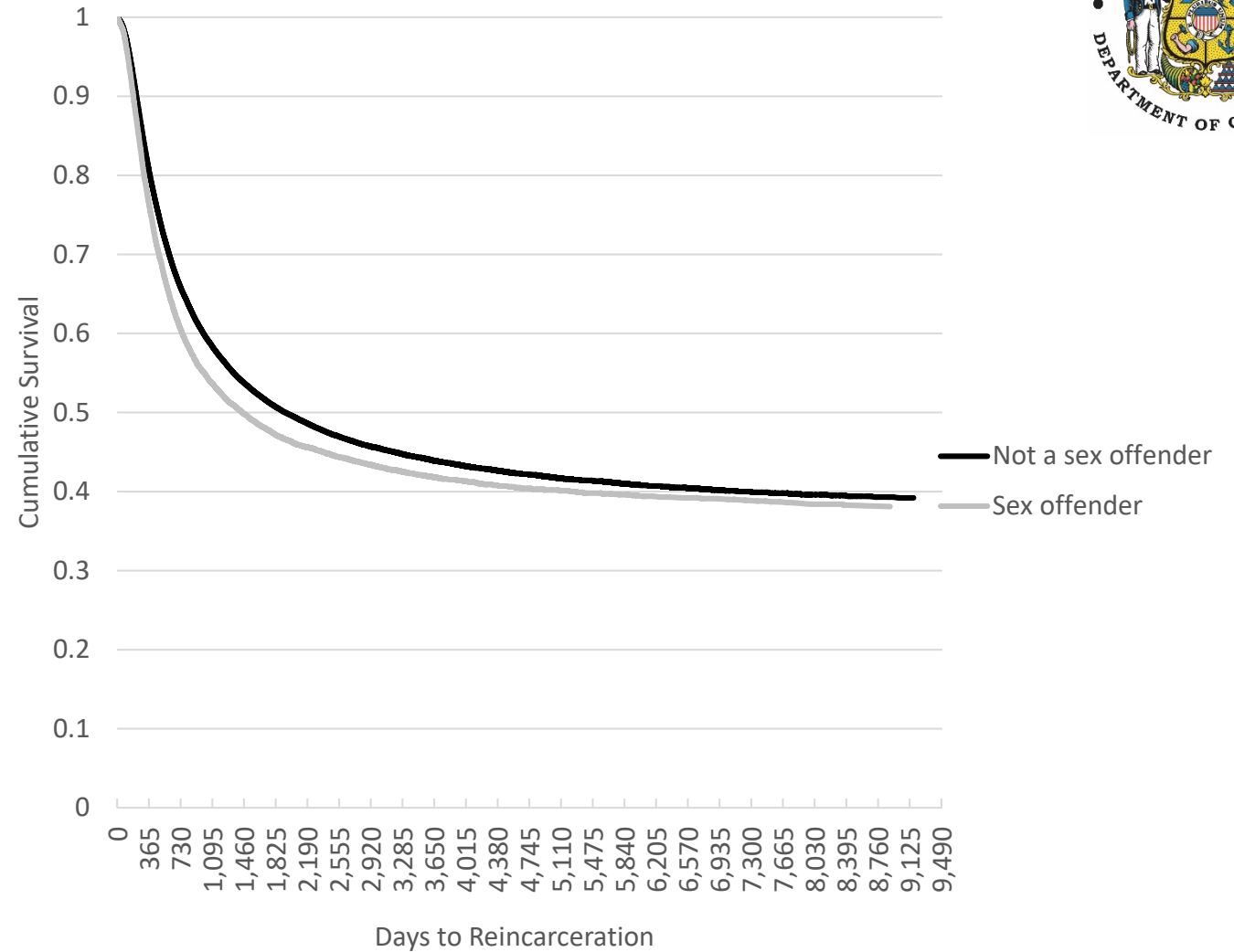
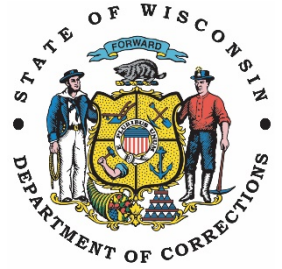


Explanation 3

A difference in supervision

Sex offenders had a higher risk to be reincarcerated than did non-sex offenders

But if we focus on reincarceration for JUST revocations without a new offense...



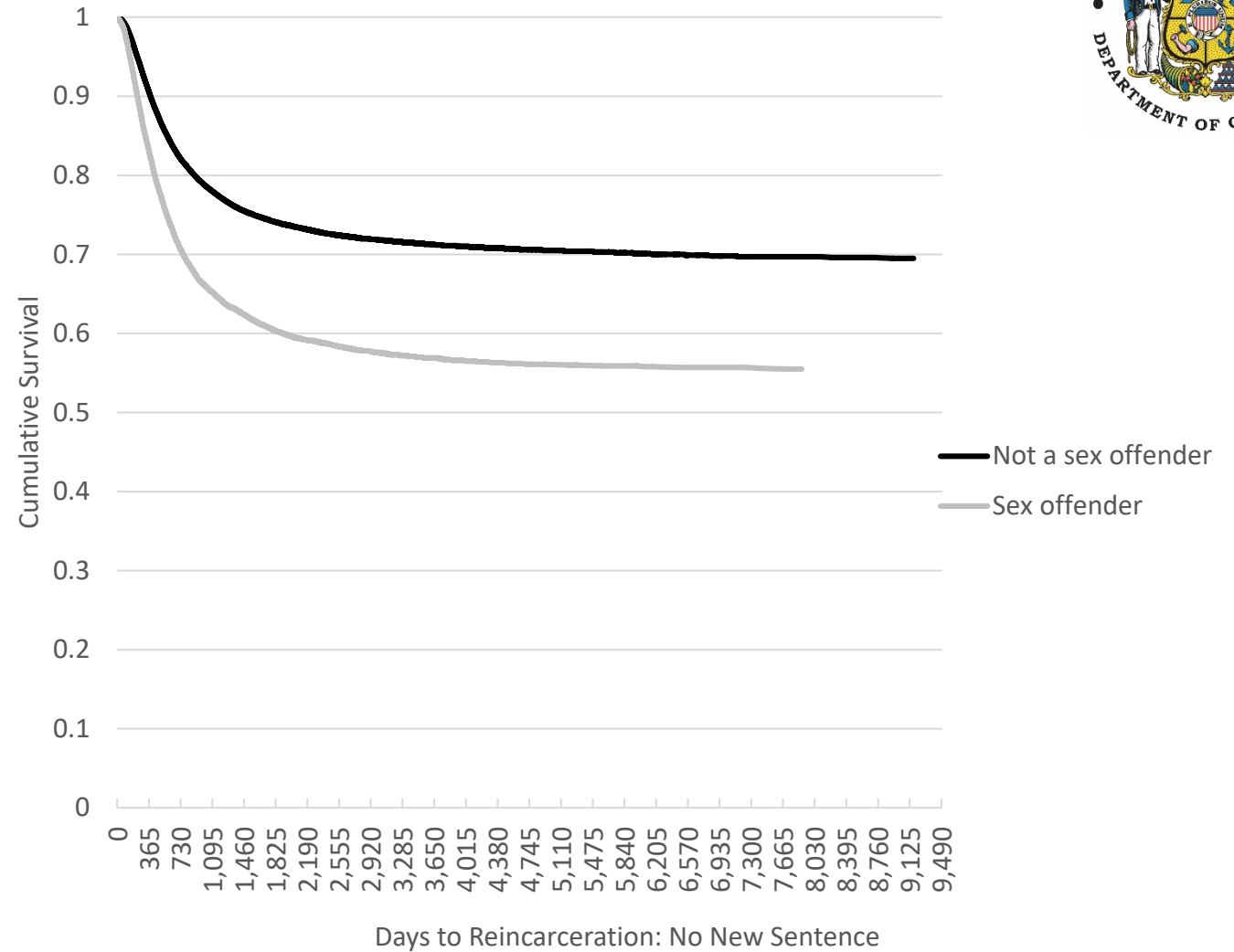
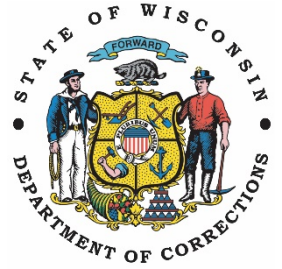
Explanation 3

A difference in supervision

Sex offenders had a higher risk to be reincarcerated than did non-sex offenders

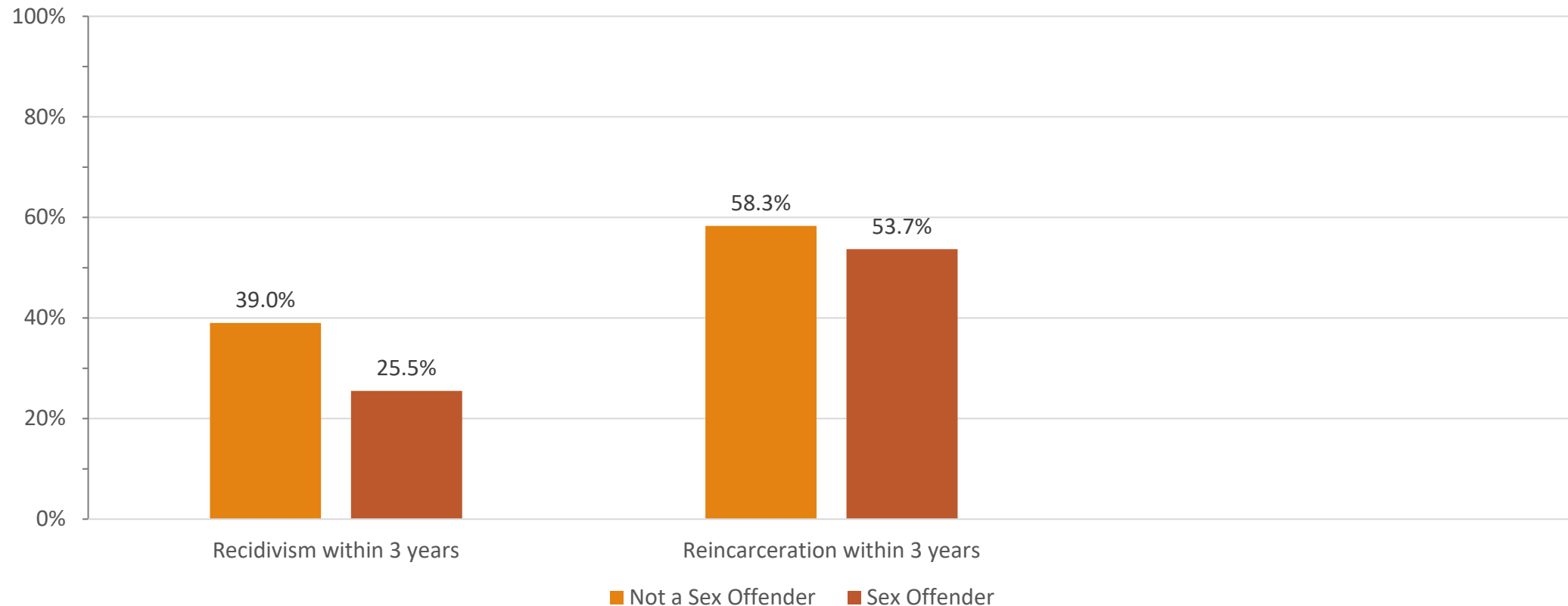
But if we focus on reincarceration for JUST revocations without a new offense...

Sex offenders had a higher risk to be reincarcerated than did non-sex offenders, specifically for no new sentence revocations



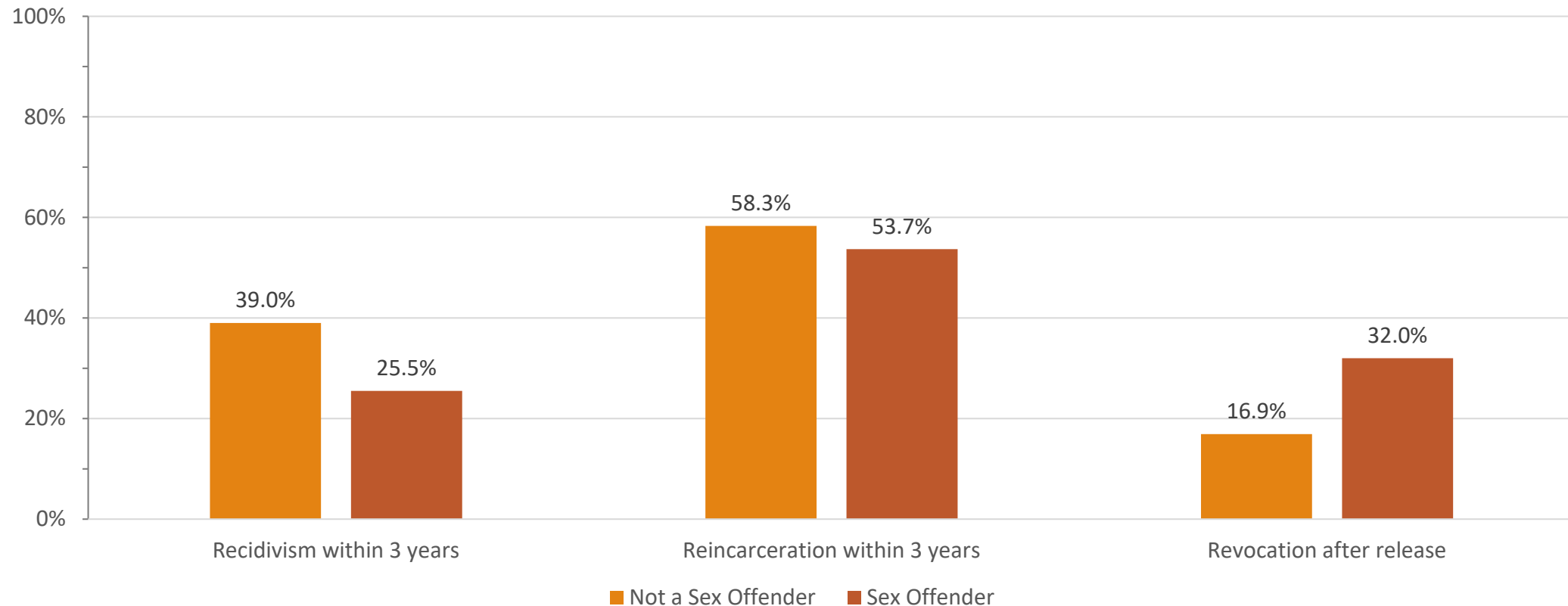


Explanation 3: A difference in community supervision





Explanation 3: A difference in community supervision



Explanation 3

A difference in supervision

Sex offenders had a higher risk to be reincarcerated than did non-sex offenders

Sex offenders had a higher risk to be reincarcerated than did non-sex offenders, specifically for no new sentence revocations

Being revoked was associated with a reduced risk to recidivate

Sex offender risk to recidivate decreased when revocation was added to model

Some evidence in favor of this explanation



	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Sex Offender</i>	-.445*** (.013)	-.346*** (.013)	-.446*** (.017)
<i>Demographics</i>			
Age*		-.027*** (.000)	-.028*** (.001)
Race†: Black		.154*** (.008)	.169*** (.012)
Race: All other		.270*** (.019)	.270*** (.019)
At least HS Education		.055*** (.008)	.101*** (.012)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Age X Education			.006*** (.001)
Black X Education			-.067*** (.016)
Age X Sex offender			-.017*** (.001)
Black X Sex offender			.247*** (.028)

Model Parameters

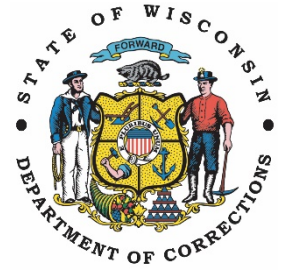
Log Likelihood	-727,256.08	-724,995.12	-724,857.78
df	1	5	9
N	112,552	112,552	112,552
DEV	1,454,512.16	1,449,990.25	1,449,715.55
BIC	1,454,523.80	1,450,048.40	1,449,820.23
AIC	1,454,514.16	1,450,000.25	1,449,733.55

* Age centered about sample mean.

† Race reference category = White.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

ZACH BAUMGART - ZACHARY.BAUMGART@WISCONSIN.GOV



Additional tests

Performed a variety of checks of other variables

- Other offense categories, release/admission types, characteristics of release location
- Due to collinearity, many of these were excluded
- Others were excluded because they were out of scope

An analysis of rearrest

- Relationships with rearrest were very similar to relationships with recidivism (reconviction)

An analysis that included release year as a control

- General trend held, through size of difference varied somewhat across time



Conclusion

There was very little evidence in favor of demographic relationships playing an intervening role

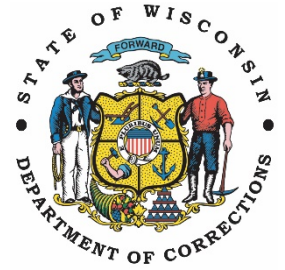
- However, these independent effects were systematically different between the two groups, which should not be disregarded

There was evidence that sex offender treatment reduced recidivism, but very few sex offenders actually completed treatment prior to release

- Should take what works from sex offender treatment, and apply it to other programs
- And obviously, expand sex offender treatment

Evidence that revocation played an important role in driving the relationship

- Though what it was about revocation was not tested
- Revocation was a proxy for differences in community supervision, and should not be taken as a direct effect



Future directions and contact info

1. Focus on sexual recidivism
2. Differences across types of sex offenders, non-sex offenders
3. Focus on the mechanisms through which these effects are realized
4. Use of release year effects

Thank you!

Zach Baumgart - Zachary.Baumgart@Wisconsin.gov

Carisa Bergner - Carisa.Bergner@Wisconsin.gov

Megan Jones - Megan.Jones@Wisconsin.gov