A Brief Snapshot of Women on Probation and Parole in South-Central Michigan

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With the assistance of 73 probation and parole agents, we recruited and interviewed 402 women from 16 counties in south-central Michigan. Of these, 305 were on probation, 93 were on parole, and 4 were on both.

Demographics

- Ages ranged from 18 to 60, with an average of 34
- 52 Married, 232 Dating
- 215 had children under age 18
- 140 were single parents

Race/Ethnicity

White 46%
White-Hispanic 3%
Black 34%
Black-Hispanic 3%
Multiracial 11%
Other 3%
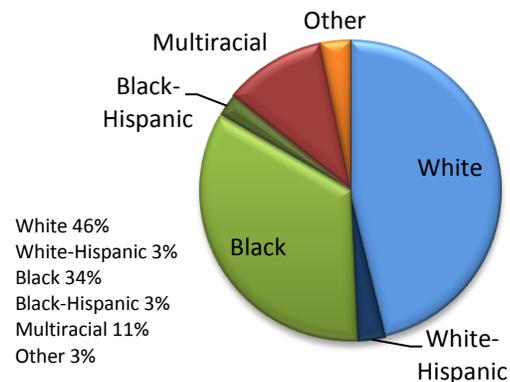
Criminal History of the Sample

- Age at first arrest ranged from 9 to 54 with an average of 23
- Number of misdemeanors ranged from 0 to 38 with an average of 3
- Number of other felonies: 216 had none, 80 had one or two others, 93 had three or more others
- 76 women reported previous arrests for violent felonies

Our first interview focused on assessing contextual, emotional, and personality factors that have been implicated as predictors of criminal justice outcomes.

Economic Standing

Employment:
- 220 Unemployed but able to work
- 112 Part-time or unable to work because of childcare
- 70 Employed Full-time

Income
- 327 had an annual income less than $10,000
- 57 had an annual income greater than $10,000
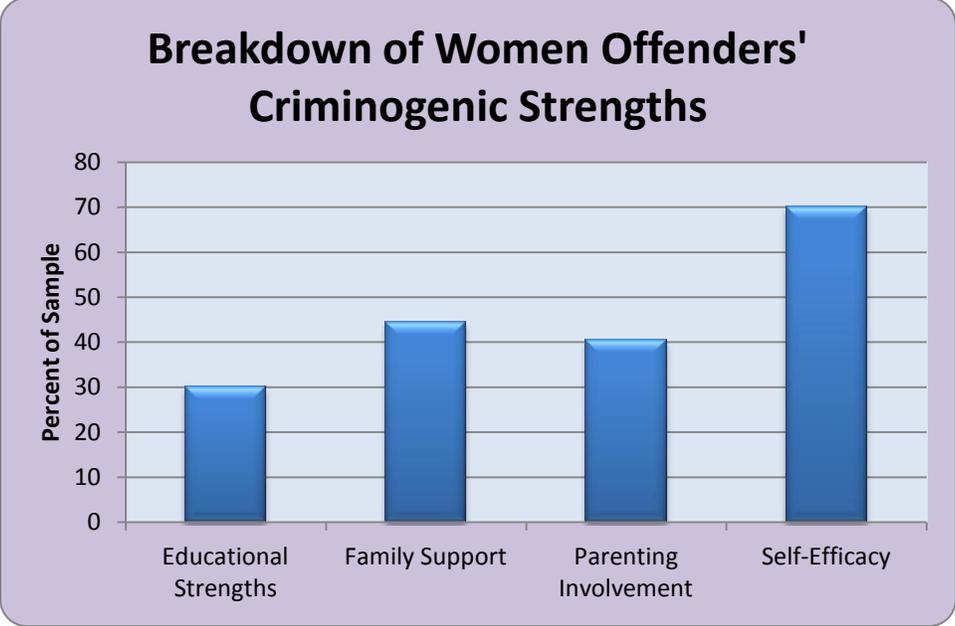
Criminogenic Needs & Risk of Recidivism

Risk of recidivism was measured with an instrument developed by the National Institute of Corrections and the University of Cincinnati to measure women offenders' needs that predict recidivism. This tool yields objective, numerical composite measures of crime-predicting needs (see e.g., Van Voorhis, Salisbury, Wright & Bauman, 2008). Based on this measure, the overall risk of recidivism was moderate to high for more than three-quarters of the sample (314 out of 402 women).

Risk of Recidivism
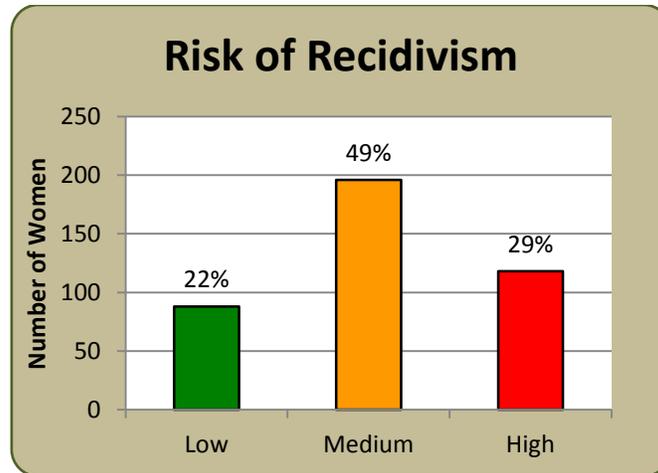
The chart below reports the percent of women who fall above the cutoff point for risks in a range of areas. As is apparent, employment/financial needs are most common, followed by abuse as an adult or child, substance abuse history, and mental illness.

Women Offenders' Criminogenic Needs
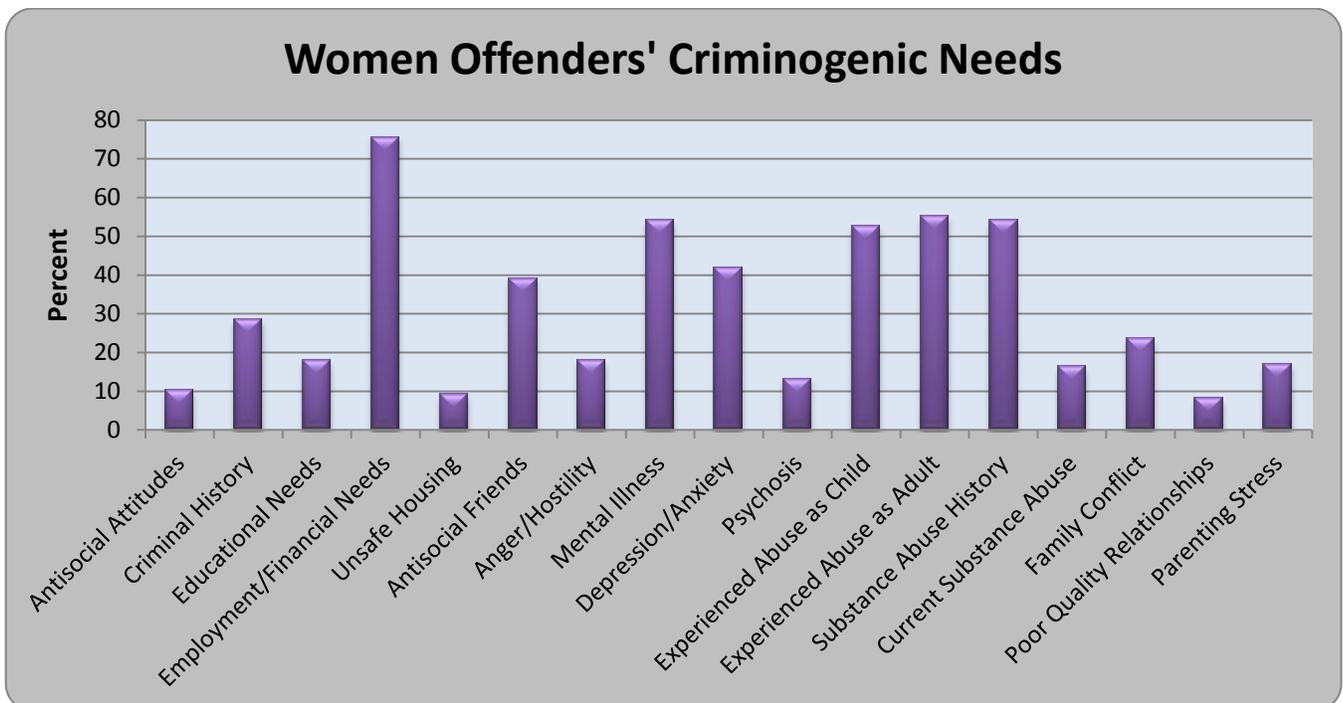
Our measure of criminogenic needs that predict recidivism also includes measures of four strengths that may counteract or compensate for risk factors. The chart below reports the percent of women who score high enough on each of four positive factors (educational strengths, family support, parenting involvement, and self-efficacy) for these strengths to have a positive impact on reducing recidivism risk.

Breakdown of Women Offenders' Criminogenic Strengths

A bar chart titled "Breakdown of Women Offenders' Criminogenic Strengths" with the y-axis labeled "Percent of Sample" ranging from 0 to 80. The bars are: Educational Strengths ≈ 30, Family Support ≈ 44, Parenting Involvement ≈ 40, Self-Efficacy ≈ 70.

We also asked women whether they were currently receiving or participating in a range of public benefit programs including cash assistance, public housing, food stamps, alcohol or drug treatment, medical insurance or medical care, and education or training programs.

The top half of the table below shows the number (and percent) of women in our sample who report receiving each benefit. The bottom half of the table is based only on those women who are not receiving the benefit, but who report needing it.

It is interesting to note that women who feel that they need alcohol or drug treatment by and large seem to be receiving it – there are only 25 women in our sample who report needing this type of treatment but not receiving it.

What public benefits are women receiving?

Type of Benefit	Number and percentage of women who are currently receiving benefit	
Cash assistance (including social security, welfare, disability)	138	34%
Public housing (including section 8 or other lower rent housing)	38	10%
Food stamps, EBT, or Bridge card	290	72%
Alcohol, drug, or mental health treatment	243	61%
Medical Insurance	227	57%
Medical care	244	61%
Education or training programs	128	32%

If a woman is <u>not</u> receiving a benefit, does she report needing it?

Type of Benefit	Number of women who need a benefit but are NOT receiving it	
Cash assistance (including social security, welfare, disability)	159 of 260	61%
Public housing (including section 8 or other lower rent housing)	200 of 352	57%
Food stamps, EBT, or Bridge card	65 of 111	59%
Alcohol, drug, or mental health treatment	25 of 156	16%
Medical Insurance	166 of 170	98%
Medical care	101 of 150	61%
Education or training programs	183 of 264	69%

Future updates on our findings will focus on effective communication styles and content for professionals working with women on probation and parole. We will also examine the types of communities where women live, and the offender, supervision, and community characteristics that predict recidivism and other outcomes.