



Impact of Day of Prison Release on Recidivism

Background

Prison releases occur nearly every day, but an important question remains: **does the day of the week someone is released from prison affect their likelihood of recidivism?**

Competing theories exist. Some argue that releases later in the week or on weekends may increase risk because individuals reenter the community when impulsive or high-risk activity (such as partying or substance use) is more common. Others suggest that weekend releases may be more difficult because key reentry supports – such as parole agents, treatment providers, housing agencies, and employers – may be closed or less available. However, another theory suggests early-week releases could increase risk by giving individuals more unstructured time to reconnect with antisocial peers and plan risky activities before the weekend. Transportation access, police activity, and family/support system schedules may also predict a difference in impact of the day of release from prison on recidivism. Finally, it is also possible that the day of release has no meaningful effect at all.

Understanding whether release day influences recidivism could inform PA DOC operations and reentry planning, yet limited research has examined this issue.

Study Design

This study examined whether recidivism differs depending on the day of the week an individual is released from PA DOC custody. The analysis included **all individuals released from PA DOC facilities in 2022 (N = 11,303)**. Release day was obtained from PA DOC administrative records. Recidivism was tracked for up to **two years post-release** using re-arrest and re-incarceration data.

The study also accounted for key characteristics that could influence recidivism, including age, sex, race, marital status, offense type, criminal risk assessment score, release type, release month, and facility released from. Importantly, there is no clear reason to believe individuals are systematically assigned to release days based on personal characteristics or risk factors. In other words, release timing across days of the week is likely **largely driven by routine scheduling and administrative processes**, meaning the day of the week a person is released is close to **quasi-random**. This allows the evaluation to more credibly assess whether release day itself may influence recidivism outcomes.

Recidivism rates were compared across release days at multiple follow-up periods: **1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years** after release.

The chart below displays the raw recidivism rates by release day at **6 months, 1 year, and 2 years** post-release.

Results

Overall, the findings indicate that **the day of the week an individual is released from prison does not meaningfully impact long-term recidivism**.

At the **1-month** follow-up point, recidivism rates did not differ significantly by release day. At **3 months**, individuals released on **Wednesdays** showed a slightly higher recidivism rate than average. However, no other release days showed meaningful differences at that time point, and the Wednesday difference **did not persist**. By **6 months, 1 year, and 2 years** post-release, there were **no significant differences** in recidivism outcomes based on the day of release.

Taken together, the results suggest that **release day is not a meaningful driver of recidivism**, and long-term reentry outcomes appear consistent regardless of which day of the week a release occurs on.

