



The effectiveness of Sex Offender Registration and Notification: A meta-analysis of 25 years of findings

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Abstract

Objectives Examine 25 years of Sex Offender Registration and Notification (SORN) evaluations and their effects on recidivism.

Methods We rely on methodology guidelines established by the Campbell Collaboration for meta-analyses to systematically synthesize results from 18 research articles including 474,640 formerly incarcerated individuals. We estimate the effect of SORN policies on recidivism from 42 effect sizes and determine if the effect of SORN varies by sexual or non-sexual recidivism when examining arrest or conviction as outcomes.

Results The random-effects meta-analysis model demonstrated that SORN does not have a statistically significant impact on recidivism. This null effect exists when examining a combined model and when disaggregating studies by sexual or non-sexual offenses, or conceptualizing recidivism by arrest or conviction.

Conclusions SORN policies demonstrate no effect on recidivism. This finding holds important policy implications given the extensive adoption and net-widening of penalties related to SORN.

Keywords Evaluation · Megan's Law · Meta-analysis · Sex Offender Registry and Notification · SORN · RSOs

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