



Issue Brief

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Automated Criminal Risk Score (ACRS)

ACRS overview

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) uses the Automated Criminal Risk Score (ACRS) to identify offenders most likely to recidivate. In Oregon, recidivism is considered the reconviction of a felony within three years of release. Currently, Oregon's recidivism rate is approximately 28 percent.

ACRS is a mathematical equation that uses seven static variables. Offender scores range from zero to one. Scores approximating zero identify inmates who are very unlikely to recidivate. Conversely, offenders with high scores are much more likely to re-offend. Those with higher ACRS will be placed in programs that reduce their risk of reoffending. Offenders with low scores will not be placed in those programs. ACRS is coupled with the criminogenic assessment to determine the proper programming for each offender.

Risk factors of recidivism

ACRS uses seven risk factors: age, earned time, sentence length, revocation, number of prior incarcerations, prior theft convictions and type of crime (person, property or statutory). ACRS is different than other risk tools; it considers combinations of the characteristics that more accurately predict who will recidivate. Most correctional risk tools consider offender characteristics separately; these tools generally have less predictable accuracy.

Example of ACRS

Age is an excellent predictor of future criminal involvement. Most offenders tend to be young and impulsive. In addition to age, behavior while incarcerated and involvement in treatment programs are also good predictors of future criminal behavior. Incarcerated offenders receiving treatment and who

are not disciplinary problems are less likely to recidivate. Young offenders with disciplinary problems who do not attend treatment are much more likely to recidivate.

Earned time, which comprises treatment attendance and institution conduct, is an excellent indicator of recidivism for offenders between the ages of 20 and 25 years. Younger inmates who earn the maximum amount of earned time rarely recidivate, while offenders with no earned time are very likely to recidivate. Despite its usefulness with young offenders, earned time is not a good indicator of recidivism for older offenders. These older offenders will attend treatment, but may not be interested in changing. Many will receive the maximum earned time, some will be invested, and others will not. Achieving 20 percent earned time for older offenders does not suggest the offender will not recidivate.

Male vs. female offenders

ACRS is used to predict recidivism of both male and female offenders; however, there are different mathematical equations for males and females. The difference between the male and female equations is small. The factors in each equation and their relative influence on recidivism are similar for male and female offenders.

A question often arises about ACRS and gender differences. If the factors and the relative influence of each factor is similar, why are there are so many more males incarcerated than females? ACRS does not answer this question. ACRS is not used to predict whether a person is likely to initially commit a crime and be convicted of that crime. ACRS is used only to predict recidivism. Once in prison, characteristics for recidivism are similar for males and females.

SB 267: Evidence based practices

In 2003, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 267, requiring a percentage of treatment money provided to five agencies to be “evidence-based” and cost effective. The DOC is one of those agencies, and ACRS is an illustration of how the department is moving toward evidence-based practices. ACRS identifies the inmates who truly need specialized treatment while they are incarcerated. Those considered higher risk by ACRS are provided a criminogenic assessment to identify the treatment necessary to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. ■

**The mission of the
Oregon Department of Corrections
is to promote public safety by
holding offenders accountable for their actions
and reducing the risk of future criminal
behavior.**



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