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# Reconviction in Northern Ireland: Results from the 2002 cohort

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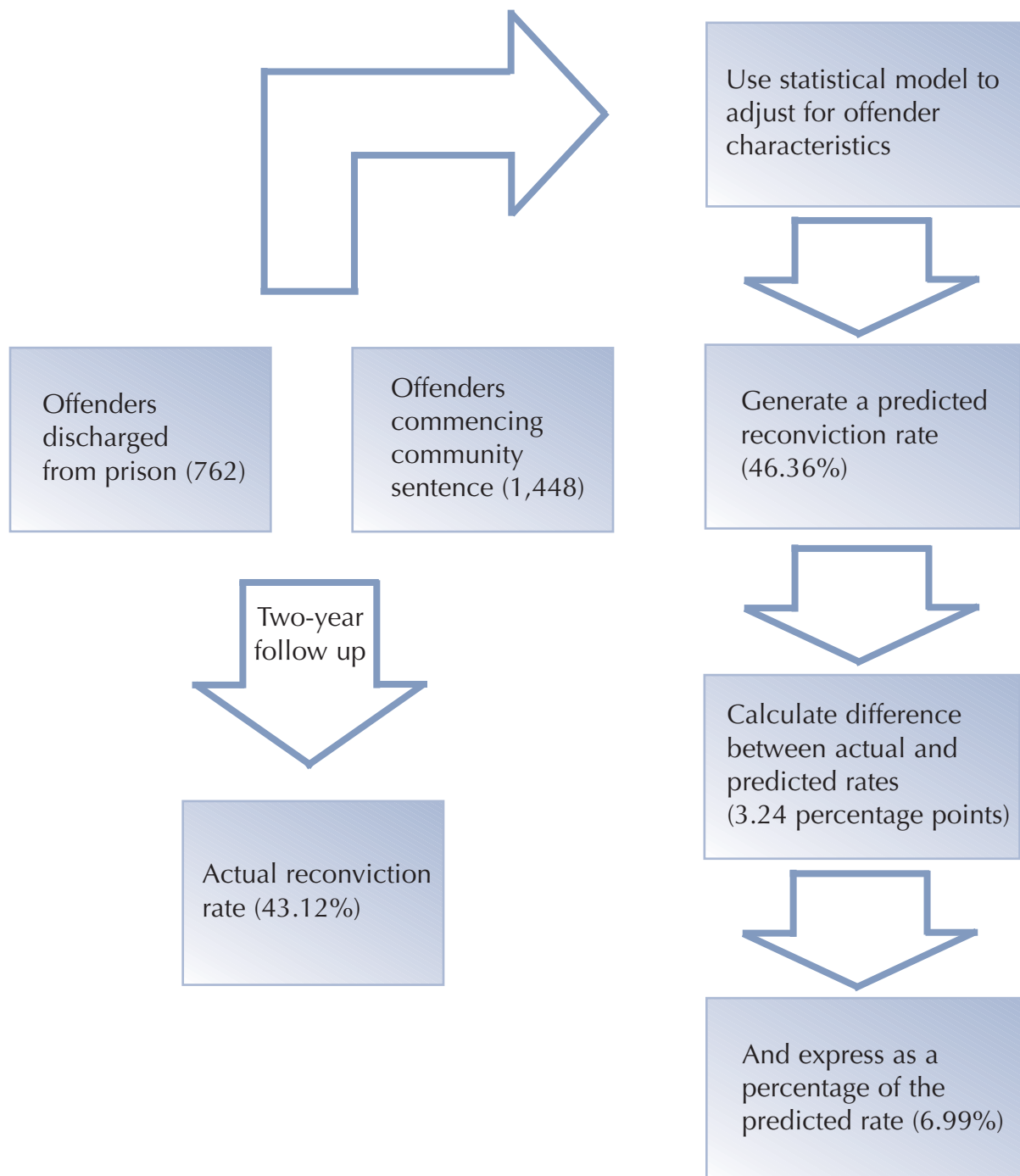
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## INTRODUCTION

This bulletin analyses the two year reconviction rates of a cohort of offenders who commenced a community disposal or were discharged from prison in Northern Ireland during 2002. It presents statistics of predicted rates of reconviction and observed or actual rates of reconviction. Predicted reconviction rates are an estimate of the percentage of offenders who are likely to re-offend within a two year period, having controlled for changes in offender characteristics. Actual reconviction rates are the percentage of offenders who are subsequently convicted in court, **for any offence**, within two years of their baseline offence in 2002.

This method of comparing predicted and observed reconviction rates is used to measure progress towards the Northern Ireland Office Spending Review 2002 Public Service Agreement (PSA) target on reducing reconviction. The target specifies a reduction in reconviction of five percent compared to the predicted rate for the 2005 cohort. This is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1 – Measuring difference in predicted and actual two year reconviction rates



Note: Adapted from Figure 1, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 25/05

## RESULTS

### Overall reconviction rate

Statistical modelling of the criminological characteristics of offenders contained in the 2002 cohort predicted a reconviction rate of 46.36%. The actual reconviction rate at the end of the two year follow-up period was 43.12%. This represents a reduction in reconviction of 6.99 % compared to the predicted rate (Table 1).

Table 1 – Overall two year reconviction rates against predicted rates, 2002

	Recon	Total	Observed %	Expected %	Difference %
Community disposal	582	1,448	40.19	44.59	9.86
Custody discharge	371	762	48.68	49.72	2.09
<b>All Offenders</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>43.12</b>	<b>46.36</b>	<b>6.99</b>

### Reconviction by gender

The 2002 cohort comprised 1,946 males (88%) and 264 females (12%). Males (46%) were significantly more likely than females (24%) to be reconvicted within the two year follow up period (Table 2).

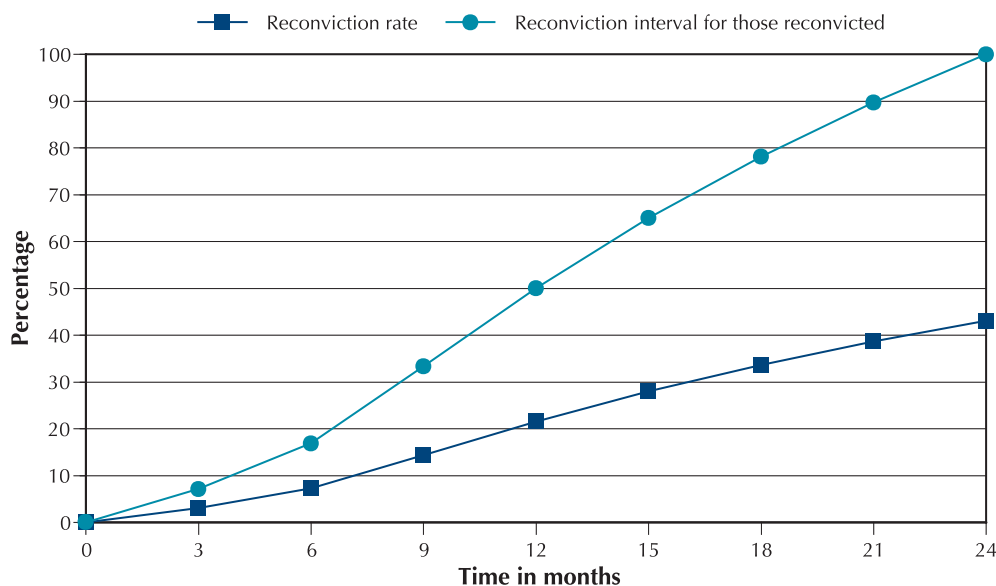
Table 2: Two year reconviction rate by gender, 2002

	Reconvicted	Total	% Reconvicted
Male	890	1,946	45.73
Female	63	264	23.86
<b>All offenders</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>43.12</b>

### Reconviction Interval

In order to place the overall reconviction rates into some context, the time to first reconviction is examined. This measure is called the reconviction interval. It is defined as the time, in months, from date of discharge from custody or from date of sentence to date of next conviction (reconviction). Figure 2 shows the percentage of those who were reconvicted within one month, two months and so on, up to two years. It also shows when reconviction took place within the two year period.

Figure 2 – Reconviction interval, 2002



After six months, 7% of the 2002 cohort had been reconvicted, and 17% of those who were reconvicted within the two-year follow up period had been sentenced. After one year, 22% of the cohort had been reconvicted, and 50% of those who were reconvicted within the two-year follow up period had been sentenced. After eighteen months, 34% of the cohort had been reconvicted, and 78% of those who were reconvicted within the two-year follow up period had been sentenced.

### Reconviction by offending history

The rate of reconviction increased markedly with an increase in the number of convictions previous to the baseline conviction in 2002 (Table 3). 35% of those with two or less previous convictions were subsequently reconvicted within the two year follow up period. This compared with a 40% reconviction rate for those with 3-6 previous convictions, 45% reconviction rate for those with 7-10 previous convictions and a 56% reconviction rate for those with 11 or more previous convictions.

Table 3: Two year reconviction rates by offending history, 2002

	Reconvicted	Total	% Reconvicted
No previous	144	413	34.87
1-2 previous	161	462	34.85
3-6 previous	191	472	40.47
7-10 previous	119	262	45.42
>=11 previous	338	601	56.24
<b>All offenders</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>43.12</b>

### Reconviction by baseline offence class

Two year reconviction rates vary considerably depending on the type of offence committed (Table 4). The highest reconviction rate was recorded for those convicted for burglary (58%). This is not surprising given that earlier work by Francis et al (2005) in developing a model to predict reconviction rates in Northern Ireland indicated that burglary was a significant predictor of reconviction. At the other end of the spectrum, 14% of those convicted for sexual offences were reconvicted - for any offence - within the two year follow up period.

Table 4: Two year reconviction rates by baseline offence class, 2002

Baseline Offence Category	Reconvicted	Total	% Reconvicted
Non-indictable	206	544	37.87
Violence against the person	128	346	36.99
Sexual offences	9	65	13.85
Burglary	118	204	57.84
Robbery	49	108	45.37
Theft	235	441	53.29
Fraud & forgery	21	72	29.17
Criminal Damage	100	217	46.08
Offences against the state	25	59	42.37
Other - Indictable	34	62	54.84
Drugs offences	28	92	30.43
<b>All offenders</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>43.12</b>

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The results are based on an analysis of offenders discharged from prison or commencing a community sentence during 2002. Details of offenders discharged from custody into the community are taken from the Prison Index Database, maintained by the Northern Ireland Office statistics and research branch. This data is then further refined to remove any duplicate records within 2002 – in measuring reconviction it is important that we only capture details of the first discharge from prison in that year in the first instance. The resultant dataset is then matched to the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Integrated Criminal Information System (ICIS) in order to track criminal history and monitor for re-offending. The data matching routine adheres to the 'National Statistics Protocol on Data Matching'. The matching routine looks at offenders' surnames, initials and dates of birth.

The community dataset is drawn directly from the ICIS database. Again, the first sweep of data for those sentenced during 2002 was refined to only capture details of an offender's first sentence at court in 2002. Together, the final custody discharge and community datasets make up the 2002 cohort.

Offenders contained in the 2002 cohort were followed up for a period of two years from the date of their discharge from custody or date of sentence and any subsequent conviction flagged as a reconviction. Pseudo reconvictions are convictions within the follow up period for offences committed prior to commencement of an order or discharge from custody - that is, 'in the pipeline'. These have been removed from this study.

Baseline offence as referred to in the commentary of this bulletin is the principal offence for which an offender was charged at court or was discharged from prison in 2002.

## REFERENCES

Cuppleditch, L and Evans, W. (2005) *Re-offending of adults: results from the 2002 cohort*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 25/05

Francis, B, Harman, J and Humphreys, L (2005) *Predicting reconviction rates in Northern Ireland*. Northern Ireland Office Research & Statistical Bulletin 7/2005

*Protocol on Data Matching*. National Statistics Code of Practice

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