

2. METHODOLOGY

Data

The 2004 cohort marks the first cohort in which the new Maine Corrections Information System (CORIS) is the sole data source for adjudicated juveniles in Maine. The 2004 cohort consists of all juveniles aged 10 through 18 who recorded at least one adjudication date in Maine between January 1, 2004 and December 31, 2004, and follows them for one year after they were first adjudicated. Only those juveniles who were adjudicated for a first time in 2004 are included in the analysis. In other words, juveniles who have been previously adjudicated, juveniles who were arrested for an act, but were not brought before a court, or who were brought before a court but not found to have committed the act, are not included in the analysis. Further, a single adjudication represents one incident, which may be comprised of multiple offenses since a juvenile can be charged with multiple offenses stemming from one incident.¹ When only one charge is examined per adjudication, the most serious charge is used. In other cases, all offenses are examined per juvenile.

Research Questions

- What are the demographic features of first time juvenile offenders in 2004?
- What is the proportion of felonies to misdemeanors among first time juvenile offenders in 2004 and what type of offenses are they adjudicated for?
- Of all first time juvenile offenders in 2004, how many committed subsequent offenses leading to a subsequent adjudication within one year?
- What are the similarities and differences between male and female first time juvenile offenders in 2004?
- What are the similarities and differences between counties in relation to rate of juveniles adjudicated for the first time, number of offenses for first time adjudications, proportion of felonies, and recidivism rates?
- What are the trends in recidivism rates for the 1998 through 2004 cohorts?
- How do the first time juvenile offender profiles in 2004 compare to the profiles of first time juvenile offenders in each year from 1998 through 2003?

Recidivism Rates

Maine's juvenile recidivism rate is measured by the occurrence of a new, subsequent offense leading to adjudication during DJS supervision or within one year after release from DJS supervision. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of juveniles in the 2004 cohort that were re-adjudicated within one year by the total number of juveniles adjudicated for the first time in 2004. Some juveniles may be adjudicated for more than one offense, either for the same incident, or for different incidences. This does not affect the recidivism rate.

¹ An incident is a discrete occurrence or happening (Garner, 2006).

Offense Characteristics

In addition to recidivism rates, the 2004 report will examine type and severity of first offenses and recidivating offenses for the entire cohort and also for females. Appendix IV reports the complete listing of offenses included in each category. DJS reports four offense types:

- Person
- Property
- Drugs
- Other

Offense class is also examined. Offense classes are labeled A-E in descending order of severity. All class A, B, and C crimes are felonies, while D and E crimes are misdemeanors.

Challenges

In 2003, MDOC adopted the department wide legacy information system entitled CORIS. During this transition it was difficult to assess the accuracy and completeness of the first adjudications in 2003, which may cause some discrepancies in the trend section of this report. This may also partially explain why the 2003 cohort differs significantly from other cohorts.

The 2004 report is the first year for which CORIS is the only data source. While CORIS is believed to provide more complete and accurate information, there still may be variations between this year and previous years. While comparisons among the years can still be made, it should be remembered that the change in data collection systems may account for some trend differences. To address this challenge and opportunity, the Maine Department of Corrections arranged for the development and implementation of a quality control protocol in each of the four DJS regions. Project assistants were hired on a temporary basis to ensure the accuracy, quality, and completeness of all data variables analyzed in this report. The assistants are also cleaning data in the CORIS system to enable future analysis of the 2005 and 2006 cohorts.

Another challenge for the 2004 report is that CORIS is not currently capturing all juveniles in the 1998 through 2004 cohorts who have moved into the adult system. This may affect recidivism and other trend information, because juveniles from each cohort may have not have been captured in the two or three year follow up period. This difficulty is in part due to data migration and the data that can be extracted from CORIS. MDOC personnel and Muskie School staff are working to resolve the data extract issues.