

Some Characteristics  
of Parole Revocations  
First Quarter 1972

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## SUMMARY OF PAROLE REVOCATION STUDY

This study describes some basic characteristics of the revoked parolee in Massachusetts. Findings are based on data collected from a sample of 129 males released from Massachusetts state correctional institutions whose paroles were revoked during the first quarter of 1972.

Of particular interest are the findings regarding the reason for revocation. Results of this study show that a majority (55%) of the revoked parolees had been involved in a new arrest. Official reasons for revocation indicate that only 11% of the subjects were revoked for reasons of convicted felony or misdemeanor (new offenses) whereas 46% were revoked for "whereabouts unknown" and 39% for "indiscreet conduct."

Another important finding of this study is that almost  $2/3$  (64%) of the revoked parolees were revoked during the first six months on parole; more than  $1/2$  (52%) were revoked during the first four months of parole.

Analysis of parole violation reports and the Parole Officers' running records indicates that Parole Officers perceive involvement with the law and failure to cooperate with parole authorities and regulations as the most critical problems confronting the revoked parolee.

Further analysis of data collected from the running records and violation reports reveals significant differences in several adjustment areas between two groups of revoked parolees, new offenders and technical violators. For example, new offenders associated significantly more "with other criminals, parolees, and undesirable" than did technical violators according to the reports of the parole officer. The conclusion of this report reviews obtained results, discusses the importance of sound data collection for informed planning and policy decisions and also makes some recommendations.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important powers vested in a paroling authority is that of determining whether a man who the Board has released into the community on parole shall be withdrawn from the community and returned to prison because of a violation of parole rules. Traditionally, parole has been viewed as a privilege and not as a right but the current decision of the Supreme Court (Morrisey vs. Brewer) clearly states the view that parole today can be considered as a right and not a privilege. This opinion will have a far-reaching impact upon paroling authorities and their future development particularly in the area of revocation of parole. Traditionally, the Parole Board has based its decisions concerning revocation on the individual case. Thus the Board may have a wealth of information on a particular offender and the reason for revocation but has developed no systematic knowledge of the characteristics of the "revokee" and his problems. The lack of systematic data seriously hampers planning and policy review concerning revocation. The current changes, however, will place a greater demand upon parole boards to review and be knowledgeable about their decision making processes.

Purpose. The purpose of this study was threefold:

1. To obtain knowledge of the characteristics of the revoked offender.
2. To determine basic adjustment problems of the revoked parolee as reported in the records.
3. To examine the feasibility of using current information, primarily the running record and parole violation reports, for data collection purposes.

Sample. The sample included 129 males from Massachusetts state correctional institutions whose paroles were revoked between January 1, 1972 and March 31, 1972.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that revocation of parole does not imply that the parolee has been reincarcerated in a correctional institution, rather it represents a decision on the part of the Parole Board to rescind permission for the parolee to remain in the community. Hence it is possible that a parolee who is "whereabouts unknown," for example, may never be returned to prison although his right to parole has been revoked.

Method. A preliminary review of the records was conducted for purposes of developing coding categories. A data collection sheet and coding instructions were then designed and a small sample was pre-tested. (See Appendix III for Data Collection Sheet and Coding Instructions.) Data were collected primarily from the parole violation reports and the parole running records.

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<sup>1</sup> A total of 140 males were paroled from Massachusetts state correctional institutions during the first quarter of 1972. However, nine of these revocations had been withdrawn when data were collected (April-May) and, therefore, these men were not included in the sample. For reasons of confidentiality, two (2) records of revocation were not available for research purposes.

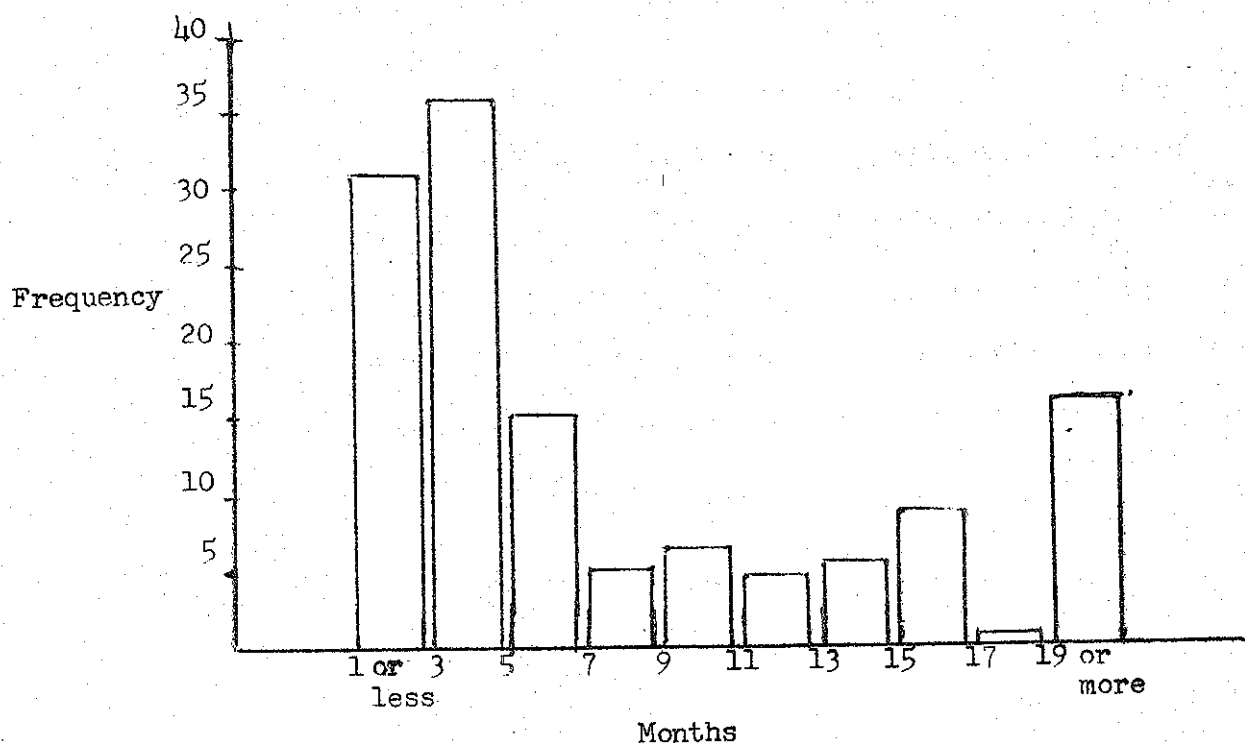
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Characteristics of the Revoked Parolee

Several characteristics of hypothesized importance were investigated in this study of the revoked parolee. Characteristics included for study were: original offense, length of time on parole, age at the time of revocation, employment situation, and living situation.

Time on Parole. An important finding of this study is that almost 2/3 (64%) of the parolees were revoked during the first six months on parole. The most critical period, in terms of probability of revocation, seems to be during the first four months on parole; 52% of the sample were revoked during this time. The average time on parole prior to revocation was nine (9) months; however this measure may be somewhat misleading in that the median time was four (4) months. (See Graph 1.)

Graph 1. Histogram showing the length of time on parole prior to revocation.



Age. Revoked parolees were, on the average, 29 years of age. However, this measure again may be somewhat misleading in that the median age is 26.

Original Offense. Almost 1/2 (48%) of the revoked parolees were originally incarcerated for offenses against persons. Another 37% originally committed offenses against property. The remaining 15% were classified as having committed a sex offense or some other offense (e.g. motor vehicle, escape, non-support.) (See Appendix I, Table 1.)

Employment Situation. Data indicate that somewhat less than 2/3 (61%) of the revoked parolees were unemployed at the time of revocation, and that only 8% of these had good reason for unemployment. On the other hand, 22% of those revoked were employed full-time; nine percent (9%) were employed part-time, were in job training, or attending classes. No information regarding employment situation was available for the remainder of the revoked parolees. (See Appendix I, Table 2.)

Living Situation. Almost 1/2 (46%) of the revoked parolees were living with parents or other relatives at the time of revocation. It is also of interest that 15% of the revoked parolees were living in a group home. Only 14% were listed as living alone. Ten percent (10%) were living with friends and 8% never established residence. Seven percent (7%) were living with their wives. (See Appendix I, Table 3.)

## REASONS FOR REVOCATION

It should be noted that two major changes within the Parole Board have occurred since the data were collected in the spring of 1972. First, the Morrissey-Brewer decision has resulted in several major revisions in the procedures and guidelines for revocation, and second, the membership of the Board has almost completely changed since the Spring of 1972. Thus findings from this study may provide an historic account rather than a description of current practice. Data collected for this study, however, do provide some important information concerning the reasons for revocation. The following analysis discusses the reasons for revocation in two ways. First data on the official reasons for revocation are presented. Secondly these reasons are further analyzed in conjunction with data on two categories of revoked offenders--new offenders and technical violators.

### OFFICIAL REASONS FOR REVOCATION

In the past, it has been the practice of the Parole Board at the time of revocation to classify parole violations into one of nine categories describing the official reason for revocation. These categories include:

1. Felony
2. Misdemeanor
3. Whereabouts unknown
4. Leaving without permission
  - State
  - Employment
5. Abuse of/or failure to support family
6. Drunkenness
7. Not reporting
  - Reporting falsely
8. Indiscreet conduct
9. Inability to adjust

During the first quarter of 1972, 10% of the 129 revoked parolees investigated by this study were officially revoked for felony, and 1% for misdemeanor. Forty-six percent (46%) were officially revoked for "whereabouts unknown," 39% for "indiscreet conduct," and 5% for other violations ("leaving without permission," "drunkenness," and "inability to adjust.") This data indicates, then, that 85% of the revocations during the first quarter of 1972 were for "whereabouts unknown and "indiscreet conduct." (See Appendix I, Table 4.)

New Offenders and Technical Violators. Revoked parolees may also be more broadly classed in two groups according to the violation which leads to revocation: the first group includes all those who have been arrested or convicted for a new offense. The second group consists of all those who have violated conditions of parole.<sup>1</sup> These violations can be more properly considered as technical violations. Technical violations include "whereabouts unknown," "leaving without permission," "abuse of/or failure to support family," "drunkenness," "not reporting," "indiscreet conduct," "inability to adjust."

Official reasons for revocation indicate convictions but not arrests. For example, in accord with past Parole Board procedures and guidelines, a man arrested for a new offense such as armed robbery, may have been revoked for reason of "whereabouts unknown" or "indiscreet conduct." In such cases, the official reasons for revocation give no indication of the revoked parolee's involvement with the law; only the convicted parolee would appear in the category of felony or misdemeanor.

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The conditions of parole are determined by the Board and are subject to change by it.



Table 1 below presents the official reasons for revocation with data on the number of new arrests in each category. According to this breakdown, 41 or 82% of the revoked parolees in the "indiscreet conduct" category and 14 or 23% of those in the "whereabouts unknown" category had new arrests and hence, in the present analysis, are grouped as new offenders.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. Frequency Distribution showing new offenders and technical violators in each category of reason for revocation.

Official Reason for Revocation	<u>New Offenders</u> (Inc. new convictions and new arrests)	<u>Technical Violators</u>	Total
Felony	13	0	13
Misdemeanor	1	0	1
Whereabouts unknown	14	46	60
Indiscreet conduct	41	9	50
Inability to adjust	0	2	2
Drunkenness	1	1	2
Leaving without permission	1	0	1
<hr/>			
Total			
Frequency	71	58	129
Percent	55	45	100

<sup>1</sup> The number of subjects in the "leaving without permission," "drunkenness," and "inability to adjust" categories prohibits calculation of reliable percentages for these categories, however, these cases may be included in computing the total number of revoked parolees who were convicted or arrested for a new offense.

In general, the data show that more than half (55%) of the revoked parolees were arrested or convicted for a new offense, while only 45% committed a technical parole violation. Hence, whereas official reasons for revocation indicate that 85% of the parolees were revoked for "whereabouts unknown" or "indiscreet conduct," this analysis indicates that just half (50%) of the parolees revoked in these categories may be truly classed as technical violators.

APPENDIX I

Table 1. Distribution of original offense of revoked parolee.

TYPE OF OFFENSE	Frequency	Percent
Against Person	62	48
Against Property	48	37
Sex	6	5
Other	13	10
Total	129	100

Table 2. Distribution showing employment status of  
revoked parolees.

JOB STATUS	Frequency	Percent
Unemployed	79	61
Employed full-time	28	22
Employed part-time	9	7
In job training	2	1
Attending school	1	1
No Information	10	8
Total	129	100

Table 3. Distribution showing living situation of revoked parolees.

LIVING SITUATION	Frequency	Percent
Parents	39	30
Other relatives	21	16
Group home	19	15
Alone	18	14
Friends	13	10
Never established residence	10	8
Wife	9	7
Total	129	100

Table 4. Distribution showing official reasons for revocation.

CAUSE OF VIOLATION	Frequency	Percent
Felony	13	10
Misdemeanor	1	1
-----		
Whereabouts unknown	60	46
Indiscreet conduct	50	39
Inability to adjust	2	2
Drunkenness	2	2
Leaving without permission	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5. Chi Square table for adjustment problems of new offenders and technical violators

PROBLEM	Frequency	X <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Suspicion of</u>			
<u>illegal activity</u>			
New offenders*	66		
Technical violators**	13	66.93	.001
<u>Absconding from</u>			
<u>supervision</u>			
New offenders	21		
Technical violators	48	36.29	.001
<u>Changing residence</u>			
<u>without permission</u>			
New offenders	15		
Technical violators	30	13.16	.001
<u>Owning &amp; operating</u>			
<u>motor vehicle without</u>			
<u>permission</u>			
New offenders	16		
Technical violators	1	12.08	.001
<u>Associating with criminal</u>			
<u>other parolees, unde-</u>			
<u>sireables</u>			
New offenders	22		
Technical violators	7	6.56	.05
<u>Failure to participate</u>			
<u>in required program</u>			
New offenders	6		
Technical violators	14	6.00	.05
<u>Failure to reply to</u>			
<u>communications from</u>			
<u>Parole Board or Parole</u>			
<u>Officers</u>			
New offenders	14		
Technical violators	22	5.26	.05

\*N= 71

\*\*N= 58



Table 5. Continued.

PROBLEM	Frequency	X <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Drinking</u>			
New offenders	17		
Technical violators	7	2.97	n.s.*
<u>Failure to maintain steady employment</u>			
New offenders	22		
Technical violators	11	2.42	n.s.
<u>Changing employment without permission</u>			
New offenders	10		
Technical violators	13	1.51	n.s.
<u>Use of narcotics</u>			
New offenders	17		
Technical violators	9	1.41	n.s.
<u>Leaving state without permission</u>			
New offenders	10		
Technical violators	11	.56	n.s.
<u>Non-support of family &amp; dependents</u>			
New offenders	1	.51	n.s.
Technical violators	3		
<u>Cohabitation</u>			
New offenders	3		
Technical violators	5	.44	n.s.
<u>Family difficulties</u>			
New offenders	11		
Technical violators	7	.31	n.s.

\* Not significant

Table 5. Continued.

PROBLEM	Frequency	$\chi^2$	Significance
<u>Employment problems</u>			
New offense	13		
Technical violators	9	.18	n.s.
<u>Keeping late hours</u>			
New offense	9		
Technical violators	6	.17	n.s.

APPENDIX II

## Some Problems of Reliability and Validity Encountered in Data Collection

Data on adjustment problems were collected from Parole Officers' running records in the following manner: If certain behavior was noted by the Parole Officer as a problem, it was recorded as a problem by the researcher. For example, if the running record contained the statement, "Subject was reprimanded for not telling P.O. he had moved...", the researcher would code the "changing residence without permission" category. Although the Parole Officer may have mentioned this problem a number of times in the running record, each problem was coded only once for each subject.

The methodology described above introduces problems of reliability and validity. For example, one Parole Officer may deem that a certain parolee has employment problems while another may not feel the situation is noteworthy; similarly, whereas a parolee's records may indicate the existence of employment problems to one researcher, these same records may not indicate any problems in this area to another researcher. For example, it is difficult to ascertain whether employment problems are indicated by the statement, "Subject had a good job...and lost that job for taking 2 days off to move." Yet although problems do exist with the data, much of the information obtained in this analysis is of interest in that it indicates, in general, which aspects of a parolee's situation the Parole Officer considers to be most in need of attention.

APPENDIX III

Column

Coding Instructions

77-82

Date Returned

00-00-00-not returned

Source: Revocation Book, running record

Information used can only apply to current parole period- i.e. no information is to be used if it applies to a previous parole or sentence or if it is entered after the date of revocation.

- 60 Living Situation (at time of revocation)  
1-parents  
2-wife  
3-other relatives (specify)  
4-alone (includes co-habiting)  
5-Friends  
6-group home-(specify)  
7-Never established residence after release  
If absconded, last residence before absconding  
Source: write-up on running record entries
- 61-63 Last Known District of Residence  
use city codes and Health and Welfare Area codes for Boston  
Source: write-up and running record entries
- 64-65 Parole Officer  
Use district number for Parole Officers  
Special Service Parole Officers  
1A=32  
2A=33  
3A=34  
Out of State cases=38  
Source: write-up
- 66 Returned  
0-no  
1-yes  
fill in date returned at bottom sheet  
Source: Revocation Book
- 67-72 Date of first parole, if more than one (this refers to current sentence)  
00-00-00= this is first parole for this sentence  
Source: Parole Summary (chronological history)
- 73-74 Offense of new arrest, if any  
00= no new arrest  
Use D.O.C. offense codes for most serious charge  
Source: write-up, running record entries for this parole
- 75-76 Offense of new conviction, if any ( must be before date of revocation)  
00-no new conviction  
use D.O.C. offense codes  
Source: write-up, running record entries for this parole

37-54

Any mention of...

0-no

1-yes

This information can be obtained from the write-up or the running record entries between the date of parole for this current parole period and the date of revocation. Code as a problem only if parole officer mentions it as a problem.

55

New Conviction

0-no new conviction

1-new conviction

2-in default of court

Source: write-up, running record entries before date of revocation

56

Job Status (at time of revocation)

1-employed full-time

2-employed part-time (includes Manpower work)

3-in job training program

4-attending school or taking courses

5-unemployed, but with good reason (i.e. P.O. feels situations justify his job status--e.g. bad health, in drug program's not expected to work yet)

6-unemployed

7-No information on job status (this applies to parolees who absconded immediately--never in contact with P.O.)

Source: write-up on running record entries between date paroled on current parole and date of revocation.

57

Number of Paroles this Sentence

1-this is first parole

2,3,4, etc. for number of paroles this sentence

Source: Parole Summary (chronological history)

58

Number of Write-Ups this Parole

1-this is first write-up

2,3,4, etc. for number of write-ups this parole

Source: look through folder to find write-ups.

59

Number of Warnings this Parole

0-no warnings

1,2,3, etc. for number of warnings this parole

Source: look through folder to find write-ups & count number stamped "warning" or "final warning"



Revocation Study

Coding Instructions

Column

- 1-6      **Instit. No.**  
for first column: code for institution sentenced or committed to-
- 0-Walpole
  - 2-Concord
  - 5-Bridgewater
- Col. 2-6: parolees commitment number  
(source-should be on write-up, but check several sources)
- 7      **Institution of Release**
- 0-Walpole
  - 1-Norfolk
  - 2-Concord
  - 3-Forestry Camp
  - 4-House of Correction
  - 5-Bridgewater
  - 6-Out of State
- Source: Parole Summary (chronological history)
- 8-9      **Age at Revocation**  
Compute from date of birth (on booking data sheet) and date of revocation  
(stamp on write-up)
- 10-15      **Date Sentenced**  
Effective date of sentence  
Source: booking data
- 16-21      **Date Paroled**  
Most recent parole if more than one. (If paroled to F.A., use date paroled  
to street)  
Source: Write-up, running record
- 22-27      **Date of Discharge**  
Good Conduct Discharge date for this parole  
Source: Computation sheet in folder, write-up, salmon card
- 28-29      **Offense**  
Original Offense-use D.O.C. offense codes for Base Expectancy Study  
Source: Booking date, write-up
- 30-35      **Date of Revocation**  
Source: stamp on write-up
- 36      **Cause of Violation**  
Official reason on stamp on write-up

Failure to Reply to Communication from Parole Board or Agent

52

Use of Narcotic Drugs

53

Failure to Participate in Program Required by Parole Board  
(e.g. Drug Program, A.A., D.L.M.)

54

New Conviction:

55

Job Status:

56

Number Paroles This Sentence:

57

Number of Write-ups this Parole:

58

Number of Warnings this Parole:

59

Living Situation:

60

Last Known District of Residence:

61-63

Parole Officer:

64-65

Returned:

66

Date of First Parole, if more than one:

67-72

Offense of New Arrest, if any:

73-74

Offense of New Conviction; if any:

75-76

Date Returned:

77-82

Revocation Study

Coded by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name:

Instit. No.:

1-6

Instit. of Release:

7

Age at Revocation:

8-9

Date Sentenced:

10-15

Date Paroled:

16-21

Date of Discharge:

22-27

Offense:

28-29

Date of Revocation:

30-35

Cause of Violation:

36

Any mention of:

Drinking

37

Arrest For New Offense

38

Failure to Maintain Steady Employment

39

Changing Employment Without Permission

40

Employment Problems (i.e. in relations with employer, employees)

41

Changing Residence Without Permission

42

Family Difficulties

43

Associating With Criminals, Other Parolees, "Undesirables"

44

Absconded from Supervision

45

Cohabitation With Paramour

46

Leaving State Without Permission

47

Owning and/or Operating Motor Vehicle Without Permission

48

Suspicion of Illegal Activity

49

Non-support of Family and Dependents

50

Keeping Late Hours

51