

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Factors Associated with Sex Offender Concentrations in Minnesota Neighborhoods

July 2015

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (MnDOC) recently examined community-level factors associated with the concentration of sex offenders across the state of Minnesota. This study was based on data from nearly 10,000 sex offenders living outside of confinement as of January 1st, 2010, as well as economic and demographic indicators for Minnesota's 1,329 census tracts from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Three categories of sex offender residency patterns were analyzed. The first category included all sex offenders required to register with Minnesota's Predatory Offender Registry (POR; $N = 9,894$). The second category included sex offenders who were previously confined in a Minnesota state prison and had been assigned a risk level of 1 or 2 ($N = 3,187$). The final, and smallest, category included the highest risk sex offenders previously released from Minnesota state prisons (Level 3 sex offenders; $N = 175$). Although these three categories of sex offenders were derived from two different data sources, Level 1, 2, and 3 sex offender data could be considered a subset of the POR data as sex offenders with an assigned risk level are also included in the POR. Given that these different categories of sex offenders are subject to varying levels of public notification (i.e., from no public notification to wide public notification and community meetings), this study also measured the degree to which public notification affects the residency patterns of sex offenders.

KEY FINDINGS

- Concentrated disadvantage is positively and significantly associated with higher concentrations of POR offenders and Level 1 and 2 sex offenders, but not with the residency of at least one Level 3 sex offender in a neighborhood.
 - Neighborhoods with higher levels of single female-headed households, families living below the poverty line, unemployed persons, households receiving public assistance, residents who do not have at least a high school education, and minority residents also have higher concentrations of two of the three categories of sex offenders.
 - The top of Table 1 displays the average number of sex offenders in neighborhoods per 1,000 residents across four different levels of concentrated disadvantage. The average number of all three categories of sex offenders generally increases as levels of concentrated disadvantage increase.

Table 1. Average Number of Sex Offenders in Neighborhoods across Varying Levels of Concentrated Disadvantage and Income Segregation^a

<i>Concentrated Disadvantage</i>	Average Number of Sex Offenders Per 1,000 Residents		
	POR	Level 1 & Level 2	Level 3
25 th Percentile (-1.15911 to -.59210)	2.09	0.71	0.04
50 th Percentile (-.59064 to -.30913)	1.54	0.44	0.01
75 th Percentile (-.30887 to .17427)	2.16	0.67	0.03
100 th Percentile (.17468 to 5.70302)	3.73	1.49	0.11
<i>Index of Concentrated Extremes</i>	POR	Level 1 & Level 2	Level 3
25 th Percentile (-.7640 to 0.1256)	3.72	1.45	1.05
50 th Percentile (0.1257 to 0.2562)	2.25	0.71	0.03
75 th Percentile (0.2568 to 0.4238)	1.57	0.47	0.03
100 th Percentile (0.4240 to 0.8670)	0.85	0.21	0.01

a. The Index of Concentrated Extremes is calculated by subtracting the number of families living below the poverty line from the number of affluent families in a census tract, and dividing the total by the total number of families.

- Household income segregation (as measured by the Index of Concentrated Extremes [ICE]) is significantly associated with concentrations of POR offenders, Level 1 and 2 sex offenders, as well as the residency of at least one Level 3 sex offender in neighborhoods.
 - Neighborhoods more densely populated with higher income families relative to families living below the poverty line had significantly lower concentrations of POR offenders and Level 1 and 2 sex offenders, and they were less likely to have even one Level 3 sex offender. This effect was significant even after controlling for housing affordability.
 - The bottom of Table 1 displays the average number of sex offenders in neighborhoods per 1,000 residents across four different levels of ICE. The average number of all three categories of sex offenders decreases as levels of ICE increase. For example, neighborhoods with the most poor families relative to affluent families have an average of about one Level 3 sex offender, while neighborhoods with the most affluent families relative to poor families have an average of just above zero Level 3 sex offenders.
- Both concentrations of POR offenders and Level 1 and Level 2 sex offenders increased as neighborhood levels of housing affordability increased. Housing affordability was not significantly associated with the likelihood of a neighborhood having at least one Level 3 sex offender.
 - Neighborhoods that had average rents lower than the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s fair market rents in the corresponding county had significantly higher levels of two of the three categories of sex offender concentrations.

Summary

Our results indicate that concentrated disadvantage helps explain why certain neighborhoods are more likely to have a higher population of some categories of sex offenders. However, it does not tell the whole story because concentrated disadvantage may not fully account for the potential protective effects of affluent neighborhoods. Income segregation (ICE) was the most consistent predictor of sex offender concentration or presence for all three categories of sex offenders.

These findings highlight the importance of including indicators of extreme wealth as well as indicators of extreme economic disadvantage in community-level research. Just as sex offenders may be pushed into communities marked by poverty and other indicators of economic disadvantage, the other tail end of the economic distribution is insulated from the presence of all levels of sex offenders. Even after controlling for the affordability and availability of housing, an increase in the level of affluence relative to poverty is associated with a decrease of all categories of sex offenders, regardless of community notification requirements.