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**Adult Sex Offender Recidivism:
A Review of Studies
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sex offenders may reoffend, even after they have been convicted and imprisoned. This conduct is known as recidivism. Research on sex offender recidivism can help the public and policymakers understand the risks posed by convicted sex offenders. This paper summarizes the major research findings related to sex offender recidivism.

Only a few studies on sex offenders have been conducted with scientific precision. Thus, the conclusions that can be drawn from this literature are somewhat limited; they include the following:

Recidivism:

- Recidivism rates vary among different types of sex offenders. For example, rapists tend to have higher recidivism rates than child molesters, while incest offenders tend to have the lowest recidivism rates.
- Sex offenders with a criminal history have higher recidivism rates than sex offenders convicted for the first time.
- Some sex offenders, such as child molesters, may reoffend many years after an initial sex offense. For these sex offenders, deviant sexual behavior may be a life-long problem.

Treatment:

- While some studies have shown that particular treatment programs are associated with lower recidivism rates in certain types of sex offenders, there is a lack of solid scientific evidence (from controlled experimental studies) that clearly proves treatment programs reduce sex offender recidivism.
- Additional research is needed to identify more effective methods of treating and supervising sex offenders, as well as more accurate methods of predicting sex offender recidivism.