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Do SORN Restrictions Reduce Sex Offending in Tampa?

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Bryanna Fox, PhD

University of South Florida

Tom Loughran, PhD

University of South Florida

Jacqueline Burckley, MA

University of South Florida



University of South Florida Center for Justice
Research & Policy: www.usf.edu/CJRP

Sex Offender Registration & Notification (SORN)

- October 1997: Florida's sex offender registry laws go into effect
 - Updated in 2006: SORNA- more restrictive
- Goals of SORN:
 - Prevent sex offenses through offender restriction and deterrence
 - Provide public safety information- tracking offenders in community
 - Aid in police investigations

Who Registers?

- Required for anyone convicted of a sex offense in US
 - Sexual offenders: convicted of committing, attempting, or soliciting to commit a sex offense
 - Sexual predators: designation given by judicial order to reflect more severe or recurring sex offenses
- There is variation across states for registry eligibility (Meloy et al., 2008)
 - Multiple states require registration for those convicted of public urination to sexual homicide

A sexual offender is an individual who meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. He or she has been convicted of a qualifying sexual offense in Florida or another jurisdiction. Qualifying Adult Conviction

1. Sexual misconduct prohibited (F.S. 393.135(2)).

2. Sexual misconduct prohibited (F.S. 394.4593(2)).

3. Kidnapping (F.S. 787.01), where the victim is a minor.

4. False imprisonment (F.S. 787.02), where the victim is a minor.

5. Luring or enticing a child (F.S. 787.025(2)(d)), where the victim is a minor.

6. Human Trafficking (F.S. 787.06(3)(b), (d), (f), or (g) and former 787.06(h)).

7. Sexual battery (F.S. 794.011), excluding subsection 10.

8. Unlawful sexual activity with certain minors (F.S. 794.05).

9. Procuring a person under the age of 18 for prostitution (former F.S. 796.03).

10. Selling or buying of minors into sex trafficking or prostitution (former F.S. 796.035).

11. Lewd/lascivious offense committed upon or in the presence of persons less than 16 years of age (F.S. 800.04).

12. Video Voyeurism of a minor (F.S. 810.145(8)).

13. Lewd/lascivious offense committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled adult (F.S. 825.10).

14. Sexual performance by a child; child pornography; penalties (F.S. 827.071).

15. Protection of minors; prohibition of certain acts in connection with obscenity (F.S. 847.0133).

16. Computer pornography (F.S. 847.0135), excluding subsection 6.

17. Transmission of child pornography by electronic device/equipment (F.S. 847.0137).

18. Transmission of material harmful to minors to a minor by electronic device/equipment (F.S. 847.0138).

19. Selling or buying of minors (for portrayal in a visual depiction engaging in sexually explicit conduct) (F.S. 847.0139).

20. Offenses concerning racketeering and illegal debts (F.S. 895.03), where the court makes a written finding that least one sexual offense in this list.

21. Sexual misconduct prohibited (F.S. 916.1075(2)).

22. Sexual misconduct prohibited (F.S. 985.701(1)).

What We Know

- Empirical research on SORN focuses on two outcomes:
 1. Effectiveness of SORN to **deter offending/reduce recidivism**
 2. Impact of additional **housing restrictions** on **individuals & community**

On SORN Decreasing Sex Offenses/Recidivism:

- 2011 study of 20 years of FBI data on sex offending pre/post SORN
- 2015 study: Florida sex offense arrest rates pre/post SORN
 - Rates of sex offenses and arrests did not improve after SORN

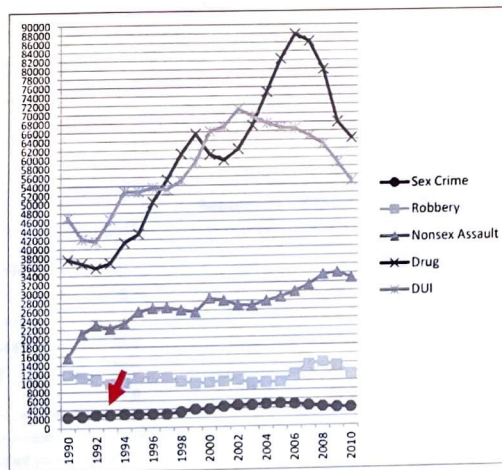
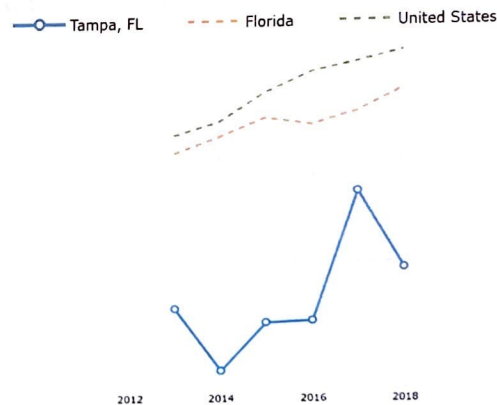


Figure 2. Annual raw counts of arrests in each crime category 1990-2010 (FDLE CCH)



- The number of rapes reported in Tampa FL for 2017 was 31.48 per 100,000 population, a 47.93% increase from 2016.
- The number of rapes reported in Tampa FL for 2016 was 21.28 per 100,000 population, a 0.71% increase from 2015.
- The number of rapes reported in Tampa FL for 2015 was 21.13 per 100,000 population, a 21.72% increase from 2014.

On Decreasing Sex Offenses/Recidivism:

- 2015 study on sex recidivism rates pre / post SORN in Florida (Levenson & Zgoba, 2015)
 - Sex offense recidivism pre-SORN: **4.9%** / post-SORN **7.5%**
- 2019 study: SORN had no effect on sex offense recidivism rates (Bouffard & Askew, 2019)

Table 1. Annual Average Repeat Offender Rates Pre- and Post 1997.

Crime category	Average annual repeat offender rate (1990-2010)	Repeat rate pre-1997	Repeat rate post 1997 ^a	Mean difference pre- and post 1997 (truncated) (t test)	Mean difference pre- and post 1997 (not truncated) (t test)
Sex offense	6.5	4.9	7.5	+2.5%***	+2.5%***
Non-sexual assault	8.3	6	9	+3.0%***	+3.7%***
Robbery	15.1	15.3	16.1	+0.75%	+0.35
Drug	29.8	27	31	+3.9%***	+4.4%***
DUI	11.6	10.2	12.5	+2.3%***	+2.3%***

^aTime period was truncated (1998-2005) to render the pre- and post-time frames equivalent. The non-truncated period was 1998-2010.

***p < .001.

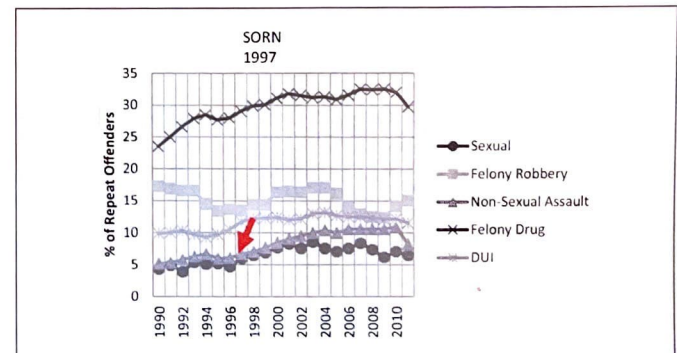


Figure 3. Florida repeat offender rates: 1990-2010 (FDLE CCH data).

Note. FDLE = Florida Department of Law Enforcement; CCH = computerized criminal histories;

On Impact of SORN Housing Restrictions:

- Reduced access to employment and treatment, both key predictors of future offending (Levenson, 2008; Levenson & Cotter, 2005)
- No effect on offending rates (Duwe et al., 2008)
- Ineffective at predicting crime or offender locations for police investigations (Agan, 2011)
- Police highlight registry as an information-sharing tool, but question its use for public information and the increasing rate of transient registrants (Harris et al., 2018)

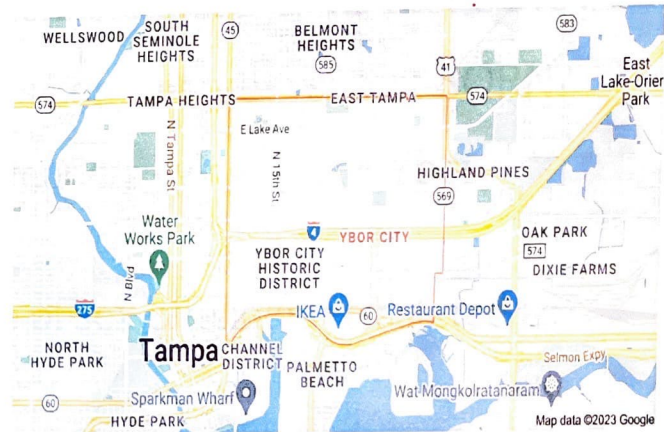
Summary of Prior Empirical Results

- Sex offenders generally have low recidivism rate
- Registries do not contribute to reduction in future offending
- For those that do reoffend, their strongest predictors are lack of employment and treatment, loss of support system
- Housing restrictions directly contribute to these barriers, add burden for police
- Registries and housing restrictions appear to have no effect at best, and may increase offending at worst
- BUT public feels safer and policymakers (usually) find it difficult to take on

Current Study

Sample and Data

- 1,368 people convicted of a sex offense 1968-2022 identified by FDLE
- Registered as living in VM Ybor (33602 & 33605) in 2012, 2017 or 2022
- Offender names, DOBs, offender type and status, home addresses, index and future crimes and dates

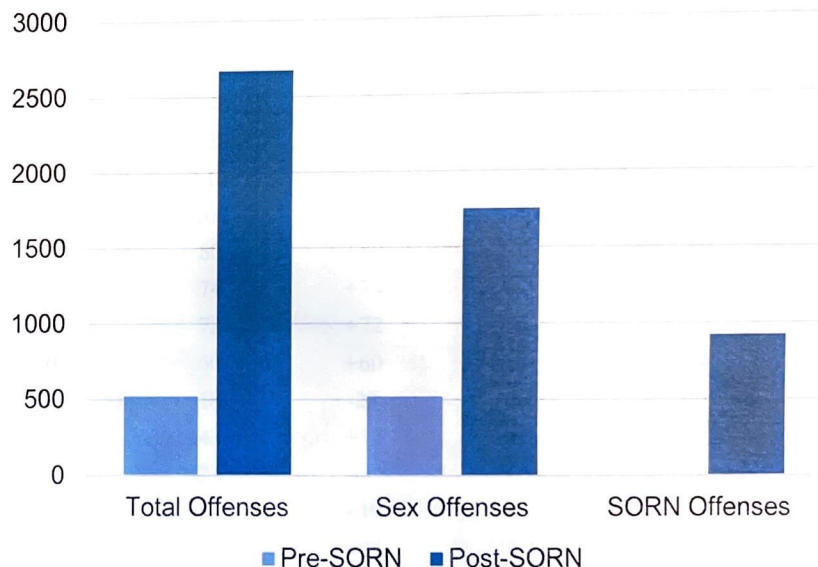


Research Questions

1. How many sex crimes did sex offenders commit pre- vs. post-SORN?
2. What type of crimes did sex offenders commit pre- vs. post-SORN?
3. Where are those registered as sex offenders living in VM Ybor committing sex crimes?
4. What is the sex crime recidivism rate of sex offenders registered as living in VM Ybor in post-SORN period?
5. Does this rate of sex offenses differ from no-SORN?
6. Can we infer a reduction in sex crimes due to SORN policies?

How many sex crimes did sex offenders commit pre- vs. post-SORN?

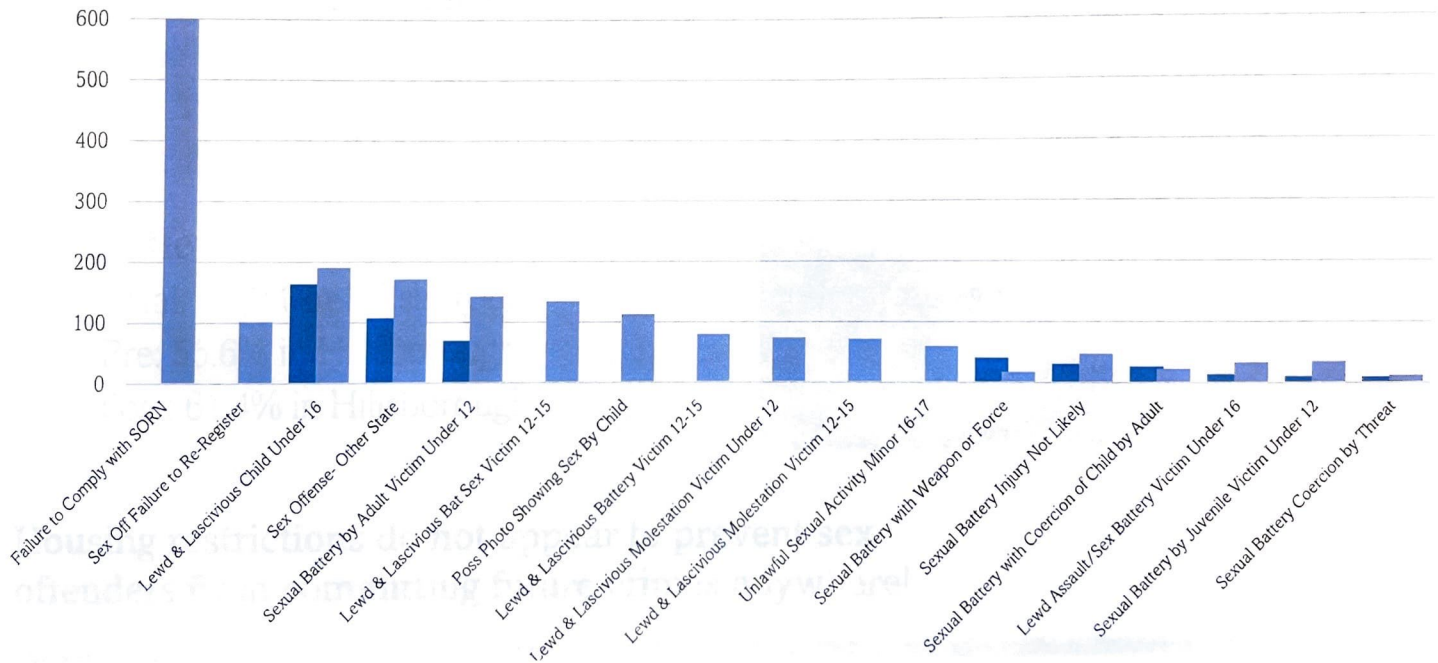
- Total sex offenses:
2,274 over 54 years
- Pre-SORN sex offenses:
523 over 29 years
- Post-SORN sex offenses:
1,751 over 25 years
- SORN registry offenses:
922 over 25 years



What type of crimes did sex offenders commit pre- vs. post-SORN?

	Pre-SORN Total	Post-SORN Total	Δ Pre-Post	Pre-SORN Crimes/Year	Post-SORN Crimes/Year
Failure to Comply with SORN Registry	0	611	+611	0	24.4
Lewd & Lascivious Child Under 16	164	191	+27	5.6	7.6
Sex Offense- Other State	108	172	+64	3.7	6.9
Sexual Battery by Adult Victim Under 12	70	143	+73	2.4	5.7
Lewd & Lascivious Battery Sex Victim 12-15	0	135	+135	0	5.4
Possession of Photo Showing Sex By Child	1	113	+112	0.03	4.5
Sex Offender- Failure to Re-Register	0	102	+102	0	4.1
Lewd & Lascivious Battery Victim 12-15	0	80	+80	0	3.2
Lewd & Lascivious Molestation Victim Under 12	0	74	+74	0	3
Lewd & Lascivious Molestation Victim 12-15	0	72	+72	0	2.9
Unlawful Sexual Activity Minor 16-17	0	60	+60	0	2.4
Sexual Battery with Weapon or Force	41	18	-23	1.4	0.7
Sexual Battery Injury Not Likely	31	48	+17	1.1	1.9
Sexual Battery with Coercion of Child by Adult	27	23	-4	0.9	0.9
Lewd Assault/Sex Battery Victim Under 16	14	33	+19	0.5	1.3
Sexual Battery by Juvenile Victim Under 12	11	35	+24	0.4	1.4
Sexual Battery Coercion by Threat	10	12	+2	0.3	0.5

How many and what type of sex crimes did the sex offenders commit pre- vs. post-SORN?



Where are those registered as sex offenders living in VM Ybor committing sex crimes?

All Offenses (sex + SORN)

Total: 67.1% in Hillsborough

Pre: 55.1% in Hillsborough

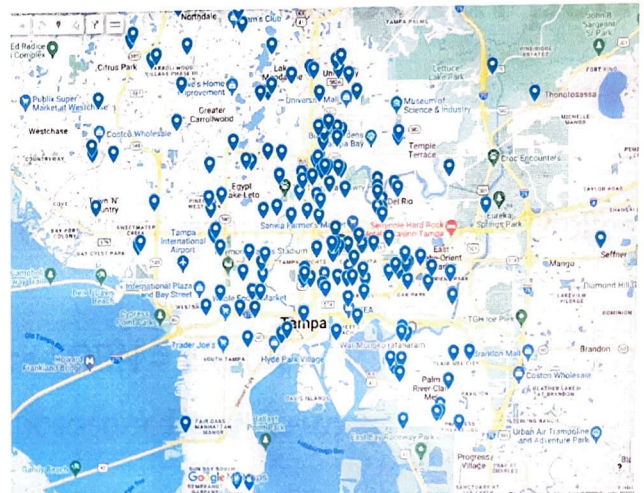
Post: 69.5% in Hillsborough

Sex Offenses

Total: 60.1% in Hillsborough

Pre: 55.6% in Hillsborough

Post: 61.4% in Hillsborough



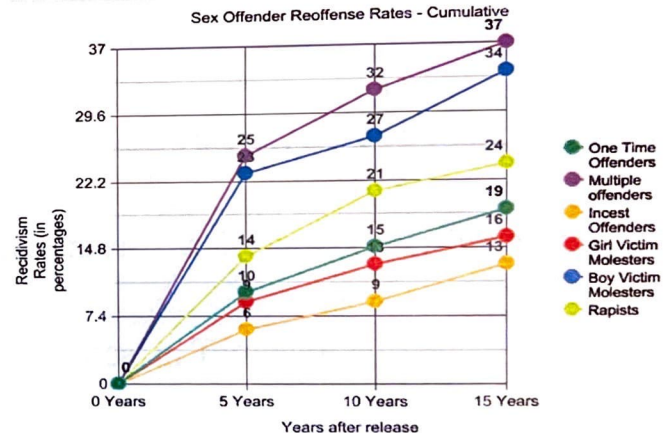
Housing restrictions do not appear to prevent sex offenders from committing future crimes anywhere!

What is the sex recidivism rate of sex offenders registered as living in VM Ybor in post-SORN period?

- Total sex offense recidivism:
 - 325 of 1,368 total sex offenders recidivated= 23.78%
 - Excluded SORN offenses such as failure to register, failure to comply (n= 922 offenses)
- Pre-SORN recidivism rate (1968-1997):
 - 96 out of 404 people with index crime pre-SORN = 23.76%
 - Less than 2% of these people recidivate post-sorn, likely due to aging out not deterrence
- Post-SORN recidivism rate (1997-2022):
 - 229 out of 963 people with index crime post-SORN= 23.78%

Does this sex offense rate differ from No-SORN?

- SORN is nationwide, so we cannot compare this time period to rates anywhere else in US
- Rate of 23.8% is **in line with sex offender recidivism rates** in nations without SORN:
 - Canada 11 year follow-up: 24.7%
 - UK 16 year follow-up: 25.7%



Harris and Hanson 2004 "Sex Offender Recidivism: A Simple Question"

Canada

Can we infer a reduction in sex crimes due to SORN?

To show a policy effect of SORN, we would need to see a reduction in sex crimes committed and/or recidivism from pre- to post-SORN.... **we do not.**

- **Sex crimes have largely increased** post-SORN.

But so has Tampa population!AND access to internet, proliferation of child pornography sites, law enforcement tactics to identify sex offenses, culture surrounding reporting and interviewing...!!!

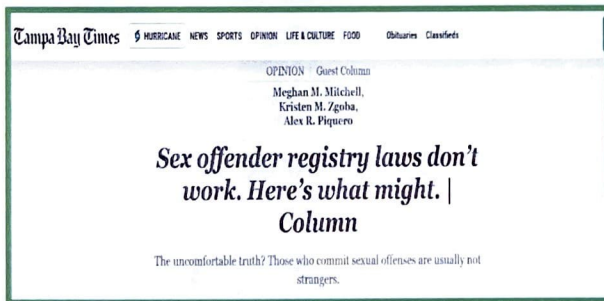
- Definitely cannot say SORN reduced sex crimes, but also cannot say it had anything to do with them increasing either
 - **Sex crime recidivism rates are almost identical in Tampa** pre- to post-SORN, and to similar nations without SORN.
 - But we cannot say for sure what the sex crime recidivism rate would have been without SORN. More research using sophisticated data and modeling are needed to parse this out.
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Conclusions on SORN & Restriction Expansion

1. SORN & related policies requiring registration and restricting housing of sex offenders **do not appear to statistically reduce recidivism or prevent crime** across multiple studies, including in Tampa
2. **Housing restrictions appear to be iatrogenic** in that they add barriers to successful reentry, increase likelihood of recidivism, do not stop offending (anywhere), and add considerable burden for police (who are already understaffed)

Summary: SORN Effect on Public Safety

- 2010 Texas Senate Criminal Justice Committee charged with examining efficacy and fairness of SORN
 - “Based on the research and testimony...it is **clear registries do not provide the public safety**, definitely not the way it is now.”



A new [study](#) of ours shows that these policies are not effective in deterring crime or protecting citizens. We used 25 years of research and 474,640 formerly incarcerated sex offenders. We found that such **policies do not reduce sexual or non-sexual recidivism. At all.** (Piquero et al 2022 TBT)

Summary: SORN Effect on Public Safety

