

# The Phoenix Sex Offender Clustering Study: Offender Interviews

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## Purpose

- Examine the impact of sex offender registration and sex offender notification on those convicted of a sex offense.
  - Sex offender perceptions and experiences with housing
  - Sex offender perceptions and experiences with victimization
  - Social and emotional and consequences of sex offender registration and notification

## Methodology

- PPD sex crimes unit database of all level 2 and 3 sex offenders registered in the city of Phoenix (n=932)
- Randomly selected interviewees using SPSS randomizer function
- A total of 19 field interviewers that we paired in teams
- \$20 incentive to SO's
- Interviewers were instructed to visit an address three times prior to discontinuation of attempts

## Methodology, Cont.

- This represents one of three studies that have gathered data directly from sex offenders in the community (see Tewksbury, 2005 & Sack and Mason, 1980).
- It is only one of two studies that examined address verification along the way (British Study—Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2000; American study--Tewksbury, 2002).

## Results of Attempted Contacts with Offenders at their Registered Address

	Frequency	Percent
Contact made, volunteered to participate in study	100	19.2
Contact made, refused to participate in study	45	8.7
Registrant does not live at address	206	39.6
Address does not exist	30	5.8
Attempted contact 3 times, no response	63	12.1
Project ended, 1 or 2 contacts and no response	76	14.6
Total	520	100

## Results of Address Verification

- We estimated that between 61.9 and 70.8 percent of registered sex offenders DO NOT reside at the address where they are registered.
- These figures do not include the roughly 6-7 percent of sex offenders who have failed to register with the county, and were not included in this analysis (Rubiano, 2005; Villa, 2003).

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## Respondent perceptions about Arizona's sex offender internet site

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	<u>Percent</u>
Accuracy of offender's information presented on site	
Completely inaccurate	10.4
Mostly inaccurate	6.3
Half inaccurate & half accurate	20.8
Mostly accurate	29.2
Completely accurate	27.1
Don't know	4.2
Refused	2.1

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## Respondent perceptions about Arizona's sex offender internet site, continued

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	<u>Percent</u>
Percent who would correct the following errors to their listing on the site	
If you found out that the address listed for you on the sex offender registry was not correct, would you contact someone to have it corrected?	82.8
If you found out that your picture on the sex offender registry was of someone else, would you contact someone to have it corrected?	75.8
If you found out that the offense(s) for which you were convicted were incorrect (listed as less or more serious) on the sex offender registry, would you contact someone to have it corrected?	89.5
If you move or change addresses, would you contact someone to update your information on the sex offender registry?	97

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<b>Description of sample (n=100)</b>	
	<b>Percent</b>
Number of Offenders	100
Gender	
Male	97
Female	3
Ethnicity	
White or Caucasian	60
Black or African-American	13
Hispanic or Latino (a)	14
Asian or Pacific Islander	1
Native American	4
Other or Multiple	8
Education	
Less Than High School	18
High School or GED	25
Some College	31
Vocational/Technical/Associate degree	20
Bachelor degree or above	6

<b>Description of sample (n=100), continued</b>	
	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	20
Single, Never Married	40
Divorced/Separated	38
Widowed	2
<b>Estimated Household Income</b>	
Under \$20,000	48
\$20,000 to \$39,900	32
\$40,000 or More	20
<b>Residence Past 30 Days</b>	
Home that you Own	12
Home that you Rent	49
Friends or Relatives	13
Hospital / Care Facility	4
Hotel / Motel	13
Dorm, Military, or Transitional Housing Facility	7
Shelter	2

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## Description of sample (n=100), continued

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	Percent	
Classification Level		
Level 1	3	
Level 2	48	
Level 3	36	
Don't Know	13	
Currently on Probation	71	
Committed a sex crime that they were not arrested for	16.2	
	Mean	S.D.
Number of times committed sex crime and not been caught	1.1	3.5
Number of times arrested for:		
Sex Crime	1.5	2.5
Non-Sex Crime	4.1	8.2

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## General perceptions of sex offender registration

- 88% stated that they understand why people want there to be a SO registry
- 61% believe that the SO registry is a good thing
- 57% believe that having their picture on the SO registry is going too far
- 50% feel that they are being unfairly punished by being on the SO registry

## Negative Experiences Resulting From Registration

- 63% lost or been denied a place to live
- 55% lost or been denied a job
- 25% have been threatened or harassed, in person, by neighbors
- Fewer than 10% have been
  - asked to leave a business or restaurant
  - received threatening telephone calls
  - received threatening mail/flyers/notes

## **Negative Experiences From Registration, Cont.**

- Over 66% agreed that Arizona's community notification law interfered with their recovery efforts by causing more stress in their life.
- Over 50% agreed that Arizona's community notification law makes them feel alone, isolated, and hopeless, and makes them fearful for their safety.
- Over 50% agreed they have less hope for their future because they are a registered sex offender

## Positive Impact of Community Notification

- 68% reported that they are more motivated to not re-offend so that I can prove to others that they are a good person;
- 55% reported that community notification helps them be more honest with people about having committed a sex crime in the past;
- 27% reported that because their neighbors knew that they were a registered sex offender, they had less access to potential victims because people keep their children (or other potential victims) away from them

**Respondent responses to how fairly they believe it is for their neighbors to know the following things about them.**

	Percent		
	Unfair	Neither Fair Nor Unfair	Fair
What you look like (e.g. through photographs)	39	8	53
Home address	64	5	31
Home telephone number	88	5	7
Employer name and work address	79	6	15
Description of crimes for which you were convicted	46	8	46
Vehicle description	65	8	27
License plate number	71	7	22



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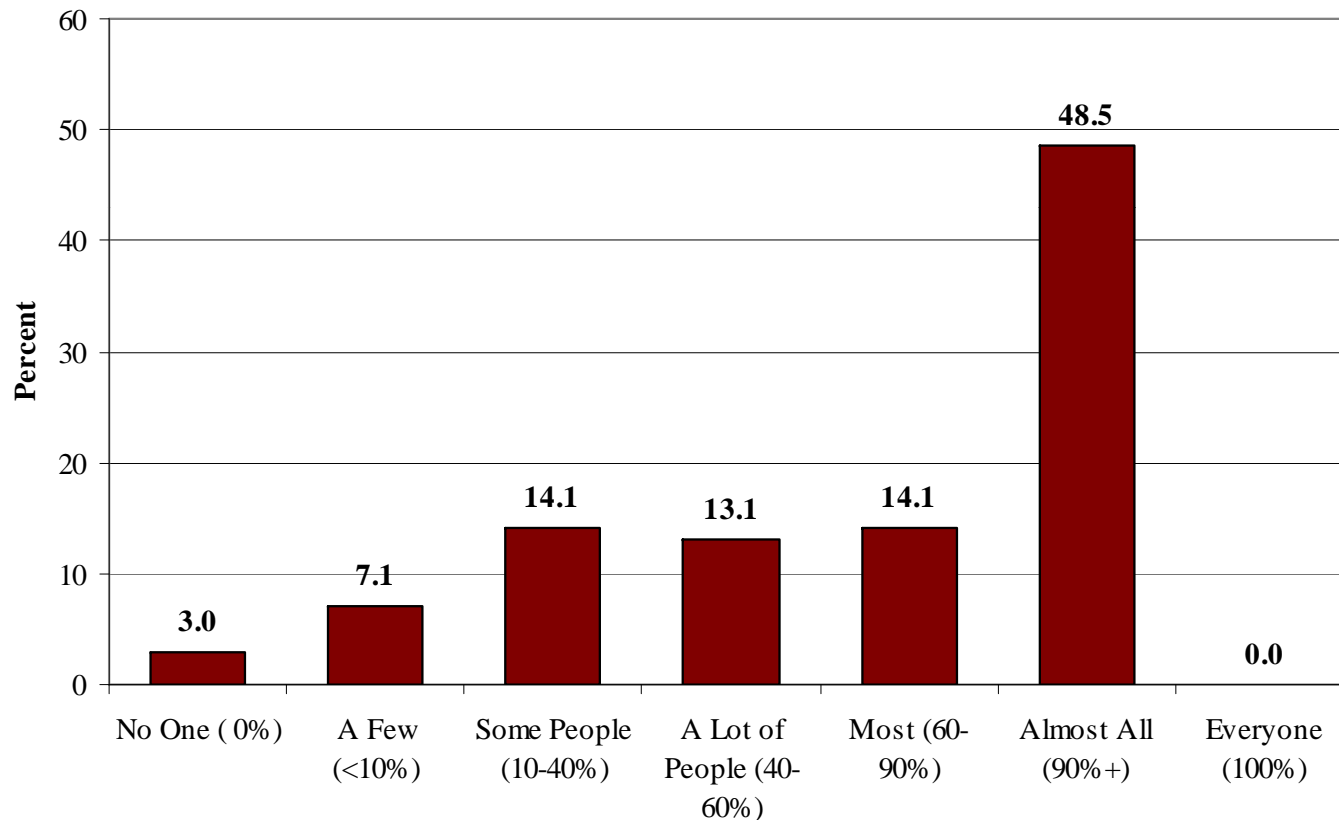
## Experiences with victimization because of your sex offender registration

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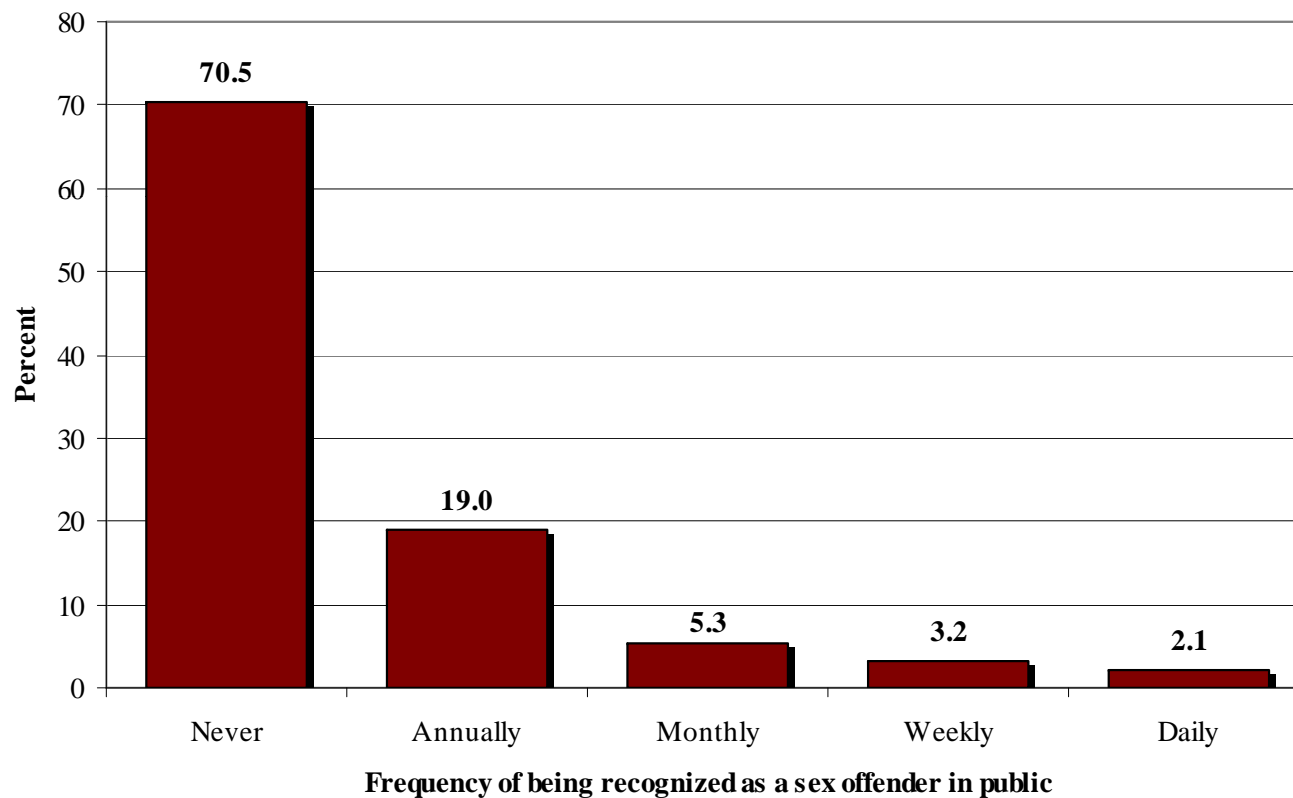
	Mean	SD
Verbally Harassed	7.22	52.31
Threatened with Physical Harm	2.02	11.36
Physically Assaulted	0.27	1.36
Sexually Assaulted	0.05	0.36
Robbed	0.16	1.22
Had Property Stolen	0.42	1.68

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## Proportion of Family, Friends, Co-Workers, and Others Know About Your Sex Offense Conviction



## Frequency of being recognized as a sex offender in public



## Impact of sex offender registration on living arrangements

- 57% found it difficult to find an affordable place to live that was not too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground;
- 41% found it difficult to find an affordable place to live that was not in close proximity to other registered sex offenders;
- 32% stated that when they were released from prison they were unable to return to their residence because it was too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground;
- 8% had to move out of a home that they owned because it was too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground?
- 20% had to move out of another residence because it was too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground;

## Opinions regarding possible laws restricting living arrangements

- 83% believed that the city should regulate sex offenders based on severity of crime
- 75% agreed that SO's should be allowed to reside in the same residence/complex as other registered SO's
- 57% agreed that SO's should only be allowed to reside in the residence/complex as other SO's if their probation or parole officer allowed them to
- Over 33% agreed that SO's should be restricted from living to close to a park, school, or day care center.

## Conclusions

- Many policies, procedures, and laws pertaining to sex offender registration, notification, and residency restrictions are based on the premise that accurate information is collected and maintained on where sex offenders reside.
- We found that the majority of the most violent and dangerous sex offenders did not reside at the address where they were registered.

## Conclusions, cont.

- Current laws and policies place much of the burden for registration compliance on the sex offenders.
- Current laws and policies create an unfunded mandate for local law enforcement.
- Policymakers need to revisit offender classification guidelines to ensure that they accurately reflect the danger the individual poses to society and that they warrant the resources needed for monitoring.

## Our Conclusions Support Previous Findings

- Several collateral consequences related to:
  - Employment
  - Living arrangements
  - Stigmatization
  - Social isolation
  - Victimization
- Programs and policies need to consider issues related to sex offender reintegration
  - Might increase accuracy of registration
  - Might decrease re-offending
  - Citizen survey showed support for reintegration policy