About the Analysis

Passed in 2018, the First Step Act (FSA) was designed to reduce reoffending among people leaving federal prisons. This analysis estimates recidivism rates among individuals released from federal prison prior to the FSA who had similar risk profiles and were tracked for similar periods of time as those released under the Act.

Though not an evaluation of the FSA or its implementation, the brief discusses several factors that individually or collectively may account for lower recidivism among people released under the FSA.

Key Findings

- Recidivism rates were an estimated 55% lower for people released under the FSA.
- People released under the FSA incurred an estimated 4,837 fewer arrests.
- People released under the FSA accounted for an estimated 0.03% of national arrests.

About the Author

Dr. Avinash Bhati is the founder and CEO of Maxarth LLC, a data science company providing creative solutions to real-world problems and opportunities. Bhati earned a Ph.D. in econometrics from American University in 2001. He is interested in all aspects of data science, including predictive modeling, quasi-experimental evaluations, micro-simulation models, and synthetic data tools. Bhati has developed and validated numerous pretrial and post-adjudication risk assessment instruments.

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