

Empirical Study on the Characteristics and Prevention of Recidivism Among Ex-Convicts

—Focusing on Recidivists

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Abstract: Recidivism is a serious social issue which receives urgent attention in contemporary society. Data analysis reveals an upward trend in recidivism rates among released prisoners, predominantly concentrated in economically developed regions and specific high-risk populations. Offenses primarily involve property crimes and disruptions to social management order, closely linked to low educational attainment, unemployment, youth and specific residential areas. Research indicates that the risk of recidivism increases with a younger age at first offense, shorter prison sentences, and more prior convictions, with the two years following release being a critical danger period. To effectively prevent recidivism, a comprehensive management system must be established: within prisons, emphasis should be placed on strengthening remorse education, vocational skills training, and psychological rehabilitation. At the societal level, social security systems must be improved to address employment and social security transition issues. Legally and policy-wise, the post-release rehabilitation and assistance system should be optimized, shifting the focus of penal enforcement toward rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Keywords: Release from prison; Recidivism; Empirical study

Introduction

The purpose of penalty is to prevent and deter crime. Recidivism, the commission of new crimes after finishing a sentence, indicates that prior penalty failed to fully achieve its rehabilitative function or yielded minimal corrective effects. The social harm that recidivism yields often exceeds that from ordinary crimes, posing a severe threat to societal security and stability. In the era of information, accelerated technological iteration and societal cognitive renewal, coupled with rapid social change, have heightened recidivism risks. During penalty enforcement, individuals face prolonged isolation from mainstream society, disrupting their socialization process. Upon release, they often struggle to resume education or secure employment,

making societal acceptance difficult. This survival dilemma may compel them to return to criminal activity. Therefore, conducting empirical statistical analysis on various factors contributing to recidivism among released prisoners, identifying their individual characteristics and general patterns of reoffending, and integrating these findings with social phenomena provides crucial empirical evidence for crime prevention, optimizing penal execution, and refining related measures. This holds significant practical importance.

1. Big Data Analysis of Recidivism

This study focuses on “repeat offenders” as the subject of recidivism research. This is because repeat offenders are defined as individuals who commit another crime within five years after completing their sentence or receiving a pardon. This timeframe provides a relatively clear reflection of the effectiveness of criminal punishment enforcement and crime prevention education. Using the China Judgments Online database, the author searched for criminal cases tried and adjudicated by courts nationwide from January 2014 to December 2019 using the keyword “repeat offender”. During this period, 5,194,507 criminal cases were tried and adjudicated nationwide, among which 630,059 cases explicitly stated repeat offender status, accounting for 12.13%. A search using the keyword “recidivism” revealed 802,861 cases explicitly noting “recidivism”. After excluding 19,415 cases marked as “no risk of recidivism”, the valid cases totaled 783,446, accounting for 15.08%. The author's analysis of data released by the Ministry of Justice, calculations by relevant scholars, and recidivism rate data published by some provinces and cities in China^[1]. These reveal that the overall recidivism rate among released prisoners nationwide has remained between 7% and 16%, showing a gradual upward trend. It rose from 3.92% in 1985 to 8.00% in 2004, and further increased to 15.98% in 2007.

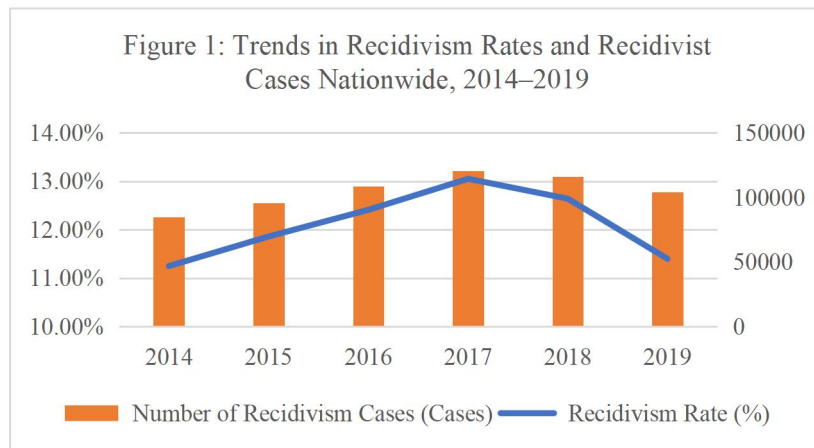
The author set keywords on the Judgment Document Network and Alpha Case Analysis Network to screen recidivist judgments from 2014 to 2019, collecting relevant data and supplementing other information by adjusting keyword ranges. Among these, the distribution of time, location, case types, and basic personal characteristics (such as drug using) reflect the fundamental features and associated factors of recidivism. The involved amounts, sentencing circumstances, and imposed penalties, meanwhile, demonstrate the social harmfulness of recidivism.

1.1 Analysis of Basic Recidivism Patterns

1.1.1 Development Trends

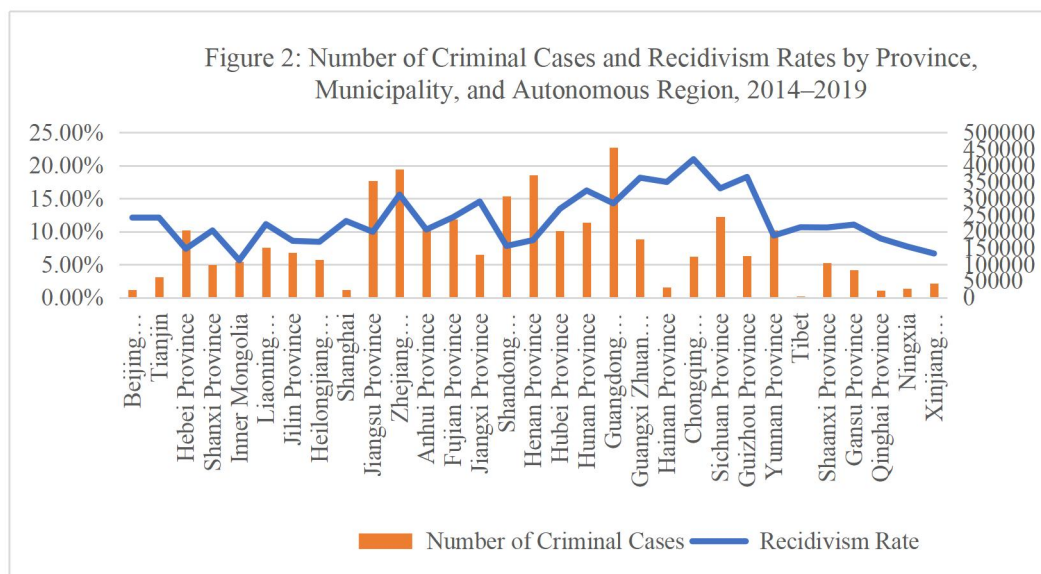
From a temporal perspective, both the national recidivism rate and the number of recidivist cases showed an upward trend from 2014 to 2017, peaking in 2017, followed by a downward trend from 2018 to 2019.

^[1] See Li Guangyong: Empirical Study on Factors Influencing Recidivism Among Released Prisoners and Preventive Measures: A Sampling Survey of Recidivist Groups in Nine Prisons in Shanghai, China Legal Publishing House, 2018.



1.1.2 Regional Distribution

Recidivism rates generally correlate positively with economic development levels. Among provinces and municipalities, economically developed regions like Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Tianjin, and Fujian exhibit relatively higher recidivism rates, while economically underdeveloped areas such as Tibet, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Qinghai show comparatively lower rates. The following are the recidivism rate data of China's seven major geographical regions: North China: 8.81%, Northeast China: 9.49%, East China: 11.63%, Central China: 12.03%, South China: 15.45%, Southwest China: 15.52%, Northwest China: 9.72%.



1.1.3 Distribution of Offense Categories

Among recidivism cases, property crimes (63.02%) and crimes against social management order (24.25%) constituted the primary offenses. Crimes endangering public safety, crimes disrupting the socialist market economy order, crimes infringing upon citizens' personal rights, and other offenses accounted for a negligible proportion. Property crimes were predominantly low-effort offenses such as theft, robbery, and fraud, while crimes against social management order were primarily drug-related offenses and crimes disrupting public order.

Notably, drug abuse is closely linked to recidivism, with related cases totaling 99,271, accounting for over 20% of all recidivism cases. Robbery and intentional injury

crimes constitute 7% of violent offenses. Given the greater harm posed by violent crimes and the rising trend in robbery-related recidivism, violent crime recidivism remains a critical concern requiring focused attention.

1.1.4 Degree of Social Harm

This section assesses the social harmfulness of recidivism through analysis of sentencing, circumstances, and involved amounts.

(a) Sentencing Statistics Analysis

According to data compiled by the Alpha platform, from 2014 to 2019, fixed-term imprisonment was the most commonly applied principal punishment in criminal cases involving recidivism, accounting for approximately 95%. Lighter punishments such as public surveillance and short-term detention collectively accounted for 4.5%. Additionally, probation was applied in 26,552 cases (probation is a method of punishment execution, not an independent principal punishment), representing about 5.5%.

(b) Circumstantial Analysis

Approximately 70% of released prisoners admitted to their crimes in recidivism cases. Voluntary compensation was a secondary common circumstance, though neither directly reflects social harm because admissions often stemmed from suspects knowing they could receive leniency, while compensation was frequently arranged by relatives rather than reflecting genuine remorse. In theft recidivism cases, 73.95% of suspects admitted to their crimes. Additionally, 17.02% of recidivists had a history of drug use, which is a significant factor influencing criminal behavior.

2. SPSS Data Analysis of Recidivism Phenomena—Focusing on Theft Crimes

This research designed variables and data tables to input data from first-instance sentencing judgments for recidivism in theft crimes in 2018 and used sampling approach to analyze seven regions: northeast China, north China, central China, east China, south China, northwest China and southwest China. Representative provinces were selected from each region to construct a database containing 13,289 valid data points. Analysis was subsequently conducted using SPSS to derive the results.

2.1 Analysis of Personal Factors of Offenders

This section analyzes personal factors (e.g. age and education level) of repeat offenders for theft crimes. Using selected variables as independent variables, it tests following hypotheses: (1) Is there a correlation between place of residence and place of crime? (2) Is there a correlation between education level and number of convictions? (3) Is there a correlation between place of residence and number of convictions?

2.1.1 Age

The sample mean was 37.44 years old, with a mode of 31 years old. The ages of recidivists ranged from 22 to 52 years old, with the highest incidence of recidivism occurring between 27 and 40 years old. The sample shows 12,052 valid cases for age, with 1,237 missing values.

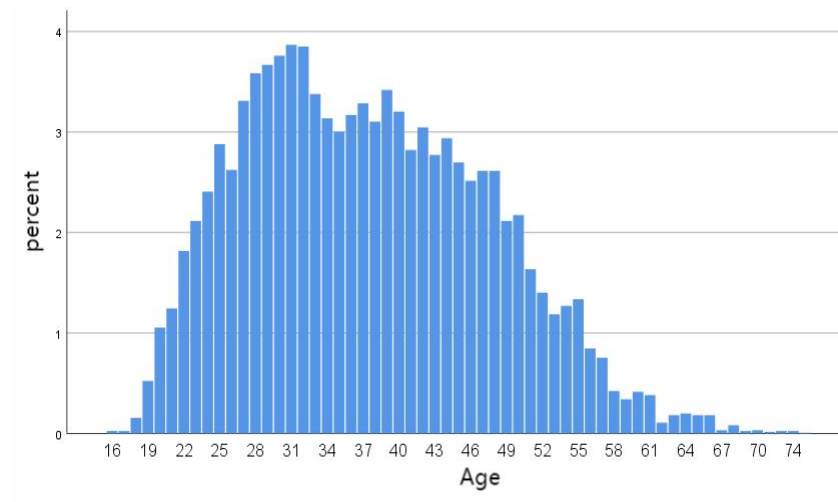


Figure 3: Age Distribution of Recidivism for Theft Offenses

2.1.2 Limited Criminal Responsibility Capacity and History of Drug Abuse

Only 1.2% of recidivists lacked complete criminal responsibility. And 6.3% of recidivists had a history of drug use. It indicates that the vast majority of recidivists possesses full capacity for criminal responsibility and doesn't commit crimes due to drug addiction or drug-related profits.

2.1.3 The Analysis of Educational Attainment and Number of Convictions

The educational attainment of recidivists was predominantly junior high school (42.9%) and primary school (42%), with illiteracy accounting for 10% and high school or above only 5.1%. A correlation analysis between educational level and prior conviction counts among recidivists was conducted using Spearman's rho test. The results indicate a significant correlation between educational attainment and prior convictions among repeat offenders: $r(11279) = -0.024$, $p = 0.012 < 0.05$. The correlation is negative, which means higher educational attainment correlates with fewer repeat offenses. This suggests that individuals with higher education are more receptive to corrections and benefit from educational qualifications that facilitate employment upon release.

2.1.4 Analysis of the Correlation Between Residence and Crime Location

Following statistical guidelines, we first propose the hypothesis: Is there a correlation between an individual's place of residence and their choice of location for committing a crime?

The null hypothesis H_0 is formulated: There is no correlation between an individual's place of residence and their choice of crime location (correlation coefficient = 0). A Pearson chi-square test is conducted.

Table 1: Pearson Chi-Square Test for Place of Residence vs. Location of Offense

Chi-Square Test

Value	Degrees of Freedom	Progressive Significance (Two-tailed)
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Pearson Chi-Square	65287.487 ^a	36	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41123.737	36	.000
Linear correlation	11429.403	1	.000
Valid Cases	12756		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.79.

Symmetry Measure

		Value	Progressive Significance
Nominal to Nominal	Phi	2.262	.000
	Clemens V	.924	.000
Number of Valid Cases		12756	

Upon testing, the contingency table analyzed here is non-four-cell. Less than 20% of cells have expected frequencies below 5, and none have expected frequencies below 1. The results from the Pearson Chi-Square column are read. $P=0.000 < 0.05$. Reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the different residential locations of recidivists influence their choice of crime location. As this is a multidimensional contingency table, read the coefficient value in the Krammer's V column. Here, $r=0.924$, indicating a highly significant correlation.

Conclusion: The different residential areas of repeat offenders influence their choice of crime location. $p < 0.05$, Krammer's $V = 0.924$, indicating a high degree of correlation. Therefore, repeat offenders are more likely to commit crimes in their residential areas.

2.2 Analysis of First-Time Offenders

This section analyzes 10,312 court judgment records from Guangdong, Shanghai, Heilongjiang, and Yunnan provinces/municipalities.

2.2.1 Frequency Analysis and Correlation Analysis of Age at First Offense

(a) Frequency Analysis of Age at First Offense

Sample statistics are shown in Figure 4. The valid case count was 8,716. The sample mode was 20, with a valid percentage of 6.8% and a frequency of 591. The next most common age was 19, with a valid percentage of 6.3% and a frequency of 550. The sample mean was 28.55, the minimum value was 14 (valid percentage $<0.1\%$, frequency=2), The maximum age was 73, with an effective percentage below 0.1% and a frequency of 1. Thus, the most common ages for first-time offenses were 20 and 19, representing the early adult stage, with young adults aged 19 to 30 being the most

prevalent group. Overall, the trend shows a decline. It can draw a conclusion that the age of first offense is negatively correlated with the risk of recidivism.

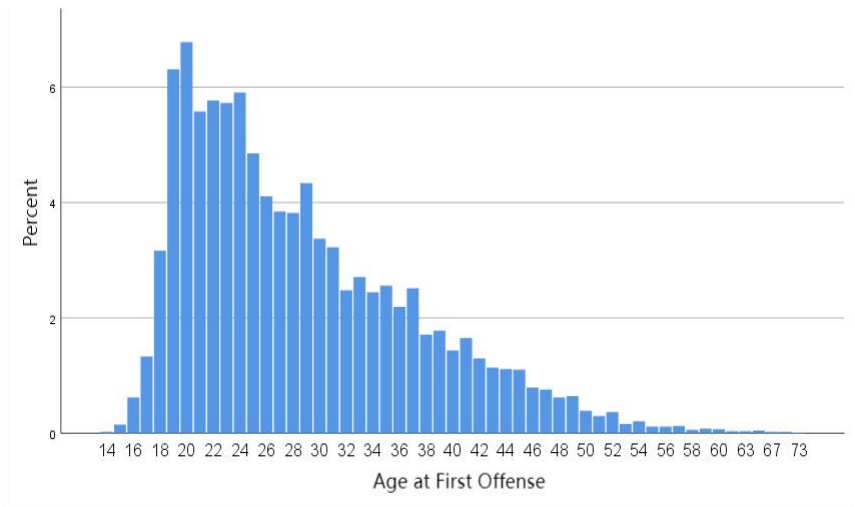


Figure 4: Frequency Distribution of Age at First Offense

(b) Correlation Analysis Between Age at First Offense and Recidivism

This correlation analysis examines the relationship between age at first offense and "number of convictions." A higher number of convictions indicates a relatively greater likelihood of recidivism.

Research Question: Does the age at first offense influence the number of subsequent offenses?

Following scatter plots and K-S tests, Spearman's correlation coefficient analysis yielded the following results:

Table 2: Correlation between age at first offense and number of prior convictions

			Age at First Offense	Number of Prior Convictions
Spearman's Rho	Age at First Offense	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.099**
		Sig. (two-tailed)	.	.000
		N	8716	8716
	Number of Prior Convictions	Correlation coefficient	-.099**	1.000
		Sig. (two-tailed)	.000	.

N	8716	13259
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******. At the 0.01 level (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.

At this point, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, leading us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the two variables are significantly correlated. This means we have at least 95% confidence that the correlation coefficient between these two variables in the population is not equal to zero, and this result is not due to chance. The correlation coefficient is -0.099, indicating a negative correlation between the two variables.

In summary, a negative correlation exists between the age at first offense and the number of prior convictions among recidivists. And a higher number of prior convictions indicates greater difficulty in rehabilitation. A lower age at first offense, particularly among youth who have not fully socialized, suggests that individuals took the wrong path and were sentenced before reaching full maturity.

2.2.2 Frequency Analysis of First Offense Categories

Statistics from 9,299 valid cases show that property crimes (excluding robbery) accounted for 86.4% (8,033 cases). Crimes against citizens' personal rights and democratic rights accounted for 4.8%. Robbery accounted for 5.2% (483 cases). Crimes against social management order (excluding drug-related crimes) accounted for 1.5% and drug-related crimes accounted for 1.3%. Thus, the initial offenses of recidivists predominantly involve property crimes with relatively low levels of violence. Simultaneously, the primary age group for these initial offenses consists mainly of young adults who have recently reached adulthood and entered society. Before achieving a stable life phase, when living conditions cannot meet their personal needs, they often develop a mindset of seeking gains without labor, leading to property crimes as their first offenses.

2.2.3 Frequency Analysis of Actual Sentences Served for First Offenses

The valid sample size was 9,433 cases. Measured in months, the most frequent actual sentence length was 6 months (9.9%, 931 cases), followed by 8 months (6.1%, 579 cases). The average actual sentence length was 20.328 months. The minimum was 0 months (2.2%, 212 cases), while the maximum was 448 months (less than 0.1%). This indicates that sentences for first offenses primarily fall within one year, with the total number of relevant cases decreasing as the actual length of imprisonment increases. Thus, the actual length of imprisonment proves effective in rehabilitating offenders and preventing recidivism. However, since the first offenses of released prisoners are predominantly property crimes (excluding theft), their severity is relatively low, which results in lighter sentences. Consequently, the rehabilitative effect of punishment is limited, making these individuals more susceptible to returning to criminal behavior.

2.3 Analysis of Other Factors Related to Prior Convictions

Statistical analysis of prior convictions shows that among 13,259 case samples, the mode is 1 prior conviction (42.9%, 5,687 cases), followed by 2 prior convictions (26.7%, 3,537 cases). The maximum number of prior convictions is 22, accounting for less than 0.1%. Thus, most released prisoners who reoffend had previously received one to two sentences, making them a key focus group in reoffending prevention efforts.

2.4 Analysis of Period Between Previous Release and Recidivism

2.4.1 Sample Frequency Analysis of Employment Status

Among released prisoners who reoffended, the data sample shows that out of 9,952

valid cases: - Unemployed individuals accounted for 74.8% (7,448 cases); - Farmers accounted for 18.9% (1,876 cases); - Workers accounted for 5.9% (590 cases); - Students accounted for less than 0.1% (2 cases); - Businesspeople accounted for 0.4%.

The unemployed constituted the overwhelming majority, followed by farmers, workers, and merchants in descending order. Students, constrained by their capacity for independent action and supported by family safety nets, exhibited the lowest proportion due to their lack of significant livelihood challenges. This indicates a negative correlation between recidivism probability and living conditions: individuals without stable income sources face higher risks of returning to criminal activity.

2.4.2 Frequency Analysis of Intervals Between Offenses

Analysis of recidivism intervals reveals that the recidivism rate decreases as the interval lengthens. The frequency distribution table shows that the average interval between the current offense and release from prison was 23.15 months, with a relatively small standard deviation. As shown in Figure 6, the probability of reoffending is highest within 0-10 months (approximately one year) after release. The normal distribution curve indicates that the two-year period following release represents a high-risk phase for reoffending, coinciding with the critical stage for post-release rehabilitation and support measures.

Long-term inmates often struggle to adapt to societal changes after completing their sentences, face difficulties securing stable livelihoods, and are thus more likely to return to criminal behavior. Conversely, those with shorter incarceration periods, having undergone limited rehabilitation and burdened by criminal records, also exhibit higher recidivism rates.

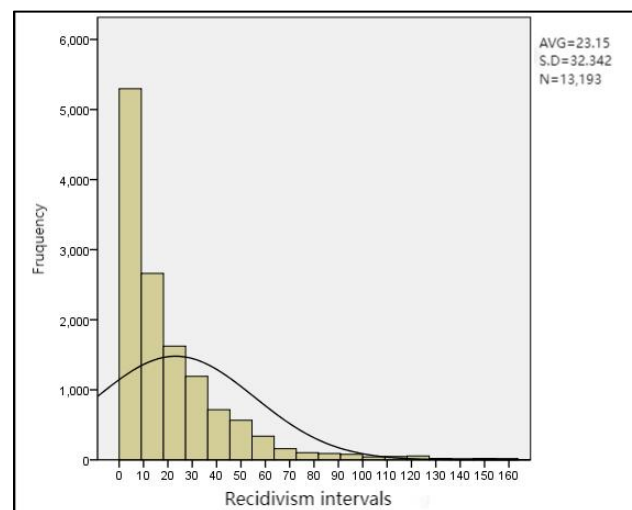


Figure 6: Frequency Distribution Histogram of Time Intervals Between Current Offense and Release Date

2.5 Characteristics and Influencing Factors of Recidivism

2.5.1 Characteristics Associated with Recidivism

(a) Sentences primarily range from 5 to 20 Months of Fixed-Term Imprisonment. Among the 13,283 valid cases analyzed for recidivism sentencing types, fixed-term imprisonment constituted the largest proportion at 71.5%, followed by life imprisonment at 26.6%. In the statistics on the duration of sentences for recidivism, the average sentence length was 15.71 months with a small standard deviation and the

mode was 12 months. Term of penalty was primarily concentrated in the 5-20 month range, with the highest frequency occurring between 5 and 15 months.

(b) The location of the crime is closely related to the place of residence. As analyzed earlier, the different places of residence of repeat offenders influence their choice of crime location, with a high probability of committing crimes in their place of residence. This indicates that criminal activity is a special type of social behavior, and perpetrators often habitually commit crimes in familiar environments.

(c) Among the crimes committed, the percentage of carrying weapons is 11.3%. The percentage of pickpocketing incidents is 16%. The percentage of burglaries is 17.5%. The percentage of multiple thefts is 27.4%. The percentage of voluntary surrender is 2.6%. The percentage of admitting to the criminal fact is 98.5%. The percentage of showing remorse is 46.5%. The percentage of returning stolen property voluntarily is 2.7%. The percentage of making contributions is 0.3%. The percentage of making active restitution is 1.9%. What's more, the percentage of being judged probation is 0.4%. Except for admitting the facts of the crime and repentance, the proportions of other mitigating or reducing circumstances were all lower than those of aggravating circumstances. According to the principle of proportionality between crime and punishment, the reoffending of theft crimes exhibits high levels of harm to legal interests, blameworthiness, and personal danger. However, the high percentages for admitting criminal facts and expressing remorse still fail to prove low dangerousness. Individuals previously punished under criminal law possess some understanding of sentencing factors. Moreover, both surrender and voluntary restitution, which more effectively demonstrate remorse, account for less than 3%. Thus, admitting facts and expressing remorse cannot fully prove a good attitude of repentance.

2.5.2 Analysis of Factors Influencing Recidivism Aggravating Circumstances^[2]

This section employs ROC curve analysis to examine the impact of intrinsic factors, first-time offense characteristics, other prior conviction factors and post-release experiences on aggravating recidivism factors. If the Sig is less than 0.05, the hypothesis that the independent variable correlates with “the presence of xx facto” is confirmed. Otherwise, it is rejected, indicating no diagnostic significance for “the presence of xx factor” or, equivalently, no statistical significance. If $AUC < 0.5$, diagnostic significance is absent; conversely, diagnostic significance is present, with accuracy improving as AUC approaches 1. “ $AUC = 0.5$ ” indicates the diagnostic method is completely ineffective and lacks diagnostic value. AUC between 0.5 and 0.7 indicates low accuracy. AUC between 0.7 and 0.9 indicates moderate accuracy. AUC above 0.9 indicates high accuracy.

(a) Table 3 presents the test results for the area under the ROC curve regarding “carrying weapons”. The diagnostic significance for “carrying weapons” is indicated by serial numbers 9 (actual time served for first offense), 13 (time of most severe sentence), and 15 (total cumulative prison time for prior offenses) showed AUC values greater than 0.5 and P values less than 0.05. Thus, the actual prison time served for the first offense, the time of the most severe sentence and the total cumulative prison time for prior offenses have a weak influence on the aggravating circumstance of “carrying a deadly weapon.”

^[2] In this section, * denotes: * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

Table 3 Area Under the Curve and Significance Values

Independent Variable	AUC Area	Sig
1. Gender	0.493	0.439
2. Age	0.496	0.632
3. Take drugs?	0.503	0.779
4. Do you have limited criminal responsibility capacity?	0.492	0.385
5. Educational attainment	0.514	0.128
6. Place of Residence	0.436***	0.000
7. Age at First Offense	0.504	0.693
8. First Offense Charge	0.470**	0.008
9. Actual prison term served for first offense	0.551***	0.000
10. Most serious prior offense	0.495	0.576
11. Most Severe Sentence Imposed	0.506	0.508
12. Whether the most severe sentence was suspended	0.505	0.622
13. Length of the most severe prison sentence served	0.552***	0.000
14. Number of Prior Convictions	0.499	0.953
15. Total time served for prior convictions	0.547***	0.000
16. Interval between crimes	0.491	0.360
17. Employment Status	0.478*	0.020

(b) The results shown in Table 4 and the test results for the area under the ROC curve for "pickpocketing" are as follows: The diagnostic significance numbers for "pickpocketing" are 2, 7, and 14, with AUC areas greater than 0.5 and P values less than 0.05. That is, age, age at first offense, and number of prior convictions have a weak influence on the likelihood of pickpocketing upon recidivism.

Table 4 Area Under the Curve and Significance Values

Independent Variable	AUC Area	Sig
1. Gender	0.511	0.195
2. Age	0.590***	0.000
3. Take drugs?	0.486	0.083
4. Do you have limited criminal responsibility capacity?	0.495	0.553
5. Educational attainment	0.480**	0.016
6. Place of residence	0.368***	0.000
7. Age at First Offense	0.586**	0.009
8. First Offense Charge	0.482*	0.048
9. Actual prison term served for first offense	0.468***	0.000
10. Most serious prior offense	0.491	0.279
11. Most Severe Sentence Imposed	0.494	0.458
12. Whether the most severe sentence was suspended	0.503	0.680
13. Length of the most severe prison sentence served	0.452***	0.000
14. Number of Prior Convictions	0.553***	0.000
15. Total time served for prior convictions	0.482*	0.031
16. Interval between offenses	0.474**	0.002
17. Employment Status	0.457***	0.000

(c) Table 5 shows the results of testing the area under the ROC curve for “household registration”. Specific results are as follows. The diagnostic significance of “home invasion” is indicated by items 9, 13, 14, and 15, with AUC values exceeding 0.5 and P values below 0.05. This indicates that the actual length of initial incarceration, the maximum length of incarceration, the number of prior convictions, and the cumulative length of prior incarceration exert a weak influence on the likelihood of committing home invasion during recidivism.

Table 5 Area Under the Curve and Significance Values

Independent Variables	AUC Area	Sig
1. Gender	0.494	0.422
2. Age	0.443***	0.000
3. Take drugs?	0.504	0.608
4. Do you have limited criminal responsibility capacity?	0.502	0.801
5. Educational attainment	0.499	0.908
6. Place of residence	0.468***	0.000
7. Age at First Offense	0.423***	0.000
8. First Offense Charge	0.508	0.371
9. Actual time served for first offense	0.560***	0.000
10. Most serious prior offense	0.494	0.486
11. Most Severe Sentence Imposed	0.508	0.341
12. Whether the most severe sentence was suspended	0.503	0.744
13. Length of the most severe prison sentence served	0.581***	0.000
14. Number of Prior Convictions	0.517*	0.039
15. Total time served for prior convictions	0.576***	0.000
16. Interval between crimes	0.499	0.859
17. Employment Status	0.515	0.065

(d) The results shown in Table 6 and the test results for the area under the ROC curve for “multiple offenses” are as follows. The diagnostic significance numbers for "whether multiple offenses were committed" are 6, 9, 13, 14, and 15, with AUC > 0.5 and P < 0.05. The remaining variables—place of residence, actual time served for first offense, time of most severe sentence, number of prior convictions, and cumulative time served for prior offenses—were not significant, indicating they do not influence the occurrence of multiple offenses.

Table 6 Area Under the Curve and Significance Values

Independent Variables	AUC Area	Sig
1. Gender	0.498	0.756
2. Age	0.494	0.360
3. Drug use?	0.501	0.932
4. Do you have limited criminal responsibility capacity?	0.486*	0.040
5. Educational attainment	0.502	0.750
6. Place of Residence	0.531***	0.000
7. Age at First Offense	0.466***	0.000
8. First Offense Charge	0.493	0.430
9. Actual time served for first offense	0.545***	0.000
10. Most serious prior offense	0.487	0.051
11. Most Severe Sentence Imposed	0.504	0.521
12. Whether the most severe sentence was suspended	0.497	0.694
13. Length of the most severe prison sentence served	0.558***	0.000
14. Number of Prior Convictions	0.525***	0.000
15. Total time served for prior convictions	0.562***	0.000
16. Interval between offenses	0.474***	0.000
17. Employment Status	0.480**	0.004

2.5.3 Summary of ROC Curve Analysis

The above factors influencing aggravating circumstances were assigned values as shown in the table below. Among the factors presented, particularly the actual time served for the first offense, the maximum time served, the cumulative time served for prior convictions and the number of prior convictions, exert a significant influence on aggravating circumstances.

Table 7: Independent Variables and Number of Influencing Factors

Independent Variables	Number of Influencing Factors
Actual Sentence Length for First Offense	3
Maximum Sentence Served	3
Cumulative Sentence Length for Prior Convictions	3
Age	1
Age at First Offense	1
Number of Prior Convictions	3
Residence	1

3. Recommendations for Preventing Recidivism

The persistently high recidivism rate not only directly tests the effectiveness of the criminal justice system but also poses a profound challenge to social governance capabilities. Whether released prisoners can successfully reintegrate into society concerns not only individual dignity but also the long-term stability and security of society. Preventing recidivism is far from a mere extension of punishment. It is a systematic endeavor requiring governance from source to end, encompassing process intervention and terminal safeguards. A comprehensive governance system should be established across three dimensions: internal rehabilitation through prison management, external acceptance through social support and institutional refinement through legal policies. This integrated approach aims to restore social relationships while rehabilitating offenders, then achieve the organic unity of legal and social outcomes.

3.1 Prison Management

3.1.1 *Strengthening Education on Remorse and Rehabilitation for First-Time Offenders*

Frequency analysis indicates that remorse is not fully developed among recidivists. From a criminological perspective, the growing severity of recidivism among released prisoners necessitates addressing internal causes alongside external factors as a primary pathway to prevention. Deepening remorseful attitudes among released prisoners promotes their renunciation of crime and successful reintegration into society.

Rehabilitation efforts for offenders, particularly first-time offenders, warrant heightened emphasis. Factors associated with first-time offenses influence aggravating circumstances in recidivism. And the age at first offense correlates with the number of prior criminal convictions. The peak age for first-time offenses is around 18-20 years old, with the majority occurring during the youth period before age 37. At this stage, most individuals are newly entering society and may stray onto the wrong path during the process of social integration. However, since the severity of

their crimes is generally relatively minor, strengthening the development of their outlook on life, moral values, and values, while reinforcing education on the rule of law, holds significant importance for preventing recidivism.

3.1.2 Implementing Vocational Education to Enhance Employment Capabilities

The Prison Law stipulates: “Local people's governments shall assist released prisoners in securing livelihood arrangements.” In order to address basic livelihood needs while fostering sound employment attitudes, prisons and post-release rehabilitation agencies must: cultivate proper employment perspectives by organizing job fairs, guiding career paths, and recommending employers. Concurrently, strengthening vocational skills training to enhance human capital is vital. Providing relevant vocational training during incarceration significantly boosts inmates' professional capabilities.

3.1.3 Implement proactive physical and mental health education

Reforming internal factors is central to prison rehabilitation. Rather than relying solely on strict surveillance, efforts should focus on psychological education, addressing inmates' inner motivations. This involves continuously fostering positive psychological factors such as self-confidence and cooperative spirit, cultivating healthy psychological qualities, standardizing behavioral awareness, and developing strong self-control. A comprehensive psychological health education assessment system should be established with regular evaluations.

3.1.4 Guide Inmates to Understand Current Social Conditions and Contemporary Information

Societal development makes it difficult for incarcerated offenders to adapt to the pace of societal change upon release. To encourage them access to external information, prisons should provide media resources such as news and periodicals to help inmates stay informed about social developments, so that they can facilitate their successful reintegration into society.

3.2 Social Management Aspects

3.2.1 Improve the social security system to continue assisting released prisoners in overcoming livelihood challenges

Although released prisoners have reintegrated into society, a great deal of them face significant challenges due to their criminal records. Modern social security systems serve both poverty alleviation and crime prevention functions. Efforts should include adjusting national income, raising the proportion of labor compensation in primary distribution, rationalizing benefit allocation structures, establishing a progressive tax system and implementing tax transfer payments to prioritize disadvantaged groups in secondary distribution. What's more, the government should integrate cultural education for ex-convicts into local planning, broaden the scope of compulsory education and enhance their cultural literacy.

3.2.2 Ensuring Employment for Released Prisoners

The vast number of released prisoners accommodated by resettlement agencies nationwide makes it impractical to provide adequate employment for each individual. However, failing to facilitate their smooth reintegration into society not only disrupts their personal lives but also threatens social stability. Besides vocational training during incarceration, resettlement agencies should establish designated employment units for released prisoners or recommend suitable job placements upon their release.

3.3 Legal and Policy Optimization

Legal policies and penal enforcement models should be optimized. Amending existing regulations on the placement and rehabilitation assistance for released prisoners at the legislative level are necessary. This involves identifying gaps in existing legal principles and areas where laws are inconsistent with judicial practice, while also

conducting empirical research to evaluate the effectiveness of laws and regulations in preventing recidivism. The aim is to pinpoint the root causes of ineffective outcomes and ensure the revised regulations align with the current Constitution, Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law. Additionally, mechanisms for liability and related implementation measures not specifically addressed in existing laws and regulations should be elaborated upon.

4. Conclusion

Preventing recidivism not only salvages individual destinies but also strengthens the foundations of society. This systemic endeavor requires both the rigid constraints of the rule of law and the flexible support of social governance. It demands precise rehabilitation within prisons and inclusive acceptance from society. And it necessitates short-term placement assistance. Against the backdrop of advancing the modernization of Chinese governance system and capacity, the prevention of recidivism should be integrated into the broader framework of high-level rule of law development. Grounded in empirical research, this approach should drive the transformation of penal enforcement models from “containment” to “rehabilitation”, elevate social support systems from “relief-oriented” to “development-oriented” and refine legal policies from “fragmented” to “systematic”.