



D69 Sex Offender Registration and Public Bias

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the need for additional research in the area of sex offender registration along with additional registries concerning the public health safety.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing that additional research is highly encouraged. It is only with added research that any major impact can happen within the criminal justice/forensic science community. The current study allows the general public to become aware of the current registries that are in place. With future research into this spectrum, adults can become better educated about the world around them. The study also allows for the general public to find out if an offender; whether a sexual offender, drug offender, or an individual with a mental disorder, resides within close proximity.

In recent years there have been many public policy changes that have affected sex offender registration. Many of these changes have come about through significant media coverage of child abductions, molestation, and murders. There is now a mandatory registration for individuals who have been convicted of any sex offense. The objective of this study is to determine if there is a public bias towards having mandatory registration for sex offenders versus other potential mandatory registrations. While sex offender registration has been deemed necessary for public safety there may be other areas of public safety that have been ignored due to the public's zeal towards sex offenders. Areas that are often ignored and just as dangerous to the public's safety or health include weapons, sexually transmitted diseases, mental health diagnoses, and other violent crimes.

The study was conducted through the use of voluntary surveys using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The results were evaluated using descriptive statistics to show any potential public bias towards registering sex offenders. Surveys were passed out to the general public ages eighteen to thirty, with no preference towards race, gender, religion, relationship status, and education level. Data was obtained through the University of Colorado as well as through means of public venue.

The results from the survey showed a high percentage of respondents indicating the public's need for additional mandatory registration. Both male and female respondents had a very high percentage of yes responses for mandating sex offender registration. However, both male and female respondents also had a high percentage of yes responses for all weapon registries for the exception of tasers. All respondents had a high percentage of yes responses for other crimes

except for illegal drug use. It is important to note that at least 96% of all respondents felt murder should result in mandatory registration. Results from the survey showed the general public ages eighteen to thirty had a bias towards registering sex offenders versus having mandatory registries for other public health safety registries such as gun ownership, HIV (positive), STDs, illegal drug association, mental illness diagnosis, and hate crimes. Although there is a bias towards registering sex offenders, it is essential to note that a majority of respondents felt there needed to be a mandatory registration for offenders guilty of murder. A large percent of respondents also felt there needed to be a mandatory registration for specific violent crimes and for specific types of weapons. The survey results revealed the need for future research in this area as well as possible changes to current policies and procedures mandating federal registration. The sole purpose of this research study is to provide statistical analysis and to increase knowledge without changing current state and federal policies.

These three words are used throughout the study and used in the surveys which were passed out.

Mandatory in reference to the study means that upon sentencing the offender has to complete the registration in a timely manner regardless of the offender's opinion. As a result of the crime committed, the offender must complete registration in a timely manner. This term is a key component to the survey.

Registration in reference to the study means that the offender must supply their name, current address, convictions or other public health safety, along with date of birth, and a physical description of the offender. Registering an offender into a data base or system provides helpful knowledge to law enforcement and the public.

Crime refers to the offense of which an offender has been convicted; such as statutory rape, first degree murder, and so on. In the study and statistics found, each offender has committed a crime that has ultimately lead to the registration for their offense.

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