

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS
WHO HAVE HISTORIES OF SEXUAL OFFENSES

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ABSTRACT

The development of criminal trajectories among sexual offenders (SOs) was explored in two studies. Study 1 focused on identifying distinct criminal trajectories, and Study 2 examined the association between these trajectories and psychosocial characteristics. Participants were 1,725 youths and their parents who were part of the National Youth Survey, which followed youths from adolescence through early adulthood. Individual youths completed a self-report delinquency measure in seven waves of the study, and youths and their parents completed psychosocial measures in the first wave. One hundred thirty-one individuals reported committing at least one sexual offense across the seven waves. Results from Study 1 indicated three criminal trajectories (i.e., low, moderate, and chronic) and that SOs generally did not have different criminal trajectories during adolescence and early adulthood than did nonsexual index offenders (NIOs). Similar proportions of SOs and NIOs were found on the three trajectories. Results from Study 1 also suggested that there were subgroups of SOs whose general patterns of criminal behavior were different from each other. Study 2 demonstrated psychosocial differences between individuals in the three trajectories but few differences between SOs and NIOs within each trajectory. Implications for research, policy, and treatment are discussed.