

Murderers who killed during robberies more likely to return to crime when paroled

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Murderers who committed homicide during robberies are more likely to commit crimes again when they are paroled, compared to murderers who committed homicide under other circumstances, according to research from North Carolina State University and Harvard University.

"We wanted to know what determines whether former [homicide offenders](#) commit [crime](#) when released from prison," says Dr. Margaret Zahn, a professor of sociology at NC State and co-author of a paper describing the research. "We found that the motivation for [murder](#) was a significant predictor."

The researchers evaluated the records of 92 paroled homicide offenders who were convicted of murder in Philadelphia, Penn., between 1977 and 1983. They found that 66 percent of parolees who committed murder during a robbery committed a crime after being released from prison, compared with 55 percent of parolees who had committed murder under other [circumstances](#).

"One reason for this is that in-prison interventions, if any, tend to focus on anger-management issues, and that does not address financial motivations for committing murder," Zahn says.

"This research is significant because, if you're going to release people on parole, it is important to look at the motivations for their previous crime; those motivations can offer insights into future behavior," Zahn adds. "It is information that parole officers can use to better monitor their cases."

Future research should explore whether these trends are consistent across jurisdictions and whether [neighborhood characteristics](#) influence recidivism rates, as well as strategies used by parolees who don't commit crimes upon release.

More information: The paper, "Criminal Recidivism among Homicide Offenders," is published online in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. [DOI: 10.1177/0886260513517302](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513517302)

Provided by North Carolina State University

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