

Sex Offender Registration and Notification: Research Finds Limited Effects in New Jersey

Researchers for the first time have conducted an independent scientific assessment of the impact of Megan's Law in New Jersey.

Researchers examined the impact of Megan's Law on New Jersey as a whole and each county within the state.

[Learn more about Megan's Law and its implementation in New Jersey.](#)

Researchers analyzed and compared data from before and after enactment of Megan's Law in New Jersey. They found that:

- **Sex offense rates in New Jersey have been on a consistent downward trend since 1985.** During this period, rearrests for all violent crime (whether sex crimes or not) also decreased. When the researchers examined the decline in each county and then examined the state as a whole, the resulting statistical analysis showed that the greatest rate of decline for sex offending occurred before 1994 (i.e., before the passage and implementation of Megan's Law) and the least rate of decline occurred after 1995.
- **Passage of Megan's Law did not reduce the number of rearrests for sex offenses,** nor did it have any demonstrable effect on the time between when sex offenders were released from prison and the time they were rearrested for any new offense, such as a drug, theft or sex offense.
- **The majority of sex offenders sentenced in New Jersey are convicted of child molestation and incest.** In more than half of the cases, the victim and offender know each other. Megan's Law did not have an effect on this pattern: The bulk of offenses and reoffenses committed both before and after the law remained child molestation and incest.
- **Megan's Law had no demonstrable effect on the number of victims involved in sexual offenses,** i.e., the data show no reduction in the number of victims.
- **Sex offenders convicted both before and after Megan's Law serve approximately the same amount of time.** Sex offenders convicted after Megan's Law received shorter sentences than those convicted before the law. Sentences were nearly twice as long before the law was passed. But after the law was passed, fewer sexual offenders were paroled largely because of changes in sentencing guidelines.
- **The researchers estimated the cost of implementing the law.** Estimates show that New Jersey spent \$555,565 to implement the law in 1995. In 2006, the estimated cost of implementing the law was approximately \$3.9 million based on data received from 15 of New Jersey's 21 counties.

Read the full report from this study [Megan's Law: Assessing the Practical and Monetary Efficacy \(pdf, 46 pages\)](#).

Researchers studying the impact of registration and notification laws in other states have found similar results. [\(See links to each of these studies.\)](#)

[Learn About the Study of Megan's Law in New Jersey.](#)

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