

UTAH STATE DRUG COURT OUTCOME STUDY

UTAH COUNTY

This study and report are the result of a request by the Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. The analysis is patterned after a similar study of the Salt Lake County Adult Felony Drug Court conducted by the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) in 2001. That study followed a 1998 analysis of the Salt Lake County Drug Court conducted by the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Utah. Both of these prior studies found that the Salt Lake County Drug Court reduces criminal activity and incarceration rates without compromising public safety. There is also an abundance of studies on the national level touting the effectiveness of the drug court concept and of specific drug courts. As with any intervention program that is subject to numerous reviews, findings have been positive, negative and inconclusive. The overwhelming majority of findings, however, have shown drug courts to be a very successful and cost-effective intervention.

| | Drug Court Successful | Drug Court Unsuccessful | Control Group |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Average Age | 27 | 29 | 28 |
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 62% | 68% | 74% |
| Female | 38% | 32% | 26% |
| Race | | | |
| Non-Minority | 98% | 100% | 97% |
| Minority | 2% | 0% | 3% |
| Average Prior Arrests | 1.1 | 2.1 | 0.7 |
| Average Prior Drug Arrests | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.2 |

Table 1

The average age of the offenders in the three groups is 28. The overwhelming majority are non-minority, which is consistent with the general population of Utah County. The average numbers of prior arrests, as well as drug arrests, both prove to be significantly different. Drug Court completers, on average, had more total arrests and more drug-related arrests when compared to the control group. Those offenders who did not successfully complete drug court, on average, had more total arrests and more drug-related arrests when compared to the other two groups in the study.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of offenders from each group that were arrested for any crime during the 18-month period under analysis.

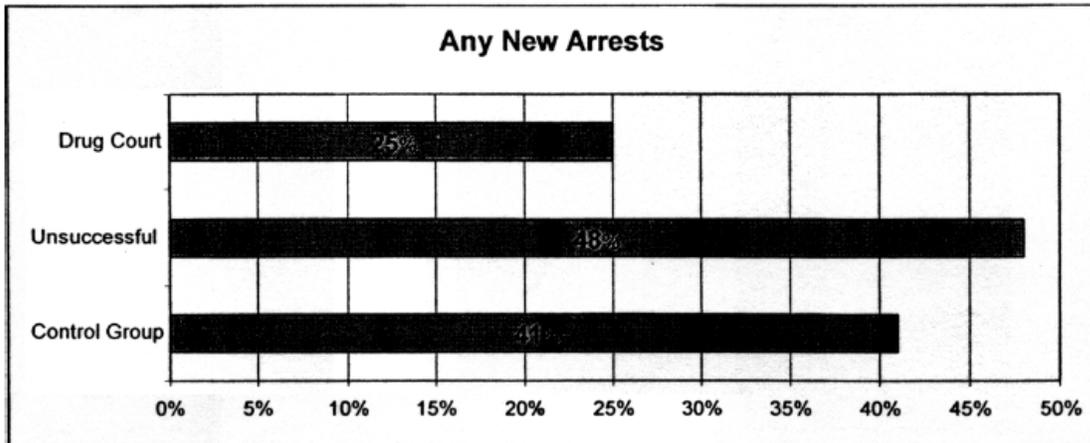


Figure 1

As can be seen, 25% of drug court graduates were arrested. This compares to 41% of the control group members, and 48% of unsuccessful drug court participants. The primary comparison, between the drug court group and the control group, shows that the arrest rate for the control group is 16% higher than drug court graduates, thereby suggesting that drug court has a positive impact on recidivism. The unsuccessful drug court group has the highest arrest rate of the three groups. The differences between the groups were statistically significant.

Figure 2 compares drug arrests among the three groups during the 18-month period under analysis.

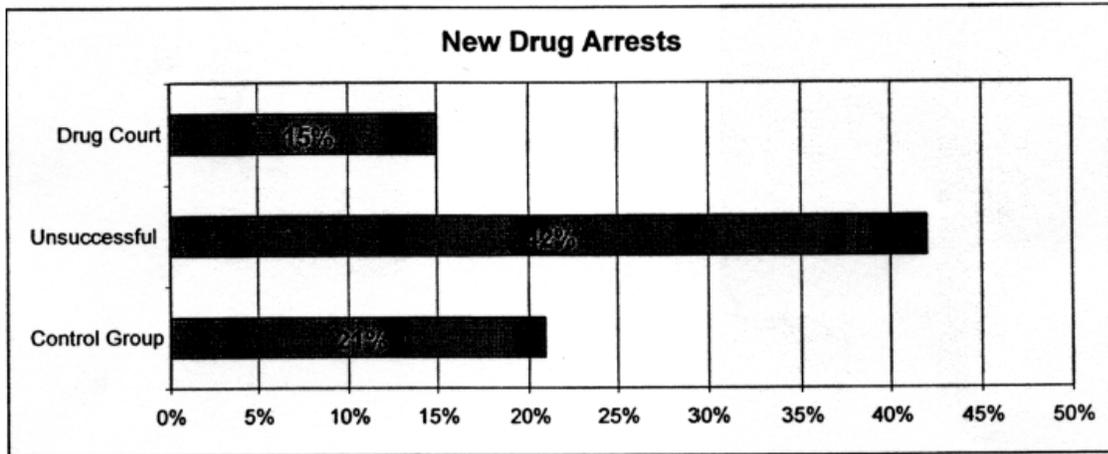


Figure 2

Drug court appears to have a positive impact on recidivism when considering drug arrests. As can be seen, 15% of drug court graduates were arrested compared to 21% of control group members. Again, the unsuccessful drug court group has the highest arrest rate at 42%. The differences between the groups were statistically significant.

Drug arrests are a particularly telling measure given that the drug court program is designed to reduce and eliminate drug dependency and use. As mentioned earlier, persons addicted to drugs generally commit a host of other crimes to support drug habits. However, new drug arrests are a fairly direct reflection of drug use.

Another manner in which to consider the data is through a time-line series. This type of analysis looks at new arrest events over a given period of time. Such a measure allows one to view the effects of an intervention, as demonstrated by the behavior of individuals, over the period of time under analysis. For example, an intervention may suggest success with a low number of arrests over the course of a few months, only to result in high recidivism rates as the time period under analysis is lengthened. A time-line series can also show if and/or when there is a plateau in the effects of the intervention. As mentioned earlier, the time period under analysis for this study is 18 months.

Figure 3 plots the percentage of offenders who were arrested for any type of crime during the 18-month period, and the month during which the first arrest occurred.

It appears that arrests for the drug court group plateaus between 14 and 18 months. This could be the beginning of a long-term affect of the drug court program. The only way to verify this, of course, is through further long-term analysis of arrests. Further analysis could result in more arrests or a continuing plateau. However, based on existing data, it is safe to state that the drug court group has a lower arrest rate than the control group, and the arrest rate for the drug court group levels off beginning at 14 months. Also, it is important to note that the control group and the unsuccessful drug court group continue to climb in the percentage of members arrested. Unsuccessful drug court participants also continue to climb in the percentage of members arrested.

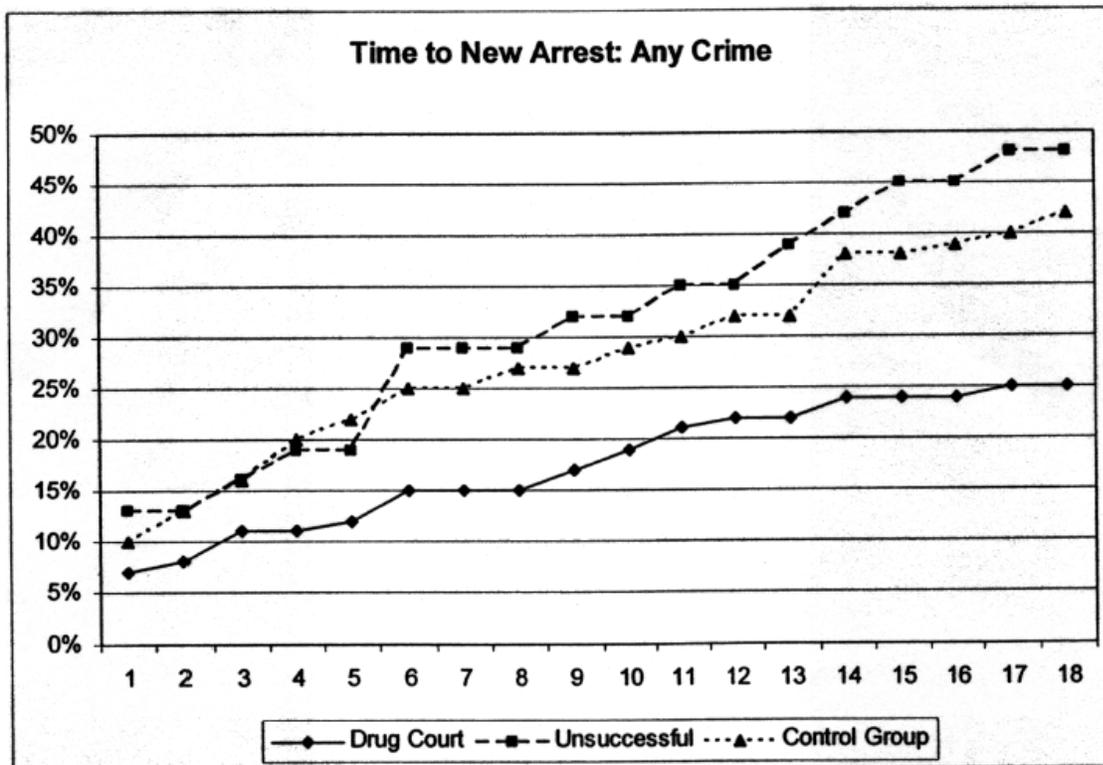


Figure 3

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, there is strong evidence that the Utah County Adult Felony Drug Court has an impact on new arrests and new drug-related arrests. This is a positive finding given the profound effects of crime and drug use reduction. At the individual level, being drug free and out of the criminal justice system gives a new lease on life to former offenders. Decreased victimization is another result as the number of citizens experiencing the traumatic and often life changing effects of being victimized is reduced. Effects on family members and communities are also profound. Finally, society benefits greatly as crime is reduced and precious taxpayer funds can be spent elsewhere.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of the Salt Lake County Drug Court analysis conducted by CCJJ in 2001. Although the two drug court programs have different entrance criteria and function somewhat differently, both have impressive and positive results.