



Comparing criminal careers: sex offenders versus non-sex offenders

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- Starting point: assumptions and stereotypes
- Objective: assess criminal career differences between SO and non-SO
- Data & methods
- Results
- Conclusions

Starting point: assumptions and misunderstandings

Widespread misconceptions and assumptions about sex offenders include:

-sex offenders are a **different, particular (even peculiar) group of offenders** as opposed to non-sex offenders

-sex offenders have a **high propensity towards recidivism**

-they repeat the same sex offence over and again (**'specialists'**)

-they are **irredeemable** offenders, incorrigibles, who will continue with their offence behaviour until it becomes impossible to them

Criminal careers: a comparison of dimensions

A **criminal career** = 'the characterization of the longitudinal sequence of crimes committed by an individual offender' (cfr. Blumstein et al., 1986: 12)

Dimensions / parameters of a criminal career:

Participation

Onset

Termination

Duration

Frequency

RQ

- Are the criminal careers of sex offenders different in terms of criminal career parameters/dimensions (e.g. onset,...) in comparison with non-sex offenders?
- Are the criminal careers of sex offenders different from the criminal careers of non-sex offenders? (frequency-based GBTM)
- Comparison of national data Belgium and the Netherlands: similar findings of comparison?

3. Data

-National datasets for Belgium and the Netherlands

Belgium: All persons convicted in **1995** (n = **136,530**)

The Netherlands: All persons convicted in **1997** (n= **153,252**)

Datasets include **all prior convictions** and have **long-follow up periods** (B: up to end of 2013; N: up to 2016)

-**Sex offender** = a person whose **index offence** (i.e. the offence that led to the conviction in 1995 (B) or 1997 (N)) is or includes a sex offence

3. Data

Conviction data: advantages and disadvantages, differences between penal codes,...

Challenges in **comparing the data sets**

(adapting the datasets to the 'lowest common denominator' wherever necessary)

Creation of common variables (e.g. based on Dutch CBS-based categories, offence categories)

Importance of **patterns** (not per se of concrete numbers)

3. Data

-selection of **all sex offenders** and a **10% sample of non-sex offenders**

BS: n = **885**;

BNS: n = **13,380**

NS*: n = **963**;

NNS: n= **7,716**

(*due to adaptation to Belgian data set, Dutch sample < 10%)

-Methods: descriptive analyses and GBTM (frequency-based)

Results

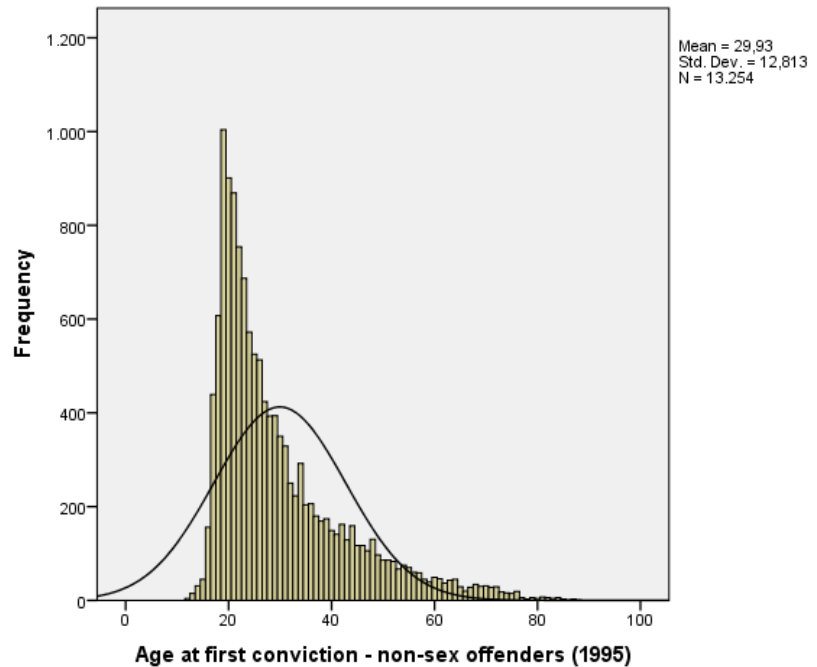
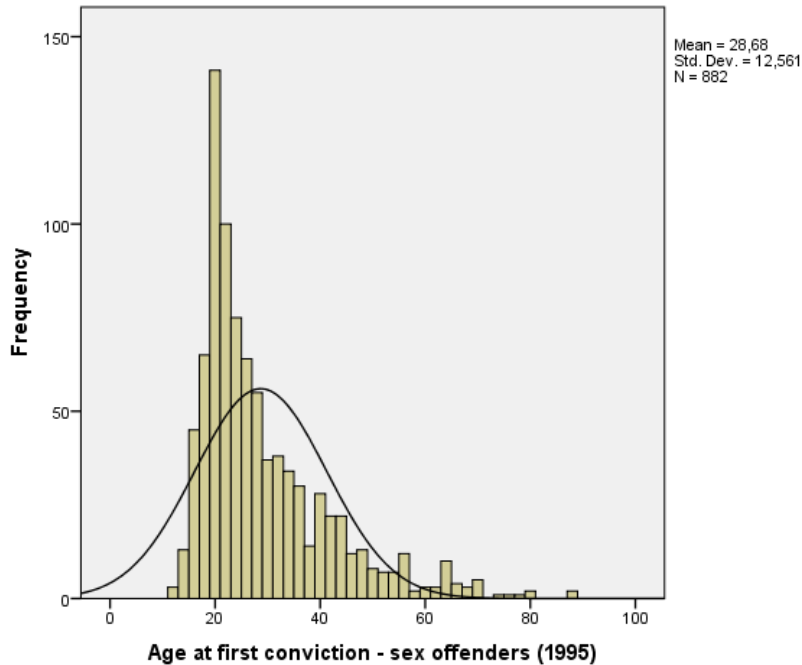
Focus here primarily on Belgian results

Showcasing career parameters

Descriptive synthesis for the Netherlands

GBTM SO-NSO Belgium and the Netherlands

Onset



Sex offenders (n = 882; 3 miss.)

Median age onset: 24 years

SD : 12,561

Min: 12

Max: 88

non-sex offenders (n = 13254; 126 miss.)

median age onset: 26 years

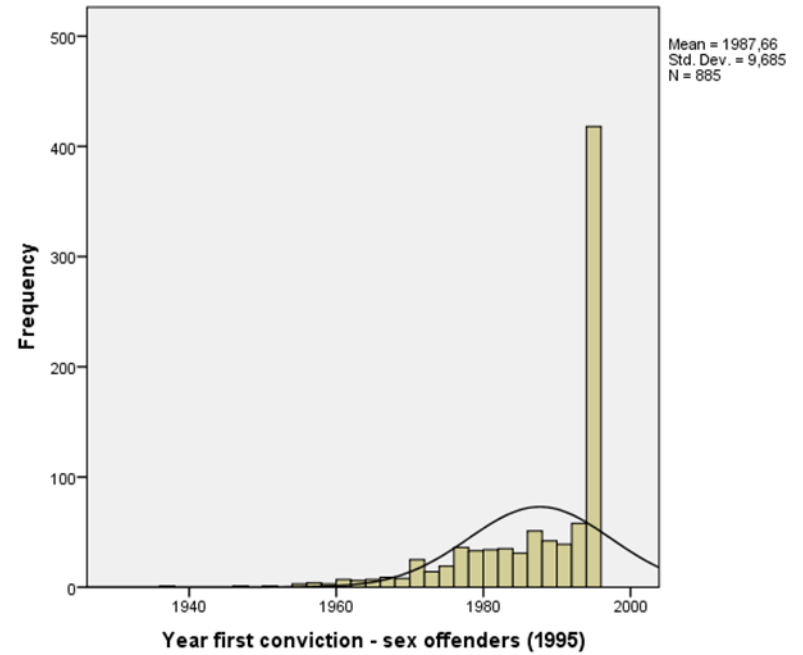
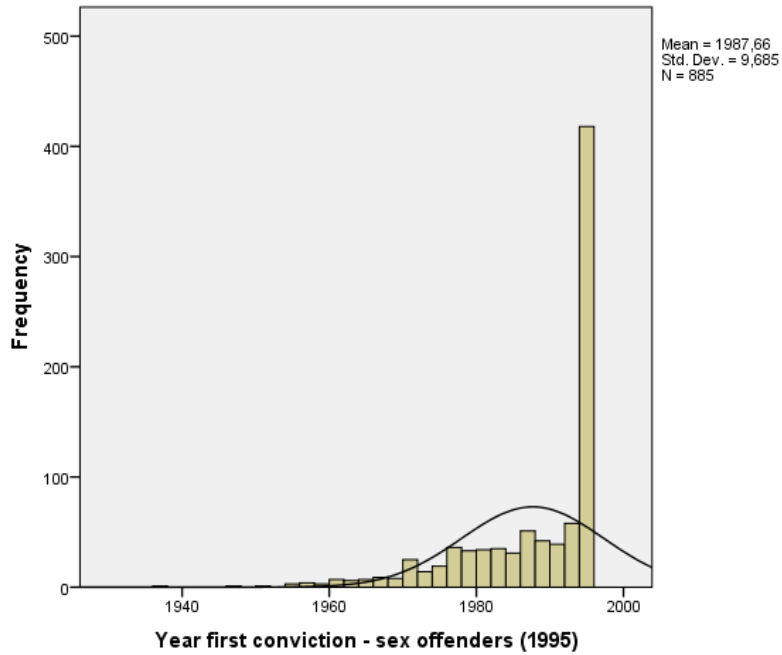
SD : 12,813

Min: 12

Max: 88

T-test: significant difference

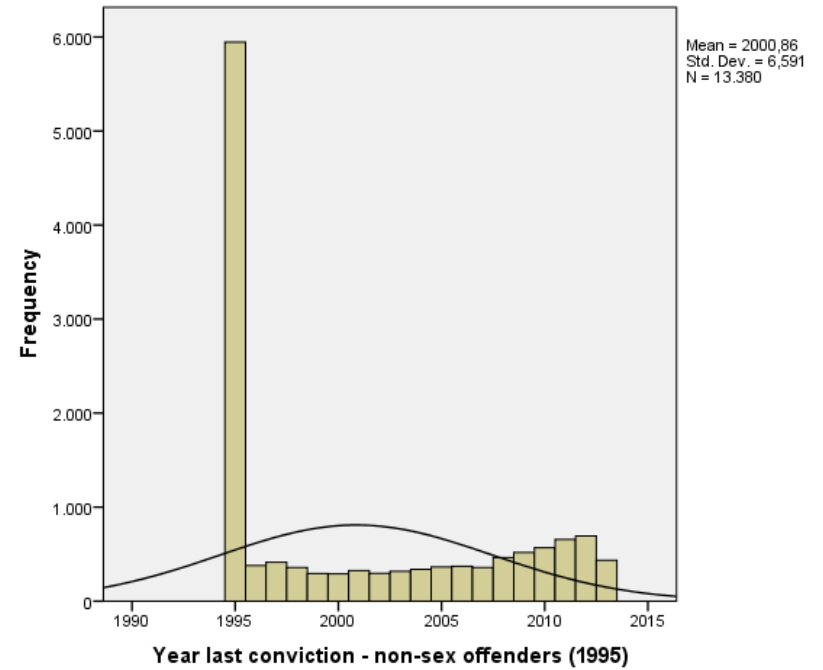
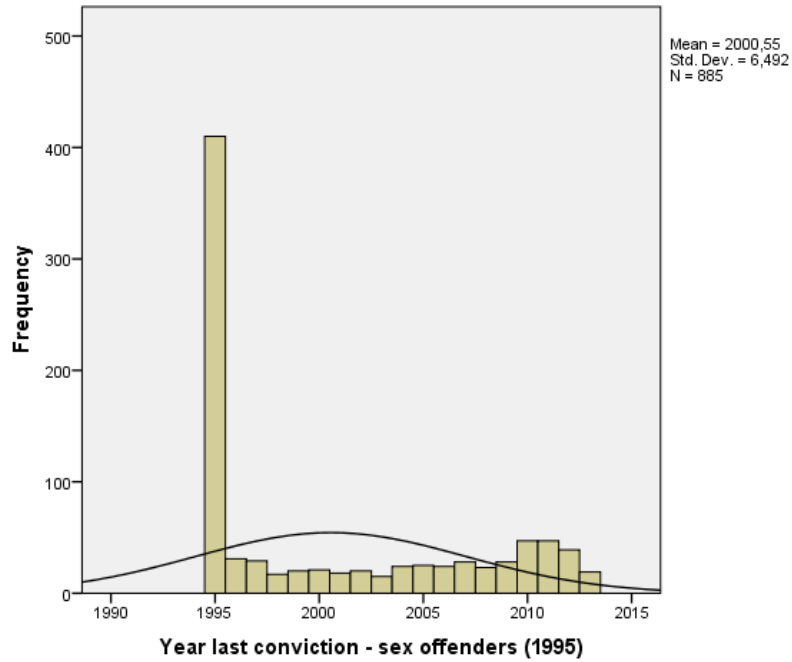
Year first conviction



SO: range between 1937 and 1995

NSO: range between 1945 and 1995

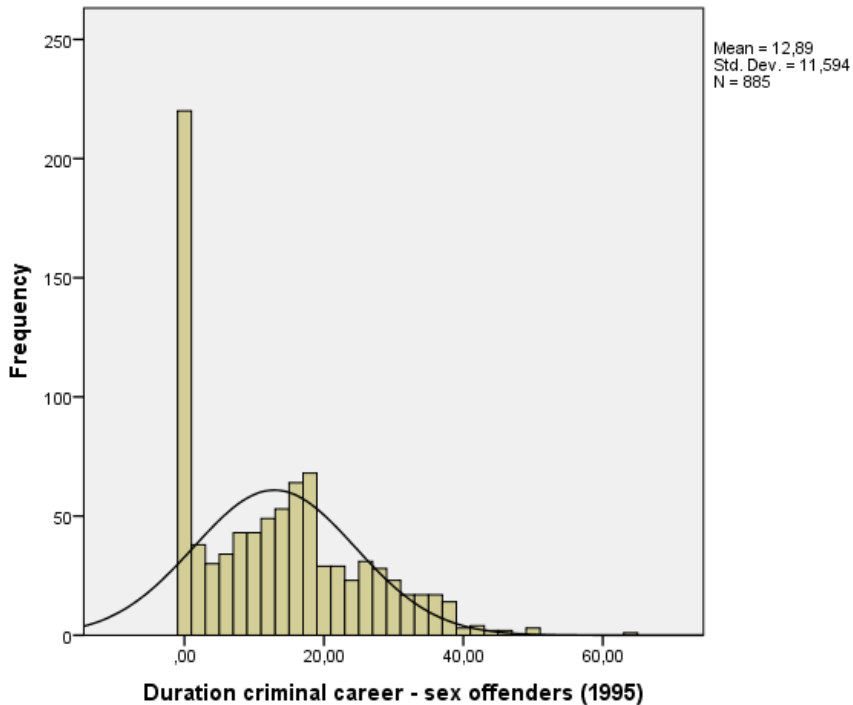
Year last conviction



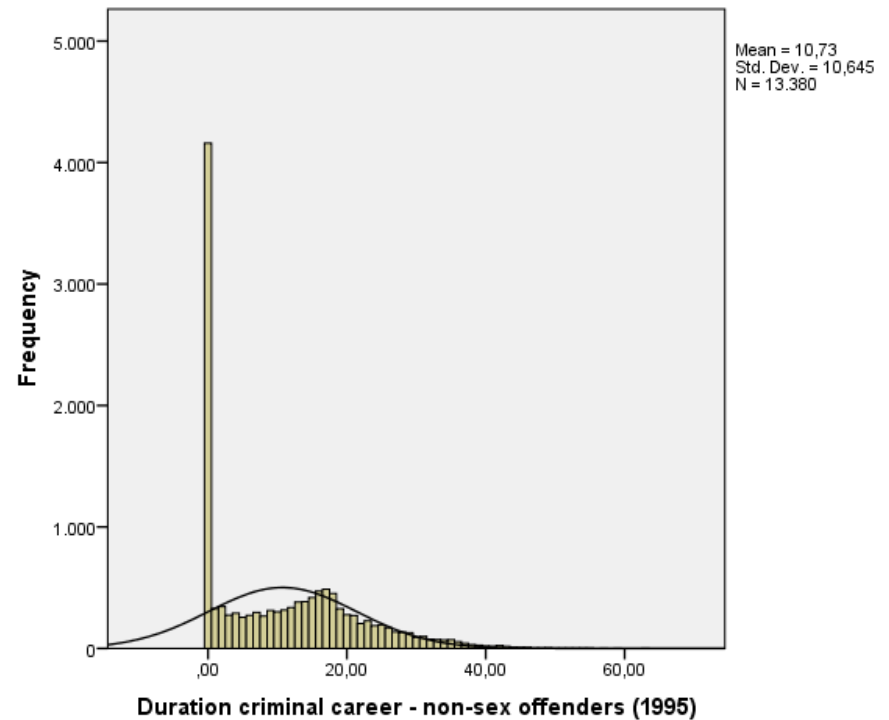
SO: range between 1995 and 2013

NSO: range between 1995 and 2013

Duration of the criminal career



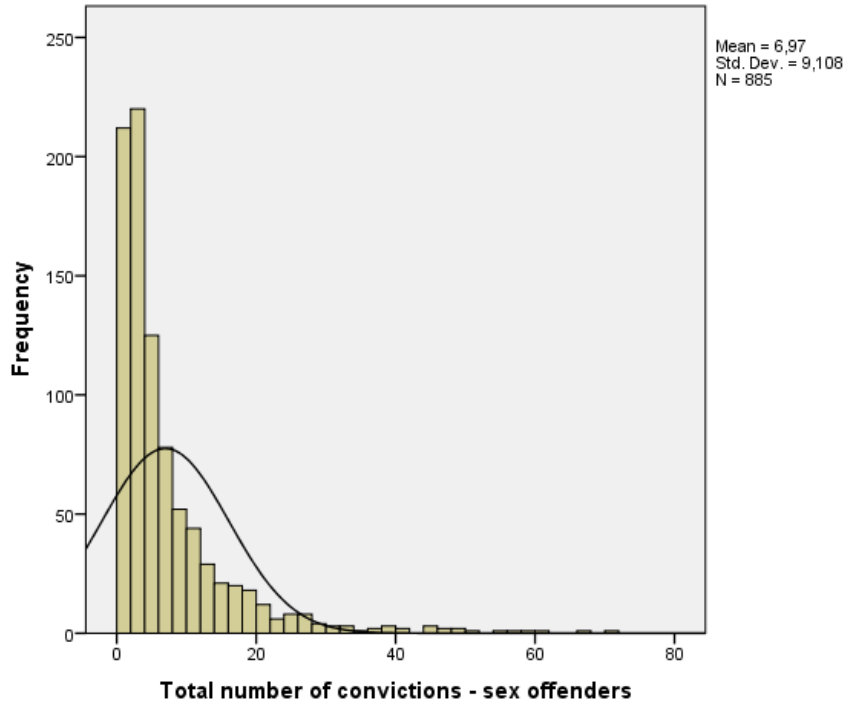
SO: n = 885
Median duration: 12 years
SD: 11,59
Min: 0
Max: 63 years



NSO: n = 13380
median duration: 9 years
SD: 10,65
Min: 0
Max: 63

T-test: significant difference

Frequency



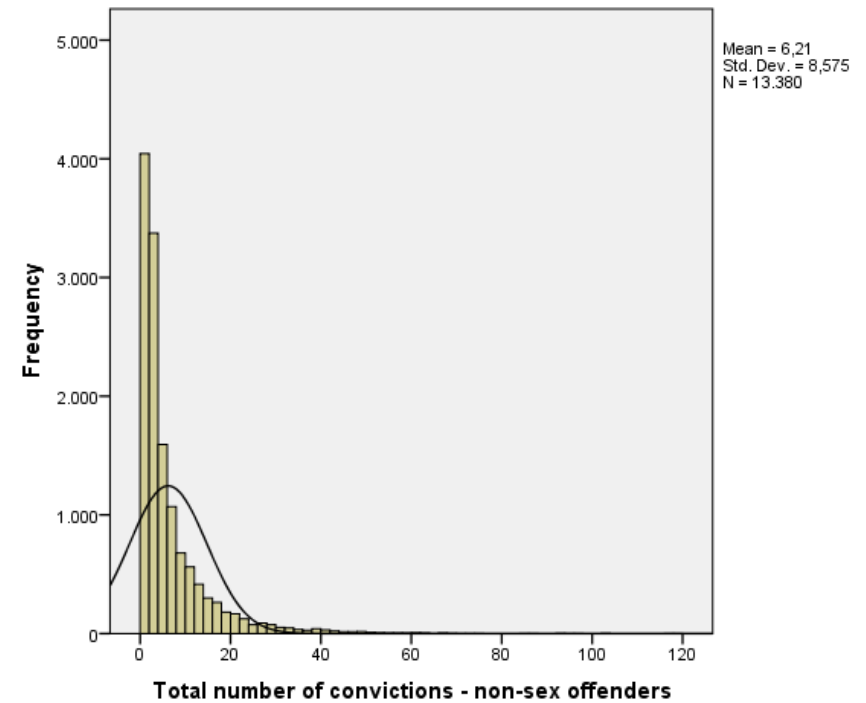
SO: n = 885

Median n convictions: 4

SD: 9,1

Min: 1

Max: 70 (max sex off: 23, median: 1)



NSO: n = 13380

median n conv: 3

SD: 8,58

min: 1

max: 119 (132 sex off after 95)

T-test: significant difference

Specialization (among sex offenders)

Ratio sex-related convictions / total convictions

N = 823 (62 miss.)

Median of specialization: 44,44%

When > 1 conviction (n = 611; 62 miss.)

Median of specialization: 28,57%

When > 5 convictions (n = 280; 48 miss.)

Median of specialization: 12,5%

When > 10 convictions (n = 140; 35 miss.)

Median of specialization: 8,33%

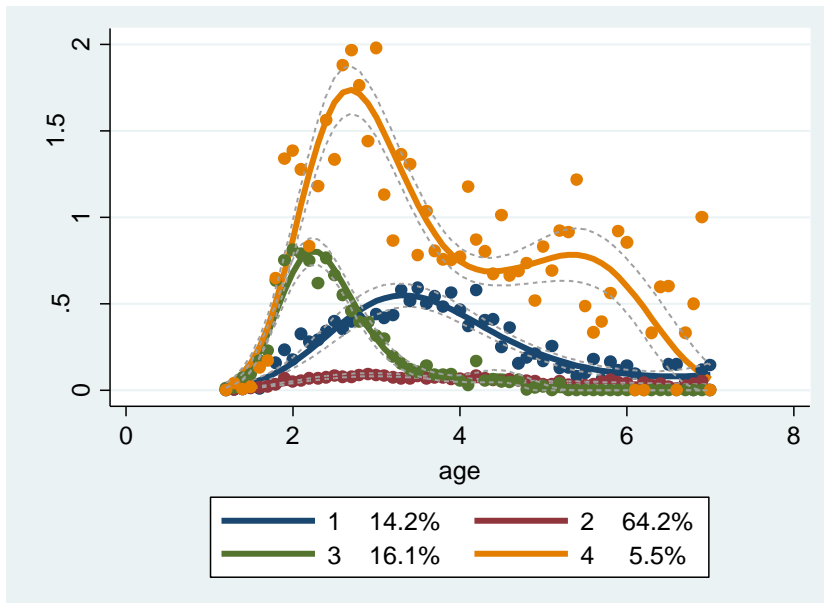
Preliminary results: the Netherlands

SEX OFFENDERS	N = 963 (99.2% men); 138 (14.33%) deceased prior to the end of the follow-up period		
Career dimension	Range	Median	SD
Onset	11-73	22	10.528
Year first conviction	1954-1997		
Age last conviction (termination)	33-94	55	12.788
Duration	19-62	31	7.483
Frequency*	3-182	7	16.151
Frequency**	1-65	6	12.433
Freq of sex offences*	1-56	1	3.616

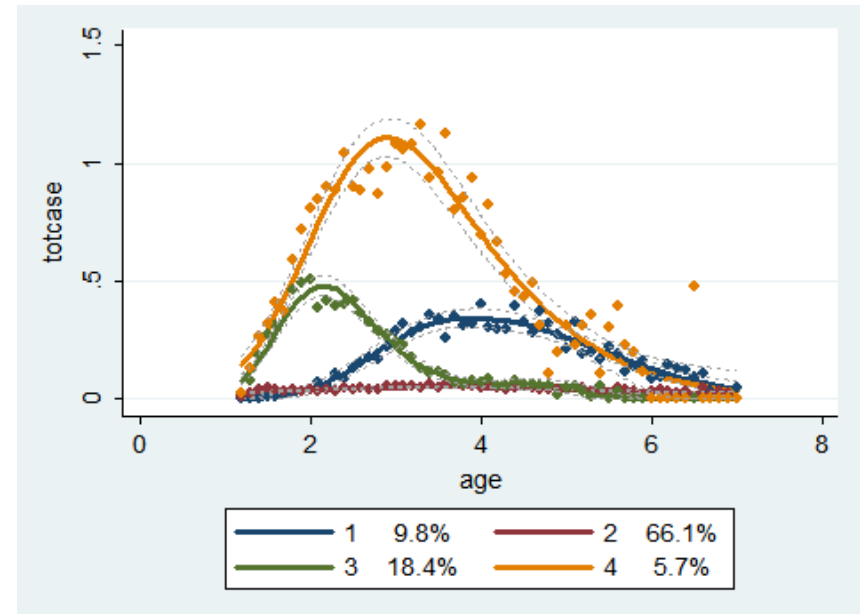
NON-SEX OFFENDERS	N = 7716 (89.9% men); 988 (12.8%) deceased prior to the end of the follow-up period		
Career dimension	Range	Median	SD
Onset	8-73	21	9.740
Year first conviction	1930-1997		
Age last conviction (termination)	19-101	51	11.262
Duration	2-61	28	7.174
Frequency *	3-291	8	19.327
Frequency**	1-96	2	6.756
Freq of sex offences* (after 1997)	0-5 1 SO: n = 103; 2 SO: n = 13; 3 SO: n = 3; 4 SO: n = 4; 5 SO: n = 5	/	/

Frequency-based GBTM comparison SO-NSO

B: SO



B: NSO

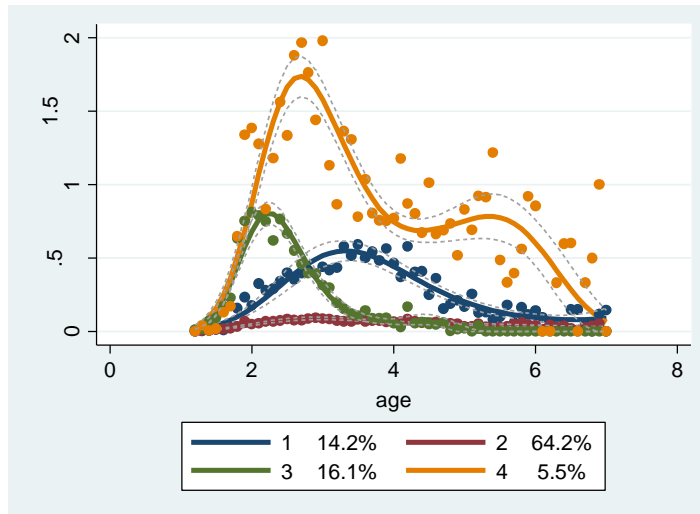


GBTM SO-NSO – Belgium and the Netherlands

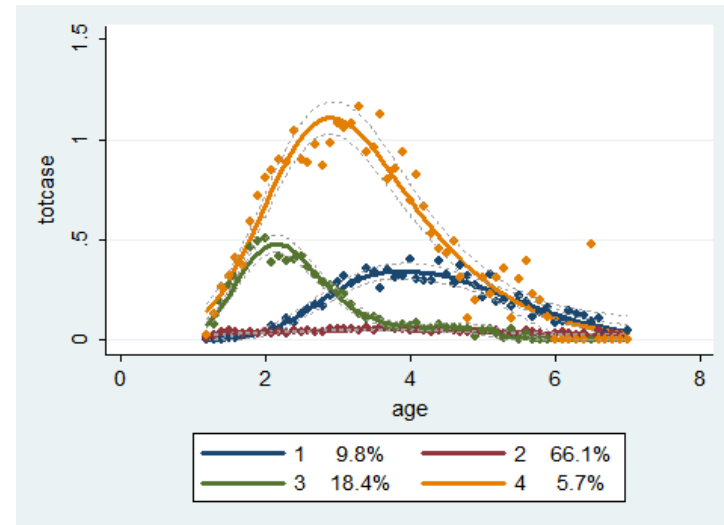
SO

NSO

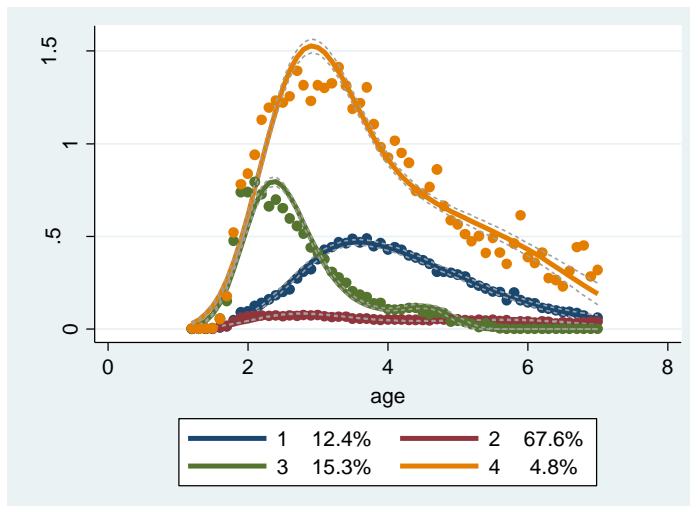
B



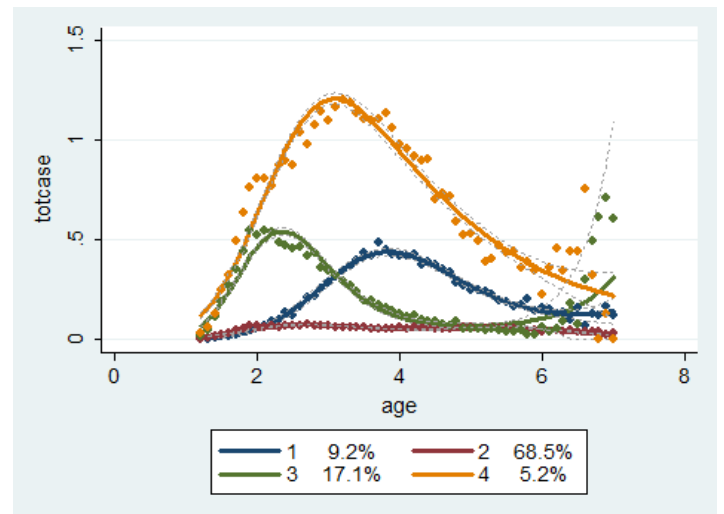
B



N



N



Intermediate conclusions

- Criminal career **dimensions** of sex offenders and non-sex offenders show **similar patterns (substantive vs. statistical)**
- Based on the **GBTM**, a **remarkable similarity** across the 4 trajectories in the 4 graphs (but mind the differences too)
- **Differences between B – N are to some extent related to the data** (comparisons are difficult): **SO and NSO are very similar per country**, but differences between countries
- Perhaps we should focus on **sex offending** rather than sex offenders

Further analyses are underway

Any thoughts or ideas are very welcome