

Planning & Research Unit
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“Outcomes need to be measured and the results should direct data-driven decision making and evidence-based policy and planning.”

-A RIDOC Guiding Operational Philosophy

Overview

By Keith Ivone

When individuals transition from incarceration to the community, they often are faced with obstacles which make reintegration difficult. It is the mission of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) to maintain a balanced correctional system to facilitate successful reentry. A key indicator to measure the Department's progress is recidivism. RIDOC defines a recidivist as a person released from a sentence who either returns as a sentenced offender or an awaiting trial detainee within 36 months of release.¹

This report is based on data extracted from RIDOC's inmate tracking system. A release cohort for calendar year 2017 (CY17) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY20) to gauge success. If an inmate can stay in the community for 36-months, they are considered successful as their likelihood to return greatly diminishes as time progresses. For those who do return, they can do so in several ways: as an awaiting trial detainee, a newly sentenced offender, or a probation or parole violator.

For this study, the release cohort consisted of 2,530 individuals representing 2,824 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (52%) males (88%) between the ages of 20-29 (36%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (44%) or violent (35%) crimes.² The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 1.8 years. The median sentence length was just 4 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (88%), followed by parole (10%). Due to the imposition of split sentences, RIDOC estimates over 85% of releases from incarceration immediately begin probation supervision in the community.

¹ RIDOC tracks offenders 36-months post-release as is standard in the criminal justice system. After 3-years, the likelihood of recidivating greatly diminishes

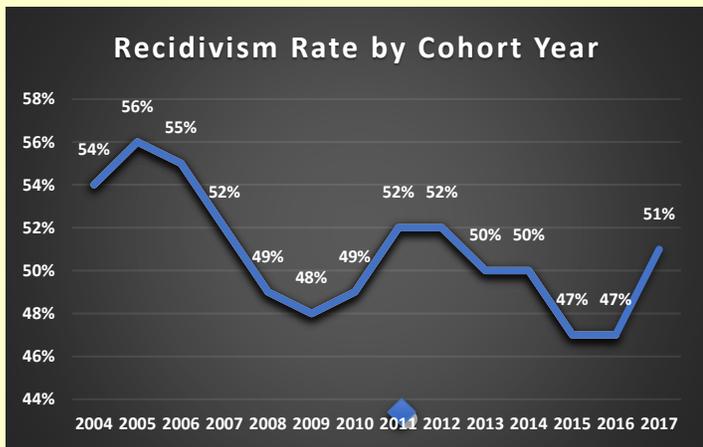
² Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order, shoplifting, or drug violations. The remaining types of crimes not listed are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering, and drug crimes.

³ Release types include expiration of sentence, discharged on parole, paroled/home confinement, parole to immigration, parole out of state, discharged at court, and discharged per court order.

Readmissions

Sentenced Readmissions

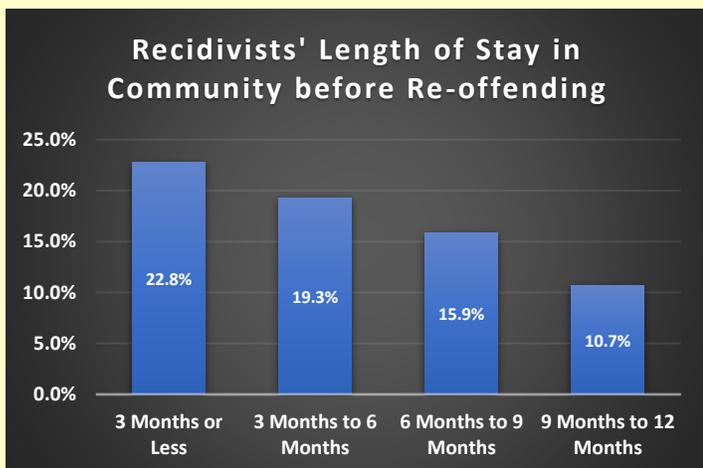
At 3-years post-release, 51% of individuals returned to RIDOC as sentenced offenders. The recidivism rate increased by 4% from the CY16 cohort. Forty-eight percent (48%) of females and fifty-one (51%) of males were recommitted as sentenced offenders. The rate of females recommitted was 4% higher than in the CY16 cohort, while males was 3% higher.



Virtually all offenders who returned were for a new sentence (67%) or as a probation violator (26%). Parole violators accounted for approximately 7% of recidivists.

Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

The average time spent in the community for CY17 was 10 months. Nearly 7% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 35% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, nearly 69% of recidivists had returned to RIDOC.

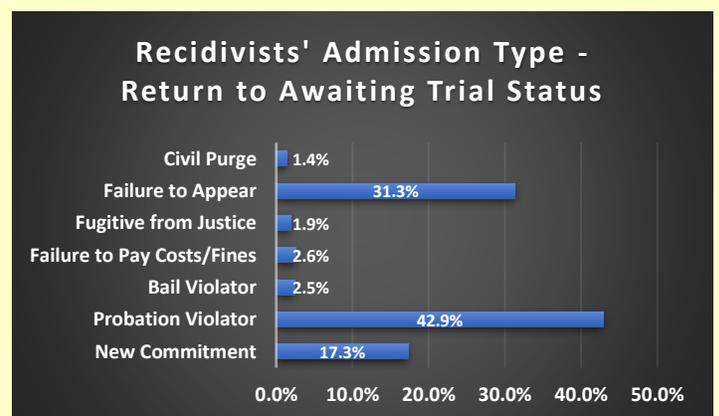


Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 10.1 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 9.5 months. Those released from serving a less serious type of offense (i.e., nonviolent) returned sooner than more serious offenses (i.e., violent). Those released from serving nonviolent offenses spent an average of 9.2 months before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 10.1 months.

Awaiting Trial Readmissions

RIDOC operates a unified correctional system, meaning all pre-trial detainees and sentenced offenders (regardless of sentence length or crime type) are under the Department's jurisdiction. Unlike most corrections departments, this gives RIDOC the unique ability to report recidivism rates for those who returned to await trial. By 36-months, 45% of the cohort returned as awaiting trial detainees. Thirty-one percent (31%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 41% within 2 years; and 45% by the third year. Of the women released in 2017, 38% returned to awaiting trial within 36 months of release while 46% of men returned in the same time period.

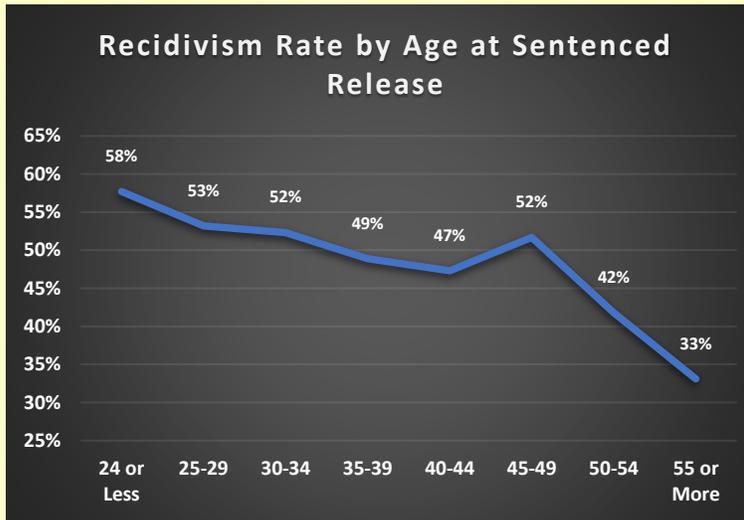
The bar graph (shown below) highlights that the majority of awaiting trial detainees were committed as probation violators (43%) or for failure to appear in court (31%).⁴ These readmission rates are similar to the CY16 cohort and are significant drivers of RIDOC's awaiting trial commitment stream. Just over two-thirds of awaiting trial recidivists (70%) were held without bail while an additional 20% were held on surety bail. Surety bail allows for detainees to post 10% of the total bail to gain release.



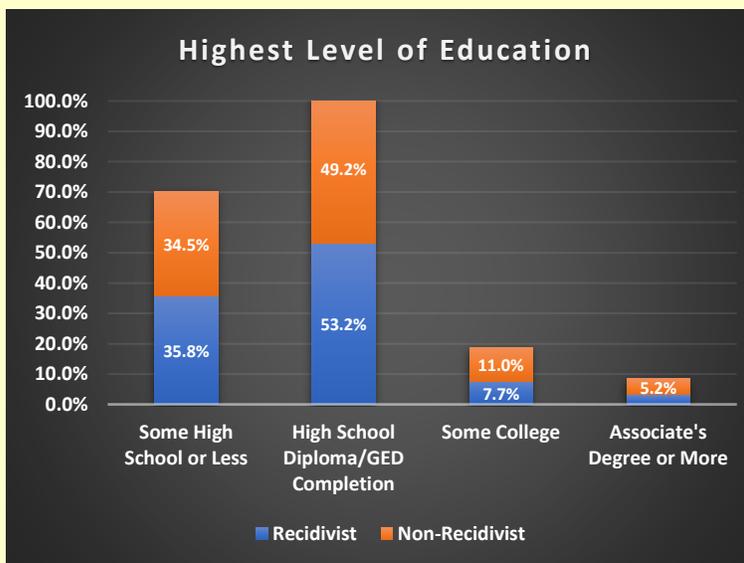
⁴The large majority of probation violators returned for a new charge.

Correlates of Recidivism

The following variables were significantly correlated to recommitment rates: Age at release, education level, offense type, security level at release, and risk assessment score. Younger offenders were more likely to reoffend than older offenders. The line graph (shown below) highlights the highest recidivism rate is found in offenders who were 24 years old or less (58%), whereas the rate significantly declines in the 50-54 year-old age group (42%) and 55 plus age group (33%).



A noteworthy trend in highest level of education for offenders who recidivated verses those offenders who did not. The bar graph (shown below) displays non-recidivists' (16.2%) yield higher levels of post-secondary education than recidivists (10.9%).



The Level of Service Inventory-Revised

Over the past decade, RIDOC has been using risk assessments to inform case management decisions by implementing the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), a 54 item empirically supported risk/need assessment that quantifies an offender's likelihood of reoffending across 10 domains; criminal history, education/employment, financial, family/marital, accommodation, leisure/recreation, companions, alcohol/drug problem, emotional/personal, and attitudes/orientation. Analysis indicates a positive correlation to recidivism: the higher the LSI-R score and risk level, the more likely an offender is to recidivate.

The average LSI-R score for those in the CY17 cohort was 29, yielding a 7% increase from the CY16 cohort. An LSI-R score of a 29 indicates a moderate risk to re-offend. The bar graph (shown below) highlights that of those who scored Low on the LSI-R, 68.7% were non-recidivists whereas only 31.3% were recidivists. The inverse of the above relationship is true for those who scored Moderate to High on the LSI-R, where the proportion of recidivists outweighed non-recidivists. Of those who scored High on the LSI-R, 30.5% were non-recidivists and a staggering 69.5% were recidivists.

