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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

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 2019 (CY19) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY22) 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 2,258 individuals representing 2,543 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (52%) males (88%) between the ages of 20-29 (34%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (47%) or violent (36%) crimes.² The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 1.7 years. The median, or middle, sentence length was just 3.5 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (87%), followed by being discharged on parole (10%).³ 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 set by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

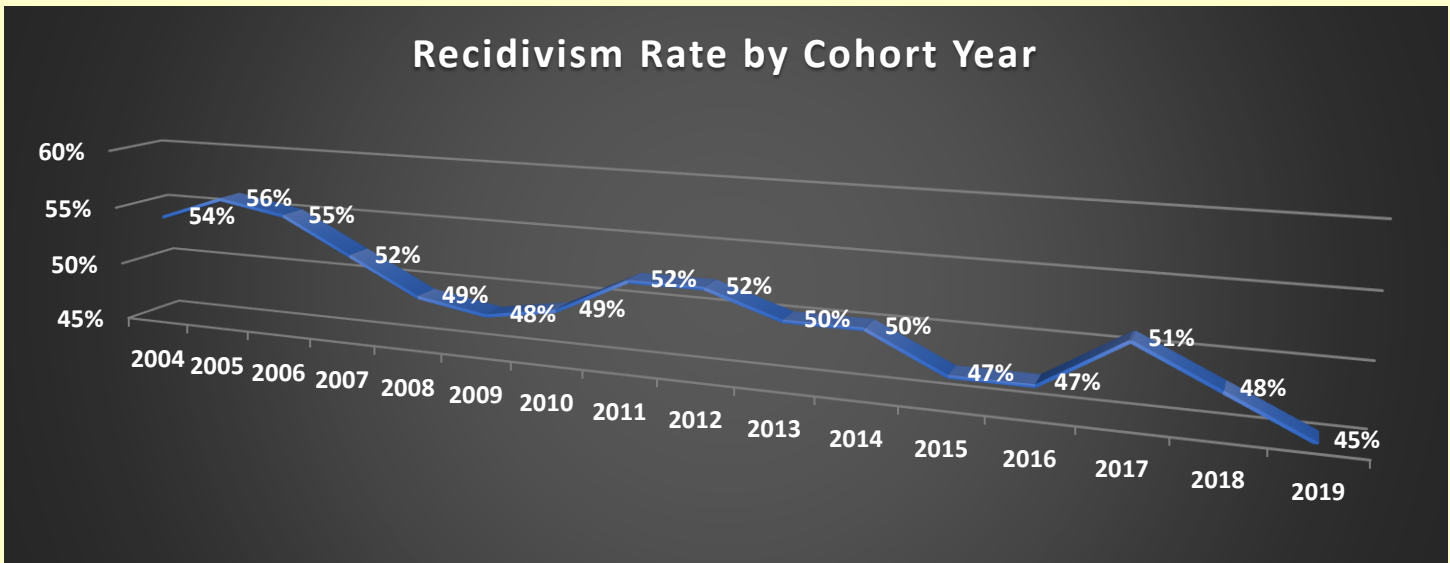
² Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order or shoplifting. Violent crimes include crimes such as manslaughter or murder. The remaining types of crimes that those released may have been serving time for are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering, 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

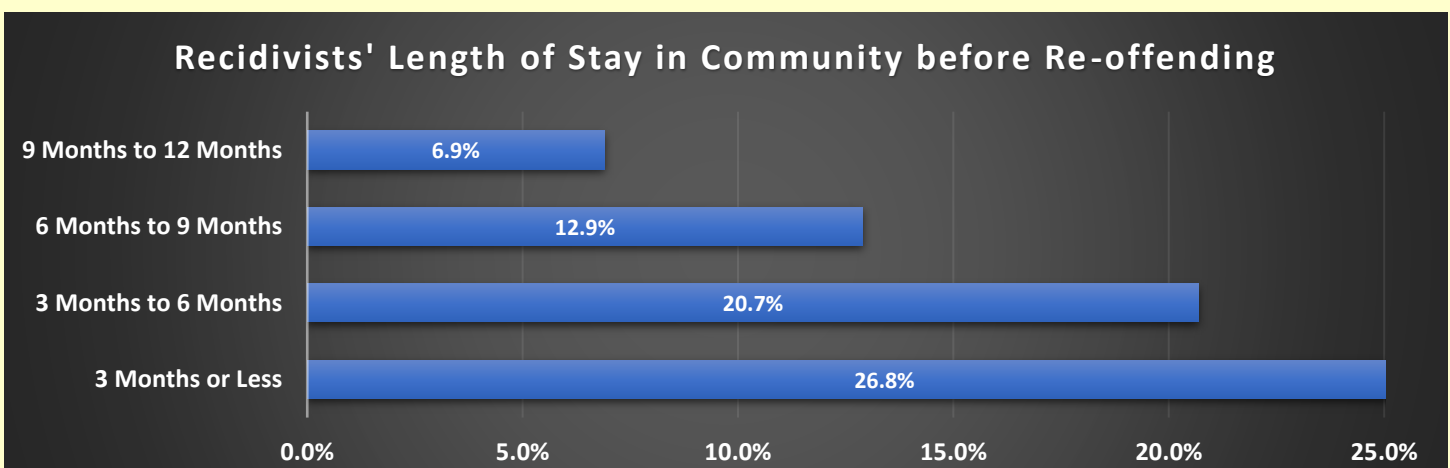
Within 3 years of release, 45% of individuals returned to RIDOC as sentenced offenders. This is the lowest reported recidivism rate since the Department began tracking yearly cohorts in 2004. The recidivism rate decreased by 3% from the CY18 and 6% from the CY17 cohort.



Virtually all offenders who returned were for a new sentence (80%). The rate of offenders who returned as a probation violator was just (13%), yielding an 8% decrease from the CY18 cohort and a 13% decrease from the CY17 cohort. Parole violators accounted for approximately 6% of recidivists.

Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

The average time spent in the community for the CY19 cohort was just over 10 months. Nearly 10% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 37% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, just about 67% of recidivists had returned to RIDOC. Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 10.7 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 9.0 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 9.3 months before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 10.8 months in the community before returning to RIDOC.

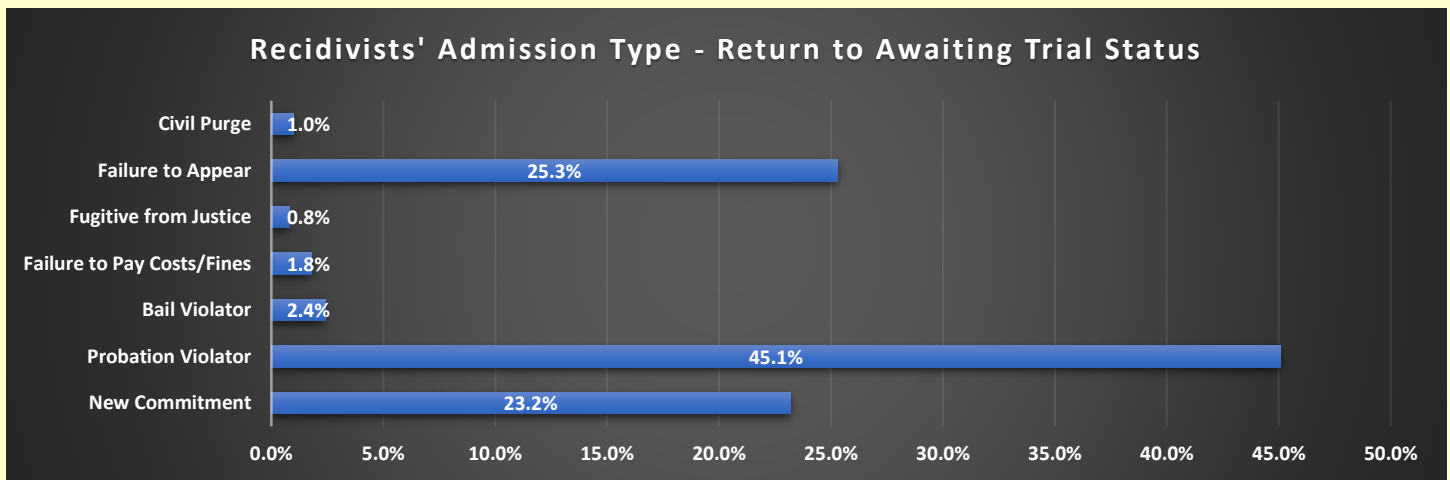


Readmissions

Awaiting Trial Readmissions

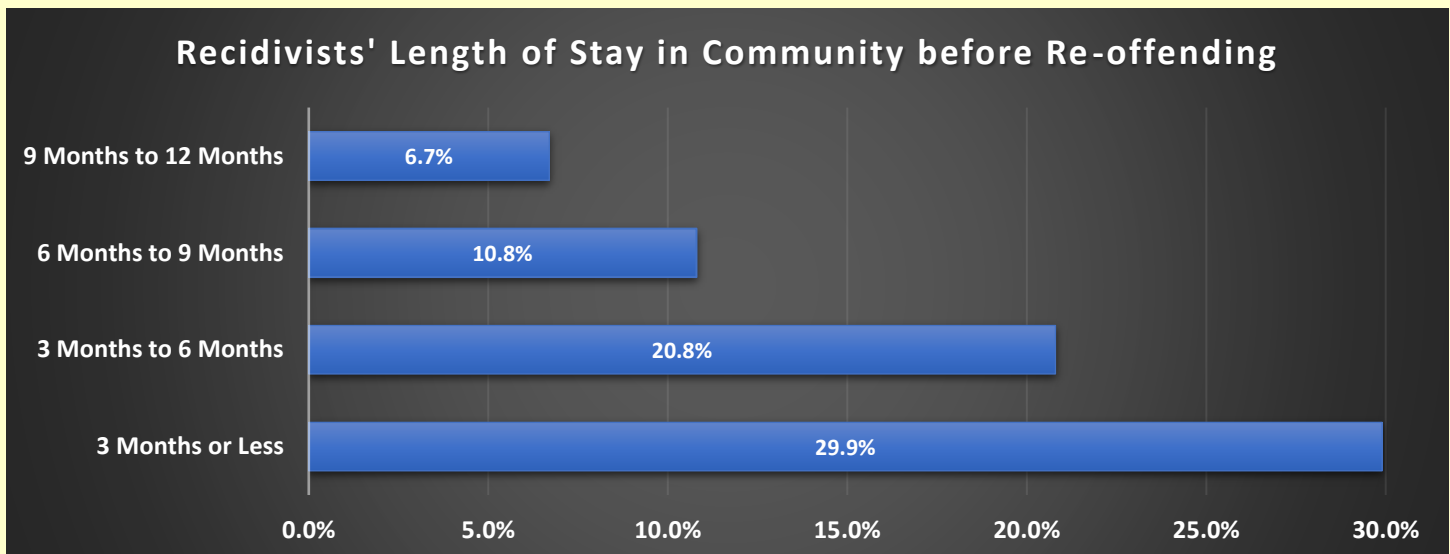
RIDOC operates a unified correctional system, meaning all pre-trial detainees and sentenced offenders (regardless of sentence length or crime type) are under the Department’s jurisdiction. Unlike most corrections departments, this gives RIDOC the unique ability to report recidivism rates for those who returned to await trial. By 36 months, 54% of the CY19 cohort returned as awaiting trial detainees. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 48.5% within 2 years; and 54% by the third year. Of the women released in 2019, 49% returned to awaiting trial status within 36 months of release, while 55% 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 (45%) or for failure to appear in court (25%).⁴ These readmission rates are similar to the CY18 cohort and are significant drivers of RIDOC’s awaiting trial commitment stream.



Time in the Community - Awaiting Trial Recidivists

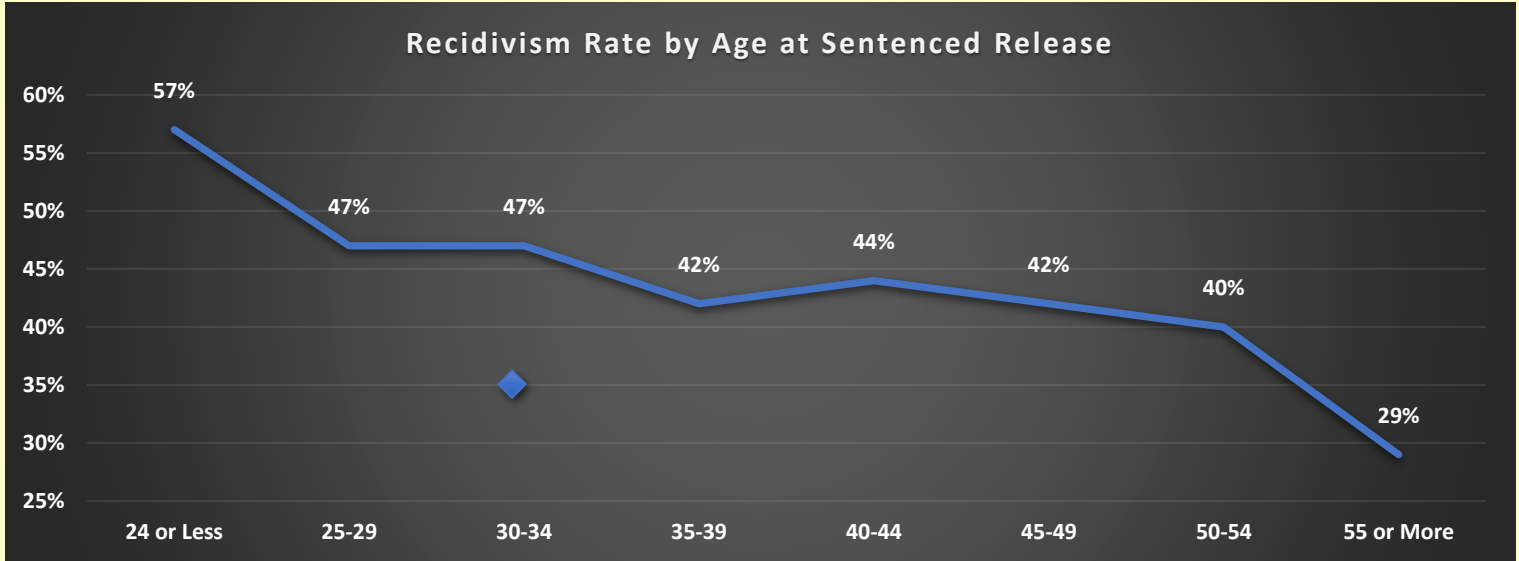
The average time spent in the community for the CY19 cohort was just under months. Nearly 12% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 39% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, just about 68% of awaiting trial recidivists had returned to RIDOC.



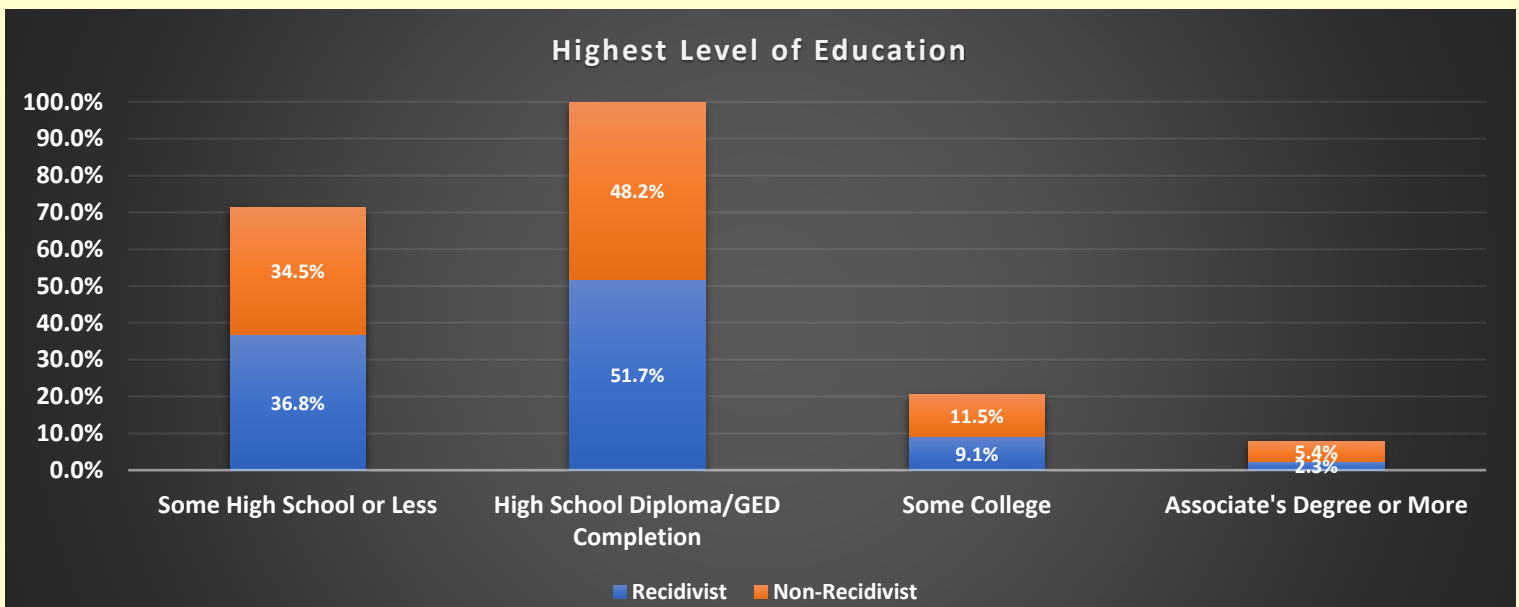
⁴The large majority of probation violators returned for a new charge.

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 below shows that the highest recidivism rates by age are offenders who were 24 years old or less (57%). The rate significantly declines in the 50-54-year-old age group (40%) and 55 plus age group (29%).



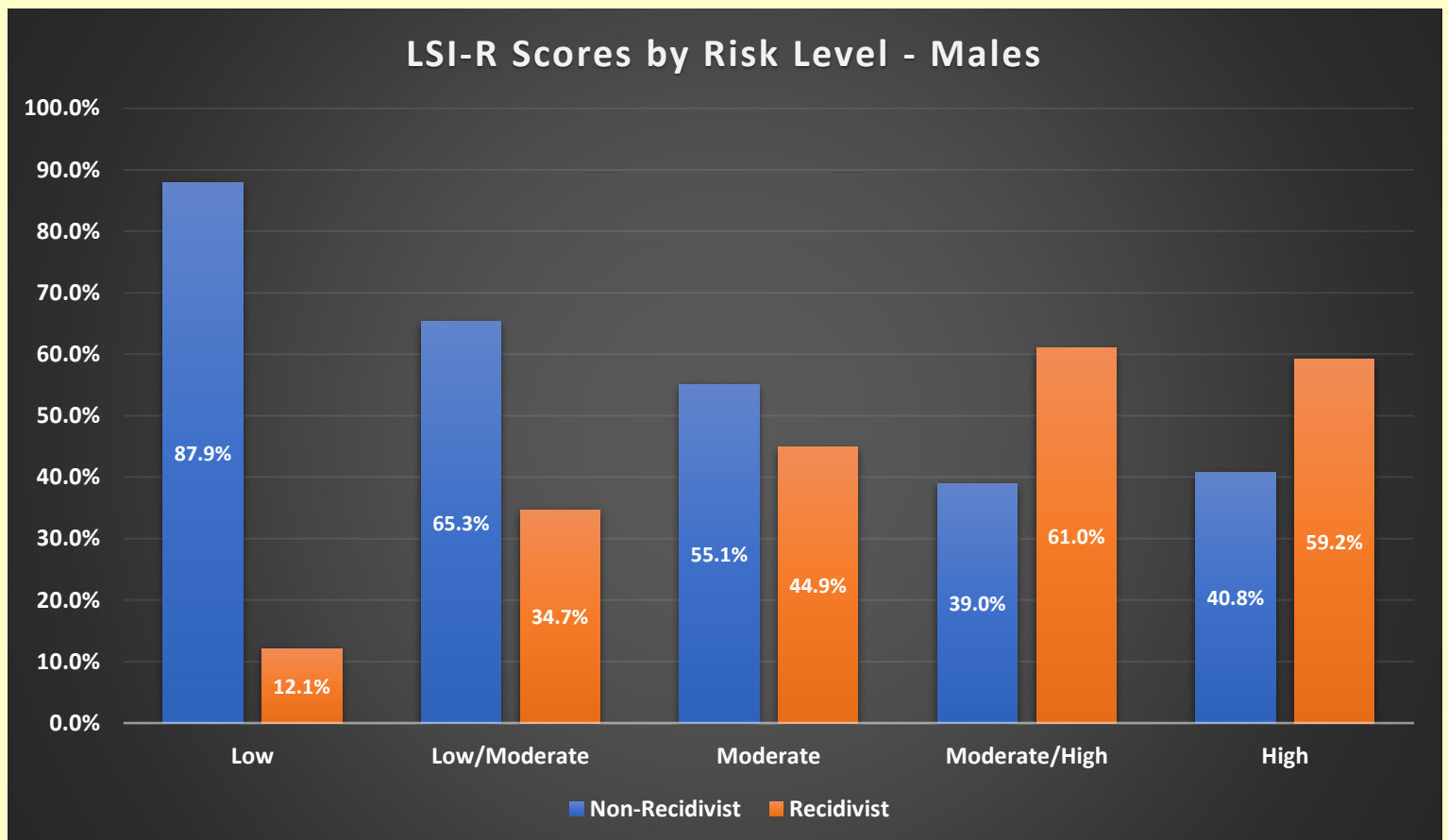
A noteworthy trend in highest level of education for offenders who recidivated versus those offenders who did not: the bar graph below displays that non-recidivists' (16.9%) yield higher levels of post-secondary education than recidivists (11.4%).



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 CY19 cohort was 29, which is 3.6% greater than the CY18 cohort.⁵ An LSI-R score of 29 indicates a moderate risk to reoffend for males and a moderate/high risk to reoffend for females. The bar graph below highlights that of males who scored “Low” on the LSI-R, 87.9% were non-recidivists whereas only 12.1% were recidivists. The inverse of the above relationship is true for males who scored “Moderate/High” on the LSI-R, where the proportion of recidivists (61%) outweighed non-recidivists (39%). Of males who scored “High” on the LSI-R, 59.2% were recidivists while 40.8% were non-recidivists.



⁵Due to a small sample size of female offenders released from sentenced status in the CY19 cohort, a breakdown of LSI-R by risk level cannot be provided as it would be in violation of cell suppression standards.