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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

For this study, the release cohort consisted of 1,702 individuals representing 1,835 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (50%) males (90%) between the ages of 30-39 (35%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (42%) or violent (35%) crimes.² The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 2.1 years. The median, or middle, sentence length was nearly 6 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (80%), followed by being discharged on parole (14%).³ Due to the imposition of split sentences, RIDOC estimates over 85% of releases from incarceration immediately begin probation supervision in the community.

Overview

When individuals transition from incarceration to the community, they are often 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 offender tracking system. A release cohort for calendar year 2020 (CY20) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY23) to gauge success. If an offender 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.

¹ RIDOC tracks offenders 36 months post-release, which reflects the standard set by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

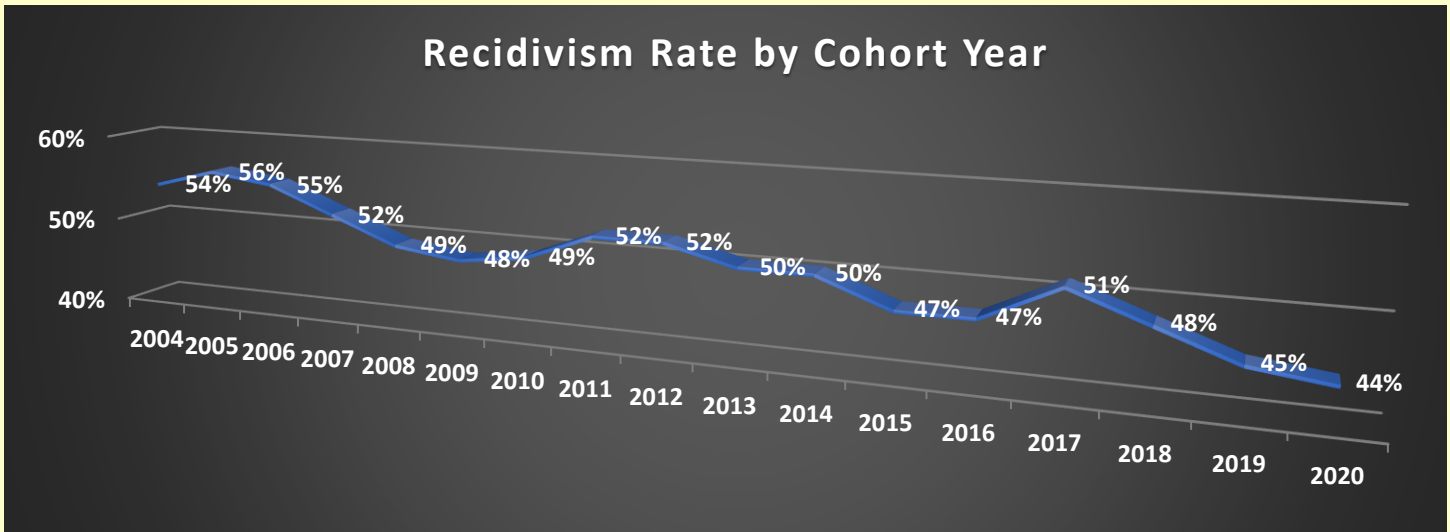
² Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order or shoplifting. Violent crimes include crimes such as manslaughter or murder. The remaining types of crimes that those released may have been serving time for are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering,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

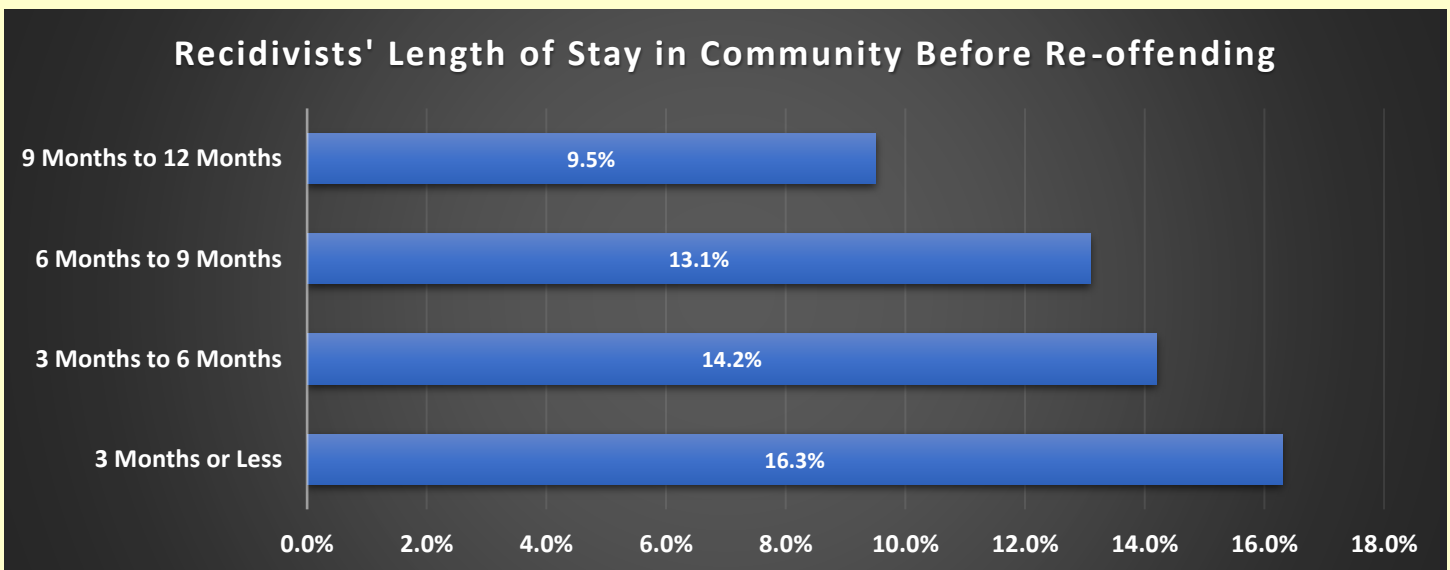
Sentenced Readmissions

Within 3 years of release, 44% 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 1% and 4% from the CY19 and CY18 cohorts, respectively.



Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

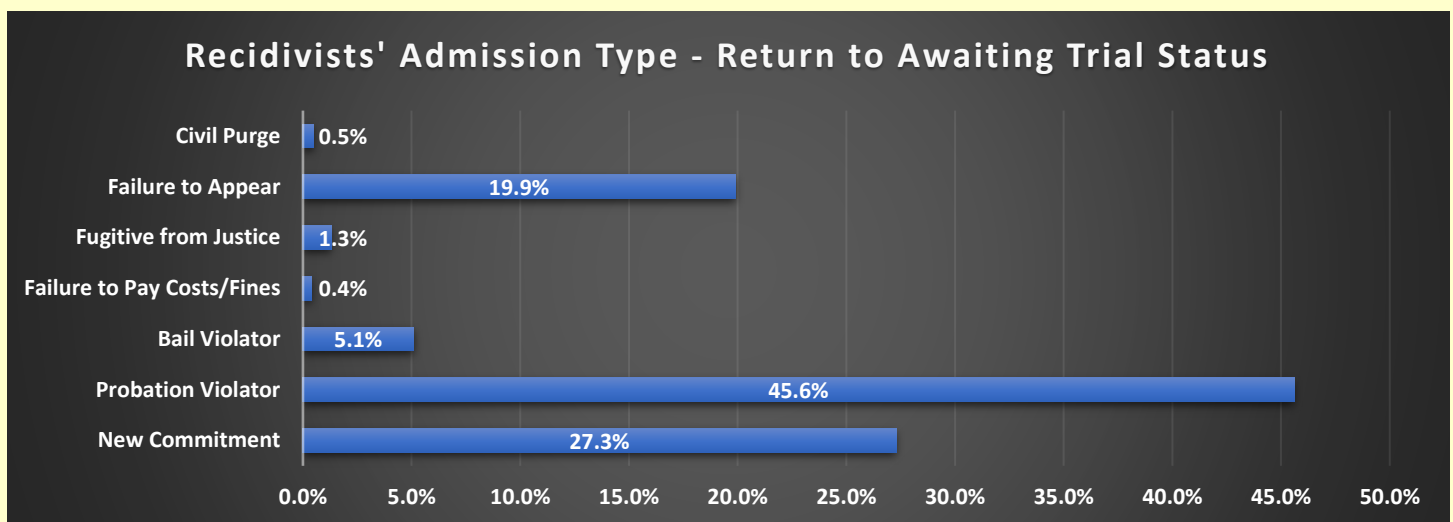
The average time spent in the community for the CY20 cohort was 12.8 months. Nearly 6% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 26% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1 year post-release, about 57% of recidivists had returned to RIDOC. Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 13.2 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 12.1 months. Those released from serving a less serious type of offense (i.e., nonviolent) returned sooner than those released after serving more serious offenses (i.e., violent). Those released from serving nonviolent offenses spent an average of 11.7 months in the community before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 12.9 months in the community before returning to RIDOC.



Readmissions

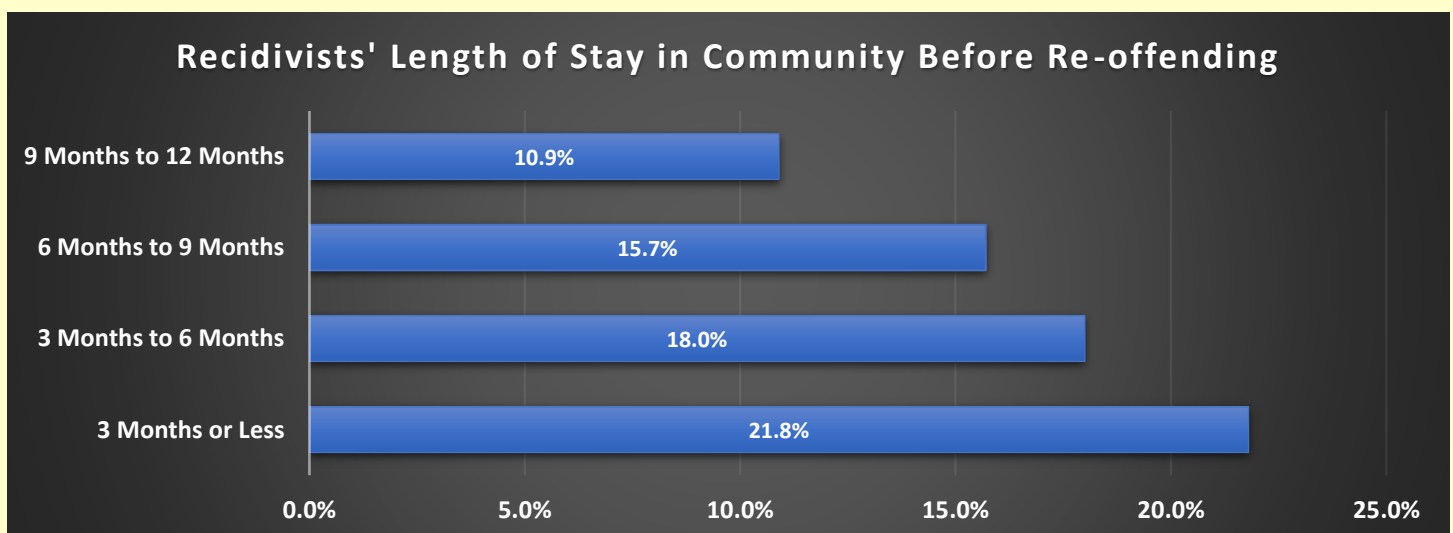
Awaiting Trial Readmissions

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, 55% of the CY20 cohort returned as awaiting trial detainees. Thirty-six percent (36%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 49% within 2 years; and 55% by the third year. Of the women released in 2020, 56% 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 (46%), new commitments (27%), or for failure to appear in court (20%).⁴ These readmission rates are similar to the CY19 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 CY20 cohort was just under 10.5 months. Just over 8% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 31.5% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, just over 66% of awaiting trial recidivists had returned to RIDOC.



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

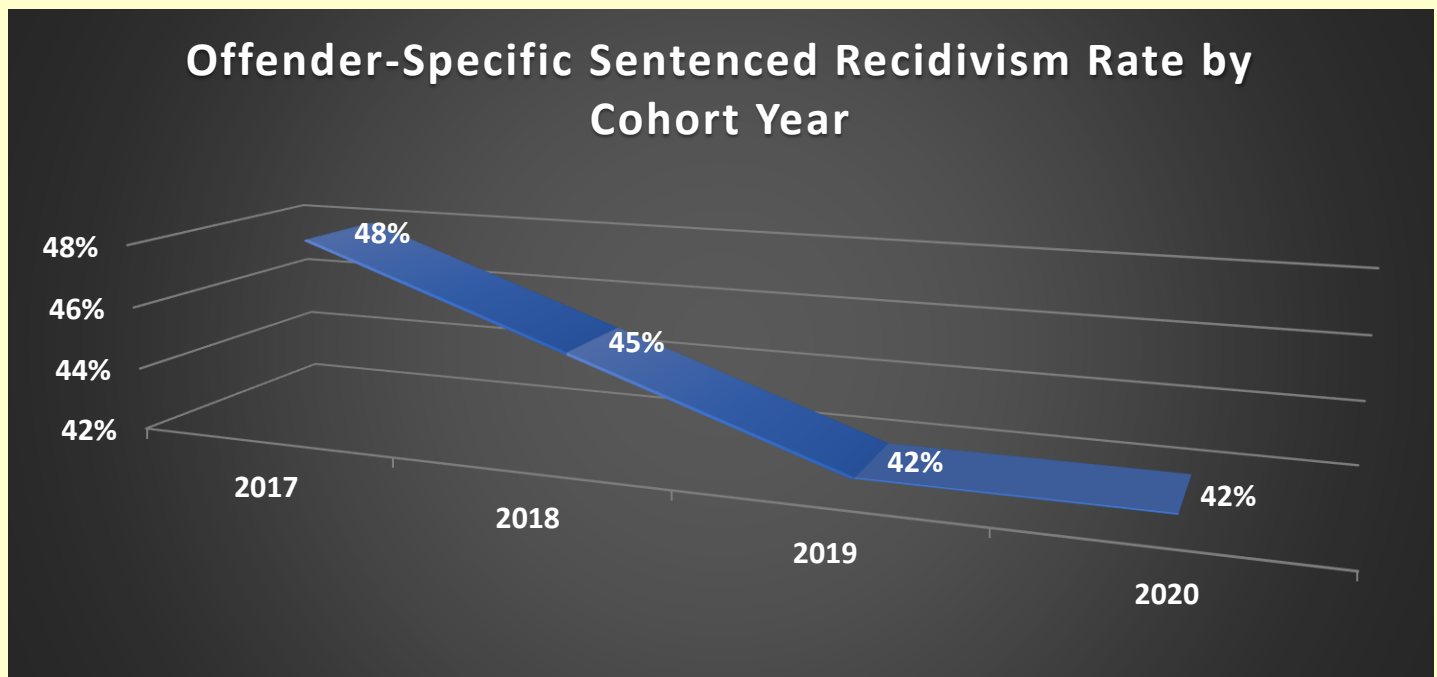
Offender-Specific Readmissions

Awaiting Trial Readmissions

Beginning with CY20, RIDOC also tracks offender-specific readmission rates, whereby all offenders released from sentenced status can only be counted once as a recidivist per release cohort. This additional methodology shows recidivism through a different lens and prevents the artificial inflation of recidivism rates that can occur with a cohort recidivism rate where all returns to incarceration are counted. Offenders who return to await trial are recorded as awaiting trial recidivists upon recommitment, *so long as the offender does not return to sentenced status during the same period of incarceration* (these offenders would be captured in RIDOC’s sentenced offender recidivism rate). Of the 1,702 offenders released from sentenced status, 908 offenders (53.3%) returned to RIDOC as an awaiting trial recidivist. Of the 908 offenders, 600 offenders (66.1%) went to sentenced status during that same period of incarceration. The resulting recidivism rate for the 308 offenders identified as awaiting trial recidivists is 18.1%.

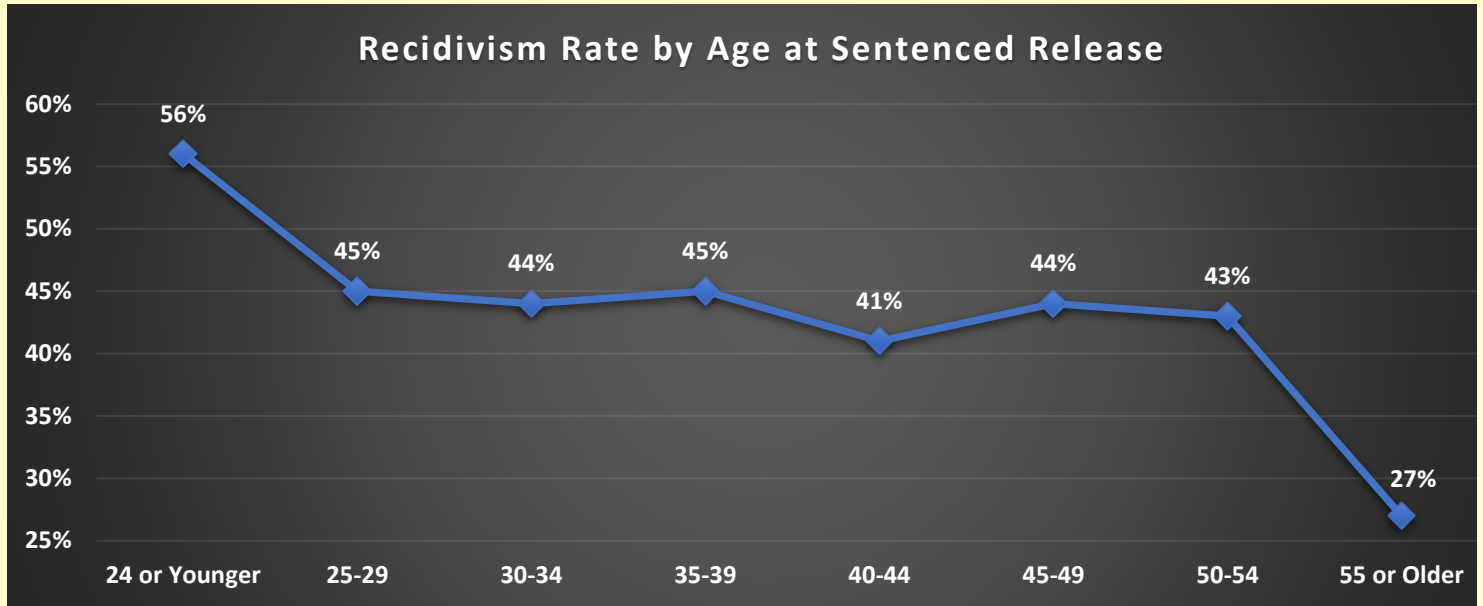
Sentenced Readmissions

Of the 1,702 offenders released from sentenced status, 715 offenders (42%) returned to RIDOC as a sentenced recidivist. This figure includes the 600 offenders who went from awaiting trial to sentenced status during the same period of incarceration. The line graph (shown below) highlights that RIDOC’s offender-specific recidivism rate declined by 6% from CY17 (48%) to CY19 (42%).

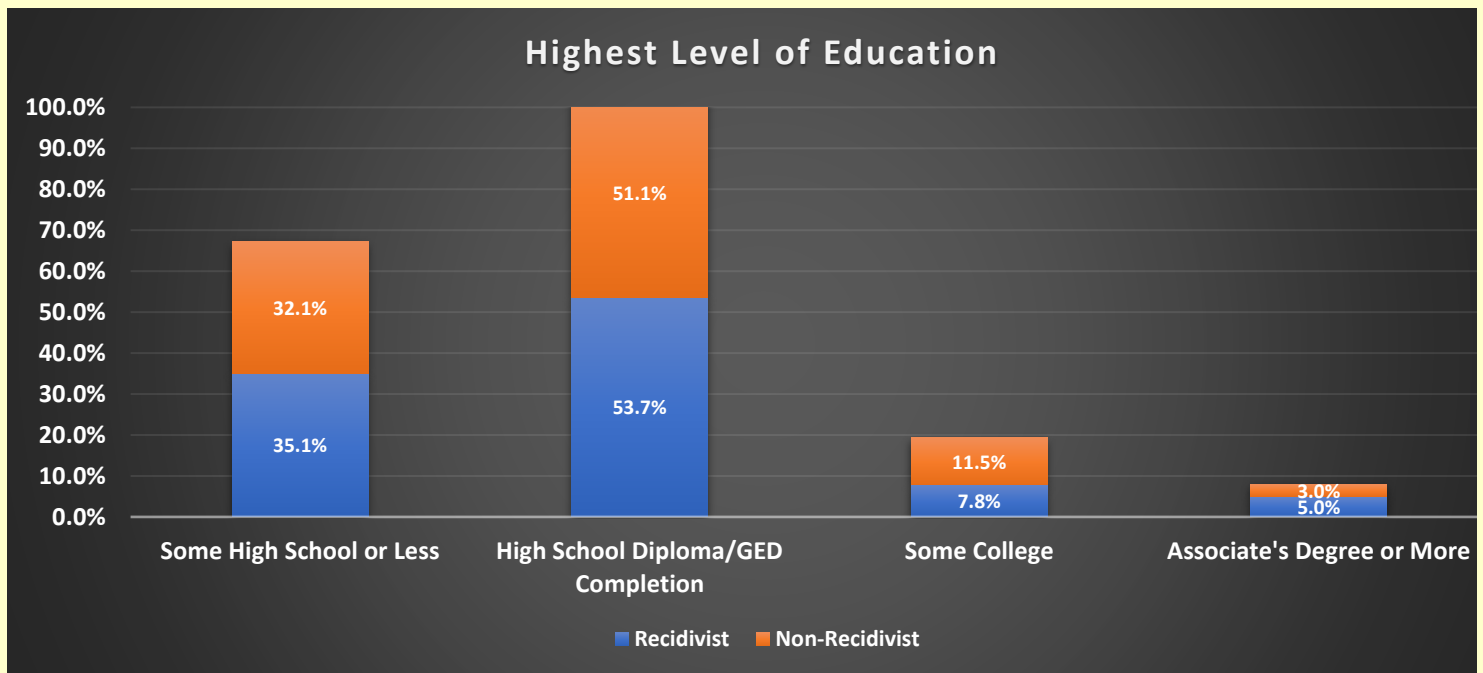


Correlates of Recidivism

The following variables were significantly correlated with recommitment rates: Age at release, education level, length of stay, 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 younger (56%). The rate significantly declines in the 55 plus age group (27%).



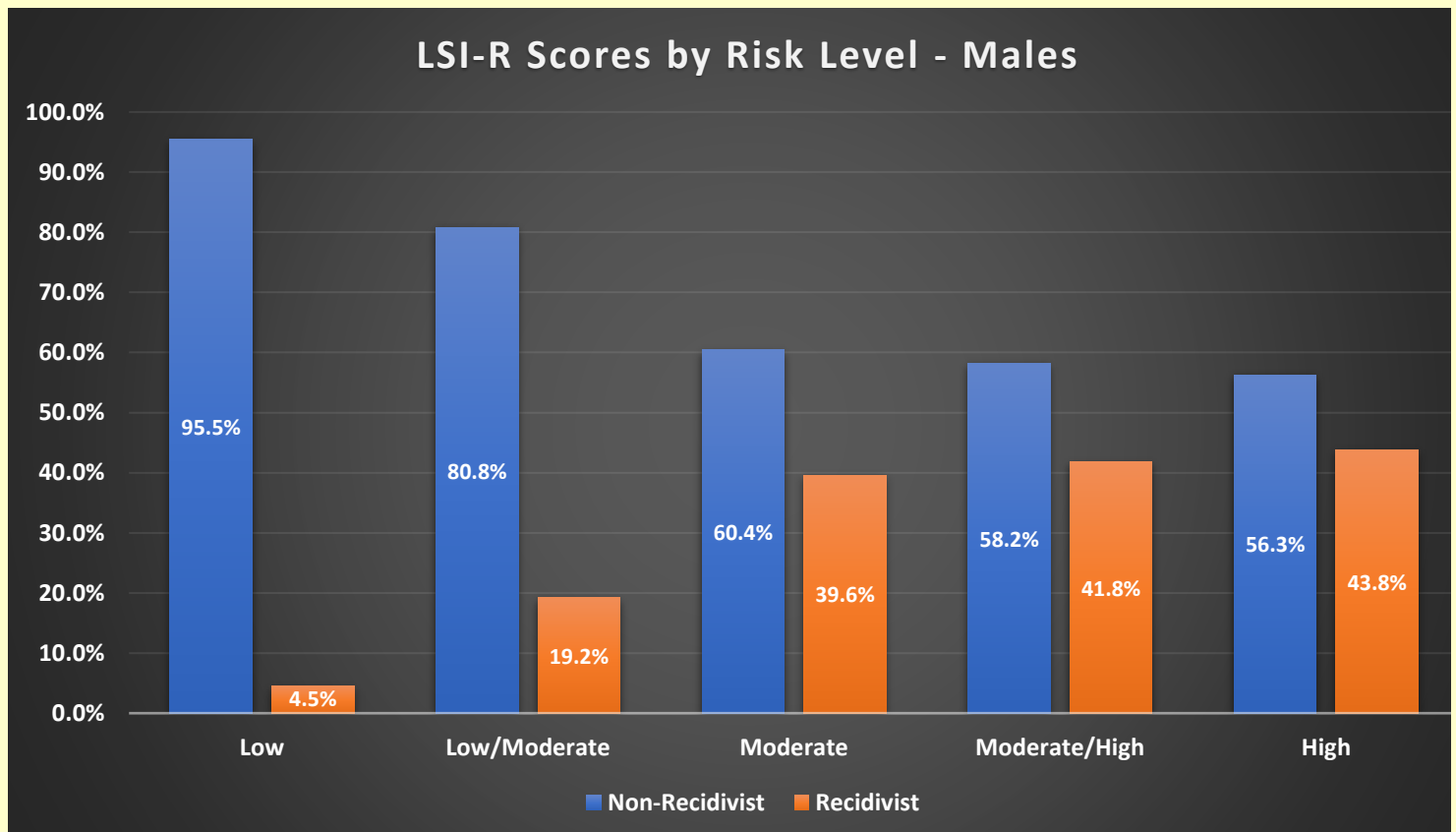
A noteworthy trend in highest level of education for offenders who recidivated versus those offenders who did not: the bar graph below displays that non-recidivists (14.5%) yield higher levels of post-secondary education than recidivists (12.8%).



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 and validated 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 CY20 cohort was 28, which is 3.5% less than the CY19 cohort.⁵ An LSI-R score of 28 indicates a moderate risk to reoffend for males and would indicate a moderate/high risk to reoffend for females. The bar graph below highlights that of males who scored “Low” on the LSI-R, 95.5% were non-recidivists whereas only 4.5% were recidivists. The proportion of male recidivists who scored “Moderate/High” (41.8%) was significantly higher and more comparable to non-recidivists who scored the same (58.2%). Of males who scored “High” on the LSI-R, 43.8% were recidivists while 56.3% were non-recidivists.



⁵Due to a small sample size of female offenders released from sentenced status in the CY20 cohort, a breakdown of LSI-R by risk level cannot be provided as it would be in violation of cell suppression standards.