

Rhode Island Department of Corrections Annual Recidivism Brief

March 2025

Prepared by Keith Ivone,
Data Analyst II
Planning & Research Unit
18 Wilma Schesler Ln
Cranston, Rhode Island



INSIDE THIS BRIEF

1. Overview
2. Sentenced Readmissions
3. Awaiting Trial Readmissions
4. Offender-Specific Readmissions
5. Correlates of Recidivism
6. Level of Service Inventory Revised

“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 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 2021 (CY21) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY24) 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.

For this study, the release cohort consisted of 1,570 individuals representing 1,728 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (50%) males (89%) between the ages of 30-39 (32%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (46%) or violent (35%) crimes.² The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 2 years. The median, or middle, sentence length was only 3 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (83%), followed by being discharged on parole (15%).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, which reflects the standard set by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

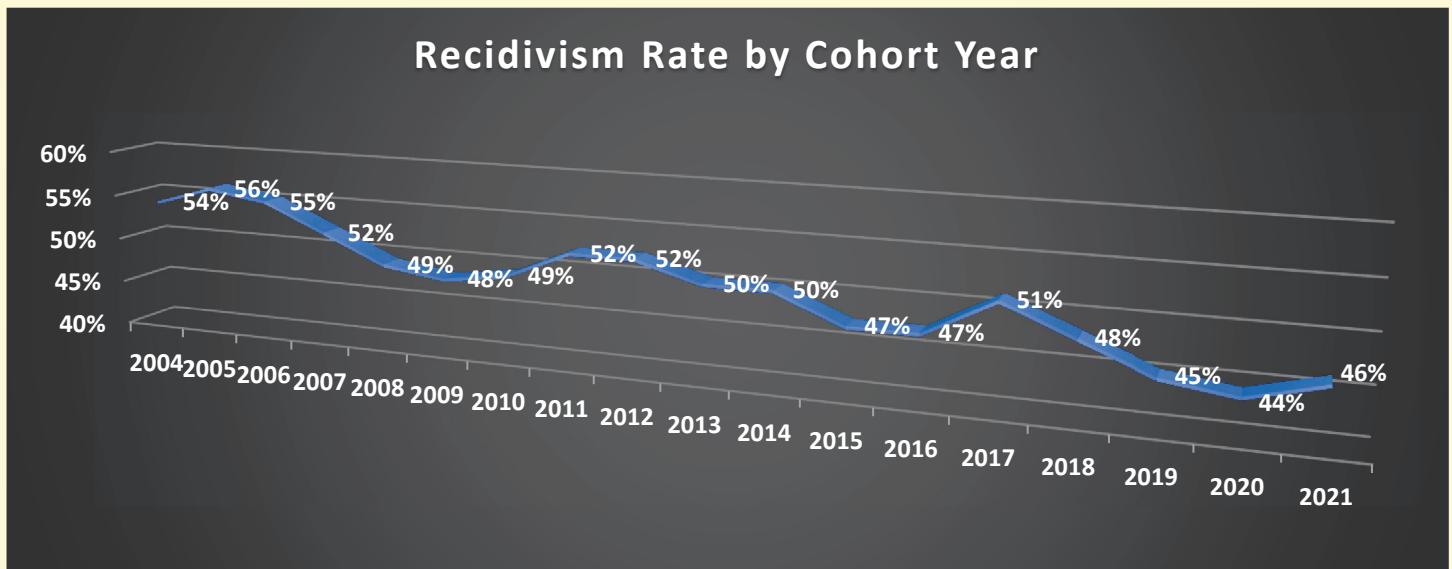
² Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order or shoplifting. Violent crimes include crimes such as manslaughter or murder. The remaining types of crimes that those released may have been serving time for are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering,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

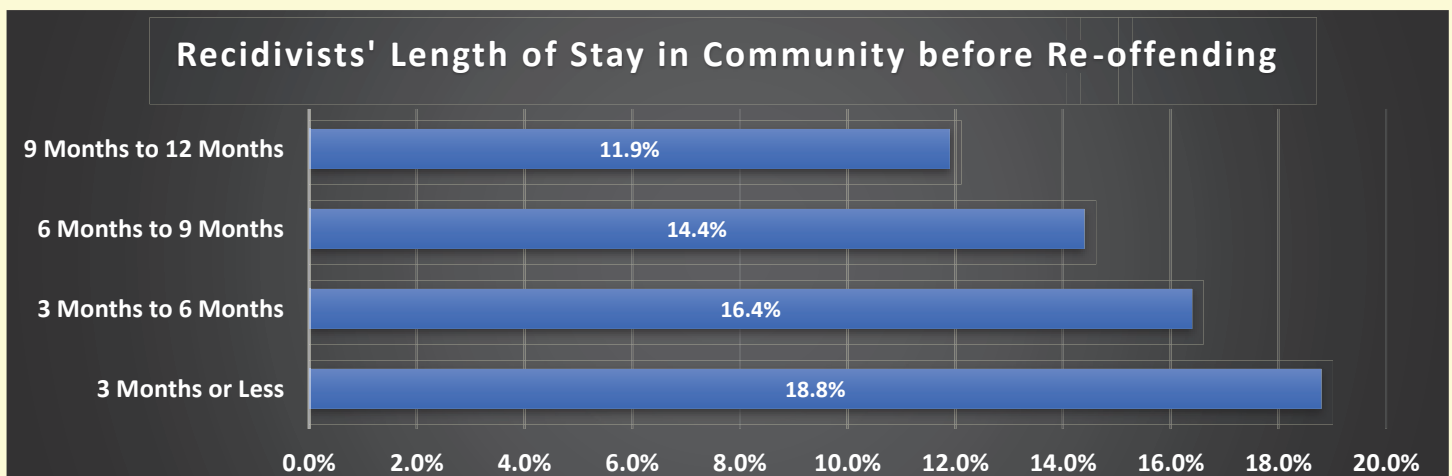
Sentenced Readmissions

Within 3 years of release, 46% of individuals returned to RIDOC as sentenced offenders. This is the third lowest reported recidivism rate since the Department began tracking yearly cohorts in 2004. The recidivism rate increased by 2% and 1% from the CY20 and CY19 cohorts, respectively. COVID-19 played an integral role in reducing number of sentenced commitments to RIDOC, thus reducing the overall number found in the release cohort to historic lows. The slight uptick in the sentenced recidivism rate may be attributed to the small relative sample. In other words, even though the overall rate increased, it reflects fewer sentenced readmissions than in the CY20 cohort.



Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

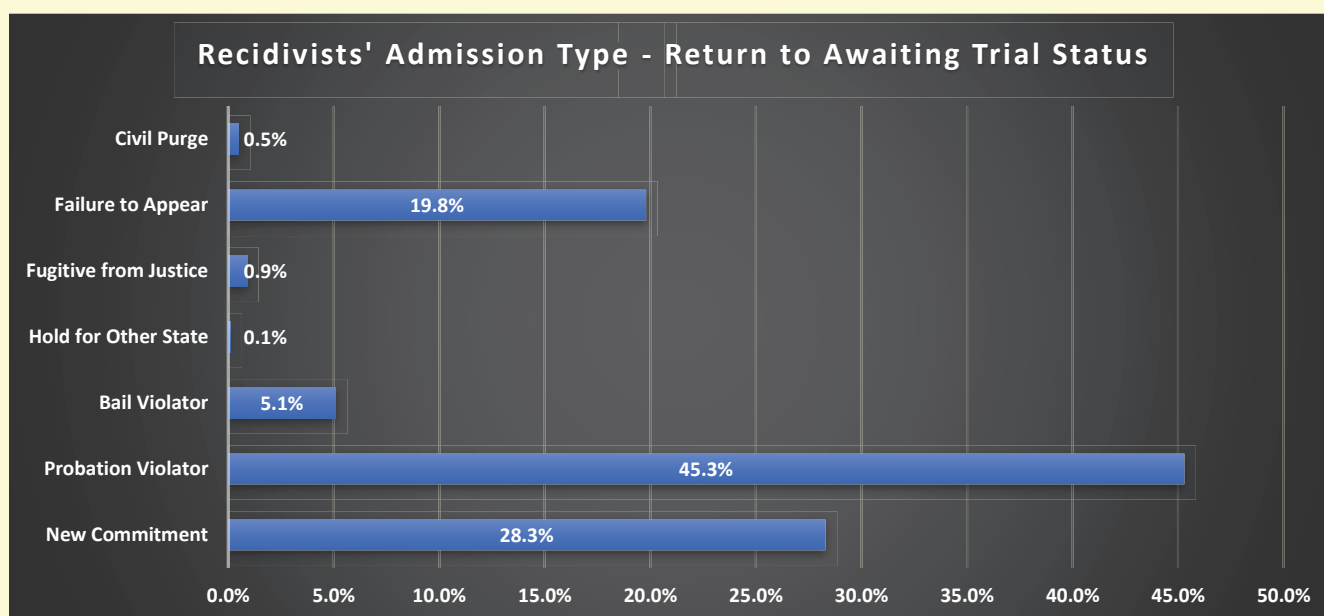
The average time spent in the community for the CY21 cohort was 11.7 months. Just over 5% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 30% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, about 62% of recidivists had returned to RIDOC. Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 11.6 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 10.3 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 9.7 months in the community before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 12.1 months in the community before returning to RIDOC.



Readmissions

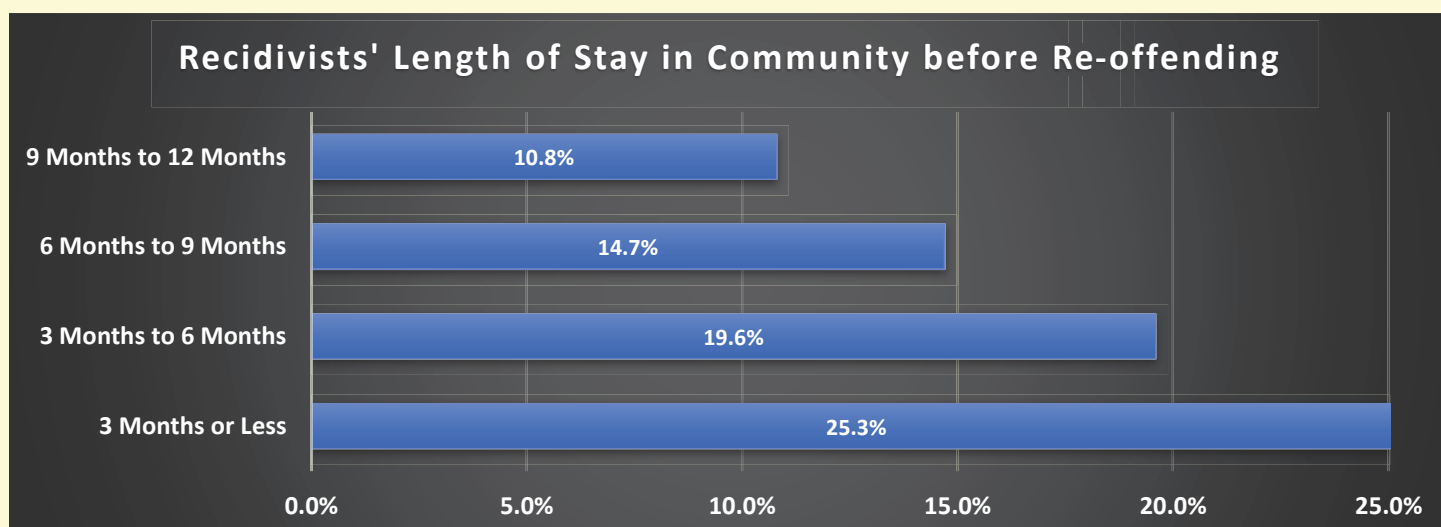
Awaiting Trial Readmissions

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 CY21 cohort returned as awaiting trial detainees. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 50% within 2 years; and 54% by the third year. Of the women released in 2021, 51% 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%), new commitments (28%), or for failure to appear in court (20%).⁴ These readmission rates are similar to the CY20 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 CY21 cohort was 9.7 months. Just over 10% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 34.6% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, just over 70% of awaiting trial recidivists had returned to RIDOC.



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

Offender-Specific Readmissions

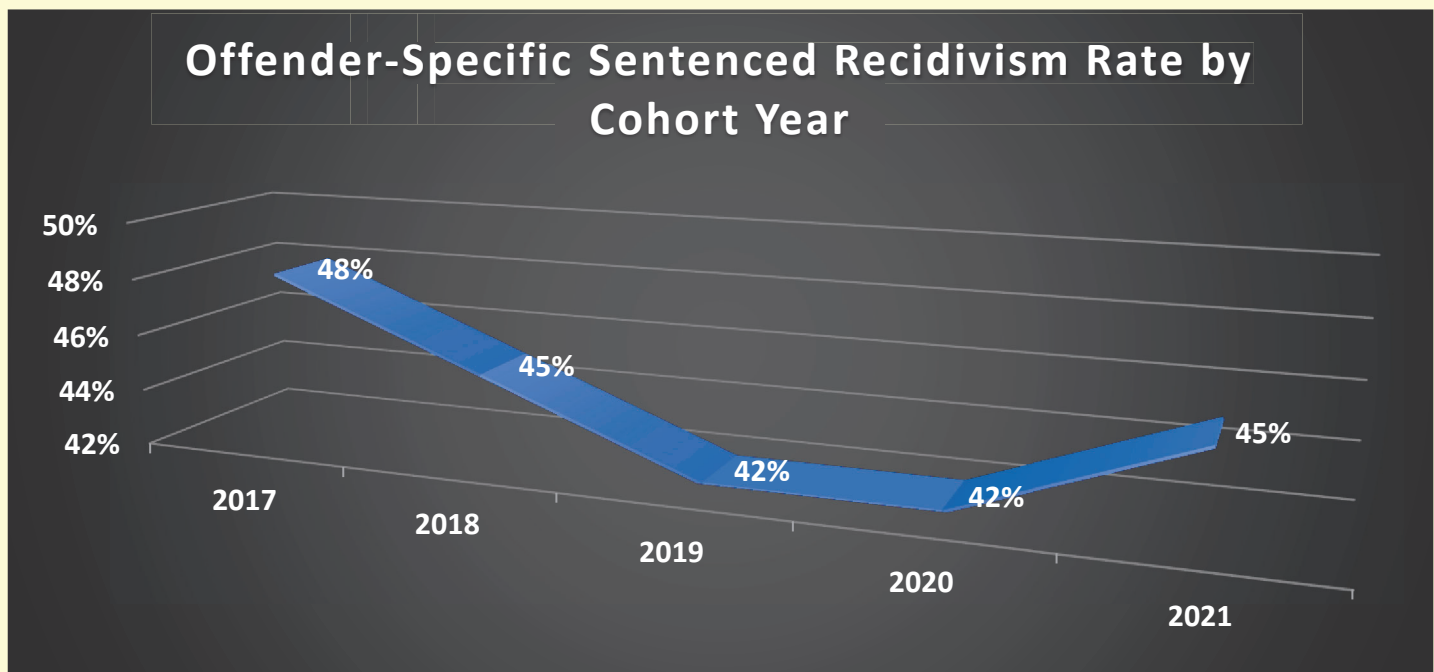
Awaiting Trial Readmissions

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 1,570 offenders released from sentenced status, 827 offenders (52.7%) returned to RIDOC as an awaiting trial recidivist. Of the 827 offenders, 592 offenders (71.6%) went to sentenced status during that same period of incarceration. The resulting recidivism rate for the 235 offenders identified as awaiting trial recidivists is 15%.

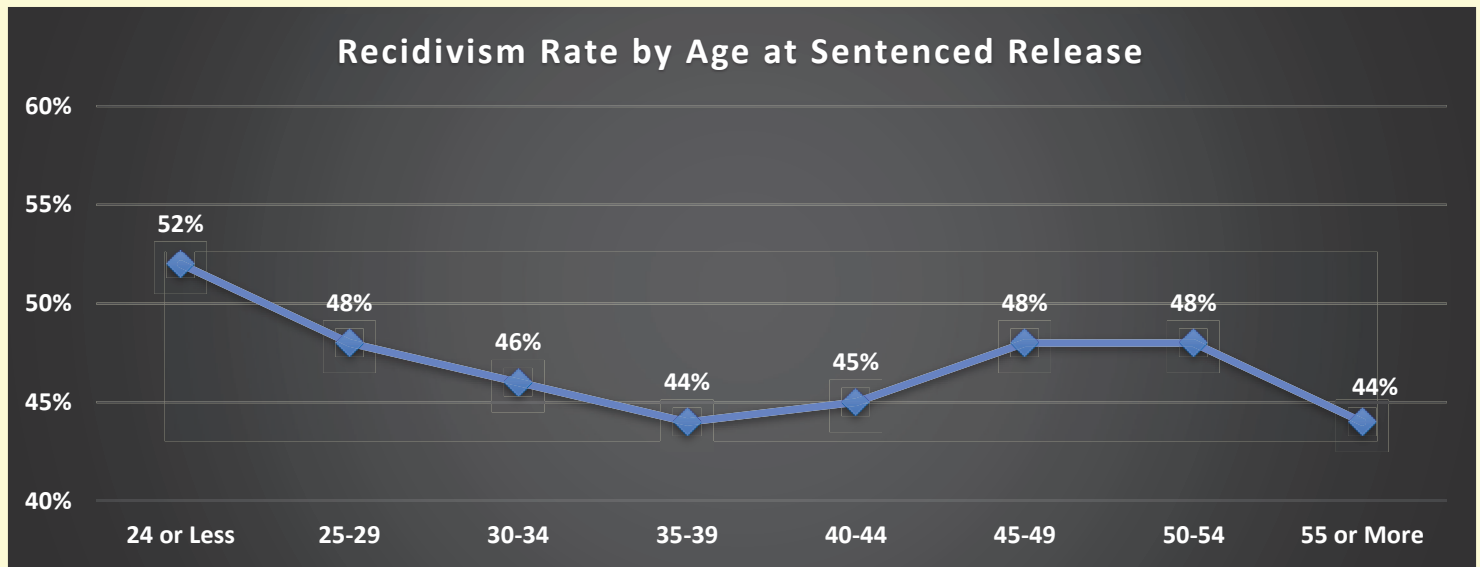
Sentenced Readmissions

Of the 1,570 offenders released from sentenced status, 699 offenders (45%) returned to RIDOC as a sentenced recidivist. This figure includes the 592 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 CY20 (42%), before increasing by nearly 3% in CY21.

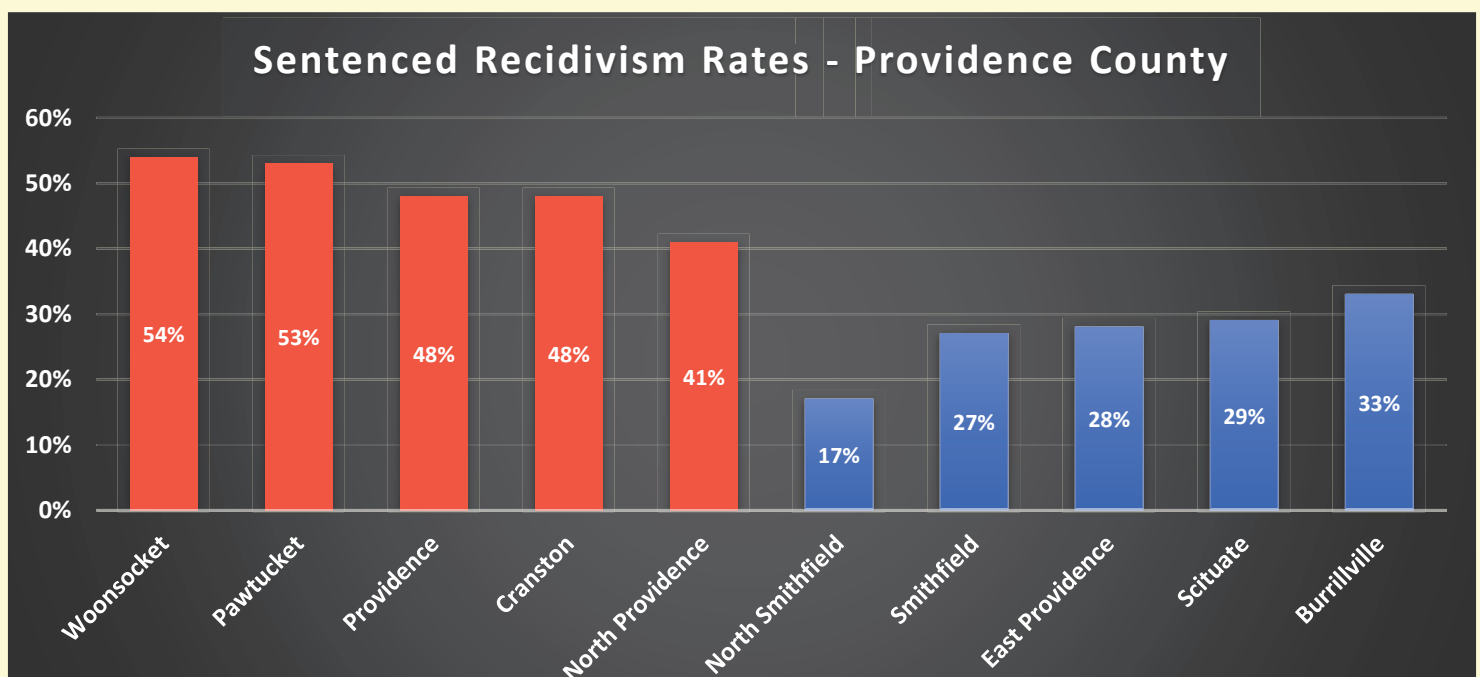


Correlates of Recidivism

The following variables were significantly correlated with recommitment rates: County of residence, length of stay, total sentence length (in days), and type of release. While age at sentenced release was not statistically significant in this Cohort, it's important to highlight that 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 (52%). The rate declines in the 55 plus age group (44%).



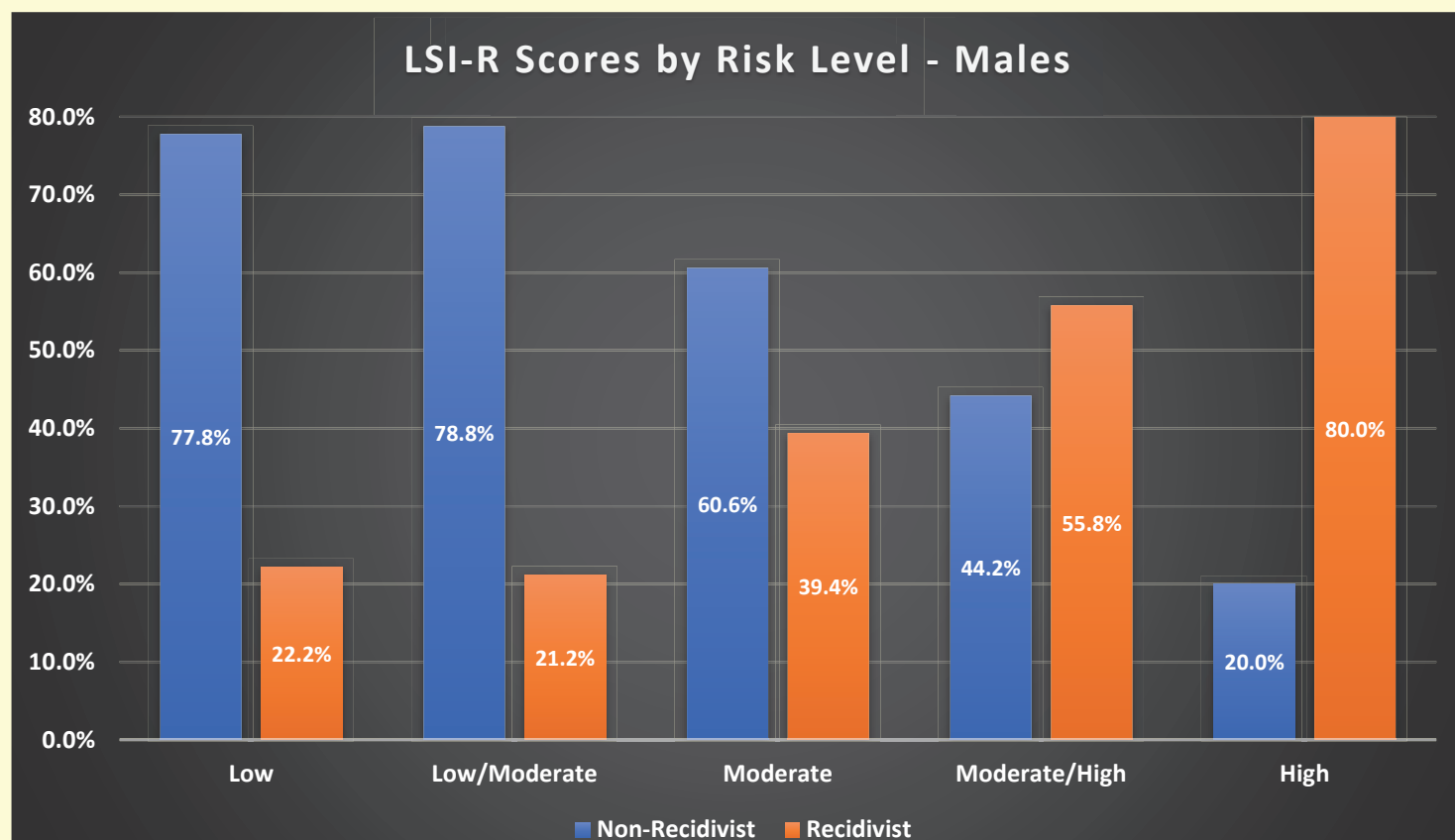
The majority of those found in the release cohort (59%) self-identified as living in a city/town located in Providence County. The bar graph (shown below) highlights that Woonsocket (54%) yielded the highest sentenced recidivism rate, followed by: Pawtucket (53%), Providence (48%), Cranston (48%), and North Providence (41%). North Smithfield (17%) recorded the lowest sentenced recidivism rate, followed by: Smithfield (27%), East Providence (28%), Scituate (29%), and Burrillville (33%).



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 CY21 cohort was 29, which is 3.6% greater than the CY20 cohort.⁵ An LSI-R score of 29 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, 77.8% were non-recidivists whereas 22.2% were recidivists. The proportion of male recidivists who scored "Moderate/High" (55.8%) was significantly higher and more comparable to non-recidivists who scored the same (44.2%). Of males who scored "High" on the LSI-R, 80.0% were recidivists while 20.0% were non-recidivists.



⁵Due to a small sample size of female offenders released from sentenced status in the CY21 cohort, a breakdown of LSI-R by risk level cannot be provided as it would be in violation of cell suppression standards.