

Rhode Island Department of Corrections Annual Recidivism Brief

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“The mission of RIDOC is to maintain a safe and secure correctional system that prioritizes the well-being of staff, incarcerated individuals, and the community. We strive to achieve this by promoting a respectful work environment, utilizing data-driven practices to guide decisions, and offering a wide range of programs to facilitate successful reintegration into the community and reduce recidivism.”

For this study, the release cohort consisted of 1,532 individuals representing 1,689 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (52%) males (89%) between the ages of 30-39 (36%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (51%) or violent (34%) crimes.² The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 1.5 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 (88%), 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.

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 2022 (CY22) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY25) 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).

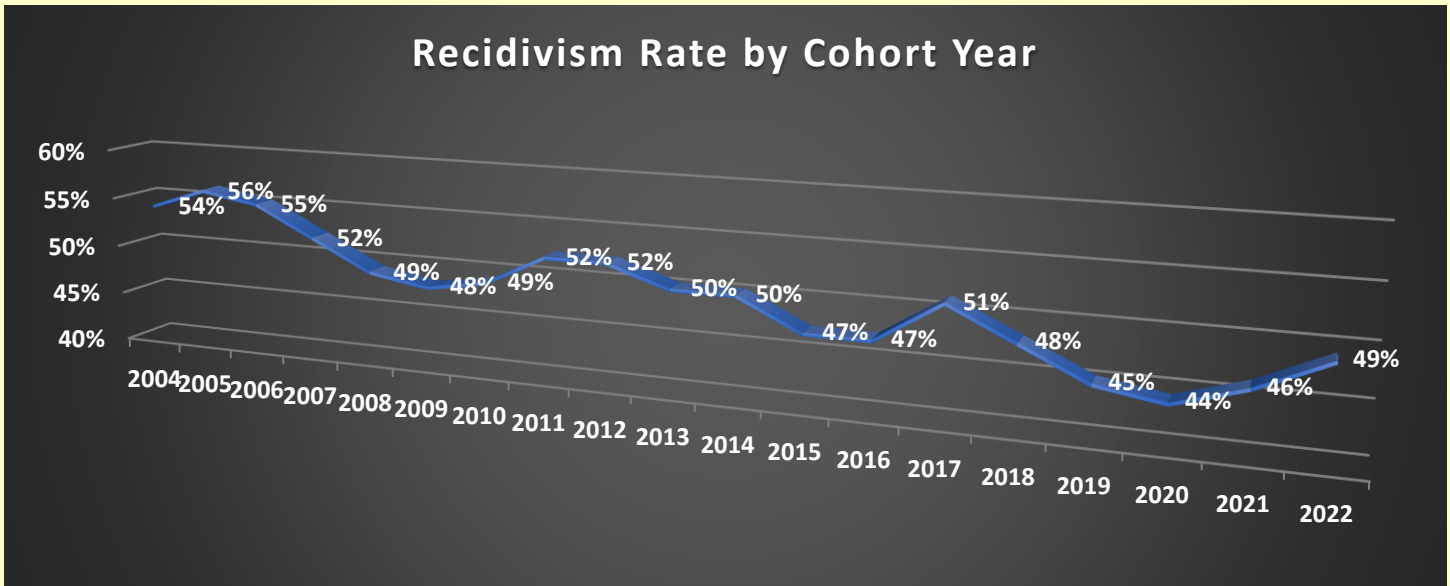
² Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order or shoplifting. Violent crimes include crimes such as manslaughter or murder. The remaining types of crimes that those released may have been serving time for are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering,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

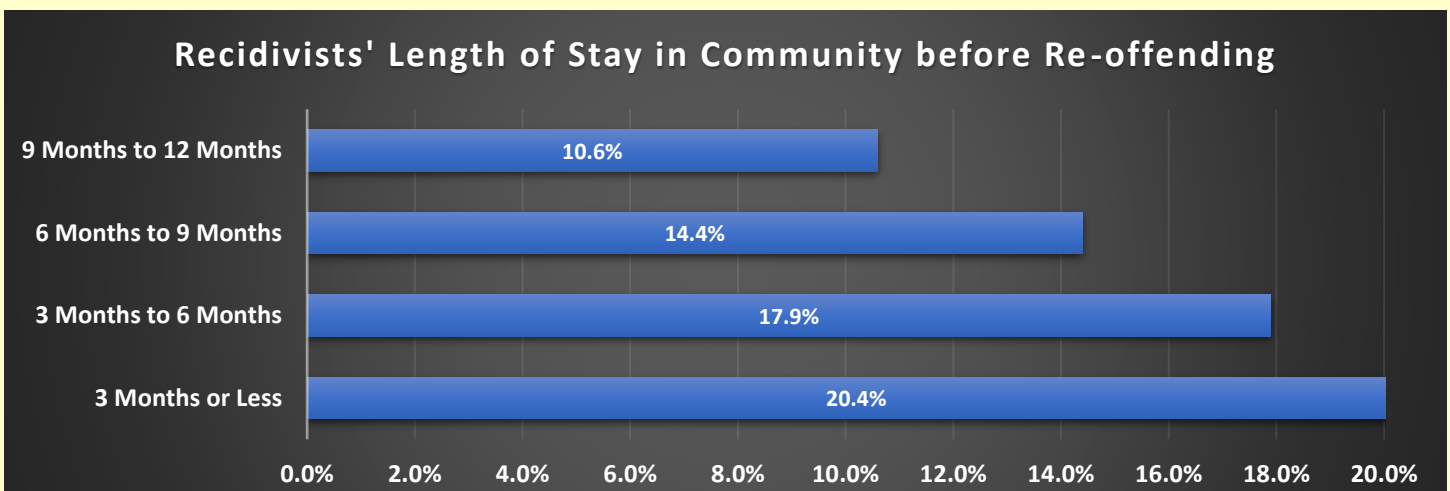
Sentenced Readmissions

Within 3 years of release, 49% of individuals returned to RIDOC as sentenced offenders. The recidivism rate increased by 3% and 5% from the CY21 and CY20 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 in historical cohorts that transpired prior to CY21.



Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

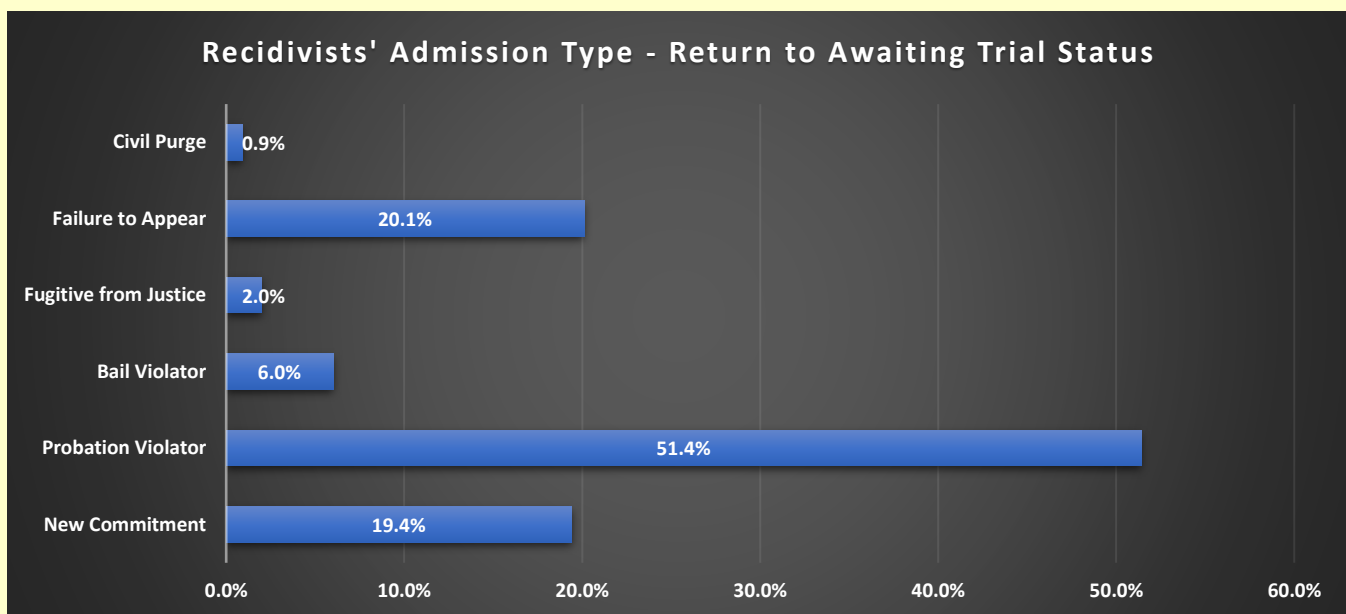
The average time spent in the community for the CY22 cohort was 11.3 months. About 6% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 33% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, nearly 64% of recidivists had returned to RIDOC. Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 11.1 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 10.5 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 10.1 months in the community before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 11.3 months in the community before returning to RIDOC.



Readmissions

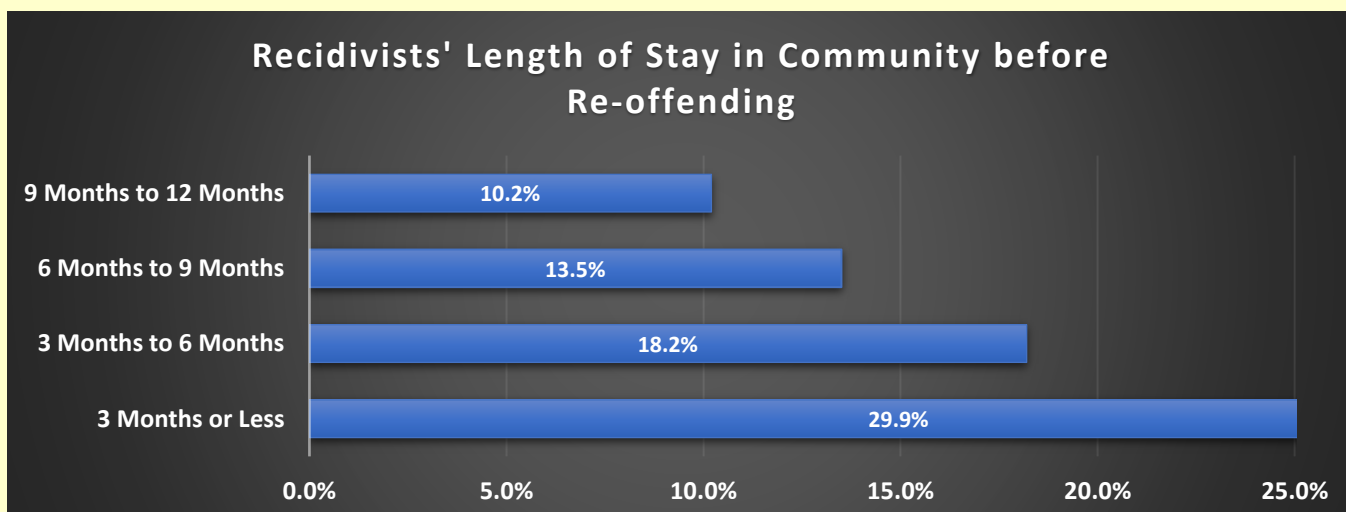
Awaiting Trial Readmissions

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, 59% of the CY22 cohort returned as awaiting trial detainees. Forty-two percent (42%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 53% within 2 years; and 59% by the third year. Of the women released in 2022, 59% returned to awaiting trial status within 36 months of release, while 59% 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 (51.4%), failure to appear in court (20.1%), or new commitments (19.4%).⁴ These readmission rates are similar to the CY21 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 CY22 cohort was 9.3 months. Nearly 11% of recidivists had returned within 30 days of release. An additional 31.7% returned between 1 and 6 months. By 1-year post-release, about 72% of awaiting trial recidivists had returned to RIDOC.



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

Offender-Specific Readmissions

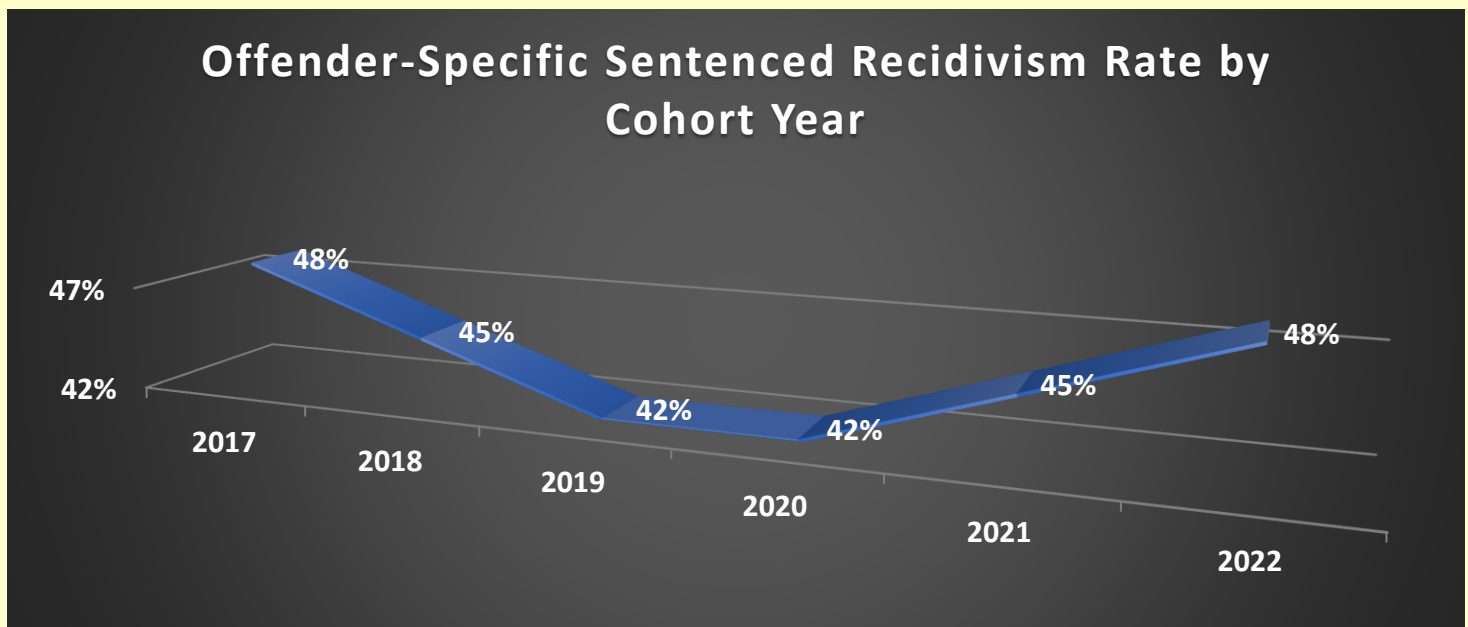
Awaiting Trial Readmissions

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 1,532 offenders released from sentenced status, 874 offenders (57%) returned to RIDOC as an awaiting trial recidivist. Of the 874 offenders, 628 offenders (71.9%) went to sentenced status during that same period of incarceration. The resulting recidivism rate for the 246 offenders identified as awaiting trial recidivists is 16%.

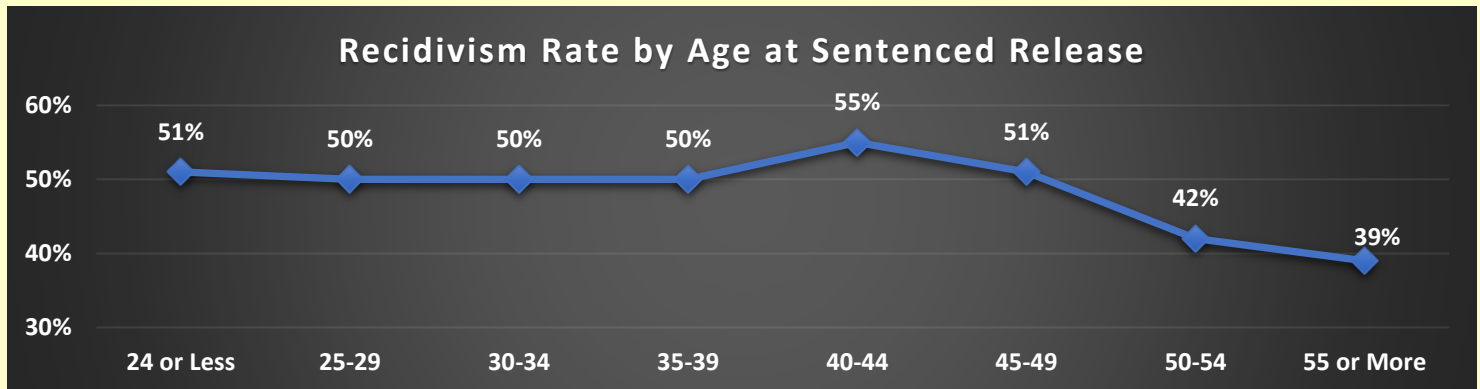
Sentenced Readmissions

Of the 1,570 offenders released from sentenced status, 728 offenders (48%) returned to RIDOC as a sentenced recidivist. This figure includes the 628 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 and an additional 3% in CY22.

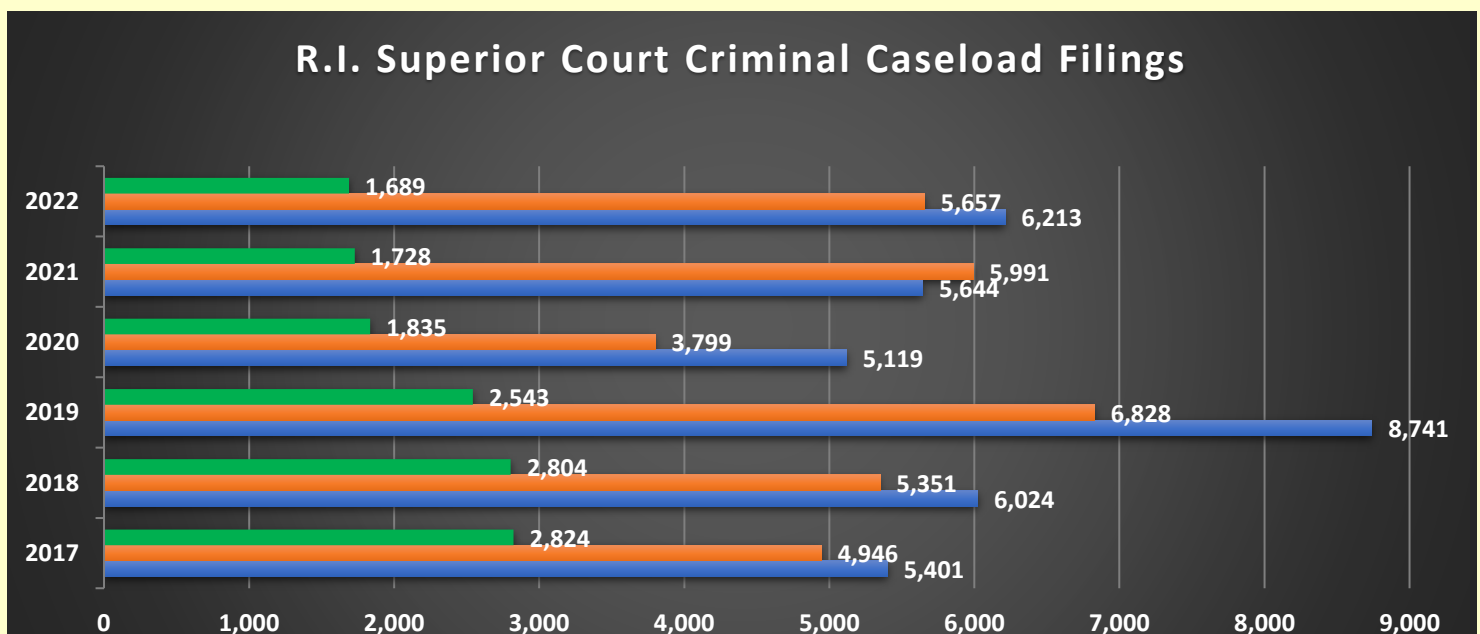


Correlates of Recidivism

The following variables were significantly correlated with recommitment rates: Length of stay (in days), total sentence length (in days), and type of release. While age at sentenced release was not statistically significant in this cohort, it is important to highlight the sharp cut off in recidivism rates for offenders who are 50 years or older. The line graph below shows that the highest recidivism rates by age are offenders who were 40 to 44 years old (55%). The rate declines in the 50 to 54 age group (42%) and even more substantially in the 55 plus age group (39%).



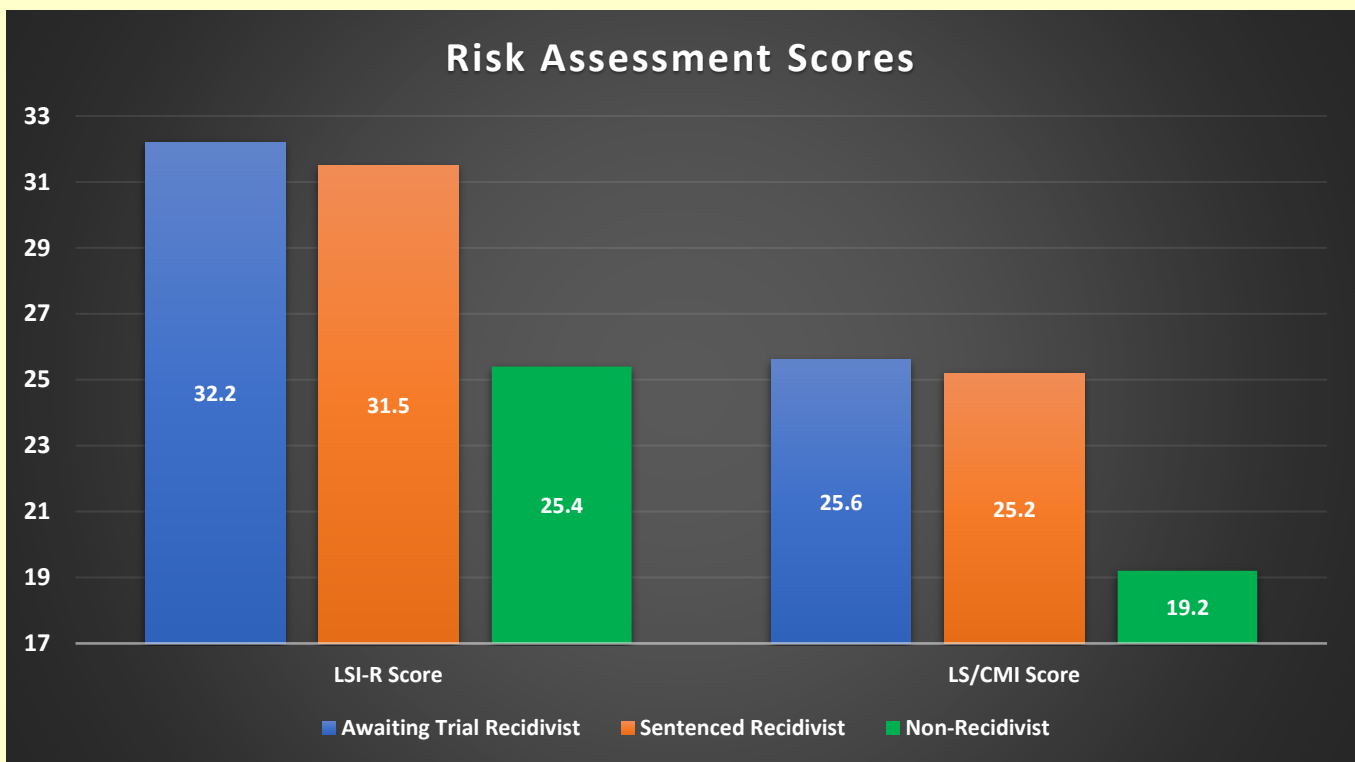
The bar graph below depicts Rhode Island (R.I.) Superior Court Criminal Caseload Filings (blue) and Dispositions (orange) relative to RIDOC’s Release Cohort (green). The impact of COVID-19 caused a significant decline in the total number of dispositions, notably from CY19 (6,828) to CY20 (3,799) where there was a decrease of more than 44%. Filings declined by more than 41%, from 8,741 in CY19 to just 5,119 in CY20. The total number of filings and dispositions declined by just under 43% from CY19 (15,569) to CY20 (8,918). The sharp decline sheds light on how COVID-19 had negatively impacted the Courts from operating at full capacity, which in turn, caused a reduction in the number of sentenced commitments and releases. From CY19 (2,543) to CY20 (1,835), RIDOC’s release cohort declined by nearly 28%. With far fewer individuals present in the release cohort, coupled with the fact that criminal justice agencies (law enforcement, courts, and corrections) were not operating at full capacity, greatly reduced the likelihood of offenders recidivating and becoming recommitting at RIDOC. This very well may be a contributing factor to how RIDOC documented its lowest sentenced recidivism rate on record (44%).



Risk Assessments

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, drug/alcohol problem, emotional/personal, and attitudes/orientation. In recent years, RIDOC has adopted the use of the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI), which is a fourth-generation risk/need assessment scale that also includes a case management component. Analysis indicates higher risk assessment scores and overall risk levels increase the likelihood of recidivism.

The average LSI-R score for those in the CY22 cohort was 28.8, which is nearly identical to the CY21 cohort.⁵ An LSI-R score of 28.8 indicates a moderate risk to reoffend for males and would indicate a moderate/high risk to reoffend for females. Awaiting trial recidivists yielded LSI-R scores of 32.2, while sentenced recidivists scored 31.5 (both indicate moderate risk to reoffend). The average LS/CMI score was 22, which indicates a high risk to reoffend. Awaiting trial recidivists yielded an average LS/CMI score of 25.6, while sentenced recidivists scored 25.2 (both indicate a high risk to reoffend).



⁵Due to a small sample size of female offenders released from sentenced status in the CY22 cohort, a breakdown of LSI-R & LS/CMI scores by risk level cannot be provided as it would be in violation of cell suppression standards.