

# Rhode Island Department of Corrections *Annual Recidivism Brief*

March 2021

Planning & Research Unit  
18 Wilma Schesler Ln  
Cranston, Rhode Island

## INSIDE THIS BRIEF

1. Overview
2. Readmissions
3. Correlates

**“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.<sup>1</sup>

This report is based on data extracted from RIDOC’s inmate tracking system. A release cohort for calendar year 2016 (CY16) was followed for three years post-release (through the close of CY19) 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 2,565 individuals representing 2,804 distinct release events. The majority of releases were white (53%) males (90%) between the ages of 20-29 (37%). Nearly all of those released had been serving time for nonviolent (45%) or violent (33%) crimes.<sup>2</sup> The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was approximately 1.8 years. The median sentence length was just 6 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (87%), followed by discharge on parole (7%), and paroled/home confinement (3%).<sup>3</sup> Due to the imposition of split sentences, RIDOC estimates over 85% of releases from incarceration immediately begin probation supervision in the community.

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

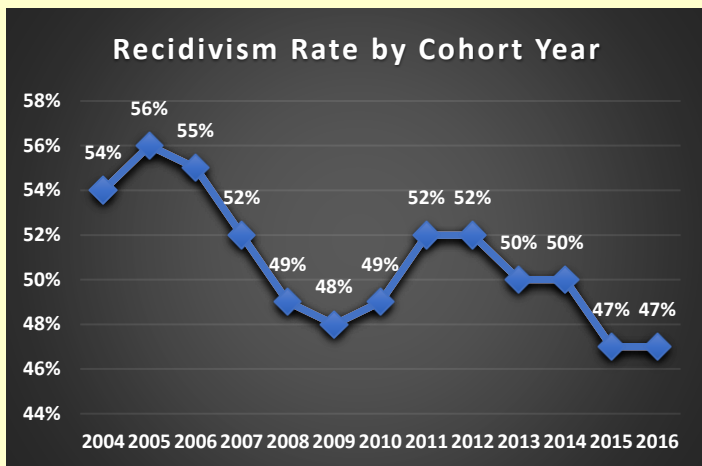
<sup>2</sup> Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order, shoplifting, or drug violations. The remaining types of crimes not listed are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking and entering, and drug crimes.

<sup>3</sup> Release types include expiration of sentence, discharged on parole, paroled/home confinement, discharged at court, and discharged per court order.

## Readmissions

### Sentenced Readmissions

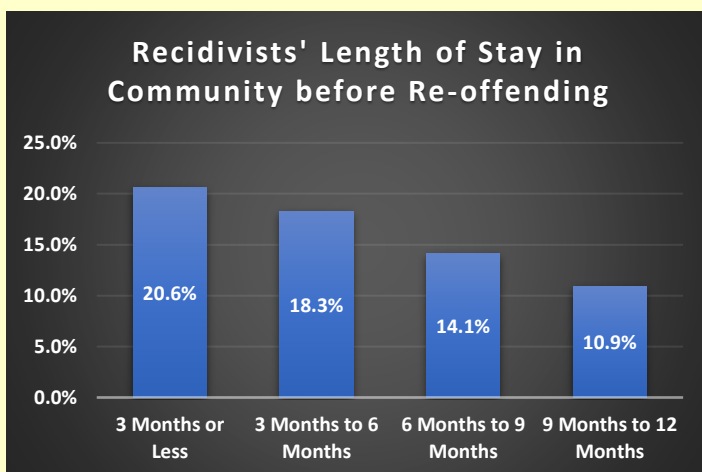
At 3-years post-release, 47% of individuals returned to RIDOC as sentenced offenders. This is identical to the recidivism rate from the CY15 cohort and is tied for the lowest reported recidivism rate since RIDOC began tracking yearly cohorts in 2004. Forty-four percent (44%) of females and forty-eight (48%) of males were recommitted as sentenced offenders. The rate of females recommitted was 8% higher than in the CY15 cohort, while males was 1% lower.



Virtually all offenders who returned were for a new sentence (68%) or as a probation violator (26%). Parole violators accounted for approximately 6% of recidivists.

### Time in the Community - Sentenced Recidivists

The average time spent in the community for CY16 was 11 months. Nearly 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.

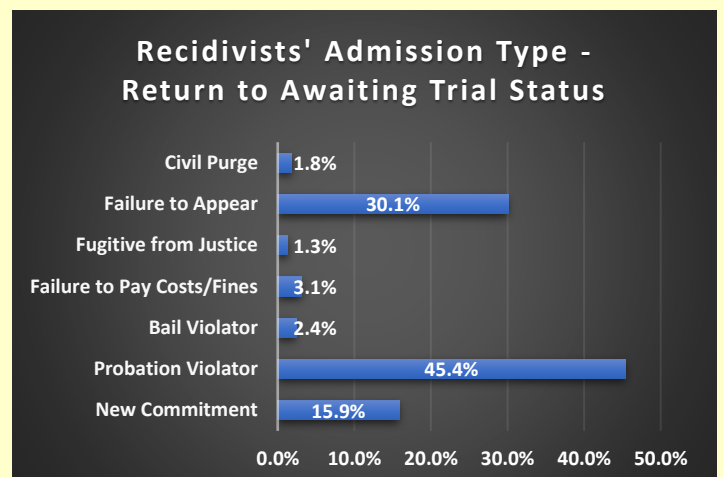


Offenders with children spent more time in the community before reoffending. On average, offenders with children spent 11.4 months in the community before reoffending, whereas offenders without children spent an average of 9.3 months. Those released from serving a less serious type of offense (i.e., nonviolent) returned sooner than more serious offenses (i.e., violent). Those released from serving nonviolent offenses spent an average of 9.4 months before returning, whereas those released from serving violent offenses spent an average of 11.2 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, 57% of the 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 57% by the third year. Of the women released in 2016, 51% returned to awaiting trial within 36 months of release while 58% of men returned in the same time period.

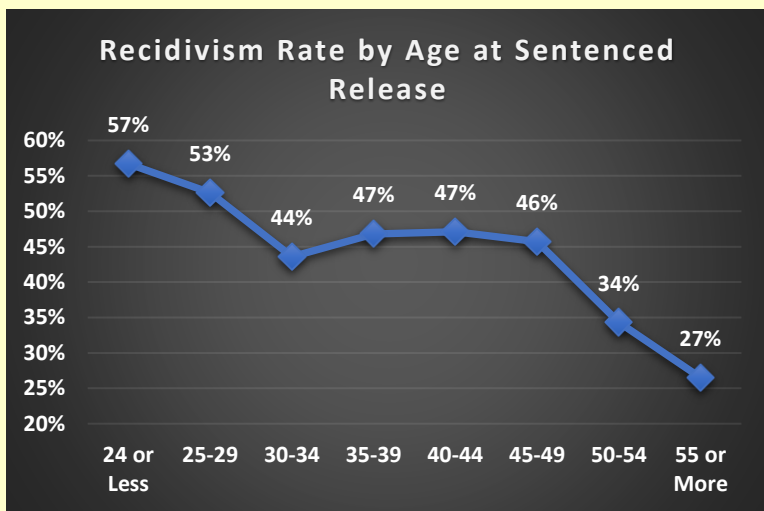
The bar graph (shown below) highlights that the majority of awaiting trial detainees were committed as probation violators (45%) or for failure to appear in court (30%).<sup>4</sup> These readmission rates are identical to the CY15 cohort and are significant drivers of RIDOC's awaiting trial commitment stream. Just over two-thirds of awaiting trial recidivists (71%) 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.



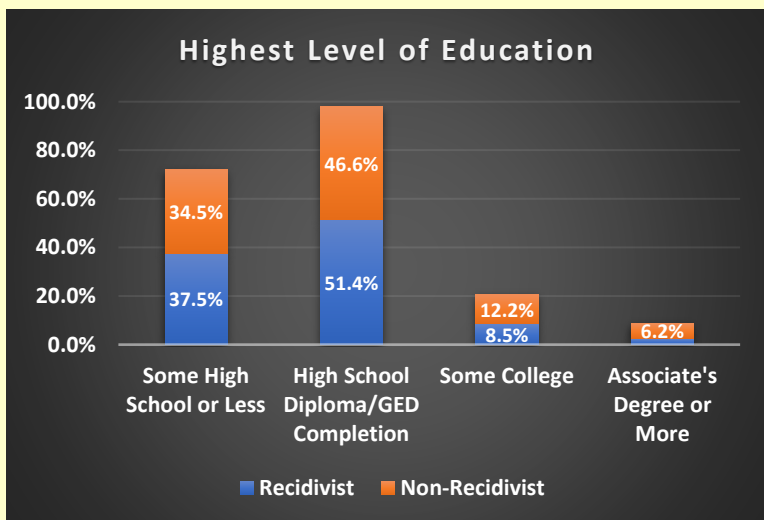
<sup>4</sup>The large majority of probation violators returned for a new charge.

## 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 (57%), whereas the rate significantly declines in the 50-54 year-old age group (34%) and 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 (shown below) displays non-recidivists' (18.4%) yield higher levels of post-secondary education than recidivists (11.1%).



### The Level of Service Inventory-Revised and Risk/Need Assessment and Risk Need Responsivity

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. It's estimated that 45% of those who score low or moderate on the LSI-R return to RIDOC within 3 years as sentenced offenders. In comparison, 68% of those who score moderate/high or high on the LSI-R return to RIDOC within 3 years as sentenced offenders. For those in the CY16 cohort, the average score for was 27, indicating a moderate risk to reoffend.

Coupled with the use of the LSI-R assessment, RIDOC has adopted the Risk-Need-Responsivity approach to effectively address the needs of the offender population. Literature indicates these principles have a positive effect on recidivism reduction (Andrews, 2001, Andrews & Bonta, 2010, Bonta & Andrews, 2007, 2010) and allow for appropriate allocation of resources. The Risk Principle identifies **who** to target (Andrews & Bonta, 1990). The LSI-R assessment categorizes offenders by risk level (low through high) and triages them to the appropriate case management process. The Need Principle identifies **what** to target (Andrews & Bonta, 1990). Specifically, which criminogenic needs should be addressed to increase the likelihood of success for an offender. RIDOC uses LSI-R need areas to guide offenders into program services that best address their highest needs. The Responsivity Principle identifies **how** to target by creating interventions to address needs that are negatively impacting successful reintegration (Andrews & Bonta, 1990). RIDOC uses interventions that may be general (e.g. therapy) or specifically tailored to the individual (e.g. ESL) in accordance with their criminogenic need areas.

Andrews, D. A. (2001). Principles of effective correctional programs. In L. L. Motiuk & R. C. Serin (Eds.), *Compendium 2000 on effective correctional programming* (pp. 9-17). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Services of Canada. Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010a). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). New Providence, NJ: LexisNexis Matthew Bender. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and treatment (User Report No.2007-06). Ottawa, Ontario: Public Safety Canada. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2010). Viewing offender assessment and rehabilitation through the lens of the risk-need-responsivity model. In F. McNeil, P. Raynor, & C. Trotter (Eds.), *Offender supervision: New directions in theory, research and practice* (pp. 19-40). New York, NY: Willan. Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Hoge, R. D. (1990). Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering psychology. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 17, 19-52.