

Rhode Island Department of Corrections

2013 Recidivism Study Brief



Introduction

This report explores the recidivism rates for inmates released from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) during calendar year 2013 (CY13). Data is compared against previously reported recidivism data.

Definition of a Recidivist:

- An offender who was released from a sentence at RIDOC, and
- Who returned to RIDOC as a sentenced inmate, or
- Who returned to RIDOC as an awaiting trial inmate as noted.

The Release Cohort

There were 2,774 sentenced offenders released in CY13, accounting for 3,074 distinct release events. The majority of offenders were white (56%), males (89%), and averaged 34 years of age upon release. Based on the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), an empirically supported risk-need assessment used by RIDOC, inmates' average score was 24, indicating a moderate risk for men and women to re-offend.

Over three quarters of those released had served for a nonviolent¹ (44%) or violent crimes (32%).

The average sentence length imposed by RI courts was 1.5 years while the median length of stay for a released offender was 3 months. As a result of the relatively short sentences, the most common manner of release was expiration of sentence (87%). Offenders were released from all facilities, including Home Confinement. Minimum Security alone accounted for almost one third (32%) of releases.

Sentenced Readmissions

At 3-years post-release, 50% of offenders had returned to RIDOC with a new sentence. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of females and 51% of males were recommitted as sentenced offenders.

Virtually all offenders who returned were for a probation violation (51%) or a new sentence (39%). Parole violators accounted for only 10% of recidivists. The majority of parole violators returned for a technical violation (83%) while the majority of probation violators returned with new charges (83%).

In general, offenders returned for the same type of crime from which they were released. Non-violent offenders tended to come back for non-violent crimes, drug offenders returned for another drug charge, etc.

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 rates for those who returned to await trial.

Forty percent (40%) of releases returned within 1 year as awaiting trial detainees; 53% within 2 years; and 60% by the third year. These rates follow the same trends reported in past cohorts.

Of the women released in 2013, 53% returned to await trial within 36 months of release while 60% of men returned in the same time period.

The majority of awaiting trial detainees were committed as probation violators (46%) or for failure to appear in court (27%).

Two-thirds of awaiting trial recidivists (66%) were held without bail while additional 30% were held on surety bail. Surety bail allows for detainees to post 10% of the total bail to gain release.

1. Nonviolent crimes include charges such as violation of a no contact order, shoplifting, or driving violations. The remaining 24% of crimes types not listed are sexual crimes, property crimes such as breaking & enterings, and drug crimes.

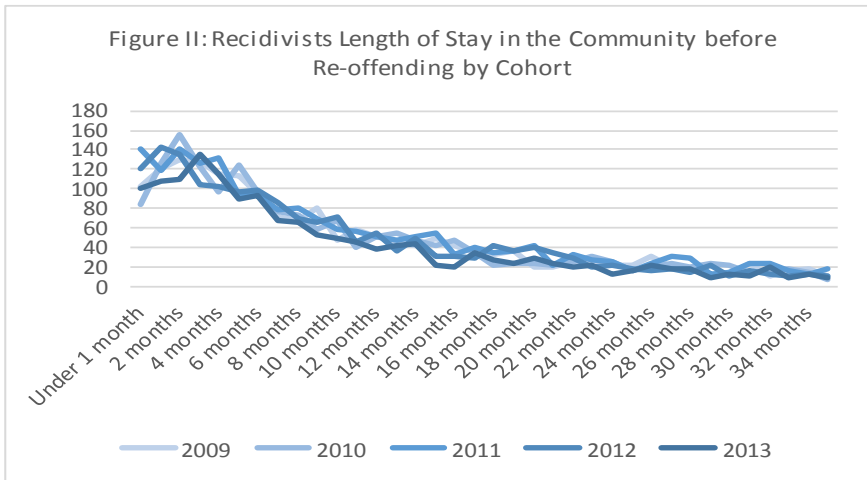
Compared to Earlier Cohorts

The number of releases and the recidivism rate has fluctuated cohort year to cohort year. The 2004 cohort had the highest return rate to-date (54%) and the 2009 cohort had the lowest return rate (48%). The current cohort (CY13) has a return rate of 50% within 36 months of release.

A significant trend to note is the difference in probation violator commitments between the cohorts. Probation violator recidivists dropped by nearly half from 2004 to 2009. Since then, a steady increase is apparent. In 2013, these types of commitments reached nearly the same level as the CY04 cohort.

Time in the Community

The average time spent in the community for the CY13 cohort was 9.8 months. Almost 7% of recidivists returned within 30 days of release. An additional 21% returned between 1 and 3 months post release. By 7 months post-release, 49% of recidivists already returned to RIDOC. Overall, length of stay in the community prior to re-offense follows the same trend throughout the years as pictured in

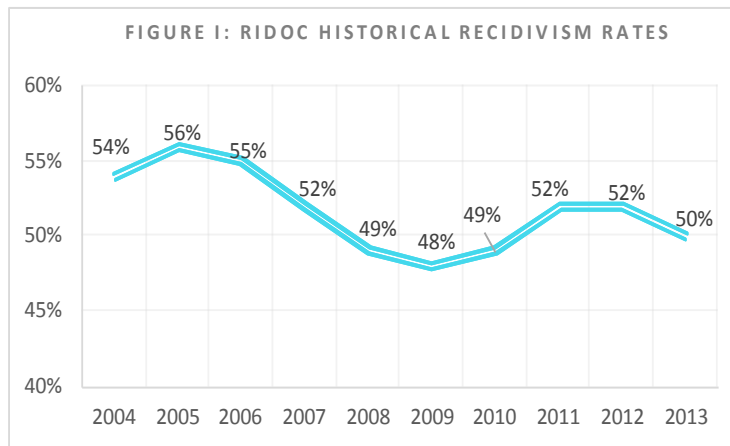


those who were newly sentenced returned in about 11 months.

Correlates of Readmission

The following variables were significantly correlated to recommitment rates: Age of release, education level, offense type, security level at release, and LSI-R score. Younger offenders and those who had not received a high school diploma were more likely to re-offend. Offenders who were released from serving a sexually based offense were less likely to re-offend than the general population.

Offenders, regardless of time served, were more likely to return if they were released from a maximum security facility versus minimum or community-based security. Security level was also correlated with time in the community. Those offenders serving in higher security facilities (i.e. High Security, Intake Service Center, and Maximum Security) stayed in the community for shorter times. For example, one third of those released from High Security recidivated within 6 months of release while only 9% of those released from Home Confinement returned in the same time period.



50%

Sentence readmissions within 36 months of release

1%

Of Recidivists were sex offenders

92%

Of recidivists were male

42%

Of recidivists returned within 6 months of release

59%

Recidivist were felons

34

Average age at release

221

Median days in the community before recidivating

51%

Of recidivists were probation violators

32%

Report being from Providence

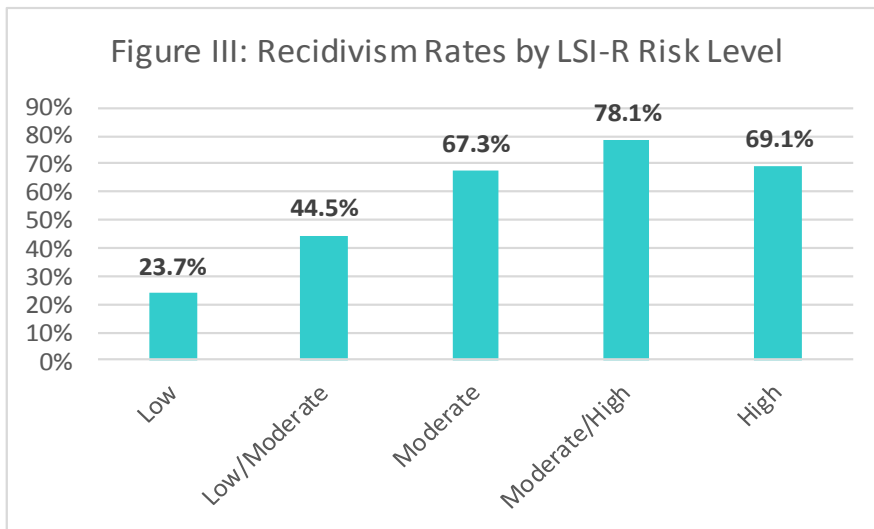
43%

Of recidivists were nonviolent offenders

The Level of Service Inventory-Revised

The LSI-R score had a strong, positive correlation to recidivism; the higher the LSI-R score and risk level, the more likely an offender is to recidivate. It is important to note risk level is not synonymous with dangerousness or indicative of how serious a crime an offender may have been committed; risk level indicates how likely a person is to re-offend.

Figure III illustrates the higher the LSI-R score the greater return rates of offenders. For example, 24% of releases with a low score indicating low risk recidivate compared to 78% with a moderate/high risk score. Not only do



higher scores and risk level imply a greater risk to re-offend, it also corresponds with less time spent in the community prior to re-incarceration. On average, the lowest risk offenders spend 80% more time more in the community than their highest risk counterparts.

In general, low and high risk offenders have an equal distribution of crime type where approximately 40% are released from serving a violent offense and a third are released from serving a nonviolent offense.

Risk level is not predictive of the readmission type for recidivists. No matter if an offender was low or high risk, they were equally likely to return as either a probation violator or a newly sentenced offender.

The LSI-R is split into 10 domains to best identify individual risk and needs: criminal history, education/employment, financial, family/marital, accommodation, leisure/recreation, companions, alcohol/drug, emotional/personal, and attitudes/orientation. Within the domains, criminal history had the strongest correlation to recidivism followed by companions, financial, and family/marital. Attitudes/orientations had a stronger relationship with awaiting trial recidivism than it did sentenced recidivism.

Risk-Need-Responsivity

Over the past four years, 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). RIDOC uses the LSI-R assessment to categorize offenders by risk level (low through high) and triage to the appropriate case management and program services.

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.

The Responsivity Principle identifies **how** to target by creating interventions to address needs that are negatively impacting successful reintegration (Andrews & Bonta, 1990). The interventions can be general (e.g. therapy) or specifically tailored to the individual (e.g. ESL).

For more information see [RIDOC's RNR report](#).

- 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.

Recidivism Reduction Programs & Initiatives

RIDOC takes pride being on the forefront of progressive corrections philosophy, new ideas, and innovative evidence-based practices. Over the past two years, RIDOC has worked closely with several agencies to launch a **Pay for Success (PFS)** program to support employment services for the population re-entering the community. PFS is new method of financing socially responsible initiatives in which the risk of funding a program is transferred from the government to outside investors. Payments are made to the investor based on the agreed upon outcomes. The department is also part of a larger working group conducting a feasibility study on a separate PFS project for permanent supportive housing.

RIDOC is in the final stages of developing an all-encompassing **case management policy**, which is a major undertaking as RIDOC strives to meet best practices. The policy outlines how an offender should be managed based his/her LSI-R score to ensure access to the most appropriate programming and services, and to increase the odds of reintegrating successfully into the community upon release. Also included in the policy are recommendations from the Government Performance Lab at Harvard Kennedy School's review of current discharge planning procedures.

Ensuring evidence-based programs are running with fidelity is of utmost importance at RIDOC. Staff have been trained on the **Correctional Program Checklist (CPC)** and the **Correctional Program Checklist-Group Assessment (CPC-GA)** to review evidence based programs and offer guidance on implementing best practices. To date, three programs have been reviewed with plans of evaluating three more in latter half of 2017.

RIDOC is moving toward offering **cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT)** in the community for moderate to high risk offenders under probation or parole supervision. CBT helps offenders discover and change thought processes that drive their criminal behavior by recognizing the pattern and consequence of their thinking.

Collaboration is tantamount to success. Currently, RIDOC is working on Justice Reinvestment initiatives with the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#). The Department also enjoys working relationships with local universities. Brown University's [Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab](#) (RIIPL) continually conducts research at RIDOC using cutting edge data mining techniques and is in the midst of pilot projects to assist in reducing recidivism. Fellows from [Government Performance Lab at Harvard Kennedy School](#) are also on site assisting with evaluations and program development where resources are scarce. Roger Williams University developed [Pivot the Hustle](#), a program to enhance skills for successful re-entry and employment upon release.



Grants

RIDOC remains vigilant in searching for grant opportunities to assist in alleviating the great need for resources to fund innovative programs. Although not all submissions are funded, RIDOC has a successful track record with grant awards. In the past decade, RIDOC has been funded for several significant initiatives. Highlights include:

In 2011, RIDOC was awarded **The Second Chance Adult Offender Reentry Program for Adults with Co-occurring Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders** providing prison-based treatment and intensive community-based services for offenders being released from incarceration and diagnosed with co-occurring disorders.

In 2012, **The Second Chance Act Recidivism Reduction Grant** gave RIDOC the opportunity to train staff in up-to-date approaches to effectively managing a corrections population as well as expand the use of the LSI-R to accurately identify medium to high risk offenders and target them with the most intensive case management and program services.

More recently, RIDOC benefits from a grant funded collaboration with a multitude of state agencies and non-profit organizations for the **Leap II Program**. The program establishes a prison-based American Job Center which provides pre-release work readiness, career counseling, employment education, and case management for a seamless reintegration post incarceration.