

# Studying Recidivism

## Introduction

The VADOC studies recidivism to gather information on the success of inmates re-entering society once released from State Responsible (SR) incarceration. SR incarceration requires a Virginia felony conviction with a sentence of one year or more or a parole violation with a sentence of two years or more. Recidivism studies can measure a variety of repeat behaviors for a range of follow-up periods. These measures are limited to known behavior that have been captured in the data. VADOC routinely studies three standard measures of recidivism—re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration—for time periods ranging from 6 to 36 months. These measures are consistent with other Virginia criminal justice agencies' standard recidivism measures.

### Re-Arrest:

Re-arrest is defined as any arrest reported in the Virginia State Police (VSP) criminal history database for a felony or misdemeanor offense, including supervision violations, within the specified time period after release. Local ordinance violations, such as non-criminal speeding, are not considered re-arrests.

### Re-Conviction:

Re-conviction is defined as a conviction resulting from a re-arrest that occurred within the specified time period. The actual conviction may occur outside the specified follow-up period.

### Re-Incarceration:

Re-incarceration is defined as any SR re-incarceration within the specified time period, including those for crimes committed prior to release and technical violations.

## State Responsible Releases

This report provides information on the recidivism of SR releases. SR releases include all Virginia felons who were sentenced to an incarceration period of one year or more and were released from an SR incarceration.

VADOC only includes SR releases who were at liberty and had the opportunity to recidivate. Those excluded from the analysis include SR releases who died in custody or were transferred to another jurisdiction upon release.

State Responsible Releases		
Release Year	Total Releases	Releases in Study
FY2014	12,109	12,021
FY2015	12,490	12,385
FY2016	12,647	12,551
FY2017	12,477	12,376
FY2018	12,601	12,500
FY2019	12,696	12,601
FY2020	12,775	12,681

Releases from Community Corrections Alternative Programs (CCAPs) are studied separately. In addition, recidivism measures for those on community supervision are included in a separate report. Recidivism rates may vary slightly from what was reported in previous versions of this report due to data maturity.

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### Public Safety First

[www.vadoc.virginia.gov/general-public/recidivism-studies/](http://www.vadoc.virginia.gov/general-public/recidivism-studies/)

Virginia Department of Corrections

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## Recidivism At a Glance

Releases from State  
Responsible  
Incarceration

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# Recidivism at a Glance

## Releases from State Responsible Incarceration

### Re-Arrest\*

The re-arrest rates for the FY2016-FY2019 release cohorts should be compared to the previous release cohorts with discretion. The change in VSP data resulted in all follow-up periods seeing a reduction in re-arrests rates. The highest rate of re-arrests at the 18 month follow-up period occurred with the FY2018 release cohort. The FY2019 release cohort has the highest re-arrest rates at the 6 and 12 month follow-up period since the FY2014 release cohort.

Months since Release	Re-Arrest				
	6	12	18	24	36
FY2014	15.2	30.0	40.2	44.3	56.3
FY2015	13.5	27.0	36.9	44.0	53.4
FY2016	13.0	26.8	37.4	44.7	53.7
FY2017	13.3	27.1	37.2	44.7	53.7
FY2018	13.0	27.4	38.1	45.1	
FY2019	13.7	28.4	37.2		

Re-arrests are reported on VSP criminal history database without delay. Therefore, this measure is immediately available. However, re-arrest is not necessarily indicative of new criminal behavior. Some re-arrests will lead to findings of not guilty or charges being dismissed.

\* Re-arrest and re-conviction information is based on July 2021 Virginia State Police (VSP) criminal history data. As of July 2021, only arrests and convictions mandated to be reported to the Central Criminal Records Exchange (CCRE) are included in the VSP data per House Bill 2113. This change resulted in minor decreases ( $\leq 0.5\%$ ) in the re-arrest and re-conviction rates for the FY2016-FY2018 release cohorts due to some misdemeanor arrests and convictions no longer being recorded in the VSP criminal history data.

### Re-Conviction\*

The re-conviction rates for the FY2016-FY2019 release cohorts should be compared to the FY2014-FY2015 release cohorts with discretion. The change in VSP data resulted in many follow-up periods seeing a reduction in re-conviction rates. Re-conviction rates reached their lowest point with the FY2017 release cohort for the 18 and 24 month follow-up period. The 6 month reconviction rate has remained around 10% between the FY2015 to FY2019 release cohorts.

Months since Release	Re-Conviction				
	6	12	18	24	36
FY2014	11.5	24.2	33.3	40.0	48.2
FY2015	10.3	21.7	30.5	37.1	46.0
FY2016	9.7	21.4	30.9	37.6	46.1
FY2017	9.8	21.4	30.3	36.7	
FY2018	9.7	21.7	30.9		
FY2019	10.1	20.9			

Re-convictions are recorded at the conclusion of court proceedings and merged into the VSP database. Because of this processing time lag, the measure is not immediately reportable. However, this measure is indicative of new criminal behavior because the charge is adjudicated in a court of law. The re-conviction rates reported in the table above only consider convictions for offenses that occurred after an inmate's release date.

### Re-Incarceration†

Re-incarceration rates have fluctuated among the past several release year cohorts. Between the FY2014 and FY2015 release cohorts, the 3-year re-incarceration rate decreased by 0.3% to 23.1%, but then increased by 0.8% to 23.9% in the FY2016 release cohort. By the FY2017 release cohort, the 3-year re-incarceration rate decreased again, by 1.6%. Other follow-up time periods have seen similar patterns in their rates as well.

Months since Release	Re-Incarceration				
	6	12	18	24	36
FY2014	1.3	5.0	10.1	15.3	23.4
FY2015	1.5	4.9	9.9	15.0	23.1
FY2016	1.3	5.0	10.1	15.6	23.9
FY2017	1.3	4.9	9.8	14.5	22.3
FY2018	1.2	4.6	9.7		
FY2019	1.2	4.4			

VADOC waits at least four years to calculate the three year re-incarceration rate of SR releases in order to allow all court information to be received and entered into VirginiaCORIS (VADOC's inmate management system). Without waiting for the data to fully mature, the FY2017 recidivism rate in July 2020 would have been 20.5%. This measure reflects criminal behavior which impacts VADOC bed space needs.

† Due to multiple court-updated New Commitment Dates in the data, re-incarceration rates for the FY2014 release cohort has been kept constant with the rates reported in the previous year.