



# Recidivism and Employment of Virginia Correctional Enterprises Participants Released from State Responsible Incarceration in FY2016 and FY2017

VADOC RESEARCH—EVALUATION UNIT

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## Introduction

A total of 1,043 state responsible (SR) inmates who participated in Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) training were released from incarceration in FY2016 and FY2017 (534 and 509, respectively). VCE provides inmates with workplace training as well as industry and vendor-specific certifications and apprenticeships to support successful reentry. This report assesses the impact of VCE participation on job attainment and recidivism after release from SR incarceration. Results are broken down by demographics, criminal history, crime type, COMPAS risk and substance abuse needs assessment results.

Demographic Characteristics, Recidivism Rates, and Employment						
	FY2016 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	534	100.0%	94	17.6%	356	66.7%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	314	58.8%	66	21.0%	207	65.9%
Female	220	41.2%	28	12.7%	149	67.7%
<b>Race</b>						
Black	261	48.9%	39	14.9%	185	70.9%
White	270	50.6%	55	20.4%	170	63.0%
Other	3	0.6%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Hispanic	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	2	33.3%
Non-Hispanic	528	98.9%	94	17.8%	354	67.0%
<b>Age Group (at release)</b>						
Under 30	90	16.9%	22	24.4%	70	77.8%
30-49	315	59.0%	55	17.5%	220	69.8%
50-59	108	20.2%	15	13.9%	61	56.5%
60-69	21	3.9%	2	9.5%	5	23.8%
<b>Age at Release (Mean)</b>	40.7					
<b>Age at Release (Median)</b>	39.0					

## VCE Participant Characteristics

VCE participants released from SR incarceration in FY2016 and FY2017 were similar in composition and had similar total sentence lengths. Among the 534 VCE participants released in FY2016, 58.8% were male and 41.2% were female. Similarly, among the 509 VCE participants released in FY2017, 64.2% were male and 35.8% were female. The racial composition of the VCE participants released in FY2016 was 48.9% Black, 50.6% White, and 0.6% Other while the racial composition of the VCE participants released in FY2017 was 48.7% Black, 50.5% White, and 0.8% Other.

Demographic Characteristics, Recidivism Rates, and Employment						
	FY2017 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	509	100.0%	73	14.3%	362	71.1%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	327	64.2%	53	16.2%	232	70.9%
Female	182	35.8%	20	11.0%	130	71.4%
<b>Race</b>						
Black	248	48.7%	33	13.3%	197	79.4%
White	257	50.5%	40	15.6%	163	63.4%
Other	4	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	50.0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Hispanic	11	2.2%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%
Non-Hispanic	498	97.8%	73	14.7%	361	72.5%
<b>Age Group (at release)</b>						
Under 30	69	13.6%	14	20.3%	57	82.6%
30-49	330	64.8%	49	14.8%	241	73.0%
50-59	83	16.3%	10	12.0%	53	63.9%
60-69	27	5.3%	0	0.0%	11	40.7%
<b>Age at Release (Mean)</b>	40.7					
<b>Age at Release (Median)</b>	39.0					

## VCE Participant Characteristics (Cont.)

For VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017, the average age at release was 41. VCE participants released in FY2016 were sentenced to a median total sentence of 5 years, 6 months (half higher and half lower) while those released in FY2017 were sentenced to a median total sentence of 6 years.

At a re-incarceration rate of 17.6% within three years of release for FY2016 releases and 14.3% for FY2017 releases, VCE program participants' recidivism rate is lower than Virginia's overall recidivism rates for FY2016 and FY2017 releases<sup>1</sup> (23.9% and 22.3%, respectively). VCE participants released in FY2017 had a lower recidivism rate than those released in FY2016 (14.3% and 17.6%, respectively). However, this difference was not statistically different.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 had lower recidivism rates than those from their respective cohorts who spent their entire incarceration term in a VADOC facility (21.0% and 20.4%, respectively).

According to Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) data,<sup>3</sup> 66.7% of the FY2016 releases and 71.1% of FY2017 releases who participated in VCE training during their incarceration term were employed during the follow-up period.<sup>4</sup> Half of the VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 who obtained employment after release did so within one quarter of release with those released in FY2016 averaging 2.4 quarters and those released in FY2017 averaging 1.3 quarters.<sup>5</sup> Among VCE participants released in FY2016, those who were employed sustained employment for approximately 55.4% of the time they were at liberty (57.1% median) and averaged 3 employers during the follow-up (2 median). Similarly, among VCE participants released in FY2017, those who were employed sustained employment for approximately 60.4% of the time they were at liberty (61.5% median) and averaged 3 employers during the follow-up (3 median).

Demographic factors such as gender and age are known predictors of recidivism. The overall recidivism rates differ between males and females released during FY2016 (24.8% and 18.0%, respectively) and FY2017 (23.2% and 16.3%, respectively). Similarly, recidivism rates differed between male and female VCE participants released during FY2016 (21.0% and 12.7%, respectively) and FY2017 (16.2% and 11.0%, respectively). Among VCE participants released in FY2016, those who were under 30 at the time of release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group (24.4%) followed by those between the ages of 30 and 49 (17.5%) whereas those between the ages of 60 and 69 at the time of release had the lowest recidivism rate (9.5%).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, for VCE participants released in FY2017, those who were under 30 at the time of release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group (20.3%) followed by those between the ages of 30 and 49 (14.8%) whereas those between the ages of 60 and 69 at the time of release had the lowest recidivism rate (0.0%).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit Recidivism Rates by Key Indicators Report, 2021,2022.

<sup>2</sup> $p < .05$  was the threshold used to determine the statistical significance of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test.

<sup>3</sup>Employment data from quarters 1 and 2 of FY2016 was not included in data provided by VEC.

<sup>4</sup>Follow up spanned three years following SR incarceration release date for non-recidivists or recidivated date for recidivists.

<sup>5</sup>Time to employment was calculated as the difference between employment quarter and year and release quarter and year.

<sup>6</sup>Fewer than 30 VCE participants were between the ages of 60 and 69 among FY2016 and FY2017 releases.

## VCE Participant Characteristics (Cont.)

There were similar rates of employment for male and female VCE participants released in FY2016 (65.9% and 67.7%, respectively) and FY2017 (70.9% and 71.4%, respectively). Black VCE participants released in both FY2016 and FY2017 obtained employment after release at a higher rate than White VCE participants (70.9% and 63.0%, and 79.4% and 63.4%, respectively). VCE participants released in both FY2016 and FY2017 who were under the age of 30 were most likely to acquire employment after release and there was a decreasing trend in employment as release age increased.

## Employment, Earnings, and Recidivism

The majority of VCE participants released in FY2016 who obtained employment after release found work in food service (25.3%), in HVAC/construction/contracting/supply companies (20.5%), through staffing or job placement agencies (18.8%), or in “other” employment areas (18.0%). Their average quarterly earnings were \$5,076.23 (median of \$3,883.39). VCE participants from the FY2016 cohort who obtained employment after release had a lower recidivism rate than those who did not (15.7% and 21.3%, respectively). However, this difference was not significant.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of VCE participants released in FY2017 who obtained employment after release found work through staffing or job placement agencies (26.0%), in food service (25.4%), in HVAC/construction/contracting/supply companies (13.0%), or in “other” employment areas (20.2%). Their average quarterly earnings were \$4,881.30 (median of \$4,381.47). VCE participants from the FY2017 cohort who obtained employment after release had a significantly lower recidivism rate than those who did not find employment (12.2% and 19.7%, respectively).<sup>7</sup>

VCE Participants who Obtained Employment after Release by Company Type		
FY2016 Releases		
	VCE Participants	
	Total	Percent
<b>Employment Rate</b>	356	66.7%
<b>Company Type*</b>		
Food Service	90	25.3%
HVAC/Construction/Contracting/Supply	73	20.5%
Staffing/Job Placement Agency	67	18.8%
Cleaning/Hotels	28	7.9%
Stores/Markets	22	6.2%
Distribution/Transportation/Moving/Storage	12	3.4%
Other	64	18.0%
FY2017 Releases		
	VCE Participants	
	Total	Percent
<b>Employment Rate</b>	362	71.1%
<b>Company Type*</b>		
Staffing/Job Placement Agency	94	26.0%
Food Service	92	25.4%
HVAC/Construction/Contracting/Supply	47	13.0%
Stores/Markets	25	6.9%
Cleaning/Hotels	16	4.4%
Distribution/Transportation/Moving/Storage	15	4.1%
Other	73	20.2%

\*VEC records of the first job the VCE participant earned wages from upon release from SR incarceration were used to classify company type.

<sup>7</sup> $p < .05$  was the threshold used to determine the statistical significance of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test.

## Crime Type

Crime type represents the most serious offense from the release term of incarceration. Among FY2016 releases who participated in VCE training, those whose crime type was drugs had a higher recidivism rate (20.7%) than those with property/public order (19.4%) or violent (14.4%) crime types. Compared to the overall recidivism rates for the FY2016 cohort by crime type, VCE participants' recidivism rates were lower in every category. VCE participants whose crime type was

Recidivism Rates and Employment by Crime Type and Prior SR Incarceration Terms						
	FY2016 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	534	100.0%	94	17.6%	356	66.7%
<b>Crime Type of Most Serious Offense</b>						
Violent	215	40.3%	31	14.4%	137	63.7%
Property/Public Order	227	42.5%	44	19.4%	164	72.2%
Drugs	92	17.2%	19	20.7%	55	59.8%
<b>Prior SR Incarceration Terms</b>						
No prior terms	301	56.4%	41	13.6%	200	66.4%
Exactly 1 previous term	134	25.1%	19	14.2%	97	72.4%
Exactly 2 previous terms	56	10.5%	19	33.9%	32	57.1%
3 or more previous terms	43	8.1%	15	34.9%	27	62.8%

Recidivism Rates and Employment by Crime Type and Prior SR Incarceration Terms						
	FY2017 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	509	100.0%	73	14.3%	362	71.1%
<b>Crime Type of Most Serious Offense</b>						
Violent	212	41.7%	20	9.4%	145	68.4%
Property/Public Order	203	39.9%	39	19.2%	148	72.9%
Drugs	94	18.5%	14	14.9%	69	73.4%
<b>Prior SR Incarceration Terms</b>						
No prior terms	304	59.7%	27	8.9%	212	69.7%
Exactly 1 previous term	117	23.0%	22	18.8%	86	73.5%
Exactly 2 previous terms	48	9.4%	13	27.1%	37	77.1%
3 or more previous terms	40	7.9%	11	27.5%	27	67.5%

property/public order were most likely to obtain employment after release (72.2%) followed by those with violent (63.7%) and drug crime types (59.8%).

Among VCE participants released in FY2017, those whose crime type was property/public order had a higher recidivism rate (19.2%) than those with drug (14.9%) or violent (9.4%) crime types. Compared to the overall recidivism rates for the FY2017 cohort by crime type, VCE participants' recidivism rates were lower in every category. VCE participants whose crime type was drugs were most likely to obtain employment after release (73.4%) followed closely by those with property/public order (72.9%) and violent crime types (68.4%).

## Incarceration History

VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 with a greater number of prior SR incarceration terms had a higher risk of recidivism. There were similar rates of employment between VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 with fewer than two prior terms of SR incarceration. VCE participants released in FY2016 with two prior SR terms of

## Incarceration History (Cont.)

incarceration had the lowest employment rate between the cohorts whereas VCE participants released in FY2017 with two prior terms of SR incarceration had the highest employment rate between the cohorts.

## COMPAS Risk and Substance Abuse Needs Assessment

The COMPAS risk and needs assessment tool is used by the VADOC to determine the risk of general and violent recidivism as well as substance

abuse needs. VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 with higher risk of general and violent recidivism had higher recidivism and employment rates, in general.

Among VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017, those who scored “Highly Probable” on the substance abuse needs scale had

the highest rates of recidivism (19.5% and 19.3%, respectively) compared to those who scored “Probable” (18.0% and 10.2%, respectively) or “Unlikely” (11.7% and 8.7%, respectively). Among VCE participants released in FY2016, those who scored “Highly Probable” or “Probable” were more likely to

obtain employment after release than those who scored “Unlikely” (68.8%, 66.2%, and 61.2%, respectively) whereas among VCE participants released in FY2017, the employment rates were similar for those who scored “Unlikely,” “Probable,” and “Highly Probable” (71.7%, 72.7%, and 70.1%, respectively).

Recidivism Rates and Employment by COMPAS Scores						
	FY2016 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	534	100.0%	94	17.6%	356	66.7%
<b>COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism</b>						
Low	244	45.7%	24	9.8%	155	63.5%
Medium	158	29.6%	32	20.3%	109	69.0%
High	132	24.7%	38	28.8%	92	69.7%
<b>COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism</b>						
Low	294	55.1%	32	10.9%	178	60.5%
Medium	153	28.7%	31	20.3%	118	77.1%
High	87	16.3%	31	35.6%	60	69.0%
<b>COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score</b>						
Unlikely	103	19.3%	12	11.7%	63	61.2%
Probable	133	24.9%	24	18.0%	88	66.2%
Highly Probable	298	55.8%	58	19.5%	205	68.8%

Recidivism Rates and Employment by COMPAS Scores						
	FY2017 Releases					
	VCE Participants		Recidivists		Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	509	100.0%	73	14.3%	362	71.1%
<b>COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism</b>						
Low	225	44.2%	17	7.6%	152	67.6%
Medium	144	28.3%	27	18.8%	107	74.3%
High	140	27.5%	29	20.7%	103	73.6%
<b>COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism</b>						
Low	274	53.8%	25	9.1%	178	65.0%
Medium	153	30.1%	30	19.6%	119	77.8%
High	82	16.1%	18	22.0%	65	79.3%
<b>COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score</b>						
Unlikely	127	25.0%	11	8.7%	91	71.7%
Probable	128	25.1%	13	10.2%	93	72.7%
Highly Probable	254	49.9%	49	19.3%	178	70.1%

## Conclusions

VCE participants released in FY2016 and FY2017 achieved similar recidivism and employment rates. VCE participants had lower recidivism rates than Virginia's overall recidivism rate and high rates of job attainment. These preliminary findings offer additional evidence that VCE participation may support successful reentry by promoting employment and reducing the risk of recidivism.

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