



Recidivism and Employment of Agribusiness Workers: FY2019 Releases

RESEARCH - EVALUATION UNIT

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Introduction

VADOC’s Agribusiness program provides inmates with various training opportunities, while also providing food to the inmate population to help reduce the Department’s food costs. Inmates participating in the program can work in food production, saw mill operations, row crop operations, swine operations, or on the beef and dairy cattle farm. This report assesses the impact of Agribusiness employment on job attainment and recidivism after release from SR incarceration. In FY2019, 177 state responsible (SR) inmates were released who held Agribusiness jobs during their release term of incarceration.¹ FY2019 was chosen as the year to analyze because it is the most recent year for which a three-year follow-up is available with mature data.

Agribusiness Worker Characteristics

Of the 177 Agribusiness workers released in FY2019, the vast majority were male (81%). The racial composition of the workers was 62% White and 38% Black. The average age at release was 40.7 years old and the largest percentage of releases were between the ages of 30 and 39 years old at release (39%).

Demographic factors such as gender and age are known predictors of recidivism. Males had a higher recidivism rate than females (16.0% and 3.0%, respectively). Inmates who were White had a higher recidivism rate (14.7%) than inmates who were Black (11.8%). Inmates who were under the age of 30 at release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group at 29.4%. Inmates who were 50 years or older when released had the lowest recidivism rates of any age group (8.1%).

At 13.6%, Agribusiness workers had a lower recidivism rate compared to all FY2019 SR releases (19.0%).² When compared to the recidivism rates for all inmates released from VADOC facilities in FY2019, the Agribusiness participant recidivism rate was lower than those who did not participate (13.6% and 16.6%, respectively); however, this difference was not significant.

Employment After Release

For this study, participants were counted as employed only if their wages were reportable to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). Unreported wages could have been employed in another state or with an employer not subject to the unemployment compensation laws.³ According to VEC data, 71% of Agribusiness workers released in FY2019 were employed during the three-year follow-up period.⁴ Agribusiness workers had a higher employment rate than the overall FY2019 SR release cohort (62%). The recidivism rate of those who were employed after release was lower

	Agribusiness*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	177	100%	24	13.6%	125	71%
Gender						
Male	144	81%	23	16.0%	102	71%
Female	33	19%	1	3.0%	23	70%
Race						
White	109	62%	16	14.7%	70	64%
Black	68	38%	8	11.8%	55	81%
Age at Release						
Under 30	17	10%	5	29.4%	17	100%
30-39	70	39%	7	10.0%	50	71%
40-49	53	30%	9	17.0%	37	70%
50+	37	21%	3	8.1%	21	57%
Age at Release (Mean)	40.7					
Age at Release (Median)	40.0					

*Percentages in the Agribusiness column will total 100% as they are calculated out of the total number of Agribusiness workers.
 **Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

¹ Due to the small sample size, results should be interpreted with caution.

² VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit (2024): FY2019 State Responsible Releases.

³ Only Virginia employers who are subject to tax provisions of the unemployment compensation laws are included in the data; freelance/under the table employment and employment records from outside of Virginia are not included; <https://www.vec.virginia.gov/employers/>.

⁴ The follow-up period was from the quarter/year the inmate was released through 12 additional quarters or through the quarter/year the inmate recidivated. The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted employment during the FY2019 follow-up periods due to shut-downs and restrictions.

than those who did not find employment after release (12.8% and 15.4%, respectively); however, this difference was not statistically significant. Of the 125 Agribusiness workers who were employed following release, the average wages earned per quarter was \$6,620.79 (median of \$5,682.25).

On average, it took these inmates just under one quarter (0.8) to find employment. Those who were employed sustained employment for approximately 59% of the time they were at liberty (median of 62%) and averaged three different employers during the follow-up period (median of 2).

Inmates who found employment and were employed less than 47% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the highest recidivism rate of 20.4%, which is slightly lower than the re-incarceration rate of the same population in the overall FY2019 cohort (20.7%). For those who found employment, recidivism rates decreased as the percentage of time employed increased. Those who were employed for greater than 77% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the lowest recidivism rate (2.5%), which is almost two percentage points lower than the same population in the FY2019 cohort (4.8%). Overall, Agribusiness participants had lower recidivism rates than the overall FY2019 cohort.

Both male inmates and female inmates obtained employment after release at almost equal rates (71% and 70%, respectively). A larger percentage of Black inmates were able to find employment after release than White inmates (81% and 64%, respectively). All inmates under the age of 30 years old at release found employment (100%). As the age at release increased, the percentage of inmates who found employment post release decreased.

Of those who found employment after release, the largest percentage of Agribusiness workers first employment after release was in Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry (30%), followed by the Manufacturing industry (20%).

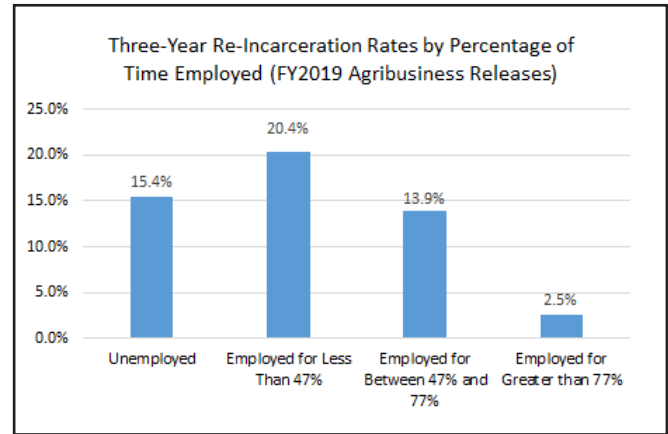
Crime Type

Crime type represents the most serious offense from the FY2019 release term of incarceration. Inmates whose crime type was property/public order had a higher recidivism rate (15.7%) than inmates with drug-related (12.3%) or violent (10.3%) crime types. Inmates whose most serious offense was drug-related had the highest rates of employment (75%) followed by those whose most serious offense was violent (69%) or property/public order (68%).

Employment Statistics: FY2019 Agribusiness Releases		
	Mean	Median
Quarterly Wages	\$6,620.79	\$5,682.25
Time to Employment*	0.8 Quarters	0.0 Quarters
Percent Employed**	59%	62%
Number of Employers	3	2

*Time to employment was calculated as the difference between employment quarter/year and release quarter/year.

**Percent of eligible quarters an individual was employed while at liberty.



FY2019 Agribusiness Releases Employed After Release: Industry Type		
Industry Type*	Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent
Employment Rate	125	71%
Industry Type*		
Construction	13	10%
Manufacturing	25	20%
Wholesale Trade	9	7%
Retail Trade	8	6%
Transportation and Warehousing	3	2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	37	30%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3	2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2	2%
Accommodation and Food Services	18	14%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	4	3%
Public Administration	1	1%
No Industry Code	1	1%

*VEC records of the first job the Agribusiness worker earned wages from upon release from SR incarceration were used to classify industry type. Industry type categories were created based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

SR Incarceration History

Inmates who had three or more prior SR incarcerations had the highest recidivism rate (36.8%), while those with two previous SR incarcerations had the lowest recidivism rate (7.7%). Except for those with no prior SR incarceration, as the number of previous SR incarcerations increased, the percentage of Agribusiness workers that were able to find employment after release decreased. However, the rates should be interpreted with caution due to the small population size.

	Agribusiness*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	177	100%	24	13.6%	125	71%
Crime Type						
Violent	29	16%	3	10.3%	20	69%
Property/Public Order	83	47%	13	15.7%	56	68%
Drug	65	37%	8	12.3%	49	75%
Previous SR Incarcerations						
No previous SR terms	83	47%	10	12.0%	61	74%
1 previous SR term	49	27%	5	10.2%	37	76%
2 previous SR terms	26	15%	2	7.7%	17	65%
3 or more previous SR terms	19	11%	7	36.8%	10	53%

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 **Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment

The COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment tool is used by the VADOC to determine the risks of general and violent recidivism as well as criminogenic needs. In terms of risk of general recidivism, those who scored 'Medium' had the highest recidivism rates (14.9%). Those who scored 'High' had the highest percentage employed post-release (73%). Comparatively, those who scored 'Medium' on the risk of violent recidivism scale had the highest recidivism rates (18.8%) among the three categories. The highest percentage of employment among the risk of violent recidivism categories was among those who scored 'Low' (72%). This is likely attributed to the low number of inmates with a 'High' score on the risk of general and violent recidivism scale who held agribusiness jobs. Inmates who scored 'Highly Probable' on the COMPAS substance abuse needs scale had the highest recidivism rate at 16.8% compared to those who scored 'Unlikely' (7.4%) or 'Probable' (10.2%).

	Agribusiness**		Recidivists***		Employed After Release***	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	177	100%	24	13.6%	125	71%
COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism						
Low	50	28%	6	12.0%	34	68%
Medium	87	49%	13	14.9%	62	71%
High	40	23%	5	12.5%	29	73%
COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism						
Low	95	54%	9	9.5%	68	72%
Medium	69	39%	13	18.8%	48	70%
High	13	7%	2	15.4%	9	69%
COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score						
Unlikely	27	15%	2	7.4%	18	67%
Probable	49	28%	5	10.2%	35	71%
Highly Probable	101	57%	17	16.8%	72	71%

*The last COMPAS assessment during the release term of incarceration was used.
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 ***Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

Conclusions

This report examined the recidivism and job attainment rates of Agribusiness workers who were released from SR incarceration in FY2019. Agribusiness workers achieved a lower recidivism rate and a higher post-release employment rate than Virginia's overall release cohort, though the difference in recidivism was not significant due to the small number of Agribusiness workers. These preliminary findings suggest Agribusiness participation may support successful re-entry by promoting both job attainment and employment stability.

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