

VADOC Recidivism



FY2021 State Responsible Releases

2026

Research - Evaluation Unit

Table of Contents

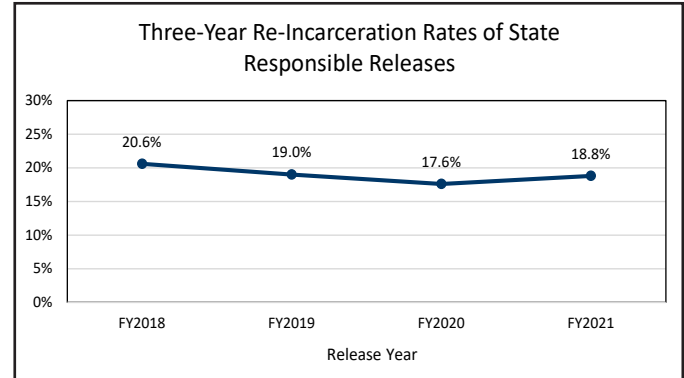
Trends in Recidivism Rates and Technical Violations	1-2
Recidivism Rate Trends	1
Impact of COVID-19 on Recidivism	1
Technical Violations among Recidivists	1-2
Predictors of Recidivism	2-4
Known Predictors	2
Time to Recidivate and Recidivism Rates	2-3
Current Analyses	3-4
State Responsible (SR) Incarceration Location and Recidivism	4-5
Mental Health and Recidivism	5-6
History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use and Recidivism	6
Known Gang Affiliation and Recidivism	6
Post-Release Employment and Recidivism	7
Combined Impact of Predictors	7-11
SR Location and Mental Health	7-8
SR Location and History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use	8
Mental Health and History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use	8
SR Location and Known Gang Affiliation	8-9
SR Location and Post-Release Employment	9
Mental Health, SR Location, and History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use	10
Substance Use, Known Gang Affiliation, Mental Health, and SR Location	10-11
Summary and Conclusion	11-12
Appendix	13

Trends in Recidivism Rates and Technical Violations

Recidivism Rate Trends

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) studies and tracks recidivism to obtain information on the success of inmates re-entering society once released from state responsible (SR) incarceration. Virginia’s recidivism rate is the lowest among the 32 states that report the re-incarceration rate of inmates with an SR sentence within three years of their release.¹ The three-year SR re-incarceration rate among the FY2021 cohort was 18.8%.

The process used by VADOC to calculate the three-year re-incarceration rate of SR releases includes waiting at least four years to allow all court information to be received and entered into VirginiaCORIS.² Without waiting for the data to fully mature, the FY2021 cohort recidivism rate in July 2024 would have been 18.5%.³



Impact of COVID-19 on Recidivism

In previous release cohorts, an estimate of how court closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected recidivism rates was able to be calculated. However, because the most of the follow-up period for the FY2021 cohort was affected by the pandemic, unlike previous cohorts, an estimate of what the recidivism rate of the FY2021 release cohort may have been if it were not impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic is not possible.

Although, compared to previous cohorts, FY2021 releases spent longer in the community before recidivating (mean=630 days, median=652 days); however, this may be due to a delay in court proceedings because of the pandemic.

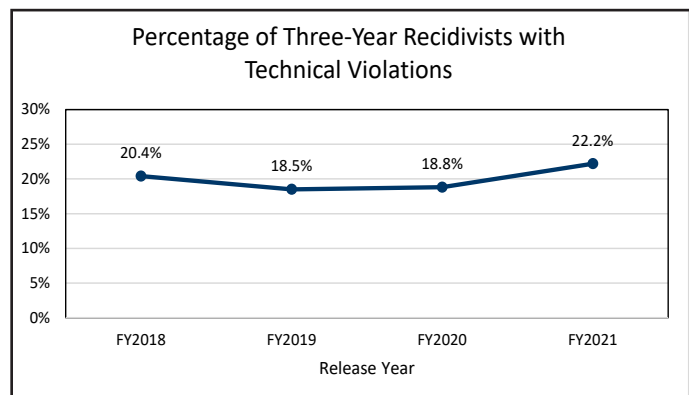
Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,722 inmates were released early in FY2021.⁴ These releases were screened prior to release and have been reported on separately. Due to the screening process, these releases have a lower recidivism rate than the overall FY2021 release cohort (13.6%).

	SR Releases	Total Recidivists	Rate	Time to Recidivate	
				Mean	Median
FY2014*	12,021	2,868	23.9%	607	607
FY2015	12,385	2,862	23.1%	606	604
FY2016	12,551	2,997	23.9%	607	609
FY2017	12,376	2,754	22.3%	600	597
FY2018	12,499	2,576	20.6%	580	569
FY2019	12,597	2,399	19.0%	609	616
FY2020	12,680	2,232	17.6%	628	644
FY2021	11,443	2,153	18.8%	630	652

*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.

Technical Violations among Recidivists

Technical violations are any violation of probation for reasons other than a new criminal conviction. The percentage of inmates returning for technical violations



1 VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit (October 2025), State Recidivism Comparison Report.

2 VirginiaCORIS is the computer-based Virginia Department of Corrections’ inmate management system.

3 Due to COVID-19, the four-year waiting period did not have as significant of an impact on the FY2021 cohort as it previously has.

4 These releases were a result of the COVID Early Release Authorization that allowed for inmates within one year of release to be released early.

in the FY2021 cohort was 22.2%, a relatively large increase (3.4 percentage points) compared to the FY2020 cohort. Without technical violations, the recidivism rate for FY2021 cohort would have been 14.6%. This is less than one percentage point (0.3) higher than the FY2020 recidivism rate excluding technical violations.

Predictors of Recidivism

Known Predictors

The VADOC examines inmate characteristics and other factors associated with recidivism in order to understand, identify, and address their criminogenic needs, with the ultimate goal of reducing recidivism and thereby increasing public safety. VADOC research findings have shown a link between certain factors and recidivism, as well as time to recidivism, establishing their importance in predicting recidivism among inmates released from an SR incarceration in Virginia.

These predictive factors include the following:

- 1) Gender: Male inmates are more likely to recidivate and spend less time in the community, on average, prior to recidivating than females.
- 2) Age: Younger inmates are more likely to recidivate than older inmates.
- 3) Previous SR Incarcerations: Inmates with a greater number of previous SR incarcerations are more likely to recidivate and those with no previous SR incarceration terms spend the most time, on average, in the community prior to recidivating.
- 4) Crime Type of Most Serious Offense: Inmates who commit a property/public order crime as their most serious offense are more likely to recidivate than those who commit violent crimes or drug-related offenses.

Time to Recidivate and Recidivism Rates

Just as recidivism rates vary among released inmates with different offense types and risk characteristics, the time to recidivate also varies. Time to SR re-incarceration is defined as the number of days between a recidivist's release date and receiving a sentence that results in a new SR incarceration. The table ([see Appendix](#)) is divided into four quartiles and displays the average time to recidivate. The re-arrest and re-incarceration rates of inmates with different offense types and risk characteristics are also included in the table.

Of the 9,879 male inmates released from an SR incarceration in FY2021, 19.4% had a new SR incarceration within three years of their release date. Of the 1,920 male inmates who were re-incarcerated within three years, 25% had a new SR incarceration within 435 days, one-half had a new SR incarceration within 650 days, and 75% had a new SR incarceration within 852 days. On average, males who recidivated started a new term of SR incarceration within 633 days of release. Slightly more than one-half of all male releases (51.2%) were re-arrested within three-years of release. Females were less likely to recidivate than males (14.9% and 19.4%, respectively) and returned with a new SR incarceration earlier than males. On average, female recidivists had a new SR incarceration within 606 days of release compared to 633 days for male recidivists.

As the age of released inmates increased, the re-arrest and re-incarceration rates declined. Those under the age of 30 at the time of release had the highest re-arrest rate (60.4%) and re-incarceration rate (23.4%). Inmates under the age of 30 spent less time in the community before recidivating than those aged 30 to 49. Inmates

aged 30 to 39 who recidivated spent the longest amount of time in the community with an average of 640 days.

Overall, those who had more previous SR incarcerations tended to have higher re-arrest rates and re-incarceration rates. Of inmates with five or more previous terms of incarceration, less than two-thirds (61.7%) were re-arrested and more than one-quarter (27.2%) were re-incarcerated within three-years of release compared to inmates with no previous terms of incarceration (43.7% and 13.8%, respectively). Of those with a prior SR incarceration term, inmates with four previous SR incarcerations tended to spend more time in the community before returning to VADOC, with an average of 652 days. Inmates with three previous terms of incarceration averaged the least amount of time overall and spent 57 days less, on average, in the community before returning to VADOC when compared to inmates with four previous terms of incarceration (595 days and 652 days, respectively). Inmates with no previous terms of incarceration spent 641 days, on average, in the community before returning to VADOC.

Recidivism Rates and Time to Recidivate for FY2021 SR Releases by Characteristics										
	Total Releases	Total Recidivists	Percentiles				Average	Percent Re-Arrested ²	Percent Re-Incarcerated	
			25th	50th ¹	75th	100th				
All Releases	11,443	2,153	430	652	852	1,095	630	50.5%	18.8%	
Gender										
Male	9,879	1,920	435	650	852	1,094	633	51.2%	19.4%	
Female	1,564	233	390	665	851	1,095	606	46.7%	14.9%	
Age at Release										
Under 30	2,616	611	447	654	844	1,095	631	60.4%	23.4%	
30-39	4,036	831	444	617	860	1,094	640	54.7%	20.6%	
40-49	2,616	433	399	637	843	1,093	615	46.5%	16.6%	
50-59	1,560	221	394	637	844	1,093	624	40.3%	14.2%	
60+	615	57	302	604	904	1,070	610	24.9%	9.3%	
Previous SR Incarcerations										
No previous SR terms	5,754	795	458	666	854	1,095	641	43.7%	13.8%	
1 previous SR term	2,740	611	428	638	849	1,093	642	54.2%	22.3%	
2 previous SR terms	1,380	328	410	655	855	1,094	631	59.3%	23.8%	
3 previous SR terms	755	185	378	611	830	1,092	595	60.4%	24.5%	
4 previous SR terms	425	128	402	649	910	1,078	652	63.8%	30.1%	
5 or more previous SR terms	389	106	382	616	844	1,093	615	61.7%	27.2%	
Crime Type										
Violent	4,439	733	434	653	849	1,094	632	46.7%	16.5%	
Property/Public Order	4,149	928	426	661	849	1,094	630	56.0%	22.4%	
Drug	2,855	492	431	636	858	1,095	627	48.5%	17.2%	

¹50th percentile = Median.
²Arrest records come from the Virginia State Police (VSP) and are matched to data in VirginiaCORIS based on key identifiers. As of July 2021, only arrests mandated to be reported to the Central Criminal Records Exchange (CCRE) are included in the VSP data, per 2021's House Bill 2113. Re-arrest information is based on July 2025 Virginia State Police criminal history data.
 Note: As of Data Copy Date 08/29/25.

Inmates whose most serious offense (MSO) during their release term of incarceration was a property/public order crime had the highest re-arrest rates (56.0%) compared to those whose MSO was a violent or drug-related crime (46.7% and 48.5%, respectively). Inmates with a property/public order crime were also more likely to recidivate (22.4%) than inmates with a violent or drug-related crime (16.5% and 17.2%, respectively). Inmates with a violent crime MSO spent 632 days, on average, in the community prior to recidivating, which is the longest average time spent in community before returning of the three MSO categories. Those with a drug-related crime spent the least amount of time in the community prior to recidivating (627 days).

Current Analyses

In addition to the known predictors of recidivism previously discussed, VADOC has found other predictors that will be highlighted in this report. In particular, this report highlights the links between SR incarceration location, mental health impairment, drug use, gang affiliation, employment, and recidivism. Regression analysis shows that

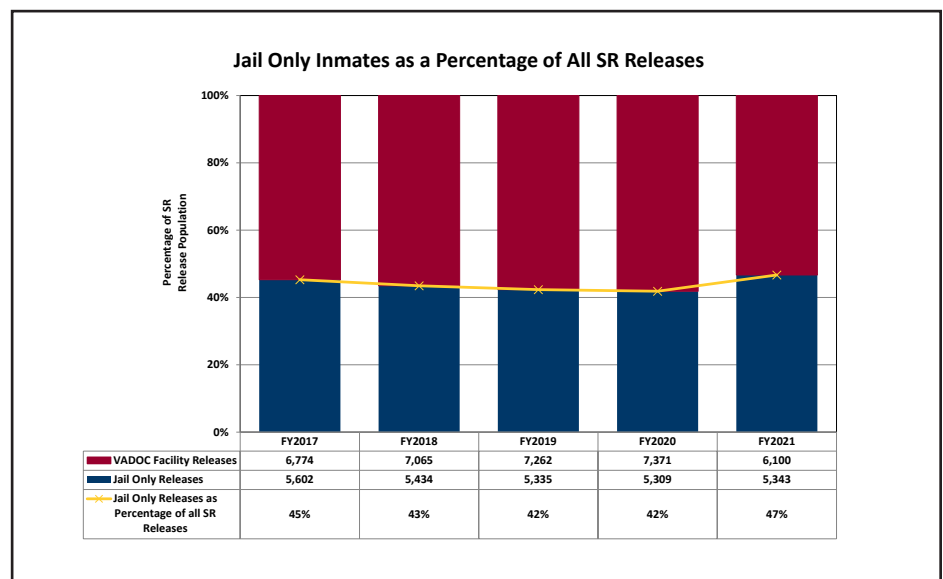
when all other factors are kept constant, certain factors are statistically significant predictors of recidivism.⁵

The relationships between the following factors, alongside other known predictors of recidivism, will be explored in this report:

- 1) SR Incarceration Location: Inmates who served their entire SR term of incarceration in a local/regional jail were more likely to recidivate than those who served some or all of their SR incarceration term in a VADOC facility.
- 2) Evidence of a Mental Health Impairment: Inmates with a known mental health impairment were more likely to recidivate than those with no known mental health impairment.
- 3) History of Positive Drug Tests for Opioids and/or Cocaine:⁶ Inmates with a history of positive drug tests for opioids and cocaine were more likely to recidivate than inmates with a history of positive drug tests for either opioids or cocaine or inmates without any history of positive drug tests for opioids or cocaine.
- 4) Known Gang Affiliation:⁷ Inmates with a known gang affiliation at the time of release were more likely to recidivate than those with no known gang affiliation.
- 5) Post-Release Employment:⁸ Inmates who did not have reportable wages (i.e. unemployed) during the three-year follow-up period were more likely to recidivate than those with reportable wages. Additionally, those who were able to sustain employment for almost one-half (47%) of their time at liberty had a drastically lower recidivism rate.⁹

SR Incarceration Location and Recidivism

Due to capacity limitations in VADOC facilities, some SR inmates served their entire term of SR incarceration in a local or regional jail (Jail Only). The number of Jail Only SR releases has been declining since FY2016, but increased slightly in FY2021. The percentage of Jail Only SR inmates increased by five percentage points between the FY2020 and FY2021 cohorts (42% and 47%, respectively). The decrease in SR releases who spent at least a portion of their SR incarceration in a VADOC facility may, in part, help explain the overall higher



⁵ Determined using a logistical regression model controlling for gender, mental health impairment, number of previous SR incarcerations, age at release, testing positive for opioids and/or cocaine, SR incarceration location, crime type of MSO, and percentage of time employed post release. The factors identified as predictors were all significant at $p < .01$.

⁶ History of multiple drug tests was evaluated in the FY2016-FY2020 cohorts. History of drug tests was examined before or within three years of an inmate's release (end of three-year follow-up for non-recidivists and recidivated date for recidivists).

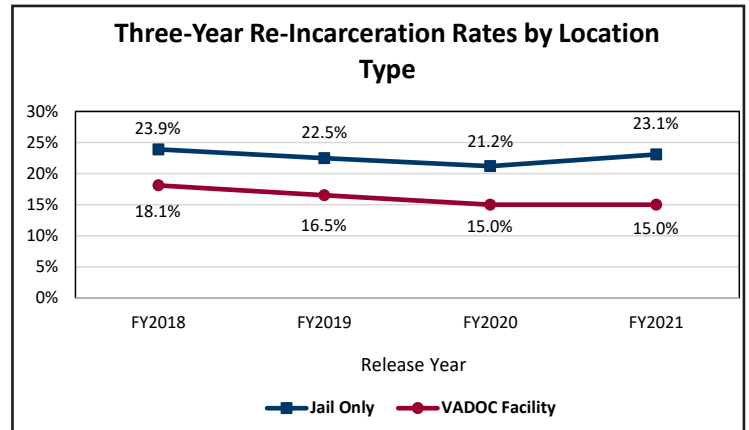
⁷ Known gang affiliation was not significant when taken into consideration with the other factors in the logistical regression model, but was found to be a significant predictor of recidivism on its own.

⁸ Employment information was obtained from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). VEC data contains only data from Virginia employers subject to unemployment compensation laws. Employment where wages were earned under the table, through freelance work, from another state, or in Washington D.C. are not included in this data. Employment was defined as any wages earned during the follow-up period.

⁹ The time that an inmate was employed is defined as the percentage of quarters that an inmate was employed during the follow-up period while at liberty. 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.

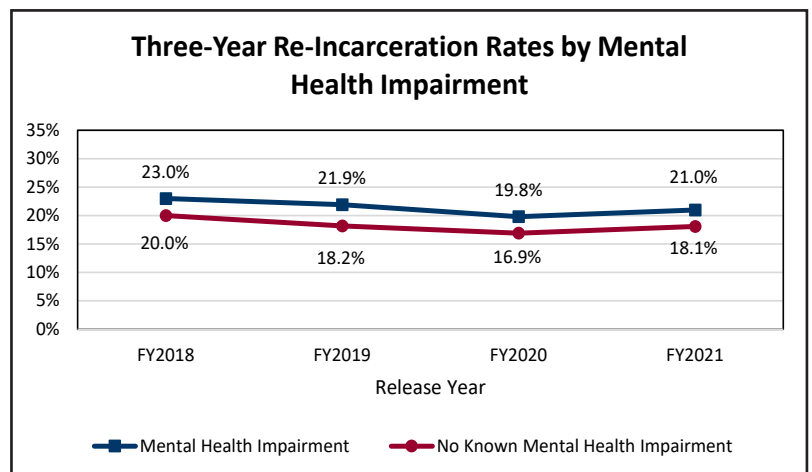
recidivism rate for the FY2021 cohort compared to previous cohorts.

The three-year re-arrest and re-incarceration rates of Jail Only SR inmates are consistently higher than that of inmates who spent at least part of their SR incarceration term in a VADOC facility. FY2021 releases who were Jail Only prior to release had a re-arrest rate of [56.1%](#) compared to [45.7%](#) of those who were located in a VADOC facility. Among FY2021 releases who served at least part of their SR term of incarceration in a VADOC facility, 15.0% recidivated within three years. Jail Only inmates saw an increase of almost two percentage points (1.9) in recidivism rates between the FY2020 and FY2021 cohorts (21.2% and 23.1%, respectively). Inmates who spent at least a portion of their SR term in a VADOC facility spent over three months longer ([96 days](#)), on average, in the community prior to recidivating than those who spent their entire SR term in a jail ([685 days and 589 days](#), respectively). Access to evidence-based programs (EBPs), educational programs, substance use treatment, and mental health treatment in VADOC facilities helps returning citizens successfully re-enter society.



Mental Health and Recidivism

Inmates with a known mental health impairment are designated with a mental health code in VirginiaCORIS indicating the severity of mental health impairment or a diagnosis of a serious mental illness. The recidivism rate of inmates with a known mental health impairment is higher than that of inmates with no known mental health impairment (21.0% and 18.1%, respectively). Individuals with a known mental health impairment had higher re-arrest rates ([54.2%](#)) compared to those with no known mental health impairment ([49.4%](#)). The average length of time to re-incarceration of inmates with a known mental health impairment was slightly lower compared to inmates with no mental health impairment ([616 and 635 days](#), respectively).



Compared to the FY2020 cohort, the recidivism rate of those with a known mental health impairment increased by one percentage point (1.2) to 21.0% and those without a known mental health impairment increased by one

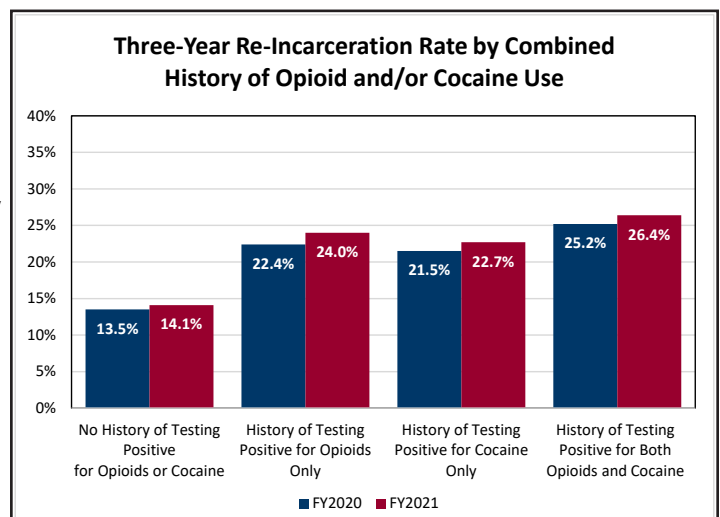
percentage point (1.2) to 18.1% in the FY2021 cohort. Recognizing the increased risk of recidivism among those with a known mental health impairment, in 2016, the Virginia General Assembly approved funding for 20 full-time mental health positions to help support VADOC's 43 Probation and Parole (P&P) Districts. The primary objective for the new staff was to facilitate continuity of care and increase the likelihood of successful re-entry for supervisees with a known mental health impairment. The additional mental health staff are also able to

collaborate with VADOC prisons, local jails, and regional jails to assist with re-entry planning. The additional support may have contributed to the convergence in recidivism rates observed in the FY2018, FY2019, FY2020, and FY2021 cohorts among those with a known mental health impairment and those without. The support may also have contributed to the decrease in recidivism rates of those with a mental health impairment in the FY2021 cohort compared to the FY2018 cohort (21.0% and 23.1%, respectively).

History of Opioids and/or Cocaine Use and Recidivism

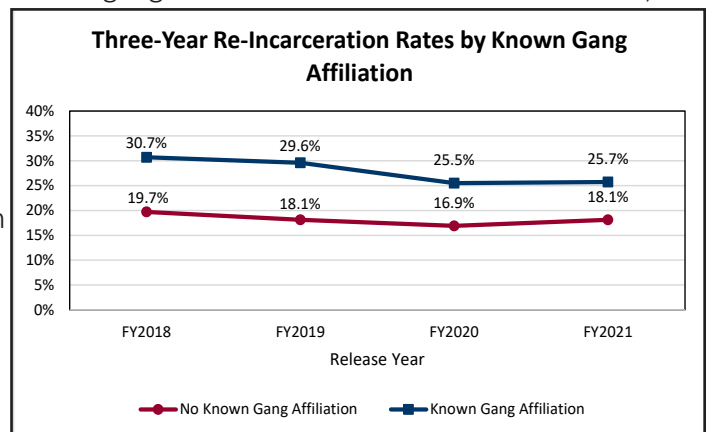
The effect of testing positive for opioids and/or cocaine on recidivism was explored for the FY2017 through FY2021 cohorts. Similar patterns were observed in all cohorts. Inmates with a history of testing positive for both opioids and cocaine before or within three-years of release had the highest recidivism rate.

FY2021 releases who had a history of testing positive for both opioids and cocaine had a three-year re-arrest rate of [69.0%](#) and a three-year recidivism rate of 26.4%. Releases who did not have a history of opioid and/or cocaine use had a much lower re-arrest rate ([39.3%](#)) and re-incarceration rate (14.1%). Inmates with a history of testing positive for only opioids and not cocaine had the second highest re-incarceration rate of 24.0%. The recidivism rates for all drug use categories were higher for the FY2021 cohort than the FY2020 cohort. Inmates who tested positive for both opioids and cocaine spent the most amount of time in the community prior to returning to VADOC, on average, [665 days](#) (median of [696 days](#)).



Known Gang Affiliation and Recidivism

Inmates with a known gang affiliation¹⁰ tended to have a higher recidivism rate than those with no known gang affiliation. The percentage of FY2021 releases with a known gang affiliation who recidivated was 25.7%, an increase of less than one percentage point (0.2) compared to the FY2020 cohort and a decrease of three percentage points (3.9) compared to the FY2019 cohort. Additionally, inmates with no known gang affiliation had a lower recidivism rate than the release cohort overall (18.1% and 18.8%, respectively). Individuals with a known gang affiliation at the time of release had a higher three-year re-arrest rate ([65.1%](#)) than those who did not have a known gang affiliation ([49.0%](#)).

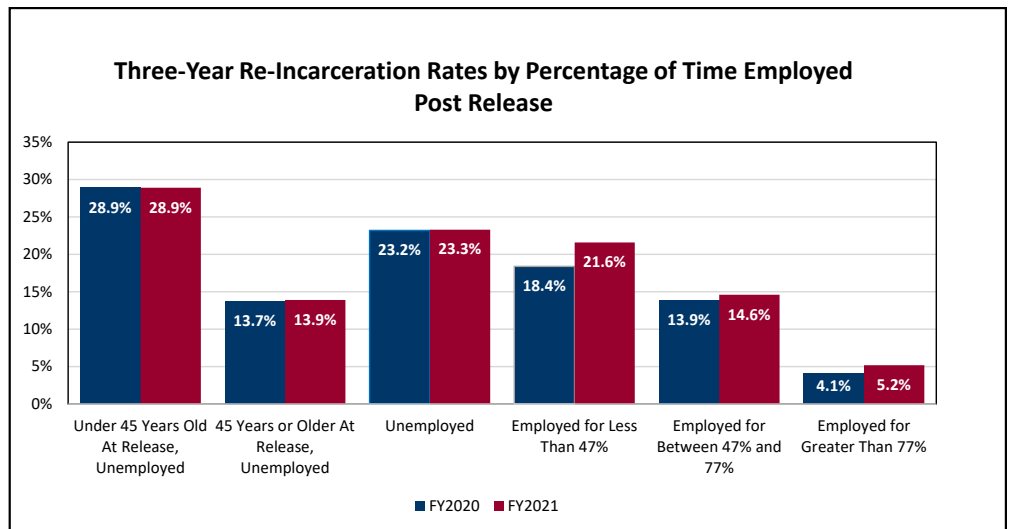


¹⁰ Gang affiliation is defined as affiliation with at least one documented gang organization at release. Inmates may be affiliated with more than one gang.

Post-Release Employment and Recidivism

Inmates who were employed were much less likely to recidivate than inmates who weren't employed (15.7% and 23.3%, respectively). Inmates who were unemployed or had lower percentages of time employed post release had higher recidivism rates. Inmates under the age of 45 at release who were unemployed had much higher recidivism rates than inmates who were 45 or older at release who were unemployed (28.9% and 13.9%, respectively). This highlights that employment has a greater impact on recidivism for younger releases than older releases. Inmates who were employed for more than 77% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the lowest recidivism rate (5.2%), which was much lower than the overall cohort (18.8%). Inmates who found employment but were employed for less than 47% of their time at liberty had much higher recidivism rates than those who maintained employment 47% or more of their time at liberty (21.6% and 9.9%, respectively).

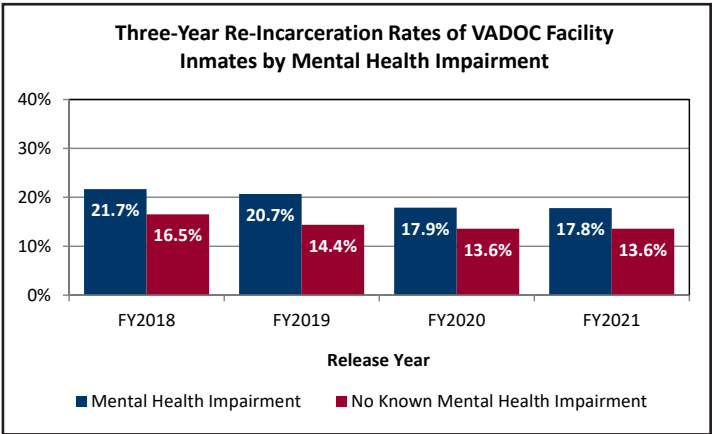
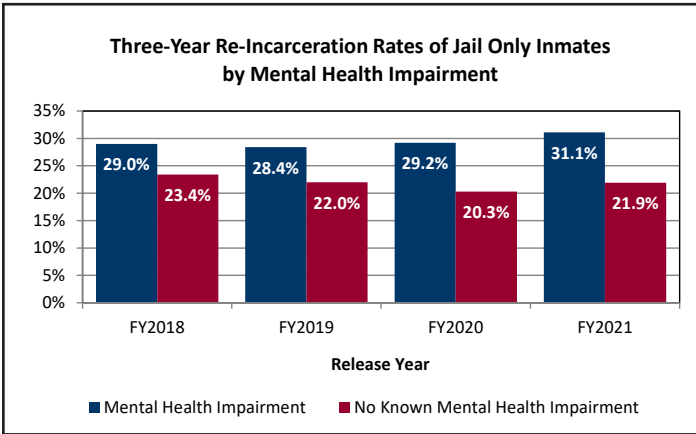
Regardless of the amount of time they were employed, FY2021 releases who found employment post-release had similar recidivism rates when compared to FY2020 releases who found employment. The recidivism rate of FY2021 releases who were employed between 47% and 77% of the follow-up period was less than one percentage points (0.7) higher than FY2020 releases who were employed between 47% to 77% of the follow-up period.



Combined Impact of Predictors

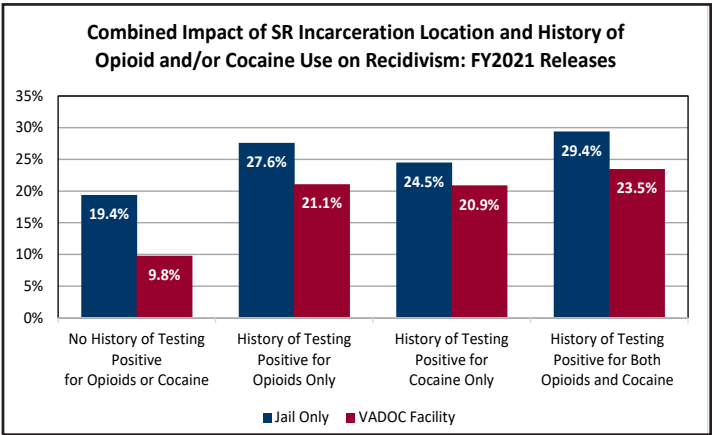
SR Location and Mental Health

When considering both SR incarceration location and mental health, the recidivism rate of FY2021 Jail Only releases with a known mental health impairment was thirteen percentage points (13.3) higher than that of those with a known mental health impairment who spent at least part of their SR incarceration term in a VADOC facility (31.1% and 17.8%, respectively). Similarly, there is an eight percentage point (8.3) difference in recidivism between those without a known mental health impairment who were Jail Only versus those without a known mental health impairment who spent at least part of their SR incarceration term in a VADOC facility (21.9% and 13.6%, respectively). This can be seen on the charts on the next page.



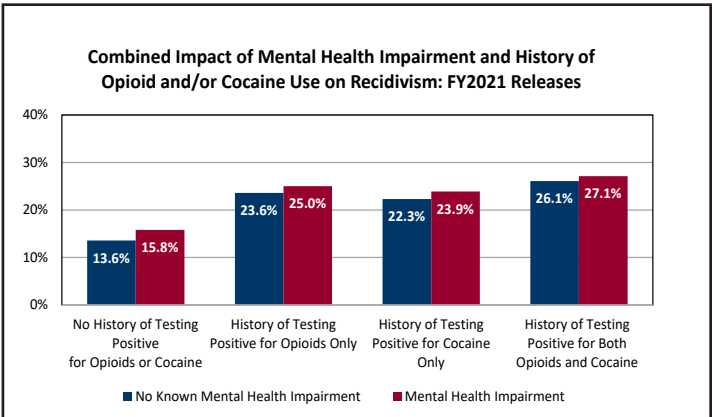
SR Location and History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use

Regardless of location of incarceration, inmates who tested positive for opioids and/or cocaine had higher recidivism rates than those who did not. However, the recidivism rates were even higher for releases who were Jail Only. Jail Only inmates had higher recidivism rates across all categories of opioid and/or cocaine use compared to those who spent a portion of their incarceration term in a VADOC facility. This can be seen on the chart to the right.



Mental Health and History of Opioid and/or Cocaine Use

For the FY2021 cohort, inmates with no known mental health impairment who had a history of testing positive for both opioids and cocaine had a lower recidivism rate than those with a known mental health impairment and a history of testing positive for opioids and cocaine (26.1% and 27.1%, respectively).¹¹ When examining inmates who had a history of testing positive for opioids only or cocaine only, those with a known mental health impairment were more likely to recidivate than those with no mental health impairment. This suggests that inmates with comorbid mental health impairment and substance use disorders may require additional resources to prevent recidivism.



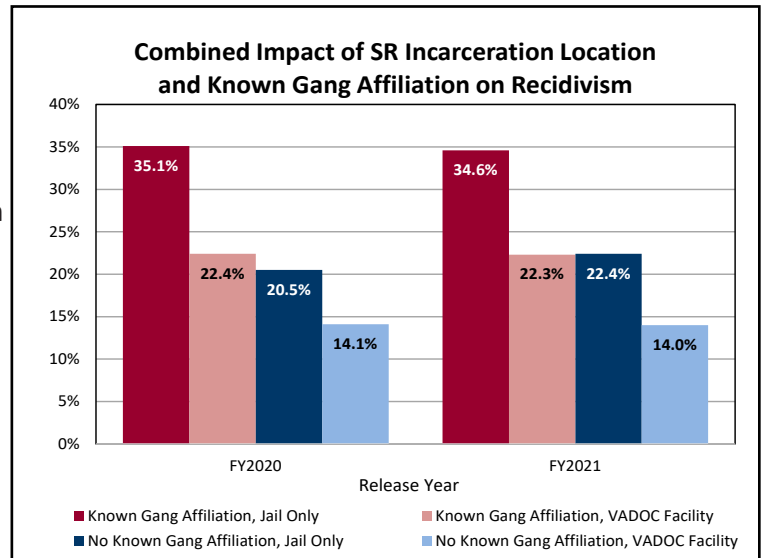
SR Location and Known Gang Affiliation

Approximately 13% of the 2,153 inmates who recidivated in the FY2021 cohort had a known gang affiliation at

¹¹ Mental health codes for Jail Only inmates are not readily available. Because of this, it is possible that some Jail Only inmates could have had a known mental health impairment that is not captured in the data, impacting the recidivism rates.

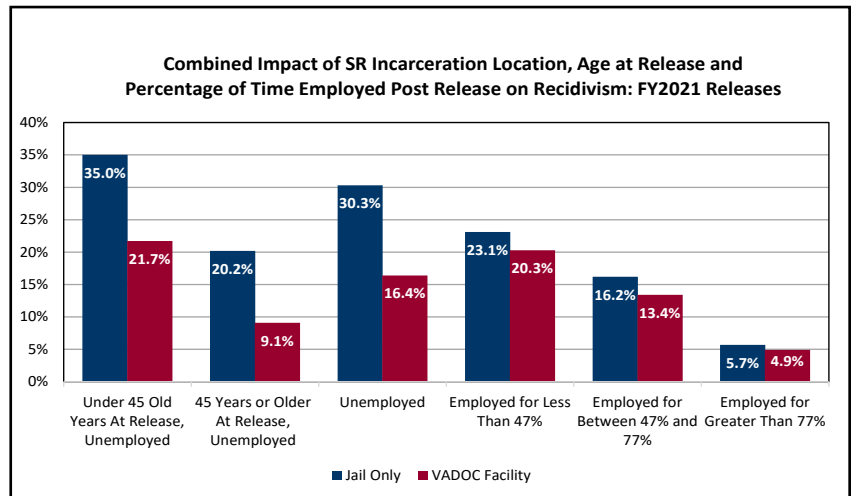
the time of release (N = 279). Jail Only inmates were less likely to be identified as a known member of a gang as local/regional jails cannot enter confirmed gang member status into VirginiaCORIS. However, if a Jail Only inmate had previous DOC history (incarceration or supervision), their gang affiliation could be identified. More than one-tenth (12.9%) of inmates in the FY2021 cohort who spent at least a portion of their incarceration term in a VADOC facility had a known gang affiliation at the time of release. In contrast, less than 6% (5.6%) of Jail Only inmates in the FY2021 cohort had a known gang affiliation at the time of release.

Inmates with a known gang affiliation at the time of release who spent the entirety of their incarceration term in a local/regional jail were at a greater risk of recidivating (34.6%) than those who spent at least a portion of their term in a VADOC facility (22.3%). Recidivism rates of inmates with a known gang affiliation who spent at least a portion of their term in a VADOC facility were almost identical for the FY2021 cohort when compared to the FY2020 cohort (22.3% and 22.4%, respectively). This suggests that inmates with a known gang affiliation may benefit from the social, cognitive behavioral, and work-related programs offered by VADOC facilities (e.g., Thinking For a Change [T4C]) that are not consistently available in all jails, prior to and upon release. Jail Only inmates with a known gang affiliation also had a lower recidivism rate for the FY2021 cohort than the FY2020 cohort (34.6% and 35.1%, respectively).



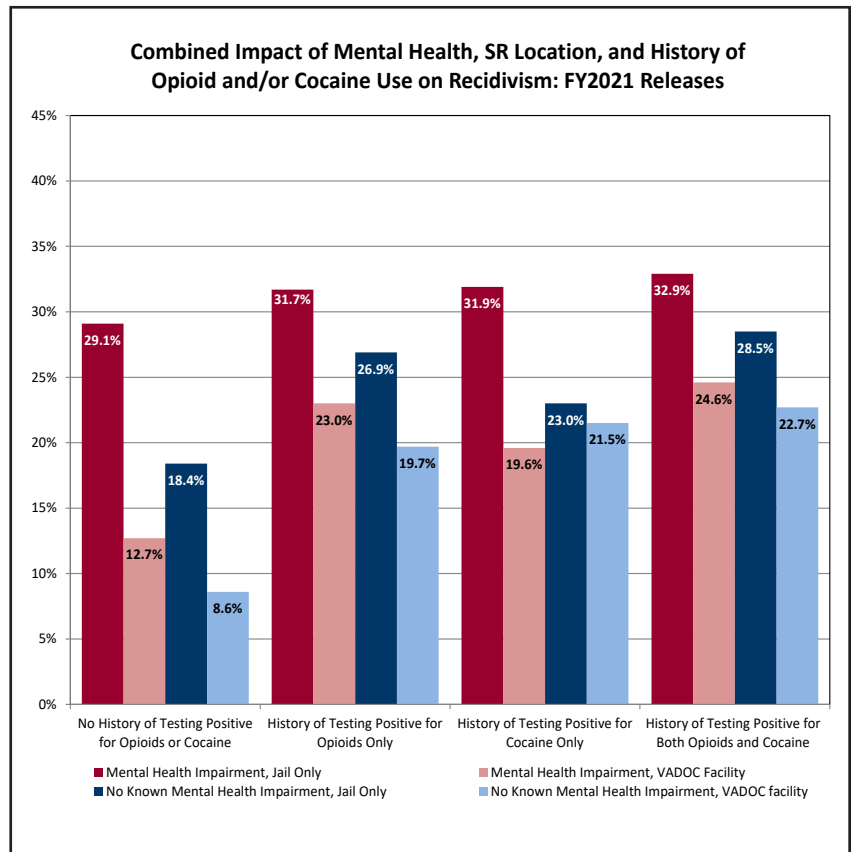
SR Location and Post-Release Employment

Regardless of post-release employment, Jail Only inmates had higher recidivism rates than inmates who spent at least a portion of their term of incarceration in a VADOC facility with the same percentage of time employed post release. Unemployed Jail Only inmates who were younger than 45 years at release had the highest recidivism rate (35.0%). Those who were employed for greater than 77% of the follow-up period while they were at liberty, both Jail Only and VADOC facility releases, had much lower recidivism rates (5.7% and 4.9%, respectively) than any other employment status. The overall recidivism rates for employed and unemployed Jail Only releases (17.6% and 30.3%, respectively) had a much larger difference than the recidivism rates for employed and unemployed inmates who spent at least a portion of their incarceration in a VADOC facility (14.2% and 16.4%, respectively).



Mental Health, SR Location, and History of Opioids and/or Cocaine Use

Jail Only inmates had higher recidivism rates than those who served a portion of their term in a VADOC facility with the same drug testing results and mental health impairment status. Jail Only inmates with a known mental health impairment and a history of testing positive for opioids and cocaine had the highest recidivism rate of 32.9%. Regardless of incarceration location, those with a known mental health impairment and a history of testing positive for opioids and cocaine had higher recidivism rates than those with a known mental health impairment and a history of testing positive for opioids or cocaine only. The recidivism rate for FY2021 releases with no known mental health impairment, no history of opioid and/or cocaine use, and who spent at least a portion of their incarceration in a DOC facility prior to release was 8.6%, which is much lower than the overall recidivism rate (18.8%).

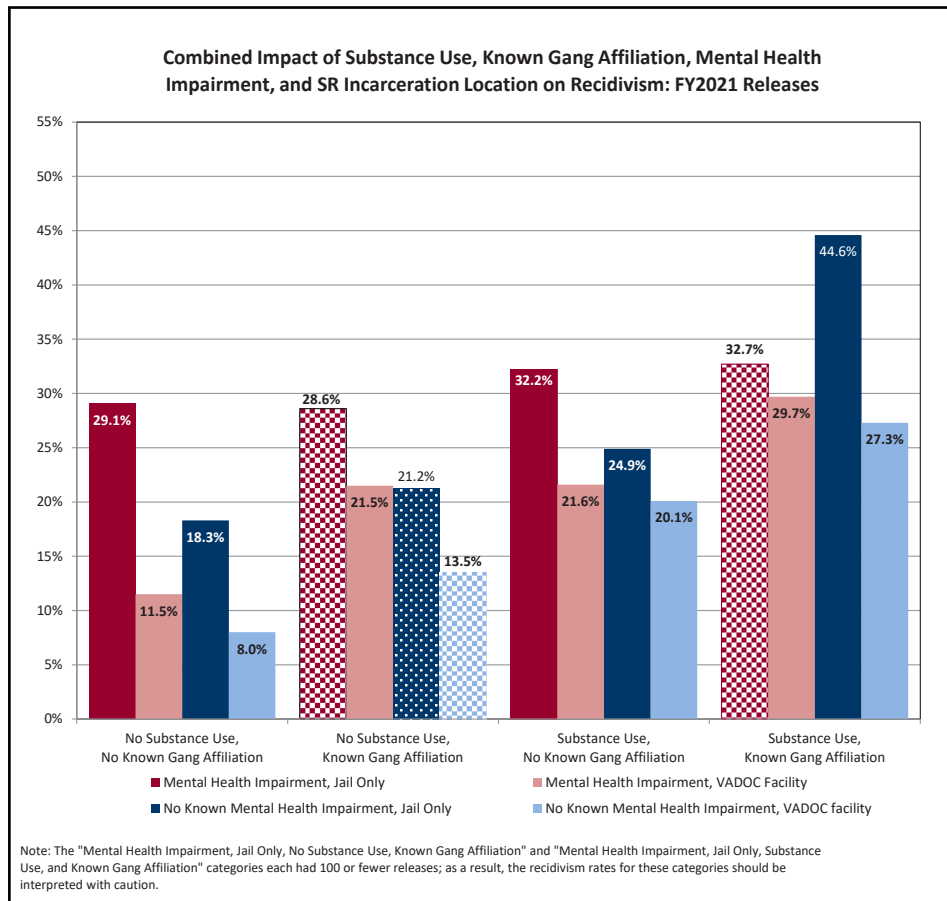


Substance Use¹², Known Gang Affiliation, Mental Health, and SR Location

Comparing the recidivism rates of inmates by substance use, gang affiliation, mental health impairment, and SR incarceration location shows that inmates with a known gang affiliation at the time of release, a known mental health impairment, and a history of testing positive for substances who spent their entire incarceration term in a local/regional jail had a higher recidivism rate than those with similar characteristics who spent at least a portion of their incarceration term in a VADOC facility (32.7% and 29.7%, respectively). These rates should be interpreted with caution, however, since there were some groups with low numbers of inmates. Regardless of mental health impairment or SR incarceration location, inmates with a known gang affiliation at the time of release or a history of testing positive for substances were at a greater risk of recidivating. This risk was compounded in the presence of multiple risk factors.

These findings suggest that inmates with a known gang affiliation at the time of release are especially vulnerable to recidivism, particularly those with a history of substance use and a mental health impairment. Disparities in identifying gang affiliation by incarceration location may factor into the differences in recidivism rates by SR incarceration location seen here. These results indicate that improvements are needed to better identify and support gang-affiliated inmates to increase their chances of successful re-entry.

¹² Substance use in this context is defined as a history of positive tests for opioids and/or cocaine use.



Summary and Conclusion

The analyses in this report indicate that risk factors historically tied with recidivism continue to play a central and statistically significant role in the prediction of recidivism in the FY2021 cohort. Most broadly, there was a one percentage point (1.2) increase in the recidivism rate for the FY2021 cohort compared to the FY2020 cohort. The three-year SR re-incarceration rate among the FY2021 cohort was 18.8%, which is still one of the lowest in over 20 years. This low recidivism rate may be partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic as the majority follow-up period for the FY2021 release cohort was affected by the pandemic.

Mental health impairment, history of testing positive for opioids and/or cocaine, SR incarceration location, and post-release employment were found to be significant factors that impact recidivism. These factors, when considered individually or in combination, are associated with an increase in the likelihood of recidivating. Regardless of whether inmates have a known mental health impairment, a history of testing positive for opioids and/or cocaine, a known gang affiliation, or were unemployed or were employed for a smaller percentage of time during the follow-up period, inmates who spent at least a portion of their incarceration term in a VADOC facility consistently have lower re-incarceration rates than their counterparts who spent the entirety of their incarceration term in a local/regional jail. These differences are likely due to the evidence-based practices, educational programs, and substance use treatment provided in VADOC facilities.

In comparison to the FY2020 cohort, the FY2021 recidivism rates of those with a mental health impairment

(19.8%) and those without a mental health impairment (16.9%) increased slightly by one percentage point (1.2) each, respectively. The recidivism rates of those with a mental health impairment have decreased by more than five percentage points (5.1) since FY2017 (21.0% and 26.1%, respectively).

Inmates with a history of testing positive for both opioids and cocaine were more likely to recidivate than those with a history of testing positive for either opioids or cocaine. FY2021 SR releases who had a history of testing positive for only opioids had higher recidivism rates than those who had a history of testing positive for only cocaine (24.0% and 22.7%, respectively). It is also important to note that inmates with no history of testing positive for opioids or cocaine had a recidivism rate four percentage points (4.7) lower than that of the overall FY2021 cohort (14.1% and 18.8%, respectively). Recidivism rates for each substance history group except those who had a history of testing positive for only opioids were slightly higher than the recidivism rates of those in the same category in FY2020.

Consistent with the pattern seen in previous cohorts, inmates in the FY2021 cohort with a known gang affiliation at the time of release were more likely to recidivate than those with no known gang affiliation (25.7% and 18.1%, respectively). Those with no known gang affiliation had slightly lower recidivism rates than the overall cohort (18.1% and 18.8%, respectively).

Inmates who were employed for 47% or more of the follow-up period while at liberty had much lower recidivism rates than those who were employed for less than 47% of the follow-up period or were unemployed (9.9% and 21.6%, respectively). Although employment post release reduces recidivism, inmates who had sustained employment saw the greatest reduction in recidivism rates. Inmates under 45 years of age at release and unemployed during the follow-up period had much higher recidivism rates than those 45 years or older and unemployed (28.9% and 13.9%, respectively).

Additionally, when time to recidivism was examined by demographic factors, mental health impairment, previous incarceration history, crime type, incarceration location, history of opioid and/or cocaine use, gang affiliation, and employment, differences in the length of time to recidivism emerged. The current study found that established predictors of SR incarceration location, mental health, and substance use still play a role in recidivism and identified gang affiliation as a novel predictor of recidivism. Additionally, employment post release, especially sustained employment, also plays a large role as a predictor of recidivism. Addressing these risks may help prevent recidivism in future cohorts.

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Appendix

(Return to page 2)

Recidivism Rates and Time to Recidivate for FY2021 SR Releases by Characteristics									
	Total Releases	Total Recidivists	Percentiles				Average	Percent Re-Arrested ²	Percent Re-Incarcerated
			25th	50th ¹	75th	100th			
All Releases	11,443	2,153	430	652	852	1,095	630	50.5%	18.8%
Gender									
Male	9,879	1,920	435	650	852	1,094	633	51.2%	19.4%
Female	1,564	233	390	665	851	1,095	606	46.7%	14.9%
Age at Release									
Under 30	2,616	611	447	654	844	1,095	631	60.4%	23.4%
30-39	4,036	831	444	617	860	1,094	640	54.7%	20.6%
40-49	2,616	433	399	637	843	1,093	615	46.5%	16.6%
50-59	1,560	221	394	637	844	1,093	624	40.3%	14.2%
60+	615	57	302	604	904	1,070	610	24.9%	9.3%
Previous SR Incarcerations									
No previous SR terms	5,754	795	458	666	854	1,095	641	43.7%	13.8%
1 previous SR term	2,740	611	428	638	849	1,093	642	54.2%	22.3%
2 previous SR terms	1,380	328	410	655	855	1,094	631	59.3%	23.8%
3 previous SR terms	755	185	378	611	830	1,092	595	60.4%	24.5%
4 previous SR terms	425	128	402	649	910	1,078	652	63.8%	30.1%
5 or more previous SR terms	389	106	382	616	844	1,093	615	61.7%	27.2%
Crime Type									
Violent	4,439	733	434	653	849	1,094	632	46.7%	16.5%
Property/Public Order	4,149	928	426	661	849	1,094	630	56.0%	22.4%
Drug	2,855	492	431	636	858	1,095	627	48.5%	17.2%
Location History									
VADOC Facility Releases	6,100	918	508	712	896	1,094	685	45.7%	15.0%
Jail Only Releases	5,343	1,235	379	610	817	1,095	589	56.1%	23.1%
Mental Health Code									
Mental Health Impairment ³	2,794	588	408	637	828	1,092	616	54.2%	21.0%
No Known Mental Health Impairment or Not Reported	8,649	1,565	440	656	855	1,095	635	49.4%	18.1%
History of Testing Positive for Opioids and Cocaine⁴									
Negative both Opioids and Cocaine	6,254	882	392	616	821	1,095	597	39.3%	14.1%
Positive only Cocaine	1,614	367	475	656	893	1,093	653	63.4%	22.7%
Positive only Opioids	1,718	413	437	659	855	1,094	639	59.5%	24.0%
Positive both Opioids and Cocaine	1,857	491	458	696	880	1,094	665	69.0%	26.4%
Known Gang Affiliation at Time of Release									
Known	1,086	279	448	646	879	1,093	648	65.1%	25.7%
No Known	10,357	1,874	424	652	848	1,095	627	49.0%	18.1%
Employment⁵									
Unemployed	4,642	1,083	324	561	778	1,095	555	46.4%	23.3%
Employed for Less Than 47% of Follow-Up Period	3,380	731	558	725	906	1,094	715	64.8%	21.6%
Employed for Between 47% and 77% of Follow-Up Period	1,721	251	499	685	881	1,094	683	53.7%	14.6%
Employed for Greater Than 77% of Follow-Up Period	1,700	88	544	728	878	1,091	695	30.3%	5.2%
Re-Incarceration Reason									
Technical Revocation	--	492	419	682	887	1,093	643	--	--
New Crime Revocation	--	1,221	440	631	833	1,095	624	--	--
Not a Revocation, New Crime Only	--	440	412	669	878	1,094	631	--	--

¹50th percentile = Median.

² Arrest records come from the Virginia State Police (VSP) and are matched to data in VirginiaCORIS based on key identifiers. As of July 2021, only arrests mandated to be reported to the Central Criminal Records Exchange (CCRE) are included in the VSP data, per 2021's House Bill 2113. Re-arrest information is based on July 2025 Virginia State Police criminal history data.

³ The Mental Health Impairment category includes those who had a mental health code of "Appropriate for Field Unit/Work Center".

⁴ Drug test history was examined before and within three years of release (end of three-year follow-up period for non-recidivists and recidivate date for recidivists).

⁵ Employment was defined as any wages earned during a quarter. Employment was categorized by the percentage of time an inmate was employed during the follow-up period while at liberty. Employment data was obtained from VEC and excludes employment data where wages were earned under the table, through freelance work, from another state, or in Washington D.C.

Note: As of Data Copy Date 08/29/25.