



## **Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC)**

### **Recidivism Rate Outcomes for 2007**

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## Abstract

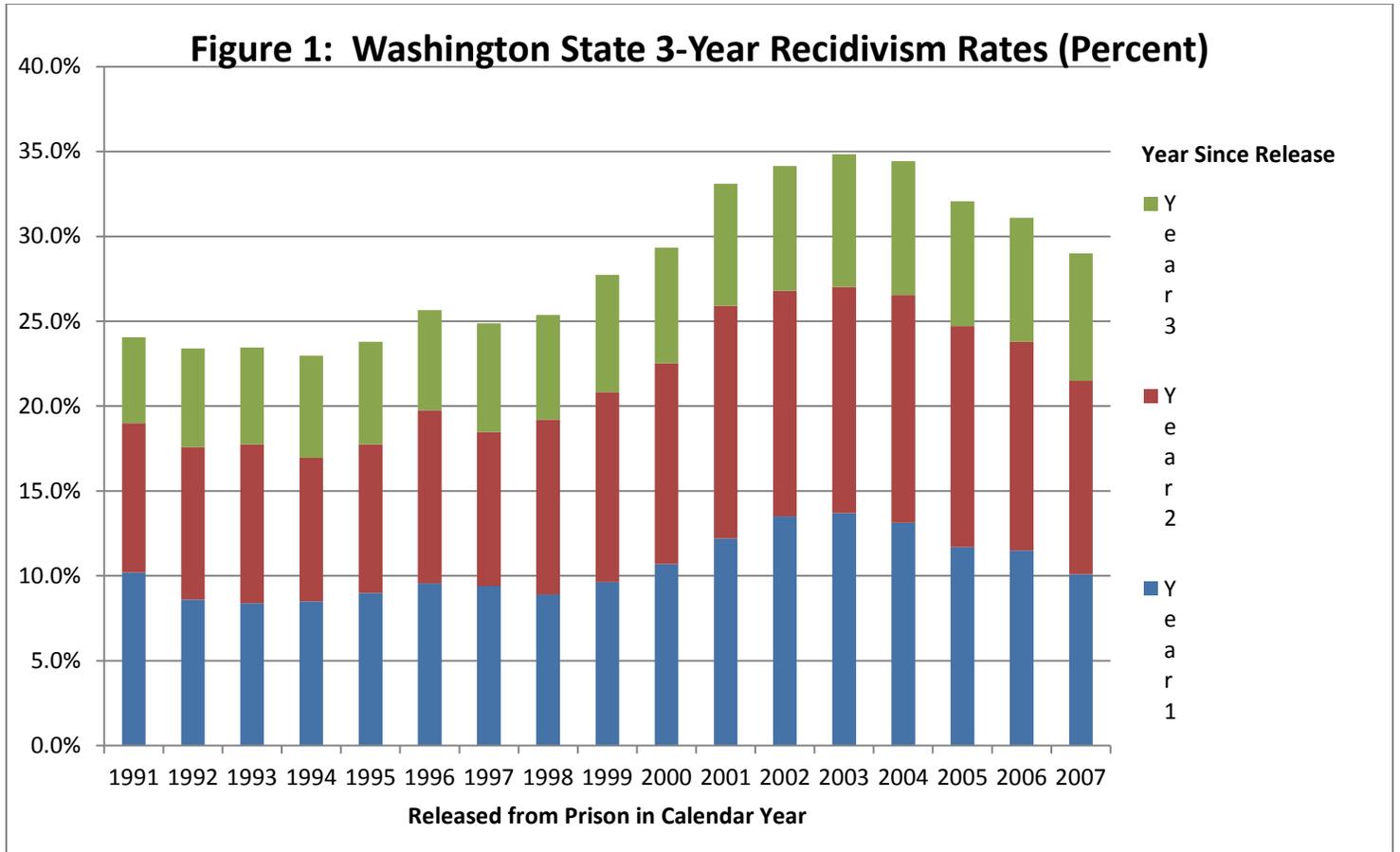
The overall average DOC recidivism rate for offenders released in 2007 and returning to prison within three years continues to drop, down to 28.7 percent, from 31.2 percent of those offenders released in 2006 (See Figure 1) and from a high of 35.0 percent in 2003. Of the 8,319 offenders released in 2007, 86.3 percent were male, while 13.7 percent were female. The recidivism rate for males was 30.2 percent compared to 19.4 percent among women. The largest percentage of the offenders released in 2007 were in prison for violent offenses (36.2%), yet property crimes account for the highest recidivism rate (40.1%). This article is a follow-up to last year's article, "Recidivism Revisited."

<http://www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/measuresstatistics/docs/Recidivism%20Revisited.pdf>

For the purposes of this article recidivism is defined as "*...any felony offense committed by an offender within 36-months of being at-risk in the community which results in a Washington State conviction.*"

**Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) Recidivism Rate (Percent) Outcomes for All Offenses by Calendar Year**

The overall average DOC recidivism rate for offenders released in 2007 and returning to prison within three years continues to drop, down to 28.7 percent from 31.2 percent of those offenders released in 2006 and from a high of 35.0 percent in 2003 (See Figure 1 and Table 1).



**Table 1: Washington State Recidivism Rates for All Offenses (Percent)**

Year Since Release	Released from Prison in Calendar Year																
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Year 3	5.1%	5.8%	5.7%	6.0%	6.0%	5.9%	6.4%	6.2%	6.9%	6.8%	7.2%	7.4%	7.8%	7.9%	7.4%	7.3%	7.4%
Year 2	8.8%	9.0%	9.4%	8.5%	8.8%	10.2%	9.1%	10.3%	11.2%	11.8%	13.7%	13.3%	13.3%	13.4%	13.0%	12.3%	11.2%
Year 1	10.2%	8.6%	8.4%	8.5%	9.0%	9.6%	9.4%	8.9%	9.6%	10.7%	12.2%	13.5%	13.7%	13.1%	11.7%	11.5%	10.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>25.4%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>34.2%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>28.7%</b>

We plan to annually update the recidivism rates from tables presented in last year's article, as well as include new data covering recidivism rates by offender demographics and characteristics. Explaining a fluctuation in the overall average recidivism rates over time is problematic as changes occur in laws and policies related to prisons and in community supervision that can lead to misleading interpretation. Breaking out the distribution of offenders by demographics, risk level and programs allows DOC to make better comparisons of recidivism, rather than looking at an overall average. Overall recidivism rates are affected by the number of releases. Rates would artificially decrease if we incarcerated and supervised more low-risk offenders, but that would not necessarily increase public safety or be a wise use of scarce resources.

#### **Comparison of Demographics and Characteristics of Washington State DOC Offenders at Release and Recidivism Rates for 2007 (Gender, Age & Race/Ethnicity)**

Of the 8,319 offenders released in 2007, 86.3 percent were male, while 13.7 percent were female. The recidivism rate for males was 30.2 percent compared to 19.4 percent among women. Age also had a substantial impact on recidivism rates (See Table1), where younger offenders recidivated more than older offenders. The age distribution of released offenders' shows the majority of them are younger, and as the age distribution changes over time it will affect the overall recidivism rate. Caucasians make up the largest segment of the general population released (63.6%), yet 28.9 percent recidivated compared to 34.7 percent of American Indians (See Table 1); Hispanics recidivated at the lowest rate of 19 percent. Those offenders who were released with a sentence of less than two years recidivated at 30 percent, and those with a sentence of over five years recidivated at lower rates.

**Table 1: Offender Demographic Characteristics by Release and Recidivism 2007**

	<u>Offenders Released in 2007 *</u>		<u>Offenders Recidivating</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent by Breakout</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent Recidivating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,319</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,387</b>	<b>28.7%</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	1,136	13.7%	221	19.4%
Male	7,183	86.3%	2,166	30.2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White	5,289	63.6%	1,529	28.9%
Black	1,551	18.6%	510	32.9%
Hispanic	924	11.1%	175	19.0%
American Indian	324	3.9%	113	34.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	204	2.5%	56	27.4%
Other/Unknown	27	0.3%	4	14.8%
<b>Age</b>				
19 and Under	117	1.4%	41	35.1%
20-24	1,370	16.5%	464	33.8%
25-29	1,563	18.8%	486	31.1%
30-34	1,291	15.5%	392	30.3%
35-39	1,334	16.0%	413	30.9%
40-44	1,164	14.0%	311	26.7%
45-49	772	9.3%	186	24.0%
50-54	423	5.1%	72	17.1%
55 and Up	285	3.4%	22	7.9%
<b>Length of Sentence</b>				
Less Than Two Years	6,402	77.0%	1,921	30.0%
Two to Five Years	1,357	16.3%	398	29.3%
Five to Ten Years	411	4.9%	57	13.8%
Over Ten Years	149	1.8%	13	8.4%

\*Characteristics of offenders released in Calendar Year 2007.

**Washington State DOC Risk Classification Level for Offenders Released in 2007 and Recidivism Rates**

The risk classification level is a tool to predict an offender’s probability to recidivate. As expected, high violent offender’s recidivate at 35.0 percent while high non-violent offender’s recidivate at 30.7 percent which is much higher than low risk offenders (15.8%; see Table 2). These recidivism rates for risk are comparable to numbers reported in the recidivism risk study by WSIPP:

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/11-01-1201.pdf>. DOC recidivism rates do not currently include jail data; hence recidivism rates are actually higher than those presented when jail incarceration is included.

One problem with risk classification, the change in recidivism over time is much different in these subpopulations compared to the overall recidivism rates. Those offenders released from incarceration for the first time have a much lower rate of recidivism than those offenders who are re-released with previous incarcerations (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Offender Characteristics by Release and Recidivism 2007**

	<b>Offenders Released in 2007*</b>		<b>Offenders Recidivating</b>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent by Breakout</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent Recidivating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,319</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,387</b>	<b>28.7%</b>
<b>Offense Type**</b>				
<b>Violent Offense</b>	3,011	36.2%	693	23.0%
<b>Murder</b>	61	0.7%	2	3.3%
<b>Manslaughter</b>	102	1.2%	3	3.0%
<b>Sex Crime</b>	618	7.4%	73	11.7%
<b>Robbery</b>	429	5.2%	104	23.5%
<b>Assault</b>	1801	21.6%	511	27.9%
<b>Property</b>	2,530	30.4%	1,019	40.1%
<b>Drug</b>	2,506	30.1%	577	22.7%
<b>Other</b>	272	3.3%	98	35.6%
<b>Risk Level Classification***</b>				
<b>High Violent</b>	2,732	32.8%	951	35.0%
<b>High Non-Violent</b>	2,451	29.5%	751	30.7%
<b>Moderate</b>	2,173	26.1%	534	24.7%
<b>Lower</b>	963	11.6%	151	15.8%
<b>Release Type</b>				
<b>First Admit</b>	4,144	49.8%	813	19.6%
<b>Re-Incarcerated</b>	4,175	50.2%	1,574	37.7%

\*Characteristics of offenders released in Calendar Year 2007.

\*\*Most serious offense of offenders released in Calendar Year 2007.

\*\*\*Risk level is an indicator of an offender's likelihood to commit a new crime. The risk level classification system changed in 2008 with the introduction of a new static risk instrument. Offenders released in 2007 were assessed at the old LSI-R risk levels.

### **Offense Type of Washington State DOC Offenders Released in 2007 and by Recidivism Rates**

The majority of the offenders released in 2007 were in prison for violent offenses (36.2% of all offenders), yet the majority recidivating were sentenced for property crimes (40.1%; See Table 2).

Where offense type has changed significantly over time for drug offenders convicted and recidivating (See Table 3), dropping to 22.7 percent in 2007 from a high of 37.3 percent in 2003; violent crime offenses continue to account for a small number of recidivists (23.0%).

**Table 3: Washington State 3-Year Recidivism Rates by Offense Type (Percent)**

Offense Type*	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Violent Offense</b>	28.0	27.9	28.2	26.6	26.7	29.1	26.4	25.7	28.2	28.8	28.8	29.9	31.0	27.0	27.2	25.6	23.0
MURDER	32.4	23.0	20.9	27.4	19.5	16.5	18.3	19.2	18.8	19.8	20.3	14.6	14.1	8.3	13.0	9.5	3.3
MANSLAUGHTER	9.6	3.4	5.8	4.6	9.9	5.7	17.0	8.3	11.8	15.1	12.7	11.1	6.8	6.7	3.1	5.6	3.0
SEX CRIME	17.1	16.7	13.1	14.6	14.3	10.2	11.5	9.4	11.1	13.9	12.2	12.1	13.0	13.5	16.3	17.4	11.7
ROBBERY	37.3	36.1	33.5	32.8	29.1	35.9	30.8	31.4	30.2	31.5	26.7	29.9	32.6	27.4	28.9	21.9	23.5
ASSAULT	36.6	38.1	42.7	37.5	38.0	43.7	37.4	35.7	39.2	38.4	39.0	40.0	40.4	34.1	33.3	31.7	27.9
<b>Property</b>																	
PROPERTY	43.2	42.0	38.0	39.3	39.4	44.7	41.6	41.9	44.7	45.1	50.6	49.9	48.5	49.3	42.3	40.8	40.1
<b>Drug</b>																	
DRUG	19.0	17.4	17.8	18.1	20.1	18.1	20.1	22.1	25.1	29.3	33.9	36.0	37.3	35.1	31.8	28.9	22.7
<b>Other</b>																	
OTHER	25.0	54.5	66.7	71.8	65.7	60.5	70.8	63.6	70.1	63.4	70.6	64.2	59.8	62.1	56.1	47.4	35.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	24.0	23.5	23.5	23.0	23.8	25.7	24.9	25.4	27.8	29.3	33.2	34.3	35.0	34.3	32.2	31.2	28.7

\*Most Serious Offense

### Conclusion

Risk classification is highly predictive of recidivism, while other offender characteristics show greater variability. Recidivists are more likely younger, male, and serving shorter sentences. Recidivism rates are also impacted by law changes and other offender characteristics selected (e.g., programs, alternative sentencing, amount of supervision after release, etc.). Overall recidivism rates are calculated using the number of offenders reoffending within 3 years of release divided by the total number of offenders released. An important factor affecting these calculated rates involve the size and risk distribution of the offender population released into the community (See Tables 3 and 4). If these two numbers are small, recidivism percentages can change dramatically from year to year, as seen in the violent offense type section in Table 3. Focusing resources on reentry programs for high risk and need offender groups makes the public safer and improves the odds that offenders are more successful on the outside reducing recidivism.

**Afterward:**

## **Washington State DOC Recidivism Rates Compared to Other States by New Crime and Technical Violation**

As discussed in last year's article, comparing average recidivism rates to other states is not only difficult due to differences in laws, policies, and the different definitions of recidivism, along with changes that occur over time in sentencing alternatives and length of community supervision to risk classification level changes in various states, (see Table 4 from "Recidivism Revisited" for more detail:

<http://www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/measuresstatistics/docs/Recidivism%20Revisited.pdf>)

Differences in survey methods also cause conflicting comparisons from state to state, such as the:

[http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing\\_and\\_corrections/State\\_Recidivism\\_Revolving\\_Door\\_America\\_Prisons%20.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing_and_corrections/State_Recidivism_Revolving_Door_America_Prisons%20.pdf), "The national recidivism rates provide an

important barometer of return on correctional investment, but they obscure key differences among the states. The correctional landscape varies dramatically in scale, policy and practice from state to state, rendering national estimates helpful for understanding broad trends and developments, but ill suited for identifying state progress and promising areas for improvement." (PEW, "State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons," 2011).

For example, comparing Washington State recidivism to California, Illinois, and Texas over time (see Table 4) shows recidivism has remained stable by defining recidivism as only new crimes over the ten year period (23%). Technical violations have fluctuated dramatically in Washington State (with a low of 6% and high of 25%) due to increases in the distribution of high risk offenders supervised in 2003 when law changes allowed early release or no supervision for low risk offenders, along with holding violators remaining under supervision more accountable causing the higher recidivism rates. In the future, we plan to incorporate jail data for a more complete picture of recidivism in the State of Washington.

**Table 4: Recidivism Rates for Prison Offenders by State and Type (New Crime and Technical Violation)**

Recidivism by State, Type and Year (Percent)	1994				1999				2004			
	<u>CA</u>	<u>IL</u>	<u>TX</u>	<u>WA</u>	<u>CA</u>	<u>IL</u>	<u>TX</u>	<u>WA</u>	<u>CA</u>	<u>IL</u>	<u>TX</u>	<u>WA</u>
New Crime	27%	32	15	23	14	30	24	27	18	27	27	23
Technical Violation	39%	6	11	25	47	22	8	6	40	25	5	16*
<b>Total</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>39%*</b>

\*Difference in PEW study to DOC 16 and 34.3% is due to reporting and definition changes.