

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SERIES

# *Recidivism After Release from Prison*



June 2014

**Office of the Secretary  
Research and Policy Unit**

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Secretary



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June 27, 2017

To: Executive Planning

From: Edward F. Wall, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E.F. Wall".

I am pleased to share with you the most current "Recidivism After Release from Prison" report that has been prepared by the talented and committed staff of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections cross-divisional Research and Policy Unit.

This performance measurement report explains how the Department defines and calculates rates of recidivism, which is the percentage of offenders released from a Wisconsin prison who go on to commit new crimes that result in a conviction and sentence to the Wisconsin DOC. The scope of this report tracks more than 140,000 offenders released from the Wisconsin prison system since 1990, and illustrates that recidivism rates in Wisconsin continue to steadily decrease.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center recognized Wisconsin DOC in their June 2014 Reducing Recidivism National Report as a result of our recidivism rate reduction. One of only eight states in the country to achieve this level of recidivism reduction, the Wisconsin DOC was highlighted at a national level for this accomplishment.

Many factors contributed to the downward trend in recidivism and one of the most important is the hard work and dedication of DOC staff. As a result of your efforts, along with our partnership with community service providers and criminal justice entities, we continue to reduce the rate of recidivism in our state and provide safety to the citizens of Wisconsin.

A key goal of the Department, and arguably one of the most important gauges of our societal affect is the goal of reduced recidivism. Working toward that goal, we implemented evidence-based practices across the Department that have proven to reduce the number of prisoners returning to the state correctional system.

The Department will continue to implement the most effective policies and procedures based on current evidence-based principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for offenders, staff and tax payers. Ultimately, we all share one goal and that is to create safer communities. I'd like to offer my personal thanks to everyone in our Department for your continued efforts in delivering on our commitment to public safety.

# *Recidivism After Release from Prison*

June 2014

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary _____	4
Introduction _____	5
Release from Prison Recidivism Rates _____	6
Trends _____	6
By Gender _____	7
By Age at Release _____	8
By Time to Recidivism Event _____	9
By Race _____	10
By Release Type _____	11
By Prior Periods of Confinement _____	12
By Length of Prison Stay _____	13
Recidivist Offense and Sentence Types _____	14
Appendix A _____	15
Definition of Recidivism _____	15
Methodology _____	15
Recidivism vs. Reincarceration _____	19
Appendix B _____	20
Table 1. Trends 1990-2011 _____	20
Table 2. By Gender 2000-2011 _____	21
Table 3. By Race 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up _____	22
Table 4. By Release Type 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up _____	23
Table 5. By Prior Periods of Confinement 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up _____	24
Table 6. By Length of Prison Stay 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up _____	25
Table 7. Recidivist Offense and Sentence Types 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up _____	26

## Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) defines recidivism as a new offense resulting in a conviction and sentence to the WI DOC. One, two, and three-year follow-up periods are calculated beginning on the day the offender is released from prison. Recidivism rates represent the number of persons who have recidivated divided by the total number of persons in a defined population. All recidivism rates are based on only Wisconsin offenses that have resulted in court dispositions that include custody or supervision under the WI DOC. This report summarizes recidivism rates for a total of 140,911 offenders released from the Wisconsin prison system between 1990 and 2011.

### *Recidivism Rates by Follow-up Period*

Release Year	Follow-up Period	Recidivism Rate
2011	1-year	14.3%
2010	2-year	24.1%
2009	3-year	30.1%

Recidivism rates in the current release years are lower than those reported for releases even a few years ago, with the exception of a slight uptick in the two-year follow-up rate between 2009 and 2010. From 2007 to 2009 the three-year follow-up recidivism rate decreased by 7.1% (or 2.3 percentage points). This continues a long-term trend of decreasing recidivism rates since 1993; between 1993 and 2009 the three-year recidivism rate decreased by 33.6% (or 15.2 percentage points).

### *Recidivism Trends from 2000–2011:*

**Gender.** Males recidivated at a consistently higher rate than females for all release years and follow-up periods.

**Age at Release.** Recidivism rates decreased as offender age increased. Offenders aged 20 to 29 made up the largest group of recidivists.

**Time to Recidivism Event.** Of the offenders who recidivated within the three-year follow-up period, 50% did so within the first year following release from prison.

**Race.** Black offenders had slightly higher recidivism rates than White offenders, but rates for both groups showed a consistent decreasing trend over the report period.

**Release Type.** Offenders discharged directly from prison without supervision exhibited higher recidivism rates than those released to supervision. Those who had discretionary releases to parole supervision demonstrated lower recidivism rates than those who had non-discretionary releases to supervision.

**Number of Prior Periods of Confinement.** Recidivism rates were highest for offenders with three or more prior periods of confinement. Rates decreased as the number of prior periods of confinement decreased.

**Length of Prison Stay.** Recidivism increased with shorter lengths of stay. The lowest recidivism rates were found among offenders released from a period of incarceration that was five years or longer.

**Recidivist Offense and Sentence Type.** The offenses that recidivists committed were categorized into four offense types, with the largest number of recidivists committing public order offenses, followed by property offenses, violent offenses, and then drug offenses. For each of the offense categories recidivists were more likely to be sentenced to prison than to probation.

## Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) defines recidivism as the following:

*Following an episode of incarceration with the WI DOC, to commit a criminal offense that results in a new conviction and sentence to WI DOC custody or supervision.*

WI DOC recidivism rates represent the number of persons who have recidivated divided by the total number of persons released from an episode of confinement that included one or more adult conviction prison sentences. Recidivism rates are based only on Wisconsin offenses that have resulted in court dispositions that include custody or supervision under the WI DOC. This means that persons who have committed offenses, and are subsequently serving their sentences under other state or federal jurisdictions, are not counted as recidivists under this definition. Furthermore, offenses that result in only jail dispositions, fines or forfeitures, or municipal violations are not included in recidivism rate calculations.

Recidivism rates for three different follow-up periods are presented throughout this report. A follow-up period is the timeframe during which an offender is tracked to determine if he/she committed a new criminal offense. Recidivism rates are reported for one-, two-, and three-year follow-up periods. Additionally, this report includes recidivism rates for groups of offenders released between 1990 and 2011. A group of offenders released in the same year is referred to as a release cohort. Appendix A (see page 15) provides a detailed description of the methodology used to calculate recidivism rates.

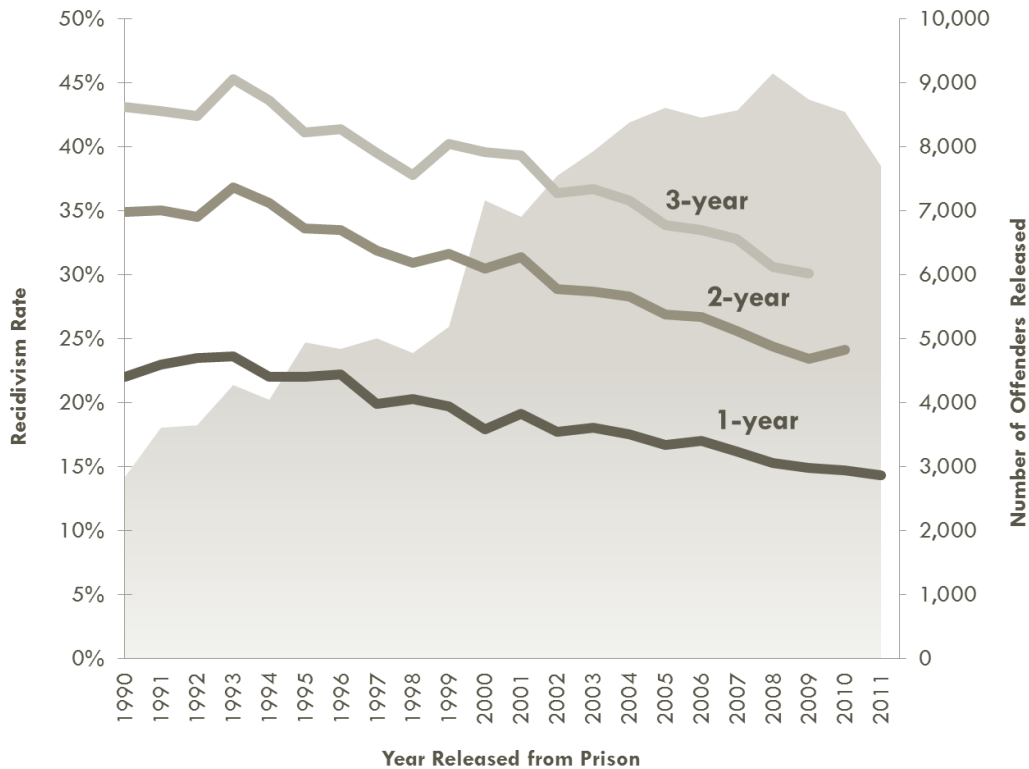
WI DOC considers the offense date the date of the recidivism event. Offenders are often not apprehended and convicted until many years after an offense occurs. WI DOC does not obtain data for an offense until a court sentences an offender to WI DOC custody or supervision. This means that historical recidivism rates can change depending on when the analysis is done. For example, if an offender was released from prison in 1995 and committed an offense in 1996, but was not arrested, convicted, and sentenced until 2009, the recidivism rate for 1995 releases as calculated in 2008 would not count the offender as a recidivist. However, when the rate was calculated again in 2010, the offender would be counted as a recidivist for the 1995 release cohort. Therefore, it is important to note that for this reason, recidivism rates reported in the last [Recidivism After Release from Prison](#) report may differ slightly from rates in the present report.

This report updates recidivism rates previously presented in the October 2012 *Recidivism After Release from Prison* report. More specifically, rates for additional release years are reported for overall trends in recidivism rates, and recidivism rates by gender, age at release, and time to recidivism event. The present report also includes new data on recidivism rates broken down by race, release type, number of prior periods of confinement, length of prison stay, and recidivism offense and sentence types.

## Release from Prison Recidivism Rates

### Recidivism Rate Trends

The figure below shows recidivism rates for releases from prison beginning in 1990, by release year and follow-up period. Overall, recidivism rates have steadily decreased since 1993, with the exception of a slight increase in the two-year follow-up rate, which rose by 0.7 percentage points from 2009 to 2010. Between 1990 and 2009 the three-year rate decreased by 30.2% (13.0 percentage points). Recidivism rates are calculated at one, two, and three years post-release and are cumulative (meaning that the longer follow-up periods include all instances of recidivism from the shorter follow-up periods).<sup>1</sup>



### Recidivism Trends for Select Release Years\*

Release Year	1-Year Follow-Up			2-Year Follow-Up			3-Year Follow-Up		
	Total Releases**	Recidivists***	Rate (%)	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate (%)	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate (%)
1990	2,841	624	22.0%	2,834	988	34.9%	2,828	1,218	43.1%
1995	4,945	1,086	22.0%	4,936	1,659	33.6%	4,922	2,024	41.1%
2000	7,162	1,283	17.9%	7,130	2,174	30.5%	7,121	2,822	39.6%
2005	8,609	1,435	16.7%	8,573	2,303	26.9%	8,539	2,897	33.9%
2009	8,746	1,302	14.9%	8,709	2,037	23.4%	8,677	2,613	30.1%
2010	8,555	1,254	14.7%	8,499	2,046	24.1%	—	—	—
2011	7,698	1,097	14.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—

\* See Table 1 in Appendix B (page 20) for a table including all release years.

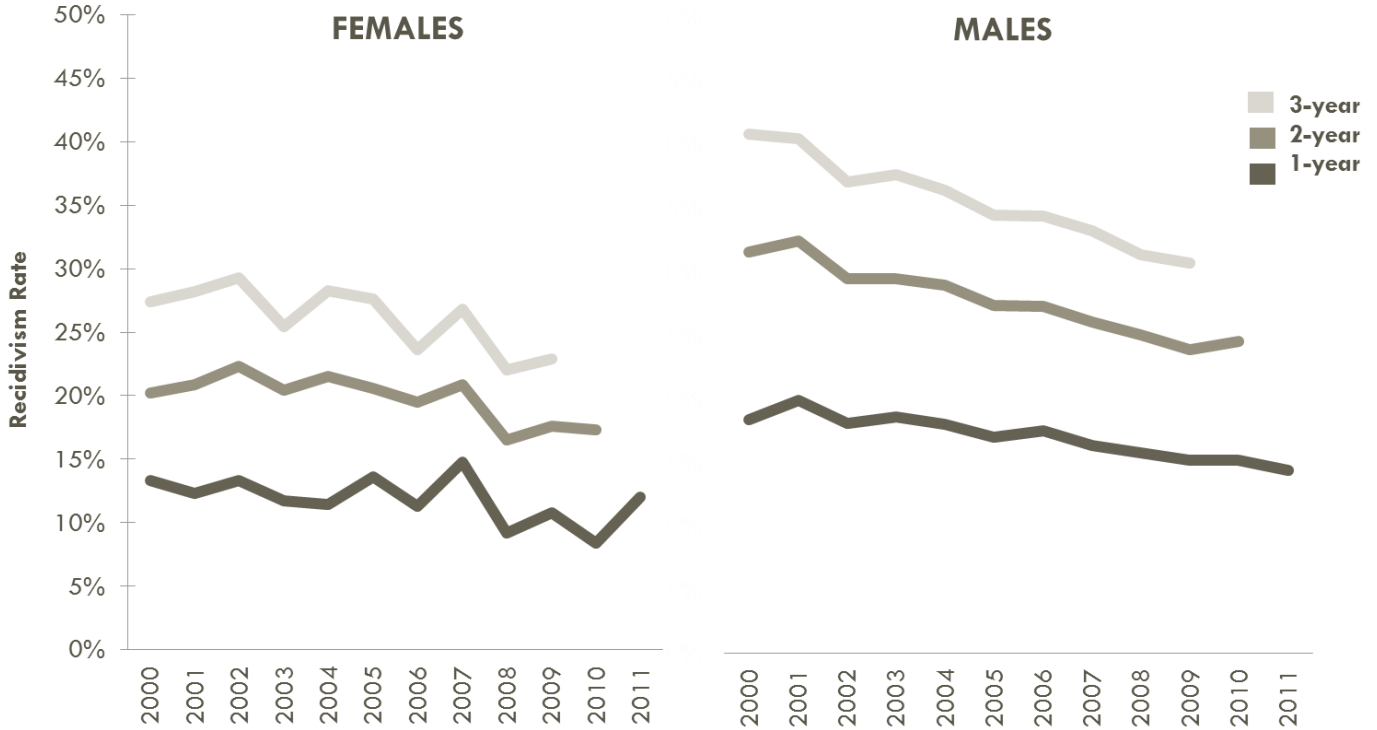
\*\* Total release numbers may differ from those in past years' reports. Data sets are re-run for every new report, and numbers may change slightly due to corrections in data entry regarding release dates or release types for past years.

\*\*\* Recidivism rates may differ slightly from those in past reports due to recent convictions and sentences to WI DOC for offenses that occurred many years before the offender was apprehended. See Appendix A (page 17) for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>1</sup> Offenders who died within the timeframe of each specified follow-up period were removed from each cohort prior to recidivism rate calculations. This resulted in slightly different numbers of offenders released and recidivists for each follow-up period for each given release year.

### Recidivism Rates by Gender

Male offenders recidivated at a higher rate than female offenders for every release year and follow-up period. The average recidivism rate for males released between 2000 and 2009 (with a three-year follow-up period) was 35.4% while for females it was 26.1%. Male offender recidivism rates followed the same pattern as the overall trend for WI DOC recidivism rates. However, the trend for females was less consistent. This is likely due to the comparatively small number of female offenders released each year (see table below). Within a small release cohort, slight variations in the number of recidivists can cause the recidivism rate to fluctuate more so than within a large release cohort.



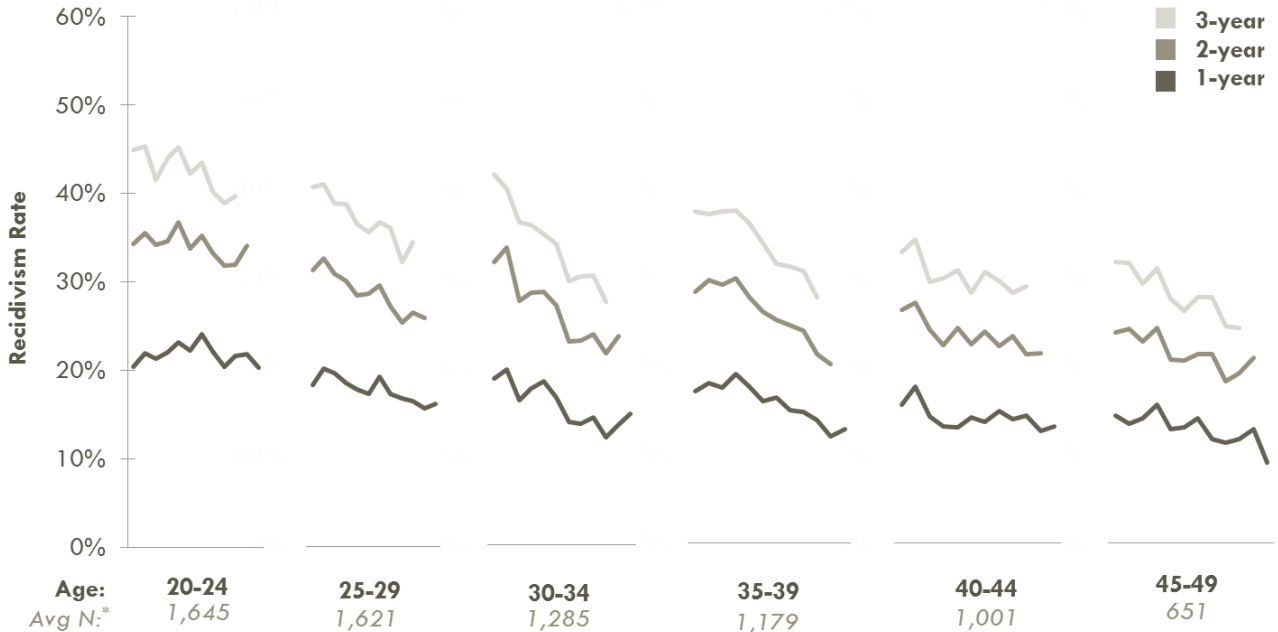
**Recidivism Rates by Gender: 3-Year Follow-up\***

Release Year	Total Releases	Females		Total Releases	Males	
		Recidivists			Recidivists	
2000	682	187	27.4%	6,439	2,635	40.9%
2001	663	187	28.2%	6,201	2,512	40.5%
2002	634	186	29.3%	6,889	2,553	37.1%
2003	672	171	25.4%	7,198	2,715	37.7%
2004	706	200	28.3%	7,617	2,778	36.5%
2005	732	202	27.6%	7,807	2,695	34.5%
2006	695	164	23.6%	7,682	2,643	34.4%
2007	679	182	26.8%	7,846	2,613	33.3%
2008	776	171	22.0%	8,318	2,610	31.4%
2009	690	158	22.9%	7,987	2,455	30.7%

\* See Table 2 in Appendix B (page 21) for table including all follow-up periods.

### Recidivism Rates by Age at Release

Younger offenders exhibited consistently higher recidivism rates than did older offenders. Offenders aged 20 to 29 represented the largest number of releases and the greatest number of recidivists between 2000 and 2009 (with a three-year follow-up period). Total numbers of releases and numbers of recidivists for offenders aged 16 to 19 and those older than 49 are included in the table below. Due to the very small numbers of offenders in these categories, recidivism rates are not reported.<sup>2</sup> For links to complete tables of recidivists by age at release click [here](#).



\* Average N is calculated using age data for all offenders in the three-year follow-up release cohorts for release years 2000 to 2009.

#### Recidivism Rates by Age: 3-Year Follow-up

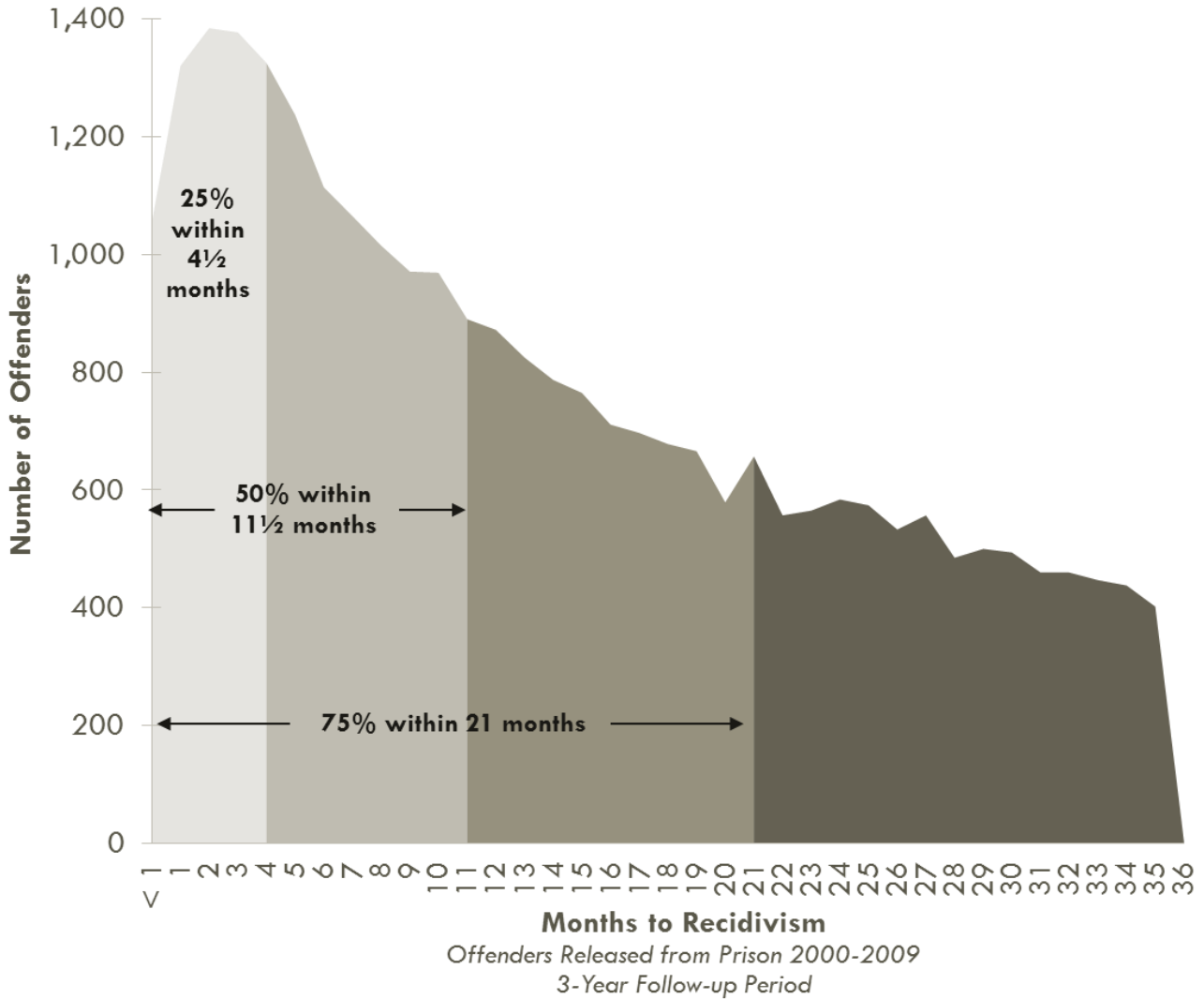
Age Category	2000			2009		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate
19 and Under	297	157	---	136	79	---
20-24	1,682	755	44.9%	1,432	569	39.7%
25-29	1,389	558	40.2%	1,865	636	34.1%
30-34	1,249	523	41.9%	1,350	371	27.5%
35-39	1,152	432	37.5%	1,195	332	27.8%
40-44	730	240	32.9%	1,038	301	29.0%
45-49	341	108	31.7%	835	203	24.3%
50-54	157	37	---	437	83	---
55-59	76	8	---	223	24	---
60-64	24	1	---	87	13	---
65 or Older	24	3	---	43	2	---

<sup>2</sup> A sub-group of offenders must make up at least five percent of the total release cohort for recidivism rates to be reported. Recidivism rates for very small populations can be misleading as slight changes in numbers of recidivists can produce large changes in recidivism rates.



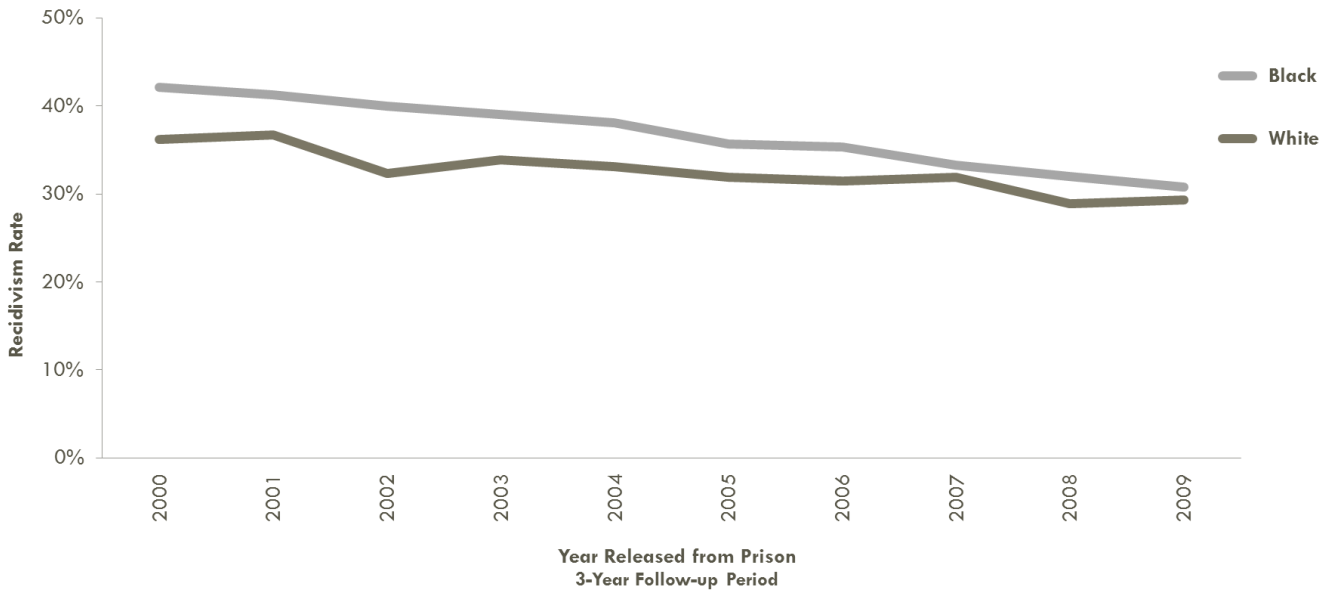
### Recidivism Rates by Time to Recidivism Event

The majority of offenders who recidivated within a three-year follow-up period did so less than two years after being released. Twenty-five percent of recidivists released between 2000 and 2009 committed an offense within 4.5 months, 50% did so within 11.5 months, and 75% committed an offense within 21 months of their release from prison. For links to complete tables of recidivists by time to recidivism event click [here](#).



### Recidivism Rates by Race

Recidivism rates for Black and White offenders followed the same trend, decreasing over the report period. Black offenders recidivated at a slightly higher rate than Whites, with a three-year follow-up rate of 30.8% in 2009, 1.5 percentage points higher than White offenders. Total numbers of releases and numbers of recidivists for American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian or Pacific Islander offenders are included in the table below. Due to the very small numbers of offenders in these categories recidivism rates are not reported.<sup>3</sup> The 2009 recidivism rate for Hispanic offenders was 26.5%. Offenders in all race categories can also be Hispanic. Of those offenders released in 2009, 663 self-reported Hispanic ethnicity. See Appendix B (Table 3, page 22) for a complete table of recidivism rates by race.



### Recidivism Rates by Race: 3-Year Follow-up\*

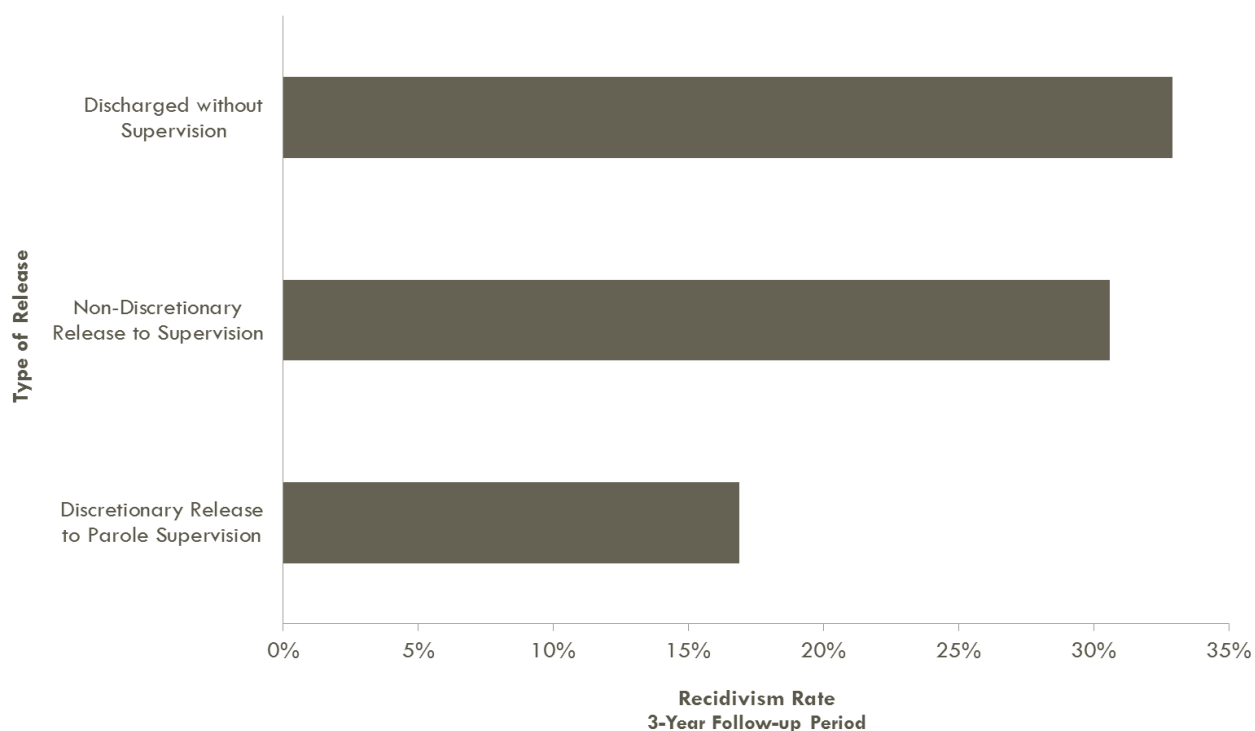
Release Year	American Indian/ Alaskan Native			Asian or Pacific Islander			Black			White		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Rate
2000	223	103	---	34	9	---	3,830	1,613	42.1%	3,018	1,093	36.2%
2001	243	118	---	33	5	---	3,443	1,422	41.3%	3,135	1,152	36.7%
2002	265	112	---	39	8	---	3,721	1,490	40.0%	3,493	1,129	32.3%
2003	245	110	---	44	11	---	3,865	1,508	39.0%	3,712	1,257	33.9%
2004	295	133	---	51	15	---	3,874	1,475	38.1%	4,092	1,355	33.1%
2005	309	133	---	65	17	---	3,982	1,420	35.7%	4,161	1,326	31.9%
2006	315	131	---	49	10	---	3,910	1,382	35.3%	4,081	1,284	31.5%
2007	309	126	---	63	18	---	3,898	1,299	33.3%	4,232	1,349	31.9%
2008	348	135	---	50	14	---	4,029	1,290	32.0%	4,646	1,341	28.9%
2009	335	128	---	62	13	---	3,770	1,163	30.8%	4,473	1,309	29.3%

\* See Table 3 in Appendix B (page 22) for a table including all follow-up periods.

<sup>3</sup> A sub-group of offenders must make up at least five percent of the total release cohort for recidivism rates to be reported. Recidivism rates for very small populations can be misleading as slight changes in numbers of recidivists can produce large changes in recidivism rates.

### Recidivism Rates by Release Type

Of the offenders released in 2009, those who discharged directly from prison without supervision recidivated at a higher rate than those who had non-discretionary releases to supervision and those who had discretionary releases to parole. Those offenders with discretionary releases to parole had the lowest recidivism rates, but also represented a very small portion of all releases in 2009 (due to changes in Wisconsin legislation). However, recidivism rates for discretionary releases to parole were consistently the lowest of all release types in 2000 and 2005 as well, when larger numbers of offenders were released to parole (see table below). See Appendix B (Table 4, page 23) for a complete table of recidivism rates by release type.



### Recidivism Rates by Release Type: 3-Year Follow-up\*

Release Type	2000			2005			2009		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
Discharged without Supervision	489	231	47.2%	412	170	41.3%	535	176	32.9%
Non-Discretionary Release to Supervision**	4,292	1,844	43.0%	6,967	2,447	35.1%	7,726	2,364	30.6%
Discretionary Release to Parole Supervision	2,298	739	32.2%	1,120	267	23.8%	367	62	16.9%
Other***	42	8	---	40	13	---	49	11	---

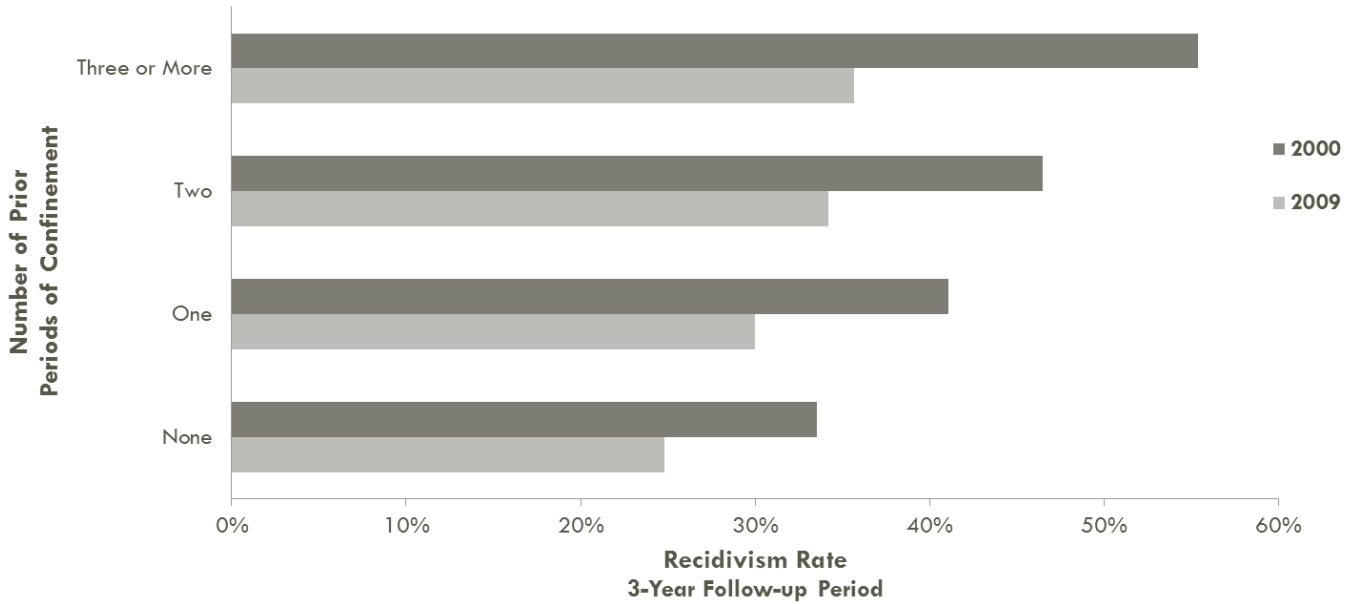
\* See Table 4 in Appendix B (page 23) for a table including all follow-up periods and release years.

\*\* "Non-Discretionary Release to Supervision" includes both offenders released to extended supervision and those released on mandatory release. Offenders released to extended supervision have completed their prison sentences under the Truth in Sentencing law and now have a period of community supervision to complete, the length of which was determined by a judge at sentencing. Offenders released on mandatory release are those who committed crimes prior to Truth in Sentencing and are required to be released to supervision once they have served two-thirds of their sentence.

\*\*\* Offenders in the "Other" release type category were either released by the court or released due to commutation. Due to the very small number of offenders in this category recidivism rates are not reported.

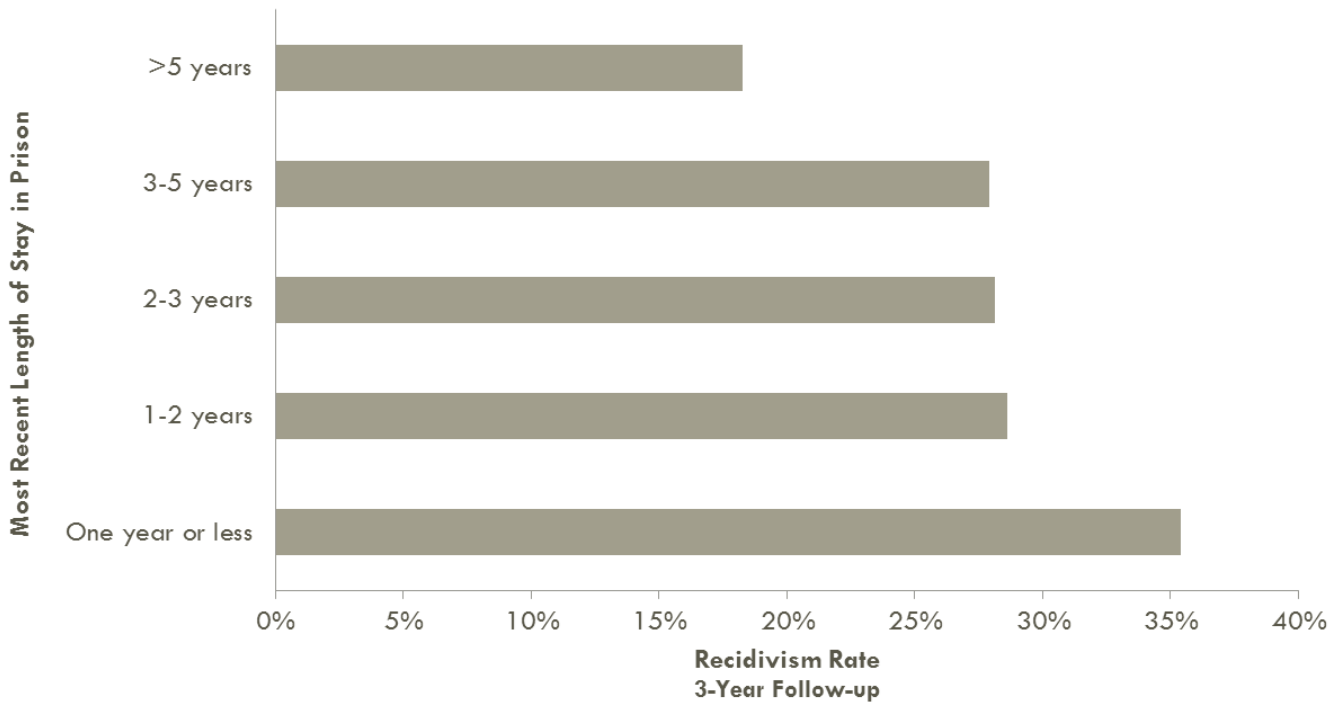
### *Recidivism Rates by Prior Periods of Confinement*

For releases in both 2000 and 2009, recidivism rates increased as the number of prior periods of confinement increased. However, the gap in recidivism rates among prior period of confinement categories did narrow from 2000 to 2009. A prior period of confinement was defined as any instance of time spent in a Wisconsin prison prior to the period of confinement that resulted in the cohort release. This included short-term stays for temporary holds, which can be as short as one day, and for alternatives to revocations. This also included longer stays for new sentences and revocations. See Appendix B (Table 5, page 24) for a complete table of recidivism rates by prior periods of confinement.



**Recidivism Rates by Length of Prison Stay**

Of the offenders released in 2009, those with a prison stay of one year or less just prior to release had the highest recidivism rates compared to all other lengths of stay. There was virtually no difference in recidivism rates among offenders whose lengths of stay were between one and five years. Those offenders who spent five or more years in prison prior to their 2009 release had the lowest recidivism rates. Because a number of offenders were released from prison stays of one year or less post-revocation, short lengths of stay do not necessarily indicate short overall sentences. See Appendix B (Table 6, page 25) for a complete table of recidivism rates by length of prison stay.

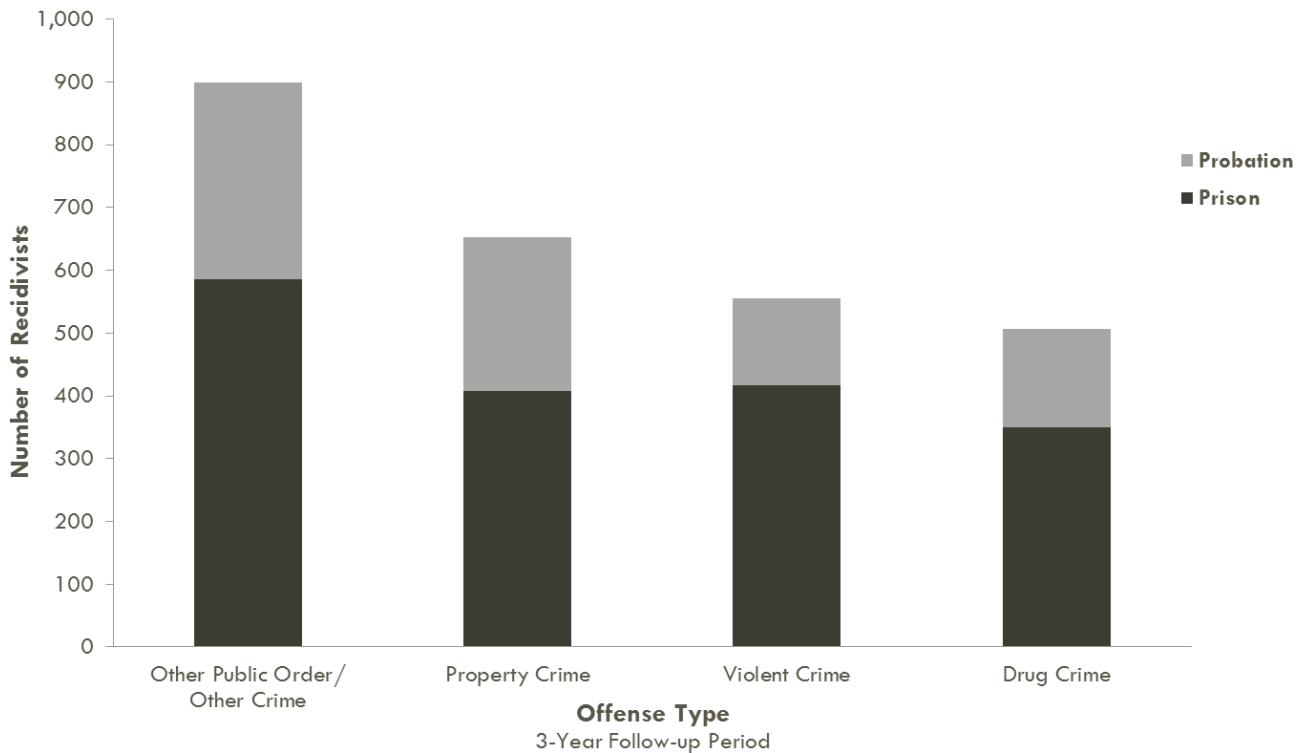


**Recidivism Rates by Length of Prison Stay: 2009 Releases, 3-Year Follow-up**

Length of Stay in Prison	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
One year or less	3,205	1,135	35.4%
1-2 years	2,748	786	28.6%
2-3 years	1,198	337	28.1%
3-5 years	792	221	27.9%
>5 years	734	134	18.3%

### Recidivist Offense and Sentence Types

The graph below shows the types of offenses recidivists committed after being released from prison in 2009, and the resulting sentences to either prison or probation with the WI DOC. Many offenders were convicted of more than one offense; therefore the most serious offense was selected for this analysis. If an offender received sentences of both prison and probation, the prison sentence was selected. The majority of recidivists committed offenses that fell into the Other Public Order/Other Crime category (see table below for examples of offenses that make up each category). Additionally, the majority of recidivists received a disposition that included a prison sentence. See Appendix B (Table 7, page 26) for a complete table of recidivism rates by recidivism offense and sentence type.



#### Top Five Most Common Offenses in Each Category\*

Other Public Order/ Other Crime		Property Crime		Violent Crime		Drug Crime	
Statute Description	N	Statute Description	N	Statute Description	N	Statute Description	N
Disorderly Conduct	196	Burglary- Building or Dwelling	136	Battery	167	Possession of THC (2nd+ Offense)	57
Resisting or Obstructing an Officer	115	Theft- Moveable Property <=\$2500	93	Substantial Battery- Intended Bodily Harm	46	Possession of THC	44
Operating while Under the Influence (5th or 6th)	67	Criminal Damage to Property	73	Armed Robbery	34	Possession of Narcotic Drugs	40
Operating while under the influence (7th, 8th, 9th)	57	Retail Theft- Intentionally Take (<=\$2500)	68	Strangulation and Suffocation	25	Possession of Cocaine/Cocaine(2nd+)	36
Vehicle Operator Flee/Elude Officer	48	Forgery- Uttering	45	Robbery with use of Force	19	Possession with Intent- THC (<=200grams)	34

\* Data from 2009 release cohort, 3-year follow-up period. Only the top five most common offenses committed by recidivists are listed as an example of the types of offenses in each category.

## Appendix A

### *Definition of Recidivism*

The WI DOC defines recidivism as a new offense resulting in a conviction and sentence to the WI DOC. This definition of recidivism is based on a rather straightforward, yet fundamental principle in defining public safety. That is, generally, when members of the public are asked what they expect of an offender who is placed on probation supervision, or released from prison following a conviction for a crime, many simply respond “...that they do not commit another crime.” Therefore, the WI DOC method for calculating recidivism rates centers on an offense date for which the offender, through full due process of the legal system, is ultimately convicted of another crime. These events can be substantiated through documentation of actions taken by the court (e.g., a Judgment of Conviction).

A notable limitation to fully applying this principle to calculating recidivism rates involves not having full access to data containing information on court dispositions that do not come under the custody or supervision of the WI DOC (see bulleted list at right). As additional data on municipal violations, fines, jail-only sentences, or convictions resulting in sentences in other state or federal correctional systems becomes available to the WI DOC, and can meet stringent validation standards, the Department will expand the scope of its recidivism calculations to include these documented incidents of new criminal behavior. Under current circumstances, the Department can only measure what it is able to count and verify as accurate. Despite this limitation, it is important to note that the WI DOC uses the same methodology to calculate recidivism rates for all past recidivism rates, and will continue to use this methodology for all future rates, allowing for consistent reporting of recidivism trends over time.

#### *Wisconsin recidivism rate calculations do not include:*

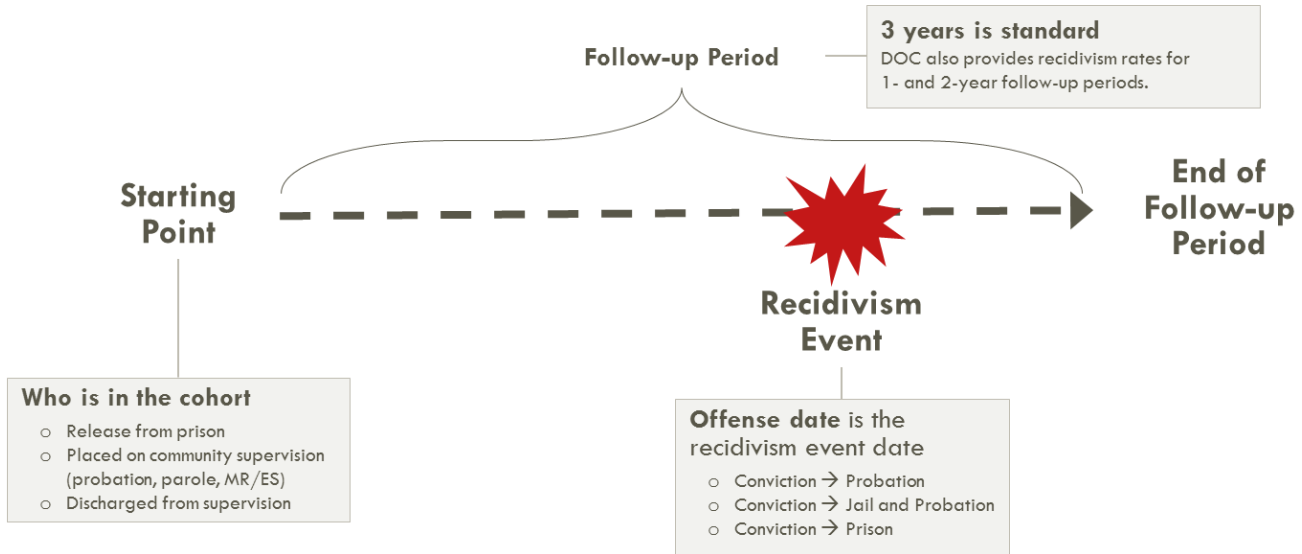
- persons convicted/sentenced in another state
- persons convicted/sentenced in Federal court
- persons convicted/sentenced in another country
- persons arrested with no conviction
- persons charged with no conviction
- persons with municipal ordinance violations
- persons convicted of a crime that results in a court disposition that *does not* lead to custody or supervision under the WI DOC
- persons admitted to jail or prison without a new conviction
- persons who have not been apprehended or convicted of a new crime

### *Methodology*

There are three key components involved in recidivism rate calculations:

- **Starting point** – This defines the cohort, or the group of offenders being examined to see if they recidivated. For example, offenders released from prison in 2007, or offenders beginning supervision in 2005.
- **Follow-up period** – Timeframe in which an offender has the opportunity to engage in a recidivism event. The standard timeframe used for follow-up periods is three years, but other follow-up periods (one, two, five, ten years) are common as well. To accurately measure recidivism rates all offenders in the cohort must have the same amount of follow-up time.

- **Recidivism event** – The measure that identifies whether and when recidivism occurred. Some commonly used recidivism events are arrest, new conviction, new prison sentence, and admission to prison. WI DOC defines a recidivism event as an offense that results in a new conviction and sentence to WI DOC custody or supervision. The WI DOC uses the date of the offense that resulted in the conviction as the date of the recidivism event. Note that the conviction and sentence can occur after the end of an offender’s follow-up period.



It is important to note what starting point, follow-up period, and recidivism event are being used when comparing results from different recidivism studies, as rates are not comparable when any one of these components are different.

**Starting Point**

For this report, offenders released from a WI DOC facility between 1990 and 2011 were included in the various release year cohorts with the following exception: offenders who were released from a temporary stay in a WI DOC facility, such as a hold, an alternative to revocation (ATR), or an alternative to prison (ATP) were not included in the release cohorts. Only those offenders who were released from a period of incarceration due to completing the confinement portion of their sentence or revocation were included in each release cohort.

An offender was only counted once in any given cohort. If an offender was released more than once during a calendar year, the last release in the year was used as the offender’s starting point for his or her follow-up period.

**Follow-up Period**

Follow-up periods for a given starting point cohort were the same for every offender in the cohort. Meaning if an offender was released from prison on January 1, 1995, he was followed until December 31, 1997 for a



three-year follow-up period, while an offender released on December 31, 1995 was followed until December 30, 1998.

Offenders who died within the timeframe of each specified follow-up period were removed from the starting point cohort. For example, an offender who died one and a half years after being released would not be included in the two-year follow-up cohort, because he died before the two years were complete. However, this offender would still be included in the one-year follow-up cohort, because he did not die until after he had been in the community for the entire one year following his release. The WI DOC is only able to track the deaths of offenders who are under the supervision of the WI DOC at the time of their deaths. Therefore offenders who died and were not under WI DOC custody or supervision at that time remain in the cohort.

### Recidivism Event

An offender was considered a recidivist if he or she committed a new crime and was convicted and sentenced to WI DOC custody or supervision within his or her follow-up period. Although an offender must be convicted and sentenced to WI DOC custody or supervision to be considered a recidivist, it is the date of the actual offense that is considered the date of the recidivism event, not the date of conviction, sentencing, or admission to prison. Therefore, the offense itself must have occurred during the offender's follow-up period. If an offender had multiple offense dates in a given follow-up period the earliest offense date was counted as the recidivism event. An offender can only be counted as a recidivist once within any given cohort.

For some older data, offense dates were missing but corresponding sentence dates were available. Estimated offense dates were calculated for all missing offense dates using the following equation:

$$\text{Estimated Offense Date} = \text{Sentence Date} - 209 \text{ days}^*$$

\*Median number of days between offense and sentence dates based on sentence dates that occurred between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2011

If an estimated offense date fell within an offender's follow-up period he or she was counted as a recidivist.

WI DOC's methodology considers the date of an offense as the date of the recidivism event. Often an offender is not arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced until years after committing an offense. The WI DOC does not obtain data for that offense until the time that the offender is sentenced to custody or supervision under the Department. Therefore, past recidivism rates can change depending on when data is analyzed. For example, if an offender was arrested, convicted, and sentenced in 2009 for an offense committed in 1996, a recidivism rate calculated in 2008 for a 1995 starting point cohort would not count the offender as a recidivist. However, if that rate was calculated again in 2010, the offender would be considered a recidivist for the 1995 starting point cohort.

Even when an offender is arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced shortly after the occurrence of an offense, the WI DOC still will not obtain offense data until 209 days (on average) after the offense. Therefore, recidivism rates calculated by the WI DOC provide for a minimum one-year lag time to account for the time between apprehension for a new crime and subsequent court disposition. This allows the Department to capture data on offenders who committed crimes during the last year of their follow-up periods, but who were not convicted and sentenced until sometime after the follow-up period. For example, a report of 2009

release from prison recidivism rates with a three-year follow-up period would not be published until after 2013, allowing for the three-year follow-up period (ending in 2012) and the one-year lag time (ending in 2013).

Furthermore, WI DOC is only able to calculate recidivism rates based on the data that is available to the Department. Therefore offenses that result in convictions to only county jail or fines are not counted as recidivism events because the WI DOC is not notified when offenders receive these types of sentences or court dispositions. At this point in time, the WI DOC is only able to obtain and validate data on offenders who are under WI DOC custody or supervision.

### **Age at Release**

An offender's age at release was calculated as the number of years between the offender's date of birth and his or her release date. The offender's age was rounded down, meaning that if 25 years and 300 days had passed between an offender's date of birth and release date, that offender was identified as being 25 years old.

### **Time to Recidivism Event**

Time to recidivism event was calculated as the number of months between the offender's date of release and the date of his or her recidivism offense. The number of months was rounded down, such that if the time between the release and the recidivism offense was two months and 27 days, the offender was categorized as having recidivated in two months from his or her release.

### **Length of Prison Stay**

Length of prison stay was calculated as the number of months between the offender's admission date and release date. The category of 1-2 years includes offenders whose lengths of stay were 24 months; the 2-3 year category includes lengths of stay of 36 months; and the 3-5 year category includes lengths of stay of 60 months.

### **Recidivism Offense and Sentence Type**

Recidivism offense categories were based on the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) Performance-Based Measures System (PBMS) standards. While the ASCA standards were followed as closely as possible in the categorization of offenses, supplementary rules were developed to aid in categorizing statutes that did not clearly fit into one category or another. Offense categorization methodology is available upon request.

If an offender had committed offenses on multiple dates within his or her follow-up period, the first offense date was selected as the date on which the offender became a recidivist. To determine the offender's most serious offense, the offenses committed on that offense date only were examined.

### **Percentage Change in Recidivism Rate**

The percentage change in the recidivism rate reported in the executive summary and on page six is calculated by dividing the percentage-point change by the initial recidivism rate and multiplying the resulting number by 100. This yields the percentage by which the recidivism rate changed. For example, in 1990 the recidivism rate was 43.1%, and it decreased 13.0 percentage points to 30.1% in 2009. Therefore, the resulting change in the recidivism rate was 30.2%.

### *Recidivism vs. Reincarceration*

One statistic commonly reported by most corrections agencies that is sometimes confused with a recidivism rate is a reincarceration rate. This statistic is the percentage of offenders released from prison who then return to prison for **any** reason within a specified follow-up period. For the WI DOC, this would include offenders who returned to prison for a temporary stay in a WI DOC facility, such as a hold, an alternative to revocation (ATR), or an alternative to prison (ATP), and those who returned for revocations without new sentences. The Department will be tracking reincarceration rates as a means to report on prison bed utilization and population projections, but not as a means to calculate recidivism rates.

## Appendix B

*Table 1. Recidivism Trends 1990-2011*

Release Year	1-Year Follow-Up			2-Year Follow-Up			3-Year Follow-Up		
	Total Releases*	Recidivists**	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
1990	2,841	624	22.0%	2,834	988	34.9%	2,828	1,218	43.1%
1991	3,606	828	23.0%	3,594	1,257	35.0%	3,582	1,533	42.8%
1992	3,649	856	23.5%	3,640	1,254	34.5%	3,631	1,541	42.4%
1993	4,276	1,009	23.6%	4,263	1,567	36.8%	4,255	1,927	45.3%
1994	4,049	889	22.0%	4,035	1,437	35.6%	4,018	1,752	43.6%
1995	4,945	1,086	22.0%	4,936	1,659	33.6%	4,922	2,024	41.1%
1996	4,844	1,074	22.2%	4,823	1,617	33.5%	4,812	1,992	41.4%
1997	5,010	998	19.9%	4,990	1,594	31.9%	4,980	1,969	39.5%
1998	4,781	971	20.3%	4,772	1,473	30.9%	4,761	1,801	37.8%
1999	5,183	1,022	19.7%	5,176	1,638	31.6%	5,171	2,081	40.2%
2000	7,162	1,283	17.9%	7,130	2,174	30.5%	7,121	2,822	39.6%
2001	6,902	1,320	19.1%	6,877	2,161	31.4%	6,864	2,699	39.3%
2002	7,552	1,337	17.7%	7,541	2,181	28.9%	7,523	2,739	36.4%
2003	7,935	1,432	18.0%	7,897	2,270	28.7%	7,870	2,886	36.7%
2004	8,383	1,465	17.5%	8,349	2,365	28.3%	8,323	2,978	35.8%
2005	8,609	1,435	16.7%	8,573	2,303	26.9%	8,539	2,897	33.9%
2006	8,456	1,437	17.0%	8,412	2,242	26.7%	8,377	2,807	33.5%
2007	8,576	1,392	16.2%	8,547	2,192	25.6%	8,525	2,795	32.8%
2008	9,153	1,396	15.3%	9,115	2,223	24.4%	9,094	2,781	30.6%
2009	8,746	1,302	14.9%	8,709	2,037	23.4%	8,677	2,613	30.1%
2010	8,555	1,254	14.7%	8,499	2,046	24.1%	—	—	—
2011	7,698	1,097	14.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—

\* Total release numbers may differ from those in past years' reports. Data sets are re-run for every new report, and numbers may change slightly due to corrections in data entry regarding release dates or release types for past years.

\*\* Recidivism rates may differ slightly from those in past reports due to recent convictions and sentences to WI DOC for offenses that occurred many years before the offender was apprehended. See Appendix A (page 17) for a more detailed explanation.

Table 2. Recidivism Rates by Gender 2000-2011

Release Year	1-Year Follow-Up						2-Year Follow-Up						3-Year Follow-Up					
	Females			Males			Females			Males			Females			Males		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
2000	682	91	13.3%	6,480	1,192	18.4%	682	138	20.2%	6,448	2,036	31.6%	682	187	27.4%	6,439	2,635	40.9%
2001	667	82	12.3%	6,235	1,238	19.9%	665	139	20.9%	6,212	2,022	32.5%	663	187	28.2%	6,201	2,512	40.5%
2002	639	85	13.3%	6,913	1,252	18.1%	637	142	22.3%	6,904	2,039	29.5%	634	186	29.3%	6,889	2,553	37.1%
2003	678	79	11.7%	7,257	1,353	18.6%	677	138	20.4%	7,220	2,132	29.5%	672	171	25.4%	7,198	2,715	37.7%
2004	708	81	11.4%	7,675	1,384	18.0%	706	152	21.5%	7,643	2,213	29.0%	706	200	28.3%	7,617	2,778	36.5%
2005	735	100	13.6%	7,874	1,335	17.0%	733	151	20.6%	7,840	2,152	27.4%	732	202	27.6%	7,807	2,695	34.5%
2006	701	79	11.3%	7,755	1,358	17.5%	697	136	19.5%	7,715	2,106	27.3%	695	164	23.6%	7,682	2,643	34.4%
2007	681	101	14.8%	7,895	1,291	16.4%	680	142	20.9%	7,867	2,050	26.1%	679	182	26.8%	7,846	2,613	33.3%
2008	780	72	9.2%	8,373	1,324	15.8%	778	128	16.5%	8,337	2,095	25.1%	776	171	22.0%	8,318	2,610	31.4%
2009	695	75	10.8%	8,051	1,227	15.2%	692	122	17.6%	8,017	1,915	23.9%	690	158	22.9%	7,987	2,455	30.7%
2010	642	54	8.4%	7,913	1,200	15.2%	637	110	17.3%	7,862	1,936	24.6%	—	—	—	—	—	—
2011	632	76	12.0%	7,066	1,021	14.4%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Table 3. Recidivism Rates by Race 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up*

Release Year	American Indian/ Alaskan Native			Asian or Pacific Islander			Black			White		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	---	Total Releases	Recidivists	---	Total Releases	Recidivists	---	Total Releases	Recidivists	---
2000	223	103	---	34	9	---	3,830	1,613	42.1%	3,018	1,093	36.2%
2001	243	118	---	33	5	---	3,443	1,422	41.3%	3,135	1,152	36.7%
2002	265	112	---	39	8	---	3,721	1,490	40.0%	3,493	1,129	32.3%
2003	245	110	---	44	11	---	3,865	1,508	39.0%	3,712	1,257	33.9%
2004	295	133	---	51	15	---	3,874	1,475	38.1%	4,092	1,355	33.1%
2005	309	133	---	65	17	---	3,982	1,420	35.7%	4,161	1,326	31.9%
2006	315	131	---	49	10	---	3,910	1,382	35.3%	4,081	1,284	31.5%
2007	309	126	---	63	18	---	3,898	1,299	33.3%	4,232	1,349	31.9%
2008	348	135	---	50	14	---	4,029	1,290	32.0%	4,646	1,341	28.9%
2009	335	128	---	62	13	---	3,770	1,163	30.8%	4,473	1,309	29.3%

*Table 4. Recidivism Rates by Release Type 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up*

Release Year	Discharged without Supervision			Non-Discretionary Release to Supervision			Discretionary Release to Parole Supervision			Other		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
2000	489	231	47.2%	4,292	1,844	43.0%	2,298	739	32.2%	42	8	---
2001	655	304	46.4%	4,328	1,832	42.3%	1,841	554	30.1%	40	9	---
2002	589	247	41.9%	4,852	1,899	39.1%	2,048	585	28.6%	34	8	---
2003	494	210	42.5%	5,510	2,151	39.0%	1,826	517	28.3%	40	8	---
2004	403	169	41.9%	6,214	2,327	37.4%	1,661	470	28.3%	45	12	---
2005	412	170	41.3%	6,967	2,447	35.1%	1,120	267	23.8%	40	13	---
2006	382	149	39.0%	7,246	2,478	34.2%	711	173	24.3%	38	7	---
2007	481	173	36.0%	7,504	2,506	33.4%	508	110	21.7%	32	6	---
2008	543	199	36.6%	8,072	2,491	30.9%	438	83	18.9%	41	8	---
2009	535	176	32.9%	7,726	2,364	30.6%	367	62	16.9%	49	11	---

*Table 5. Recidivism Rates by Prior Periods of Confinement 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up*

Release Year	None			One			Two			Three or More		
	Total Releases	Recidivists		Total Releases	Recidivists		Total Releases	Recidivists		Total Releases	Recidivists	
2000	3,699	1,241	33.5%	1,669	686	41.1%	860	400	46.5%	893	495	55.4%
2001	3,338	1,136	34.0%	1,615	623	38.6%	895	399	44.6%	1,016	541	53.2%
2002	3,592	1,066	29.7%	1,802	681	37.8%	949	392	41.3%	1,180	600	50.8%
2003	3,708	1,124	30.3%	1,757	678	38.6%	1,067	464	43.5%	1,338	620	46.3%
2004	3,872	1,165	30.1%	1,787	655	36.7%	1,109	440	39.7%	1,555	718	46.2%
2005	3,889	1,074	27.6%	1,774	622	35.1%	1,117	424	38.0%	1,759	777	44.2%
2006	3,375	913	27.1%	1,747	617	35.3%	1,215	432	35.6%	2,040	845	41.4%
2007	3,267	830	25.4%	1,754	598	34.1%	1,252	442	35.3%	2,252	925	41.1%
2008	3,450	806	23.4%	1,850	566	30.6%	1,256	433	34.5%	2,538	976	38.5%
2009	3,425	849	24.8%	1,629	489	30.0%	1,158	396	34.2%	2,465	879	35.7%



*Table 6. Recidivism Rates by Length of Prison Stay 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up*

Release Year	One Year or Less			1-2 Years			2-3 Years			3-5 Years			>5 Years		
	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate	Total Releases	Recidivists	Recidivism Rate
2000	2,651	1,122	42.3%	2,064	830	40.2%	1,103	421	38.2%	809	307	37.9%	494	142	28.7%
2001	2,463	1,057	42.9%	1,929	751	38.9%	944	351	37.2%	910	341	37.5%	618	199	32.2%
2002	2,683	1,087	40.5%	2,069	756	36.5%	1,042	371	35.6%	942	319	33.9%	787	206	26.2%
2003	2,717	1,133	41.7%	2,284	826	36.2%	1,060	364	34.3%	928	317	34.2%	881	246	27.9%
2004	3,030	1,262	41.7%	2,419	821	33.9%	1,091	381	34.9%	879	286	32.5%	904	228	25.2%
2005	3,149	1,193	37.9%	2,571	898	34.9%	1,141	380	33.3%	867	260	30.0%	811	166	20.5%
2006	3,155	1,187	37.6%	2,483	824	33.2%	1,133	380	33.5%	908	253	27.9%	698	163	23.4%
2007	3,322	1,246	37.5%	2,657	865	32.6%	1,029	341	33.1%	863	232	26.9%	654	111	17.0%
2008	3,323	1,161	34.9%	2,993	909	30.4%	1,141	343	30.1%	876	222	25.3%	761	146	19.2%
2009	3,205	1,135	35.4%	2,748	786	28.6%	1,198	337	28.1%	792	221	27.9%	734	134	18.3%

*Table 7. Recidivist Offense and Sentence Types 2000-2009: 3-Year Follow-up*

Release Year	Prison Sentence								Total
	Violent Crime		Property Crime		Drug Offenses		Other Public Order/ Other Crime		
2000	441	23.8%	522	28.1%	470	25.3%	422	22.7%	1,855
2001	440	24.0%	469	25.6%	447	24.4%	474	25.9%	1,830
2002	422	22.6%	465	24.9%	486	26.0%	493	26.4%	1,866
2003	427	21.4%	468	23.5%	533	26.8%	563	28.3%	1,991
2004	426	21.2%	468	23.3%	545	27.1%	570	28.4%	2,009
2005	416	20.0%	470	22.6%	562	27.0%	636	30.5%	2,084
2006	420	21.5%	436	22.3%	487	24.9%	612	31.3%	1,955
2007	430	22.4%	424	22.1%	449	23.4%	613	32.0%	1,916
2008	424	22.3%	404	21.2%	451	23.7%	625	32.8%	1,904
2009	416	23.7%	407	23.2%	350	19.9%	585	33.3%	1,758

Release Year	Probation Sentence								Total
	Violent Crime		Property Crime		Drug Offenses		Other Public Order/ Other Crime		
2000	178	18.4%	303	31.3%	124	12.8%	362	37.4%	967
2001	166	19.1%	288	33.1%	106	12.2%	309	35.6%	869
2002	163	18.7%	241	27.6%	138	15.8%	331	37.9%	873
2003	167	18.7%	281	31.4%	152	17.0%	295	33.0%	895
2004	180	18.6%	256	26.4%	186	19.2%	347	35.8%	969
2005	136	16.7%	218	26.8%	150	18.5%	309	38.0%	813
2006	130	15.3%	258	30.3%	164	19.2%	300	35.2%	852
2007	165	18.8%	253	28.8%	162	18.4%	299	34.0%	879
2008	153	17.4%	258	29.4%	183	20.9%	283	32.3%	877
2009	139	16.3%	245	28.7%	157	18.4%	314	36.7%	855