

# Florida Prison Recidivism Report: Releases from 2006 to 2013

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Florida Prison Recidivism Report is produced annually by the Bureau of Research and Data Analysis within the Florida Department of Corrections. The study examines the recidivism rate of Florida's released inmate population. While the use of recidivism as a performance indicator of the state's rehabilitative efforts can be debated, the analysis itself is of significant public importance. Given that 87% of inmates housed in Florida prisons today will one day be released back into our communities, those responsible for the state's planning and budgeting need to know the likelihood that an inmate who is released today will one day return to Florida's prison system. More importantly, for the public and those charged with ensuring public safety, the state's recidivism rate is an important measure of criminal activity produced by released prisoners.

When discussing recidivism rates, the factors that influence recidivism must be considered. For example, recidivism rates vary across age groups, racial/ethnic groups, and gender. To determine where to devote correctional and community resources, we must identify which groups are most likely to fail when they are released from Florida's prisons and which groups are likely to successfully re-enter society.

This study finds that the factors that influence Florida's recidivism rate are generally consistent with existing research. A report by the Pew Center on the States shows the overall recidivism rate (**return to prison for any reason within three years of release**) for releases from 33 states participating in the study was approximately 43%.<sup>1</sup> A 2014 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics of multiple states reports an overall recidivism rate of nearly 50%.<sup>2</sup>

It must be noted that, unlike most states, Florida paroles very few inmates and only about one third of released inmates have court-ordered supervision following their release. Historically, inmates who are supervised following release have recidivated at a higher rate than those without post-release supervision. Since fewer of Florida's released inmates participate in court-ordered supervision, Florida's

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Center on the States, *State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons* (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 2011) [www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS\\_Assets/2011/Pew\\_State\\_of\\_Recidivism.pdf](http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2011/Pew_State_of_Recidivism.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United States. U.S. Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010*. By Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper, Ph.D., and Howard N. Snyder, Ph.D. Washington D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014. Web. 24 Apr. 2014. [www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf)

recidivism rate is lower than that of other states. It is not surprising that California, for example, releases the majority of their inmates to supervision and their recidivism rate is 61.0% (FY 08-09 releases).<sup>3</sup>

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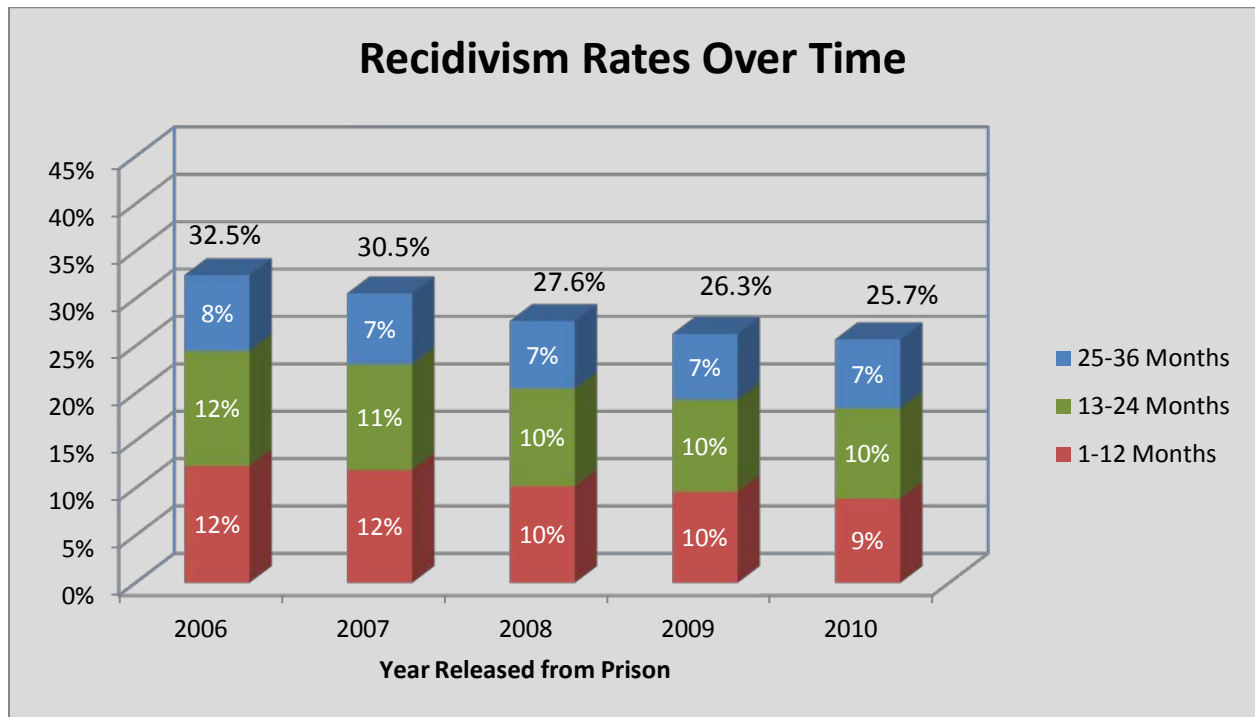
<sup>3</sup> "2013 Outcome Evaluation Report." *California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)*. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Jan. 2014. Web. 24 Apr. 2014. [www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult\\_Research\\_Branch/Research\\_Documents/Outcome\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/Outcome_Evaluation_Report_2013.pdf)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### *Defining Recidivism*

Recidivism is defined as a **return to prison**. The return to prison may be a result of a new conviction or a violation of post-prison supervision. The follow-up periods (typically reported as **three years**) are calculated from prison release date to the date of readmission to prison.



### *Changing Recidivism Rates*

The last three-year release cohorts have shown slight decreases in three-year recidivism rates.

These decreases are shown below:

- Inmates released in 2008 who returned to prison within three years → 27.6% recidivism rate
- Inmates released in 2009 who returned to prison within three years → 26.3% recidivism rate
- Inmates released in 2010 who returned to prison within three years → 25.7% recidivism rate

### *Factors to be Considered*

For 2010 releases, some factors that influence an inmate's likelihood of recidivism include:

- Number of prior prison commitments
  - More Priors → Higher Likelihood of Recidivating

- Whether the inmate has a supervision term after release
  - Supervised → Higher Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate's tested education level
  - Higher Grade Level → Lower Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate's behavior while in prison (*for male inmates only*)
  - More Disciplinary Reports → Higher Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate's age upon release
  - Younger → Higher Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate-reported drug screening score
  - Higher scores → Higher Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate's ethnicity
  - Hispanic → Lower Likelihood of Recidivating
- The inmate's custody level upon release
  - Low → Lower Likelihood of Recidivating
- Number of visits the inmate gets one year prior to release
  - More Visits → Lower Likelihood of Recidivating

## METHODOLOGY

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All inmates released from Florida prisons from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010 are included in the study with the following exceptions:

- Inmates who died or were executed have been omitted from the calculation of recidivism rates.
- Inmates who are missing information on the factors of interest are omitted from the analysis of factor influences.
- Inmates with more than one release in a calendar year have only the first such release included.
- Inmates with detainers in place at the time of release are omitted.

This methodology follows the definition of recidivism stated by the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) Performance-Based Measures System Counting Rules.<sup>4</sup> For this study, survival analysis techniques are used to compute recidivism rates and to define the statistical models that determine which factors significantly influence recidivism rates. The basic rates for tables and graphs are computed from Kaplan-Meier estimates of the survival curve using right-censored data. The analyses of factor significance are conducted using Cox models (proportional hazards regression) of the same data. The analysis used a 5% level of significance to determine the factors to include, and a stepwise selection routine for determining the order of importance. The correlations between factors were considered during the stepwise routine to eliminate highly correlated variables from both being selected for inclusion in the model.

The following variables were considered for inclusion in the model:

- **Inmate Background Information**

- Gender is male – Yes/No
- Number of prior prison commitments
- Age at release
- Age at first offense
- Race is black – Yes/No
- Ethnicity is Hispanic – Yes/No
- Confirmed or suspected gang member – Yes/No

- **Inmate Incarceration Information**

- Time served in prison (current incarceration in months)
- Custody level– Low or High

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<sup>4</sup> “ASCA Performance-Based Measures System Counting Rules” (April 2013 Web)  
[http://www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/5685/PBMS%20KeyIndicators%204\\_3\\_13.pdf?1365012031](http://www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/5685/PBMS%20KeyIndicators%204_3_13.pdf?1365012031)

- Number of disciplinary reports during current incarceration
  - Number of violent disciplinary reports during current incarceration
  - Internal classification score
  - Substance abuse severity score
  - Diagnosed mental illness – Yes/No
  - Supervision to follow – Yes/No
- **Inmate Education Information**
- Has inmate obtained a GED/HS certificate – Yes/No
  - Has inmate received a vocational certificate – Yes/No
  - Most recent Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) score (education level in grade equivalents)
- **Inmate Criminal History**
- Worst violent offense in criminal history (Categories for murder/manslaughter, sex offense, robbery, other violent offense (like assault or kidnapping) – Yes/No)
  - Worst violent offense within 15 years prior to admission (Categories for murder/manslaughter, sex offense, robbery, and other violent offense – Yes/No)
  - Offense counts in criminal history (Categories for murder/manslaughter, sex offense, robbery, other violent offense, burglary, theft, drugs, weapons, and other non-violent offense)
  - Offense counts in criminal history (Categories for violent, property, drugs, and other non-violent offense)
  - Non-violent offense counts within 5 years prior to admission (Categories for burglary, theft, drugs, weapons, and other non-violent offense)
- **Inmate Social Relations**
- Inmate is concerned about child's welfare – Yes/No
  - Number of visits inmate gets 12 months prior to release
  - Does inmate have enemies – Yes/No
  - Inmate's family is in crisis – Yes/No
  - Influence of family on the inmate – Positive/ Negative
  - Influence of friends on the inmate – Positive/ Negative
  - Influence of spouse on the inmate – Positive/ Negative
  - Does inmate have spouse – Yes/No
  - Inmate's relationship with his/her attorney – Positive/Negative
  - Does inmate have any other influences in his/her life – Positive/Negative

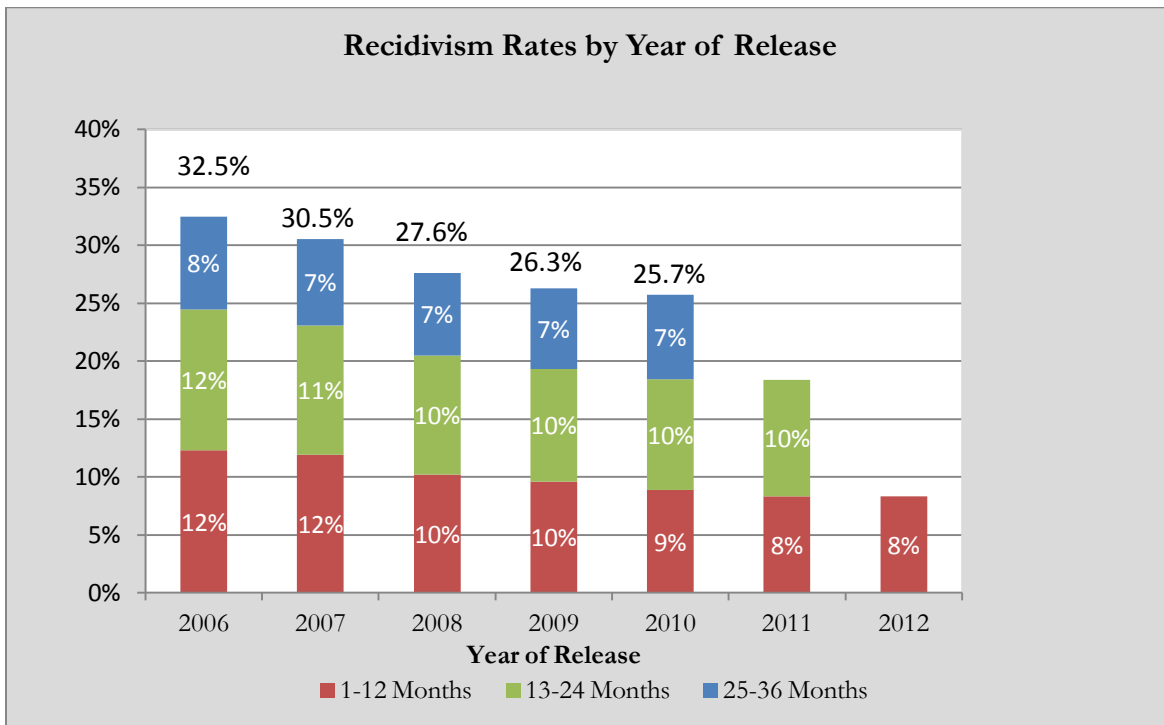
Note that for the "worst" offense factors the hierarchy is: murder/manslaughter > sex offense > robbery > other violent offense. Each inmate can only be designated in one of the categories. For example, if he has committed both sex offenses and robbery, he will be considered in the "worst offense is sex offense" category, not in the "worst offense is robbery" category.



Also, for the criminal history factors, only those offenses for which the inmate received either a Florida prison sentence, or Florida community supervision sentence, are considered. Crimes in Florida that resulted in other sanctions, such as fines, county jail or federal sentences, are not considered. Arrests, supervision or prison sentences outside of Florida are not considered unless they are part of the inmate's Florida sentence.

## RECIDIVISM RATES OVER TIME

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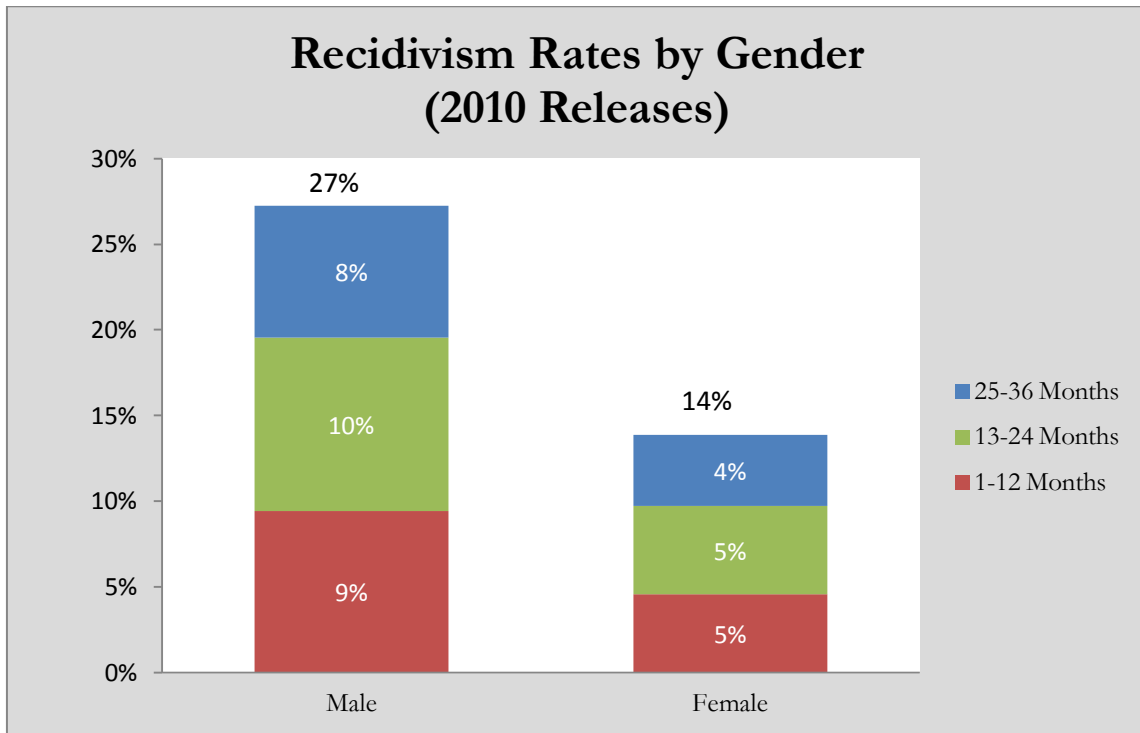


The 36 months recidivism rates, when examined one year of releases at a time, range from 25.7% to 32.5% in the five years for which three-year rates can be computed.

Recidivism rates are certainly affected by factors outside the influence of the Department of Corrections, such as unemployment, crime rates and local criminal justice issues including jail bed availability and judicial behavior. Statewide initiatives such as truth-in-sentencing, increased use of mandatory prison terms and inconsistent funding for inmate rehabilitative programs may also influence recidivism rates. For these reasons, recidivism rates cannot be used as the only measure of operational performance for the prison system. It is a measure of a multitude of societal issues working for and against the released inmate, before he ever receives a prison sentence and after he is released.

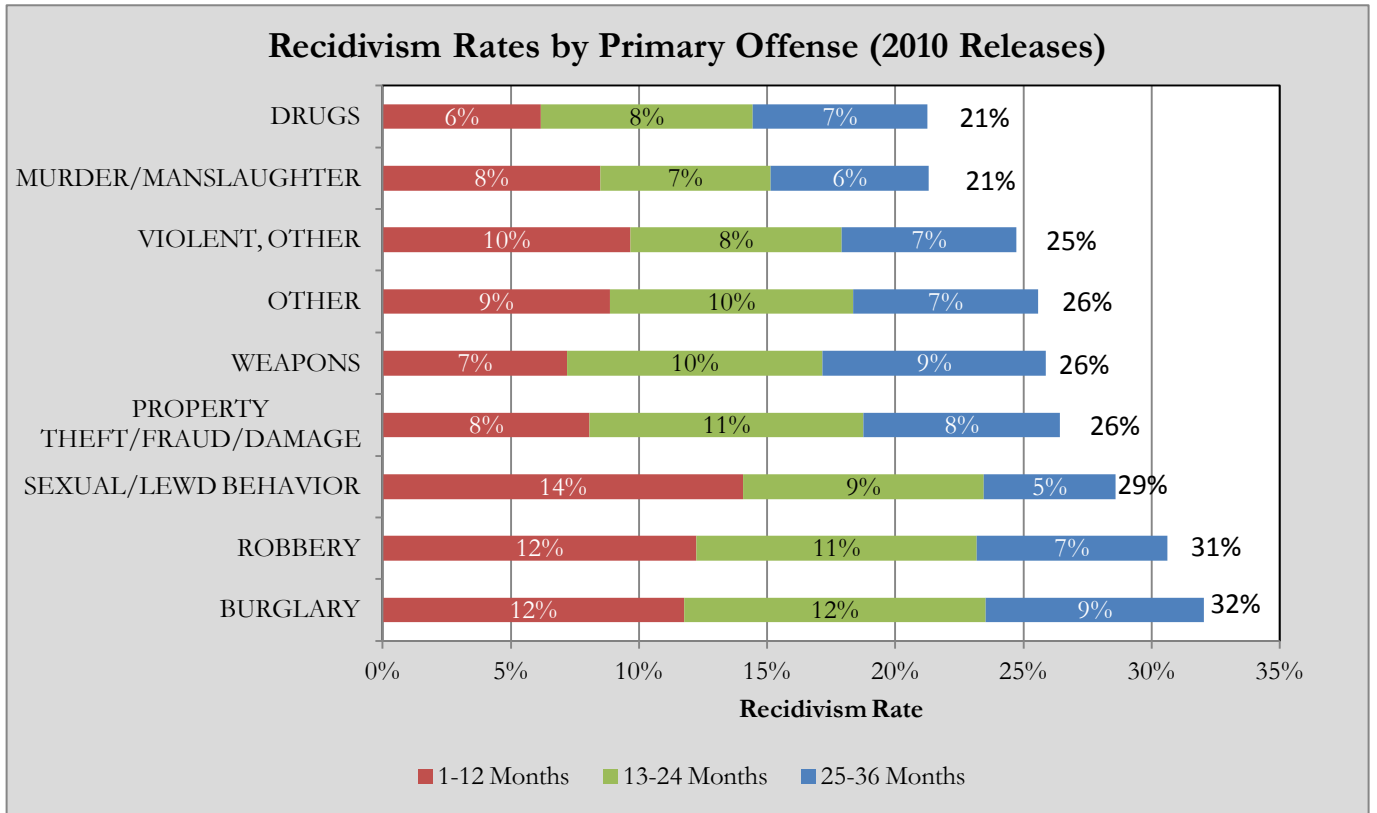
## RECIDIVISM RATES AND GENDER FOR INMATES RELEASED 2010

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With regard to gender, female inmates' recidivism rates are much lower than male inmates' recidivism rates. At three years, the male recidivism rate is 27% while the female rate is only 14%. Other factors could impact the difference in the recidivism rates. While the average time served for males is 38 months, the average time served for females is only 25 months. Approximately 32% of female releases have some type of supervision to follow compared to 35% of males. These factors and others may explain some of the differences in the recidivism rate for males and females.

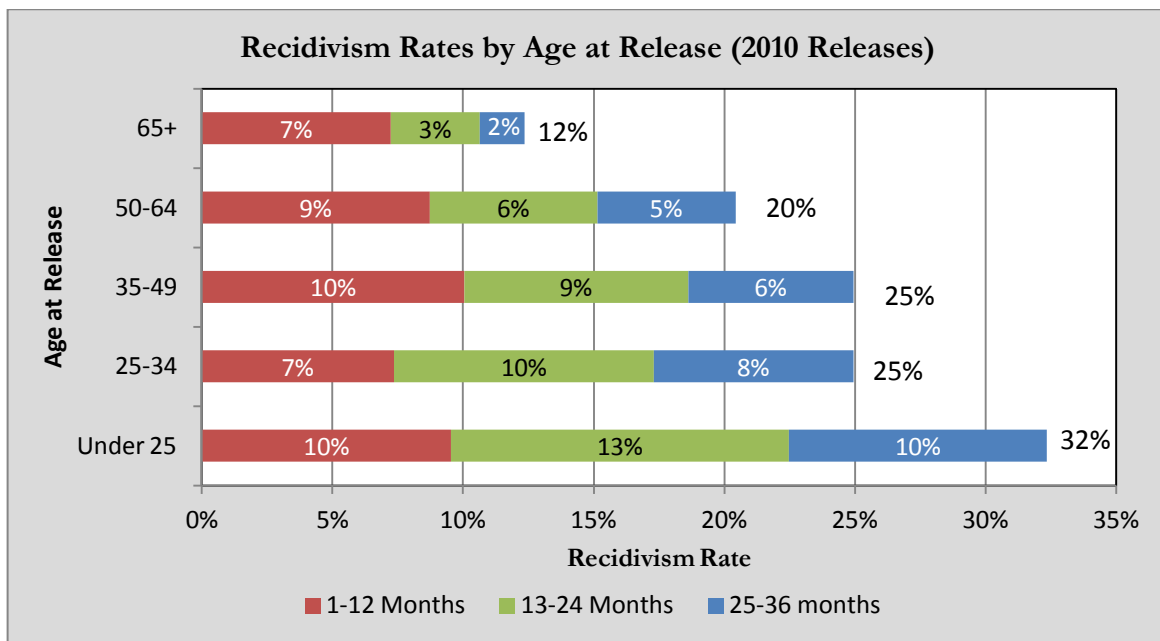
## RECIDIVISM RATES AND PRIMARY OFFENSES FOR INMATES RELEASED 2010



The graph above shows that inmates serving a prison sentence for drug offenses have the lowest recidivism rates, followed closely by murder and manslaughter offenders. Inmates serving time for burglary, robbery, sex, property, and weapons offenses have higher recidivism rates than average recidivism rates.

## RECIDIVISM RATES AND AGE FOR INMATES RELEASED 2010

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An inmate's likelihood to recidivate decreases with age. Note that there is little difference in the recidivism rates between the age group of 25-34 and 35-49.

**RECIDIVISM RATES – MODEL FACTOR TABLES  
FOR INMATES RELEASED 2010**

**Table 1. Hazard Ratios for Categorical Factors Selected by Model (Male)**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Overall Releases 2010 (Available Data Only)</b>	<b>Percent of Release Cohort</b>	<b>Recidivism Rate</b>	<b>Hazard Ratio</b>
Supervision to Follow	Yes	9,978	35%	38%	1.944**
	No	18,647	65%	21%	
Gang Membership	Yes	2,175	8%	45%	1.461**
	No	26,450	92%	26%	
Ethnicity	Hispanic	2,516	9%	20%	0.676**
	Non-Hispanic	26,109	91%	28%	
Custody at Release	Low (Community or Minimum)	12,764	45%	23%	0.833**
Sex Offense within 15 Years Prior to Admission	Sex Offense	1,794	6%	31%	1.259**
No Spouse	Yes	5,588	22%	30%	1.059*
	No	19,325	78%	27%	
Inmate Has Other Negative Influences in Their Life	Yes	329	1%	38%	1.191*
	No	24,584	99%	27%	
Murder Offense within 15 Years Prior to Admission	Murder Offense	660	2%	22%	0.842*

\*\* : p-value ≤ 0.01; \* : 0.01 < p-value < 0.05; NS: Not Significant at α = 0.05

**Table 2. Hazard Ratios for Continuous Factors Selected by Model (Male)**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Hazard Ratio</b>
Criminal History	Number of Prior Prison Commitments (0-9)	0.0	0.7	1.277**
Age at Release	Age at Release (15-82)	33	35	0.97**
Institutional Behavior	Number of Disciplinary Reports During Current Incar. (0-128)	1.0	2.6	1.012**
Criminal History	Number of Burglary Offenses (0-102)	0	1.0	1.036**
Education Level	Most Recent Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Score (Grade Equivalents of 1-12.9)	7.1	†	0.962**
Number of Visits Inmate Gets 12 Months Prior to Release	Number of Visits(0-113)	0	2.9	0.987**
Substance Abuse Severity Score	Inmate-Reported Drug Screening Score (0-14)	4.0	5.4	1.016**
Criminal History	Number of Theft Offenses (0-114)	0.0	1.8	1.023**
	Number of Other Offenses within 5 Years Prior to Admission (0-13)	0.0	0.4	1.071**
	Number of Drug Offenses within 5 Years Prior to Admission (0-23)	0.0	0.9	1.027**

\*\* $p$ -value  $\leq 0.01$ ; \* $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ; NS: Not Significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; †: An average cannot be calculated for grade equivalent TABE scores since these are not interval scale.

**Table 3. Hazard Ratios for Categorical Factors Selected by Model (Female)**

Factors	Values	Overall Releases 2010 (Available Data Only)	Percent of Release Cohort	Recidivism Rate	Hazard Ratio
Supervision to Follow	Yes	1,193	32%	20%	1.894**
	No	2,536	68%	11%	
Custody at Release	Low (Community or Minimum)	2,575	69%	12%	0.709**
Most Serious Crime in Inmate History	Murder	84	2%	***	0.24**
Inmate feels Animosity Towards Their Attorney	Yes	371	12%	10%	0.643**
	No	2,666	88%	15%	
Family has a Negative Influence on the Inmate	Yes	87	3%	***	1.582*
	No	2,950	97%		
Inmate Concerned about Child's Welfare	Yes	2,078	68%	13.9%	1.214*
	No	959	32%	14.2%	

\*\* : p-value ≤ 0.01; \* : 0.01 < p-value < 0.05; NS: Not Significant at α = 0.05; \*\*\*: Sample size is too small.

**Table 4. Hazard Ratios for Continuous Factors Selected by Model (Female)**

Factors	Value	Median	Mean	Hazard Ratio
Criminal History	Number of Prior Prison Commitments (0-7)	0.0	0.4	1.474**
Age at First Offense	Age at First Offense (13-63)	24.0	26.6	0.957**
Substance Abuse Severity Score	Inmate-Reported Drug Screening Score (0-14)	6.0	6.5	1.056**
Number of Visits Inmate Gets 12 Month Prior to Release	Number of Visits(0-89)	0	2.5	0.971**
Criminal History	Number of Drug Offenses (0-28)	1.0	2.0	0.963*

\*\* : p-value ≤ 0.01; \* : 0.01 < p-value < 0.05; NS: Not Significant at α = 0.05;



Note that hazard ratios in the above tables are interpreted as the multiple of the likelihood of failure. For example, in Table 1 male inmates who are gang members have a hazard ratio of 1.461. This ratio means that a male inmate who is a gang member is  $(1.461-1=0.461)$  46.1% more likely to fail than a male inmate who is not a gang member with all other factors held constant (meaning they are identical on all factors in the model except for gang membership).

On the other hand, if the hazard ratio is less than one, the interpretation is a percent reduction in likelihood to fail. For example, in Table 1 a male Hispanic inmate is  $(1-0.676=.324)$  32.4% less likely to recidivate than a non-Hispanic male inmate with all other factors held constant.

For those measures that are expressed as numeric counts instead of dichotomous (Yes/No), the hazard ratios show the increase or decrease **per unit increase** in the factor. For example, in Table 2 for each additional disciplinary report a male inmate receives while incarcerated, his likelihood of recidivating increases by  $(1.012-1=.012)$  1.2%. For each additional grade level tested, his likelihood of recidivating decreases by  $(1-0.962=0.038)$  3.8%.

## Factors in Order of Predictability

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Listed below are the factors in order of importance followed by an '*H*' if the factor is associated with a higher likelihood of recidivism and an '*L*' for a lower likelihood of recidivism.

### Males

1. Supervision Following Prison – *H*
2. Number of Prior Prison Commitments – *H*
3. Age at Release – *L*
4. Number of Disciplinary Reports while in Prison – *H*
5. Number of Burglary Offenses – *H*
6. Gang Member Suspected or Confirmed – *H*
7. Most Recent TABE (Educational Level) Score – *L*
8. Number of Visits Inmate Gets 12 Months Prior to Release – *L*
9. Number of Theft Offenses – *H*
10. Hispanic Ethnicity – *L*
11. Low Custody – *L*
12. Number of Other Offenses within 5 Years Prior to Admission – *H*
13. Inmate Reported Drug Screening Score – *H*
14. Inmate has Sex Offenses within 15 Years Prior to Admission – *H*
15. Number of Drug Offenses within 5 Years Prior to Admission – *H*
16. Inmate has NO Spouse – *H*
17. Inmate has Other Negative Influences in their Life – *H*
18. Inmate has Murder Offense within 15 Years Prior to Admission - *L*

### Females

1. Number of Prior Prison Commitments – *H*
2. Supervision Following Prison - *H*
3. Age at First Offense – *L*
4. Inmate Reported Drug Screening Score – *H*
5. Low Custody - *L*
6. Number of Visits Inmate Gets 12 Months Prior to Release – *L*
7. Worst Offense is Murder - *L*
8. Inmate Feels Animosity towards their Attorney - *L*
9. Number of Drug Offenses – *L*
10. Family has a Negative Influence on the Inmate – *H*
11. Inmate Concerned about Child's Welfare – *H*

**The factors that affect male recidivism rates, but not female rates are:**

1. Number of Discipline Reports while in Prison
2. Age upon Release
3. Number of Other Violent Offenses
4. Number of Theft Offenses
5. Number of Burglary Offenses
6. Inmate is Hispanic
7. No Spouse
8. Gang Membership
9. Sex Offense within 15 years Prior to Admission
10. Education Level

**The factors that affect female recidivism rates, but not male rates are:**

1. Age at First Offense
2. Inmate Concerned about Child's Welfare
3. Inmate Feels Animosity towards their Attorney

**The factors that affect both male recidivism and female recidivism in the same direction are (not in order of importance):**

1. Number of Prior Prison Commitments
2. Supervision to Follow
3. Low Custody
4. Inmate-Reported Drug Screening Score
5. Negative Influence (Male-Other Negative Influence; Female-Family Negative Influence)
6. Murder Offense
7. Number of Visits Inmate Gets 12 Months Prior to Release

The factor *Drug Offense* is associated with a higher likelihood of recidivism rate for males and a lower likelihood of recidivism rate for females. Not considering the other factors, the hazard ratio of male inmate with a drug offense (within 5 years prior to admission) is 1.027 (Table 2), while female inmate with a drug offense is 0.963 (Table 4).

**Table 5. Factors Not Included in the Model**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Overall Releases 2010</b>	<b>Percent of Release Cohort</b>	<b>Recidivism Rate</b>
Release Type	Expiration of Sentence (No Supervision to Follow)	21,118	65%	20%
	Conditional Release (mandatory supervision for serious offenders as specified in F.S. 947.1405)	4,899	15%	42%
	Expiration of Sentence to Probation or Community Control (Split Sentence)	4,554	14%	36%
Release Facility	Major Correctional Institution	25,631	81%	27%
	Work/Forestry Camp	1,971	6%	22%
	Community Release Center / Transition Center	3,544	11%	15%

Note that the results presented in Table 5 do not constitute a rigorous evaluation of any factor. For example, it is not valid to claim that if all inmates went to Work Release Centers, one would realize a lower overall recidivism rate. Inmates who succeed at work release do not have the same characteristics as many other inmates, meaning the work release impact would likely be different if expanded to include a broader group of inmates.