

***THE BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND RECIDIVISM RATES
FOR RELEASES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTIONS DURING 1991***

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ABSTRACT

This report presents recidivism rates of offenders released from Department of Correction facilities during 1991. Some highlights from this report are:

- The recidivism rate in 1991 was 27%, a two point decline from the rate for 1990 (29%).
- The recidivism rate varied by security level of the institution from which the offender was released: 41% for maximum, 34% for medium, 19% for minimum, 21% for minimum/pre-release, 25% for state pre-release and 22% for contract pre-release.
- From 1990 to 1991 the recidivism rate for releases from maximum or medium security institutions decreased from 36% to 34%, and the recidivism rate for releases from lower security facilities decreased from 23% to 21%.
- The recidivism rate for males was 29%, a decrease from the 1990 figure of 32% while the rate for females increased from 20% in 1990 to 22% in 1991.
- Among males, the recidivism rate was 29% for those serving Cedar Junction/State Prison sentences (compared to 32% for 1990), 35% for those serving Concord/Reformatory sentences (compared to 39% for 1990), and 8% for inmates who subsequently transferred to the DOC from a commitment to a county or out-of-state facility (compared to 9% for 1990).
- Recidivists were returned for a variety of reasons, the majority of which were parole violations. Of the 833 recidivists, 27% were returned for technical parole violations, 38% for parole violations involving a new arrest, 30% for reincarceration on a new sentence, 4% for probation violations, and 1% to await trial for a new offense.
- Offenders released by parole had a higher recidivism rate (36%) than those who were released by a discharge or expiration of sentence (18%).
- Offenders who were paroled following a parole violation had a higher rate of recidivism (66%) than those who were first releases (29%). Likewise, offenders who were discharged following a parole violation had a higher rate of recidivism (25%) than those who were first releases (17%).
- The offense category with the highest recidivism rate for both males and females was property offense (40%). The recidivism rate for male property offenders was 44% and the recidivism rate for female property offenders was 30%.
- The recidivism rate for offenders without any prior adult incarcerations was lower (21%) than for those released with a history of one (30%) or more than one (35%) prior adult incarcerations.
- The recidivism rate was higher for offenders with no furloughs prior to release (27%) than it was for offenders with earned furloughs (13%) or offenders with only emergency escorted furloughs (17%).

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Introduction

This report presents a statistical description and the recidivism rates of offenders released to the street from Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) facilities during 1991. Recidivism statistics are presented by the security level of the facility from which the offender was released. (See Table 3).

Information contained in this report includes recidivism rates with regard to release variables, nature of present offense, personal background, criminal history, furlough participation, and release follow-up variables. Each table contains two types of information: (1) statistical data describing characteristics of offenders released from each security level during 1991; and (2) the recidivism rates for each of the categories of statistical data for these offenders.

There are two main sections to this report. Section One discusses selected variables in relation to recidivism rates. Some comparisons are made between 1990 and 1991 rates. Section Two consists solely of statistical tables. When examining the tables, the reader should note the following: (1) the release population is divided according to the security level from which the offender was released; (2) N represents the number of releases who fall into the corresponding category in the table; (3) Rec represents the number of releases who are recidivists; and (4) Rate (Recidivism Rate) represents the percentage of releases in that category who have recidivated. For example, upon referring to the first table on page 18, the variable "Type of Release" is presented and the following kinds of information may be obtained:

- The number of releases broken down by the security level of the releasing institution is presented horizontally;
- The number of releases by type of release (parole, and GCD/expiration of sentence) is presented vertically;
- Of the 3,059 releases during 1991, 1,554 were released on parole and 1,505 were released by a certificate of discharge or by expiration of sentence;
- Of the parole releases, 561 were recidivists (yielding a recidivism rate of 36%).

Method

A recidivist is defined as any release who is reincarcerated in a state or federal correctional institution, or to a house of correction/jail for at least 30 days within a year of their date of release to the street. This includes parole violators as well as those offenders sentenced for new crimes.¹

During 1991, there were 3,059 releases from DOC facilities where the offender had been incarcerated in a state facility for at least 30 days. This included 2,436 males and 623 females. Any release of an offender who was incarcerated for less than 30 days or where the release was not to the community (i.e., released to a new sentence at a state, federal or county facility, or released to and held on a warrant) was excluded from the sample. In the case of inmates transferred from houses of correction to Longwood Treatment Center, the time spent in county facilities was counted toward the 30 day required stay. An analysis of the cases excluded from the sample appears in an Appendix to this report. (Appendix A: Technical Notes).

¹ Recidivism data were collected and coded for this study by Debra Burden, Kristin M. Carvill, Barbara Ann Hartwell, Matthew S. Kern and Michael P. Shannon.

Section One: 1991 Recidivism Rates

There were 3,059 releases to the street from the DOC during 1991. Of these, 833 offenders returned to custody during the one year period following their release date, yielding a recidivism rate of 27%.

Type of Return

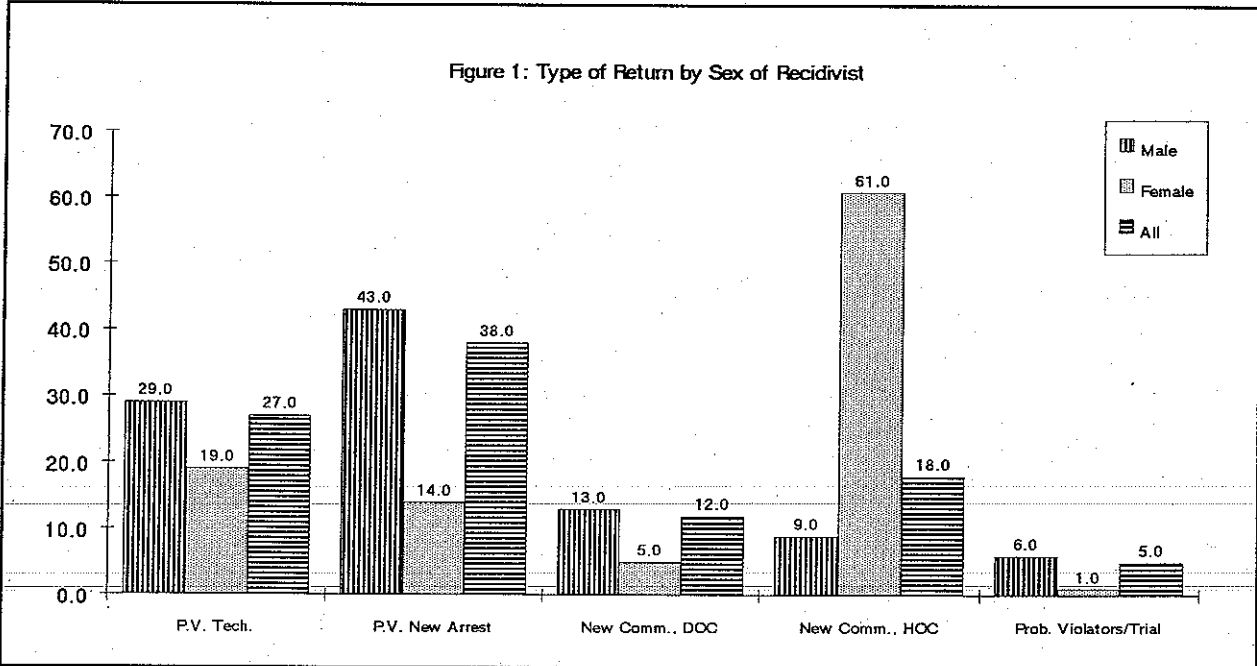
Table 1 presents the distribution of the type of return for recidivists. Recidivists were returned for a variety of reasons, the majority of which were parole violators. Of all offenders reincarcerated during the followup period, 27% were returned for technical parole violations, 38% for parole violations involving a new arrest, 30% for commitments to a county house of correction or a DOC facility to serve a new sentence, 4% for violations of probation, and one percent were held in jail awaiting trial on a new offense.

The proportions within these categories differ for male offenders and for female offenders. For males, 29% were technical parole violators, 43% were parole violators with new arrests, 22% were committed for new offenses, four percent were returned to custody for probation violations, and two percent were in jail awaiting trial on a new offense.

For females, 19% were technical parole violators, 14% were parole violators with new arrests, 66% were committed for new offenses, and one percent were returned to custody for probation violations.

Table 1:
Type of Return by Sex of Recidivist

<u>Type of Return</u>	<u>MALE</u>		<u>FEMALE</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Parole Violation - Technical	201	29%	26	19%	227	27%
Parole Violation - New Arrest	300	43%	19	14%	319	38%
Commitment - HOC	93	13%	7	5%	100	12%
Commitment - DOC	64	9%	83	61%	147	18%
Jail - Awaiting Trial	12	2%	0	0%	12	1%
Probation Violation - Technical	4	1%	0	0%	4	1%
Probation Violation - New Arrest	23	3%	1	1%	24	3%
Total	697	(100)	136	(100)	833	(100)

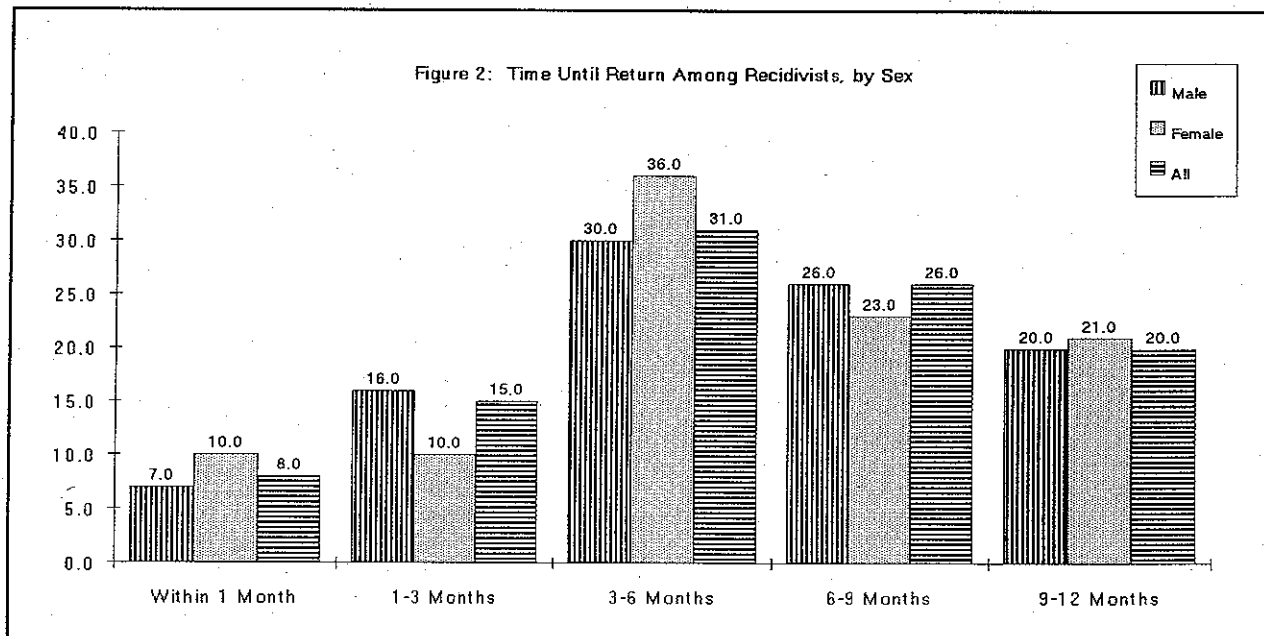


Time Until Return

Table 2 presents data, by sex, on the length of time the offender was in the community before being reincarcerated. Of the 833 recidivists, 54% returned to custody within 6 months of their release, 26% between 6 and 9 months, and 20% between 9 months and 1 year. For males, 7% returned to custody within one month following their release, 16% between 1 and 3 months, 30% between 3 and 6 months, 26% between 6 and 9 months, and 20% between 9 months and a year after their release. Among female offenders, 10% were returned to custody within one month of release, 10% between 1 and 3 months, 36% between 3 and 6 months, 23% between 6 and 9 months, and 21% between 9 months and a year after their release.

Table 2:
Time Until Return Among Recidivists, by Sex

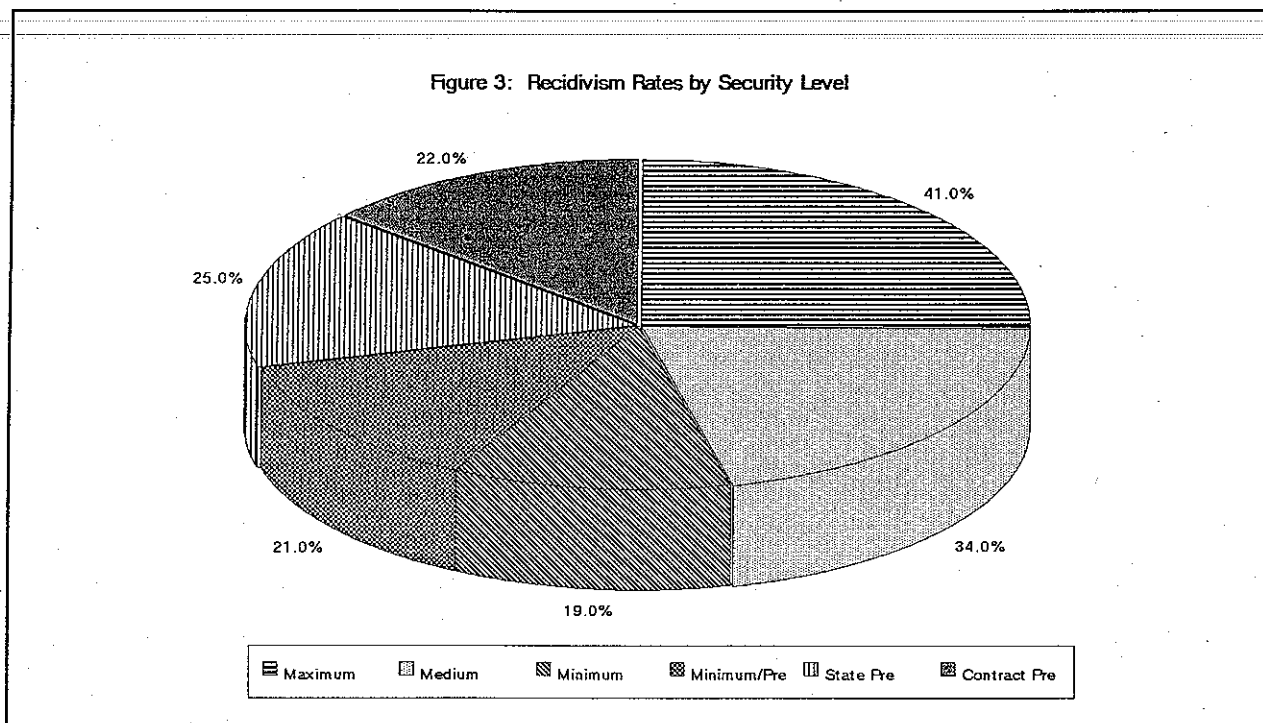
<u>Time Until Return</u>	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Within 1 Month	49	7%	14	10%	63	8%
1 Month - 3 Months	114	16%	13	10%	127	15%
3 Month - 6 Months	211	30%	49	36%	260	31%
6 Month - 9 Months	183	26%	31	23%	214	26%
9 Month - 1 Year	140	20%	29	21%	169	20%
Total	697	(100)	136	(100)	833	(100)



Institution Released From

Data presented in Table 3 reveal the recidivism rate by the releasing institution and its corresponding security level.² The recidivism rate was the highest among releases from maximum security (41%). Recidivism rates were lower for releases from medium security (34%) and from lower security facilities: minimum (19%), minimum/pre-release (21%), state pre-release (25%), and contract pre-release (22%).

Compared to recidivism rates for 1990 releases, the 1991 recidivism rates for releases from maximum, medium and minimum security facilities decreased. The rates for releases from minimum/pre-release and contract pre-release stayed the same. However, there was a slight increase in the recidivism rate for persons released from state pre-release facilities. (Table 4).



² Releases from Lemuel Shattuck Hospital are included in the following tables as releases from the institution they were in prior to placement at the hospital.

Table 3:
Recidivism Rates by Security Level of Releasing Institution, 1991

<u>Institution and Security Level</u>	<u>Non Recidivists</u>	<u>Recidivists</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Recidivism Rate</u>
Maximum				
Cedar Junction	52	36	88	41%
Subtotal	52	36	88	41%
Medium				
Bay State (7/10/91 and After)	4	1	5	20%
Boston C.C.	35	38	73	52%
Concord	112	53	165	32%
Framingham	327	116	443	26%
NCCI-Gardner	107	72	179	40%
Norfolk	84	41	125	33%
Old Colony C.C.	55	42	97	43%
Shirley	23	18	41	44%
Southeastern C.C.	142	71	213	33%
Subtotal	889	452	1,341	34%
Minimum				
Bay State (Prior to 7/10/91)	23	6	29	21%
Northeastern C.C.	89	19	108	18%
Southeastern C.C.	33	10	43	23%
Subtotal	145	35	180	19%
Minimum/Pre-Release				
Hodder House	10	2	12	17%
Lancaster	82	20	102	20%
Longwood	309	16	325	5%
Plymouth	96	30	126	24%
Pondville	65	18	83	22%
Shirley	123	55	178	31%
South Middlesex	86	53	139	38%
Warwick	20	12	32	38%
Subtotal	791	206	997	21%
State Pre-Release				
Boston State	41	20	61	33%
Park Drive	90	23	113	20%
Subtotal	131	43	174	25%
Contract Pre-Release				
Brooke House	118	43	161	27%
Charlotte House	21	4	25	16%
Faith House	6	1	7	14%
Hillside	17	2	19	11%
Houston House	15	0	15	0%
McGrath House	35	11	46	24%
Meridian House	6	0	6	0%
Subtotal	218	61	279	22%
Total	2,226	833	3,059	27%

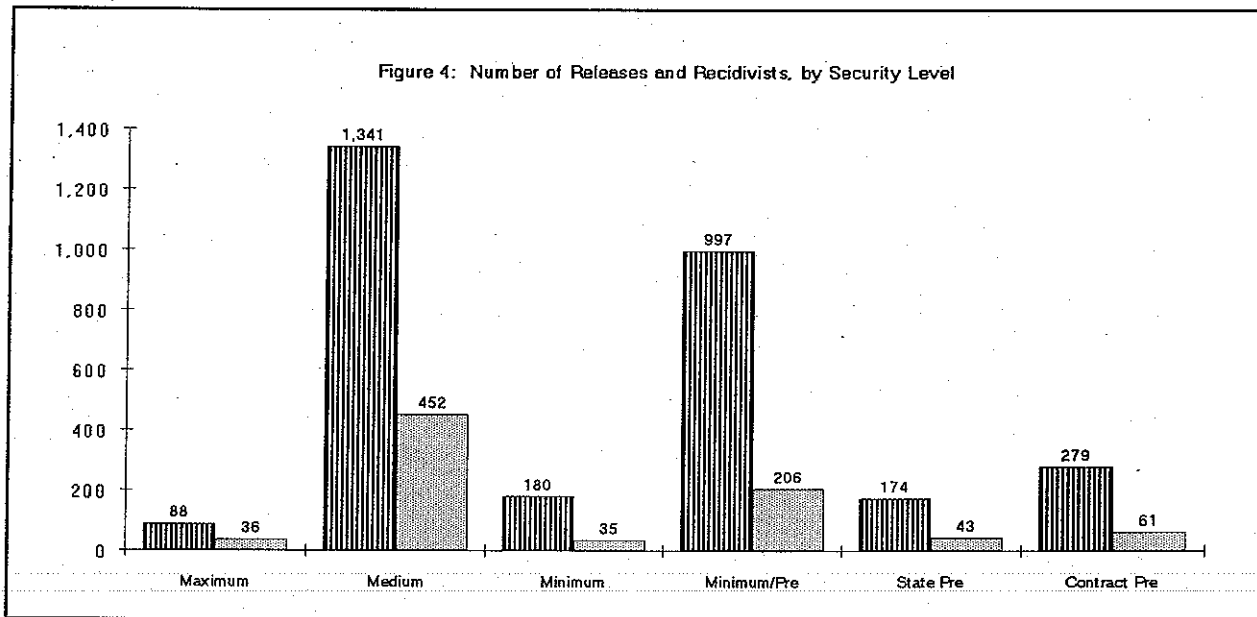


Table 4:
Recidivism Rates by Security Level, 1990-1991

<u>Security Level</u> <u>of Releasing Institution</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>Absolute Change</u> <u>1990-1991</u>
Maximum	53%	41%	-12
Medium	35%	34%	-1
Minimum	33%	19%	-14
Minimum/Pre-Release	21%	21%	0
State Pre-Release	22%	25%	+3
Contract Pre-Release	22%	22%	0
All Facilities:	29%	27%	-2

Furlough Program Participation

The two types of furloughs that may be granted to inmates are earned furloughs and emergency escorted furloughs. An earned furlough is an "extension of the limits of the place of confinement" for a trustworthy resident.³ Earned furloughs are distinguished from emergency escorted furloughs in that emergency escorted furloughs require the inmate to be accompanied by correctional staff throughout the furlough, while earned furloughs are unescorted.

³ 103 CMR 463 Furloughs.

Of the 3,059 offenders released during 1991, 276 (9%) received a furlough prior to release. Overall, 113 (4%) received at least one earned furlough, and 134 (4%) received emergency escorted furloughs only. In addition, 29 (1%) of all offenders received both earned and emergency escorted furloughs. Table 5 shows that the recidivism rate was substantially lower for releases with at least one earned furlough (13%) than it was for releases who were not granted any furloughs (28%).

The recidivism rate also varies by the security level of the releasing institution. Offenders released from maximum or medium security facilities who did not receive furloughs during their incarceration had a recidivism rate of 35% while their cohorts who were granted at least one furlough had a recidivism rate of 17%. Offenders released from lower security facilities with at least one earned furlough had a recidivism rate of 11%.

For both males and females, recidivism rates were found to be lower for releases from lower security facilities and for releases who had at least one earned furlough. The recidivism rate for males who did not have furloughs during their incarceration was 29% compared to 14% for males with at least one earned furlough. For females, the recidivism rate for releases who did not have any furloughs during their incarceration was 22%, while it was 9% for releases with at least one earned furlough.

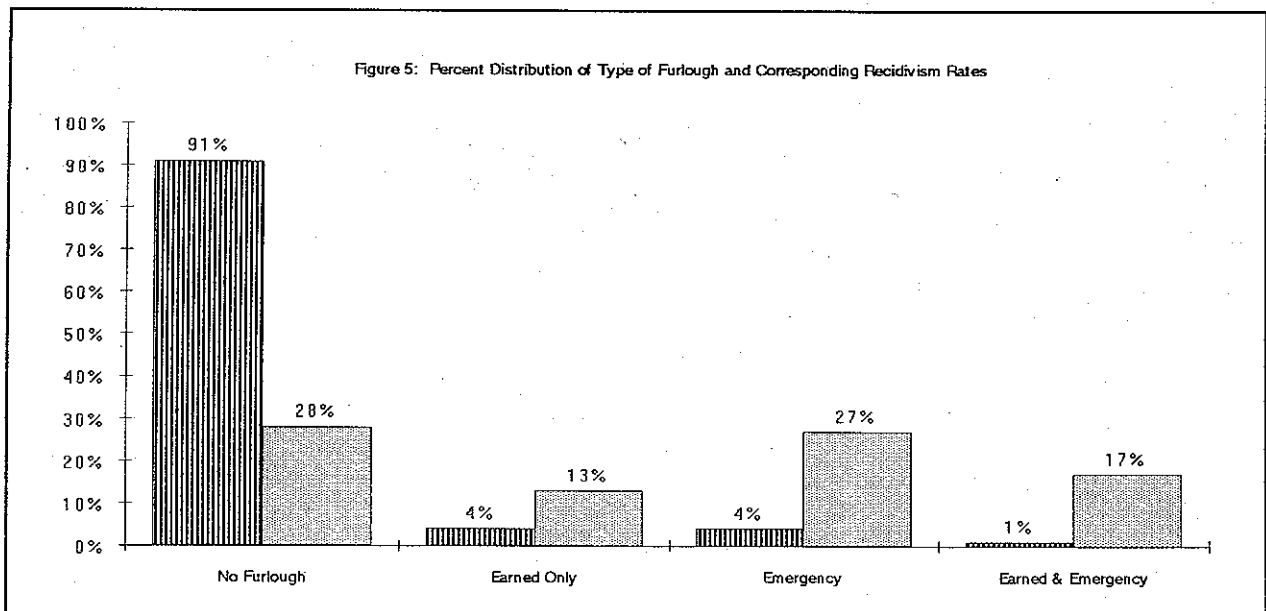


Table 5:
Recidivism by Furlough Program Participation, Sex of Offender and
Security Level of Releasing Institution

	Secure Facilities			Lower Security Facilities			Total		
	N	Rec	Rate	N	Rec	Rate	N	Rec	Rate
Males									
No Furloughs	892	347	39%	1,299	297	23%	2,191	644	29%
Earned Furloughs Only	47	8	17%	55	6	11%	102	14	14%
Emergency Escorted Furloughs Only	42	16	38%	74	18	24%	116	34	29%
Both Earned and Emergency Furloughs	5	1	20%	22	4	18%	27	5	18%
Subtotal	986	372	38%	1,450	325	22%	2,436	697	29%
Females									
No Furloughs	433	114	26%	159	19	12%	592	133	22%
Earned Furloughs Only	1	0	0%	10	1	10%	11	1	9%
Emergency Escorted Furloughs Only	7	2	29%	11	0	0%	18	2	11%
Both Earned and Emergency Furloughs	2	0	0%	0	0	0%	2	0	0%
Subtotal	443	116	26%	180	20	11%	623	136	22%
Total									
No Furloughs	1,325	461	35%	1,458	316	22%	2,783	777	28%
Earned Furloughs Only	48	8	17%	65	7	11%	113	15	13%
Emergency Escorted Furloughs Only	49	18	37	85	18	21%	134	36	27%
Both Earned and Emergency Furloughs	7	1	14	22	4	18%	29	5	17%
Grand Total	1,429	488	34%	1,630	345	21%	3,059	833	27%

Type of Release

Data presented in Table 6 show recidivism rates by type of release and the corresponding security level of the releasing institution. Overall, the recidivism rate was higher for persons released on parole (36%) than for those who were discharged (18%). Individuals released by parole are supervised by a parole officer for a period of time following their release, whereas individuals released by expiration of sentence or certificate of discharge are not, unless they are required to serve a probation term.

In addition to the type of release, recidivism rates also vary based on whether the release was the offender's first release from the present sentence, or if the release followed a prior parole violation (Table 6). First releases had consistently lower recidivism rates than parole violators. Among parolees, first releases had a recidivism rate of 29%, while the recidivism rate for parole violators was 66%. For offenders discharged from their sentence, the recidivism rate for first releases was 17%, while it was 25% for parole violators.

When the data are compared by security level of the releasing institution, the recidivism rate is 32% for first releases paroled from maximum or medium security institutions and 27% for first releases paroled from lower security institutions. For those paroled from maximum or medium security who were parole violators, the recidivism rate is 66% compared to 64% for parole violators who were released from lower security.

The recidivism rate for offenders released by expiration of sentence or good conduct discharge was 26% for first releases from maximum or medium security and 8% for first releases from lower security. For those who were discharged but who had a prior parole violation on the present sentence, the recidivism rate was 30% for those released from maximum or medium security and 10% for those released from lower security.

Table 7 shows recidivism rates by type of release for males and females. Once again we find that offenders released by parole have a higher recidivism rate than those released by expiration of sentence or good conduct discharge, and parole violators have a higher recidivism rate than first releases.

Males released by parole had a recidivism rate of 38% and males released by discharge had a recidivism rate of 17%. For both types of releases, the recidivism rates were lower for first releases than for parole violators. For females, those released by parole had a higher recidivism rate (25%) than those released by discharge (18%). As with the males, the recidivism rate for females was also higher for parole violators than for first releases.

Table 6:
Recidivism Rates by Type of Release and Security Level
of Releasing Institution

<u>Type of Release</u>	<u>Secure Facilities</u>			<u>Lower Security Facilities</u>			<u>Total</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Parole:									
First Release	385	125	32%	862	235	27%	1,247	360	29%
Parole Violator	220	145	66%	87	56	64%	307	201	66%
Subtotal	605	270	45%	949	291	31%	1,554	561	36%
Expiration of Sentence and Discharge:									
First Release	665	171	26%	629	49	8%	1,294	220	17%
Parole Violator	159	47	30%	52	5	10%	211	52	25%
Subtotal	824	218	26%	681	54	8%	1,505	272	18%
Total	1,424	488	34%	1,630	345	21%	3,059	833	27%

Table 7:
Recidivism by Type of Release and Sex of Offender

<u>Type of Release</u>	<u>MALES</u>			<u>FEMALES</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Parole:									
First Release	1,057	317	30%	190	43	23%	1,247	360	29%
Parole Violator	289	192	66%	18	9	50%	307	201	66%
Subtotal	1,346	509	38%	208	52	25%	1,554	561	36%
Expiration of Sentence and Discharge:									
First Release	924	149	16%	370	71	19%	1,449	243	17%
Parole Violator	166	39	23%	45	13	29%	211	52	25%
Subtotal	1,090	188	17%	415	84	18%	1,505	272	18%
Total	2,436	697	29%	623	136	22%	3,059	833	27%

Offender Characteristics

Table 8 shows recidivism rates for male and female offenders by race, age at release, present offense, and prior adult incarcerations. Overall, females have a lower rate of recidivism (21%) than males (29%).

As shown in Table 8, Caucasian inmates had a recidivism rate of 24%, Hispanic inmates had a recidivism rate of 29%, and African American inmates had a recidivism rate of 34%. The patterns were different for males and females. For males, the recidivism rates for African American and Hispanic releases were 36% and 31% respectively, while the recidivism rate for Caucasian male releases was 25%. For females, the recidivism rate for Caucasian releases (21%) was slightly lower than the recidivism rates for Hispanic and African American releases (23%).

The section on age at release and sex of offender shows that younger offenders generally have higher rates of recidivism than older offenders. The 21 years and younger age group had the highest recidivism rate for males (43%), while for females those in the 22 through 25 year old age group had the highest recidivism rate (29%).

In terms of present offense, the recidivism rate was highest in the property offense category (40%), followed by person offenses (31%), drug offenses and sex offenses (22%) and "other" offenses (16%).

For all releases, the offense category with the highest recidivism rate was property offenses (44%). The offense category with the second highest recidivism rate for females was the "other" category (23%), followed by person and drug offenses (18%). For males, the second highest recidivism rate was for person offenses (32%), followed by drug (24%) and sex (23%) offenses.

The final section of Table 8 on recidivism by prior adult incarcerations and sex of offender reveals a higher recidivism rate for those with a history of one or more prior adult incarcerations than for those without any prior adult incarcerations. Overall, the recidivism rate was 21% for offenders without any prior adult incarcerations versus a 30% recidivism rate for those with one prior adult incarceration and a 35% recidivism rate for those with two or more prior adult incarcerations. This pattern is similar for males and females. For males, those without any prior adult incarcerations had a 22% recidivism rate, while those with one prior adult incarceration or those with more than one prior adult incarceration recidivated at higher rates (33% and 36%, respectively). Females without any prior adult incarcerations had a 15% recidivism rate, those with one prior adult incarceration had a 20% recidivism rate, and those with more than one prior adult incarceration had a 32% recidivism rate.

Table 8:
Recidivism Rates by Selected Characteristics and Sex of Offender

<u>Selected Characteristics</u>	MALES			FEMALES			TOTAL		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Rec</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Race									
Caucasian	1,381	341	25%	379	80	21%	1,760	421	24%
African American	623	227	36%	132	30	23%	755	257	34%
Hispanic	418	128	31%	104	24	23%	522	152	29%
Asian	10	0	0%	4	1	25%	14	1	7%
Native American	4	1	25%	4	1	25%	8	2	25%
Total	2,436	697	29%	623	136	22%	3,059	833	27%
Age at Release									
21 Years and Younger	189	82	43%	61	15	25%	250	97	39%
22-25 Years	424	153	36%	111	32	29%	535	185	34%
26-29 Years	535	172	32%	164	39	24%	699	211	30%
30-39 Years	900	243	27%	222	45	20%	1,122	288	26%
40-49 Years	294	41	14%	49	4	8%	343	45	13%
50-59 Years	70	5	3%	13	1	8%	83	6	7%
60-69 Years	24	1	4%	3	0	0%	27	1	4%
Total	2,436	697	29%	623	136	22%	3,059	833	27%
Present Offense									
Person	848	275	32%	74	13	18%	922	288	31%
Sex	243	55	23%	6	0	0%	249	55	22%
Property	430	190	44%	159	48	30%	589	238	40%
Drug	553	130	24%	233	41	18%	786	171	22%
Other	362	47	13%	151	34	23%	513	81	16%
Total	2,436	697	29%	623	136	22%	3,059	833	27%
Prior Adult Incarcerations									
None	1,137	250	22%	217	32	15%	1,354	282	21%
One	364	119	33%	101	20	20%	465	139	30%
Two or More	541	197	36%	161	52	32%	702	249	35%
Unknown	394	131	33%	144	32	22%	538	163	30%
Total	2,436	697	29%	623	136	22%	3,059	833	27%

SECTION II: STATISTICAL TABLES

RELEASE CHARACTERISTICS