



RECIDIVISM IN ARKANSAS

A Roadmap to Reform

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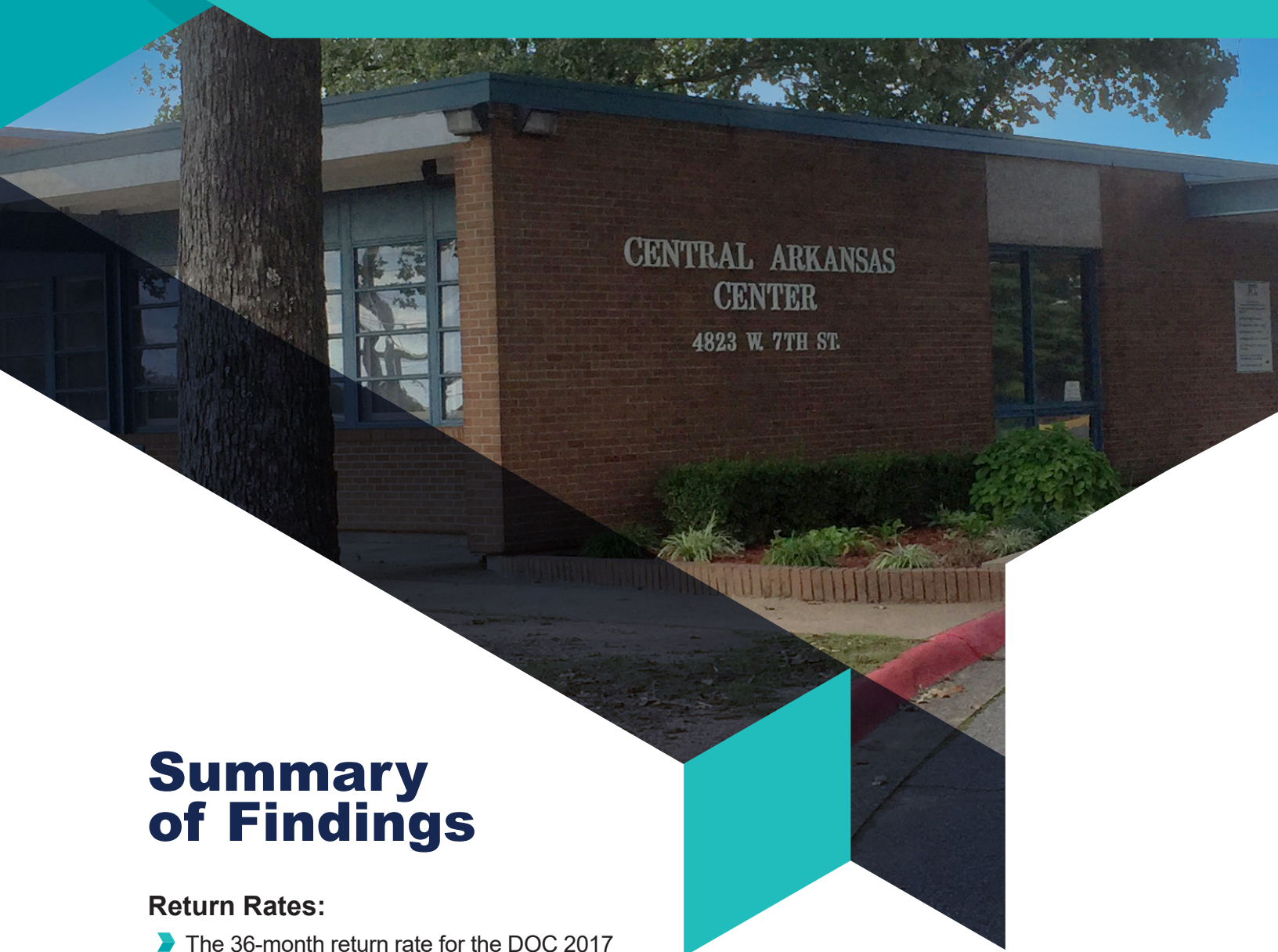
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– 2022 –

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Summary of Findings

Return Rates:

- The 36-month return rate for the DOC 2017 release cohort was 46.1%, the lowest rate since the 2012 release cohort.
- The 36-month return rate for those released from the Division of Correction was 47.8%.
- The 36-month return rate for those released from the Division of Community Correction was 37.5%.
- The 36-month probation imposition rate was 4.5%.
- Half of those who returned did so within 13 months of their release.
- The median number of months for receiving a probation sentence after release was 19.

Predictors of Recidivism:

- Those 18 to 24 years of age are 1.5 times more likely to recidivate than older individuals.
- The probability of recidivism is 1.8 times higher for men than women.
- Previous incarceration predicts future incarceration.
- The odds of security threat/terrorist group (STTG) affiliates recidivating are 1.2 times higher than non-affiliates.
- Reincarceration is more likely for supervised individuals than for those who discharged their sentence.



Introduction

Recidivism is defined in Arkansas Code Annotated (A.C.A.) § 5-4-101 as “a criminal act that results in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to incarceration of a person with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the person’s release from custody.” Recidivism rates are often used to measure criminality among formerly incarcerated individuals and assess the impact of criminal justice interventions. To adhere to our commitment to transparency, the Arkansas Department of Corrections (DOC) publishes a yearly report highlighting recidivism rates and associated data among those released from DOC custody.

This report is similar to previous reports, in that we describe the characteristics of those released from the DOC in 2017 and the return rates of those who returned to incarceration within 36 months, but we have made some notable changes.¹ Namely, the biggest change, is the expansion of the conceptualization of recidivism by including probation impositions within 36 months of release. Although this change eliminates our ability to compare past recidivism rates, it better aligns with the statutory definition. To help formerly incarcerated individuals avoid continued criminality, it is necessary to better understand factors associated with recidivism. Thus, we also added a regression analysis to identify the factors that increase the risk of recidivism among those released in 2017. This scientific addition is important because the findings can inform correctional policies and practices that aim to reduce criminality and recidivism rates.

¹ Due to data limitations, separate program evaluations, and scant empirical support, we excluded some of the items included in previous reports: institutional programming, military history, unit of release, specific crime types, and county of conviction.

*Recidivism rates are measured differently across states. This means Arkansas’ recidivism rates cannot be compared to any other state.

Recidivism Rates

Despite the statutory definition of recidivism in Arkansas, DOC researchers do not have access to arrest data. Therefore, in this report, recidivism was defined as a probation imposition or return to incarceration in a DOC facility within 36 months of their 2017 release.² In 2017, 10,795 individuals were released from a Division of Correction (ADC) prison, Division of Community Correction (ACC) center, or a contracted facility under the jurisdiction of the DOC (e.g., an ACC Reentry house; $n = 577$) or county jail ($n = 802$).³ Within 36 months from release, 4,981 individuals were reincarcerated in a DOC facility and 484 received a probation imposition in Arkansas.⁴ This means that the recidivism rate for the 2017 release cohort was 50.6%. Throughout this report, we largely discuss returns to incarceration (i.e., return rates) and probation impositions (i.e., probation rates) separately to minimize the differences between the past and current reports. The return rate for the DOC was 46.1% – the lowest reported rate since the 2012 release cohort (Arkansas Department of Corrections; see Table 1). The

probation rate among those released in 2017, was 4.5%.

Although this report primarily focuses on 36-month return rates for the DOC more broadly, division-specific rates were calculated to better understand recidivism within 6, 12, and 36 months of release (see Graph 1 on the following page). Namely, in 2017, 9,020 people were released from the

49.4% Did Not Recidivate



² For those released multiple times in 2017, we employed data from their last release of the year. A return to incarceration was defined as someone's first return to an ADC facility or ACC center after their 2017 last release. For instance, 298 individuals were reincarcerated and sentenced to probation during the 36 months after their release, they were only included in the returns to incarceration cohort.

³ Individuals released from incarceration in another state and from the Supervision Sanction Program (SSP) were excluded from the release sample.

ADC and 1,775 from the ACC. Within 36 months, 47.8% ($n = 4,315$) of those released from the ADC and 37.5% ($n = 666$) of individuals from the ACC returned to incarcerated. For ACC, the return rate did not change from 2016 to 2017. For ADC, the return rate slightly declined between the 2016 and 2017 release cohorts (from 48.7 to 47.8). Among those released from ADC

in 2017, 4.2% ($n = 383$) received a probation sentence within 36 months. The probation rate for those released from the ACC was slightly higher than ADC at 5.7% ($n = 101$). Consistent with past reports, we also explored the demographic characteristics of those released in 2017 and their corresponding recidivism rates.



50.6%
Recidivated

⁴ Federal and other state prison admission data are not tracked by the DOC. This means those reincarcerated or sentenced to a term of probation outside of the DOC's jurisdiction were excluded from the return sample.

Table 1
*DOC Return Rates for
the 2012 to 2017 Cohorts*

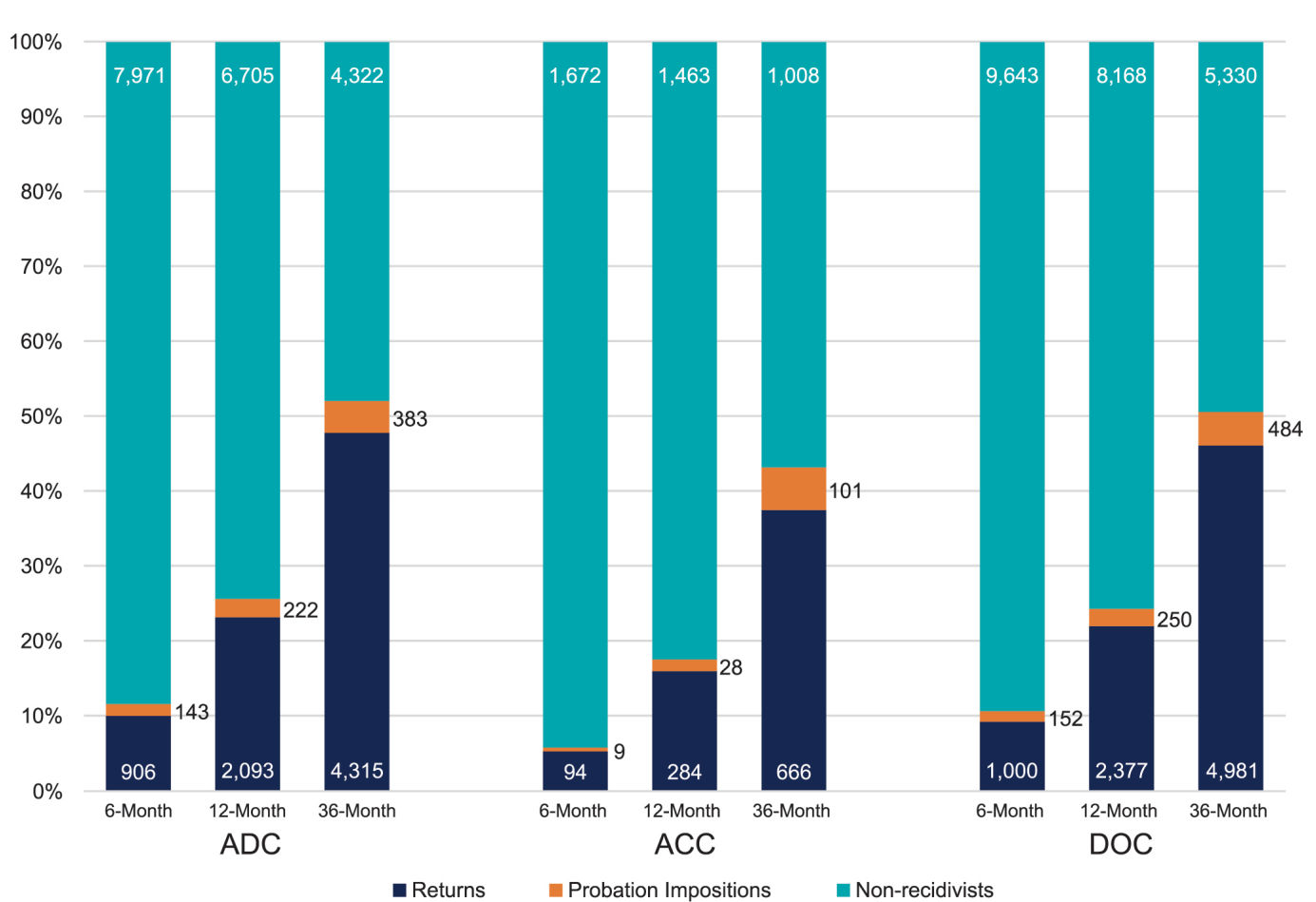
Cohort Year	Return Rate
2012	43.6
2013	49.0
2014	51.1
2015	49.2
2016	47.5
2017	46.1

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Graph 1

ADC, ACC, and DOC 6-, 12-, 36-Month Probation Impositions and Returns for the 2017 Release Cohort



Demographics and Characteristics

Table 2

Demographics and Return Rates for the 2017 Release and Return Cohorts

	Released (N = 10,795)		Probation (N = 484)		Return (N = 4,981)		Recidivism Rate
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	%
GENDER							
Male	9,007	83.4	364	75.2	4,391	88.2	52.8
Female	1,788	16.6	120	24.8	590	11.8	39.7
AGE AT RELEASE							
18 to 24	1,031	9.6	53	11.0	570	11.4	60.4
25 to 34	4,124	38.2	203	41.9	2,042	41.0	54.4
35 to 44	3,278	30.4	143	29.5	1,512	30.4	50.5
45 to 64	2,291	21.2	84	17.4	843	16.9	40.5
65+	71	0.6	1	0.2	14	0.3	21.1
RACE							
White	7,115	65.9	363	75.0	3,311	66.5	51.6
Black	3,333	30.9	113	23.3	1,519	30.5	49.0
Other	347	3.2	8	1.7	151	3.0	45.8
EDUCATION							
<High School	2,352	21.8	98	20.3	1,043	20.9	48.5
High School	2,498	23.2	111	22.9	1,018	20.4	45.2
GED	4,841	44.9	222	45.9	2,516	50.5	56.6
Some College	958	8.9	49	10.1	360	7.2	42.7
College	126	1.2	4	0.8	40	0.8	34.9
SECURITY THREAT/TERRORIST GROUP							
Yes	1,774	16.4	72	85.1	1,005	20.2	60.7
No	9,021	83.6	412	14.9	3,976	79.8	48.6
RELEASE TYPE							
Discharged	926	8.6	90	18.6	313	6.3	43.5
To Supervision	9,869	91.4	394	81.4	4,668	93.7	51.3
RESTRICTIVE HOUSING							
Yes	1,152	10.7	54	11.2	641	12.9	60.3
No	9,643	89.3	430	88.8	4,340	87.1	49.5
REENTRY							
Yes	577	5.3	20	4.1	266	5.3	49.6
No	10,218	94.7	464	95.9	4,715	94.7	50.7
TRANSITIONAL FACILITIES							
Yes	1,174	10.9	56	11.6	576	11.6	53.8
No	9,621	89.1	428	88.4	4,405	88.4	50.2

Note: The “other” racial category includes Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American individuals.

Educational attainment data were missing for 20 individuals.

College include bachelor’s ($n = 33$) or master’s degrees ($n = 7$).

“Recidivism rate” is the combined rate of those who were placed on probation and reincarcerated within 36 months of their release.

Gender

Although the number of female inmates continues to increase throughout the U.S., the correctional population is primarily composed of males (Harmon & Boppre, 2015; Jeffries & Newbold, 2015). So, it is not surprising that men made up 83.4% ($n = 9,007$) of the 2017 release cohort and 88.2% ($n = 4,391$) of those reincarcerated. Women, then, made up the remaining 16.6% ($n = 1,788$) of those released and 11.8% ($n = 590$) of the return cohort. A division-specific breakdown also shows that males recidivated more often than females (see Table 3). The 36-month return rate was higher for the males (48.8%) than their female counterparts (33.0%). There was even less parity between the men and women sentenced to probation. Namely, 75% of those who received probation within 36 months were men (75.2%, $n = 364$).

Age

Researchers have well established the negative relationship between age and criminal behavior. More specifically, criminality generally peaks around the late teens and early twenties and steadily declines as age increases (Hirschi &

Table 3

Release, Probation, and Return Frequencies by Division and Gender

	Released ($N = 10,795$)		Probation ($N = 484$)		Return ($N = 4,981$)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
ADC	($n = 9,020$)		($n = 383$)		($n = 4,315$)	
Male	7,723	85.6	298	77.8	3,844	89.1
Female	1,297	14.4	85	22.2	471	10.9
ACC	($n = 1,775$)		($n = 101$)		($n = 666$)	
Male	1,284	72.3	66	65.3	547	82.1
Female	491	27.7	35	34.7	119	17.9

Gottfredson, 1983; Nieuwbeerta et al., 2010). Consequently, we expected the individuals in our sample to be younger, but, regardless of gender or other factors, the average age was 35 (35.1, *Min* = 16, *Max* = 83) at intake and nearly 37 (36.6, *Min* = 18, *Max* = 86) at release.

Similarly, the average age of recidivists was 35 (35.1, *Min* = 18, *Max* = 78). Although the bulk of the release and return cohorts were between 25 and 64 years of age, individuals between 18 and 24 years of age had the highest return (55.3%) and probation (5.1%) rates of any other age group. Those 65 years of age and older had the lowest return (19.7%) and probation (1.4%) rates.⁵ Regardless of the type of sanction received after release (i.e., reincarceration or probation), recidivism rates subsequently declined as age increased, which aligns with the existing literature on age and criminality (see Graph 2).

⁵ Only one person over the age of 64 ($N = 71$) was sentenced to probation within 36 months of their 2017 release.

Race

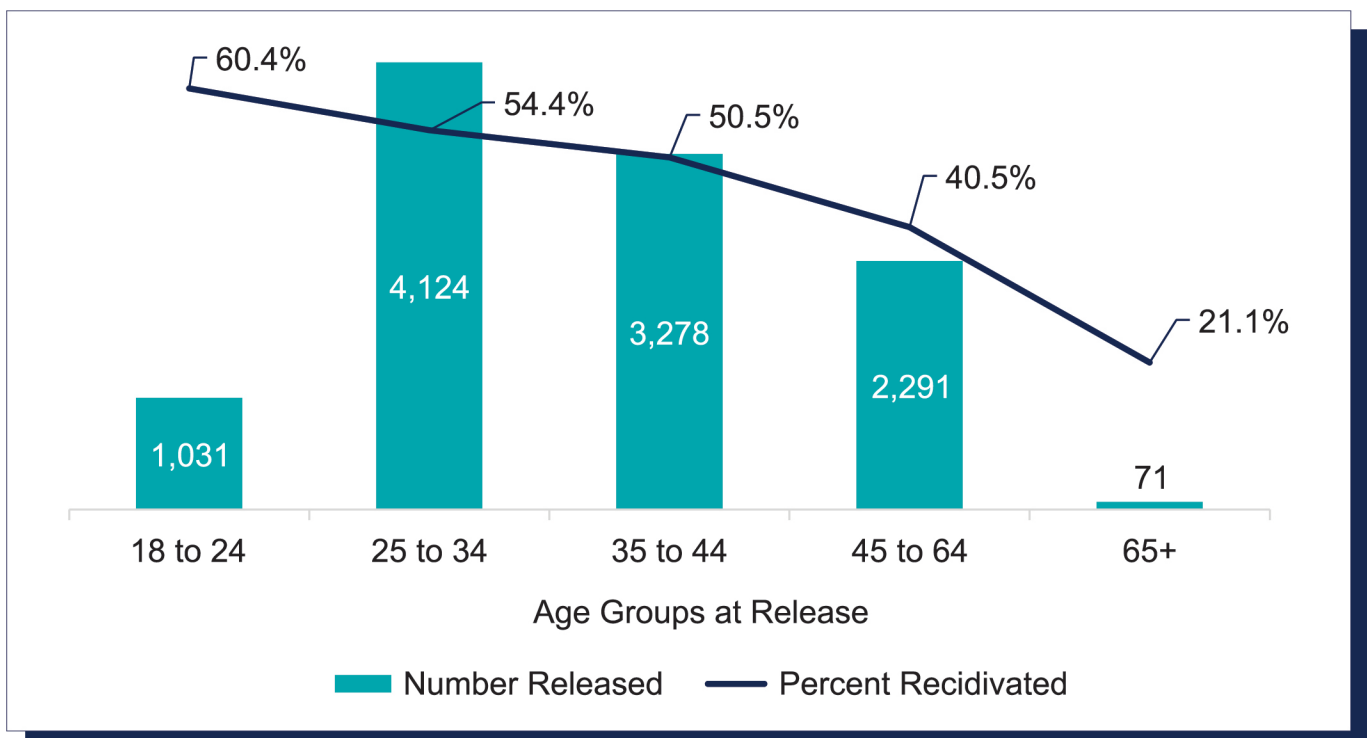
Though White individuals made up the majority (65.9%, $n = 7,115$) of the released sample, Black individuals (30.9%, $n = 3,333$) were overrepresented in relation to the larger population of Arkansas (see <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/AR> for census information). Most of the sample were men, so the racial composition of the males reflected that of the release and recidivism cohorts. However, the racial breakdown was less diverse among the 1,788 females released in 2017. Nearly 85% (84.6%, $n =$

1,512) were White, 14% (14.2%, $n = 254$) were Black, and only around 1% (1.2%, $n = 22$) were Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Asian, or Native American. The racial composition of the women who returned to incarceration ($n = 590$) and received a probation sentence ($n = 120$), resembled the female release cohort. That is, 90% of the women who received a probation imposition ($n = 108$) and 86% (86.1%; $n = 508$) of those reincarcerated were White.



Graph 2

Release Frequencies and Recidivism Rates by Age Group



Note: “Percent Recidivated” is the percent of those who were placed on probation or reincarcerated within 36 months of their release.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment among the released cohort ranged from less than high school to having a college degree (viz., bachelor's or master's degree), but the majority had a high school diploma (23.2%, $n = 2,498$) or a GED (44.9%, $n = 4,841$; see Table 2). Those with a college degree (1.2%, $n = 126$) were underrepresented relative to the larger Arkansas population (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/AR>). Among those who were reincarcerated, those with a GED had the highest return rate (52.0%), and those who had some college had the highest probation (5.1%) rate, while those with a college degree had the lowest rates (31.7%; 3.2%). Although the majority had a GED, we were unable to identify whether they received their diploma during incarceration. Thus, the numbers should not be used to make inferences about the Corrections School or other educational institutions. More research is needed to understand the relationship between education and recidivism among formerly incarcerated individuals in Arkansas. The existing literature has well-established that those with higher educational attainment and vocational training have a lower risk of reoffending than those with lower levels of education and no vocational skills. The mechanism through which educational and vocational attainment impacts criminality is the employment opportunities available to those with more education and vocational skills. Put differently, individuals with more education and vocational training are more likely to find employment in better-paying fields. Considering the negative relationship

between criminality and socioeconomic status, providing incarcerated individuals with educational and vocational opportunities would likely lower recidivism rates.

Table 4

Demographics of STTG Affiliated Individuals

	Release ($N = 1,774$)	Probation ($N = 72$)	Return ($N = 1,005$)
Gender			
Male	1,749	70	996
Female	25	2	9
Age at Release			
18 to 24	144	8	95
25 to 34	748	35	445
35 to 44	680	24	365
45 to 64	199	5	99
65+	3	0	1
Race			
White	711	27	439
Black	1,008	44	530
Other	55	1	36
Educational Attainment			
<High School	441	25	241
High School	311	8	170
GED	924	32	543
Some College	93	6	49
College Graduate	5	1	2
Release Offense			
Violent and Sexual	46	—	—
Violent	605	—	—
Sexual	5	—	—
Drug	595	—	—
Non-Violent	523	—	—
Return Offense			
Violent and Sexual	—	—	3
Violent	—	—	92
Sexual	—	—	0
Drug	—	—	190
Non-Violent	—	—	133

Note:

Non-violent offenses include failures to register as a sex offender ($n = 9$).

STTG

Individuals affiliated with a security threat / terrorist group (STTG) made up 16.4% ($n = 1,774$) of the release sample. Nearly all, of which, were male (98.6%, $n = 1,749$). The majority of the released STTG affiliates were Black (56.8%, $n = 1,008$), between 25 and 44 years of age (80.5%, $n = 1,428$), and had a high school diploma or GED (69.6%, $n = 1,235$). Of the released STTG affiliates, 72 (4.1%) individuals received a probation sentence within 36 months of their release.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Return Types

		Technical Violations ($N = 2,635$)		Criminal Offense ($N = 2,346$)	
		%	\bar{x}	%	\bar{x}
Gender					
Male		89.2	—	87.0	—
Female		10.8	—	13.0	—
Age at Intake		—	33.9	—	33.6
Age at Release		—	35.3	—	34.7
Race					
White		60.9	—	72.7	—
Black		36.1	—	24.2	—
Other		2.9	—	3.1	—
Educational Attainment					
<High School		21.7	—	20.1	—
High School		19.9	—	21.1	—
GED		50.2	—	50.9	—
Some College		7.4	—	7.1	—
College Graduate		0.8	—	0.8	—
Proportion of Returns ($N = 4,981$)		52.9	—	47.1	—

Release Types and Returns by Criminal Offenses and Technical Violations

Incarcerated individuals are released by discharging (i.e., completing) their sentence or transferring to community supervision by the Arkansas Parole Board. Of the 10,795 people in the released cohort, 91.4% ($n = 9,869$) were released to supervision, while only 8.6% ($n = 926$) discharged their sentence (see Table 2). The return rate was lower for those who were discharged (33.8%, $n = 313$) than those released to supervision (47.3%, $n = 4,668$). Conversely, the probation rate (9.7%, $n = 90$) was higher for those that discharged their sentence

than those released to supervision (4.0%, $n = 394$).

Individuals who return to incarceration do so by being convicted of a new criminal offense or for violating the conditions of their parole or both. Though we describe all technical violators (see Table 5), there are notable differences within this group. For example, the majority of technical violators were reincarcerated due to the commission of a new felony offense in violation of their parole (86.9%). This means that only a fraction of technical violators were reincarcerated for violating a condition of their parole that did not include the commission of a new felony offense. The remaining 47.1% ($n = 2,346$) of returns to incarceration, then, were for a criminal offense.

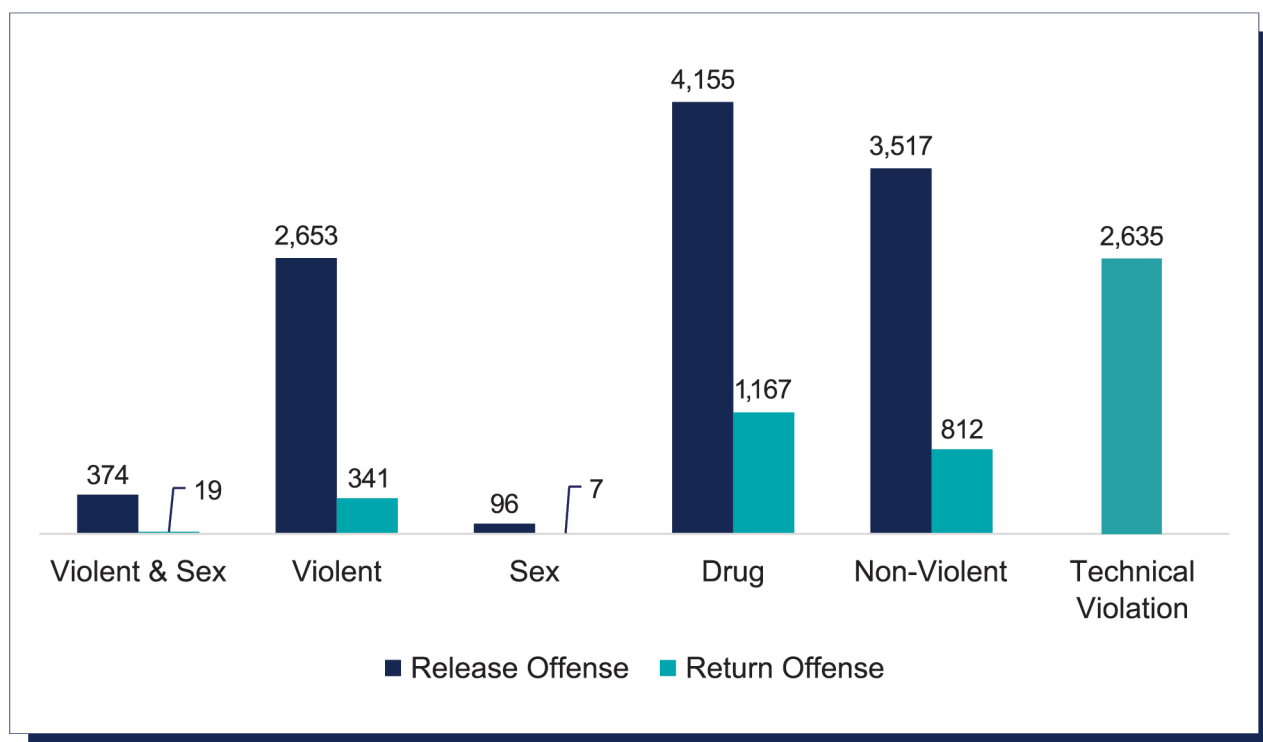
Release Types and Returns *(continued)*

To better understand the offense associated with the cohort's 2017 incarceration and what type of crime led to their return,⁶ release offenses were explored. We found that one-fourth of those released were serving time for a violent offense before their 2017 release, but most were incarcerated for a drug (38.5%, $n = 4,155$) or non-violent offense (32.6%, $n = 3,517$; see Graph 3). Of the 2,346 people who returned because of a criminal offense, 49.7% ($n = 1,167$) were reincarcerated for a drug offense.

Interestingly, over half of those who returned for a drug-related crime were serving time for a drug offense prior to their 2017 release (56.1%, $n = 654$). Drug crimes were the most common return offense regardless of gender, race, or educational attainment. Though this was true for most of the age cohorts, 21% (21.1%, $n = 120$) of those between 18 and 24 years of age returned for a non-violent offense,⁷ while 18% (18.1%, $n = 103$) were reincarcerated for a drug crime. Of those who returned for a criminal offense, 34.6% came back because of a non-violent crime ($n = 812$), including the 80 individuals (female, $n = 4$; male, $n = 76$) who failed to register as a sex offender.

Graph 3

Release and Return Offense Types and Technical Violations



Note: Non-violent offenses include failures to register as a sex offender. Technical violations are only shown for return offenses.

Table 6

Release and Return Types by Gender

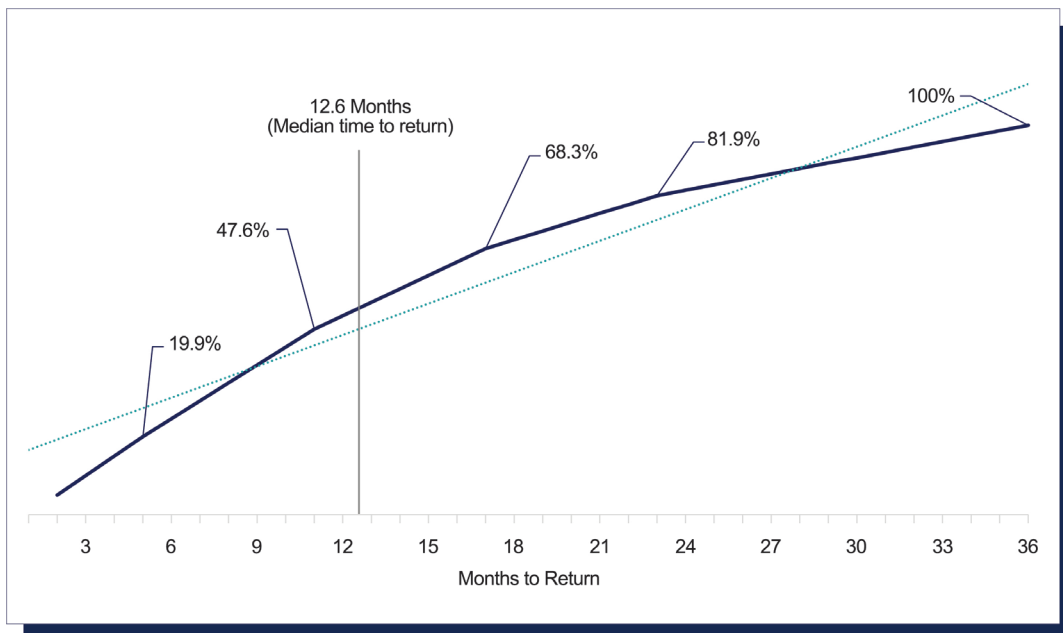
Offense Type	Release (N = 10,795)		Return (N = 4,981)	
	f	%	f	%
Male	(n = 9,007)		(n = 4,391)	
Violent & Sexual	363	4.0	18	0.4
Violent	2,354	26.1	317	7.2
Sexual	94	1.0	7	0.2
Drug	3,241	36.0	969	22.1
Non-Violent	2,955	32.8	729	16.6
Technical Violation	—	—	2,351	53.5
Female	(n = 1,788)		(n = 590)	
Violent & Sexual	11	0.6	1	0.2
Violent	299	16.7	24	4.1
Sexual	2	0.1	0	—
Drug	914	51.1	198	33.6
Non-Violent	562	31.4	83	14.1
Technical Violation	—	—	284	48.1

Time to Probation and Return to Incarceration

For formerly incarcerated individuals the likelihood of recidivating is the highest within the first year of release (Benda, 2005; Caudill, 2010; Jung et al., 2010; Schmidt & Witte, 1989). In line with the literature, half of those in the release sample were reincarcerated 13 months (12.6 months) after their release (see Graph 4). This was particularly true for those 34 years of age and younger, who made up 54.6% of all the 12-month returns. The youngest age cohort, those between 18 and 24 years of age, had the fastest return average (13 months) of the age cohorts (see Table 7).

Graph 4

Time to Return to Incarceration



⁶ Individuals who returned to incarceration could have been convicted of multiple crimes; however, return offense was measured using only the most serious offense.

⁷ For the return criminal offense types, failure to register as a sex offender (n = 80) was included in the non-violent offense category. This means that failing to register as a sex offender was their most serious offense leading to their return. Of the return sample, less than 2% (n = 96) failed to register as a sex offender before they were incarcerated regardless of other offenses or violations.

Time to Probation and Return to Incarceration (continued)

Despite the existing literature and the time to return rates, for those who received a probation sentence after release the median time to probation was 19 months (19.3 months, $\bar{X} = 18.3$ months). In fact, only 28.3% ($n = 137$) of the 484 probation impositions received by the release cohort occurred within 12 months of release. Like time return, though, the youngest individuals received a probation imposition faster than their older counterparts (see Table 7). More specifically, those between the ages of 18 and 24 accounted for the smallest age cohort (10.9%, $n = 53$) of the probation sample, but had the fastest time to probation average (17.2 months). Additionally, the oldest cohort, those between 45 and 64 years have the slowest time to probation average (19.2 months).

Like age group differences, time to probation and return to incarceration varied by gender, levels of educational attainment, and whether someone was under community supervision. For women, the average time to probation and return was slightly longer than for men. That is, the females returned to incarceration after 16 months (16.4 months) and received probation after 20 months (20.6 months), while men received probation at 17.5 months and returned to incarceration 14 months after release.

Table 7

Time to Return by Age Group (N = 4,981)

Age Groups	Average Time to Probation (N = 484)	Average Time to Return (N = 4,981)
18 to 24	17.2	13.0
25 to 34	18.6	14.2
35 to 44	17.8	14.7
45 to 64	19.2	14.9
65+	–	13.9

Note:

Time to return to incarceration ranged from less than one month (0.3) to 36 months.

Time to probation ranged from 1 day to 36 months.

Only one person placed on probation was person 65 years of age or older.

Those without a college degree returned between 14 and 15 months. Among those with a bachelor's or master's degree, the average time to return was nearly 17 months (16.5 months). On average, individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree received probation after nearly 17 months (16.8 months) from their release. Those with a GED, received probation after almost 19 months (18.8 months), the slowest time to probation of the educational cohorts.

Finally, those under community supervision returned nearly 14 months (14.3 months) after their 2017 release, while individuals who discharged their sentence were reincarcerated after nearly 16 months (15.6 months). The average time to probation among the individuals who discharged their sentenced and were released in 2017 was 15.5 months. For those who were released to supervision, the average time to probation was 18.9 months.

Length of Incarceration and Criminal History

Sentence length can impact future criminality among formerly incarcerated individuals (Collins, 2010; Rydberg & Clark, 2016). To better understand how long someone spent incarcerated before their 2017 release, we included an item for sentence length (measured in months). For the 2017 release cohort, the average length of incarceration was 17.5 months and 15 months (14.8 months, $N = 5,465$) for those who recidivated. Sentence length also differed by type of recidivism and gender. Namely, people who received probation spent an average of 12.5 months incarcerated before their release, while the average length for those who were reincarcerated was 15 months. On average, the males

served 18.5 months, while their female counterparts were incarcerated for 12.5 months.

Criminal history or frequent criminal justice system involvement can also influence recidivism (Doerner & Demuth, 2014; Kurlychek et al., 2006). As a proxy measure for criminal history, we explored previous incarcerations among those released in 2017. Previous incarcerations ranged from one to 19. The average number of previous incarcerations for those released in 2017 was 2.9 and 3.2 for those who recidivated within 36 months. We also found that previous incarcerations differed by recidivism type. Also, on average, those who were reincarcerated after their release had been previously incarcerated more times ($M = 3.2$, $N = 4,981$) than those who received a probation imposition after their release in 2017 ($M = 2.8$, $N = 484$).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for the 2017 Release, Probation, and Return Cohorts

	Release ($N = 10,795$)		Probation ($N = 484$)		Return ($N = 4,981$)	
	\bar{x}	Range	\bar{x}	Range	\bar{x}	Range
Age						
at Intake	35	16 to 83	34	17 to 67	34	16 to 77
at Release	37	18 to 86	35	18 to 68	35	18 to 78
Length of Incarceration						
ACC	15.2	.9 to 242	17.5	–	14.8	–
ADC	17.9	.1 to 492	21.0	–	15.1	–
DOC	17.5	.1 to 494	20.3	–	15.0	–
Time to Return						
Released from ACC	–	–	20.3	0 to 36	15.7	0 to 36
Released from ADC	–	–	17.8	0 to 36	14.2	0 to 36
DOC	–	–	18.0	0 to 36	14.3	0 to 36
Previous Incarcerations	2.9	1 to 19	2.8	1 to 14	3.3	1 to 19

Note:

Age was rounded to the nearest whole number.

Previous incarcerations include the sentence in which they were released in 2017.

Restrictive Housing

Restrictive housing is when an incarcerated individual is confined to a cell for at least 22 hours a day.⁸ Restrictive housing is reserved for those posing a direct threat to themselves or those around them. Of the 10,795 people released in 2017, 1,152 individuals had spent some time in restrictive housing within the last year of their incarceration. Of the 1,152 individuals, 54 received a probation imposition, while 641 were reincarcerated within 36 months of their release. This means that the recidivism rate for those who spent time in restrictive housing before release was 60.3% ($n = 695$).

Reentry Program

The Reentry Program is a 180-day program designed to ease incarcerated individuals' transition from imprisonment to society. Program participants live in one of the reentry facilities licensed by the DOC, but they are still considered an "ADC inmate." After participants complete the program, they are released to community supervision. In 2017, 577 individuals were released from the Reentry Program. Within 36 months, 266 former program participants were reincarcerated (46.1%) and 20 received a probation imposition (3.5%). This means that the recidivism rate for those released from the Reentry Program in 2017 was 49.6%. Recently, the Reentry Program was evaluated by the DOC's QI/PE staff. The purpose of the qualitative evaluation was to assess the extent to which the program adhered to best practices. The study's findings resulted in programmatic and curriculum changes that better align

with the best practices literature.

Transitional Facilities

The transitional housing program provides housing to formerly incarcerated individuals who were released to supervision by the Arkansas Parole Board or placed on probation by a circuit court. Of the 10,795 released individuals, 1,174 lived in a transitional facility after their 2017 release. Individuals in transitional housing had a 53.8% recidivism rate, with 56 receiving a probation imposition and 576 being reincarcerated. Though we include transitional facilities in the current report, these individuals are released then they go to a transition house. Thus, they are not released from a transitional house. The recidivism, return, and probation rates presented here should not be used to make causal assumptions about crime or the effectiveness of the transitional facilities. This is particularly important considering homeless and marginally housed people are more at risk to recidivate than those with stable housing (Lutze et al., 2014). Additionally, each transitional facility offers different programming and resources. Therefore, the return rates for those in transitional facilities are likely due to their housing situation, not the facility or its practices.

Supervision Sanction Program

The Supervision Sanction Program (SSP) is a short-term (viz., 90 or 180 day) residential alternative sanction program.⁹

⁸ Arkansas Department of Corrections, Administrative Directive 2021-15.

⁹ Recently, the length of the SSP changed from 90 and 120 days to 60 and 90 days.

The purpose of SSP is to reduce revocations among probation and parole violators and alleviate overcrowding in DOC correctional facilities. Overall, 408 individuals

completed the SSP after their 2017 release. Of which, 316 SSP participants were reincarcerated, making the return rate for overall SSP completions 77.4% (see Table 9).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for the Supervision Sanction Program (SSP)

	Participants (N = 408)	Returned (N = 316)	Return Rate	Time to Return
SSP Participation	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	%	\bar{x}
1 Time	285	234	82.1	22.0
2 Times	123	82	66.7	25.2
Overall	408	316	77.4	31.3

Predictors of Recidivism

To better understand the impact of specific factors on reincarceration we employed binary logistic regression, a statistical technique that allowed us to regress empirically and theoretically sound variables on reincarceration. Specifically, we regressed age, gender, race, educational attainment, restrictive housing, previous incarcerations, STTG affiliation, release offense, and release type on reincarceration within 36 months among a sample of 10,714 individuals released from a DOC facility in 2017.¹⁰ This scientific addition to the current report not only helped us identify statistically significant predictors of reincarceration, but the findings lay the foundation for future research and can be used to inform our policies and practices.

The results of the binary logistic regression revealed that the model significantly predicts reincarceration,

$X^2(9) = 825.45, p < .001$ (see Table 11). Namely, age, gender, race, restrictive housing, previous incarcerations, STTG affiliation, and release type are statistically significant predictors of reincarceration. Conversely, the results showed that educational attainment and release offense were not associated with recidivism.

The results were consistent with previous research, revealing that older individuals are less likely to be reincarcerated than their younger counterparts ($b = -.43, p < .001$). Compared to those between 25 and 34 years of age, people between 18 and 24 are 1.5 times more likely to be reincarcerated within 36 months of their release ($OR = 1.54, p < .001$). Unsurprisingly, then, people 35 years of age and older are less likely to return to incarceration than those between 25 and 34 years of age.

¹⁰ Diagnostics for binary logistic regression were run but omitted from this report. None of the assumptions of binary logistic regression were violated. For more information on sample demographics, variables, diagnostics, and findings please contact Dr. Tabrina Bratton at Tabrina.Bratton@arkansas.gov.

Predictors of Recidivism (continued)

The effects of gender and race also align with the existing scholarship. The probability of males returning to incarceration is 1.8 times higher than their female counterparts ($OR = 1.76$, $p < .001$). Though men are more likely to be reincarcerated than women, the female prison population is rapidly increasing. Thus, research that focuses on incarcerated women and gender-specific programming and services is needed. Race also predicted recidivism. Compared to those whose race was reported as Black, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Native American individuals were less likely to return to incarceration than White individuals. This finding is surprising considering that much of the existing research suggests that White individuals are less likely than non-White individuals to be incarcerated (Monk, 2018).

Experiences and associations during incarceration also influence reincarceration. Namely, an STTG affiliate is 1.2 times more likely to be reincarcerated within 36 months of release than non-affiliates ($OR = 1.18$, $p < .05$). Spending time in restrictive housing within one year of release increases the probability of returning to incarceration. The results showed that being in restrictive housing increases the odds of reincarceration by 1.4 times ($OR = 1.382$, $p < 0.001$).

Method of release and one's history of incarceration matters for future

incarceration. That is, those released to community supervision are two times more likely to recidivate than those who discharged their sentence ($OR = 2.13$, $p < .001$). This could be related to sentence length rather than supervision itself, considering individuals with shorter probation sentences are more likely to complete their probation than those with longer terms.¹¹ Finally, for every previous incarceration, the odds of reincarceration increased by 1.3 times ($OR = 1.23$, $p < .001$).

The results suggest that carceral programming, behavioral interventions, and policy aimed to address the factors that influence criminality should be designed for those between 18 and 24 years of age, STTG-affiliates, individuals who have been in restrictive housing, and those with a history of incarceration. These individuals have the highest risk of being reincarcerated. Further, future research is needed on the relationship between race and educational attainment and recidivism.

Of the variables in the Model, educational attainment and release offense were not statistically significant predictors. Educational attainment is associated with criminality.¹² That is, people with higher levels of educational attainment typically commit less crime than those with less education. Surprisingly, in our Model, educational attainment was not statistically significant. This finding warrants more research to better understand the relationship between education and recidivism in Arkansas.

¹¹ Sims & Jones, 1997.

¹² Fella & Gallipoli, 2014; Swisher & Dennison, 2016.

Table 10

Binary Logistic Regression Results

Variable	OR	<i>b</i>	<i>RSE</i>
Age (25 to 34)			
18 to 24	1.54	.43**	.07
35 to 44	.74	-.30**	.05
45 to 64	.43	-.84**	.06
65+	.19	-1.64**	.33
Gender (Female)			
Male	1.76	.57**	.06
Race (White)			
Black	.77	-.26**	.05
Other	.82	-.20	.12
Educational Attainment (<High School)			
High School	.87	-.13	.06
GED	1.14	.13	.05
Some College	.87	-.14	.08
College Graduate	.80	-.23	.21
Restrictive Housing			
Yes	1.38	.32**	.07
Previous Incarcerations			
	1.23	.21**	.01
STTG			
Yes	1.18	.17*	.06
Release Offense (Non-Violent)			
Violent and Sexual	.85	-.16	.12
Violent	1.08	.08	.05
Sexual	.74	-.29	.22
Drug	.97	-.03	.05
Release Type (Dicharged)			
Community Supervision	2.13	.76**	.08

Note: *N* = 10,714

The “other” racial category includes Hispanic, Asian, and Native American individuals.

Base categories are in parenthesis.

Robust standard errors are displayed for coefficients.

p* < .05. *p* < .001.

Conclusion

Incarceration adversely impacts families, the economy, public health, marriages, communities, and crime and delinquency rates.¹³ The far-reaching effects warrant an in-depth look at the Arkansas carceral population and the return rates of those released from the DOC. Thus, like previous recidivism reports, we explored the characteristics and return rates of those released in 2017. Additionally, we added a logistic regression model to the current report. By employing this statistical technique, we were able to identify statistically significant factors related to recidivism. This is an important addition to the recidivism report because intervention strategies specific to these factors can be designed and implemented. Lastly, the findings can inform correctional policy and practice that seeks to help formerly incarcerated individuals desist from crime, ultimately reducing victimization rates and the size of the Arkansas carceral population.

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— Dr. Tabrina Bratton, Ph.D.

¹³ Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Massoglia et al., 2011; Pettit & Lyons, 2009.

Glossary of Terms and Measures

BINARY LOGISTIC REGRESSION.

A statistical technique that explores the regressive abilities of predictor variables on a dichotomous outcome variable.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT.

Educational attainment categories include less than high school, high school diploma, GED, some college, and college graduate. The “some college” category included those who reported taking at least some college classes and those who earned an associate of arts degree. The “college graduate” group includes individuals who earned a bachelor’s or master’s degree. There were no doctoral degrees in the sample. Educational data were missing for 20 individuals.

FAILURE TO REGISTER. Though failure to register as a sex offender was included in the non-violent return offense variable, we created a separate item for whether someone failed to register regardless of their other crimes or violations. Here, failure to register may not be their most serious offense, but it occurred during the 36-month follow-up period. Of the return sample, less than 2% ($n = 96$) failed to register as a sex offender before they were incarcerated.

LENGTH OF INCARCERATION. The number of months an individual was incarcerated before release in 2017.

NUMBER OF PREVIOUS INCARCERATIONS. The number of times an individual was admitted to a DOC correctional facility includes the incarceration in which they were released

in 2017. This means everyone in the release cohort had at least one previous incarceration. Previous incarcerations ranged from one to 19.

PROBATION. A court-imposed sanction that allows an individual convicted of a criminal offense to remain in the community under supervision. Although people convicted of an offense can receive probation and be sentenced to incarceration, we looked at the sanctions separately. For those who did receive probation and returned to incarceration ($n = 298$), we only counted their return.

PROBATION RATE. The number of people who received probation/number of those released in 2017.

RACE. The racial composition was broken down into three groups: White, Black, and “Other.” Due to the relatively small number of Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American individuals, they were combined to create the “Other” racial group.

RECIDIVISM. The legal definition for Arkansas is “a criminal act that results in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to incarceration of a person with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the person’s release from custody” (A.C.A. § 5-4-101). However, DOC researchers do not have access to rearrest data. Thus, we defined recidivism as a return to incarceration in a facility under the jurisdiction of the DOC or receiving a probation imposition within 36 months of their last release in 2017.

RECIDIVISM RATE. The (number of people who returned to incarceration + number of people who received probation)/ number of those released in 2017.

REENTRY PROGRAM. The Reentry Program is a 180-day program for incarcerated individuals who transferred from the ADC to one of seven licensed reentry facilities located throughout the state. During the program, participants work full-time and attend Alcoholic and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

RELEASE DIVISION. Individuals were released from DOC's institutional (viz., ADC) and community (viz., ACC) correctional facilities. Although we considered the release division a dichotomy (i.e., released from ACC or ADC), this variable was composed by combining ACC centers ($n = 1,198$) and reentry facilities ($n = 577$) releases and releases from ADC prisons ($n = 7,693$), county jails backup ($n = 802$), 309 ($n = 57$), work release ($n = 463$), and Arkansas State Police ($n = 5$).

RELEASE OFFENSE. The most serious active offense on record at the time of release was considered their release offense. These offenses were classified into five crime types: violent and sexual, violent only, sex only, drug, and non-violent offenses.

RETURN RATE. The number of people who returned to incarceration/number of those released in 2017.

RELEASE TYPE. Incarcerated individuals are released by discharging their sentence or being transferred to

community supervision by the Arkansas Parole Board.

RETURN OFFENSE. Return offense was the most serious crime someone released in 2017 was convicted of. These offenses were classified into five crime types: violent and sexual, violent only, sex only, drug, and non-violent offenses. For the return offenses, non-violent crime includes failure to register as a sex offender. There were 80 failures to register in the non-violent return offenses, which means that was their most serious offense.

RESTRICTIVE HOUSING. Restrictive Housing (viz., being placed in a confined cell for at least 22 hours a day) is commonly used for individuals who pose a threat to those around them, themselves, or the safe and secure operations of the facility. We used a binary item indicating whether a person was in restrictive housing at any point in the 12 months before their release.

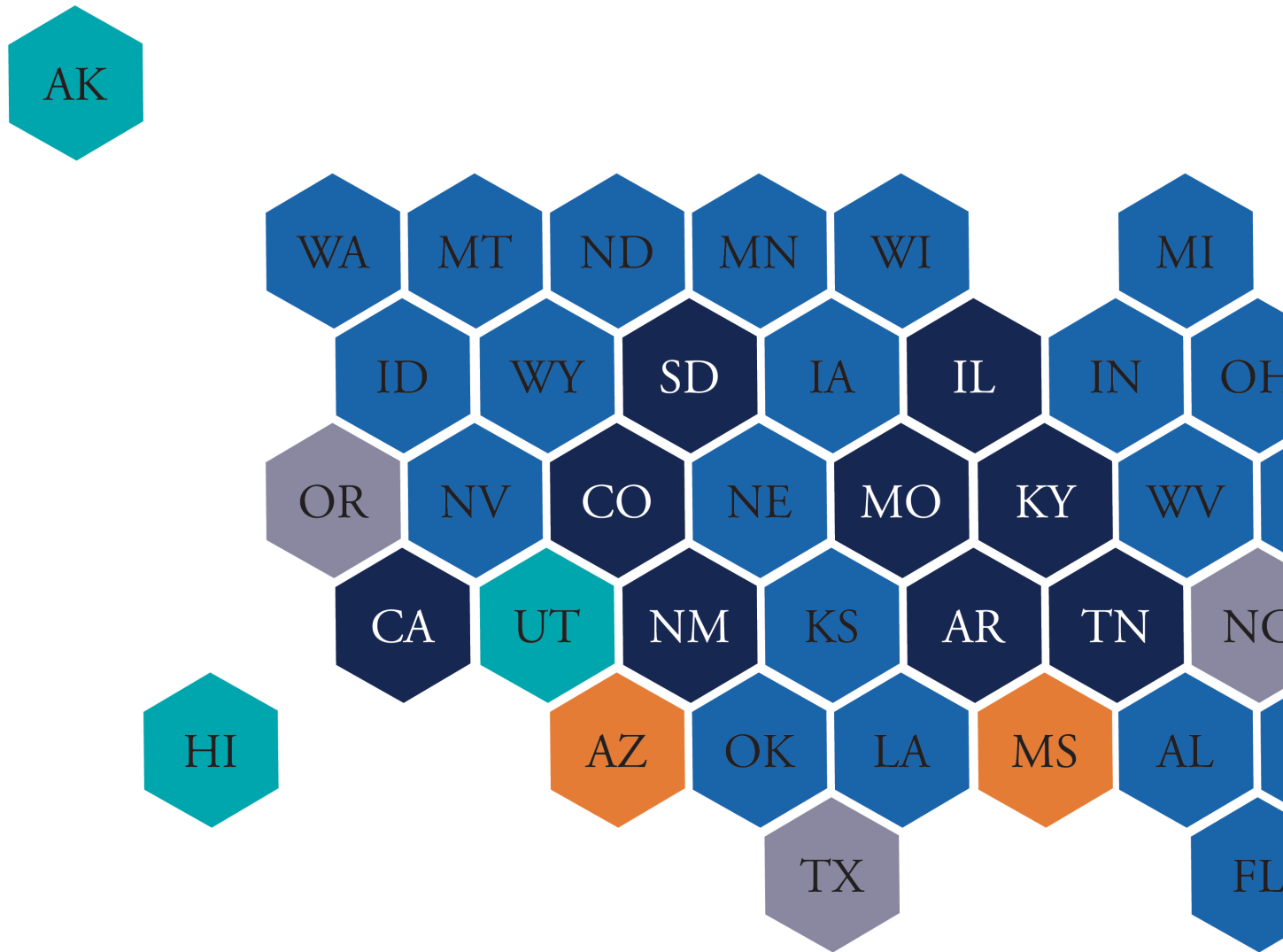
SECURITY THREAT / TERRORIST GROUP (STTG). Individuals who were affiliated with a group that poses a threat to the security of the institution or the physical safety of other inmates and staff.

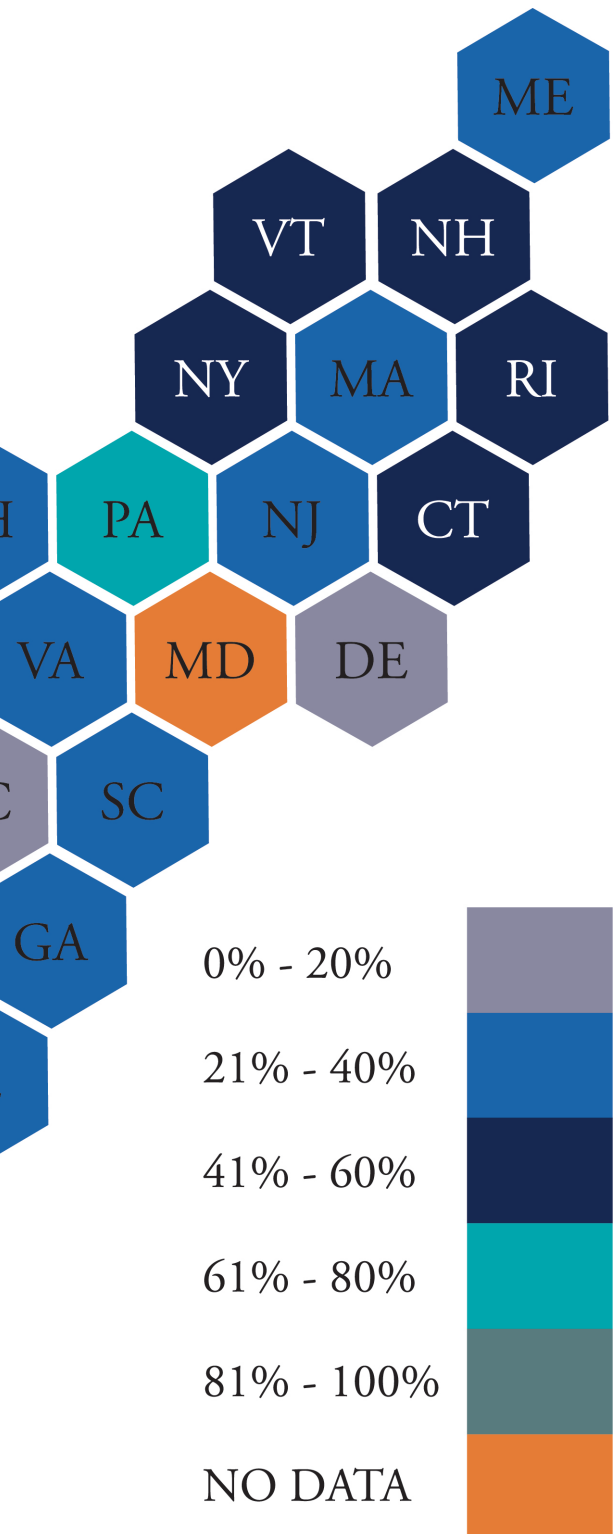
TRANSITIONAL FACILITY. In 2017, 1,174 people listed in their approved parole plan that they would be going to live in a transitional facility. The transitional housing program provides housing to formerly incarcerated individuals who were released to supervision by the Arkansas Parole Board or placed on probation by a circuit court.

Supplemental Information

Figure 1

Supplemental Figure from Arkansas Department of Corrections' "2016 Recidivism Study"





The graphic represents the 2016 recidivism rates reported by state correctional agencies. It is important to note that states define and measure recidivism differently. Thus, recidivism rates should not be compared across states. Below are examples of some of the various recidivism measurements and reporting practices from state agencies across the U.S.

Recidivism Defined:

- Iowa, Michigan, Utah's recidivism rate is defined as reincarcerations
- Connecticut, Oregon, and Texas define recidivism as arrests, convictions, and incarcerations after release
- Virginia counts someone as a recidivist if they were "convicted of a felony in Virginia with a sentence of one year or more or a parole violation with a sentence of two years or more."
- Alabama counts those who have had a revocation due to technical violations after three 45-day confinements
- Vermont includes those who have been incarcerated for at least one year in their release cohort and only those who have returned for at least 90 days as a recidivists

Recidivism Time Frames:

- Missouri measures recidivism by fiscal year
- Kansas measures recidivism by calendar year
- North Carolina and Kentucky explore recidivism within two years of release
- Louisiana explores recidivism within five years of release

Recidivism Reported:

- Montana exclusively reports recidivism by gender
- Oregon reports parole and probation separately
- Delaware separates their rates by returns to prison by sentence length
- Minnesota separately reports reconvictions and reincarcerations

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