



# Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

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## Recidivism Report December 2011 with Fiscal Year 2009 Update

### Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background	5
Methodology	7
Release Population	10
Recidivism of Release Population	14
Time to Failure	18
Comparing Recidivism Rates in the Juvenile Justice System	20
Juvenile Cohort Methodology	23
Recidivism by District and County	25
Policy Implications	28

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## Executive Summary

The 2011 Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Recidivism Report measures all juvenile releases into the community and follows them until the end of a three-year follow-up period or until a subsequent adjudicated offense. Recidivism, in this report, is defined as *the adjudication for delinquent acts after a juvenile is released into the community while under DJJ supervision or after DJJ supervision*. This report explains recidivism trends in the context of juvenile risks, initial offenses, recidivating offenses, and other influencing factors. Additionally, this report provides the results of alternate recidivism approaches to facilitate comparison with other states.

The 2011 Recidivism Report finds that DJJ’s release population has decreased in number every year since 2004, but its recidivism rate has increased each year

**Release and Recidivism Trends  
FY 2003-2009**

FY	Juveniles	Releases	1 Year Delinquent Recidivism Rate	1-year Delinquent Recidivism Rate		
				0%	20%	40%
2003	12851	14742	27.6%			
2004	13863	15912	30.2%			
2005	13389	15453	31.7%			
2006	12346	14119	32.3%			
2007	12281	13989	32.6%			
2008	11882	13581	33.0%			
2009	10852	12302	33.5%			
7-Year Total	65466	100098	31.5%			

since 2003. Both of these trends are very important because they show that DJJ, in conjunction with Georgia courts, police, schools, and health services have been gradually focusing limited resources on youth with greater needs and higher risks.

During fiscal year 2009, DJJ released 10,852 unique (unduplicated) juveniles into the community while under DJJ supervision, or after DJJ supervision. Due to repeated releases by individual youth, the total sum of unique releases was

## Executive Summary

12,302. After a one-year follow-up period, 33.5 percent of these releases ended in recidivating events. The two-year recidivism rate is 41 percent and the three-year recidivism rate is 45 percent.

### Recidivism Rates, FY 2009

One year	34%
Two year	41%
Three year	45%

The Recidivism Report also found the following:

- When compared to the other states that utilize a similar measure of recidivism, Georgia's one-year recidivism rate is proximate to those states' average one-year recidivism rate of 33 percent.
- In Georgia, metro areas including Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Savannah and the greater Atlanta area have higher than the one-year state recidivism rate for FY2009.
- When examined by legal status, the population released from STP (Short Term Program) with probation had the highest one-year recidivism rate during FY 2009 at 51 percent; the population of youth placed in STP alone had the third highest rate of recidivism by legal status.
- A juvenile's Comprehensive Risk and Needs (CRN) assessment risk score is a strong predictor of the likelihood of recidivism. FY 2009 data shows that juveniles released with higher CRN scores were more likely to recidivate, and more likely to recidivate with more serious offenses.
- The severity of originating offense does not predict the likelihood of recidivating. Fiscal year 2009 data shows that regardless of the severity of the originating offense, 63 percent of the population did not recidivate within the first year of their community release.
- The originating offense does, however, provide some information on the severity of recidivating events. Recidivating juveniles released with low-level status offenses are more likely to recidivate with a status offense.

## Executive Summary

Likewise, recidivating juveniles released with a felony originating offense more frequently recidivate with a felony offense.

Given the findings of this report, three important policy issues should be considered:

1. *Preventing Recidivism* - The CRN estimates the likelihood of recidivism upon a juvenile's release into the community and identifies resources essential for successful juvenile transition into their communities. This measure has been validated as a statistically useful tool. It is a more accurate estimator of recidivism than widely-used factors such as offense history. It would provide information that would help ensure successful transitions into the community or alternate placements.
2. *Addressing Community Commitment Recidivism* - In comparison to community commitments, the recidivism rate for residential commitments is 70 percent less, even though the CRN profiles are similar for both populations. Such a large difference in recidivism rates implies that services in the community are not adequately addressing the needs of the youth. The unexpectedly high recidivism rates for community commitments needs to be addressed with improved placements and services that meet juvenile needs.
3. *Enhancing Services Available to DJJ Youth* - There is an ever growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of programs modeled after best practices in reducing recidivism. Conversely, short-term programming has consistently been found in the literature to be ineffective in reducing recidivism among juveniles. Programs modeled after best practices, with adequate amounts of treatment have been found to reduce recidivism by up to 40 percent. The array of services available to DJJ Youth can be enhanced by increasing the availability of services that are based on best practices and principles of effective intervention.

## Background

Recidivism is the primary outcome measure of juvenile and adult justice systems. The success of an agency, program, placement or intervention is determined largely based on the recidivism rates after release. However, defining and measuring recidivism can be ambiguous tasks in the juvenile justice system. Many scholars, professional organizations and states utilize different definitions and measurement methodologies when examining recidivism. This variation has many in the field of juvenile justice calling for standardization in both the definition and measurement of recidivism.<sup>1</sup>

A consensus in the way recidivism is defined and measured would improve the ability to measure outcomes and performance of juvenile justice programs. Other outcome measures such as educational attainment and employment are also reported as indicators of program success, but a program's recidivism rates are most often regarded as the best indicator of success.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, to facilitate more accurate comparisons of recidivism in juvenile justice programming, there must be more consistency in how recidivism is defined and measured.

Standardization among entities measuring recidivism is also critical to accurately examining performance and achieving the goals of measuring recidivism as defined by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA). These goals include reducing re-offenses, increasing support for evidence based programming and supporting quality improvement efforts.<sup>3</sup>

### Understanding Recidivism

Although defining recidivism and measuring recidivism are closely related, understanding the differences between the two is important. Defining recidivism means to state what is meant by the term and clarify the parameters of the re-offense data that will be examined. The definition implicitly determines the data used to measure recidivism. The CJCA's position on the definition of recidivism is that it does not include status offenses or technical violations of court

## Background

orders; therefore, their definition is “a new offense that would be a crime if perpetrated by an adult, committed by a previously adjudicated youth who has been released from a program or returned to a community.”<sup>4</sup>

### DJJ’s Recidivism Definition

Adjudication for delinquent or criminal acts after a juvenile is released into the community while under DJJ supervision or after DJJ supervision.

On the other hand, measuring recidivism refers to the type of data used to assign the values that will determine the recidivism rate. For example, recidivism could be defined as the actual commission of a new felony or misdemeanor, while the measure of recidivism would be the adjudication of delinquency that resulted from the commission of a new felony or misdemeanor. The types of data used to measure recidivism most often include police arrest records, court adjudication records, juvenile justice agency data.<sup>5</sup>

### Understanding Factors that may Influence Recidivism Rates

Youth examined in recidivism reports are inherently different. These differences in youth characteristics can influence recidivism rates. Demographic characteristics including gender, age, race, and ethnicity are all associated with recidivism. Likewise, several risk factors have been associated with predicting juvenile recidivism. In analysis of over 20 studies examining predictors of recidivism, these risk factors generally fit into one of eight domains – demographic information, offense history, family and social factors, educational factors, intellectual and achievement scores, substance use history, clinical factors, and formal risk assessment. The offense history domain was the strongest predictor of reoffending.<sup>6</sup>

Meta-analyses aimed at identifying the specific primary risks associated with predicting juvenile recidivism have cited delinquent peer associations, antisocial attitudes, misconduct problems, ineffective use of leisure time, and problems in family relations as predominant factors associated with reoffending.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, several studies have found that juvenile crime is influenced by the youth’s environment – their neighborhoods and communities.<sup>8</sup> However, prior offense history is consistently found to be a risk factor for future delinquency.<sup>9</sup>

## **Methodology**

This report analyzes juvenile release cohorts. Release cohorts are distinct from juvenile cohorts in that a juvenile can have multiple releases. Each release begins with the first day a youth becomes “at risk” for reoffending in the community and ends after three years or the day a new qualifying offense occurs.

### Juveniles

For the purposes of this report, DJJ classifies a juvenile as any individual who is:

- (A) Under the age of 17 years old;
- (B) Under the age of 21 years, who committed an act of delinquency before reaching the age of 17 years, and who has been placed under the supervision of the court or on probation to the court; or
- (C) Under the age of 18 years, if alleged to be a “deprived child” or a “status offender”.

### DJJ Supervision

This report investigates recidivating events for juveniles who have been placed under the supervision of DJJ. A juvenile who receives an informal adjustment or is transferred to Superior Court is not considered under DJJ supervision. Also, juveniles who serve their probation under Independent Court Services<sup>a</sup> are not under DJJ supervision. Most metro counties are served by Independent Courts. Juveniles supervised through Independent Court Services represent approximately half of Georgia’s probated juveniles and are not captured in this analysis. However, DJJ supervises all committed juveniles—juveniles under regular commitment in the community or in residential placements and those committed to our secure facilities as regular commitments or designated felons.

### Release into the Community

Measured time to recidivating events begins at the point of a juvenile’s release

a. The seventeen counties with Independent courts are Chatham, Clayton, Cobb, Columbia, Crawford, DeKalb, Dougherty, Floyd, Fulton, Glynn, Gordon, Gwinnett, Hall, Peach, Spalding, Troup, and Whitfield. This report does not capture recidivating events following probation from these counties.

## Methodology

into the community. This point may be at the start of a new probation or community commitment or when a juvenile is released from secure confinement. Measurement begins at the point of release into the community because this is when the youth has the opportunity to commit a new offense and impact public safety. This approach also facilitates comparison among dispositional groups by disregarding the time a juvenile is held in secure confinement. Most offenders are still under DJJ supervision when they are released to community on probation, in aftercare or in residential placements.

### Recidivating Events

Rather than tracking a juvenile cohort, our recidivism rate captures each release into the community and subsequent recidivating event. This methodology captures multiple recidivating events for the same juvenile as unique recidivating events. The focus is on outcomes by placement rather than legal status.

### Follow up Period

Recidivism is measured for a period of at least one year from time of release into community and extended two or three years depending on data availability at the time of reporting. The majority of recidivism, as observed by Georgia DJJ and other states, occurs within the first year —marking an important window for analysis. The extended follow up period of three years describes long term outcomes.

This method of examining all releases to the community during a single year, while following juveniles for a three-year at-risk period, is carried out for FY2003 through FY2009. By definition, full three-year follow up periods have not occurred for youth released in fiscal year 2008 or 2009.

### Linking to Adult Corrections

A juvenile may legally be an adult during the at-risk follow up period after their release into the community. Juvenile records are linked with adult conviction data so that adult recidivating events are captured in our analysis. The data provid-



## Methodology

ed by Georgia Department of Corrections provides the offense date for incarcerated adult offenders and the probation start date for probated adult offenders. Since our juvenile recidivism analysis uses the date of offense in our analysis, we estimated the adult probation date of offense by subtracting an estimated average court processing time (90 days) from the probation start date. This report does not capture multiple adult criminal offenses since once a juvenile has been tried in adult court they are no longer released from DJJ.

### Originating versus Recidivating Offenses

Originating offense is the juvenile offense associated with a specific release into the community. Recidivating offense is the recidivating event after a youth is released into the community.

### Status versus Delinquent Offenses

A youth may start in a release group with either a delinquent or status originating offense. However, the recidivating offense type can be analyzed as being either delinquent, criminal or status recidivism. Delinquent offenses are juvenile misdemeanor or felony offenses. Criminal offenses are adult offenses. Delinquent and Criminal offenses are combined into the total delinquent recidivism rates.

Status offenses are those acts committed by youth that would not be considered legally valid were the juvenile an adult at the time of the offense. As such, status offenses are lesser offenses. They do not indicate the same level of recidivism or public safety impact and will be monitored separately.

### Single, Most Serious Offense

For each release event, an offender may be adjudicated on multiple offenses. The recidivism dataset takes into account only the single, most serious offense related to the current adjudication or conviction.

## Release Population

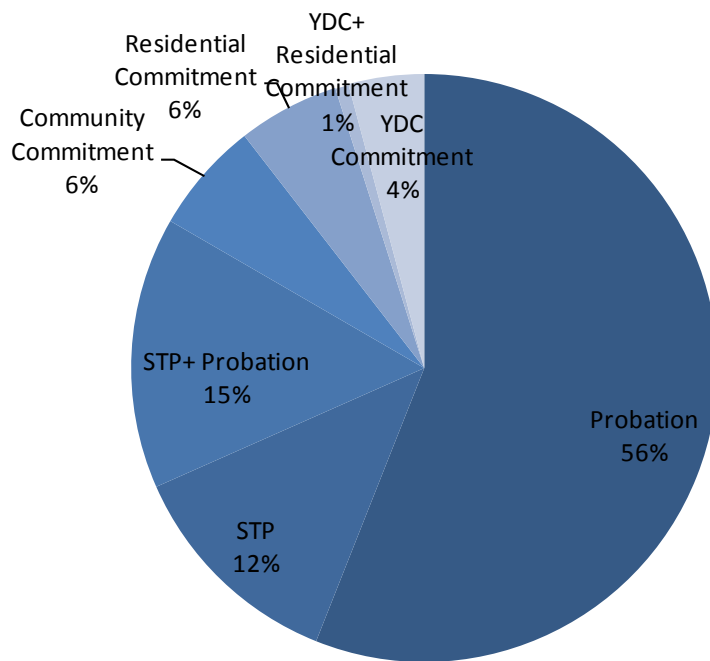
During the 2009 fiscal year, 10,852 unique juveniles were released into the community after a juvenile judicial adjudication. Some juveniles were released multiple times within a year. There were 12,302 total releases in fiscal year 2009.

During the past four years, the number of juveniles released and the number of releases both decreased by over 20 percent. Most of this population decrease is a drop in the white juvenile population. The number of white juvenile releases dropped 34 percent from 6,383 releases in fiscal year 2003 to 4,183 releases in 2009. In comparison, black juvenile releases only dropped five percent from 7,666 to 7,258 in fiscal year 2009. The juvenile disproportionate minority representation in DJJ is increasing.

FY	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Racial/Ethnic Juvenile Release Population		
2003	43.3%	52.0%	3.5%	1.3%	w	B	H O
2004	42.4%	52.4%	3.8%	1.4%	w	B	H O
2005	39.1%	55.5%	3.9%	1.5%	w	B	H O
2006	37.4%	57.6%	3.7%	1.2%	w	B	H O
2007	37.1%	57.2%	4.3%	1.3%	w	B	H O
2008	36.4%	57.4%	4.8%	1.4%	w	B	H O
2009	34.0%	59.0%	5.3%	1.6%	w	B	H O

In fiscal year 2009, the majority of youth released into the community were being supervised in the community through probation, community commitments or aftercare.

The juvenile release population is consistently about 25 percent female. However, females are disproportionately represented in some dispositions.



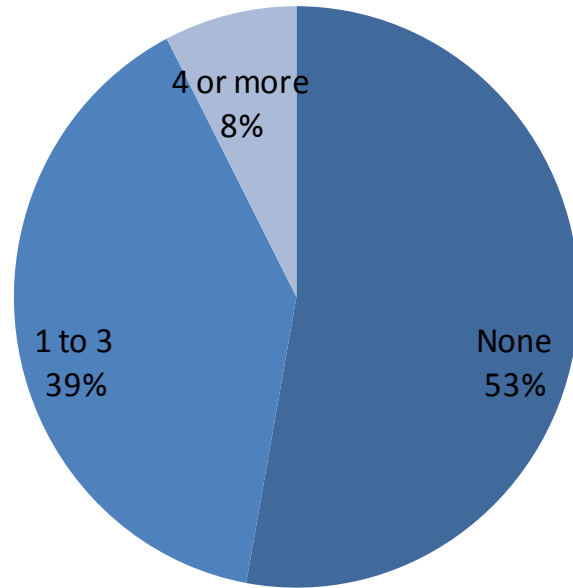
## Release Population

Thirty percent of juveniles released with probation were female whereas only 13 percent of juveniles released from a YDC commitment were female.

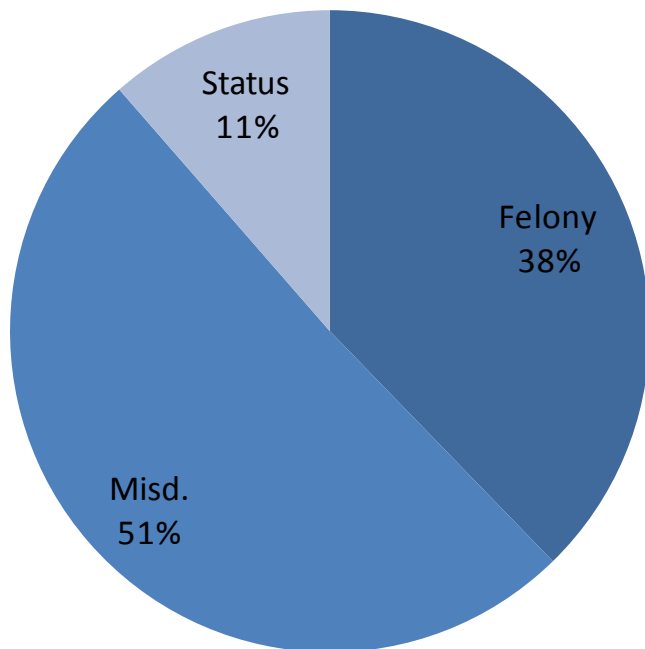
In fiscal year 2009, over half the youth released had no delinquent history prior to the offense they were being released on. As such, over half of DJJ's juvenile population made contact with DJJ for the first time.

The majority of youth DJJ releases into the community are released

Percent of Releases by Number of Prior Adjudications, FY2009



Percent of Releases by Originating Offense Type, FY2009



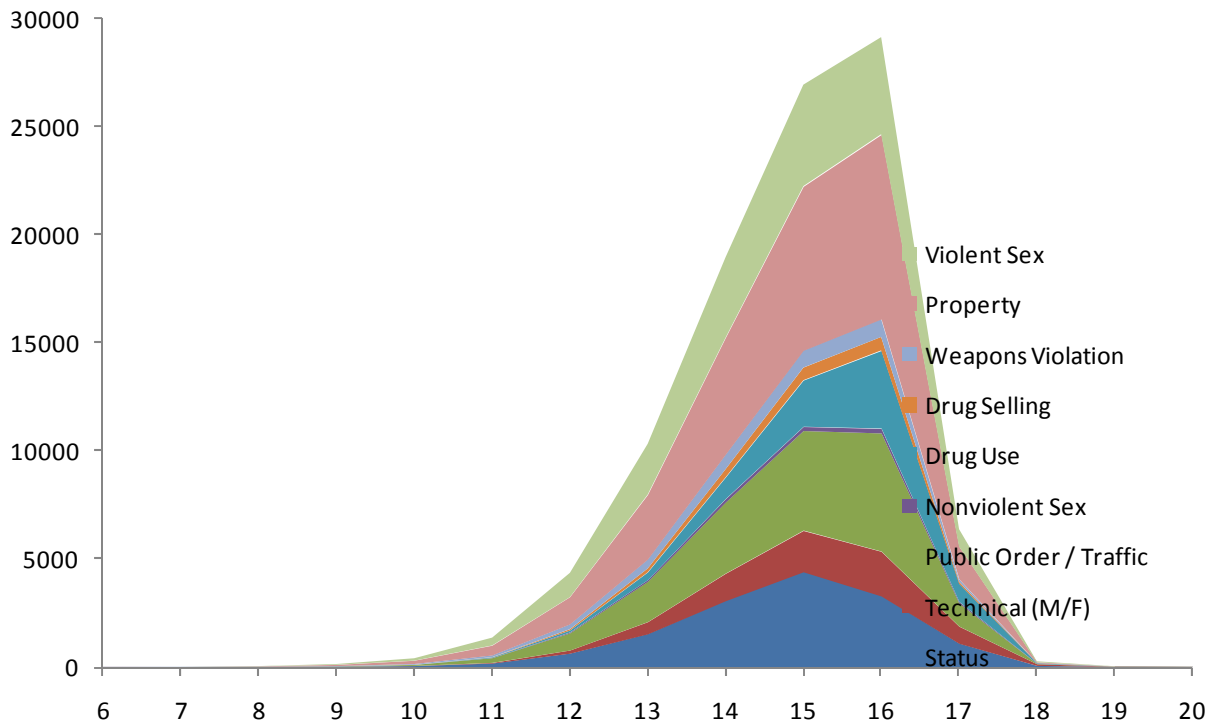
for status or misdemeanor offenses. Felony offenses represent only a third of DJJ releases.

DJJ primarily serves youth entering DJJ supervision between the ages of 14 and 16 years old. However, in the last seven years, DJJ has served two youth as young as 6 years old. This graph shows the types of offenses by age of offender. Violent Sex and Property offenses are classified as the most serious. Technical violations and status offenses are classified as the least

## Release Population

serious. Generally speaking, youth participation in more serious acts peak at age 16 while participation in less serious acts peak at age 15. DJJ continues to serve juveniles who turn 17 while under DJJ supervision, but any new acts at age 17 are processed in the adult system.

**Original Offense Type by Age, FY2003— FY2009**



## Release Population

DJJ developed a validated assessment tool for identifying youth risk for reoffending called the Comprehensive Risk and Needs assessment (CRN). The CRN is administered at the time of entry into DJJ’s care—except when a youth is placed in STP alone. Most juveniles adjudicated and placed with DJJ participate in a risk assessment, however, over 60 percent of juveniles released from STP never received a CRN assessment.

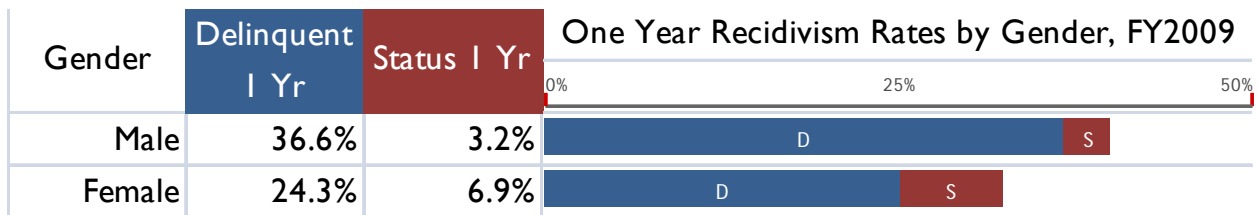
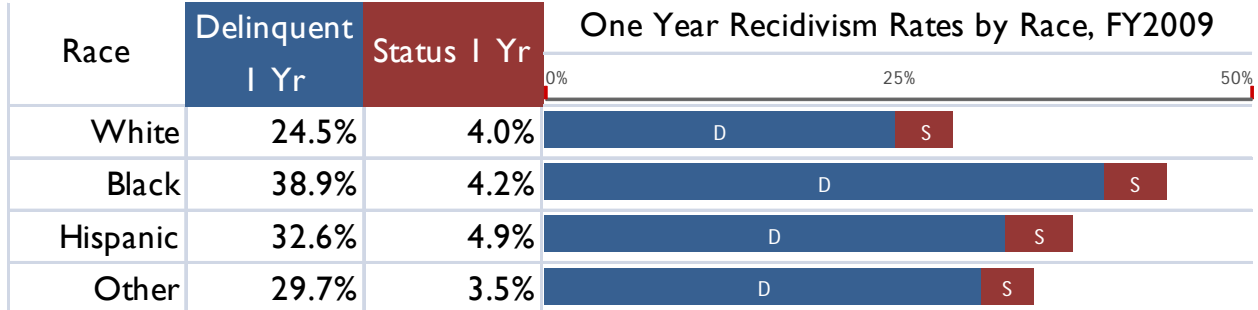
Juveniles who enter deeper levels of the juvenile justice system often have higher risk levels and increased likelihood of recidivating. These populations often have more prior offenses and greater social, safety and developmental needs.

Legal Status	No CRN	Low	Medium	High	Percent of CRN Risk Level by Legal Status, FY2009
Probation	5%	7%	87%	0%	
STP	61%	9%	29%	1%	
STP+Probation	21%	18%	59%	2%	
Community Cmt.	6%	38%	50%	7%	
Residential Cmt.	0%	44%	50%	7%	
YDC+Residential Cmt.	0%	47%	37%	15%	
YDC Cmt.	5%	37%	24%	34%	

## Recidivism of Release Population

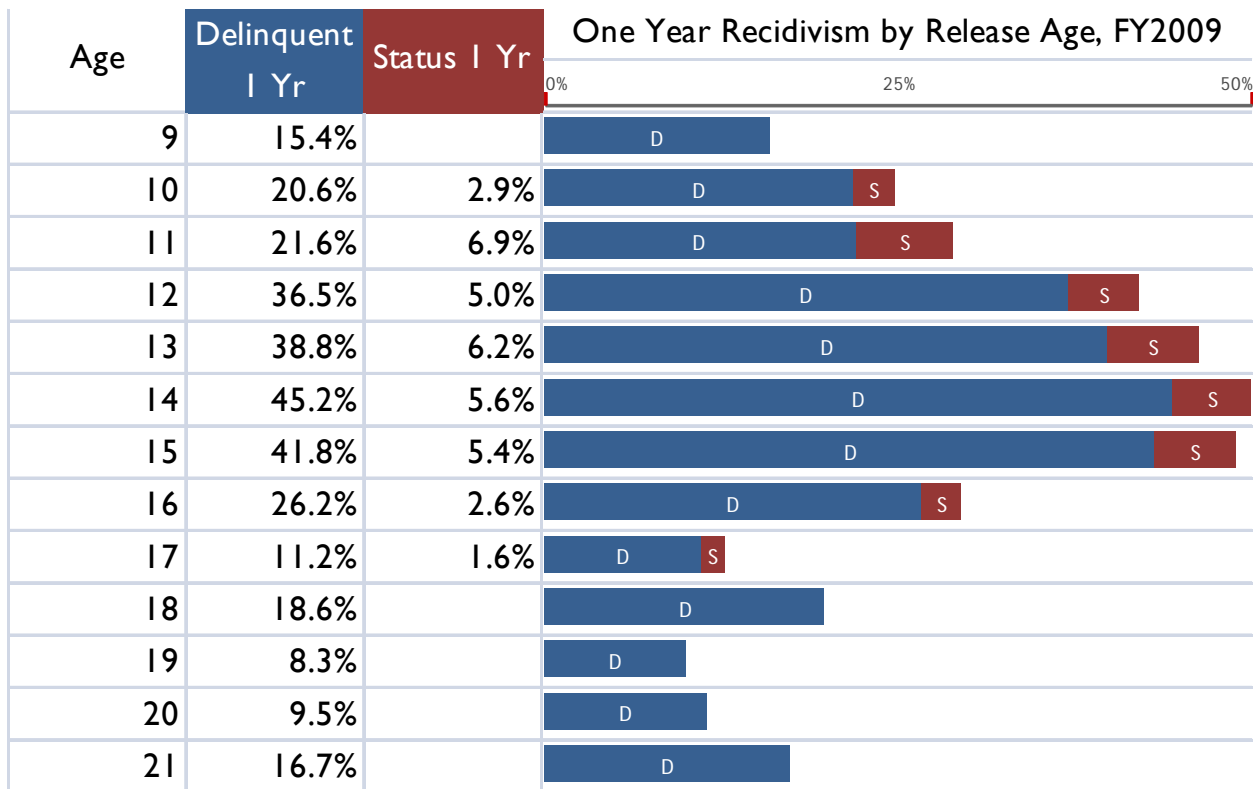
FY	Delinquent Recidivism Rate (%)					Status Recidivism Rate (%)					# Releases Not Recidivating
	Years from Release into Community					Years from Release into Community					
	One	Two	Three	Total	#	One	Two	Three	Total	#	
2003	27.6%	8.6%	4.4%	40.5%	5,973	10.5%	1.3%	0.3%	12.1%	1,786	6,983
2004	30.2%	8.9%	4.6%	43.7%	6,959	7.3%	1.0%	0.3%	8.6%	1,363	7,590
2005	31.7%	8.1%	4.1%	43.9%	6,782	6.0%	0.9%	0.3%	7.2%	1,107	7,564
2006	32.3%	8.8%	4.3%	45.4%	6,404	5.5%	0.8%	0.3%	6.7%	943	6,772
2007	32.6%	8.5%	3.9%	45.0%	6,292	4.9%	0.7%	0.2%	5.8%	817	6,880
2008	33.0%	7.8%				4.5%	0.7%				
2009	33.5%					4.2%					

While delinquent recidivism increased steadily from Fiscal Year 2003 to 2009, status recidivism steadily decreased. Further, the raw number of releases decreased during the same time-period causing fewer juveniles to recidivate in the community. Together, these trends imply an improvement in Georgia’s ability to target limited resources on juveniles with greater needs and higher risks.



Delinquent recidivism rates continue to be disproportionately high for male and black populations. Status recidivism rates continue to be disproportionately high for females.

## Recidivism of Release Population



In fiscal year 2009, DJJ supervised over 12-thousand youth releases into the community. 98 percent of those releases were youth between the ages of 12 and 17 years old.

Recidivism rates peaked for those youth that were released into the community at 14 years old. This population tends to have many risk factors in their life influencing their participation in delinquent behavior at a young age.

There are no status recidivism measured for those over the age of 17. Some status offenses, such as truancy, are not applicable after the age of 16 in Georgia. Furthermore, it is often difficult to hold older youth accountable for status offenses.

## Recidivism of Release Population

CRN Risk Level	Recidivating Offense - 1 year				Severity of Recidivating Offense by CRN Risk Level, FY2009			
	No Recidivism	Status	Misdemeanor	Felony	N	S	M	F
High	48.9%	4.1%	20.8%	25.7%	N	S	M	F
Medium	47.3%	4.2%	25.9%	22.4%	N	S	M	F
Low	66.8%	4.4%	17.8%	10.9%	N	S	M	F
No CRN	59.0%	2.9%	22.5%	12.4%	N	S	M	F

A juvenile's CRN risk score is a strong predictor of the likelihood of recidivating offense. The CRN risk score is designed to predict the juvenile's risk for reoffending by evaluating the juvenile's community, family and personal resources that help improve delinquent behaviors. Fiscal year 2009 data shows that juveniles released with higher CRN scores were more likely to recidivate, and more likely to recidivate with more serious offenses.

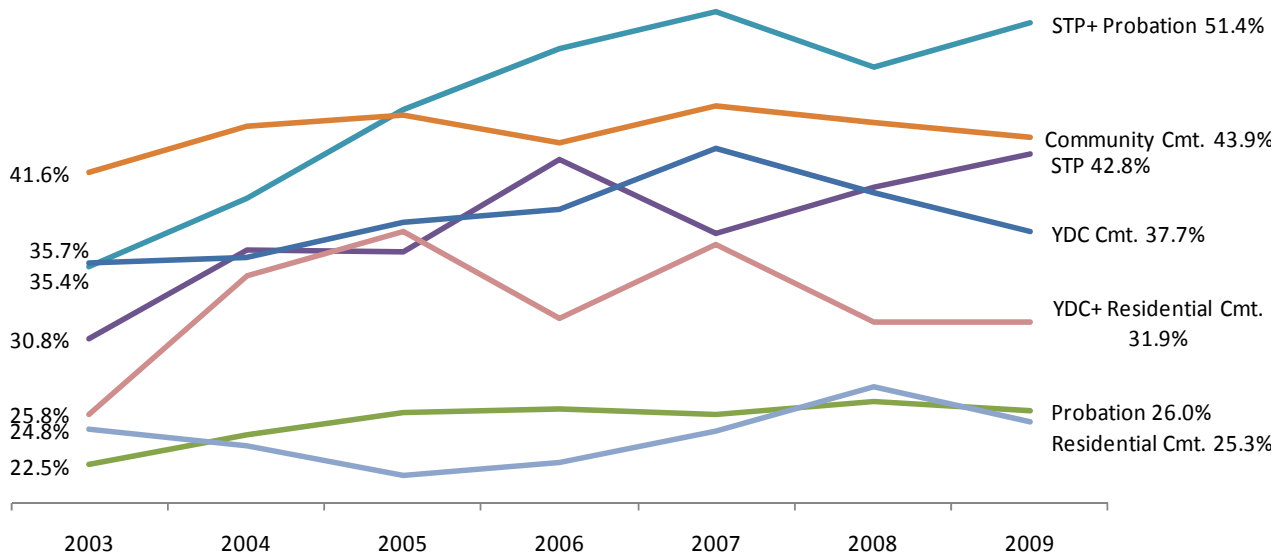
Originating Offense	Recidivating Offense - 1 year				Severity of Recidivating Offense by Originating Offense, FY2009			
	No Recidivism	Status	Misdemeanor	Felony	N	S	M	F
Felony	63.1%	2.4%	15.1%	18.7%	N	S	M	F
Misdemeanor	62.5%	3.1%	23.4%	10.4%	N	S	M	F
Status	63.1%	14.9%	15.2%	6.7%	N	S	M	F

Unlike the CRN risk score, the severity of the originating offense does not predict the likelihood of recidivating. Fiscal year 2009 data shows that regardless of the severity of the originating offense, 63 percent of the population did not recidivate within the first year of their community release. The originating offense, however, does provide some information on the severity of recidivating events. Juveniles released with low-level status offenses, if they do recidivate, are more likely to recidivate with a status offense. And recidivating juveniles released with a felony originating offense more frequently recidivate with a felony offense.



# Recidivism of Release Population

## One Year Recidivism Rates by Fiscal Year and Legal Status



Residential commitment and Community commitment populations have very similar CRN profiles, but their one-year recidivism rates are very different. Community commitment recidivism is 70 percent higher than Residential commitment. This implies that services provided to youth in Community commitment do not adequately address the risks these youth are facing.

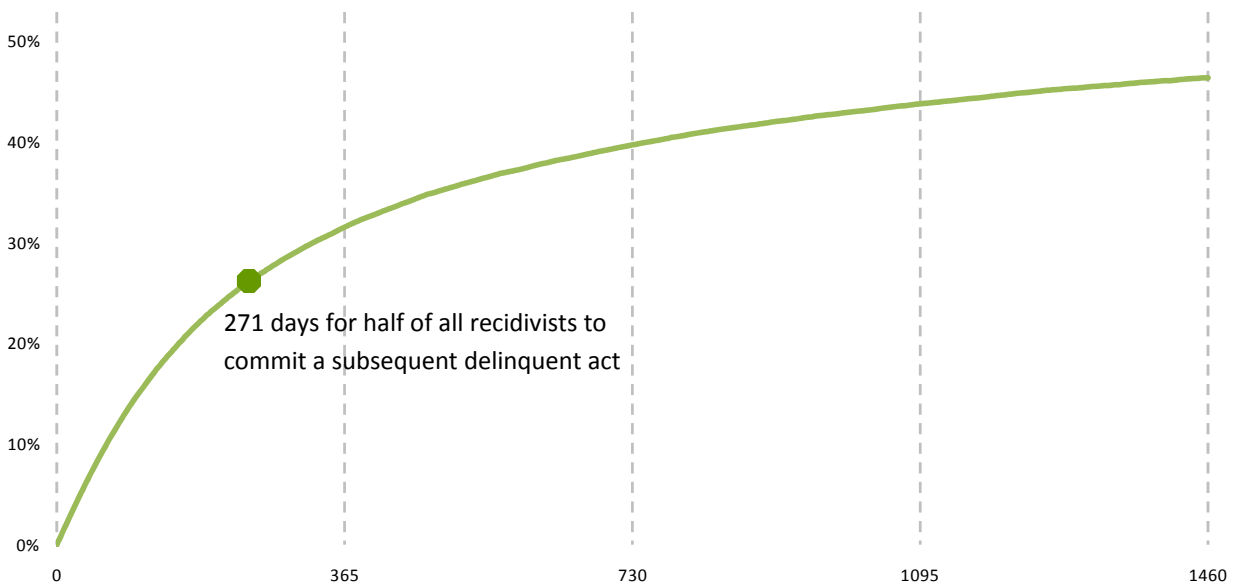
Two other populations with very high recidivism rates are those released from the 60-day STP program (which became a 30-day program in 2010) and those who participated in both STP and are supervised with Probation. Unfortunately, it is difficult to evaluate the extremely high recidivism found in these populations because they are not consistently given CRN risk assessments.

Legal Status	CRN Risk Profiles of Release Population by Legal Status, FY 2009							
	None	Low	Medium	High	N	L	M	H
Probation	5%	87%	7%	0%	N	L	M	H
STP	61%	29%	9%	1%	N	L	M	H
STP+Probation	21%	59%	18%	2%	N	L	M	H
Community Cmt.	6%	50%	38%	7%	N	L	M	H
Residential Cmt.	0%	50%	44%	7%	N	L	M	H
YDC+Residential Cmt.	0%	37%	47%	15%	N	L	M	H
YDC Cmt.	5%	24%	37%	34%	N	L	M	H

## Recidivism: Time to Failure

Analysis of the time between a juvenile’s release into the community and a subsequent recidivating event indicates that half of all recidivists commit a subsequent delinquent act by 271 days or within nine months.

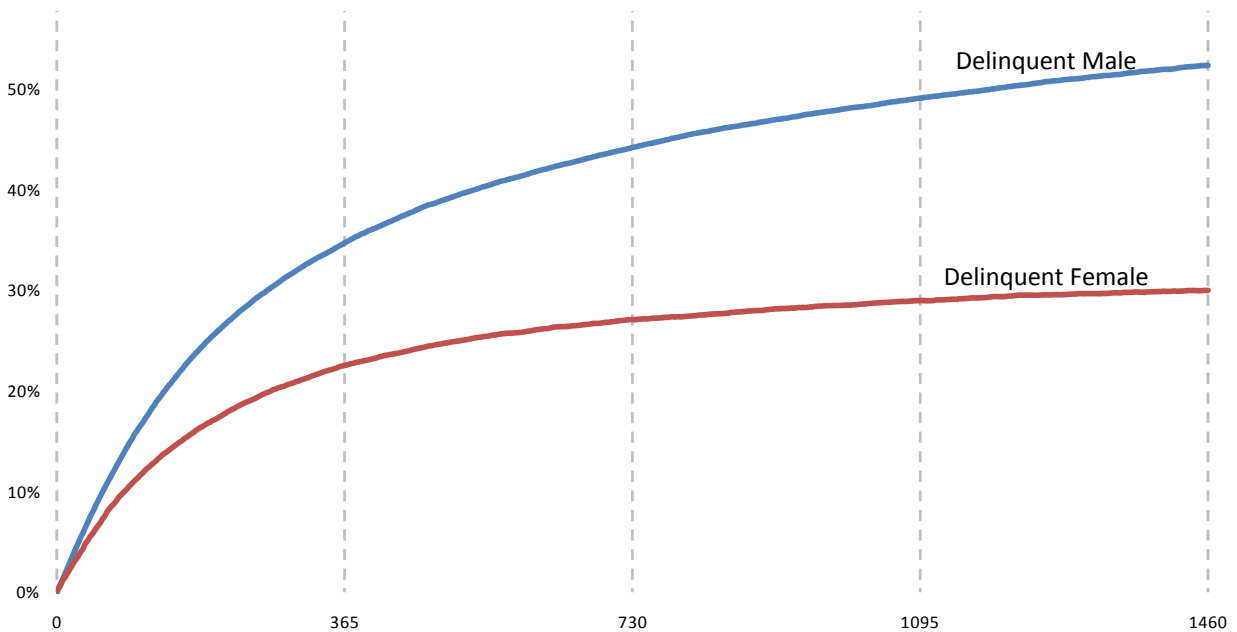
**Cumulative Delinquent Recidivism Rate by Days from Release, FY2003—FY2009**



## Recidivism: Time to Failure by Gender

During a four year follow-up period, males are nearly twice as likely to recidivate as females. However, this analysis also demonstrates that the median time to return is significantly shorter for females than for males. Half of all female recidivists return within seven months, while half of all male recidivists return within ten months. Put another way, if females participate in recidivating behaviors, they tend to do it more quickly upon their release.

**Delinquent Recidivism by Days from Release by Gender, FY2003—FY2009**



## Comparing Recidivism Rates in the Juvenile Justice System

### Estimating a National Rate of Recidivism

Accurately estimating a national recidivism rate proves to be a difficult task given the rates vary greatly depending on how recidivism is defined and measured in each state. The definition of recidivism and the measure used can substantially affect recidivism rates reported across the nation. In addition to the types of offenses included in the definition (e.g. delinquent or delinquent & criminal) and the data used to measure recidivism (e.g. rearrests, reconvictions, re-confinements), a state’s approach to reporting recidivism can also differ among several other variables. The upper age of the state’s juvenile court jurisdiction, the length of the follow up period, the utilization of cohorts, and the inclusion on adult system data can all impact variability in how these rates are measured and reported.<sup>10</sup>

#### Variables that Influence Recidivism Rates

<b>Upper Age of the State’s Juvenile Court Jurisdiction</b>	16 17 18
<b>Follow Up Period</b>	12 months 18 months 24 months 36 months
<b>Cohort studies</b>	Following a cohort of juveniles for a specified amount of time Tracking an event for a specified amount of time
<b>Offenses Included</b>	Delinquent Delinquent & Criminal All (delinquent, criminal, traffic violations, violations of probation, contempt of court, failure to appear)
<b>Systems Researched</b>	Juvenile Juvenile & Adult
<b>Re-offense Type</b>	Rearrest Informal adjustment and diversion Filing of charges Reconviction/readjudication Return to supervision/custody Reincarceration/reconfinement

## Comparing Recidivism Rates in the Juvenile Justice System

For example, a state that treats 16 year olds as adults will examine a different age range when calculating their recidivism rate when compared to a state that treats 16 year olds as juveniles. That recidivism rate will be further influenced by the states' decision to follow the juvenile into adult corrections in their calculation of recidivism or only examine recidivism within their juvenile system. Recidivism can also be affected by the quality of aftercare services, variation in police and judicial practices, and differences in state criminal justice system laws.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of this lack of comparability among states, a national rate can not be computed. However, in 2009, the CJA published a set of core recommendations to address the need for standardization of defining and measuring recidivism. These recommendations include the following:

1. Specify the population represented (e.g. age, gender, race, first-time offender, secure care program, special needs, mental health, offense type, risk score)
2. Include conviction/adjudication; including adult convictions as a measure
3. Provide multiple measures
4. Specify the length of follow-up (2 years minimum)
5. Measure status offenses and technical violations separately from new delinquent or criminal offenses
6. Clearly identify sources of data

Additionally, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Reauthorization Bill (Senate Bill 678) addressed the provision of a national recidivism measure by specifying that the Administrator of OJJDP will establish a data collection protocol instrument and technology that states shall use to report data on juvenile recidivism on an annual basis; establish a common national juvenile recidivism measurement system; and make cumulative juvenile recidivism data that is collected from states available to the public."<sup>10</sup>

### Comparing Recidivism among States

Given all of the variables listed in the previous table, examining state rates in an equitable way proves to be a difficult activity. Rates determined by different

## Comparing Recidivism Rates in the Juvenile Justice System

methodologies yield unfair comparisons. Therefore, Georgia’s one year recidivism rate of 34% may seem to be higher than other states; however, after closer inspection, it becomes apparent that differences in recidivism measures, methods and approaches significantly influence the numeric value of a state’s recidivism rate.

To facilitate a more equitable comparison of rates, only states having similar measurement approaches should be examined against each other. As recidivism is most commonly measured in terms of rearrests, reconvictions, or re-confinements, some degree of aggregation and comparison can be achieved. In the 2006 OJJDP National Report, using the average of state juvenile recidivism rates for a small number of states, it was estimated that the national average could be anywhere between 12% and 55%, depending on the measure of recidivism used (table reproduced below). In fact, rates of juveniles recidivism have been found as high as 66% when measuring recidivism by rearrests and as high as 33% when measuring re-offending by reconvictions within a few years of release. This difference in the rates is due to assessments and judgments made throughout the justice process.<sup>11</sup>

<b>Reoffense type Measured</b>	<b>Effect on Recidivism</b>	<b>Average recidivism rate among comparable states</b>
<i>Rearrests</i>	This rate is not influenced by court proceedings but may overestimate the level of reoffending because rearrests could be more likely to include offenses the juvenile did not commit.	55%
<i>Reconvictions/ Readjudications</i>	A court of law has determined that a juvenile committed a crime; this is a subset of rearrests.	33%
<i>Reconfinements/ Reincarcerations</i>	This is the most restrictive subset of rearrests; the juvenile has been adjudicated and confined to an adult or juvenile detention facility.	12%

## Recidivism: Juvenile Cohort Methodology

Until now, this report has calculated recidivism as a measure of juvenile releases into the community. By following the recidivism for each release, some juveniles are counted multiple times. This technique provides useful information for resource management, program evaluation, and public safety as each new offense is captured in the recidivism rate.

Other jurisdictions may use different measures of recidivism. Tracking unique juveniles using a cohort approach is a popular method in other jurisdictions. For purposes of comparison and because some information cannot be analyzed without the unique juvenile cohort methodology, the following section compares the DJJ recidivism rate with two alternate recidivism measures.

Methodology A is the release approach described and used in this report.

Methodology B measures a unique set of juveniles released during a given year and determines what percentage of that starting population recidivates with at least one delinquent offense within the follow up period. This measurement distinguishes between recidivating juveniles and non-recidivating juveniles but does not track multiple offenses by the same juvenile.

Methodology C only analyzes first-time offenders. This approach excludes previous repeat offenders from the starting population in a given year because those recidivating juveniles were captured in previous years' recidivism rates. Then,

### Recidivism Outcomes using Three Methodologies, FY 2007 and FY 2009

	FY	Delinquent Recidivism Rate (%)					Status Recidivism Rate (%)					# Releases Not Recidivating
		Years from Release into Community					Years from Release into Community					
		One	Two	Three	Total	#	One	Two	Three	Total	#	
A) DJJ's Release Events	2007	33%	8%	4%	45%	6,292	5%	1%	0%	6%	817	6,880
	2009	34%					4%					
B) Juvenile Cohort	2007	31%	8%	4%	43%	5,314	5%	1%	0%	6%	685	6,282
	2009	31%					4%					
C) Juvenile Cohort for First-time Offenders	2007	24%	8%	4%	36%	2,648	4%	1%	0%	5%	400	4,349
	2009	25%					4%					

## Recidivism: Juvenile Cohort Methodology

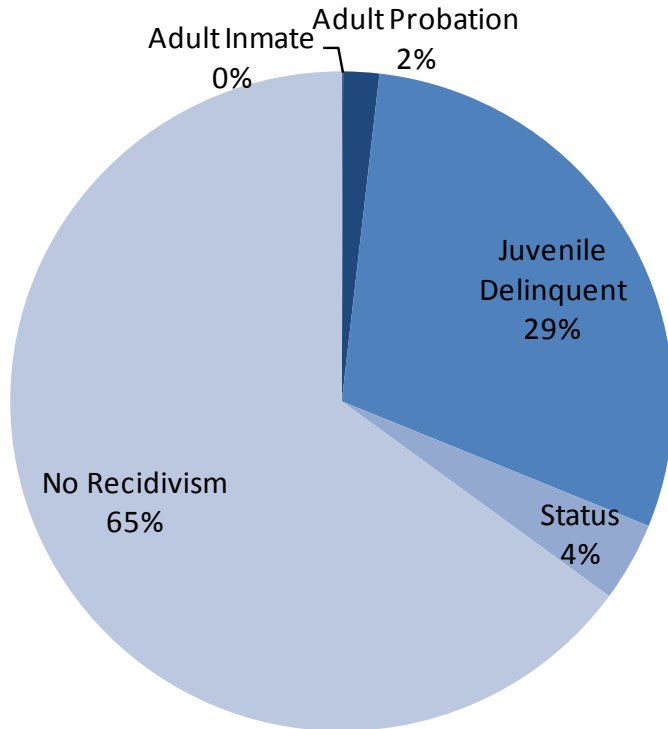
similar to Methodology B, Methodology C determines which percentage of the starting population recidivates.

Other jurisdictions most commonly use Methodology B, so it is more suited for comparison between jurisdictions.

Methodology B and C both produce lower recidivism rates than Methodology A. By excluding repeat offenses (Methodology B) or repeat offenders (Methodology C), they discount the recidivism of chronic offenders.

That said, the juvenile cohort methodologies do allow a much clearer analysis of the proportion of juveniles who do not reoffend. From the FY 2009 release cohort with one-year follow-up, nearly 70 percent of DJJ juveniles had no new delinquent adjudications. That is a 30 percent delinquent recidivism rate. In comparison, Georgia's observed recidivism rates when utilizing the juvenile cohort methodology (30 percent) and when following recidivism for each release (34 percent) both align closely to the average rate (33 percent) of states with similar recidivism measures.<sup>b</sup>

**Outcome of First Recidivating Event, FY 2009, Methodology B Cohort with 1-year follow-up**



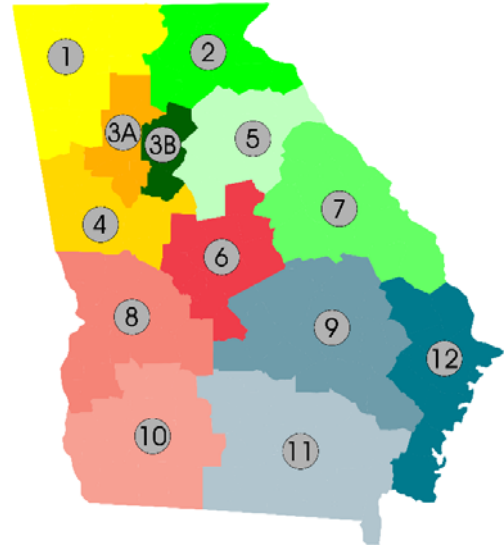
b. Georgia DJJ recidivism measure is similar to those in Alaska, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Virginia



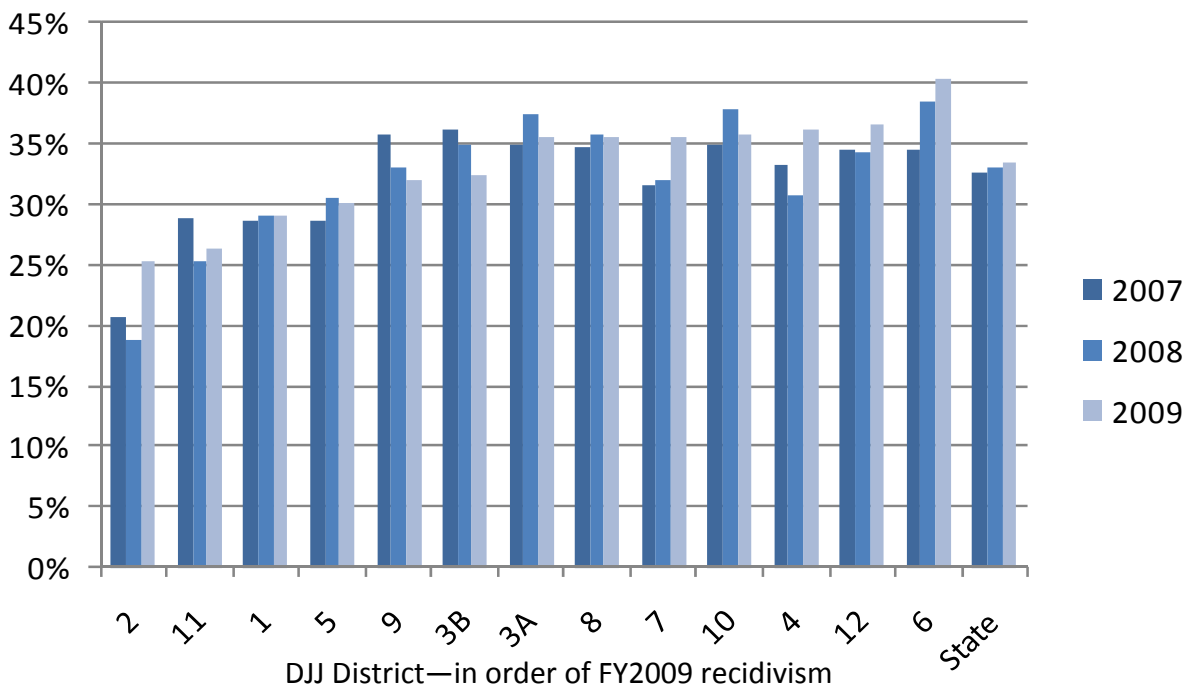
## Recidivism by District and County

Further analysis of recidivism measured as releases to the community, allows us to look at recidivism by physical state regions, districts and counties.

This graph below shows recidivism by DJJ management districts. They are displayed in the order of recidivism rates from fiscal year 2009. District 2, 11 and 1 are all primarily composed of



**One Year Recidivism Rate by District and Fiscal Year**

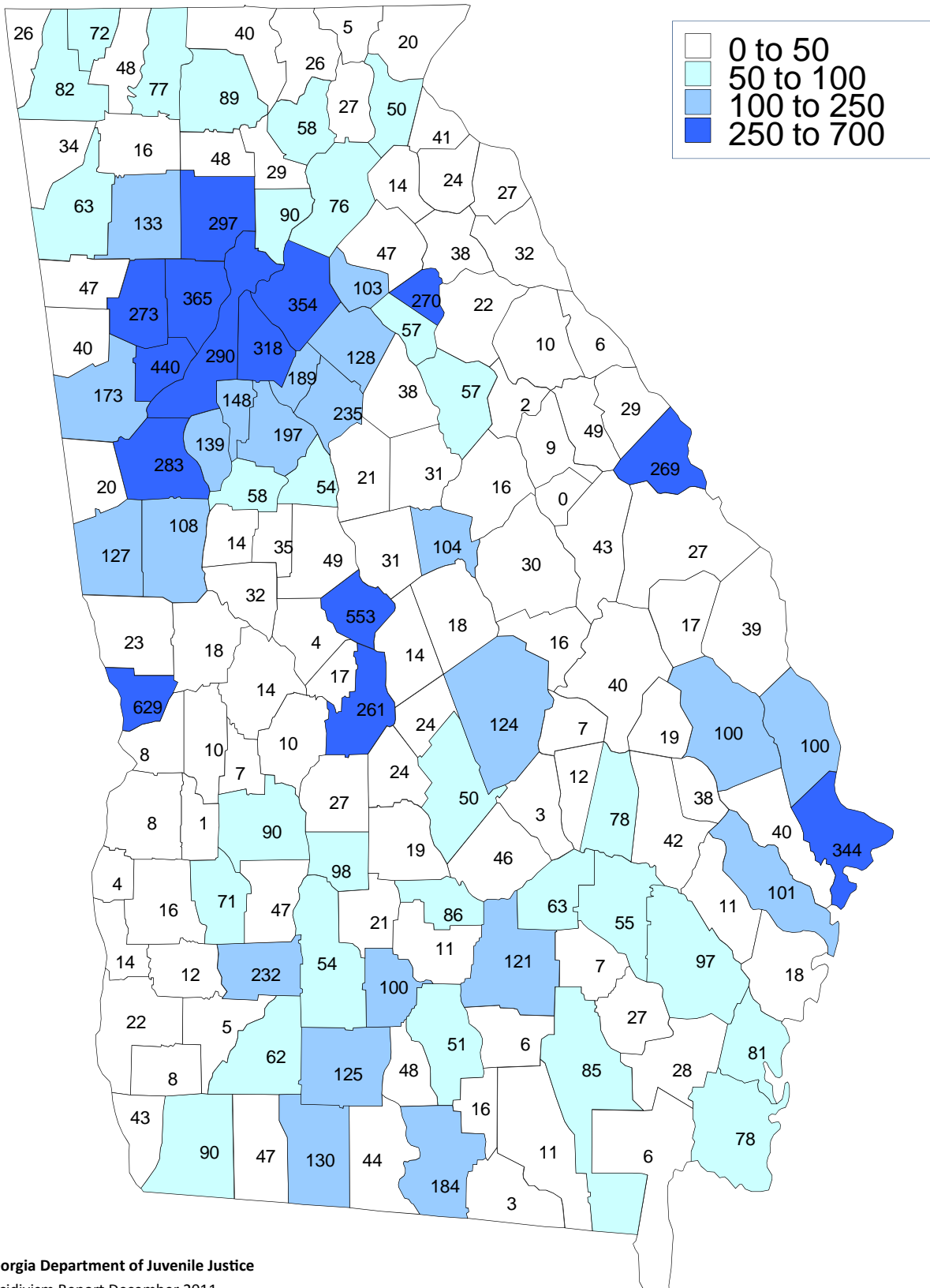


rural communities. Districts 3B and 3A compose the greater Metro-Atlanta area. Savannah contributes to the high rates in District 12 and Macon contributes to the high rates in District 6.

The map on the next page shows that many more youth are released into the community in urban areas than rural areas. In many states, urban areas tend to

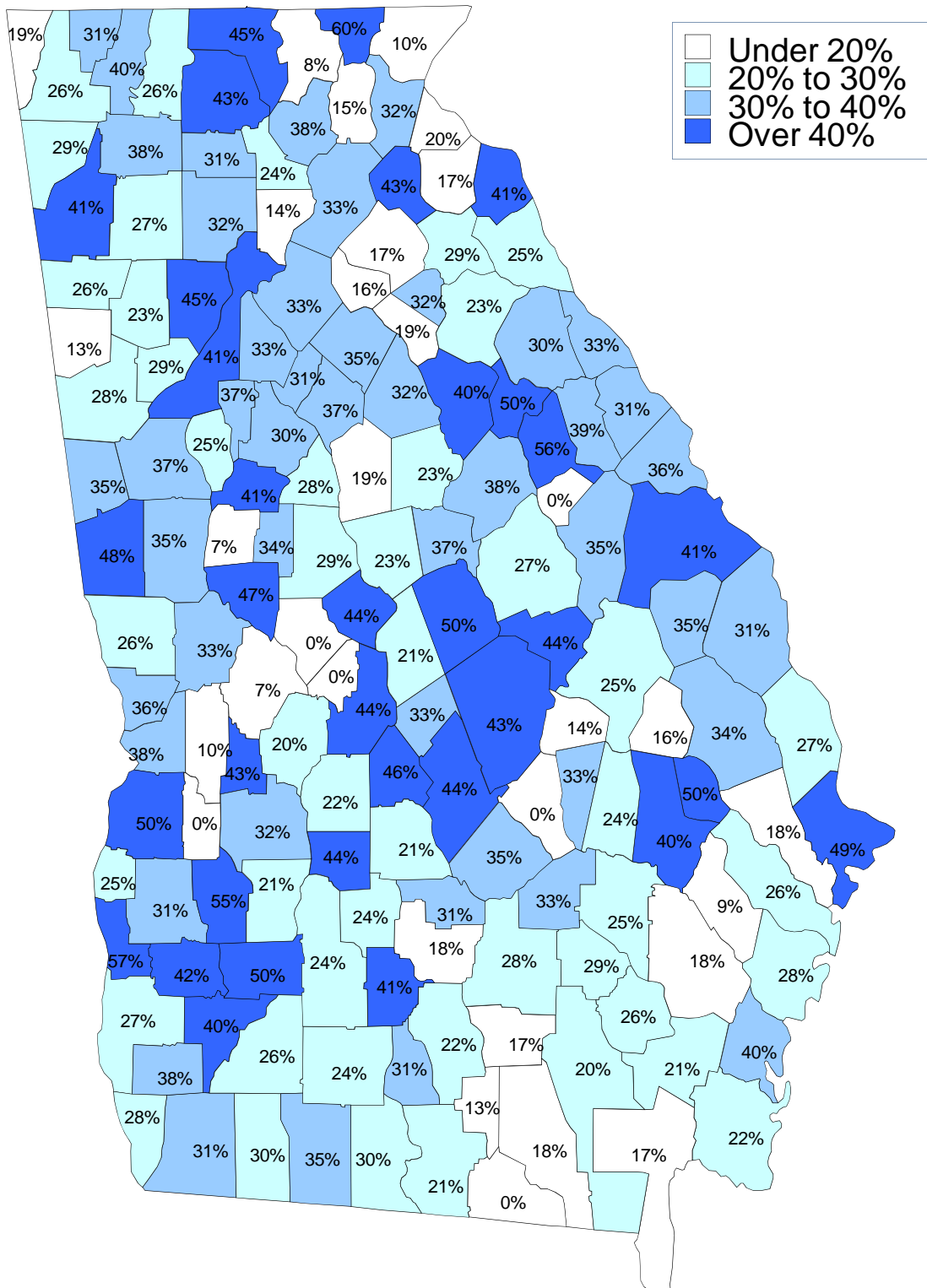
# Mapped Release Population by County

Number of Releases by County of Residence, FY 2009



# Mapped Recidivism by County

One Year Delinquent Recidivism Rates by County of Residence, FY 2009



## **Policy Implications**

The Department has taken steps to address recidivism by implementing tools such as the CRN Assessment and the Enhanced Service Plan. Identifying and targeting dynamic criminogenic risk factors using these two tools will allow case managers to work strategically with youth on their caseloads to reduce the youth's risk of re-offending. The Department also strives to continuously improve agency practices to achieve our mission to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia by holding young offenders accountable for their actions through the delivery of services and sanctions in appropriate settings and by supporting youth in their communities to become productive and law-abiding citizens. To facilitate these efforts, DJJ aims to provide policy makers with data-driven analysis of recidivism trends and the accompanying policy implications. Highlighted below are three substantial policy implications of the recidivism data.

### CRN Should Be Used as a Tool in Exit Evaluations

The Comprehensive Risk and Needs assessment (CRN) should be included in juvenile evaluations at the time of their release. The CRN estimates the likelihood of recidivism upon a juvenile's release into the community and identifies resources essential for successful juvenile transition into their communities. This measure has been validated as a statistically useful tool. It is a more accurate estimator of recidivism than widely-used factors such as offense history. It would provide information that would help ensure successful transitions into the community or alternate placements. The CRN should become a part of juveniles' release evaluation.

### Community Commitment Recidivism Should Be Addressed

The unexpectedly high recidivism rates for community commitments needs to be addressed with improved placements and services that meet juvenile needs. Most juveniles with regular commitments are supervised in their communities. Consistently, for several years, these community commitments show higher than expected recidivism rates. To compound this problem, in 2010 DJJ began serving

## **Policy Implications**

more regular commitment juveniles, with greater needs, in the community. As such, DJJ should expect to see community commitment recidivism rates increase for FY10 and FY11. A likely explanation for this disparity is that these youth have inadequate resources to address the risks they are facing in their community.

### Services Available to DJJ Youth Should be Enhanced

There is an ever-growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of evidence based and promising practices in reducing recidivism. Conversely, short term programming has consistently been found in the literature to be very ineffective in reducing re-offenses among juveniles.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the CRN profiles of residential and community commitment populations described in this report are similar, yet a 70 percent difference in the recidivism rates of the residential and community populations implies that services in the community do not adequately address the needs these youth possess. The array of services available to DJJ youth can be enhanced by increasing the availability of quality services that are modeled after best practices.

System improvements can be instituted that will reduce recidivism. The implementation of programs modeled after best practices, with adequate amounts of treatment, have been found to reduce recidivism by up to about 40 percent.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, programs that meet the *Principles of Effective Intervention* have been found to reduce recidivism anywhere from 10 to 50 percent.<sup>16</sup> Many states including Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Washington have adopted legislation requiring evidence-based programming given its proven success in reducing recidivism.<sup>17</sup> In Georgia, the Department has initiated strategic plan projects to examine case management processes and the delivery of programming and services to our youth. These projects have resulted in recommendations that will address identified areas in need of improvement and resource shortages. Implementing the various recommendations will strengthen the quality of services provided to youth; consequently reducing recidivism and preserving the safety of citizens in the State of Georgia.

## Endnotes

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## Appendix A: Recidivism Rates by Disposition

		Delinquent Recidivism Rate (%)					Status Recidivism Rate (%)					# Releases Not Recidivating
		Years from Release into Community					Years from Release into Community					
		One	Two	Three	Total	#	One	Two	Three	Total	#	
YDC Committed	2003	36%	14%	7%	57%	444	2%	0%	0%	2%	17	323
	2004	36%	13%	8%	57%	374	3%	1%	0%	4%	24	255
	2005	38%	12%	6%	56%	348	3%	0%	0%	4%	22	249
	2006	39%	15%	6%	60%	442	3%	0%	0%	3%	24	275
	2007	43%	11%	6%	60%	450	3%	0%	0%	3%	23	273
	2008	40%	11%				2%	1%				
	2009	38%					3%					
Residential Committed	2003	25%	14%	9%	48%	435	2%	2%	1%	5%	43	432
	2004	24%	16%	7%	46%	445	3%	2%	0%	5%	45	468
	2005	22%	15%	7%	43%	320	3%	1%	0%	5%	35	383
	2006	23%	17%	7%	47%	449	2%	1%	1%	4%	42	468
	2007	25%	16%	5%	46%	355	3%	2%	0%	5%	40	378
	2008	28%	16%				3%	1%				
	2009	25%					3%					
YDC + Residential Committed	2003	26%	18%	10%	53%	95	3%	1%	0%	4%	7	76
	2004	35%	20%	5%	61%	80	5%	1%	0%	6%	8	44
	2005	38%	14%	2%	54%	57	1%	2%	2%	5%	5	44
	2006	32%	23%	9%	64%	82	2%	0%	0%	2%	3	43
	2007	37%	17%	5%	59%	66	2%	2%	0%	4%	4	41
	2008	32%	17%				5%	1%				
	2009	32%					2%					
Community Committed	2003	42%	9%	5%	55%	459	4%	1%	0%	5%	39	336
	2004	45%	10%	5%	59%	511	4%	1%	0%	5%	41	308
	2005	45%	9%	4%	58%	577	4%	0%	0%	5%	47	372
	2006	44%	10%	5%	59%	565	4%	1%	0%	5%	47	351
	2007	46%	7%	4%	57%	574	4%	1%	0%	4%	45	386
	2008	45%	9%				2%	0%				
	2009	44%					4%					
STP	2003	31%	8%	5%	44%	993	10%	1%	0%	10%	234	1,049
	2004	37%	9%	5%	51%	1,237	8%	1%	0%	8%	206	999
	2005	36%	8%	5%	49%	1,141	6%	0%	0%	7%	153	1,027
	2006	42%	8%	5%	55%	915	5%	0%	0%	6%	96	651
	2007	38%	9%	4%	50%	767	4%	1%	0%	5%	75	686
	2008	41%	8%				4%	0%				
	2009	43%					3%					
STP + Probation	2003	35%	8%	3%	47%	990	17%	2%	0%	19%	404	713
	2004	40%	9%	4%	53%	1,206	11%	1%	0%	13%	287	799
	2005	46%	8%	4%	58%	1,174	9%	1%	0%	10%	196	639
	2006	50%	8%	3%	61%	938	8%	0%	0%	9%	135	460
	2007	52%	9%	3%	64%	1,082	6%	0%	0%	6%	109	501
	2008	48%	7%				6%	1%				
	2009	51%					5%					
Probation	2003	22%	7%	4%	33%	2,557	12%	2%	0%	14%	1,042	4,039
	2004	25%	8%	4%	36%	3,106	7%	1%	0%	9%	752	4,696
	2005	26%	7%	4%	37%	3,165	6%	1%	0%	7%	649	4,833
	2006	26%	7%	4%	37%	3,013	6%	1%	0%	7%	596	4,507
	2007	26%	7%	4%	37%	2,998	5%	1%	0%	6%	521	4,605
	2008	27%	7%				5%	1%				
	2009	26%					4%					

## Appendix B: Recidivism Rates by District

	Delinquent Recidivism Rate (%)					Status Recidivism Rate (%)					# Releases Not Recidivating	
	Years from Release into Community					Years from Release into Community						
	One	Two	Three	Total	#	One	Two	Three	Total	#		
District 1	2003	21%	8%	4%	32%	431	14%	2%	1%	16%	219	690
	2004	25%	9%	4%	38%	528	10%	1%	1%	12%	166	691
	2005	27%	8%	4%	38%	552	9%	1%	0%	11%	152	729
	2006	27%	7%	3%	38%	456	7%	1%	0%	9%	111	646
	2007	29%	6%	3%	38%	533	6%	1%	0%	7%	103	764
	2008	29%	6%				7%	1%				
	2009	29%					6%					
District 2	2003	23%	6%	4%	34%	219	10%	2%	0%	12%	81	352
	2004	22%	8%	4%	34%	243	10%	2%	0%	13%	90	386
	2005	25%	7%	4%	35%	218	8%	1%	0%	9%	56	343
	2006	24%	7%	5%	36%	208	4%	1%	0%	5%	27	347
	2007	21%	6%	4%	31%	153	4%	1%	1%	6%	29	319
	2008	19%	7%				5%	1%				
	2009	25%					3%					
District 3A	2003	28%	8%	5%	42%	809	9%	1%	0%	11%	205	916
	2004	32%	9%	4%	46%	932	6%	1%	0%	7%	142	951
	2005	35%	9%	4%	48%	927	5%	1%	0%	6%	126	886
	2006	33%	9%	5%	47%	825	5%	1%	0%	6%	113	820
	2007	35%	8%	3%	47%	825	5%	1%	0%	6%	107	839
	2008	37%	7%				5%	1%				
	2009	35%					4%					
District 3B	2003	27%	8%	3%	39%	512	15%	1%	0%	16%	209	607
	2004	32%	9%	5%	45%	628	6%	1%	0%	8%	106	648
	2005	33%	9%	4%	45%	563	5%	1%	0%	6%	69	610
	2006	35%	9%	5%	48%	566	3%	1%	0%	5%	54	544
	2007	36%	7%	4%	47%	613	2%	1%	0%	4%	46	636
	2008	35%	8%				4%	1%				
	2009	32%					4%					
District 4	2003	26%	10%	4%	40%	412	10%	1%	0%	11%	118	505
	2004	30%	8%	5%	43%	571	7%	1%	0%	8%	107	630
	2005	33%	8%	4%	45%	515	5%	1%	0%	6%	70	556
	2006	33%	9%	5%	47%	481	3%	0%	1%	3%	36	512
	2007	33%	9%	4%	46%	518	4%	1%	0%	6%	62	540
	2008	31%	10%				3%	0%				
	2009	36%					3%					
District 5	2003	26%	9%	4%	39%	541	12%	3%	1%	15%	214	642
	2004	29%	7%	4%	40%	636	7%	1%	1%	9%	146	790
	2005	31%	8%	4%	42%	584	6%	2%	0%	8%	106	690
	2006	29%	9%	3%	42%	536	5%	1%	0%	6%	78	660
	2007	29%	9%	4%	41%	515	6%	1%	0%	7%	83	646
	2008	30%	7%				4%	1%				
	2009	30%					4%					
District 6	2003	31%	7%	4%	42%	524	13%	2%	0%	15%	182	534
	2004	29%	6%	4%	39%	536	15%	1%	0%	17%	224	594
	2005	30%	7%	3%	39%	503	14%	1%	0%	16%	203	570
	2006	34%	7%	3%	44%	654	14%	1%	0%	15%	227	615
	2007	34%	8%	3%	46%	582	12%	1%	0%	13%	163	529
	2008	38%	7%				8%	0%				
	2009	40%					9%					



## Appendix B (continued): Recidivism Rates by District

	Delinquent Recidivism Rate (%)					Status Recidivism Rate (%)					# Releases Not Recidivating	
	Years from Release into Community					Years from Release into Community						
	One	Two	Three	Total	#	One	Two	Three	Total	#		
District 7	2003	33%	8%	4%	45%	460	8%	0%	0%	9%	87	467
	2004	33%	10%	6%	48%	515	4%	1%	0%	5%	53	503
	2005	33%	9%	5%	46%	530	2%	0%	0%	3%	33	577
	2006	33%	10%	4%	47%	449	3%	0%	0%	4%	34	467
	2007	31%	9%	6%	46%	354	1%	1%	0%	2%	14	398
	2008	32%	9%				2%	0%				
	2009	36%					1%					
District 8	2003	33%	11%	4%	48%	442	10%	1%	0%	12%	110	361
	2004	36%	9%	5%	50%	544	9%	1%	0%	10%	114	428
	2005	39%	8%	4%	51%	587	7%	1%	0%	8%	94	458
	2006	35%	8%	5%	48%	483	9%	1%	0%	10%	101	413
	2007	35%	10%	4%	48%	517	6%	1%	0%	6%	68	485
	2008	36%	8%				6%	0%				
	2009	36%					6%					
District 9	2003	24%	10%	5%	39%	338	11%	2%	0%	14%	118	415
	2004	28%	11%	5%	44%	364	6%	1%	0%	7%	57	402
	2005	30%	9%	6%	45%	348	5%	1%	0%	6%	49	384
	2006	31%	10%	4%	45%	380	4%	0%	1%	5%	39	425
	2007	36%	9%	4%	48%	423	3%	1%	0%	4%	31	423
	2008	33%	8%				3%	1%				
	2009	32%					3%					
District 10	2003	25%	10%	5%	39%	378	9%	1%	0%	10%	93	492
	2004	32%	11%	5%	47%	457	5%	1%	0%	5%	51	460
	2005	34%	9%	5%	47%	468	4%	1%	0%	5%	49	478
	2006	40%	9%	5%	53%	501	4%	1%	0%	5%	47	403
	2007	35%	11%	5%	50%	494	5%	0%	0%	6%	55	437
	2008	38%	8%				4%	1%				
	2009	36%					3%					
District 11	2003	28%	8%	5%	41%	412	8%	1%	0%	10%	101	500
	2004	28%	7%	6%	41%	486	5%	0%	0%	6%	70	627
	2005	24%	6%	5%	35%	465	4%	1%	0%	5%	68	788
	2006	26%	11%	7%	43%	358	4%	1%	0%	6%	49	425
	2007	29%	7%	5%	41%	325	3%	1%	0%	3%	26	438
	2008	25%	9%				3%	0%				
	2009	26%					3%					
District 12	2003	32%	11%	5%	48%	495	4%	0%	0%	4%	46	487
	2004	34%	13%	5%	51%	519	3%	0%	0%	4%	37	458
	2005	36%	9%	5%	51%	522	3%	0%	0%	3%	32	478
	2006	34%	11%	5%	50%	507	2%	0%	0%	3%	27	478
	2007	35%	11%	4%	50%	440	3%	0%	0%	3%	30	416
	2008	34%	10%				1%	0%				
	2009	37%					2%					