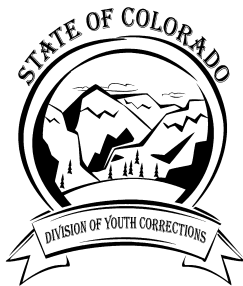


Recidivism Evaluation of Committed Youth Discharged in Fiscal Year 2002-03



Colorado Department of Human Services
Division of Youth Corrections

Working with Colorado Communities to Achieve Justice

January 1, 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) submits annual reports of recidivism outcomes on committed youth. The current report is submitted in response to Footnote 76 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004-05 Long Bill (HB04-1422).

Recidivism is a measure that is often utilized in determining the level of effectiveness for juvenile justice agencies. However, the definition of recidivism can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. In response to recommendations resulting from a Legislative audit of the criminal justice system, Colorado established a common definition of recidivism in FY 1999-00. The definition that was adopted and is used for this report is as follows:

Pre-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from DYC.

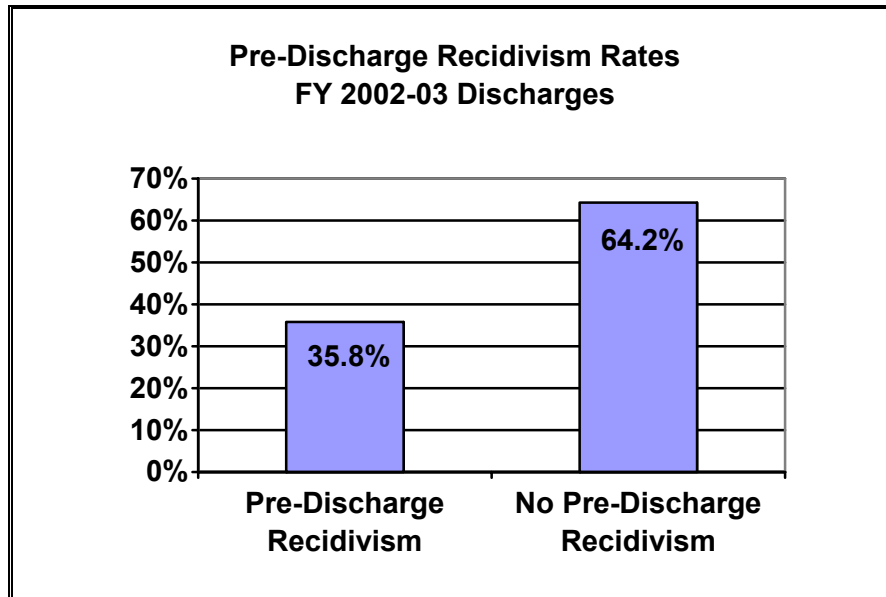
Post-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from DYC.

The sample for this year's report includes 779 youth discharged from DYC between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003. This sampling methodology differs substantively from previous DYC recidivism reports. In the past, the Division has reported pre-discharge recidivism from a cohort of newly committed youth. Because of increases in lengths of stay over the years, higher percentages of youth in the new commitment cohorts were still not discharged at the time recidivism reports were prepared.

The change in sampling methodology was prefaced not only upon the General Assembly's request for more current recidivism data, but also upon the Division's need for more timely outcome data to assist with internal management decisions.

Recidivism Results

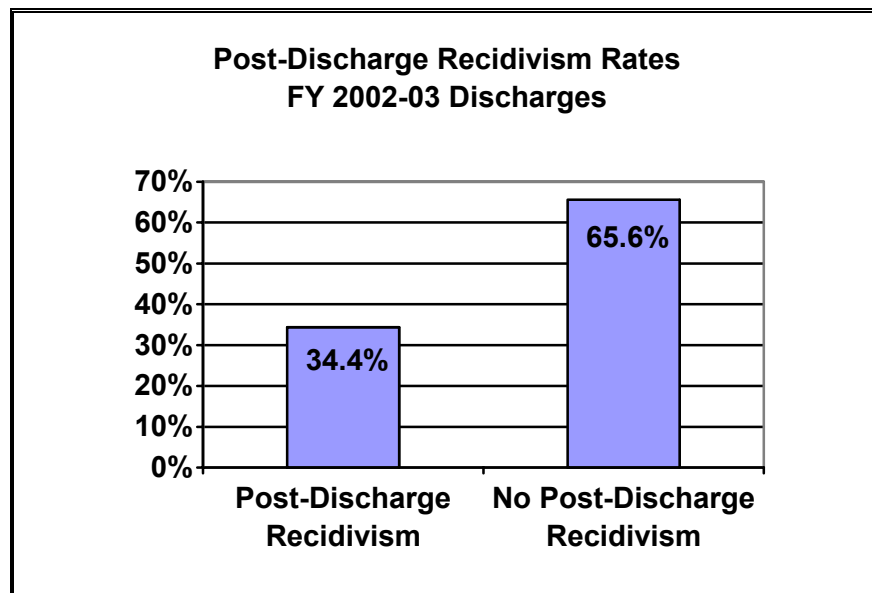
Pre-Discharge



- Thirty-six percent of youth discharged in FY 2002-03 received a new felony or misdemeanor filing (i.e., recidivated) prior to discharge. Over 80% of pre-discharge filings were for offenses that occurred while youth were on parole status. Because of Colorado's recent budgetary constraints, the amount of supervision and services available to youth on parole has declined significantly over the past few years. If more research-based treatment services were made available to youth on parole, reductions in pre-discharge parole might be possible.
- Twenty-eight percent of new filings for offenses that occurred during commitment were on felony person charges. Felony property charges accounted for 27% of new filings that occurred prior to discharge.
- Over 60% of pre-discharge filings resulted in a guilty finding for the most serious offense filed. The majority of the remaining youth were found guilty on a lesser charge.
- Youth committed in the Western Region were statistically less likely to recidivate prior to discharge than youth committed in other regions.
- Youth who did not have any escapes or recommitments during their commitment were less likely to have a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge than youth that did escape or get recommitted.

- Youth who had more prior contacts with the juvenile justice system (prior detention admissions, prior adjudications, and prior commitments) were more likely to recidivate prior to discharge than youth with no prior contacts.
- Higher risk scores on the Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI) were also highly correlated with a youth having a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge.

Post-Discharge



- Thirty-four percent of youth discharged in FY 2002-03 received a new felony or misdemeanor (i.e., recidivated) within one year of discharge from NYC.
- Many of the traditional risk of re-offending factors did not produce significant differences in post-discharge recidivism rates (e.g., prior adjudications, age at first adjudication, prior commitments, risk assessment tools). Because differences among these risk factors were seen in pre-discharge recidivism rates for this same sample, this finding suggests that case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services may be positively reducing longer-term recidivism.
- Sixty-five percent of new filings for youth discharged in FY 2002-03 (n=268) were for felony offenses. Property felony offense constituted 28% of all new filings for this discharge cohort.

- Males were significantly more likely to have a new filing within one year of discharge from NYC when compared to females in the sample.
- Youth who obtained a satisfactory or better parole adjustment rating were less likely to recidivate within one year following discharge than youth with a poor or unsatisfactory parole adjustment rating.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
RECIDIVISM IN COLORADO	3
Recidivism as an Outcome Measure.....	3
Establishment of a Common Definition in Colorado.....	3
STUDY METHODOLOGY	5
A Change In Sampling Methodology	5
A Note Regarding Statistical Significance	6
PRE-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM	7
Influence of Mandatory Parole	9
Charge Types	10
Filing v. Adjudication	11
Demographics.....	12
Gender.....	12
Primary Ethnicity.....	13
DYC Management Region.....	14
Commitment.....	16
Commitment Sentence Type	16
Commitment Offense Type	17
Number of Escapes	18
Number of Recommitments.....	19
Risk of Re-Offending	20
Prior Out-of-Home Placements	20
Prior Detention Admissions	21
Prior Adjudications	22
Age at First Adjudication	22
Prior Commitments to DYC	23
Assessed Risk Score	24
POST-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM	25
Charge Types	27
Filing v. Adjudication	28
Time to First Post-Discharge Offense	28
Demographics.....	29
Gender.....	29
Primary Ethnicity.....	30
DYC Management Region.....	31
Commitment.....	32
Commitment Offense Type	32
Number of Escapes	33
Number of Recommitments.....	34
Parole Adjustment at Time of Discharge	35
Job/School Status at Time of Discharge.....	35
Risk of Re-Offending	36
Prior Out-of-Home Placements	37
Prior Detention Admissions	38
Comparison of Pre-Discharge and Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates.....	39

DISCUSSION	40
Limitations of Recidivism Research	40
Population Shifts	40
Information Technology Advances	41
Policy Variations	41
Actual Change in Criminal Behavior	42
Recidivism Results	42
Pre-Discharge Recidivism	42
Post-Discharge Recidivism	43

INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections (DYC), prepares an annual recidivism report on committed youth. The current report, along with the Division's annual Management Reference Manual (MRM), are submitted in response to Footnote 76 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004-05 Colorado Long Bill (HB04-1422).

Footnote 76 reads:

The Division is requested to continue its efforts to provide outcome data on the effectiveness of its programs. The Division is requested to provide to the Joint Budget Committee, by January 1 of each year, an evaluation of Division placements, community placements, and nonresidential placements. This evaluation should include, but not be limited to, the number of juveniles served, length of stay, and recidivism data per placement.

The Division's annual recidivism study does not report recidivism data by DYC placement. Youth committed to DYC experience multiple placements, both residential and non-residential, throughout their commitment. Collection of recidivism outcomes, while useful for understanding the rate of re-offending during the commitment period and monitoring re-offending behaviors by specific sub-populations, is not useful in measuring performance of individual DYC placements or programs¹. In FY 2002-03, the Division operated seven state facilities for committed youth and administered contracts with private vendors for services in over 40 residential programs. Evaluation of the effectiveness of individual programs requires experimental research designs that incorporate control or comparison groups matched on critical characteristics, and strict procedures to measure program fidelity. Evaluation of individual programs is time and staff intensive, and is beyond the resource capacity of the Division.

¹ Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) is an exception because the RVYSC program is intended to be the primary placement for eligible youth, and for many of them, represents the first placement after assessment and the last placement before parole.

Recidivism is used as an overall outcome measure for DYC commitment programs. This report is intended to evaluate recidivism results for all youth discharged from DYC during FY 2002-03. The results of this report are divided into two sections: 1) The pre-discharge recidivism section provides results on new filings for charges that occurred prior to discharge from DYC for youth discharged from a DYC commitment sentence in FY 2002-03; and 2) The post-discharge recidivism section examines post-discharge filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses that occur within one year following discharge from the Division.

For this year's report, the Division has modified its sampling methodology. This modification is intended to allow for timelier reporting of recidivism data, and to eventually allow for a more accurate evaluation of recidivism trend data over time. This is the first report to include both pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same client sample.

RECIDIVISM IN COLORADO

Before providing the results of this year's study, it is important to outline the evolution of recidivism as a criminal and juvenile justice outcome measure in Colorado.

Recidivism as an Outcome Measure

Throughout the United States, recidivism is a measure that is often utilized to determine the level of effectiveness of juvenile justice and criminal justice agencies. This seems reasonable since there is an implied public expectation that youth who leave the care of the Division will present a lesser threat to public safety. However, the definition of recidivism can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. Defining recidivism is an imperfect science. In the criminal justice literature, recidivism has been defined as broadly as "any new arrest" (including petty offenses) to as narrowly as "the adjudication for the same or similar offense" (whereby ignoring other offenses). In discussing recidivism, consistency in definition is perhaps as important as how recidivism is defined. A common definition of recidivism allows for meaningful comparisons of performance data among agencies; as well as providing a mechanism for analyzing historical performance trends (either for a single agency or for the juvenile justice system as a whole)².

Establishment of a Common Definition in Colorado

In Colorado, a common definition of recidivism dates back to the early 1990's. In FY 1990-91, the Office of the State Auditor reviewed various components of Colorado's juvenile justice system. Among numerous other recommendations, the State Auditor's Office recommended to the Legislature that a common definition of recidivism be established. This recommendation eventually resulted in a footnote to the Long Bill that

² While efforts to define standard definitions of recidivism across correctional agencies should produce more consistency in data collection and reporting, some differences will still exist across agencies due to differences in programs, levels of security imposed (e.g., residential versus non-residential) and procedures used to regress or sanction youth.

mandated NYC, the Judicial Department, the Division of Criminal Justice, and the Division of Child Welfare develop a common definition of recidivism.

In 1998, the Office of the State Auditor revisited the definition of recidivism. In its review of the juvenile probation system, the Office of the State Auditor recommended that the definition of recidivism be less restrictive and incorporate juvenile, as well as adult offenders. Based on this recommendation, the Legislature approved a footnote that required the Judicial Branch to consult with the Departments of Human Services, Public Safety, and Corrections to consider a newly revised and common definition of recidivism. A multi-agency committee was formed and a collaborative report was submitted in June 1999. In this report, a two-tiered definition of recidivism was proposed. The first tier focuses on re-offending during supervision (pre-discharge recidivism), while the second tier looks at the rates of re-offending once an individual successfully completes the term of their sentence (post-discharge recidivism).

Pre-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from NYC.

Post-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from NYC.

This report is the sixth to apply the above definition of recidivism to committed youth served by the Division of Youth Corrections.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The source of data is critical for determining recidivism rates. Since recidivism is defined for both the pre-release and post-release samples as “a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense,” the Division relied upon the Judicial Department’s Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) database for determining whether a recidivist act had occurred. Only those filings entered into the Colorado Judicial Department’s ICON data system are included in these recidivism measures. Traffic, municipal, status, and petty offenses are not included.

The Colorado Judicial Department prepared a data file containing filing information that was matched with a DYC data file on committed youth served in FY 2002-03. The matched file was used to evaluate pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates on youth discharged from the Division between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003.

A Change In Sampling Methodology

This methodology differs substantively from previous DYC recidivism reports. In the past, the Division has reported pre-discharge recidivism from a cohort of newly committed youth. Because of increases in lengths of stay over the years, higher percentages of youth in the new commitment cohorts were still not discharged at the time recidivism reports were prepared. The change in sampling methodology was prefaced not only upon the General Assembly’s request for more current recidivism data, but also upon the Division’s need for more timely outcome data to assist with internal management decisions. This report addresses these issues by providing both pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism results for the FY 2002-03 discharge sample³.

The process for matching files involves a high level match of youths’ last name, first initial, and two of the three birth date elements. These matches are further examined for evidence of accurate matches (review of the full name listed by both agencies, further checks against the ICON system for nicknames, etc.). Any method to match files is

³ To focus on more current data, recidivism rates for youth discharged in FY 2001-02 have not been analyzed and are not included in this report.

limited by data entry errors, spelling differences, and aliases. Efforts are made to minimize errors through spot-checking and manual reviews of randomly selected cases in the ICON system.

A Note Regarding Statistical Significance

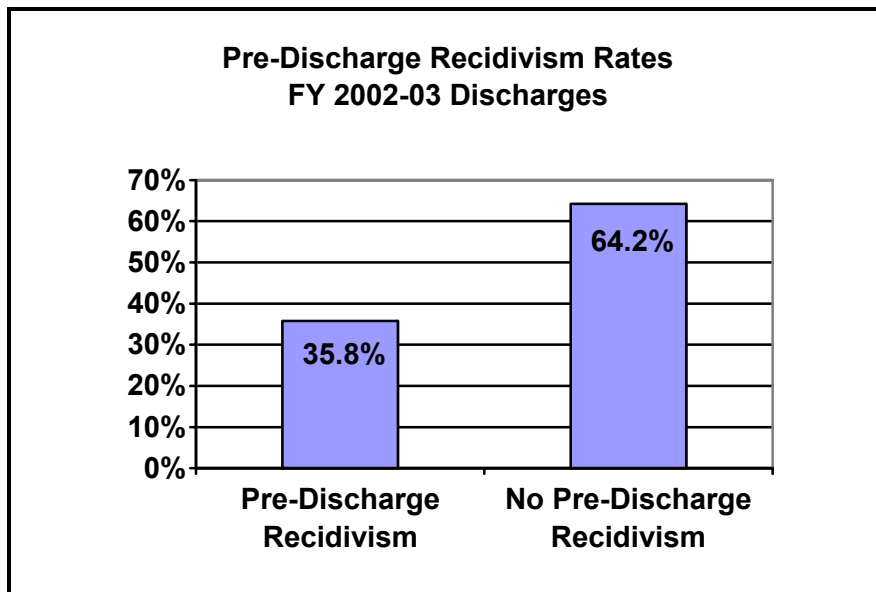
Evaluation studies often reveal differences between groups. These differences may be the result of some noteworthy impact, or they simply could have occurred because of random chance. Throughout this study, findings are included with their statistical significance. If it is highly unlikely that a finding (such as a difference between two groups) happened due to chance, it is said that the finding is statistically significant. Significance is measured through interpretation of a “p” value. Two values are reported here ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). A “p” value less than 0.05 would mean there is less than a 5% chance that a finding is random (due to chance, rather than the existence of a real relationship or cause). A “p” value less than 0.01 would mean there is less than a 1% chance that the finding is random. Social Science research traditionally accepts findings at the $p < 0.05$ level or lower as being sufficiently significant to accept those findings as valid and true. Throughout this report, the term “significant” is used only to describe findings that are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level or lower.

PRE-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM

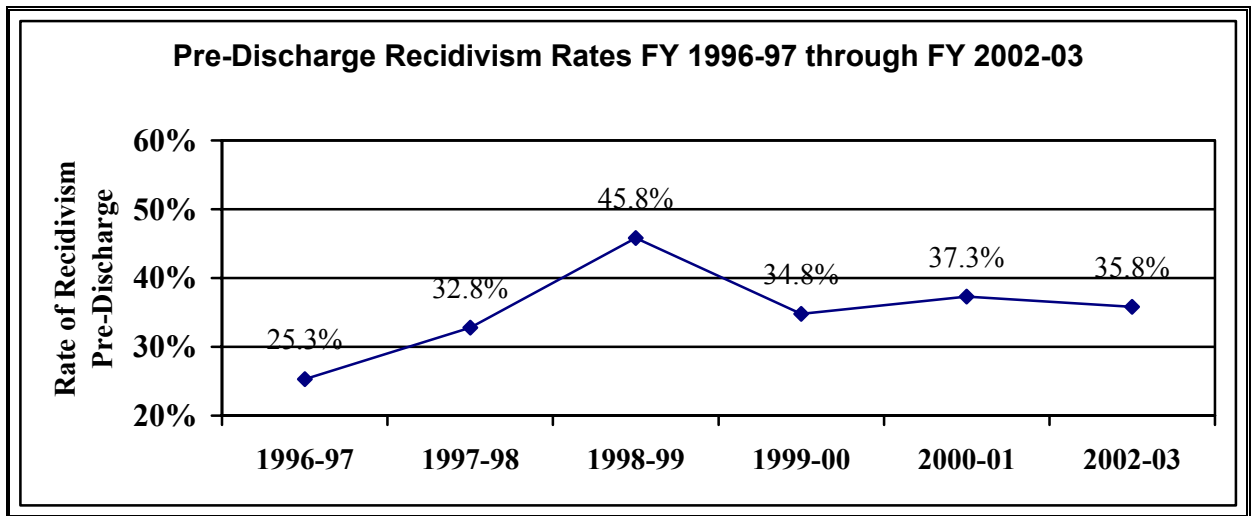
Findings contained in this report are based on an evaluation of youth discharged in FY 2002-03. The term 'pre-discharge' is used to identify offenses filed during the period a youth is on commitment status. For purposes of this report, the period of commitment includes both residential out-of-home placement and non-residential parole.

In previous years, samples were restricted to youth committed in the first six months of the fiscal year in order to minimize the proportion of youth that had not been discharged from NYC at the time the study was prepared. For this year's report, the methodology was modified to include all youth discharged from the Division during FY 2002-03.

The FY 2002-03 pre-discharge recidivism sample consists of 779 youth discharged from NYC between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003. Of the 779 youth, 279 (35.8%) had a new misdemeanor or felony offense filed prior to discharge, while 64.2% had no new filing prior to discharge



The following chart outlines trends in pre-discharge recidivism rates for the past six DYC recidivism studies. Although pre-discharge recidivism rates have remained fairly stable over the past three studies, it is important to remember that changes have been made with regard to study methodology, including sample selection and data collection techniques. Trend data should be cautiously interpreted⁴.



⁴ There is no fiscal year 2001-02 pre-discharge sample because of the shift in study methodology to study pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same study sample and focus on more current recidivism data.

Influence of Mandatory Parole

Changes in policy have most certainly influenced pre-discharge recidivism rates over the past several years. Perhaps, the greatest influence was the introduction of mandatory parole legislation in the 1996 Legislative Session. As shown in Table 1, the majority of new filings in this year's sample were for charges that the youth incurred while on parole.

TABLE 1
Commitment Status of Youth at the Time a Recidivist Act Occurred
Pre-Discharge Filings For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

	N	%
New Offenses Pre-Parole Only	32	11.5%
New Offenses On Parole Status Only	225	80.6%
New Offenses Pre-Parole and on Parole Status	22	7.9%
Pre-Discharge Recidivism Totals	279	100.0%

Almost 90% of youth that received a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from the Division committed at least one of their offenses while on parole status. Twenty-two youth (8%) received new filings for multiple offenses that occurred both prior to parole and while on parole supervision in the community.

Prior to mandatory parole legislation, almost half of the youth committed to NYC spent their entire commitment sentence in residential placements. While a required period of parole in non-residential settings may facilitate the successful reintegration of the juvenile back into the community, thus potentially reducing rates of post-discharge recidivism, it may also artificially inflate pre-discharge recidivism rates because of the increased opportunities to offend that are not available to youth in a residential placement. All 779 youth in this sample were required to serve at least 6 months of parole under mandatory parole legislation. The average length of stay (LOS) on parole for this sample was 8.7 months. Over the past few years, non-residential parole services have been reduced significantly because of State budget constraints. Given that most pre-discharge recidivism filings were for offenses committed while a youth was on parole status, better service delivery and supervision during parole may help to lower recidivism rates in the future.

Charge Types

The 'types' of charges for which a youth received new filings are presented in Table 2. Over two-thirds (70.6%) of the youth who received a filing for a new offense prior to discharge were filed upon for a felony offense⁵.

TABLE 2
Most Serious Pre-Discharge Filing (Offense Type)
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Offense	N	%
Person Felony	78	28.0%
Property Felony	76	27.2%
Drug Felony	11	3.9%
Weapon Felony	1	0.4%
Other ⁵ Felony	31	11.1%
Total Felony Filings	197	70.6%
Person Misdemeanor	25	8.9%
Property Misdemeanor	26	9.3%
Drug Misdemeanor	1	0.4%
Weapon Misdemeanor	3	1.1%
Other ⁶ Misdemeanor	27	9.7%
Total Misdemeanor Filings	82	29.4%
Pre-Discharge Recidivism Totals	279	100.0%

⁵ District Attorney's possess significant discretion in determining whether to file a felony or misdemeanor charge. Research has indicated that persons with previous criminal histories are more likely to receive a felony versus a misdemeanor filing.

⁶ Other offenses include escapes, DUIs, and other miscellaneous offenses.

Filing v. Adjudication

It is important to realize that not all pre-discharge filings resulted in a guilty finding. Table 3 shows that only 62% of the most serious charges filed upon for youth resulted in a guilty adjudication. However, the majority of those youth that had charges dismissed or deferred were found guilty on a lesser charge (69%).

TABLE 3
Court Findings (Most Serious Filing Pre-Discharge)
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Finding	N	%
Guilty	174	62.3%
Not Guilty	1	0.4%
Dismissed	96	34.4%
Deferred	8	2.9%
Total	279	100.0%

If the definition of pre-discharge recidivism were made more restrictive, to only include guilty findings, the pre-discharge recidivism rate for this sample would be under 32%.

Demographics

The following demographic data is presented to illustrate differences in pre-discharge recidivism by gender, ethnicity, or NYC Management Region.

Gender

Table 4 shows a breakdown of pre-discharge recidivism results by gender.

TABLE 4
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Gender
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Gender	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	428	63.1%	250	36.9%	678	87.0%
Female	72	71.3%	29	28.7%	101	13.0%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

Eighty-seven percent of the FY 2002-03 pre-discharge sample was male. The rate of pre-discharge recidivism is 36.9% for males compared with 28.7% for females. Although males indicated a greater likelihood of recidivating (i.e. receiving a filing for a new offense prior to discharge), when compared to females, these findings were not found to be statistically significant.

Primary Ethnicity

Table 5 shows differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates by primary ethnicity. The 'other' category includes Native-American and Asian-American youth, as well as those officially identified as "other." These categories are not combined because of commonalities among them, but because the numbers of youth in each category are too small when taken alone to make valid statistical comparisons.

TABLE 5
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Primary Ethnicity
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

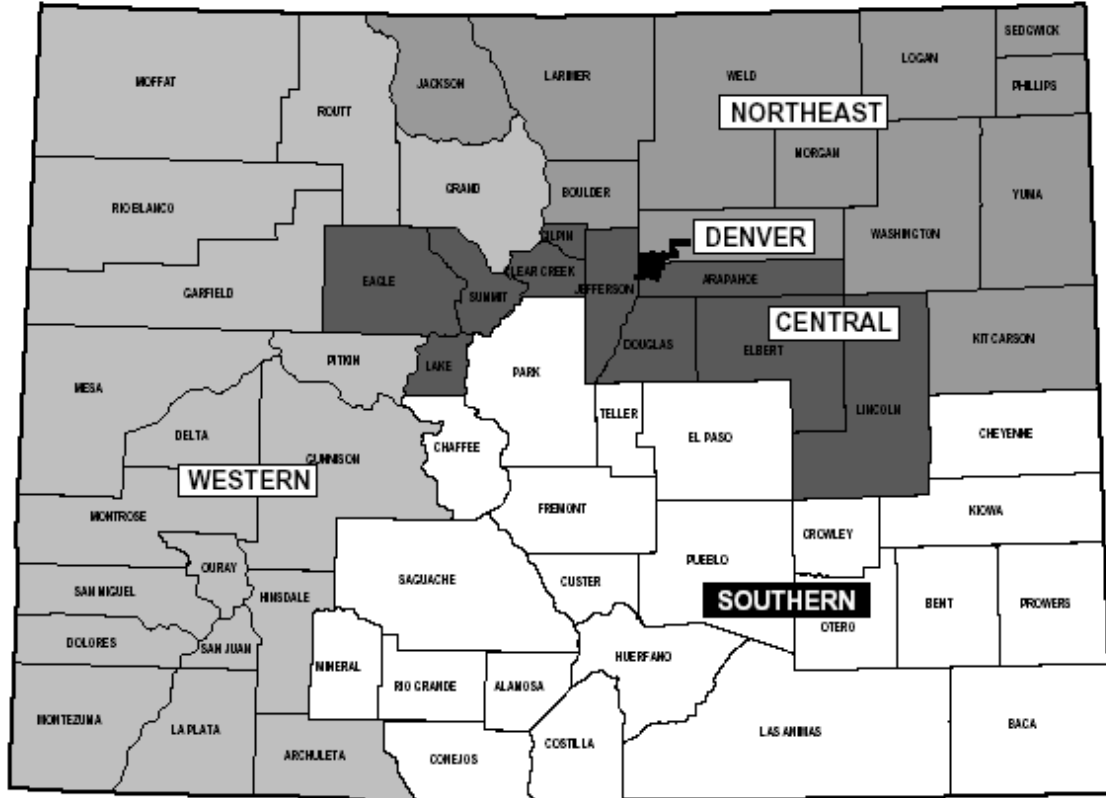
Ethnicity	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
African-American	66	65.3%	35	34.7%	101	13.0%
Hispanic	160	60.2%	106	39.8%	266	34.1%
White	260	67.5%	125	32.5%	385	49.4%
Other ⁷	14	51.9%	13	48.1%	27	3.5%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

Although Hispanic youth in the sample had slightly higher rates of pre-discharge filings than African-American youth or White youth, these differences were not statistically significant. The highest rates of recidivism were noticed among youth identified as 'Other' (48%). This finding is consistent with what was found in previous recidivism studies; however, because of the small sample size (n=27) of this category, results should be interpreted cautiously.

⁷ Includes Native-American and Asian-American youth as well as those officially identified as 'other.'

DYC Management Region

Throughout the period of time this report covers, DYC had a regionally based management structure, operating from five management regions in the state. The Central Region⁸ consisted of four judicial districts and included the major counties of Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Douglas. The Denver Region was the City and County of Denver. The Northeast Region consisted of five judicial districts and included the major counties of Adams, Boulder, Larimer, and Weld. The Southern Region consisted of seven judicial districts and included the major counties of El Paso and Pueblo, and the San Luis Valley. The Western Region consisted of the six judicial districts on the western slope.



⁸ In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region. In FY 2002-03, these regions were still individual entities and recidivism rates for each are reported in these analyses.

Table 6 shows a breakdown of new offenses filed during commitment by DYC management region.

TABLE 6
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by DYC Management Region
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Region	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Central ⁹	114	65.9%	59	34.1%	173	22.2%
Denver	89	64.5%	49	35.5%	138	17.7%
Northeast	132	63.8%	75	36.2%	207	26.6%
Southern	96	55.8%	76	44.2%	172	22.1%
Western	69	77.5%	20	22.5%	89	11.4%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

The rates of new offenses filed during commitment ranged from a low of 22.5% in the Western Region to a high of 44.2% in the Southern Region. Youth committed in the Western Region were statistically less likely than youth committed in other regions to have another charge filed prior to discharge from DYC (Chi-Square=12.38; p<0.05). Results from the past few years have consistently shown the Western Region to have the lowest rates of pre-discharge recidivism in the state.

⁹ In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region. In FY 2002-03, these regions were still individual entities and recidivism rates for each are reported in these analyses.

Commitment

Commitment data presented in this section illustrates differences in pre-discharge recidivism by type of commitment sentence, offense category, and various indicators of successful treatment.

Commitment Sentence Type

Most youth sentenced to NYC commitment receive a non-mandatory sentence length that varies from zero to twenty-four months. Youth with non-mandatory sentences may be granted discretionary parole prior to serving their maximum sentence length. Seventy-one percent of youth discharged in FY 2002-03 were committed under non-mandatory sentences (N=555). Conversely, there were 222 youth who were required to serve a minimum length of stay (LOS) in residential treatment as determined by the court. In rare instances, the minimum LOS could be up to a seven-year commitment sentence for those youth adjudicated on an aggravated mandatory sentence.

Youth serving mandatory sentences have a significantly longer length of stay (average of 31.1 months, including residential and parole placements) than youth serving non-mandatory sentences (average of 26.8 months)¹⁰. Because of the longer lengths of stay for youth serving mandatory sentences, it is expected that a greater percentage of these youth would receive a new filing prior to discharge from NYC, simply because of the greater length of time at risk.

However, there were no differences between the amount of time these groups spent on parole status, which is when the majority of pre-discharge offenses occurred. The average LOS on parole for mandatory sentences was 8.7 months, compared with 8.8 months for youth who received non-mandatory sentences. The rates of recidivism for these two groups were almost identical (35.9% for non-mandatory sentences, and 36.0% for mandatory offenses; Missing Data: N=2).

¹⁰ F=35.03; p<0.01.

Commitment Offense Type

The Colorado TRAILS data system includes information on the most serious offense for which youth are committed, as it is recorded on the juvenile's mittimus. These offenses have been grouped into general types of commitment offenses for purposes of analyses. Table 7 presents a breakdown of original commitment offense-type by pre-discharge recidivism.

TABLE 7
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Original Committing Offense Type
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Offense Type	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Person Offenses	189	66.3%	96	33.7%	285	36.8%
Property Offenses	205	59.9%	137	40.1%	342	44.2%
Drug Offenses	35	68.6%	16	31.4%	51	6.6%
Weapon Offenses	22	75.9%	7	24.1%	29	3.7%
Other ¹¹ Offenses	45	67.2%	22	32.8%	67	8.7%
Total	496	64.1%	278	35.9%	774	100.0%

Missing Data: N=5

Differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates shown by offense type were not statistically significant. The highest rate of pre-release recidivism was seen in youth with an original charge for a property offense (40%). There were also no differences found when comparing felony offenses with misdemeanor offenses.

¹¹ Includes escapes, DUIs, and other miscellaneous offenses.

Number of Escapes

The DYC TRAILS database tracks the number of times a committed youth escapes from placement during commitment. DYC policy defines an escapee as a juvenile who has left a facility's custody without proper authorization, or a juvenile who has not returned to a facility within four hours of the prescribed time from any authorized leave. Table 8 illustrates the differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates by number of escapes.

TABLE 8
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Escapes
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Number of Escapes	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	217	73.3%	79	26.7%	296	38.0%
One	129	64.5%	71	35.5%	200	25.7%
Two or More	154	54.4%	129	45.6%	283	36.3%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

As expected, youth with more escapes were more likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from DYC (Chi-Square=22.48; $p < 0.01$). This data may be skewed slightly by the fact that youth who escape from placement are often charged with an 'escape' offense that may be their only pre-discharge filing. Not all youth who are reported as escapees are filed upon, since many escapes are simply youth who returned to the treatment program on their own, yet still long enough after their prescribed return time to count as an escape under DYC policy.

Upon further review, over 90% of youth with an escape recorded in TRAILS that did receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense, received filings for offenses other than their escape.

Number of Reccommitments

The NYC TRAILS data system also tracks the number of times a committed youth receives an additional commitment sentence while they are still sentenced to NYC. Judges can mandate that recommitment sentences be served either consecutively or concurrently with the original commitment sentence. Since all recommitments are the product of another charge being filed against the youth, either before or during their commitment, it is expected that recommitted youth will have higher rates of pre-discharge recidivism than youth that have no recommitments. Pre-discharge data by the number of recommitments is presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Reccommitments
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Number of Reccommitments	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	394	68.0%	185	32.0%	579	74.3%
One	86	54.4%	72	45.6%	158	20.3%
Two or More	20	47.6%	22	52.4%	42	5.4%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

The majority of youth committed to NYC never receive a recommitment sentence (74%). Nonetheless, the recidivism rate for recommitted youth is higher than the rate for youth that do not have any recommitments (Chi-Square=15.31; $p < 0.01$).

Risk of Re-Offending

During the first thirty days of a commitment to NYC, youth undergo a battery of assessments to determine placement needs, treatment needs, and evaluate the risk the youth poses to himself (i.e. suicide risk) or the community (i.e. public safety). This recidivism study examined a number of factors which have been correlated with an increased risk of re-offending, including number of prior out-of home placements, number of prior detentions, number of prior adjudications, age at first adjudication, number of prior commitments, and risk scores (for re-offending). This section will describe differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates by some of these factors.

Prior Out-of-Home Placements

Table 10 shows pre-discharge recidivism rates by the number of out-of-home placements the youth had before this commitment. Out-of-home placements can include inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities and Child Welfare placements, as well as any prior NYC placements.

TABLE 10

**Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Prior Out-of-Home Placements
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Number of Out-of-Home Placements	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	121	75.6%	39	24.4%	160	20.5%
One	108	62.8%	64	37.2%	172	22.1%
Two or more	271	60.6%	176	39.4%	447	57.4%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

Youth with no prior out-of-home placements were less likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from NYC than youth with one or more prior placements (Chi-Square=11.72; $p < 0.01$). Only 24% of youth with no prior placements recidivated during their commitment, compared with 37% of youth with one prior placement, and 39% of youth with two or more prior placements.

Prior Detention Admissions

The number of detention admissions for youth prior to commitment for this sample ranged from zero to twenty-seven prior detention admissions. Prior detention admissions may be viewed as a measure of 'involvement with the juvenile justice system.' Greater numbers of admissions is reflective of one or a combination of the following factors: greater police contact, probation violations, or judicial sentencing decisions. The average number of prior detention admissions by pre-discharge recidivism is shown in Table 11.

TABLE 11
Average Number of Prior Detention Admissions
Pre-Discharge Filings For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

	Average # Detention Admissions	N
No Pre-Discharge Recidivism	4.6	500
Pre-Discharge Recidivism	5.6	279
FY 2002-03 Discharge Sample Totals	4.9	779

On average, all committed youth discharged in FY 2002-03 had been admitted to a detention placement 4.9 times prior to their commitment. Youth who received a new filing had, on average, one more prior detention admission than youth who did not receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor charge prior to discharge. These results were significant at the $p < 0.01$ significance level.

Prior Adjudications

Table 12 shows pre-discharge recidivism rates by the number of prior adjudications for youth discharged in FY 2002-03. Since prior adjudications is a measure of previous involvement in the juvenile justice system, it is expected that youth with more prior adjudications would be more likely to receive a filing for a new offense prior to discharge.

TABLE 12
Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Prior Adjudications
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Number of Prior Adjudications	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	127	70.6%	53	29.4%	180	23.5%
One	135	65.2%	72	34.8%	207	27.0%
Two or more	228	60.0%	152	40.0%	380	49.5%
Total	490	63.9%	277	36.1%	767	100.0%

Missing Data: N=12

Almost half of the youth discharged in FY 2002-03 had two or more delinquency adjudications before their commitment to the Division of Youth Corrections (49.5%). Forty percent of youth with two or more prior adjudications received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to their discharge from DYC. This is significantly higher than youth with zero (29.4%) or one (34.8%) prior adjudications (Chi-Square=6.12; $p < 0.05$).

Age at First Adjudication

This evaluation also investigated pre-discharge recidivism rates by the age at first adjudication. While previous reports have shown that youth who get involved with the criminal justice system at younger ages are more likely to recidivate, this study did not corroborate those findings. While youth in this pre-discharge sample who recidivated were slightly younger at the time of their first adjudication (14.0 years old) than youth who did not receive a new filing (14.2 years old), the results were not statistically significant.

Prior Commitments to NYC

The group that represents the most protracted involvement with the juvenile justice system is youth who were previously committed to the Division of Youth Corrections. Research indicates that this group may be the least responsive to treatment and the likelihood of future recidivism is high for these youth. Pre-discharge recidivism rates by prior new commitments are shown in Table 13.

TABLE 13

**Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Prior NYC Commitment
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Number of Prior NYC Commitments	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	491	64.8%	267	35.2%	758	97.3%
One	9	42.9%	12	57.1%	21	2.7%
Total	500	64.2%	279	35.8%	779	100.0%

Although very few youth had been committed to the Division previously (N=21), over half of those youth recidivated prior to discharge (57.1%) compared with 35% of youth that had not been committed. Because the number of youth with prior NYC commitments is so small, this should be interpreted cautiously. This result is not statistically significant, but overall this study still supports the hypothesis that prior contact with the juvenile justice system is one of the most powerful predictors of future delinquent or criminal activity.

Assessed Risk Score

The objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI) is one of the many assessment instruments used at the time of commitment. The CCI calculates placement needs using the combined risk score and severity of the offense for which the youth was committed. The risk score is a composite score based on factors such as the number of prior adjudications, offense type, prior placement history, and age at first adjudication.

TABLE 14

**Pre-Discharge Recidivism by Assessed Risk Score
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Risk of Re-offending	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	171	72.2%	66	27.8%	237	30.8%
Medium	192	61.1%	122	38.9%	314	40.8%
High	130	59.4%	89	40.6%	219	28.4%
Total	493	64.0%	277	36.0%	770	100.0%

Missing Data: N=9

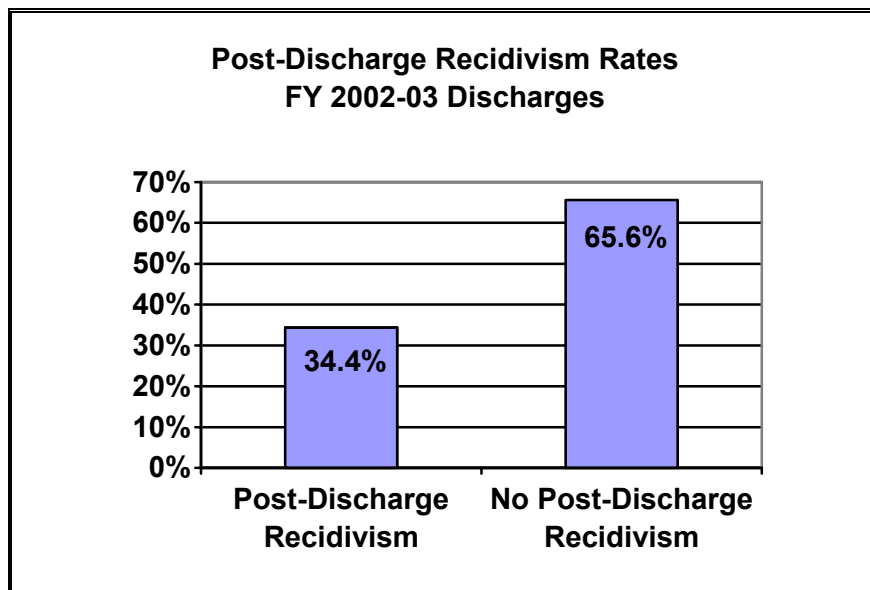
The results in Table 14 appear to validate the risk scores obtained by the CCI. Youth assessed as having a low risk of re-offense were significantly less likely to receive a new filing for an offense prior to discharge (27.8%) when compared with youth assessed at the medium (38.9%) or high (40.6%) risk levels (Chi-Square=9.99; $p < 0.01$).

POST-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM

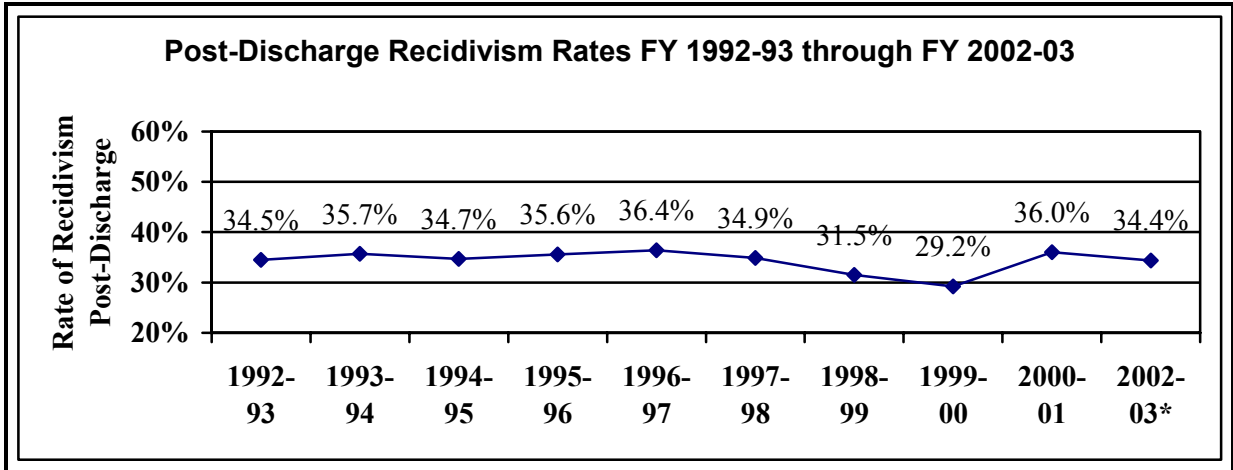
This section reports on post-discharge recidivism rates for youth that have been discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections. Recidivism for youth who have been discharged from DYC is defined as a judicial filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense that occurs within one year following discharge from DYC.

In an effort to provide more current recidivism data, the Division has modified the sample selection for this year's study. Previous samples have been selected from youth discharged two years prior to data collection for the annual recidivism report. Modifications to this year's pre-discharge sample to select youth discharged from a later sample, allow for more current post-discharge recidivism results as well. Additionally, with the use of this new methodology it is now possible to track pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates for the same sample, allowing for better comparisons of pre-discharge and post-discharge results.

Follow-up information on new misdemeanor or felony offenses committed within one year following discharge from DYC, resulting in a court filing, and entered into the Judicial Department's ICON data system, was collected on all 779 youth discharged in FY 2002-03. Of the 779 youth in this year's sample, 268 (34.4%) received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge.



A ten-year trend of post-discharge recidivism rates is shown in the chart below. It is important to remember that changes have been made with regard to study methodology, including sample selection and data collection techniques; thus, interpretation of trend data on post-discharge recidivism rates should be made cautiously.



*There is no fiscal year 2001-02 post-discharge sample because of the shift in study methodology to study pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same study sample and to report on recidivism rates in a timelier manner.

Charge Types

The following table shows offense type for the most serious offense for which youth received new post-discharge filings. Sixty-five percent of new filings were for felony offenses.

TABLE 15
Most Serious Post-Discharge Filing (Offense Type)
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Offense	N	%
Person Felony	44	16.4%
Property Felony	75	28.0%
Drug Felony	31	11.5%
Weapon Felony	1	0.4%
Other ¹² Felony	23	8.6%
Total Felony Filings	174	64.9%
Person Misdemeanor	37	13.8%
Property Misdemeanor	24	9.0%
Drug Misdemeanor	1	0.4%
Weapon Misdemeanor	2	0.7%
Other ¹¹ Misdemeanor	30	11.2%
Total Misdemeanor Filings	94	35.1%
Post-Discharge Recidivism Totals	268	100.0%

¹² Other offenses include escapes, DUIs, and other miscellaneous offenses.

Filing v. Adjudication

As with pre-discharge recidivism filings, it is important to realize that not all filings for post-discharge recidivism charges resulted in a guilty finding. Table 16 shows that only 59% of the most serious charges filed upon for youth resulted in a guilty adjudication. Most of the youth who had their most serious charges dismissed or deferred were found guilty on a lesser charge. In total, 225 youth (84% of youth with a post-discharge filing; 29% of the entire FY2002-03 discharge sample) were found guilty of a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge.

TABLE 16
Court Findings (Most Serious Filing Post-Discharge)
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Finding	N	%
Guilty	158	59.4%
Not Guilty	2	0.7%
Dismissed	88	33.1%
Deferred	18	6.8%
Total	266	100.0%

Missing Data: N=2

If the definition of post-discharge recidivism were made more restrictive, to only include guilty findings, the post-discharge recidivism rate for this sample would be 29%.

Time to First Post-Discharge Offense

An analysis of time to first offense shows that over 60% of youth that received a new filing recidivated within the first 6 months, and over 80% recidivated within the first 9 months. Only 18% of youth discharged in FY 2002-03, who received a filing for a new charge within one year following discharge, received their first filing more than 9 months past their discharge date. The average amount of time following discharge date to first offense that a youth received a new filing for was just over 5 months (154.5 days).

The following subsections provide post-discharge recidivism outcomes by a number of demographic, commitment, and risk factors.

Demographics

The following demographic data is presented to illustrate differences in post-discharge recidivism by gender, ethnicity, and NYC Management Region.

Gender

Table 17 shows a breakdown of post-discharge recidivism results by gender.

TABLE 17
Post-Discharge Recidivism by Gender
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Gender	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	423	62.4%	255	37.6%	678	87.0%
Female	88	87.1%	13	12.9%	101	13.0%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

Thirty-seven percent of males discharged in FY 2002-03 received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge, compared with 13% of females in the sample. Males were statistically more likely to receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge than females (Chi-Square=22.76; $p < 0.01$).

Primary Ethnicity

Post-discharge recidivism rates by primary ethnicity are shown in Table 18. The 'other' category includes Native-American and Asian-American youth as well as those officially identified as "other." As previously mentioned, these categories are not combined because of commonalities among them, but because the numbers of youth in each category are too small when taken alone to make valid statistical comparisons.

TABLE 18
Post-Discharge Recidivism by Primary Ethnicity
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Ethnicity	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
African-American	61	60.4%	40	39.6%	101	13.0%
Hispanic	162	60.9%	104	39.1%	266	34.1%
White	268	69.6%	117	30.4%	385	49.4%
Other ¹³	20	74.1%	7	25.9%	27	3.5%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

Although White youth had slightly lower rates of post discharge filings (30%) than African-American (40%) and Hispanic youth (39%), these differences were not statistically significant.

¹³ Includes Native American and Asian American youth as well as those officially identified as 'other.'

DYC Management Region

Table 19 shows a breakdown of new offenses within one year following commitment by DYC management region.

TABLE 19
Post-Discharge Recidivism by DYC Management Region
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Region	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Central ¹⁴	115	66.5%	58	33.5%	173	22.2%
Denver	86	62.3%	52	37.7%	138	17.7%
Northeast	141	68.1%	66	31.9%	207	26.6%
Southern	104	60.5%	68	39.5%	172	22.1%
Western	65	73.0%	24	27.0%	89	11.4%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

The rates of new offenses filed within one year following discharge ranged from a low of 27.0% in the Western Region to a high of 39.5% in the Southern Region. Although these results are not significant, they are similar in ranking (not absolute numbers) to the results shown in the previous section on pre-discharge recidivism rates.

¹⁴ In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region. In FY 2002-03, these regions were still individual entities and recidivism rates for each are reported in these analyses.

Commitment

Commitment data presented in this section illustrates differences in post-discharge recidivism by offense category and various indicators of successful treatment. Two indicators of successful completion of parole sentence, which were not included as part of the previous analysis on pre-discharge recidivism rates, are also presented.

Commitment Offense Type

The Colorado TRAILS data system includes information on the most serious offense for which youth are committed as it is recorded on the juvenile's mittimus. These offenses have been grouped into general types of commitment offenses for purposes of analyses. Table 19 presents a breakdown of original commitment offense-type by post-discharge recidivism.

TABLE 19
Post-Discharge Recidivism by Original Committing Offense Type
For Juveniles Discharged From DYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Offense Type	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Person Offenses	186	65.3%	99	34.7%	285	36.8%
Property Offenses	213	62.3%	129	37.7%	342	44.2%
Drug Offenses	41	80.4%	10	19.6%	51	6.6%
Weapon Offenses	20	69.0%	9	31.0%	29	3.7%
Other ¹⁵ Offenses	47	70.1%	20	29.9%	67	8.7%
Total	507	65.5%	267	34.5%	774	100.0%

Missing Data: N=5

Differences in post-discharge filings by original commitment offense type were not significant. The highest rate of post-release recidivism was observed in youth with an original charge for a property offense (38%). There were also no differences in post-discharge recidivism rates when comparing felony offenses with misdemeanor offenses.

¹⁵ Includes escapes, DUI's, and other miscellaneous offenses.

Number of Escapes

The NYC TRAILS database tracks the number of times a committed youth escapes from placement during their commitment. NYC policy defines an escapee as a juvenile who has left a facility's custody without proper authorization, or a juvenile who has not returned to a facility within four hours of the prescribed time from any authorized leave. It is expected that youth with escapes would have higher rates of recidivism than youth that completed their commitment sentence without an escape. Table 20 illustrates differences in post-discharge recidivism rates by number of escapes.

TABLE 20
Post-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Escapes
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

Number of Escapes	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	202	68.2%	94	31.8%	296	38.0%
One	132	66.0%	68	34.0%	200	25.7%
Two or More	177	62.5%	106	37.5%	283	36.3%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

Although these results were not statistically significant, youth with more escapes during their commitment did have slightly higher post-discharge recidivism rates than youth without any escapes.

Number of Reccommitments

Judges can mandate that recommitment sentences be served either consecutively or concurrently with the original commitment sentence. Since all recommitments are the product of another charge being filed against the youth either before or during their commitment, it is expected that recommitted youth will have higher rates of recidivism than youth that have no recommitments, since they have already demonstrated a higher level of involvement in delinquent activity. Post-discharge data by the number of recommitments is presented in Table 21.

TABLE 21

**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Reccommitments
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Number of Reccommitments	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	386	66.7%	193	33.3%	579	74.3%
One	90	57.0%	68	43.0%	158	20.3%
Two or More	35	83.3%	7	16.7%	42	5.4%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

The highest rate of post-discharge recidivism is observed in youth that received one recommitment. Surprisingly, youth with more than one recommitment were less likely to recidivate within a year following discharge. This is most likely an artifact of the small number of youth in this category rather than any real difference in the rates of recidivism. These results were statistically significant (Chi-Square=11.37; $p < 0.01$).

Parole Adjustment at Time of Discharge

When a youth is discharged from NYC they receive a parole adjustment rating that reflects their ability to adapt to life in a community setting. It is expected that youth who successfully reintegrate into community settings would be less likely to receive a new filing for a post-discharge offense than youth who received a less than satisfactory adjustment rating. Table 22 shows post-discharge recidivism rates by parole adjustment rating at the time of discharge from NYC.

TABLE 22

**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Parole Adjustment at Discharge
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Parole Adjustment at Discharge	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poor/Unsatisfactory	180	60.0%	120	40.0%	300	39.6%
Satisfactory/Excellent	264	67.9%	125	32.1%	389	51.4%
Unknown	49	72.1%	19	27.9%	68	9.0%
Total	493	65.1%	264	34.9%	757	100.0%

Missing Data: N=22

Over half of discharged youth received a satisfactory or better parole adjustment at the time of discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth who received a poor or unsatisfactory parole adjustment were more likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense post-discharge (40%) than youth who received a satisfactory or better rating (32%) (Chi-Square=6.20; p<0.05).

Job/School Status at Time of Discharge

This study also investigated recidivism rates for youth that were gainfully employed or enrolled in school at the time of parole discharge, another measure of successful reintegration into the community.

Youth who were not employed or in school at time of discharge had slightly higher rates of post-discharge recidivism (39%) than youth that were employed or in school (33%), however, these results were not statistically significant.

Risk of Re-Offending

During the first thirty days of commitment to NYC, youth undergo a battery of assessments to determine placement needs, treatment needs, and to evaluate the risk the youth poses to himself (i.e. suicide risk) and the community (i.e. public safety). This recidivism study examined a number of factors which have been shown to increase the risk of re-offending, including number of prior out-of-home placements, number of prior detentions, number of prior adjudications, age at first adjudication, number of prior commitments, and risk scores (for re-offending).

Only two of the factors analyzed were statistically significant for post-discharge recidivism; number of prior out-of-home placements and number of detention admissions prior to commitment.

The lack of significant results in this section could be an indicator of treatment success during a youth's NYC commitment sentence. Since these risk factors are identified within the first thirty days of commitment and significant results were identified during the evaluation of pre-discharge recidivism rates, it is possible that successful treatment during commitment has mitigated these risk factors for some youth.

The lack of significant findings may also indicate a need for re-assessment of youth at specified times during commitment. Treatment plans based upon assessment tools administered during the first month of commitment may no longer be accurate after six months or a year of commitment. Re-assessment at regular intervals could help the Division more effectively modify treatment plans as the youth is progressing through the system, and may eventually positively influence the Division's overall recidivism rates. The Division is currently evaluating other objective classification instruments that could support re-assessment of youth at regular intervals during commitment.

This section will show the significant findings for the risk factors studied compared to post-discharge recidivism results.

Prior Out-of-Home Placements

Table 23 shows post-discharge recidivism rates by the number of out-of-home placements the youth had before this commitment. Out-of-home placements can include inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities or Child Welfare placements, as well as any prior NYC placements.

TABLE 23

**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Number of Prior Out-of-Home Placements
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003**

Number of Out-of-Home Placements	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	106	66.2%	54	33.8%	160	20.5%
One	99	57.6%	73	42.4%	172	22.1%
Two or more	306	68.5%	141	31.5%	447	57.4%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

The results of this comparison were not quite as expected. Youth with one prior out-of-home placement were most likely to receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge (Chi-Square=6.58; $p < 0.05$). However, youth with two or more prior out-of-home placements show the lowest rates of post-discharge recidivism (32%), even slightly lower than youth that did not have any placements prior to this commitment.

Prior Detention Admissions

The number of detention admissions for youth prior to commitment for this sample ranged from zero to twenty-seven prior detention admissions. The average number of prior detention admissions by pre-discharge recidivism is shown in Table 24.

TABLE 24
Average Number of Prior Detention Admissions
Post-Discharge Filings For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between
July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

	Average # Detention Admissions	N
No Post-Discharge Recidivism	4.8	511
Post-Discharge Recidivism	5.3	268
FY 2002-03 Discharge Sample Totals	4.9	779

On average, all committed youth discharged in FY 2002-03 had 4.9 detention admissions prior to their commitment. Although the number of prior detention admissions is significantly different by post-discharge recidivism group ($p < 0.05$), these results are not necessarily meaningful. Youth who did receive a filing for a new offense within one year following discharge were only found to have an average of one-half of an additional detention admission prior to this commitment.

Results that are not meaningful may provide some initial insight into differences between groups, but should not necessarily dictate changes in policy or decision-making processes.

Comparison of Pre-Discharge and Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates

The shift in the sampling methodology for this report allows comparisons of post-discharge recidivism rates by pre-discharge recidivism. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 25.

TABLE 25
Post-Discharge Recidivism by Pre-Discharge Recidivism
For Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003

	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Pre-Discharge Recidivism	345	69.0%	155	31.0%	500	64.2%
Pre-Discharge Recidivism	166	59.5%	113	40.5%	279	35.8%
Total	511	65.6%	268	34.4%	779	100.0%

Youth in the sample who received a new filing during their commitment were also more likely to have recidivated following discharge (Chi-Square=6.75; $p < 0.01$). While this is not surprising, it is interesting to note that more than half of the youth who received a filing for a new offense during commitment did not receive a new filing within a year following discharge (59.5%).

These findings may be an artifact of the supervision that a youth receives while in residential placement and while on parole, and the likelihood that they will be caught. However, it may also reflect the successful treatment and reintegration back into their communities of youth who had previously been filed upon for a pre-discharge offense. One possible explanation is the influence of case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services. To the extent that these services ameliorate risk factors and augment protective factors, the probability of re-offense will be markedly different for a youth upon discharge as compared to when that youth was originally committed.

DISCUSSION

Limitations of Recidivism Research

Before discussing the results presented within this report, it is important to realize that any analysis of recidivism rates must be approached cautiously. Policy-makers and juvenile justice practitioners often refer to recidivism as if it were a constant, universal concept. In reality, recidivism is an amorphous concept that is dependent upon its underpinning assumptions. A marked departure from any of these assumptions will result in outcome measures that are significantly disparate. This section of the report will discuss those assumptions that have the greatest potential for influencing recidivism rates¹⁶.

Population Shifts

In the juvenile justice system, the concept of risk is invariably connected to the probability of re-offending; as such, an “at-risk youth” is a youth who presents a greater than average chance of committing a criminal act. If a juvenile justice agency suddenly realizes a significant realignment of the risk potential of its population, then that realignment can result in differing recidivism rates when all other factors are held constant. For example, if a certain juvenile justice program or project is eliminated because of budget constraints, then youth who would have been directed to that program are then re-directed to other programs. This process of directing youth deeper into the juvenile justice system has occurred in Colorado. For example, the Community Accountability Program, as well as other programs designed to intervene with youth at earlier stages of the juvenile justice system, have been eliminated or seriously impacted because of state budget cuts. These programs were designed to provide alternatives to NYC detention and commitment sentences. The process of shifting populations into other programs which may not be adequately prepared to treat delinquent youth, or alternatively provide more treatment than is required, can both positively and negatively impact recidivism rates.

¹⁶ Altering the definition of recidivism can influence wholesale changes in outcome results. This discussion assumes that the definition of recidivism remains constant.

Information Technology Advances

Most juvenile and criminal justice agencies rely upon official records to determine recidivism rates. To the extent that these official records are considered accurate and complete, each agency is able to determine their respective rates of recidivism. It should be noted that the completeness and accuracy of official records have been questioned in the past. In response to these concerns, Colorado has devoted significant resources updating its criminal and juvenile justice information systems¹⁷. An unexpected consequence of updating these information systems is that recidivism rates may begin to increase in the future. These rates of recidivism are not necessarily increasing as a result of actual spikes in criminal behavior, but possibly because of the increased reliability and accuracy of matching offenders between data systems¹⁸.

Policy Variations

The juvenile justice system can be viewed as an intricate network of decision points that is generally governed by statute, policy, or administrative declaration, but where key decision-makers are allowed considerable discretion. Clearly, one of the key decision-makers in the juvenile justice system is the District Attorney. The District Attorney (DA) has considerable discretion in whether a Delinquency Petition is filed with the Court. A DA may choose not to file on a case because the case is considered to be without significant merit or because appropriate alternatives exist that can otherwise effectively discharge the case (e.g., a Diversion Program). Because of this discretion, there exist significant differences in filing practices throughout the State. In some jurisdictions, the DA may choose to file upon the majority of cases and allow the judicial process to determine the relative merits of a case. In other jurisdictions, in an attempt to manage the limited resources of the DA's Office or the Court, a DA may only file on those cases

¹⁷ Marked improvements have been made to the Judicial Department's data system (ICON) as well as to the Department of Human Services data system (TRAILS). These improvements are in conjunction with the statewide Colorado Integrated Criminal Justice Information Systems (CICJIS) effort that attempts to link individual and stand alone data systems.

¹⁸ Conversely, less than accurate information systems may net lower recidivism rates because of errors associated with data entry or software inconsistencies.

where the merits of a case have undergone careful examination. In either scenario, it is policy, not necessarily criminal activity that determines a filing; which in turn influences recidivism data and rates in Colorado.

Actual Change in Criminal Behavior

Lastly, changes in the recidivism rate can be the result of actual changes in criminal behavior. As research advances juvenile justice programming, it is generally believed that these advances will eventually result in better short-term and long-term outcomes. Quantitative evidence of these enhanced outcomes may require years to be realized. Until causal links can be firmly established in data, claims that actual criminal behavior patterns have changed (either positively or negatively) should be made cautiously. This is not to suggest that annual recidivism rates should be ignored. Recidivism rates provide a basic barometer in how the system is reacting. Minimally, changes in recidivism rates should prompt policy-makers to question whether actual behavioral changes have occurred or whether the fluctuation in rates is an artifact of some other change occurring elsewhere in the juvenile justice system.

Recidivism Results

A discussion of the recidivism results is presented below. Overall the pre-discharge recidivism rate for youth discharged from DYC during FY 2002-03 was 36%. Thirty-four percent of the FY 2002-03 discharge sample recidivated within one year following discharge.

Pre-Discharge Recidivism

Overall, 279 youth (36%) in the FY 2002-03 DYC discharge sample received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from DYC. Over the past three recidivism studies prepared by the Division, pre-discharge recidivism rates have remained fairly steady.

Over 80% of all youth who received a new filing prior to discharge committed new offenses only while on parole status. While supervision and services provided during parole are intended to monitor the youth and facilitate the juvenile's transition back into

the community, non-residential placement does provide more opportunities for juveniles to commit delinquent acts than in a residential setting. Over the past few years, non-residential parole services have been reduced significantly because of State budget constraints. Given that most pre-discharge recidivism filings were for offenses committed while a youth was on parole status, better service delivery and supervision during parole may lead to fewer youth recidivating in the future.

As expected, youth with more risk factors for re-offending were more likely than other youth to have received a new filing during their NYC commitment. Youth that had prior involvement in the juvenile justice system, as measured by prior detention placements, prior adjudications, and prior commitments, were more likely to have received a filing for a new offense prior to discharge. Additionally, at the time of commitment, youth are assessed for risk of re-offending with the objective Commitment Classification Instrument. Youth with higher risk scores on this instrument were more likely to recidivate prior to discharge.

Post-Discharge Recidivism

Thirty-four percent of the FY 2002-03 NYC discharge sample received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor within one year following discharge from NYC.

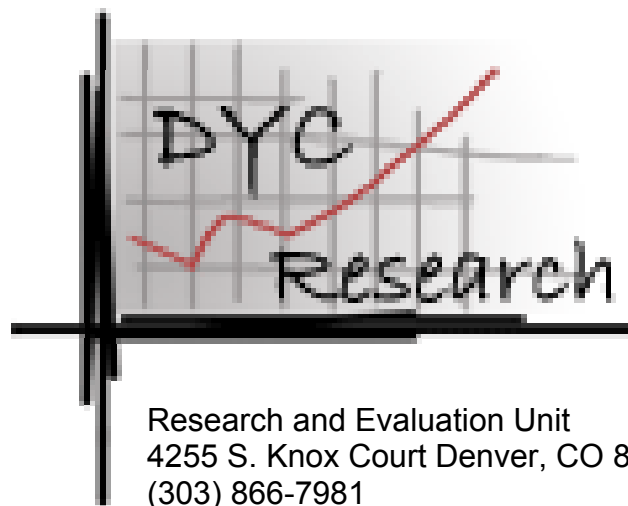
The most interesting results from the analysis of post-discharge recidivism rates are the lack of significant results for youth with higher risk factors. These same risk factors that exhibited significant differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates were mostly non-existent for post-discharge recidivism results. The most significant differences by group were observed for males and youth with a pre-discharge filing, and even for youth who received a new filing prior to discharge, the majority (60%) did not recidivate within one year following discharge.

These results may be a positive indicator of success for the Division's treatment programs. The juvenile justice literature has clearly established a linkage between elevated risk and need factors and the increased probability of re-offense (Andrews and

Bonta, p. 154¹⁹). The results of this post-release recidivism study did not generate findings consistent with this well-established theorem. One possible explanation is the influence of case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services. To the extent that these services ameliorate risk factors and augment protective factors, the probability of re-offense will be markedly different for a youth upon discharge as compared to when that youth was originally committed. If the Division successfully reduces a youth's risk of recidivism, it should not be surprising that those risk factors identified at the beginning of a juvenile's commitment sentence are no longer significantly correlated with recidivism upon post-discharge.

The lack of significant findings may also indicate a need for re-assessment of youth at specified times during commitment. Treatment plans based upon assessment tools administered during the first month of commitment may no longer be accurate after six months or a year of commitment. Re-assessment at regular intervals could help the Division modify treatment plans more effectively as the youth is progressing through the system, and may eventually positively influence the Division's overall recidivism rates.

¹⁹ Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.



Research and Evaluation Unit
4255 S. Knox Court Denver, CO 80236
(303) 866-7981