

Response to Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee  
February 5, 2013  
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**Question:** Is it possible to show recidivism such that the offense the offender returned to prison for was more violent than the original lead offense?

**Response:** Yes. Data are readily available for FY2007 prison releases tracked through FY2010. The offenders we tracked were paroled or discharged their sentences from prison or work release. Recidivism was defined as return to prison within three years. The methodology for this study adheres to the standard adopted by the Association of State Correctional Administrators and was used by the Pew Center on the States in their state-by-state recidivism analysis, published in 2011.

During FY2007, there were 4,044 prison releases. Of those, 97 offenders whose most serious offense at release was not a violent crime were returned to prison for new convictions for violent offenses (based on most serious new conviction). That calculates to a recidivism rate of 2.4%.

Another question has been posed regarding recidivism where the new offense was at a more serious level than the original serving offense. This question may be answered by comparing the offense class of the releasing offense with the offense class of the new conviction. What we found was, of the 4,044 prison releases, 190 were returned for a more serious offense, based on offense class) when compared with the releasing offense(s). That calculates to a recidivism rate of 4.7%.

For perspective, 7.4% (300 offenders) were returned to prison for less serious offenses than the releasing offense, and 7.1% were returned to prison for crimes of the same level of seriousness.

All together, the rate of return to prison for any new conviction was 19.2%.

We will be working on an updated detailed offender recidivism report in the Spring. In the meantime, we know that the overall return rate to prison (for any reason including technical parole violations) has declined since FY2007, from 31.8% to 31.4% for FY2008 releases to 30.8% for FY2009 releases tracked through FY2012.

The mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections is:  
**To advance successful offender reentry to protect the public, staff and offenders from victimization.**

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