



# IRISH PRISON SERVICE RECIDIVISM STUDY

May 2013



## **IRISH PRISON SERVICE RECIDIVISM STUDY 2013**

A study of recidivism among all prisoners released by the Irish Prison Service on completion of a sentence in 2007 - based on reoffending and reconviction data up to the end of 2010

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## 1. Foreword

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Mr Alan Shatter, TD, published the 3 year Strategic Plan for the Irish Prison Service in April 2012. The Strategy sets out the overall high level objectives and key strategic actions the Irish Prison Service intends to take during the period 2012 to 2015.

The overarching high level objectives which underpin our strategic actions are:

- Increasing public safety by maintaining safe and secure custody for all those committed by the Courts and by reducing reoffending and improving prisoner rehabilitation through the development of a multiagency approach to offending.
- Ensuring Ireland's compliance with domestic and international human rights obligations and best practice.
- Delivering reform and implementing change in accordance with the Public Service Agreement and the Integrated Reform Plan for the Justice and Equality Sector.

There is a clear commitment throughout the Strategy to enhance sentence planning and the delivery of both prison and community based rehabilitative programmes in order to reduce recidivism. In order to deliver on this commitment it is imperative that the Service can monitor recidivism. **This report is a study of recidivism among all prisoners released by the Irish Prison Service on completion of a sentence in 2007, based on reoffending and conviction data up to the end of 2010.**

Previously, the only information available to the Service related to re-imprisonment rates. The UCD Institute of Criminology published a report in 2006 which was based on re-imprisonment.

This study focuses on recidivism where the new offence does not necessarily lead to a period of imprisonment and gives a clearer picture of the offending behaviour of ex-prisoners. It will also enable yearly monitoring of recidivism trends and the evaluation of rehabilitation interventions.

This research project was undertaken in partnership with the Central Statistics Office, specifically the Crime Statistics Section, who facilitated the linking of Irish Prison Service data, Garda Síochána records and Courts Service records. This type of cross-agency analysis of released prisoners has not been possible in the past and this is the first study of its kind in the Republic of Ireland. The findings mark an important contribution to criminological

research in Ireland and highlight the need for a greater emphasis on a structured multi-agency approach to preparing prisoners for their release. It is clear that the responsibility for reducing recidivism must be borne by all criminal justice agencies.

Through focusing on the ways in which we can improve co-operation within the criminal justice system and between state agencies we can certainly create the conditions which are needed to bring about better outcomes for offenders. We can also go some way towards achieving our collective objective of improving public safety. An equal commitment from the offender and the community the offender is returning to is also required in order to achieve this objective.

I would like to thank the management and staff of the Central Statistics Office - Kevin McCormack, Karina Kelleher and Tim Linehan, in particular - for their invaluable support and contribution to this study.

It is hoped that the Irish Prison Service, the Central Statistics Office and the Probation Service, who published their recidivism study in December 2012, will jointly develop our data analysis and research, particularly in the context of a multi-agency response to the management of offenders.



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May 2013.

## Irish Prison Service Recidivism Study 2013

### 2. Summary

The Irish Prison Service and the Central Statistics Office established a partnership in 2010 to conduct research on recidivism and imprisonment rates. In order to facilitate this, the Irish Prison Service re-categorised the offence groups under which prisoners' convictions are recorded using the same offence groupings as those used by An Garda Síochána, the Central Statistics Office, the Courts Service and the Probation Service.

This report is based on all prisoners released by the Irish Prison Service on completion of a sentence during 2007. The study reports on recidivism up to the end of 2010 among that cohort using recorded crime and Court Service data held by the Central Statistics Office.

The study also examines variations in recidivism relating to the gender and age of the offender, the category of the original offence and of the subsequent offence.

In 2012, the Probation Service published its study of persons who had re-offended within two years following the imposition of a Probation Order or Community Service Order. The two studies are not comparable as the Probation study is based on a two year period for re-offending and certain road traffic offences were excluded. However, both studies showed that re-offending was most likely to occur in the first 12 months either after release from prison or the imposition of an alternative sanction.

- The Probation Service study showed a recidivism rate of 37.2% within two years of the imposition of a Probation or Community Service Order.
- This study shows a recidivism rate of 58.3% within two years of the completion of a prison sentence.

#### 2.1 Main Findings

- A recidivism rate of 62.3% within three years
- Over 80% of those who re-offended did so within 12 months of release.
- The recidivism rate decreased as the offender age increased.
- Male offenders represented 92.5% of the total population studied and had a higher recidivism rate of than female offenders (63% for males and 57% among females).

- The most common offences for which offenders were reconvicted was Public Order Offences.
- Burglary offenders, while a relatively small group within the study, had the highest rate of reconviction at 79.5%.

### 3. Introduction

#### 3.1 Aims of the Study

- To establish reliable recidivism data on the cohort of prisoners studied;
- To analyse the data and evaluate and report the findings;
- To develop greater knowledge to support effective interventions and Service actions to reduce recidivism.

#### 3.2 Population Studied

The population studied were prisoners who were released from the custody of the Irish Prison Service having completed a sentence in 2007.

A dataset containing all the releases in 2007 was selected (11,553 releases with 8,119 individual prisoner records). Of the 8,119 individual prisoner records 7,701 were successfully matched which represents 95% of cases.

The study considered variations in recidivism as they relate to the gender and age of the offender, the category of the original offence, (the offence for which the offender was released from custody in 2007) and of the subsequent offence (the first offence of reconviction).

#### 3.3 Development of Methodology

To date there has been limited research on recidivism in Ireland due, in part, to a lack of comprehensive information on reoffending by individual offenders. Criminal records

searches are, by their nature, time consuming and costly and substantial searches would be required in order to provide the numbers to make a study meaningful. With the development of information technology, records at most stages of the Criminal Justice cycle are now available in databases. However, there is no single identifier or shared database currently used across the different justice agencies.

In 2005, the reporting of crime statistics transferred from An Garda Síochána to the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Since then the CSO has maintained a database of records on all offenders and offences that were reported to the Gardaí and also of Court convictions during that period.

Discussions between the Irish Prison Service and the CSO explored the possibility of utilising the parallel databases to improve information on outcomes and subsequent criminal history of offenders. Without a unique identifier the linking of the databases was not straightforward.

Department of Justice agencies use separate database systems. Strong linkages exist between PULSE and CCTS (Courts) database systems. These take the form of numerous common identifiers that exist in both systems: Charge No., Summons No. etc. These are linked to the Person PULSE ID to allow linking by individuals and criminal incident. As a result, the CSO can easily produce statistics combining garda and court outcome data, such as the amount of recorded offences leading to conviction and the detection and conviction rates for particular offences. Indeed, such statistics have been produced by the CSO Crime Section going back to 2006.

Unfortunately, such corresponding common identifiers do not exist for the Probation and Prison datasets. It was therefore important to devise alternative methods of linkage.

Such a linkage could be produced however. If persons in the separate systems can be matched across variables that exist in both systems, such as first name, surname and date of birth, then a table linking unique identifiers can be produced. This is achievable provided variables such as first name, surname, data of birth and address exist in both systems (a condition fulfilled in the case of both PULSE and PRIS). Therefore a link can be made between the two systems.

In 2011, the Crime Unit received sample datasets from the Prison Service. At this stage, the objective was to analyse the Prison datasets with a view to establishing data linkage. At this early stage in this process it was established that the PRIS administrative data source had the potential to provide the necessary variables for matching at an individual level. Having



decided on an appropriate data source the Crime Section then established the appropriate variables for matching:

- Demographic variables, such as age, gender and address.
- Supplementary variables, such as offences associated with each individual and nationality.

These would be used for cross-checking purposes.

A manual matching process was then conducted. The Prison Service supplied a sample dataset. The objective was to establish what percentage could be matched to PULSE records.

This process was successful in 98% of cases. As a result a sample dataset existed that combined PRIS and PULSE data. The next step was to test it on a much larger dataset. This involved implementing an automated form of the above matching process.

### 3.4 Matching Algorithm

Having established the possibility of data linkage via a manual matching process, the next step was to automate. This involved developing a data matching algorithm and then the algorithm was employed to match all the individuals released from Prison in 2007 to the Garda PULSE dataset. There were several steps involved in the development and employment of the matching algorithm:

- Exact Matching on first name, surname and date of birth.
- Exact Matching on first name, surname. Dates of birth within 30 days.
- Exact matching on first name, surname, day and year of birth. Different month.
- Exact matching on first name, surname, day and month of birth. Years differ within 5 years.
- Exact matching on first name, surname and year of birth. Day and month of birth reversed.
- Exact matching on first name, date of birth. Matching on first letter of surname.

- Additional matching steps.

For these latter steps, a particularly high degree of manual verification was required. Likewise, for each step, 10-15% of records were also cross-checked manually to verify the accuracy of the matches.

### 3.5 Summary of matching process

In total over 95% of the releases from 2007 were matched across to corresponding PULSE records. This was a sufficiently high percentage (>95% confidence) for the production of official recidivism figures.

### 3.6 Definition of Recidivism

For this study, re-conviction was chosen as the most appropriate and rigorous indicator of recidivism. It has the advantage of being the most commonly used indicator of recidivism within the European context and allows for comparison with similar jurisdictions.

### 3.7 Calculating Reconviction

The current study examines recidivism defined and calculated as described above, amongst the population of prisoners released having completed a custodial sentence in 2007.

There is no agreed international standard for measuring and reporting recidivism. An offender's journey through the criminal justice system can often be a complex one; offenders can appear on numerous occasions. Wartna (2009) highlights the substantial challenges in endeavouring to conduct comparative analysis across different criminal justice systems, not least varying legislation; different recording practices; different sentencing policies and differences in the time periods under observation. These factors must be taken into account when comparing the Irish experience with statistics relating to recidivism rates in other jurisdictions.

Recidivism rates by those convicted of criminal offences are a cause of concern for criminal justice systems across many jurisdictions. In the USA for example, a 15 State study shows that over two-thirds of released prisoners (67.5%) were rearrested, convicted and returned to prison within three years of their release (Langan & Levin, 2002). In contrast, an Australian study indicates that approximately 38% of prisoners return to prison within two years of release. However, this number increases to 45% when other sanctions such as

community service are included in the calculation (SCRG, 2006). During 2010, approximately 650,000 offenders in England and Wales were either cautioned, convicted, received a warning or reprimand from a court, were released from custody or tested positive for opiates or cocaine. Around 170,000 of these offenders committed an offence within one year. This equates to a one year proven recidivism rate of 26.7%. The recording methodology used to compile statistics in England and Wales underlines the difficulty in conducting comparative studies between Ireland and other jurisdictions. In England and Wales proven re-offending is defined as any offence committed in a one year follow-up period and receiving a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning in the one year follow-up. Following this one year period, a further six month waiting period is allowed for cases to progress through the courts (Ministry of Justice, 2012).

In Scotland statistics indicate that of the 53,260 offenders sentenced in 2006/07, 23,419 were reconvicted of another crime within two years. The statistics also show that 72% of offenders sentenced to less than six months were reconvicted within two years of their release, compared with 40% of those given a fine and 42% handed community service.

## 4. Findings

The total population studied was 7,701, of which just under two thirds 4,795 (62.3%) had re-offended within three years. However, there are significant differences in the recidivism rates when considering age, sex and the original offence for which the offender was imprisoned.

Recidivism was higher for males than females and for younger age groups; it also varied significantly by imprisonment offence. Most re-offences occurred within 6 months of release.

### 4.1 Recidivism Rate and Timeframe

Of the 4,795 individuals who re-offended, 3201 did so within the first six months of official release from custody.

Recidivism classified by gender and time of first re- offence						
	Male ( 7,089)		Female (612 )		All Persons ( 7,701 )	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total re-offenders</b>	<b>4,445</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>57.2</b>	<b>4,795</b>	<b>62.3</b>
<b>Time period to first re-offence</b>						
<6 months	2,971	41.9	230	37.6	3,201	41.6
6<12 months	607	8.6	50	8.2	657	8.5
12<18 months	356	5.0	31	5.1	387	5.0
18<24 months	228	3.2	20	3.3	248	3.2
24<36 months	283	4.0	19	3.1	302	3.9

*Table 1: Gender and time frame, post release, within which re-offending occurred*

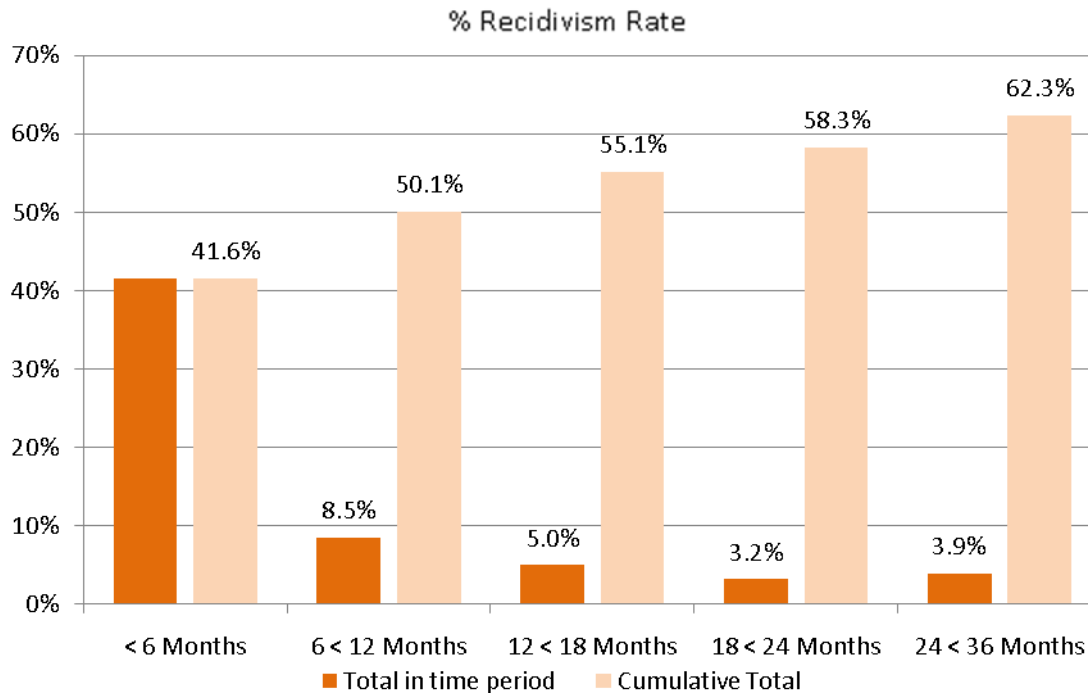


Table 2: Time frame, post release, within which re-offending occurred

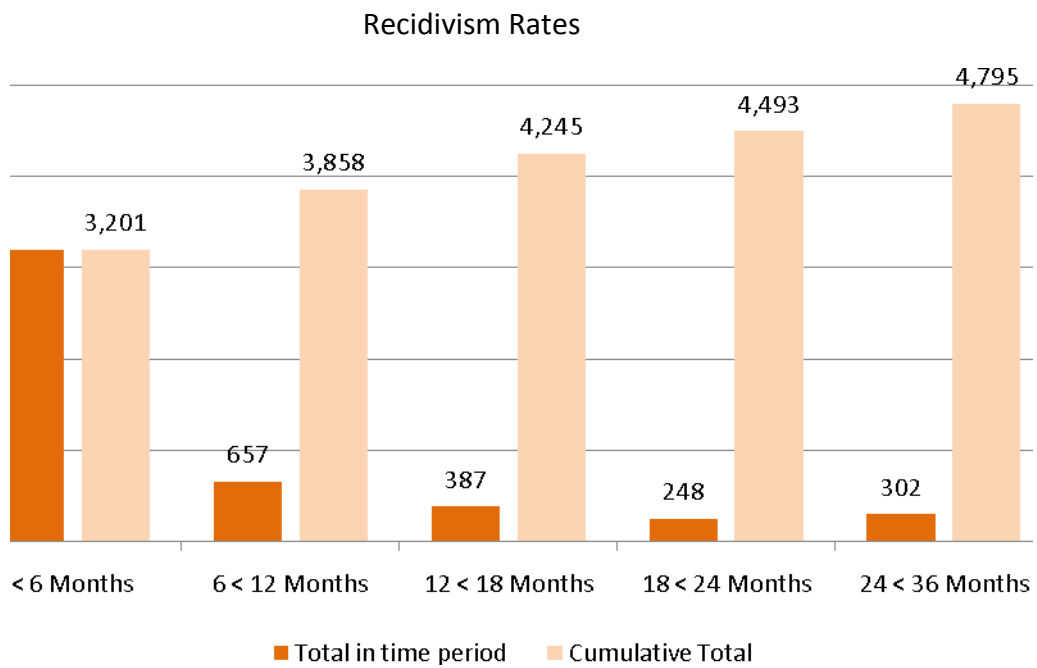


Table 3. Time frame, post release, within which re-offending occurred

**4.2 Gender and Recidivism:** Males represented 92% of the total population studied and had a higher recidivism rate than females.

The population studied was predominantly male; females comprised approximately 8% of the population studied (7,089 males and 612 females). This distribution reflects the much lower rate of offending in the general population amongst females compared with males. Males had a higher rate of recidivism than females. The rate of offending of males was 63% while the rate of female offending was 57%. (See table 4).

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Number that Reoffended within 3 Years</b>	<b>Recidivism %</b>
<b>Male</b>	7,089	4,445	63%
<b>Female</b>	612	350	57%
<b>Total</b>	7,701	4,795	62%

*Table 4. Recidivism by Gender*

**4.3 Age and Recidivism:** The recidivism rate decreased as the offender age increased

Overall, recidivism rates decreased with age. While 68.5% of individuals aged less than 21 years reoffended; the recidivism rate fell to 38.6% for both the 51-60 year age category and the 61 years and older age category (though it is important to note that only 70 individuals were in the latter age group).

More than 85% of the population in this study were aged 40 years or less. The greatest concentrations of persons studied were in the age group 21 to 25 which accounted for 26.2% of the 7,701 studied.

Of those who re-offended, over two thirds were aged 30 years or less (3,207 or 66.8%). As would be expected, there was a progressive reduction in recidivism through the different age groups studied. The most significant reduction in recidivism was seen in the 50+ age group with a drop to 39%.

All persons age group	Population Studied	Number that Reoffended within 3 Years	Recidivism %
<21 years	1,252	857	68.5
21-25	2,017	1,367	68
26-30	1,508	983	65
31-35	1,140	645	57
36-40	725	416	57
41-50	753	409	54
51-60	236	91	39
61 +	70	27	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,701</b>	<b>4,795</b>	<b>62</b>

Table 5. Recidivism by Age

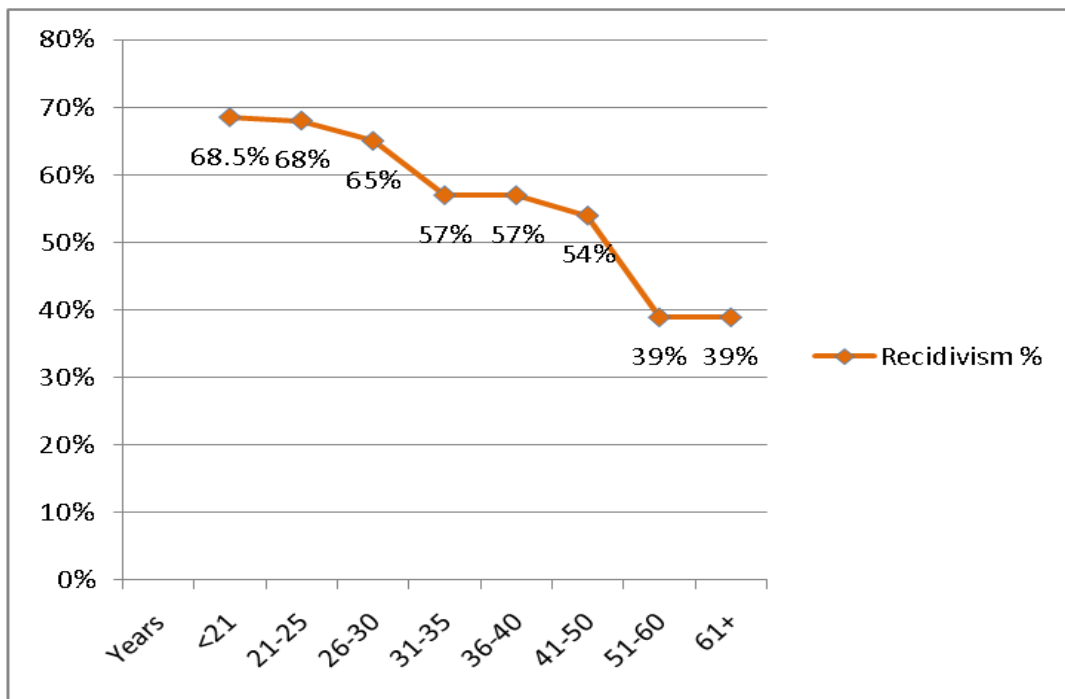


Table 6: Age profile of re-offenders

#### 4.4 Original Offence and Recidivism

	Population Studied	Re-conviction within three years	Recidivism %
<b>01</b> Homicide offences	42	11	26.2
<b>02</b> Sexual offences	108	31	28.7
<b>03</b> Attempts/Threats to Murder, assaults, harassments and related offences	735	465	63.3
<b>04</b> Dangerous or negligent acts	573	307	53.6
<b>05</b> Kidnapping and related offences	17	10	58.8
<b>06</b> Robbery, extortion and hijacking offences	91	63	69.2
<b>07</b> Burglary and related offences	239	190	79.5
<b>08</b> Theft and related offences	1,077	763	70.8
<b>09</b> Fraud, deception and related offences	216	68	31.5
<b>10</b> Controlled drug offences	550	298	54.2
<b>11</b> Weapons and explosives offences	253	176	69.6
<b>12</b> Damage to property and to the environment	428	308	72.0
<b>13</b> Public order and other social code offences	1,359	962	70.8
<b>14</b> Road and traffic offences (NEC)	761	483	63.5
<b>15</b> Offences against Government, justice procedures and organisation of crime	751	442	58.9
<b>16</b> Offences not elsewhere classified	501	218	43.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,701</b>	<b>4,795</b>	<b>62%</b>

*Table 7: Recidivism rate by original offence*

The original offences were divided into 16 sub-categories (See Appendix 1). The classifications of offences are in line with those used by the Garda, Courts Service, Probation Service and CSO. The frequency and recidivism rate for the original offences are detailed in Table 7 above.



- Those released having served a sentence in the Burglary and Related Offences Group, although a relatively small group (239) within the population studied, had the highest recidivism rate at 79.5%.
- The Offence Groups with the lowest rates of recidivism were the Homicide (26.2%) and Sexual Offences (28.2%) groups.
- The most common original offence of the population studied, Public Order Offences, also had a high rate of recidivism at 70.8%.
- Those released having served a sentence in the Theft Offences Group were the second largest group of releases (1,077) and also had a recidivism rate of 70.8%.

Recidivism rates differed by imprisonment offence type. Recidivism rates ranged from 26.2% (Group 01 Homicide Offences), 28.7% (Group 02 Sexual Offences) and 31.5% (Group 09 *Fraud, Deception and Related Offences*), to 79.5% for *Group 07 Burglary and Related Offences* and 72.0% for *Group 12 Damage to property and the environment*.

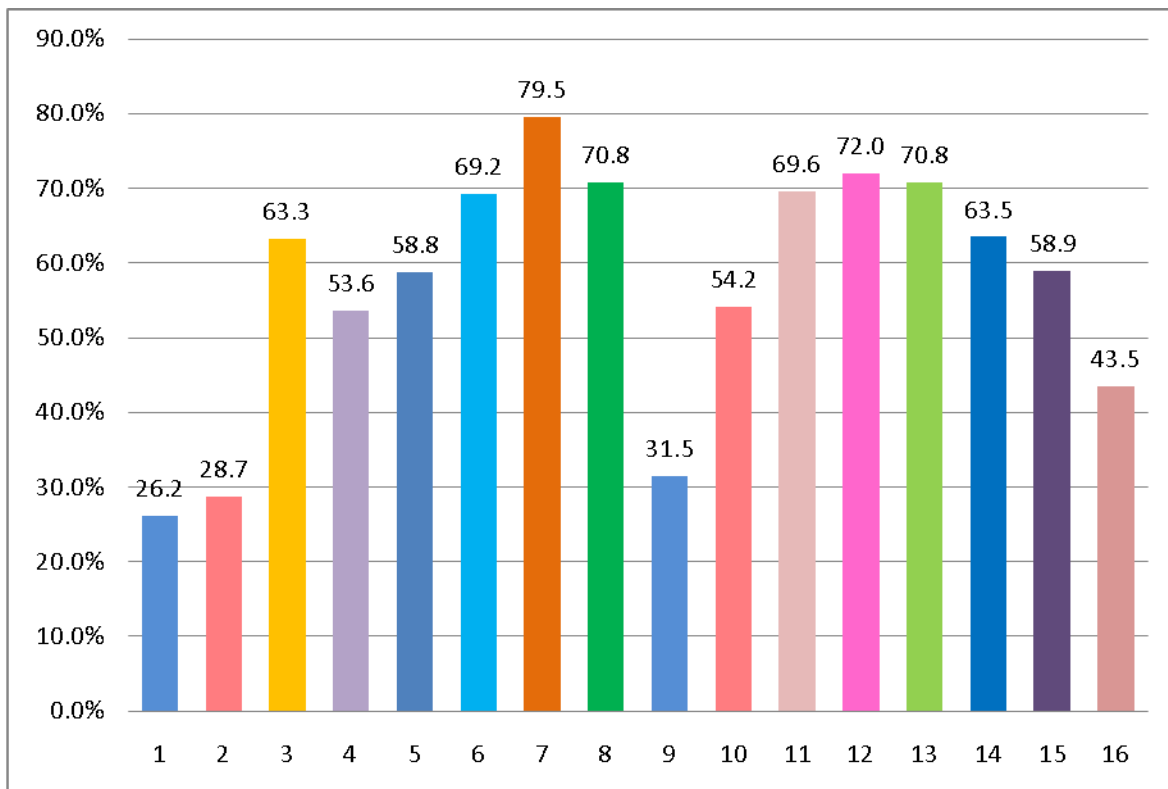


Table 8: Recidivism Percentage Rates by Original Offence Group

#### 4.5 Reconviction Offence

Of the 4,795 reconvicted within 3 years:

- The most common offence group for which offenders were reconvicted was Public Order Offences (1,281 or 27%).
- Almost 27% were reconvicted of the same offence.
- More than 30% of public order offenders committed a further public order offence.
- More than 34% of theft offenders committed a further theft offence.
- More than 20% of drug offenders committed a further drug offence.

**Table 4. Re-offender numbers classified by imprisonment offence group and subsequent re-offence group, 2007**

		Subsequent re-Offence Group																Total re-offenders
		01 Homicide Offences	02 Sexual Offences	03 Attempts / Threats to murder, assaults, harassment and related offences	04 Dangerous or negligent acts	05 Kidnapping and related offences	06 Robbery, extortion and hijacking offences	07 Burglary and related offences	08 Theft and related offences	09 Fraud, deception and related offences	10 Controlled drug offences	11 Weapons and explosives offences	12 Damage to Property and to the environment	13 Public order and other social code offences	14 Road and traffic offences (NEC)	15 Offences against Government, justice procedures and organisation of crime	16 Offences not elsewhere classified	Total re-offenders
		3	7	167	438	3	72	291	856	46	407	110	172	1,281	655	269	18	4,795
		Original Offence Group																
01 Homicide offences		0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	3	1	0	11
02 Sexual offences		0	5	2	4	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	8	4	2	1	31
03 Attempts/Threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences		1	1	47	39	0	5	24	59	5	32	9	24	137	60	22	0	465
04 Dangerous or negligent acts		0	0	10	90	0	1	4	34	0	20	4	6	75	47	14	2	307
05 Kidnapping and related offences		0	0	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	10
06 Robbery, extortion and hijacking offences		0	0	2	6	0	6	4	15	0	4	1	2	9	10	4	0	63
07 Burglary and related offences		0	0	5	11	1	3	57	32	0	11	5	8	34	14	9	0	190
08 Theft and related offences		0	0	12	34	1	21	49	292	12	57	20	13	142	65	42	3	763
09 Fraud, deception and related offences		0	0	1	8	0	2	4	14	14	2	0	0	6	11	3	3	68
10 Controlled drug offences		0	0	9	19	0	4	14	36	1	83	8	5	50	54	13	2	298
11 Weapons and explosives offences		0	1	7	12	0	3	7	28	1	18	18	14	44	10	13	0	176
12 Damage to Property and to the environment		1	0	9	26	0	1	24	53	1	20	3	40	93	26	10	1	308
13 Public order and other social code offences		1	0	36	62	0	12	51	119	4	64	20	37	418	85	51	2	962
14 Road and traffic offences (NEC)		0	0	8	69	0	6	19	54	3	42	6	9	82	163	19	3	483
15 Offences against Government, justice procedures and organisation of crime		0	0	9	34	0	3	25	78	3	28	12	7	120	65	58	0	442
16 Offences not elsewhere classified		0	0	9	18	0	5	8	37	1	24	4	7	59	37	8	1	218

## Discussion

In criminology, measuring recidivism is an established method for examining the effects of penal interventions. The work of the Central Statistics Office, along with the co-operation of criminal justice agencies, has opened up opportunities to do significant recidivism research on custodial and community sanctions in Ireland.

### 4.6 Key findings include:

- Overall recidivism rate of offenders within three years was 62.8 %
- Over 80% of re-offending occurred within 12 months of release
- The recidivism rate decreased as the offender age increased.
- Male offenders represented 92.5% of the total population and had a higher recidivism rate of 63% than female offenders – 57%.
- The most common offence for which offenders were reconvicted was Public Order Offences
- Burglary offenders, while a relatively small group within the study, had the highest rate of recidivism at 79.5%.

### 4.7 Desistance

It is difficult to discuss recidivism without also discussing desistance as current studies indicate that the majority of offenders will have desisted from crime between their mid 20s and early 30s. The term “desistance” refers to an extended period of refraining from further offending. However, there is considerable disagreement among researchers about how long an offender must be crime-free before being considered a “desister”, with some researchers claiming that “true desistance” can be determined with certainty only after offenders die. In most evaluations, a two-year follow-up period is used to differentiate desisters from recidivists.

A number of longitudinal studies in the UK indicate that offending behaviour generally starts in early adolescence, peaks during the late teens and tapers off in young adulthood. Farrington’s Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, conducted with a cohort of 411 men from 1961 to 1981, indicates that the majority of offenders in the study had desisted

from crime by the age of 28, with a peak decrease in offending shown at the age of 23. The findings in Farrington's study correlate with the findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime <sup>1</sup> which found that 14 years of age was the peak age for offending, with a sharp decrease after that. At age 14, 52% of boys had engaged in four or more delinquent acts in the previous 12 months. By age 17, nearly half of these had stopped or sharply reduced their offending. Some longitudinal studies have documented that a small minority of offenders (approximately 5% of the offender population) continue to offend throughout adulthood and are accountable for a disproportionately large number of offences (Healy, 2010). The relationship between age and offending is construed as reflecting underlying changes in biology, social contexts, attitudes and life circumstances that influence offenders' motivation to desist from crime rather than a unitary maturation process (McNeill & Weaver, 2010).

The available literature on desistance indicates that quality social ties formed through employment, marriage or cohabitation and education promotes conformity and desistance from crime. It is a consistent finding in the literature that key life events such as securing suitable employment, acquiring a stable partner and completing education degrees increase the likelihood of desistance from offending by providing structure to offenders' lives and acting as a source of informal monitoring and emotional support (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The same effect has been observed when offenders move away from criminal peers (Farrall, 1995).

## 5. Conclusion

For the majority of those incarcerated, similar criminogenic needs and risks exist, many of which are often interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Lack of employment, abuse of alcohol and drugs, anti-social attitude and companions, emotional and personal difficulties, poor educational achievement, family problems, and lack of housing or accommodation are prominent among them.

Given the complex range of problems many prisoners have, is it reasonable to expect the Irish Prison Service alone to achieve the successful reintegration of prisoners? Is it any more reasonable to expect the criminal justice system to provide solutions to such a multitude of social problems?

If we are to really succeed in reconnecting offenders back to their communities, then we must devise a model which involves a multiplicity of state, community and voluntary

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc/findings/digest12.pdf>

agencies working in partnership on behalf of individual communities to bring about real change in the individual lives of offenders.

If this can be achieved, the challenge then becomes how we can work together with individual offenders to reconnect them back with society and reduce the likelihood of them reoffending.

One of the ways the Irish Prison Service is improving the conditions necessary for resettlement is through greater strategic joined up thinking and coordination with other agencies across the system, particularly the Probation Service.

There is a growing realization within the Service that unless we can adopt a multiagency approach to effectively plan the release of offenders and to then oversee their transition into the community, we will fail in our mission to improve public safety by reducing recidivism.

The recent success of the Community Return Programme bears testimony to the positive benefits which can be derived for prisoners by enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between both Services. Community Return is an incentivised scheme for earned temporary release under which offenders who pose no threat to the community were offered early temporary release in return for supervised community service.

The Irish Prison Service's new Strategic Plan contains a strong commitment to work in close cooperation with the Probation Service in order to successfully achieve the national roll out of this Programme and, to this end; we have co-located staff to jointly manage the project.

This is a new departure for both Services and one which we very much intend to capitalize and build on in order to improve prisoner outcomes.

To compliment our individual Strategic Plans, both Services are currently finalizing a joint Strategic Plan for the coming 3 years. Our joint strategic objective is *"to develop a multiagency approach to offender management from pre to post imprisonment in order to reduce re-offending and improve prisoner outcomes"*.

As part of the joint Prison Service and Probation Service Strategy, it is our intention to pilot a specific reintegration initiative in Cork to increase the availability of support and structured release in the community. This will involve the appointment of a prisoner advocacy worker for Cork prison who will serve as the link between the prison and the community for short term sentenced prisoners and builds on our Cork specific strategy which was published in 2012 (Unlocking Community Alternatives – a Cork Approach).

## 6. Future Direction

In 2012, the Probation Service published its study of persons who had re-offended within two years following the imposition of a Probation Order or Community Service Order. The two studies are not comparable as the Probation study is based on a two year period for re-offending and certain road traffic offences were excluded. However, both studies showed that re-offending was most likely to occur in the first 12 months either after release from prison or the imposition of an alternative sanction.

This study is a first for the Irish Prison Service. It is the starting point and the intention is that the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service, in partnership with the Central Statistics Office, will jointly publish annual recidivism figures.

This will provide a clearer overview of sanctions and their outcomes and will in turn inform both Services and the wider criminal justice agencies in developing interventions and enhancing practice for better outcomes.

Future studies will deal with:

- prisoner population projections based on recorded crime rates and court outcomes data;
- prisoners released from custody on structured release programmes or under supervision.

The Service also intends to conduct comprehensive analysis of the future annual recidivism findings to compare different interventions and programmes and their success rates. This will allow for evidence based judgements about which services are likely to be of benefit to individual offenders.

The prisoner population projections study will be of significant benefit to the Service in planning future capital investment needs. Previous prisoner population projections have had to rely almost entirely on the prison committal figures for the previous years. This project will examine whether the prevailing recorded crime rates coupled with court results data can accurately predict the number of custodial sanctions that are likely to be imposed in future months and years. The project, if successful, will afford the Irish Prison Service some element of advance warning in relation to the number of prisoners it will have to accommodate.

## Appendix I

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