

**State of New Jersey**  
**Juvenile Justice Commission**

**RECIDIVISM AND OUTCOMES REPORT:  
A THREE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP OF YOUTH RELEASED  
IN 2017 AND 2018**

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## Background

This report is the result of a legislative mandate instituted by P.L. 2009, c. 329 (N.J.S.A. 30:4-91.15), as amended by P.L. 2015, c. 144, which requires the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJJ) as well as the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the State Parole Board (SPB) to compile reports that record and examine annual recidivism rates, and to measure the effectiveness of the State's reentry initiatives and programs. Previously, the DOC took the lead on publishing a joint report for all three agencies. Beginning with the present report, our agencies collectively agreed to issue separate reports. This report therefore focuses solely on youth released from JJJ facilities in 2017 and 2018 (it does not include results for adults released from DOC facilities).

## About the Juvenile Justice Commission

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJJ) was established in 1995 to serve as the single agency of State government with centralized authority for planning, policy development, and provision of services in the juvenile justice system. The JJJ is committed to leading the ongoing reform of the youth justice system, implementing and promoting policies and practices that improve outcomes for young people involved with the justice system, their families, and their communities, and advancing race equity and eliminating racial disparities in the administration of justice.

The JJJ's three primary responsibilities are providing care, custody, and rehabilitative services to youth committed to the agency by the courts, supervising and coordinating services for youth released from custody on parole, and supporting local efforts to provide prevention and early intervention services to at-risk and court-involved youth. Across a continuum of care, which includes secure care facilities, residential community homes, and community-based parole and transitional services, the JJJ provides programming, support, and opportunities designed to help youth grow and thrive and to become independent, productive, and law-abiding community member.

More specifically, as a partner with communities and County Youth Services Commissions, the JJJ works to identify and address specific issues faced by at-risk and justice-involved youth. The JJJ awards millions of dollars in state, federal, and private funding each year to communities, allowing them to implement programs and services that help youth grow into successful adults. The vast majority of justice-involved youth receive the necessary interventions and support in their communities and never enter a JJJ facility.

For those youth who, as a matter of community safety, require out-of-home placement with the JJJ, a comprehensive classification process, which involves in-depth evaluations and assessments, determines each resident's placement in the JJJ's continuum of secure-care facilities and residential community homes as well as the rehabilitative services each young person receives. Medical needs, education level, mental health diagnoses, history of substance abuse, suicide risk level, gang affiliation, and personal strengths and interests are also examined and used to guide the specific services and opportunities provided to youth. Routine case action

planning and reclassification reviews assess progress and inform whether adjustments to placement and programming are warranted.

The JJC also provides parole supervision and reentry planning for youth, striving to help youth stay on track after they return home. Each youth leaves the JJC with a structured community transition plan that includes goals, services, and a monitoring and support schedule. JJC parole staff support youth as they follow their plans, and help youth reconnect with their community through education, work, and mentoring.

The JJC has additional significant responsibilities which include partnering with counties in implementing youth justice reforms designed to improve outcomes for young people and communities; establishing standards for county youth detention facilities and monitoring compliance; overseeing the implementation of education programs in county detention facilities; and in partnership with the Governor’s Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Committee, monitoring compliance with the core requirements of the federal JJDP Act.

### Summary of Recidivism Findings

The present report considers youth released from a JJC secure facility or residential community home in 2017 and 2018 and follows each youth for a full three years after release. The three primary measures of recidivism considered by the JJC address three distinct questions:

- 1) Do released youth have a subsequent delinquency court filing or adult arrest for a new offense?
- 2) Do released youth have a subsequent adjudication or conviction for a new offense?
- 3) Do released youth experience a subsequent commitment to the JJC or to the New Jersey Department of Corrections for a new offense?

Note that the average age at release for youth considered in this analysis was 18.4 years. As a result, and as suggested by the three questions noted above, the analysis considers both juvenile and adult records to assess recidivism. Recidivism within three years for each of the three measures for 2017 and 2018 follow:

Release Year	Court Filing/Arrest	Adjudication/Conviction	Commitment
2017	87.3%	64.8%	30.7%
2018	74.0%	49.4%	24.2%

Notably, recidivism on each measure dropped from 2017 to 2018. The recidivism rates do, however, underscore the challenge the JJC faces in working to address the complex, multi-faceted issues presented by the young people in our care. While far fewer youth are committed to the JJC as a result of the extraordinary work of reform efforts such as the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, the young people in the JJC population are now significantly older; have committed more serious community harm and therefore face longer terms of commitment, including youth convicted and sentenced as adults; are more heavily gang involved; and are more

often dealing with complex service needs, including complex trauma. Additional context for the recidivism rates and the corresponding challenges faced by JJC youth are detailed throughout this report.

The JJC is committed to continuing to innovate and grow as an agency in response to the needs presented by this changing youth justice landscape. In just the past couple of years, the JJC has expanded services and opportunities provided to young people. These efforts include, for example, expanding the number of college courses offered; implementing new career training opportunities, including programs in entrepreneurship and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC); implementing intensive healing circles in partnership with the Inside Circle Foundation; expanding employment opportunities, including a program to hire former JJC residents as youth worker trainees; launching new housing programs for released youth; and engaging with a consortium of community-based providers to bring a wide array of prosocial activities to youth to expand their interests and connect them with positive mentors. The JJC has put in place additional data collection mechanisms that will allow our agency to assess the impact of these and other interventions in the future, beginning with the cohort of youth released in 2020. The work undoubtedly continues, but the JJC will continue to rise to the challenge as we strive on an ongoing basis to improve outcomes for youth, families, and communities.

## METHODOLOGY

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This report examines recidivism for youth released from the JJC in 2017 (n=244)<sup>1</sup> and 2018 (n=265). While there are various ways to define recidivism, the three primary measures of recidivism evaluated by the JJC, which are consistent with the work of the National Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA), address three distinct questions:

- 1) Do released youth have a subsequent **delinquency court filing or adult arrest** for a new offense?
- 2) Do released youth have a subsequent **adjudication or conviction** for a new offense?
- 3) Do released youth experience a subsequent **commitment** to the JJC or to the New Jersey Department of Corrections for a new offense?

Because the average age at release for youth in the study was 18.4 years, the analysis considered both juvenile and adult records when measuring recidivism. The date recorded for the recidivism event was the date most closely representing when the released youth committed/allegedly committed the new offense. The analysis used this new offense date to determine whether a given recidivism event occurred within 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 months of release.

The JJC's Information Technology Unit provided a datafile extracted from the JJC's Juvenile Information Management System (JIMS) listing all youth released from JJC custody in 2017 and 2018. This datafile also contained additional data points including demographic and offense information. For each released youth, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) then provided recidivism-related data from its Family Automated Case Tracking System data. JJC staff also consulted the State Police Criminal Case History database to acquire additional recidivism-related data for each released youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report, "n" refers to the raw number/total count of cases.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASED YOUTH

## Youth Demographics

Table 1 describes the demographics of youth released from custody in 2017, 2018, and for the combined group. For the combined cohort of youth released in 2017 and 2018 (N=509), Table 1 indicates that the majority were male (93.1%) and youth of color (89.2%). The average age of youth released during the two-year period was 18.4, with the majority of youth falling in the age range of 18-20 years (53.0%). Overall, 49.1% of youth released in the two-year period resided in one of New Jersey’s most densely populated, or “Urban 15” municipalities.<sup>2</sup> Finally, youth released during the two-year period were most commonly from Camden County (21.6%), followed by Mercer County (14.5%).

**TABLE 1. YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS**

	2017		2018		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	227	93.0%	247	93.2%	474	93.1%
Female	17	7.0%	18	6.8%	35	6.9%
<b>Race</b>						
Black	169	69.3%	177	66.8%	346	68.0%
Hispanic	55	22.5%	51	19.2%	106	20.8%
White	18	7.4%	37	14.0%	55	10.8%
Other Race	2	.8%	-	-	2	.4%
<b>Age at Release</b>						
14 and under	1	.4%	3	1.1%	4	.8%
15-17	105	43.4%	103	38.9%	209	41.1%
18-20	124	51.2%	145	54.7%	270	53.0%
21 and over	12	5.0%	14	5.3%	26	5.1%
Mean	18.2		18.5		18.4	
Range	13-28		14-27		13-28	
<b>Resides in Urban 15</b>						
Yes	127	52.0%	123	46.4%	250	49.1%
No	117	48.0%	142	53.6%	259	50.9%
<b>Top 5 Committing Counties</b>						
Camden	55	22.5%	55	20.8%	110	21.6%
Mercer	32	13.1%	42	15.8%	74	14.5%
Essex	22	9.0%	28	10.6%	50	9.8%
Passaic	17	7.0%	23	8.7%	40	7.9%
Union	24	9.8%	14	5.3%	38	7.5%

<sup>2</sup> The Urban 15 Cities are as follows: Bayonne, Camden, Clifton, East Orange, Elizabeth, Hoboken, Jersey City, Newark, New Brunswick, Passaic, Paterson, Trenton, Union City, Vineland, and West New York.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASED YOUTH

### Offense and Commitment History of Youth

As described in Table 2, most youth released during the two-year period had been committed to the custody of the JJC by the Family Part of the Superior Court (62.5%). An additional 1.4% were “waived” youth, who were tried, convicted, and sentenced by the Criminal Part of the Superior Court. Finally, 36.1% had been court-ordered to attend and complete a JJC residential community home as a condition of probation.

**TABLE 2. OFFENSE AND COMMITMENT HISTORY OF YOUTH**

	2017		2018		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Court Status</b>						
Waived	3	1.2%	4	1.5%	7	1.4%
Committed	154	63.1%	164	61.9%	318	*62.5%
Probation	87	35.7%	97	36.6%	184	36.1%
<b>Release Location</b>						
Secure Facility	86	35.2%	94	35.5%	180	35.4%
Residential Community Home	158	64.8%	171	64.5%	329	*64.6%
<b>Committing Offense Type</b>						
Offense Against the Person <sup>3</sup>	97	39.8%	121	45.7%	218	*42.8%
Weapons	36	14.8%	29	10.9%	65	12.8%
Drug	14	5.7%	14	5.3%	28	5.5%
Property	28	11.5%	21	7.9%	49	9.6%
Public Order <sup>4</sup>	15	6.1%	17	6.4%	32	6.3%
Violation of Probation (VOP)	54	22.1%	63	23.8%	117	23.0%
<b>Committing Offense Degree</b>						
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	46	18.9%	53	20.0%	99	19.4%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree	66	27.0%	78	29.4%	144	*28.3%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Degree	47	19.3%	51	19.2%	98	19.3%
4 <sup>th</sup> Degree	23	9.4%	10	3.8%	33	6.5%
DP/PDP	8	3.3%	10	3.8%	18	3.5%
Violation of Probation (VOP)	54	22.1%	63	23.8%	117	23.0%
<b># of Adjudications</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>
Total Adjudications in History	6.54	1-28	5.92	1-20	6.22	1-28

\*Indicates the highest percentage in each category

Table 2 also indicates that for youth released during the two-year period, 35.4% were released from a JJC secure facility, while 64.6% were released from a JJC residential community home. Offenses against the person (42.8%) were the most prevalent offense type for which youth had been originally placed with the JJC, followed by violations of probation (VOP, 23.0%). Regarding

<sup>3</sup> Offenses against the person include, for example, homicide, assault, terroristic threats, sexual offenses, robbery, carjacking, and kidnapping.

<sup>4</sup> Public order offenses include, for example, disorderly conduct, riot, false public alarm, and obstruction of justice.

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASED YOUTH

offense degree, most commonly youth had been placed with the JJC on a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree offense (28.3%), followed by violations of probation (23.0%). Finally, at the time of JJC admission, youth had an average of 6.22 total adjudications in their court history.

### Additional Descriptors

Table 3 provides some additional, descriptive information regarding youth released from JJC custody. For youth released over the two-year period, 36.8% had a high school degree or equivalent, while 63.2% had not yet graduated high school.<sup>5</sup> Notably, upon entering the JJC, 7.7% (39) of the youth had a high school degree or equivalent, but upon departing the JJC, that figure had increased to 36.8% (187). Additionally, just under half of youth (43.0%) released in the two-year period had a reported history of gang involvement and 57.0% had no reported gang activity.

TABLE 3. ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTORS

	2017		2018		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Education Level</b>						
HS Degree/Equivalent	84	34.6%	103	38.9%	187	36.8%
Non-Graduate	159	65.4%	162	61.1%	321	63.2%
<b>Gang Involvement</b>						
Yes	106	43.4%	113	42.6%	219	43.0%
No	138	56.6%	152	57.4%	290	57.0%

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<sup>5</sup> The average age of youth released from JJC without a high school degree was 17.8, i.e., the younger age accounts for why they had not yet graduated from high school.

# RECIDIVISM RATES

For each of the three measures of recidivism, the JJC evaluated recidivism within 3, 6, 12, 24, and 36 months, as well as the average length of time to the recidivism event, in days.

## **New Court Filings/Arrests**

As indicated in Figure 1, the prevalence of recidivism, as measured by an offense leading to a new court filing/arrest, increased over time through the three-year period. Within one year of release, 61.1% of youth released during the 2017-2018 period recidivated with a new court filing/arrest. At two years following release, recidivism rates had increased to 74.5%, and by three years after release, to 80.4%. Notably, however, the three-year recidivism rate for new court filings/arrests decreased between 2017 and 2018, from 87.3% to 74.0%. The average number of days between release and the new offense for youth experiencing a new court filing/arrest was 253 days.

## **New Adjudications/Convictions**

The prevalence of recidivism, as measured by an offense leading to a new adjudication/conviction, also increased over the three-year period, as illustrated in Figure 2. Within one year following release, 45.4% of youth released during the two-year period recidivated with a new adjudication/conviction. By two years, the new adjudication/conviction rate rose to 55.4%, and again to 56.8% by three years post-release. But as with court filings/arrests, the three-year recidivism rate for new adjudications/convictions decreased markedly between 2017 and 2018, from 64.8% to 49.4%. The average number of days between release and the new offense for youth experiencing a new adjudication/conviction was 223 days.

## **New Commitments**

As summarized in Figure 3, recidivism rates, as measured by an offense leading to a new commitment, also rose over the course of the three-year follow-up period, but to a lesser extent. Within one year after release, 22.2% of youth recidivated with a new offense leading to a new commitment. By two years post-release, the rate had increased to 26.5%, and by the three years post-release, it had increased slightly to 27.3%. The average number of days between arrest and an event that led to a new commitment was 220 days.

Figure 1. New Court Filings/Arrests

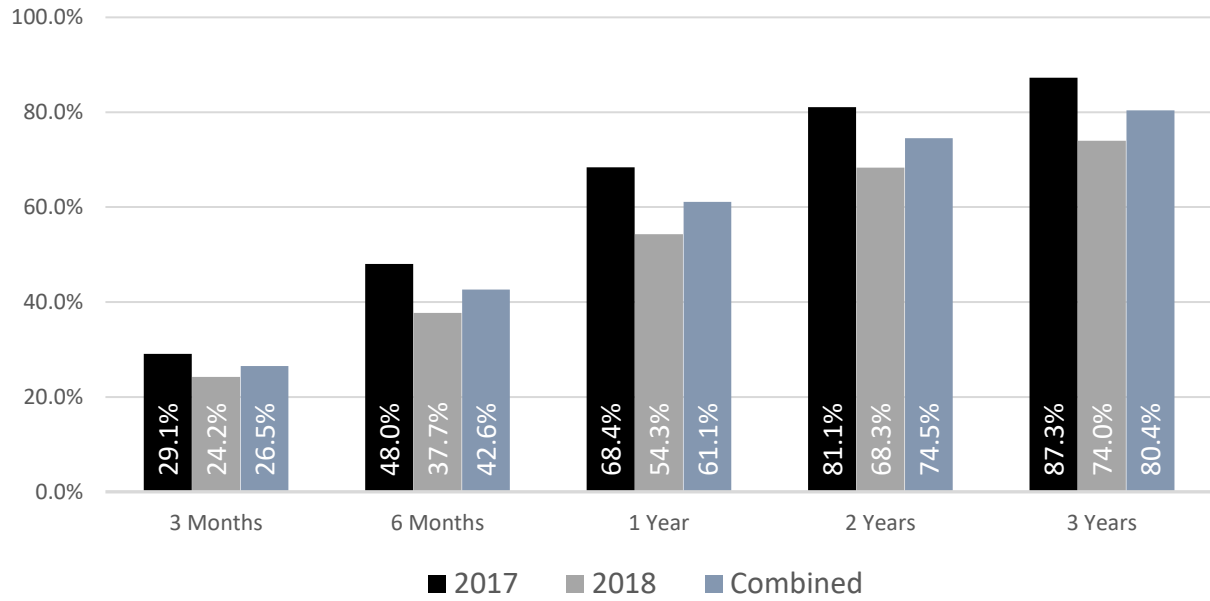
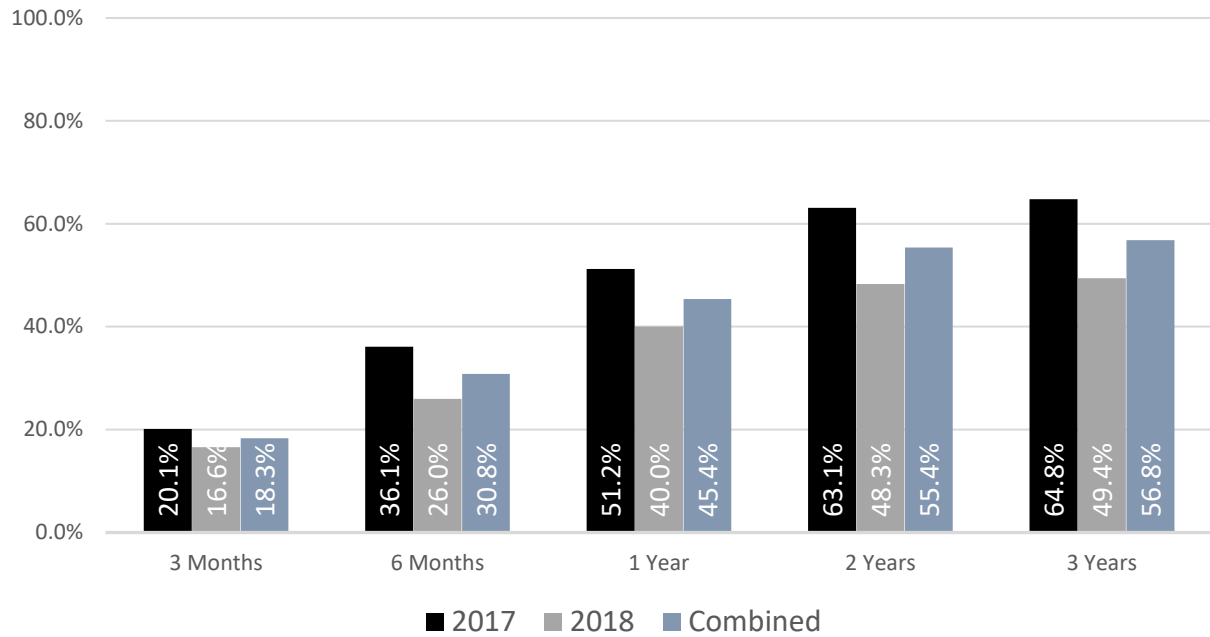
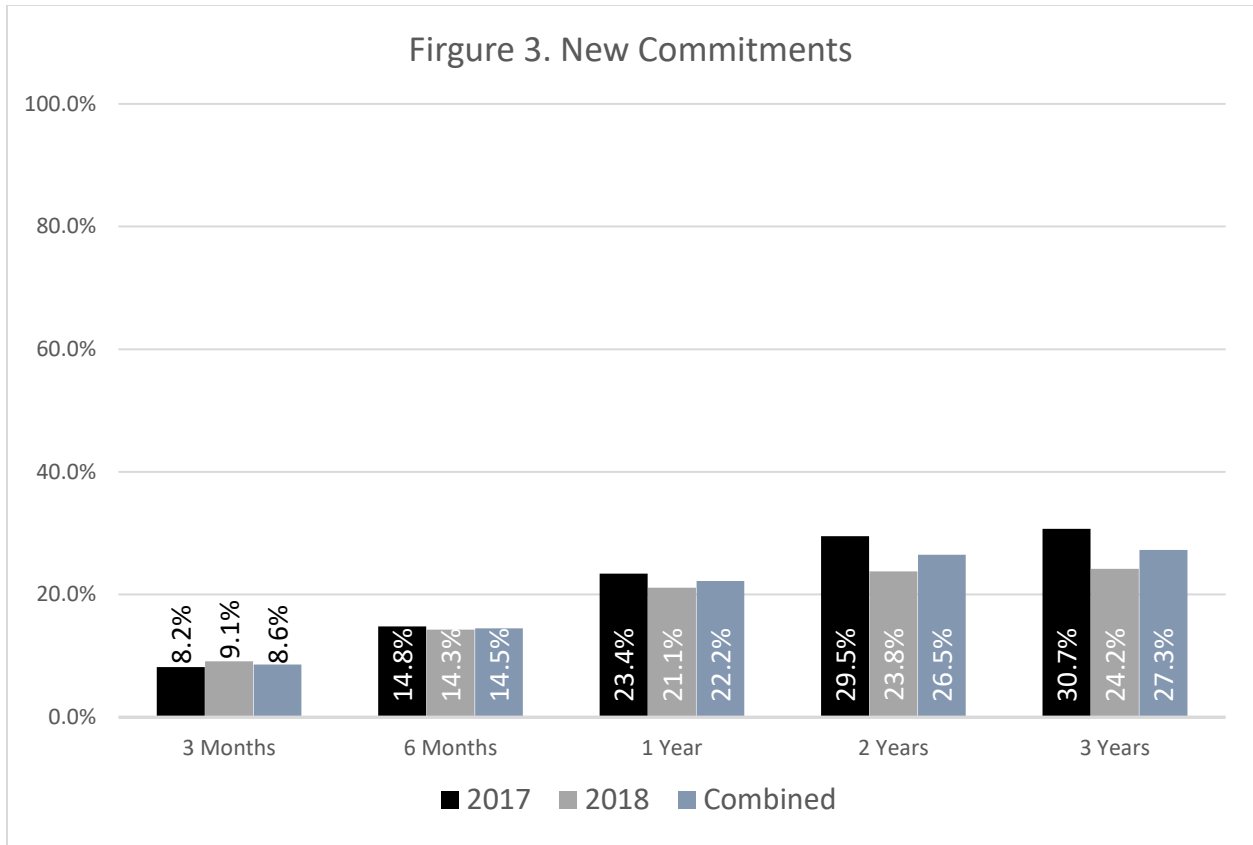


Figure 2. New Adjudications/Convictions





**Trends in Recidivism: Three Years Post-Release**

Table 4 shows multi-year trends for the three measures of recidivism at three years post-release. It is important to note that over time, as the result of substantial progress toward youth justice reform in New Jersey, the number of youths placed with the JJC has decreased substantially. Youth charged with lesser offenses and who have more limited court histories are now being successfully served in the community. While far fewer youth are placed with the JJC, the young people who are committed to the JJC today tend to be older, have committed more serious community harm and face longer sentences (including youth sentenced as adults), have been convicted of multiple offenses over time, are gang involved, and are more often dealing with complex service needs. These factors tend to be those that put youth at a greater risk for reoffending.

Importantly, however, despite JJC youth presenting with more significant risk factors over time, Table 4 indicates that recidivism rates have in fact been generally decreasing over time. For example, for youth released in 2018, 74.0% experienced a new court filing/arrest, down from 85.0% in 2008. Similarly, 49.4% of released youth experienced a new adjudication/conviction within three years, down from 73.3% in 2008. Finally, 24.2% of released youth experienced a new commitment within three years, down from 38.7% in 2008.

**TABLE 4. TRENDS IN JUVENILE RECIDIVISM, 2008 TO 2018: THREE YEARS POST-RELEASE**

Release Year	New Court Filing/ Arrest	New Adjudication/ Conviction	New Commitment
2008	85.0%	73.3%	38.7%
2009	84.8%	73.4%	34.7%
2010	86.1%	71.6%	36.9%
2011	84.0%	71.9%	32.4%
2012	78.9%	67.7%	33.1%
2013	78.9%	67.6%	30.2%
2014	76.9%	58.9%	23.9%
2015	78.0%	61.3%	28.0%
2016	72.2%	58.3%	29.2%
2017	87.3%	64.8%	30.7%
2018	74.0%	49.4%	24.2%

**Differences in Recidivism Across Youth Characteristics: Three Years Post-Release**

The analyses that follow describe differences in recidivism across various youth characteristics/circumstances and across different programmatic interventions. The analyses focus on recidivism within three years of release. Additionally, given the small number of cases in any given subcategory under consideration in each individual year, the analyses focus on the combined population of youth released over the two-year period of 2017-2018 in order to assist

in detecting whether any meaningful or statistically significant<sup>6</sup> relationships exist between particular characteristics, circumstances, or interventions and recidivism.

**Youth Demographics**

*Gender.* As described in Table 5, for youth released in the two-year period 2017-2018, males were more likely to recidivate than females. Within three years of release, the recidivism rate for males was higher for new court filings/arrests (81.9% vs. 60.0%),<sup>7</sup> for new adjudications/convictions (59.3% vs. 22.9%),<sup>8</sup> and for new commitments (29.3% vs. 0.0%).<sup>9</sup>

**TABLE 5. RECIDIVISM ACROSS YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS**

	New Court Filings/ Arrests	New Adjudications/ Convictions	New Commitments
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	81.9%	59.3%	29.3%
Female	60.0%	22.9%	0.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
Black	87.3%	65.3%	32.1%
Hispanic	67.0%	36.8%	19.8%
White	61.8%	40.0%	12.7%
Other Race	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Youth of Color*	82.6%	58.8%	29.1%
<b>Resides in Urban 15</b>			
Yes	86.8%	63.6%	29.6%
No	74.1%	50.2%	25.1%
* The combination of races/ethnicities excluding White			

*Race/ethnicity.* Regarding race/ethnicity, as described in Table 5, youth identified as an “other” race/ethnicity were the most likely to have a new court filing/arrest (100%, n=2), followed by Black youth (87.3%, n=302), Hispanic youth (67.0%, n=71), and White youth (61.8%, n=34).<sup>10</sup> Youth identified as an “other” race/ethnicity were also most likely to have a new adjudication/conviction (100%, n=2), followed by Black youth (65.3%, n=226), White youth (40.0%, n=22), and Hispanic youth (36.8%, n=39).<sup>11</sup> Finally, Black youth were most likely to experience a new commitment (32.1%, n=111), followed by Hispanic youth (19.8%, n=21), White youth (12.7%, n=7), and youth of “other” races/ethnicities (0%).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In simple terms, statistical significance means it is very unlikely that observed differences between groups can be explained by chance alone. Throughout the report, a result is determined to be statistically significant when the p value, or probability value, is .05 or less.

<sup>7</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=9.863$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.002$ .

<sup>8</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=17.622$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>9</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=14.120$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>10</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=34.990$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.000$ .

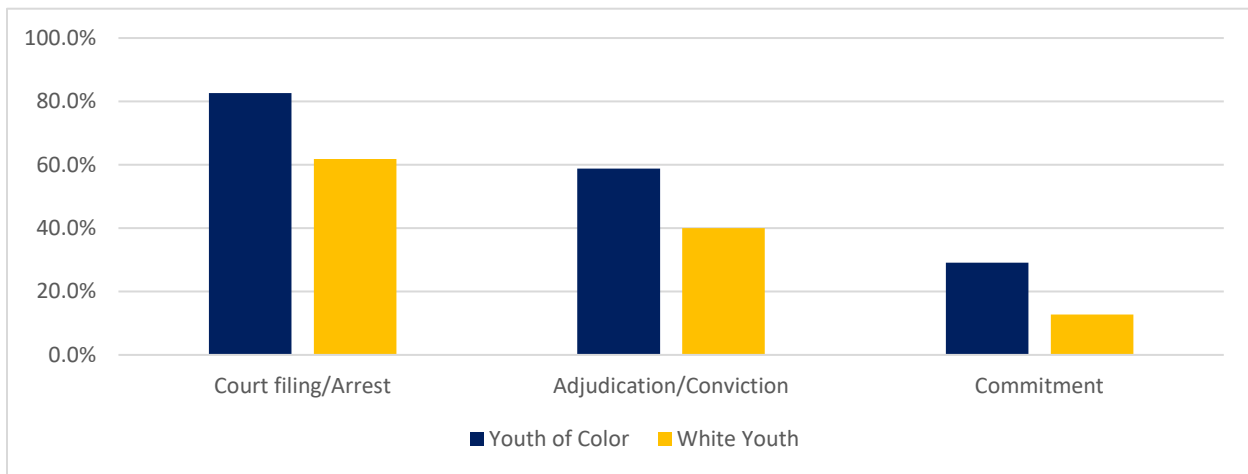
<sup>11</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=35.366$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>12</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=13.613$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.003$ .



A dichotomous race/ethnicity variable was created in order to consider recidivism results for Youth of Color collectively as compared to White youth. As described in Table 5 and Figure 4, Youth of Color were more likely to experience a new court filing/arrest as compared to White youth (82.6% vs. 61.8%, n=375 vs. n=34),<sup>13</sup> a new adjudication/conviction (58.8% vs. 40.0%, n=267 vs. n=22),<sup>14</sup> and a new commitment (29.1% vs. 12.7%, n=132 vs. n=7).<sup>15</sup>

FIGURE 4. THREE-YEAR RECIDIVISM RATES FOR YOUTH OF COLOR VS. WHITE YOUTH



*Municipality of Residence.* As indicated above in Table 5, youth residing in the major urban 15 areas were more likely to experience a new court filing/arrest (86.8% vs. 74.1%, n=217 vs. n=192),<sup>16</sup> a new adjudication/conviction (63.6% vs. 50.2%, n=159 vs. n=130),<sup>17</sup> and a new commitment (29.6% vs. 25.1%, n=74 vs. n=65),<sup>18</sup> as compared to youth residing in other areas.

<sup>13</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=13.420$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>14</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=7.073$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.008$ .

<sup>15</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=6.604$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.010$ .

<sup>16</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=12.933$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>17</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=9.317$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.002$ .

<sup>18</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $X^2=1.300$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.254$ .

**Youth Offense/Commitment History and Gang Involvement**

**TABLE 6. RECIDIVISM ACROSS OFFENSE/COMMITMENT HISTORY & GANG INVOLVEMENT**

	<b>New Court Filings/ Arrests</b>	<b>New Adjudications/ Convictions</b>	<b>New Commitments</b>
<b>Committing Offense Type</b>			
Drug	92.9%	78.6%	28.6%
Weapons	90.8%	70.8%	29.2%
Property	89.8%	69.4%	22.4%
Public Order	81.3%	59.4%	37.5%
Violation of Probation (VOP)	80.3%	52.1%	29.9%
Offense against the Person	73.4%	49.1%	24.8%
<b>Committing Offense Degree</b>			
1 <sup>st</sup> degree	68.7%	47.5%	26.3%
2 <sup>nd</sup> degree	81.3%	54.9%	23.6%
3 <sup>rd</sup> degree	86.7%	70.4%	31.6%
4 <sup>th</sup> degree	90.9%	66.7%	27.3%
DP/PDP	83.3%	61.1%	22.2%
Violation of Probation (VOP)	80.3%	52.1%	29.9%
<b>Gang Involvement</b>			
No Gang Involvement	75.9%	49.7%	21.7%
Yes Gang Involvement	86.3%	66.2%	34.7%
<b>Total Adjudications</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Recidivists	6.68	7.02	6.78
Non-Recidivists	4.31	5.16	6.01

*Committing Offense Type.* As described in Table 6, youth released during 2017-2018 who were placed with the JJC for drug offenses were most likely to have a new court filing/arrest within three years of release (92.9%), followed by weapons offenses (90.8%), property offenses (89.8%), public order offenses (81.3%), VOPs (80.3%), and offenses against the person (73.4%).<sup>19</sup> For new adjudications/convictions, youth placed with the JJC for drug offenses were most likely to recidivate (78.6%), followed by weapons offenses (70.8%), property offenses (69.4%), public order offenses (59.4%), VOPs (52.1%), and offenses against the person (49.1%).<sup>20</sup> Lastly, in terms of new commitments within three years, youth with public order offenses were most likely to recidivate (37.5%), followed by VOPs (29.9%), weapons offenses (29.2%), drug offenses (28.6%), offenses against the person (24.8%), and property offenses (22.4%).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=16.711$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.005$ .

<sup>20</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=20.154$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.001$ .

<sup>21</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $X^2=3.508$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.622$ .

*Committing Offense Degree.* Table 6 indicates that for new court filings/arrests, youth placed with the JJC for 4<sup>th</sup> degree offenses were most likely to recidivate (90.9%), followed by 3<sup>rd</sup> degree offenses (86.7%), DP/PDP offenses (83.3%), 2<sup>nd</sup> degree offenses (81.3%), VOPs (80.3%), and 1<sup>st</sup> degree offenses (68.7%).<sup>22</sup> Youth placed with the JJC on 3<sup>rd</sup> degree offenses were most likely to receive a new adjudication/commitment (70.4%), followed by 4<sup>th</sup> degree offenses (66.7%), DP/PDP offenses (61.1%), 2<sup>nd</sup> degree offenses (54.9%), VOPs (52.1%), and 1<sup>st</sup> degree offenses (47.5%).<sup>23</sup> For new commitments, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree offenses had the highest rate of recidivism at 31.6%, followed by VOPs (29.9%), 4<sup>th</sup> degree offenses (27.3%), 1<sup>st</sup> degree offenses (26.3%), 2<sup>nd</sup> degree offenses (23.6%), and DP/PDP offenses (22.2%).<sup>24</sup>

*Gang Involvement.* As noted in Table 6, youth with gang involvement were more likely to experience a new court filing/arrest within three years as compared to youth with no gang affiliation (86.3% vs. 75.9%).<sup>25</sup> There were higher rates of new adjudications/convictions among youth with gang involvement compared to youth with no gang involvement (66.2% vs. 49.7%).<sup>26</sup> And finally, youth with gang involvement were more likely to have a new commitment compared to youth with no gang involvement (34.7% vs. 21.7%).<sup>27</sup>

*Number of Adjudications.* Table 6 also indicates that youth who recidivate had longer court histories at the time of placement with the JJC than youth who did not recidivate. Specifically, the average number of adjudications at the time of placement with the JJC for youth who experienced a new court filing/arrest was higher than for those who did not (6.7 vs. 4.3).<sup>28</sup> The same was true for youth who experienced new adjudications/convictions (7.0 vs. 5.2)<sup>29</sup> and new commitments (6.8 vs. 6.0).<sup>30</sup>

### **Additional Factors**

Several additional characteristics of released youth were examined, with a primary focus on their relationship with new court filings/arrests within three years. For these additional variables, data are collected either exclusively or largely for committed and waived youth, who comprised 63.9% of the youth released in 2017-2018, rather than on youth placed with the JJC as a condition of probation. As a result, the findings are relevant largely for the JJC's committed and waived population, except where otherwise noted.

<sup>22</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=13.567$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.019$ .

<sup>23</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=13.606$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.018$ .

<sup>24</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $X^2=2.604$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=.761$ .

<sup>25</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=8.613$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.003$ .

<sup>26</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=13.934$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>27</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=10.588$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.001$ .

<sup>28</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=31.086$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>29</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=29.469$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>30</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=3.891$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.049$ .

TABLE 7. DIFFERENCES IN NEW COURT FILINGS/ARRESTS ACROSS ADDITIONAL FACTORS

Education Level	% with a New Court Filing/Arrest
HS Degree/Equivalent	73.8%
Non-Graduate	84.2%
Education/Vocation Needs Score	Mean
Recidivists	4.17
Non-Recidivists	3.51
Substance Abuse Needs Score	Mean
Recidivists	6.35
Non-Recidivists	5.47
Peers/Role Models Needs Score	Mean
Recidivists	4.88
Non-Recidivists	4.17
Attitudes/Behaviors Needs Score	Mean
Recidivists	4.16
Non-Recidivists	3.17
Psychological/Mental Health Needs Score	Mean
Recidivists	2.44
Non-Recidivists	2.91

*Education Level.* For youth without a high school diploma or equivalent, the JJC provides a full, year-round academic program aligned to Core Curriculum Content Standards of the Department of Education. Youth that exited the JJC with a high school diploma were less likely to have a new court filing/arrest within three years (73.8 vs. 84.4%, n=138 vs. n=271).<sup>31</sup>

*Comprehensive Informational Assessment (CIA) Needs Area Scores.* The CIA is used to determine levels of need on eight separate life domains. The domains include family/household; educational/vocational; substance abuse; peers/role models; attitudes/behaviors; use of time/leisure activity; medical/physical health; and psychological/mental health. The analysis considered the relationship between all of these needs areas and recidivism, as measured by new court filings/arrests within three years.

Recidivists were found to have statistically significant higher scores than non-recidivists in the following areas: education/vocation, 4.17 vs. 3.51,<sup>32</sup> substance abuse, 6.35 vs. 5.47,<sup>33</sup> peers/role models, 4.79 vs. 3.74,<sup>34</sup> and attitudes/behaviors, 4.16 vs. 3.17.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, recidivists were found to have statistically significant lower scores than non-recidivists in the area of

<sup>31</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=8.505$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.004$ .

<sup>32</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=12.021$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.001$ .

<sup>33</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=4.597$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.033$ .

<sup>34</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=273.843$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ .

<sup>35</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=10.889$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.001$ .

psychological/mental health, 2.44 vs. 2.91.<sup>36</sup> The areas that were not significant in either direction for the combined cohort were family/household, use of time/leisure, and medical/physical health.

*Initial Classification & Custody Document (ICCD) Scores.* The ICCD guides placement decisions for committed and waived youth and serves as a broad measure of prior delinquency and placement history. The analysis considered the relationship between ICCD scores and recidivism, as measured by new court filings/arrests within three years. The average ICCD score for recidivists was 13.30, higher than that of non-recidivists (11.86).<sup>37</sup>

*Type of Facility.* This analysis compared recidivism across residential and secure care settings in a more in-depth way, again focusing on new court filings/arrests, but considering additional time frames, including time to recidivism. Last year's report contained findings contrary to previous reports, with youth departing residential programs having higher rates of new court filings/arrests within three years, as compared to youth departing secure facilities. This year's findings are similar. Youth departing residential programs had higher recidivism rates compared to youth departing secure facilities (83.3% vs. 75.0%, n=274 vs. n=135).<sup>38</sup> However, youth departing residential programs took longer to recidivate (272 days) than youth departing secure care facilities (214 days).

### Differences in Recidivism Across Rehabilitation & Reentry Programming

Youth involved with the JJC receive the same basic curricula in three common programs. New Freedom is a cognitive-behavioral substance abuse curriculum that works with residents' thinking patterns to affect and redirect future behavior through the stages of change. The Phoenix curriculum is built on a motivational enhancement and cognitive-behavioral model and is specifically targeted toward disentangling youth from gangs. And Aggression Replacement Training (ART) focuses on the underlying philosophy that every act of adolescent aggression, whether in school, at home, or in the community, has both external and internal causes. ART is an evidenced-based cognitive behavioral intervention that consists of three components: anger control, behavioral skills, and moral reasoning.

There are a few key intervention strategies that differ significantly based on each youth's needs and risk factors. This recidivism study examined differences between those who did and those who did not recidivate in terms of several key interventions provided by the JJC. This analysis focused primarily on new court filings/arrests within three years.

*Sex Offender Treatment.* Sex offender specific treatment is provided in both the secure and residential environments for youth clinically assessed as requiring treatment. For the youth released during the two-year period, 7.3% (n=37) of the entire cohort took part in sex offender treatment within the JJC. Of those, 51.4% (n=19) received their treatment in a secure care facility

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<sup>36</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $F=3.981$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.047$ .

<sup>37</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $F=3.113$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.079$ .

<sup>38</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=5.056$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.025$ .

while 48.6% (n=18) received treatment at a residential program. The rate of new court filings/arrests for those in secure care receiving sex offender treatment was 42.1% (n=8), as compared to 22.2% (n=4) for those receiving sex offender treatment in a residential setting.<sup>39</sup>

*Substance Abuse Treatment.* Of the entire 2017-2018 release cohort, 37.5% (n=191) took part in an intensive substance abuse treatment program for at least 30 days, based on a clinical assessment of substance abuse needs. Within that subgroup, 81.2% (n=155) received treatment in a residential program, while 18.8% (n=36) received treatment in a secure care setting. The rate of new court filings/arrests for those receiving most of their intensive substance abuse treatment in a residential setting was 83.2% (n=129), compared to 80.6% (n=29) for those in a secure care setting.<sup>40</sup>

*Transitional Reentry Programs.* Transitional programs are available for both committed and probationer youth (males). Committed youth attend as a condition of their parole, and probationers attend when they have completed a community residential program and have been granted a release date. This transitional setting allows residents to gain responsibility gradually as they prepare to return to their community, in a facility that is closer to their home. The youth receive education in their home school district or at the transitional program, which follows the Core Curriculum Content Standards of the NJ Department of Education. Each youth receives a myriad of other services that are best suited to meet his release plan, including career exploration, health/wellness, life skills, family reunification, and/or planning for independent living. Residents are permitted to visit their homes, schools, religious services, and work sites in accordance with program policies. A resident's stay can range from two weeks to 45 days. Program completion is determined by each resident's behavior, their individual completion of transitional goals, and the recommendation of the transitional team.

When looking at the combined release cohort, 35.4% (n=180) took part in a transitional reentry program. The combined years dataset also shows higher rates of new court filings/arrests for youth who did take part in a transitional program (86.7%, n=156) compared to those that did not (76.9%, n=253).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $X^2=1.668$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.197$ .

<sup>40</sup> These differences were NOT statistically significant.  $X^2=.146$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.703$ .

<sup>41</sup> These differences were statistically significant.  $X^2=7.030$   $df=1$ ,  $p=.008$ .

## CONCLUSION

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This legislatively-mandated report examines recidivism outcomes for a cohort of youth released from the care and custody of the JJC in 2017 and 2018. Each youth was tracked for three full years following release from custody. As described in this report, recidivism rates have been generally decreasing over time. For example, for youth released in 2018, 74.0% experienced a new court filing/arrest, down from 85.0% in 2008. Similarly, 49.4% of released youth experienced a new adjudication/conviction within three years, down from 73.3% in 2008. Finally, 24.2% of released youth experienced a new commitment within three years, down from 38.7% in 2008.

It is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic emerged during the three-year follow-up period for the current cohort. In March of 2020 all schools in the state were ordered to close indefinitely and many school districts had transitioned to remote or hybrid learning for the 2020/2021 school year. Employment was impacted due to stay-at-home orders. During this time, the lack of structure and organization that school and work provides created challenges for many. Youth recently released from a highly structured stay in state custody may have felt the impact even more intensely. However, it will likely take several years to better understand the extent to which the pandemic had an effect on the recidivism rates of JJC youth. And, the precise impact of the pandemic on recidivism may not fully be known, given the myriad other factors that influence an individual's involvement in crime and delinquency.

Additionally, while this report focuses on outcomes for youth released from the JJC's direct care, it is important to note the JJC serves many different groups of youth annually, including youth served through its Office of Local Programs and Services. The Office of Local Programs and Services administers funding to develop and implement a coordinated, community-based continuum of programs and services to address the needs of youth in the community and to prevent system-involvement. This continuum of services includes delinquency prevention programs, court diversion programs, detention alternatives, dispositional options, and re-entry programs. On an annual basis, more than 10,000 youth are served in the community with the support of JJC funding. Moreover, the number of youth arrested in New Jersey has decreased steadily and significantly over the past decade, suggesting that the JJC's efforts to transform youth justice through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and by prioritizing community-based prevention programs is having a significant, positive impact on overall public safety.

The JJC is committed to leading the ongoing reform of the youth justice system and to implementing policies and practices that help youth to grow and thrive. The extent of identified personal, family, and community risk factors faced by youth placed with the JJC underscores the challenges to achieving sustained, successful reintegration back to the community. The JJC remains laser-focused on meeting this challenge and on strengthening its approach to working with youth, families, and communities.