



## South Carolina Department of Corrections

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For immediate release

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**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – South Carolina has the lowest recidivism rate in the nation and its lowest in more than 25 years, new data shows.

The largest national survey that measures recidivism, conducted by the Virginia Department of Corrections, shows South Carolina has a 21.9 percent return-to-prison rate for all inmates who have been out of prison for three years. These numbers show that the state's efforts to train and prepare returning citizens to society are paying off, with fewer people returning to prison within three years of their release.

"Under the leadership of Director Stirling, the Department of Corrections has done a tremendous job in training and preparing inmates for reentry into society," Gov. Henry McMaster said. "The importance of reduced recidivism rates cannot be understated as it makes an enormous impact across our state as former inmates become productive members of our communities."

South Carolina and Virginia were tied for the lowest national rate at 23.1 percent last year. Virginia is now second in the nation at 23.9 percent.

This is South Carolina's lowest return-to-prison rate since the state started tracking the data in the early 1990s. The rate in 1993 was 33.3 percent, which increased to 33.9 percent in 2005. Since that time, it has steadily decreased. This data is from inmates released between July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

The department has committed considerable resources and efforts with public and private partnerships to prepare people to reenter society, with reentry programs for incarcerated people at all custody levels. They are taught work skills, given help with job placement and

housing, and are offered support for drug addiction, anger management and other obstacles to success, among many other things.

“People now leave prison more prepared for success,” said Bryan Stirling, Director of the S.C. Department of Corrections. “This is a direct result of our extensive public and private partnerships and job training programs. I’m proud of the hard work our staff puts into helping people succeed.”

Pre-release programs exist for all custody levels and are expanding. Manning Reentry/Work Release Center works with minimum-security inmates who are six months from being released, and Kershaw Correctional Institution and Reentry Center works with medium-security inmates. A two-year program opened at Lieber Correctional Institution and Reentry Center in 2019 to help maximum-security inmates gain the necessary skills and services.

This investment is considerable and is one the department and state are committed to growing.

“When returning citizens have the tools to succeed, it helps them, their family, employers, taxpayers and public safety,” Stirling said. “It’s truly a second chance.”

Recidivism rates are measured after inmates have had time to rebuild their life after release. There is no national standard, but this is the lowest rate for the 42 states that report three-year recidivism rates by tallying the number of offenders reincarcerated within three years of their release from prison.

This rate includes returning citizens who come back to prison on crimes committed before they were incarcerated. South Carolina also measures recidivism without including these offenders, because their crimes were committed before they attended programming aimed at helping them succeed in society. That rate is even lower, at 20.2 percent after three years.

“South Carolina is setting the standard in preparing individuals to reenter society,” said Mark Holden, former Chairman of Safe Street & Second Chances, a national group that uses an evidence-based approach to advocate for best practices for prison reform. “It is a model for what we’d like to see in the criminal justice system around the country. We are studying their programs to see how we can help duplicate them across the country and give people real second chances. This approach is smart on crime and soft on taxpayers.”

The success of the reentry programming would not be possible without support from the S.C. General Assembly.

“We understand how important it is to fund programs that help make South Carolina safer,” said Rep. Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. “We want everyone who leaves the Department of Corrections to become a productive citizen. This is a big step in that direction.”

The General Assembly has allocated more than \$4 million for reentry programs since 2014.

“In my capacity as chairman of the Senate Finance Criminal Justice Subcommittee, one of my priorities was to provide adequate funding for reentry programs at SCDC,” said Sen. Shane Martin, R-Spartanburg. “This funding is not only integral to ensuring better outcomes for those reentering the community, but also improving community safety. The current recidivism rate is evidence that providing the agency with the necessary resources and support will deliver positive results.”

The success wouldn’t be possible without the support of both new and longtime partners.

“We’re just thrilled that the Department of Corrections has moved towards doing even more reentry,” said Anne Walker, executive director of the Austin Wilkes Society, which has been working with SCDC on reentry services for decades. “We appreciate the partnership we have with the Department of Corrections.”

Here is a link to a breakdown of South Carolina’s recidivism results and the national comparison:

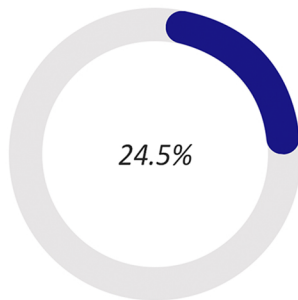
[http://www.doc.sc.gov/research/SpecialReports/FY2017\\_Recidivism\\_Data\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.doc.sc.gov/research/SpecialReports/FY2017_Recidivism_Data_Summary.pdf)



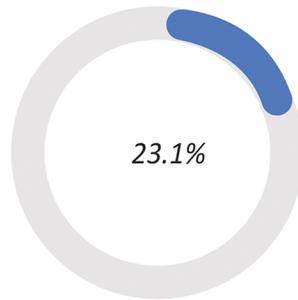
# SCDC Recidivism Statistics

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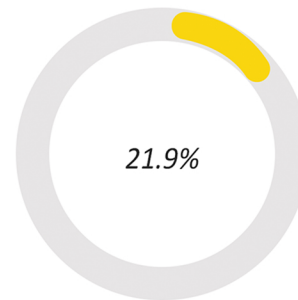
## SCDC Recidivism Statistics



3 year return to prison rate  
FY 2015

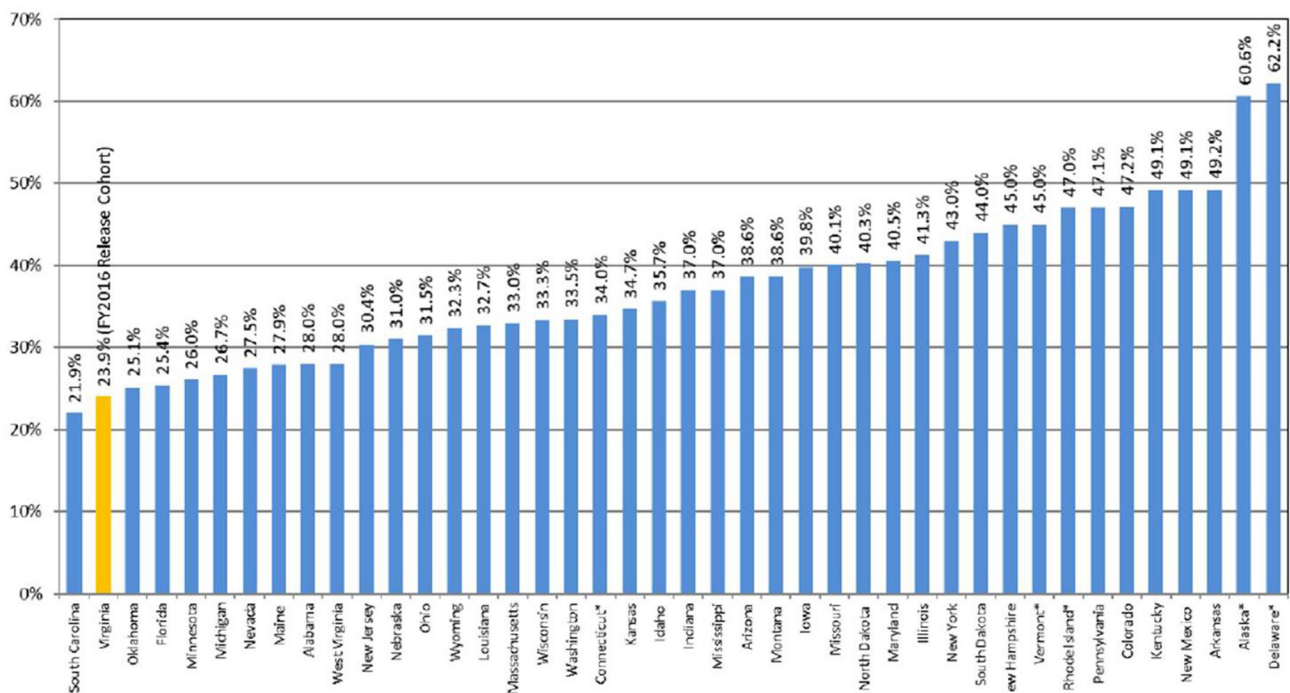


3 year return to prison rate  
FY 2016



3 year return to prison rate  
FY 2017

## Three-Year Re-Incarceration Rates: A State Comparison



Source: Virginia Department of Corrections Research-Evaluation Unit

<https://www.vadoc.virginia.gov/media/1684/vadoc-state-recidivism-comparison-report-2021-04.pdf>