



California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

RECIDIVISM RATES FOR FIRE CAMP PARTICIPANTS RELEASED FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION IN FISCAL YEAR 2015-16

Division of Correctional Policy Research and Internal Oversight

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Recidivism Rates for Fire Camp Participants Released from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Fiscal Year 2015-16

Summary

Despite characteristics typically associated with higher rates of reoffending, offenders released from fire camps have recidivism rates that are lower than or nearly equal to offenders who did not participate in fire camps during their incarceration. The three-year conviction rate for offenders who were released from a fire camp is 40.8 percent, which is slightly lower than rates for offenders with some fire camp experience (43.8 percent) and offenders with no fire camp experience (47.8 percent).

The duration of participation in a fire camp appears to influence recidivism rates, with those spending more time in fire camps recidivating at lower rates than those spending less time. Offenders who were released after spending a year or longer in a fire camp have the best recidivism outcomes, with a three-year conviction rate of 36.4 percent. Fire camp participation also appears to influence recidivism rates when examined by age group: younger offenders are generally among the highest recidivating groups of offenders, but younger offenders released from fire camps have lower rates than young offenders without fire camp experience.

Offenders released from fire camps have slightly lower recidivism rates than fire camp-eligible offenders who did not participate in fire camps. The three-year conviction rate for offenders released from fire camps is 1.3 percentage points lower (40.8 percent) than the rate for fire camp eligible offenders who did not participate in camps (42.1 percent). While further research is needed to determine if the higher rates among fire camp eligible offenders are associated with the demographic composition of the group, fire camp experience, or a combination of multiple factors, this difference could suggest that participation in a fire camp positively influences recidivism rates.

Background

Of the 33,756 offenders released from California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) institutions in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16, approximately six percent of the release cohort (2,108 offenders) were released from a fire camp (fire camp releases). An additional three percent (1,067 offenders) had some fire camp participation during their most recent stay at CDCR, but were released from an adult institution instead of a fire camp (fire camp participants).ⁱ Approximately 80 percent of offenders (26,526 offenders) released during FY 2015-16 did not participate in a fire camp (non-fire camp participants) and 4,055 offenders were dropped from this analysis because they were either sentenced to an indeterminate term (lifer) or required to register under Penal Code 290 (sex registrants) and were therefore ineligible to participate in a fire camp.ⁱⁱ

Because fire camp releases and fire camp participants were released from different correctional settings and the reason for the end of a fire camp participant's tenure in a fire camp is not accounted for when calculating recidivism rates, these two groups are treated separately.ⁱⁱⁱ The intent of this report is to examine differences in recidivism rates among offenders with varying levels of experience in a fire camp to better understand how fire camps influence post-release outcomes. Fire camp releases have the most consistent fire camp experience (both participation in and release from a fire camp) and are therefore the focus of this report. It should be noted that fire camp releases and fire camp participants include offenders with a wide range of fire camp assignments (e.g., firefighters, cooks, porters) and rates are not specific to firefighters.

CDCR uses three measures of recidivism with the three-year conviction rate serving as the primary measure. The three-year arrest and return-to-prison rates serve as supplemental measures of recidivism.^{iv} This briefing supplements the Statewide Recidivism Report for Offenders Released from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Fiscal Year 2015-16. Detailed information regarding the evaluation design, methodology and data limitations may be found in the statewide report.^v

Profile of Fire Camp Releases and Participants

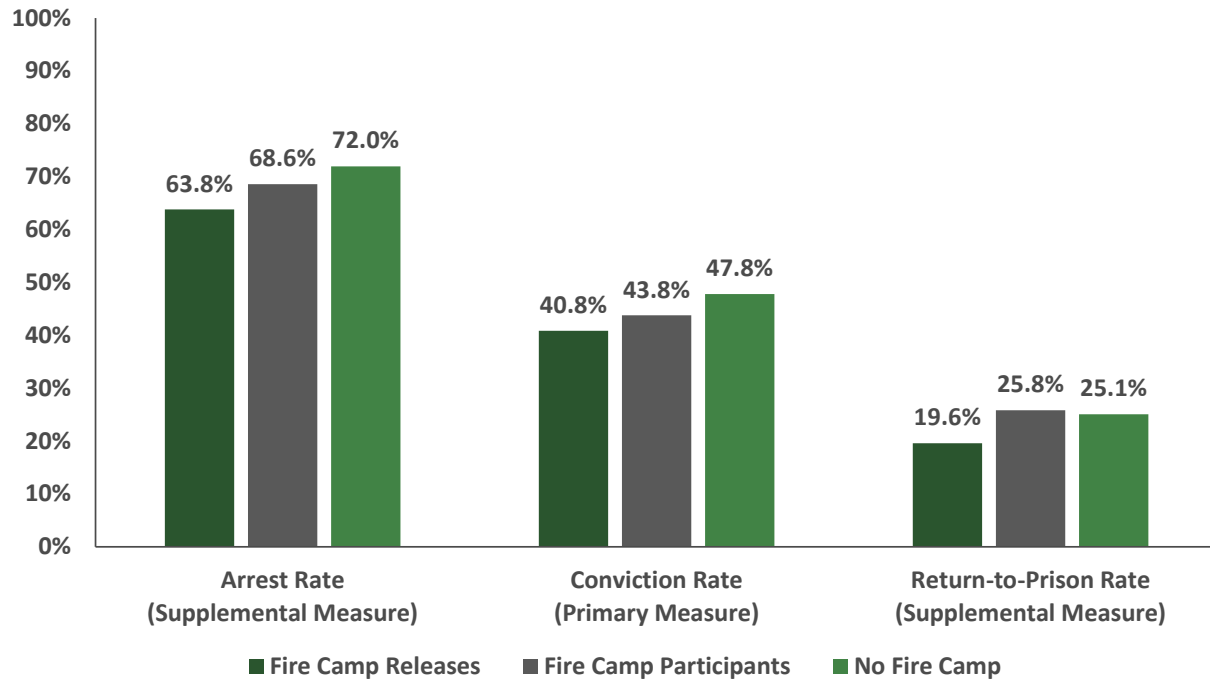
When compared to offenders with some fire camp experience, fire camp releases were more likely to be released to Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS) than parole supervision (Appendix A). Higher percentages of fire camp releases and participants were committed to prison for property and drug crimes than non-fire camp participants, who were more likely to be committed for crimes against persons.^{vi} Higher percentages of fire camp releases and participants were sentenced as second strikers or released under Proposition 47 when compared to non-fire camp participants who were more likely sentenced to a determinate term.^{vii}

Many of the characteristics of fire camp releases and participants are historically associated with higher recidivism rates: younger offenders who commit less serious and violent crimes such as property and drug crimes and have shorter prison stays typically recidivate at higher rates than older offenders with longer prison stays for more serious and violent crimes.^{viii} Although many complex factors contribute to patterns of reoffending, higher rates of reoffending among fire camp releases and participants could be expected due to the prevalence of characteristics that are highly associated with recidivism (Appendix A).

Recidivism Rates (Arrests, Convictions and Returns to Prison)

The three-year conviction rate for fire camp releases is 40.8 percent, which is slightly lower than the rate for fire camp participants who released from an adult institution (43.8 percent) and offenders without fire camp experience (47.8 percent).^{ix} The recidivism rate for all 33,756 offenders released during the same period, regardless of participation in a fire camp, is 44.6 percent, slightly higher than the recidivism rate of fire camp releases (40.8 percent).^x As shown in Figure 1, arrest rates followed a similar pattern: the three-year arrest rate for fire camp releases is 63.8 percent, the rate for fire camp participants is 68.6 percent and the rate for non-fire camp participants is 72.0 percent. The three-year return-to-prison rate is 19.6 percent for fire camp releases, 25.8 percent for fire camp participants and 25.1 percent for offenders without fire camp experience (Appendix B).

Figure 1. Three-Year Arrest, Conviction, and Return-to-Prison Rates for Fire Camp Releases, Fire Camp Participants and Non-Fire Camp Participants Released from CDCR During FY 2015-16



One-, two- and three-year arrest, conviction and return-to-prison rates for each of the three groups may be found in Appendix B. Direct comparisons among the three groups are difficult to make because the groups vary widely in their demographic composition. For example, the non-fire camp group is large (with over 80 percent of all releases in FY 2015-16) and contains many offenders associated with low recidivism rates (e.g., offenders serving longer prison terms for crimes against persons), which may influence their overall recidivism rate downward.^{xi} Conversely, the fire camp release and fire camp participant groups have high numbers of young property and drug offenders, which may influence the overall recidivism rate upward. Further, fire camp releases and participants are smaller subgroups than non-fire camp releases, and nuances associated with individual cases have a greater impact on rates.^{xii}

Type of Post-Release Conviction for Fire Camp Releases

Of the 2,108 offenders released from a fire camp in FY 2015-16, 40.8 percent or 861 offenders were convicted within three years of their release. Less than half (46.9 percent) of the convictions are felony convictions and 53.1 percent are misdemeanor convictions. As shown in the Table 1, over one quarter (25.1 percent) of all convictions are misdemeanor drug/alcohol crimes, followed by felony property crimes (13.1 percent) and felony crimes against persons (12.3 percent).^{xiii}

Table 1. Type of Conviction for the 861 Fire Camp Releases Convicted During the Three-Year Follow-Up Period

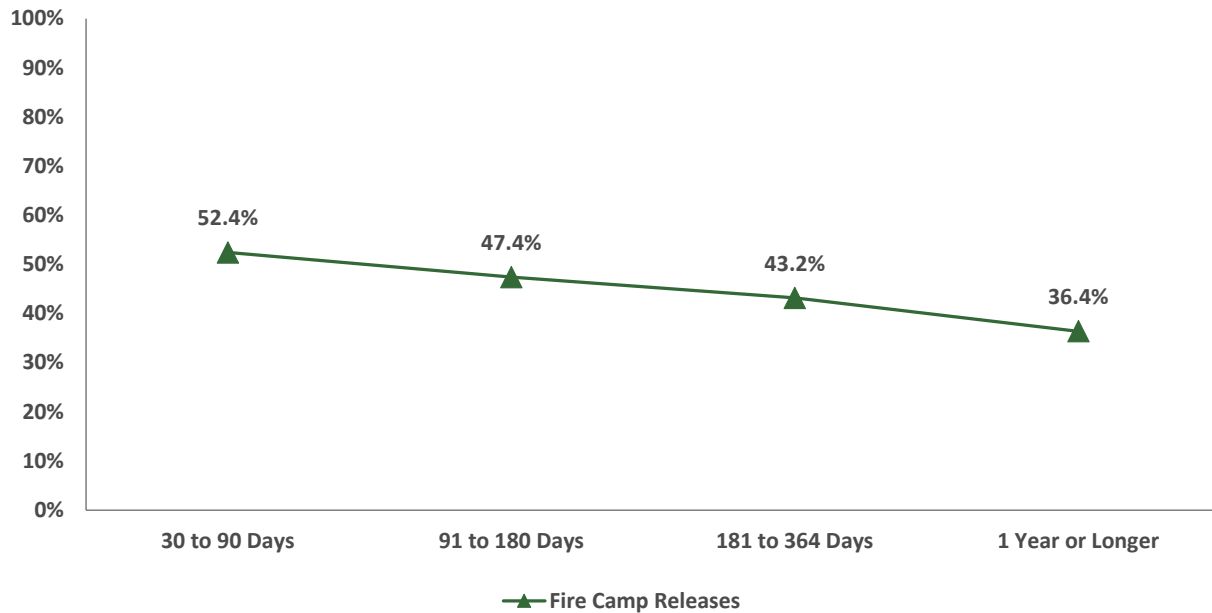
Type of Conviction for Fire Camp Releases	Number	Percent
All Felonies	404	46.9%
Felony Property Crimes	113	13.1%
Felony Crimes Against Persons	106	12.3%
Felony Other Crimes	104	12.1%
Felony Drug/Alcohol Crimes	81	9.4%
All Misdemeanors	457	53.1%
Misdemeanor Drug/Alcohol Crimes	216	25.1%
Misdemeanor Crimes Against Persons	86	10.0%
Misdemeanor Property Crimes	82	9.5%
Misdemeanor Other Crimes	73	8.5%
Total	861	100.0%

The type of conviction for fire camp releases is consistent with fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants with a few exceptions: when compared with fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants, a slightly higher percentage of convictions among fire camp releases are felony property or felony drug/alcohol crimes, as well as misdemeanor drug/alcohol crimes (Appendix C). Additionally, fire camp releases are less likely to be convicted of felony or misdemeanor crimes against persons than fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants.

Time Spent in a Fire Camp and Recidivism

The amount of time spent in a fire camp influences recidivism rates positively: those with longer stays have substantially lower rates than offenders with shorter stays.^{xiv} When a fire camp release spends less than one year in a fire camp, the recidivism rates range from 52.4 percent (30 to 90 days in a fire camp) to 43.2 percent (between 181 and 364 days), as shown in the figure below. The rate drops to 36.4 for fire camp releases who spent one year or longer in a fire camp.

Figure 2. Three-Year Conviction Rate for Fire Camp Releases by Time Spent in a Fire Camp



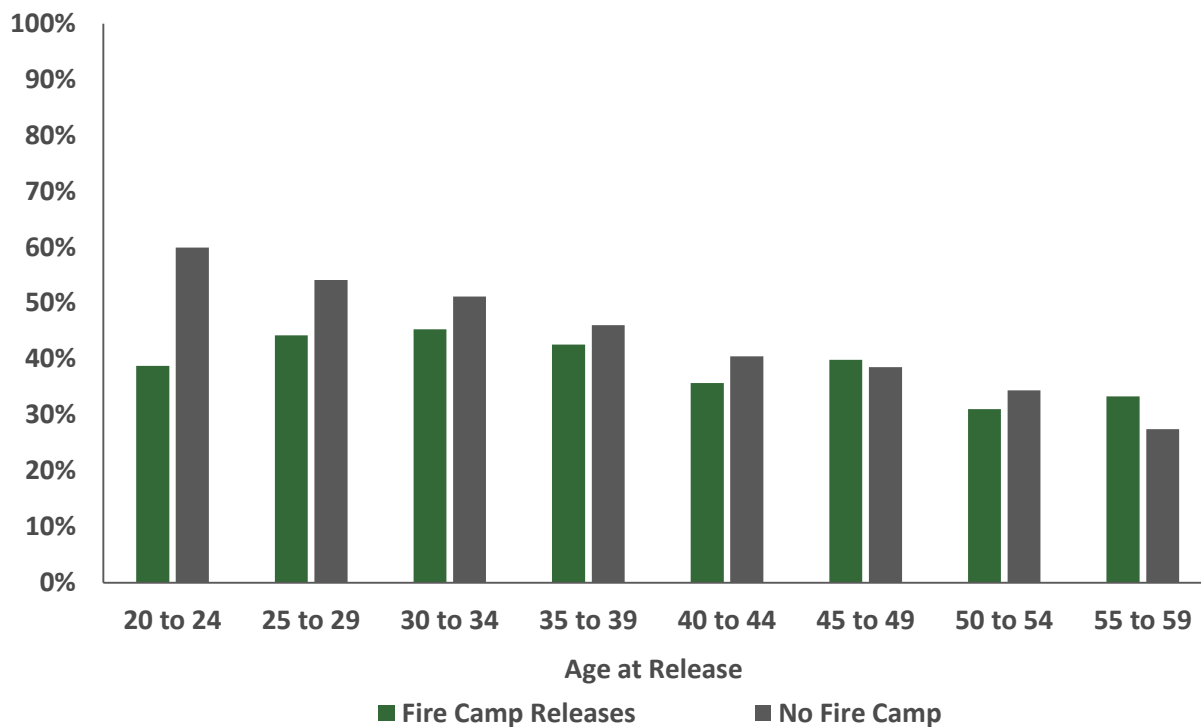
The decrease in rates for fire camp participants based on time spent in a fire camp is less pronounced than the decrease for fire camp releases, although the pattern is consistent. The three-year conviction rate for fire camp participants with less than 30 days in a fire camp is 48.1 percent and the rate for those with one year or longer is 36.5 percent, a difference of 11.6 percentage points (Appendix D). These rates indicate the best outcomes tend to occur when offenders are released from a fire camp after one year or longer.

Age, Fire Camp Participation and Recidivism

Age is a strong predictor of recidivism among younger offenders, particularly those committed to CDCR for property and drug crimes who are often associated with high recidivism rates. Older offenders, especially those who serve long prison sentences, are often associated with some of the lowest recidivism rates. For this reason, age is a heavily weighted factor in determining an offender’s risk of recidivism through the CSRA.^{xv} A review of the recidivism rates by age group for all 33,756 offenders released from CDCR during FY 2015-16 affirms age as a predictor of recidivism: as the age group of the offenders increases, the rate consistently decreases.^{xvi} This same general pattern holds true when looking at recidivism rates for all three levels of fire camp participation (Appendix E).

A notable exception to the age and recidivism relationship exists among fire camp releases. While younger offenders generally have higher rates than older offenders, younger offenders released from fire camps have substantially lower rates than non-fire camp participants in the same age group (Figure 3). Further, the difference in recidivism rates within age groups is most pronounced among younger age groups (e.g., offenders ages 20 to 34) and the gap closes as the age of the offender increases (e.g., offenders ages 50 to 54 in both groups have rates that are nearly equal). In some cases, fire camp releases in older age groups have higher recidivism rates than the corresponding age group of offenders without fire camp experience (e.g., offenders ages 45 to 49 and 55 to 59). These findings may indicate that participation in fire camps is most effective in reducing recidivism in younger age groups, a group that is typically identified as one of the highest recidivating groups of offenders.^{xvii}

Figure 3. Three-Year Conviction Rate by Age at Release for Fire Camp Releases and Non-Fire Camp Participants



Recidivism Rates by Serious and Violent Offenses and Commitment Offense Category

Recidivism rates for fire camp releases, fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants are provided by serious and violent commitment offense, as well as commitment offense category (the most serious offense for which an offender was most recently committed to CDCR) in Appendix E. In general, the rates are consistent across the three groups and follow reoffending patterns observed with the statewide FY 2015-16 release cohort, as well as previous cohorts of releases: non-serious and non-violent drug and property offenders tend to have higher recidivism rates than serious or violent offenders that commit crimes against persons. Offenders with violent offenses have substantially lower rates than offenders with serious or non-serious/non-violent offenses.

In most cases, fire camp releases have lower conviction rates than fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants when comparing rates by serious/violent offenses and commitment offense categories, which is reflective of the overall lower rates among fire camp releases. The three-year conviction rate for fire camp releases is lower than the rate of fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants when examined by serious and violent offenses. Similarly, fire camp releases have lower recidivism rates across the four commitment offense categories (crimes against persons, property crimes, drug crimes and other crimes) when compared to fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants. An exception exists among fire camp participants who are committed for drug crimes (36.9 percent), who have a slightly lower rate than fire camp releases committed for drug crimes (40.9 percent).

A contributing factor to the higher rates observed among fire camp participants is likely the composition of this group of offenders.^{xviii} The presence of a large number of offenders who are more likely to recidivate (e.g., non-serious and non-violent property and drug offenders) in fire camp groups could influence the rate for those groups upward. Conversely, the non-fire camp group is comprised of a large number of offenders associated with low recidivism rates (e.g., offenders committed for crimes against persons with longer prison stays), which could influence their overall rate downward.

It should be noted that the fire camp release and fire camp participant groups are relatively similar in their demographics and characteristics, although fire camp releases recidivated at lower rates than fire camp participants (Appendices A and B). These findings indicate better post-release outcomes occur for offenders released from a fire camp, in contrast with those who only participated in a fire camp.^{xix}

Appendix A – Demographics and Characteristics of Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation

Demographics and Characteristics	Fire Camp Releases		Fire Camp Participants		No Fire Camp	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	2,108	100.0%	1,067	100.0%	26,526	100.0%
Gender						
Male	1,956	92.8%	954	89.4%	24,521	92.4%
Female	152	7.2%	113	10.6%	2,005	7.6%
Age at Release						
18 and 19	2	0.1%	4	0.4%	269	1.0%
20 to 24	281	13.3%	214	20.1%	4,121	15.5%
25 to 29	418	19.8%	258	24.2%	5,288	19.9%
30 to 34	428	20.3%	187	17.5%	4,922	18.6%
35 to 39	359	17.0%	157	14.7%	3,897	14.7%
40 to 44	224	10.6%	103	9.7%	2,539	9.6%
45 to 49	188	8.9%	78	7.3%	2,162	8.2%
50 to 54	148	7.0%	44	4.1%	1,702	6.4%
55 to 59	48	2.3%	18	1.7%	1,018	3.8%
60 and over	12	0.6%	4	0.4%	608	2.3%
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian/Alaskan Native	25	1.2%	8	0.7%	295	1.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	32	1.5%	23	2.2%	399	1.5%
Black/African American	476	22.6%	268	25.1%	6,616	24.9%
Hispanic/Latino	816	38.7%	451	42.3%	11,610	43.8%
White	685	32.5%	279	26.1%	6,636	25.0%
Other	74	3.5%	38	3.6%	970	3.7%
Commitment Offense Category						
Crimes Against Persons	742	35.2%	414	38.8%	11,349	42.8%
Property Crimes	577	27.4%	329	30.8%	5,857	22.1%
Drug Crimes	403	19.1%	168	15.7%	3,065	11.6%
Other Crimes	386	18.3%	156	14.6%	6,255	23.6%

Appendix A – Demographics and Characteristics of Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation (continued)

Demographics and Characteristics	Fire Camp Releases		Fire Camp Participants		No Fire Camp	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sentence Type						
Proposition 47 Releases	52	2.5%	24	2.2%	265	1.0%
Determinate Sentencing Law	1,237	58.7%	651	61.0%	19,385	73.1%
Second Strikers	819	38.9%	392	36.7%	6,876	25.9%
Type of Post-Release Supervision						
Parole	959	45.5%	565	53.0%	11,396	43.0%
Post-Release Community Supervision	1,145	54.3%	501	47.0%	15,074	56.8%
Directly Discharged	4	0.2%	1	0.1%	56	0.2%
Serious/Violent Offenders						
Serious	483	22.9%	248	23.2%	7,014	26.4%
Violent	464	22.0%	310	29.1%	4,353	16.4%
Non-Serious/Non-Violent	1,161	55.1%	509	47.7%	15,159	57.1%
CSRA Risk Score						
Low	446	21.2%	190	17.8%	6,159	23.2%
Moderate	766	36.3%	416	39.0%	7,705	29.0%
High Drug	194	9.2%	75	7.0%	1,597	6.0%
High Property	316	15.0%	161	15.1%	3,090	11.6%
High Violent	386	18.3%	225	21.1%	7,975	30.1%

Appendix B – Recidivism Rates for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation

Arrest Rates

Release Type	Number Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number Arrested	Arrest Rate	Number Arrested	Arrest Rate	Number Arrested	Arrest Rate
Fire Camp Releases	2,108	902	42.8%	1,186	56.3%	1,345	63.8%
Fire Camp Participants	1,067	531	49.8%	669	62.7%	732	68.6%
No Fire Camp	26,526	14,226	53.6%	17,487	65.9%	19,090	72.0%
Total	29,701	15,659	52.7%	19,342	65.1%	21,167	71.3%

Conviction Rates

Release Type	Number Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
Fire Camp Releases	2,108	313	14.8%	648	30.7%	861	40.8%
Fire Camp Participants	1,067	199	18.7%	372	34.9%	467	43.8%
No Fire Camp	26,526	5,381	20.3%	9,929	37.4%	12,687	47.8%
Total	29,701	5,893	19.8%	10,949	36.9%	14,015	47.2%

Return-to-Prison Rates

Release Type	Number Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number Returned	Return Rate	Number Returned	Return Rate	Number Returned	Return Rate
Fire Camp Releases	2,111	90	4.3%	290	13.7%	413	19.6%
Fire Camp Participants	1,068	73	6.8%	193	18.1%	276	25.8%
No Fire Camp	26,585	1,752	6.6%	4,596	17.3%	6,668	25.1%
Total	29,764	1,915	6.4%	5,079	17.1%	7,357	24.7%

Appendix C – Type of Conviction for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation

Type of Conviction for All Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation (Includes Offenders with No Conviction)

Type of Conviction	Fire Camp Releases		Fire Camp Participants		No Fire Camp	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Conviction	1,247	59.2%	600	56.2%	13,839	52.2%
All Felonies	404	19.2%	226	21.2%	6,254	23.6%
Felony Property Crimes	113	5.4%	65	6.1%	1,674	6.3%
Felony Crimes Against Persons	106	5.0%	60	5.6%	2,064	7.8%
Felony Other Crimes	104	4.9%	71	6.7%	1,730	6.5%
Felony Drug/Alcohol Crimes	81	3.8%	30	2.8%	786	3.0%
All Misdemeanors	457	21.7%	241	22.6%	6,433	24.3%
Misdemeanor Drug/Alcohol Crimes	216	10.2%	88	8.2%	2,602	9.8%
Misdemeanor Crimes Against Persons	86	4.1%	63	5.9%	1,576	5.9%
Misdemeanor Property Crimes	82	3.9%	51	4.8%	1,346	5.1%
Misdemeanor Other Crimes	73	3.5%	39	3.7%	909	3.4%
Total	2,108	100.0%	1,067	100.0%	26,526	100.0%

Type of Conviction for the 14,051 Offenders Convicted During the Three-Year Follow-Up Period by Fire Camp Participation (Includes Only Those Convicted)

Type of Conviction	Fire Camp Releases		Fire Camp Participants		No Fire Camp	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Felonies	404	46.9%	226	48.4%	6,254	49.3%
Felony Property Crimes	113	13.1%	65	13.9%	1,674	13.2%
Felony Crimes Against Persons	106	12.3%	60	12.8%	2,064	16.3%
Felony Other Crimes	104	12.1%	71	15.2%	1,730	13.6%
Felony Drug/Alcohol Crimes	81	9.4%	30	6.4%	786	6.2%
All Misdemeanors	457	53.1%	241	51.6%	6,433	50.7%
Misdemeanor Drug/Alcohol Crimes	216	25.1%	88	18.8%	2,602	20.5%
Misdemeanor Crimes Against Persons	86	10.0%	63	13.5%	1,576	12.4%
Misdemeanor Property Crimes	82	9.5%	51	10.9%	1,346	10.6%
Misdemeanor Other Crimes	73	8.5%	39	8.4%	909	7.2%
Total	861	100.0%	467	100.0%	12,687	100.0%

Appendix D – Three-Year Conviction Rate by Time Spent in a Fire Camp for Fire Camp Releases and Fire Camp Participants

Fire Camp Stay	Fire Camp Releases			Fire Camp Participants		
	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
Less than 30 Days	14	7	N/A	135	65	48.1%
30 to 90 Days	103	54	52.4%	150	67	44.7%
91 to 180 Days	287	136	47.4%	213	108	50.7%
181 to 364 Days	651	281	43.2%	317	135	42.6%
1 Year or Longer	1,053	383	36.4%	252	92	36.5%
Total	2,108	861	40.8%	1,067	467	43.8%

Appendix E – Recidivism Rates for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Fire Camp Participation and Select Demographics and Characteristics

Three-Year Conviction Rates by Age at Release and Fire Camp Participation

Age at Release	Fire Camp Releases			Fire Camp Participants			No Fire Camp		
	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
18 and 19	2	1	N/A	4	1	N/A	269	189	70.3%
20 to 24	281	109	38.8%	214	113	52.8%	4,121	2,470	59.9%
25 to 29	418	185	44.3%	258	127	49.2%	5,288	2,862	54.1%
30 to 34	428	194	45.3%	187	82	43.9%	4,922	2,519	51.2%
35 to 39	359	153	42.6%	157	65	41.4%	3,897	1,795	46.1%
40 to 44	224	80	35.7%	103	35	34.0%	2,539	1,028	40.5%
45 to 49	188	75	39.9%	78	27	34.6%	2,162	834	38.6%
50 to 54	148	46	31.1%	44	14	31.8%	1,702	586	34.4%
55 to 59	48	16	33.3%	18	3	N/A	1,018	280	27.5%
60 and over	12	2	N/A	4	0	N/A	608	124	20.4%
Total	2,108	861	40.8%	1,067	467	43.8%	26,526	12,687	47.8%

Three-Year Conviction Rates by Serious or Violent Offense and Fire Camp Participation

Serious/Violent Offense	Fire Camp Releases			Fire Camp Participants			No Fire Camp		
	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
Serious	483	207	42.9%	248	116	46.8%	7,014	3,408	48.6%
Violent	464	135	29.1%	310	122	39.4%	4,353	1,668	38.3%
Non-Serious/Non-Violent	1,161	519	44.7%	509	229	45.0%	15,159	7,611	50.2%
Total	2,108	861	40.8%	1,067	467	43.8%	26,526	12,687	47.8%

Three-Year Conviction Rates by Risk Score and Fire Camp Participation

CSRA Risk Score	Fire Camp Releases			Fire Camp Participants			No Fire Camp		
	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
Low	446	103	23.1%	190	31	16.3%	6,159	1,549	25.2%
Moderate	766	270	35.2%	416	165	39.7%	7,705	3,445	44.7%
High Drug	194	112	57.7%	75	40	53.3%	1,597	932	58.4%
High Property	316	177	56.0%	161	93	57.8%	3,090	1,935	62.6%
High Violent	386	199	51.6%	225	138	61.3%	7,975	4,826	60.5%
Total	2,108	861	40.8%	1,067	467	43.8%	26,526	12,687	47.8%

Three-Year Conviction Rates by Commitment Offense Category and Fire Camp Participation

Commitment Offense Category	Fire Camp Releases			Fire Camp Participants			No Fire Camp		
	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate	Number Released	Number Convicted	Conviction Rate
Crimes Against Persons	742	277	37.3%	414	177	42.8%	11,349	5,146	45.3%
Property Crimes	577	267	46.3%	329	163	49.5%	5,857	3,194	54.5%
Drug Crimes	403	165	40.9%	168	62	36.9%	3,065	1,337	43.6%
Other Crimes	386	152	39.4%	156	65	41.7%	6,255	3,010	48.1%
Total	2,108	861	40.8%	1,067	467	43.8%	26,526	12,687	47.8%

Appendix F – Recidivism Rates for Fire Camp Eligible Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 without Fire Camp Experience

The below table shows one-, two- and three-year recidivism rates for the 2,108 fire camp releases and 470 offenders who are considered eligible for participation in a fire camp at the time of their release, but did not participate in a fire camp during their most recent stay at CDCR (fire camp eligible offenders).^{xx} Please note the 470 fire camp eligible offenders are also included in the non-fire camp participant group of 26,526 offenders detailed in this report. Fire camp eligible offenders are isolated in this section to better understand their reoffending behaviors when compared to offenders with fire camp experience.

As shown in the below tables, fire camp releases have slightly lower recidivism rates than fire camp eligible offenders (without fire camp experience). The three-year arrest rate for fire camp releases (63.8 percent) is 6.4 percentage points lower than the rate of fire camp eligible offenders (70.2 percent). The three-year conviction rate for fire camp releases (40.8 percent) is 1.3 percentage points lower than fire camp eligible offenders (42.1 percent) and the three-year return-to-prison rate for fire camp releases (19.6 percent) is 1.2 percentage points lower than fire camp eligible offenders (20.8 percent).

Further research is needed to determine if the higher rates among fire camp eligible offenders are associated with the demographic composition of the group, fire camp experience, or a combination of multiple factors. Given each group was considered eligible and only one group (fire camp releases) have fire camp experience, these rates could suggest those with fire camp experience have slightly better post-release recidivism rates than those who are eligible and do not participate.

Arrest Rates

Release Type	Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fire Camp Releases	2,108	902	42.8%	1,186	56.3%	1,345	63.8%
Fire Camp Eligible (No Fire Camp)	470	235	50.0%	297	63.2%	330	70.2%

Conviction Rates

Release Type	Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fire Camp Releases	2,108	313	14.8%	648	30.7%	861	40.8%
Fire Camp Eligible (No Fire Camp)	470	87	18.5%	160	34.0%	198	42.1%

Return-to-Prison Rates

Release Type	Released	One-Year		Two-Year		Three-Year	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fire Camp Releases	2,111	90	4.3%	290	13.7%	413	19.6%
Fire Camp Eligible (No Fire Camp)	471	29	6.2%	71	15.1%	98	20.8%

Methodology and Limitations

The three groups presented in this report (fire camp releases, fire camp participants and non-fire camp participants) are subgroups of offenders examined in the “Recidivism Report for Offenders Released from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Fiscal Year 2015-16”. Development of one-, two-, and three-year recidivism rates follow the methods detailed in Section 10 Evaluation Design of the report.^{xxi} Similarly, arrest and conviction data only include offenders with a Department of Justice (DOJ) automated Record of Arrest and Prosecution (RAP) sheet, while return-to-prison data include all offenders released from CDCR during FY 2015-16.^{xxii}

Each subgroup of offenders presented in this report has limitations and caution should be exercised when interpreting rates, particularly when comparing rates among subgroups. Fire camp releases include offenders who participated in and were released from a fire camp, while fire camp participants include those who participated in a fire camp at some point during their most recent stay at CDCR, but were not released from a fire camp. Instead, fire camp participants were released from a CDCR adult institution. Because these two groups were released from different correctional settings and the reason for the end of a fire camp participant’s tenure in a fire camp is not accounted for when calculating recidivism rates, these two groups were treated separately.

Fire camp participants can be returned to an institution prior to their release for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: medical, dental, court and disciplinary reasons, or if an offender is paroling from an institution rather than the fire camp. Further, the duration for which fire camp participants stayed in fire camps varied substantially: some fire camp participants participated in a fire camp for less than 30 days prior to returning to a CDCR adult institution, while some fire camp participants participated in a fire camp for a year or longer before returning to an institution. For these reasons, the make-up of this group varies widely and their differences could influence recidivism rates.^{xxiii} Recidivism rates for this group should be interpreted with caution, as the reason for a participant’s departure from a fire camp could further influence recidivism rates and is not examined in this report.

Non-fire camp participants (offenders without fire camp experience) represent the largest group of offenders and also vary widely in their makeup (e.g., includes offenders serving short prison stays for drug and property offenses, as well as those serving much longer sentences for more serious and violent offenses). These differences could also influence recidivism rates and make comparisons between groups difficult. For the purposes of this report, offenders sentenced to an indeterminate term (lifers) and offenders required to register under Penal Code 290 (sex registrants) were removed from the non-fire camp participant group, as they are ineligible for fire camps. These two groups, particularly lifers, are among some of the lowest recidivating groups released by CDCR and their inclusion in the non-fire camp participant group would influence that particular group’s rate downward.^{xxiv}

Finally, it is beyond the scope of this report to estimate the impact of fire camp participation on recidivism rates. While an examination of fire camp data shows that participation and release from a fire camp (particularly for those who spend a year or longer in the fire camp) may have a positive influence on recidivism outcomes, the precise impact of participation cannot be measured. Further, this report does not consider participation in other in-prison programs or services that may or may not influence recidivism outcomes.

Notes

ⁱ Fire camp participants can be returned to an institution prior to their release for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: medical, dental, court and disciplinary reasons, or if an offender is paroling from an institution, rather than the fire camp.

ⁱⁱ A total of 4,055 offenders were dropped from the Fiscal Year 2015-16 release cohort because they were ineligible to participate in a fire camp. These offenders include 728 offenders sentenced to an indeterminate term (lifers), 3,312 offenders required to register under Penal Code 290 (sex registrants) and 15 offenders who were both lifers and sex registrants. During Fiscal Year 2015-16, a total of 33,861 offenders were released from CDCR, however, only 33,756 offenders had an automated Department of Justice RAP sheet. Arrest and conviction data only include the 33,756 offenders with an automated rap sheet, while return-to-prison data include all 33,861 offenders released during the fiscal year. For more information, please see section 10 Evaluation Design of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Fire camp participants can be returned to an institution prior to their release for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: medical, dental, court and disciplinary reasons, or if an offender is paroling from an institution, rather than the fire camp. The reasons for which offenders were returned and released from an institution (e.g., disciplinary action, transfer or rules violation report) versus a fire camp and the impact of the reason for the removal from the fire camp are beyond the scope of this analysis. Further research is needed to determine whether the reason for removal from a fire camp or the end of an offender's participation (e.g., disciplinary action, transfer or rules violation report) in a fire camp is associated with higher rates of recidivism.

^{iv} The three-year conviction rate is defined as "an individual convicted of a felony and incarcerated in a CDCR adult institution who was released to parole, discharged after being paroled, or directly discharged during Fiscal Year 2015-16 and subsequently convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense within three years of their release date". More information regarding CDCR's definition of recidivism, supplemental measures of recidivism and methods may be found in section 10 Evaluation Design of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^v Please see section 10 for detailed information regarding the evaluation design, methodology and limitations with regards to offenders released from CDCR during FY 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{vi} The California Static Risk Assessment (CSRA) is a tool used to calculate an offender's risk of conviction for a new offense after release from prison. Based on criminal history and demographics, including age, offenders are designated as having a low, moderate, or high risk of being convicted of a new offense.

^{vii} For more information regarding definitions and terms, please see section 11 Definition of Terms of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{viii} For a detailed discussion regarding the associations between recidivism rates and offender demographics and characteristics, please see sections 7.1.1, 7.2.1, 7.2.4 and 7.2.12 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{ix} Fire camp releases include offenders released from a fire camp during Fiscal Year 2015-16. Fire camp participants include those who participated in a fire camp at some point during their most recent stay at CDCR, but were not released from a fire camp. Non-fire camp participants were not released from a fire camp, nor did they participate in a fire camp at any point during their most recent stay at CDCR.

^x The three-year conviction rate for offenders released in FY 2015-16 is slightly lower (44.6 percent) than prior release cohorts. The decrease in the rate is largely attributed to a decrease in offenders released under Proposition 47 (drug and property offenders) who were associated with higher rates of reoffending compared to one year earlier (FY 2014-15). For more information on the three-year conviction rate for FY 2015-16 releases and how it compares to prior release cohorts, as well as the rates of Proposition 47 offenders, please see section 7.2.3 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16. Additionally, the FY 2015-16 release cohort

includes 4,055 offenders who were dropped from this examination due to their ineligibility to participate in fire camps. These offenders include 728 offenders sentenced to an indeterminate term (lifers), 3,312 offenders required to register under Penal Code 290 (sex registrants) and 15 offenders who were both lifers and sex registrants. Each of these groups are characterized by low recidivism rates. For more information regarding the recidivism rates of lifers, please see section 9.1 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 and available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xi} Lifers are associated with some of the lowest recidivism rates among CDCR releases (3.2 percent for lifers released in FY 2015-16) and are not eligible to participate in fire camps. Inclusion of offenders with lower rates or vice versa, may drive rates upward or downward, thereby making comparisons among groups difficult. For more information regarding subgroups of offenders, including lifers, please see sections 9.1 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link:

<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xii} For a detailed discussion regarding the associations between recidivism rates and offender demographics and characteristics, please see sections 7.1.1, 7.2.1, 7.2.4 and 7.2.12 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xiii} Other felony crimes could include offenses such as DUI, escape, possession of a weapon and other offenses (e.g., false imprisonment, stalking, street gang act). For a more detailed discussion, please see section 7.2.1 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 available through the following link:

<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xiv} Time spent in a fire camp for fire camp releases only includes the time spent in the camp prior to their release and during their most recent stay at CDCR. Previous time spent in a fire camp was not included. For fire camp participants (who were not released from the fire camp), time spent in a fire camp includes all time spent in a fire camp during their most recent stay, whether that time was spent consecutively in a fire camp or not.

^{xv} For more information, please see section 7.2.5 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xvi} For a detailed discussion of age and recidivism, please see sections 7.1.1 and 7.5 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-recidivism/>

^{xvii} Further research is needed to affirm the idea that fire camp participation is most effective in reducing recidivism among younger age groups, as a number of complex factors contribute to recidivism rates. Analysis of fire camp data by age group for multiple release cohorts would be needed. Consideration of factors associated with older age groups (e.g., ability to obtain employment or utilize camp fire skills) versus younger age groups, and the impact of those factors on recidivism rates is also warranted.

^{xviii} Further research is needed to determine whether the reason for removal from a fire camp or the end of an offender's participation (e.g., disciplinary action, transfer or rules violation report) in a fire camp is associated with higher rates of recidivism and accounts for some of the difference in recidivism rates observed between the two groups (fire camp releases and participants).

^{xix} Fire camp participants can be returned to an institution prior to their release for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: medical, dental, court and disciplinary reasons, or if an offender is paroling from an institution, rather than the fire camp. The reasons for which offenders were returned and released from an institution (e.g., disciplinary action, transfer or rules violation report) vs. a fire camp and the impact of the reason for the removal from the fire camp are beyond the scope of this analysis. Further research is needed to determine whether the reason for removal from a fire camp or the end of an offender's participation in a fire camp is associated with higher rates of recidivism.

^{xx} Fire camp eligibility is based upon an administrative determinant obtained from classification forms (intake and annual review) that were derived from the Strategic Offender Management System (SOMS). Offenders considered "fire camp eligible" had an administrative determinant indicating they were fire camp eligible at the time of their release, although they did not participate in a fire camp during their most recent stay at CDCR. Each of the fire

camp eligible inmates is included in the non-fire camp participant group for the purposes of this report. In 2014, SOMS became CDCR's system of record regarding administrative determinates. The transition to SOMS overlaps with the release dates of the offenders included in this analysis, and therefore, there may be data limitations in the determination of camp eligibility.

^{xxi} For more information, please see section 10 Evaluation Design of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-graduation/>

^{xxii} During Fiscal Year 2015-16, a total of 33,861 offenders were released from CDCR, however, only 33,756 offenders had an automated Department of Justice RAP sheet. Arrest and conviction data only include the 33,756 offenders with an automated rap sheet, while return-to-prison data include all 33,861 offenders released during the fiscal year. For more information, please see section 10 Evaluation Design of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-graduation/>

^{xxiii} The reasons for which offenders were returned and released from an institution (e.g., disciplinary action, transfer or rules violation report) vs. a fire camp and the impact of the reason for the removal from the fire camp are beyond the scope of this analysis. Further research is needed to determine whether the reason for removal from a fire camp or the end of an offender's participation in a fire camp is associated with higher rates of recidivism.

^{xxiv} For more information regarding the recidivism rates of lifers, please see section 9.1 of the Recidivism Report for Offenders Released in Fiscal Year 2015-16 and available through the following link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/offender-outcomes-characteristics/offender-graduation/>



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