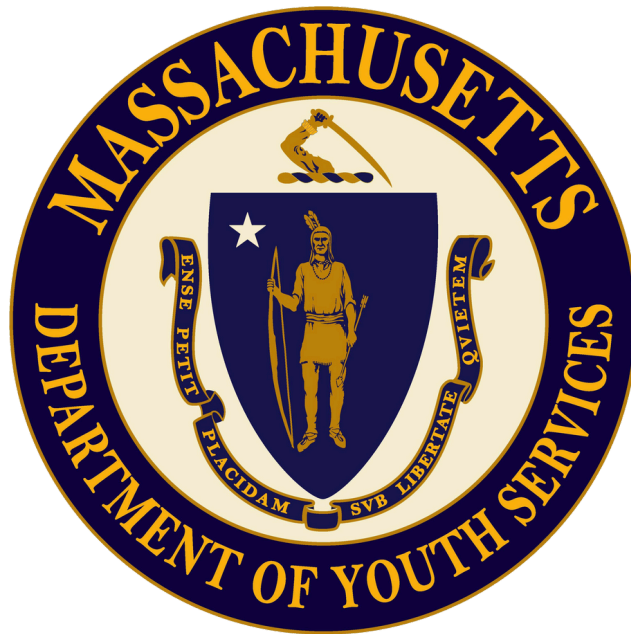


Juvenile Recidivism Report

For Youth Discharged During 2019



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executive summary

Each year, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS or “the Department”) issues a report analyzing the criminal justice involvement, or recidivism, of a cohort of young adults formerly committed to the Department and discharged from its custody after reaching their statutory age of discharge.[1] This year’s report focuses on a cohort of 257 young people who were discharged from DHS in 2019. DHS—as the juvenile justice agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with the mission of fostering positive outcomes for youth, building safer communities, and collaborating for an equitable and fair justice system—envisioned a Commonwealth in which every young person has the skills, supports, and resources necessary to engage safely with their communities and lead productive and fulfilling lives. While recidivism rates do not tell the whole story of a young person’s engagement with their community post-discharge, they are an outcome measure tracked by the Department to inform the rehabilitative programming and transitional services that it provides.

DYS defines recidivism as an arraignment leading to a conviction within one year of discharge from the Department. To determine the elapsed time to recidivism post-discharge, we calculate the number of days between the date of discharge and the date of the arraignment that culminated in a conviction. Calendar year 2019 marked the sixth, nearly consecutive, annual decline in the number of young people leaving DHS.[2] Between 2012 and 2019, the number of young people discharged from the Department dropped from 617 to 257, or 58.3%. Of the 257 young people who exited DHS’ custody in 2019:

- 39.3% (101 individuals) were re-arrested within one year.
- 18.7% (48 individuals) were found guilty and thus, for the purpose of this study, are considered to have recidivated.
- 12.8% (33 individuals) were later incarcerated in the adult system.

All three of these percentages represent decreases from the 2018 cohort of youth. Compared to the 2019 cohort, young people who were discharged from DHS custody in 2018 had a re-arrest rate of 48.1%, a recidivism rate of 19.7%, and an incarceration rate of 14.5%.

Of the 48 young people in the 2019 cohort who recidivated:

- 95.8% (46 individuals) were youth whose sex assigned at birth was male.
- 93.8% (45 individuals) did not identify as LGBTQ+.

[1] This age is determined at adjudication and may be 18, 19, 20, or 21. Most young people committed to DHS discharge at 18; however, a small number may discharge at either 19 or 20, based on their age at the time of adjudication, or at 21 if adjudicated Youthful Offender.

[2] The one exception was in 2017, when total discharges grew by 10.6% compared to 2016. However, in 2018, the declining trend that was observed in previous years continued.

- 64.6% (31 individuals) were from Regional Urban Centers.[3]
- 60.4% (29 individuals) were discharged at the age of 18.
- 56.2% (27 individuals) identified as Hispanic/Latinx, and 33.3% (16 individuals) identified as Black or African American.

The greatest number of cases meeting the definition of recidivism occurred in Worcester (12.5% of all cases), followed by Brockton, Lawrence, and Springfield (8.33% of all cases each).

Research and data typically show that high school attainment is a protective factor against recidivism, and historically, youth who leave DYS with a diploma or equivalency (e.g., HiSet or GED) have been less likely to recidivate. For example, among young people who exited DYS in 2017, those with a high school diploma or equivalency had a recidivism rate of about 22%, whereas those without a diploma or equivalency had a rate of about 27%. Among young people in the 2018 cohort, about 17% of those with a high school diploma or equivalency recidivated, compared to about 22% of those without a diploma or equivalency. In contrast, young people who exited DYS with a high school diploma or equivalency in 2019 had a similar recidivism rate as those who left without high school attainment (18.8% and 18.6%, respectively).

Table 1 provides a summary of key recidivism outcomes for the study cohort.

Table 1. *Recidivism Rates for All DYS Youth Discharged in 2019*

	% Re-Arraigned	% Recidivated	% Incarcerated
Total	39.3%	18.7%	12.8%
Sex Assigned at Birth			
Male	42.7%	20.9%	14.1%
Female	18.9%	5.4%	5.4%
Racial Identity			
Black or African American	52.4%	25.4%	15.9%
Hispanic/Latinx	38.7%	19.7%	13.9%
All Other Races[4]	25.0%	6.3%	6.3%
White	26.8%	9.8%	7.3%

[3] For this report, we used the community types defined by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council of Massachusetts. Different from regions, which group towns/cities geographically, community types group towns/cities based on land use and housing patterns, growth trends, and projected development patterns. According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (2008), Regional Urban Centers include large, high-density urban centers that are not proximate to Boston—Boston and high-density centers proximate to Boston are part of the Inner Core community type—and sub-regional urban centers, including mid-sized urban downtowns. Examples of Regional Urban Centers include Fall River, Framingham, and Springfield. For a full list of municipalities by community type, see pages 4-9 of the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Community Types classification system](#).

[4] This group is composed of the following races: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Multiracial, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other, and Chooses to not identify or Unknown. The number of young people discharged from each race in this group was too small to report or analyze separately.

	% Re-Arraigned	% Recidivated	% Incarcerated
Sexual Orientation/Identity			
Identified as Straight	41.6%	19.9%	13.3%
Identified as LGBTQ+	23.3%	10.0%	10.0%
Home Region[5]			
Central	29.4%	17.6%	8.8%
Metro	50.0%	30.6%	25.0%
Northeast	40.0%	18.5%	10.8%
Southeast	46.2%	21.2%	13.5%
Western	32.9%	11.4%	10.0%
MA Community Type[6]			
Developing Suburbs	22.2%	7.4%	3.7%
Inner Core	48.9%	31.1%	24.4%
Maturing Suburbs	36.4%	9.1%	0.0%
Regional Urban Centers	41.5%	18.9%	12.8%
Grid Level[7]			
1	25.0%	6.3%	0.0%
2	43.2%	16.8%	10.5%
3	40.4%	17.3%	13.5%
4	39.7%	22.1%	16.2%
5	29.4%	23.5%	17.6%
6	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%

Key Findings

- The overall one-year recidivism rate for the 2019 cohort was 18.7%.
- The recidivism rate for young people whose sex assigned at birth was male was 20.9%, while the rate for young people whose sex assigned at birth was female was 5.4%. The recidivism rate for female youth in the 2019 cohort was notably lower than the rate for female youth in the 2018 cohort, which was 15.6%.
- Recidivism rates were highest for young people who identified as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latinx at 25.4% and 19.7%, respectively. In comparison, young people who identified as White had a recidivism rate of 9.8%, and those who identified as all other races had a rate of 6.3%.

[5] A young person's home region, or the region in which a young person lives or is from, is determined using their mailing address.

[6] A description of each community type can be found here: http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Massachusetts-Community-Types-Summary-July_2008.pdf.

[7] DYS uses Grid Level to reflect the severity of a particular offense: young people who commit more severe offenses are assigned a higher grid. Grid levels range from one to six, with one and two considered low, three considered medium, and four to six considered high.

- Young people who were committed to DYS at the ages of 13 and 19 had the highest recidivism rates at 40% each. This finding denotes a difference from the 2018 cohort, in which young people who experienced their first arraignments at 14 and 15 had the highest recidivism rates.
- Young people who identified as LGBTQ+ in the 2019 cohort[8] had a lower recidivism rate than young people who did not identify as LGBTQ+ (10% compared to 19.9%). This finding marks a change from the 2018 cohort, in which youth who identified as LGBTQ+ had a higher recidivism rate than non-LGBTQ+ youth (27.8% compared to 19.9%).
- Young people from the Metro region had the highest recidivism rate of all five home regions at 30.6%, followed by those from the Southeast region (21.2%).
- Across Massachusetts communities, young people from Inner Core cities had the highest recidivism rate at 31.1%.[9]
- Young people assigned a grid level of five or six—those adjudicated for more severe offenses—had the highest recidivism rates of all levels at 23.5% and 33.3%, respectively. This finding also marks a notable change from the 2018 cohort, in which youth with grid levels of two or three had the highest recidivism rates.
- The recidivism rate for Youthful Offenders (YO) was higher than that of non-YOs (23.8% compared to 17%).[10] YOs have had higher recidivism rates than non-YOs only three times since 2012. In addition to YOs in the 2019 cohort, YOs in the 2015 and 2018 cohorts had higher recidivism rates than non-YOs.
- Among young people in the 2019 cohort, recidivism rates were highest for those who were initially adjudicated on a motor vehicle offense (28.6%) or a public order offense (27.8%).
- Unlike in the 2018 cohort, young people in the 2019 cohort who were placed on a substance use treatment track had a slightly higher recidivism rate than those placed on a prevention track (18.8% compared to 17.2%).[11] This change was driven by a notable decrease in the recidivism rate for youth on the substance use prevention track from the 2018 cohort, in which youth on the prevention track had a recidivism rate of 29.1%, to the 2019 cohort.
- Young people who obtained a high school diploma or equivalency by the time they left DYS in 2019 had a similar recidivism rate as those who did not obtain a diploma or equivalency (18.8% compared to 18.6%). As discussed, this finding contrasts with previous trends showing that young people who leave DYS with a diploma or equivalency recidivate at lower rates than those who do not.

[8] Of the 257 youth who were discharged in 2019, 30 identified as LGBTQ+.

[9] According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (2008), Inner Core communities include high-density inner cities, as well as high-density suburbs near inner cities.

[10] A Youthful Offender is a young person between the ages of 14 and 18 who is charged with a felony and meets at least one of the following criteria: was previously committed to DYS, has been charged with a specific firearm offense, and/or is alleged to have committed an offense that involves the threat or infliction of serious bodily harm.

[11] The Substance Use Prevention Track is for all detained young people, and some committed young people who are not considered at high risk for developing a substance use disorder. Youth receive weekly substance use groups based on a

- Historically, young people who have opted to participate in the Youth Engaged in Services (YES) program have had lower recidivism rates than those who did not.[12] However, among the 2019 cohort, the recidivism rate for young people who transitioned into YES was slightly higher than the rate for those who did not (19.6% compared to 17.3%). Since 2014, the only other year when youth in YES had a higher recidivism rate than non-YES youth was 2017, when the difference was also about three percentage points. See Table 2 for year-by-year comparisons.

Table 2. Annual Recidivism Rates for YES and Non-YES Youth

Discharge Year	YES	Non-YES
2014	23.3%	25.9%
2015	21.7%	32.5%
2016	19.4%	28.7%
2017	29.1%	25.7%
2018	19.1%	20.6%
2019	19.6%	17.3%

introduction

The Department of Youth Services (DYS or “the Department”) is the juvenile justice agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Department’s mission is to foster positive outcomes for youth, build safer communities, and collaborate for an equitable and fair justice system. DYS envisions a Commonwealth where every young person has the skills, supports, and resources necessary to engage safely with their communities and lead productive and fulfilling lives. DYS invests in highly qualified staff and a service continuum that engages youth, families, and communities in strategies that support positive youth development. Decision-making at the Department is guided by values of fairness, transparency, racial equity, and integrity.

curriculum that is primarily psychoeducational in nature, one that examines the effects of substance use on the brain and body, the reasons for substance misuse, and the social and cultural history of substance use. The Treatment Track is for committed young people who are determined to have or be at high risk for a substance use disorder based on assessments and behavioral health history. Youth receive group and individual substance use treatment services based on a curriculum that educates them on the effects of substance abuse and teaches skills for navigating life by helping them make responsible decisions about their substance use.

[12] The Youth Engaged in Services (YES) program is offered to every young person discharged from DYS. The goal is to promote a successful reentry into the community. YES is voluntary, and youth can join the program anytime after release.

Services in Calendar Year 2019

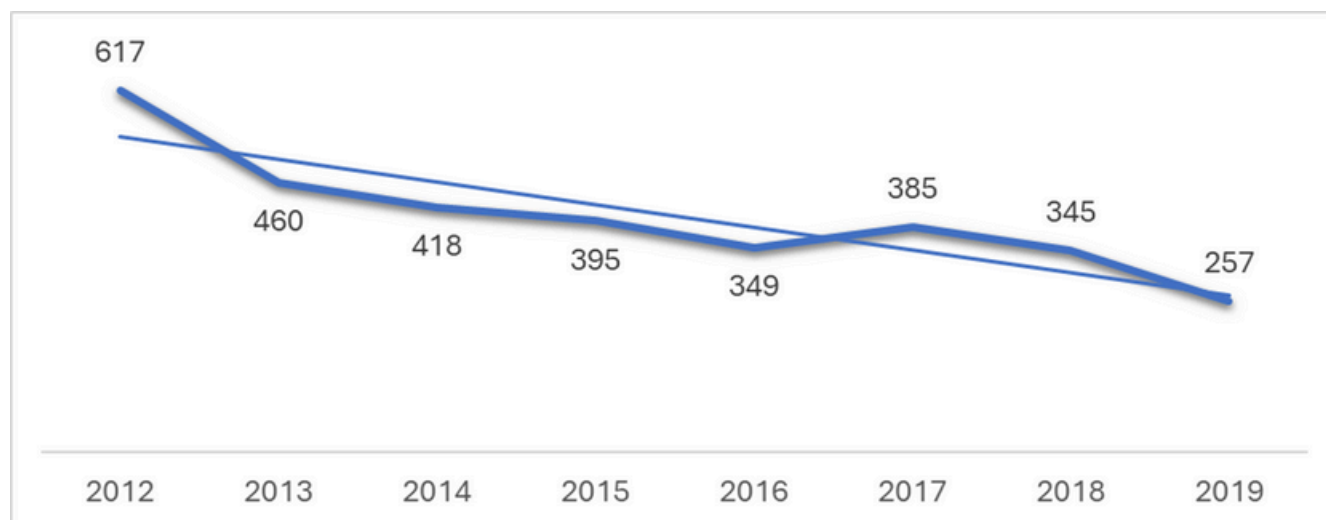
In 2019, DYS' continuum of services was comprised of:

- 47 staff secure and hardware secure residential programs, and
- 25 community-based district and satellite offices serving committed young people living in the community (residing with a parent, guardian, foster parent, or in an independent living program).

DYS Discharged Youth in Calendar Year 2019

In line with previous years, commitments to and discharges from DYS declined in 2019. Between 2018 and 2019, there was a 25.5% decrease in annual discharges, outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Annual Discharges From DYS Between 2012 and 2019



In 2019:

- Both the average and median age of discharged young people at the time of their commitment was 16.
- Young people whose sex assigned at birth was male comprised 85.6% of all youth discharged from the Department, while young people whose sex assigned at birth was female comprised 14.4%.
- The racial breakdown of young people discharged from DYS was 53.3% Hispanic/Latinx, 24.5% Black or African American, 15.9% White, and 6.2% all other races.
 - This breakdown represents a change from 2018. While the percentage of young people who identified as Black or African American, White, and other races decreased by about three percentage points each, the percentage of young people who identified as Hispanic/Latinx increased by over eight percentage points.

- Hispanic/Latinx and Black or African American youth continue to be overrepresented in DYS commitment. As noted above, DYS youth in the 2019 cohort were 53.3% Hispanic/Latinx and 24.5% Black or African American, while the percentages of Hispanic/Latinx and Black or African American youth in Massachusetts overall are 19.4% and 10.1%, respectively (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2022).
- The percentage of Youthful Offenders (YO) among young people discharged from DYS commitment was 24.5%.

full report findings

Defining Recidivism

Juvenile delinquency is often a predictor of illicit behaviors in adulthood (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2008). Successful re-entry for young people can be described, among other things, as having no further involvement with the criminal justice system.^[13] Although recent literature has called for a shift away from recidivism as the sole metric by which to assess successful re-entry (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022; National Institute of Justice, 2023), recidivism rates remain one of the only measures that is consistently examined by juvenile justice jurisdictions across the United States. To track recidivism, states and institutions employ different methodologies. Some states, like Illinois, use a three-year timespan to analyze recidivism, while others, like North Carolina, study the issue over a one- or two-year period. In Massachusetts, DYS defines recidivism as a conviction in the adult system for an offense committed within one year of a young person being discharged from the Department's custody. The time to recidivism is calculated by determining the number of days between the date of a young person's discharge and the date of the arraignment that led to a conviction.

The Department's vision is for young people to engage safely with their communities and lead productive and fulfilling lives. Therefore, DYS sees a conviction for an offense as an adult to be an undesirable outcome. Juvenile justice researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike have observed the far-reaching consequences of recidivism. For example, research has shown that young people who recidivate are far less likely to graduate from high school and have a higher propensity to experience substance use disorders (Kirk & Sampson, 2013; Welty et al., 2017). The need to implement effective

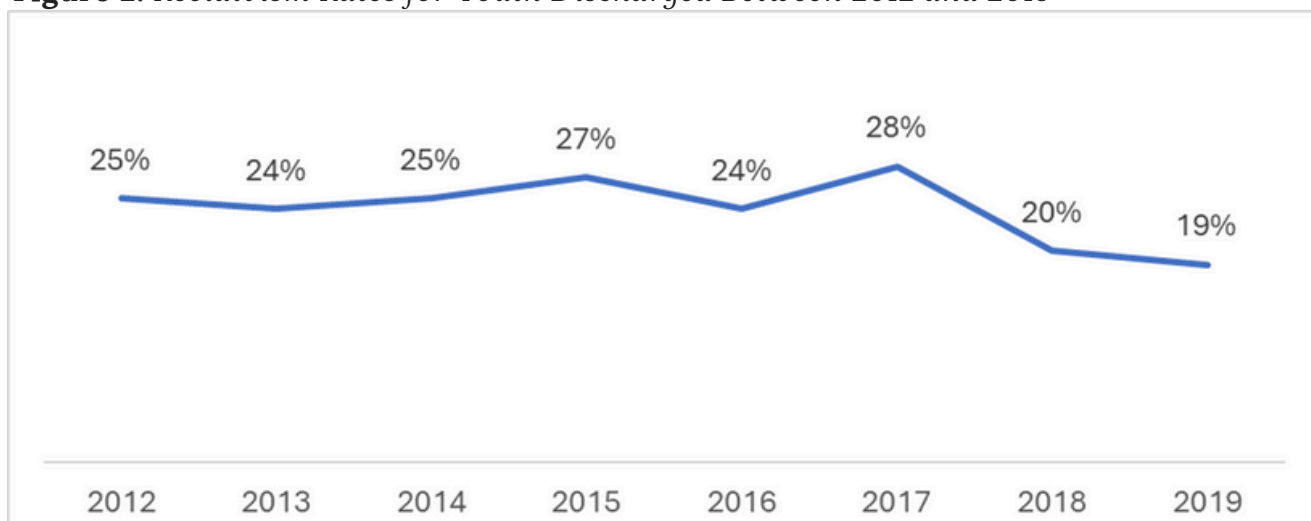
[13] Successfully enrolling and completing post-secondary education is another metric used to measure long-term success, as well as obtaining gainful employment post-adjudication.

policies and programs to prevent young people from re-engaging with the justice system after discharge is apparent. Still, DYS recognizes that relying on a conviction as a recidivism metric is not without peril due to factors that contribute to policing patterns, arrest and charging decisions, and case outcomes in the communities that we serve, including, but not limited to, systemic racism, implicit biases, and variations in available behavioral health and substance use resources. When interpreting and acting on the following findings, it is essential to be mindful of these factors.

Overall Trends

Historically, about 1 in 4 young people discharged from DYS recidivate within one year, but this rate has fluctuated by cohort and decreased over time. For example, while about 25% of young people discharged between 2012 and 2017 recidivated within one year, only about 20% of young people in the 2018 and 2019 cohorts recidivated. This decrease over time can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Recidivism Rates for Youth Discharged Between 2012 and 2019*



Among young people discharged in 2019:

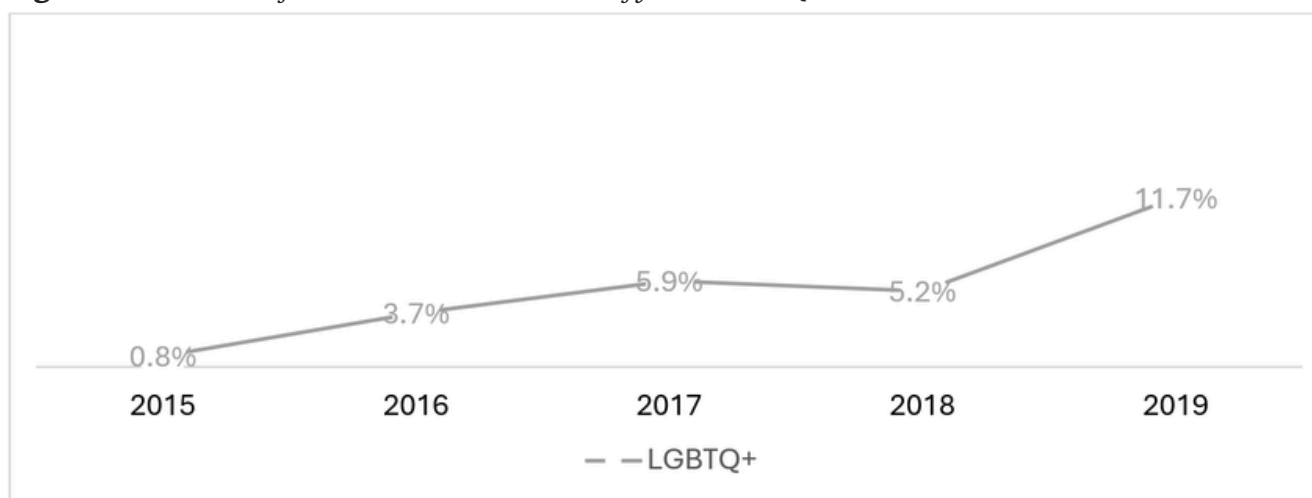
- 39.3% were re-arraigned within one year due to technical violations or new arrests.
- 18.7% were found guilty and thus, for the purpose of this study, are considered to have recidivated.
- 12.8% were incarcerated in the adult system.

Gender, Race, and LGBTQ+ Outcomes

Young people whose sex assigned at birth was male accounted for over 85% of the young people discharged in 2019. This over-representation of male youth is in line with historical trends and exists among those who recidivated as well. Of the 48 young people who recidivated in the 2019 cohort, 46 were young people whose sex assigned at birth was male, and two were young people whose sex assigned at birth was female. Also in keeping with historical trends, male youth in the 2019 cohort were more likely to recidivate than female youth (20.9% compared to 5.4%). Notably, the recidivism rate for female youth discharged in 2019 was 10 percentage points lower than the rate for female youth discharged in 2018.

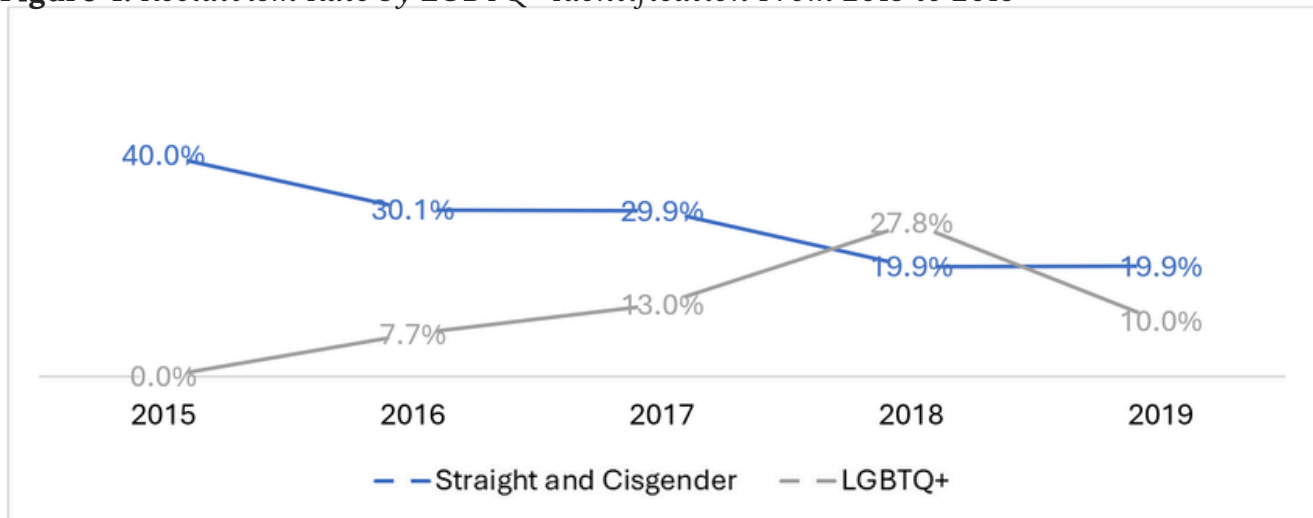
The percentage of young people in DYS commitment who identify as LGBTQ+ has steadily increased over time.[14] While the recidivism rate for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ has also increased in prior years, there was a decrease in recidivism among LGBTQ+ youth between the 2018 and 2019 cohorts. Only 10% of young people who identified as LGBTQ+ in the 2019 cohort recidivated, compared to 27.8% of young people who identified as LGBTQ+ in the 2018 cohort. This 10% recidivism rate was also lower than the rate for young people who did not identify as LGBTQ+ in the 2019 cohort, which was 19.9%. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

Figure 3. Percent of DYS Youth Who Identify as LGBTQ+ From 2015 to 2019



[14] This increase does not necessarily mean that there is a greater number of young people who identify as LGBTQ+ committing offenses today than in prior years. The increase may be related to DYS's expanded efforts to collect LGBTQ+ data more accurately and consistently across its continuum by routinely asking young people how they identify and providing multiple opportunities for youth to update their self-identification.

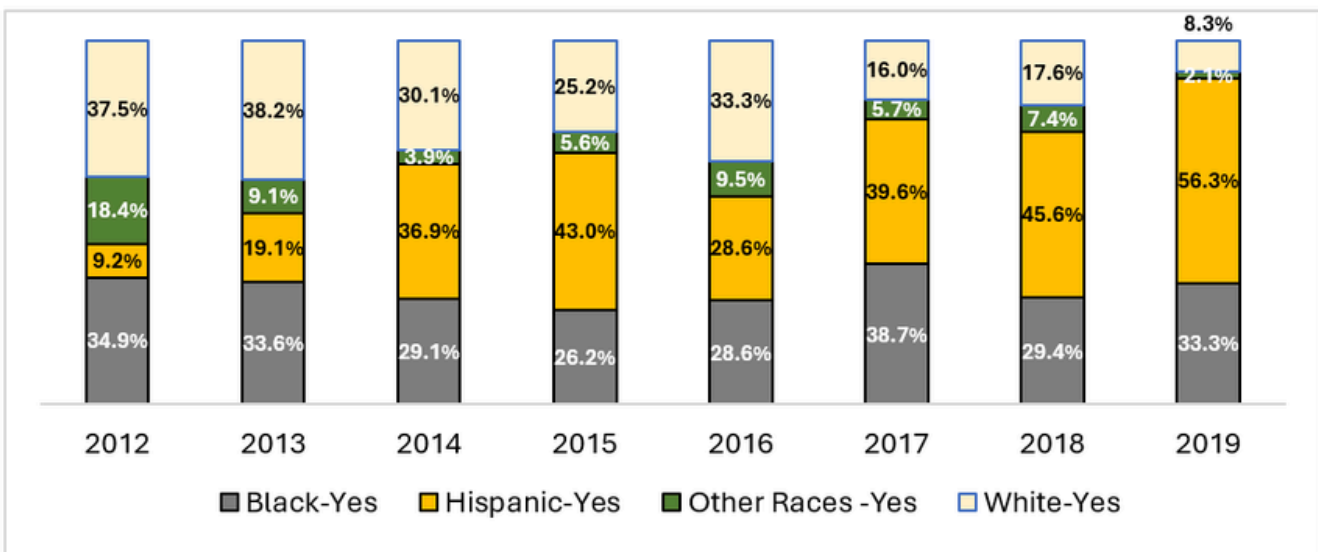
Figure 4. Recidivism Rate by LGBTQ+ Identification From 2015 to 2019



Looking at race and ethnicity, the recidivism rates for young people who identified as Hispanic/Latinx and Black or African American were about twice as high as the rate for young people who identified as White: 25.4% of Black or African American youth and 19.7% of Hispanic/Latinx youth recidivated after leaving the Department in 2019, compared to 9.8% of White youth and 6.3% of youth of other races.

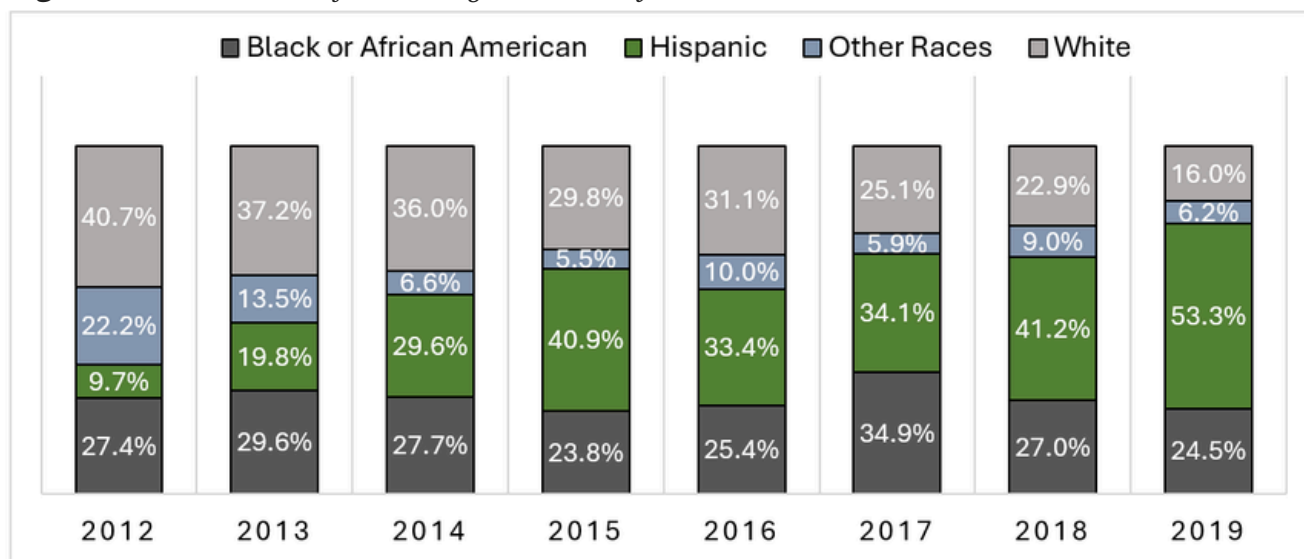
The racial breakdown of young people who recidivate has shifted dramatically over the years. This shift is most pronounced for young people who identify as White or Hispanic/Latinx. In 2012, 37.5% of all young people who recidivated identified as White, and 9.2% identified as Hispanic/Latinx. In contrast, only 8.3% of young people who recidivated after exiting DYS in 2019 identified as White, whereas 56.3% identified as Hispanic/Latinx. The percentage of recidivating youth who identify as Black or African American has remained relatively consistent (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Breakdown of Recidivism Rate by Race From 2012 to 2019



This change in the racial breakdown of recidivating youth matches the change in the racial breakdown of young people committed to and discharged from the Department overall. Since 2012, the percentage of Hispanic/Latinx youth in DYS has increased considerably, as illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Breakdown of Discharged Youth by Race From 2012 to 2019



Offense Type

Though fewest in number, young people initially adjudicated for a motor vehicle offense had the highest recidivism rate of all offense types at 28.6%, followed by those who were committed for public order offenses (27.8%). The 2019 cohort marks the third year in a row in which young people who were adjudicated for motor vehicle offenses had the highest recidivism rates. In contrast, young people who were adjudicated for property or drug offenses had the lowest recidivism rates at 14% and 10%, respectively.

Table 3. Recidivism for DYS Youth Discharged in 2019 by Offense

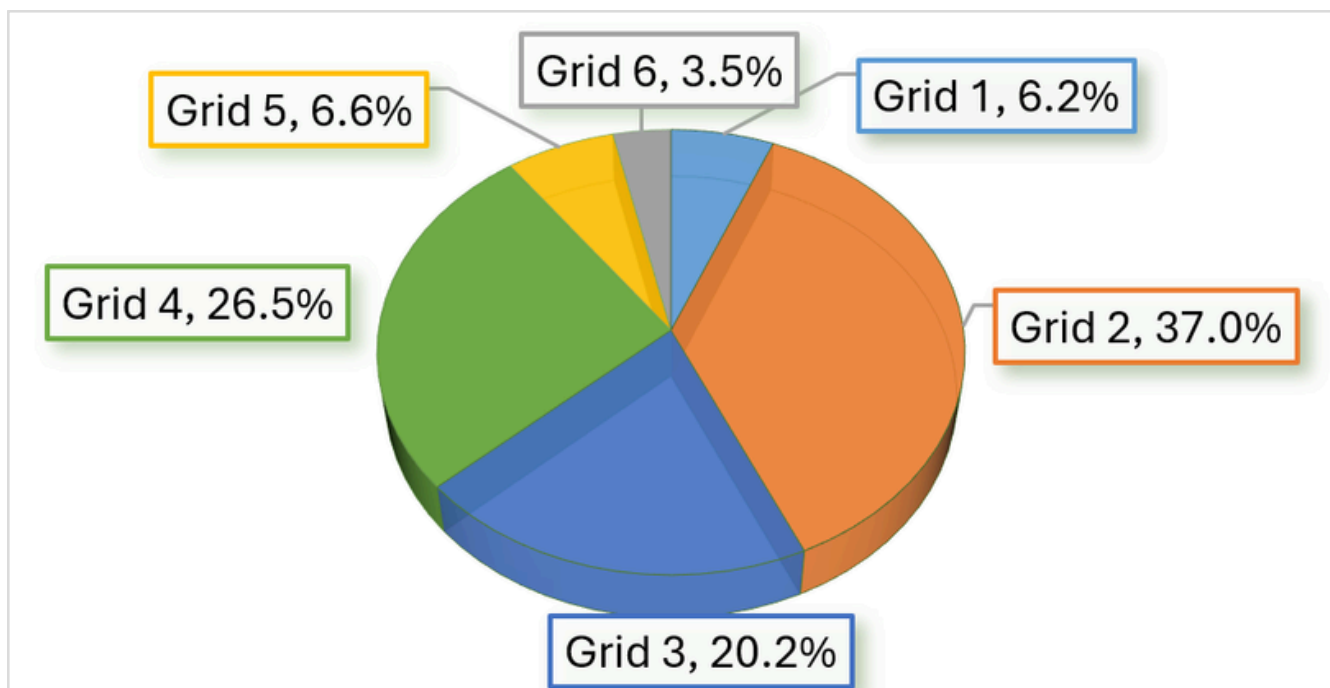
Offense Type	Youth Who Recidivated	Total Youth	Recidivism Rate
Drugs	1	10	10.0%
Motor Vehicle	2	7	28.6%
Person	23	123	18.7%
Property	8	57	14.0%
Public Order	5	18	27.8%
Weapons	9	42	21.4%

Grid Level

Grid level is used to reflect the severity of a particular offense, with more severe offenses having higher grid numbers. Grid levels range from one to six, with grids one and two considered low, three considered medium, and four to six considered high.

Grid level plays an important role in determining placement type. Young people adjudicated for high grid level offenses are often placed in hardware-secure facilities, whereas those adjudicated for low grid level offenses are usually placed in staff-secure facilities.[15] Of the young people discharged in 2019, 63.4% had been adjudicated for an offense with a grid level between one and three, indicating that most were adjudicated for less severe offenses (see Figure 8).

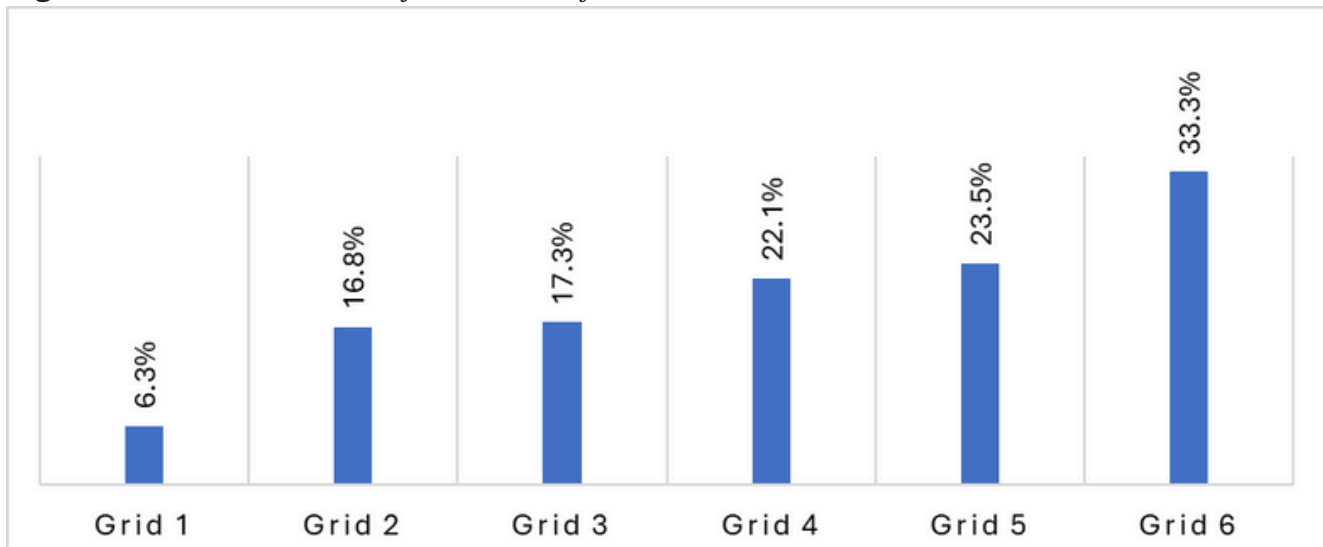
Figure 8. Breakdown of Youth Discharged in 2019 by Grid Level



Among the 2019 cohort, recidivism rates were positively correlated with grid level. Young people who were adjudicated for grid level five or six offenses had the highest rates of recidivism at 23.5% and 33.3%, respectively (see Figure 9).

[15] Hardware secure facilities are DYS' most secure facilities. The movement of young people within a hardware secure facility is limited by locked doors into the facility and within the unit. Young people in hardware secure facilities are locked in their rooms during sleeping hours and escorted by staff within the facilities at all times during the day. In contrast, staff secure facilities are residential facilities where staff and adherence to policy provide the security for young people. The facility itself is not locked, and young people are not locked in their rooms.

Figure 9. *Recidivism Rate by Grid Level for the 2019 Cohort*



Cities

Twelve cities across Massachusetts had at least six young people discharged from DYS commitment in 2019 (see Table 4). Among those 12 cities, New Bedford and Worcester youth had the highest recidivism rates at 42.9% and 35.3%, respectively.

Table 4. *Recidivism Rates for Cities With the Greatest Number of Discharged Youth*

City	Youth Who Recidivated	Total Youth	Recidivism Rate
Boston	2	6	33.3%
Brockton	4	12	33.3%
Dorchester	3	11	27.3%
Fall River	1	7	14.3%
Holyoke	1	6	16.7%
Lawrence	4	15	26.7%
Lowell	3	9	33.3%
Lynn	2	12	16.7%
Mattapan	2	6	33.3%
New Bedford	3	7	42.9%
Springfield	4	33	12.1%
Worcester	6	17	35.3%

Home Regions

Of the 48 young people in the 2019 cohort who recidivated, 25% were from the Northeast region (see Figure 10). This finding marks a change from the 2018 cohort, in which only 15.5% of young people who recidivated were from the Northeast. The lowest percentage

of recidivism occurred among youth from the Central region at 12.5%, which has been a relatively consistent pattern over the past six years (see Figure 11).

Figure 10. Breakdown of Recidivism Rate by Home Region for the 2019 Cohort

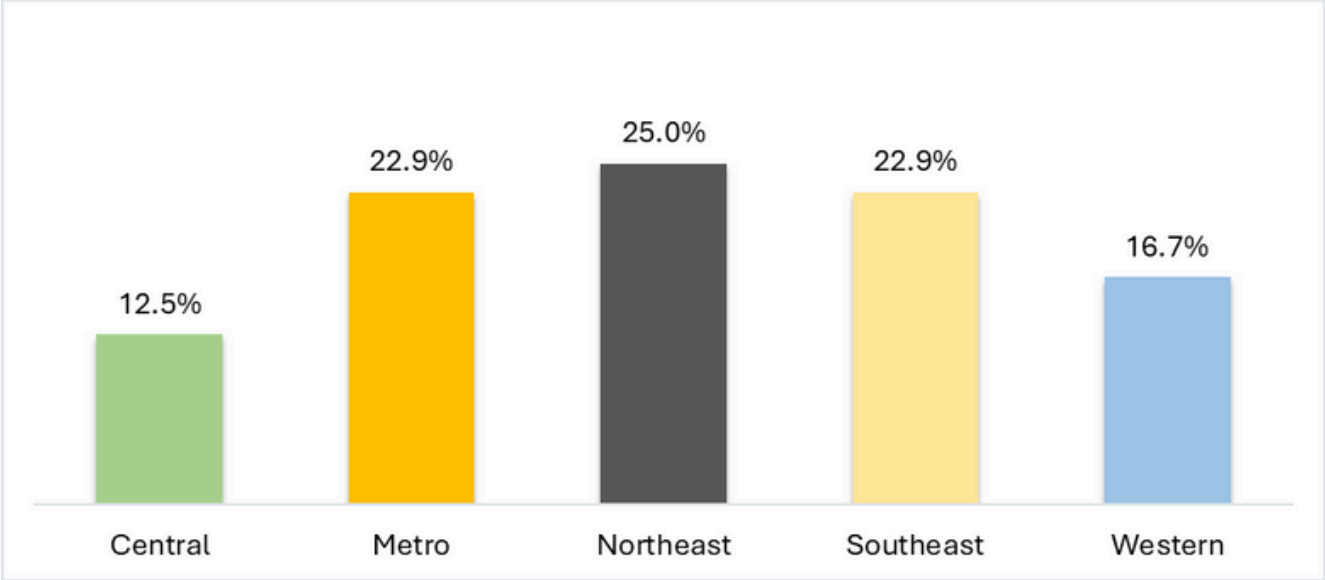
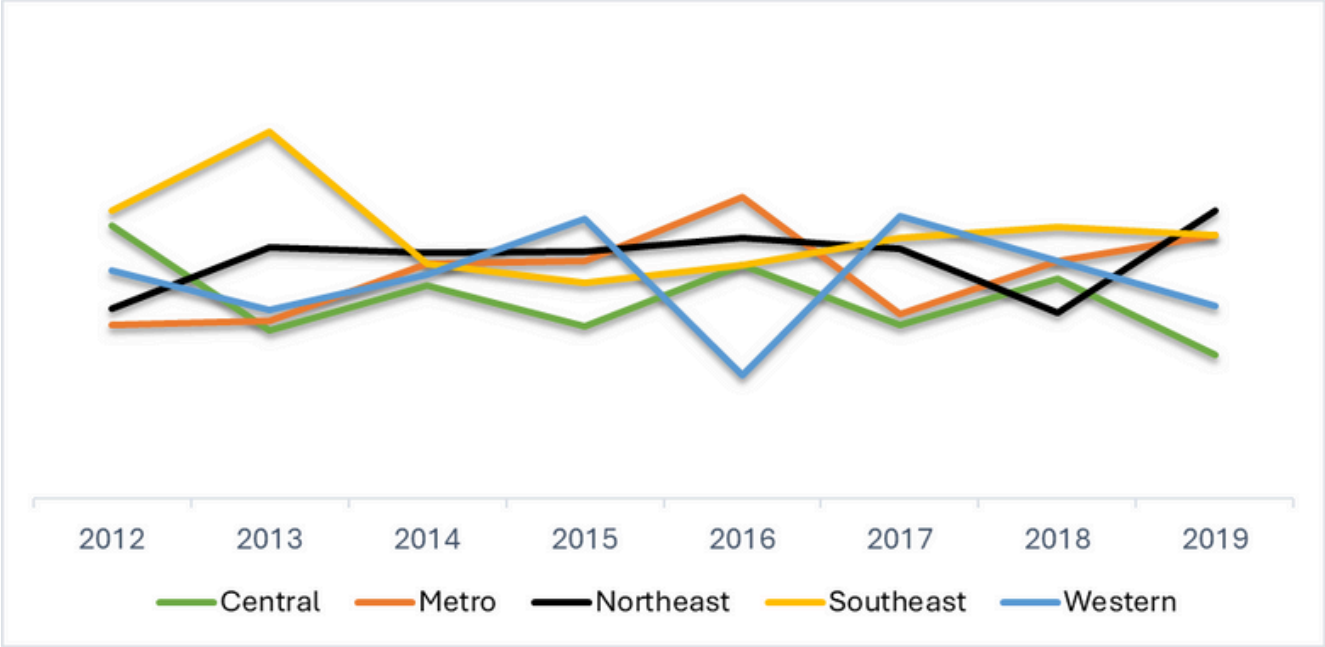


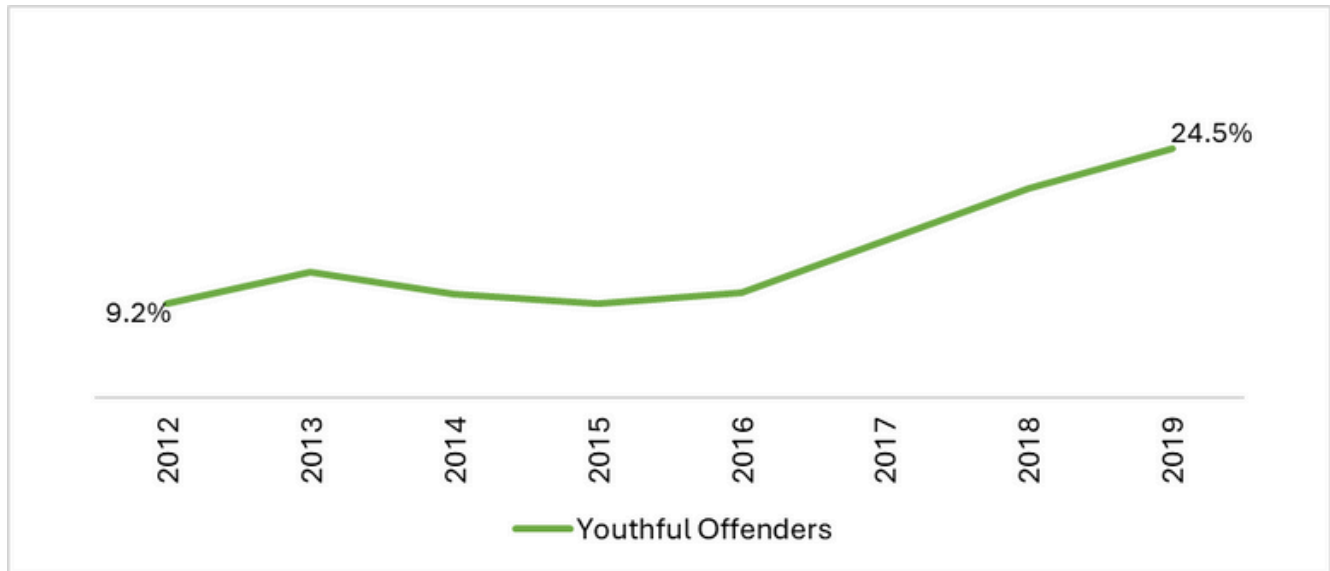
Figure 11. Breakdown of Recidivism Rate by Home Region From 2012 to 2019



Youthful Offenders

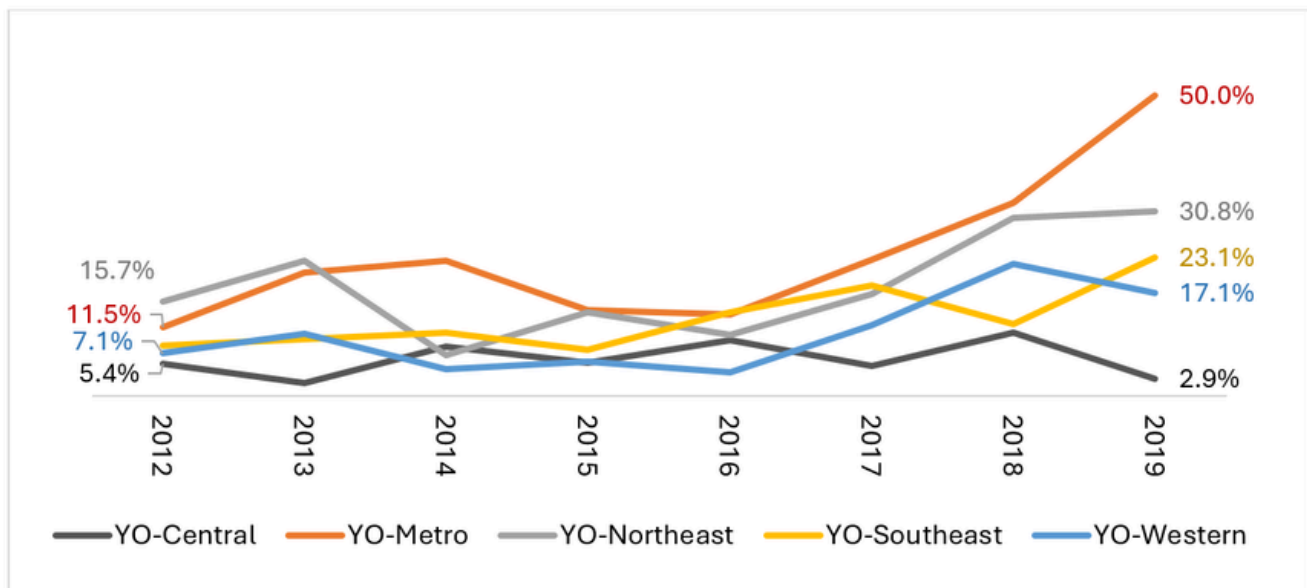
The proportion of Youthful Offenders (YO) in DYS has steadily risen. Among young people discharged in 2019, 24.5% were classified as YOs. This percentage represents a 166% increase in the proportion of YOs since 2012 (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Percent of Youthful Offenders in DYS From 2012 to 2019



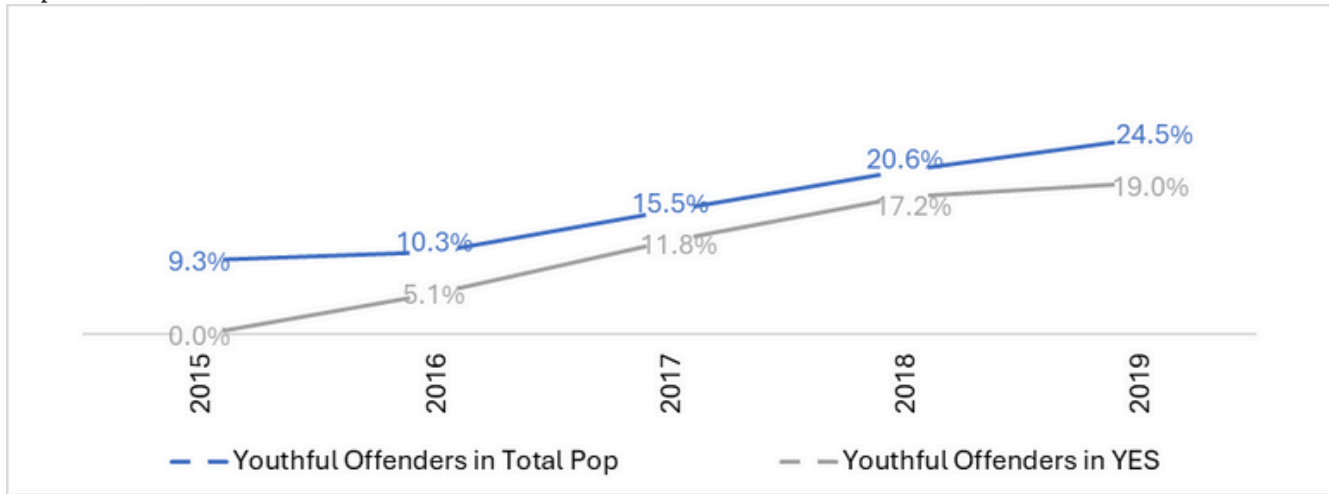
Such rapid growth was most pronounced in four of the Department's five regions: over the past seven years, the percentage of YOs in DYS went from 15.7% to 30.8% in the Northeast region, 11.5% to 50% in the Metro region, 8.4% to 23.1% in the Southeast region, and 7.1% to 17.1% in the Western region (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Regional Trends in Percent of Youthful Offenders in DYS From 2012 to 2019



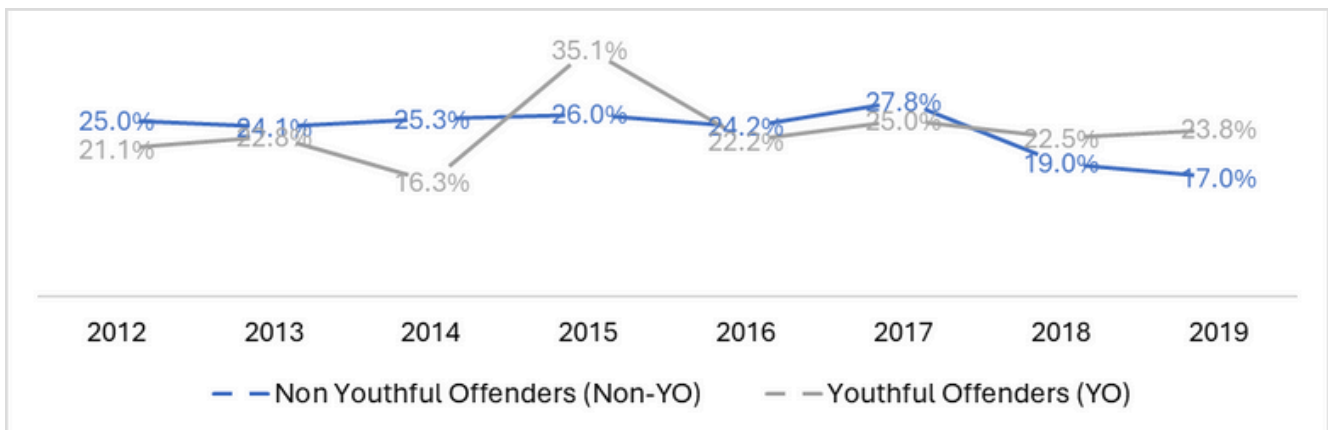
Increases in the percentage of YOs who opt to participate in the Youth Engaged in Services (YES) program have been similar to increases in the proportion of YOs in DYS overall. In 2019, 19% of YOs elected to take part in the YES program (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Percent of Youthful Offenders in the YES Program Compared to Their Overall Population in DYS



Between the 2018 and 2019 cohorts, the percentage of YOs who recidivated after leaving DYS commitment increased slightly from 22.5% to 23.8% (see Figure 15). In contrast, recidivism among non-YOs decreased from 19% to 17%.

Figure 15. Recidivism Trends for Youthful Offenders vs. Non-Youthful Offenders From 2012 to 2019



High School Attainment

Among young people discharged in 2019, 39.3% left with a high school diploma or equivalency (e.g., HiSet or GED).[16] The 2019 cohort saw a notable decline in high school attainment for young people whose sex assigned at birth was female, dropping from

[16] This percentage includes young people who had already received an attainment before being committed. Of the young people discharged in 2019, 4% had an educational attainment prior to their commitment.

51.1% in the 2018 cohort to 40.5%. Graduation rates for young people whose sex assigned at birth was male also declined but to a lesser extent (from 42.7% in the 2018 cohort to 39.1% in the 2019 cohort).

Still, high school attainment has been on the rise at DYS overall. The average percentage of young people who attain a diploma or equivalency by the time they are discharged from DYS has increased from 27.5% in 2015 to 45.4% in 2022, though this percentage differs across regions. In 2019, 50% of all young people discharged from the Metro region left with a diploma or equivalency, compared to 32.7% of young people from the Southeast region (see Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 16. High School Attainment Rate by Home Region From 2015 to 2022

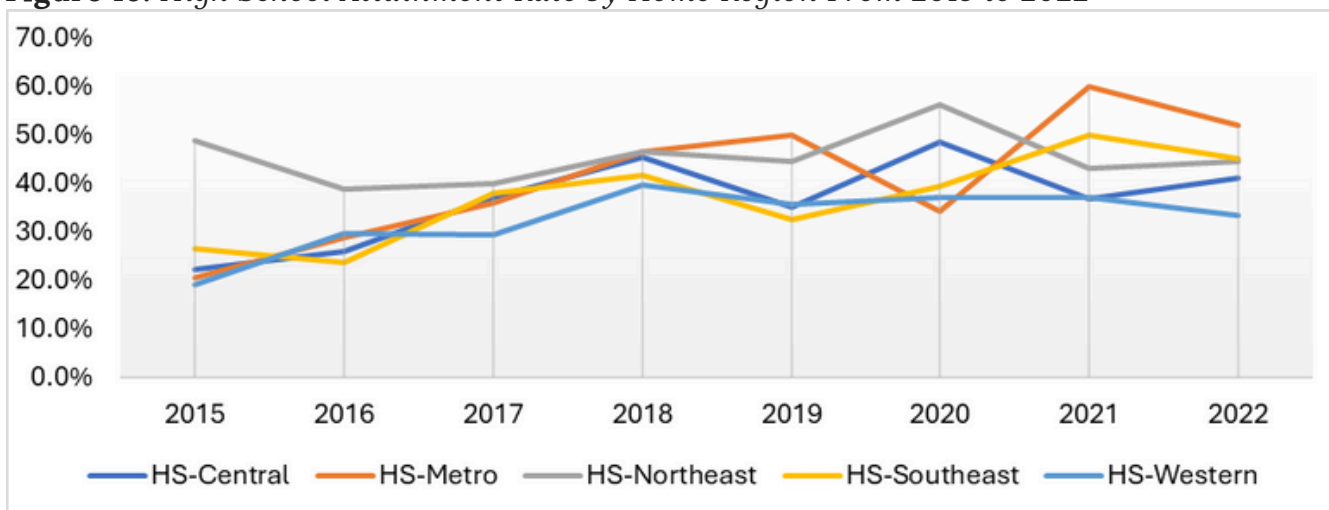
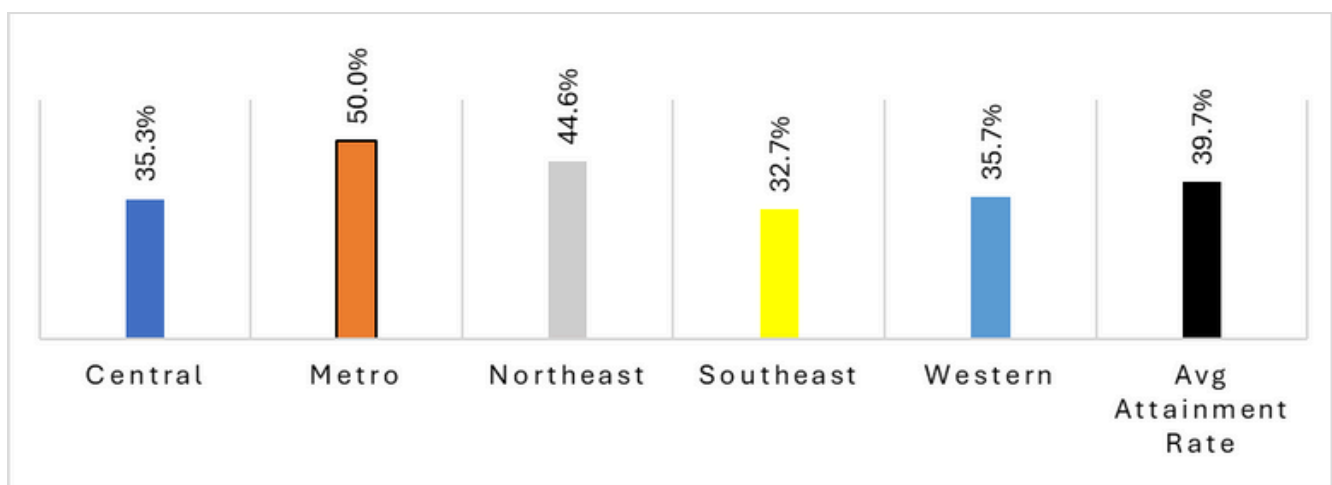


Figure 17. High School Attainment by Home Region for the 2019 Cohort



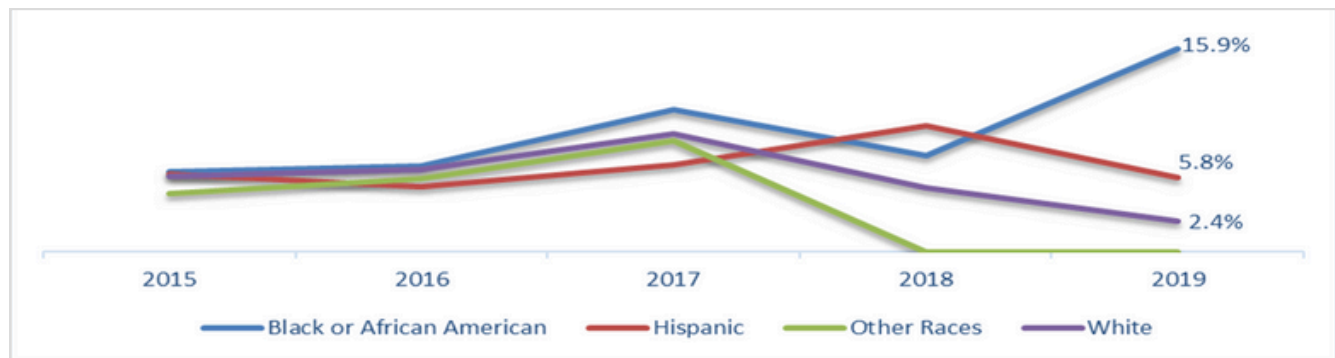
Although educational attainment has historically been a protective factor against recidivism, young people who exited DYS with a high school diploma or equivalency in 2019 had a similar recidivism rate as those who left without a diploma or equivalency (18.8% and 18.6%, respectively).

Looking specifically at the 48 young people who recidivated by race and ethnicity:

- 15.9% of Black or African American youth had a diploma or equivalency.
- 5.8% of Hispanic/Latinx youth had a diploma or equivalency.
- 2.4% of White youth had a diploma or equivalent.

In both the 2018 and 2019 cohorts, no young people of other races who left DYS with a diploma or equivalency recidivated. Additionally, after remaining relatively consistent, the percentage of young people who had a diploma or equivalency when they recidivated decreased for Hispanic/Latinx and White youth between the 2018 and 2019 cohorts while increasing for Black or African American youth (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Percentage of Recidivating Youth With a High School Diploma or Equivalency by Race

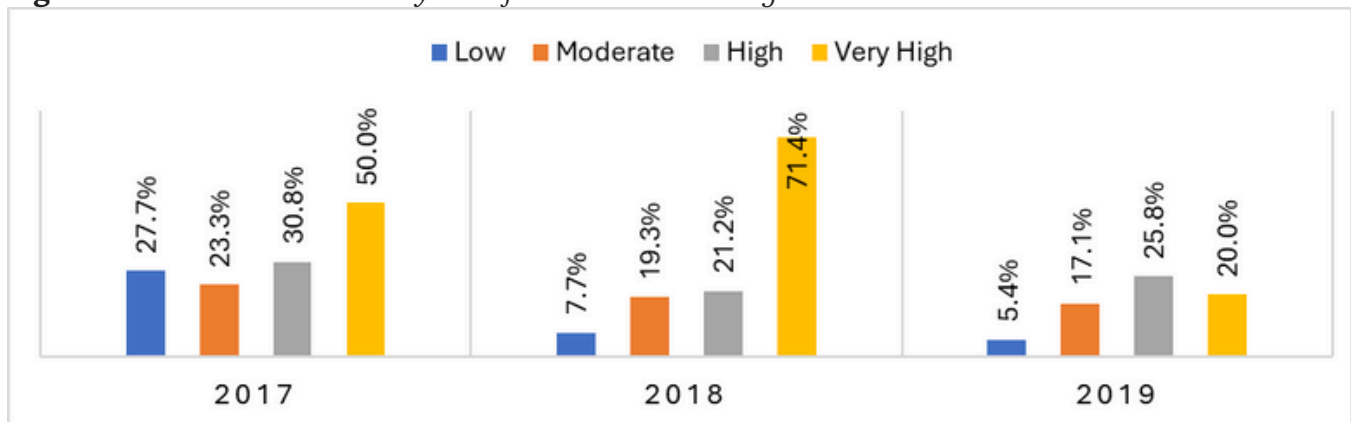


Youth Level of Service Inventory

The Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLS) is one of several instruments DYS uses to understand a young person's criminogenic needs. It is a validated and reliable tool that "assesses the risk for recidivism by measuring 42 risk/need factors over [eight] domains: Prior and Current Offenses, Family Circumstances/Parenting, Education/Employment, Peer Relations, Substance Abuse, Leisure/Recreation, Personality/Behavior, and Attitudes/Orientation" (Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, 2023, p. 1).

DYS has collected reliable YLS data since 2017. After assessment, a young person can be classified as Low, Moderate, High, or Very High risk. Of the 48 young people in the 2019 cohort who recidivated, 52% had a YLS classification of High or Very High. Young people with a YLS of High had the highest recidivism rate of any group at 25.8%. Notably, there was a substantial decrease in the recidivism rate for young people with a Very High YLS between the 2018 and 2019 cohorts, when the recidivism rate for young people with a Very High classification dropped from 71.4% to 20% (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Recidivism Rate by YLS for Youth Discharged in 2019



Youth Placement Conditions

The Department employs a continuum-of-care model that places young people in different types of programs and facilities throughout their treatment. Ideally, as their treatment progresses, a young person is expected to move from a more secure facility to a less secure setting, which may include a staff secure program or their home under DYS supervision. The progression from a hardware secure facility to a staff secure program is called a “step down.” In some instances, a young person may move from a less secure program to a more secure one, called a “step up.” Disruptions in a treatment plan are typically due to young people experiencing behavioral challenges while in a residential facility or committing a new offense while in community supervision.

In the 2019 cohort, the recidivism rate was highest for young people who were moved down in security to a staff secure program, at 26.7%. This percentage marks a substantial change from the 2018 cohort, in which only 14.7% of young people who were moved down in security recidivated.

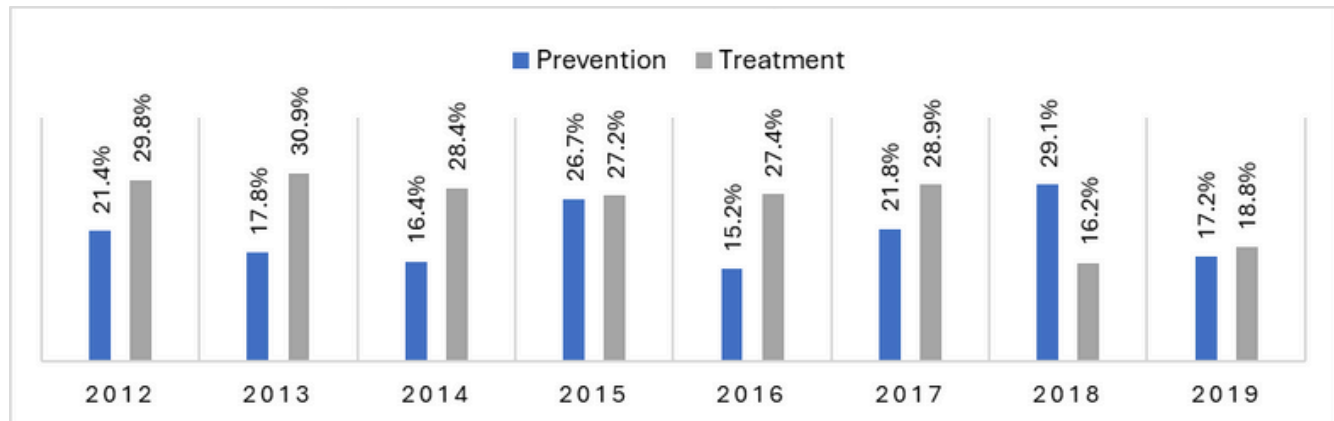
Table 5. Recidivism Rate by Placement Type

Placement Types	Recidivism Rate
Step Down	26.7%
Step Up	25.0%
Hardware Secure Only	23.9%
Staff Secure Only	17.3%
Released After Assessment	3.8%
Placed with DCF	0.0%

Substance Use Track

Of young people discharged in 2019, 70.4% were deemed at risk of substance use and placed in a treatment track program, and 22.6% were considered suitable to be placed in a prevention track.[17] The recidivism rate for those placed on the treatment track was 18.8%, which was slightly higher than the rate for those placed on the prevention track, at 17.2%.

Figure 20. *Recidivism Rate by Treatment Track*



empirical analysis

Research has identified several factors that influence the likelihood of youth recidivism, including gender, age at first commitment, race, substance use, gang affiliation, offense type, offense severity, offense history, geographic location, educational attainment, length of treatment, and placement type (Barrett & Katsiyannis, 2015). Some studies also suggest that young people who are transferred to the adult system exhibit greater recidivism than their peers (Myers, 2003).

In this section, we explore the extent to which many of the factors mentioned above influence recidivism in Massachusetts. Specifically, we used a logistic regression to test which variables contributed most to the likelihood of recidivism among the 257 young people who were discharged from DYS in 2019.[18]

[17] Data were missing for about 6.2% of young people, and 0.78% of young people only received an assessment.

[18] The null hypothesis for our regression analysis was that none of our independent variables (e.g., race, sex assigned at birth) had a statistically significant relationship with our dependent variable of recidivism. The alternative hypothesis for our regression analysis was that at least one of our predictor variables had a statistically significant relationship with recidivism.

Our dependent variable of interest is the binary variable, “Recidivism,” coded as follows:

- 1: If the young person was re-arraigned and found guilty of a crime within one year of being discharged from DYS.
- 0: If otherwise.

The independent, or predictor, variables tested in the model included:

- “Race”: A young person’s self-identified race.
- “Birth_Sex”: A young person’s sex assigned at birth (either “Male” or “Female”).
- “MSO_Grid”: Offense severity (measured by grid level).
- “LGBTQ+”: Whether a young person self-identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community (coded as “Yes” or “No”).
- “Y_O”: Whether a young person was a Youthful Offender.
- “Total_Resident_Days”: Total days a young person spent in a residential program.
- “Treatment_LOS”: A young person’s length of stay (LOS) in treatment.
- “Age_Initial_Commit”: A young person’s age when they were committed.
- “Age_at_Disch”: A young person’s age when they were discharged.
- “Region”: DYS geographic regions.
- “LAST_SA_TrackPrevention”: Whether a young person was dealing with a substance use disorder and placed in a treatment program versus a prevention program.
- “YES_Transition”: Whether a young person opted to participate in the state-sponsored YES program after discharge.
- “Most_Recent_YLS”: A young person’s most recent risk level on the YLS.
- “Offense_Type”: The type of offense a young person was initially adjudicated on.
- “HS_Diploma”: Obtaining a high school diploma or equivalency before discharge.

To determine whether a variable was a statistically significant contributor to recidivism, we used a p-value threshold of 0.05.[19]

[19] A p-value is a measure of probability that is used to help determine whether the results of a study or experiment are statistically significant. The p-value tells you the likelihood of observing your obtained results, assuming that there is no real effect (i.e., that the null hypothesis is true). In this study, a p-value threshold of 0.05 means that we considered a variable to be a statistically significant predictor of recidivism (our dependent variable) only if there was a less than 5% chance that there was no real effect or relationship between the variables. In other words, a low p-value suggested that our results—the association between the predictor variable and recidivism—were unlikely to be due to chance alone.

Model Results

Table 6. Influence of Different Factors on the Likelihood of Youth Recidivating

	Odd Ratios	Std. Error	Z Value	Pr(> z)	Signif.
(Intercept)	32760369	11.247	1.62	0.1053	
RaceBlack or African American	1.69	0.740	0.711	0.4768	
RaceHispanic	3.11	0.662	1.716	0.0862	
RaceOther Race	0.50	1.238	-0.562	0.5742	
Birth_SexMale	10.19	1.131	2.053	0.0401	*
as.numeric(MSO_Grid)	1.09	0.219	0.403	0.6870	
LGBTQ.No	0.52	1.029	-0.627	0.5308	
Y_YO	39.30	1.867	1.966	0.0493	*
Total_Resident_Days	1.00	0.001	1.01	0.3126	
Treatment_LOS	1.00	0.001	-0.816	0.4143	
Age_Initial_Commit	1.07	0.235	0.288	0.7730	
Age_at_Disch	0.28	0.654	-1.926	0.0541	
RegionCentral	0.66	0.817	-0.506	0.6128	
RegionNortheast	0.21	0.688	-2.252	0.0243	*
RegionSoutheast	0.72	0.686	-0.478	0.6330	
RegionWestern	0.22	0.712	-2.135	0.0327	*
LAST_SA_TrackPrevention	1.63	0.500	0.973	0.3306	
YES_TransitionYes	2.02	0.502	1.404	0.1602	
Most_Recent_YLSVery High	0.73	1.028	-0.304	0.7608	
Most_Recent_YLSLow	0.08	0.938	-2.704	0.0069	**
Most_Recent_YLSModerate	0.37	0.461	-2.175	0.0296	*
Offense_TypeMotor Vehicle	1.61	0.985	0.483	0.6287	
Offense_TypeDrugs	0.32	1.215	-0.947	0.3436	
Offense_TypeProperty	1.22	0.554	0.357	0.7212	
Offense_TypePublic Order	2.00	0.668	1.038	0.2994	
Offense_TypeWeapons	1.31	0.577	0.462	0.6441	
HS_DiplomaYes	1.30	0.492	0.535	0.5924	

* = statistically significant at 0.05

** = statistically significant at 0.01

Model Summary

Factors That Predicted Recidivism

- The regression model indicates that Youthful Offenders (YO) were the group most at risk of recidivating. After controlling for other factors, YOs had 39 times greater odds of recidivating than non-YOs [Odd Ratio (OR) of 39.30].
- Young people whose sex assigned sex at birth was male had 10 times greater odds of recidivating than young people whose sex assigned sex at birth was female (OR of 10.19).
- Young people from the Northeast and Western regions were significantly less likely to recidivate than those from the Metro region (ORs of 0.21 and 0.22, respectively).
- Young people with a Low or Moderate YLS were significantly less likely to recidivate than those with a High YLS (ORs of 0.08 and 0.37, respectively).

Factors That Did Not Predict Recidivism

- No race was more or less likely to recidivate after controlling for other factors. Therefore, for the 2019 cohort, race was not a significant predictor of recidivism.
- Neither age at commitment nor age at discharge were significant predictors of recidivism.
- The likelihood of a young person recidivating was not significantly influenced by the number of days they spent in a residential program or the length of time in treatment.
- Neither grid level nor offense type were significant predictors of recidivism.
- Whether a young person identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community did not significantly influence their likelihood to recidivate.
- Whether a young person was deemed to have a substance use disorder and placed on a treatment track did not have a significant influence on recidivism.
- Participating in the YES program did not influence the likelihood of recidivism.
- Exiting DYS with a high school diploma or equivalency did not influence recidivism.

c o n c l u s i o n

Total discharges from DYS maintained a downward trend in 2019, decreasing 25.5% from 2018. A similar decline in the overall recidivism rate accompanied this decrease. Among young people who left DYS supervision in 2019, 18.7% were found guilty of an adult offense within one year and thus are considered to have recidivated. This recidivism rate is the lowest that the Department has seen since 2012. Moreover, an even smaller percentage of discharged young people—12.8%—were found guilty of offenses for which they were incarcerated.

Our regression model revealed that Youthful Offenders (YO) had the greatest odds of recidivating, and young people classified as Low risk on the Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLS) had the lowest odds of recidivating. Additionally, young people whose sex assigned at birth was male had nearly 10 times greater odds of recidivating than young people whose sex assigned at birth was female. Lastly, a geographical analysis indicated that young people from the Metro region were the most likely to recidivate of any region, while those from the Northeast and Western regions were the least likely.

Unlike previous findings, the recidivism rate among young people who left DYS with a diploma or equivalency in 2019 was about the same as the rate for those who left without a diploma or equivalency, implying that high school attainment was not a protective factor for this cohort.[20] The regression model also did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the likelihood to recidivate by race, LGBTQ+ identification, length of time spent in a residential program or treatment, age at commitment or discharge, or participation in the YES program.

Still, data in this report illuminate the importance of continuing to study trends by race. Over 80% of young people in DYS now identify as youth of color, which marks a dramatic shift in the racial makeup of the Department's population over the past seven years. In 2012, Hispanic/Latinx youth represented less than 10% of young people discharged, compared to 53.3% of those discharged in the 2019 cohort. In contrast, the percentage of discharged White youth decreased from 40.7% in 2012 to 16.4% in 2019. Examining the factors contributing to these changes will be necessary to ensure that DYS policies and practices are equitable and fair and mitigate systemic disparities wherever possible.

Looking Forward

DYS is committed to expanding the metrics we use in our reentry research to go beyond recidivism rates alone and better capture the dynamic factors critical to reentry success. Knowing that recidivism rates are impacted by various neighborhood- and community-level factors, including environmental inequities and structural racism across the criminal legal continuum, DYS has begun identifying and investigating strengths-based youth outcomes to broaden the conceptualization of positive and successful reentry experiences. As part of this effort, DYS partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the CERES Institute for Children and Youth at Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development

[20] Our regression model confirmed this fact. The variable "HS_Diploma," representing whether a young person exited DYS with a diploma or equivalency, was not statistically significant.

to analyze the relationships between juvenile justice involvement and youth educational outcomes. [The first report from this partnership](#) was released in March 2023 and explores secondary and postsecondary attainment among justice-involved young people in Massachusetts. Forthcoming DYS research will continue to explore educational and vocational attainment, as well as other strengths-based measures, as part of a broader conceptualization of reentry success.

DYS has also begun identifying measures of desistance that will be critical for understanding which treatments and interventions best support young people in making progress on their reentry journeys. Future reports from the Department will explore changes in the frequency and severity of offending among young people who are re-adjudicated while still committed to DYS and young adults convicted of adult offenses after being discharged from DYS. The Department plans to examine this data alongside reentry and discharge plans to determine whether there are patterns in how young people are being set up for success as they reenter their communities.

Finally, it is essential to note that this report is the last recidivism report that DYS will release examining outcomes for young people discharged before the COVID-19 pandemic. Our next outcomes report will analyze recidivism among young people discharged in 2020, which was an unequivocally unique and difficult year. Year-over-year comparisons are already a challenge for DYS, given the small, declining number of young people discharged from the Department each year and the even smaller number of young people who re-offend. Such comparisons will only be more challenging in future years with the pandemic's profound and continuing social, economic, and political impact.

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appendix a: glossary

Term	Definition
Hardware Secure Facility	Hardware secure facilities are DYS' most secure facilities. The movement of young people within a hardware secure facility is limited by locked doors in the facility and within the unit. Young people in hardware secure facilities are locked in their rooms during sleeping hours and escorted by staff within the facilities at all times during the day.
Recidivism	For the purposes of the report, we define recidivism as an arraignment leading to a conviction within one year of discharge from DYS. To calculate the elapsed time to recidivism post-discharge, we calculate the number of days from the date of discharge to the date of the arraignment culminating in a conviction.
Staff Secure Facility	Staff secure facilities are residential facilities where staff and adherence to policy provide security for young people. The facility itself is not locked, and young people are not locked in their rooms.
Substance Use Prevention Track	The Substance Use Prevention Track is for all detained young people, and some committed young people who are not considered at high risk for developing a substance use disorder. Young people on this track receive weekly substance use groups based on a curriculum that is primarily psychoeducational in nature, one that examines the effects of substance use on the brain and body, the reasons for substance misuse, and the social and cultural history of substance use.
Substance Use Treatment Track	The Substance Use Treatment Track is for committed young people who are determined to have or be at high risk for a substance use disorder based on assessments and behavioral health history. Young people on this track receive group and individual substance use treatment services based on a curriculum that educates them on the effects of substance abuse and teaches skills for navigating life by helping them make responsible decisions about their substance use.
Youth Engaged in Services (YES)	YES is a program offered to every young person discharged from DYS. The goal is to promote a successful reentry into the community. YES participation is voluntary, and young people can seek a range of needed services at any time after discharge and participate until the age of 22.
Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLS)	The YLS is an assessment instrument that juvenile justice agencies use to assess a young person's risks and needs regarding various factors, including history, frequency, and severity of offense, family history and circumstances, peer relations, educational and vocational skills, attitudes, behaviors, and substance use, amongst others. When completing the YLS assessment, young people receive a continuous score on all YLS domains, and validated cut-off scores are then used to categorize young people into low, moderate, high, and very high-risk levels.
Youthful Offender	A Youthful Offender is a young person between the ages of 14 and 18 who is charged with a felony and meets at least one of the following criteria: was previously committed to DYS, has been charged with a specific firearm offense, and/or is alleged to have committed an offense that involves the threat or infliction of serious bodily harm.

appendix b: dys regions by county

DYS Central Region

- Worcester County

DYS Metro Region

- Suffolk County

DYS Northeast Region

- Essex County
- Middlesex County

DYS Southeast Region

- Barnstable County
- Bristol County
- Dukes County
- Nantucket County
- Norfolk County
- Plymouth County

DYS Western Region

- Berkshire County
- Franklin County
- Hampden County
- Hampshire County

appendix c: offense list

Offense	Offense Type
A&B	Person
A&B ON A CORRECTIONS OFFICER	Person
A&B ON A PUBLIC SERVANT	Person
A&B ON CHILD WITH INJURY	Person
A&B ON ELDER (+60)/DISABLED PERSON; BODILY INJURY	Person
A&B ON RETARDED PERSON	Person
A&B W/INTENT TO MURDER	Person
A&B WITH DANGEROUS WEAPON	Person
ABANDONMENT	Public Order
ABDUCTING FEMALES TO BE PROSTITUTES	Public Order
ABDUCTION	Person
ABUSE OF A FEMALE CHILD	Person
ABUSE PREVENTION ACT (VIOLATING RESTRAINING ORDER)	Public Order
ACCESSORY AFTER THE FACT	Public Order
ACCESSORY TO MURDER - AFTER FACT	Person
ACCOSTING	Public Order
ADULTERY	Public Order
AFFRAY	Public Order
ARMED ASSAULT & ROBBERY	Person
ARMED ASSAULT IN DWELLING	Person
ARMED ROBBERY	Person
ARMED ROBBERY WHILE MASKED	Person
ARSON	Property
ASSAULT	Person
ASSAULT W/INTENT TO MURDER	Person
ASSAULT WITH DANGEROUS WEAPON	Person
ASSUMING TO BE AN OFFICER	Public Order
ATTACHING WRONG PLATES-124P, 124B	Motor Vehicle
ATTEMPT TO COMMIT A CRIME	Public Order
ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP	Person
ATTEMPTED ARSON	Property
ATTEMPTED B&E DAYTIME	Property
ATTEMPTED B&E NIGHT	Property
ATTEMPTED MURDER	Person
ATTEMPTED RAPE	Person
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE	Public Order
ATTEMPTED UNARMED ROBBERY	Person
B&E	Property
BIGAMY OR POLYGAMY	Public Order
BOMB THREAT	Weapons
BOXING MATCHES	Public Order
BREAKING GLASS	Property
BRIBE	Public Order
BURGLARY, UNARMED	Property
BURN A MEETING HOUSE	Property
BURNING A DWELLING	Property

Offense	Offense Type
CARJACKING	Motor Vehicle
CARNAL ABUSE OF A FEMALE	Person
CARRYING A DANGEROUS WEAPON IN SCHOOL	Weapons
CARRYING A FIREARM IN A MOTOR VEHICLE	Weapons
CARRYING DANGEROUS WEAPON	Weapons
CIVIL RIGHTS ORDER VIOLATION	Public Order
COERCION TO JOIN A GANG	Public Order
COMPULSORY INSURANCE LAW-118A	Motor Vehicle
CONSPIRACY TO VIOLATE DRUG LAWS	Drug
CONSPIRACY-OTHER CRIME	Public Order
CONTEMPT OF COURT (COURT VIOLATION)	Public Order
CONTRIBUTING TO THE DELENQUINCY OF A MINOR	Public Order
COUNTERFEIT MONEY	Property
DISCHARGING A FIREARM WITHIN 500 FEET OF A BUILDING	Weapons
DISORDERLY CONDUCT	Public Order
DISTRIBUTE (CLASS A)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE (CLASS B)-COCAINE	Drug
DISTRIBUTE (CLASS C)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE (CLASS D)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE (CLASS E)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE TO MINOR (CLASS A)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE TO MINOR (CLASS B)	Drug
DISTRIBUTE TO MINOR (CLASS C)	Drug
DISTRIBUTING IN A SCHOOL ZONE	Drug
DISTURBING A SCHOOL ASSEMBLY	Public Order
DISTURBING THE PEACE	Public Order
FAILURE TO APPEAR ON PERSONAL RECOGNIZANCE	Public Order
FALSE FIRE ALARM	Public Order
FORGERY ON CHECK OR PROMISSORY NOTE	Property
GAMBLING	Public Order
GUN LAW-CARRYING A FIREARM	Weapons
HAVING A FIREARM W/O A PERMIT	Weapons
HAVING ALCOHOL ON MDC RESERVATION	Public Order
HOME INVASION	Person
IDLE AND DISORDERLY	Public Order
ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREWORKS	Weapons
INDECENT A&B	Person
INTIMIDATING A GOVERNMENT WITNESS	Public Order
KIDNAPPING	Person
LARCENY LESS	Property
LARCENY MORE (FELONY)	Property
LEAVING SCENE OF ACCIDENT AFTER INJURING PERSON	Motor Vehicle
LEAVING SCENE OF ACCIDENT AFTER INJURING PROPERTY	Motor Vehicle
MALICIOUS DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY-OVER \$250	Property
MALICIOUS DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY-UNDER \$250	Property
MANSLAUGHTER	Person

Offense	Offense Type
MINOR POSSESSIONG ALCOHOL	Public Order
MURDER IN THE 1ST DEGREE	Person
MURDER IN THE 2ND DEGREE	Person
OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE	Public Order
OPEN AND GROSS LEWDNESS	Public Order
OPERATING AS TO ENDANGER LIVES AND SAFETY-112A	Motor Vehicle
OPERATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LIQUOR-111A	Motor Vehicle
OPERATING WITHOUT A LICENSE-114F	Motor Vehicle
PERJURY	Public Order
POSSESSION (CLASS A)	Drug
POSSESSION (CLASS B)	Drug
POSSESSION (CLASS C)	Drug
POSSESSION (CLASS D)	Drug
POSSESSION (CLASS E)	Drug
POSSESSION OF A DANGEROUS WEAPON	Weapons
POSSESSION OF BURGULAROUS TOOLS	Property
POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISPENSE (CLASS A)	Drug
POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISPENSE (CLASS B)	Drug
POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISPENSE (CLASS C)	Drug
POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISPENSE (CLASS D)	Drug
POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO DISPENSE (CLASS E)	Drug
POSSESSION-MARIJUANA (CLASS D)	Drug
PROSTITUTION	Public Order
RAPE	Person
RAPE OF CHILD	Person
RECEIVING AND/OR CONCEALING STOLEN PROPERTY	Property
RESISTING ARREST	Public Order
SHOPLIFTING	Public Order
SPEEDING-116A	Motor Vehicle
STALKING	Public Order
STATUTORY RAPE	Person
THREATENING	Public Order
TRESSPASS	Public Order
UNARMED ROBBERY	Person
USE WITHOUT AUTHORITY-114A	Motor Vehicle
VIOLATION OF PROBATION	Public Order
WANTON DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY-OVER \$250	Property
WANTON DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY-UNDER \$250	Property