



Recidivism and Employment of Virginia Correctional Enterprises Participants: FY2018 State Responsible Releases

RESEARCH - EVALUATION UNIT

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Introduction

A total of 675 state responsible (SR) inmates who participated in Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) training were released in FY2018. VCE provides inmates with workplace training, industry and vendor-specific certifications, and apprenticeships to support successful reentry to the community. This report assesses the impact of VCE participation on job attainment and recidivism after release from SR incarceration. Recidivism and employment trends from FY2015 to FY2018 releases were also assessed. A more in-depth analysis of the FY2018 cohort is provided since it is the most recent year for which a three-year follow-up is available with mature data.

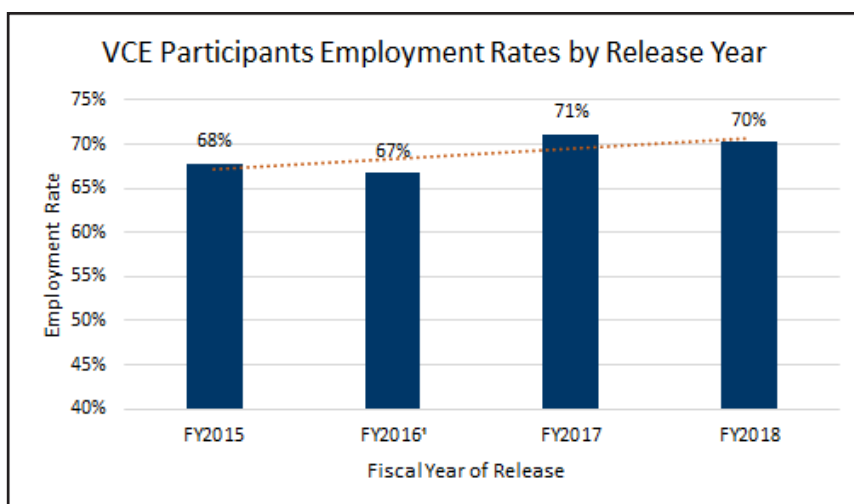
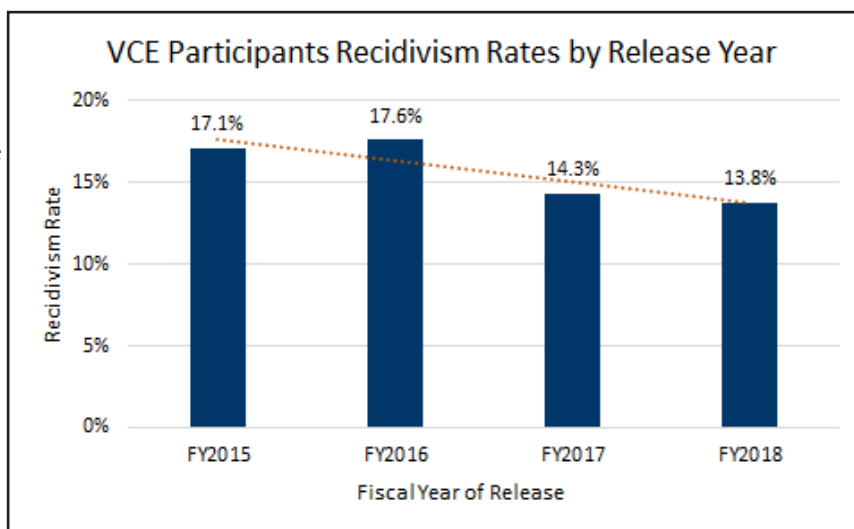
Employment and Recidivism Trends: FY2015-FY2018

Of the four year comparison, VCE participants released in FY2016 had the highest recidivism rate at 17.6%. FY2018 participants had the lowest recidivism rate of the four years (13.8%). Even though FY2016 VCE participants had a higher recidivism rate than FY2015, FY2017, and FY2018 participants, recidivism rates have been trending down since FY2015, which mirrors the overall SR release cohort trend during the same timeframe.

Across FY2015-FY2018 releases that participated in VCE, FY2017 participants had the highest employment rate at 71%. FY2016¹ VCE participants had the lowest employment rate after release at 67%. Despite the employment rate decreasing between FY2017 and FY2018 participants, the employment rate has continued to trend upwards.

FY2018 VCE Participant Characteristics

Among the 675 VCE participants released in FY2018, 65% were male and 35% were female. The racial composition of the participants was 56% White, 43% Black, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander. The vast majority of the participants were Non-Hispanic (99%). The average age at release was 41.5 years old and the largest age group at the time of release was 30-39 years old (33%).



¹ At the time of report development for the FY2016 cohort, employment data from quarters one and two of FY2016 were not included in data provided by VEC.

VCE Participant Characteristics (Continued)

Demographic factors such as gender and age are known predictors of recidivism.² VCE participants who were male were less likely to recidivate than VCE participants who were female (11.5% and 18.0%, respectively). This is different from what is typically found because males tend to have higher recidivism rates than females. Participants who were White had higher recidivism rates than those who were Black (17.4% and 8.9%, respectively). Participants who were between the ages of 30 and 39 at release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group (21.5%). Participants who were 60 years or older at the time of release had the lowest recidivism rates of any age group (one, 2.3%). VCE participants had a lower recidivism rate (13.8%) compared to all FY2018 SR releases (20.6%). VCE participants were less likely to recidivate than all FY2018 SR releases from a VADOC facility (18.1%). Additionally, VADOC facility releases that participated in VCE were significantly less likely to recidivate than those who did not participate (13.8% and 18.5%, respectively).³

FY2018 VCE Participants Demographic Characteristics, Recidivism Rates, and Employment						
	VCE Participants*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	675	100%	93	13.8%	474	70%
Gender						
Male	436	65%	50	11.5%	296	68%
Female	239	35%	43	18.0%	178	74%
Race						
White	379	56%	66	17.4%	243	64%
Black	292	43%	26	8.9%	228	78%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	1%	1	25.0%	3	75%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	10	1%	0	0.0%	3	30%
Non-Hispanic	665	99%	93	14.0%	471	71%
Age at Release						
Under 30	86	13%	14	16.3%	65	76%
30-39	223	33%	48	21.5%	169	76%
40-49	206	31%	19	9.2%	137	67%
50-59	117	17%	11	9.4%	84	72%
60+	43	6%	1	2.3%	19	44%
Age at Release (Mean)	41.5					
Age at Release (Median)	41.0					
*Percentages in the VCE Participants column will total 100% as they are calculated out of the total number of VCE participants						
**Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.						

Employment and Recidivism

According to Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) data,⁴ 70% of VCE participants released in FY2018 were employed during the three-year follow-up period.⁵ VCE participants that found employment after release had a higher recidivism rate than participants that were unable to find employment (14.1% and 12.9%, respectively). The difference among VCE participants who did find employment and those who did not find employment was not statistically significant. VCE participants that were female were able to find employment at a higher rate than VCE participants that were male (74% and 68%, respectively).

A higher percentage of VCE participants who were Black were able to find employment than participants who were White (78%, and 64%, respectively). VCE Participants under the age of 39 at release had the highest employment rate of any age group (76%). Participants 60 years and older at release had the lowest employment rate after release (44%).

² [VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit \(2023\): FY2018 State Responsible Releases.](#)

³ The chi-square (X^2) test statistic was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference. The difference was significant at $p=.002$.

⁴ Only Virginia employers who are subject to tax provisions of the unemployment compensation laws are included in the data; freelance/under the table employment and employment records from outside of Virginia are not included; <https://www.vec.virginia.gov/employers/>.

⁵ The follow-up period was from the quarter/year the inmate was released through 12 additional quarters or through the quarter/year the inmate recidivated.

Employment and Earnings

Of the 474 employed VCE participants, it took one and one-half quarters (1.5),⁶ on average, to find employment after release. Employed participants made, on average, \$5,400.41 quarterly (median of \$4,810.50). These participants sustained employment, on average, 58% of the time (median of 62%) they were at liberty and averaged 3 employers during that time.

The majority of VCE participants that were employed post release found employment in the food service industry (23%), staffing or job placement agencies (22%), HVAC/construction/contracting/supply companies (21%), or in “other” employment areas (16%). The least popular categories of employment were the cleaning and hotel industries (5%).

Crime Type

Crime type represents the most serious offense from the FY2018 release term of incarceration. The largest percentage of VCE participants released in FY2018 had a crime type of violent or property/public order (40%). Participants with a crime type of property/public order had a higher recidivism rate (19.7%) than participants with drug-related (10.2%) or violent (9.7%) crime types. FY2018 VCE participants had lower recidivism rates in all three crime type categories than all FY2018 SR releases. Participants with a most serious offense that was drug-related had a higher employment rate (76%) than property/public order (72%) and violent (65%) crime types.

Incarceration History

The majority of the VCE participants released in FY2018 had no previous SR terms of incarceration (54%). Inmates with one previous term of SR incarceration (23%) outnumbered those with two previous SR terms (12%) and those with three or more previous SR terms (10%). FY2018 VCE participants with no previous SR terms had a lower recidivism rate (7.9%) than those with one, two, and three or more previous SR terms (20.5%, 16.9%, and 26.1%, respectively). FY2018 VCE participants had lower recidivism rates in all four previous SR term categories than all FY2018 SR releases. Participants with one previous SR term and two previous SR terms had similar employment rates (76% and 75%, respectively). Participants with three or more previous SR terms had the lowest employment rate at 64%.

	Mean	Median
Quarterly Wages	\$5,400.41	\$4,810.50
Time to Employment	1.5 Quarters	1.0 Quarter
Percent Employed*	58%	62%
Number of Employers	3	3

*Percent of time an individual was employed while at liberty.

Employment Rate	Employed VCE Participants	
	Total	Percent
Company Type*		
Food Service	107	23%
Staffing/Job Placement Agency	106	22%
HVAC/Construction/Contracting/Supplies	98	21%
Distribution/Transportation/Moving/Storage	31	7%
Stores/Markets	30	6%
Cleaning/Hotels	26	5%
Other	76	16%

*VEC records of the first job the VCE participant earned wages from upon release from SR incarceration were used to classify company type. Company types were coded based on the legal company name found in the VEC data.

	VCE Participants*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	675	100%	93	13.8%	474	70%
Crime Type						
Violent	269	40%	26	9.7%	175	65%
Property/Public Order	269	40%	53	19.7%	195	72%
Drug	137	20%	14	10.2%	104	76%
Previous SR Incarcerations						
No previous SR terms	367	55%	29	7.9%	250	68%
1 previous SR term	156	23%	32	20.5%	118	76%
2 previous SR terms	83	12%	14	16.9%	62	75%
3 or more previous SR terms	69	10%	18	26.1%	44	64%

*Percentages in the VCE Participants column will total 100% as they are calculated out of the total number of VCE participants

**Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment

The COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment tool is used by the VADOC to determine the risks of general and violent recidivism as well as criminogenic needs. There were more VCE participants who scored ‘Low’ (40%) than those who scored ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ on the COMPAS risk of general recidivism scale (33% and 27%, respectively). As the risk level increased, the recidivism rate and the employment rate increased as well. Those who scored ‘High’ on the COMPAS risk of general recidivism scale had the highest recidivism rates (24.6%) and the highest employment rates (74%). Participants who scored ‘Low’ on the risk of general recidivism scale had the lowest recidivism rates (6.3%) and the lowest employment rates (68%).

For the COMPAS risk of violent recidivism scale, those who scored ‘Low’ comprised the majority of the cohort (53%), while those who scored ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ made up 33% and 14% of the cohort, respectively. The same pattern seen with the COMPAS risk of general recidivism scale can be seen with the COMPAS risk of violent recidivism scale. Those who scored ‘High’ had the highest recidivism rate (26.8%) and the highest employment rate (73%), while those who scored ‘Low’ had the lowest recidivism rate (8.1%) and the lowest employment rate (68%).

FY2018 VCE Participants Recidivism Rates and Employment by COMPAS Scores						
	VCE Participants**		Recidivists***		Employed After Release***	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	675	100%	93	13.8%	474	70%
COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism*						
Low	272	40%	17	6.3%	186	68%
Medium	223	33%	32	14.3%	154	69%
High	179	27%	44	24.6%	133	74%
COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism*						
Low	356	53%	29	8.1%	243	68%
Medium	221	33%	38	17.2%	159	72%
High	97	14%	26	26.8%	71	73%
COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score*						
Unlikely	143	21%	14	9.8%	96	67%
Probable	175	26%	23	13.1%	136	78%
Highly Probable	356	53%	56	15.7%	241	68%
*One VCE participant did not have a COMPAS assessment completed during their FY2018 release term of incarceration.						
**Percentages in the VCE Participants column will total 100% as they are calculated out of the total number of VCE participants						
***Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.						

The majority of participants scored ‘Highly Probable’ (53%) on the COMPAS substance abuse needs scale. Those who scored ‘Unlikely’ had lower recidivism rates (9.8%) than those who scored ‘Probable’ or ‘Highly Probable’ (13.1% and 15.7%, respectively). Participants who scored ‘Probable’ had the highest employment rate (78%), while those who scored ‘Unlikely’ or ‘Highly Probable’ had comparable employment rates (67% and 68%, respectively).

Conclusions

This report examined the recidivism and job attainment rates of VCE participants who were released from SR incarceration in FY2018. VCE participants achieved a lower recidivism rate than Virginia’s overall recidivism rate and a high rate of job attainment. Additionally, employment rates of VCE participants have been trending upwards while recidivism rates continue to have a downward trend. These preliminary findings offer additional evidence that VCE participation may support successful reentry by promoting job attainment, employment stability, and reducing the risk of recidivism.

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