



# Recidivism and Employment of Virginia Correctional Enterprises Participants: FY2019 State Responsible Releases

RESEARCH - EVALUATION UNIT

SEPTEMBER 2024

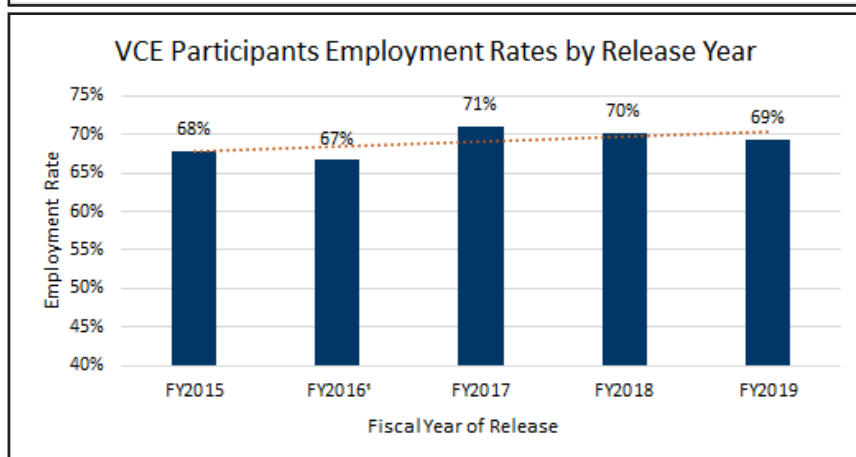
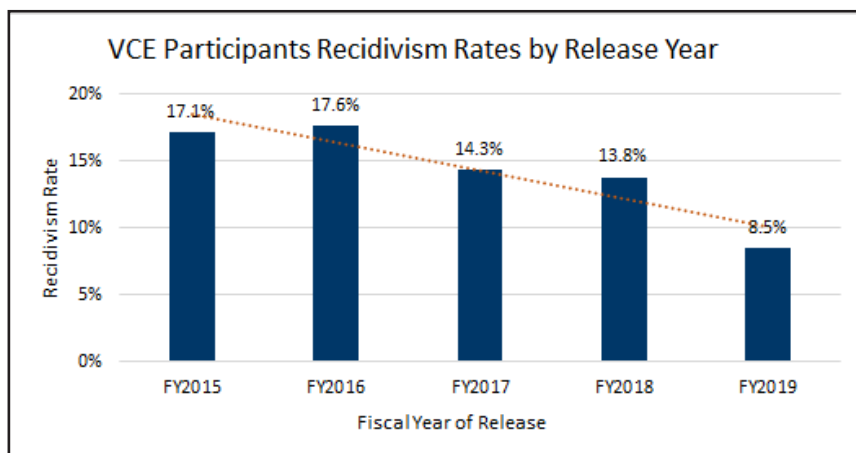
## Introduction

VCE provides inmates with workplace training, industry and vendor-specific certifications, and apprenticeships to support successful re-entry to the community. This report assesses the impact of VCE participation on job attainment and recidivism after release from SR incarceration. A total of 632 state responsible (SR) inmates who participated in Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) training were released in FY2019. Recidivism and employment trends from FY2015 to FY2019 releases were also assessed. A more in-depth analysis of the FY2019 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-FY2019

Of the five year comparison, VCE participants released in FY2016 had the highest recidivism rate at 17.6%. FY2019 participants had the lowest recidivism rate of the five years examined (8.5%). Even though FY2016 VCE participants had a higher recidivism rate than FY2015 participants, recidivism rates have been trending down, which mirrors the overall SR release cohort trend during the same timeframe. Beginning in March 2020, this may be partially explained by the COVID-19 pandemic limiting court activity during the FY2017-FY2019 three year follow-up periods.<sup>1</sup>

Across FY2015-FY2019 releases that participated in VCE, FY2017 participants had the highest employment rate at 71%. FY2016<sup>2</sup> VCE participants had the lowest employment rate after release at 67%. Despite the employment rate decreasing by one percentage point between FY2018 and FY2019 participants, the employment rate has remained fairly consistent.<sup>3</sup>



1 VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit (2024): FY2019 State Responsible Releases.

2 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 the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC).

3 The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted employment rates during the FY2017-FY2019 follow-up periods due to shut-downs and restrictions.

## FY2019 VCE Participant Characteristics

Among the 632 VCE participants released in FY2019, 66% were male and 34% were female. The racial composition of the participants was 52% White, 47% Black, 1% Asian or Pacific Islander, and less than (<) 1% American Indian of Alaskan Native. The average age at release was 43.4 years old. The 40-49 age group accounted for the largest percentage of the population at 32%.

Demographic factors such as gender and age are known predictors of recidivism.<sup>4</sup> VCE participants who were female were less likely to recidivate than VCE participants who were male (7.8% and 8.9%, respectively). Participants who were White had higher recidivism rates than those who were Black (11.0% and 6.0%, respectively). Participants under the age of 30 at release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group (18.3%). As age increased, recidivism rates decreased. VCE participants had a lower recidivism rate (8.5%) compared to all FY2019 SR releases (19.0%). VADOC facility releases that participated in VCE were significantly less likely to recidivate than those who did not participate (8.5% and 17.2%, respectively).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, regression analysis showed that, when all other factors are kept constant, VCE remained a statistically significant predictor of recidivism.<sup>6</sup>

	VCE Participants*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	632	100%	54	8.5%	438	69%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	415	66%	37	8.9%	285	69%
Female	217	34%	17	7.8%	153	71%
<b>Race</b>						
White	327	52%	36	11.0%	213	65%
Black	298	47%	18	6.0%	222	74%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	1%	0	0.0%	0	0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	<1%	0	0.0%	3	100%
<b>Age at Release</b>						
Under 30	60	9%	11	18.3%	49	82%
30-39	188	30%	23	12.2%	139	74%
40-49	200	32%	13	6.5%	142	71%
50-59	139	22%	7	5.0%	86	62%
60+	45	7%	0	0.0%	22	49%
<b>Age at Release (Mean)</b>	43.4					
<b>Age at Release (Median)</b>	42.0					
*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

For this study, participants were counted as employed only if their wages were reportable to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). Unreported wages could have been employed in another state or with an employer not subject to the unemployment compensation laws.<sup>7</sup> According to VEC data, 69% of VCE participants released in FY2019 were employed during the three-year follow-up period,<sup>8</sup> which is seven percentage points higher than the proportion of overall SR releases who found employment post-release (62%). VCE participants that found employment after release had a lower recidivism rate than participants that were unable to find employment (7.8% and 10.3%, 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 slightly higher rate than VCE participants

4 VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit (2024): FY2019 State Responsibility Releases.

5 Chi square( $\chi^2$ ) <.001.

6 Logistic regression model controlled for gender, mental impairment, release age, previous SR incarcerations, MSO, drug test history, gang affiliation, and VCE participation. Even with all additional factors, VCE participation was still a significant predictor at  $p < .001$ .

7 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/>.

8 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.

that were male (71% and 69%, respectively). A higher percentage of VCE participants who were Black were able to find employment than participants who were White (74%, and 65%, respectively). All American Indian or Alaskan Native VCE participants found employment (3, 100%). VCE Participants under the age of 30 at release had the highest employment rate of any age group (82%). Participants 60 years and older at release had the lowest employment rate after release (49%). As age increased, the employment rate decreased.

Inmates who found employment but were employed less than 47% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the highest recidivism rate of 11.9%, which is lower than the re-incarceration rate of the same population in the overall FY2019 cohort (20.7%). For those who found employment, the recidivism rates decreases as the percentage of time employed increases. Those who were employed for greater than 77% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the lowest recidivism rate (3.5%), which is just over one percentage point lower than the same population in the FY2019 cohort (4.8%). Regardless of employment status, VCE participants had lower recidivism rates than the overall FY2019 cohort.



### Employment and Earnings

Of the 438 employed VCE participants, it took almost one and one-half quarters (1.4), on average, to find employment after release. Employed participants made, on average, \$6,002.20 quarterly (median of \$4,962.85). These participants sustained employment, on average, 58% of the time (median of 62%) they were at liberty and averaged three different employers during the follow-up period.

	Mean	Median
Quarterly Wages	\$6,002.20	\$4,962.85
Time to Employment*	1.4 Quarters	1.0 Quarter
Percent Employed**	58%	62%
Number of Employers	3	3

\*Time to employment was calculated as the difference between employment quarter/year and release quarter/year.  
 \*\*Percent of eligible quarters an individual was employed while at liberty.

The majority of VCE participants that were employed post release found employment in the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry (27%), Accommodation and Food Services industry (21%), Construction industry (13%), or in Manufacturing industries (11%).

	Total	Percent
<b>Employment Rate</b>	438	69%
<b>Industry Type*</b>		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7	2%
Construction	56	13%
Manufacturing	49	11%
Wholesale Trade	7	2%
Retail Trade	42	10%
Transportation and Warehousing	15	3%
Information	1	<1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5	1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	<1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	116	27%
Educational Services	1	<1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	16	4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	<1%
Accommodation and Food Services	93	21%
Other Services(except Public Administration)	21	5%
Public Administration	5	1%
No Industry Code	2	<1%

\*VEC records of the first job the Agribusiness worker earned wages from upon release from SR incarceration were used to classify industry type. Industry types were created based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

## Crime Type

Crime type represents the most serious offense from the FY2019 release term of incarceration.

The largest percentage of VCE participants released in FY2019 had a crime type of violent (45%).

Participants with a crime type of property/public order had a higher recidivism rate (13.0%) than participants with drug-related (7.5%) or violent (5.7%) crime types. FY2019 VCE participants had lower recidivism rates in all

three crime type categories than all FY2019 SR releases. Participants with a most serious offense that was violent had a slightly higher employment rate (71%) than drug-related (69%) and property/public order (67%) crime types.

	VCE Participants*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	632	100%	54	8.5%	438	69%
<b>Crime Type</b>						
Violent	283	45%	16	5.7%	201	71%
Property/Public Order	216	34%	28	13.0%	145	67%
Drug	133	21%	10	7.5%	92	69%
<b>Previous SR Incarcerations</b>						
No previous SR terms	358	57%	24	6.7%	245	68%
1 previous SR term	161	25%	16	9.9%	109	68%
2 previous SR terms	60	9%	5	8.3%	45	75%
3 or more previous SR terms	53	8%	9	17.0%	39	74%
*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.						

## SR Incarceration History

The majority of the VCE participants released in FY2019 had no previous SR terms of incarceration (57%). Inmates with one previous term of SR incarceration (25%) outnumbered those with two previous SR terms (9%) and those with three or more previous SR terms (8%). As SR incarceration increased, recidivism rates increased. FY2019 VCE participants had lower recidivism rates in all four previous SR term categories than all FY2019 SR releases. Participants with two previous SR terms or three or more previous SR terms had similar employment rates (75% and 74%, respectively). Participants with no previous SR terms or one previous SR term had equal rates of employment at 68%.

## 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' (43%) than those who scored 'Medium' or 'High' on the COMPAS risk of general recidivism scale (30% and 26%, respectively). Those who scored 'High' on the COMPAS risk of general recidivism scale had the highest recidivism rates (18.1%) and the highest employment rates (73%). Participants who scored 'Low' on the risk of general recidivism scale had the lowest recidivism rates (3.6%) and

	VCE Participants**		Recidivists***		Employed After Release***	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>Overall</b>	632	100%	65	8.5%	438	69%
<b>COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism*</b>						
Low	274	43%	10	3.6%	187	68%
Medium	192	30%	14	7.3%	129	67%
High	166	26%	30	18.1%	122	73%
<b>COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism*</b>						
Low	363	57%	15	4.1%	243	67%
Medium	174	28%	22	12.6%	128	74%
High	95	15%	17	17.9%	67	71%
<b>COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score*</b>						
Unlikely	136	21%	3	2.2%	99	73%
Probable	162	26%	9	5.6%	109	67%
Highly Probable	334	53%	42	12.6%	230	69%
*The last COMPAS assessment during the release term of incarceration was used.						
**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.						

and participants who scores 'Medium' on the risk of general recidivism scale had the lowest employment rates (67%).

For the COMPAS risk of violent recidivism scale, those who scored 'Low' comprised the majority of the cohort (57%), while those who scored 'Medium' or 'High' made up 28% and 15% of the cohort, respectively. Those who scored 'High' had the highest recidivism rate (17.9%) while those who scored 'Medium' had the highest employment rate (74%). Those who scored 'Low' had the lowest recidivism rate (4.1%) and the lowest employment rate (67%).

The majority of participants scored 'Highly Probable' (53%) on the COMPAS substance abuse needs scale. Those who scored 'Unlikely' had lower recidivism rates (2.2%) than those who scored 'Probable' or 'Highly Probable' (5.6% and 12.6%, respectively). Participants who scored 'Unlikely' had the highest employment rate (73%), while those who scored 'Probable' or 'Highly Probable' had comparable employment rates (67% and 69%, respectively).

## Conclusions

This report examined the recidivism and job attainment rates of VCE participants who were released from SR incarceration in FY2019. VCE participants achieved a lower recidivism rate than Virginia's overall recidivism rate and a higher employment rate than Virginia's overall release cohort employment rate. Additionally, employment rates of VCE participants have stayed fairly consistent while recidivism rates continue to have a notable downward trend. These preliminary findings offer additional evidence that VCE participation may support successful re-entry by promoting job attainment, employment stability, and reducing the risk of recidivism.

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