



RECIDIVISM OF ADULT OFFENDERS IN NORTH CAROLINA

JOINT JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 9, 2023

NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission

About

Membership

- 28 members including criminal justice system stakeholders and public

Independent

- Members appointed by leaders of all three branches of government

Purpose

- Advise General Assembly and criminal justice agencies on criminal justice policy

Duties

Legislative Mandates

- Monitor sentences imposed under Structured Sentencing
- Annual population projections
- Review criminal justice bills and provide fiscal impact
- Biennial recidivism reports (adult, juvenile)
- Evaluate implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA)

Other Requests

Why measure recidivism?

- Nationally accepted way to assess effectiveness of in-prison and community corrections programs in preventing future criminal behavior
- Barometer of effectiveness of the criminal justice system in North Carolina
 - Are recidivism rates improving? Worsening?
 - What factors are driving the rates?
- Set priorities for the use of correctional resources
 - Identify what programs/interventions are working to better target limited resources
 - Identify needed changes to policy and/or practices

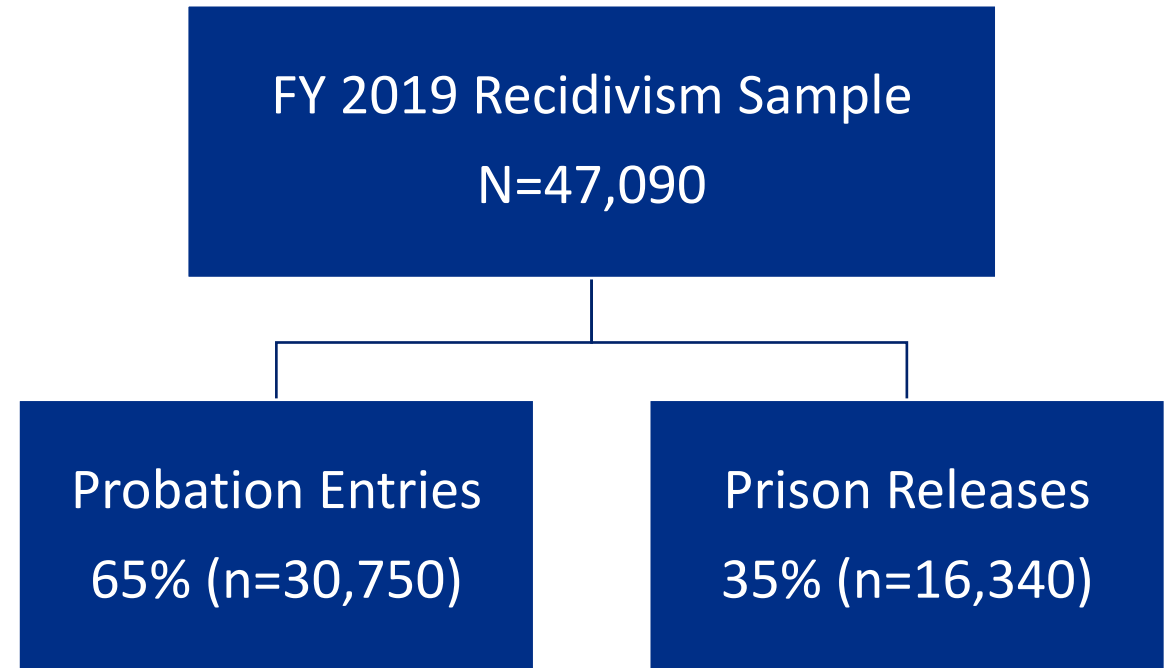
Defining recidivism

Outcome measures

- Primary: fingerprinted arrest
- Supplementary: convictions, incarcerations (state prison only)
- Not included in outcome measures:
 - Out-of-state arrests
 - Incarcerations in local jails

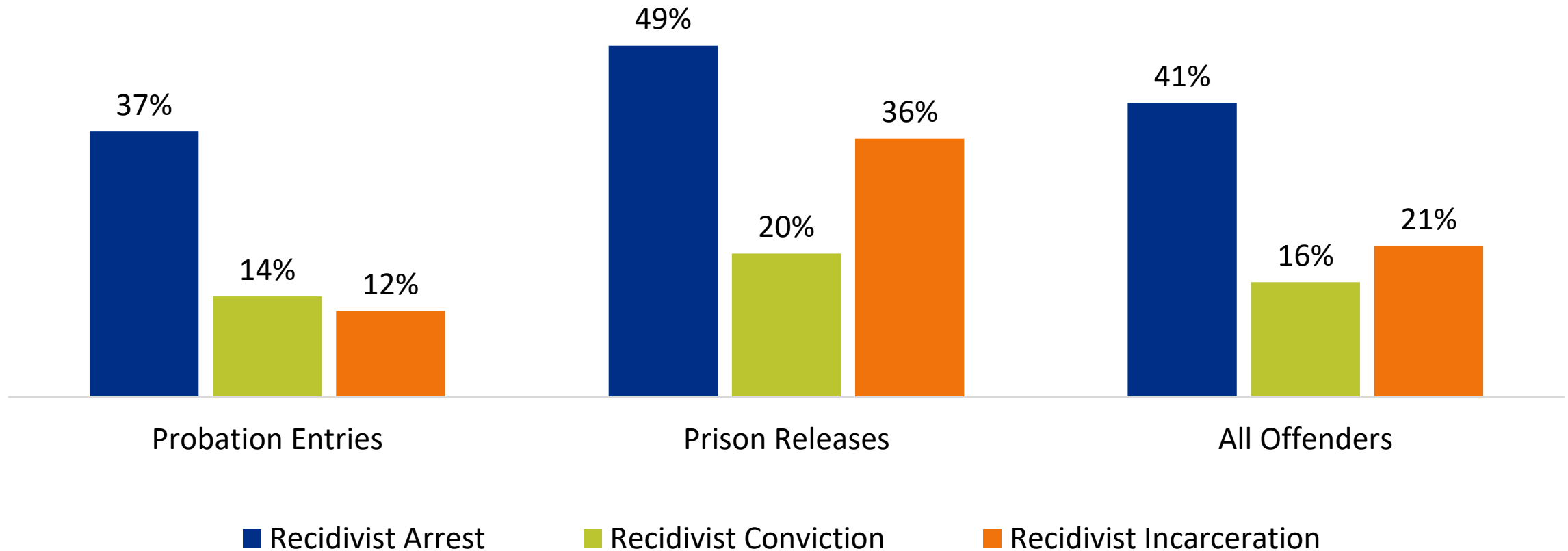
Time periods examined

- Two years following release from prison or admission to probation
- Supervision period and two years following release from probation (probation releases only, separate sample)

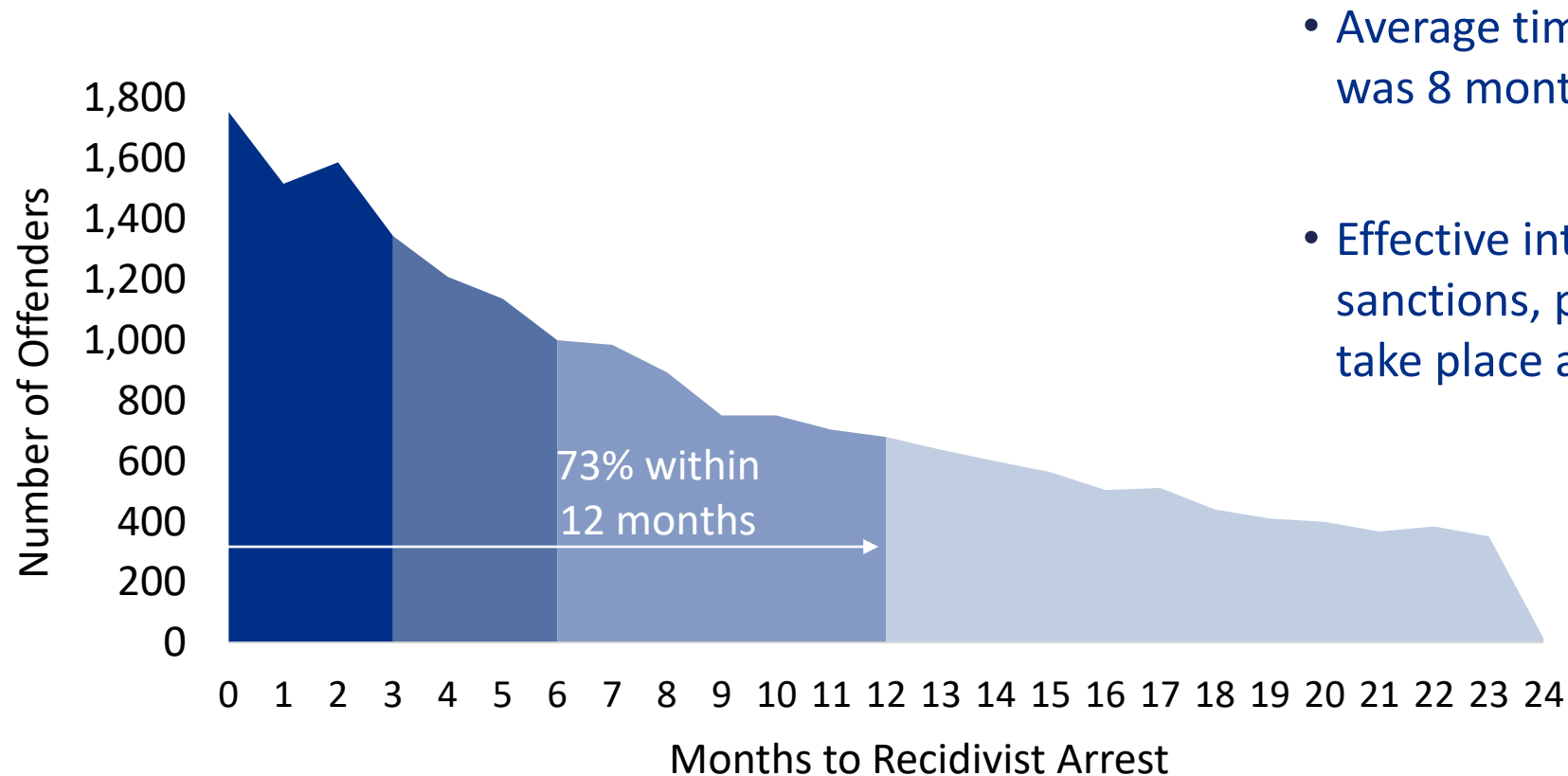


UNDERSTANDING RECIDIVISM:
ALL OFFENDERS
N = 47,090

Regardless of measure, prisoners had higher recidivism rates than probationers



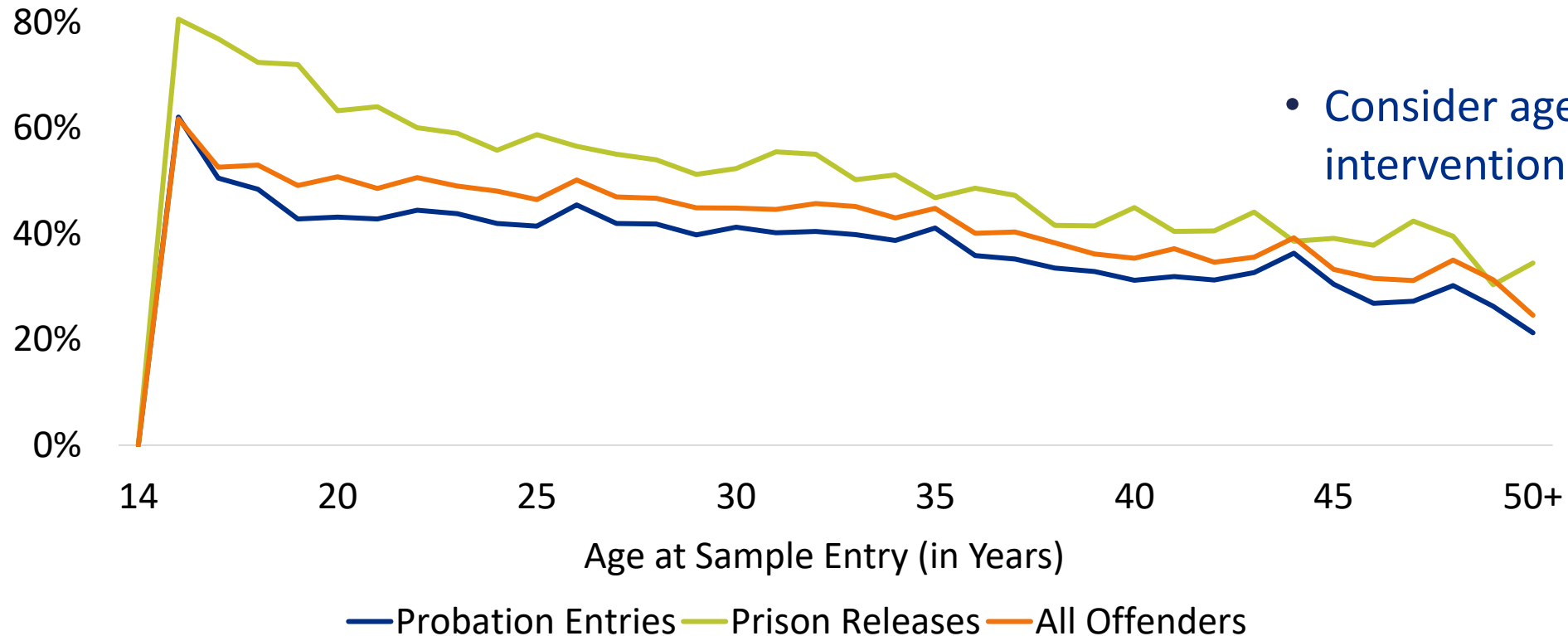
Recidivist arrests largely occurred within the first year of the follow-up period



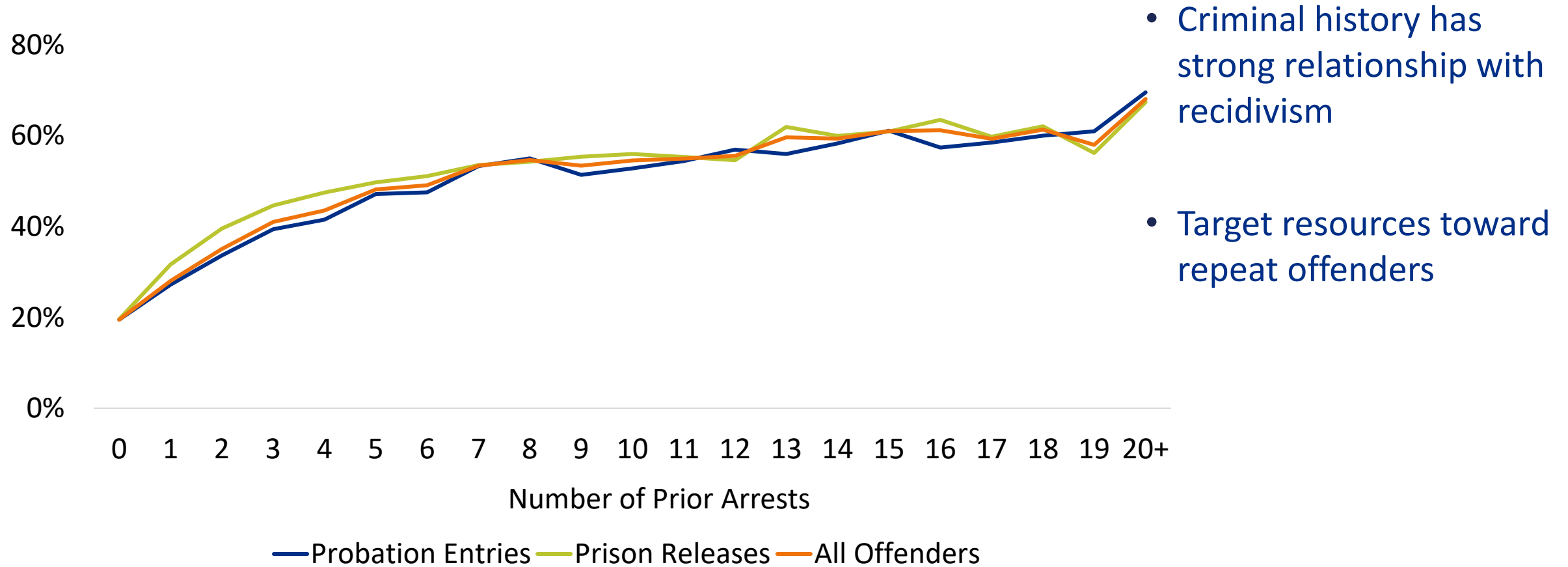
- Average time to the first recidivist arrest was 8 months
- Effective interventions (controlling sanctions, programs and services) should take place as soon as possible

For both prisoners and probationers, recidivist arrest rates declined with age

- Younger offenders have highest recidivism rates
- Consider age-appropriate interventions

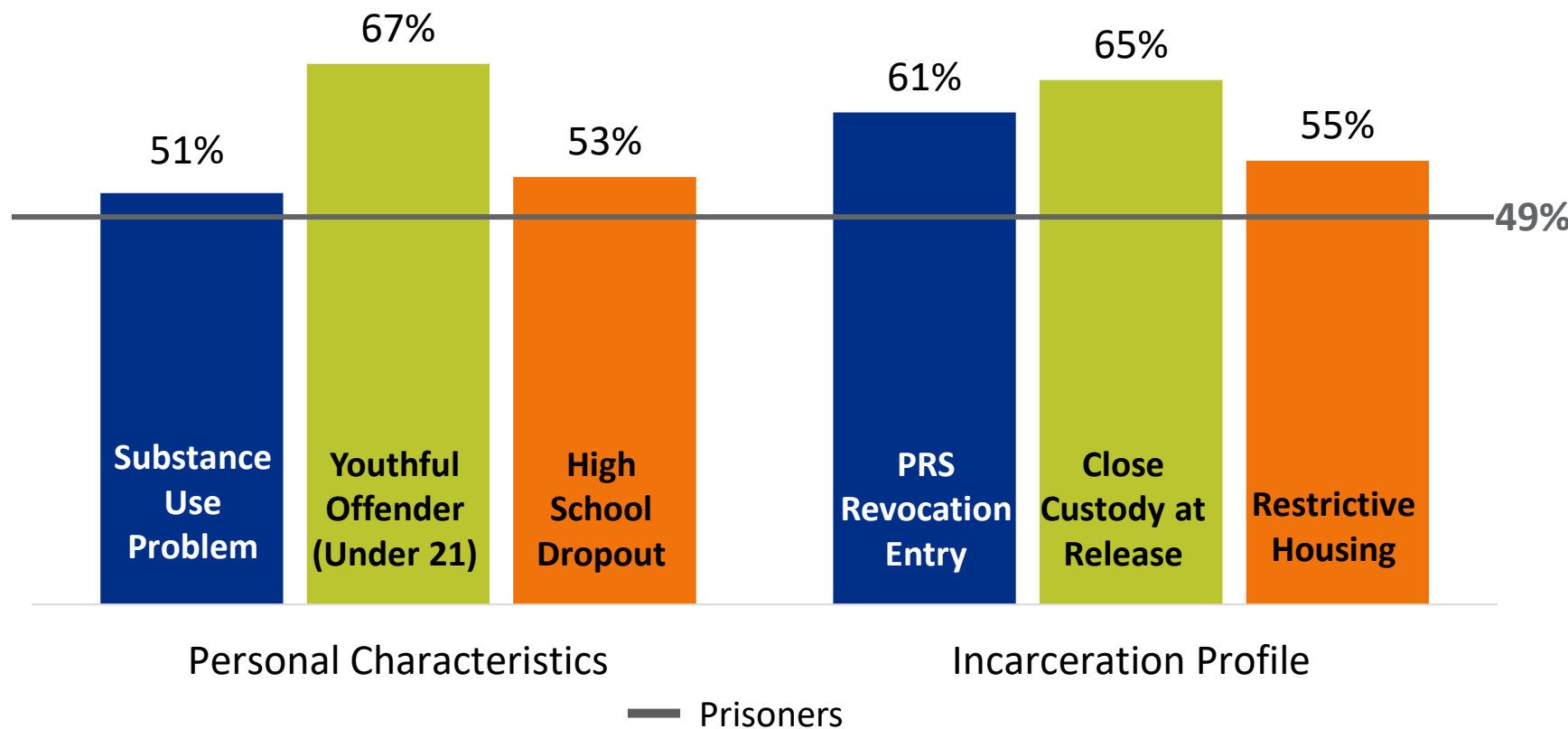


Past behavior is a strong predictor of future offending



UNDERSTANDING RECIDIVISM:
PRISON RELEASES
N = 16,340

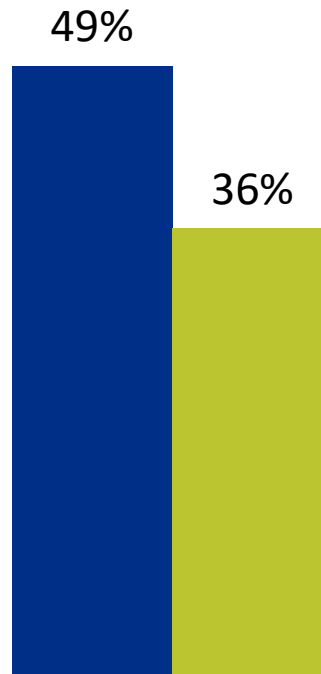
Higher recidivist arrest rates were found for certain groups of prisoners



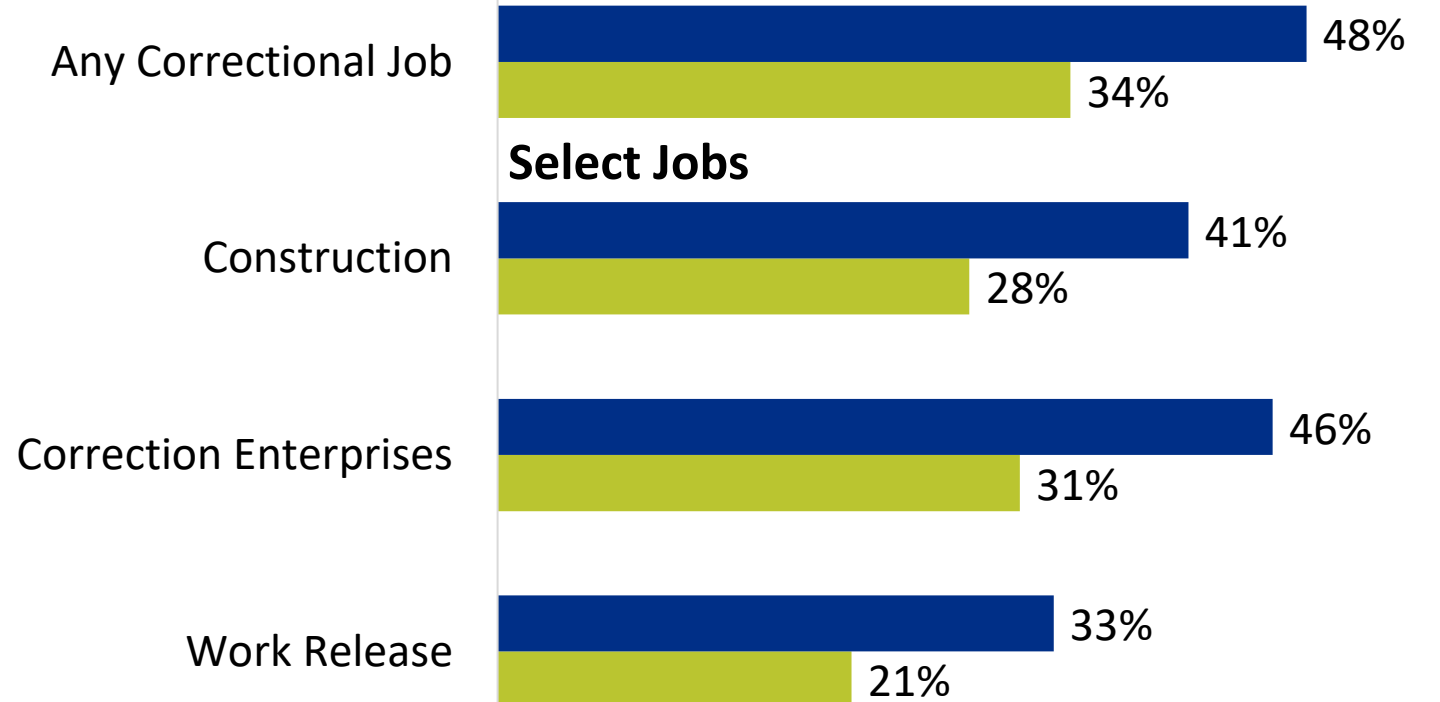
- Consider certain demographic variables (e.g., age, sex) for programmatic interventions
- Custody classification at release affects outcomes

Lower recidivist arrest *and* incarceration rates were found for inmates with correctional jobs

All Prisoners

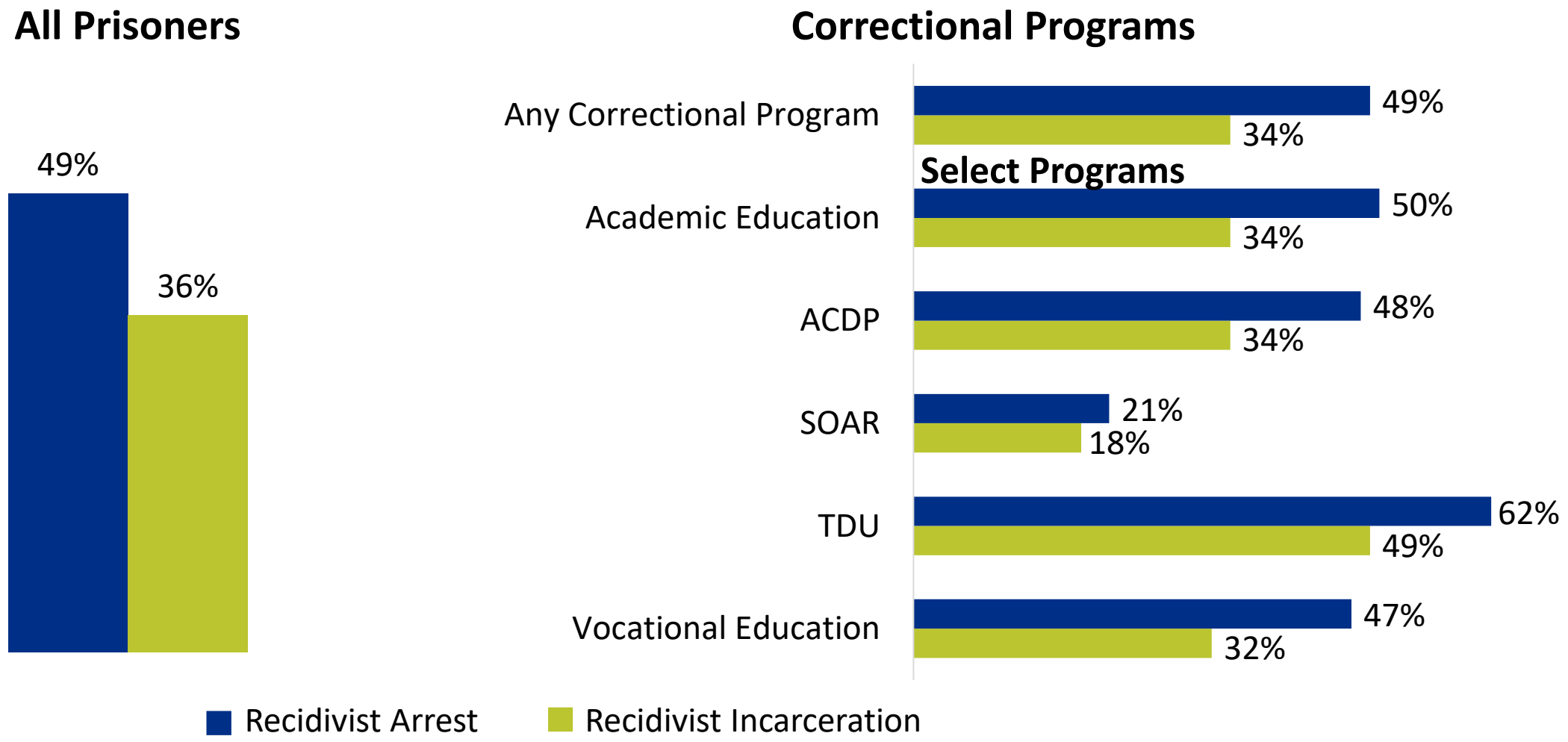


Correctional Jobs



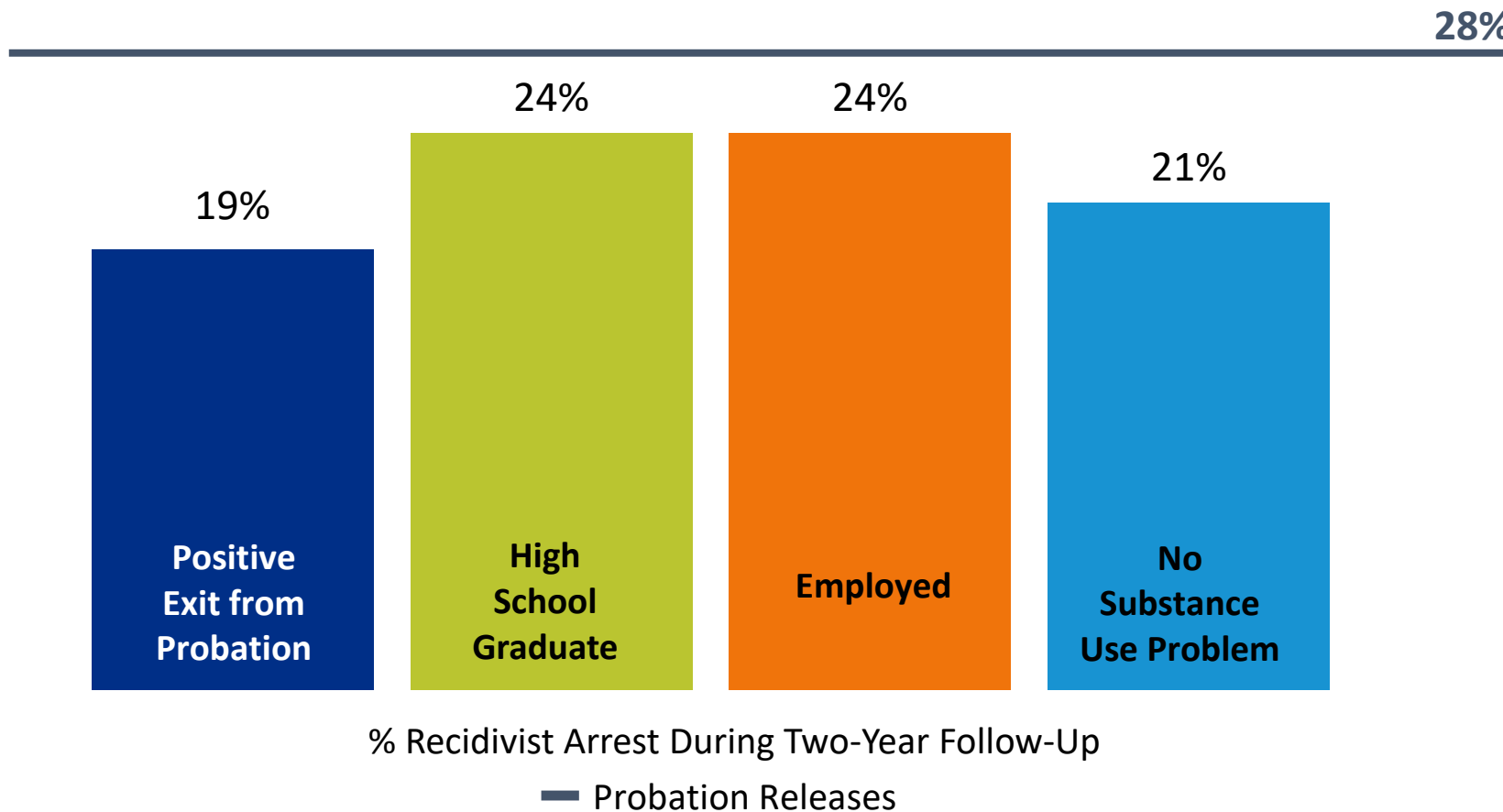
■ Recidivist Arrest ■ Recidivist Incarceration

ACDP, SOAR, and Vocational Education participants had lower recidivist arrest and incarceration rates than all prisoners



UNDERSTANDING RECIDIVISM:
PROBATION RELEASES
N = 30,809

Lower recidivist arrest rates were found for certain groups of probation releases

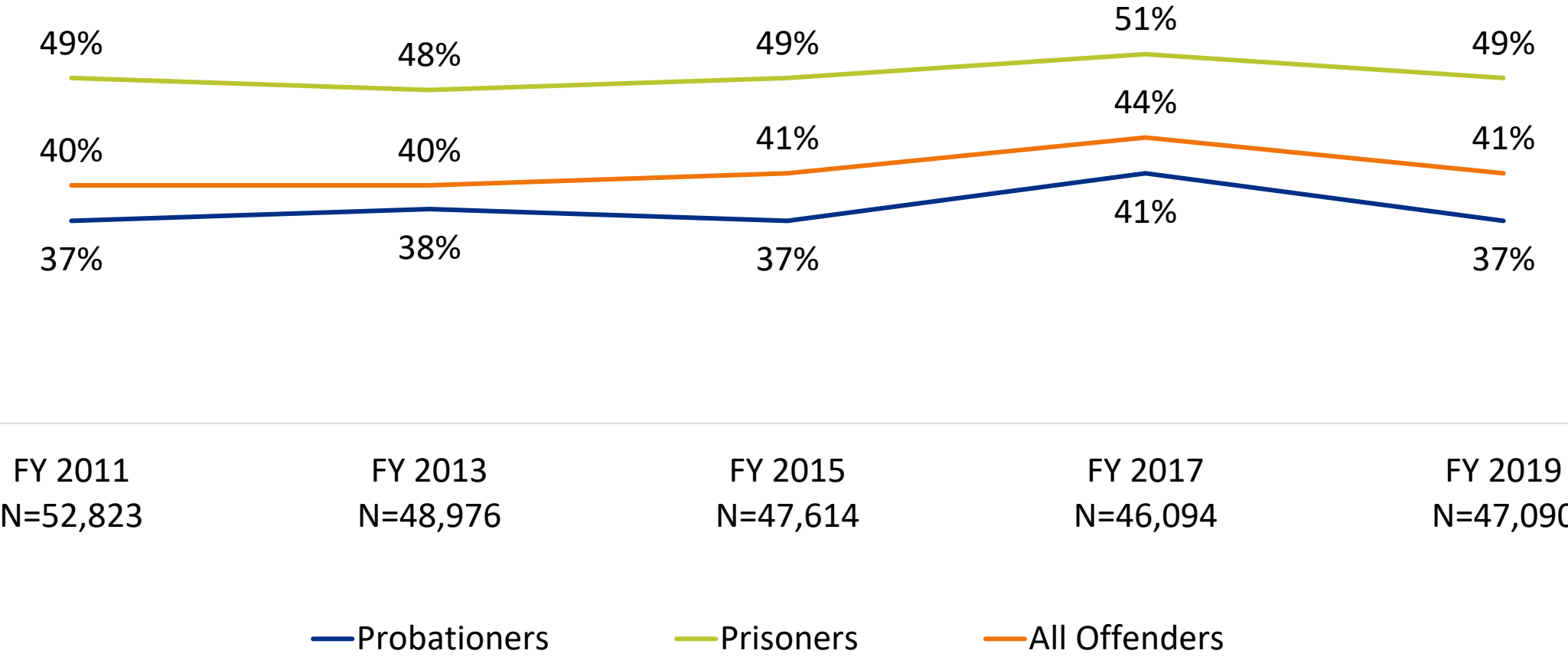


- Success on probation leads to better outcomes following supervision
- Employment is associated with reduced risk of recidivism

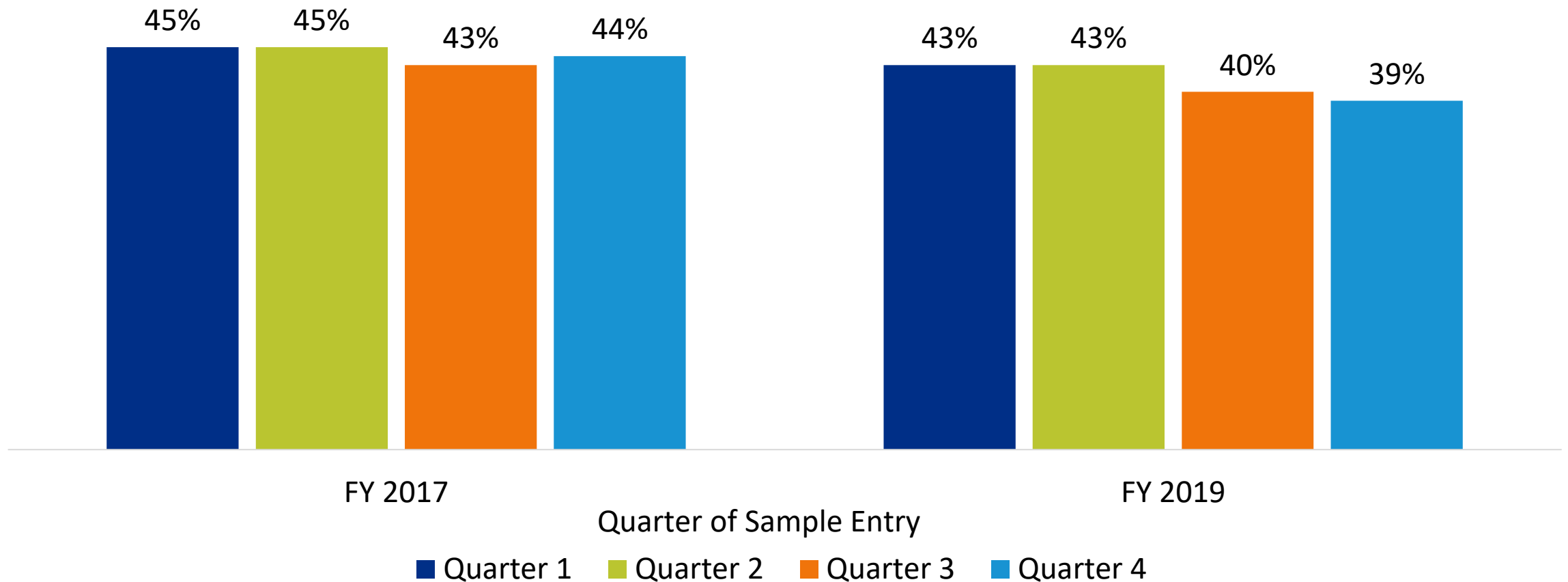
RECIDIVISM TRENDS

FY 2011 – FY 2019 SAMPLES

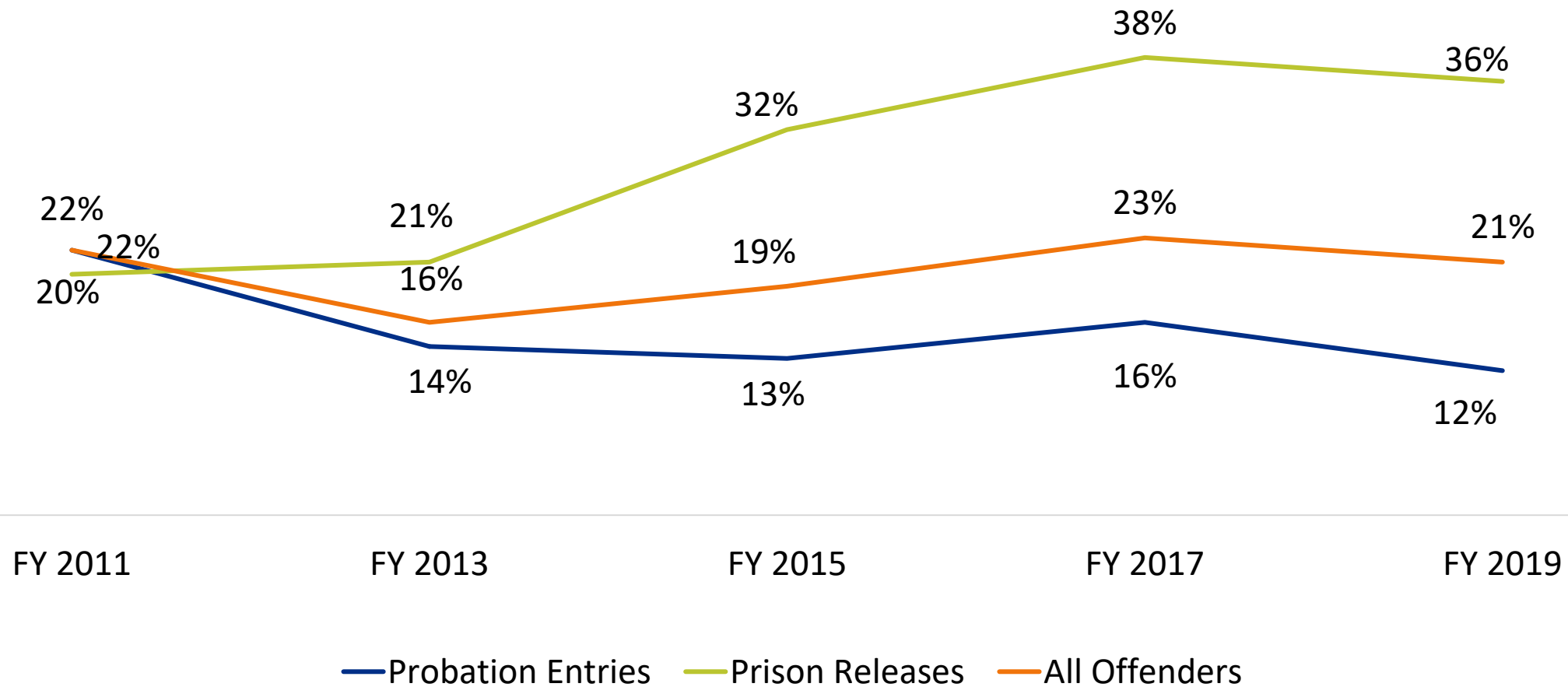
After years of stability, the recidivist arrest rate increased for the FY 2017 sample before decreasing for the FY 2019 sample



The COVID-19 pandemic likely contributed to a decline in recidivist arrests for the FY 2019 sample

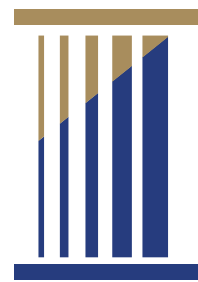


The overall trend for recidivist incarcerations is upward, driven by prisoners (revocations of PRS)



Recap of Findings and Possible Policy/Resource Implications

- The pandemic impacted the two-year follow-up period
 - Potentially contributing to a decline in recidivism relative to pre-COVID levels
- Recidivist arrests generally occurred within the first year of the follow-up period
 - Early intervention with reentry services
- Past behavior is a strong predictor of future reoffending
- PRS revocations have contributed to the increase in the recidivist incarceration rate
 - Possible effect on prison resources



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