



*Senate Bill 213 Evaluation Series*

# Habitual Offenders (SB213) Preliminary Evaluation: Community Supervision



February 2025

**Part 1**

Utah Commission on Criminal  
& Juvenile Justice

<https://justice.utah.gov/>

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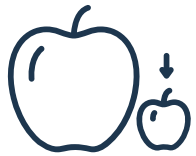
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# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



*~Defined in SB213 as individuals with six or more prior felony convictions within the past five years~.*



Habitual offenders make up a small share of individuals starting AP&P supervision (1.5%)



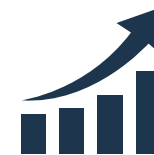
>80% are convicted of a property or an alcohol & drug related offense



The majority are assessed as intensive to high risk to reoffend, with many in need of substance use treatment



A significant share of new supervision violations are related to alcohol and drugs



Many prison returns occur early in the supervision term, emphasizing the need for transitional and tailored support



Intensive supervision programs can be cost effective when paired with targeted and ongoing rehabilitation and support

*~An analysis of probation and parole starts between 2019 and 2024~*

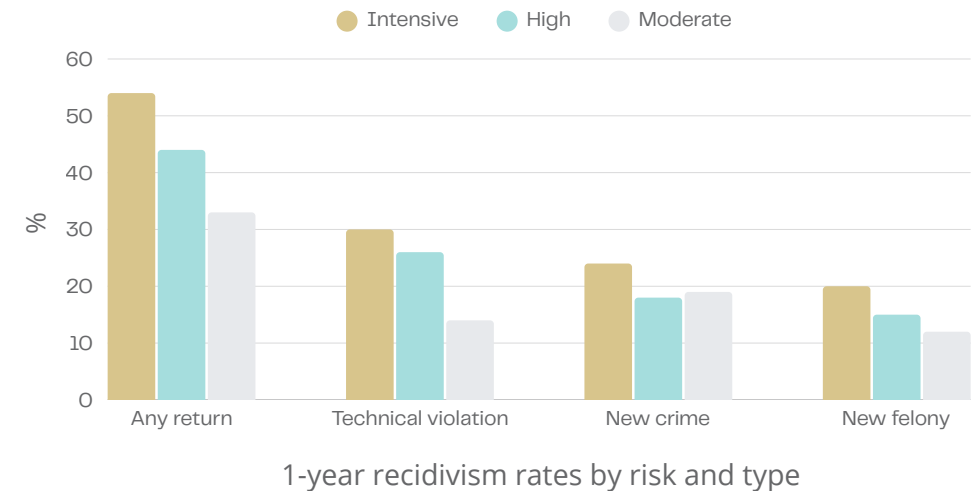
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report evaluates the characteristics and outcomes of individuals under AP&P supervision that are classified as habitual offenders, as defined by SB213.

- **Evaluation Scope & Criteria:** Assesses individuals under AP&P supervision classified as habitual offenders per Senate Bill 213 (SB213) that started probation and parole between 2019 and 2024.
- **Offense Type & Supervision Challenges:** Most were convicted of property or drug-related crimes and frequently violated supervision due to substance use.
- **Prison Returns & Risk Factors:** Many returns occur early, with higher-risk individuals returning more frequently.

- **Policy Recommendations:** Early intervention, tailored supervision, expanded treatment access, and comprehensive services can reduce recidivism, improve rehabilitation, and generate cost savings.



# INTRODUCTION



Senate Bill 213 (SB213) classifies individuals with six or more felony convictions within the past five years as habitual offenders. This report examines the characteristics and outcomes of habitual offenders under AP&P supervision using data from the Utah Department of Corrections (UDOC) from 2019 to 2024. The analysis explores their demographics, risk and need profiles, including substance use needs, criminal history, and recidivism trends.

In 2024, UDOC launched an intensified supervision program to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety through tailored strategies for habitual offenders, including reduced officer case loads. **Part two of this series will explore the program's impact on a set of outcomes, including violations and early recidivism patterns. Insights from this study aim to inform policy improvements and strengthen supervision practices for this high-risk population.**

This report analyzes 3 areas related to Habitual Offenders under AP&P supervision:

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1

## Characteristics

Examines demographics, primary offense type, and risk and need profiles.

2

## Best practices

Reviews best practices for supervising their often multifaceted-needs.

3

## Supervision outcomes

Analyzes recidivism and violation patterns while under supervision.



# Literature



“Habitual offenders,” frequent flyers,” or familiar faces” are a small share of individuals who cycle in-and-out of the criminal justice system. Research highlights structural, social, and individual factors contributing to their repeated criminal behavior, with incarceration without rehabilitation often worsening these challenges (Stolzenberg et al., 2024).

Due to their often elevated risk and complex needs, studies show that habitual offenders benefit from personalized supervision that addresses both individual challenges and systemic barriers to break the cycle of reoffending. One such approach is intensive supervision programs (ISPs)—structured supervision models that combine close monitoring with rehabilitative services, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, substance use treatment, and employment support. **When implemented effectively, ISPs have been shown to reduce recidivism more successfully than traditional supervision programs (WISPP, 2024).**



When implemented with fidelity, intensive supervision programs can reduce recidivism more effectively than traditional supervision programs.

# Officer Caseload



Studies have shown that reducing probation and parole caseloads can lead to better outcomes, especially for medium- to high-risk offenders. Smaller caseloads enable officers to apply evidence-based practices (EBPs) like cognitive-behavioral techniques and intensive supervision programs (ISPs), which can significantly reduce recidivism. However, caseload reductions alone are insufficient—without EBPs, results can be inconsistent.

Specialized caseloads, especially for individuals with mental health or substance use disorders, have shown even greater improvements, including better supervision, fewer jail days, and enhanced mental health outcomes. Success depends on the effective use of EBPs, supported by adequate funding, training, and resources, ensuring that reduced caseloads lead to meaningful improvements in probation and parole outcomes. For a comprehensive guide in “right-sizing” caseloads, see: [Caseload Guidelines: Strategies & Recommendations \(2023\)](#).

## Key-TakeAways: Caseload Best Practices



### Risk & needs

Reduced caseloads are most effective in reducing recidivism for higher risk individuals.



### Behavioral health

Specialized caseloads for individuals with behavioral health needs has shown an even greater improvement.



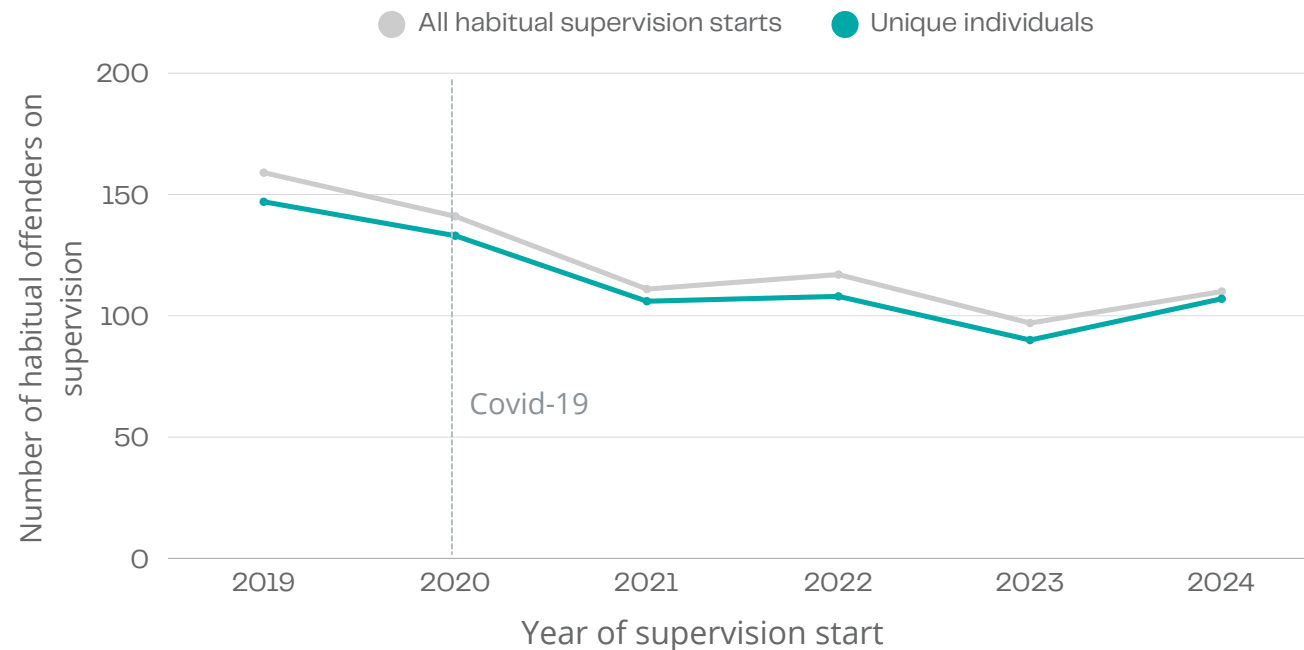
### Combined with EBP

Reduced caseloads should be combined with evidence based practices (EBP), rehabilitation, training and proper funding.

# CHARACTERISTICS



Between 2019 and 2024, habitual offenders represented on average, 108 unique individuals and 1.5% of AP&P supervision starts in Utah. The majority of these individuals were placed on parole (~70%) followed by probation (~30%).



## Characteristics of Habitual Offenders:



### A small percent

Habitual offenders make up around 1.5% of all supervision starts.



### Supervision type

Around 70% are on parole followed by probation at 30%.



### Prior convictions

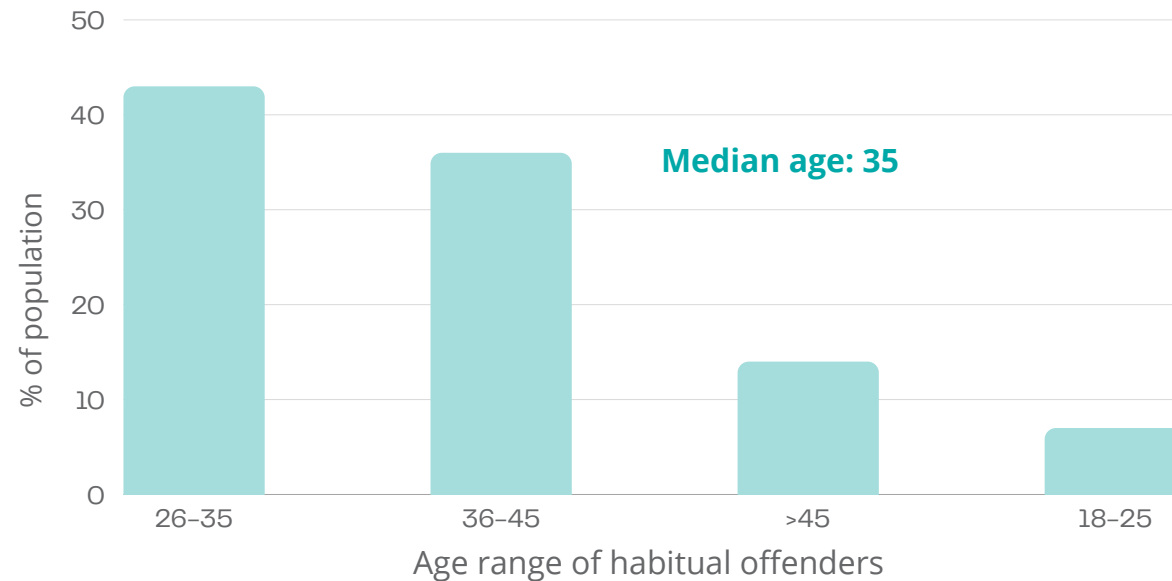
The median number of prior felony convictions was 6.5.



# Demographics



Most habitual offenders were males (76%), with a median age of 35 years, with 42% being aged 26 to 35. 80% were White, a proportion notably higher than that of the general supervision population.



## Demographics of Habitual Offenders:



### Gender

76% of habitual offenders are male and 24% females.



### Race

80% are white-non-hispanic and 20% minority.



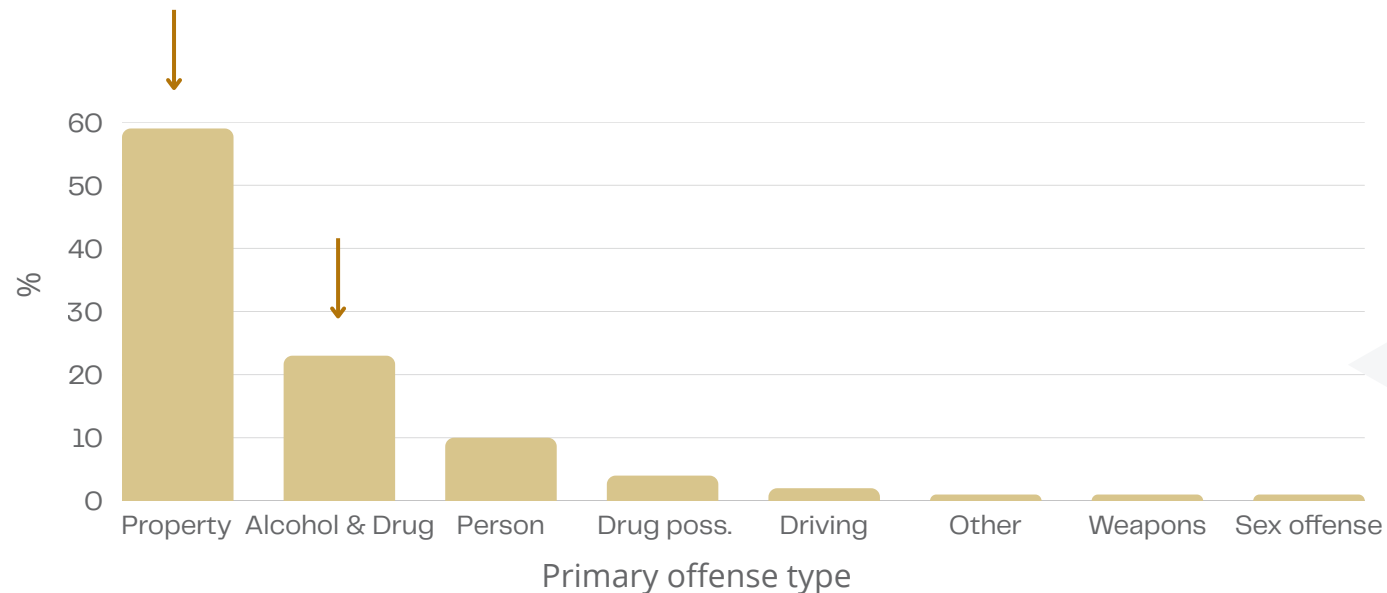
### Age

The median age was 35, with 42% aged 26 to 35.

# Risk and Offense Type



The most common primary offense was property-related (~60%), followed by alcohol & drug offenses (23%) and person offenses (10%). A significant portion (86%) were assessed as intensive or high risk, with 56% having high substance use treatment needs.



## Characteristics of Habitual Offenders:



### Risk-to-reoffend

86% of habitual offenders were considered intensive or high risk to re-offend.



### Substance need

56% were assessed as very high or high need for substance use treatment.



### Primary offense

~60% were serving time for a property offense followed by a drug & alcohol offense.

# Habitual Offenders vs the General Supervision Population

*Compared to the general AP&P supervision population\*, habitual offenders statistically and more commonly showed an increased chance of:*



A **non-violent** primary offense, often relating to a property or an alcohol and drug related conviction



Being intensive-risk to re-offend versus lower risk categories



Individuals on parole rather than probation



An increased number of prior probation starts if placed on probation



Having a higher offense degree



Being White non-Hispanic versus Minority

\*Take aways are not necessarily in *absolute* terms. Learn about our data & methodology in [Appendix A](#).

# Primary Court Location



Effective resource allocation is essential in addressing the complex needs of habitual offenders. As mentioned, prior research has shown that many individuals in this population face significant challenges, including substance use, mental health disorders and securing safe housing, making it critical to ensure services are not only appropriate but also geographically accessible (Stolzenberg et al, 2024).

The map to the right illustrates the geographic distribution of habitual offenders original location prior to incarceration or probation placement.\* Around 50% resided in the urban counties of Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Weber before incarceration or probation. This can be compared to these counties general population share of 75%.

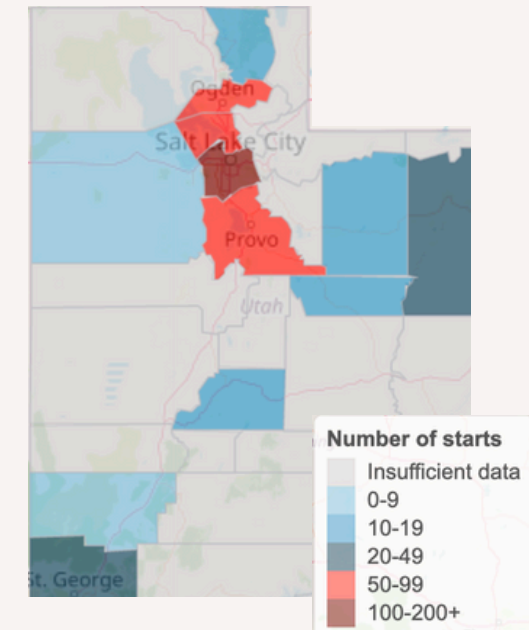
\*Counties that involved supervision starts from less than five unique individuals have been suppressed.

## What counties are habitual offenders residing in?



### Primary court location

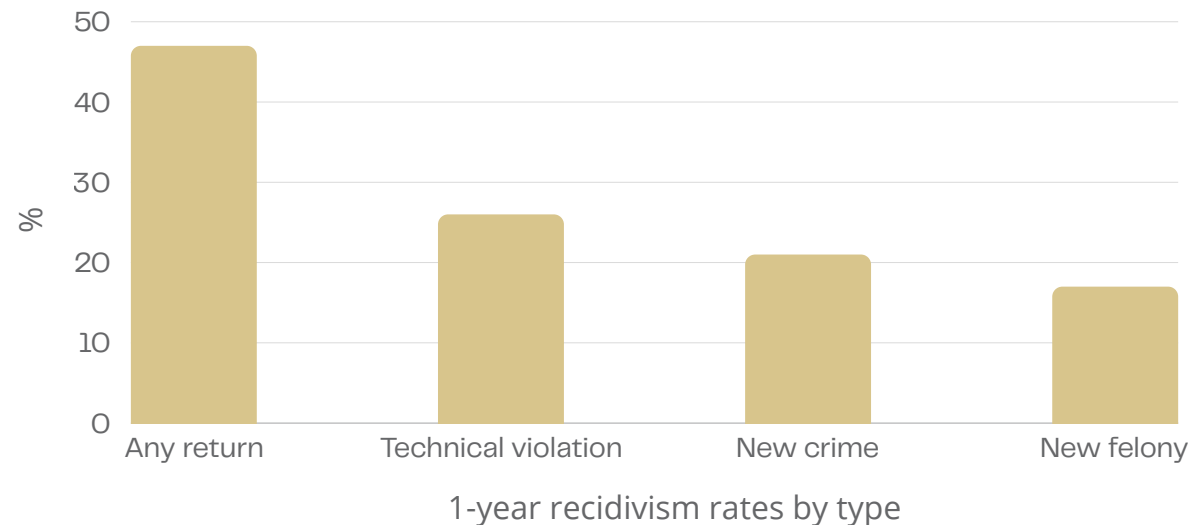
~50% of supervision starts are for individuals convicted in Utah's urban counties of Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Weber.



# OUTCOMES



Within one year, 47% of habitual offenders either returned to prison or had their probation revoked. Twenty-six percent involved a technical violation and 21% involved a new crime, with 17% being for a new felony crime. These rates were higher for parolees and typically higher than for the general supervision population.



## Key TakeAways: Recidivism

Learn about our data & methodology in [Appendix A.](#)



### Any return

Within one year, 47% of habitual offenders either returned to prison or had their probation revoked.



### Type of return

26% returned on a technical violation, 21% on a new crime and of those, 17% involved a felony crime.



### Gender differences

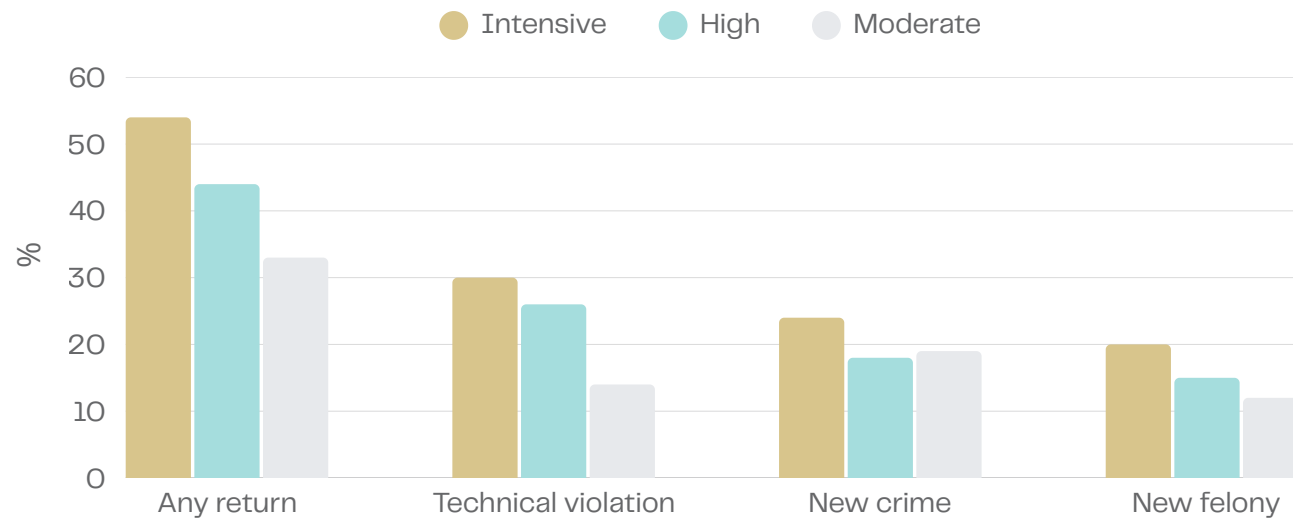
Men had a higher overall recidivism rate than females.



# Outcomes: Risk

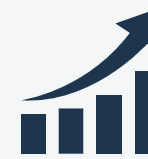


Among intensive-risk individuals, 54% either returned to prison or had their probation revoked, 30% returned on a technical violation and 24% returned for a new crime within one year. Of the 24% who returned for a new crime, 20% were returned on a new felony crime. These rates were lower for lower risk levels



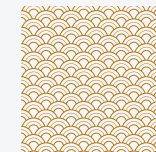
1-year recidivism rates by risk and type

## Key TakeAways: Recidivism by risk level



### Intensive risk

Those assessed as intensive risk were returned or revoked to prison at a higher rate than lower risk categories.



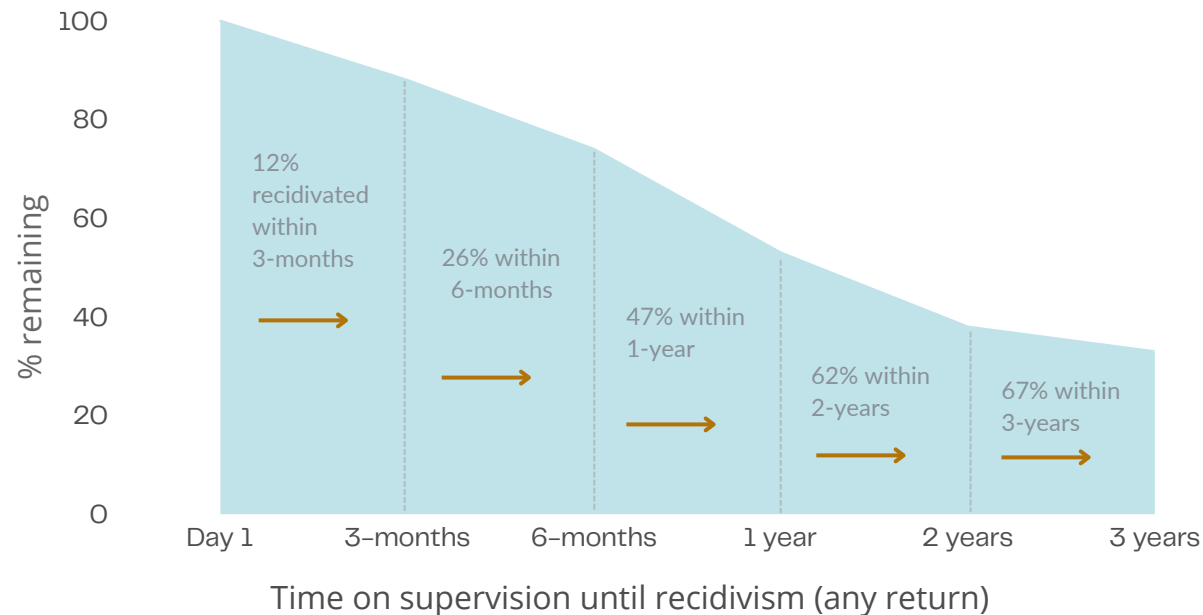
### Expected patterns

These findings generally held true across different return and revocation types.

# Time to Recidivism



Twelve percent of habitual offenders returned to prison within 3-months and 26% returned within 6-months. At the 1-year mark, 47% had returned and at year 2 and 3 respectively, 62 and 67% had returned. Parolees showed a higher failure rate than probationers.

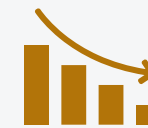


## Key TakeAways: Time to recidivism



### Many fail early

12% of habitual offenders were revoked to prison (for any reason) within 3-months, 26% within 6-months, and 47% within 1-year.



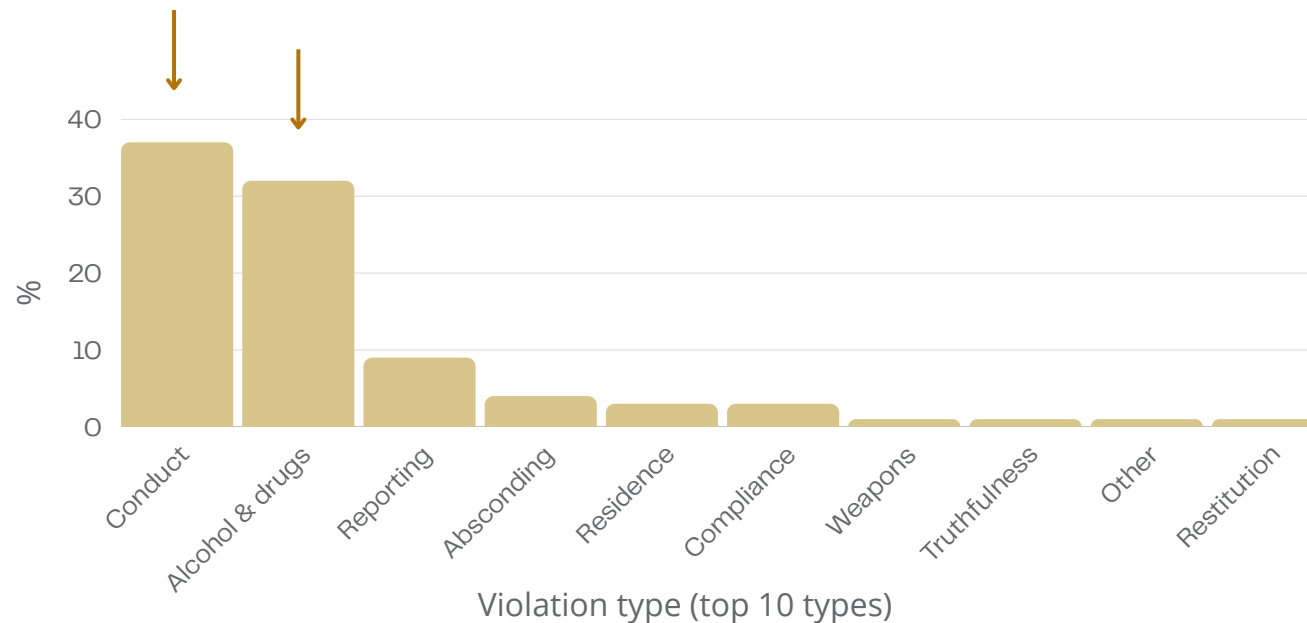
### A decreasing rate

Over time, failure rates declined, reflecting in part, greater success in navigating supervision conditions.

# New Violations



Among new supervision violations, 37% were for conduct, followed by drug and alcohol related violations at 32%. It should be noted that *conduct* often involve drugs and alcohol and hence the drug and alcohol category is by itself underestimated. Violations related to reporting, absconding, and other types each made up a smaller share.



## Key TakeAways: New violations



### Violation type

Conduct and alcohol and drug related violations were the most common types (~70%).



### A smaller share

Violations related to reporting, absconding, residence, and compliance each made up a smaller percent.



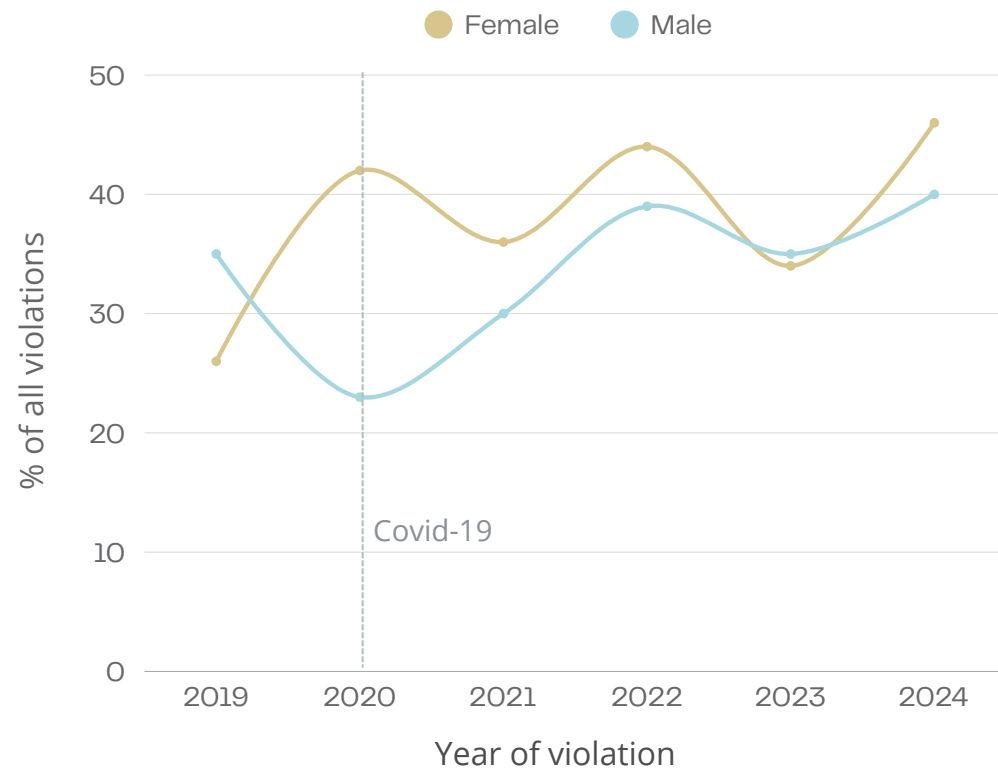
### Gender

Females saw a higher percent of drug and alcohol related violations than males (~40 vs 30%).

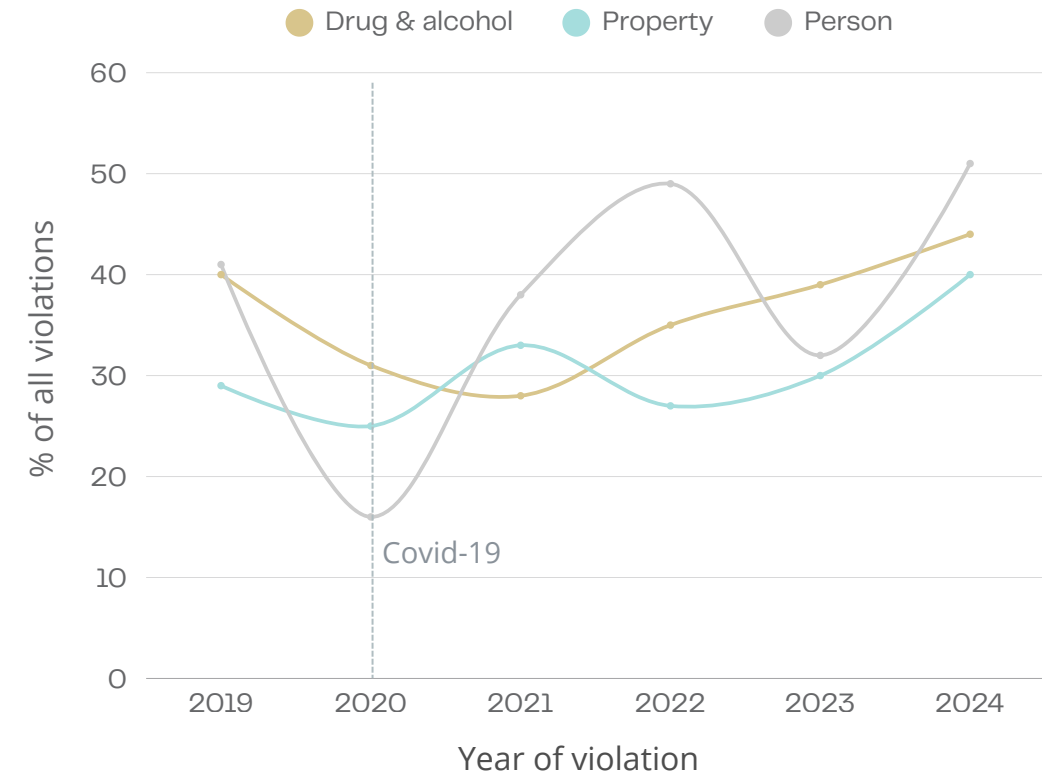
# Trends in Drug & Alcohol Violations



Percent drug & alcohol violations by gender



Percent drug & alcohol violations by offense type\*



\*Includes the top three offense types; person offenses have lower counts.

# Cost Implications



In 2024, the average annual per person prison costs in Utah measured above \$35,000. This cost rises further for aging individuals and those with increased medical needs. In contrast, intensive community supervision, which includes case management, monitoring, and treatment services, can be a fraction of this amount.

Preventing or even delaying new prison returns for this population by providing tailored support and services could yield significant cost savings while upholding public safety and promoting rehabilitation. For a cost-benefit analysis of intensive supervision programs, see [WSIPP, 2024](#).

## Takeaways: Cost implications

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### Cost of prison

Annual average per-person prison cost exceeded \$35K in 2024, with higher expenditures for aging individuals and those requiring more medical services.



### Cost-Effectiveness

Research has shown that intensive supervision programs can be a cost effective solution.



# TAKEAWAYS & POLICY IMPLICATIONS



~ The majority of habitual offenders have been convicted of a property or an alcohol and drug related offense and exhibit intensive-to-high risk and need profiles, highlighting the necessity for targeted supervision and treatment services. A smaller proportion have been convicted of person-related offenses, requiring a stronger focus on public safety measures. ~

## Report Takeaways:



### Small but costly

Habitual offenders are a small share of AP&P's supervised population but costly due to repeated system involvement.



### High risk & needs

Many are intensive to high risk to reoffend with high substance use needs.



### Continued support

Supervision and treatment should be tailored to individual risk and needs, with ongoing support being key to success.

# Next Phase Evaluation: Part 2



In early 2024, Utah Department of Corrections' Adult Probation & Parole (AP&P) launched an Intensified Supervision Program (ISP) with **reduced officer caseloads**, offering tailored support based on individual risks and needs to address the multifaceted needs of habitual offenders. These individuals further have special conditions that allow an agent to respond more promptly to changes needed in their supervision structure. The initiative aims to reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and optimize justice system resources. This next report reviews the characteristics and early outcomes for individuals participating in this initiative.

# Supervision Dosage



In criminal justice research and policy, the term "dosage" refers to the appropriate level and intensity of supervision and intervention based on an individual's specific risk and need profile. The dosage of supervision is crucial in managing individuals under both general and intensive supervision. Higher-risk individuals often need more intensive monitoring and support, while low-to-moderate risk individuals can be harmed by excessive supervision.

A tailored approach that follows risk and needs ensures interventions are effective and avoids hindering rehabilitation and reintegration. **Prior studies have found that increased surveillance without proper rehabilitation does not reduce recidivism among higher risk individuals** (Gleicher, Manchak & Cullen, 2013).

## Key TakeAways: Dosage Best Practices



### Risk & needs principle

Supervision and treatment dosage should be tailored to an individual's risk and needs.



### Balanced approach

Research shows that supervision should be balanced to avoid both under- and over-supervision.



### Continued support

Continued support and services are critical to ensure sustained success.

# Acknowledgements



We would like to express our gratitude to the Utah Department of Corrections for their invaluable support, collaboration and for sharing the data underlying this report. A special thank you to Ben Watkins, David Hannah and Aimee Griffiths whose expertise and commitment to data transparency have been crucial in shaping the direction of this report. We would further like to acknowledge the Wisconsin Department of Corrections for the design that inspired this report.

*Thank  
you!*

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# APPENDIX A: Data & Methodology



Recidivism analyses need a start and an end point.



When measuring a return to prison, a revocation from probation and new violations on supervision, clear start and end points are essential. This report defines the start as the date an individual begins supervision and the end as sequential time periods of 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 3 years after the initial start date, providing sufficient time for evaluation. This approach ensures a fair assessment of rates within each time interval.

# Data & Methodology Cont.



We use data from the Utah Department of Corrections (UDOC) on individuals starting AP&P supervision flagged as habitual offenders between 2019 and 2024, analyzing their characteristics and outcomes. It is important to note that UDOC records may contain discrepancies in the reported number of prior convictions before supervision began.

Recidivism is defined as: 1) Any recidivism event (any reason), 2) A technical violation, 3) A new crime and 4) A new felony crime within determined time periods. Follow-up periods extend up to three years for selected definitions. Individuals who were deported, passed away, or transferred to another state during supervision were excluded from recidivism analyses. Time-to-recidivism analyses may be marginally affected by those who absconded due to differences between the actual time they absconded and when their supervision officially ended. Drug and alcohol related supervision violations were grouped by violation type. Because the category “conduct” often involves drugs and alcohol, the drug and alcohol category by itself is underestimated.

Logistic regression was used to compare the characteristics of habitual offenders to the general supervision population, as shown on page 11. Statistical significance was assessed at the <1%, 5%, and 10% levels, with odds ratios generally indicating small group differences.