

## Research in Brief

# The Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Recidivism Report: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012

September 2016

## Introduction

Since 2011, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission has undertaken the task of monitoring the annual statewide recidivism rates of juvenile offenders who had a case closed from a Pennsylvania juvenile probation department. Initially conducted to determine the relationships that existed between certain juvenile- and system-level variables, the current report serves to highlight how juvenile offender characteristics and juvenile recidivism trends have changed over time in Pennsylvania. For the purposes of this report, recidivism is defined as: within two years of case closure, a subsequent adjudication of delinquency in juvenile court or conviction in criminal court for a felony or misdemeanor offense. Analyses for the current study were based on data collected from youth with cases closed from Pennsylvania juvenile probation departments between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2012. The outcomes presented in this report are reflective of 110,881 youth with cases closed in this time period. Data for this project was compiled from the Pennsylvania Juvenile Case

Management System (PaJCMS) and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Court's (AOPC) Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS). It should be noted that expunged cases created a significant limitation to the study. Prior to October 1, 2014 in Pennsylvania, when a case was expunged, all of a juvenile's identifying information related to that case was "erased" and was therefore not available for analysis. Arguably, juveniles whose cases are expunged are presumed to be individuals who are considered to be at lower risk to recidivate. In general, counties that expunged significant numbers of cases had higher recidivism rates than their counterparts. A possible explanation for this result is that a significant number of lower risk youth were removed from the research sample in these jurisdictions.

The remainder of this Research in Brief will highlight the major findings from *The Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Recidivism Report: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,*

### RECIDIVISM DEFINED:

Within two years of case closure, a subsequent adjudication of delinquency in juvenile court or conviction in criminal court for a felony or misdemeanor offense

This Research in Brief is based on findings presented in ***The Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Recidivism Report: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012***. To view a detailed description of the methodology employed and the major findings from this study, please refer to the full report, available on the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission website at [www.jcjc.pa.gov](http://www.jcjc.pa.gov).

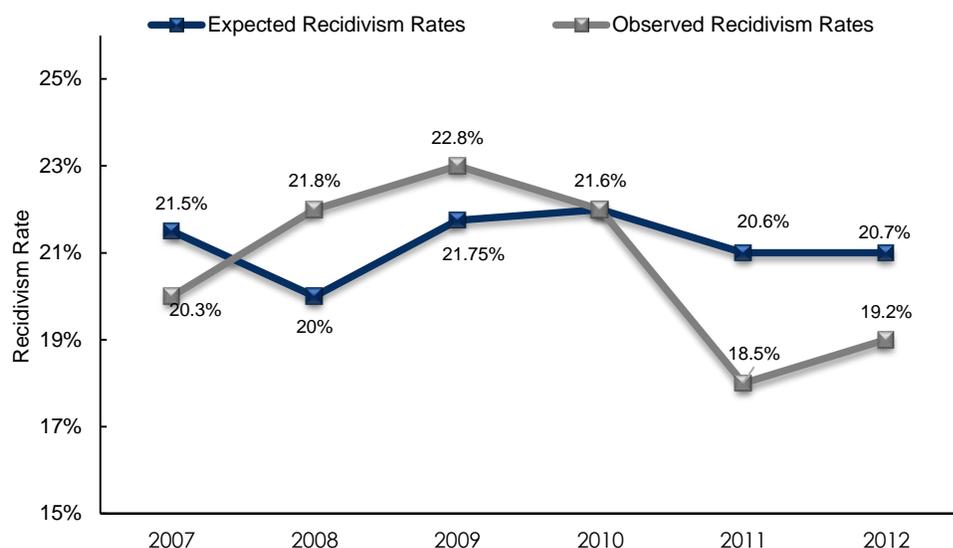
*2011, and 2012*, which is available on the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission's website. These findings are presented by the following topic areas: Expected vs. Observed Recidivism Rates, General Recidivism Findings, Demographic Variables, Offense and Disposition Variables, Out-of-Home Service Variables, and Serious, Violent, and/or Chronic Offenders.

## Expected vs. Observed Recidivism Rates

In 2015, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission partnered with research staff from the University of Pittsburgh to determine Pennsylvania's expected recidivism rates. As previous analyses have demonstrated, it is important for states to take into account how their juvenile offender population has changed over time and the impact this change may have on expected recidivism rates. For example, if a juvenile probation department is consistently diverting low risk youth out of the juvenile justice system, the recidivism rate of that department would inevitably increase, as it is providing services to juveniles who are more likely to recidivate (i.e., moderate and high risk youth). Comparing expected recidivism rates to observed recidivism rates provides a much more meaningful measurement of system performance since expected recidivism rates take into account the types of juveniles who had been under supervision.

When comparing expected recidivism rates to observed recidivism rates, Pennsylvania performed better than anticipated in 2007, and most notably, 2011 and 2012. In 2008 and 2009, the observed recidivism rate was higher than the expected recidivism rate. In 2010, there were no differences between the expected recidivism rate and the observed recidivism rate (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Expected Recidivism Rates vs. Observed Recidivism Rates: Juveniles With Cases Closed in 2007-2012**



## General Recidivism Findings

Juveniles were most likely to recidivate first in criminal court (versus juvenile court). The percentage of juveniles who recidivated first in criminal court increased 13% (or seven percentage points) between 2007 and 2012 (54% and 61%, respectively).

Between 2007 and 2012, the average length of time that elapsed between the juvenile's case closure date and the juvenile's first re-offense date that resulted in a subsequent delinquency adjudication in juvenile court or conviction in criminal court ranged from 7.3 months (in 2011) to 7.9 months (2007).

Between 2007 and 2012, the average length of time that elapsed between the juvenile's case closure date and the juvenile's first subsequent delinquency adjudication in juvenile court or conviction in criminal court ranged from 11.0

months (in 2011) to 11.5 months (2007 and 2012).

Across all years studied, recidivists consistently spent more time involved with the juvenile justice system than their non-recidivist counterparts.

Across all six years analyzed, recidivists were more likely than non-recidivists to have been adjudicated delinquent prior to their case closure.

Across all six years examined, recidivists averaged three written allegations each, while non-recidivists averaged two written allegations each.

As the youths' number of total written allegations to a juvenile probation department increased, so did the likelihood of recidivism. This trend was consistent between 2007 and 2012.

There has been ongoing interest in determining the number of juveniles who, within two years of case closure, had a conviction in criminal court, even if was not the youth's first recidivating case. In 2012, approximately 12% of all juveniles with a case closed from a juvenile probation department in Pennsylvania had a criminal conviction within two years. This is slightly lower than 2009, the year in which the percentage of juveniles with criminal convictions peaked at 14%. In general, between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of all juveniles who had a criminal conviction did not vary considerably. The range of juveniles who had a criminal conviction was anywhere

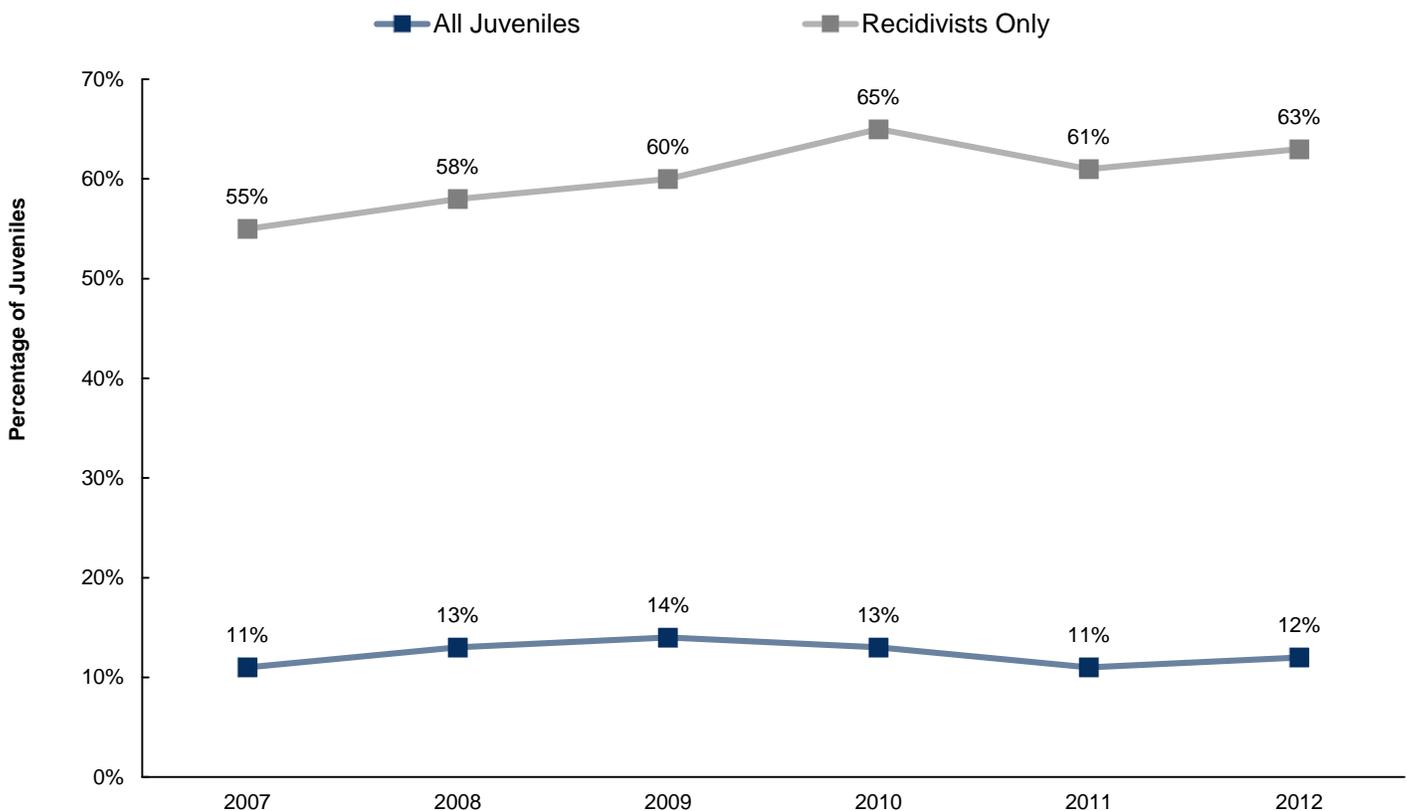
between 11% (in 2007 and 2010) to 14% (in 2009).

When considering the population of juveniles who were recidivists, however, the percentage of youth who had a criminal conviction increased steadily between 2007 and 2012. In 2007, only 55% of recidivists had a criminal conviction within two years. By 2012, that figure increased about 15% (or eight percentage points) to 63% (See Figure 2).

It should be noted these percentages include all juveniles who had a case closure in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, regardless of the juveniles' ages at the time of their case closure.

The reader should be cautioned that many of the juveniles were not old enough to be charged as an adult within two years of their case closure, unless they committed a felony at age 14 or older and were subject to transfer to criminal proceedings or if they committed an offense excluded from the definition of "delinquent act," which is subject to original criminal court jurisdiction. The average age of juveniles at the time of their 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, or 2012 case closure was 17 years, and this was consistent across the six years examined.

**Figure 2. Juvenile Offenders Who Had Criminal Convictions within Two Years of Case Closure: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



## Demographic Variables

Recidivists were slightly younger, on average, than non-recidivists at the time of their first written allegation. This trend was consistent across all six years examined.

In general, as age at the time of the youth's first written allegation to a juvenile probation department increased, the likelihood of recidivism decreased, indicating an inverse relationship between the two variables (See Figure 3).

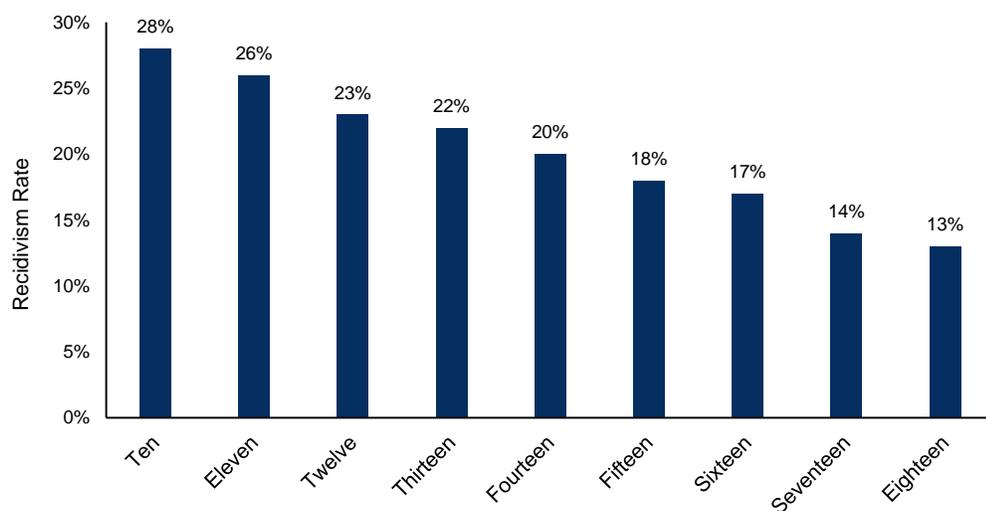
The younger a juvenile was at the time of his or her first adjudication of delinquency, the more likely he or she was to recidivate. Conversely, the older the juvenile was at the time of his or her first adjudication of delinquency, the less likely he or she was to recidivate.

Among all juveniles with a case closed between 2007 and 2012, as age at the time of the youth's case closure increased, so did the likelihood of recidivism.

Among all juveniles with a case closed between 2007 and 2012, males recidivated at a rate about 2.5 times higher than females. The recidivism rates of males ranged from a low of 22% in 2011 to a high of 27% in 2009. The recidivism rates of females ranged from a low of 8% in 2011 to a high of 11% in 2008 and 2009.

There was a substantial shift in the race and ethnicity of juveniles who had cases closed from Pennsylvania juvenile probation departments in the six-year time period examined.

**Figure 3. Recidivism Rates by Age at First Written Allegation: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2012**



From 2007-2012, the percentage of White Non-Hispanic youth with a case closure decreased 19% (or eleven percentage points), from 59% to 48%. The percentage of Black Non-Hispanic youth increased approximately 20% (or six percentage points), from 31% to 37%. The percentage of Hispanic youth with a case closure increased approximately 45% (or three percentage points), from 9% to 13% (See Figure 4).

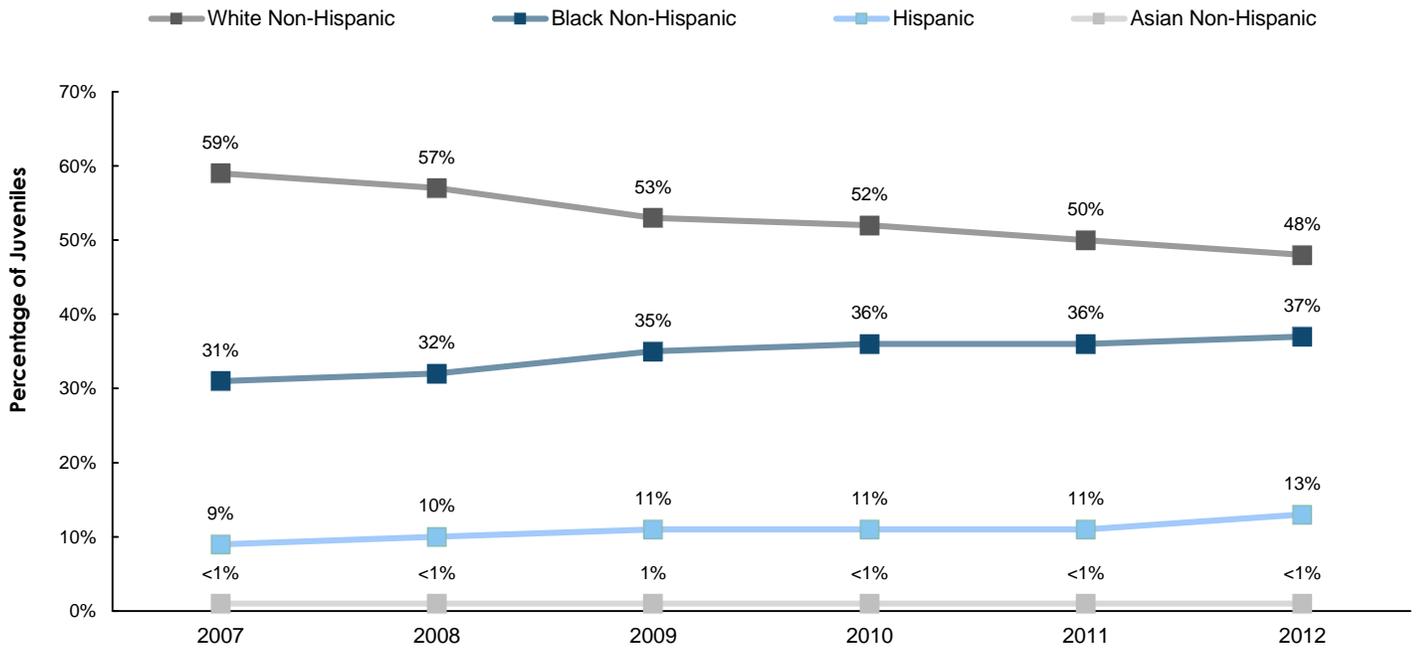
While recidivism rates for each race and ethnicity groups declined between 2007 and 2012 (with the exception of Asian Non-Hispanic juveniles), Black Non-Hispanic juveniles consistently had the highest recidivism rates, followed by Hispanic juveniles and White Non-Hispanic juveniles. Asian Non-Hispanic juveniles consistently had the lowest recidivism rates, with the exception of the year 2012. Between 2011 and 2012, the recidivism rates of Asian Non-Hispanic juveniles increased 50%

(or six percentage points), from 12% to 18% (See Figure 5).

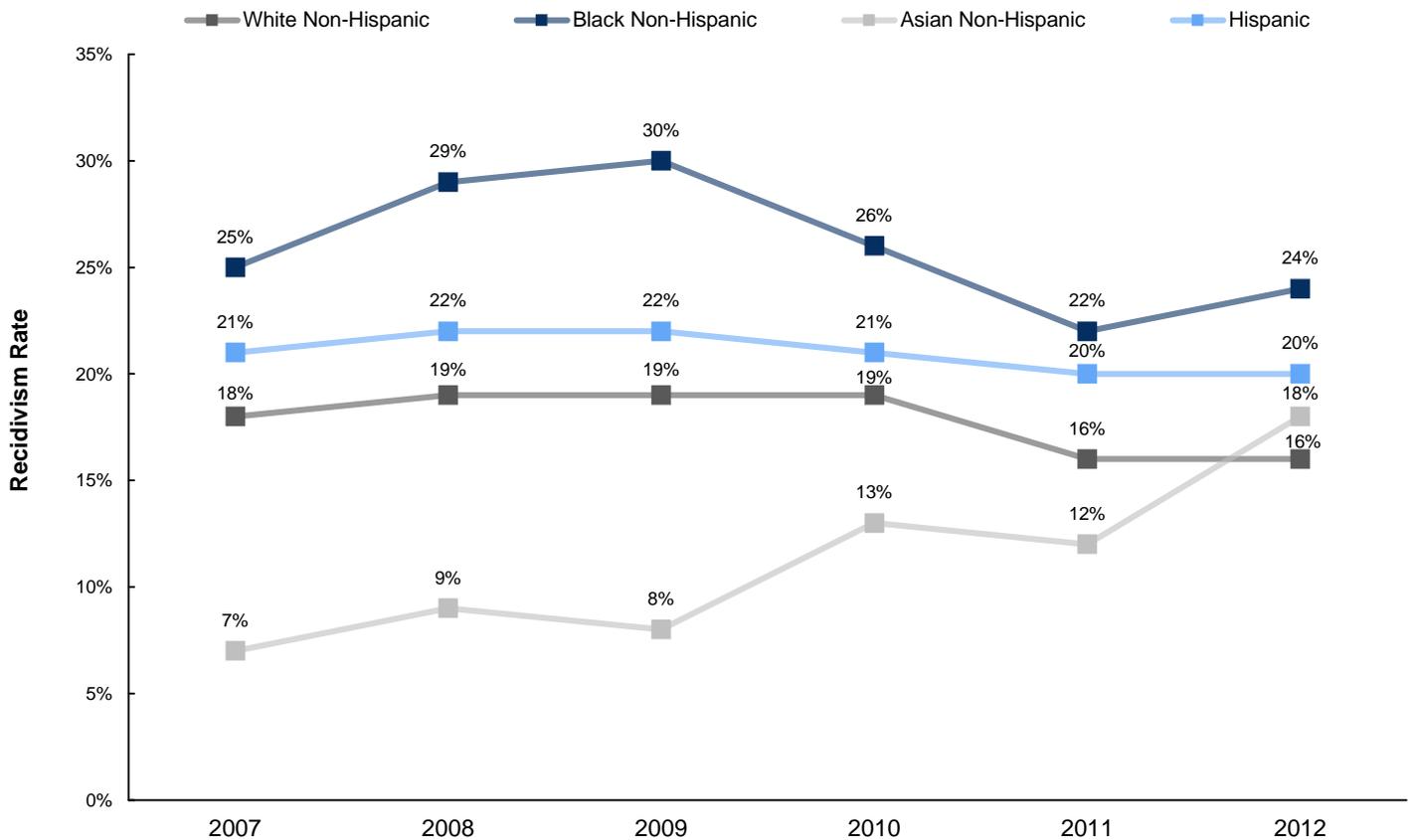
The percentage of White Non-Hispanic males with cases closed decreased 20% (nine percentage points) between 2007 and 2012, from 45% to 36%. The percentage of Black Non-Hispanic males increased 17% (or four percentage points) in this six-year time period, from 23% to 27%. Among the remaining race/ethnicity and gender groups, there were not substantial changes in the percentage of youth with cases closed.

While recidivism rates for each of the race/ethnicity and gender groups generally declined between 2007 and 2012 (with the exception of Asian Non-Hispanic males), Black Non-Hispanic males consistently had the highest recidivism rates, followed by Hispanic males, and White Non-Hispanic males. Black Non-Hispanic females, White Non-Hispanic females, and Hispanic females consistently had the lowest recidivism rates.

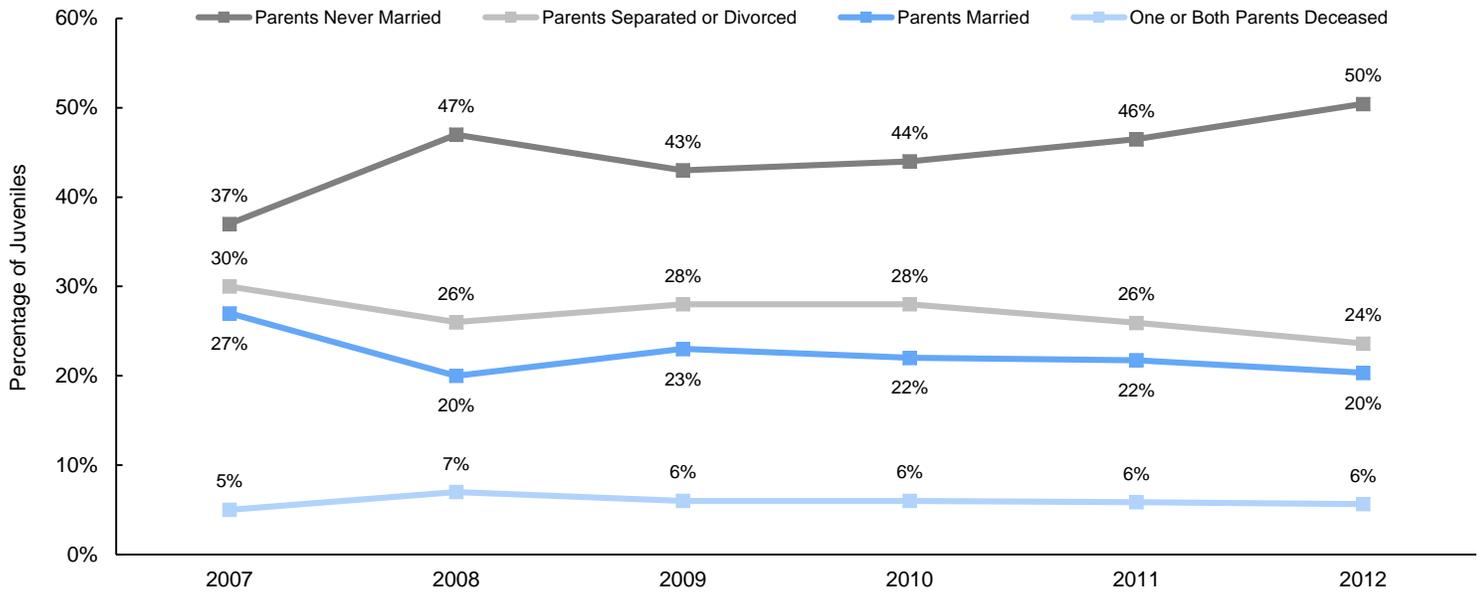
**Figure 4. Race and Ethnicity of All Youth: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



**Figure 5. Recidivism Rates by Race and Ethnicity: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



**Figure 6. Family Status of All Youth: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



Across the six years examined, the proportion of juveniles with a case closure whose parents were never married increased approximately 35% (or thirteen percentage points), from 37% in 2007 to 50% in 2012. Conversely, the proportion of juveniles with a case closure whose parents were married decreased approximately 25% (or seven percentage points), from 27% in 2007 to 20% in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of juveniles with a case closure whose parents were separated or divorced decreased approximately 20% (or six percentage points), from 30% in 2007 to 24% in 2012. The proportion of juveniles with a case closure with one or both parents deceased did not change substantially between 2007 and 2012 (See Figure 6).

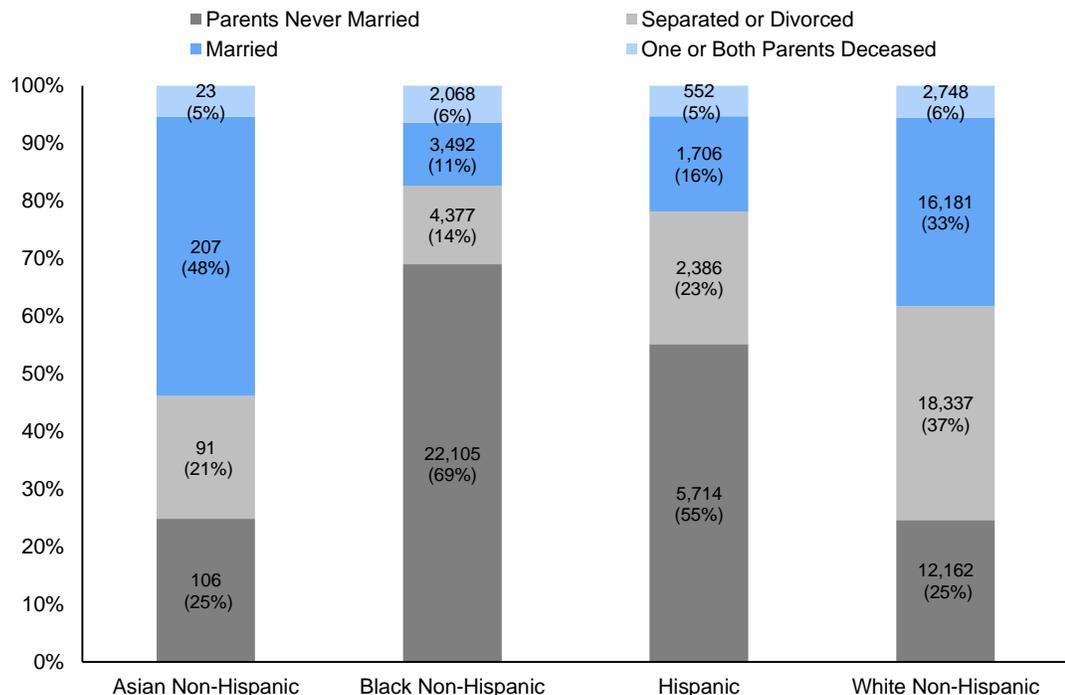
Across the six years examined, juveniles with one or both parents deceased and juveniles with parents never married had the highest recidivism rates. Juveniles

whose parents were married had the lowest recidivism rates.

Across the six years examined, Asian Non-Hispanic juveniles were most likely to have a family status of parents married, Black Non-Hispanic juveniles were most likely to have a family status of parents never married,

Hispanic juveniles were most likely to have a family status of parents never married, and White Non-Hispanic juveniles were most likely to have a family status of parents separated or divorced (See Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Family Status by Race/Ethnicity: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



## Offense and Disposition Variables

Juveniles who committed the following offenses consistently had the lowest recidivism rates over the six-year time period examined: non-payment of fines, possession of weapon on school property, indecent assault, and retail theft. Conversely, juveniles who committed the following offenses consistently had the highest recidivism rates: firearm-related offenses, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, possession with intent to deliver, and robbery.

Across the six years examined, the proportion of juveniles who committed Drug offenses and Other offenses remained relatively stable. However, the percentage of juveniles who committed Person offenses increased about 25% (or six percentage points), from 23% in 2007 to 29% in 2012. Similarly, the percentage of juveniles who

had committed Property offenses decreased about 12% (or three percentage points), from 26% to 23%.

Between 2007 and 2012, Drug offenders consistently had the highest recidivism rates among offenders. The recidivism rate of juveniles who committed Other offenses dropped substantially (30% or seven percentage points) over time, from a high of 23% in 2009 to a low of 16% in 2012 (See Figure 8).

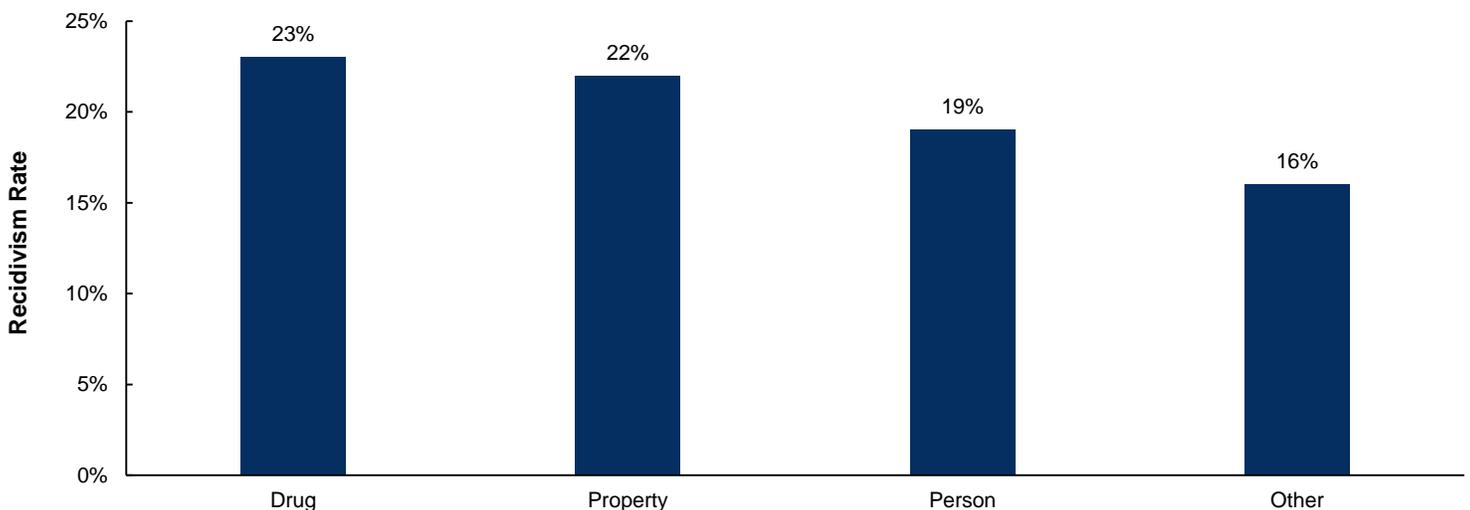
Between 2007 and 2012, Person offenders, Property offenders, and Drug offenders were most likely to return to the same types of crimes when they recidivated (i.e., exhibit offense type specialization). In addition, in that six-year time period, Drug offenders exhibited the greatest degree of offense type specialization.

The percentage of juveniles who committed misdemeanors on their base case remained consistent between 2007 and 2012. However, the percentage of juveniles who committed a felony offense increased about 20% (or four percentage points), from 19% in 2007 to 23% in 2012. Conversely, the percentage of youth who committed ungraded/summary offenses in this six-year time period decreased about 20% (or five percentage points), from 24% in 2007 to 19% in 2012.

The recidivism rates of felony offenders dropped between 2007 (23%) and 2011 (21%), most notably between 2009 (28%) and 2011 (21%), before increasing again in 2012 (25%).

The recidivism rates of ungraded/summary offenders decreased 36% (or eight percentage points), from a high of 22% in 2008, 2009, and 2010 to a low of 14% in 2012.

**Figure 8. Recidivism Rates by Offense Type of Base Case: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2012**



Regardless of the grading of the offense of the base case, the majority of recidivists committed misdemeanor offenses when they recidivated. This trend was consistent across all six years examined.

Between 2007 and 2012, youth with more formal dispositions on their base case had higher recidivism rates than juveniles with less formal dispositions.

Across the six years examined, juveniles who committed sex offenses recidivated (both sex offenses and non-sex offenses) at rates substantially lower than the statewide average (See Figure 9 for 2012 rates).

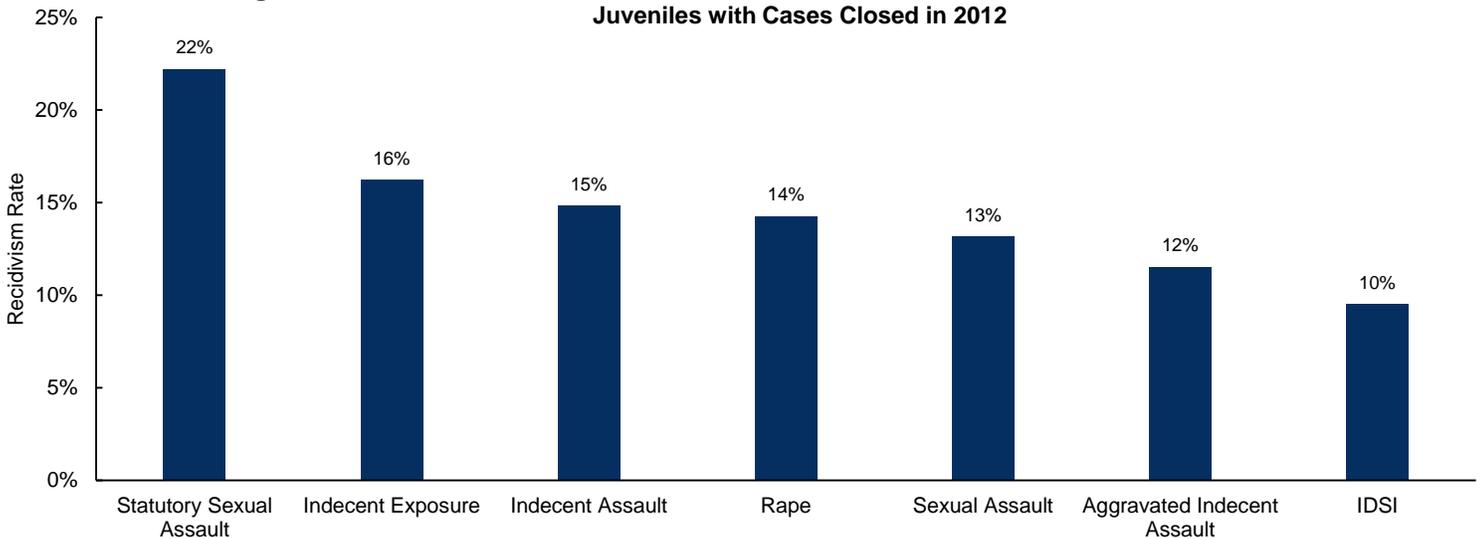
Between 2007 and 2012, the rate at which sex offenders were adjudicated delinquent or convicted in criminal court for a subsequent sex offense ranged from 1.0% (in 2009) to 2.3% (in

2010) (See Figure 10 for 2012 rates).

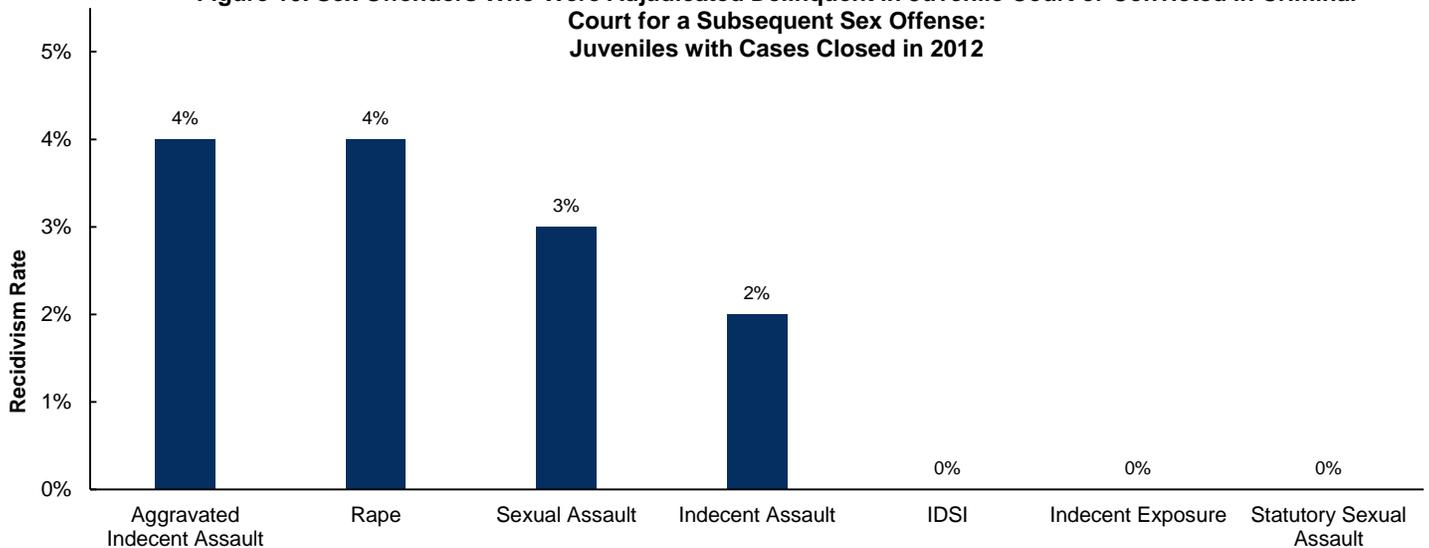
The percentage of sex offenders identified as White Non-Hispanic declined steadily between 2007 and 2012, while the percentage of sex offenders identified as Black Non-Hispanic and Hispanic increased steadily in this same time period.

The majority of sex offenders had a family status of parents never married.

**Figure 9. General Recidivism Rates of Juveniles Who Committed a Sex Offense on Their Base Case: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2012**



**Figure 10. Sex Offenders Who Were Adjudicated Delinquent in Juvenile Court or Convicted in Criminal Court for a Subsequent Sex Offense: Juveniles with Cases Closed in 2012**



### Out-of-Home Service Variables

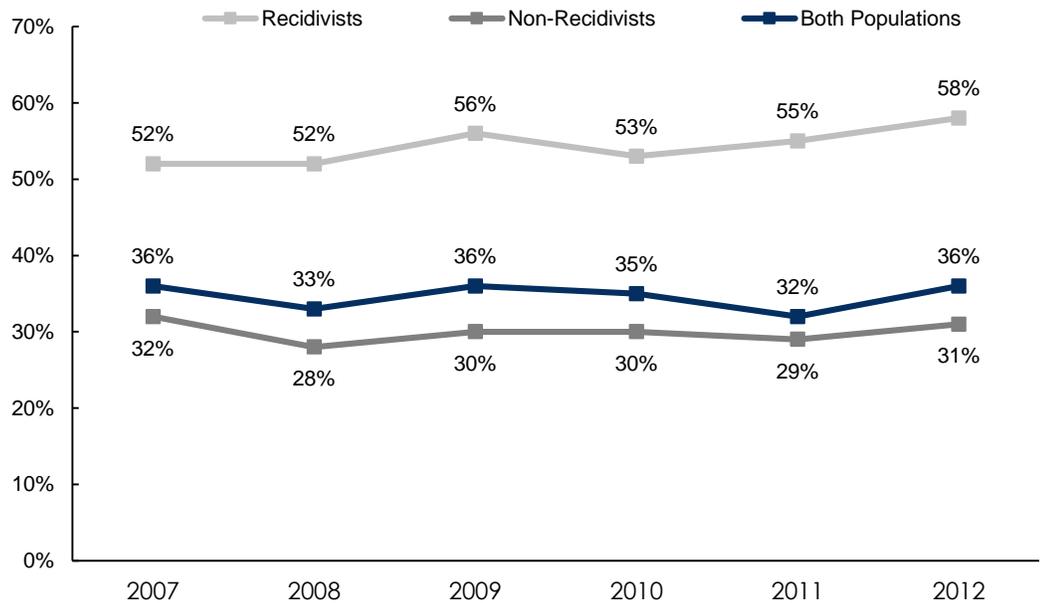
Between 2007 and 2012, the rate of receiving out-of-home services remained relatively consistent for non-recidivists. However, the rate of receiving out-of-home services increased about 11% (or six percentage points) for recidivists, from 52% (in 2007) to 58% (in 2012) (See Figure 11).

Between 2007 and 2012, juveniles who had at least one detention/shelter or dispositional placement experience recidivated at a rate at least two times as high as that of juveniles who had no out-of-home experience.

Across the six-years examined, juveniles with no out-of-home experience had the lowest recidivism rates, while juveniles with both detention AND placement experiences had the highest recidivism rates. Juveniles who had an experience at a detention/shelter only or placement only had very similar recidivism rates between 2007 and 2009, though in 2010, 2011, and 2012, the former had much lower recidivism rates, on average, than the latter.

As the total number of dispositional placement episodes in a juvenile's offense history increased, so did the likelihood of recidivism. This was consistent across all six years examined (See Figure 12).

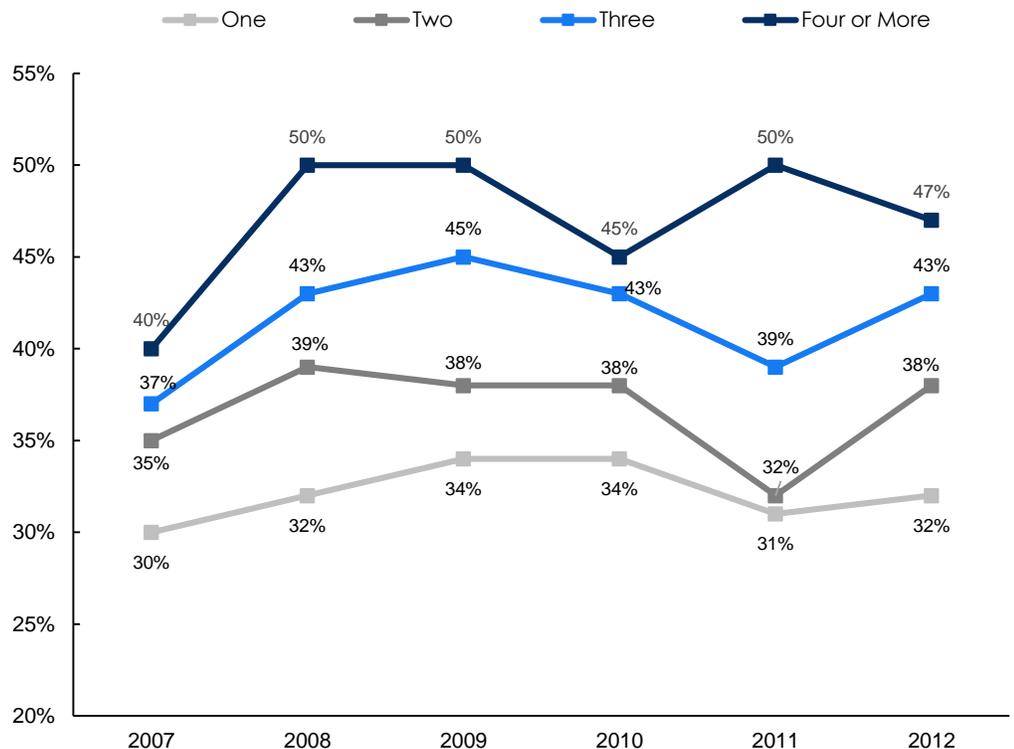
**Figure 11. Overall History of Receiving Out-of-Home Services: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



Generally, across the six years examined, juveniles who spent more time receiving out-of-home services had the highest recidivism rates, while juveniles who spent less time receiving out-of-home services had

lower recidivism rates. While rates fluctuated from year to year, these trends generally held constant from 2007-2012.

**Figure 12. Recidivism Rates by Total Number of Placement Episodes in Juvenile Offending History: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



## Serious, Violent, and/or Chronic Offenders and Child Offenders

Across the six years examined, the percentage of juveniles (both recidivists and non-recidivists) identified as a serious, violent, or chronic offender remained relatively stable. The lowest percentage of youth identified as a serious, violent, or chronic offender occurred in 2008 and 2011 (19%), while the percentage of youth identified as such peaked in 2010 (22%).

Between 2007 and 2012, the recidivism rates of serious, violent, or chronic offenders was consistently at least two times higher than the recidivism rates of juveniles who did not meet such a classification. Furthermore, the recidivism rates of both populations peaked in 2009 (38% and 18%, respectively), while decreasing steadily thereafter.

The prevalence of serious offenders among all juveniles with cases closed between 2007 and 2012 remained relatively stable, only decreasing one percentage point in that six-year time period (6% to 5%). The recidivism rates of serious offenders ranged from 34% (2007) to 39% (2009).

The percentage of serious offenders who were White Non-Hispanic decreased 33% (or nineteen percentage points) between 2007 and 2012, from 57% to 38%. Conversely, the percentage of

serious offenders who were Black Non-Hispanic increased 35% (or eleven percentage points) in this time period, from 31% to 42%. Similarly, the percentage of serious offenders who were Hispanic increased 42% (or five percentage points), from 12% in 2007 to 17% in 2012.

The prevalence of violent offenders among all juveniles with cases closed between 2007 and 2012 remained relatively stable, only increasing one percentage point across that six-year time period (6% in 2007 to 7% in 2012). The recidivism rates of violent offenders ranged from 31% (2007) to 40% (2008).

The percentage of violent offenders who were Black Non-Hispanic increased 15% (or nine percentage points) between 2007 and 2012, from 58% to 67%. Conversely, the percentage of violent offenders who were White Non-Hispanic decreased 36% (or ten percentage points) in this time period, from 28% to 18%. The percentage of violent offenders who were Hispanic remained stable between 2007 and 2012 at 13%.

The prevalence of chronic offenders among all juveniles with cases closed between 2007 and 2012 remained relatively stable, only decreasing one percentage point in that six-year time period (14% to 13%), though it did hit a low of 12% in 2011. The recidivism rates of chronic offenders ranged from 37% (2007) to 43% (2009).

### Definitions

Serious Offender: a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent in juvenile court at any point in his or her juvenile offending history for one of the following offenses: burglary, theft (felonies only), arson, drug trafficking (manufacture/deliver/possession with intent to deliver), and extortion (theft by extortion).

Violent Offender: a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent in juvenile court at any point in his or her juvenile offending history for one of the following offenses: homicide or non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, kidnapping, and select firearm/weapon offenses.

Chronic Offender: a juvenile who has four or more previous written allegations for separate incidents that occurred prior to the date of the juvenile's 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, or 2012 case closure.

Child Offender: a juvenile who was under the age of 13 as of the date of his or her first adjudication of delinquency.

The percentage of chronic offenders who were Black Non-Hispanic increased 28% (or eleven percentage points) between 2007 and 2012, from 39% to 50%. Conversely, the percentage of chronic offenders who were White Non-Hispanic decreased 32% (or sixteen percentage points) in this time period, from 50% to 34%. Similarly, the percentage of chronic offenders who were Hispanic increased about 30% (or three percentage points), from 11% in 2007 to 14% in 2012.

Across the six years examined, no more than 0.5% of juveniles with cases closed met the definition of a serious, violent, and chronic (SVC) offender. The recidivism rates for these offenders, however, ranged from 47% (2008) to 66% (2009).

See Figures 13 and 14 for the average recidivism rates of serious, violent, and/or chronic offenders and the prevalence of such between 2007 and 2012.

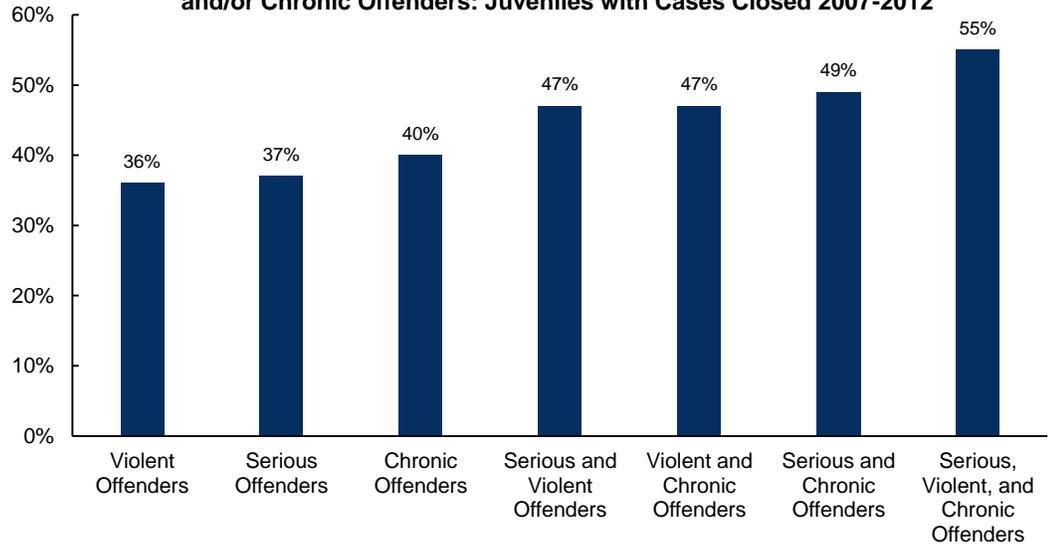
The prevalence of child offenders among all juveniles with cases closed between 2007 and 2012 remained relatively stable, only increasing one percentage point in this six-year time period (2% to 3%). The recidivism rates of child offenders ranged from 29% (2007) to 35% (2008 and 2011).

The percentage of child offenders who were Black Non-Hispanic remained relatively stable between 2007 and 2012, only increasing two percentage points between 2007 (48%) and 2012 (50%), after dropping to a low of 41% in 2009. The percentage of child offenders who were Hispanic increased about five percentage points, from 10% in 2007 to 15% in 2012. Conversely, the percentage of child offenders who were White Non-Hispanic decreased seven percentage points in this time period, from 40% in 2007 to 33% in 2012.

Between 2007 and 2012, approximately 50% of child offenders were either a serious offender, a violent offender, or

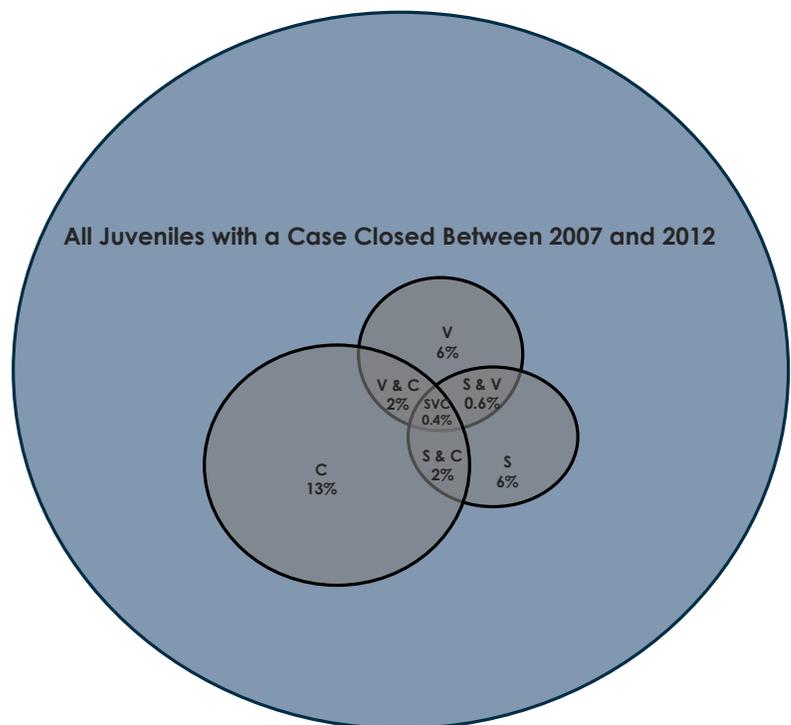
a chronic offender, while only 20% of non-child offenders were a serious offender, a violent offender, or a chronic offender.

**Figure 13. Six-Year Average Recidivism Rates for Serious, Violent, and/or Chronic Offenders: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**



**Figure 14. Serious, Violent, and/or Chronic Offenders in Pennsylvania: Juveniles with Cases Closed 2007-2012**

S= Serious  
 V= Violent  
 C= Chronic  
 SVC= Serious, Violent, and Chronic  
 S & V= Serious and Violent  
 S & C= Serious and Chronic  
 V & C= Violent and Chronic



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