

Vermont's Raise the Age Law

Early Outcomes and Implications

September 2026



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Presented To :
Vermont Department for
Children and Families

Council for Equitable Youth
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2020, Vermont became the first state to extend juvenile jurisdiction beyond age 18. Under Act 201, most offenses committed by 18-year-olds are handled in the Family Division rather than the adult Criminal Division. This report provides the first descriptive baseline of 377 18-year-olds whose delinquency cases were processed under the reform.

Key findings include:

- Motor vehicle offenses accounted for 42.7% of lead charges, followed by public order offenses (16.7%) and assaults (15.9%).
- Diversion was the most common case outcome: 161 cases (42.7%) resulted in diversion, 109 (28.9%) in dismissal, and 107 (28.4%) in a delinquency finding.
- Across the available follow-up period, 324 individuals (85.9%) had no subsequent adult conviction.

A 2022 CRG study established a baseline for 18- and 19-year-olds convicted in adult criminal court between 2016 and 2019 also excluding 'Big 12' cases. Post-reform figures are lower on every measure:

- One-year reconviction was 6.9% in the present cohort, compared with 24.0% in the adult-court benchmark (the one-year rate of the adult cohort includes 18- and 19-year-olds).
- Three-year reconviction was 18.7%, compared with 45.98% overall and 43.5% among 18-year-olds in the benchmark report.

Median time to reconviction was 379 days, compared with roughly six months in the benchmark study. These findings should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal. This study establishes a baseline for monitoring Act 201 and assessing longer-term outcomes as additional data become available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Crime Research Group, Inc. (CRG) under contract with the Vermont Department for Children and Families. CRG subcontracted the analysis and report development to the Justice Information Research Network (JIRN). Diba Rouzbahani, Ph.D., of JIRN served as the primary author. Monica Weeber, Executive Director of CRG, provided project oversight, contributed to the interpretation of findings, and reviewed and edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND: RAISE THE AGE & ACT 201

On July 1, 2020, Vermont became the first state in the United States to extend juvenile jurisdiction beyond the eighteenth birthday. Under Act 201 of 2018, commonly referred to as the *Raise the Age law*, most individuals accused of offenses at age 18 are prosecuted in the Family Division of the Superior Court rather than the adult Criminal Division. Supervision and coordination of services are provided by the Department for Children and Families (DCF) instead of the Department of Corrections (DOC). However, the most serious offenses, which are often referred to as the "Big 12,"¹ remain under the jurisdiction of the adult Criminal Division.

This reform is the result of roughly a decade of growing changes within Vermont's juvenile justice system. These changes included the earlier transfer of 16- and 17-year-olds charged with non-Big 12 offenses to the Family Division, the extension of Youthful Offender status to older adolescents, and sustained investment in diversion and restorative justice infrastructure.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENTAL RATIONALE FOR THE REFORM

The rationale behind the Raise the Age initiative is grounded in a substantial body of research from neuroscience, developmental psychology, and sociology, indicating that 'emerging adulthood', approximately ages 18 to 25, is a distinct developmental stage rather than a sudden transition to full adulthood^{2,3}.

The human brain continues to mature into the mid-twenties, and individuals in this age group reach conventional markers of adulthood, such as stable housing, steady employment, and marriage, later than previous generations⁴. Similar to younger adolescents, emerging adults exhibit greater reward-seeking behavior, heightened susceptibility to peer influence, and increased impulsivity compared to older adults.

¹ The "Big 12" refers to the serious offenses enumerated in 33 V.S.A. § 5204(a): arson causing death; assault and robbery with a dangerous weapon; assault and robbery causing bodily injury; aggravated assault; murder; manslaughter; kidnapping; unlawful restraint; maiming; sexual assault; aggravated sexual assault; and burglary into an occupied dwelling. Act 201 distinguishes these offenses from other offenses for purposes of juvenile jurisdiction and provides different rules governing where proceedings originate and whether jurisdiction may be transferred between the Family and Criminal Divisions of the Superior Court.

² Vastine, K., Chester, L., Sussman, M., Carey, N., & Schiraldi, V. (2019). *Report on Act 201 implementation plan report & recommendations: Report to the Vermont Legislature*. Vermont Department for Children and Families. <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/20191101-Vermont-RTA-DCF-Report-Final.pdf>

³ Cohen, A. O., Breiner, K., Steinberg, L., Bonnie, R. J., Scott, E. S., Taylor-Thompson, K. A., Rudolph, M. D., Chein, J., Richeson, J. A., Heller, A. S., Silverman, M. R., Dellarco, D. V., Fair, D. A., Galván, A., & Casey, B. J. (2016). When is an adolescent an adult? Assessing cognitive control in emotional and nonemotional contexts. *Psychological Science*, 27(4), 549–562. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615627625>

⁴ Settersten, R. A., Jr, & Ray, B. (2010). What's going on with young people today? the long and twisting path to adulthood. *The Future of children*, 20(1), 19–41. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.0.0044>

Two key findings from the literature are central to the policy argument. First, most young people cease engaging in unlawful behavior as they mature, as they age into adult roles. Second, formal justice-system processing can disrupt this natural desistance and, in some cases, increase reoffending compared to less formal responses such as diversion. The same developmental malleability that enables emerging adults to benefit from rehabilitative, developmentally tailored interventions in the juvenile system also renders them susceptible to the punitive aspects of the adult system. The adult system has historically failed to address these issues, treating 18- and 19-year-olds identically to much older adults⁵. By integrating this population into a system focused on rehabilitation, Vermont aimed to improve outcomes for young people, enhance public safety, and reduce long-term costs.

1.3 CURRENT STUDY

This report describes the young people processed under Act 201, the charges and dispositions their cases received, and their subsequent contact with the adult criminal system. The Crime Research Group (CRG) prepared this report for DCF. CRG has a memorandum of understanding with the Vermont Judiciary to obtain family court records. Those records were matched to adult criminal-history data to construct the first empirical portrait of the Raise the Age cohort.

This study examines a cohort of 377 individuals whose qualifying delinquency cases were filed in the Family Division at age 18, with preliminary hearings occurring on or after July 1, 2020, the effective date of Act 201. The analysis describes the cohort's demographic composition, geographic distribution across Vermont's counties, distribution of lead charges, case dispositions across three outcome groups (delinquency finding, dismissal, and diversion), and recidivism, measured as adult reconviction within one- and three-year observation periods.

Consistent with the cautions raised during implementation planning, the analysis is deliberately descriptive. The cohort size is modest, recidivism events are infrequent, and a substantial proportion of records lack race or ethnicity data. Consequently, most results are reported as counts relative to observable denominators rather than as rates. Observed differences across offense categories, counties, genders, or racial groups should be interpreted as descriptive of this specific cohort, not as evidence of differential offending, charging, or reoffending. The primary objective is to establish an accurate baseline rather than to support causal inferences.

Even as a descriptive baseline, this study fulfills several important functions. The study provides an initial measure of recidivism for emerging adults processed in the juvenile rather than adult system, a metric central to evaluating the reform's rehabilitative and public safety objectives.

Vermont remains the first and most closely observed state to raise the age of jurisdiction beyond 18. The early evidence generated is directly relevant to other jurisdictions considering similar reforms and to the ongoing refinement of Vermont's two-phase implementation. Act 201 phased in

⁵ Schiraldi, V., Western, B., & Bradner, K. (2015). *Community-based responses to justice-involved young adults* (New Thinking in Community Corrections Bulletin No. 1; NCJ 248900). U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/community-based-responses-justice-involved-young-adults>

18-year-olds in July 2020, with 19-year-olds to follow; however, the effective date for the second phase has been significantly delayed.

2 METHODS

2.1 DATA SOURCES

This study draws on two sources. The Vermont Judiciary provided juvenile case data, combining two case-management systems: the Vermont Automated Docketing System (VTADS) and Odyssey, the Judiciary's current records management system. VTADS provided quarter-level disposition dates, while Odyssey included exact dates. The data included each individual's charges, race, gender, and preliminary hearing date. Cases from the Judiciary span from July 2020 through 2025. The data were extracted in February 2026 from the judiciary data provider.

The Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC) provided adult criminal history data, including individuals' arraignment dates, final dispositions, conviction status, and charge rankings. This sample includes case dispositions through March 2026. Cohort and adult criminal history records were linked using last name, first name, and date of birth, as no shared personal identifier was available in both datasets.

2.2 COHORT DEFINITION

The cohort includes individuals whose qualifying family court case met three criteria:

- (1) The individual was 18 years old at the time of filing (18 or older but under 19),
- (2) The case involved delinquency, and
- (3) The preliminary hearing occurred on or after July 1, 2020, when Act 201 of 2018, *Raise the Age*, took effect.

Each individual was assigned a single base case as the index event, defined as the earliest qualifying case by preliminary hearing date. If multiple cases shared the same date, the most serious case was selected according to the state's charge-severity ranking, with the docket number serving as the final tiebreaker. This produced exactly one base case per individual; remaining cases were retained for analysis as prior or recidivism events. After excluding probation-violation offenses, procedural or non-substantive dispositions (such as transfers, dismissals for cause, and no-probable-cause findings), cases with probation, guilty, or no-contest dispositions, cases too recent to allow a one-year recidivism observation window, and cases with missing dispositions, the final cohort comprised 377 cases.

2.3 DISPOSITION COHORTS

Each case was categorized into one of three disposition groups by its most consequential outcome, prioritized as: any delinquency finding, followed by any diversion, and then dismissal. Cases with dispositions outside these categories (such as guilty or no-contest pleas and probation discharges) were excluded.

2.4 OFFENSE CATEGORIES

Each charge carries a Vermont charge code and a detailed description, recorded both at original filed charge and final disposition. The state assigns each code a numeric rank from least serious to most serious charges, and each rank maps to category label such as DUI, assaults, public order, or drug offenses.

In the case-level offense analysis, each case is represented by its single most serious charge (highest rank); a multi-charge case is therefore summarized by its highest-rank offense. Results use the final (disposed) charge category as the primary measure; the original charge category is available for comparison upon request.

In this analysis, approximately 0.3% in the base cohort lacked a severity rank; a single case was assigned to its category by hand. Among adult recidivism charges for cohort members 10 (2.2%) lacked a rank, most commonly Violation of Conditions of Release, a procedural charge outside the offense category. Because recidivism is measured by conviction and arraignment date rather than by offense code, and because recidivism is reported by base charge category, unranked charges do not affect recidivism counts.

2.5 RECIDIVISM DEFINITION

Recidivism was measured exclusively as adult reconviction, defined as the first case resulting in an adult conviction occurring after the base case's disposition. That means recidivism counts cases that resulted in conviction, not arrests or charges⁶. Time to recidivism was measured in days from base disposition to the arraignment date of the first case resulting in a conviction. Rather than disposition date, arraignments date was used because it is closest to the arrest date for the charge that led to conviction.

Two observation windows of one year and three years from the base disposition date were used. A case entered a window's denominator only if that full window had elapsed by the data pull date (observability). The one-year analysis includes all 377 cases while the three-year analysis includes only the 160 cases observed for a full three years.

2.6 PRIOR JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

A minority of the cohort (23 of 377) had criminal justice records predating their base family court case, including 31 misdemeanors and 14 felony charges across these individuals. Adult and juvenile prior records were drawn from separate systems and are reported separately rather than combined into a single total. A small number of these prior records (five individuals) involved a pre-18 offense; the adult and juvenile prior pipelines were checked for overlapping events and found to capture distinct dockets, so no records are double counted.

⁶ This measurement is more conservative and does not include an arrest or charge that did not result in conviction. Therefore, the results should not be compared to studies measuring rearrest as indicator of recidivism.

2.7 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The unit of analysis is base case. Because each individual contributes exactly one base case, case-level and person-level count coincide for this cohort. Given the cohort size and the small number of recidivism events, results are reported as counts rather than rates. Analyses were conducted using the statistical program R.

2.8 LIMITATIONS

2.8.1 Match completeness

The adult criminal history match relied on name and date of birth without a shared unique identifier. Of the 377 cohort members, 84 linked to at least one adult record (11 to a pre-base only, and 61 to a post-base only, 12 both), while 293 had no adult record. A high share with no adult footprint is expected for this population of 18-year-olds routed to family rather than criminal court, and an absent record is consistent with genuine non-involvement rather than a failed link. The 73 with any post-base adult record (61 post-base only plus 12 with both) is broader than the recidivism measure in Section 3.2, which counts only first post-base convicted arraignments (53 members ever, 26 within one year); the difference reflects charges without conviction and convictions outside the observation window. Matching was made robust to punctuation and spacing differences in surnames (for example, apostrophes), which would otherwise cause records to be missed.

2.8.2 Juvenile date resolution

In the prior juvenile system (VTADS), disposition dates are recorded only at quarter-level resolution, and preliminary-hearing dates are absent. Juvenile recidivism timing is therefore effectively limited to the newer system (Odyssey) records, and prior/recidivism splits that depend on these dates carry corresponding imprecision.

2.8.3 Sample size

With 377 cases and few recidivism events, subgroup analyses by offense category, county, gender, and race lack sufficient sample sizes for reliable rate comparisons. Results are reported as counts rather than rates and observed subgroup differences should not be interpreted as meaningful without larger samples. (Demographic details about the sample are provided in section 4.1)

2.8.4 Non-comparable windows

One-year and three-year recidivism rates are computed on different populations (all 377 cases vs. only the 160 observed for three years) and are not directly comparable; the three-year subset is systematically older.

2.8.5 Race coding

Approximately 20% of the cohort has race recorded as unknown, and several racial categories with fewer than five cases (e.g., Asian) were collapsed into White/Nonwhite/Unknown for analysis.

The Nonwhite group is small and heterogeneous, so it does not support the subgroup insight originally intended.

3 RESULTS

3.1 COHORT CHARACTERISTICS

This report analyzes a cohort of 377 individuals including 79 females (21.0%), 289 males (76.7%), and 9 of unknown gender (2.4%). Of these, 271 were White (71.9%), 22 Black (5.8%), 7 were listed as an 'other' race (1.9%), 2 Asian (0.5%), and 75 had unknown or unclassified race⁷ (19.9%). Ethnicity data were missing for 320 individuals (84.9%); among the 57 recorded, 7 (12.3%) were Hispanic. Each case belongs to one of three disposition groups: delinquency finding (107), dismissal (109), and diversion (161).

Individuals were distributed across thirteen of Vermont's fourteen counties. Chittenden County accounted for the largest share of cases (56, 14.9%), followed by Washington and Windham (43 each, 11.4%). Essex, the state's least populated county, contributed the fewest (5, 1.3%).

Table 1. Individuals' Distribution by County

County	n	percent
Chittenden	56	14.9
Washington	43	11.4
Windham	43	11.4
Bennington	36	9.5
Orleans	36	9.5
Windsor	36	9.5
Franklin	34	9.0
Rutland	32	8.5
Caledonia	18	4.8
Addison	15	4.0
Lamoille	12	3.2
Orange	11	2.9
Essex	5	1.3
Grand Isle	0	0

3.1.1 Charges

Each case is classified by its most serious charge, determined by the state's charge-severity ranking and based on the final (disposed) charge. Motor vehicle offenses are the most common,

⁷ Due to the small sample size for each race, further analysis categorized race as white or nonwhite.

representing 161 individuals (42.7%) across three categories: driving under the influence (79, 21.0%), gross negligent operation-GNO (37, 9.8%), and other motor vehicle offenses (45, 11.9%), which primarily involve carelessness, eluding law enforcement, or operating with a suspended license. Public order offenses are the second most frequent category (63, 16.7%), mainly involving disorderly conduct, open or gross lewdness, or unlawful mischief. Assault-related charges follow (60, 15.9%), along with domestic assault (30, 8.0%). Theft offenses account for 24 of these cases (6.4%). More serious offenses are rare, with sexual assault as the most serious charges in 10 cases (2.7%) and weapon offenses in 1 case (0.3%).

Table 2. Cases by Base Charges

Category	n	Percent
Driving under influence	79	21.0 %
Public Order	63	16.7%
Assaults	60	15.9%
Motor Vehicle-Other	45	11.9%
Gross Negligent Operation	37	9.8%
Domestic Assault	30	8.0%
Theft Offenses	24	6.4%
Drug Offenses	10	2.7%
Sex Assaults	10	2.7%
Fish and game	9	2.4%
Violation of Abuse Prevention Order	5	1.3%
Fraud	4	1.1%
Weapons	1	0.3%

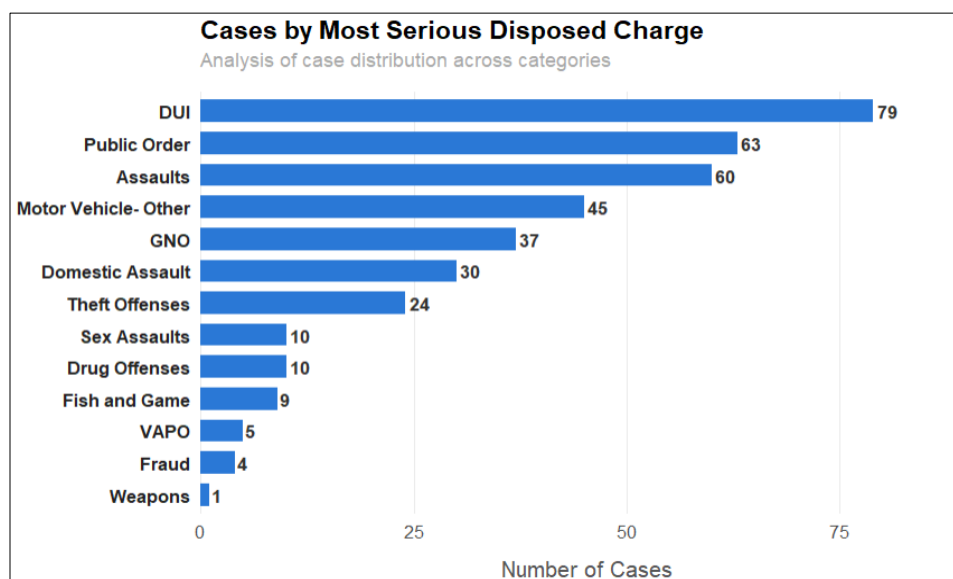


Figure 1. Cases with most serious charges

3.1.2 Gender

The charge composition differed modestly by gender. For females, the most common lead charges were public order offenses (17, 21.5%), assaults (16, 20.3%), and DUI (14, 17.7%). Among male cases, DUI was most common (62, 21.5%), followed by public order (44, 15.2%) and assaults (42, 14.5%).

Two differences are notable. Domestic assault was the lead charge in 12 of 79 female cases and 18 of 289 male cases. Given the small number of events, this difference should be verified against larger caseloads before informing programming decisions. Conversely, several categories appeared only among males: sexual assault (10), fish and game violations (9), violation of an abuse prevention order (5), and weapons offenses (1). Given the small counts in most cells, these distributions should be read as descriptive rather than as evidence of gender differences in offending.

Table 3. Charges by Gender		
Category	Female	Male
Assaults	16 (20.3%)	42 (14.5%)
Domestic Assault	12 (15.2%)	18 (6.2%)
Drug Offenses	2 (2.5%)	8 (2.8%)
DUI	14 (17.7%)	62 (21.5%)
Fish and Game	0	9 (3.1%)
Fraud	1 (1.3%)	3 (1.0%)
Gross Negligent Operation	5 (6.3%)	30 (10.4%)
Motor Vehicle-Other	6 (7.6%)	39 (13.5%)
Public Order	17 (21.5%)	44 (15.2%)
Sex Assaults	0	10 (3.5%)
Theft Offenses	6 (7.6%)	18 (6.2%)
Violation of Abuse Prevention Order	0	5 (1.7%)
Weapons	0	1 (.3%)

Note. Column percentages: each column sums to 100%. Nine individuals (2.4%) with unknown gender are included in the total analysis but omitted here, as percentages based on small samples are unstable.

3.1.3 County

This section summarizes the distribution of base charges by county. Cases were drawn from thirteen counties, ranging from 56 in Chittenden to five in Essex; none originated in Grand Isle County. As most counties contributed fewer than 40 individuals, the following distributions are presented as descriptive counts only and should not be interpreted as evidence of county-level differences in offending or charging practices. County-level rates are not reported.

Motor vehicle offenses were the most common lead charge in most counties, consistent with the overall cohort. DUI was the predominant charge in Chittenden (20, 35.7%), Windham (12, 27.9%), and Orleans (9, 25.0%). Public order offenses were most frequent in Washington (11, 25.6%) and Rutland (8, 25.0%), while assaults were most common in Windsor (11, 30.6%).

Two counties differed from the general pattern. Washington County had a notably high proportion of other motor vehicle offenses (12, 27.9%, compared to the cohort average of 11.9%), while Windham had almost none (1, 2.3%) despite a similar caseload. However, these data do not indicate whether this reflects differences in charging practices or underlying conduct.

The least common categories were sparsely distributed across counties. Drug offenses, sexual assault, fish and game violations, violations of abuse prevention orders, fraud, and weapons offenses together accounted for 39 (10.3%), with most counties recording zero or one case in each category.

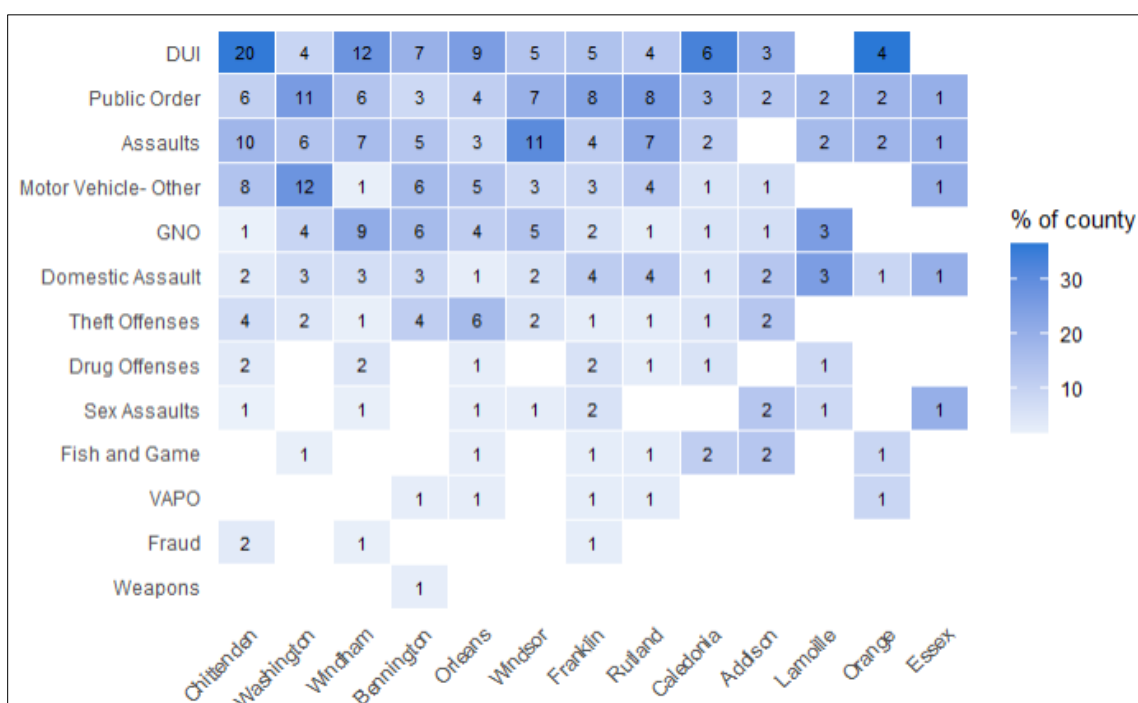


Figure 2. Charges by County

3.1.4 Race

This section summarizes the distribution of base charges by race. The categories were consolidated into three groups: White, Nonwhite (including Asian, Black, and other races), and Unknown (individuals without an assigned race). The Nonwhite group is relatively small and heterogeneous, with approximately one in five people lacking a clear racial designation. Among White individuals, the most common lead charges were DUI (20.7%), public order offenses (18.1%),

and assault (17.0%). The Unknown group had a similar pattern, with DUI as the most frequent charge (25.3%), followed by public order offenses and gross negligent operation (13.3% each), and assault (12.0%). The Nonwhite group was too small for reliable characterization; 31 individuals were distributed across several categories, with assaults and drug offenses being the most frequent (5 cases each, 16.1%), followed by DUI and public order offenses (4 cases each, 12.9%). Drug offenses constituted a larger proportion of Nonwhite cases (16.1%, 5 cases) compared to White cases (1.5%, 4 cases), although this difference is based on a small number of cases and should be interpreted with caution.

Table 4. Charges by Race			
Category	Nonwhite	White	Unknown
Assaults	5 (16.1%)	46 (17.0%)	9 (12.0%)
Domestic Assault	3 (9.7%)	21 (7.7%)	6 (8.0%)
Drug Offenses	5 (16.1%)	4 (1.5%)	1 (1.3%)
Driving Under Influence	4 (12.9%)	56 (20.7%)	19 (25.3%)
Fish and Game	0	4 (1.5%)	5 (6.7%)
Fraud	2 (6.5%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (1.3%)
Gross Negligent Operation	0	27 (10.0%)	10 (13.3%)
Motor Vehicle-Other	2 (6.5%)	36 (13.3%)	7 (9.3%)
Public Order	4 (12.9%)	49 (18.1%)	10 (13.3%)
Sex Assaults	2 (6.5%)	6 (2.2%)	2 (2.7%)
Theft Offenses	3 (9.7%)	16 (5.9%)	5 (6.7%)
Violation of Abuse Prevention Order	0	5 (1.8%)	0
Weapons	1 (3.2%)	0	0

Note. Column percentages: each column sums to 100%. Given the small Nonwhite count (31) and the substantial share of cases with unknown race, the percentages for the Nonwhite and Unknown columns are reported for descriptive purposes only.

3.2 RECIDIVISM

Of the 377 individuals, 324 (85.9%) had no further adult convictions after their cases were disposed in family courts. Across the full follow-up period, 53 individuals (14.1%) were reconvicted at least once. Because follow-up length varies by case, this figure is not bounded by fixed observation window; the one- and three-year figures below apply consistent windows to observe subset. One year after the base disposition, 26 cases (6.9%) recidivated (defined as being convicted of a new crime), 22 of 289 males and 4 out of 79 females recidivated within one year. Three-year recidivism was also examined. Only 160 of the 377 cases (42.4%) have been observed for a full three years; the remainder entered the cohort too recently to have completed the window. Among those 160 cases, 30 recidivated within three years. Because the three-year figure is derived from a smaller subset, it is reported as a count and is not directly comparable to the one-year rate.

3.2.1 Recidivism by Base Charges

One-year recidivism was distributed sparsely across all charges, with no single category demonstrating a notably higher frequency. Counts ranged from 0 to 5, with most categories recording between 0 and 3 cases. Assaults (5 cases) and DUI (4 cases) accounted for the highest number of one-year recidivists, followed by domestic assault, public order, theft, and fish and game.

The three-year breakdown reveals a similar pattern of low and scattered counts. Although rate calculations might suggest elevated recidivism in categories such as domestic assault (5 of 17) and gross negligent operation (4 of 14), these proportions are based on a small number of events within limited subsets and do not provide evidence of higher reoffending risk for those offenses. Therefore, these figures are presented as counts relative to their observable denominators, rather than as rates or as charts.

Table 5. Recidivism by Base Charges

Charges	1-yr (recidivated/ observable)	3-yr (recidivated/observable)
Assaults	5 / 60	7 / 27
Domestic Assault	3 / 30	5 / 17
Drug Offenses	1 / 10	1 / 4
DUI	4 / 79	4 / 26
Fish and Game	3 / 9	1 / 3
Fraud	0 / 4	0 / 2
Gross Negligent Operation	1 / 37	4 / 14
Motor Vehicle-Other	2 / 45	2 / 19
Public Order	3 / 63	4 / 27
Sex Assaults	0 / 10	0 / 6
Theft Offenses	3 / 24	2 / 11
Violation of Abuse Prevention Order	1 / 5	0 / 3
Weapons	0 / 1	0 / 1
Total	26 / 377	30 / 160

3.2.2 Recidivism by County

One-year recidivism counts by county ranged from 0 to 5. Five counties reported no one-year recidivists (Orleans, Addison, Lamoille, Orange, and Essex), while the highest count in a single county was five, observed in Bennington, Franklin, and Rutland. Most counties reported too few recidivism events for county-level rates to be meaningful; therefore, observed differences should not be interpreted as differences in reoffending.

Table 6. Recidivism by county

County	1-year recidivated	Observable
Chittenden	4	56
Washington	3	43
Windham	1	43
Bennington	5	36
Orleans	0	36
Windsor	1	36
Franklin	5	34
Rutland	5	32
Caledonia	2	18
Addison	0	15
Lamoille	0	12
Orange	0	11
Essex	0	5
Total	26	377

3.2.3 Recidivism by Disposition Cohort

The base cohort included three disposition groups: delinquency finding (107 cases), dismissal (109 cases), and diversion (161 cases). One-year recidivism rates varied by group: 6 of 107 delinquency findings (5.6%), 15 of 109 dismissals (13.8%), and 5 of 161 diversions (3.1%) resulted in reconviction within one year. Among the 160 cases observed for a full three years, the counts were 8 of 44 delinquency findings, 12 of 52 dismissals, and 10 of 64 diversions. Dismissal remained the highest group in both windows, but the differences between groups were smaller over the longer

window. The disposition composition of the three-year subset is broadly similar to the full cohort, so the narrowing does not appear to reflect a shift in which cases are observed.

This association should not be read as an effect of disposition. Cases are not assigned to dismissal, diversion, or a delinquency finding at random; the same underlying factors that make a case more likely to be dismissed may independently relate to reoffending. The comparison is therefore descriptive of the three groups as they exist, not evidence that one disposition causes more or less recidivism than another.

Timing presents a different perspective for narrowing. Among the 53 individuals reconvicted during follow-up, the median time from base disposition to first reconviction was 544 days for delinquency findings (n = 19), 321 days for dismissals (n = 23), and 432 for diversions (n = 11). Reconvictions following delinquency findings therefore tended to occur after the one-year mark and would fall outside that window, which may contribute to the low one-year count for that group. These differences were not statistically significant (Kruska-Willis p=0.22) and should not be interpreted as a cohort effect.

Table 7. Recidivism by Disposition Cohort

Disposition cohort	Cases	1-yr recidivated/ observable	1-yr recidivism rate	3-yr recidivated/ observable	Median days to recidivate
Delinquency Finding	107	6/107	5.6%	8/44	544 (n=19)
Dismissed	109	15/109	13.8%	12/52	321 (n=23)
Diversion	161	5/161	3.1%	10/64	432 (n=11)
Total	377	26/377	6.9%	30/160	379 (n=53)

Note. The one- and three-year columns are computed on different populations: all 377 cases had a full year of observation, while only 160 had a full three years. The two columns are not cumulative as an individual reconvicted within one year is also counted in the three-year column if their case observed that long. Three-year figures are reported as counts relative to observable denominator; rates are not reported given the small subgroup counts. Median days are calculated among individuals reconvicted at any point during follow-up (n=53)

3.2.4 Reconviction Severity

Among the 53 individuals reconvicted during follow-up, 32 had only misdemeanor reconvictions, two only felony reconvictions, and 19 had both; 21 in total had at least one felony conviction. These counts cover the entire follow-up period rather than a fixed observation window.

3.2.5 Recidivism by Race

One-year recidivism by race is not reported as a comparison. Of the 26 individuals reconvicted within one year, 24 were White, one was Black, and one had no recorded race. With 31 Nonwhite individuals in the cohort and approximately one in five records lacking race, the resulting cell counts cannot support any statement about differential reoffending.

4 COMPARISON WITH THE PRE-RAISE THE AGE BENCHMARK

Before Act 201 took effect, DCF contracted CRG to establish a baseline recidivism analysis for youth aged between 18 and 19 who were convicted in adult criminal court (CRG, 2022). The study followed individuals convicted between 2016 and 2019 and, like the present study, excluded cases carrying a 'Big 12' charge on the base docket.

4.1 WHO IS IN EACH COHORT

The 2022 cohort consists of 400 18–19-year-old individuals convicted in adult court. The present cohort consists of 377 18-year-olds whose delinquency cases were processed under the reform in the Family Division, and 270 of those cases (71.6%) ended in diversion or dismissal rather than a delinquency finding. The 107 cases resulting in a delinquency finding are the closest available analogue to a conviction cohort; one-year reconviction in that group was 5.6%.

4.2 RECIDIVISM FINDINGS SIDE BY SIDE

Both studies reported one- and three-year recidivism. The comparability constraints described above apply to every row.

Results	Recidivism of Youth 18-19 Adjudicated in Criminal Court	2026 Raise the Age Study (18 only)
Delinquency finding	Not applicable; all cohort members had an adult conviction	5.6% (6 of 107)
One-year recidivism	24.0% (91 of 379 eligible) among 18- and 19-year-olds	6.9% (26 of 377)
Three-year recidivism	45.98% (126 of 274) overall; 43.5% (64 of 147) among 18-year-olds	18.7% (30 of 160) individuals reconvicted
Median time to reconviction	6 months (mean 9.6 months), among those reconvicted within three years, measured from eligibility to reoffend	379 days, roughly 12.5 months, among all 53 individuals reconvicted at any point in the follow-up, measured from base disposition.

The post-reform figures are lower in every comparison, and the differences are substantial. The cohort processed in family court had a 6.9% one-year recidivism rate, compared with 24.0% among the 18–19-year-old individuals whose base cases were in adult criminal court. Over a three-year follow-up period, 45.98% of 18- and 19-year-olds processed in adult court recidivated, including 43.5% of 18-year-olds. In comparison, the three-year recidivism rate among 18-year-olds processed in Family Division following implementation of Raise the Age was 18.7%. Finally, the median time to reconviction in the prior study was 6 months, but in this report, it was 379 days, a little more than a year.

5 CONCLUSION

This report provides the first descriptive baseline of Vermont's Raise the Age initiative, examining the characteristics, case outcomes, and early adult recidivism of 377 individuals whose delinquency cases were processed in the Family Division under Act 201. The findings indicate that most cases involved motor vehicle (42.7%), followed by public order (16.7%), and assault-related offenses (15.9%), while more serious offenses were relatively uncommon. Secondly, 161 cases (42.7%) resulted in diversion, 109 (28.9%) in dismissal, and 107 cases (28.4%) in delinquency finding. Finally, 324 individuals (85.9%) did not receive a subsequent adult conviction during the observation period, with only 26 individuals (6.9%) reconvicted within one year of disposition.

Because of the modest cohort size, limited follow-up for many participants, and the small number of recidivism events, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal. The results do not establish whether processing 18-year-olds in the juvenile system reduces recidivism compared with the adult criminal justice system, nor do they support conclusions about differences across counties, demographic groups, offense types, or disposition outcomes. It should also be noted that the data only includes incidents that came to the attention of the police. It is possible that some individuals engaged in conduct that went undetected. Instead, this study establishes an empirical foundation for ongoing monitoring of Raise the Age implementation and provides policymakers, DCF, and justice system partners with an initial understanding of the population served under Act 201. As additional years of data become available and larger cohorts are observed over longer follow-up periods, future analyses will be better positioned to evaluate long-term outcomes, equity, and the extent to which the reform achieves its goals of promoting rehabilitation while maintaining public safety. Future research on the effects of Raise the Age implementation might include additional qualitative methods of data collection and analyses, such as interviews with DCF staff, prosecutors, and defense council.

Implication: Considering impaired and negligence driving accounted for nearly third of lead charges, substance-use screening and driving-related intervention warrant priority in DCF supervision and diversion programming.