

# Employment and Reentry

*ICCA Forum on Community Corrections in Transition*

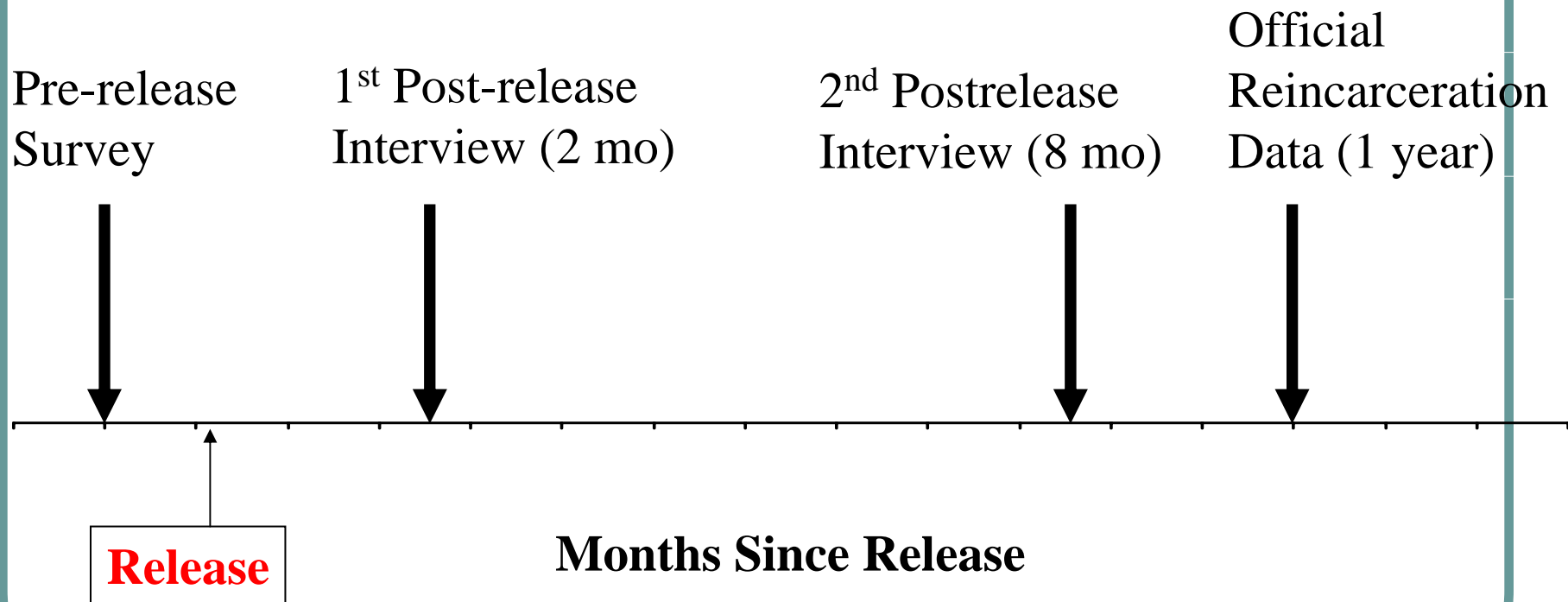
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March 24, 2009

# Returning Home Study Overview

N = 740 men completed all 3 interviews

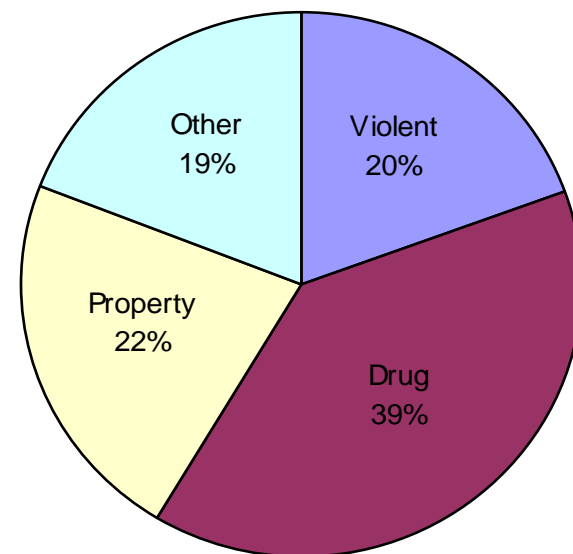


*Includes interviews with those who were returned to prison*

# EMPLOYMENT

## Sample

- Men from IL, OH & TX  
*Returning Home* sites  
(n=740)
  - 74% A-A, 16% White, 9% Latino
  - 35 years old
  - 52% high school education
  - 59% frequent illegal drug users
  - 84% with prior conviction
  - 68% previous prison term
  - 25% married, 56% had minor children



*Current Conviction Offense*

**Myth: Most people behind bars were unemployed prior to their incarceration**

**Fact:**

- More than two-thirds were working
- Only about one in ten reported all income from illegal activities

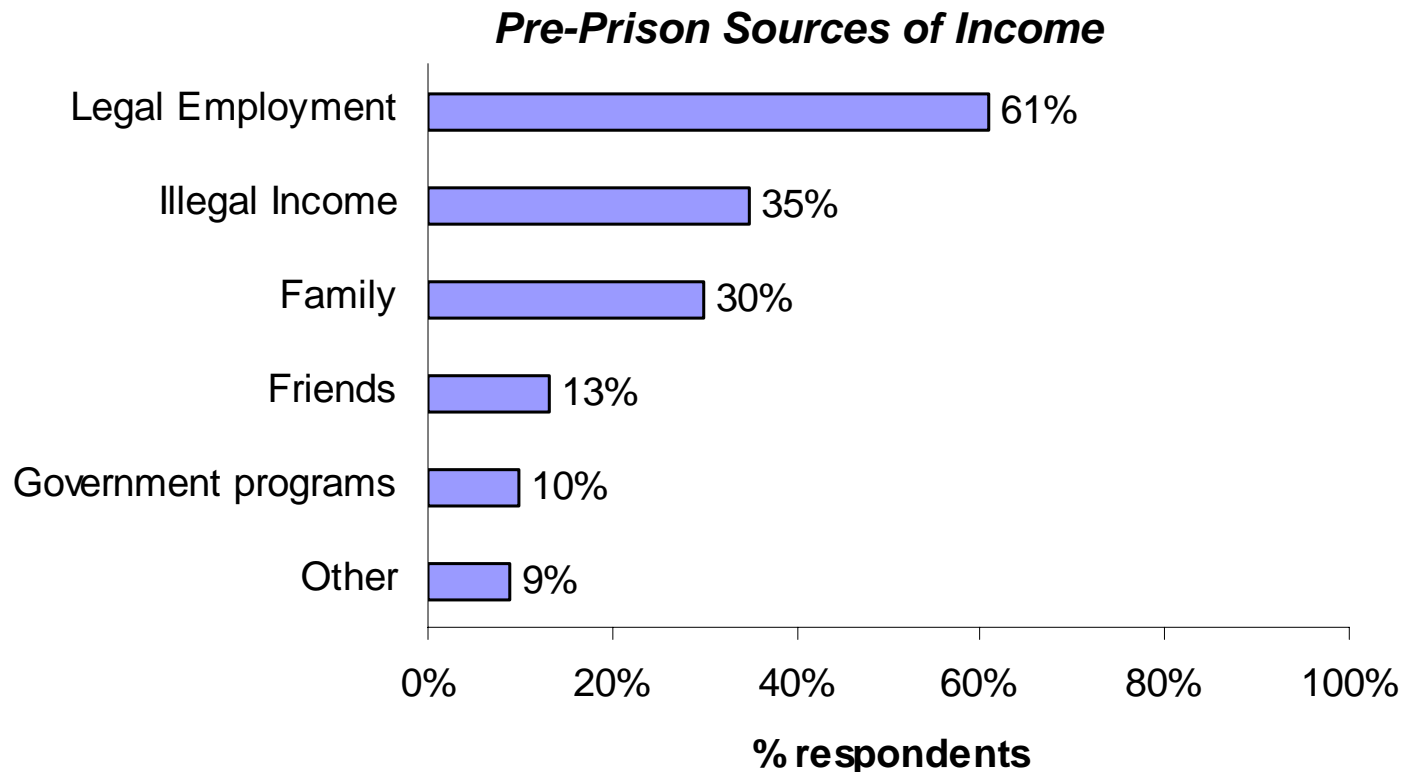
**Implication:**

- Former employers promising resource for job placement upon release

# EMPLOYMENT

## Pre-Prison Employment History

- 68% worked in the 6 mo. before prison
- Wage of \$9/hour



## Myth: Most prisoners are idle behind bars

### Fact:

- Only 20% of respondents reported that they were not offered programs
- Higher than a national study in 1987

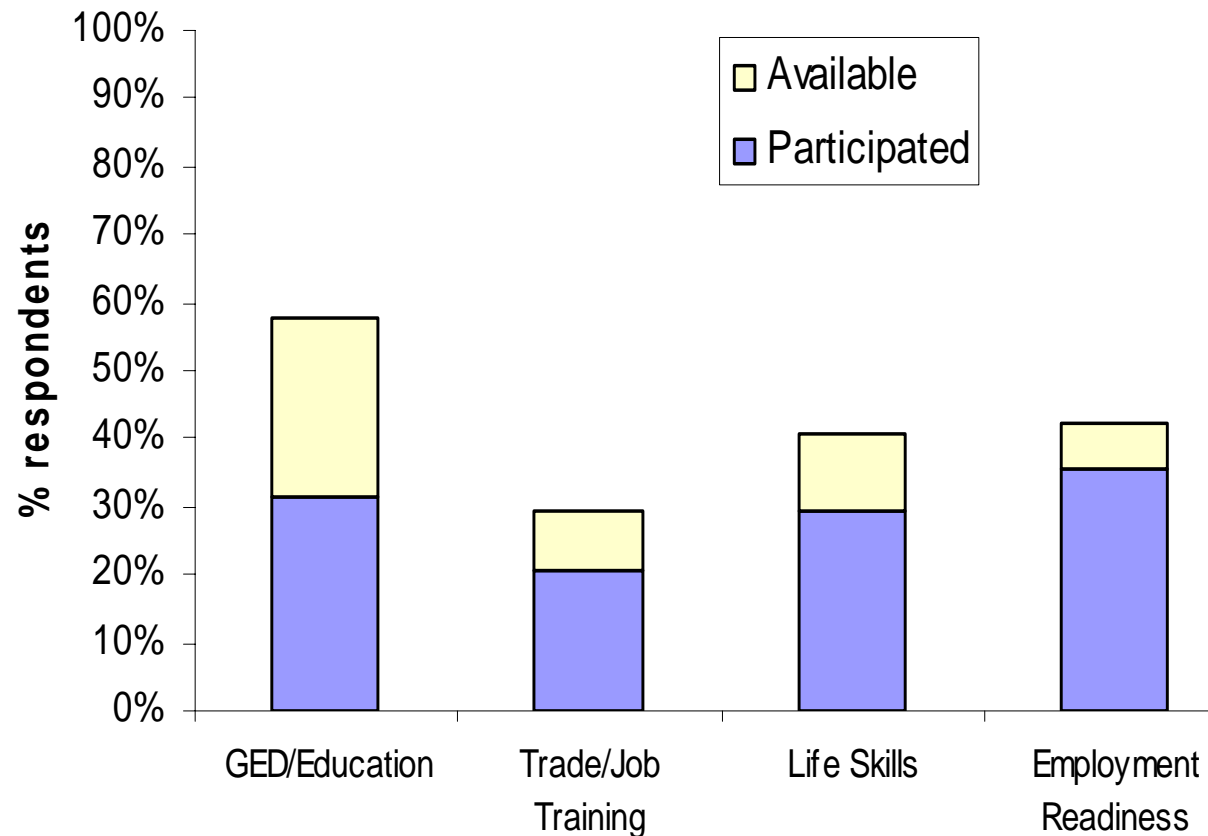
Implication: DOCs are embracing expanded role

Caveat: We should not assume that some participation is equal to adequate preparation

# In-Prison Jobs & Employment Programs

- 53% held a prison job
- 9% had a work release job
- 65% participated in education or employment programs

*In-Prison Job Programs*



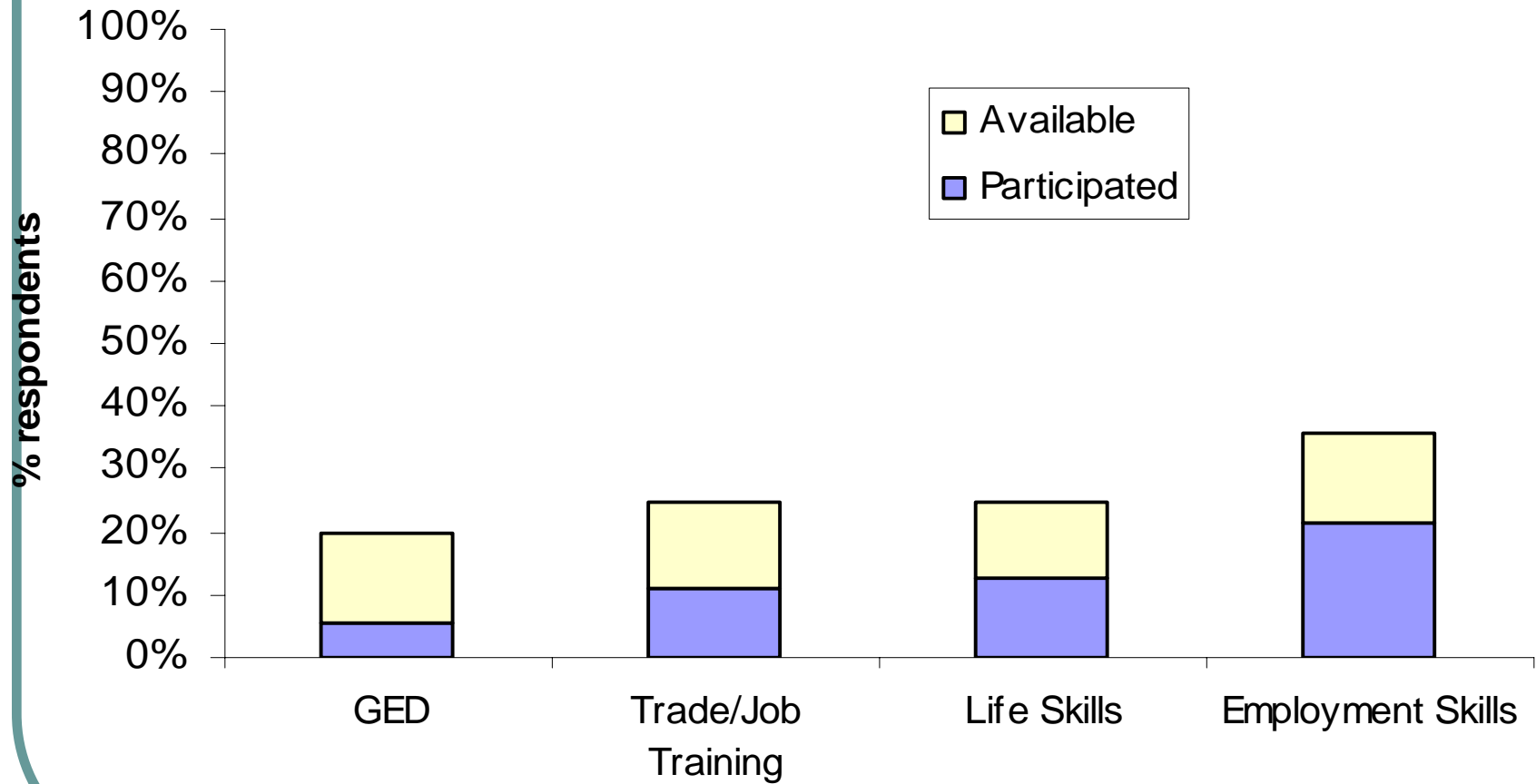
## Myth: There are not enough community-based job training and referral programs

### Fact:

- Greatest reason for lack of participation in programs was lack of awareness
- Implication: More focus on linking to existing programs and services

Caveat: This does not suggest that ample programs are available.

# Community Programs & Services



Myth: Formerly incarcerated people turn down jobs they think are “beneath” them

Fact:

- High job satisfaction
- About half, however, were not satisfied with wages

Implication:

- Efforts to find employment for the formerly incarcerated should focus more on living wages than on the nature of the work

Myth: Exiting prisoners with jobs lined up are the most likely to experience employment success on the outside.

**Fact:**

- Only half of those who reported having a job lined up worked

**Implications:** Discharge planners, POs should view “lined up jobs” with skepticism

Myth: Most who find jobs do so because they do not disclose their criminal records

Fact:

- 87% of those who were employed said their current employer knew about their history

Implication: Record may not be great impediment

Caveat: Many who found employment did so through family or friends and/or returned to a previous employer

Efforts to “ban the box” are probably well spent

# Employment Rates Still Low

- At 8 months following release, only 45% were currently employed
- One in three had not been employed at all
- Many of the predictors of employment – having worked before prison, having used a former employer to find a job – are beyond the control of the corrections and parole agencies.
- However, a few critical factors are not:
  - **photo ID**
  - **those who participated in job training in prison**
  - **those who had strong, healthy attachments to their kids were more likely to be employed and employed for longer periods of time.**

# Public Benefits to Employment

- Employment is associated with lower rates of reoffending and returns to prison.
- Benefits for public safety
- Benefits for wise use of tax payer's money (re: costs of incarceration).

# Observations Re: The Economy

- Clear variations in employment rates in three regions based on local economies
- Availability/access to low-skill jobs will affect this population
- Recession creates challenges, but also poses opportunities
- Strong argument for focusing on employment efforts rather than paying a higher price in incarcerating people