

# Family and Reentry

## Capitalizing on the Often Untapped Role of Family in Successful Reentry



**International Community  
Corrections Association**

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Justice Policy Center



# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Overview of “Returning Home” study
- Highlights of family findings
  - Expectations and experiences of prisoners
  - Family perspective
- Implications for community corrections programs and initiatives



# DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS FOR AND RECEIPT OF FAMILY SUPPORT

## Why Study?

### **Prior research on family support finds:**

- Taking on roles within a family aids in the development of pro-social identities (Hairston 2002; Sampson & Laub 1993; Uggen & Behrens 2004)
- Spending time with children has been associated with lower rates of recidivism (Waller 1974)
- Tangible and emotional family support leads to positive post-release outcomes (La Vigne et al. 2004; Nelson et al. 1999; Sullivan et al. 2002; Visher et al. 2004)



# Returning Home Study Overview



# RETURNING HOME

## Study Background

- Longitudinal study of persons released from state correctional institutions
- Conducted in Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; Cleveland, OH; Houston, TX
- Focused on reentry expectations & needs and post-release challenges & experiences
- Considers family and community context



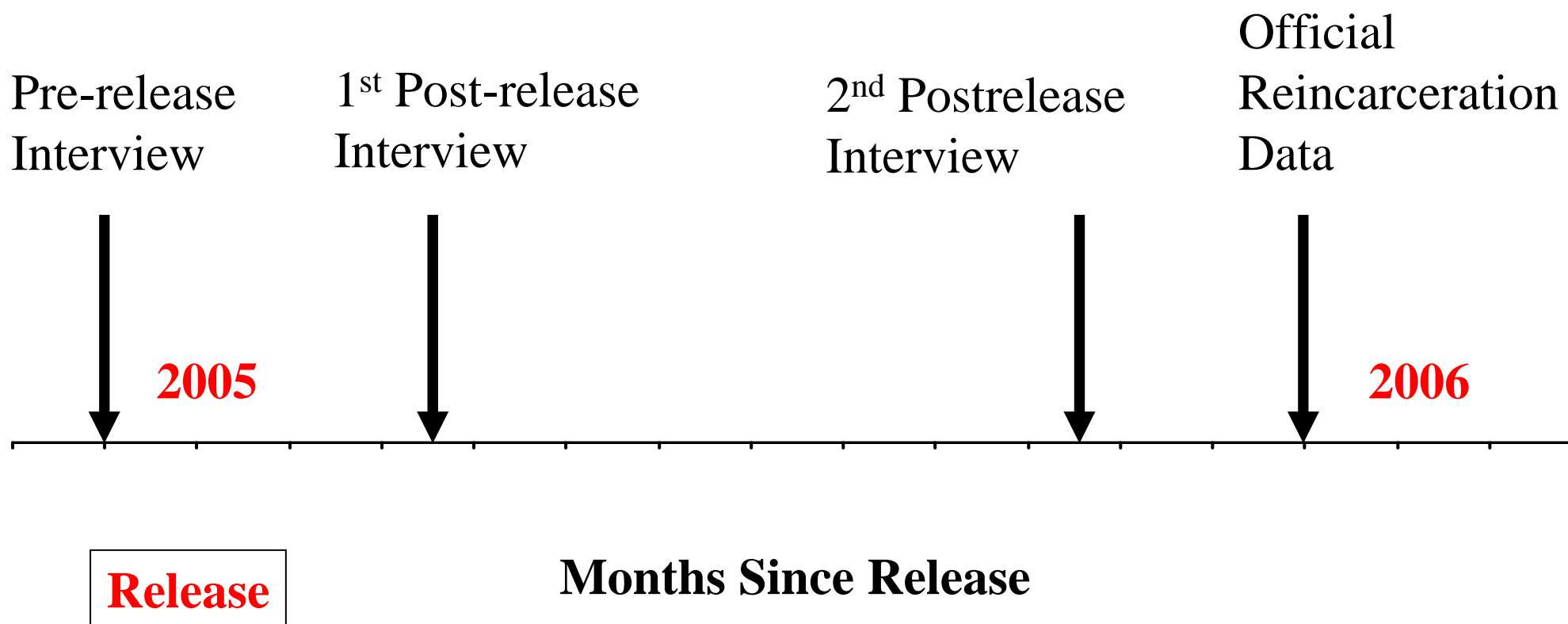
# Returning Home to Houston Study Design

- Experiences of men and women returning to their communities
- Based on pre-release and two post-release interviews
- Over 650 men and women completed all three interviews
- Interviews with family members of respondents

# RETURNING HOME

## Timeline: *Returning Home Texas*

N = 352 completed all 3 interviews



*Includes interviews with those who were returned to prison*



# Returning Home to Houston Outcomes Analyzed

- Employment (self-report)
  - % of months worked since release
- Substance use (self-report)
  - Frequent use (>weekly in past 30 days)
- Recidivism
  - Official reincarceration (TDCJ) within 12 months of release

***Used regression analyses to identify predictors of each outcome***

# DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS FOR AND RECEIPT OF FAMILY SUPPORT

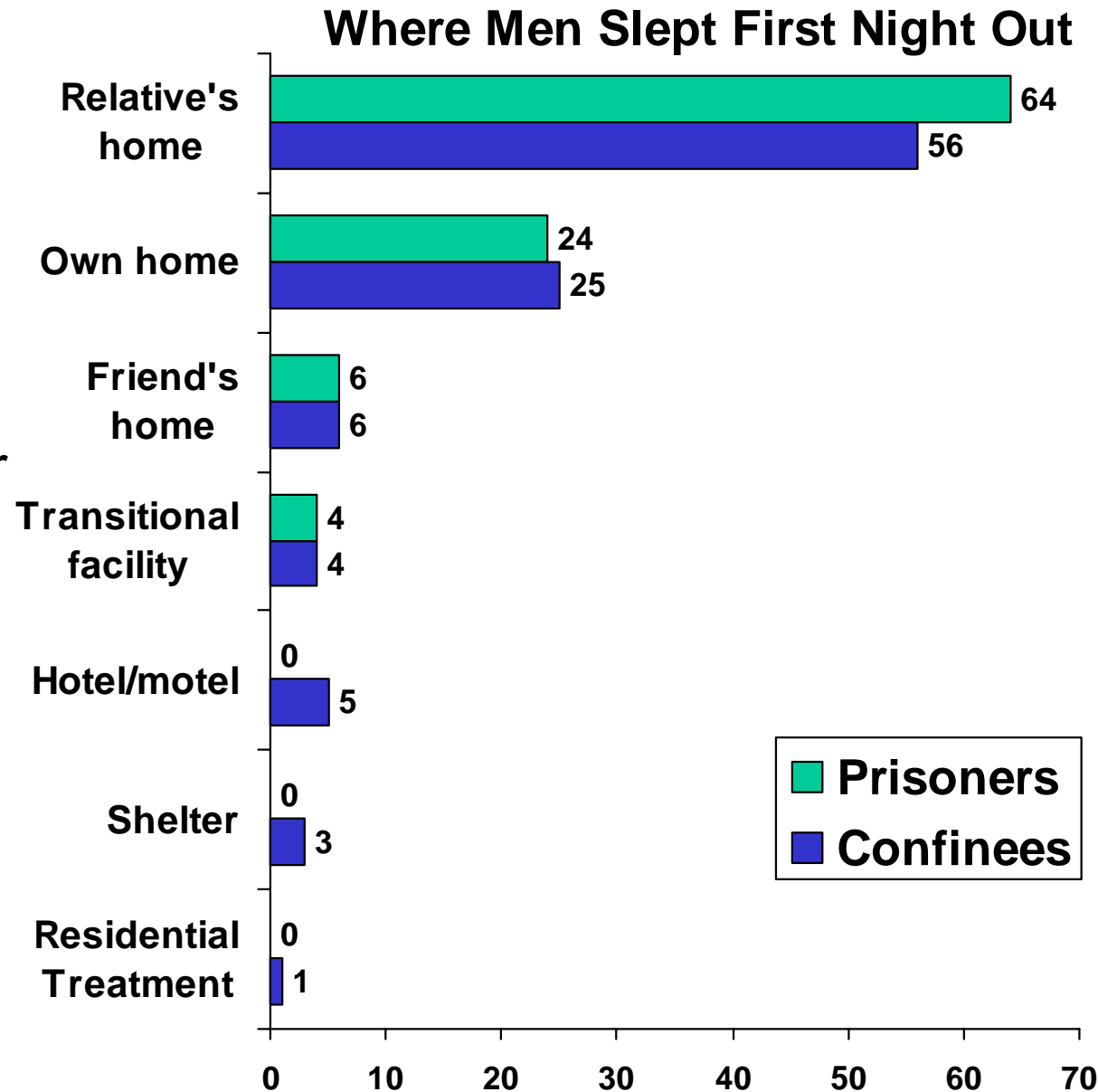
## Definition of Family

- A blood or legal relative, someone with whom you have a child in common, or a significant other or guardian you lived with prior to your incarceration or plan to live with after you are released from prison
- Soon-to-be released inmates referred:
  - *Family members who knew what your life was like before you came to prison this time*
  - *Family members who will know how things are going in the months after you leave prison*

# Returning Home to Houston

## Moment of Release

- 50% had someone meet them; 28% took the bus
- 37% had a photo ID (other than TDCJ ID)
- \$50 gate money (only for released prisoners); \$66 from other sources
- 62% had debts
- 8% spent first night in temporary housing



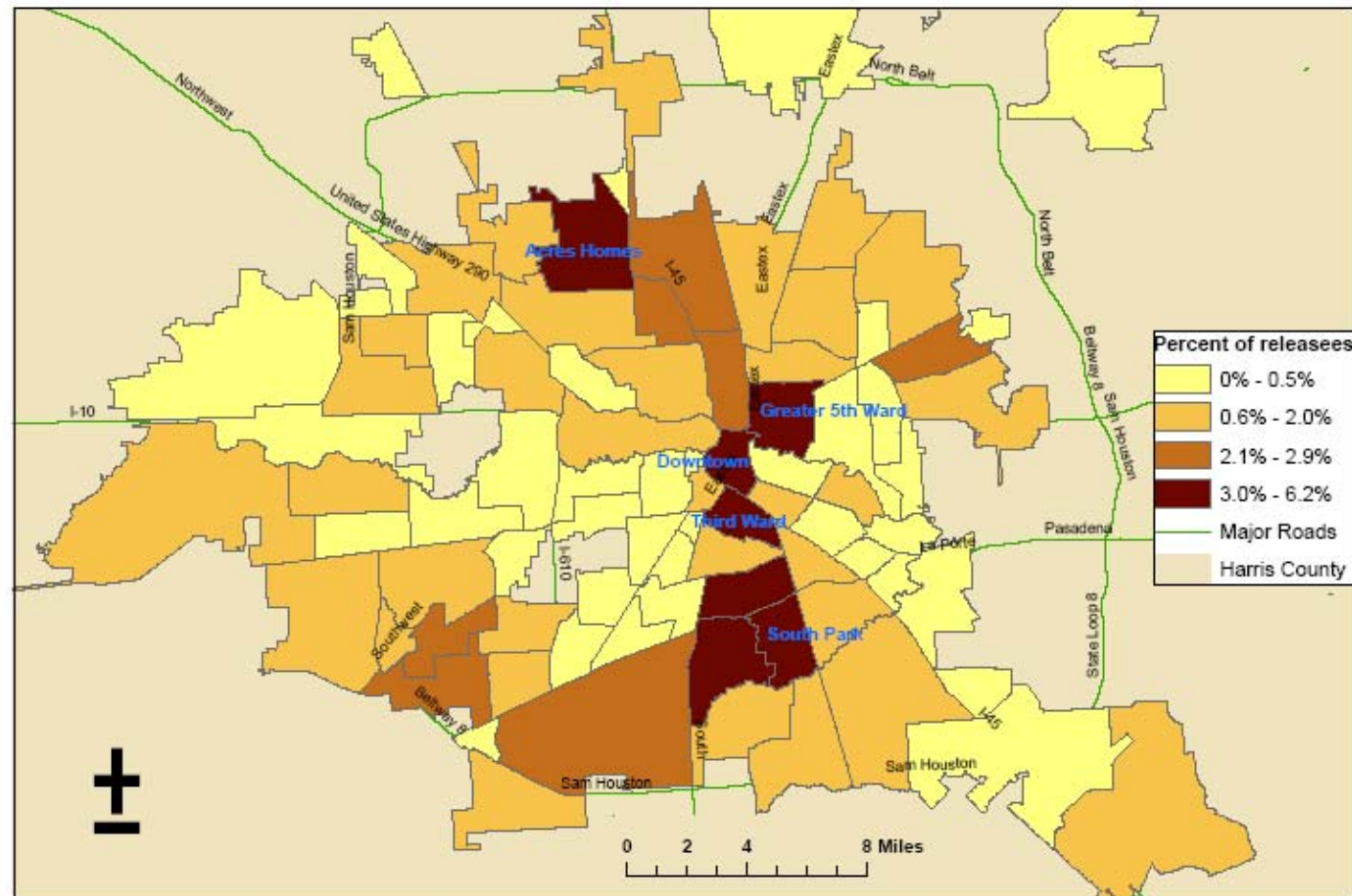
# Returning Home: Post-Release Surveys Community

- About a third did not return to old neighborhood
  - Family moved
  - Lost housing
  - Avoiding trouble
- Most (80%) felt area was safe

However...

- Over one-third (37%) said drug dealing was problem
- Half (51%) felt it wasn't a good place to find job

First Address of Releasees in Houston Neighborhoods

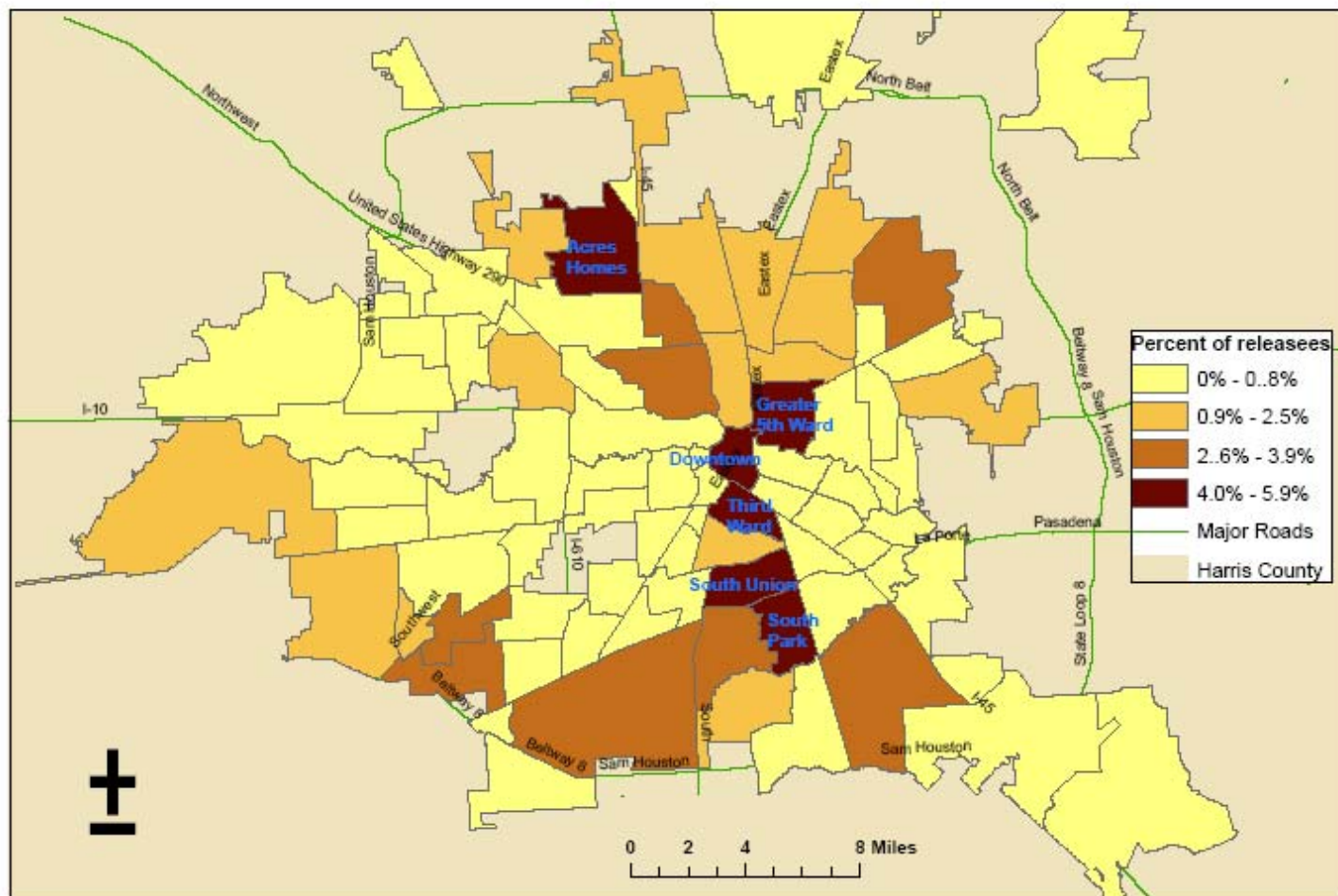


Source: Urban Institute "Returning Home" Prisoner Reentry Research, N=344

# Returning Home: Post-Release Surveys Community

- 39% had lived in more than one place
- Moves could be for good or bad reasons
- 19% had housing trouble due to criminal record

Last Address of Releaseses in Houston Neighborhoods



Source: Urban Institute "Returning Home" Prisoner Reentry Research, N=344



# Housing

- Two-thirds (66%) relied on family for housing
- Most felt housing met or exceeded expectations

However,

- 1 in 5 lived with former prisoner or substance user
- Half viewed housing as temporary



# Returning Home: Post-Release Surveys

## Family Relationships and Support

- 83% received financial support from family
  - For two months on average
- Most had several close family relationships
- Over half received food, cash, clothing, transportation
- Parents greatest source of support
- Support typically met or exceeded expectations

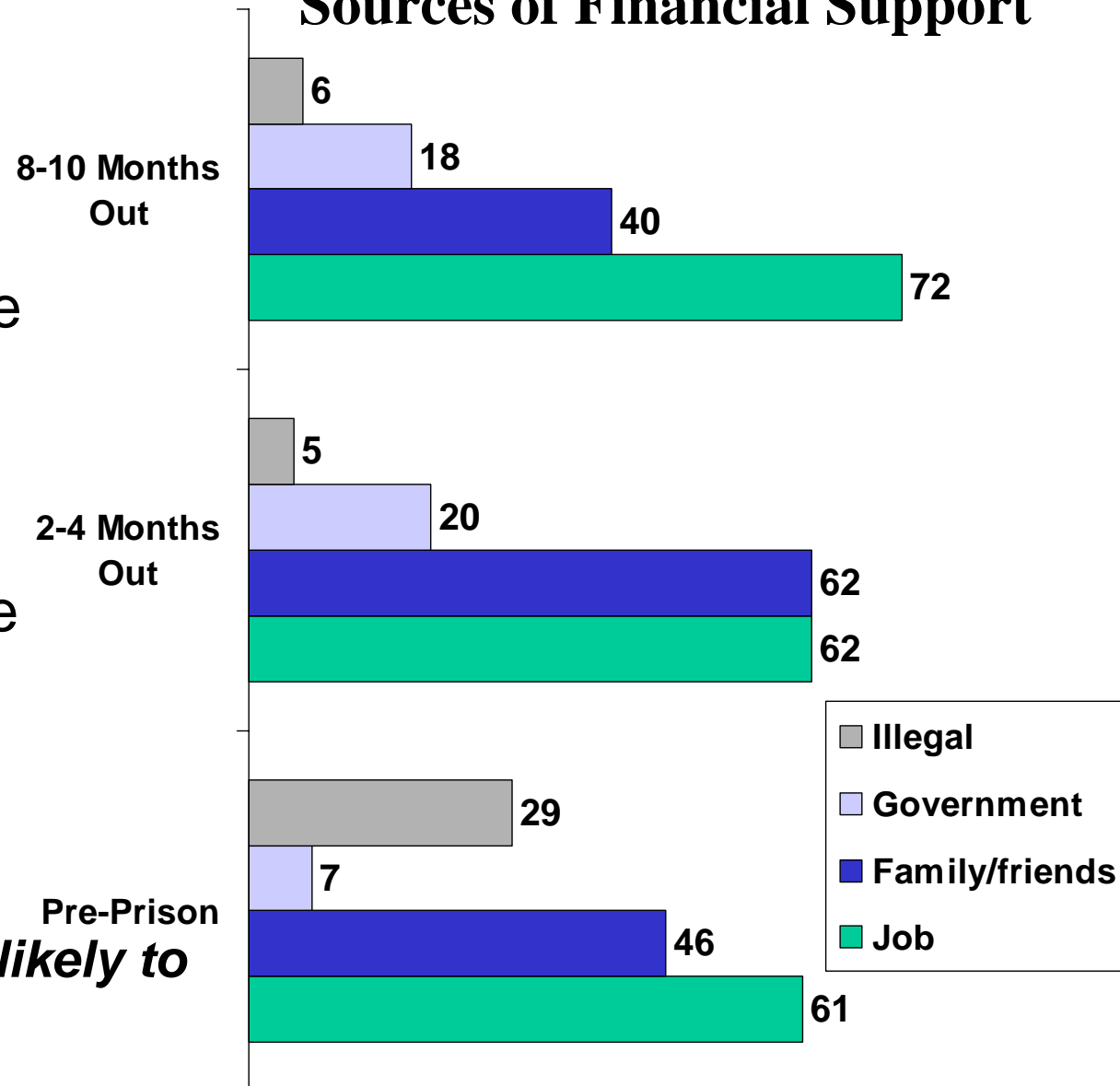
***Those with higher levels of family support less likely to relapse***

# Returning Home: Post-Release Surveys

## Employment, Income & Debt

- About two thirds worked before prison
- 60% had legal employment at 8-10 months after release
- 68% reported CJ record hindered job search
- Most employers (84%) were aware of CJ record
- Most (63%) had debts

### Sources of Financial Support



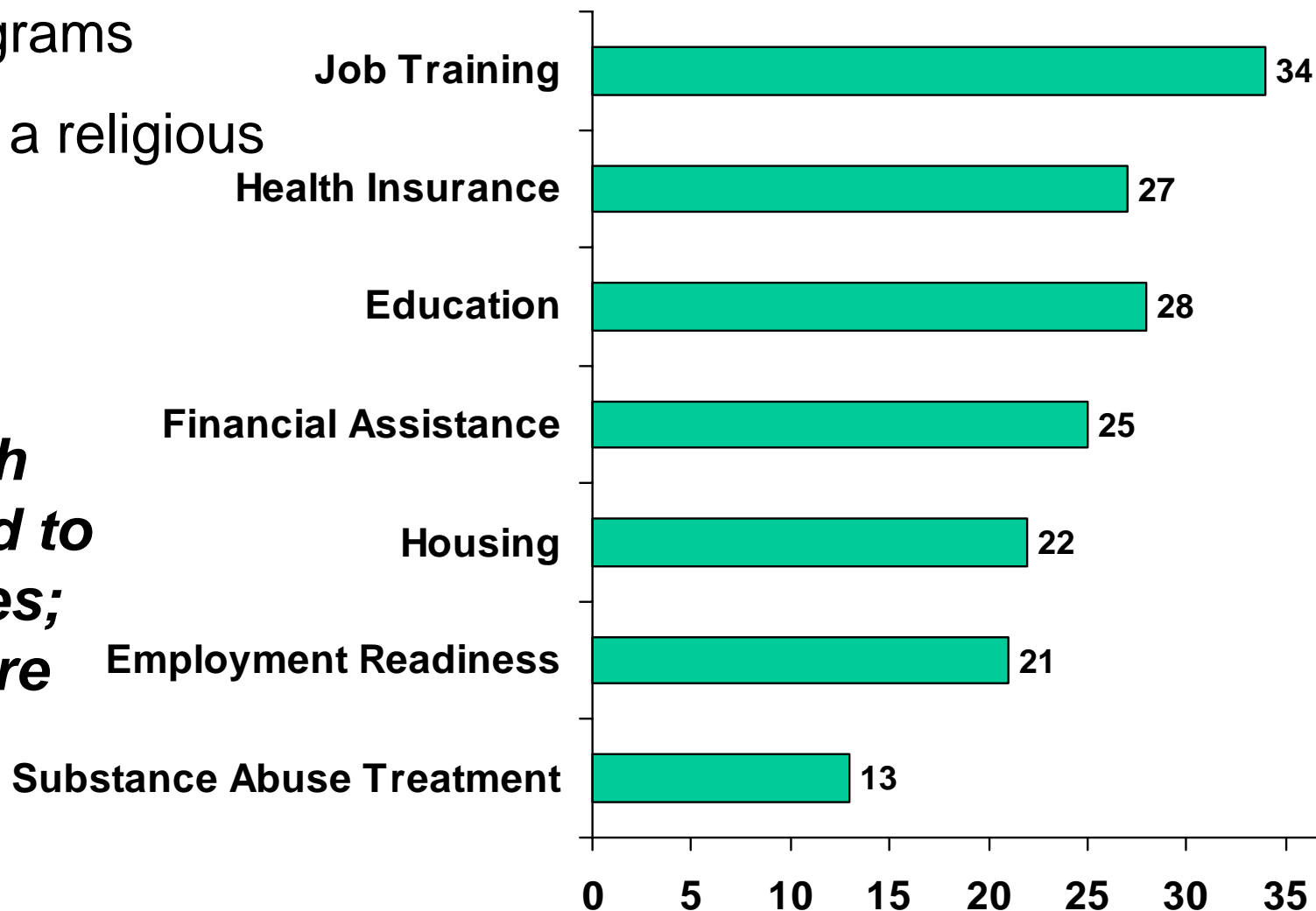
***Parents of minor children more likely to find and keep jobs***

# Community Involvement and Program Participation

- 83% of prisoners, 44% of confinees participated in post-release programs
- 41% belonged to a religious organization

***Belonging to faith institution related to positive outcomes; dropping out more detrimental than never belonging***

## Programs Most Needed in Community





# Returning Home: Post-Release Surveys

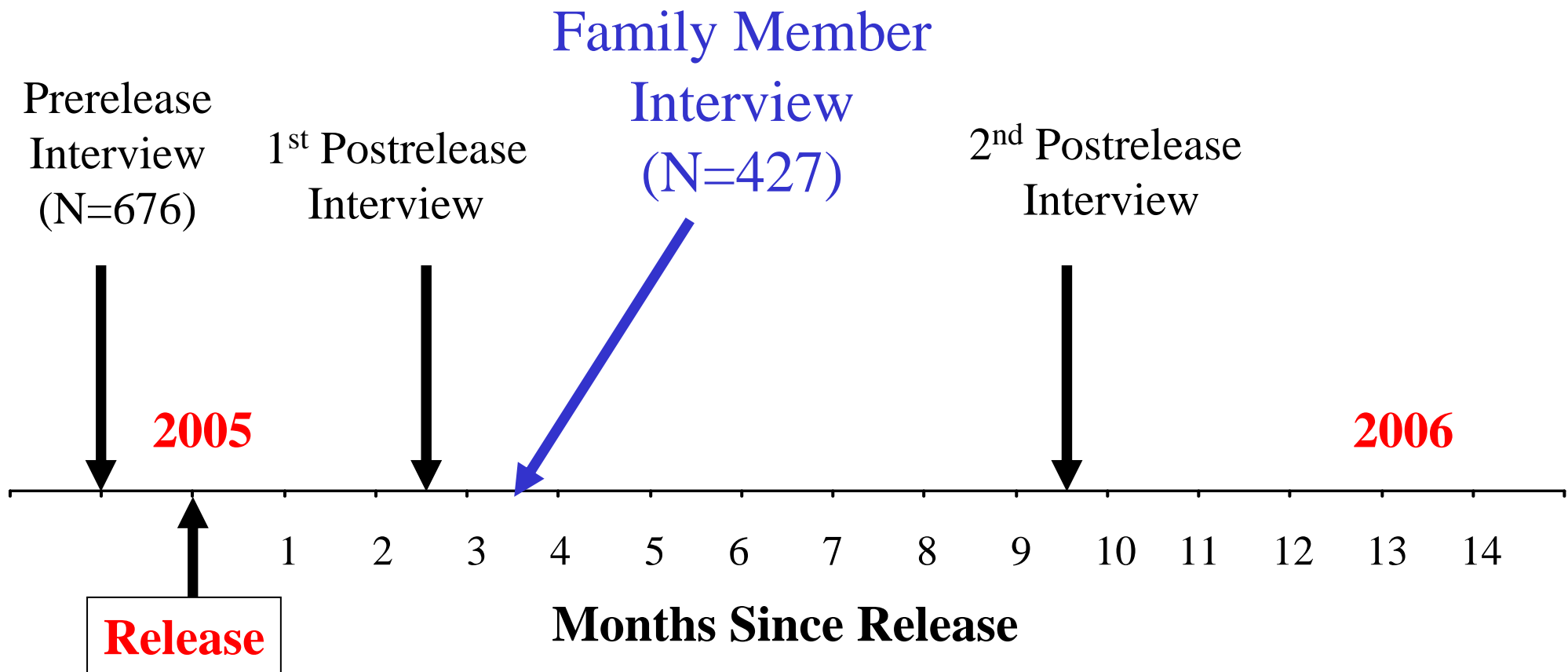
## Female vs. Male Respondents

- **Women less likely to:**
  - Have been in TDCJ before
  - Participate in prison job training programs
  - Live with family
  - Find family helpful
  - Work at any time
- **Women more likely to:**
  - Have moved
  - Have and live with minor children
  - Have a partner who uses drugs



# What are the perspectives of family members?

# FAMILY AND REENTRY Data Collection in Texas



# DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS FOR AND RECEIPT OF FAMILY SUPPORT

## Definition of Family

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- Soon-to-be released inmates refer:
  - *Family members who knew what your life was like before you came to prison this time*
  - *Family members who will know how things are going in the months after you leave prison*

# Who are the family members in our sample?

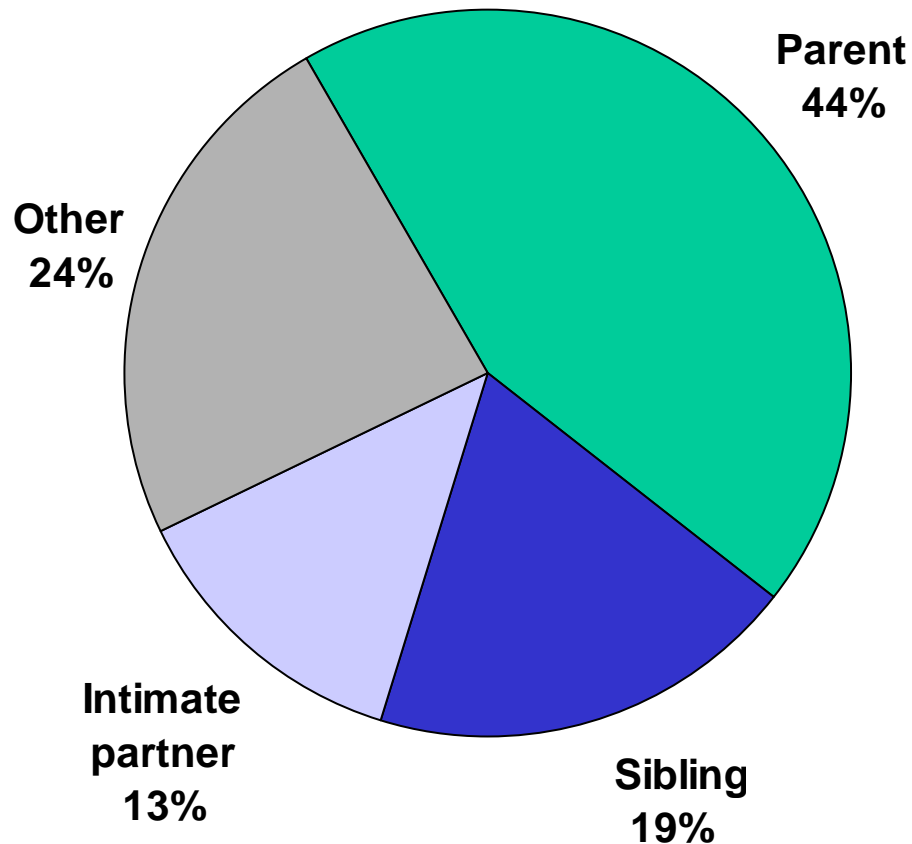
## DEMOGRAPHICS

- Majority female (77%)
- Median age: 51
- 61% black, 26% white
- 14% Hispanic
- 55% were married or widowed

## EXPERIENCES

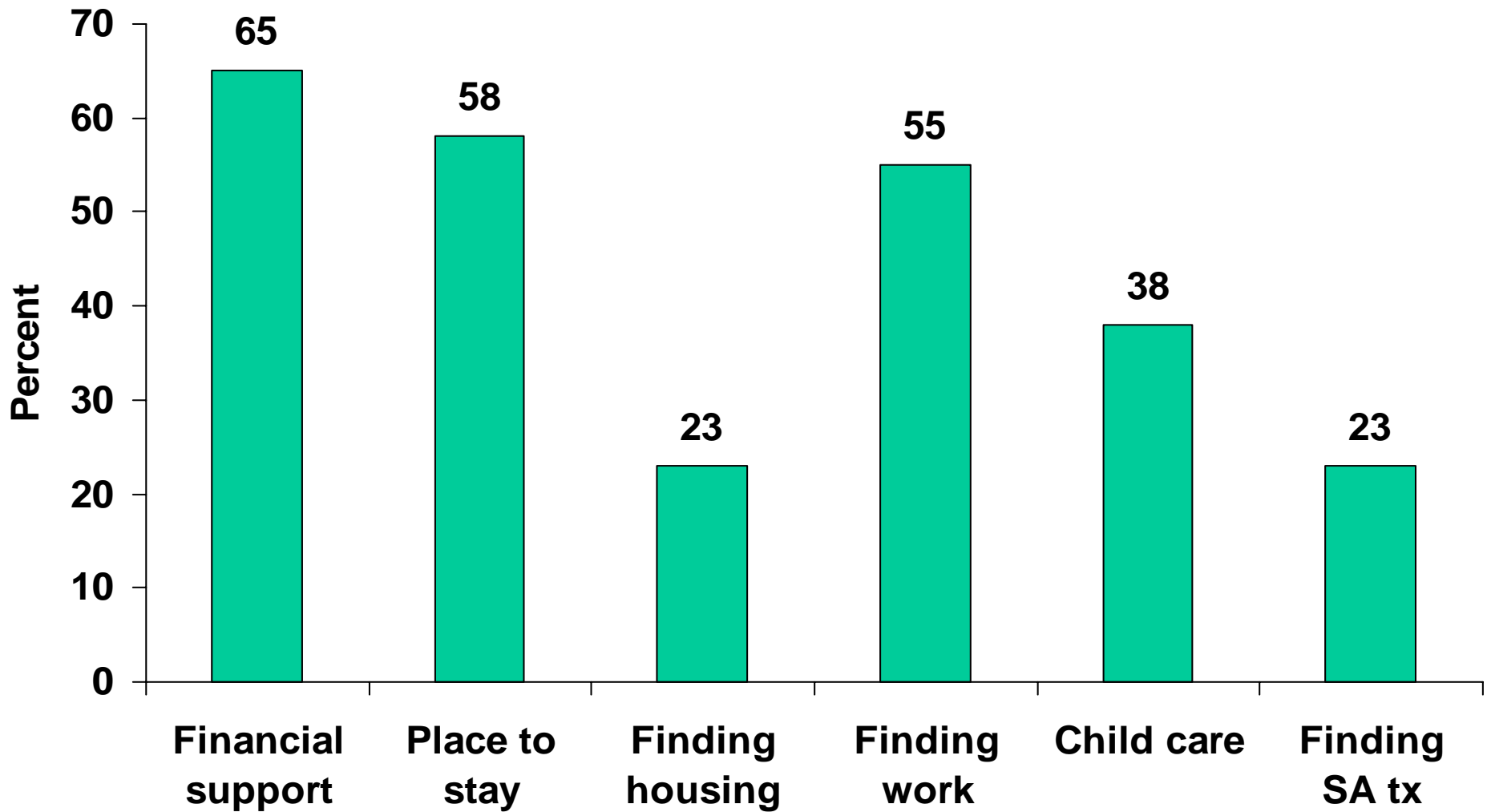
- 37% some college
- 52% employed
- 36% arrested as adult
- 21% served time
- 30% had other family members in the system
- 11% reported substance use or intoxication

# What is their relationship to returning prisoners?



- Most had lived together (88%)
- Median length of relationship: 29 years
- Family support scale (pre-prison): 3.25
- Small share (5%) had children together

# How much support do families provide after release?



# Who is providing support?

## Family Respondents, by Inmate Characteristics

	Parent	Partner/ Spouse	Sibling	Other
<b>0 Priors</b>	39	9	17	36
<b>1+ Priors</b>	37	17	19	27
<b>Women</b>	30	8	19	43
<b>Men</b>	43	15	16	27
<b>18 to 25</b>	48	4	11	37
<b>26 to 35</b>	43	13	11	32
<b>36 to 45</b>	37	14	21	28
<b>Over 45</b>	23	14	24	39

# What types of support are they providing?

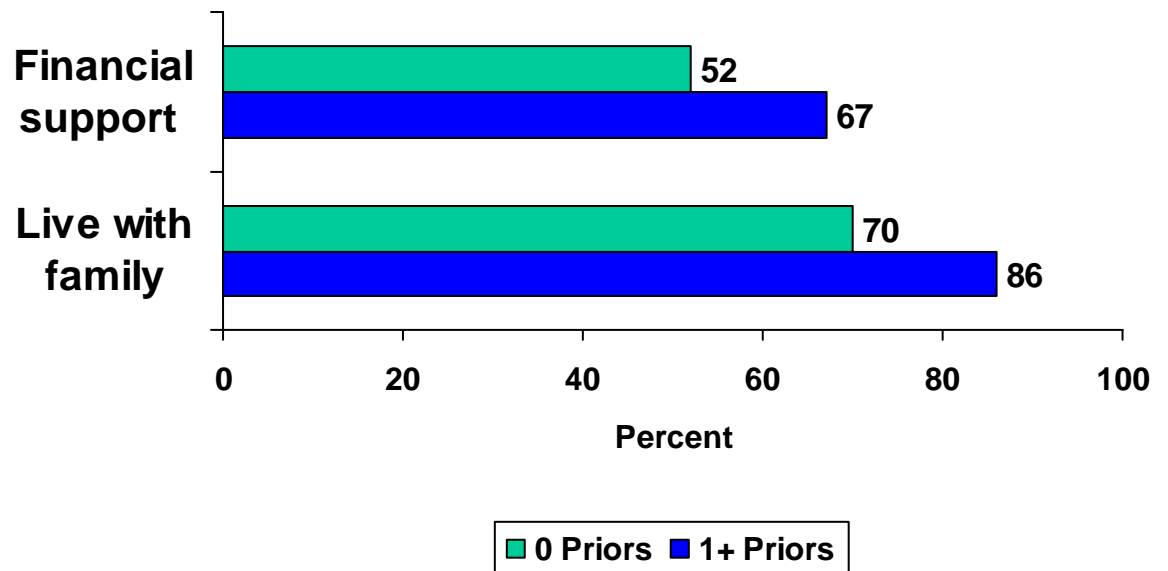
## Percent of Family Members Providing Each Type of Support

	Parent	Partner/ Spouse	Sibling	Other
<b>Kind of Support</b>				
Ex-prisoner lives with	60	77	44	24
Helped ex-prisoner find a job	58	80	44	38
Provided financial support	81	73	66	44

# Does support vary re: criminal history?

Those with prior incarcerations are more likely to expect family support upon return from prison

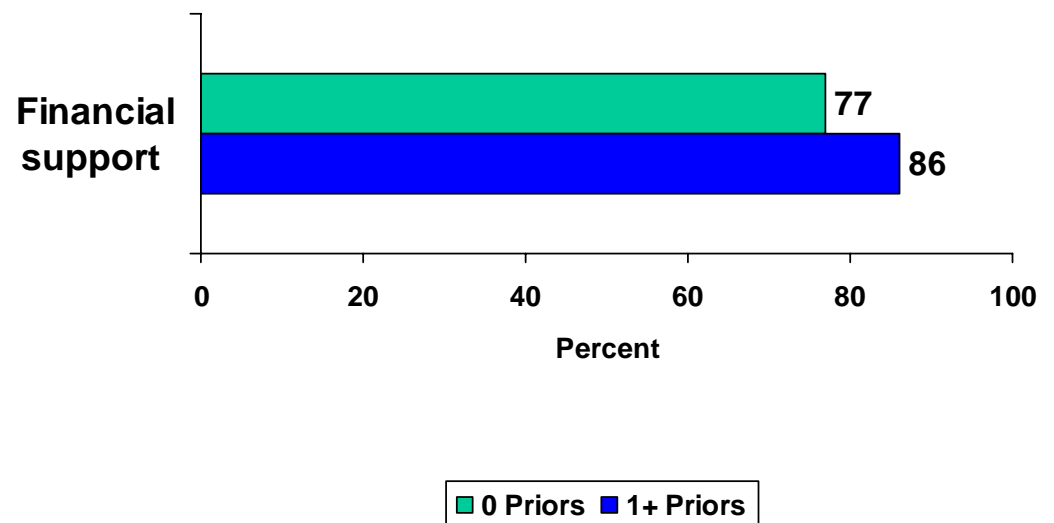
Pre-release Expectations, by Prior Convictions



# Does support vary re: previous prison terms?

Those with prior incarcerations more often receive financial support from family

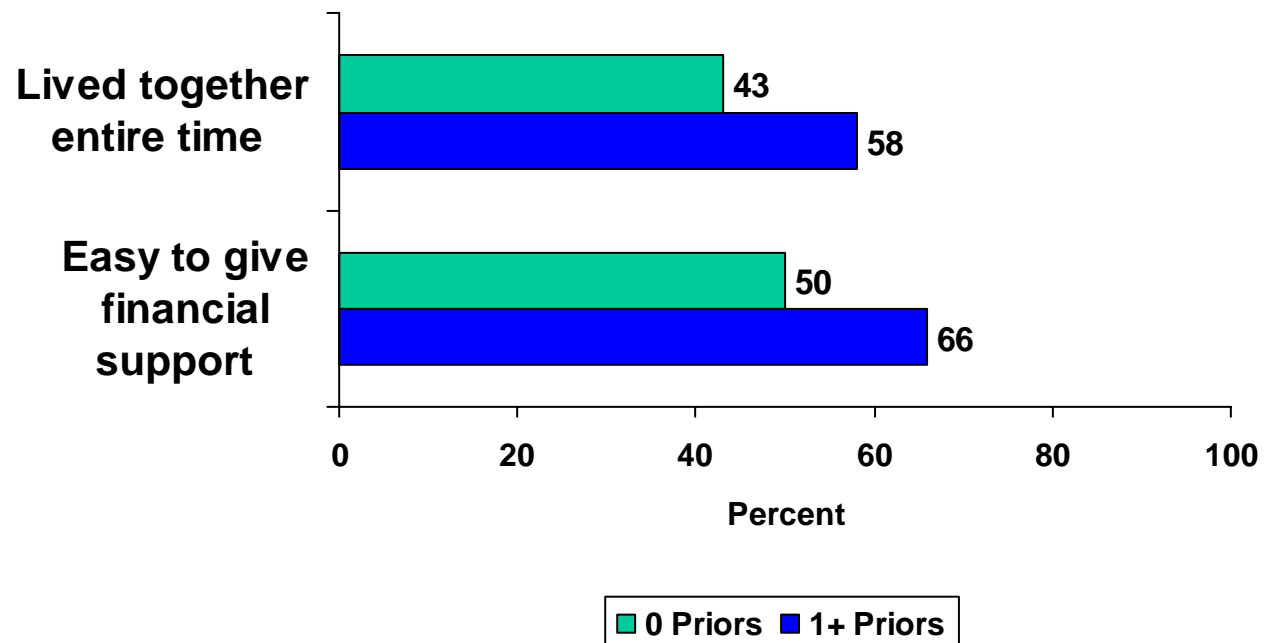
Post-release Support Received, by Prior Convictions



# Does support vary re: prior convictions?

Family members of those with prior convictions often find it *easy or very easy* to provide financial support

Family Support Provided, by Prior Convictions

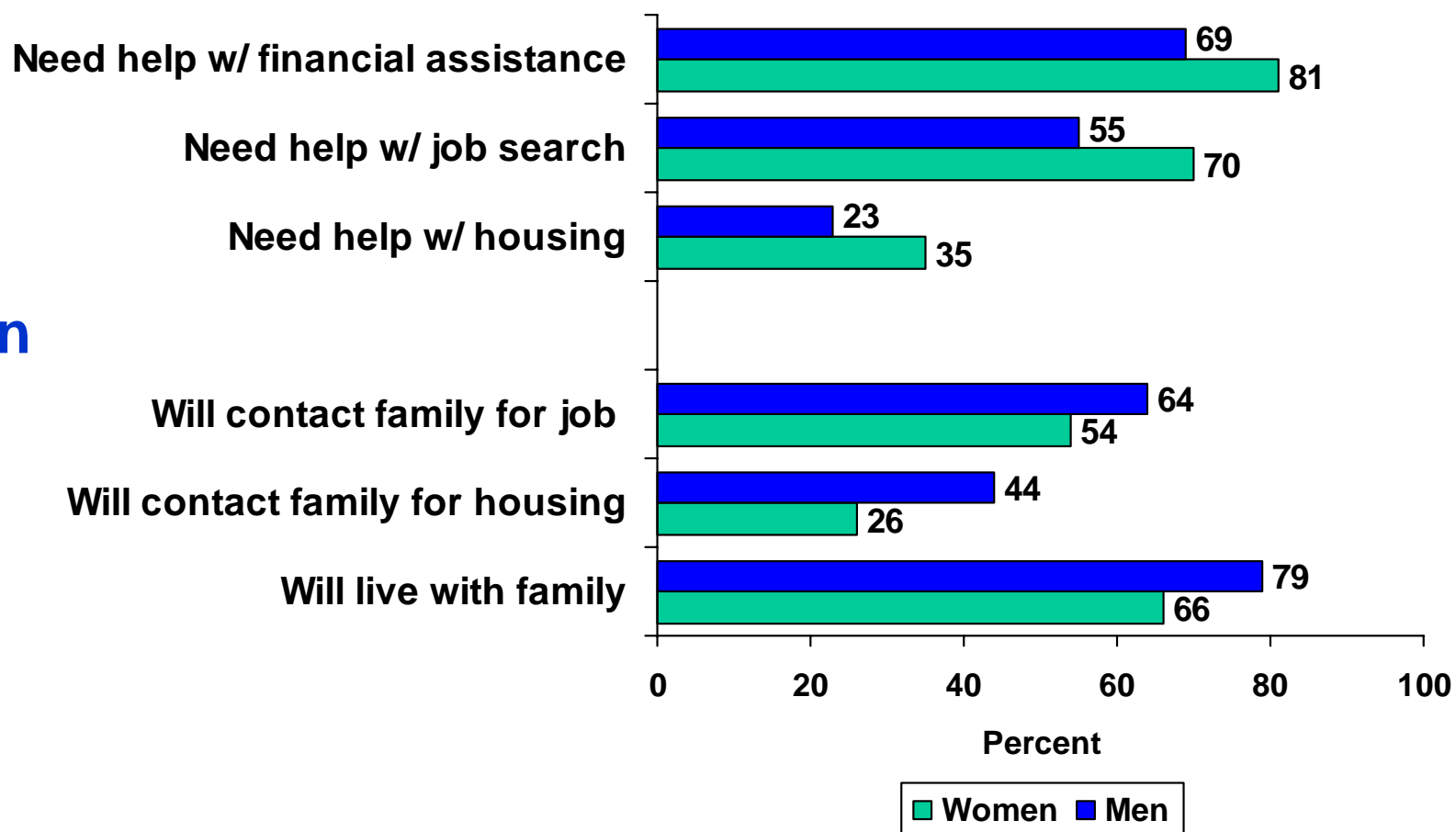


# Does support vary by gender of returning prisoner?

Women more often express need for assistance

Men more often expect help from family

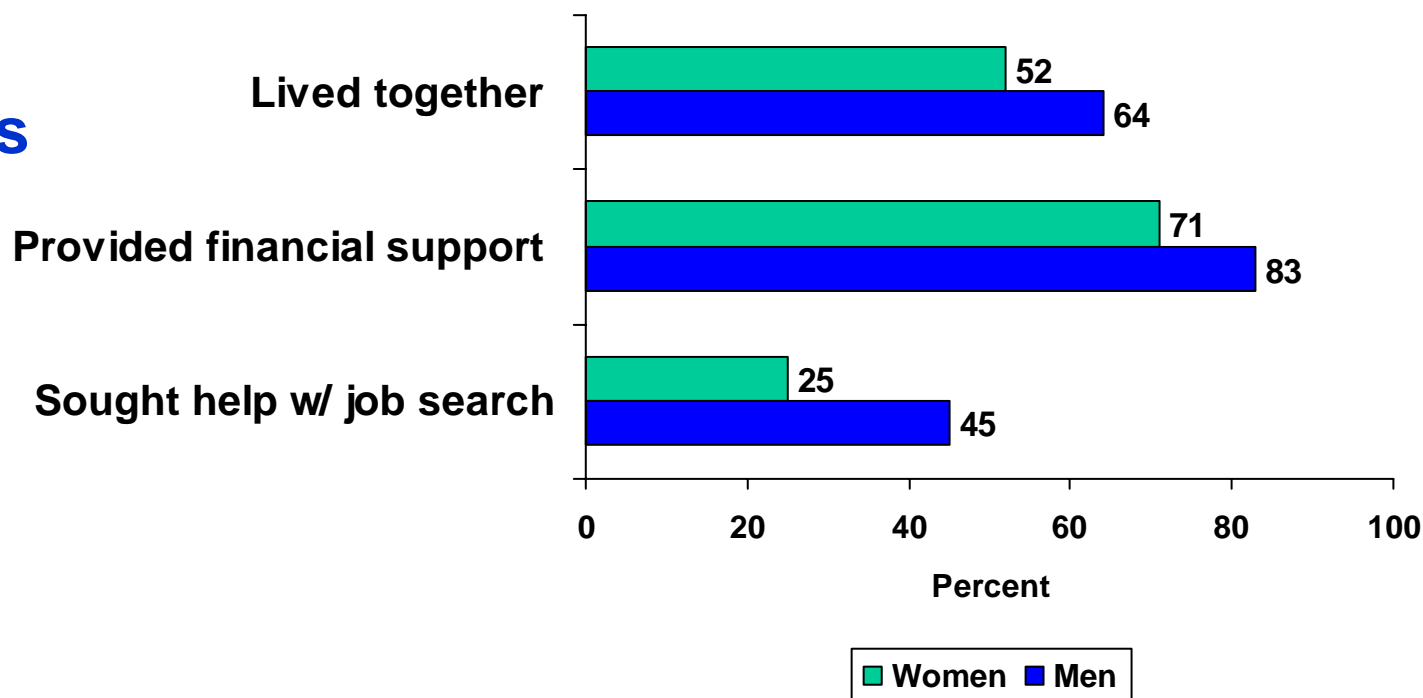
Pre-release Expectations, by Gender



# Does support vary by gender of returning prisoner?

Families provide high levels of support, meeting men's expectations for assistance upon release

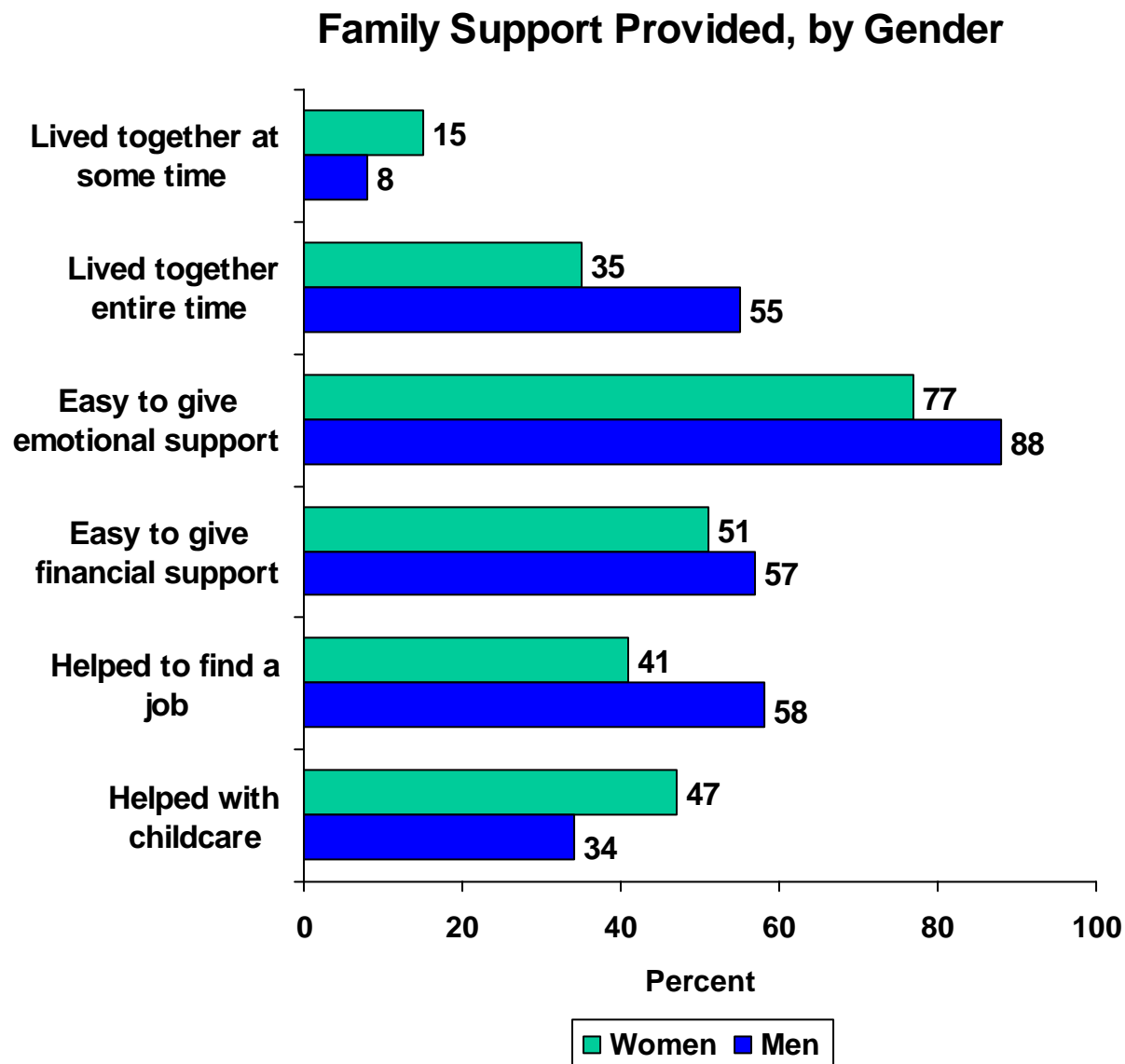
Post-release Support Received, by Gender



# Does support vary by gender of returning prisoner?

Family members of men are more likely to report providing help.

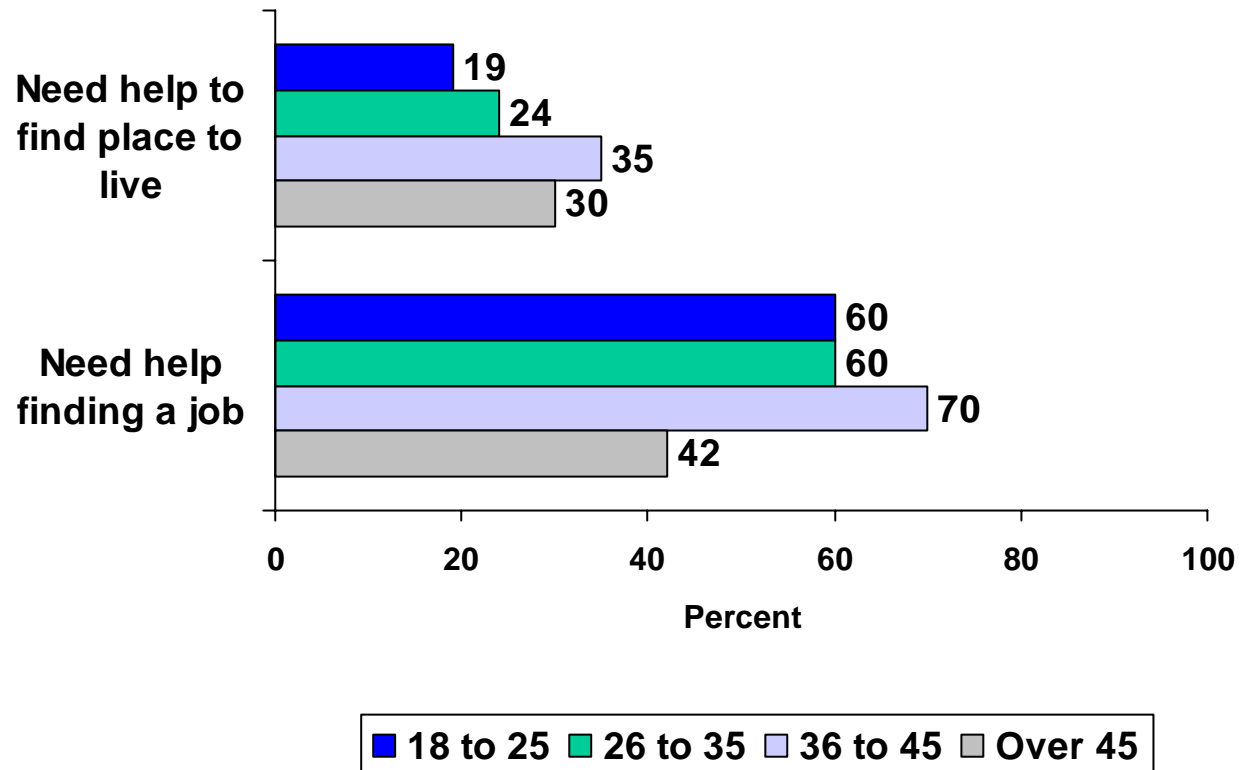
Family members often find it easy or very easy to provide support



# Does support vary by age?

Older prisoners  
more often  
anticipate need  
for help with  
housing and  
employment

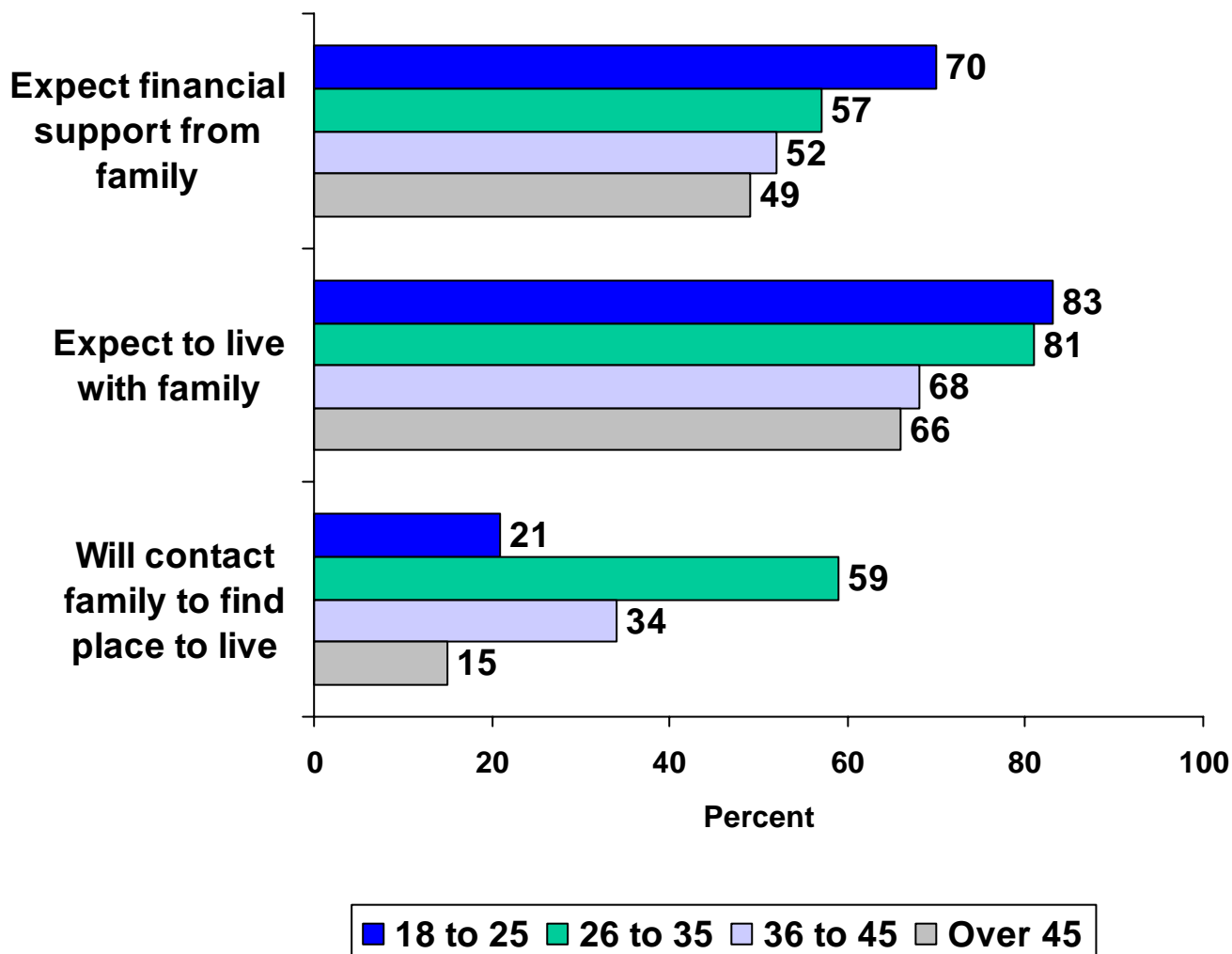
Post-release Help Needed, by Age Group



# Does support vary by age?

Older prisoners are less likely to expect housing and financial support from family

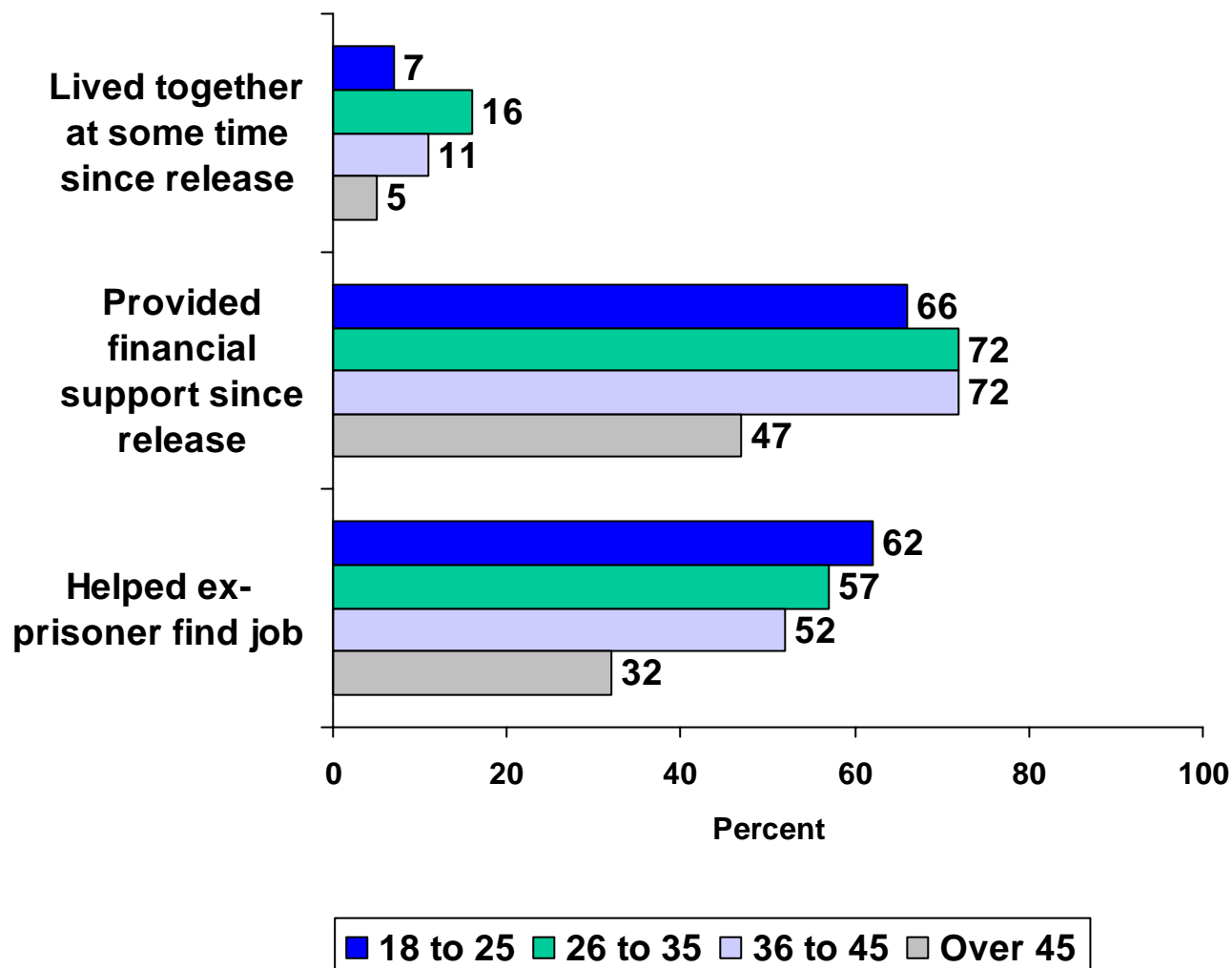
Pre-release Expectations, by Age Group



# Does support vary by age?

Fewer family members had provided help to older returning prisoners

Family Support Provided, by Age Group



# How are relationships affected by incarceration?

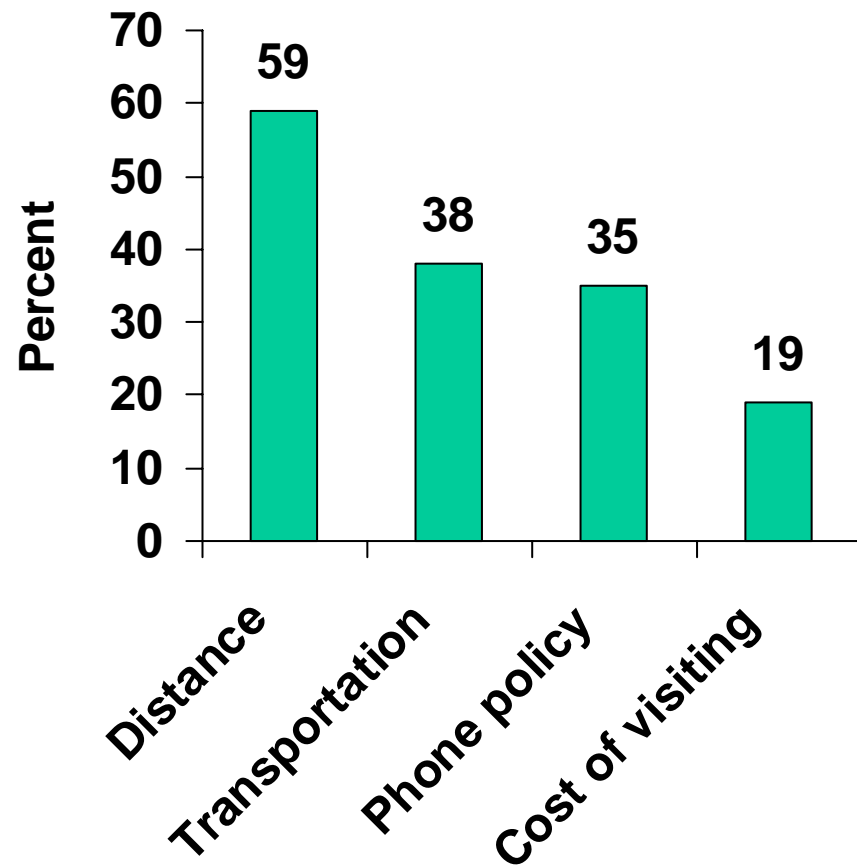
## Pre-prison:

- 97% were in contact

## During prison:

- 89% were in contact
- 46% mailed weekly;  
12% visited weekly
- 13% did not want to stay in touch

## Obstacles to Contact



# How are family members affected by release and return?

- Negative effects of return:
  - Anxiety (27%)
  - Financial hardships (20%)
  - Small shares: problems with other relationships (8.2%), theft (3.8%), moving (1.9%)
- Difficulty providing post-release support
  - Financial (45%)
  - Emotional (15%)
- Impact of release on relationship:
  - 54% stronger or easier
  - 14% weaker or more difficult
  - 32% no change



# What resources and support do family members need?

- Very few family members were offered or received support specific to release (4.6%)
- Respondents expressed a variety of needs; many highlighted needs of returning prisoner
  - *“a job placement program... or at least a list of employers that would hire ex-offenders”*
  - *“funds until they get on their feet so they won’t be such a burden on us”*
  - *“the family as a whole needs counseling to learn to deal with the situation”*

# What are the Implications for Program Delivery?



# Summary and Implications

- **Family is an important source of support:**
  - Include family in pre-release planning - *formalize* involvement
  - Assess prisoner's needs and family's resources
  - Support and strengthen family support system
    - Families need immediate financial support and counseling
  - Anticipate which family members may be most willing and able to provide support (intimate partners, parents)
- **Ties to children important stake in “making good”**
- **Not all returning prisoners can rely on family:**
  - Pre-release and community programs targeted to:
    - Women
    - Older prisoners
    - Prisoners without family support systems



# FAMILY AND REENTRY

## Future Research

- Interview families over time; look for changes in perspectives on support
- Interview multiple family members for a more comprehensive perspective on the family experience
- Investigate role of intimate partner support



**For more information on prisoner reentry, please  
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