

**Attitudes Toward and Support for Services to  
Successfully Reintegrate People with Felony Convictions Back into Society:  
A Survey of Residents of Washington, DC and Georgia**

Submitted to:  
Community Voices

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## I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

### Methodology

#### Survey Methodology Poll of DC 01/11/07 thru 01/19/07

This is a telephone survey of likely voters in Washington, DC and Georgia conducted by Zogby International. The target sample in Washington, DC is 501 interviews with approximately 43 questions asked and the target sample in Georgia is 800 interviews with approximately 43 questions asked. Samples are randomly drawn from telephone cd's of national listed sample. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Up to six calls are made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR's approved methodologies<sup>1</sup> and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies.<sup>2</sup> Weighting by party, age, race, gender is used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 4.5 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Zogby International's sampling and weighting procedures also have been validated through its political polling: more than 95% of the firm's polls have come within 1% of actual election-day outcomes.

Sample Characteristics	Washington, DC		Georgia	
	Frequency	Valid Percent*	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	501	100	800	100
Atlanta MSA	--	--	408	51
Other MSA (GA)	--	--	140	18
Rural (GA)	--	--	252	32
Very likely to vote	478	95	735	92
Somewhat likely to vote	23	5	65	8
Democratic	371	74	264	33
Republican	40	8	344	43
Independent/Minor party	90	18	192	24
18-29	69	14	126	16
30-49	181	37	324	41
50-64	158	33	229	29

<sup>1</sup> See COOP4 (p.38) in *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates of Surveys*. The American Association for Public Opinion Research, (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Cooperation Tracking Study: April 2003 Update*, Jane M. Sheppard and Shelly Haas. The Council for Marketing & Opinion Research (CMOR). Cincinnati, Ohio (2003).

Sample Characteristics	Washington, DC		Georgia	
	Frequency	Valid Percent*	Frequency	Valid Percent*
65+	75	16	111	14
18-24	31	7	36	5
25-34	75	16	136	17
35-54	227	47	354	45
55-69	91	19	191	24
70+	59	12	74	9
Did not answer age	17	--	10	--
Less than high school	22	4	34	4
High school graduate	69	14	138	17
Some college	70	14	220	28
College graduate+	338	68	404	51
Did not answer education	2	--	4	--
White	169	35	549	69
Hispanic	24	5	--	--
African American	280	58	199	25
Asian/Pacific	5	1	--	--
Other/mixed	5	1	48	6
Did not answer race	18	--	4	--
Suburbs	31	6	401	51
Rural	8	2	259	33
Urban	451	92	133	17
Did not answer locale	18	--	7	--
Less than \$25,000	53	12	85	12
\$25,000-\$34,999	31	7	118	17
\$35,000-\$49,999	65	15	107	15
\$50,000-\$74,999	84	19	149	21
\$75,000-\$99,999	67	15	112	16
\$100,000 or more	148	33	141	20
Did not answer income	54	--	87	--
Male	240	48	386	48
Female	261	52	414	52

\* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

## II. Executive Summary

Approximately 700,000 men and women are released from correctional facilities yearly in the United States and return to their communities. Many who are incarcerated and then reenter their communities upon release confront numerous obstacles including unemployment, disenfranchisement, limited housing, poor health, and lack access to health services. The survey was conducted in Washington, DC and Georgia to determine the public support of rehabilitative services and reentry policies.

About half in both Washington, DC and in Georgia believe that released prisoners are about as likely to commit further crimes after their release as they were before. One in four in DC and one in three in Georgia believe that released prisoners are more likely to commit further crimes. Despite this (or perhaps *because* of this), respondents in both locations appear to support rehabilitation efforts.

A significant majority in both locations support the more comprehensive policy of providing state-funded services during and after incarceration to enhance the chances of a successful rehabilitation and a majority in both locations for nearly all of the services tested, like providing access to housing, medical services, and job training believe that these services are very important to a successful rehabilitation.

Job training tops the list of respondents from both locations as an important factor in successfully reintegrating a prisoner into society. Access to drug treatment and mental health services are also considered important to both locations for a successful reintegration.

Both groups believe it is essential to begin planning for reintegration into society at sentencing, or at the very least, one year prior to release. The Second Chance Act to fund programs and services for returning prisoners is supported by a significant majority in both locations (three in four or more).

### III. Narrative Analysis

6. *How concerned are you about crime in your community?*

**Table 1. How Concerned about Crime? (%)**

	DC	GA
Very concerned	60	59
Somewhat concerned	36	29
Not concerned	4	12
Not sure	0	0

Three in five in both Washington, DC and Georgia say they are very concerned about crime in their community. One in three (36%) in DC and more than one in four (29%) in Georgia are somewhat concerned. Those living in Georgia (12%) are three times as likely as those in Washington, DC (4%) to say they are not concerned about crime. Less than one percent of each say they are not sure.

#### Washington, DC

Eighty-two percent or more in each sub-group say they are *very* or *somewhat concerned* about crime in their community.

#### Georgia

As in Washington, DC, the vast majority of respondents in all sub-groups (three in four or more) say they are very or somewhat concerned about crime in their communities.

7. *In 2006, 700,000 prisoners will be released from prison to their home communities. How do you feel about this situation?*

**Table 2. Feelings about Release of Prisoners (%)**

	DC	GA
Fearful	12	16
Somewhat concerned	47	63
Not concerned	37	18
Not sure	4	3

Those living in Georgia are more likely than those living in Washington, DC to feel fearful (16% vs. 12%) and to be somewhat concerned (63% vs. 47%) about the release of prisoners. Those in the nation's capital are twice as likely as those living in Georgia (37% vs. 18%) to say they are not concerned about the 700,000 prisoners who will be released from prison.

## Washington, DC

Those under 30 (17%) and those 65 and older (16%) are more likely than respondents between the ages of 30 and 64 (10%) to say they are fearful about the 700,000 prisoners who were released from prison in 2006. Women (15%) are more fearful than men (9%) and also a majority of women (53%) say they have some concern compared to 41% of men who feel that way.

Clearly income plays a role in level of concern, with the lower the income, the greater the concern – 22% of those earning less than \$25,000 a year compared to 6% of those earning \$100,000 a year or more saying they are fearful about the release of prisoners. African Americans (15%) are more likely than whites (8%) to say they are fearful.

## Georgia

In Georgia, results do not mirror results in DC. Women (20%) are more likely than men (12%) to say they are fearful and the elderly (26%) are more likely than those aged 30 to 64 (18%) to say they fear the release of 700,000 prisoners, but no one under the age of 30 says they are fearful and African Americans (18%) and whites (16%) are about equally fearful.

Those at the lowest end of the income scale are the most likely to say they fear the release of these prisoners (25%), while the level of fear among the other income levels is fairly consistent at around 15% saying they are fearful.

*8. Generally speaking, do you think that people who have served their time in prison and are released back into society today are more likely, less likely, or about as likely as they were before their imprisonment to commit future crimes?*

**Table 3. Likelihood to Commit Future Crimes (%)**

	DC	GA
More likely	25	34
Less likely	18	14
Same	46	46
Not sure	11	6

Just under half (46% each) of both those living in DC and in Georgia say people who have served their time and are released back into society are about as likely to commit further crimes as they were before they were sent to prison. One in four (25%) in Washington and one in three in Georgia (34%) say these people will be more likely to commit crimes after their release. Eighteen percent in Washington, DC and 14% in Georgia say these released prisoners will be less likely to commit further crimes.

## Washington, DC

Among the age groups, half of those between 30 and 49 (52%) say released prisoners are just as likely as before to commit future crimes, while 36% of those 65 and older agree. Most likely to say released prisoners are more likely to commit further crimes are 18 to 29 year olds (32%). One in four (26%) of those over 65 say released prisoners are less likely to do so.

Equal percentages of men and women (18%) think that released prisoners are less likely to commit further crimes, while men are more likely than women (51% vs. 41%) to think these prisoners are just as likely to commit crimes after release as before, while women (29%) are slightly more likely than men (22%) to say they are more likely to commit further crimes.

## Georgia

Those over 30 are twice as likely as those under 30 to say that prisoners are more likely to commit further crimes once released (37% vs. 18%), while about half of those under 65 say that these prisoners are just likely as before to commit further crimes, compared to one in three (36%) of seniors who feel this way. One-fourth of those under 30 believe released prisoners are less likely to commit further crimes.

Men (51%) are more likely than women (42%) to say that the frequency of committing crimes once released will be about the same as before incarceration, while women are more likely than men (37% vs. 31%) to say these prisoners are more likely to commit further crimes.

*9. I am going to read four alternative prison policies that state prison systems could follow for people who have committed property crimes or drug-related offenses and not violent crime. After I read them, please tell me which one you would prefer that the state implement. Please keep in mind that there is a difference between prison and jail. Please think about these responses in relation to prison.*

***Policy 1.*** *Treat prison as punishment and do not offer rehabilitation services to people either during their time in prison or after their release.*

***Policy 2.*** *Make state-funded rehabilitation services available to incarcerated people while they are serving time in prison.*

***Policy 3.*** *Make state-funded rehabilitation services available to incarcerated people only after they have been released from prison.*

***Policy 4.*** *Make state-funded rehabilitation services available to incarcerated people both while they are in prison and after they have been released from prison*

**Table 4. Policies for Non-violent Crime (%)**

	<b>DC</b>	<b>GA</b>
Policy 1	2	9
Policy 2	6	13
Policy 3	8	10
Policy 4	82	64
Not sure	2	4

An overwhelming majority in both Washington, DC (82%) and in Georgia (64%) support Policy 4 which would make state-funded rehabilitation services available to incarcerated people while in prison and after they have been released. Policy 1 which would treat prison as a punishment and offer no rehabilitation services has the least amount of support from both locations – 2% in DC and 9% in Georgia. About one in ten in both DC (8%) and Georgia (10%) support Policy 3, wherein state-funded rehabilitation programs are made available only after someone has been released from prison. Those living in Georgia (13%) are twice as likely as those living in Washington (6%) to agree with Policy 2, making such programs available to inmates only while they are serving their sentence in prison.

### **Washington, DC**

Responses among sub-groups mirror responses overall.

### **Georgia**

As with Washington, responses among sub-groups reflect responses overall. The majority in most sub-groups is in favor of Policy 4, including 70% of 50 to 64 year olds, 73% living in the suburbs, and 70% of African Americans.

10-13. More than 60-75% of all prisoners now released from state prisons are rearrested within two years after release. I am going to read some reasons that people have given to explain why this is. As I read each one, please tell me whether you think this is a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in the high rate of people returning to prison after they have been released.

**Table 5. Factors in Return to Prison (%)**

	Washington, DC				Georgia			
	Major	Minor	Not	Not Sure	Major	Minor	Not	Not Sure
13. People returning to society from prison experience too many obstacles to living a crime-free life.	72	19	8	1	49	34	15	3
12. When people leave prison, they have no more life skills than they had before they entered prison.	71	17	10	2	58	25	14	3
11. The experience of prison reinforces criminal behavior.	60	28	10	2	52	33	13	3
10. Once a criminal, always a criminal.	9	38	51	2	22	40	36	2

Just over seven in ten in Washington, DC believe that there are too many obstacles to living a crime-free life (72%) and that people leaving prison do not learn any additional life skills while in prison (71%) and that both of these factors are a major contributor to recidivism. Furthermore, 60% believes that the experience in prison reinforces criminal behavior and is a major factor in returning to prison once the person has been released. However, in Georgia about half believe that these three factors play a major role in released prisoners returning to prison. One in eleven in DC (9%) believe that “once a criminal, always a criminal” plays a major role in recidivism, while in Georgia, more than twice that number (22%) believes this is a major factor.

Just over half in Washington (51%) and more than one in three (36%) in Georgia do not believe that someone who is a criminal is “always a criminal.” One in ten or less in the nation’s capital do not believe that any of the other three statements is a factor in released prisoners returning to prison, while in Georgia, those who do not believe any of the other three factors have an impact range from 13% to 15%.

**Washington, DC**

Men and women agree equally that the prison experience is a major reinforcement of criminal behavior (60% each), however women are more likely than men to agree that the other three aspects are major factors in the recidivism rate. Interestingly, respondents under 30 are at odds with those over 30 on all the factors – twice as likely to agree that “once a criminal, always a criminal” is a major factor and less likely than older respondents to agree that the other three aspects are major factors in a prisoner’s return to jail or prison.

## Georgia

In general, the youngest respondents are less likely to say any of the aspects tested are a major factor in the recidivism rate, while men are more likely than women to say that prison reinforces criminal behavior and that prisoner have no more life skills than when they entered prison.

*14-18. I am going to read a list of items that have been barriers for those, recently released from prison, who reenter their communities. As I read each one, please tell me if you think it is very important, somewhat important, or not important in a person's successful reintegration into society after incarceration.*

**Table 6. Importance to a Successful Reintegration (%)**

	Washington, DC				Georgia			
	Very	Smwht	Not	Not Sure	Very	Smwht	Not	Not Sure
18. Access to job training.	94	5	1	--	81	17	2	0
17. Access to medical services.	71	23	6	--	50	34	14	2
15. Access to student loans for education.	59	33	7	1	50	35	14	1
16. Access to public housing.	57	33	9	1	46	40	14	1
14. Reinstating a person's right to vote.	53	24	22	1	32	32	36	1

Nearly all respondents in both DC and Georgia believe that access to job training is important to successful reintegration into society after incarceration, including 94% in DC and 81% in Georgia who say this is very important. Nearly nine in ten in Georgia say it is important for released prisoners to have access to medical services and access to student loans for education in order to successfully integrate into society. In DC, 94% and 92%, respectively, believe these two factors are important to successful integration.

Ninety percent of Washingtonians and 86% of Georgians believe that it is important to provide access to public housing to ensure a successful reintegration, while 87% in DC and 64% in Georgia think reinstating the right to vote is important.

## Washington, DC

Women are more likely than men in every case to say it is *very important* for successful reintegration that prisoners be given access to these services or rights. In nearly all cases, those under 30 are more likely than those over 30 to say it is very important for each of these services or rights to be available.

## Georgia

Again, in every case, women are more likely than men to say successful reintegration is dependent upon access to these services and rights. Generally, there is little difference among the age groups, except that those under 30 are more likely than those older to say access to student loans and access to medical services is *very important*.

19-26. I am going to read some services that could be made available to people reentering society after being incarcerated. As I read each one, please tell me if you think it is very important, somewhat important, or not important in a person's successful reintegration into society after incarceration.

**Table 7. Importance of Services to Successful Reintegration (%)**

	Washington, DC				Georgia			
	Very	Smwht	Not	Not Sure	Very	Smwht	Not	Not Sure
21. Access to job training.	94	6	1	--	83	15	2	--
22. Access to drug treatment.	88	10	2	0	79	14	6	1
23. Access to mental health services.	86	12	2	1	70	25	5	0
26. Access to medical treatment.	76	20	4	--	57	33	9	1
24. Access to mentoring.	74	21	4	1	67	27	5	1
25. Access to help for their families.	74	22	4	1	58	33	8	1
19. Access to housing in general.	72	24	3	0	58	36	6	1
20. Access to public housing.	58	32	9	0	45	41	13	1

A majority of both those living in Washington, DC and in Georgia say each of the services tested is important (combining *very* and *somewhat important*) to a successful reintegration. Nearly all respondents in both locations say job training is important and more than 90% of both groups believe that access to drug treatment is important to successfully reintegrate.

## Washington, DC

As with the previous series of questions, women are more likely than men on every service to say each is *very important* for a successful reintegration into society.

## Georgia

There is little difference between the opinion of men and women on the importance of access to housing in general, while in all other cases, women are more likely than men to say the service tested is *very important* to a successful reintegration. Those under 30 are more likely than those over 30 to say that access to job training, housing in general, and medical care are *very important*, while on the other services, there is little difference among the age groups.

27. When do you think planning for an incarcerated person's reentry into society should begin?

**Table 8. Planning for Reentry into Society (%)**

	DC	GA
At sentencing	51	42
One year prior to release	27	30
Six months prior to release	15	17
Upon release	5	8
Never	1	0
Not sure	1	3

In Washington DC (51%) more likely to say that planning should be done at sentencing, while both groups are equally likely to say that planning should occur one year prior to release (27% DC; 30% GA) and six months prior to release (15% DC; 17% GA). Five percent in Washington and 8% in Georgia think planning for reentry into society should take place upon release.

### **Washington, DC**

Close to a majority or more in most sub-groups believe planning for a person's reentry into society should begin at sentencing. About one in four in most sub-groups believe this planning should begin one year prior to release. Women are slightly more likely than men (55% vs. 47%) to believe that such planning should begin at sentencing.

### **Georgia**

Nearly half (48%) of 50 to 64 year olds believe that planning for a person's reentry into society should begin at sentencing, compared to 31% of those under 30 who feel this way. A plurality (43%) of the youngest respondents believe planning should begin one year prior to release. Nearly half of whites (46%) believe such planning should begin at sentencing, while African Americans are evenly divided between planning at sentencing and planning one year prior to release (36% each).

28. There is a bill in the US House of Representatives and Senate called the Second Chance Act, which funds programs and services for those, recently released from prison, who reenter their communities. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this effort on the part of the federal government?

**Table 9. Support/Oppose Second Chance Act (%)**

	<b>DC</b>	<b>GA</b>
Strongly	60	39
Somewhat	21	36
<b>Support</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>76</b>
Strongly	4	7
Somewhat	4	7
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>
Not sure	11	10

The vast majority in both DC (81%) and in Georgia (76%) support the Second Chance Act. Depth of support is stronger in the capital (60% strongly support it) than in Georgia where 39% strongly support the act. Nearly twice as many in Georgia than in Washington (15% vs. 8%) say they do not support such an act. About one in ten in both locations are not sure where they stand.

### **Washington, DC**

A majority in most sub-groups supports the Second Chance Act, including 68% of those 50 to 64, 64% of women, and 67% of African Americans.

### **Georgia**

Seventy percent or more in most sub-groups support Second Chance Act.

29-35. Most state governments in the US still treat certain crimes as a felony. A felony is the most serious classification of crimes, more serious than a misdemeanor, and may result in punishment including imprisonment for one year or longer or even death. Some states have classes of felonies, and some do not. I am going to ask you a few questions about those recently released from prison that reenter their communities who have received a felony conviction. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. . .

**Table 10. Agree/Disagree Statements about Those w/Felony Convictions (%)**

. . .that someone who has committed felony. . .	DC			GA		
	Agree*	Disagree*	Not sure	Agree*	Disagree*	Not sure
29. be allowed to serve on a jury?	42	52	6	25	71	4
30. be allowed to vote?	80	17	3	57	40	3
31. receive job-training?	98	2	0	91	8	1
32. be allowed to have access to student loans for education?	90	9	2	76	23	2
33. have access to public housing?	84	14	2	75	23	2
34. have access to medical services?	97	3	0	83	17	1
35. be allowed to receive state subsidized (Medicaid) health services?	91	8	1	65	32	3

A majority in both locations agree that those with felony convictions should be allowed to participate in or have access to all of the rights or services tested, with the exception of serving on a jury – 42% in DC and 25% in Georgia agree that released felons should be allowed to serve on a jury. Majorities in both locations disagree.

Nearly all those living in DC agree that felons should receive job training (98%) and have access to medical services (97%). In Georgia, support for these services is high - 91% say they should receive job training and 83% say felons should have access to medical services.

More than half (57%) in Georgia believe that released felons should have the right to vote, and 80% in Washington, DC who agree with this. Three in four Georgians agree that those who have received felony convictions should be allowed to have access to student loans (76%) and to public housing (75%). In DC, there is support the same services – 90% for student loans and 84% for public housing.

Nine in ten (91%) in Washington say they agree that felons should have access to state-subsidized health services and 65% in Georgia agree.

36. Do you know anyone who is incarcerated?

**Table 11. Know Someone Incarcerated? (%)**

	DC	GA
Yes	34	40
No	66	60
Not sure	--	0

One in three in Washington, DC (34%) and two in five (40%) in Georgia say they know someone who is incarcerated.

### Washington, DC

Younger respondents (45%) are more likely than those who are older to know someone who is incarcerated. Men and women are equally likely (34%) to say they know someone who is incarcerated, while African Americans (44%) are more likely than whites (27%) to say they know someone.

### Georgia

Respondents living in rural (46%) and metropolitan areas in the state other than Atlanta (47%) are more likely than those living in Atlanta (35%) to say they know someone who is incarcerated. As age increases, the incidence of saying they know someone incarcerated decreases from 63% of those under 30 saying “yes” to 24% of those 65 and older saying “yes.” African Americans (59%) are more likely than whites (33%) to say they know someone who is incarcerated.

**(Asked only of those who said they know someone who is incarcerated)**

37. Is this a family member?

**Table 12. Family Member Incarcerated? (%)**

	DC	GA
Yes	45	42
No	55	59

Forty-five percent in DC and 42% in Georgia say that the person they know who is incarcerated is a family member.

### Washington, DC

Sub-group sample sizes are generally too small to draw any statistically valid conclusions.

## Georgia

Sub-group responses generally follow the overall response.

38. *Does your opinion or response to the questions asked today change if the person recently released from prison who reenters their community was a male or female.*

**Table 13. Responses Change if Male/Female? (%)**

	DC	GA
Yes	8	9
No	90	89
Not sure	2	2

Nine in ten in both locations (90% in DC; 89% in Georgia) say that it would make no difference in their responses knowing if the prisoner set to reenter society was a man or a woman.

## Washington, DC

The vast majority in every sub-group say their responses would not change if person reentering society was a man or a woman.

## Georgia

Again, the overwhelming majority in all sub-groups would not change their responses based on the sex of the person reentering society.