

Prisoner Re-Entry Employment Program

Final Evaluation Report, 2006

SUMMARY RECIDIVISM FINDINGS

Prepared for

Second Chance

Prepared by:

**The Social and Behavioral Research Institute
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Summary of Recidivism Findings

Recent newspaper headlines decry the state of California’s prisons. Dubbing them “overcrowded,” Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for more prisons to be built¹. On July 1, the U.S. District Court ordered that a federal receiver be put in charge of the California State Prisons’ health care system due to the high number of inmate deaths and in response to independent evaluations.² The receiver, Robert Sillen, promptly called the system, “at best ‘in a state of abject disrepair.’”³

Given this problematic climate, a program that promises to help former inmates stay out of jail or prison and to become employed, productive members of society ought to be a welcome addition to California’s correctional system. This summary report describes such a program, started by a San Diego nonprofit, Second Chance.

This report was commissioned as part of an evaluation of the Prisoner Re-entry Employment Program (PREP) supported by a grant from the California Endowment. Second Chance, the nonprofit recipient of this funding, chose the Social and Behavioral Research Institute at Cal State San Marcos (SBRI) to design an evaluation that not only looked at program counts and outcomes, but generated publishable results of best practices.

¹ *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2006.

² *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 1, 2005.

³ Reuters, July 5, 2006.

An Evaluation with an Experimental Design

The SBRI evaluators recognized that more people would want to participate in this program than could be accommodated. Thus, they proposed to track PREP-eligible non-participants to see if they recidivated more quickly than those who participated in the PREP program. Prison inmates initially applied to program, and were then accepted based on their release dates. If their release dates didn’t fit the parameters of the program, they were not let in. The non-participants were assigned to a control group.

SBRI and Second Chance did not choose to pursue a randomized experiment because it would mean knowingly depriving people of the services Second Chance provided. However, randomization was accomplished by the calendar of STRIVE classes. If the release date was 11 days or more prior to the start of the next STRIVE class, the person was assigned to the control group. And, if the release date was less than 11 days prior to the next STRIVE class, they were assigned to the treatment group and received the PREP program.

PREP Prevents Recidivism

SBRI found the following: Of 506 people tracked over two years, 331 were eligible, but could not come because of their release dates. These people were assigned to the control group. The remaining 175 applicants were assigned to the treatment group. Of these, 74 enrolled but didn’t finish the program due to either dropping out or being terminated. One hundred one (101)

graduated from the PREP program. Of these, 64 did not complete a 60-90 follow-up interview, and 37 completed the follow up.

- Of the 101 PREP graduates over two years, 70% **stayed out of jail or prison.**
- Of the 37 PREP graduates for whom follow-up information was collected, **87% stayed out of jail or prison.**
- Of those who entered the PREP program but could not complete it (74 people), **sixty-one percent (61%) returned to incarceration.**
- Of those who qualified for PREP, but did not get in (331), **sixty-eight percent (68%) returned to incarceration.**

The fact that the control group members were eligible for the PREP program before their release date was even known by Second Chance staff means that this program was not simply targeting the most likely to succeed in the jails and prisons, many more could have been helped if Second Chance had the resources.

The Program

PREP combines job readiness training, transitional sober living, mental health services, and case management. Participants were taken directly from their jail or prison gate to a sober living household. Within days they were placed in an award-winning “**tough love**” job readiness program (STRIVE) for three weeks. They were provided mental health counseling, case management for health care and basic

needs, job counseling and job placement assistance.

Participants were recruited while incarcerated. Second Chance staff gave presentations to inmates about Second Chance and their STRIVE and PREP programs. Interested inmates filled out PREP applications right after the presentation. Applicants who said that they had nowhere to go after leaving jail or prison, and who were able and willing to come immediately to the program, were most likely to be selected.

The Evaluation

Over two years, the SBRI collected data from PREP participants at four points: application, entry, graduation, and 60-90 day follow-up. Relying on written forms for the application, entry and graduation tests, the SBRI attempted to contact graduates by phone for the final follow-up interview. The instrument used at entry, graduation and follow-up was identical. It measured the following outcome measures:

- 1) Health – mental, physical and psychological, including alcohol and drug behavior
- 2) Changes in attitudes and beliefs
- 3) Changes in parenting or social integration.

Employment

Although SBRI did not measure employment data, the evaluator was presented with employment statistics from Second Chance:

Table 5 (reprinted below from the report) illustrates the reported placement of PREP graduates by industry. Second Chance staff reported that the average

starting wage for PREP graduates was \$10.41 per hour. This rate is significantly below the average personal income for the region (\$16.53 per hour⁴); however, it is well above California's minimum wage of \$6.75 per hour.

Industry	PREP Grads
Maintenance & Repair	40%
General Office	21%
Supermarket & Retail	18%
Amusement & Recreation	14%
Manufacturing	5%
Healthcare	2%

According to Second Chance staff, the employment placement rate for these cycles of treatment group participants was eighty-three percent (83%).

⁴ Source: SANDAG publication, *Indicators of sustainable competitiveness: A quality of life index for San Diego*, (2005), p. 28.

Section 1: Introduction & Methodology

1.1 Introduction

Second Chance, a nonprofit dedicated to providing a second chance to homeless men and women since 1998, began the Prisoner Re-entry Employment Program (PREP) in the summer of 2003. PREP is aimed at reducing recidivism and homelessness while improving the well-being and job readiness of those being released from jail or prison. The program includes:

1. Gate pick-up for prisoners released from jail or prison,
2. Immediate transportation to a sober living transitional housing placement,
3. A three-week job readiness training course (STRIVE – see below),
4. Mental health counseling,
5. Job search assistance, and
6. Job-placement and coaching.

The job readiness program builds on the core program of Second Chance. Since 1998, they have offered the nationally-recognized STRIVE (Support and Training Resulting in Valuable Employees) program for job readiness training to any person interested in the intensive three-week, tough-love approach to getting ready to land and keep a job.

The Evaluator -- As part of a seed grant for the PREP program from the California Endowment, Second Chance selected the Social and Behavioral Research Institute (SBRI) at California State University San Marcos to be its

evaluation partner. As a partner, rather than an auditor or quality management team, SBRI worked with Second Chance staff to craft a record-keeping and participant tracking program. In addition to the instruments used for this report (Second Chance Survey), the SBRI helped Second Chance develop an orientation evaluation, a formal application and interview process for PREP participants, and a revised application form for all participants in the STRIVE program as well as PREP participants.

This summary report examines specific outcomes of the PREP program in three areas:

- Recidivism rates
- Employment placement
- Perceptions of preparedness to secure a good job

In addition, this report describes the demographics of the PREP participants (treatment group), in comparison to a control group.

Control Group

A control group is important when measuring the effect of a program to know if the program works. Without a control group, there is no way to know if any observed changes are the result of the intervention the program performed or some other factor. If, after participating in PREP, a certain percentage of people stay out of jail, they need to be compared to a similar group who did not participate.

Very few evaluations of small non-profit programs are concerned with control groups. Rarely do programs measure the

interventions and services they offer in comparison to doing something else or nothing at all. Second Chance and the SBRI took great pains to examine their recidivism results in comparison with a non-treatment group.

All PREP-eligible participants were released in the San Diego area. Second Chance staff began the program by working first in the San Diego County jails and eventually recruited at Donovan State Prison.

PREP applicants were screened based on their interest in the program and their suitability. Each applicant was interviewed one-on-one by a Second Chance staff member. Based on these interviews with program staff, all applicants were screened into either likely participants or not. During this period, almost everyone who was interviewed was given the chance to enter the treatment, provided their release dates matched the program dates. All of the participants in the control group and those who received the program were deemed eligible for PREP based on these interviews.

If a person's release date was 11 days or more before the start of the next cycle, then that person was put in the control group and encouraged to come take STRIVE on their own. If a person's release date was 10 days or less from the next cycle, then that person was put into the treatment group.

Given these criteria, from the data provided by the Department of Justice, 506 PREP applicants were tracked for recidivism, 331 of these were put in the control group, 74 people were in the treatment group but did not graduate;

they were either terminated or they quit the program. The final 101 people surveyed graduated.

Unfortunately, due to the limited contact with inmates during the design of this report, it was not possible to pre-test the inmates using the instruments developed for this evaluation. Second Chance recruiters had limited access to and time with inmates; and they did not think it was possible to administer the 30 minute survey. Thus, the only data used to compare the control group with the treatment group was whether the control group recidivated during comparable time periods to the treatment group.

SBRI and Second Chance elected to not pursue a randomized experiment because it would mean knowingly depriving people of the services Second Chance provided. However, the way the control group was assigned takes the place of a randomization process, because the release dates from incarceration were not under the control of the study.

Program Flow Chart

The PREP program officially began in the summer of 2003, with evaluation tracking of participants starting in January of 2004. Each PREP class participated in four week cycles that included the three week STRIVE training and one week of job placement assistance. The evaluation period lasted until December of 2005. A total of twenty-two (22) cycles were tracked for this report.

Part of SBRI's role was to help the program staff track participants through the process from prison to program completion and a 60 to 90 day follow-

up. This process is shown in Chart 1, Program Flow Chart. SBRI broke the process down into the following steps:

1. **Orientation** (inside the institution) – inmates were given an overview of Second Chance and the STRIVE and PREP programs, then they were given the PREP Application.
2. **Application Processing** – PREP applicants were selected for eligibility based on their interest and they were contacted for interviews. Program staff were not aware of the inmates' release date until they were already accepted into the program. PREP participants received notification that they were accepted while still incarcerated.
3. **Interviews** – All applicants were interviewed using an SBRI-developed interview guide. This interview occurred while the inmates were still incarcerated.
4. **Pick-up at Gate** – Second Chance staff picked up PREP participants on their release date.
5. **Office Application** – All PREP participants filled out a Second Chance Application which included the Second Chance Survey (Baseline).
6. **Graduation** – On the day before graduation, PREP participants took the Second Chance Survey again (Post Test)
7. **Follow-Up** – Between 60 and 90 days following graduation, the SBRI contacted PREP graduates at their primary contact numbers to have them take the **Second Chance** Survey again on the phone (Follow-Up).

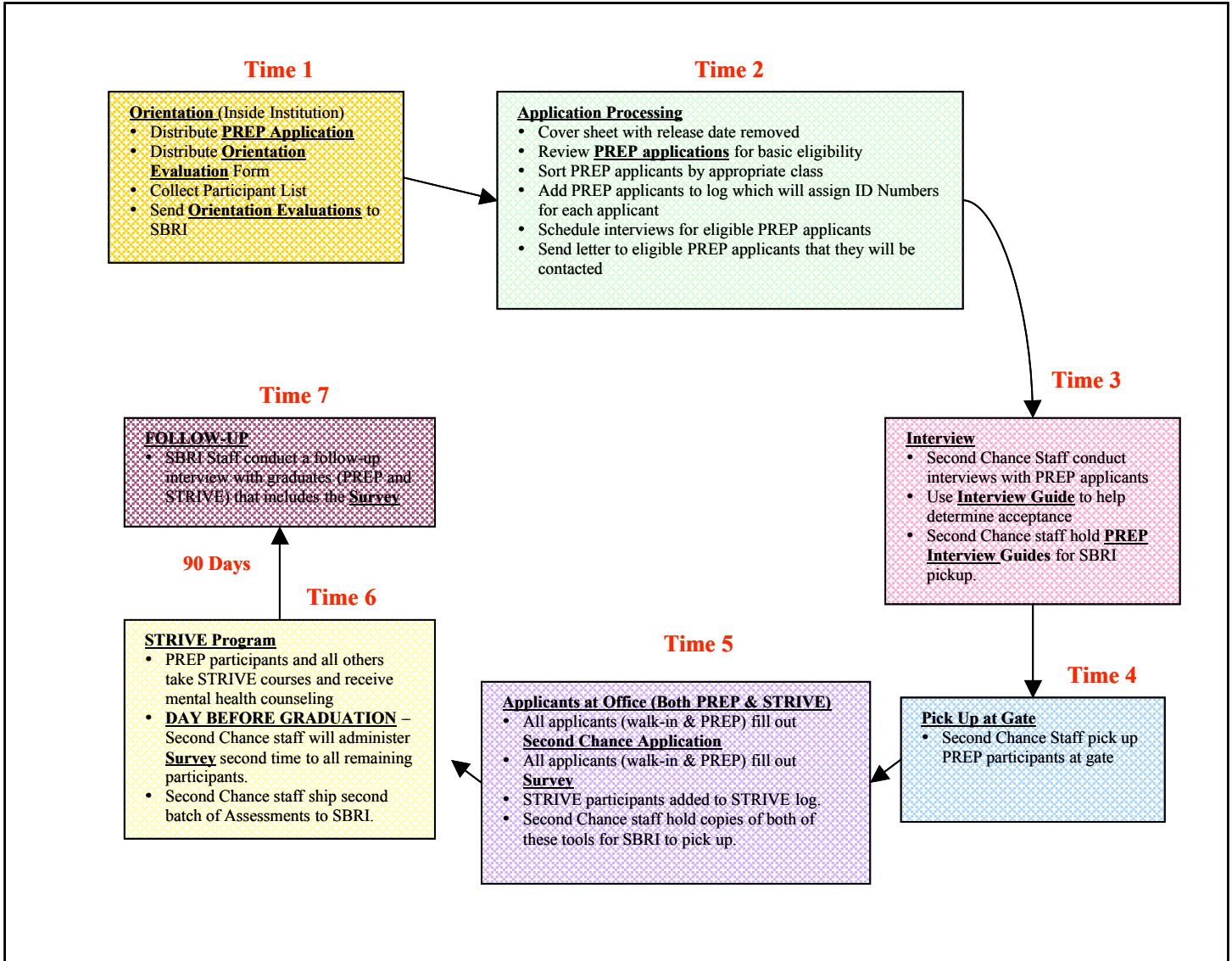
The “intervention,” the treatment that the PREP program provided, was:

1. Sober living in group housing for a minimum of two months (unless rules were violated),
2. Three weeks of STRIVE job readiness training,
3. Mental health counseling in both individual and group treatment,
4. One-on-one meetings with case managers and job placement professionals
5. Follow-up calls for a minimum of 60 days from case managers and job-placement professionals.

In addition to setting up this process, SBRI worked closely with Second Chance staff to train them in data collection methods and use of the different set of ID numbers to manage the control group.

See next page for program flow chart

Program Flow Chart



1.2 Methodology

Data collection for this study began in January of 2004. PREP participants were considered eligible if they showed an interest in the PREP program when meeting with the Second Chance recruiters, filled out a PREP application, showed up for their PREP interview, and met the “gut” feelings as eligible by Second Chance staff. According to the staff, their primary criterion was whether a person was willing to be picked up at the gate and transported immediately to Second Chance.

As mentioned in Section 1.1, the data for this report were gathered in two ways, paper and pencil and telephone interviews. All PREP participants were asked to complete pre-tests, post-tests and follow-ups using the Second Chance Survey instrument. This instrument measured psycho-social outcomes of the Second Chance program, and health and social relationships both before and after the program. The Second Chance Application measured demographic characteristics, current health and drug use status and employment training experience.

These instruments were self-administered using paper and pen during the pre- and post-test. For respondents who were limited in either literacy or English language, Second Chance staff provided assistance.

Participants first completed the Second Chance Survey instrument when they enrolled in the STRIVE component of the program (Pre-test). After the three week course, those participants still left

in the program completed the questionnaire again (Post-test). After 60-90 days following graduation from the program, an attempt was made to contact the participant again to complete the follow-up version of the same questionnaire – this time on the phone with trained SBRI interviewers.

A total of 952 people applied to the PREP program during the study period. Of these, 309 people were admitted into the treatment group, leaving 643 people as the control group. Of the 309 people who entered the treatment group, 175 graduated.

It is natural to expect that there would be some attrition between the beginning of the program and graduation. The classroom portion of the Second Chance program is a “tough love” experience and many participants were removed during this period.

Table 1 shows the number of program participants and the number of participants who graduated, as well as those who were successfully contacted for a follow-up interview.

	Prep	Attrition
Entry	309	
Graduation	175	43.4%
Follow-Up	57	67.4%

Table 1 shows a 43.4% attrition rate for PREP participants from beginning to graduation.

In addition, follow-up with the PREP graduates was more difficult. Of the 159 graduates in the two years of data collection, only 56 were successfully contacted to complete the follow-up survey, an attrition rate of 67%. It is important to note that this follow-up group is not representative of the PREP participants as a whole.

For the purposes of this research, a \$25.00 incentive was offered to any PREP participant who completed the follow-up questionnaire; however, this amount did not generate very much additional cooperation.

- *An area for further investigation for Second Chance is to determine methods that are more successful in following-up with their clients -- both graduates and people who have left the program.*

1.3 Measures of Success

The purpose of the Second Chance Survey was to measure psychological outcomes of the PREP program, including: **depression, anxiety, somatization, general distress, public confidence and social anxiety.** Psycho-social measures were also tracked, including **future aspirations, perceptions of control, self-esteem, mastery, and impulse control.**

Section 2: Recidivism

2.1 PREP vs. Control

In March of 2005, the SBRI submitted to the California Department of Justice a request for information about all participants in PREP and the PREP-

eligible control group. In January of 2006, the SBRI received data on approximately 506 of the participants who had contact with law enforcement based on their names, driver's license numbers and social security numbers.

The California Department of Justice data was incomplete – not every request for participant information yielded results. The SBRI was able to obtain matching records for 506 of the PREP participants who either applied for the program or actually participated. There were 952 PREP applications received for the program.

California Department of Justice records are often many months behind the up-to-date arrest and conviction records. Ideally, these records would be cross-checked with police arrest records; however, given limited resources, this analysis was not possible.

Because the DOJ database was missing 446 PREP records, further work needs to be done to locate these. **Of the 506 located DOJ records, 331 were assigned to the control group.** The remaining 175 people were in the treatment group (PREP participants). Of these 74 either dropped out or were terminated. The remaining 101 of the treatment group graduated from the program and were included in the DOJ recidivism data.

The breakdown of the status of PREP and PREP-eligible participants for whom recidivism data were available is shown in Table 2:

Table 2 -- Status of Prep Clients For Whom Recidivism Data Were Available			
Control Group			
	No Pre-test completed	65.4%	331
Treatment Group			
	Completed Pre-test (Dropped out or terminated)	14.6%	74
	Completed Post-test (Graduated)	20.0%	101
	Total		506

Table 3 shows the all of the variables that were recorded for the control group compared to the PREP enrollees who dropped out and the PREP enrollees who graduated. For all of the characteristics presented below, the only significant difference between the groups was the number of women vs. men. The control group is somewhat more male than the PREP enrollees. In other words, the control group is demographically very similar to the treatment group.

The Department of Justice data was obtained quite late during the study period (January, 2006). Thus, comprehensive analysis of people's complete rap sheets was not possible given limited resources.

The DOJ data had the PREP participants listed by identification number. For each ID# there was a list of contacts with law enforcement resulting in arrest. SBRI used this arrest data as the point of comparison to the PREP application date.

For the purposes of this report, a person was considered to have gone back to jail

or prison if there was contact with the Department of Justice. This contact may not have resulted in reincarceration, but it serves as the latest point of contact with the system. This approach may be blunt; however, it serves to quantify a point in time where a likely return to jail or prison occurred.

The date of the participants' submission of a PREP application was compared to the latest arrest or law enforcement contact date. If the last contact date occurred after submission of the application, this was considered to be someone who recidivated. If the last contact date was before the application date, that person was considered out of the penal system.

There is no follow-up data on participants' recidivism available at this time. The Department of Justice data run was a snapshot of the current status of the participants. One problem with this approach is that interval post graduation will vary from cycle to cycle. Early cycles will have a higher likelihood of recidivating than those with recent graduation dates. However, given that the entire study period was two years, the time frame was not extensive.

For the purposes of this report, recidivism means that the PREP-eligible person had a registered contact with the Department of Justice some time after submitting a PREP application to Second Chance.

This new contact was a re-arrest for either a new crime or a violation of parole or probation. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of new offenses. (See Section 2.2)

Table 3 -- PREP Groups by Demographics				
Category	Subcategory	Control, n=331	Drop-out, n=74	Grad., n=101
Age				
	Under 21	4%	10%	9%
	Over 21 to 30	24%	23%	31%
	Over 30 to 40	34%	25%	31%
	Over 40 to 50	32%	39%	23%
	Over 50 to 60	6%	3%	6%
	Over 60	0%	0%	0%
		100%	100%	100%
Sex				
	Male	76%	68%	62%
	Female	24%	32%	38%
Education				
	Completed grade school	3%	5%	4%
	Some high school	20%	19%	21%
	High school graduate/ GED	37%	46%	35%
	Occupational skills training	4%	1%	3%
	Occupational skills license	13%	16%	15%
	Some college	20%	16%	23%
	AA Degree	3%	1%	2%
	College graduate	4%	5%	7%
Race				
	African American	23%	26%	20%
	Asian	1%	3%	1%
	Caucasian	46%	43%	50%
	Latino	18%	23%	23%
	Native American/Alaskan	3%	1%	1%
	Pacific Islander	3%	4%	2%
	Mixed race/other	6%	0%	3%

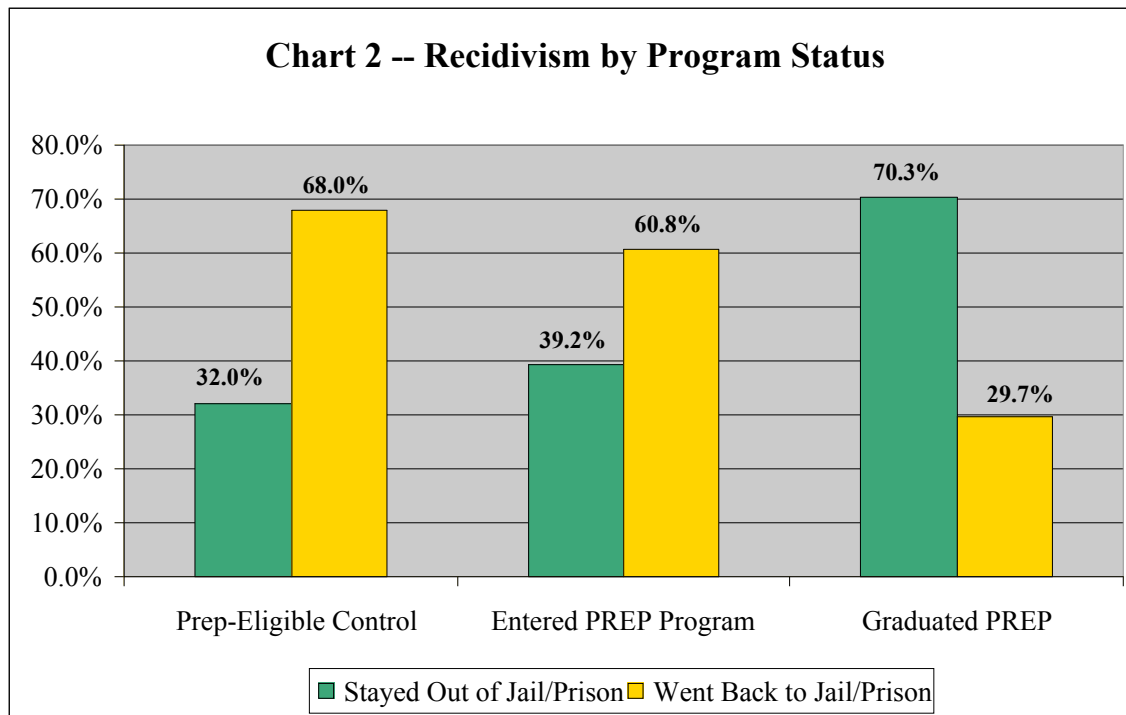


Chart 2 shows the recidivism results from the Department of Justice data. For those in the control group (never attended PREP), sixty-eight percent (68.0%) returned to jail or prison. The results for those who entered PREP but could not finish are similar; sixty-one percent (61%) returned to jail or prison. However, for those who graduated, the situation reverses itself. In this case, 70% stayed out of jail for the study period. The prospects were even better for those who were available for contact at the follow-up (total of 37 people). Of these participants, eighty-seven percent (87%) stayed out of jail or prison.

release. For those who did recidivate, their crime is the one for which they went back to jail or prison. During this period, all participants and control group members were either on probation or parole. Those who recidivated were more likely to have committed an administrative violation, (such as a parole violation), than those who stayed out of an institution. Those who did not recidivate were more likely to have committed either a violent or a property crime as their latest crime.

2.2 Nature of Crimes Committed

Table 4 shows the differences between the latest crime committed by both those who recidivated and those who did not. For those who did not recidivate, the data are from their latest crime prior to

	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Drug Crime	Administrative Violation	Other
Stayed out	13.6%	34.0%	27.7%	10.7%	14.1%
Recidivated	6.7%	26.7%	29.7%	24.3%	12.7%

Section 3: Employment

3.1 Placement of PREP Graduates

Table 5 illustrates the placement of PREP Graduates by industry as reported

by Second Chance staff. They reported that the average starting wage for PREP graduates was \$10.41 per hour. This rate is significantly below the average personal income for the region (\$16.53 per hour⁵); however, it is well above California's minimum wage of \$6.75 per hour.

Industry	PREP Grads
Maintenance & Repair	40%
General Office	21%
Supermarket & Retail	18%
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Manufacturing	5%
Healthcare	2%

According to Second Chance staff, the employment placement rate for these cycles of treatment group participants was eighty-three percent (83%).

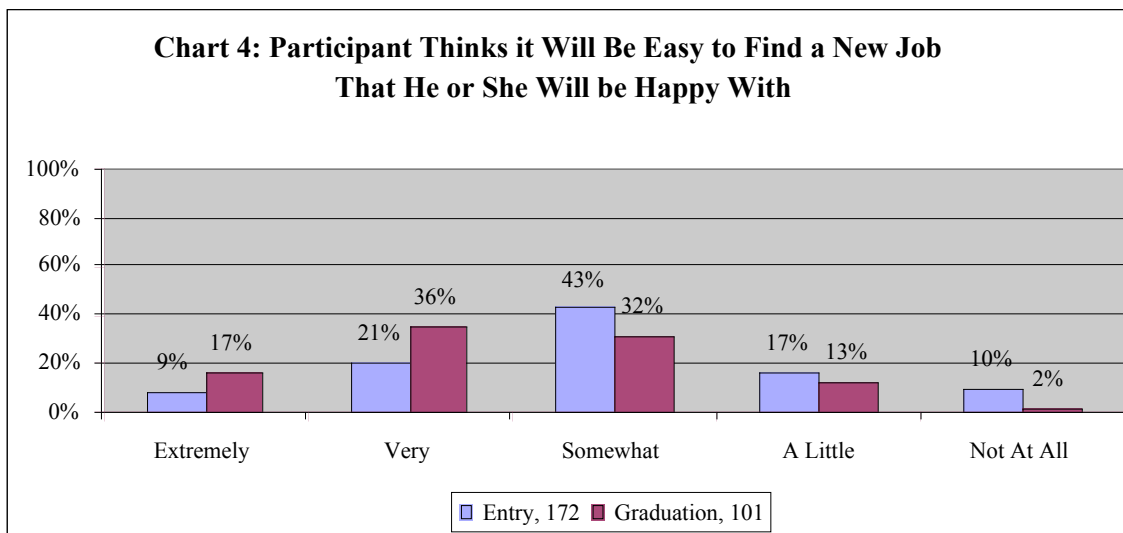
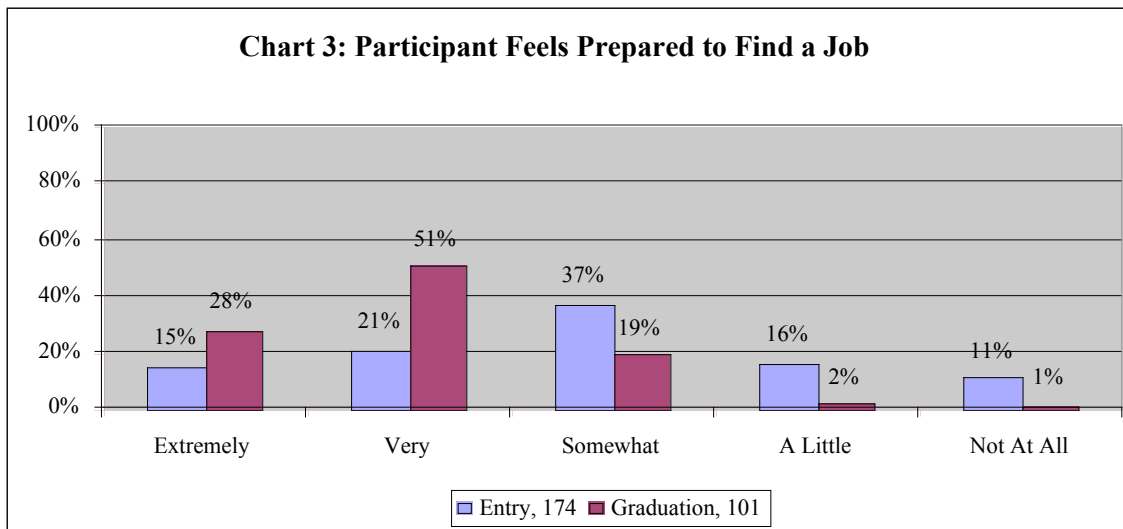
Even more significant are the obstacles that previously incarcerated people must overcome to gain employment. This is the message that Second Chance promotes; that people can overcome personal obstacles and become productive members of society. Sometimes, restricted employment was a condition of being released (e.g. not being allowed to work around alcohol or to come in contact with children), however this represented a minority of participants in the study (16%).

3.2 Job Readiness

Another measure that was tracked was a person's overall orientation toward his or her readiness for a job. This is Second Chance's core mission through their STRIVE program. Participants were recruited believing and hoping that they would be able to overcome the stigma of incarceration, beat their personal demons and become more employable.

For the 175 treatment group participants, how they rated their job readiness is shown on Charts 3 and 4 below.

⁵ Source: SANDAG publication, *Indicators of sustainable competitiveness: A quality of life index for San Diego*, (2005), p. 28.



Charts 3 and 4 show the rising expectations that the treatment group (PREP participants) had from program entry to graduation. Chart 3 shows that participants moved from feeling somewhat prepared to find a job to either Very prepared or Extremely prepared at graduation. Some of this change can be accounted for by attrition.

treatment group at graduation were significantly more likely to express optimism that it would be Very or Extremely easy to find a good job.

Chart 4 shows that there were reasonably high expectations of finding a job that would be a good job at the beginning of the program. Participants in the