

# Redemption in the Presence of Widespread Criminal Background Checks

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*[www.saferfoundation.org](http://www.saferfoundation.org)*



# Factors That Impact Redemption Point

## Time elapsed since initial arrest +

- *Changes in life course*
- *Age-crime curve*
- *Age when first crime was committed*
- *The nature of the offense*

**Time is primary factor that can not be disputed**

*However, it is extremely important to acknowledge when evaluating a criminal record that there are other factors at play that must also be considered*

# Two Major Changes in Life Course

## ***Stable Employment\****

***Immediate employment post release is crucial to successful reentry. According to a research study which tracked people arrested in Illinois over a three year period immediately following release from incarceration:***

- ***8% of those employed for a year recidivated***
- ***Compared to the state's 54% average recidivism rate\****

## ***Marriage/Committed Relationship\*\****

***Marriage is a crucial turning point in an individual's life. According to a research study which tracked 652 released men returning to three cities***

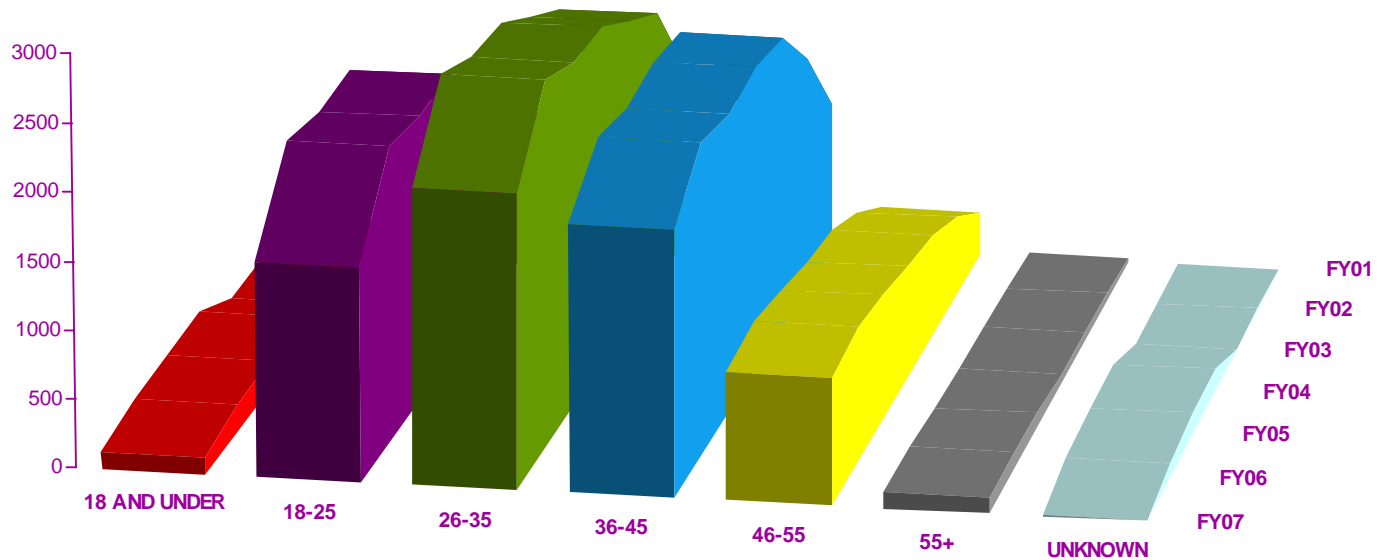
- ***Men who are in married or committed cohabitating relationships are half as likely to report engaging in drug use and/or committing a new crime at eight months post release compare to those who were uninvolved or in non-committed relationships***

*\* 2004 Safer Foundation commissioned recidivism study conducted by Loyola University (Chicago)*

*\*\* The Impact of Marital and Relationship Status on Social Outcomes for Returning Prisoners, Christy A. Visher, Carly R. Knight, Aaron Chalfin, and John K. Roman [http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/MFS-IP/Incarceration&Family/ch1.shtml#\\_Toc208309139](http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/MFS-IP/Incarceration&Family/ch1.shtml#_Toc208309139)*

# Age-Crime Curve and Safer Clients

## Safer's Age Demographic



- The age category 26-35 consistently has the highest percentage of clients
- 18 and under is the fastest growing group – people are getting started at an earlier age

# The Hidden Picture

## Race, Criminal Record and Employment

Approximately 60% of the jail and prison population is Black and Latino

### Harry Holzer on Barriers to Employment:

- High incarceration rates of black males feed into discriminatory behavior by employers
  - Employers that conduct background checks are actually *more* likely to hire black employees
  - Perceived criminality

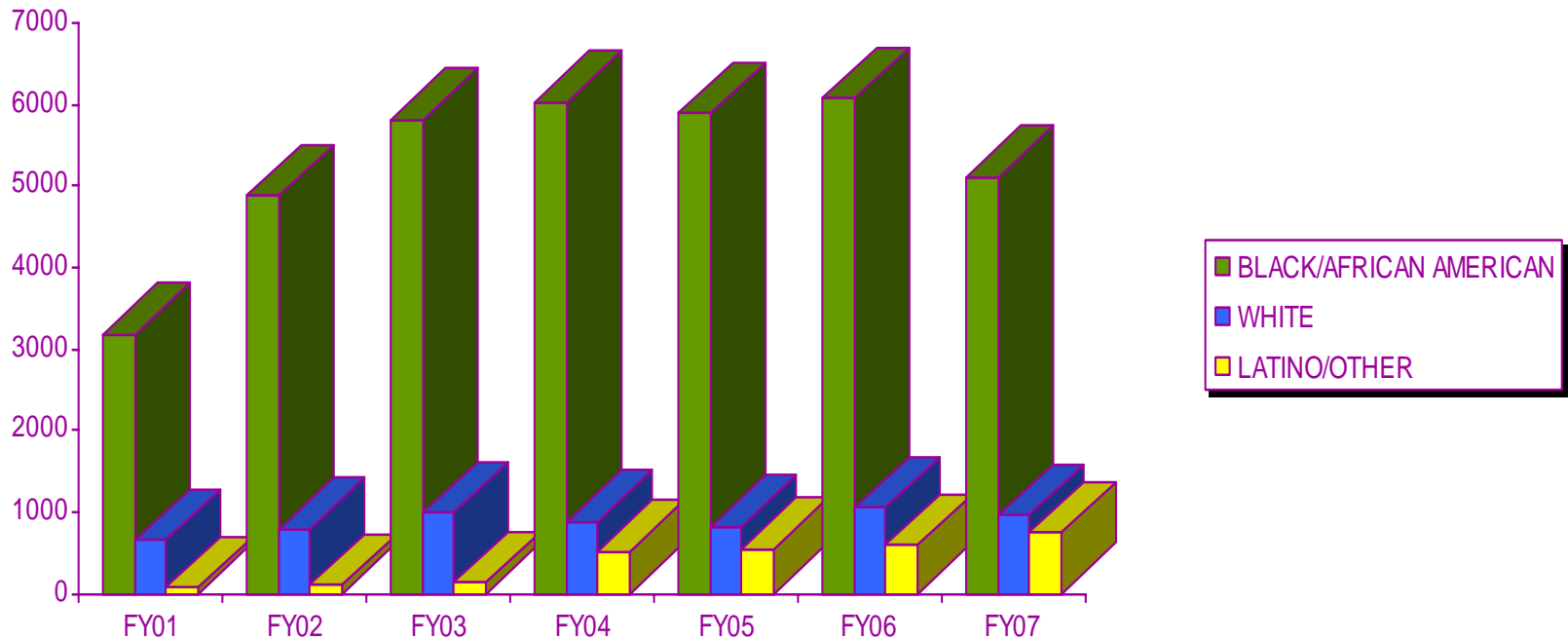
### Devah Pager Study:

- 34% of Whites without criminal records received call backs for job interviews compared to:
- 17% of Whites with records
- 14% of Blacks with no record
- 5% of Blacks with criminal records

### In a Pager Study Which Included Latino testers:

- Black applicants were slightly more than half as successful in receiving consideration by employers relative to equally qualified white applicants and two thirds as successful as Latino counterparts

# Safer Client Intakes by Race



- African Americans are consistently the highest number of people we serve
- Latino population has increased greatly in the last four years

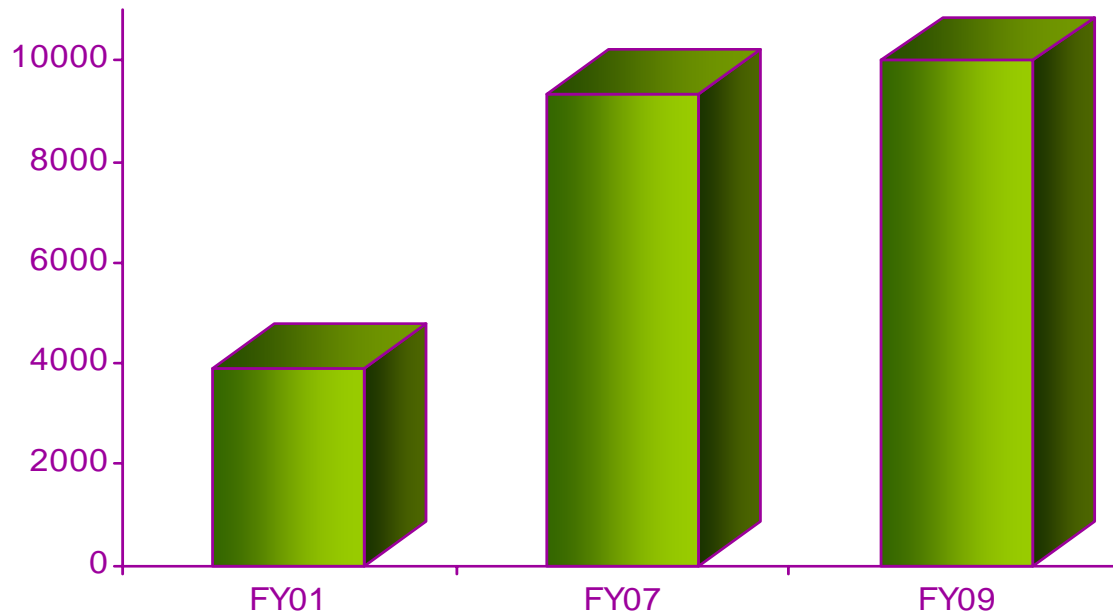
# Safer Foundation: Client Profile

## Typical Client

- ✓ ***African American Male***
- ✓ ***26 – 35 Years Old***
- ✓ ***Single***
- ✓ ***Possession of a Controlled Substance***
- ✓ ***No Post Secondary Education***
- ✓ ***Limited and disjointed work experience***

# Number of Clients

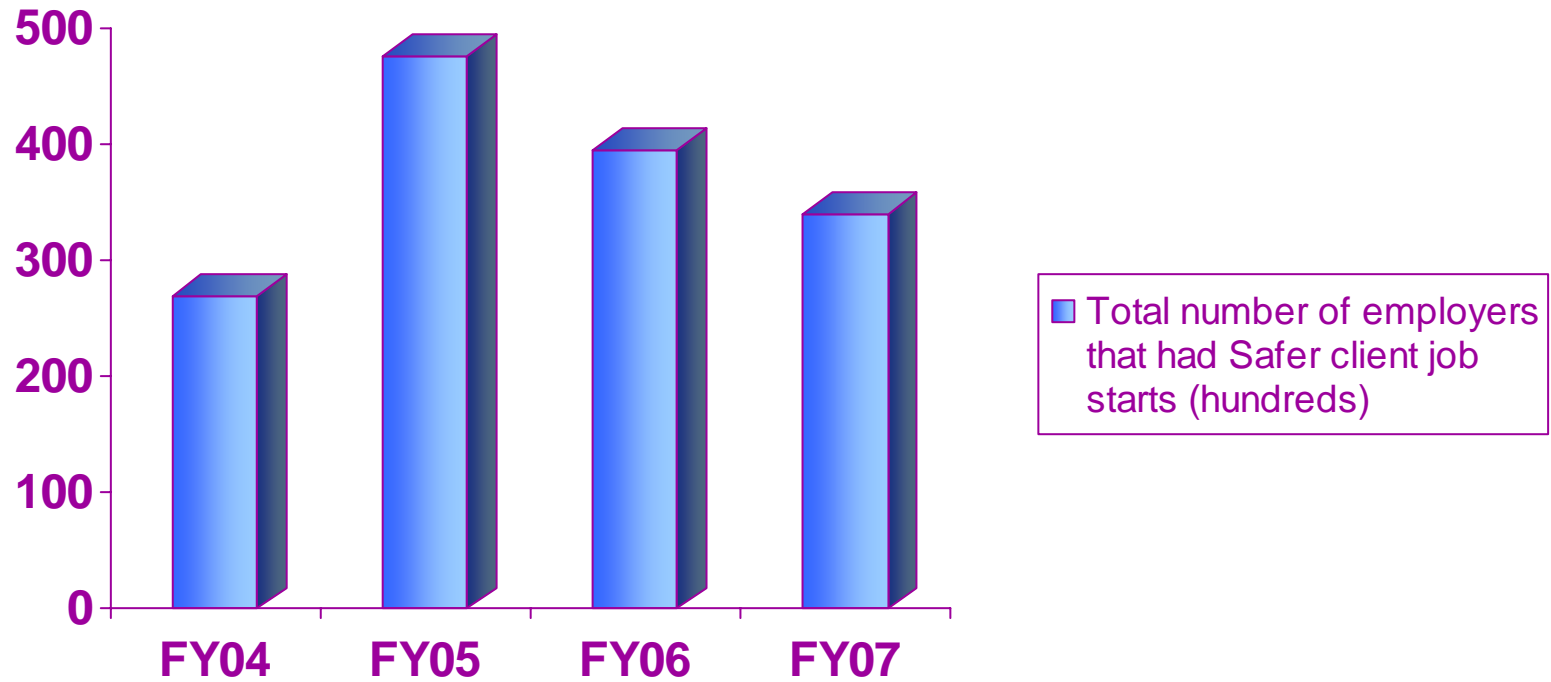
Increase in number of people seeking Safer's services



*Over the last 20 years the number of people incarcerated has increased dramatically.*

*At Safer, our numbers have followed a similar pattern, in FY09 we expect to see over 10,000 people come through our doors looking for help and employment opportunities.*

# Employers That Hired Safer Clients



- *Percent of businesses contacted by Safer managers that go on to hire Safer clients: 18%*
- *In Fiscal Year 2007, 22% of employers hired five or more Safer clients, 51% hired two or more*

# Hiring Decisions (Kokopelli/Survey Results)

## Decision Not to Hire:

1. *Blanket company policy*
2. *Economy*
3. *Insurance concerns*
4. *Staff stability*
5. *Already have a hiring system in place*
6. *Bad experience in the past*
7. *No explanation given*
8. *Loss of business if public finds out*
9. *No Experience*
10. *Getting what they deserve*

## Decision to Hire:

1. *Non violent offense*
2. *Experience*
3. *3rd party provides background check*
4. *Belief in second chances*
5. *3rd party helping/coaching*
6. *Testimonials from other employers*
7. *Willing to fill entry-level positions*
8. *3rd party screening and training*
9. *More appreciative of the opportunity*
10. *Good for the community*

# What This Tells Us

- Time elapsed since first arrest was never an expressed factor in hiring decisions
- People's decision not to hire someone with a criminal record was often based on factors not relevant to an applicant's "redemption point" (e.g. economy, successful hiring system already in place)
- People's perceptions, stereotypes and fears regarding people with criminal records (whether rational or not) will likely not be remedied by a redemption point system
- Relevant work experience (or lack thereof) makes or breaks a person's employment opportunities

# What's Great About a Redemption Point System

- Serves as a tangible ruler by which to measure one's "redemption" in the eyes of society/employers
- Can be a useful tool for government when looking at sealing/expungement of criminal records
- With current economic troubles more and more people with criminal records are going back into the job market after years of having stable employment

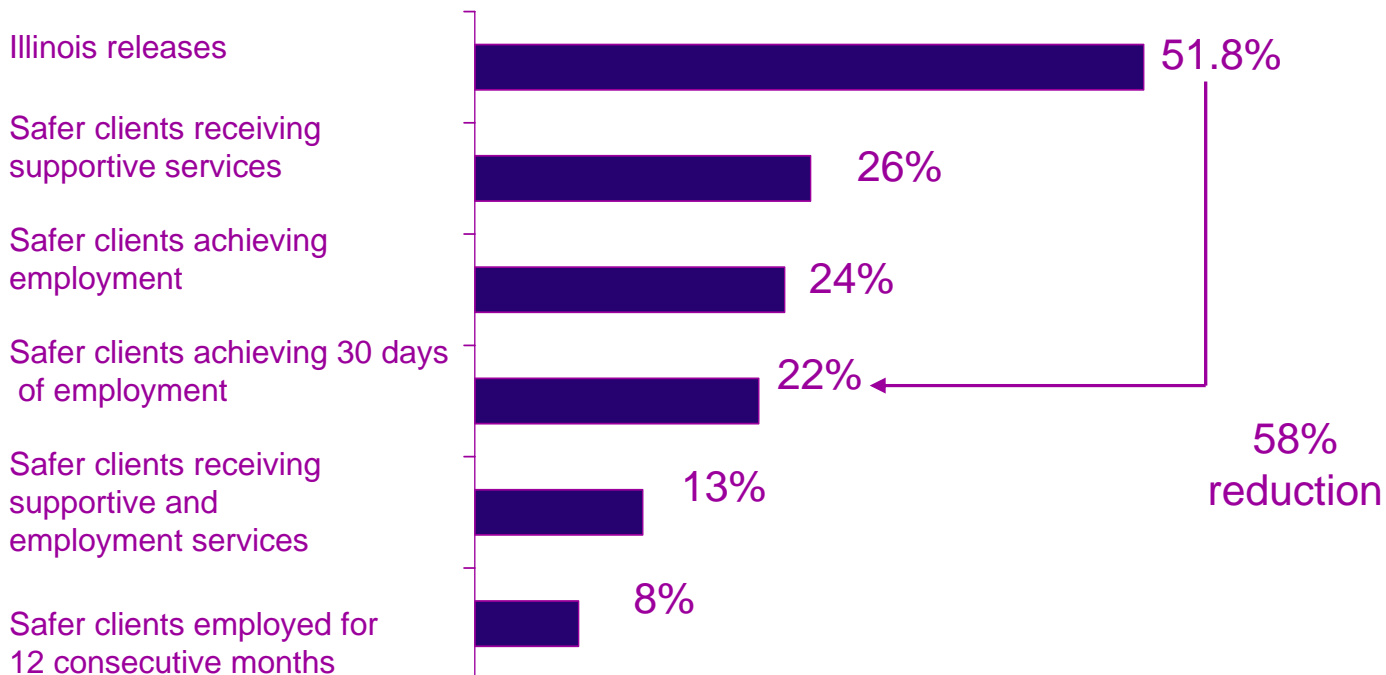
# Recommendations

- Position the redemption point system in a way that does not negatively impact otherwise qualified job applicants with a criminal record who have not yet reached that point
- Don't ignore the fact that a criminal record may serve as a proxy for race
- Push for clean up and appropriate utilization of arrest records, particularly FBI rap sheets – the accuracy of a redemption point can be negatively impacted by incomplete, erroneous and difficult to interpret FBI rap sheets and arrest records
- Utilize the redemption point system only as applicable to job related offenses
- Consider the redemption point further along in the application process
- Make sure that there is interim employment, education support and treatment for people who have not yet reached their “redemption point” – immediate opportunity is crucial to successful reentry

# Safer Results

*Success may be measured by the lives Safer has touched, the families that have benefited, the communities that were impacted. One objective measure is the recidivism rate of Safer clients.*

## 3 Year Recidivism Comparison (FY2003 Releases)



# Questions

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This presentation will be available at  
[www.saferfoundation.org](http://www.saferfoundation.org)