


2009

Ex-Offender Populations in Milwaukee County

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Report Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Background	1
Incarcerated Adults Are of Prime Working Age	4
Driver's License Barriers to Employment	6
Concentrations of Ex-Offenders in Inner City Milwaukee	8
Education Barriers to Employment	10
Drug Problems	11
Public Assistance Receipt	12
Ex-Offender Populations by Zipcode and Race/Ethnicity	13
The Growing Milwaukee County Corrections Population	15

This report is one of a series of four studies prepared for the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to describe the characteristics of the Milwaukee area labor force, identify the education and training needs of the workforce in key occupations, and detail barriers to employment for targeted populations. The work uses institutional, administrative and census databases to aid MAWIB in setting priorities and improving strategies for service to Milwaukee County workers during the difficult economic period the community is now facing. Research for this report was supported by the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, the Fitch Research Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board works in partnership with local leaders from government, private industry and labor to develop workforce solutions to meet and anticipate regional economic development needs. For employers, MAWIB offers specialized training programs and innovative human resource services to provide the skilled workers they need to remain competitive and contribute to a robust economy. For job seekers, MAWIB provides the resources to keep pace with today's job market.



The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is a family of over 1,000 individual charitable funds, each created by donors to serve the charitable causes of their choice. Grants from these funds serve people throughout Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties and beyond. Started in 1915, the Foundation is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the world.



The Employment and Training Institute addresses the workforce training, transportation, and education needs of low-income and unemployed workers in Wisconsin through applied research, policy development, and technical assistance. For more information, contact John Pawasarat, Director, Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 161 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 6000, Milwaukee, WI 53203 (eti@uwm.edu). Website: www.eti.uwm.edu.

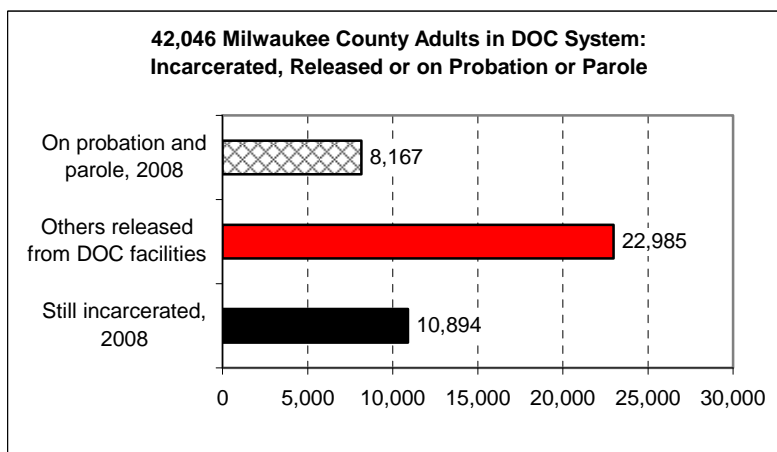
Ex-Offender Populations in Milwaukee County

Background

Released prisoners are among the most difficult labor force populations to serve and least likely to be successfully engaged in sustained employment due to persistent legal problems, low education attainment levels, high recidivism rates, and driver's license suspension and revocation problems. The stigma of being an ex-inmate alone and the limitations this places on those released and expected to become gainfully employed are compounded by further legal sanctions placed on many adults who have spent time in correctional facilities.

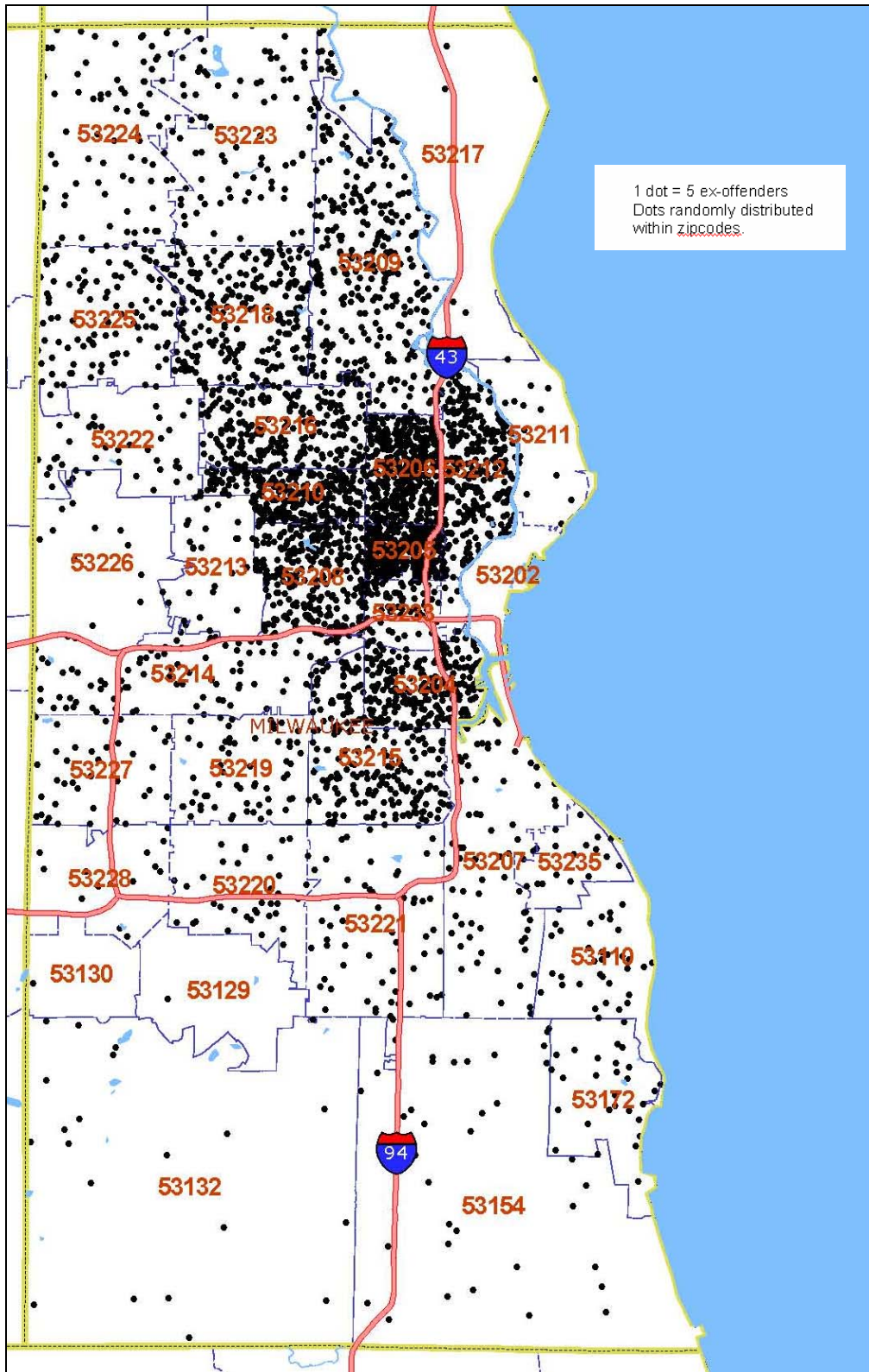
Three Milwaukee County adult populations were examined for this report: persons presently incarcerated in Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities, persons released from DOC facilities since 1993, and persons on probation or parole in 2008. The State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections public inmates data file containing detailed information on each incarceration and release of adult inmates was examined from January 1993 through June 30, 2008 and probation and parole files for July and December 2008. The DOC files analyzed include demographic characteristics as well the history of violations resulting in incarceration or probation/parole. The primary data base documents adults who have been incarcerated or released since 1993 and consequently reflects a relatively young population likely to be incarcerated again. *The databases include individuals in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections system but do not include inmates in the House of Corrections and jails.*

- The number of adults released to Milwaukee County or on probation or parole from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) system totaled 31,152 (1993-2008), including 8,167 on probation or parole in 2008. Another 10,894 Milwaukee County adults were currently incarcerated in DOC facilities (as of 2008).

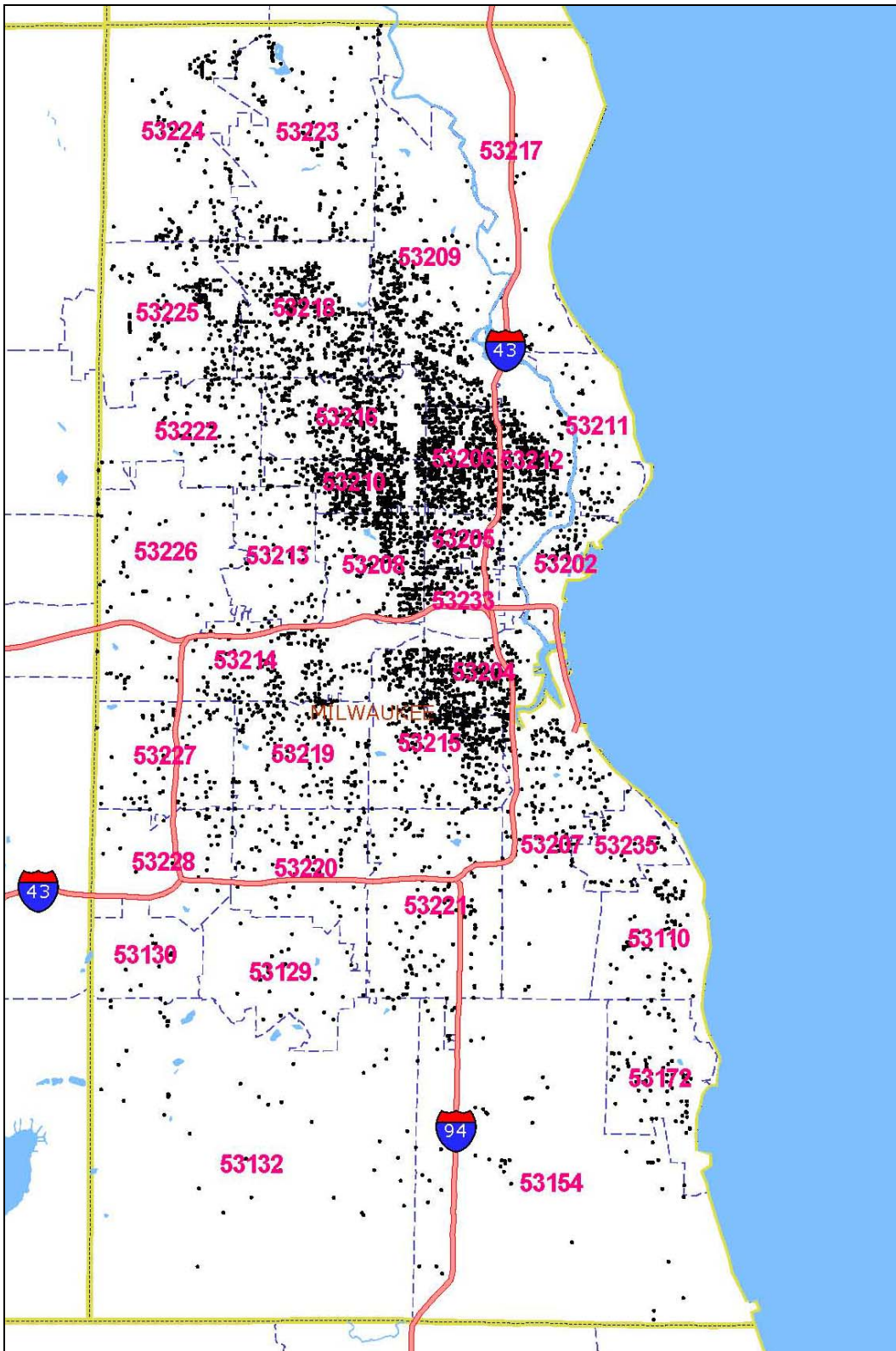


- The DOC ex-offender population, including persons on probation and parole, is up by 4,380 over the 26,772 Milwaukee County adults released from DOC correctional facilities as of June 2006 (i.e., 1993 to mid-2006), when the Employment and Training Institute issued its last report on the Milwaukee County prison population. See **Barriers to Employment: Prison Time** by John Pawasarat, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, 2007, posted at <http://www.eti.uwm.edu/>.

22,985 Ex-Offenders Released to Milwaukee County (1993-2008)



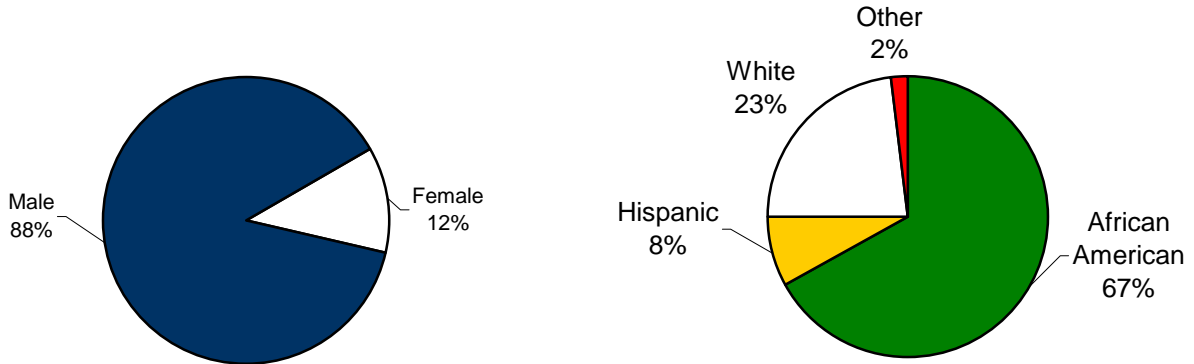
8,167 Milwaukee County Adults on Probation or Parole (2008)



The prison population released into Milwaukee County is mostly male and predominately African American.

- The population is 88% male.
- Two-thirds are African Americans, 23% whites, and 8% Latinos.

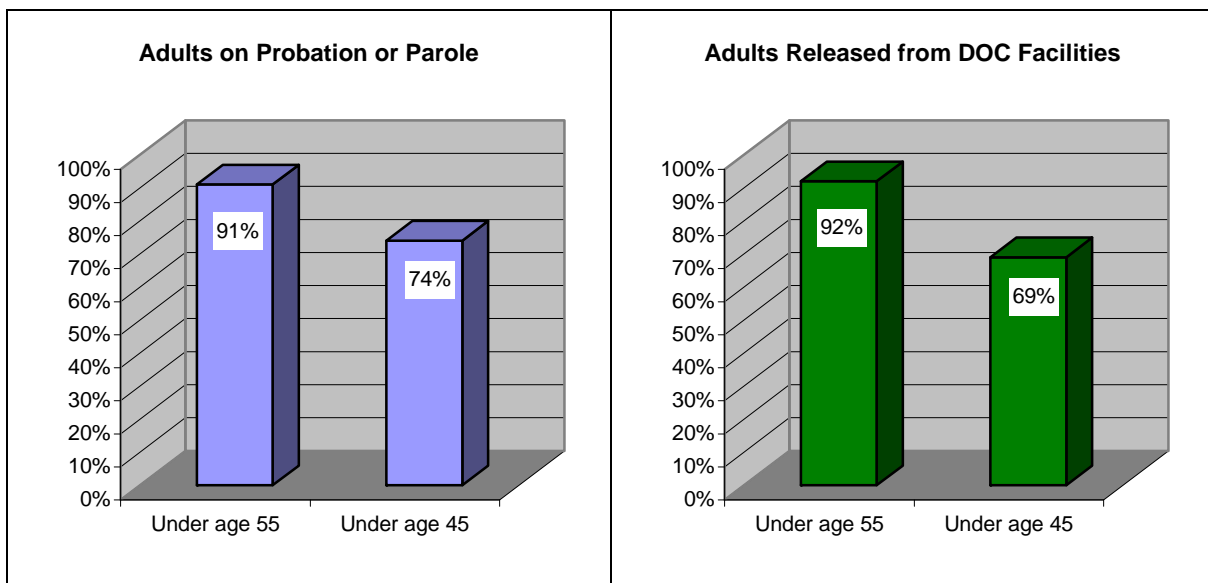
Demographics of the Released DOC Population from Milwaukee County



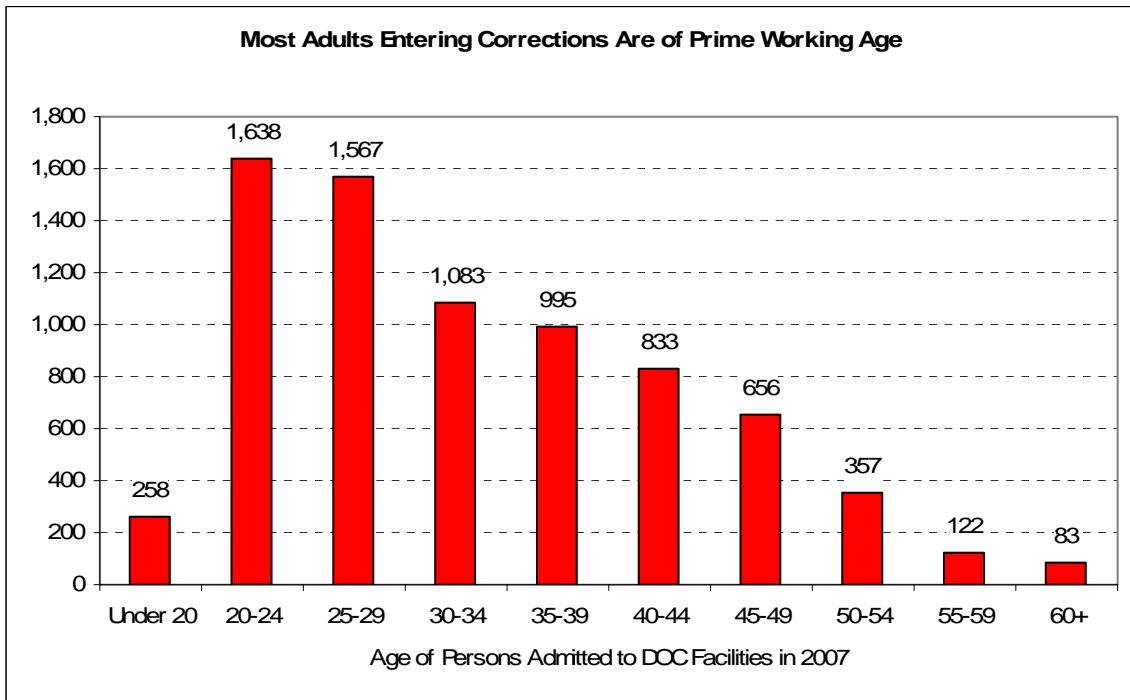
Incarcerated Adults Are of Prime Working Age

Most of the ex-offenders admitted to and released from DOC facilities are of prime working age.

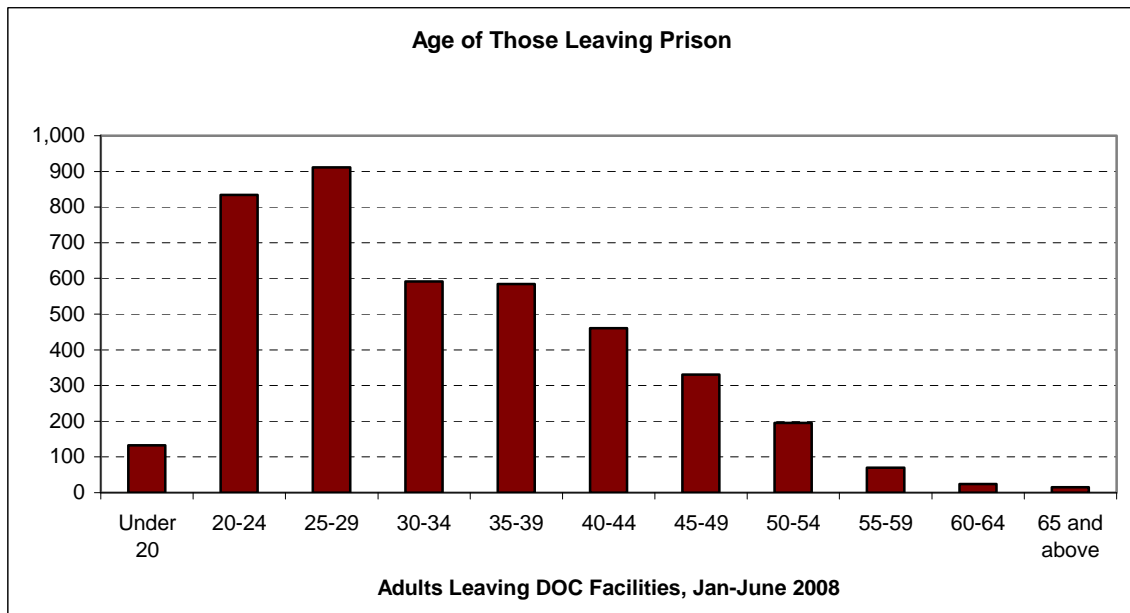
- Of those on probation or parole, 91% are under age 55 and 74% are under age 45.
- Of those released from state correctional facilities but not on probation or parole, 92% are under age 55 and 69% are under age 45.



- Two-thirds (69%) of the men and women entering DOC correctional facilities in 2007 were in their twenties and thirties.



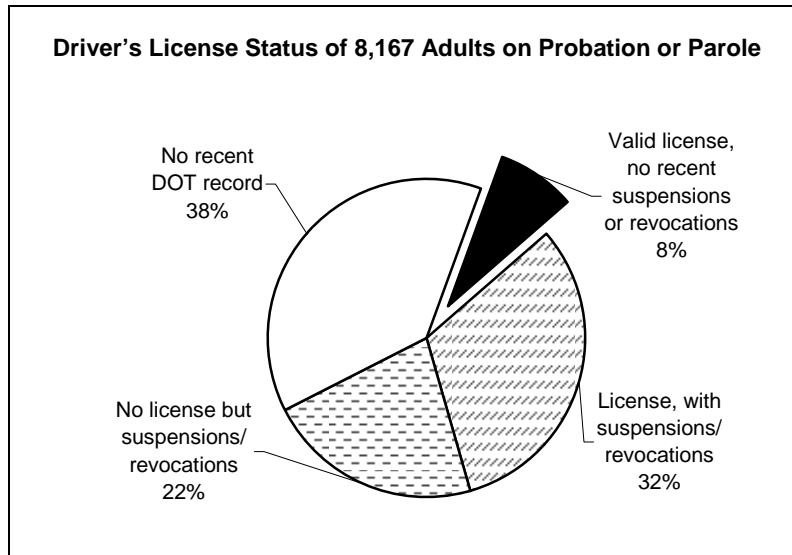
- Likewise, 70% of those released from prison are prime working age (i.e., in their 20s and 30s).



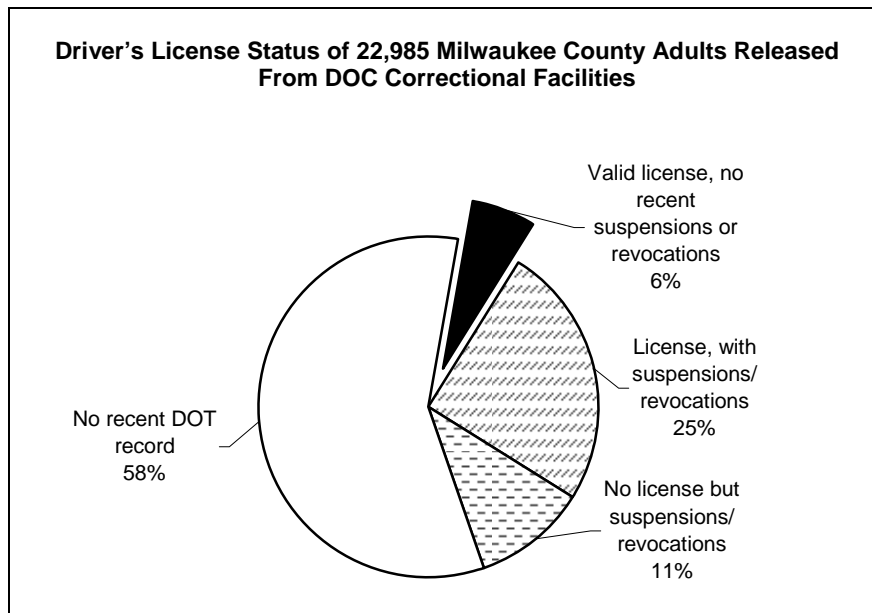
Driver's License Barriers to Employment

Nearly all of the Milwaukee County adults released from DOC facilities, including those on probation and parole, are limited in their access to jobs by lack of a valid driver's license. Very few of the ex-offenders hold a valid driver's license.

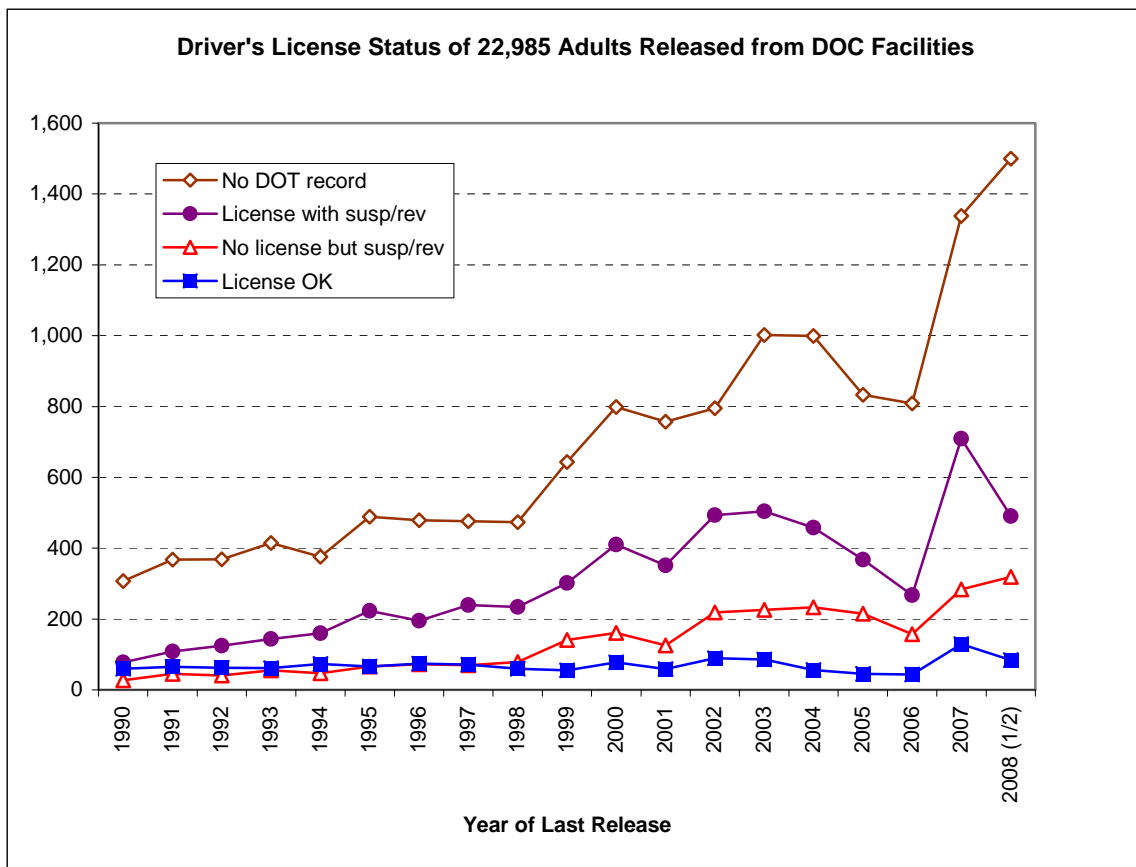
- For those 8,167 individuals on probation or parole, 8% have a valid driver's license, 32% have a license but with suspensions or revocations, 22% have no license but suspension and/or revocation orders, and 38% have no recent DOT record.



- For the 22,985 Milwaukee County adults released from the state DOC correctional facilities, only 6% have a valid driver's license, 25% have a license with a suspension or revocation, and 11% have no license but suspension or revocation orders, while most (58%) have no license record in the DOT system.



- Very few adults who were released from correctional facilities in the 1990s now have a valid driver's license and an even smaller percentage of **recent** ex-offenders released from DOC facilities hold a valid license.



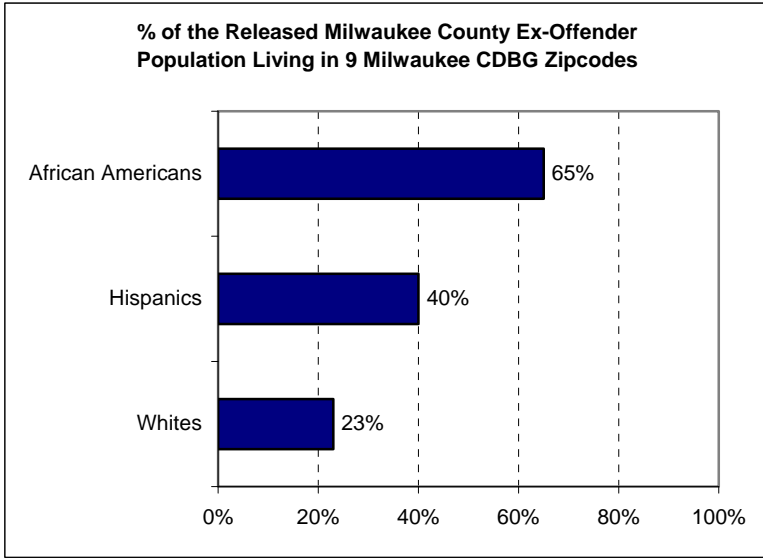
For many ex-cons driver's license problems are fixable.

- The Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability operating out of Milwaukee Area Technical College has shown success in helping ex-offenders restore or obtain their driving privileges. In 2008, 58% of the CDLRE clients formerly incarcerated in state corrections facilities obtained their driving privileges (up from a 44% success rate in 2007), with many of these clients seeking out the program on their own. The 58% recovery rate is notable given the level of problems faced, including the potential for drug convictions, SR 22 insurance requirements, and damage judgments to limit any access to immediate license recovery as well as the extremely low rates of licensed drivers among ex-offenders.¹
- In March 2009 the Wisconsin legislature voted to opt out of federal law requirements that had been preventing drug offenders from restoring their driving privileges before prison release.
- The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* editorial board has proposed reforms that the City of Milwaukee and State of Wisconsin could adopt to increase driver's education programs for low-income youth and reduce the number of license and vehicle suspensions related to poverty and failure to fines and forfeitures rather than unsafe driving. (Posted at www4.uwm.edu/eti/2007/MJS.htm)

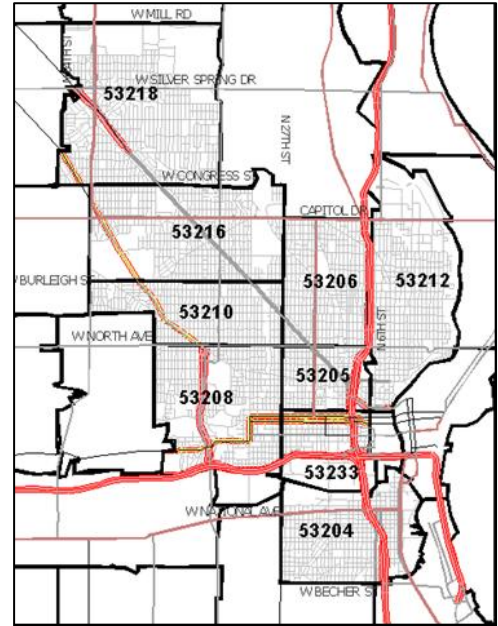
¹ See [Second Year Evaluation of the Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability](#) (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, 2008), posted at www.eti.uwm.edu.

Concentrations of Ex-Offenders in Inner City Neighborhoods

- Two-thirds of African Americans and 40% of Latinos from Milwaukee County are released into 9 Milwaukee inner city zipcodes targeted by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs.

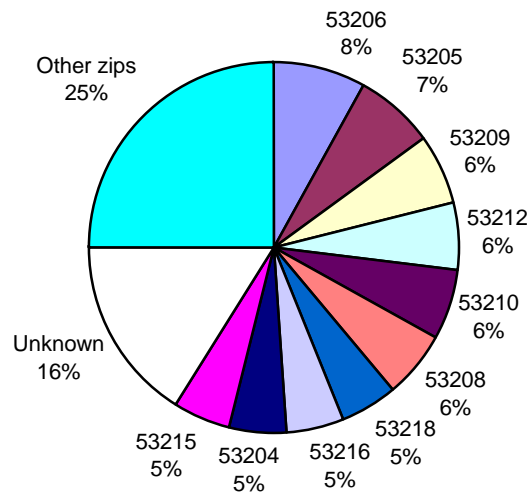


9 CDBG Zipcodes

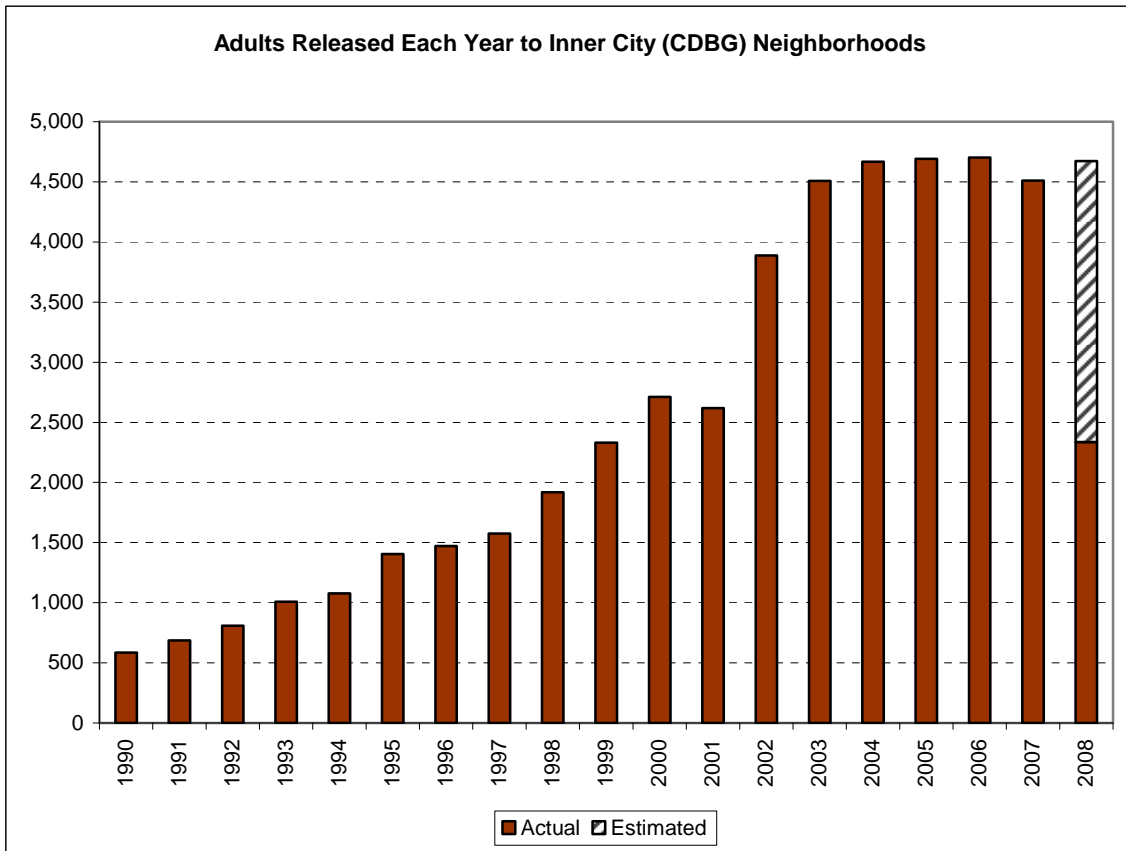


- Zipcode 53206, on the northside, has the largest number of ex-offenders returning the neighborhood, followed by zipcodes 53205, 53209, 53212, 53210, and 53208.

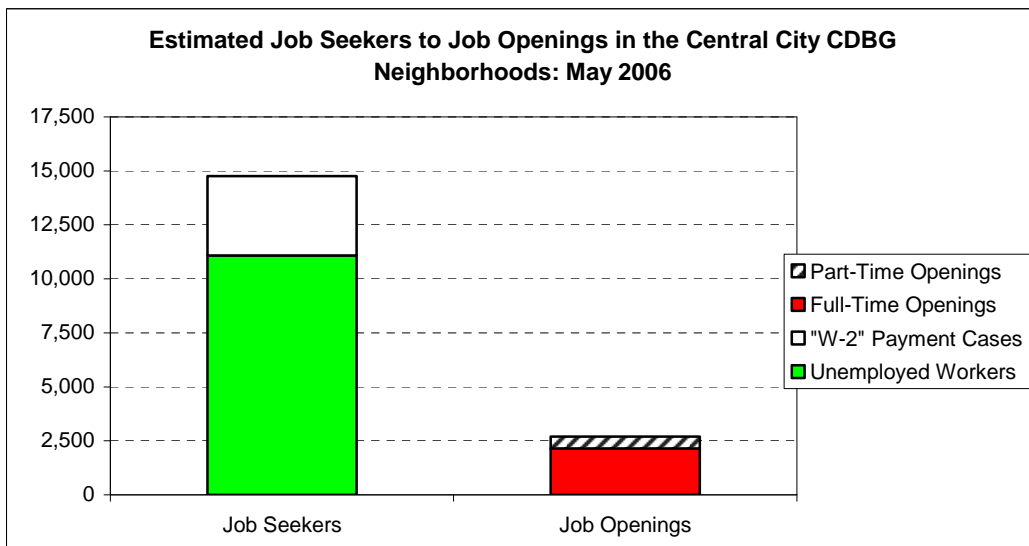
Milwaukee County Zipcodes with the Largest Populations of Released and Probation/Parole Ex-offenders



- Since 2003, each year about 4,500 ex-offenders have been released into these 9 inner city zipcodes.



- At the time of the last Employment and Training Institute job openings survey in May 2006, before the economic downturn, the number of persons looking for work outnumbered full-time job openings by a ratio of 7 to 1 in the CDBG neighborhoods.²

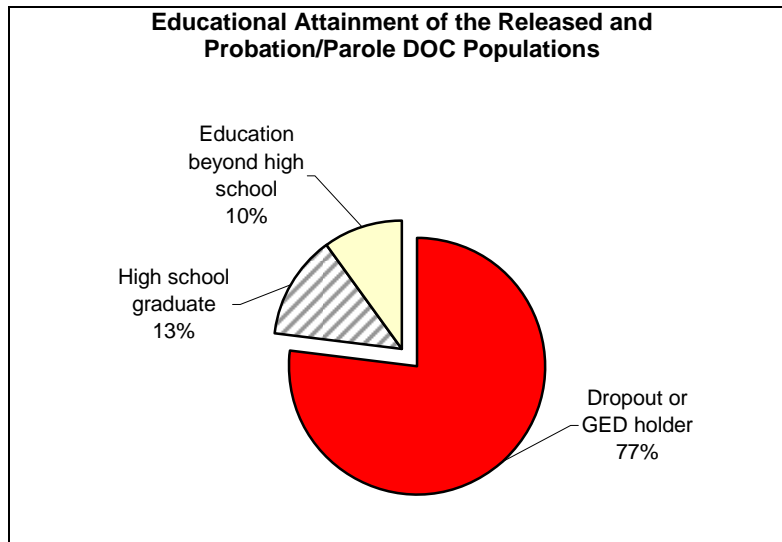


² Survey of Job Openings in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area: Week of May 24, 2006 (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, 2006), posted on www.eti.uwm.edu.

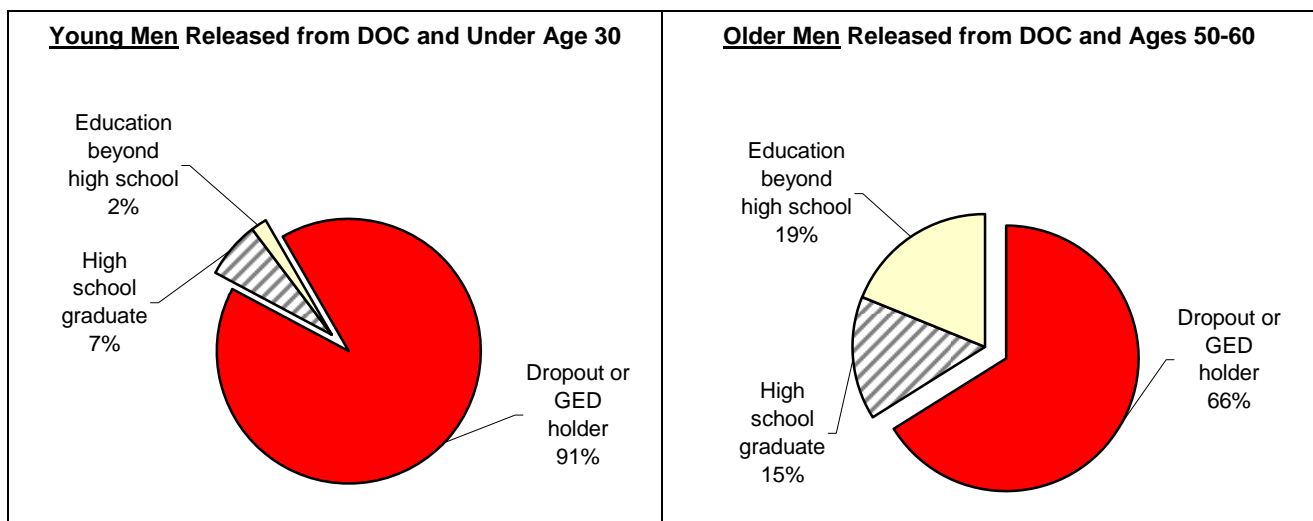
Education Barriers to Employment

The education level of the DOC populations in Milwaukee County (ex-offenders released from DOC supervision and adults on probation and parole) is much lower than education levels of the general Milwaukee workforce.

- The DOC population includes 77% dropouts or GED holders and only 13% high school graduates and 10% with education beyond high school.



- The situation for young men is far worse than for the older ex-DOC population. For those men released and under 30 years of age, 91% are dropouts or GED holders, 7% are high school graduates and 2% have education beyond high school. Among older adults released from DOC facilities and ages 50 through 60, 66% are dropouts or GED holders, 15% high school graduates, and 19% have post-secondary education.

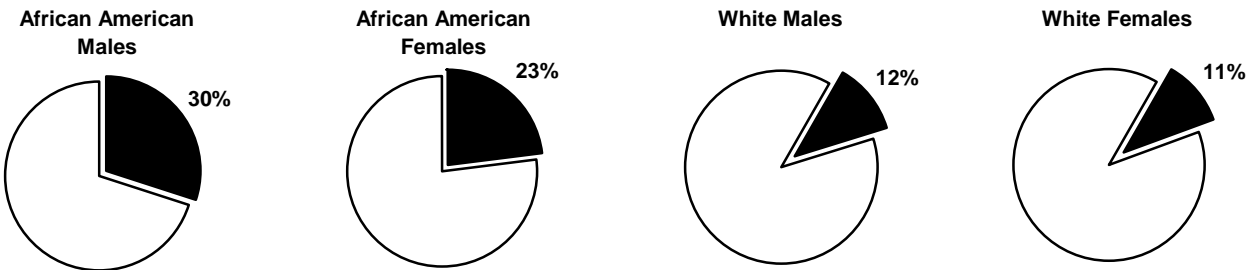


Drug Problems

Felons with drug-related convictions face problems securing private and public sector employment and may also have limitations placed on their access to federal aid and scholarships to attend vocational education classes, college, and other post-secondary education programs. Until the Wisconsin passed SJR 6 in March 2009 to opt out of the federal law, courts were required to suspend driving privileges for juveniles and adults with drug violations for a minimum of six months. Imposition of these suspensions at the time the felon was released from prison (or after) effectively prevented ex-offenders from legally driving to work after their release from corrections.

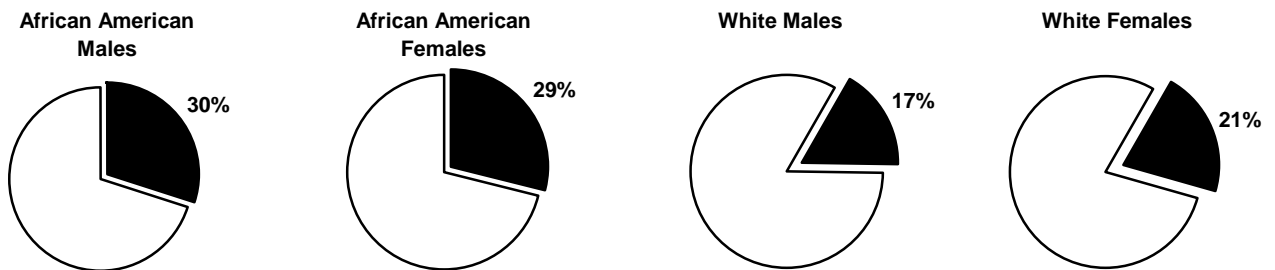
- For the population on probation or parole, 30% of African American males had a drug charge history, as did 23% of the African American females, 12% of the white males, and 11% of the white females on probation or parole.

Adults on Probation and Parole with Drug Convictions



- Released individuals (not on probation or parole) who were doing time for drug violations make up 30% of the African American males and 29% of African American females discharged, compared to 17% of the white males discharged and 21% of the white females discharged.

Adults Released from DOC Facilities (and Not on Probation and Parole) with Drug Convictions

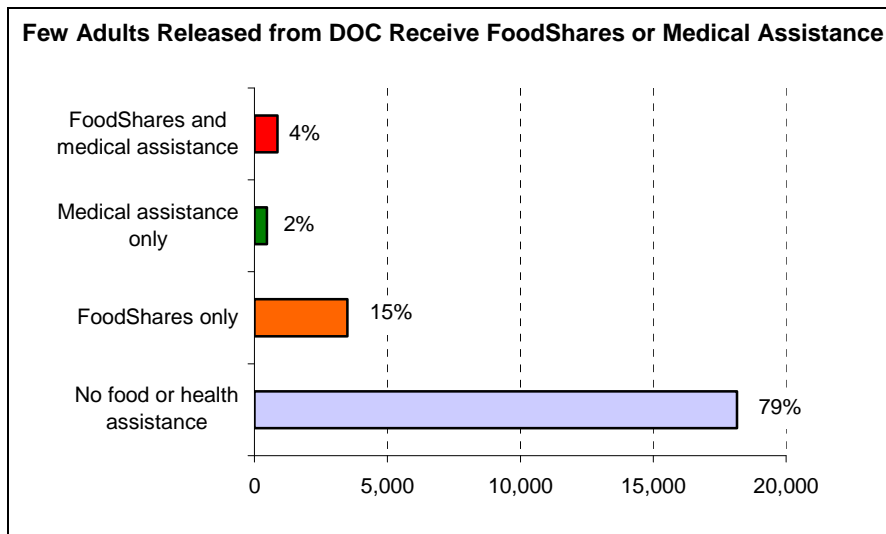


Public Assistance Receipt

Few adults released from DOC supervision receive public assistance, *even in the form of health care*. Only 21% of the 22,985 adults released from DOC supervision receive FoodShares or medical assistance. In order to receive FoodShares benefits persons convicted of drug offenses within the past five years are required to report the conviction at the time of application and to pass a drug test. Drug felons (with convictions within the past five years) are eligible for W-2 benefits if they pass a drug test, may be eligible for reduced W-2 payments if they fail the drug test, and are denied benefits and services if they refused to take a drug test.

Of the 22,985 released adults:

- 3,498 (15%) are on FoodShares only.
- 473 (2%) are on medical assistance only.
- 859 (4%) are on both FoodShares and medical assistance.



Ex-Offender Populations by Zipcode and Race/Ethnicity

Based on the most recent address available, most African Americans and Hispanics released from correctional institutions live in the poorest Milwaukee neighborhoods, where job availability is very low.

- A majority of ex-offenders who are no longer under the supervision of DOC are living in the inner city CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) target areas, with 24% of African Americans living in two zipcodes (53205 and 53206), 9% living in 53209, and 8% each living in zipcodes 53208, 53210, and 53212.
- Latino ex-offenders are concentrated in the neighborhoods with the largest Latino populations: zipcode 53204 (where 25% of the released Hispanic population lives) and 53215 (where 19% of the released Hispanic population lives).
- White ex-cons are more widely distributed throughout the county, but with concentrations in zipcodes 53215 (9% of the total), 53204 (7%), and 53214 (7%).
- The highest numbers of formerly released prisoners and men and women on probation or parole are in zipcode 53206 (with 2,615 ex-offenders) and zipcode 53205 (with 2,026 ex-offenders). The zipcodes with the largest concentrations of released ex-offenders and adults on probation and parole are shown below.

Milwaukee County Zipcodes with More Than 200 Released and Probation/Parole Ex-Offenders

Zipcode	African Americans	Hispanics	Others	Whites	Total
53206	2,536	19	14	46	2,615
53205	1,833	36	28	129	2,026
53209	1,805	26	9	149	1,989
53212	1,616	97	19	201	1,933
53210	1,656	32	14	131	1,833
53208	1,505	61	51	171	1,788
53218	1,339	30	29	171	1,569
53216	1,396	21	14	90	1,521
53204	382	590	73	452	1,497
53215	274	459	86	604	1,423
53225	528	15	15	153	711
53214	78	51	20	459	608
53223	416	11	7	109	543
53224	443	11	11	75	540
53233	364	24	15	78	481
53207	75	81	25	297	478
53221	56	57	13	284	410
53219	47	45	14	292	398
53110	36	18	14	290	392
53154	32	24	14	276	376
53202	133	18	6	155	312
53172	18	32	6	226	298
53222	148	8	5	82	243
53227	30	14	6	193	243
53220	29	26	7	163	225
53132	20	8	4	170	222

As of June 2008, a total of 10,894 adults from Milwaukee County were incarcerated in DOC facilities.

- The majority (72%) of prisoners are African Americans.
- About a fourth (26%) are whites. Only 1% are Latinos and 1% other minorities.

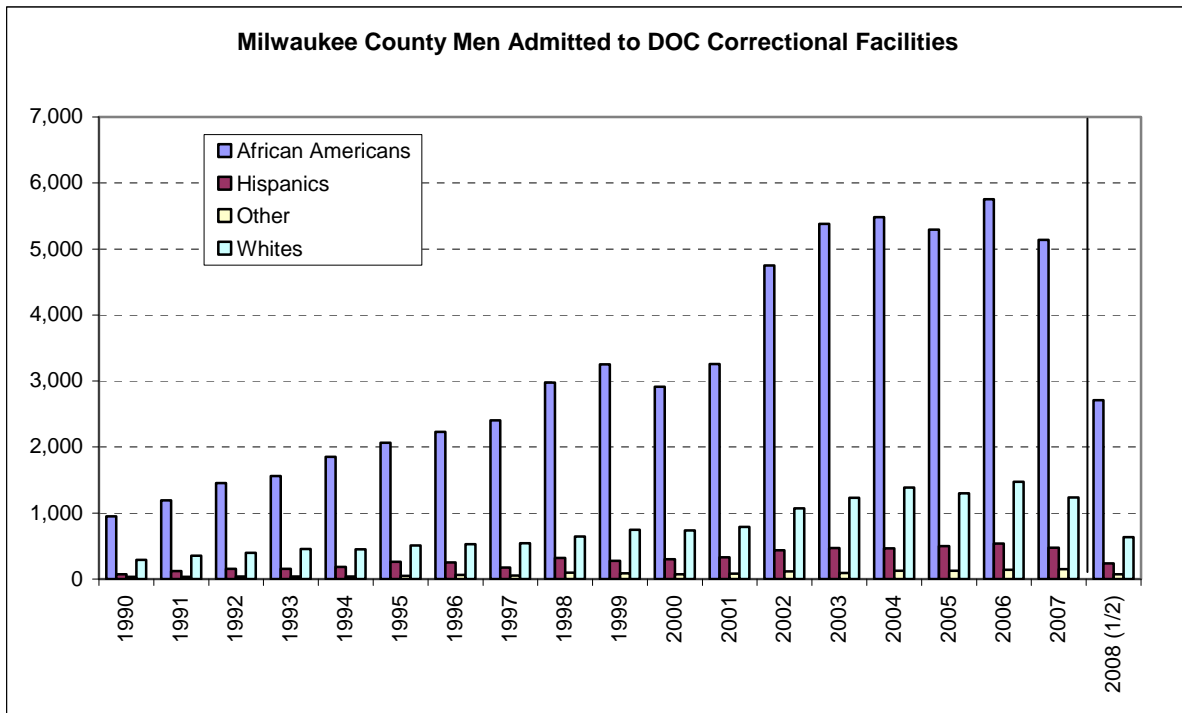
**Milwaukee County Zipcodes with More Than 100
DOC Incarcerated Adults (2008)**

Zipcode	African Americans	Hispanics	Others	Whites	Total
53206	1,061	2	3	11	1,077
53210	760	5	5	41	811
53212	709	7	2	91	809
53209	686	2	3	57	748
53208	653	2	21	70	746
53204	180	26	4	385	595
53218	500	3	9	64	576
53205	493	1	7	42	543
53216	510	0	5	16	531
53215	106	22	9	368	505
53225	214	2	5	39	260
53214	23	5	3	175	206
53224	163	2	2	39	206
53223	154	1	2	43	200
53233	136	2	0	24	162
53207	24	4	1	109	138
53221	22	3	4	109	138
53219	14	3	0	85	102
Other zips	534	216	18	9	777
Unknown addresses	498	1,210	33	22	1,763
Total from Milwaukee County	7,834	143	117	2,800	10,894

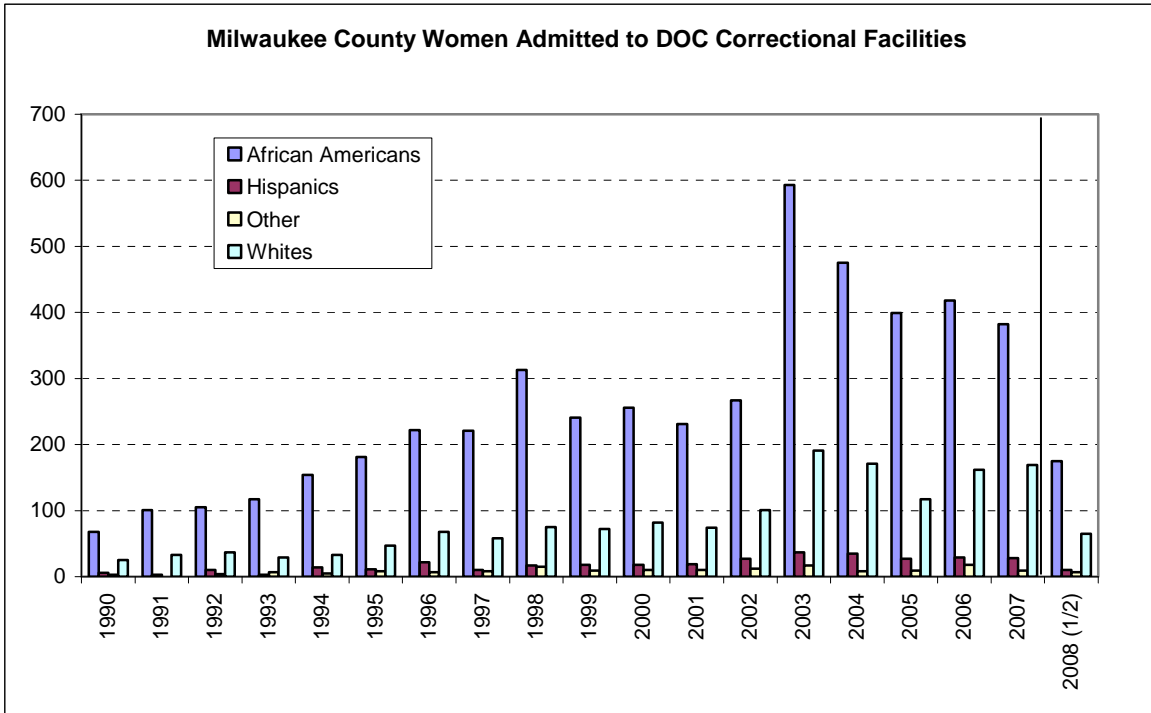
The Growing Milwaukee County Incarcerated Population

Since 2002, each year 7,500-8,000 individuals have been admitted into Wisconsin DOC correctional facilities, and 7,500-8,000 individuals from the DOC system have been released into Milwaukee County neighborhoods. The data entries for admission and release from DOC facilities are for any reason, including for formal alternatives to revocation or for temporary probation and parole holds. Given high recidivism rates, some adults recycle through prison a number of times.

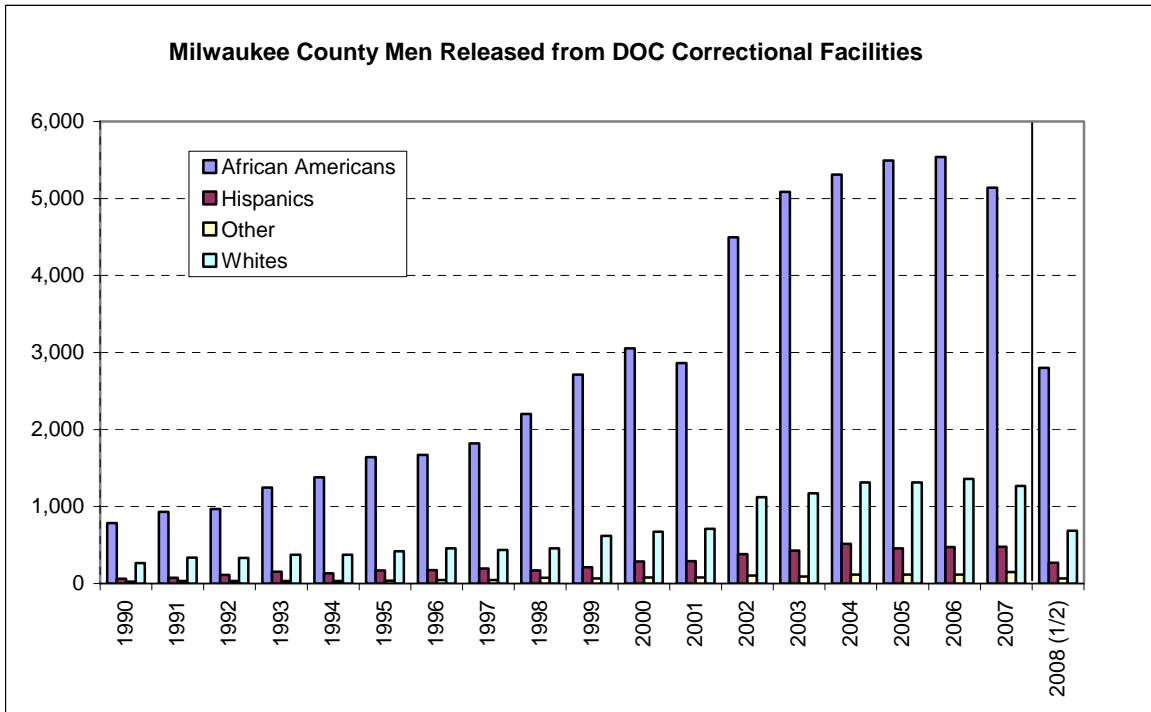
- African American males from Milwaukee County make up most of the admits with more than 5,000 men incarcerated into DOC per year since 2003.
- White male admits from Milwaukee County have totaled 1,200–1,400 per year.
- Hispanics make up 400-500 male admits from Milwaukee County each year.



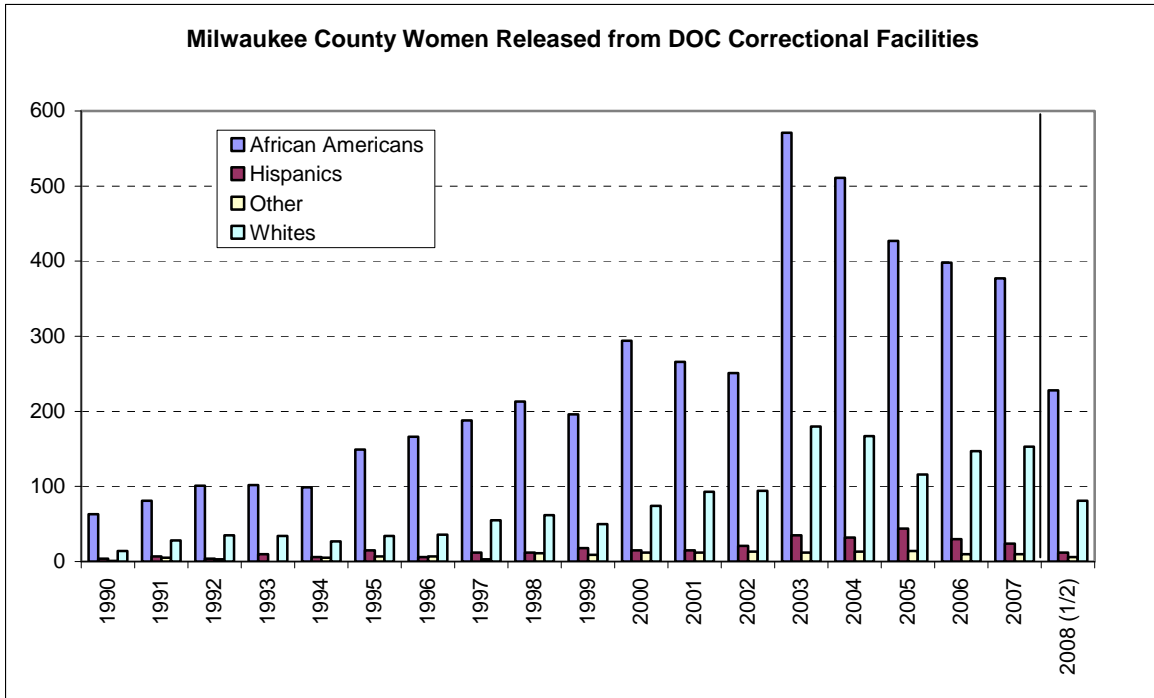
- Since 2004 around 400 African American women from Milwaukee County have been incarcerated in state DOC facilities each year.
- About 100-200 white women have been incarcerated each year.



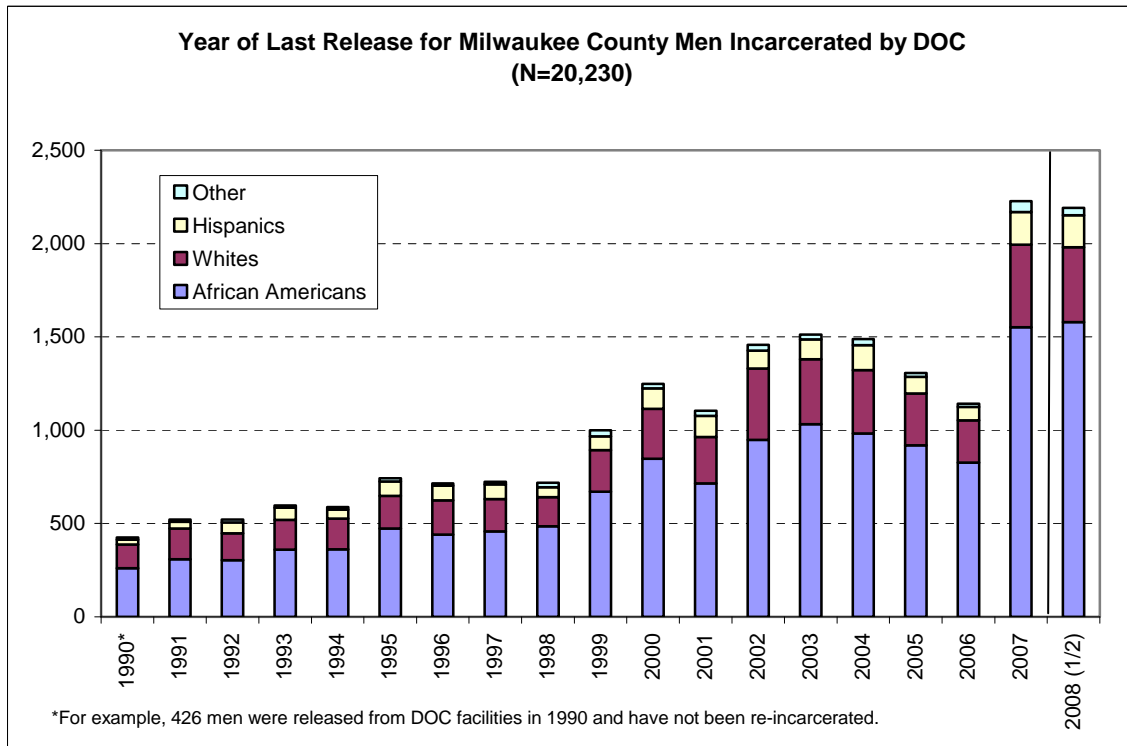
- The released populations, particularly of African American men, offer challenges for job training and placement, as well as family and economic issues for neighborhoods.

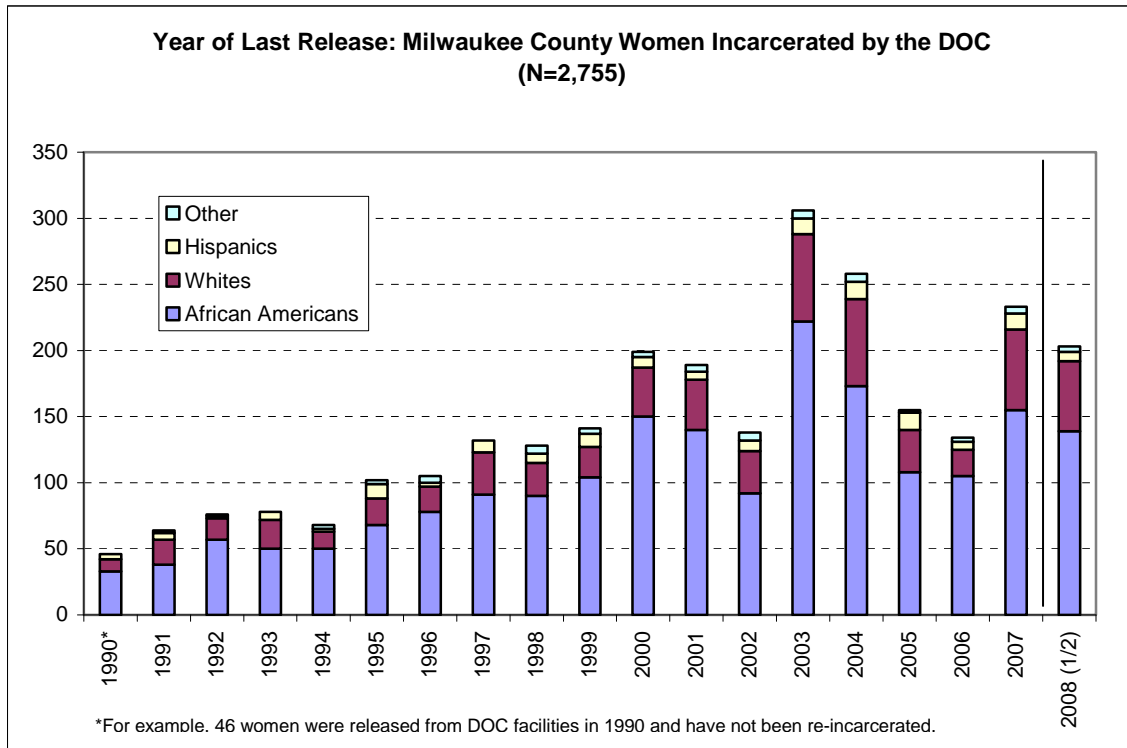


- While declining in absolute numbers, women ex-offenders continue to represent a sizable population returning to Milwaukee communities.



The cumulative effect of men and women incarcerated and then reentering the community can be seen in the graphs below that show the last release year for Milwaukee County adults released from DOC correctional facilities.





The Employment and Training Institute has identified barriers to employment for ex-offenders in a number of its research reports. These include:

- **Ex-Offender Populations in Milwaukee (2009).**
- **Addressing Driver's License Issues for Milwaukee Workers**, including driver's license recommendations by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial board (2009).
- **Second Year Evaluation of the Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability (2008).**
- **Barriers to Employment: Prison Time (2007).**
- **The EARN (Early Assessment and Retention Network) Model for Effectively Targeting WIA and TANF Resources to Participants (2007).**
- **New Indicators of Neighborhood Need in Zipcode 53206 (2007).**

These and other ETI reports are available online at www.eti.uwm.edu.