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# The Effectiveness of Prisoner Reentry Services as Crime Control: The Fortune Society

Douglas McDonald, Christina Dyou, and Kenneth Carlson  
Abt Associates Inc.  
November 20, 2008

## Abstract

The Fortune Society, located in New York City, provides various services on a voluntary basis to offenders who have been incarcerated previously, at an average cost (in 2005) of about \$3,265 per client. This study examines the extent to which receipt of these services reduces recidivism and homelessness following release. Recidivism is measured by an arrest leading to conviction; homelessness is indicated by a request to the NYC Department of Homeless Services for shelter. Fortune clients released to NYC from state prisons or from NYC jails during 2000-2005 are examined and their outcomes are compared to outcomes observed for state prisoners or local jail inmates released during same period but who did not go to Fortune. Multivariate survival analyses and propensity score analyses are used to estimate program effects on recidivism. No evidence of positive effects on recidivism is found. Indeed, Fortune clients were more likely to recidivate than non-clients, even after controlling for several measured differences among them. This should not be interpreted as showing that Fortune has negative effects on clients but instead that all differences associated with risk were not measured for lack of sufficient information.

Fortune clients typically have long criminal records, little education, no legitimate employment, few employable skills, and are dependent upon others for housing. Their participation rates in Fortune's services were generally low: one in four dropped out, and fewer than half completed the course of services. Half participated in no more than nine group sessions, whereas the most active 25% received 36 or more group sessions. Given clients' generally dire circumstances, such low participation rates make it unlikely that positive program effects are achievable for the client population as a whole.

Released prisoners are at high risk of homelessness. Using multivariate survival analysis techniques to account for the effects of measured differences among clients and non-clients, we estimate that participation in Fortune's services has a positive effect on released jail prisoners' ability to avoid homelessness throughout the years following release. No similar effect was found for released state prisoners, however. One possible explanation of this is that returning state prisoners have more access to services than returning city jail prisoners (90% of state prisoners leave under parole supervision), with the result that Fortune's contribution of services is relatively greater for city prisoners, and possibly more effective for them. This hypothesis was not tested for lack of information about services to non-clients.



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# **The Effectiveness of Prisoner Reentry Services as Crime- Control: The Fortune Society**

## **SUMMARY**

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## Summary

The Fortune Society is a private not-for-profit organization established in New York City in 1967 to serve ex-prisoners and to advocate on their behalf. Starting as a small project staffed by few paid employees and unpaid volunteers, it has grown into an organization with a \$13-14 million annual budget and a staff of about 200 paid employees who serve approximately 3,000-3,500 ex-prisoners annually, at an average cost per client in 2005 of about \$3,265. Fortune offers its services voluntarily to those who choose to come, with the exception of those offenders sentenced by the courts to Fortune's Alternative to Incarceration Program, who are not examined here. The organization also allows clients to come whenever they need services, even if they have dropped out at some point in the past. Fortune's staff recognizes that many clients may not be ready to take advantage of the services and encourage them to return whenever they are ready and motivated.

Fortune's open-door policy allows entry to any offender who has been released from prison any time within a ten-year period. Indeed, most clients do not come to the Fortune Society shortly after release. The average time between release and enrollment at Fortune was about nine months for state prisoners and about seventeen months for released NYC jail prisoners. This distinguishes Fortune from other "reentry" programs that focus services close to the point of release from incarceration.

Persons coming to the Fortune Society in search of assistance typically have long criminal records, little education, no legitimate employment, few employable skills, and are dependent upon others for a place to live. These are not generally people early in their adult lives, but are older: their average age is 34. By the time that they come to Fortune, they have spent more than four years, on average, in the state's prison system. Eight in 10 clients are men; 64 percent are African American, and a third are of Hispanic origin.

Parole or probation officers referred 35 percent of the clients who came to Fortune for the first time in 2005. Another 27 percent came to Fortune on their own, often after hearing about the program from another Fortune client, a friend, family member, or through the Fortune newsletter. Others were referred by other service agencies, by correctional facility staff or court personnel, and about 13 percent came as a result of Fortune's outreach efforts.

Peer counseling, career development and education have been the backbone of Fortune since its inception. Today, Fortune offers a comprehensive array of services, including health services, the Alternatives to Incarceration Program, substance abuse treatment, family support services, mental health counseling, a drop-in center for individuals recently released and in need of immediate services, and a housing facility for homeless ex-prisoners, among others. As one staff person put it, Fortune is a "one stop shop for re-entry."

Fortune offers clients services, but large proportions do not take advantage of these opportunities. About four in ten drop out, and fewer than half completed the most recent program for which they were enrolled. Half of the clients discharged during 2000-2005 participated in a total of 9 or fewer group sessions. This does not count individual sessions they may have participated in

because counts of individual sessions were not reliably recorded prior to 2005. Based upon the ratio of group to individual sessions recorded during 2005, the numbers of sessions of any kind were larger, but only incrementally. A small proportion of clients—the most active 25 percent—did participate more intensively, receiving 36 or more group sessions prior to discharge.

For that large percentage of the client population that does not engage, one would not expect that Fortune's few service sessions produce the outcomes desired—even the immediate outcomes they are designed to accomplish (getting a job, finding shelter, stopping their abuse of alcohol or other substances, earning their GED, etc.). For the minority of clients who do engage and participate in Fortune's services programs, some do achieve their goals. Unfortunately, we lacked any information about services that released prisoners not going to Fortune may have received at organizations or agencies elsewhere, so we were unable to compare amounts of services delivered to these two comparison populations. We sought to obtain measures of post-release substance use for both clients and non-clients, using information about paroled drug testing results for that subset of released state prisoners on parole, but the NYS Division of Parole was unwilling to provide these data. We also sought to obtain employment and earnings information from the Social Security Administration but the time lag for these data was too long for our study's schedule. We did obtain information about post-release homelessness from the New York City Department of Homeless Services, which is discussed below.

Our principal interest is in estimating the extent to which participating in Fortune programming reduced the likelihood of committing crimes following release. We also sought to estimate the effects of Fortune's programming generally, and not just its housing assistance services, on released prisoners' homelessness throughout the post-release period. We argue that homelessness does not only indicate residential instability but also social instability and unsuccessful reintegration generally.

## **Fortune's Impact on Post-Release Recidivism**

Prisoners returning to their communities fail to become law-abiding citizens at distressingly high rates. Among all prisoners convicted of felonies in New York City courts and released from the state's prisons between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005, about 30 percent were arrested and convicted of a criminal offense within one year of release, and about two-thirds by the end of three years. The pattern for persons released from New York City jails after serving a sentence was no better. Of those released from jails between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005, about 45 percent were arrested within one year of release and convicted, and about two-thirds within three years of release.

Although the primary mission of the Fortune Society is to serve needy ex-prisoners and to advocate on their behalf, the organization hopes that its services contribute not only to clients' successful integration into the community but also to improved public safety. We therefore sought to estimate the extent to which Fortune's services reduced the likelihood of clients' recidivism. Because we have no information about the number or types of services that released prisoners not going to Fortune received, our comparison is not between getting services at Fortune versus getting no services. Rather, the question is whether services received at Fortune make a difference in clients' subsequent recidivism, relative to the effects of whatever other

services these clients would have availed received in the absence of Fortune. This treats Fortune as a “black box,” because we are unable to trace the possible chains of causation, or pathways, from specific types of services (e.g., substance abuse treatment) to specific outcomes (abstinence) to more general impacts (reduced recidivism). To analyze such causal sequences requires having comparable information about services and outcomes experienced by offenders who did not go to Fortune, which is not available.

We initially sought to implement a strong evaluation design involving random assignment of parolees and probationers to Fortune, but this proved infeasible. We therefore adopted a quasi-experimental design that compared recidivism outcomes for Fortune clients to persons released from New York State prisons and returning to New York City and, separately, inmates released from the New York City jails, none of whom went to Fortune. (These latter we call “non-clients.”) All—clients and non-clients alike—were released after January 1, 2000 and before November 3, 2005 (for state prisoners) and March 3, 2005 (for city jail prisoners). Information about all prisoners released during these time frames was obtained from the New York State Department of Correctional Services for state prisoners, from the New York City Department of Correction for city prisoners. We also obtained records from the Fortune Society for its clients and arrest and conviction information for all released prisoners from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services’ criminal history repository. These records were matched and merged, producing datasets containing 57,349 released state prisoners, of whom 3,292 enrolled at Fortune following their first release during this 2000-2005 period, and 64,049 city jail prisoners released during this period, of whom 2,613 enrolled at Fortune.

At the point of their first enrollment after being released from prison or jail after January 1, 2000, Fortune clients had been convicted of criminal offenses as adults an average of 11 times. Seventy-five percent had been convicted previously for drug law offenses, 65 percent for violent crimes, and 70 percent had been convicted of one or more property crimes. The most common crime on their records was for drugs: an average of 5 of the 11 prior convictions were for drug law offenses. Accordingly, the most common conviction for clients coming out of prison or jail during this period to Fortune was for a drug offense (39 percent). Twenty percent had been convicted and incarcerated for a violent crime and 32 percent for a property crime.

Clients were at high risk of recidivism following release from prison or jail. Using survival analysis techniques, we calculated that 28-30 percent of released state prisoners who became Fortune clients were arrested within a year of release from prison, 44-46 percent by the end of the second year, and about 55-57 percent by the end of three years. Among Fortune clients who were released from city jails, all but about 12-15 percent managed to avoid arrest and conviction within three years of release.

These rates were higher than observed among other prisoners released from either prisons or the city’s jail who did not go to Fortune. This reflected the fact that Fortune clients differed in significant ways from the larger population of released prisoners not going to Fortune. They were generally at higher risk of recidivism than non-clients; they had longer criminal records and had spent more time in state prisons. To account for these and other differences associated with the probability of committing other crimes following release, we developed multivariate statistical models to estimate the extent to which having enrolled at Fortune was associated with

any reduction in post-release recidivism, other (measured) things being equal. Even after taking these differences in risk-related characteristics among clients and non-clients into account statistically, our models still estimate that Fortune clients do worse than non-clients with respect to subsequent recidivism, and this difference is statistically significant. A second analytic strategy—propensity score analysis—was used to estimate Fortune’s effects and it provided essentially the same estimates.<sup>1</sup> In short: we find no evidence that receiving services at the Fortune Society has a positive effect on reducing the likelihood of subsequent offending.

But could Fortune have a negative effect on prisoners’ chances for leading law-abiding lives? We think this is highly improbable. The most likely explanation of this difference in outcomes is that we were unable, for lack of data, to account for all differences among clients and non-clients in their risks of reoffending. We know that Fortune clients were at higher risk of reoffending and we were able to impose statistical controls for many of those differences associated with such risks that we could measure. These included prior criminal histories, age, gender, ethnicity, and type of release from incarceration (serving entire sentence behind bars as opposed to released under supervision). These controls probably failed to account completely for some other unidentified risk factors that distinguished Fortune’s clients from non-clients. Had we been able to measure and account statistically for all risk factors, the estimated differences between the groups in recidivism might disappear. It is also theoretically possible that clients would be at *lower* risk of recidivism if all relevant risk factors were accounted for statistically, but we think this is unlikely.

Given the nature of clients’ extreme circumstances and the fact that, on average, clients’ engagement in Fortune’s services were limited, it is not surprising that we find no evidence of a positive effect on subsequent criminality. Nine out of ten were not employed when they came to Fortune, and half were high school dropouts. Their work histories were not recorded at the point of intake to Fortune, but it is likely that few had held stable jobs, and that most had few or no marketable skills. Moreover, many lacked the “soft” skills that are increasingly important in getting and keeping work—good communication skills, a demonstrated work ethic, apparent trustworthiness, and apparent willingness to assume responsibilities. And all carried the stigma of a criminal record. The Fortune Society’s career development workshops have sessions devoted to instructing offenders in how to deal with questions about their criminal records in job interviews. There are certainly better and worse ways to manage this information, but the fact remains that clients typically have several convictions on their records and significant time behind bars in state prison (four years, on average). Clients’ superficial engagement (on average) with Fortune and the relatively limited services Fortune offers may not be sufficient to overcome these accumulated handicaps, deficiencies and problems, thereby lessening their likelihood of reoffending.

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<sup>1</sup> This approach first calculates the probability (“propensity”) that released offenders will be enrolled at Fortune upon release, using various information we have about offenders’ characteristics. These scores are then used to create several groups of clients and non-clients that are equivalent in their estimated propensity to enroll at Fortune. With this propensity factor held constant, a comparison of clients’ rearrests to non-clients’ offers an unbiased test of whether participating in Fortune has an effect on this outcome.

## Fortune's Effect on Preventing Homelessness

Having a home is nearly a necessary condition for achieving any measure of stable integration into one's community. Unfortunately, persons released from state prisons to New York City were 8 times more likely than the general population to become homeless, and those released from the local jail were 2.6 times as likely. Thus, about 16 percent of all offenders released during 2000-2005 from New York City's jails upon serving out their sentence lacked a home to return to and came to NYC's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) for shelter services, as did about 11 percent of all state prisoners released during this period. Released offenders also constituted a significant proportion of the entire New York City homeless population: about 16 percent. The Fortune Society provides shelter services to small numbers of offenders coming out of prison. No further analysis is needed to determine the effectiveness of Fortune's housing services in providing shelter to this group—one needs only to count the numbers of clients served upon release.

The Fortune Society provides a variety of services that are intended to support former prisoners in becoming stable and productive members of society. How successful the organization is in promoting such stability can be measured by clients' experience of homelessness during the post-release period, and not just immediately following release. To assess this, we obtained records from the New York City DHS of all persons who sought shelter or other homeless services during the period from January 1, 2000 to April 10, 2006. We matched these names to the records of prison and jail releases to identify prisoners who had become homeless after release. These records were matched further with Fortune Society records to identify the organization's clients. (These populations of released state and city prisoners were the same as those used for the analysis of recidivism.) In any given month, an average of about three percent of state prisoners and 14 percent of city inmates applied for homeless services at least once.

Using multivariate survival analysis techniques to account for the effects of measured differences among clients and non-clients, our models estimated that participation in Fortune's services had a positive effect on released city jail prisoners' ability to avoid homeless throughout the three-plus years following release. Because the effects of Fortune might be different for clients who were homeless at the point of release from jail and those not homeless at this time, separate analyses were done for each population. For those who were not homeless during the first month after release, Fortune clients were estimated to be about one-third less likely to become homeless during any subsequent month. Fortune clients who were homeless immediately after release were about half as likely as non-clients to become be homeless during subsequent months.

Among prisoners released from state prisons who were not homeless at the time of release, we found no difference in subsequent homelessness between Fortune clients and the non-client comparison group. Among those who were homeless at some point during that first month, Fortune clients were *more* likely to be homeless in subsequent months (by about 44 percent) than were non-clients. As there is no reasonable explanation for how participating in the Fortune Society's programs increased the odds of becoming homeless, we interpret this as another indication that Fortune's clients were at higher risk of being homeless for reasons that we were unable to measure given the available data.

We hypothesize that these results might indicate that the contribution to services that Fortune provides is greater for released city prisoners, relative to what they would have received otherwise, than for state prisoners. Returning state prisoners have more access to services than returning city prisoners, with the result that Fortune’s contribution may make a bigger impact on city prisoners, who receive few services upon release. Ninety percent of state prisoners are released to parole supervision, and the state Division of Parole operates a number of dedicated programs to secure housing and other services for offenders under its jurisdiction. Prisoners leaving the New York City jails complete their entire sentence behind bars and are discharged to a subway in Queens with a little pocket money, and they are on their own from that point onwards.

In conclusion, it appears that receiving services at the Fortune Society does improve at least one measure of community reintegration—avoidance of homelessness—especially for prisoners released from the city’s jails. We have no evidence that this contributes to a detectable reduction in the probabilities of reoffending, however.



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## Abstract

The Fortune Society, located in New York City, provides various services on a voluntary basis to offenders who have been incarcerated previously, at an average cost (in 2005) of about \$3,265 per client. This study examines the extent to which receipt of these services reduces recidivism and homelessness following release. Recidivism is measured by an arrest leading to conviction; homelessness is indicated by a request to the NYC Department of Homeless Services for shelter. Fortune clients released to NYC from state prisons or from NYC jails during 2000-2005 are examined and their outcomes are compared to outcomes observed for state prisoners or local jail inmates released during same period but who did not go to Fortune. Multivariate survival analyses and propensity score analyses are used to estimate program effects on recidivism. No evidence of positive effects on recidivism is found. Indeed, Fortune clients were more likely to recidivate than non-clients, even after controlling for several measured differences among them. This should not be interpreted as showing that Fortune has negative effects on clients but instead that all differences associated with risk were not measured for lack of sufficient information.

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## Preface

This study was undertaken in response to a solicitation issued by the National Institute of Justice calling for an evaluation of the Fortune Society, a New York City organization that provides services to ex-prisoners. The Fortune Society received funds from the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the legislation authorizing the Bureau's program required that the National Institute of Justice undertake evaluations of selected programs. Among those organizations that were funded, the Fortune Society was selected for evaluation because it has a forty-year history of providing services to ex-prisoners and Department of Justice officials thought that it might serve as a model for prisoner reentry programs elsewhere. To address these interests of the National Institute, the present study provides a description how Fortune has evolved over the years, how it has managed to create a diversified revenue base, and how it delivers its services. It also provides estimates of the longer-term effects of Fortune's services on ex-prisoners' recidivism and social stability.

We are grateful for the support and assistance of several people and organizations. Laurie Bright served as the project officer for the National Institute. To examine the effects of Fortune society programming on released prisoners' subsequent criminality, the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services provided us with information about all prisoners released over a five-year period from the New York State Department of Correctional Services' prisons, including information about their subsequent arrests and convictions. Susan Jacobsen, David van Alstyne, and Steve Greenstein provided these data and helped us to understand them. Information about all prisoners released from the New York City jails was provided to us by the New York City Department of Correction. We thank Commissioner Martin Horn and his deputy, Ari Wax, for their willingness to provide these data. To examine the Fortune Society's effectiveness in stabilizing prisoners' lives following release, we obtained information about all requests for shelter from the New York City Department of Homeless Services. Robin Bidner and her colleagues at NYCDHS were especially helpful in making these data available to us.

The willing participation of the Fortune Society was especially crucial, as this study could not have been done without the organization's support. JoAnne Page, Fortune's President and CEO, Stanley Richards, Chief Operating Officer, welcomed the evaluation and commanded the organization's support for it. Sherry Goldstein, the Chief of Staff, provided various data, and Boris Sporer did the work to provide us with various data from the organization's management information system. A number of other staff met with and shared information with us.

Finally, several Abt Associates staff worked on this project. Kenneth Carlson assisted in development of the research design and the multivariate statistical analyses of program impacts. Christine Dyous served as a deputy project director and assisted in many activities, including, most prominently, the analysis of program processes. Ryan Kling and Chris Flygare were responsible for building the databases, for matching and merging files from the different agencies and organizations, and for conducting a variety of other programming tasks. Kevin Mihal and Dawn Revett provided financial administrative support. William Rhodes, Ph.D., served as Abt Associates' quality assurance advisor to this project. His comments and advice have been extremely helpful.

Douglas McDonald, Ph.D.  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
November, 2008

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Parole or probation officers referred 35 percent of the clients who came to Fortune for the first time in 2005. Another 27 percent came to Fortune on their own, often after hearing about the program from another Fortune client, a friend, family member, or through the Fortune newsletter. Others were referred by other service agencies, by correctional facility staff or court personnel, and about 13 percent came as a result of Fortune's outreach efforts.

Peer counseling, career development and education have been the backbone of Fortune since its inception. Today, Fortune offers a comprehensive array of services, including health services, the Alternatives to Incarceration Program, substance abuse treatment, family support services, mental health counseling, a drop-in center for individuals recently released and in need of immediate services, and a housing facility for homeless ex-prisoners, among others. As one staff person put it, Fortune is a "one stop shop for re-entry."

Fortune offers clients services, but large proportions do not take advantage of these opportunities. About four in ten drop out, and fewer than half completed the most recent program for which they were enrolled. Half of the clients discharged during 2000-2005 participated in a total of 9 or fewer group sessions. This does not count individual sessions they may have participated in because counts of individual sessions were not reliably recorded prior to 2005. Based upon the ratio of group to individual sessions recorded during 2005, the numbers of sessions of any kind were larger, but only incrementally. A small proportion of clients—the most active 25 percent—did participate more intensively, receiving 36 or more group sessions prior to discharge.

For that large percentage of the client population that does not engage, one would not expect that Fortune's few service sessions produce the outcomes desired—even the immediate outcomes they are designed to accomplish (getting a job, finding shelter, stopping their abuse of alcohol or other substances, earning their GED, etc.). For the minority of clients who do engage and participate in Fortune's services programs, some do achieve their goals. Unfortunately, we lacked any information about services that released prisoners not going to Fortune may have received at organizations or agencies elsewhere, so we were unable to compare amounts of services delivered to these two comparison populations. We sought to obtain measures of post-release substance use for both clients and non-clients, using information about paroled drug testing results for that subset of released state prisoners on parole, but the NYS Division of Parole was unwilling to provide these data. We also sought to obtain employment and earnings information from the Social Security Administration but the time lag for these data was too long for our study's schedule. We did obtain information about post-release homelessness from the New York City Department of Homeless Services, which is discussed below.

Our principal interest is in estimating the extent to which participating in Fortune programming reduced the likelihood of committing crimes following release. We also sought to estimate the effects of Fortune's programming generally, and not just its housing assistance services, on released prisoners' homelessness throughout the post-release period. We argue that homelessness does not only indicate residential instability but also social instability and unsuccessful reintegration generally.

## **Fortune's Impact on Post-Release Recidivism**

Prisoners returning to their communities fail to become law-abiding citizens at distressingly high rates. Among all prisoners convicted of felonies in New York City courts and released from the state's prisons between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005, about 30 percent were arrested and convicted of a criminal offense within one year of release, and about two-thirds by the end of three years. The pattern for persons released from New York City jails after serving a sentence was no better. Of those released from jails between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005, about 45 percent were arrested within one year of release and convicted, and about two-thirds within three years of release.

Although the primary mission of the Fortune Society is to serve needy ex-prisoners and to advocate on their behalf, the organization hopes that its services contribute not only to clients' successful integration into the community but also to improved public safety. We therefore sought to estimate the extent to which Fortune's services reduced the likelihood of clients' recidivism. Because we have no information about the number or types of services that released prisoners not going to Fortune received, our comparison is not between getting services at Fortune versus getting no services. Rather, the question is whether services received at Fortune make a difference in clients' subsequent recidivism, relative to the effects of whatever other services these clients would have availed received in the absence of Fortune. This treats Fortune as a "black box," because we are unable to trace the possible chains of causation, or pathways, from specific types of services (e.g., substance abuse treatment) to specific outcomes (abstinence) to more general impacts (reduced recidivism). To analyze such causal sequences requires having comparable information about services and outcomes experienced by offenders who did not go to Fortune, which is not available.

We initially sought to implement a strong evaluation design involving random assignment of parolees and probationers to Fortune, but this proved infeasible. We therefore adopted a quasi-experimental design that compared recidivism outcomes for Fortune clients to persons released from New York State prisons

and returning to New York City and, separately, inmates released from the New York City jails, none of whom went to Fortune. (These latter we call “non-clients.”) All—clients and non-clients alike—were released after January 1, 2000 and before November 3, 2005 (for state prisoners) and March 3, 2005 (for city jail prisoners). Information about all prisoners released during these time frames was obtained from the New York State Department of Correctional Services for state prisoners, from the New York City Department of Correction for city prisoners. We also obtained records from the Fortune Society for its clients and arrest and conviction information for all released prisoners from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services’ criminal history repository. These records were matched and merged, producing datasets containing 57,349 released state prisoners, of whom 3,292 enrolled at Fortune following their first release during this 2000-2005 period, and 64,049 city jail prisoners released during this period, of whom 2,613 enrolled at Fortune.

At the point of their first enrollment after being released from prison or jail after January 1, 2000, Fortune clients had been convicted of criminal offenses as adults an average of 11 times. Seventy-five percent had been convicted previously for drug law offenses, 65 percent for violent crimes, and 70 percent had been convicted of one or more property crimes. The most common crime on their records was for drugs: an average of 5 of the 11 prior convictions were for drug law offenses. Accordingly, the most common conviction for clients coming out of prison or jail during this period to Fortune was for a drug offense (39 percent). Twenty percent had been convicted and incarcerated for a violent crime and 32 percent for a property crime.

Clients were at high risk of recidivism following release from prison or jail. Using survival analysis techniques, we calculated that 28-30 percent of released state prisoners who became Fortune clients were arrested within a year of release from prison, 44-46 percent by the end of the second year, and about 55-57 percent by the end of three years. Among Fortune clients who were released from city jails, all but about 12-15 percent managed to avoid arrest and conviction within three years of release.

These rates were higher than observed among other prisoners released from either prisons or the city’s jail who did not go to Fortune. This reflected the fact that Fortune clients differed in significant ways from the larger population of released prisoners not going to Fortune. They were generally at higher risk of recidivism than non-clients; they had longer criminal records and had spent more time in state prisons. To account for these and other differences associated with the probability of committing other crimes following release, we developed multivariate statistical models to estimate the extent to which having enrolled at Fortune was associated with any reduction in post-release recidivism, other (measured) things being equal. Even after taking these differences in risk-related characteristics among clients and non-clients into account statistically, our models still estimate that Fortune clients do worse than non-clients with respect to subsequent recidivism, and this difference is statistically significant. A second analytic strategy—propensity score analysis—was used to estimate Fortune’s effects and it provided essentially the same estimates.<sup>1</sup> In short: we find no evidence that receiving services at the Fortune Society has a positive effect on reducing the likelihood of subsequent offending.

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<sup>1</sup> This approach first calculates the probability (“propensity”) that released offenders will be enrolled at Fortune upon release, using various information we have about offenders’ characteristics. These scores are then used to create several groups of clients and non-clients that are equivalent in their estimated propensity to enroll at Fortune. With this propensity factor held constant, a comparison of clients’ rearrests to non-clients’ offers an unbiased test of whether participating in Fortune has an effect on this outcome.

But could Fortune have a negative effect on prisoners' chances for leading law-abiding lives? We think this is highly improbable. The most likely explanation of this difference in outcomes is that we were unable, for lack of data, to account for all differences among clients and non-clients in their risks of reoffending. We know that Fortune clients were at higher risk of reoffending and we were able to impose statistical controls for many of those differences associated with such risks that we could measure. These included prior criminal histories, age, gender, ethnicity, and type of release from incarceration (serving entire sentence behind bars as opposed to released under supervision). These controls probably failed to account completely for some other unidentified risk factors that distinguished Fortune's clients from non-clients. Had we been able to measure and account statistically for all risk factors, the estimated differences between the groups in recidivism might disappear. It is also theoretically possible that clients would be at *lower* risk of recidivism if all relevant risk factors were accounted for statistically, but we think this is unlikely.

Given the nature of clients' extreme circumstances and the fact that, on average, clients' engagement in Fortune's services were limited, it is not surprising that we find no evidence of a positive effect on subsequent criminality. Nine out of ten were not employed when they came to Fortune, and half were high school dropouts. Their work histories were not recorded at the point of intake to Fortune, but it is likely that few had held stable jobs, and that most had few or no marketable skills. Moreover, many lacked the "soft" skills that are increasingly important in getting and keeping work—good communication skills, a demonstrated work ethic, apparent trustworthiness, and apparent willingness to assume responsibilities. And all carried the stigma of a criminal record. The Fortune Society's career development workshops have sessions devoted to instructing offenders in how to deal with questions about their criminal records in job interviews. There are certainly better and worse ways to manage this information, but the fact remains that clients typically have several convictions on their records and significant time behind bars in state prison (four years, on average). Clients' superficial engagement (on average) with Fortune and the relatively limited services Fortune offers may not be sufficient to overcome these accumulated handicaps, deficiencies and problems, thereby lessening their likelihood of reoffending.

## **Fortune's Effect on Preventing Homelessness**

Having a home is nearly a necessary condition for achieving any measure of stable integration into one's community. Unfortunately, persons released from state prisons to New York City were 8 times more likely than the general population to become homeless, and those released from the local jail were 2.6 times as likely. Thus, about 16 percent of all offenders released during 2000-2005 from New York City's jails upon serving out their sentence lacked a home to return to and came to NYC's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) for shelter services, as did about 11 percent of all state prisoners released during this period. Released offenders also constituted a significant proportion of the entire New York City homeless population: about 16 percent. The Fortune Society provides shelter services to small numbers of offenders coming out of prison. No further analysis is needed to determine the effectiveness of Fortune's housing services in providing shelter to this group—one needs only to count the numbers of clients served upon release.

The Fortune Society provides a variety of services that are intended to support former prisoners in becoming stable and productive members of society. How successful the organization is in promoting such stability can be measured by clients' experience of homelessness during the post-release period, and not just immediately following release. To assess this, we obtained records from the New York City DHS

of all persons who sought shelter or other homeless services during the period from January 1, 2000 to April 10, 2006. We matched these names to the records of prison and jail releases to identify prisoners who had become homeless after release. These records were matched further with Fortune Society records to identify the organization's clients. (These populations of released state and city prisoners were the same as those used for the analysis of recidivism.) In any given month, an average of about three percent of state prisoners and 14 percent of city inmates applied for homeless services at least once.

Using multivariate survival analysis techniques to account for the effects of measured differences among clients and non-clients, our models estimated that participation in Fortune's services had a positive effect on released city jail prisoners' ability to avoid homeless throughout the three-plus years following release. Because the effects of Fortune might be different for clients who were homeless at the point of release from jail and those not homeless at this time, separate analyses were done for each population. For those who were not homeless during the first month after release, Fortune clients were estimated to be about one-third less likely to become homeless during any subsequent month. Fortune clients who were homeless immediately after release were about half as likely as non-clients to become be homeless during subsequent months.

Among prisoners released from state prisons who were not homeless at the time of release, we found no difference in subsequent homelessness between Fortune clients and the non-client comparison group. Among those who were homeless at some point during that first month, Fortune clients were *more* likely to be homeless in subsequent months (by about 44 percent) than were non-clients. As there is no reasonable explanation for how participating in the Fortune Society's programs increased the odds of becoming homeless, we interpret this as another indication that Fortune's clients were at higher risk of being homeless for reasons that we were unable to measure given the available data.

We hypothesize that these results might indicate that the contribution to services that Fortune provides is greater for released city prisoners, relative to what they would have received otherwise, than for state prisoners. Returning state prisoners have more access to services than returning city prisoners, with the result that Fortune's contribution may make a bigger impact on city prisoners, who receive few services upon release. Ninety percent of state prisoners are released to parole supervision, and the state Division of Parole operates a number of dedicated programs to secure housing and other services for offenders under its jurisdiction. Prisoners leaving the New York City jails complete their entire sentence behind bars and are discharged to a subway in Queens with a little pocket money, and they are on their own from that point onwards.

In conclusion, it appears that receiving services at the Fortune Society does improve at least one measure of community reintegration—avoidance of homelessness—especially for prisoners released from the city's jails. We have no evidence that this contributes to a detectable reduction in the probabilities of reoffending, however.

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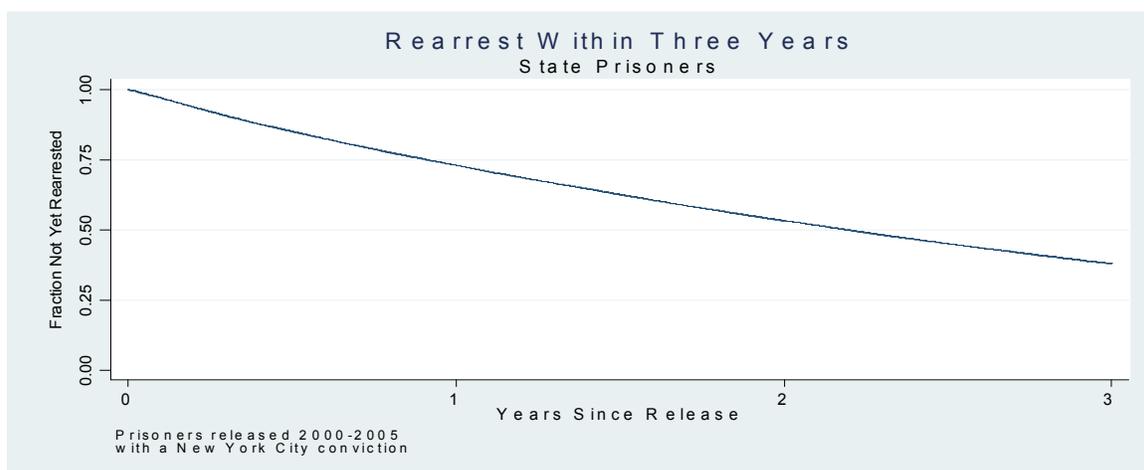
# 1. Introduction

The need for effective prisoner reentry policies and programs is difficult to overstate. The numbers of criminal offenders released from prisons to our communities have reached unprecedented levels, a consequence of the huge increase in the use of imprisonment since the early 1970s. In 1970, the numbers of inmates in all state and federal prisons stood at 196,000. By 2005, that number had risen to more than 1.5 million (Harrison and Beck, 2006). Growth in the numbers of persons in local jails on any given day also grew during this time, from about 158,000 in 1978 to 719,000 in 2005 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1886; Harrison and Beck, 2006). This happened partly because crime rates increased after 1970 but, more importantly, because sentencing and imprisonment policies got tougher. Nearly all of these—95 percent—of these state and federal prisoners (Hughes and Wilson, 2004) and all jail prisoners return to their communities. The impact of these returning prisoners is felt disproportionately by certain neighborhoods. In New York City, for example, a very small number of neighborhoods generate a large proportion of all the state’s prisoners (Cadora et al., 2003), and it is mostly to these neighborhoods that prisoners return.

Nationwide, approximately two-thirds of released state and federal offenders are rearrested for new crimes within three years, and approximately one-third fail within six months of release—a critical reentry “window of opportunity” (Langan et al., 2002). This is but the tip of the iceberg, as active criminals commit more crimes than those for which they are arrested (e.g., Camela-Cacho et al., 1997). Data from New York State indicate a generally similar pattern (Figure 1.1). Among all state prisoners

**Figure 1.1**

**Rearrests Within Three Years of Release: State Prisoners Returning to New York City, 2000-2005**



*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.*

released during 2000-2005 and who were assumed to be returning to New York City, approximately two-thirds were rearrested within three years for new crimes, for which they were ultimately convicted.<sup>2</sup> The proportions rearrested within the first six months of release (about 12 percent) was not as large as the one-third found in the national sample, however.

## Obstacles to Successful Reentry

Why do so many prisoners fail to lead law-abiding lives upon release? This question could be answered completely if we had a full understanding of why people commit crimes. At this point in history, however, we lack a unified theory of crime and desistance—and such a theory is not likely to be on the horizon anytime soon. “Crime” is an extremely broad term that encompasses a wide range of different behaviors, including rationally calculated tax evasion, murdering a spouse in a fit of rage, and illegal use of a controlled substance to which one is addicted. In place of a general theory of crime or desistance, we have a collection of middle-range theories about why large numbers of reentering prisoners fail to become productive and law-abiding members of society. Some of these turn on the nature of the obstacles to successful reintegration that released prisoners face—each of which suggests different approaches to mitigating these obstacles. These include deficiencies in prisoners’ human capital and social capital. Although these terms were initially coined to describe attributes that individuals possessed that afforded them advantages in economic life, they can also be used more broadly to refer to resources that afford advantages in both economic and non-economic domains. Whereas *human* capital refers to resources held by individuals (e.g., education, employable skills, work history), social capital refers to the value of social networks and the collective resources that these networks can mobilize on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals (e.g., Bourdieu 1972; Putnam 2000; Portes 1998; Coleman 1988). Still other to successful reentry obstacles are not characteristics of persons or their social networks but barriers to entry that act upon certain persons, such as prohibitions against employing persons with criminal records or, less formally, an unwillingness on the part of employers to hire such persons.

### Human Capital Deficiencies

A large proportion of released prisoners lack the skills and work-related characteristics that employers typically demand. Many have few or no marketable skills, poor educational backgrounds, inadequate job histories, and a plethora of behavioral disorders—substance abuse and other mental disorders—that keep them from being “job ready.” In earlier eras, unskilled manual labor could find a place in the workplace more easily, but the contemporary U.S. job market requires a level of educational and cognitive skills that many prisoners cannot meet. Holzer (1996) estimates that fewer than 5 percent of the unskilled jobs in central-city labor markets do not require high school diplomas, work experience, or other relevant skills. Moreover, virtually all require that workers demonstrate “soft skills” associated with job readiness—a strong work ethic, responsibility for showing up consistently and on time, trustworthiness, and good communication skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Prisoners sentenced to prison from one of the courts in New York City were presumed to be returning to that city upon release. A more certain determination of destination following release could not be made for lack of information in the state’s criminal justice data. Moreover, arrest information was available only for persons whose cases resulted in a conviction; cases involving persons for whom charges were dropped or who were acquitted were sealed and unavailable for study. Some small proportion of ex-prisoners in this sample had cases that had not yet reached final disposition and were included for this analysis, classified as having been arrested and convicted.

A 1997 national survey of state prisoners found that 68 percent were high school dropouts (Harlow, 2003); another study estimated that about half are functionally illiterate (Hirsch et al., 2002). The extent of labor market participation by offenders coming out of prisons and jails is not documented on a national level, but local statistics indicate that large proportions are only marginally attached to the legitimate labor force, if at all. In the District of Columbia, for example, fifty-six percent of prisoners under probation or parole supervision reported being unemployed during the past six months and 32 percent reported having no marketable skills (Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, 2007).

The extent of offenders' substance abuse and dependence is somewhat better documented, in part because the nation's jails and prisons have become collecting places for persons with drug and alcohol problems. Drug testing of jailed arrestees in several cities consistently finds that at least 50 percent test positive for cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, opiates, or PCP (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program, 2003). Based upon a surveyed sample of state and federal prisoners in 1997, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 70 percent of the 1.1 million inmates held in state and federal prisons at that time had been regular drug or alcohol users prior to imprisonment and that 51 percent reported using alcohol or other drugs at the time of committing their crimes (Mumola, 1999). Moreover, a significant proportion had severe problems with drugs and alcohol. Based upon prisoners' response to the CAGE instrument (Ewing, 1984) in the 1997 survey, the BJS estimated that a quarter of all state prisoners and a sixth of were abusing or dependent upon alcohol (Mumola, 1999). In a 1991 study of all offenders entering federal prisons, 52 percent were found to meet the DSM-IV criteria for having either a drug abuse or drug dependency disorder, with the latter more prevalent (31 percent) than the former (21 percent) (Murray, 1991). A more recent study of 6,881 male inmates in all Minnesota state prisons examined behavior during the year prior to imprisonment and found that dependence was even more prevalent than abuse (Jones & Hoffmann, 2006). Using the SUDDS-IV (Substance Use Disorder Diagnostic Schedule-IV), the authors found that 52 percent of the population met at least 6 of the 7 DSM-IV criteria for substance abuse "dependence," most often for alcohol (29 percent); a smaller proportion (21 percent), could be diagnosed for "abuse"—again, most frequently for alcohol (16 percent).

Rates of mental illness are also higher among released prisoners than in the general population, in part because of the frequent co-occurrence of mental disorders with substance abuse and the reliance upon criminal sanctions to control drug use. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that a more than a half of prison and jail inmates in 2005 had a mental health "problem," and that a quarter of all state prisoners and a fifth of all jail prisoners that year had histories of mental health problems (James and Glaze, 2006). Prisons and jails now house more mentally ill persons than mental hospitals in the U.S. do.

### **Demand-Side Barriers**

In addition to the mismatch between the attributes offenders bring to the job market and the skills that employers want are a number of other barriers to entry. These include legal restrictions on licensing felons for particular types of work, such as security professionals, nursing home services, childcare and other positions where contact with children is required, and some health services, among others. Even where formal barriers do not exist, there is a widespread aversion among employers to hiring persons with criminal records. Studies of employer preferences by Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2003) find that employers are "much more averse to hiring ex-offenders than they are toward any other disadvantaged group, such as welfare recipients," and that the frequency with which employers check applicants criminal records is increasing, in large part because of the ease of doing so on the Internet. Fewer than 40 percent of the employers said that they would hire somebody with a criminal record. Similar findings were reported in a Massachusetts study (Fahey, Roberts and Engel, 2006.) Another study of Wisconsin

employers found that the interaction of race and criminal records results in even greater barriers to African-Americans with records (Pager, 2002).

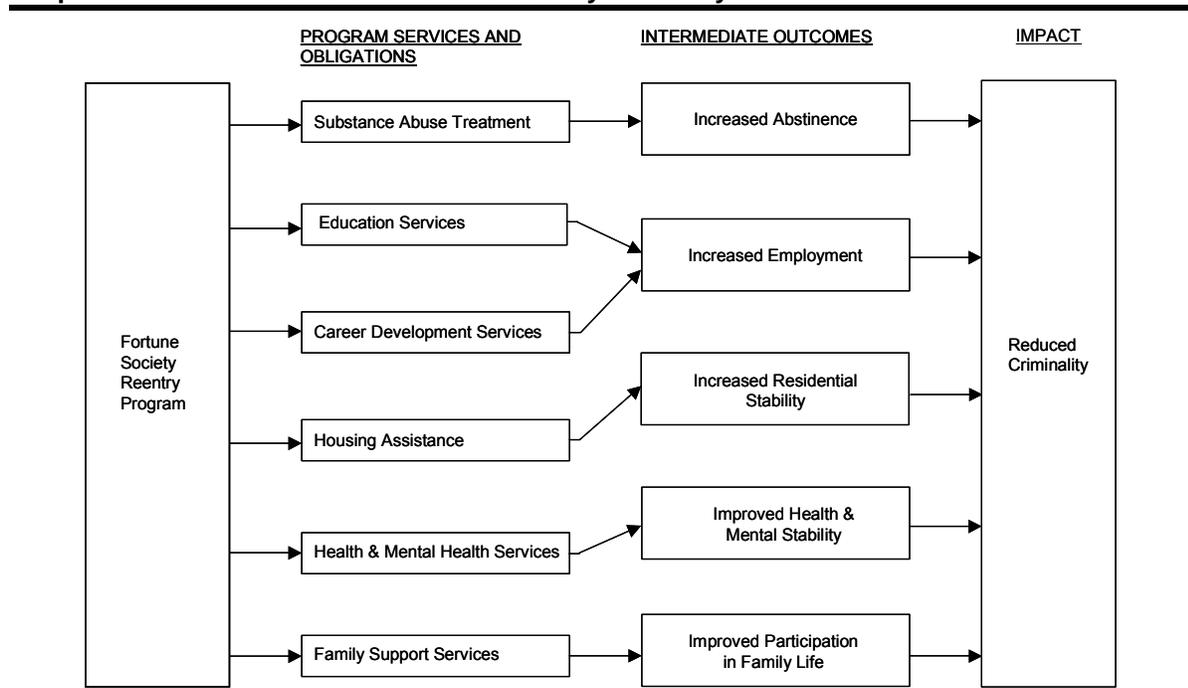
## The Fortune Society’s Strategy to Facilitate Successful Reentry

Even though Fortune can be termed a “reentry program,” it does not limit itself to offering services only to recently released prisoners. Rather, it offers an open door to offenders who have been behind bars at any time within the past ten years. Fortune is therefore more accurately described as service agency for offenders and ex-offenders in the community.

The Fortune Society serves ex-prisoners and advocates on their behalf for both charitable and utilitarian reasons. That is, providing needy offenders with assistance is seen as an end in itself, rather than simply a means to reducing crime. Nonetheless, the organization sees its charitable and utilitarian aims as complementary: improving the lot of former prisoners and improving public safety are two sides of the same coin because offenders who are better integrated into their communities are also more likely to be responsible and productive citizens. The logic of this strategy is illustrated graphically in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1**

### Simplified Causal Model of the Fortune Society’s Reentry Services



Even though the Fortune Society advocates changes in policies that pose demand-side barriers to prisoner reintegration, most of its efforts are focused on individual clients. These include building skills through education and vocational development programs, alleviating disabling conditions such as substance abuse, mental and physical health problems, and providing short-term assistance such as shelter and food. In the sections that follow, each of these different services is described more fully, including counts of activities provided and, where data exist, the immediate effects—or intermediate outcomes—of these

services. We also examine the impacts of Fortune’s services on recidivism, although we are unable for lack of data to trace the specific causal pathways through each of the types of services.

### **What Does Research Tell Us About the Effectiveness of Similar Programs?**

Fortune did not design its program to test hypotheses about the effects of particular services on public safety, but instead sought to provide assistance that this needy population requested. Moreover, the social scientific research literature provides no real guidance for designing housing services, medical or mental health services, or family support services that are likely to be most effective in reducing recidivism. Certain types of offender services have been much studied, however. These include employment and vocational development programs, educational programs, and substance abuse treatment programs.

#### ***Research on the Effectiveness of Employment and Training Programs for Offenders***

Government-funded programs to improve ex-offenders’ standing in the labor market began in the early 1960s with passage of the Manpower Demonstration and Training Act of 1962 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. A variety of manpower programs for offenders in a variety of correctional settings were begun after this and several were studied (McDonald, 1998). Taggart’s review in 1972 of these studies drew generally negative conclusions, finding “no proof that any single manpower service has had more than a marginal impact on its recipients, and no proof that any combination of services can make a substantial contribution” (Taggart, 1977). Many of these studies had weak research designs, making it difficult to determine if program failures stemmed from program design flaws, ineffective implementation, or from other specific factors. During the 1970s and early 1980s, stronger research designs (including experimental designs) were used to study the effectiveness of supported work—closely supervised work in sheltered settings, with subsidized wages. Although supported work was found in some programs to have positive short-term effects on recidivism, earnings, or employment (usually while participants were in the programs), they generally found no lasting effects, or no effects at all (Friedman, 1978). Still another strategy—giving financial aid directly to prisoners upon release to help them through the transition—was subjected to a controlled experiment and was found to have a positive effect on public safety but no impact on post-release employment (Lenihan, 1977). A subsequent experiment replicated this program nationwide and added a test of job placement services. The results were disappointing, with no significant difference in public safety or employment among those received these services and those who did not (Rossi, Berk, & Lenihan, 1980).

Although not designed as offender manpower programs, a number of other programs for disadvantaged and hard to employ persons included offenders and the effectiveness of these programs on this subpopulation have been studied. An evaluation of the Job Corps, which provides a comprehensive array of manpower services to disadvantaged youths in a rural residential setting, found that participants had higher earnings and lower rates of crime (Mallar, Kerachsky, & Thornton, 1982) and has been touted as evidence that these programs work. But some success resulted from enrolling participants in the military (not an option for many offenders); violent offenders were not allowed in the program; and it is difficult to assume that a rural residential program has much relevance for an urban offender manpower program.

Another nationwide program, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), provided a variety of programs: job search assistance, basic education, classroom vocational instruction, plus on-the-job training. A strong experimental design was used to evaluate its impact at sixteen different sites. The program was found to have positive effects on earnings for adult men and women, but this probably has little bearing on how offenders fared. Offenders who had been to prison or jail were not studied as a particular subgroup, but one relevant subgroup was comprised of out-of-school youths and a subgroup of them had

arrest records. The program was not found to have any positive effects on earnings for this subgroup. Nor were there positive effects on recidivism for any group (Bloom et al., 1994). One bright spot in the research is from the study of JOBSTART, which provides comprehensive services similar to those delivered in the Job Corps. An experimental evaluation of the program found that among a subgroups of young men having arrest records, the program appeared to have produced a substantial increase in earnings, as well as positive effects on likelihood of rearrest and drug use (Cave, Bos, Hans, Doolittle, & Toussaint, 1993). One of the most successful sites, the Center for Employment and Training in San Jose, California, was especially aggressive in job placement—suggesting that this strategy may be effective rather than focusing mostly on training or job-readiness preparation.

A recent meta-analytic synthesis of findings from these and a few other research studies that used even moderately rigorous research designs found no evidence of positive effects on offender recidivism (Visher, Winterfield, & Coggeshall, 2006). Because so many released prisoners have few personal and social resources on which to build, it is not surprising that most studies of employment and training programs have reported little success in preventing recidivism. Reviewing the research on employment and training programs in 1994, one analyst remarked, “An intervention lasting three or four months is not going to be able to turn around sixteen years of accumulated problems” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1994). These problems include not only educational failures such as dropping out of school but also drug abuse, family instability, housing instability, and mental disorders.

### **Educational Programming, including Vocational Education**

Despite the fact that educational programs have been among the most prevalent and enduring rehabilitation services for offender populations, there have been very few well-designed studies of their effectiveness. It may be that the value of education has been taken for granted. After all, if education improves employment prospects for persons generally, should it not be the same for offenders?

Among the studies of the effectiveness of offender education programs on recidivism, most are of in-prison programs and most have weak research designs. A review by Gerber and Fritch of the better designed studies (only 14 studies met the requirements for inclusion in the review) found that 9 of the studies reported positive effects on recidivism (Gerber & Fritch, 1994). These 14 studies were also ranked according to the strength of their research designs. Of the 7 that were most highly ranked, 3 found no positive relationship between education programming and recidivism, and 4 showed an inverse correlation (that is, the more education, the lower the recidivism rate)—suggesting that education works. Gerber and Fritsch also found 13 studies of prison vocational education programs that were considered strong enough to be considered in their review. Nine of these reported positive effects on recidivism—again, a suggestion that such programming works.

Drawing conclusions about causal relationships from these findings is difficult, however. State law or correctional policies often dictate assignment to educational programs, so randomized assignment for purposes of testing program effectiveness is difficult to implement. Comparisons of offenders in educational programs with other comparison groups may therefore be biased in favor of finding what appear to be positive effects. Those who enroll in education programs and stay in them are typically more motivated than those who don't enroll or drop out, and offenders who are motivated to educate themselves may also be more motivated to go straight upon release regardless of their involvement in education. Given this possibility, it is nearly impossible to attribute any observed reduction in recidivism to the effects of an education program.

Some reentry programs do not focus on sustained vocational development and training but instead on “job readiness” training, job search skills, and so forth. Such programs have not been well studied. If more sustained job training shows little evidence of success for offenders, one might ask why training in these softer skills does any better.

### **Substance Abuse Treatment Programs in Correctional Settings**

Most studies of substance abuse treatment programs for offenders have examined programs operating in correctional settings, either in prisons or jails or in community correctional agencies. Provision of substance abuse treatment programming to offenders is typically grounded on two assumptions, or hypotheses: (1) that substance abuse treatment is effective in promoting criminal offenders’ abstinence from drugs and alcohol use, and (2) that abstinence reduces the likelihood of further criminality. Many studies have sought to test these hypotheses, but only a few that have used even moderately robust research designs. Moreover, the most thoroughly studied are in-prison programs structured as therapeutic communities (TCs) and these studies have typically focused on the more distal of the two treatment outcomes—criminal recidivism (Butzin, Martin, & Inciardi, 2002; Field, 1989; Inciardi, Martin, & Butzin, 2004; Inciardi, Martin, Butzin, Hooper, & Harrison, 1997; Knight, Simpson, & Hiller, 1999; Martin, Butzin, Saum, & Inciardi, 1999; Prendergast, Hall, Wexler, Melnick, & Cao, 2004; Wexler, Falkin, & Lipton, 1990; Wexler, Melnick, Lowe, & Peters, 1999).

A systematic review in 1999 of research published between 1968 and 1996 on incarceration-based programs identified only 30 studies that were deemed methodologically adequate enough to be considered for analysis (Pearson & Lipton, 1999). The authors found that TCs were effective in reducing recidivism, but not group counseling programs or programs structured as boot camps. Another review that included more recent research—studies produced between 1980 and 2004—identified 233 but culled a total of 63 evaluations with research designs rigorous enough to be considered (Mitchell, Wilson, & MacKenzie, 2006). In these studies, however, the bar for what was considered “rigorous” was quite low. Indeed, of those included in the latter review, the majority was rated as having “weak” designs. Applying meta-analytic statistical techniques to these studies, the authors concluded that overall, incarceration-based treatment programs show evidence of being “moderately effective” in reducing recidivism—producing reductions in the range of 28%, from a base rate of about 35% for untreated comparison groups. They estimate that certain types of programs are more effective than others: TCs and counseling programs are effective where boot camp or narcotic maintenance programs are not. Moreover, more mature counseling programs and voluntary programs exhibit statistically larger effect sizes.

One of the puzzling results of the Mitchell et al. review is that little evidence was found of effects on preventing relapse to drug use. “This finding suggests that, with few exceptions, regardless of variations in methodology, sample, or treatment characteristics incarceration-based drug treatment does not generally reduce post-release drug use” (p. 17). This raises some interesting questions. If evidence of positive effects on post-release drug use is weak, what is the mechanism by which drug treatment affects recidivism? This also raises questions about validity of all these mostly non-experimental studies. Mitchell et al. caution “the limited statistical power of the analyses, however, undermines our ability to draw firm conclusions in this area of research” (p. 18).

Another study of community-based drug treatment programs for offenders (Chanhatasilpa, MacKenzie, & Hickman, 2000) examined 15 studies that examined program effects on recidivism. Many were reportedly “of such poor scientific merit that it is impossible to determine the impact of the programs.” One of the common errors was to compare only program completers to untreated comparison groups,

ignoring dropouts, which probably biased the findings in favor of the programs. They concluded “there is insufficient evidence to determine whether outpatient treatment alone, specific components of the treatment (such as acupuncture), or aspects of the treatment (intensity) are effective in reducing criminality. Outpatient treatment designed as aftercare to prison-based therapeutic communities (TCs) is shown to be effective. However, it is unclear whether this is the effect of the TC, the length of treatment, or the combination of the TC and the aftercare” (p. 383).

## **A Roadmap to This Report**

Chapter 2 provides a brief history of how the Fortune Society was established and how it has developed since its inception in the 1960s. Chapter 3 describes the offender population that comes to Fortune for services, focusing primarily upon those coming during the 2000-2005 period. How the organization addresses those needs is examined in Chapter 4.

Because the purpose of this evaluation is to explore the extent to which receiving supportive services at Fortune improves clients’ prospects for law abiding behavior, we undertook to estimate the effects of Fortune’s services on criminal recidivism following release from incarceration, using statistical techniques. These analyses are described at length in Chapter 5. For reasons discussed there, we did not aim to estimate the effectiveness of specific services for achieving the intermediate outcomes listed in Figure 1.1. Instead, our focus was on the relationship between having participated at Fortune, receiving any type of service, and subsequent recidivism.

The one exception to this is our examination of Fortune’s impact on clients’ homelessness. Fortune provides homeless services to clients, and the immediate results are relatively easy to count (the number of persons given shelter in the organization’s housing unit upon coming out of prison or jail, for example). But homelessness can also be seen as an indicator of more general social stability throughout the months and years following release—albeit an indicator of perhaps the most extreme condition of instability. Chapter 6 examines, using statistical techniques, the evidence of improved social stability (according to this measure) and receipt of any and all services at the Fortune Society following release from incarceration—and not just homeless services. Some concluding thoughts are offered in Chapter 7.

## 2. Building the Fortune Society

During the past four decades, the Fortune Society has grown from an unfunded and informally organized initiative to an organization with a \$13-14 million annual budget and a staff of about 200 persons, who serve approximately 3,000-3,500 ex-prisoners annually. This chapter traces the growth of this organization.

### Fortune and Men's Eyes: The Beginnings

In 1966, David Rothenberg, a young Broadway producer, was sent a script for a play called *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. The play, written by a former prisoner, was about a man who was raped in prison and the horrors of prison life. This was Rothenberg's first introduction to prisons. To prepare for the play, Rothenberg and the actors took a tour of the Adolescent Remand Center, part of an enormous New York City jail complex located on Riker's Island in the East River. Rothenberg reported being traumatized by what he saw there. "I was overwhelmed by that visit...by seeing the hordes of youngsters in cages. It seemed to me, instinctively, that if this is how we warehouse kids with problems, we'd be inheriting much worse when they returned to the streets."<sup>3</sup>

One night after the play opened and the curtain closed, someone stood up in the audience and questioned its validity. This prompted an ex-prisoner in the audience, to stand up and share his own traumatic prison experiences. Thereafter, question and answer sessions after the show involving the audience and actors became a weekly feature and the play became a magnet for former prisoners to talk about their prison experiences. The popularity of the play and the weekly sessions grew, and *The New York Times* ran a story called "The Drama Continues After the Curtain Falls."

In 1967, Rothenberg and some ex-prisoners decided to formalize this initiative by establishing the Fortune Society to educate the public on prisoner issues and to advocate for the rights of prisoners and individuals released from prison. Working out of Rothenberg's theater office, they began the *Fortune Newsletter*. It soon became popular among prison inmates and the New York State Department of Correctional Services banned it from its prisons. The society took the state to court and in 1970, in *Fortune v. McGinnis*, it won the right to distribute the newsletter to prisoners in New York.<sup>4</sup> This newsletter continues to be distributed in the state's prisons and to the general public today.

### The Fortune Society Becomes an Organization

In the late 1960s, Rothenberg and several former prisoners were invited to appear on *The David Suskind Show*, a television talk show. At the end of the show, the host told the broadcast audience that the Fortune Society was dedicated to helping ex-offenders and gave the address of his theater office. When Rothenberg arrived at his office the next morning, there were twenty-five former prisoners waiting for him. According to Rothenberg, "they were ex-cons looking for the same thing people are looking for today when coming from prison—help and assistance." Rothenberg was unprepared to deal with the number of people expecting to get services from Fortune. One ex-prisoner, who became Fortune's first

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted at [http://www.fortunesociety.org/01\\_about/history.html](http://www.fortunesociety.org/01_about/history.html).

<sup>4</sup> 319 F. Supp., 901,905 (S.D.N.Y.).

counselor, took control of the situation and began counseling the men about life after prison. A few years later, another ex-offender joined as a counselor.

During these early years, informal counseling was the primary service provided to ex-offenders who came to Fortune. Later, other services were developed to respond to various other needs of prisoners coming for help. For example, Rothenberg described how educational services were introduced when it became evident that an employee, who was a former prisoner, had difficulty reading. Today, Fortune managers say that this is still the case; services originate at Fortune to respond to the needs presented by clients who come to the organization.

Attention to prisoners and their plight took a dramatic turn in September 1971, when prisoners at the Attica Correctional Facility—a maximum-security prison and one of the oldest in the country—rioted and took a number of correctional officers hostage to protest prison conditions. During a four-day standoff, the prisoners requested that a number of outsiders come into the prison to serve as observers and intermediaries. Rothenberg and two of his ex-prisoner counselors were invited, and they went into the prison as members of the Observers Committee. After the state police took back the prison, killing forty-three prisoners and officers in the process, the Fortune Society held a funeral for the unclaimed prisoners who were killed during the incident. This put the organization in a media spotlight and for weeks reporters and television crews were set up in Fortune's offices. As a result of this exposure, the Fortune Society's visible presence as a prisoners' advocacy organization was solidified.

During the years that followed, the organization provided counseling, career development services, and literacy instruction. There were only a few paid staff, augmented by volunteers who tutored clients—most often teaching clients how to read—and the annual budgets were small, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The organization's activities were subsidized by Rothenberg's plays, a \$2.00 per year membership for the newsletter, and some contributions from individuals.

As with many small social service organizations, the demand for services outstripped the resources available. Revenue shortfalls were chronic problems that were managed in various ways, by relying on volunteered labor, working overtime, and other strategies. By the mid-1980s, the problem became acute, with expenditures outpacing revenues by significant amounts. At this point, it was clear that two basic choices were available—to cut back services and shrink the organization or to develop a different strategy to grow revenues substantially. Ultimately, Rothenberg and the board of directors chose the latter course and reorganized the management team.

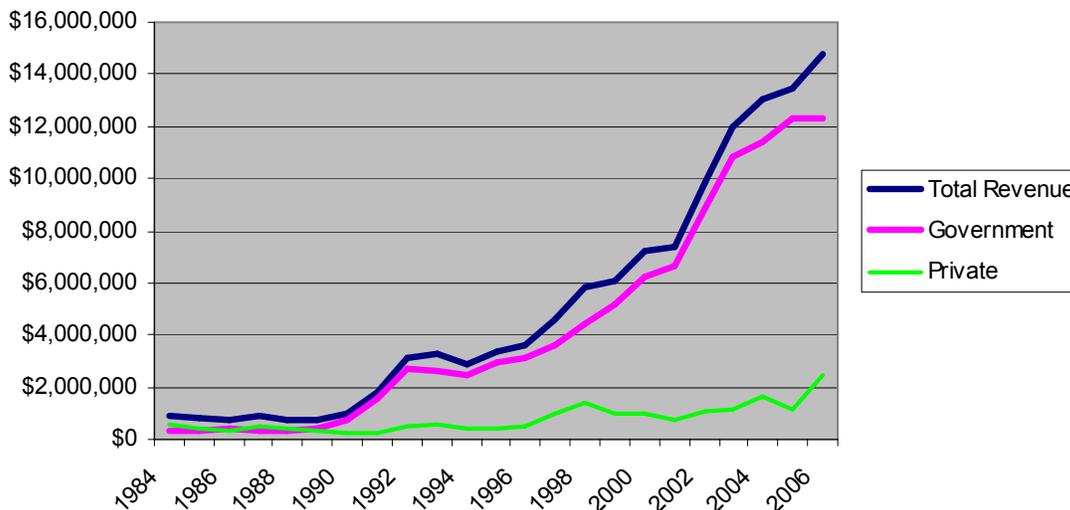
### **New Leadership and Subsequent Growth**

After serving as the executive director of the Fortune Society for almost 18 years, Rothenberg officially retired in 1986 and passed the job to a successor. In 1990, the responsibility for managing the organization was given to JoAnne Page, who has held that position since then. Ms. Page had been working as a volunteer at Fortune since the late 1970s as a tutor and counselor-trainer. A graduate of the Yale Law School, she had been a criminal defense attorney with the Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn and had designed and managed alternative to incarceration programs for the Court Employment Project in New York City. According to Rothenberg, she “had the vision for growth.” Under her leadership, the organization has indeed grown. When she assumed the executive directorship, Fortune employed only 22 persons; today it employs about 200.

Page led the effort to put Fortune on firmer financial footing. When she became executive director, the organization was in financial jeopardy with an annual budget of about \$800,000 and revenues of about \$700,000. As the new executive director, she became the chief fundraiser and was able to bring financial continuity to Fortune. By diversifying funding, Fortune has become financially viable; by 2006, it received funds from various sources, including government support, individual and foundation contributions, bequests and matching gifts, direct mail/renewals, newsletter subscriptions, special events and other miscellaneous sources of income. The most dramatic shift was the turn to government grants and contracts. Private donations remained relatively constant but revenues from city, state and federal governments increased from less than \$1 million in the late 1980s to \$12 million in 2006. Page and her staff devoted substantial resources (almost \$500,000 in 2006) to fundraising. In recent years, the organization has received funding for a diverse collection of services from, among others, New York Mental Health Research Association, NYC Coordinator for Criminal Justice, NYC Department for Homeless Services, NYC Department of Probation, NYC Department for Youth and Community Development, NYS Department of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, NYS Office for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, NYS Education Department, Robin Hood Foundation, STRIVE, US Department of Education, US Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

**Figure 2.1**

**Growth in Revenues, 1979-2006, by Source of Funding**



Sources: *The Fortune Society*

Fortune is a not-for-profit organization with an active board of volunteer directors. Board members include academic criminologists, attorneys, marketing and financial consultants, television producers, and other criminal justice experts. A third of the board members are former prisoners or persons with histories of substance abuse, and half are persons of color. The board meets quarterly, with committee meetings in the intervening months; standing committees include executive, finance, development,

program and nominating. In addition to their fiduciary responsibilities, they work closely with the Ms. Page to create the vision and set overall direction of the agency.

### **The Fortune Society's Mission**

Statements declaring the Fortune Society's goals reflect the organization's roots in serving ex-prisoners and advocating on their behalf—essentially charitable purposes. Fortune's managers and their staff see providing services to prisoners and ex-prisoners as an end in itself, but they also hope that their work brings broader social benefits—such as less crime. One recent statement of mission reads:

The Fortune Society exists to help prisoners, former prisoners, and those facing jail or prison time. The Fortune Society works to improve prison conditions and protect the rights of prisoners. Staffed primarily by former prisoners, we are committed to providing the foundation from which new lives can be launched. The Fortune society seeks to reverse current punitive criminal justice policy, and to address the root cause of crime through outreach and advocacy. Fortune is committed to having its services and advocacy shaped by the prison and transition experiences of former prisoners. The Fortune Society recognizes the importance of prevention by developing services that reflect the needs of our clients and their families. Fortune acts to reverse the current plague of prison construction and mass incarceration by changing minds and building lives.

### **Diverse Services**

Peer counseling, career development and education have been the backbone of Fortune since its inception. In more recent years, under the leadership of Ms. Page other services have been established, these include, health services, the Alternatives to Incarceration Program, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, a drop-in center for individuals recently released and in need of immediate services, and a housing facility for homeless ex-prisoners. Today, Fortune offers a comprehensive array of services for persons transitioning from prison to the community. As one staff person put it, Fortune is a “one stop shop for re-entry.”

### **Numbers of Clients Served**

During 2005, about 3,450 individuals received services from the Fortune Society. Most of these clients came to Fortune voluntarily, although a small proportion were ordered to do so by the courts as a condition of a probation sentence. Fortune contracts with the NYS Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives to provide services to offenders who are convicted in criminal court and sentenced to an “alternative to incarceration”—a sentence requiring the offender to participate in Fortune's programming as a condition of probation rather than being sent to jail or prison. Over the years, the numbers of offenders ordered to participate in Fortune's program as a condition of their sentence increased, from fewer than 100 in 1995 to about 350 in 2005.<sup>5</sup> Because the conditions of participation differ for these “ATI” clients than for the voluntary participants, they are excluded from further analyses in this report.

Among the 3,100 non-ATI clients who came to Fortune during 2005, 1,721 of them came to Fortune for the first time during that year, while the others had begun to receive services in earlier years. Most were served in group settings rather than in one-to-one sessions. In 2005, for example, 2,323 clients received

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<sup>5</sup> This is the number of ATI contracts with prisoners that were initiated during the year.

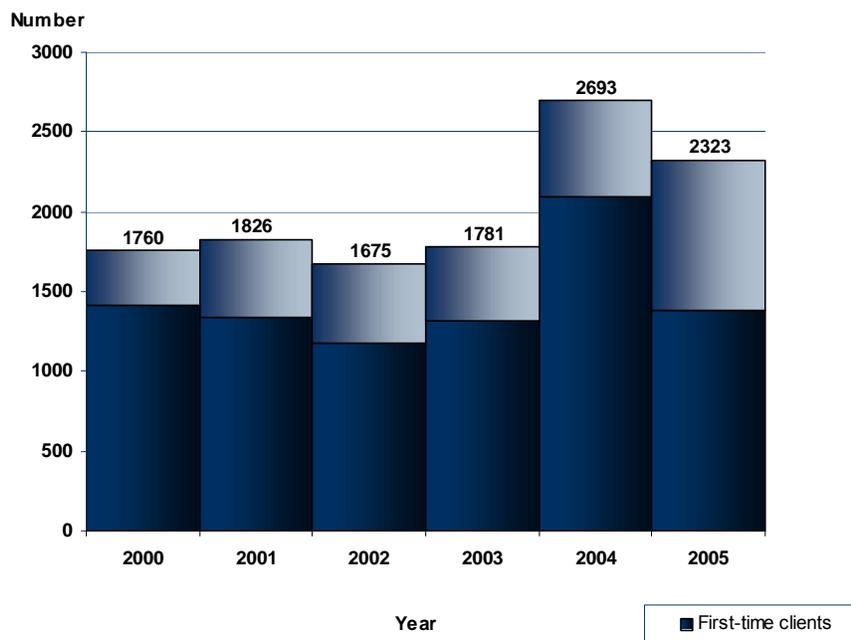
services in group sessions (Figure 2.1). This number was about 10 percent lower than in 2004, but higher than the numbers served during earlier years.

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**Figure 2.1**

**Number of Clients Accessing Group Services by Year**

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Notes: First-time clients refer to those clients accessing group activities for the first time during a particular year. Offenders directed by the courts to participate in the Alternatives to Incarceration Program are not included.

Sources: Computed from data provided by the Fortune Society

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## The Costs of Delivering Fortune’s Services

During 2006, the Fortune Society spent approximately \$14.4 million for operations (Table 2.1). This included spending for all services, including the Alternatives to Incarceration Program (\$2.9 million), which was not examined in this study. The largest operating expense was for staff salaries and fringe benefits (\$9.1 million, or 63 percent of the total annual expenditure). During this year, the organization employed about 180 full-time staff and 15 part-timers. About four-fifths of all spending was incurred in direct support of program services to clients; 18 percent covered management and general administration costs, and 3% was devoted to fundraising activities.

**Table 2.1**

**The Fortune Society's Operating Costs, 2006**

	<b>Program Services</b>	<b>Management and General Admin.</b>	<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Salaries and Fringe Benefits</b>	\$7,059,206	\$1,689,001	\$328,668	\$9,076,875	(63%)
<b>Other</b>	4,316,658	883,064	138,755	5,338,477	(37%)
<b>Total</b>	\$11,375,864	\$2,572,065	\$467,423	\$14,415,352	(100%)
<b>(Percent of Total)</b>	(79%)	(18%)	(3%)	(100%)	

Note: Includes spending for the Alternatives to Incarceration program (\$2.9 million).

Sources: *The Fortune Society Inc., Consolidated Statement of Functional Expenses for the Year Ended December 31, 2006 (Preliminary)*

Because we have a full year's information for 2005 about clients served, the cost per client during that year can be computed. In that year, the total expenditure was \$12.9 million, and \$10.1 million was for services other than the Alternatives to Incarceration Program. A total of 3,100 clients were served that year, including all persons who receiving one or more sessions of any type of service and excluding clients in the ATI program. The average annual cost per client served that year was therefore about \$3,265. This is an average cost for all clients, but expenditures for some clients who stayed and consumed many services were higher, while comparatively little was spent for persons who dropped out soon after intake.

### 3. Who Comes to the Fortune Society?

Persons coming to the Fortune Society in search of assistance typically have substantial criminal records, little education, no legitimate employment, few employable skills, and are dependent upon others for a place to live. These are not generally people early in their adult lives, but are older: their average age is 34. By the time that they come to Fortune, they have spent more than four years, on average, in the state prison system.<sup>6</sup> Eight in 10 clients are men; 64 percent are African American, and a third are of Hispanic origin. This chapter provides a brief description of these clients and the needs that they present.

#### Pathways into Fortune

Thirty-five percent of the clients who came to Fortune for the first time in 2005 were referred by their parole or probation officer (Table 3.1). Twenty-seven percent came to Fortune on their own, often after hearing about the program from another Fortune client, a friend, family member, or through the Fortune newsletter. Other sources of referral included other services agencies, other criminal justice personnel such as correctional facility staff and criminal justice or court advocates, and some (about 13 percent) came as a result of Fortune’s outreach efforts.

**Table 3.1**

#### How Clients Came to Fortune (2005 Enrollees)

Source	Percent
Parole/Probation referral	35%
Other criminal justice referral	6
On own initiative	27
Other services agency	10
Fortune outreach presentation	9
Other	13

*Notes:* Includes all clients who enrolled or reenrolled for the first time during 2005 (that is, excluding persons who had enrolled in previous years and was still active at the beginning of 2005). Persons ordered by the court under the Alternative to Incarceration program were excluded from these analyses.

*Sources:* Computed from data provided by the Fortune Society

#### Prior Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

The Fortune Society does not obtain elaborate information about clients’ prior criminal histories, as this detail is considered less important than the needs they have for services. We obtained this information for this study from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the official repository for criminal history information for all persons arrested and convicted in the state. Official criminal histories were requested and provided for all Fortune clients who had been released from state prisons or from the New York City jails after serving a sentence between January 1, 2000 and the end of 2005. This included information about all arrests that resulted in convictions in adult courts (juvenile records were sealed) as

<sup>6</sup> These statistics were computed by Abt Associates using data described below for clients coming to Fortune between 2000 and 2005.

well as information about the nature of the arrest and conviction charges and the disposition of those cases, including sentences and incarcerations.

Many clients were released from jail or prison more than once during this period, either because they had been arrested and sentenced again or because they had been incarcerated for violating conditions of probation and parole and then released again. Moreover, some clients enrolled at Fortune more than once, which Fortune staff permit and even encourage if services are needed. To fix a point at which clients' criminal histories and encounters with the criminal justice system could be characterized, we identified the date when clients first enrolled (or reenrolled) following their first release from jail or prison after January 1, 2000. At this point, 44 percent had been released most recently from NYC's jails, and 56 percent from one of the state's prisons.

Among those released from prison, 54 percent had earned discretionary parole release and another 35 percent had been released conditionally—meaning that they served their maximum sentence minus whatever time off for good behavior they had earned. Both offenders released conditionally and to parole were under the supervision of the state's Division of Parole. Only 6 percent had been released after fulfilling their entire sentence in prison.

Criminal offenders serve sentences of a year or less in the city's jails. They serve their entire sentences there and are not permitted by law to be released to parole supervision. If the courts imposed a probation sentence in addition to a jail sentence, offenders are supervised by the New York City Department of Probation following release.

In the entire client population released from state prison and the New York City jails during this six-year period, a combined total of 51 percent were under parole supervision at the time of release and some unspecified (but no doubt small) number of city jail inmates were supervised by probation authorities. Not all of these were still under supervision by the time that they came to Fortune for services, because many had completed their sentence by then.

At this point of their first enrollment after being released from prison or jail after January 1, 2000, Fortune clients had been convicted of criminal offenses as adults an average of 11 times (Table 3.2). Seventy-five percent had been convicted previously for drug law offenses, 65 percent for violent crimes, and 70 percent had been convicted of one or more property crimes. The most common crime on their records was for drugs: an average of 5 of the 11 prior convictions were for drug law offenses. Accordingly, the most common conviction for clients coming out of prison or jail during this period to Fortune was for a drug offense (39 percent). Twenty percent had been convicted and incarcerated for a violent crime and 32 percent for a property crime.

**Table 3.2**

**Criminal Histories of Fortune Clients (2000-2005)**

Average number of prior convictions	11.2
Average number of convictions for:	
– Violent offense	1.0
– Property offense	0.7
– Drug offense	4.9
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	3.6
Percent convicted previously of:	
– Violent offense	65%
– Property offense	70%
– Drug offense	75%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	34%
Total time incarcerated in state prison as an adult	4.2 years
<b>Most Recent Incarceration Prior to Fortune Enrollment</b>	
Top charge at arrest	
– Violent offense	23%
– Property offense	28%
– Drug offense	41%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	7%
Top charge at conviction:	
– Violent offense	20%
– Property offense	32%
– Drug offense	39%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	9%

Notes:

<sup>b</sup> Includes weapons offenses.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

**Education and Employment**

Nearly all (90 percent) of the clients coming to Fortune during 2005 were unemployed, although 73 percent said that they were looking for work (Table 3.3). Twenty-nine percent reported no current source of income, 26 percent relied on financial support from family or friends, about a fifth received some form of support from government agencies, and some no doubt relied in part upon earnings from crimes. Opportunities for legitimate employment are limited by the fact that, in addition to having a criminal record, they have low educational attainment—half of the clients do not have a high-school diploma, few have some college experience (only 14 percent) and only 3 percent had earned a college or graduate degree.

**Table 3.3**

**Education, Employment and Primary Source of Income: Fortune Clients (2000-2005)**

	Percent
<b>Education</b>	
11th grade or below	50.1%
High school/GED	32.6
Some college	14.3
Bachelor's degree	2.4
Graduate degree	0.5
NA	0.1
<b>Current Employment Status</b>	
Unemployed, looking for work	73%
Unemployed, not looking for work	15
Employed, FT (35 hrs/wk)	7
Employed, PT (<35 hrs/wk)	3
Not in Labor Force (Disabled, retired, etc.)	2
<b>Primary Source of Income</b>	
Wages from employment	9%
Family, spouse, friends	26
Public assistance/entitlements	21
None	29
Other (including crime?)	14

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.*

## Marital and Living Arrangements

Most clients were single, dependent upon others for a place to live (even though they were in their thirties, on average), and a significant proportion was homeless. Only 12 percent were married or had a domestic partner. Three quarters were single and never married, another 13 had been married previously but were currently single (Table 3.4). A third lived with their parents, 19 percent with brothers, sisters or other family relatives, 22 percent with non-related others, and 16 percent lived with their spouse or domestic partner. Ten percent lived alone.

A large proportion (17 percent) of those enrolled at Fortune during 2005 were homeless when they arrived seeking services and another 16 percent were at imminent risk of being homeless. Twenty-three percent reported having been homeless at some point in their lives (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4**

**Marital Status and Residential Arrangement: Fortune Clients (2005)**

	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never married	75%
Previously married	13
Married/domestic partner	12
<b>Children</b>	
Has child under 18	38%
Lives with child under 18	9
Has legal custody of child under 18	9
<b>Homelessness</b>	
Ever homeless	23%
Imminent risk of homelessness	16
<b>Living Arrangements</b>	
Living w/ parent(s)	33%
Living w/ non-related others	22
Living w/ other relative(s)	19
Living w/ spouse or significant other	16
Living alone	10

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.*

## **Health and Mental Health**

Approximately 12 percent of Fortune clients enrolled during 2005 had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS or were HIV positive (Table 3.5). Significant proportions also reported having histories of mental disorders. Twelve percent reported having received some type of outpatient mental health treatment in the past, and almost 8 percent had received inpatient mental health treatment. Moreover, 12 percent said that they had considered committing suicide at some point in their life and 7 percent said that they had in fact attempted to do so.

**Table 3.5**

**Health and Mental Health: Fortune Clients (2005)**

	Percent
<b>HIV Status</b>	
HIV/AIDS	6%
HIV+ (symptomatic)	1
HIV+ (asymptomatic)	5
<b>Mental Health</b>	
Ever received outpatient mental health treatment	12%
Ever received inpatient mental health treatment	8
Ever considered suicide	12
Ever attempted suicide	7

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.*

## Needs For Service

As part of the intake process, counselors conduct a needs assessment of clients. Unfortunately, counselors update the electronic records every time that a client moves from one specific program to another, overwriting the data that were entered earlier. It is therefore not possible to determine which needs were identified at the time of enrollment. Nonetheless, the service needs that were on clients' records at the time of data collection provide a picture of their outstanding needs at that time.

Among those enrolling for services in 2005, the most commonly recorded need was for employment assistance or vocational development; this was listed in the records of 56 percent of the clients (Table 3.6). This is not surprising as nine out of ten were out of work at the time of enrollment, and that three-quarters of the clients were looking for work (Table 3.3 above). The next most commonly recorded service need was for substance abuse treatment: 31 percent of the clients were listed as needing these services. A significant proportion also needed help in obtaining transportation assistance (subway money, most likely), government benefits, housing, and various other needs. The following chapter examines how Fortune sought to address these needs for services.

**Table 3.6**

**Fortune Clients' Needs For Services (2005)**

	<b>Proportion Needing Service</b>
Employment/vocation	56%
Substance use treatment	31
Other	20
Transportation	19
Housing	16
Social supports (groups)	14
Benefits/entitlements	10
Education	9
Legal assistance/advocacy	7
Primary health care	7
Family service (incl. child care)	5
Food, clothing	5
HIV/AIDS issues (specific)	5
Mental Health Care	5
Medications	3
Domestic violence assistance	2
Income or financial aid	2

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 percent because some clients presented more than one need for service.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

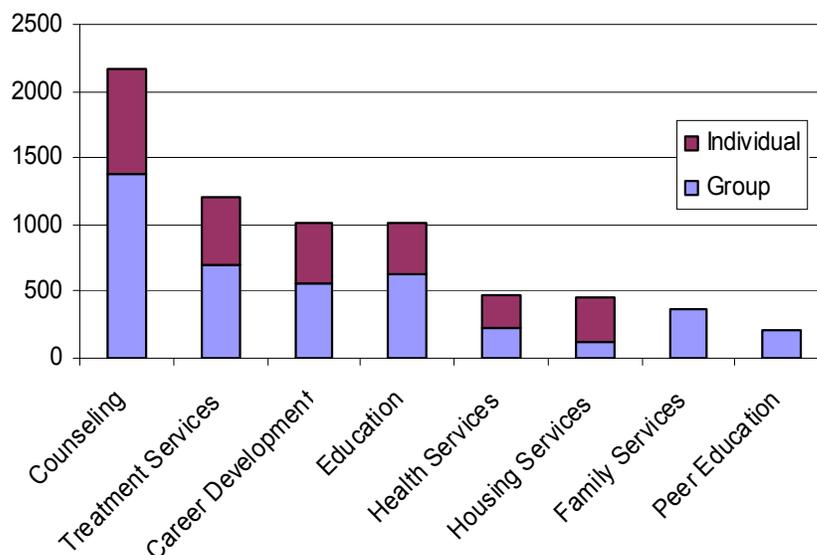
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## 4. The Fortune Society's Services

At the most general level, the Fortune Society's services include enrolling offenders who come for services, identifying their needs, placing them in one or more of the organization's units designed to address these needs or—in the event that Fortune is unable to provide appropriate services—referring them to other providers. Of the 3,100 clients who were served by Fortune in 2005 (excluding those sent to Fortune's ATI program), approximately two-thirds received counseling services (Figure 4.1). Substance abuse treatment services were the next most frequent, followed by career development and education services. The remaining services—health and transition services for HIV-infected offenders, family services, housing assistance, and peer education—were given to smaller numbers of clients. Most types of services were delivered either in group settings or individually in one-to-one meetings.

**Figure 4.1**

**Numbers of Clients Served by Each of Fortune's Units During 2005, by Group or Individual Session**



**Notes:** Includes clients who attended at least one group or individual service session during 2005, regardless of when they first started attending counseling sessions. Excludes clients directed by the courts to the Alternatives to Incarceration program.

**Sources:** Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society

There are three primary patterns of obtaining services at Fortune. The most common is to be admitted to the counseling unit first; two-thirds of all clients enrolled at Fortune during 2000-2005 were served first by this unit (Table 4.1). Ten and 19 percent of the clients during this period were served first by the health services unit and the substance abuse treatment units, respectively. The other units were points of entry for even smaller numbers of clients.

**Table 4.1**

**First Service Encountered by Clients, 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Counseling services	6,328	66%
Health services	982	10
Treatment services	818	9
Peer training	76	<1
PTI-PEPSA	401	4
Family services	427	4
Drop-in center	286	3
Academy	238	2
Education	13	<1
Career development	11	<1
Total	11,447	100%

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society*

Most clients do not receive a second service beyond their first. During 2000-2005, only 29 percent were referred by Fortune staff or elected on their own initiative to receive a second service (Table 4.2). Approximately half of those second services were counseling sessions, in large part because half of those referrals out of counseling were for further counseling, which was recorded as a second enrollment for service but which should probably be considered really a continuation of service rather than a second one. About half of those who came through the health services unit or the family services unit first went on to a second service, whereas only a quarter of those going through counseling or substance abuse treatment went further.

**Table 4.2**

**Clients Receiving a Second Service, 2000-2005, By First Type of Service**

First Type of Service	Number Going to Second Service	Proportion Going to Second Service
From all services	4,579	29%
Counseling services	2,589	25
Health services	1,027	53
Treatment services	348	22
Peer training	70	10
PTI-PEPSA	78	16
Family services	242	57
Drop-In center	16	6
Academy	184	77
Education	14	100
Career development	11	100%

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society*

Most clients who went through intake processes during 2000-2005 did not complete the course of service that Fortune offered and were ultimately discharged as “unsuccessful” clients (Figure 4.2). From 2000 through 2004, fewer than half were discharged successfully. In 2005, the successful completion rate reached 55 percent, the highest observed over this six-year period.

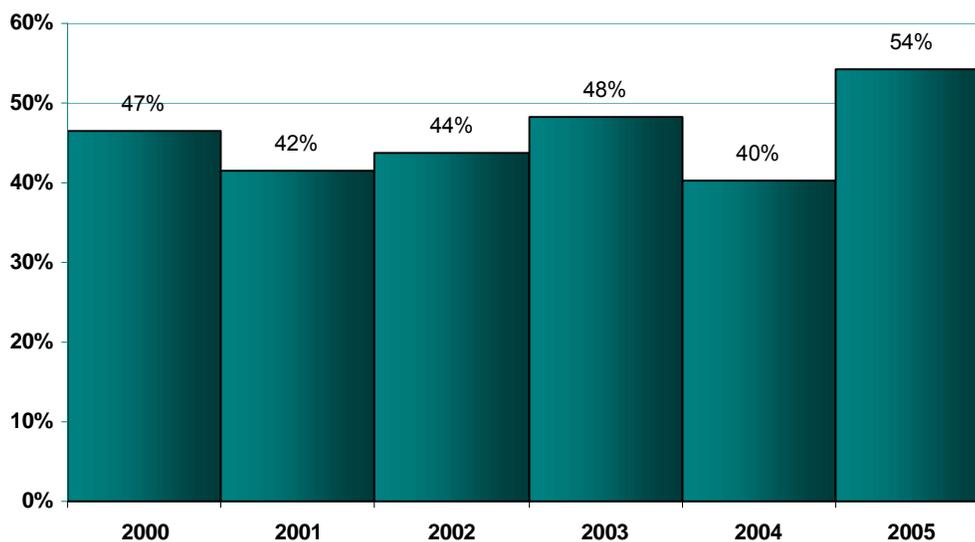
What constituted “successful” completion varied from one service unit to the next. For example, to graduate from the treatment services unit, clients were required to attend counseling, a relapse prevention training, to develop an aftercare plan, and to continue being sober and drug free for at least 90 consecutive days. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, successful and unsuccessful completion rates varied according to the service unit.

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**Figure 4.2**

**Proportion of Fortune Clients Who Were Discharged Following “Successful” Performance, 2000-2005**

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Note: “Successful” includes completing program, some other type of successful exit, or a transfer to another Fortune program. During the 2000-2005 period, 32 percent completed program, 6 percent had another successful exit, and 8 percent transferred to another Fortune program. Excludes clients in the Alternatives to Incarceration program.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates Inc. using data provided by the Fortune Society.

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Half of the clients discharged during this period attended a total 9 or fewer group sessions before being discharged (Table 4.3). This includes all group sessions that clients attended since the mid-1990s regardless of whether they attended during the most recent episode of service or years apart. This does not count sessions that were held individually with clients because these meetings were not counted prior to 2005. During 2005, half of all clients attended a total of 11 sessions, either in group or one-to-one settings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This does not include any sessions, either group or individual, that the client may have attended in previous years.

**Table 4.3**

**Number of Service Sessions Per Client and Length of Time Prior to Discharge**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Service Sessions Attended, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	32	9	4	36	659
Number of Group & Individual Sessions in 2005	42	11	3	39	716

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Counseling Services

The counseling unit, the first stop for most clients, is the core component of the organization and was the first service provided by Fortune. When clients come to Fortune, they are usually directed to this unit, where a counselor initiates a formal enrollment procedure and undertakes an assessment of the person’s needs. Fortune’s policy and practice is to attend first to the most pressing and immediate needs (for food, shelter, and clothing, for example), and counselors assume responsibility for identifying the needed resources. Fortune provides free meals on an as-needed basis and the housing unit can be engaged to find emergency shelter. Once these emergency needs are addressed, counselors can then address clients’ various other needs. They may refer clients to any of the various programs that Fortune offers, such as career development, educational services, or housing services, or they may refer to other services provided by other organizations or agencies. Examples of the latter include mental health care, legal services, and in-patient substance abuse treatment. Counselors therefore act as the traffic coordinators for the organization, steering clients to needed services. They also may counsel clients directly in group sessions—such as men’s groups, parenting workshops, and violence prevention workshops—or in one-on-one sessions. During 2005, for example, almost 1,400 clients were served in group sessions (Figure 4.3), and another 790 in individual meetings (which are not shown in this figure).

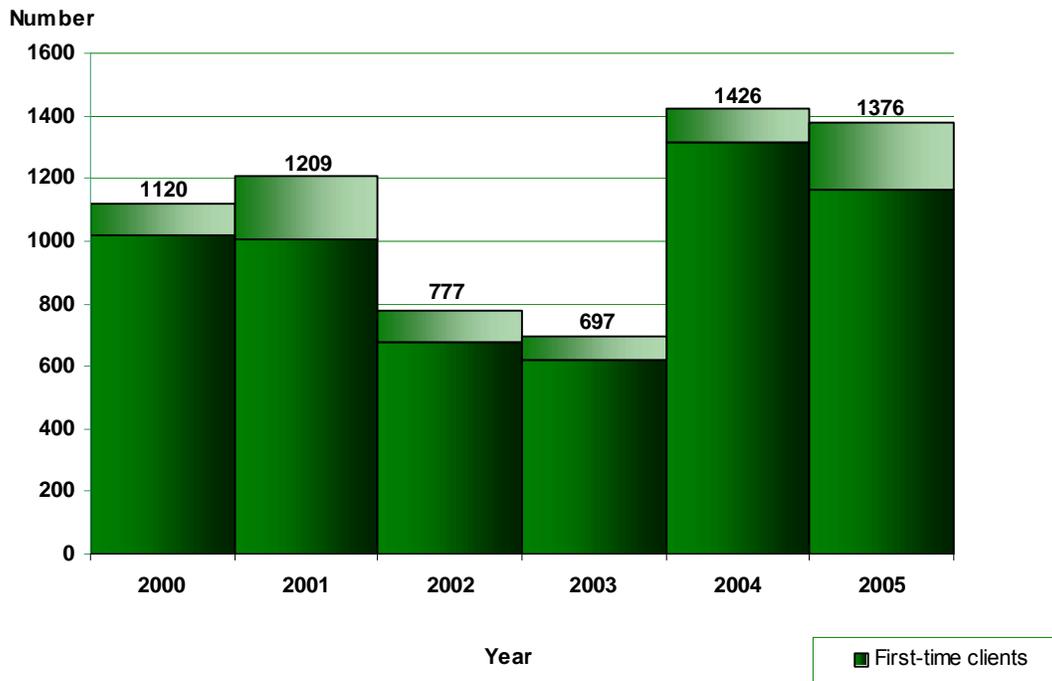
In the early years, as discussed above, informal counseling took place in the founder’s office. This was done not by persons trained formally in social work or social service professions but by volunteers and peers, including—most importantly—ex-offenders. Today, the service is more structured, following a social casework model, whereby counselors work to identify clients’ needs to link them to programs that will address their psychosocial needs.

Fortune’s program model still relies upon paraprofessional counseling staff, however. Many counselors first came to Fortune as clients seeking services, and ended up being recruited to their staff positions. This is an important element of Fortune’s operation for several reasons. The first is that Fortune seeks to maintain a hospitable environment to offenders seeking services. Because they once came through the door in similar circumstances, counselors are intimately familiar with the circumstances clients face. This may reduce the social distance between service provider and client, which probably increases the likelihood of engagement with Fortune. The other reason is that this arrangement offers offenders a visible career ladder. Persons with long criminal records have few prospects for good work, and offender service organizations like Fortune are among the few places that are open to them.

Trends in annual counseling enrollments can be seen only for clients receiving group counseling services because Fortune’s electronic data system did not capture individual sessions before 2005. Changes in the numbers of clients who obtained these group counseling services has varied in recent years, ranging from about 700 clients in 2003 and twice that number in 2004 (Figure 4.3). The number of first-time clients during each year was slightly smaller (indicated by the darker shade in each stack).

**Figure 4.3**

**Number of Clients Accessing Group Counseling Services by Year**



Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

In 2000-2005, half of the clients in counseling attended only one group counseling session (Table 4.4). Seventy-five percent attended only 6 or fewer. One client attended over 400 sessions, so that the mean (10 sessions) provides a distorted measure of the typical pattern. Clients also received individual counseling sessions but these could only be counted after 2004, when Fortune implemented a new management information system. During 2005, when individual sessions can be included in the count, the total number of counseling sessions per client is shown to be greater. Half of the clients attended a total of only three sessions during that year, either individual or group (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4**

**Number of Counseling Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in Counseling**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Counseling Sessions Received, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	10	1	1	6	418
Number of Group & Individual Counseling Sessions in 2005	12	3	1	10	384

Note: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: *Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.*

Fortune counselors kept track of the reasons why clients were discharged from counseling. (See “Reasons for Discharge from Fortune Programs” to see how these recorded reasons were categorized.) During 2000-2005, about 6,000 persons were discharged from counseling; this included not only persons who came to counseling as the first stop but also clients who had come to the unit at other points during their stay. Forty-five percent were discharged upon meeting all or some of the goals that were set at intake (Table 4.5). This ended their involvement at Fortune for this particular episode of service, although some came back after a period of time and re-enrolled. Only 9 percent stayed at Fortune and were re-enrolled either in another service unit or, more often, for another counseling engagement. Thirty-eight percent were discharged because they dropped out or failed to respond to the counselors’ suggestions. The median time to complete counseling more or less successfully was between two and three months (Table 4.6). Those who were deemed unsuccessful stayed for shorter times.

Reasons for Discharge From Fortune Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Program completion</b></li> <li>• <b>Other successful exit</b></li> <li>• <b>Some program goals met</b></li> <li>• <b>Transfer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Transfer other organization for treatment</li> <li>– Transfer to other organization for services other than treatment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Transfer to other Fortune program</b></li> <li>• <b>Unable to Attend</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Client died</li> <li>– Family reasons</li> <li>– Job/school conflicts</li> <li>– Medical reasons</li> <li>– Moved</li> <li>– Other reasons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Unsuccessful discharge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Client left without approval</li> <li>– Client no-show or lost to follow-up</li> <li>– Re-arrested and/or re-incarcerated</li> <li>– Violated terms of parole/probation</li> <li>– Non-compliance (excessive absences, disruptive behavior, substance use, or other unspecified reason)</li> <li>– Other unsuccessful exit</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table 4.5**

**Reasons for Terminating Last Counseling Engagement: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	1,607	28%
Some program goals met	295	5
Other successful exit	656	12
Transfer (to another agency)	39	<1
Transfer to other Fortune program	494	9
Unable to attend	424	8
Unsuccessful discharge	2,142	38
Total	5,657	100%

Notes: The “last counseling engagement” is the last one in which there was a discharge during the 2000-2005 period. Clients who resumed counseling and were still active at the end of 2005 are not counted.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.6**

**Total Number of Days in Counseling by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number Clients
All Discharges	132	80	1	3677	5760
Program completion	129	84	1	2150	1592
Some program goals met	168	115	7	2470	295
Other successful exit	199	122	9	1599	656
Transfer (other agency)	100	67	10	395	39
Transfer to other Fortune program	71	24	1	667	404
Unable to attend	132	54	3	2916	423
Unsuccessful discharge	126	75	3	3677	2138

Notes: Based on the total duration of all counseling contracts per client since the mid-1990s (some clients may have more than one counseling contract) and the reason given for their last counseling contract.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

As noted above, only about one in ten clients discharged from counseling were subsequently enrolled in another service unit at Fortune. Half of those discharged during 2005 and who stayed at Fortune enrolled for another counseling engagement (Table 4.10). Thirteen percent of them went into the career development unit, 13 percent went to the education unit, and 7 percent went to family services. Only a few clients went to the other services units.

**Table 4.7**

**Clients Referred Out of Counseling to Fortune Services in 2000-2005: Where They Went**

<b>Second Type of Service</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Further counseling services	1,030	51%
Career development	296	13
Education	258	13
Family services	206	10
Treatment services	61	3
Housing services/Academy	42	2
Health services	30	1
Other	87	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Excludes 100 clients listed as being referred to the Alternatives to Incarceration program, which requires court order.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society

## Treatment Services

Fortune’s treatment services unit provides substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling to clients. Among those who came to Fortune for services in 2005, 31 percent were identified as needing substance abuse treatment. The extent of the need for treatment among released prisoners coming to Fortune was not measured, but it is likely that an even larger proportion of them had abused or was dependent upon alcohol or other drugs. Approximately three-quarters of those released from state prisons during 2000-2005 had been convicted previously of a drug crime, and had an average of 2-3 such convictions on their record. Prisoners released from NYC jails during this same period had similar backgrounds.<sup>8</sup> Some of these persons were convicted of trafficking and may not have abused or been dependent upon alcohol or drugs, but some others convicted of violent or property crimes were no doubt abusers or dependent. A nationwide survey of state and federal prisoners in 2004 estimated that about 70 percent of state prisoners used illegal drugs “regularly” prior to being incarcerated and that 53 percent met the diagnostic criteria for drug “dependence” (Mumola and Karberg, 2006). An earlier 1997 survey found that about one in three prisoners reported using alcohol at the time of committing the offense that got them in prison (Mumola, 1999). It is likely that offenders leaving New York prisons and jails have similar experiences/difficulties with drugs or alcohol.

Fortune provides licensed outpatient substance abuse treatment for clients who have mainly alcohol and/or marijuana dependencies. Clients requiring treatment for abuse of and dependence on other drugs are referred to other agencies and organizations that have the requisite ability to serve them. Fortune’s program includes an intensive treatment phase that involves individual and group counseling; a relapse prevention stage that includes relapse prevention counseling, continued sobriety, and development of an aftercare plan; and graduation once the client has remained drug-free for 90 consecutive days.

<sup>8</sup> See Tables 5.4 and 5.9 below in Chapter 5.

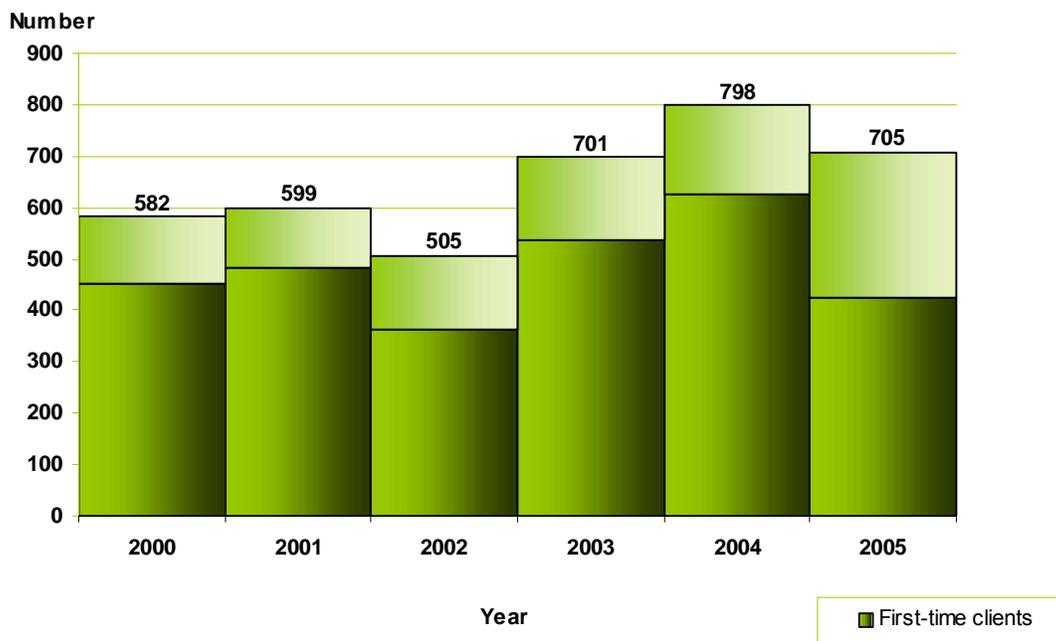
Fortune clients in the treatment services unit participate in a variety of group activities, including anger management seminars, health workshops, and nutrition workshops, among others. The number of clients receiving these group treatment services annually during 2000-2005 is shown in Figure 4.4. The numbers of clients receiving services in individual sessions or meetings is not available for 2000-2004, but in 2005, nearly 500 others received only individual sessions, or about 41 percent of the all clients in treatment.

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**Figure 4.4**

**Number of Clients Receiving Group Treatment Services Annually**

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Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

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Clients discharged from the treatment services unit during 2000-2005 attended an average of 18 group sessions, although half of these clients attended 12 or fewer (Table 4.8). In 2005, when counts of both individual and group sessions were recorded, both the average and median numbers of sessions were lower: clients attended an average of 15 sessions of either type, and half attended 5 or fewer during that 12-month period.

**Table 4.8**

**Number of Treatment Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in Treatment**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Treatment Sessions Received, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	18	12	3	27	134
Number of Group & Individual Treatment Sessions in 2005	15	5	2	20	164

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

About half of all clients served by the treatment services unit during 2000-2005 were deemed to have completed the program more or less successfully (Table 4.9). Forty-three percent graduated, and another 5 percent met some of their program goals or were considered successes. Forty-one percent of discharged clients were recorded as not succeeding in treatment. Ten percent were transferred out of the unit, either to another agency (7 percent) or to another unit within Fortune. Those who completed the program did so within an average of 179 days, or six months (Table 4.10). Those who were listed as “unsuccessful” were discharged within three months, on average, although half were out within 70 days or fewer.

**Table 4.9**

**Reasons for Discharge from Last Treatment Episode: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	496	43%
Some program goals met	32	3
Other successful exit	20	2
Transfer (other agency)	86	7
Transfer to other Fortune program	32	3
Unable to attend	21	2
Unsuccessful discharge	469	41
Total	1,156	100%

Note: These data do not include treatment services contracts that may have been initiated after a client’s last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.10**

**Total Number of Days in Treatment Services by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number Clients
All Discharges	129	119	1	612	1125
Program completion	172	179	18	612	496
Some program goals met	136	122	34	260	32
Other successful exit	116	132	12	236	20
Transfer (other agency)	102	87	1	371	85
Transfer to other Fortune program	134	136	8	426	28
Unable to attend	100	84	8	288	21
Unsuccessful discharge	90	70	1	531	457

Note: This is based on the total duration of all treatment contracts per client since the mid-1990s (some clients may have more than one treatment contract) and the reason given for their last treatment contract.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Career Development Services

Nine out of ten offenders coming to Fortune are unemployed.<sup>9</sup> Fortune’s career development unit assists clients with gaining and retaining employment largely by providing job readiness services. Clients take a two-week Job Readiness Workshop, partially based on the STRIVE (Support Training Resulting in Valuable Employees) model. In this workshop, vocational counselors work with clients to prepare them to find employment by instructing them on preparing a resume and cover letter, by providing them interviewing skills and other skills needed to gain employment. After clients have finished the program, they work with job developers who aim to find them work. Over the years Fortune has developed relationships with employers who are willing to hire former prisoners, and the job developers try to set up at least one interview per client with these employers. In addition, clients are counseled on the obstacles they are personally experiencing in obtaining and sustaining employment. The unit has a job search resource room where clients can use computers to conduct job searches online, to develop their resumes and cover letters, and to use telephones and facsimile machines to communicate with prospective employers. Not all of these service elements have been available throughout the period studied here. Different contracts supported different bundles of activities. For example, funding for a computer training program that enables clients to earn certification by Microsoft was not available until November 2003.

Fortune’s career development services have been funded by grants from STRIVE, the Robin Hood Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education’s Transitions Program, and the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

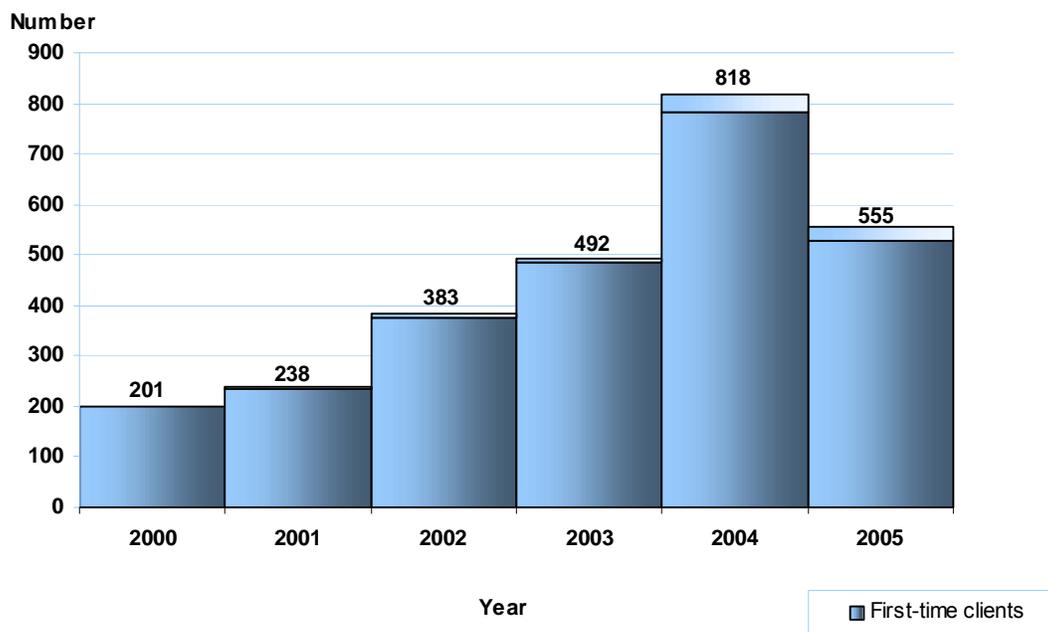
<sup>9</sup> See Table 3.3 above.

During 2005, a total of 1,016 clients were enrolled in the career development unit, and 55 percent received services in group sessions, while another 45 percent were given individual assistance. Although counts of individual sessions are not available prior to 2005, the numbers of clients receiving group services during 2000-2005 indicates the changes in the service capacity during this period (Figure 4.5).

Clients who were discharged from the career development unit during 2000-2005 attended an average of 6 group sessions prior to being discharged (Table 4.11). During 2005, when both individual and group sessions could be counted, clients attended the same number of sessions, on average.

**Figure 4.5**

**Number of Clients Receiving Group Career Development Services, 2000-2005, by Year**



Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.11**

**Number of Career Development Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in Treatment**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	6	4	3	8	34
Number of Group & Individual Sessions in 2005	6	4	1	10	33

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Education Services

The Fortune Society has been providing educational services to ex-prisoners since 1972, when a Fortune counselor, a former prisoner, told Rothenberg that he could not participate in a radio program because he was unable to read the script for the show. It became evident that many of the clients who came to Fortune were also in need of education services and that there was a desire by many to obtain their GED. A volunteer receptionist was recruited as a tutor, and she became the first teacher at Fortune. Within two weeks she had five students, and soon there was a need for more teachers to meet the demand for education services. Since then, half of those coming to Fortune have not gotten past the eleventh grade and many were probably far below grade level before dropping out.<sup>10</sup>

Today, Fortune's education unit offers classes in adult literacy, math, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation. In addition, Fortune has a computer lab in which clients are instructed on basic or more advanced computer skills (e.g., web design). Each class is staffed by a teacher/coordinator who is responsible for the curriculum, teaching the classes, and supervising volunteer tutors who help teach classes.

As with counseling services, clients participate in both group (e.g., computer lab instruction, ESOL classes) and individual activities. Of the 1,013 clients who enrolled at Fortune during 2005 and were served by this unit, about 60 percent participated in group activities, and about forty percent only in individual sessions.

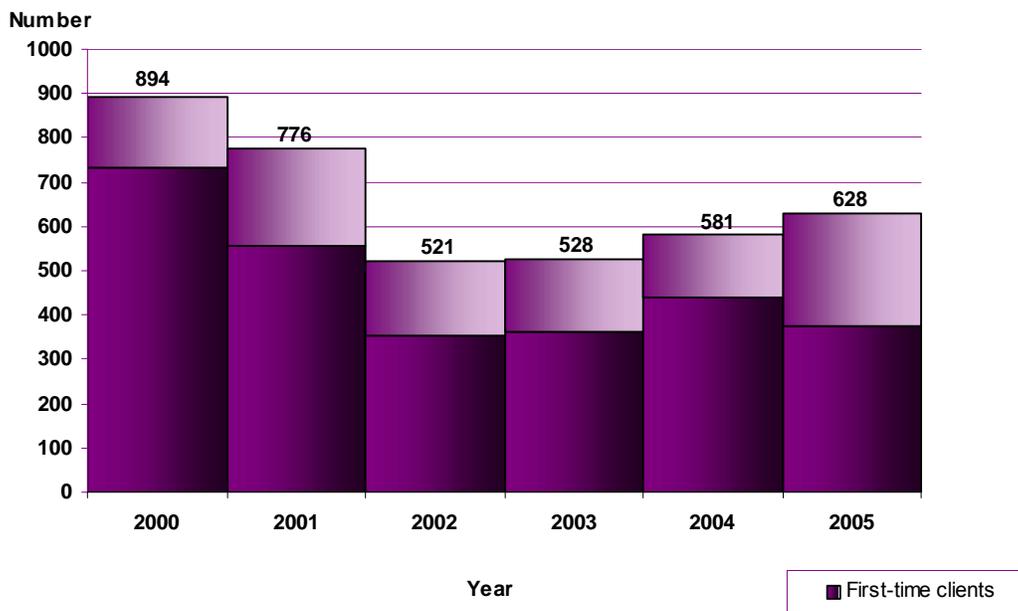
The numbers of clients served by the educational unit in group sessions have declined since 2000, when nearly 900 were served (Figure 4.6). Whether this decline was offset by an increase in individual sessions is not known, as the counts of these meetings were not recorded.

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<sup>10</sup> See Table 3.3 above.

**Figure 4.6**

**Number of Clients Attending Group Education Sessions, by Year**



Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

Half of the clients enrolling in this unit during 2000-2005 attended 9 or fewer group sessions (Table 4.12). In 2005, when both group and individual sessions were counted, half of the clients attended four or fewer sessions during the course of about a month before being discharged. As one would expect from so few sessions, most did not achieve their educational goals and were discharged without having completed the program. Only one in ten enrollees who were discharged in 2005 was reported to have completed more or less successfully (Table 4.13). Some were transferred out before completing, but three-quarters were listed as having been “unsuccessful.” This failure rate is not unexpected, given that profound educational deficits require an enormous concentration of resources and strong motivation on the part of the student to remedy.

**Table 4.12**

**Number of Educational Service Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in the Unit**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	20	9	2	25	658
Number of Group & Individual Sessions Attended in 2005	14	4	1	14	248

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.13**

**Discharge Reasons for Last Education Episode: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	30	7%
Some program goals met	3	<1
Other successful exit	9	2
Transfer (other agency)	2	<1
Transfer to other Fortune program	4	1
Unable to attend	50	12
Unsuccessful discharge	323	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: These data do not include education contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Health and Transitional Services

Approximately 7 percent of all inmates in New York State prisons during 2005, or 4,400 persons, were infected with the HIV virus. This was the largest number of HIV-infected prisoners of any state in the nation, and constituted 20 percent all HIV-positive state prisoners nationwide (Maruschak, 2007). In 1990, as the need for HIV/AIDS services among Fortune's clients became more apparent, the organization began providing HIV services and other health services to clients and their families, including, case management, education, peer training, outreach, and HIV care services. Today, Fortune's health and transitional services unit provides a comprehensive array of services for prisoners and former prisoners living with HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. Individuals who participate in the program enter it through Fortune's outreach, through referrals from other agencies, or walk into Fortune seeking services. Outreach workers regularly make presentations to prisoners who are about to be released from jails and prisons throughout New York State and to former prisoners at shelters and halfway houses. These presentations focus on various health-related issues, including HIV/AIDS, and the services available at Fortune. After staffs make their presentation, a discharge planner meets with prisoners one-on-one to determine their eligibility for the program and develop a plan for release. Those who are eligible are encouraged to come to Fortune for services; those who are ineligible are referred to other Fortune services and individuals not returning to NYC are referred to other service providers in New York State.

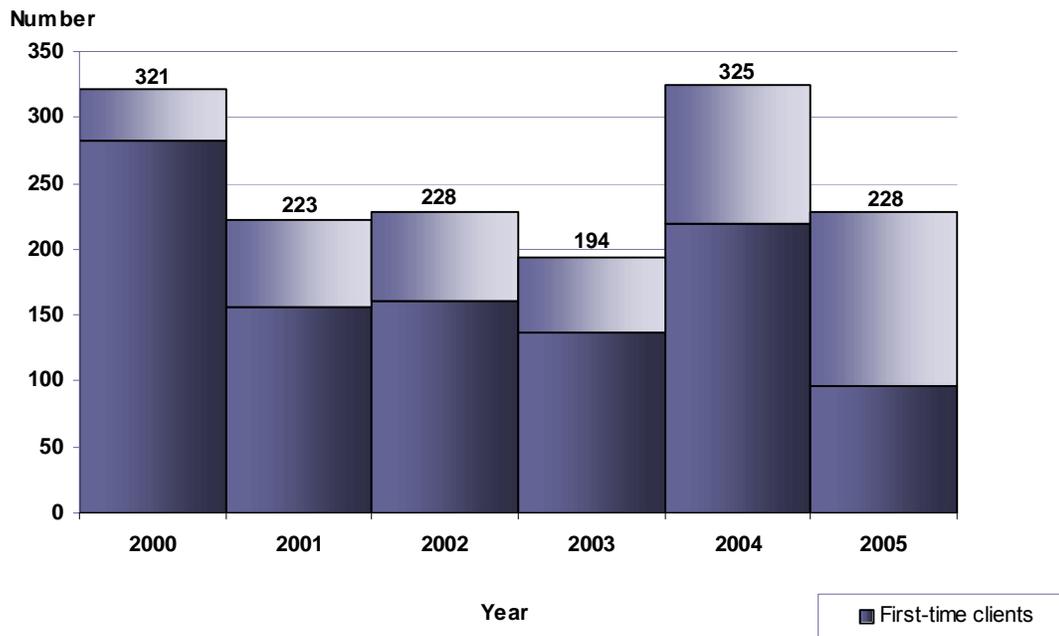
Clients coming to this unit begin with an intensive case management program. They meet with a case manager/counselor who conducts an assessment to determine their immediate needs. Once these immediate needs have been addressed and the client has housing, a source of income or public assistance, and primary medical care, the client and counselor devise an initial treatment plan outlining short and long-term goals. In addition, there are support groups available for health services unit clients. The unit also provides HIV-specific services for individuals living with HIV/AIDS, including medical referrals, treatment adherence support from a full-time nurse on Fortune's staff, and counseling for individuals and their families.

The number of clients served by this unit in group sessions has been between 200-325 each year (Figure 4.7), but a significant number of clients were also served in one-to-one sessions, which were not counted

until 2005. In 2005, 322 clients were seen in individual sessions, some of whom were also seen in groups.

**Figure 4.7**

**Number of Clients Receiving Group Health & Transitional Services, by Year**



Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.14**

**Number of Health/Transitional Services Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in the Unit**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	26	4	1	23	575
Number of Group & Individual Sessions Attended in 2005	21	2	1	14	317

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

Most clients did not complete the unit’s program satisfactorily. Six of ten discharged during 2000-2005 were listed as unsuccessful, and only 17 percent completed the program. Another 8 percent achieved some of the goals (Table 4.15).

**Table 4.15**

**Discharge Reasons for Last Health & Transitional Service Episode: Clients Discharged 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	184	17%
Some program goals met	53	5
Other successful exit	29	3
Transfer (other agency)	36	3
Transfer to other Fortune program	31	3
Unable to attend	77	7
Unsuccessful discharge	661	62
Total	1,071	100%

Notes: These data do not include health contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.16**

**Total Number of Days in Health & Transitional Services, by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged 2000-2005**

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number Clients
All Discharges	388	226	1	3529	1082
Program completion	678	508	47	3521	184
Some program goals met	693	475	59	3529	53
Other successful exit	471	206	29	2467	29
Transfer (other agency)	355	247	29	1736	36
Transfer to other Fortune program	143	80	2	602	25
Unable to attend	423	242	6	3075	77
Unsuccessful discharge	293	174	20	2300	660

Note: Based on the total duration of all health contracts per client since 1990s (some clients may have more than one contract) and the reason given for their last discharge. Data do not include health and transitional services contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Family Services

Only one-quarter of the clients coming to Fortune in 2005 were married or had a domestic partner at the time of enrollment or had been married previously. However, many others – 38 percent – had a child under the age of 18. Among those having children, only 25 percent of the clients lived with them. Men with children were more likely not to be living with their children: 79 percent of the fathers did not have their children in their households. This pattern of fathers living apart from their children is result, in part,

of their having been incarcerated, but this is not the only explanation. This pattern is common in poor communities, especially in poor African-American ones. By 1995, around 70 percent of all black children were born out of wedlock, and half of those born to married couples saw their parents divorce. The result is that about 85 percent of African-American children in the U.S. spend some or all of their childhoods in a female-headed family (Haskins, 2006).

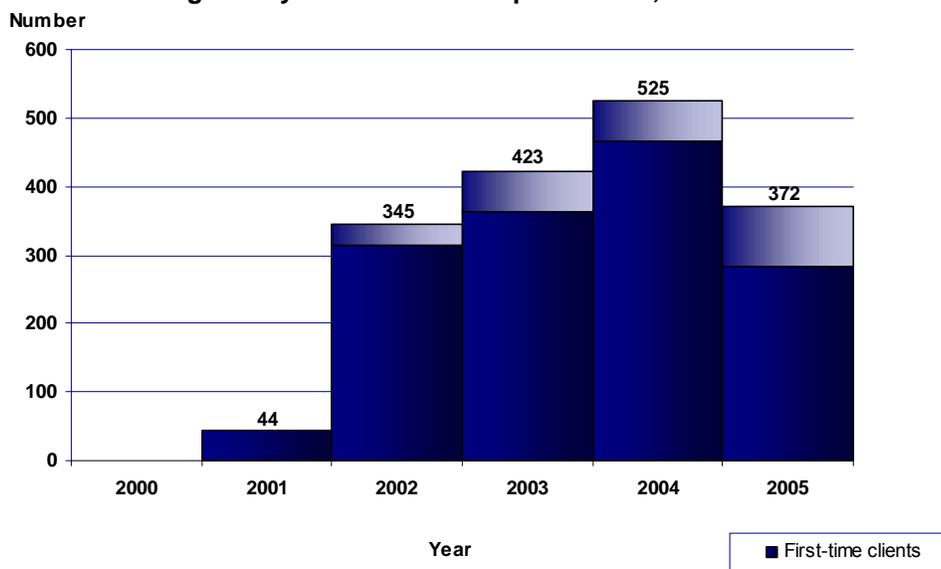
The impact of incarceration on child rearing patterns is probably more evident among the female clients. The majority of these women who had children under 18 (59 percent of them) did not live with their children. This probably resulted in large part from having their children transferred to other caretakers upon being imprisoned and not having reassumed their parental responsibilities upon release.

To address offenders' interests in rebuilding their families, the Fortune Society has developed several programs that are focused on the issues that confront offenders returning from prison or jail. These programs are designed for mothers and fathers who have legal custody of their children as well as for those who are not legal custodians. (Only about one-quarter of the male clients have legal custody of their children.) The non-custodial program encourages and trains the non-custodial parents—predominately fathers—to take an active role in raising their children, both in a financial and emotional capacity. There is also a parenting course designed for mothers. All family services are delivered in group sessions as well as individually.

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**Figure 4.8**

**Number of Clients Receiving Family Services in Group Sessions, 2001-2005**



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Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

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**Table 4.16**

**Number of Family Service Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in the Unit**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2001-2005 <sup>a</sup>	7	2	1	8	79
Number of Group & Individual Sessions Attended in 2005	7	4	2	8	44

*Notes:* <sup>a</sup> This is based on the number of sessions per client on or before their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

*Sources:* Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

Most of those who attended family services were discharged following unsuccessful performance, usually because they dropped out quickly (Table 4.18). Only 26 percent completed the full course. Half of those who completed the full course did so within 116 days, whereas the median for those discharged unsuccessfully was 134 days (Table 4.19).

**Table 4.18**

**Reasons for Discharge from Family Services: Clients Discharged 2001-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	236	26%
Some program goals met	33	4
Other successful exit	20	2
Transfer (other agency)	9	1
Transfer to other Fortune program	64	7
Unable to attend	45	5
Unsuccessful discharge	516	56
Total	923	100%

*Note:* These data do not include health contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

*Sources:* Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.19**

**Number of Days in Family Services Unit by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged 2001-2005**

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number Clients
Program completion	151	116	1	750	970
Some program goals met	214	174	25	750	236
Other successful exit	157	119	56	467	33
Transfer (other agency)	97	111	23	183	20
Transfer to other Fortune program	114	129	44	213	9
Unable to attend	82	47	1	443	59
Unsuccessful discharge	198	134	8	697	516

Note:

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society

## Housing

During the organization’s strategic planning process in the late 1990s, Fortune administrators decided that the organization needed to address the problem of homelessness among its clients. As mentioned in Chapter 3, 17 percent of those coming to Fortune in 2000-2005 were homeless at time of intake and another 16 percent were at risk of becoming homeless immanently. Funding for homeless services was obtained from several sources and in 2002 Fortune opened the Academy, a residential housing facility for former prisoners located on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.<sup>11</sup> The Academy provides housing for 59 individuals—18 in emergency beds and 41 in longer-term beds. Residents typically stay six to eighteen months, but the length of stay depends in large part upon the specific needs and circumstances of each individual. The Academy also provides case managers who are available 24 hours a day to assist clients in finding permanent housing, and residents have access to all of the services provided by Fortune.

Former prisoners who are homeless, who do not present risks of violence, and who appear motivated are eligible for residency at the Academy. To remain at the Academy, residents must complete 35 hours of productive service per week, which includes employment, searching for employment, and participating in other Fortune programs. They must also perform 10 hours of community service for the Academy. If they are working, they are required to deposit 25% to 30% of their salary into savings to prepare for when they leave. Those who are employed and are in longer-term housing are required to pay rent, at the rate of 30% of their salary. For those not employed, the city of New York pays \$215 (the amount provided to welfare recipients) to the Fortune Society to house them.

The Academy has an equipped industrial kitchen and cooks who prepare approximately 260 meals a day for both residents of the Academy and clients who receive other services at Fortune’s other facilities. (Fortune provides a lunch to all its clients who come for services in all of their locations.) The Academy

<sup>11</sup> Funding for capital construction and renovation was provided by the NYS Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Historic Tax Credits program, and contributions to the capital campaign. Operating funds come from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the NYC Department of Homeless Services, Shelter Plus Care, private foundations, and other private contributors.

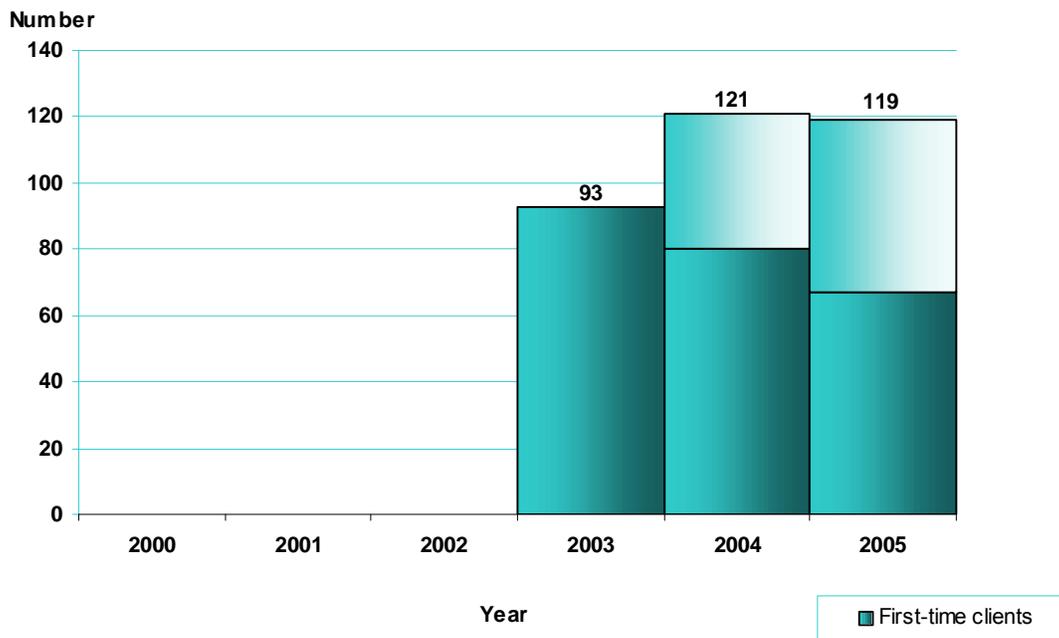
also provides laundry facilities for its residents, business clothes for going on job interviews, a computer lab, and community space for socializing. Fortune is in the process of raising funds to offer education and career development programs at the Academy.

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**Figure 4.9**

**Number of Clients Given Group Housing Services, by Year**

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Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

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In addition to the Academy, Fortune offers emergency housing or other housing assistance to released prisoners who are HIV-positive. These services include assistance in obtaining emergency, transitional, or permanent housing. Staff locate new housing and assist clients with moving in, entering into leases, and sometimes help clients obtain rent subsidies. Fortune also provides short-term rental assistance, start-up money, and assistance in getting furniture. These services are closely linked with the case management, counseling and treatment services provided by the Health Services unit.

The numbers of persons served in group housing assistance sessions has grown slightly, from 93 in 2002 to about 120 in subsequent years (Figure 4.9). Half of the clients served received 5 or fewer group sessions of service (Table 4.20), and about half completed more or less successfully and were discharged (Table 4.21).

**Table 4.20**

**Number of Housing Service Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in the Unit**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2003-2005 <sup>a</sup>	8	5	2	11	42
Number of Group & Individual Sessions Attended in 2005	5	2	1	6	51

Notes: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.21**

**Discharge Reasons for Last Housing Services Episode: Clients Discharged During 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	83	23%
Some program goals met	11	3
Other successful exit	75	21
Transfer (other agency)	9	2
Transfer to other Fortune program	51	14
Unable to attend	11	3
Unsuccessful discharge	121	34
Total	361	100%

Notes: These data do not include housing contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.22**

**Total Number of Days in Housing Services, by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged 2000-2005**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Number Client</b>
All Discharges	174	118	1	836	386
Program completion	275	223	8	832	83
Some program goals met	158	99	17	522	11
Other successful exit	235	194	2	836	75
Transfer (other agency)	128	130	1	282	9
Transfer to other Fortune program	135	70	9	497	50
Unable to attend	99	44	10	351	11
Unsuccessful discharge	99	59	1	671	121

Notes: This is based on the total duration of all housing contracts since the mid-1990s per client (some clients may have more than one housing contract) and the reason given for their last housing contract.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

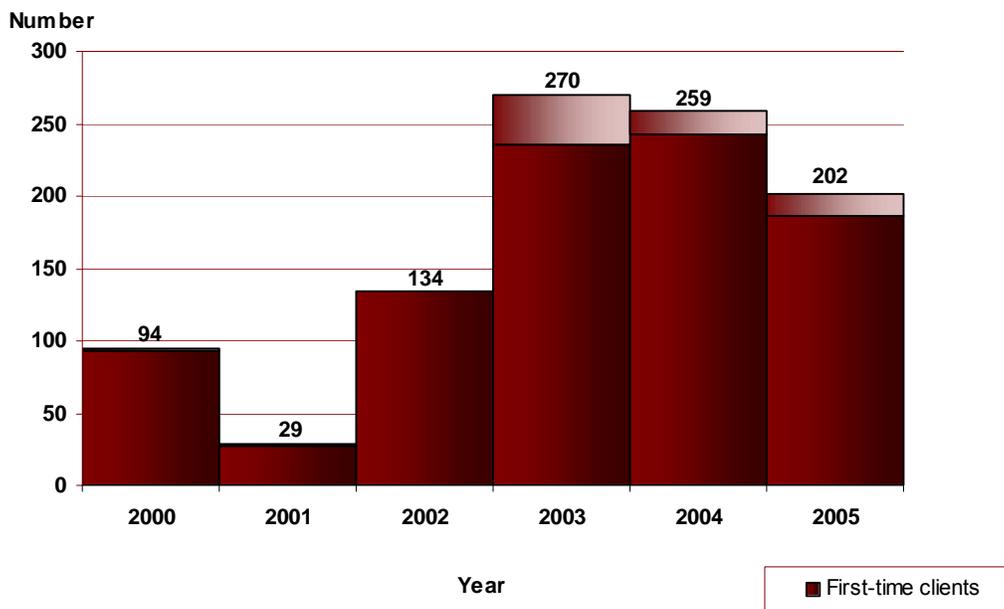
## Peer Education/Client Development Services

In 1997, Fortune created two peer education programs to educate and inform communities about HIV prevention and provide training to former prisoners (LifeWork program) and at-risk youths (PTI – Peer Training Institute Program). Both programs are twelve weeks long and train participants in leadership, HIV/AIDS education, and public speaking. Once they have completed the program, participants give presentations about STDs and safe sex practices to their peers at prisons, churches, schools and other community programs around New York City.

The numbers of clients in this unit have fluctuated slightly over the years and in 2005, the annual count was approximately 200 (Figure 4.10). Half of the clients receiving these services attended for five or fewer times (Table 4.23). Most did not complete the course and were discharged (Table 4.24). Among those who did complete, half did so over a period of about 8-9 months; the other half took longer.

**Figure 4.10**

**Number of Clients Receiving Group Peer Education/Client Development Services, by Year**



Note: First-time clients are those who attended group activities for the first time during a particular year. The others include those who attended sessions in that year but began earlier.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.23**

**Number of Group Peer Education/Client Development Sessions Per Client and Length of Time in the Unit**

	Mean	Median	25 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	75 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	Maximum
Number of Group Sessions Attended, 2000-2005 <sup>a</sup>	10	5	2	16	39
Number of Group & Individual Sessions Attended in 2005	13	5	1	26	42

Note: <sup>a</sup> This is based on total number of sessions per client since the mid-1990s prior to their last discharge date (as determined by their last contract end date). These data do not include sessions that may have occurred after that discharge date if clients returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.24**

**Discharge Reasons for Last Peer Education/Client Development Episode: Clients Discharged 2000-2005**

	Number	Percent
Program completion	44	42%
Some program goals met	1	1
Other successful exit		--
Transfer (other agency)		--
Transfer to other Fortune program	2	2
Unable to attend	18	17
Unsuccessful discharge	41	39
Total	106	100%

Note: These data do not include peer education contracts that may have been initiated after a client's last discharge if they returned or started a new contract and were still active in Fortune.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

**Table 4.24**

**Total Number of Days in Peer Education/Client Development Services, by Discharge Reason: Clients Discharged 2000-2005**

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number Clients
All Discharges	143	122	3	596	106
Program completion	225	198	49	596	44
Some program goals met	a	a	a	a	1
Other successful exit	a	a	a	a	0
Transfer (other agency)	a	a	a	a	0
Transfer to other Fortune program	a	a	a	a	2
Unable to attend	78	43	3	475	18
Unsuccessful discharge	85	67	12	428	41

Note: (a) Number of clients too small for meaningful statistics.  
This is based on the total duration of all peer education contracts since the mid 1990s per client (some clients may have more than one peer education contract) and the reason given for their last peer education contract.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by the Fortune Society.

## Is This Pattern of Service Delivery Intensive Enough?

As discussed in Chapter 3, clients come to Fortune with a variety of serious problems and conditions. The organization welcomes all of them through its doors, assesses their conditions and their needs for services, and provides them with opportunities to receive a number of different services. But large

proportions of clients do not take advantage of these opportunities. About four out of ten drop out, and fewer than half completed the most recent program for which they were enrolled. Half of the clients discharged during 2000-2005 participated in a total of 9 or fewer group sessions. This does not count individual sessions that they may have participated in because counts of individual sessions were not reliably recorded prior to 2005. Based upon the ratio of group to individual sessions recorded during 2005, the numbers of sessions of any kind were larger, but only incrementally (Table 4.3). A small proportion of clients—the most active 25 percent—did participate more intensively, receiving 36 or more group sessions prior to discharge.

By policy and design, Fortune offers its services voluntarily to those who choose to come (with the exception of those offenders sentenced by the courts to Fortune's Alternative to Incarceration Program, who were not analyzed here). The organization also allows clients to come whenever they need services, even if they have dropped out at some point in the past. Fortune's staff recognizes that many clients may not be ready to take advantage of the services and that they may come back when they are ready and motivated. It is also likely that many clients quickly assess what Fortune has to offer and decide that these do not match what they hope to find.

For that large percentage of the client population that does not engage, one would not expect that Fortune's few services produce the outcomes desired—even the immediate outcomes they are designed to accomplish (getting a job, finding shelter, stopping their abuse of alcohol or other substances, earning their GED, etc.). For the minority of clients who do engage and participate in Fortune's services programs, some do achieve their goals. We did not assess the extent to which clients achieved these intermediate objectives, largely because we sought to obtain information about *all* subjects, not just clients—which we were not able to obtain.<sup>12</sup> The one exception to this was information about post-release homelessness (see Chapter 6). Our principal interest is in estimating the extent to which participating in Fortune programming reduced the likelihood of committing crimes following release. Information about service outcomes achieved by clients could not be used in this analysis unless we also had similar information about the comparison population of released prisoners who did not go to Fortune. These issues are addressed in the next chapter.

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<sup>12</sup> We sought drug testing results for Fortune clients and other released prisoners from the New York State Division of Parole so that we could compare post-release drug use for the subpopulation of parolees but were unable to obtain access to this information. We also sought employment data from the Social Security Administration but were unable to do so quickly enough to be analyzed.

## 5. Do Fortune’s Post-Release Services Make the Community Safer?

The Fortune Society is dedicated to the principle that providing services to offenders, most of who are poor and otherwise disadvantaged, is worth supporting even if these services do not necessarily result in lower rates of criminality by clients. But governments typically justify spending tax dollars on such programs for more utilitarian reasons, such as improving public safety. Moreover, the federal government’s emphasis on performance rather than process exhorts government-funded programs to demonstrate their effectiveness—and effectiveness is to be measured not by how many services are provided but by the outcomes and impacts achieved (103rd Congress, 2006). For example, federal funding provided to state and local organizations under The Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program aims to “create safer communities” (U.S. Department of Justice). The most direct way for an organization like the Fortune Society to improve public safety is to provide services that contribute to keeping clients on the right side of the law. This chapter examines the recidivism of released state and city prisoners and explores whether receiving services at Fortune contributes to improved public safety.

### The Strategy for Estimating Fortune’s Effect on Recidivism

As discussed in Chapter 1, prisoners returning to their communities fail to become law-abiding citizens at distressingly high rates. Among all prisoners convicted of felonies in New York City courts and released from the state’s prisons between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005, about 30 percent were arrested and convicted of a criminal offense within one year of release, and about two-thirds by the end of three years (Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). The pattern for persons released from New York City jails after serving a sentence was no better. Of those released from jails between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005, about 45 percent were arrested within one year of release and convicted, and about two-thirds within three years of release.

Did Fortune’s clients fare better than those who were similarly situated but who did not come to Fortune? And if they fared better, was it *because* they received Fortune’s services, or was this difference the result of something apart from Fortune’s activities? Answering this first question requires comparing the outcomes of persons who were similar in important respects except for having gone to Fortune. Answering the second question—are any observed differences in recidivism attributable to Fortune’s efforts?—is more difficult because it requires knowledge of how Fortune’s clients would have performed in the absence of the organization’s efforts. The fundamental problem is that persons who came to Fortune may have been less likely (or perhaps more likely) to commit further crimes, whether or not they had received the services that Fortune offers. If we were certain that we knew all the conditions and forces that led some released prisoners to commit further crimes and other to desist, and if we had measures for all these characteristics, we would have several options for devising an analytic strategy that would provide a defensible answer to these basic evaluation questions. Unfortunately, we do not have such perfect knowledge or information. Our scientific understanding of recidivism and desistance from crime is far from complete, as is the information we obtained from the official records for released prisoners.

## **Attempting to Test Fortune’s Effectiveness by Controlled Experimentation**

Given the limits to our understanding of recidivism processes and our limited data, the strongest research design for answering questions about Fortune’s impact on clients’ recidivism would be a controlled experiment. This would involve assigning some clients at random to the Fortune Society while randomly excluding others. In principle, this could be done by a toss of a coin or other unbiased selection method. Knowing which characteristics of offenders made them more or less likely to commit crimes would not be necessary, because distributions of differing types of offenders and their various characteristics would be the same in the two groups. The only difference among the offenders in the two groups would be that some were admitted to Fortune and others not admitted. If any differences in recidivism are observed in these circumstances, one has good grounds for inferring that they can be attributed to offenders having received or not received Fortune’s services.

Randomized enrollment was not acceptable to Fortune’s managers, however, because adopting it would violate one of the organization’s core principles: that any ex-prisoner in search of aid will be served in at least some fashion. We therefore sought to implement random assignment procedures that would not require Fortune staff to deny services to seekers. Our proposal was to change procedures that parole and probation officers would follow when making referrals to the Fortune Society. That is, when supervising officers considered referring a parolee or probationer to Fortune, he or she would follow a randomized assignment procedure that would direct some referrals to Fortune but not others. The former population would be considered the “experimental” group, the latter the “control” group. This design would eliminate the possibility that differences in observed recidivism resulted from selection processes rather than Fortune’s services or lack thereof.

The New York City Department of Probation agreed in principle to this design if it would not impose too great a burden on its probation officers. Upon further consideration, however, these procedures were found to be infeasible. This is because referrals of probationers to the Fortune Society are infrequent—only about one probationer every other day citywide. Implementing assignment procedures in several probation offices in NYC to randomize referrals for such a small output of clients and an equal number of control group subjects did not make sense when the vast majority of probationers were not ever considered for referral to Fortune. There are approximately 30,000 probationers under supervision in NYC (City of New York, 2007). The investment of time, resources, and commitment on the part of probation staff may have been worth it if the numbers of referrals were increased significantly, but the Fortune Society would not accept larger numbers of probationers without being funded to do so. Moreover, Fortune’s managers argued that a larger proportion of probationers would divert resources from serving persons who are generally needier upon release—those coming out of state prisons after serving years rather than weeks or months behind bars. (Probationers were typically younger and were more likely to have spent short terms in local jails rather than longer sentences in state prison.)

Fortune’s priorities for serving the most needy would have been better satisfied by randomly referring parolees to Fortune, who nearly always come out of state prisons. But the numbers referred by parole officers to Fortune were also small, in part because Fortune was not among the private agencies contracted by the State Division of Parole to provide post-release services. As with probation, the number of referrals to Fortune was too small to warrant creating elaborate procedures to govern parole officer referrals for service. For these and other reasons, the Division of Parole declined to participate in the research.

## Non-Experimental Comparisons

Lacking the ability to implement randomized procedures for enrolling some offenders in Fortune while denying entry to others, it was necessary to identify a study population that best represents what would have happened to Fortune's clients had they not sought services at Fortune. Comparing the recidivism outcomes of Fortune clients with the outcomes of this comparison population would provide an estimate of Fortune's effectiveness in reducing subsequent criminality. The validity of such an estimate turns on the extent to which the not-Fortune population is truly comparable.

There were at least two possible candidates for such comparison populations: (a) prisoners released to New York City who did not seek Fortune's services, or (b) prisoners released to cities other than to NYC who were similar in significant ways to Fortune clients.

### *Comparing Fortune Clients to Other Released Prisoners in New York City.*

Given the numbers of prisoners released from prisons and jails to New York City, there was an abundance of releasees who did not seek Fortune's assistance to whom Fortune clients could be compared. The fundamental difficulty with this design is that our ability to draw strong inferences about Fortune's effectiveness is threatened by the possibility of selection biases. That is, some offenders seek out Fortune voluntarily or are referred by probation or parole officers. If the factors that influence these selection or self-selection decisions into Fortune—such as being more motivated to succeed and more committed to a crime-free livelihood—are also associated with a lesser likelihood of committing crimes, it is difficult to distinguish the effects of Fortune's services from the effects of sorting offenders into groups that differ in their preexisting motivation and commitment. If one could measure those dimensions that affect selection decisions, one could develop statistical tests designed to account for their effects. Unfortunately, the data available for this evaluation do not include measures of factors that probably influenced decisions to seek Fortune's services.

### *Comparing Fortune Clients to Released Prisoners in Another City.*

Finding comparison subjects in other cities seems, at first glance, to avoid this potential selection bias. That is, persons enrolled in Fortune could be matched on several characteristics with offenders released to other cities in the state where Fortune services were not available. The underlying logic is that these matched persons in other cities do not have the ability to select themselves or be selected for entry to Fortune, so their recidivism outcomes provide an estimate of how Fortune's clients would have fared if Fortune's services were not available to them.

This cross-city comparison does not completely eliminate the possibility of selection bias, however. If Fortune's clients are more highly motivated to succeed upon release from prison than offenders not seeking services there, the best match would be with similarly motivated offenders in the other city. But no such indicator of "motivation to succeed" exists in the data that were available to us, so there is no way of matching clients and otherwise similar offenders in the comparison city according to their motivation.

To eliminate this source of possible selection bias in a cross-city comparison, one could compare recidivism outcomes of *all prisoners* released to city X to *all prisoners* released to NYC. This latter population would include *both Fortune clients and those not going to Fortune*. If participating in Fortune has a positive effect on the recidivism of its clients, the NYC releasee population considered as a whole would have lower recidivism rates than the releasees to the comparison city.

Although protected against selection biases, such a comparison stands little chance of yielding an accurate estimate of Fortune’s effectiveness because the social contexts in other cities differ dramatically and the combination of pressures and opportunities to commit crimes may differ as well. If recidivism were simply a matter of individuals’ propensities, one might assume that a sample of individuals matched on several dimensions from another city would provide a valid comparison to Fortune’s clients. But social, economic, and cultural environments affect the occurrence of crime and the risks of recidivism. There is no city remotely similar to New York City in the state. Outside the New York City Metropolitan Statistical Area, the largest cities in the state are Buffalo (population 292,648) and Rochester (population 219,773)—both vastly smaller than New York City, with its population of 8.7 million. Opportunities for crime differ in these cities (the crack cocaine market in New York City was far more developed than elsewhere in the state, for example); opportunities for and barriers to gainful employment vary by region; availability of social services probably varies significantly; and local neighborhood cultures differ in important ways that affect crime rates. A small number of neighborhoods in New York City generate a large proportion of all the state’s prisoners (Cadora et al., 2003), which probably reflects a dynamic relationship among individuals and their environments. Thus, the types of state prisoners “produced” by different cities or regions of the state vary significantly. For example, slightly more than half of the state prisoners prosecuted in New York City courts and released during 2000-2003 were convicted of drug offenses, compared with fewer than a quarter of those prosecuted in Buffalo and Rochester. Eleven percent of releasees prosecuted in New York City had been convicted of property crimes, compared with 28 percent of those from these other two cities (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1**

**Prisoners Released from NYS State Prisons, by Offense Type and County of Conviction, 2000-2003**

Commitment Offense	Place of Conviction				Total
	New York City	Other NYC MSA	Upstate	Buffalo and Rochester	
Violent felony	29%	31%	25%	37%	29%
Other coercive	6	8	11	11	8
Drug offenses	54	42	33	24	46
Property & other offenses	11	19	32	28	17
Juvenile offenses	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by NYS Department of Correctional Services*

Weighing the strengths and weaknesses of these two different comparison strategies, we selected the former (comparing New York City released prisoners who went to Fortune with released prisoners who did not) and sought to mitigate possible selection biases by use of statistical techniques described below.

### Comparing Fortune Clients to Non-Clients: The Chosen Research Design

We conducted separate analyses of released state prisoners and released jail prisoners to estimate Fortune’s effects on client recidivism. The analyses were separated because the experience of going to state prison differs in many ways from having been incarcerated in New York City’s jails and the dynamics of post-release recidivism may differ for the two populations. Prison sentences are a minimum of one year in length, whereas one year is the maximum sentence in jails. The majority of prisoners released from state prison are required to submit to supervision by the New York State Division of Parole;

most sentenced prisoners in jail complete their sentence before release and return to their communities with no supervision requirements. State prisoners included all prisoners released to New York City between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005. The New York City jail inmate population included all persons released between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005 after serving a sentence. Each of these two populations were then split further into two sub-populations: (a) those and subsequently admitted to the Fortune Society (“clients”) and (b) those released during the same period but who had not sought services at Fortune (“non-clients”).

***Fortune Clients.*** Because the Fortune Society has been in operation since the late 1960s and has always had an open door for ex-prisoners, many ex-prisoners had been clients at some earlier point in their lives. For purposes of this evaluation, “clients” were limited to persons who:

- were formally enrolled by the Fortune Society to participate in one or more of the organization’s programs,
- were registered as an entrant after January 1, 2000 and before January 1, 2005,
- had previously been released from prison or jail on or after January 1, 2000 before coming to Fortune, and
- had been prosecuted in New York City courts for the offenses that led to this incarceration.

The Fortune Society provided a database containing names and other identifying information for all persons formally registered as clients since the mid-1990s, which was used to select clients entering Fortune after January 1, 2000. To determine which of these persons had been released from prison or jail on or after that date, databases were obtained from the New York State Department of Correctional Services and the New York City Department of Corrections. These contained names and identifiers of all sentenced prisoners convicted in New York City courts and released from prison or jail on or after January 1, 2000.<sup>13</sup> Persons released from pretrial detention in the city’s jails, who had not been convicted and sentenced, were excluded.<sup>14</sup> These records were matched with Fortune’s client database to select all persons meeting the conditions listed above for being identified as a “client.”<sup>15</sup> Clients were then split into two sub-groups—those who had been released from the state’s prisons and those released from New York City jails.

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<sup>13</sup> The NYS Department of Correctional Services data were obtained indirectly through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.

<sup>14</sup> Our rationale for excluding these persons was that a stay of days or weeks in pretrial detention was qualitatively different and less disruptive of a person’s life than a longer sentence in jail or prison.

<sup>15</sup> Matching required several steps because people’s names and other identifying information sometimes differed in databases for several reasons, including data entry errors. We first matched Fortune and official records using the unique NYS identification number (NYSID) and Social Security numbers when available. These were considered exact matches. Fifty-three percent of our matches were of this kind. We then sought to match the remaining records using a several decision rules designed to create probable matches. These rules sought to match on a variety of different characteristics (e.g., matches on all the following characteristics: name, birth date, gender, race, and Hispanic origin). Rules were then loosened in various ways, including opening the possibility of transposed dates (e.g., allowing matches if birthdates differed in ways that could have resulted from transposition—such as 1989 and 1998.) This resulted in records that we considered either exact matches or strongly probable matches. Records that could not be so matched were not used.

Not all Fortune clients were newcomers to the organization. Some of those admitted after January 1, 2000 had also participated in Fortune programs at an earlier date—often years earlier. Thus, the clients in the study population had widely varying exposure to Fortune, both before and after January 1, 2000.

**Non-Clients.** The comparison population, called “non-clients” here, included all persons who:

- were released from prison or jail between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005 (state prisoners) or March 3, 2005 (city prisoners), who were sentenced in New York City courts and therefore presumed to have returned to New York City, and
- had never been registered formally as a client of the Fortune Society, before or after January 1, 2000.

Non-clients meeting these two criteria were then placed into two different populations—those released from state prisons and those released from New York City’s jails.

### **Determining Who Was Released to New York City**

It is not possible to identify precisely which prisoners returned to New York City following their release for lack of information in the official records. Some state and city prisoners leave forwarding addresses with the correctional authorities, but these authorities make no effort to check their validity. Those leaving under parole or probation supervision can be identified with certainty in parole and probation databases, but the State Division of Parole was unwilling to provide us the information required to determine this. Consequently, we assumed that all persons who were prosecuted in New York City courts and sentenced to jail or prison also returned to New York City following release.

This assumption about who returned to New York City following release may produce some error in the measure. Some persons arrested and convicted in New York City courts may have lived elsewhere and returned home upon release. Conversely, some New York City residents may have moved outside the city after being released, but this would no doubt have constituted a small proportion of all releasees. To the extent that non-clients committed their crimes outside of New York State, this would bias the findings against the Fortune Society (because we assume that clients are more likely to reside in the city). Any arrest occurring elsewhere in New York State would be captured. We believe that out-of-state non-clients are exceedingly small in proportion to the total population examined here.

### **The Size of the Comparison Populations**

The numbers of prisoners released during this six-year period who could be assigned unambiguously to either the client or non-client populations and for whom the needed data were available are shown in Table 5.2. There were more Fortune clients released from state prisons than from local jails (3,292 compared to 2,613, respectively). Only a small proportion (6 percent) of those released from prison went to Fortune, and an even smaller percentage (4 percent) of those released from local jails.

**Table 5.2**

**Fortune and Non-Fortune Study Subjects Released from State Prisons and NYC Jails (2000-2005)**

<b>Following Release</b>	<b>Released from State Prison</b>	<b>Released from NYC Jail</b>
Enrolled in Fortune	3,292	2,613
Not Enrolled in Fortune	54,057	61,436
Total	57,349	64,049

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.*

**Measuring Recidivism**

The outcome of interest—whether or not clients or non-clients committed crimes following their release from incarceration—is not directly observable. What can be observed and measured are arrests for crimes as well as their subsequent court processing. For this study, criminal recidivism is indicated by an arrest for a criminal offense at any time during the observation period (defined below), for which the records have not been sealed. Records of arrest are sealed in New York State if the outcome is ultimately favorable to the defendant—that is, if all charges are dismissed, if there has been a complete acquittal, or if the judgment is overturned after an appeal or other court order.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, most arrests counted here had been followed by a conviction, although a small proportion were pending final disposition in court.

As described more fully below, the time to arrest (if any arrest occurred) was measured for each subject and these times were compared for clients and non-clients.

**The Observation Period**

Because the aim of this analysis is to estimate the crime control effects of receiving services at Fortune following release from prison, defining when this period of interest (the “observation period”) begins and ends is of critical importance.

***Non-Clients***

For persons who did not seek services at Fortune, the observation period began when they were first released from incarceration after January 1, 2000 but before November 5, 2005. This is termed the “index release date” to distinguish it from other release dates that may have occurred before or after this date.<sup>17</sup>

The observation period lasted as long as the subject was arrest-free and still at liberty to commit crimes, up to the point of our collecting arrest records. Therefore, this period ended on the date when the subject was arrested or was taken into custody for violating a condition of their parole or probation agreement—

<sup>16</sup> NY CPL § 160.50.

<sup>17</sup> “Release” means discharged to the community. Some discharged prisoners were immediately transferred to other states or to the federal government for incarceration, were handed over to immigration authorities for deportation, or were taken into custody immediately to serve another sentence. None of these persons have been included in this analysis. All such persons were readily identified in the correctional databases provided to us.

whichever came first, if at all.<sup>18</sup> If neither of these events occurred, the observation period ended on November 5, 2005—the day that the State of New York provided us with arrest records for each subject.

Violations of parole or probation often followed an arrest for a crime, but some persons were returned to prison or jail for violating a “technical” condition of release, such as consorting with other felons, testing positive for illegal drug use, or violating any number of conditions established by parole or probation authorities. These events were not counted as equivalent to arrests, and were therefore not considered “failures” for purposes of this analysis. One might quarrel with this decision, arguing that violations of the technical conditions of probation or parole indicate a failure that is equivalent to being arrested for a crime. But probation and parole officers are given considerable discretion in supervising their clients and revocation may depend in large part upon the behavior of the officer as well as the client. Defining parole/probation violations as recidivism therefore conflates the behavior of released prisoners with the behavior of supervision officers. In short: revocation and return to prison as a result of a technical violation was not defined as a failure but ended the subject’s period of liberty and, by extension, his or her observation period.

### ***Fortune Clients***

Fortune clients were defined as persons who enrolled at the Fortune Society following their discharge from one of the state’s prisons or from New York City’s jails during this same six-year period, and who had not been arrested between times of their release and their enrollment. (As indicated earlier, only sentenced prisoners released from these jails—and not persons released from pretrial detention—were included in this study.) Selecting the effective date of enrollment at Fortune posed some definitional issues, however, because many clients had come through the organization’s “open door” at different times in the past and had been jailed previously more than once. For this study, we sought to identify a single episode of service that represented clients’ post-incarceration reentry service. This was done by first selecting the date of the first Fortune enrollment after January 1, 2000, then identifying the date of incarceration most immediately preceding that date, and then selecting the date of first release from that incarceration (the “index release date”). This rule allowed us to identify the effective index release dates for persons enrolled in Fortune after leaving prison or jail as well as for those who enrolled while still incarcerated.

To determine if Fortune’s services had positive effects on their clients, the logical time to begin observation is the moment they enrolled. This was therefore the date chosen to mark the beginning of the observation period, or the time during which arrests were counted (Figure 5.1). For the minority of clients who enrolled in Fortune programs while incarcerated or immediately upon release, the observation period began at the time of their release. (Even though we did not “observe” their arrest events prior to enrollment, we know that clients were not arrested prior to enrollment because this was a rule we followed for classifying them as clients.)

Most clients came to Fortune long after being released: the average time between release and enrollment at Fortune was about nine months for state prisoners and about seventeen months for released jail prisoners. This long period for most clients between release from incarceration and enrollment poses an interesting analytic issue. During this time leading up to enrollment, Fortune could not have had any

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<sup>18</sup> Subjects who died or who were taken into custody from the street for deportation proceedings were also not at liberty to commit crimes and ideally should be removed from the observation period when these events occur. However, information about these events was not obtained. Not accounting for such events is unlikely to bias the comparisons.

effect at all on the performance of released prisoners. Moreover, none of those who ultimately became clients were arrested prior to becoming a client. Anybody who might have gone to Fortune at some point in the future but who was arrested beforehand was considered a non-client. A simple comparison of arrests of clients and non-clients during one, two or three years following release—such as the proportions of each population arrested during those periods—would be biased in favor of clients. This is because to enroll in Fortune, clients were defined as including only persons who had successfully avoided arrest during the days and months immediately following release, the times of highest risk of recidivism. We therefore chose not to make such simple comparison and instead used survival analysis techniques, described below, designed to eliminate this source of bias.

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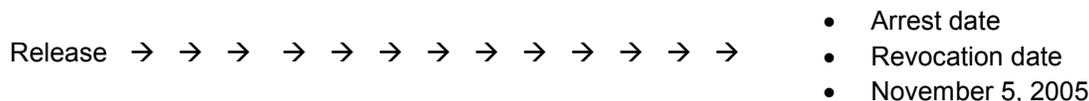
**Figure 5.1**

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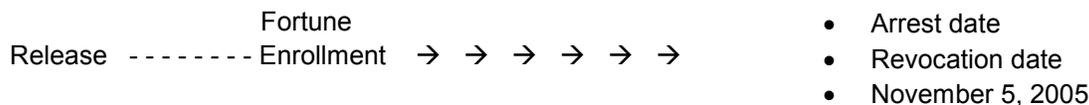
**Observations Periods for Fortune Clients and Non-Clients**

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**Non-Clients**



**Clients**



The length of the observation periods varied for each subject, as did the start and stop dates. The longest period was almost six years for subjects released on January 1, 2000 and who were not arrested before the data were collected. Persons released during 2005 had less time to be observed before the criminal record information was collected. For example, some subjects had observation periods only a few days long because they were released shortly before November 5, 2005.

**Released State Prisoners: Characteristics of the Client and Non-Client Populations**

Among those released from the state’s prisons to New York City 2000-2005, the client and non-client populations were generally similar (Table 5.3). The ethnic makeup of both was comparable, and small differences existed in their gender and age distributions. (There were slightly more females in the client population and clients were slightly older—by two years.) A somewhat larger proportion of clients had been convicted in New York County (i.e., Manhattan) courts—which is not surprising because the society’s offices are located in that borough. Those sentenced in the courts of the outer boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn were less likely to be in the Fortune client population, probably because Fortune’s offices were less convenient to those living in these boroughs.

**Table 5.3**

**Released State Prisoners: Selected Characteristics of Fortune Clients and Non-Clients**

	<b>Fortune Clients (n=3,292)</b>	<b>Non-Clients (n=54,057)</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black Non-Hispanic	52%	49%
Hispanic	44%	44%
White Non-Hispanic	3%	6%
Other	—	1%
<b>Sex: Male</b>	89%	91%
<b>Age: Average age at release (years)</b>	33	31
<b>Court of Conviction</b>		
New York County (Manhattan)	46%	40%
Bronx County	24%	22%
Kings County (Brooklyn)	17%	20%
Queens County	11%	15%
Richmond County (Staten Island)	1%	2%

*Note:* Includes state prisoners released to New York City between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005. See text for how clients and non-clients are defined.

*Sources:* Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

Despite the demographic similarities, however, Fortune clients had significantly worse criminal histories than non-clients. Clients had been convicted an average of almost 10 times, compared to 6 times for non-clients (Table 5.4). A larger proportion of them had been convicted previously of a violent offense (71 percent compared with 60 percent of non-clients), and of property offenses (67 percent compared with 53 percent). As a consequence, clients had spent more time in state prisons—6.1 years, on average, compared with 4.6 years spent by non-clients. A larger proportion of clients than non-clients had been incarcerated most recently for property crimes. Clients were more likely to have been released after serving time for property offenses, and less likely for drug offenses.

Approximately similar proportions were released after serving out their entire sentence behind bars—10 percent of clients compared with 7 percent of non-clients. More than half of both populations (56-60 percent) had been released to supervision at the discretion of the parole board. Another third of both populations were “conditionally released.” That is, they got out after serving their full sentence minus whatever time they were credited for good behavior. Parole authorities supervise both offenders released by discretionary parole and conditionally released. Therefore, nine-tenths of those in our study were subject to having their freedom revoked and sent back to prison for the remainder of their court-imposed sentence. During the period we observed, 8 percent of clients and 14 percent of non-clients were sent back to prison for a technical violation of their condition of release.

**Table 5.4**

**Criminal Histories of Released State Prisoners: Fortune Clients and Non-Clients**

	<b>Fortune Clients (n=3,292)</b>	<b>Non-Clients (n=54,057)</b>
<b>Previous Convictions</b>		
Average number of prior convictions	9.7	6.3
Average number of convictions for:		
– Violent offense	1.8	1.3
– Property offense	3.9	2.3
– Drug offense	3.2	2.3
– Other offense <sup>a</sup>	0.7	0.5
Percent convicted previously of:		
– Violent offense	71%	60%
– Property offense	67%	53%
– Drug offense	72%	70%
– Other offense <sup>a</sup>	32%	24%
Total time incarcerated in state prison as an adult (including index incarceration; average in years)	6.1	4.6
<b>Index Incarceration</b>		
Top charge at arrest leading to index incarceration:		
– Violent offense	30%	32%
– Property offense	21%	12%
– Drug offense	42%	51%
– Other offense <sup>a</sup>	6%	5%
Top charge at conviction:		
– Violent offense	27%	29%
– Property offense	24%	13%
– Drug offense	42%	51%
– Other offense <sup>a</sup>	7%	7%
<b>Status Following Index Release</b>		
Released to parole supervision	90%	93%
Expiration of maximum sentence	10%	7%
<b>Observation Period</b>		
Mean number of maximum possible days	1,083	1,226
Mean days between index release and entry to Fortune	275 days	NA
Percent returned to prison or jail for violation of supervision	8%	14%

<sup>a</sup> Includes weapons offenses.

*Note:* Includes state prisoners released to New York City between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005. See text for how clients and non-clients are defined.

*Sources:* Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

## Recidivism of Fortune Clients Released from State Prisons

We used survival analysis techniques to compare the recidivism of Fortune clients with non-clients released from state prisons (Elandt-Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Lawless, 2003). The recidivism of state prisoners who became Fortune clients could be observed for 2,814 persons.<sup>19</sup> These persons could be identified as clients and we were able to obtain complete information about their demographic characteristics and criminal histories. Most did not come out of prison identified as clients but rather accumulated slowly as they enrolled at Fortune. Only a small minority of clients—400—had enrolled on the day of their release from prison. On the second or third day after release, another 75 enrolled. This process of accumulating clients continued throughout the six-year observation period.

As this population of clients accumulated over time, it was also diminished by the removal of those who were arrested or reincarcerated for a technical violation of their parole or probation supervision, or had reached the cut-off when arrest data were obtained from New York State (thereby ending the observation period). For example, two clients who had enrolled at Fortune immediately following release were arrested on the third day following their enrollment. Another client was removed from the sample on the fifth day after his release because the November 5, 2005 cutoff for observations was reached. This continued until all clients had been removed from the analysis for any of the three different reasons. One consequence of these accumulation and removal processes was that subjects had observation periods of varying length, stopping and starting on different times throughout the five years. In all, we observed Fortune clients at risk of rearrest for 1.5 million person-days (4,138 years). During that time, 1,071 of the clients were rearrested during the period we observed, for an average of 27 rearrests per 100 person-years of observation.

Figure 5.2 shows survival curve that illustrates the day-by-day progression of the client population as some were arrested and the remainder survived without being arrested. The curve shows the exact proportion of clients who had not been arrested on each day after their release. On each day, we added to the analysis all the Fortune clients who enrolled on that day. They remained in the analysis (“survived”) until they were arrested or until their observation period ended for other reasons discussed above. On the first day of their observation period, 100 percent of the clients had not yet been rearrested (or had survived).<sup>20</sup> By day 3 this had fallen to 99.6 percent of the clients.<sup>21</sup> On each day, we applied the day’s “failure” rate (the proportion arrested on that day) to the number of clients who were at liberty at the beginning of that day.

The steepest drop in survival rates occurred during the period immediately following release from state prison. In other words, the likelihood of arrest was highest during this period. The arrest rate slowed progressively with the passage of time. By the end of the first year following enrollment at Fortune, 29 percent had been rearrested. By the end of two years, the proportion arrested grew to 45 percent, and then to 56 percent after three years.

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<sup>19</sup> This is a smaller number of clients than is show in Table 5.4 because we eliminated clients whose Fortune enrollment preceded the first release in our time frame.

<sup>20</sup> We did exclude one client who was rearrested on the day he was released from prison.

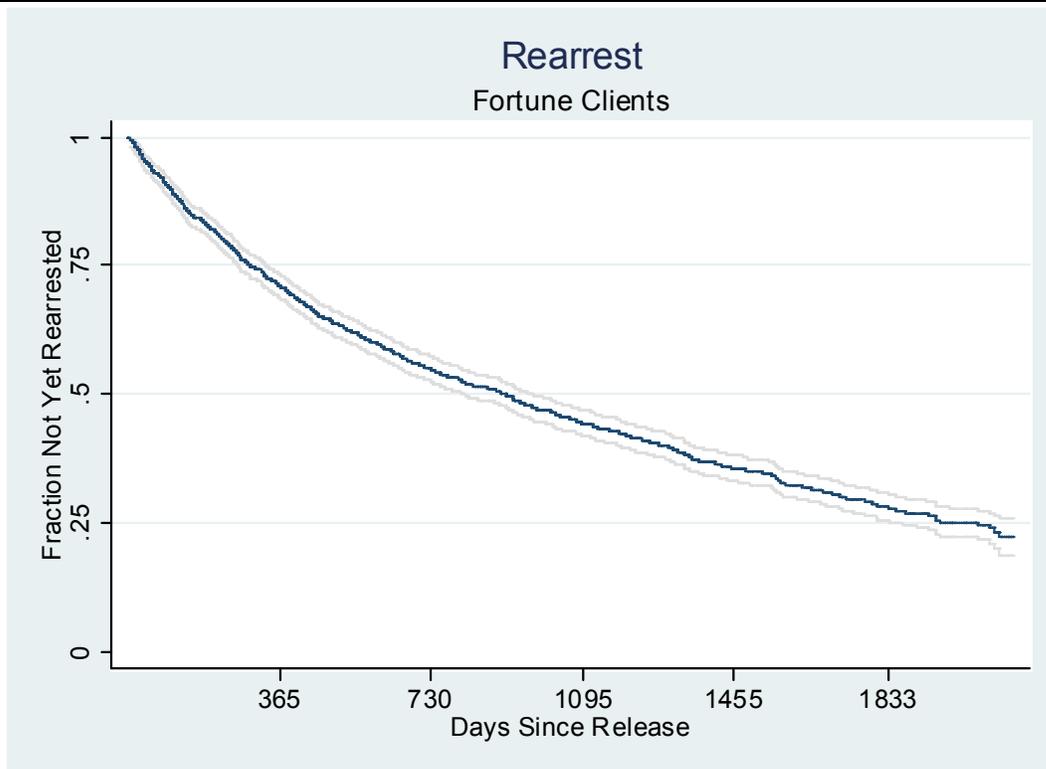
<sup>21</sup> That is, of the 475 clients who had enrolled during the first three days following their release, 2 were arrested on the third day; the 473 clients not yet arrested equaled 99.6 percent of the total released and enrolled in Fortune by the end of that day.

This figure shows the actual survival and failure rates of the Fortune clients released during the period between January 1, 2000 and November 5, 2005 for whom we obtained arrest records. If we considered this particular population a simple random *sample* of a larger population of all Fortune clients (including, for example, those for whom we could not match criminal records, or who were released in other years), we are able to use these data to estimate the survival rates for those other client populations not examined here. Using statistical tests, we compute the probability that the observed survival rate in this sample reflects the true survival rate in a larger population. These estimated probabilities of arrest on any single day are subject to some error—the standard error in the estimate is 1.1 to 1.2 percentage points. The faint lines on each side of the curve in Figure 5.2 show the range of error in these estimates (that is, the 95 percent confidence interval).

Based upon the observed arrests in this particular population, we can estimate that about 28-30 percent of Fortune clients generally will be arrested within a year. By the end of the second year, an estimated 44-46 percent of clients will be arrested, and about 55-57 percent within three years of enrollment.

**Figure 5.2**

**Released State Prisoners Who Became Fortune Clients: Proportions Not Arrested Following Release**



*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.*

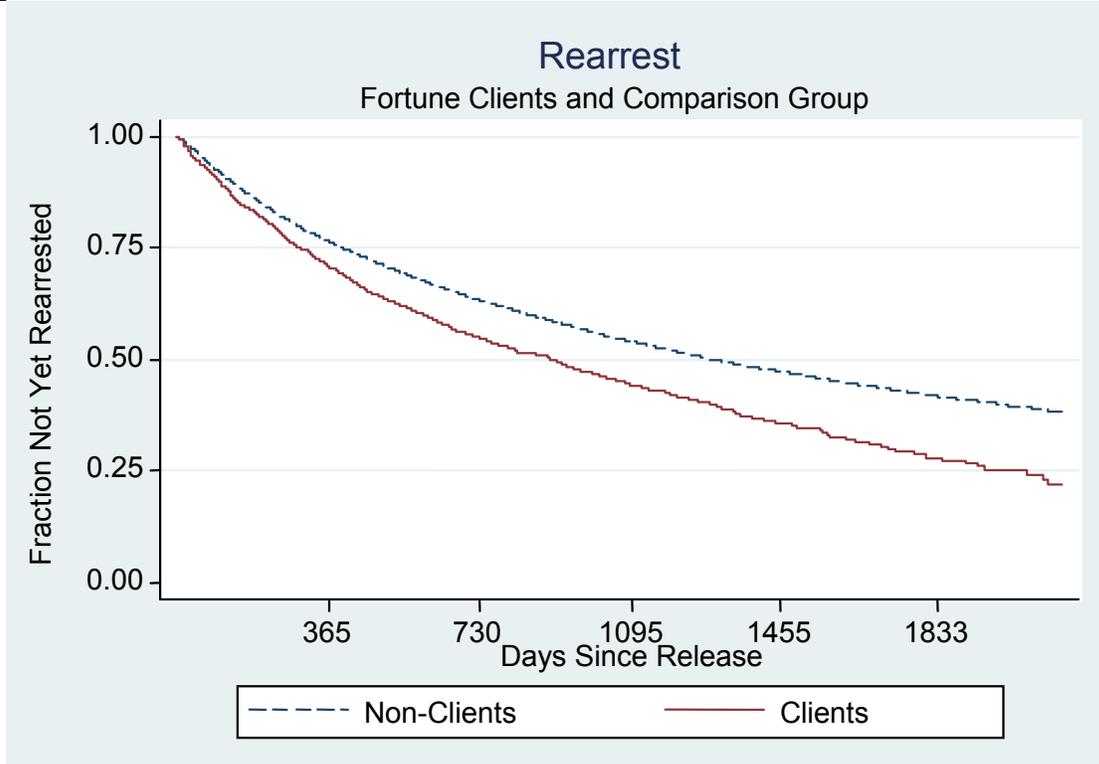
**Comparing the Recidivism of Fortune Clients to Non-Clients**

Throughout the post-release period, the rate of arrest was higher for Fortune clients than for non-clients. This is evident in Figure 5.3, which compares the survival curves for Fortune clients and non-clients

released from state prisons. This should not be interpreted as Fortune’s services having a *negative* effect on clients. The more plausible explanation is that client and non-client populations were not sufficiently comparable, and that clients were at higher risk of recidivism. As indicated above (Table 5.4), they had, on average, longer and more serious criminal histories. Longer criminal records are typically predictive of higher recidivism risk, other things being equal.

**Figure 5.3**

**Released State Prisoners Who Became Fortune Clients or Non-Clients: Proportions Not Arrested Following Release**



To account for such preexisting differences in risk among clients and non-clients and the effects that these differences may have had on arrest rates, we constructed multivariate mathematical (regression) models. The three models are summarized in Table 5.5. Each model provides estimates of the effects on recidivism of participating in Fortune as well as the effects of a variety of other characteristics that we were able to measure. What is being estimated here is the effect of these characteristics on the *hazard* of being arrested on each day following release. (The hazard rate is defined as the rate of arrest at time  $t$  conditional on surviving until time  $t$  or later.)

These three models were fit to the survival data (Table 5.5). Each model uses a different assumption about how the hazard of arrest varies over time, but all test the ratio of the hazard for Fortune clients divided by the hazard for the comparison group; that is, the model are proportional. The Cox model makes no assumption about the shape of the hazard, other than that it is proportional for both groups. The other two models make stronger assumptions about the shape of the hazard, but in exchange make more efficient use of the data. The exponential model assumes that the hazard does not change from the day of release to the last day of observation. This seems unlikely to be true, so we also used the Weibull

distribution, which allows the hazard to increase or decrease over time. We found that the hazard decreases substantially over the first year after release, and more gradually thereafter. We allowed different rates of decrease in the hazard for different groups of prisoners. The Weibull model allows the shape of the hazard function to depend on age and the most recent offense (see “ancillary parameters” in Table 5.5). Other variables did not have much effect on the shape.

Table 5.5 shows the estimates of the relative increase in hazard associated with each factor in the model. The larger the number, the larger is the estimated increase in risk. Nearly all the variables in the model were statistically significant. This table shows, for example, that the risk of rearrest for females was about 72-73 percent that of the comparison group (males), after accounting for the effects of other differences. Having been convicted most recently (the index offense) for a property crime was estimated to increase the risk of recidivism substantially over convictions for other types of crimes—between 49-118 percent, depending upon the model. Being a non-Hispanic African American was associated with a 24-25 percent higher risk, compared with being white, and being Hispanic, a 16-17 percent higher risk, other things being equal. In the three models, clients’ estimated risk of recidivism ranged from 18 to 26 percent higher than for non-clients’, after accounting for differences associated with all other measured characteristics that shown in the table.

**Table 5.5**

**Three Models of Post-Release Recidivism: Fortune Clients and Non-Clients Released from New York State Prisons**

	Weibull	Exponential	Cox
Participated in Fortune Program	1.25***	1.18***	1.26***
Index Offense			
Property	2.18***	1.52***	1.49***
Drug	1.08	1.23***	1.22***
Other	0.68	1.03	1.03
Prior offenses			
Violent	1.07***	1.08***	1.07***
Property	1.10***	1.11***	1.10***
Drug	1.10***	1.10***	1.10***
Other	1.00	1.00	1.00
Date Released	1.00***	1.00***	1.00
Total Years in State Prison	0.99***	0.99***	0.99***
Age			
Under 30	1.01	0.96***	0.97***
30-45	0.96***	0.96***	0.96***
Over 45	0.96***	0.96***	0.96***
Female	0.72***	0.71***	0.73***
Multiple gender	1.40***	1.43***	1.39***
Black	1.24***	1.25***	1.24***
Hispanic	1.16***	1.17***	1.16***
Borough of Conviction			
New York	1.13***	1.13***	1.13***
Queens	1.03	1.03	1.03
Richmond	1.00	1.00	0.99
Bronx	1.11***	1.11***	1.11***
Type of release			
Served entire sentence	1.60***	1.61***	1.61***
Conditional Release	1.09***	1.10***	1.09***
Constant	0.00***	0.00***	
Ancillary parameters			
Effect of age for those under 30	0.99***		
Conviction History: Number of			
Property Convictions	0.93***		
Drug Convictions	1.02		
Other Convictions	1.07*		
Constant	1.05		

Notes: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

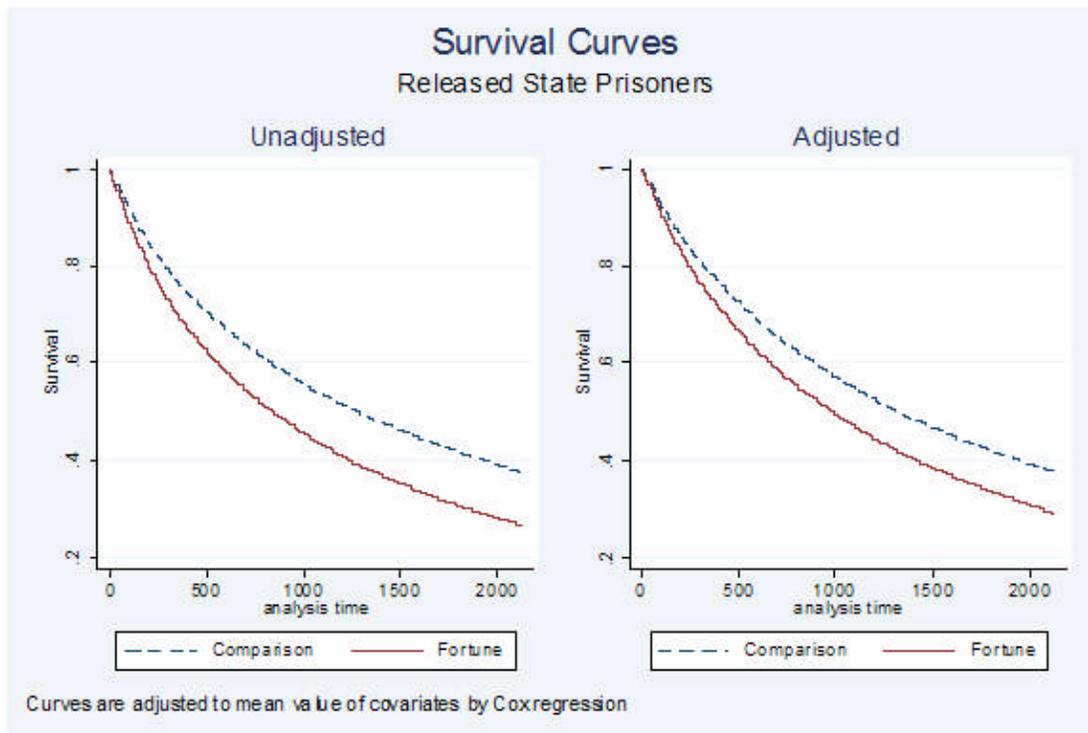
Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

The effects of accounting for preexisting differences are shown graphically in the two sets of survival curves shown in Figure 5.4. The figure on the left shows the difference in arrest-free survival without taking into account differences in other measured characteristics. The figure on the right shows the estimated difference in survival after taking into account statistically (“adjusting” for) these other

measured difference.<sup>22</sup> The difference is narrower once these measured preexisting differences were controlled for, but Fortune clients still experienced worse outcomes.

**Figure 5.4**

**Survival Curves for Clients and Non-Clients Released from State Prisons: Differences in Proportions Not Arrested (“Unadjusted”) and Differences After Accounting for Preexisting Differences (“Adjusted”)**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

Because it is not plausible to argue that receiving Fortune’s services produced negative results, the strongest conclusion we can draw is that we find no evidence of a positive effect on recidivism. Had all these differences been measured—especially those conditions that Fortune sought to ameliorate—and accounted for statistically, it is likely that the recidivism outcomes would be indistinguishable—indicating no effect associated with participating in Fortune.

**The Problem of How to Treat Clients’ Delayed Entry to Fortune**

This analysis compares the arrest rates of clients and non-clients following their release from prison, but Fortune’s services only affect clients after they enroll at the organization. Because of the way we selected the Fortune client population to be studied, the client group included only persons who had avoided arrest

<sup>22</sup> Cox regression is used to calculate the effect of each covariate and adjust the survival curve to average values of these covariates. The left set of figures shows the fraction of Fortune clients and other state prisoners who remained arrest free at each interval during the study period. The right side of the figure shows the Cox regression estimate of the same curves, assuming that all prisoners in both the Fortune and comparison groups were “average” in all respects described by the covariates.

prior to enrolling, which typically occurred many months after release (about nine months, on average). By assigning persons who were arrested in the earlier months to the non-client group, this may have created a selection bias in favor of the Fortune group. That is, Fortune clients were those who successfully avoided arrest prior to the time of enrollment. Therefore, in addition to testing three functional forms of the hazard (Table 5.5), we tested whether the conclusions might change if we used different assumptions about how to treat the interval between release from prison and the day the client first received Fortune services. A variety of different models were developed but none produced information that would lead us to draw a different conclusion about Fortune's having no effect on offenders' post-release recidivism (see Appendix A).

### **Using Propensity Scores to Neutralize Possible Selection Biases**

As discussed above, those who entered Fortune at some point following their release were, on average, at higher risk of reoffending, than persons who did not seek Fortune's assistance and they were rearrested at higher rates. Even after taking some of the measured differences among clients and non-clients into account in the statistical models described above, Fortune clients still performed worse than non-clients. The most plausible explanation of this difference is that an unmeasured selection occurred whereby higher risk offenders were more motivated to knock on Fortune's door. It may be that other offenders were able to obtain support and services on their own, or through their networks of family and friends or other community resources. Those who have thinner supportive networks, longer and more serious criminal histories, who have spent more time in prison, and who have less social capital to draw upon may come to Fortune as a last resort. This selection bias probably explains the difference in rearrest rates that remains after making statistical adjustments for those differences among clients and non-clients that we could measure.

There exist a number of different analytic strategies that aim to minimize unmeasured selection biases in non-experimental research designs. One involves the calculation of propensity scores—scores indicating the conditional probability that released offenders will be enrolled at Fortune upon release, given various information we have about offenders' characteristics (e.g., Luellen, Shadish, and Clark, 2005). These scores are then used to create groups of clients and non-clients that are equivalent in their estimated propensity to enroll at Fortune. With this propensity factor held constant, a comparison of clients' rearrests to non-clients' offers an unbiased test of whether participating in Fortune has an effect on this outcome.

If we had a direct measure of released offenders' interest and motivation to seek services at Fortune, this measure could be used to sort offenders according to their motivation. Because we lacked such a measure, we developed an estimate of offenders' propensity to seek Fortune's services—which probably reflects their motivation to seek Fortune's services as well as certain of their abilities (such as being able to travel conveniently to Fortune's offices). This was done using a mathematical (logistic regression) model to estimate the probability that a released prisoner would seek Fortune services and become a client, using the information about offenders' demographic and criminal characteristics listed in Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6**

**Propensity Score Model of the Probability of Seeking Fortune Services (State Prisoners)**

	<b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt;z</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
Lifetime Total Years in State Prison	1.035	0.004	8.350	0.000	1.027	1.044
Conviction History--number of:						
Violent Offenses	1.030	0.011	2.730	0.006	1.008	1.053
Property Offenses	1.003	0.003	1.010	0.310	0.997	1.010
Drug Offenses	1.046	0.005	8.760	0.000	1.036	1.057
Other Offenses	1.007	0.005	1.390	0.166	0.997	1.018
Date of Release	1.000	0.000	13.420	0.000	1.000	1.000
Effect of One Year of Age						
For 18 to 30 Year Olds	1.017	0.007	2.510	0.012	1.004	1.031
For 30 to 45 Year Olds	1.043	0.005	8.390	0.000	1.033	1.053
For those over 45	0.962	0.010	-3.630	0.000	0.942	0.982
Arrest conviction resulting in most recent incarceration						
Property	1.491	0.095	6.270	0.000	1.316	1.689
Drugs	0.712	0.039	-6.140	0.000	0.639	0.794
Other	1.211	0.111	2.090	0.036	1.012	1.448
Black	1.669	0.099	8.650	0.000	1.486	1.874
Hispanic	1.619	0.094	8.280	0.000	1.444	1.814
Court of Conviction						
Manhattan	1.260	0.071	4.090	0.000	1.128	1.408
Queens	0.903	0.068	-1.360	0.174	0.780	1.046
Richmond	0.781	0.132	-1.460	0.145	0.561	1.089
Bronx	1.298	0.081	4.170	0.000	1.148	1.468

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.*

This equation assigned a score to each released state prisoner ranging from nearly zero to one, reflecting his or her expected probability of seeking Fortune services. Prisoners were then assigned to one of 15 groups based on this score (Table 5.7). At the lowest end of the scale, about two percent of released prisoners came to Fortune; at the highest end, the rate was ten times as high. With a few exceptions, Fortune participants have the same average scores on all model variables as members of the non-client comparison group who had propensity scores in the same range.

**Table 5.8**

**Groups Stratified by Propensity Scores: Percent Seeking Fortune’s Services and Number of Offenders in Each Group (State Prisoners)**

Score Group	Percent Seeking Fortune Services		Number of Observations
	Actual	Predicted	
1	2.6%	2.1%	2,115
2	3.1%	3.2%	8,062
3	4.2%	4.4%	8,861
4	5.3%	5.6%	7,312
5	6.3%	6.8%	5,115
6	5.5%	7.7%	1,020
7	8.5%	8.0%	941
8	9.0%	8.4%	1,619
9	9.9%	9.4%	2,498
10	10.6%	11.1%	2,896
11	14.3%	13.6%	1,549
12	17.4%	17.0%	1,299
13	22.7%	24.5%	577
14	28.6%	46.9%	28
15	100.0%	62.2%	1

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.*

Each of these strata was then split further into client and non-client sub-groups, except for three groups at the extremes because the number of cases in them was small and the validity of the comparison was therefore doubtful. This permitted a comparison of the rearrest hazard of Fortune clients with that of the non-clients for twelve of the fifteen blocks defined by the propensity scores. In Figure 5.5, the broken line shows the hazard of the non-client group, while a solid line shows that for Fortune participants. In several blocks, the survival curves for Fortune clients are similar to those for the non-clients but, more often, Fortune clients were more likely to be rearrested.

To summarize the difference between the client and non-client groups across all blocks, we computed a weighted average of the difference between Fortune and the non-client comparison group in the first year after release for all propensity score blocks.<sup>23</sup> On average Fortune clients were about nine percent more likely to be rearrested within one year than similar members of the non-client comparison group. The unadjusted difference (i.e., before controlling statistically for other differences) was about 24 percent. This means that the variables in the propensity score calculation were able to explain about 60 percent of the difference in the arrest hazard between Fortune clients and the non-client comparison group. We assume that the remaining difference may be due to unmeasured covariates that were not available for inclusion in the model.

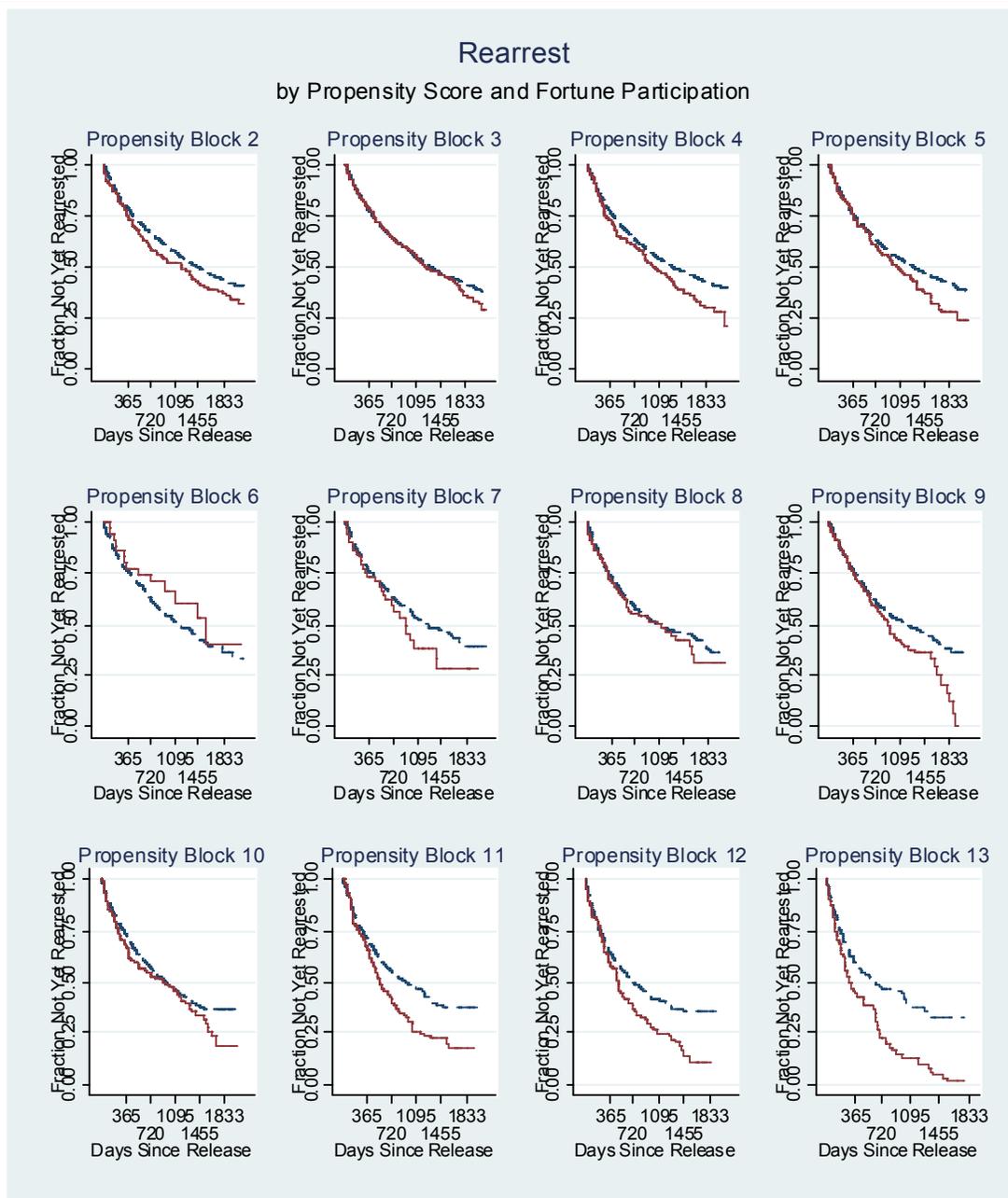
In conclusion: the results of this statistical test using propensity scores are consistent with those produced by the other multivariate survival models. That is, it is unlikely that receipt of these services worsened clients’ prospects, so we assume that the residual difference in arrest rates stemmed not from anything

<sup>23</sup> We used the number of Fortune clients as the weights because this provided a consistent estimate of the treatment effect for Fortune clients.

that Fortune did but from preexisting differences among clients and non-clients that we could not measure.

**Figure 5.5**

**Comparing Hazard of Rearrest for Clients and Non-Clients, Sorted into Groups According to Offenders' Propensity to Enroll at Fortune (State Prisoners)**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

## The Recidivism of Fortune Clients Released from New York City Jails

Similar analytic approaches were followed to determine if receiving services at Fortune had a detectable effect on the recidivism of offenders released from New York City’s jails. As discussed above, we assumed (for lack of information about residence) that all persons who were sentenced by New York City courts and released from these jails returned to New York City residences.<sup>24</sup> Information about 64,049 prisoners released between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005 could be assembled, including information about release dates, criminal history, and whether or not they enrolled at the Fortune Society at some point following their release. Only a small proportion—four percent—had records of having enrolled at Fortune following their first release from jail during this period.

As with state prisoners, those released jail prisoners who were at higher risk of rearrest were more likely to seek services at Fortune. Although the average age at release was the same for both groups, clients had criminal records that were almost twice as long as non-clients (Table 5.9). That is, clients had an average of 13.2 prior convictions for criminal offenses, compared with 7.6 for non-clients. Clients had, as a consequence, spent somewhat more time incarcerated in state prisons as an adult (1.7 years compared with 1.2 years for non-clients). It is interesting to note that most offenders released during this period from the city’s jails did not enroll at Fortune soon after release. The average time between release and enrollment among this population was 516 days, or almost one and a half years.

**Table 5.9**

**Released Offenders From NYC Jails (2000–2005): Comparing Fortune Clients to Non-Clients**

	Fortune (n= 2,613)	Non-Fortune (n=61,436)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black Non-Hispanic	52%	52%
Hispanic	44%	36%
White Non-Hispanic	4%	11%
Other	0%	1%
<b>Sex: Male</b>	78%	84%
<b>Age: Average age at release (years)</b>	33	33
<b>Court of Conviction</b>		
New York	44%	35%
Bronx	21%	22%
Kings	22%	25%
Queens	12%	15%
Richmond	2%	3%
<b>Criminal History</b>		
Average number of prior convictions	13.2	7.6
Average number of convictions for – Violent offense	1.5	1.1

<sup>24</sup> As mentioned above, persons released from pretrial detention only were excluded from in this analysis.

**Table 5.9**

**Released Offenders From NYC Jails (2000–2005): Comparing Fortune Clients to Non-Clients**

	<b>Fortune (n= 2,613)</b>	<b>Non-Fortune (n=61,436)</b>
– Property offense	6.2	3.3
– Drug offense	4.0	2.4
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	1.5	0.8
Percent convicted previously of		
– Violent offense	57%	50%
– Property offense	74%	67%
– Drug offense	78%	68%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	37%	31%
Total time incarcerated in state prison as an adult (average in years)	1.7	1.2
<b>Index Incarceration</b>		
Top charge at arrest		
– Violent offense	15%	17%
– Property offense	36%	32%
– Drug offense	40%	41%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	9%	11%
Top charge at conviction		
– Violent offense	11%	13%
– Property offense	42%	38%
– Drug offense	36%	38%
– Other offense <sup>b</sup>	11%	12%
<b>Observation Period</b>		
Mean number of maximum possible days	896	571
Mean days between index release and entry to Fortune	516	NA
Percent returned to prison or jail for violation of supervision	4%	6%

*Notes:*

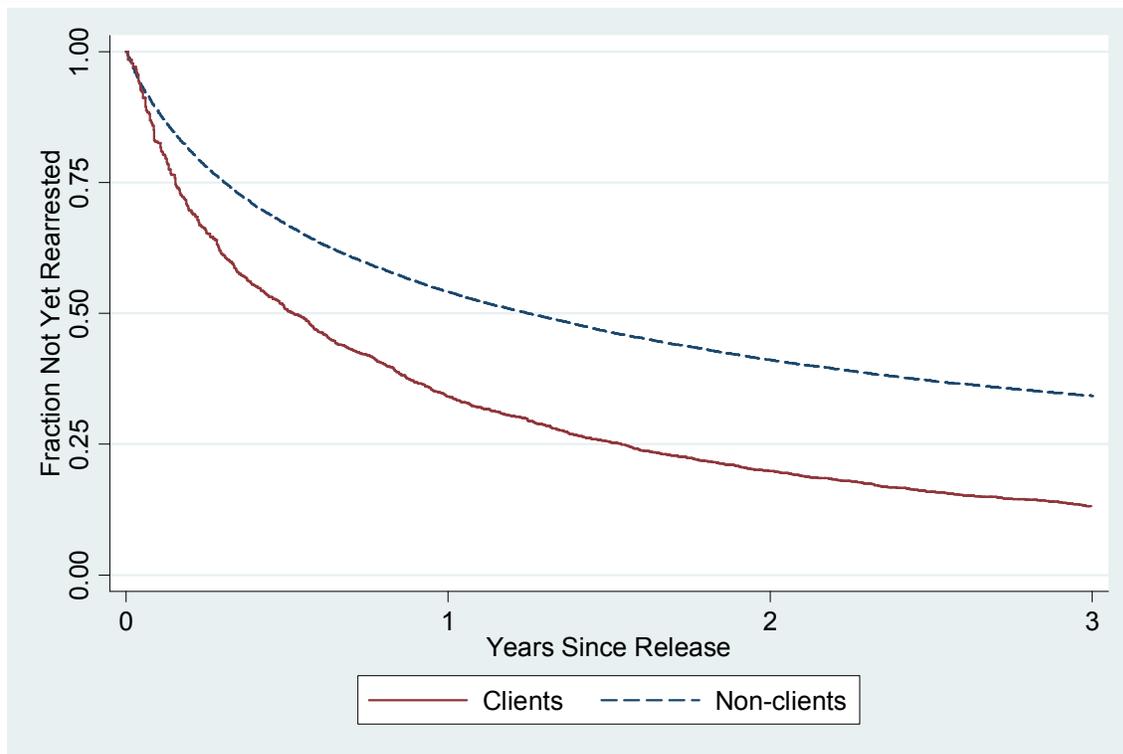
<sup>b</sup> Includes weapons.

*Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.*

That clients were at higher risk of rearrest is evident in Figure 5.6. This shows the survival curves for both Fortune clients and non-clients over the three-year period following release from jail. The proportion of clients getting arrested shortly after release was greater than for non-clients, and by the end of the three years, all but about 12-15 percent had been arrested and convicted of another crime. Among non-clients, the about 35 percent managed to avoid arrests and conviction during these three years.

Figure 5.6

Rearrests Within Three Years of Release: New York City Prisoners Returning to New York City, 2000-2005



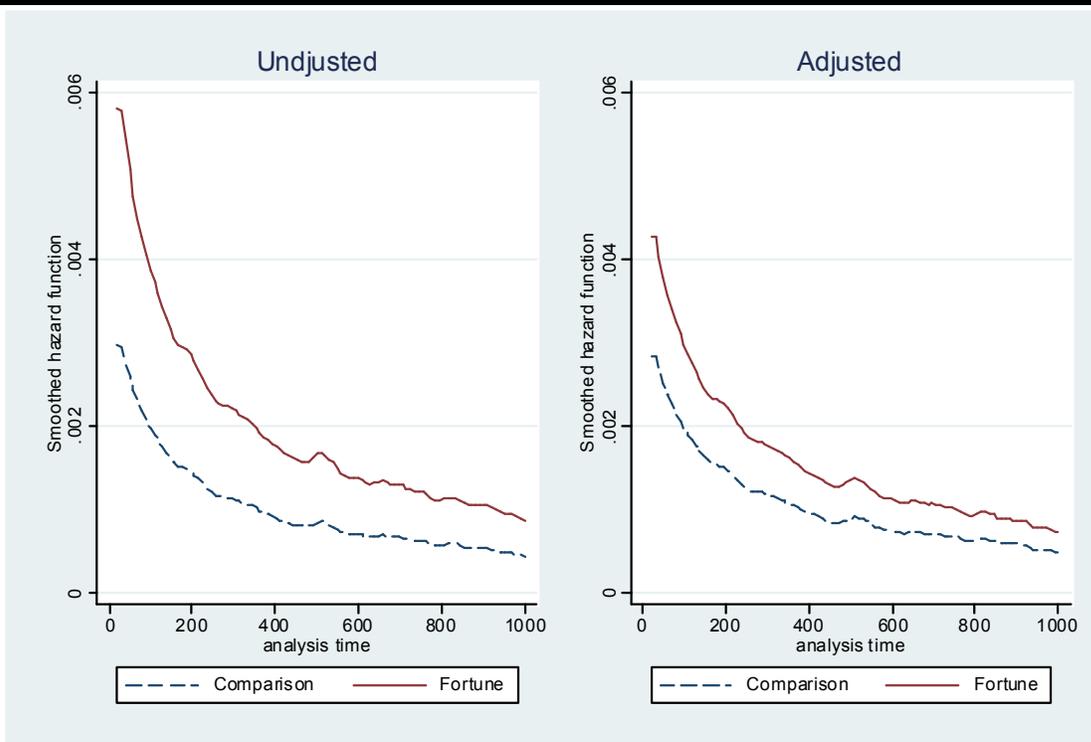
Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data provided by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.

Figure 5.7 shows that some, but not all, of this difference in risk of arrest can be accounted for by preexisting differences that we were able to measure.

The figure on the left side compares the hazard of rearrest for clients and non-clients, without any statistical adjustments to account for other pre-existing differences among offenders. (Note that this table does not chart the proportion of subjects not yet arrested—or “surviving”—at each point in time but instead the probability of arrest on each day following release.) The hazard of rearrest for persons released from jail is initially very high. Fourteen percent of Fortune clients (and 10% of others) were rearrested within 30 days of release. In later months the hazard decreased substantially.

Figure 5.7

**Hazard of Rearrest, by Time Since Release from NYC Jails and Fortune Participation**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

Because clients and non-clients differed in important ways other than having gone to Fortune (clients had lengthier criminal records, for example), we used nearly the same statistical models as we used for state prisoners to control for the various differences that we could measure.<sup>25</sup> Because the hazard of rearrest was high and changed rapidly, the three models of recidivism gave conflicting estimates of the difference between Fortune clients and other released jail inmates (Table 5.10). After adjustment for covariates, the Weibull and Cox regressions still found Fortune clients to be rearrested at rates estimated to be 30 percent to 50 percent higher than non-clients. The exponential regression estimated that the Fortune rearrest rate was 10 percent lower than that for other released jail inmates. We believe that the assumptions underpinning the Cox and Weibull regressions are probably more likely to be true than the assumptions required of the exponential model, so we have no reason to give more weight to the findings of the exponential model's estimates than the other two.<sup>26</sup>

These findings are generally consistent with those for released state prisoners and our interpretation of the observed patterns of arrest are similar. That is, these analyses provide no evidence that receiving services

<sup>25</sup> Because jail inmates are not subject to the same kind of conditional release decisions that apply to state prisoners, we did not include type of release in the models for NYC jail releasees.

<sup>26</sup> As discussed in the analysis of state prisoners, the exponential model requires assuming that the hazard of rearrest does not change from the day of release to the last day of observation—an assumption that does not reflect the trends shown in Figure 5.7.

at Fortune affects the likelihood of subsequent rearrest, above and beyond whatever supportive services other released prisoners receive from other organizations or agencies. That Fortune clients still had worse outcomes than non-clients after taking into account other measured differences probably indicates that clients were at higher risk of rearrest than non-clients prior to making any decision about seeking Fortune’s services, and that data available to us did not adequately capture these differences in preexisting risk. Had all the factors indicative of higher risk been measured and accounted for in the models, we suspect that we would find little or no difference between clients and non-clients in rates of rearrest.

**Table 5.10**

**Models of Post-Release Recidivism of Offenders Released From New York City Jails: Fortune Clients and Non-Clients**

Variable	Type of Regression Model		
	Weibull	Cox	Exponential
Enrolled at Fortune	1.314304 ***	1.508114 ***	0.880661 ***
Release Date	0.999957 ***	0.999869 ***	1.000156 ***
Effect of Age			
For those under 30	1.012052 **	0.993158 ***	0.99343 ***
For those between 30 and 45	0.985958 ***	0.986923 ***	0.983034 ***
For those over 45	0.970769 ***	0.972448 ***	0.964135 ***
Instant Offense			
Property	1.418828 ***	1.400245 ***	1.476009 ***
Drugs	1.236948 ***	1.223661 ***	1.262358 ***
Other	1.002411	0.999661	0.995566
Female	1.001861	1.003937	0.991603
Both genders reported	1.697426 ***	1.656183 ***	1.894274 ***
Conviction History: Number of			
Violent Convictions	0.994038	1.04395 ***	1.053459 ***
Property Convictions	1.023834 ***	1.021664 ***	1.02769 ***
Drug Convictions	1.038314 ***	1.047717 ***	1.061023 ***
Other Convictions	1.010662 ***	1.005524 ***	1.006394 ***
Years of State Incarceration	1.032493 ***	1.030418 ***	1.044789 ***
Black	1.206796 ***	1.192234 ***	1.24453 ***
Hispanic	1.117634 ***	1.108214 ***	1.142188 ***
Court of Conviction			
Manhattan	1.064122 ***	1.06304 ***	1.078927 ***
Queens	0.982205	0.981521	0.983301
Richmond	0.81705 ***	0.823443 ***	0.793614 ***
Bronx	1.104808 ***	1.102079 ***	1.123673 ***
Constant	0.01012 ***		6.31E-05 ***
Ancillary parameters			
Effect of age for those under 30	0.995724 ***		
Conviction History: Number of			
Violent Convictions	1.012659 ***		
Property Convictions	0.999653		
Drug Convictions	1.002795 ***		
Other Convictions	0.998448 **		
Constant	0.715387 ***		

Notes: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001.

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, and the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services.

## **Might Fortune's Services Be Effective for Selected Offenders?**

Fortune's services may be effective in reducing recidivism of special subpopulations of offenders who come to the organization. It is also possible that certain of the services are more effective than others. Unfortunately, it is difficult to test these hypotheses. Even though we are able to identify specific types of Fortune clients to evaluate (e.g., young men having histories of substance abuse) or clients receiving specific services (e.g., substance abuse treatment), we are unable to identify a comparison population among non-clients. The information we have about non-clients is very limited—their age, race/ethnicity, dates of release from prison, and their criminal records. There is little reason to think that comparisons of populations defined by such limited characteristics alone would be of interest. Consequently, this analysis views participation in Fortune Society services as a “black box,” without being able to differentiate among clients or types of services rendered.

## **Were Fortune's Services Effective for Those Who Completed the Program?**

The population examined here included all persons who were enrolled at Fortune and attended at least one service session, even if it was only a single counseling session. As discussed in Chapter 4, a significant number of clients stayed a very short time and received few, if any, services. Among all those discharged during the 2000-2005 period, 25 percent of the clients attended 4 or fewer group sessions, and half attended 9 or fewer. Moreover, only about 32 percent of all clients discharged completed the course of activities, and another 6 percent did not complete the program but were still listed as having made a “successful exit.”<sup>27</sup> It is not surprising that such short engagements at Fortune had no apparent effect on clients' subsequent recidivism. But for those who stayed and participated fully, is it possible that the services did make a difference in preventing subsequent criminality?

If the client population examined here was limited only to those who were discharged following what was seen to be “successful” performance, it is unlikely that our statistical analyses would find that the likelihood of their being rearrested was less than the non-client comparison group's. Assume, for the purpose of exploring this possibility, that the client group comprised two populations: one of offenders who received few services before being discharged unsuccessfully, and another of offenders who participated fully and were discharged following successful performance. Furthermore, assume that Fortune had no effect on the first and a positive effect on the second. By combining the two populations, the apparent effect of Fortune is diluted by the inclusion of clients who could not have benefited from Fortune, thereby pulling down the average effect for the entire group. If these clients were omitted, the group average would be higher and the survival curve for clients in Figure 5.4 would be closer to the curve for non-clients.

## **Does this Mean That Services Make No Difference in Preventing Recidivism?**

That we find no evidence that Fortune clients are less likely to recidivate does not necessarily mean that providing services to released prisoners is an ineffective crime control strategy. Our comparison was not between one population that received services at Fortune and another that did not receive any services at all. Rather, it is between clients who went to Fortune for services and non-clients who may have gotten similar services elsewhere. Because we have no information about services that may have received, we

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<sup>27</sup> This refers to their last engagement at Fortune. In addition, 8 percent were transferred to another Fortune program; some of these persons may have completed one program before being transferred to another, but this information is not recorded in the Fortune data.

are unable to draw a service/no service comparison. Therefore, the most precise inference that we can make is that we find no evidence that getting services at Fortune provides any *additional* effect above and beyond what released prisoners may be getting elsewhere in one form or another.

## 6. The Effectiveness of Fortune’s Services in Preventing Homelessness

The Fortune Society aims to stabilize released offenders in the community, which it considers an end in itself as well as a means of improving public safety. As discussed above in Chapter 1, the logic of the program assumes that services are provided to offenders with the aim of achieving certain objectives, such as abstinence from drugs or alcohol, gainful employment, access to healthcare, improved family functioning, and stable residence, among others. It is hoped that achieving these objectives will result in integrating the offender successfully into the community as a law-abiding citizen.

The analyses above in Chapter 5 examine the correlations between being enrolled at Fortune and the most distant outcomes—whether or not clients are rearrested—which we use as a barometer of successful integration into the community as a law-abiding citizen. Ideally, we would also want to trace the paths from enrollment at Fortune to participation in particular types of services (such as substance abuse treatment or employment assistance), to achievement of the intermediate objectives of abstinence, residential stability, and so forth. If Fortune failed to deliver the needed services, or failed to achieve these intermediate objectives, one would not expect to see any correlation between having enrolled at Fortune and a reduced likelihood of arrest.

We know that Fortune did deliver a variety of services to offenders, as described in Chapter 4. We did not examine systematically whether these services accomplished their immediate objectives in large part because our primary focus was on the last leg of this implied causal chain—the link between being served at Fortune and a reduced likelihood of subsequent arrest. Even if we had included information about the extent to which Fortune clients achieved a variety of their intermediate objectives such as employment, we would not have been able to include this information in our analytic models because we could not obtain it for the far larger number of released prisoners who did not go to Fortune.

The one exception to this was information about offenders’ being homeless following release. Although we were not able to measure the condition of being homeless directly for all released offenders, we have a good proxy measure: whether offenders sought shelter or other homeless services from the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). This provides us with a measure of released offenders’ residential stability—one of the intermediate objectives that Fortune seeks to achieve for its clients. One can also view being homeless (or seeking shelter or homeless services from DHS) as a more general indicator of social stability. That is, having a home is nearly a necessary condition for achieving any measure of stable integration into one’s community. Unfortunately, about 16 percent of all offenders released during 2000-2005 from New York City’s jails upon serving out their sentence lacked a home to return to and came to NYCDHS for shelter services, as did about 11 percent of all state prisoners released during this period.<sup>28</sup> Released offenders thereby constituted a significant proportion of the New York City homeless population. A DHS study of 8,700 adult males entering the DHS system between January and July 2003 found that 16 percent reported their last place of residence was a prison or a jail. Another study by W.R. McDonald Associates and Abt Associates estimated that persons released from state prisons to New York City were 8 times more likely than the general population to become homeless, and

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<sup>28</sup> These estimates were developed by matching correctional data and homeless services data, discussed below.

those released from the local jail were 2.6 times as likely (Graham, Locke, Rubenstein and Carlson, 2004).<sup>29</sup>

Most Fortune services are non-residential. However, the Fortune Society provides homeless services and shelter to some persons needing shelter upon release from prison, although its resources are not sufficient to serve the entire population of prisoners in need. All of these clients receiving homeless services from Fortune are homeless at release and all receive housing at Fortune. No further analysis is needed to determine the effect of Fortune's housing services on this group. Our interest is in examining the effects of Fortune's various other services on social stability/homelessness, so we excluded from this analysis that small number of persons who were given shelter in the Fortune Academy—the society's shelter.

### **The Comparison Populations, Data, and Approach to Analysis**

The New York City DHS provided records of all persons who sought shelter or other homeless services during the period from January 1, 2000 to April 10, 2006. We matched these names to the records of prison and jail releases to identify prisoners who had become homeless after release. These populations of released state and city prisoners were the same as those used for the analysis of recidivism. That is, state prisoners had been released between January 1, 2000 and November 3, 2005 and assumed to have returned to New York City, and city prisoners were released between January 1, 2000 and March 3, 2005 after serving a sentence in one of the city's jails, and who were also assumed to return to New York City. In any given month, an average of about three percent of state prisoners and 14 percent of city inmates applied for homeless services at least once.

As mentioned above, for 11 percent of state prisoners, and 16 percent of city inmates, one such episode of homelessness occurred during the first month—and usually the first few days—after release. By policy, released state prisoners assessed as being at risk of homelessness are referred to DHS for assessment and services upon release. We conducted separate analyses for state prisoners receiving homeless services from DHS in the first month after release. We also separated state prisoners from New York City inmates. Thus, we analyzed a total of four different groups of prisoners:

- New York City prisoners who were homeless at time of release,
- City prisoners who were not homeless at release
- State prisoners who were homeless at release, and
- State prisoners who were not homeless at time of release.

The observation period following the date of release was divided into 30-day intervals. During any one of these intervals, released prisoners were considered homeless if the NYC DHS initiated any homeless services during the month or had initiated services in a previous month that had not yet been closed. With in our analysis of recidivism, the observation period began, for non-clients, on the day of release and for clients on the day of enrollment at Fortune. It ended when a subject was re-incarcerated or April 10, 2006—the date when NYC DHS data were obtained—whichever date occurred first.<sup>30</sup> For each prisoner

<sup>29</sup> This is the adjusted rate taking into account the different distributions of race, sex, and gender in both the released prisoner and general populations. Before taking these differences into account, returned state prisoners are estimated to be 17.5 times more likely to be homeless than the general population.

<sup>30</sup> There was one exception to this rule: re-incarcerations between November 5, 2005 and April 10, 2006 were not observed because the criminal history data were produced on the former date. Consequently, the small number of released prisoners imprisoned during this six-month period were not classified correctly. We chose to use all

we therefore had a series of from 1 to a maximum of 77 dichotomous indicators showing whether he or she had been homeless during each month of observation. We modeled the effect of Fortune participation on homelessness using logistic regression techniques. As might be expected, these dependent variables are highly correlated within individuals, because persons who are homeless in one month are more likely than others to also be homeless in other months. Our regression therefore included a random effect for persons.

Our model included the following independent variables:

Fortune client	1 if the subject had enrolled in Fortune before the current month, missing if the subject enrolled after the current month, and 0 otherwise
Time since release	In days
Index release	Date of index release
Female	1 for females, 0 otherwise
Both genders	1 for Transgendered or transsexual prisoners, as identified by the NYC DOC; 0 otherwise
Disposition offense	1 if the disposition offense that resulted in the index incarceration was in the named category, 0 otherwise. ("Other" offenses is the omitted reference category.)
Prior convictions	Counted number of convictions in each category (0 if none.)
Years in state prisons	The sum of time served for all recorded state incarcerations
Hispanic	Ethnicity as classified by NYC or NYS DOC
African-American	Race as classified by NYC or NYS DOC
Age	Age at index release, in years. Separate coefficients are applied for different age ranges
County of conviction	1 if the court for offense that resulted in the index incarceration is in the listed county, 0 otherwise. (Brooklyn is the omitted reference category.)
Months since release	31 to 60 days after release is coded as one month after release, 61 to 90 as two, and so on.

The Fortune term measures the main effect of Fortune, that is, the ratio of the odds of being homeless for Fortune clients to the odds of being homeless for non-clients. We included two interaction terms. The interaction of Fortune with time since release allows the effect of Fortune to vary depending on how long the client had been out of prison. The interaction of Fortune with date of release allowed the effect of Fortune to vary from one calendar year to the next.<sup>31</sup>

the homeless services data, past November 2005 up to the April 2006 cut-off, because this provided more observations and increased to robustness of the estimate. The tradeoff was between including a small number of misclassified subjects at little or no loss of precision in the estimate versus excluding six months of follow-up data for all subjects, at a cost of substantial loss of precision. We chose the former because it does not bias the estimate either for or against finding an effect of Fortune's services because both clients and non-clients re-imprisoned during this six months were misclassified.

<sup>31</sup> We found no evidence for this kind of variation.

We included several terms to provide a curvilinear fit for the probability of becoming homeless during the post-release period. For prisoners who were homeless in the first month after release, the incidence of becoming homeless declined rapidly during the first few subsequent months, reaching an approximately constant level after a year or two. For those prisoners who were not initially homeless, the incidence of homelessness *rose* to an approximately constant level over a few months after release. Thus, the effects of time since release were different for the persons who were homeless at time of release and for persons who had returned to a residence.

To account for various measured differences among released prisoners that may have affected their odds of becoming homeless, apart from having received supportive services from Fortune, we included a number of covariates in the models, as shown in the tables below.

### **Prisoners Released From New York City Jails**

Table 6.1 shows four regression equations for offenders released from New York City jails. The tables show logistic regression coefficients for each model. The coefficient is in exponentiated form; that is, the odds of homelessness are the product of the terms in the model. The first coefficient in model 1 is 0.645. This means that the model estimate of the odds of homelessness in any given month are 64.5% as high as the odds for a similarly situated non-client in the same month. The three stars after the number show that the probability of such an odds ratio occurring in a sample where the true value was 1.0000 is less than one in one thousand. Equations 1 and 3 provide a direct test of the difference between Fortune clients and other inmates released from the New York City correctional facility. For those who were not homeless during the first month after release, Fortune clients are about one-third less likely to become homeless during any subsequent month (equation 1). Fortune clients who were homeless immediately after release (equation 3) were about half as likely as non-clients to become be homeless during subsequent months.<sup>32</sup>

We found that the effect of Fortune varied slightly after inmates were released. For those who were not initially homeless, the difference between Fortune and non-Fortune increased by about one percent for each month after release. For those who were initially homeless, the difference decreased by about one percent per month.

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<sup>32</sup> Equations 2 and 4 allow the effect of Fortune to be different at different times. Equations 1 and 3 assume (and force) it to be constant. Equations 2 and 4 fit the data better, because the effect of Fortune does vary with time since release. However, because equations 1 and 3 assume a constant effect, they provide a summary of the average effect over all time periods. Regardless of the form of equation used, the inference about Fortune's possible effect is the essentially the same.

**Table 6.1**

**Estimating the Effects of Fortune’s Services on Subsequent Homelessness Among Prisoners Released From New York City Jails**

	Status During First Month After Release							
	Not Homeless				Homeless			
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
Fortune client	0.654	***	0.691	***	0.526	**	0.522	***
Fortune X time since release			0.990	***			1.011	*
Index release	0.999	***	0.999	***	1.000	***	1.000	***
Female	0.970		0.969		1.271		1.279	
Both genders	0.984		0.983		0.736		0.736	
Disposition offense								
Property	0.826	**	0.825	**	0.941		0.945	
Drug	0.819	**	0.819	**	1.137		1.139	
Public order	0.928		0.927		0.875		0.875	
Prior convictions								
Violent	0.981		0.981		0.983		0.982	
Property	1.000		0.999		0.997		0.996	
Drugs	0.992		0.992		0.976	*	0.976	*
Other	0.997		0.997		0.984		0.984	
Years in state prisons	0.983		0.983		0.975		0.975	
Hispanic	1.110		1.109		1.315	*	1.314	*
African-American	1.261	***	1.260	***	1.931	***	1.928	***
Age								
If under 30	0.978	***	0.978	***	1.014		1.015	
If 30 to 45	1.018	***	1.018	***	1.049	***	1.049	***
If over 45	1.002		1.002		1.030		1.030	
County of Conviction								
New York	0.947		0.948		1.213		1.215	
Queens	1.012		1.012		1.043		1.043	
Richmond	0.823		0.824		1.172		1.176	
Bronx	0.911		0.912		1.311		1.323	
Fortune X release date			1.000				1.000	
Months since release	0.000	***	0.000	***	1.031	***	1.031	***
Log of months since release	0.000	***	0.000	***	0.685	***	0.685	***
Square root of months	55070	***	55136	***	0.496	***	0.497	***
Months squared	3.500	***	3.498	***				
Months cubed	0.776	***	0.776	***				
1/(square root of months)	0.000	***	0.000	***				

Notes: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

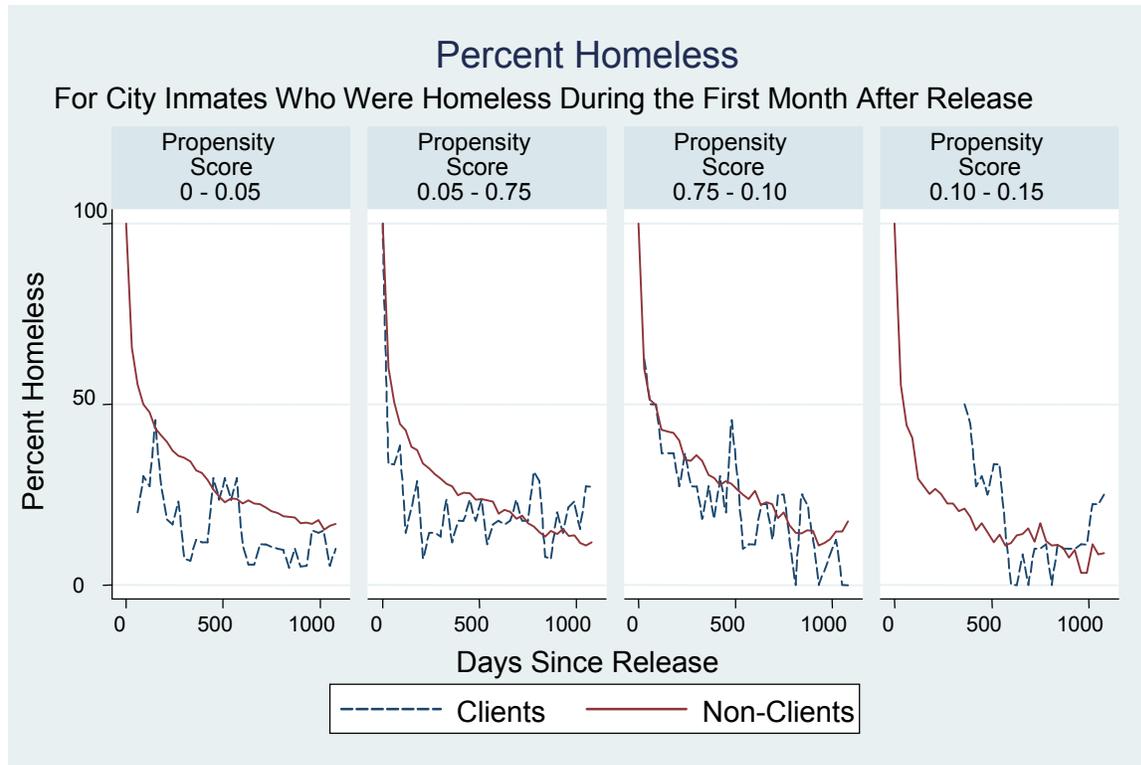
Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show the data behind these equations. We used logistic regression techniques to estimate the probability that each released inmate would become a Fortune client, based on the independent variables in table 6.1 (excluding those relating to time since release). We then grouped inmates with similar estimated probabilities of enrolling at Fortune for services. Within each of these

four groups Fortune clients and non-clients had similar average values not just for their propensity to seek help from Fortune, but also for nearly all of the other attributes that went into the model. The scores thus provide a simple way to construct comparable groups of inmates. (As noted above, no procedure other than random assignment guarantees comparability for attributes that are not measured and thereby unknown to us.)

In figures 6.1 and 6.2, the period after release is divided into 30-day intervals. The time periods, measured in days since release, are plotted on the horizontal axis. The percent of persons who applied for homeless services at least once in a 30-day period is shown on the vertical axis. Figure 6.1 describes released inmates who were homeless at least once during the 30 days after their index release. (The figures show that 100% were homeless during the first month. Incidence of homelessness decreases in the second and subsequent months.) Months represented by fewer than 30 observations are not plotted. Fortune clients do not enter the analysis until they enroll in Fortune.

**Figure 6.1**

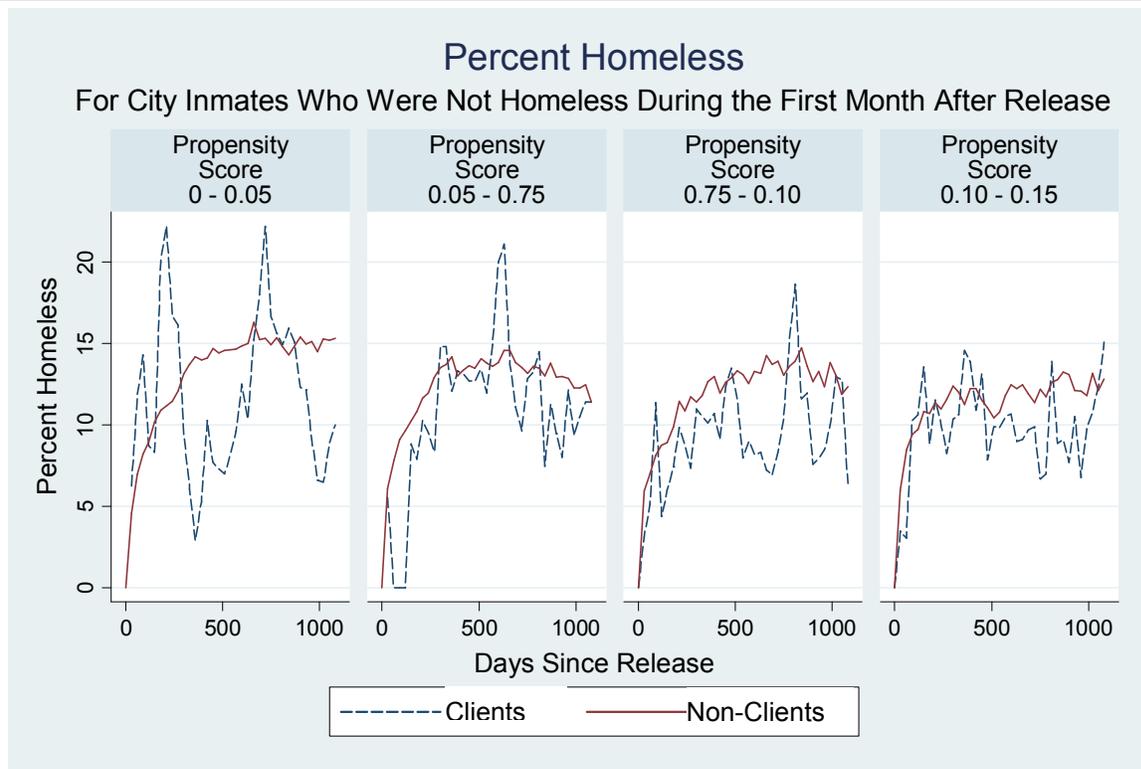
**New York City Inmates Who Were Homeless Upon Release: Percent Subsequently Homeless, By Fortune Participation, Propensity To Participate In Fortune, and Time Since Release**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

**Figure 6.2**

**New York City Inmates Who Were Not Homeless Upon Release: Percent Subsequently Homeless, By Fortune Participation, Propensity To Participate In Fortune, and Time Since Release**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York City Department of Correction, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

In each panel of these two figures, Fortune clients sometimes experienced higher rates of homelessness than did members of the comparison non-client group.<sup>33</sup> However, times when Fortune clients fared better than others occurred more frequently.

**Homelessness of Released State Prisoners**

We used the same analytic approach for state prisoners. Table 6.2 shows the four equations used to estimate the effects of participating in Fortune’s programs on post-release homelessness. In addition to the demographic and criminal history, we included indicator variables to distinguish whether the prisoner was released through discretionary parole, conditional release, or expiration of sentence. Among those prisoners who were not homeless at the time of release (or, more precisely, during the first month of release), we found no difference in subsequent homelessness between Fortune clients and the non-client comparison group. Among those who were homeless at some point during that first month, Fortune clients were more likely to be homeless in subsequent months (by about 44 percent) than were non-clients. As there is no reasonable explanation for how participating in the Fortune Society’s programs

<sup>33</sup> The relationship between time since release and homelessness is much smoother for the non-client group because it is based on a number of cases about twenty times as large as the number for Fortune.

increased the odds of becoming homeless, we interpret this as another indication that Fortune’s clients were at higher risk of being homeless for reasons that we were unable to measure given the available data.

**Table 6.2**

**Released New York State Prisoners: Estimating the Effects of Fortune’s Services on the Likelihood of Subsequent Homelessness**

	Status During First Month After Release							
	Not Homeless				Homeless			
	(1)		(2)		(3)		*4)	
Fortune clients	1.088		1.169		1.437	***	1.448	***
Fortune X time interaction			0.998				0.991	
Fortune X date interaction	1.000		1.000		1.000	*	1.000	
Female	1.581	***	1.581	***	2.578	***	2.578	***
Both genders	1.560	*	1.560	*	1.901	***	1.908	***
Disposition offense								
Property	0.743	***	0.745	***	1.150	**	1.150	**
Drug	0.762	***	0.761	***	1.240	***	1.240	***
Public order	1.106		1.107		0.937		0.938	
Date released	0.999	***	0.999	***	1.000	***	1.000	***
Hispanic	1.066		1.067		1.352	***	1.352	***
African-American	1.602	***	1.600	***	1.970	***	1.970	***
Prior convictions								
Violent	0.953	***	0.953	***	1.084	***	1.084	***
Property	0.982	***	0.982	***	1.018	***	1.018	***
Drugs	0.994		0.994		1.046	***	1.046	***
Other	0.975	**	0.975	**	0.974	***	0.974	***
Years in state prison	1.014	*	1.014	*	0.988	***	0.987	***
Type of release								
Sentence expired	2.966	***	2.966	***	2.010	***	2.011	***
Conditional release	1.228	***	1.228	***	1.166	***	1.166	***
County of conviction								
New York	1.157	*	1.157	*	1.064		1.063	
Queens	0.969		0.969		0.696	***	0.695	***
Richmond	0.687	*	0.687	*	0.957		0.954	
Bronx	1.024		1.023		1.238	***	1.238	***
Effect of age								
If under 30	1.063	***	1.063	***	1.034	***	1.034	***
If 30 to 45	1.069	***	1.069	***	1.010	**	1.010	**
If over 45	1.046	***	1.046	***	0.986		0.986	
Months since release	1.131	***	1.131	***	0.979	***	0.979	***
Square root of T	0.132	***	0.132	***				***
Log time since release					1.983	***	1.978	
Second month	1.979	***	1.979	***	0.966		0.966	*

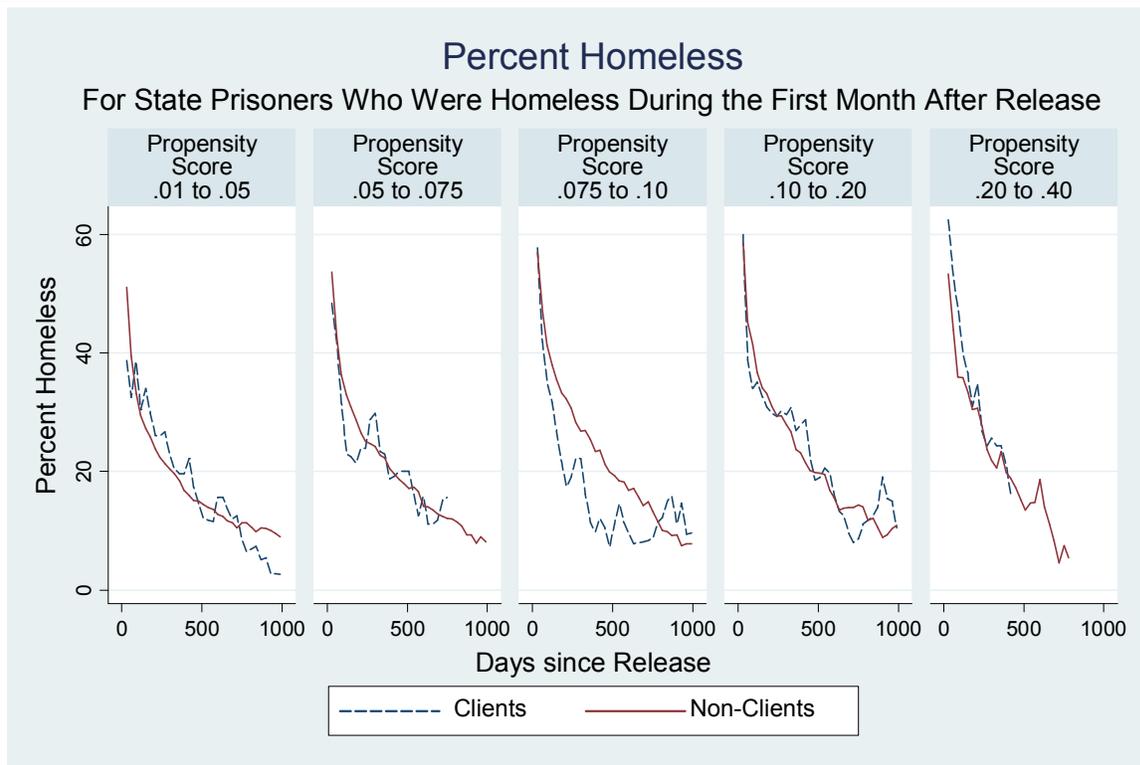
Notes: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

Figures 6.3 and 6.4 show the data on which these equations are based, using the same format as Figures 6.1 and 6.2. A comparison of Figures 6.2 and 6.4 show a difference in the pattern of post-release homeless among released state and city prisoners who were not initially homeless. State prisoners who were not homeless during that first month had much lower risk of becoming homeless during the post-release observation period than released city jail prisoners (two to four percent, compared with 12 to 15 percent for local inmates), but their risk continued to rise for at least the first three years, while released city prisoners appeared to reach a steady state after approximately one year.

**Figure 6.3**

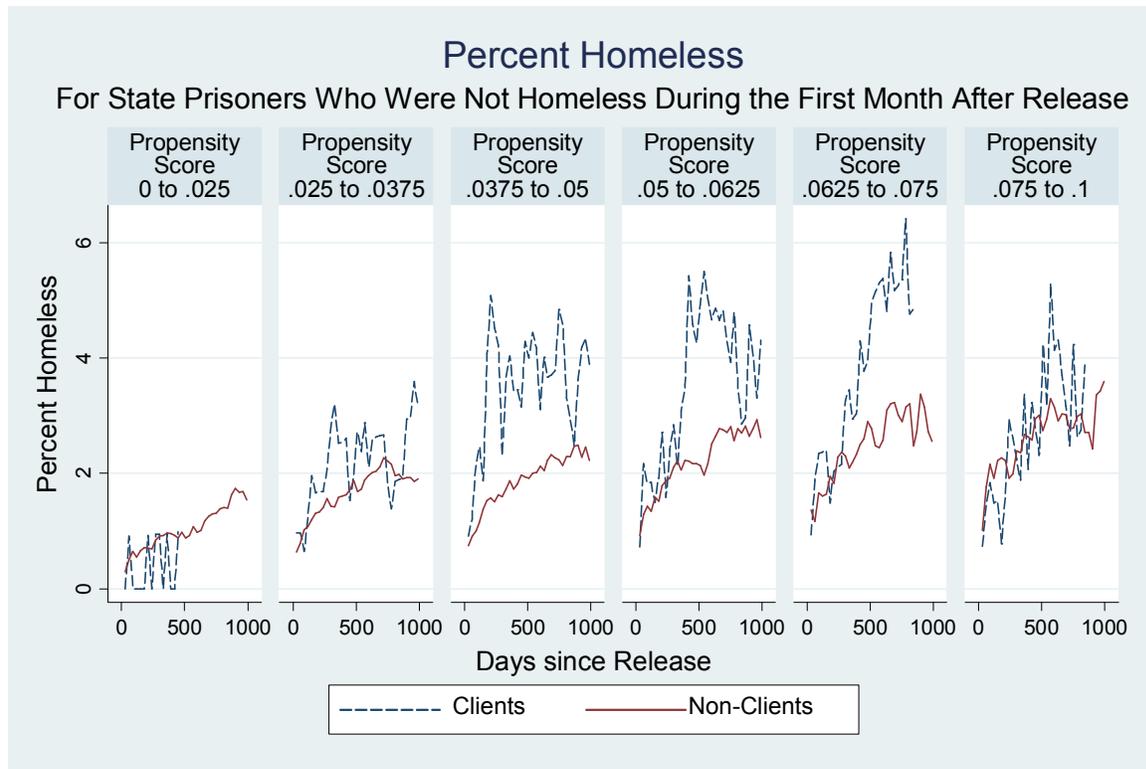
**New York State Prisoners Who Were Homeless At Time Of Release, By Fortune Participation, Propensity To Participate In Fortune, And Time Since Release**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

**Figure 6.4**

**New York State Prisoners Who Were Not Homeless At Time Of Release, By Fortune Participation, Propensity To Participate In Fortune, And Time Since Release**



Sources: Computed by Abt Associates using data obtained from the Fortune Society, the New York State Department of Correctional Services, the New York State Division for Criminal Justice Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

**Why Did Fortune Appear to Be More Effective With City Prisoners than State Prisoners?**

Fortune participation appears to have significantly reduced the risk of homelessness for inmates released from the New York City Department of Correction; this effect was significant both for inmates who were homeless at time of release and those who were not. But no evidence was found for any such effect on released state prisoners. This may be because the contribution to services that Fortune provides is greater for released city prisoners, relative to what they would have received otherwise, than for state prisoners. Returning state prisoners have more access to services than returning city prisoners, with the result that Fortune’s contribution may make a bigger impact on city prisoners, who receive fewer services upon release. This may explain why a substantial number of released state prisoners in our sample (11 percent) received homeless services during the first month but that only a small percentage—about 3 percent—subsequently experienced an episode of homelessness in any given month. In contrast, released city jail prisoners also came to DHS during the immediate month following release (about 16 percent of all city prisoners released during this six-year period) but were more likely to be homeless in subsequent months (about 14 percent, on average).

Nine out of ten state prisoners are released to parole supervision, which provides both the carrot of services and the stick of legal authority to motivate offenders in building law-abiding arrangements for living. Over half of all prisoners released during the 2000-2005 period to New York City were released

on discretionary parole, and one of the conditions of release is that prisoners have a place to live. Institutional parole officers work with prisoners who are nearing parole release to confirm that their housing arrangement is legitimate and, if no home is available, to arrange for shelter in the New York City network for homeless services. If no satisfactory housing arrangement can be made, the state's Board of Parole can deny release to parole until such arrangements have been confirmed. Persons who reach the point of conditional release—their full sentence minus whatever credit they receive for good behavior—are released from prison but are still under parole supervision and receive the same set of housing and other assistance that all parolees receive and are eligible for. The New York State Division of Parole contracts directly with many organizations and has informal non-contractual relationships with many more to provide shelter and housing services to its parolees. As of 2002-2003, the number of contracts numbered 17 and these informal arrangements existed with another 80 service providers in New York City (Graham, Locke, Rubenstein and Carlson, 2004).

In addition, the New York State prison system has developed a number of pre-release transitional programs designed to facilitate prisoners' reintegration into their families and the community. As prisoners near their release dates, they are moved to facilities in or near New York City. Some of these are work release facilities that allow prisoners to leave during the day for employment and to arrange housing. In 2002, the Department of Correctional Services launched phase III of its Transitional Services Program, which provides structured assistance in employment assistance, housing assistance, and family reunification. Counselors in the prisons write letters on behalf of inmates to housing providers and prospective employers. Other programs also offer similar services to special inmate populations. For example, chronically mentally ill inmates receive services provided by the State Office of Mental Health; incarcerated veterans receive services through a Veterans Program in three state prisons; and prisoners with AIDS get services from the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

In 2002, the State Division of Parole and the New York City DHS began joint efforts to coordinate services, especially for single adults at risk of being homeless upon their release. The two agencies began to share datasets to identify parole populations needing services and determined that 9 percent of all city residents seeking homeless services on any particular day were on parole following release from state prison, and that 16 percent of those entering the city's public shelter system reported that their last place of residence was a prison or a jail (Graham, Locke, Rubenstein and Carlson, 2004). This recognition stimulated the creation of specialized parole units to manage homeless parolees, and specialized parole officers were assigned to shelter facilities housing large numbers of homeless parolees. In 2003, the two agencies launched pilot project in two shelters with the largest numbers of parolees to provide joint case conferences with both parole officer and DHS case workers meeting with clients to coordinate services better.

Against this background of services available to 90 percent of all released state prisoners, the homeless services provided by the Fortune Society may not make a substantially larger contribution to them throughout their post-release period—at least for as long as they are under parole supervision. For prisoners released from New York City's jails, however, Fortune's services may make a significantly larger contribution to what they get from other sources.

As discussed elsewhere in this report, offenders sentenced to jails in New York State are given definite sentences of one year or less that are served in full behind bars, without the possibility of parole. Offenders are released at the end of their sentence and have no supervision requirements. Instead, prisoners leaving Rikers Island facilities are simply taken to a subway stop in Queens with a small amount of pocket money for transportation. From that point on, they are on their own. While prisoners

are incarcerated in jail, the city's Department of Correction provides some pre-release or transitional services, but these are focused primarily upon prisoners with mental illness or other special medical needs (Graham, Locke, Rubenstein and Carlson, 2004). This is largely the result of a class action lawsuit filed in 2000 on behalf of mentally ill prisoners receiving mental health treatment claiming that the city's jails were not providing adequate discharge planning for them. This was settled and the Department of Correction now provides them with discharge planning that includes assessment and various services, including housing assistance. Apart from this class of prisoners, few transitional services are offered prior to release. Some of these released prisoners no doubt seek assistance from various social service agencies, but we have no way of determining what proportion of offenders do so and for how long, except for those who come to Fortune. Because they are not under parole supervision, it is safe to assume that they do not receive anywhere near the level of assistance and services, on average, that parolees get following release.

Against this background, it seems reasonable to suspect that Fortune clients coming out of jail are receiving more services, and perhaps more effective services, than non-clients are getting, which may contribute to their lower rates of homelessness.

## 7. Conclusion

Based upon our limited observations, the Fortune Society is true to its primary mission. It provides a variety of services to more than 3,000 ex-prisoners annually, and many of these ex-prisoners are in great need. A significant proportion are HIV positive, most lack work, many are homeless upon return from prison or jail or are at risk of becoming homeless. There is no doubt that the Fortune Society provides services and assistance to these offenders and that many benefit from them. Although we did not conduct a systematic survey of clients, those we met testified to being grateful to the organization. Indeed, some commented that Fortune was “like family”—a perception that Fortune’s managers and staff encourage by their talk, their expressed values, and their actions. The organization also offers an offender-friendly environment, where many of the employees are ex-offenders themselves.

Whether these services improved public safety by preventing recidivism is another question that was addressed by this evaluation. As discussed above, we find no evidence that having attended Fortune’s service programs made a positive difference in reducing recidivism rates following release from prison or jail in New York City. Indeed, the analyses produced estimates of a *negative* effect that was statistically significant, for both offenders released from state prisons and from New York City jails. These findings can be interpreted in at least two different ways. One is that the statistical models that we were able to construct did not account for all the ways that Fortune clients were at greater risk than non-clients, simply because we lacked sufficient information about these various characteristics. Another interpretation is that participating in Fortune programming had iatrogenic effects. This may seem implausible, but a well-designed evaluation of a more intensive reentry program in New York City for returning state prisoners reported that participants also did worse than the comparison control group, leading the authors to theorize about why programs may actually do harm rather than just being ineffective (Wilson and Davis, 2006). There does exist a small body of research suggesting that some programs—especially poorly conceived or badly implemented ones—can have negative effects, but it is difficult to see how the Fortune Society’s services could produce such results. Participation is voluntary; a large proportion of clients drop out quickly and probably experience little effect, positive or negative; and there are no negative consequences to clients for failing to perform as expected. We therefore believe the most plausible interpretation of the estimated negative effects is that the clients were at greater risk of arrest than non-clients and that did not have sufficient information to account for these differences adequately. In other words, ex-prisoners who were at greatest risk tended to select themselves for Fortune’s services—or, at least, for coming to Fortune and participating in at least one session. Lacking sufficient information about all subjects, and lacking any ability to impose controls on how offenders were chosen for participation, we were probably unable to eliminate these selection effects and their resulting biases.

Nor did we evaluate systematically the extent to which various causal pathways between services and public safety worked or did not work. For example, we did not measure the extent to which substance abuse services resulted in reduced abuse of alcohol or illegal substances, or the extent to which these intermediate results affected subsequent recidivism.<sup>34</sup> We lacked completely any information about how non-clients were served, if at all, following their release. We were only able to count the numbers of services and sessions clients received and to document how staff characterized clients’ progress or, at least, their reasons for being discharged. This required us to consider the Fortune Society’s services and programs a “black box” for the impact analyses.

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<sup>34</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, we attempted to measure drug use and employment, but were unable to obtain the required data.

Even if we assume that Fortune delivered these services with a high level of competence and consistency, most clients' participation in these service units was neither intensive nor long-lived. Half of the clients discharged during 2000-2005 attended only 9 group sessions over the course of about ten years of data collection. This measure does not capture individual sessions with clients for lack of a data system that tracked such meetings, but numbers of both group and individual sessions attended during 2005, when individual session data were recorded, were in the same order of magnitude. Moreover, about 4 in 10 drop out, and fewer than half of those who were discharged during the six years between January 2000 and December 2005 completed the program in which they were most recently enrolled. Especially significant—given the importance of education for gaining and maintaining employment—is the fact that only one in ten completed the education program. It is easy to understand how only brief participation makes no positive difference in the likelihood of subsequent criminality.

That we find no evidence of a positive effect of Fortune's services on clients' subsequent criminality should not be too surprising given the nature of clients' offenders' extreme circumstances. Nine out of ten were not employed when they came to Fortune, and half were high school dropouts. Their work histories were not recorded at the point of intake to Fortune, but it is likely that few had held stable jobs, and that most had few or no marketable skills. Moreover, many of them lacked the soft-skills that are increasingly important in getting and keeping work—good communication skills, demonstrated work ethics, apparent trustworthiness, and apparent willingness to assume responsibilities. And all carried the stigma of a criminal record. The Fortune Society's career development workshops have sessions devoted to instructing offenders in how to deal in job interviews with questions about their criminal records. There are certainly better and worse ways to manage the information, but the fact remains that clients typically have several convictions in their past and significant time behind bars in state prison (four years, on average).

Having a job is not a pre-requisite for staying on the right side of the law, as most unemployed persons are probably law-abiding, but it certainly provides support to building a stable and crime-free life. Clients' backgrounds and current circumstances put them at an extreme disadvantage in the labor market. In recent decades, employers have been raising their requirements for educational attainment. Exactly why this is occurring is a matter of debate among labor economists. One explanation is that technological changes have resulted shifting work from unskilled labor to more skilled labor, and especially to labor involving higher cognitive skills (e.g., Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison, and Myers, 1960; Bell, 1973). During 1940 and 1990, employment in the United States has shifted from less-educated and lower-paid occupations toward more-educated and high-paid positions, and the years of schooling the average worker in the U.S. had has grown from 9.2 years in 1940 to 13.2 years in 1990 (Murphy and Welch, 1993). There is evidence of this in even the manufacturing sector, where introduction of labor-saving technologies have shifted the balance of skilled and unskilled jobs in the direction of the former (Berman, Bound, and Griliches, 1994). A competing explanation of this relationship between education and occupational position is that the skills inherently required of jobs may have changed, but that the real driver is the increase in the supply of educated persons in the economy, an increase that has outstripped the growth in the number of higher-skilled jobs. Given an oversupply of educated workers, employers can require college degrees for "high-school jobs," ones that were once done by high school grads (Heckler, 1992; Berg, 1970; but see Tyler, Murnane, and Levy, 1995). Yet another explanation is that employers see formal education as a signal that individuals have the abilities to learn on the job effectively, to work independently, to persist in doing demanding work, among others. Employers may also see that those with more formal education are more trainable, thereby requiring lower on-the-job training costs.

For these reasons, criminal offenders are in a weak position vis-à-vis other candidates in a competitive job market. They lack skills—both hard and soft—to offer employers. They lack educational achievements and work histories that signal that they are good bets for hiring, even in jobs where their skills may be sufficient. And their criminal records are also stigmatizing. Given a choice, employers will tend not to offer offenders a “second chance”—although for many it may be their first chance to earn a living (Holzer, Raphael and Stoll, 2003; Fahey, Roberts, and Engel, 2006).

Research on the effectiveness of employment and training programs for offenders generally indicates that even intensive training programs have minimal effects on preventing recidivism, if at all. (See Chapter 1.)

Studies of the return on investments in employment and training program suggest that large investments are needed to have an impact on earnings. Heckman (1994), for example, estimates that it takes an investment of approximately \$10,000 in training to produce a \$1,000 increase in annual earnings. How large an investment is needed to get people into the workforce to begin with, and not just to increase their wages? One suspects that a still larger dedication of resources is required for these persons. Fortune spends a considerably smaller amount of money (about \$3,000 per client) for its services.

Studies of correctional treatment programs for substance abusers also report evidence that intensive residential aftercare programs structured as therapeutic communities have positive effects on subsequent criminality (Inciardi et al., 1997). Such interventions are substantially more demanding than Fortune’s services because they are carried out under direct criminal justice supervision and because the therapeutic community model imposes a rigorous regime on its participants, with little tolerance for slippage.

## **The Challenge of Evaluating Programs With Little Leverage Over Their Design or Operation**

Our inability to draw strong inferences about how Fortune’s services did or did not affect its participants reflects a systemic problem in criminal justice research. For decades, nearly all programs delivering services to offenders have been designed, implemented, and operated with little input from research scientists who are ultimately asked to evaluate them. In recent years, nearly all federally funded programs result from earmarked appropriations—funds directed by law to a particular organization or agency. Congress, state legislatures, and private funding agencies sometimes mandate that these investments in programs be evaluated, but the conditions rarely exist to support research that can provide strong conclusions based on strong evidence. Rather, researchers are typically confronted with a program that began operations without planning for an evaluation. Whatever data the program collects are typically collected to support operational needs, and data that are critical to an evaluator are not collected. Moreover, programs are generally left to manage their own admission process, selecting persons they believe are most likely to benefit from their services, or persons most in need of their services, or whatever. Finding comparable populations of non-participants is generally difficult, and finding comparable information about these non-participants is even rarer. The result is that non-experimental evaluation techniques are often unable to provide strong bases for drawing valid and defensible inferences about program effects. This has been demonstrated in any number of reviews of correctional research (e.g., Lipton, Martinson, Wilks, 1975; McDonald, 1998 on offender employment and training programs; Petersilia, 2004 on offender reentry programs). In her review of reentry research, Petersilia (2004) writes that “there are so few rigorous evaluations upon which to base any generalizable knowledge. Using this

‘body’ of research to conclude anything about which reentry programs ‘work’ or ‘don’t work’ seems misguided.”

A better way to evaluate programs and to expand our understanding of how interventions do and do not produce their desired outcomes is to support demonstrations designed explicitly to test program strategies and the assumptions and hypotheses upon which they are built. Program design, data collection procedures, decision rules for selecting recipients or subjects of the intervention—these should be developed to support scientific assessment of program processes and their impacts. Ideally, these should be designed as social experiments, permitting strong control over how programs are implemented and how subjects are selected, using random assignment or other unbiased methods. There have been some powerful examples of such studies. Although many argue that such control experimentation is not feasible in criminal justice settings or is unethical, there are examples of good experiments that have yielded persuasive results. For example, the development of widespread practice of releasing defendants on their own recognizance in lieu of money bail owes its origins to an elegant experiment conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice in the Manhattan criminal courts (Ares, Rankin and Sturtz, 1963; Friedman, 1976). In most cases, what is required for such strong demonstration projects is that funding agencies make their investments in program conditioned upon implemented programs designed for evaluation. These funding agencies have the leverage to require this; researchers invited in to conduct after-the-fact evaluations are rarely able to impose the changes in operations required for strong evaluations.

## References

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## Appendix A

As discussed in Chapter 5, our analysis compares the arrest rates of clients and non-clients following their release from prison. Non-clients were followed from the day of their release to count the days between release and their first re-arrest, whereas time to re-arrest for clients was counted from the day of enrollment at Fortune. We raised the question of whether this different treatment of time biases the estimate of Fortune's effect because clients have avoided arrest successfully during the post-release period leading up to their enrollment.

The use of survival analysis minimizes the possibility of this bias affecting the comparison. On each day following release, the comparisons began with computing the numbers of both clients and non-clients who had survived since their release from prison or jail without having been arrested prior to that day. Both the client and non-client populations had therefore been at risk for equal numbers of days. The proportions of clients arrested on that day were then computed separately for clients and non-clients, producing the arrest rates for both populations on that day. If receiving services at Fortune contributed to a lower rate of recidivism, this would probably have been evident in a comparison of unadjusted client and non-client survival curves over time (e.g., in Figure 5.4).

Still, it is possible that the multivariate mathematical models that we were used to account for a variety of measured differences among the two groups, including the fact of having or not having been served at Fortune, may have produced incorrect estimates of Fortune's effects on clients' arrest rates. Several different approaches were therefore used to test if the estimates produced by the models shown in Table 5.5 were biased by the way the time between release from prison and time of clients' enrollment in Fortune was treated.

We first excluded Fortune clients who were recruited in prison because they were a highly specialized population unlike other prisoners in many respects. We then repeated the analyses, using the models shown in Table 5.5. The results were consistent with those reported in Table 5.5.

We also treated Fortune participation as a time-varying covariate that was turned "off" (set to 0.0) between release and the first Fortune contact, and then changed to "on" (set to 1.0) while the client was receiving Fortune services. We introduced a second time-varying covariate that allowed the hazard for Fortune clients to change smoothly after they had begun receiving services. (This would be appropriate if, for example, Fortune had a cumulative effect that built up over the period of participation, or, alternatively, if the initial effect of Fortune participation dissipated over time.)

For Fortune clients, the days between release and the first Fortune contact is different from that for other released prisoners, because – in any formulation of the estimate – they are not Fortune clients during that period. If our models imperfectly specify the change in hazard over that period, they might produce biased estimates of the difference between Fortune clients and other released prisoners. We tested two alternative ways of handling this pre-Fortune period. For one test we started observation at the date of Fortune entry. We assigned non-Fortune prisoners a simulated Fortune entry date by selecting the date of the nearest (in propensity score) Fortune client. We estimated the regression, stratifying the estimates by the delay between release and Fortune entry. The estimated difference between Fortune clients and other prisoners was substantially the same as that produced by the Cox regression shown in Table 5.5.

Our second test involved selecting subsets of cases. We compared all Fortune clients who were participating as of the first day after their release with all other released state prisoners who had not been rearrested on the first day. We estimated the Cox regression for this subset of clients. We repeated this selection for day 2, and for other days up to 1000. Again the results are substantially the same as those for the Cox regression shown in Table 5.5