

**ComALERT**  
**(Community and Law**  
**Enforcement Resources**  
**Together)**

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**ComALERT**  
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# What is ComALERT?

- Reentry program in Brooklyn, NY
- Serves about 350 recently released former prisoners per year
- Main Services
  - › Drug treatment
  - › Transitional employment, vocational training, and job search assistance
  - › Referrals for mental health, Medicaid benefits, and other services

# The ComALERT Partnership

- Kings County District Attorney's Office
  - › Overarching coordination of program and ties to service providers
- The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing, and Able Program (RWA)
  - › Transitional employment and housing, vocational training, job search assistance
- Counseling Service EDNY
  - › Drug treatment, counseling
- Other service providers

# Parole Mandate and Program Intake

- ◉ Serves clients with a parole mandate to complete drug treatment
  - › Parolees with a history of drug use or drug crimes
  - › Required to attend and complete program
- ◉ Streamlined referrals from parole to ComALERT
  - › Intake and screening at parole office
  - › Brings clients into ComALERT quickly, often within one month of release

# Drug Treatment

- ◎ Counseling provided onsite by Counseling Service EDNY
- ◎ 3 to 6 month, non-intensive, out-patient treatment
  - › Attend one individual meeting with counselor and one group meeting per week
  - › Focus on relapse prevention
- ◎ Drug tested two times per month
  - › 1/3 test positive

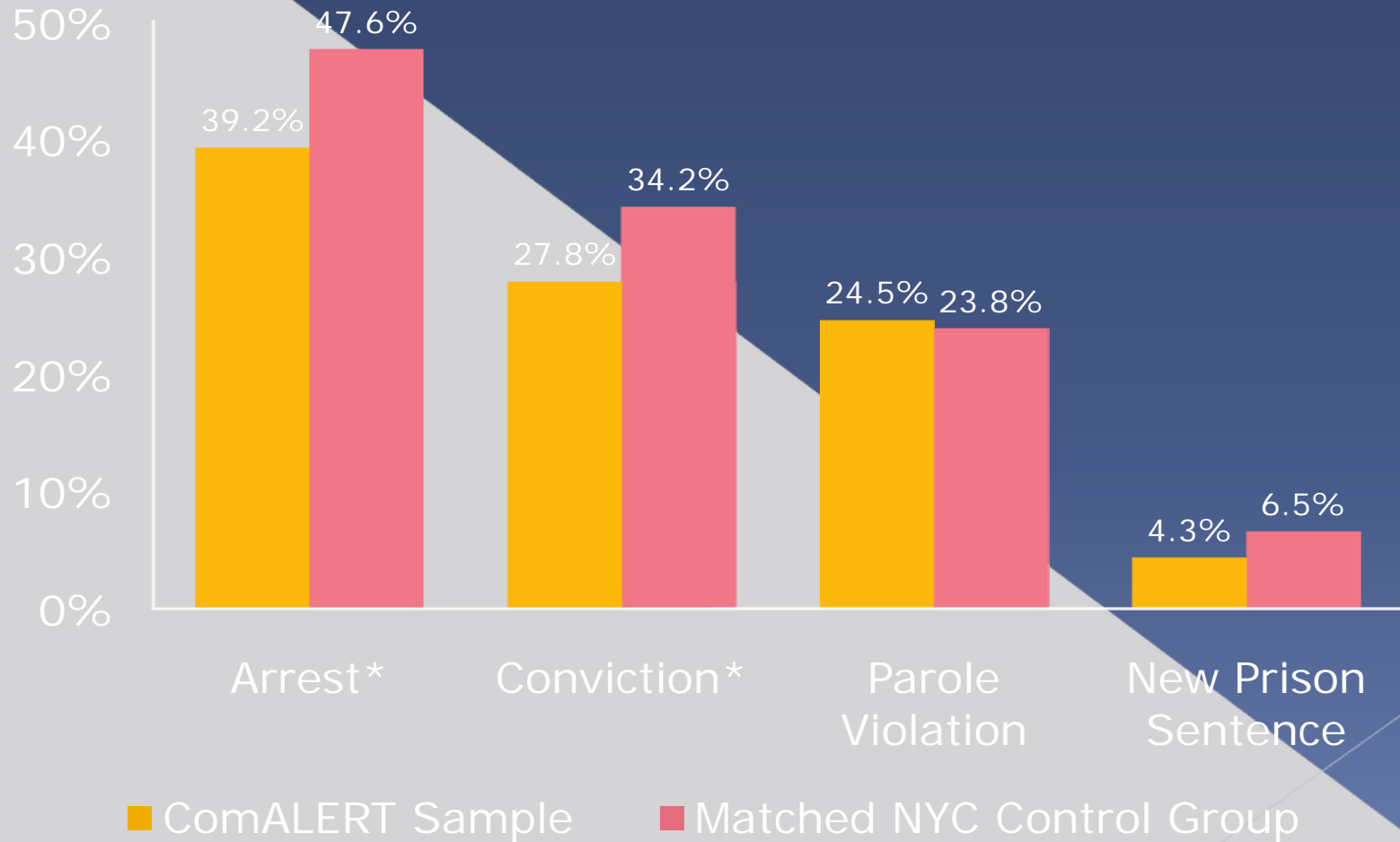
# Employment Services

- Must be employed or in school to complete program (and parole mandate)
- Doe Fund (RWA)
  - › 12 months of transitional employment
    - Jobs in street cleaning
    - Can move into supervisory, driver, or security positions; paid vocational training
    - Paid \$7.50/hr, savings account
  - › Paid job search after 9 months
  - › Other services: housing, life skills classes
  - › \$1000 bonus with stable job and housing

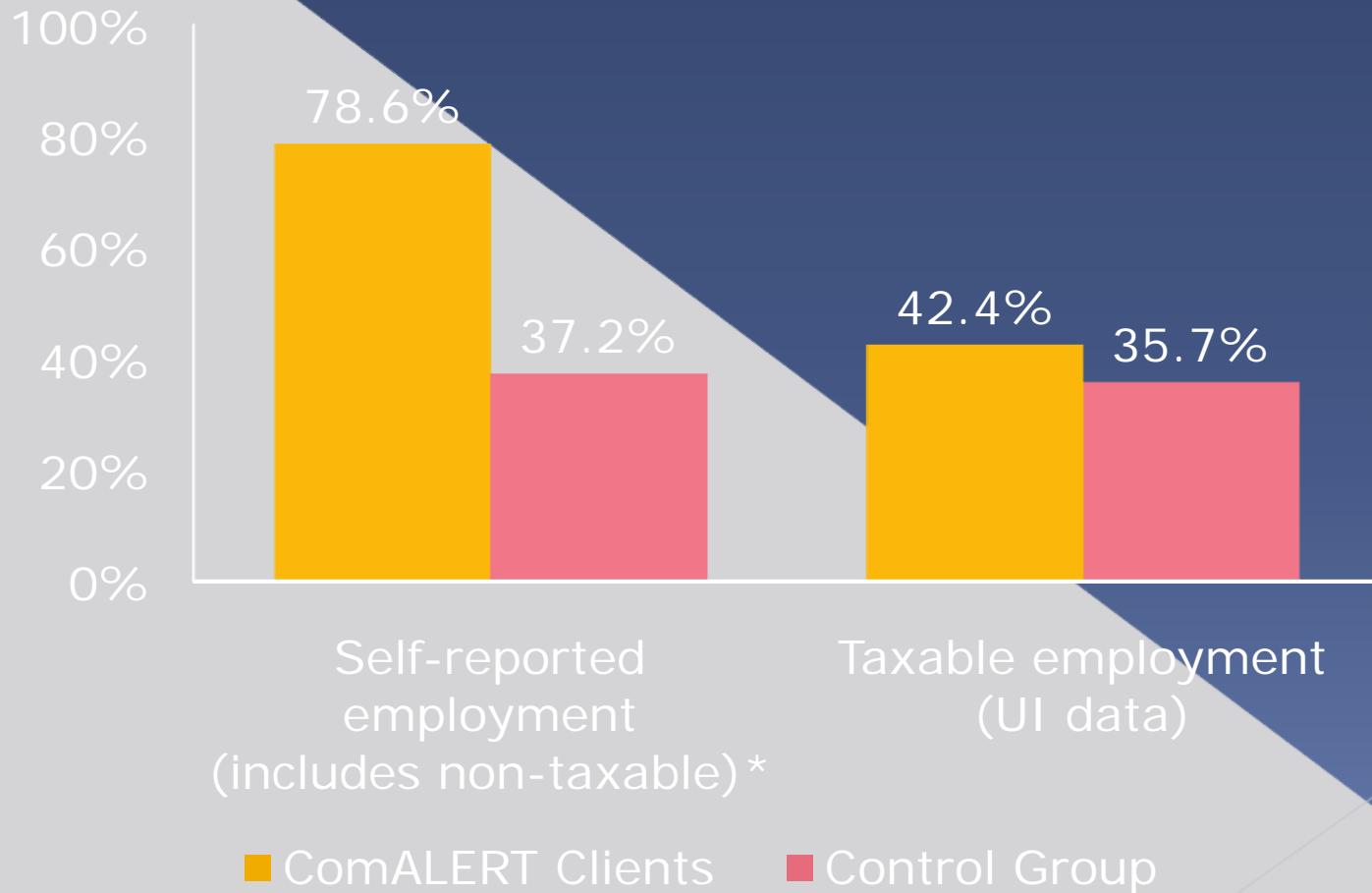
# The ComALERT Evaluation

- Compares ComALERT clients to similar, non-ComALERT parolees using quasi-experimental design
- Quantitative Data
  - › Recidivism
    - Administrative criminal justice (rap sheet) data
  - › Employment and earnings
    - Survey data (measures taxable and non-taxable employment)
    - Unemployment insurance (UI) data (measures only taxable employment)
- Open-ended interviews with clients, counselors, and Doe Fund employees

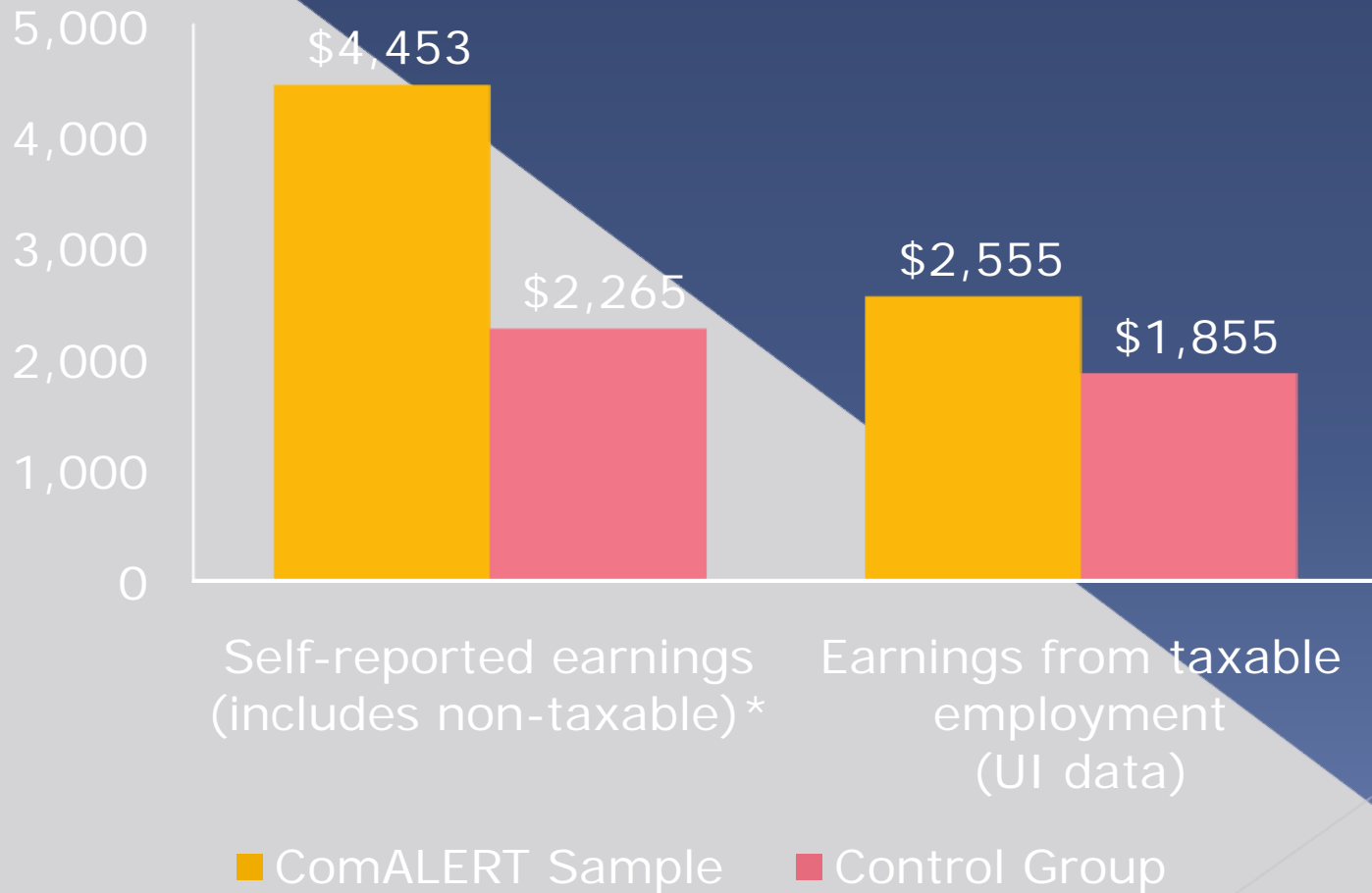
# 2-Year Recidivism Rates



# Employed at the time of the Survey



# Earnings in the Survey Quarter



# What factors might make ComALERT effective?

- ⦿ How does ComALERT engage clients and encourage employment?
- ⦿ The ComALERT evaluation cannot speak directly to which aspects of ComALERT help to produce positive results
- ⦿ However, there are several factors that may contribute:
  - › Speedy post-release provision of services
  - › Parole mandate to participate
  - › Strong transitional jobs program with wraparound services

# Services Soon After Release

- Evidence from other evaluations (e.g. CEO) suggests that services soon after release are especially beneficial
- Period of high risk: Parolees are especially likely to recidivate in the first 6 to 12 months after release
- Engage parolees before they return to old places and activities
- Intake process typically brings parolees into ComALERT within one month of release

# Parole Mandate to Participate

- Mandate may bring men to ComALERT who would not otherwise seek services
- Drug mandate is harnessed to engage clients in employment services
  - › Coupled with ComALERT graduation requirements, participants are effectively mandated to employment
- However, engagement challenges remain
  - › 45% do not graduate and two thirds do not opt to take up RWA transitional jobs
  - › Drug treatment mandate not strongly enforced
  - › Mandate may alienate some clients

# Strong Transitional Jobs Program with Opportunities for Advancement/Training

- ◎ Intensive employment program
  - › Lengthy transitional employment
  - › Opportunities for advancement and training
  - › Extensive wraparound services
  - › Monetary incentives: retention bonuses
  - › Services that are seen as an opportunity
- ◎ However, engagement challenges remain
  - › Street cleaning work not attractive to all
  - › Large time commitment involved
  - › Strict drug testing and zero tolerance policy

# Connection with District Attorney's Office

- Brings political weight and legitimacy to the program
  - › Facilitates connection with Parole
  - › Facilitates building of ties to service providers
- Connection with DA's Office and with program may mediate situations in which clients are rearrested or in danger of parole violation
- Little evidence from interviews that connection with DA's Office alienated clients

# Conclusions

- ComALERT is a unique program given its ties to the DA's Office
  - › May be difficult to replicate, but the ComALERT situation provides some lessons
- General lessons for program development
  - › Support from law enforcement agencies adds legitimacy
  - › Inter-organizational ties are key
- General lessons for program model
  - › Services received soon after release may be most effective
  - › A parole mandate may encourage engagement
  - › Parolees may best respond to an employment program that provides opportunities for advancement
- More research is needed to better understand what works