

# *Understanding Volunteerism in Vocational and Life Skills Programming*

## Background

The purpose of this research is to understand who volunteers for Vocational & Life Skills (VLS) reentry programming in institutional and community correctional settings. We had three primary goals for this research note:

- 1) describe key differences between participants versus non-participants,
- 2) describe how VLS participants in facilities differ from participants in community VLS programs, and
- 3) describe key findings from our statistical models predicting who volunteers to participate in VLS programs.

VLS is a statewide reentry program that provides competitive grant funding to multiple community resource organizations and is administered by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS). VLS grantees provide services that include prerelease counseling, case management, educational courses, and training in specific trades.

## Research Questions of Interest

- 1 What are the individual characteristics associated with program involvement in a custodial setting and in the community?
- 2 What are the individual characteristics of individuals who received the most programs during their custodial supervision?

Data included a release cohort between  
July 1, 2014 & June 30, 2018

2014

2018

**Custodial setting  
participants**

**471**

**Community  
participants**

**451**

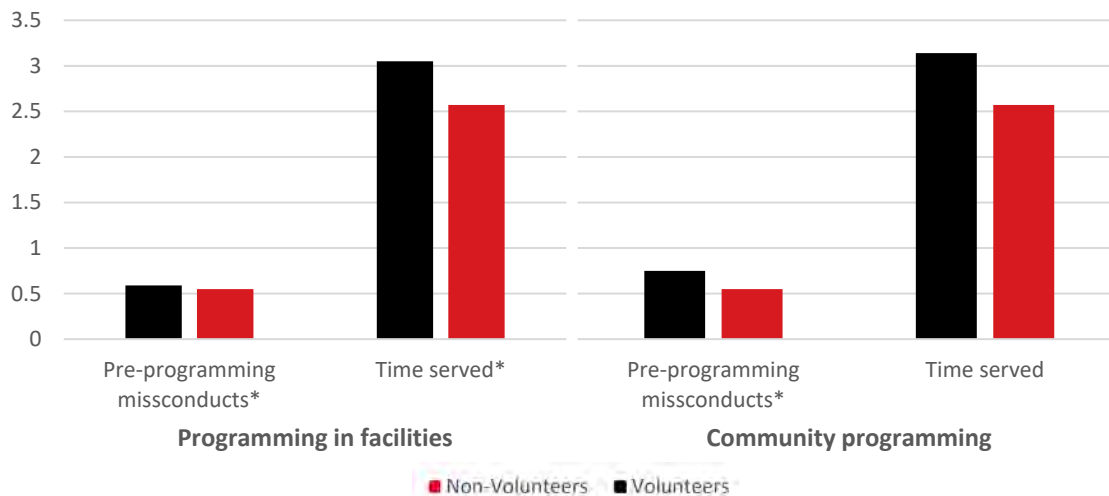
**Non-  
participants**

**7,988**

**Percentage VLS  
participation**

**6%**

### Pre-Release Descriptive Statistics



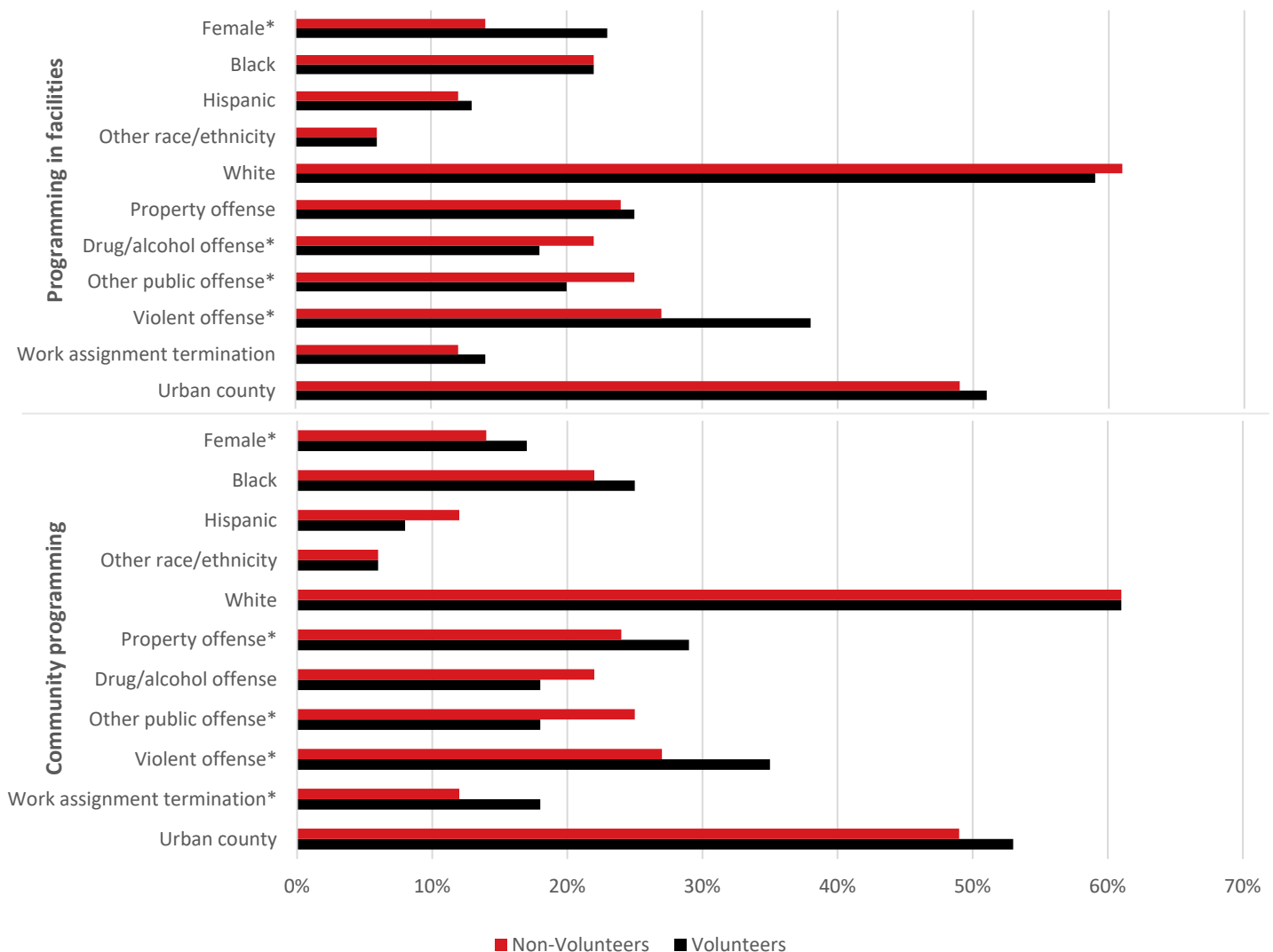
\* indicates significant findings

### Key Findings

- The more time individuals served in prison, the higher their odds of participating in a VLS program
- Females are more likely to participate in a VLS program compared to males
- Volunteers who received programming in prison were less likely to have an initial arresting offense for drug/alcohol related crimes<sup>1</sup>
- Volunteers who received programming in the community were more likely to have an initial arresting offense of a property crime or a violent crime, but less likely to have an arresting offense for a public order crime

<sup>1</sup> All offenses in this brief refer to the offense that led the individual to be incarcerated. These are not follow-up offenses commonly referred to as recidivistic events.

## Demographic Differences in Volunteers versus Non-Volunteers



\* indicates significant findings

### This research note is adapted from findings from the article:

Butler, H. Daniel., Michael Campagna, Ryan Spohn, and Katelynn Towne. (Online First) "Understanding Volunteerism: The Role of the Participant in Non-Clinical Correctional Programming." *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*

The full text peer-reviewed manuscript can be accessed here (subscription required):

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509674.2022.2116520?journalCode=wjor20>

Alternatively, you may request the full text from Dr. Katelynn Towne: [ktowne@unomaha.edu](mailto:ktowne@unomaha.edu)