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**Date:** June 20, 2003

**Subject:** **Feelings towards the rights of convicted felons once they are released from prison**

## **PURPOSE**

The following survey was designed to complete course requirements for Technical Writing at Arkansas Tech University. Many people today have concerns about convicted felons who are released back into society. There is much debate concerning the rights, or lack thereof, of a felon once he or she is no longer incarcerated. This survey was conducted to determine feelings toward the privileges that should be available for released criminals.

## **PROCEDURE**

The survey included the following questions:

1. What age category do you belong to?
2. Are you male or female?
3. Do you feel convicted felons should be allowed to vote once they have been released from prison?
4. Do you feel convicted felons should be able to legally own and purchase firearms once they have been released from prison?
5. Do you feel convicted felons should be allowed to hold jobs that put them in close contact with children?

Thirty-seven surveys were administered to both males and females belonging to five different age categories. The survey responses were divided first by age category and then by gender. The number of “no” responses were calculated for questions three, four, and five.

The no responses to each question were counted and then converted into a percentage to illustrate a clear interpretation of the results. In Table 1 the percentages of “no” responses for each age group and each gender within each age group are listed. Also included in the table is the total percentage of “no” responses within each age group.

This survey does not ask questions about a specific felony. It was designed to determine the feelings of people toward someone marked as a felon regardless of the crime he or she committed.

**Table 1: Survey of Feelings Toward the Rights of Convicted Felons Once They are Released from Prison**

Age Category	Do you feel convicted felons should be allowed to vote once they have been released from prison?	Do you feel convicted felons should be able to legally purchase and own firearms?	Do you feel convicted felons should be allowed to hold jobs that put them in close contact with children?
	No %	No %	No %
<b>16-25 Male</b>	40%	100%	100%
<b>16-25 Female</b>	25%	75%	75%
<b>16-25 Total</b>	32%	87%	87%
<b>26-35 Male</b>	50%	100%	100%
<b>26-35 Female</b>	25%	82%	100%
<b>26-35 Female</b>	38%	91%	100%
<b>36-45 Male</b>	33%	67%	67%
<b>36-45 Female</b>	40%	100%	80%
<b>36-45 Total</b>	36%	84%	74%
<b>46-55 Male</b>	60%	57%	100%
<b>46-55 Female</b>	67%	34%	100%
<b>46-55 Total</b>	64%	46%	100%
<b>55 &amp; over Male</b>	67%	62%	88%
<b>55 &amp; over Female</b>	25%	100%	100%
<b>55 &amp; over Total</b>	46%	82%	94%
<b>Overall Totals</b>	40%	79%	91%

## RESULTS

The 46-55 age category had the most opposition to convicted felons being able to vote. Sixty-four percent of the individuals in this age group surveyed felt that once a person breaks the law so severely he is convicted of a felony; he should not be allowed to take part in the government in a way that could affect law-abiding citizens. The 16-25 age category showed the least opposition to convicted felons having the right to vote. This may be due to the fact that many 16-25 year old individuals are not registered to vote and many others in this age group do not feel it is necessary for them to vote due to their young age. Overall males showed a greater opposition to convicted felons voting than females.

The 26-35 age category demonstrated the most opposition to convicted felons being able to own and purchase firearms. Ninety-one percent of the individuals surveyed in this category showed opposition. The 46-55 age category showed significantly less opposition to this issue than any other age group with only 46% of the individuals surveyed being opposed to convicted felons owning and purchasing firearms. Males showed approximately the same amount of opposition to this issue as females did.

Every age group surveyed displayed strong opposition to convicted felons being able to hold jobs that put them in close contact with children. The 26-35 age group and the 46-55 age group each had one hundred percent opposition to this issue. The least amount of opposition came from the 36-45 age group, although seventy-four percent is a great amount of opposition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of the survey show that many people believe that once a person has been convicted of a felony he should lose many of the rights and privileges he once had. Many people stated their answers might differ if they knew what specific felony had been committed. For example, one individual surveyed in the 26-35 age category commented that if a person was convicted of a felony for writing hot checks there should be no problem with that individual purchasing a firearm for hunting or self-defense purposes. Many others commented that if the felony was not a violent crime against another person, the felon should not be prohibited from owning firearms.

Concerning the issues of voting and owning firearms, women proved to be a little more forgiving than men. Many of the women surveyed commented that once a person had paid their debt to society through fines or a prison sentence he should be able to resume the rights and privileges he held before his conviction. When it came to the issue of convicted felons working around children women showed more opposition than men. Most of the women surveyed felt that even a rehabilitated criminal should not be around children due to the negative image that person portrays.