

Kenai Peninsula Community Readiness for Reentry Assessment

Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition



SUMMARY

The Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition is a coalition concerned with finding ways to make our community safer by reducing the constant cycle of people returning to crime and incarceration. We are working in several areas, such as transportation, housing, wellness, and socio-economic concerns. The reduction of recidivism in our communities will help to make our neighborhoods safer by reducing the number of offenders that commit new crimes, thus reducing the number of victims of those crimes.

The Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition has completed its initial assessment of communities across the Kenai Peninsula. The community was assessed using the Community Readiness for Community Change model by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research of Colorado State University.

The purpose of this assessment is to gain knowledge about our community's readiness for change as it pertains to the issue of reentry into the community from incarceration. The individuals that are released back into the community are referred to as reentrants. According to the pipeline data the Coalition received from the Alaska Department of Corrections, 645 reentrants were released to the Kenai Peninsula during the year 2017. The Kenai Peninsula has the fourth highest number of individuals released to an individual area, outnumbered only by Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks. Of these four regions, the Peninsula comes in second when we consider the number of releases per capita. By further analyzing this data, we have found that an average of 53.75 reentrants were released the Kenai Peninsula each month during the same year- that's nearly two reentrants per day releasing to this area from prisons across the state.

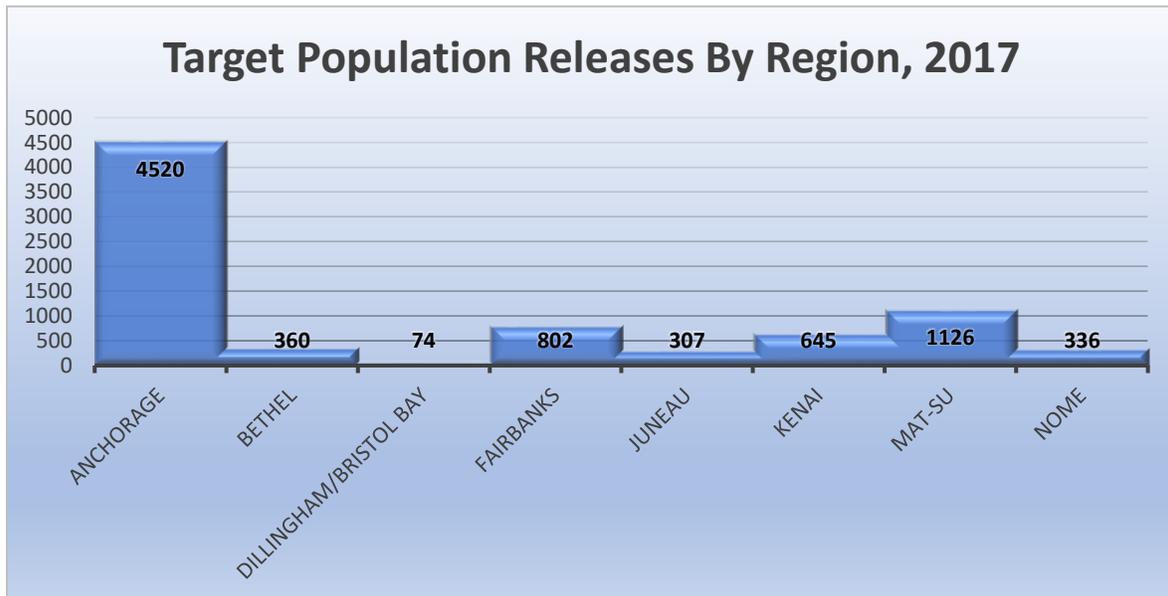
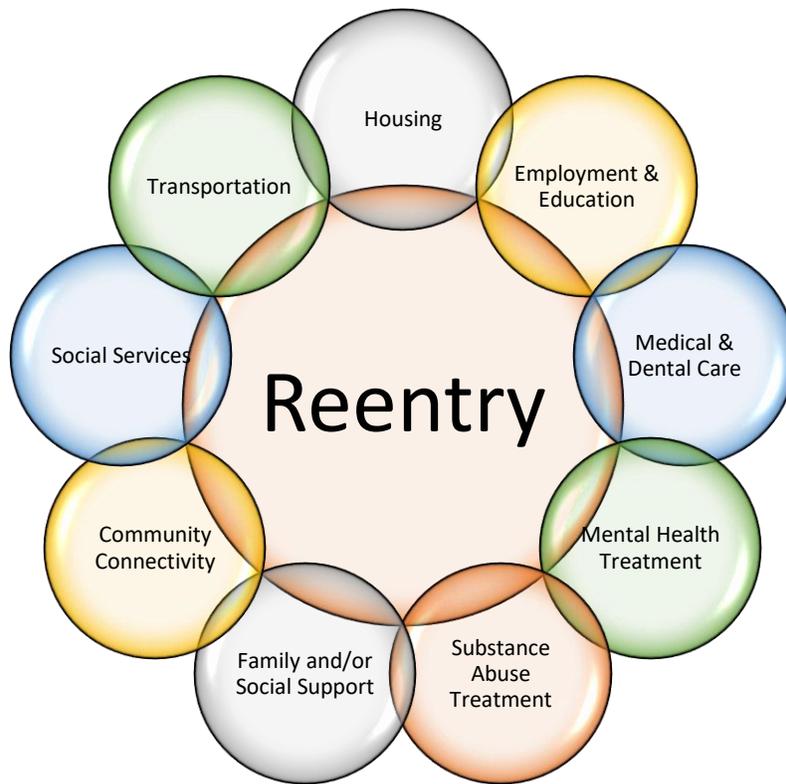


Chart 1, TARGET POPULATION RELEASES BY REGION, 2017

It is also important to recognize that state numbers do not include the number of releases from community jails. The Homer Community Jail held a total of 436 inmates in 2017. Of these individuals, 323 were released back into the community. So far, Homer’s jail has held 121 inmates in 2018 with 98 released into Homer. The Seward Community Jail held 222 inmates in 2017. So far, Seward’s jail has held 37 inmates in 2018 with 30 released into Seward. (We were unable to identify the exact number of individuals released to Seward during the year 2017.)

Returning to the community from incarceration is a complex and challenging transition for the reentrant, their families, and their communities. These individuals often struggle with lack of adequate housing, job skills, education, and other challenges including mental health issues, lack of support systems, and substance abuse. It is not uncommon for these challenges to become barriers to successful reintegration into society if left unresolved.



KPRC REACH

The Kenai Peninsula Borough has a total area of 24,752 square miles and is situated in the south-central region of Alaska. The Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition is dedicated to reentry across this vast expanse and includes the following communities:

Anchor Point	Hope	Point Possession
Bear Creek	Jakolof Bay	Port Graham
Beluga	Kachemak Selo	Primrose
Clam Gulch	Kalifornsky	Razdolna
Coho	Kasilof	Ridgeway
Cooper Landing	Katchemak	Salamatof
Crown Point	Kenai	Seldovia
Diamond Ridge	Lawing	Seward
Fox River	Lowell Point	Soldotna
Fritz Creek	Moose Pass	Sterling
Funny River	Nanwalek	Sunrise
Halibut Cove	Nikiski	Tyonek
Happy Valley	Nikolaevsk	Voznesenka
Homer	Ninilchik	

DATA COLLECTED

This report shows the results of the completed Kenai Peninsula Community Readiness for Reentry Assessment, in which we interviewed a total of nine key respondents representing different sectors of the communities that collectively make up the Kenai Peninsula. These are qualitative interviews with individuals that are chosen based on their level of firsthand knowledge about the community in which they live, including professionals, community leaders, and residents. The questions asked gave us insight into the following five dimensions: Community Knowledge of Efforts, Leadership, Community Climate, Community Knowledge of the Issue, and Resources. You will find more detailed information regarding each dimension and the corresponding level of readiness in the following section.

The results of this assessment will be used to guide and direct next steps of the Coalition in its efforts to engage the residents of the Kenai Peninsula in creating safer communities by effectively responding to the issue of reentry. The Tri-Ethnic Model for Community Readiness for Community Change suggests that the area with the lowest readiness score be addressed first. The results of the Coalition's assessment show that *Knowledge of Efforts* is the area with the lowest score, therefore this will be reflected in the goals and strategies the Coalition has identified further on in this report.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition conducted a total of nine interviews. Each interview was scored to provide a level of readiness for each dimension of the assessment. Scoring was done by two members of the coalition that were not involved in conducting or transcribing the interviews to keep the interviews anonymous and the scores unbiased.

The nine levels of readiness are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1: No Awareness | 6: Initiation |
| 2: Denial/Resistance | 7: Stabilization |
| 3: Vague Awareness | 8: Expansion/Confirmation |
| 4: Preplanning | 9: Community Ownership |
| 5: Preparation | |

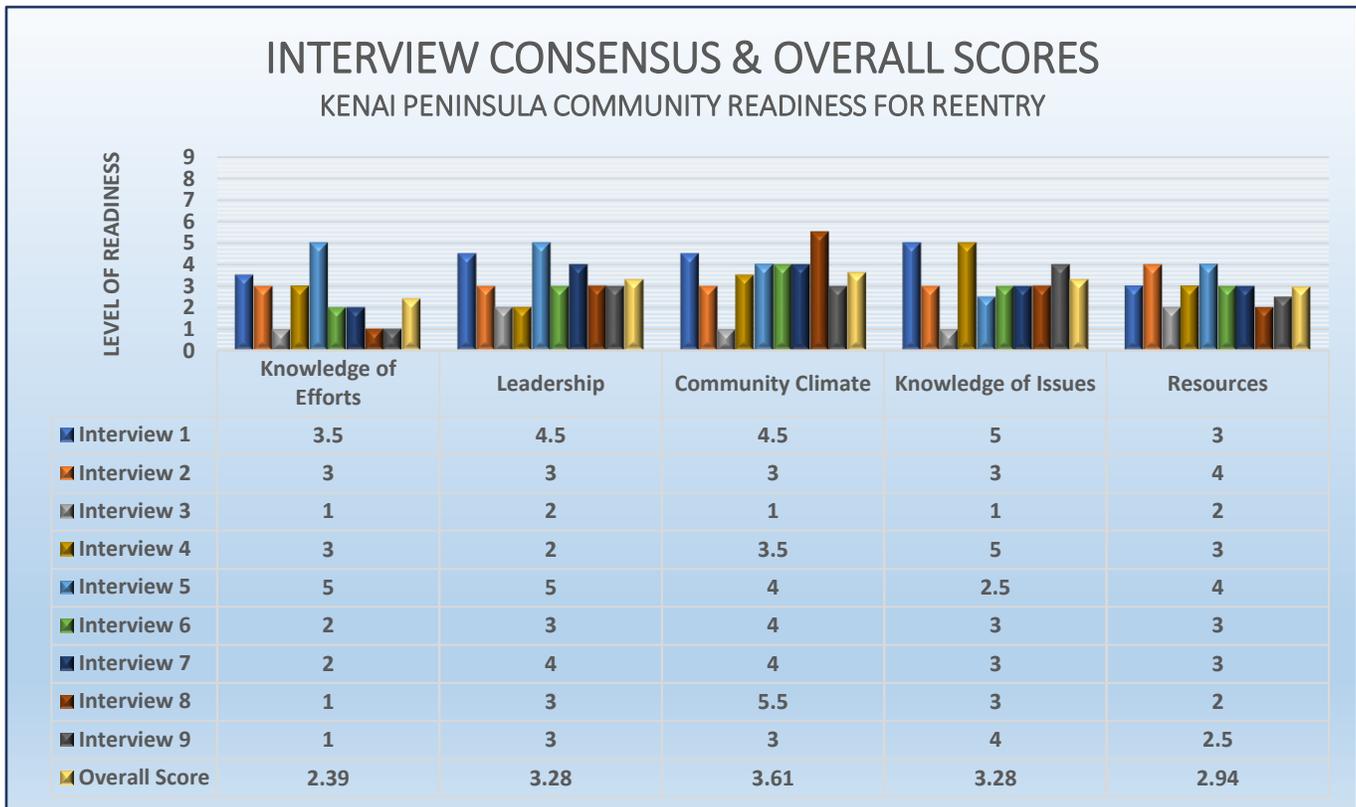


Chart 2, INTERVIEW CONSENSUS & OVERALL SCORES

The Kenai Peninsula's stage of readiness score based on the Tri-Ethnic Model is a 3.1, indicating VAGUE AWARENESS of the issue. This indicates that there are limited resources, only a few of members of the community have an awareness of current efforts, and community members and leadership show no immediate motivation to act on this issue.

DIMENSION SCORES

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF EFFORTS: 2.39

Community Knowledge of Efforts refers to how much the community knows about current programs and activities that address this issue. An overall score of 2.39 indicates that there is denial or resistance to current efforts. This means that the community may believe this is not a concern in the community, possibly that it can't or shouldn't be addressed, very few community members have knowledge about the issue, there may be misconceptions about the issue, and there is little to no support for using community resources to address the issue.



Chart 3, COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF EFFORTS DIMENSION SCORE PER INTERVIEW

In Chart 3 we can see that half of the interviews conducted were scored at 2 or below, meaning there is a low perception of knowledge of efforts in our communities. Those that did say there was some knowledge, were only able to name one individual or a couple of organizations that were actively involved or that knew that this was a problem area. Most respondents have a perception that very few people in our community are aware of efforts. While only a few community members see that this may be an issue, it is not known as a priority and there is very little knowledge of what is happening to address it or that it should be addressed. As the lowest scored dimension for this assessment, addressing misconceptions and educating the community about current efforts and why those efforts are important is a priority for this Coalition. This can be accomplished in a number of ways including media campaigns, community outreach activities, news bulletins, and engaging more community members from different sectors in current efforts. By addressing the lack of knowledge of efforts and how these efforts effect the community at large, the Coalition will be able to successfully raise the level of readiness for this dimension while affecting the level of readiness in other dimensions.

LEADERSHIP: 3.28

This dimension refers to leadership’s attitude toward addressing the issue. For the purpose of this assessment, leadership refers to those in local government or other leadership roles in the community. An overall score of 3.28 indicates that at least some of the leadership believes that this issue may be a concern. However, it also indicates that they show no immediate motivation to act.



Chart 4, LEADERSHIP DIMENSION SCORE PER INTERVIEW

Our data shows that the perception of the community is that to leadership, reentry may be an issue but is not yet prepared to address it. It also shows, by the few midlevel scores, that at least some believe that a few of our members in leadership are participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts. Our strategy for improving this score would be to engage leadership in playing a key role in local efforts. This may be by helping the community to evaluate, modify, and seek new resources, to speak out publicly on behalf of efforts, or to expand efforts.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE: 3.61

Community Climate refers to the community’s attitude towards addressing the issue. The overall score of 3.61 indicates that there is only vague awareness of the issue, that it may be a concern but is not considered a priority, and there is little to no motivation to act.

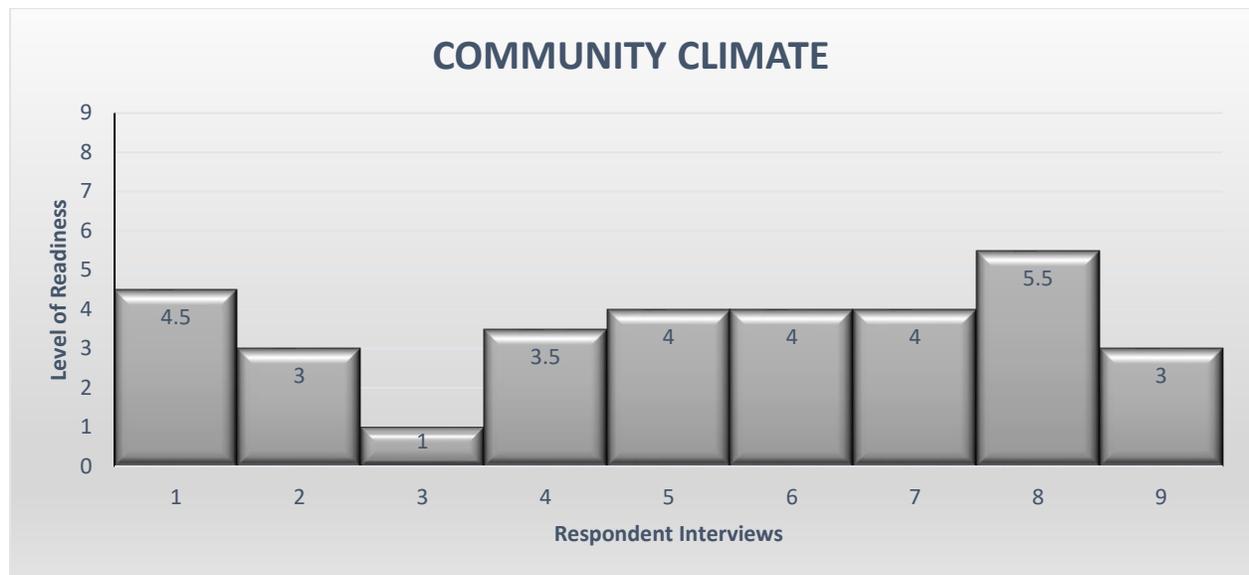


Chart 5, COMMUNITY CLIMATE DIMENSION SCORE PER INTERVIEW

We can see by the visual data that we have one outlier respondent that has a perception that the communities are not yet receptive and/or is unaware that reentry is even a concern in the communities. Of the other eight respondent scores we can see that most believe that this issue is a concern for the members of our communities, that some type of effort is needed to address it, and that at least some community members are participating in those efforts. Although we are a long way from people seeing efforts as having any long-term viability, the Coalition will work to engage community members in being a more supportive, driving force of local efforts across the communities of the Kenai Peninsula through further education and outreach.

KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUE: 3.28

In this dimension, we are referring to how much the community knows about the issue of reentry. An overall score of 3.28 indicates that at least some community members have heard about the issue, there may be misconceptions about the issue, and that it is possible that some community members are aware that this is an issue locally.



Chart 6, COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUE DIMENSION SCORE PER INTERVIEW

The majority of respondents perceive that at least some community members have heard of the issue but little else. We can see from the data that there is some of knowledge of causes, consequences, and signs and symptoms of this issue in our communities. Although our data indicates some knowledge, moving forward it will be important to educate the communities about the rate of local occurrences and its impact on communities, while increasing the detailed knowledge of the issue and how to address it.

RESOURCES: 2.94

This dimension asked questions regarding the resources that are being used or could be used to address the issue. A score of 2.94, still being in the denial/resistance stage of readiness, is also a high 2. This indicates that although still limited, there are some resources such as community rooms, volunteers, local professionals, grant funding, or other financial sources that could be used for further efforts, there is little or no action to allocate these resources to the issue. This also means that financial resources are not stable or sustaining.



Chart 7, RESOURCES DIMENSION SCORE PER INTERVIEW

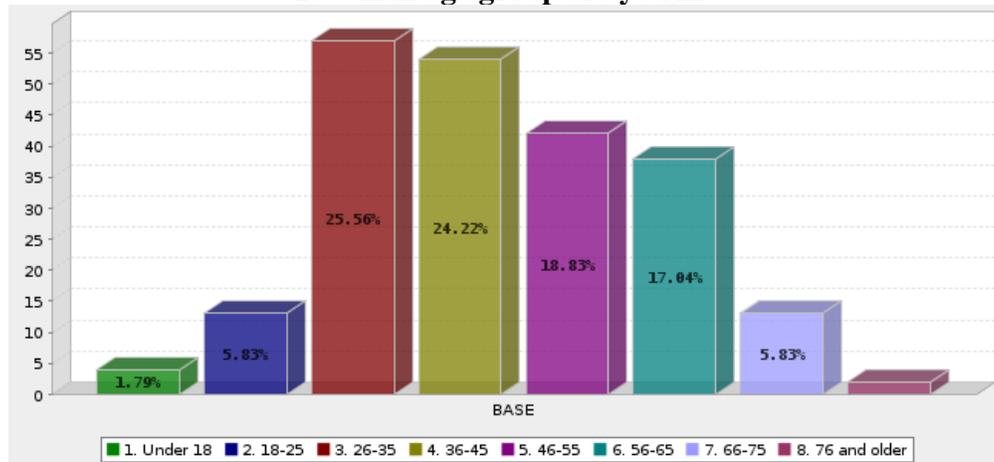
Most people believe that there just are not enough resources available to address the problem. Our score shows that there is a perception that there are some resources but that there isn't enough action to allocate resources to the issue. Obtaining new resources and engaging community members and leaders in actively working to secure and allocate resources toward this issue are also next steps for the Coalition. For any sustainable solution, it is important that our communities are able to find and allocate stable funding sources for efforts that address the issue.

COMMUNITY REENTRY READINESS SURVEY

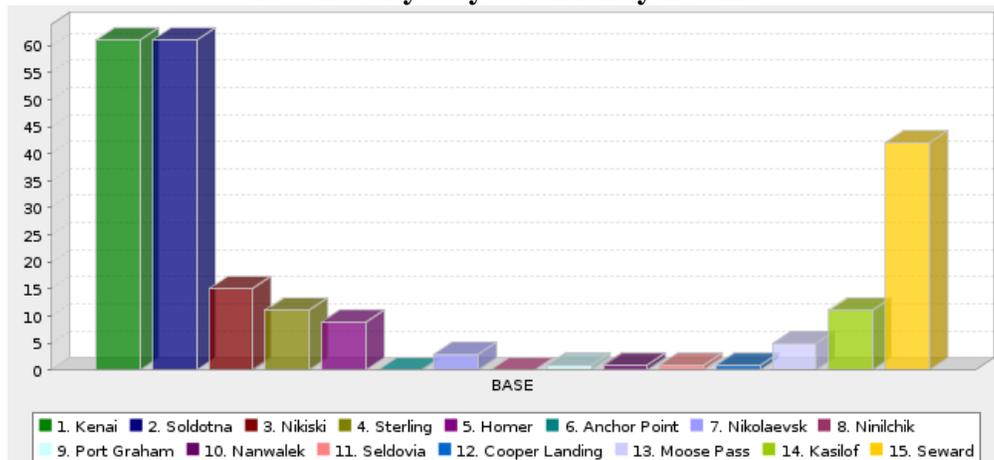
The Kenai Peninsula Reentry Coalition began its process for assessing the community's readiness using the Tri-Ethnic Model as outlined above. However, we also felt that it was crucial to ask the members of our community how they felt regarding the topic of reentry. Therefore, we developed a short survey targeting the residents of the Kenai Peninsula. We surveyed a total of 222 residents from across the Kenai Peninsula and have included that data below.

COMMUNITY REENTRY READINESS SURVEY RESULTS

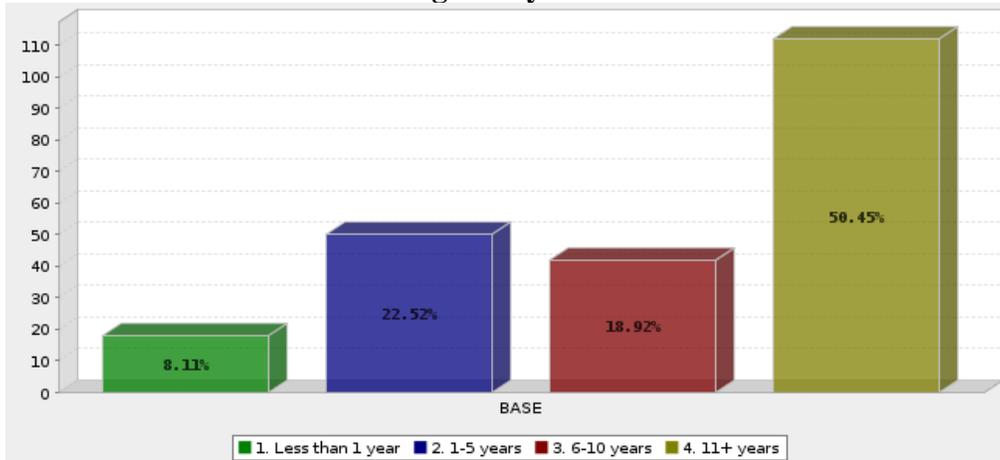
1. Which age group are you in?



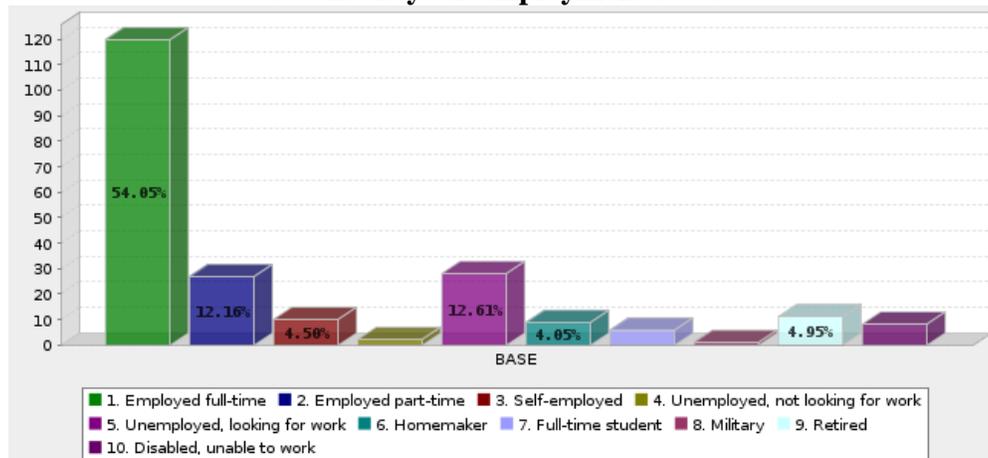
2. What city do you currently live in?



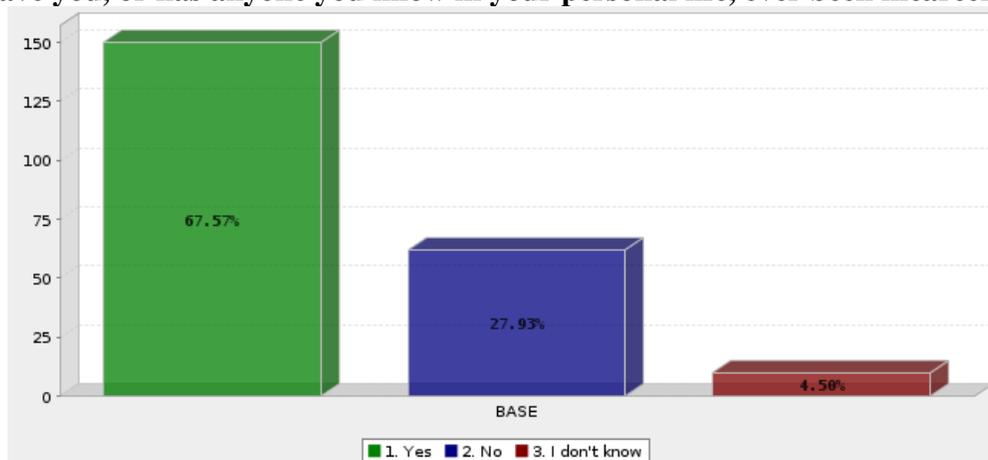
3. How long have you lived here?



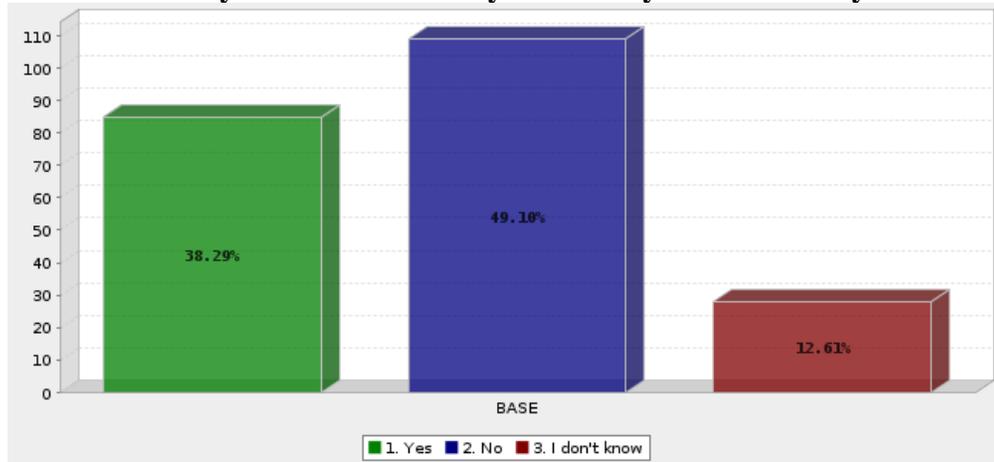
4. What is your employment status?



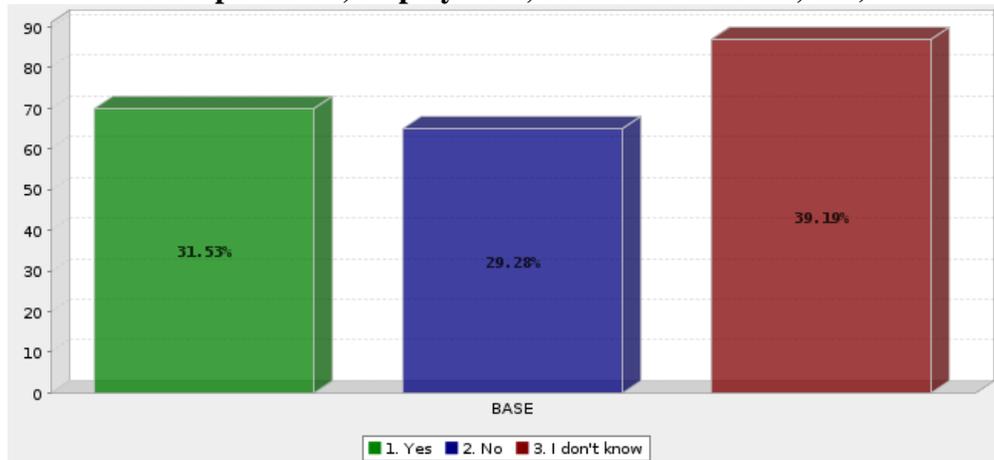
5. Have you, or has anyone you know in your personal life, ever been incarcerated?



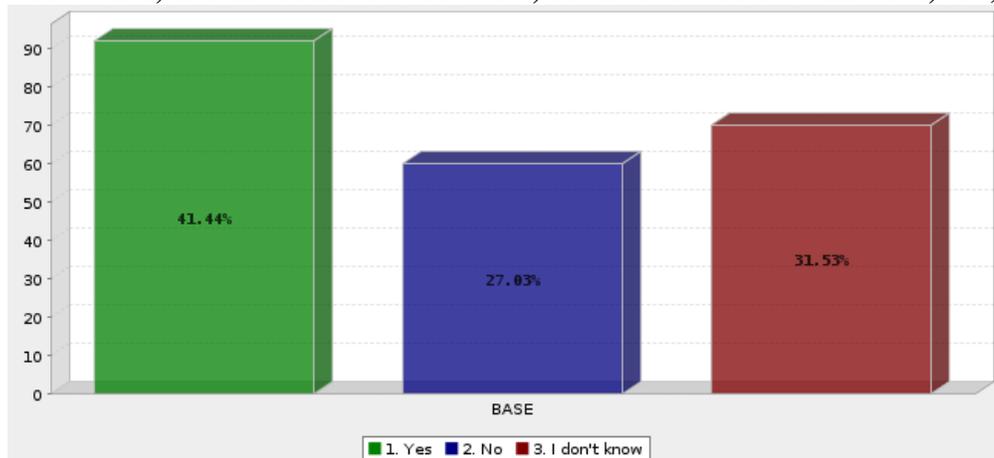
6. Are you aware of reentry efforts in your community?



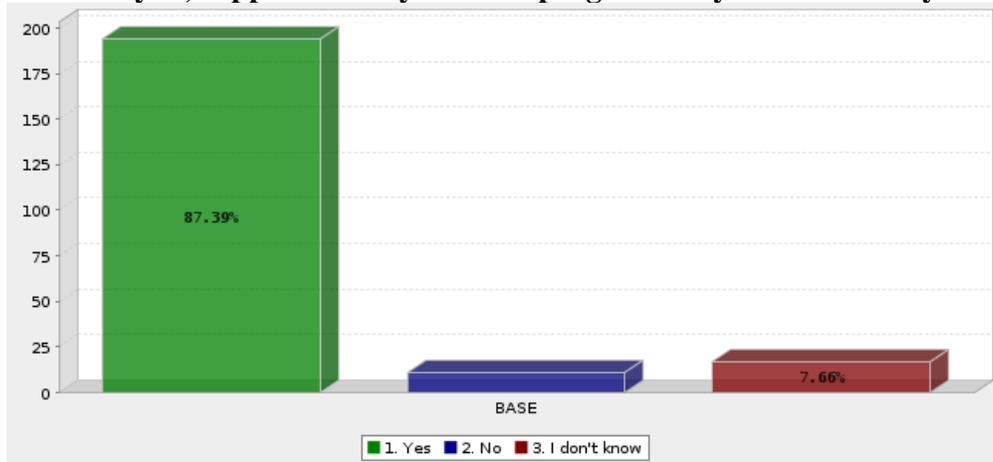
7. Do we have assets for people that are releasing to the community? (Housing, transportation, employment, vocational services, etc.)



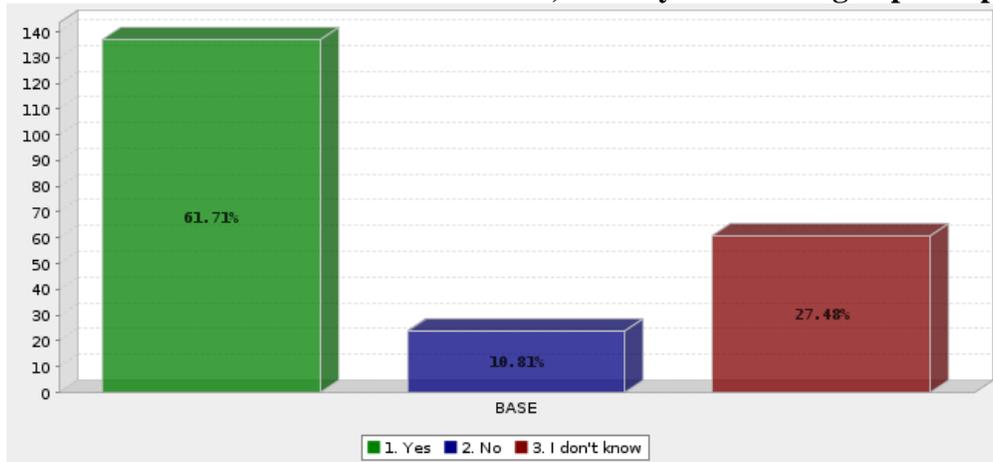
8. Do you believe that we have assets for reentrants in regards to wellness? (Basic healthcare, substance abuse treatment, behavioral health treatment, etc.)



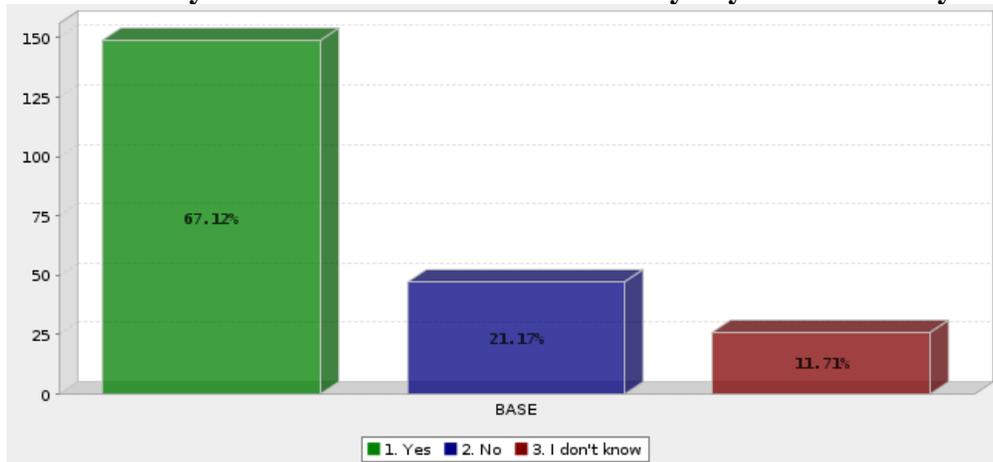
9. Do you, support reentry services/programs in your community?



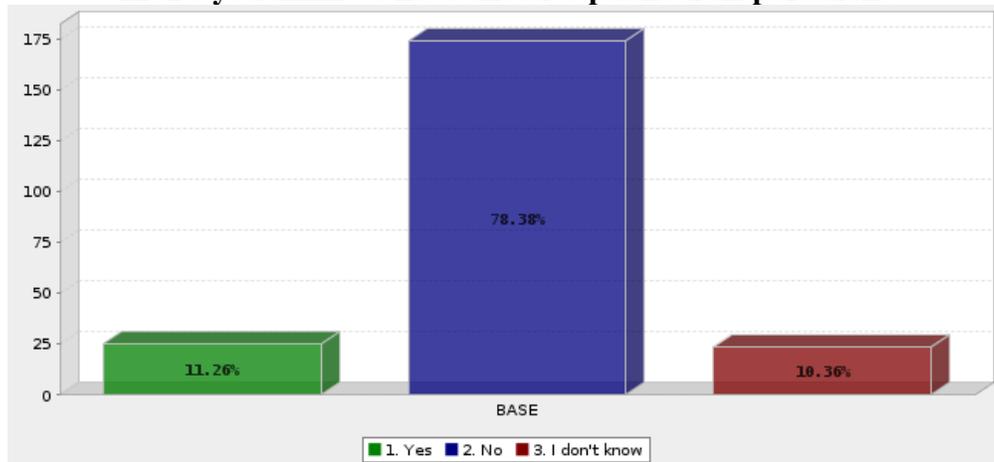
10. If there were a fundraiser for reentrants, would you be willing to participate?



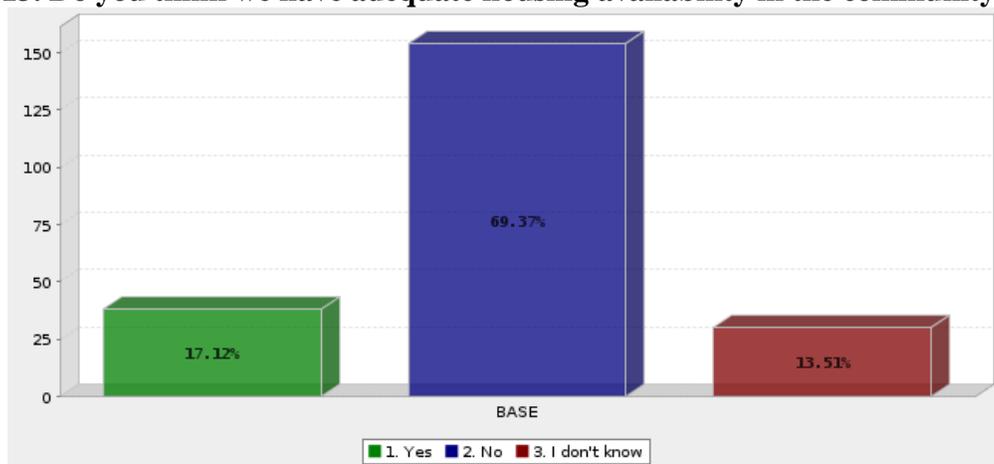
11. Would you like to know more about reentry in your community?



12. Do you think we have effective public transportation?



13. Do you think we have adequate housing availability in the community?



The data from this survey has indicated that although slightly less than half of the population is unaware of reentry efforts currently, 87.39% of those surveyed are or would be supportive of reentry efforts and programs on the Kenai Peninsula. According to our Community Readiness Assessment, Community Climate was the highest scored dimension with a 3.61 indicating that it may be a concern but is still not considered a priority and there is little to no motivation to act. We were pleased to uncover evidence that the community may be more receptive to projects and programs related to reentry as we continue our outreach and education efforts than we had anticipated or that our dimension scores have illustrated. This gives us hope for the future of our community and those that return to this area from incarceration.