



# INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITIZING RAPID DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS TO ADVOCATES, PROFESSIONALS, AND POLICYMAKERS.

## Impact of Incarceration

### **National Scope**

- ❖ 2.3 million people are behind bars on any given day.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ 67% of the incarcerated population are held in state or federal prisons, 28% held in local jails, and 4% held in some other setting (immigration detention, youth facilities, etc.).<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Nearly 1.5 million people are in a state or federal prison on any given day.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Approximately 4.5 million adults are under community supervision.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Nearly 350,000 people are transferred from community supervision to prison or jail each year.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ More than 95% of state and federal prisoners eventually release to communities, and nearly 80% will be released to parole supervision.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Over 622,000 people release to communities from state and federal prisons each year- roughly 12,000 people every week.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ More than 13 million people cycle through incarceration every single year.<sup>2,5</sup>

### **The Institute for Justice Research and Development (or, IJR):**

- Our goal at IJR is for fewer people to enter the criminal justice system, and to help those who do become involved in the system return to our communities with the tools they need to succeed. IJR has [active projects](#) in 10 states across the nation all designed to stop the churn of incarceration, release, and reincarceration and help individuals, families and communities to develop well-being.
- Read about how and why [well-being development](#) guides all we do at IJR.
- Read the key takeaways from this IJR report on the [technical violations of probation or parole that lead people back to jail](#), even when they haven't committed a new crime.
- Read [this analysis by IJR team members](#), suggesting that Black men were far more likely to return to incarceration after release, and they were re-incarcerated more quickly than their White peers, despite being lower risk.
- Learn more about IJR's Flagship project - the [5-Key Model for Reentry](#) – and how we are working to help individual leaving prisons in 7 states across the nation to develop well-being and succeed in the community.

### **Children of Incarcerated Parents**

- ❖ Parental incarceration is so prevalent that Sesame Street did a series called “Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration” for parents, providers, and caregivers.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ Parental incarceration is a new phenomenon – just 25 years ago 1 in 125 children had a parent go to prison, compared to 1 in 28 children today. Estimates suggest that between 1.7 million to 2.7 million children in the United State have experienced parental incarceration at least once in their childhood.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ More than 800,000 individuals held in state and federal prisons are parents of minor children. More than half (52%) of those incarcerated in state prisons and 63% of those incarcerated in federal prisons report having children under 18.<sup>8,9</sup>
- ❖ 82% of fathers had regular visitation with their children prior to incarceration (42% lived with their children; 40% had regular contact) and 60% of mothers lived with their children prior to incarceration.<sup>8</sup>
  - Jail incarceration separates 2.3 million mothers from their children annually. 80% of the women jailed each year are mothers, including nearly 150,000 pregnant women.<sup>10,11</sup>

- ❖ Each year, 14,000 minor children whose parents are incarcerated are placed into the foster care system because of parental incarceration. Although case-by-case exceptions may be granted to incarcerated parents in some states, federal law requires that states file to terminate parental rights when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. <sup>12</sup>
- ❖ Racial disparities permeate parental incarceration and disproportionately affect children of color. Black children are 7.5 times more likely, and Latinx children are 2.5 times more likely, than White children to have a parent in prison. <sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Through no fault of their own, children with incarcerated parents fare worse than their counterparts.<sup>13</sup>
  - Research has found that children with incarcerated parents have increased odds of developing mental and physical health problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, high cholesterol, asthma, and migraines. <sup>14</sup>
- ❖ When fathers are incarcerated, the average child's family income falls 22% and continues to remain 15% below pre-incarceration levels for the remainder of his life. <sup>15</sup>
- ❖ Children with an incarcerated parent are 2 to 7 times more likely to become incarcerated themselves. <sup>16</sup>
- ❖ 26 states have policies outright banning or limiting access to food stamps for individuals who have a felony conviction. This means that the innocent children of parents with felony convictions often go hungry. <sup>17</sup>

#### **IJRD:**

- Read about an empirically and theoretically informed approach to working with [families of individuals transitioning from incarceration back home to the community](#).
- Read this IJRD working paper about young, incarcerated fathers and how [strengthening the father-child relationship](#), in tandem with employment opportunities, may improve outcomes for fathers and their children.
- Learn how [many mothers sacrifice their own health and wellness](#) to parent their children prior to incarceration (for example, foregoing substance use disorder treatment because they had no childcare) and describe the psychological distress of family separation during custody in this IJRD paper.

#### **Mental Health**

- ❖ Incarcerated individuals are 3 to 5 times more likely to have met the threshold for serious psychological distress compared to adults in the U.S. general population. <sup>18</sup>
- ❖ Incarcerated women are more likely to report having a history of mental health issues when compared to incarcerated men – 66% of women in jail have a history of mental health issues compared to 35% of men in jail. <sup>18</sup>
- ❖ 37% of individuals held in state prisons and 44% of those in jails have been told by a mental health professional that they have a mental disorder. This means that approximately 550,000 individuals with mental health issues are incarcerated in prisons on any given day. <sup>18</sup>
  - Among those who had been told they had a mental disorder, the largest percentage of state prisoners (24%) and jail inmates (31%) reported they had a major depressive disorder. <sup>18</sup>
  - Nearly a quarter of those incarcerated who have a mental health problem, compared to a fifth of those without, have served 3 or more prior incarcerations. <sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Depending on the sample and the methodology, up to 99% of incarcerated men and women have experienced a traumatic event prior to incarceration.<sup>20,21,22,23</sup> The American Psychiatric Association defines trauma as directly experiencing or witnessing events including natural disasters, serious accidents, terrorist acts, war, combat, or rape. Further, having been threatened with death, sexual violence, or serious injury are also traumatic events. <sup>24</sup>
  - Incarcerated individuals who experience trauma are significantly more likely to have mental health issues including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and psychosis.<sup>25,26,27,28</sup>
- ❖ People with multiple arrests often report more serious mental health needs. 25% of individuals with 2 or more arrests have a serious mental disorder, compared to 22% for those with one arrest and 9% for those with no arrests. 30% of individuals with 2 or more arrests have serious psychological distress, compared to 27% for those with one arrest and 11% for those with no arrests. 52% of individuals with 2 or more arrests had a substance use disorder, compared to 36% for those with one arrest, and 7% for those with no arrests.<sup>29</sup>

- ❖ Suicide has been the leading cause of death every year in jails since 2000. In 2013, a third (34%) of jail inmate deaths were due to suicide which is a rate of 46 suicide deaths per 100,000 inmates. This rate was 15 suicide deaths per 100,000 inmates for those incarcerated in state prisons.<sup>30</sup> Compare these rates to rate of suicide death in the U.S. general population in the same year: 12.6 per 100,000 individuals.<sup>31</sup>

#### **IJRD:**

- Learn about the [psychological toll of reentry](#) on individuals leaving incarceration and returning home from this IJRD Report.
- Read this IJRD report about how many individuals experience [serious trauma and lose critical resources](#) in the community after leaving incarceration.
- Learn from this IJRD academic paper about the [traumatic experiences many incarcerated men report](#) in their lifetimes.
- Read about how [childhood abuse relates to mental health symptoms for incarcerated men](#) and for [incarcerated women](#) in these IJRD academic papers.
- Learn how [trauma](#) and [mental health disorders](#) contribute to returning to incarceration after release in these IJRD academic papers.
- Read about the innovative ways IJRD provides [trauma treatment](#) to [incarcerated individuals](#) to help them succeed after release.
- Learn more about IJRD's [active projects](#) that help justice-involved individuals address trauma and mental health symptoms so that they can thrive in our shared communities.

#### **Substance use**

- Substance use disorders are an epidemic among prisoners. Between 65 and 75% of incarcerated individuals nationally meet criteria for a substance use disorder,<sup>32</sup> in stark contrast to 9% of the U.S. general population.<sup>33</sup>
- Among a national sample of individuals incarcerated in state prisons, alcohol or other drugs were involved in 78% of violent crimes, 83% of property crimes, and 77% of public order, technical violations, and other types of offenses.<sup>34</sup>
- Problematic substance use fuels the cycle of incarceration, release, and re-incarceration.<sup>35,36</sup>
  - More than half of prisoners with substance use disorders report having been arrested and booked at least twice before compared to 7% of those without substance use disorders.<sup>29</sup>
- Nationally only 11% of prisoners identified as needing substance use disorder treatment receive treatment during incarceration.<sup>34</sup>
- Providing opioid use disorder treatment during incarceration is associated with increased community treatment engagement as well as reduced opioid use and injection drug use after release.<sup>37</sup>
- Mental health and substance use disorders tend to co-occur. Studies indicate that 60–87 percent of justice involved individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness are also diagnosed with a substance use disorder.<sup>38</sup>

#### **IJRD:**

- Read IJRD's [policy impact brief on addressing the opioid crisis](#) among individuals leaving incarceration.
- Learn from this IJRD report how many incarcerated individuals [release to the community and die](#).
- Read this IJRD paper about the relationship between [childhood abuse, problematic substance use and experiences of sexual violence](#) for incarcerated women.
- Learn from this IJRD paper about how [multiple, cumulative childhood abuse experiences increase the risk for problematic substance use](#) among incarcerated women.
- IJRD helps prisons [build capacity for substance use disorder treatment](#) by testing an innovative and low-cost alternative to existing treatment models which cannot meet demand.

## **Education and Employment**

- ❖ Individuals involved with the criminal justice system report significantly lower educational attainment than the U.S. general population. Approximately 30% of those in prison have not earned a high school diploma or GED compared to 14% of the general public.<sup>39</sup>
  - Just under 40% (39.5%) of men and 36.5% of women in state prisons have less than a high school education.<sup>40</sup>
  - A greater percentage of Black men (58.4%) and Latinx men (62.7%) in prison had less than a high school education compared to White men (40.8%). This pattern repeats for women, with 41.6% of Black women and 51.9% of Latinx women in prison reporting less than a high school diploma compared to 28.7% of White women in prison.
  - Individuals incarcerated in state prisons without a high school diploma or GED are more 9% more likely to have been incarcerated previously when compared to individuals who had completed high school or held a GED.<sup>41</sup>
  - Individuals without a high school diploma or GED are also more likely to have been sentenced as juveniles. Roughly 1 in 5 individuals in state prison without a high school diploma or GED were incarcerated as juveniles compared to 1 in 10 individuals in state prison who had completed high school or held a GED.<sup>41</sup>
- ❖ The majority of incarcerated individuals were employed prior to incarceration. Two-thirds of incarcerated individuals indicate that they were working full-time (49%) or part-time (16%) prior to their incarceration. Of the other 34% of individuals, 16% reported being students, permanently disabled, looking after family members, or in retirement and 19% were unemployed.<sup>39</sup>
- ❖ The median income among individuals incarcerated in state prisons prior to their incarceration was \$19,185 – which is 41% less than the median income among non-incarcerated people of similar ages.<sup>42</sup>
- ❖ In the month before arrest, 63% of incarcerated individuals who had less than a high school education, and 47% of those with a high school education, reported an income of under \$1,000.<sup>42</sup>
- ❖ A history on incarceration reduces hourly wages by approximately 11%, decreases annual employment by 9 weeks, and cuts annual earnings by 40%.<sup>43</sup> This is problematic because as wages increase after incarceration, the likelihood of reincarceration decreases significantly, especially for individuals who identify as Black or are releasing from their first incarceration.<sup>44</sup>
- ❖ Unemployment rates are nearly 7 times higher among individuals who have experienced incarceration when compared to the U.S. general population.<sup>45</sup> This gap is amplified for people of color:
  - Likewise, 35% of Black men who have experienced incarceration are unemployed compared to 8% of Black men in the U.S. general population.
  - Nearly 44% of Black women who have experienced incarceration are unemployed compared to 6% of Black women in the U.S. general population.<sup>45</sup>

## **IJR:**

- Read IJR's [preliminary results for policy stakeholders on employment and behavioral health outcomes](#) for individuals enrolled in the 5-Key Model study 8 months after their release from incarceration.
- Learn about the state- and regional-level reforms enacted to redress the roughly 45,000 state and federal statutes that [limit civic participation for individuals with a felony conviction in this comprehensive analysis](#).
- Explore [data-driven policy actions](#) to reform the collateral consequences of incarceration.

## **Community stability**

- ❖ After release, individuals who have experienced incarceration are nearly 10 times more likely to experience homelessness.
  - The rate of homelessness among individuals who have experienced incarceration is 200 per 100,000 – compared to a rate of 21 per 100,000 for the U.S. general population.
  - Homelessness increases for individuals who have been incarcerated more than once.<sup>46</sup>
  - For men who have experienced incarceration of all races, the rate of homelessness is 90 per 100,000. The rate for formerly incarcerated women of all races is 156 per 100,000 and 203 per 100,000 for Black women.<sup>46</sup>

- ❖ 12 states and Washington D.C. automatically suspend the driver's license of any individual convicted of a drug crime, regardless of whether the crime involved a vehicle/driving. Together, these jurisdictions suspend more than 191,000 driver's licenses annually.<sup>47</sup> These laws disproportionately impact people of color:
  - More than 76% of the individuals convicted of federal drug crimes are Black or Latinx.
  - Nearly half (44%) of Black Americans live in a jurisdiction with these laws.<sup>47</sup>
- ❖ Driver's licenses may also be suspended for unpaid court fines and fees and failure to pay child support. Estimates suggest that 40% of all license suspensions are due to reasons/causes unrelated to driving.<sup>47</sup>
- ❖ More than 6 million Americans with felony convictions are prohibited from voting and exercising other civil rights. The scope and nature of felony disenfranchisement varies widely by state.<sup>48</sup>

**IJRD:**

- IJRD's flagship project, the [5-Key Model for Reentry](#), is an innovative intervention designed to help individuals who have experienced incarceration to achieve community stability and develop well-being as they leave prison and return home.
- IJRD releases [Quarterly Research Reports](#) – each paired with one-page key takeaways – which detail the experiences of individuals leaving incarceration and the many barriers they face to achieving community stability as they leave prison and return home.
- IJRD created a national network of prosecutors – the [Prosecution Research Network](#) to identify research and policy strategies to reduce the use of incarceration and improve health and community stability for individuals who make contact with the criminal justice system. These innovations are designed to increase national safety, prosperity, and well-being.
- Read this [data-driven implementation guide](#) to help prosecutors design and implement innovative diversion programs to move individuals who do not pose a threat to public safety away from incarceration and into appropriate community supports to increase their ability to thrive in the community.
- IJRD is developing [artificial intelligence applications to improve well-being among individuals under community supervision](#) in collaboration with researchers from Purdue University and the University of Alabama- Huntsville. The goal of this project is to enhance community stability and increase well-being for those on probation.

**Costs**

- ❖ Since 2000, corrections spending has represented 5-6% of state general operating funds annually.<sup>49</sup>
- ❖ Costs to the taxpayer:
  - Incarceration costs \$182 billion annually, which includes \$80.7 billion for public corrections agencies and \$63.2 billion for policing.<sup>50</sup>
  - Community supervision – probation and parole – costs approximately \$4,200 per supervisee per year.<sup>51</sup> With more than 4.4 million individuals under supervision at any given time, this translates into a cost to the taxpayer of \$18.5 billion per year.
- ❖ Other costs of incarceration:<sup>50</sup>
  - Nearly \$4.5 billion are lost to asset forfeiture every year.
  - \$1.4 billion are spent annually on bail and bail bonds.
  - \$1.6 billion are spent at prison and jail commissaries annually.
  - \$1.3 billion are spent making telephone calls from incarceration settings every year.
- ❖ The average cost to incarcerate an individual in state prison for one year is \$33,274, although costs vary widely by state.<sup>52</sup>
- ❖ The average cost to incarcerate an individual in federal prison for one year is \$36,299.<sup>53</sup>

**IJRD:**

- Learn from this IJRD analysis which puts the [social costs of incarceration at \\$1 Trillion](#) annually.
- IJRD conducts high-impact work with [lawmakers and policymakers](#) to ensure that individuals can successfully meet the terms of their release and thrive in the community after returning home from incarceration.

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- 2 "Prisoners in 2018" <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p18.pdf>
- 3 "Probation and Parole in the United States, 2016" <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppus16.pdf>
- 4 "Reentry trends in the U.S." <https://www.bjs.gov/content/reentry/reentry.cfm>
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- 6 "Coping with Incarceration" <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration/>
- 7 "Hidden Consequences: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children" <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/hidden-consequences-impact-incarceration-dependent-children#noteReference5>
- 8 "Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children" <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>
- 9 "Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility" [https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs\\_assets/2010/CollateralCosts1pdf.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/CollateralCosts1pdf.pdf)
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- 11 "Pregnant Women in Prison and Jail Don't Count: Data Gaps on Maternal Health and Incarceration" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0033354918812088>
- 12 "Child Welfare: More Information and Collaboration Could Promote Ties between Foster Care Children and Their Incarcerated Parents" <https://www.gao.gov/assets/590/585386.pdf>
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- 16 "Association of Parental Incarceration with Psychiatric and Functional Outcomes of Young Adults" <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2748665>
- 17 "Most States Have Ended SNAP Ban for Convicted Felons" <https://www.ncsl.org/blog/2019/07/30/most-states-have-ended-snap-ban-for-convicted-drug-felons.aspx>
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- 19 "Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates" <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/mhppji.pdf>
- 20 "Childhood and adult trauma experiences of incarcerated persons and their relationship to adult behavioral health problems and treatment." <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3386595/>
- 21 "What Trauma Looks Like for Incarcerated Men: A Study of Men's Lifetime Trauma Exposure in Two State Prisons" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7377264/>
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