

Fact Sheet



Jobs After Jail: Ending the Prison to Poverty Pipeline

Each year an average of 630,000 people are released from state and federal prisons.

About 70 million people in the U.S have a felony or serious misdemeanor arrest or conviction that could impact their ability to find a job.

Nationwide there are more than 6,000 mandatory employment restrictions for people who have been incarcerated.

These restrictions mean that a prison record can be a life sentence to poverty and low wages after release. Often the prohibited occupations are some of the better-paying jobs.

Every state restricts employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated people.

On average, states have 123 mandatory restrictions for those with felony records. Some states have more than 200 – and Louisiana has 389 restrictions.

Health care, law enforcement and legal services are the most commonly restricted occupations. They are also relatively high-paying fields and include occupations with the most projected job openings.

People of color make up 39 percent of the general population, but they make up two-thirds of the incarcerated population.

People of color are disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of poverty and debtors' prisons. Low-income communities and communities of color are targeted for low-level citations which can quickly lead to high levels of court debt.

People of color are more likely than white offenders to receive long sentences. While only 13 percent of the general population, black offenders represent nearly a third of those sentenced to life in prison, and half of those serving life without parole.

People of color have seen harsher sentencing when it comes to controlled substances.

Occupations restricted in various states may include jobs like security guards, optometrists, mortgage brokers, and veterinarians.

In Illinois, formerly incarcerated people are restricted from serving on the fire protection district board, which is an elected position; in Louisiana they are barred from elected offices including the Veteran's Affairs Commission.