

UNITED STATES FELON DISENFRANCHISEMENT:

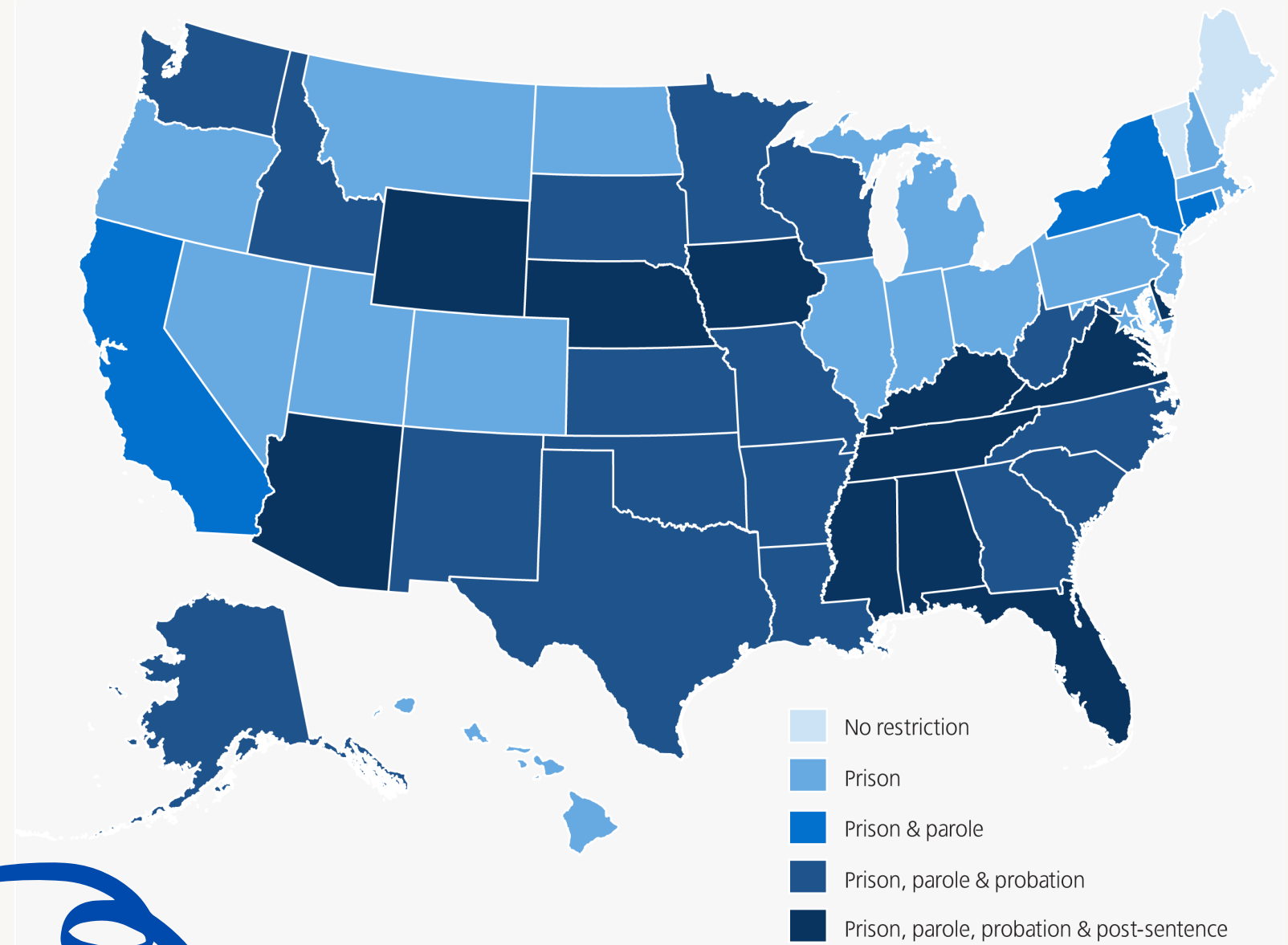
SYSTEMATICALLY DISENFRANCHISING MINORITY VOTERS



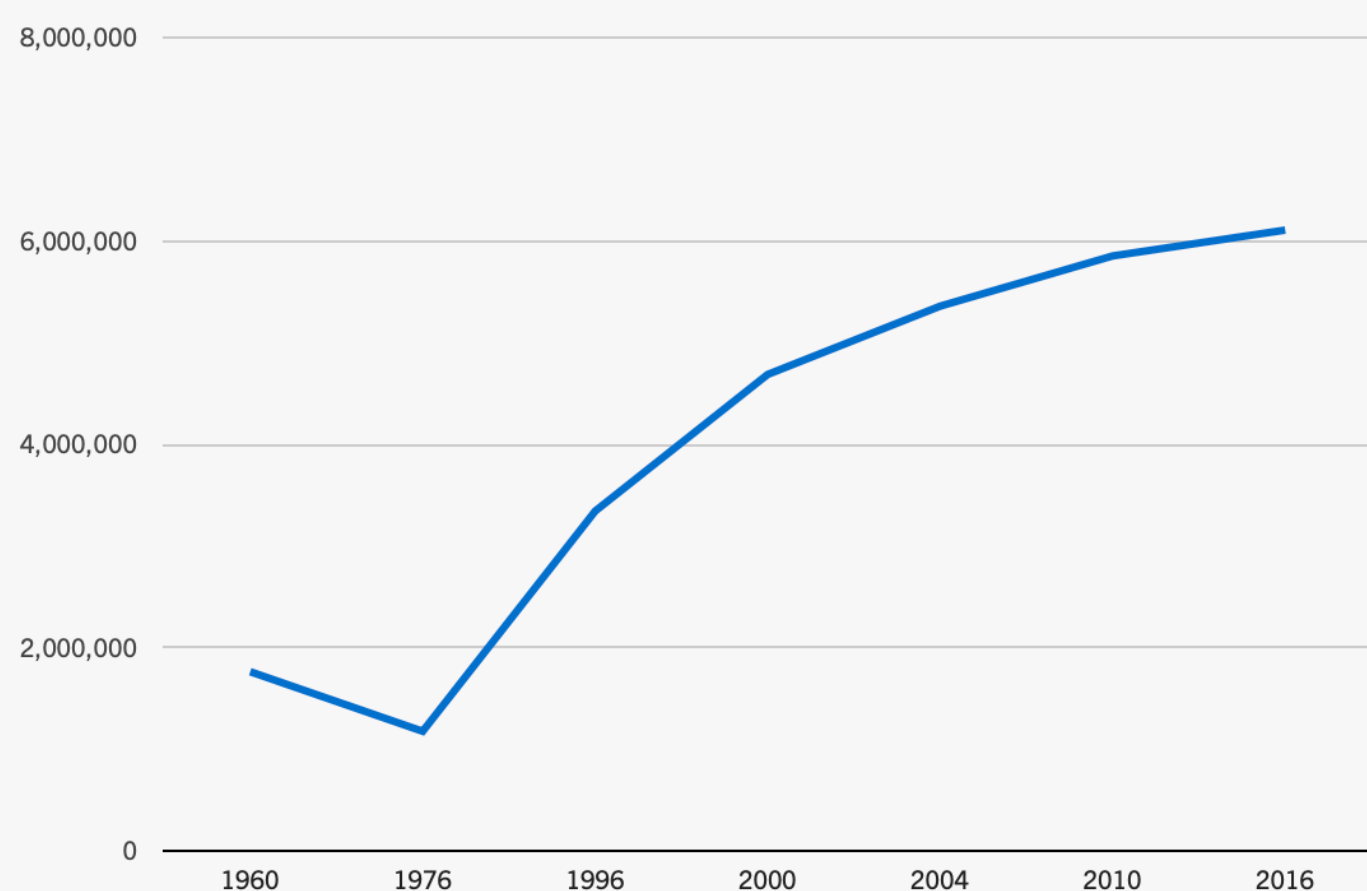
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The Problem:

- 48 U.S. states disenfranchise incarcerated felons and 14 states disenfranchise at least some ex-felons who have completed their sentences. ¹
- As of 2016, 6.1 million Americans were prohibited from voting due to laws that disenfranchise citizens convicted of felony offenses. ²
- As recently as 2000, the Supreme Court affirmed that states do not have to extend suffrage to ex-felons. ⁸



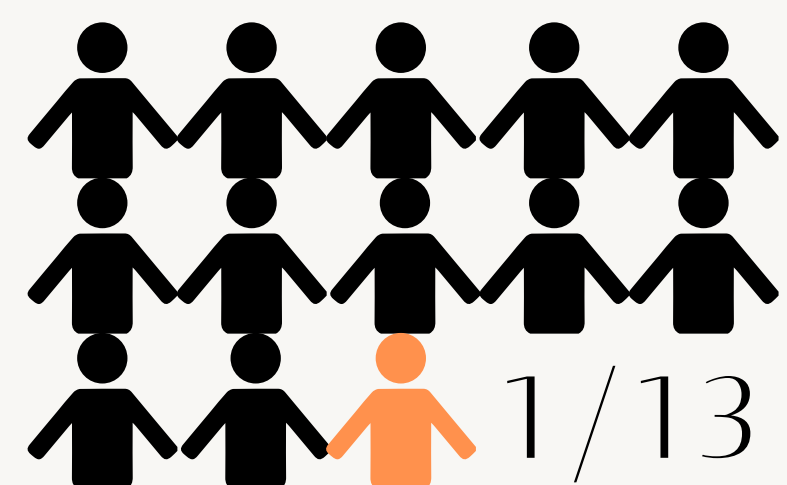
The overall disenfranchisement rate has increased dramatically along with the increasing U.S. prison population. ²



This is a problem because the institutionalization of minorities reflect stereotypes about African-American men, which drives the support for disenfranchisement. ¹ It is not equitable to allow a democratic institution to reinforce racism through continued disenfranchisement of millions of Americans, namely minorities and the poor.

The History:

- Felon disenfranchisement laws do not reference race, but race is tied to the likelihood of a felony in the USA. ¹
- African-American imprisonment rates have exceeded whites since the Civil War era. ¹
- Many states enacted felon disenfranchisement laws following the Civil War. ¹
- Before the Civil War, nineteen of the thirty-four states had adopted similar legislation, and by 1869 twenty-nine had. This has increased so by 2004, forty-eight states imposed some limits on the voting rights of ex-felons. ⁴
- The majority of convicted felons are not just minorities, but from lower classes. This also dilutes representation of the poor. ⁹



Black Americans do not have the right to vote due to past convictions. ²

Examples of Solutions

Felon disenfranchisement can be challenged under the Voting Rights Act based on claims of vote dilution of race. Suggesting a policy that would require states to make eligibility rules clear and transparent to former felons, while also assisting newly eligible individual felons in registering to vote is essential. ⁵

1

Statewide Voter Registration Database

Mark the names of felons as inactive, which can be easily reactivated upon release in a state computerized voter registry. This allows easy communication between the justice system and polling places. ¹¹

2

Education

Make the state's chief election official responsible for educating the bureaucracy and public about the law. Outreach is necessary to increase efficacy for ex-felons. They can't vote if they don't know they can. ¹¹

3

Giving Notice

Ensure that criminal defendants are told that they will lose voting rights before conviction and sentencing to prison and that after their release, that they are again eligible to register and vote. ¹¹

4

Restoration

Automatically restore voting rights to people on probation or parole. Ensure their registration is not dependent on payment of legal financial obligations. ¹¹

**CIVIC EXCLUSION LIKE
DISENFRANCHISEMENT HAS AN
IMPACT ON THE REAL LIFE
EXPERIENCE OF
REINTEGRATION. ⁸**

**IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AN
ESTIMATED 4.7 MILLION PEOPLE LOST THE RIGHT
TO VOTE DUE TO FELONY CONVICTIONS. ¹**



**IF FELONS WERE ALLOWED TO VOTE,
AL GORE WOULD HAVE BEEN
PRESIDENT IN 2000. ⁹**

Still Have Concerns?

1 Myth: Felons may use their vote as revenge to the system that incarcerated them or not even vote at all. ⁷

Actually, during or after completion of a sentence, many felons will acquire greater education and more stable attachments to work, family, and their communities that will likely increase their probability of voting. ⁵

2 Myth: Felons do not deserve the right to participate in civic life. ⁷

Actually, the Supreme Court of the United States has characterized voting as a "fundamental right." ⁴

3 Myth: The right to vote is useless for felons.

Actually, those who vote are less likely to commit new crimes, extending the franchise may facilitate reintegration efforts and perhaps even improve public safety. ⁵

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