



# Recidivism in the U.S.

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## Why Does it Matter?

In 30 surveyed states between 2005 and 2014, **5 in 6** ex-prisoners were rearrested at least once. That's 83% of the prison population (Alper et. al).



In the span of that same 9-year period, 87% of formerly incarcerated African Americans and 81% of White and Hispanic offenders recidivated. The rate of desistance, or cessation of criminal activity, increased as more time passed from a prisoner's release, yet the majority of people were still rearrested in the time this study was completed (Alper et. al). When an individual is convicted of a crime and labeled a felon, their chances of recidivating increase drastically compared with those who are granted **preadjudication**.



## Recidivism is...

The process by which an individual previously convicted and/or imprisoned for a crime is rearrested for engaging in continued criminal behavior (Yang).

## It disproportionately affects...

African Americans, younger men, and individuals with less education and lower socioeconomic status (Hunt and Dumville).

## What is preadjudication?

This refers to a sentencing being withheld from a suspect provided that he or she fulfill another requirement to remove the threat of conviction (Latessa and Reitler).

## Myths and Misconceptions

**FALSE**

1

Punishing convicted felons more harshly will lead to decreased rates of recidivism.

2

Recidivism can be reduced by implementing education programs that use fear tactics and shaming to deter offenders from reoffending.

**TRUE**

In actuality, legislation banning felons from receiving government assistance puts more at risk of recidivating (Yang).

Numerous studies show that these programs have little to no impact on rates of recidivism, while better solutions exist that are underutilized (Latessa and Reitler).



# Potential Solutions



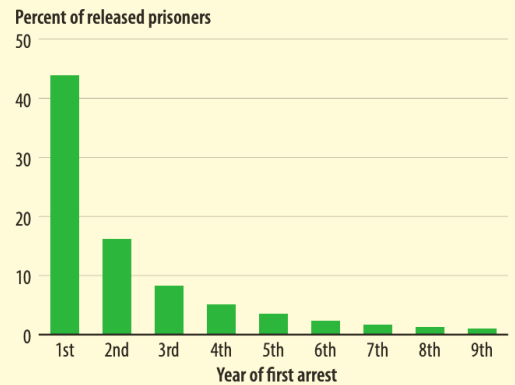
1 As seen in the graph, the percentage of prisoners who are rearrested after release is highest within the first year of their release (Alper et. al). One solution would be to implement programs geared toward ex-prisoners that help them re-adjust socially and economically to life outside of prison.

2 Another potential solution to decrease the rate of recidivism is to remove the federal ban on felons' access to government aid. Recidivism is significantly reduced when felons are given access to public assistance because they are then less likely to turn to crime to make ends meet (Yang).

3 A third solution is one that has been minimally implemented in the US, but has a high success rate. In the case of drug offenses, pre-adjudicative courts give offenders the opportunity to have the felon label removed provided they complete required drug education programs. Recidivism decreases because the lessened opportunities for employment and resources felons have is no longer an issue (Latessa and Reitler).

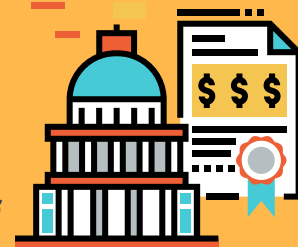
**FIGURE 3**

Percent of prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 who were arrested after release, by year of first arrest



Note: The denominator for the annual percentage was 401,288 (total state prisoners released in 30 states in 2005). See appendix table 4 for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Recidivism of State Prisoners Released in 2005 data collection, 2005–2014.



**More punishment doesn't work. Let's find solutions that actually do.**

# References

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