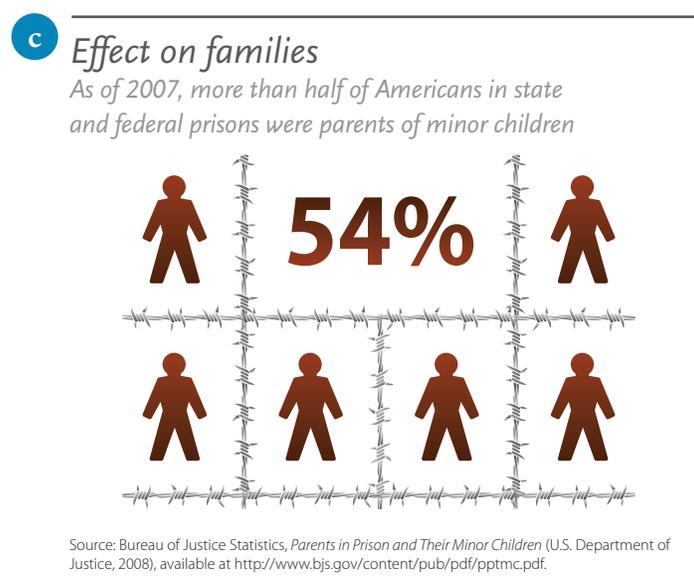
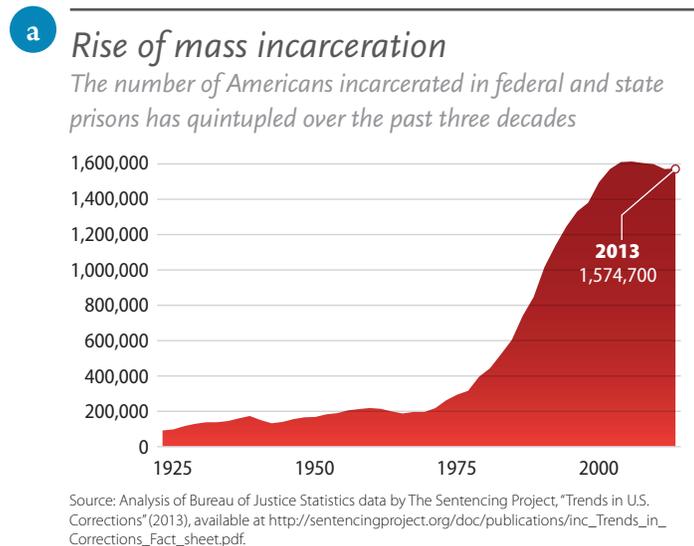


Americans with Criminal Records

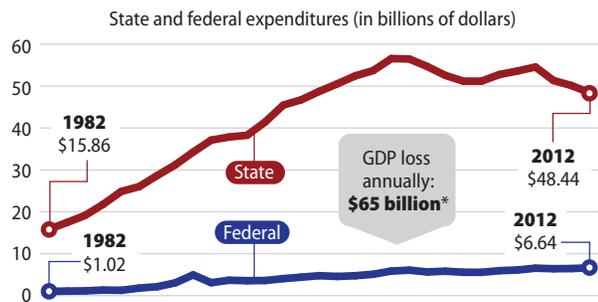
The United States is the global leader in incarceration. Today, more than 1.5 million Americans are incarcerated in state and federal prisons, a figure that has quintupled since 1980. Adding in jails, the number of Americans who are behind bars rises to 2.2 million. One in three U.S. adults has been arrested by age 23. Communities of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals; and people with histories of abuse or mental illness are disproportionately affected. As a result, between 70 million and 100 million—or as many as one in three Americans—have some type of criminal record. Having even a minor criminal record, such as a misdemeanor or even an arrest without conviction, can create an array of lifelong barriers that stand in the way of successful re-entry. This has broad implications for individuals’ and families’ economic security, as well as for our national economy. Mass incarceration and hyper-criminalization serve as major drivers of poverty; having a criminal record can present obstacles to employment, housing, public assistance, education, family reunification, building good credit, and more.



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Rising costs and a net loss

Correctional expenditures have quadrupled since 1982



* Employment losses due to criminal records resulted in as much as \$65 billion in lost gross domestic product output in 2008.

Sources: Author's calculations are based on Bureau of the Census, *Annual Survey of State Government Finances* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1982–2012), available at https://www.census.gov/govs/state/historical_data.html; Tracey Kyckelhahn, "State Corrections Expenditures, FY 1982-2010" (Washington: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), available at <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/scefy8210.pdf>; Nathan James, "The Bureau of Prisons (BOP): Operations and Budget" (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2014), available at <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42486.pdf>; John Schmitt and Kris Warner, "Ex-offenders and the Labor Market" (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2010), available at <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/ex-offenders-2010-11.pdf>.

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Barriers to employment

With 87 percent of employers conducting background checks, a criminal record can be a major barrier to employment

More than 60 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed one year after being released;



those who do find jobs take home 40 percent less pay annually



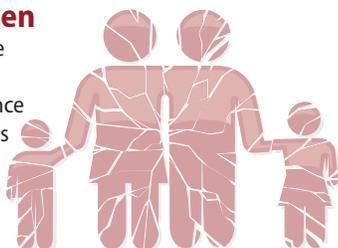
Sources: Society for Human Resource Management, "Background Checking—The Use of Criminal Background Checks in Hiring Decisions" (2012), available at <http://www.shrm.org/research/surveyfindings/articles/pages/criminalbackgroundcheck.aspx>; Bruce Western, "Collateral Costs" (Washington: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010), available at http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes_assets/2010/CollateralCosts1.pdf.pdf?la=en.

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Barriers to public assistance hurt women and children

In many states, people with felony drug convictions are banned for life from receiving certain types of assistance

180,000 women are subject to the lifetime ban on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families



*Figure represents an estimate of the number of women who may now be subject to the TANF ban in the 12 states with the most punitive policies

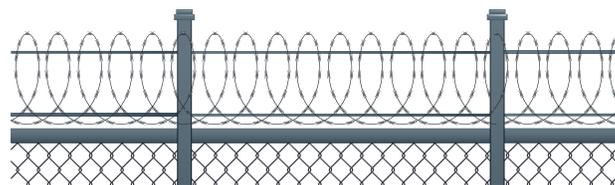
Source: The Sentencing Project, "A Lifetime of Punishment: The Impact of the Felony Drug Ban on Welfare Benefits" (2011), available at www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/cc_A%20Lifetime%20of%20Punishment.pdf.

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Mass incarceration is a major driver of poverty

Without mass incarceration, 5 million fewer Americans would have been poor between 1980 and 2014

The U.S. poverty rate would have dropped by 20 percent if not for the trend of mass incarceration over the past several decades



Source: Robert H. DeFina and Lance Hannon, "The Impact of Mass Incarceration on Poverty," *Crime and Delinquency* 59 (4) (2013): 562–586, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1348049.

We cannot be a nation of "one strike and you're out." Understanding that a criminal record can be a lifelong barrier to economic security and mobility—with adverse effects on families, communities, and our entire economy—we must craft policies to ensure that Americans with criminal records have a fair shot at a decent life. We must remove barriers to employment, housing, public assistance, education, and building good credit. In a recent and welcome development, bipartisan momentum appears to be building in support of criminal justice reform, in part due to the skyrocketing costs of mass incarceration, as well as an increased focus on evidence-based approaches to public safety. Failure to address the obstacles associated with criminal records as part of a larger anti-poverty agenda risks missing a major piece of the puzzle in the effort to truly enable shared prosperity for all Americans. Moving forward, we must continue to break down these barriers to economic security and ensure that second chances are within reach for Americans with criminal records.

For full source information, see Rebecca Vallas and Sharon Dietrich, "One Strike and You're Out: How We Can Eliminate Barriers to Economic Security and Mobility for People with Criminal Records" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014).