



Normalizing Opportunity

A Policy Agenda to Promote Economic
Advancement for People With Criminal Records

AT A GLANCE

We call on policymakers to break down barriers to economic opportunity—and establish policies that create equitable economic advancement—for the 70 million people in the United States with criminal records. Our actionable recommendations will expand the talent pool available to fill critical workforce gaps and build a more equitable and just society.

DEVELOPED BY

**JFF's Center for Justice &
Economic Advancement**

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A Call to Action

The U.S. economy has a [talent pipeline problem](#). Employers in several [industries](#) are struggling to fill job vacancies, and the gap between the demand for labor and the supply of talent is likely to grow. In the next decade, the [labor supply](#) is projected to shrink while recent federal investments are expected to spur the private-sector creation of about 10 million new jobs.¹

But our nation can ease critical workforce shortages, starting immediately—if we choose to give people with records of arrest, conviction, or incarceration a fair chance to work in a quality job. At Jobs for the Future (JFF), we believe it’s time to tap the full potential, skills, and aspirations of the more than [70 million](#) people with records living in the United States—about [one in every three adults](#). We call on policymakers to overhaul the complex web of rules and regulations that penalize people with records and exclude them from pursuing jobs they are qualified for or can learn to do. We also urge policymakers to invest in proven models to help people with records advance economically and foster alignment across systems to sustain these goals. Without bold

policy action, the employment and economic prospects for people with records will [remain bleak](#), and they’ll be particularly limited for many [Black and Latinx people](#), who are disproportionately arrested and convicted as a result of racism in the legal system and must also contend with the racial discrimination that remains [constant](#) in the labor market.

JFF’s Center for Justice & Economic Advancement has crafted a policy agenda that provides federal, state, and local leaders with specific strategies to break down systemic barriers to the equitable economic advancement of all people with records, with an intentional focus on Black and Latinx communities. Designed as a road map for efforts to “normalize opportunity” for people with records, it identifies policy solutions within and across the U.S. education, workforce, financial, and housing systems, as well as the legal, judicial, and correctional systems.

People with records have fulfilled their obligations to the judicial system and are ready, willing, and able to contribute to the economy. Yet the stigma and lifelong barriers

associated with having a record—known as collateral consequences—continue to punish people for a lifetime, making it difficult for people to move on with their lives and achieve long-term success and economic advancement.

The nation’s economy and communities can no longer afford such exclusionary practices. The economic impact on people with records amounts to [\\$372.3 billion](#) in lost wages annually. On the other hand, when people with records receive a fair chance, they gain a stronger foothold in the labor market and improve the competitive advantage of their employers by performing the [same as or better](#) than employees without records.

To illustrate the urgent need for policy reform and how specific policies affect individuals, we feature the firsthand accounts of Aminah Elster, a California woman whose journey of reentry into her community following a period of incarceration was impacted, both negatively and positively, by local, state, and federal policies (see “Meet Aminah Elster”). The policy recommendations we present here were shaped and informed by Elster and other people with expertise from lived experience navigating the U.S. criminal, judicial, and corrections systems.



AMINAH ELSTER TELLS HER STORY **Meet Aminah Elster, and Learn How Policy Impacts Lives**

Originally from Oakland, California, Aminah Elster served nearly two decades in prison before being paroled in 2017.

While incarcerated, she earned two associate’s degrees, and went on to earn a bachelor’s degree from the University of California, Berkeley, after her release. She now works to create opportunities for others by serving as a legal advocate and researcher for the California Coalition for Women Prisoners and as a cofounder of Unapologetically HERS, an advocacy group for incarcerated women.

Elster’s successful post-incarceration reentry into her community has been aided by strong state policies around prison education and fair chance hiring. But it was nearly derailed by policies that restricted her access to financial assistance and affordable housing, and by punitive measures that imparted harsh financial penalties.

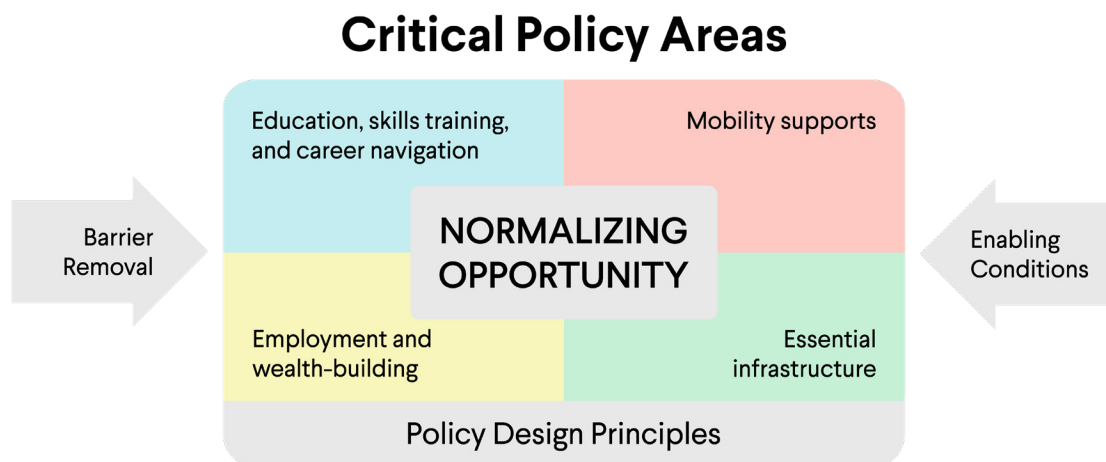
Learn how she overcame these systemic barriers by reading her personal accounts in the text boxes throughout this report.

Policy Recommendations

Normalizing opportunity for people with records requires more than a piecemeal approach to updating individual policies or programs. It requires a comprehensive and interconnected policymaking strategy that focuses on people, places, and systems.

Experience tells us that there are four critical areas in which policies will have an impact on opportunity for people with criminal records to advance economically:

- I. Education, skills training, and career navigation
- II. Employment and wealth-building
- III. Mobility supports
- IV. Essential infrastructure



Here's a rundown of each:



I. Education, Skills Training, and Career Navigation

Policy solutions that support people's ability to acquire credentials, skills, and experiences that have value in the local labor market and ensure that they have access to professional networks and career coaching that help them identify and navigate their desired career pathways.



II. Employment and Wealth Building

Policy solutions that expand access to capital that supports entrepreneurial opportunities and encourage employers to adopt more inclusive and equitable hiring and talent development practices.



III. Mobility Supports

Policy solutions designed to ensure that everyone has access to the foundational supports they need to focus on building skills, sustaining employment, and advancing economically.



IV. Essential Infrastructure

Policy solutions that enhance the assets, networks, and structures needed to foster collective action for helping individuals and communities overcome individual, institutional, and structural barriers and advance economically.

In the following sections, we outline policy recommendations in each of those four areas—accompanied by Aminah Elster's personal recollections of how local, state, and federal rules and regulations in these four issue areas affected her as she reentered her community following incarceration.



I. Education, Skills Training, and Career Navigation

Policy solutions that support people's ability to acquire credentials, skills, and experiences that have value in the local labor market, and ensure that they have access to professional networks and career coaching services that help them identify and navigate their desired career pathways.

Here are five steps policymakers can take to promote education, skills training, and career navigation opportunities:

1

Expand access to education and training programs in corrections and the community. Policies should increase investment needed to expand the availability and diversity of the education and training programs in corrections facilities and the community. Policies should ensure that people with criminal records can pursue education and training opportunities when they're incarcerated, on parole or probation, and throughout their lifetimes. Policy measures that can help achieve that goal include eliminating consideration of criminal histories in college admissions policies and program eligibility requirements and offering incarcerated people benefits and privileges such as work release time, earned time credits, and other incentives for participating in education and skills development experiences.

2

Strengthen pathways to credentials and careers. Policies should require that all publicly funded education and skills training programs and work-based learning experiences offered in corrections facilities or are otherwise geared toward individuals with records implement evidence-based promising practices that promote degree or credential completion, integrate social supports, and generate connections between learning and work. One way to do that is to hold providers accountable for education and employment outcomes. Another approach is to ensure that the skills and credentials earned in an education or training program can be articulated as credit in other educational programs or are otherwise transferable, portable, and stackable for ongoing training experiences.

3

Ensure that education and training programs focus on skills and knowledge that are in demand. Policies should include incentives encouraging all publicly funded education, training, and work-based learning programs offered in corrections facilities or designed for people with records to build the skills and credentials that are aligned with competencies needed for quality jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities that make it possible for people with records to establish a trajectory for economic advancement and wealth generation.

4

Empower learners to select and pursue their preferred careers. Policies should ensure that people who are incarcerated or reentering the community following incarceration have access to career coaching and academic advising services and other information, tools, and resources that help them match their talents and aspirations with career fields and navigate the job search and hiring process. These services and resources must help individuals understand whether and how their convictions may be considered in the hiring process and what rights they have concerning the disclosure and dissemination of their records.

5

Integrate work and learning. Policies should expand access to high-quality work-based learning experiences for people who are incarcerated or reentering their communities. From Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships to transitional jobs, work-study courses, and internships, work-based training and education programs allow participants to learn new skills and get practical experience applying those skills in workplaces while building professional networks and social capital. Some can even lead directly to permanent jobs and career advancement opportunities. Whenever possible, work-based learning programs should compensate participants at fair wage levels.



AMINAH ELSTER TELLS HER STORY

Earning Degrees in Prison and Beyond

During my incarceration, I enrolled in Feather River College's Incarcerated Student Program (ISP), which was a remarkable program but extremely underfunded. Of the very limited number of college and vocational programs being offered to people inside California women's prisons, the ISP was the gold standard. It was successful because it was designed to create a pipeline for incarcerated students to enter four-year colleges and universities upon release. This was accomplished by intentionally investing in in-person instruction from college professors, providing academic advising to ensure that students were taking the necessary courses in line with each individual's educational goals, and making space for students to cultivate meaningful connections with instructors and access community resources that supported their future trajectories back into their communities.

My experience was made possible through successful policies such as state Senate Bill 1391 of 2014, which removed barriers [preventing programs](#) from compensating community colleges for teaching face-to-face courses in prison and from offering incarcerated students the same services that were offered to students on campus, such as tutoring and academic advising. I also benefited from the California College Promise Grant (formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver) which provides tuition coverage for all students enrolled in a California community college who qualify as low-income, regardless of whether they are incarcerated or not.

The ISP prepared and positioned me to gain admission to a number of California universities within eight months of being home, making it possible for me to major in an area of focus that lined up perfectly with my professional pursuits and passion. I applied for, and received, undergraduate admission into a number of University of California schools thanks to the support of the Underground Scholars Initiative (USI), a student organization founded by students at the University of California, Berkeley, who had been incarcerated or otherwise faced systemic barriers to advancement. And it was first funded through UC Berkeley via a fee that students voted for in a referendum. USI later partnered with state Senator Loni Hancock, who led an effort to secure funding from the state to initiate the development of an academic support program to serve formerly incarcerated students and the student organization itself.



II. Employment and Wealth Building

Policy solutions that 1) expand access to capital that supports entrepreneurial opportunities and 2) encourage employers to adopt more inclusive and equitable hiring and talent development practices.

Here are five steps policymakers can take to promote employment and wealth-building opportunities:

1

Mitigate barriers to career entry. Laws, regulations, and policies should be modified to minimize or eliminate requirements that automatically disqualify people from jobs or professions based on their records. Instead, only convictions that are relevant to the work should be taken into account. And criteria used to make such decisions about the relevance of convictions to licensure or certification should be transparent and based on publicly enumerated factors. In addition, policymakers should draft laws and regulations that automatically expunge people's records from databases so that cleared records aren't available for background or credit searches.

2

Promote the adoption and scale of fair chance hiring practices. Policies should encourage and support employers to implement practices that evaluate job candidates based on skills and experiences, not rely solely on degrees and credentials they've earned, and eliminate broad prohibitions based on arrest, conviction, or incarceration records. In addition, policies should seek to mitigate employers' concerns about the perceived risks of hiring individuals with prior convictions while enforcing and strengthening laws that prohibit workplace discrimination and bias. Policymakers should encourage public employers to model these hiring practices.

3

Ensure equitable and inclusive working conditions and career pathways. Policymakers should ensure that anti-discrimination policies work well with fair chance policies to ensure that employees with records have access to all employee benefits and defined career ladders, including the training and professional development programs that give all employees equitable opportunities to build the skills they need to advance.

4

Address sector-based workforce needs. Policies should explicitly include people with records as priority populations in investment in and development of programs and other initiatives designed to increase training, recruitment, hiring, and advancement of workers to fill critical vacancies in high-growth industries with well-paid jobs. Effective strategies would include offering incentives and technical assistance to sector-based partnerships between training providers, employers, community-based organizations, and correctional agencies to build strong and equitable talent development pipelines and job placement practices that created on-ramps to quality jobs for individuals with records.

5

Support entrepreneurship and capital creation opportunities. Policies should ensure that people with past convictions and those currently incarcerated who are interested in starting businesses have equitable access to publicly funded small business development services and loan programs. Policies should also create incentives for expanding access to other private sources of capital.

AMINAH ELSTER TELLS HER STORY

Benefitting From a Fair Chance in the Job Market

I was fortunate that it didn't take me long to find a job. I sought employment that would allow me to engage in social justice "peer" work where my lived experience, coupled with my professional experiences, was valued and welcomed. Utilizing my network, I learned about an internship with the American Friends Service Committee, an organization that promotes a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression.

I benefited from California's passage of the Fair Chance Act in 2018. Also known as the "Ban the Box" law, the Fair Chance Act prohibits employers from asking job applicants about their criminal histories before making a job offer, which levels the playing field for people who may be highly qualified for certain jobs but have had a criminal conviction.

Normalizing Opportunity Requires Seismic Shifts in Expectations and Actions

From reducing recidivism ...



... to repairing lives.

From “fixing” individual bad habits ...



... to investing in foundational supports that create resilience and social and emotional well-being.

From stabilizing at the point of reentry ...



... to driving upward social and economic mobility across a lifetime.

From mitigating the perceived risks of having people with criminal records in workplaces ...



... to investing in talent development and committing to inclusive fair chance hiring practices that are proven to improve productivity, stimulate innovation, and boost the bottom line.

From operating within existing structural inequities that limit access to skill-building and employment opportunities ...



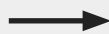
... to redesigning education and workforce development systems to be equitable and intentionally promote career advancement.

From devastating communities through mass incarceration ...



... to building and preserving safe and prosperous communities.

From storylines that perpetuate harmful stereotypes that entrench stigma and encourage exclusionary practices ...



... to dynamic and transformational narratives that represent individuals as change agents in society.



III. Mobility Supports

Policy solutions designed to ensure that everyone has access to the foundational supports they need to focus on building skills, sustaining employment, and advancing economically.

Here are four steps policymakers can take to improve mobility supports:

1

Eliminate barriers to accessing resources that support reintegration into the community and families. Policies should do the following: either institute complete relief from fees and fines imposed by courts and correctional institutions or at least allow for means-based reductions in the amounts people are required to repay to minimize debt and income burdens. They should also expand access to public benefits, such as cash assistance, food, housing, child-care assistance programs, and trauma and mental health counseling services. Also, ensure that individuals can fully participate in civic activities such as voting, so they can have a say in decisions about public policies that impact their economic opportunities.

2

Ensure poverty alleviation policies encourage pursuing education and careers for people receiving public assistance or serving on parole or probation. Policies can end generational poverty and recidivism by easing “work-first” rules that make it difficult for people on public assistance or serving on parole or probation to pursue education and skills training. Rather than requiring a job that may pay low wages and offer few advancement opportunities, enabling people to build new skills can put them on a path to upward mobility. Policies should also ease or eliminate “[benefits cliffs](#)” to ensure that people can access public benefits even as their earnings grow while they advance in their careers.

3

Make education and training programs more affordable. Policy levers that could help achieve this goal include lifting restrictions that make it difficult for people with records to qualify for in-state tuition discounts and financial aid packages. Other options include loosening rules governing eligibility for training accounts and employment and training supports tied to public benefits programs and expanding traditional and alternative education financing models to cover high-quality, short-term credential programs.

4

Promote the formation of community and regional partnerships. Policies should offer incentives to encourage corrections, education, workforce development, human services, and business leaders to work together to devise unified and comprehensive strategies for providing services and supports to people reentering their communities following incarceration. The decisions and activities of these partnerships should be informed and driven by the expertise of individuals with lived experience with incarceration.



AMINAH ELSTER TELLS HER STORY

Finding Housing, Overcoming a Debt Burden

After my release, I was housed in a transitional program for the first six months of my reintegration, with the expectation that I would find and secure my own housing. To help me cover living expenses in the high-priced city of San Francisco, I applied for food benefits through the state's CalFresh program but was denied because I resided in transitional housing.

San Francisco has a [fair chance housing ordinance](#) that protects tenants and housing applicants from discrimination by affordable housing providers based on criminal history, but it allows landlords to consider applicants' criminal convictions if they are deemed to be "directly related" to the safety of the property. Also, many landlords in the city require potential tenants to have funds that amount to at least three times the amount of one month's rent. Unable to meet this threshold on my own, I found another formerly incarcerated person looking for housing to be my roommate, and together we pooled our incomes to secure a small studio apartment in San Francisco with very little difficulty.

Having secured stable housing, employment, and access to higher education, I was excited to use my first tax return to treat myself to something special. Imagine my surprise when my federal tax return was garnished per the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) because I still owed restitution from 18 years earlier. I contacted the DOJ to make payment arrangements. A few months later, my employer received a letter from the Franchise Tax Board—the California agency responsible for collecting state personal income tax—notifying them that my wages were being garnished due to court-ordered debt collection. I was devastated! I hadn't even been home a year and here was this mountain of debt looming over my future like a tule fog. How was I supposed to get on my feet and begin accumulating wealth with wage and tax return garnishments and county liens on properties I might potentially hold in the future?

Frustrated and unaware of what my next steps should be, I was connected with an attorney with a legal services provider who discouraged me with the complexities around victims' compensation and restitution and encouraged me to file a motion to modify my sentence in Superior Court. I did, and the court granted my motion, and the judge ruled a "no restitution" order before dropping the matter from the court calendar and clearing away \$88,000 of criminal justice debt blocking my path to upward mobility.



IV. Essential Infrastructure

Policy solutions that enhance the assets, networks, and structures needed to foster collective action for helping individuals and communities overcome barriers and advance economically.

Here are four steps policymakers can take to improve the essential infrastructure that people with records will rely on:

- 1 Make strategic and significant investments in reentry and economic advancement strategies.** Policies should make it easier to braid and blend existing funds for education, skills training, employment programs, and social services to maximize resources supporting reentry and economic advancement for people with records.
- 2 Establish success metrics and devise strategies that promote shared accountability for achieving those targets.** Metrics to consider in such assessments include how well programs address the immediate employment and training needs and long-range career goals of incarcerated individuals and others with criminal records, and the return on investment of post-incarceration reentry support services. Policies should promote a culture of continuous improvement through performance monitoring, coaching and technical assistance, and improvement planning. And to understand the short- and long-term impact of policies, programs should undergo multiple types of evaluations that include assessments of participants' experiences based on feedback from participants themselves.

AMINAH ELSTER TELLS HER STORY

Emphasizing the Need for Equitable Access to Opportunities and Supports

My story isn't unique. Many people with criminal records face challenges similar to the ones I faced when they try to get an education, secure employment and housing, and achieve financial stability. That's why ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities and support structures that help drive upward mobility for formerly incarcerated people is essential if we truly want everyone to thrive in today's economy and succeed in the jobs of the future.

3

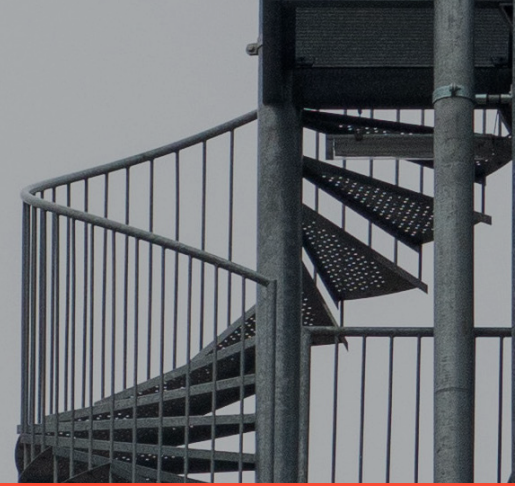
Use technology to mitigate barriers. Policies should promote the use of automated tools for practices like clearing the records of people who stay arrest- and conviction-free for a certain period (as the [Clean Slate Initiative](#) proposes). They should also give employers, credit agencies, and other entities incentives to use background check technologies only to identify convictions that are relevant to the work an individual would be hired to do and to use individualized metrics (such as the [R3 Score](#)) to identify people with criminal records who would be good fits for certain jobs. In addition, anti-discrimination policies should be updated to cover the use of technologies in employment decisions to ensure that the algorithms used in automated vetting systems don't replicate human biases about members of certain populations and thereby further institutionalize racism and other forms of discrimination, including discrimination against people with records, in hiring.

4

Increase the availability and transparency of data. Legislative and regulatory measures should ensure that policymakers and stakeholders throughout the corrections, education, workforce development, and human services ecosystems have access to comprehensive and well-organized data about the circumstances of people who have been incarcerated or otherwise have records of arrests or convictions. Specifically, information about individuals' activities and outcomes in training and education programs and the labor market should be disaggregated, publicly reported, and widely distributed to guide decision-making about the need for systemic changes, programmatic improvements, and increases in investments.



Policy Design Principles



Policymakers should adhere to the following principles when designing and implementing policy solutions intended to normalize opportunity for people with criminal records:

1

Build on the expertise of people with lived experience. For the nation to develop fairer and more effective systems, policies should be informed by and implemented with input and leadership from individuals with direct experiences with the systems, practices, policies, and perceptions that need to be changed or expanded.

2

Scale what works while catalyzing thoughtful innovation. Policies should create incentives that encourage expansion and adaptation of programs that have proved to be effective. The goal is to enable proven strategies to be deployed broadly to serve as many people as possible while facilitating customization of those approaches to ensure that they meet the unique needs of a wide range of populations and geographic areas. And adaptations of strategies and programs should be designed to holistically address the complexity of systemic and structural harm, including the intergenerational impact of parental incarceration on children and partners. At the same time, it's essential to look beyond proven approaches to seek out and promote promising innovations and new programs and tools.

3

Make measurable improvements in equity. Policies should acknowledge and undo structural barriers that have excluded individuals with records—and their communities—from education and employment opportunities. Legislative and regulatory measures should be intentionally designed and evaluated based on their effectiveness in eliminating inequities along racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic lines. Furthermore, policies should ensure that all stakeholders are accountable and responsible for developing and implementing fair and effective systems.

4

Integrate and coordinate systems to provide more effective pathways to opportunity. Policies should support comprehensive approaches to address complex challenges and encourage stakeholders in education, workforce development, human services, correctional, and judicial systems to work outside their traditional siloes to more efficiently and effectively serve the needs of individuals, communities, and regional economies impacted by criminal convictions.

5

Prioritize investments in communities disproportionately impacted by criminal records to stimulate economic renewal, create quality jobs, and improve the quality of life. Policies should direct public resources and encourage private investment to revitalize communities and improve the quality of job opportunities in neighborhoods with large numbers of people returning from incarceration or with past convictions. Such projects could include road-building and other infrastructure initiatives, expanding broadband internet service, and constructing everything from affordable housing to schools, hospitals, or grocery stores. These efforts can further benefit communities by including requirements to hire local residents and offering them opportunities to participate in relevant training.

Policy Must Address the Inequities That Compound Inequities

Policies designed to normalize opportunity for people with criminal records must address the unique inequities that disadvantage members of the various distinct demographic groups within the overall population of people with records.

While men make up the overwhelming majority of people in prison, the [growth rate](#) for the incarceration of women has been twice that of men since 1980. Women experience the same degree of racism in the legal system as men: Black, Latinx and Indigenous women are more likely to be incarcerated than white women. However, they also face a number of added challenges. For example, incarceration of women can result in significant [intergenerational impacts](#), in part because women who are incarcerated are more likely to be parents than their male counterparts and an estimated 55,000 women are [pregnant](#) when they begin serving their sentences.

Yet women have less access to the resources needed to rebuild their lives and support their children after they leave prison. Women’s facilities are less likely than men’s facilities to [offer postsecondary education and training](#) programs that would equip women for quality jobs when they return home. Moreover, the social and individual supports offered in corrections facilities, including mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment, generally aren’t [gender-responsive](#), which makes them less effective for women than they are for men.

Leaders and advocates at all levels of government should be aware of the need to craft gender-specific policies that address the unique experiences women face while they’re incarcerated and when they’re in the process of reentering their communities. Those policies must ensure that women have equitable access to resources and supports so that they have the same opportunities as men to secure housing, employment, and child care, achieve financial stability, and get on a pathway to economic advancement.



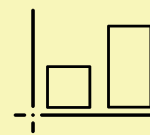
Demographic Snapshot: Women Incarcerated in the U.S.²



The number of women incarcerated in the United States increased by 475% between 1980 and 2020—from 26,000 to 153,000.



Black, Latinx, and Native American women are more likely to be incarcerated than white women.



More than half (58%) of women in prison and the majority (80%) of women in jails are mothers to children under the age of 18 when they are incarcerated.



NORMALIZING OPPORTUNITY

Join Our Drive to Normalize Opportunity

Now is the time to take bold policy steps to ensure that people with records have a fair chance to pursue careers that match their talents, skills, and aspirations, so that we, as a nation, can move forward together to a more resilient, more prosperous, and more equitable future.

This agenda is just a start. In the near future, JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement will begin unveiling a plan of action with recommendations for specific federal and state policy strategies that can help normalize opportunity for people with records.

These recommendations will be based on the insights of people with personal experience navigating U.S. criminal, judicial, and corrections systems. They will incorporate promising practices and policy approaches emerging in some states and municipalities. The first phases of this plan will include the publication of a brief highlighting transformative state and federal funding strategies, the launch of a collaborative advocacy campaign, and the kickoff of a state-based coalition-building initiative.

If you're interested in working with us, you can learn more about our initiatives on [JFF.org](https://www.jff.org) and email us at justice@jff.org.

JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement is working with partners—especially individuals who have personal experience and expertise navigating the impact of the criminal system—to expand access to education and employment opportunities that equip people for careers in the following ways:



Mobilize employers to adopt equitable and inclusive hiring practices, with a particular focus on racial equity



Provide technical assistance for implementing promising models that equip people for quality jobs and navigating their own career trajectory



Advocate for policy and systems change that remove barriers to and create conditions for economic mobility



Change the narrative about people with records to amplify the dignity, humanity and talents of people with records



Research to identify and spread transformative solutions

Acknowledgments

Normalizing Opportunity was developed and written by David Altstadt, a director in JFF's Policy & Advocacy unit, under the guidance and leadership of Vice President Lucretia Murphy, who leads JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement. The Council of State Governments Justice Center and Aminah Elster also made major contributions to this report. The author would like to thank the following colleagues and partners who provided feedback on *Normalizing Opportunity*: JFF's Joel Vargas, Karishma Merchant, Mary Clagett, Brandi Mandato, and Crystal Green; Libuse Binder of AMP Consulting; Emily Fabiano and Nicholas Klein at Workmorphis; and Jason Whyte of the National Reentry Workforce Collaborative. Special thank you to the Blue Meridian Partners Justice and Mobility Fund for their generous support of JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement.

About JFF

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement

The Center for Justice & Economic Advancement (CJEA) leads JFF's efforts to eliminate barriers to economic mobility for people with criminal records and create opportunities that give them a fair chance to pursue careers that match their talents, skills, and aspirations. cjea.jff.org

About JFF's Language Choices

JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity, rooted in the strengths of the people and communities we serve. We develop our content with the awareness that language can perpetuate privilege but also can educate, empower, and drive positive change to create a more equitable society. We will continually reevaluate our efforts as language usage continues to evolve.

Join the Dignity-Focused Language Pledge of the Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network

If you're interested in promoting people first, dignity-focused language when working with people who are currently or have been incarcerated, we [invite you to join the pledge](#) of our partners at the Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network.

Endnotes

1 Industry observers have estimated that the Inflation Reduction Act's investments in climate action would create [9 million jobs](#) over 10 years; the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act would boost employment by [888,000 jobs](#); and the CHIPS and Science Act would create [42,000](#) additional jobs in the semiconductor industry.

2 The Sentencing Project, "Incarcerated Women and Girls" (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>



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