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Recidivism Rate: What Are We Doing in Alabama?

by

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Introduction

When we talk about recidivism, most understand it to mean recurring criminal events. When discussing the crime rate and criminal activity, there are a plethora of negative consequences associated with this topic. Those consequences include, but are not limited to, rearrests, reconviction, and returning to prison. The above-mentioned dilemma is just a small part of the overall problem that many states and communities face. Recidivism rates are a national and societal problem that requires a comprehensive approach that would be impossible to thoroughly examine in this article. In fact, tackling this complex dilemma would take several books; therefore, this article will simply highlight the general problem; recidivism rate, briefly address this national problem, and provide recent data collected in Alabama relative to its effort to combat recidivism.

The Problem: Recidivism Rates!

The National Institute of Justice took a snapshot of the recidivism rate between 2005-2014 and found that about 68% of released prisoners committed additional criminal acts



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within a three-year period of their release date. This study also showed that the recidivism rate increased to 79% between 2005 and 2010. Additional findings determined that among the 401,288 state prisoners observed, the recidivism rate rose to a stunning 83% within this nine-year study. Finally, this study showed that this population of released prisoners accounted for about 2 million arrests during the study ([Archived | Measuring Recidivism | National Institute of Justice \(ojp.gov\)](#)).

So, let's put these findings in simple English: over 400 thousand released state inmates account for about 2 million arrests within nine-years of their release date. The results show an 83% recidivism rate in this study group ([Archived | Measuring Recidivism | National Institute of Justice \(ojp.gov\)](#)). Consider that only 17% in this study did not fall back into criminal activity over this nine-years period. Now, think about the quality of life for citizens, and the negative economic impact on the communities in this observation. Upon doing so, one must ask, "what did the 17% of the non-reoffenders do or have that the reoffenders did not do or have?"

The negative impacts surrounding the recidivism rate are far-reaching and should concern everyone. Research has revealed that women report being victimized more frequently than men; therefore, for that reason alone, something must be done. Upon considering this, one could assume that young men need to have purpose and positive reinforcement while incarcerated. David Trilling cited Crystal Yang's study on the labor market and criminal recidivism, and found



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that there are many reasons why former inmates struggle finding meaningful employment. Yang said that limited job experience, lack of education, little or no skills along with employer apprehensions are major factor in the hiring process. This study found that about 60% of released inmates have trouble finding good paying jobs (Trilling, 2017). There is a need to inform stakeholders, state legislators, business owners and the community about the negative impact associated with isolating those recently released from prisons. This population will need the necessary skills and a vibrant support network to successfully reintegrate into our communities.

What Are We Doing in Alabama?

J.F. Ingram State Technical College (J.F. ISTC) is a part of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). J.F. ISTC is unique among most two-year community colleges in America because all its students are incarcerated in the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC). ISTC is committed to returning responsible citizens back to Alabama's communities. The college offers adult education and valuable trades such as plumbing, HVAC, welding, diesel mechanics, auto body repair, marine technology, carpentry, masonry, ServSafe, forklift operator, OSHA certification, logistics, cosmetology, barbering and several other trades that quickly



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translate to good paying jobs for those students who complete the program (AL Daily News, Feb. 22, 2023).

Recently, J.F. ISTC collaborated with Lightcast to analyze the effectiveness of the college and examine the economic impact in Alabama. Based on Lighcast modeling, J.F. ISTC graduates are projected to have about a \$124 million dollars' positive impact in the state. "In FY 2020-21, J.F. ISTC alumni generated \$123.9 million in added income for the state economy, which is the equivalent to supporting 1,785 jobs." Due to data limitation, the recidivism rate is not included in this analysis. However, the efforts of J.F. ISTC is adding intrinsic value to communities in Alabama, improving the local economy and refining the lives of graduates (CBS 42 News, Feb. 21, 2023).

J.F. ISTC has programs in most prison camps across Alabama, and they are starting programs in Day Reporting Centers (DRC) (AL Daily News, Feb. 22, 2023). Alabama leaders are finding that those who complete the program along with completing the drug rehabilitation program are less likely to return to prison. In fact, Alabama Pardon and Paroles report the recidivism rate among those who fully complete the program drops from 30% to 4.1% (CBS 42 News, Feb. 21, 2023). Alabama state leaders are finding that educating the incarcerated



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population and training them to work in skilled trades is the smart way to reduce crime, return responsible citizens to our communities, and positively impact Alabama's economy.

Reference:

AL Daily News - College exclusively serving incarcerated population pushes for more funding (CBS News, Feb. 21, 2023) Retrieved: 'Providing them a second chance': State officials tour Alabama's largest correctional education system | CBS 42

Trilling, D. (2017). The economy and ex cons' odds of returning to jail (journalistsresource.org)

U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs: Archived | Measuring Recidivism | National Institute of Justice (ojp.gov)