



Reentry Programs and Services

Executive Summary

Reentering society can be difficult for incarcerated individuals, who may face challenges such as finding employment, housing, and transportation; re-establishing family relationships; finding treatment for substance use, medical, and mental health conditions; and not reoffending. The purpose of the Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) is to improve the overall reintegration process of offenders leaving prison and returning to the community and to subsequently reduce recidivism. Currently, research on the effectiveness of reentry programs (such as housing, education, employment, and substance abuse specific programs) has been mixed, with only a few studies demonstrating positive impacts such as reduced substance use and reduced recidivism rates.

Highlights

- Almost 50% of Missouri offenders released between 2012 and 2016 have returned to prison within 5 years.
 - Of the 4,015 offenders released in 2021, 5% have returned to prison in 6 months.
- Reentry programs aim to facilitate the transition from incarceration back into the community and reduce recidivism using multifaceted approaches such as by increasing access to community resources (e.g., housing, employment) or by directly providing treatment for areas of need (e.g., substance use).
- In 2021, 15 states enacted legislation to improve reentry and reintegration programs including education, employment training and workforce reentry, release programs related to employment, and housing.

Limitations

- Randomized control trials of reentry programs are very limited and contain numerous limitations which include lack of individual-specific concerns within each plan based on needs and risks, lack of gender-responsive programs, potential needs for higher levels of training for treatment provided, and the emphasis on the importance of case-management and follow-up.
- Additional research is needed to better understand the impacts of quality of life, support networks, family relationships, and community on recidivism.

Research Background

Missouri Offender Profile

In 2021, the Missouri Department of Corrections supervised approximately 80,000 offenders.¹ The institutional (incarcerated) population consisted of 23,137 individuals, and 55,577 individuals were under probation (37,847) and parole (17,730).¹ Approximately 80% of the incarcerated

population is between the ages of 18–49 years old.¹ Additionally, 85.7% of those on probation and 88% of parolees are between the ages of 18–49 years old.¹

Males make up the majority of the incarcerated and supervised populations compared to females (incarcerated: 91% vs 9%; probation: 71% vs. 29%; parole: 83% vs. 17%).¹ Racial disparities are evident amongst the incarcerated and supervised populations for both men and women (**Figure 1**).¹

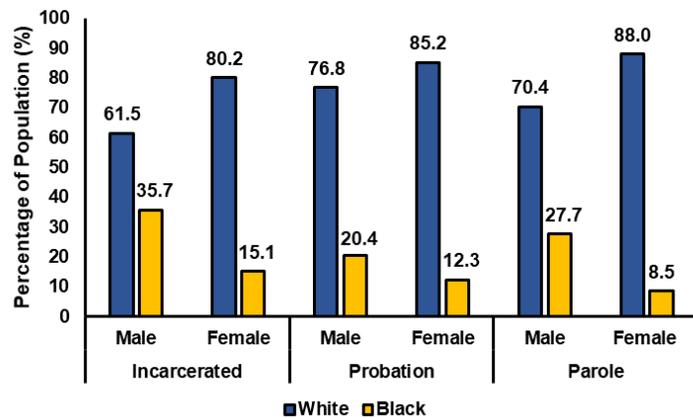


Figure 1. Male and female incarcerated and supervised populations separated by race. Figure data is from the 2021 Missouri Offender Profile.¹

In 2016, incarceration of one individual was estimated to cost approximately \$58 per day or \$21,140 per year.² The estimated total annual taxpayer cost of incarceration was \$694,179,434.² Likewise, one individual under supervision was estimated to cost approximately \$6 per day or \$2,211 per year.² The estimated total cost of supervision was \$130,085,111.²

Recidivism

According to the National Institute of Justice, recidivism is “a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime.”³ In Missouri, recidivism is measured by criminal acts that result in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a five-year period following the person's release.¹ In 2016, 4,910 offenders were released from prison with approximately 9.6% of offenders returning to prison in 6 months and 44.7% returning to prison in 5 years.¹ Since 2016, recidivism rates have improved (**Figure 2**). In 2021, of the 4,015 offenders released, 5% have returned to prison in 6 months.¹

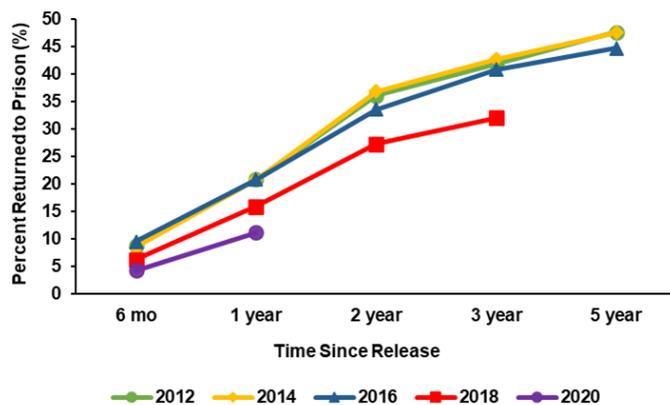


Figure 2. Recidivism rates measured as first return to prison for all offenders between 2012–2020. Figure data is from the 2021 Missouri Offender Profile.¹

Missouri Reentry Process

The purpose of the Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) is to improve the overall transition process of offenders leaving prison and returning to the community. The MRP works with community partnerships and government agencies to prepare offenders to be successful, productive, taxpaying citizens upon their release from prison.⁴ These partnerships help Missourians leaving

prison to find housing, clothing, food, transportation, medical care, substance abuse treatment, childcare, education, spiritual support and additional resources they may need. Community partnerships and government agencies (such as DSS, DHSS, DESE, DoR) provide advising and services to offenders before release and offer follow-up services and support after release.⁵ These include assistance with Medicaid, child support, obtaining a nondriver's state issue ID, and mental and medical health care.⁶ The Missouri Department of Corrections has partnered with over 300 Missouri businesses throughout the state who hire individuals with involvement in the criminal justice system.

Women-Specific Reentry Process

While men make up a greater portion of the incarcerated population, Missouri has one of the fastest growing populations of women in prison in the U.S. Between 2007 and 2016, Missouri's female prison population increased by 33%.⁷ The MRP has implemented department-wide trauma-informed practices and gender-responsive programs that provide health, mental health, self-esteem, parenting, academic and vocational education, substance use treatment and life skills assistance, as those can differ from male offenders.⁵

Effectiveness of Reentry Programs

Reentering society after incarceration is difficult and presents many challenges including: finding employment, housing, and transportation; re-establishing family relationships; finding treatment for substance use, medical, and mental health conditions; and not reoffending.⁴ [The Second Chance Act of 2007](#) was enacted to improve outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals by funding a number of reentry initiatives aimed at reducing recidivism. This act was reauthorized in [The First Step Act of 2018](#), which also requires the Department of Justice to develop a system to assess the recidivism risk of all federal prisoners and to place prisoners in recidivism reduction programs and productive activities to reduce this risk.

Generally, reentry programs aim to facilitate the transition to the community and reduce recidivism using multiple approaches such as increased access to community resources (e.g., housing, employment) or direct treatment for areas of need and risks (e.g., substance use).^{8,9} Reentry programs may be implemented during three different phases: in preparation for eventual release, during the inmate's release period to help access services, and long-term programs that further assist with reintegration into society.¹⁰ Research on the effectiveness of reentry programs has been mixed, with only a few studies demonstrating positive impacts such as reducing substance use and reducing recidivism rates. Specifically, employment-, education-, housing- and health-specific reentry services have been shown to effectively reduce recidivism rates.⁸⁻¹⁶ Research suggests that the most effective programs begin during incarceration and continue throughout the release and reintegration process.¹⁰

Research has cited numerous limitations to understanding the effectiveness of reentry programs. Reentry programs vary in design, range, services, and methodology, and these differences contribute to not fully understanding what type of programs are most effective.¹⁰ In order for

reentry programs to be considered effective by evidence-based practices, research studies need to include randomized control trials in their methodology. However, the majority of research investigating reentry programs utilize a quasi-experimental design (meaning they use criteria to place individuals in treatment groups rather than randomization; these designs can introduce bias into the results of the study).¹⁷ Further limitations include diluting the needs of high-risk offenders and lack of individual-specific concerns within each plan, lack of gender-responsive programs, higher levels of training for treatment provided, and the importance of case-management and follow-up.⁸⁻¹⁶ Additional research is needed to better understand the impacts of quality of life, support networks, family relationships, and community on recidivism.^{8,9}

State Legislation

In 2021, 15 states (AZ, CA, DE, KY, MD, MS, MT, NJ, NY, OR, TN, TX VA, WA, WV) enacted 24 bills related to reentry and reintegration improvements. The bills included provisions related to education, employment training and workforce reentry, release programs related to employment, and housing.¹⁷

During the 2020-2021 legislative session, New Jersey's [S 2331](#) enacted one of the most comprehensive reentry laws in the nation. This bill requires that at least 10 days prior to their release, the Commissioner of Corrections shall provide a summary of the following to the inmate: 1) information about voting; 2) information about the availability of educational and employment assistance programs; 3) detailed written records of the inmate's participation in programs and medical treatments while incarcerated; 4) any financial obligations (e.g. fines, child support) due and payable by the inmate; 5) a copy of their birth certificate; 6) assistance in obtaining a social security card; 7) a one-day bus or train pass; 8) a two-week supply of prescription medications; 9) a non-driver state ID; 10) information about social service programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Work First New Jersey Program; and 11) information about Medicaid enrollment.

Missouri Legislation

In recent years, Missouri has filed and passed legislation to improve reentry efforts for incarcerated individuals. In 2018, the Department of Corrections was required to implement a community behavioral health program to provide comprehensive community-based services for individuals who have serious behavioral health conditions (RSMo [217.021](#)). Passed in 2019, the Fresh Start Act prevents a person from being disqualified from licensure for any occupation because of a prior criminal conviction unless the criminal conviction directly relates to the duties and responsibilities for the licensed occupation.

Filed in the 2022 legislative session, [HB 2088](#) creates the Earning Safe Entry Through Work Act. This act permits any offender on probation, parole, or conditional release to earn credits that will reduce sentence term lengths through maintaining employment. Specifically, for every 30-day period a worker maintains eligible employment, 20 work-for-time credits may be accrued which will reduce the term of probation, parole or conditional release by 20 days.

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