

# Research Supporting Digital Access

## Correctional Education

Research indicates incarcerated individuals are not receiving access to education and programming at consistent levels. The reasons cited include limited classroom space, staffing shortages, and limited movement within facilities. Technology can solve these problems through a combination of computer labs and tablets to amplify and augment the work of the instructional and rehabilitative staff.

1. Providing incarcerated individuals with opportunities for education reduces their risk of being reincarcerated upon release. [RAND](#) (2018)
2. Inmates participating in correctional education programs were 28% less likely to recidivate when compared with inmates who did not participate in correctional education programs. [Journal of Experimental Criminology](#) (2018)
3. Individuals who enroll in postsecondary education programs are 48% less likely to be reincarcerated than those who do not. [Brookings](#) (2021)
4. The odds of being employed post-release are 12% higher for individuals who participate in any type of correctional education. [Brookings](#) (2021)
5. Only 43% of people in state prisons have participated in educational programming (even though 62% had not completed high school upon admission). [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2016)
6. Among the 57% of people in state prisons who had never participated in educational programming, the reasons they cite for not participating are illuminating: 18% — over 125,000 people — had never been offered the chance. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2016)
7. In terms of education, 70 percent of prisoners who were not currently taking an academic class or program said they wanted to participate in one. Among those prisoners, the programs they most wanted to participate in were to earn a certificate from a college or trade school (29 percent), a high school diploma/GED (18 percent), an Associate's degree (18 percent), a Bachelor's degree (14 percent), and a pre-associate education (13 percent). [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (2017)
8. 58 percent of incarcerated people do not complete an education program while in prison, yet 64 percent are academically eligible to enroll in a college prison program. Only 9 percent complete a college prison program. [Vera Institute](#) (2018)
9. For every dollar spent on correctional education, \$5 is saved in three-year re-incarceration costs — a 400% ROI. [Rand](#) (2013)
10. Individuals who secure employment after incarceration are 61% less likely to reoffend compared to those who remain unemployed. [Council on Criminal Justice](#) (2023)

## Workforce and Employment

Research indicates incarcerated individuals are less likely to recidivate if they have a path to gainful employment post release. Using the time of incarceration to skill/upskill individuals is an investment in not only the individual but the community as a whole, with living wage employment be a measurable deterrent for recidivism.

1. Formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27% — higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2018)
2. The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is nearly five times higher than the unemployment rate for the general United States population. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2018)
3. Four in 10 (39%) people in state prison did not have a job (i.e., were “jobless”) in the month before their arrest. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2016)
4. The average working person is employed for 78% of the time, versus just 58% of the time for formerly incarcerated people. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2018)
5. Although employers express willingness to hire people with criminal records, evidence shows that having a record reduces employer callback rates by 50%. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2018)
6. A person’s median earnings prior to incarceration were 41% less than median earnings for workers who have not been incarcerated. [Vera Institute](#) (2018)
7. Employment rates for former inmates also increase by nearly 10 percent, on average, after they participate in a college program. [Vera Institute](#) (2018)
8. Unemployment is highest within the first two years of release, suggesting that pre- and post-release employment services are critical in order to reduce recidivism and help incarcerated people quickly integrate back into society. Of those most recently released from prison (that is, within two years of the survey date), over 30% were unemployed. Unemployment rates were lower for those released within 2-3 years of the survey (21%), and people who had been out of prison for at least 4 years reported the lowest rates of unemployment (just under 14%). [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2018)
9. Among those who did work before their arrest, 1 in 5 (20%) were actually working two or more jobs, compared to just 1 in 20 (5%) of the U.S. [Prison Policy Initiative](#) (2016)