

# Chambers Get Smart on Justice

Is criminal justice reform a business issue? It's probably not on your chamber's public policy agenda, but consider these numbers.

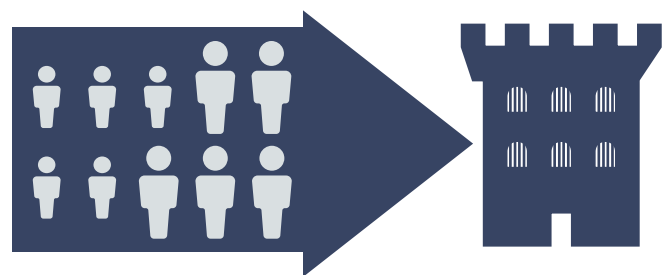
- One in 111 American adults is behind bars. That's more than two million people and nearly triple the incarcerated population just 30 years ago.
- One in 36 American adults is under correctional control. That's too many of our nation's workforce either locked up or on probation or parole.
- One in 15 state general fund dollars are spent on corrections. That's \$49 billion in total expenditures annually.
- One in 11 state employees work for corrections. That's more than the total number of educators at state colleges and universities.



Despite the size, cost and growth, our state and federal criminal justice systems are not producing better outcomes or reducing recidivism.

- Crime rates have fallen, but not in proportion to the corrections system's growth.
- An analysis of the most recent data finds no clear causal relationship between higher incarceration and lower crime. On the contrary, 30 states have reduced both rates at the same time.
- Despite courts imposing longer sentences for crimes, five out of 10 inmates return to prison within three years of release. That's a 50 percent failure rate.

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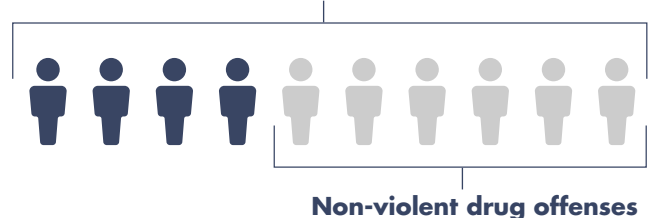


THAT'S A 50% FAILURE RATE

What's driving the growth? Not the hardened violent criminals you might suspect.

- 58% of prisoners arrive because of a technical violation of parole, probation or other controlled supervision.
- Of the new offenders sentenced to prison, more than half are convicted of non-violent drug offenses.

New offenders sentenced to prison

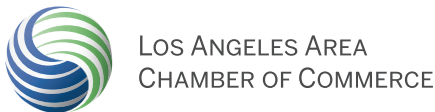


If you care about workforce development, transportation or higher education, you should care about criminal justice reform. The state funding streams and systems are highly connected. For those reasons, many chambers of commerce have already weighed in on this important issue:



“We know everyone wants to be tough on crime, but when you point out to a Rotary Club or chamber member that it costs \$20,000 to send somebody to prison for a low-level drug offense, and that’s equivalent to sending three people to a community college, they see it doesn’t make sense to lock up everyone hanging out on a street corner.”

– Dave Adkisson, CCE, president and CEO,  
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce



“Los Angeles has learned that an unintended consequence of getting tougher on crime leads to a massive investment in criminal justice at the expense of education and prevention. The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce leads a Smart Justice approach that promotes public safety and expands investments in education, training, and preventions that work.”

– David Rattray, executive vice president of education and workforce development, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce



“Building on our long history of advocating for sound criminal justice reform, supporting “presumptive parole” policies that ensure that those sentenced to prison no longer serve exorbitantly long prison terms. The Chamber recognizes that a significant portion of associated cost savings should be redirected to efforts to increase public safety.”

– 2016 Legislative Priorities

**A chorus of other voices are speaking out on this issue.** Republicans, Democrats, faith-based organizations, taxpayer advocates, journalists, lawmakers.



**If you haven’t already explored this issue and its impact on your state, let us help.**

Explore the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Public Safety Performance Project at [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org) for information and resources.

Call ACCE to learn about how chambers have engaged on these issues at 703-998-0072.

