

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 14, 2021

Contact: Sean Keady, sean.keady@berlinrosen.com, 202-725-4156

New Analysis Examines Criminal Convictions in New York City

Almost 750,000 People Have Criminal Convictions in New York City that Can Create Barriers to Housing and Employment; Convictions are Concentrated among Black and Latinx People.

New York (April 14, 2021) – 745,924 people have New York City criminal conviction records, and many people have only a single conviction on their record, according to a new report from the [Data Collaborative for Justice \(DCJ\)](#) at John Jay College. The report also provides data on the substantial and disparate impacts of such convictions on Black and Latinx communities in New York City.

Criminal Conviction Records in New York City (1980-2019) arrives shortly following the passage of legislation legalizing marijuana for recreational use in New York and requiring expungement of prior marijuana convictions for conduct that is now legal. This report demonstrates the extent to which New Yorkers may face barriers to housing and employment due to drug convictions, some of which will be expunged under the new law, as well as the disproportionate impact on Black and Latinx New Yorkers. **Between 1990 and 2019, roughly 80,000 New Yorkers – 87% of whom were Black and Latinx people – accrued criminal conviction records composed of *only* drug convictions (~45,000 have only drug possession convictions).**

This new research, conducted with funding from Trinity Church Wall Street, assesses data from 1980 to 2019, and finds **substantial racial disparities in criminal convictions** at a time when New York City, and the country, continue to reckon with longstanding disparities in the criminal legal system. This new data sheds light on the legacy of nearly 11 million arrests, which [prior research](#) from DCJ shows were overwhelmingly of Black and Brown people, that resulted in **approximately 3.3 million convictions of almost 745,924 people**. Today's report shows a **significant proportion of people with criminal conviction records in New York City are over 45 years old, have a single misdemeanor conviction on their record, have been convicted of drug-related crime, and/or have a conviction record that is over ten years old**. New York State provides some opportunities for people to expunge or seal criminal convictions but many people with a criminal conviction record face barriers to [employment, education, and housing](#).

The report found that, in New York City, between 1980 and 2019:

- Police made nearly 11 million arrests, resulting in approximately 3.3 million criminal convictions and the creation of criminal convictions records for 745,924 individuals.
- Almost 80% of people with criminal conviction records are Black or Latinx (~400,000 people). *(Note: reliable race data is only available for 1990-2019)*
- 42% of people with criminal records had only one conviction on their record (~315,000 people) and an additional 16% have two convictions (~120,000 people).
- ~77% of criminal convictions were for misdemeanors (2,575,639 misdemeanor convictions)
- Drug convictions account for almost one third of misdemeanor and felony criminal convictions (1,108,209 convictions).

- Almost 15% of people with criminal records have only drug convictions on their records (~111,000 people).
- Almost two-thirds of people with convictions have not had a new conviction for over 10 years (~477,000 people).

“As conversations about addressing long standing racial inequities in our criminal legal system continue in and beyond New York City, a data-driven understanding of these disparities is critical,” said Preeti Chauhan, Director of the Data Collaborative for Justice. “DCJ’s research shows that hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, mostly Black and Latinx people and people over the age of 45, have criminal conviction records that are largely made up of misdemeanors and convictions over ten years old. At a time when the city and country are working to recover from the pandemic and address racial disparities in our society, this research shines a light on a large group of people that may face additional barriers to recovery because of their criminal conviction records.”

“Foundational analyses about criminal convictions and racial disparities can ensure that any subsequent criminal justice reforms produce racially equitable outcomes,” said Susan Shah, Managing Director, Racial Justice in Trinity Church Wall Street’s Grants and Mission Investing department. “We cannot afford to overlook the fact that thousands of Black and Latinx New Yorkers are facing perpetual punishment because they have a record; we are talking about a lifetime of blocked opportunities when it comes to basic needs like housing.”

Facing obstacles to employment, many individuals with criminal conviction records start small businesses, but amid the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, such entities have been barred from accessing relief funds provided by the federal government through the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#). For example, **small businesses were not eligible for Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) loans if any owner holding more than 20% of the business was under criminal supervision or had a felony conviction in the last five years.** Other Covid-19 relief programs, such as the Paycheck Protection Program, also imposed limitations on aid based criminal conviction records though the Biden Administration recently [eased](#) these restrictions.

“From housing to employment to COVID-19 relief, the consequences of a criminal conviction follow people for years.” remarked **Erica Bond, Policy Director of the Data Collaborative for Justice.** “Increasing numbers of arrests between 1980 and 2010, particularly for misdemeanors and drug charges, means that, decades later, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, most of whom are Black and Latinx, continue to deal with the consequences of a criminal conviction. This research provides crucial information for policymakers and organizations seeking to address the role criminal convictions play in undermining economic stability for people and communities in this city.”

The full report is available on the Data Collaborative for Justice’s website at: <https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/work/communities/criminal-conviction-records-in-new-york-city-1980-2019/>

###

The [Data Collaborative for Justice \(DCJ\)](https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice houses a group of research initiatives that raise important questions and share critical research about the criminal justice system and its role in creating safe, just, and equitable communities. DCJ conducts data analysis and research on enforcement in the community, the adjudication of cases in the courts, and the use of confinement in jails and prisons. DCJ's work has informed policy reforms, facilitated partnerships between researchers and government agencies across the country, spurred new scholarly research on lower-level enforcement, and has been cited extensively in the press. For more information about the Data Collaborative for Justice please visit: <https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/>