Fact Sheet
The Deleterious Impact of Criminal Convictions in New York State

In May 2023, the [Data Collaborative for Justice](#), [Brennan Center for Justice](#), and [New York City Comptroller](#) released overlapping reports documenting the magnitude and racially inequitable impacts of criminal convictions in New York.

Statewide Scale

From 1980 to 2021, there were over 6.6 million convictions of more than 2.1 million people across New York State. The most serious conviction for 76% was for a misdemeanor. Indicating the rate at which New Yorkers are currently accumulating conviction records, over 30,000 people experienced their first conviction in the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Majority of Convictions are from Long Ago

The most recent conviction was over 20 years ago for 47% of people experiencing a conviction since 1980. Another 26% had their most recent conviction 11 to 20 years ago.

Breakdown by Region and County

From 1980 to 2021, about 817,000 people had a conviction in New York City, 382,000 in Long Island, Westchester, or Rockland, and 944,000 in upstate counties. New York City's share of the State's convictions has declined over time. In 2019, one-third of convictions were from NYC, 18% were from the suburbs, and almost half (49%) were from upstate.

Stark Racial Disparities

In the pre-pandemic year of 2019, the conviction rate relative to their general population numbers was 5.7 times higher for Black than white people in New York City, 5.5 times higher in the suburbs, and 4.8 times higher in upstate. The conviction rate for Hispanic people was 3.5 times higher than white people in NYC, 2.5 times higher in the suburbs, and 2.0 times higher in upstate. Shown in a series of [interactive maps](#) displaying racial disparities in conviction rates for all 62 counties, disparities were greatest in Manhattan, where Black people were 14 times more likely to be convicted than white people in 2019.

Access all seven interactive heat maps presenting a visual representation of disparities in convictions at the county level across New York State [here.](#)

Statewide Economic Impact

National research has documented that criminal convictions block access to housing, employment, and income, among other potentially lifelong repercussions. An earlier analysis found that misdemeanor convictions reduce a person's annual earnings by about 15% and felony convictions by about 20%. When applying these effects to the aforementioned estimates of New Yorkers with convictions since 1980, the Brennan Center found that misdemeanor convictions were producing $9.0 billion in annual earnings loss for New York State and felony convictions were producing $3.6 billion in annual earnings loss (for a total loss of $12.6 billion).

Estimated Annual Earnings Loss Due to Conviction, New York (2021)

Most Serious Conviction	Number of People	Average Annual Earnings Loss Per Person	Total Annual Earnings Loss
Misdemeanor	1.6 million	$5,600	$9.0 billion
Felony	518,000	$6,900	$3.6 billion
Total	2.1 million	-	$12.6 billion

Note: Average annual earnings loss figures were underlined adjusted for inflation. Total earnings loss was calculated from unrounded figures and may not appear to match inputs.
Source: Data Collaborative for Justice, Brennan Center analysis.
Table courtesy of the Brennan Center for Justice, source: New Data on Poverty and Criminal Records in New York State

Benefits of the Clean Slate Act

The pending Clean Slate Act (S.211/A.1029) would automatically seal misdemeanor convictions that are at least three years old and felony convictions that are at least seven years old (excluding convictions for sex crimes). The NYC Comptroller estimated that if this bill became law, over half a million New York City residents would be eligible to have their criminal history sealed. As a result, they could see an increase of an estimated $2.4 billion in annual wages, numbers replicating the vast economic benefits estimated by the Brennan Center for the entire State.

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