

Research Supporting Second Chances  
Prepared for Second Chances Working Group Convening  
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## **Criminal History**

- [Rethinking Criminal Propensity and Character: Cohort Inequalities and the Power of Social Change](#) by Robert Sampson and L. Ash Smith and [The birth lottery of history: Arrest over the life course of multiple cohorts coming of age, 1995–2018](#) by Roland Neil and Robert Sampson show how policy decisions shape people’s criminal records in ways that should lead policymakers to reconsider traditional uses of criminal history to assess risk levels and enhance prison sentences.
- [Paying for the past: The case against prior record sentence enhancements](#) by Robert Frase and Julian Bond critiques the use of criminal history to lengthen prison sentences and outlines a set of recommendations to reform these policies and practices.

## **Emerging Adults**

- [Left to Die in Prison: Emerging Adults 25 and Younger Sentenced to Life without Parole](#) by The Sentencing Project, finds that two in five people sentenced to LWOP were 25 and under at the time of their conviction. Reviews research adolescent brain development and highlights related judicial, legislative, and administrative reforms.

## **Felony Murder**

- [Felony Murder: An On-Ramp for Extreme Sentencing](#) by The Sentencing Project and Fair and Just Prosecution, [surveys the landscape](#) of felony murder sentencing laws.
- [Police Killings as Felony Murder](#) by Guyora Binder and Ekow Yankah applies a racial justice lens to felony murder laws and urges “legislatures to abolish felony murder wherever racially disparate patterns of charging can be demonstrated.”

## **International**

- [Long Sentences: An International Perspective](#) by Lila Kazemian provides an overview of existing research of long sentences in countries outside of the United

## **Parole**

- [The future of parole release](#) by Edward Rhine, Joan Petersillia, and Kevin Reitz provides an overview of parole. This is the article we highlighted which has a good overview of research on parole—and how to improve it

### **Polling**

- [Public support for second look sentencing: Is there a Shawshank redemption effect?](#) by Kellie R. Hannan et al., finds public support for Second Look reforms like that of Washington DC. This team plans to do further related research.
- [Moral Judgments and Knowledge about Felony Murder in Colorado: An Empirical Study](#) by Ian Farrell. Finds that in Colorado, the public is not aware of sentencing law for felony murder and doesn't support it.

### **Public safety impact**

- [The Impact of Long Sentences on Public Safety: A Complex Relationship](#) by Roger Przybylski et al. reviews existing research on long sentence's impact on public safety.
- [The Public Safety Impact of Shortening Lengthy Prison Terms](#) by Avi Bhatti analyzes the arrest history data of individuals released from Illinois prisons between June 2016 and June 2019 after serving sentences of 10 years or more and finds that even slight reductions in such lengthy prison terms would lead to minimal additional arrests while significantly decreasing the state's prison population.
- [Long Sentences, Better Outcomes: Opportunities to Improve Prison Programming](#) by Roger Przybylski reviews literature on prison-based programs for people serving long sentences/

### **Racial justice**

- [Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice, and Policy](#) by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, identifies long sentences as a source of disparity in imprisonment and recommends “establishing second-look provisions for long sentences...and eliminating the death penalty.”
- [How Many People Are Spending Over a Decade in Prison?](#) by The Sentencing Project, notes that while racial disparities can be found at every sentencing level, they are most pronounced in lengthy and extreme sentences. In 2019, Black Americans represented 14% of the total U.S. population, 33% of the total prison population, and 46% of the prison population who had already served at least 10 years.

### **Sentencing reform**

- [A New Paradigm for Sentencing in the United States](#) by the Vera Institute of Justice's Marta Nelson, Sam Feineh, Maris Mapols outlines seven key sentencing reforms for sentencing policy with a presumption toward community-based sentences except in limited circumstances.
- [How Long is too Long](#) by the Criminal Justice's Task Force on Long Sentences presents 14 recommendations to enhance judicial discretion in sentencing, promote individual and system accountability, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, better serve victims of crime, and increase public safety.
- American Bar Association: [Resolution 502](#) in support of judicial resentencing after 10 years of imprisonment; [Resolution 504](#) in support of prosecutor-initiated resentencing
- [Counting down: Paths to a 20-year maximum prison sentence](#) by the Sentencing Project's Liz Komar, Ashley Nellis, and Kristen M. Budd outlines a framework for capping sentences for the most serious offenses at 20 years and shifting sentences for all other offenses proportionately downward, including by decriminalizing some acts, to arrive at a system that values human dignity and prioritizes racial equity.

### **Time served**

- [American Prison-Release Systems: Indeterminacy in Sentencing and the Control of Prison Population Size](#) by University of Minnesota Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice's Kevin Reitz, et al. provides a ground-breaking overview of how law, policy, and practice in prisons and parole boards impact time people serve.
- [Prison-Release Discretion and Prison Population Size State Reports](#) by Robina Institute University of Minnesota Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice's Kevin Reitz outline the legal and policy structures for how all 50 states prison systems shape the time people serve in prison.

### **Victims/survivors**

- [Reflections on Long Prison Sentences: A Conversation with Crime Survivors, Formerly Incarcerated People, and Family Members](#) outlines key findings that include shared support for second looks.

### **Forthcoming**

- The Sentencing Project will be updating its [census of life imprisonment](#) in 2024. TSP will also be publishing a brief on research on crimes of a sexual nature. [The Second Look](#)

[Network](#), a project of TSP, will be surveying members on data collection practices and research needs.

- [Two NIJ-funded studies](#) on second look:
  - Examining the Effects of Back-End Release Discretion on Prison Populations and Length of Stay: A State-by-State Analysis
  - Second Looks for Youth: An Implementation Evaluation of Resentencing Models in Five Jurisdictions