

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

[**https://www.vera.org/publications/second-chance-pell-snapshot**](https://www.vera.org/publications/second-chance-pell-snapshot)

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

The Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative, launched by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015, provides need-based Pell Grants to people in state and federal prisons. Second Chance Pell has active partnerships with 64 colleges that teach in 28 states. The schools were selected in June 2016 for the initiative, which examines whether expanding access to financial aid increases incarcerated adults participation in educational opportunities. The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) is providing technical assistance to the participating colleges and corrections departments, helping to ensure that the programs provide quality higher education in prison and post-release. This policy brief summarizes survey data that 60 of the participating colleges submitted to Vera about the first three years of the project.

Postsecondary education in prison has been shown to contribute to successful reentry for people who have been incarcerated, while promoting public safety. Second Chance Pell colleges have enrolled nearly 17,000 people over three years. Second Chance Pell students have earned more than 4,500 certificates, postsecondary diplomas, associates degrees, and bachelors degrees.

People who participate in postsecondary education in prison describe the experience as transformative.

People who participate in education programs in prison are more likely to be employed after their release and to earn higher wages.

Incarcerated people who participate in prison postsecondary education programs are 48 percent less likely to recidivate than those who do not, and prisons with college programs report less violence.

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