**America's second-class citizens**

Over six million people aren't allowed to vote in the upcoming United States elections. They are people who have been convicted of a felony crime and have had their voting rights taken away from them.

*"I feel like my voice doesn't matter, that I'm a second class citizen. I’ve payed a lot of taxes over the last decade but yet I can’t put a little ‘X’ in a box on a ballot because I once was convicted of a felony."*

The number of people that is not eligible to vote is so high that one in forty Americans cannot vote.

**What is disenfranchisement**

If you get convicted in the United States, chances are you lose the right to vote in the elections. Since the United States has the largest prison population per capita in the world, this means that a significant amount of people aren't allowed to vote.

According to independent research done by [The Sentencing Project](http://www.sentencingproject.org/" \t "_blank), about 6 million Americans are not allowed to vote because of this. They're disenfranchised, cut out from participating in the democracy that locked them up.

*"Being branded as a convicted felon has disconnected me from some important things like voting. Because I am a convicted felon, I have been left out to dry, and I’m not the only one." – Mantell Stevens, spent 30 days in jail and three years of probation after drug possesion.*

Since each state is allowed to make its own laws regarding (ex-)felons voting, numbers of who are most affected are very different for each state.

**How many people are disenfranchised?**

In total, about 6 million people cannot vote because they are disenfranchised. This means that 1 in 40 Americans has their voting rights taken away from them.

*"If we can't vote, we can't vote to change things which means we are just gonna be silenced for the rest of our lives. There's no major political voice in my state, Kentucky, that has taken this up to do it. I'm just disheartened." - Kristi Kendall* (PERSON WANTS TO BE KEPT ANONYMOUS, SO WE SHOULD NOT MENTIOn HER NAME OR HER CONVICTION SHE DID BECAUSE OF IDENTIFYING FACTORS)

The state of Florida alone houses more than a quarter of all disenfranchised people. The southern state has nearly 1.5 million individuals who aren't allowed to vote.

However, looking at the percentage of total voting population, there are six states that stand out. In Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tenessee, Virginia and Alabama more than 7 percent of the voting population cannot excercise their democratic right. This number is even higher for African Americans

**Different state, different law**

It's the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution that's responsible for the big difference in disenfranchised people in each state.

According to this amendment, each state makes its own laws regarding the voting rights of convicted felons.

*"I like to call myself a legal alien. I’m legally allowed to be here but I’m alienated because I’m set apart from everybody." – Mantell Stevens*

Only two states allow all people to vote: Maine and Vermont. Then there are several states will allow people on probation and on parole to vote, but not people that are still in jail or prison. Finally, there are a couple of states that won't allow convicted felons to vote even when their parole or probation has ended, effectively banning them from participating in the democratic process.

*"I pay taxes, I’m held accountable when I commit a crime, so why can’t I vote. I should have all the rights as any other person has." – Mantell Stevens*

In total, over half of all the disenfranchised are people who have completed their sentence. However, even after their time in prison and finishing their parole and probation they are still not allowed to vote.

**How many people are disenfranchised?**

In total, almost 6 million people cannot vote because they are disenfranchised. This means that 1 in 40 Americans have their voting rights taken away from them.

The state of Florida alone houses more than a quarter of all disenfranchised people. The southern state has nearly 1.5 million individuals who aren't allowed to vote.

*"When I go to renew my license, when I go to the county clerk. They always ask ‘would you like to register to vote’. It’s embarrasing to say no, because a lot of people think ‘why would you say’. Its embarrassing to answer to that in public. It sounds like I don’t care about voting. I feel like the bottom of the barrel."*

However, looking at the percentage of total voting population, there are six states that stand out. In Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tenessee, Virginia and Alabama more than 7 percent of the voting population cannot excercise their democratic right. This number is even higher for African Americans.

**Different state, different law**

It's the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution that's responsible for the big difference in disenfranchised people in each state. According to this amendment, each state makes its own laws regarding the voting rights of convicted felons.

"I like to call myself a legal alien. I’m legally allowed to be here but I’m alienated

because I’m set apart from everybody."

Only two states allow all people to vote: Maine and Vermont. Then there are several states will allow people on probation and on parole to vote, but not people that are still in jail or prison. Finally, there are a couple of states that won't allow convicted felons to vote even when their parole or probation has ended, effectively banning them from participating in the democratic process.

*"I pay taxes, I’m held accountable when I commit a crime, so why can’t I vote. I should have all the rights as any other person has." – Mantell Stevens*

In total, over half of all the disenfranchised are people who have completed their sentence. However, even after their time in prison and finishing their parole and probation they are still not allowed to vote.

**The role of race in disenfranchisement**

In total, about **6 million people** cannot vote because they are disenfranchised. This means that 1 in 40 Americans has their voting rights taken away from them.

The state of Florida alone houses more than a quarter of all disenfranchised people. The southern state has nearly 1.5 million individuals who aren't allowed to vote.

However, looking at percentage of total voting population, there are six states that stand out. In Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tenessee, Virginia and Alabama more than 7 percent of the voting population cannot excercise their democratic right. This number is even higher for African Americans.

**How does race play a role?**

Voter disenfranchisement is a much bigger problem for African Americans than it is for white Americans and Latinos. Overall one in forty Americans cannot vote because of voter disenfranchisement, but for African Americans this number goes up to one in thirteen.

*"For ex-felons, a big problem is that they face a lot of other issues that take precedence over changing voting rights. They’re more concerned with where their next meal is gonna come from than their concern about whether they’re able to vote." -*

For some states, this rate is even higher. In four states black voter disenfranchisement is higher than twenty percent, meaning one in every five African American is not allowed to vote because they once were convicted of a felony crime.

What is the difference between sentence and post-sentence?

In all but two states (Maine and Vermont), people who are currently serving a sentence are not allowed to vote. Most states allow ex-felons back into the democratic process after serving either parole or probation.

*"A friend of mine, her dad is in his sixties. He got a felony when he was in his twenties, hasn’t been in trouble again, he owns several businesses and he hasn't been able to vote for what's best for him, his family and his business." – Kristi Kendall*

Some states, however, will not give ex-felons their voting rights after serving their full sentence. For a state like Florida, for example, this means that 1.5 million people who have fully served their sentence, cannot vote again.

**The United States' high incarceration rate**

The United States has about five percent of the global population. However, it also has 25% of the global prison population. Since the 1980s, the number of inmates in the US has risen dramatically.

*"I was convicted of a felony over twenty years ago and I’ve been living with that label for two decades now. Because I am a convicted felon, I have been left out to dry, and I’m not the only one."*

The main cause for this is the War on Drugs and the harsh sentences for relatively small drug offences. This has led to a rapidly increasing number of prisoners. However, in the last couple of years, the number of incarcerated Americans has dropped somewhat.

**The rise in disenfranchisement through the years**

Because of the rise of the number of prisoners, the amount of disenfranchised voters has also increased rapidly. Especially in states where post-sentence voting is not allowed there is a large number of people who are not allowed to vote.

*"I believe there is a benefit to disenfranchising certain groups of people. When you take the power of voting away from a quarter of a million people in Kentucky alone, that’s a lot of votes. It's a way to keep control." – Mantell Stevens*

THINGS YOU MENTIONED:

* Hillary is pro reform, as per this tweet:  
  <https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton/status/723585247443619840>
* Trump is ANTI reform, as per this article:

<http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/article_cff41b5a-a671-59a0-8549-d81bf4f17eb6.html>

* BLM wants to end voter disenfranchisement, as per this article:

<http://mashable.com/2016/08/02/black-lives-matter-movement-coalition-policy-goals/#aMTm28Q3OOqq>

-