Incarceration and the criminal justice system often have extreme negative effects on the financial security of families and communities, and these effects can be generational.

**Over 3.5% of Ohio’s population over the age of 16 is involved with the criminal justice system, either through incarceration or through supervision programs like probation and parole**[^5].

Black Ohioans are overrepresented in the criminal justice system—43% of incarcerated population vs. 13% of state population[^609]. This is not due to a higher rate of crime, but because of targeted laws and the criminal justice system itself. From policing through sentencing and incarceration, the criminal justice system is more punitive towards Black people[^613,614,615]. The negative financial effects of the criminal justice system are concentrated in Black communities and increases community risk of experiencing IPV.

When people cannot afford bail, they are separated from their families and communities, they cannot work, and they are more likely to lose their jobs. Being arrested and facing criminal charges places an immediate and substantial financial burden on families. They may also face extreme economic hardship when released from incarceration because bills like rent and car payments do not cease when someone is incarcerated. Increased financial burden of families and communities can increase risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.

People of color are disproportionately impacted by the cash bail system because they tend to have less money to pay for bail, both individually and within their communities[^622]. Additionally, people of color are arrested and incarcerated at higher rates than white people due to racial discrimination and bias in the legal systems.

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[^5]: Funding for this publication was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cooperative agreement number 5NU4CE002310-03-00. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.
Recovering from the economic impact of being involved in the criminal justice system is extremely difficult for incarcerated individuals and their families. After incarceration, individuals have less access to jobs. They have an average unemployment rate of over 27%. Formerly incarcerated Black people between 35 and 44 have much higher unemployment rates (43.6% for women, 35.2% for men). The jobs they do have access to generally pay less than jobs available to individuals who have not been involved with the criminal justice system.

The economic effects of criminal justice system involvement and incarceration can be generational and impact a family’s economic security for decades. These outcomes increase the likelihood of becoming involved with the justice system while perpetuating the risk for experiencing poverty, economic instability and IPV.

**Criminal Justice Reform Barriers and Opportunities**

**Barriers**
- Black people are disproportionately represented in the incarcerated population.
- Involvement with the criminal justice system has a cascading effect on individuals and families, extending from high expenses before incarceration to diminished earning potential after incarceration including generational effects.
- Due to the many systems involved and the generational scope of the effects of incarceration, lessening the economic burden of criminal justice system involvement will require substantial effort across systems and over time.

**Opportunities**
- Some cities in the U.S. have ended the cash bail system.
- The Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court supports reducing the use of cash bail due to its disproportionate impact on people living in poverty.
- Cash bail policy reform must protect victims of violent crime such as Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Child Abuse and Human Trafficking.
- Public employers in Ohio are prohibited from asking applicants about their criminal history on written job applications, although this information can still be gathered later in the hiring process.
- Eliminate zero tolerance educational policies.

**Criminal Justice Reform Policy Recommendations and Action Items**

- Institute criminal justice reform to reduce mass incarceration and racial disparities in the system.
- Pass policies to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline.