

# New survey reveals effects of incarceration for older Americans' work and retirement plans

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Americans age 50 and older who report that they have been incarcerated at some point in their lives are more likely to express anxiety about several aspects of retirement, to have experienced unemployment in the recent past, and to have fewer sources of income for retirement than those who have not, according to a new national survey of Americans age 50 and older from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey offers a rare look at the effects of incarceration on older Americans' work life and retirement outlook.

"This new survey provides important data on the lasting impact incarceration has on older Americans long after they are released," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "We have seen difficulties for many Americans in planning for retirement, but those are magnified when someone spends time in jail or prison."

Key findings from the survey include:

- Fifty-seven percent of those who have served time in prison or jail say they are more anxious than excited about retiring, while 53 percent of those who have not been incarcerated say they are more excited than anxious.
- One in 4 adults age 50 and older who have been incarcerated say they have no retirement accounts at all, compared with just 5 percent of older adults who have not been incarcerated.

- One-third of those who have been incarcerated lost a job as a result of being imprisoned.
- Forty-four percent of those who have been incarcerated say that they have looked for a job in the past five years, compared with only 24 percent of those who say they have not been incarcerated.
- Fifty-four percent of those who have served time in prison or jail say they are not confident their savings will last through the entirety of their retirement, compared with 37 percent of those who have not been incarcerated.
- About 1 in 3 Americans age 50 and older with a family member who has served time have had to borrow or withdraw money from a retirement plan, compared with 24 percent of those who have not had a family member incarcerated.

The 2017 study, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is a continuation of and expansion on the 2013 and 2016 surveys from The AP-NORC Center. The 2017 study extends the previous research and examines new topics, including [older workers'](#) experiences with unemployment and saving for retirement, as well as how experiences with the penal system affect the [retirement](#) planning of older Americans. The [survey](#) also tracks a number of attitudes and behaviors that were examined in 2013 and 2016 surrounding issues facing older workers.

Provided by niversity of Chicago

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