



People with Criminal Records Are “Redeemed” after Short Waiting Periods

While our society treats people with past criminal records as if they will always be at a higher risk for future contact with the criminal system, research tells a different story. After between 3 and 7 years without a subsequent offense, people with records are **no more likely** than the general population to be rearrested.

A landmark 2009 study ([Alfred Blumstein & Kiminori Nakamura, *Criminology*, 2009, Volume 47 Number 2](#)), updated in 2012 ([Alfred Blumstein & Kiminori Nakamura, *Final Report Submitted to the National Institute of Justice*](#)), used data to empirically estimate the point of “redemption” for people with records, or the number of years in which the risk of rearrest intersects with the risk of arrest for the general population of the same age.

The study found the point of “redemption,” depending on the type of offense, to be:

- 4 years for drug offenses.
- 3 – 4 years for property offenses.
- 4 – 7 years for violent offenses.

A conservative criminal records policy would therefore allow record clearing of misdemeanors after 5 years and non-violent felonies after 10 years have passed with no additional system contact.

Record Clearing Reduces Recidivism and Promotes Public Safety

Record clearing relief can lead to opportunities for better employment, housing, and education; making people with records less likely to be rearrested.

A 2019 study ([J.J. Prescott & Sonia B. Starr, *Harvard Law Review* Vol. 133:2460](#)) looked at the impact of expungement in Michigan on employment, income, and recidivism.

Of the individuals who benefitted from record clearing at least five years after sentencing/release from prison:

- Quarterly wages increased by 23% within one year.
- Only 3.4% were rearrested and 1.8% were reconvicted within two years.
 - Only 0.2% were convicted for violent crimes, and 0.3% were convicted of felonies within two years.
- Only 7.1% were rearrested and 4.2% were reconvicted within five years.
 - Only 0.6% were convicted of violent crimes and 1% were convicted of felonies within five years.
- The researchers concluded that **"expungement recipients pose a lower crime risk than the general population of Michigan as a whole."**

Record clearing promotes public safety, reducing recidivism and boosting employment and earnings for individuals, families, and communities.