

Employment in London after prison

Key information

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Contents

[Investigation aims and objectives \(Terms of Reference\)](#)

[Key issues](#)

[Key questions](#)

[Call for Evidence](#)

Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

- Understand the challenges faced by people who have served custodial sentences in entering or re-entering the labour market in London
- Evaluate the adequacy of the support currently offered to Londoners who have served custodial sentences to enter or re-enter the labour market, both prior to and following their release
- Understand to what extent characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity affect people's prospects of finding and maintaining employment after leaving prison in London
- Understand which interventions in London have proven effective at supporting people who have served custodial sentences to access and sustain employment
- Understand what actions the Mayor, local and central government can take to support Londoners who have served custodial sentences to access and sustain employment

Key issues

- In the year to March 2024, 17.1 per cent of ex-offenders in London were employed six weeks after release from custody. Nationally, this figure is 19.3 per cent, rising to 31.1 per cent after six months.
- According to a 2021 survey, around half of employers would not hire someone with a criminal record. Nearly eight out of ten people with a criminal record cite employment as one of the main difficulties they face after being involved with the criminal justice system (CJS). This tends to persist for a long period of time and affect people of all ages.
- The 2017 Lammy Review found Black offenders are more likely to be unemployed two years after a caution, conviction or release from custody and that probation services do not effectively meet the needs

of ex-offenders from minority ethnic background. There is also a large gender disparity: In the year to March 2024, 49.3 per cent of male offenders were in employment 6 months post release, for women this was 17 per cent.

- Different convictions have different rehabilitation periods after which the conviction is considered “spent”, allowing the ex-offender to portray themselves as though they never committed a crime.
- Prisoners are entitled to a Community Offender Manager (COM) to help them transition back into the community by providing health, employment and accommodation support. This has been criticised for being disjointed and not being effective due to staff shortages by the Prison Reform Trust and the Centre for Social Justice. Ex-offenders experience high rates of homelessness and mental ill health/substance abuse, and often encounter difficulties accessing benefits.
- In 2018 the Government launched the New Futures Network (NFN) to broker relationships between prisons and businesses and provide employment opportunities. This is complemented by services provided by a number of third-sector organisations.

Key questions

- What are the challenges faced by Londoners who have served custodial sentences in accessing and maintaining employment?
- To what extent is the support currently offered to Londoners who have been to prison adequate in helping them access and maintain employment?
- To what extent do characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity affect the chances of Londoners who have served custodial sentences in the job market?
- Which interventions have proved effective at helping Londoners who have served custodial sentences into employment and why?
- What can the Mayor, local and central government do to support ex-offenders to access and sustain employment?

Call for Evidence

As part of its investigation, the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee launched a Call for Evidence, inviting those who have knowledge and experience of people leaving prison in London and employment to respond.

The deadline to submit to the Call for Evidence has now closed.

[Back to table of contents](#)