

17.20 Introduction to the American Political Process

Recitation: Incarceration and Political Participation

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**Why does incarceration drive
people away from the polls?**

- Intense criminal justice contact: defendants were poorly treated
- Stigmatization
- Bad experiences eroded the trust in political institutions (mainly external efficacy)

Resources Deprivation

- Loss of earnings (about \$40,000 on average)
- Unlikely to be employed in the future
- Loss of group membership
- These are all indispensable for political participation

- Felony disenfranchisement laws vary by states
- Individuals often incorrectly believe that they were ineligible to vote

System Avoidance

- Criminal justice agencies keep formal records of defendants
- Individuals subjected to intense criminal justice contact are less likely to engage with institutions that keep formal records, in order to avoid scrutiny and further entanglement with law enforcement

- Incarceration could extend through the election for some defendants

Now, let's take a step back

Alternative explanation?

- Do people always disengage from politics after being incarcerated (or being mistreated by the law enforcement?)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kD0iw2NWwPk>

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