

Second Chance Pell: A Snapshot of the First Three Years

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Policy Brief

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The Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative, launched by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015, provides need-based Pell Grants to people in state and federal prisons. Second Chance Pell has active partnerships with 64 colleges that teach in 28 states. The schools were selected in June 2016 for the initiative, which examines whether expanding access to financial aid increases incarcerated adults' participation in educational opportunities. The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) is providing technical assistance to the participating colleges and corrections departments, helping to ensure that the programs provide quality higher education in prison and post-release. This brief summarizes survey data that 60 of the participating colleges submitted to Vera about the first three years of the project.

Why postsecondary education in prison?

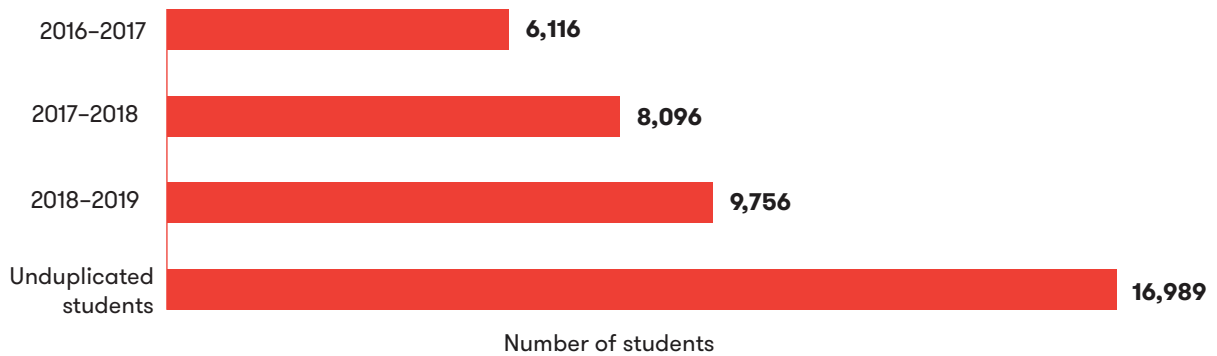
Postsecondary education in prison has been shown to contribute to successful reentry for people who have been incarcerated, while promoting public safety.

- › People who participate in postsecondary education in prison describe the experience as transformative.¹ They become positive role models in prison and return to their communities with new perspectives and goals—and with new opportunities open to them.²
- › People who participate in education programs in prison are more likely to be employed after their release and to earn higher wages.³ Jobs that require applicants to have at least some college education make up a sizable share of the economy and are projected to continue to do so over the next decade.⁴
- › Incarcerated people who participate in prison postsecondary education programs are 48 percent less likely to recidivate than those who do not, and prisons with college programs report less violence and safer conditions.⁵ This helps create safer communities as well as taxpayer savings from reduced incarceration costs.⁶

Enrollment and credentials earned

Second Chance Pell colleges have enrolled an increasing number of students every year of the initiative—nearly 17,000 people over its first three years. The 60 colleges that participated in Vera's survey offer 73 credentials. These include 33 career-technical and academic certificates, 12 applied and 17 transferable associate's degrees, and 11 bachelor's degrees. Colleges have also reported increasing credential attainment rates. So far, Second Chance Pell students have earned more than 4,500 certificates, postsecondary diplomas, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees. The students are completing a variety of programs—from applied career-technical training, such as a welding certificate at Milwaukee Area Technical College, to baccalaureate degrees, such as the Bachelor of Science in business administration at Glenville State College in West Virginia.

Figure 1
Second Chance Pell students, 2016–2019



a “Unduplicated students” refers to the number of unique participants who have enrolled through Second Chance Pell over the three academic years reported here. (Some students participating in longer programs enrolled in multiple years.)

Figure 2
Credentials offered in Second Chance Pell programs

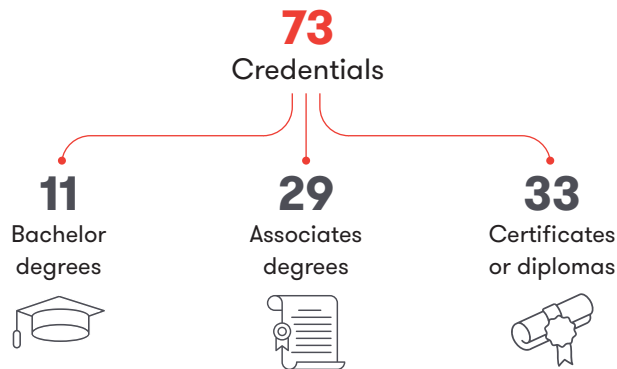
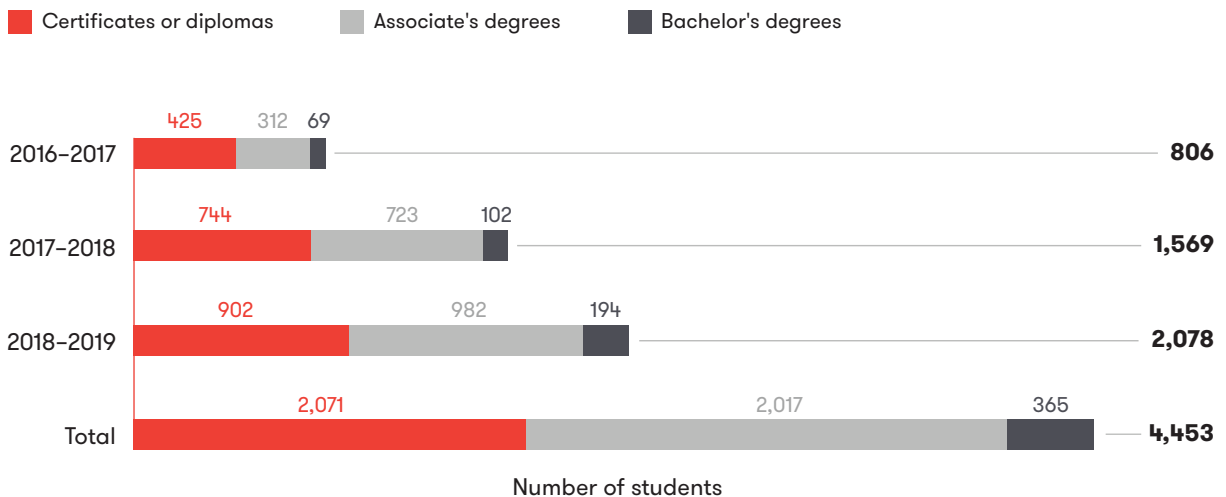


Figure 3
Completion of credentials among Second Chance Pell students, by year and type

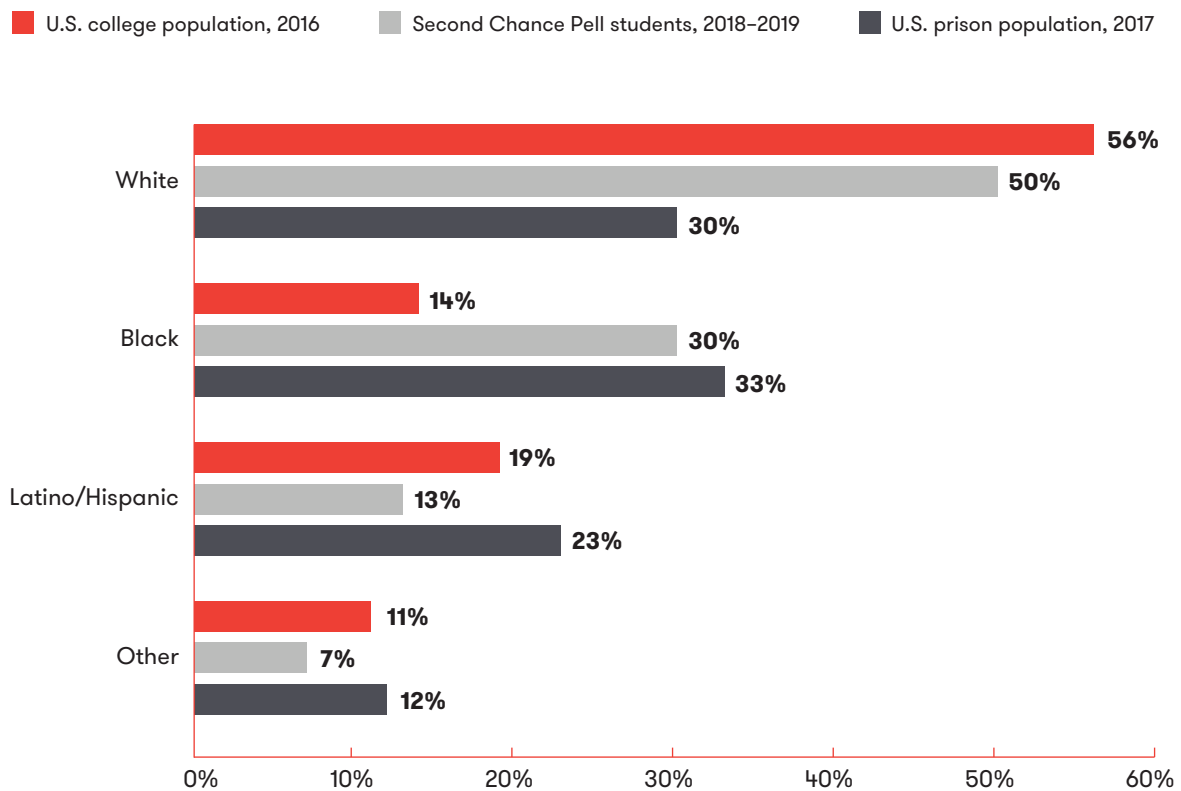


Student demographics

As Figures 4 through 6 illustrate, Second Chance Pell students have different demographics than people in prisons and undergraduate students in the community do. The programs enroll slightly more people of color than college campuses do, but the distribution of students is somewhat different. (See Figure 4.) Among Second Chance Pell participants, the proportion of Black students (30 percent) is more than twice that found on college campuses (14 percent); the percentage of students who identify as nonwhite Hispanic/Latino (13 percent) is considerably smaller than that on campuses (19 percent); and the proportion of participants who identify their race or ethnicity as a category other than Black, white, or Hispanic/Latino (7 percent) is smaller than among students on campuses (11 percent). As compared to the prison population, the Second Chance Pell student body has proportionately more white participants (50 percent) and fewer who identify as Hispanic/Latino (13 percent)—or in any other race or ethnic category other than Black. Black students enroll in Second Chance Pell colleges in proportions roughly equivalent to their representation in the national prison population (30 percent versus 33 percent, respectively).

Figure 4

Race among Second Chance Pell students and in U.S. colleges and prisons^a

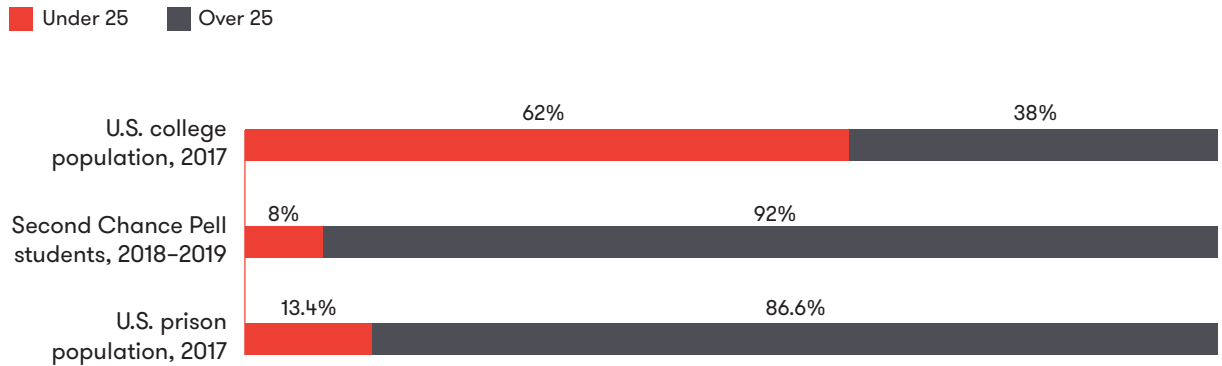


- a Except for “other,” race and ethnicity categories reported here are mutually exclusive. “Other” includes Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, two or more races, foreign-born, or unknown.
- b U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), “Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities” surveys, 1976 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), “Fall Enrollment Survey” (IPEDS-EF:90); and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2017, Fall Enrollment component, Table 306.10, December 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_306.10.asp.
- c Jennifer Bronson and E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2017* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019), 17, <https://perma.cc/V687-8CD2>.

As compared to students on campus, Second Chance Pell includes many more men and students older than 25, putting them closer to the makeup of the prison population in terms of gender and age. (See Figures 5 and 6.) No national data is currently collected on the race, gender, and age of postsecondary education students in prison, so it is impossible to know whether Second Chance Pell students reflect the demographic distribution of all postsecondary students in U.S. prisons.

Figure 5

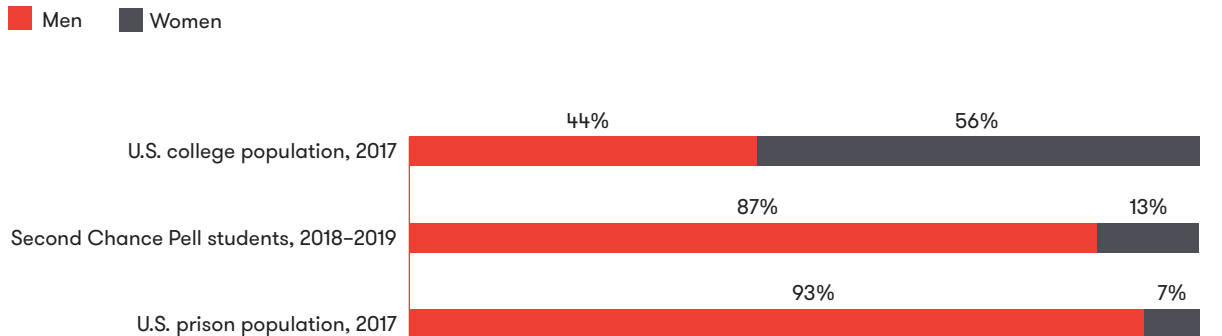
Age among Second Chance Pell students and in U.S. colleges and prisons



- a U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), “Fall Enrollment Survey” (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2017, “Fall Enrollment component and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 2000 through 2027”; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey, October, selected years, 1970 through 2016,” Table 303.40, April 2018, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_303.40.asp.
- b Jennifer Bronson and E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2017* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019), 17, <https://perma.cc/V687-8CD2>.

Figure 6

Gender among Second Chance Pell students and in U.S. colleges and prisons



- a Gender for Second Chance Pell students refers to facilities and not to people (that is, 87 percent of students were housed in facilities for men).
- b U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), “Fall Enrollment Survey” (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2017, “Fall Enrollment component and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 2000 through 2027”; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey, October, selected years, 1970 through 2016,” Table 303.40, April 2018, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_303.40.asp. Note that the IPEDS system uses categories of “male” and “female” and has not published data about transgender or gender-nonconforming people.
- c Jennifer Bronson and E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2017* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019) 17, <https://perma.cc/V687-8CD2>. Note that the BJS report uses categories of “male” and “female” and does not discuss transgender or gender-nonconforming people.

Students by state

At the end of 2019, Second Chance Pell programs were operating in 28 states and had enrolled nearly 17,000 students. Eleven of these states have just one Second Chance Pell college operating in state or federal prisons within their boundaries; five states have two colleges; four states have three colleges; five states have four colleges; and two (New York and Texas) have seven colleges participating.

Table 1
Second Chance Pell students by state, 2016–2019

State	Unduplicated students ^a	Second Chance Pell colleges
Texas	3,268	7
Arkansas	1,771	2
Michigan	1,311	3
New York	1,172	7
Connecticut	1,110	4
West Virginia	1,037	2
Louisiana	923	2
Ohio	899	1
New Jersey	842	2
Oklahoma	804	3
California	649	4
Alabama	534	3
Iowa	377	1
Missouri	282	1
Georgia	261	1
Wisconsin	236	1
Minnesota	235	4
South Carolina	175	1
Virginia	163	2
Oregon	148	1
Maryland ^b	130	3
Maine	127	1
Massachusetts	119	1
Indiana	103	1
Washington	83	3
Pennsylvania ^b	83	4
Florida	65	1
Nebraska	64	1

a “Unduplicated students” refers to the number of unique participants who have enrolled through Second Chance Pell over the three academic years reported here. (Some students participating in longer programs enrolled in multiple years.)

b One college in this state did not report the number of students participating in Second Chance Pell programs.

Acknowledgments

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About citations

As researchers and readers alike rely more and more on public knowledge made available through the Internet, “link rot” has become a widely acknowledged problem with creating useful and sustainable citations. To address this issue, the Vera Institute of Justice is experimenting with the use of Perma.cc (<https://perma.cc>), a service that helps scholars, journals, and courts create permanent links to the online sources cited in their work.

Credits

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Suggested citation

Ruth Delaney and Chase Montagnet. *Second Chance Pell: A Snapshot of the First Three Years*. New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2020.

Endnotes

- 1 Lindsey Livingston and Jody Miller, “Inequalities of Race, Class and Place and Their Impact on PostIncarceration Higher Education,” *Race & Justice* 4, no. 3 (2014), 212-45, <https://perma.cc/PDC9-2AKT>; and Alexis Halkovic, Michelle Fine, John Bae et al., *Higher Education and Reentry: The Gifts They Bring* (New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Prisoner Reentry Institute, 2013), <https://perma.cc/E84N-EUN2>.
- 2 Livingston and Miller, “Inequalities of Race,” 2014; Halkovic, Fine, Bae et al., *Higher Education and Reentry*, 2013; and Correctional Association of New York, *Education from the Inside, Out: The Multiple Benefits of College Programs in Prison* (New York: Correctional Association of New York, 2009), 3, <https://perma.cc/678G-979E>.
- 3 Patrick Oakford, Cara Brumfield, Casey Goldvale et al., *Investing in Futures: Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Postsecondary Education in Prison* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2019), 2-3, <https://perma.cc/QSV7-KLEM>.
- 4 Oakford, Brumfield, Goldvale et al., *Investing in Futures*, 2-3.
- 5 Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Lois M. Davis, and Susan Turner, “Does Providing Inmates with Education Improve Postrelease Outcomes? A Meta-Analysis of Correctional Education Programs in the United States,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14, no. 3 (2018), 389-428; Amanda Pompoco, John Wooldredge, Melissa Lugo et al., “Reducing Inmate Misconduct and Prison Returns with Facility Education Programs,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 16, no. 2 (2017), 515-547; and Correctional Association of New York, *Education from the Inside, Out*, 8-9.
- 6 Every dollar invested in prison-based education yields four to five dollars of taxpayer savings in reduced incarceration costs. Lois M. Davis, Jennifer L. Steele, Robert Bozick et al., *How Effective Is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here? The Results of a Comprehensive Evaluation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 81, <https://perma.cc/57BA-6FDN>.