

# Improving Workforce Outcomes for Incarcerated Texans

By 2030, 62% of jobs in Texas will require some postsecondary training or education. Today, the number of incarcerated Texans in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice who are eligible for higher education far outpaces those who are enrolled.

Research shows that these programs result in **better employment outcomes** and **reduced recidivism** for formerly incarcerated students resulting in cost savings for taxpayers.

**Did you know?**

**41.5%**

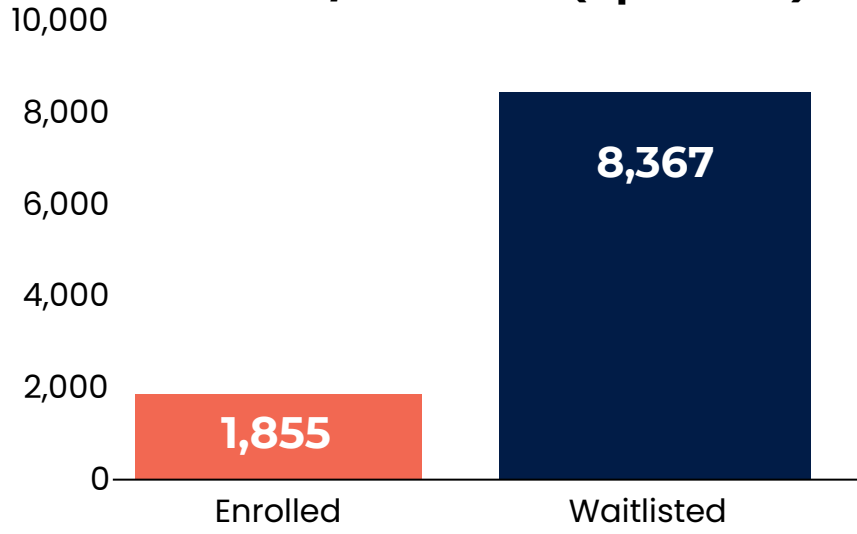
reduction in recidivism from prison college programs.

**\$1.61**

estimated return for every \$1 spent on prison college programs.

**Source:** "Are Schools in Prison Worth It? The Effects and Economic Returns of Prison Education." (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-023-09747-3>

## TDCJ Higher-Education Students Enrolled/Waitlisted (April 2024)



Source: Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice via public Information request

## Policy Priorities for 2025 ✓

### 1. Set Goals for Prison Postsecondary Training & Education

Texas should set a percentage **goal for the completion of postsecondary credential attainment** prior to release that is informed by our state's Building a Talent Strong Texas workforce strategic plan and TDCJ's 2030 Vision.

The Talent Strong Texas plan strives for 60% of Texans ages 25-64 to complete a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value by 2030. TDCJ's 2030 vision seeks to see 95% of incarcerated Texans employed prior to release by the same year.

### 2. Better Coordination & Oversight

There are only a handful of employees currently overseeing postsecondary programming for TDCJ.

**Windham SD** has the capacity and resources to better coordinate among institutions and help incarcerated individuals **navigate education and career pathways**. Additionally, there should be formalized oversight and ongoing review of postsecondary programs in prison.

### 3. Improve Data Sharing

Efforts to systematically track the performance of programs are hamstrung by a lack of data collection data sharing between corrections agencies and the education/workforce data ecosystem.

This can be fixed by requiring **better data collection** by TDCJ and **more data sharing** between TDCJ, Windham SD, and the education and workforce agencies' data maintained by the Texas Education Research Centers.

## Higher-Ed Data in Focus

Data for this analysis was pulled from the Texas Education Research Center (ERC) and compiled by Texas 2036 in partnership with the Texas Schools Project at UT Dallas.

The ERC links education and workforce datasets from state agencies, including robust higher education data reported to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### Data limitations

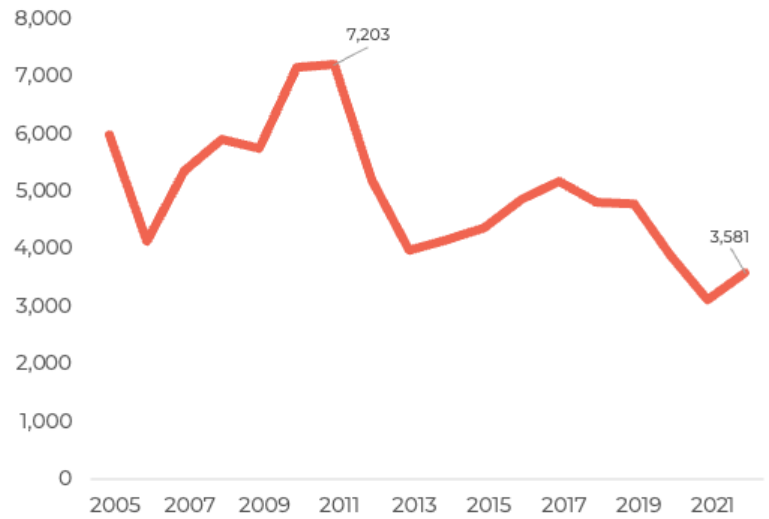
Because corrections data is not shared with the ERC, **this higher-ed data cannot:**

- differentiate between individuals incarcerated in federal or state prison
- compare incarcerated individuals enrolled in higher education with those who are not

### Did you know?

- The incarcerated student population is significantly older than the general population, expanding funding opportunities for community colleges.
- Annual postsecondary degree & credential attainment in Texas prisons has declined by 807 since 2011 – **a 46% decrease**.

## 50% Decline in Higher-Ed Enrollment for Incarcerated Texans since 2011



## Age Distribution of Higher-Ed Students

