



# Earned Credit in Ohio

**Rachel Gagnon**  
Toledo

**Rayshun Holt**  
Cincinnati

**Jocelyn Rosnick**  
Cleveland

**Bryan Stewart**  
Dayton

**Hillary Stewart**  
Ohio

# Key Takeaways

1

Earned Credit is defined as a credit against a sentence or period of incarceration that is earned through participation in or completion of productive activities.

2

Ohio has one of the lowest rates of Earned Credit in the nation at [8%](#).

3

Access to Earned Credit is limited and there are differences in access across prisons.

4

The average percentage of the total prison population earning credit from January to June 2022 was 19.38%.

[Bit.Ly/earnedcredit](https://bit.ly/earnedcredit)



# Our Methodology

## We researched Ohio's Earned Credit program through:



Interviewing individuals with lived experience in Ohio



Analyzing data received from the ODRC

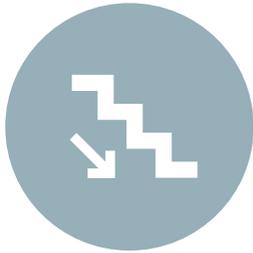


Interviewing practitioners who advocate for earned credit expansion



Attending meetings where [Senate Bill 288](#) has been discussed

# Why Earned Credit Matters



**Poverty Reduction**



**Rehabilitation Through  
Programming**



**Public Safety**



**Family Impacts**



**Workforce Development**



**Reduces Taxpayer  
Burden**

# Why Earned Credit Matters

1

## Poverty Reduction

There is an undeniable relationship between poverty and incarceration; and inevitably recidivism. Given that most offenders will at some point be released ([Newsweek Magazine reported the average prison sentence to be approximately 5 years](#)), increased access to Earned Credit-eligible programming would produce more employable, financially conscious, and responsible citizens. Fostering positive attitudes through programming, and connecting offenders to employable skill sets, will organically have a favorable impact on poverty rates. The strongest predictor for recidivism: poverty.

# Why Earned Credit Matters

2

## Rehabilitation Through Programming

Nationally accredited and/or evidenced based programming such as [Victim Awareness Program](#), [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#), [FDIC: Money Smart – A Financial Education Program](#), and others, are programs offered in correctional settings across the country. With community safety and rehabilitation being the foundation of America's criminal legal system, broader accessibility to these programs, coupled with a greater incentive to participate (Earned Credit), amplifies ODRC's effectiveness in successful rehabilitation.



# Why Earned Credit Matters

3

## Public Safety

One of the strongest predictors of [recidivism is poverty](#). Meaningful workforce development and educational opportunities can help lower recidivism. After researching recidivism rates and commonalities in 1985, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles wrote, "Recidivists were most likely to...not have graduated from high school." And "They (recidivists) tended to have unstable employment histories prior to incarceration." A decrease in crime correlates to [safer communities](#).

# Why Earned Credit Matters

4

## Family Impacts

It's difficult to quantify both the short term and long-lasting effects of incarceration on families but, through our interviews, we continually heard about the profound trickle effect of earned time credit program participation and the overall progress of participants.



# Why Earned Credit Matters

5

## Workforce Development

Through incentivizing participation in workforce development programs and education, the labor force will have more qualified candidates ready to fill open jobs. According to CNBC, "There are over 11 million open jobs right now." ([cnbc.com](https://www.cnbc.com))

# Why Earned Credit Matters

6

## Reduces Taxpayer Burden

In 2021, it cost [\\$99.96](#) per person per day in an Ohio prison. This totals \$36,485.40 per person each year.

In September 2022, the ODRC population was [43,737](#). Using the above costs, this totals nearly [\\$1.6 billion](#).

Earned Credit allows people in prison to reduce their sentence length reducing the burden on taxpayers.



# Earned Credit: Basics

## What qualifies as earned credit?

- Any academic or vocational program, prison industry, or alcohol and drug treatment, unit management program, or mental health program, as well as DRC substance use disorder treatment programs under [Section 5120.035](#).

## Who tracks earned credit?

- The Bureau of Sentence Computation

## Who can earn credit?

- For offense committed before Sept 30, 2011: earn only one day of credit per month
- For offense committed on or after Sept 30, 2011: one day or five days of credit per month depending on a variety of factors
- HB 261 (117t OGA): two days of credit for participating in an approved academic, vocation, or prison industries program
  - Additional two days credit available for other programs

## Who can NOT earn credit?

- Sexually oriented offenses committed on or after Sep. 30, 2011.
- **People serving time explicitly for:**
  - Certain firearms offenses.
  - Violating post release control.
  - Various offenses including but not limited to murder, aggravated murder, rape or felonious sexual penetration, vehicular homicide, some drug offenses depending on date committed/OGA.
- **People serving mandatory sentences**
  - Repeat violent offender ((B)(2)(a) of [2929.14](#))
  - 10 yr. term for drug offense/major drug offender; corrupt activity with most serious offense as first-degree felony, attempted rape/felonious sexual penetration by force with victim under 13 y/o ((B)(3)(a) of [2929.14](#))



# Earned Credit: How does Ohio Compare?



8%

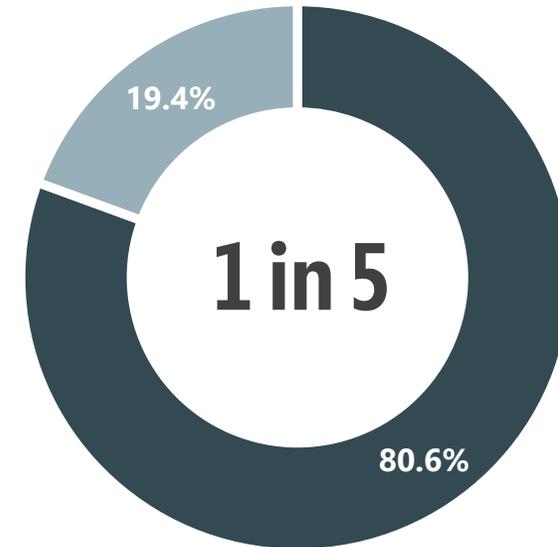
- Earned Credit: Reduces a prison sentence through program participation/ completion.
- Good time credit: Given for following prison rules and required participation in activities. Some states have both credits available; others have one or the other.
- Some states have absolute Earned Credit exclusions for certain offenses.
- **Of states allowing earned and/or good time credit, Ohio has one of the lowest caps at 8%—about half of the Federal rate at 15%.**

# Earned Credit: By the Numbers

AVG. JANUARY TO JUNE 2022



## Public Records Request



■ Earning Credit ■ Not Earning Credit

Any given day, about **1 in 5** people in prison was earning credit that month.

# Earned Credit: By the Numbers

## HIGHLIGHTS

18.31%

January had the **lowest average** across all prisons at 18.31%.

20.99%

June had the **highest average** across all prisons at 20.99%.

1.49%

The lowest **one-time rate** was 1.49% (25 people) at the Grafton Correctional Institution.

54.48%

The highest **one-time rate** was 54.48% (231 people) at the Northeast Reintegration Center.

# Interview Insights

We conducted fourteen interviews with lawmakers, criminal legal system reform advocates, people with lived experience, prison officials, representatives of educational institutions, as well as reentry professionals. A summary of the information captured during these interviews follows:

**Access to Earned Credit through programming has bipartisan support.**

**Participation in Earned Credit eligible programming increases prison safety, public safety, and lowers recidivism rates.**

**People in prison overwhelmingly want access to more programs!**

- **This team reported access to Earned Credit-eligible programming was the number one priority amongst group participants.**
- **ODRC has many great initiatives and partnerships.**

**Staffing and capacity appears to be a significant barrier to broader accessibility to Earned Credit-eligible programming.**

Although educational opportunities are more abundant, accessing re-entry, recovery and other programming is widely considered to be difficult. Programming is well worth the investment as it is proven to make prisons safer, provide many societal benefits, and make recidivism less likely.

# Recommendations

**Everyone has a role to play in expanding the availability of Ohio's Earned Credit program. We recommend:**

## **Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections**

- Expand availability of Earned Credit eligible programs across all ODRC institutions
- Request funding to make this expansion possible via the State Budget process

## **Ohio General Assembly:**

- Limit offenses that render a person ineligible for Earned Credit programs
- Pass Senate Bill 288 and continue to reassess and further expand the percentage of time that can be reduced through earned credit
- Support increased funding to ODRC specifically for Earned Credit programming
- Introduce and pass legislation to provide Earned Credit to people in jails, in addition to prisons

## **Employers:**

- Explore ways to be involved with local returning citizen networks
- Hire returning citizens, especially those with earned credit program experience

## **Higher Education Institutions:**

- Partner with ODRC institutions to create more educational program opportunities like that of Sinclair Community College at the Dayton Correctional Institution

## **Leadership Ohio Alumni / Everyday Ohioans**

- Volunteer to serve for a locally accredited program at an ODRC institution
- Vote for politicians who support expansion of Earned Credit and re-entry reform

## **Organizations and advocates interested in continuing this research**

- Continually request ODRC records to track access to and use of Earned Credit programs
- Create an asset map of nonprofits and higher education institutions which have programs eligible for credit at ODRC institutions
- Explore multigenerational resources for impacted families/communities