

# **The Relevance of Women's Economic Marginalization to Recidivism**

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## **The Importance of Finding that Economic Marginalization is an Exceptionally Strong Predictor of Recidivism**

Knowing that Economic Marginalization is a strong predictor of recidivism highlights the relevance of preparation for employment, employment, and social welfare policies for promoting women's desistance from drug use and illegal activity. Many theories and interventions highlight women's decisions and their exercise of agency as influences recidivism. The findings of this research show that economic marginalization, which is often neglected, should be recognized as key in reducing recidivism.

### **What did we study?**

In a 9-year longitudinal study, 304 Michigan women on probation or parole were interviewed repeatedly for 4.5 years after supervision began. We predicted recidivism for 3.4 years after the last interview from a very wide range of needs and risk factors identified in prior research. A multifaceted gender-specific definition of economic marginalization took into account women's responsibilities for children and the extremes of poverty.

### **What were the findings?**

Net of the effects of other predictor, decreased financial need during the 4.5 years before the final interview stood out as an especially strong predictor of rearrests and convictions.

### **What are the implications for practice and social policy?**

At the practice level, correctional programs need to work towards increasing women's financial well-being by opening opportunities for work preparation programs and facilitating access to social welfare benefits. At the policy level, policies to reduce discrimination that stands as a barrier to employment are needed as is legislation to increase access to benefits for the working poor and for people who cannot work. Reforms must occur well beyond the correctional system to include access to mental and physical health services, affordable housing, financial aid, and education.

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