

# What Is Felony Disenfranchisement?

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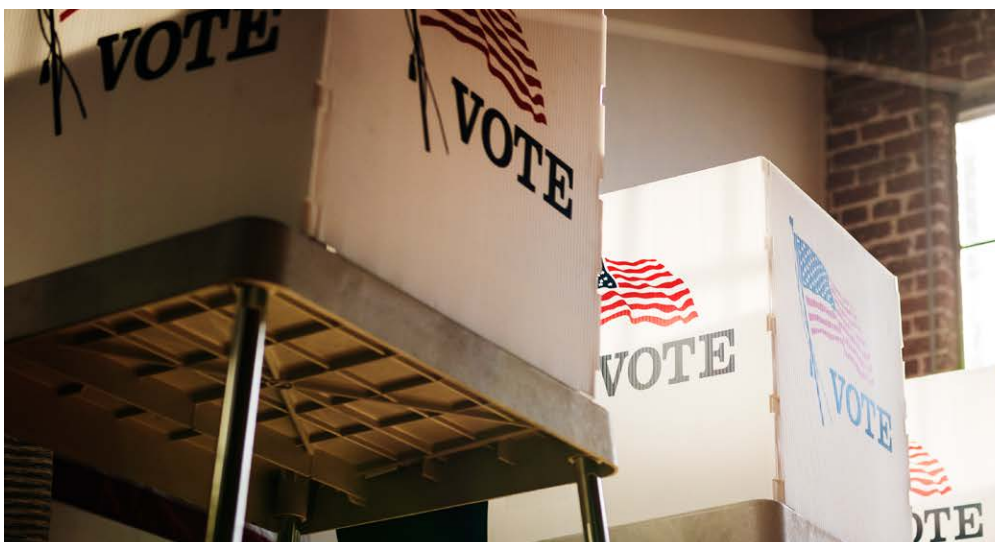
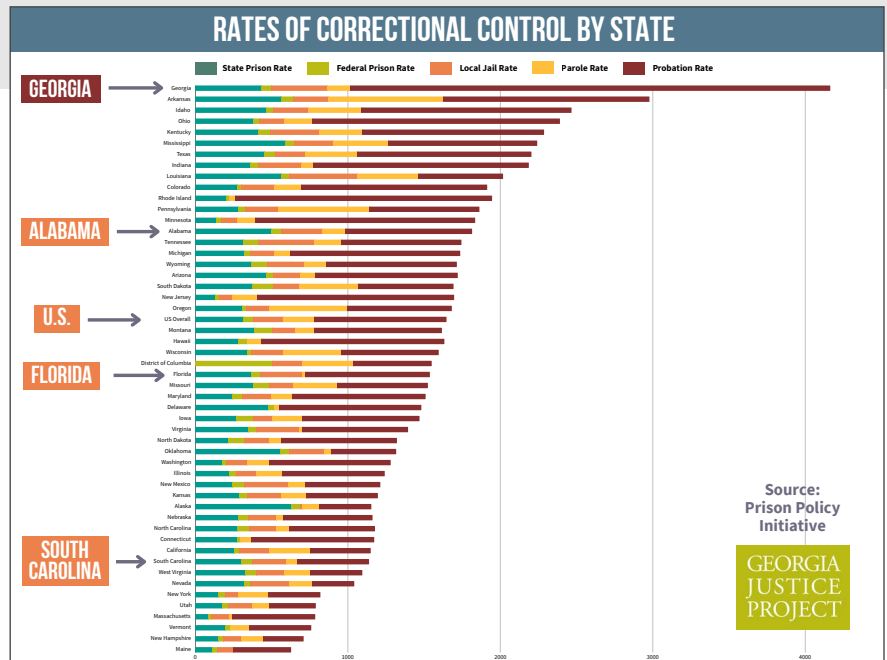
Felony disenfranchisement, or the revocation of the right to vote upon conviction of a felony, was added to the Georgia State Constitution in 1868 – just after the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution granted full citizenship and equal protection under the law to formerly enslaved people.

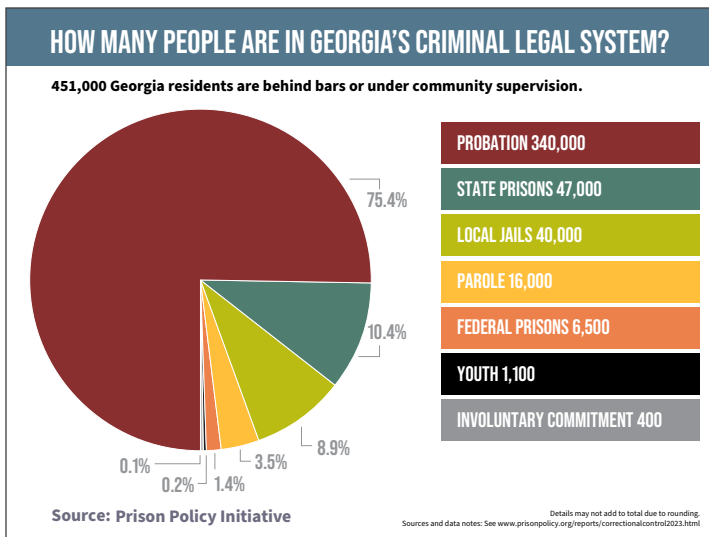
**The 13th Amendment, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery “except as punishment for a crime.”** Southern states rushed to enact Black Codes, laws created to restrict the rights

and freedoms of newly freed Black people, who were subsequently arrested and “leased” out to private enterprises, establishing the system of “convict leasing” as a means to replace slavery.

**Denying the right to vote was never about public safety. It was about undermining the political power of Black people.** This policy continues to disproportionately impact people of color due to racial bias in each and every stage of the criminal legal system.

**It's time we acknowledge and reckon with the purpose of felony disenfranchisement. Taking away the right to vote due to an unrelated criminal conviction undermines the very foundation of democracy. Let's put this chapter of Georgia's history behind us.**





## About The Issue

Georgia has one of the highest rates of felony disenfranchisement in the country, with nearly 250,000 Georgians unable to vote due to a felony conviction<sup>1</sup>. Most of us live and work in our communities, pay taxes, and support our families—yet remain completely excluded from policy decisions that affect all our lives. It's time for that to change.

**Under Georgia law, people lose the right to vote upon conviction of a felony and cannot register to vote until the sentence is complete, including probation and parole.** However, we have **more citizens per capita on probation** than any other state, and **our probation sentences are three times longer than the national average.**<sup>2</sup> These sentencing practices drive our rate of disenfranchisement as high as states who continue to deny the right to vote to people post-sentence.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2024-four-million-denied-voting-rights-due-to-a-felony-conviction>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/correctionalcontrol2023.html>



## What Change Do We Want Right Now? Repeal Felony Disenfranchisement And Restore All Of Our Civil Rights.

Why This Matters:

- **Our convictions did not strip us of our citizenship.** True citizenship includes exercising our civic duty, especially the right to vote. Excluding us from the ballot box weakens our communities, distorts democracy, and undermines trust in the very institutions meant to serve us all.
- Discretionary decisions made at each step of the criminal legal process (policing, arrest, diversion, charging, sentencing, and parole) and disinvestment in communities led to a **disparate impact on people of color**. As a result, Black adults make up roughly half of the disenfranchised population<sup>1</sup>, despite comprising only one-third of Georgia's adult population.
- Felony disenfranchisement, while originally designed to disempower and suppress Black voters, impacts all our lives. **When we refuse to empower and resource certain communities, we all suffer as a result.**
- **Civic engagement makes responsible, invested, and informed citizens.** When we have a say in policy decisions that directly impact our lives, we are better able to support, show up and speak up for ourselves, our families, and our communities.

## The Path Forward

We seek broad, bipartisan support to ensure every Georgian can fully rejoin civic life through common-sense, pro-democracy reform that strengthens communities and advances racial justice. **It's time we moved past the outdated and discriminatory roots of Georgia's disenfranchisement laws.**

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