

# Parole in Mississippi is Working and the Data Confirms it

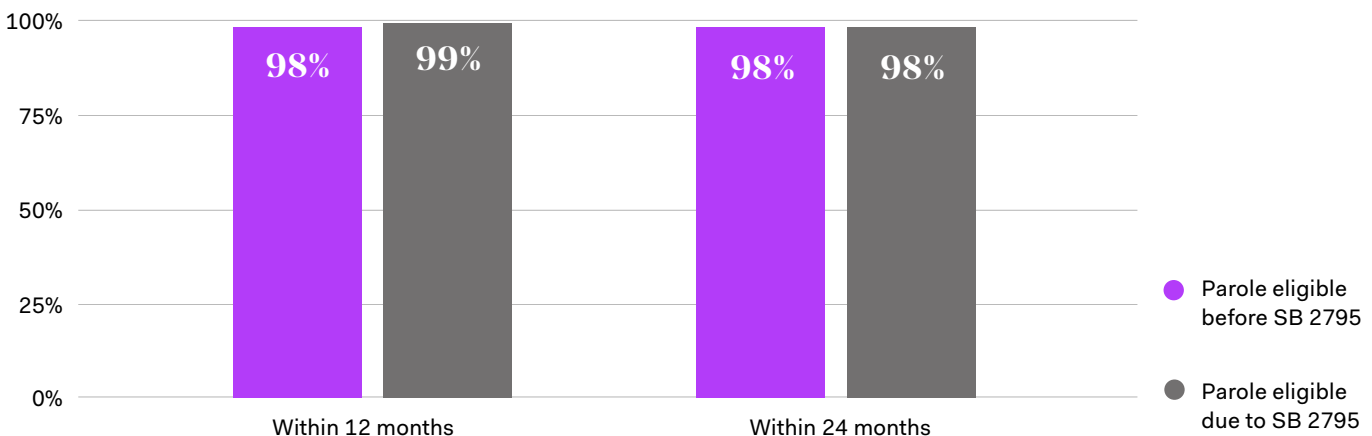
Almost three years ago, Mississippi lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to expand parole eligibility and the data makes it clear that the state’s current parole law is indeed working. A new analysis using MDOC data finds that people who became eligible for parole through recent reforms are **just as successful** after returning home from prison as those who have long been eligible for parole.

Mississippi has the highest imprisonment rate in the country, despite decades of research finding long prison sentences do not make us safer. In 2021, lawmakers passed SB 2795, expanding parole eligibility to address the state’s high prison population without compromising public safety. By expanding parole eligibility, the share of people eligible to earn their way home on parole grew from one-third of Mississippi’s prison population to over two-thirds of the prison population. While parole eligibility does not guarantee release, it incentivizes participation in programming. It also increases access for some people to participate in additional education and workforce development programming.

Since the passage of the law, little data has been available to compare the post-release outcomes of people newly eligible for parole with those whose offenses have been eligible for parole since at least 2014. This new analysis from FWD.us does just that and finds:

## 98% of people made newly eligible for parole by SB 2795 did not return to MDOC custody on a new sentence in the first 24 months following release from prison.

Share of people released between July 2021 and November 2022 who did not return to prison on a new sentence



Between July 2021 and November 2022, over 5,000 people with parole-eligible offenses were released from prison, including just over 2,150 people with offenses newly eligible for parole under SB 2795. This analysis tracks their success in the community over a 12-month and 24-month period following release.

- **WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RELEASE FROM PRISON:** Ninety-nine percent of people who became parole-eligible due to SB 2795 did not return to prison on a new sentence, compared to 98% of people whose lower-level crimes were already considered eligible for parole.
  - In fact, 87% of people who became parole-eligible due to SB 2795 did not return to prison on a new sentence or for a violation of their supervision, compared to 83% of people already considered eligible for parole.
- **WITHIN 24 MONTHS OF RELEASE FROM PRISON:** Outcomes for both groups were identical, as 98% of people in each group did not return to prison on a new sentence.
  - Over this two-year period, 80% of people who became parole-eligible due to SB 2795 did not return to prison on a new sentence or for a violation of their supervision, compared to 71% of people whose crimes were parole-eligible prior to the passage of SB 2795.

**These findings confirm what researchers have long known: parole is a data-driven, evidence-based policy and a critical tool for safely reducing Mississippi’s dangerously high prison population.** Nearly 90% of Mississippi voters support allowing people to earn their way home through the parole process. This session, lawmakers must ensure that our current parole eligibility law remains intact by removing the repealer.

## Methodology

This analysis tracked post-release recidivism for individuals who entered prison on a new court commitment and whose first release from prison occurred between July 2021 and November 2022, using data received from the Mississippi Department of Corrections via a records request. Outcomes were tracked for standardized 12-month and, as applicable, 24-month follow-up periods following their date of release, using MDOC release, sentencing, and readmission data. Trackable outcomes include any return to prison, and any return to prison on a new sentence. Individuals were identified to have returned to prison on a new sentence by a return admission type of “new prisoner.”

Recidivism cohorts were defined based on whether individuals were eligible for parole prior to the passage of SB 2795 or became parole-eligible as a result of the law. For people serving multiple sentences, parole eligibility was determined by the most serious sentence on their admission. Individuals with at least one parole ineligible sentence were excluded, since they would not have the same release opportunities or post-release supervision, as were individuals released to the custody of technical violation centers or medical facilities. Although this analysis includes only people who were eligible for parole, they were not necessarily released to parole supervision: the cohorts studied also include individuals who were released upon completion of their sentence, as well as those released to probation, earned release supervision (ERS), and house arrest.