

Harms of Fines and Fees to Families

- [*Debt Sentence: How Fines And Fees Hurt Working Families*](#), Fines and Fees Justice Center & Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law (2023)
 - **Key findings:** 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. had fine or fee debt in the previous 10 years. Of those with debt, more than 1 in 3 had challenges obtaining food as a result, and more than 1 in 4 reported the debt causing hardships related to housing.
- [*How Fines and Fees Impact Family Well-Being*](#), Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center (2024)
 - **Key findings:** This study looked specifically at families owing court and incarceration-related fees for more serious charges, and the financial devastation was even more profound than what the FFJC/Wilson Center found: 57% of families experience food insecurity and 29% reported difficulty paying housing costs (compared to 25% and 8% of families who did not owe fines and fees).
- [*Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families*](#), Ella Baker Center, (2015)
 - **Key findings:** More often than not, family members end up responsible for paying loved one's fines and fees. Of the family members responsible for paying, 83% were women.

Negative Impact of Fines and Fees on Safety & Reentry

- [*Under Pressure: How fines and fees hurt people, undermine public safety, and drive Alabama's racial wealth divide*](#), Alabama Appleseed et al. (2018) and
- [*The Impact of New Mexico's Fines and Fees: Interim Survey Results*](#), Fines and Fees Justice Center (2023)
 - **Key findings:** These studies involved surveys of hundreds of people impacted by fines and fees. Both studies found that about 2 in 5 people reported engaging in illegal activity to get the money needed to pay court-ordered fines and fees.
- [*Exploitative Revenues, Law Enforcement, and the Quality of Government Services*](#), Rebecca Goldstein et al., Urban Affairs Review (2018)
 - **Key findings:** Every 1% increase in revenue from fines and fees corresponds with a 6% decrease in the violent crime clearance rate and an 8% decrease in the property crime clearance rate.
- [*Reframing the debate on legal financial obligations and crime: How accruing monetary sanctions impacts recidivism*](#), Michael Ostermann et al., Criminology (2024)
 - **Key findings:** As the amount of fines and fees owed grows, the risk of rearrest, reconviction and parole revocation increases.

Research Specific to Counsel Fees

- *At What Cost?: Findings From an Examination Into the Imposition of Public Defense System Fees*, NLADA (2022)
 - **Key findings:** Most counsel fees assessed are not collected. For example, in Iowa, only about 3% of what is assessed is collected annually. These fees lead to ongoing entanglement with the criminal justice system for failure to pay.
- *Can't Afford an Attorney? Virginia Law Tells People to Pay Anyway* Legal Aid Justice Center (Virginia) (2023)
 - **Key findings:** The majority of counsel fees are uncollectible. In Virginia, only 3% of the counsel fees are collected during the same year that they are assessed. Typical collection costs are around 50% in Virginia, meaning jurisdictions are spending about half of what they collect on the collections process itself.