Unemployment

Executive Summary

Lack of access to employment opportunities is associated with poor physical and mental health, social isolation, poverty and an increased engagement with the criminal justice system. The effects of unemployment are compounded by the fact that there are lower employment opportunities for people who have previously been imprisoned. An individual’s life circumstances fundamentally affect their capacity for employment. Factors such as education, locational factors, and health can impact an individual’s ability to gain employment.

Being unemployed can have negative outcomes on mental and physical health indicators, social marginalisation, and child development outcomes. Furthermore, ‘[l]ong-term unemployment itself reduces people’s employment prospects, as employers worry about large gaps in their resumes and unemployed people lose confidence and skills.’ Poverty and long-term unemployment are also causes of homelessness.

Research has reported associations between unemployment and interaction with the criminal justice system. The relationship between incarceration and unemployment is cyclical, as ‘[t]he stigma of a criminal record for an ex-prisoner job seeker is among the most intractable barriers to employment.’

The potential relevance of evidence of the causes and impacts associated with unemployment in sentencing proceedings may include an assessment of moral culpability; moderating the weight to be given to general deterrence; determining the weight to be given to specific deterrence and protection of the community; and findings of special circumstances due to a possible need for extended supervision and the tailoring of a sentence to enhance prospects of rehabilitation.

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3 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Closing the Gap Report 2019* (Report, 2019) 94.


