

Financial Costs and Benefits of Wiping the Slate

Anyone arrested or convicted of a crime can tell you there's a heavy economic burden that can follow for years after. There are some ways to wipe the slate clean, including pardons and expungements. But each process comes with regulations, and considerable court fees.

Though the costs may be high, it may be worth it to see if you can still wipe the slate clean:

1. The financial cost of expungement vs. the personal cost of carrying a criminal record



Cost to Expunge

Court Fees: \$100 - 400

Attorney's Fees: \$400 - 4,000

Filing Fees: \$75 - 100

\$575 - 4500

Costs to Carry

Employment: Applicants with a criminal background have a 50% less chance of getting a call back for an interview

Housing: Landlords can deny rental applications for people with criminal backgrounds

Volunteerism: Organizations, including public schools, can deny volunteers based on criminal backgrounds

Personal Finances: Lenders can deny loan applications for people with criminal backgrounds

2. How can an arrest record affect my employment prospects?

Men who reported criminal convictions (of any kind) were **50% less likely**¹ to receive a callback on a job application.

For men and women convicted of felonies²:



Men: up to 13.8% higher unemployment rate



Women: up to 12.14% higher unemployment rate

Sources:

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/business/out-of-trouble-but-criminal-records-keep-men-out-of-work.html>

² <http://cepr.net/publications/reports/the-price-we-pay-economic-costs-of-barriers-to-employment-for-former-prisoners-and-people-convicted-of-felonies>

3. What are the three basic levels of criminal offenses?

Infraction

Description	Public offenses less serious than official crimes. Often infractions are punishable by fines instead of jail time
Common examples include	Traffic violations
Is it pardonable or expungeable	Does not apply – infractions cannot result in a jail sentence or probation

Misdemeanor

Description	Minor crimes that often come with a combination of fines and jail time. Jail time can range from 90 days to one year.
Common examples include	DUI's Theft of property Assault
Is it pardonable or expungeable	Misdemeanors can be pardoned or expunged. Laws and procedures vary by state.

Felony

Description	Serious and often violent crimes. Felonies are punishable by imprisonment from one year to life.
Common examples include	Murder Sexual misconduct Serious weapons charges
Is it pardonable or expungeable	Nonviolent felonies may be expunged according to state. Violent felonies cannot be expunged except in very rare cases. Pardons can either be federal or state pardons depending on the offense.

4. What's the difference between a pardon and an expungement?

Pardons and expungements aren't interchangeable. Though both are forms of clemency, only an expungement will help you clear a background check. Here's how pardons and expungements compare:

Pardons

Does it erase the crime? No

Who can grant a pardon? The President (for federal offenses)

A State Governor (for state offenses)

State Parole and Pardon Boards (for state offenses)

Will my crime show up on a background check? Yes

Expungement

Does it erase the crime? Yes

Who can grant a pardon? Criminal court judges

Will my crime show up on a background check? No
