**What Rights Do Convicted Felons Lose?**

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Convicted felons lose many of the [civil rights](http://thelawdictionary.org/civil-rights/) afforded to Americans without a felony on their record. As always, the answer depends on which state the felon lives in. However, there are trends and general losses of privilege that exist throughout the country.

Some of the most common rights lost or severely curtailed by a felony record include:

* Voting
* Traveling abroad
* The [right to bear arms](http://thelawdictionary.org/right-to-bear-arms/) or own guns
* Jury service
* Employment in certain fields
* Public social benefits and housing
* Parental benefits

**Lost voting rights**

Most states prohibit felons from voting while they are currently incarcerated. Upon receiving parole or completing their sentences, many convicted felons find that it is more difficult to vote than it was before. Some states ban felons from voting for a certain period of time after their release while others ban felons for life.

**Traveling abroad**

While felons are legally allowed to hold and use U.S. passports, there are certain travel [restrictions](http://thelawdictionary.org/restrictions/) that may be levied by other countries. A visa is a right, not a privilege, and a country may choose to deny admission to a convicted felon.

**Gun ownership**

Most states require firearms dealers to conduct immediate background checks prior to selling guns. Many of these states hold bans on felons purchasing and owning firearms, especially if they were accused of a violent crime or a crime involving a gun.

**Employment rights**

Many private employers will conduct background checks and choose not to hire felons. They are allowed to discriminate in this way, but it is not a requirement. However, certain public positions bar felons from taking employment. These include employment with the U.S. Armed Forces, law [enforcement](http://thelawdictionary.org/enforcement/) agencies, teachers, child care professionals and many jobs that require a [professional](http://thelawdictionary.org/professional/) license.

**Public social benefits**

In addition to not being allowed to serve on a jury in most states, convicted felons are not allowed to apply for federal or state grants, live in [public housing](http://thelawdictionary.org/public-housing/), or receive federal cash assistance, SSI or [food stamps](http://thelawdictionary.org/food-stamps/), among other benefits. Convicted felons also see their parental rights diminish, especially in the case of custody battles or divorces. A felony conviction is almost always a red flag for any judge to award custody to the other parent.

In addition to all of these lost rights, a felony conviction is a permanent stain on a person's record. Even if these are not necessary lost rights, he or she may find difficulty getting a lease, applying for a loan or filing official paperwork in any capacity.

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