Estimating the Human Costs of Debtor Prisons

Sector(s): Crime, Violence, and Conflict

J-PAL office: J-PAL Middle East and North Africa

Sample: 3000 individual

Target group: Incarcerated people

AEA RCT registration number: AEARCTR-0016609

Partner organization(s): El Masry Foundation for Education and Development

In Egypt, a sizable portion of the prison population is incarcerated solely for failing to repay private debts, highlighting serious concerns about the social, economic, and legal consequences of debtor imprisonment. Researchers are conducting two randomized evaluations, the first tests the impact of paying off the debts of incarcerated individuals on their post-release outcomes. The second study examines how the threat of imprisonment affects moral hazards and adverse selection in credit markets.

Research ongoing; results forthcoming.



A woman, a young girl, and a man work together to weigh and sort dates in Egypt.

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