

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/confronting-confinement>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

The Commission on Safety and Abuse in Americas Prisons a national group of civic leaders, corrections administrators, scholars, advocates, police officers, religious community members, and former prisoners authored this report following a year-long study of jail and prison conditions in the U.S. The Commission, finding high volumes of violence and abuse, offered numerous recommendations for improving safety and increasing accountability, including:

The Commission further discussed how these changes could have a significant impact on public safety and public health. Given that 95 percent of incarcerated people will eventually return home, it is within the public interest to improve conditions of confinement to promote rehabilitation and proper reentry into society. 10 years after the release of this report, Vera is revisiting the issues addressed along with others as part of its Reimagining Prison Initiative.

What happens inside jails and prisons does not stay inside jails and prisons. Formerly incarcerated people and corrections officers carry the effects of violence home to their families and communities. Reducing violence and improving safety and health behind bars is thus essential for the prosperity of all communities.

The U.S. incarcerates more people at a higher rate than anywhere else in the world. This bleeds correctional systems of resources that could be used for rehabilitation, not punishment.

We cannot allow anyone who is incarcerated to be victimized by other prisoners or corrections officers. Prisons and jails are part of the justice system, not apart from it.

While Americas correctional facilities are less turbulent and violent than they were decades ago, steady decreases in riots and homicides do not tell us about the larger universe of less-than-deadly violence in prison.

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