

What Really Lowers Crime

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No matter what we look like or where we come from, most of us have known the pain of seeing loved ones struggle—friends who have dealt with substance use, children who have made rebellious choices, neighbors in over their heads trying to make ends meet. We also share some basic desires: that our communities would be places where people can overcome their struggles and be treated as equals. Where we are free to care for our families, find success, and be recognized for our best moments—not just our worst.

But for too long, we've allowed police and prison lobbyists to convince our leaders that separating people from their families through endless punishment is somehow a path to safety: an estimated 8 million Americans have been to prison,¹ over 70 million (20% of the population) are living with a criminal record,² and nearly half of American families are impacted by American prisons and jails³. Contrary to the claims of certain politicians, these policies have actually made us *less* safe.⁴

The truth is, we know what keeps us safe. Research demonstrates that 3 key factors are particularly important for lowering crime and increasing safety: 1) steady income, whether through employment or public benefits; 2) access to safe, stable housing; and 3) access to care and services. These are the factors that promote well-being, success, and empowerment for individuals, families, and communities—all while reducing crime. If we want to imagine a world where people are given a chance to address harm and heal, we must invest in the things that foster success and equal justice.

1. Income, Through Employment or Public Benefits

Considerable research over the years has demonstrated that poverty and income inequality are primary indicators of crime, violence, and recidivism.^{5,6,7} Interactions with the criminal legal system pose massive barriers to steady employment and stable income: formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27% — 5x higher than the total U.S.

¹ Grawert, Ames & Craigie, Terry-Ann. (2020). *Mass Incarceration Has Been a Driving Force of Economic Inequality*. Brennan Center for Justice. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/mass-incarceration-has-been-driving-force-economic-inequality>.

² Grawert, Ames & Craigie, Terry-Ann. (2020). *Mass Incarceration Has Been a Driving Force of Economic Inequality*. Brennan Center for Justice. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/mass-incarceration-has-been-driving-force-economic-inequality>.

³ *Every Second*. Fwd.us. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://everysecond.fwd.us/#chapter1-6>.

⁴ Stemen, Don. (2017). *The Prison Paradox: More Incarceration Will Not Make Us Safer*. Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-prison-paradox_02.pdf.

⁵ *Recidivism and Reentry*. (2022). Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism_and_reentry/.

⁶ Holtfreter, K., Reisig, M. D., & Morash, M. (2004). Poverty, State Capital, and Recidivism Among Women Offenders. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 3(2): 185-208. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/poverty-state-capital-and-recidivism-among-women-offenders>.

⁷ Jay, Allen. *How Income Inequality Affects Crime Rates*. Finances Online. June 16, 2022 from <https://financesonline.com/how-income-inequality-affects-crime-rates/#:~:text=Not%20only%20that%2C%20but%20a,has%20a%20crime%2Dreducing%20effect>.

unemployment rate during any period in history, including the Great Depression.⁸ Like housing, employment and incarceration function as a cycle, and **ensuring that people can access quality, steady employment has the potential to break that cycle—or stop it from beginning in the first place.**

- Employment and stable income prevent crime:
 - Simply put, lower wages contribute to higher crime rates, and higher wages contribute to lower crime rates.⁹
 - A study on an experimental guaranteed income program found that guaranteed income was strongly correlated with reductions in overall crime rates, particularly for violent and property crimes. When people had adequate financial resources, they were far less likely to commit crimes.¹⁰
 - Other Universal Basic Income pilots have demonstrated similar results: improved public health, well-being, and empowerment while reducing crime rates.¹¹
 - One study found that increasing social mobility and making the distribution of resources more equal improved trust and cooperation, thus reducing the likelihood of crime. The same study found that increasing punishments for crime, however, did *not* reduce crime.¹² In other words, ensuring that people have equal access to resources is more effective at deterring crime than increased punishment.
 - Access to educational attainment, which improves the likelihood of future employment stability, can prevent criminal legal system involvement for young people.¹³
 - Workforce development and employment opportunities such as summer job programs can reduce youth involvement in violence by 35%-45%.¹⁴

⁸ Couloute, Lucius & Kopf, Daniel. (2018). *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 5, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>.

⁹ Machin, S. & Meghir, C. (2004). Crime and Economic Incentives. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 39(4): 958-979. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3559034?seq=1>.

¹⁰ Calnitsky, D. & Gonalons-Pons, P. (2020). *The Impact of an Experimental Guaranteed Income on Crime and Violence*. University of Pennsylvania Population Center. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from https://repository.upenn.edu/cji/viewcontent.cgi?article=1055&context=psc_publications.

¹¹ Samuel, Sigal. (2020). *Everywhere basic income has been tried, in one map*. Vox. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/2/19/21112570/universal-basic-income-ubi-map>.

¹² De Courson, B. & Nettle, D. (2021). Why do inequality and deprivation produce high crime and low trust? *Scientific Reports*, 11. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-80897-8>.

¹³ Barnert, E. S., Perry, R., Shetgiri, R., Steers, N., Dudovitz, R., Heard-Garris, N. J., Zima, B., & Chung, P. J., (2021). Adolescent Protective and Risk Factors for Incarceration through Early Adulthood. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 30: 1428-1440. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10826-021-01954-y>.

¹⁴ Heller, S., Pollack, H. A., & Davis, J. M. (2017). The Effects of Summer Jobs on Youth Violence. *National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Office of Justice Programs*. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/oijdp/grants/251101.pdf>.

- One study found that provision of workforce development services is associated with reduced crime at the community level: each new nonprofit focused on workforce development per 100,000 residents led to a 21% decline in the murder rate, a 14% decline in the violent crime rate, and a 10% decline in the property crime rate.¹⁵
- Access to employment opportunities post-incarceration lower recidivism, thus improving public safety:
 - One study found that, within 600 days post-incarceration, nearly twice as many employed people survived without an arrest as their unemployed counterparts (42% compared to 24%).¹⁶
 - Some research suggests that it is not access to just any job, but access to “good” jobs (jobs that are stable, full-time, higher quality, and are the same or similar to the job the person held pre-incarceration) that reduces likelihood of recidivism.¹⁷
 - For example, a 2008 study found that people making over \$10/hour were half as likely to recidivate as those making less than \$7/hour.¹⁸
- Supplemental income through welfare and public benefits helps reduce crime:
 - Access to income in the form of public aid, especially through unemployment benefits, reduces criminal legal involvement.¹⁹
 - A recent study found that the removal of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) increased the number of criminal charges a person might face by 20%.²⁰
 - The increase was even higher (60%) for crimes related to income generation, such as theft, burglary, fraud and forgery, and sex work, and the impacts lasted for at least 2 decades after welfare was removed.²¹

¹⁵ Sharkey, P., Torrats-Espinosa, G. & Takyar, D. (2017). Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review*. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/VThwp5JSFz7eNKF5GkxW/full>.

¹⁶ Couloute, Lucius & Kopf, Daniel. (2018). *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 5, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>.

¹⁷ Ramakers, A., Nieuwbeerta, P., Wilsem, J.V., & Dirkzwager, A. (2016). Not Just Any Job Will Do: A Study on Employment Characteristics and Recidivism Risks After Release. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 61(16): 1795–1818. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5669259/>.

¹⁸ Visher, C., Debus, S., & Yahner, J. (2008). *Employment after Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releasees in Three States*. Urban Institute. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32106/411778-Employment-after-Prison-A-Longitudinal-Study-of-Releasees-in-Three-States.PDF>.

¹⁹ Rudolph, M. & Starke, P. (2020). How does the welfare state reduce crime? The effect of program characteristics and decommodification across 18 OECD-countries. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 68. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047235220300623>.

²⁰ Deshpande, M. & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022) Does Welfare Prevent Crime? the Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1-45. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/advance-article/doi/10.1093/qje/qjac017/6581195?login=true>.

²¹ Deshpande, M. & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022) Does Welfare Prevent Crime? the Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1-45. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/advance-article/doi/10.1093/qje/qjac017/6581195?login=true>.

- Youth who lost SSI were twice as likely to be charged with an income-generating crime than they were to find and maintain steady employment.²²
 - This loss of SSI increased the annual risk of incarceration by 60%.²³
 - The cost of incarcerating the people who lost welfare benefits and were charged with income-generating crimes was so high for taxpayers that it essentially eliminated the savings from removing SSI in the first place.²⁴
- Another study found that the longer it had been since the last welfare payment, the higher crime rates went. In other words, welfare payments helped people pay their bills, and when they ran out, people were more likely to resort to income-generating crimes to survive.²⁵
 - A study in Chicago found that access to emergency financial assistance reduced crime: arrests for violent crimes declined by 51% for those who received temporary financial assistance.²⁶

2. Access to Safe, Stable Housing

The relationship between housing insecurity and incarceration is cyclical and well-established. We know that homelessness²⁷ and housing insecurity²⁸ increase the likelihood of criminal legal system involvement, and that people who have been arrested or incarcerated are far more likely to experience housing instability or homelessness (formerly incarcerated people are 10x more likely to experience homelessness²⁹), creating a vicious cycle. Despite the clear evidence linking the lack of access to safe, stable housing to crime and recidivism,³⁰ traditional policy interventions continue to criminalize homelessness and

²² Deshpande, M. & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022) Does Welfare Prevent Crime? the Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1-45. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/advance-article/doi/10.1093/qje/qjac017/6581195?login=true>.

²³ Deshpande, M. & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022) Does Welfare Prevent Crime? the Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1-45. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/advance-article/doi/10.1093/qje/qjac017/6581195?login=true>.

²⁴ Deshpande, M. & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022) Does Welfare Prevent Crime? the Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1-45. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/advance-article/doi/10.1093/qje/qjac017/6581195?login=true>.

²⁵ Foley, C. F. (2008). *Welfare Payments and Crime*. Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from [https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/FoleyCrimeFeb08_\(2\).pdf](https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/FoleyCrimeFeb08_(2).pdf).

²⁶ Palmer, C. Phillips, D. C., & Sullivan, J. X. (2019). Does emergency financial assistance reduce crime? *Journal of Public Economics*, 169: 34-51. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/James-Sullivan-Does-emergency-financial-assistance-reduce-crime.pdf>.

²⁷ Fischer, S. N., Shinn, M., Shrout, P., & Tsemberis, S. (2008). Homelessness, mental illness, and criminal activity: Examining patterns over time. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(3-4): 251-265. Doi: 10.1007/s10464-008-9210-z.

²⁸ Jacobs, L. A. & Gottlieb, A. (2020). The Effect of Housing Circumstances on Recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 47(9): 1097-1115. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8496894/>.

²⁹ Couloute, Lucius. (2018). *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.

³⁰ Jacobs, L. A. & Gottlieb, A. (2020). The Effect of Housing Circumstances on Recidivism. *Criminal Justice Behavior*, 47(9): 1097-1115. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8496894/>.

fail to help people achieve stability and break the cycle.³¹ **Research has demonstrated that having a roof over one's head reduces the risk of criminal legal involvement³² and reduces recidivism post-release.^{33,34} Ensuring access to safe, stable housing improves public safety.**

- Access to affordable housing prevents crime:
 - A study on housing subsidized by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) found that more affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods reduced crime rates.³⁵
 - Another study in Orange County found that increasing the availability of affordable housing reduced crime, especially violent crime.³⁶
- A recent study explored the impacts of housing programs for unhoused people in LA, whose experiences of homelessness put them at higher risk of criminal legal contact, and found that access to housing:
 - Lowered emergency room visits by 80%;
 - Reduced the number of jail days by 130%;
 - Reduced probability of committing crime by 80%;
 - And increased the probability of employment by 24%.³⁷
- Efforts to make housing safer have been shown to reduce crime: a study in Philadelphia found that home repairs in low-income, predominantly Black neighborhoods were associated with a 21.9% reduction in total crime.³⁸
- Housing support for formerly incarcerated people reduces recidivism:

³¹ Couloute, Lucius. (2018). *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.

³² *Housing, Inclusion, and Public Safety*. (2016). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight1.html>.

³³ Clark, Valerie A. (2014). Predicting Two Types of Recidivism Among Newly Released Prisoners: First Addresses as "Launch Pads" for Recidivism or Reentry Success. *Crime and Delinquency*, 62(10): 1364-1400. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128714555760>.

³⁴ Petteruti, A., Tevah, A., Walsh, N., & Ziedenberg, J. (2007). Housing and Public Safety. *Justice Policy Institute*. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/07-11_rep_housingpublicsafety_ac-ps.pdf.

³⁵ Diamond, R. & McQuade, T. J. (2019). Who Wants Affordable Housing in their Backyard? An Equilibrium Analysis of Low Income Property Development. *Journal of Political Economy*, 127(3): 1063-1117. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/701354>.

³⁶ *Affordable housing decreases crime, increases property values*. (2022). University of California Irvine School of Social Ecology. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://socialecology.uci.edu/news/affordable-housing-decreases-crime-increases-property-values>.

³⁷ Cohen, Elior. (2021). *Housing the Homeless: The Effect of Homeless Housing Programs on Future Homelessness and Socioeconomic Outcomes*. UCLA Department of Economics. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PSWGvsCVJqsEhec0xZbJj9-Ya_S_5OH2/view.

³⁸ South, E. C., MacDonald, J., & Reina, V. (2021). Association between structural housing repairs for low-income homeowners and neighborhood crime. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 4(7). Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2782142>.

- One study found that a housing support program in Washington State decreased rates of recidivism for new convictions (22% vs. 36%), revocations (40% vs. 47%), and readmission to prison (37% vs. 56%).³⁹
- This is especially true for people who were incarcerated for lower-level crimes: one study estimated that 17% of people formerly incarcerated for lower-level crimes with housing were likely to recidivate at 1 year post-release, compared to 33% of those without housing.⁴⁰
- Returning Home, an Ohio program offering permanent housing with supportive services for formerly incarcerated people who have specific medical needs or are at risk of homelessness, has been successful in reducing rearrests and re-incarceration.⁴¹
- Burlington, Vermont's Offender Re-Entry Housing Program has seen success in reducing recidivism among those returning home from prison.⁴²
- Housing as a public safety intervention is cost-effective:
 - Particularly for the people at highest risk of criminal legal system involvement, supportive or affordable housing is cost-effective, as it reduces spending on incarceration costs and reduces the likelihood of recidivism.⁴³
 - One study found that supportive housing reduced annual corrections costs for cities and counties by 55%.⁴⁴

3. Access to Care: Healthcare, Mental Health Services, and Substance Use Treatment

The relationship between incarceration and health has been widely documented. People who interact with the criminal legal system tend to have a greater need for medical, mental health, and substance use treatment, but are significantly less likely to have health insurance⁴⁵ or access to treatment. For example, 16% of men and 31% of women in jail have a serious psychiatric condition (compared with 5% in the general population) and at least 50%

³⁹ Lutze, F. E., Rosky, J. W., & Hamilton, Z. K. (2014). Homelessness and Reentry: A Multisite Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Reentry Housing Program for High Risk Offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 41(4): 471-491. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/438/2014/11/Criminal-Justice-and-Behavior-2014-Lutze-471-91.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Jacobs, L. A. & Gottlieb, A. (2020). The Effect of Housing Circumstances on Recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 47(9): 1087-1115. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8496894/>.

⁴¹ *Reducing Offender Recidivism and Reconnecting Opportunity Youth*. (2016). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight3.html>.

⁴² *Reducing Offender Recidivism and Reconnecting Opportunity Youth*. (2016). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight3.html>.

⁴³ Pettenuti, A., Tevah, A., Walsh, N., & Ziedenberg, J. (2007). Housing and Public Safety. *Justice Policy Institute*. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/07-11_rep_housingpublicsafety_ac-ps.pdf.

⁴⁴ Culhane, D. P., Metraux, S., & Hadley, T. (2022). Public Service Reductions Associated with Placement of Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness in Supportive Housing. *Housing Policy Debate*, 13(1). Retrieved June 16, 2022 from https://shnny.org/uploads/The_Culhane_Report.pdf.

⁴⁵ Jones, A. & Sawyer, W. (2019). *Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/repeatarrests.html>.

of people in jail experience problems related to drug or alcohol use.⁴⁶ However, only about 10% of people who cycle through jails ever receive any form of mental health or substance use treatment.⁴⁷ Law enforcement often resort to jails and prisons when people are experiencing mental health crises,⁴⁸ which is not only ineffective, but also further exacerbates barriers to stability. **Access to medical care and mental health and substance use treatment—not jails and prisons—stabilizes people’s lives, improves health outcomes, and reduces crime.**

- Investing in community-based mental health and substance use treatment services is estimated to yield a \$12 return for every \$1 spent, as it prevents future crime, reduces incarceration, and lowers health care expenses.⁴⁹
- Healthcare coverage reduces crime and lowers the risk of recidivism:
 - By looking at recidivism rates and differences in Medicaid expansion decisions across states, one study found that access to Medicaid coverage reduced recidivism rates, especially among people convicted of violent and public order crimes.⁵⁰
 - Another study considered the impact of healthcare coverage on incarceration in South Carolina and found that low-income men who lost access to Medicaid services at age 19 were 15% more likely to experience incarceration in a two-year period than a comparison group that did not lose access to Medicaid. This was especially true for men who were using Medicaid to access mental health services.⁵¹
- Access to quality mental health and substance use treatment prevents crime:
 - A study in Chicago found that low-income adolescents who participated in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) programs were less likely to be arrested for both violent and non-violent crimes.⁵²

⁴⁶ Cloud, D.H., Bassett, M.T., Graves, J., Fullilove, R.E., & Brinkley-Rubinstein, L. (2020). Documenting and Addressing the Health Impacts of Carceral Systems. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6987922/>.

⁴⁷ Belenko, S., Hiller, M., & Hamilton, L. (2014). Treating Substance Use Disorders in the Criminal Justice System. *Current Psychiatric Reports*, 15(11). Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3859122/>.

⁴⁸ Jones, Alexi & Sawyer, Wendy. (2019). *Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/repeatarrests.html/>.

⁴⁹ Jones, Alexi & Sawyer, Wendy. (2019). *Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/repeatarrests.html/>.

⁵⁰ Aslim, E.G., Mungan, M.C., Navarro, C.I., & Yu, H. (2020). The Effect of Public Health Insurance on Criminal Recidivism. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Retrieved June 15, 2022 from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3425457.

⁵¹ Jacome, Elisa. (2021). *How better access to mental health care can reduce crime*. Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://siepr.stanford.edu/publications/policy-brief/how-better-access-mental-health-care-can-reduce-crime>.

⁵² Heller, S. B., Shah, A. K., Guyran, J., Ludwig, J., Mullainathan, S., & Pollack, H. A. (2017). Thinking, Fast and Slow? Some Field Experiments to Reduce Crime and Dropout in Chicago. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(1). Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <http://theslab.uchicago.edu/anuj/uploads/qjebam.pdf>.

- The availability of substance use treatment services reduces violent and financially-motivated crimes.⁵³
- One study highlighted the impact of nonprofit substance use services on crime: each additional nonprofit that focused on substance use treatment per 100,000 residents led to a 23% decline in the murder rate, a 15% decline in the violent crime rate, and an 11% decline in the property crime rate.⁵⁴
- Numerous programs such as diversions to treatment, jail-based and prison-based drug treatment, and drug courts have seen notable success in long-lasting treatment adherence and lower recidivism.^{55,56} The research highlights the urgent need to connect people to treatment before, during, and after they have been incarcerated.^{57,58}

Conclusion

After years of “reform” efforts focusing on a harmful and largely ineffective arrest-and-incarcerate model, we must commit to innovative strategies that invest in the things more likely to foster safety: income, housing, and access to care. . A budget is not just a statement of values—it’s a determination of what tools we choose to try and construct safer, healthier, more prosperous communities. If we are to stand a chance of fulfilling our promise as a nation, we must follow the data and invest in the things we know can work as opposed to continuing our addiction to incarceration. Partners for Justice empowers public defenders to connect clients to these services as seamlessly as possible, not only improving the lives of individuals and their families, but also meaningfully improving public safety by addressing the very source of the harm that causes crime and incarceration. For more on how Partners for Justice is investing in communities by transforming public defense, see our website at www.partnersforjustice.org.

⁵³ Bondurant, S., Lindo, J. M., & Swensen, I. (2018). Substance Abuse Treatment Centers and Local Crime. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 104. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322995145_Substance_Abuse_Treatment_Centers_and_Local_Crime.

⁵⁴ Sharkey, P., Torrats-Espinosa, G. & Takyar, D. (2017). Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review*. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/VThwp5JSFz7eNKF5GkxW/full>.

⁵⁵ Belenko, S., Hiller, M., & Hamilton, L. (2014). Treating Substance Use Disorders in the Criminal Justice System. *Current Psychiatric Reports*, 15(11). Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3859122/>.

⁵⁶ Hull, C. & Marcellin, C. (2020). *Community-Based Supports Are Essential to Better Address Behavioral Health Needs and Reduce Incarceration*. Urban Institute. Retrieved June 16, 2022 from <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/community-based-supports-are-essential-better-address-behavioral-health-needs-and-reduce-incarceration>.

⁵⁷ Jones, Alexi & Sawyer, Wendy. (2019). *Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems*. Prison Policy Initiative. Retrieved from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/repeatarrests.html/>

⁵⁸ Belenko, S., Hiller, M., & Hamilton, L. (2014). Treating Substance Use Disorders in the Criminal Justice System. *Current Psychiatric Reports*, 15(11). Retrieved June 15, 2022 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3859122/>.