WHAT INVESTMENT DO WE NEED FOR SAFE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES?

A Review of Justice Reinvestment in North Carolina
# Table of Contents

4 Executive Summary

6 Racial Disparities of Incarceration in North Carolina

8 Case Studies
   - Wake County
   - New Hanover
   - Buncombe County
   - Craven County

16 Partners

18 Acknowledgments
What is Justice Reinvestment

In 2011, despite a declining crime rate, North Carolina’s prison population had risen by 27% since 2000, with corrections spending at about $1.3 billion (a 49% increase since 2000). The prison population was projected to rise another 10% by 2020, which would have cost the state approximately $378 million in new prison construction and additional operating costs. In response, North Carolina state leaders, spurred by growing public consciousness about costs and repercussions of over-incarceration, passed the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA) of 2011. The JRA made significant changes to state sentencing law and corrections, resulting in a decline in North Carolina’s overall prison population by about 8% since 2011, and actual savings for the state totaling approximately $195 million.

While these are hopeful markers of progress for North Carolina, North Carolina has “reinvested” just $30 million of it into support for justice-involved individuals returning home to their communities – and this reinvestment has been nearly entirely in the form of funding for additional probation and parole staff. There has been no public discussion about how the remaining $165 million should be used to address the far-reaching impacts of mass incarceration on formerly incarcerated people and their communities.
Accountability to Community

Meanwhile, justice-involved individuals in North Carolina continue to struggle to access employment, education, behavioral health services, housing, occupational licenses, and their right to vote. In the Winter and Spring of 2019 Forward Justice along with anchor, partners launched community hearings in four parts of the state to identify what were community needs on the ground and to aid the reentry of returning community members and to support the rebuilding of communities devastated by mass incarceration. In conjunction with our anchor partners, we brought together justice-involved individuals, their families, community advocates, and other allies to discuss the tangible and intangible harms their communities have suffered as a result of mass incarcerations. Furthermore, community members had an opportunity to share their story of involvement with the criminal justice system through a participatory research process. Site selection was relied on by the willingness and readiness of local community anchors (see page 16) to have conversations regarding justice reinvestment but also organizing power to advocate for legislative change.

What and why this data?

It is impossible to talk about justice reinvestment without a core understanding of what is currently happening in communities. We used a participatory research process that allowed for the sharing and collection of data by popular education on the state of policing in the various communities at each hearing and, participants were able to have a common knowledge regarding education suspension, police stop and search rates, county and statewide incarceration rates among women, Black, White, and Latinx residents in their locale. This report highlights the overall black and white incarceration rate per site location, necessary demographic information regarding each county along with incarceration rates, but also data specific to each hearing location. For example, we tried to provide an overview of who was in the room by collecting information regarding gender, age, and proximity to the issue of incarceration or conviction. By collecting this information, it is helpful to understand who is affected by these issues and what are their priorities. This report further highlights each communities top priorities but also provides data and information on the current “state of play” for each location, to get a better understanding of the rate in which current services are being funded and how it impacts each community.

By compiling this report, we hope to document from a community perspective, the unaddressed harms of mass incarceration. Not only are we documenting community needs, but we also hope to offer community-identified recommendations for current and future justice reinvestment savings. Legislative advocacy efforts in the form of a dedicated formula is a key strategy to ensuring reinvestment saving are going back to community-identified needs.
Racial Disparities of Incarceration in North Carolina

North Carolina is not immune to the plague of incarceration that infects the United States. Of the 35,697 people imprisoned, about 61 percent are people of color. Black residents are incarcerated at over four times the rate of White residents. The figure represented in the following map shows the difference between the white incarceration rate (i.e., the number of white people incarcerated per 100,000 white NC residents) and the black incarceration rates. The state average is 4.97x higher than white incarceration.

By county, the numbers are just as disturbing. In Wake County, black individuals are incarcerated at a rate 10.14x higher than white imprisoned individuals. In New Hanover County, black individuals are incarcerated at a rate of 8.51x higher than white imprisoned individuals.

To further help put the costs of incarceration in perspective in North Carolina, the Department of Public Safety reports it spend an average of $99.23 per day per incarcerated persons, which equals $36,219 per year per person.

=Buncombe County

7.93 x

= White Incarceration Rate
Wake County

POPULATION: 1,072,203

Race and Ethnic Population Overview

- Hispanic or Latino: 10%
- Black or African American: 21%
- White: 68%

Police Search by Race

- Hispanic or Latino: 8%
- Black or African American: 18%
- White: 72%

Data Source: (2018) U.S Census - Wake County, NC

Data Source: (2018) Open Data Policing - Raleigh Police Department

Did You Know?...

Black people make up 21% of the overall population in Wake County but account for 72% of all police searches in Raleigh?
Wake County participants were asked what their top priorities for “reinvestment were”. They highlighted education, employment, and housing. In Wake County, the public school system spends approximately 2,628 dollars per pupil. Furthermore, the unemployment rate is 4% compared to the national rate at 3.7%.

Lastly, to afford a two-bedroom home, an individual would need an income of $43,440, or on a minimum wage salary, an individual would have to work 115 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom home.

**Participant Breakdown**

- **40%** identified as women
- **60%** were 25 to 34 years old
- **40%** had an immediate family member who has been incarcerated or convicted
New Hanover participants highlighted housing as a top priority, followed by education and employment. In regards to housing - to afford a two-bedroom home an individual would need an income of $40,120 or on a minimum wage salary an individual would have to work 106 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom home.

New Hanover County public school system spends approximately 3,042 dollars per pupil. Furthermore, the unemployment rate is 4.1% higher than the national rate at 3.7%.

**Participant Breakdown**

- **77%** identified as women
- **60%** were 25 to 34 years old
- **40%** had an immediate family member who has been incarcerated or convicted
On the impact of community support during reentry...

“Since I’ve been home, I’ve attended the LINC program. LINC has taught me accountability and how to be a contributive member to society. The case managers have been extremely helpful in connecting me to resources and providing access to counseling so I can become a better mother.
Buncombe County
POPULATION: 257,607

Race and Ethnic Population Overview

- Hispanic or Latino: 6%
- Black or African American: 6%
- White: 89%

Police Searches by Race

- Hispanic or Latino: 6%
- Black or African American: 47%
- White: 48%

Data Source: (2018) U.S Census Buncombe County, NC
Data Source: (2018) Open Data Policing Asheville, NC

Did You Know?...

Black people make up 6% of the overall population in this county but account for 47% of police searches in Asheville?
When participants were asked what their top priorities for “reinvestment were,” they highlighted education as a top priority followed by health services, and housing and employment equally important.

Relating to health services, according to the 2018 Buncombe County Community Health Assessment priority health issues include addressing birth outcomes and infant mortality rates. Significant disparities are present in birth outcomes, infant mortality, and preconception health for Black and Latinx residents. Additionally, general mental health, such as depression, anxiety, stress were top concerns identified by community leaders.

### Participant Breakdown

- **50%** identified as women
- **50%** were 25 to 34 years old
- **37%** had an immediate family member who has been incarcerated or convicted
In September 2018, Hurricane Florence severely damaged multiple cities across eastern North Carolina causing extreme property damage and impacting the livelihoods of the residents of these cities. At least twenty-eight counties in North Carolina experienced significant damage or impact from the hurricane, including Craven County.

The needs of Craven County reflected the aftermath of this storm, with participants highlighting education as a top priority followed by health services, transportation, housing and employment ranking equally. The Craven County public school system spends approximately 1,714.78 dollars per pupil. In terms of housing, to afford a two-bedroom home, an individual would need an income of $40,120.

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<th>Participant Breakdown</th>
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<td>40% identified as women</td>
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On the impact of Hurricane Florence...

“Found schools here was some of the worst in the state. Storm [damage] has destroyed most of the homes. All of these [areas need] to be addresssed equally” - Community Member
Forward Justice, along with partners in the NC Second Chance Alliance, a statewide alliance of people with criminal records, their family members, service providers, congregations, community leaders and concerned citizens who have come together to address the causes of criminal records and the barriers they create to successful reentry, seeks to ensure that North Carolina’s current and future justice reinvestment savings are used to dismantle the web of collateral consequences that perpetuates the racial injustices of mass incarceration.

Justice Served NC Inc.

Under the leadership of Ms. Diana Powell, Justice Served provides community based alternatives to court system involvement that create life changing interventions for youth, men and women at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Justice Served has been at the forefront of criminal justice advocacy in Wake County, including demanding law enforcement accountability in police brutality cases, organizing “Clean Slate” legal clinics for people with records, and leading violence interruption workshops through “Straight Talk” conversations with rival gang members.

Buncombe County Justice Resource Center

With the leadership of Mr. Brent Bailey at the helm, the Justice Resource Center provides a multi-agency model of serving people in the criminal justice system with diversion options, connecting them to community services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, transportation, as well as career and professional development. Brent Bailey, a formerly incarcerated criminal justice reform advocate, has been central to reform in Buncombe County by advocating for policies changes related to Fair Chance Hiring, bail reform, and drug diversion.
Leading Into New Communities (LINC)

Guided by the leadership of Mr. Frankie Roberts, LINC empowers individuals with criminal histories to make positive life choices. LINC provides direct services that meet the immediate needs of people with criminal histories by providing housing, food, clothing, and employment opportunities. In addition, Frankie Roberts has been a leader in local policy change in New Hanover County by advocating for “Fair Hiring and Housing” policies for people with criminal records.

Wash Away Unemployment

Under the leadership of Mr. Corey Purdie, Wash Away Unemployment is working to alleviate the escalating problem of high unemployment for disadvantaged groups, particularly people with criminal records. Wash Away uses a hands on approach to prepare individuals for successful reentry into the job market. Most notably, Wash Away and Corey Purdie recently led a campaign to change hiring policy for people with criminal records at the New Bern City Council.
This report and project would not have been possible without support from the local community anchors and partner organizations. We also thank all of the community members who came out to share their stories and experiences with the criminal justice system. We also thank the Public Welfare Foundation and Butler Family Fund for supporting this project.

With much appreciation,
The Forward Justice Team

Sources


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NC Housing https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/north-carolina


Craven County Health Services: https://www.cracountync.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7639/2018-Craven-County-Community-Health-Assessment-


New Bern Unemployment rate: https://www.bls.gov/regions/southeast/nc_newbern_msa.htm#eag_nc_newbern_msa.f.p

NC State Map by Free Vector Maps: http://freevectormaps.com