Alaska Federation of Natives

# Recommendations to Reduce the Overrepresentation of Alaska Native People in the Criminal Justice System

## FINAL REPORT 2025

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

www.nativefederation.org/

# Table of CONTENTS

**SECTIONS:** **PAGE NUMBER**


Table of Contents..... 01.

Alaska Federation of Natives..... 02.

Purpose & Background..... 03.

Abstract..... 05.

Recommendations for Action..... 06.

Summary of UAA Report..... 13.

Summary of UAF Report..... 16.

- Literature Review..... 18.
- Organizational Representative Surveys..... 20.
- Expert Interviews..... 21.

Community Listening Session..... 24.

Acknowledgements/Thank you..... 26.

- Meet the Team..... 27.

Resource Page..... 32.

Appendix 1: UAA Report: Alaska Native Disparities in Alaska Jails and Prisons an Exploratory Study and Descriptive Analysis..... 34.

Appendix 2: UAF Report: Findings on Preventing the Disproportionate Incarceration and Recidivism of Alaska Native People..... 35.

Appendix 3: Federal Funding Opportunities..... 36.

# ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

## WHO WE ARE

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 176 federally recognized tribes, 143 village corporations, 11 regional corporations, and 11 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. AFN is governed by a 38-member board, which is elected by its membership at the annual convention held each October. Learn more about AFN's

Learn more about AFN's history here: https://nativefederation.org/history/

## OUR MISSION

Alaska Native people began as members of full sovereign nations and continue to enjoy a unique political relationship with the federal government. We will survive and prosper as distinct ethnic and cultural groups and will participate fully as members of the overall society. AFN's mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. Our major goals are to:

- Advocate for Alaska Native people, their governments and organizations, with respect to federal, state and local laws;
- Foster and encourage preservation of Alaska Native cultures;
- Promote understanding of the economic needs of Alaska Natives and encourage development consistent with those needs;
- Protect, retain and enhance all lands owned by Alaska Natives and their organizations; and
- Promote and advocate for programs and systems which instill pride and confidence in individual Alaska Natives.

# PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Alaska Native people experience some of the most disproportionately high rates of incarceration in the United States, a stark indicator of deep systemic inequalities. Although Alaska Native people is composed of roughly 14-19% of Alaska's population, they represent 44% of those incarcerated in the state's prisons. This imbalance reflects inequalities that begin long before an individual enters the justice system, including historical trauma, social and economic marginalization, inadequate access to culturally appropriate health and behavioral health services, over-criminalization, and substance use.

Once in the criminal justice system, Alaska Native people are faced with the highest recidivism rate of all monitored races/ethnicities, at 60% among those who were released in 2021 (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025), highlighting the barriers to successful reentry and lack of culturally grounded support. The consequences of these disparities extend far beyond individual incarceration: families and communities are destabilized, intergenerational trauma is reinforced, and the social and economic well-being of Alaska Native communities is eroded. Incarceration imposes heavy financial burdens on the state and on families, diverting resources from education, health, and community development.

By recognizing both the disproportionate impact of incarceration on Alaska Native people and the promise of culturally grounded solutions, policymakers, communities, and justice stakeholders can work collaboratively toward reforms that are both more equitable and more effective. **Reducing these disparities is not only a matter of justice and cost effectiveness – it is a pathway to healthier, safer, and more resilient communities throughout Alaska.**

During the discussions of an omnibus criminal law/procedure/civic commitment bill in the Alaska Legislature during the 2023/2024 session (33rd Alaska Legislature), a provision was included in House Bill 66 for a study to better understand why the Alaska Native incarceration and recidivism rates are so high, including recommendations on how to decrease these disparities. House Bill 66 was passed in May 2024 and signed into law on October 9, 2024. Section 64 of the bill required the *Department of Corrections to contract with a statewide Alaska Native organization whose membership consists of villages, Alaska Native Corporations, and tribal consortiums to conduct a study on the reasons Alaska Natives make up 40 percent of the state's prison population, yet make up just 14 percent of the general population.*

Section 64 further directed the study to address *recommendations for specific actions that can be taken to reduce initial encounters with the prison system and recidivism rates following the release of Alaska Native prisoners. The recommendations may include ways that Alaska Native entities that are primarily federally funded can;*

> *(1) establish restorative justice programs to address the unique cultural needs of Alaska Native people;*
> *(2) intervene earlier with at-risk Alaska Native youth and young adults to ensure those at-risk youth and young adults have the life skills and support systems necessary to prevent encounters with the criminal justice system;*
> *(3) reduce the Alaska Native prison population by providing early mental health diagnosis and better treatment;*
> *(4) provide low-income housing options to reduce the Alaska Native homeless population that are more likely to encounter law enforcement when living on the street;*
> *(5) improve alcohol and drug misuse treatment options for Alaska Native youth and young adults;*
> *(6) provide job training and mentoring opportunities to earn a living and provide food, housing, and other family necessities for Alaska Native residents and families;*
> *(7) offer digital training to Alaska Native residents to access tribal, state, and federal services, obtain digital employment, participate in remote counseling services to address alcohol and drug abuse, and participate in job training and education; and*
> *(8) identify federal grant programs at the United States Department of Justice, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, including the Indian Health Service and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department of Labor, and other federal agencies that could be used to fund implementation of the recommendations, with a particular emphasis on juveniles and young adults.*

# PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

In response to this directive, the Department of Corrections (DOC) contracted with the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to manage and develop a study related to the language in House Bill 66. AFN partnered with and subcontracted to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR), to conduct interviews and surveys with experts and community members across the seven applied areas identified in the legislation. In addition, the UAF team conducted a literature review to examine and summarize relevant published articles and reports. We understand and recognize that there have already been important studies published on the high rates of Alaska Native incarceration, and we wanted to create a comprehensive review and uplift the reports and recommendations that have been completed.

AFN also subcontracted with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) to work with the DOC on analyzing the over-representation of Alaska Native people in Alaska jails and prisons and identifying factors that may contribute to these disparities.

To ensure a comprehensive and Indigenous-led effort, AFN established an Advisory Team to guide the study. This team comprises Alaska Native individuals deeply connected to our Indigenous communities throughout Alaska and brings lived experience and professional expertise to the project. The Advisory Team members work within tribal programs and tribal justice systems, make important contributions to our state and communities, and actively create spaces of healing and advocacy. Their feedback, guidance, and input through this process were invaluable.

> ***"They're here because they can't go home to their village, [...] because probation won't let them go back home to their village. And they're walking around with a backpack, and they're telling me, hey, I got a new house. But I can't go home because I'm on probation. [...] [So] they're homeless, staying at the mission. But they have to get out during the day, so you see them walking around with their backpacks."***

*– UAF Interview Participant on Preventing the Disproportionate Incarceration and Recidivism of Alaska Native People Report*

# ABSTRACT

Due to historical and ongoing systemic inequalities, Alaska Native people make up the largest proportion of the prison population and have the highest recidivism rate in Alaska. The Alaska Legislature required the DOC to fund a study on disproportionate incarceration and recidivism faced by Alaska Native people, focusing on eight specific areas named in House Bill 66. AFN led the study and contracted with researchers at UAA and UAF to analyze data, conduct a literature review, and conduct expert interviews and an organizational representative survey. The findings from this study are summarized in this report.

**Early Family Support:** Supporting individuals early in life, such as through culturally relevant parenting support, prenatal care (including to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), and access to culturally appropriate child care, emerged as some of the most cost effective and powerful options to prevent incarceration, but with limited access: "*If a parent's motivated, and they're ready to go, and they want the help, and then they don't get it for 6 months, that's a huge issue.*" *- UAF Report Interview Participant*

Reducing barriers to meeting parole and probation conditions emerged as a dominant theme for preventing recidivism, as **the majority of individuals are reincarcerated due to probation/parole violations (62%) (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025),** and current conditions often set people up to fail:

"*We had a situation where a polygraph test was required every, I wanna say every year? Every two years? This individual lived in Gambell and he does not have the resources to fly to Nome, take the polygraph test, stay overnight (because there couldn't be a day trip because of the flight times), buy his own food, and then fly back the next day. If you are not properly resourcing your re-entrants for the requirements that you are putting on them, you are setting them up to fail." -– UAF Report Interview Participant*

**Alaska Native workforce development:** Increasing the number of Alaska Native people in the workforce for criminal justice, healthcare, behavioral health, social services, etc., was mentioned frequently: *"They need to start hiring more Native correctional officers and probation officers. They need to be hiring more lawyers, Native attorneys that can either act as public defenders, or in the prosecutor's office. We need more Native judges." - UAF Report Interview Participant*

Other key recommendations included expanding access to locally led, trauma responsive and culturally relevant:

- Tribal and therapeutic courts through increased financial support, staff support, and case purview
- Programming for youth and Elder/youth mentoring initiatives
- Therapeutic and crisis mental health services to rural, incarcerated, and recently released people, including to address trauma
- Reentry housing that provides a suite of integrated services, such as substance misuse treatment, mental health care, and job support
- Housing First shelter, low-income housing, and reentry programs that provide housing support
- Timely, on demand, substance misuse treatment, especially for individuals while they are incarcerated
- Structured reentry career support, including planning early in incarceration for reentry housing, substance misuse treatment, workforce development, etc.
- Telehealth, online job training, and remote fulfillment of probation/parole requirements

Additional recommendations include:

- Respecting community cultures, such as by designing and funding programs that are adapted and led by individual Tribal Councils
- Creating a task force that centers Alaska Native expertise to continuously identify systemic improvements to reduce the number of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 1. Expand Restorative Justice Programs

The restorative justice approach differs from the standard Western-style model of justice. Restorative justice considers the impact of the crime and seeks ways of restitution that include the victim, offender, and community. Alaska has a history of pioneering alternative courtroom models and was one of the first places in the country to offer mental health court as an alternative to incarceration (Alaska Court System 2016). There are several types of courts that offer alternatives, including Tribal courts, which generally take a restorative justice approach, focusing on healing and peacemaking; therapeutic courts, including drug & DUI courts, family courts, mental health courts, veterans courts, and State/Tribal healing to wellness courts (Alaska Court System, n.d.). Tribal Courts were cited for positively addressing intergenerational trauma, allowing people to stay within the community, and increasing Tribal sovereignty, cultural alignment, and community-driven problem-solving.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Expand state support for Tribal Courts and therapeutic courts, including staffing and infrastructure**
- **Expand the case purview of Tribal Courts to include additional types of offenses**
- **Increase use of diversion programs for low-level and misdemeanor offenses**
- **Support Elder-led restorative justice practices, including Talking Circles and community accountability models**
- **Improve coordination between state courts, law enforcement, and Tribal justice systems**

Specific Actions:

- The State of Alaska and Tribes should work together to increase Tribal Court capacity to hear cases, especially in areas where Tribal Courts are not as extensive.
- The Legislature can (a) authorize data- and case-sharing agreements with Tribal courts, (b) have state judges and prosecutors refer eligible Alaska Native defendants to Tribal courts or diversion agreements when feasible, and (c) fund technical assistance that aligns Tribal restorative processes with due process and victim rights protections.
- Direct DOC, the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the court system to pilot joint state-tribal restorative justice pathways in at least three hub communities with clear eligibility criteria and outcome tracking (recidivism, victim satisfaction, cultural connection).
- Provide state match funds so Tribal courts can apply under DOJ's Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) grants.

> ***"As an Inuk human being, I would be deathly afraid to be sitting in a tribal court where there's all these Elders that are going to pass judgment on me. That'll straighten me up really quick in a hurry."***

*–UAF Interview Participant on Preventing the Disproportionate Incarceration and Recidivism of Alaska Native People Report*

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 2. Early Intervention for At-Risk Youth

The growing body of research demonstrates the more effective and cost-saving approach to reducing incarceration is early childhood intervention such as access to prenatal care, preschools and parent training classes. A systematic analysis highlighted that for every dollar invested in early childhood interventions, there are significant financial returns, due to a reduced need for spending on criminal justice, healthcare, and welfare (Doyle et al., 2009; Caspi et al., 2016). Youth based programs integrated within our schools that focus on mentorship, behavior management, and building community connections are all cited by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as key strategies to ending the school to prison pipeline. Additionally, a focus on building strong ties with cultural identities were sighted in research and interviews to build resilience. Participants in the interviews with UAF suggested that a key way to keep Alaska Native youth out of incarceration systems is to support their connection with Elders and assist them in developing a strong cultural identity.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Emphasize support at the earliest possible timeframe, especially prenatal care (including prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)**
- **Support free or reduced cost culturally-relevant childcare and home visit programs for young children**
- **Invest in early childhood and youth mental health screening, especially in rural communities**
- **Support parents through offering free or low cost culturally-grounded parenting support and mentorship**
- **Reduce reliance on punitive school discipline and address the school-to-prison pipeline**
- **Fund programs that strengthen cultural identity, language, subsistence, and land connection**

Specific Actions:

- Increase youth mental health and developmental disorder assessment services, particularly in rural Alaska.
- Support cultural programming and Elder mentoring initiatives to increase Alaska Native youth connection and cultural identity formation.
- Direct Department of Education and Department of Family and Community Services to fund tribally designed youth diversion and truancy response programs, can look into using DOJ Tribal Youth Program (TYP) grants.
- Encourage school districts to sign MOUs with Tribes so tribal staff can deliver culturally specific life-skills curricula.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 3. Improve Mental Health Diagnosis and Treatment

Alaska Native people experience disproportionate mental health burdens (Kwon, Kabir, & Saadabadi, 2024), shaped by experiences of generational trauma (Brave Heart, 2011) and lower access to satisfying basic needs (Perdacher, Kavanaugh, & Sheffield, 2024). To address these challenges, trauma-engaged and culturally responsive services are needed in cities and villages throughout Alaska.

Addressing childhood trauma risks early can help prevent involvement in the juvenile justice system. The Alaska Transforming Schools Framework provides steps and examples that can be implemented in schools and other youth programming to support trauma-engaged care. *"Commonly, community members, families, tribes, and businesses are underutilized partners, with few pathways to meaningfully include them in academic, social, emotional, and cultural outcomes for students and schools." - Alaska's Transforming Schools Framework*

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Expand funding for early mental health screening, diagnosis, and treatment, particularly for children, youth, and young adults**
- **Emphasize programmatic stability of mental health treatment through adequate and consistent funding and staffing**
- **Support trauma-engaged, culturally responsive services, including Elder involvement and cultural identity programming**
- **Expand Medicaid and other reimbursement pathways to support Alaska Native–led service models**
- **Require culturally responsive training for DOC, probation/parole, courts, and healthcare staff**

Specific Actions:

- Contract with organizations (e.g ANTHC and Tribal Health Organizations) to provide expanded culturally responsive mental health services to both rural and incarcerated Alaska Native people.
- Expand joint DOC-Tribal transition clinics so Alaska Native individuals receive mental health assessment and medication continuity before release and have warm handoffs to tribal behavioral health teams.
- Support tribal applications to IHS behavioral health and injury prevention funding and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Native Connections or similar grants to build long-term suicide, trauma, and mental health prevention infrastructure for youth and young adults.
- Promote Medicaid reimbursement for culturally responsive services and programs that are delivered in communities.

## 4. Increase Housing to Reduce Homelessness and Justice Contact

Individuals returning to the community from incarceration face numerous barriers to reentry, and securing safe, stable housing is often the most immediate challenge. Housing is a vital element of successful reentry, as stated in *The Effect of Housing Circumstances on Recidivism*, citing that individuals who may otherwise be considered at "low risk for reoffending" are significantly more likely to return to incarcerated systems if they are experiencing housing insecurity. Further, reentry housing that provides a suite of integrated services, such as substance misuse treatment, mental health care, and job support, can reduce recidivism and increase follow-up contact in justice-involved populations.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Expand reentry housing that provides a suite of integrated services, such as substance misuse treatment, mental health care, and job support**
- **Expand Housing First and low-barrier housing models, including for individuals with criminal justice involvement**
- **Provide support for tenant success workshops and similar educational programs**
- **Remove barriers that exclude formerly incarcerated individuals from housing eligibility**
- **Support culturally grounded reentry housing programs, particularly in rural and hub communities**
- **Allow remote probation and parole supervision so individuals can live where housing exists**

Specific Actions:

- Partner with Alaska Native housing authorities and nonprofits to create recovery and reentry housing set-asides for Alaska Native people exiting prison or juvenile facilities.
- Scale up or replicate programs like Covenant House Alaska, an organization in Anchorage that provides low barrier housing to youth.

- Direct state housing agencies to prioritize reentry supportive housing and to jointly apply with Tribal partners for SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issues recovery housing and homelessness-related opportunities for youth and young adults.
- Review and update eligibility standards for housing authorities. Often, exclusionary policies and practices for individuals with criminal records are in place and often enforced without consideration for the severity of the crime, denying housing to individuals for low-level crimes like shoplifting (HSS, Reentry and Housing Stability: Final Report, 2024).

## 5. Increase access to Alcohol and Drug Misuse Treatment

Substance misuse treatment for Alaska Native people requires culturally responsive, community-centered models that bridge Alaska Native cultural ways of life with Western evidence-based practices (Rasmus et al., 2019). Partnerships with Tribal communities, researchers, and health systems, with an emphasis on Mental Health and Disability Services (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020), are essential for addressing substance misuse treatment among Alaska Native people to reduce incarceration and recidivism. Through interviews, the participants shared the need both to reduce the wait time for substance misuse treatment services and increase the number of people in the substance misuse treatment workforce. They encouraged wider expansion of Tribal substance misuse treatment resources, including inpatient treatment centers, and continued funding of culturally-responsive programming.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Provide substance misuse diagnosis and treatment options for all incarcerated persons**
- **Increase funding for community-based, Alaska Native–led treatment programs**
- **Address workforce shortages through training and certification pathways for Alaska Native providers**
- **Integrate substance misuse treatment with mental health and housing services**
- **Reduce wait times and expand telehealth options, particularly for rural communities**

Specific Actions:

- Provide substance misuse treatments while individuals are incarcerated.
- Require substance misuse treatment to be culturally responsive, community-centered models for Alaska Native people.
- Expand Tribally led youth and young adult treatment programs by leveraging SAMHSA Tribal grants (e.g., Native Connections, SOR subawards) to add adolescent and transition-age youth tracks, including family-based treatment.
- Encourage DOC and DJJ to enter agreements allowing Alaska Native individuals to fulfill court-ordered treatment through Tribally operated programs and telehealth when geography is a barrier.

## 6. Strengthen Job Training and Mentoring

There is significant support for the link between career training while an individual is incarcerated and a reduced risk of recidivism after release (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025). The effect is especially pronounced when the individual is offered structured reentry career support. In Alaska, the Reentry Coalitions offer programs to assist reentrants with job skills and placement. Additionally, augmenting the representation of Alaska Native people working in the criminal justice field may have a broadly positive impact on the overrepresentation of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated. There is strong evidence suggesting that greater racial representation in legal systems reduces racial gaps in incarceration outcomes (Harris, 2023; King et al., 2010). For example, Alaskan lawyers are not racially representative of Alaska's population, with 6% of attorneys and 9% of sitting judges in Alaska being Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) (Diversity Commission Report, 2023). Recommendations to address this element include developing programs to encourage Alaska Native youth to pursue careers in the legal field.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Create education and career pathways for Alaska Native judges, attorneys, probation officers, correctional staff, clinicians, and reentry specialists**
- **Support mentorship programs using credible messengers with lived experience and cultural alignment**
- **Expand education, job training, and apprenticeship programs during incarceration and reentry**

Specific Actions:

- Direct the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development to partner with Tribal workforce programs and the Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center to create target apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and subsidized employment slots for Alaska Native reentrants and high-risk youth.
- Support mentoring networks that pair formerly incarcerated Alaska Native mentors with youth and adults in reentry, could look to Second Chance Act (SCA) reentry grants and tribal workforce development dollars to support.
- State, local, and Tribal entities can establish paid internships for legal career paths.
- Universities to partner with law schools outside of Alaska to create more opportunities for obtaining legal degrees, and develop other education and career pathways for programs that support more diversity in the justice system.

## 7. Improve Digital Skills and Access to Services

There is evidence that remote services, such as telehealth, cultural programming, workforce training, education, and parole obligation fulfillment, are convenient and effective ways to reduce incarceration and recidivism. Digital skills are increasingly necessary across these areas, including applying for jobs, navigating state and federal benefits, and accessing telehealth and education, all of which are important for preventing recidivism and enabling rural participation in services. Programs available online that support job training, housing access, and workforce education tailored for Alaska Native individuals can reduce recidivism rates (Kelly & Tubex, 2015). Educational and mentorship opportunities for young people can augment in-person resources in Alaska communities and support youth to avoid incarceration (Tomoh et al., 2025; Isles, 2001). State, local, and Alaska Native entities could host digital literacy labs in communities and use culturally relevant instructors to reduce barriers for elders, youth, and returning citizens.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Expand telehealth and virtual counseling for mental health and substance misuse treatment**
- **Expand flexibility in supervision requirements for rural and remote residents to allow for remote or Tribal management of supervision**
- **Provide funding for access to reliable internet, training, and office space.**
- **Align supervision practices with housing availability, employment, and family responsibilities**

Specific Actions:

- Fund Tribally run digital access and skills hubs where those facing reentry and at-risk youth can get support with online job applications, resumes, virtual schooling, and telehealth-based substance use or mental health counseling.
- Work with federal partners to align broadband and telehealth expansions with reentry and prevention goals, ensuring that Tribal behavioral health clinics can deliver remote counseling and group supports into villages.
- Direct state, local, and Tribal governments to identify more employment opportunities, especially in rural Alaska, with a focus on digital and remote opportunities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 8. Sustainable Funding:

Alaska Native Tribes and communities face significant challenges in accessing federal and state funding to support important restorative justice efforts, tribal courts, public safety, housing, behavioral and mental health, substance misuse treatment, and increasing broadband to enable more digital and remote learning and employment opportunities. Complex application processes, inconsistent eligibility criteria, limited administrative capacity, funding structures that favor state or municipal governments, and competitive, single-year grant funding create systemic barriers. These obstacles delay or prevent delivery of essential services, exacerbate infrastructure gaps, and undermine Tribal self-determination and long-term community wellness. Addressing these barriers requires streamlined and sustainable funding pathways, increased technical assistance, and policies that recognize and respect the unique legal and governmental status of Alaska Native Tribes.

The Not One More Report from the Not Invisible Act Commission states, *"During plenary Commission meetings, subcommittee meetings, and field hearings, commissioners heard facts, anecdotes, stories, and testimony about Alaska that made clear that the challenges of distance, poverty, governmental structures, lack of technology and transportation, and a traumatic history set Alaska apart from the rest of Indian country. Federal governmental support afforded to other Tribal governments is either not available, or woefully inadequate, in Alaska. Funding needs are substantial to bring Alaska Tribes and Villages to parity with their Lower 48 relatives – a standard that is still substantially lower than what the general U.S. population enjoys in terms of public safety and services."*

While it is important to understand and acknowledge available funding opportunities, it is equally important to understand the barriers to accessing and maintaining funding. A key takeaway is having strategic coordination among state agencies, Tribes, and community partners will be critical to maximizing the impact and sustainability of these funding opportunities.

There is a set of federal funding sources across the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (including IHS and SAMHSA), the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Labor that specifically name American Indian/Alaska Native communities, juvenile justice, mental health, and reentry priorities. Many of these are accessible to Alaska Native tribes, consortia, and tribal nonprofits. (*Appendix three of this report outlines the various opportunities for federal funding across agencies, page 32.)*

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Coordinate state–tribal applications for federal grants**
- **Provide state match funds to unlock federal dollars**
- **Prioritize AI/AN eligibility in justice, health, and workforce funding**
- **Fund culturally based diversion and reentry programs**

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## 9. Additional Community-Identified Recommendations (Beyond the Eight Areas Identified in HB66)

Listening sessions, interviews, surveys, and research surfaced several priorities that warrant inclusion as additional recommendations, particularly for the DOC and reentry partners. These include addressing the overrepresentation of Alaska Native men in low-wage DOC employment and ensuring their voices are meaningfully included in decision-making; expanding culturally grounded healing, recovery, and service opportunities within facilities and communities; and improving communication, consistency, and transparency across sectors. Participants also emphasized stronger DOC engagement in positive community events, better coordination between rural and urban justice systems (including language access and legal navigation), and expanded community partnerships to support reintegration, cultural practices, mentorship, and opportunities for individuals to give back.

**Recommended Actions:**

- **Assign only parole/probation conditions where resources are provided for those conditions to be met - to decrease the likelihood of technical violations and subsequent rearrest**
- **Develop a task force to continuously identify systemic improvements that could be made to reduce the number of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated**
- **Funding further research on how to address disproportionate incarceration rates of Alaska Native people, as this topic is underrepresented in existing scholarly research**
- **Increase DOC presence in positive community events, such as graduations, to demonstrate support and partnership**

# SUMMARY OF UAA REPORT: ALASKA NATIVE DISPARITIES IN ALASKA JAILS AND PRISONS - AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

AJiC research task was twofold: (1) to conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of the research literature examining racial disproportionalities in American jails and prisons, and (2) to analyze Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) data to identify factors that may contribute to the over-representation of Alaska Native people in DOC's inmate population.

**Summary of Findings**

- Alaska is one of only six states in the U.S. that operate a unified correctional system. In a unified correctional system, both jails and prisons are administered by a single, statewide entity.
  - Within the Alaska correctional system context, many DOC facilities function as both jails and prisons simultaneously, and their populations are mixed with respect to inmate legal status.
  - Estimates of the racial/ethnic group composition of DOC's inmate population reflect all individuals in institutional custody, irrespective of offense or legal status.
  - In 2023, Alaska Native/American Indian people comprised 42% of inmates under institutional supervision, 29% of those on pre-trial supervision, and 39% of those on probation/parole. The percentage of Alaska Native/American Indian people incarcerated in DOC facilities has increased markedly in recent years after an extended period of stability, from 35% in 2016 to 42% in 2023.

**Key Takeaways**

- Overrepresentation: Alaska Native/American Indian people make up 42% of people in Department of Corrections custody vs.17% of Alaska's adult population.
- Disparities in Alaska Native over-representation exist at booking and persist throughout the criminal justice system. Upstream processes may be more effective at mitigating this burden.

# SUMMARY OF UAA REPORT: ALASKA NATIVE DISPARITIES IN ALASKA JAILS AND PRISONS - AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

**Why This Matters**

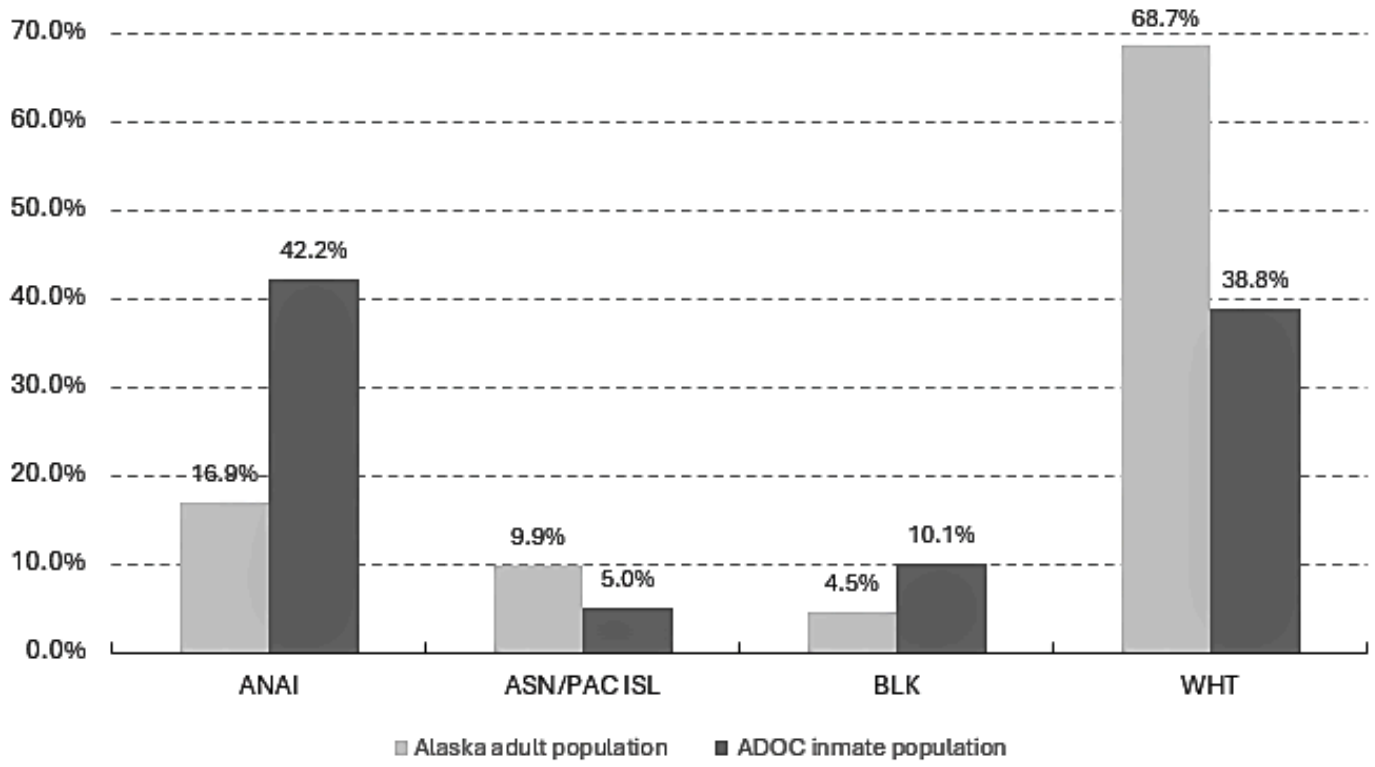
- Alaska Native overrepresentation has implications for Tribal sovereignty, public safety, state corrections costs, and community well-being.
- Legislative recognition of disparity, explicit or implicit, creates a foundation for targeted, data-driven reform.

**Policy Considerations**

- Require regular reporting alongside benchmarks for improvement.
- Investing in pretrial diversion, treatment, and alternatives to incarceration.
- Supporting tribal justice authority and culturally grounded interventions.
- Aligning corrections policy with prevention, housing, and behavioral health strategies.

**Figure 2.**

Comparison of racial group composition: Alaska total adult population vs. ADOC inmate population, by racial group: 2023.




**Notes**

a. Alaska population includes adults only.
b. Census data for all racial groups shown: Race alone or in combination.
c. ANAI=Alaska Native or American Indian; ASN/PAC ISL=Asian or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; BLK=Black/African American; WHT=White/Caucasian.
b. Hispanic comparison not shown due to differences in measurement between ADOC and U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau measures Hispanic origin separately from race.
d. Data sources: Alaska Department of Corrections (1999-2024). *Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

# SUMMARY OF UAA REPORT: ALASKA NATIVE DISPARITIES IN ALASKA JAILS AND PRISONS - AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

**Key Highlights**

- **Total Alaska Population in DOC Supervision (July 1, 2023): 10,061:**
  - 45% in jails or prisons (4,525 individuals)
  - 32% on probation or parole (3,230 individuals)
  - 23% on pretrial supervision (2,306 individuals)

**Alaska Native/American Indian Representation:**
**Pretrial supervision:** 29%
**Institutional custody:** 42%
**Probation/parole:** 39%

**Policy Significance:** Disparities are not uniform across supervision types, suggesting that interventions at arrest, charging, sentencing, and release could mitigate the disproportionate representation of Alaska Native people.

**Table 1.**
Percentage of persons under ADOC supervision, by racial group and supervision type: 2023

| | Type of Supervision | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Community supervision | |
| Race/Ethnic Group | Institutional supervision[a] (n=4,525) | Pre-trial[a] (n=2,306) | Probation/Parole[a] (n=3,230) |
| Alaska Native/American Indian | 42.2% | 28.6% | 38.5% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 5.0 | 5.4 | 5.3 |
| Black | 10.1 | 8.8 | 6.5 |
| Hispanic | 3.1 | 3.9 | 2.3 |
| White | 38.8 | 49.5 | 45.0 |
| Unknown race/ethnicity | 0.8 | 3.9 | 2.5 |
| TOTALS | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.1 |

**Notes**
a. Column totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections (2024). *2023 Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/admin/docs/1CurrentProfile.pdf

# SUMMARY OF UAF ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH REPORT: FINDINGS ON PREVENTING THE DISPROPORTIONATE INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM OF ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

**Short Summary of the Report**

This study was commissioned under House Bill 66 (2024) to examine why Alaska Native people are disproportionately incarcerated and to identify evidence-based and culturally responsive solutions. The Alaska Federation of Natives contracted with Dr. Katie Cueva at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to conduct a literature review, expert surveys, and in-depth interviews across seven focus areas.

Ongoing impacts of colonization have resulted in high rates of poverty, trauma, homelessness, substance abuse, and other challenges that are correlated with a greater vulnerability to incarceration and recidivism. Disproportionate incarceration and recidivism are rooted in systemic factors like intergenerational trauma, poverty, housing insecurity, adverse childhood experiences, limited access to mental health care, and lack of culturally aligned services. “Alaska Native people are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group in Alaska to be the victim of a crime” which is associated with later involvement in the justice system (Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2002).

Experts interviewed for this study emphasized that prevention efforts that are more effective include those that begin in the prenatal and early childhood environment, as well as offerings that support cultural identity, stabilize housing, and address mental health and substance misuse through community-based and Alaska Native–led approaches. Among the seven HB66 priority areas, surveyed individuals identified a critical mismatch between what they perceive to be most effective and what is funded and staffed.

**Key Highlights (At a Glance)**

- **Reduce barriers to meeting parole and probation conditions to prevent recidivism, as the majority of individuals are reincarcerated due to probation/parole violations (62%) (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025).**
- **Increase the number of Alaska Native people in the workforce for criminal justice, healthcare, behavioral health, social services, etc.**
- **Respect community cultures by designing and funding programs that are adapted and led by individual Tribal Councils.**
- **Create a task force that centers Alaska Native expertise to continuously identify systemic improvements that could be made to reduce the number of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated.**

**Disproportionate Alaska Native incarceration and recidivism can be mitigated through expanded access to locally led, trauma-responsive, and culturally relevant:**

- Tribal and therapeutic courts through increased financial support, staff support, and case purview
- Prenatal care (including prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), parent training programs, and free or reduced-cost culturally relevant childcare and home visit programs for young children,
- Programming for youth and Elder/youth mentoring initiatives
- Therapeutic and mental health crisis services for rural, incarcerated, and recently released people, including addressing trauma
- Housing First shelter, low-income housing, and reentry programs that provide culturally relevant housing support
- Timely, on-demand substance misuse treatment, especially for individuals while they are incarcerated
- Structured reentry career support, including planning early in incarceration for reentry housing, substance misuse treatment, workforce development, etc.
- Telehealth, online job training, and remote fulfillment of probation/parole requirements

# LITERATURE REVIEW: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS
# EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES TO REDUCE INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM OF ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

**Purpose**
This literature review, conducted by researchers at the University of Alaska, examined peer-reviewed and grey literature to identify evidence-based and promising practices that reduce incarceration and recidivism. The review focused on Alaska Native people and comparable contexts and is organized around the seven applied domains identified in House Bill 66.

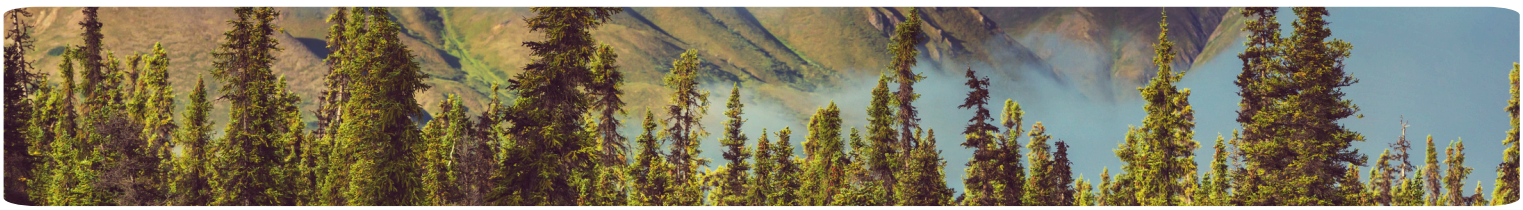
**Current Context in Alaska**
- Approximately 17 of every 1,000 Alaskan adults were in the care or custody of the Department of Corrections (DOC) in 2024 (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025).
- Alaska Native people comprise 44% of the prison population, despite representing 19% of the state population (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2025; Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025.
- Alaska's overall recidivism rate has declined over the past decade, but Alaska Native people continue to have the highest recidivism rate (60%) of monitored races/ethnicities (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025).
- The majority of individuals who returned to prison (62%) were reincarcerated due to probation/parole violations (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025).

**Root Causes of Disproportionate Involvement**
Historic and ongoing impacts of colonization are foundational drivers of disproportionate incarceration and recidivism impacting Alaska Native people, including:
- Generational trauma, poverty, and housing instability
- High rates of victimization, especially among Alaska Native women (Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2002)
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which are strongly linked to later justice system involvement (Graf et al., 2021; White & Frisch-Scott, 2022).
- Undetected or untreated youth mental health, behavioral, and substance use challenges (Pyle et al., 2015)

These factors increase vulnerability to justice involvement, particularly when culturally responsive prevention and early intervention services are unavailable.

**Key Findings by HB 66 Focus Area**
**Tribal Courts, Diversion, and Restorative Justice**
Tribal courts in Alaska generally oversee child welfare and custody cases, and have recently been able to take on domestic violence cases in a limited capacity (Carlson 2024). Tribal Courts support tribal sovereignty and the ability to access justice proceedings in one's own community, promoting responsive governance and youth well-being (van Schilfgaarde 2024; Allen et al., 2025).

In addition to Tribal Courts, the State of Alaska also offers therapeutic courts, including drug & DUI courts, family courts, mental health courts, veterans courts, and State/Tribal healing-to-wellness courts (Alaska Court System, n.d.). The State of Alaska and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe currently collaborate to administer the Henu Community Wellness Court, and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska administers the Healing to Wellness Court. Typically, in order to go through the therapeutic court system, one must plead guilty and agree to complete a course of treatment, rather than being incarcerated. Therapeutic courts tend to have lower recidivism rates than traditional courts (Judicial Council of Alaska, 2005), although this may be due to who chooses to participate rather than the effectiveness of the program on reducing recidivism (Roman et al. 2008).



**Early Interventions with Youth**
Early childhood and youth interventions have significant long-term benefits, including reducing incarceration (Welsh & Farrington, 2011; Greenwood, Model, Rydell, & Chiesa, 1998). There are significant financial returns on investment in early childhood and youth due to a reduced need for spending on criminal justice, healthcare, and welfare (Doyle et al., 2009; Caspi et al., 2016). Additionally, there is evidence that the positive impact from early childhood programs is greater for youths who experience a higher degree of relative disadvantage (Garcia et al. 2020). Programs with documented benefits include access to prenatal care (including to reduce Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), preschools and parent training classes, as well as multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, and multi-dimensional foster care treatment (Welsh & Farrington, 2011; Greenwood, Model, Rydell, & Chiesa, 1998; Aos et al., 2001). Further, "scared straight" programs and juvenile boot camps have negative economic returns, indicating that those are not cost-effective strategies (Aos et al., 2001).

**Mental Health and Disability**
Alaska Native people experience disproportionate mental health burdens (Kwon, Kabir, & Saadabadi, 2024), shaped by experiences of generational trauma (Brave Heart, 2011) and lower access to satisfying basic needs (Perdacher, Kavanaugh, & Sheffield, 2024). To address these challenges, trauma-engaged and culturally responsive services are needed in cities and villages throughout Alaska. Alaska's Transforming Schools Framework (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development & Association of Alaska School Boards, 2019) provides steps and examples that can be implemented in schools and other youth programming to support trauma-engaged schooling. Providing training to the workforce in health care systems (Oldani & Prosen, 2021) and within the Department of Corrections (Perdacher et al, 2024) to provide culturally responsive services has strong potential to decrease instances of incarceration and recidivism (Lambert, 2016) among Alaska Native people.

**Housing**
Individuals who may otherwise be considered at "low risk for reoffending" are significantly more likely to return to incarcerated systems if they are experiencing housing insecurity (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2021). Housing First, a housing intervention model that provides individuals with shelter and basic needs without requiring sobriety or treatment compliance, has a strong evidence base and has proven effective in both urban and rural areas of Alaska (Driscoll et al., 2018; MacKinnon & Socias, 2021). Reentry housing that provides a suite of integrated services, such as substance misuse treatment, mental health care, and job support, can reduce recidivism and increase follow-up contact in justice-involved populations (Baker et al. 2023). Reentry programs that provide culturally relevant housing support, such as Chanlyut, are also promising practices.

**Substance Misuse Treatment**
Substance misuse treatment for Alaska Native people requires culturally responsive, community-centered models that bridge Alaska Native cultural ways with Western evidence-based practices (Rasmus et al., 2019). Partnerships with Tribal communities, researchers, and health systems, with an emphasis on Mental Health and Disability Services (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020), are essential for addressing substance misuse treatment among Alaska Native people to reduce incarceration and recidivism. Substance misuse treatments delivered while individuals are incarcerated have been found to be more effective, reduce the likelihood of overdose, and are more cost-efficient when compared to substance misuse treatments delivered while individuals are in communities, with up to $23.80 return on every dollar invested (Valle, 2017).

**Workforce, Education, and Mentorship**
There is significant support for the link between career training while an individual is incarcerated and a lowered risk of recidivism after they are released (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025). The effect is especially pronounced when the individual is offered structured reentry career support. In Alaska, the Reentry Coalitions offer programs to assist reentrants with job skills and placement. Mentorship programs are most effective when they have strong cultural alignment and when the mentor is a "credible messenger" (National Institute of Justice, 2016). The study by Valle (2017) found that in Alaska, vocational rehabilitation and general education had two of the highest returns on investment, with a $10.58 return on every dollar spent on general education and a $7.11 return on every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation.

Additionally, augmenting the representation of Alaska Native people working in the criminal justice field may have a broadly positive impact on the overrepresentation of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated. The Diversity Commission Report (2023) made several recommendations on increasing Alaska's racial diversity in the justice system, including earlier career outreach to rural areas; establishing paid internships; and partnering with law schools outside of Alaska to create more opportunities for obtaining legal degrees.

**Remote Services**
**S**uch as telehealth, cultural programming, workforce training, education, and parole obligation fulfillment, are convenient and effective ways to reduce incarceration and recidivism. Offering ways for individuals to fulfill probation/parole requirements remotely can allow individuals to return to communities where they have access to housing, creating greater stability and compliance with probation and parole requirements. One early influential study on the impact of remote parole check-ins in
New York found that this method decreased administrative burden with no increase in crime rates (Wilson et al. 2007). However, digital literacy, broadband access, confidential spaces for telehealth, culturally-relevant services, culturally-aware providers, and provider reimbursement must be addressed to optimize delivery of remote services (Tomoh et al., 2025; Isles, 2001). Infrastructure to support these services is burgeoning in rural Alaska, and further development of infrastructure and services in collaboration with local leaders can lead to more sustainable and appropriate remote services.

**Key Takeaways for Legislators**
- **Disproportionate incarceration is driven by structural and historical factors, not individual failure.**
- **Mental health, housing stability, and early youth intervention consistently show the strongest evidence for reducing incarceration and recidivism.**
- **Probation and parole practices are a major leverage point for reducing returns to prison.**
- **Culturally grounded and Tribal-led approaches are essential, not optional.**
- **Upstream investments, especially in youth, housing, and mental health, offer the greatest long-term public safety and fiscal returns**

# ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE SURVEYS

**Survey Development**
Survey questions were developed by the AFN Advisory Team, with support from CANHR, focusing on the seven applied areas identified in House Bill 66. The full CANHR report can be found in Appendix 2. Survey questions included:

- In the last 12 months, my organization has had enough staff to meet client needs
- My organization has had enough funding to operate its programs effectively
- If the Alaska State Legislature gave your organization funds, what would be the most effective way to spend them to reduce incarceration and recidivism?
- Overall, what should the Alaska State Legislature or the federal government fund to reduce incarceration and recidivism of Alaska Native people?
- Whether organizations had sufficient staffing and funding to meet client needs

**Survey Administration and Analysis**
Between October and November 2025, survey invitations were emailed to 411 Alaska-based experts identified across the seven applied House Bill 66 focus areas. The project team aimed to survey about 100 people. By early December 2025, 83 individuals had completed at least part of the survey, representing an approximate response rate of 20 percent. Survey data were analyzed using R statistical software.

**Survey Respondents**
Respondents were highly experienced and represented a broad range of professional backgrounds. Approximately 76 percent had 4 or more years of experience in their field, including 39 percent with more than 10 years. Over half held a bachelor's degree or higher, and 37 percent held graduate or professional degrees. Alaska Native individuals represented 28 percent of respondents, contributing lived cultural experience alongside professional expertise.

**Summary of Survey Findings**
Most respondents identified Mental Health as one of the most effective strategies to prevent incarceration and recidivism (55%), followed by Housing Access (45%).

- These domains suffered from the greatest shortages in funding and staffing levels. Additionally, mental health was identified as the domain with the lowest amount of program consistency. Among respondents who identified as Alaska Native, most individuals indicated Mental Health (74%) as most effective at preventing incarceration and recidivism, followed by Early Interventions With Youth (61%), and Substance Misuse Treatment (57%). Alaska Native respondents indicated that Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts and Substance Misuse Treatment were the most culturally relevant of the examined areas. Alaska Native respondents gave Mental Health, Substance Misuse Treatment, and Early Intervention with Youth a median score of 3 ("neutral") in regards to "Makes a Positive Difference", potentially reflecting uncertainty about whether organizational efforts translate into meaningful community outcomes.

# EXPERT INTERVIEWS

## Expert Interviews

### Interview Design

Semi-structured interview questions were developed by the AFN Advisory Team with input from CANHR, including the following questions:

- What do you think would be most effective at preventing incarceration among Alaska Native people?
- What do you think would be most effective at preventing recidivism among Alaska Native people?
- What recommendations or specific actions would you give to decision makers, like the Alaska State Legislature?
- If you were given funding to spend, how would you use it to reduce incarceration and recidivism? The full CANHR report can be found in Appendix 2.

### Interview Administration and Analysis

AFN provided CANHR with a list of individuals identified as subject-matter experts, and additional experts were identified through snowball sampling. Personalized invitations were sent to 50 individuals, and 25 interviews were completed by December 12, 2025, yielding a 50% response rate. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded, and auto-transcribed. Transcripts were reviewed and corrected for accuracy.

The research team used a Rapid Qualitative Inquiry approach designed to support policy decision-making. A codebook was developed, piloted, revised, and then independently applied by two researchers to each interview. Researchers met to reach consensus on coding, and interviews were analyzed for common themes aligned with the House Bill 66 focus areas.

### Interview Participants

Interview participants represented all seven applied focus areas identified in House Bill 66, with many individuals reporting expertise in multiple areas. Sixty percent of interviewees identified as Alaska Native. Participants had an average of 20 years of experience in justice-related or adjacent fields and represented diverse regions of Alaska, including urban, rural, and remote communities.

### Key Findings by HB 66 Focus Area

### Tribal Courts, Diversion, and Restorative Justice

Participants noted a positive trend in the State of Alaska's recognition of Tribal Courts. Several participants agreed that Tribal Courts can be effective and should be supported by the state, and expressed that judgment from Alaska Native Elders may be taken more seriously.

> *"as an Inuk human being, I would be deathly afraid to be sitting in a tribal court where there's all these Elders that are going to pass judgment on me. That'll straighten me up really quick in a hurry."*

Additionally, Tribal Courts were cited for positively addressing intergenerational trauma, allowing people to stay within the community, and increasing tribal sovereignty, cultural alignment, and community-driven problem-solving. Participants noted a lack of capacity and state support for full implementation.

### Early Interventions with Youth

Participants highlighted the impacts of the "school to prison pipeline," the idea of punitive school policies and structures leading to an increase in conflict at schools and engagement with the criminal justice system. This "pipeline" is especially active for students of color and contributes to the over-incarceration of Alaska Native people.

> *"When you're talking about doing prevention work, it's catching them at the right time. The earlier you reach them, the longer and the stronger those messages become, because those children, they're just so willing and pliable at a younger age. Once they start reaching 14, 15 years old, they've been basically institutionalized in their upside-down way. It's really difficult to change those behaviors that cause the recidivism."*

Participants suggested that a key way to keep Alaska Native youth out of incarceration systems is to support their connection with Elders and assist them in developing a strong cultural identity. Participants noted a lack of available mental health-based interventions and assessments, especially in rural communities where youth may go for extended periods of time without receiving intervention for serious mental health concerns.

### Mental Health

For many participants, supporting connection with Alaska Native identity and culture was the primary way to prevent incarceration and recidivism. In some cases, this meant addressing and rebuilding relationships with Alaska Native people and communities, who have experienced generational trauma. Participants also recommended providing mental health services for youth and allowing youth to connect with Elders, who can ground them in identity and Alaska Native ways of life.

> *"Boating, camping, hiking, four-wheeling, spending family time with my grandkids, my daughters. Just being in their life, present in their life, cooking moose up and stuff like that, and having them come over and eat. Just having that community around you again, and reintroduced back into who am I supposed to be? That's what really worked for me. That's the best way that I could stay out of prison, is just being part of something bigger, like a community, and you can build your community, you could have it of whoever you want in your community, your family members, your friends, whoever you feel most safe, and most welcomed and honored."*

### Housing

Participants emphasized the importance of low-barrier Housing First approaches that provide shelter, with prerequisites for sobriety or employment eligibility. Participants also noted a severe shortage of accessible and affordable housing, especially in rural areas, where limited options drive up costs and reduce stability. High barriers to housing access, especially for individuals with an incarceration history, further constrict options and, in some cases, may lead individuals to intentionally seek arrest as a means of securing shelter.

> *"From housing, you can go on to employment, and you can go on to education, and you can go on to better health. I've seen the impact that the lack of affordable housing, or having the lack of housing, period, what that does to families. And oftentimes, I see that people see ex-offenders or previously incarcerated people as individuals, and don't really understand that they're connected to families. If an individual has a problem with finding permanent housing that's stable and affordable and in a decent neighborhood so that you don't get drawn back into the same scenarios, it impacts the entire family."*

### Substance Misuse Treatment

Participants shared the need both to reduce the wait time for substance misuse treatment services and increase the number of people in the substance misuse treatment workforce. They encouraged wider expansion of Tribal substance misuse treatment resources, including inpatient treatment centers, and continued funding of culturally-responsive programming. Participants noted that addressing housing, early childhood experiences and mental health would help support those seeking substance misuse services.

*If I'm taking people out to go check their fish traps and things, I have to get very creative to be able to deliver services in a way that would actually have any impact for people at all in communities. It's not going to be cognitive behavioral therapies, and treatments in clinic [...] it just was so clear that we needed a different kind of service model, and that it needed to be reimbursable, and it absolutely needed to be tailored and delivered within the community and cultural context that people's lives were being lived. Otherwise, it just wasn't going to work."*

**Workforce Education and Mentorship**

Most responses focused on workforce development for those working in the justice system, rather than education for people who are incarcerated or at risk of incarceration. Participants noted that, while there is still more work to be done, there have been improvements in the education, training, and overall attitude of people working in the justice system towards Alaska Native people. One participant noted;

*"it's really refreshing, it's really cool to be able to talk to a [parole officer] and say [...] 'should we do this recommendation or that recommendation?', instead of, 'well, you know what, they're just being an ass, we need to lock them up and let them think about their behavior.' You know, that kind of mentality is really disappearing in the field."*

Participants noted a justice system workforce largely from outside the state; cross-cultural communication challenges (i.e. body language miscommunication); and high turnover. Participants noted barriers to Alaska Native people entering the criminal justice workforce, including lower high school graduation rates and difficulty navigating college far from home. Participants identified a need for an increased Alaska Native workforce and increased Alaska Native cultural training for those who work in the justice system.

*"they need to start hiring more Native correctional officers and probation officers. They need to be hiring more lawyers, Native attorneys that can either act as public defenders, or in the prosecutor's office. We need more Native judges."*

**Other Findings**

Outside of the focus areas, participants emphasized the need for people to stay in their own communities to access mental health and substance misuse treatment, as well as complete probation and parole requirements from their home community. Transporting people into urban areas was viewed as a driver of both increased homelessness and recidivism.

*"To me, it contributes to homelessness in Anchorage, in Fairbanks, in Ketchikan, in Juneau. Because a lot of times these court orders [...] say they have to stay in these urban places to receive anger management, alcoholism treatment, they gotta receive evidence that they know how to get a job, and how to get around. But they don't support them. They just kind of toss them out there, and you have to try to survive. And a lot of them fail. They end up on the streets, and then they get re-arrested for hanging out with other felons. So, consequently,a lot of native inmates are doing time on the installment plan, as I call it. Because they get violated again, and it's kind of a never-ending cycle. Some inmates whose original sentence was 3 or 4 years can end up serving much longer periods of time because of those violations."*

Additionally, the ongoing nature of disproportionate incarceration, as well as the holistic approaches required to adequately address this issue, led some participants to recommend developing a task force focused on reducing incarceration among Alaska Native people.

*"A task force that could really [bring] people together to come up with a comprehensive plan and bring that back to the legislature. That's actually a really tangible thing, and they don't have to come up with the answer. They have to come up with bringing the people together who can come up with the answer, and it doesn't mean they have to accept it or not, but to really come together and systematically look at all of these factors that we know and come up with an idea."*

# COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

**Listening Session Summary**
AFN Annual Convention
October 17, 2025 | 12:30 PM

AFN hosted a community listening session during the Annual AFN Convention on Oct 17, 2025, with UAA, UAF, and DOC. This listening session provided an opportunity for Alaska Native community members, tribal representatives, and stakeholders to share their experiences and recommendations related to the disproportionate incarceration of Alaska Native peoples. The following summary reflects concerns and suggestions expressed by participants.

**1. Root Causes of Disproportionate Incarceration**
Participants identified several factors contributing to the disproportionately high incarceration rates of Alaska Native peoples:

- **Early Childhood Challenges:** Many emphasized the importance of strong family values, cultural grounding, and early support to prevent youth from entering harmful cycles involving substance use and disengagement from school.
- **Limited Tribal Jurisdiction:** The lack of tribal authority over tribal citizens is viewed as a significant systemic barrier, limiting community-driven approaches to justice and accountability.
- **Misleading or Incomplete Data:** Some participants questioned the accuracy and interpretation of existing data, noting Alaska's unique demographic distribution and the potential for statistics to be misunderstood.
- **Historical Trauma:** Intergenerational trauma, land loss, and the impacts of colonization were repeatedly identified as core contributors that must be acknowledged before meaningful change can occur.
- **Multi-system Failure:** Many people entering the justice system have been failed by other systems, such as foster care, housing, and behavioral health systems.
- **Geographic Limitations:** Participants shared concerns about individuals being sent out of state, separating them from land, language, and community— further harming their ability to heal.

**2. Needed Changes at the Community, State, and System Levels**
Participants offered a range of recommendations to reduce incarceration and strengthen community well-being:

**Community-Level Solutions**

- Increased support for community-based, culturally grounded healing programs, including traditional activities, subsistence practices, and family-centered approaches.
- Encouraging parents and caregivers to teach traditional knowledge, values, and ways of living to younger generations.
- Expanding access to proactive programs that focus on wellness, cultural identity, and early intervention.

**State and System-Level Solutions**

- The DOC and courts need to examine their practices and improve communication, consistency, and transparency:
  - Pursue policy and structural changes that do not require extensive time to implement.
  - Address communication and language barriers, including complex forms and processes that can require outside legal assistance.

- Addressing transportation hardships for rural inmates and ensuring safe, humane handling. Strengthening the detox system, including preventing premature or unsafe releases.
- Develop healing and recovery spaces in every region and facility.
- Improving systems that intersect with DOC, including foster care, healthcare, and housing, to reduce pathways into incarceration.
- Increase DOC presence in positive community events, such as graduations, to help with support and partnership.
- Provide inmates with opportunities to give back through service, mentorship, and community engagement.
- Explicitly address land loss, cultural disconnection, and historical and intergenerational trauma.

**3. Experiences and Stories Shared**

Community members shared deeply personal stories highlighting the need for compassion, connection, and cultural identity within correctional and justice systems:

- Many were taught to visit hospitals and jails to show community members that they are cared for. Participants stressed the importance of reinforcing strong family values, reducing substance abuse, and teaching cultural traditions.
- Recent cultural programming at Palmer Correctional Center, including talking circles, demonstrated healing among participants. Men were encouraged to identify their personal gifts, such as sharing, listening, or surviving trauma, which helped them reconnect with their identity and self-worth.
- Several individuals emphasized the importance of being allowed to share their stories: “I’m allowed to be a human being.”
- Also brought up was the overrepresentation of Alaska Native men in low-wage labor, and the need for their voices to be included in listening sessions.

**Closing Reflections**

Participants emphasized the urgency of listening to Alaska Native voices and honoring the stories shared. While community members expressed readiness to contribute to solutions, they stressed that Alaska Native people cannot and should not be the only ones responsible for repairing systems that have historically harmed them. True progress requires equitable partnerships and shared responsibility across all levels of government and society.

The session concluded with a strong consensus:
**Healing must be culturally grounded, community-driven, and accessible, and the work must begin now.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANK YOU

The authors thank the project team for their leadership and contributions to this work. We are grateful to the community members who participated in listening sessions, interviews, surveys, and reached out to us to share their experiences, insights, and ideas. We also acknowledge the DOC for providing data and support, and the UAA and UAF teams for their research collaboration, and the Advisory Team for their time, sharing their knowledge and guidance. This study was a true community approach to identifying solutions.

**We look forward to continued collaboration to implement the report's recommendations and advance meaningful action.**

**Mahsì' choo • Quyana • Chin'an • Gunalchéesh • Taikuu • Háw'aa • N'toyxsm • Qagaliqux • Tsin'aen • Quyanaa • Enaa Baasee' • Thank You**

# MEET THE TEAM

# AFN TEAM

## BENJAMIN MALLOTT, MPA.

Ben Mallott currently serves as President of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), a position he assumed in October 2024. Prior to becoming President, he served as Vice President of External Affairs at AFN, where he supported various committees, including the AFN Subsistence Committee, Executive Governance Committee, and Resolutions Committee, while cultivating relationships across federal, state, and local levels. Ben has also worked as a Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, focusing on policy areas affecting Alaska Natives and rural Alaska communities. In addition to his leadership at AFN, Ben is involved in several organizations, serving as Chair of the Alaska Humanities Forum, a board member of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, a member of the Nature Conservancy of Alaska Board of Trustees, and as a member of his village corporation, Baan O Yeel Kon Corporation. Ben holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science with a concentration in Natural Resource Policy and Pre-Law from Oregon State University and a Master's in Public Administration and Policy from American University in Washington, D.C.

## KENDRA KLOSTER, MPA.

Kendra (Kahtle-et) Kloster (Tlingit/German/Irish) is the Director of Government Relations at AFN. She was born in the beautiful community of Wrangell, Alaska, and spent most of her childhood in Juneau, and is currently raising her three children on Dena'ina lands in Anchorage. Kendra is Tlingit Raven/Kiks.a'di of the Sun House and is a tribal citizen of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. Kendra is also a co-founder/co-director of the MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group, which is dedicated to advocating, educating, and creating healing centered spaces related to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Crisis. Kendra holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Fort Lewis College and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage. Kendra has spent many years in policy as staff in the Alaska State Legislature and staff for US Senator Ted Stevens. "I am passionate about working for our communities and Indigenous people to ensure everyone is safe in their home and can continue to hunt, fish, and gather. It is our responsibility to take care of our lands, water and people so our future generations can thrive."

## AUTUMN CANTU, BSW.

Autumn Cantu is a proud Koyukon Athabascan from Ruby, Alaska, deeply connected to her culture and community. Guided by her roots, she's passionate about creating meaningful, lasting change across Alaska. Autumn holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and is preparing to pursue her Master's in the same field. She currently serves as the Initiatives Director at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), where she helps lead efforts that strengthen communities, uplift Indigenous voices, and protect traditional ways of life. With experience as an Executive Director and as the owner of Cantu Tactics & Consulting (CTC), Autumn brings years of leadership in communications, outreach, direct client services, and strategic development. Her past work includes roles with Native Peoples Action, Native Movement (The MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group), The Mobilization Center, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and Recover Alaska, among others. Throughout her career, Autumn has focused on building partnerships, promoting wellness, and empowering future generations. She's a strong advocate for Indigenous sovereignty, community healing, and the preservation of cultural identity. At her core, Autumn believes in always doing what's right, even when it's difficult. Her integrity and courage have guided her through challenging moments and continue to inspire those around her to lead with honesty, empathy, and purpose. When she's not working, you can find Autumn enjoying the outdoors with her family or curled up with a good book.

# ADVISORY TEAM

## CHARLENE AQPIK APOK, MA, PHD.

Aqpik is Iñupiaq, her family is from White Mountain and Golovin, AK. She is mother to Evan Lukluan. Aqpik has served in many spaces as an advocate for Indigenous womxn, Indigenous sovereignty, climate justice and Indigenous rights to health and wellbeing. Aqpik is a lifelong learner in both her cultural traditions and decolonizing academia. She earned her B.A in American Ethnic Studies with a minor in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies, an M.A in Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development and PhD in Indigenous Studies. She is concurrently the Executive Director of Data for Indigenous Justice, and Co-Founder to the Alaska Native Birthworkers Community and owns a small business, Cloudberry Consulting. Previous to these she worked in tribal health as a researcher serving Alaska Native and American Indian peoples. Aqpik gratefully resides in Anchorage on the territories of the Dena'ina peoples.

## DOREEN QATASURUQ SCHENKENBERGER, MBA.

Doreen Qatasuruq Schenkenberger has been active in promoting therapeutic justice throughout the state of Alaska for over 20 years. Originally from Nome, Alaska, Doreen has worked in program development, financial management, and grant writing to secure funding for reformative justice programs in rural Alaska. She is the Chief Executive Officer of Partners for Progress, an Anchorage-based Social Justice non-profit that works to reduce recidivism, unnecessary incarceration, and increase public safety. Doreen is a founding member of the Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni Group (AKTCA), a statewide peer support group supporting reentry, recovery, and therapeutic courts. Doreen has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Management from the University of Alaska Anchorage and an MBA in Health Services Administration from Alaska Pacific University.

## RICK A. HASKINS-GARCIA, ESQUIRE

Rick A. Haskins-Garcia, Esq., serves as the Director of Law and Policy for the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) and as a Tribal Judge for the Chickaloon Native Village. Rick was born in West Germany and raised in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Since 2018, Rick has provided training and technical assistance to Alaska tribal courts and justice systems and has served as the Tribal Justice Director and Associate General Counsel for AVCP and as the District Court Magistrate Judge for the Alaska Court System's 4th Judicial District, based in Aniak and Hooper Bay. Rick graduated cum laude from the Southern Illinois School of Law in 2009 and received his bachelor's degree in Political Science cum laude from Florida Atlantic University in 2004. Rick has been a licensed Attorney for over fourteen years and is licensed in the state courts of Florida and Alaska and in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

## ALEX CLEGHORN, BA, JD.

Alex Cleghorn was born in Anchorage and raised in Fairbanks. He is of Alutiiq descent and a tribal citizen of Tangirnaq Native Village. He is a shareholder of Natives of Kodiak, Koniag, and CIRI. A licensed attorney in Alaska, California, and several tribal jurisdictions, Alex serves as the Chief Policy Officer at the Alaska Native Justice Center, where he helps direct the legal and policy agenda to advance justice for Alaska Native people. He also provides training and technical assistance for tribal justice initiatives.

# UAF TEAM

**Katie Cueva, ScD MAT MPH** is an Associate Professor with the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). She was born in Mt. Edgecumbe Alaska and raised mostly on the homelands of the Dena'ina people in Anchorage, where she continues to live. Her work focuses on Community Based Participatory Action Research; working in partnership with communities and organizations to help address their priorities to support health and well-being. Dr. Cueva helped lead the UAF portion of this project (interviews, surveys, and literature review), and is grateful both to have a fantastic team, and to be learning from experts throughout Alaska working to prevent incarceration and recidivism. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Stanford University, a Master of Arts in Teaching from The University of Alaska Southeast, a Master of Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a dual doctoral degree in Public Health Nutrition and Social and Behavioral Sciences from the Harvard Chan School of Public Health.

**Ay'aqulluk Jim Chaliak (Yup'ik), BA,** formerly the Prevention Services Director for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, currently a co-Investigator at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Mr. Chaliak has extensive training through UAF's Rural Human Services and Social Work programs. Mr. Chaliak served as a community research assistant on the Alaska Native Collaborative Hub for Research on Resilience (ANCHRR) and was the primary interviewer in the collection of 264 surveys in rural Alaska, as well as a collaborator with Dr. Cueva on a COVID-19 case study in the rural Yukon Kuskokwim region. Mr. Chaliak was part of the UAF team for this project.

**Fiona Rowles, MS** is a research professional with CANHR. She has a master's degree from UAF in natural resources management, and is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Malawi '17-'19). She also works on projects related to cancer education, traditional food systems, and climate change and stress. Ms. Rowles co-led the UAF portion of this project.

**Raymond Dacosta Azadda, MS** is a statistician with CANHR, where he applies statistical methods and computational tools to health research in Alaska Native communities. His work focuses on multilevel modeling, Bayesian methods, and machine learning, with a particular focus on accelerometry and physical activity measurements. Mr. Azadda led the quantitative analyses for the UAF team.

**Lena Thompson, PhD MPH** is a public health-trained behavioral scientist with interests in conducting community-engaged work with AN/AI Elders on the topics of aging, disaster preparedness, and caregiving support. She earned her PhD at the University of Iowa College of Public Health, Department of Community and Behavioral Health and is now a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for One Health Research at the University of Alaska College of Indigenous Studies Center for One Health Research. Dr. Thompson was part of the UAF team for this project, conducting and analyzing interviews.

**Lauren Kiker, MS** is a fourth year doctoral student in the University of Alaska Anchorage's Clinical-Community Psychology program. Lauren's research interests are in developing and evaluating the effectiveness of harm reduction based interventions, promoting the well-being of sexual and gender minority individuals, and understanding how oppressive systems influence mental health. Lauren was part of the UAF team for this project, conducting and analyzing interviews.

**Hannah Robinson, MPH** is a project director at CANHR, where she works on research projects that show the strengths of Alaska Native communities. She enjoys working closely with and getting to know community members. She is grateful to interview a few people for this project.

# UAA TEAM

**Brad A. Myrstol, Ph.D** is the Assistant Dean of the School of Justice and Human Services. Brad began working in the UAA Justice Center in 2002 as a research associate when he was still a doctoral student at Indiana University. During his four years working as a Justice Center staff researcher, Brad completed his Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees, and he conducted his dissertation research with the Anchorage Police Department. Dr. Mystrol then moved Outside for three years before returning to the UAA Justice Center in 2009 – this time as a tenure-track Assistant Professor. He's been at UAA ever since. Dr. Mystrol's research spans many areas within criminology, but centers primarily on policing, as well as various aspects of criminal justice response to sexual assault and intimate partner violence. In his time at UAA Dr. Mystrol has served in several faculty, leadership, and administrative roles. Dr. Mystrol is the founding director of the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC), and prior to assuming the role of Assistant Dean of the School of Justice and Human Services he served as both director and chair of the UAA Justice Center.

# DOC TEAM

**Sandy Martinson** is a Koyukon Athabascan raised in Beaver, Alaska, where she spent her early years hunting, trapping, and living a subsistence lifestyle. For the past 24 years, she proudly served the State of Alaska in various capacities within the Department of Corrections, including roles as a Probation/Parole Officer, Lieutenant, Superintendent, and Deputy Director of Institutions. Her academic journey led her to earn a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's degree in Administration of Justice from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Beyond her professional commitments, she is an active community leader, dedicated to the success and well-being of her community. Over the years, she served on several boards and committees, including the Nome Public School Board, Seaside Advisory Board, Nome Reentry Coalition Taskforce, Sex Offender Treatment Provider Committee, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Public Safety Coalition, and the Annual Jail Research Network Team. Additionally, I she enjoyed being a Girl Scout Leader. The past two decades she focused on public safety, and led projects, and teams targeting fiscal responsibility, time and resource improvements, and interagency collaboration.

# RESOURCE PAGE

**Resources and reports used with recommendations, stories, and cultural insight related to reducing AI/AN incarceration:**


- Alyce Spotted Bear & Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children. *The Way Forward: Report.* https://udallcenter.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2024-07/TheWayForward.pdf. Feb 29, 2024.
- Administration for Native Americans. *Improving Outcomes for American Indian/Alaska Native People Returning to the Community from Incarceration: A Resource Guide for Service Providers.* https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/87b6927ebbd6583df77f31ef4648cbac/improving-aian-reentry-toolkit.pdf. October, 2021.
- Department of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Tribal Youth Programs and Services. https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/tribal-youth-programs-and-services
- Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center.(n.d.). *Home*. https://www.atjrc.org/reentry-programs/
- Alaska Native Justice Center. https://anjc.org
- Congressional Research Service. Congress.Gov.
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Reentry & Restorative Justice Services. https://citci.org/reentry-restorative-justice-services-adults/
- Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/media/document/ctas-a9-tribal-youth-program.pdf
- Indian Health Services – Funding Opportunities, Division of Grants Management. https://www.ihs.gov/dgm/funding/
- National Reentry Resource Center, https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/second-chance-act;
- Not Invisible Act Commission. *Not One More: Findings & Recommendations of the Not Invisible Act Commission (Final report).* National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/files/34%20NIAC%20Final%20Report_version%2011.1.23_FINAL_0.pdf. November 1, 2023.
- Ray, Ryan and Madison, Alli. Reducing criminal recidivism in Alaska: The Set Free Model. Journal of Community Safety and Wellbeing. https://doaj.org/article/47acdbf6940944cb89b57a211409ef3f.September 2023
- Recidivism Reduction Joint Annual Report: State of Alaska Department of Health and Alaska Department of Corrections. https://health.alaska.gov/media/yqgpi4hz/fy2023_doh-doc-rrap.pdf . FY 2023.
- Reentry and Housing Stability: Final Report. US Department of Health and Human Services. https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/49f0895779c6b984a9261c96f747e707/reentry-housing-stability.pdf. December, 2024.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Native Connections. https://www.samhsa.gov/communities/tribal-affairs/funding-opportunities/native-connections
- The Council of State Governments, Justice Center, Second Chance Act Grant Center. https://csgjusticecenter.org/?post_type=publication&p=23589
- Congressional Research Service. (2025). Federal grant funding structures and justice-related funding opportunities [Unpublished memorandum prepared in response to a congressional or stakeholder request]. Congressional Research Service.
- Myrstol, B. A., Jones, C., & Moffat, B. (2025, December). Alaska Native disparities in Alaska jails and prisons: An exploratory study and descriptive analysis (Unpublished report). Submitted to Alaska Federation of Natives.
- Rowles, F., & Cueva, K. (2025, December). Findings on preventing the disproportionate incarceration and recidivism of Alaska Native people. Center for Alaska Native Health, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Completed in partial fulfillment of a contractual agreement with the Alaska Federation of Natives.

# APPENDIX 1:
# UAA ALASKA JUSTICE INFORMATION CENTER REPORT: ALASKA NATIVE DISPARITIES IN ALASKA JAILS AND PRISONS AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

# Alaska Native Disparities in Alaska Jails and Prisons

## An Exploratory Study and Descriptive Analysis

**Submitted to:**
**Alaska Federation of Natives**

**By:**


**Brad A. Myrstol**
**AJiC Director**

**Cheryl Jones**
**AJiC Research Professional**

**Rus'sel Sampson**
**AJiC Research Professional**

**Bri Moffat**
**AJiC Research Professional**


**December 2025**


Alaska Justice Information Center
University of Alaska Anchorage

Alaska Justice Information Center
University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska 99508


Printed in the United States of America

# Executive Summary

## Purpose

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) contracted with the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) to conduct a study of the over-representation of Alaska Natives in ADOC facilities. AJiC's research task was twofold: (1) to conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of the research literature examining racial disproportionalities in American jails and prisons, and (2) to analyze Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC) data to identify factors that may contribute to the over-representation of Alaska Natives in ADOC's inmate population.

The systematic review of the empirical and theoretical literatures on racial disproportionality in United States jails and prisons was undertaken with three objectives in mind: to describe the racial composition of the Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC) institutions and the extent to which racial disparities exist; to compare the current state of affairs with respect to racial disparities in ADOC institutions with other states and the U.S. as a whole; and, to review factors impacting jail and prison disparities in the U.S.

The analysis of ADOC data took as its starting point the following assertion: Inmate populations housed at each of the correctional facilities administered by ADOC are the culmination, the apotheosis, of decisions made by other actors. Like all correctional systems in the U.S., ADOC exerts little direct influence over either the size or the demographic composition of the population in its custody. Both the number of people in ADOC custody and their demographic characteristics are almost entirely determined by decisions and actions made by others, before they arrive at ADOC.

Consistent with this perspective, analysis of ADOC data focused on developing an empirical understanding of the demographic composition of ADOC's institutional population at the stage of the criminal legal process when defendants are first brought to ADOC: booking. It is at booking when law enforcement agencies remand individuals into ADOC custody following arrest and thus booking represents the raw inputs into Alaska correctional system – inputs from which all other empirical portraits of ADOC's inmates are derived. Therefore, a full understanding of ADOC institutional populations and their demographic characteristics – including the over-representation of Alaska Natives – must begin with a detailed examination of this critical stage of the criminal legal process, and it is a detailed empirical description of the who, where, what and why of ADOC bookings that this study provides.

# Summary of Findings

## Part I: Literature Review

*The racial composition of Alaska's correctional system.*

- Alaska is one of only six states in the U.S. that operate a unified correctional system. In a unified correctional system, both jails and prisons are administered by a single, statewide entity.
  - Within the Alaska correctional system context, many ADOC facilities function as both jails and prisons simultaneously, and their populations are mixed with respect to inmate legal status.
  - Estimates of the racial/ethnic group composition of ADOC's inmate population reflect all individuals in institutional custody, irrespective of offense or legal status.
- In 2023, Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised 42.2% of inmates under institutional supervision, 28.6% of those on pre-trial supervision, and 38.5% of those supervised on probation/parole.
- The percentage of Alaska Native/American Indian inmates in ADOC facilities has increased markedly in recent years after an extended period of stability, from 34.5% in 2016 to 42.2% in 2023.
- As of 2023, the percentage of Alaska Native/American Indian inmates in ADOC facilities was 2.5 larger than the percentage of Alaska Natives/American Indians in the Alaska adult population (42.2% vs. 16.9%).

*The racial composition of U.S. jails and prison*

- Alaska Native/American Indian jail (1.3%) and prison (1.5%) populations in the U.S. have been consistent for more than a decade.
- In the aggregate, Alaska Natives/American Indians are under-represented in the total population of inmates in U.S. jails and prisons (as of 2022).
- Alaska's Alaska Native/American Indian disparities in ADOC facilities were directly compared to those of other state jurisdictions on three dimensions: (1) Public Law 280 states, (2) states with substantial indigenous populations, and (3) states with unified correctional systems. Among the 17 states examined (Alaska plus 16 comparison states) across these three analytic dimensions:
  - Alaska ranked 7th using jail disparity data for comparison, below South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin, and Nebraska.
  - Alaska ranked 5th using prison disparity data for comparison, below Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana.

- The peer-review literature examining the racial composition of U.S. jails (including racial disparities) is limited. Among the studies published, the following factors have been shown to impact jail admissions and populations:
  - Region/jurisdiction
  - Region/jurisdiction racial composition
  - Region/jurisdiction political conservativism
  - Region/jurisdiction criminal justice capacity
  - Region/jurisdiction socioeconomic conditions
- Like the peer-review literature examining the racial composition of U.S. jails, the peer-review literature examining the racial composition of U.S. prisons (including racial disparities) is limited. Among the studies published, the following factors have been shown to impact jail admissions and populations:
  - Of the several factors shown to impact prison racial compositions, the most influential is differential involvement in crime.
  - Region/jurisdiction
  - Region/jurisdiction political conservativism
  - Region/jurisdiction socioeconomic conditions
  - Region/jurisdiction racial composition

## Part II: Alaska Department of Corrections Booking Data Analyses

*Racial/ethnic composition of bookings.*

- The percentage of Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities was 2.5 larger than the percentage of Alaska Natives/American Indians in the Alaska adult population (43.0% vs. 16.9%).
  - These findings suggest – strongly – that the racial/ethnic disparities observed in ADOC facilities, in general, are established at the earliest stage of the incarceration process: immediately upon transfer of custody from law enforcement agencies to ADOC at booking.

*Jurisdictional context.*

Bookings into ADOC custody do not occur in a single jurisdiction; they occur in every region of the state, making it important to examine their jurisdictional contexts to understand regional distributions of ADOC bookings, and how racial/ethnic disparities in booking patterns vary by context. Four aspects of jurisdictional context were analyzed: judicial district, jurisdictional trial court, arresting agency, and ADOC facility.

- Across all four Alaska judicial districts, Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were over-represented. Estimated disparity ratios ranged from +1.5

in the 2nd Judicial District to +4.0 in the 3rd Judicial District, with the 1st and 4th Judicial Districts both coming in at +2.6.

- Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort were, without exception, proportionally over-represented in jurisdictional trial courts – even in communities and regions in which Alaska Natives/American Indians are majority populations. Disparity ratios ranged from +1.2 (Bethel and Dillingham District Courts) to +5.1 in Fairbanks District Court, with several courts having disparity ratios of +4.0 and higher (Anchorage District and Superior Courts, Fairbanks Superior Court, and Juneau Superior Court).
- The Bethel (96.1%), North Slope Borough (92.3%), Nome (92.1%), and Dillingham (81.9%) police departments had the highest percentages of Alaska Native/American Indian arrestees, but the largest estimated Alaska Native/American Indian arrest rate disparity ratios were observed for the Fairbanks (+5.9) and Anchorage (+4.9) police departments.
- The percentage of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities who were Alaska Native/ American Indian varied widely, ranging from 15 percent to more than 95 percent.
    - The highest concentrations of Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities were observed at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Correctional Center (96.6%) in Bethel, the Anvil Mountain Correctional Center (95.9%) in Nome, and the contract jails in Barrow (91.8%) and Dillingham (85.8%). Combined, these four facilities accounted for approximately a third (n=1,787; 32.7%) of all bookings of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members.
    - The Anchorage Correctional Complex alone accounted for more than 39 percent of all bookings of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members statewide.

*Criminal offenses.*

The analysis of the criminal offenses included an overall description of *misdemeanor crimes* and *felony crimes*, respectively, regardless of crime type. Focus then shifted to six criminal offense categories that were most frequently observed in the booking data, beginning with *violent offenses* and then proceeding through descriptive analyses of *property offenses*, *public order* offenses*, OUI/DUI* offenses, *controlled substances offenses*, and *probation and/or parole violations.*

- Alaska Natives/American Indians were 42.7% of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanor offenses.

    - More than two-thirds (67.2%) of Alaska Native/American Indian members of the cohort were booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanors.
- Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised the largest share of booking cohort members remanded into ADOC institutional custody for felony offenses (44.0% of all felony bookings).
    - Approximately one-third (31.7%) of Alaska Native/American Indian members of the cohort were booked into ADOC for felonies.
- Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities constituted a majority or preponderance of individuals in every one of the violent crimes examined. More specifically, Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members comprised:
    - 52.5% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for assault (52.4% of misdemeanor assault bookings, 53.8% of felony assault bookings).
    - 60.3% of all those booked into ADOC for sexual assault.
    - 53.2% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for sexual abuse of a minor.
    - 46.5% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for homicide.
    - 38.4% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for robbery.
    - Overall, Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised more than half (52.4%) of all individuals booked into ADOC for violent crimes.
- Among all cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for violent felonies, more than half (53.4%) were Alaska Native/American Indian.
- Nearly half (45.7%) of all Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were remanded into ADOC facilities for violent offenses (misdemeanor or felony).
- The likelihood that Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked for a property offense was no different than for other racial/ethnic groups.
- Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort were significantly less likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be booked for misconduct involving weapons (MIW) offenses, but significantly more likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be remanded for disorderly conduct.
- Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort, along with their Asian or Pacific Islander and black counterparts, were significantly less likely than whites to be booked into ADOC facilities for operating under the influence/driving under the influence (OUI/DUI).
- Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort were significantly less likely than members of all other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for controlled substances offenses.
- Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort comprised 51.8% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for probations violations and 41.4% of those booked for parole violations.

- 5.8% of Alaska Natives/American Indians were booked for probation violations.
- 1.0% of Alaska Natives/American Indians were booked for parole violations.

## Key Findings and Discussion

Of the many empirical findings cited above, we highlight three here:

**The over-representation of Alaska Natives/American Indians in ADOC inmate populations is established at the point of entry into Alaska's correctional system.**

> Because this (and other) disparity is set immediately upon booking – when custody transfers from law enforcement to the ADOC – internal departmental polices, practices, and programs have limited power to alter the racial composition of the incarcerated population. To achieve a meaningful reduction in racial and ethnic disparities among the ADOC inmate population, reform efforts must be directed "upstream" to the stages of the criminal process that precede ADOC custody.

**Across every violent crime category analyzed, Alaska Natives/American Indians accounted for the preponderance or majority of ADOC bookings, with a notable concentration in misdemeanor assault offenses.**

> While these are indirect measures of criminal behavior, the findings highlight an urgent need for focused attention from policymakers and practitioners across both justice and non-justice domains. Achieving lasting reductions in the over-representation of Alaska Natives/American Indians in ADOC institutions requires implementing effective primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention efforts aimed at reducing the incidence of criminal conduct. Because violent offenses dramatically increase the likelihood and duration of incarceration, violent crime prevention is a vital for reducing racial and ethnic disparities in ADOC.

**Racial disparities for Alaska Natives/American Indians in ADOC facilities fall within the middle range of Public Law 280 states, unified correctional systems, and states with substantial Indigenous populations.**

> That Alaska's Indigenous incarceration rates fall squarely within the national average for similar states demonstrates that Alaska's incarceration disparities are part of a larger, national issue. While Alaska's mid-range standing shows progress relative to some peers, these findings can serve as a vital catalyst for state leaders to analyze and tackle the systemic drivers of Alaska Native/American Indian over-representation in Alaska's jails and prisons.

# Table of Contents


Executive Summary..... iii

Table of Contents..... x

Tables, Figures, & Exhibits..... xiii

Part I: Literature Review.....1

Introduction..... 2

The Racial Composition of Alaska's Correctional System.....4

A clarification of concepts: Difference, disparity, and discrimination.....7

Racial disparity in Alaska Department of Corrections institutions.....8

Racial Disparities in U.S. Jails and Prisons.....11

Why examine both prisons *and* jails?.....12

The racial composition of U.S. jails and prisons.....14

The need for disaggregation of U.S. jail and prison data.....18

Jail racial compositions in Public Law 280 states.....18

Jail racial compositions in states with substantial indigenous populations.....19

Prison racial compositions in Public Law 280 states.....20

Prison racial compositions in states with substantial indigenous populations.....21

Prison racial compositions in states with unified correctional systems.....22

Summary of jail and prison racial composition comparisons.....23

Factors Impacting Racial Disparities in U.S. Jails.....25

Factors impacting local jail *admissions*.....25

Jurisdictional racial composition and distribution.....25

Socioeconomic conditions.....26

Criminal justice system capacity.....26

Additional factors impacting jail admissions.....27

Factors impacting local jail *populations.*.....27

Jurisdictional racial composition and distribution..... 28
Socioeconomic conditions..... 28
Criminal justice system capacity..... 29
Jurisdictional crime rates..... 30
Region..... 30
Urbanicity..... 30
Additional factors impacting jail populations..... 31
Summary..... 31
Factors Impacting Racial Disparities in U.S. Prisons..... 34
Differential involvement in crime..... 34
Political conservativism..... 35
Region..... 35
Socioeconomic conditions..... 36
Community racial composition..... 36
Urbanicity..... 36
Summary..... 37
References cited..... 40
Part II: Alaska Department of Corrections Booking Data Descriptive Analyses..... 43
Alaska Department of Correction Booking Data..... 44
Data Description..... 44
Demographic Characteristics..... 45
Jurisdictional Context of Booking..... 48
Judicial District..... 50
Jurisdictional Tribal Court..... 51
Arrest/Remand Agency..... 53
ADOC Correctional Facilities..... 55
Summary: Jurisdictional Context of Booking..... 56

Criminal Offenses..... 57
Misdemeanor Offenses..... 58
Felony Crime..... 59
Violent Offenses..... 61
Assault..... 62
Robbery..... 62
Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse of a Minor..... 63
Summary: Violent Offenses..... 63
Violent Felony Offenses..... 64
Property Offenses..... 65
Criminal Mischief..... 66
Theft..... 66
Trespassing..... 67
Burglary..... 67
Arson..... 67
Summary: Property Offenses..... 67
Public Order Offenses..... 68
Misconduct Involving Weapons..... 68
Disorderly Conduct..... 69
Summary: Public Order Offenses..... 69
Motor Vehicles: Offenses and Accidents..... 70
Operating Under the Influence..... 71
Controlled Substances..... 72
Probation and Parole Violations..... 73
Research Note: Title 47: Welfare, Social Services & Institutions..... 74
Health/Safety Detentions..... 74
Summary: Criminal Offenses..... 76

# Tables, Figures, & Exhibits

## *Tables*

**Table 1.** Percentage of persons under ADOC supervision, by racial group and supervision type: 2023..... 4
**Table 2.** U.S. jail inmate racial composition (%): 2010-2022..... 15
**Table 3.** U.S. prison inmate racial composition (%): 2010-2022..... 16
**Table 4.** Comparison of indigenous state and jail inmate populations: Public Law 280 states..... 19
**Table 5.** Comparison of indigenous state and jail inmate populations: States with indigenous populations of at least 5 percent..... 20
**Table 6.** Comparison of indigenous state and prison inmate populations: Public Law 280 states..... 21
**Table 7.** Comparison of indigenous state and prison inmate populations: States with indigenous populations of at least 5 percent..... 22
**Table 8.** Comparison of indigenous state and prison inmate populations: States with unified correctional systems..... 22
**Table 9.** Summary of comparative state-level jail and prison disparity ratios..... 23
**Table 10.** Factors predicting local jail admissions and overall populations..... 33
**Table 11.** Factors predicting prison admissions and populations..... 39
**Table 12.** Demographic Characteristics of 2019 booking cohort..... 46
**Table 13.** Estimated racial/ethnic composition of population 15 years of age and older, by Alaska judicial district and borough/census area..... 49
**Table 14.** Distribution of 2019 booking cohort members across Alaska Court System judicial districts..... 50
**Table 15.** Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by Alaska Court System judicial districts..... 51
**Table 16.** Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by Alaska Court System jurisdictional trial courts..... 52
**Table 17.** Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by arresting agency name cited in Alaska Department of Corrections cohort booking record dataset by race..... 54

**Table 18.** Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by booking facility name..... 55
**Table 19.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with misdemeanor offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 58
**Table 20.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more misdemeanor offenses in first 2019 booking event..... 59
**Table 21.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with felony offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 60
**Table 22.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more felony offenses in first 2019 booking event..... 61
**Table 23.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with violent offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 61
**Table 24.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more violent offenses in first 2019 booking event..... 64
**Table 25.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with violent felony offenses, by racial/ethnic group, and racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more violent offenses, first 2019 booking event..... 65
**Table 26.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with property offense in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 66
**Table 27.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with property offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 68
**Table 28.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with public order offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 69
**Table 29.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more public order offenses in first 2019 booking event..... 70
**Table 30.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence (OUI) offenses, by racial/ethnic group, and racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more OUI offenses, first 2019 booking event..... 71
**Table 31.** Percentage of booking cohort members charged with misconduct involving controlled substances offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 72

**Table 32.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more misconduct involving controlled substances offenses in first 2019 booking event..... 72
**Table 33.** Percentage of booking cohort members remanded into ADOC institutional custody for probation and/or parole violations in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group..... 73
**Table 34.** Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members remanded into ADOC institutional custody for probation and/or parole violations in first 2019 booking event.....74

## *Figures*

**Figure 1.** Percentage of persons under institutional supervision ("inmates"), by racial group: 1998-2023..... 5
**Figure 2.** Comparison of racial group composition: Alaska total adult population vs. ADOC inmate population, by racial group: 2023..... 9
**Figure 3.** Comparison of racial group composition: U.S. population (total) vs. U.S. prison population vs. U.S. jail population, by racial group: 2022..... 17
**Figure 4.** Comparison of racial group composition: Alaska total adult population vs. 2019 booking cohort, by racial group..... 47

## *Exhibits*

**Exhibit 1.** Booking offense likelihood ranking, by racial/ethnic group: 2019 ADOC booking cohort..... 76
**Exhibit 2.** Racial/ethnic group composition within criminal offense category, in descending order: 2019 ADOC booking cohort..... 79

# Part I

## Literature Review

Racial Disproportionality in U.S. Jails and Prisons

# Introduction

This review of the empirical and theoretical literatures on racial disproportionality in United States prisons and jails was undertaken with three objectives in mind: to describe the racial composition of the Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC) institutions and the extent to which racial disparities exist; to compare the current state of affairs with respect to racial disparities in ADOC institutions with other states and the U.S. as a whole; and, to review factors impacting jail and prison disparities in the U.S.

The first objective of this review of the literature is to compile and present for the reader racial composition data to establish a current empirical picture of racial disparities in ADOC; where Alaska is at now, as well as in the recent past. While the focus of this review is on ADOC racial disparities pertaining to Alaska Natives and American Indians, the review will examine, to the maximum extent possible, compositional disparities for all racial groups. This approach will provide essential comparative context for Alaska Native and American Indian overrepresentation in ADOC institutions and provide the opportunity to explore the extent to which other racial groups are overrepresented as well. It is important to keep in mind that it is a mathematical truism that compositional disparities in one direction (e.g., overrepresentation) observed for one or more racial groups will result in compositional disparities in the other direction (e.g., underrepresentation) for one or more racial groups. This aspect of racial disparity – underrepresentation – thus represents the flip side of the same population composition coin and is an essential element for a full understanding of ADOC population composition dynamics. Such comparisons provide an empirical basis for answering questions like:

> *Which racial groups are over/underrepresented in ADOC institutions?*
> *What is the magnitude of over/under-representation of racial groups in ADOC institutions?*

Our second objective is to empirically explore racial disproportionalities in jails and prisons across the U.S. and compare those findings with those for ADOC institutions. Documentation of racial disproportionality in U.S. jurisdictions outside Alaska is an important step because it provides important comparative context about racial disparities found in Alaska's correctional system and may offer some clues as to the processes and dynamics that may explain the racial composition of ADOC institutions. Such comparisons provide an empirical basis for answering questions like:

> *Are the racial disparities observed in Alaska's correctional system unique?*

*Do the racial disparities observed in Alaska's correctional system differ from what is observed elsewhere in the United States?*

*Can other jurisdictions' successes (or challenges) help Alaska to change the racial compositions of its institutions?*

Having developed an empirical foundation for understanding racial disproportionalities in ADOC institutions, the third step in the review process is to examine the research litera-ture pertaining to explanations of racial disparities in U.S. jails and prisons. Importantly, this portion of the review will summarize the research literature testing various theoretical formulations offered as explanations of racial disparities in U.S. jails and prisons. However, the review is not an overview or a summation of theoretical frameworks or the hypotheses derived from them. Rather, this review consists of a summary and synthesis of the scien-tific research evidence testing the explanatory power of explanatory factors shown to im-pact racial disparities in U.S. jails and prisons. The central question to be addressed in this portion of the review is this:

*Given racial/ethnic disparities in jail and prison populations and their variability across U.S. jurisdictions, what factors contribute to the production of such disparities?*

# The Racial Composition of Alaska's Correctional System

Before embarking on our review of the empirical research documenting racial disparities in other jurisdictions, we begin with an overview and discussion of the racial composition of Alaska's correctional system. The data source for the data presented below is the Alaska Department of Corrections' Offender Profile reports, which are published annually.

Table 1 shows the racial composition of three specific types of ADOC supervision on a single "snapshot" day: July 1, 2023 (the most recent ADOC data available). The first type of supervision is institutional supervision (i.e., ADOC jails and prisons), followed by two forms of community supervision: pretrial supervision, and post-conviction community supervision (i.e., probation and parole). In total, 10,061 people were under one of these three types of ADOC supervision on July 1, 2023, with slightly less than half in institutional custody (45.0%; n=4,525), approximately one-third on probation or parole (32.1%; n=3,230), and less than a quarter on pretrial supervision (22.9%; n=2,306).

**Table 1.**
Percentage of persons under ADOC supervision, by racial group and supervision type: 2023

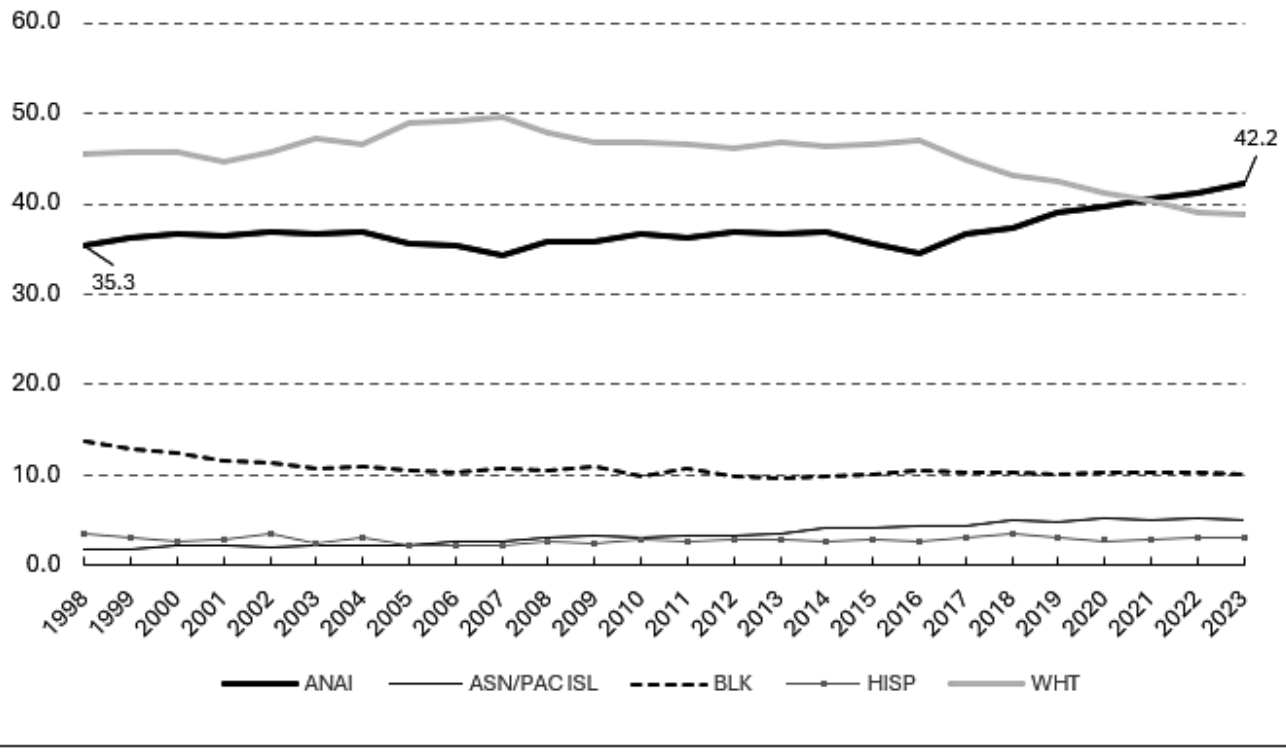
| | Type of Supervision | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Community supervision | |
| Race/Ethnic Group | Institutional supervision[a] (n=4,525) | Pre-trial[a] (n=2,306) | Probation/Parole[a] (n=3,230) |
| Alaska Native/American Indian | 42.2% | 28.6% | 38.5% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 5.0 | 5.4 | 5.3 |
| Black | 10.1 | 8.8 | 6.5 |
| Hispanic | 3.1 | 3.9 | 2.3 |
| White | 38.8 | 49.5 | 45.0 |
| Unknown race/ethnicity | 0.8 | 3.9 | 2.5 |
| TOTALS | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.1 |

**Notes**
a. Column totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections (2024). *2023 Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/admin/docs/1CurrentProfile.pdf

Each column in Table 1 shows the percentage of the total population for each racial category, for each type of ADOC supervision. Readers can compare across Table 1 columns to explore the extent to which the racial compositions of each form of ADOC supervision were consistent within each racial grouping. For example, in 2023 42.2% of all inmates held in ADOC *institutions* were classified as Alaska Native or American Indian (ANAI). In contrast, the pretrial column shows that 28.6% of all persons subject to *pretrial supervision* were ANAI. Finally, the percentage of *probationers/parolees* classified as ANAI fell between ADOC institutions and pretrial enforcement percentages: 38.5%.

Reading down each column (e.g., institutional supervision) allows for comparison across racial groupings. As noted previously, in 2023 42.2% of all inmates in ADOC institutional custody were classified as ANAI, making ANAI inmates the largest among the six racial/ethnic groups shown. Meanwhile, white inmates represented 38.8% of ADOC inmates, black inmates constituted 10.1%, Asians/Pacific Islanders comprised 5.0%, and Hispanics were 3.1%. Less than 1% of all ADOC inmates were classified as some other race/ethnicity, or as an unknown race/ethnicity.

**Figure 1.**
Percentage of persons under institutional supervision ("inmates"), by racial group: 1998-2023.




**Notes**
a. Racial categories of *Other* and *Unknown* are excluded.
b. Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections (1999-2024). *Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/

Figure 1 focuses solely on the racial composition of ADOC *institutions* between 1998 and 2023. Each line depicts, for each year 1998-2023, the percentage of the total ADOC inmate population for each racial group. For example, in 1998 35.3% of the total ADOC inmate population was ANAI. By 2023, this percentage had risen to 42.2% of the total ADOC inmate population (a compositional increase of 6.9 percentage points; an overall increase of 19.6% compared to 1998). A more striking compositional increase between 1998 and 2023 is observed for Asian or Pacific Islander inmates, from 1.9% of the total inmate population in 1998 to 5.0% of the total inmate population in 2023 (a compositional increase of 3.1 percentage points, but an overall increase of 166.8% compared to 1998). The remaining three racial groups – blacks, Hispanics, and whites – each saw compositional declines during the

1998-2023 period. The percentage of black inmates dropped from 13.7% in 1998 to 10.1% in 2023 (a decline of 26.3%), the percentage of white inmates dropped from 45.5% to 38.8% (a decline of 14.8%), and the percentage of Hispanic inmates dropped from 3.6% to 3.1% (a decline of 13.0%).

The most notable inflexion point displayed in Figure 1 came in 2016, when the compositional trajectories for ANAI and white inmates both changed sharply. On the one hand, the percentage of the ADOC inmate population that was white began a period of marked (and continuing) decline, dropping from 47.0% in 2016 to 38.8% in 2023. On the other hand, the percentage of the ADOC inmate population that was ANAI began a period of marked (and continuing) growth, increasing from 34.5% in 2016 to 42.2% in 2023. As a result of these compositional trajectory changes, ANAI inmates now comprise the largest share of ADOC inmates – a compositional position that had heretofore been held by white inmates. In contrast, the increase in the percentage of ADOC inmates categorized as Asian or Pacific Islander increased almost linearly throughout the 1998-2023 period (as opposed to the well-defined inflection points observed for ANAI and white inmates). Meanwhile, the black ADOC inmate composition consistently declined from 1998 through 2013, increased slightly for a short period, then held steady from 2015 through to 2023 with an average of approximately 10.3% of the ADOC inmate population. Finally, the Hispanic ADOC inmate population vacillated continually throughout the observation period between 2.5% and 3.5% of the ADOC inmate population.

Overall, the data presented in Figure 1 show that the racial composition of the ADOC inmate population was dynamic between 1998 and 2023, with each specific racial group's representation fluctuating from year to year. However, it is important to also note that while compositional variability was the general rule, the 8-year period spanning 2016-2023 was one of significant – some might say, tectonic – change in the racial composition of ADOC institutions. Between 2016 and 2023, the percentage of ADOC inmates classified as white and black declined 17.4% and 3.5%, respectively, while the share of Alaska Native or American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic inmates all increased. The percentage of Asian or Pacific Islander inmates increased 11.0%, the percentage of Hispanic inmates increased by 14.5%, and the percentage of Alaska Native or American Indian inmates increased by 22.3% between 2016 and 2023. The compositional change in the ANAI inmates during these eight years resulted in a fundamental compositional position "switch" between ANAI and white inmates, with ANAI inmates now exceeding the populations of all other racial groups, including whites.

## A clarification of concepts: Difference, disparity, and discrimination

As alluded to previously, this review focuses on the research literature pertaining to racial disparities in the composition of ADOC institutional populations. Prior to embarking on our review of those disparities, it is important to pause to define what *disparity* means for the purposes of this review, and how that concept is operationalized empirically.

It is helpful when defining the term *disparity* to contrast it with two other terms that are sometimes used along with it conversationally: *difference* and *discrimination.*

*Difference* refers simply to numerical dissimilarity, an inequality of two measurements. One example pertinent to this review would be the observed difference in the percentage of ADOC inmates categorized as ANAI, and the percentage of ADOC inmates categorized as white. In 2023 those percentages were 42.2% and 38.8%, respectively. These two racial composition measures – 42.2% and 38.8% – clearly differ from one another, but little else can be said beyond the empirical fact of difference. They are just different numbers; one is higher than the other, and conversely, one is lower than the other. In similar fashion, one could compare two numbers for the same phenomenon over time. For example, the percentage of ADOC inmates categorized as ANAI in 1998 and then again in 2023. This racial composition measure was 35.3% in 1998 and 42.2% in 2023. Once again, these measures differ from one another, but little can be said other than the two measurements differ, and more specifically that the percentage of ADOC inmates classified as Alaska Native or American Indian was larger in 2023 than it was in 1998.

***Disparity*****,** in contrast, is conceptually "deeper" than mere difference. A determination of difference is a prerequisite for any use of the term disparity, to be sure. But the basis of comparison between two measures is substantively different and more analytical when we speak of disparity. Conceptually, disparity adds something important to mere difference: it adds an *expectation* of what an observed difference *should be*. Disparity is said to exist when the difference between two observations is not what we expect it to be, what we think it *should* be, empirically. Returning to the previous examples, absent explicit expectations about what our observations should be, we cannot make a determination of disparity. What should the respective percentages of Alaska Natives or American Indians and whites be? Should our measurements between racial groups (or within the same racial group over time) differ? If so, by how much? Key to assessing disparity empirically is clearly identifying the basis of our expectations, and the thresholds to be used in making a determination of disparity.

The most common basis of expectation in discussions of disparity in the demographic composition of jails and prisons is that their demographic compositions should closely

approximate the demographic composition of the general population of the jurisdiction. Thus, it is not unusual that discussions of *racial disparity* in Alaska jails and prisons typically compare the racial/ethnic composition of ADOC institutions with the racial/ethnic composition of the total Alaska population. To illustrate, consider text included in *House Bill 66*, which was signed into law in 2024:

> "The legislature finds that 14 percent of the state's general population is Alaska Native, yet 40 percent of the Department of Corrections' inmate population is Alaska Native" (p. 2, @17).

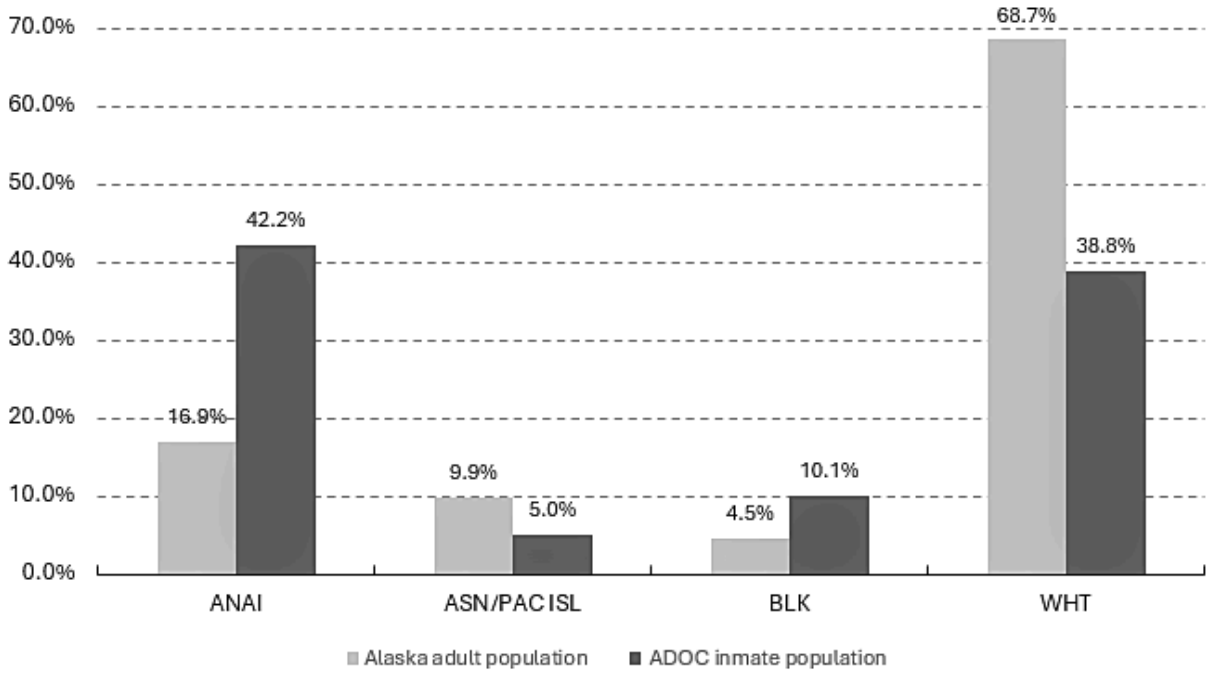
While the Alaska Legislature does not invoke the term "disparity," the statement nevertheless illustrates the contrast between the concepts of *difference* and *disparity*. Inherent in the statement is an *expectation* that the share of ADOC's inmate population that is Alaska Native should approximate the share of Alaska's general population that is Alaska Native. The Alaska Legislature's statement is not simply highlighting difference; it is highlighting a difference that does not meet expectation. This is the essence of *disparity* as a concept that is distinct from mere difference.

Finally, *discrimination* subsumes the properties of both difference and disparity and adds to them another dimension: *intentionality.* Discrimination is said to be operant when there is *intentional* disparity. Put another way, discrimination is disparity by design.

## Racial disparity in Alaska Department of Corrections institutions

Figure 2 (next page) presents a side-by-side comparison of ADOC's inmate population with Alaska's **adult population**, by racial group. In presenting these specific points of comparison, Figure 1 adopts the approach typically taken to gauge and assess disparity. That is, Alaska's adult population composition is used to establish an empirical expectation for ADOC's inmate population composition.

**Figure 2.**
Comparison of racial group composition: Alaska total adult population vs. ADOC inmate population, by racial group: 2023.




**Notes**
a. Alaska population includes adults only.
b. Census data for all racial groups shown: Race alone or in combination.
c. ANAI=Alaska Native or American Indian; ASN/PAC ISL=Asian or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; BLK=Black/African American; WHT=White/Caucasian.
b. Hispanic comparison not shown due to differences in measurement between ADOC and U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau measures Hispanic origin separately from race.
d. Data sources: Alaska Department of Corrections (1999-2024). *Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

While the percentages displayed for the ADOC inmate population correspond with the data presented in Table 1, the Alaska population data presented include two empirical adjustments. Firstly, because over 99% of the ADOC inmate population in 2023 was 18 years or older, the data shown in Figure 2 is limited to the Alaska *adult* population (age 18 years or older), not the total population inclusive of all ages. Secondly, the race group-specific Alaska adult population data presented in Figure 2 is measured as race alone or in combination, for all racial groups. Thus, in 2023, 16.9% of the Alaska adult population identified as ANAI, alone (single race) or in combination with one or more additional racial groups (multiracial).

The degree of racial disparity in ADOC's inmate population can be assessed visually by directly comparing the heights of the light grey and dark grey bars for each racial group, and numerically by comparing the two percentage values for each racial group. The data shown in Figure 2 reveal that, in 2023, 42.2% of ADOC's inmate population was ANAI (dark grey

bar) while just 16.9% of the Alaska adult population identified as ANAI (light grey bar). This comparison reveals that Alaska Natives and American Indians were overrepresented among ADOC inmates when compared to their overall representation in the Alaska adult population. In 2023, the ratio of the percentage of ADOC's inmate population categorized as ANAI to the percentage of the Alaska adult population who identified as Alaska Native or American Indian was +2.5, meaning that the ADOC percentage was 2.5 times higher than would be expected based (solely) on the composition of Alaska's adult population. This ratio of +2.5 is a measure of *disparity*.

One of the three other racial groups examined also had a positive disparity ratio. In 2023, blacks were over-represented in ADOC's institutional population, with a disparity ratio of +2.2. This can be interpreted to mean that the ADOC percentage of 10.1 percent was 2.2 times higher than would be expected based on the percentage of Alaska's adult population identifying as black (4.5%).

Conversely, white inmates and inmates of Asian or Pacific Islander descent were under-represented in the ADOC inmate population. While whites comprised 68.7 percent of the Alaska adult population in 2023, they represented just 38.8 percent of the ADOC inmate population, resulting in a disparity ratio of -1.8. The disparity ratio for Asians or Pacific Islanders was -2.0.

In sum, racial disparities abounded in ADOC's inmate population in 2023. Some groups were overrepresented (ANAI and black inmates), with others were under-represented (white and Asian or Pacific Islander inmates). Notably, however, the disparities observed for each of these racial groups differed with respect to their magnitudes. Alaska Native/American Indian and black over-representation disparities were not "balanced" with white and Asian/Pacific Islander under-representation disparities. The magnitudes of the prison-to-population ratios for the first two racial groups exceeded those of the latter two racial groups. In other words, what might be termed the "intensity" of over-representation of Alaska Natives/American Indians and blacks, exceeded the "intensity" with which whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders were under-represented in ADOC facilities.

# Racial Disparities in U.S. Jails and Prisons

This section of the literature review focuses on research reports published by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). BJS is the primary statistical agency of the USDOJ, and serves as the foremost source of jail and prison inmate data in the U.S. The mission of BJS is to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government. BJS publications report on a broad range of inmate population and correctional facility characteristics in local, regional, national, and tribal jurisdictions. BJS administers a variety of recurrent (some annually, some more periodically) data collections focused on U.S. jails and prisons.

These BJS data collections include complete enumerations of jail and prison populations during census years, and survey-based estimates on non-census years. Jail and prison facility data on the number, size, capacity, staffing, and number of admissions and releases are consistently gathered by BJS. Jail and prison population data also includes (but is not limited to) inmate demographic characteristics, conviction status, and arrest/conviction offense severity information. BJS reports often provide jail and prison data aggregated by individual states, as well as by geographic regions. Findings reported by the BJS are collected directly from prisons and jails administered by federal, state, local, and tribal authorities, providing rich data that may otherwise be inaccessible to researchers, policymakers, and members of the public.

Data from the following BJS data collections (and the reports derived from those data collections) are included in this review:

- *Census of Jails.* The U.S. Census Bureau collects data every five years for the BJS's Census of Jails (COJ). Data are collected from U.S. jails that hold adult inmates beyond arraignment. The universe of jails includes facilities under city, county, and regional jurisdictions, privately contracted jail facilities, and Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) detention centers that function as jails. Separate confinement facilities that do not hold persons after formal charging are excluded. While the COJ collects data on facility characteristics, jail inmate populations, and jail programs, data sometimes differ between reports. The COJ is the only complete enumeration of U.S. jails.
- *Annual Survey of Jails.* The Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) is administered by BJS annually during years when census counts are not conducted. Facilities surveyed include jails that hold adults beyond arraignment and are under city, county, and

- regional jurisdictions, and privately contracted jail facilities. Federal BOP detention centers and separate confinement facilities that don't hold persons after formal charging are excluded. The ASJ produces estimates of the number of U.S. jails, characteristics of U.S. jails, as well as demographics and conviction status of the jail inmate population.
- *Annual Survey of Jails in Indian Country*. The Annual Survey of Jails in Indian Country is administered annually by BJS, collecting data on inmate population and facility characteristics from all adult and juvenile jails operated by tribal authorities or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Data gathered on inmate characteristics include age, sex, conviction status, and offense severity. Inmate race data are not collected. Facility characteristics include capacity, staffing, admissions, and releases.
- *National Prisoner Statistics Program*. The National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPSP) provides an annual enumeration of the U.S. prisoner population and data on prisoner and facility characteristics. All 50 state departments of corrections and BOPs are included. In addition to population estimates, data collected on inmates includes race, sex, age, citizenship, geographic location, offense characteristics, and sentencing. Facility data include capacity, jurisdiction, and geographic location.
- *Survey of Prison Inmates*. The Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI) is a periodic, cross-sectional survey of sentenced state and federal prison populations. Its primary objective is to produce national estimates on state and federal prison populations across a variety of domains, including but not limited to demographic characteristics, current offense and sentence, incident characteristics, firearm possession and sources, criminal history, socioeconomic characteristics, family background, drug and alcohol use, mental and physical health, treatment programs, and rule violations.

## Why examine both prisons *and* jails?

Data on both types of incarceration are included in this review because Alaska is one of only six states[1] in the U.S. that operate a unified correctional system. In a unified correctional system, both jails and prisons are administered by a single, statewide entity – typically a state department of corrections. This stands in stark contrast to jurisdictions that do not have unified correctional systems – whereby jails are administered at the

---

[1] States with unified correctional systems include: Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, Vermont.

city/municipal level or by county governments, and prisons are administered by state departments of corrections. That jails and prisons are separately managed in most U.S. jurisdictions makes sense once one understands the profound difference in the institutional functions jails and prisons serve.

Institutionally, jails are primarily designed as sites for the short-term detention or incarceration of individuals accused and/or convicted of minor criminal offenses. Perhaps the single most important characteristic of jails that distinguishes them from prisons is that jails largely serve as pretrial detention facilities. For example, BJS's Jail Inmates in 2002 report shows that just 29.7% of all jail inmates held in U.S. jails were convicted. Another contrast between jails and prisons pertains to the seriousness of the offense(s) of those who are convicted. Except for the temporary incarceration of individuals accused and/or convicted of felony crimes who are awaiting a trial or transfer of custody to a state prison facility, jails house individuals convicted of misdemeanor crimes for a period of one year or less (including persons serving weekend-only sentences).

In contrast, prisons are designed as sites for the long-term incarceration of individuals convicted of felony crimes and who are sentenced to a period of incarceration of one year or more. Nearly two-thirds (62.9%) of all prisoners in state prisons in *2022* were convicted of violent crimes (e.g., murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape and sexual assault, aggravated assault, robbery), 13% were convicted of property crimes (e.g., burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft), 12% were convicted of drug crimes (e.g., trafficking, possession), and 11% were convicted of various public order crimes (e.g., weapons offenses, probation and parole violations, DUI/DWI). In 2018, the average time served in prison prior to release for each of these crime categories was 4.8 years (violent crimes), 1.7 years (property crimes), 1.7 years (drug crimes), and 1.7 years (public order crimes).

Within the Alaska correctional system context, ADOC not only administers both jails and prisons as a unified system, but it is not uncommon for ADOC to combine jail and prison functions within a single facility. For example, recent inmate count data published by ADOC shows that only three of the department's 15 institutions housed only offenders who had been convicted and sentenced (Palmer Correctional Center, Palmer Correctional Center-Minimum Security, and Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm). An additional three facilities had convicted and sentenced inmate populations exceeding 50 percent: Wildwood Correctional Center (94.6%), Spring Creek Correctional Center (94.4%), and Goose Creek Correctional Center (62.3%). Taken together, these six ADOC facilities could rightly be described as "prisons," in the traditional sense of that term.

The inmate populations of all the remaining ADOC facilities were majority unsentenced[1], and some decidedly so. For example, more than 90% of inmates in Anvil Mountain Correctional Center (91.9%), Fairbanks Correctional Center (91.6%), Mat-Su Pretrial Facility (91.4%), and Wildwood Pretrial Facility (91.7%) were classified as unsentenced. Two more facilities – Anchorage Correctional Complex (80.4%) and the Ketchikan Correctional Center (89.7%) – had unsentenced populations exceeding 80 percent. Taken together, these six ADOC facilities could rightly be described as "jails."

The three remaining ADOC facilities (including Alaska's only female institution), while housing mostly unsentenced offenders, also housed a significant percentage of sentenced offenders, making their institutional role much more ambiguous. For example, the mix of unsentenced and sentenced inmates for Highland Mountain (female facility) was 59.1% and 40.9%, respectively. The figures for Lemon Creek Correctional Center were 56.4% and 43.6%, and 69.1% and 30.9% for the Yukon Kuskokwim Correctional Center. Overall, in 2023 ADOC reported that half of all inmates incarcerated were unsentenced.

To summarize: Many ADOC correctional facilities function as both jails and prisons simultaneously (to some degree), and their inmate populations are highly mixed with respect to inmate legal status (i.e., sentenced vs. unsentenced; pretrial and post-conviction), conviction offense seriousness (i.e., misdemeanor vs. felony), and sentence length (short-term vs. long-term). Consequently, it is necessary to situate our examination of racial disparities in ADOC facilities within the context of data and research pertaining to *both* jails and prisons in the U.S.

## The racial composition of U.S. jails and prisons

Table 2 shows the racial composition of U.S. jails for the period 2010[2] through 2022. Data are presented for five race groups: Alaska Native or American Indian, black, Hispanic, white, and all Other racial groups combined. Each row in Table 1 depicts the percentage of the total number of jail inmates within each race category. For example, in 2010 an estimated 1.3% of all jail inmates in the U.S. were of Alaska Native or American Indian (ANAI) descent, 37.8% of all jail inmates were black, 15.8% were Hispanic, 44.3% were white, and 0.8% were members of other racial groups. The last row of data included in Table 2 shows

---

[1] ADOC publications do not classify inmates according to conviction status. Instead, ADOC publications classify offenders as *sentenced* and *unsentenced*. Consequently, we cannot estimate the true prevalence of the ADOC inmates who are in what is typically referred to as a "pre-trial" status (i.e., not convicted). While imperfect, we use the category of "unsentenced" as a proxy measure of pre-trail status, but acknowledge that some inmates who are unsentenced are, in fact, convicted and awaiting sentencing.

[2] Racial composition data for U.S. jails did not include Alaska Natives or American Indians, Asians, or Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders prior to 2010.

the average percentage of population values for each racial group for the 13-year period spanning 2010 through 2022.

**Table 2.**
U.S. jail inmate racial composition: 2010-2022

| Year | Alaska Native/ American Indian | Black | Hispanic | White | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 1.3% | 37.8% | 15.8% | 44.3% | 0.8% |
| 2011 | 1.3 | 37.6 | 15.5 | 44.8 | 1.0 |
| 2012 | 1.2 | 36.9 | 15.1 | 45.8 | 1.0 |
| 2013 | 1.4 | 35.8 | 14.8 | 47.2 | 0.9 |
| 2014 | 1.4 | 35.4 | 14.9 | 47.4 | 0.9 |
| 2015 | 1.2 | 35.1 | 14.3 | 48.3 | 1.0 |
| 2016 | 1.2 | 34.4 | 15.2 | 48.1 | 1.1 |
| 2017 | 1.2 | 33.6 | 14.5 | 49.7 | 1.0 |
| 2018 | 1.3 | 32.8 | 14.8 | 49.9 | 1.2 |
| 2019 | 1.4 | 33.6 | 14.6 | 49.4 | 1.0 |
| 2020 | 1.2 | 35.1 | 14.9 | 47.7 | 1.1 |
| 2021 | 1.2 | 34.8 | 14.3 | 48.7 | 1.0 |
| 2022 | 1.4 | 35.4 | 14.1 | 47.8 | 1.2 |
| Averages: | 1.28 | 35.25 | 14.83 | 47.62 | 1.02 |

**Notes**
a. Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. Data source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2011-2023). *Annual Survey of Jails*. https://bjs.ojp.gov/data-collection/annual-survey-jails-asj#2-0

Nationally since 2010, the percentage of ANAI inmates incarcerated in U.S. jails increased from 1.3 to 1.4 percent (an increase of 7.7%). The percentage of whites incarcerated in American jails increased similarly, from 44.3 to 47.8 percent (an increase of 7.9%). The percentage of jail inmates belonging to a racial group other than ANAI, black, Hispanic, or white also increased (from 0.8% to 1.2%). Conversely, the representation of blacks and Hispanics in U.S. jails declined between 2010 and 2022 (decreases of 6.3% and 10.8%, respectively).

Table 3 presents the same data for U.S. prisons. As was observed for jails, the percentage of ANAI inmates held in U.S. prisons increased between 2010 and 2022 – this time from 1.5 percent to 1.6 percent of all prison inmates. Contrary to the jail data presented in Table 2, Hispanic representation in U.S. prisons increased during the 2010-2022 period from 21.8 to 23.1 (an increase of 6%), as did the representation of inmates in the Other race category, which had a notable increase of 38.8%. The compositional representation of blacks and whites declined (decreases of 11.5% and 1.9%, respectively).

**Table 3.**
U.S. prison inmate racial composition: 2010-2022

| Year | Alaska Native/ American Indian | Black | Hispanic | White | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 1.5% | 36.6% | 21.8% | 31.6% | 8.5% |
| 2011 | 1.5 | 36.0 | 22.2 | 31.2 | 9.1 |
| 2012 | 1.4 | 35.5 | 22.2 | 31.1 | 9.7 |
| 2013 | 1.3 | 34.9 | 22.6 | 30.9 | 10.4 |
| 2014 | 1.4 | 34.3 | 22.5 | 30.8 | 11.0 |
| 2015 | 1.4 | 33.6 | 22.7 | 30.5 | 11.8 |
| 2016 | 1.4 | 33.2 | 23.4 | 30.2 | 11.8 |
| 2017 | 1.5 | 32.9 | 23.5 | 30.3 | 11.8 |
| 2018 | 1.5 | 32.7 | 23.6 | 30.5 | 11.8 |
| 2019 | 1.6 | 32.6 | 23.4 | 30.6 | 11.8 |
| 2020 | 1.6 | 33.0 | 23.4 | 30.5 | 11.5 |
| 2021 | 1.6 | 32.4 | 23.5 | 30.5 | 11.9 |
| 2022 | 1.6 | 32.4 | 23.1 | 31.0 | 11.8 |
| Averages: | 1.48 | 33.85 | 22.92 | 30.75 | 10.99 |

**Notes**
a. Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. Data source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

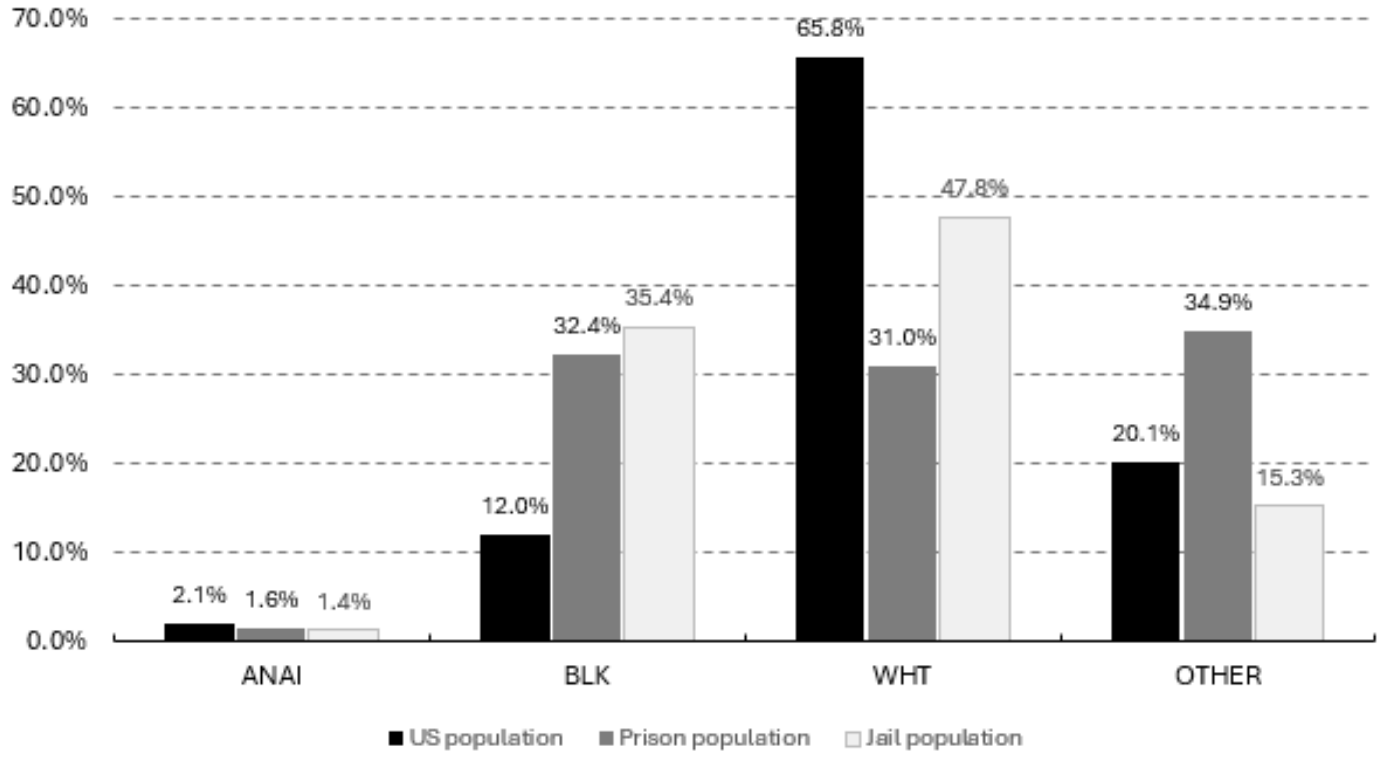
While the racial compositions shown in Table 2 (U.S. jails) and Table 3 (U.S. prisons) do show variability over time for every racial group, the overall trend for ANAI inmates can be described as stable, with only small year-to-year variability and across the full time period spanning 2010 through 2022.

But, what about *disparities* in racial group representation in American jails and prisons? That is, does each racial group's overall representation in these carceral institutions differ significantly from their overall representation in the U.S. population?

Figure 3 compares the overall representation in the U.S. population (2022), representation in the U.S. prison population (2022), and representation in the U.S. jail population (2022) for four racial groups: Alaska Natives/American Indians, blacks, whites, and all other racial groups[1] combined. Black bars show representation in the total U.S. population, dark grey bars show representation in the U.S. prison population, and light grey bars show representation in the U.S. jail population for each of the racial groups examined. Jail and prison population disparities can be observed when the dark grey bars (prison) and the light grey bars (jails) differ in height from the black bar (U.S. population).

[1] The Other racial groups category includes Hispanics, Asians, Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islander, and all Other racial groups due to source data inconsistencies.

**Figure 3.**
Comparison of racial group composition: U.S. population (total) vs. U.S. prison population vs. U.S. jail population, by racial group: 2022.




**Notes**
a. Within-group column percentages may not total to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. ANAI=Alaska Native or American Indian; BLK=Black/African American; WHT=White/Caucasian.
c. "OTHER" racial group inclusive of: Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Other racial groups, due to data source inconsistencies.

Two racial groups – ANAI and whites – were underrepresented in U.S. jail and prison populations when compared to their respective representation in the overall U.S. population. ANAI's constituted 2.1 percent of the U.S. population in 2022 but 1.6 percent of the population of U.S. prisons (1.3 times less likely), while whites comprised an estimated 65.8 percent of the U.S. population in 2022 and just 31.0 percent of the population of U.S. prisons (2.1 times less likely). The underrepresentation of these two groups in U.S. jails was 1.5 times less likely (ANAI) and 1.4 times less likely (whites).

One group – blacks – was overrepresented in both U.S. jail and prison populations when compared to their respective representation in the overall U.S. population. Blacks represented an estimated 12 percent of the U.S. population in 2022, but 32.4 percent of the U.S. prison population (2.7 times more likely) and 35.4 percent of the U.S. jail population (3.0 times more likely).

The results for the Other racial group were mixed, with overrepresentation in U.S. prisons (1.7 times more likely) but underrepresentation in U.S. jails (1.3 times less likely).

## The need for disaggregation of U.S. jail and prison data

While the data shown in Table 2, Table 3, and Figure 3 are accurate at the national level, they do little to inform analyses at the state level which, of course, is the level of analysis for this review. Nationally aggregated jail and prison racial composition data are of limited comparative utility for contextualizing racial disparities in Alaska's correctional institutions, or the racial disparities in the jails and prisons of other states. More appropriate – and informative – comparisons with Alaska can be made.

In what follows, we present BJS jail and prison racial composition data from states that are similar to Alaska, in varying degrees, on three dimensions: (1) states that, like Alaska, are Public Law 280 states, (2) states that, like Alaska, have substantial indigenous populations, and (3) states that, like Alaska, administer unified correctional systems.

### Jail racial compositions in Public Law 280 states

Public Law 280 was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1953 to grant certain states criminal jurisdiction over Alaska Natives and American Indians on lands held in trust for tribes and tribal communities, as well as ancestral territories of Native peoples (often referred to as "Indian Country"). Alaska, along with California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin, are known as "mandatory" Public Law 280 states. As mandatory Public Law 280 jurisdictions, these states could not refuse the criminal and limited civil jurisdiction provided for in the law.

Table 4 lists each Public Law 280 state, followed by the percentage of the total state population within each state that was Alaska Native or American Indian, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hawaii only) in 2020, the percentage of the total state jail population that was Alaska Native or American Indian, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hawaii only) in 2019, and an estimated disparity ratio. Positive disparity ratios indicate *overrepresentation* in the jail population for each state; negative disparity ratios indicate *underrepresentation* in the jail population for each state.

Statewide population data from 2020 were used because of the enhanced precision of the estimate provided by the full 2020 Census (as compared to non-Census years). Statewide jail population data from 2019 are used because it was the most recent data available that provided race-specific jail population estimates for Alaska Native/American Indian and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (Hawaii only) inmates for each state.

**Table 4.**

Comparison of indigenous state and jail inmate populations: Public Law 280 states.

| State | State population (2020) | Jail population (2019) | Disparity ratio estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska[a] | 20.4% | 39.0% | +1.9 |
| California[a] | 2.8 | 0.8 | -3.5 |
| Hawaii[b] | 27.4 | n.d. | --- |
| Minnesota[a] | 2.2 | 8.6 | +3.9 |
| Nebraska[a] | 2.3 | 4.5 | +2.0 |
| Oregon[a] | 3.5 | 2.8 | -1.3 |
| Wisconsin[a] | 1.9 | 5.1 | +2.7 |

**Notes**

a. % state population and % jail population values provided for Alaska Natives and American Indians.

b. % state population and % jail population values provided for Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders.

c. n.d.=no data available.

c. Data sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). *Census of Jails, 2005-2019: Statistical Tables*. https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cj0519st.pdf. U.S. Census Bureau (2024). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for [STATE]: April 1, 2020 to July 2, 2023.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html. Alaska Department of Corrections. (2020). *2019 Offender profile*.

In 2020, an estimated 20.4 percent of Alaska's total resident population identified as ANAI according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Meanwhile, in 2019 an estimated 39.0 percent of inmates held in ADOC facilities were classified as ANAI. This difference – 20.4 percent vs. 39.0 percent – resulted in a disparity ratio of +1.9, indicating that ANAI representation in ADOC facilities in 2019 was 1.9 times higher than the overall representation of ANAI residents in Alaska.

Positive disparity ratios were also found for the states of Nebraska (+2.0), Wisconsin (+2.7), and Minnesota (+3.9). Negative disparity ratios were found for Oregon (-1.3) and California (-3.5). Jail data were not available for Hawaii[1]. These results show that, in comparison with other Public Law 280 states, the degree of ANAI over-representation in ADOC facilities is in the middle range – with three states having higher disparity ratios, and two states having lower disparity ratios.

Jail racial compositions in states with substantial indigenous populations

Table 5 presents the same data for Alaska and seven additional states in which at least five percent of the total resident population was Alaska Native or American Indian, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hawaii only), in 2020.

When compared to this group of states, Alaska once again fell in the middle range, with three states having higher disparity ratios, and three states having lower disparity ratios. The states with disparity ratios higher than Alaska's were South Dakota (+4.7), North Dakota

[1] States with unified correctional systems do not submit jail data to BJS. Alaska data are included because the ADOC annual Offender Profile publication includes inmate racial group information. Similarly published data could not be found from the Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The states with disparity ratios higher than Alaska's were South Dakota (+4.7), North Dakota (+4.5), and Montana (+3.0). Arizona (+1.3), New Mexico (-1.1) and Oklahoma (-1.2) each had disparities lower than Alaska's.

**Table 5.**
Comparison of indigenous state and jail inmate populations: States with indigenous populations of at least 5 percent.

| State | State population (2020) | Jail population (2019) | Disparity ratio estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska[a] | 20.4% | 39.0% | +1.9 |
| Arizona[a] | 6.3 | 8.1 | +1.3 |
| Hawaii[b] | 27.4 | n.d. | --- |
| Montana[a] | 8.4 | 24.8 | +3.0 |
| New Mexico[a] | 12.7 | 11.6 | -1.1 |
| North Dakota[a] | 6.4 | 28.6 | +4.5 |
| Oklahoma[a] | 14.1 | 11.5 | -1.2 |
| South Dakota[a] | 10.1 | 47.0 | +4.7 |

**Notes**
a. % state population and % jail population values provided for Alaska Natives or American Indians.
b. % state population and % jail population values provided for Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders.
c. n.d.=no data available.
c. Data sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). *Census of Jails, 2005-2019: Statistical Tables*. https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cj0519st.pdf. U.S. Census Bureau (2024). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for [STATE]: April 1, 2020 to July 2, 2023*. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html. Alaska Department of Corrections. (2020). *2019 Offender profile*.

Taken together, the data presented in Table 4 and Table 5 show that among the 12 states with substantial ANAI resident populations that are contrasted with Alaska, those located in the Upper Midwest/Midwest experience higher (and sometimes significantly higher) disparity ratios. Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin all incarcerate Alaska Natives/American Indians in local jails at rates at least twice their overall representation in each state. That is not to say, however, that the data presented in Table 4 and Table 5 represent good news with respect to the over-representation of Alaska Natives and American Indians in the jail populations of the states examined. Among the 13 states examined (Alaska plus 12 comparison states), Alaska Natives and American Indians were overrepresented in the jail populations of 8 of them. Alaska Natives and American Indians were underrepresented in only 4 states: California, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Oregon. (Jail data were not available for Hawaii).

## Prison racial compositions in Public Law 280 states

Table 6 lists each Public Law 280 state, followed by the percentage of the total state population within each state that was Alaska Native or American Indian, or Native Hawaiian or

Other Pacific Islander (Hawaii only) in 2020, the percentage of the total state prison[1] population that was Alaska Native or American Indian, or Native Hawaiian (Hawaii only) in 2020, and an estimated disparity ratio for each state.

**Table 6.**
Comparison of indigenous state and prison inmate populations: Public Law 280 states.

| State | State population (2020) | Prison population (2020) | Disparity ratio estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska[a] | 20.4% | 42.7% | +2.1 |
| California[a] | 2.8 | 1.1 | -2.6 |
| Hawaii[b] | 27.4 | 44.0 | +1.6 |
| Minnesota[a] | 2.2 | 8.9 | +4.1 |
| Nebraska[a] | 2.3 | 4.7 | +2.0 |
| Oregon[a] | 3.5 | 3.2 | -1.1 |
| Wisconsin[a] | 1.9 | 3.9 | +2.1 |

**Notes**
a. % state population and % prison population values provided for Alaska Natives or American Indians.
b. % state population and % prison population values provided for Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders.
c. Data sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). *Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables (Appendix Table 2). https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf.* U.S. Census Bureau (2024). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for [STATE]: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html.

Alaska's 2020 prison disparity ratio of +2.1 reveals that Alaska Natives and American Indians were represented in ADOC facilities at a rate more than twice their overall representation in the Alaska state population (42.7% vs. 20.4%). Compared to the other Public Law 280 states, Alaska's prison disparity ratio was second only to Minnesota (+4.1) and was equal to Wisconsin's. Public Law 280 states with lower prison disparity ratios than Alaska's included Nebraska (+2.0), Hawaii (+1.6), Oregon (-1.1), and California (-2.6).

## Prison racial compositions in states with substantial indigenous populations

Table 7 shifts comparison from Public Law 280 states to states that have substantial indigenous populations, operationally defined here as comprising at least 5 percent of a state's overall population. Alaska's disparity ratio ranked 4th within this grouping of 8 states. States with higher disparity ratios included North Dakota (+3.3), South Dakota (+3.3), and Montana (+2.7). States with lower disparity ratios included Hawaii (+1.6), Arizona (-1.2), Oklahoma (-1.3), and New Mexico (-1.6).

---

[1] "Prison" population statistics for states that administer unified correctional systems represent inmates held in all state correctional facilities, not just post-conviction facilities for the incarceration of felons.

**Table 7.**
Comparison of indigenous state and prison inmate populations: States with indigenous populations of at least 5 percent.

| State | State population (2020) | Prison population (2020) | Disparity ratio estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska[a] | 20.4% | 42.7% | +2.1 |
| Arizona[a] | 6.3 | 5.5 | -1.2 |
| Hawaii[b] | 27.4 | 44.0 | +1.6 |
| Montana[a] | 8.4 | 22.9 | +2.7 |
| New Mexico[a] | 12.7 | 8.2 | -1.6 |
| North Dakota[a] | 6.4 | 20.8 | +3.3 |
| Oklahoma[a] | 14.1 | 10.7 | -1.3 |
| South Dakota[a] | 10.1 | 33.7 | +3.3 |

**Notes**
a. % state population and % prison population values provided for Alaska Natives or American Indians.
b. % state population and % prisons population values provided for Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders.
c. Data sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). *Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables (Appendix Table 2). https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf.* U.S. Census Bureau (2024). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for [STATE]: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html.

## Prison racial compositions in states with unified correctional systems

The final set of prison disparity ratio comparisons is presented in Table 8, which includes states with unified correctional systems. Positive disparity ratios were found for Alaska and Hawaii, and negative disparity ratios for Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Within the context of Alaska, Alaska Natives and American Indians were overrepresented in the state's correctional institutions at a rate more than twice Alaska's overall population of Alaska Native and American Indian residents (42.7% vs. 20.4%).

**Table 8.**
Comparison of indigenous state and prison[a] inmate populations: States with unified correctional systems.

| State | State population (2020) | Prison population (2020) | Disparity ratio estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska[b] | 20.4% | 42.7% | +2.1 |
| Connecticut[b] | 1.3 | 0.3 | -4.3 |
| Delaware[b] | 1.5 | 0.0 | --- |
| Hawaii[c] | 27.4 | 44.0 | +1.6 |
| Rhode Island[b] | 1.9 | 0.9 | -2.1 |
| Vermont[b] | 1.3 | 0.1 | -13.0 |

**Notes**
a. States identified in this table administer unified correctional systems and thus "prison" population statistics represent inmates held in all state correctional facilities, not just post-conviction facilities for the incarceration of felons.
b. % state population and % prison population values provided for Alaska Natives or American Indians.
c. % state population and % prison population values provided for Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders.
d. Data sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). *Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables (Appendix Table 2). https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf.* U.S. Census Bureau (2024). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for [STATE]: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html.

In Hawaii, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders were overrepresented in that state's correctional facilities at a rate 1.6 times higher than Hawaii's overall population of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander residents (44.0% vs. 27.4%). The representation of Alaska Natives and American Indians in the correctional systems of the four other unified correctional system states was extremely low (ranging from 0.0% to 0.9%), and notably all of these states had negative prison disparity ratios.

## Summary of jail and prison racial composition comparisons

Table 9 presents a summary of the comparative state-level jail and prison disparity ratios shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. States are listed, in descending order, according to their respective jail and prison disparity ratios.

**Table 9.**

Summary of comparative state-level jail and prison disparity ratios.

| State | Jail disparity estimate (2019) | State | Prison disparity estimate (2020) |
|---|---|---|---|
| South Dakota[a] | +4.7 | Minnesota[a] | +4.1 |
| North Dakota[a] | +4.5 | North Dakota[a] | +3.3 |
| Minnesota[a] | +3.9 | South Dakota[a] | +3.3 |
| Montana[a] | +3.0 | Montana[a] | +2.7 |
| Wisconsin[a] | +2.7 | **Alaska[a]** | **+2.1** |
| Nebraska[a] | +2.0 | Wisconsin[a] | +2.1 |
| **Alaska[a]** | **+1.9** | Nebraska[a] | +2.0 |
| Arizona[a] | +1.3 | Hawaii[b] | +1.6 |
| New Mexico[a] | -1.1 | Oregon[a] | -1.1 |
| Oklahoma[a] | -1.2 | Arizona[a] | -1.2 |
| Oregon[a] | -1.3 | Oklahoma[a] | -1.3 |
| California[a] | -3.5 | New Mexico[a] | -1.6 |
| Connecticut | n.d. | Rhode Island[a] | -2.1 |
| Delaware | n.d. | Delaware | --- |
| Hawaii | n.d. | California[a] | -2.6 |
| Rhode Island | n.d. | Connecticut[a] | -4.3 |
| Vermont | n.d. | Vermont[a] | -13.0 |

**Notes**

a. Jail and prison disparity estimate values provided for Alaska Natives or American Indians.

b. Jail and prison disparity estimate values provided for Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders.

c. "n.d."=no data available.

While the data summarized in Table 9 and discussed in preceding sections does not include all 50 states, the 16 states included for comparison to Alaska are highly relevant for the purposes of contextualizing the racial disparities observed among Alaska's incarcerated population, in general, and the overrepresentation of Alaska Natives and Americans in ADOC correctional facilities, in particular. The states contrasted with Alaska span three important analytic dimensions: (1) states subject to the criminal jurisdiction provisions of

Public Law 280, (2) states with substantial indigenous populations (at least 5 percent of the resident population), and (3) states that administer unified correctional systems.

Alaska's disparity ratios consistently rank below several states in the upper Midwest (North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana) and are closely ranked with two others (Nebraska and Wisconsin). Notably, these seven states – Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin – are all bunched together rather tightly in comparison to the other 10 states reviewed. Importantly, *among states with relatively high jail and prison disparity ratios,* Alaska occupies a middling position.

The states that differentiate themselves in the opposite direction, which is to say that they demonstrate consistent underrepresentation of Alaska Natives and American Indians in their jails and prison populations, are California, Oklahoma, Oregon, and New Mexico – all western states with either substantial indigenous populations and/or that exercise Public Law 280 jurisdiction. Thus, these four states demonstrate that, while both factors appear to be related to the disproportionate representation of Alaska Natives and American Indians in jails and prisons, they are not fully determinative of Alaska Natives and American Indians disparities.

Finally, with the exceptions of Alaska and Hawaii, the states that operate unified correctional systems – which are all located in the Northeastern U.S. – all had negative disparity ratios.

# Factors Impacting Racial Disparities in U.S. Jails

A review of the peer-reviewed research literature

## Factors impacting local jail *admissions*

The research literature on factors impacting the composition of U.S. jails is limited. Studies that have been conducted focus primarily on two aspects of U.S. jail populations: jail *admissions* and jail *populations*. Distinguishing between jail admissions, on the one hand, and jail populations, on the other hand, is important because jails serve as initial booking and pretrial detention facilities for both misdemeanant and felon arrestees, as well as post-conviction detention facilities for misdemeanants. (Felons are typically transferred to state correctional custody following conviction, and often immediately transferred to a state correctional facility to await sentencing.) Consequently, jail inmate populations are more dynamic than prison populations, and are characterized by frequent turnover with continual flows of new inmates arriving and others departing.

## Jurisdictional racial composition and distribution

Among the factors found to impact jail admissions in the U.S., the **racial composition of the surrounding jurisdiction** is the most consistently impactful. In his study of U.S. *city* jails, Carmichael[7] found that as cities' black populations increased so, too, did jail admission rates. Furthermore, Carmichael's research revealed that this effect on jail admissions was more pronounced in cities with the largest black populations. In their study of U.S. *county* jails, Ouellette and Applegate[18] also found that the percentage of a county's black population significantly impacted jail admission rates, but in a more nuanced fashion than described by Carmichael. Their research showed that the relationship between percentage black and jail admission rates was curvilinear (U-shaped), indicating that jail admissions rates were especially high in counties with small black populations (less than 10%) and in counties with large black populations (greater than 70%), but quite modest in counties with black populations ranging in between.

Beyond the overall representation of blacks in a community, the degree of **racial segregation** has also been shown to significantly influence jail admission rates. Ouellette and Applegate,[18] for example, found that as white–black segregation in U.S. counties increased (implying greater inter-racial separation) jail admission rates declined. Conversely, Carmichael[7] found that the effects of racial segregation in U.S. cities were directly related to jail admission rates. More specifically, Carmichael discovered that increases in racial segregation were significantly associated with increases in jail admission rates. Taken together, the results of these studies reveal that the relationship between racial composition and the

corresponding jail admission rate of a jurisdiction is far from straightforward; it is, in fact, quite complex.

## Socioeconomic conditions

Some socioeconomic conditions of surrounding communities are also found to significantly influence jail admission rates. Both Carmichael[7] and Ouellette and Applegate[18] found that **income inequality** significantly impacted jail admission rates. However, the specific effects of inequality were divergent between these two studies. In Carmichael's study, as black–white household income inequality increased, jail admission rates also increased. In contrast, Ouellette and Applegate[18] found that jail admissions increased as overall county-level inequality decreased. While both studies are important for identifying the relationship between inequality and jail admission rates, Carmichael's finding that race-specific inequality significantly impacts jail admission rates is particularly compelling for future research focused specifically on the racial composition of jail admissions – particularly research examining potential racial disparities in jail admission rates. Other socioeconomic factors examined in the research literature include poverty and unemployment rates. Neither of these indicators, however, have been found to significantly impact local jail admission rates.

## Criminal justice system capacity

Another set of factors found to influence jail admission rates can be conceived of as **criminal justice capacity.** In general, increases in criminal justice capacity are associated with higher jail admission rates, net of other factors. Carmichael's[7] study of jails in U.S. cities demonstrated that increases in **jail capacity** were significantly associated with increases in jail admission rates. Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study of county jails replicated this finding. Combined, the results of Carmichael's[7] and Ouellette and Applegate's[18] studies provide consistent empirical support for a direct relationship between jail capacity and jail admissions.

A second criminal justice capacity metric found to be associated with jail admission rates is a jurisdiction's **policing capacity.** However, the relationship between police capacity and jail admissions is more ambiguous than the relationship between jail capacity and jail admissions. Ouellette and Applegate[18] found a direct relationship between county-level police capacity and jail admission rates, whereas Carmichael's[7] study demonstrated an inverse relationship between city-level police capacity and jail admission rates.

## Additional factors impacting jail admissions

Four additional factors impacting local jail admissions were identified in the research literature: (1) community-level crime rates, (2) community social disorganization, (3) local politics, and (4) region.

Community-level crime rates have shown mixed effects on jail admission rates. Carmichael[7] found that a city's felony crime rate did not significantly impact jail admissions. Similarly, Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study demonstrated that county-level felony violent crime rates did not impact jail admission rates. However, the latter study also reported that **felony property crime rates** were significantly associated with higher jail admission rates at the county level.

Community social disorganization factors have demonstrated variable impacts on U.S. jail admission rates. Carmichael's[7] analysis showed that as a city's **divorce rate** increased, jail admissions decreased. Additionally, Carmichael found that a higher **density of liquor stores** moderately increased jail admission rates.

The local political landscape is yet another factor shown to influence U.S. jail admissions. Ouellette and Applegate[18] examined the relationship between county-level **conservative politics** and jail admission rates, finding that more politically conservative counties had higher jail admission rates, independent of other factors.

Finally, the literature reviewed shows that the **region** within which a jurisdiction is located significantly influences jail admissions. Carmichael[7] found that city jails located in midwestern, southern, and western regions of the U.S. had significantly higher overall jail admission rates than jails located in the northeastern region of the country. Ouellette and Applegate[18] found that county jails located in the southern region of the U.S. had higher overall jail admission rates than those located elsewhere.

# Factors impacting local jail *populations*

Whereas jail admissions reflect the fluctuation of individuals arrested and booked into and out of local jail facilities ("flow"), jail *populations* reflect the aggregation of all the individuals incarcerated at a specific point in time, some of whom will have just arrived and some of whom will have been in custody for more prolonged periods (pretrial as well as post-conviction detention). A jail's *population* is determined by a combination of factors on a given day, such as the number of admissions, the lengths of stay for inmates previously admitted, and the number of inmates released from jail custody (e.g., pretrial releases, community supervision releases, end-of-sentence releases, and custody transfers). Importantly, the bulk of research literature on jail populations focuses on *overall* incarceration rates

rather than *race-specific* incarceration rates. Only one of the five studies reviewed examined *race-specific* jail incarceration.

## Jurisdictional racial composition and distribution

Consistent with the research literature on jail admissions, jurisdictional racial composition is a reliable predictor of jail *populations*. For example, in their study of county-level jail incarceration rates, Reeds et al.[21] found that counties with larger black populations had disproportionately high black incarceration rates (relative to whites). Ouellette and Applegate's[18] examination of county jail populations showed that the racial composition of a county's population did not significantly impact county jail incarceration rates when the black population was less than 20 percent. However, once the 20 percent threshold was crossed, county-level jail incarceration rates increased at an accelerated pace.

Rather than focusing on overall jail populations, Ranson et al.[20] focused on *pretrial* detention populations (those held while awaiting trial) and found that counties with the largest black populations had higher jail pretrial detention rates than counties with the smallest black populations. Similar findings were reported by Arvanites and Asher[1] and Weiss-Riley et al.[22]
Together, these studies of total jail populations suggest that the racial make-up of the surrounding community is an important predictor of jail incarceration rates.

## Socioeconomic conditions

Several local socioeconomic factors are shown to influence U.S. jail populations, with **income inequality** being the most prominent. In their study of county jails, Reeds et al.[21] found an inverse relationship between income inequality and the racial composition of local jail populations. More specifically, they discovered that as black income inequality increased, black overrepresentation in jail populations declined. While Reeds et al.[21] focused on the relationship between race-specific inequality and the racial composition of jail populations, Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study focused on the relationship between overall county-level income inequality and overall jail incarceration. Oullette and Applegate also found an inverse relationship between income inequality and jail populations, such that higher overall income inequality in a jurisdiction was significantly associated with lower overall jail population rates. Conversely, Arvanites and Asher's[1] study demonstrated a direct relationship between income inequality and overall jail populations, while Ranson et al.[20] also found a direct relationship between income inequality and pretrial jail populations.

Another community socioeconomic factor impacting jail populations is unemployment. Ouellette and Applegate's[18] results showed that counties with higher unemployment rates had larger overall jail populations. A direct relationship between county unemployment and *pretrial* jail incarceration was supported by Ranson et al's findings. In contrast, Weiss-Riley et al.[22] found that unemployment was not a significant indicator of overall jail populations.

Finally, Ouellette and Applegate[18] and Weiss-Riley et al.[22] each examined the relationship between county poverty rates and jail populations, with both finding county-level poverty to be significantly associated with increased jail populations.

Two additional factors – black household income disparity and county welfare spending – were analyzed and did not significantly predict jail populations.
In sum, research demonstrates that specific local socioeconomic factors significantly influence jail populations.

## Criminal justice system capacity

**Criminal justice system capacity** indicators (e.g., jail capacity, police capacity, and crime control expenditures) are consistent predictors of jail incarceration. Ouellette and Applegate[18] found that an increase in jail capacity predicted an increase in overall jail population, net of other factors. Ranson et al.[20] also showed that jail capacity had a direct relationship with the *pretrial* jail population, further supporting the idea that jail capacity has a significant influence on overall jail populations.

Jurisdictional police capacity was a less consistent predictor of local jail populations. The results of Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study indicated that counties with a higher number of sworn police officers had larger overall jail populations. However, Ranson et al.[20] reported that a county's police capacity was not a significant indicator of *pretrial* jail populations. This suggests that county-level police capacity has a more complex relationship with jail populations than county-level jail capacity.

Weiss-Riley et al.[22] examined total police and correctional expenditures and found a direct relationship between increased crime control spending and overall jail populations.

Together, these articles demonstrate a strong relationship between jurisdictional criminal justice capacity and jail populations, with jail capacity being the most consistent predictor.

## Jurisdictional crime rates

Research has demonstrated that the volume of crime in a community is predictive of jail incarceration rates. Reeds et al.[21] showed that **felony property crime rates** were significant and negatively associated with the black-to-white jail incarceration rate, indicating that higher felony property crime rates predicted lower black jail incarceration disparity. Felony crime rates were also analyzed in Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study, finding that both **felony violent crime rates** and **felony property crime rates** had direct relationships with overall jail populations. These results were duplicated by Ranson et al.[20] on the pretrial detention population, revealing that higher felony crime rates were associated with higher jail pretrial detention rates.

In contrast, Arvanites and Asher[1] found that neither total crime rates, nor felony violent crime rates, influenced overall jail populations.

Overall, these articles provide mixed results on the impacts of local crime rates on jail incarceration, although a focus on felony crime rates, but not misdemeanor crime rates, represents a significant limitation of these studies.

## Region

Research demonstrates that the size and composition of local jail populations vary according to the **region of the country** in which jails are situated, with jails in southern locales being the most prominently examined in the jail research literature. In their study of black racial disparity in local jails, Reeds et al.[21] found that black overrepresentation in county jails was lower in jurisdictions located in the southern region of the U.S. In contrast, Ouellette and Applegate[18] found that jails in the southern region had significantly higher overall incarceration rates compared to other regions of the country.

## Urbanicity

**Urbanicity** is a structural feature of local communities that influences U.S. jail populations. In their study on urban-rural drivers of jail incarceration, Weiss-Riley et al.[22] revealed that rural jail incarceration rates were higher than urban and suburban jail incarceration rates. This finding was also supported in Ouellette and Applegate's[18] study. In contrast, Arvanites and Asher[1] demonstrated no significant relationship between urbanicity and overall jail populations, while Ranson et al.[20] found no urbanization effect on *pretrial* jail populations. These mixed results point to a nuanced effect of urbanization/rurality on local jail populations.

## Additional factors impacting jail populations

Some indicators of community social disorganization have been associated with increased jail incarceration rates, including factors related to family disruption (e.g., divorce rate) as well as the broader community-level indictors of social disorder (e.g., drug deaths, density of liquor stores). Ranson et al.[20] found that higher county **divorce rates** and higher **drug death rates** were both predictive of larger *pretrial* jail populations.

The political landscape of a community has also been shown to impact jail populations. Ouellette and Applegate[18] found a direct relationship between county-level **political conservativism** and jail incarceration rates. This result was replicated by Ranson et al.[20] on the *pretrial* population, revealing that more politically conservative counties had larger *pretrial* jail populations.

## Summary

Table 10 provides a summary of the factors shown to impact jail admissions and jail populations. While the volume of research examining local jail populations in the U.S. is limited, a number of factors have been identified as significantly impacting the flow into and the overall population of inmates incarcerated in local jails.

Among the studies reviewed, by far the most consistent predictor of both jail admissions and jail populations documented in the research literature is **jurisdictional racial composition**. In each of the seven studies reviewed, jurisdictional racial composition was a significant predictor of jail admissions and/or jail populations. More specifically, the research evidence consistently shows that as the percentage of a community's non-white population increases, jail admissions and jail populations also tend to increase.

The socioeconomic conditions within a jurisdiction are also significantly related to jail admissions and jail populations. Among the various socioeconomic factors examined in the literature, **inequality** was the most impactful, followed by **poverty rates** and **unemployment.** All told, socioeconomic conditions were found to impact jail admissions and jail populations in six of the seven studies reviewed. Despite the consistency of statistically significant impacts of socioeconomic conditions on jail admissions and jail populations, it is important to note that the directionality of those effects was mixed.

The next set of factors that was consistently found to impact both jail admissions and jail populations was criminal justice system capacity. More specifically, the research reviewed shows that both **police capacity** and **jail capacity** tend to inflate jail admissions and populations. That is to say that, all else equal, jurisdictions with larger police forces and larger jails tend to admit and house more people in local jails.

Additional factors found to impact local jail admissions and populations include local **felony crime rates,** the **region** of the country in which a jurisdiction is located, the local **political** climate, community **social disorganization**, and **urbanicity.**

Taken together, the findings of the studies reviewed highlight the complexity of factors that contribute to the volume of people admitted to and detained in local jails in the U.S. Simply stated, while some factors are more consistently predictive than others, there is no single factor that explains fluctuations in jail admissions and/or jail inmate populations. Jail admission and jail population dynamics are a multivariate problem that is not reducible to a single explanation.

Finally, it must be noted that, while the peer-reviewed literature examining jail admissions and jail populations is sparse, it is even more limited with respect to the racial composition of jail admissions and jail populations. Only one of the seven articles reviewed here explicitly modeled the racial composition of jails; all of the remaining studies focused on overall jail admissions and overall jail populations. This highlights the need for more empirical studies specifically focused on the racial/ethnic composition of jail inmate populations, not just the number of people booked into local jails, or the number of people detained in local jails.

**Table 10.**

Factors predicting local jail admissions and overall populations.

| | Jail Admissions | | Jail Populations | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | * Carmichael (2005) | * Ouellette & Applegate (2023) | * Arvanites & Asher (1998) | * Ouellette & Applegate (2023) | ** Ranson et al. (2023) | *** Reeds et al. (2022) | * Weiss-Riley et al. (2018) |
| Racial composition (community) | | | | | | | |
| Percent black | + | U | | U | + | + | + |
| Percent non-white | | | + | | | | |
| Racial segregation (black-white) | + | - | | ns | | | |
| Socioeconomic conditions | | | | | | | |
| Inequality (Gini index) | + | - | + | - | ns | - | |
| B-W household income | | | | | | - | |
| Unemployment | ns | ns | | + | + | | ns |
| Poverty | | + | | + | | | + |
| County welfare spending | | | | | | | ns |
| Criminal justice system capacity | | | | | | | |
| Jail capacity | + | + | | + | + | | |
| Police capacity | - | + | | + | ns | | |
| Crime control expenditures | | | | | | | + |
| Crime rate | | | | | | | |
| Crime (felony) | | | ns | | + | | |
| Violent crime (felony) | | ns | ns | + | | | |
| Property crime (felony) | | + | | + | | - | |
| Social disorganization | | | | | | | |
| Divorce rate | - | | | | + | | |
| Liquor store rate | + | | | | | | |
| Drug death rate | | | | | + | | |
| Region | | | | | | | |
| Northeast | - | | | | | | |
| South | | + | | + | | + | |
| Urbanicity | | - | ns | - | ns | | |
| Political conservativism | | + | | + | + | | |

**Notes**

a. "+" indicates a direct relationship between the identified factor and corresponding jail admissions or jail population rates.

b. "-" indicates an inverse relationship between the identified factor and corresponding jail admissions or jail population rates.

c. "U" indicates a non-linear relationship between county percent black and jail admissions rate.

d. "ns" indicates the finding was nonsignificant.

# Factors Impacting Racial Disparities in U.S. Prisons

A review of the peer-reviewed research literature

Prisons differ from local jails in a number of ways because they serve a different institutional function. Whereas local jails are the institutional site where criminal defendants enter the legal system following arrest during the pretrial phase of the criminal legal process, and the site where a portion of those convicted of *misdemeanor* crimes are incarcerated, prisons are the institutional site very near the end of the criminal legal process for convicted *felons*. Prisons are state or federal detention facilities for the incarceration of individuals convicted of felony crimes serving sentences exceeding one year. Consequently, prison populations are more static than jail populations due to their lack of a pretrial population coupled with much longer post-conviction sentence durations – and prisons house people convicted of more serious crimes.

Contemporary discourse on racial disproportionality in U.S prison populations has been a topic of interest among penological researchers for decades. Researchers have explored the explanatory power of a variety of factors over the years. The factors most researched include systemic racial discrimination, socioeconomic inequalities, political ideologies, and differential involvement in crime. This review synthesizes key findings from various studies to explore the complex nature of racial disproportionality in prisons, and to offer a deeper understanding of the mechanisms driving these disparities.

## Differential involvement in crime

Of the several factors that are shown to impact racial compositions within prison populations, the most influential is **differential involvement in crime.** Primarily, though not exclusively, researchers have operationalized jurisdictional crime rates by using **arrest** data. In his seminal work on racial disparities in prison populations, Blumstein[5] found that 80 percent of the overrepresentation of blacks in U.S prisons was due to their disproportionate involvement in crime, particularly violent crime. In a follow-up to his original work, conducted a decade after the first, Blumstein[4] once again found that arrest differentials account for more than 75 percent of the observed racial disproportionality in U.S prisons. When Blumstein excluded drug crimes, over 90 percent of the observed racial disproportionality in prison populations was accounted for by race-based differences in arrests.

In their study published in 1988, which used the same analytic methods as Blumstein, Bridges and Crutchfield[6] once again found a direct relationship between **race-based disparities in arrests** and racial disproportionalities in prisons. However, Bridges and Crutchfield's study results showed a smaller proportion of the variance in the racial

disproportionality of U.S prison populations attributable to arrest disparities. Yates and Fording[23], in their study of state-level imprisonment, also found a direct relationship between race-based arrest rates and race-based imprisonment rates. Finally, Percival's[19] study of California counties revealed a direct relationship between black arrests and black incarceration. The studies by Blumstein, Bridges and Crutchfield, Yates and Fording, and Percival examined three different levels of analysis: country, state, and county. Concurring results on all three levels speaks to the consistency of empirical support for differential involvement in crime being a highly influential factor determining the racial composition of U.S. prisons, and more specifically, racial disproportionalities within prison populations.

Langan[14], expanding on Blumstein's original work, conducted a similar analysis using National Crime Victimization Surveys (NCVS) rather than arrest data to avoid the possibility of police racial bias. Langan also focused on prison admissions rather than prison populations to understand the flow into prisons rather than simply the composition of prison populations on a given day. Langan found that in 75 percent of comparisons drawn there were no statistically significant differences between the racial composition of offenders, as reported by crime victims, and the racial composition of prison admissions. Thus, Langan's results further supported prior research documenting the predictive power of differential criminal involvement on the racial disproportionality in U.S. prison inmate populations.

## Political conservatism

The next most influential factor shown to impact racial compositions in prison populations is political ideology and partisanship. Jacobs and Carmichael's[12] examination of U.S. imprisonment rates in 1970, 1980, and 1990 found a direct relationship between **conservative politics/ideology** at the state level and overall incarceration rates. Similarly, Yates and Fording's[23] analyses of state imprisonment rates found that ideologically conservative states tended to have higher incarceration rates, especially for blacks. At the county level, results are more mixed. While Percival[19] found that conservative political ideology had a direct relationship with incarceration rates, Durante's[11] analysis found that conservative political ideology was inversely related to racial inequalities in prison admissions.

## Region

Another influential factor when examining racial disproportionality in U.S prisons is **region**. Region is generally classified as states located in the Southern, Northern, or Central U.S. Alternatively, some studies classify region simply as Southern or non-Southern. Blumstein's[4] examination of black-to-white incarceration ratios showed that the highest levels of racial disparity are in non-Southern states, while the lowest levels of disparity are primarily in Southern states. Bridges and Crutchfield's[6] research replicated this finding, as their analysis showed that imprisonment disparities were greatest in North/Central states, and

lowest in the South. Conversely, Jacobs and Carmichael[12] found no evidence that regional differences impact state-level imprisonment rates.

## Socioeconomic conditions

Economic inequality is another factor shown to impact racial disproportionality in U.S prisons. Socioeconomic factors are characteristics that impact an individual's or a community's economic status, access to resources, and/or quality of life. Durante's[11] county-level analysis found that as black **incomes** increase, prison admission disparities decrease. Furthermore, when **unemployment** disparities are lower, prison admission disparities also decrease. Yates and Fording's[23] state-level analysis also found that there is a direct relationship between race-based imprisonment rates and **poverty**. Similarly, Bridges and Crutchfield's[6] state-level analysis found that **economic inequality** increased the likelihood of imprisonment for blacks. Conversely, Percival's[19] California county-level analysis found that poverty does not have a direct relationship with black incarceration rates.

## Community racial composition

Another influential factor when examining racial disproportionality in U.S prisons is **community racial composition**. Bridges and Crutchfield's[6] state-level study found that states with larger **black populations** tended to have lower rates of black imprisonment. Similarly, Durante's[11] state-level analysis found that larger black populations result in decreased prison admission disparities.

Conversely, Jacobs and Carmichael[12] found that states with the largest black populations have overall higher incarceration rates. This relationship was shown to increase in strength over time, becoming more substantial during the latter portion of the analysis period. Jacobs and Carmichael's findings align with those of Keen and Jacobs[13], who found that the size of a state's **minority population** influences incarceration rates, with states that have a larger black population tending to incarcerate higher numbers of blacks. However, Keen and Jacobs also found that this effect was curvilinear, such that the relationship between the increasing black population and increased incarceration of black individuals persisted until reaching a threshold and then diminishing thereafter.

Finally, Percival's[19] county-level analysis revealed a direct relationship between racial population diversity and black imprisonment rates, such that when county **racial diversity** increased, so too did black incarceration rates.

## Urbanicity

A final factor shown to impact racial disproportionality in U.S prison populations is **urbanicity**. Percival's[19] county-level analysis found that the likelihood of black incarceration

decreases in urban counties, relative to rural counties. Conversely, Bridges and Crutchfield's[6] state-level analysis found a direct relationship between the concentration of blacks in urban areas and increased black incarceration rates.

## Summary

The literature on racial compositions within U.S. prison populations is a complex work in progress. While a considerable body of research demonstrates the importance of jurisdictional crime rates, political ideologies, socioeconomic factors, regional variance, community demographics, and jurisdictional context as contributing factors, much work remains to fully understand the full range of factors that influence the racial composition of American prisons.

Table 11 provides a summary of the factors shown to impact prison admissions and prison populations. While the body of research examining prison population compositions in the U.S is limited, several factors were found to impact U.S prison populations.

Among the studies reviewed, the most consistently impactful factor shown to impact prison admissions and populations is differential involvement in crime. Out of the nine studies reviewed here, seven found a direct effect between differential involvement in crime and increases in prison admissions and populations. That these findings were found at different levels of aggregation – the county level, the state level, and nationally – speaks to the robustness of this specific relationship.

The next most influential factor examined was community racial composition. While the results of the research literature are somewhat mixed, the impact of community racial composition on prison admissions and overall populations is, nevertheless, consistently reported. Political conservatism was also found to be an influential factor in prison admissions and populations. Of the five studies that examined political conservatism, four found a direct relationship between political conservativism, prison admissions, and prison populations.

Another set of factors consistently shown to impact prison admissions and populations is socioeconomic conditions such as unemployment rates, poverty rates, and income inequality. The effects of socioeconomic conditions on U.S prison admissions populations is mixed. While some research found a direct relationship, others found an indirect relationship or no effect at all. The final factors found to impact U.S prison admissions and populations are region and urbanicity. Of the research that examined region, no studies found that the Southern U.S had higher black-white imprisonment disparities than other regions of the country. Moreover, three of the four studies found an inverse relationship, while one found

this factor to lack statistical significance. Taken together, the findings of the reviewed studies illustrate the multiplicity of factors that contribute to the volume of people admitted to and housed in prisons in the U.S. While some factors are more consistently predictive than others, there is no single factor that explains U.S prison admissions or inmate populations.

**Table 11.**

Factors predicting prison admissions and populations.

| | Prison admissions | | | Prison populations | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Langan (1986) | Keen & Jacobs (2009) | Durante (2020) | Blumstein (1982) | Bridges & Crutchfield (1988) | Blumstein (1993) | Jacobs & Carmichael (2001) | Yates & Fording (2005) | Percival (2010) |
| Differential involvement in crime | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrest Rates | | + | | + | + | + | | + | + |
| NCVS | + | | | | | | | | |
| Political conservatism | | | | | | | | | |
| Republican presidential election vote | | + | - | | | | | | |
| Percent republican officials | | | | | | | | + | |
| Congress representative conservativism | | | | | | | + | | |
| Resident self-report conservatism | | | | | | | | | + |
| Community racial composition | | | | | | | | | |
| Percent black | | U | - | | + | | + | - | - |
| Socioeconomic conditions | | | | | | | | | |
| Unemployment rate | | ns | + | | | | ns | + | - |
| Poverty rate | | | | | + | | | | |
| Income inequality | | | - | | | | ns | | |
| Region | | | | | | | | | |
| Southern U.S. | | | - | | - | - | ns | | |
| Urbanicity | | | | | + | | | | - |

**Notes**

a. "+" indicates a direct (positive) relationship between the identified factor and corresponding jail admissions or jail population rates.

b. "-" indicates an indirect (negative) relationship between the identified factor and corresponding jail admissions or jail population rates.

c. "U" indicates a non-linear relationship between county percent black and jail admissions rate.

d. "ns" indicates the finding was nonsignificant.

# References Cited


1. Arvanites, T.M. & Asher, M.A. (1998). State and county incarceration rates: The direct and indirect effects of race and inequality. *American Journal of Economics,* 57(2), 119-244. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.1998.tb03273
2. Beatty, L., & Snell, T. (2021). *Profile of Prison Inmates*, 2016 - Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppi16.pdf
3. Bowie, C. (1982). Prisoners 1925-81. Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p2581.pdf
4. Blumstein, A. (1993a). Racial disproportionality of u.s. prison populations revisited. *University of Colorado Law Review*, 64(3), 743–760. https://doi.org/https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/ucollr64&id=773&collection=journals&index=#
5. Blumstein, A. (1982). On the racial disproportionality of United States' prison populations. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* (1973-), 73(3), 1259. https://doi.org/10.2307/1143193
6. Bridges, G. S., & Crutchfield, R. D. (1988). Law, Social Standing and Racial Disparities in Imprisonment. *Social Forces*, 66(3), 699–724. https://doi.org/10.2307/2579572
7. Carmichael, J.T. (2005). The determinants of jail use across large US cities: An assessment of racial, ethnic, and economic threat explanations. *Social Science Research*, 34(3), 538-569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2004.05.001
8. Carson, E. (2021). *Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables* - Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf
9. Carson, E. (2022). Prisoners in 2021 – *Statistical Tables* - Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/p21st.pdf
10. Carson, A.E., Kluckow, R. (2023). *Prisoners in 2022 – Statistical Tables*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p22st.pdf
11. Durante, K. A. (2017). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Prison Admissions Across Counties: An Evaluation of Racial/Ethnic Threat, Socioeconomic Inequality, and Political Climate Explanations. Race and Justice, 10(2), 176-202. https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368717738038 (Original work published 2020)
12. Jacobs, D., & Carmichael, J. T. (2001). The politics of punishment across time and space: A pooled time-series analysis of imprisonment rates. *Social Forces*, 80(1), 61–89. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2001.0070
13. Keen, B. & Jacobs, D. (2009). Racial threat, partisan politics, and racial disparities in prison admissions: A panel analysis. Criminology, 47(1), 209-238. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2009.00143.x

14. Langan, P. A. (1985). Racism on Trial: New Evidence to Explain the Racial Composition of Prisons in the United States. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* (1973-), 76(3), 666–683. https://doi.org/10.2307/1143517
15. Minton, T.D., & Golinelli, D. (2014). (2014). *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2013: Statistical Tables Revised* (NCJ 245350). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-midyear-2013-statistical-tables-revised
16. Minton, T.D., & Zeng, Z. (2015). *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2014* (NCJ 248629). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-midyear-2014
17. Minton, T.D., & Zeng, Z. (2021). *Jail Inmates in 2020: Statistical Tables* (NCJ 303308). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-2020-statistical-tables
18. Ouellette, H.M. & Applegate, B.K. (2023). Local incarceration as social control: A national analysis of social, economic, and political determinants of jail use in the United States. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 48, 457-571. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-022-09682-9
19. Percival, G. L. (2010). Ideology, diversity, and imprisonment: Considering the influence of local politics on racial and ethnic minority incarceration rates*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(4), 1063–1082. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00749.x
20. Ranson, J.W.A., Arnio, A.N., & Copp, J.E. (2023). Jurisdictional context and the (over)use of pretrial detention. *Social Science Research*, 112, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2023.102872
21. Reeds, C.L., Fridell, L., Renno Santos, M., & Cochran, J. (2025). A test of the association between racial economic threat and racial disparities in jail incarceration across counties in the United States. *Race and Justice*, 15(1), 67-91. https://doi.org/10.1177/21533687221126754
22. Weiss Riley, R., Kang-Brown, C.M., Valsalam, V., Chakraborty, S., & Henrichson, C. (2018). Exploring the urban=rural incarceration divide: Drivers of local jail incarceration rates in the United States. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 36(1), 76-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2017.1417955
23. Yates, J., Fording, R. (2005): Politics and State Punitiveness in Black and White. The Journal of Politics, 67(4). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00352.x
24. Zeng, Z., & Minton, T.D. (2021). *Census of Jails, 2005-2019: Statistical Tables* (NCJ 255406). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/census-jails-2005-2019-statistical-tables
25. Zeng, Z. (2022). Jail Inmates in 2021: *Statistical Tables* (NCJ 304888). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-2021-statistical-tables

26. Zeng, Z. (2023). *Jail Inmates in 2022: Statistical Tables* (NCJ 307086). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-2022-statistical-tables

# Part II

## Alaska Department of Corrections Booking Data

Descriptive Analyses

# Alaska Department of Corrections Booking Data

This study takes as its starting point the following: The inmate populations housed at each of the correctional facilities administered by the Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC) are the *culmination*, the *apotheosis*,of decisions made by other criminal justice actors. Like all correctional systems in the U.S., ADOC exerts little direct influence over either the size or the demographic composition of the population of individuals in its custody. Both the number of people in ADOC custody and their demographic characteristics are almost entirely determined by decisions and actions made by others: the individuals who commit crimes; the victims, witnesses and third parties who report crimes; the police who investigate crimes and make arrests; the prosecutors who lay charges against defendants and prosecute cases; the attorneys who provide legal defense for criminal defendants; the juries who decide the facts of criminal cases and render verdicts; and the judges who make pre-trial detention decisions, oversee the adjudicatory process, and impose sentences. Each of these criminal process participant groups serves as the inputs for ADOC's inmate populations.

Consistent with this perspective, this research focuses its attention on developing an empirical understanding of the demographic composition of ADOC's institutional population at the stage of the criminal legal process when criminal defendants are first brought to ADOC: **booking**.[1] It is at booking when law enforcement agencies remand individuals into the custody of ADOC following arrest. Booking thus represent the raw inputs into Alaska's correctional system, inputs from which all other empirical portraits of ADOC inmates are derived. Therefore, a full understanding of ADOC institutional populations and their demographic characteristics must begin with a detailed examination of this critical stage of the criminal legal process.

## Data Description

The analyses that follow use booking data provided to the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) by the Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC). Booking into an ADOC facility represents a seminal event for the purposes of documenting the demographic composition

---

[1] Within a criminal legal context, "booking" refers to the process of formally recording an arrested person's personal (e.g., name, date of birth, demographic characteristics, address) and charging (criminal offenses a person is suspected of committing) information into ADOC's records database. More generally, "booking" also includes the formal recording of any person's personal information and the statutory authority providing for the transfer of custody from a remanding entity to ADOC, including instances when a booking event is not due to a criminal offense (e.g., a non-criminal hold).

of ADOC institutions because booking events constitute the primary input into Alaska's correctional facilities, and the state's correctional system more generally.

In total, the booking record dataset provided to AJiC by ADOC included 61,099 **records** for calendar year 2019 spanning the period from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019. ADOC's booking record dataset can be thought of as a "charge-level" or "statutory violation" dataset. That is, a new booking record is generated by ADOC for each criminal charge (e.g., AS 11.41.200 – *Assault in the first degree*) and/or for each non-criminal statutory violation or reference (e.g., AS 47.37.180 – *Emergency commitment*).

Booking records are nested within booking **events**. A booking event may include a single criminal charge or statutory violation/reference, or multiple charges or statutory violations/ references. In total, the booking dataset provided to AJiC by ADOC included 34,776 separate booking events.

Finally, each booking record is linked to a specific **person** who is remanded into ADOC institutional custody. Individuals may have been booked for a single booking event for a single criminal charge or statutory violation, a single booking event for multiple criminal charges and/or statutory violations, or multiple booking events with a combination of single or multiple criminal charges and/or statutory violations.

The analyses presented in this section focus on the population of unique individuals who were booked into ADOC facilities at least once in calendar year 2019 for **one or more criminal offenses.**

We refer to this population as the **2019 booking cohort**, which included **12,702 unique individuals.**

In addition, the analyses focus on the **first booking event** for each member of the booking cohort. (Among the 12,702 members of the 2019 booking cohort, 7,711 (60.7%) were booked into an ADOC facility once and only once in calendar year 2019.) If a member of the cohort experienced multiple booking events in 2019, only information from the first booking event is included in the analysis.

Altogether, these 12,702 individuals were cited for **21,672 criminal offenses** at the time of their first booking event of 2019. The average number of offenses cited per cohort member was 1.7.

## Demographic Characteristics

Table 12 presents the demographic characteristics of the 2019 booking cohort. Ages ranged from less than 18 years old to over 65 years old. The peak age category was 25-34

years old, with more than a third (36.4%) of all cohort members falling within this range. Less than 20 percent of individuals (17.8%) were 24 years old or younger. Just 10 individuals were minors under the age of 18. Slightly more than 20 percent of the cohort (22.6%) was aged 35-44 years, and an additional 21.7 percent of cohort was 45 years of age or older. Age was unknown or missing for 1.6 percent of cohort members.

**Table 12.**
Demographic characteristics of 2019 booking cohort (n=12,702).

| Race/Ethnicity | Frequency | Percent[a] |
|---|---|---|
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 603 | 4.8 |
| AK Native/AM Indian | 5,466 | 43.0 |
| Black | 963 | 7.6 |
| White | 5,484 | 43.2 |
| Unknown | 186 | 1.5 |
| **Age Group** | **Frequency** | **Percent[a]** |
| Less than 18 yrs | 10 | 0.1 |
| 18-24 yrs | 2,247 | 17.7 |
| 25-34 yrs | 4,629 | 36.4 |
| 35-44 yrs | 2,867 | 22.6 |
| 45-54 yrs | 1,583 | 12.5 |
| 55-64 yrs | 950 | 7.5 |
| 65 yrs and older | 215 | 1.7 |
| Unknown/Missing | 201 | 1.6 |
| **Sex** | **Frequency** | **Percent[a]** |
| Female | 3,782 | 29.8 |
| Male | 8,879 | 69.9 |
| Unknown/Missing | 41 | 0.3 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

Males comprised a majority (69.9%) of the 2019 booking cohort, while females constituted 29.8 percent. There were 41 individuals (0.3%) whose sex was either unknown or missing.

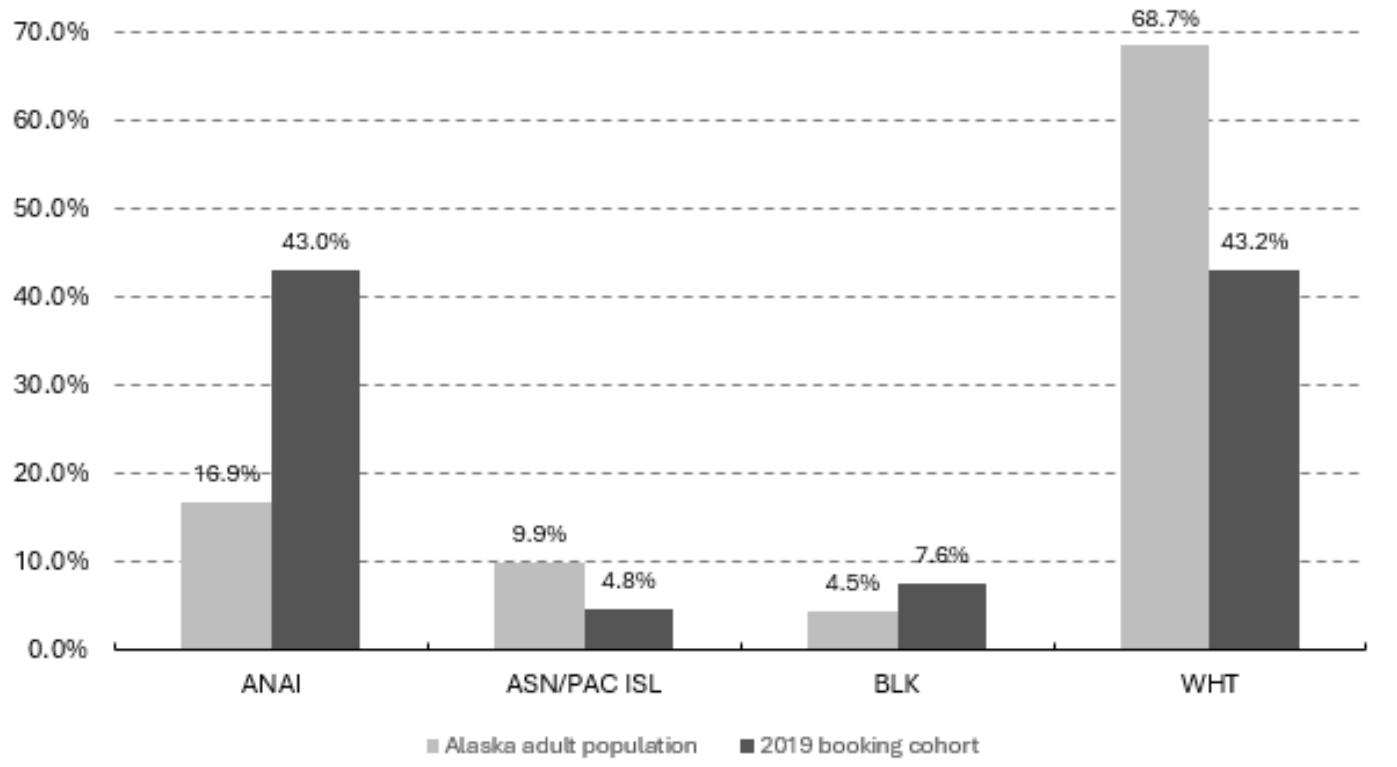
Whites constituted the preponderance of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities in 2019 (43.2%), followed closely by Alaska Natives/American Indians (43.0%). Blacks (7.6%) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (4.8%) comprised much smaller percentages of the population of people booked into ADOC facilities. Finally, racial/ethnic group membership was unknown for 1.5 percent of the 2019 booking cohort.

Figure 4 compares 2019 booking cohort percentages (dark grey bars) for each racial/ethnic grouping to overall Alaska adult population percentages (light grey bars) for each racial/ ethnic grouping. The data presented in Figure 4 illustrate differences for all four racial/ethnic groups. For two groups – Alaska Natives/American Indians (ANAI), and blacks (BLK) – the booking cohort percentages exceed the overall Alaska adult population percentages. Among booking cohort members, individuals categorized as ANAI comprised 43.0 percent

of all those booked into ADOC facilities in 2019. In contrast, individuals categorized as ANAI comprised just 16.9 percent of Alaska's adult population. This difference – 43.0 percent vs. 16.9 percent – results in a disparity ratio of +2.5, indicating that ANAI representation at booking was 2.5 times higher than the overall representation of ANAI adults in Alaska. The disparity ratio for BLK was smaller in magnitude but also positive (+1.7), indicating that BLK representation at booking was 1.7 times higher than the overall representation of BLK adults in Alaska.

**Figure 4.**

Comparison of racial group composition: Alaska total adult population vs. 2019 booking cohort, by racial group.




**Notes**

a. Alaska population includes adults only.

b. Census data for all racial groups shown: Race alone or in combination.

c. ANAI=Alaska Native or American Indian; ASN/PAC ISL=Asian or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; BLK=Black/African American; WHT=White/Caucasian.

b. Hispanic comparison not shown due to differences in measurement between ADOC and U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau measures Hispanic origin separately from race.

d. Data sources: Alaska Department of Corrections (1999-2024). *Offender Profile*. https://doc.alaska.gov/. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Conversely, individuals categorized as white (WHT) and Asian or Pacific Islander (ASN/PAC ISL) had booking cohort percentages less than their overall Alaska adult population percentages. Among booking cohort members, individuals categorized as WHT comprised 43.2 percent of all individuals booked into ADOC facilities in 2019, but those categorized as WHT comprised more than two-thirds – 68.7 percent – of all adults in Alaska. This difference results in a negative disparity ratio of -1.6, indicating that WHT representation at

booking was 1.6 times lower than the overall representation of WHT adults in Alaska. The disparity ratio for ASN/PAC ISL was also negative, and larger in magnitude (-2.1), indicating that the ASN/PAC ISL population was more under-represented at booking than the WHT population.

Notably, all of these compositional differences observed at booking very closely approximate those reported by ADOC for all inmates in ADOC institutions (see Figure 2, page 8), irrespective of stage of the criminal legal process. **These findings suggest that racial/ethnic compositional disparities observed in ADOC facilities, in general, are established at the earliest stage of the incarceration process: immediately upon the transfer of custody from law enforcement agencies to ADOC at booking.**

# Jurisdictional Context of Booking

While it may seem self-evident, it is nevertheless important to highlight that bookings into ADOC custody do not occur in a single jurisdiction. They occur in every region of the state, making it important to examine their jurisdictional contexts to understand regional distributions of ADOC bookings, in general, and racial/ethnic disparities in booking patterns more specifically.

Summary booking data are presented for each of Alaska's four judicial districts (Table 14), followed by the racial/ethnic composition of bookings within each judicial district (Table 15). Next, data are presented for jurisdictional trial courts (Table 16). To assist readers with the interpretation of the racial composition of bookings within these two levels of court jurisdiction (judicial district, trial court), Table 13 presents the racial composition of the population[1] for each judicial district and borough/census area. These data precede the booking data so that readers can get a sense of the racial/ethnic composition of Alaska's communities and regions prior to reviewing community/regional booking patterns.

For example, the first row of data in Table 13 are for the Court System's 1st Judicial District, which covers Southeast Alaska. According to 2020 Census data, in the aggregate an estimated 65.4 percent of the population in the 1st Judicial District were white (WHT), followed by 14.5 percent Alaska Native/American Indian (ANAI), 6.9 percent Asian or Pacific Islander (API), 1.2 percent black (BLK), and 11.9 percent who identified as belonging to some other racial/ ethnic group(s). It is important to note that the racial/ethnic composition of sub-regions within the 1st Judicial District varied considerably. The racial/ethnic compositions varied widely both across and within the other three judicial districts as well.

---

[1] The racial/ethnic composition data presented are for the population 15 years of age and older, for each borough/census area according to the 2020 Census. Data were then aggregated for each judicial district.

**Table 13.**
Estimated racial/ethnic composition of population 15 years of age and older, by Alaska Judicial District and borough/census area, 2020.

| | Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | API | ANAI | BLK | WHT | OTH |
| First Judicial District | 6.9% | 14.5% | 1.2% | 65.4% | 11.9% |
| Haines | 1.4 | 9.3 | 0.8 | 78.0 | 10.5 |
| Hoonah | 0.8 | 35.4 | 2.1 | 49.6 | 12.0 |
| Juneau | 8.0 | 10.5 | 1.4 | 67.3 | 12.8 |
| Ketchikan | 8.8 | 12.8 | 1.0 | 66.1 | 11.4 |
| Petersburg | 5.4 | 9.2 | 2.0 | 73.8 | 9.7 |
| Prince of Wales | 2.2 | 39.4 | 0.7 | 48.0 | 9.7 |
| Sitka | 8.1 | 14.6 | 0.8 | 64.5 | 12.1 |
| Skagway | 3.2 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 84.5 | 7.2 |
| Wrangell | 3.2 | 14.7 | 0.7 | 68.6 | 12.8 |
| Yakutat | 5.5 | 34.8 | 2.1 | 41.6 | 16.1 |
| Second Judicial District | 4.1% | 62.4% | 1.4% | 25.0% | 7.1% |
| Nome | 2.2 | 71.7 | 1.0 | 18.1 | 7.0 |
| North Slope | 7.2 | 45.8 | 1.6 | 37.9 | 7.5 |
| Northwest Arctic | 1.7 | 76.9 | 1.6 | 13.3 | 6.5 |
| Third Judicial District | 9.3% | 8.5% | 3.8% | 66.6% | 11.7% |
| Aleutians East | 41.7 | 10.1 | 9.4 | 20.0 | 18.8 |
| Aleutians West | 40.6 | 7.9 | 7.8 | 29.0 | 14.7 |
| Anchorage | 11.7 | 8.0 | 5.4 | 61.7 | 13.2 |
| Bristol Bay | 2.6 | 29.4 | 0.6 | 44.7 | 22.6 |
| Chugach | 6.7 | 10.5 | 1.1 | 71.6 | 10.2 |
| Copper River | 2.1 | 17.6 | 0.6 | 71.8 | 7.8 |
| Dillingham | 1.5 | 69.6 | 0.8 | 17.9 | 10.1 |
| Kenai Peninsula | 2.1 | 7.6 | 0.8 | 81.7 | 7.8 |
| Kodiak Island | 24.4 | 11.2 | 1.2 | 51.6 | 11.6 |
| Lake and Peninsula | 3.4 | 60.1 | 1.2 | 24.4 | 11.0 |
| Matanuska-Susitna | 2.1 | 6.3 | 1.3 | 80.9 | 9.4 |
| Fourth Judicial District | 3.3% | 22.9% | 3.9% | 60.1% | 9.8% |
| Bethel | 1.4 | 81.7 | 1.2 | 11.6 | 4.0 |
| Denali | 4.9 | 6.2 | 3.2 | 80.4 | 5.2 |
| Fairbanks North Star | 3.9 | 7.4 | 4.9 | 72.3 | 11.6 |
| Kusilvak | 0.7 | 92.9 | 0.4 | 4.1 | 1.9 |
| Southeast Fairbanks | 3.1 | 11.4 | 1.9 | 75.2 | 8.5 |
| Yukon-Koyukuk | 1.7 | 67.3 | 0.8 | 24.5 | 5.8 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.
API=Asian or Pacific Islander; ANAI=Alaska Native or American Indian; BLK=black; WHT=white; OTH=all other racial/ ethnic groups.

## Judicial District

Table 14 presents the distribution of booking cohort members across Alaska's judicial districts. More than 60 percent of the 12,702 individuals in the 2019 booking cohort were remanded into an ADOC facility within the 3rd Judicial District (n=8,062; 63.5%). The 4th Judicial District, which includes Fairbanks, Interior Alaska, as well as the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, was a distant second, with 20.5 percent of the booking cohort (n=2,598 individuals). Approximately 15 percent of cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities in the 1st (n=1,287; 10.1%) and 2nd (n=710; 5.6%) Judicial Districts combined. The Judicial district information provided in the booking data was ambiguous or not provided for 45 members of the booking cohort.

**Table 14.**
Distribution of 2019 booking cohort members across Alaska Court System judicial districts.

| Judicial District | Frequency | Percent of Total[a] |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Judicial District | 1,287 | 10.1% |
| 2nd Judicial District | 710 | 5.6 |
| 3rd Judicial District | 8,062 | 63.5 |
| 4th Judicial District | 2,598 | 20.5 |
| Other/unspecified | 45 | ! |
| TOTAL BOOKING RECORDS | 12,702 | 100.1 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
! indicates a value less than 0.5%.

Table 15 (next page) presents the racial composition of bookings within each of Alaska's four judicial districts. For each judicial district, data are presented for the total number of individuals booked into ADOC facilities, and then the percentage distribution of individuals according to their racial/ethnic group.

For example, there were 1,287 members of the cohort booked into ADOC facilities in the 1st Judicial District. More than half of these individuals (53.7%) booked in 1st Judicial District facilities were White, 38 percent were Alaska Native/American Indian, 3.4 percent were black, 3.1 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and race/ethnicity was unknown or missing for 1.8 percent. **Bolded** percentage values highlight the highest value within each row (judicial district).

Overall, whites and Alaska Natives/American Indians dominated the racial/ethnic compositions of bookings in all four judicial districts. Whites represented the preponderance or majority of individuals booked within the 1st and 3rd Judicial Districts, while Alaska

Natives/American Indians were the majority of those booked in the 2nd and 4th Judicial Districts.

**Table 15.**
Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by Alaska Court System judicial districts.

| | | Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jurisdictional District | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| 1st Judicial District | 1,287 | 3.1% | 38.0% | 3.4% | **53.7%** | 1.8% |
| 2nd Judicial District | 710 | 0.7 | **94.8** | 0.6 | 3.7 | 0.3 |
| 3rd Judicial District | 8,062 | 6.6 | 34.3 | 9.4 | **47.8** | 1.9 |
| 4th Judicial District | 2,598 | 0.9 | **58.7** | 5.8 | 34.1 | 0.5 |
| Other/unspecified | 21 | 0.0 | 23.8 | 0.0 | **76.2** | 0.0 |
| **TOTAL** | 12,702 | 4.8 | 43.0 | 7.6 | **43.2** | 1.5 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

Whites comprised a majority (53.7%) of all cohort members who were booked into an ADOC facility within the 1st Judicial District, while slightly more than a third (38.0%) were Alaska Native/American Indian. Less than five percent were Asian or Pacific Islander (3.1%) or black (3.4%). Within the 3rd Judicial District, whites were 47.8 percent of all cohort members booked into ADOC facilities, followed by Alaska Natives/American Indians (34.3%), blacks (9.4%) and Asian or Pacific Islanders (6.6%).

Whites comprised a majority (53.7%) of all cohort members who were booked into an ADOC facility within the 1st Judicial District, while slightly more than a third (38.0%) were Alaska Native/American Indian. Less than five percent were Asian or Pacific Islander (3.1%) or black (3.4%). Within the 3rd Judicial District, whites were 47.8 percent of all cohort members booked into ADOC facilities, followed by Alaska Natives/American Indians (34.3%), blacks (9.4%) and Asian or Pacific Islanders (6.6%).

Individuals booked into the 2nd Judicial District in 2019 were overwhelmingly Alaska Native/American Indian (94.8%). While whites were the second-most frequent, they constituted just 3.7 percent of those booked in ADOC facilities in the 2nd Judicial District. Alaska Natives/American Indians were also a majority of those booked into ADOC facilities in the 4th Judicial District (58.7%). Whites comprised just over a third of individuals booked (34.1%), followed by blacks (5.8%) and Asian or Pacific Islanders (0.9%).

Across all judicial districts, Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were over-represented among those booked into ADOC facilities. Estimated disparity ratios ranged from +1.5 in the 2nd Judicial District to +4.0 in the 3rd Judicial District, with the 1st and 4th Judicial Districts both coming in at +2.6.

## Jurisdictional Trial Court

Table 16 presents the racial/ethnic distribution of 2019 booking cohort members at a lower, more disaggregated jurisdictional level: jurisdictional trial court. ADOC booking data included a field indicating a specific trail court for each booking event (“case”). Trial courts are listed in Table 16 descending order according to the total number of cohort members

whose cases were assigned. Only courts with 100 or more members the 2019 booking cohort are shown. As  was done in Table 15, Table 16 presents the racial composition of bookings across rows – that is, within each jurisdictional trial court.

**Table 16.**
Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by Alaska Court System jurisdictional trial courts.

| | | Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jurisdictional Trial Court | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Anchorage District Court | 4,389 | 8.5% | **39.4%** | 12.3% | 37.8% | 2.0% |
| Fairbanks District Court | 1,320 | 0.7 | 37.7 | 8.5 | **52.7** | 0.5 |
| Palmer District Court | 1,141 | 1.7 | 18.1 | 3.1 | **75.4** | 1.8 |
| Anchorage Superior Court | 1,107 | 9.4 | **37.5** | 14.6 | 37.3 | 1.2 |
| Bethel District Court | 768 | 0.9 | **96.6** | 0.5 | 1.6 | 0.4 |
| Kenai District Court | 578 | 1.7 | 14.9 | 1.0 | **80.5** | 1.9 |
| Juneau District Court | 430 | 4.2 | 34.2 | 3.0 | **56.7** | 1.9 |
| Nome District Court | 315 | 0.3 | **93.0** | 0.6 | 6.0 | 0.0 |
| Fairbanks Superior Court | 305 | 2.0 | 34.4 | 10.8 | **52.5** | 0.3 |
| Ketchikan District Court | 289 | 2.8 | 38.4 | 2.8 | **55.4** | 0.7 |
| Kenai Superior Court | 227 | 1.8 | 15.0 | 3.1 | **78.9** | 1.3 |
| Juneau Superior Court | 174 | 1.7 | 42.0 | 4.0 | **52.3** | 0.0 |
| Dillingham District Court | 154 | 0.7 | **84.4** | 0.0 | 14.3 | 0.7 |
| Barrow District Court | 150 | 2.7 | **93.3** | 0.0 | 2.7 | 1.3 |
| Kodiak District Court | 130 | 13.1 | 28.5 | 0.8 | **55.4** | 2.3 |
| Sitka District Court | 127 | 2.4 | 37.8 | 2.4 | **57.5** | 0.0 |
| Courts with <100 cohort members | 1,074 | 1.5 | **61.6** | 2.5 | 32.1 | 2.3 |
| Unknown/Missing | 24 | 4.2 | 37.5 | 16.7 | 41.7 | 0.0 |
| TOTAL | 12,702 | 4.8 | 43.0 | 7.6 | **43.2** | 1.5 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

With more than a third of all booking cohort members (34.6%; n=4,389), the Anchorage District Court far outpaced any other jurisdictional trial court. An additional 28.1 percent of booking cohort members had their cases assigned to three jurisdictional trial courts: Fairbanks District Court (n=1,320; 10.4%), Palmer District Court (n=1,141; 9.0%), and Anchorage Superior Court (n=1,107; 8.7%). Altogether, these four jurisdictional trial courts accounted for 62.6 percent of the individuals in the cohort booked into ADOC facilities in 2019.

The data presented in Table 16 demonstrate that, by volume, district courts had jurisdiction over a large majority of booking cohort member cases. More than three-quarters of 2019 booking cohort members (n=9,791; 77.1%) had their criminal cases assigned to district courts.

As with judicial district data presented previously, whites and Alaska Native/American Indian booking cohort members dominated the racial/ethnic compositions of bookings at the

jurisdictional trial court level. Whites constituted a majority in 10 of the 16 courts identified in Table 16, while Alaska Natives/American Indians constituted the preponderance or majority of cohort members in 6 of the 16 courts identified, plus the jurisdictional trial courts with less than 100 booking cohort members.

While there exists racial/ethnic group compositional variability between jurisdictional trial courts, there is also a lot of variability within each racial/ethnic group, especially regarding whites and Alaska Natives/American Indians. This finding highlights the relevance of geographic context in shaping the racial/ethnic composition of those booked into ADOC facilities. As the racial/ethnic composition of Alaska's communities and regions change so, too, does the racial/ethnic composition of the population of individuals booked into the ADOC facilities within those communities and regions.

Nevertheless, the data presented in Table 16 show that Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort were, without exception, proportionally over-represented – even in communities and regions in which Alaska Natives/American Indians are majority populations. Disparity ratios ranged from +1.2 (Bethel and Dillingham District Courts) to +5.1 in Fairbanks District Court, with several courts having disparity ratios of +4.0 and higher (Anchorage District and Superior Courts, Fairbanks Superior Court, and Juneau Superior Court).

## Arrest/Remand Agency

The third aspect of jurisdictional context is arresting agency. These analyses shift focus from the courts to police and other law enforcement entities that serve as the primary inputs into ADOC institutions.

Table 17 displays the arresting agencies for booking cohort members, for their first booking event of 2019. The Anchorage Police Department alone arrested 5,165 individuals, totaling more than 40 percent of the entire cohort. The Alaska State Troopers came in a distance second, arresting 2,996 members of the cohort (23.6%). Taken together these two agencies accounted for nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of booking cohort member arrests. Fairbanks Police Department and the Juneau Police Department each had more than 500 cohort member arrests, and the Bethel Police Department had more than 450.

In general, the distribution of racial/ethnic composition shown in Table 17 parallels that shown in Table 16 for jurisdictional trial courts. However, the inclusion of the Alaska State Troopers in Table 17 makes direct comparisons between arresting agencies and jurisdictional trial courts difficult because of the Troopers statewide jurisdiction and coverage, especially in Alaska's rural and tribal communities. Special jurisdiction agencies such as

university police, airport police, and ADOC pretrial, probation, and parole officers complicate direct comparisons between arresting agencies and jurisdictional trial courts even further.

**Table 17.**
Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by arresting agency name cited in Alaska Department of Corrections cohort booking record dataset by race (n=12,702)

| | | Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arrest/Remand Agency | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Anchorage PD | 5,165 | 8.7% | **38.8%** | 12.9% | 37.7% | 1.9% |
| Alaska State Troopers | 2,996 | 1.3 | 42.2 | 3.1 | **52.4** | 1.0 |
| Fairbanks PD | 561 | 1.3 | **43.5** | 12.3 | 42.4 | 0.5 |
| Juneau PD | 552 | 3.4 | 35.7 | 3.6 | **55.8** | 1.5 |
| Bethel PD | 466 | 0.6 | **96.1** | 0.6 | 2.4 | 0.2 |
| Wasilla PD | 298 | 1.7 | 13.4 | 4.0 | **79.2** | 1.7 |
| Nome PD | 278 | 0.4 | **92.1** | 1.1 | 6.5 | 0.0 |
| Ketchikan PD | 275 | 2.9 | 41.8 | 2.9 | **51.3** | 1.1 |
| Kenai PD | 214 | 2.3 | 21.0 | 3.7 | **71.0** | 1.9 |
| Palmer PD | 211 | 1.0 | 20.4 | 4.7 | **72.0** | 1.9 |
| North Slope Borough PD | 182 | 2.8 | **92.3** | 0.6 | 3.3 | 1.1 |
| Sitka PD | 141 | 2.8 | 36.2 | 2.8 | **58.2** | 0.0 |
| Kodiak PD | 118 | 13.6 | 27.1 | 1.7 | **55.1** | 2.5 |
| Dillingham PD | 116 | 2.6 | **81.9** | 0 | 14.7 | 0.9 |
| ADOC: Pretrial | 112 | 7.1 | 33.0 | 10.7 | **47.3** | 1.8 |
| Airport Police | 110 | 6.4 | **47.3** | 12.7 | 31.8 | 1.8 |
| Soldotna PD | 103 | 3.9 | 15.5 | 0.0 | **79.6** | 1.0 |
| Agencies with <100 cases | 751 | 2.0 | 43.9 | 4.7 | **46.5** | 2.9 |
| Unknown/Missing | 53 | 1.9 | **56.6** | 7.6 | 34.0 | 0.0 |
| TOTAL | 12,702 | 4.8 | 43.0 | 7.6 | **43.2** | 1.5 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
! indicates a value less than 0.5%.

The Bethel (96.1%), North Slope Borough (92.3%), Nome (92.1%), and Dillingham (81.9%) police departments had the highest percentages of Alaska Native/American Indian arrestees, but the largest estimated Alaska Native/American Indian arrest rate disparities were observed for the Fairbanks (+5.9; 43.5% of all arrestees) and Anchorage (+4.9; 38.8% of all arrestees) police departments. (Note: Arrest rate disparities could not be computed for Alaska State Troopers or specialized jurisdiction agencies.) Whites constituted the preponderance or majority of arrestees for 11 of the police/law enforcement agencies identified in Table 17. In only one instance were white members of the cohort over-represented as arrestees, with a disparity ratio of +1.1 (Kodiak PD; 55.1% of all arrestees).

## ADOC Correctional Facilities

The fourth and final dimension of the jurisdictional context of bookings is ADOC correctional facilities themselves. Discussions about the over-representation of Alaska Natives/American Indians in ADOC facilities typically portray ADOC as an institutional monolith, relying on a single measure of inmate racial/ethnic composition collected on a single snapshot day. The problem with that approach, of course, is that ADOC is not an institutional monolith. The department's facilities – including contract jails – operate throughout Alaska and thus are subject to the same contextual forces described previously for court and agency jurisdictions.

**Table 18.**
Race/ethnicity of booking cohort members, by booking facility name.

| | | Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Booking Facility | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Anchorage CC | 5,509 | 8.6% | **39.0%** | 12.8% | 37.8% | 1.8% |
| Fairbanks CC | 1,632 | 0.9 | 36.6 | 9.0 | **53.0** | 0.5 |
| Mat-Su Pretrial | 1,259 | 1.7 | 19.0 | 3.0 | **74.7** | 1.6 |
| Yukon-Kuskokwim CC | 940 | 0.9 | **96.6** | 0.5 | 1.6 | 0.4 |
| Wildwood Pretrial | 855 | 1.6 | 15.0 | 1.8 | **79.8** | 1.9 |
| Lemon Creek CC | 611 | 3.4 | 36.2 | 3.4 | **55.7** | 1.3 |
| Anvil Mountain CC | 560 | 0.2 | **95.9** | 0.5 | 3.4 | 0.0 |
| Ketchikan CC | 382 | 3.6 | 39.0 | 3.1 | **53.1** | 1.1 |
| Dillingham PD[b] | 204 | 1.5 | **85.8** | 0.0 | 12.3 | 0.5 |
| North Slope Borough PD[b] | 182 | 2.8 | **91.8** | 0.6 | 3.9 | 1.1 |
| Kodiak PD[b] | 162 | 11.7 | 29.0 | 1.2 | **56.2** | 1.9 |
| Sitka PD[b] | 144 | 2.8 | 36.8 | 3.5 | **56.9** | 0.0 |
| Facilities with <100 cases | 262 | 1.2 | 37.4 | 4.2 | **49.6** | 7.6 |
| TOTAL | 12,702 | 4.8 | 43.0 | 7.6 | **43.2** | 1.5 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.
b. ADOC contracted facility.

Table 18 displays the racial/ethnic distributions for the 12 ADOC facilities that booked at least 100 booking cohort members. (All of the remaining ADOC facilities and contract jails were consolidated into a single category (row) in Table 18). Five ADOC facilities accounted for more than 80 percent of all cohort member bookings: Anchorage Correctional Complex (n=5,509; 43.4%), Fairbanks Correctional Center (n=1,632; 12.8%), Mat-Su Pretrial (n=1,259; 9.9%), Yukon-Kuskokwim Correctional Center (n=940; 7.4%); and Wildwood Pretrial (n=85; 6.7%). Not surprisingly, these ADOC facilities – as well as the others included in Table 18 – are located in Alaska population centers.

The percentage of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities who were Alaska Native/ American Indian varied widely, ranging from 15 percent to more than 95 percent. The highest concentrations of Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities were observed at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Correctional Center (96.6%) in Bethel, the Anvil Mountain Correctional Center (95.9%) in Nome, and the contract jails in Barrow (91.8%) and Dillingham (85.8%). Combined, these four facilities accounted for approximately a third (n=1,787; 32.7%) of all bookings of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members. The Anchorage Correctional Complex alone accounted for more than 39 percent of all bookings of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members statewide, in addition to 39 percent of all bookings at the facility itself.

White cohort members constituted a majority of individuals booked into all other ADOC facilities with 100 or more bookings, and nearly half (49.6%) of all bookings into ADOC facilities with fewer than 100 total cohort member intakes.

## Summary: Jurisdictional Context of Booking

The data presented in this section make clear that the racial composition of bookings into ADOC facilities – and the racial composition of ADOC facilities more generally – is not uniform and is, in fact, highly variable depending on jurisdictional context and geographic location. In other words, one's understanding of the racial composition of ADOC institutional populations necessarily becomes more nuanced once jurisdictional context is considered.

For example, while Alaska Natives/American Indians were most likely to be booked into an ADOC correctional facility in the 3rd Judicial District, they represented the majority of individuals booked in both the 2nd (94.8%) and 4th (58.7%) Judicial Districts as well. In similar fashion, while Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities were most likely to have their cases fall within the jurisdiction of the Anchorage District or Superior Courts, Alask Native/American Indian cohort members comprised large majorities of all those booked into ADOC facilities for offenses falling within the jurisdictions of the Bethel (96.6%), Barrow (93.3%), Nome (93.0%), and Dillingham (84.4%) District Courts. These geographic and jurisdictional patterns also held for arresting agencies, and the specific ADOC facilities into which Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked.

Beyond the importance of regional and contextual variability in racial composition, the principal finding of empirical analyses presented is this: **The percentages of Alaska Natives/American Indians who are booked into ADOC facilities exceed overall Alaska Native/ American Indian population estimates in almost every jurisdictional context examined.**

# Criminal Offenses

This section describes the criminal offenses for which individual members of the cohort were booked into ADOC facilities during their *first booking event* of 2019. (59.2% of the booking cohort were booked into an ADOC facility just once in 2019; 40.8% were booked into ADOC facilities on multiple occasions.)

While the analyses presented in preceding sections provided important information on *who* was booked into ADOC facilities (i.e., demographic characteristics) and *where* bookings occurred (i.e. judicial districts, jurisdictional trail courts, arresting agencies, and correctional facilities), the analyses presented below detail *why* cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities.

Thorough descriptive analyses of the criminal offenses for which the individuals included in the booking cohort were accused of committing was undertaken for two principal reasons.

Firstly, as discussed previously, ADOC is a *receiving institutional system* that exerts limited control over its inputs. As receiving institutions, ADOC facilities only rarely initiate the incarceration process, although they are legally required to assume legal custody of and house the people brought to them by other criminal justice agencies and actors. Thus, ADOC's intakes are determined almost exclusively by the decision and actions of others outside of the department, including those whose behavior(s) prompted a criminal legal response and the criminal justice actors who brought them through the sally ports of ADOC facilities and into departmental custody. Within this institutional context, analysis of the criminal charges levied against those booked into ADOC facilities provides essential information and insights about the events that occurred outside the walls of ADOC facilities that led to members of the booking cohort being remanded into ADOC custody.

Secondly, the specific criminal offenses for which individuals are incarcerated in correctional facilities, whether jails or prisons, dramatically influences all aspects of their incarceration. For example, both the *type* (e.g., violent vs. property) and *seriousness* (e.g., felony vs. misdemeanor) of crime can significantly impact initial security and custody level determinations (e.g., minimum vs. maximum; general population vs. segregation) as well as pretrial release decisions, and if convicted, decisions about sentence duration, custodial supervision type (e.g., community supervision vs. incarceration), and parole determinations made during the post-conviction phase, among others.

In sum, examination of criminal offenses cited at booking contributes to our understanding of the events that generate the inputs into ADOC facilities, as well as factors that influence the extent and duration of incarceration stays in them. To the extent that patterns of

criminal offenses differ between racial/ethnic groups, analysis of criminal offense data helps advance our understanding of the racial composition of ADOC's inmate population.

The analysis of the criminal offenses begins with an overall description of *misdemeanor crimes* and *felony crimes*, respectively, regardless of crime type. Focus then shifts to six criminal offense categories that were most frequently observed in the data, beginning with *violent offenses* and then proceeding through descriptive analyses of *property offenses*, *public order* offenses, *OUI/DUI* offenses, *controlled substances* offenses, and *probation and/or parole violations*. Importantly, racial/ethnic group comparisons are presented in each section to examine race-specific differences in the criminal offense data – differences that may help to explain racial differences and disparities in ADOC inmate populations.

## Misdemeanor Offenses

In total, more than two-thirds of all arrest cohort members (n=8,606; 67.8%), in their first booking event of 2019, were remanded into ADOC facility custody for one or more misdemeanor offenses.

Table 19 presents the percentage of cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for *misdemeanor offenses* according to racial/ethnic group membership, as recorded in ADOC booking records. Data are presented for Class A, Class B, Class C, and unspecified misdemeanor crimes.

**Table 19.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with misdemeanor offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Misdemeanor Level | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Class A | 41.6% | 46.5% | 39.5% | **50.2%** | 45.2% |
| Class B | 10.3 | **15.4** | 10.7 | 11.7 | 12.9 |
| Class C | ! | ! | ! | ! | ! |
| Unspecified | 10.6 | **5.3** | 9.7 | 8.3 | 13.4 |
| ANY misdemeanor | 62.5 | 67.2 | **59.9** | **70.1** | 71.5 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages do not sum to 100%.
! indicates insufficient data for estimation.

Individuals may have been booked into an ADOC facility for one and only one misdemeanor offense (any category), or for multiple misdemeanor offenses falling into a single offense category or a combination of offense categories.

The values presented in Table 19 represent the percentages of booking cohort members *within each racial/ethnic grouping* who were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one misdemeanor crime. **Bolded** values highlight statistically significant differences between the reference racial/ethnic group (bolded) and one or more of the other racial/ethnic groups.

With respect to misdemeanor offenses, Class A offenses were far and away the most observed offense classification for all racial/ethnic groups. Nevertheless, whites (50.2%) were more likely than members of all other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for Class A misdemeanors, with statistically significant differences observed with Asians or Pacific Islanders (41.6%), Alaska Natives/American Indians (46.5%), and blacks (39.5%). On the other hand, Alaska Natives/American Indians were significantly more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for Class B misdemeanors. Conversely, Alaska Natives/American Indians were significantly less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be booked for misdemeanors categorized as unspecified.

Altogether, whites (70.1%) were significantly more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC correctional facilities for misdemeanor offenses. At the same time, blacks (59.9%) were significantly less likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC correctional facilities for misdemeanor offenses.

**Table 20.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more misdemeanor offenses in first 2019 booking event

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Misdemeanor (any) | 8,606 | 4.4% | 42.7% | 6.7% | **44.7%** | 1.6% |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 20 presents the distribution of racial/ethnic groups given booking for misdemeanor offenses. Whites comprised 44.7 percent of the 8,606 individuals booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanor crimes, followed closely by Alaska Natives/American Indians (42.7%). Asians or Pacific Islanders and blacks were 4.4 percent and 6.7 percent of the 8,606 cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanors.

## Felony Crimes

Approximately a third of all arrest cohort members (n=3,964; 31.1%) were remanded into ADOC facility custody for one or more felony offenses.

Table 21 presents the percentage of cohort members who, in their first booking event of 2019, were taken into ADOC facility custody for *felony offenses* according to racial/ethnic group membership. Data are presented for Unclassified, Class A, Class B, Class C, and unspecified felony offenses. Cohort members may have been booked into an ADOC facility for one and only one felony offense (any category), or for multiple felony offenses falling into a single offense category or a combination of multiple offense categories.

**Table 21.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with felony offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Felony Level | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Unclassified | 0.3% | 1.3% | 0.7% | 1.0% | 0.5% |
| Class A | **2.8** | 1.5 | **2.5** | 1.2 | 1.1 |
| Class B | 9.6 | 7.6 | **10.5** | 6.7 | 9.7 |
| Class C | **22.7** | 18.2 | **22.1** | 16.7 | 15.1 |
| Unspecified | 1.8 | 3.2 | 3.5 | 2.7 | 1.1 |
| ANY felony | **37.3** | 31.7 | **39.4** | 28.4 | 27.4 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages do not sum to 100%.

Significant between racial/ethnic group differences were found for three felony classifications: Class A, Class B, and Class C. Blacks and Asian or Pacific Islanders were significantly more likely than whites and Alaska Natives/American Indians to be booked into ADOC facilities for Class A and Class C felony crimes. Blacks alone were significantly more likely than whites and Alaska Natives/American Indians (but not Asians or Pacific Islanders) to be booked for Class B felony offenses. No statistically significant between-racial group differences were observed for Unclassified felony crimes, or offenses recorded as unspecified. In the aggregate, two racial/ethnic groups – Asian or Pacific Islander, and black – had very similar rates of felony crimes at booking (37.3% and 39.4%, respectively), and these rates were significantly higher than those observed for Alaska Natives/American Indians and whites.

Table 22 presents the racial/ethnic group distribution for those members of the cohort who were booked into ADOC facilities for felony offenses. Despite being less likely than Asians or Pacific Islanders and blacks to be booked for felony offenses, Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised the largest share of booking cohort members taken into ADOC facility custody for felonies. Out of the 3,946 cohort members booked for felony crimes, 44 percent of them (n=1,735) were Alaska Native/American Indian. Whites followed closely with 1,556 individuals booked for felonies (39.4%). Blacks comprised 9.6 percent of cohort

members booked into ADOC facilities for felonies; Asians or Pacific Islanders constituted 5.7 percent of the total.

**Table 22.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more felony offenses in first 2019 booking event.

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Felony (any) | 3,946 | 5.7% | **44.0%** | 9.6% | 39.4% | 1.3% |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

## Violent Offenses

The analysis of specific criminal charges levied against booking cohort members at their first booking event of 2019 begins with crimes classified as *offenses against the person* in Alaska Statutes. These offenses are often colloquially referred to as *violent crimes* and are inclusive of criminal offenses typically referred to in official publications and public policy conversations about Alaska's violent crime rates.

**Table 23.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with violent offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offense Category | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Assault (any) | 40.0% | **43.7%** | 38.1% | 27.4% | 30.1% |
| Misdemeanor assault | 28.5 | **32.7** | 26.1 | 21.1 | 24.2 |
| Felony assault | 14.1 | 15.5 | 15.3 | **8.7** | 9.7 |
| Robbery (any) | 1.2 | 0.9 | **2.3** | 0.9 | 0.0 |
| Sexual assault (any) | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| Sex abuse of a minor (any) | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| Homicide (any) | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| ANY violent offense | 41.6 | **45.7** | 39.7 | **28.8** | 30.1 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages do not sum to 100%.

Table 23 presents the percentage of booking cohort members who were charged with violent offenses in their first booking event of 2019 according to racial/ethnic group membership. Five violent crimes are examined: assault (separate entries for misdemeanor and felony charges), robbery, sexual assault, sexual abuse of a minor, and homicide. The values presented in Table 23 represent the percentages of booking cohort members *within each racial/ethnic grouping* who were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one charge of

each violent offense. **Bolded** values highlight statistically significant differences between the reference racial/ethnic group (bolded) and one or more of the other racial/ethnic groups.

## Assault

Three percentage values are highlighted within the assault offense category. The first highlighted percentage – 43.7% – indicates that 43.7 percent of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one assault offense, (misdemeanor or felony). This percentage was significantly higher than those for both black (38.1%) and white (27.4%) cohort members, as well as those of unknown race/ethnicity (30.1%). The second bolded value – 32.7% – indicates that 32.7 percent of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for one or more misdemeanor assault charges. As was the case with the aggregate assault measure, this percentage was significantly higher than those for both black (26.1%) and white (21.1%) cohort members, as well as those of unknown race/ethnicity (24.2%). Finally, the third bolded value – 8.7% – indicates that 8.7% of white cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for one or more felony assault charges. This percentage was significantly lower than those for Alaska Native/American Indian (15.5%), black (15.3%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (14.1%) cohort members.

Overall, these findings show two compositional patterns with respect to assault charges at booking: (1) Overall, Alaska Natives/American Indians were significantly more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC custody for one or more assault offenses. Notably, however, this aggregate pattern was driven by *misdemeanor* assault offenses. (2) At the same time, whites were significantly less likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into an ADOC facility for one or more felony assault offenses.

## Robbery

The fourth row in Table 23 presents the percentages of booking cohort members within each racial/ethnic grouping booked into an ADOC facility for at least one robbery offense. The bolded value in the robbery row – 2.3% – indicates that 2.3 percent of black cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for one or more robbery offenses. This percentage was significantly higher in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups including Alaska Native/American Indian (0.9%) and white (0.9%) cohort members, as well as those of unknown race/ethnicity (0.0%).

## Sexual assault and sexual abuse of a minor

The data presented in Table 23 reveal the extremely low prevalence of *sexual assault* and *sexual abuse of a minor* offenses among booking cohort members. Less than one percent of cohort members in each racial/ethnic group were booked into an ADOC facility for any sexual assault offenses or any sexual abuse of a minor offenses. In total, just 152 members of the cohort (1.2%) were booked into ADOC facilities for these crimes. No statistically significant between-group differences in the likelihood of booking for these crimes were observed.

## Homicide

The data presented in Table 23 for criminal homicide are very similar to the data presented for sexual assault and sexual abuse of a minor with respect to very low prevalence. In total, just 71 members of the cohort (0.6%) were booked into ADOC facilities for any homicide offenses[1].

## Summary: Violent Offenses

Located at the bottom of Table 23 is an *ANY violent offense* row (grey shading). This row presents the aggregate percentages of booking cohort members within each racial/ethnic group who were booked into an ADOC facility for ANY assault, robbery, sexual assault, sexual abuse of a minor, or homicide offenses.

Two values are bolded: the percentage for Alaska Natives/American Indians (45.7%), and the percentage for whites (28.8%). Both percentages are highlighted because of the simultaneous dynamic highlighted previously. **In the aggregate across all the violent crime categories examined, Alaska Natives/American Indians (45.7%), were significantly more likely than black (39.7%), white (28.8%) cohort members, and those of unknown race/ethnicity (30.1%) to be booked into ADOC facilities for violent offenses.** Concurrently, whites (28.8%) were significantly less likely than Alaska Native/American Indian (45.7%), Asian or Pacific Islander (41.6%), and black (39.7%) cohort members to be booked into ADOC facilities for violent crimes.

Table 24 presents the distribution of racial/ethnic group groups, given booking into ADOC facilities for violent offenses. The data shown in Table 24 reveal a clear pattern: **Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities constituted a majority or preponderance of individuals in every one of the violent crimes examined.**

---

[1] Includes: Murder in the first degree and second degrees, manslaughter, and criminally negligent homicide.

Alaska Natives/American Indians represented 52.5% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for assault (52.4% of misdemeanor assault bookings, 53.8% of felony assault bookings), 60.3% of all those booked into ADOC for sexual assault, 53.2% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for sexual abuse of a minor, 46.5% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for homicide, and along with whites, 38.4% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for robbery. Overall, Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised more than half (52.4%) of all individuals booked into ADOC for violent crimes.

**Table 24.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more violent offenses in first 2019 booking event.

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Assault (any) | 4,557 | 5.3% | **52.5%** | 8.1% | 33.0% | 1.2% |
| Misdemeanor assault | 3,410 | 5.0 | **52.4** | 7.4 | 33.9 | 1.3 |
| Felony assault | 1,574 | 5.4 | **53.8** | 9.3 | 30.3 | 1.1 |
| Robbery (any) | 125 | 5.6 | **38.4** | 17.6 | **38.4** | 0.0 |
| Sexual assault (any) | 73 | 1.4 | **60.3** | 6.9 | 31.5 | 0.0 |
| Sex abuse of a minor (any) | 94 | 5.3 | **53.2** | 4.3 | 37.2 | 0.0 |
| Homicide (any) | 71 | 4.2 | **46.5** | 9.9 | 39.4 | 0.0 |
| ANY violent offense | 4,770 | 5.3 | **52.4** | 8.0 | 33.1 | 1.2 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

## Violent Felony Offenses

Table 25 presents data for violent offenses classified as felonies, split into two panels. These additional analyses – a combination of the felony offense and violent offense analyses already presented – were undertaken because of the dramatic impact these offenses have on the total incarceration experience to which individuals charged with violent felonies are subject. All else equal, individuals booked into ADOC facilities for violent felonies are more likely to be subjected to more intense security and supervision protocols while in institutional custody, are more likely to be detained during the adjudicatory phases of the criminal legal process, and, if found guilty, are more likely to be given sentences that include incarceration, and finally incarcerative sentences of longer duration. These factors all directly impact inmate counts on a given day, and to the extent that violent felony bookings are concentrated among racial/ethnic groups, violent felony bookings uniquely contribute to the overall racial/ethnic composition of ADOC inmate populations.

Panel A depicts within-group percentages booked into ADOC facilities for violent felony offenses, for each of the five racial/ethnic groups examined. Panel B presents the

percentage distribution of racial/ethnic group membership among the 2,022 cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for violent felony offenses.

**Table 25.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with violent felony offenses, by racial/ethnic group, and racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more violent offenses, first 2019 booking event.

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| PANEL A: | | | | | | |
| Within racial/ethnic group | | | | | | |
| Violent felony (any)[a] | | 17.9 | 19.8 | 19.8 | **11.3** | 12.9 |
| PANEL B: | | | | | | |
| Within offense category | N | | | | | |
| Violent felony (any)[b] | 2,022 | 5.3 | **53.4** | 9.5 | 30.6 | 1.2 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages do not sum to 100%.
b. Row percentages may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

Panel A results show that white cohort members were significantly less likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for violent felonies. Slightly more than one out of every 10 whites (11.3%) booked into ADOC facilities were taken into custody for violent felonies as compared to almost one out of every 6 Asians or Pacific Islanders (17.9%) and one out of every 5 Alaska Natives/American Indians (19.8%) and blacks (19.8%).

**Panel B shows that among the 2,022 cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for violent felonies, more than half (53.4%) were Alaska Native/American Indian.** Approximately a third (30.6%) of cohort members taken into ADOC custody were white, while blacks and Asians or Pacific Islanders comprised approximately 10 percent and 5 percent of the total, respectively.

## Property Offenses

The next portion of the analysis focuses on crimes classified as offenses against property in Alaska Statutes. Separate analyses are presented for the crimes of *criminal mischief, theft, trespassing, burglary, and arson.*

Table 26 presents the percentage of booking cohort members who were charged with property offenses in their first booking event of 2019 according to racial/ethnic group membership. The values presented in Table 26 represent the percentages of booking cohort members *within each racial/ethnic grouping* who were booked into an ADOC facility for at

least one property offense. Bolded values highlight statistically significant differences between the reference racial/ethnic group (bolded) and one or more of the other racial/ethnic groups.

**Table 26.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with property offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offense Category | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Criminal mischief (any) | 10.1% | 8.7% | 9.0% | 8.7% | 9.7% |
| Misdemeanor | 6.0 | 6.3 | 5.1 | 6.3 | 5.9 |
| Felony | 4.3 | 2.5 | 4.1 | 2.6 | 4.3 |
| Theft (any) | 11.3 | **6.1** | 9.2 | 9.4 | 5.4 |
| Trespassing (any) | 2.7 | **4.6** | 1.8 | **4.4** | 3.2 |
| Burglary (any) | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 2.7 |
| Arson (any) | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| ANY property offense | 22.7 | 18.8 | 19.5 | 20.9 | 16.7 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages do not sum to 100%.

## Criminal Mischief

Across all racial/ethnic groups, roughly one out of every 11 cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities for a criminal mischief offense. Misdemeanor criminal mischief offenses were more common than felony criminal mischief offenses for all racial/ethnic groups.

Notably, there are no bold values in any of the criminal mischief categories, including misdemeanor and felony criminal mischief. This indicates that there were no statistically significant differences between racial/ethnic groups in the likelihood of booking for criminal mischief offenses.

## Theft

The fourth row in Table 26 presents the percentages of booking cohort members within each racial/ethnic grouping booked into ADOC facilities for at least one *theft* offense. The bolded value in the theft (any) row – 6.1% – indicates that 6.1 percent of Alaska Native/ American Indian cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility with one or more theft offenses. This percentage was significantly lower in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups including Asian or Pacific Islanders (11.3%), White (9.4%), and Black (9.2%) cohort members.

## Trespassing

Two percentage values are highlighted within the trespassing offense category. The first highlighted percentage – 4.6% – indicates that 4.6 percent of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one trespassing offense. This percentage was significantly higher than for black cohort members (1.8%). The second highlighted percentage – 4.4% – indicates that 4.4 percent of white cohort members were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one trespassing offense. This percentage was also significantly higher than those for black cohort members (1.8%)

## Burglary

In total, 306 individuals in the booking cohort (2.4% of total) were booked into an ADOC facility for at least one burglary charge. However, the analysis revealed that no racial/ethnic group was more (or less) likely to be booked into an ADOC facility for a burglary offense.

## Arson

The seventh row in Table 26 presents the percentages of booking cohort members within each racial/ethnic grouping booked into an ADOC facility for at least one arson offense. As was the case for burglary, the analysis revealed that no racial/ethnic group was more (or less) likely to be booked into an ADOC facility for an arson offense.

## Summary: Property Offenses

Overall, there were not many between-group differences when it came to the likelihood of booking for property offenses, although **Alaska Natives/American Indians were found to be significantly less likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for theft offenses, and along with whites, significantly more likely to be booked for trespassing.**

However, the data in Table 27, which presents the distribution of racial/ethnic groups *given booking for one or more property offenses*, reveals several between-racial/ethnic group differences.

Whites comprised most of those booked into ADOC facilities for nearly all of the property crimes examined, with the exceptions of trespassing and arson. Whites represented 42.6 percent of all those booked into ADOC facilities for criminal mischief (43.9% of misdemeanors and 40.2% of felonies), 50.8% of all those booked for theft offenses, and 50.5% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for burglary offenses.

Alaska Natives/American Indians represented the preponderance of booking cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for trespassing (47.4%) and arson (43.0%) offenses and tied with whites for criminal mischief (any) (42.6%).

Overall, whites constituted 45.3 percent of cohort members booked into ADOC for property offenses, and Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised 40.6 percent.

**Table 27.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with property offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Criminal mischief (any) | 1,120 | 5.5% | **42.6%** | 7.8% | **42.6%** | 1.6% |
| Misdemeanor | 783 | 4.6 | 43.8 | 6.3 | **43.9** | 1.4 |
| Felony | 353 | 7.4 | 39.1 | 11.1 | **40.2** | 2.3 |
| Theft (any) | 1,012 | 6.7 | 32.7 | 8.8 | **50.8** | 1.0 |
| Trespassing (any) | 528 | 3.0 | **47.4** | 3.2 | 45.3 | 1.1 |
| Burglary (any) | 303 | 3.0 | 38.0 | 6.9 | **50.5** | 1.7 |
| Arson (any) | 26 | 15.4 | **43.0** | 0.0 | 26.9 | 0.0 |
| ANY property offense | 2,526 | 5.4 | 40.6 | 7.4 | **45.3** | 1.2 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Column percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

## Public Order Offenses

In this section, we focus on a category of offenses defined in Alaska Statutes as *offenses against public order*. Public order offenses are behaviors in public spaces that interfere with the public peace – in other words, incivilities that violate social norms and interfere with the quiet and orderly conduct of life in public spaces.

Two categories of public order offenses are examined: (1) misconduct involving weapons (MIW), and (2) disorderly conduct.

### Misconduct Involving Weapons

Table 28 presents the percentage of booking cohort members who were charged with a misconduct involving weapons (MIW) in their *first booking event* of 2019 according to racial/ethnic group membership.

Overall, 2.7 percent of Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities for one or more MIW offenses, a percentage significantly lower than those observed for Asian or Pacific Islander (4.6%), black (7.1%), and white (4.2%) booking cohort members.

**Table 28.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with public order offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offense Category | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Misconduct Involving Weapons | 6.1% | **2.7%** | 7.6% | 5.0% | 7.0% |
| Misdemeanor MIW | 3.2 | **1.9** | 4.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Felony MIW | 4.0 | **1.2** | **5.3** | 2.3 | 4.8 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 0.8 | **6.8** | 1.4 | 3.2 | 4.8 |
| ANY Public Order Offense | 7.0 | **9.4** | 8.8 | 8.1 | 10.8 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.

This significantly lower rate for Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members was driven by *misdemeanor* MIW bookings. Just 1.9 percent of Alaska Natives/American Indians were booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanor MIW offenses compared to 3.6 percent for blacks and 2.8 percent for whites (the observed difference between Alaska Native/American Indians and Asians or Pacific Islanders was not statistically significant).

Conversely, black cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities for *felony* MIW offenses at a rate (5.3%) that was higher than other racial/ethnic groups. In fact, the rate of felony MIW bookings for blacks was significantly higher than the rates for Alaska Natives/ American Indians (1.2%), whites (2.3%), and Asians or Pacific Islanders (4.0%). At the same time, the percentage of Alaska Natives/American Indians booked into ADOC facilities for felony MIW offenses (1.2%) was lower than all other racial/ethnic groups, and significantly lower than the rates for blacks, Asian or Pacific Islanders, and whites.

## Disorderly Conduct

Results for disorderly conduct paint a different picture, however. While Alaska Native/ American Indian members of the cohort were significantly less likely to be booked for MIW offenses, they were more likely than members of all other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for disorderly conduct. The Alaska Native/American rate of booking for disorderly conduct (6.8%) was significantly higher than the rates for cohort members of unknown race (4.8%), whites (3.2%), blacks (1.4%), and Asians or Pacific Islanders (0.8%).

## Summary: Public Order Offenses

In the aggregate Alaska Native/American Indian cohort members were significantly more likely than their Asian or Pacific Islander, black, and white counterparts to be booked into ADOC facilities for public order offenses. (There was no statistically significant difference,

in the aggregate, between Alaska Natives/American Indians and cohort member of unknown race/ethnicity.) However, it is more accurate to say that **Alaska Native/ American Indian cohort members were more likely than others to be booked for disorderly conduct, and significantly less likely than others to be booked for misconduct involving weapons offenses.**

**Table 29.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more public order offenses in first 2019 booking event

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Misc. Involving Weapons | 461 | 6.1 | 26.7 | 14.8 | **50.1%** | 2.4 |
| Misdemeanor MIW | 300 | 5.0% | 29.7% | 11.7% | **51.7** | 2.0% |
| Felony MIW | 220 | 8.2 | 23.2 | 21.4 | **44.1** | 3.2 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 575 | 0.9 | **64.5** | 2.3 | 30.8 | 1.6 |
| ANY Public Order Offense | 1,103 | 3.8 | **46.3** | 7.7 | 40.3 | 1.8 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 29 shows the racial/ethnic group breakdown *within each public order offense category*. White cohort members represented a majority (50.1%) of all those booked into ADOC facilities for one or more MIW offenses, and a slightly larger majority of those booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanor MIW offenses (51.7%). And, while they comprised a smaller percentage of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for felony MIW offenses, whites still represented the largest share (44.1%). In contrast, Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised the largest share of cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for disorderly conduct (64.5%). Overall, when MIW and disorderly conduct offenses were combined, Alaska Natives/American Indians represented the largest segment of those booked into ADOC facilities.

## Motor Vehicles: Offenses and Accidents

An offense category this is often given only minor consideration in crime, public safety, or correctional policy discussions is that of motor vehicle offenses. This is somewhat curious given their overall volume. This section focuses on one high-volume motor vehicle offense in particular: *operating under the influence (OUI)*. Importantly, in Alaska law this offense is not limited to driving an automobile (i.e., a car or a truck) under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. Rather, Alaska's OUI statutes applies to snow machines, ATV's, cars, trucks, or commercial vehicles, as well as aircraft and watercraft.

In total, more than one out of every five booking cohort members were booked into ADOC facilities for OUI (n=2,749; 21.6%), making OUI the second-most prevalent offense type examined in this report. In total, fewer booking cohort members were remanded into ADOC facilities for OUI than for violent offenses (n=4,770), but more booking cohort members were remanded into ADOC facilities for OUI than for property (n=2,526) and public order (1,103) offenses.

## Operating Under the Influence (OUI)

Table 30 presents two data panels. Panel A depicts within-group percentages booked into ADOC facilities for OUI offenses, for each of the five racial/ethnic groups examined. Panel B presents the percentage distribution of racial/ethnic group membership among the 2,749 cohort members who were booked into ADOC facilities for OUI offenses.

**Table 30.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence (OUI) offenses, by racial/ethnic group, and racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more OUI offenses, first 2019 booking event.

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| PANEL A: | | | | | | |
| Within racial/ethnic group | | | | | | |
| OUI (any)[a] | | 17.7 | 15.6 | 18.4 | **28.4** | **31.2** |
| PANEL B: | | | | | | |
| Within offense category | N | | | | | |
| OUI (any)[b] | 2,749 | 3.9 | 30.9 | 6.4 | **56.6** | 2.1 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages do not sum to 100%.
b. Row percentages may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

The data presented in Panel A show that cohort members in the unknown racial/ethnic group had the highest observed rate of booking for OUI offenses. Just under a third (31.2%) of cohort members in this group were booked for OUI. This was significantly higher than the OUI booking rates for Asians or Pacific Islanders (17.7%), blacks (18.4%), and Alaska Natives/American Indians (15.6%), but not whites. Whites had the second-highest OUI booking percentage (28.4%), and that rate was also significantly higher than the rates for Asians or Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives/American Indians, and blacks.

The data in Panel B reveal that, overall, a majority (56.6%) of the 2,749 cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for OUI offenses were white. Alaska Natives/American Indians came in a distant second with just under a third (30.9%) of OUI offenders, followed by blacks (6.4%), and Asians or Pacific Islanders (3.9%). Finally, while nearly a third (31.2%) of

cohort members whose race/ethnicity was unknown were booked on OUI offenses, this group comprised just 2.1% of all those booked into ADOC facilities for OUI.
In sum, OUI was an offense type dominated by white members of the booking cohort. Whites were both the most likely to be booked for an OUI offense (28.4% of whites), and they represented the majority of all OUI bookings (56.6% of individuals booked for OUI).

## Controlled Substances

A total of 704 booking cohort members were booked into ADOC for one or more controlled substances offenses. In Alaska, controlled substance means a drug, substance, or immediate precursor in the drug schedules set out in law. Controlled substance offenses typically involve violations of law pertaining to the manufacture, delivery, or possession of a controlled substance. The use of controlled substances, per se, is not included.

**Table 31.**
Percentage of booking cohort members charged with misconduct involving controlled substances offenses in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group.

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offense Category | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Misdemeanor MICS | 3.5 | **1.7** | 4.3 | 3.1 | 2.7 |
| Felony MICS | 3.8 | **1.6** | 4.4 | 5.4 | 1.1 |
| ANY MICS Offense | 6.5 | **3.0** | 8.2 | 7.6 | 3.8 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.

The data presented in Table 31 reveal a clear pattern: Alaska Natives/American Indians were significantly less likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for misconduct involving a controlled substance (MICS) offenses. All of the other racial/ethnic groups were equally likely to be booked for MICS offenses.

**Table 32.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members booked into ADOC facilities for one or more misconduct involving controlled substances offenses in first 2019 booking event.

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Misdemeanor MICS | 329 | 6.4% | 27.7% | 12.5% | **52.0** | 2.0% |
| Felony MICS | 451 | 5.1 | 19.7 | 9.3 | **65.4** | 0.4 |
| ANY MICS Offense | 704 | 5.5 | 23.0 | 11.2 | **59.2** | 1.0 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 32 presents the racial/ethnic group distribution of cohort members, *given booking for one or more MICS offenses.* Whites were the majority those booked for both misdemeanor (52.0%) and felony (65.4%) MICS offenses. Overall, nearly two out of every three members of the booking cohort (59.2%) who were remanded into an ADOC facility for MICS offenses were white.

In summary, the MICS data presented in Tables 31 and 32 present two distinct patterns. The first pattern pertains to Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort. **Alaska Natives/American Indians were significantly less likely than all other racial/ ethnic groups to be booked for MICS offenses, misdemeanor or felony.** The second pattern applies to white members of the booking cohort. While whites were not more likely than members of other racial/ethnic groups to be booked for MICS offenses (except for Alaska Natives/American Indians), they nevertheless comprised most of the people who were remanded for MICS offenses – and this was especially true for felony MICS offenses. White comprised nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of all those booked into ADOC facilities for MICS felonies.

## Probation and Parole Violations

We conclude our examination of the categories and types of criminal offenses for which booking cohort members were remanded into ADOC institutional custody with an exploration of probation/parole violations. For the past decade Alaska criminal justice professionals and policymakers have expressed concern about the extent to which probation/parole revocations drive the ADOC's inmate population, as well as the role probation/parole revocations contribute to racial/ethnic disparities in ADOC institutions. Table 33 presents the percentage of booking cohort members who were flagged for probation and/or parole violations in their first booking event of 2019, according to their racial/ethnic group membership.

**Table 33.**
Percentage of booking cohort members remanded into ADOC institutional custody for probation and/or parole violations in first 2019 booking event, by racial/ethnic group

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offense Category | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Probation violation | 4.2% | **5.8%** | 5.0% | 4.0% | 2.7% |
| Parole violation | 1.2 | **1.0** | 2.2 | 0.9 | 0.0 |
| ANY Probation/Parole violation | 5.1 | **6.4** | 6.2 | 4.6 | 2.7 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.

Probation/parole violations were not a common occurrence. In total, 699 of the 12,702 booking cohort members were remanded into ADOC institutional custody for probation/ parole violations. Nevertheless, some statistically significant differences were observed.

Alaska Natives/American Indians (5.8%) were significantly more likely than whites (4.0%), but not any other racial/ethnic groups, to be booked into ADOC facilities for probation violations, and Alaska Natives/American Indians (1.0%) significantly less likely than blacks (2.2%), but not any other racial/ethnic groups, to be booked for parole violations.

**Overall, when probation and parole violations were combined there was only one statistically significant difference: Alaska Native/American Indians (6.4%) were more likely than whites (4.6%) to be booked into ADOC facilities for probation and/or parole violations.**

**Table 34.**
Racial/ethnic group distribution among booking cohort members remanded into ADOC institutional custody for probation and/or parole violations in first 2019 booking event

| | | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity[a] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Among those booked for... | N | Asian or Pacific Islander | AK Native or AM Indian | Black | White | Unknown |
| Probation violation | 614 | 4.1% | **51.8%** | 7.8% | 35.5% | 0.8% |
| Parole violation | 133 | 5.3 | **41.4** | 15.8 | 37.6 | 0.0 |
| ANY Probation/Parole violation | 699 | 4.4 | **50.4** | 8.6 | 35.9 | 0.7 |

**Notes**
Data source: Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.
a. Row percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.
b. Column percentages do nut sum to 100%.

**While Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort did not have a high likelihood of being booked into ADOC facilities for probation/parole violations in general (6.4%), they nevertheless accounted for a preponderance of all those remanded for parole violations (41.4%) and a majority of all those remanded for probation violations (51.8%).**

## Research Note: Title 47: Welfare, Social Services & Institutions

### Health/Safety Detentions

In Alaska, the phrase “Title 47 safety hold” is often used to refer to the statutory authority provided to peace officers, mental health professionals and physicians to cause a person who is (a) suffering from mental illness and is deemed likely to cause immediate, serious harm to self or others[1], or who is (b) severely intoxicated (or incapacitated) in a public

[1] See: AS 47.30.705-709.

place and in need of immediate assistance[1], to be taken into protective custody and transported to an approved stabilization/evaluation facility for mental health assessment and medical treatment, or a public treatment facility for the protection of the person's health or safety.

Among the 12,702 members of the 2019 booking cohort, 7 individuals were booked into an ADOC facility for a criminal offense with a Title 47 flag indicating a mental health or intoxication health/safety hold.

---

[1] See: AS 47.37.160

## Summary: Criminal Offenses

Using booking data provided by ADOC, the analyses presented in the preceding pages provided an empirical description of the criminal offenses for which members of the booking cohort were remanded into ADOC facility custody for their *first booking event* of 2019. The information gleaned from these analyses provide a basis of understanding for why these 12,702 individuals were delivered to ADOC by arresting authorities and subsequently taken into ADOC institutional custody, and how patterned differences in criminal offenses between racial/ethnic groups might contribute to racial/ethnic disproportionalities in ADOC institutional populations.

**Exhibit 1**

Booking offense likelihood ranking, by racial/ethnic group: 2019 ADOC booking cohort

| | Booking Cohort Member Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | API | ANAI | BLK | WHT | UNK |
| Most likely (1) | **Misdemeanor** (62.5%) | **Misdemeanor** (67.2%) | **Misdemeanor** (59.9%) | **Misdemeanor** (70.1%) | **Misdemeanor** (71.5%) |
| (2) | **Violent** (41.6%) | **Violent** (45.7%) | **Violent** (39.7%) | **Violent** (28.8%) | **OUI** (31.2%) |
| (3) | **Felony** (37.3%) | **Felony** (31.7%) | **Felony** (39.4%) | **Felony** (28.4%) | **Violent** (30.1%) |
| (4) | **Property** (22.7%) | **Violent felony** (19.8%) | **Violent felony** (19.8%) | **OUI** (28.4%) | **Felony** (27.4%) |
| (5) | **Violent felony** (17.9%) | **Property** (18.8%) | **Property** (19.5%) | **Property** (20.9%) | **Property** (16.7%) |
| (6) | **OUI** (17.7%) | **OUI** (15.6%) | **OUI** (18.4%) | **Violent felony** (11.3%) | **Violent felony** (12.9%) |
| (7) | **Public Order** (7.0%) | **Public Order** (9.4%) | **Public Order** (8.8%) | **Public Order** (8.1%) | **Public Order** (10.8%) |
| (8) | **Drugs** (6.5%) | **Prob/Parl** (6.4%) | **Drugs** (8.2%) | **Drugs** (7.6%) | **Drugs** (3.8%) |
| Least likely (9) | **Prob/Parl** (5.1%) | **Drugs** (3.0%) | **Prob/Parl** (6.2%) | **Prob/Parl** (4.6%) | **Prob/Parl** (2.7%) |

Likelihood

**Data source:** Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.

API=Asian or Pacific Islander; ANAI=Alaska Native/American Indian; BLK=Black; WHT=White; UNK=Unknown race/ethnicity.

Row and column percentages do not sum to 100%.

Exhibit 1 provides a visual summary of the report's findings with respect to the likelihood members of each racial/ethnic group were booked into ADOC facilities for each of the nine crime categories/types examined. Offense categories/types at the top of Exhibit 1 were most likely *within each racial/ethnic group*; offense categories/types at the bottom were least likely. The information presented in Exhibit 1 provides a quick way to explore (and perhaps even answer) questions such as:

> *Among [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members, which offense category/type was most likely to be observed at booking?*
>
> *Among [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members, which offense category/type was least likely to be observed at booking?*
>
> *How does the pattern of booking offenses for [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members compare to the pattern of booking offenses for [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members? In what ways are they similar or different?*
>
> *Are any offense categories/types particularly surprising for [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members? Potentially problematic?*
>
> *Does the overall pattern of booking offense categories/types for [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] cohort members highlight potential points for prevention or intervention?*

Members of all racial/ethnic groups[1] were most likely to be booked into ADOC facilities for misdemeanor offenses. Importantly, however, there was considerable between-group variation in the likelihood of misdemeanor bookings ranging from 59.9 percent for blacks to 70.1 for whites. Violent offenses and felony offenses were uniformly the second- and third-most likely for all racial groups. But again, there was considerable between-group variability. Alaska Natives/American Indians were most likely to be booked into ADOC facilities for violent offenses (45.7%) and whites were the least likely (28.8%). Blacks were the most likely to be booked in ADOC facilities for felony crimes (39.4%) while whites were the least likely (28.4%).

It is at the fourth-most likely offense that we begin to see divergence among the four racial/ ethnic groups examined. For Alaska Native/American Indian and black members of the booking cohort, violent felonies were in fourth position with 19.8 percent of each group remanded into ADOC institutional custody for these offenses. In contrast, violent felonies ranked fifth among Asian or Pacific Islander cohort members (17.9%) and sixth for whites

---

[1] Cohort members whose racial/ethnic group membership was categorized as unknown not included in criminal offense summary.

(11.3%). Coming in at the fourth position for Asians or Pacific Islanders were property offenses (22.7%); for whites, OUI's ranked fourth (28.4%).

Property offenses and OUI's each ranked fifth and sixth, respectively, for three racial/ethnic groups (with the exceptions being for whites and Asians or Pacific Islanders for whom violent felonies ranked fifth or sixth). Public order offenses were in seventh position for all racial/ethnic groups with percentages ranging between 7 and 10 percent.

Controlled substances ("drugs") and probation/parole violations ranked eighth and ninth, respectively, for Asians or Pacific Islanders, black, and whites. The order was flipped for Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort, with drug offenses ranking ninth and probation/parole violations ranking eighth.

The summary data in Exhibit 1 reveal between-racial/ethnic group consistency with respect to the offenses for which cohort members were *most likely* and *least likely* to be booked into ADOC facilities, although some differences in rates were observed within this overall pattern. It was in the middle range where racial/ethnic group divergence was more evident. For Alaska Native/American members of the booking cohort, the combination of the relative ranking (2nd) and percentage value for violent offenses (45.7%), the relative ranking (3rd) and percentage value for felony offenses (31.7%), and the relative ranking (4th) and percentage value (19.8%) for violent felonies, was noteworthy.

Also noteworthy was the ninth place ranking of controlled substance offenses for Alaska Native/American Indian members of the booking cohort. Alaska Natives/American Indians were the least likely of all racial/ethnic groups to be booked into ADOC facilities for drug offenses, and they were the only racial/ethnic group for which drug offenses ranked last.

Exhibit 2 (next page) presents a summary of the criminal offense data according to offense category instead of racial/ethnic group. Rather than addressing the question *Given [RACE/ETHNICITY], how are booking offenses distributed?*, Exhibit 2 addresses the question *Given [BOOKING OFFENSE], how are racial/ethnic groups distributed?*

Readers will quickly notice that Alaska Natives/American Indians and whites dominate representation in every offense category, with Alaska Natives/American Indians predominate for some offenses and whites predominate for others. That Alaska Natives/American Indians and whites predominate in Exhibit 2 reflects the fact that these two racial/ethnic groups were the two most numerous racial/ethnic groups in ADOC custody (see Table 12). The remaining three racial/ethnic groups also appear in Exhibit 2 in the order with which they are represented in Table 12: black, Asian or Pacific Islander, and unknown race/ethnicity.

**Exhibit 2**

Racial/ethnic group composition within criminal offense category, in descending order: 2019 ADOC booking cohort

| | Criminal Offense Category | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Misdemeanor | Felony | Violent | Violent Felony | Property | Public Order | Operating Under Influence | Controlled Substances | Probation/ Parole |
| Most common (1) | **WHT** (44.7%) | **ANAI** (44.0%) | **ANAI** (52.4%) | **ANAI** (53.4%) | **WHT** (45.3%) | **ANAI** (46.3%) | **WHT** (56.6%) | **WHT** (59.2%) | **ANAI** (50.4%) |
| (2) | **ANAI** (42.7%) | **WHT** (39.4%) | **WHT** (33.1%) | **WHT** (30.6%) | **ANAI** (40.6%) | **WHT** (40.3%) | **ANAI** (30.9%) | **ANAI** (23.0%) | **WHT** (35.9%) |
| (3) | **BLK** (6.7%) | **BLK** (9.6%) | **BLK** (8.0%) | **BLK** (9.5%) | **BLK** (7.4%) | **BLK** (7.7%) | **BLK** (6.4%) | **BLK** (11.2%) | **BLK** (8.6%) |
| (4) | **API** (4.4%) | **API** (5.7%) | **API** (5.3%) | **API** (5.3%) | **API** (5.4%) | **API** (3.8%) | **API** (3.9%) | **API** (5.5%) | **API** (4.4%) |
| Least common (5) | **UNK** (1.6%) | **UNK** (1.3%) | **UNK** (1.2%) | **UNK** (1.2%) | **UNK** (1.2%) | **UNK** (1.8%) | **UNK** (2.1%) | **UNK** (1.0%) | **UNK** (0.7%) |

**Data source:** Alaska Department of Corrections booking record dataset, 2019.

API=Asian or Pacific Islander; ANAI=Alaska Native/American Indian; BLK=Black; WHT=White; UNK=Unknown race/ethnicity.

Row percentages do not sum to 100%.

Column percentages may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

The analytic value of Exhibit 2 is in showing how Alaska Native/American Indian and white members of the booking cohort *alternate* dominant representation across offense categories, as well as the *differences in percentages* within each offense category which serves as a measure of *intensity of representation*. For example, among misdemeanants, whites dominated with 44.7 percent of the total and Alaska Natives/American Indians followed closely with 42.7 percent. A difference of just 2.0 percentage points. In contrast, whites also dominated the OUI offense category, this time with 56.6 percent of the total, while Alaska Natives/American Indians represented a much smaller 30.9 percent. A difference of 25.7 percentage points. Thus, whites were more intensely represented among OUI's than they were among misdemeanors, even though they were the largest portion of both offense categories. Similar dynamics were also found for property offenses where whites predominated, but by a relatively small margin over Alaska Natives/American Indians (45.3% vs. 40.6%), and for controlled substances offenses where whites also dominated by a much larger margin (59.2% vs. 23.0%).

Alaska Natives/American Indians were the most commonly observed racial/ethnic group for five offense categories: felony offenses, violent offenses, violent felony offenses, public order offenses and probation/parole violations. Of these five offense categories, Alaska Natives/American Indians and whites had comparable overall representation for two: felony offenses and public order offenses. Alaska Natives/American Indians comprised 44 percent of the individuals booked for felony offenses and 46.3 percent of the individuals booked for public order offenses, while whites constituted 39.4 percent and 40.3 percent, respectively. The gap between Alaska Natives/American Indians and whites was much larger for probation/parole violations (14.5 percentage points), violent offenses (19.3 percentage points), and violent felony offenses (22.8 percentage points).

These points of representational divergence shown in Exhibits 1 and 2 provide an empirical basis for understanding why cohort members were delivered by law enforcement officials to ADOC facilities for booking, and more importantly for the purposes of this study, why Alaska Natives/American Indians are over-represented in ADOC facilities when compared to their overall representation in the Alaska adult population.

While the booking data analyzed and presented in this report do not provide definitive answers as to why Alaska Native/American Indian disproportionalities are so pervasive in ADOC facilities, they nevertheless provide important clues for future research and for guiding the continued advancement of criminal justice policy and practice.

# APPENDIX 2:
# UAF ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH REPORT: FINDINGS ON PREVENTING THE DISPROPORTIONATE INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM OF ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

# FINDINGS ON PREVENTING THE DISPROPORTIONATE INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM OF ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE

COMPLETED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES


DECEMBER 2025

For questions, contact:
Fiona Rowles fdrowles@alaska.edu
Katie Cueva kcueva@alaska.edu

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary.....2
Background.....4
Literature Review.....5
Surveys.....9
Interviews.....13
Appendix.....18

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background:

The Alaska Legislature passed House Bill 66 in May 2024, which included funding for a study investigating disproportionate incarceration among Alaska Native people. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) contracted with Dr. Katie Cueva of the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) in July 2025 for up to 100 surveys and 25 expert interviews. The project was submitted for institutional and tribal review in July 2025, underwent Institutional Review Board (IRB) review, receiving final approval in October 2025. In October-Dec. 5, 2025, the project team conducted a literature review and conducted and analyzed 25 interviews and 83 surveys.

### Recommendations:

The following are evidence-based recommendations with high returns on investment that draw from the interviews, surveys, and literature review. While the recommendations are not listed in any particular order, programs and supports that intervene earliest in individuals' lives have the highest positive impact and return on investment.

#### Tribal Courts, Diversion, and Restorative Justice

- Provide financial and staff support to expand the geographic coverage and case type purview of Tribal Courts in Alaska

#### Early Interventions with Youth

- Increase culturally relevant parent training programs
- Increase access to free or reduced cost daycare and home visit programs for young children
- Increase youth mental health and developmental disorder assessment services, particularly in rural Alaska. Build on successful programs, such as Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.
- Support cultural programming and Elder mentoring initiatives to increase Alaska Native youth connection and cultural identity formation

#### Mental Health and Disability

- Contract with organizations (e.g ANTHC and Tribal Health Organizations) to provide expanded culturally responsive mental health services to both rural and incarcerated Alaska Native people
- Promote Medicaid reimbursement for culturally responsive services and programs that are delivered in communities (e.g. learning how to set a fishing net)

#### Housing

- Increase access to Housing First programs
- Increase access to culturally relevant reentry programs that provide housing
- Increase stable, affordable, long-term housing, especially in rural communities

- Provide options for distance probation/parole monitoring and classes so that released individuals may travel to where they have housing available without violating conditions of their release
- Scale up or replicate programs like Covenant House Alaska, an organization in Anchorage that provides low barrier housing to youth

**Substance Misuse Treatment**

- Increase the number of Alaska Native people in the substance misuse treatment workforce
- Require Alaska Native cultural training for substance misuse treatment workforce
- Support the implementation of culturally-grounded recovery programs such Family Wellness Warriors / Nu'iju

**Workforce Education and Mentorship**

- Augment hiring pathways to increase the number of Alaska Native people in criminal justice and legal careers in Alaska.
- Mandate frequent and effective training on Alaska Native culture at every stage of Alaska workforce development in criminal justice and legal education.
- Facilitate mentorship opportunities for young Alaska Native boys and men to support cultural connections with Elders and community

**Remote Services**

- Provide options for individuals released from incarceration to fulfill parole/probation requirements from their home communities
- Support remote access to culturally relevant telehealth, workforce development, and educational and mentorship opportunities

**Additional Recommendations:**

- Simplify conditions for parole/probation to decrease the likelihood of technical violations and subsequent rearrest

**BACKGROUND**

The Alaska Legislature passed House Bill 66 in May 2024, which included funding for a study "on the reasons Alaska Natives make up 40 percent of the state's prison population, yet make up just 14 percent of the general population." The funding was given to the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to administer the study, with a final report due to the Alaska Legislature in early 2026. House Bill 66 specified eight specific focus areas:

1. "establish restorative justice programs to address the unique cultural needs of Alaska Native people;
2. intervene earlier with at-risk Alaska Native youth and young adults to ensure those at-risk youth and young adults have the life skills and support systems necessary to prevent encounters with the criminal justice system;
3. reduce the Alaska Native prison population by providing early mental health diagnosis and better treatment;
4. provide low-income housing options to reduce the Alaska Native homeless population that are more likely to encounter law enforcement when living on the street;
5. improve alcohol and drug misuse treatment options for Alaska Native youth and young adults;
6. provide job training and mentoring opportunities to earn a living and provide food, housing, and other family necessities for Alaska Native residents and families;
7. offer digital training to Alaska Native residents to access tribal, state, and federal services, obtain digital employment, participate in remote counseling services to address alcohol and drug abuse, and participate in job training and education; and
8. identify federal grant programs at the United States Department of Justice, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, including the Indian Health Service and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department of Labor, and other federal agencies that could be used to fund implementation of the recommendations, with a particular emphasis on juveniles and young adults."

AFN began conversations with Dr. Katie Cueva of the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) in November 2024, with the contract signed in July 2025 for her team to conduct surveys of up to 100 people and interviews of up to 25 people identified by AFN as experts in the above 8 fields linked to prevention of incarceration and recidivism disproportionately impacting Alaska Native people. The project then underwent Institutional Review Board (IRB) review by the Alaska Area IRB, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) IRB and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) IRB, receiving final approval in October, 2025. In October-December 2025, the CANHR team of Fiona Rowles, Lena Thompson, Ay'aqulluk Jim Chaliak, Raymond Dacosta Azadda, Hannah Robinson and Katie Cueva conducted and analyzed 25 interviews and 83 surveys.

AFN additionally contracted with the CANHR team to conduct a literature review of evidence-based and promising practices to prevent incarceration and recidivism disproportionately impacting Alaska Native people, with the contract signed in December 2025. This document summarizes these three deliverables.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Literature Review Methods

A research team at the University of Alaska reviewed peer-reviewed and grey literature for information on evidence-based and promising practices that prevent incarceration and recidivism. The team focused on programs for Alaska Native people, but also included information on programs that have been implemented in potentially translatable contexts. Findings are divided into the seven applied domains that House Bill 66 identified.

### Overview of Incarceration and Recidivism in Alaska

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development estimates that there were 599,719 individuals in Alaska age 18 or over in July 2024 (2025). As of July 1, 2024, a total of 10,111 people were in the care or custody of the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) (2025). Consequently, about 17 out of every 1,000 Alaskan adults were in DOC care or custody on July 1, 2024 (2025). In the United States, about 21 out of every 1,000 adults were supervised by a correctional system at the end of 2023 (Gann & Kaeble, 2025).

Of people in DOC care or custody in 2024, about 44% were institutionalized and 32% were on probation or parole (Alaska Department of Corrections Research, 2025). Alaska Native people have been the largest proportion of the Alaska prison population each year for the last 4 years, comprising 44% of the prisoner population as of July 1, 2024 (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025). Comparatively, House Bill 66 notes that only 14% of Alaskans identify as Alaska Native. When race is counted both alone or in combination, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development estimates that about 19% of the Alaska population is Alaska Native (2025).

Alaska's recidivism rate has generally decreased in the last ten years, declining from 67% in 2013 to 55% in 2021. However, Alaska Native people suffer from the highest recidivism rate of all monitored races/ethnicities, at 60% among those who were released in 2021 (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025). Individuals released from crimes involving motor vehicles, such as driving with a cancelled license (67% returned) and those released from violating probation/parole (59% returned) were most likely to return, while those released from crimes involving alcohol or drugs were least likely to be reincarcerated (42% returned) (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025). The majority of individuals who returned to prison (62%) were reincarcerated due to probation/parole violations (Alaska Department of Corrections, 2025).

In addition to humanitarian considerations, preventing incarceration and recidivism has a strong economic argument. Alaska spends $73,730 on average annually to incarcerate someone, and has the highest rate of recidivism in the United States (van Brocklin, 2024). In the Alaska Results First Initiative study (Valle, 2017), a cost/benefit analysis and review of state-funded programs intended to reduce incarceration and recidivism, almost every single program evaluated had a positive economic return.

**Causes of Disproportionate Incarceration and Recidivism**

Historic and ongoing colonialism has forced Alaska Native people through recent dramatic changes. These have included the forced settlement of previously semi-nomadic communities, many in areas subject to increased flooding and coastal erosion, widespread sexual abuse by respected religious figures, viral epidemics that have devastated populations and kinship structures, and boarding schools that took young people from their families and punished them for knowing their languages and ways of survival before returning youth to home communities where they were then unable to communicate and contribute in traditionally meaningful ways. The ongoing impacts of this colonization have resulted in high rates of poverty, trauma, homelessness, substance abuse, and other challenges that are correlated with a greater vulnerability to incarceration and recidivism.

Compounding this trauma, "Alaska Native people are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group in Alaska to be the victim of a crime" (Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2002). Second only to children, Alaska Native women are one of the most victimized groups in Alaska (Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2002). Research on childhood victimization correlates adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, exposure to violence and family instability, to future contact with the criminal justice system (Graf et al., 2021; White & Frisch-Scott, 2022). Further, youth challenges with academics, mental health, behavior, cognition, and substance use are connected to higher risk for incarceration, especially when they go undetected and without appropriate intervention (Pyle et al., 2015).

**Tribal Courts, Diversion, and Restorative Justice**

Alaska has had a history of pioneering alternative courtroom models, and was one of the first places in the country to offer mental health court as an alternative to incarceration (Alaska Court System 2016). There are several types of courts that offer an alternative to what is widely considered to be the standard, Western-style model of justice. Generally, tribal courts in Alaska oversee child welfare and custody cases, and have recently been able to take on domestic violence cases in a limited capacity (Carlson 2024). Alaska Legal Services (2022) has published the Alaska Tribal Court Directory, which has the Tribal Court status of all federally recognized tribes in Alaska. Tribal Courts also support tribal sovereignty, and the ability to access justice proceedings in one's own community, promoting responsive governance and youth well-being (van Schilfgaarde 2024; Allen et al., 2025).

In addition to Tribal Courts, the State of Alaska also offers therapeutic courts, including drug & DUI courts, family courts, mental health courts, veterans courts, and State/Tribal healing to wellness courts (Alaska Court System, n.d.). The State of Alaska and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe currently collaborate to administer the Henu Community Wellness Court, and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska administers the Healing to Wellness Court. Typically, in order to go through the therapeutic court system, one must plead guilty and agree to complete a course of treatment, rather than being incarcerated. Therapeutic courts tend to have lower recidivism rates than traditional courts (Judicial Council of Alaska, 2005), although this may be due to who chooses to

participate rather than the effectiveness of the program on reducing recidivism (Roman et al. 2008).

**Early Interventions with Youth**

There is significant evidence that early childhood interventions (such as access to prenatal care, preschools and parent training classes) have significant long-term benefits, including reducing incarceration among participants, and have a net positive cost/benefit ratio (Welsh & Farrington, 2011; Greenwood, Model, Rydell, & Chiesa, 1998). A systematic analysis highlighted that for every dollar invested in early childhood interventions, there are significant financial returns, due to a reduced need for spending on criminal justice, healthcare, and welfare (Doyle et al., 2009; Caspi et al., 2016). Additionally, there is evidence that the positive impact from early childhood programs is greater for youths that experience a higher degree of relative disadvantage (Garcia et al. 2020).

A study by Aos et al. (2001) found that "scared straight" programs and juvenile boot camps were the only youth-oriented interventions they evaluated to have negative economic returns. Multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, and multi-dimensional foster care treatment were the interventions that had the highest rates of return on investment.

In Alaska, RuralCAP provides a suite of programs for youth that are similar to the interventions described. The Cook Inlet Native Head Start program is another example of programming that exists as a model for interventions described. The Tribal Early Learning Initiative exists as a partnership between Tribes and the federal government to support early childhood learning in Tribal communities.

**Mental Health and Disability**

Alaska Native people experience disproportionate mental health burdens (Kwon, Kabir, & Saadabadi, 2024), shaped by experiences of generational trauma (Brave Heart, 2011) and lower access to satisfying basic needs (Perdacher, Kavanaugh, & Sheffield, 2024). To address these challenges, trauma-engaged and culturally responsive services are needed in cities and villages throughout Alaska.

Childhood trauma affects brain development, health, and learning, creating long-term risks for youth (Sun et. al., 2024). Addressing these risks early can help prevent involvement in the juvenile justice system (Graf et al., 2021). Alaska's Transforming Schools Framework (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development & Association of Alaska School Boards, 2019), provides steps and examples that can be implemented in schools and other youth programming to support trauma engaged care. Further support for culturally responsive services may be needed.

Additionally, providing training and support in health care systems (Oldani & Prosen, 2021) and within the Department of Corrections (Perdacher et al, 2024) to provide culturally responsive services has strong potential to decrease instances of incarceration and recidivism (Lambert, 2016) among Alaska Native people.

## Housing

Individuals who may otherwise be considered at "low risk for reoffending" are significantly more likely to return to incarcerated systems if they are experiencing housing insecurity (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2021). Housing First, a housing intervention model that provides individuals with shelter and basic needs without requirements for sobriety or treatment compliance, has a strong evidence base and has proven to be effective in both urban and rural areas of Alaska (Driscoll et al., 2018; MacKinnon & Socias, 2021). Reentry programs that provide culturally relevant housing support, such as Chanlyut, are also promising practices.

Reentry housing that provides a suite of integrated services, such as substance misuse treatment, mental health care, and job support, can reduce recidivism and increase follow-up contact in justice-involved populations (Baker et al. 2023). Evidence suggests that these elements reduce subsequent involvement in the justice system, but the specific components and reasons for that need further investigation (Gibbs et al. 2023), and different programs may have different levels of efficacy.

## Substance Misuse Treatment

Substance misuse treatment for Alaska Native people requires culturally responsive, community-centered models that bridge Alaska Native cultural ways with Western evidence-based practices (Rasmus et al., 2019). Partnerships with Tribal communities, researchers, and health systems, with an emphasis on Mental Health and Disability Services (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020), are essential for addressing substance misuse treatment among Alaska Native people to reduce incarceration and recidivism.

Substance misuse treatments delivered while individuals are incarcerated have been found to be more effective and cost-efficient when compared to substance misuse treatments delivered while individuals are in communities (Valle, 2017). In fact, the program with the highest cost/benefit ratio in the Valle 2017 study was the PsychEd program, with a $23.80 return on every dollar invested. There is very strong evidence that treating opioid use disorder while an individual is incarcerated (rather than starting treatment post-release) is associated with better treatment adherence, and reduces the likelihood of overdose post-release (Aos et al. 2011; Cates & Brown 2023).

## Workforce, Education, and Mentorship

There is significant support for the link between career training while an individual is incarcerated, and a lowered risk of recidivism after they are released (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025). The effect is especially pronounced when the individual is offered structured reentry career support. In Alaska, the Reentry Coalitions offer programs to assist reentrants with job skills and placement. Mentorship programs are most effective when they have high cultural alignment, and the mentor is a "credible messenger" (National Institute of Justice, 2016). The study by Valle (2017) found that in Alaska, vocational rehabilitation and general education had two of the highest positive returns on cost, with a $10.58 return on every dollar spent on general education, and a $7.11 return for vocational rehabilitation.

Additionally, augmenting the representation of Alaska Native people working in the criminal justice field may have a broadly positive impact on the overrepresentation of Alaska Native people who are incarcerated. Alaskan lawyers are not racially representative of Alaska's population, with 6% of attorneys and 9% of sitting judges in Alaska being Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) (Diversity Commission Report, 2023). There is strong evidence suggesting that greater racial representation in legal systems reduces racial gaps in incarceration outcomes (Harris, 2023; King et al., 2010).

Recommendations to address this element include developing programs to encourage Alaska Native youth to pursue careers in the legal field, similar to the existing Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP). The Diversity Commission Report (2023) made several recommendations on increasing Alaska's racial diversity in the justice system, including earlier career outreach to rural areas; establishing paid internships; and partnering with law schools outside of Alaska to create more opportunities for obtaining legal degrees.

**Remote Services**

There is evidence that remote services, such as telehealth, cultural programming, workforce training, education, and parole obligation fulfillment are convenient and effective ways to reduce incarceration and recidivism. Telehealth can increase access to mental health care and support, including for individuals recovering from addiction (Tomoh et al., 2025; Isles, 2001). Programs available online that are designed to support job training, housing access, and workforce education tailored for Alaska Native individuals can reduce recidivism rates (Kelly & Tubex, 2015). Educational and mentorship opportunities for young people can augment in-person resources in Alaska communities and support youth to avoid incarceration (Tomoh et al., 2025; Isles, 2001).

Offering ways for individuals to fulfill probation/parole requirements remotely can allow individuals to return to communities where they have access to housing, creating greater stability and compliance with probation and parole requirements. One early influential study on the impact of remote parole check-ins in New York found that this method decreased administrative burden with no increase in crime rates (Wilson et al. 2007).

However, digital literacy, broadband access, confidential spaces for telehealth, culturally-relevant services, culturally-aware providers, and provider reimbursement must be addressed to optimize delivery of remote services (Tomoh et al., 2025; Isles, 2001). Infrastructure to support these services is burgeoning in rural Alaska, and further development of infrastructure and services in collaboration with local leaders can lead to more sustainable and appropriate remote services.

**SURVEY**

A team at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research administered a survey to individuals identified as experts on the 8 areas identified in House Bill 66 as related to preventing disproportionate incarceration and recidivism impacting Alaska Native people. The survey was developed by the AFN steering committee for the project, with input from the CANHR team. The survey included the questions:

- In the last 12 months, my organization has had enough staff to meet client needs
- My organization has had enough funding to operate its programs effectively
- If the Alaska State Legislature gave your organization funds, what would be the most effective way to spend it to reduce incarceration and recidivism?
- Overall, what should the Alaska State Legislature or federal government fund to reduce incarceration and recidivism of Alaska Native people?

**Methods**

In October-November 2025, an invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to 411 people identified as Alaska experts within the seven applied domains identified in House Bill 66. A total of 83 individuals completed at least some of the survey questions by the beginning of December 2025; a response rate of about 20%. Some emails may have gone into individuals' spam folders. The surveys were analyzed in R statistical software.

**Survey Findings Summary**

Most expert respondents identified Mental Health as one of the most effective strategies to prevent incarceration and recidivism (55%), followed by Housing Access (45%). Among respondents who identified as Alaska Native, most individuals indicated Mental Health (74%) as most effective, as well as Early Interventions With Youth (61%), and Substance Misuse Treatment (57%).

- Expert respondents indicated that there were critical staffing and funding needs in Mental Health and Housing Access - the same two themes that experts ranked as most effective - a critical mismatch between perceived effectiveness and available resources.
- Respondents indicated that Mental Health also suffered in the category of program consistency, suggesting that service delivery stability is compromised in this area.
- Alaska Native respondents indicated that Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts and Substance Misuse Treatment were the most culturally relevant of the examined areas.
- Alaska Native respondents gave Mental Health, Substance Misuse Treatment, and Early Intervention with Youth a median score of 3 ("neutral") in regards to "Makes a Positive Difference", potentially reflecting uncertainty about whether organizational efforts translate into meaningful community outcomes.
- Both Alaska Native and non-Native respondents identified Housing Access as having relatively weak remote delivery capacity.
- Alaska Native respondents reported relatively better remote access for Substance Misuse Treatment services (a median rating of 2, or adequate), than non-Native respondents (rating of 4, or gap).

**Survey Findings**

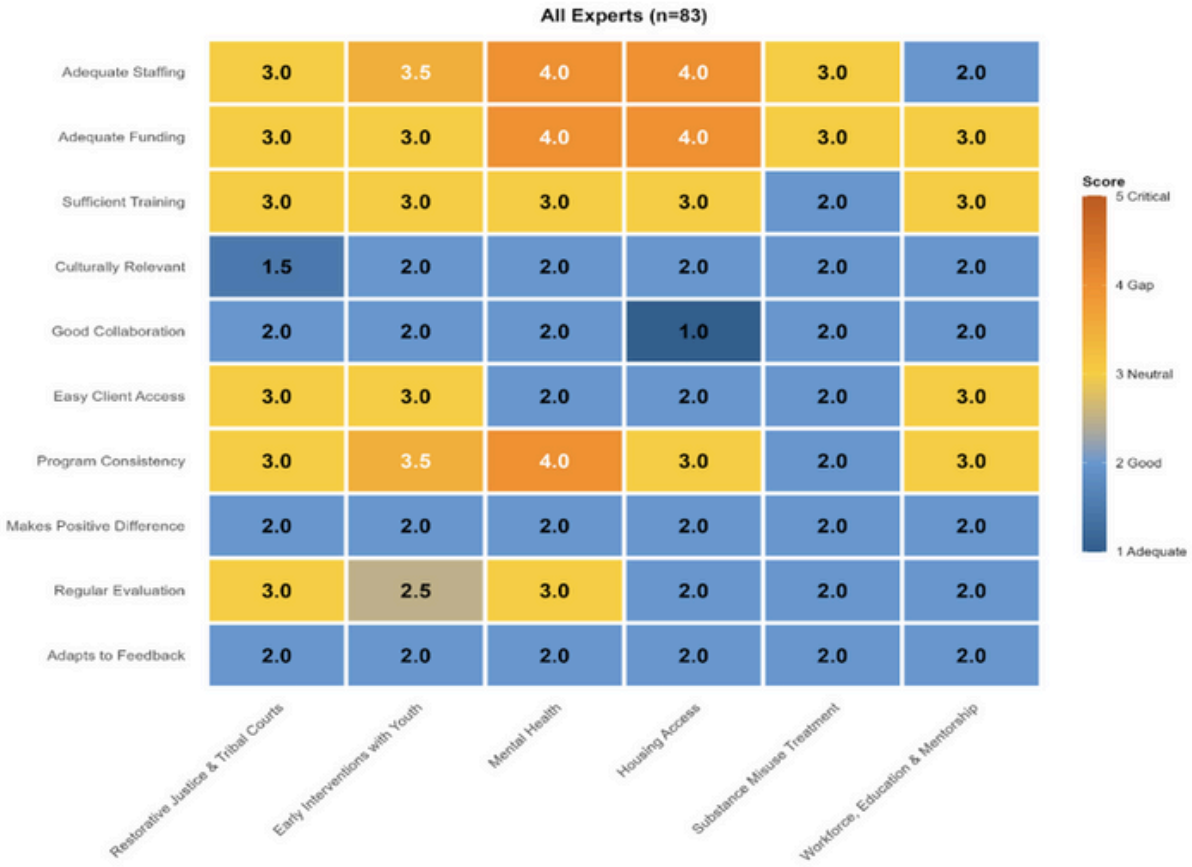
Respondents were (see Table 1 in the Appendix):

- About half female (51%), with a large percentage not reporting gender (24%). The gender composition of service providers may be predominantly female.
- Highly educated with about 56.6% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, and 37% holding graduate or professional degrees.
- Highly experienced with about 76% having 4 or more years of experience, including 39% with more than 10 years in the field.
- Alaska Native individuals represented 28% of respondents, bringing lived cultural experience alongside professional expertise.

Respondents were asked to select the top three intervention themes they believed would be most effective at reducing incarceration and recidivism (see Table 2 in Appendix). Most respondents selected Mental Health as a most effective (55%), followed by Housing Access (45%). The remaining four themes were recognized by a large percentage of respondents, indicating a broad recognition of a need for multiple approaches; Workforce, Education, Mentorship (41%), Early Interventions with Youth (40%), Substance Misuse Treatment (39%), and Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts (27%). Among respondents who identified as Alaska Native, as their lived cultural experience and perspectives may reflect insights that others lack. These individuals felt Mental Health (74%) would be one of the most effective at preventing incarceration, followed by Early Interventions With Youth (61%), and Substance Misuse Treatment (57%) (see Appendix for Table 3 and extended discussion).

Respondents were asked to rate their organization's capacity across 10 factors (e.g., In the last 12 months, my organization has had enough staff to meet client needs) ranging from adequate to a critical need gap (see Figure 1):

Figure 1. Survey Respondents' Report of Organizational Capacity




*Note: Values shown are medians. Sample sizes vary by theme as practitioners only rated themes they work in (Workforce, Education & Mentorship n=37, Mental Health n=27, Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts n=24, Early Intervention with Youth n=22, Substance Misuse Treatment n=19, Housing Access n=21).*

*Note: Values shown are medians. Sample sizes vary by theme as practitioners only rated themes they work in (Workforce, Education & Mentorship n=37, Mental Health n=27, Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts n=24, Early Intervention with Youth n=22, Substance Misuse Treatment n=19, Housing Access n=21).*

From figure 1:

- The concentration of orange cells in the upper rows for Mental Health and Housing Access indicates clear resource gaps. These are the same two themes that experts ranked as most effective - a critical mismatch between perceived effectiveness and available resources. Program Consistency also shows orange coloring (4.0) in Mental Health, suggesting that service delivery stability is compromised in this high-priority area.
- Cultural Relevance displays blue cells (1.5-2.0) across all themes, indicating that expert respondents reported that services are appropriately aligned with Alaska Native values. Similarly, “Makes a Positive Difference” shows consistent blue ratings (2.0) across themes, and “Adapts to Feedback” remains in the adequate range (2.0). The Good Collaboration row is predominantly blue, with Housing Access showing the darkest blue cell (1.0). This pattern suggests that while organizations face significant staffing and funding constraints, experts remain confident in their cultural alignment, inter-agency partnerships, and overall positive impact.

The aggregated findings may mask important differences in perspective, particularly in contrast with individuals who identify as Alaska Native who bring both professional expertise and lived cultural experience (see Appendix for additional figures and extended discussion). Alaska Native respondents indicated that:

- Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts and Substance Misuse Treatment were the most culturally relevant of the examined areas.
- Mental Health, Substance Misuse Treatment, and Early Intervention with Youth received a median score of 3 ("neutral") in regards to "Makes a Positive Difference", potentially reflecting uncertainty about whether organizational efforts translate into meaningful community outcomes. As members of the communities these programs aim to help, Alaska Native experts may have greater insight into whether services are actually reaching their people, aligning culturally, and producing real improvements in people's lives. This finding reinforces the importance of including Alaska Native voices in program evaluation. Relying solely on non-Alaska Native staff assessments may produce an overly optimistic picture of program effectiveness.

Many Alaska Native communities are in rural and remote areas accessible only by plane or boat. If support services cannot be delivered remotely, these communities are effectively excluded. We asked respondents about organizational capacity to deliver services remotely (via telehealth, online platforms, or phone-based support) as well as the cultural alignment of the remote services (see Table 5 in appendix):

- Both Alaska Native and non-Native respondents identified Housing Access as having relatively weak remote delivery capacity. Non- Alaska Native experts rated Housing Access remote delivery at 4 (indicating a gap), while Alaska Native experts rated it at 3 (neutral). While it is possible that respondents were referring to the impossibility of providing remote housing, this pattern suggests that housing assistance services like help navigating housing programs or application support are currently challenging to provide remotely.
- Alaska Native respondents reported relatively better remote access for Substance Misuse Treatment services (a median rating of 2, or adequate), than non-Native respondents (rating of 4, or gap). This difference suggests Alaska Native practitioners may have greater awareness of or access to telehealth and distance-based addiction services in their communities.
- Both Alaska Native and non-Native respondents rated cultural alignment at 3 (neutral) or better across all intervention themes, indicating that current remote delivery services are reasonably aligned with Alaska Native values and practices.

## INTERVIEWS

A team at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research interviewed individuals identified as experts on the 7 applied areas identified in House Bill 66 as related to preventing disproportionate incarceration and recidivism impacting Alaska Native people. The survey was developed by the AFN steering committee for the project, with input from the CANHR team. The survey included the questions:

- What do you think would be most effective at preventing incarceration among Alaska Native people?
- What do you think would be most effective at preventing recidivism among Alaska Native people?
- What recommendations or specific actions would you give to decision makers, like the Alaska State Legislature?
- If you were given funding to spend, how would you use it to reduce incarceration and recidivism?

Personalized invitations were sent to 50 individuals, with 25 participating in interviews as of Dec. 12, 2025, a response rate of 50%.

### Methods

AFN provided the CANHR team with a list of individuals identified as experts to be contacted for interviews. Each interview was recorded and auto-transcribed by Zoom, with transcripts checked against the recording by members of the research team who revised the transcripts as needed to match the audio. The research team used a Rapid Qualitative Inquiry approach, designed for team studies intended for policy decisions. The team developed a codebook that was then piloted on one interview, and subsequently revised. The revised codebook was then applied independently by two researchers for each interview using Microsoft Word, with the researchers meeting to come to consensus on the coding. The coded interviews were then analyzed for common themes aligned with the focus areas specified by House Bill 66.

### Respondents

Most of the 25 respondents identified more than one area of expertise, covering all of the seven applied focus areas (restorative justice, early youth interventions, mental health, housing, substance abuse treatment, job training and mentoring, and remote services). Of the 25 respondents, 15 (60%) identified as Alaska Native, while 10 (40%) did not. The respondents represented Alaska's diverse geography, including state-wide programs, as well as individuals who lived and worked in Southeast, Interior, Southwest, Anchorage, MatSu, Aleutian Pribiloff Islands, and Northern regions of Alaska. Respondents had an average (both mean and median) of 20 years of experience in a field related to criminal justice.

### Tribal Courts, Diversion, and Restorative Justice

Recommendation: The State of Alaska and Tribes should work together to increase Tribal Court capacity to hear cases, especially in areas where Tribal Courts are not as extensive.

Thirteen participants reported having experience in tribal courts, diversion, and/or restorative justice programs, with the majority focused on Tribal Courts. Participants noted a positive trend towards recognition of Tribal Courts by the State of Alaska. Several participants agreed that Tribal Courts can be effective and should be supported by the state, with participants expressing that judgement from Alaska Native Elders may be taken more seriously;

> "*as an Inuk human being, I would be deathly afraid to be sitting in a tribal court where there's all these Elders that are going to pass judgment on me. That'll straighten me up really quick in a hurry.*"

Tribal Courts were cited as positively addressing intergenerational trauma, and allowing people to stay within the community, as well as increasing tribal sovereignty, cultural alignment, and community-driven problem solving. Participants noted a lack of capacity and state support for full implementation.

Tribal Court programs cited by participants include the circle peacemaking programs being implemented by Tlingit & Haida and Kenaitze. The Village Public Safety Officer program was also cited by two participants as a positive program. For diversion programming, one participant noted the success of a community service patrol in Bethel and Fairbanks that diverts intoxicated people to sobering centers rather than the jail.

**Early Interventions with Youth**

Recommendations:

- Increase youth mental health and developmental disorder assessment services, particularly in rural Alaska. Build on successful programs, such as Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.
- Support cultural programming and Elder mentoring initiatives to increase Alaska Native youth connection and cultural identity formation.
- Decrease punitive school policies by implementing trauma-informed policies that meet youth where they are at and focus on building up youth's capacity to effectively engage in the school environment.

Nineteen participants shared responses related to early interventions with youth. Participants highlighted the impacts of the "school to prison pipeline," the idea of punitive school policies and structures leading to an increase in conflict at schools and engagement with the criminal justice system. This "pipeline" is especially active for students of color and contributes to over incarceration of Alaska Native people. Participants suggested that a key way to keep Alaska Native youth out of incarceration systems is to support their connection with Elders and assist them in developing a strong cultural identity. Participants noted a lack of available mental health based interventions and assessments, especially in rural communities where youth may go for extended periods of time without receiving intervention for serious mental health concerns.

**Mental Health and Disability**

Recommendations:

- Contract with organizations (e.g ANTHC) to provide expanded culturally responsive mental health services to both rural and incarcerated Alaska Native people

- Promote Medicaid reimbursement for culturally responsive services and programs that are delivered in communities (e.g. learning how to set a fishing net)

Nineteen participants gave responses around mental health and disability. For many participants, supporting connection with Alaska Native identity and culture was the primary way to prevent incarceration and recidivism. In some cases, this meant addressing and re-building relationships with Alaska Native people and communities, who have experienced generational trauma.

> *"And there's huge benefits to who we are, and what our practices and our history and our language and our stories and all of that, hold so much medicine, and knowledge that can benefit, not only Indigenous people, but people worldwide."*

Participants also recommended providing mental health services for youth and allowing youth to connect with Elders, who can ground them in identity and Alaska Native ways of life.

> *"My wellness, my…my sense of identity, my understanding of who I am as a [Indigenous Identity], right? Like, that all is because [the Elders] were able to carry some of this forward, and it helps ground me in who I am."*

Participants encouraged contracting with Tribal organizations, naming the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska Native Justice Center, and local Tribal Councils, to provide services to Alaska Native people and to further expand and support mental health and disability services in the villages. Participants also stressed that non-judgemental services that treat the whole person, including their relationships with family, community, and society will be the most effective.

**Housing**

Recommendations:

- Scale up or replicate programs like Covenant House Alaska, an organization in Anchorage that provides housing to youth aged 13-25 with extremely low barriers, and expand services to rural areas.
- Increase options for transitional housing and more stable long-term housing in rural communities.
- Offer incentives for housing formerly incarcerated people
- Reduce restrictions on housing impacting previously incarcerated people

Fifteen participants highlighted housing as a critical need, emphasizing the importance of low-barrier Housing First approaches that provide shelter with our prerequisites for sobriety or employment eligibility. Participants also noted a severe shortage of accessible and affordable housing, especially in rural areas, where limited options drive up costs and reduce stability. High barriers to housing access, especially for individuals with incarceration history, further constrict options and, in some cases, may lead individuals to intentionally seek arrest as a means of securing shelter.

**Substance Misuse Treatment**

Recommendations:

- Increase the number of Alaska Native people in the substance misuse treatment workforce
- Require Alaska Native cultural training for substance misuse treatment workforce
- Support the implementation of culturally-grounded recovery programs such Family Wellness Warriors / Nu'iju

Sixteen participants shared responses around substance misuse treatment. Participants shared the need both to reduce the wait time for substance misuse treatment services and increase the number of people in the substance misuse treatment workforce. They encouraged wider expansion of Tribal substance misuse treatment resources, including inpatient treatment centers, and continued funding of culturally-responsive programming. Participants noted that addressing housing, early childhood experiences and mental health would help support those seeking substance misuse services.

**Workforce Education and Mentorship**

Recommendations:

- Augment hiring pathways for Alaska Native people in criminal justice and legal careers, similar to the existing ANSEP and RRANN programs.
- Mandate frequent and effective training on Alaska Native culture at every stage of criminal justice and legal education in Alaska.
- Facilitate mentorship opportunities for young Alaska Native boys and men to support cultural connections with Elders and community.

Thirteen participants reported having experience in workforce, education, and mentorship. Most responses focused on workforce development for those working in the justice system, rather than education for people who are incarcerated or at risk of incarceration.

Participants noted that, while there is still more work to be done, there have been improvements in the education, training, and overall attitude of people working in the justice system. One participant noted;

> *"it's really refreshing, it's really cool to be able to talk to a [parole officer] and say [...] 'should we do this recommendation or that recommendation?', instead of, 'well, you know what, they're just being an ass, we need to lock them up and let them think about their behavior.' You know, that kind of mentality is really disappearing in the field."*

Participants identified a need for an increased Alaska Native workforce, and increased Alaska Native cultural training for those who work in the justice system;

> *"they need to start hiring more Native correctional officers and probation officers. They need to be hiring more lawyers, Native attorneys that can either act as public defenders, or in the prosecutor's office. We need more Native judges."*

> *"you look at how many Alaska Native lawyers there are, there's not that many. We're only 2% of the overall attorney population."*

Participants noted a justice system workforce largely from outside the state; cross-cultural communication challenges (i.e. body language miscommunication); and high turnover.
Participants noted barriers to Alaska Native people entering the criminal justice workforce, including lower high school graduation rates and difficulty navigating college far from home. Participants positively discussed UAA's work on integrating human services programming with their criminal justice degree; a workshop in Fairbanks where police officers worked with Elders to make beaver fur hats; and a grant to augment the victim service workforce.

**Remote Services**

- Invest in infrastructure that allows people to return to their home communities while complying with the parameters of their parole conditions
- Fund and support remote services and distance learning opportunities, especially for rural and remote communities
- Invest in contingency planning for weather-related outages

One major theme to emerge related to the remote provision of services is the option to continue with parole conditions and monitoring while staying in one's home community.

> "*To me, it contributes to homelessness in Anchorage, iIn Fairbanks, in Ketchikan, in Juneau. Because a lot of times these court orders [...] say they have to stay in these urban places to receive anger management, they have to receive alcoholism treatment, they gotta receive evidence that they know how to get a job, and how to get around. But they don't support them. They just kind of toss them out there, and you have to try to survive. And a lot of them fail. They end up on the streets, and then they get re-arrested [...] it's kind of a never-ending cycle. Some inmates whose original sentence was 3 or 4 years can end up serving much longer periods of time because of those violations.*"

Another participant provided additional information about the perception of parole conditions contributing to the problem of homelessness in urban Alaska.

> "*They're here because they can't go home to their village, [...] because probation won't let them go back home to their village. And they're walking around with a backpack, and they're telling me, hey, I got a new house. But I can't go home because I'm on probation. [...] [So] they're homeless, staying at the mission. But they have to get out during the day, so you see them walking around with their backpacks.*"

Seven participants shared insights about the use of remote services for those who are incarcerated or reentering. While fewer participants talked about remote services, at least one participant's number one recommendation was to implement telehealth more widely across the state. Overall, participants felt that remote services provided opportunities to access resources, especially for those living in villages.

> *'the supervision model for BHAs, I feel like, has improved kind of a lot, especially with our technology and Starlink, and you can do clinical supervision when it was, like, considered by the phone, which is totally different*"

Participants had conducted services such as rehabilitation, education, substance abuse counseling and other treatment groups, language courses, and clinical supervision for staff. While a couple of participants acknowledged that some feel that it is better to have sessions in person, one also noted that there are some cases where people who participate in remote services may not be ready to be in person or feel safe around others. Remote services provided them access to services they may otherwise not feel comfortable seeking out.

> "*Some people think it's a drawback if they're... if it's not live, you know, if you're not sitting in front of somebody. But then on the other hand, maybe some people aren't ready to sit live in a room with somebody else. Maybe they don't feel safe enough yet*."

One potential challenge to more widely implementing remote services is that weather conditions can take out cables for long periods of time, leaving people without services until they are fixed.

> *"could be really helpful. So, I think, you know, as far as for Alaska Native people, yes, technically there is, you know, I think that's a good thing that's working. Like, there is telehealth, it is trying to get it out in rural areas."* [R040-156]

> *"it's, like, imperative, for that space to have that because of what happened. But I think all spaces, when you're dealing with, like, these heavier topics, being online is another place to connect, right? And so we're building connection. When someone, you know, is overwhelmed to go in person. it can happen online, and I, you know, it's not always the best, and hopefully we can do more in person, but the reality is this is where we're at these days, and it's a tool, and so it's how we use it. So, I would encourage online."* [R032-347-349]

## APPENDIX

### Survey Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| | Sample Size ($n$) | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Total Participants ($N$) | 83 | 100% |
| **Gender** | | |
| Man | 18 | 21.7% |
| Woman | 42 | 50.6% |
| Nonbinary | 3 | 3.6% |
| Not Reported | 20 | 24.1% |
| **Alaska Native** | | |
| Yes | 23 | 27.7% |
| No | 41 | 49.4% |
| Not reported | 19 | 22.9% |
| **Educational Level** | | |
| High School diploma/GED | 4 | 4.8% |
| Some college | 10 | 12% |
| Associate degree | 4 | 4.8% |
| Bachelor's degree | 16 | 19.3% |
| Graduate/Professional degree | 31 | 37.3% |
| Not reported | 18 | 21.7% |
| **Professional Experience across themes** | | |
| Less than 1 year | 3 | 1.9% |
| 1-3 years | 35 | 21.9% |
| 4-6 years | 35 | 21.9% |
| 7-10 years | 24 | 15% |
| More than 10 years | 63 | 39.4% |

*Note: For professional experience, respondents could select multiple themes.*

Table 2: Experts Ranking of Most Effective Approaches

| Rank | Intervention Theme | Sample size (n) | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mental Health | 46 | 55.4% |
| 2 | Housing Access | 37 | 44.6% |
| 3 | Workforce, Education & Mentorship | 34 | 41.0% |
| 4 | Early Intervention with Youth | 33 | 39.8% |
| 5 | Substance Misuse Treatment | 32 | 38.6% |
| 6 | Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts | 22 | 26.5% |

Table 3: Experts Ranking of Most Effective Approaches by Alaska Native and Non-Alaska Native

| Intervention Theme | Alaska Native | Non-Alaska Native | Differences |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mental Health | 1 (73.9%) | 1 (70.7%) | Same |
| Early Intervention with Youth | 2 (60.9%) | 4 (46.3%) | ↑+2 |
| Substance Misuse Treatment | 3 (56.5%) | 5 (46.3) | ↑+2 |
| Housing Access | 4 (52.2%) | 2 (61%) | ↓-2 |
| Workforce, Education & Mentorship | 5 (47.8%) | 3 (56.1%) | ↓-2 |
| Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts | 6 (43.5%) | 6 (29.3%) | Same |

From table 3, here are what we have learnt from the comparison:

- Both groups agree that Mental Health is the top priority. Alaska Native and non- Alaska Native experts both rank Mental Health as the most effective intervention, and Alaska Native experts endorse it even more strongly (73.9% vs 70.7%).
- Alaska Native experts tended to select Early Interventions with Youth and Substance Misuse Treatment more frequently. These themes rank 2 and 3 among Alaska Native experts, compared to 4 and 5 among non- Alaska Native experts. This pattern may reflect Alaska Native experts' firsthand understanding of how early intervention and addiction services affect their communities.
- Housing Access and Workforce, Education & Mentorship programs were selected less frequently by Alaska Native experts**.** While still considered important, these themes were ranked 4 and 5 by Alaska Native experts, compared to 2 and 3 by non- Alaska Native experts.

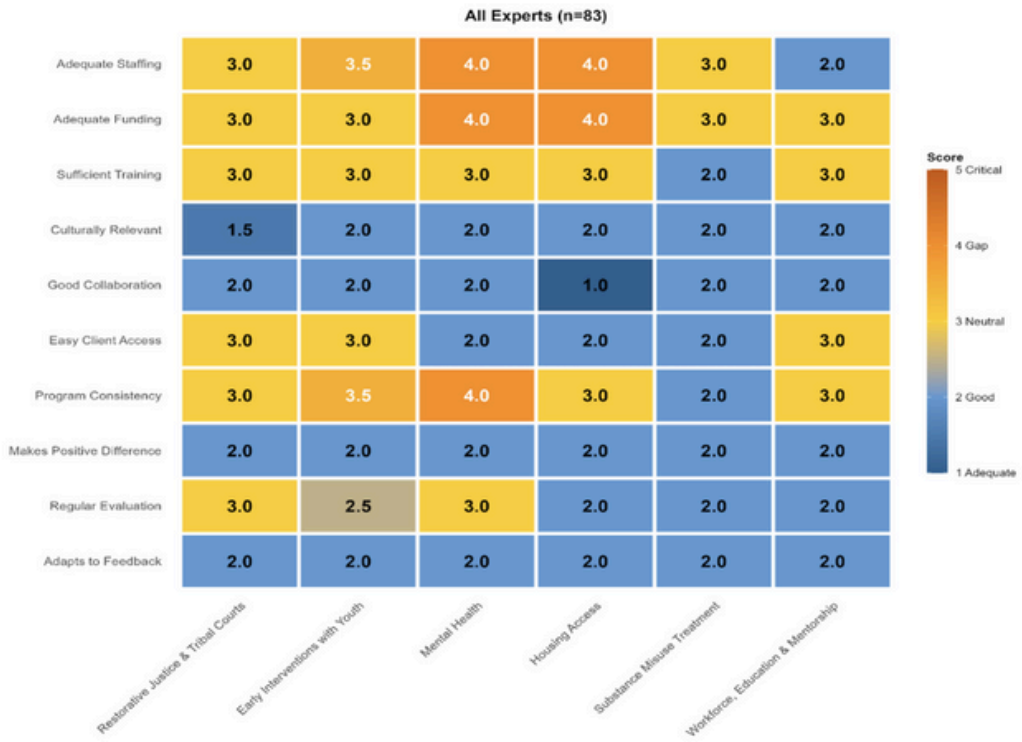
These findings provide perspectives of Alaska Native experts who bring lived cultural experience alongside professional expertise and are valuable to consider when setting policy priorities for reducing incarceration among Alaska Native people.

The heatmap above represents all experts combined, but this aggregate view may mask important differences in perspective. Given that 27.7% of respondents identify as Alaska Native who bring both professional expertise and lived cultural experience, we then further examined whether these experts perceive organizational capacity gaps differently than their non- Alaska Native colleagues. If Alaska Native experts see gaps that others miss, their insights could be critical for improving service delivery to Alaska Native communities. Figures 2 and 3 present the same organizational capacity ratings disaggregated by experts' background (see Appendix for figures and extended discussion).

From figure 2:

- We can see the concentration of dark blue cells in the Cultural Relevance row, with scores of 1.0 in Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts and Substance Misuse Treatment having the lowest (most positive) ratings in the entire figure. This indicates Alaska Native experts perceive current services as strongly aligned Alaska Native values and practices. Equally notable is the row of blue cells for Adapts to Feedback (scores of 1.5-2.0 across themes), suggesting these experts believe their organizations respond well to community input.
- It also reveals areas of concern through its yellow and orange coloring. The "Makes a Positive Difference" row shows yellow cells (median of 3.0) in Mental Health, Substance Misuse Treatment, and Early Intervention with Youth, which reflect uncertainty about whether organizational efforts translate into meaningful community outcomes. Program Consistency displays orange cells (4.0) in Early Intervention with Youth and Mental Health, pointing to concerns about service delivery stability. Staffing and funding patterns vary considerably across themes. Housing Access shows an orange funding cell (4.0) while Mental Health displays adequate staffing (2.0 in blue). Training needs appear greatest in Early Intervention with Youth (4.0, orange) compared to other themes. The Collaboration row remains consistently blue to light yellow (2.0-2.5), with no critical gaps evident in inter-agency partnerships.

Figure 2:




*Note: Values shown are medians. Sample sizes vary by theme as practitioners only rated themes they work in (Workforce, Education & Mentorship n=37, Mental Health n=27, Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts n=24, Early Intervention with Youth n=22, Substance Misuse Treatment n=19, Housing Access n=21).*

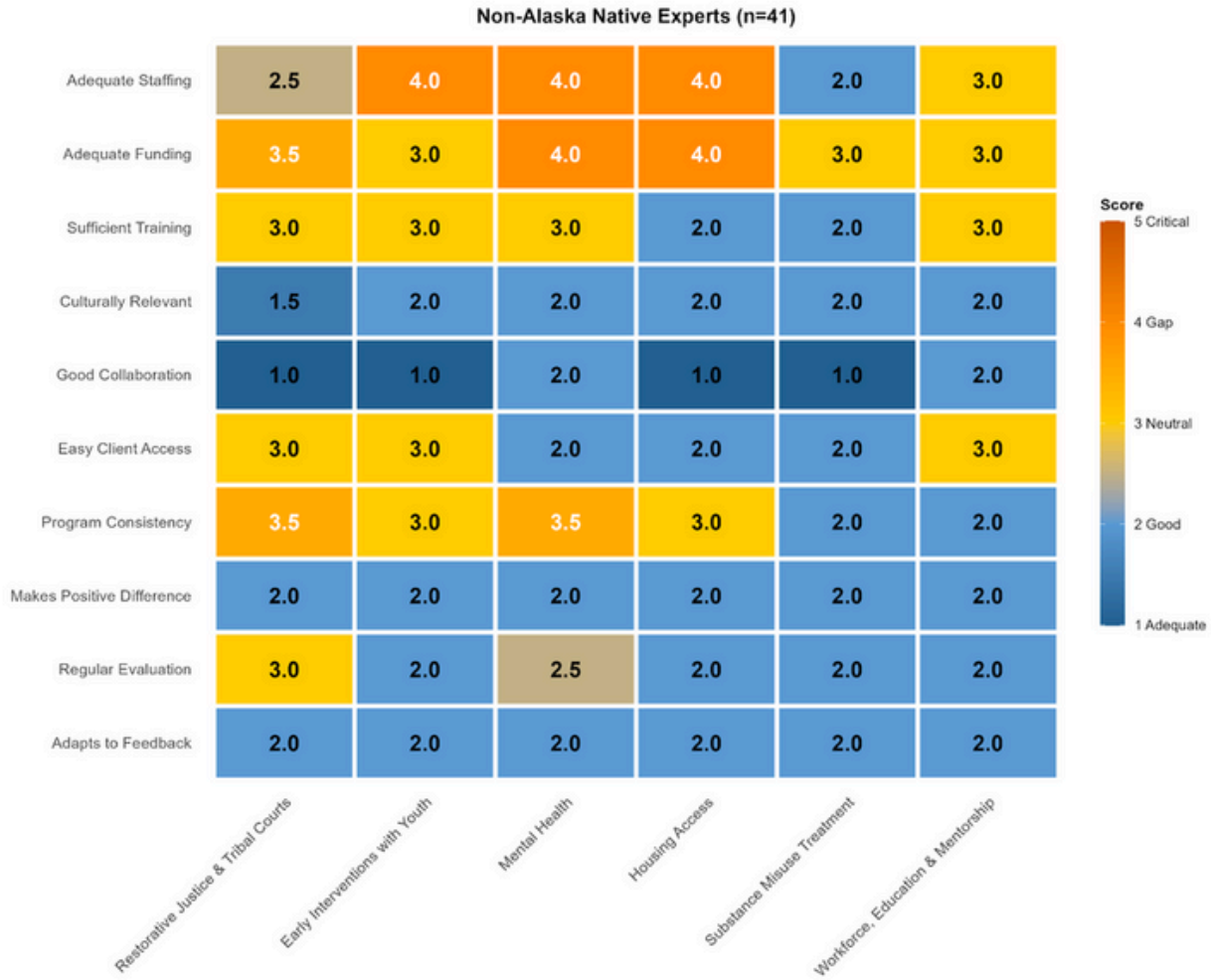
*Note: Values shown are medians. Sample sizes vary by theme as practitioners only rated themes they work in (Workforce, Education & Mentorship n=15, Mental Health n=9, Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts n=12, Early Intervention with Youth n=11, Substance Misuse Treatment n=6, Housing Access n=6).*

From figure 3:

- Displays organizational capacity ratings from non- Alaska Native experts only. We can see that there are cluster of orange cells in the upper-left corner of the heatmap, where Staffing and Funding both show median scores of 4.0 for Mental Health, Housing Access and Early Intervention with Youth. These mean that resources constraints are most severe. In the the bottom portion of the heatmap is dominated by blue, with the "Good Collaboration" row showing dark blue cells (scores of 1.0) across almost all the themes indicating strong confidence in inter-agency partnerships.
- The "Makes a Positive Difference" row presents a consistent blue cells (median of 2.0) across all six themes, reflecting confidence that organizational efforts are producing meaningful outcomes. Cultural Relevance similarly displays blue tones (1.5-2.0), suggesting services are perceived as well-aligned with Alaska Native values. Program Consistency reveals a mixed pattern that is the orange cells (3.5-4.0) appear in Mental Health and Early Intervention with Youth, while Housing Access and Workforce, Education & Mentorship show yellow (neutral at 3.0). Training adequacy varies across the heatmap, with neutral ratings (3.0, yellow) in Workforce, Education & Mentorship and Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts, but adequate ratings (2.0, blue) in Mental Health and

- Housing Access. This heatmap shows clear resource gaps concentrated in the top-ranked themes while organizational commitment indicators remain positive

Figure 3:




*Note: Values shown are medians. Sample sizes vary by theme as practitioners only rated themes they work in (Workforce, Education & Mentorship n=21, Mental Health n=18, Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts n=8, Early Intervention with Youth n=8, Substance Misuse Treatment n=13, Housing Access n=15).*

To determine whether the two groups perceive organizational capacity differently, we conducted Mann-Whitney U tests which is a non-parametric statistical test appropriate for comparing ordinal (Likert-scale) data between two independent groups. This test assesses whether one group tends to rate items higher or lower than the other.

From table 4, we report on only the statistically significant factors across the intervention themes:

- Alaska Native experts expressed less confidence that their organizations make a meaningful positive difference and collaborate effectively not because they are pessimistic, but likely because they are closer to the communities being served. As members of the communities these programs aim to help, Alaska Native experts may have greater insight into whether services are actually reaching their people, aligning culturally, and producing real improvements in people's lives. Non- Alaska Native

- experts, while committed and professional, may not have the same visibility into how services are experienced on the ground.
- This finding reinforces the importance of including Alaska Native voices in program evaluation. Relying solely on non- Alaska Native staff assessments may produce an overly optimistic picture of program effectiveness. Alaska Native experts offer a valuable perspective that can help identify gaps and improve service delivery.
- From the heatmaps, we can see that some factors showed large descriptive differences between groups but did not reach statistical significance. For example, Mental Health staffing showed a 2-point median difference (AN/AI = 2.0, Non-AN/AI = 4.0) suggesting Alaska Native experts perceive less of a staffing gap. However, with only 9 Alaska Native responses for this theme and high variability within the group (scores ranging from 1 to 5), this difference could not be statistically confirmed. This means that meaningful differences may exist but remain undetectable with current sample sizes.

Table 4:

| Theme | Question on? | AN/AI Median Score | Non-AN/AI Median Score | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mental Health | Positive Difference | 3.0 | 2.0 | 0.011 |
| Substance Misuse Treatment | Collaboration | 2.5 | 1.0 | 0.005 |
| Substance Misuse Treatment | Positive Difference | 3.0 | 2.0 | 0.034 |
| Housing Access | Collaboration | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.038 |
| Housing Access | Positive Difference | 2.5 | 2.0 | 0.027 |
| Early Intervention with Youth | Positive Difference | 3.0 | 2.0 | 0.021 |

Table 5:

| | Alaska Native/ American Indian | | Non- Alaska Native/ American Indian | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intervention Theme | AN/AI Remote | AN/AI Cultural | Non-AN/AI Remote | Non-AN/AI Cultural |
| Restorative Justice & Tribal Courts | 2 | 3 | 2.5 | 2 |
| Early Interventions with Youth | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Mental Health | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Housing Access | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Substance Misuse Treatment | 2 | 2.5 | 4 | 2 |
| Workforce, Education & Mentorship | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |

**References**


Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2002). Racism's Frontier: The Untold Story of Discrimination and Division in Alaska. Retrieved November 27, 2025 from: https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/sac/ak0402/ch4.htm

*Alaska Bar Association. (2023). Diversity Commission report: Final report (approved June 12, 2023). Retrieved from https://alaskabar.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report.pdf*

Alaska Court System. (2016). *FY16 year in review: Coordinated Resources Project — Mental health court* (Anchorage Coordinated Resources Project). https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/docs/fy16.pdf

Alaska Court System. (n.d.). *Therapeutic courts*. Retrieved December 14, 2025, from https://courts.alaska.gov/therapeutic/index.htm

Alaska Department of Corrections Research (2025). Alaska Department of Corrections 2024 Offender Profile. Retrieved November 27, 2025 from: https://doc.alaska.gov/admin/docs/2024Profile.pdf

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development & Association of Alaska School Boards. (2019). *Transforming schools: A framework for trauma-engaged practice in Alaska*. State of Alaska. https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/a2fc763c-aba5-4b25-875e-b0f63c54c301/Transforming-Schools-A-Framework-for-Trauma-Engaged-Practice-Final.pdf

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section (2025). Alaska Population by Age, Sex, Race (Alone or in Combination) and Hispanic Origin, July 2024. Retrieved November 27, 2025 from: https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates

Alaska Legal Services. (2022). *Alaska Tribal Court Directory*. AlaskaLawHelp.org. Retrieved December 14, 2025, from https://alaskalawhelp.org/resource/alaska-tribal-court-directory

Allen, J., Wexler, L., Apok, C.A. *et al.* Indigenous Community-Level Protective Factors in the Prevention of Suicide: Enlarging a Definition of Cultural Continuity in Rural Alaska Native Communities. *Prev Sci* 26, 246–257 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-025-01782-2

Aos, S., Phipps, P., Barnoski, R., & Lieb, R. (2001). *The comparative costs and benefits of programs to reduce crime: Version 4.0* (Full report). Washington State Institute for Public Policy. https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/756/Wsipp_The-Comparative-Costs-and-Benefits-of-Programs-to-Reduce-Crime-v-4-0_Full-Report.pdf

Baker, O., Wellington, C., Price, C. R., Tracey, D., Powell, L., Loffredo, S., Moscariello, S., & Meyer, J. P. (2023). Experience delivering an integrated service model to people with criminal justice system involvement and housing insecurity. BMC Public Health, 23, Article 222. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15108-w

Brave Heart, M. Y., Chase, J., Elkins, J., & Altschul, D. B. (2011). Historical trauma among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: concepts, research, and clinical considerations.

*Journal of psychoactive drugs*, *43*(4), 282–290. https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2011.628913

Caspi, A., Houts, R., Belsky, D. W., Harrington, H., Hogan, S., Ramrakha, S., ... & Moffitt, T. E. (2016). Childhood forecasting of a small segment of the population with large economic burden. Nature Human Behaviour, 1(1). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-016-0005

Cates, L., & Brown, A. R. (2023). *Medications for opioid use disorder during incarceration and post-release outcomes*. Health & Justice, 11, Article 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-023-00209-w

Carlson, K. M. (2024). *Justice beyond the state. Alaska Law Review, 41*(1), 45–92. Retrieved December 14, 2025, from https://alr.law.duke.edu/article/justice-beyond-the-state-carlson-vol41-iss1/

Chloupis, G., & Kontompasi, D. (2025). Examining the relation between education, recidivism & crime prevention. *Discover Global Society, 3*(1), 18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-025-00153-0

Doyle, O., Harmon, C., Heckman, J. J., & Tremblay, R. E. (2009). Investing in early human development: Timing and economic efficiency. Economics & Human Biology, 7(1), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2009.01.002

Driscoll, D. L., Johnston, J. M., Chapman, C., Hedwig, T., Shimer, S., Barker, R., Burke, N., Baldwin, M., & Brown, R. A. (2018). Changes in the health status of newly housed chronically homeless: the Alaska Housing First program evaluation. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, *27*(1), 34–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/10530789.2018.1441678

Gann S, Kaeble D. (2025). Correctional Populations in the United States, 2023 – Statistical Tables. Retrieved December 14, 2025 from: https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/correctional-populations-united-states-2023-statistical-tables

Gibbs, D., Stockings, E., Larney, S., Bromberg, D. J., & Shakeshaft, A. (2023). *The impact of supported accommodation on health and criminal justice outcomes of people released from prison: A systematic literature review.* Harm Reduction Journal, 20, Article 91. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-023-00832-8

Graf GHJ, Chihuri S, Blow M, Li G. (2021). Adverse Childhood Experiences and Justice System Contact: A Systematic Review. *Pediatrics*, 147(1): e2020021030. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-021030

Greenwood PW, Model KE, Rydell CP & Chiesa J. (1998). Diverting children from a life of crime (2nd ed.). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.Hemez, P., Brent, J. J., & Mowen, T. J. (2020). Exploring the School-to-Prison Pipeline: How School Suspensions Influence Incarceration During Young Adulthood. *Youth violence and juvenile justice*, *18*(3), 235–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204019880945

Harris, A. (2023). Can racial diversity among judges affect sentencing outcomes? American Political Science Review, 118(2), 940–955. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000552

Isles, A. (2001). Telehealth—a health manager's perspective. Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare, 7(2_suppl), 1-1. https://doi.org/10.1258/1357633011937029

Jacobs, L. A., & Gottlieb, A. (2020). The effect of housing circumstances on recidivism: Evidence From a Sample of People on Probation in San Francisco. *Criminal justice and behavior*, *47*(9), 1097–1115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854820942285

Judicial Council of Alaska. (2005). *Recidivism in Alaska's felony therapeutic courts*. Alaska Judicial Council. Retrieved December 14, 2025, from https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/recidivism-alaskas-felony-therapeutic-courts

Kelly, M. and Tubex, H. (2015). Stemming the Tide of Aboriginal Incarceration. The University of Notre Dame Australia Law Review, 17(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.32613/undalr/2015.17.1.2

King, R. D., Johnson, K. R., & McGeever, K. (2010). Demography of the legal profession and racial disparities in sentencing. Law & Society Review, 44(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2010.00394.x

Kwon, S. C., Kabir, R., & Saadabadi, A. (2024). *Mental health challenges in caring for American Indians and Alaska Natives*. In StatPearls. StatPearls Publishing. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK570587/

MacKinnon, L., & Socias, M. E. (2021). Housing First: A housing model rooted in harm reduction with potential to transform health care access for highly marginalized Canadians. *Canadian family physician Medecin de famille canadien*, *67*(7), 481–483. https://doi.org/10.46747/cfp.6707481

Mmari, KN, Blum, R Wm & Teufel-Shone, N. (2009). What Increases Risk and Protection for Delinquent Behaviors Among American Indian Youth?: Findings from Three Tribal Communities: Findings from Three Tribal Communities. *Youth & Society*, *41*(3), 382-413. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X09333645 (Original work published 2010)

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). *Common comorbidities with substance use disorders* (NIH Publication No. NBK571451). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK571451/

National Institute of Justice. (2016). *The role of credible messengers in violence prevention.*

Oldani, M. J., & Prosen, D. (2021). *Trauma-informed caring for Native American patients and communities prioritizes healing, not management. AMA Journal of Ethics, 23*(6), E446–E455.

Perdacher, E., Kavanagh, D., & Sheffield, J. (2019). Well-being and mental health interventions for Indigenous people in prison: systematic review. *BJPsych open*, *5*(6), e95. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2019.80

Prison Policy Initiative. (n.d.). Alaska profile. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/AK.html

Pyle, N., Flower, A., Fall, A. M., & Williams, J. (2015). Individual-Level Risk Factors of Incarcerated Youth. *Remedial and Special Education*, *37*(3), 172-186. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932515593383.

Rasmus, S. M., Trickett, E. J., Charles, B., John, S., & Allen, J. (2019). *The Qasgiq Model as an Indigenous intervention: Using the cultural logic of contexts to build protective factors for Alaska Native suicide and alcohol misuse prevention. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 25*(1), 44–54.

Roman, J. K., Chalfin, A., Reid, J., & Reid, S. (2008). *Impact and cost-benefit analysis of the Anchorage Wellness Court* (NCJ 227605). National Institute of Justice. https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/impact-and-cost-benefit-analysis-anchorage-wellness-court

Sun, Y., Blewitt, C., Minson, V., Bajayo, R., Cameron, L., & Skouteris, H. (2024). Trauma-informed Interventions in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings: A Scoping Review. *Trauma, violence & abuse*, *25*(1), 648–662. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231162967

Tomoh, B. O., Mustapha, A. Y., Mbata, A. O., Kelvin-Agwu, M. C., Forkuo, A. Y., & Kolawole, T. O. (2025). Assessing the impact of telehealth interventions on rural healthcare accessibility: a quantitative study. International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, 7(3), 203-226. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v7i3.1861

Valle, A. (2017). *Alaska Results First Initiative: Adult criminal justice program benefit cost analysis* (Report). Alaska Justice Information Center, University of Alaska Anchorage. Retrieved from https://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=31&docid=60624

Van Brocklin, V. (2024, April 2). *Opinion: A step toward addressing Alaska's appalling prison statistics*. Anchorage Daily News. https://www.adn.com/opinions/2024/04/02/opinion-a-step-toward-addressing-alaska-appalling-prison-statistics/

van Schilfgaarde, L. (2024). *Restorative justice as regenerative tribal jurisdiction. California Law Review, 112*, 103–? https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38V11VM7Z

Welsh BC & Farrington DP. (2011). The Benefits and Costs of Early Prevention Compared With Imprisonment: Toward Evidence-Based Policy *The Prison Journal*, *91*(3_suppl), 120S-137S. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885511415236

Wexler L. (2014). Looking across three generations of Alaska Natives to explore how culture fosters indigenous resilience. *Transcultural psychiatry*, *51*(1), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461513497417

White, H. R., & Frisch-Scott, N. E. (2022). Childhood Victimization and Adult Incarceration: A Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *24*(3), 1543-1559. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211073841 (Original work published 2023)

Wilson, J. A., Naro, W., & Austin, J. F. (2007). *Innovations in probation: Assessing New York City's automated reporting system* (Research Report). The JFA Institute.

https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/parole/documents/archived-website-materials/research/OSR3.pdf

# APPENDIX 3:
# FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**US Department of Justice (DOJ)**

- Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS)
- Tribal Juvenile Healing to Wellness Courts, which support culturally relevant tribal juvenile drug courts addressing underage substance use and delinquency

The SCA supports state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations in their work to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people returning from state and federal prisons, local jails, and juvenile facilities. Passed and signed into law on April 9, 2008, and reauthorized in 2018, SCA legislation authorizes federal grants for vital programs and systems reform to improve the reentry process. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) funds and administers the Second Chance Act grants. Within OJP, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) awards SCA grants serving adults, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) awards grants serving youth. Since 2009, BJA and OJJDP have awarded more than 800 grants to grantees across 49 states. In support of SCA grantees nationwide, the National Reentry Resource Center collaborates with Second Chance Act technical assistance (TA) providers.

**US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS, including IHS and SAMHSA)**

- IHS (https://www.ihs.gov/dgm/funding/) provides numerous grants to assist American Indian/Alaska Native entities, including outreach and education, support for community health aides, tribal self-governance, suicide prevention, alcohol related programs, tribal management, Native Public Health Resilience Program, behavioral health programs and awareness, opioid intervention prevention program, and many more.
- SAMHSA:
  - State Opioid Response (SOR) program – The purpose of this program is to address the opioid overdose crisis by providing resources to states and territories for increasing access to FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder (MOUD), and for supporting the continuum of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support services for opioid use disorder (OUD) and other concurrent substance use disorders. The SOR program also supports the continuum of care for stimulant misuse and use disorders, including for cocaine and methamphetamine. The SOR program aims to help reduce unmet treatment needs and opioid-related overdose deaths across America. On August 25, 2025, SAMHSA announced $43 million in new supplemental funding available to State Opioid Response (SOR) program grantees to expand recovery housing services for young adults, ages 18-24.
  - Native Connections is a five-year grant program that helps American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities identify and address the behavioral health needs of Native youth. By August 2024, SAMHSA had awarded 342 five-year grants to eligible AI/AN entities: 20 Cohort 1 grantees were awarded in 2015, 69 Cohort 2 in 2016, 13 Cohort 3 in 2017, 45 Cohort 4 in 2018, 26 Cohort 5 in 2019, 40 Cohort 6 in 2020, 29 Cohort 7 in 2021, 12 Cohort 8 in 2022, and 48 Cohort 9 in 2023. Forty communities were awarded grants in 2024, composing Cohort 10. The Native Connections Grant Program supports grantees in:
    - Reducing suicidal behavior and substance use among Native youth up to age 24
    - Easing the impacts of substance use, mental illness, and trauma in tribal communities
    - Supporting youth as they transition into adulthood

**Federal Grant Search Resources**
Legislators, agencies, Tribes, and partner organizations may use the following primary tools to identify federal funding opportunities:

- **SAM.gov – Assistance Listings**

The Assistance Listings page on SAM.gov is the federal government's primary source of information on federal assistance programs. Listings include program purpose, eligibility, application requirements, and matching or cost-share requirements.

- **Grants.gov**

Grants.gov provides information on and access to competitive federal grant opportunities awarded directly by federal agencies.

**Important Funding Considerations**
Identifying a potential grant program does not guarantee that funding is currently available. Grant availability may be affected by:

- Congressional appropriations
- Agency rulemaking or priority shifts
- Executive actions affecting grant administration

In January 2025, executive orders directed certain federal agencies to pause or review grant-related activities to ensure consistency with administration priorities. Some programs listed below may be affected by such reviews, which are subject to litigation and ongoing agency guidance. Interested parties should consult the administering agency directly for the most current information.

**DOJ Funding Opportunities**

**Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program**
The Byrne JAG Program is the leading source of federal criminal justice funding to states, Tribes, and local governments. Funds may be used across a broad range of activities, including:

- Law enforcement and prosecution
- Courts and indigent defense
- Corrections and community corrections
- Crime prevention and education
- Mental health and behavioral health programs
- Drug treatment and enforcement
- Planning, evaluation, and technology improvement

JAG funding is designed to support diversion, reentry, behavioral health, and community-based alternatives.

**Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative**
This initiative supports evidence-informed, community-centered strategies to reduce violence by:

- Preventing and disrupting cycles of violence and retaliation
- Addressing trauma and unmet behavioral health needs
- Strengthening community assets and economic opportunity

These approaches align with culturally grounded prevention and restorative justice strategies, particularly in communities disproportionately impacted by violence and justice involvement.

**Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) Program**
Formerly the Innovations in Community-Based Crime Reduction program, BCJI supports data-driven, place-based strategies to reduce crime in high-impact neighborhoods. Core elements include:

- Targeting crime hot spots with coordinated interventions
- Community engagement and resident leadership
- Data- and evidence-based decision-making
- Cross-sector partnerships to enhance trust and sustainability

**Mental Health and Justice Collaboration Programs**
DOJ administers several programs that directly support the intersection of mental health, substance misuse, and justice involvement, including:

- Mental Health Courts Program: Supports collaborative, system-wide approaches to better address the needs of individuals with mental illnesses involved in the justice system.
- Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP): Supports cross-system collaboration between criminal justice and mental health partners to plan, implement, or expand diversion and treatment-focused programs.
- Connect and Protect: Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Response Program: Supports partnerships between law enforcement and behavioral health providers to improve responses to individuals with mental health or co-occurring disorders.

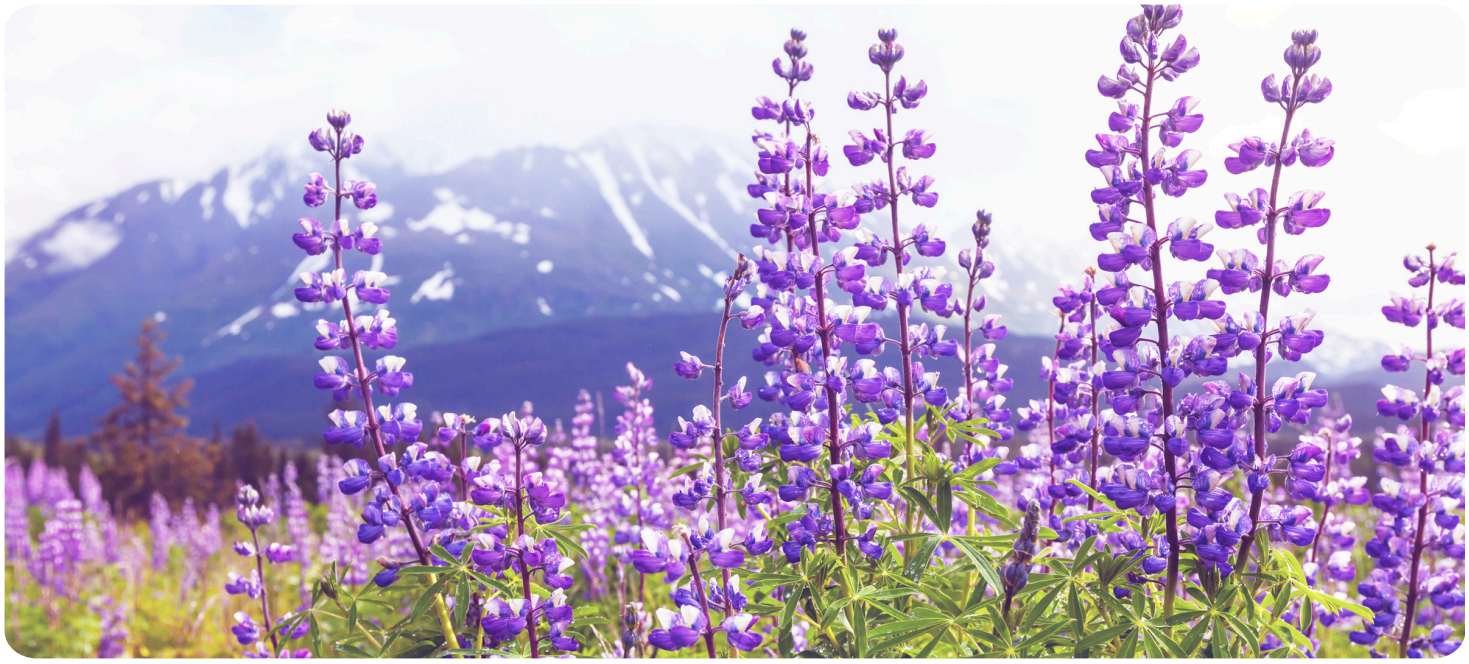
**Substance Misuse and Opioid Response Programs**

- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP)
- Provides funding and technical assistance to states, local governments, and Tribal governments to develop or expand comprehensive substance misuse response strategies, including treatment, recovery support, and diversion.

**Juvenile Justice Funding (OJJDP)**
OJJDP administers funding and technical assistance focused on youth prevention, early intervention, and system reform, including:

- Title II Formula Grants Program
- Mentoring programs
- Programs supporting youth and families impacted by substance misuse

These funds align closely with the report's emphasis on early intervention, trauma-engaged care, and prevention-focused approaches.



**Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)**
The COPS Office advances community policing through grants, training, and technical assistance. Relevant opportunities include:

- **Community Policing Development Microgrants Program:** Supports innovative approaches to community engagement, problem-solving, and organizational change, including projects addressing:
  - Rural law enforcement challenges
  - Youth engagement
  - Officer wellness
  - Victim-centered approaches
  - Recruitment and retention

**Strategic Implications for Alaska**
Many of the programs identified align with the recommendations in this report and offer opportunities to:
- Leverage federal dollars to supplement state investments
- Support Tribal and Alaska Native–led initiatives
- Expand mental health, housing, youth prevention, and diversion programs
- Strengthen cross-system collaboration across justice, health, and social services

*(Funding Information sourced from the Congressional Research Service. (2025) (page 34).*

**Strategic coordination among state agencies, Tribes, and community partners will be critical to maximizing the impact and sustainability of these funding opportunities.**