

The Reduction of the Use of Solitary Confinement & Safety Concerns

Some people may say or think that solitary confinement decreases the safety of staff and incarcerated people (IP) in prisons because it restricts tools the Correctional Officers use to control people. In reality, research has shown the opposite. By removing solitary confinement as a threat or punishment prisons become safer for both staff and those incarcerated.

CITATION: *Chris Haney, Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and "Supermax" Confinement, 49 CRIME & DELINQUENCY 124 (2003) at 140.*

REALITY:

Since initiating restrictions on the use of solitary confinement **nine states**—Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Washington, found that putting IP's into isolated confinement did not reduce violence in prisons and releasing prisoners from solitary confinement did not increase violence.

CITATION:

Marc A. Levin, Esq., Testimony Before the U.S Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on The Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights 3 (February 25, 2014), <https://bit.ly/2Mdmgbg>; Rick Raemisch, remarks at Vera Institute of Justice, Webinar: Rethinking Restrictive Housing: What's Worked in Colorado? (Sept. 17, 2018), <https://bit.ly/2VXdPh> [hereinafter "Raemisch Remarks"];

REALITY:

Between 2011 and 2016, Colorado cut the number of people in solitary from 1500 to 185 and during that same time annual inmate assaults on staff fell from an average of 262 to 160.

CITATION: <https://apnews.com/article/05602c59cd2446b8b9e2eae967f9e6af>

REALITY:

Colorado banned solitary confinement in 2017. At the time, the executive director of Colorado Department of Corrections (Rick Raemisch) stated: "Studies have found that inmates who have spent time in solitary confinement are more likely to reoffend than those who have not."

CITATION: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/opinion/solitary-confinement-colorado-prison.html>

REALITY:

Solitary confinement does not make prisons or jails safer. Most studies examining the effects of solitary find that its use does not decrease instances of misconduct or violence—including assaults on corrections staff or other incarcerated people—and therefore does not improve prison and jail safety.

CITATION: Kayla James & Elena Vanko, THE IMPACTS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, Vera Institute for Justice (April 2021).

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/the-impacts-of-solitary-confinement.pdf>

REALITY:

Solitary confinement does not improve public safety and may even increase reoffending. Studies indicate that the use of solitary confinement does not decrease rates of recidivism, which refers to the percentage of people who are rearrested and/or reincarcerated after being released from prison or jail. In fact, research suggests that time spent in solitary may actually increase people's likelihood of post-release offending, especially violent re-offending.

CITATION: Kayla James & Elena Vanko, THE IMPACTS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, Vera Institute for Justice (April 2021).

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/the-impacts-of-solitary-confinement.pdf>