



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Six Lessons Learned for Advancing Racial Equity at the Intersection of Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health

February 29, 2024

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

Racial Equity Cohort

- Convened four counties from the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge in early 2023: Dane County, WI; Durham County, NC; Franklin County, OH; and Mecklenburg County, NC.
- The cohort structure supports connections among the sites and disseminates knowledge about advancing equity in their justice and behavioral health systems.
 1. Counties share tips, ideas, and approaches with each other via bimonthly calls.
 2. Counties share lessons learned and strategies with the field via webinars, web posts, and other knowledge-sharing products.

Panelists

- Colleen Clark Bernhardt, *Manager, Community Justice Coordinating Council, Dane County, WI*
- Tamarine Cornelius, *Research Analyst, Dane County (WI) Community Justice Council*
- Ruchelle Pride, *Director, Office of Justice Policy and Programs (Franklin County, OH) Interim Director, Franklin County (OH) Economic Development & Planning*
- Orleny Rojas, *Senior Manager, Center for Effective Public Policy*
- Marc Strange, *Clinical Services Manager, Durham County, NC*
- Stephen Strzelecki, *Clinical Director, Mecklenburg County (NC) Criminal Justice Services*
- Chandra Tyler, *Safety and Justice Challenge Equity Inclusion Consultant, Mecklenburg County, NC*
- Bria Gillum, *Senior Program Officer, Criminal Justice, MacArthur Foundation*



SAFETY+JUSTICE CHALLENGE

*An initiative to reduce over-incarceration by
changing the way America thinks about and
uses jails.*

The Problem



There are nearly **12 million** annual jail admissions nationwide—the populations of NYC and Los Angeles **combined**.



Annual jail admissions are **19x** that of annual admissions to state and federal prisons.



3 out of **5** people in jail are legally presumed **innocent**.



Black Americans are jailed at almost **4x** the rate of White Americans.



17 percent of people in jail have a **serious mental illness**, and of those, **76 percent** have a co-occurring **substance use disorder**.

Goals of the Safety + Justice Challenge



Change in public perception



Fewer people incarcerated

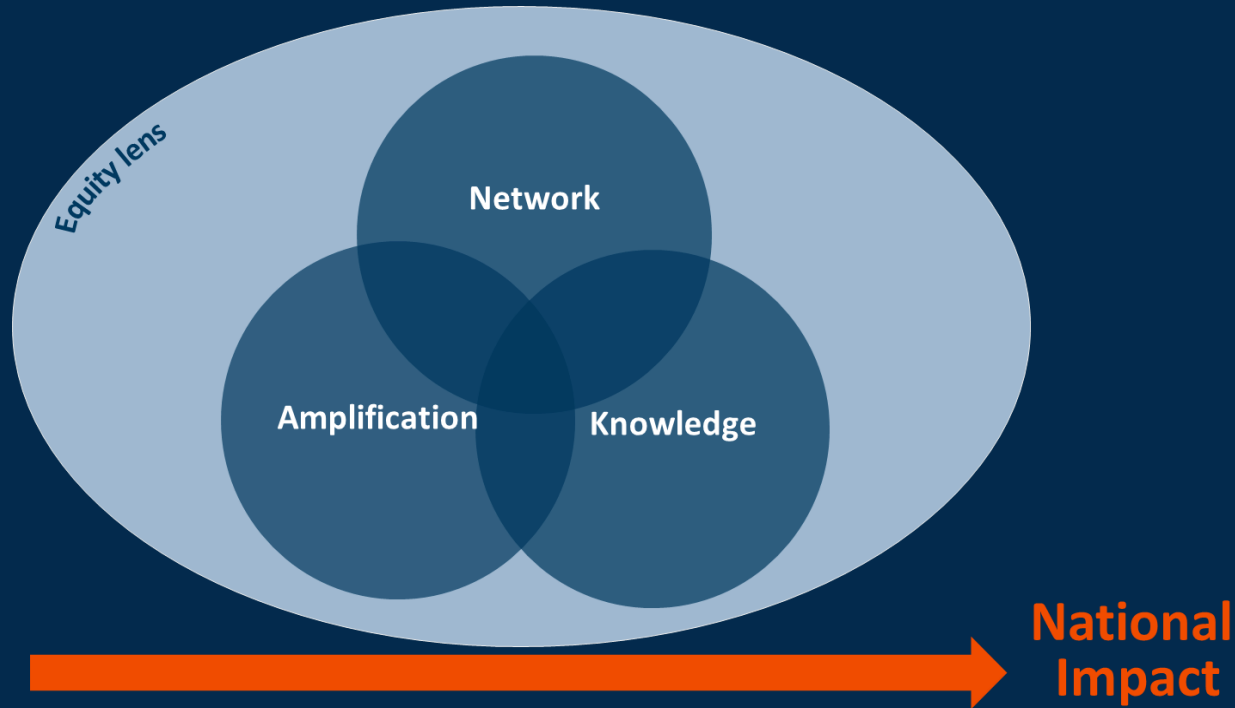


Increase in number of jurisdictions undertaking reform



More fair, just, and equitable use of jails

The Approach



Design features of the SIC

- Large, multi-year grants to 26 local jurisdictions
- Additional grants to spark innovation in 54 more jurisdictions
- Robust data infrastructure and data capacity building in sites
- Intensive technical assistance support for grantees
- “Big tent” embrace of a diversity of viewpoints about how to effect change
- Strong commitment to centering racial equity and community engagement

Where are we today?

After almost a **decade of reform**, where are we today?

Launch of the
SJC

Implementing
bold
approaches

Sustaining
progress

Building our
legacy

2015

2017

2019

2021

2023

2024

2025



The Scope



The SJC Network

80 sites

35 states

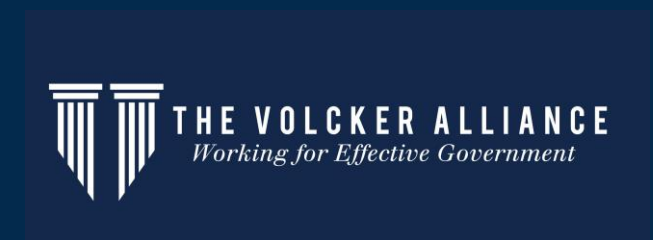
\$388M total investment

332 innovative reform strategies

17,737 fewer people in American jails

The Partners

Technical Assistance Providers



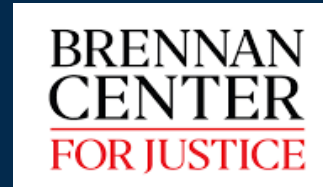
The Partners

Research and Knowledge Development



The Partners

Communications and Amplification



The Partners

Strategic Allies



The Scope

Ada County, ID

Adams County, CO

Allegheny County, PA

Baltimore City, MD

Bernalillo County, NM

Broward County, FL

Buncombe County, NC

Camden County, NJ

Campbell County, TN

Charleston County, SC

City of Atlanta, GA

City and County of San Francisco, CA

City of Long Beach, CA

City of St. Louis, MO

Clark County, NV

Cook County, IL

Cumberland County, ME

Dane County, WI

Deschutes County, OR

Durham County, NC

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Franklin County, OH

Gwinnett County, GA

Harris County, TX

Hennepin County, MN

Lake County, IL

Los Angeles County, CA

Lucas County, OH

Mecklenburg County, NC

Milwaukee County, WI

Minnehaha County, SD

Missoula County, MT

Multnomah County, OR

New Orleans, LA

New York, NY

Norfolk County, MA

Palm Beach County, FL

Pennington County, SD

Philadelphia, PA

Pima County, AZ

Polk County, IA

St. Louis County, MO

Sangamon County, IL

Santa Clara County, CA

Shelby County, TN

Spokane County, WA

The State of Connecticut

State of Delaware

Summit County, OH

Tulsa County, OK

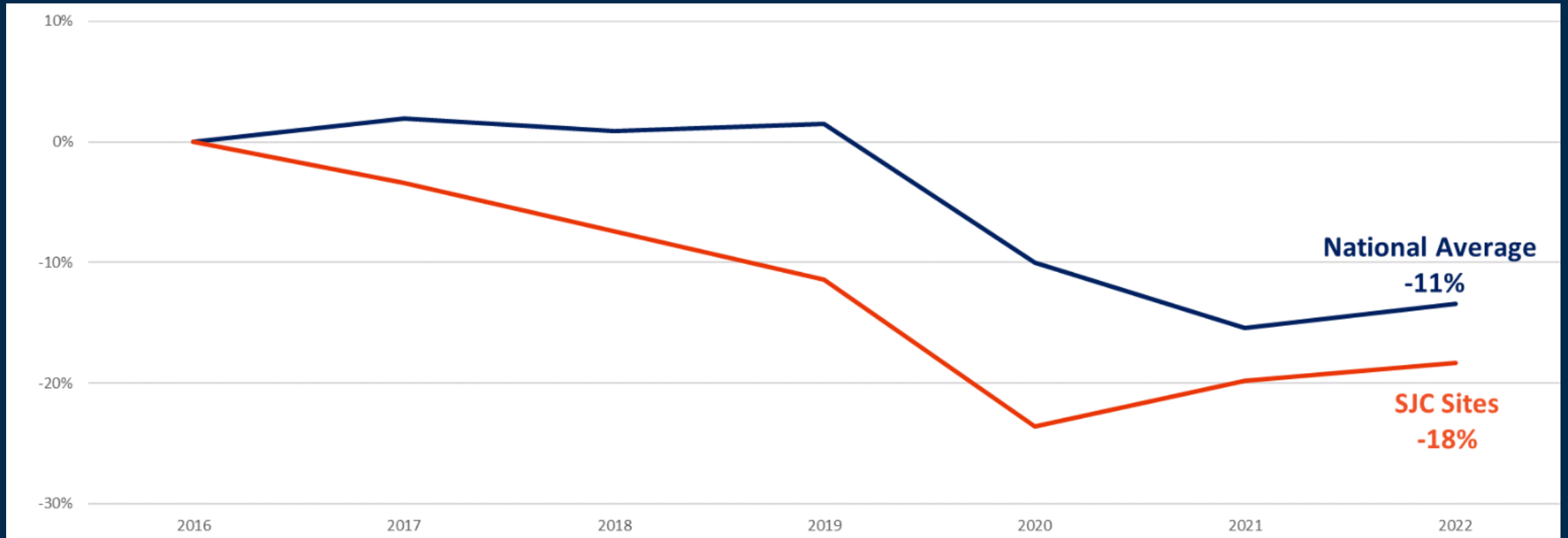
Yakima County, WA

Evidence and Impact:

Harm was reduced but racial and ethnic disparities persist.

The Impact

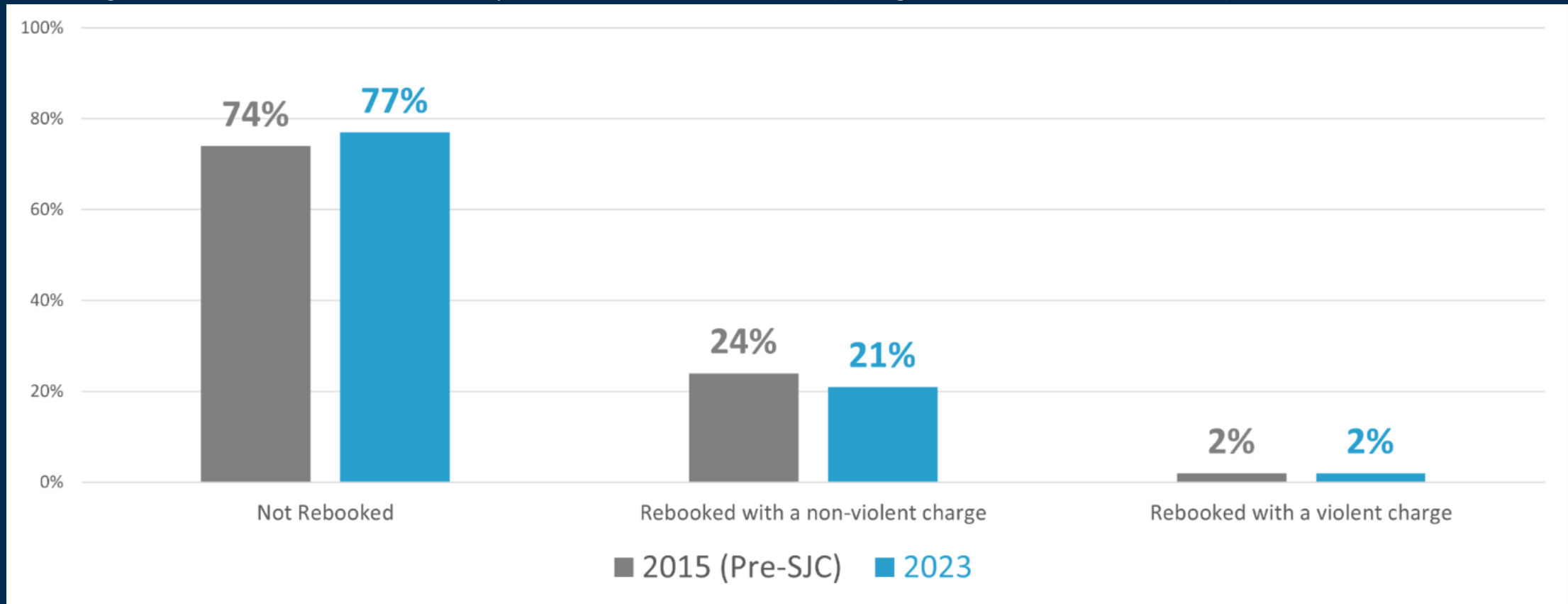
Declines for SJC cities and counties outpaced national declines in jail population.



The Impact

Safely reducing jail populations is possible.

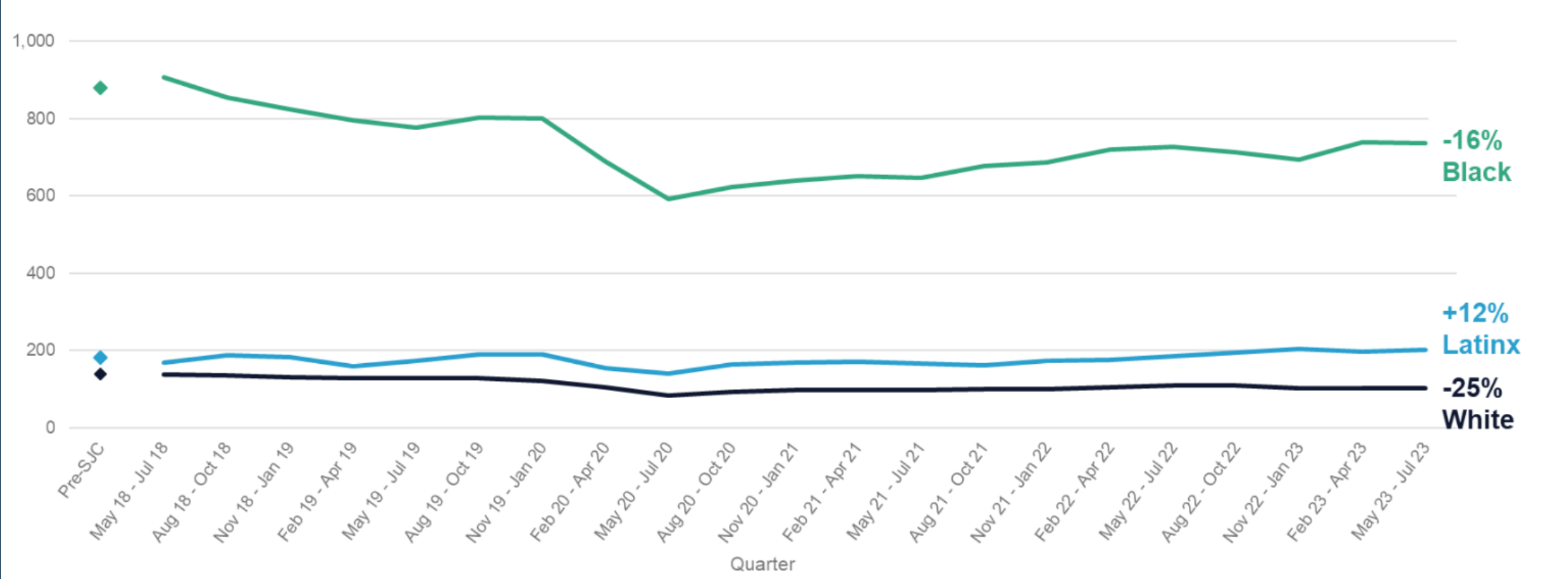
Rebooking outcomes of individuals released on pretrial status within six months (average across SJC cities and counties)



Preliminary average across SJC cities and counties (outcomes tracked through April 2023).

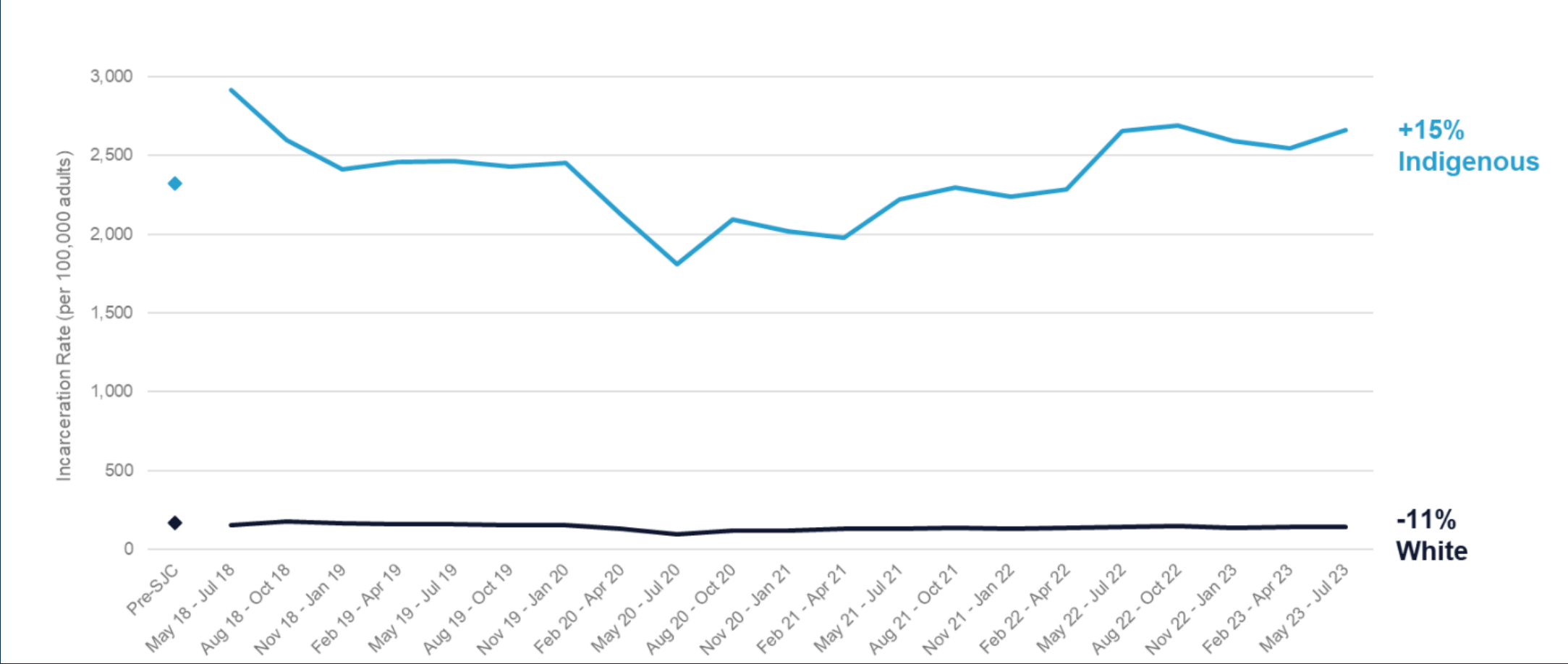
Harm has been reduced for some groups, but disparities persist.

Average jail incarceration rate per 100,000 adults, across SJC sites



Indigenous people continue to be incarcerated at much higher rates, and the disparity has increased since the pandemic.

Average jail incarceration rate per 100,000 adults, across SJC sites



Racial Equity and Community Engagement: SJC increases its efforts to advance equity and community engagement.

Why equity and community engagement?

What we learned

Though jail populations in SJC sites declined overall, inequities and racial disparities **did not**— in some cases, they **worsened**.

What we need to do

Address the **overrepresentation** of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people in the jail population, and encourage communities to **actively participate in reform** efforts.

How we're doing it:

Doubling down on the SJC's approach to centering racial equity (RE) and meaningfully engaging community (CE).

Efforts to center equity and community engagement

- Enshrining commitments through an actionable value statement
- Establishing equity-focused partnerships
- Funding strategies that empower community voices
- Launching the Racial Equity Cohort

Value Statement

The SJC's value statement uplifts racial equity and justice as the core of the initiative's jail reduction strategy, guiding program and investment decision-making through commitments to:

- Advance **racial equity** and **justice**
- **Authentically collaborate** with community members, people with lived experiences, and system actors
- Prioritize the **dignity** of all justice-impacted individuals
- Honor the **expertise of directly impacted communities**
- Lead with an **intersectional perspective**
- **Confront** the history of **systemic racism**
- Achieve **equitable outcomes** for all people

Efforts to center equity and community engagement

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Local Strategies to Advance Equity

Minnehaha County, SD

In Lakota meaning, “to help,” the Wo’Okiye Project deploys **Indigenous peer navigators** to support law enforcement in responding to low-level, non-emergent calls. The peer navigators bring care and resources from the health clinic to the street and answer questions about mental health.

Mecklenburg County, NC

The County’s Criminal Justice Advisory Group (CJAG) launched a **Racial and Ethnic Disparities Working Group** to examine and address policies and practices that lead to disparities in the justice system. As a result of this body, hired equity and inclusion specialists and completed decision point maps and analysis of disparities.

Efforts to center equity and community engagement

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- ✓ **Establishing equity-focused partnerships**
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Community Engagement Strategies

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

The parish's CJCC established CJCC Engage, a **subcommittee of community members** that collaborate with justice system leaders to identify and implement strategies for system improvement. These include "Heal the Block," gatherings for communities impacted by violence and held in collaboration with the Baton Rouge mayor, and a series of **dialogue sessions on community safety** in various neighborhoods.

Allegheny County, PA

The county is **redesigning the jail** to shrink its footprint, improve service delivery, and better meet the needs of incarcerated people. The process, informed by community voices and people with lived experience, is intended to limit space available for incarceration and permanently cap the size of the jail population.

Efforts to center equity and community engagement

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Racial Equity Cohort Work

Cook County, IL

Developed anti-racism training framework for individuals wanting to advance racial equity and systemic change.

Launched Racial Equity Fellowship Cohort providing individuals with equity training, workshops, etc.

New Orleans, LA

Launched Agents of Change Cohort to empower directly impacted residents to engage with system stakeholders and community members to reimagine NOLA's criminal legal system.

Philadelphia, PA

Launched *Straight Outta Trouble*, a jail deflection program helping individuals successfully navigate probation and combat recidivism.

Pima County, AZ

Launched peer-led juvenile diversion program.

Designed equitable microgrant application for community partners.

Racial Equity Cohort Overview

Strategy charge

Pilot innovative policies and practices to center racial equity and implement strategies that reduce ethnic and racial disparities in local justice systems.

Strategy features

- Joint grants between sites and local community partners
- Equity-focused technical assistance (e.g., Kirwan Institute)
- Equity-focused steering committee of TA providers and strategic allies

Equity Cohort sites

Cook County, IL
Pima County, AZ

Philadelphia, PA
New Orleans, LA

Efforts to center equity and community engagement

- Enshrining commitments through an actionable value statement
- Establishing equity-focused partnerships
- Funding strategies that empower community voices
- ✓ **Launching the Racial Equity Cohort**

Questions?



SafetyAndJusticeChallenge.org

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For more information, please contact Mark Stovell at mstovell@csg.org

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