

# Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice and Policy

## Highlights for Policymakers

### OVERVIEW

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine convened a multidisciplinary, expert committee that authored *Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice and Policy*, a comprehensive study to understand how racial inequality is perpetuated by the criminal justice system and interacts with broader societal forces, and what should be done about it.

### FINDINGS

Addressing racial inequalities in the criminal justice system requires addressing historic inequalities in interconnected social systems like health, housing, education, and economic opportunity. Policymakers do not have to choose between public safety and racial equity because many of the policies designed to address racial inequalities also make communities safer.

#### **01 CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM MUST HAPPEN AT EVERY STAGE OF THE SYSTEM.**

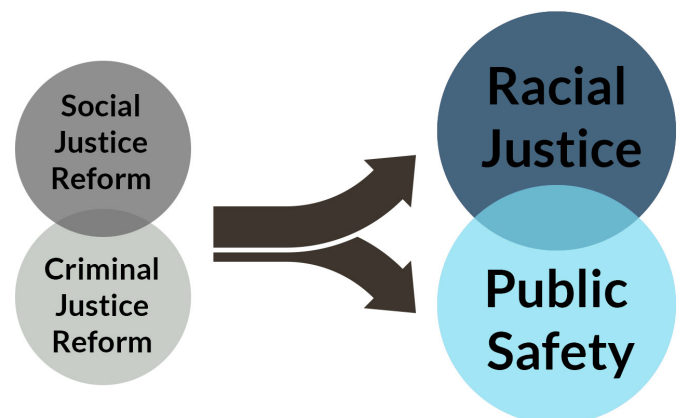
Racial disparities compound at each stage of the criminal justice system. Thus, reducing racial inequality must involve coordinated reforms across all stages of the criminal justice system to decrease cumulative racial disadvantage—from police contact to court processing and sentencing to correctional supervision.

#### **02 CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH.**

Structural reforms that improve public space, reduce neighborhood inequality, and alleviate concentrated poverty can advance criminal justice reforms by reducing crime and improving the social contexts in which reforms can operate. However, criminal justice policy alone cannot solve historically rooted, multidimensional racial inequality.

#### **03 INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY-BASED AND NONCRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY SOLUTIONS ARE NEEDED.**

Governments, community organizations, and private firms and foundations should play a role in improving the wellbeing of communities and lessening structural social disadvantages.



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS

Evidence-based strategies to reduce racial inequalities through criminal justice reforms include:

- Limiting jail detention to only those charged with serious crimes who pose a serious and immediate risk of harm or flight
- Exploring further drug reform policies, including the de-felonization of certain drug offenses
- Reevaluating which crimes warrant long sentences and reevaluate the cases of those currently serving long sentences
- Eliminating the death penalty
- Eliminating cash bail and replacing it with an actuarial system where detention depends on the risk of pretrial misconduct
- Reducing the arrest and incarceration of individuals under community supervision, especially for technical violations

## SOCIAL JUSTICE REFORMS

Evidence-based strategies to reduce racial inequalities through social justice reforms include:

- Universal policy approaches, such as Medicaid expansion
- High quality early childhood education programs, which reduce criminal involvement and result in cost savings in the long term
- Targeted approaches, such as community-based health services
- Placement into high quality jobs with potential for upward mobility through educational and entrepreneurship programs
- Funding for Business Improvement Districts that work to enhance public safety and good.
- Improving the built environment through greening and lead remediation program.
- Matched grants for community organizations for neighborhood improvement projects or services.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This Consensus Study Report Recommendations was prepared by the Committee on Law and Justice based on the Consensus Study Report *Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice, and Policy* (2022). The study was sponsored by Arnold Ventures, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, National Academy of Sciences Cecil and Ida Green Fund, National Academy of Sciences W.K. Kellogg Fund, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Russell Sage Foundation, and William T. Grant Foundation. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization or agency that provided support for the project. This Consensus Study Report is available from the National Academies Press | (800) 624-6242 | <http://www.nap.edu> | <http://www.nationalacademies.org>

To read the full report, please visit <http://www.nationalacademies.org/reducing-racial-inequality>

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