



# Living and Working Conditions in Five State Prisons: Cross-Site Findings from the Prison Research and Innovation Initiative

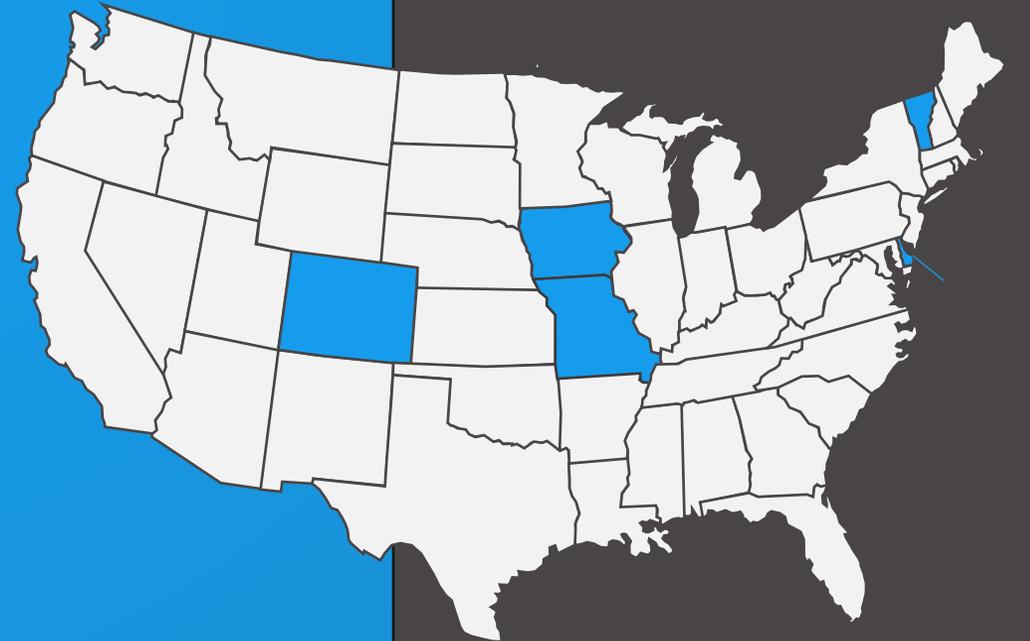


# Housekeeping

- The event is being recorded, and the recording will be posted online afterward
- Speaker biographies and related materials are available online.
- All participants are muted, but you can type your questions or comments into the Q&A box at any time.

# PRISON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INITIATIVE

- Five U.S. state prisons
- Annual climate surveys of incarcerated people and corrections staff
- Community engagement
- Participatory research



# Local Research Partners



UNIVERSITY *of*  
DENVER



# The Data

- Three waves of climate surveys in 5 state prisons
- Participants
  - Incarcerated people
  - Correctional staff
- ~30 cross-site questions along with site-specific questions
- Administered between 2021 and 2024



# The Data (Continued)

TABLE 1

## Number of Survey Respondents, by Wave and Type

*According to climate surveys across three waves in five facilities of correctional staff and incarcerated people*

	Incarcerated People	Correctional Staff	Total
<b>Wave</b>			
Wave 1	1,546	615	2,161
Wave 2	1,975	607	2,682
Wave 3	1,747	528	2,275
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,268</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>7,018</b>

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of a total of 28 climate surveys (three waves) of correctional staff and incarcerated people at five state prisons conducted by local research partners between May 2021 and September 2024.

# Cross-Site Survey Questions

Purpose of Prison

Prison Conditions  
and Environment

Perceptions of  
Personal Safety

Correctional Staff and  
Practices

COVID-19

Prison Activities

Staff-Incarcerated  
People Interactions

View on Workplace  
Culture

Job Satisfaction

Contact with Family  
and Friends

# Select Characteristics: **Incarcerated People**

- 53% were white, 21% were Black/African American, and 15% were multiracial
- Three-quarters identified as men
- 46% had completed high school or a GED and 23% had completed some college
- 41% reported annual household income below \$20k
- More than half were employed full time prior to incarceration but 20% were unemployed
- 84% had been in the state prison less than 5 years
- 40% received a sentence of more than 10 years

# Select Characteristics: Corrections Staff

- 67% were white, 15% were Black/African American, and 4% were multiracial
- 53% identified as men
- Half of staff had a higher-education degree
- 44% reported annual household income between \$50k and \$100k and 25% made over \$100k
- 95% of staff worked full time at the prison
- 38% had been employed by the DOC for 10+ years and 29% between 1-5 years
- 55% had a security/custody role
- 75% were direct line staff

# Comparing Perspectives Across Incarcerated People & Corrections Staff

# Purpose of Prison

- Asked to rate four purposes of prison
  - Punish people for the crimes they have committed
  - Ensure public safety
  - Prevent people from committing future crimes
  - Help people make changes for a better life



# Purpose of Prison

It's important that prisons... (Wave 1)	Staff I/VI	IP I/VI
Punish people for the crimes they have committed.	57.0%	60.0%
Ensure public safety.	83.7%	67.3%
Prevent people from committing future crimes.	81.4%	67.9%
Help people make changes for a better life.	82.4%	67.3%

It's important that prisons... (Wave 3)	Staff I/VI	IP I/VI
Punish people for the crimes they have committed.	61.4%	56.5%
Ensure public safety.	98.8%	64.0%
Prevent people from committing future crimes.	95.6%	64.0%
Help people make changes for a better life.	97.6%	65.7%

# Prison Living Conditions

- Asked to rate four prison living conditions
  - Incarcerated people get enough to eat here.
  - This facility gives incarcerated people what they need (e.g. soap, regular showers, sanitary products) for good personal hygiene for free.
  - Incarcerated people are usually able to get a good night's sleep here.
  - It's easy for people with physical disabilities to get around in this prison.



**Incarcerated people and staff largely disagreed on the state of prison living conditions.**

# Prison Living Conditions Wave 3 Perceptions

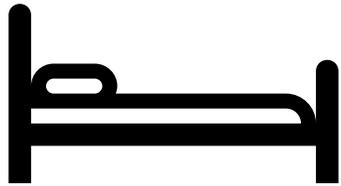


**40% of IP** agreed/strongly agreed that they get enough to eat, compared to **62% of staff**.



**36% of IP** agreed/strongly agreed that they get what they need for good personal hygiene for free, compared to **62% of staff**.

# Prison Living Conditions Wave 3 Perceptions



**40% of IP** agreed/strongly agreed that they usually can get a good night sleep, compared to **62% of staff**.



**37% of IP** agreed/strongly agreed that it's easy for people with physical disabilities to get around the prison, compared to **52% of staff**.

# Prison Working Conditions

# Safety and Well-Being

Survey Item	Wave 1 A/SA	Wave 3 A/SA	Change
I feel safe speaking up about staff misconduct.	53.4%	63.4%	+ 10.0

# Safety and Well-Being

Survey Item	Wave 1 A/SA	Wave 3 A/SA	Change
I feel safe speaking up about staff misconduct.	53.4%	63.4%	+ 10.0
I feel that I can rely on other staff in this facility.	66.6%	70.3%	+ 3.7

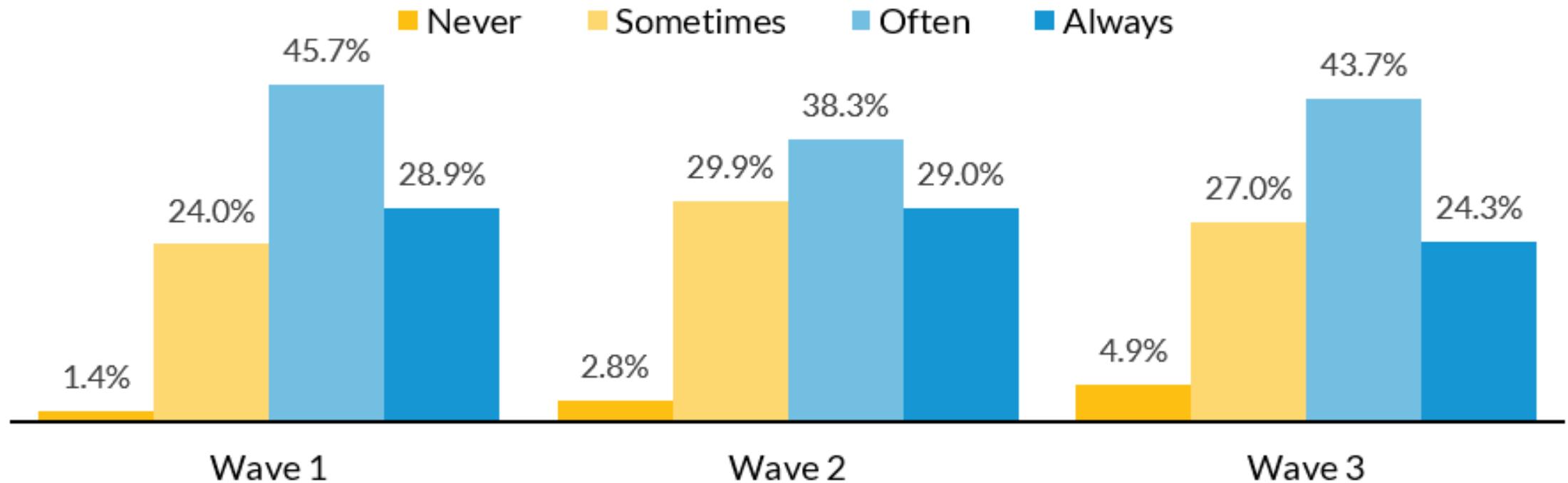
# Safety and Well-Being

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I feel safe speaking up about staff misconduct.	53.4%	63.4%	+ 10.0
I feel that I can rely on other staff in this facility.	66.6%	70.3%	+ 3.7
This prison's leadership does everything possible to keep staff safe here.	35.2%	60.8%	+ 25.6

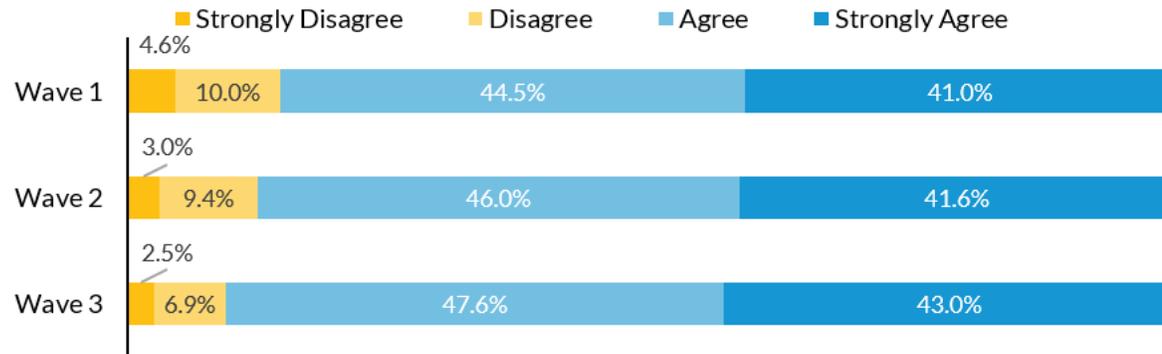
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This prison's leadership does everything possible to keep staff safe here.	35.2%	60.8%	+ 25.6
This prison's policies and practices support staff well-being.	31.6%	54.7%	+ 23.1

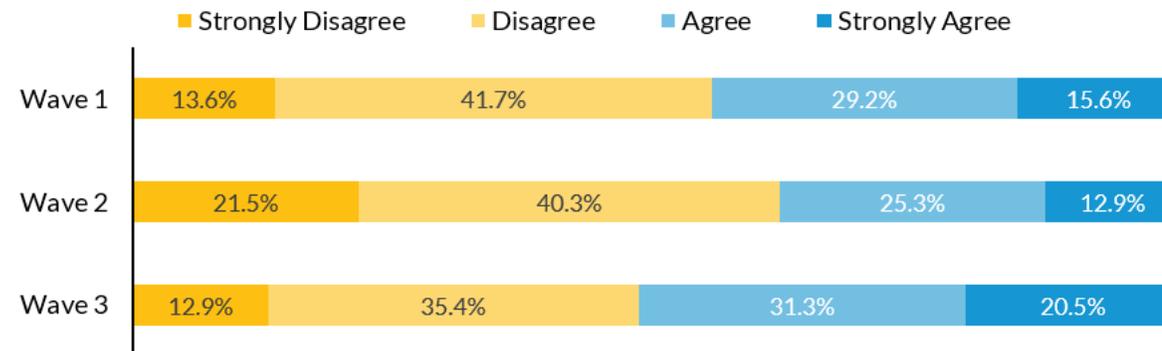
# “My coworkers show signs of stress”



# Job Satisfaction



“I take pride in my job”



“I look forward to coming to work.”



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