# **CRIME IN INDIANAPOLIS:**

### Trends, Sources, and Opportunities for Change

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"Crime...requires a complex, multi-dimensional approach = in order to be reduced."

### **KEY IDEAS**

- Homicides and non-fatal shootings have increased in the second half of 2015
- Violent crimes are overrepresented in challenged areas of Indianapolis
- Crime is associated with many issues individually (prior offenses, substance use and abuse, and mental health) and community trends (high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, poverty)
- Approaches to reduce crime must take place in criminal justice system and within communities
- Changes should be collaborative, communityfocused, consistent, and include quality data collection and analysis

Nationally, homicides and non-fatal shootings are at a 20-year low (Felker-Kantor, Colbert, & Kandris, 2015), but homicides and non-fatal shootings in Indianapolis are at a four-year high. Though homicides are less likely to occur than other violent and nonviolent crimes, homicides are the leading cause of death for 18 to 24-year-old males in Marion County, and the second leading cause of death for 25 to 34-year-old males (Gibson et al., 2015).

There are many social issues related to crime, but finding consistent, evidence-based causes and solutions relating homicides to other violent crimes is more difficult. Why? The actions of criminal offenders result from their environments and the criminal justice system, in addition to offenders' individual behaviors.

Each of these areas plays a role in preventing future criminal activity and treating the offenders and problems that are associated with crime. Because of these different areas of influence, there is no single policy or program that will reduce crime, especially more violent ones. Crime is a complex and multi-dimensional problem, and it requires a complex, multi-dimensional approach in order to be reduced.

This brief highlights how crime in Indianapolis is related to a variety of issues and how solutions must take a multi-faceted approach to reduce crime now and in the long-term by looking at three key issues:

- Recent trends in crime
- General issues associated with crime
- Opportunities to address crime-related issues

This overview of crime and related issues is not based on original research, but compiles existing information about Indianapolis, Marion County, and national trends in these topics. This brief focuses on those that drive many negative perceptions of crime rates: homicides and non-fatal shootings.



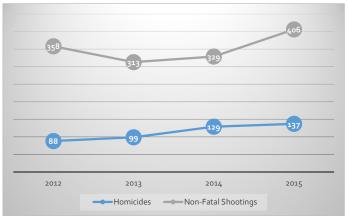
### **KEY TRENDS: HOMICIDES AND NON-FATAL SHOOTINGS IN INDIANAPOLIS**



### THE NUMBER OF HOMICIDES AND NON-FATAL SHOOTINGS HAVE INCREASED IN RECENT YEARS.<sup>1, 2</sup>

There were more non-fatal shootings than homicides from 2012 to 2015, with an average of 113 homicides and 352 non-fatal shootings per year during this time period. Homicides steadily increased by 56 percent by November 2015. From 2013 to 2015, the number of non-fatal shootings increased by nearly 100 incidents, or 30 percent. From 2012 to 2015, the number of homicide victims increased by 56 percent. The number of homicide suspects increased by 47 percent during that same time span.

Figure 1: Number of homicides and non-fatal shootings in Indianapolis, 2012-2015



Source: InterAct Incident Reports and Commander Sheets, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis Section, December 1, 2015

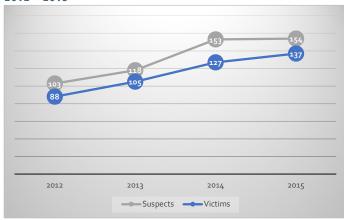


# HOMICIDES AND NON-FATAL SHOOTINGS ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN THE MOST CHALLENGED AREAS OF INDIANAPOLIS.

In 2014, the city of Indianapolis and the Department of Public Safety identified six areas of Indianapolis that have higher crime rates than other areas of the city. These locations—referred to as focus areas—are particularly prone to violent crimes, especially the non-fatal shootings and homicides that may worsen public perceptions of crime (See Figure 3, Page 3).

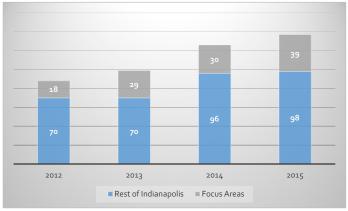
Figure 4 and 5 show the proportion of homicides and non-fatal shootings that have been committed in the six focus areas relative to the total numbers of those crimes committed in the rest of Indianapolis. The focus areas only comprise 4.7 percent of Indy's population; yet, account for up to one-third of non-fatal shootings and homicides from 2012 to 2015.

Figure 2: Number of homicide victims and suspects in Indianapolis, 2012 – 2015



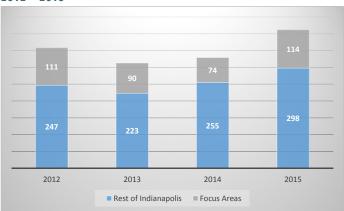
Source: HomiStat.mdb, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis Section, December 1, 2015

Figure 4: Number of criminal homicides, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2012-2015



Source: HomiState.mdb, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis Section

Figure 5: Number of non-fatal shootings, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2012-2015



Source: InterAct incident reports and Commander Sheets, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis

- 1 The definition for criminal homicides could change pending UCR Review. Criminal homicides do not include police action shootings, self-defense, or negligent homicides.
- ${\scriptstyle 2\ } \text{Numbers are not comparable prior to 2012 due to changes in reporting practices or incomplete data}.$
- 3 Typically, homicide and non-fatal shooting rates are calculated using population numbers. The latest population numbers for Indianapolis are from 2013, so rates could not be calculated for 2014 and 2015.
- 4 Data for 2015 are current through December 1.



## HOMICIDES AND NON-FATAL SHOOTINGS HAVE INCREASED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE SECOND HALF OF 2015.

In the focus areas during 2015, homicides were up 30 percent and non-fatal shootings increased by 54 percent from 2014. This compares to a 2 percent increase in homicides and a 17 percent increase in non-fatal shootings for the rest of Indianapolis during the same time period.

Not only have violent crimes been overrepresented in the focus areas, but more of them occurred during the second half of the year. Excluding the focus areas, Indianapolis experienced a 33 percent increase in homicides during the second half of 2015 compared to the first half of 2015. In the focus areas, homicides increased by 155 percent from June 2 to November 30, 2015. Non-fatal shootings increased by 48 percent in focus areas from the first six months of 2015, compared to an 8 percent decline across the rest of the city.

Overall, these trends support the perception that violent crimes have worsened recently, and that additional attention is needed in focus areas to reduce crime.

Table 1: Change in crime, January 1 through June 1, 2015 compared to June 2 through November 30, 2015

	1		
	Jan to June 1	June 2 to Dec 1	% Increase
Total Homicides	42	95	126%
Indianapolis (Excluding Focus Areas)	31	67	116%
Focus Areas	11	28	155%
Total Non-Fatal Shootings	155	257	66%
Indianapolis (Excluding Focus Areas)	109	189	73%
Focus Areas	46	68	48%

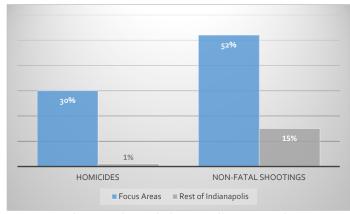
Source: InterAct incident reports and Commander Sheets, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis

Figure 3: Map of six focus areas in Indianapolis/Marion County



Source: Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis

Figure 6: Percent change in homicides and non-fatal shootings, 2014 to 2015



Source: InterAct incident reports and Commander Sheets, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis

### **KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRIME: COMMUNITY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE TIES**

Several issues exist within communities and the criminal justice system that may be associated with both violent and non-violent crime. Effectively reducing violent crime involves addressing issues with both individual offenders and the communities in which they live.

#### INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRIME

Mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and former offenders have all been associated with criminal activity. These three issues are all addressed at different levels within the criminal justice system in Indianapolis, yet persist within communities at risk for criminal activity.

1	Re-offenders and re-entry environments
2	Mental health
3	Substance use and abuse
4	Poverty
5	Unemployment
6	Education

## **RE-OFFENDERS (RECIDIVISTS) AND RE-ENTRY ENVIRONMENTS**

Recidivists are described as ex-offenders who are arrested, convicted, or returned to a correctional environment, usually within two to three years of being released. Re-entrants are ex-offenders who are released from a correctional facility and re-enter a community. The problem is that many re-entrants become re-offenders, and continue criminal activity. This link is due to correctional and community environments being unable to effectively support the rehabilitation of offenders. As of 2011, Marion County has one of the highest recidivism rates of Indiana counties, with more than half of offenders returning to prison (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2012; Indiana Department of Correction). Ninety-three percent of homicide suspects in Indianapolis have a criminal history—an increase from 70 percent in 2012. This year, about 9,000 ex-offenders will be released into Indianapolis.

includes offenders who local adult criminal histories begin criminal activity at early ages. The younger an individual who commits a crime, the more likely that person is to become an offender in adulthood. and remain in the criminal justice system (National Source: Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis Section

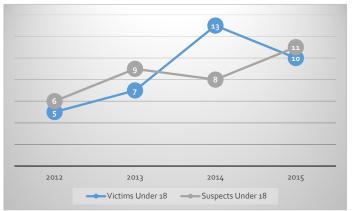
One source of recidivism Table 2. Homicide suspects with

Year	Percent of Homicide Suspects with Adult Criminal History
2012	70%
2013	82%
2014	92%
2015	93%

Justice Institute; Loeber and Farrington, 2011). The number of youth committed to the Department of Correction from Marion County has declined by 93 percent, from 840 youth in 1998 to 63 in 2014 (Indiana Department of Correction). This decline may be due to more youth being recommended to serve home detentions rather than serve time in facilities.

Yet, nearly 20 percent of high school students in Marion County have reported carrying a gun, knife, or other weapon (Gibson et al., 2015). More concerning, the number of homicide victims and suspects under the age of 18 increased from 2012 to 2015,

Figure 8: Number of homicide victims and suspects under 18, 2012 - 2015



Source: HomiState.mdb, Prepared by IMPD Crime Analysis Section

with youth offenders averaging 8 percent of all homicide victims and 6 percent of homicide suspects during this time frame.

The City-County Council of Indianapolis-Marion County conducted a policy study on re-entry in July 2013. They found that a one percent decline in in the three-year recidivism rate would save Marion County \$1.5 million dollars, with potential additional cost savings based on the reason for which an offender returned (Bruggeman et al., 2013). Among offenders returning to prison within three years, the average cost per offender would be \$33,786 based on an average sentence of 626 days. In short, reducing recidivism reduces financial costs to the county in addition to reducing personal costs for the offender.

The Indiana Department of Correction has several facilities that allow ex-offenders to develop work-related and personal management skills before release. Some facilities may be underutilized, and often rely on government grants and local donations to operate, which can make operations inconsistent. Moreover, ex-offenders are often required to pay for re-entry services, and the immediate financial costs may outweigh the perceived long-term benefits for an individual with limited financial resources. One of these Indianapolis facilities, Liberty Hall Re-entry Facility, has experienced a decline in the number of ex-offenders there (Indiana Department of Correction).

Marion County Community Corrections also offers work release programs and home monitoring programs. Currently, 2,000 individuals participate in the work release program, and 5,000 participate in the home monitoring programs. But, exoffenders are less likely to commit violent crimes if they return to communities that offer educational and job opportunities to ex-convicts and have lower incidents of crime-related activity. Unfortunately, communities that have higher incidents of crime in Indianapolis do not have consistent employment or educational opportunities that allow an ex-offender to effectively re-enter his or her community.



#### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental illnesses—which affect a person's thinking, mood, ability to relate to others, or function on a daily basis—increase the likelihood of incarceration if they remain untreated (NAMI). Among offenders, many mental health issues are likely to be undiagnosed prior to incarceration, and are often only detected among offenders when they enter the criminal justice system. From 2013-2014, the six focus areas experienced 24 mental health incidents per 1,000 population that required calls to Indianapolis Emergency Medical Services (IEMS) compared to a rate of 7 incidents per 1,000 population for the entire IEMS coverage area, including focus areas. Again, these numbers are reported incidents, and do not include latent or undiagnosed mental health issues.

Marion County Health Department identified mental health as one of its top priorities for improving overall health in the county. The effects of mental illness are visible numerically and financially throughout the criminal justice system in Marion County. About 30 percent of inmates, or 600 to 650 individuals, are classified as mentally ill in Marion County Jail. Financially, even though Marion County Jail contracts their mental health services, these needed services still total nearly \$8 million a year. These costs are mostly from care and treatment (\$5 million) and security (\$2 million). Additionally, about 700 medications are prescribed daily, which costs about \$650,000 per year.

Mental health also includes issues associated with effective treatment of an offender. Mental health courts have been helpful with offenders suffering from mental illness, but they can only afford to meet once a week instead of daily. Additionally, included in treatment is the cost of case workers, who often have high caseloads and increasingly less time to work with their assigned offenders. Mentally ill offenders often share space with non-mentally ill offenders, which means they may not always live in environments that support effective rehabilitation. Addressing both prevention and treatment of mental health in communities and in the criminal justice system is needed.

Figure 9: Number of mental health incidents per 1,000 population reported by IEMS, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2013 – 2014

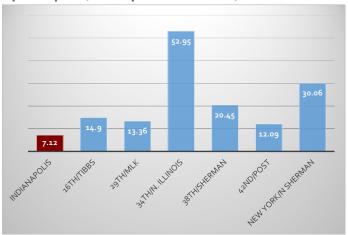
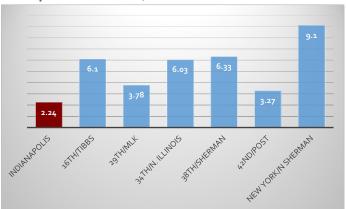


Figure 9: Number of mental health incidents per 1,000 population reported by IEMS, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2013-2014

Figure 10: Indianapolis EMS-reported overdoses, per 1,000 population, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2013-2014



Source: Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis



### SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Like mental health and re-entry, substance use and abuse play a role in crime among individual offenders and trends in the community. Individuals who commit crimes, including violent ones, are likely to have used drugs or alcohol prior to committing the offense (Fletcher & Chandler, 2014). Worse, mental health issues often co-occur with substance use and abuse.

Alcohol abuse is involved in half of homicides in Marion County (Gibson et al., 2015), and in 2015, 56 percent of homicide suspects had a previous drug arrest. Eighty-five percent of inmates in Marion County Jail have reported some type of substance use or abuse. Like reported mental health incidents, substance abuse issues in the focus areas are also higher than the average in Indianapolis. From 2013 to 2014, six overdoses per 1,000 population were called in to IEMS by residents of focus areas compared to two for the entire city.

## INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRIME: TRENDS IN INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITIES

To address crime long-term, addressing immediate sources of crime are not sufficient. The community factors that produce violent offenders and to which offenders return play a major role in reducing the number of crimes committed in the future. Violent offenders are likely to live in or have grown up in poverty, have low educational attainment, and live in communities with few employment opportunities.



Poverty rates in Marion County doubled from 2000 to 2012. Poverty is also considered a top priority for Marion County because it is a major determinant of individual and community health—physical, mental, and social. Poverty also leads to reduced opportunities for youth, especially related to employment and education (National Institute of Justice), which can lead to crime-related activities for income. Without quality employment or higher education levels, ex-offenders are more likely to live in poverty after they are released, which can lead to re-offending. In Indianapolis, slightly higher proportions of individuals live in poverty in the six focus areas compared to the rest of the city of Indianapolis. In two of the focus areas, about 20 percent of residents with children in the household live in poverty.

One issue associated with poverty is housing. Once ex-offenders are released, they may be unable to find stable housing for multiple reasons. Monthly average rental prices in the focus

areas range from \$485 to \$744, which may be excessive for ex-offenders working a minimum-wage job (Department of Public Safety). The Indianapolis Housing Authority may deny applicants who have been convicted of drug, theft, violent, or sex crimes in the past 10 years (Sankari & Littlepage, 2015), so public housing may not be attainable. As of 2015, 25 percent of the homeless population in Marion County reported a previous felony conviction. Eleven percent of convicted felons who were homeless were employed. Unemployed convicted felons were homeless due to a lost job, history of previous incarceration, and being asked to leave as the top reasons for being homeless (Sankari & Littlepage, 2015).

Another poverty-related issue is hunger via food insecurity. Marion County has the highest food insecurity rate in the state, with 19 percent of its population unable to access adequate or nutritionally acceptable food (Gondola, 2014). Though there are numerous food banks and organizations dedicated to hunger relief, many food insecure individuals who live in poverty may be uninformed about available resources.



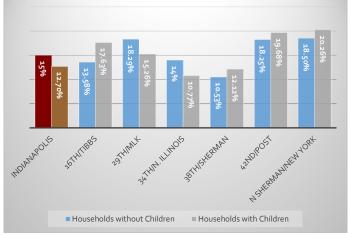
### UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is one of the top predictors of recidivism among Indiana's most populated counties. In Indiana, 49 percent of released offenders were unemployed. Forty-two percent of those unemployed offenders returned to prison (Nally et al., 2012). In the most populous counties in Indiana, almost all white and African-American ex-offenders were unemployed for the first year after they were released, though unemployment rates for African-American offenders were higher (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2015). Worse, few opportunities may exist for many residents in Indianapolis communities before individuals commit crimes again: among individuals 16 and older who are actively seeking employment, the average unemployment rate in 2013 for census tracts in the six focus areas (23 percent) is nearly twice that of Marion County (12 percent).

Several agencies, including Recycle Force and Public Advocates in Community Re-Entry (PACE), provide workforce training and job placement for ex-offenders. Indianapolis businesses may utilize multiple practices to create opportunities for exoffenders. The Work Opportunities Tax Credit provides tax credits for employers to hire groups, such as ex-offenders, who may not be able to find work. In 2014, Indianapolis enacted "ban the box" legislation, which prevents potential employers from asking about an applicant's criminal history. At the same time, other information may cue employers to a criminal background, such as listed employment at a correctional facility, which may still allow a form of discrimination due to criminal history.

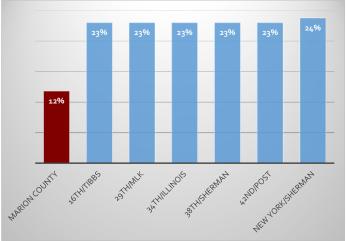
Even when employed, the quality of employment is also low for ex-offenders. A five-year study conducted by researchers with the Indiana Department of Correction found that among employed ex-offenders, most found jobs in low-skill hourly and

Figure 11: Percentage of families with and without children who live in poverty, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2013-2014



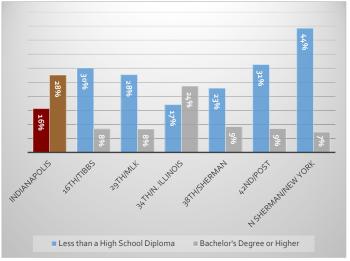
Source: Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis

Figure 12: Percentage of population age 16 and over who are not employed, Marion County and focus areas, 2013



Source: Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis

Figure 13: Percentage of population age 25 and over who did not complete high school or who earned a Bachelor's degree, Indianapolis and focus areas, 2013-2014



Source: Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis

seasonal jobs (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). These jobs included areas such as waste management, construction, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and administrative support. A separate study found that during the recession, over 60 percent of employed ex-offenders in Indiana earned less than \$10,000 a year, with many earning around \$5,000 annually (Nally, Lockwood, & Ho, 2011).



Education is the second predictor of recidivism among Indiana's most populated counties, and offenders with more education are more likely to be employed, and less likely to return to an IDOC facility (Nally et al., 2012). In 2005, 46 percent of offenders released to Marion County had less than a high school education. Only 12 percent of offenders with less than a high school education had higher than a sixth-grade literacy

level. Compared to the rest of Indianapolis, twice the number of residents in focus areas (30 percent) do not have high school diplomas or equivalencies. Conversely, Indianapolis residents have nearly three times the proportion of individuals with at least a college degree compared to those in focus areas (29 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

Educational systems play an early role in educating youth, especially since higher levels of education are associated with a lower likelihood of crime. Even school attendance has been linked to youth not being re-arrested, especially among African-American males (Blomberg, Bales & Piguero, 2012).

The 2013-2014 high school graduation rate for Indianapolis Public Schools (in which the focus areas are located) is 72 percent, well below the state total of 90 percent. In terms of higher education, offenders with drug convictions are not eligible for financial aid, which may prevent them from pursuing postsecondary education.

### OPPORTUNITIES: A COLLABORATIVE, CONSISTENT COMMUNITY APPROACH

The individual and community-level issues associated with crime were multiple and involve many different organizations. Educational groups, nonprofit agencies, food banks, and correctional facilities, among many others, each have special

expertise that allows them to uniquely address each of these issues in an effort to reduce crime. Both short-term approaches and long-term responses may help address crime-related problems.

### The following methods may be considered for crime-reduction approaches:

COMMUNITY	Any efforts to address crime-related issues should require an in-depth understanding of the needs and characteristics of communities at risk for crime, and especially violent crime. Addressing the community environment in addition to offenders is needed for communities that are more susceptible to criminal activity. Also, involving community members are crucial in actively participating in reducing crime. For example, crime stopper tips have increased, even in focus areas, which can help find offenders more efficiently than if the criminal justice system works alone.
CONSISTENCY	Any program or similar efforts to address crime-related issues should be ongoing in order to experience the full effects of these efforts on crime reduction and community improvement. These ongoing programs and/or policies should target both communities and re-entrants.
COLLABORATION	All issues associated with crime involve multiple partners in the criminal justice system, the community, nonprofit organizations, and other groups. Efforts may be more effective if collaboration occurs with individuals and organizations who best understand the needs and people within a given community.
DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES & INITIATIVES	Seventy percent of law enforcement agencies in Indiana report needing to access investigative information on at least a weekly basis, and over 60 percent received requests for information on at least a weekly basis (Sapp & Thelin, 2013). These needs imply an opportunity for quality data collection, management, and analysis for both criminal justice-related agencies and community partners.  If data are sufficiently utilized by partner agencies, such as nonprofits and others who work within communities, the results can be coordinated among organizations and the criminal justice system for better information about trends and what issues are need to be addressed. Additionally, quality evaluation of programs and policies designed to help offenders and communities, especially within the focus areas, may help involved organizations develop effective strategies for community development and targeting re-entrants.

#### SHORT- AND LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS

POVERTY	<ul> <li>Safe and quality housing options for community residents, especially in focus areas</li> <li>Availability of healthy and affordable food options in high-poverty areas</li> <li>Affordable and consistent housing options for re-entrants and homeless ex-offenders</li> </ul>
MENTAL HEALTH	<ul> <li>Sufficient bed space for the purpose of housing the mentally ill in correctional and re-entry facilities</li> <li>Investment in short-term beds, case workers, mental health courts, and other mental health experts, based on the number of offenders</li> <li>Training for all public safety personnel for effective interactions with community members suffering from mental illness</li> </ul>
SUBSTANCE ABUSE	<ul> <li>Address key sources of substance use and abuse in communities at risk for violent crime and among repeat offenders</li> <li>Treatment of both substance abuse and co-occurring mental health issues among offenders</li> <li>If the Criminal Justice Center is completed, ensure quality treatment for offenders with mental health and substance abuse-related issues</li> </ul>
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & SKILLS LEVELS	<ul> <li>Quality educational opportunities from grades Pre K to 12, especially in the focus areas</li> <li>Opportunities for educational attainment among re-entrants at initial incarceration and after release</li> <li>Quality skills training for non-high school graduates and re-entrants</li> </ul>
EMPLOYMENT	Higher numbers of employment opportunities for residents of focus areas, for individuals with higher and lower levels of educational attainment     Short-term options may include unfilled, seasonal government or contracted jobs upon initial release of exoffenders     Opportunities for quality employment (i.e., jobs that pay at least living wage) for re-entrants and at-risk community residents

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