

# Prison Research and Innovation Network

Abby Crocker, Associate Professor of Statistics, University of Vermont

Isaac Dayno, Exec Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Vermont Department of Corrections

Vermont House Committee on Corrections and Institutions

February 6, 2025



University  
of Vermont

Justice  
Research Center

# Overview for today

## 1. Background

Jan 1, 2020

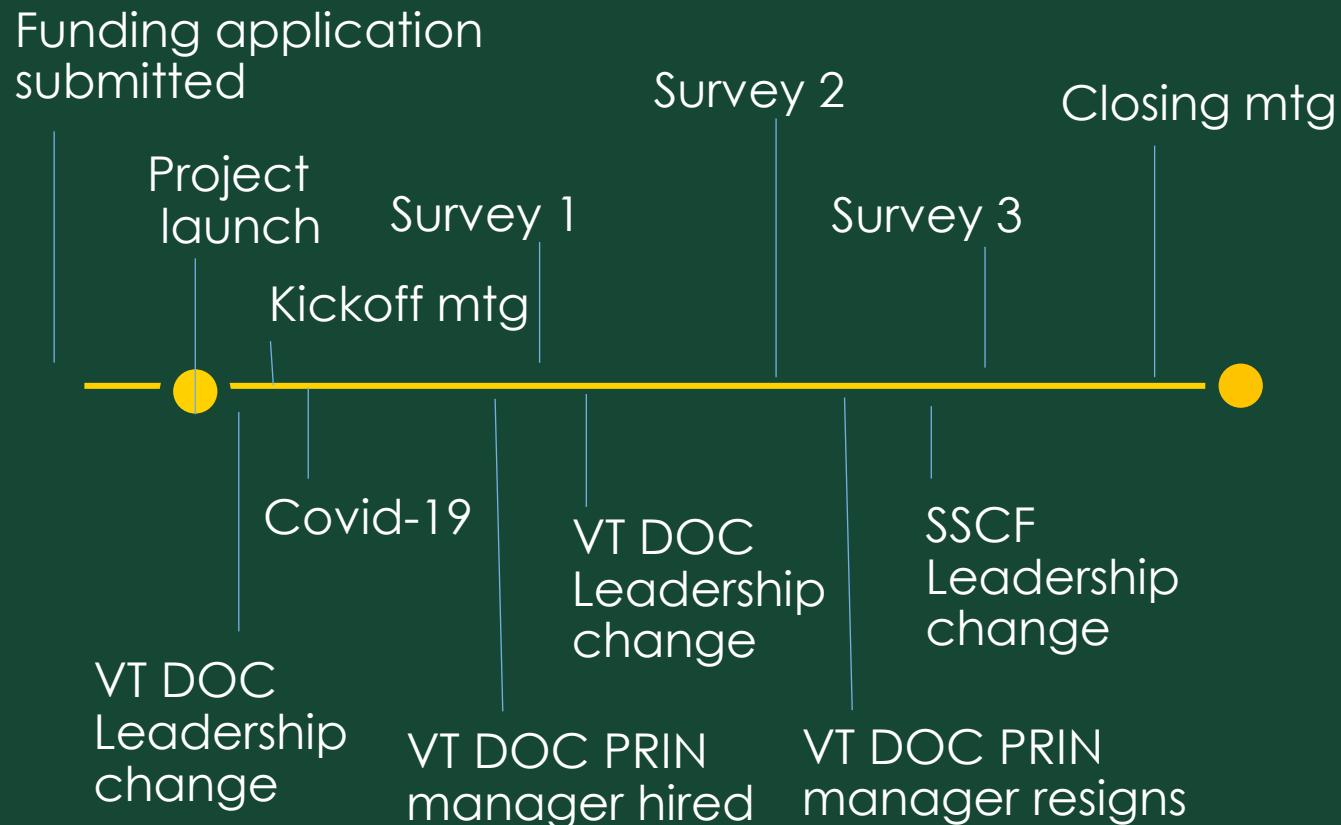
## 3. Updates

Feb 6, 2025

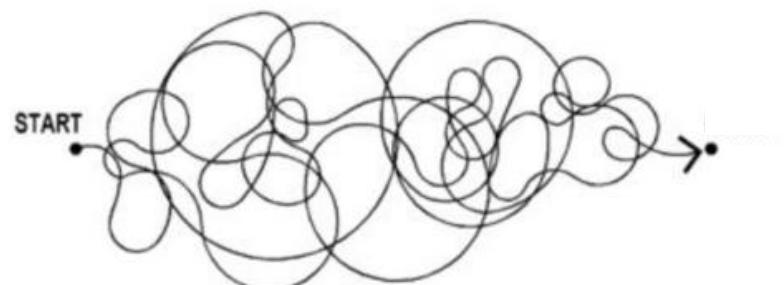


## 2. Lessons Learned

# Background



PROGRESS IS NOT LINEAR.



# Background

Despite their scale and impact  
prisons are among the most  
understudied and least  
transparent public institutions in  
the country.



*Typical two-person cell at SSCF.*

# Prison Research and Innovation Network (PRIN)

A five-year pilot project to leverage **research and data to shine a much-needed light on prison conditions** and pilot strategies to promote the well-being of people who are confined and work behind bars.

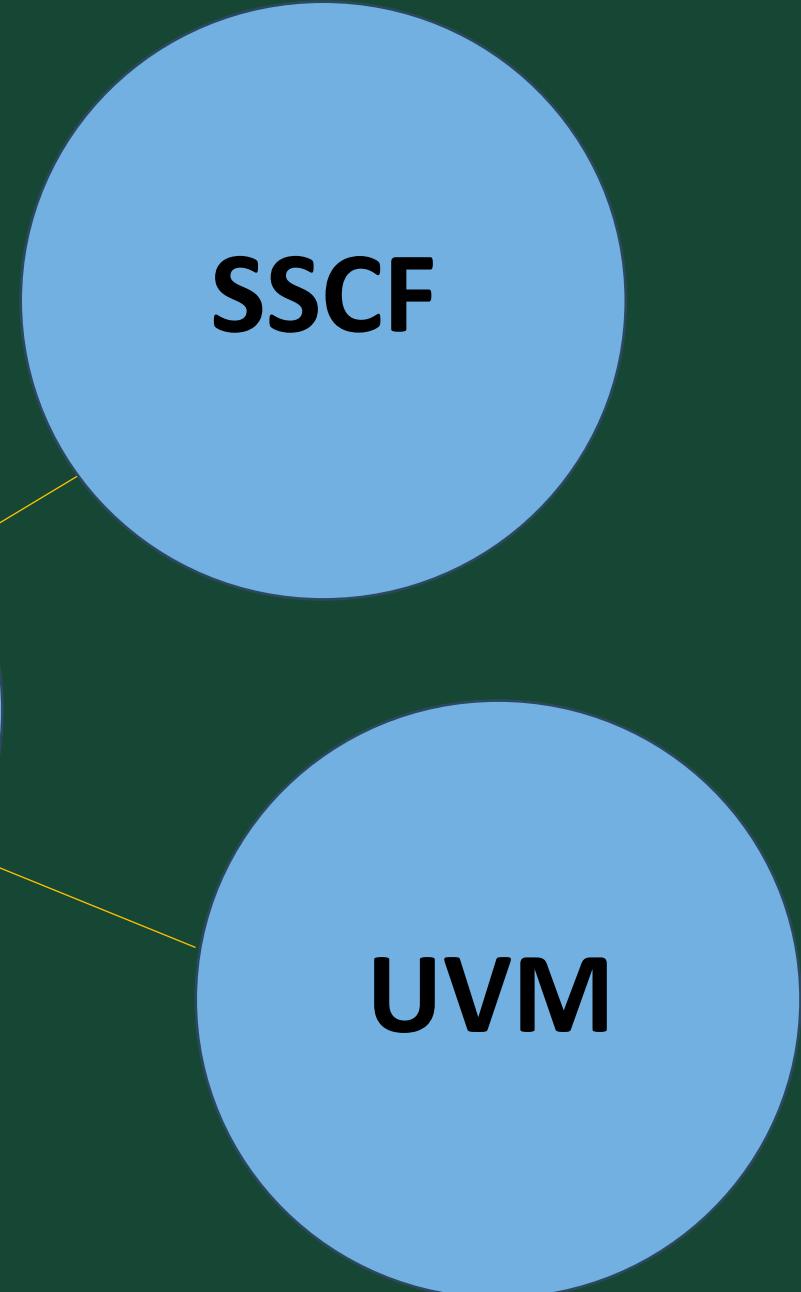
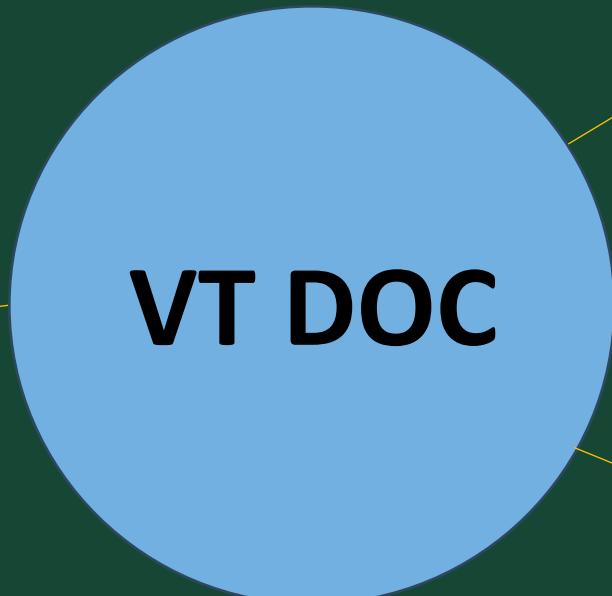
URBAN  
INSTITUTE

## PRIN Core Elements

- 5 participating states, VT DE CO IA MO
- Independent research team & pilot prison
- Prison surveys
- Innovation strategies

# PRIN in Vermont

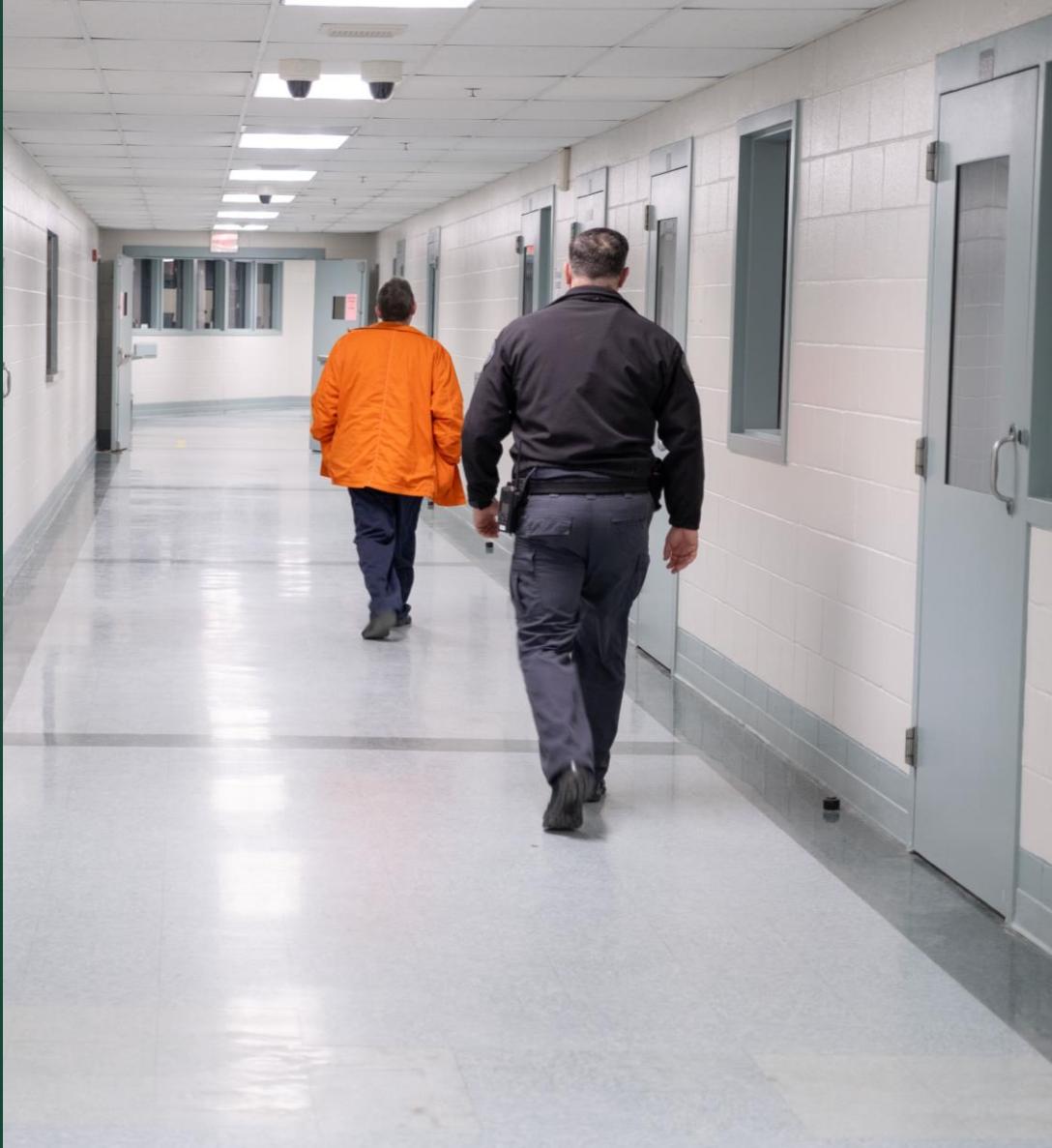
Pilot phase : Jan 1, 2020 – Dec 31, 2024



# UVM - Independent Research

## Vermont Prison Surveys

- Community-Engaged Approach
- Foster awareness and understanding of complex issues
- Drive action for meaningful impact



*Staff and incarcerated individual at SSCF.*

# UVM – Survey Process



## DEVELOPMENT

Center lived experience as content expertise



## ADMINISTRATION

Protecting confidentiality

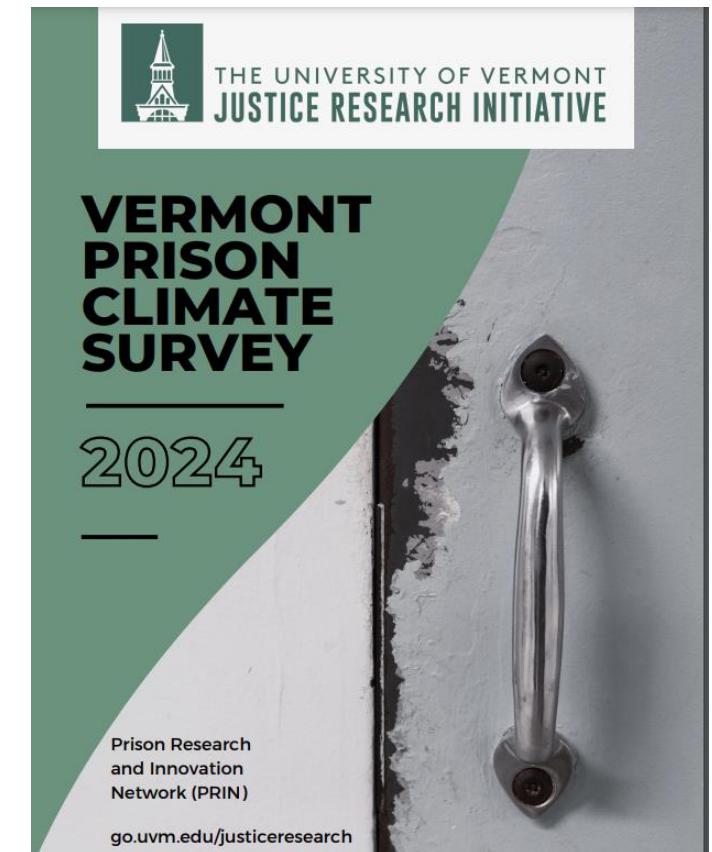
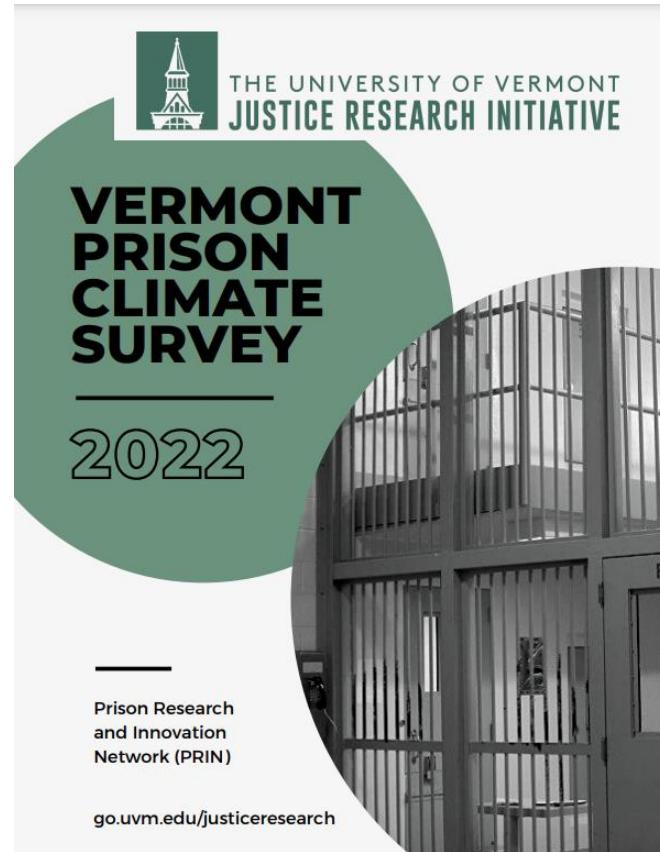
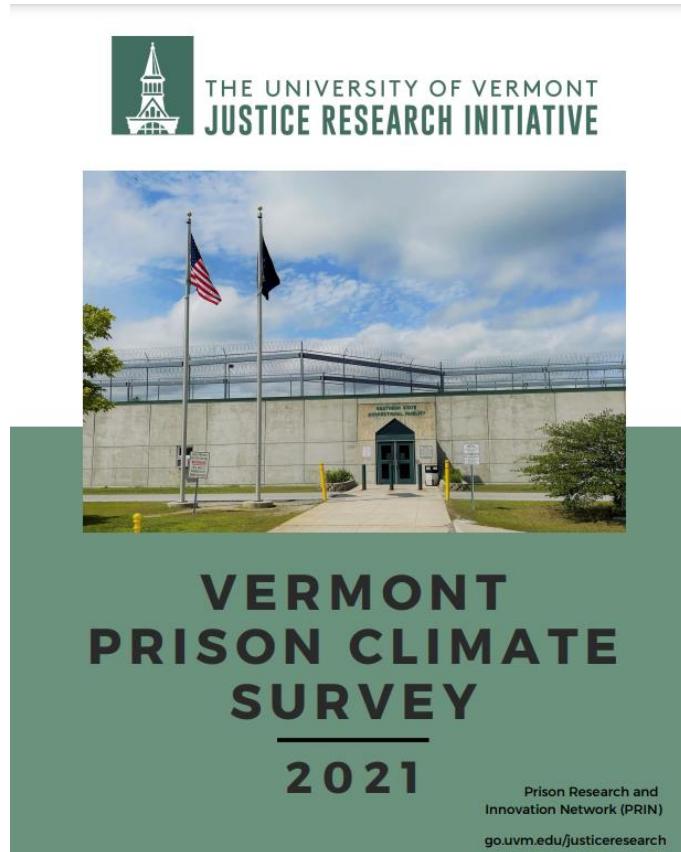
## FEEDBACK

What do you think is important for decision-makers to understand when reviewing these results?

## DATA WALK

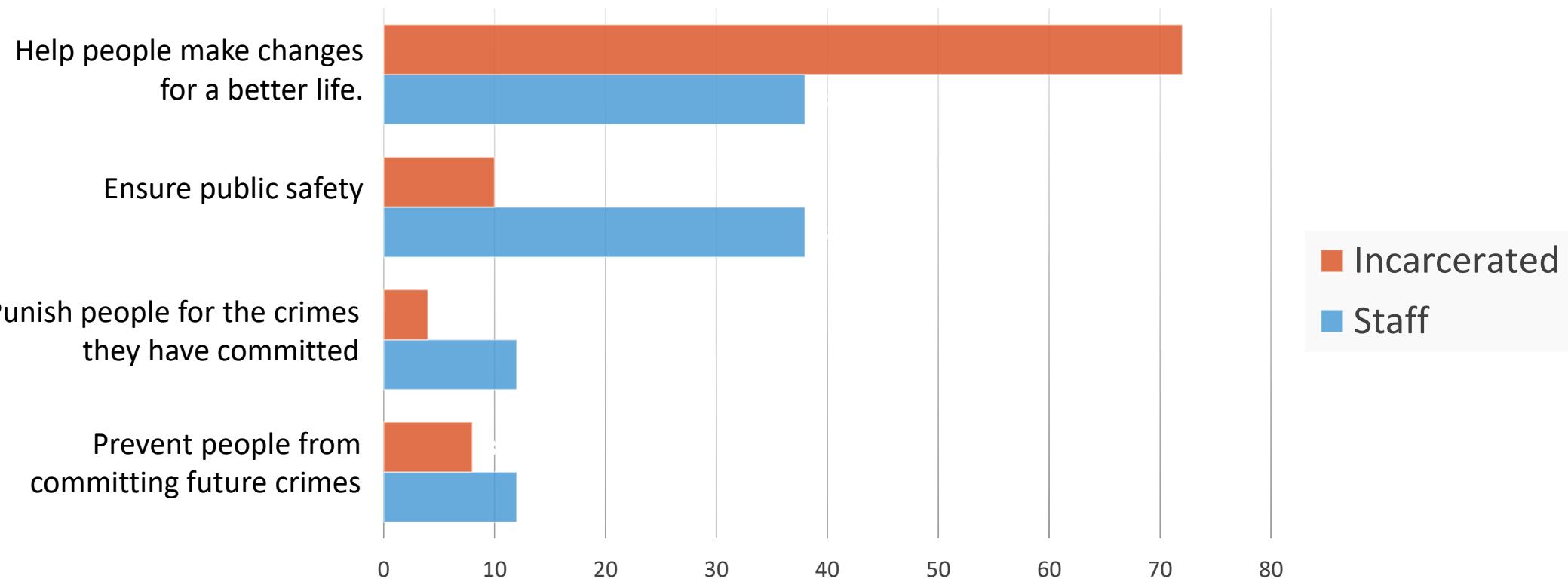
Sharing findings with participants and understanding context

# Survey Results



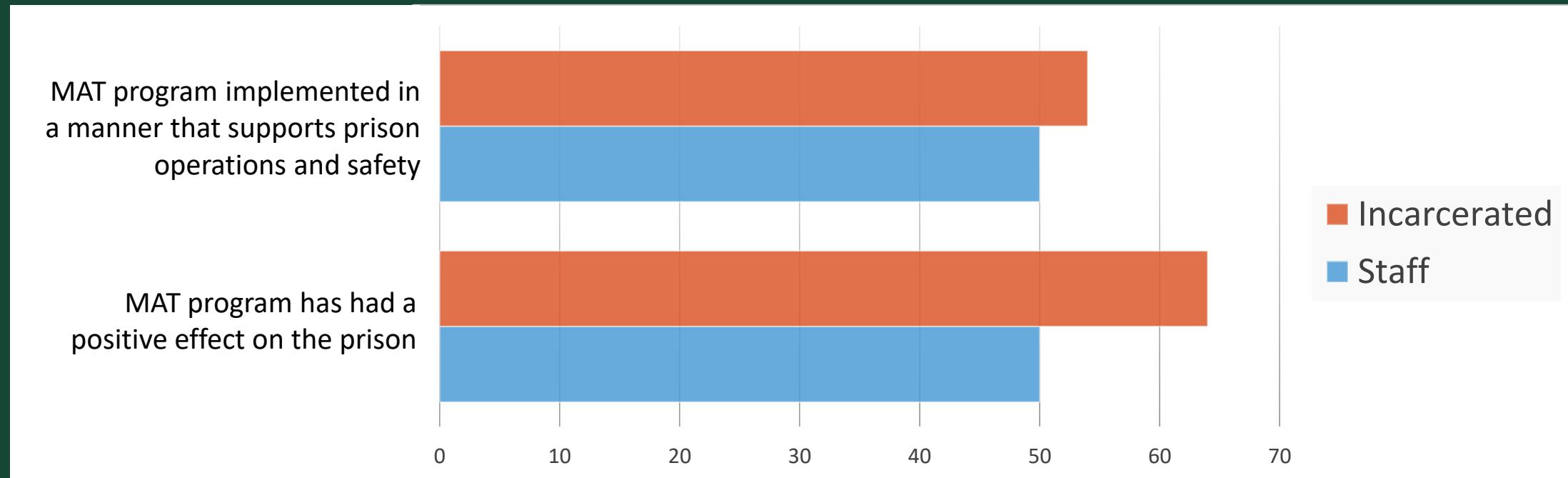
# Wave 3 Survey Highlights: Purpose of Prison

What is the most important purpose of prison?



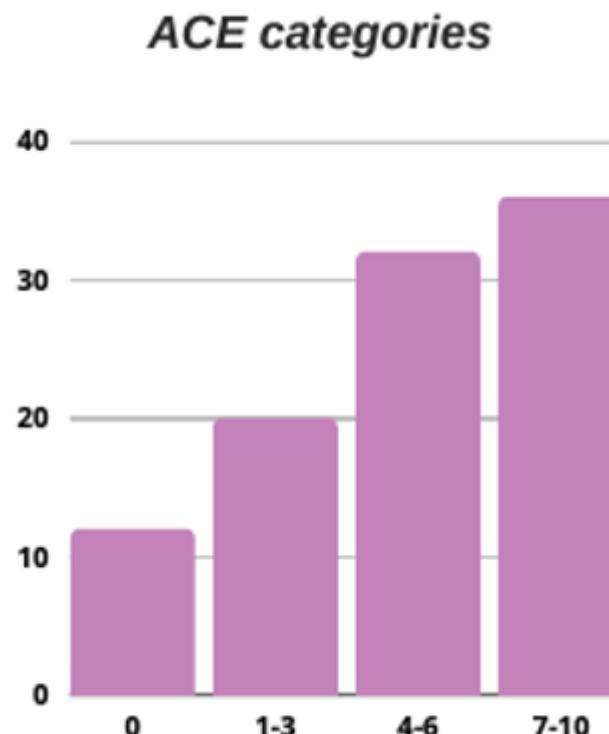
# Wave 3 Survey Highlights: MAT Program

(% agree)

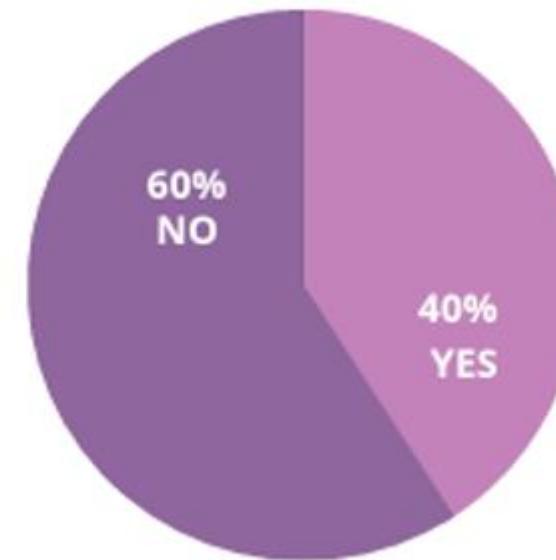


I am able to get adequate treatment for my SUD here: **37%, agree**

# Wave 3 Survey Highlights: Adverse Childhood Experiences



*% with history of  
incarcerated parent*



**Do you have children under the age of 18yo?**

**58%, yes**

**(123/212)**

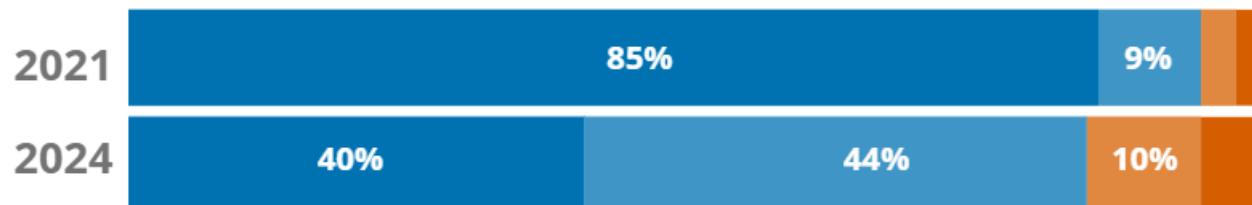


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

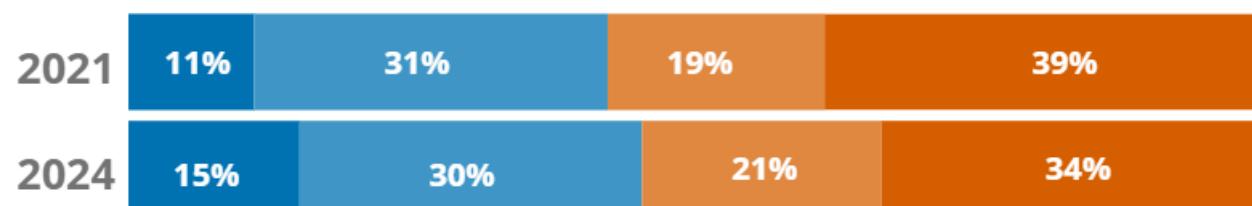
## 1. STAFFING

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

a. There are enough staff to meet the current needs of this prison.



b. My work schedule causes conflict at home.

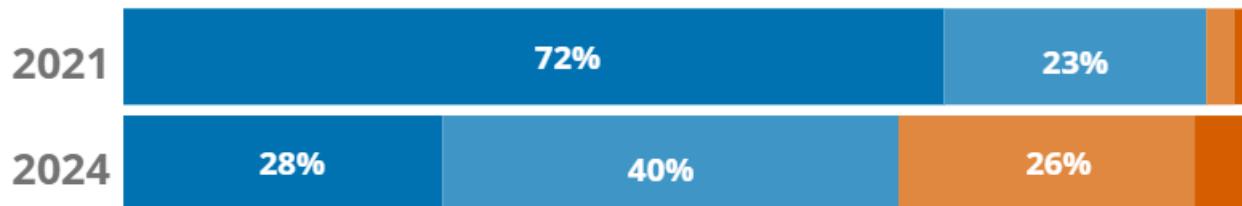


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

## 1. STAFFING



c. Generally, staff morale is high.



d. My coworkers show signs of stress.

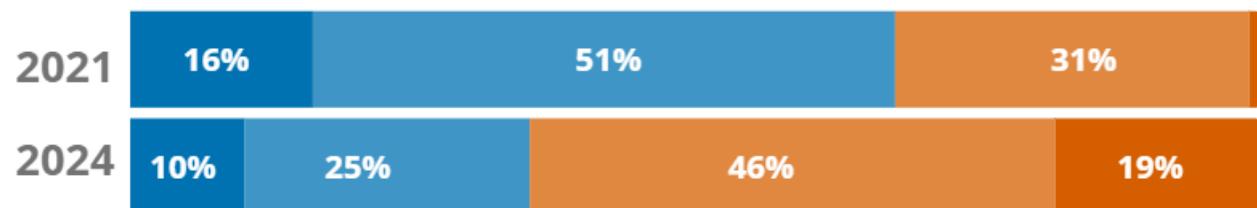


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

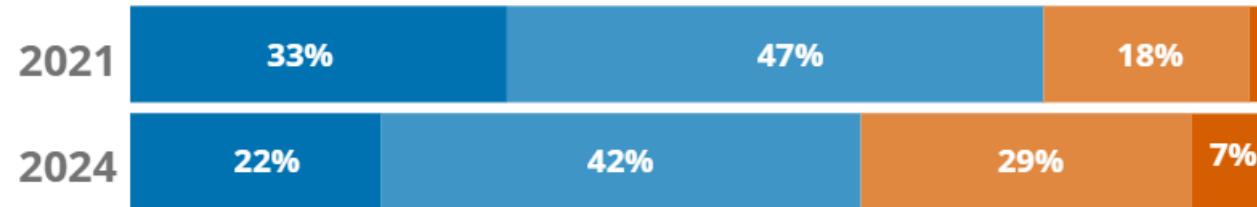
## 2. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



### a. The Department communicates a clear vision (mission) for Corrections



### b. There are discussions involving all staff about the vision for Corrections and ways to achieve it.

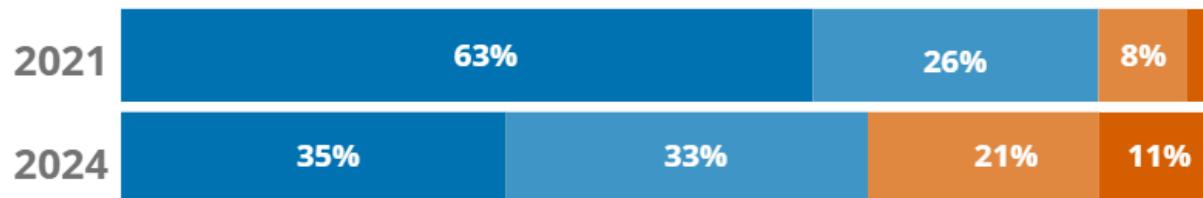


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

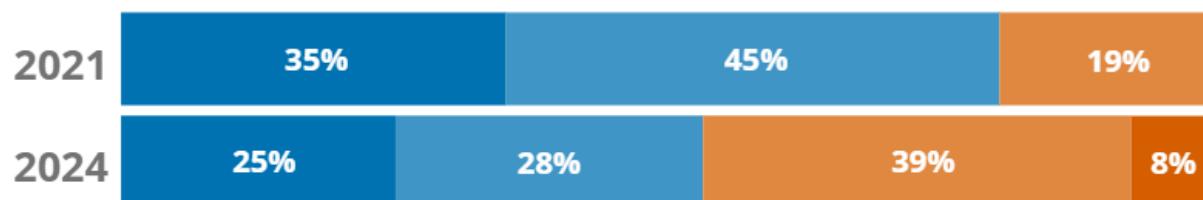
## 2. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

c. The Department has a clear understanding of what it's like for staff to work in this prison.



d. The Department takes the things I say seriously and treats me and my ideas with respect.

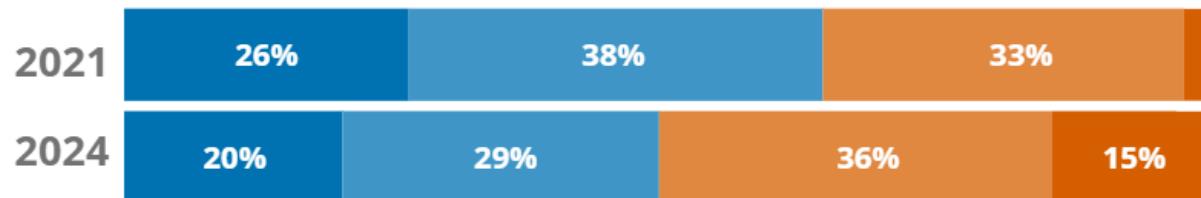


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

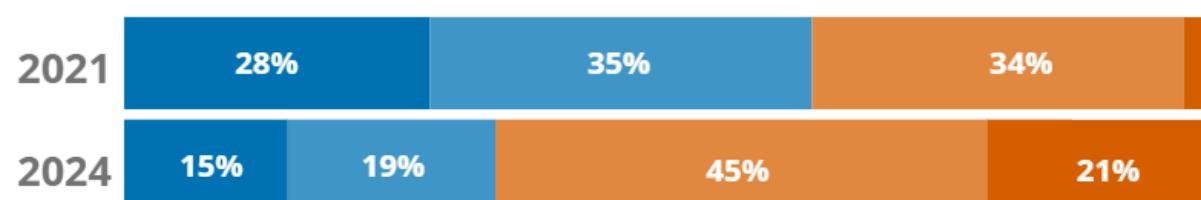
## 4. JOB SATISFACTION

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

a. Staff in this prison are fairly compensated for the duties and tasks they are required to perform



b. Leadership in this prison shows appreciation for staff in meaningful ways.

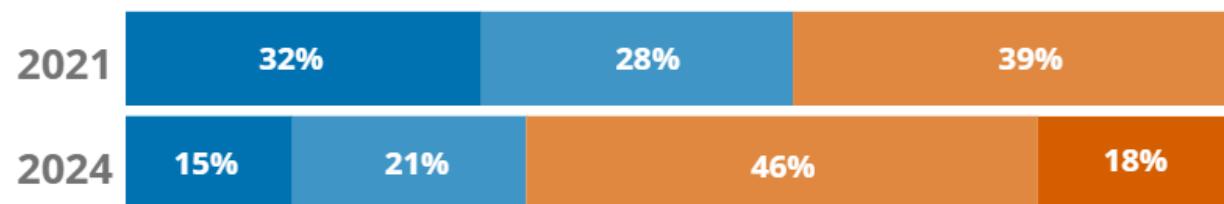


# Wave 3 Surveys – Staff Data Walk

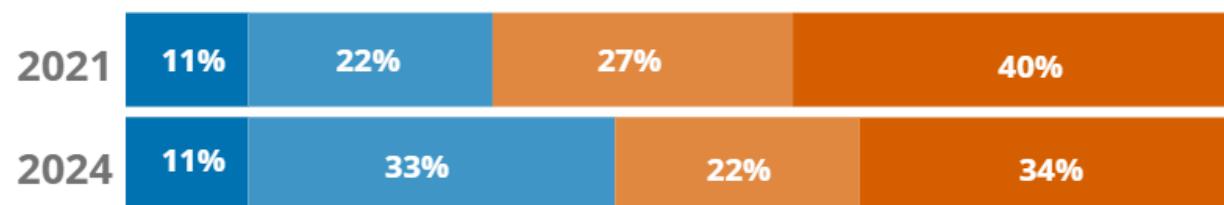
## 4. JOB SATISFACTION



c. Promotions in this prison are done fairly.



d. If I have a chance, I will change to some other job outside of corrections at the same rate of pay



# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

## 1. PLANNING FOR RELEASE

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

a. This prison does a good job preparing people for release.



b. There are enough staff to help me get ready for release.

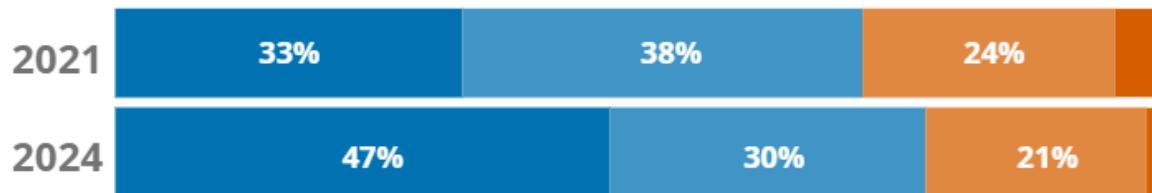


# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

## 1. PLANNING FOR RELEASE

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

c. I am able to start planning for release with enough time to be ready for when I am released.



d. The programs in this facility give me the skills I need to be successful on the outside.

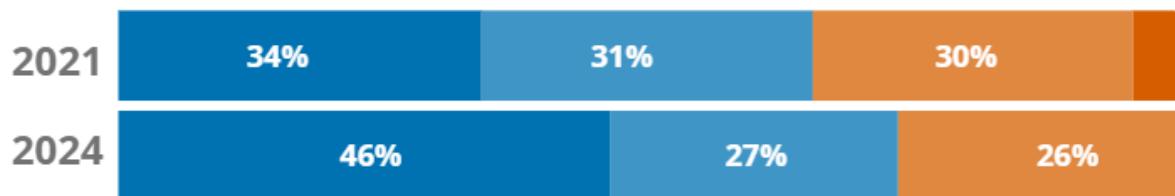


# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

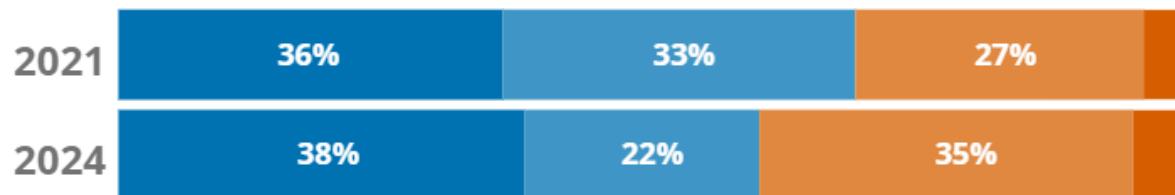
## 2. HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

a. I get the medical treatment I need in this prison, when I need it.



b. I get the mental health care/treatment I need in this prison, when I need it.

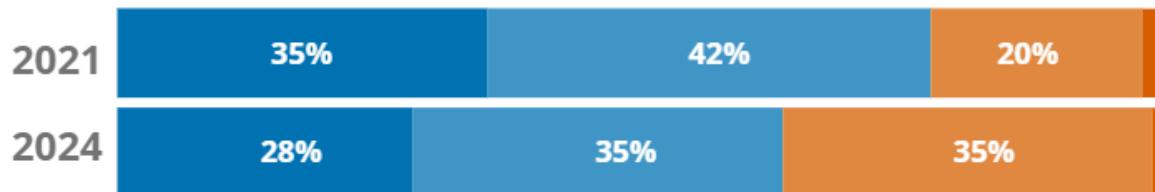


# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

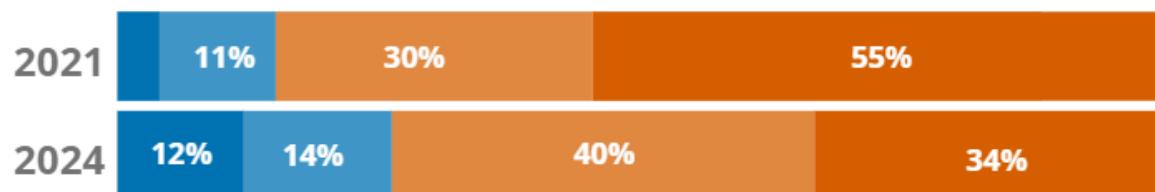
## 3. PRISON ACTIVITIES

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

a. I have access to activities that promote well-being and growth.



b. There are a lot of times when there is nothing productive (or meaningful) for me to do.

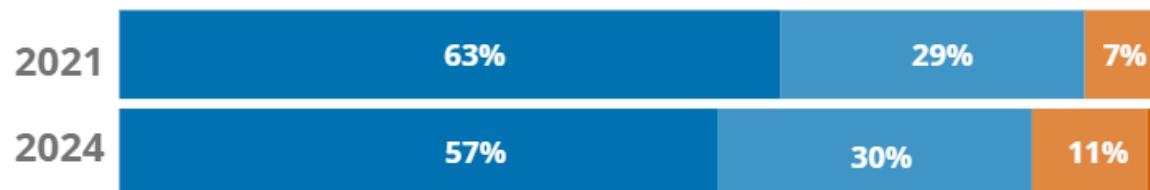


# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

## 4. COMMISSARY

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

a. There are enough outside vendors to choose from.



b. There are enough options for things to buy.



# Wave 3 Surveys – Incarcerated Individuals Data Walk

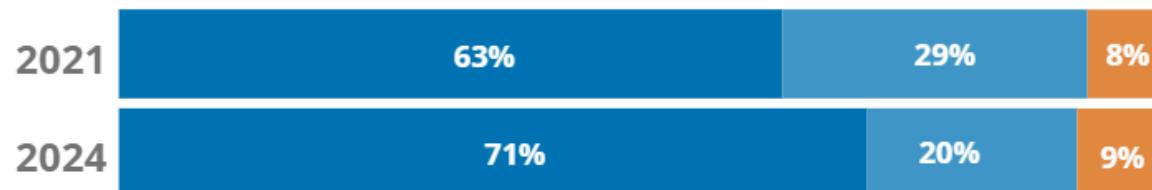
## 4. COMMISSARY

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

c. The quality of the available items is good.



d. The costs are reasonable



# VT DOC – SSCF Innovations



## HONORS UNIT

Indirect supervision and self-governance



## COFFEE SHOP

Skill-building and fostering community



## INNOVATION COUNCILS

Data-driven, facility level participatory change

# Lessons Learned

# Lessons learned

**Change is needed, slow and complex (champions are critical!)**

1. SSCF empowered to innovate – shift from security focus
2. Value of independent research – trust in data and best practices
3. VT DOC opening doors to community partners – question practices
4. Corrections is part of a spectrum – upstream influences and downstream impacts

# Updates

# VT DOC – UVM Partnership

## **PRIN Expansion Phase: Jan 1, 2025 – Dec 31, 2027**

- Scope of Work to guide partner roles and commitments (attached).
  - UVM - survey process in all 6 prisons
  - VT DOC - innovation process in all 6 prisons

*Pending no-cost contract to support continued collaboration*



# University of Vermont Justice Research Center



- **Research core of the National Center on Restorative Justice (NCORJ)**, a partnership with the Vermont Law and Graduate School, the University of Vermont, the University of San Diego, and the US Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Assistance.
- Leverage this platform to **Institutionalize PRIN efforts at UVM** and connect state initiatives to national conversations.
  - **4 focus areas**

# 1. Vermont Prison Surveys

- Expand PRIN survey process to all **6 Vermont prisons**
  - Onboarding 1 facility per year.
- **Collaborate with SSCF** leadership and innovation contact
  - Mentorship for data-driven innovation in facilities.
- Building capacity : **PRIN summer scholars' program**
  - Launching May 2025, annual survey data collection

*Pending no-cost contract to support continued collaboration.*

## 2. Justice Data Collaborative

- A **data analysis resource to support leveraging PRIN surveys**, and other justice data sources, for meaningful impact.
- Funding for faculty, undergraduate and graduate student roles.
- Upcoming projects
  - American Public Health Association & collaborative research on carceral health.

### 3. Related Projects

1. Evaluation of statewide expansion of community-based peer recovery
  - 3-year collaboration with Turning Point Center of Rutland
2. Identifying data gaps in understanding carceral health and impacts
  - 1.5-year contract with VT Dept of Health
3. Evaluation of direct services (e.g., restorative justice, SUD treatment, postsecondary educ) to support re-entry
  - 3-year study with NCORJ

And more...

### Vermont state prisons open door to community-based addiction recovery services

The Department of Corrections is collaborating with recovery centers statewide to replicate a successful program at the Rutland prison after receiving \$1.5 million from the Legislature this year.

By Tiffany Tan  
June 2, 2024, 6:01 am



Tracie Hauck is the director of the Turning Point Center of Rutland. Photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

## 4. Growing the field

- **Events** : Creating awareness of the issues
  - April 16<sup>th</sup> panel discussion with UVM's Leahy Institute
- **Research capacity-building** : Workshops and resources
  - Interdisciplinary, community-engaged research
  - Prison-based research
- **Community convening** : Bridging silos
  - Fall 2025 multi-stakeholder working session

# VT DOC

1. PRIN steering committee → modernization committee
2. Survey expansion → support role of SSCF in mentorship and onboarding new facilities
3. Facility innovation → empower superintendents & innovation contacts
4. Exec 2.0
5. Embed using PRIN survey data in practice

## VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS STRATEGIC PLAN



***Roadmap to 2030:***  
***Mission-focused, values-driven***

# Thank You