

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Essex County has become more diverse, the number of people in the county being put behind bars – many of whom are never convicted of crimes – has skyrocketed. The county's District Attorney and Sheriff and local law enforcement officials are locking up far too many men and women in jail unnecessarily, while failing to follow best practices for reducing incarceration, holding police accountable and preventing gun violence.

Mass incarceration may be a national issue, but solving it requires sustained local action in Franklin County. The good news is that there are tested research-based policies that other counties in Ohio

and across the nation have adopted that have succeeded in reducing the number of people of color



- **Between 1985 and 2014 the per capita jail population in Essex County correctional facilities more than doubled from .94 to 2.1 per thousand.**
- **The percent of inmates in Essex County who have not been convicted of any crime has increased by 30 percent since 1989 and is now 43 percent.**
- **Among inmates found innocent or released after charges were dropped, 61% were incarcerated for more than one week, 31% were incarcerated for more than 30 days, and 4% spent more than 6 months behind bars**
- **Unlike other counties, Essex fails to accurately report on the racial makeup of the county's correctional population. In seven of the last ten American Jail survey's Essex County listed the race of its inmates as "unknown", making it impossible to track and effectively reduce racial disparities.**

in jail and under the supervision of the criminal justice system, while making communities safer and refocusing public resources on education, training, drug treatment and violence prevention.

This report is a call for leadership. Elected law enforcement officials, here in Essex County, and across the United States, must choose whether to provide leadership to end mass incarceration and criminalization, or step aside, and let others lead.

LOCAL DATA

Jail population: In 2014, Essex County jails held an average daily population of 1613 incarcerated individuals, making it the 66th largest single-county jail system in the country.

Race and Ethnicity: In 1989-2014 the per capita jail population in Essex County increased by 123%, from 0.94 to 2.1 incarcerated individuals per 1,000 residents. The county's reporting of race and ethnicity is notably poor, and in six of the last nine AJS surveys, Essex County reported the number of Black, White, and Latino/a inmates was "unknown." The lack of reporting makes it impossible to accurately analyze the racial disparities in the county jail system/].

Immigration: Essex County's reporting of inmates who are either undocumented or held for ICE is slightly better than the reporting of race & ethnicity statistics, but still quite bad: in four of the last ten waves of AJS data, the county has reported that the number of these inmates is "unknown."

Women: Essex County regularly reports an extremely low number of incarcerated women: in the last 10 waves of the ASJ survey, it has reported an average of 29.1 incarcerated women. The reporting of gender statistics in Essex County is notably more complete than their reporting of Immigration or Race & Ethnicity information: they have the number of women incarcerated as "actual" (rather than estimated or unknown) in 9 of the last 10 waves of ASJ data.

Unconvicted inmates: The percent of inmates in Essex County jails who have who are unconvicted (and therefore legally innocent) has increased 32% between 1989 and 2014, from 32.8% to 43.3% of the total incarcerated population. However, compared to the national sample of large single-county jails, Essex County has consistently reported a very low population of unconvicted inmates. Among inmates found innocent or released after charges were dropped, 61.2% were incarcerated for more than one week, 31% were incarcerated for more than 30 days, and 3.6% spend more than 6 months incarcerated.