

**Sanitary Conditions in Prison Have Fallen**

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### Sanitary Conditions in Prisons Have Fallen

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, hygienic conditions in prisons and jails have reached an all-time low. Prior to the establishment of COVID, prisons were still grossly undervalued in the hygienic department. Whether it's due to the constant transfer of germs among residents or the large number of diseases that afflict jails, it's a problem. Throughout the United States carceral system, sanitary conditions have long been an issue. The point here is that jails are already bad enough, and the fact that hygienic conditions aren't taken as seriously as they should be is a source of concern for many people throughout the world...especially those who are waiting for family members to leave. COVID-19 has now spread over the world, causing panic in jails. Consider how easy it is to spread viruses and diseases, then consider how easy it is to spread COVID. To be honest, the figures are staggering. Not only for residents, but also for the prison system as a whole, sanitary conditions must be improved.

For most people, carceral conditions have long been a minor source of concern. The majority of people believe that these facilities function as a detention center for criminals. While this may be true, it does not imply that they should be subjected to a cruel and unusual

punishment. The purpose of prisons is either rehabilitation or, in many circumstances, simply the detention of criminals. Overcrowding is a subject that raises numerous worries due to the spread of germs and diseases. Assume you're at a school cafeteria with a capacity of 100 people. Imagine that same cafeteria with 200 people, then multiply that by two. Consider how close everyone would be. People would be uncomfortable because of how close they were. Consider the confines of a prison/jail cell. The majority of the cells are six by eight feet in size. Image living in such a cramped space, but now imagine cramming more than one person into it. Not only would the area be constrained, but social distancing would be impossible. In situations like COVID, residents are unable to maintain social distance with their fellow residents. This is when issues started to multiply. COVID begins a terrible outbreak in jails/prisons all throughout the world as a result of overcrowding. In the United States by May 13<sup>th</sup> at least 25,239 residents tested positive for COVID, with 373 deaths (Dutheil et al, 2020). When it comes to most law enforcement and government institutions, including firms that manage private prisons, the problem is unimportant. These conditions are filthy and life-threatening, and they are a major issue that must be addressed. The only things that have been recommended are the same things that have been recommended to the general public. Washing hands, using masks, disinfecting, social separation, and limiting movement are examples. All of these aspects are evident, yet they aren't taken into account when looking at statistics. These residents are not being socially distanced, which is the most serious of all the issues; they should be able to socially distance themselves in order to avoid spreading the sickness.

Furthermore, several restrictions have been imposed as a result of COVID to prevent the virus from spreading. The suspension of visits and activities has a significant psychological impact on most detainees. It causes a lot of tension among the convicts. A study conducted in

1970 showed that mice that are able to stay active and have control even if partial are defining factors of preserving their life (Dutheil et al, 2020). These kinds of activities that allow residents to socialize and/or enjoy fresh air are beneficial to their health and longevity. Being pent up all day can be mentally draining. Certain procedures can be implemented to ensure that tasks are carried out safely. Getting rid of them completely will only make the situation worse for the residents.

Prisons themselves are obviously dangerous enough, but consider the prison staff/officers who watch over the residents. In the late 1990's correctional officers were among the most abusive in prisons. In February of 1998 out of 50 residents, most of them unarmed and seven were shot by guards. Those guards were pitting residents with each other, a gladiator type game, and this is a precedent for the future, that sometimes guards can be abusive, power hungry people. By using their authoritative power, they can make resident lives much harder than it already is. This type of condition lines directly up with being unsanitary, because this causes issues, and it causes inmates to be diagnosed with depression or psychosis. In a 2017 study one out of seven residents produced those exact symptoms. (Dutheil et al, 2020). This isn't a healthy aspect for prisons, it's a concerning one and it further proves the point that many aspects of the prison system are either overlooked or not cared for.

Another factor to consider is the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in the majority of prisons. Men, in particular, are the ones that spread it. These men are sexually abused by other inmates. This conduct is not only incredibly unclean, but it also has psychological consequences for those who are assaulted. Most jurisdictions don't even have preventative measures in place, and most abusers aren't even adequately punished. This leads to the abusers continuing to engage in specific behaviors and transmitting diseases such as chlamydia,

gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV 3-12. These infections are easily transmitted through sexual activity and are often harmful to the body. There are STD prevention programs in place in some parts of the United States; however, these programs need to be more widely publicized in order to reduce the impact they have on residents as a whole.

Let us now turn our attention to the opposing viewpoint. The health element of everything, as well as what is being done in prisons and jails around the world. It has been difficult to guide health responses to be successful since the commencement of COVID all over the world. Unfortunately, when discussing social distancing and getting health care to where they're needed, a dilemma develops. The issue is that these prisons would require a large drop in population and a new approach to population control. Most US jails/prisons used to, and still do, operate at or well above their designated capacity. (Cloud et al, 2020). Not only that, but security and healthcare services are chronically understaffed, making the situation far worse than it was before COVID. As a result, any type of successful and ethical medical isolation requires the quick release of as many people as possible from jails. This would ensure that enough physical space and medical personnel are available for the remaining population. The numbers that have been released in most jurisdictions, on the other hand, are minimal and insufficient. Given the serious health risks that COVID-19 poses to correctional institutions and their surrounding communities, corrections officials and advocates for incarcerated people and their families should join forces to persuade governors, legislators, and the general public that rapid decarceration, including of the sentenced population, is necessary and safe. (Cloud et al, 2020). This is what is necessary in order to prevent more disaster, and there's a safe way to do it. If there is such a safe way to do it, well we need to try and try harder.

Now comes the idea of a specific solution to this problem. There are many solutions to resolve the sanitary conditions within prisons. The first suggestion is to not put two to three people per cell. Since COVID started people have been supposed to isolate themselves from others, specifically maintain a six feet distance between one another. However, overcrowding has become its own issue by putting more than two to three residents per cell, this obviously causes an onslaught of problems previously discussed. The solution is not simple, because putting one or two residents per cell, well it just may not be plausible. One would be the amount of money that would cost, because there are most likely not that many cells in the first place. The prison system just needs to find a better solution to the sanitary conditions within a prison. Whether it be better social distancing or removing the limit of inmate per cell, there are many ways that they could help prevent the spread of COVID. As for sexually transmitted diseases this will be a problem most likely forever, there is no solution that comes to mind when regarding this issue specifically, but there is someone within the system who knows what to do. As for the other plethora amount of solutions, it's up to the prison system with how they'd change/alter it.

Right present, the carceral sanitary system is a double-edged sword. There are clearly opposing viewpoints on what to do and why to do it. There is clearly an issue, and there are solutions, but doing so will take a lot more time and money. This brings me back to the suffering of these individuals. Carceral residents are subjected to a staggering number of things on a daily basis. Whether it's from STDs, sexual abuse, physical torture by prison guards, or the development of COVID, it's all too common. Yes, prison isn't supposed to be nice, *but it could be better*. All of these factors contribute significantly to the prison/jail system's filthy environment. These poor conditions kill and injure residents and have an impact on their overall

living conditions as well as their mental health. The carceral system must change, and if it does not, there will be a lot more unnecessary harm.

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