NAACP Game Changer Fact Sheet: 
Public Safety and Criminal Justice

In the fall of 2011, the NAACP developed five Game Changers to address the major areas of inequality facing African Americans – Economic Sustainability, Education, Health, Public Safety and Criminal Justice, and Voting Rights and Political Participation. These Game Changers will help guide the NAACP as it moves into its second century.

Mass Incarceration

Prison and jail incarceration rate: 1 in 21 Black men is behind bars vs. 1 in 72 for all men and 1 in 136 for White men

Figure 12: Prison and jail incarceration rate

![Graph showing incarceration rates for Black and White men](image)

Incarceration Trends in America

- Today, the US is 5% of the World population and has 25% of world prisoners.
- As of 2008, one in every 31 adults (7.3 million people) in the United States was behind bars, on probation or on parole.
- From 1980 to 2008, the number of people incarcerated in America quadrupled—from roughly 500,000 to 2.3 million people.

---

2 Graph adapted from The Pew Center on The States. One in 100: Behind Bars in America. February 2008.
• The recidivism rates for released prisoners in the United States of America is 60%.  
• During the last two decades, state spending on prisons grew at six times the rate of state spending on higher education.

Racial Disparities in Incarceration
• 70% of prisoners in the United States are non-whites.
• In 2006, there were 3,042 black male prisoners per 100,000 black males in the United States, compared to 1,261 Hispanic male prisoners per 100,000 Hispanic males and 487 white male prisoners per 100,000 white males.
• If African American and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rates of whites, today’s prison and jail populations would decline by approximately 50%.
• African American youth are 1.4 times more likely to be detained than their white peers.
• Together, African Americans and Hispanics comprised 60% of all U.S. prisoners in 2009.
• Today, 1 in 100 African American women are in prison.

Drug Sentencing Disparities
• African Americans are 13% of the population and 14% of drug users, but make up 37% of the people arrested for drugs and 56% of people in state prisons for drug offenses.
• African Americans serve virtually as much time in prison for a drug offense (58.7 months) as whites do for a violent offense (61.7 months).

Death Penalty
• Since 1973, 140 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence.
• The death penalty is costly. Since 1978, California has spent four billion dollars on death penalty cases on its way to carrying out 13 executions. Various studies show that state by state, the death penalty is far more expensive than sentences of life imprisonment.
• Over 75% of murder victims in cases resulting in execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims are generally white.

---

7 NAACP, "Misplaced Priorities (2011)
8 SUNY Binghamton, "Resisting the Prison Industrial Complex"
10 JFA Institute, “Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce America’s Prison Population” (November 2007)
12 United States Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prison Inmates for 2009 - Statistical Tables"
13 The Pew Center on The States. “One in 100: Behind Bars in America” (February 2008)
16 Staff Report, House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, 1993, with updates from Death Penalty Information Center
18 Testimony Submitted to the Kentucky Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary Hearings on the Costs of the Death Penalty March 1, 2012, Frankfort, Kentucky by Richard C. Dieter Executive Director Death Penalty Information Center.
19 NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Death Row USA” (January 1, 2012)
• Since 1976, 35% of those executed since 1976 have been black, even though blacks constitute only 12% of the population. Since 1976, 35% of those executed since 1976 have been black, even though blacks constitute only 12% of the population. Currently, 41% of death row inmates are black.

Racial Profiling and Police Disparities

According to the most recent survey available, 4.4% of African Americans experienced use of force by the police compared to 1.2% of Whites.

Figure 13: Percentage of African Americans and Whites that have experienced use of force by police

• An estimated 32 million people in the United States say that they have been victims of racial profiling by the police.

• New York Police Department (NYPD) “stop-and-frisk” data revealed that in 2011, a record 684,330 people were stopped, 87% of whom were black and Hispanic, although those groups comprise approximately 25% and 28% of New York City’s population respectively. Of those stopped, nine out of ten were not arrested, nor did they receive summonses.

• A 2008 report by the ACLU of Arizona found that Native Americans were 3.25 times more likely, and African Americans and Hispanics each 2.5 times more likely, to be searched during traffic stops than whites.

---

20 NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Death Row USA” (January 1, 2012)
21 NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Death Row USA” (January 1, 2012)
24 New York Police Department
25 ACLU of Arizona, Driving While Black or Brown 3 (2008),
Safe Communities

Victimization rate, all personal crimes: 2.66% Black vs. 1.86% White\(^\text{26}\)

**Figure 14: Victimization rate for Blacks and Whites**

- African Americans are roughly 50% of all murder victims in the United States.\(^\text{27}\)
- The homicide rate for African Americans in the U.S. is 20.86 per 100,000 as compared to the national average of 5.30 per 100,000. The rate for whites is 3.11 per 100,000.\(^\text{28}\)

The Goal: Equitable Dispensation of Justice for All

- **End** disproportionate incarceration, racially motivated policing strategies, and racially biased, discriminatory, and mandatory minimum sentencing.
- **Greatly reduce** incarceration and communities will be safer.
- **Abolish** the death penalty at the state and federal level, as well as in the military.

---


\(^{27}\) US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “FBI Homicide Reports,” and “National Crime Victimization Survey,” 2007

\(^{28}\) FBI, “Supplementary Homicide Report”, 2007