

# LOUISIANA JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

## *IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY, REINVESTING IN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES*

In 2017, Louisiana passed a comprehensive justice reform package as a result of its Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) effort, which found the state had the highest imprisonment rate in the country—nearly double the national average, prior to JRI.

Since that time, Louisiana agency leaders and staff have embarked on an intensive implementation effort with support from the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI), funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. CJI also assisted the Louisiana Women's Incarceration Task Force in developing policies to improve women's services in prison and on community supervision.

In five years, Louisiana has taken major steps to **improve public safety** and **maximize taxpayer resources** by implementing **evidence-based policy changes**. These efforts have resulted in a **26% decrease in the prison population** since 2016 and almost **\$107 million reinvested** in supportive services.

This brief explores Louisiana's progress towards the legislation's four overarching goals:

1

Focus prison beds on those who pose a serious threat to public safety

2

Strengthen community supervision

3

Reinvest a substantial portion of the savings

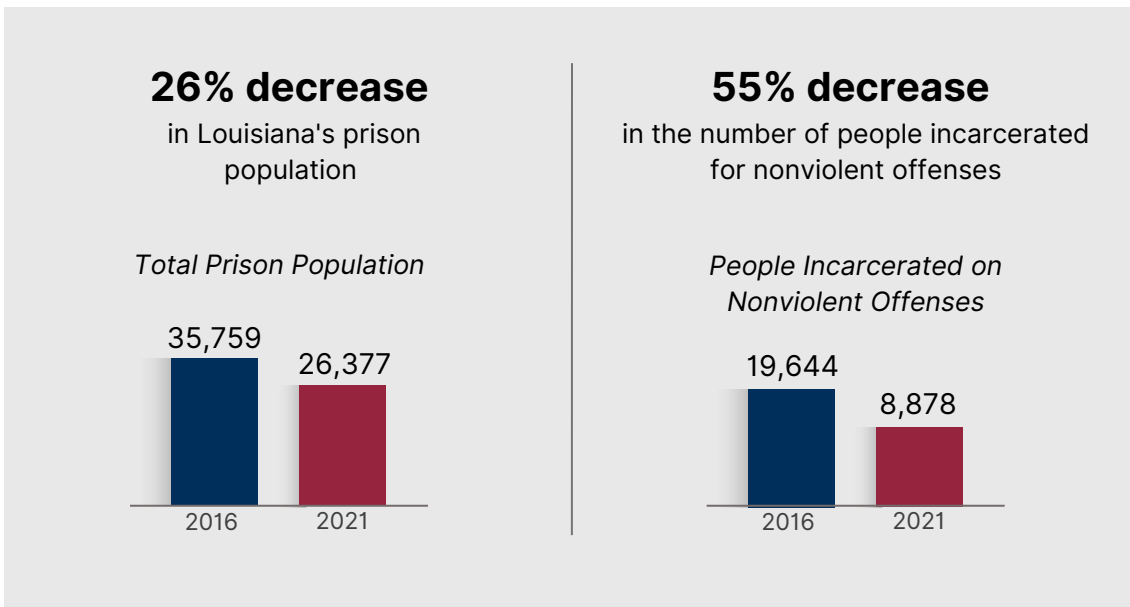
4

Clear barriers to successful reentry

1

FOCUS PRISON BEDS ON THOSE WHO POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Prior to JRI, Louisiana sent more people to prison for nonviolent offenses than southern states with similar crime rates. The state responded legislatively by steering people with **less serious offenses away from prison and toward community supervision**, allowing Louisiana to focus prison beds on serious threats to public safety.



JRI legislation reduced the cleansing period for a subsequent nonviolent felony to qualify under the habitual offender statute from ten to five years, meaning fewer people would be sentenced for nonviolent offenses as a "habitual offender."

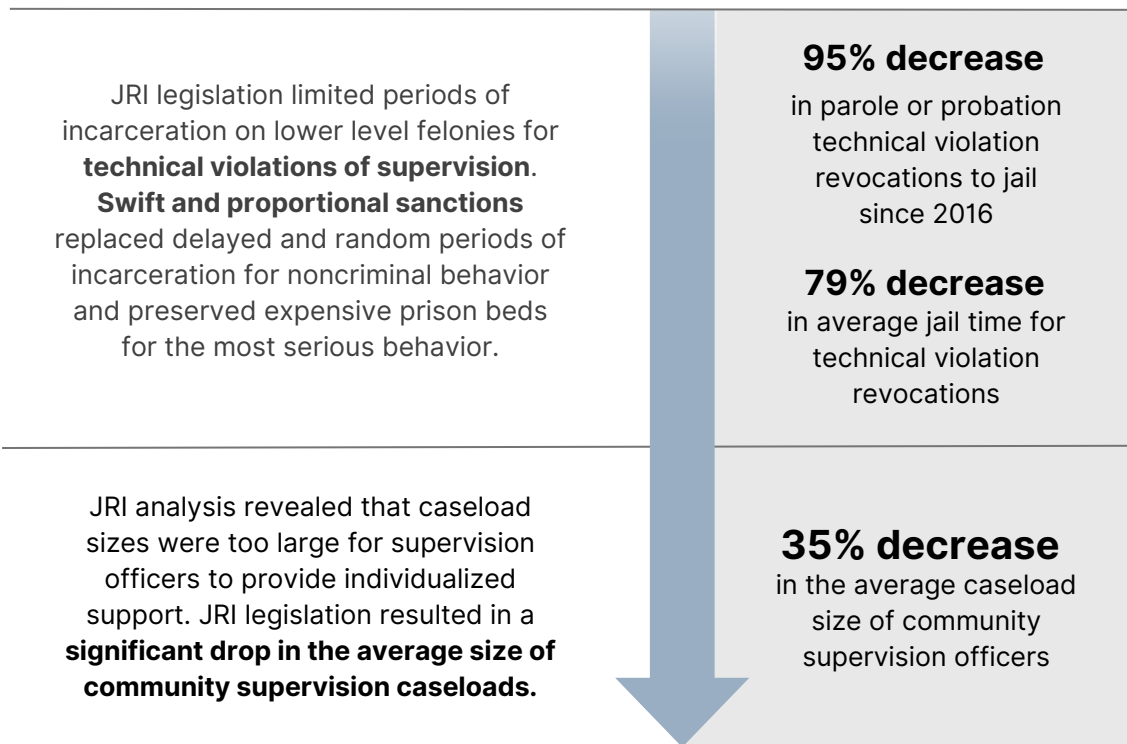
In the five years prior to JRI legislation, sentences for nonviolent offenses increased by ten months. The legislation reduced sentence lengths for certain offenses.

- 81% decrease** in admissions for habitual offender sentences since 2016
- 37% decrease** in drug offense sentence lengths
- 18% decrease** in property offense sentence lengths

# 2

## STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

The JRI analysis revealed that community supervision in Louisiana should better align with evidence-based practices shown to reduce recidivism and thereby improve public safety. The legislative package required changes to **strengthen community supervision** and allow Probation and Parole Officers to **focus on supervisees at high risk for recidivism**.



JRI introduced **earned compliance credits**, which allow individuals on supervision to earn 30 days off their supervision term for every month they are in compliance with supervision conditions. In 2021, 71% of the supervision population were eligible to earn compliance credits.

# 3

## REINVEST A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE SAVINGS

To support evidence-based changes to Louisiana's justice system, JRI legislation requires **70% of total annual savings** to be reinvested in **alternatives to incarceration, recidivism reduction practices, and support for victims of crime.**



**Nearly \$107 million** reinvested since the implementation of JRI

- ▶ Community Incentive Grants (\$26.5 million)
- ▶ DOC Reinvestment Funding (\$44.3 million)
- ▶ Youth Justice (\$18.3 million)
- ▶ Victims Related Investment (\$17.7 million)

# 4

## CLEAR BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

The JRI process identified a number of barriers for people reentering society from incarceration, including challenges related to finding stable housing and maintaining consistent employment. Louisiana's legislation has shifted funding and resources towards **helping justice-involved people succeed in their communities, ending cycles of incarceration, and protecting public safety.**



**Almost \$71 million** in cumulative reinvestments for reentry related services, staffing, and programming

- ▶ Expanded Regional Reentry Center resources and programming
- ▶ Expanded educational training programs
- ▶ Increased transitional specialists in jails to aid in reentry
- ▶ Increased transportation services for justice-involved people
- ▶ Expanded mental health screening
- ▶ Expanded the Emergency Transitional Housing Program

## NOTES

All data cited in this report are from Louisiana's Justice Reinvestment Reforms Annual Reports, available at the [Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections website](#).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) is a data-driven process funded through a public-private partnership between the funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. JRI aims to improve public safety by helping states make their justice systems more fair, effective, and efficient as they direct resources to address the complex factors that drive crime and recidivism.

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) has more than a decade of experience as a JRI technical assistance provider, supporting states through assessing strengths and needs, conducting data analysis, facilitating policy development, and assisting with implementation.

*For more information on this initiative or the Crime and Justice Institute please visit our website at [www.cjinitiative.org](http://www.cjinitiative.org) or contact the Director of Justice Initiatives.*

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