



Navigating Political Shifts & Policy Threats in the Garden State

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About the Crime and Justice Institute

The Crime and Justice Institute is a trusted, nonpartisan leader in justice system improvement, uniquely combining policy expertise, practitioner experience, and rigorous data analysis with deep partnerships and cross-system collaboration. We help stakeholders uncover root causes, build consensus, and implement evidence-based responses to complex justice and behavioral health challenges. For nearly two decades, CJI has partnered with leaders, practitioners, and communities across the country, providing strategies that strengthen systems and improve outcomes.

To learn more about CJI's work, please visit: cjinstitute.org

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Background

This project originated from Arnold Ventures' interest in understanding the trajectory of criminal justice reform in New Jersey, with a specific focus on policy recommendations made by the state's Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission in 2023. Given the Commission's recommendations that the Garden State should limit mandatory minimums for nonviolent offenses, reduce unnecessary lengths of stay, and address fines and fees that contribute to inequities within the system, the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) began its assessment of New Jersey's progress in these policy areas.

CJI's process involved analyzing publicly available data from reports published by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, New Jersey Courts, New Jersey State Parole Board, and the New Jersey State Police. CJI also collected qualitative information through conversations with practitioners and leaders in the state's justice system including representatives from the Governor's Office, the Department of Corrections, and the State Parole Board, among several other criminal justice agencies and community groups.

Conversations with policy leaders, system practitioners, and advocates about the trajectory of reform in New Jersey all shared a common theme – that **the future of criminal justice policy work in the state is highly dependent on the administration that will assume office in 2026.**

With the 2025 gubernatorial election quickly approaching and both leading candidates signaling potential changes in the state's approach to criminal justice, the focus of CJI's work shifted to assess the wider landscape of risk and transition facing New Jersey's justice system.

Purpose

The 2025 gubernatorial election marks a pivotal moment for New Jersey, as the results will reshape the state's policy priorities **regardless of who is elected**. As with any election where the incumbent is term-limited, shifts in political agendas are likely across multiple issue areas. In New Jersey, however, the criminal justice system warrants particular attention during this transitional period, given the **heavy influence** the governor's leadership and priorities have on criminal justice policy in the state.

As an administration that has championed these issues for nearly a decade prepares to pass the torch to a new era of state leadership, it is vital to understand the level of impact this election will have on state policies and practices to prepare the criminal justice field.

This brief **highlights key policy and data trends** that help tell the story of New Jersey's commitment to public safety over the past decade, **outlines the significance this election has for the state's justice system**, and **identifies specific risks, threats, and opportunities** for justice partners, advocates, and investors to consider as they plan for future reform in the Garden State.



Foundational Policy Context

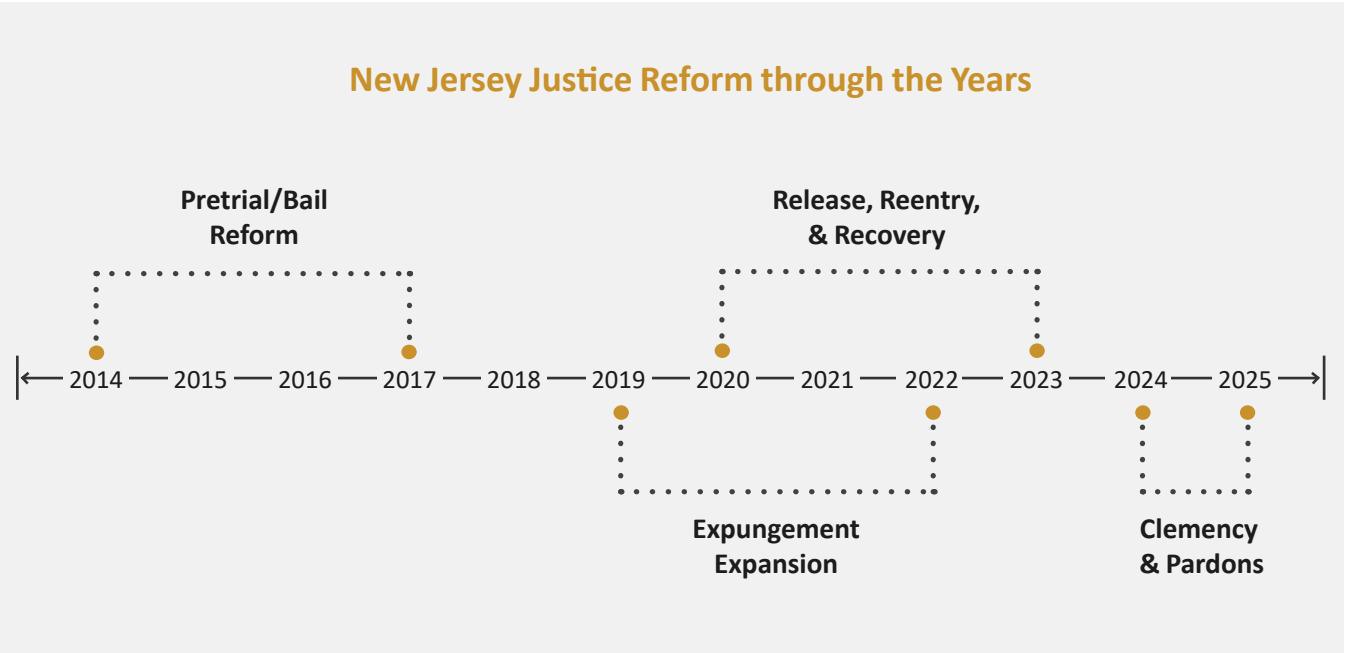
New Jersey’s criminal justice system has changed fundamentally over the past decade as leaders have prioritized using data and research to guide necessary system improvements. After findings from a 2013 study on the state’s jail population revealed several concerns about case backlogs, long pretrial detention terms, and high bail amounts for indigent defendants, local and state leaders joined forces to investigate the system and propose solutions.¹ This process informed the implementation of a new law in 2017 that transformed the pretrial system and earned the Garden State its reputation as a national leader in criminal justice reform.²

Efforts to improve public safety policies in New Jersey have since spanned far beyond the court system. Lawmakers have championed improvements to prison reentry by expanding expungement laws,³ streamlining prison release levers for appropriate candidates,⁴ and promoting reentry planning and in-prison program participation.⁵ Executive leaders have prioritized using public health resources to support public health challenges rather than relying on law enforcement and criminal justice resources,⁶ and the state has demonstrated a

“groundbreaking” commitment to second chances to help people return to their communities safely and without re-engaging in crime.⁷

New Jersey’s commitment to fairness and accountability has weathered administration changes in the past, and the policies and practices currently in place are not a product of rash decision-making, but rather of a standing commitment by many justice system partners and state leaders to continuously evaluate the justice system and identify opportunities for improvement (see [Appendix A](#)).

Overall, New Jersey’s approach to public safety in the past decade has evolved to balance accountability with rehabilitation, directing resources toward addressing violent offenses while also expanding opportunities for treatment, reentry, and release where appropriate, all aimed at ending cycles of recidivism. As this brief outlines, efforts to propel reform have corresponded with many positive outcomes across the justice system, but given the depth of the executive branch’s influence, such outcomes could be at risk if future leaders change the focus of public safety.



Foundational Data Context

As noted, New Jersey's leaders have made criminal justice improvements a top priority over the past decade. While many factors make it challenging to attribute outcomes to specific policy efforts, it is worth investigating how the state's criminal justice system has evolved from a data perspective in the same timeframe that meaningful criminal justice reforms have occurred.

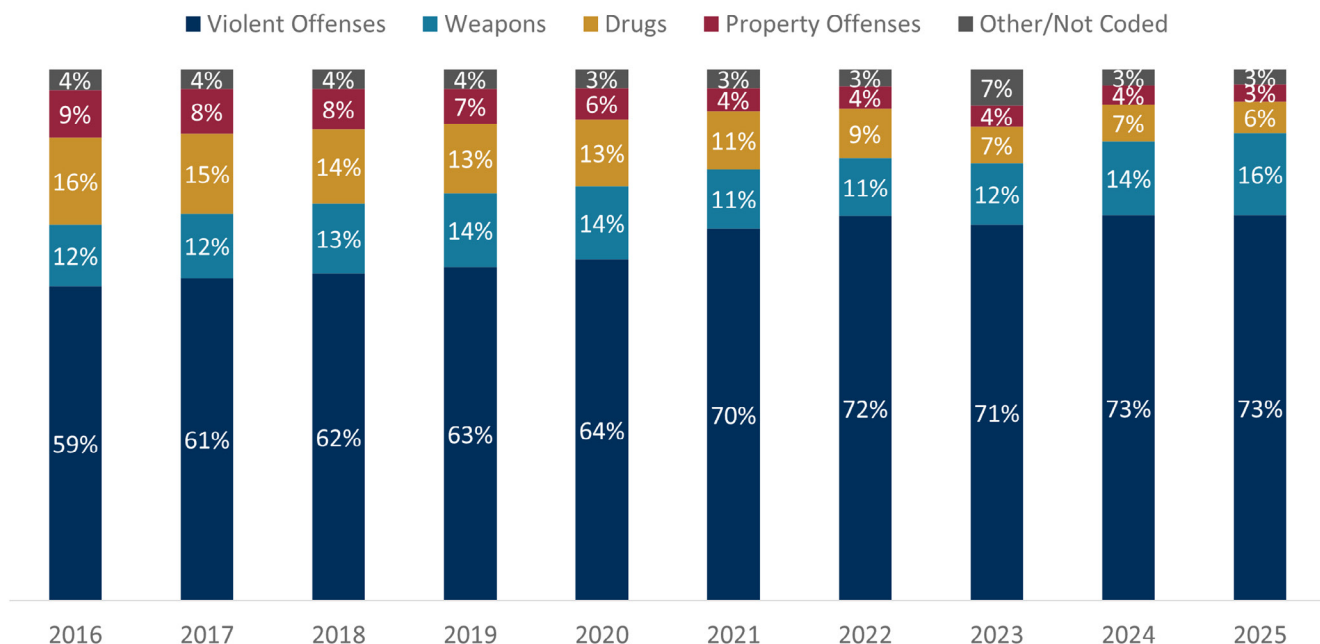
Crime Trends

One primary indicator of how a state's criminal justice system is functioning is its crime rate. New Jersey's violent crime rate is 49 percent lower than the national rate and the property crime rate is 21 percent lower.⁸ Further, violent crime rates have decreased substantially over the past decade. By 2024, violent crime was 15 percent lower than in 2015, and homicide in particular had dropped by 42 percent. These declines outpace national trends, which reflect a six percent decrease in violent crime and a two percent increase in homicide.⁹ Looking beyond national comparisons, New Jersey is also arguably safer than its neighboring states. Its violent crime rate falls 54 percent lower than that of New York, 12 percent lower than that of Pennsylvania, and 49 percent lower than that of Delaware, while the property crime rate was 19 percent lower than that of New York, one percent lower than that of Pennsylvania, and 20 percent lower than that of Delaware.¹⁰

Prison Population

Another indicator often examined to determine the progress of a state's criminal justice system is the size of its incarcerated population. The number of people in state custody in New Jersey has gone from nearly 21,500 individuals in 2015 to under 13,000 in 2025, representing a 37 percent decrease.¹¹ The largest drop occurred between 2020 and 2021, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the population has remained relatively steady in the years since. This runs counter to national trends, which has seen state and federal prison populations up two percent between 2022 and 2023.¹² Additionally, New Jersey's prison population is predominantly sentenced for violent offenses. This aligns with policies many states are adopting to reserve prison space for individuals convicted of serious and violent offenses.¹³ In New Jersey, the proportion of individuals serving for violent offenses over the past decade has grown from 59 percent to 73 percent – a 24 percent increase – while the proportion of those incarcerated for a drug offense as their most serious offense has decreased by 64 percent. **Given the decrease in violent crime in New Jersey, this may reflect a dedication to using correctional resources to focus on individuals who commit the most serious offenses**, especially as roughly 40 percent of violent offenders in 2023 were incarcerated for homicide as their most serious offense.¹⁴

Figure 1. Standing Prison Population by Most Serious Offense at Admission (2016 - 2025)



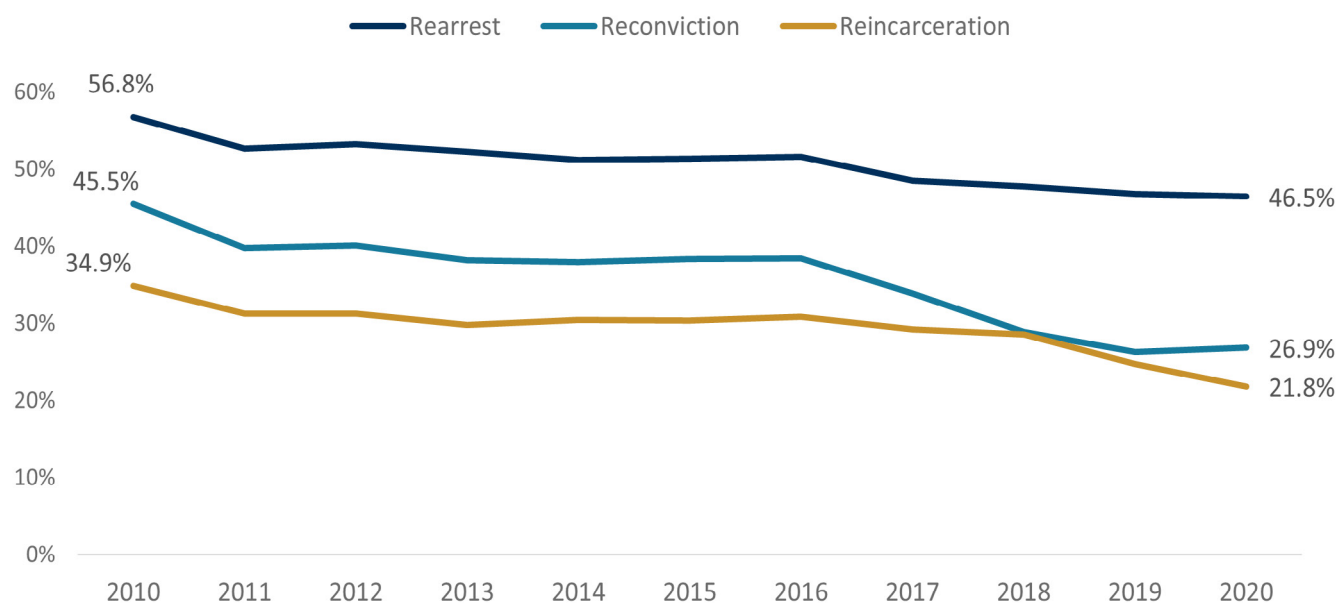
Recidivism

Aside from crime and prison population shifts, the most prominent measure of criminal justice success is often recidivism. The New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC) measures recidivism within three years of release (including individuals on community supervision as well as those fully released from DOC custody) in three different ways: **rearrest** (arrest on criminal charges), **reconviction** (conviction for a crime), and **reincarceration** (DOC admission following a conviction). A comparison of release cohorts from 2010 and 2020, the most recent recidivism data published by DOC, demonstrates declines across all three metrics: rearrests fell by 18 percent, reconvictions by 41 percent, and reincarceration by 37 percent.¹⁵

Despite an overall decrease in recidivism, **the primary driver of recidivism in New Jersey is community**

supervision violations.¹⁶ Although New Jersey's parole revocation rate (6.45 percent) is lower than the national rate (10.65 percent),¹⁷ revocations have become a larger share of recidivism. Among 2015 releases, 60.2 percent of recidivism was due to community supervision violations (returns from both probation and parole). This has grown to over three-quarters of recidivism among the 2020 release cohort. **Most of these returns are technical parole violations**, which have steadily increased as a proportion of overall recidivism each year.¹⁸ In 2023, the Parole Board issued 1,205 revocation decisions, and 1,106 of those (91.8 percent) were for technical violations such as missed appointments, housing issues, or failed drug tests.¹⁹ Furthermore, these outcomes weigh most heavily on communities of color: nearly three-quarters of those facing revocation proceedings were Black or Hispanic.²⁰

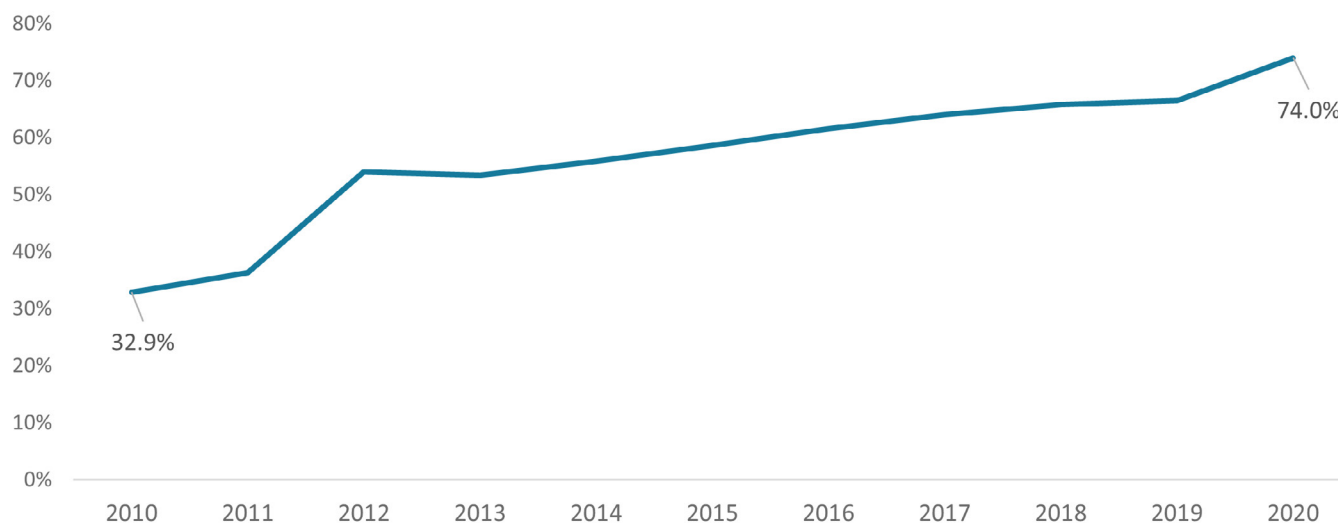
Figure 2. Reoffending Events by Release Cohort Year, (2010 - 2020)



These trends in revocations due to technical violations have been a recent priority for the current administration. In his 2025 State of the State address, Governor Murphy highlighted some of the encouraging trends emerging from New Jersey's criminal justice system – including historically low rates of gun violence and the

groundbreaking clemency initiative – but emphasized revocations due to technical violations as a continued problem. “Nobody should lose their freedom because of a technicality,” he said, urging legislators to send a bill reforming penalties for technical violations of parole to his desk.²¹

Figure 3. Recidivism Trends for Technical Parole Violations by Cohort Year, 2010-2020



Political Transitions & Vulnerabilities

Significance of Gubernatorial Transitions in the Context of the Justice System

Across the country, governors play a central role in shaping their state's approach to public safety. This executive leadership includes setting policy priorities for their administration, creating policies through executive orders, and appointing cabinet members who oversee key components of the justice system. **In New Jersey, the governor's influence over criminal justice policy exceeds that of most other states**, due to the structure of the state's cabinet.

The governor not only nominates the commissioner of the Department of Corrections and the superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, but also appoints the state's attorney general – a rare authority shared by only four other states.^{22,23} This appointment is especially significant as the New Jersey attorney general serves as the chief law enforcement officer, overseeing the Department of Law and Public Safety, and establishing binding policies for **all law enforcement entities** in the state.

This brief will explore the implications of that authority in greater detail in a later section.

Outside of the executive cabinet, the governor has influence over the appointment of key public safety leaders in several other offices, including:



Public Defender



Chair of State Parole Board



Chair of Sentencing & Disposition Commission



Correctional Ombudsperson



Chair of Clemency Advisory Board



Several Judicial Offices

New Jersey's Trifecta

New Jersey has held a Democratic trifecta since Governor Murphy assumed office in 2018, but that could shift after the election in November. Voters will choose between Republican candidate Jack Ciattarelli, who has pledged to tighten bail reform regulations, restore privacy of certain law enforcement records, and appoint conservative prosecutors and judges to steer the criminal justice system towards “law and order,” and Democratic candidate Mikie Sherrill, whose public safety platform also emphasizes law enforcement and enhanced penalties for certain justice-involved individuals.²⁴ **Either way, both candidates' campaigns represent a significant departure from the current administration's criminal justice policies.** While most polls published in September and October maintain a lead for Sherrill, Ciattarelli is supported by more than 40 percent of polled voters.²⁵

The election also has significant implications for the legislature, as New Jersey is one of two states where all Assembly seats are on the ballot in 2025.²⁶ In November, voters will determine the makeup of the Legislative Assembly, with all 80 seats up for election.²⁷ The Democrats currently hold majorities in both chambers (25 out of 40 seats in the Senate and 52 out of 80 seats in the Assembly), though the Senate will not hold elections until 2027.²⁸ The rareness of both gubernatorial and state assembly elections this year has drawn a national audience to New Jersey, with many wondering not only what shifts are ahead in the Garden State, but how the outcomes of these political races will impact future elections across the country.²⁹

Risks to Effective Policy & Practice



New Jersey Governor's Office: Key Appointments

DOC Commissioner

The role of the governor-appointed commissioner in carrying out the mission of the DOC is significant. The commissioner oversees the state's second-largest Department, “is responsible for a budget greater than \$1 billion, approximately 6,600 employees, and the oversight of approximately 13,000 state-sentenced people housed across nine correctional facilities, county jails, and Residential Community Reintegration Programs.”³⁰ In recent years, the DOC’s commissioners have prioritized rehabilitation and programs that set individuals up for successful reentry.³¹ This includes facilitating Medicaid applications and other benefits prior to release, operating a pre-release program to address employment, housing, and family reunification needs,³² creating health focused reentry services to ensure women continue medical and mental health care after release,³³ and awarding nearly seven million dollars in New Jersey Locally Empowered, Accountable and Determined (NJLEAD) grants to community organizations for job training, housing, and case management.³⁴ These

efforts and initiatives have contributed to the recidivism reductions noted above. New leadership may not have this same dedication to reintegration and supporting individuals while in custody, which will critically impact recidivism.

Chair of Parole Board

Similarly, the governor-appointed State Parole Board Chair has a crucial role in overseeing decisions about whether or not individuals should be released from prison and whether or not individuals should return to prison if they violate conditions of community supervision. The mission of the Parole Board is to both promote public safety and foster the successful rehabilitation of individuals through the implementation of policies that result in effective parole case management.³⁵ Like the DOC commissioner, the current Parole Board has prioritized supporting individuals getting released and reintegrated into the community. This is evidenced by their embrace of the Parole Revocation Defense Unit that authorizes attorney representation for people at violation hearings, as well as their continued focus on case management improvements through recent trainings.³⁶ A change in leadership could adjust the Parole Board’s mission away from rehabilitation and second chances and toward a more punitive approach.

Clemency Advisory Board

Through Executive Order No. 362 in 2024, Governor Murphy established the Clemency Advisory Board to create a structured and transparent process for reviewing petitions for pardons and commutations.³⁷ Since its launch, more than 4,500 applications have been submitted, underscoring significant demand for relief from long or disproportionate sentences.³⁸ For the first time, clemency in New Jersey was transformed from an opaque process decided solely by the Governor to one informed by review and recommendation from a dedicated body. This development is especially notable given New Jersey's history of granting very few clemencies. Unlike some states that process hundreds of petitions annually, New Jersey Governors have historically approved only a handful of applications each year, often without clear criteria or public explanation. The Advisory Board represents a departure from longstanding practice by formalizing review, improving transparency, and offering applicants a realistic avenue for relief.

The Board's brief existence has already proven valuable, with clemency granted to 169 individuals since its inception in December 2024.³⁹ This track record demonstrates the role of added oversight in expanding access to relief and addressing inequities that the courts or legislature have not yet resolved. The future of the Board, however, depends entirely on gubernatorial will. A new administration could choose not to sustain the Board, leaving clemency once again to the discretion of the governor alone.

Corrections Ombudsperson

Oversight of New Jersey's prison conditions is entrusted to the corrections ombudsperson, a five-year gubernatorial appointee authorized by statute to investigate complaints and monitor systemic issues in correctional facilities.^{40,41} The Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson gives individuals incarcerated in New Jersey prisons the opportunity to raise concerns about conditions, programming, and treatment. Recent reports have documented challenges such as staffing shortages that led to canceled programming, restricted visitation, and overcrowded housing units. A new governor could weaken this role by underfunding the office, appointing political allies with little independence, or deprioritizing its findings.

Chair of CSDC

The Criminal Sentencing & Disposition Commission (CSDC) is a legislative body that was established in 2009 for the purpose of reviewing sentencing laws and developing recommendations to make improvements across the criminal justice system.⁴² Although the CSDC is comprised of 13 members, with various state leaders responsible for appointing seats, the group has historically been inactive in years that the governor has failed to fill the two seats assigned to his office.⁴³ So, despite existing in statute for nearly a decade, the CSDC first convened in 2018 when Governor Murphy made his appointments.⁴⁴ Since then, the CSDC has published three reports with recommendations for improving criminal justice laws, some of which have been implemented,⁴⁵ while others have been tangled in the legislative process.⁴⁶ These efforts gave the CSDC renewed visibility and underscored its importance as a vehicle for evidence-based sentencing reform. If a new governor does not prioritize appointing members when their terms end or fills the open seats with members less committed to reform, the CSDC could lose momentum or fall dormant. This would stall progress on sentencing equity and reduce opportunities for the state to examine data-driven policy changes.



New Jersey Governor's Office: *Executive Orders*

Executive orders are another powerful tool that the governor utilizes. Under the New Jersey Constitution, the orders remain in effect unless rescinded by a future Governor.⁴⁷ This creates both opportunity and risk. Unlike legislation, which requires agreement between the executive and legislative branches, an executive order can be reversed immediately after a transition in leadership. This makes reforms tied to executive action less stable than those enacted by statute. Executive Order No. 362 provides a clear example. While it created the Clemency Advisory Board and expanded access to relief, the order rests entirely with executive authority and could be rescinded swiftly at the start of a new administration's term.⁴⁸ Its fragility demonstrates the vulnerability of even major reforms when they are enacted through executive power alone.

Other executive orders highlight the breadth of gubernatorial influence on criminal justice policy. In 2016, Governor Christie issued an order directing statewide coordination around cash bail reform, underscoring a governor's role in implementing pretrial changes.⁴⁹ In 2018, Governor Murphy signed an order expanding data sharing on gun sales and gun violence, illustrating the use of executive power to build information systems.⁵⁰ Later that year, Murphy issued an order prioritizing youth justice, which included efforts to reduce the use of secure confinement for juveniles.⁵¹ Most recently, a 2022 order focused on mental health coordination reinforced the intersection between justice, behavioral health, and community well-being.⁵²

The stakes are high. What one governor establishes to expand transparency, reduce youth incarceration, or promote public safety, another may reverse. Without legislative codification, these initiatives could be undone in a single transition, leaving agencies uncertain and communities without consistent support.



New Jersey AG's Office: *Justice Policy Role*

New Jersey's Attorney General is among the most powerful in the nation when it comes to shaping criminal justice policy. Unlike in many states, where prosecutors and police departments operate independently, New Jersey's attorney general holds **statutorily codified, centralized authority** over law enforcement and prosecutorial practices statewide. Established under the Criminal Justice Act of 1970 (N.J.S.A. 52:17B-97 et seq.), this structure empowers the attorney general to supervise all 21 County Prosecutors' Offices, oversee more than 38,000 law enforcement officers, and **issue binding directives that govern the enforcement of criminal laws throughout the state.**⁵³

These attorney general directives are legally binding, not merely advisory, unless explicitly changed by a new attorney general, overturned by legislation, or invalidated by a court ruling. In practice, the attorney general's directives shape the daily operations of New Jersey's criminal justice system, guiding policy on use

of force, charging decisions, juvenile justice, bail and pretrial detention, crisis response alternatives, police accountability, and data transparency.

Relationship with Prosecutors & Law Enforcement

The relationship between the attorney general and county prosecutors highlights this top-down approach to criminal justice. Although county prosecutors are independently appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate, they are **legally required to comply with attorney general directives**. The attorney general can intervene in a county prosecutor's office under certain circumstances, mandate local policy changes, require specific law enforcement training, and even discipline or remove prosecutors or officers who fail to comply with binding guidance.

This centralized structure allows the attorney general's office to maintain statewide consistency, which is particularly important for reform implementation and ensuring accountability. However, it also makes attorney general-driven policy vulnerable to political changes. Because the **attorney general is appointed by the governor**, a new administration can quickly **reverse or roll back** major directives. As a result, shifts in the governor's office can have significant consequences for criminal justice policy, especially in areas such as police oversight, community alternatives, juvenile justice, and sentencing reform.

End of Attorney General Platkin's Era

Over the past decade, New Jersey's attorneys general have influenced the state's criminal justice landscape, using the power of directives to steer criminal justice practices in the state. Beginning with efforts to implement sweeping bail reform (Directive 2016-6), successive attorneys general built a framework for reform that has touched every stage of the criminal justice system: juvenile justice (Directive 2020-12), county working groups to address use-of-force and coordinate system-wide change (Directive 2020-14), the dismissal of low-level marijuana cases and rollback of mandatory minimums (Directives 2021-1, 2021-4), establishing the Office of Justice Data to drive transparency and accountability (Directive 2022-2), and most recently, the creation of an Office of Alternative and Community Responses (Directive 2024-1) and new statewide protocols for barricaded individuals (2024-4).

Attorney General Platkin has accelerated and deepened this trajectory, solidifying New Jersey as a leader in criminal justice reform.

However, because these advances were established primarily through directives rather than legislation, they remain vulnerable to change. The next attorney general will have the authority to uphold, revise, or repeal them. As these policies form a key part of his legacy, the impact of “replacing Platkin” will ultimately depend on which of his directives are preserved, altered, or undone. So far, both candidates have signaled interest in modifying or moving away from Platkin’s approach, but they differ in tone and emphasis. Ciattarelli has been more direct about rolling back reforms and “restoring” traditional law

enforcement priorities, while Sherrill has taken a more cautious and moderate stance. In a recent town hall in Pitman, Ciattarelli announced that he would scale back police use-of-force reporting to only incidents involving gunfire and has proposed ending the release of internal affairs records, as well as limiting civilian review powers.⁵⁴ In contrast, Sherrill, speaking to law enforcement groups, has criticized certain “progressive” criminal justice policies and affirmed that Platkin would not continue in her administration, though she has declined to name specific directives she would reverse.⁵⁵

For more detailed information on each directive including intent and the consequences of repeal, please see the full table in [Appendix B](#).

Conclusion & Looking Forward

The noted data trends and highlighted policies and practices point to a positive trajectory for the future of New Jersey’s criminal justice system, in no small part due to funders who have invested in the reform efforts that contributed to these trends. However, these promising outcomes are a product of a system that has been evolving over many years under the leadership of committed criminal justice reform champions, whose tenure in the state is nearing its end. For that reason, it is a critical time to understand the vulnerabilities of the state’s justice system following an election cycle and the myriad ways political transitions can impact criminal justice practices, policies, and outcomes.

As New Jersey enters a period of political transition, there is an opportunity to sustain and strengthen the progress achieved over the past decade by ensuring that new leaders and decision-makers understand the positive impacts of recent reforms: overall crime has declined, incarceration has fallen, and correctional resources are increasingly concentrated on those who pose the greatest risk to public safety. These outcomes reflect a more data-driven, equitable, and efficient system that has benefited from steady executive leadership and coordinated policymaking across agencies.

The election presents a chance to invest in educating and orienting incoming officials on what has worked, why it has been effective, and how continued collaboration can sustain those gains. There is also an opportunity to elevate critical areas that have enabled reform, such as data transparency, cross-agency coordination, and accountability mechanisms, ensuring that these systems endure beyond individual administrations.

By proactively engaging new leadership and reinforcing the importance of evidence-based approaches, funders and partners can help New Jersey navigate this transition without losing the momentum that has positioned it as a national leader in criminal justice reform.

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Appendix A: New Jersey Criminal Justice Policy Timeline

Enacted	Policy Type	Title/Link	Themes	Summary
8/11/2014	Legislation	NJ Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA) P.L.2014, c.31	Bail, Courts, Pretrial	("Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA)") Updated NJ's pretrial system by shifting from reliance on cash bail towards using a risk-based decision process by: - Requiring courts to prioritize non-monetary conditions of release and authorized detention only when no conditions could ensure appearance in court, community safety, and fairness in the process - Establishing the Pretrial Services Program to conduct risk assessments within 48 hours of arrest and provide judges with release recommendations - Creating procedures for prosecutors to request detention hearings and for courts to consider victim safety and public protection
11/4/2014	Public Question	Public Question 1	Bail, Pretrial	Constitutional amendment permitting judges to order detention in jail without bail in certain cases.
8/10/2015	Legislation	S2559	Pretrial, Domestic Violence	Created a presumption <i>against</i> admission into a pretrial intervention program for people charged with a domestic violence offense; required the AG to set guidelines overseeing prosecutors' recommendations for pretrial intervention participation when individuals have been charged with a domestic violence offense.
3/1/2016	AG Directive (Hoffman)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2016-2	Pretrial, Domestic Violence	Created uniform guidelines for how prosecutors exercise discretion in making recommendations for participation in pretrial intervention programs, specifically for applicants charged with violent or domestic violence offenses.
7/1/2016	Executive Order (Christie)	EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 211	Bail, Courts, Pretrial	Directed the AG to review the costs, savings, and administrative challenges of moving from cash bail to the new risk-based pretrial release system.
10/11/2016	AG Directive (Porrino)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2016-6	Pretrial	Set interim policies and procedures for prosecutors and law enforcement to follow (i.e. instructions for detention hearings, using the risk assessment tool, making recommendations for release or detention, and responding to violations of release conditions) in preparation for the CJRA taking effect in January 2017.
9/27/2017	AG Directive (Porrino)	Revision of LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2016-6	Bail, Courts, Pretrial	Updated the directive on implementing the CJRA by: Providing more detailed rules for prosecutors on requesting detention hearings, using the risk assessment tool, and setting release conditions

				Clarifying how to handle cases involving repeat offenders, violent crimes, and violations of release conditions.
4/6/2018	Executive Order (Murphy)	EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 21	Data and Information Sharing, Weapons	Required the Department of Law and Public Safety (DLPS) to make efforts to regularly share information with the public related to the use of guns in criminal activity in NJ.
10/26/2018	Executive Order (Murphy)	EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 42	Youth Justice	Created the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice in NJ to recommend future reforms. Priorities included reducing racial disparities in detention, expanding community-based programs, reviewing youth facilities, planning to close Jamesburg and the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility, and reinvesting funds into community care. Membership included state agencies, courts, advocacy groups, labor, and community organizations.
7/11/2019	Legislation	A314	Restrictive Housing, Prison	Limited the use of isolated confinement in correctional facilities.
12/18/2019	Legislation	S4154	Expungement	("Clean Slate") Created a petition process for individuals with certain criminal convictions to have their records expunged or erased and explicitly granted expedited expungement for non-convictions (including dismissals and acquittals).
12/18/2019	Legislation	A5823	Reentry	Restored voting rights for NJ residents on probation and parole.
1/20/2020	Legislation	S761	Reentry, parole	("Earn Your Way Out Act") Implemented reforms to corrections, reentry processes, and parole by requiring DOC to develop reentry plans for individuals in their custody; creating an administrative/automatic parole release process; providing for parole compliance credits; creating an inmate disciplinary database; and mandating an impact study of the bill's reforms.
10/8/2020	AG Directive (Grewal)	ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2020-10	Cross-agency Collaboration	Established formal rules for how the DLPS communicates with the Governor's Office and the Legislature, codifying practices to prevent political influence over law enforcement and legal matters.
10/19/2020	Legislation	A2370	Compassionate Release	Created a compassionate release program and process for people in DOC custody with serious medical conditions and eliminated the state's older medical parole law.

10/19/2020	Legislation	A4371	Compassionate Release	Required the DOC, in consultation with the Parole Board and State Treasurer, to study the cost savings from compassionate release and from eliminating certain mandatory minimum terms; directed the Commissioner to issue annual reports on savings and deposit them into the "Corrections Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention Fund." Money from the fund must be used for programs that reduce recidivism, such as education, vocational training, and reentry services.
10/19/2020	Legislation	A4373	Sentencing, Youth Justice	Established that a defendant's youthful age must be considered as a mitigating factor during sentencing. Judges are required to weigh the reduced maturity and greater potential for rehabilitation of individuals under 26 years old when deciding penalties.
12/3/2020	AG Directive (Grewal)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2020-12	Youth Justice	Required officers to divert youth through stationhouse adjustments when appropriate, limited unnecessary complaints, and mandated tracking of racial disparities in enforcement.
12/21/2020	AG Directive (Grewal)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2020-14	Policing, Behavioral Health	Created county working groups and a statewide steering committee to oversee police use-of-force reform. Required county prosecutors to chair local groups that include law enforcement, civil rights advocates, and community leaders. Directed the statewide committee to track progress, share best practices, and ensure consistent implementation across counties. Aimed to make reform collaborative and transparent and focus on improving law enforcement encounters with community members with mental health issues or other special needs.
2/22/2021	Legislation	A21	Drug Offenses	("New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory, Enforcement Assistance, and Marketplace Modernization Act") Legalized recreational use of cannabis for certain adults, removed marijuana as a Schedule I drug, and decriminalized small amounts of marijuana and hashish possession.
2/22/2021	Legislation	A1897/4269	Drug Offenses	Updates penalties for marijuana and hashish related offenses including manufacturing and distribution.
2/22/2021	Legislation	S3454	Drug Offenses	Clarified cannabis use and penalties for minors.
2/22/2021	AG Directive (Grewal)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2021-1	Drug Offenses	Ordered prosecutors to dismiss pending marijuana cases and vacate past convictions for certain marijuana offenses after legalization. Barred new charges for conduct made legal under the new law and required withdrawal of related municipal complaints. Directed county prosecutors to oversee compliance and ensure uniform application across municipalities.
4/19/2021	AG Directive (Grewal)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2021-4	Sentencing, Drug offenses, Mandatory Minimums	Directed prosecutors to use existing discretion to waive mandatory minimum sentences in low-level, non-violent drug offenses, reducing unnecessary incarceration and racial disparities.

10/5/2021	AG Directive (Bruck)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2021-10	Weapons, Violence Reduction	Established a statewide Gun Violence Reduction Task Force to coordinate investigations and prosecutions of gun crimes; required each county prosecutor to designate an assistant prosecutor and law enforcement liaison to work with the task force; directed the AG's Office to share intelligence, target illegal gun trafficking, and support local strategies.
12/16/2021	AG Directive (Bruck)	ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2021-15	Racial Justice	Directed the Division on Civil Rights and Division of Consumer Affairs to prioritize cases that address racial justice; required agencies to focus enforcement on discrimination in housing, employment, lending, and consumer protection; mandated data collection and reporting on outcomes to ensure accountability.
1/18/2022	Legislation	S3493	Expungement, Behavioral Health	Permitted expungement for offenses related to possession or distribution of hypodermic syringes or needles and repealed the criminal offense of possession of syringe.
1/18/2022	Legislation	A4771	Expungement, Behavioral Health	Expanded expungement eligibility for certain previously "non-expungable" convictions, specifically for individuals who have successfully completed drug court and who have met other required conditions.
3/22/2022	AG Directive (Platkin)	ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2022-02	Data	Codified a centralized data hub within the AG's Office to standardize justice data collection and public reporting. Aimed to support transparency, accountability, and evidence-based reform.
5/25/2022	AG Directive (Platkin)	LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2022-6	Bail, Warrants	Directed law enforcement to stop executing most municipal court bench warrants for low-level offenses, such as unpaid fines or missed court dates. Required agencies to establish procedures for resolving these warrants without unnecessary arrests or jail time. Emphasized the need to reduce burdens on the justice system and prevent disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations.
8/31/2022	Executive Order (Murphy)	EXECUTIVE ORDER NO.305	Behavioral Health	Established the Office of the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund within the Department of Human Services to oversee the use of settlement funds from opioid-related litigation. Required the office to develop a public process for distributing funds, consult with impacted communities, and prioritize evidence-based treatment, prevention, and recovery programs.
9/23/2022	AG Directive (Platkin)	ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2022-10	Victims, Crime Prevention	Created the Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance (VIVA) within the DLPS.

3/17/2023	Executive Order (Murphy)	<u>EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 323</u>	Behavioral Health	Created the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Advisory Council to support the Office of the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund established under Executive Order 305. Required the council to include diverse stakeholders and provide recommendations on how opioid settlement funds should be used. Aimed to ensure transparency, community input, and equitable investment in treatment, prevention, and recovery programs.
12/21/2023	Legislation	<u>S524</u>	Behavioral Health, Diversion	Established a Mental Health Diversion Program to divert certain people with serious mental health disorders away from the justice system and into treatment and social services for the purpose of reducing recidivism and increasing public safety.
3/13/2024	AG Directive (Platkin)	<u>ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2024-01</u>	Crisis Intervention, Behavioral Health, Cross-agency Collaboration	Created infrastructure within the AG's office to support non-law enforcement responses to crises (i.e., mental health, substance use). Promoted local crisis response models as alternatives to police involvement.
6/19/2024	Executive Order (Murphy)	<u>EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 362</u>	Clemency	Created the Clemency Advisory Board to provide a structured review process for clemency petitions.
8/22/2024	AG Directive (Platkin)	<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVE NO. 2024-04</u>	Policing	Established statewide standards for use-of-force incidents, including mandatory de-escalation, reporting, investigation protocols, and transparency requirements. Required law enforcement to use force only when necessary.

Appendix B: Notable Attorney General Directives at Risk

Directive	Summary of Intent & Key Provisions	Potential Impact if Rescinded or Changed
2016-6 v3.0: Modification of Directive Establishing Interim Policies, Practices, and Procedures to Implement Criminal Justice Reform Pursuant to P.L. 2015, c. 31⁵⁶	Operationalized the 2017 Criminal Justice Reform Act by guiding prosecutors on risk-based detention decisions. It emphasizes the use of the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) tool and sets guardrails around seeking pretrial detention.	Weakening the directive could reintroduce inconsistent practices and increased pretrial incarceration. It could also undercut the impact of bail reform and open the door to a return of reliance on cash bail in practice, even if not in law.
2020-12: Directive Establishing Policies, Practices, and Procedures to Promote Juvenile Justice Reform⁵⁷	Required officers to divert youth through stationhouse adjustments when appropriate, limited unnecessary complaints, and mandated tracking of racial disparities in enforcement. Aimed to reduce youth system involvement.	Rescission could increase youth arrests, deepen system penetration, and reverse progress on racial equity. Diversion-first principles would be weakened, potentially leading to unnecessary involvement of youth—especially Black and Brown youth—in the legal system.
2021-4: Directive Revising Statewide Guidelines Concerning the Waiver of Mandatory Minimum Sentences in Non-Violent Drug Cases Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:35-12⁵⁸	Directed prosecutors to use existing discretion to waive mandatory minimum “parole disqualifiers” for low-level, non-violent drug offenses during plea negotiations, following a probation violation, and after conviction at trial.	Rescission could increase the use of mandatory minimum sentences and ultimately increase the amount of time that people spend incarcerated for low-level, non-violent drug offenses.
2022-02: Directive Codifying the Office of Justice Data⁵⁹	Codified a centralized data hub within the AG’s Office to standardize justice data collection and public reporting. Aimed to support transparency, accountability, and evidence-based reform.	Eliminating or weakening could severely hinder the state’s ability to track outcomes, evaluate reforms, or ensure public transparency. Policymakers, advocates, researchers, and community members could lose a critical source of disaggregated justice data.
2024-01: Directive Creating the Office of Alternative and Community Responses⁶⁰	Created infrastructure within the AG’s Office to support non-law enforcement responses to crises (e.g., mental health, substance use) and promoted local crisis response models as alternatives to police involvement.	Dismantling this office could impact how law enforcement officers engage in behavioral health emergencies, disrupting collaborative community-led interventions that do not require justice system resources. This could increase the burden placed on police, and result in greater usage of criminal justice resources to respond to public health problems.
2024-04: Directive Revising the Statewide Use of Force Policy to Incorporate an Addendum Addressing Law Enforcement Responses to Barricaded Individuals Policing & Use of Force⁶¹	Established statewide standards for use-of-force incidents, including mandatory de-escalation, reporting, investigation protocols, and transparency requirements. Required law enforcement to use force only when necessary.	Weakening or rolling this back could lead to inconsistent use-of-force practices across departments, reduced accountability, and increased public mistrust—especially in communities disproportionately impacted by police violence.