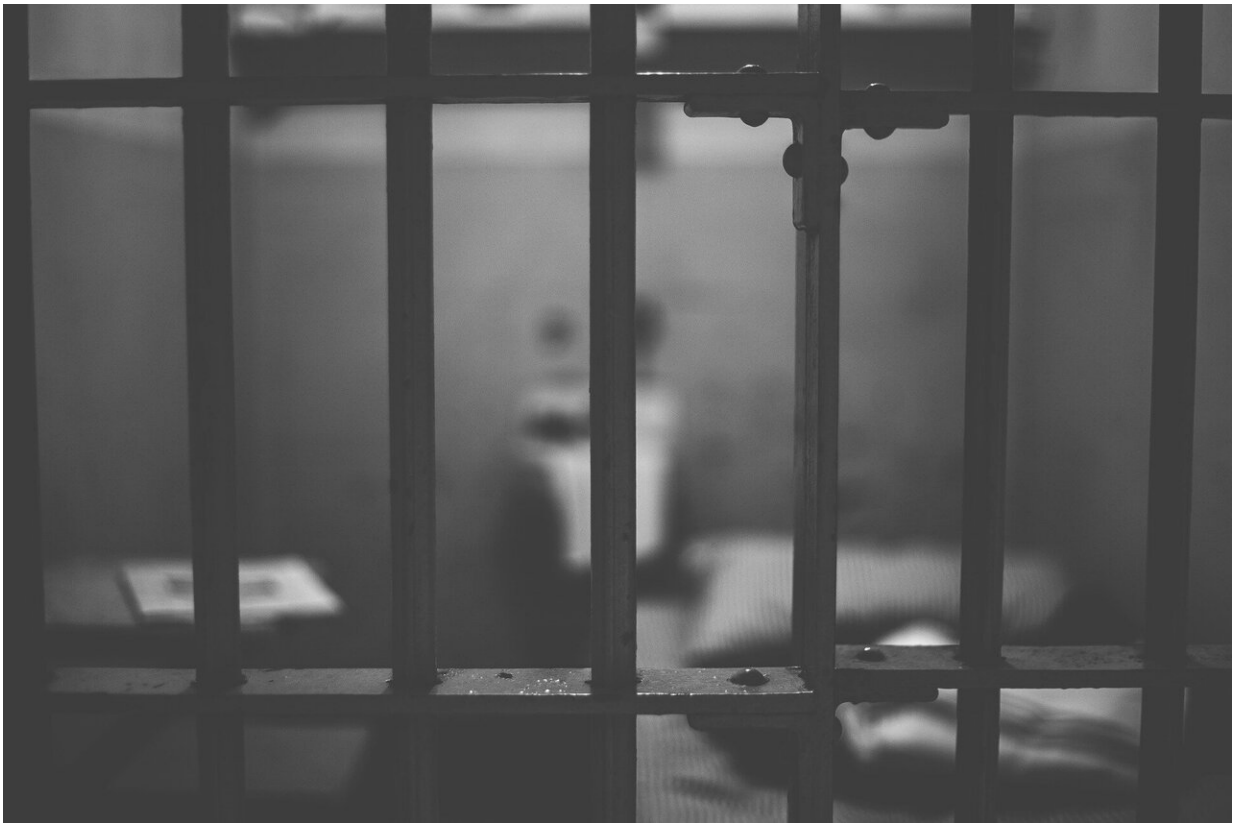


Professor calls for national metrics to track prison violence

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An [article](#) in *The Criminologist*, written by Nancy Rodriguez, University of California Irvine professor of criminology, law and society, shines a light on the lack of prison violence metrics that could help advance

safety.

"For the 800,000 persons currently confined and the 200,000 state and federal correctional officers who work within U.S. prisons, the threat of violence is a routine feature of daily life," she writes. "Accounts from incarcerated persons and staff detail the ever-present threats to safety in prisons and the human toll of this violence."

Federal resources have been dedicated to improving the conditions of confinement and addressing the diverse factors that contribute to safety, including [mental health](#), substance use, and contraband detection, Rodriguez notes.

But, improvement is slow-going, she says.

"Despite the detrimental consequences of violence in correctional institutions, we remain woefully ill-equipped to determine whether institutions are becoming safer or more dangerous," the professor writes.

"Institutional violence cuts through every dimension of the incarceration experience. It disrupts prison operations and practices, including those designed to improve correctional outcomes and well-being. ... Programming, treatment services, timely medical care, and recreation time are unavailable during prison lockdowns, while suspensions of visitation restrict access to loved ones.

"Consequences of violence continue upon release, where managing the trauma associated with prison violence compounds an already challenging reentry process, with likely impacts on recidivism and well-being. Yet, current correctional policy has not explicitly targeted violence prevention and intervention."

Rodriguez, who served as director of the National Institute of Justice

from 2015–2017, has been studying prison violence for years and stresses the need for consistent data to monitor, track, and compare violence across state and federal prisons. In order to advance safety in prisons, she calls on the U.S. Department of Justice to create a national, uniform measure of [prison violence](#).

She wants the DOJ to "to build on recent efforts to expand accountability and transparency and to develop a mechanism to improve the [safety](#) of everyone within state and local facilities. Anything less will be detrimental and seen by many of us as performative posturing."

More information: Nancy Rodriguez, Addressing the Data Gap to Advance Prison Safety and Why it Matters for Correctional Policy. *The Criminologist* (2024). [asc41.org/wp-content/uploads/A ... nologist-2024-09.pdf](https://asc41.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Addressing-the-Data-Gap-to-Advance-Prison-Safety-and-Why-it-Matters-for-Correctional-Policy.pdf)

Provided by University of California, Irvine

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