



**JUST
REINVEST
DATA HUB**

2025 RESEARCH AGENDA

This is a summary of the JRNSW Data Team's research agenda for 2025. It outlines key projects being undertaken and topline detail on each proposed paper, including the key questions to be answered and the main data sources.



Designing a Justice Reinvestment Mechanism for New South Wales: A Concept Paper

This paper is a collaboration between JRNSW and three academic researchers prominent in the Australian justice reinvestment space, which seeks to advance the process of co-designing a justice reinvestment policy mechanism in NSW. It briefly explores the history of justice reinvestment and draws on key learnings to explore several questions fundamental to the design of a policy mechanism for reinvesting resources away from the criminal justice system and into community-led preventative approaches. This paper is currently in the final draft stage and will be published in early 2025.

The Cost of the NSW Criminal Justice System

This paper presents the costs involved when Aboriginal people move through the justice system, covering police contact, remand, court appearances and incarceration costs. These costs are examined for both adults and young people, and are used to calculate the Aboriginal criminal justice cost gap in NSW.

01

What is required to reduce the resources in the carceral system?

This paper seeks to understand the resources consumed by the NSW criminal justice system, and what would be needed to reduce them. The report will assemble basic information about the carceral system, in order to identify the type and scale of possible policy or demand-driven changes that would effectively result in either savings and/or avoided costs. Key questions to be answered in the paper include:

- *How many prisons are in NSW and what is their capacity? What staffing is required to operate them?*
- *How much does it cost to operate these prisons? Who owns and operates them, i.e., how many are privately vs. publicly run?*
- *What is the distribution of offense types for inmates in NSW prisons? I.e., in what areas could crime-prevention policies or changes to policing, sentencing, etc., achieve reductions in incarceration?*
- *What are the costs of non-custodial sentences (e.g. Community supervision) compared to incarceration?*
- *To what extent can this data be disaggregated to reflect youth detention and adult incarceration?*

Data Sources: This paper will draw on data from Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), as well as publicly available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the Australian Productivity Commission, and BOSCAR data on crime statistics and court finalisations.

02

What is the economic opportunity cost of imprisonment, in terms of labour?

This paper seeks to uncover the economic opportunity cost of imprisonment, in terms of labour, to inform a justice reinvestment approach that would recapture this benefit and return it to the economy. This paper will examine prison labour and allowances to compare with non-prison labour and income, as well as tax revenue.

Data Sources: This will require publicly available data from CSNSW, the Australian Productivity Commission and ABS on labour statistics and prison employment. This will also require additional information held by CSNSW which is subject to ethics approval.

03

What is the minimum required legislative change needed to see changes in incarceration levels?

This project seeks to understand the structural and systemic elements that drive Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system and determine which need to be addressed to see changes in the rates of incarceration and recidivism. By examining the key drivers of incarceration alongside existing policy, we hope to identify which policies could be changed to drive significant change.

Key Questions:

- *Are there any key policy/legislative drivers of incarceration rates (e.g. mandatory sentencing)?*
- *Are there any policies driving recidivism rates (e.g. Bail/parole revocation rules)?*
- *Can this data be disaggregated by Aboriginality? If so, is there sufficient data to just focus this research on Aboriginal people?*
- *Can this data be disaggregated for young people?*
- *Are there any jurisdictions that have seen policy reform result in improvements to the incarceration or recidivism rate?*

Data Sources: This work will draw on existing court and incarceration data from ABS and BOCSAR, as well as current policy documents and sentencing codes in NSW. Research will also be undertaken to find international case studies demonstrating policy reform.

04

What is a realistic time horizon for observing changes in incarceration and recidivism?

This paper will examine trends in international data to determine a reasonable timeframe for lowering incarceration and recidivism rates in NSW. In addition to quantitative trend data, case studies from international jurisdictions will be analysed to understand where this has been achieved, how it was implemented (e.g. policy, legal or economic reform), and how long it took to realise these outcomes. This project will proceed in two parts: one addressing incarceration rates and the other addressing recidivism rates.

Part 1 Key Questions:

- *Are there any jurisdictions that have seen sustained reductions in incarceration over time? How long did this change take to materialise?*

04 / Part 1 Key Questions cont.

- *Have any specific policy/legislative reforms or programs/initiatives seen faster (or more sustained) results? Were there any JR programs or initiatives involved?*
- *Is there similar available data on youth incarceration?*

Part 2 Key Questions:

- *Have any jurisdictions achieved sustained reduction in recidivism over time?*
- *If so, how long did it take for these to materialise?*
- *Have any specific policy/legislation or programs/initiatives seen faster (or more sustained) results? Were there any JR programs or initiatives involved?*
- *Is there similar available data on youth recidivism?*
- *For consistency, we need to determine how to define recidivism (e.g. return to prison after 12 months, 2 years, 5 years, never?).*

Data Sources: This project will create a longitudinal dataset of incarceration rate and recidivism rate data from a range of international jurisdictions; we intend to collate data for as many years as possible from each state and territory in Australia and the United States and from England and Wales in the United Kingdom.

The Just Reinvest Data Hub is a resource centre for community backbone teams implementing justice reinvestment. An initiative of Just Reinvest NSW, the hub is a free service that acts as a central repository for justice reinvestment-specific data resources. Our goal is to collectively build the infrastructure required to support Indigenous Data Sovereignty, working together for impact evaluation at scale, and economic modelling for reinvestment and long-term systems change.