

RESEARCH AND DATA

Show George Gascón's Policies Enhance Safety

Recently, political opponents of Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón have interfered with his implementation of policies that data and research indicate enhance safety. In fact, research shows that the policies Gascón's critics advocate for—which increase punishment and incarceration—do so at the expense of public safety. Studies show the dated carceral policies of the 1980s and 1990s may increase rates of reoffense, also known as recidivism, and create more victims of crime. In fact, under the prior tough-on-crime District Attorney, LA sent more people to state prison per capita than 56 of California's 58 counties, and yet violent crime increased 25 percent. This highlights the failure of the traditional tough on crime approach to enhance safety in Los Angeles County.

In opposing reform, District Attorney Gascón's political opponents have turned to scare tactics and blatant falsehoods, as the most serious offenders continue to face significant sentences. Murderers continue to face life in prison, and no directive implemented by DA Gascón has implications for sex offenses. Research also indicates that victims of violent crime in Los Angeles County overwhelmingly support criminal justice reforms that emphasize rehabilitation and crime prevention, rather than more incarceration.

DA Gascón's critics have also made the audacious claim that his prosecution policies have increased crime. DA Gascón took office on December 7th, 2020, at the end of a year that saw violent crime and homicides surge across much of the United States. What's more, the policy changes he made related to violent crimes have not resulted in violent offenders being released from custody. See page two of this document for an overview of the major changes made by DA Gascón and the corresponding citations to the research highlighting that these policies enhance safety.



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SENTENCE ENHANCEMENTS

Why is DA Gascón Not Using Sentencing Enhancements & Three Strikes?

Most felony offenses have a sentencing triad. For example, an individual convicted of robbery can be sentenced to 4, 5 or 6 years in state prison. Enhancements are extra time added on to these base sentences. Enhancements have never been shown to enhance safety, but excessive sentences have been shown to increase rates of reoffense and therefore lead to more victims of crime.

LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

Why is DA Gascón Not Seeking Life Without Parole (LWOP)?

Of those sentenced to a life sentence with the possibility of parole (versus life without the possibility of parole) less than 1% commit new violent felonies if granted parole and released by the Governor. By contrast, individuals sentenced by prosecutors serving non-life sentences reoffend approximately 65% of the time. Prosecutors and judges need not make decisions with lifetime implications today given the parole board's success evaluating public safety risk in the future. LWOP also ignores the fact that people change, committing California to exorbitant expenditures associated with incarcerating those in their 60s, 70s, or older, who have long since aged out of crime.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Why is DA Gascón No Longer Prosecuting Kids as Adults?

Prosecuting youth as adults is correlated with higher rates of recidivism and trauma. Fear destroys our capacity to learn, and we know that isolation activates the harmful stress hormone cortisol in our bodies leading to lasting damage. Youth also have a unique ability to rehabilitate and grow. Teenagers make risky decisions without consideration for the consequences, a reality that research indicates results from the fact that human brains don't fully develop until one's mid-20s. The rational decision-making part of the brain is the last to develop.

MISDEMEANORS

Why is DA Gascón Diverting Rather than Prosecuting Many First-Time, Low-Level Misdemeanors?

Misdemeanors make up 80% of cases in our legal system, diverting massive resources from the prosecution of violent crime. Additionally, prosecuting first time non-violent misdemeanors significantly increases the risk of rearrest. A recent study shows people who were arrested but not prosecuted for low-level, nonviolent misdemeanors such as shoplifting, drug possession, motor vehicle offenses, and similar actions, were "58 percent less likely to commit another crime in the following two years, than those who were prosecuted for that same minor crime." Non-prosecution also reduced the rate at which nonviolent misdemeanor defendants were charged with subsequent violent offenses within two years by 64 percent, relative to comparable prosecuted defendants.

CASH BAIL

Why is DA Gascón Seeking to End the Use of Cash Bail?

Cash bail is as unsafe as it is unjust. Dangerous individuals with resources who commit serious offenses can buy their freedom while those who pose no threat to our community that commit low-level offenses languish behind bars. It is exceptionally rare that individuals willfully flee prosecution or commit violent felony offenses while released pretrial and the overwhelming majority of people return to court, even when they have no financial interest at stake.