



# **SOLITARY: A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

**CITIZENS FOR  
PRISON REFORM**



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## **Solitary Confinement is associated with higher mortality rates after the incarcerated individual is released.**

- A cohort study that followed 222,974 incarcerated individuals released between 2000 to 2015 from prisons in North Carolina found those who were in solitary were MORE LIKELY to DIE within FIRST YEAR of release, especially from suicide and homicide. Individuals were also more likely to die within the first two weeks of release due to opioid overdose and/or become reincarcerated<sup>1</sup>.
- A population-based study on Danish prison administrative data included 13,776 prisoners in 2016, found those who were in solitary confinement had higher overall mortality rates for 5 years after release due to non-natural causes<sup>2</sup>.

## **Increased cost for medical/mental health of someone held in solitary**

- Serious and lasting damage done to people's mental and physical health in solitary is likely to significantly increase the costs of providing them with health care during their incarceration and beyond<sup>7</sup>.
- The cost of healthcare for an individual with severe mental illness is approximately three times higher than someone in a Level 1 unit. In addition, the cost to staff segregation units is roughly four times higher according to the Michigan Department of Corrections.<sup>8</sup>

## **Solitary Confinement has negative physical and psychological consequences**

- Researchers conducted interviews with 106 incarcerated individuals in Washington State using Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS) assessments and found that individuals in solitary confinement suffered from feelings of depression, anxiety, guilt, loneliness, loss of self and had higher rates of mental illness and self-harm<sup>3</sup>.
- The same BPRS assessments also indicated individuals in solitary had physical symptoms such as skin irritations, weight fluctuations, untreated or mistreated chronic conditions, or exacerbated musculoskeletal pain<sup>4</sup>.

## **Solitary Confinement is a social determinant of poor health outcomes for the incarcerated individual upon release**

- The short and long term risks associated with solitary confinement implicate the practice as a negative health determinant and a cause for concern.
- In addition to health disparities, solitary confinement progresses racial and economic disparities as the prisoners put in isolation are primarily racial minorities and of lower socioeconomic status<sup>5</sup>.
- Framing solitary confinement as a risk factor for negative health outcomes in this population subset shifts the narrative for reform to a public health framework, which can influence public policy and program interventions.

## **Solitary Confinement's detrimental effects do not stay inside prison walls.**

- Michigan Department of Corrections employees are more likely to experience PTSD, depression and anxiety<sup>6</sup>
- This leads to changes in interactions within society and family members
- Families report that the constant state of worry and stress led to diagnosed anxiety disorders, depression, panic attacks, and deep loneliness.<sup>9</sup>



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