



Police officers amassed in Minneapolis, following the death of George Floyd. DAVID JOLLES/STAR TRIBUNE, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

*The Marshall Project tracks the impact of our journalism on lawmakers, advocates and other media. Some recent examples:*

**CHOKED-HOLD** Our journalists' expertise means they are often ahead of the curve when reporting breaking news. After the death of George Floyd, Simone Weischelbaum and Jamiles Lartey quickly produced a [detailed story](#) on the troubled history of the Minneapolis police department, and how its leaders failed to adopt proposed reforms. Their story informed subsequent media coverage, and they appeared on NPR's Marketplace, Voice of America, Brian Lehrer, CBS News,

and Vox's podcast, as well as British and Australian media. Lartey's [subsequent story](#), on how excessive policing can turn a peaceful protest violent, was tweeted by President Obama as "a reminder of the importance of de-escalation by police in their interactions with protestors."

**PLAYING CHICKEN** North Carolina corrections officials shut down family visits on March 13 as the coronavirus pandemic spread across America, and restricted educational and other programs in prisons. But reporter Joe Neff [revealed](#) that weeks later, the state was still allowing hundreds of incarcerated people to leave prisons to work for local industries such as chicken-processing plants, potentially bringing the virus back with them at the end of the day. "The Division of Prisons is sensitive to the business needs of participating employers," a spokesman for the department said. After our story ran in partnership with the [News & Observer](#) in Raleigh and Charlotte, the state shut the program down.

**NEW ORLEANS** As COVID-19 was sweeping through New Orleans, we reported how local officials were painfully slow to reduce the city jail's population of 900 people. After [our story](#) ran in every [Gannett paper](#) in Louisiana, the process sped up considerably,

and in less than a week the jail population had shrunk to 763 people—still too high, many advocates felt, but an improvement. We also [exposed](#) how court monitors were being shut out of courtroom Zoom proceedings in places like New Orleans. Within a day, one district court judge had provided a link to monitors who can now observe the proceedings in her courtroom.

**ON GUARD** Many of the first-person narratives in our weekly feature, Life Inside, are written by incarcerated people. We also publish the stories of people who work in the system, including corrections officers, and two recent accounts have led to interesting impact. [Cary Johnson](#) described in emotional detail her Michigan prison's failures to prevent coronavirus from spreading—and inspired another prison employee to come forward with evidence of internal policy failures. We've now partnered with the Detroit Free Press to dig deeper into that story. Meanwhile, [Toby Tooley](#) described how his Oregon prison adopted practices learned from corrections officials in Norway. Now, the non-profit organization Amend is using his piece as a part of their curriculum to train corrections officers in North Dakota on ways to decrease violence and improve mental health inside prisons.



Barack Obama  
@BarackObama

Here's a useful read—a reminder of the importance of de-escalation by police in their interactions with protestors.



De-escalation Keeps Protesters And Police Safer. Departments Respond With Force... MINNEAPOLIS — Last Wednesday, Marcell Harris was hit by a rubber bullet. He had joined the second day of protests in this city over the killing of George Floyd, a black...

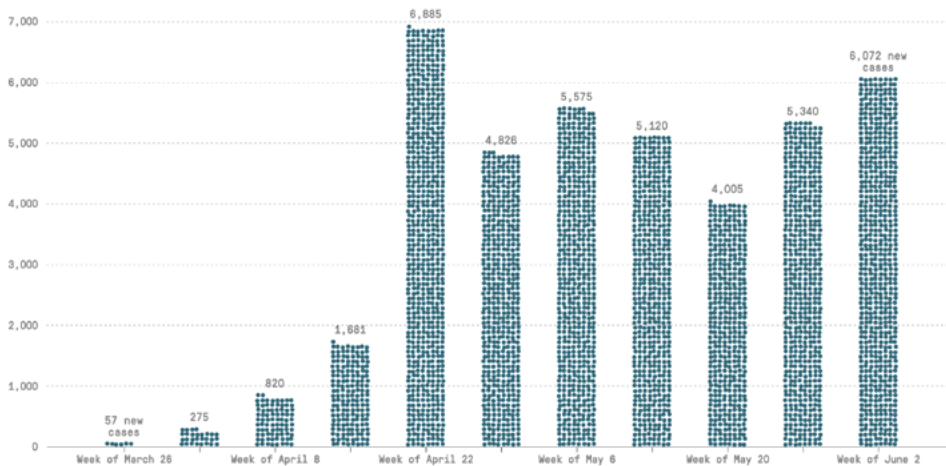
There have been at least

**40,656** cases (as of June 5, 2020)

of coronavirus reported among prisoners.

**21,832** prisoners have recovered.

Each • represents 10 new cases



**BY THE NUMBERS** As the pandemic began to take hold, we wanted to know its impact on the people who live and work in our nation's prisons. Our reporters began contacting prison authorities in all 50 states and the federal system to gather a weekly update on the numbers of people inside prisons and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19, and those who have died. Members of Congress immediately started citing [our figures](#) in their own demands for a response to COVID-19. Sen. Amy Klobuchar used it in a [letter](#) to Attorney General William Barr, while several others, including Sen. Cory Booker and Rep. Ayana Pressley, relied on our numbers in a letter to governors of five hard-hit states, urging them to release people from prison who are over 50 or have pre-existing health conditions. Meanwhile, our tracker has been cited

in over 120 stories from other media organizations, and counting.

**WHAT IS THAT?** Prison food has always been awful, but Keri Blakinger [revealed](#) that the pandemic had made meals even more disgusting in 40 Texas prisons currently on COVID-19 lockdown. Paper bags of cold, mushy food come at strange hours—sometimes 3 a.m., then not again till 4 p.m., without a green vegetable in sight. After our story ran in print in [local newspapers](#), lawmakers reached out to prison officials, who told families of the incarcerated that they would revise quality control procedures. Days later, people living in one prison reported a change: they'd received hot meals at last. Prison officials have told families of the incarcerated that vegetables, real milk, and fresh fruit have been ordered.



*"I can say that after the article by Keri the food has gotten much better. We haven't had milk in the carton in years. We get two hot meals on cardboard trays and one 'johnnie' (snack lunch) daily. 100% better."*

—MICHAEL TRACY, Texas

**TAYLOR MADE** It was the [largest payment](#) ever made in the case of a wrongful death at a New York prison. Karl Taylor, incarcerated at Sullivan Correctional Facility and struggling with mental illness, was ordered to clean his cell one day in April 2015. Later that day, Taylor died after an altercation with corrections officers, and our contributing writer Tom Robbins followed the case closely as his sister sued the state for damages. He even gave her the phone number of a prison advocate, who found her a lawyer—who won a record settlement of \$5 million for the family in February. Terms of the agreement included an unprecedented pledge by officials to install video cameras and microphones throughout Sullivan prison. "I am hoping they can save someone else's life," said Taylor's sister. When [similar measures](#) were taken at Attica prison, also in the wake of a [2015 investigation by Robbins](#), levels of violence dropped dramatically.

**"LIKE A KIDNAPPING"** While our work generally has impact after publication, sometimes change can take place *before* a word is printed. That is what happened as Eli Hager worked on an [exposé](#) about "short-stayers"—children who are removed from their homes, often in the dead of night, and placed in foster care for ten days or less. Experts say the trauma these children experience can be akin to that of a kidnapping. While reporting this story in New Mexico, which has the highest rate of "short-stayers" in the country, Hager heard repeatedly that top officials at the state's child welfare agency were worried his article would embarrass them. Before our story was published, child welfare agencies reached a formal agreement with the Albuquerque police department to reduce the number of "forced removals" of children, and the state started providing families with financial support and other resources. As a result, "short-stay" removals in New Mexico dropped by more than half. In May, after months of further study of the problem, the New Mexico legislature sent a [report](#) to the child welfare agency outlining steps for fixing the problem, requiring the agency implement within one month.