The Marshall Project tracks the impact of our journalism on lawmakers, advocates and other media.

Reformers like to talk about “changing the narrative” on criminal justice. But where does a narrative come from, exactly? And how can it be changed?

The media play an outsized role in affecting the public’s understanding of criminal justice. And that role hasn’t always been positive. In addition to publishing our own rigorous coverage, The Marshall Project tries to help other journalists do a better job covering criminal justice for their own media outlets. Here are some examples of our impact on other media:

**AFTER BITES** Our Pulitzer Prize-winning series on police violence using dogs included one installment that explained to other media how they could follow up in their own locales. And they did. A television station in Tampa, Florida, for example, produced an investigation into “the consequences when police dogs disobey their handlers,” while the East Bay Times tracked the 73 police dog bites plaguing the city of Richmond, California.

**TWO STRIKES, OUT** We aren’t advocates, and our stories don’t include recommendations for what policymakers should do. But our media partners at the Tampa Bay Times have an editorial board that seized on the investigation we did with them about life-without-parole sentences in Florida, saying “The state’s so-called ‘two strikes’ law has served its time and should be stripped from the books.”

**ALABAMA SPLASH** As part of our ongoing series about police violence against children, The Marshall Project wrote about the experience of one Alabama teen who was tased by police while she was having a grand-mal seizure at a music concert. The story was co-published with USA Today and reached a wide audience. It also appeared on the front pages of six local newspapers in Alabama: The Birmingham News, the Montgomery Advertiser, The Gadsden Times, the Mobile Press-Register, The Huntsville Times and The Tuscaloosa News. The public radio station in Birmingham also carried the story and did an on-air interview with The Marshall Project’s reporter on the story.

**FOSTER FOLLOW** When we published an investigation with NPR into how states were pocketing millions in federal funding meant for foster kids, we included a sidebar making it easy to track what was happening in individual states. And local media jumped on it. The Philadelphia Inquirer, for example, used findings from our investigation to examine their city’s record – and found that Philadelphia had pocketed $5 million meant for local foster kids. Meanwhile, the Omaha World-Herald published a sternly-worded editorial, opining that “Current government policy can fairly be termed as financial abuse of some of Nebraska’s most vulnerable children.”

**HIGHLY PRIZED**

One reason the media follow our lead is that we’ve received many of the top awards in the journalism business. In 2021 alone, we won:

- Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting
- Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting
- Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Innovation
- National Headliner Award for Online Investigative Reporting
- Deadline Club Awards for Digital Video Reporting and National TV Series
- White House Correspondents’ Association’s Award for Courage and Accountability
- Society for News Design for Best of Digital Design
- Harry Frank Guggenheim Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting
- Communication Arts Illustration Award
- Editor & Publisher EPPY Awards for Best Innovation Project on a Website
- Online Journalism Awards for General Excellence in Online Journalism, Innovation in Investigative Journalism, Explanatory Reporting and Excellence and Innovation in Visual Digital Storytelling
- Neil and Susan Sheehan Award for Investigative Journalism
- Collier Prize for State Government Accountability
In November the Mississippi Department of Corrections admitted in court that it failed to monitor conditions in the state’s three private prisons. The Marshall Project had sued to obtain weekly reports that track health and safety in the prisons. We had previously revealed how the private company MTC let gangs run one prison and profited from short staffing that made the facilities unsafe for staff and incarcerated people alike. The Corrections Commissioner responded by kicking MTC out of one of the prisons. In court, prison administrators admitted they couldn’t find more than half of the contractually mandated safety reports. A big thanks to our pro bono lawyers from the Mississippi Center for Justice for forcing the department to obey the public records law.

Our data journalism is designed to fuel great investigations at The Marshall Project. We also deliberately process data and make it easy to use, so that policymakers, other media, academics, and advocates can use it as seamlessly as possible in their own work. Some recent examples:

- We took incarceration data published by the U.S. Census Bureau, and processed and documented it for easier access. Our data release not only generated our own story for The Marshall Project analyzing why incarceration rates have gone down, but also powered stories by U.S. News and World Report, WVFT Virginia Public Radio, and WFAE Charlotte Public Radio. The census data release was also featured in the popular open data newsletter Data is Plural.

- A letter signed by 93 members of Congress cites a data analysis by The Marshall Project in partnership with the Associated Press, and argues for more robust and accurate collection of excess mortality statistics by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our story visualized the striking data on racial disparities in COVID deaths. The CDC only publicly released data about excess deaths by race after The Marshall Project pursued that information for several months via public records requests.

- Our investigation into a special immigration status for juveniles found 26,000 young immigrants stuck in bureaucratic limbo for years. Our data also informed a new coalition of advocacy groups pushing reform legislation in Congress. Their website uses our charts and figures to illustrate how many kids are affected, and their recent study of the issue built upon our work.

- No more than one in four people convicted of felonies were registered to vote in time for the 2020 election, according to our data investigation in four battleground states that had legally restored the right to vote to these communities. This reporting informed a legislative resolution in Nebraska to study voting among formerly incarcerated people. The resolution acknowledges that “data and system errors have impermissibly disenfranchised eligible voters from participation in the election process.”

- We are releasing as much data and methodology as we can on Observable, to make it easily accessible to experts across civil society. For example, our dataset about the practice of states collecting federal benefits intended for foster children has been used by advocates, journalists and government officials from Massachusetts to Montana and Michigan. Our data also powered a simple tool that allows users – including foster kids themselves – to check the policy in their state.