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The Mental and Physical Experiences of Inmates in Solitary Confinement

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Mental and Physical Experiences of Inmates in Solitary Confinement

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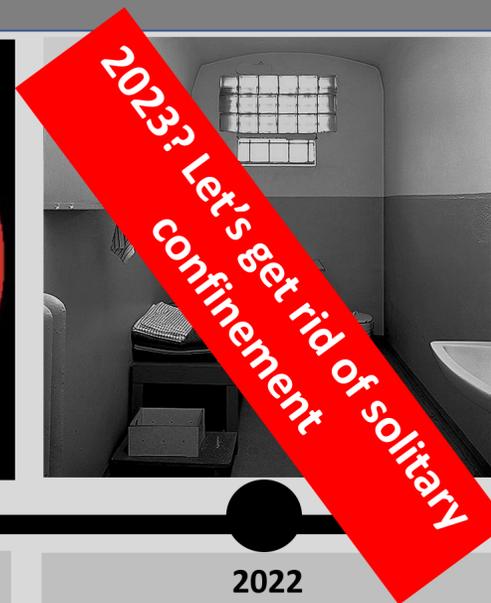
Solitary Confinement is the confinement of a prisoner alone in a cell for all, or nearly all, of the day with minimal environmental stimulation and minimal opportunity for social interaction (Grassian, 2006).

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel F. Miller: "A number of the prisoners fell, after even a short confinement, into a semi-fatuous condition, and others became violently insane or committed suicide..."

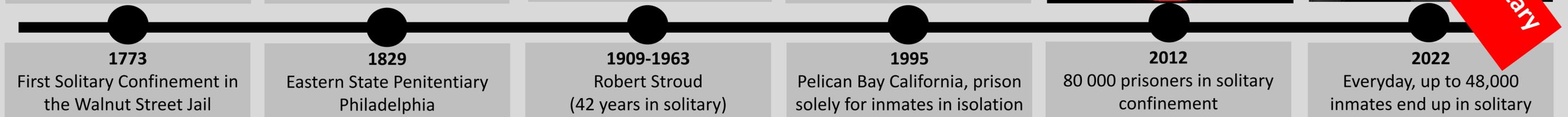


Reported depression and multiple suicidal attempts.

Madrid v. Gomez (1995)
"Conditions in the SHU may well hover on the edge of what is humanly tolerable." Yet, there was no constitutional basis for the courts to shut down the unit or to alter it.



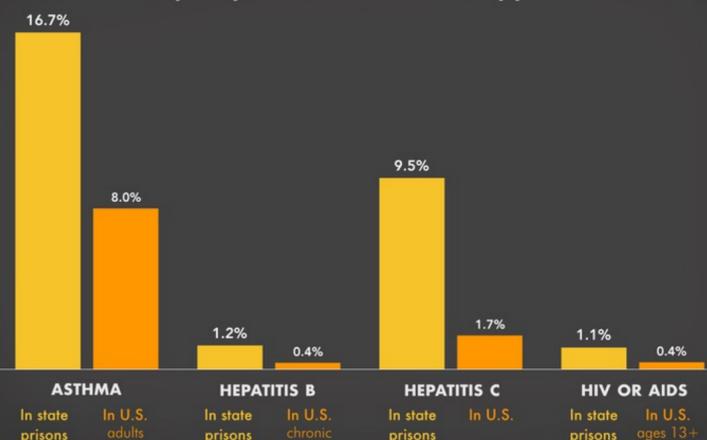
2023? Let's get rid of solitary confinement



Effects of Solitary Confinement

People in state prisons suffer disproportionately from various medical conditions compared to the overall U.S. population

Medical diagnoses ever received by people in state prisons in 2016, compared to prevalence estimates in the broader U.S. population



Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Survey of Prison Inmates 2016*; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019); Lim et al. (2020); Hofmeister et al. (2019); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). For a detailed source list, see https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/spi_2016_conditions_comparison.html

PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of concentration
- Confusion
- Florid delirium
- Lethargy
- Chronic tiredness
- Paranoia

Incarcerated people suffer disproportionately with serious mental illnesses compared to the overall U.S. population

Specific mental health problems reported by people in state prisons in 2016 compared to the U.S. adult population in 2016



PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Survey of Prison Inmates 2016* data analyzed by the Prison Policy Initiative; Olsson et al. (2019); Treatment Advocacy Center (2017); National Institute of Mental Health. For a detailed source list, see https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/spi_2016_mental_health_comparison.html

Physiological Effects of Solitary Confinement

- Severe headaches
- Heart palpitations
- Increased heart rate
- Oversensitivity to stimuli
- Digestive problems
- Fluctuations in body weight
- Skin irritations
- Nausea
- Dizziness

John J. Moran Medium Security Facility in Cranston, RI

PURPOSE

This study aims to investigate the effects of solitary confinement on mental and physical health of inmates in correctional facilities.

METHOD

Participants will be recruited from the John J. Moran Medium Security Facility in Cranston, Rhode Island who will be male prisoners aged 18 and older and will be asked to fill out a questionnaire.

PREDICTIONS

Inmates who spent some time in solitary confinement will experience both psychological and physiological effects of solitary confinement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have been possible without the support and nurturing of Barbara Frazier, LP.D.

REFERENCES

- Grassian, S., & Friedman, N. (1986). Effects of sensory deprivation in psychiatric seclusion and solitary confinement. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 8(1), 49–65.
- Madrid v. Gomez, 889 F. Supp. 1146 (N.D. Cal. 1995) <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/889/1146/1904317/>