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COVID-19 Behind Bars in the Mountain West

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COVID-19 BEHIND BARS IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Criminal Justice Fact Sheet No. 6 | May 2022

Prepared by: Dielle T. Telada, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

Due to overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, systemic neglect, and violence in U.S. carceral (i.e. jails or prisons) and immigration detention centers, these facilities are a hot spot for the spread of COVID-19. In March 2020, the UCLA Law “Covid Behind Bars Data Project” began tracking official agency websites for self-reported data of COVID-19 across prisons, jails, and other detention facilities in the U.S.¹ The number of COVID-19 cases, deaths, and tests performed from 50 state correctional agencies, the District of Columbia’s Department of Corrections, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and several county jail systems are explored in the original report. Due to inconsistencies in data reporting practices across agencies, efforts to collect and standardize COVID-19 data is challenging. This fact sheet explores the available COVID-19 data collected by the UCLA Law “Covid Behind Bars Data Project,” with a focus on agency data reporting and data quality.

ABOUT THE DATA:

To demonstrate the inconsistencies in data reporting and quality, the UCLA Law “COVID Behind Bars Data Project” created a scorecard to assess several COVID-19 related metrics for each of the 53 major state and federal agencies. The original report utilizes three sets of metrics to assign an Overall Score and Overall Grade.

- 1) Data reporting for incarcerated people (*Cumulative Cases, Cumulative Deaths, Active Cases, Tests Administered, Population, Vaccinations, and Boosters*)
- 2) Data reporting for staff (*Cumulative Cases, Cumulative Deaths, Active Cases, Tests Administered, Population, Vaccinations, and Boosters*)
- 3) Data quality (*Machine Readable, Regularly Updated, Clearly Defined, Contextualized Historically*).

The data quality grade represents the Project’s assessment of the transparency and quality of self-reported data by the department of corrections in each state.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Most Mountain West states (Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, and Arizona), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and another forty-one state correctional agencies received failing grades.
2. Colorado, with a D grade, is the only Mountain West state to not receive a failing grade (F) on the Data Reporting and Quality Scorecard.
3. Within the Mountain West, Nevada received the highest score (4 out of 6) on reporting for staff COVID-19 data.

Table 1 displays carceral agency scores of Mountain West states and federal facilities using aggregate COVID-19 data from the UCLA Law “COVID Behind Bars Data Project.” Using the scorecard metrics in the original report, the

¹ UCLA Law. “COVID Behind Bars Data Project”. 2022. (<https://uclacovidbehindbars.org/blog/scorecard>)

table presents how Mountain West states scored on Data Quality, Reporting for Incarcerated People, and Staff. All Mountain West states including BOP and ICE received a failing grade (F), except for Colorado which received a D grade. Among Mountain West states and federal carceral agencies, Nevada received the highest score (4 out of 6) on reporting for staff COVID-19 data.

Table 1: Mountain West State and Federal Carceral Agency Scores

Mountain West State / Federal Carceral Agency	Data Quality (out of 8)	Reporting for Incarcerated People (out of 10)	Reporting for Staff (out of 6)	Overall Score (out of 24)	Overall Grade
BOP	4	5	2	11	F
ICE	2	8	0	10	F
Utah	4	6	1	11	F
New Mexico	2	7	0	9	F
Colorado	6	8	1	15	D
Nevada	2	4	4	10	F
Arizona	2	6	1	9	F

* Adapted from “Covid Behind Bars Data Project.” *UCLA Law*. <https://uclacovidbehindbars.org/blog/scorecard>

Table 2 displays total reported COVID-19 cases among incarcerated people in Mountain West States. Colorado is the only state to have reported numbers of cases across all federal, state, and local carceral facilities within the state.

Table 2: Cumulative COVID-19 Cases of Incarcerated People in Mountain West States

Mountain West State	State Adult Prisons		Federal Prisons		ICE Detentions Centers		State and Local Youth Facilities	
	Count	Per 10k	Count	Per 10k	Count	Per 10k	Count	Per 10k
Utah	6,242	9,046	--	--	21	0	--	--
New Mexico	4,104	5,283	--	--	1,440	--	24	--
Colorado	14,176	8,087	11,692	4,609	807	34,195	208	9,498
Nevada	7,922	6,606	--	--	150	5,226	--	--
Arizona	14,858	3,500	1,967	4,791	6,571	--	--	--

* Adapted from “Covid Behind Bars Data Project.” *UCLA Law*. <https://uclacovidbehindbars.org/states/nevada/#scorecard>

Table 3 displays total reported COVID-19 cases among carceral staff in Mountain West States. No federal prisons within Mountain West states report data on COVID-19 among staff.

Table 3: Cumulative COVID-19 Cases of Carceral Staff in Mountain West States

Mountain West State	State Adult Prisons		Federal Prisons	
	Count	Per 10k	Count	Per 10k
Utah	939	4,070	--	--
New Mexico	973	--	--	--
Colorado	14,176	8,087	--	--
Nevada	1,923	7,290	--	--
Arizona	5,009	5,507	--	--

* Adapted from “Covid Behind Bars Data Project.” *UCLA Law*. <https://uclacovidbehindbars.org/states/nevada/#scorecard>