

# SCF DATA REPORT

## INCARCERATED PEOPLE SURVEY RESULTS COMPARISON 2021-2023

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



Reduced Sense of Safety



More Fears of Victimization



Less Trust in Staff



More Scarcity, Economic Strain



Reduced Opportunities



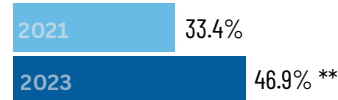
Less Clarity of Purpose

### REDUCED SENSE OF SAFETY AMONG INCARCERATED PEOPLE

On the 2023 survey, incarcerated people at SCF were 14.5% more likely to say that they fear for their safety, 12.7% more likely to say that they have seen things in SCF that they “just can’t shake,” and 12.7% more likely to say that they sometimes feel that their lives are in danger.

These results indicate that compared to responses in 2021, incarcerated people at SCF are feeling significantly less safe in 2023.

I fear for my safety.



I have seen things in this prison I just can't shake.



I sometimes feel my life is in danger.



### ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was prepared by an external research team at the University of Denver as part of Sterling Correctional Facility's commitment to transparency and data-driven decision-making. The report compares data from surveys of incarcerated people conducted at SCF in 2021 (n=409), and again in 2023 (n=150).

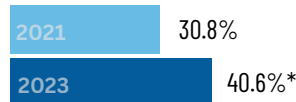
It is important to note that those who completed the survey are not necessarily the same people. Therefore, the findings represent changes across time as well as differences in those who chose to complete the survey each year. Each survey is best viewed as a "screenshot" of how the people currently incarcerated at SCF feel at that moment in time.

## FEARS OF VICTIMIZATION BY INCARCERATED PEERS

On the 2023 survey, incarcerated people at SCF were 9.8% more likely to say that they often feel threatened by other incarcerated people, 18.2% more likely to say they gangs in the prison make them feel unsafe, and 10.5% more likely to say that weak incarcerated people often get exploited and victimized in the facility.

These directionally consistent shifts suggest that incarcerated people are feeling less safety *with one another* in 2023 compared to 2021. Results also show statistically significant increases in those saying racial tension is a problem, and those reporting discrimination on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity.

I often feel threatened by other incarcerated people.



Gangs in this prison make me feel unsafe.



The weak are often victimized at SCF.



## LESS TRUST IN STAFF

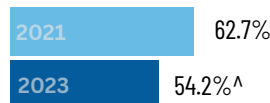
In 2023, incarcerated people were 8.6% less likely to feel that staff treat them with respect, 8.5% less likely to say that staff in their unit treat them fairly, and 6.9% less likely to say that they feel safe raising concerns with staff members.

The consistency in this data area indicate that incarcerated people have a significantly dimmer view of staff, and there has been some loss of trust that staff members are protecting them.

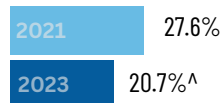
Staff at SCF treat me with respect.



Staff in my unit treat fairly.



I feel safe raising concerns with staff at SCF.



The asterisks in this report indicate differences that reach the threshold of statistical significance. These differences are statistically larger and less likely to be due to chance. The more asterisks that are present, the greater the statistical reliability of the difference. [^=.10, \*=.05, \*\*=.01, \*\*\*=.001]

## REPORTS OF SCARCITY AND ECONOMIC STRAIN

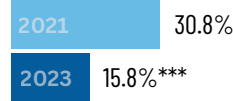
In 2023, incarcerated people were 7.8% more likely to say that they did not have enough money or resources to meet their basic needs, and 15.1% less likely to say that items in the canteen are fairly priced. They also were significantly less likely to say that they get enough to eat or are able to have a balanced diet. These are likely related, as incarcerated people have reported that purchasing from the canteen allows them to supplement their diet.

These results suggest that the economic pressures that are impacting the country more generally are also being felt by those incarcerated in SCF.

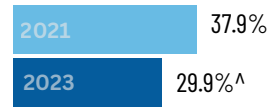
I do not have enough money or resources to meet my basic needs in here.



The items in the canteen are fairly priced.



I get enough to eat here.



## REDUCED PROGRAM ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

In 2023, incarcerated people reported much more difficulty participating in programs, treatment, and other opportunities. The percentage of those saying that it was hard or very hard to get into educational programs increased by 17.6%, and those saying that it was hard or very hard to get into vocational programs increased by 12.6%.

Incarcerated people were also 10.2% less likely to say they are able to get substance abuse treatment when they need it, and 18.1% less likely to say they can access case management when they need it. Further, the percent of incarcerated people who said that they are usually able to get enough recreation time in SCF decreased by 35.1% between 2021 and 2023.

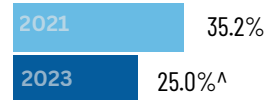
Getting into educational programs is hard.



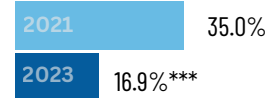
Getting into vocational programs is hard.



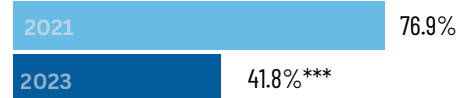
I am able to get substance abuse treatment.



I am able to get case management.



I am usually able to get enough recreation.



The asterisks in this report indicate differences that reach the threshold of statistical significance. These differences are statistically larger and less likely to be due to chance. The more asterisks that are present, the greater the statistical reliability of the difference. [^=.10, \*=.05, \*\*=.01, \*\*\*=.001]

## REDUCED CLARITY OF PURPOSE

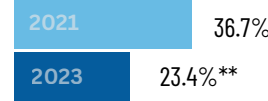
Reduced access to programming and treatment can be linked to negative outcomes for incarcerated people. Compared to survey findings in 2021, incarcerated people in 2023 were 8.3% less likely to say that they were clear on what they need to do in order to meet their parole requirements, and 11.5% less likely to say they have healthy ways to cope with the stress of being in prison.

This may be contributing to a reduction in purpose and hope among the incarcerated population. Survey respondents in 2023 were 13.4% less likely to say they have a purpose in SCF, and 12.8% less likely to say that they have hope for the future.

I have healthy ways to cope with the stress of being in prison.



I have a purpose here.



I have hope for the future.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This research brief summarizes the key areas of interest and the most significant findings based on a side-by-side analysis of 2021 and 2023 surveys. The surveys also show other differences. To review complete tables of all survey results, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/25mh4b4f>.

*In 2023, 38.6% of incarcerated respondents said they believe this research is making a difference at SCF.*

To discuss these findings further, please contact the research team at the University of Denver:

Dr. Jeff Lin, Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology and Criminology  
[Jeffrey.Lin@du.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Lin@du.edu)

Dr. Shannon Sliva, Associate Professor  
Graduate School of Social Work  
[Shannon.Sliva@du.edu](mailto:Shannon.Sliva@du.edu)

## FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*This work was completed under the Urban Institute's Prison Research and Innovation Initiative, supported by Arnold Ventures — a six-year effort to leverage research and evidence to shine a light on prison conditions and pilot strategies to promote the well-being of people who are confined and work behind bars. The views expressed here are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, Arnold Ventures, its trustees, or its funders.*