



# AMERICAN EQUITY & JUSTICE GROUP

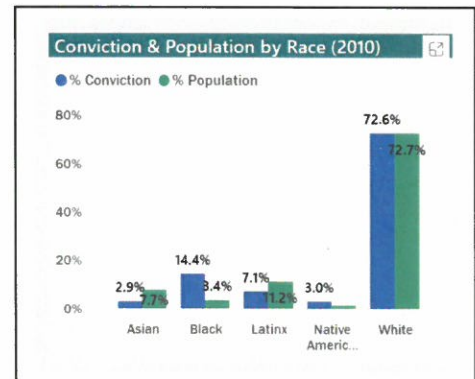
## What do you want to explore?<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Does Washington charge people in different demographic groups proportionately?

Use the Conviction Proportionality Dashboard:



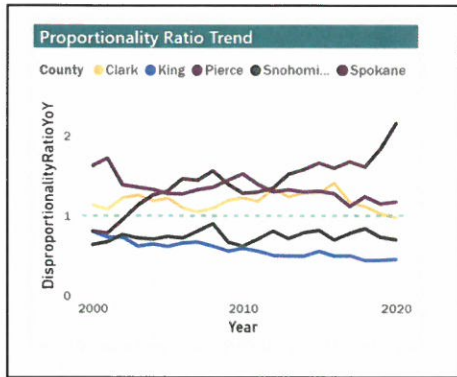
To be proportionate, the population of a particular demographic group within the criminal legal system should closely mirror the representation of that same group in the general population. The Equity Dashboard explores conviction proportionality by overlaying Caseload Forecast Council data with Washington State census data.



- If % of convictions is > than % of census population the disproportionality ratio will be > 1.
- If % of convictions is < than % of census population the disproportionality ratio will be < 1.
- If % of convictions equal to % of the population the disproportionality ratio will be = 1.

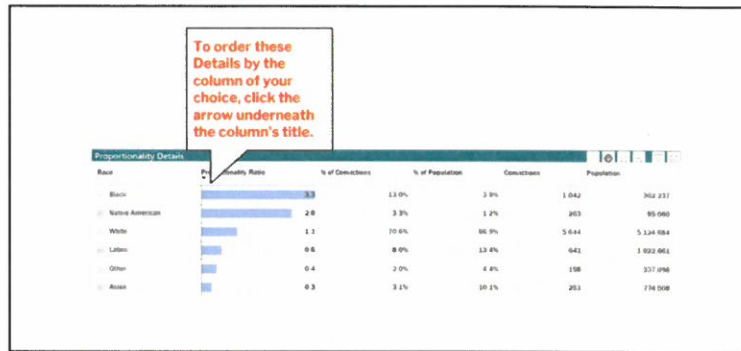
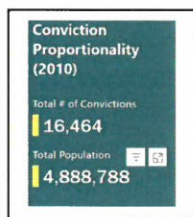
<sup>1</sup> Note, this User Manual covers the desktop Dashboard. Some features may be different on the mobile version.





The blue dashed line on the Ratio Trend view represents a disproportionality ratio of 1.

These two visuals break down the filtered data:

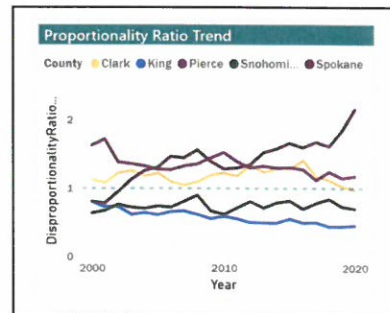


## 2. Is this happening right now?

All the views on the Conviction Proportionality Dashboard show one year of data, except for the Ratio Trend view, which shows a year range.

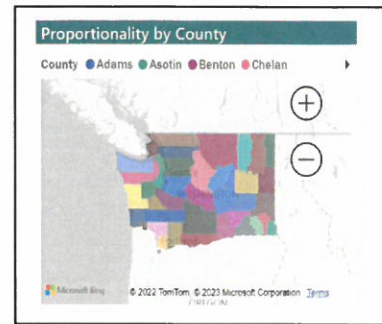
## 3. Does this pattern change over time?

- Adjust the “Year Range” filter to get a snapshot of a different year; or
- Use the Ratio Trend visual to explore how things change over all years in the data.



#### 4. Does this pattern vary by county?

- Select one or more counties from the “County” drop-down filter; or
- Use the interactive “Proportionality by County” map.



NOTE: If you select “all counties”, the Ratio Trend View will automatically display the 5 counties that have the highest population of the selected race.

#### 5. Does this pattern vary by race/ethnicity?

Select one or more race/ethnicities from the “Race” filter.

#### 6. Does this data perfectly capture community demographics?

Data limitations can impact proportionality analysis and mask disparities.

- Washington’s 39 counties do not all use the same sentencing forms and inconsistently identify race and ethnicity.
- The CFC does not enable users to identify multiracial individuals.
- The CFC codes “Hispanic/Latinx” as a race instead of an ethnicity and does not include “Native Hawaiian” and “Other Pacific Islander” in its dataset.

#### 7. Does this pattern change depending on the age of the person charged?

Use the “Age Range” filter.

NOTE: The age in the Equity Dashboard is the age at sentencing.

#### 8. Does this pattern change depending on the gender of the person charged?

Use the “Gender” filter.

NOTE: Gender options are binary because those are the categories in the CFC data.



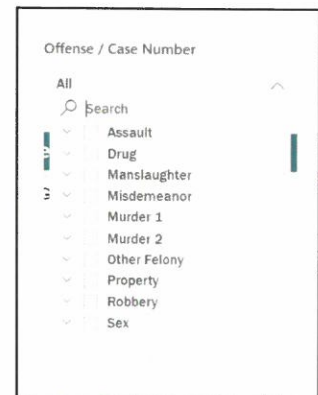
## 9. Does this pattern change depending on the crime?

Select one or more race/ethnicities from the “Offense” drop-down menu, which reflects the offense categories in the CFC data.

NOTE: Each category has drop-down subgroups.

Some offenses may appear in multiple categories.

We recommend reviewing all subgroups to ensure all relevant boxes are selected.



## 10. Are the conviction proportionality comparisons statistically significant?

### Use the Statistics Dashboard:

NOTE:

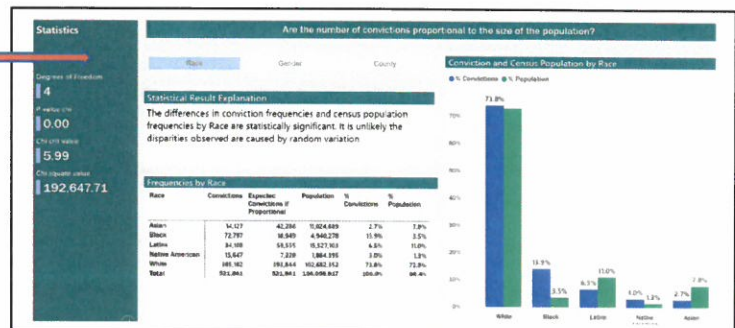
Adjust the visuals by selecting “Race,” “Gender,” or “County”.

The “**Race**” visual compares the size of that population

with convictions and the size of that population in the census.

The “**Gender**” visual compares the conviction and census populations by binary gender category.

The “**County**” visual compares the number of convictions in the selected county (or counties) with the census population. For example, filter for “Black” and the year “2000.” Select “County” for the visual set. The Dashboard will indicate that King County accounted for 51.4% of the Black people convicted of felonies in Washington in 2000, even though King County only accounted for 50.2% of Black people in Washington State. For comparison, change the year to “2020.” King County accounted for 32.9% of Black people convicted of felonies in Washington in 2020 but accounted for 50.6% of Washington’s Black population. Changing the “County” visual allows you to



compare whether the changes seen in King County are also seen in other counties around the state.

**“Statistical significance”** helps quantify whether the result is likely due to random variation or to some factor of interest. It is a tool used to understand how strongly the results of a sample set should influence decisions. For more information see: <https://hbr.org/2016/02/a-refresher-on-statistical-significance>.

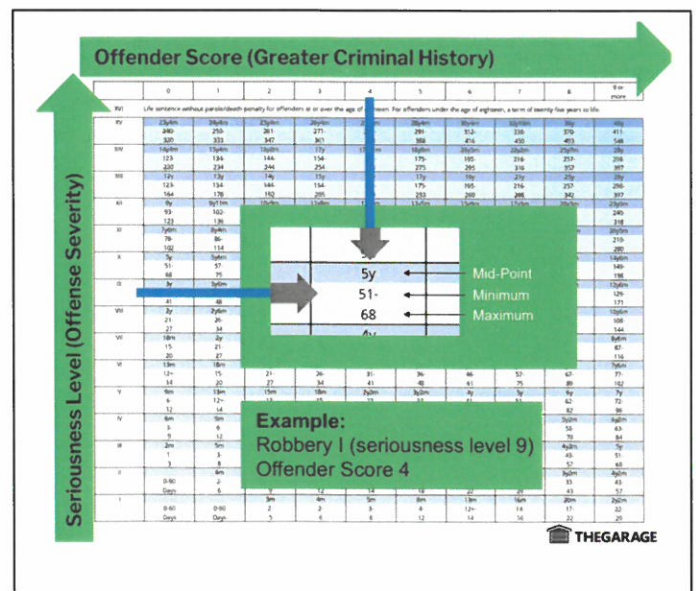
**“Degrees of freedom”** generally relate to the size (or number of independent pieces of information) in the sample set.

A **“p-value”** of less than or equal to 0.05, in a Chi square test, is regarded as a statistically significant result and the null hypothesis is rejected. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant and the null hypothesis is accepted.

A **“Chi crit value”** is the value of a statistic which defines the bounds for a chi-square test with the associated degrees of freedom.

## 11. How are adult felony sentences chosen in Washington State?

In Washington State, felony sentencing is governed by the Sentence Reform Act of 1981 (SRA) sentencing grid. The grid accounts for the seriousness of an offense (seriousness level) and different levels of criminal history (offender score), providing the judge with a sentencing length range. The judge chooses a sentence after receiving information about the case, hearing from the victim and the defendant (if they choose to make a statement), and considering the recommendations and legal arguments from prosecution and defense. The judge cannot legally impose a sentence outside of the standard sentencing range unless



there are sentence alternatives, enhancements, or grounds for an exceptional sentence.

In this example, an individual is being sentenced for a First Degree Robbery, which has a seriousness level of “9”. Because of other current or past criminal history, the individual has an offender score of “4”. The standard range of imprisonment is 51-68 months confinement.

**ASR % = where, between the low and high end of the standard range, the average sentence falls.**

We have converted the sentencing data into an average sentence range percentage (ASR%). Using this metric, we control for the seriousness of the offense and prior criminal history to see if disparities exist.

- If the judge always sentences at the low-end, the ASR% is 0.
- If the judge always sentences at the middle, the ASR% is 50%.
- If the judge always sentences at the high-end, the ASR% is 100%.
- If the judge chooses different parts of the range, the ASR% is the average.
- If the ASR% is more than 100%, the data set includes cases with enhancements and/or exceptional sentences above the range.

NOTE: Keep in mind that, when the prosecution charges and obtains a conviction that includes a sentence enhancement, the judge typically must add the enhancement time to the sentence, even though doing so bumps the sentence above the high-end of the standard range.

Before imposing sentence, judges hear recommendations from the prosecution and the defense. Each person being sentenced has the option to make a statement. The judge may hear from the victim or others impacted by the crime. Finally, the judge is tasked with choosing a sentence that:

1. Ensures that the punishment for a criminal offense is proportionate to the seriousness of the offense and the offender’s criminal history;
2. Promotes respect for the law by providing punishment which is just;
3. Is commensurate with the punishment imposed on others committing similar offenses;
4. Protects the public;



5. Offers the offender an opportunity to improve himself or herself;
6. Makes frugal use of the state's and local government's resources; and
7. Reduces the risk of reoffending by offenders in the community.<sup>2</sup>

## 12. If a sentence is disproportionate, who is to blame?

Disproportionate treatment can occur at each stage of a criminal legal case. It can accumulate over the life of a criminal case, from arrest through sentencing, and beyond. Disproportionality at the point of sentencing may reflect all of the decisions made up to that point in time, or “cumulative disproportionality.” Our Dashboards do not tell users the extent to which sentencing disparity is the result of any one person's choices. Instead, **our Dashboards are one way we work to help users consider how each choice in the life of a case may contribute to, may reflect, or may help resolve the inequity that is in the criminal legal system.**

In a 2020 open letter, the Washington Supreme Court called on all of us to work to eliminate systemic racism in the legal system:<sup>3</sup>

The legal community must recognize that we all bear responsibility for this ongoing injustice, and that we are capable of taking steps to address it, if only we have the courage and the will. The injustice still plaguing our country has roots in the individual and collective actions of many, and it cannot be addressed without the individual and collective actions of us all.

The Court recently repeated its call to action:<sup>4</sup>

The legal system is made of people – lawyers, judges, jurors, and others – and it shared in our human strengths and weaknesses. All of us has the capacity to push our system closer to the ideals and promises of justice; we also have the ability to perpetuate harm. To turn our system squarely toward fairness requires conscious effort and honesty when we fail.

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<sup>2</sup> RCW 9.94A.010.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.courts.wa.gov/content/publicUpload/Supreme%20Court%20News/Judiciary%20Legal%20Community%20SIGNED%20060420.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Henderson v. Thompson*, 200 Wn.2d 417 (2022)



AEJG provides transparency to inform everyone working to understand where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go if we are to achieve fairness and equity in the criminal legal system.

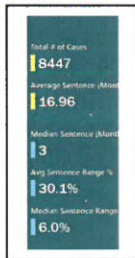
### 13. Are people in different demographic groups sentenced differently?

Three Dashboards help you explore this question:

- Sentencing Disparity: Summary
- Sentencing Disparity: Deep Dive
- Case Drill Down

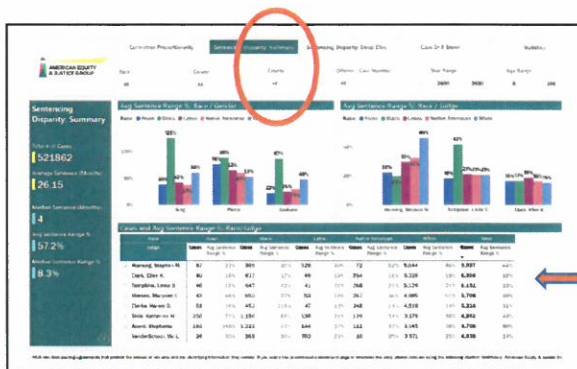
The Dashboards default to all convictions, across the entire State, for the period for which we have data. Select from these filters. Unless reset, they apply across all three Dashboards.

Race	Gender	County	Offense / Case Number	Year Range	Age Range
All	All	All	All	2009 2019	0 19



The column on the left provides basic information about the filtered data set.

The **Sentencing Disparity: Summary Dashboard** defaults to the three most populous counties. Use the “County” filter to select different counties:

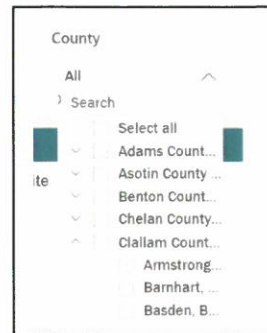


Further details about the caseload(s) are in this chart.





It defaults to the three judges with the most cases in that data set. Choose specific judges via the drop-down menu for their County:

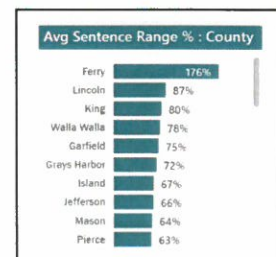


NOTE: Consider that judges do not typically choose which cases they consider. Cases are assigned to them. AEJG believes information about judicial case assignment will provide our users valuable information. We encourage courts to share that data with us, to help you put our data in context.

The **Sentencing Disparity: Deep Dive Dashboard** provides additional filters for “Age Range,” “Race,” “Gender,” “Judge,” and “County.”

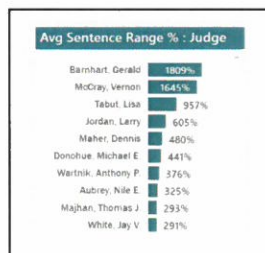
Which counties have the highest ASR%?

Filter by “County” to explore.



Does ASR% change by race/ethnicity?

Filter by “Race” and change the “County” filter to compare.



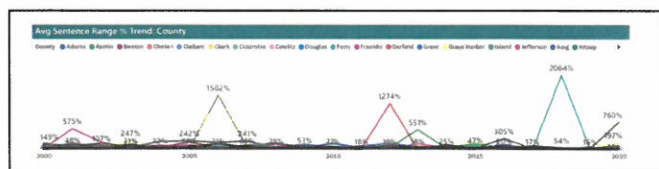
Which judges in the state, or in a particular county, have the highest ASR%? Filter by “Judge” to compare.

Does this change by race/ethnicity?

Filter by “Race” and change the “County” filter to explore.

Does this change over time?

Use the Trend to see.




The **Case Drill Down Dashboard** empowers users by providing granular filters:


- Case Number
- Sentencing Date
- Judge
- Race
- Offender Age (at sentencing)
- Verdict (Jury trial, Bench trial, Plea)
- Offense Count, Offender Score, Seriousness Level
- Offense Type & Description
- Standard Range (low end, high end)
- Sentence imposed (ASR%, length, exceptional sentences, LWOP<sup>5</sup>)
- Qualifiers (Attempt, Solicitation, Conspiracy, Sexual Motivation, Deadly Weapon, and Firearm).<sup>6</sup>

Click the arrow under each column header to sort the data by that column.

Scroll across the columns to see more information.



County_CauseNum	Sentencing_Date	Judge	Race	Offender_Age	Verdict
99-1-50931-1	February 8, 2000	Schapira, Carol A.	White	32	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50929-0	October 2, 2000	Wartnik, Anthony P.	Black	37	Jury Trial
99-1-50928-1	July 16, 2000	Ishikawa, Richard M.	Black	23	Jury Trial
99-1-50925-7	January 28, 2000	Wartnik, Anthony P.	Black	33	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50920-6	August 23, 2000	Trickey, Michael J.	Black	45	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50916-8	January 14, 2000	Armstrong, Sharon S.	Asian	19	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50914-1	September 8, 2000	Hayden, Michael	White	47	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50913-3	November 17, 2000	DuBuque, Joan	Native American	35	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50913-3	August 18, 2005	Erick, John P.	Native American	40	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50912-6	April 7, 2000	Schapira, Carol A.	Black	49	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50909-5	April 20, 2001	Mertal, Charles W.	Black	36	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions

Click  at the end of the “Cases by Race” row to show filters affecting the visual:

Filters and slicers affecting this visual

**Age**  
is greater than or equal to 0 and is less than or equal to 25

**CountyState**  
is King County WA

**Measures**  
is Cases

**PivotBy Fields**

Click to  move the dataset to a full screen “focus” mode.

<sup>5</sup> Life Without Parole.

<sup>6</sup> Other qualifiers exist in law, but are not tracked in the CFC data.



**14. I want to see all cases in which there is a Deadly Weapon or Firearm Enhancement.**

Use the **Case Drill Down Dashboard**.  
Choose “Yes” in the “Qualifications” filter:

Qualifications

Yes ▼

Sort by the “Offense Qualifications” column to see the enhancements and their corresponding count:

Offense\_Qualifications

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4:NA, 5:Deadly  
weapon: Firearm,  
6:NA, 7:Deadly  
weapon: Firearm  
1:Deadly weapon:  
Firearm, 2:NA, 3:NA,  
4:NA, 5:NA

NOTE: We are working to make it easier to filter by a specific qualifier.

**15. I want to look up all cases in the state where a person was under 18 years old and was sentenced to more than 20 years imprisonment.**

NOTE: The CFC data tracks the age at sentencing, not the date of the offense. We expect that the upcoming addition of data will enable you to track by age at the time of the offense with more precision.

In the meantime, begin to explore this question using the **Case Drill Down/Export Dashboard**.

**16. How can I find a specific case in the Equity Dashboard?**

Use the **Case Drill Down/ Export Dashboard**.

If you know the case number, you can search for it using the filter on the right-hand side of this Dashboard. NOTE: multiple counties may have cases with the same number. One number could return more than one case. Use the case details to locate your specific case:

County_CauseNum	Sentencing_Date	Judge	Race	Offender_Age	Verdict
99-1-50931-1	February 8, 2000	Schapira, Carol A.	White	32	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50929-0	October 2, 2000	Wartnik, Anthony P.	Black	37	Jury Trial
99-1-50928-1	July 16, 2000	Ishikawa, Richard M.	Black	23	Jury Trial
99-1-50925-7	January 28, 2000	Wartnik, Anthony P.	Black	33	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions
99-1-50920-6	August 23, 2000	Trickey, Michael J.	Black	45	Plea or Stipulated Findings & Conclusions



**17. I want to look up a case by an individual's name.**

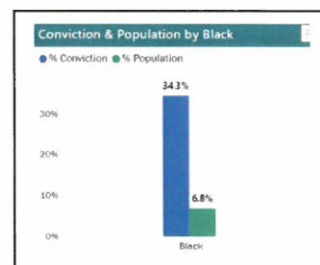
We do not provide access to this information.

**18. I represent a Black client charged with First Degree Murder in King County.**

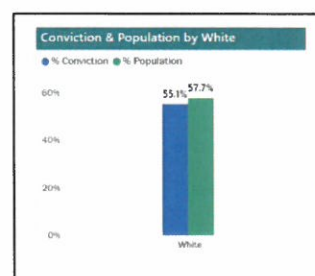
**The prosecutor offered to recommend the low-end of the standard range in exchange for my client's guilty plea to a Second Degree Murder. How can I use the Equity Dashboard to further my understanding of the fairness of this proposed resolution?**

- Consider starting with the **Conviction Proportionality Dashboard**. Are Black people are convicted more often than would be expected from the size of the population? How does the proportionality for Black people compare to that of other race/ethnicities?
- Filter this search by the "County" in which your client is charged. How does conviction proportionality for that county compare to the entire state?

Conviction proportionality by "Black," "King County," and "2020":

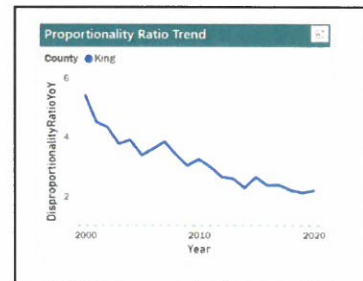


Conviction proportionality by "White," "King County," and "2020":



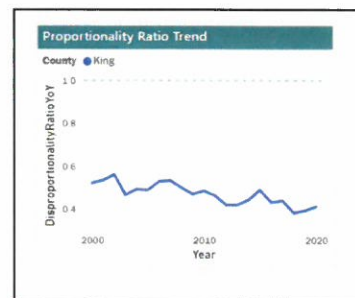
- Review the “Proportionality Ratio Trend” visual to see how proportionality changes over time. You could also review different dates by changing the upper end of the “Year Range” filter.

This is the “Proportionality Ration Trend” visual when filtered by ‘Black”, “King County” and the “Year Range” 2000-2020:



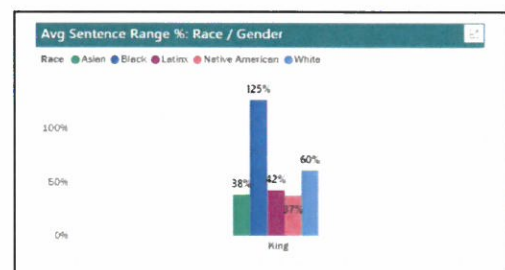
When the same visual is filtered by “White”, it looks different:

Consider where the blue dashed line (representing proportionality) is on each visual.

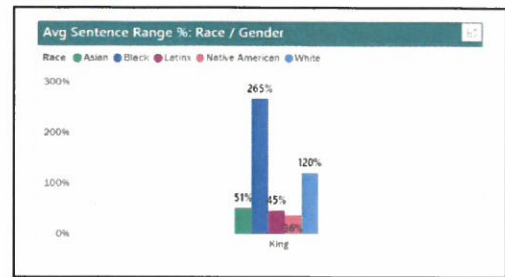


- Is the low-end sentence that would be recommended if the client takes a plea offer to Second Degree Murder “good”? Use the **Sentencing Disparity: Summary Dashboard** to assess the ASR%:

For all crimes combined, and for all King County Judges, over all years, the data shows that the ASR% is the highest (by far) for Black people. This data does not tell you who recommended what sentence recommendations. But *if* the client were to receive the low-end of the ASR% (instead of just a prosecutor recommendation for the low-end), the client would do better than the average for both White and Black individuals.



If this data set is further filtered by “Murder 2” as the “Offense” type, the result again shows disparity.

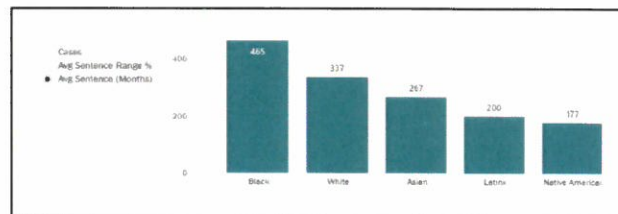


- Use the **Case Drill Down/ Export Dashboard** to assess whether the sentence length for Murder 2 in King County varies by race/ethnicity. In the last step, you considered whether, on average, the court imposed a sentence at a higher point in the standard range. In this step, you explore whether that ASR% also correlates to a higher sentence.

For King County, in 2020, there were six Murder 2 cases. The sentence length varied by race with Black people receiving the highest sentence.



If the “Year Range” were changed to “2000-2020”, then the sample set includes 260 Murder 2 cases. The sentence length still varied by race with Black people receiving the highest.



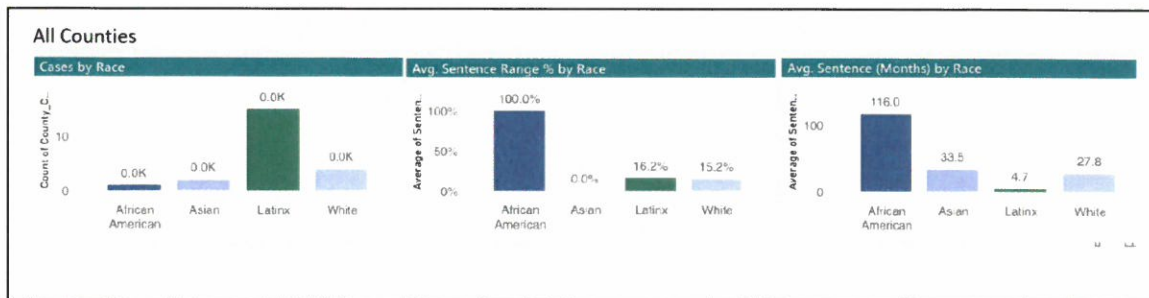
- Is there more to investigate? The result achieved assumes that Murder 2 is the only crime that the client could have been charged with. But, there is significant overlap with Manslaughter 1, a lesser charge with a lower sentence range. This means the prosecutor has discretion on which crime is charged, and what crimes is offered the plea agreement. You may want to run all these same searches for the crime of Manslaughter 1. You can then better determine whether your client is receiving a plea offer that is fair across all demographics.



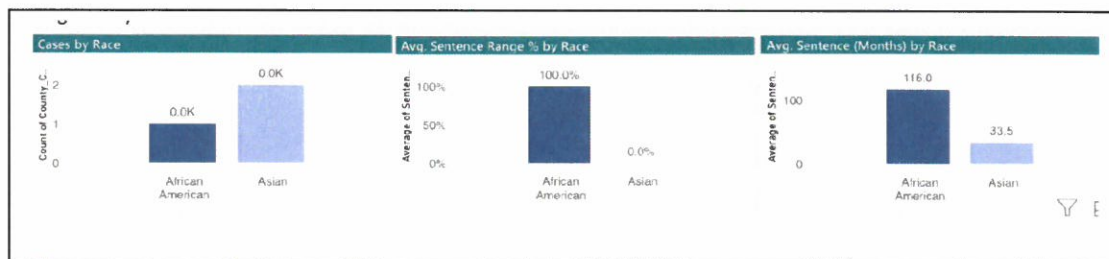
**19. If the penalty for a specific crime is increased, will that change disproportionately impact persons of color or marginalized communities?**

This example comes from a question posed by a legislator looking for ways to help solve a problem in their district. We used the **Case Drill Down/ Export Dashboard** to explore this subject.

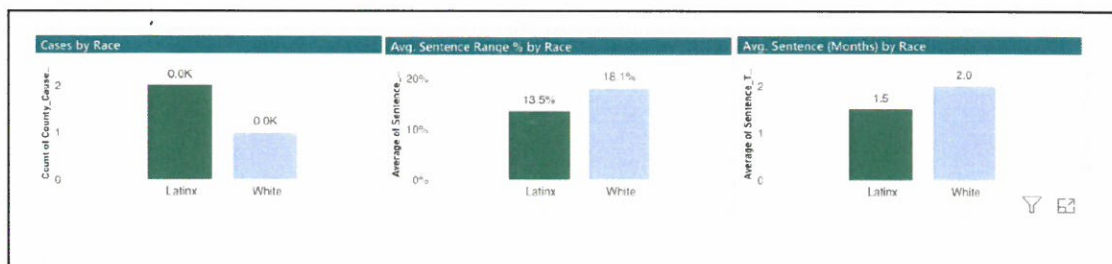
Only some Washington counties had convictions for the crime at issue:



**King County:** 3 cases, one with a Black defendant and two with Asian defendants. Different ASR% and very different sentences.

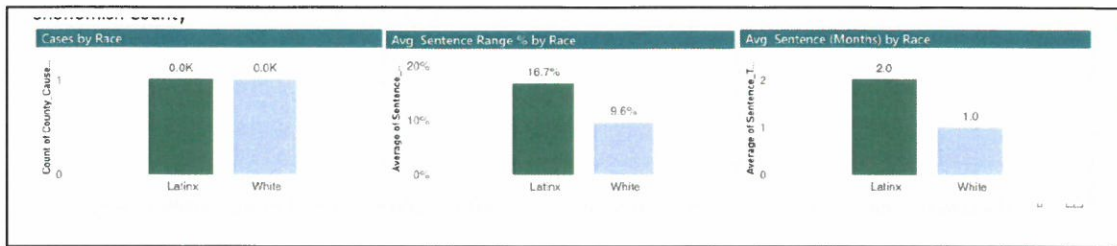


**Benton County:** 3 cases, one with a White defendant and two with Latinx defendants. Different ASR% and different sentences.



**Snohomish County:** 2 cases, one White defendant and one Latinx defendant. The sentences were again different.





Yakima and Franklin County each had two cases. All the defendants were Latinx.

This was a small data set. The crime rarely results in convictions. Our data did not include the facts underlying each case. But it did suggest an increased penalty would disproportionately impact people of color. This led to a discussion about whether the problem was best addressed without increased punishment.

## 20. How do I compare whether proportionality and equity change between prosecutor administrations?

To conduct this search, you need to know the years for that administration. Once you have that information, you can review conviction and sentence proportionality during those years and in that county.

In 2021, the Spokane County Bar Association asked AEJG to show them how the Equity Dashboard might be used to compare the Tucker (2010-2015) and Haskell (2016-present) administrations. This use-case scenario formed the basis for these suggestions:

- Start with conviction proportionality for those two time periods in the whole state. How does Spokane compare with the whole state? With other counties? Counties with large vs. small populations? Those in Eastern vs. Western Washington? Those with similar populations?
- Look at conviction proportionality for different types of offenses. Are the trends for robbery offenses the same as for drug or sex offenses?

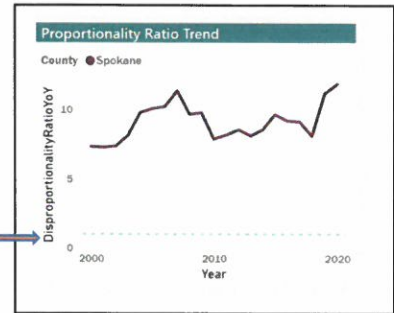




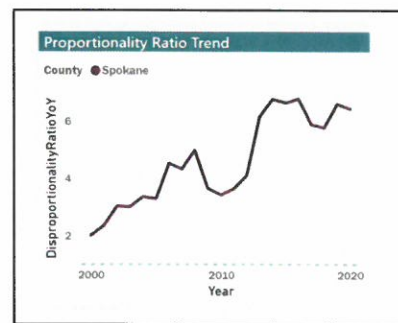
- Use the “Proportionality Ratio Trend” visual in the **Conviction Proportionality Dashboard**:

If “Spokane County” and “Black” are the filters, this is the resulting trend:

NOTE: Remember the blue dashed line shows where the trend would be if Black people were convicted proportionately.

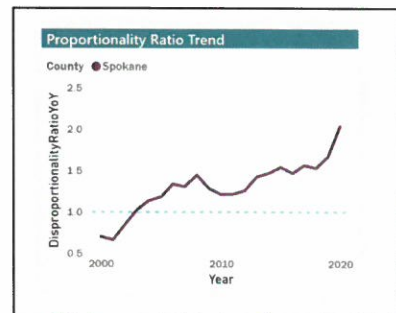


Change the “Race” filter to “Native American”:



Change the “Race” filter to White:

NOTE: The number of White convictions relative to White population is increasing. But in 2020, the trend tops out at 2.0. In 2020, the ratio is 11.9 for the Black population and 6.4 for the Native American population.

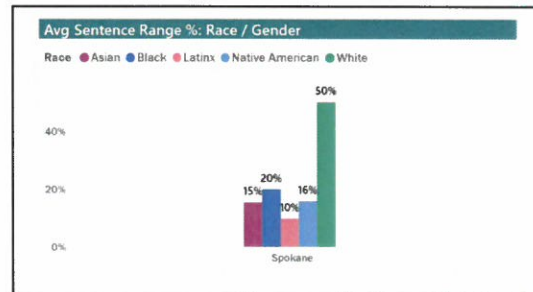


- To see the Proportionality details for any given year, adjust the “Year Range” and use the “Proportionality Details” visual on the **Conviction Proportionality Dashboard**. These are the details for Spokane in 2020:

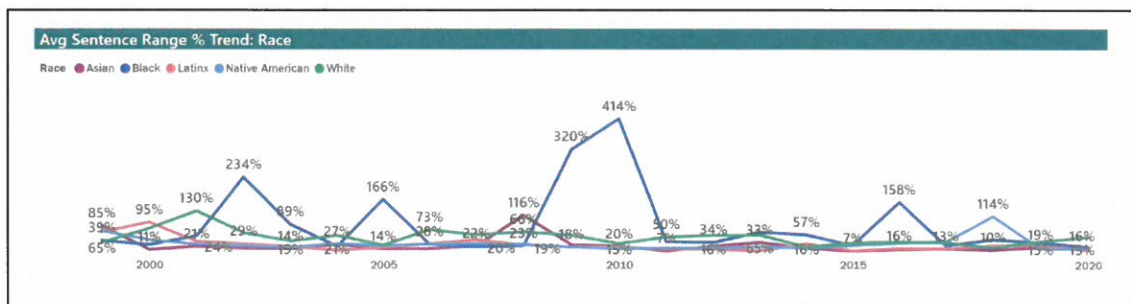
Proportionality Details (2020)					
Race	Proportionality Ratio	% Convictions	% Population	Convictions	Population
Black	11.9	10.8%	2.0%	120	9,875
Native American	6.4	4.3%	1.5%	48	7,281
White	2.0	82.5%	87.2%	913	437,443
Latinx	0.5	1.5%	6.1%	17	30,456
Asian	0.5	0.8%	3.3%	9	16,805

We don't yet have prosecutor recommendations in our data. But those recommendations are one factor considered when choosing a sentence.

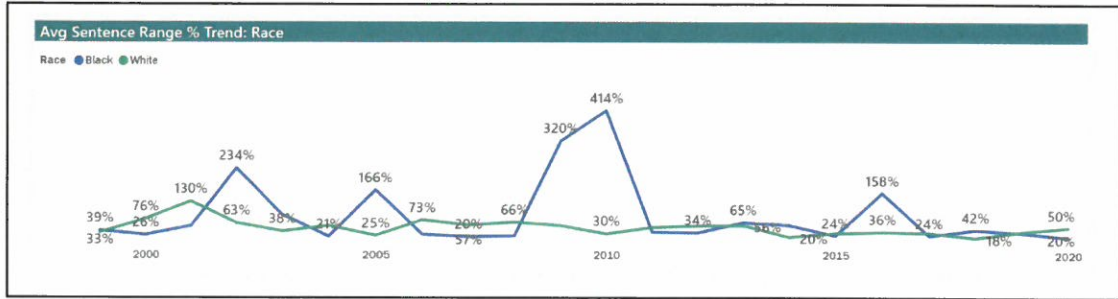
- Use the **Sentencing Disparity Summary Dashboard** to explore how the ASR% varies for each Race in Spokane. This visual is for 2020, but you can run the search for all the years in each prosecutor administration.



- Or if you want one visual that shows how ASR% changes over the time periods in the two administrations, use the timeline in the **Sentencing Disparity: Deep Dive Dashboard**.

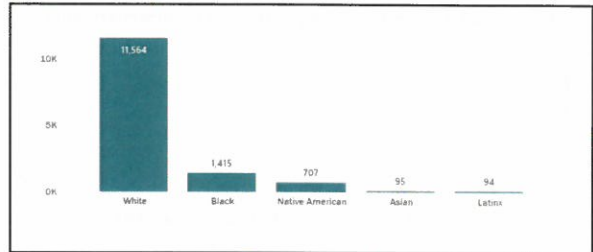


For a simpler timeline visual, consider filtering by just two races. This the above visual filtered by “Black” and “White”:

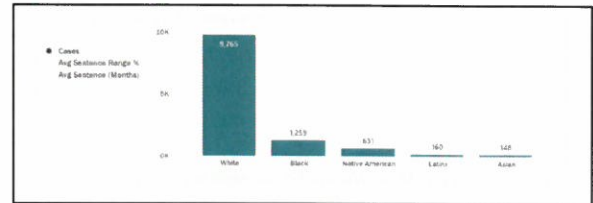


- Use the **Case Drill Down Dashboard** to compare the volume of cases by race and the average sentence by race during the years in each administration:

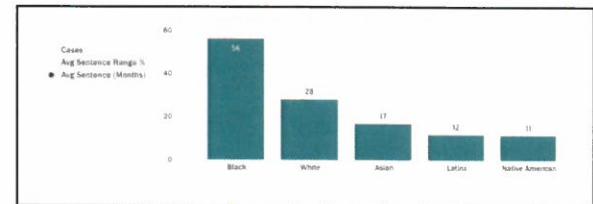
White people had the majority of criminal convictions in the Tucker administration:



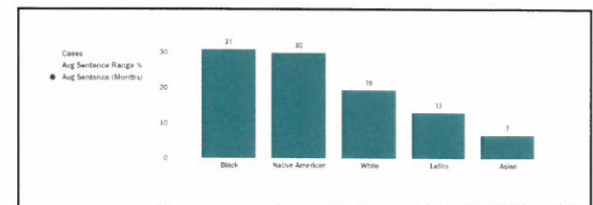
And the Haskell administration:



Black and Native American people had the highest sentences in the Tucker administration:



And the Haskell administration:



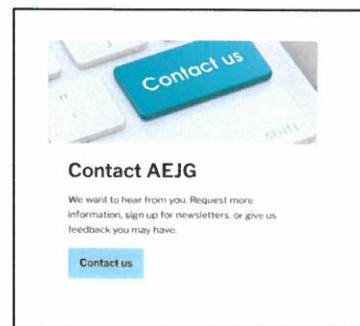
**20. Can I get more insight into data related to the cases discussed in “One crime, two very different punishments for Everett teens” via the Equity Dashboard?**

The answer is “possibly.” A copy of this article is attached. Two young men with the last names “Corona-Medina” and “Alexander” were sentenced for similar involvement in an “armed robbery spree in south Everett.” Neither had criminal history. Corona-Medina was kept in custody while the case was resolved, had a public defender, did not have a psychological evaluation, had no one speak for him at sentencing, and was sentenced by Judge Lucas to 7 years in prison. Alexander had a private attorney, was out of custody while the case was resolved, had a psychological evaluation offered at sentencing, had many people present at sentencing, and was sentenced by Judge Langbehn to probation.

With our data, the user can explore the difference in conviction and sentencing outcomes for the Latinx and non-Latinx populations. The user can explore the sentencing data for Judges Lucas and Langbehn. But we believe that Alexander’s record is not in our data set. We believe that Corona-Medina’s is. We do not have conclusive information about the race/ethnicity for either person. We do not (yet) have data that enables the user to explore the impact of public vs. private counsel, pre-trial release vs. pre-trial incarceration, or other personal facts that would be revealed through a psychological evaluation or letters from family and supporters. But our data can be used to get insight into whether the reported result in these cases are consistent with other conviction and sentencing trends in Washington, Snohomish County, or the courtrooms of the two Judges.

**21. I need help figuring out how to use the data to answer my specific question. What do I do?**

The “Take Action” page on our website provides a way for you to contact us. Send us your question, and we will set up a time to help.



## 22. What citation do I use if I want to export AEJG’s visuals or filtered data for use outside the website?

AEJG has data sharing agreements that prohibit the release of raw data and the identify information it contains. If you would like to download a Dashboard page or reference the data, please use the following citation:

**Dashboard, American Equity & Justice Group (2022). *American Equity & Justice Group Dashboard Tool (Data Release 1.1.1) Retrieved from <https://www.americanequity.org> on date.***

Use of the Dashboard is an express agreement to comply with the terms of use.



## Equity Dashboard Data Sources:

1. Washington State Census population data: Each year, the United States Census Bureau produces and publishes estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, state/county equivalents, and Puerto Rico. The Census Bureau measures the resident population for each year since the most recent decennial census by using measures of population change. The resident population includes all people currently residing in the United States. Governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses rely on the U.S. population information provided decennially through the Census. Over time, the Census Bureau has changed the way it classifies race and ethnicity. Historically, the changes have been influenced by social, political, and economic factors including emancipation, immigration and civil rights. More information can be found at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).
2. Washington Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) data: CFC data is available for the years 1999-2021. Outlier cases in the CFC data have been filtered out of AEJG's sentencing views (550 cases with sentences 9998 months). Washington's legislature and administrative agencies use CFC data to inform their understanding of caseloads and budgets. The data, available at [www.cfc.wa.gov](http://www.cfc.wa.gov), includes all adult felony cases in Washington Superior Courts. The CFC obtains their data, including demographics, from the forms prepared at each felony sentencing hearing.
3. **UPCOMING:** Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) data: Established in 1957 by state lawmakers, the AOC maintains information and records from court management systems across Washington's non-unified courts, including the Judicial Information System (JIS), the Superior Court Management and Information System (SCOMIS), the Appellate Court System (ACORDS), and Odyssey. AOC uses their data, in part, to develop operational budgets, evaluate judicial system functionality, maintain the computer system that serves the entire court system, provide continuing judicial education, compile statewide court statistics, and provide information to the judicial community, other



branches of the government, and the public. The AOC tracks data from many points at all stages of felony cases filed in any of Washington's 39 superior courts.

AEJG does not expect that adding AOC data will remedy *all* of the limitations found in CFC data. That will require improved data keeping by actors throughout the criminal legal system.



# One crime, two very different punishments for Everett teens

Two young men went on an armed robbery spree. One was sentenced to seven years in prison. The other, zero.

By Ellen Dennis

Monday, April 19, 2021 7:56am | [LOCAL NEWS](#) [EVERETT](#)

EVERETT — Two teens went on the same armed robbery spree in south Everett.

One is serving a prison sentence of seven years.

The other was sentenced to 10 years of probation, with no time behind bars.

“It shows you how unfair the system can be,” said Oscar Corona-Medina’s public defender, David Roberson. “When presented with the same facts, two different judges can make two completely different decisions. The courts shouldn’t be that way.”

Corona-Medina and Chase Alexander, both then 19, pointed guns at four strangers in separate parked cars, demanding valuables over the course of about three hours in September 2018, according to court papers.

Both were charged with three counts of first-degree robbery and one count of attempted robbery.

Each young man claimed the spree was the other’s idea. In both cases, the charges brought by prosecutors were virtually the same.



Alexander hired a private defense attorney.

Corona-Medina was assigned a public defender.

Alexander posted \$25,000 bail.

Corona-Medina struggled to come up with \$100,000 in bond.

The young men had different prosecutors.

They were sentenced, in hearings two years apart, by different judges.

### **The spree**

Around 3:40 a.m. Sept. 24, 2018, Alexander and Corona-Medina — in dark clothes, masks and gloves — got out of a dark Chevy Trailblazer and approached a car in the Anytime Fitness parking lot off 132nd Street SE in Everett, according to charging papers. They pointed realistic-looking BB guns at the occupant and demanded a laptop, cellphone and watch, the man reported to police.

A couple of hours later, around 5:30 a.m., a man in south Everett was waiting for his car to warm up outside a Fred Meyer when he saw a Trailblazer park near his car.

He heard a tap on his window, so he rolled it down halfway to see what the two teenagers outside wanted. Alexander and Corona-Medina brandished their guns, pressed a kitchen knife to the man's throat, then seized the man's wallet and cellphone, he told police.

Two miles away, in the Burlington Coat Factory parking lot, a woman sat in her car waiting to go to work. A young man got out of an SUV and approached her window at about 5:50 a.m., she told police. He was asking her for directions to I-5 when she saw a second young man exit the SUV. The teen asking for directions then pulled out a black handgun, pointed it at her head and demanded her wallet and phone.

The pair fled in the SUV.

About an hour later, they attempted to rob a fourth stranger in the Everett Costco parking lot. That heist was thwarted when one of their guns made contact with the car's window and made an obvious plastic sound, a woman told police.

The woman told the two young men she knew their guns were fake. She said they pulled down their masks, said it was all a prank and left.

One of the victims pinged his stolen phone, and police located the Trailblazer outside Alexander's home. Both teens were arrested.

### **The system**

Bail was set at \$25,000 for both young men in Everett District Court.

Alexander posted that amount.

Corona-Medina's bail was raised to \$100,000 at arraignment. At 19, he didn't have that kind of money.

One teen being in custody and one being out of jail influenced the differing outcomes, said Alexander's attorney, Samantha Sommerman, of Mazzone Law.

Corona-Medina's case resolved relatively fast as he sat behind bars. He pleaded guilty as charged in December 2018.

State guidelines suggested prison time within a range of 6½ to 8½ years. Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Eric Lucas handed down a sentence near the middle of that range, in early 2019.

Corona-Medina has now served two years behind bars. His attorney said last week he was surprised to learn Alexander wasn't sentenced to any time in prison, given his co-defendant's sentence.

"It's just two different judges — one that accepts the science about youthful criminal behaviors, and one that didn't," Roberson said. "Judge Lucas didn't give it any weight."

Alexander's family also had money to hire a lawyer. His defense compiled a 64-page memorandum with psychological reports, character references and letters of support from family members.

"He would be quick to ask me if I needed help with carrying in groceries or other tasks when my own kids didn't!" wrote a neighbor, whose son was close friends with Alexander.

"Putting together a package like the one we presented takes time. It takes effort," Sommerman said. "That work is easier to do when your client is out of custody."

Both Sommerman and Roberson said they believe Corona-Medina would be a good candidate for a [resentencing petition](#), under a new state law that passed in 2020.

"I can tell you this (kind of unequal justice) is the part of the system that is terrible, in my opinion," Sommerman said.

### **The consequences**

At Corona-Medina's sentencing in 2019, nobody spoke on his behalf.

In contrast, more than 15 family members and friends filed into the courtroom last Monday afternoon to show support for Alexander, now 21, at his sentencing hearing.

A psychological examination by a defense expert indicated Alexander "tends to be impulsive, unsophisticated and immature in his social reasoning, judgment and decision-making skills. It is likely that these factors played a significant role in his behavior that night."

The report also gave Alexander's version of the crimes. He stated he was hallucinating on drugs that morning, seeing "waves of colors."

Four family members fought tears as they addressed Superior Court Judge Jennifer Langbehn, urging her to be sympathetic.

"This young man made a damaging mistake — he was wrong," said Joshua Kline, the defendant's uncle. "But I'm begging you to see that sending a young man like Chase to prison will have no good, whatsoever, come out of

it.”

The judge agreed, noting Alexander put himself in danger, too.

Langbehn advised Alexander “not to punish yourself, not to keep yourself in the prison of grief and remorse that your uncle referred to, but to help you as you move forward, as you move out of the home of your parents, out of the arms of those who are with you here today, and have to make more decisions for yourself.”

The judge ordered Alexander to serve 10 years on probation. He will be subject to random drug tests and other restrictions.

The defendant has “walked the path of the straight and narrow” ever since that morning, according to a memorandum from his attorney.

Alexander, a 2018 graduate of Henry M. Jackson High School, received a degree from Montana State University in 2020, while out on bail. He now works as a welder with Travis Industries, according to court documents.

Sommerman noted he had no criminal history until 2018.

“I think you can tell that Chase is a kind and good kid who is not very bright,” Sommerman said in court.

Deputy prosecutor Tyler Scott said in an interview Friday that such a large disparity in sentences was “unusual.” He maintained that both young men deserved years behind bars, within the state standard.

“One of the glaring differences,” Scott said, “is that one had a public defender, and one had a private attorney.”

Immaturity, Sommerman argued, prevented Alexander from knowing the wrongfulness of his actions. She said he was induced to commit the crimes by Corona-Medina.

Corona-Medina’s attorney argued it was actually Alexander who persuaded the other teen robber.

Corona-Medina had no criminal record before the arrest, too.

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