MINNESOTA
TASK FORCE ON MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

Mandatory Minimum Sentencing in Minnesota: Assessment and Recommendations

Final Task Force Report to the Legislature

08/14/2026

About this report

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) engaged Wilder Research to facilitate the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences and to assist with drafting this report. Wilder Research is an independent research and evaluation division of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation that partners with government agencies, nonprofits, and policymakers in Minnesota and beyond to inform effective programs and policies.

Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences

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Executive Summary

At the end of its 2025 session, the Legislature created the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences to collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences for mandatory minimums; assess whether Minnesota's laws and practices promote public safety and equity in sentencing; and make recommendations to the legislature.

In compliance with its mandate, the Task Force now submits this report to the legislature.

Based on its research and deliberations, and having met at least monthly for a full year, the Task Force is making four consensus recommendations. Two of the consensus recommendations are unanimous, and two are nearly so. This consensus is strengthened by the range of perspectives represented on the Task Force: three executive-branch officials working in corrections and criminal justice policy, two county attorneys, two defense attorneys, two peace officers with shooting-investigation experience, a retired judge, an academic expert on other states' laws, a victims-rights representative, and a person directly impacted by a mandatory minimum sentence.

These recommendations, summarized below, are discussed in more detail beginning on page 21. The proposed bill language can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation #1:
Move the penalty-enhancement scheme for committing violent felonies with firearms or while using dangerous weapons into the sentencing guidelines.

The Task Force unanimously recommends that the Legislature require the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to create, subject to specific legislative guidance with six tiers of weapons involvement, a penalty-enhancement scheme in the sentencing guidelines to replace the existing mandatory-minimum scheme, now found in Minn. Stat. § 609.11, for committing violent felonies with firearms or while using dangerous weapons, effective August 1, 2029.

Discussion and findings

Minn. Stat. § 609.11 fails to target its penalties rationally along any of the three dimensions that matter most for public safety: the seriousness of the weapons involvement, the seriousness of the underlying crime, and the seriousness of the defendant's criminal record.

On **weapons involvement**, § 609.11 treats a person who commits a crime while a firearm is locked in a closet the same as a person who personally possesses, brandishes, or fires a firearm while committing the crime—despite very different implications for public safety. Likewise, unauthorized possession of a bullet receives the same five-year mandatory minimum as unauthorized possession of a firearm.

On **crime severity**, § 609.11 imposes the same minimum penalty whether the underlying offense is murder or 5th-degree drug possession. On the other hand, the sentencing guidelines—Minnesota's primary sentencing framework since 1980—grade punishment by offense severity. For the most serious offenses on the § 609.11 list—those ranked at severity level 8 and above—the guidelines already recommend prison terms longer than the mandatory minimum, meaning § 609.11 adds no real penalty for the state's most dangerous firearm users. Its practical effect falls instead almost entirely on lower-severity offenses, where § 609.11's mandatory minimums are enormously consequential.

On **criminal history**, § 609.11's step-ups for repeat weapons involvement in a listed offense (one to three years for repeat non-firearm weapon use; three to five years for repeat firearm use or possession) do not affect defendants with significant records, who typically face much longer guidelines-recommended sentences regardless. The mandatory minimum instead falls hardest on first-time offenders, many of whom—absent § 609.11—would receive a stayed sentence under the guidelines.

Minn. Stat. § 609.11's mandatory minimums direct finite correctional resources away from deterring and incapacitating those who use weapons to commit the most severe offenses or who have the lengthiest criminal records, misdirecting those resources instead toward deterring and incapacitating those with low criminal histories who use weapons in the commission of mid- and low-severity offenses. The Task Force concludes that a properly calibrated, six-tier, penalty-enhancement scheme built into the sentencing guidelines—where offense severity, weapons involvement, and criminal history can all be weighed together—would better serve public safety than the current one-size-fits-most mandatory minimum. An August 2029 effective date gives the Sentencing Guidelines Commission time to design and implement this replacement framework, with appropriate public input, before submitting it to the Legislature before its 2029 session.

Recommendation #2: Remove nonviolent drug offenses from the firearm-disqualifying "crime of violence" list.

The Task Force recommends, by a vote of 12 to 1, that the Legislature remove eight felony drug offenses from the "crime of violence" list—a conviction or juvenile adjudication of which will trigger a lifetime ban on possessing a firearm or ammunition. These offenses are either statutorily authorized for deferred prosecution or have a maximum penalty of five years or less, and none involve the sale, manufacture, or importation of a controlled substance. Effective: August 1, 2027.

Discussion and findings

Minn. Stat. § 609.11 provides a five-year minimum penalty for possessing a firearm or ammunition after a conviction of, or juvenile delinquency adjudication for, a "crime of violence," as that term is defined in § 624.712. Included on the list of crimes of violence is an anomaly: any felony violation of chapter 152 (controlled substances). The Task Force finds that, while some chapter 152 felonies may be violent—or, at least, may tend to engender violence within the communities in which they are committed—not all are violent or have violence-inducing tendencies.

The Task Force infers that, by authorizing deferred prosecution in Minn. Stat. § 152.18 for 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-degree controlled substance possession, the Legislature finds these offenses less threatening, and presumably less violent, than other drug offenses, and that these offenses may, therefore, be safely removed from the "crime of violence" list. The Task Force infers that five additional offenses—none involving drug sale, manufacture, or importation, and none with a statutory maximum exceeding five years—are generally within the spirit of the offenses listed in § 152.18: Minn. Stat. §§ 152.0263 (1st-degree cannabis possession), 152.0265 (1st-degree cannabis cultivation), 152.097 (sale of a simulated controlled substance), 152.136 (tamper, steal, or transport anhydrous ammonia), and 152.137 (exposing a child or vulnerable adult to methamphetamine or related chemicals, or exposing a child to fentanyl). The peace officer member who cast the lone "no" specifically and only objected to removing 3rd- and 4th-degree controlled substance possession from the "crime of violence" list. This member clarified that he agreed with removing the other six drug crimes from the list.

Recommendation #3:
Eliminate the mandatory minimum for first violations of predatory offender registration requirements.

The Task Force endorses, by a vote of 11 to 2, the 2022 recommendation of the Predatory Offender Statutory Framework Working Group: that the Legislature repeal the year-and-a-day mandatory minimum penalty for first violations of predatory offender registration requirements and reduce the two-year mandatory minimum penalty for second violations to a year and a day. Effective: August 1, 2027.

Discussion and findings

The logic of the Predatory Offender Statutory Framework Working Group remains sound. Violating predatory offender registration requirements remains Minnesota's only non-victim, non-weapon crime with an associated mandatory minimum sentence for a first-time conviction. Convictions for this offense remain among the most frequently granted mitigated dispositional departures. The Task Force shares the view of the large majority of working group members, who saw an elimination of the mandatory minimum as a reflection of current practice in many jurisdictions in Minnesota, as well as their concerns regarding racial disparities in conviction rates and the need for discretion at sentencing to view the entirety of the circumstances for the failure to register.

Recommendation #4:
Allow defendants, not just the prosecutor, to request a waiver of mandatory minimum sentences.

The Task Force unanimously recommends that the Legislature amend all three mandatory minimum waiver statutes where the prosecutor is now the only party permitted to make a waiver motion, by permitting either party to make a waiver motion. Effective: August 1, 2027.

Discussion and findings

Three of Minnesota's mandatory minimum statutes—Minn. Stat. § 609.11 and the predatory offender registration statute, previously discussed, plus the mandatory minimum applicable to certain 1st-degree controlled substance possession—include waiver provisions allowing a sentencing court, for substantial and compelling reasons, to sentence without regard to the mandatory minimum. Under these statutes, however, only the prosecutor may bring a motion to waive the mandatory minimum—and the court may waive the mandatory minimum on its own motion—but the defendant has no comparable right, even when the same substantial-and-compelling-reasons standard would apply.

The Task Force finds no principled reason why the waiver motion should be available to only the prosecutor or the court. Restricting the motion in this manner invites a process that either ignores this requirement or requires the defense to raise it in a way where the court then takes on the motion as its own, inserting itself into the advocacy process. Such a procedure leaves the court with more limited information on the departure issue, depriving the defense of presenting its strongest case for departure, the court of greater information on the issue, or even the prosecution of a better chance to advocate against departure. Allowing either party to move for a waiver does not change the substantive standard a court must apply, nor does it expand the number of waivable mandatory minimums; it simply ensures that both sides can fully discuss all issues bearing on the waiver question for the court's independent judgment.

Introduction

In 2025, the Minnesota Legislature created the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences to collect and analyze data on the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons to mandatory minimum sentences; assess whether current laws and practices promote public safety and equity in sentencing; and make recommendations to the legislature.

2025 Minn. Laws ch. 35, art. 2, § 26, subd. 2.

Mandatory minimum sentences, written into statute for some felony offenses, are specific, required prison terms for certain crimes. According to The Sentencing Project:

> *As crime rose in the 1980s and early 1990s, federal and state lawmakers scrambled to calm public concern…[and] politicians built on growing momentum to end indeterminate sentences, consisting of a range of years with no set minimum, and instead opted for longer, determinate sentences upon conviction with a long, minimum term. By 1995, all 50 states and the federal government mandated minimum imprisonment terms for a wide variety of offenses (Nellis, 2024).*

Many states have been re-examining the use of mandatory minimum sentencing, with some states removing them altogether. The primary reasons cited for eliminating mandatory minimums are that: 1) they have no effect on public safety, 2) they disproportionately impact people of color, and 3) they move sentencing power from judges to prosecutors (Nellis, 2024; American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, 2019).

This report explores the use of mandatory minimum sentencing in Minnesota. It details the processes that the Task Force used to explore data and information about the impacts of mandatory minimums on offenders, victims, and families, and public safety, and includes recommendations based on Task Force findings.

Background on sentencing in Minnesota

Mandatory minimum sentencing does not exist in isolation; it operates alongside Minnesota's broader sentencing guidelines system for individuals convicted of a felony. This section describes both systems and their intersection.

Sentencing guidelines framework

In Minnesota, felony sentencing is governed by the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines. The guidelines, which are illustrated in Appendix B, are built on two key factors: 1) a person's criminal history and 2) the severity level of the crime they committed (Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission [MSGC], n.d.-a). At the intersection of those two factors, there is a recommended, or "presumed," sentence (MSGC, n.d.-b). The guidelines establish whether the presumed sentence is prison or probation, and if prison is recommended, the length of the prison sentence.

The original sentencing guidelines went into effect in 1980 (MSGC, n.d.-a). At that time, all felony offenses were incorporated into a single sentencing guidelines grid. Since that time, two more grids have been created to guide sentencing specifically for sex offenses and drug offenses. The Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission, which is the state agency that oversees and updates the guidelines, states that:

> *The purpose of the guidelines is to establish rational and consistent sentencing standards that promote public safety, reduce sentencing disparity, and ensure that the sanctions imposed for felony convictions are proportional to the severity of the offense and the individual's criminal history (MSGC, n.d.-c).*

Types of departures

A sentencing departure refers to a situation where a judge deviates from the presumptive sentence recommended by the guidelines. Judges have the authority to grant a departure if they find that substantial and compelling circumstances exist that warrant a sentence different from the presumptive sentence outlined in the guidelines. There are two types of departures: dispositional and durational.

Dispositional departure: Changes how or where a sentence is served. For example, if the guidelines recommend a prison sentence, a judge may instead sentence the individual to probation.

Durational departure: Changes the length of the sentence. A downward durational departure results in a shorter sentence than would normally be required, while an upward durational departure results in a longer sentence.

Mandatory minimums framework

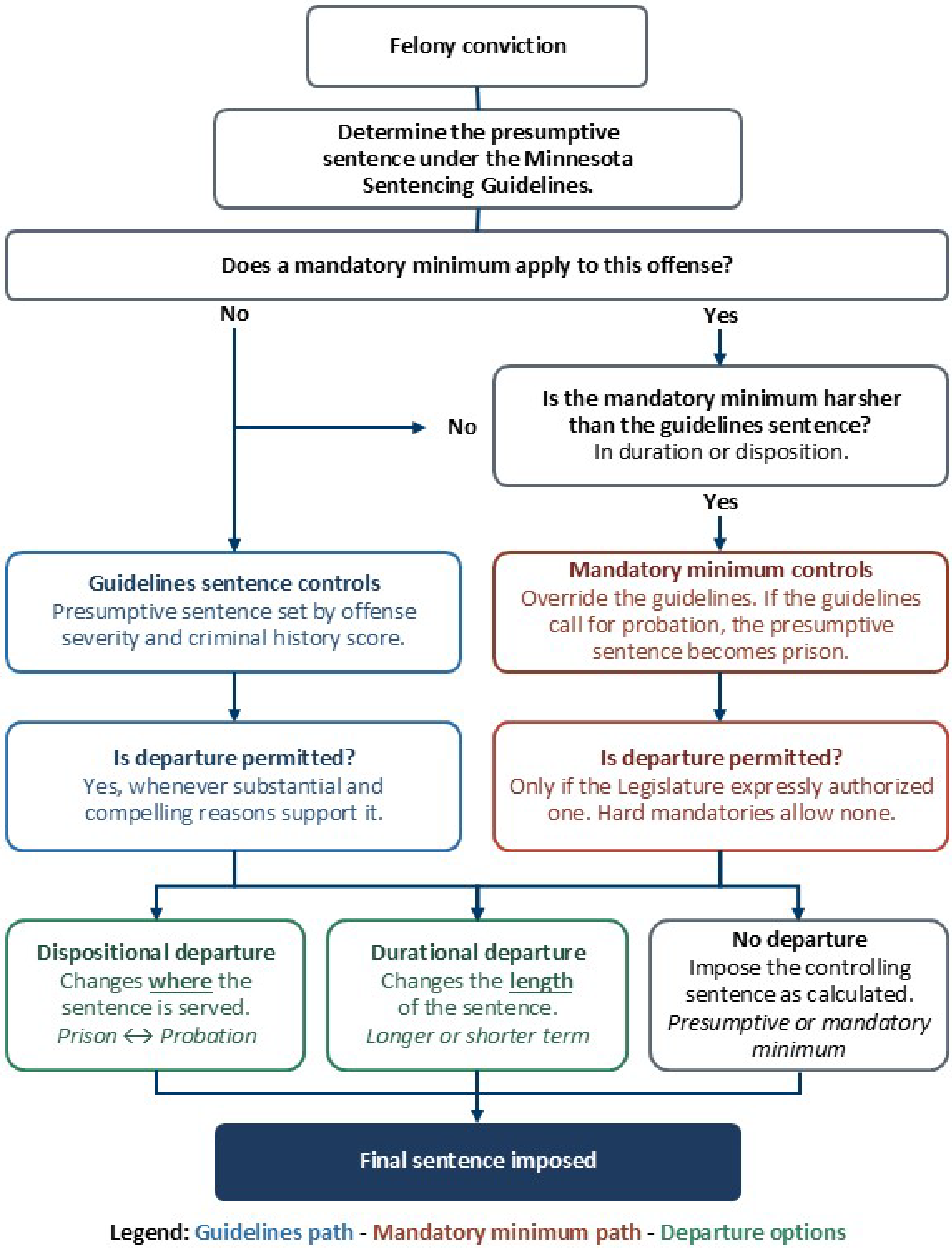
In addition to the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, Minnesota law requires mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes. These laws set the minimum jail or prison term that must be imposed for specific offenses, such as certain firearm and sex-related crimes. Mandatory minimums are intended to ensure that serious offenses receive at least a certain level of punishment and promote consistency in sentencing.

Minnesota's sentencing guidelines and mandatory minimum laws work differently. The sentencing guidelines provide a recommended sentence based on the severity of the offense and the person's criminal history. Sentences generally increase (become harsher) as the severity level of the offense increases and as the individual's criminal history score increases. Mandatory minimums, on the other hand, are a single sentencing standard set by state law. Mandatory minimums establish the shortest sentence that can generally be imposed for certain crimes and do not take into account other factors, such as the person’s criminal history. When a mandatory minimum is longer than the sentence recommended by the sentencing guidelines, the mandatory minimum generally applies. However, when the mandatory minimum is shorter than the sentence recommended by the sentencing guidelines, the guidelines generally control the sentence.

While departures are available for most sentences under the sentencing guidelines, so long as there are substantial and compelling reasons to depart, departures are only available for mandatory minimums if the Legislature has specifically provided for them in state law. Thus, some mandatory minimums are hard mandatories that must be imposed regardless of the specific circumstances of the offense or the individual, while others permit departures.

Overall, Minnesota's sentencing system uses sentencing guidelines to set standard sentences, mandatory minimum laws to impose minimum punishments for certain offenses, and departures to give judges limited flexibility when the circumstances of a case warrant a different outcome (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Minnesota's felony sentencing workflow



Mandatory minimums in practice

Minnesota resolves criminal cases within the structure of the sentencing guidelines, which set a presumptive sentence based on two factors: the severity of the offense and the offender's criminal history. Mandatory minimum statutes operate alongside that structure, and the Task Force's review suggests the two do not always fit together well. The review identified four recurring characteristics of Minnesota's mandatory minimum statutes.

1. Many "mandatory" minimums are actually discretionary. A large number of these provisions are "soft," the statute itself lets a judge depart for the same "substantial and compelling reasons" that justify a departure under the guidelines. A soft mandatory is therefore better understood as a legislative override of where an offense sits on the severity scale than as a true sentencing floor. The "mandatory minimum" label is misleading as it implies a fixed prison term even though departures are lawful, and it leads observers to conclude the law is being ignored whenever a judge departs, when in fact the judge is exercising authority the statute grants. 2nd-degree assault and felon in possession are both severity level 6 offenses, and at lower criminal history scores, the guidelines would presume a stayed (probationary) sentence. The Task Force found that judges across Minnesota departed from these mandatory minimums at higher rates than for other offenses, most often for offenders with low criminal history scores (roughly 0 to 2), where the mandatory term would otherwise displace a presumptive stay.

2. Mandatory durations are disconnected from the guidelines. Mandatory minimums' fixed terms are set by statute and rarely line up with guidelines' durations; therefore, under 2nd-degree assault, use of a knife carries a one-year-and-a-day minimum, while first-time use or possession of a gun carries three years; second offenses carry three and five years, respectively. Felon in possession carries a flat sixty months. A first predatory offender registration violation carries one year and a day, and a second carries two years. Because durational departures are rare in Minnesota, a mandatory term below the guidelines range has little practical effect. And when a statute and the guidelines conflict, the longer sentence controls, so the one-year assault minimum is itself a downward departure. Where the mandatory term instead exceeds the guidelines range, it flattens punishment because it disregards criminal history and treats very different conduct alike. Felon in possession is the clearest example, as the sentence is identical whether the offender's criminal history score is zero or six, punishing everyone as though they had the highest score.

3. One statute, a wide range of conduct. A single mandatory minimum often covers conduct that differs sharply in seriousness and prevents courts from distinguishing among cases. For 2nd-degree assault with a firearm, merely brandishing the weapon is punished the same as discharging it, even though actual use poses a far greater safety risk. The same flattening occurs with prior-offense triggers: felon in possession treats a decades-old qualifying conviction the same as a recent one, and the "crime of violence" list includes offenses whose violent character is disputed. A person whose only prior is a 5th-degree controlled substance offense is treated the same as one convicted of murder or criminal sexual conduct. By contrast, the 2016 drug-sentencing reforms tied the new penalties to the guidelines durations, which reduced departures, an approach the Task Force views as a workable model.

4. The heaviest impact can fall on the least serious cases. Because mandatory minimums ignore both criminal history and offense severity, they can come down hardest on offenders with little criminal history who commit lower-severity offenses, and they add little for the most serious cases. An offender with a qualifying prior crime of violence who commits 2nd-degree assault or felon in possession faces essentially the same mandatory term as an offender with an extensive record, so a long prior history barely changes the outcome. For a higher-severity offense such as aggravated robbery, the mandatory minimum adds only a few months, if anything, because the guidelines already prescribe a long, executed prison sentence. The result is a structure that sanctions lower-level offenders most severely relative to their conduct, the very offenders for whom the guidelines would otherwise allow a more tailored sentence.

A note on disparities. The departure standard gives judges a tool to soften the one-size-fits-all effect, but heavy reliance on departures carries its own cost. The Task Force found that the higher departure rates for some offenses were accompanied by wider disparities across racial and ethnic groups, and that those racial and ethnic differences themselves varied by the geographic location of the case, an equity concern that falls within the Task Force's charge.

Task Force approach and methodology

Task Force membership and representation

The Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences consisted of 13 members, each with varied professional backgrounds or area of expertise. The position for a member of a statewide civil rights organization, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, remained vacant because there was no House majority to make the appointment. Figure 2 illustrates Task Force membership, including which subcommittee members served on. (An explanation of the subcommittees follows Figure 2.)

Figure 2. Task Force members and their roles

Member	Required role, per statute	Subcommittee
Nate Reitz (Chair)	Executive Director of Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission, or designee	Legal Analysis
Kelly Lyn Mitchell (Vice Chair)	Commissioner of Corrections, or designee	Stakeholder Input (Lead)
Shane Baker	County Attorney from outside Hennepin County or Ramsey County, appointed by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA)	Legal Analysis

Member	Required role, per statute	Subcommittee
Jeremiah Carlson	Peace officer familiar with shooting investigations, appointed by the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association	Data
John Donovan	State public defender, or designee	Legal Analysis
Mark Haase *(see notes)*	County attorney from Hennepin or Ramsey County, appointed by the MCAA	Data
Judge Dale Harris	Retired district court judge, appointed by the Chief Justice	Legal Analysis
Amber Johnson	Defense attorney, appointed by the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers	Data
Mark Osler	Person with academic expertise regarding the laws and practices of other states relating to mandatory minimum sentences, appointed by the Governor	Legal Analysis (Lead)
Ken Sass	Statewide coordinator of the Violent Crime Coordinating Council, or designee	Data
Nick Sassor	Peace officer familiar with shooting investigations, appointed by the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association	Data
Robert Stewart	Impacted person who is related to a person who has been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence or who has been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence and has completed the sentence, appointed by the Governor	Data (Lead), Stakeholder Input
Ashley Sturz-Griffith	Member representing a victims' rights organization, appointed by the Senate Majority Leader	Stakeholder Input
Not filled (see notes)	Member of a statewide civil rights organization, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives	n/a

Note. Morgan Kunz, Criminal Division Director, Hennepin County Attorney's Office, served as the MCAA appointee from September 2025 to March 2026. He was succeeded by Mark Haase as MCAA appointee, and by Kelly Lyn Mitchell as Vice Chair. Regarding the vacant seat: A power-sharing agreement in effect in 2025–26 required a single appointment by the Speaker of the House to remain vacant unless the Speaker and the DFL Caucus Leader agreed on the appointment.

During the initial meetings, Task Force members decided to form three subcommittees that could focus on several related duties.

- **Data subcommittee:** Chaired by Dr. Robert Stewart, this committee explored available secondary data and the extent to which those data can answer the Task Force's research questions.
- **Legal Analysis subcommittee:** Chaired by Professor Mark Osler, this committee conducted a historical analysis of mandatory minimum sentences and comparative state reforms.

- **Stakeholder Input subcommittee:** Chaired by Assistant Commissioner Kelly Lyn Mitchell, this subcommittee contracted with the Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) to conduct primary data collection with people affected by mandatory minimum sentences or professionals with extensive knowledge of mandatory minimum sentences.

The statute mandating the Task Force also identified the following duties for Task Force members (Figure 3). The three subcommittees took the lead in several of these areas. The Sentencing Guidelines Commission also aided the Task Force by providing data addressing several of these areas and sharing its own findings from a recent comprehensive review that were relevant to the Task Force's work.

Figure 3. Task Force duties and their corresponding subcommittee lead

Task	Subcommittee lead
Collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences that involve mandatory minimum sentences.	Data subcommittee and Sentencing Guidelines Commission
Collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person received a mitigated durational departure because a judge or county attorney, or both, saw the mandatory minimum sentence as inappropriate.	Data subcommittee and Sentencing Guidelines Commission
Collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person likely would have received a mitigated durational departure but for the enforcement of a mandatory minimum sentence.	Data subcommittee
Collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences for codefendants of persons sentenced to a mandatory minimum sentence.	Data subcommittee
Review relevant state statutes and state and federal court decisions.	Legal Analysis subcommittee
Receive input from persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence.	Stakeholder Input subcommittee
Receive input from family members of persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence.	Stakeholder Input subcommittee

Task	Subcommittee lead
Receive input from persons who were victims of crimes with a mandatory minimum sentence.	Stakeholder Input subcommittee
Receive input from family members of persons who were victims of crimes with a mandatory minimum sentence.	Stakeholder Input subcommittee
Analyze the benefits and unintended consequences of state statutes and practices related to the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons of crimes with mandatory minimum sentences, including but not limited to an analysis of whether current statutes and practices: (i) promote public safety; and (ii) properly punish a person for that person's role in an offense.	Legal Analysis subcommittee
Make recommendations for legislative action, if any, on laws affecting: (i) the collection and reporting of data; and (ii) the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons for crimes with mandatory minimum sentences.	All Task Force Members, led by the Chair and Vice Chair

The Task Force also identified methods for collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing the data necessary to carry out the statute's duties. This section details the steps the Task Force took to accomplish each task.

Statutes of focus

During its initial meetings, the Task Force reviewed the range of mandatory minimum statutes in Minnesota and discussed their purpose, application, and impacts. To facilitate a more focused and in-depth examination, the Task Force agreed to concentrate its work on the following statutes, primarily because these were the most frequently sentenced mandatory minimums:

- **Minnesota Statutes Section 609.11:** Requires mandatory minimum sentences—ranging from 1 year and 1 day to 5 years, depending on the offense and prior convictions—for listed felonies committed with a firearm or other dangerous weapon; also requires a 5-year mandatory minimum for possessing a firearm or ammunition after a “crime of violence,” as defined in Minn. Stat. § 624.712.
- **Minnesota Statutes Section 243.166**: Requires individuals convicted of certain sex offenses, kidnapping offenses, and other specified crimes to register as predatory offenders and keep their residence, employment, and other identifying information current with law enforcement; failure to comply is a felony offense with a mandatory minimum prison sentence.

- **Minnesota Statutes sections 152.021** and **152.022:** Requires mandatory minimum sentences for certain 1st- and 2nd-degree drug offenses involving 100 or more grams, or 500 or more dosage units, of certain drugs, or for repeat 1st- or 2nd-degree offenses (*e.g.*, 3- to 4-year minimum if there is a prior conviction within 10 years of discharge from sentence).

By April 2026, the Task Force shifted its focus away from the mandatory minimums for controlled substance offenses because 2016 law changes had already integrated many of those penalties with the sentencing guidelines.

Convening and discussing the issues

Between September 2025 and August 2026, the full Task Force met 13 times for over 40 hours total to discuss information and data related to mandatory minimum sentencing, including presentations on specific, relevant topics (Figure 4). Members also shared their experiences, opinions, and observations from their unique roles.

Prior to each meeting, Wilder Research staff met with the Task Force Chair and Vice Chair to debrief the previous meeting and develop the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Wilder staff took detailed notes for each meeting and planned and coordinated activities to help guide discussions and decision-making, such as slide decks and discussion grids (see *Previous Meetings* listed on website https://mn.gov/doc/about/legislative-info/task-force-for-mandatory-minimum-sentences/).

Over the course of 13 meetings between September 2025 and August 2026, the Task Force examined Minnesota's mandatory minimum sentencing laws, moving from foundational education and data review to structured policy evaluation and recommendation development. Members reviewed sentencing, demographic, fiscal, recidivism, and stakeholder input data; analyzed mandatory minimum provisions related to firearms, controlled substance offenses, and predatory offender registration; and applied a consistent evaluation framework to assess policy options. Figure 4 highlights the progression of the Task Force's work, key information considered at each stage, and the major outcomes that led to the final recommendations for the legislative report.

Figure 4. Task Force meeting summary

Meeting date	Meeting focus	Relevant data reviewed	Key outcome
26-Sep-25	Established the Task Force's structure, responsibilities, and overall work plan.	Legislative charge and overview of Minnesota mandatory minimum sentencing statutes.	Launched the Task Force and established scope, goals, timeline, and expectations.

Meeting date	Meeting focus	Relevant data reviewed	Key outcome
10-Oct-25	Examined the history and purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing in Minnesota.	Historical information on Minn. Stat. § 609.11 and the development of mandatory minimum laws.	Began narrowing the scope of the Task Force's work to the most commonly used mandatory minimum provisions.
14-Nov-25	Explored predatory offender registration requirements and firearm-related mandatory minimums.	Registration data, firearm sentencing information, and reform efforts from other jurisdictions.	Identified key questions about discretion, departures, and the practical application of mandatory minimums.
12-Dec-25	Reviewed drug-related mandatory minimum statutes and sentencing practices.	MSGC sentencing and departure data for controlled substance offenses and federal comparison information.	Expanded the Task Force's analysis beyond firearm offenses to include controlled substance crimes.
9-Jan-26	Reviewed sentencing data provided by MSGC and finalized the primary areas of focus for the Task Force.	Sentencing, departure, demographic, and offense-level data from MSGC.	Members selected § 609.11 offenses, predatory offender registration offenses, and controlled substance offenses for further analysis.
13-Feb-26	Applied a structured seven-domain framework to evaluate mandatory minimum sentencing policies (see next section for more information).	Prison bed data, including fiscal impact estimates, and demographic impact information.	Shifted from issue exploration to structured policy evaluation.
13-Mar-26	Continued evaluation using the structured seven-domain framework.	(No additional materials posted beyond agenda/minutes)	Concluded evaluation using the structured framework and prepared for stakeholder feedback and data analysis.
10-Apr-26	Reviewed practitioner perspectives and discussed potential policy approaches.	Qualitative findings from interviews with criminal legal system stakeholders and preliminary policy proposals.	Began transitioning from information-gathering to recommendation development.
8-May-26	Considered stakeholder feedback and compared potential policy options.	Preliminary findings from stakeholder engagement activities and member-submitted proposals.	Refined recommendation concepts and identified areas requiring additional discussion.

Meeting date	Meeting focus	Relevant data reviewed	Key outcome
12-Jun-26	Reviewed stakeholder findings, departure analyses, recidivism outcomes, and predatory offender registration data, and continued discussion of policy options.	Stakeholder findings, departure analyses, recidivism information, and registration offense data.	Worked toward consensus on potential recommendations while identifying unresolved issues for further consideration.
2-Jul-26	Continued discussion of policy options and draft recommendations.	Updated decision-point materials and supporting analyses.	Focused on narrowing options and moving toward final recommendations for the legislative report.
10-Jul-26	Applied the structured seven-point framework used in the February 13, 2026, meeting to evaluate recommendations and voted on final recommendations.	Prison bed data, preliminary policy recommendations.	Finalized recommendations for the legislative report.
4-Aug-26	Ratify draft recommendations from July 10, 2026, and review and approve the report.	Final report.	Concluded the Task Force.

For more detailed information about the meeting discussions, see Appendix C.

Reviewing data and relevant topics

Task Force members identified a range of specific topics they wanted to discuss in greater depth. Experts were invited to Task Force meetings to share research findings and discuss data related to mandatory minimum sentencing, including:

- Information on departures from mandatory minimum sentences
- Data on the fiscal impacts of mandatory minimum sentences
- Findings from stakeholder engagement conducted by MSGC (presented by the Robina Institute)
- Findings from stakeholder input on mandatory minimum sentences (presented by the Minnesota Justice Research Center)

Appendix C provides in-depth material on each of these topics — data tables, presentations, and other supporting documents.

Evaluating current mandatory minimum sentences

Before discussing recommendations for adapting or removing mandatory minimum sentences, Task Force members evaluated current mandatory minimum sentences against the seven-domain framework introduced at the February 13, 2026, meeting (Figure 4). These domains and corresponding questions were developed by Ashley Sturz-Griffith, a member of the Task Force, and are grounded in the areas the Legislature asked the Task Force to study throughout its work, as well as the literature review conducted by Wilder Research (summarized in Appendix D). **Task Force members agreed to use the following seven domains to assess the current mandatory minimum sentences**:

1. **Public safety:** Does the policy promote or undermine public safety?
2. **Fairness and proportionality:** Does the policy ensure the sentence reflects culpability and properly punishes the person being sentenced?
3. **Equity and disparities:** Does the policy reduce, perpetuate, or worsen disparities regarding those affected?
4. **Impact on victims and survivors:** How does this policy affect victims/survivors and their sense of safety, healing, autonomy, etc.?
5. **System functioning and feasibility:** Is the policy feasible? Does it support the functioning of the criminal legal system?
6. **Fiscal and resource impact:** What are the financial implications of the policy (e.g., prison/jail populations, court workload, county costs, treatment capacity)?
7. **Unintended consequences and risks:** Does this policy create harmful or counterproductive outcomes (e.g., charge stacking, coercive pleas)?

Each of the three subcommittees was responsible for discussing the first domain (public safety) and two additional domains. The discussions were guided by the following questions: *How well does the mandatory minimum sentence accomplish the domain's implied goals? What else does the Task Force need to know about that domain in order to make a recommendation about the sentence to the Legislature?*

After the subcommittees discussed their assigned domains, the Task Force met as a large group, and each subcommittee presented a summary of its discussion. Wilder Research staff took notes and completed a grid of summaries, which can be viewed in Appendix E.

This initial evaluation process allowed the Task Force to identify issues in current policies and tailor its recommendations to have the most significant impact on factors such as public safety, the experiences of victims and survivors, and fairness and proportionality. The process also highlighted where additional data or resources were needed to better understand the impact of mandatory minimum sentences on people who commit crimes, victims, families, and the general public.

The same evaluation matrix was used to examine the Task Force's recommendations to ensure they achieved the goals in each domain.

Consensus building and writing recommendations

The final meetings of the Task Force were dedicated to discussing ideas related to reforming mandatory minimum sentences and building consensus on specific recommendations to the Legislature, which are included in this report. The Task Force used the following process to build consensus and finalize recommendations.

- First, prior to the May Task Force meeting, Wilder Research staff asked all Task Force members to submit ideas for recommendations. Wilder collected these ideas into a discussion guide that included each idea and the corresponding rationale. The Guide can be viewed in the May meeting materials on the Task Force website. During this meeting, Task Force members discussed each idea and used a "fist-to-five" approach to build consensus. The fist-to-five technique allows for a quick assessment of group consensus about a particular topic. Participants are asked to simultaneously hold up their fingers to indicate agreement with an idea. Five fingers indicate complete agreement, and no fingers (a fist) indicate complete disagreement. Rather than a true vote, the fist-to-five method allows a group to see where they largely agree and where further discussion may be needed to reach agreement.
- Next, prior to the June meeting, Wilder Research staff reviewed the May discussion and created a memo outlining 16 specific decision points that needed to be addressed to develop concrete recommendations. The decision point memo can be viewed in the June meeting materials on the Task Force website. Task Force members reviewed these decision points. During two meetings in June and July, each decision point was discussed, and members were asked to vote on it. Decisions with majority support were moved forward to the next step. After each meeting, Chair Nate Reitz drafted recommendations based on the decisions made in the prior meetings.
- Further, at the second July Task Force meeting, participants reviewed each of the final recommendations using the evaluation framework created by Task Force member Ashley Sturz-Griffith. Members discussed and refined each recommendation in the context of public safety; fairness and proportionality; equity and disparities; impact on victims and survivors; system functioning and feasibility; fiscal and resource impact; and unintended consequences and risks.
- Finally, at the August meeting, Task Force members reviewed and discussed a final draft of the recommendations and an initial draft of this report.

Gathering stakeholder input

Overview of the input from key stakeholders on mandatory minimums report by MNJRC

To fulfill the Task Force's legislative charge to gather input from individuals directly affected by mandatory minimum sentences, the Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) conducted interviews, focus groups, and surveys with justice-impacted individuals, family members, victim-survivors, and criminal justice system professionals (N=94). Participants generally viewed mandatory minimum sentences through the lens of whether they allow consideration of individual circumstances and promote fair outcomes.

Three key themes emerged:

- **Limited awareness and questions about effectiveness.** Participants reported that most individuals are unaware of mandatory minimum penalties until they become involved in the criminal justice system. Across stakeholder groups, many questioned whether mandatory minimums effectively deter crime or improve public safety. Instead, participants commonly identified punishment as their primary effect while expressing skepticism that punishment alone leads to rehabilitation or long-term behavioral change. Survey respondents also questioned whether mandatory minimums reduce disparities, produce proportionate outcomes, or improve the administration of justice.
- **Reduced flexibility and individualized decision-making.** Participants described mandatory minimums as shifting discretion away from judges and toward prosecutors, influencing plea negotiations and limiting courts' ability to consider treatment progress, personal circumstances, victim preferences, or mitigating factors. Many participants, including judges and victim-survivors, expressed concern that mandatory minimums can restrict opportunities for individualized and case-specific justice.
- **Broad impacts on families and communities.** Participants emphasized that the consequences of mandatory minimum sentences often extend beyond the individual involved in the offense. Reported impacts included family separation, loss of income, housing instability, caregiving disruptions, and barriers to successful reintegration following incarceration. Many participants felt that addressing underlying issues such as substance use, trauma, housing instability, and economic hardship would better support long-term community safety than incarceration alone.

Overall, MNJRC found that many stakeholders perceived a disconnect between the intended goals of mandatory minimum sentencing and its practical effects. While perspectives differed regarding appropriate accountability for serious offenses, participants broadly agreed that lasting public safety requires a combination of accountability, treatment, economic opportunity, stable housing, and community support (See Appendix F for full report).

Recommendations, challenges, and areas for future exploration

Summary of consensus recommendations

Voting on the recommendations followed Robert's Rules of Order and included discussions of each recommendation before the vote was called. Those discussions are summarized in this section. The proposed bill language can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation #1:
Move the penalty-enhancement scheme for committing violent felonies with firearms or while using dangerous weapons into the sentencing guidelines.

Require the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to create, subject to legislative guidance, a penalty-enhancement scheme in the sentencing guidelines for committing violent felonies with firearms or while using dangerous weapons. The legislative guidance would include six tiers of firearm involvement in violent *crimes, from personal firearm possession or other dangerous weapon use at the lowest tier, to firearm discharge at the highest tier. The new penalty-enhancement scheme would replace the existing mandatory-minimum scheme for crimes committed on or after August 1, 2029*.

Bill language: Appendix A, sections 15 & 16 (pp. 14–16), with conforming changes in sections 3–7 & 9–12.

Task Force consensus: Unanimous (13–0).

Discussion themes: In discussing the mandatory minimum applicable to offenses involving a firearm, the Task Force noted that the current penalty scheme is the inverse of what the Legislature intends because the mandatory minimum falls hardest on the people committing the least serious crimes with the least criminal history. The discussion of this recommendation focused on the significant differences between merely possessing a firearm during the commission of a crime and actually discharging it. In terms of public safety, fairness, and proportionality, Task Force members emphasized the importance of incapacitating individuals who actually fire a weapon during the course of the offense. This proposal would require the creation of a new sentencing enhancement in the sentencing guidelines that is grounded in the current severity level/criminal history structure *and* imposes progressively harsher penalties based on the type of firearm use, ranging from possession to discharging the weapon during the offense or while fleeing from its commission.

For a closer look at this issue, see the illustrative example in the sidebar below.

One mandatory minimum, three very different outcomes

To illustrate why the Task Force is examining the § 609.11 firearm mandatory minimums, the Chair walked through three hypothetical defendants. All three are identical except for two variables, the seriousness of the new offense and the length of the defendants' criminal history, yet the same five-year mandatory minimum affects each of them in completely different ways (Figure 5).

Shared facts. Each defendant has one prior conviction for 2nd-degree assault (threatening another person with a firearm, no bodily harm inflicted), giving each at least one criminal history point. Because of that prior § 609.11 offense, any new listed offense committed with a firearm exposes each of them to the 60-month (five-year) mandatory minimum.

Differences. The three defendants are the same, except that Defendant B has a much longer criminal history (criminal-history score of 6) than defendants A and C (criminal-history score of 1); and Defendant C is now being sentenced for a significantly more serious offense (1st-degree aggravated robbery) than defendants A and B (2nd-degree assault by threatening with a firearm, no bodily harm inflicted).

The result. Defendant A, who has a lower criminal history score than Defendant B and committed a less serious offense than Defendant C, ends up serving exactly as much mandatory prison time as either of them. Looking at the impact of § 609.11 on the sentencing guidelines' recommended sentence, the mandatory minimum's heaviest impact falls on the defendant who displays the least evidence of blameworthiness or public-safety risk, as measured by the guidelines' metrics of offense severity and criminal history.

Figure 5. Illustration of the net effect of Minn. Stat. § 609.11's mandatory minimums

	Defendant A (lower criminal history, lower offense severity)	Defendant B (higher criminal history)	Defendant C (more serious offense)
New offense	2nd-degree assault (threatening another person with a firearm - no bodily harm inflicted)	Same as Defendant A	1st-degree aggravated robbery (stealing from someone while threatening them with a firearm)
Offense severity level	6	6	8
Criminal history score	1	6	1
Guidelines presumptive sentence (without a mandatory minimum)	Stayed 27 months (up to 1 yr jail + probation)	57 months executed prison (because of the lengthy criminal history)	58 months executed prison (because of the high offense severity)
§ 609.11 mandatory minimum	60 months prison	60 months prison	60 months prison
Net effect of the mandatory minimum	+48 to 60 months of prison — the largest difference	+3 months	+2 months

The takeaway. The mandatory minimum barely moves the sentences of Defendant B (the defendant with the longest record) and Defendant C (the defendant who committed the most serious offense), increasing them by two to three months each. But it transforms Defendant A's sentence, converting a probationary disposition into a mandatory prison sentence while more than doubling the presumptive length. Section 609.11's one-size-fits-all minimums ignore both current offense seriousness and prior record, the two factors the sentencing guidelines are specifically built to weigh. It is the core rationale for the proposal to replace the mandatory minimums with a graded firearm sentence modifier (modeled on the existing gang modifier) that scales the type of gun use with the severity of the offense and criminal history.

Recommendation #2:
Remove nonviolent drug offenses from the firearm-disqualifying "crime of violence" list.

Remove from the "crime of violence" list—a conviction or juvenile adjudication of which will trigger a ban on possessing a firearm or ammunition—the following eight drug offenses:

1. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.023, subd. 2 (3rd-degree controlled substance possession);*
2. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.024, subd. 2 (4th-degree controlled substance possession);*
3. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.025, subd. 2 (5th-degree controlled substance possession);*
4. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.097 (sale of a simulated controlled substance);*
5. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.0263 (1st-degree cannabis possession);*
6. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.0265 (1st-degree cannabis cultivation);*

7. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.136 (tamper, steal, or transport anhydrous ammonia); and*
8. *Minn. Stat. §§ 152.137 (exposing a child or vulnerable adult to methamphetamine or related chemicals or exposing a child to fentanyl).*

Effective: August 1, 2027.

Bill language: Appendix A, section 13, with a conforming change on lines 11.14 & 11.15.

Task Force consensus: 12–1.

Discussion themes: A primary theme of discussion about this recommendation was whether possession and sale of drugs should be considered a “crime of violence” for the purpose of banning individuals from gun possession. The Task Force agreed that 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-degree possession charges, and other drug offenses of similar severity, should not be considered violent offenses and that removing them does not impact public safety. Including these charges unintentionally harms individuals who may be better served with treatment rather than incarceration.

The peace officer member who cast the lone “no” specifically objected to removing 3rd- and 4th-degree controlled substance possession from the “crime of violence” list. This member clarified that he agreed with removing the other six drug crimes from the list. Thus, the Task Force is unanimous in recommending the removal of six drug crimes—the eight crimes listed above, less 3rd- and 4th-degree possession—from the “crime of violence” list.

Recommendation #3: Eliminate the mandatory minimum for first violations of predatory offender registration requirements.

Repeal the year-and-a-day mandatory minimum penalty for first-time violations of predatory offender registration requirements. Replace the two-year mandatory minimum penalty for second-time violations with a year-and-a-day mandatory minimum penalty. Effective: August 1, 2027.

Bill language: Appendix A, lines 2.27–2.33.

Task Force consensus: 11–2.

Discussion themes: This was an endorsement of the final report of the Predatory Offender Statutory Framework Working Group (2022), and the logic of which remains sound. Violating predatory offender registration requirements remains Minnesota’s only non-victim, non-weapon crime with an associated mandatory minimum sentence for a first-time conviction. Convictions for this offense remain among the most frequently granted mitigated dispositional departures. The Task Force shares the view of the large majority of working group members, who saw an elimination of the mandatory minimum as a reflection of current practice in many jurisdictions in Minnesota, as well as their concerns regarding racial disparities in conviction rates and the need for discretion at sentencing to view the entirety of the circumstances for the failure to register. Two members—the Department of Public Safety official and one of the peace officer members—voted against this recommendation in anticipation of the possibility of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) submitting its own legislative recommendations regarding predatory offender registration in the near future.

Recommendation #4:
Allow defendants, not just the prosecutor, to request a waiver of mandatory minimum sentences.

For all three waivable mandatory minimum penalties, where the prosecutor is now the only party permitted to make a waiver motion, permit either party to make a waiver motion. Effective: August 1, 2027.

Bill language: Appendix A, lines 2.4, 3.1, 5.26, 6.1, & 6.5.

Task Force consensus: Unanimous (13–0).

Discussion themes: Discussion about this proposal centered on the fact that mandatory minimums are the only sentencing context in which the defendant is unable to request a departure. Although the law permits the court to depart based on its own motion, the court is often ill-equipped to define the compelling circumstances justifying a departure without input from the parties. Thus, it makes more sense to place the onus on the defendant to request and justify the reasons for a departure. The recommendation passed unanimously.

Other significant discussions

One of the most significant mandatory minimums currently applies to possessing a firearm or ammunition after a crime of violence. (See recommendation #2 regarding the definition of "crime of violence.") Those convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for, crimes of violence are barred from possessing firearms and ammunition for life and are subject to a five-year mandatory minimum penalty for violating the ban. While a person may petition a court for relief from the ban, the decision to grant relief rests entirely in the court's discretion. After a crime of violence conviction or adjudication, there is no automatic or certain path for firearm-rights restoration.

The Task Force discussed recommending an automatic off-ramp from the lifetime ban upon a showing of rehabilitation—for example, by remaining crime-free for ten years—but ultimately decided to table the issue due to a lack of consensus.

Concluding thoughts

The Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences was directed by the Legislature to collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences for mandatory minimums; assess whether Minnesota's laws and practices promote public safety and equity in sentencing; and make recommendations to the legislature. Over the course of 13 meetings, the Task Force reviewed sentencing data, legal research, stakeholder input, academic literature, and the experiences of other states with mandatory minimum sentences.

The Task Force found that Minnesota's mandatory minimum sentences often operate independently of the sentencing guidelines, do not consistently account for offense severity and criminal history, and disproportionally impact people who commit less dangerous offenses. Departure allowances make it difficult to integrate mandatory minimum sentences with the sentencing guidelines.

After reviewing the impacts of mandatory minimum sentencing and receiving expert input, the Task Force approved several recommendations to reduce reliance on certain mandatory minimum penalties while preserving enhanced penalties for serious violent offenses. Key recommendations included replacing the current firearm mandatory minimum framework with a sentencing guidelines penalty-enhancement scheme for violent crimes involving firearms or dangerous weapons; modifying mandatory minimum penalties for predatory offender registration violations, amending the "crime of violence" list to exclude lower-level controlled substance crimes; and allowing either party, not just prosecutors, to seek waivers mandatory minimum sentences, when relevant. The Task Force also discussed but ultimately tabled a proposal to create a pathway for the automatic restoration of firearm rights after a lengthy crime-free period, citing the need for additional information and analysis. Collectively, the consensus recommendations seek to improve public safety, ensure fairness and proportionality in sentencing, reduce disparities, support the functioning of the criminal legal system, and mitigate unintended consequences.

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A bill for an act

relating to crime; requiring the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to establish penalty enhancements; modifying the definition of a crime of violence; modifying certain mandatory minimum penalty policies; requiring a report; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 152.021, subdivision 3; 243.166, subdivision 5; 244.09, subdivision 14; 244.10, subdivisions 5, 6, 7; 588.20, subdivision 1; 609.11, subdivision 8; 609.135, subdivision 1; 609.229, subdivision 1; 609.495, subdivision 3; 617.91, subdivision 4; 624.712, subdivision 5; 624.713, subdivision 1; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.11, subdivisions 4, 5, 5a, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 152.021, subdivision 3, is amended to read:

Subd. 3. **Penalty.** (a) A person convicted under subdivisions 1 to 2a, paragraph (a), may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than 30 years or to payment of a fine of not more than $1,000,000, or both.

(b) If the conviction is a subsequent controlled substance conviction, a person convicted under subdivisions 1 to 2a, paragraph (a), shall be committed to the commissioner of corrections for not less than four years nor more than 40 years and, in addition, may be sentenced to payment of a fine of not more than $1,000,000.

(c) If the defendant is convicted under subdivision 1, clause (1), (2), (3), (4), or (5), or subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (1), (2), or (3), and the defendant or an accomplice sold or possessed 100 or more grams or 500 or more dosage units of a mixture containing the controlled substance at issue, that person shall be committed to the commissioner of corrections for not less than 65 months or the presumptive fixed sentence under the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, whichever is greater, nor more than 40 years and may be sentenced to payment of a fine of not more than $1,000,000, or both. If a person to be sentenced under this paragraph for a conviction under subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (1), (2), or (3), has not previously been convicted of an offense under section 152.021, 152.022, or 152.023, or of a similar offense by the United States or another state, ~~the prosecutor~~ either party may, prior to the time of sentencing, file a motion to have the person sentenced without regard to the mandatory minimum sentence established by this paragraph. The motion shall be accompanied by a statement on the record of the reasons for it. When presented with the motion, or on its own motion, the court may sentence the person without regard to this mandatory minimum sentence if the court finds substantial and compelling reasons to do so; such a sentence is a departure from the Sentencing Guidelines.

(d) A person convicted under subdivision 2b shall be committed to the commissioner of corrections for not less than 86 months or the presumptive fixed sentence under the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, whichever is greater, nor more than 40 years and may be sentenced to payment of a fine of not more than $1,000,000, or both.

(e) In a prosecution under subdivisions 1 to 2b involving sales by the same person in two or more counties within a 90-day period, the person may be prosecuted for all of the sales in any county in which one of the sales occurred.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2027.

Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 243.166, subdivision 5, is amended to read:

Subd. 5. **Criminal penalty.** (a) A person required to register under this section who was given notice, knows, or reasonably should know of the duty to register and who:

(1) knowingly commits an act or fails to fulfill a requirement that violates any provision of this section; or

(2) intentionally provides false information to a corrections agent, law enforcement authority, or the bureau is guilty of a felony and may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than five years or to payment of a fine of not more than $10,000, or both.

~~(b) Except as provided in paragraph (c), a person convicted of violating paragraph (a) shall be committed to the custody of the commissioner of corrections for not less than a year and a day, nor more than five years.~~

~~(c)~~ (b) A person convicted of violating paragraph (a), who has previously been convicted of or adjudicated delinquent for violating this section or a similar statute of another state or the United States, shall be committed to the custody of the commissioner of corrections for not less than ~~two years~~ a year and a day, nor more than five years.

~~(d)~~ (c) Prior to the time of sentencing, ~~the prosecutor~~ either party may file a motion to have the person sentenced without regard to the mandatory minimum sentence established by this subdivision. The motion must be accompanied by a statement on the record of the reasons for it. When presented with the motion, or on its own motion, the court may sentence the person without regard to the mandatory minimum sentence if the court finds substantial and compelling reasons to do so. Sentencing a person in the manner described in this paragraph is a departure from the Sentencing Guidelines.

~~(e)~~ (d) A person convicted and sentenced as required by this subdivision is not eligible for probation, parole, discharge, work release, conditional release, or supervised release, until that person has served the full term of imprisonment as provided by law, notwithstanding the provisions of sections 241.26, 242.19, 243.05, 244.04, 609.12, and 609.135.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2027, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 244.09, subdivision 14, is amended to read:

Subd. 14. **Report on ~~mandatory minimum~~ sentences for violent felonies committed with firearms or while using dangerous weapons.** (a) The Sentencing Guidelines Commission shall include in its annual report to the legislature a summary and analysis of reports received from county attorneys under section 609.11, subdivision 10. This paragraph expires January 16, 2032.

(b) The Sentencing Guidelines Commission shall include in its annual report to the legislature a summary and analysis of sentences on or after August 1, 2029, that have been incorporated into the Sentencing Guidelines Commission's sentence-monitoring data and for which the Sentencing Guidelines recommended an increased penalty because the offense was a violent felony committed with a firearm or while using a dangerous weapon.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029.

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 244.10, subdivision 5, is amended to read:

Subd. 5. **Procedures in cases where state intends to seek an aggravated departure.** (a) When the prosecutor provides reasonable notice under subdivision 4, the district court shall allow the state to prove beyond a reasonable doubt to a jury of 12 members the factors in support of the state's request for an aggravated departure from the Sentencing Guidelines or the state's request for an aggravated sentence under any sentencing enhancement statute

~~or the state's request for a mandatory minimum under section 609.11~~ as provided in paragraph (b) or (c).

(b) The district court shall allow a unitary trial and final argument to a jury regarding both evidence in support of the elements of the offense and evidence in support of aggravating factors when the evidence in support of the aggravating factors:

(1) would be admissible as part of the trial on the elements of the offense; or

(2) would not result in unfair prejudice to the defendant.

The existence of each aggravating factor shall be determined by use of a special verdict form.

Upon the request of the prosecutor, the court shall allow bifurcated argument and jury deliberations.

(c) The district court shall bifurcate the proceedings, or impanel a resentencing jury, to allow for the production of evidence, argument, and deliberations on the existence of factors in support of an aggravated departure after the return of a guilty verdict when the evidence in support of an aggravated departure:

(1) includes evidence that is otherwise inadmissible at a trial on the elements of the offense; and

(2) would result in unfair prejudice to the defendant.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 244.10, subdivision 6, is amended to read:

Subd. 6. **Defendants to present evidence and argument.** In either a unitary or bifurcated trial under subdivision 5, a defendant shall be allowed to present evidence and argument to the jury or fact finder regarding whether facts exist that would justify an aggravated departure or an aggravated sentence under any sentencing enhancement statute ~~or a mandatory minimum sentence under section 609.11~~. A defendant is not allowed to present evidence or argument to the jury or fact finder regarding facts in support of a mitigated departure during the trial, but may present evidence and argument in support of a mitigated departure to the judge as fact finder during a sentencing hearing.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 6. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 244.10, subdivision 7, is amended to read:

Subd. 7. **Waiver of jury determination.** The defendant may waive the right to a jury determination of whether facts exist that would justify an aggravated sentence. Upon receipt of a waiver of a jury trial on this issue, the district court shall determine beyond a reasonable doubt whether the factors in support of the state's motion for aggravated departure or an aggravated sentence under any sentencing enhancement statute ~~or a mandatory minimum sentence under section 609.11~~ exist.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 7. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 588.20, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Felony contempt.** (a) A person who knowingly and willfully disobeys a subpoena lawfully issued in relation to a ~~crime of violence, as defined in section 609.11, subdivision 9~~ designated offense, as defined in section 609.229, subdivision 1, paragraph (c), with the intent to obstruct the criminal justice process is guilty of a felony and may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than five years or to payment of a fine of not more than $10,000, or both.

(b) A felony charge under this subdivision may be filed upon the person's nonappearance. However, the charge must be dismissed if the person voluntarily appears within 48 hours after the time required for appearance on the subpoena and reappears as directed by the court until discharged from the subpoena by the court. This paragraph does not apply if the person appears as a result of being apprehended by law enforcement authorities.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 8. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.11, subdivision 8, is amended to read:

Subd. 8. **Motion ~~by prosecutor~~.** (a) Except as otherwise provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), prior to the time of sentencing, ~~the prosecutor~~ either party may file a motion to have the defendant sentenced without regard to the mandatory minimum sentences established by this section. The motion shall be accompanied by a statement on the record of the reasons for it. When presented with the motion, or on its own motion, the court may sentence the defendant without regard to the mandatory minimum sentences established by this section if the court finds substantial and compelling reasons to do so. A sentence imposed under this subdivision is a departure from the Sentencing Guidelines.

(b) The court may not, on its own motion or ~~the prosecutor's~~ a party's motion, sentence a defendant without regard to the mandatory minimum sentences established by this section if the defendant previously has been convicted of an offense listed in subdivision 9 in which the defendant used or possessed a firearm or other dangerous weapon.

(c) The court may not, on its own motion or ~~the prosecutor's~~ a party's motion, sentence a defendant without regard to the mandatory minimum sentences established by subdivision 5, if the defendant was convicted of a crime under section 152.021, subdivision 1, or 152.022, subdivision 1, and the person or an accomplice possessed on their person or within immediate reach, or used, whether by brandishing, displaying, threatening with, or otherwise employing, a firearm.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2027.

Sec. 9. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.135, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Terms and conditions.** (a) Except when the applicable law requires a sentence of life imprisonment ~~is required by law, or when a mandatory minimum sentence is required by section 609.11~~ or a minimum executed sentence of imprisonment, any court may stay imposition or execution of sentence and:

(1) may order intermediate sanctions without placing the defendant on probation; or

(2) may place the defendant on probation with or without supervision and on the terms the court prescribes, including intermediate sanctions when practicable. The court may order the supervision to be under the probation officer of the court, or, if there is none and the conviction is for a felony or gross misdemeanor, by the commissioner of corrections, or in any case by some other suitable and consenting person. Unless the court directs otherwise, state parole and probation agents and probation officers may impose community work service or probation violation sanctions, consistent with section 243.05, subdivision 1, or sections 244.197 to 244.199.

No intermediate sanction may be ordered performed at a location that fails to observe applicable requirements or standards of chapter 181A or 182, or any rule promulgated under them.

(b) For purposes of this subdivision, subdivision 6, and section 609.14, the term "intermediate sanctions" includes but is not limited to incarceration in a local jail or workhouse, home detention, electronic monitoring, intensive probation, sentencing to service, reporting to a day reporting center, chemical dependency or mental health treatment or counseling, restitution, fines, day-fines, community work service, work service in a restorative justice program, work in lieu of or to work off fines and, with the victim's consent, work in lieu of or to work off restitution.

(c) A court may not stay the revocation of the driver's license of a person convicted of violating the provisions of section 169A.20.

(d) If the court orders a fine, day-fine, or restitution as an intermediate sanction, payment is due on the date imposed unless the court otherwise establishes a due date or a payment plan.

(e) The court may prohibit a defendant from using adult-use cannabis flower as defined in section 342.01, subdivision 4, or adult-use cannabis products as defined in section 342.01, subdivision 2, if the defendant undergoes a chemical use assessment and abstinence is consistent with a recommended level of care for the defendant in accordance with the criteria under section 254B.04, subdivision 4. The assessment must be conducted by an assessor qualified under section 245G.11, subdivisions 1 and 5.

(f) A court shall not impose an intermediate sanction that has the effect of prohibiting a person from participating in the registry program as defined in section 342.01, subdivision 63.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 10. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.229, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. ~~**Definition**~~ **Definitions.** (a) As used in this section, the following terms have the meanings given.

(b) "Criminal gang" means any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that:

(1) has, as one of its primary activities, the commission of one or more ~~of the offenses listed in section 609.11, subdivision 9~~ designated offenses;

(2) has a common name or common identifying sign or symbol; and

(3) includes members who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity.

(c) "Designated offense" means a felony violation of chapter 152; a violation of section 609.165, subdivision 1b (possessing a firearm or ammunition after a crime of violence); 609.185 (first-degree murder); 609.19 (second-degree murder); 609.195 (third-degree murder); 609.20 (first-degree manslaughter); 609.205 (second-degree manslaughter); 609.221

(first-degree assault); 609.223 (third-degree assault); 609.24 (simple robbery); 609.245 (aggravated robbery); 609.247 (carjacking); 609.25 (kidnapping); 609.255 (false imprisonment); 609.342, subdivision 1 (first-degree criminal sexual conduct; adult victim); 609.342, subdivision 1a, paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), or (i) (first-degree criminal sexual conduct; victim under the age of 18); 609.343, subdivision 1 (second-degree criminal sexual conduct; adult victim); 609.343, subdivision 1a, paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), or (i) (second-degree criminal sexual conduct; victim under the age of 18); 609.344, subdivision 1, paragraph (a), (b), or (c), or paragraph (d) under the conditions described in section 609.341, subdivision 24, clause (2), item (i), (ii), or (iii) (third-degree criminal sexual conduct; adult victim); 609.344, subdivision 1a, paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), or (h), or paragraph (i) under the conditions described in section 609.341, subdivision 24, clause (2), item (i), (ii), or (iii) (third-degree criminal sexual conduct; victim under the age of 18); 609.485 (escape from custody); 609.498, subdivision 1 or 1b (first-degree or aggravated first-degree witness tampering); 609.561 (first-degree arson); 609.562 (second-degree arson); 609.563 (third-degree arson); 609.582 (burglary); 609.66, subdivision 1e (drive-by shooting); 609.749, subdivision 3, paragraph (a), clause (3) (harassment with a dangerous weapon); or 624.713, subdivision 1, clause (2) (possessing a firearm or ammunition after a crime of violence); or an attempt to commit any of these offenses.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 11. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.495, subdivision 3, is amended to read:

Subd. 3. **Obstructing investigation.** (a) For purposes of this subdivision, "designated crime" means a crime listed in section 609.229, subdivision 1, paragraph (c), under the laws of this state, another state, or the United States, or an act that would be a crime under section 609.229, subdivision 1, paragraph (c), if committed by an adult.

(b) Whoever intentionally aids another person whom the actor knows or has reason to know has committed a ~~criminal act~~ designated crime, by destroying or concealing evidence of that crime, providing false or misleading information about that crime, receiving the proceeds of that crime, or otherwise obstructing the investigation or prosecution of that crime is an accomplice after the fact ~~and may be sentenced to not more than one-half of the statutory maximum sentence of imprisonment or to payment of a fine of not more than one-half of the maximum fine that could be imposed on the principal offender for the crime of violence. For purposes of this subdivision, "criminal act" means an act that is a crime listed in section 609.11, subdivision 9, under the laws of this or another state, or of the~~

~~United States, and also includes an act that would be a criminal act if committed by an adult~~ as provided in paragraph (c).

(c) A person who violates this subdivision may be sentenced:

(1) to not more than 20 years if the maximum sentence that could be imposed on the principal offender for the designated crime is life imprisonment; or

(2) to not more than one-half of the maximum imprisonment or fine or both that could be imposed on the principal offender for the designated crime. The maximum in any case must not be less than imprisonment for 90 days or a fine of $100.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 12. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 617.91, subdivision 4, is amended to read:

Subd. 4. **Gang activity.** "Gang activity" means the commission of one or more of the offenses listed in section ~~609.11, subdivision 9~~ 609.229, subdivision 1, paragraph (c); criminal damage to property in the first or second degree under section 609.595, subdivision 1 or 1a; trespass under section 609.605; disorderly conduct under section 609.72; or unlawful possession of a firearm by a minor under section 624.713, subdivision 1, clause (1).

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

Sec. 13. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 624.712, subdivision 5, is amended to read:

Subd. 5. **Crime of violence.** "Crime of violence" means~~:~~ a felony ~~convictions of the following offenses: sections~~ conviction of section 152.021 (first-degree controlled substance crime); 152.022 (second-degree controlled substance crime); 152.023, subdivision 1 (third-degree controlled substance sale); 152.024, subdivision 1 (fourth-degree controlled substance sale); 152.025, subdivision 1 (fifth-degree controlled substance sale); 152.0261 (importing a controlled substance); 152.0262 (possession of substances with intent to manufacture methamphetamine); 152.0264, subdivision 1 (first-degree cannabis sale); 152.027, subdivision 6, paragraph (c) (sale of synthetic cannabinoids); 609.185 (murder in the first degree); 609.19 (murder in the second degree); 609.195 (murder in the third degree); 609.20 (manslaughter in the first degree); 609.205 (manslaughter in the second degree); 609.215 (aiding suicide ~~and~~ or aiding attempted suicide); 609.221 (assault in the first degree); 609.222 (assault in the second degree); 609.223 (assault in the third degree); 609.2231 (assault in the fourth degree); 609.224 (assault in the fifth degree); 609.2242 (domestic assault); 609.2247 (domestic assault by strangulation); 609.229 (crimes committed for the benefit of a gang); 609.235 (use of drugs to injure or facilitate crime); 609.24 (simple robbery); 609.245 (aggravated robbery); 609.247 (carjacking); 609.25 (kidnapping); 609.255 (false imprisonment); 609.322 (solicitation, inducement, ~~and~~ or promotion of prostitution; sex trafficking); 609.342 (criminal sexual conduct in the first degree); 609.343 (criminal sexual conduct in the second degree); 609.344 (criminal sexual conduct in the third degree); 609.345 (criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree); 609.377 (malicious punishment of a child); 609.378 (neglect or endangerment of a child); 609.486 (commission of crime while wearing or possessing a bullet-resistant vest); 609.52 (~~involving~~ theft), limited to theft of a firearm ~~and theft involving the theft of~~, a controlled substance, an explosive, or an incendiary device~~)~~; 609.561 (arson in the first degree); 609.562 (arson in the second degree); 609.582, subdivision 1 or 2 (burglary in the first ~~and~~ or second ~~degrees~~ degree); 609.66, subdivision 1e (drive-by shooting); 609.67 (unlawfully owning, possessing, operating a machine gun, conversion kit, trigger activator, or short-barreled shotgun); 609.71 (riot); 609.713 (~~terroristic~~ threats of violence); 609.749 (harassment; stalking); or 609.855, subdivision 5 (shooting at or in a public transit vehicle or facility); ~~and chapter 152 (drugs, controlled substances);~~ ~~and~~ or an attempt to commit any of these offenses.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2027, and applies to violations of Minnesota Statutes, section 609.165, 609.668, 624.713, or 624.7141, committed on or after that date.

Sec. 14. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 624.713, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Ineligible persons.** The following persons shall not be entitled to possess ammunition or a pistol or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon or, except for clause (1), any other firearm:

(1) a person under the age of 18 years except that a person under 18 may possess ammunition designed for use in a firearm that the person may lawfully possess and may carry or possess a pistol or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon (i) in the actual presence or under the direct supervision of the person's parent or guardian, (ii) for the purpose of military drill under the auspices of a legally recognized military organization and under competent supervision, (iii) for the purpose of instruction, competition, or target practice on a firing range approved by the chief of police or county sheriff in whose jurisdiction the range is located and under direct supervision; or (iv) if the person has successfully completed a course designed to teach marksmanship and safety with a pistol

or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon and approved by the commissioner of natural resources;

(2) except as otherwise provided in clause (9), a person who has been convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent or convicted as an extended jurisdiction juvenile for committing, in this state or elsewhere, a crime of violence. For purposes of this section, crime of violence includes crimes in other states or jurisdictions which would have been crimes of violence as herein defined if they had been committed in this state;

(3) a person who is or has ever been committed in Minnesota or elsewhere by a judicial determination that the person is mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or mentally ill and dangerous to the public, as defined in section 253B.02, to a treatment facility, or who has ever been found incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of mental illness, unless the person's ability to possess a firearm and ammunition has been restored under subdivision 4;

(4) a person who has been convicted in Minnesota or elsewhere of a ~~misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor~~ criminal violation of chapter 152 other than a crime of violence, unless three years have elapsed since the date of conviction and, during that time, the person has not been convicted of any other such violation of chapter 152 or a similar law of another state; or a person who is or has ever been committed by a judicial determination for treatment for the habitual use of a controlled substance or marijuana, as defined in sections 152.01 and 152.02, unless the person's ability to possess a firearm and ammunition has been restored under subdivision 4;

(5) a person who has been committed to a treatment facility in Minnesota or elsewhere by a judicial determination that the person is chemically dependent as defined in section 253B.02, unless the person has completed treatment or the person's ability to possess a firearm and ammunition has been restored under subdivision 4. Property rights may not be abated but access may be restricted by the courts;

(6) a peace officer who is informally admitted to a treatment facility pursuant to section 253B.04 for chemical dependency, unless the officer possesses a certificate from the head of the treatment facility discharging or provisionally discharging the officer from the treatment facility. Property rights may not be abated but access may be restricted by the courts;

(7) a person, including a person under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, who has been charged with committing a crime of violence and has been placed in a pretrial diversion

program by the court before disposition, until the person has completed the diversion program and the charge of committing the crime of violence has been dismissed;

(8) except as otherwise provided in clause (9), a person who has been convicted in another state of committing an offense similar to the offense described in section 609.224, subdivision 3, against a family or household member or section 609.2242, subdivision 3, unless three years have elapsed since the date of conviction and, during that time, the person has not been convicted of any other violation of section 609.224, subdivision 3, or 609.2242, subdivision 3, or a similar law of another state;

(9) a person who has been convicted in this state or elsewhere of assaulting a family or household member and who was found by the court to have used a firearm in any way during commission of the assault is prohibited from possessing any type of firearm or ammunition for the period determined by the sentencing court;

(10) a person who:

(i) has been convicted in any court of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year;

(ii) is a fugitive from justice as a result of having fled from any state to avoid prosecution for a crime or to avoid giving testimony in any criminal proceeding;

(iii) is an unlawful user of any controlled substance as defined in chapter 152. The use of medical cannabis flower or medical cannabinoid products by a patient enrolled in the registry program or the use of adult-use cannabis flower, adult-use cannabis products, lower-potency hemp edibles, or hemp-derived consumer products by a person 21 years of age or older does not constitute the unlawful use of a controlled substance under this item;

(iv) has been judicially committed to a treatment facility in Minnesota or elsewhere as a person who is mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or mentally ill and dangerous to the public, as defined in section 253B.02;

(v) is an alien who is illegally or unlawfully in the United States;

(vi) has been discharged from the armed forces of the United States under dishonorable conditions;

(vii) has renounced the person's citizenship having been a citizen of the United States; or

(viii) is disqualified from possessing a firearm under United States Code, title 18, section 922(g)(8) or (9), as amended through March 1, 2014;

(11) a person who has been convicted of the following offenses at the gross misdemeanor level, unless three years have elapsed since the date of conviction and, during that time, the person has not been convicted of any other violation of these sections: section 609.229 (crimes committed for the benefit of a gang); 609.2231, subdivision 4 (assaults motivated by bias); 609.255 (false imprisonment); 609.378 (neglect or endangerment of a child); 609.582, subdivision 4 (burglary in the fourth degree); 609.665 (setting a spring gun); 609.71 (riot); or 609.749 (harassment or stalking). For purposes of this paragraph, the specified gross misdemeanor convictions include crimes committed in other states or jurisdictions which would have been gross misdemeanors if conviction occurred in this state;

(12) a person who has been convicted of a violation of section 609.224 if the court determined that the assault was against a family or household member in accordance with section 609.2242, subdivision 3 (domestic assault), unless three years have elapsed since the date of conviction and, during that time, the person has not been convicted of another violation of section 609.224 or a violation of a section listed in clause (11);

(13) a person who is subject to an order for protection as described in section 260C.201, subdivision 3, paragraph (d), or 518B.01, subdivision 6, paragraph (g); or

(14) a person who is subject to an extreme risk protection order as described in section 624.7172 or 624.7174.

A person who issues a certificate pursuant to this section in good faith is not liable for damages resulting or arising from the actions or misconduct with a firearm or ammunition committed by the individual who is the subject of the certificate.

The prohibition in this subdivision relating to the possession of firearms other than pistols and semiautomatic military-style assault weapons does not apply retroactively to persons who are prohibited from possessing a pistol or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon under this subdivision before August 1, 1994.

The lifetime prohibition on possessing, receiving, shipping, or transporting firearms and ammunition for persons convicted or adjudicated delinquent of a crime of violence in clause (2), applies only to offenders who are discharged from sentence or court supervision for a crime of violence on or after August 1, 1993.

Participation as a patient in the registry program or use of adult-use cannabis flower, adult-use cannabis products, lower-potency hemp edibles, or hemp-derived consumer products by a person 21 years of age or older does not disqualify the person from possessing firearms and ammunition under this section.

For purposes of this section, "judicial determination" means a court proceeding pursuant to sections 253B.07 to 253B.09 or a comparable law from another state.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective August 1, 2027, and applies to crimes and committed on or after that date.

Sec. 15. **COMMISSION OF VIOLENT FELONIES WITH FIREARMS OR WHILE USING DANGEROUS WEAPONS; PENALTY ENHANCEMENT; SENTENCING GUIDELINES MODIFICATION.**

Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** (a) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the meanings given.

(b) "Crime of violence" has the meaning given in Minnesota Statutes, section 624.712, subdivision 5.

(c) "Dangerous weapon" has the meaning given in Minnesota Statutes, section 609.02, subdivision 6.

Subd. 2. **Penalty enhancement proposal.** The Sentencing Guidelines Commission must propose modifications to the Sentencing Guidelines that enhance the presumptive sentences for individuals who commit violent felonies with firearms or while using dangerous weapons. The proposed modifications may amend the presumptive disposition of a sentence from a stay to imprisonment, increase the length of presumptive imprisonment, or both.

Subd. 3. **Requirements and considerations.** (a) The requirements and considerations described in Minnesota Statutes, section 244.09, subdivision 5, apply to the enhancements proposed under this section.

(b) The commission must assume that the proposed enhancements will replace the minimum penalties now provided under Minnesota Statutes 2026, section 609.11, subdivisions 4 to 9.

(c) The commission must identify the violent felonies that would be subject to the proposed enhancement and is not bound by previous laws or guidelines establishing the possession of a controlled substance in violation of Minnesota Statutes, section 152.025, subdivision 2, or any other felony, to be a violent felony.

(d) In addition to the Sentencing Guidelines' considerations of the severity of the offense and the criminal history of the person who committed the offense, the commission must consider, when proposing enhancements, the type of weapon involved in the offense and the degree of the weapon's involvement. The proposed enhancements must apply in the following scenarios and the commission must treat each scenario as more serious than the scenarios described in any preceding numbered clauses:

(1) the person used, whether by brandishing, displaying, threatening with, or otherwise employing, a dangerous weapon other than a firearm to commit a violent felony or the person committed a violent felony while possessing a firearm on their person or within immediate reach;

(2) the person committed a violent felony while possessing a firearm on their person or within immediate reach contrary to a prohibition against such possession due to a prior crime of violence conviction or juvenile adjudication;

(3) the person used, whether by brandishing, displaying, threatening with, or otherwise employing, a firearm to commit a violent felony;

(4) the person used a firearm to commit a violent felony contrary to a prohibition against firearm possession due to a prior crime of violence conviction or juvenile adjudication;

(5) the person used a firearm to commit a violent felony after a previous, nondecayed sentence for using a firearm to commit a violent felony; or

(6) the person discharged a firearm in the commission of a violent felony.

(e) The Sentencing Guidelines Commission may establish when a person's use of a dangerous weapon or possession of a firearm during a violent felony justifies a presumptive penalty enhancement for an accomplice.

(f) Proposed enhancements must not result in the application of multiple penalties for the same conduct. For this reason:

(1) a presumptive penalty enhancement for discharging, using, or possessing a firearm during a violent felony, or for using a dangerous weapon other than a firearm during a violent felony, must not apply if the discharge, use, or possession of the firearm or other dangerous weapon is a necessary element of the violent felony; and

(2) a presumptive penalty enhancement for using or possessing a firearm to commit a violent felony contrary to a prohibition against firearm possession due to a prior crime of violence conviction or juvenile adjudication must not apply if such a prohibition is a necessary element of the violent felony.

Subd. 4. **Report.** By January 15, 2029, the commission must submit a report with the proposed modifications to the Sentencing Guidelines and an explanation of the rationale for the proposal to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over public safety policy and finance.

Subd. 5. **Adoption; proposed application.** Modifications to the Sentencing Guidelines proposed pursuant to this act and submitted to the legislature by January 15, 2029, take effect as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 244.09, subdivision 11, except that the modifications apply to crimes committed on or after August 1, 2029, unless the legislature provides otherwise by law.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 16. **REPEALER.**

(a) Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.11, subdivisions 4, 5, 5a, 6, 7, 8, and 9, are repealed.

(b) Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 609.11, subdivision 10, is repealed.

EFFECTIVE DATE. Paragraph (a) is effective August 1, 2029, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date. Paragraph (b) is effective January 16, 2032, and applies to reports of criminal cases disposed of on or after July 1, 2031.

Appendix B. Sentencing guideline overview

In Minnesota, sentencing for felony offenses is governed by the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines. As shown in Figure B1, the guidelines are based on a grid structure (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Figure B1. Excerpt from the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines standard grid (2025)

SEVERITY LEVEL OF CONVICTION OFFENSE (Example offenses listed in bold)		Criminal History Score: 0	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more
Agg. Robbery; 1st Degree; Burglary, 1st Degree (w/Weapon or Assault)	**8**	48 **41-57**	58 **50-69**	68 **58-81**	78 **67-93**	88 **75-105**	98 **84-117**	108 **92-129**
Felony DWI; Financial Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult	**7**	36	42	48	54 **46-64**	60 **51-72**	66 **57-79**	72 **62-84**
Assault, 2nd Degree Burglary, 1st Degree (Occupied Dwelling)	**6**	21	27	33	39 **34-46**	45 **39-54**	51 **44-61**	57 **49-68**

Finding the presumptive guidelines sentence

- Offense severity – The vertical axis of the grid represents the **severity** of the offense for which the individual was convicted.
- Criminal history – The horizontal axis represents a measure of the individual's **criminal history**, which is a composite score derived from the number and weight of prior felony, gross misdemeanor, and misdemeanor convictions, prior juvenile adjudications, and whether an individual committed the offense while serving a prior sentence (Minn. Sent. Guidelines § 2.B). (Note: The 2026 sentencing guidelines, which went into effect August 1, 2025, include significant changes to the criminal history score that are not included here.)
- Presumptive sentence – The presumptive guidelines sentence is found in the cell where the individual's criminal history score and the severity level of the offense intersect.

Different sentence types

- Prison sentences – For cells in the non-shaded area of the grid, the guidelines recommend a prison sentence. The top number in the cell is the recommended length of the prison sentence in months. By law, the court can impose a sentence that is up to 15% lower or 20% higher than the recommended sentence (Minn. Stat. § 244.09, subd. 5(2)); this range is shown in bold.
- Probation sentences – For cells in the gray-shaded area of the grid, the guidelines recommend a stayed sentence (probation). The shaded cells also contain a recommended prison length should the court choose to impose a prison sentence instead of probation.
- Disposition line – The bolded black line on the grid is the "disposition line," which separates probation and prison sentences.

Appendix C. Key data and documents from the Task Force meetings

This summarizes the key data presented to the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences by members and guests and provides weblinks to the related documents from each meeting. The documents linked below are drawn from the Task Force webpage. They are not a complete inventory of every item posted to that page; rather, they are a selected set of materials that illustrate some of the information, data, and analysis presented to the Task Force over the course of its meetings and that informed its recommendations.

General / overview documents

- Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences One-Pager
- Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences Legislation

September 26, 2025

Presenter: Nate Reitz — Mandatory Minimum Catalog

- Catalog of every Minnesota statute requiring a mandatory prison sentence, with the relative frequency each is used
- Table detailing the rules governing waiver of a mandatory minimum penalty under Minn. Stat. § 609.11

Selected documents from this meeting:

- Mandatory-Minimum Prison Sentences in Minnesota — memo, Nate Reitz (Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission)

October 10, 2025

Presenters: Nate Reitz and Mark Osler

- History of Minn. Stat. § 609.11 and of mandatory minimum sentencing in Minnesota generally

Selected documents from this meeting:

- History of Federal Mandatory Minimum Penalties and Statutory Relief Mechanisms — report chapter, U.S. Sentencing Commission
- History of Minn. Stat. § 609.11's Mandatory Minimum Penalties, 1974–Present — presentation slides, Nate Reitz (MSGC)

November 14, 2025

Presenters: Mark Osler and Adam Gallagher, University of St. Thomas Law School — State Trends in Mandatory Minimum Gun Sentences

- Comparative report on mandatory minimum sentencing and reform efforts in other states, focused on firearm and felon-in-possession offenses
- Examined how states structure mandatory minimum penalties, the extent of judicial discretion at sentencing, and legislative trends toward expanding or reducing mandatory minimums

- Significant variation among states: some pursue more punitive frameworks, others expand judicial flexibility, sentence review, and rehabilitation
- North Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Vermont reduced reliance on mandatory minimums, expanded judicial discretion, and pursued rehabilitation while maintaining public safety
- Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Washington maintained or expanded mandatory minimum penalties
- Conclusion: meaningful reform is possible while maintaining accountability for serious/violent offenses; other states' experience may offer models for Minnesota

Presenters: Nate Reitz and Eric Sagvold, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension — Predatory Offender Registration: Overview of Recent Work and Discussion

- Overview of Minnesota's predatory offender registration (POR) system: origins (created in response to the abduction of Jacob Wetterling), current requirements, and recent data
- Registry has expanded significantly since creation, producing a complex statutory framework for registration, reporting, and verification
- Current data presented on registrant counts, compliance rates, and risk-level classifications; discussion of compliance challenges for individuals experiencing homelessness or unstable housing
- Reviewed the mandatory minimum sentence for failure to register (enacted 2000); many violations are administrative (e.g., failing to return a verification form), and data are limited on whether the mandatory minimum improves compliance or public safety
- Noted Minnesota's unique practice of requiring registration in some cases based on charges rather than convictions
- Flagged areas for further analysis: sentencing departures and registration enforcement

Selected documents from this meeting:

- State Trends in Mandatory Minimum Gun Sentences — research report, Adam Gallagher (University of St. Thomas School of Law), November 2025
- Recommendations for Reforms Relating to Mandatory Minimum Sentences — report, New York State Justice Task Force, September 2025
- Predatory Offender Statutory Framework Working Group Report to the Minnesota Legislature (excerpt) — report, Minnesota Department of Corrections, February 2022
- Predatory Offender Registration — presentation slides, Eric Sagvold (BCA Predatory Offender Registration Unit)

December 12, 2025

Presenter: Nate Reitz — Mandatory Minimums and Drug Sentencing

- Overview of the mandatory minimum penalties that apply to controlled substance offenses and how those penalties interact with drug sentencing

Presenters: Wilder Research, Chair, and Vice Chair — Task Force Role, Timeline, and Work Plan

- Overview of Wilder Research's role in supporting the Task Force
- Discussion of the Task Force's timeline and work plan

- Subcommittee breakout sessions (all members)

Selected documents from this meeting:

- Minnesota's Mandatory Minimums for First- and Second-Degree Controlled Substance Crimes — presentation slides, Nate Reitz (MSGC)
- Controlled Substance Statutes and Drug Offender Grid (Minn. Stat. §§ 152.01, 152.021, 152.022) — statutory excerpt handout
- 2024 Departure Data for Drug Mandatory Minimums — data tables, MSGC research staff

January 9, 2026

Presenters: Nate Reitz — MSGC Departure Data Pertaining to Mandatory Minimums

- Sentencing departure data for mandatory minimums under § 609.11, failure to register as a predatory offender, and certain drug crimes
- Departure rates varied by type of weapons involvement and moved inversely with criminal history
- Departure rates exceeded **50%** for (a) possession of ammunition after a crime of violence and (b) first-time predatory offender registration violations

Selected documents from this meeting:

- MSGC Departure Data Pertaining to Mandatory Minimums — memo with data tables, Nate Reitz (Task Force Chair)

February 13, 2026

Presenters: Nate Reitz — Fiscal and Demographic Impact Overview

- Projected fiscal and demographic impact of removing Chapter 152 drug offenses from Minnesota's definition of a "crime of violence"
- Based on a sample of 2019–2023 cases, estimated to reduce the prison population by approximately 222 beds
- Black and American Indian individuals are disproportionately represented in Minnesota's prison population, so changes to crime-of-violence classifications could affect racial disparities in the system

March 13, 2026

Presenters: Subcommittee chairs and Task Force members — Evaluation Framework Review and Subcommittee Updates

- Kelly Mitchell was elected Vice Chair, filling the vacancy created by Morgan Kunz's departure; Mark Haase joined as the Minnesota County Attorneys Association appointee
- Subcommittee chairs walked through their assigned cells of the evaluation framework table for predatory offender registration and controlled substance offenses
- Stakeholder Input subcommittee: the Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) was formally contracted, with practitioner surveys, focus groups for people convicted of relevant offenses, and one-on-one interviews with victims; identifying individuals whose cases involved mandatory minimums was flagged as a

central challenge, since defendants and victims are often unaware that a statute such as § 609.11 applied in their case

- Data subcommittee: a contract with the Robina Institute was finalized to support the Task Force's data analysis
- A scheduled presentation on stakeholder engagement findings and failure-to-register data was postponed to a later meeting

April 10, 2026

Presenter: Dr. Julia Laskorunsky, Robina Institute — Qualitative Research on Mandatory Minimum Sentences: Presentation and Discussion

- Qualitative research (part of MSGC's comprehensive sentencing review) based on interviews with prosecutors, defense attorneys, and dispositional advisers
- Focused on offenses with high downward-departure rates: failure to register, 2nd-degree assault, and aggravated robbery
- Examined how mandatory minimums shape decisions well before sentencing — charging, plea negotiations, and trial — with charge reductions and negotiated departures often used to avoid mandatory penalties
- Recurring themes: pressure to amend charges/depart where one mandatory penalty covers a wide range of conduct; proportionality concerns for first-time and lower-criminal-history defendants; potential for mandatory minimums to amplify disparities by limiting judicial discretion; practitioner confusion about how some mandatory minimum statutes interact with the guidelines
- Conclusion: mandatory minimums function as legislative overrides of the guideline-based sentencing framework; effects on consistency, proportionality, and equity warrant further study

Selected documents from this meeting:

- How Mandatory Minimums Shape Charging, Plea, and Sentencing Decisions — presentation slides, Dr. Julia Laskorunsky (Robina Institute)

May 8, 2026

Presenter: Dr. Katie Remington, Minnesota Justice Research Center — Preliminary Findings from Stakeholder Input

- Preliminary findings drawn from 95 participants — 77 criminal justice practitioners, 13 justice-impacted individuals, 6 family members, and 4 victims — gathered through surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- Respondents spanned both the Twin Cities metro area and Greater Minnesota; underlying cases among interview and focus group participants involved drug, firearm, failure-to-register, terroristic threats, and mixed offenses, and roughly 44% of those participants had served 10 years or more
- System actors described mandatory minimums in more technical terms, while directly impacted participants were often unaware of them before serving time
- System actors emphasized consistency, deterrence, punishment, and public safety, while impacted individuals and family members more often described harm and broader social impacts

- Broad agreement across groups that mandatory minimums do not appear to function effectively as a deterrent, with mixed views on whether they produce consistent or proportionate sentences

Presenters: Task Force members — Discussion of Proposed Recommendations

- Members reviewed recommendation ideas submitted in advance, organized around Minn. Stat. §§ 609.11, 243.166, and Chapter 152
- Firearm sentencing: disagreement over whether mandatory minimums should be limited to the most serious conduct, such as discharge, or retained more broadly for firearm possession during criminal activity
- Discussion of whether high departure rates indicate a problem with the policy or reflect intentional flexibility within the system, and of how mandatory minimums interact with guidelines presumptions, departures, and plea negotiations
- Consideration of whether certain controlled substance offenses should remain on the "crime of violence" list, and of an automatic, time-based off-ramp from the lifetime firearm prohibition
- Concerns raised about accomplice liability in firearm-related enhancements, and about whether registration penalties should vary by risk level or supervision context
- Chair Reitz asked that the June meeting present a clearer set of decision points so members could compare approaches before drafting final recommendations

June 12, 2026

Presenter: Dr. Julia Laskorunsky, Robina Institute — Racial and Ethnic Patterns in Downward Departures under Minnesota's 609.11

- Analysis of Minnesota's firearm mandatory minimum statute (§ 609.11): departures are common where guidelines would otherwise recommend probation, but are not granted equally across racial and ethnic groups
- After accounting for legally relevant factors, defendants of color were generally less likely than similarly situated White defendants to receive relief; the largest disparities were in felon-in-possession cases
- Hispanic defendants experienced significant disparities across both case categories examined
- Felon-in-possession cases involving Black defendants were disproportionately concentrated in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties — effects are geographically as well as racially concentrated
- Disparities were more pronounced for firearm possession than firearm use, suggesting less equitable outcomes where more discretion exists
- Conclusion: the statute may contribute to racial/ethnic disparities by creating a default prison sentence paired with discretionary departures that are not evenly distributed

Presenter: Dr. Robert Stewart — Recidivism and Registration Failure Overview

- Recidivism risk is highest in the first several years after release and declines over time; rates vary by offense type, and the analysis counted all new convictions, not only new violent ones
- Approximately **35%** of individuals with a single crime-of-violence conviction remained conviction-free 10 years after completing their sentence; among those, the annual risk of a new conviction was low
- Findings were discussed in the context of firearm prohibition and restoration policies, emphasizing that reoffending risk changes over time and differs across offenses

- Separate review of first-time predatory offender registration-failure cases: most stemmed from administrative/compliance lapses — failing to update an address or vehicle registration after moving, or missed check-ins among registrants experiencing homelessness — rather than a new underlying offense
- Fewer cases involved absconding, failure to register after release from custody, or providing an invalid address

Selected documents from this meeting:

- Racial and Ethnic Patterns of Downward Departures from § 609.11 Mandatory Minimums — presentation slides, Dr. Julia Laskorunsky (Robina Institute)

July 2, 2026

Presenter: Nate Reitz — Decision Point Review: Minn. Stat. § 243.166, Chapter 152, and § 609.11

- Members worked through an updated decision point document and accompanying slides covering predatory offender registration, controlled substance offenses, and firearm-related mandatory minimums
- General support for directing the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to develop a replacement sentencing enhancement framework accounting for criminal history, offense severity, and the level of weapon involvement
- Review of the proposed weapon involvement tiers, progressing from firearm possession through firearm use, prohibited possession, firearm discharge, and repeat firearm-related conduct
- Discussion generally supported removing lower-level controlled substance possession offenses from the designated crime and crime of violence lists, while retaining sale, manufacturing, importation, and more serious possession offenses

Selected documents from this meeting:

- Drug Crimes on Two Crime Lists – §§ 609.11 and 624.712 — memo, Nate Reitz (Task Force Chair)

July 10, 2026

Presenters: Nate Reitz and Matthew Hlina, Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission — Prison Bed Impact Estimates

- Review of MSGC staff prison bed impact estimates, based on a 2023 sentencing data sample and on stated assumptions about how a replacement enhancement framework would be structured
- Estimated reductions of roughly 409 prison beds from replacing the § 609.11 mandatory minimum framework, 123 beds from removing specified drug possession offenses from the crime of violence list, and 53 beds from changes to predatory offender registration penalties; no estimated impact from the proposed firearm rights restoration off-ramp
- Members cautioned that the estimates rest on assumptions, and that recent sentencing guidelines amendments and implementation of the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act (MRRA) were not incorporated, which may overstate future reductions
- Analysis indicated the proposed framework would reduce incarceration for some lower-severity offenders while increasing sentence lengths for offenders with more serious offenses or higher criminal history scores

Presenters: Subcommittee chairs — Evaluation of Preliminary Policy Recommendations

- Subcommittee chairs led an assessment of each preliminary recommendation across the seven evaluation domains; evaluation of the predatory offender registration and waiver recommendations was deferred to written assessments completed after the meeting
- Preliminary votes: the firearm enhancement proposal was adopted as amended to create a separate tier for actual discharge of a firearm; removal of the specified drug offenses from the crime of violence list, the predatory offender registration changes, and the either-party waiver motion were each adopted; the ten-year firearm rights restoration off-ramp was tabled for discussion in the final report
- Members absent from this meeting were given an opportunity at the August 4 meeting to register concurrence with or opposition to these actions, which is reflected in the final vote totals reported earlier in this report

Document links compiled from the Task Force source page (mn.gov/doc/about/legislative-info/task-force-for-mandatory-minimum-sentences) on August 5, 2026.

Appendix D. Overview of literature and policy

Research on mandatory minimum sentencing presents a mixed picture, with much of the recent literature questioning whether mandatory minimum penalties achieve their intended goals of deterring crime and increasing public safety. Evidence suggests that mandatory minimums may increase incarceration while providing limited improvements in public safety, and they may reduce flexibility to impose proportionate sentences tailored to the circumstances of individual cases. Below is a summary of the current academic literature across several domains related to the impact of mandatory minimum sentences.

- **Public safety** - The evidence supporting mandatory minimum sentences as an effective crime reduction strategy is limited. Research examining prison populations across all 50 states over several decades found that larger prison populations were not consistently associated with lower crime rates and, in some analyses, were associated with higher rates of violent and property crime (Dhondt, 2018). Other reviews conclude that mandatory minimums are unlikely to reduce future offending and may reduce opportunities for rehabilitation by requiring longer periods of incarceration (Luna, 2017).
- **Fairness and proportionality** - Mandatory minimum sentences reduce judicial discretion by requiring courts to impose sentences that meet statutory minimums regardless of mitigating circumstances. Critics argue that this can produce sentences that are disproportionate to an individual's culpability and limit judges' ability to consider case-specific factors (Luna, 2017; Nir & Liu, 2022). At the same time, proponents argue that mandatory minimums promote consistency, certainty, and uniformity by reducing variation in sentencing across judges (Luna, 2017). Research points to an ongoing challenge in balancing individualized justice with consistent sentencing practices.
- **Equity and disparities** - The literature presents evidence that mandatory minimums may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities. Studies have found that Black and Hispanic defendants are more likely than similarly situated White defendants to receive mandatory minimum charges or sentences in some jurisdictions (Ulmer et al., 2007; Spohn & Johnson, 2025). Research also suggests that prosecutorial choices about what penalties are charged and whether plea agreements are offered may inadvertently impact racial disparities in the application of mandatory minimum sentences (Starr & Rehavi, 2013). However, scholars also note that eliminating structured sentencing can increase disparities if judicial discretion is unconstrained, highlighting the importance of balancing consistency with flexibility (Luna, 2017).
- **Impact on victims and survivors** - Several authors suggest that mandatory minimum sentencing may unintentionally affect victims and survivors by reducing flexibility to account for their preferences or circumstances. Mandatory penalties may discourage cooperation, increase the likelihood that cases proceed to trial rather than resolve through negotiated pleas, and reduce opportunities for restorative justice or other victim-centered approaches (Schulhofer, 1993; Tonry, 1992).
- **Criminal legal system functioning** - Mandatory minimums shift significant sentencing influence from judges to prosecutors by increasing the importance of charging decisions and plea negotiations (Luna, 2017). The literature also associates mandatory minimums with longer prison sentences, larger prison populations, prison overcrowding, and higher security classifications, all of which can increase demands on correctional resources while limiting access to rehabilitation and treatment programming (Thomas & Renninger, 1995; Nellis, 2024; Raphael & Tahamont, 2017).
- **Fiscal and resource impacts** - Longer prison terms associated with mandatory minimum sentencing increase correctional costs. Although some costs may shift between state and local governments, available evidence suggests that expanding mandatory minimums generally increases overall correctional expenditures because more people serve longer prison sentences (Pennsylvania House Committee on Appropriations, 2017).

- **Unintended consequences -** The literature identifies several unintended consequences of mandatory minimum sentencing. Prosecutors may circumvent mandatory penalties by reducing charges when they believe mandatory sentences would be inappropriate, resulting in inconsistent application of the law (Bjerk, 2005). More broadly, mandatory minimums can increase prosecutorial leverage during plea negotiations while reducing transparency regarding how sentencing decisions are ultimately made (Luna, 2017).
- **Alternative sentencing approaches** - The literature describes several alternatives to mandatory minimum sentencing, including structured sentencing guidelines with judicial departure authority, advisory sentencing guidelines, indeterminate sentencing, parole-centered systems, and broader judicial discretion within statutory sentencing ranges. These models differ primarily in how they balance consistency, proportionality, rehabilitation, and judicial discretion. Recent reforms in several states have moved toward advisory guideline systems that preserve consistency while allowing judges to depart when justified by case-specific circumstances.

Overall, the literature suggests little evidence that mandatory minimum sentences improve public safety compared with more flexible sentencing approaches. Instead, the strongest and most consistent findings relate to increased incarceration, reduced judicial discretion, greater prosecutorial influence, higher correctional costs, and the potential for racial and ethnic disparities. At the same time, the literature recognizes that structured sentencing systems can improve consistency and reduce unwarranted judicial variation, suggesting that the central policy challenge is balancing uniformity with sufficient flexibility to ensure proportionate and individualized sentencing.

Appendix E. Evaluation of mandatory minimum recommendations, by domain

Each of the following preliminary policy recommendations was assessed by the relevant lead committee(s) across seven evaluation domains. The table below provides a snapshot of each domain. Full committee assessments follow below, organized by recommendation.

Preliminary Policy Recommendations	A Public Safety *(Lead: All)*	B Fairness & *Proportionality (Lead: Legal)*	C Equity & *Disparities (Lead: Data)*	D Victim/Survivor *Impact (Lead: Stakeholder)*	E System Feasibility *(Lead: Stakeholder)*	F Fiscal Impact *(Lead: Data)*	G Unintended *Consequences (Lead: Legal)*
Firearm/dangerous-weapon penalty enhancement	Deterrent effect questioned	Improves fairness and proportionality in sentencing	Likely reduces geographic disparity	Mixed — limited direct effect	Little near-term change; aids early ID	Reserves prison beds for the most serious offenses	Implementation uncertain
Remove drug possession offenses from the "crime of violence" list	No safety harm expected	Fairness gains, some proportionality concern	Clearly reduces disparity	Neutral (victimless offenses)	Eases system functioning	Net reduction in prison beds	Low risk of upcharging
Ten-year firearm-rights restoration off-ramp	Risk flagged (DV history)	Most contested item	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Reduce predatory offender registration penalties	Minimal impact; supports safety	Improves fairness & proportionality	Reduces geographic disparity	Neutral; discretion preserved	Eases reintegration burden	Conserves court/prison resources	Low risk; investigator burden flagged
Allow either party to move for a mandatory minimum waiver	Neutral — procedural change	Improves fairness & proportionality	Reduces disparity across counties	Varies by case	System well-equipped to absorb	Slight workload rise, outweighed by gains	Reduces coercive pleas; may add litigation

Note: Column leads: A — All committees; B, G — Legal Committee; C, F — Data Committee; D, E — Stakeholder Committee.

Full domain assessments by preliminary policy recommendation

Preliminary policy recommendation: Firearm/dangerous-weapon penalty enhancement

A. Public safety (Lead: All)

Some Task Force members questioned whether the enhancement would meaningfully deter offenders, suggesting a shorter baseline penalty (6–12 months) paired with a 5-year enhancement specifically for actual firearm discharge, placed at Tier 6 in the sentencing guidelines.

B. Fairness and proportionality (Lead: Legal)

This proposal would improve fairness and proportionality in sentencing by scaling the punishment to the seriousness of the offense, the type of gun use in the commission of the crime, and the person's criminal history.

C. Equity and disparities (Lead: Data)

Likely to reduce geographic disparities; the effect on racial disparities is less certain, given limited data, though any reduction in prison beds was seen as likely to have an ameliorative effect given existing disproportionality.

D. Impact on victims/survivors (Lead: Stakeholder)

Most reduced prison beds stem from drug possession and felon in possession offenses, seen as having little direct victim impact, while enhanced penalties target violent offenses (e.g., murder) where incapacitation may benefit victims; some noted that drug offenses can still cause broader community harm.

E. System functioning and feasibility (Lead: Stakeholder)

High departure rates already occur for these offenses, so limited practical change is expected for the most serious cases; the scheme could help identify high-risk individuals (e.g., young men with prior firearm involvement) earlier for targeted intervention.

F. Fiscal and resource impact (Lead: Data)

This proposal would result in a better distribution of correctional resources; it reserves prison beds for the most serious offenses.

G. Unintended consequences and risk (Lead: Legal)

Uncertainty about how the Sentencing Guidelines Commission will implement the new scheme, though members noted the commission has historically followed legislative direction.

Preliminary policy recommendation: Remove drug possession offenses from the "crime of violence" list

A. Public safety (Lead: All)

"Sale" is broadly defined under Minnesota law and often charged alongside possession, so prosecutorial discretion may offset the practical effect; removing the possession-only offenses was seen as making the "crime of violence" list more accurate without harming public safety.

B. Fairness and proportionality (Lead: Legal)

Some favored removing § 152 entirely on fairness grounds; a concern was raised that 2016 changes to possession-degree thresholds shifted many cases between degrees, and that a lifetime firearm ban for a single drug offense raises proportionality concerns.

C. Equity and disparities (Lead: Data)

§ 152.025 (5th-degree possession) is the most frequently charged and most racially disproportionate offense on the list; its removal was seen as clearly reducing disparities.

D. Impact on victims/survivors (Lead: Stakeholder)

Removed offenses are possession-based and considered victimless, so the impact on victims/survivors was viewed as neutral.

E. System functioning and feasibility (Lead: Stakeholder)

Expected to ease system functioning by eliminating downstream collateral consequences tied to these convictions.

F. Fiscal and resource impact (Lead: Data)

Removing felon in possession from the list makes affected individuals better candidates for boot camp programming; a net reduction in prison beds is expected, though forecasts remain indirect.

G. Unintended consequences and risk (Lead: Legal)

Could affect plea negotiation practices, with some risk that prosecutors upcharge from possession to sale based on intent, though this shift was considered unlikely.

Preliminary policy recommendation: Ten-year firearm-rights restoration off-ramp

A. Public safety (Lead: All)

Concern that individuals who reach a felony domestic violence conviction often have an extensive prior history not always captured by law enforcement, raising the risk of future domestic-violence-related homicides if firearm rights are restored.

B. Fairness and proportionality (Lead: Legal)

Generated the most disagreement among members, centered on whether firearm rights should be restored at all and whether a "crime-free" period reliably reflects actual conduct rather than simply avoiding detection.

Not evaluated for this recommendation: C. Equity and disparities; D. Impact on victims/survivors; E. System functioning and feasibility; F. Fiscal and resource impact; G. Unintended consequences and risk.

Preliminary policy recommendation: Reduce predatory offender registration penalties

A. Public safety (Lead: All)

- Registration violations remain a criminal offense; removing the mandatory minimum preserves the ability to pursue harsher sentences for deliberate concealment while allowing more proportionate outcomes when violations stem from housing instability.
- Promotes public safety by working with people who struggle with housing stability rather than incarcerating them for it.
- Expected to promote public safety by allowing courts to evaluate each case individually rather than applying a uniform mandatory minimum.
- Minimal impact on public safety given the current high departure rate and the regulatory nature of the offense.

B. Fairness and proportionality (Lead: Legal)

- Helps ensure people are properly punished by no longer treating all first-time violations uniformly — allowing violations tied to housing instability to be treated differently than more egregious ones, so the penalty better reflects culpability.
- Improves proportionality by eliminating geographic disparities and improves fairness by removing the first-time mandatory minimum for registrants facing housing instability, whose registration burdens are significant.

C. Equity and disparities (Lead: Data)

Expected to reduce disparities, particularly geographic disparities, since departure patterns previously varied considerably by judicial district.

D. Impact on victims/survivors (Lead: Stakeholder)

Victims/survivors may value the registration system's tracking function, but a violation is not itself a new act of harm; judicial discretion allows courts to distinguish technical violations from more serious noncompliance.

E. System functioning and feasibility (Lead: Stakeholder)

Registrants often face housing and employment instability that can contribute to technical violations, and repeated incarceration can further disrupt reintegration; discretion supports more proportionate use of incarceration by distinguishing technical noncompliance from genuine public safety concerns.

F. Fiscal and resource impact (Lead: Data)

Expected to conserve court and prison resources by allowing courts to sort minor violations from more serious ones.

G. Unintended consequences and risk (Lead: Legal)

- Also seen as avoiding counterproductive outcomes previously raised as a concern with this policy.
- The primary risk is that registrants could be harder to locate if the underlying conduct is unchanged by the conviction or probation term; this could burden investigators if the registrant becomes a suspect in a new offense.

Preliminary policy recommendation: Allow either party to move for a mandatory minimum waiver

A. Public safety (Lead: All)

- Seen as promoting public safety by allowing all parties to present relevant information to the court in support of a more individually tailored sentence.
- Considered neutral for public safety — whether a departure is warranted is case-specific and ultimately for the court to decide.
- Unable to say whether it promotes public safety, but likely does not undermine it, since it preserves the adversarial process.
- No impact on public safety; this is a purely procedural change.

B. Fairness and proportionality (Lead: Legal)

- Better reflects fairness and proportionality — allowing either party to move preserves cases where a departure was warranted but the prosecutor didn't seek one, so the sentence more accurately reflects culpability.

- Improves fairness by allowing either party to make the motion, consistent with how most other motions function in criminal proceedings.

C. Equity and disparities (Lead: Data)

Expected to reduce disparities, particularly geographic disparities, since waiver-motion practices vary considerably by county attorney's office.

D. Impact on victims/survivors (Lead: Stakeholder)

Impact on victims/survivors will vary by case since each waiver request is fact-specific.

E. System functioning and feasibility (Lead: Stakeholder)

Defense attorneys already routinely make similar requests in other case types, and the system is considered well-equipped to manage the additional requests.

F. Fiscal and resource impact (Lead: Data)

May slightly increase court workload, but this is considered to be outweighed by the benefits to equitable justice.

G. Unintended consequences and risk (Lead: Legal)

- Reduces the risk of coercive pleas, since a defendant would no longer need to plead guilty just to preserve a prosecutor-only chance at a departure; may also modestly reduce the number of trials, since departure eligibility would no longer rest solely on the prosecutor's motion.
- Risk of increased litigation at sentencing.

Input from Key Stakeholders on Mandatory Minimums:

Justice-Impacted Individuals, Victim-Survivors, Family Members, and System Actors

Sub-report for the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences in Minnesota

June 2026

Authored by Janett Casillas, MNJRC Research Manager
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Executive Summary

As part of its legislative charge, the Mandatory Minimum Task Force was required to gather input from individuals directly impacted by mandatory minimum sentences, including people convicted of crimes with mandatory minimums, their family members, victims of those crimes, and victims' family members. To support this effort, the **Minnesota Justice Research Center** (MNJRC) conducted a qualitative study in the spring of 2026 designed to capture a range of perspectives. We conducted focus groups and interviews for impacted community members (n=18), including victim-survivors (n=4), justice-impacted individuals (n=14), family members of victim-survivors (n=2), and family members of justice-impacted individuals (n=6). Participants often occupied multiple roles simultaneously, reflecting the complex, interconnected ways that mandatory minimums affect people's lives. We administered a mixed-methods survey for criminal justice system actors (n=77).

The study was designed to understand how mandatory minimums shape perceptions of fairness and justice across stakeholders. Overall, participants' perceptions were shaped most by whether mandatory minimum sentences allowed for individual circumstances to be considered. Across stakeholder groups, many participants viewed mandatory minimums as unfair because they limit the judges' ability to take a more individualized approach to sentencing, resulting in the same punishment being applied to people with very different histories, levels of risk, and circumstances. Specifically, we found:

1) Individuals Had Limited Awareness And Questioned The Purposes of Mandatory Minimums. Across all groups, participants consistently reported that mandatory minimum sentences are poorly understood by the people most directly subject to them. Justice-impacted individuals typically learned about mandatory minimum sentences only after charges were filed, and often not until a plea hearing or sentencing proceeding. System actors corroborated this: 67% of survey respondents rated defendants' pre-offense knowledge of mandatory minimums as none or little, and 94% of defense attorneys and 83% of prosecutors described mandatory minimums as an ineffective deterrent. One judge described personally witnessing a defendant's shock upon learning of mandatory minimum consequences at sentencing. Even when they knew about them, participants rejected their deterrent effect. As one justice-impact participant said, "Time wasn't the issue. I can do time on my back. I was in and out for 11 years. I didn't care about the time. Mandatory minimum doesn't quite set a point... What ended up saving me is getting more information about me. I learned about myself through trials and tribulations through the passing of my mother." This near-universal finding across stakeholder groups fundamentally calls into question whether mandatory minimums can deter behavior they are largely unknown to prevent.

Punishment is the only purpose participants believe mandatory minimums actually achieve. Participants across all groups identified four theoretical purposes of mandatory minimums — consistency, deterrence, punishment, and public safety — but expressed broad skepticism that most of these goals are meaningfully achieved in practice. Punishment emerged as the one outcome participants consistently believed mandatory minimums deliver. However, this was rarely offered as an endorsement: most participants across groups — including prosecutors, judges, and justice-impacted individuals alike — questioned whether punishment without individualized consideration, treatment, or attention to root causes produces behavioral change or long-term public safety. As one family member noted, “I don't think punishing someone can make them change if that person doesn't want to change. You can punish him more and more, and still nothing comes out of it. It's more about the person wanting to change from the inside.” Several justice-impacted and victim-survivor participants characterized mandatory minimums as policies that perpetuate structural racism under the appearance of neutrality. In fact, majorities of survey respondents *disagreed* that mandatory minimums reduce racial disparities (61%), result in proportionate outcomes (62%), or improve the administration of justice (58%). Consistency was the one area where opinion was most divided, and mandatory minimums fared relatively better — 42% agreed they produce more consistent sentences, though 80% of judges specifically disagreed.

2) Mandatory Minimums Reshape the Case Process and Remove Individual Consideration. Justice-impacted participants, victims, and system actors alike described mandatory minimums as fundamentally shifting discretion from judges to prosecutors, pressuring some defendants toward plea agreements while pushing others to trial, and preventing courts from accounting for treatment progress, individual history, or changed circumstances. Judges described their hands as "tied" even when mitigating circumstances were evident. Victim-survivors described feeling sidelined by a process that left little room for their preferences or voice. One victim-survivor of domestic violence described not wanting incarceration for her child's father, only to have the state take over the process entirely. She noted, “I didn't want my son to lose his dad; I didn't really want to press charges... but because of the degree of it, the state kind of took over, and I wasn't allowed to, you know, do anything besides an impact statement, really, and to feel so small... like I don't get a voice here either.”

3) The Impacts Of Mandatory Minimums Extend Far Beyond the Individual. Participants described incarceration resulting from mandatory minimums as a collective family experience — one marked by lost income, housing instability, separation of parents and children, and long-term barriers to reintegration. Justice-impacted participants described cycling through incarceration without receiving meaningful support for addiction, trauma, or economic instability. Participants described losing years with children, missing major life events, and experiencing long-term disruptions to family relationships and caregiving responsibilities. Two justice-impacted individuals – one white woman and one Black woman – described the deeply personal impact of their long sentences associated with their drug crimes: both gave birth while in prison, and did not get to have time with their babies because of their sentences, as one participant explains: “you're supposed to be with your infant for two years, but when you get to prison they do not actually honor that or give you that.”

Taken together, these three main findings reveal a striking disconnect between the theoretical purposes of mandatory minimums and how individuals experience them in practice. And in fact, when it comes to participants' input about mandatory minimum sentences, we often found it deeply intertwined with their perspectives on the value and fairness of sentence lengths and prison time more broadly. Across all groups, participants agreed that lasting public safety requires stable housing, treatment, economic opportunity, and community support — not incarceration alone. While some victim-survivors supported serious consequences for serious harm, nearly all agreed mandatory minimums were not the most effective vehicle. In the end, across groups, participants grappled with whether punishment imposed without consideration for individual circumstances, needs, and context would ever achieve the goals of behavior change and long-term community safety.

Project Background

In 2025, the Minnesota Legislature established the Mandatory Minimum Task Force, supported by the Minnesota Department of Corrections, to study mandatory minimum sentencing laws and provide recommendations to the Legislature. As part of its charge, the Task Force was required to gather input from individuals directly impacted by mandatory minimum sentences, including: people convicted of crimes with mandatory minimums, their family members, victims of those crimes, and the victims' family members.

Methods

To support this effort, the Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) conducted a qualitative study in the spring of 2026 designed to capture a range of perspectives across these groups. The MNJRC is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to driving meaningful change to Minnesota's criminal legal system through rigorous and community-centered research, education, and policy development.

The MNJRC held a consensus workshop with members of the Task Force in early March 2026 to help narrow our focus to the topics that were of greatest interest and need for the Task Force's final report. Following the workshop, we identified a primary objective of this study: **to understand how mandatory minimum sentences shape perceptions of fairness and justice across stakeholders.** We also heard from members of the task force that hearing from system actors directly would provide helpful input and context.

To address this, the research explored three key questions: 1) How do impacted individuals, victim-survivors, and system actors ***understand*** mandatory minimum sentences and their intended ***purpose*** in the criminal legal system? 2) How do mandatory minimums ***influence decision-making*** and experiences throughout the case process? And 3) How do individuals and families ***experience the effects*** of mandatory minimum sentences, including broader personal, familial, and community impacts?

Drawing on existing relationships with community members and system actors, recruitment strategies were tailored to each group while grounded in shared principles of trust, respect, and accessibility within the short timeline (March through May 2026). We conducted two focus groups in the Twin Cities with justice-impacted individuals (one of whom was also a victim-survivor) and family members of justice-impacted individuals—most of whom were older Black men—totaling 13 participants across both sessions. Participants' experiences with mandatory minimum sentencing in Minnesota included controlled substance offenses, firearm-related offenses, violent crimes such as assault and homicide, aggravated robbery, predatory offender registration violations, gang-related sentencing enhancements, and impaired driving offenses. Several participants also had experiences involving federal mandatory minimum sentences; their experiences were similar, and their input was useful.

Additionally, we conducted four in-depth interviews: two with victim-survivors (domestic violence and assault/battery, one of whom was also justice-impacted and a family member of a victim-survivor) and two with family members of individuals convicted of crimes (controlled substance and domestic violence-related offenses, one of whom was also a relative of a victim-survivor of domestic violence). Among interview participants, three identified as women and one identified as a man. Most participants were people of color, though complete racial and ethnic demographic information was not available for all participants.

Lastly, we sought perspectives from system actors, including judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers/community corrections, law enforcement, and victim services advocates. To collect this input, we surveyed system actors with both multiple-choice and open-ended questions and received 77 responses spread across the stakeholder groups. The vast majority of survey respondents identified as white, about half were men, and about half were located in Greater Minnesota. We also conducted follow-up interviews with one judge and one public defender from Greater Minnesota.

Despite outreach to understand the perspectives of different groups, participants did not fit neatly into a single group. That is, justice-impacted participants in our focus groups shared their own experiences along with their experiences with family members who were also justice-impacted; a few also described their experiences as victim-survivors. Several of our victim-survivor and family member participants were also justice-impacted, describing experiences as criminalized survivors. One of our family member participants joined the study to speak about her experience as the sister of someone who committed an offense for which there was a mandatory minimum. But because the offense was committed against her brother's wife, she also shared how the experience affected her as the sister-in-law of the victim-survivor of this crime. These overlapping and intersecting experiences underscore the importance of attending carefully to participants' multiple and sometimes overlapping positionalities throughout the analysis. They also highlight the complex, relational nature of how mandatory minimums affect individuals, families, and communities. We include a full demographic breakdown of all participants in Appendix A.

Following the survey, we conducted descriptive analyses of the multiple-choice responses (see Appendix B) alongside thematic analysis of the short-answer responses. We then analyzed focus group and interview data to identify key themes, shared experiences, and unique perspectives across participant groups.

Findings: Mandatory Minimums Are Poorly Understood On Their Own and Largely Deemed Ineffective

When it comes to participants' input about mandatory minimum sentences, we often found it deeply intertwined with their perspectives on the value and fairness of *sentence lengths* more broadly; that is, participants often veered from talking about mandatory minimums specifically to discussing the purpose, experiences, and impact of long sentences writ large. In addition, and also entangled with these perspectives, were participant perspectives about the necessity of *prison time* more broadly, its purpose, role in the case process, and deep impact on the lives of those who serve time, victim-survivors, and their family members. Put differently, a "mandatory minimum sentence" was less salient for participants than the experience of serving time. Therefore, our findings below summarize participants' input on mandatory minimums, but we strongly recommend that the Task Force understand these perspectives as tied to larger carceral questions.

Overall, participants' perceptions of fairness and justice were shaped less by the existence of consequences themselves and more by whether mandatory minimum sentences allowed for individual circumstances to be considered. Across stakeholder groups, many participants viewed mandatory minimums as unfair because they limit the judges' ability to take a more individualized approach to sentencing and can result in the same punishment being applied to people with very different histories, levels of risk, and circumstances.

Limited Awareness, Questioned Purposes: Participant Understanding of Mandatory Minimums

Participants across all stakeholder groups reported that mandatory minimum sentences are poorly understood by those directly impacted, with justice-impacted individuals typically learning about them only after system involvement – undermining their potential deterrent effect. While participants identified **consistency, deterrence, punishment, and public safety as the theoretical purposes of mandatory minimums, most expressed skepticism that these sentences achieve any goal other than punishment**, citing their inflexibility, racial disparities, and failure to account for individual circumstances.

Understanding. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of system actors (83%) demonstrated some or complete understanding of mandatory minimums. However, across stakeholder groups, participants generally reported that mandatory minimum sentences are poorly understood by the individuals directly impacted by them. Justice-impacted participants, victim-survivors, and family members consistently described themselves and others as largely unaware of mandatory minimum sentencing laws before committing an offense.

To the extent that justice-impacted participants knew about mandatory minimums, they describe learning about them through direct system involvement rather than through any prior awareness of sentencing laws. Some participants reported not learning that their offense carried a mandatory minimum sentence until they were already incarcerated or deep into the court process. Victim-survivors and family members similarly demonstrated limited understanding of mandatory minimums - even after knowing that the person who harmed them or their loved ones was sentenced. Instead, they often describe them through personal experience rather than legal definitions. For example, one family member described mandatory minimums simply as “short sentences people have to serve,” reflecting her understanding through a relative’s short incarceration experience for his domestic violence case.

Defense attorneys, judges, law enforcement, and probation respondents largely corroborated these perspectives. Public defenders consistently reported that defendants are generally unaware of mandatory minimums until after charges are filed and legal counsel explains the consequences, as one attorney puts it:

> *“Your average member of the public has no idea what charges carry mandatory minimums or how long those sentences are… Even people who have gone through the criminal legal system before are often confused about why the judge isn't taking into account their personal life circumstances, their remorse, and other individualized considerations.” (System-actor, Minneapolis)*

Several judges similarly stated that defendants are often learning about mandatory minimum penalties during plea hearings or sentencing proceedings. Even among law enforcement respondents who supported mandatory minimums, many acknowledged that people committing crimes frequently do not think about sentencing consequences at the time of the offense. Probation officers particularly highlight that many of these cases are happening in situations involving substance use, mental health crises, desperation, coercion, or survival-related circumstances, as one probation officer respondent from Greater Minnesota puts it: “People don't think about it when they are committing a crime. Especially if they are struggling with chemical use, mental health, or suffering from trauma.”

Purpose. Justice-impacted, victim-survivor, and family member participants tended to have more difficulty naming a practical purpose for mandatory minimum sentences. Instead, most tended to share that they felt they were designed for nefarious reasons, for the purposes of enacting racial harm and control. System actor respondents, on the other hand, identify **four primary theoretical purposes of**

mandatory minimum sentencing: consistency, deterrence, punishment, and public safety. However, when discussing how mandatory minimums function in practice, many respondents expressed skepticism that they meaningfully accomplish most of these goals. Instead, punishment emerged as the primary outcome most respondents believed mandatory minimums actually achieve, which justice-impacted participants largely corroborated with their lived experiences. Ultimately, these observations among both impacted community member participants and system actor respondents contribute to their perceptions that mandatory minimum sentences are neither fair nor just. Participants feel that they are not making sentencing more consistent across defendants, nor that people are weighing them before committing an offense.

Purpose 1: Consistency. Across all system actors, consistency or uniformity in sentencing was the most commonly cited purpose of mandatory minimums. Survey respondents describe this as "ensuring unbiased sentencing" or "creating a default sentence," removing judicial discretion, eliminating sentencing disparities, and ensuring similar offenses receive similar punishment. Re-entry/probation staff tended to name this neutrally or positively, saying things like "fairness," while defense attorneys more often frame it as a mechanical floor rather than a genuine equity tool.

Despite this being the most frequently named purpose, less than half of survey respondents (42%) agreed that mandatory minimums actually promote more consistent sentencing. Somewhat surprisingly, given their role in administering sentencing, a huge majority of judges (80%) *disagreed* that mandatory minimums produce consistency.

In fact, a major theme across stakeholder groups was concern about the inflexibility of mandatory minimum sentencing and the limited ability to consider individual circumstances. Public defenders, judges, victim-survivors, family members, and justice-impacted participants repeatedly emphasized that offenses carrying mandatory minimums can vary substantially depending on context, history, risk, and personal circumstances, yet mandatory sentencing structures often treat cases similarly regardless of those differences.

This concern was particularly pronounced in discussions of firearm possession offenses. Several participants questioned whether individuals possessing firearms for self-protection after prior victimization or community violence should face the same penalties as individuals *using* firearms to threaten or harm others:

> *"The mandatory minimums leave no room to 'have the punishment fit the crime.' It allows for no discretion in sentencing as it relates to the facts of each individual case. For example, should a loaded firearm on the person of a defendant who is under the influence of drugs while threatening his wife and child be treated the same as the*

> *person who has some ammunition in the bottom of a backpack which is stored in the back of his closet? The law says these are exactly the same." (System-actor, Twin Cities Metro)*

Similarly, several participants, especially victim-survivor participants, distinguished between first-time or lower-level offenses and repeated or more serious violent conduct, emphasizing the importance of allowing courts to weigh individual circumstances.

Participants also raised concerns about racial disparities associated with the crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences as undermining any attempts at consistency. Justice-impacted and victim-survivor participants alike frequently described mandatory minimums, particularly for controlled substance and firearm-related offenses, as disproportionately affecting Black communities and contributing to broader patterns of racial inequity in the criminal legal system, as a couple of participants describe:

> *"The ratio of people being brought before a judge is already skewed. If the majority of the defendants are already black, it's not really going to make anything more fair." (Victim-Survivor Participant)*

> *"In the 60s you had the Black Panthers [who were possessing guns], and then, our communities got flooded with drugs. I'm hearing 'population control'." (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

Some participants characterized mandatory minimums as policies that perpetuate structural racism under the appearance of neutrality, as another participant—a justice-impacted participant with a controlled substance-related offense—puts it, "In Minnesota, we know how to hide racism behind a law." Several system actors similarly questioned whether mandatory minimums meaningfully reduce disparities in practice. A majority (61%) disagreed that mandatory minimum sentences reduce racial disparities, particularly when disparities may already exist earlier in the criminal legal process through policing, charging, or plea negotiations.

> *"It's important to note that because Black and Brown communities are policed more heavily than white communities, arrests for offenses with mandatory minimums will always be more common in those communities. That doesn't mean crime occurs more frequently in those communities. But until policing starts being done more equitably, Black and Brown people will continue to suffer under a mandatory minimum system." (System-actor, Minneapolis)*

Purpose 2: Deterrence. Connected to our findings on the lack of understanding of mandatory minimums, most participants in all stakeholder groups questioned whether mandatory minimums meaningfully function as a deterrent to crime. Following consistency in sentencing, deterrence was the second most frequently cited purpose of mandatory minimum sentences among system actors, identified by 14% of survey respondents. However, skepticism about whether mandatory minimums actually deter crime was widespread across stakeholder groups.

Unlike system actors, justice-impacted participants, victim-survivors, and family members rarely identified deterrence as a purpose of mandatory minimums on their own. When prompted, many expressed doubt that mandatory minimums prevent people from committing crimes, particularly because most individuals are unaware of them prior to becoming involved in the criminal legal system. As one justice-impacted participant stated, “No one is going to educate us on mandatory minimums because they do not want to keep us out of jail.”

This skepticism was echoed by many system actors, with respondents describing deterrence as the “alleged purpose” of mandatory minimums rather than an outcome they had observed in practice. Defense attorneys were particularly doubtful, with 94% reporting that mandatory minimums were somewhat or extremely ineffective at deterring crime. One judge noted.

> *“Many individuals that commit these types of crimes (especially first-time offenders and low-risk offenders) have no idea of a minimum mandatory consequence until a court or their attorney informs them. It’s not something that anyone thinks about before a crime is committed. I have personally observed the looks on their faces when it takes place during a plea or at sentencing. It's disturbing to watch.” (System-actor, Greater Minnesota)*

Prosecutors largely agreed: 83% described mandatory minimums as somewhat or extremely ineffective as a deterrent. Justice-impacted participants frequently echoed these perspectives, describing personal experiences in which incarceration alone did not deter or in any way change their long-term behavior. As one participant describes,

> *“Time wasn't the issue. I can do time on my back. I was in and out for 11 years. I didn't care about the time. Mandatory minimum doesn't quite set a point… What ended up saving me is getting more information about me. I learned about myself through trials and tribulations through the passing of my mother.” (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

Much like this individual, many justice-impacted participants described significant life changes and often pointed to major personal events, treatment, recovery, relationships, or family responsibilities as the factors that ultimately helped justice-impacted participants to get out of the cycle of incarceration they described.

Purpose 3: Punishment. Justice-impacted participants largely described mandatory minimums as a mechanism for imposing harsh and inflexible consequences on people, that do not take into account any factors in the person’s specific case, history, or efforts taken to make amends. Across stakeholder groups, punishment emerged as the purpose participants most consistently believed mandatory minimums actually achieve. However, participants were far less certain that punishment alone produces the broader outcomes often associated with sentencing, such as behavioral change and rehabilitation, which are the factors that would promote long-term public safety by reducing recidivism.

About 20% of system actors framed the purpose of mandatory minimums as punishment for serious offenses, with no broader instrumental goal attached. The word *punish* appeared verbatim in responses from multiple attorneys, including both prosecutors and defense attorneys. Many system-actor respondents from other groups, primarily law enforcement and probation, used the term *accountability* as either connected to or interchangeable with punishment. Some law enforcement respondents similarly described mandatory minimums as necessary tools for accountability and incapacitation, particularly for repeat or violent offenses. One system actor respondent noted that the purpose is to “make the community feel people are being held accountable (even though these minimums/sentences are not evidence-based or calculated in meaningful ways).”

System-actor respondents and justice-impacted participants shared nuanced perspectives on punishment and accountability, often distinguishing between the importance of accountability and mandatory minimum sentencing as the mechanism for achieving it. Several victim-survivors and family members expressed support for serious consequences in cases involving violence, repeated harm, or controlled substance distribution resulting in community harm. At the same time, many justice-impacted participants and system-actor respondents believed that the punishment resulting from a mandatory minimum sentence was often disproportionate to the offense, failed to account for individual circumstances, or was not necessarily the outcome that they had hoped for. As one paralegal respondent from Greater Minnesota stated, "Mandatory minimums definitely punish the client, but in my opinion, more harshly than necessary in most situations."

Justice-impacted participants brought this concern to life through their own experiences. One participant described receiving a federal mandatory minimum sentence and a 20-year probation period for a controlled substance offense despite being a first-time offender. A victim-survivor of domestic violence similarly described the impact of her husband's incarceration, which she did not want. She explained that his imprisonment reduced the time her son was able to spend with his father and limited his ability to financially support the family through child support due to the barriers to employment associated with incarceration and a felony record.

> *“There's a mandatory minimum involved, but there's also the fact that, you know, even after it happened, because I didn't want my son to lose his dad, I didn't really*

want to press charges ... but because of the degree of it, the state kind of took over and I wasn't allowed to, you know, do anything besides an impact statement, really, and to feel so small at the point of, you know, that the government is redoing it again, like I don't get a voice here either." (Victim-Survivor Participant)

This perspective reflects a broader theme across stakeholder groups: many participants supported accountability but questioned whether mandatory minimum sentences allow sufficient consideration of the circumstances, needs, and perspectives of those most directly affected.

Across groups, participants emphasized that accountability matters but that incarceration alone without treatment, rehabilitation, and attention to root causes like addiction, trauma, and economic insecurity does little to reduce recidivism, which would contribute to improving long-term public safety.

Purpose 4: Public Safety. System-actor respondents identified public safety slightly less frequently than the previous three theoretical purposes and often discussed it in connection with deterrence and recidivism. Law enforcement framed this purpose most straightforwardly and positively, one respondent states:

"Mandatory minimums will hold offenders accountable and can assist the victims with a feeling of vindication. Choices have consequences. Behavior can be modified by holding a line of accountability with no wiggle room." (System-actor, Twin Cities Metro)

Law enforcement respondents were more likely to view mandatory minimums as promoting public safety through accountability and incapacitation, particularly for serious, violent, or repeat offenses. Some respondents also viewed mandatory minimums as an important signal that certain behaviors carry serious consequences. In contrast, corrections, probation, and parole respondents more frequently emphasized rehabilitation and successful reentry, expressing skepticism that mandatory minimum sentences alone produce lasting improvements in public safety or reductions in recidivism.

*"While jail and prison have a time and a place in the criminal justice system, the safety of our communities are best served by providing evidence-based tools and interventions to build skills which are lacking. There is nothing tied - from an evidence-based standpoint - to "90 days in jail on your second DUI." These numbers are arbitrarily selected by prosocial, rule-following professionals who themselves think "Oh wow, that sounds terrible. That should stop their shenanigans." (*System-actor, Greater Minnesota)

Attorneys and most judges are the most skeptical about the role of mandatory minimums in achieving public safety. When listing the theoretical purposes of mandatory minimum sentences, as they believe them to be, they couch these with skepticism. For example, one prosecutor states, "They *want* the purpose to be [to] protect public safety" and later elaborates that “[Mandatory minimum sentences] make it difficult to encourage true change when the end result is incarceration and no chance to argue against that.” Respondents frequently emphasized that lasting public safety depends on addressing the factors that contribute to criminal legal system involvement, including substance use, mental health needs, trauma, housing instability, and economic insecurity. Several respondents also expressed concern that mandatory minimums can limit opportunities for individualized sentencing, treatment, and rehabilitation, which they viewed as more likely to improve long-term outcomes for both individuals and communities.

Similarly, justice-impacted participants point out that incarceration alone does not do much to rehabilitate a person. Many point to circumstances in people’s lives, such as addiction, trauma, lack of economic opportunity, and mental health struggles, that drive people to commit offenses, despite the possibility of facing time in prison. In turn, they frequently emphasized the need to address the root causes of these crimes by providing access to treatment, housing, employment, and other forms of support as more effective approaches for preventing future harm and reducing criminal legal system involvement. Moreover, they also called for the importance of receiving treatment and meaningful educational opportunities while in prison, which several shared they did not experience during their sentences, as one participant shares:

> *“Everyone should have to go through treatment, whatever that crime may be, you shouldn't just be sitting in prison. You're sitting there and it does what? it doesn't make you smarter. You got nothing but time to think while you're in there.” (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

At the same time, some participants acknowledged that incarceration may be appropriate in cases involving serious violence. This was especially true for a victim-survivor who experienced a random, violent attack and believed her attacker received too little prison time, as well as a family member of an individual convicted of a domestic violence offense. Both viewed incarceration as warranted, with the family member noting that the sentence imposed was appropriate and, if anything, shorter than she would have expected. However, participants who support incarceration in these cases reiterate that time in prison alone is not enough to contribute to long-term changes in behavior and thereby public safety.

> *“I don't think punishing someone can make them change if that person doesn't want to change. You can punish him more and more, and still nothing comes out of it. It's more about the person wanting to change from the inside.” (Family Member Participant)*

This quote speaks to participants' broader sentiments about the limits of incarceration. Most participants across stakeholder groups feel that prison alone is not sufficient to deter crime or promote public safety, and often, it may not be the best approach to treat individual cases.

Shifting Discretion: How Mandatory Minimums Shape Charging, Pleas, and Sentencing

Participants described mandatory minimums as fundamentally reshaping the case process by shifting discretion from judges to prosecutors through charging and plea decisions—pressuring some defendants to accept pleas while pushing others toward trial—and preventing courts from considering rehabilitation, treatment progress, or individual circumstances at sentencing. Most system actors and justice-impacted participants alike described feeling constrained by predetermined outcomes, while victim-survivors expressed feeling sidelined from a process that left little room for their voice or preferences.

Mandatory minimum sentences were widely described as significantly shaping decision-making throughout the criminal legal process, particularly by shifting meaningful discretion away from judges and toward prosecutors through charging decisions and plea negotiations. Public defenders and defense attorneys most consistently described mandatory minimums as fundamentally altering case strategy, plea negotiations, and client counseling.

Several defense attorneys explained that if their client has the possibility of facing a mandatory minimum, it becomes one of the first issues discussed, substantially changing legal risk and available options. Respondents reported that mandatory minimums can increase pressure on defendants to accept plea agreements, particularly when prosecutors are willing to negotiate charges that avoid triggering mandatory sentences. At the same time, respondents also described the opposite dynamic: when prosecutors are unwilling to negotiate around mandatory minimum charges, some defendants become more willing to proceed to trial because the mandatory sentence reduces the perceived benefit of pleading guilty.

Defense attorneys repeatedly described mandatory minimums as limiting their ability to advocate for individualized outcomes based on treatment progress, rehabilitation, personal history, or demonstrated amenability to probation. Several respondents described situations in which clients completed treatment, maintained sobriety, secured employment, or otherwise demonstrated meaningful behavioral change during the pendency of their case. Justice-impacted participants similarly expressed frustration that mandatory minimums leave little room to account for the unique circumstances of a case or the perspectives of those most directly affected. When asked what sentencing would look like in an ideal system, one justice-impacted participant emphasized the importance of bringing together all parties involved and considering the specific context of each case:

> *"[Sentencing] should be a collective thing, like with PSI [pre-sentence investigation], prosecutor, attorney, and with the victim, because every case is different. These people that were affected by the harm have a say. Some people may be victims of crimes of lower statutes that shouldn't carry a mandatory minimum. You have victims' advocates speaking out against it, and people still get it." (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

Yet judges remained unable to depart from statutory sentencing requirements. In these situations, respondents often described judges as acknowledging the mitigating circumstances while simultaneously expressing that their "hands were tied" by mandatory sentencing laws. One justice-impacted participant describes this experience as:

> *"[What comes to mind when I think of mandatory minimum sentences is] the whole violation of it - all other cases there is a fight and you can go in there and say your piece, have a lawyer negotiate, witnesses, but with a mandatory minimum you have to take that to the chin." (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

Judges similarly described mandatory minimums as constraining their discretion and limiting courts' ability to tailor sentences to individual circumstances. Judges also questioned whether mandatory minimums consistently produce uniform outcomes in practice, noting that similarly situated individuals may ultimately receive different outcomes depending on charging decisions, negotiated pleas, or prosecutorial discretion.

Probation and parole respondents described more varied effects on their work. Some respondents explained that mandatory minimums shape supervision planning and reentry support for individuals returning from lengthy incarceration. Others noted that mandatory minimums can complicate rehabilitation planning because sentencing outcomes are predetermined, potentially reducing incentives for treatment engagement or behavioral change during the case process. Several respondents also described tensions between statutory mandatory minimum requirements and early release programs, particularly where individuals sentenced under mandatory minimum statutes later become eligible for release programming.

Victim-survivors and family members generally discussed the role of mandatory minimums in the case process less directly, often because of their more limited familiarity with sentencing structures. However, several participants still described strong feelings about fairness, proportionality, and voice within the process itself.

One victim-survivor described feeling that mandatory minimum sentencing removed her ability to meaningfully influence the outcome of a domestic violence case involving the father of her child. Although she no longer wanted incarceration after the incident occurred, she described the state as effectively taking over the process, leaving her feeling isolated and unheard. Other participants expressed more general beliefs that individuals who commit serious harm should "do the time" associated with their actions, while still recognizing the importance of considering the severity and context of individual cases.

Beyond the Sentence: Family, Community, and Long-Term Impacts

Participants consistently described the impacts of mandatory minimum sentencing as extending far beyond the individual sentenced, shaping family stability, economic security, emotional well-being, and long-term community outcomes. One of the strongest themes across interviews and focus groups was the broad impact that incarceration—as a result of mandatory minimums—has on families. Justice-impacted participants, victim-survivors, family members, and system actors alike described incarceration as something experienced collectively by families rather than solely by the sentenced individual.

Participants described the loss of income, instability in housing and caregiving arrangements, separation between parents and children, and emotional strain that often accompany lengthy incarceration. Several respondents noted that children may lose critical developmental years with parents, while family members often assume increased financial and caregiving responsibilities during incarceration. Two justice-impacted individuals – one white woman and one Black woman – described the deeply personal impact of their long sentences associated with their drug crimes: both gave birth while in prison, and did not get to have time with their babies because of their sentences, as one participant explains: "You're supposed to be with your infant for two years, but when you get to prison they do not actually honor that or give you that." The other participant described not learning that her offense carried a mandatory minimum sentence until she was already incarcerated. She was devastated by the news, having expected to transfer to boot camp after serving two-thirds of her sentence, only to learn that the mandatory minimum made her ineligible to serve the remaining portion there.

As noted above, participants also consistently questioned whether incarceration alone promotes long-term behavioral change. Justice-impacted participants frequently stated that prison itself did not fundamentally change their behavior or address the circumstances contributing to their criminal legal system involvement. For example, several participants instead described experiences of cycling repeatedly through incarceration without receiving meaningful support related to addiction, trauma, mental health, housing instability, or economic insecurity. One victim-survivor participant reflected on repeatedly encountering punishment throughout her life while struggling with substance use and victimization, describing a system that repeatedly punished without adequately addressing underlying needs.

> *“[As] a woman who has been incarcerated, who's been a victim of a violent crime, a person who's been in jail or prison for these things. I’ve been in jail for a charge I did not even understand, like me, a person who was a vulnerable adult who has mental health issues, who takes medication. I have been in court and pled to a charge. I didn't even know what the hell I was pleading to...I only pled to the charge to get out of jail to get to my son, knowing that I didn't really do nothing wrong.” (Victim-Survivor Participant)*

Participants also described the long-term consequences of criminal records and incarceration following release from prison. Justice-impacted participants discussed barriers to employment, housing, financial stability, and community reintegration that continued long after their sentence was completed. Several participants described feeling trapped between expectations to rebuild their lives and the ongoing limitations imposed by criminal records, supervision requirements, or living in unsafe neighborhoods. In discussions regarding firearm possession offenses, some participants explained that individuals returning to communities where they previously experienced violence may continue to feel unsafe despite knowing the legal consequences associated with firearm possession.

> *“[Knew about] mandatory minimum for a firearm for 3 years, 5 years. At one point in time, I didn't care - I would rather get caught with a gun than without it. Just because you choose to walk in a different direction, doesn't mean that the person you harmed is thinking the same way ... How do you tell a man not to protect his family? People would rather die on their feet than get caught without a gun to defend himself.” (Justice-Impacted Participant)*

Similarly, a family member-participant recalls his experience of losing his brother for five years at a time due to felon in possession offenses. He describes how, as he got older, he understood why his brother still felt the need to carry a weapon despite knowing the consequences due to the unsafe neighborhood they lived in. This pushed him to move when he had a son to avoid repeating that pattern:

> *“I lost my brother for a number of years - when I lost him for five years, it took a lot out of our family. He was the head of the family. As the younger brother, I had to step up. I have been scared of firearms. I get why people have to use them for protection. It made me understand more of what he was going through to have to step up. All the drama he was facing, he would come be our protector. Trying to avoid those situations was really hard. When I had my kid, I moved. Because I didn't want to have to stand around and protect him the way my older brother did for me, and I didn't want to lose my kid the way we lost my brother - five years at a time.”*
>
> *-Family Member Participant*

Across stakeholder groups, participants repeatedly emphasized that meaningful public safety requires more than incarceration alone. Participants frequently pointed to the importance of stable housing, economic opportunity, education, treatment, mental health services, restorative approaches, and community support in reducing future harm and promoting long-term safety. While perspectives differed on the appropriate role of punishment, there was broad agreement that incarceration by itself often fails to address the underlying conditions contributing to criminal legal system involvement.

Conclusion

Taken together, these three main findings reveal a striking disconnect between the theoretical purposes of mandatory minimums and how individuals experience them in practice. Participants questioned how mandatory minimums can deter criminal behavior by those who are largely unaware of them, whether consistency is really achieved when discretion shifts from judges to prosecutors, and, more broadly, whether inflexible sentences and incarceration can really address the substance use, trauma, and economic insecurity that participants identify as drivers of system involvement.

Mandatory minimums have a profound human impact on those who are incarcerated, victim-survivors, and their family members. While perspectives varied on the use of incarceration as punishment – and some participants supported serious consequences for serious harm – punishment emerged as the only stated purpose that mandatory minimums actually achieve. In the end, across groups, participants grappled with whether punishment imposed without consideration for individual circumstances, needs, and context would ever achieve the broader goals of behavior change and long-term community safety.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Demographics

Focus group/interview participants: N=18

Connection to Mandatory Minimums (i.e., "stakeholder group"):
N = 18, Percentages sum to more than 100% due to overlapping group identities

Stakeholder Group	n	%
Victim-survivor	4	22.2%
Justice-impacted	14	77.7%
Family member (victim-survivor)	2	11.1%
Family member (justice-impacted)	6	33.3%

Mandatory Minimum Charge Category
N = 18

Charge	n	%
Drug-related	5	27.8%
Firearm-related	5	27.8%
Other (e.g., domestic violence, failure to register)	4	22.2%
Unknown by victim-survivor/family member	6	22.2%

Mandatory Minimum Sentence Length (in years)
N = 18

Years	n	%
Less than 1	3	16.7%
1-2	2	11.1%
3-5	1	5.6%
6-10	2	11.1%
More than 10	8	44.4%
Unknown	2	11.1%

Racial/ethnic identity:

N = 18 respondents. Races are perceived, not reported

Response	n	%
Black/African American	15	83.3%
Hispanic/Latino	1	5.6%
White	2	11.1%

Gender identity:

N = 18 respondents. Genders are perceived, not reported

Response	n	%
Man	12	66.7%
Woman	6	33.3%

Age:

N = 18, DOBs collected for justice-impacted, not victim-survivors or family members

- Range: 32 - 60 years old
- Mean: 49.7 years

Survey respondents: N=77

Select the part(s) of the criminal justice system that best describe(s) where you work: *N = 77*

Sector	n	%
Courts - Public defenders	20	26.3%
Courts - Prosecutors	9	11.8%
Courts - Judges	5	6.6%
Re-entry/probation	32	42.1%
Law enforcement	4	5.2%

Policy/advocacy	3	3.9%
Jails	2	2.6%
Community legal	2	2.6%

Where are you located?

n = 75

Response	**n**	**%**
Minneapolis	4	5.3%
St. Paul	6	8.0%
Twin Cities Metro (not Minneapolis or St. Paul)	24	32.0%
Greater Minnesota	41	54.7%

Racial/ethnic identity:

N = 77 respondents. Percentages sum to more than 100% due to multiple selections.

Response	**n**	**%**
American Indian/Alaskan Native/Indigenous	1	1.3%
Asian/Asian American	1	1.3%
Black/African American	4	5.2%
Hispanic/Latino	5	6.5%
White	67	87.0%
I prefer to self-describe	2	2.6%

Gender identity:

N = 77

Response	**n**	**%**
Man	34	44.2%

Woman	41	53.2%
Nonbinary	1	1.3%
Other	1	1.3%

Work Experience:

- Mean: 12.3 years
- Bimodal: Roughly ⅓ early-career (<5 yrs), ⅓ mid-to-senior (11–20 yrs), and a handful each of mid-career (6-10 yrs) and senior (20+ yrs)

Appendix B: Survey Descriptives

How would you rate your knowledge/understanding of mandatory minimum sentences in Minnesota?

n = 66

Response	n	%
No knowledge/understanding	0	0.0%
Little knowledge/understanding	2	3.0%
Some knowledge/understanding	29	43.9%
Complete or robust knowledge/understanding	35	53.0%

How would you rate the knowledge/understanding of mandatory minimums of the average individual who is charged with an offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence BEFORE they commit the offense?

n = 66

Response	n	%
No knowledge/understanding	23	34.8%
Little knowledge/understanding	21	31.8%
Some knowledge/understanding	17	25.8%
Complete or robust knowledge/understanding	5	7.6%

How would you rate the knowledge/understanding of mandatory minimums of someone who is the victim of an offense connected to a mandatory minimum sentence?

n = 66

Response	n	%
Unsure	5	7.6%
No knowledge/understanding	22	33.3%
Little knowledge/understanding	24	36.4%
Some knowledge/understanding	13	19.7%
Complete or robust knowledge/understanding	2	3.0%

Overall, do you believe that mandatory minimums are effective at serving the purpose you named above?

n = 66

Response	n	%
Yes, extremely effective	6	9.1%
Yes, somewhat effective	18	27.3%
Neutral	14	21.2%
No, somewhat ineffective	14	21.2%
No, extremely ineffective	14	21.2%

Do you believe that mandatory minimums act as an effective deterrent?

n = 66

Response	n	%
Yes, extremely effective deterrent	1	1.5%
Yes, somewhat effective deterrent	9	13.6%
Neutral	10	15.2%

No, somewhat ineffective deterrent	15	22.7%
No, extremely ineffective deterrent	31	47.0%

Overall, do you believe mandatory minimums promote public safety?

n = 66

Response	n	%
Yes, strongly	2	3.0%
Yes, somewhat	17	25.8%
No opinion	7	10.6%
No, somewhat	15	22.7%
No, strongly	25	37.9%

Mandatory minimums produce more consistent sentences across defendants.

Select one. n = 66 respondents who answered.

Response	n	%
Strongly disagree	6	9.1%
Disagree	20	30.3%
Neutral	12	18.2%
Agree	27	40.9%
Strongly agree	1	1.5%

Mandatory minimums reduce racial disparities in sentencing.

n = 66

Response	n	%
Strongly disagree	23	34.8%

Disagree	17	25.8%
Neutral	12	18.2%
Agree	13	19.7%
Strongly agree	1	1.5%

Mandatory minimums result in sentences that are proportionate to a person's role in the offense.

n = 66

Response	n	%
Strongly disagree	22	33.3%
Disagree	19	28.8%
Neutral	12	18.2%
Agree	11	16.7%
Strongly agree	2	3.0%

Mandatory minimums improve the administration of justice.

n = 66

Response	n	%
Strongly disagree	21	31.8%
Disagree	17	25.8%
Neutral	15	22.7%
Agree	11	16.7%
Strongly agree	2	3.0%

How likely do you think it is for changes to mandatory minimums to happen within the next five years?

n = 50

Response	n	%
Very likely	0	0.0%
Somewhat likely	7	14.0%
Unsure	14	28.0%
Somewhat unlikely	10	20.0%
Very unlikely	19	38.0%