

# Why examine the problem?

Advocates, experts, academics and children themselves know the detrimental effect of detention. It changes the course of childhood, personal development and, often, children's lives. The UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty was just released in 2019 showing that **more than 7 million children are deprived of liberty in the world each year.** This includes 1 million children in police custody, and each year, 1.5 million are detained by courts. What this means is that **on any single day there around 480,000 – 600,000 children in detention facilities.**

But child advocates had a tremendous problem:  
**How do you show child detention is a bad idea?**

Advocates in the child rights community, too often, had only anecdotes, local research, individual case examples or small data sets to rely on to show that detention is damaging in unexpected and unintended ways. Developments in artificial intelligence technology make it possible to leverage big data and accomplish in days what would otherwise take many years: **we can use AI to show what detention does to children, families and communities. There is no reason to delay.**






# Why does it matter?

**There may be so many consequences of depriving children of liberty.**

- Is there an increased risk of COVID and other health risks in jails/detention/prison/police stations?
- Are there consequences for mental health or physical, emotional, mental, neurological, health?
- Are there consequences for education and school - expulsion, limited expectations for success, etc.
- Does detention affect the disintegration to families, increase engagement with child welfare system?
- Are there consequences for housing and shelter? And more.



**"I was suffocated inside the prison, more than ever. I could not even talk to the others. My world inside was already dull, but when the Covid-19 arrived it turned total darkness. I was left completely alone."**

13 year old detained in Afghanistan

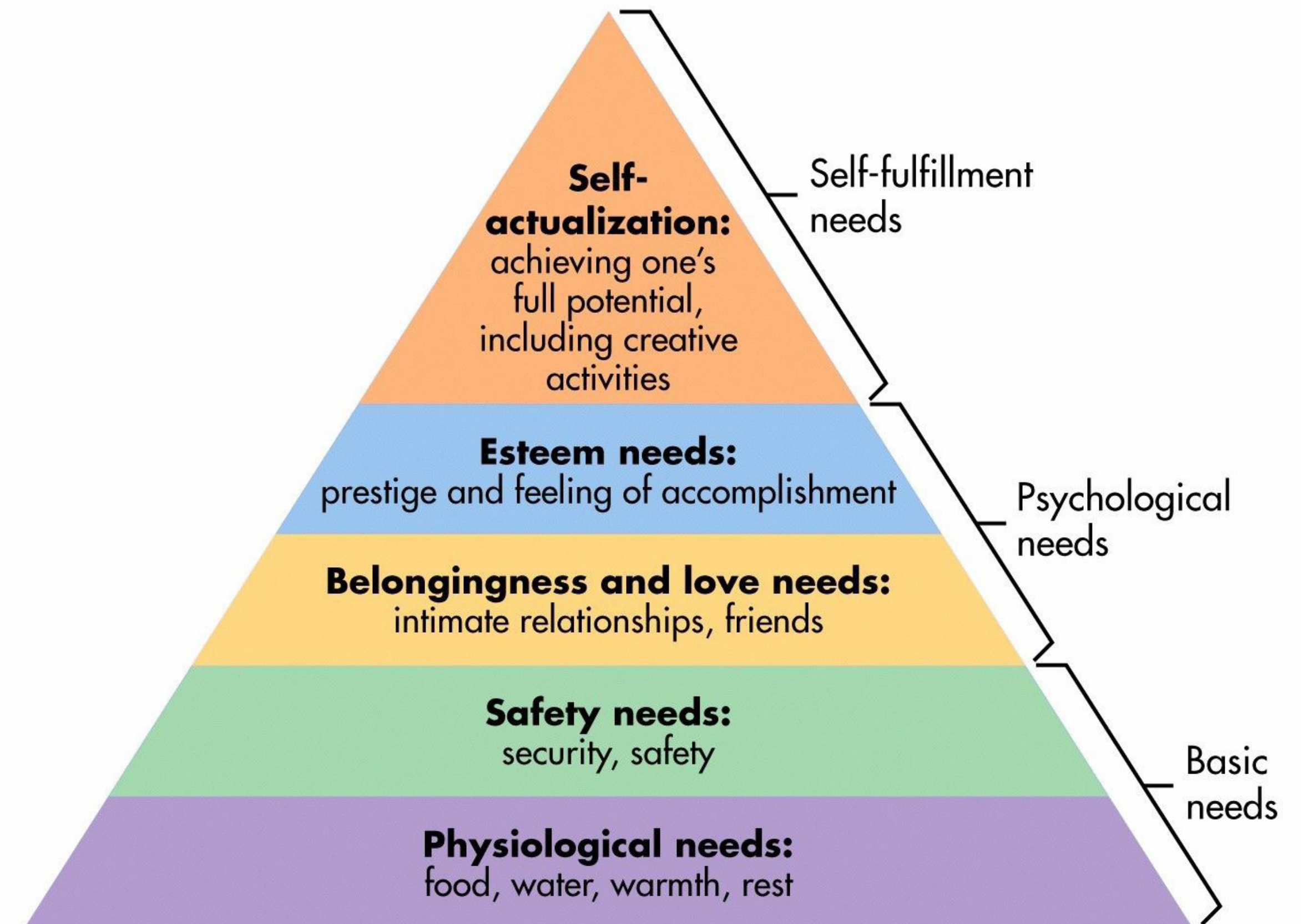


# What did we do?

Baker McKenzie and SparkBeyond worked together to track all the components of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs on the web looking for supporting evidence linking to them from child detention. We examined:

- **400 billion web pages**
- **100s of millions of scientific publications**
- **10 million pages on Wikipedia**
- **100s of millions of pages of news**
- **100s of thousands of pages of clinical trial reports**
- **100s of thousands of pages of government websites**

The tool uncovered 125 separate and **distinct paths** through the web linking **millions of points** of evidence of the negative effect of detention on the key areas of human need enunciated in Maslow's hierarchy.





# What did we learn?

- Using SB's Research Studio we found millions of sources on the web linking child detention to a host of **unintended consequences that negatively impact every human need contained in Maslow's hierarchy**.
- Our efforts were intentionally broad in that we looked at child detention for any reason - criminal offense, refugee, residential centers from child welfare, etc. All forms of detention lead to all the negative consequences that were uncovered in the mining of SparkBeyond's tool.
- The sheer numbers of publications connecting negative outcomes to child detention were enormous.
  - Publications and news items connecting child detention to **trauma**, for example, each showed **over 100,000 evidence points**.
  - The detrimental effect on **wellbeing** was also discussed in **over 100,000** places.
  - **Anxiety** and **depression** revealed over 100,000 pieces of evidence each.
  - **Mental health** reveals over a **half million connections** news and publications connection them.
  - **Health**, in general, was reported to be negatively affected by child detention in over **10 million** publications.
- This exploration showed that we are only scratching the surface in understanding long term consequences of detention on education, employability and job success, family structure, and violence in families long-term and so much more.
- SparkBeyond's tool shows the effects of detention have been studied and discussed all over the globe and over decades. The world was talking to its own communities about the exact the same things around the globe but **these results now allow the universality of those conclusions and communications to be shared**. The possibilities this opens up for improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable children are both limitless and game changing.
- The revelations of experts and reporters around the world cannot replace the silenced voices of the children themselves who, at this moment, sit in concrete, mesh and steel-barred cells all over the world and sleep alone in the dark with no family or caregiver nearby each night. But this is a start. **These results can open the discussion to allow those voices to be heard**.





# What's Next?

We aim to share this with all our social impact partners in child rights.

## ■ BE THE VOICE

Our primary aim is to lift up the voices and conditions of children and youth who cannot be heard in the circumstances where they are. To do that, we must share our results with the world of advocates for child health, wellness, safety, rights and justice.

## ■ COLLABORATION

There are potentially many users of this important work including organizations that serve youth, law enforcement and security forces, governments, courts, policy leaders, academics, community leaders and business/sustainability leaders. Our Firm's clients have been working with these organizations and will want to work with us more. We know the NGO and global leadership community can put this work to use very effectively, including with UN Entities focused on next steps to the UN Study on Deprivation of Liberty.

## ■ SHOUT OUT

We have been invited to announce our work at the World Congress on Justice with Children alongside the Terre des Hommes foundation, our pro bono partners in many of our global child rights work. This will take place virtually in November 2021 co-hosted by the Supreme Court of Mexico.

