



Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers

A monthly summary produced by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Coordination

2023 in Review

Purpose

This report aims to address two broad questions: "Who was detained in the Orleans Justice Center last year?" and "What was the flow of people into and out of the jail last month. To that end, the report presents information about average daily jail population, admissions, and releases in 2023.

Data sources

The data behind the graphics comes from the **Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office** and the **Orleans Parish Criminal District Court** via the OCJC Data Warehouse. OCJC undertakes additional data processing to better enable tabulations and analyses.

Summary

- On average, 1,120 **people were detained in the jail daily 2023**, an increase of nearly 15% compared to 2022, when on average, 977 people were detained in the jail each day,
- **8,198 jail admissions took place in 2023**, a 13% increase compared to 2022, when 7,271 people were admitted to the jail. Just under half (49%, or 325 people) were admitted to the jail with a felony as the most serious charge at booking.
- **7,861 jail releases took place in 2023**, an 10% increase from 2022, when 7,142 jail releases took place, and 87% -- 6,840 releases -- occurred before final case disposition.
- **The average length of stay for the 7,861 released people in 2023 was 47 days** (min = less than 1 day; max = 3,154 days; standard dev. = 165.2).
 - The median length of stay for all released people was 2 days.
 - Nearly 48% of jail releases took place within 2 days of jail admission.
 - Releasees who spent 2 days or more in jail after admission had an average jail stay of 98 days (min = 3 days; standard dev. = 228.0 and a median length of stay of 27 days.
- Racial disparities persisted in the jail population in 2023. **Black people were detained in the jail at 5 times the rate of white people**, per 100,000 New Orleans residents by race, an increase compared to the 2022 relative rate index of 4.2.
 - The jail detention rate for Black people was 452 Black detainees per 100,000 Black residents, compared with the white rate of 91 white detainees per 100,000 white residents. In 2022, the jail detention rate for African American people was 388, and for white people, 90 per 100,000 residents.
 - The jail detention rate for all New Orleanians in 2023 was 297 detained people per 100,000 residents. In 2022, the jail detention rate for all New Orleanians was 259 detained people per 100,000 residents.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 in Review

The average daily jail population in 2023 was 1,120 people, an increase of nearly 15% from 2022, when the average daily jail population was 976 people. The daily jail population was at its lowest on 1 January 2023, when 955 people were in custody, and at its highest on 26 November 2023, with 1,268 detained people (standard dev. = 165.2)

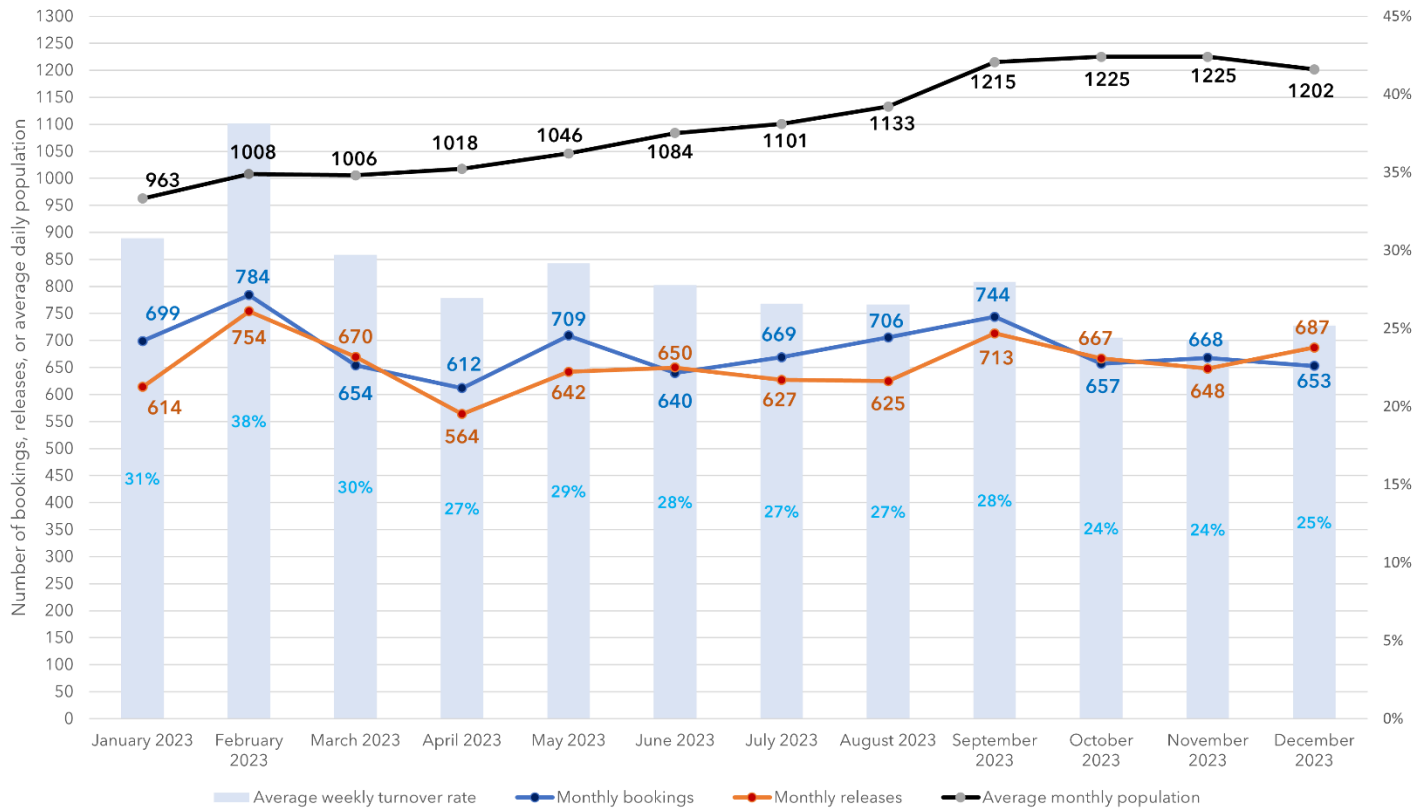


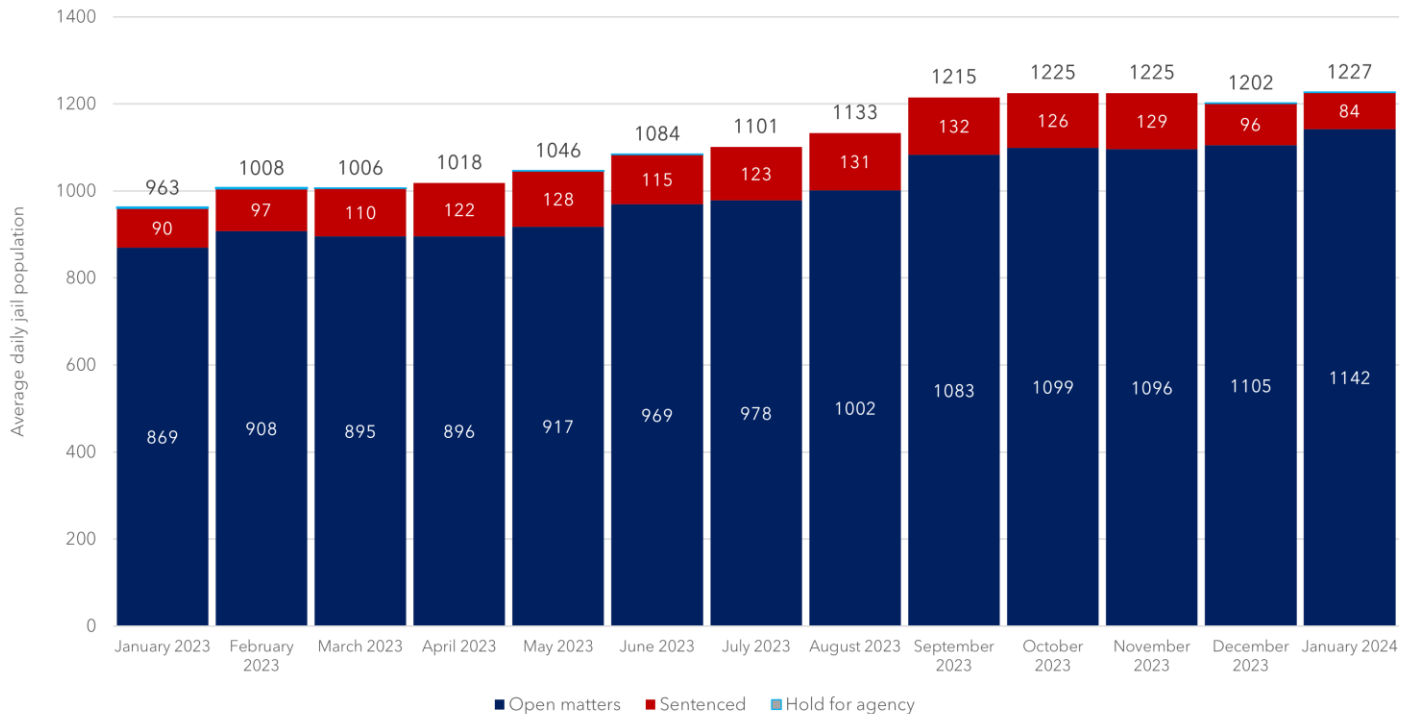
Figure 1. Historical trends in average jail population, admissions, releases, and turnover rate, 2023

The average weekly jail turnover rate for 2023 was 27%. The jail turnover rate is a ratio of jail admissions and release to the average daily population; it measures the “flow” of people into and out of the jail. On average in 2023, more than 1 in 4 people detained in the jail on a given week had been newly admitted or was about to be released from custody.

In 2022 (the most recent year for which we have published data), the average weekly turnover rate for jails of our size was 31% (see this [BJS report](#) for more details). Generally, higher turnover rates indicate larger numbers of jail admissions and releases, relative to the average daily population.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 Review

Most people detained in the jail in 2023 - 87%, on average -- were in custody on open matters. On a typical day in 2023, about 10% of the jail population was detained on closed matters, and the remaining



3% was detained on other matters.

Figure 2. Average daily population by legal status, 2023

A quick word about the use of averages in OCJC reporting

Averages - arithmetic means - are useful in summarizing data that can be highly variable from one day to the next, like the jail population. If we were to plot the daily jail population as a "traditional" line graph, the trendline for 2023

would look something like this, with many peaks and valleys:



For ease of reading and discussion, we generate averages to "smooth out" daily fluctuations. We also provide additional information, such as the minimum and maximum values and the standard deviation of the mean, as additional context to the averages we report.

OCJC does have daily jail population figures from OPSO for each day of the year, as well as length of jail stay for all jail releases. If you have a question that might be answered by looking at day-to-day or person-to-person figures, please reach out to [Adrienne Tobler](#).

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 Review

Focus on racial equity: Overrepresentation and disparity in jail detention

Black people were overrepresented in the jail population in 2023

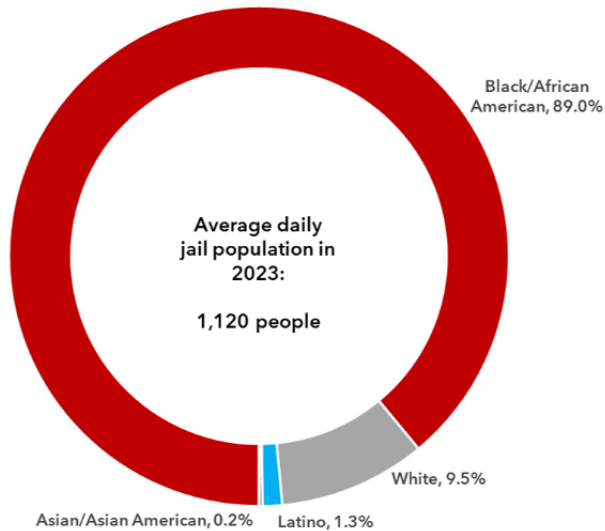


Figure 3. Average daily population by race/ethnicity, 2023.

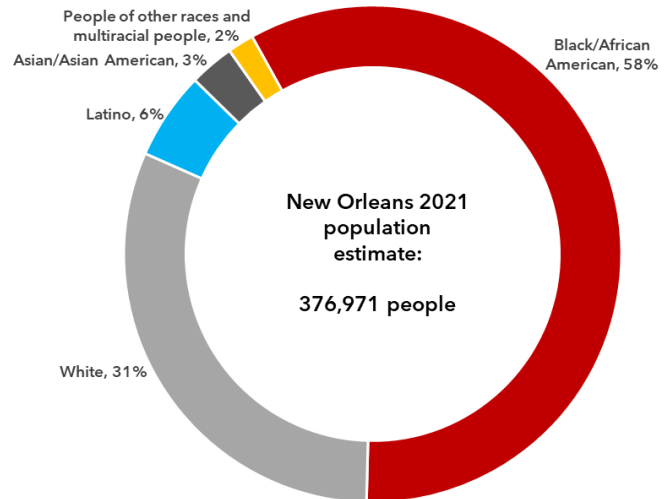


Figure 4. New Orleans population estimate, 2021. Source: Summary Files, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

Note: OPSO race categories differ from those used by the US Census Bureau. Please contact us for more information about our methodology.

'Wide' disparities persisted in jail detention rates in 2023

New Orleans is a majority-Black city, yet African Americans remain overrepresented in the average jail population. Black/African American people comprised 89% of the average daily jail population in 2023. In comparison, Black people are 59% of the New Orleans population, based on 2021 Census estimates.

If Black people are disproportionately represented in the average jail population, white people are under-represented in the jail population. In 2023, white people made up nearly 10% of the average jail population, while making up 31% of the New Orleans population, based on 2021 Census estimates.

Even when we control for differences in population sizes of Black and white New Orleans residents, we find that, per 100,000 New Orleanians by race, in 2023 **Black people are detained in the jail at five times the rate of white people (RRI = 5.0)**. For every 100,000 Black/African American New Orleanians, 452 Black people were in detained in November 2023; for every 100,000 white New Orleanians, 91 white people were in jail custody.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 Review

Five Black people are detained in the jail, while...

...One white person is detained in the jail



for every 100,000 Black New Orleanians...

for every 100,000 white New Orleanians

Figure 5. Relative rate index of jail detention rates by Black and white race categories, 2023.

For more about disproportionality, disparity, and this measure, the Relative Rate Index (RRI), please see the Glossary at the end of this report.

8,008 Jail Admissions in 2023

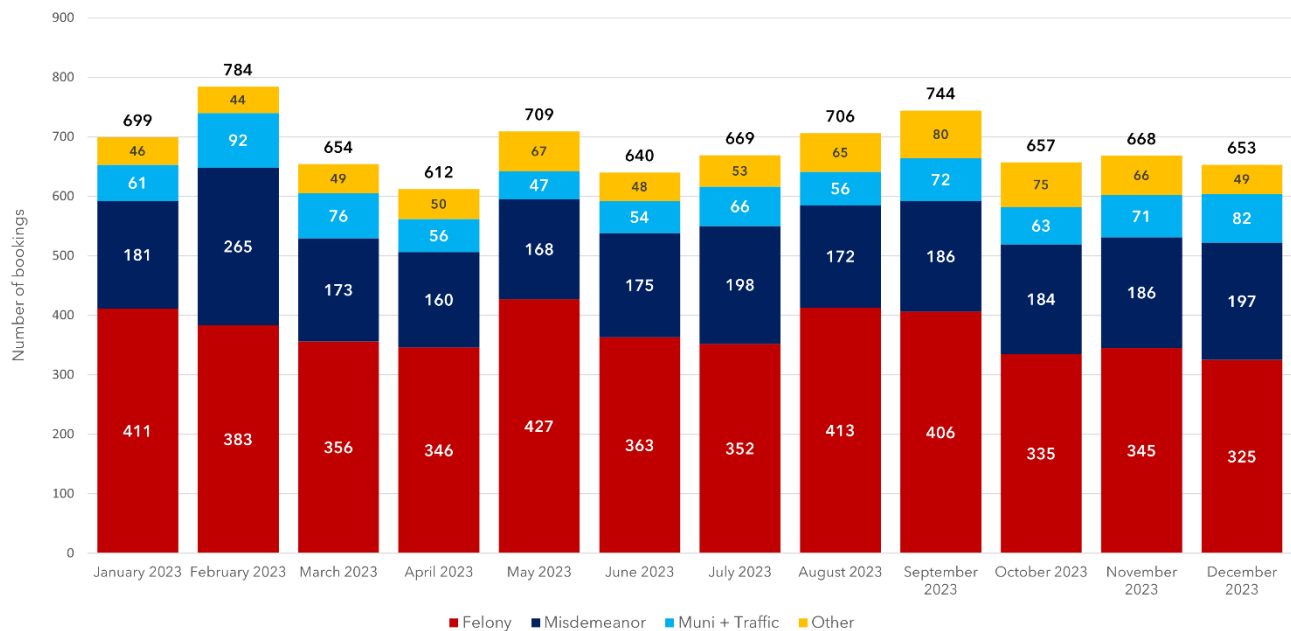


Figure 6. Jail admissions by most serious charge category at booking, 2023

8,195 jail admissions took place in 2023, a 13% increase from 2022, when 7,271 jail admissions occurred. Nearly 55%, or 4,472 jail admissions, were for people charged with felonies as the most serious charge at booking. 27%, or 2,172 jail admissions, were for people charged with a state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking.

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Of the 6,714 jail admissions in 2023 for a felony or state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking, **46% were for violent offenses,**

In 2023, less than 1% of jail admissions were for misdemeanor sex offenses and misdemeanor drug offenses as the most serious charge at admission.

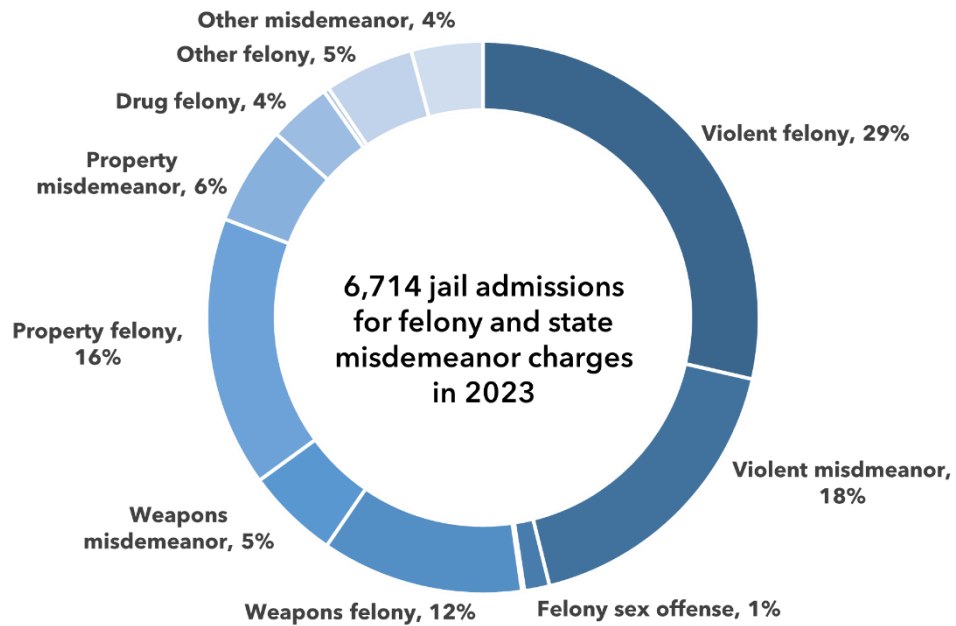


Figure 7. Felony and state misdemeanor jail admissions by most serious charge category

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 Review

More than 3 out of 5 people who were admitted to the jail and made first appearances in 2023 were assessed to be 'low risk'

Pretrial Services, a program under the aegis of the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court and supported in part by OCJC, administered over 6,300 Public Safety Assessments (PSA) in 2023. A tool for assessing a person's risk of new criminal activity and failure to appear in court after release from jail custody, the PSA was developed by the Arnold Foundation and adopted for use by the Court in 2018. The Magistrate Court judge and commissioners use PSA scores as additional information to guide setting an arrested person's release terms. Click [here](#) for more information about the PSA.

62%, or 3,889 of the 6,301 people who made first appearances before a Magistrate judge or commissioner in 2023 were assessed to be Risk level 1 or 2. Persons assessed to be Risk level 1 or 2 have little to no criminal history and are less likely than those with higher risk scores to reoffend or fail to appear in court, should they be released from jail.

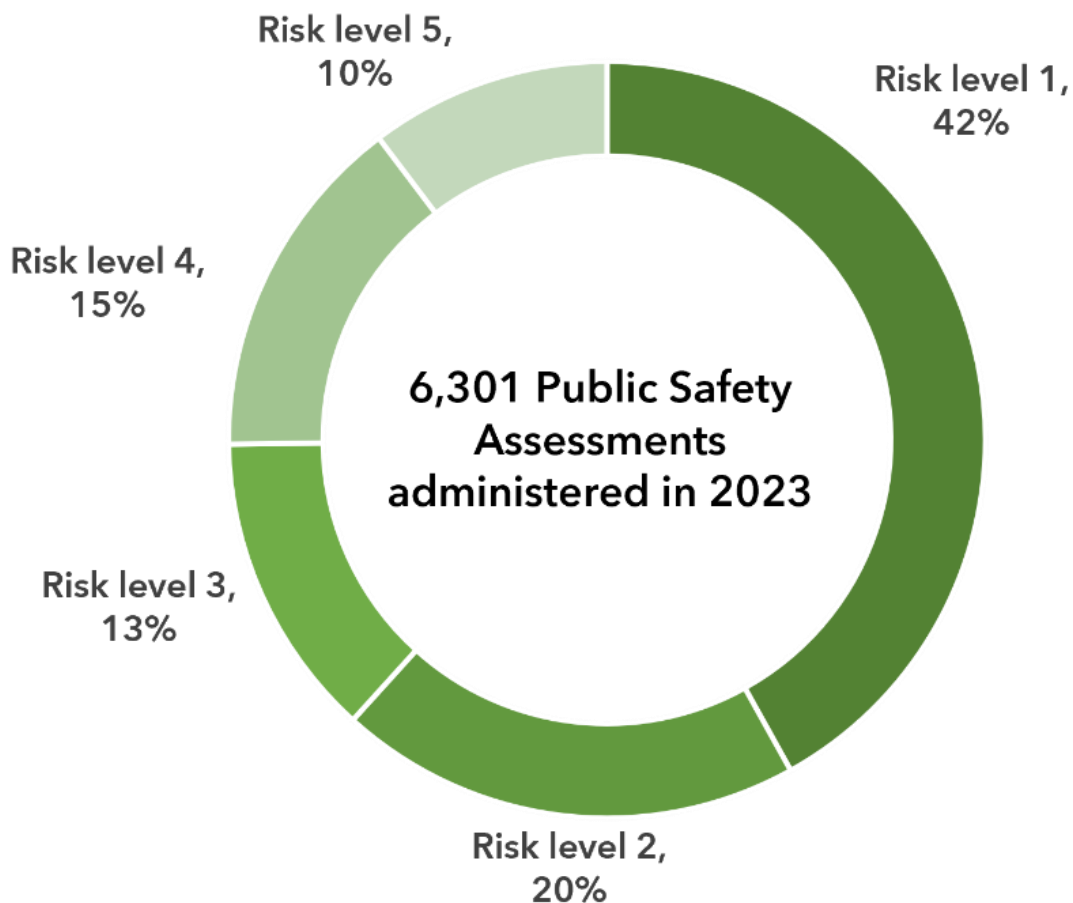


Figure 8. Public safety assessments administered in 2023

What is a first appearance? A first appearance before a Magistrate Court judge or commissioner typically occurs within a day of jail admission for people with felony and state misdemeanor charges. During first appearance hearings, an arrested person "hears" the charges for which they have been detained in jail, and the judge or commissioner sets the terms of release that must be met before getting out of jail. Release terms can include payment of a bond (commonly known as "bail") and/or release on recognizance (for people with eligible charges).

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 in Review

7,861 Jail Releases

7,861 jail releases took place in 2023, a 10% increase from 2022, when 7,142 jail releases occurred. Most jail releases – 87%, or 6,840 jail releases – took place before the final disposition of the case was reached.

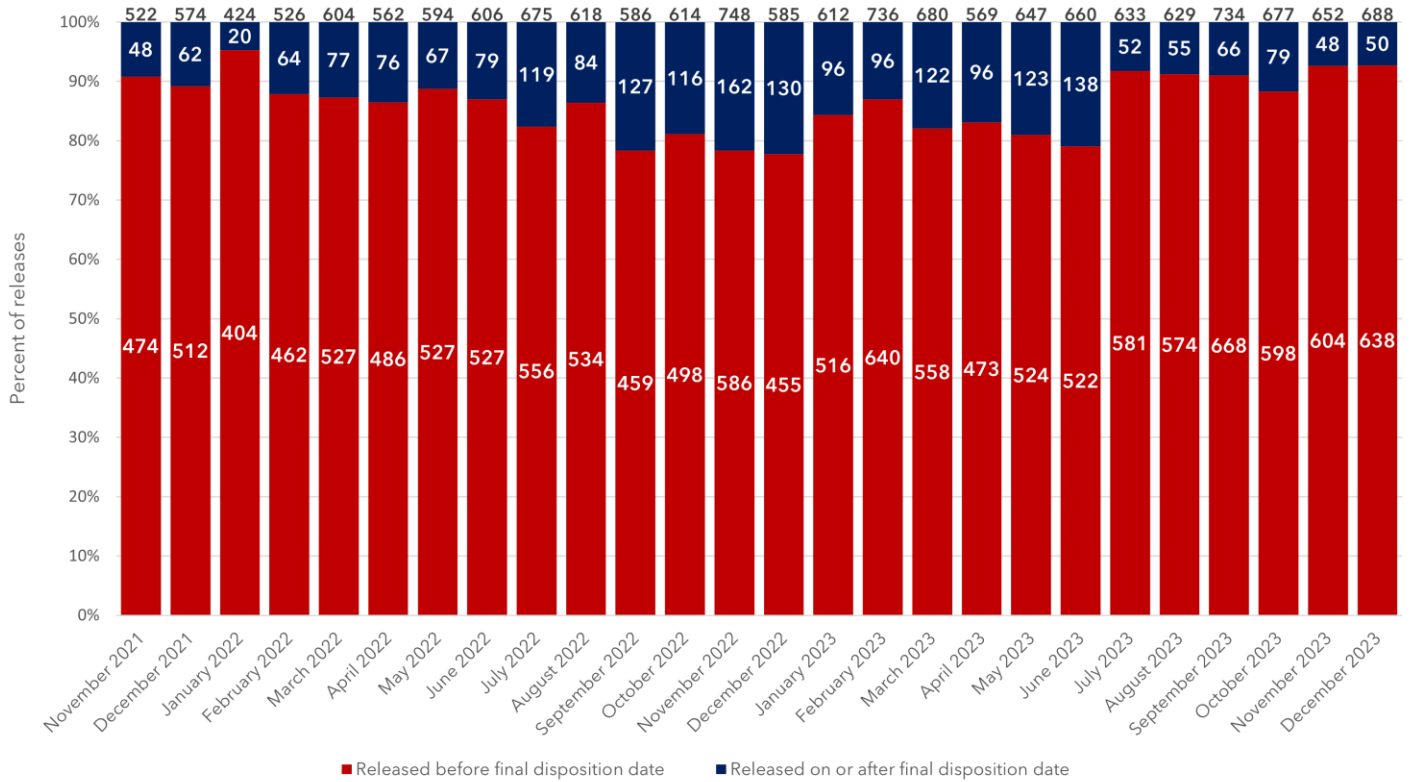
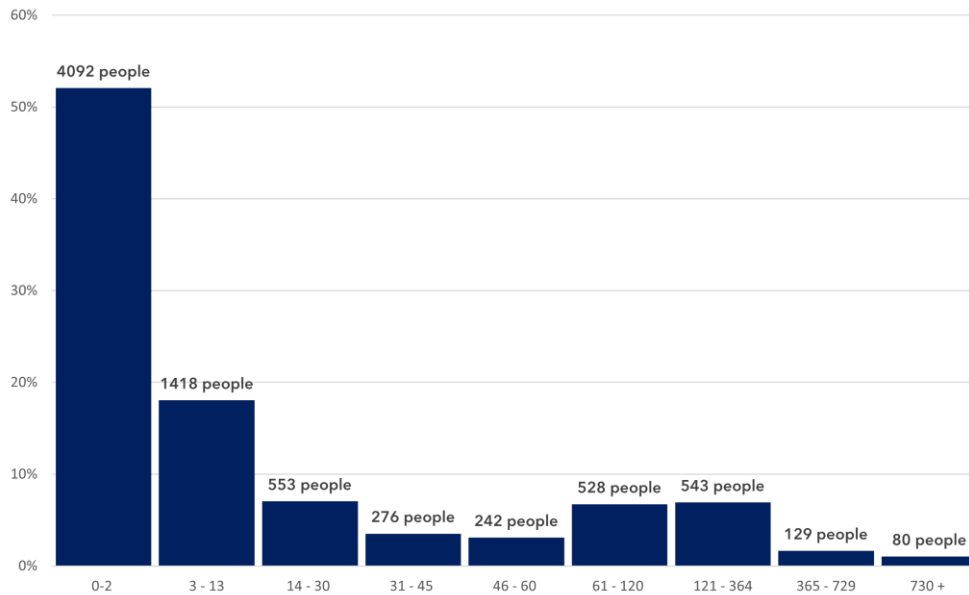


Figure 9. Jail releases by final case disposition status at time of release, December 2021 - December 2023

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 in Review

The average length of stay was 47 days for people released from jail custody in 2023 (min = less than 1 day; max = 3,154 days; standard dev. = 165.2). **The median length of stay was 2 days.**

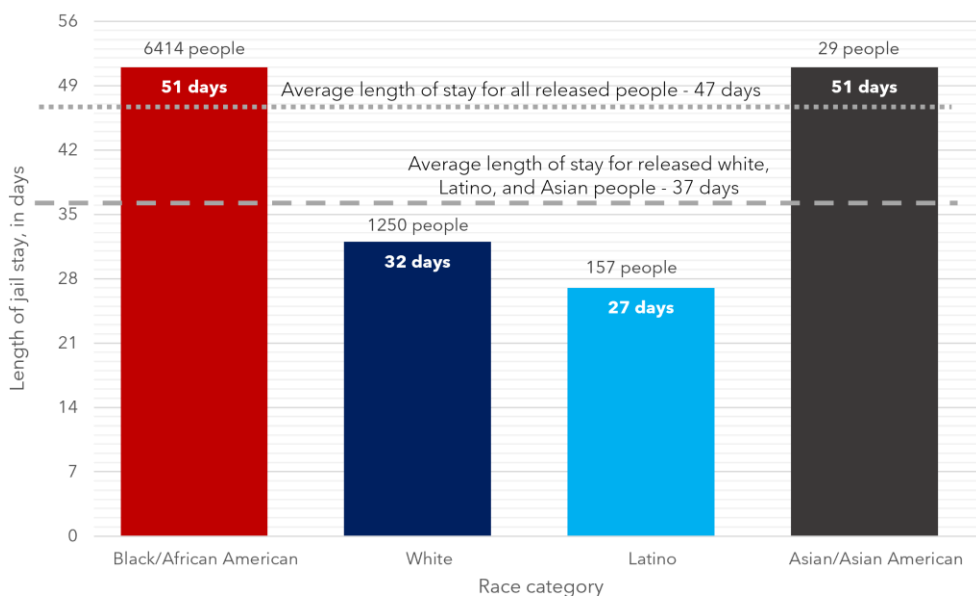
Over half of jail releases in 2023 -- 52%, or 4,092 jail releases -- took place after a jail stay of 2 days or fewer. 48% of 2023 jail releases -- 3,769 releases -- took place 2 or more days after booking. The average length of stay for people who spent more than 2 days in jail in 2023 was 98 days (min = 3 days; standard dev. = 228.0; median = 27 days).



In 2023, the average length of stay decreased by 4 days compared to 2022's average length of stay (N = 7,142; standard dev. = 194.3; median = 2).

Figure 9 Releases by length of jail stay, N= 7,861 releases

Focus on racial equity: Disparity and disproportionality in lengths of stay



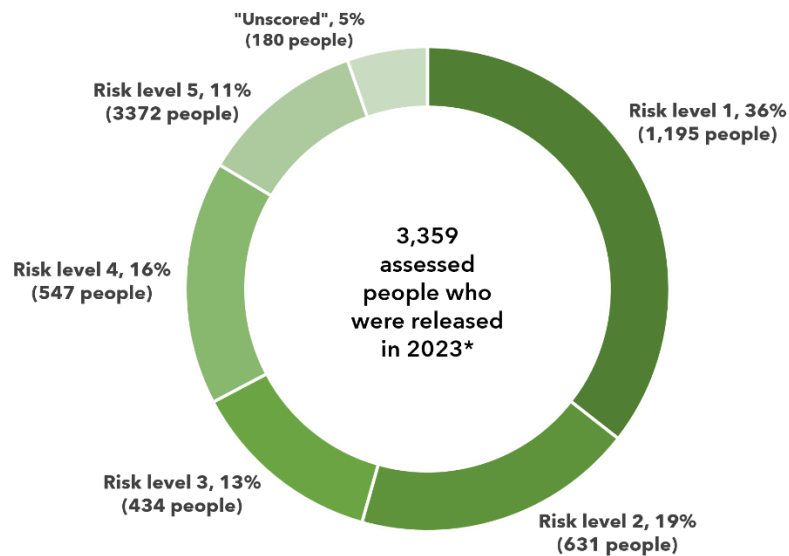
In 2023, **African American people released from the jail spent an average of 51 days in jail** -- 10 days longer than the average length of stay of 37 days for white, Latino, and Asian people released from jail.

Figure 11. Average length of jail stays by race, 2023, N = 7,850 releases. Note that totals do not include 11 jail releases for people of "unknown" race.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers - 2023 in Review

After jail release: Outcome measures for assessed people who were released in 2023

What happens to people after they are released from jail? Do they return to court for the events related to their cases? Are they arrested again on new charges?



To address these questions, we looked at 3,359 assessed people who were released in 2023 whose charges, for which they had made the first appearance, had been screened or had reached a final disposition.

Overall, **the Court Appearance Rate for 2023 was 97.8%**. 98.2% appeared at all their magistrate court events (3,298 out of 3,359 people). Of those who had been assessed and released, 1,082 had cases that had been screened, accepted, and allotted to section court. Of this group, 97% (1,044 people) appeared at all their section court events.

The Public Safety Rate for 2023 releases was 92.5%. 3,108 out of 3,359 released people were not arrested on new charges after release.

Figure 13. Jail releases of people who had been assessed, screened, and released in 2023

The Success Rate for 2023 was 93.8%. More than 9 out of 10 assessed, released, and screened people were present at all their court events and were not arrested for new offenses.

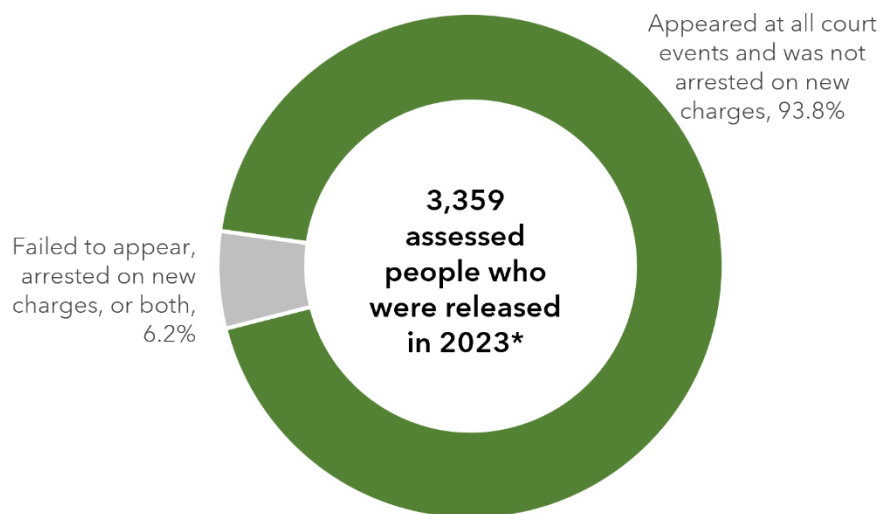


Figure 14. Success Rate for assessed, released, and screened people in 2023.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers -2023 in Review

Glossary of terms and technical notes

Criminal legal system definitions

Average monthly jail population. The sum of all the daily detainee counts divided by the number of days in the month. We use an average, rather than a snapshot (the jail population on a single day of the month which represents the jail population for the month) so that we can report one figure that takes into consideration the fluctuations in jail population during the month.

Jail admissions. We acknowledge that the term, *jail admission*, may be defined differently in correctional, pretrial, and other spaces. Here, we define jail admissions as bookings into the jail from the community; that is, jail admissions resulting from custodial arrests that occurred outside of the jail. Certainly, people can be and are booked on new charges after admission to the jail (for example, for offenses that can only take place within a jail, such as battery of a correctional officer), our tabulations and analyses only consider bookings that brought a person from the community into the jail, consistent with the central aims of the report.

Jail releases. A person's exit from jail custody. Note that 'releases' can refer to releases back into the community (for example, when someone is released on their own recognizance or posts bond); release to another jurisdiction's law enforcement agency (for example, in the case of someone admitted to the jail on an out-of-state warrant); or release to the Department of Corrections upon sentencing.

Final disposition date. The close date for the case associated with the charge(s) that brought a person to be admitted to the jail from the community. Cases are closed upon a final disposition of refusal; a not-guilty verdict; or a sentence imposed on cases in which the person was found guilty. We describe jail releases relative to final disposition dates to sidestep differing definitions of the term, *pretrial*.

Length of jail stay. The difference, in days, between the date of jail admission and the date of jail release. Note that the length of stay is only calculated for people who have been released from jail to ensure a final, static figure.

Average length of stay. The mean of all jail stays for people released during the month, calculated as the sum of all lengths of stay divided by the number of people released.

Most serious charge at booking. We use a hierarchy of charge categories to determine the most serious charge at booking. In the hierarchy, all charges are categories into four types: 1) felonies; 2) state misdemeanors; 3) municipal and traffic offenses; 4) warrants, attachments, and Louisiana parole and probation detainers. All felonies are more serious than state misdemeanors, and within the felony and state misdemeanor categories is a sub-hierarchy of offense types, listed here in order of seriousness: a) violent offenses; b) sex offenses; c) weapons offenses; d) property offenses; e) drug offenses; and f) 'other' offenses.

Average weekly jail turnover rate: A measure "borrowed" from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the weekly jail turnover rate aims to capture in broad terms the movement of people into and out of the jail. We calculate the jail turnover rate by dividing the average daily population by the sum of jail admissions and jail releases.

How we operationalize measures of inequality

Disproportionality and over- and underrepresentation. We use these terms to compare the demographic characteristics of a group (like people detained in the jail) to the demographic characteristics of the larger community from which most on that group came (like Orleans Parish). When both groups share similar proportions of people by demographic characteristics, we observe **proportionality**. We observe **disproportionality** when one demographic group -- for example, Black people or white people detained in the jail--is **overrepresented** (in the case of Black people in the jail) or is **underrepresented**, in comparison with the demographic characteristics of Orleans Parish.

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Glossary: How we operationalize measures of inequality, continued

Disparity. We use the term, *disparity*, to refer to differences in the rates at which something occurs among 2 or more groups. To explore the possibility of disparity in our jail population reports, we first calculate the **rate of jail detention per 100,000** New Orleans residents by race/ethnicity. The jail detention rate is the average jail population for a group (say, Black people detained in the jail during the month) divided by the estimated number of Black people in New Orleans, then multiplied by 100,000. Generating a rate per 100,000 is useful when comparing rates between groups of differing sizes (for example, the population of New Orleans, a majority (58%) African American city), we can “control” for the differences in size by comparing rates per 100,000 residents.

Further, we can “relate” the jail detention rate for Black people with that of white people to generate a **relative rate index**. To do this, we divide the Black jail detention rate per 100,000 Black people in New Orleans by the jail detention rate for white people per 100,000 residents. By using the white rate as the denominator in the calculation, we effectively index the white rate to 1 and defensibly make the statement that, in August 2023 (for example), Black people were jailed at a rate 4.8 times that of white people. We observe parity - a measure of equality - when the RRI = 1.

Notes about race / ethnicity categories

Our reporting on racial and ethnic demographics of people detained in the jail is based on data collected by Orleans Parish Sheriff’s Office (OPSO) deputies during the jail admission process. OPSO uses the following mutually exclusive categories for race: Black; White; Hispanic; Asian; American Indian; and Unknown. The race and ethnicity categories currently in use by OPSO do not quite align with those used by the US Census Bureau, which defines race and ethnicity as separate constructs.

Our reporting is rooted in an understanding that the inequalities that we observe are reflections and symptoms of systemically racist systems. We view mass incarceration in the US as the cumulative effects of systemic racism that impact everyone’s lives before any one person is ever booked into jail. Accordingly, our reporting about racial disproportionalities should not be interpreted as critiques of Black people or Black culture; nor should it be interpreted as evidence to support detention of more white people to reduce inequalities.

One thing to keep in mind: we use these measures and categories as a kind of shorthand to describe inequalities, but they certainly don’t tell the whole story. Race - like other categories like gender -- is a broad social construct that is shaped by history and contains other constructs, like socio-economic status and access to essentials such as education and health care. Accordingly, the purpose of the sections is to highlight some observed areas of inequality, in the hope that it sparks continued conversation about how to make our community more just and equitable.

We welcome your feedback and questions!

As a stakeholder, have you noticed something and wondered if data exists to confirm your observations? At OCJC, we are interested in your observations and data questions. Please reach out to Adrienne Tobler at adrienne.tobler@nola.gov to further discuss the possibility of exploring your questions.

For technical questions, please contact Theresa McKinney at theresa.mckinney@nola.gov.