Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers

November 2023

Purpose

This report aims to address two broad questions: "Who was detained in the Orleans Justice Center last month?" 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 over the past month.

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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, **1,226 people were detained in the jail daily in November 2023**
    - A less than 1% decrease from the October 2023 average of 1,230 people detained in the jail.
    - Compared to November 2022, when 936 people, on average, were detained in the jail, the average jail population has increased by 31%.

- **668 people were admitted to the jail**, a 1% decrease from October 2023, with 79% of the population-- 531 people – admitted to the jail with a felony or misdemeanor offense as the most serious charge at admission.

- **652 people were released from the jail,** a 3% decrease from October, and 93% -- 604 people -- were released before the final disposition of their cases.

- **The average length of stay for the 652 people released from the jail was 52 days** (min = less than 1 day; max = 3,016 days; standard dev. = 202.0).
    - The median length of stay for all released people was 2 days, a decrease of one day from October 2023.
    - 337 people (52%) were released from jail within 2 days of admission.
    - People who were released 2 days or more after admission had an average jail stay of 107 days (min = 3 days; standard dev. = 280.4) and a median length of stay of 30 days.

- Racial disparities persist in the jail population. In November 2023, **Black people were detained in the jail at nearly 5 times the rate of white people**, per 100,000 New Orleans residents.
    - The jail detention rate for Black people was 500 Black detainees per 100,000 Black residents, compared with the white rate of 104 white detainees per 100,000 white residents.
    - The jail detention rate for all New Orleanians was 325 detained people per 100,000 residents.

Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers – November 2023 Monthly report

The average monthly jail population in November 2023 was 1,226 people, a 1% decrease from October, when the average jail population was 1,230 people. **The average monthly population has increased by 31% since November 2022,** when on average 936 people were detained in the jail.
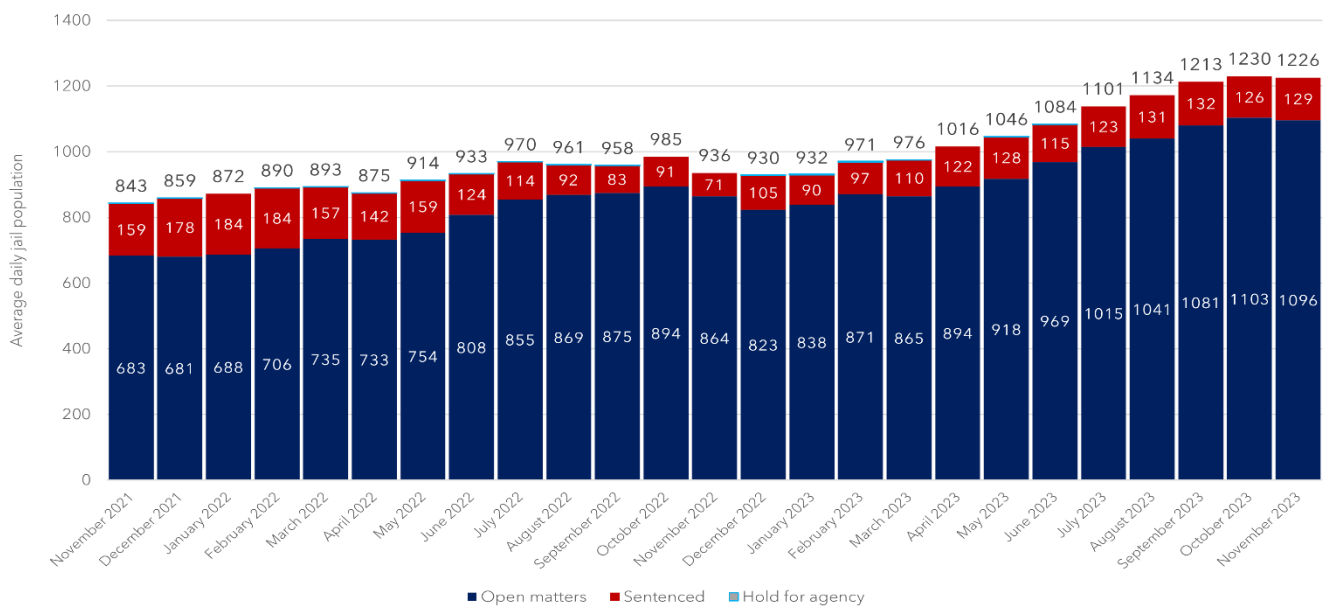
Historical trends in average jail population, admissions, and releases | November 2021 – November 2023
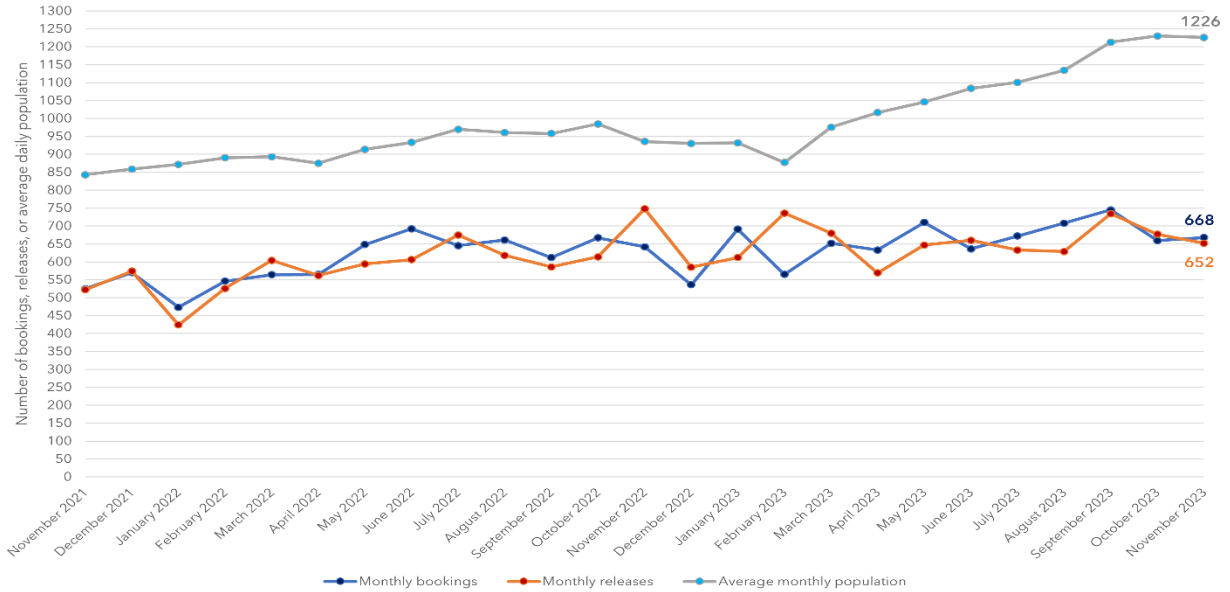
The jail turnover rate for November 2023 was 24%. The jail turnover rate is a ratio of jail admissions and release to the average daily population; it measures the "flow" of people into and out of the jail. On average, one quarter of the jail's daily population in November was newly admitted or about to be released from custody. November's jail turnover rate is 1 percentage point lower than October's and 9 percentage points higher than the 35% turnover rate for February 2023.

Most people detained in the jail have open matters. On average, **89% of the people in jail custody in November 2023 were detained on open matters.** The remaining 11% (about 129 people, on average) were in jail custody with closed matters.
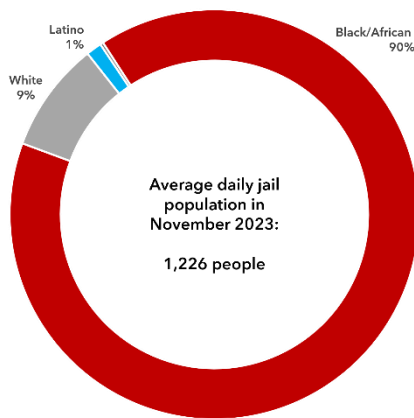
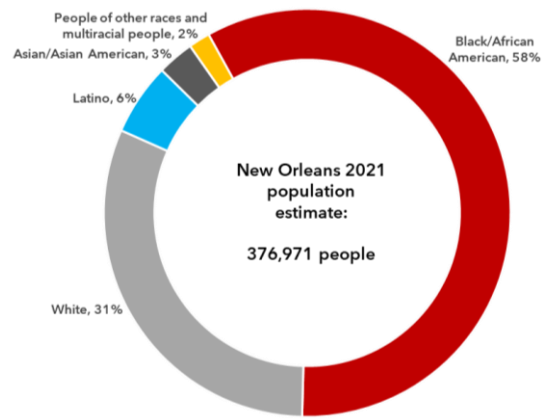*Average daily population by legal status, November 2021 – November 2023*

Focus on racial equity: Overrepresentation and disparity in jail detention

Black people are overrepresented in the jail population

Note: Asians/Asian Americans made up less than 1% of the average daily jail population in November.

Source: Summary Files, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

New Orleans is a majority-Black city, yet African Americans remain overrepresented in the average jail population. In November, Black/African American people comprised 89% of the average daily jail population. 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 November, white people made up 9% of the average jail population, while making up 31% of the New Orleans population, based on 2021 Census estimates.

For more about how we define *overrepresentation*, please see the Glossary at the end of the report.

'Wide' disparities exist in jail detention rates

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, **Black people are detained in the jail at five times the rate of white people (RRI = 4.8).** For every 100,000 Black/African American New Orleanians, 500 Black people were in detained in November 2023; for every 100,000 white New Orleanians, 104 white people were in jail custody.

For every 100,000 Black New Orleanians…

…Five Black people are detained in the jail
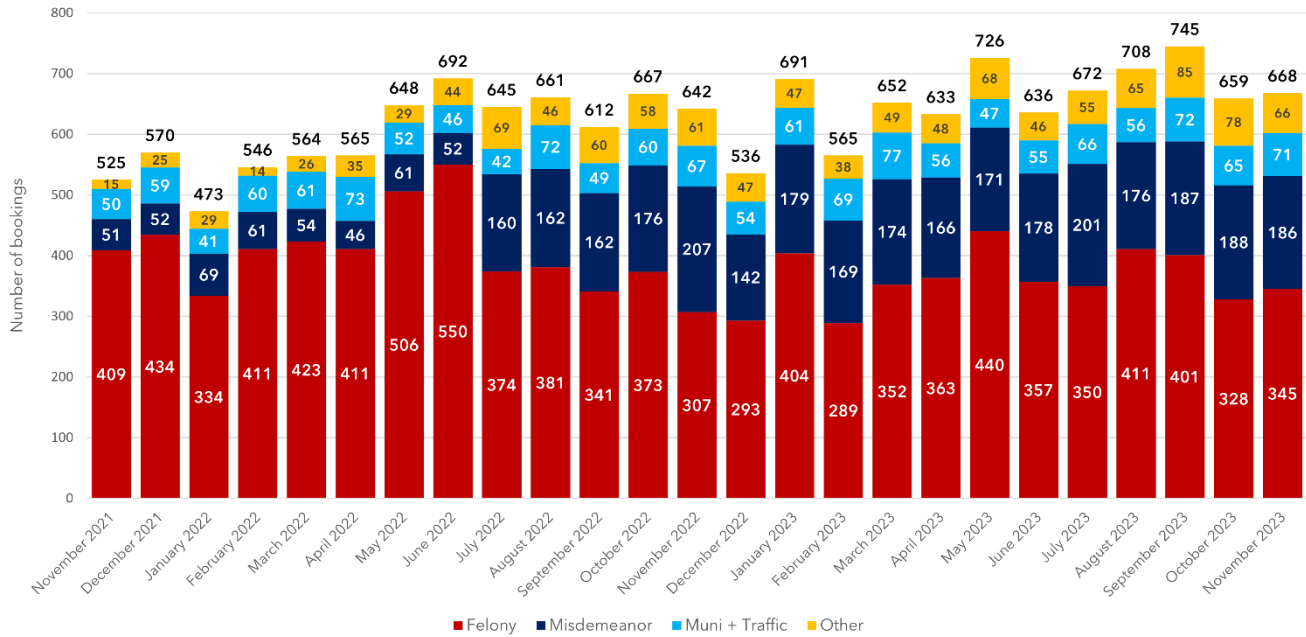
For every 100,000 white New Orleanians…

…One white person is detained in the jail

For more about this measure, the Relative Rate Index (RRI), please see the Glossary at the end of this report.
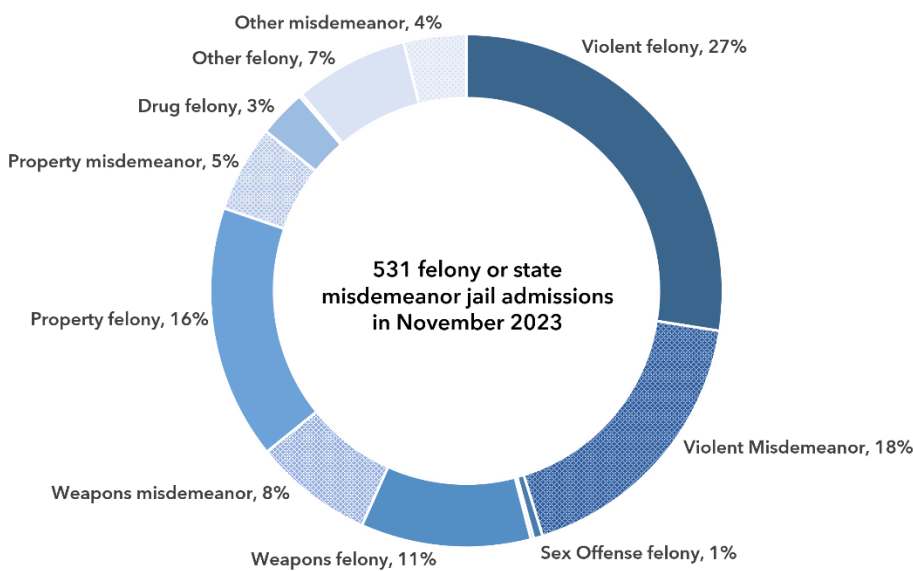
668 Jail Admissions in November 2023

Jail admissions by most serious charge at booking, November 2021 – November 2023

668 were people booked into the jail in November 2023, a small increase from October, when 659 people were admitted to the jail. Just over half (51%, or 345 people) admitted to the jail in November had a new felony charge as the most serious charge at booking, and nearly 28% -- 186 people – were admitted to jail with a new state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking.

Felony and state misdemeanor jail admissions by most serious charge category, November 2023, N = 531

Of the 531 jail admissions in November 2023 with a felony or state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking, **45% were for violent offenses,** a decrease of 1 percentage point from October, when the 238 violent offense bookings made up 46% percent of the 516 felony and misdemeanor admissions.

In November 2023, misdemeanor sex offenses and drug charges, combined, accounted for less than 1% of the most serious charge at booking.

652 Jail Releases

652 people were released from jail custody in November 2023**, a 3% decrease** from October, when 677 people were released from jail.
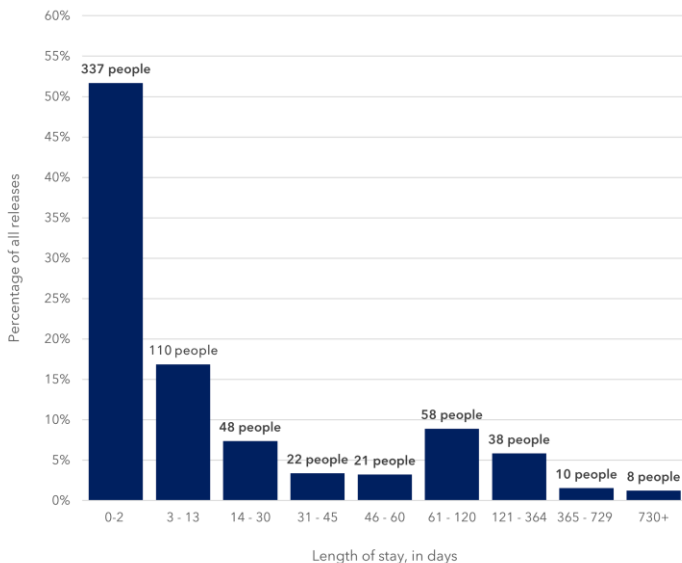
Jail releases by final case disposition status at time of release, November 2021 – November 2023
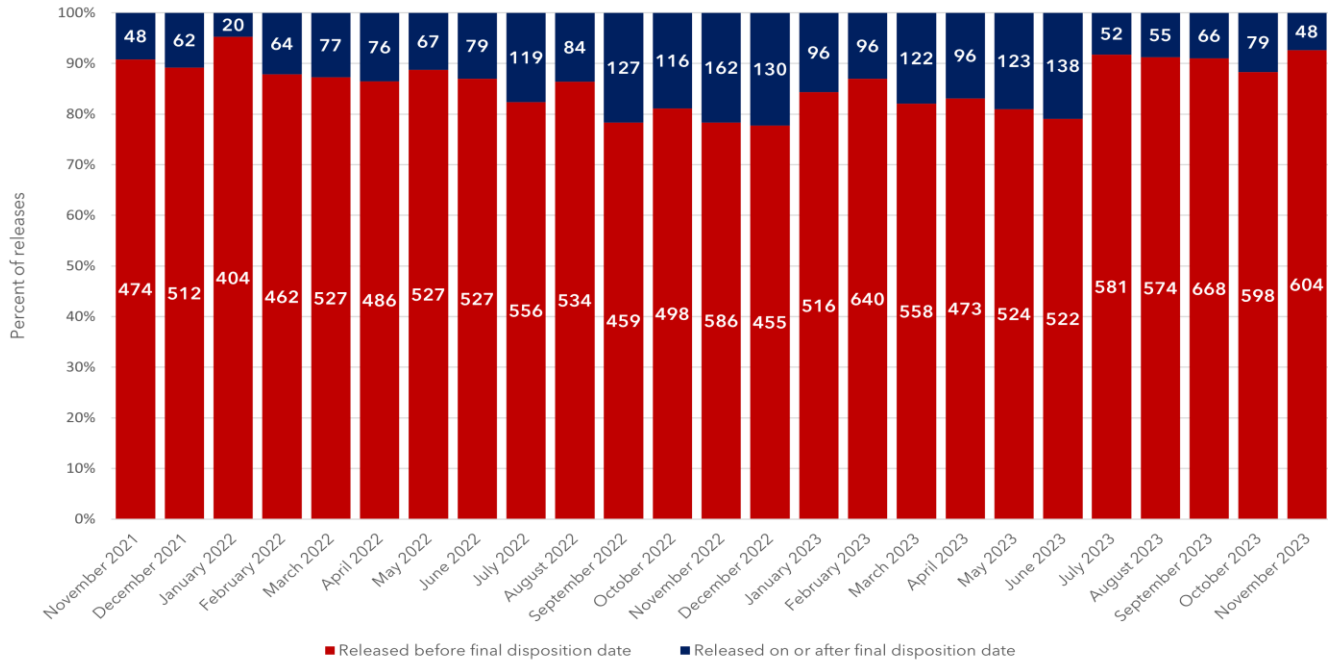
Of the people who were released from in November, **604 left jail custody before the final disposition** of their cases (nearly 93% of all releases).

Average length of jail stays for all people released in November 2023 was 52 days

Releases by length of jail stay, N= 652 releases

The average length of stay was 52 days for the 652 people who were released from jail custody in November 2023 (min = less than 1 day; max = 3,016 days; standard dev. = 202.0). **The median length of stay was 2 days,** a decrease by 1 day from October's median.

337 people – 52% of all jail releases in November -- were released after staying in jail for two days or fewer.

53% of November's jail releases – 361 people – were released 2 or more days after booking and spent an average of 89 days in custody (min = 3 days; standard dev. = 315.4; median = 39 days).

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

Average length of jail stays by race, November 2023, N = 652 releases
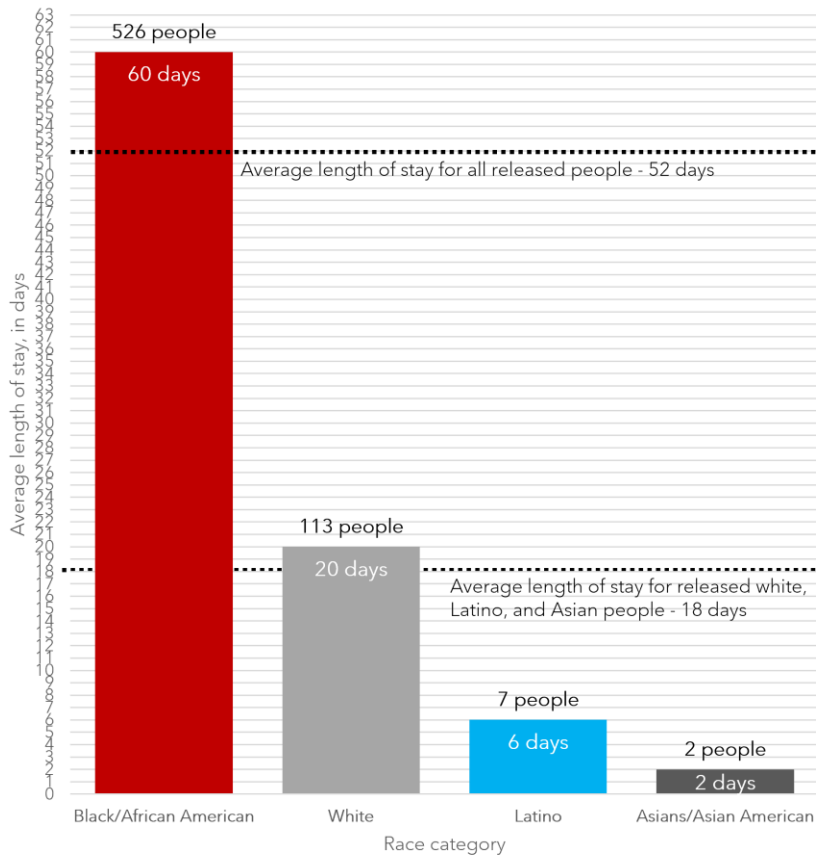
In November, **African American people released from the jail spent an average of 60 days in jail – nearly 5 weeks longer than the average length of stay of 18 days for white, Latino, and Asian people released from jail.**

The burden of jail detention, particularly of very long jail stays, disproportionally falls on detained African American people, their families, and their communities. All who were released from jail in November after spending 1 year or more in custody were African American people.

Length of stay by race, November 2023, N = 652 releases
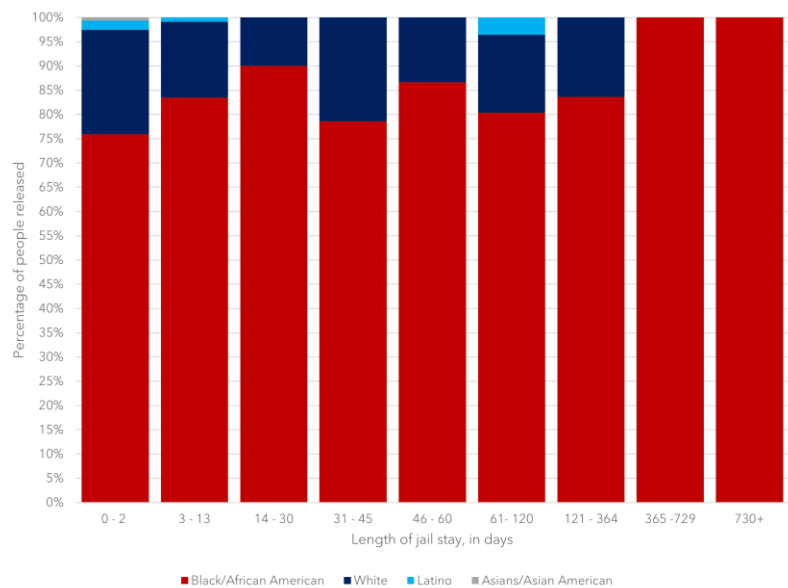
Glossary of terms and technical notes

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.

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.

Burden refers to the difference between groups in the number of persons who experience an adverse phenomenon. Generally, the larger the group, the larger the burden.

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 – along with 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.