

New Orleans

2019 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

Jail detention hurts our families and communities. The costs are significant: lost income, financial burdens on families, untreated mental health and substance use issues, safety risks within the jail, and a greater risk of new criminal activity. Despite reducing the jail population by more than 75% since 2005, New Orleans' jail incarceration rate still exceeds the national average.

Here's what we know about the individuals in the Orleans Parish jail:

- In New Orleans, most people jailed (89%) are awaiting a disposition, meaning they have not been tried or convicted of a crime, and thus, constitutionally, are still considered innocent.
- Black men are arrested at twice the rate of white men while black women are arrested at 1.6 times the rate of white women. This racial disparity is carried over into who actually gets detained in our jail, where black men (15-64) comprise 88% of the jail population but only make up 19% of the total New Orleans population.
- One of the biggest drivers of disparities in our jail population concerns the ability to pay bail: many people are detained because they are poor, not because they pose a risk to our community.
- 27% are under active supervision of probation or parole and have been arrested on a new charge.
- In 2017, more than 1/3 of all low-risk defendants were jailed more than three days, spending an average of 36 days in jail; and 647 people were detained for their entire pretrial only to have their charges refused by prosecutors or receive a non-custodial sentence (i.e. release), spending an average of 92 days in jail.
- More than 500 people detained (about 30% of the total population) are receiving psychiatric medication and 230 have reported a substance use disorder. Further, of those currently detained in our jail, 71 are reported to be a suicide or self-harm risk. Our jail is not equipped to be a mental health care provider, but these numbers indicate it is doing just that.

There are proven solutions to create a fairer, more effective local justice system:

- To address the overuse of jail in New Orleans, the city will reduce our average daily jail population by an additional 20 percent. These reform efforts will be supported by an additional \$2 million grant from the Safety and Justice Challenge.
- In order to achieve this reduction goal, New Orleans has developed a jail reform plan that will attack the main drivers of local incarceration, including racial and ethnic disparities, through a set of collaborative, system-wide strategies that build on past successes and expand the scope of our efforts.
- This plan will: focus release decisions on risk and not financial ability; divert people with mental illness and substance use disorders toward community-based services; provide more

opportunities for release and diversion; improve case processing time; and create an interagency database that allows for real time monitoring of jail population statistics.

- For example, to help address the racial and ethnic disparities that exist in New Orleans' local justice system, the city will create tracking and accountability mechanisms focused on disparities to inform the development of targeted interventions.
- The city will also strengthen pretrial release efforts through increased risk-based decision making to make sure defendants don't stay in jail just because they cannot afford their bail.
- The Community Advisory Group, originally established under the first phase of the Safety & Justice Plan, is a volunteer resident group which continues to monitor the progress of the plan and hold city officials and agencies accountable to the commitments they made under the plan.
- The Community Advisory Group will hold meetings, informational workshops around the city and a day-long symposium this Spring, to help broaden public awareness of the plan, the inequities within the current criminal system, and participate in conversations among our communities on how our criminal system should be shaped moving forward

Who is helping to affect change?

- The reforms outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the City of New Orleans Mayor's Office and the Criminal Justice Council. The strategies included in the plan have been developed with, and are supported by, a diverse group of stakeholders and champions, including local criminal justice agencies, the City Council, Louisiana Supreme Court, New Orleans Health Department, and the SJC Community Advisory Group.