



# Orleans Parish Jail Population by the numbers

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

## March 2024

## Summary

### Purpose

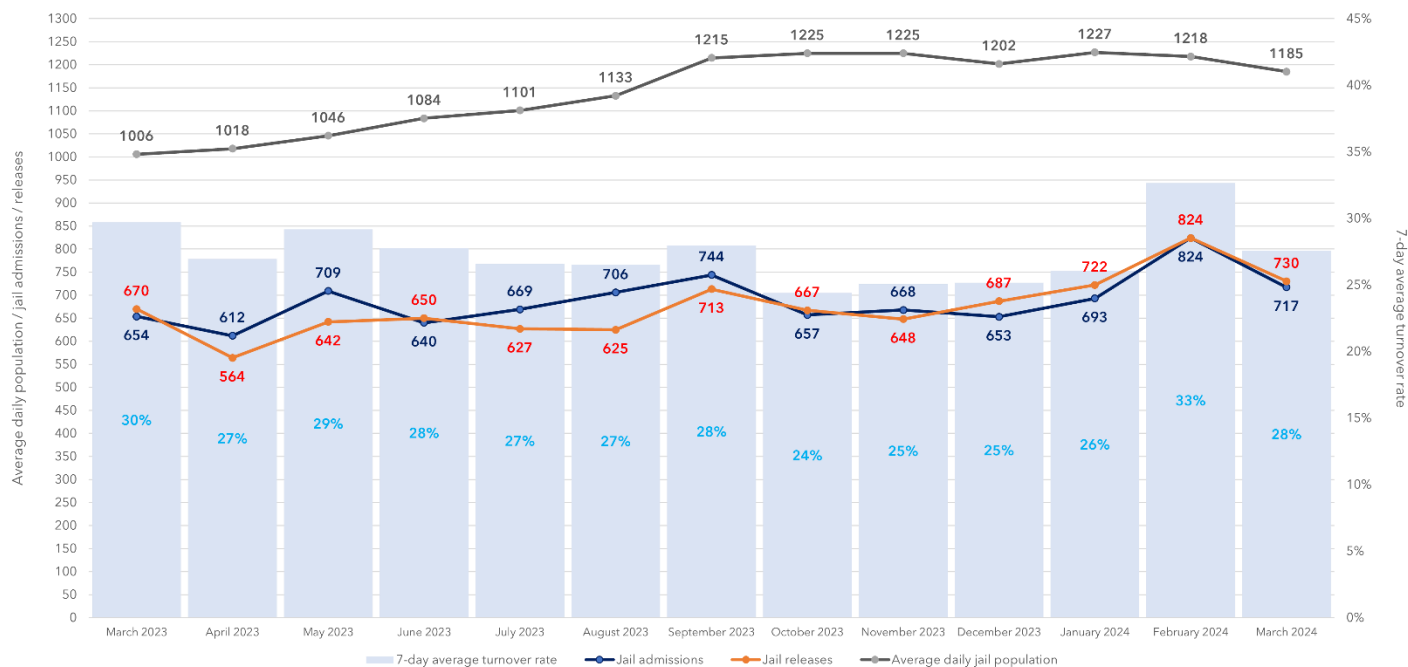
This report aims to address two broad questions: "Who was detained in the Orleans Justice Center last month?" and "What was the flow of people into and out of the jail last month. To that end, the report presents information about average daily jail population, admissions, and releases over the past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

### 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.

- On average, **1,185 people were detained in the jail daily in March 2024.**
  - A decrease of over 2% from the February 2024 average daily jail population of 1,218 people.
  - Compared to March 2023, when 1,006 people, on average, were detained in the jail, the average jail population has increased by nearly 18%.
- **717 people were admitted to the jail in March**, a 13% decrease from February, when 824 people were admitted to the jail. 52%, or 372 people, were admitted to the jail with a felony as the most serious charge at booking.
- **730 people were released from the jail**, an 11% decrease from February, when 824 people were released from jail, and 92% – 671 people – were released before the final disposition of their cases.
- **The average length of stay for the 730 people released from the jail in February was 55 days** (min = less than 1 day; max = 2,617 days; standard dev. = 185.6).
  - The median length of stay for all released people was 2 days, the same as February's.
  - 377 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 114 days (n = 353 people; min = 3 days; standard dev. = 254.3) and a median length of stay of 31 days.
- Racial disparities persist in the jail population. In March 2024, **Black people were detained in the jail at 4.3 times the rate of white people**, per 100,000 New Orleans residents by race.
  - The jail detention rate for Black people was 471 Black detainees per 100,000 Black residents, compared with the white rate of 109 white detainees per 100,000 white residents.
  - The jail detention rate for all New Orleanians in March 2024 was 314 detained people per 100,000 residents.

The average monthly jail population in March 2024 was 1,185 people (standard dev. = 7.6), a 2.7% decrease from February, when the average jail population was 1,218 people. The average monthly population has increased by 17.7% compared to March 2023, when on average 1,006 people were



detained in the jail.

Figure 1. Historical trends in average jail population, admissions, and releases, March 2023 - March 2024

The average weekly jail turnover rate for March 2024 was 26%. 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, over 1 in 4 people detained during a 7-day period in March were newly admitted to or about to be released from custody. March’s jail turnover rate was 5 percentage point lower than February’s rate. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that in 2022 (the most recent year for which data are available), the national average weekly turnover rate for jails of our size was 31%.

The lowest daily jail population was on March 9<sup>th</sup>, when 1,167 people were detained in the jail. The daily jail population hit its March peak on March 25<sup>th</sup>, when 1,204 were detained in the jail. The daily jail population on the last day of the month, March 31<sup>st</sup>, was 1,175 people.

Jail admissions fluctuated daily in March (daily average = 21; standard dev. = 7.1) and reached a peak on March 13<sup>th</sup> and again on March 20<sup>th</sup>, when 34 people were admitted to the jail on each of those days. 21 people were admitted on the last day in February. In all, 717 people were admitted to the jail last month.

Jail releases fluctuated more widely than jail admissions in March (daily average = 24; standard dev. = 9.7). On March 15<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>, 42 and 43 people were released from the jail, the largest number of releases during the month. 6 people were released from the jail on the last day of the month. In all, 730 people were released from jail in March 2024.

Most people in jail custody in March – 92%, on average – were detained on open matters. By “open matters”, we’re referring to people whose court cases have not yet reached their final disposition and those who were admitted to the jail with open warrants and/or probation or parole detainers only.

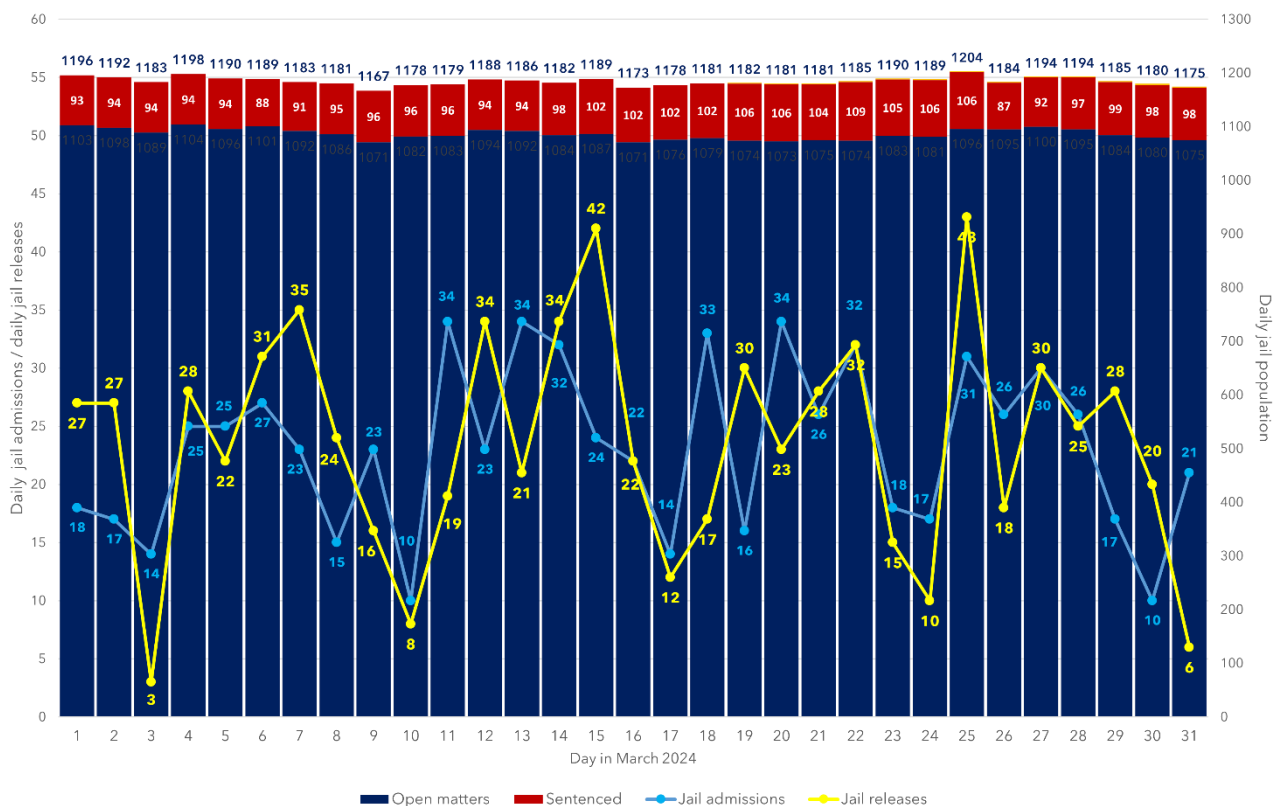


Figure 2. Daily population by legal status, jail admissions, and jail releases, March 2024

8% of the average daily jail population – about 98 people in custody each day in March -- comprised detained people with closed matters. By “closed matters”, we mean that at least one case associated with their current jail stay has reached its final disposition. Included in this group are people who had been sentenced to the Department of Corrections or the Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System. The proportion of the average daily population detained on closed matters increased by 2 percentage points between February and March 2024.

Focus on racial equity: Overrepresentation and disparity in jail detention

Black people are overrepresented in the jail population

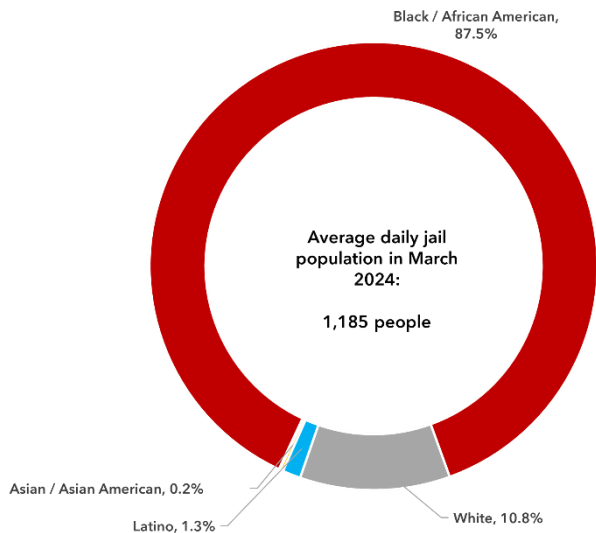


Figure 3. Average daily population by race/ethnicity, March 2024.

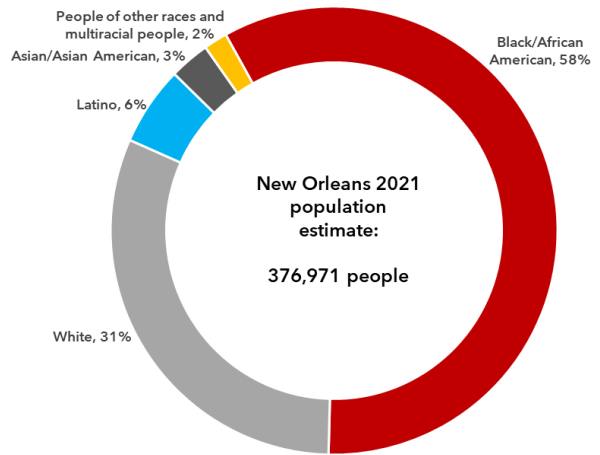


Figure 4. New Orleans population estimate, 2021. Source: Summary Files, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

**New Orleans is a majority-Black city, yet African Americans remain overrepresented in the average jail population.** In February, Black/African American people comprised nearly 88% 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 February, white people made up 10% 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 nearly five times the rate of white people (RRI = 4.3)**. For every 100,000 Black/African American New Orleanians, 471 Black people were in detained in March 2023; for every 100,000 white New Orleanians, 109 white people were in jail custody.

**Over 4 Black people were detained in the jail...**



per 100,000 Black New Orleanians

**...For every one white person detained in the jail**



per 100,000 white New Orleanians

Figure 5. Relative rate index of jail detention rates by Black and white race categories, March 2024. Population estimates are from the 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

### 717 Jail admissions in March 2024

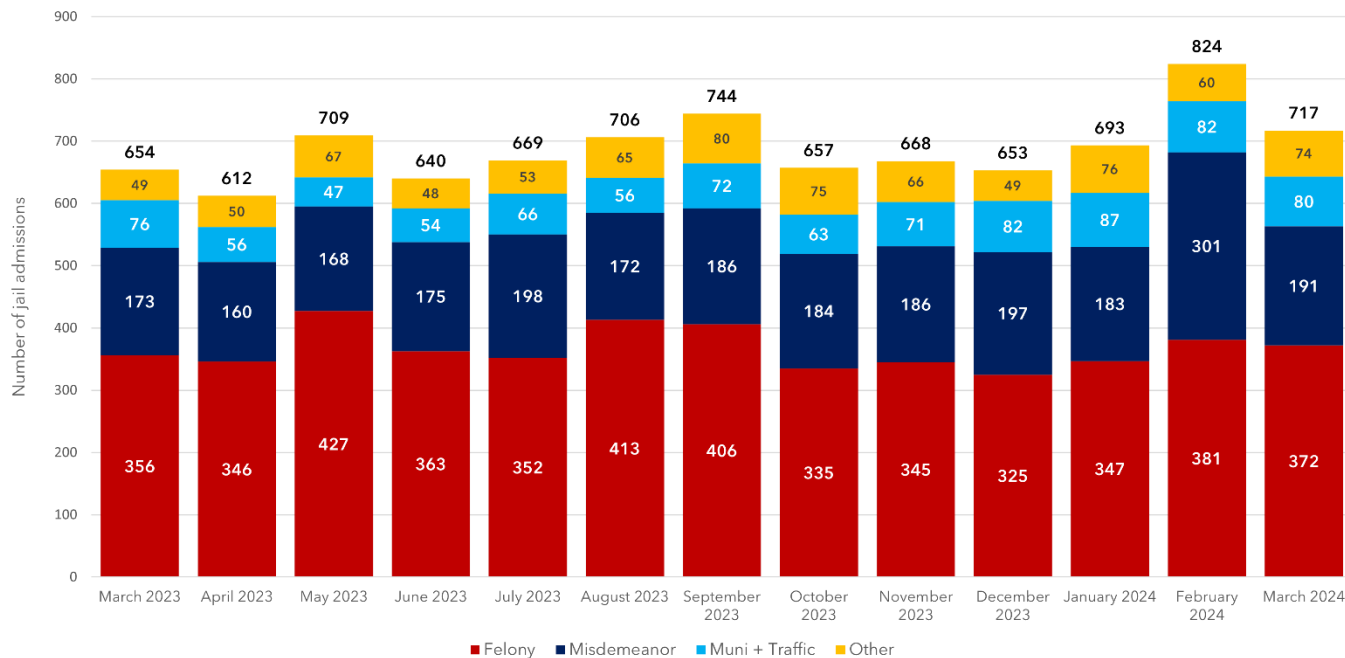


Figure 6. Jail admissions by most serious charge category at booking, March 2023 - March 2024

**717 were people admitted to the jail** in March 2024, a nearly 13% decrease from February, when 824 people were admitted to the jail. 52%, or 372 people admitted to the jail last month had a new felony charge as the most serious charge at booking, and nearly 27% -- 121 people -- were admitted to jail with a new state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking. 10 people -- 2% of March admissions -- had missing or incomplete charge information at the time of reporting.

**Most people who were admitted to the jail in March -- 81%, or 565 out of the 717 jail admissions -- had been arrested by NOPD officers.**

Louisiana State Police, which earlier this year expanded their presence in the city beyond patrolling the French Quarter, arrested 3%, or 7 people who were admitted to the jail in March.

Arresting agency data was missing for 68 people admitted to the jail, about 7% of February jail admissions at the time or reporting. OCJC will revise this data graphic when the tables are updated.

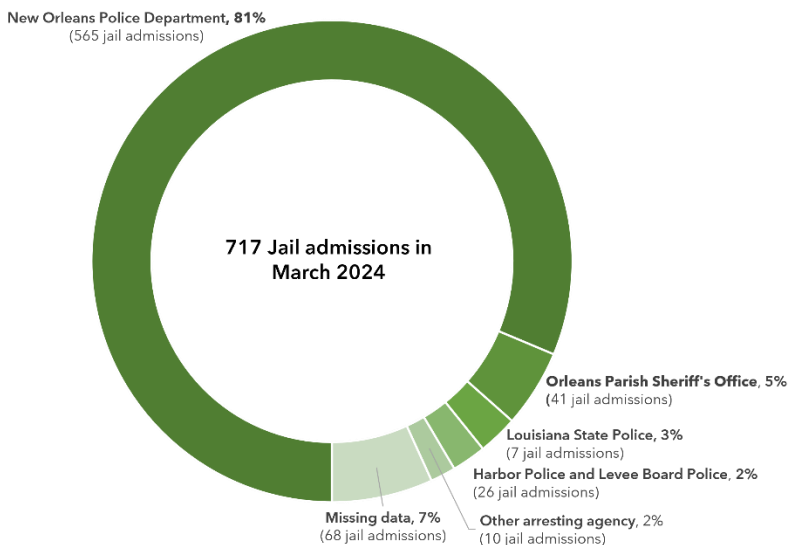


Figure 8. March 2024 jail admissions by arresting officer's agency. Note that "Other arresting agency" may include campus police departments, HANO police, and LA probation and parole.

Of the 563 jail admissions in March 2024 with a felony or state misdemeanor as the most serious charge at booking, **45% of jail admissions were for violent offenses**, an increase of 8 percentage point from February, when violent offense bookings made up 37% percent of the 682 felony and misdemeanor admissions.

51 people were admitted to the jail in March with weapons offenses as the most serious charge at booking (9% of the 563 people booked on felony or state misdemeanor charges).

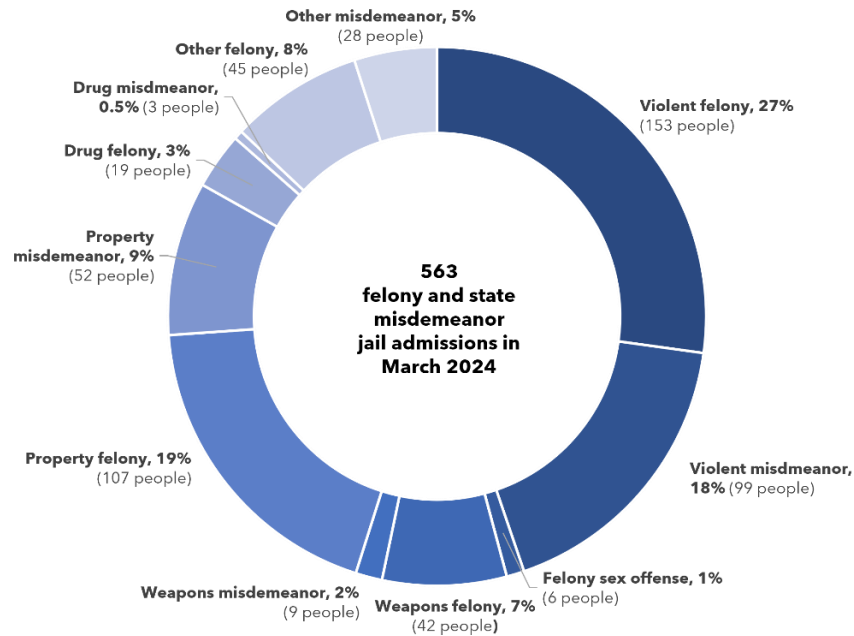


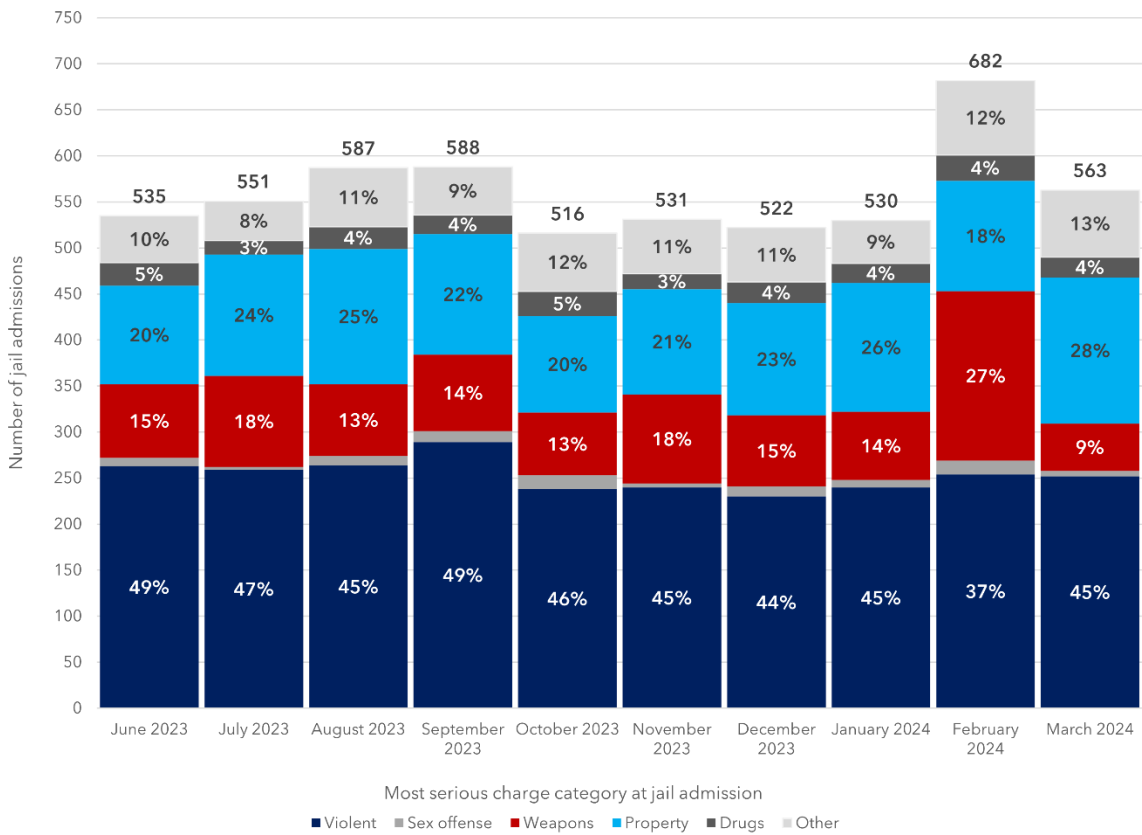
Figure 9. Felony and state misdemeanor jail admissions by most serious charge category, March 2024. No one was admitted to the jail last month with a misdemeanor sex offense as the most serious charge at booking.

**Jail admissions for weapons charges as the most serious charge at booking decreased markedly in March**, both numerically as as a percentage of jail admissions for felony and state misdemeanor charges, compared to February. 51 people (9% of felony and state misdemanor bookings) were admitted to the jail in March with weapons offenses as the most serious charge at booking, a decrease of 72% from February, when the 184 admissions on weapons charges as the most serious offense made up 27% of felony and state misdemeanor admissions. Jail admissions for weapons charges as the most serious offense at booking are at the lowest number since OCJC began producing monthly reports in June 2023.

**Jail admissions in which property offenses were the most serious charge at booking increased in March**, compared to February and preceding months. 159 people (28% of felony and state misdemeanor jail admissions) were admitted to the jail in March with property offenses as the most serious charge at booking, compared to the 120 people admitted on weapons violations who made up 18% of felony and state misdemeanor admissions in February. Jail admissions for property offenses as the most serious charge at booking are the highest number since OCJC began producing monthly reports in June 2023.

We we continue to report on historical trends in charge type in future reports.

Figure 10. Historical felony and state misdemeanor jail admissions by most serious charge type, June 2023 – March 2024



**Focus on racial equity: Disparity in jail admission**

Disparities by race in jail admissions persisted in March 2024. **Black people were admitted to the jail at a twice the rate of white people for every 100,000 New Orleans by race** (RRI = 2.2). Overall, New Orleans admitted 190 people into the jail for every 100,000 parish residents in March 2024. When we compare jail admission rates by race, we find that, in March, 253 Black people were booked into the jail for every 100,000 Black New Orleanians, and 113 white people were admitted to the jail for every 100,000 white New Orleanians.

**For every 2 Black people admitted to the jail...**



per 100,000 Black New Orleanians

**...One white person was admitted to the jail**



per 100,000 white New Orleanians

Figure 11. Relative rate index, jail admission rate per 100,000 New Orleans residents by race, March 2024. Population estimates are from the 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

### Focus on racial equity: Disparity in jail admission for weapons charges

Disparities by race are even wider when we look at the admissions by race by the most serious charge at booking. **Black people were admitted to the jail on weapons charges at nearly 4 times rate of white people in March** (RRI = 3.8). For every 100 Black people booked into the jail, nearly 9 have a weapons offense as the most serious charge at admission, compared to 2 white people with a weapons charge as the most serious offense at admission for every 100 white people booked into the jail.

*For nearly every 4 Black people admitted to the jail with a weapons charge as the most serious offense..*

*One white person is admitted to the jail with a weapons charge as the most serious offense.*



per 100 Black people admitted to the jail



per 100 white people admitted to the jail

Figure 12. Relative rate index, jail admissions for which weapons charges were the most serious charge at booking per 100 jail admissions by race, March 2024

### 730 Jail Releases in March 2024

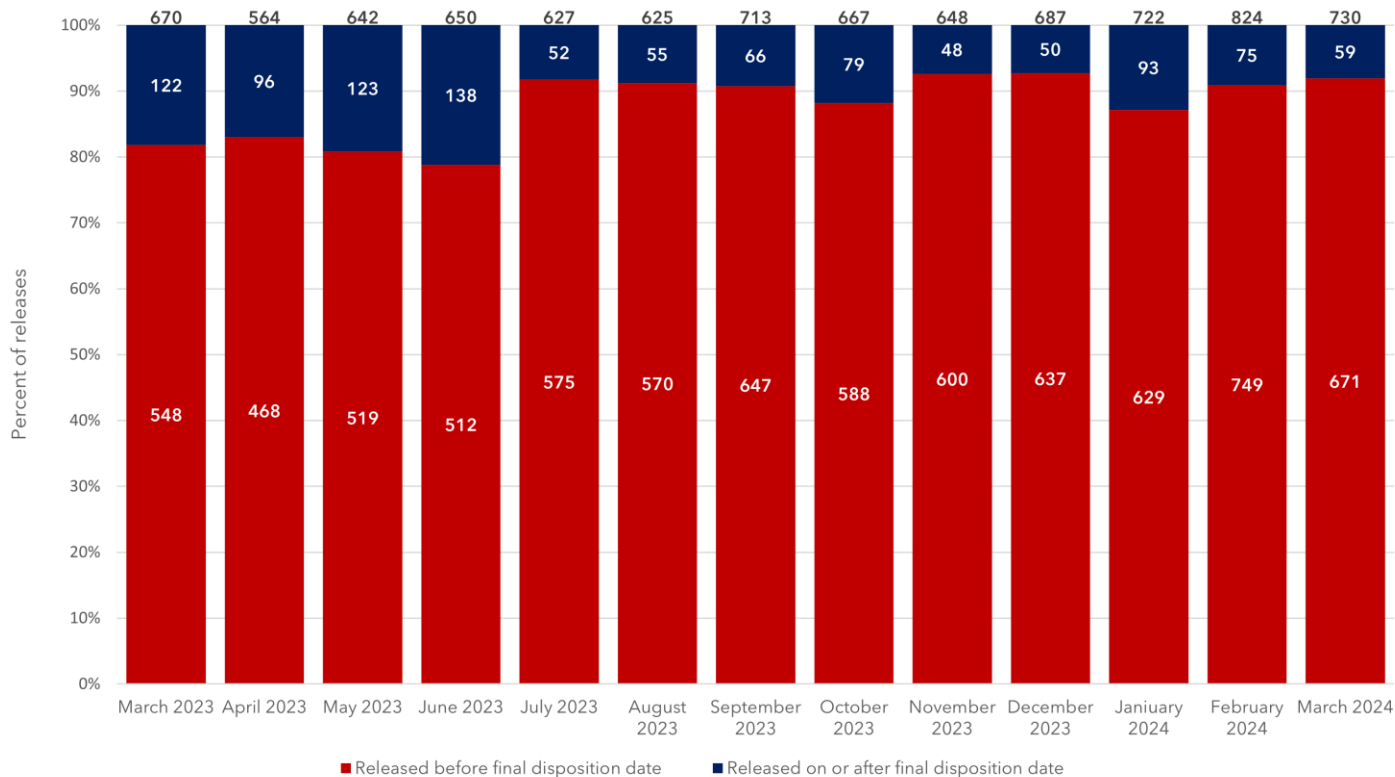


Figure 13. Jail releases by final case disposition status at time of release, March 2023 - March 2024



**730 people were released from jail custody in March 2024, a 11% decrease** from February, when 824 people were released from jail. 92% -- 671 people -- were released from jail left jail custody before the final disposition of their cases and spent an average of 32 days in jail (min = < 1 day; max = 2,617 days; standard dev. = 123.4; median = 2 days).

People released before the final disposition of their case left jail custody typically after having been granted a release on recognizance (ROR) or securing a surety bond to post bail set at first appearance and before their cases were "closed", whether by a refusal or a verdict, such as "not guilty". Note that some people released from jail custody may have more than one case in progress. For reporting purposes, we focus on the disposition of the case associated with their most recent jail stay.

The 59 people who were released upon or after the final disposition of their case spent had an average length of stay of 317 days (max = 1,869 days; standard dev. = 422.6; median = 165 days.)

**The average length of jail stays for all people released in March 2024 was 55 days**

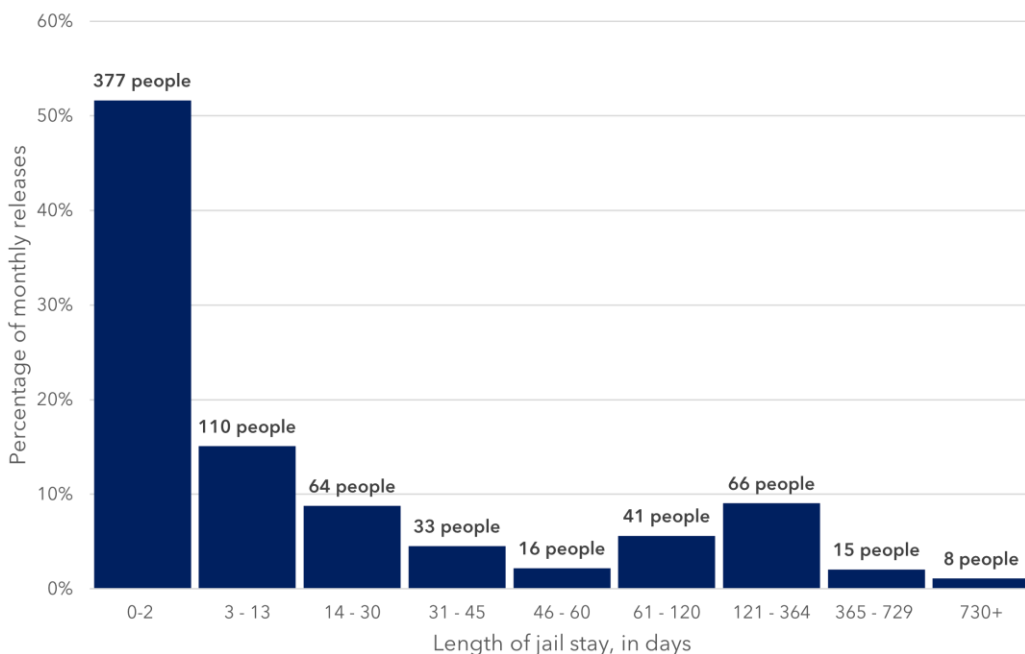


Figure 14. Releases by length of jail stay in March 2024, N= 730 people released

**The average length of stay was 55 days** for the 730 people who were released from jail custody in March 2024 (min = less than 1 day; max = 2617 days; standard dev. = 185.6). **The median length of stay was 2 days**, the same as February's median.

377 people - 52% of all people released from jail in February--left jail custody after staying two days or fewer after admission. 48% of March 2024 jail releases - 353 people - were released from jail 2 or more days after admission and spent an average of 114 days in custody (min = 3 days; standard dev. = 254.3; median = 31 days).

Focus on racial equity: Disparity in lengths of stay

In February, African American people released from the jail spent an average of 63 days in jail - nearly 6 weeks longer than the average length of stay of 23 days for white, Latino, and Asian people released from jail.

Compared to February, the average length of stay for Black people who were released from jail in March has increased by 8 days, while the length of stay for white releasees has decreased by 7 days. The disparity between lengths of stay for Black releasees and white, Latino, and Asian/Asian American released people has increased, from a difference of 35 days in February to a difference of 40 days in March.

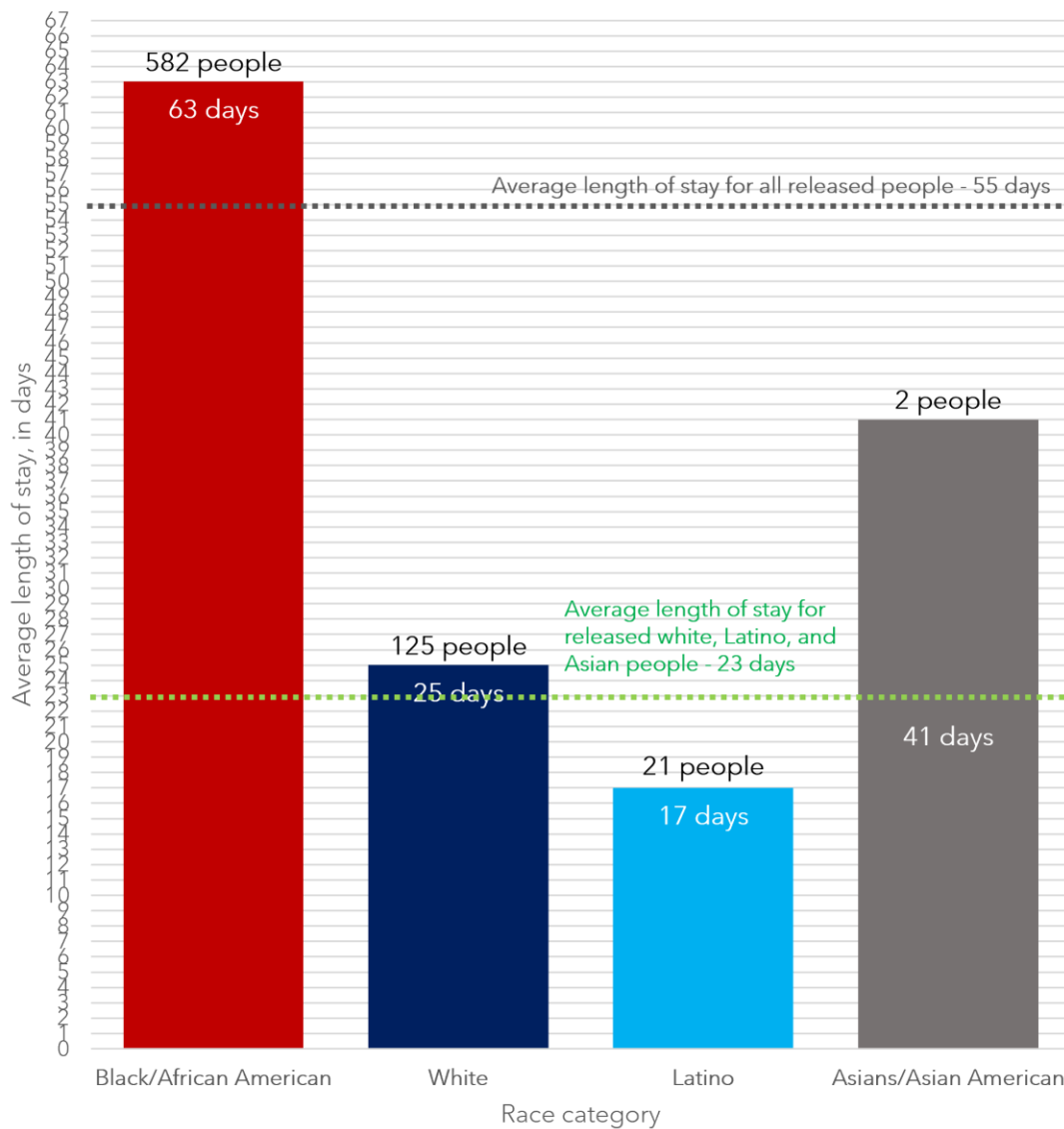


Figure 15. Average length of jail stays by race, March 2024, N = 730 released detainees.

## 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 7-day jail turnover rate:** A measure "borrowed" from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the average 7-day 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 for the month by the sum of jail admissions and jail releases, multiplying by 7, and dividing by the number of days in the month.

### *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.

### *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](mailto: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](mailto:theresa.mckinney@nola.gov).