

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/jail-in-new-york-city>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Jail in New York City: Evidence-Based Opportunities for Reform examines the key decision points within New York City's criminal justice system that drive people into the jail. The report uses rich data on case processing, pretrial decision-making, bail decisions, and case disposition to understand how decision makers can impact the size of the jail at each point in the criminal justice case process. Using this data, the report also investigates the cost of running the New York City jail, disaggregated by borough, charge severity, and risk level.

The report models the impact of several potential reform scenarios based on risk score including the possible cost savings to the city from downsizing the jail system.

Although New York City has already significantly downsized its jail, the city still has the potential to reduce its jail size further without jeopardizing public safety. Through reducing the number of people in the system, the city can also scale back operations and save money.

The city can reduce the cost of jail to taxpayers by reducing the number of people booked into the jail, reducing average length of stay, or doing both.

People held on misdemeanor charges typically have short lengths of stay, but even a few days can be disruptive to employment, education, and caregiving responsibilities.

While the city spends most of its resources incarcerating those accused of more serious crimes, the city can still achieve meaningful savings by reducing incarceration for misdemeanor defendants.

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