

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/new-orleans-jail-population-quarterly-report>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Until recently, New Orleans was the longtime nationwide leader in urban jail incarceration rate, which today remains at nearly double the national average. Although the population of the city's jail has been declining since 2009, there is still much room for improvement, including addressing the considerable and persistent racial disparities in arrest and detention.

By examining the key sub-populations of people behind bars including charge at the time of arrest and risk level this report aims to provide accurate and unbiased data and analysis to support local leaders in safely reducing incarceration.

Despite common practice to detain defendants even when they are assessed as low risk, New Orleans has more than enough beds to accommodate both its current and projected jail population. The vast majority of people in New Orleans's jail have not been tried or convicted and many are low risk.

The purpose of jail is to hold people who are too risky to await their day in court in their communities.

If people who pose little risk were released pretrial in New Orleans, thousands of days in jail could be avoided and millions of taxpayer dollars saved.

Everyone deserves to be safe; unnecessary detention does not increase public safety.

NEWS

PUBLICATION

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