

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/justice-in-katrinawake-changing-course-on-incarceration-in-new-orleans>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

In 2005, New Orleans detained more people in its local jail per capita than any other urban jurisdiction in the country. The jail designed to hold people too great a risk to be released pretrial was actually used to detain thousands of people too poor to pay a financial bond, with dramatic human and financial consequences. In the 10 years since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans officials and community leaders have begun to depart from this legacy of over incarceration, leading to a 70 percent reduction in New Orleans jail population. This report documents the groundbreaking reforms that the City of New Orleans has engaged in to safely decrease its use of detention, from reducing the physical size of its jail to implementing risk-based pretrial release practices. This text was originally published by the [Data Center](#) as part of a series of essays about New Orleans's progress since Hurricane Katrina.

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