

# EMERGENCY COVID-19 JAIL REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Impacts to Jail Populations  
and Community Safety

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JUSTICE SYSTEM PARTNERS

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# INTRODUCTION

Jails book and confine more than 10 million people every year in the United States. People incarcerated in jails can experience overcrowding, lack of resources, exposure to violence, and deteriorating physical and mental health conditions<sup>i</sup>. Even short stays – 72 hours or less – can have devastating consequences for employment, income, housing, and access to government benefits<sup>ii</sup>. Most individuals confined to jails are not convicted and are, instead, held in pretrial detention. For individuals confined to *pretrial detention*<sup>iii</sup>, this period of detention can also impact case processing outcomes: pretrial detention increases the likelihood an individual experiences a conviction, a sentence to incarceration, and longer sentences overall<sup>iv</sup>. This is especially true for Black, Latine, and other historically racially minoritized groups. In response to the disproportionate impacts on these groups, practitioners and policymakers have pushed to reduce the size of US jails overall, reduce the population of people held in pretrial detention specifically, and decrease the footprint of the criminal legal system within communities.

The MacArthur Foundation launched the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) – a national initiative – in 2015 to reduce the overreliance on jails across communities. The SJC provides grants and technical assistance to local jurisdictions to help them develop and implement strategies to safely reduce jail populations, address racial and ethnic disparities, and improve community safety. The initiative provides support on strategies such as pretrial reform, alternatives to incarceration, reducing the use of jails for low-level offenses, and addressing the overuse of incarceration for people with mental health and substance use disorders. It also promotes data-driven decision-making and community engagement to create more equitable and effective criminal legal systems. Since its inception, over 50 jurisdictions have engaged in the work, leading to reductions in jail populations in participating sites. While the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge helped sites reduce their local jail population, as of early 2020, many sites still had room to continue reducing their jail populations.

As SJC sites continued to implement strategies to reduce jail populations in early 2020, the World Health Organization declared Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) a global pandemic<sup>v</sup>. As the virus spread rapidly in March 2020, it became increasingly clear continued bookings across local jails would put both jail staff and incarcerated individuals at a severe health risk. As a result, many jurisdictions, including SJC sites, implemented emergency jail population reduction strategies to meet social distancing recommendations and better protect the health of staff and incarcerated individuals.

SJC sites were uniquely well positioned to address COVID-19 challenges because they had existing operational strategies aimed at reducing their jail population. Many sites implemented new iterations of these strategies as well as expanded eligibility criteria for existing practices. In doing so, these emergency reduction efforts pushed SJC sites further than they ever imagined in their jail reduction efforts. Research from the CUNY

**SJC sites implemented emergency jail population reduction strategies to meet COVID-19 social distancing recommendations and better protect the health of staff and incarcerated individuals.**

Institute of State and Local Governance (CUNY ISLG) – the primary research agency for the Safety and Justice Challenge – found SJC sites dramatically reduced their jail populations in March 2020<sup>vi</sup> with twelve sites decreasing the jail population by over 20% with no correlation with an increase in violent crime, and then sustained these reductions well into 2022<sup>vii</sup>.

However, CUNY ISLG's research did not determine whether violent reoffending decreased among individuals with a history of being booked into jail for violent offenses. Their research also did not explore public perceptions of safety during emergency jail reduction efforts. As a result, Justice System Partners (JSP) conducted a case study in one SJC site, Multnomah County, Oregon. The goal of the case study was to gain valuable lessons from Multnomah County about the emergency jail reduction strategies they implemented, the impact these strategies had on their jail population, and to provide insight on how to sustain jail reduction reforms for the wider Safety and Justice Challenge community.

This brief summarizes the findings from JSP's case study and provides recommendations for how other SJC sites and non-SJC sites could use the lessons from Multnomah County, Oregon to improve and sustain their own jail reduction efforts. The brief begins with an overview of Multnomah County and the research, offers key findings, and concludes with a discussion of policy and practice recommendations.



## OVERVIEW OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON CASE STUDY

JSP's research is grounded in the popular presumption that local jurisdictions cannot significantly reduce the use of jails because jails serve as a critical deterrent to crime. That is, without the presence and knowing consequence of going to jail, individuals will not only engage in law breaking behavior but will escalate to more serious and violent forms of crime. If this presumption were true, SJC sites implementing reforms to reduce the size and overreliance of their jails would see an increase in jail booking for more serious and violent crimes.

In 2023, JSP partnered with Multnomah County, Oregon, which includes the city of Portland, to understand the implementation and impact of jail reduction strategies between March 2018 and February 2022. JSP selected Multnomah County, Oregon as a case study for two main reasons. First, according to findings from CUNY ISLG, the county experienced more than a 20% reduction in their incarceration rate between 2019 and 2020 while also experiencing a decline in bookings for violent crime. As the key findings will describe below, these numbers resulted from the implementation of new strategies and expanding eligibility criteria of existing SJC jail reduction strategies. The new strategies eliminated jail booking for individuals with bench

warrants for missing court and the implementation of manual review of sentenced individuals who served most of their term at the point of review. They expanded eligibility for citation-in-lieu of arrest, pretrial release, and nearly eliminated jail stays for probation technical violations.

Second, Multnomah County experienced these important reductions while they experienced over 100 days of social unrest and protests by community members in response to the murder of George Floyd. During protests, federal troops were deployed to help local police agencies control the scale of protests. Following the protests, Oregon lawmakers and advocates filed lawsuits against the various crowd control measures (e.g., tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets) local police and federal troops used to manage protests. This context provides valuable lessons for how other sites could implement or sustain their own jail reduction efforts while navigating difficult socio-political environments.

## OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH APPROACH

JSP first relied on interviews with criminal legal staff stakeholders to understand the emergency COVID-19 jail reduction strategies they implemented. Informed by these discussions, it became clear to JSP researchers that analyzing jail booking outcomes in two periods – before and after the implementation of COVID-19 emergency jail reduction strategies – would not tell a complete story for Multnomah County. The interviews suggested there were four distinct periods experienced by Multnomah County:

1. Pre-COVID-19 Period: From March 1, 2018 to February 29, 2020
2. Early COVID-19 Period: From March 1, 2020 to May 27, 2020
3. 100 Days of Protest Period: From May 28, 2020 to December 31, 2020 (occurring during COVID-19 pandemic)
4. After 100 Days of Protest Period: From January 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022 (occurring during COVID-19 pandemic)

JSP then used person-level, jail bookings data from the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office provided to CUNY ISLG to examine how strategies affected key outcomes, including:

1. Average monthly jail booking at each period.
2. Average monthly jail booking for violent offenses at each period.
3. Jail rebooking for any offense after March 1, 2020 for individuals with previous jail booking in the Pre-COVID-19 period.
4. Jail rebooking for any offense after March 1, 2020 for individuals with a previous jail booking in the Pre-COVID-19 period for a violent offense.
5. Jail rebooking for a violent offense after March 1, 2020 for individuals with a previous jail booking in the Pre-COVID-19 period for a violent offense.

Mar 2018  
 May 2018  
 Jul 2018  
 Sep 2018  
 Nov 2018  
 Jan 2019  
 Mar 2019  
 May 2019  
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 Nov 2019  
 Jan 2020  
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 May 2021  
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 Nov 2021  
 Jan 2022  
 Mar 2022

Pre-Covid-19  
 Period

Early Covid-19  
 Period

100 Days of  
 Protest Period

After 100 Days of  
 Protest Period

## Important Methodology Definitions

### Jail Booking

A formal custodial admission into the local Multnomah County jail following an arrest.

### Rebooking Outcome

Any new custodial admission into Multnomah County jail between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2022.

### Violent booking

New custodial admission into Multnomah County jail for of the 30 violent offense types per the violent offenses list locally developed for each jurisdiction's Public Safety Assessment.

# THEMATIC FINDINGS

## KEY FINDING 1: PARTICIPATION IN THE SAFETY JUSTICE CHALLENGE LAID THE GROUNDWORK TO ACT QUICKLY DURING COVID-19.

Participation in the SJC required a strong culture of collaboration from multiple stakeholders to reduce jail populations. First, Multnomah’s Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) coordinated many policy group meetings for each of the strategies the county implemented as part of their SJC work. These policy groups met on reoccurring schedules (e.g., Thursdays), at various frequencies based upon how the group set up the meeting structure (e.g., weekly, monthly, bimonthly), and both in-person and virtually. These policy groups included stakeholders from the District Attorney’s Office, Sheriff’s Office, Department of Community Justice, Metropolitan Public Defender’s Office, Portland Police Bureau, and the Oregon Judicial Department Circuit Court. In most cases, individuals from these offices would participate in multiple policy groups. From these existing policy group meetings, Multnomah County stakeholders had a significant understanding of each agency’s role, limitations, resources, and communication and working styles.

At the start of COVID-19 in March 2020, LPSCC leveraged one of the policy groups already meeting weekly to create the “Criminal Justice COVID Check-In group.” LPSCC also invited the county’s Health Department to this meeting. The Criminal Justice COVID Check-In meetings addressed two primary issues: (1) how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the jail system and (2) how to keep justice-involved people and staff safe. Many stakeholders reported that during the first meeting, they did not spend time on introductions, roles, and from which agencies they worked, and instead could immediately begin discussing the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, during this first meeting, the group agreed to meet daily and virtually. Many of the group members were already comfortable with virtual technologies from existing SJC policy group meetings, and all interviewees reported an easy transition to meeting virtually and daily.

Lastly, stakeholders reported that because they often met in SJC policy groups, they had a firm understanding of the role, responsibilities, and the limitation of resources of other stakeholders. Based upon this knowledge, interviewees reported the group was able to more quickly brainstorm and implement crisis strategies because they did not need to spend time explaining to other members what they could and could not realistically do. In this way, Multnomah County’s participation in SJC enabled existing relationships to transition into a pandemic-focused group in a crisis.



**Table 1. Multnomah County Key Emergency Jail Reduction Strategies**

Strategy	Existing SJC Strategy	Used Strategy During Period			
		Pre-COVID-19	Early COVID-19	100 Days of Protest	After 100 Days of Protest
Manual Review of Sentenced Cases	No	No	Yes	Yes; Some	Yes; Few
Citation-In-Lieu of Arrest	Yes	Yes	Yes; Expanded eligible offense types		
Eliminate Bench Warrants for Missing Court	No	No	Yes		
Reduce Jail Stay for Probation Technical Violations	Yes	Yes; Reduced length of stay in jail for probation technical violations	Yes; Expanded to reduce nearly all jail stays for probation technical violations	Yes; Allowed jail stays for some probation technical violations	

**KEY FINDING 2: MULTNOMAH COUNTY MOSTLY EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OF PRETRIAL REFORMS THEY PREVIOUSLY IMPLEMENTED AS PART OF SJC.**

During the three distinct periods following the start of COVID-19: the Early COVID-19 period, the 100 Days of Protest period, and After 100 Days of Protest period, Multnomah County maintained a historically low jail population. They did so by implementing new strategies, but mostly by expanding the eligibility criteria of existing SJC strategies during the Early COVID-19 period and maintaining these efforts through the subsequent periods. First, the group immediately began a new strategy to manually review individuals sentenced to the Multnomah County jail who, at the point of review, had served most of their sentence and would be at greatest risk for COVID-19 (e.g., immunocompromised individuals). The review process included collaborative discussions between the Multnomah County’s Sheriff’s Office, District Attorney’s Office, and the judges from the Circuit court. However, this manual review process was labor intensive, not scalable, and primarily relied on releasing individuals rather than focusing on preventing individuals from entering the jail.

Citation-in-lieu of arrest is the process of police issuing a citation in the field to an individual instead of arresting them and booking them into county jail. During the Pre COVID-19 period, local police agencies used this strategy for low-level, non-person offenses (e.g., trespassing). During the Early COVID-19 period, stakeholders identified other misdemeanor offense types suitable for citation-in-lieu of arrests (e.g., possession of controlled substance) and expanded the use of this strategy. As stakeholders shared information about the success of this strategy in reducing the number of jail bookings and jail population, they continued to expand the strategy during the 100 Days of Protest Period to more offense types including

felony charges without a victim (e.g., felony possession of controlled substance), ultimately relying on this strategy as their primary jail reduction strategy.

Multnomah County implemented a new strategy to eliminate warrants for missing court hearings. Stakeholders understood individuals may be confused by the court shutting down and the timing of the court reopening operations. Stakeholders understood individuals may also not attend court from fear of contracting COVID-19 or unable to attend court because the county had limited public transportation services. Stakeholders recognized how limited public transportation may disproportionately affect Black, Latine and other historically racially minoritized community members, or individuals living in historically disinvested neighborhoods. In response, stakeholders agreed to eliminate warrants for missing court throughout the three periods. Instead, these individuals received a citation-in-lieu of arrest if they missed court.

Prior to COVID-19, Multnomah County had implemented strategies to reduce length of stay for community supervision technical violations (e.g., missing appointments with probation officer, positive drug tests). As stakeholders convened for their collaborative check-in meetings during the pandemic, stakeholders were already familiar with this strategy and understood the collateral consequences of returning to jail for technical violations. Many system actors felt that these bookings unnecessarily increased the risk of spreading COVID-19. In response, the Multnomah Department of Community Justice (DCJ) agreed to nearly eliminate the processing of all community supervision violations during the Early COVID-19 period and maintained this strategy during the 100 Days of Protest period. DCJ only issued new warrants for violations against victims from the underlying offense (e.g., non-compliance to no-contact orders) or for new crimes with a victim.

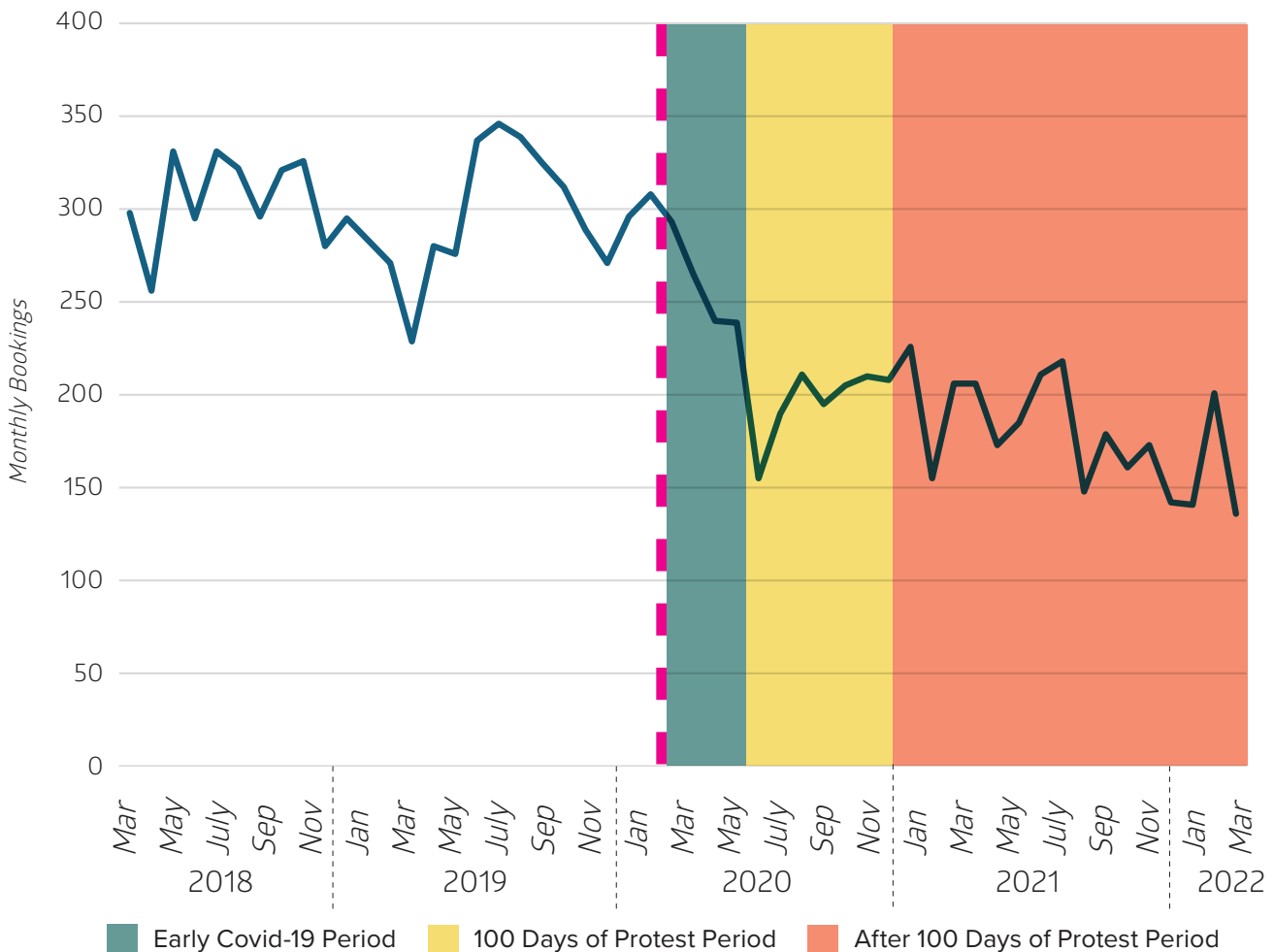
**KEY FINDING 3: FOLLOWING EMERGENCY JAIL REDUCTION EFFORTS, MULTNOMAH COUNTY DID NOT EXPERIENCE AN INCREASE IN OVERALL JAIL BOOKINGS OR AN INCREASE IN JAIL BOOKINGS FOR VIOLENT OFFENSE TYPES.**

As previous CUNY ISLG research details, Multnomah County experienced historically low jail bookings for any offense types starting in the Early COVID-19 period. The reliance on citation-in-lieu of arrest, elimination of bench warrants for missing court, and reducing jail stays for probation technical violations all contributed to maintaining these numbers throughout the 100 Days of Protest and After 100 Days of Protest periods.

Interviewees reported that during the COVID-19 Check-In meetings some stakeholders were concerned the reliance on citation-in-lieu of arrest or police simply not responding to some offense types at all could encourage residents to escalate and commit violent offenses. However, this was not the case.

Despite the coalescing of many serious and contentious events in their community, the number of jail bookings related to violent offenses did not increase to pre-COVID-19 numbers during any of the subsequent three periods. In fact, the number of bookings associated with violence decreased significantly during the three periods following the onset of COVID-19. In the 24 months in the pre-COVID-19 period, Multnomah County experienced an average of 302 monthly bookings for violent charges. In the 24 months following the implementation of COVID-19 emergency jail reduction strategies, Multnomah County experienced an average of 193 monthly bookings for violent charges.

**MONTHLY JAIL BOOKINGS FOR VIOLENT OFFENSE TYPES, MARCH 2018 – FEBRUARY 2022**



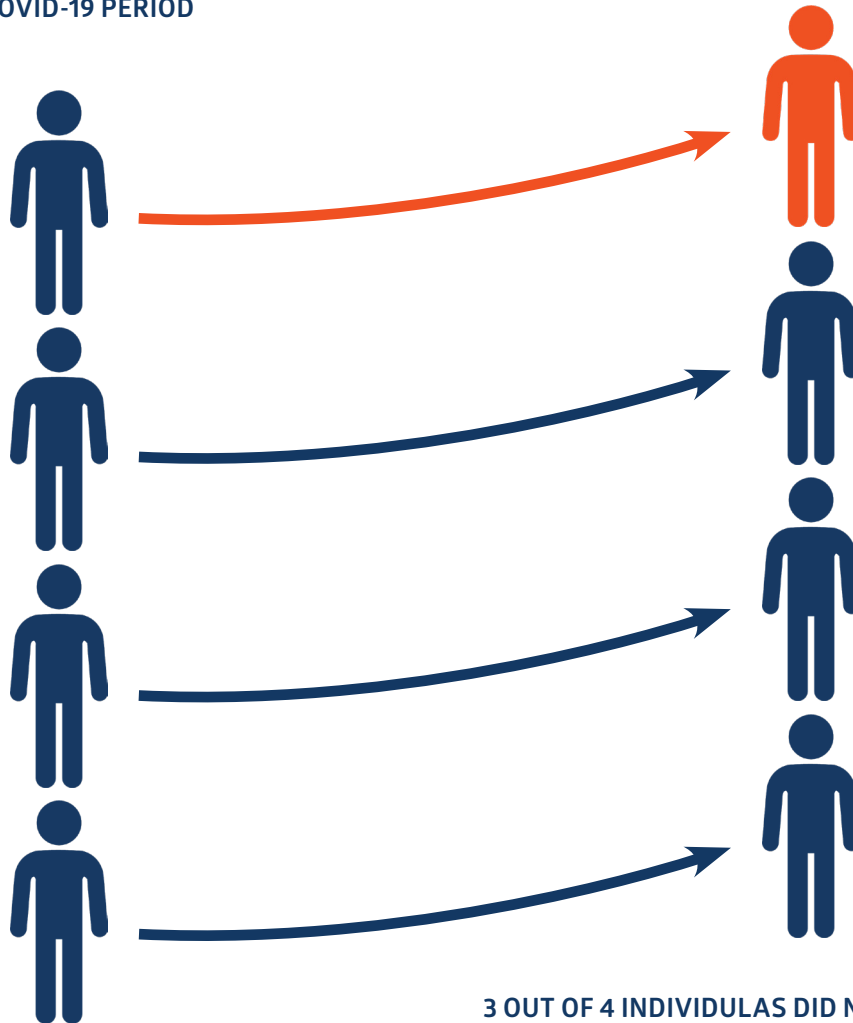


**KEY FINDING 4: MOST INDIVIDUALS WITH A HISTORY OF ANY JAIL BOOKING DID NOT EXPERIENCE A JAIL REBOOKING FOLLOWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMERGENCY JAIL REDUCTION EFFORTS.**

There is a popular presumption that jails serve as a critical deterrent to crime, and without the consequence of jail, individuals may escalate to more serious and violent forms of crime – especially individuals who have a history of law-breaking behavior. However, analysis revealed that among individuals with a previous jail booking for any offense type, they were unlikely to experience a new booking at all after March 2020. In fact, 3 out of 4 individuals did not experience a new jail booking for any reason after March 2020.

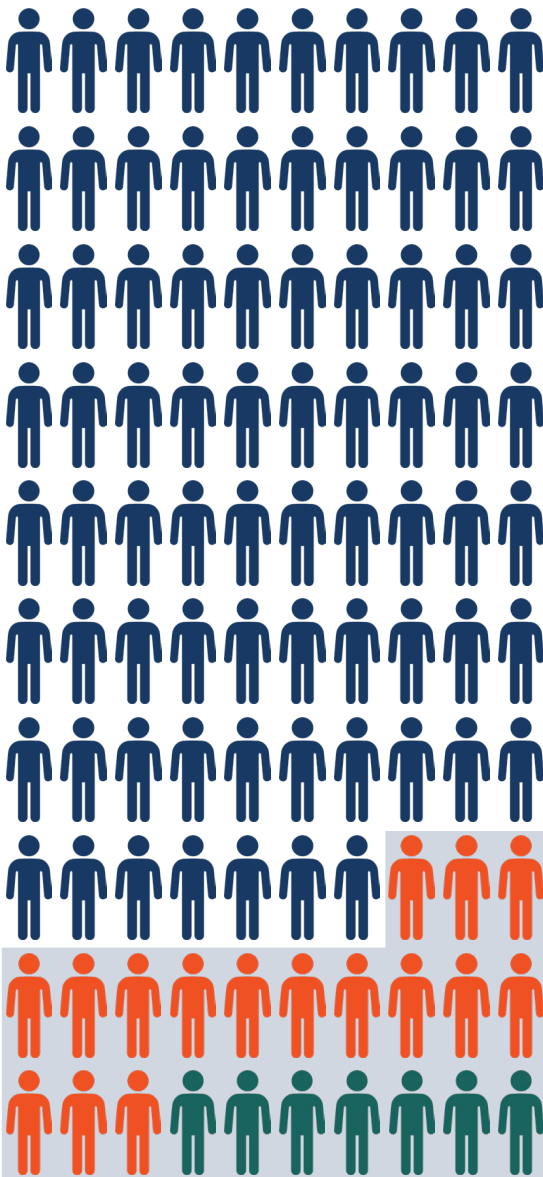
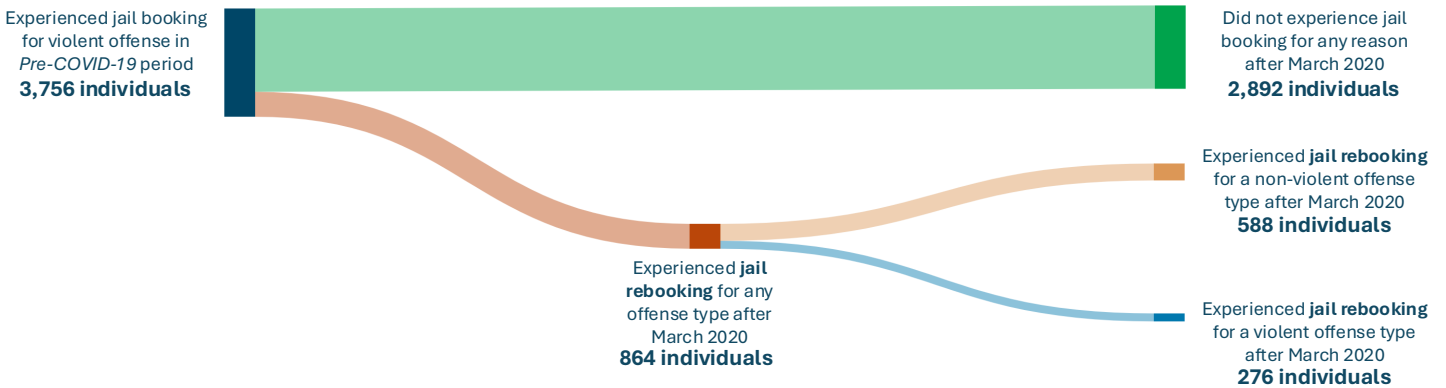
Even among people with a history of jail bookings for violence, jail reduction strategies did not lead to increases in violence.

**EXPERIENCED JAIL BOOKING FOR ANY REASON IN PRE-COVID-19 PERIOD**



**3 OUT OF 4 INDIVIDUALS DID NOT EXPERIENCE A JAIL REBOOKING FOR ANY REASON AFTER MARCH 2020**

**Jail rebooking after March 2020 for individuals with at least one jail booking for a violent offense in Pre-Covid-19 period**



JSP also analyzed jail rebooking patterns for individuals with at least one jail booking for a violent offense during the pre-COVID-19 period – 3,756 individuals.

Among these individuals, 864 individuals, 23%, experienced a new jail booking for any offense type between March 2020 and February 2022. Of these 864 individuals experienced a jail rebooking between March 2020 and February 2022, 588 individuals experienced a jail rebooking for a non-violent offense type and 276 individuals – 7% – experienced a jail rebooking for a violent offense type.

These findings are consistent with CUNY ISLG’s review of SJC sites where they found no correlation between jail reduction efforts and increases in violent crime<sup>viii</sup>. This suggests that even among people with a history of violence, jail reduction strategies do not lead to increases in violence.



Proportion of Individuals with Violent Booking in Pre-COVID-19 with Subsequent Booking and Violent Booking after March 2020.

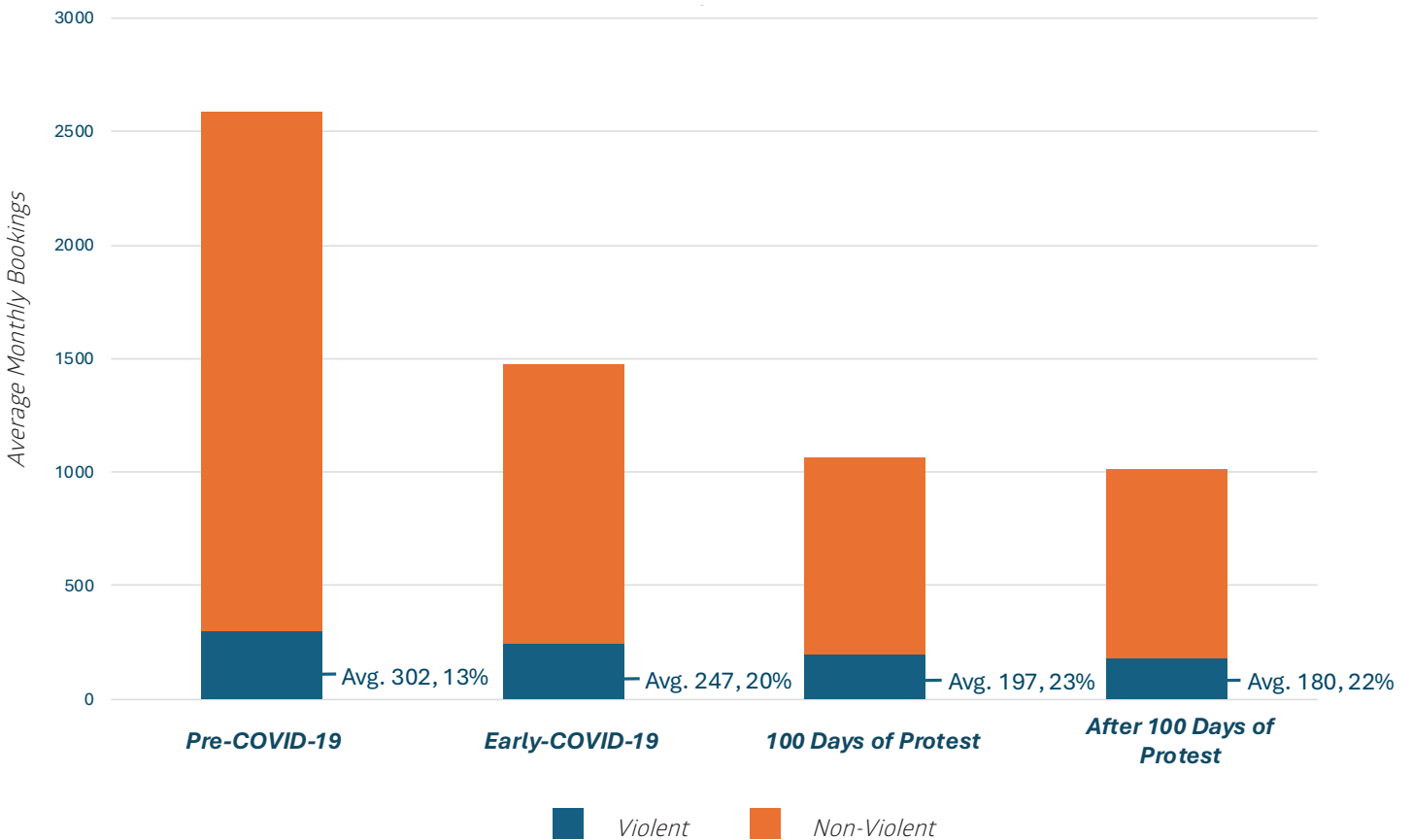
**KEY FINDING 5: THE RACIAL DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE JAIL REMAINED RELATIVELY THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE THREE SUBSEQUENT PERIODS; HOWEVER, THE COMPOSITION OF TYPES OF CHARGES BOOKED INTO JAIL CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY.**

During the pre-COVID-19 period, the Multnomah County jail averaged over 2,500 bookings per month. In the three periods following, the number of jail bookings, on average, decreased to approximately 1,000 per month. Although the volume of jail bookings decreased over time, the racial demographic composition of bookings remained consistent over time. For example, in the pre-COVID-19 period white men comprised 48% of bookings and Black men accounted for 17% of bookings. In the subsequent three periods, white men accounted for 50% of bookings and Black men were 18% of bookings.

However, the types of charges booked changed during the pandemic. The proportion of bookings for person or violent offenses increased during the pandemic, even though the total number of bookings decreased. This increase is expected and reflects the essence of jail reduction strategies which relies on jails for serious and violent offenses, rather than non-violent offenses. Stakeholders, therefore, prioritized incarcerating individuals for more serious offenses, while reducing incarceration for low-level, non-violent charges.

The changes in composition of offense types booked into jail during the pandemic reflect the goal of jail reduction efforts to rely on jails for serious and violent offenses, only.

**AVERAGE MONTHLY JAIL BOOKINGS FOR NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT OFFENSE TYPES BY PERIOD**  
**MARCH 2018 – FEBRUARY 2022**



## KEY FINDING 6: COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY EXTEND BEYOND CLASSIC DEFINITIONS OF VIOLENCE.

Most Multnomah County staff, community members, and individuals who experienced a jail booking during COVID-19 shared that they often felt unsafe during this time or felt unwell by the combination of COVID-19, limited local police presence, and the addition of a militarized federal police presence during protests. However, safety was often perceived within the context of social disorder, drug use, and property damage, rather than from classic violent offenses. A staff member shares,

*So we're in the old courthouse, there are protests literally across the street, in the park, on a daily basis, and at night, and there's vandalism, and people were upset, you know? ... But we are human beings, and so you can't help but be affected by what's going on in our society – and we all were. I was working at the courthouse every day, and so I would come in, and I would see the damage to the courthouse itself. Most of it superficial damage, some of it not... You know, we're trying to keep the court system functioning and to be fair, and do our mission, to serve the public, and to see spray painted on the side of the building where we go to work that, 'courts are corrupt,' you know?*

For residents, they reported feeling physically unsafe related to concerns about others stealing their property—even without use of force – and police not responding to this theft with an arrest. A resident explained,

*I used to live in a homeless camp. it just went off the wall with the criminality, [stealing from] people in the camp. You know what I mean? It just got scary. People were getting scared to leave [their] property behind. Anytime we went out, I made sure I had a backpack full of my personal belongings and stuff that I didn't want to lose. And believe it or not, I'm 5'11 240 pounds, and I have a lot of fear rolling through me at that time. You know what I mean? Mostly the police not coming around and doing their duty. They just let everybody run rampant. You know what I mean?*

Other residents shared that the lack of arrests for people who were using substances in shared public spaces made them perceive a general sense of lawlessness. However, few staff and community members identified instances of violence against people when talking about their personal feelings of safety.



Few staff and community members identified instances of violence against people when talking about their personal feelings of safety.

## KEY FINDING 7: STAFF WHO EXPERIENCED HARM DURING COVID-19 ARE STILL HEALING YET RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINING JAIL REDUCTION REFORM EFFORTS.

Criminal legal system staff recalled being exhausted from a combination of concerns about their physical safety during protests and fear of contracting COVID-19. Staff explained that the process of traveling to and from the Justice Center – the building which also houses the jail among other criminal legal agencies – felt dangerous because of the protests happening across the street. They also felt unsafe because their work building experienced property damage and was set on fire during protests. Additionally, staff feared physically coming to work and how exposure to COVID-19 may impact their immunocompromised loved ones.

However, many of the concerns expressed by staff appeared more related to the interactive effect of sustained protests and COVID-19 rather than jail reduction strategies. One staff shared,

*So, here's what I witnessed. So, there was the social justice protests that happened and this place got militarized, like, there was fences everywhere and like guards, and it was crazy, like coming to work. I was like showing my badge and people were yelling stuff at me. If you [were working] until about 11 o'clock at night, you had protesters protesting and then they that group would subside, and this different group would show up. And it did not stop. functioning and to be fair, and do our mission, to serve the public, and to see spray painted on the side of the building where we go to work that, 'courts are corrupt,' you know?*

Staff shared that they were doing their best to support individuals who were incarcerated and reduce jail populations to better protect individuals incarcerated during the pandemic, but they struggled to balance their own needs and concerns while doing so. Among staff members who participated in the research and are still working in the county, they report they have not yet recovered from the challenges they experienced during COVID-19 and the social justice protests. One participant said,

*We're the court system, we're trying to do things the right way. And I do understand the frustration, I do understand the need to have kind of a "valve" to allow some of that community tension to happen. But it was a very difficult time to just go to work on a daily basis, and do your best, and not get disheartened and depressed in some way by what was happening in our community.*

Staff perceptions of safety related to protests and exposure to COVID-19 rather than jail reduction strategies.



# POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS TO SJC SITES AND OTHER JURISDICTIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

## RECOMMENDATION: MINIMIZE RELYING ON JAILS FOR INDIVIDUALS CHARGED WITH NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES.

Multnomah County demonstrated that reducing jail bookings and incarceration for people with non-violent offenses does not increase violent crime in the community. Local law enforcement agencies should use citation-in-lieu of arrest to include nearly all non-violent misdemeanor and felony offense types. Additionally, local law enforcement can rely on deflection programs triaging individuals from the criminal legal system to community-based providers. Counties that are already using citation-in-lieu of arrest for some offenses should review and expand eligibility to additional charge types. Taking these steps can act as a roadmap towards stronger public health responses and a decreased reliance on jail incarceration.

## RECOMMENDATION: ELIMINATE BENCH WARRANTS FOR MISSED COURT HEARINGS.

In recognition of the barriers to appearing to in-person court appearances, jurisdictions should increase the accessibility of pretrial proceedings by allowing people to appear in court virtually for nearly all hearings, and by using citation-in-lieu of arrest for all missed court appearances. Doing so will reduce the use of jail for individuals who do not commit new crimes or for crimes that are non-violent.

## RECOMMENDATION: ADDRESS VIOLENT-PERSON OFFENSES VERSUS PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE.

Case study participants including staff stakeholders and community members discussed public safety and violence differently. In Multnomah County, the COVID-19 Check-In stakeholders often discussed the need to consider “public safety” but, in practice, this meant considering individuals with violent charges such as robbery and offenses against other people, domestic violence, or weapons possession. For community

members, when they discussed violence and safety, they often defined it as destruction of property and business, general lawlessness, and social disorder.

These misaligned definitions suggest a need to build a mutual understanding of what “safety” and “violence” means within communities. Importantly, there is a need to distinguish violence from broader perspectives of community safety and social disorder. When perceptions of safety are entangled with unmet basic needs such as houselessness and food insecurity, it is important to have conversations about the intersection of personal safety and public health.

## RECOMMENDATION: SUSTAIN REFORM EFFORTS BY ACKNOWLEDGING TRAUMA EXPERIENCED BY CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM STAFF AND EMPHASIZE WELLBEING.

Many case study participants reported experiencing harm or trauma during COVID-19 and social unrest. While other SJC and non-SJC sites may not have experienced the level and intensity of sustained protests like Multnomah County, many staff still experienced emotional fatigue working in the system during COVID-19. There is a need to recognize and support staff members who continue to work for the criminal legal system after experiencing COVID-19.

Implementing or expanding programs which emphasize staff wellness can enhance how staff deliver services to individuals navigating the criminal legal system. Importantly, it is this staff who must continue to champion and lead ongoing efforts to reduce over-reliance on jails. Ensuring this remaining workforce is healthy is essential to reduce the over-reliance on jails.

Ensuring the remaining COVID-19 workforce is healthy is essential for sustaining reform efforts and reducing the over-reliance of jails.

## RECOMMENDATION: INVEST IN INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION AND LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCILS TO SUSTAIN REFORM EFFORTS.

A strong culture of collaboration was critical to the adoption and implementation of jail reduction strategies in a time of crisis in Multnomah County. In particular, the local criminal justice coordinating council – LPSCC – had helped lead and facilitate many collaborative discussions during the pre-COVID-19 period. This made it easy for LPSCC to facilitate the COVID Check-In group to help multiple agency stakeholders respond effectively and efficiently.

Investing in local criminal justice coordinating councils (CJCCs) can create similar collaborative structures and a facilitating lead to maintain momentum across various policy goals. These collaborative partnerships are beneficial to all SJC and non-SJC sites and enable criminal legal system stakeholders to act in urgent situations and collaboratively reduce the over-reliance on jails. Stakeholders across SJC and non-SJC sites should continue to invest in an open dialogue and collaborative approach to continue promoting strategies that reduce the size and scope of jails.



## END NOTES

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More information is available at [www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org](http://www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org).



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