

News Release



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Judiciary Releases 2020 Annual Criminal Justice Reform Report

New Jersey's county jail population under Criminal Justice Reform continues to include an increasing percentage of defendants accused of serious crimes and a decreasing percentage of low-risk defendants unable to pay bail, according to an annual report released today by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The [report](#) found the percentage of individuals in jail charged with a serious offense increased for three consecutive years, from 74.9 percent in 2018 and 75.9 percent in 2019 to 79.7 percent in 2020.

At the same time, the practice of holding low-risk defendants in jail for inability to pay bail – once the catalyst for CJR – continued to decline dramatically, according to the report. In 2020, even as the overall jail population increased slightly because of the suspension of criminal jury trials necessitated by Covid-19, the percentage of jail inmates held on bail of \$2,500 or less dropped to 0.2 percent, or 14 inmates, the report found.

Both findings followed up on a 2012 jail population study that looked at a single day in October. That study found 1,547 inmates - 12 percent of the jail population – were in jail pretrial on a bail of \$2,500 or less. When that study was replicated for 2018 and 2019, the percentage had dropped to 4.6 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively.

Other annual report statistics continued to show CJR has proven effective in maintaining the balance between public safety and the rights of the accused.

The rate of new indictable criminal activity for defendants released pretrial has held between 13.7 percent and 13.8 percent for three consecutive years. Court appearance rates increased slightly to 90.9 percent.

The report also found that New Jersey's jail population continues to hold a disproportionate percentage of Black men and women. Although there are fewer defendants of all races and genders in jail today under CJR, Black individuals represent 60 percent of the state's jail population.

The report notes that such racial disparities continue to exist throughout the criminal justice process and extend beyond the courts, which respond to defendants after they are brought into the judicial system.

“New Jersey's justice system is fairer and safer today under Criminal Justice Reform, but we must continue to work together with stakeholders across the criminal justice system to confront inequities wherever we find them and identify responsible, meaningful solutions,” Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said.

Criminal Justice Reform began in New Jersey in January 2017, replacing a cash bail system that had stood for more than a century. Under the new system, the use of bail has been minimal.

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