

UNDERSTANDING THE POPULATION OF PEOPLE WITH FREQUENT JAIL CONTACT

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

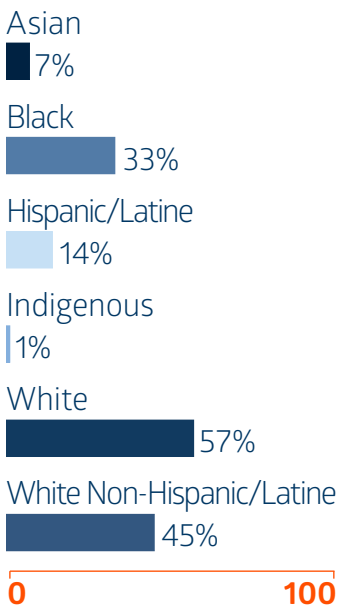


POPULATION: 1,115,482

AVERAGE JAIL POPULATION: 1,141

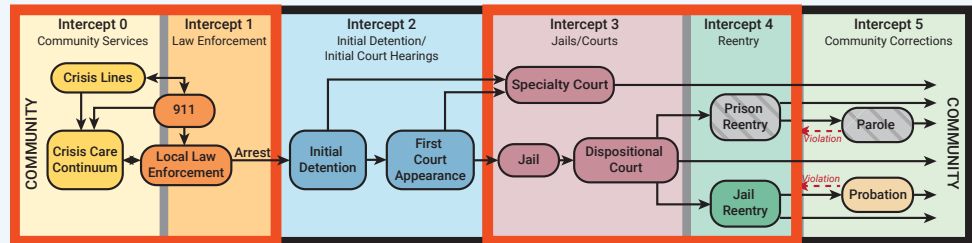
COUNTY SEAT:
CHARLOTTE, THE MOST POPULOUS CITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

RACIAL/ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHICS:



Statistics according to 2020 census data.

Mecklenburg County has several programs that may meet the needs of people with frequent jail contact. For example, the law enforcement-clinician co-responder program seeks to intercept people, including people with frequent jail contact, after the police have been called and before a mental health crisis can ensue. Upon arrest, a person may be diverted from regular court to the county’s Wellness Court, which serves as an intervention for people with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Within the county there are also peer-based services available, such as Freedom Fighting Missionaries and Promise Resource Network, that work closely with people involved with the legal system to help them navigate the system and get their needs met. These programs are located at Intercepts 0, 1, 3, and 4 of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM).



Abreu, D., Parker, T. W., Noether, C. D., Steadman, H. J., & Case, B. (2017). Revising the paradigm for jail diversion for people with mental and substance use disorders: Intercept 0. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 35(5-6), 380-395. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2300>
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“Housing, [affordability of] medications, addiction—definitely [those are the] top three [challenges faced by people using services at a county treatment center].”

JAIL BOOKINGS BY THE NUMBERS (2011 TO 2021)

- ▶ **253,802** bookings
- ▶ **91,363** people booked
- ▶ **33** is average the age at time of booking (range 16 to 88)
- ▶ **81%** of bookings were men
- ▶ **72%** of bookings were People of Color
- ▶ **3** is the median number of bookings among people booked more than once (project definition for “frequent jail contact”)



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[Lack of] housing causes disruptions, whether that be, because they lose their medication, they can't find their medication, or something else. A lot of times it's not just simply [that people] stop taking their medications. [It] is usually a whole lot of other factors, [like the person was at] the homeless shelter and kept [their medication] in [their] shoes. [They] would lose it [or it] got crushed. So, on paper, it looks like a lot of bad noncompliance, but when you really get to it it's more like housing instability.

KEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of People With Frequent Jail Contact

- ▶ People with frequent jail contact (i.e., 3 or more bookings during study period) represent approximately **half of bookings**



but only about **one fifth of people booked.**



- ▶ People of Color were twice as likely to have frequent jail contact than white people.

Sample Services for People With Frequent Jail Contact

- ▶ **Co-responder Program**
 - Team of one law enforcement person and one clinician
 - Prevents escalation during arrests
 - Attends to mental health needs during police contact
- ▶ **Wellness Court**
 - Serves people with SPMI
 - Uses Assertive Community Treatment
 - Helps achieve stability and abstinence from substance use
- ▶ **Freedom Fighting Missionaries**
 - Peer-lead non-profit
 - Serves people returning to community from jail or prison
 - Facilitates connection to services
- ▶ **Promise Resource Network**
 - Peer-lead non-profit
 - Focuses on recovery and crisis support
 - Offers a wide range of services (e.g., respite center, crisis warm-line, support groups)

Well. . .they suffer from what I call the trifecta. They have mental health [needs], they have substance [use], and they have a criminal background, you know. Then, more than likely, they're Black, right? And [with those three factors in play], it's just so much easier for the systems to just incarcerate that person.

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