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An Examination of Admissions, Discharges & the Population of the Cook County Jail, 2012

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Cook County Sheriff's Reentry Council Research Bulletin

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HIGHLIGHTS

- **The average daily population & admissions to the Cook County Jail increased 6% between 2011 and 2012, the first annual increase in 6 years (p. 1 & 3).**
- **Without the expansion of Electronic Monitoring for pre-trial supervision, the jail's average daily population in 2012 would have likely exceeded 10,000, and may have resulted in the U.S. Department of Justice seeking federal court intervention (p. 3).**
- **The characteristics of those admitted to the Cook County Jail in 2012 continued to consist primarily of African-American males between the ages of 21 and 30, from Chicago's south and west sides (p.4).**
- **The current charges against those admitted to the Cook County Jail were distributed across all crime categories, with violent crimes accounting for 29% of all admissions, followed by drug-law violations (26%), property offenses (18%), and driving-related offenses, including DUI (15%), Almost one out of every 8 (12%) individuals admitted to the jail were charged with domestic battery.**
- **Although only 29% of those admitted to the jail were currently charged with a violent crime, roughly 82% of those in the jail on any given day had one or more *prior* arrest for a violent crime (p. 5).**
- **A small proportion (21%) of all *individuals* admitted to the jail between 2007 and 2012 accounted for 50% of the 501,000 jail *admissions* during that period (p. 6).**
- **The length of stay in the jail for those discharged in 2012 continued to increase compared to previous years, translating into higher average daily jail populations (page 7).**

An Examination of Admissions, Discharges & the Population of the Cook County Jail, 2012

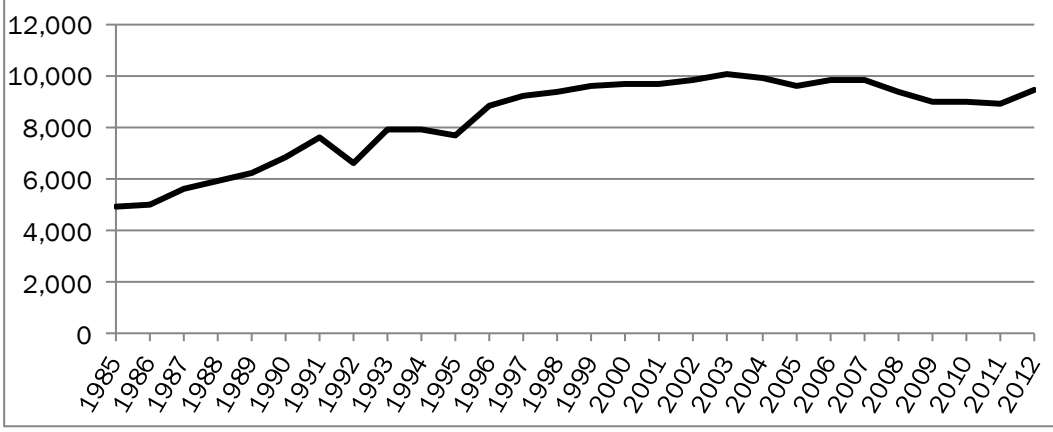
Introduction

The Cook County Department of Corrections (i.e., the Cook County Jail) is operated by the Cook County Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff Thomas Dart. In county fiscal year 2012, the Cook County Department of Corrections operating budget was $226 million, with roughly 89 percent of the budget going towards the salaries/benefits of more than 3,800 staff who work within the jail. This research bulletin provides a detailed examination of admissions to, and exits from, the jail in 2012. In addition, trends in the jail's average daily population (ADP) is also examined, along with analyses that describe the reasons for the fluctuations in the population on a month-to-month basis as well as over the past few years.

Situated on 96 acres on Chicago's southwest side, the Cook County Jail is one of the largest *single site* county jails in the United States based on both its daily population as well as its rated capacity. Based on 2011 data collected by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Cook County Jail housed a total of 9,658 inmates on June 30, 2011, just ahead of the 9,614 inmates detained in the second largest single site facility in the country, the Harris County Jail in Houston, TX (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012). Although the jail *systems* in New York and Los Angeles have more inmates— 12,283 and 14,193 on June 30, 2011, respectively—these jail systems are in *multiple sites* across their respective jurisdictions.

Since 1996, the annual average daily population (ADP) of the Cook County Jail has been between 8,000 and 10,000 inmates (Figure 1). In 2012, the ADP of 9,451 was 6 percent higher than in 2011, and represented the first year-to-year increase since the 2 percent increase between 2005 and 2006. Figure 1 also reveals that between 1985 and 2004, the jail's average daily population increased dramatically, but also experienced some short-term decreases, usually driven

Figure 1: Average Daily Population (ADP) of the Cook County Jail

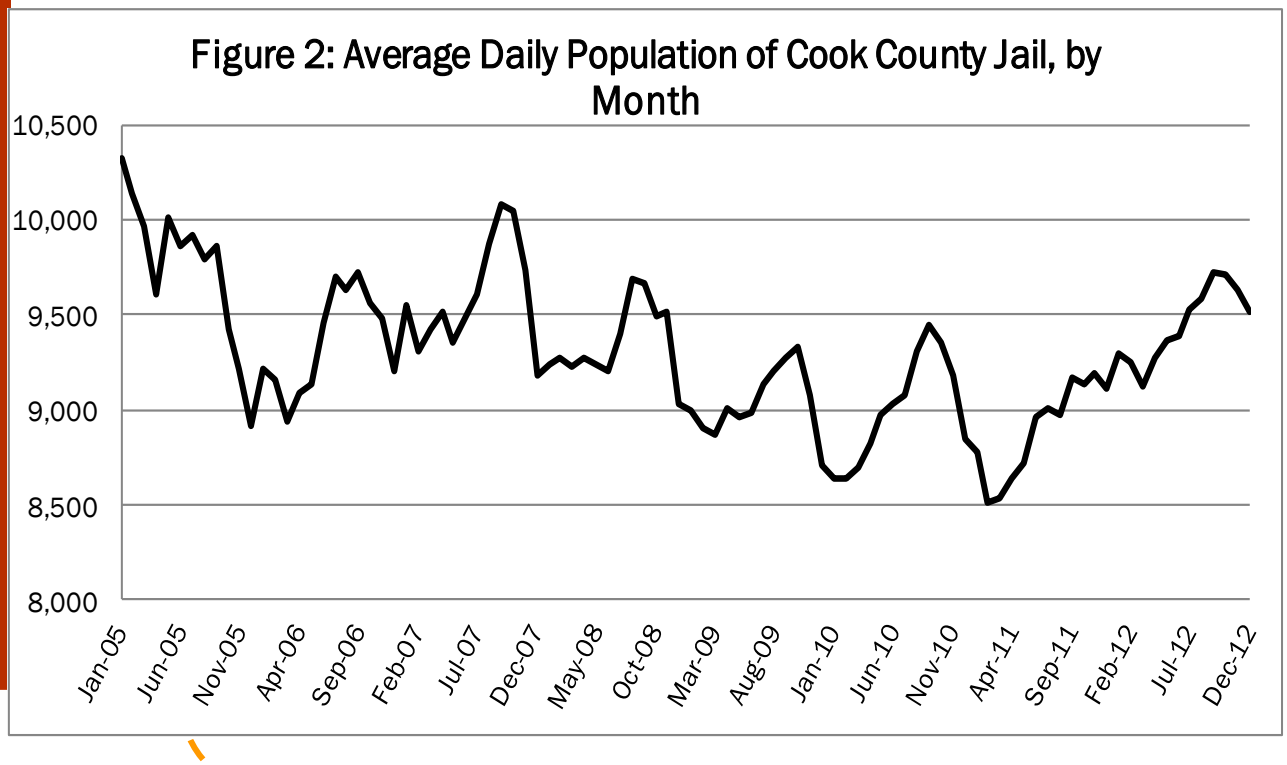


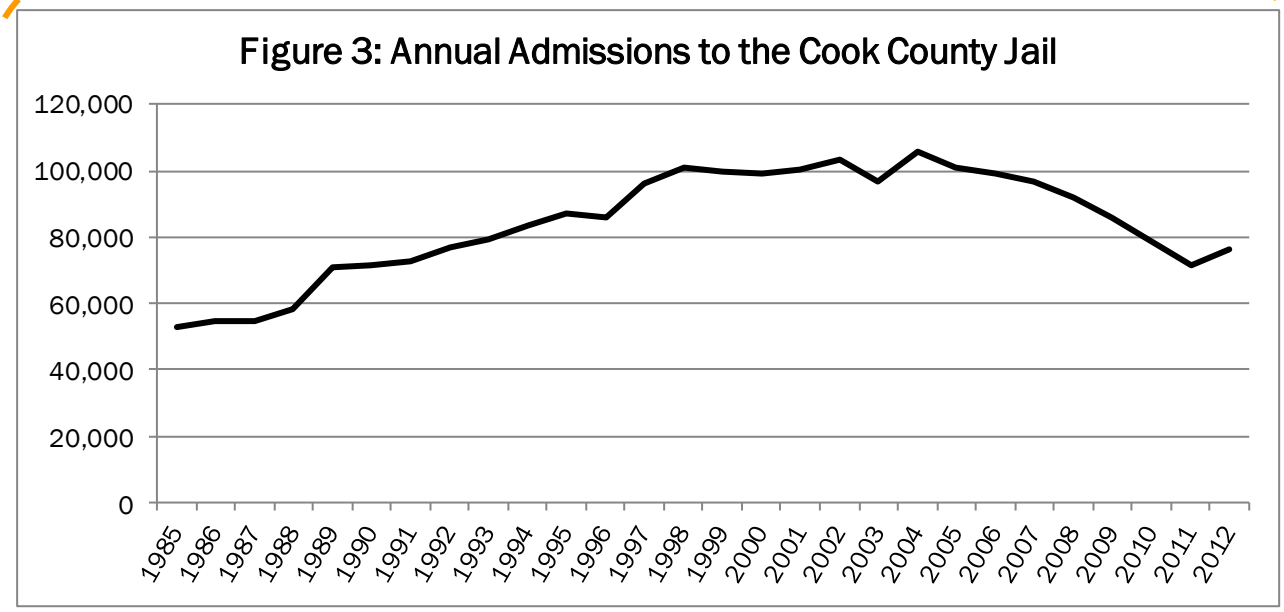
by the implementation of specific programs or policy changes within the Sheriff's Office, or decreases in criminal court case filings. For example, in 1992 and then again in 1995 the jail's average daily population fell, attributable to the implementation and expansion of an Electronic Monitoring (EM) program for pre-trial detainees and a Day Reporting Center (DRC) for pre-trial detainees. During these years there were also some decreases in felony or misdemeanor case filings. However, since 2004, much larger and more sustained decreases in felony and misdemeanor case filings have not translated into as large of a decrease in the jail's average daily population. For example, between 2007 and 2011 (the most recent publicly available court data), felony filings in Cook County decreased 17% and misdemeanor case filings fell 32% (Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, 2007 and 2011), but the jail's average daily population only decreased 9%. Data from the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court indicates that 2012 saw an increase in felony filings over the 2011 level.

Figure 2 (below) reveals how the jail's average daily population can fluctuate widely on a month-to-month basis, and also reveals a pattern of seasonality correlated with arrest patterns in Cook County, particularly in Chicago. Generally, the jail's average daily population reaches an annual peak during the August to October period, and the lowest average daily populations are seen during the February to March period. However, part of the reason for the higher average daily population of the jail in 2012 was the fact that the previously consistent pattern of dramatic decreases in the ADP between the Fall and Winter did not materialize this past year. Specifically, between September 2011 (September is usually the month with the highest ADP) and February 2012 (February is usually the month with the lowest ADP), the ADP actually *increased* 1 percent. By comparison, during the previous six years, the ADP *decreased* every year between September and February an average of 7 percent. Again, because the jail's population is driven primarily by admissions, it is possible that the unseasonably warm weather in February and March of 2012 resulted in a higher than normal amount of criminal activity and, more directly impacting jail admissions, an increase in arrests by police. This also meant that the jail's population began 2012 at a much higher level than what had been seen in previous years.

Impact of Expanded Use of Electronic Monitoring

In the Fall of 2011, there was a dramatic expansion in the use of Electronic Monitoring (EM) as a condition of pre-trial release, and it appears that the increased numbers of individuals placed on EM would have otherwise been admitted to the jail and been required to post bond or would have remained in jail until the disposition of their case. In other words, the extent and nature of the criminal history and current charges of those admitted to EM immediately following the expansion appeared to be similar to those being





placed on EM before the expansion. The average number of individuals placed on EM each month more than doubled to nearly 600 during the last few months of 2011, compared to monthly admissions that averaged between 200 and 250 prior to this most recent expansion. As a result, the average daily population of individuals on EM during 2012 was 1,132, compared to 636 during 2011 and 395 in 2010. In November 2012, EM placements began to decrease as a result of judicial orders that required individuals placed on EM to also post bail in order to be released, resulting in fewer jail detainees being released to EM. Despite this decreased use of EM towards the end of 2012, it is fair to say that without the increased use of EM during most of the year the jail's ADP during 2012 would have likely exceed 10,000 detainees. The current capacity of the Cook County Jail is 10,136, and under the current Agreed Order between the Cook County Sheriff's Office, Cook County, and the U.S. Department of Justice, if the jail's population exceeds that capacity and the Department of Justice determines this high population negatively impacts the ability to comply with the Agreed Order's provisions, the Department of Justice may seek intervention from the federal court.

In addition to operating the Cook County Jail, there are a number of other programs through which both pre-trial and sentenced individuals are under the custody of the Cook County Sheriff. Almost all of these individuals are initially admitted to the jail before being placed into these programs. As described above, among these programs is the Electronic Monitoring (EM) program that began in 1989, which had an ADP of 1,132 individuals in 2012, a Day Reporting Center (DRC), which opened in 1993 and had an ADP in 2012 of 188, and a Pre-Release Center (PRC) that provides residential substance abuse treatment to pre-trial and sentenced detainees, which had an ADP of 443 in 2012. Since 1997 the Sheriff has also operated the Vocational Rehabilitation Impact Center (VRIC), a sentencing alternative to traditional prison for adult males who meet the age and conviction offense eligibility criteria, and had an ADP of 191 inmates during 2012. Finally, the Sheriff's Women's Justice Program also provides an array of services and operates a number of programs for females under the custody of the Sheriff's Office, with a collective average daily population of 373 in 2012, including a residential treatment program within the jail, the Sheriff's Female Furlough Program, and a program for pregnant detainees.

In 2012, an average of 208 inmates were admitted to the Cook County Jail every day.

All told, the average daily population of adults *under the custody* of the Cook County Sheriff's Office in 2012 totaled 11,950, of which 9,451, or 80%, were physically incarcerated in the Cook County Jail.

Volume & Characteristics of Admissions to the Cook County Jail

In 2012, the Cook County Jail recorded a total of 76,398 admissions (Figure 3), 66,506 (87.1%) of which were male detainees and 9,880 (12.9%) were female detainees (Table 1). For the first time since 2002-2003, annual admissions to the jail increased, climbing by 4,737 individuals, or 6%, between 2011 and 2012. The number of admissions *per day* to the Cook County Jail in 2012 averaged 208, but ranged from fewer than 100 on some days to more than 360 on Friday, August 24th. Out of these total admissions

Table 1
Comparison of Male & Female Jail Admissions, 2012

	Males	Females	Total
Total Admissions	66,506	9,880	76,398
Percent	87.1%	12.9%	100.0%
Admissions per Individual During 2012			
1 Admission	82.0%	86.8%	82.8%
2 Admissions	13.9%	10.8%	13.5%
3 or More Admissions	4.1%	2.4%	3.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Avg. Daily Admissions	181	27	208
Race			
African American	67.3%	67.8%	67.3%
Caucasian	12.7%	19.7%	13.6%
Hispanic/Other	20.0%	12.5%	19.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average Age	32.5 Yrs	33.7 Yrs	32.7 Yrs
Age Distribution			
17-21 years old	19.5%	14.7%	18.9%
22-25 years old	16.3%	15.4%	16.1%
26-30 years old	16.2%	16.1%	16.2%
31-35 years old	12.7%	12.7%	12.7%
36-40 years old	9.6%	11.1%	9.8%
41-49 years old	14.9%	19.9%	15.6%
50 years old or older	10.8%	10.1%	10.7
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Marital Status			
Single	86.7%	90.9%	87.3%
Married	13.3%	9.1%	12.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Area of Cook County			
Chicago's North Side	8.3%	7.3%	8.2%
Chicago's South Side	33.1%	31.9%	32.9%
Chicago's West Side	21.1%	21.0%	21.1%
Chicago's Loop	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
Cook Outside Chicago	29.2%	30.7%	29.4%
Unknown	7.5%	8.2%	7.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

in 2012, many were accounted for by individuals who had been admitted multiple times during the year. Specifically, during 2012, there were 54,064 unique individual males and 8,509 unique individual females admitted to the jail. Thus, while the majority of individuals, 82% of males and almost 86.8% of females, entered the jail only once during 2012, 13.9% of males and 10.8% of females entered the jail *twice*, and 4.1% and 2.4% respectively, entered *three or more times* during 2012 (Table 1). Thus, there were more than 9,700 individual males, and nearly 1,100 females, admitted to the jail multiple times during 2012 (Table 1).

The typical inmate admitted to, and discharged from, the Cook County Jail is a single, African American male from Chicago averaging 32 years-old at admission. Among those admitted to the Cook County Jail in 2012, the majority (67%) were African-American, followed by Hispanics (19%) and whites (14%). Although the average age of those admitted to the jail was roughly 32 years old, nearly one in five (18.9%) were between 17 and 21 years old, and just over 10% were 50 or older (Table 1). Large proportions of those admitted to the jail came from Chicago's south (32.9%) or west (21.1%) sides. Finally, among those admitted to the Cook County Jail in 2012, the majority (87.3%) were single/not married, whereas only 12.7% were married.

Table 1 also illustrates some of the differences in the characteristics of male and female admissions to the jail. In recognition of the different needs of females processed through the Cook County Jail, in 1999 the Cook County Sheriff's Office created the Department of Women's Justice Services (DWJS), which provides enhanced services to women in the jail as well as those released from the jail but still under the custody of the Sheriff's Office. During 2012, the 9,880 females admitted to the Cook County Jail accounted for 12.9% (Table 1) of all admissions to the jail—a proportion of admissions that has been consistent over the past few years. Other than differences in the sheer volume of admissions into the jail, male and female admissions to the jail were only slightly different in terms of their age, race, marital status and area of Cook County they were from (Table 1). For example, the average age of females admitted in 2012 was 33.7 years old, compared to an average of 32.5 years old for males admitted to the jail. The youngest inmates (male and female) admitted to the jail was 17 (the minimum age of an adult in Illinois' justice system), while the oldest female admitted in 2012 was 79 years old, and the oldest male admitted was 84. Some slight differences were evident when the race of male and female detainees was compared, with roughly two-thirds of both males and females

Table 2: 2011 and 2012 Admissions by Current Offense Type, with Top 4 in Each Category Identified

Type of offense	2011	2012	% Change '11-'12	% of 2012 Total
Violent	**20,567**	**22,201**	**7.9%**	**29.10%**
Domestic Battery	9,108	9,370	2.9%	12.3%
UUW by Felon	1,445	1,420	-1.7%	1.9%
Aggravated UUW	1,377	1,478	7.3%	1.9%
Armed Robbery	646	765	18.4%	1.0%
Property	**12,790**	**14,016**	**9.6%**	**18.3%**
Retail Theft	3,484	3,578	2.7%	4.7%
Burglary	1,751	1,721	-1.7%	2.3%
Theft	1,554	2,501	60.9%	3.3%
Residential Burglary	1,020	1,077	5.6%	1.4%
Drug-Law Violations	**19,238**	**20,168**	**4.8%**	**26.4%**
Poss. of Cont. Subs.	12,066	12,667	4.9%	16.6%
Man/Del of Cont. Subs.	3,109	2,802	-9.9%	3.7%
Poss. of Cannabis	2,532	2,620	3.5%	3.4%
Man/Del Cannabis	1,018	1,278	25.5%	1.7%
DUI/Traffic	**11,022**	**12,502**	**13.4%**	**16.4%**
Driving with Suspended license	6,555	6,983	6.5%	9.1%
DUI	3,556	3,889	9.4%	5.1%
Agg. DUI	366	778	112.6%	1.0%
Agg. Fleeing an officer	222	221	-0.5%	0.3%
Sex	**1,578**	**1,685**	**6.8%**	**2.2%**
Prostitution	680	764	12.4%	1.0%
Failure to register as a sex-offender	216	202	-6.5%	0.3%
Agg. Criminal Sexual Assault	140	197	40.7%	0.3%
Failure to report change of address,sex offender	119	126	5.9%	0.2%
Other	**4,706**	**4,251**	**-9.7%**	**5.6%**
Interference with a public officer	652	678	3.9%	0.9%
Disorderly Conduct	275	305	10.9%	0.4%
Pedestrian soliciting rides	132	74	-43.9%	0.1%
Obscene harassment	102	135	32.4%	0.2%
Unknown	**1,762**	**1,574**	**-10.7%**	**2.1%**
Total	**71,663**	**76,398**	**6.6%**	**100%**

accounted for by African-Americans, but a smaller proportion of females accounted for by Hispanics (12.5%) than male detainees (20.0%), and a larger proportion of females were accounted for by whites (19.7%) than among males (12.7%).

Although not presented in tabular form, more substantive differences were noted between female and male jail admissions when the most serious current criminal charges were compared, with males being slightly more likely than females to be admitted for violent crimes (29.7% versus 24.5% , respectively), traffic offenses (16.8% versus 13.4%, respectively), and for drug-law violations (27.0% and 22.6%, respectively). On the other hand, women were *more likely* than men to be admitted to the jail for property crimes (23.3% versus 17.6%, respectively) and sex offenses, which include prostitution, at 7.4% versus 1.4%, respectively.

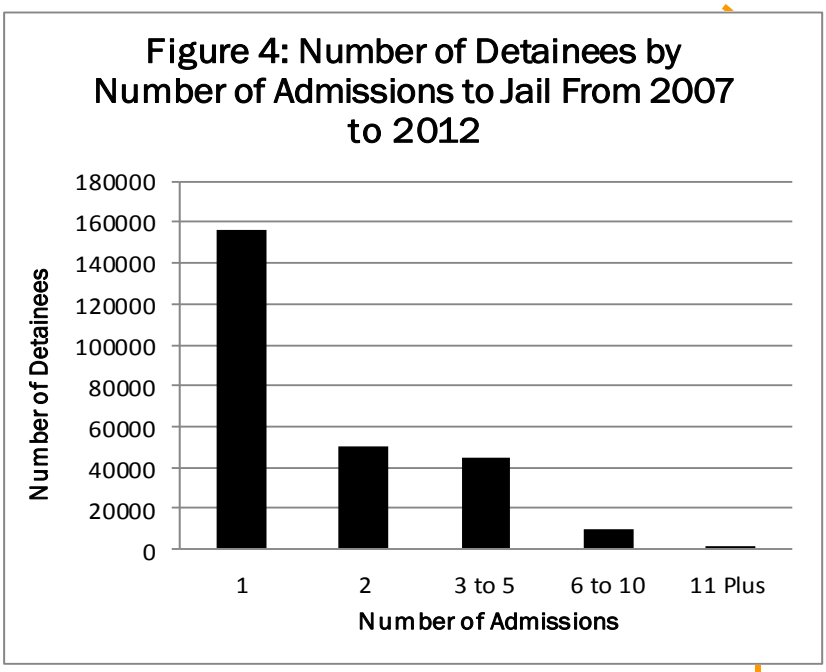
Current Criminal Charges Among Jail Admissions

Table 2 summarizes the nature of the criminal charges associated with admissions to the jail during 2012, and how those have changed since 2011. Presented in Table 2 are the number of admissions based on general crime categories (violent, property, drug-law violations, DUI/traffic, sex offenses, and "other"), as well as the four most frequent sub-categories of offenses within these groupings. These crime categories are based on the most serious *current* criminal charge for the detainee, and does not take into account the prior criminal history of the individual. For example, among those under the custody of the Sheriff on September 7, 2012, the average total number of prior arrests for all offenses was 25, and roughly 82% had one or more *prior* arrests for a violent crime.

The single largest general category of admissions to the jail in 2012 were accounted for by those charged with violent crimes (29.1%) (Table 2), followed closely by drug-law violations (26.4%), property offenses (18.3%), traffic/driving under the influence of alcohol (16.4%), and other types of offenses (5.6%). Only 2.2% of admissions to the jail were for sex crimes, which include prostitution offenses as well as sexual assault and abuse cases. Also summarized in Table 2 are the changes between 2011 and 2012 in the number of admissions across these offense categories, and the percent change in the numbers. For the most part, increases were evident across almost all of the general crime categories as well as most of the specific subcategories of offenses. It should be noted that some of the percent changes are based on relatively small numbers, so caution should be made when examining the percent change between 2011 and 2012 among the specific crime categories. The general crime category that saw the largest percent increase in admissions was DUI/traffic offenses, which increased more

than 13% between 2011 and 2012, followed by property crimes, which jumped 9.6%, violent offenses, climbing almost 8% between 2011 and 2012, and drug-law violations, which increased 4.8% during that time period.

When the current criminal charges were disaggregated and looked at more closely (Table 2), it can be seen that domestic battery charges accounted for 12.7% of ***all*** admissions to the jail in 2012, and 42.2% of admissions involving ***violent charges***. The next single largest subgroup of admissions were those charged with possession of a controlled substance, which *excludes* offenses involving cannabis/marijuana. In 2012, there were 12,667 admissions for possession of a controlled substance, accounting for 16.6% of ***all*** admissions and 5.5% more than in 2011.



Multiple Admissions to the Jail, 2007-2012

One aspect of jail populations that is recognized as particularly challenging is the significant number of individuals who cycle in and out of jail systems multiple times in relatively short periods of time. Oftentimes these individuals have mental health issues and may be homeless, but they are also charged with minor crimes that result in charges being dropped and short jail stays. To provide some perspective on the frequent users of the jail, analyses were performed to determine the prevalence of this problem. Overall, there was 501,432 admissions to the Cook County Jail from 2007 to 2012, but these admissions were accounted for by "only" 262,734 individual detainees. In other words, on average, every individual detainee admitted to the jail from 2007 to 2012 was admitted nearly two separate times. However, as illustrated in Figure 3, of these 262,734 individual detainees, 156,631 (60%) were admitted only once, 50,173 (19.1%) were admitted twice, 45,162 (17.2%) were admitted 3 to 5 times, 9,865 (3.8%) were admitted 6 to 10 times, and 903 (0.3%) individuals were admitted 11 times or more. Looked at another way, 21% of the *individuals* admitted to the jail between 2007 and 2011 accounted for 50% of all the *admissions* to the jail during that period.

Discharges/Exits from the Cook County Jail

A total of 76,080 discharges/exits from the Cook County Jail occurred in 2012, and as with admissions, many individuals exited the jail multiple times during 2012. Specifically, the 76,080 exits were accounted for by 64,423 unique individuals. Detainees are discharged from the jail for one of four general reasons: 1) they post the necessary bail ordered by a judge to obtain their release prior to trial (accounting for 32.0% of the 2012 discharges), 2) they stay in the jail until their criminal case results in their conviction and sentencing to prison, probation or supervision (accounting for 31.8% of all discharges), 3) they stay in the jail until the charges in their criminal case are dropped (15.9% of discharges) or they are found not guilty (0.5%), or 4) they are sentenced to the jail as a result of their conviction, and are released once the jail sentence has been served (14.3% of discharges).

Time Served Among Jail Exits

The length of time inmates spend in the Cook County Jail varies widely, and is influenced primarily by the mechanism by which they are released from the jail, such as posting bail or being detained until their criminal case reaches its conclusion. If more defendants remain in jail until their case is disposed of, that will result in longer lengths of stay and contribute to the jail's average daily population. Similarly, if detainees spend longer in the jail awaiting the disposition of their case, or it takes longer for them to post bail for their release, that too will impact the jail's population. Thus, when attempting to examine and understand the length of time served among those released from the jail it is important to not only take into account the means by which they were released, but also, due to the statistical patterns in these data, it is necessary to use multiple statistical measures of time served, such as the arithmetic average (mean), the median, and the proportion that serve relatively short or long periods of incarceration. For example, among *all* of those released from the Cook County Jail in 2012, the

Table 3
Comparison of Time Served (Days) in the Cook County Jail Among 2007, 2011 & 2012 Discharges

	Percent of all Discharges			Average (Mean) Number of Days in Jail			Median Number of Days in Jail			Percent of Discharges that spent 2 days or Less in jail		
	2007	2011	2012	2007	2011	2012	2007	2011	2012	2007	2011	2012
Total	100%	100%	100%	47.9	54.1	57.0	11	12	12	28.3%	24.5%	24.9%
Posted Bond	35.8%	32.5%	32.0%	9.8	12.9	13.4	1	2	1	64.4%	57.0%	59.4%
Sentenced to Prison	17.8%	18.8%	19.1%	140.3	153.3	161.3	64	67.5	78	2.8%	5.5%	5.5%
Sentenced to Probation/ Supervision	11.1%	11.6%	12.7%	52.8	56.7	61.6	30	27	34	8.3%	7.7%	6.8%
Time Served	6.5%	6.7%	6.3%	60.6	58.6	63.5	9	12	11	11.3%	12.1%	13.0%
Sentence Expired	8.3%	8.0%	8.0%	27.9	32.7	33.2	12	13	13	14.4%	15.7%	15.5%
Charges Dropped	14.1%	15.0%	15.9%	26.2	25.4	25.6	18	17	16	2.9%	3.5%	4.4%
Not Convicted	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	253.7	285.4	279.8	182	203.5	209	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%

average length of time served was 57.0 days, whereas the median revealed that one-half of detainees spent 12 days or less in the jail and one-half spent more than 12 days in the jail (Table 3). Looking at time served another way, 18,912 (or 24.9% of all releasees) spent 2 days or less in the jail (Table 3), while 2,496 (3.3% of all releasees) spent more than one year in the jail. Finally, since the average daily population of correctional facilities is driven by changes in admissions, exits ***and*** lengths of stay**,** in order to better understand why trends in the jail's average daily population have differed from admissions between 2007 and 2012, it is important to determine how changes in the length of stay among jail detainees might explain these patterns of admissions and ADP.

Overall, the average length of stay in the Cook County Jail *increased* 19% between 2007 and 2012, climbing from an average (mean) of 47.9 days to 57.0 days in 2012, or an average of 9.1 more days per detainee. Because the average can be inflated as a result of cases with exceedingly high lengths of stay, it is also important to examine the *median* time spent in the jail, which increased from 11 to 12 days between 2007 and 2012. In terms of the most recent year-to-year comparison, the overall average length of stay increased 5 percent between 2011 and 2012, from an average of 54.1 to 57.0 days. While an increase in the average time served of 2.9 days per detainee between 2011 and 2012 does not seem like a dramatic change, when this small change is multiplied by the 76,080 inmates discharged in 2012, those additional 2.9 days per inmate translates to a total of 220,632 additional jail days (2.9 X 76,080), or an *addition* of 604 inmates to the jail's average daily population (220,632 additional days of incarceration/365 days in a year). Looked at another way, if the length of stay in the Cook County Jail in 2012 was the same as it was in 2011, the average daily population of the Cook County Jail in 2012 *would have been* 8,846, or roughly the same as 2011 *despite* the increased admissions between 2011 and 2012.

Between 2007 & 2012, the average number of days inmates spent in the Cook County Jail increased, and translated into 1,897 more inmates in the average daily population.

As would be expected, the length of time spent in the Cook County Jail varies depending on the means by which detainees were discharged (Table 3). Those who are released because they posted the necessary bail generally stay in the jail for a much shorter period of time than did those who remained until they are convicted and sentenced to prison. However, for the most part, increases in the average number of days in jail were seen across all types of discharges from the jail between 2011 and 2012, and each has different implications and possible explanations. For example, among those released from the jail because they posted bail (which accounts for about one-third of discharges from the jail each year), the average time in the jail increased from 12.9 days in 2011 to 13.4 days in 2012, and even larger increases were seen between 2007 and 2012 (Table 3). This increase could be due to it taking longer for family members to come up with

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In order to support research, evaluation and planning efforts for the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff's Office entered into a cooperative agreement with Loyola University Chicago to support the development of an enhanced research capacity. Under the agreement, Dr. David Olson, Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Loyola, and Loyola Graduate Research Assistant Koert Huddle, have developed datasets and protocols to support research and evaluation efforts, performed research and analyses to support program and policy development and evaluations, and established stronger ties between the academic community interested in conducting applied research and the Cook County Sheriff's Office. Staff from the Sheriff's Office, including Policy Advisor Margaret Egan, Lieutenant Larry Gavin in the Sheriff's Information Technology Unit, and Officers Marie Ruzanski and Kimberly Harris have provided extensive support in obtaining data needed to perform these activities and analyses.

the necessary cash to post a defendant's bail, higher bond amounts, or both. Again, an average increase of 3.6 days between 2007 and 2012 may not seem like much, but when multiplied by the 24,345 released on bond translates into an increase in the average daily population of 240 inmates specifically because of this longer time to post cash bond.

Similarly, among those released from the jail because they were convicted and sentenced to the Illinois Department of Corrections, the time in the jail increased from an average of 140 days in 2007 to an average of 161 days in 2012. This could be due to longer court processing times because of more complex cases, fewer resources available in the courtrooms to process cases, more people staying in jail before they are convicted and sentenced to prison because they could not post bond, or all these factors. Among those sentenced to prison, there is some indication that the felony classes of the crimes that resulted in a prison sentence from Cook County have gotten slightly more serious between 2007 and 2012. Specifically, 21% of those sentenced to prison from Cook County during state fiscal year (SFY) 2007 were convicted of Murder, a Class X felony, or a Class 1 felony (the 3 most serious types of felony offenses in Illinois). By SFY 2012, these three levels of felony offenses accounted for 24% of those sentenced to prison from Cook County.

Among those who remained under the custody of the Sheriff until they were convicted and sentenced to probation/supervision (more than 9,500 in 2012), the length of time in custody also increased between 2007 and 2012, averaging 61.6 days among the 2012 discharges. Among detainees released from the jail because the charges against them were dropped, which accounted for 12,081 of the 76,080 exits in 2012, the average time spent in the jail actually decreased slightly between 2007 and 2012, from 26.2 days to 25.6 days , respectively.

Conclusions

The information presented in this *Research Bulletin* illustrates a number of the challenges that face not only the Cook County Sheriff's Office, but the criminal courts in Cook County as well. First, the jail must effectively, efficiently, and safely admit and house an extremely large volume of inmates, with more than 200 inmates admitted per day, and operate a jail with an average daily population that exceeded 9,400 inmates during 2012, and exceeded 9,700 in September and October. Further, those under the custody of the Sheriff on any given day also have extensive criminal histories, including prior arrests for crimes of violence. Between 2011 and 2012, admissions to the jail increased 6%, with increases seen across almost every crime type. Compounding the increase in admissions to the jail, most likely due to increased arrests by the police, was the fact that the average length of stay in the jail has also continued to increase. Although the increase in the average length of stay between 2011 and 2012 may appear to be small—an increase of 2.9 days per inmate—when this increase is applied to the more than 76,000 detainees discharged, it equates to an increase in the ADP of 604 detainees. While the expansion of EM as a tool for pre-trial release helped the Sheriff and County avoid violating provisions of the Agreed Order during 2012, strategies to address the increased lengths of stay, particularly for those who post bond, have their charges dropped, or end up being convicted and then placed back in the community on probation or supervision, need to continue to be developed and implemented to prevent further crowding at the jail.

References

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