

Improving Mental Health in Oklahoma's Jails

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Overview

- The necessity of mental health treatment and diversion services
- Improving training, quality, and availability of mental health treatment in jails
- Improving Oklahoma's pretrial release process



Jails should not be the default option for mental health treatment in Oklahoma



Oklahomans need, but can't access, mental health care

Rank

Contributing Factor

47

Adult Mental Health

1 in 5 had Substance Use Disorder in past year

39

Youth Mental Health

Over half did not receive needed care for Major Depressive Episode

39

Access to Care

1 in 3 adults experiencing frequent mental distress couldn't afford care

Source: *The State of Mental Health in America 2024*, Mental Health America



Treatment improves public safety and saves tax dollars

- Untreated mental illness can result in behaviors leading to law enforcement intervention
- Mental health treatment reduces:
 - Risk or severity of future health crises
 - Burden on first responders, hospitals, and jails
 - Tax dollars spent on jail and covering uncompensated emergency care



Diversion is effective but still limited

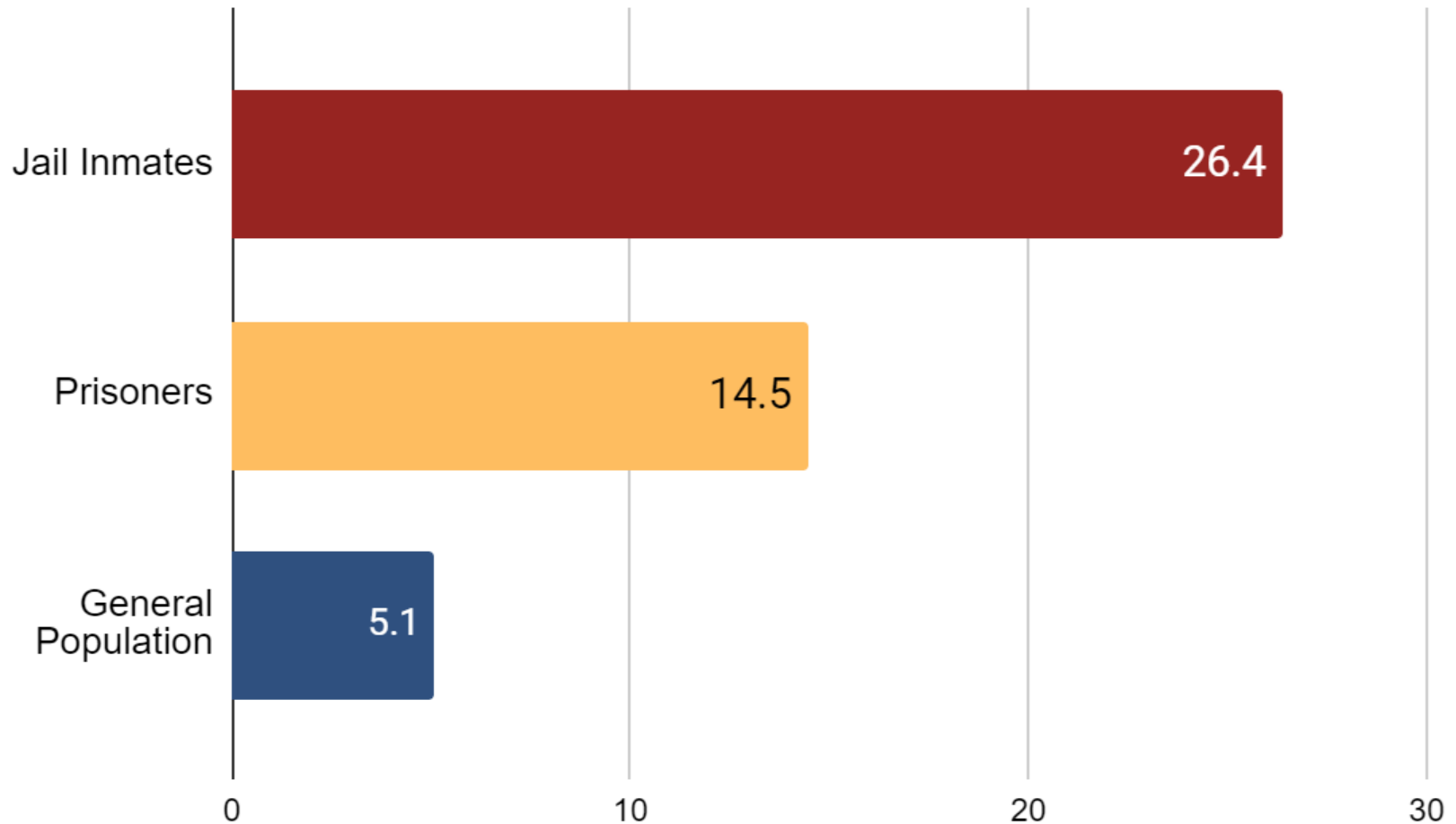
- Diversion provides needed treatment and services, and reduces recidivism
- Statute only requires immediate diversion from jail for “Persons Requiring Treatment”
- Expanding diversion options will improve mental health outcomes and reduce jail populations



Outdated standards and long stays threaten mental health



Jail inmates experience Serious Psychological Distress at higher rates than prisoners and the general public



Source: Oklahoma Policy Institute analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics Data; *Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12*

Percent



Oklahoma's low jail standards leave people vulnerable

- Oklahoma statute does not require:
 - Evidence-based mental health screening on intake
 - Specific mental health training for jail staff
 - Immediate treatment for illnesses incurred before arrest
- Jails often lack resources and facilities required for prisons



A snapshot of Oklahoma County Detention Center on October 23, 2024

1520 People

**4 in 5 Held
Pretrial**

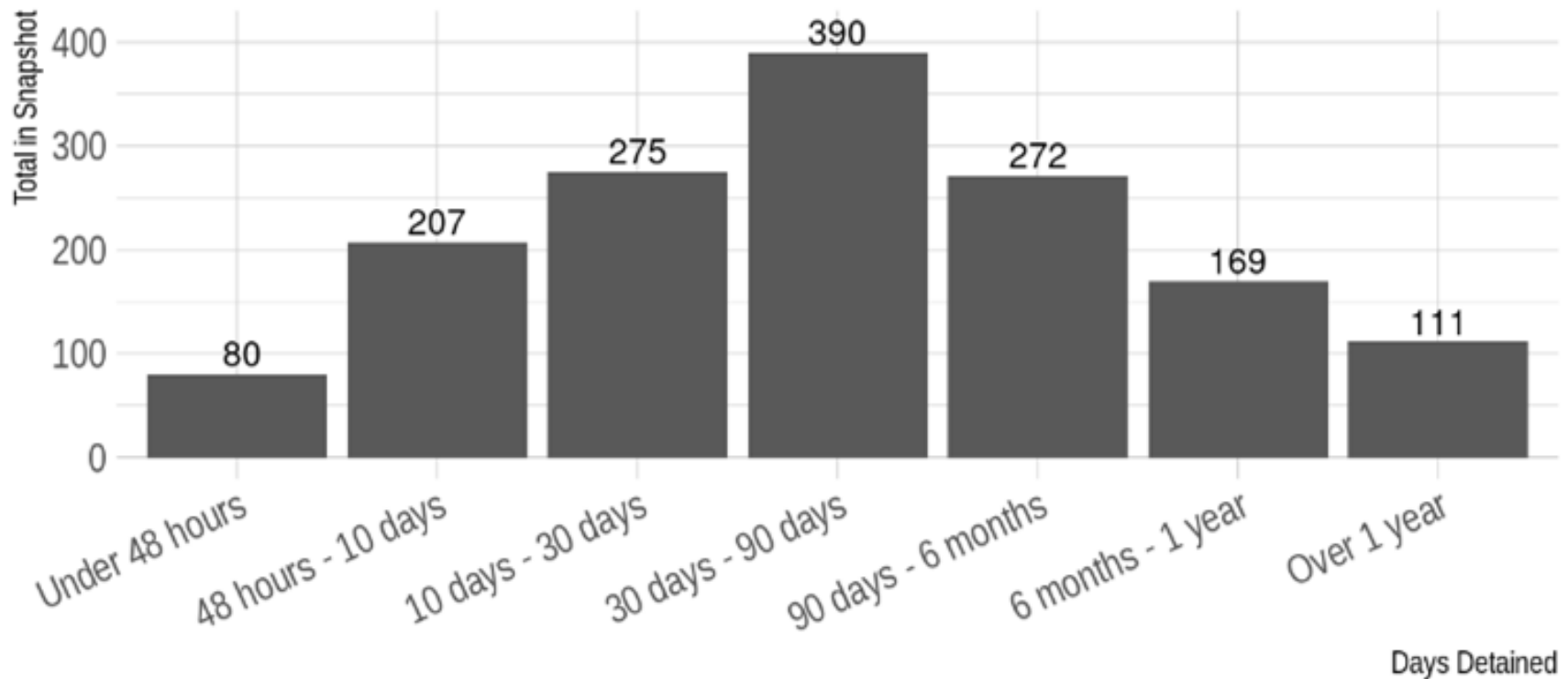
2 in 5 Black

**Average Detention is
114 days**

Snapshot of OCDC population on October 23, 2024.
Source: OCDC 'jailtracker' system; analysis by Oklahoma Policy Institute



Most Oklahoma County Detention Center inmates have spent more than a month in jail



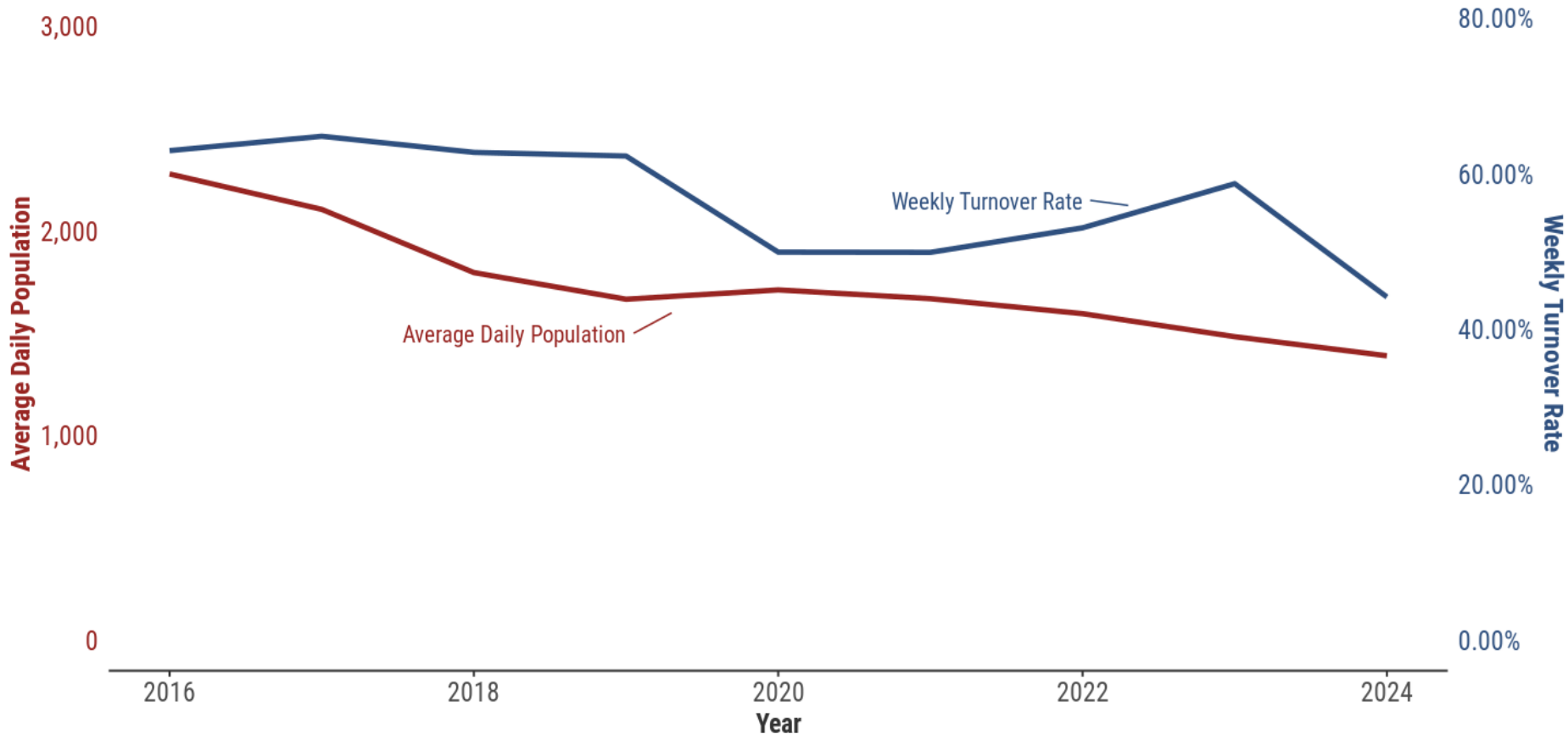
Snapshot of OCDC population on October 23, 2024.

Source: OCDC 'jailtracker' system; analysis by Oklahoma Policy Institute



The population at Oklahoma County's jail has fallen, and the turnover rate has slowed.

**Average Daily Population and Weekly Turnover Rate
Oklahoma County Detention Center 2016 - 2024**



Source: OCDC 'Jailtracker' System
Analysis by Oklahoma Policy Institute
See <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/ji22st.pdf> Table 12
2024 data is only complete through the end of September



Oklahoma's pretrial release system keeps people in jail

- Pretrial release is often unavailable to individuals with low incomes
- Denial of release prolongs stressors associated with incarceration in jail:
 - Separation from family
 - Loss on income
 - Loss of autonomy
 - Fear
 - Violence



Solutions



Oklahoma must...

- Continue expanding access to mental health treatment and diversion services
- Modernize training, quality, and availability of mental health treatment in jails
- Develop effective and equitable pretrial release systems



Questions?

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