

Research & Planning

Exploratory Study of the County Jail Population:

HIGHLIGHTS

(Working Draft)

Prepared for:
Corrections Task Force, Criminal Justice Commission

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Introduction:

The purpose of this exploratory study is to review the data maintained by the Corrections Bureau, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office inmate database Incarceration Inmate Management and Cost Recovery System (IMACS). It is our hope that the dissemination of these findings will generate discussion and interest so that we may improve and enhance the type of information we provide to support policy and program development. More specifically, these data were developed to inform the policy discussions of the Corrections Task Force, Alternatives to Incarcerations Committee and were recently used by the Re-Entry Committee to submit a federal grant application in late April 2009.

Method

The following findings are based on an extract from the IMACS Charge Information Table based on "bookings" that occurred between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2008. The date of extract is April 21, 2009, 14:00:00.

These data were then aggregated to calculate the number of unique admissions and inmates that entered the County jail during the above noted period. It is important to note that these data do not include inmates that were already in the jail as of January 1, 2005 when examining the four year cohort of admissions and inmates. When examining the number of days in custody, readers should know that these lengths are calculated using "booking date & time (hh:mm:ss)" along with "release date & time (hh:mm:ss)" expressed in days.

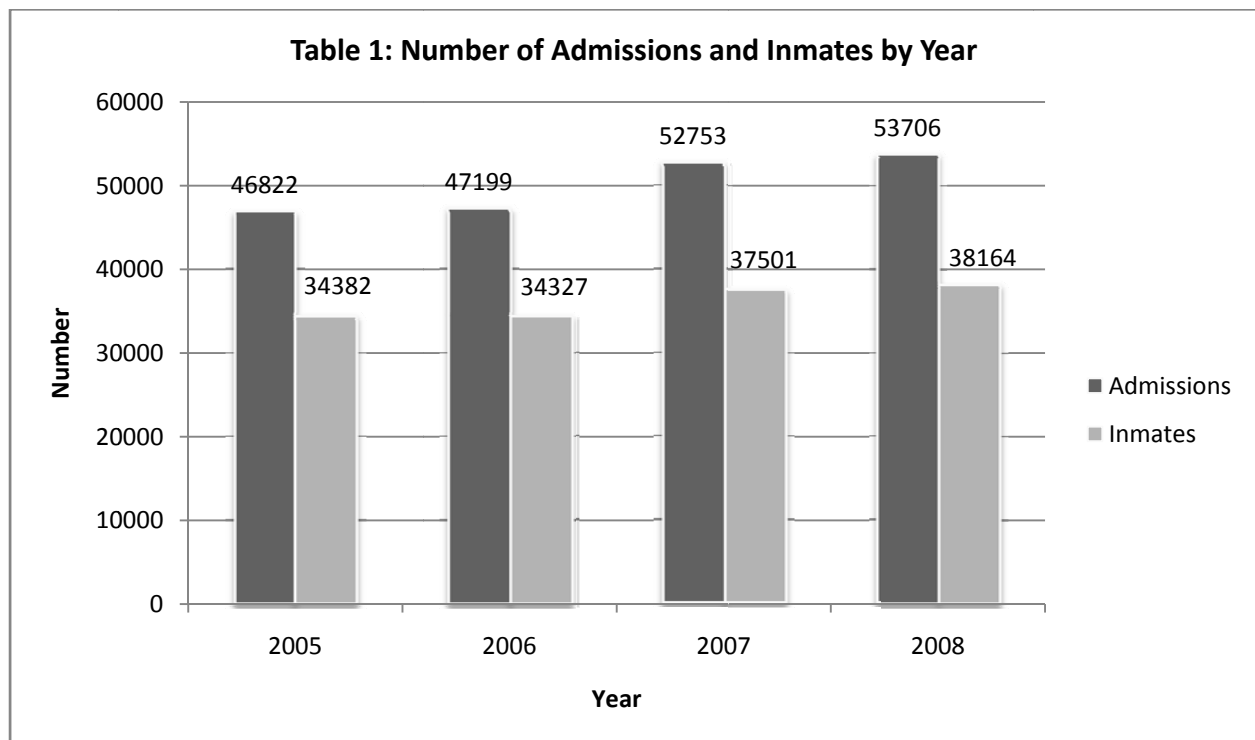
Readers should also be aware that the Research and Planning Unit has used the jail data to derive new variables. For example, using the Inmate Id Number, Booking Date and Booking Time, we derived the variable Admission by aggregating the individual booking records reported by the Corrections Bureau. As a result, the statistics noted below may not match exactly the operational data maintained by the Corrections Bureau, as these data include the derived variables and the dataset is "frozen" as of the date of extract. Lastly, the research dataset will also exclude data that appear invalid, such as release dates occurring before the booking date. Admissions involving Criminal Registrants are not included in these data. Regardless, these data are an important part of better understanding the jail population characteristics and activities.

The Research and Planning Unit welcomes your input, so please do not hesitate to contact us at (561) 355-4943 or CJCRPU@pbcgov.org.

Findings

Admissions

Between 2005 and 2008, there were approximately 200,480 admissions into the County jail, involving approximately 100,302 unique inmates. The following chart illustrates the number of admissions and inmates admitted into the County jail over the last four years.

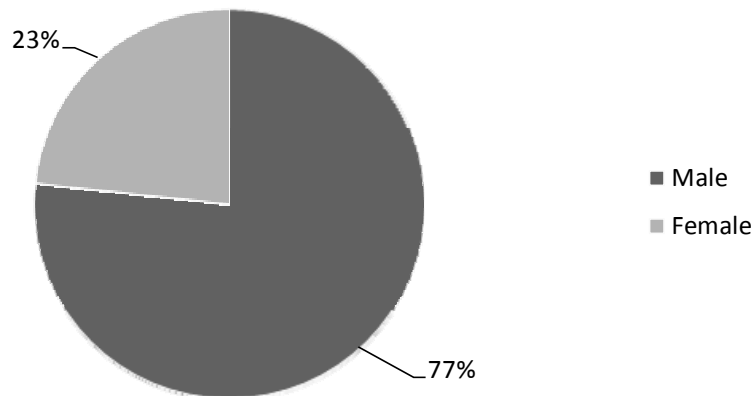


The total number of inmates in the above graph (144,374) is more than the reported number above; as some inmates were admitted into the County jail more than once over the four year period for committing new offenses or for violating conditions of their pre-trial release or probation sentence.

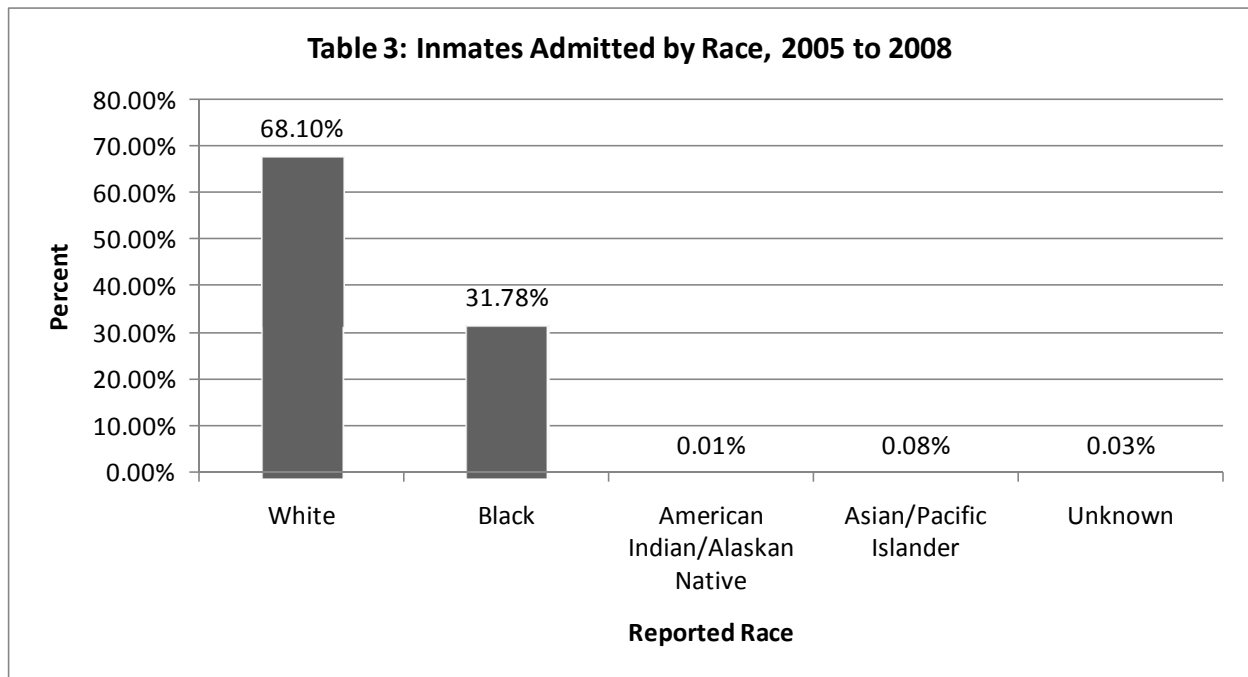
Inmate Characteristics

We also examined the sex, race, and age group of individuals admitted into the county jail. Understanding the characteristics of the jail population may benefit those who operate the jail as well as those who may want to implement programs or policies targeting a specific population. The majority of inmates entering the county jail are male (76,916), while almost 23% were female (23,362).

Table 2: Sex of Inmates Admitted, 2005 to 2008

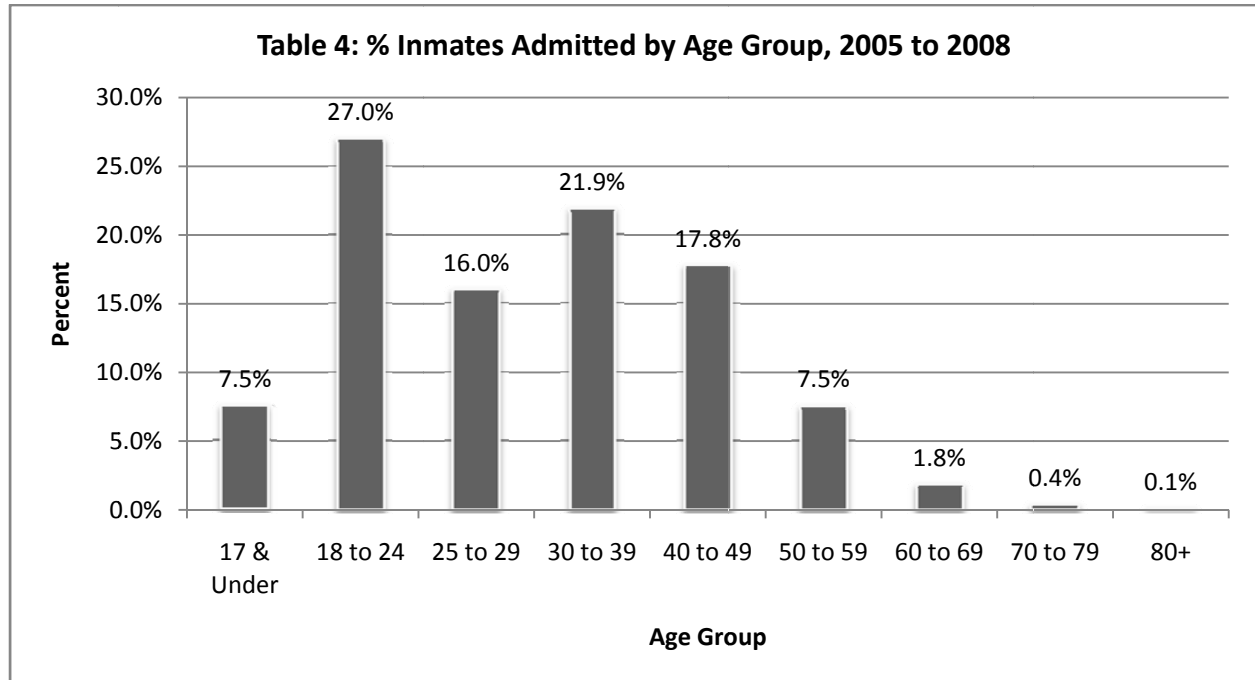


The following chart shows that the majority of inmates admitted into the jail are reported as White (68,306) between 2005 and 2008. In comparison, approximately 32% of the inmates were reported as Black (31,877). The remaining race categories were virtually unreported when compared to White and Black.



The above graph suggests that Blacks appear to be overrepresented in the inmate population as Blacks make up roughly 13% of the population in Palm Beach County. We also examined the variable "language spoken" to further explore the ethnic makeup of inmates admitted to the county jail between 2005 and 2008. Regrettably, this variable is not as robust as Race; however, we found that when language spoken was reported, it showed that 84% of the inmates reported speaking Spanish, and 10% reported speaking Creole.

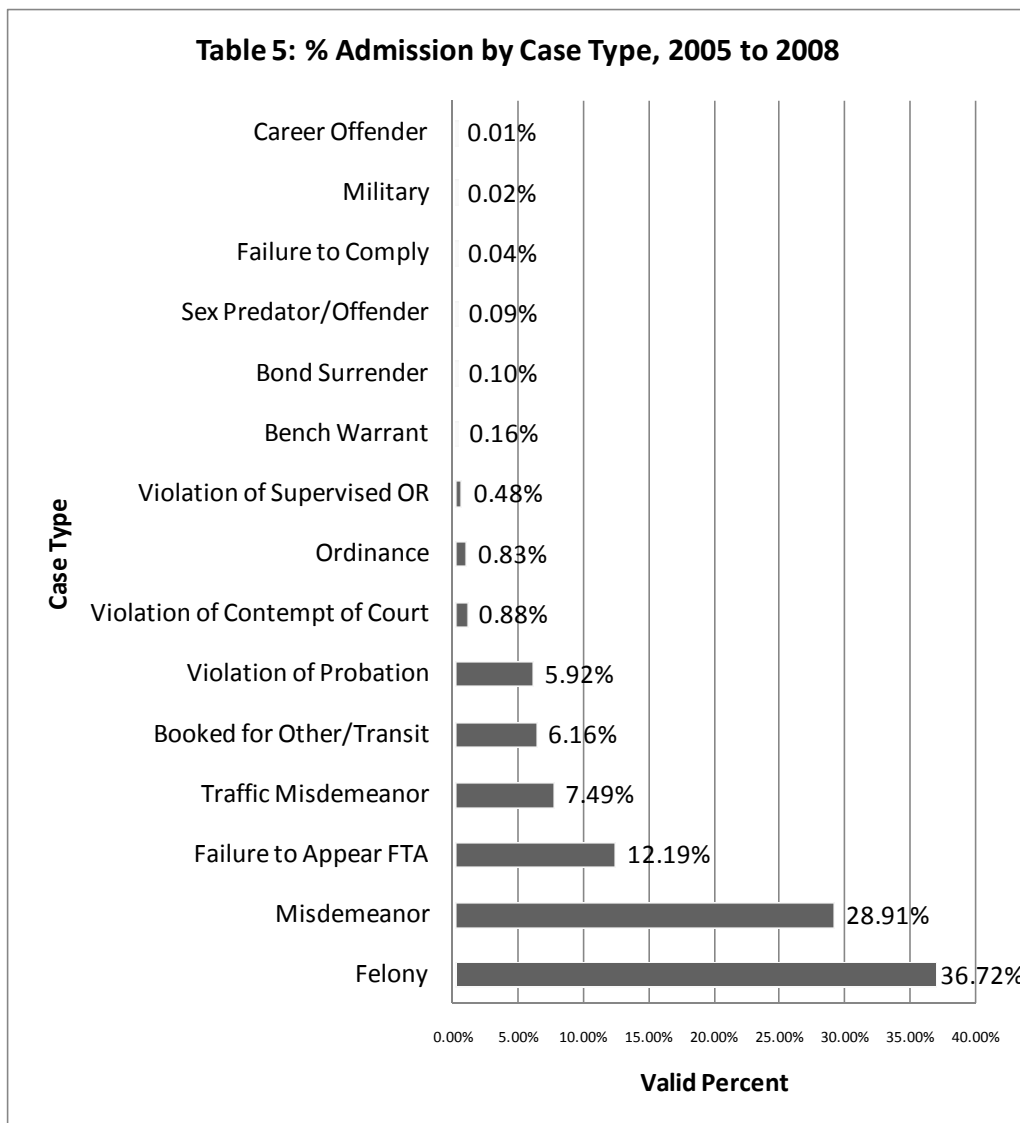
Not surprising the 18 to 24 year old age group reported the highest number of inmates admitted into the county jail between 2005 and 2008. This reflects scholarly works which show this group to be the most criminogenic, when compared to other age groups. Furthermore, the graph supports the overall trend that as an individual grows older they tend to “age out of crime.”



Admissions Characteristics

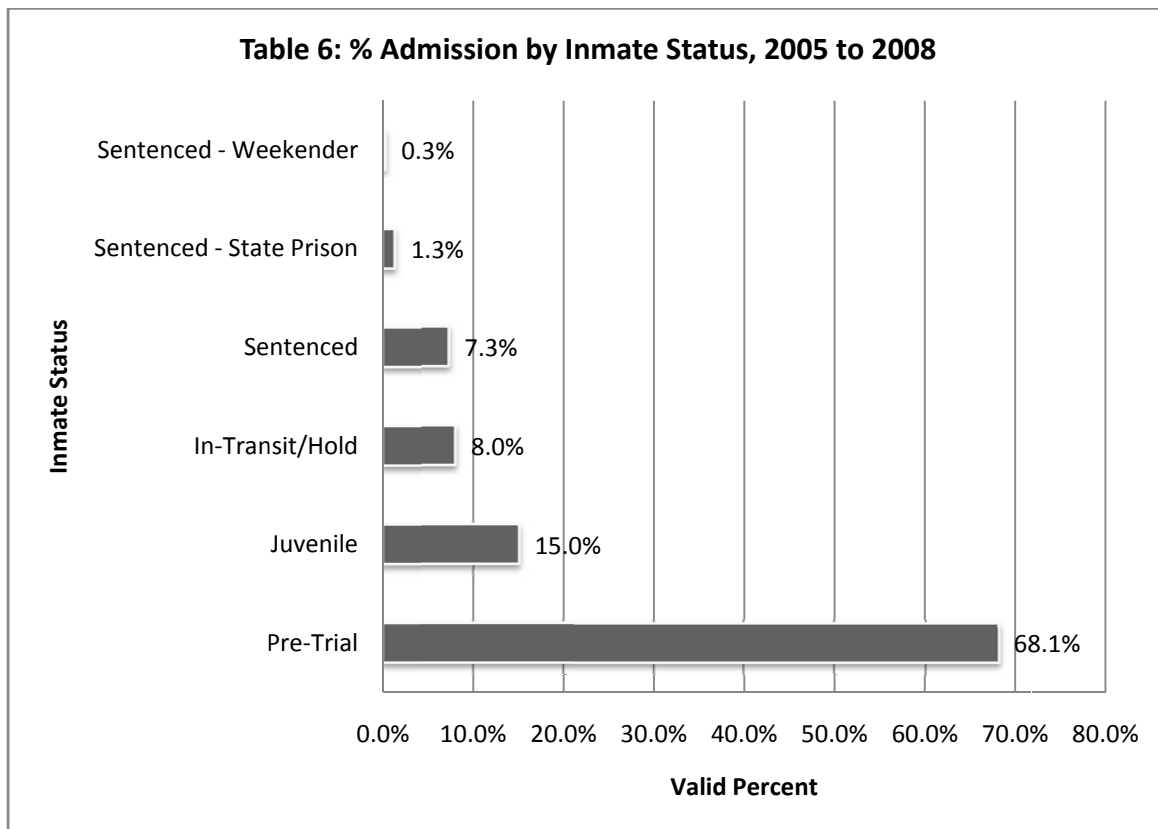
Case Type

Over one-third (73,601) of all admissions are related to felony offenses according to the data. It is important to note that unless otherwise specified, the data have been sorted by Most Serious Offense in situations where the admission contains more than one charge.



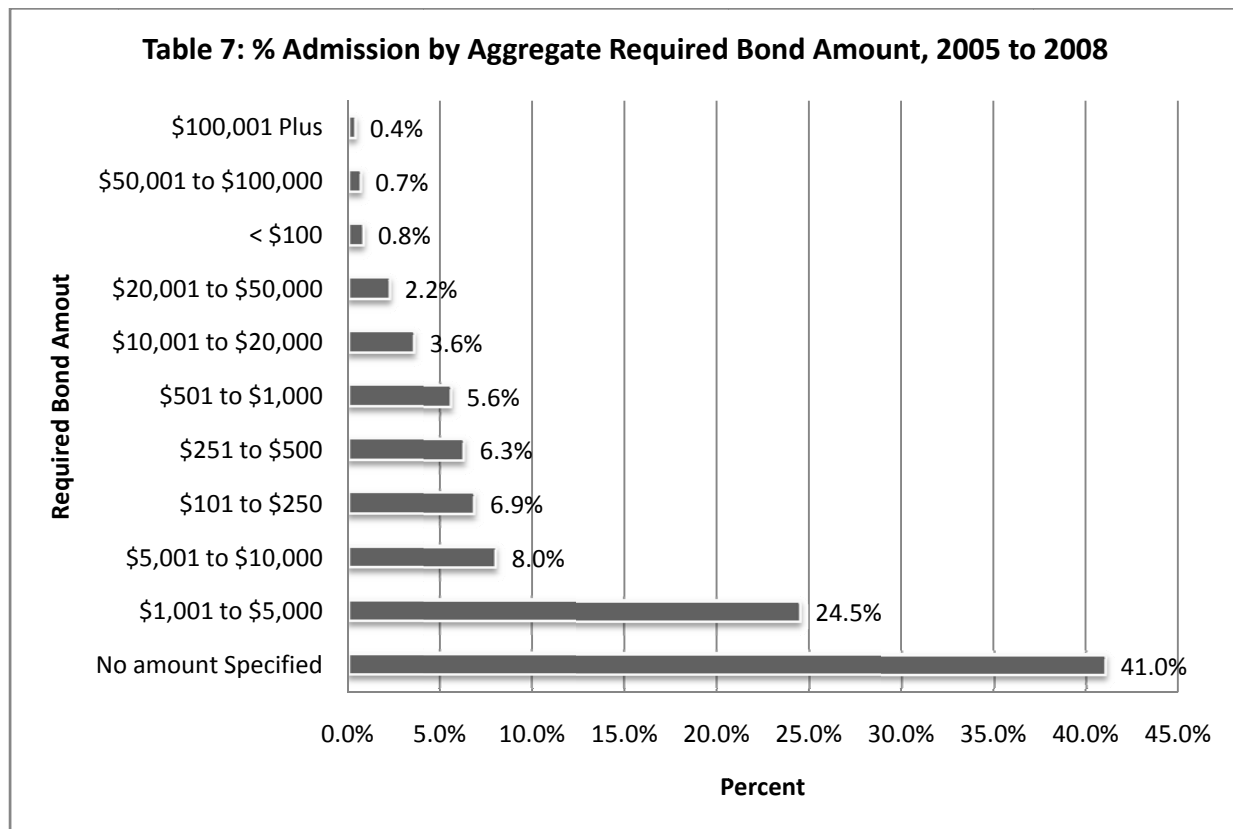
Inmate Status

The data revealed that almost two-thirds of all admissions into the County jail are reported as a Pre-trial. Given the nature of the County Jail, this figure is not surprising as all felony and some misdemeanor defendants must be taken to the County jail to be properly processed. Approximately 7% of the admissions during this time were reported as Sentenced. We have seen a vast improvement in the data quality of this variable which reported 98% of the admissions with a valid inmate status in 2008. However, overall, 43% of the records are missing the inmate status for the study period.



Aggregate Bond

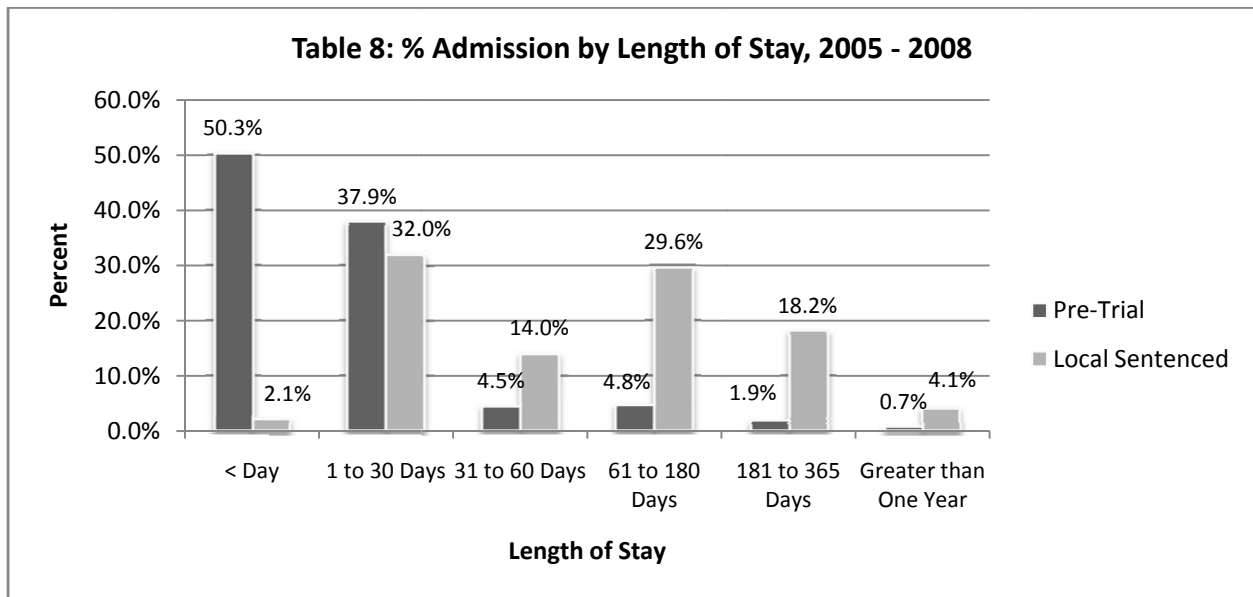
From the total number of admissions that were reported as Pre-trial (75,727) between 2005 and 2008, most (41%) of the admission records did not specify a bond amount (reported as \$0.00). It is important to note that we are not sure if this means that the bond was set at zero dollars or bail was denied. The Research and Planning Unit is following up with the Sheriff's Office to better understand the bond reporting variable. Almost one-quarter (18,454) of the admissions required a bond amount between \$1,001 and 5,000.



Length of Stay

The Case Type or Inmate Status does seem to have an impact on the length of stay an inmate will have in the County jail. The following chart illustrates the difference between two Inmate Status values: Pre-trial and Sentenced (local sentenced only, excluding weekender). Between 2005 and 2008, the vast majority (88%) of Pre-trial admissions result in one to 30 days in custody, with 17 days as the average length of stay. Sentenced admissions were more evenly dispersed, with 34% of the admission grouped in 1 to 30 days in custody with a reported average 109 days in custody.

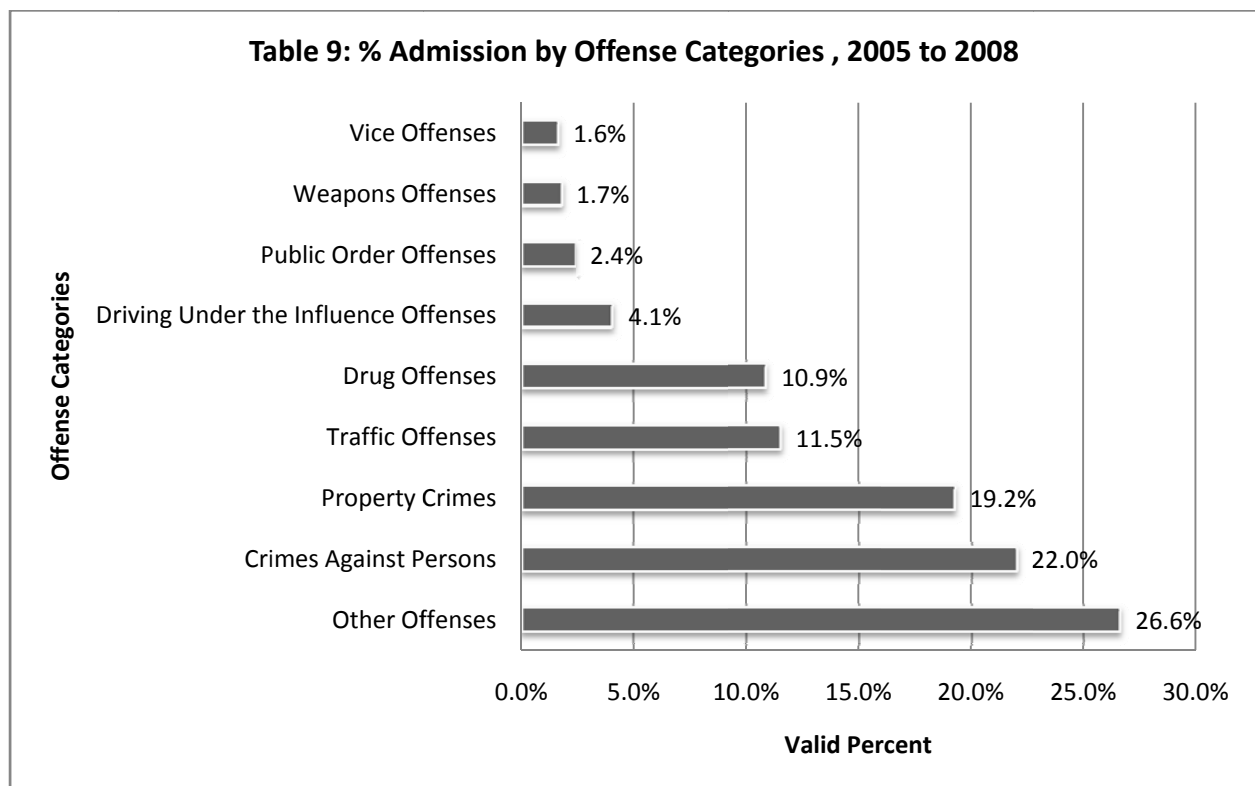
When we examined the Pre-trial and Sentenced Admissions across Felony and Misdemeanor Admissions, we found that Misdemeanants reported an average of 3.56 days in custody between 2005 and 2008; while Felony Admissions reported an average of 35.6 days in custody before being released. As can be expected, for Sentenced Admissions, the average number of days in custody increased for both Felony and Misdemeanant Admissions – 144.7 and 48.4 respectively.



Offense Categories

Between 2005 and 2008, 22% of all admissions reported Crimes Against the Person (includes violent offenses e.g., Robbery), and 19% of Admissions were Property Crimes. Traffic Offenses and Drug Offenses each accounted for 11% of Admissions. From the total Crimes Against the Person, almost one-quarter are violent in nature.

Since the Other Offenses category is so prevalent, we examined the category more closely. We found that bulk of this category can be attributed to Failure to Appear (51%) and Violation of Probation Admissions (29%).



Releases into the Community

The following data describe “releases” (not admissions) for local sentenced inmates only; therefore, other types of inmates such as pre-trial and those inmates released to the Florida Department of Corrections are not included in this analysis. Local sentenced inmates typically include offenders who were sentenced to a year less a day, regardless of the level of the offense (i.e., misdemeanor, felony, or local ordinance).

Overall, between 2005 and 2008, there were approximately 200,188 releases from county jail in Palm Beach County. From the total number of releases, almost four percent (7,991) can be attributed to releases for local sentenced inmates.

From the total number of local sentenced releases, the average length of days in custody for the four year period was approximately 113 days. When we examined the average number of days in custody for each year separately, we found that the average number of days decreased between 2005 and 2008.

At the time of this analysis, there were 53 different zip codes within Palm Beach County that identified specific municipal and county areas. The following 10 zip codes account for over 50% of the valid addresses for releases reported between 2005 and 2008 in Palm Beach County. The following 10 zip codes are listed in rank order (highest number of releases to lowest): 33404, 33407, 33444, 33435, 33460, 33461, 33401, 33463, 33415, and 33409).

From the total number of municipal and county areas (39) used in this analysis, the top 10 areas account for almost 60% of the valid addresses for releases reported between 2005 and 2008. The following municipal and county areas are listed in order from highest number of releases to lowest:

1. Riviera Beach, Palm Beach Shores, Unincorporated
2. West Palm Beach, Mangonia Park, Riviera Beach
3. West Palm Beach
4. Delray Beach
5. Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Briny Breezes
6. Lake Worth
7. Palm Springs, Unincorporated, Lake Worth
8. Greenacres, Unincorporated
9. Unincorporated, Greenacres, Haverhill
10. Jupiter, Unincorporated.