

Why We Conducted This Audit

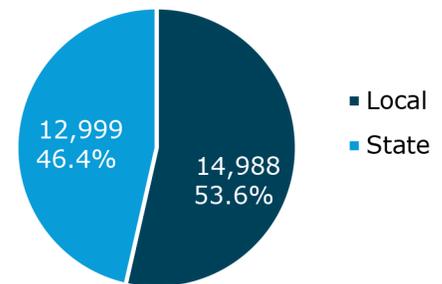
We evaluated the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) from its inception in October 2017 through fiscal year 2023 to evaluate the challenges Louisiana faces in implementing JRI, as well as its effect on incarceration and outcomes. We conducted this audit in response to legislative interest. This is the second report in a series of audits on JRI.

What We Found

Objective 1: What challenges does Louisiana face in fully implementing JRI reforms?

- **There is no consensus among criminal justice stakeholders on the impact of JRI, which leads to challenges in fully implementing JRI across the criminal justice system.** These challenges include conflicting criminal justice stakeholder opinions on the impact of JRI, the lack of integrated criminal justice data systems which limits the ability to calculate statistics and identify trends, and the COVID-19 pandemic which closed courts and reduced programs for inmates and those on community supervision.
- **Unlike other states, Louisiana houses approximately half of state inmates in local correctional facilities.** However, savings from JRI do not always flow to local correctional facilities, and, as a result, sheriffs may not have funds to provide rehabilitation and reentry services.

Inmates in Local or State Correctional Facilities On June 30, 2023



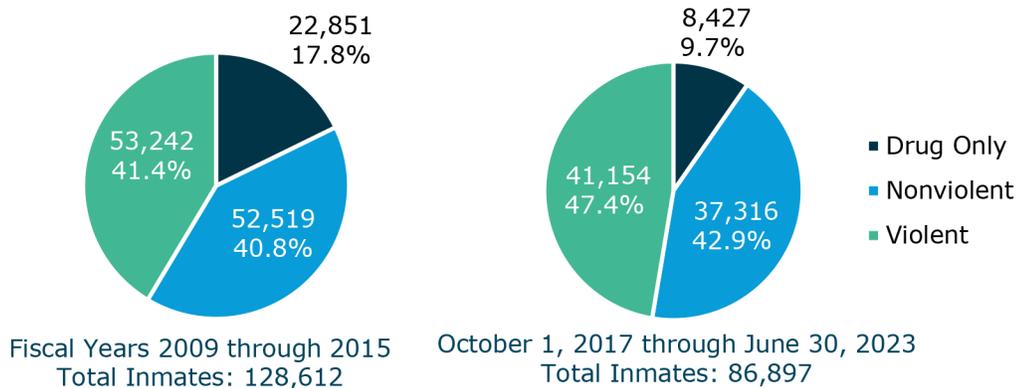
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using CAJUN data.

Objective 2: What effect has JRI had on incarceration trends in Louisiana?

- **After the implementation of JRI, the number of inmates decreased and the percentage of inmates who were violent increased, which is in line with the JRI goal of focusing prison beds on serious threats to public safety.**
- **While the percentage of those released from incarceration and subsequently returning is lower than the five years before JRI, those who do return are returning sooner than previous years.** In addition, we found that those with a violent felony offense in their criminal history returned at a higher rate than those with only non-violent felony offenses.

What We Found (Cont.)

Most Serious Offense in an Inmate's History Fiscal Years 2009 through 2015 and October 1, 2017, through June 30, 2023



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using LLA 2016 performance audit and CAJUN data.

- **Inmates released based on JRI good time changes do not appear to return to custody at a higher rate than the overall return rate.** However, the Department of Corrections' (DOC) data system does not maintain a historical record of under which good time law an inmate was released.

Objective 3: What performance metrics exist for JRI-related programs, and what are the outcomes?

- **DOC has not developed performance measures to determine the outcomes of JRI-funded programs.** Developing goals and benchmarks and measuring outcomes of the various programs could help DOC determine which programs are effective and could be adjusted or expanded.
- **While the percentage of inmates receiving JRI-related programs while incarcerated has increased by 13.1 percentage points since fiscal year 2013, less than 50.0% of inmates participate in programs each year.** In addition, JRI-funded services such as community incentive grants, emergency transitional housing, and day reporting centers serve a small portion of those on community supervision.
- **Individuals obtaining jobs after release in fields related to career and technical education programs they participated in while incarcerated have positive outcomes.** However, a low percentage of inmates appear to get jobs in fields related to their career and technical education programs.
- **During fiscal years 2020 through 2023, a low percentage of youth participating in Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) JRI-funded programs subsequently entered either OJJ or DOC custody. However, OJJ has not developed performance measures to determine the outcomes of JRI-funded programs.** In addition, OJJ could improve its monitoring of contractors providing JRI-funded services.