



# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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## Jail Safety: Adult Jails Can Improve Safety, Equity

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LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE

April 6, 2021

# Methodology

- Examined data from 2017–2019 for:
  - 2,300 violent incidents
  - More than 100,000 bookings
  - 75,000 security and classification decisions
  - 17,000 disciplinary actions

# Resources available

This report contains references to suicide and other traumatic experiences

- U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255), or text HOME to 741741 to speak with a crisis counselor
- The King County Sexual Assault Resource Center provides critical support and direct service from their resource line at 888-99-VOICE (86423)

# Key takeaways



Proximity leads to violence



Psychiatric needs grown, capacity has not



Steps to reduce risk of deaths in custody

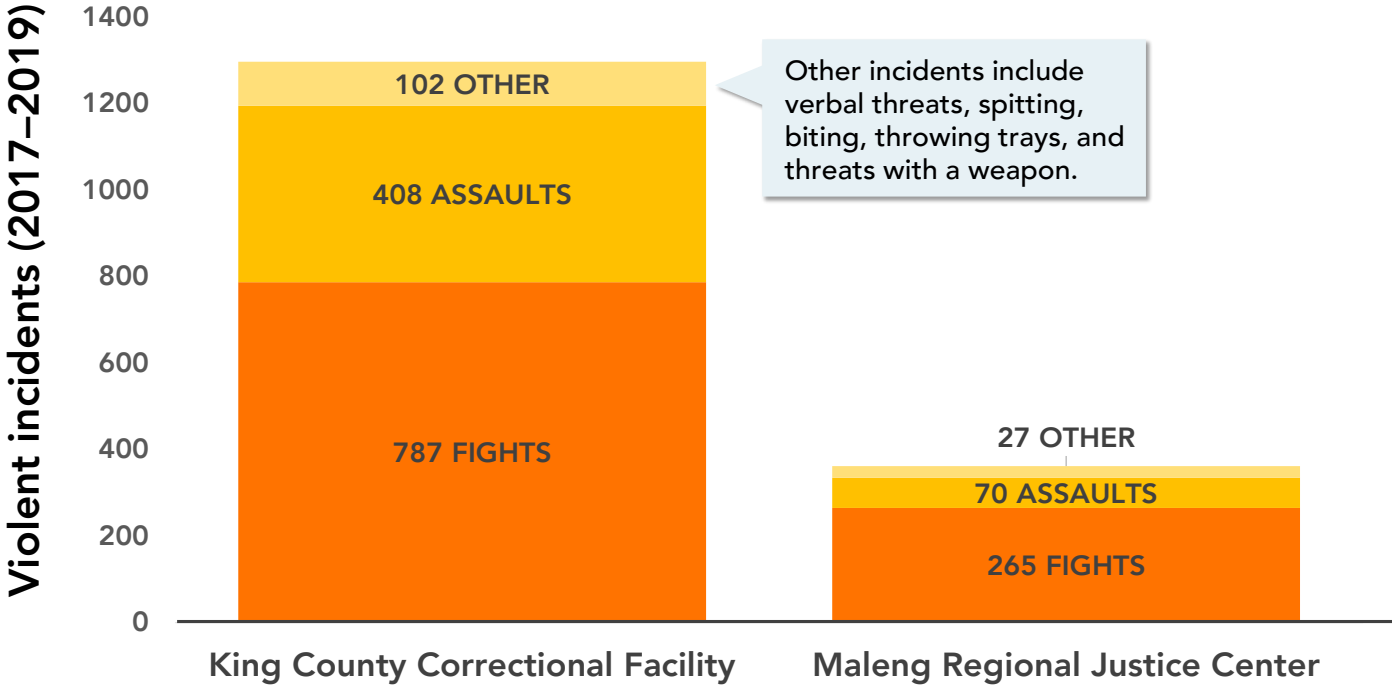


Racial disparities in housing, discipline

# What we audited

	<b>KING COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY (KCCF)</b>	<b>MALENG REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER (MRJC)</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	Downtown Seattle	Kent
<b>AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION (2019)</b>	1159	817
<b>SECURITY LEVEL</b>	Higher	Lower
<b>SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS</b>	More space for people with medical or psychiatric needs	Limited psychiatric and medical population

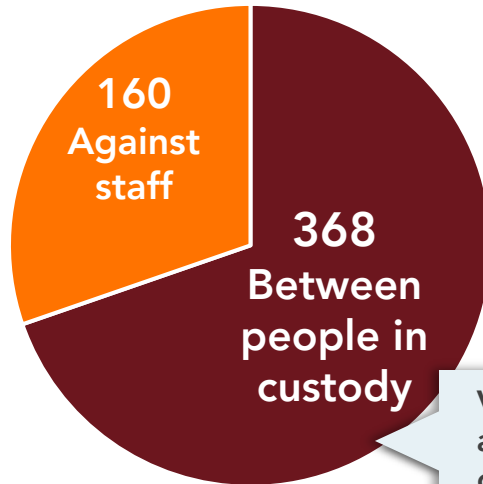
# What we audited



# Violent incidents rates higher at KCCF

## KING COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

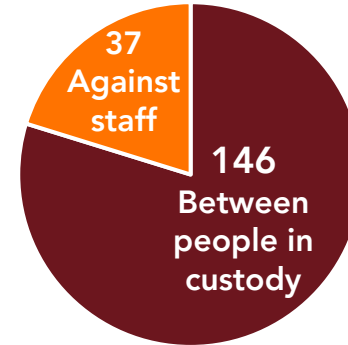
528 incidents per year  
per 1,000 population



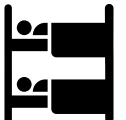
(Violent incidents 2017–2019)

## MALENG REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER

183 incidents per year  
per 1,000 population



Violent incidents were much more common at KCCF and included a higher percentage of incidents against staff.





# Proximity Leads to Violence

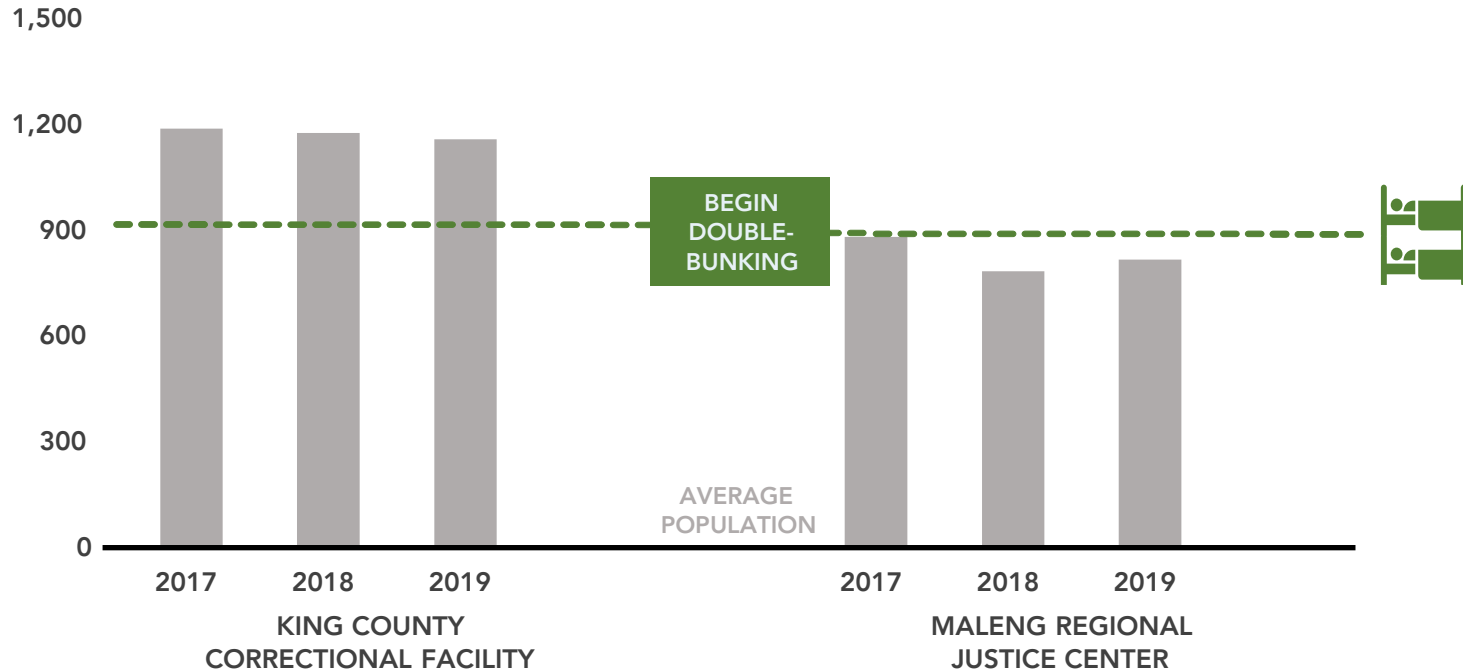


# COVID-19 led to fewer people in custody

- Living in close quarters can contribute to violence
- Population decreased from 1,900 to 1,300
- KCCF reduced its use of double-bunking



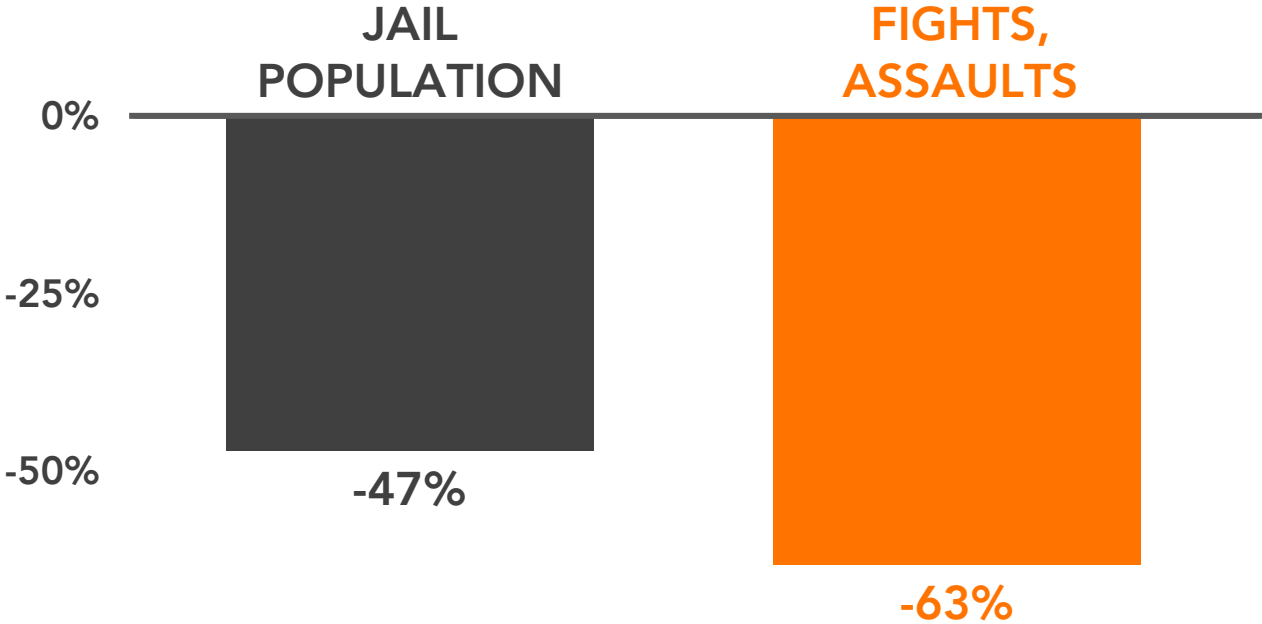
# Double-bunking decreased during 2020



\*2020 is April through December to reflect the reduced population during the pandemic

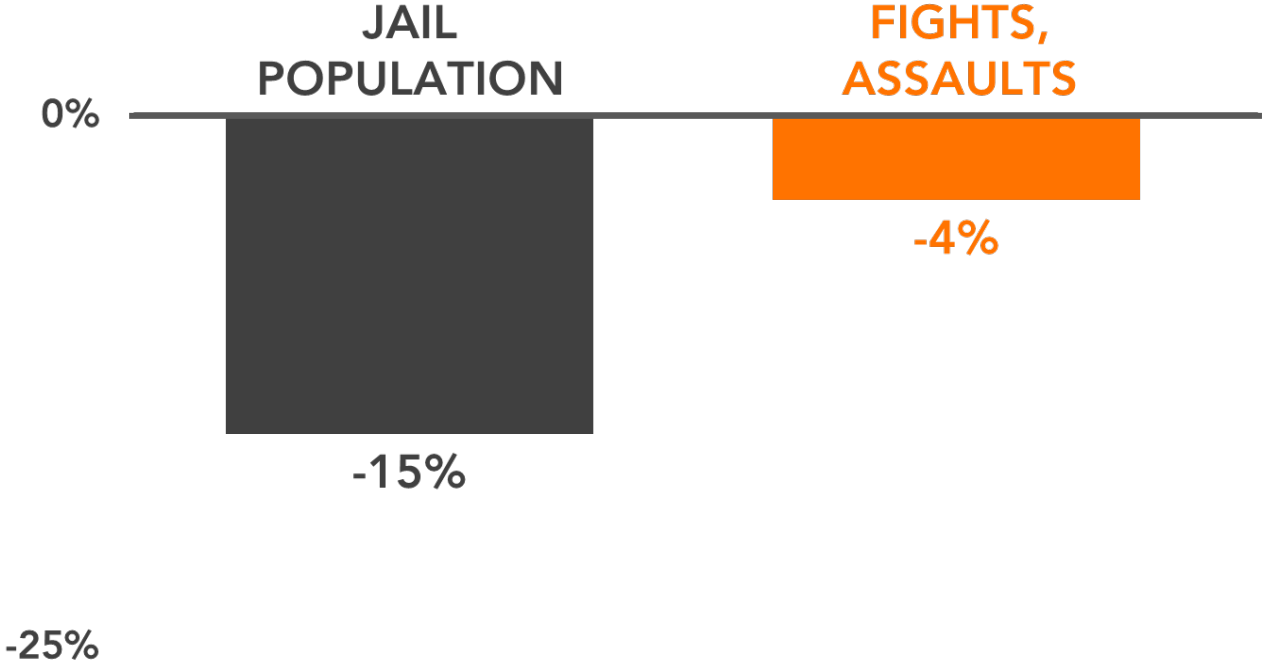


# Lower population led to reduced violence



(KCCF 2020)

# Lower population led to reduced violence



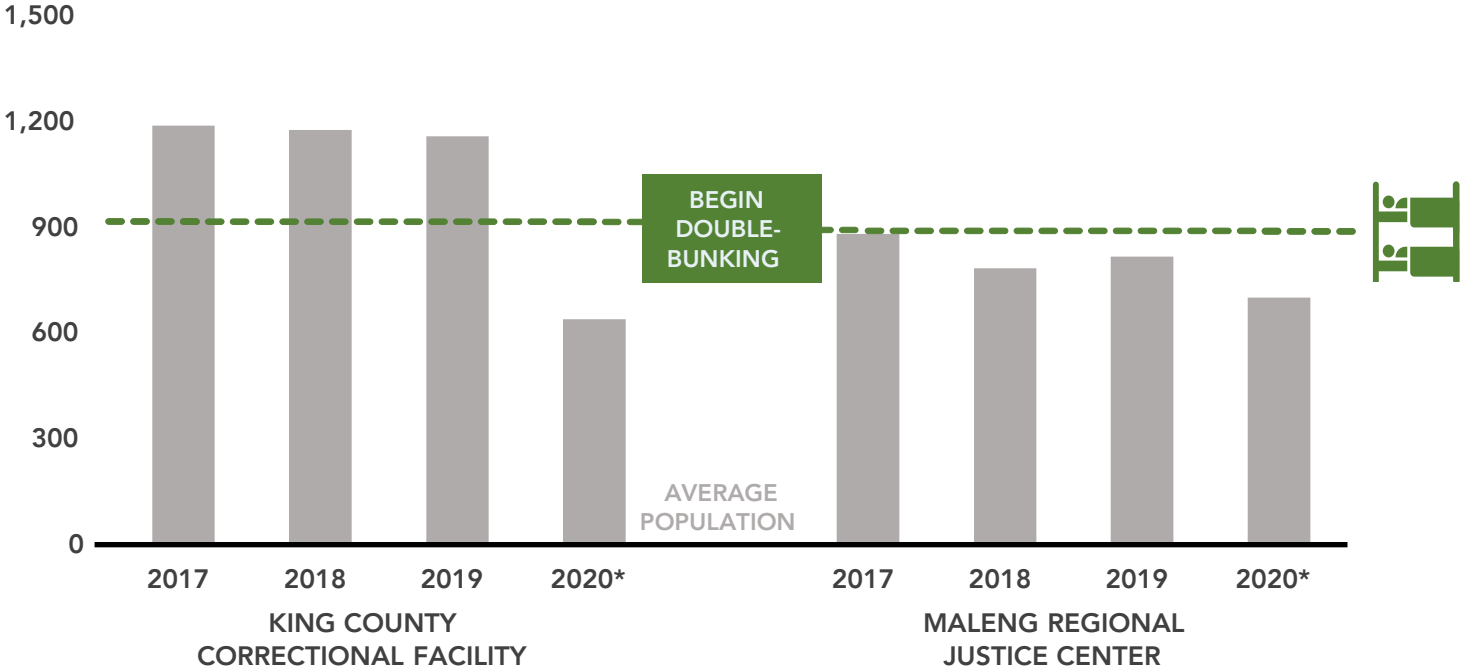
(MRJC 2020)

# Changes had mixed outcomes

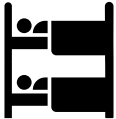
- Corrections officer mentioned there are fewer incidents
- People in custody reported reduced interpersonal conflict
- Stress may be higher due to some COVID precautions



# Low ADP required to keep single-bunking



\*2020 is April through December to reflect the reduced population during the pandemic



# Avoid double-bunking

## Recommendation

- ▶ DAJD should work with justice partners to manage the population of county jails with the goal of no double-bunking





# Demand for Psychiatric Housing Exceed Capacity

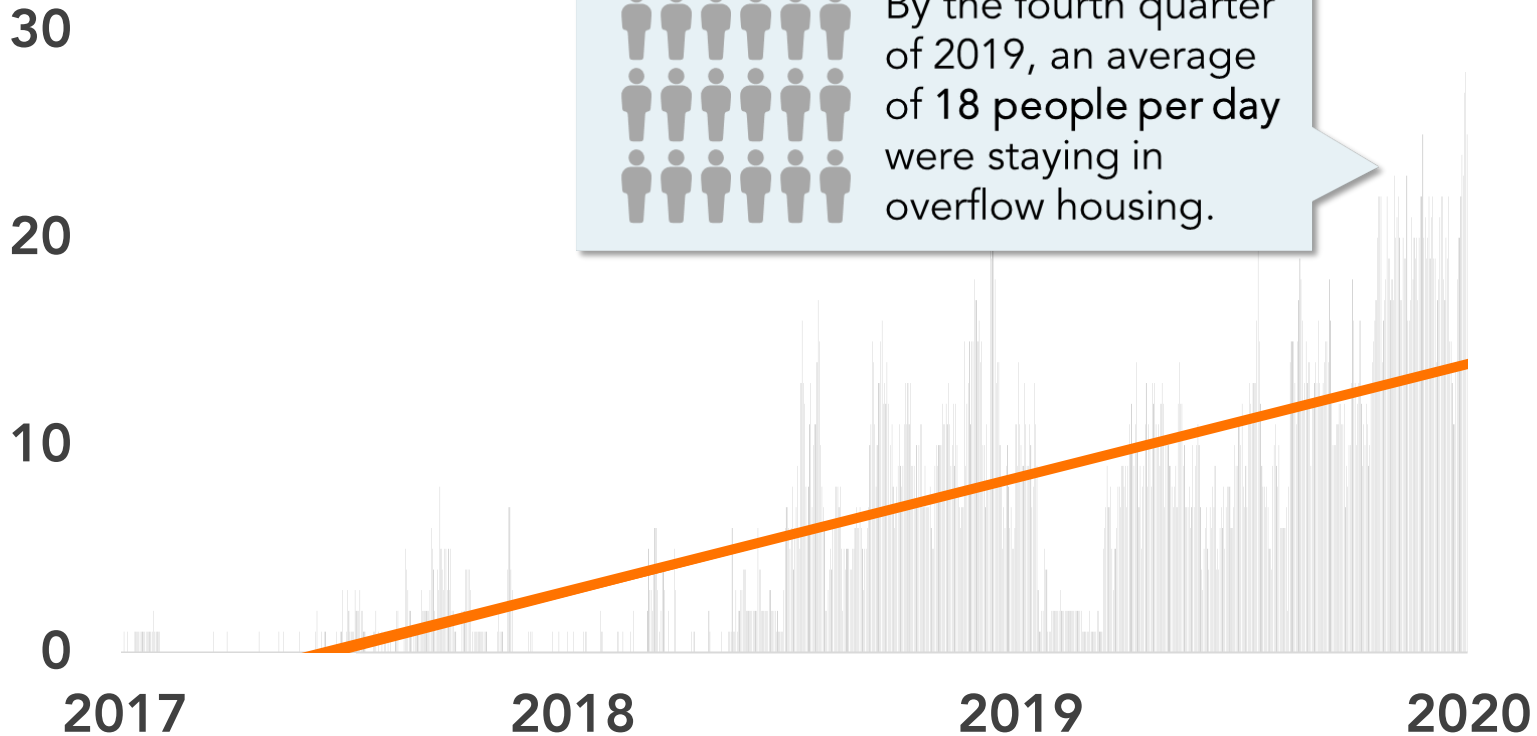


# KCCF has designated psychiatric housing

- Seventh floor is designed to accommodate those with psychiatric needs
- Other floors used as “overflow” housing as the need arises



# Psychiatric needs grown, capacity has not



By the fourth quarter of 2019, an average of 18 people per day were staying in overflow housing.



# Psychiatric housing needs unmet

- Overflow housing presents challenges for consistent care
- Need for psychiatric care is increasing



# Ensure consistent care across locations

## Recommendation

- ▶ DAJD should work with JHS to ensure people receive commensurate care regardless of location



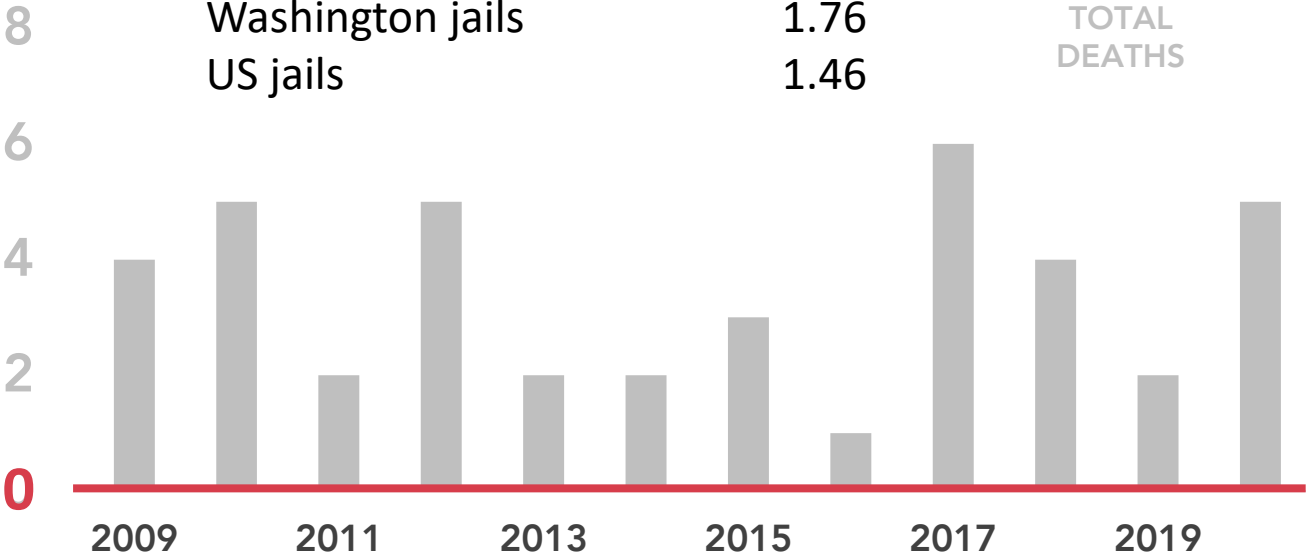


# Deaths in Custody

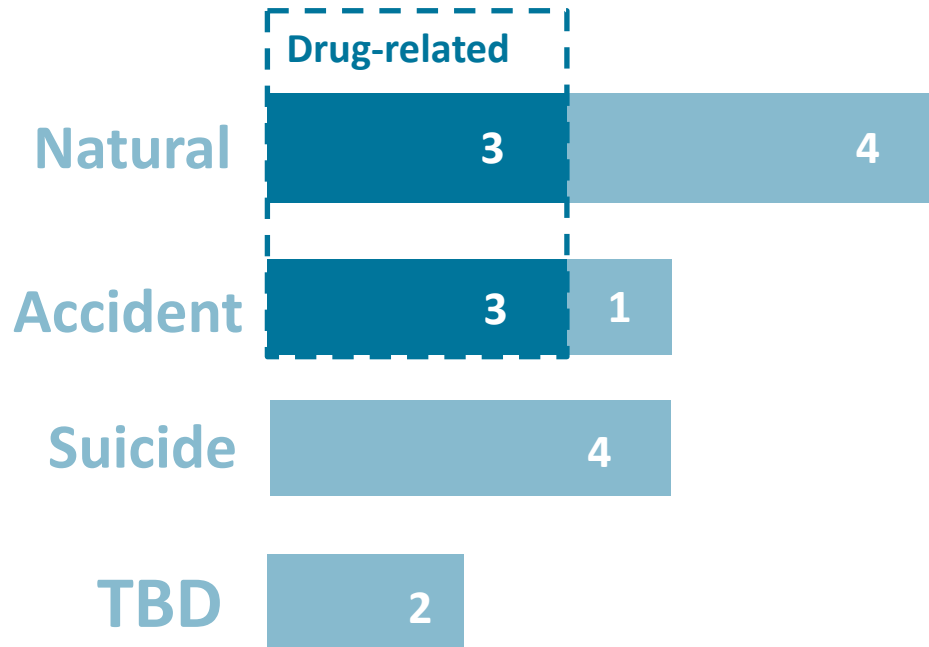
# People die in custody each year

## Mortality rate per 1,000 people in custody

King County jails	1.78
Washington jails	1.76
US jails	1.46



# Manners of death varied, 2017–2020



17 deaths



# Drug-related deaths

- Opioid withdrawal
- Opiates, methamphetamine, cocaine
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities

## Recommendation

- ▶ DAJD, JHS should adopt annual in-service training requirements





# Suicide-resistant cells work

- Psychiatric cells are suicide resistant
- No completed suicides in psychiatric cells
- Two suicides completed in restrictive housing

## Recommendation

- ▶ DAJD, JHS take risk-based approach to increase number of suicide resistant cells





# Racial Disparities in Housing and Discipline

# Racial disparities in housing, discipline

- Black people overrepresented in higher security levels
- Black, Indigenous people faced more time in disciplinary restrictive housing



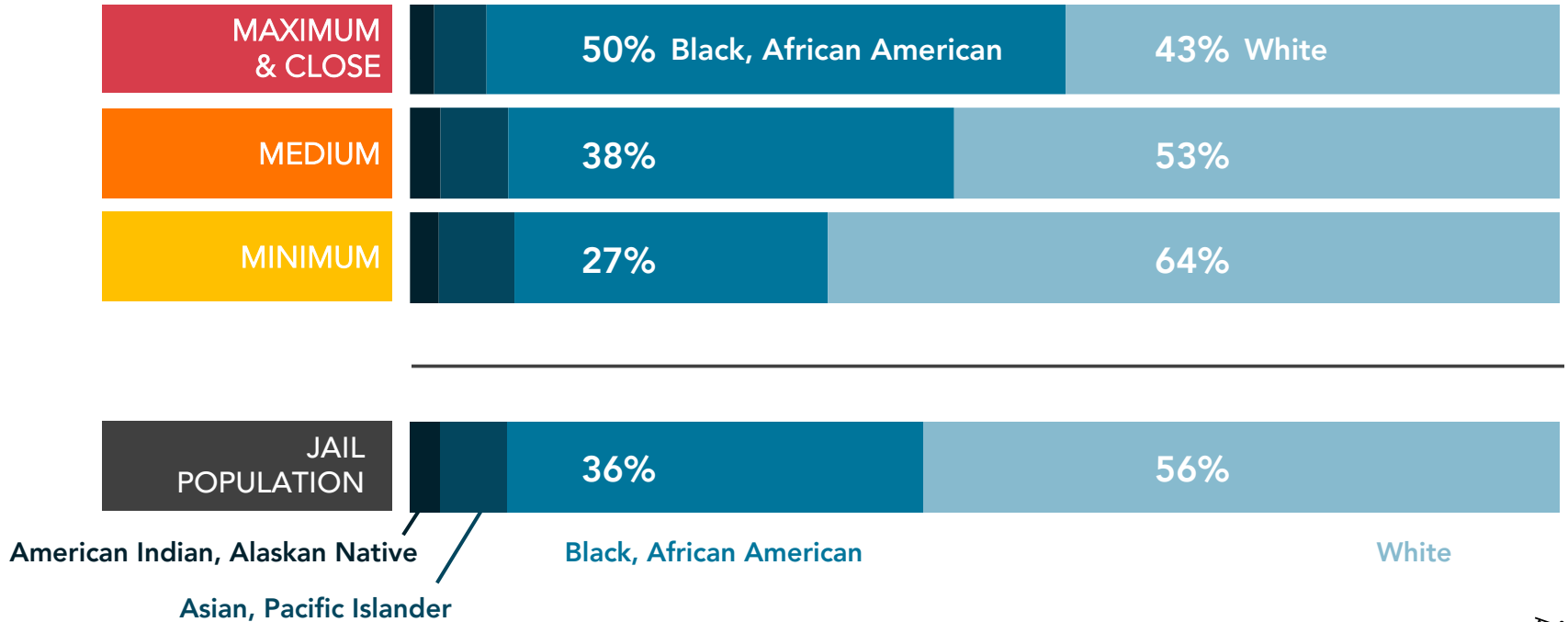
# Housing classifications affect life inside



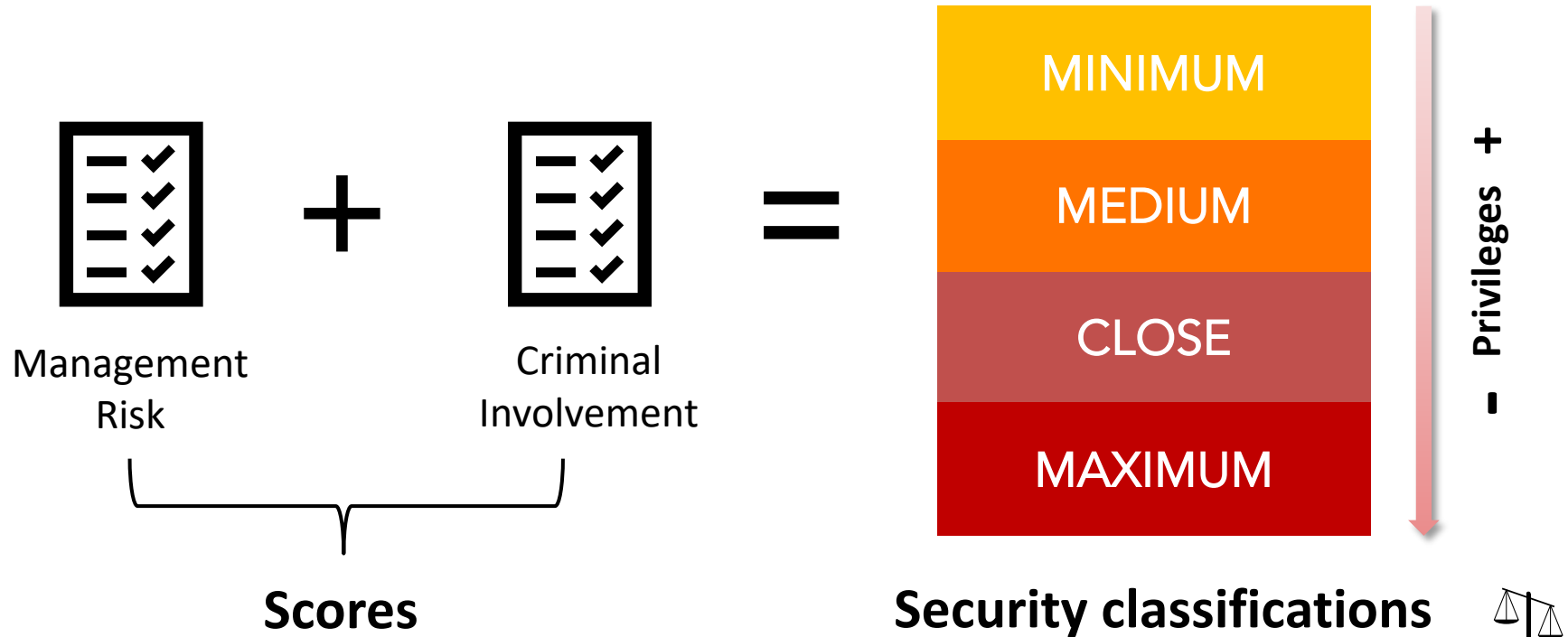
**Security classifications**



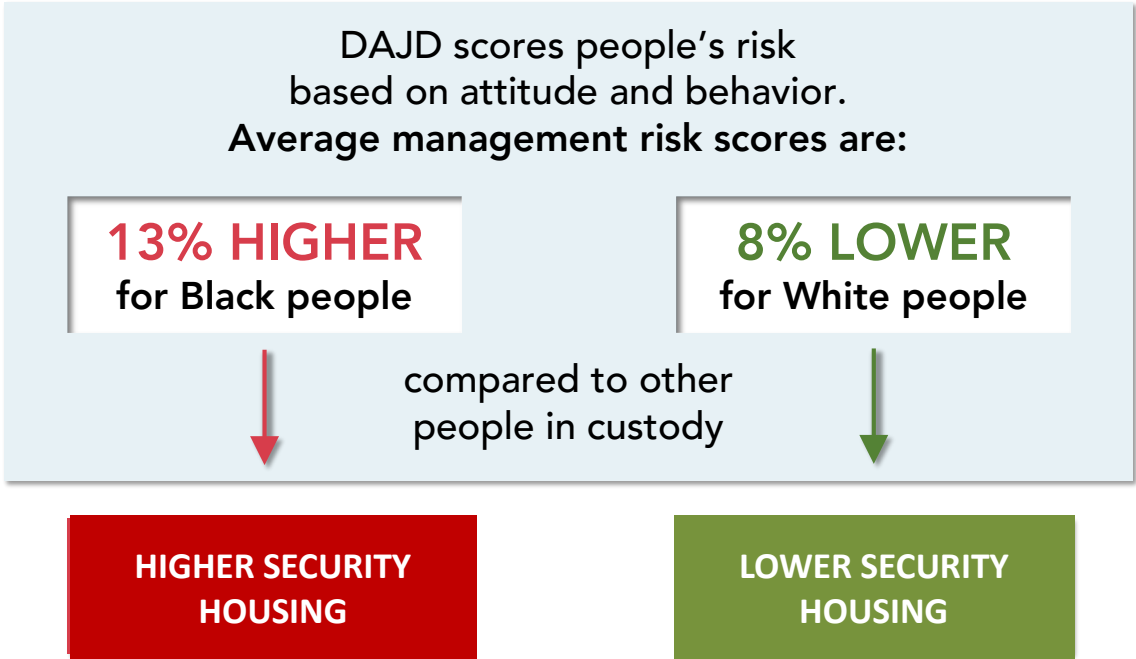
# Black people overrepresented in high security



# Two scores lead to housing classifications



# One score adds bias



# The other score perpetuates bias

Systemic racism makes Black people have, on average, more:

ARRESTS

SERIOUS CHARGES

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS

INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES

DAJD uses these factors to score people's risk. Average criminal involvement scores are:

**21% HIGHER**  
for Black people

**13% LOWER**  
for White people

compared to other people in custody

**HIGHER SECURITY HOUSING**

**LOWER SECURITY HOUSING**





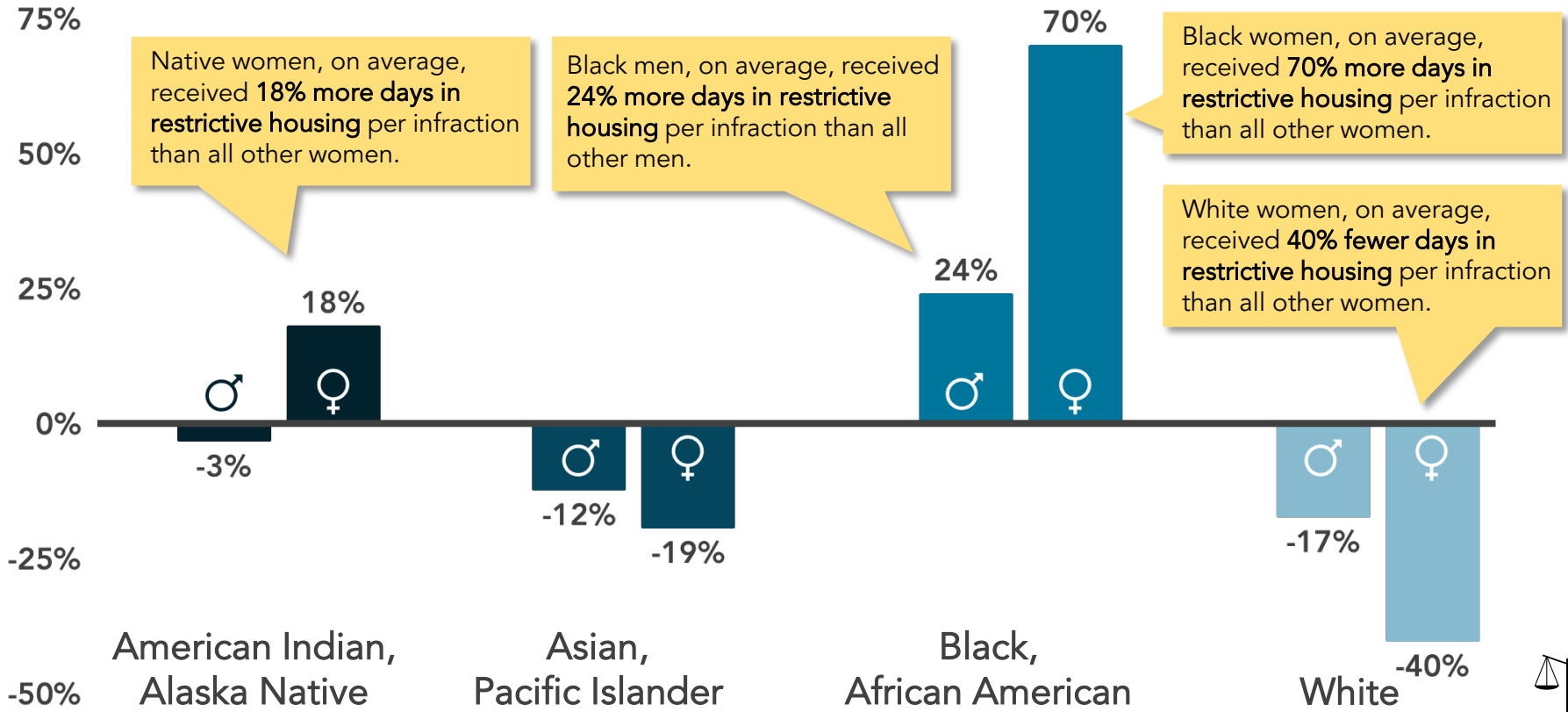
# Reduce racial disparities in housing

## Recommendations

- ▶ DAJD should revise scoring system, check for racial disparities, and adjust as needed



# Black, Indigenous women get worse punishment



# Discretion can lead to disparities

- Was the violation general, serious, or major?
  - Black people nearly 50% more likely to get serious, major violations
- How many days of restrictive housing?



# Reduce racial disparities in discipline

## Recommendations

- ▶ DAJD should reduce discretion in, check for racial disparities, and adjust as needed
- ▶ DAJD should require in-service training on bias and racial justice



# Key takeaways



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Steps to reduce risk of deaths in custody



Racial disparities in housing, discipline



# Thank you

Full report available online at  
[KingCounty.gov/Auditor](http://KingCounty.gov/Auditor)

Questions?

# Resources available

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