

Firearm Jail Bookings in Washington

Firearms pose a risk to the safety of Washington residents. This report focuses on firearm-related jail bookings reported by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC)'s Jail Booking Reporting System (JBRS) and aims to explore the demographics of those being booked in jail with a firearm-related charge.

Data Parameters

The JBRS is a Washington state component of Justice Intelligence, a nationwide information-sharing solution for criminal justice agencies. WASPC is responsible for the implementation and operation of the Washington State JBRS Program under [RCW 36.28A.040](#). JBRS was intended to be a central repository instant information source for offender information and jail statistical data across Washington counties. However, while two county jails (King County Jail and the Maleng Regional Justice Center in south South King County) provide data to JBRS, this data is not shared with the Office of Financial Management (OFM). In this brief, the following parameters were utilized:

- Firearm usage and presence is defined by [RCW 9.41](#), and in terms of the present data, involves having “firearms” noted in the booking description, which designates a crime committed involving a firearm. The most common firearm-related charges in the present data include firearms unlawful possession in the second degree and the first degree ([RCW 9.41.040](#)).
- Only individuals who were 18 years or older at the time of booking were included in analyses.
- Jail bookings between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2023, were utilized in this report.
- The JBRS data is jail booking based, not individual based. An individual could be represented as many times as they were booked in jail from 2018 to 2023.

Limitations

All data comes with its limitations. This report identifies a few major limitations, and there are likely more not listed that could impact work that utilize this data. Limitations include:

- Analyses are descriptive and non-generalizable. Any inferences and implications are limited, and results are modest. Further analyses must be completed for causal relationships to be determined.
- Administrative data and the lack of detail or richness significantly limits any conclusions yielded from this work.
- In terms of demographic assessment, these results must be interpreted with caution. Any analysis of race across criminal justice decision points is negatively impacted by true reliability and validity as race data can be misclassified. Only booking information for individuals with clearly defined, unduplicated race, sex, and date of birth were utilized to ensure data quality, so results may be underreported. Additionally, this brief was limited to values collected by JBRS.
- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, trends might be skewed and misreported.
- There are many factors that contribute to the reluctance of a victim reporting, and the data might not accurately represent the true picture of firearm-related jail bookings.

Demographics

Table 1 depicts the demographics of firearm-related jail bookings in the JBRS sample. Between January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2023, there were 1,056 firearm-related jail bookings. The average age was 33 years old ($M = 33.9$, $SD = 10.8$). Firearm-related jail bookings were more likely to be associated with males than females. When evaluating race, firearm-related jail bookings were more likely to be associated with white individuals than the rest of race categories provided by JBRS. In terms of age categories, those younger than the average age were more likely to be associated with firearm-related jail bookings.

Washington's population is almost evenly distributed in terms of sex, and the majority of the population were white (81.0%), while the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color community) presented slightly less than one-fifth of the Washington population.

Table 1. Firearm-related arrests demographics

	N	%
Sex		
Female	81	7.7
Male	975	92.3
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	21	2.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	27	2.6
Black	164	15.5
White	844	79.9
Age Category		
18 to 25	279	26.4
26 to 35	378	35.8
36 to 45	261	24.7
> = 46	138	13.1

Notes: Percentages are based on column totals. Due to rounding totals may not equal 100%.

For more information contact:

Hanna Hernandez, MA | hanna.hernandez@ofm.wa.gov | Vasiliki Georgoulas-Sherry, Ph.D | vasiliki.georgoulas-sherry@ofm.wa.gov

Outcomes

Figure 1 shows the number of firearm-related jail bookings from 2018 to 2023. There was a 62.1% increase in firearm-related jail bookings from 2018 to 2023. Additionally, on average there were about 176 firearm-related jail bookings from 2018 to 2023, with 2022 and 2023 being above average. Due to the impacts of COVID-19 and policy changes in firearm-related offenses, these trends may be skewed. 2018 showed the lowest number of firearm-related jail bookings, while 2023 was the highest. 2020 was right below the six-year average, and 2018, 2019, and 2021 were all below average.

Similarly, Figure 2 breaks down the firearm-related jail bookings by age categories. Those aged 26 to 35 were consistently the most frequent category among firearm-related jail bookings while those aged 46 and older were consistently the least prevalent. However, those aged 18 to 25 and 36 to 45 had mixed findings and did not show a consistent trend. Since this report is jail booking based, individuals could be booked in jail multiple times for firearm-related jail bookings. While there were 1,056 firearm-related jail bookings between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2023, there were only 932 individuals, indicating some were booked in jail multiple times in the evaluated six-year span for firearm-related charges. However, this does not show consistency with individuals continuing to be booked in jail for firearm-related charges while they continue to age.

Figure 1. Frequency of firearm-related jail bookings by year

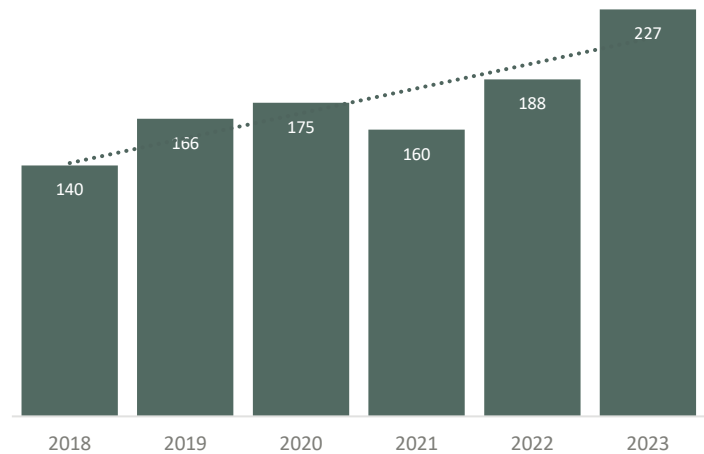
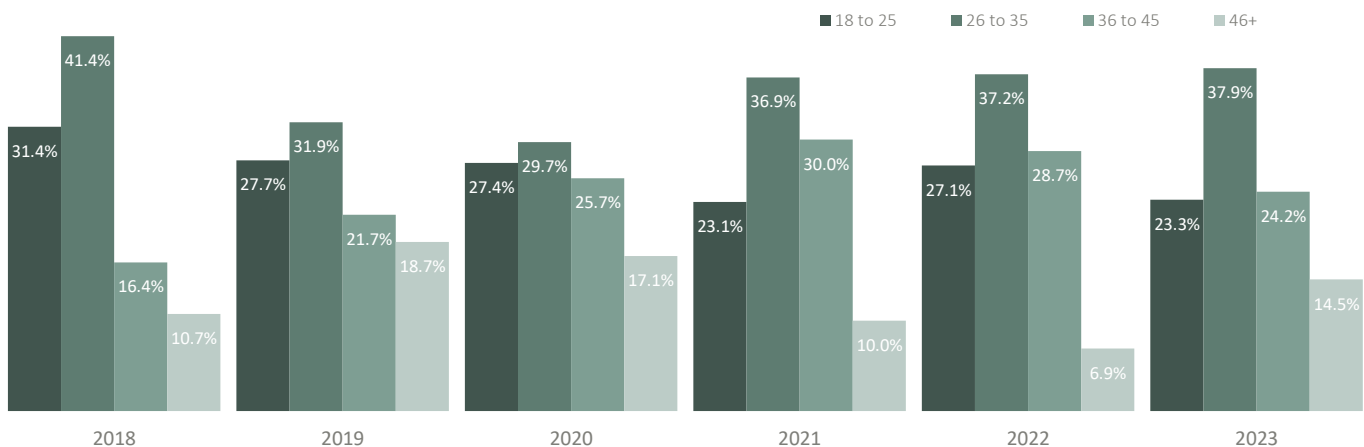
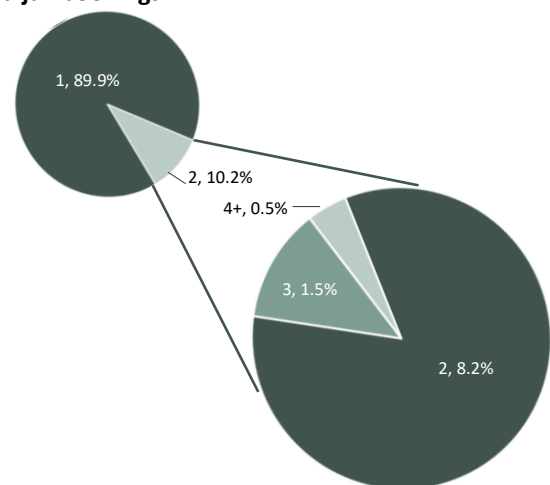


Figure 2. Frequency of firearm-related jail bookings by year and age category



Specifically, individuals booked in jail once on firearm-related charges made up 89.8% of the individuals (n = 837), or 79.3% of the firearm-related jail bookings. Figure 3 represents the percentage of individuals with multiple firearm-related jail bookings (10.2%). Of those booked multiple different times, the majority were only booked twice (8.2%), while the remaining 2.0% were made up of individuals who were book three times or more on firearm-related charges. The highest frequency of firearm-related jail bookings by one individual was eight times in the evaluated six-year time span. It is important to note these are individuals being booked in jail on firearm-related charges and does not mean an individual was ever convicted of a crime. Future research should explore the trajectory of jail bookings (i.e., resulting in charges, plea deals, etc.) to better understand our criminal justice system outcomes.

Figure 3. Percentage of individuals with multiple firearm-related jail bookings



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