



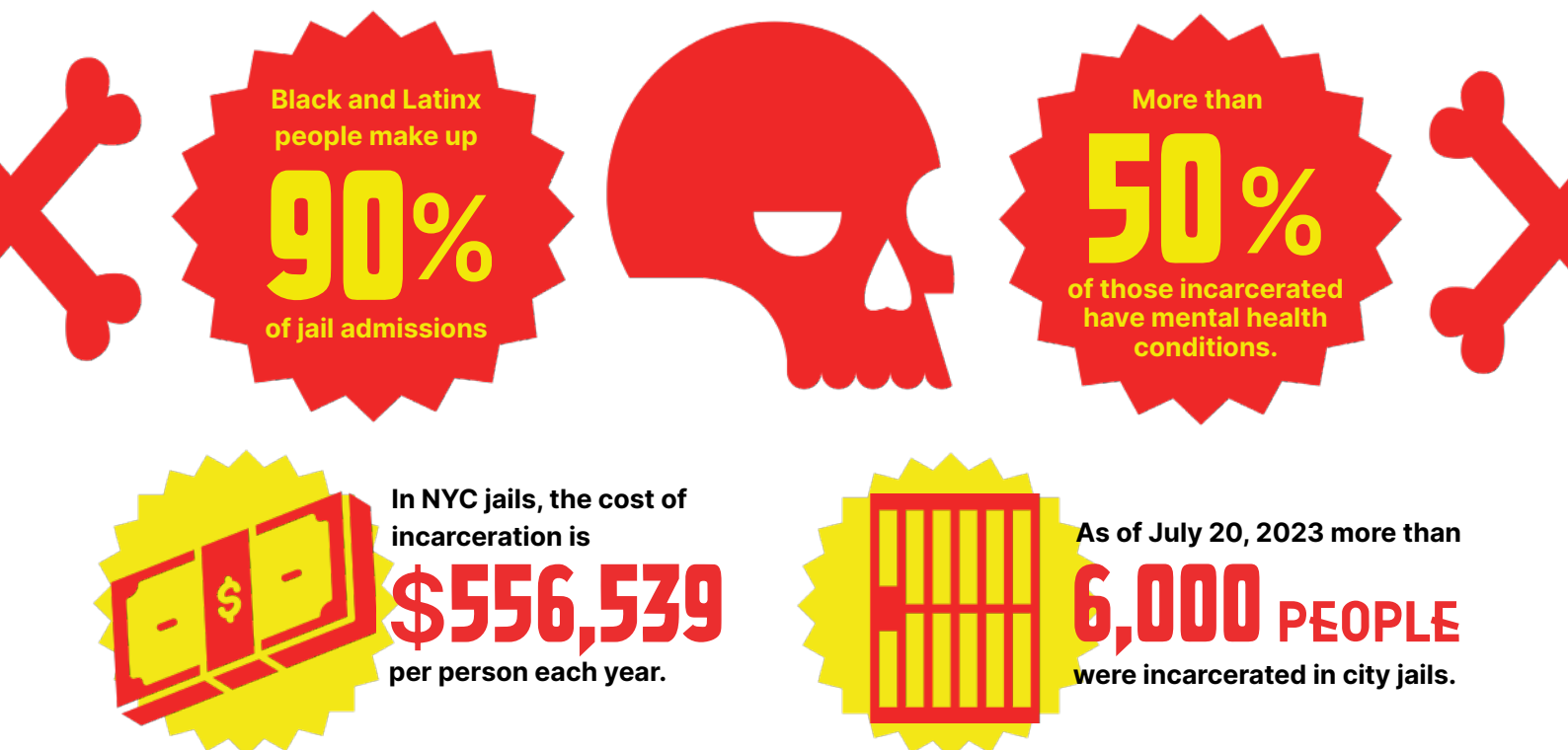
SHUT RIKERS NOW

New Yorkers are deeply concerned about the crisis on Rikers Island. The conditions at New York City's massive jail complex are horrific and life-threatening for human beings – the people incarcerated and those who work there.¹ Violence is rampant.² Racism and other types of bias are deeply entrenched.³ And though Black and Latinx people constitute about half of the city's population, they represent almost 90 percent of jail admissions.⁴

Most people on Rikers Island haven't been convicted: They're being held in jail *pretrial* while considered innocent because, unlike those who have money, they can't afford bail.⁵ *This is wrong. Rikers has become the city's largest mental health facility.* More than 50 percent of people incarcerated there have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, yet they have little or no access to meaningful care while they are locked up.⁶

Under Mayor Eric Adams, conditions at Rikers have gotten worse. Violence at Rikers is out of control. At least 31 people have died in the city jail system since Adams became mayor in 2022.⁷ But the actual number of deaths is unknown, because under this administration, the Department of Correction (DOC) has become less transparent and has declared that they will stop reporting deaths to the public.⁸

The DOC is plagued by crises and scandals, exacerbating harms to people in its jails. This has only gotten worse under Mayor Adams. Now the DOC is attempting to hide its extraordinary dysfunction by refusing to release information to the public.⁹ In response to this disaster, the federal monitor, appointed by the federal courts in 2015, has sounded the alarm about "imminent risk of harm" for everyone at Rikers – the people incarcerated and those who work there.¹⁰



MAYOR ADAMS WANTS RIKERS TO STAY OPEN.

Under Mayor Adams, the city is no longer on track to shut Rikers down. If Mayor Adams has his way, Rikers will stay open forever. In 2017, under pressure by community groups and other advocates who organized for many years, Bill de Blasio, then mayor, announced that New York City would close Rikers. It took until 2019 for the city council to pass a package of related bills that would shutter the jail complex by 2027.¹¹ Instead of trying to meet the benchmarks for the closure plan, Mayor Adams has worked to keep Rikers open and lock up more Black, brown, and low-income people. Instead of investing in real community safety – housing, health care, education, and jobs – Adams has cut budgets for essential services across the city and at Rikers, including vital alternatives to incarceration and reentry programming, while investing billions in police and jails.¹²

New York City's jail population is going up when it should be going down. As of April 2, 2024, more than 6,200 people were incarcerated in city jails – an increase of nearly 15 percent since Mayor Adams took office in 2022.¹³ That means 800 more people behind bars. Given the mayor's "jail first" approach, the DOC commissioner has stated that they expect the jail population to surpass 7,000 next year.¹⁴

The financial and human costs of this "jail first" approach are catastrophic. In fiscal year 2021, the DOC budget cost city taxpayers \$1.25 billion; the cost of incarceration here was \$556,539 a person per year, which is \$1,525 a day.¹⁵ The forecast reported for the DOC budget in fiscal year 2024 is nearly \$1.2 billion.¹⁶ In his initial 2024 budget, Adams proposed deep cuts to essential services including libraries and prekindergarten programs while spending billions on policing and jails.¹⁷ Communities fought back to restore funding to libraries and other services, but Adams remains committed to locking up more people who are presumed innocent.

SHUT RIKERS DOWN

#SHUTRIKERS #CUSHUTINVESTNY

TAKE ACTION HERE:



The appalling problems at Rikers aren't new – they are all too familiar and dramatically underscore that the city needs alternatives to jail. With an unrelenting crisis at Rikers marked by a rapidly rising death toll, we need urgent action to save lives.

Mayor Adams and the New York City Council must:

- **CUT** the number of people held on Rikers and in all city jails and cut the budgets used for caging people.
- **SHUT** down the Rikers Island jail complex.
- **INVEST** in real community safety: housing, health care, education, and jobs.

Until Rikers is shut down, the federal courts must appoint a receiver to take over city jails and improve conditions for the people incarcerated there and those who work there.¹⁸

For more information and to get involved, please contact:

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