

Uncounted and Uninvestigated: Deaths Behind Bars

Prof. Andrea Armstrong



COLLEGE OF LAW

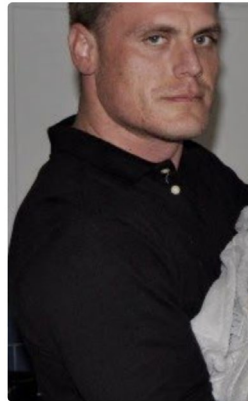
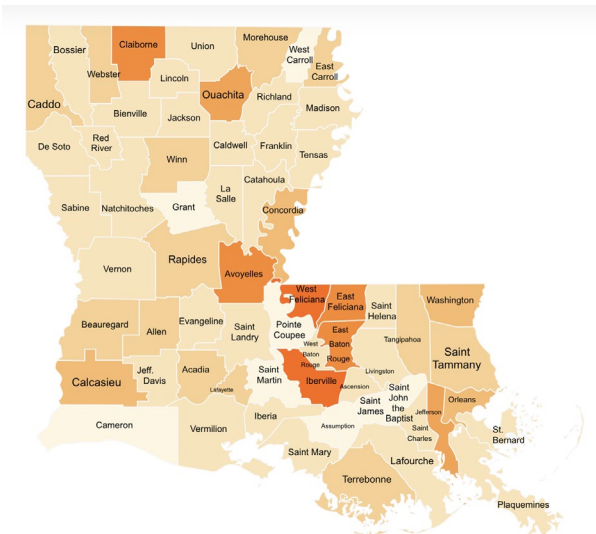
National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine
Committee on Advancing the Field of Forensic Pathology:
Lessons Learned from Death in Custody Investigations
Meeting #1, April 2, 2024

Incarceration Transparency

Deaths Behind Bars Collection & Analysis

In Memoriam

LA Facility Memos



In Memoriam
**Christian David
Freeman**



In Memoriam
**Desmond "Plucky"
Guild**



Baton Rouge City Jail	East Baton Rouge Parish Prison
2016 (1 death) 2017 (1 death)	2014 (4 deaths) 2015 (2 deaths) 2016 (6 deaths)
	2017 (4 deaths) 2018 (4 deaths) 2019 (4 deaths)
	Student Memo
	East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Info

Overview

1. Carceral (and Attributable) Conditions

2. Louisiana Deaths Behind Bars

- Collection Process
- 2015-2021 Findings

3. Key Takeaways

Mass Incarceration

People

1.9 million people held behind bars in the U.S.

1 in 7 children have an incarcerated parent

Over 10 million people love someone behind bars.

Disproportionate racial impact

Spaces

Almost 5,000 carceral spaces incl. 3,300 jails + fed, state, and private prisons + youth prisons.

Louisiana has at least 133 carceral spaces, with more prison beds than hospital beds

Nationally, more carceral spaces than colleges

Prison v. Jail

Prison: →

- Houses people convicted of felony crimes
- Operated by state (or via contract with state)



Jail: →

- Houses people accused of a crime (pre-trial) or serving a misdemeanor sentence
- Operated by the city/municipal authority





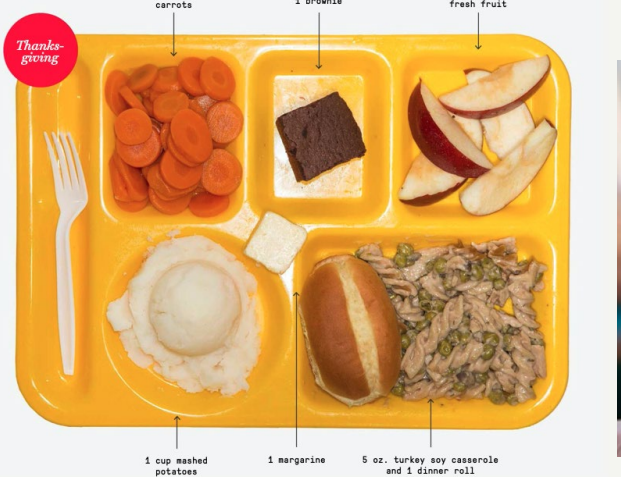
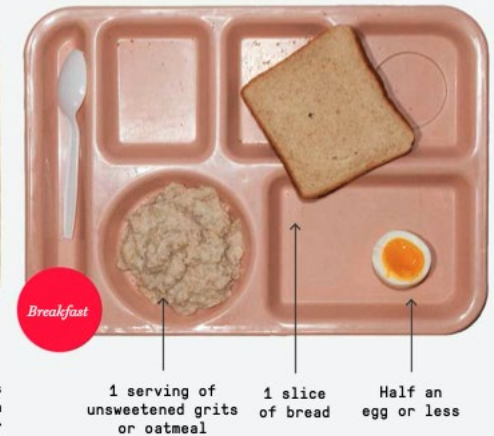
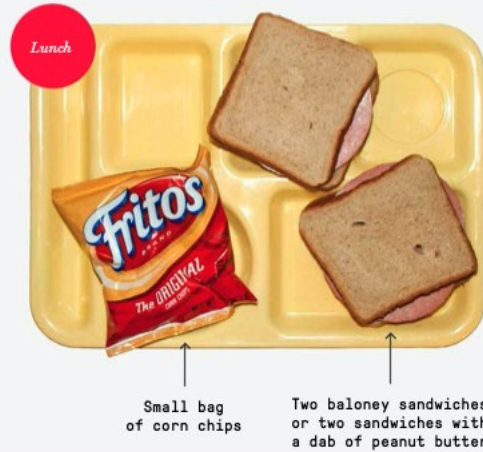
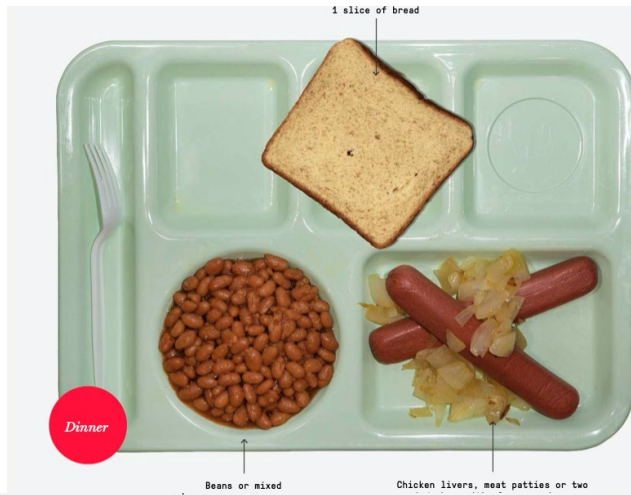
HOD – Restraint Cell

Carceral Healthcare

- High needs
- Limited access
- Inconsistent delivery
- Unlicensed and unsupervised



Determinants of health...





LOUISIANA DEATHS BEHIND BARS 2015———2021

www.incarcerationtransparency.org

JUNE 2023

Data Collection

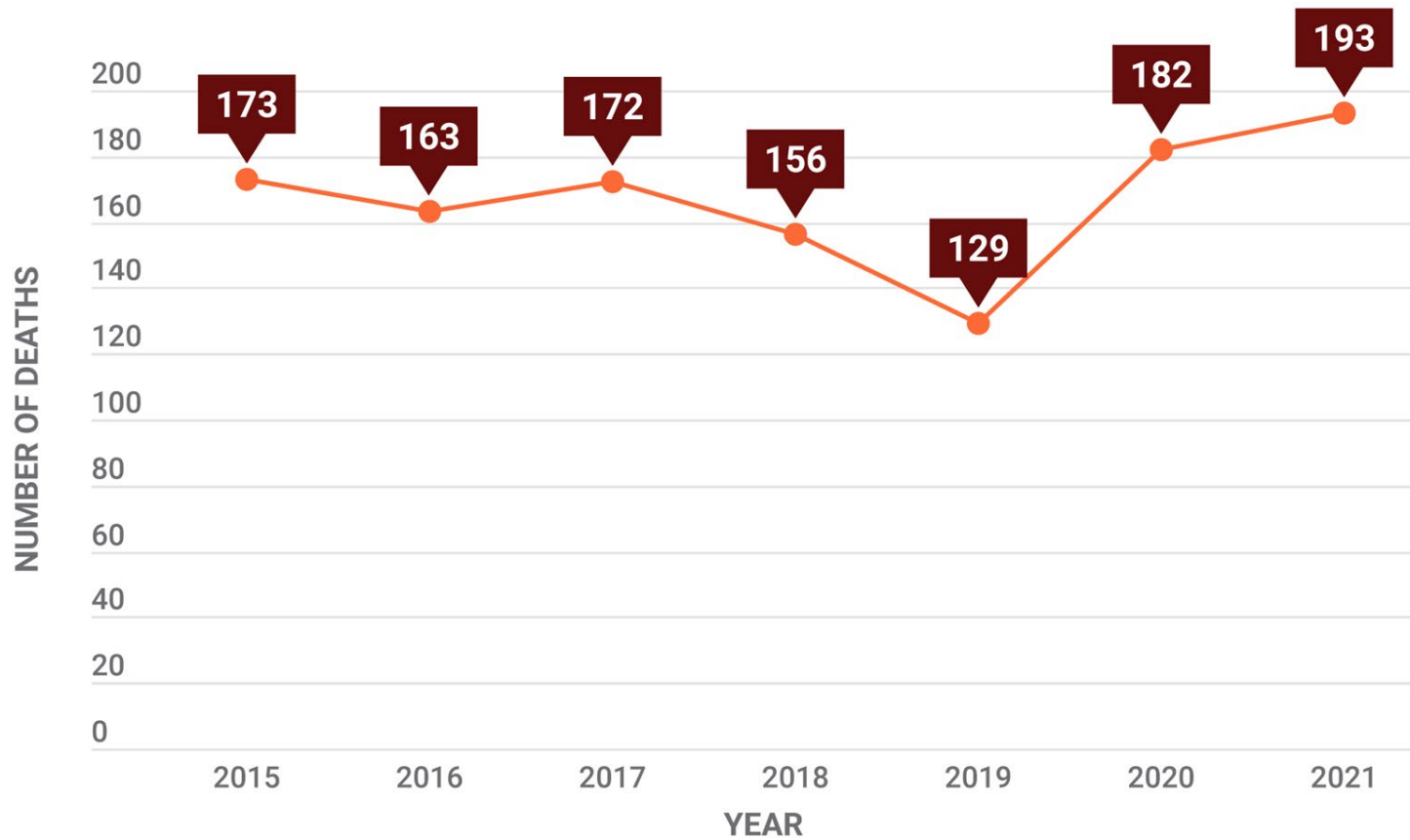
The problem:

- Federal data analysis was too broad, delayed, and not targeted to improving conditions
- Public health agencies, like CDC, were not monitoring

The project:

- Started Fall 2019 due to lack of facility-specific info
- Law students file public records req. with ~130 facilities
- Coroners are back-up option for non-responsive jxdns
- Process takes 4 months to request and receive

Deaths per year

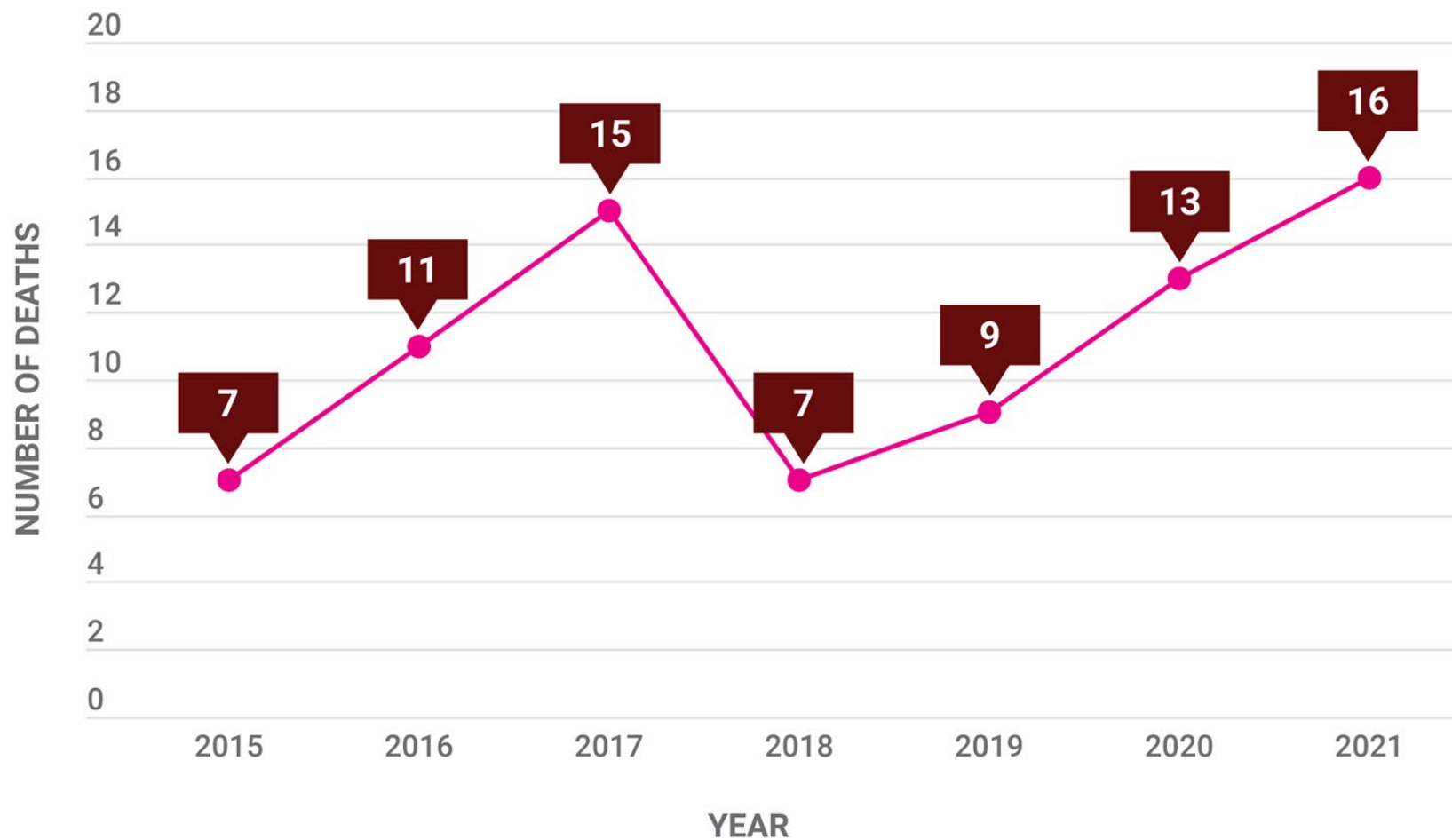


Total Deaths: 1,168

Louisiana mortality rate - convicted population

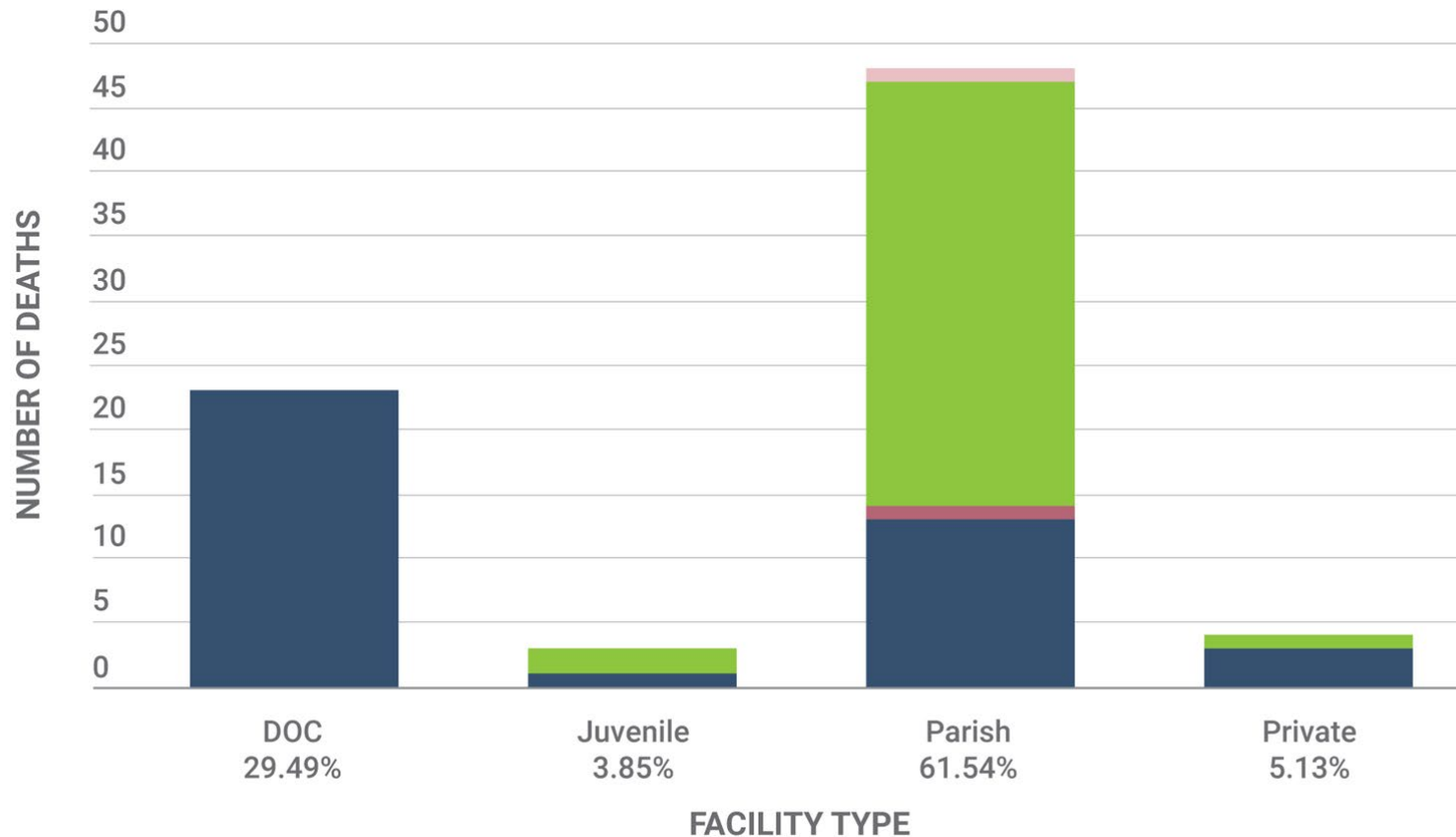
Year (Dec.)	Total convicted population	Convicted mortality rate per 100k (all facilities)	DOC Housed per 100k	DOC Mortality Rate per 100k	Parish Housed (Incl. TWP) per 100k	Parish Mortality Rate per 100k
2015	36,377	407	18,430	646	17,947	117
2016	35,682	395	15,162	765	20,520	63
2017	33,739	406	15,152	779	18,587	91
2018	32,397	417	14,880	739	17,517	103
2019	31,609	345	15,042	632	16,567	72
2020	26,770	586	13,903	964	12,867	124
2021	26,377	663	13,091	1039	13,286	256

Suicide deaths by year



Total Deaths: 78

Suicide deaths by facility type & trial status



Total Deaths: 78



Convicted



Parole Hold

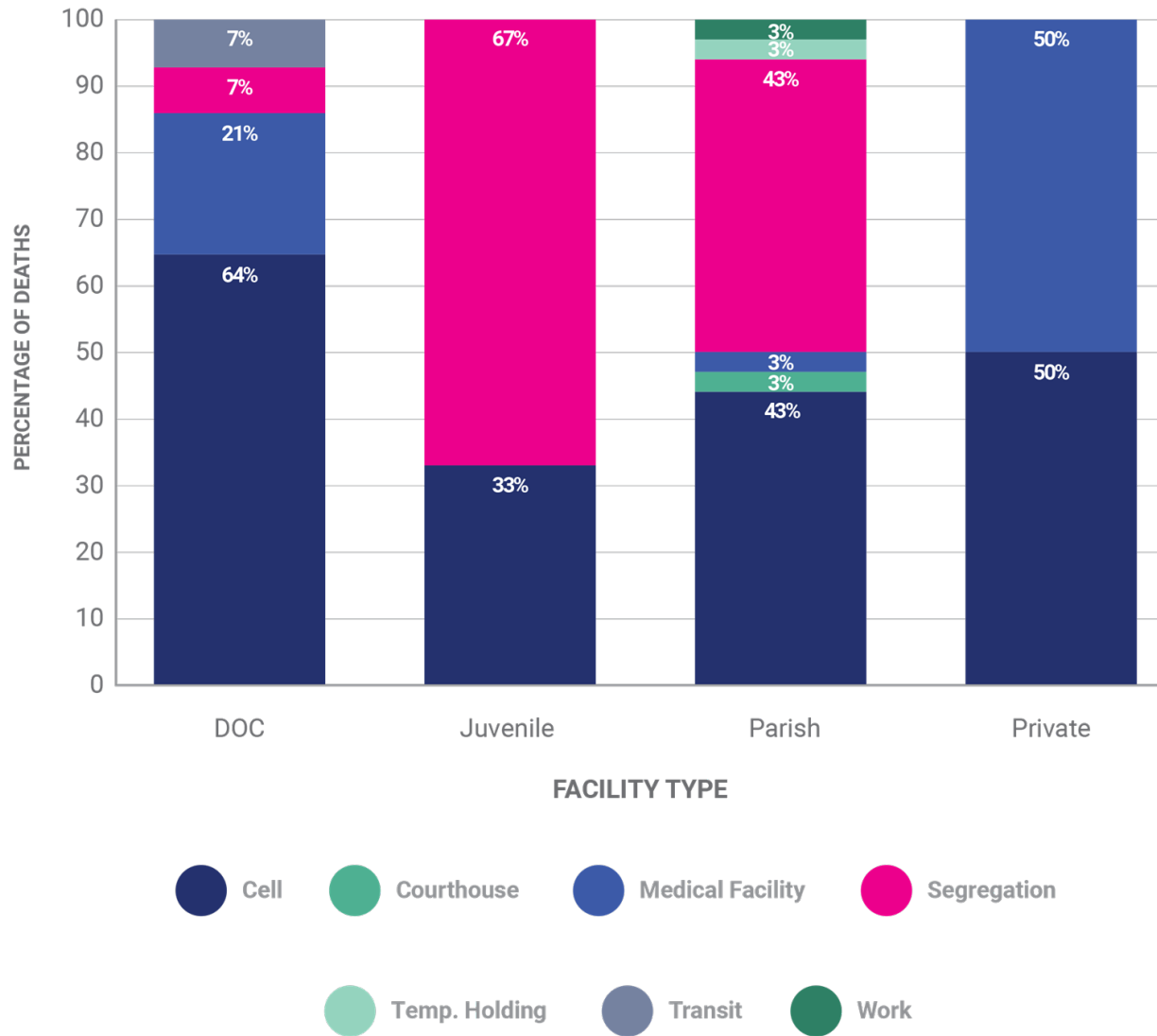


Pretrial



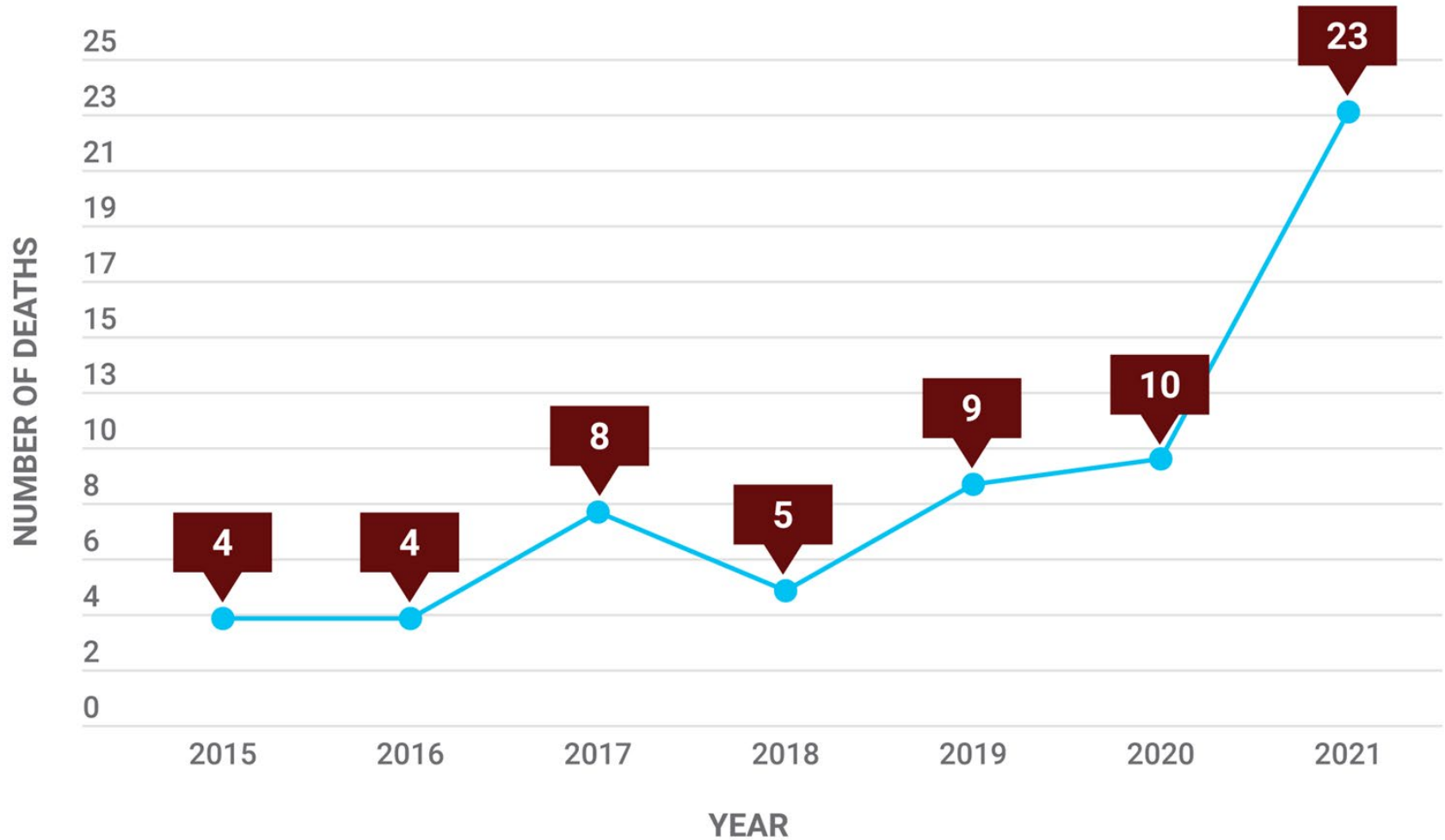
Probation Hold

Suicide deaths by facility location & facility type



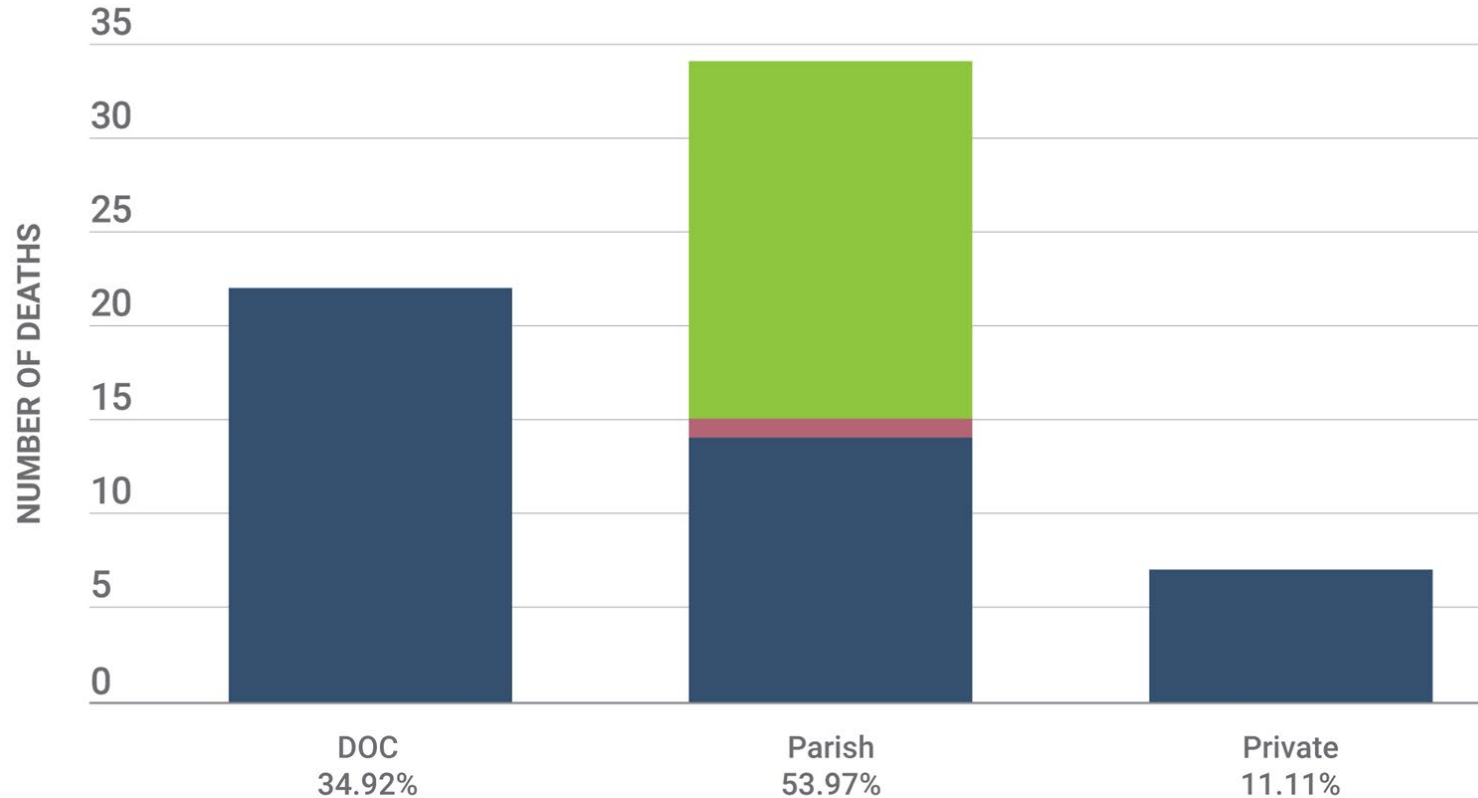
* 2015-2019 deaths only

Drug deaths by year



Total Deaths: 63

Drug deaths by trial status & facility type



Total Deaths: 63



Convicted



Parole Hold



Pretrial

Key Takeaways

1. Forensic pathology has to anticipate and address the **non-transparent and dispersed** character of carceral spaces
 2. Carceral spaces uniquely control determinants of healthcare, thus some deaths may be **attributable to the facility** context
 3. **Jails are most challenging** for data collection, but also where many preventable deaths are occurring.
 4. Federal data collection is **unreliable, yet the data is critical** for saving lives and preventing future deaths
-

Thank you!

Questions or comments?

armstron@loyno.edu