

MARCH 2022

# DECATUR COUNTY, GA JAIL TRENDS

**RURAL JAILS  
RESEARCH HUB**  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The University of Georgia, in partnership with the Decatur County Sheriff's Office, examined data on jail bookings between January 2019 and June 2020 to understand the jail trends in Decatur County, including why numbers have grown in recent years. The results from this partnership are below. This fact sheet presents information related to the charges for people entering jail in Decatur County and the length of their stays. It can be used to learn more about local jail incarceration and talk about potential options for changes in policy and the community.

## TOP FINDINGS



Almost one-quarter of people booked into the Decatur County Jail between January 2019 and June 2020 were charged with traffic or motor vehicle-related charges. Many of these bookings were not for dangerous driving, but rather for license suspensions that stemmed from unpaid fines.



Overall, most booking charges fell into three broad categories: traffic or motor vehicle-related (23%), probation or parole violations (17%), and drug-related (10%).

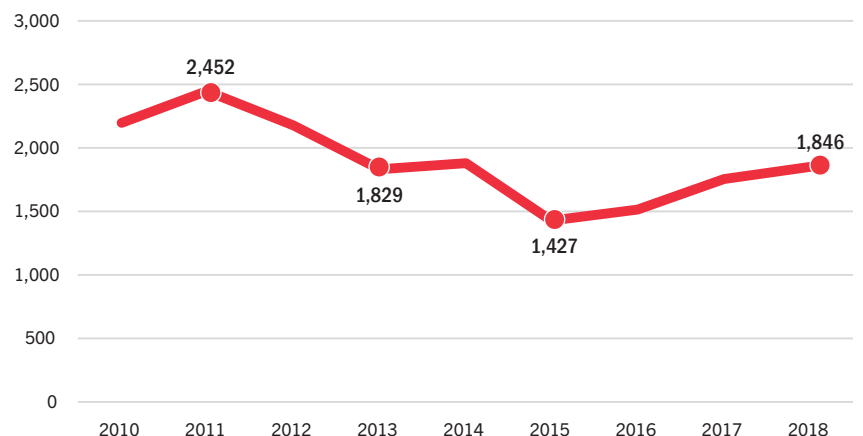


African Americans were over-represented in Decatur County Jail bookings (56%) compared to the percentage of African Americans residing in Decatur County (43%).

## THE INCARCERATION RATE IN DECATUR COUNTY HAS INCREASED SINCE 2015.

From 1970 to 2010, the jail incarceration rate in Decatur County increased by 553% from 337 per 100,000 people to 2,200 per 100,000 people (not shown). After a drop between 2011 and 2015, the jail incarceration rate increased through 2018. The 2018 rate was 1,846 per 100,000 people, which is 4.4 times higher than the Georgia jail incarceration rate of 422.

**JAIL INCARCERATION RATE PER 100,000: 2010-2018**



# BOOKING TRENDS



JANUARY 2019–JUNE 2020

## NUMBER OF CHARGES PER BOOKING

One Charge

**61%**

Two Charges

**20%**

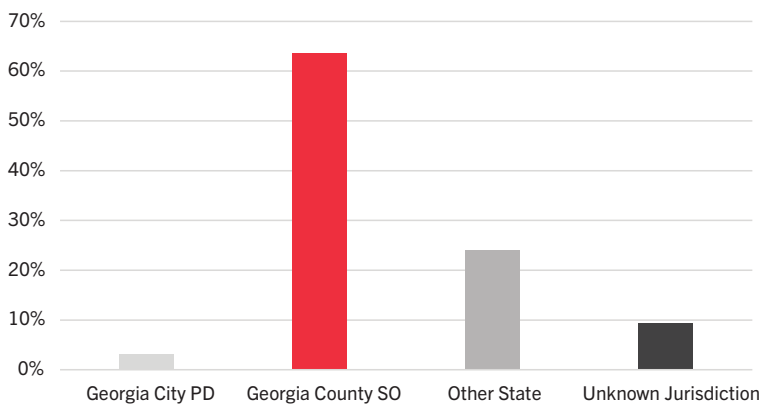
Three Charges

**10%**

Four or More Charges

**9%**

## HOLDS FOR OTHER AGENCIES



PD = Police Department • SO = Sheriff's Office

## 5% OF JAIL BOOKINGS WERE HOLDS FOR OTHER AGENCIES.

Out of 2,106 bookings, 96 were people arrested by or on behalf of other agencies. Of these holds, 64% were for sheriffs or jails in other Georgia counties, 3% were for Georgia cities, 24% were for prison agencies from other states, and 9% were for other jurisdictions.

Of those housed for other counties, the highest percentage (12%) was for Seminole County, which has its own jail.

*“Hold” refers to a person detained in a local county jail under the jurisdiction of another agency, such as another county, state corrections, or a federal agency.*

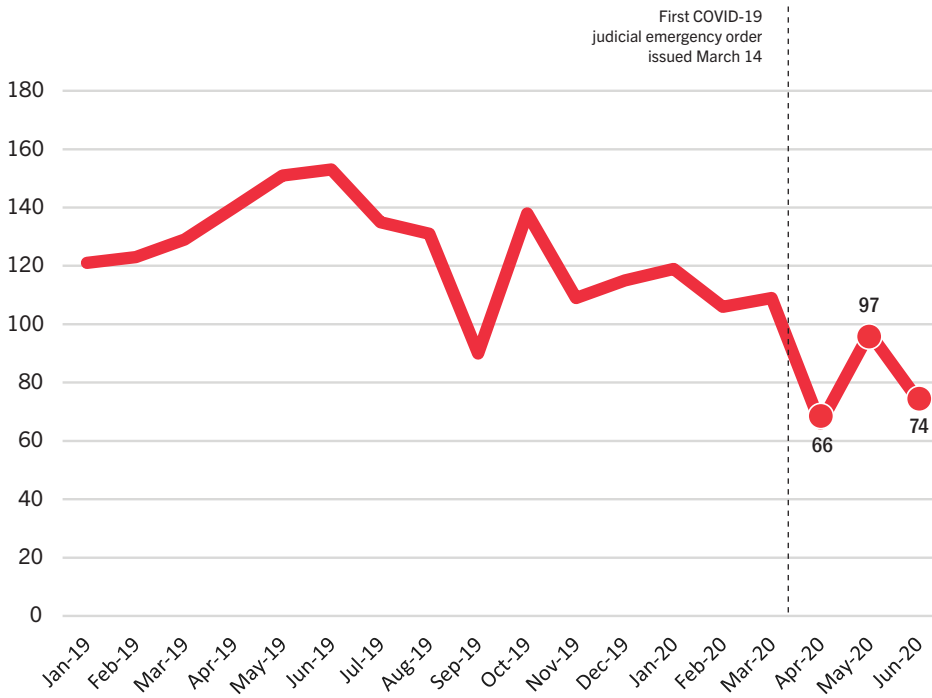
## LONGER AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY FOR PROBATION OR PAROLE VIOLATIONS.

About 45% of people booked stayed less than one day, and 66% of all those booked stayed seven days or fewer in jail. Median length of stay for traffic or motor vehicle-related charges was less than one day, meaning that most people were released quickly while a small proportion stayed in jail much longer. Median length of stay for drug-related charges was six days. People held for other agencies stayed in the county jail for seven days on average. Average length of stay for probation or parole violations was 52 days.\*

*\* In Georgia, jail stays due to probation or parole violations are influenced by set periods of jail time as a consequence for violations and by barriers to complying with conditions of probation or parole, such as fees imposed on people on probation.*



## MONTHLY BOOKINGS



## JAIL BOOKINGS DECREASED BY 24% AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BUT INCREASED IN MID-2020.

In an average month in 2019, 128 people were booked into the Decatur County Jail. During the first six months of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, bookings dropped by 24%, to 95 bookings on average per month.

In April 2020, there were only 66 total bookings, of which 13 were for probation or parole violations. Bookings increased again in May (97) and June (74) of 2020.

## MOST JAIL BOOKINGS WERE FOR NONVIOLENT CHARGES.

The most common charge categories were traffic or motor vehicle-related (23%)\*, probation or parole violations (17%), and drug-related (10%).\*\* This is in line with the most frequent charge categories across all seven counties included in the Rural Jails Research Hub. With some exceptions, these are nonviolent charges.

### TOP 5 BOOKING CHARGES



**#1**  
Traffic or Motor Vehicle-Related



**#2**  
Probation or Parole Violations



**#3**  
Drug-Related



**#4**  
Assault/Battery

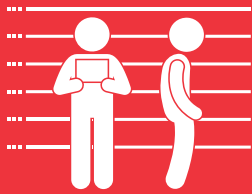


**#5**  
Theft

\* Note that the category for traffic or motor vehicle-related charges is very broad and includes everything from seat belt violations to vehicular homicide.

\*\* Many of these charges are for possession, and some are for trafficking.

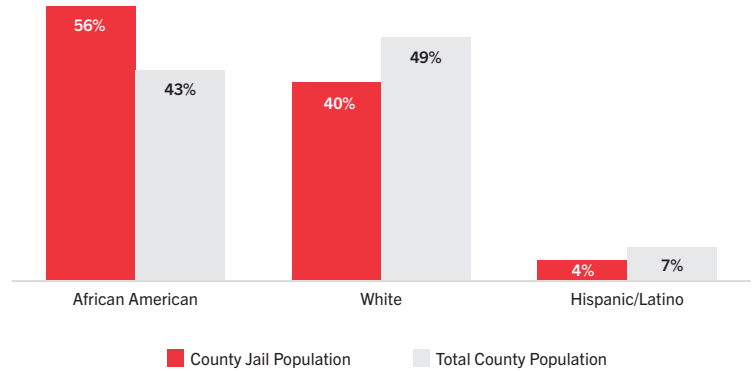
# DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS



**JANUARY 2019–JUNE 2020**

**56% OF PEOPLE BOOKED IN DECATUR COUNTY JAIL WERE AFRICAN AMERICAN, HIGHER THAN THEIR PERCENTAGE IN THE GENERAL COUNTY POPULATION.**

**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF DECATUR COUNTY JAIL COMPARED TO THE TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION**



African Americans were over-represented in jail bookings (56%) compared to the percentage of African Americans residing in Decatur County (43%).

**WOMEN MADE UP NEARLY ONE-QUARTER OF JAIL BOOKINGS.**

22% of bookings were women. Overall, the number of women in jail in Georgia increased 23-fold from 1980 to 2015. As of 2019, 15% of people in Georgia jails were women.

**DECATUR COUNTY JAIL BOOKINGS BY SEX**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
Number	<b>463</b>	<b>1,643</b>
Percent	<b>22%</b>	<b>78%</b>



**THE AVERAGE AGE OF PEOPLE BOOKED WAS 33 YEARS OLD. AGES RANGED FROM 14 TO 75 YEARS OLD.**

About one-quarter of all bookings during this period were of young adults between the ages of 14 and 27.\*



\* In Georgia, youth between the ages of 13 and 16 can be booked in jail for “seven deadly sins” charges, such as aggravated assault or aggravated robbery.

Data: This fact sheet uses data provided by the Decatur County Sheriff’s Office for January 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 and is supplemented by historical data from the Vera Institute of Justice Incarceration Trends Dataset, available on GitHub at <https://github.com/vera-institute/incarceration-trends>, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics Census of Jails, 2005-2019 Statistical Tables available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/census-jails-2005-2019-statistical-tables>. The UGA research team requested data from each county sheriff using a list of desired variables (including demographics, length of stay, and charges) and accepted the data that were provided.

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