

MARCH 2022

# HABERSHAM COUNTY, GA JAIL TRENDS

**RURAL JAILS  
RESEARCH HUB**  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The University of Georgia, in partnership with the Habersham County Sheriff's Office, examined data on jail bookings between January 2019 and June 2020 to understand the jail trends in Habersham County. The results from this partnership are below. This fact sheet presents information related to the charges for people entering jail in Habersham 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



Nearly 40% of people booked into the Habersham 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 (38%), drug-related (15%), and probation or parole violations (8%). Most of these charges were nonviolent.

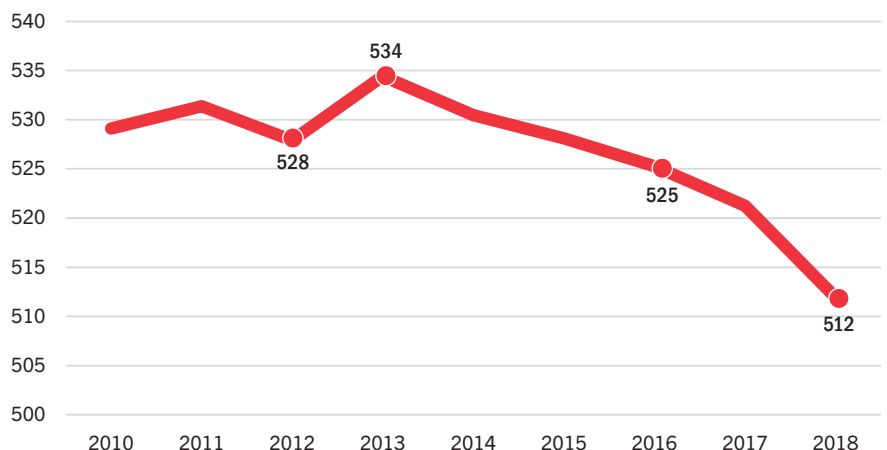


Although nearly half of people booked stayed for less than one day, median length of stay was five days for controlled substance charges and six days for not complying with court-imposed conditions (e.g., failure to appear).

## THE INCARCERATION RATE HAS DECREASED SINCE 2013.

From 1970 to 2010, the jail incarceration rate in Habersham County increased by 404%, from 105 per 100,000 people to 530 per 100,000 people (not shown). After a rise between 2012 and 2013, the jail incarceration rate decreased through 2018. The 2018 rate was 512 per 100,000 people, which is 1.2 times higher than the Georgia rate of 422.

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



# BOOKING TRENDS



**JANUARY 2019–JUNE 2020**

## NUMBER OF CHARGES PER BOOKING

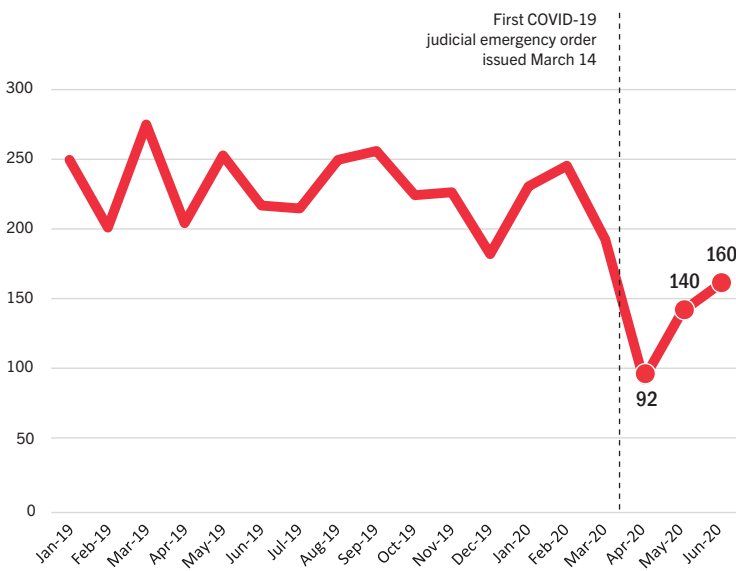
One Charge  
**52%**

Two Charges  
**22%**

Three Charges  
**12%**

Four or More Charges  
**14%**

### 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, 229 people were booked into the Habersham County Jail. During the first six months of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, bookings dropped by 24%, to 175 bookings on average per month.

In April 2020, there were only 92 total bookings, of which 54 were for misdemeanors and 34 were for felonies. Five bookings were for probation or parole violations in April 2020. Bookings increased again in May (140) and June (160) of 2020.

## **MOST JAIL BOOKINGS WERE FOR NONVIOLENT CHARGES.**

The most common charge categories were traffic or motor vehicle-related (38%),\* drug-related (15%),\*\* and probation or parole violations (8%). This is in line with the most frequent charge categories across all seven counties included in the Rural Jails Research Hub.

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

\*\* Many drug-related charges are for possession, and some are for trafficking.

### TOP 5 BOOKING CHARGES



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



**#2**  
**Drug-Related**



**#3**  
**Probation or Parole Violations**

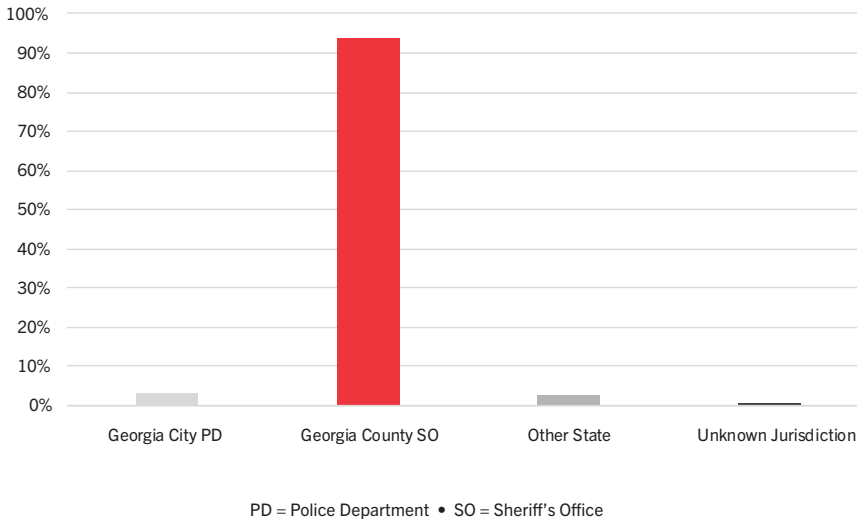


**#4**  
**Criminal Procedure**



**#5**  
**Theft**

### **HOLDS FOR OTHER AGENCIES**



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

Out of 3,811 bookings, 178 were people arrested by or on behalf of other agencies. Of these holds, 93% were for sheriffs or jails in other Georgia counties, 3% were for Georgia cities, and 3% were for agencies from other states.

Of those housed for other counties, the highest percentage (27%) was for Rabun 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.*



### **THE AVERAGE AGE OF PEOPLE BOOKED WAS 35 YEARS OLD.**

**AGES RANGED FROM 18 TO 93 YEARS OLD.**

**ABOUT ONE-QUARTER OF ALL BOOKINGS WERE YOUNG ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 17 AND 28 YEARS OLD.**

### **JAIL BOOKINGS FOR MINOR INFRACTIONS SAW LONGER AVERAGE LENGTHS OF STAY.**

About 46% of people booked stayed less than one day, and 71% of all those booked stayed seven days or fewer in jail. The median length of stay for a traffic or motor vehicle-related charge was one day, while those booked for drug-related charges was five days. For criminal procedure charges, the median length of stay was six days. People held for other agencies stayed for 14 days on average. The average length of stay for probation or parole violations was 64 days.\*



*\* In Georgia, jail stays due to probation or parole violations are influenced by set periods of 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.*



**Data:** This fact sheet uses data provided by the Habersham 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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