

MARCH 2022

TOWNS COUNTY, GA JAIL TRENDS

**RURAL JAILS
RESEARCH HUB**
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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

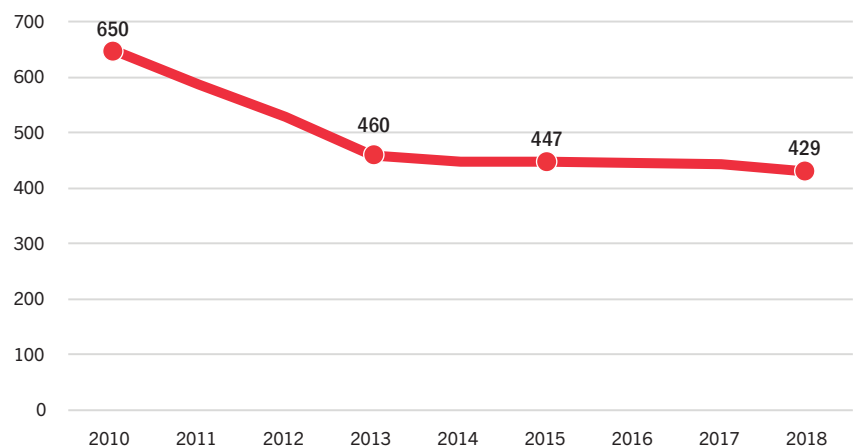


Overall, most booking charges fell into three broad categories: traffic or motor vehicle-related (37%), drug-related (31%), and probation or parole violations (10%). Most of these charges were nonviolent.



About 40% of people booked in the Towns County Jail were denied bond or had bond revoked. Excluding probation or parole violations, the most common charges denied bond or for which bond was revoked were drug-related (31%).

JAIL INCARCERATION RATE PER 100,000: 2010-2018



THE INCARCERATION RATE HAS DECREASED SINCE 2010.

From 1970 to 2010, the jail incarceration rate in Towns County increased by 371%, from 138 per 100,000 people to 650 per 100,000 people (not shown). After a significant drop between 2010 and 2013, the jail incarceration rate gradually decreased through 2018. The 2018 rate was 429 per 100,000 people, which is on par with the Georgia jail incarceration rate of 422.

BOOKING TRENDS



JANUARY 2019–JUNE 2020

NUMBER OF CHARGES PER BOOKING

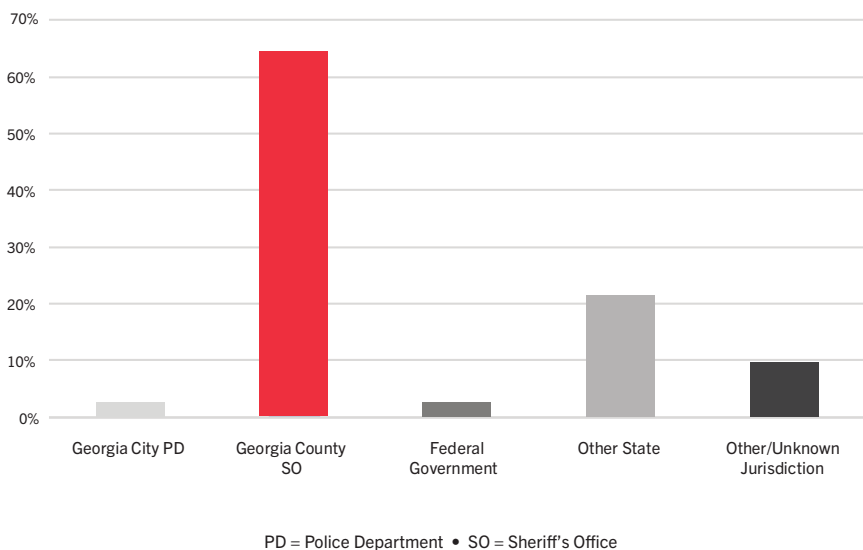
One Charge
44%

Two Charges
25%

Three Charges
14%

Four or More Charges
17%

HOLDS FOR OTHER AGENCIES

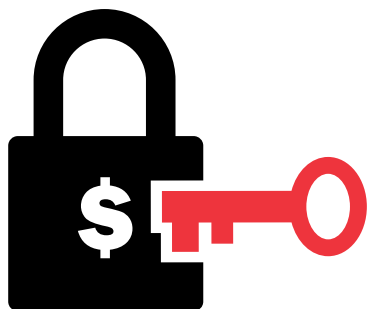


5% OF JAIL BOOKINGS WERE HOLDS FOR OTHER AGENCIES.

Out of 913 bookings, 42 were people arrested by or on behalf of other agencies. Of these holds, 64% were for sheriffs or jails in other Georgia counties, 2% were for Georgia cities, 21% were for prison agencies from other states, and 2% were for federal agencies.

Of those housed for other counties, the second highest percentage (10%) was for Clay County, which does not have 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.



Bond amounts imposed ranged from **\$4** to **\$75,000**, with a median bond of **\$2,500**.

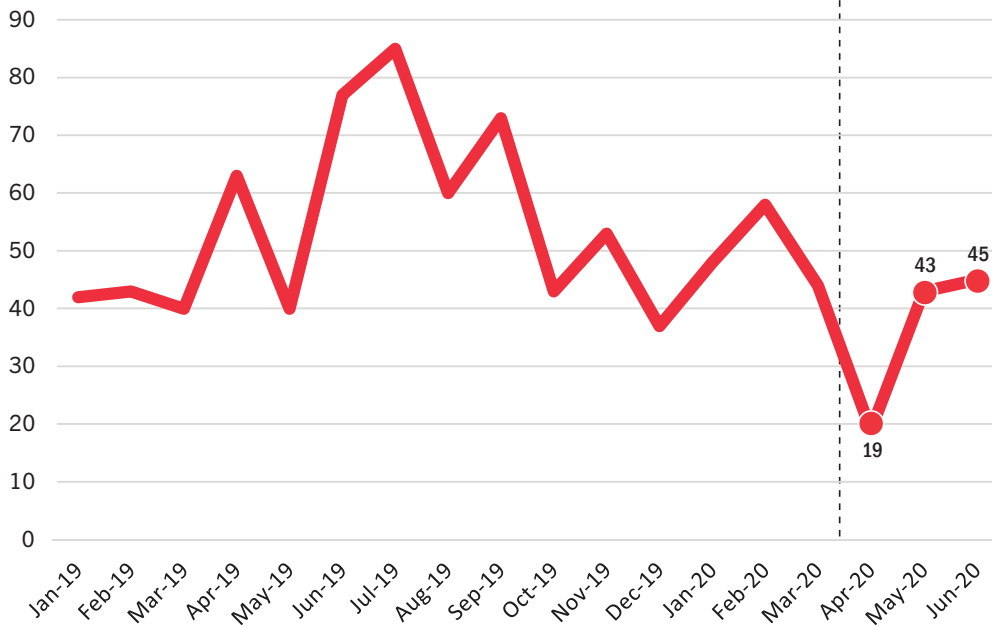
39% OF ALL PEOPLE BOOKED WERE DENIED BOND OR HAD BOND REVOKED.

Out of all bookings, over one-third (39%) were held without bond, either because they were initially denied bond or had bond revoked (for example, for failure to comply with pretrial release conditions). Aside from probation or parole violations, people in jail without bond were most commonly held for drug-related charges (31%), traffic or motor vehicle-related charges (10%), or for not complying with court-imposed conditions (e.g., failure to appear) (6%).

Among the broad charge categories for those granted bond, the median bond amount was \$1,000 for assault/battery, \$7,000 for theft, and \$2,731 for criminal procedure (e.g., failure to appear).

MONTHLY BOOKINGS

First COVID-19
judicial emergency order
issued March 14



JAIL BOOKINGS DECREASED BY 22% AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BUT INCREASED IN MID-2020.

In an average month in 2019, 55 people were booked into the Towns County Jail. During the first six months of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, bookings dropped by 22%, to 43 bookings on average per month.

In April 2020, there were only 19 total bookings, including just one booking for a probation or parole violation. Bookings increased again in May (43) and June (45) of 2020.

MOST JAIL BOOKINGS WERE FOR NONVIOLENT CHARGES.

The most common charge categories were traffic or motor vehicle-related (37%)*, drug-related (31%)** and probation or parole violations (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. Three percent of all charges were for criminal procedure violations, most commonly failure to appear in court.

TOP 5 BOOKING CHARGES



#1
Traffic or Motor
Vehicle-Related



#2
Drug-Related



#3
Probation or
Parole Violations



#4
Theft

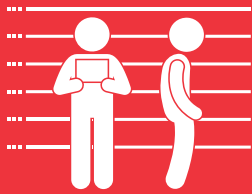


#5
Criminal
Procedure

* 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

WOMEN MADE UP NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF JAIL BOOKINGS.

30% of bookings were women. The most common charges were similar for both men and women, although drug-related charges were higher for women (36%) than for men (28%), while traffic or motor vehicle-related charges were slightly more common for men (39%) than women (33%).

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.

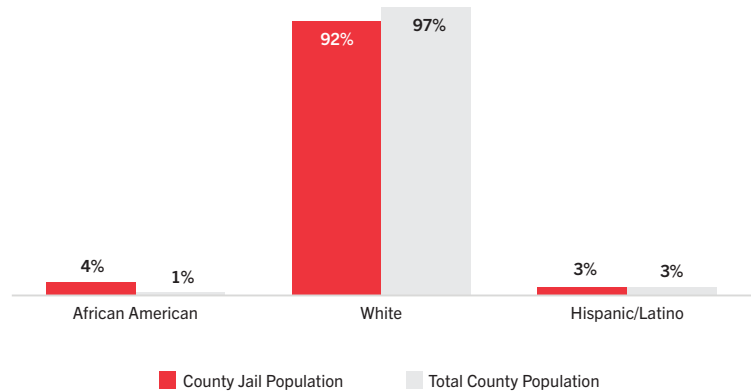


TOWNS COUNTY JAIL BOOKINGS BY SEX

	Female	Male
Number	270	643
Percent	30%	70%

4% OF PEOPLE BOOKED IN THE TOWNS COUNTY JAIL WERE AFRICAN AMERICAN. THIS WAS MORE THAN TRIPLE THE PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE GENERAL COUNTY POPULATION.

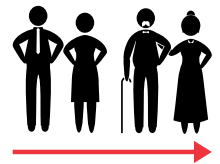
RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF TOWNS COUNTY JAIL COMPARED TO TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION



African Americans were over-represented in jail bookings (4%) compared to the percentage of African Americans residing in Towns County (1%).

THE AVERAGE AGE OF PEOPLE BOOKED WAS 38 YEARS OLD. AGES RANGED FROM 17 TO 79 YEARS OLD.

About one-fifth of all bookings were of young adults between ages 17 and 26. The most common charge categories for this age group were traffic or motor vehicle-related (40%) and drug-related (34%).



Data: This fact sheet uses data provided by the Towns 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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