

People In Jail and Prison in 2022: Methodology and Source Notes

Jail data: Researchers from the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) obtained jail population data for U.S. jail jurisdictions from various sources. Some population numbers came from statewide sources and others came directly from local agencies, either through direct data requests or from an automated system that collected data from jail websites. Vera collected data for the following timepoints.

- 2021: spring, midyear, fall, and end-of-year.
- 2022: spring, midyear, and fall.

Overall, Vera sampled 1,452 jurisdictions from 44 states and the District of Columbia for 2022, accounting for 526,100 incarcerated people. (Six states do not operate local jails.) The 1,452 jurisdictions in the 2022 sample accounted for 76 percent of people incarcerated in 2019, the last year that the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released data on all jails in the United States. A public use datafile with jurisdiction-level data for 2021 and 2022 is available on Vera's website.¹

Vera obtained recent, comprehensive jail data from 16 states. Vera obtained information from the ten states where central agencies collect and publicly share timely data (monthly or weekly) on jails at the local-jurisdiction level: California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. These state-level reports cover over 830 jurisdictions. Vera researchers also obtained statewide data on local jails from Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, and North Carolina from agencies via public records request. The New Mexico Association of Counties provided data on jails in New Mexico. Vera collected data on jails in Louisiana in a variety of ways but included all jails in the state. These data sources covered around 290 jurisdictions.

Vera researchers obtained data on an additional 355 jail jurisdictions. Vera collected data from a large number of these jails in an automated way from jail websites. New York University Public Safety Lab's Jail Data Initiative supplied data for additional jail jurisdictions that would not otherwise have been in the sample.² Vera also collected data on jail populations from the MacArthur Foundation's Justice and Safety Challenge.³ Vera also collected data directly from state and local government agencies through phone calls and public records requests.

The jail estimates presented in this paper are of the jail *custodial* population, rather than the jurisdictional population. Custodial jail populations and jurisdictional jail populations measure different sets of people. Because jails rent their space to state and federal authorities, people under the *custody* of a jail system may be under the *jurisdiction* of a state prison system or a federal agency, such as ICE. The custody population counts everyone who is in a local jail, although some of these people are serving a prison sentence or may be facing a civil immigration charge.

To validate recent jail population data, Vera researchers compared estimates gathered from individual jurisdictions to the counts reported in other months of the year, as well as other available sources, to determine their plausibility. In addition, researchers spot-checked counts that differed substantially from those numbers available from BJS for 2013 through 2021.

Vera computed national jail population estimates using a method similar to the sample-weighting technique that BJS uses to estimate the national jail population from the Annual Survey of Jails responses. Vera divided all U.S. jail jurisdictions into strata based on the

average daily population in 2019, as reported on the 2019 Census of Jails. The BJS sampling method computes sample weights within seven strata; however, because the sampling strategy here was not random, Vera instead computed the population estimate over a range of strata (25 to 75) and subsequently averaged the results. The researchers determined this range via a sensitivity analysis on the number of strata, which substantially increased the stability of the national jail population estimate.

Prison data: Vera derived U.S. prison population estimates from information for all states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

National prison estimates presented in this report are of the jurisdictional population, rather than the custodial population. Jurisdictional prison populations and custodial prison populations measure different sets of people. People under the jurisdiction of a prison system are those whom the correctional authority has the legal responsibility to confine, no matter where they are held. The jurisdiction population is, therefore, the most accurate representation of the scope of incarceration because it includes people held on behalf of the correctional authority in private prisons or facilities other than prisons (jails, hospitals, halfway houses, etc.). The number of people in the custody of a prison system is the number of people actually confined in a facility directly operated by the jurisdiction's correctional authority. This does not include people held on a contract basis in county jail facilities—a substantial part of the prison population in states like Utah and Louisiana. In some states, the number of people in the custody of a prison system includes people held for other jurisdictions (mainly other state prison systems). To avoid problems of over- or underinclusiveness that come with using custody counts, this report presents jurisdictional counts.

Six states—Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont—operate unified jail and prison systems. This makes them less comparable to states that operate only a state prison system (generally for people convicted of felonies), where local jurisdictions operate jails for pretrial detention and shorter sentences. For these states with unified systems, Vera collected both the larger jurisdictional count that includes people on pretrial detention, as well as the sentenced prison count.

National combined estimates: Vera researchers derived the total incarcerated population estimate by adding the number of people incarcerated under prison jurisdictions to the number of people in the custody of local jails, with a small reduction to address double counting. Without this reduction, people serving prison sentences in local jails would be counted twice. According to research by BJS, from 2008 to 2018, the average reduction needed to account for people under state prison jurisdiction held in local jails was 3.6 percent, or 82,900 people.⁴ Vera researchers applied the same 3.6 percent adjustment to the total incarceration estimate, reducing the count by 68,233 people in fall 2022.

A note on seasonality, as this report compares counts within a particular year: Prison populations do not show as much seasonal variation as jail populations and tend to be more stable. Jail populations tend to be lowest toward the end of the year, with populations usually dropping to an annual low in late December—likely due to changes in arrest and bail practices near the holidays and New Year. BJS has long used the end of December to

measure prison population counts and the end of June to measure jail populations, based on historical evidence that a June measure is more representative of an average daily population. According to an analysis of seasonality published by BJS, drawing on data from the National Crime Victimization survey, violent victimization rates are highest in the fall and lowest in the winter, with a difference of 4.4 percent between the two.⁵ Property crime victimization rates are highest in the summer and lowest in the spring, with a difference of 8.0 percent.⁶ Most relevant for this study, property crime victimization declines 3.1 percent from summer to fall on average, and violent crime increases 1.83 percent from summer to fall, on average.

The researchers calculated incarceration rates per 100,000 residents in each state, including people of all ages. The resident population data is from the U.S. Census Bureau's annual estimates released in December 2022.⁷ Vera researchers calculated the incarceration rates discussed in the text by dividing each jurisdiction's incarcerated-population estimate by the total resident population for the appropriate geographic unit (United States or geographical region) and multiplying the result by 100,000.

States and localities rarely publish data on incarceration by race, ethnicity, or gender. As a result, this report focuses on overall incarceration numbers. BJS will continue to release its own jail and prison population estimates, along with estimates of several other jail-related incarceration measures, in the future. BJS, through the Annual Survey of Jails and the Census of Jails data collection programs, releases these figures in its Jail Inmates Series reports, as well as in the Correctional Populations in the United States series. Prison statistics collected through the National Prisoner Statistics data collection program are released in the Prisoners Series reports. These prison reports provide detailed breakdowns by race and gender; however, the jail reports only cover gender and race separately. The most recent BJS report for prisons and jails, which provides 2021 data, was released in December 2022.⁸

Jail jurisdiction source notes

Eleven states have agencies that produce reports that detail a set of local jail population statistics for every county in the state, as listed below. Some of these reports include all jails in the state; others are more limited and do not include city jails, work-release jails, or certain county-operated prisons. In an additional two states, individual organizations, rather than a state agency, collect complete information about local jails from each county: Louisiana (Vera Institute of Justice), and New Mexico (New Mexico Association of Counties). The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction collects midyear jail population data through jail inspections but does not publish this information and does not systematically collect jail population data at any other point in the year. Indiana's Department of Correction also collects data on jail populations but does not publish this information publicly.

California: For county jail populations see California's Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), Jail Profile Survey data, available upon request from BSCC and on file with authors.

Florida: For average daily county jail populations, see *Florida County Detention Facilities Average Inmate Population* reports, prepared by the Florida Department of Corrections

Bureau of Research and Data Analysis, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/jails/>.

Georgia: For county jail populations on the first Thursday of the month, see Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Office of Research, *County Jail Inmate Population Report*, <https://www.dca.ga.gov/node/3811/documents/2086>.

Kentucky: For county jail populations, see Kentucky Department of Corrections, Research and Statistics, *Weekly Jail* reports, <http://corrections.ky.gov/About/researchandstats/Pages/WeeklyJail.aspx>.

Massachusetts: For weekly county house of correction and jail population reports, see Massachusetts Department of Correction, *Weekly Inmate Count 2022*, County/Interstate Correctional Facilities, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/weekly-inmate-count-2022>.

New York: For average daily county jail populations, see New York Division of Criminal Justice Services, *Jail Population in New York State, Average Daily Census by Month*, https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/jail_population.pdf.

North Carolina: For end-of-month local jail populations, Vera received data from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services through a public records request.

Tennessee: For end-of-month, one-day snapshots of jail populations, see Tennessee Department of Correction, Decision Support: Research & Planning, *Tennessee Jail Summary Report*, <https://www.tn.gov/correction/statistics-and-information/jail-summary-reports.html>.

Texas: For first-of-month, one-day snapshot jail populations, see Texas Commission on Jail Standards, *County Jail Population, Abbreviated Population Report*, <https://www.tcjs.state.tx.us/population-reports/>.

Virginia: Virginia jail populations are reported by the Virginia Compensation Board through the Local Inmate Data System, see <https://www.scb.virginia.gov/lids.cfm>.

West Virginia: West Virginia has a regional jail system in which all counties participate. For regional jail population data, see *COVID-19 Testing*, W.Va. Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, <https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities-report-archive.aspx>.

Prison jurisdiction source notes

Alabama: For jurisdictional populations in September 30, 2022, see *Alabama Department of Corrections, Monthly Statistical Report for September 2022*, <http://www.doc.state.al.us/docs/MonthlyRpts/September%202022.pdf>.

Alaska: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the Alaska Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Arizona: For jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, see *Arizona Department of Corrections, Institutional Capacity & Committed Population, for the Month Ending September 30, 2022*, under “Total Prison Inmate Population” column and row.
<https://corrections.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/Bed%20Capacity/2022/bed-capacity-sep22.pdf>.

Arkansas: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the Arkansas Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

California: The jurisdictional population numbers include total population in custody/community rehabilitative pre-release programs (CRPP) supervision, as well as the population temporarily released to court and hospital.

For the jurisdiction population for September 30, 2022, see *California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Monthly Total Population Report as of Midnight September 30, 2022*, <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/174/2022/10/Tpop1d2209.pdf>.

Colorado: For jurisdictional population on September 30, 2022, see *Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Report as of September 30, 2022*.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nd_NHi5wXpcbbr3GhJhybPZlfeoz-fMP/view.

Connecticut: For the jurisdictional populations on September 30, 2022, see *Connecticut Correctional Facility Total Population Counts Report*. https://cjis-dashboard.ct.gov/CJPPD_REPORTS/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Total_Counts.

Delaware: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the Delaware Department of Correction in response to a Vera public information request.

Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP): For the jurisdictional populations on September 22, 2022, see Federal Bureau of Prisons, *Population Statistics*, “Total Federal Inmates,” September 22, 2022,
https://web.archive.org/web/20221007183533/https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population_statistics.jsp.

Florida: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the Florida Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Georgia: For the jurisdictional population on October 1, 2022, *Georgia Department of Corrections, Inmate Statistical Profile: All Active Inmates, October 2022*, page 4 table, “Current age, broken out in ten-year age groups.”
https://gdc.ga.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Profile_all_inmates_2022_09.pdf.

Hawaii: For jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, see *Hawaii Department of Public Safety End of Month Population Report, September 30, 2022*.
<https://dps.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Pop-Reports-EOM-2022-09-30.pdf>.

Idaho: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the

Idaho Department of Correction in response to a Vera public information request.

Illinois: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Illinois Department of Correction in response to a Vera public information request.

Indiana: The total jurisdictional population includes the total number of people imprisoned in Department of Correction facilities and people imprisoned in local jails on Department of Correction contract.

For jurisdictional population on October 1, 2022, see *Indiana Department of Correction, October 2022 Offender Population Report*, page 4. <https://www.in.gov/idoc/files/Indiana-Department-of-Correction-October-2022-Total-Population-Summary.pdf>.

Iowa: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Iowa Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Kansas: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the Kansas Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Kentucky: For jurisdictional numbers of September 30, 2022, see *Kentucky Department of Corrections Statewide Population Report for September 30, 2022*, table “Grand Total.” <https://corrections.ky.gov/About/researchandstats/Documents/Daily%20Population/2022/09/09-30-22.pdf>.

Louisiana: The jurisdictional population on September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Maine: For the average daily jurisdictional populations in September, see *Maine Department of Corrections Adult Data Report, December 2022*, page 3, table “Incarcerated Population.” <https://www.maine.gov/corrections/sites/maine.gov.corrections/files/inline-files/December%202022%20Monthly%20Adult%20Data%20Report.pdf>.

Maryland: The jurisdictional population for September 2022 was reported directly by the Maryland Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services in response to Vera public information request.

Massachusetts: The total jurisdictional population includes figures reported under the Total Jurisdictional Population minus the Electronic Monitoring Program.

For the jurisdictional population for October 31, 2022, see *Massachusetts Department of Correction Weekly County Sheet, October 31, 2022*. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/weekly-inmate-count-10312022/download>.

Michigan: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Michigan Department of Corrections.

Minnesota: The jurisdictional population for October 1, 2022, were reported directly by the Minnesota Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Mississippi: The jurisdictional populations include the custody population, other custody count, and off-grounds medical populations.

For the jurisdictional population for October 1, 2022, see *Mississippi Department of Corrections, Fact Sheet as of October 1, 2022*. <https://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Admin-Finance/MonthlyFacts/10-03-22-Corrected.pdf>.

Missouri: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Missouri Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Montana: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, are available at the Montana Department of Corrections *Daily Population Report Dashboard*. https://dataportal.mt.gov/t/COR/views/POPReportPublic_15931787918580/SecurePopulation?%3Aiid=2&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y.

Nebraska: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services in response to a Vera public information request.

Nevada: For the jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, see *Nevada Department of Corrections, StatFacts Monthly as of September 30, 2022*. https://doc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/docnv.gov/content/About/Statistics/Monthly_Reports_by_Year/20220930_StatFacts%20version%202.pdf.

New Hampshire: For the jurisdictional population for September 1, 2022, see *New Hampshire Department of Correction Monthly Facility Population Summary Report*. <https://www.nh.gov/nhdoc/documents/population-summary.pdf>.

New Jersey: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the New Jersey Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

New Mexico: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the New Mexico Corrections Department in response to a Vera public information request.

New York: For the jurisdictional population on October 1, 2022, see *New York State Corrections and Community Supervision Fact Sheet, October 1, 2022*, page 3 table “Staffing and Population Differences.” https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/10/doccs-fact-sheet-october-2022_0.pdf.

North Carolina: For the jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, see *North Carolina Department of Adult Correction Research and Planning, Automated System Query*. <https://webapps.doc.state.nc.us/apps/asqExt/ASQ>.

North Dakota: The jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, were reported directly by the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in response to a Vera public information request.

Ohio: Jurisdictional population on October 4, 2022, obtained by Vera from *Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Population Count Sheets 2022 - 10 - 04*, page 2, on file with the authors.

Vera calculated the jurisdictional numbers by adding the Total Population, Absent Without Leave (AWL), and Out To Court (OTC) figures.

Oklahoma: For the jurisdictional population on October 3, 2022, see *OK Department of Corrections, Incarcerated Inmates and Community Supervision Offenders Daily Count Sheet*. <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/doc/documents/population/count-sheet/2022/OMS%20Count%2010-03-2022.pdf>. See row and column “Grand Total,” and “Total County Jail Transfers Pending.”

Oregon: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Oregon Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Pennsylvania: For the jurisdictional population on September 30, 2022, see *Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Monthly Population Report As of September 30, 2022*, page 1, table “PA DOC Monthly Population v. Capacity.” <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Statistics/Documents/Monthly%20Population%20Reports/Mtpop2209.pdf>.

Rhode Island: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Rhode Island Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

South Carolina: The jurisdictional population for September 19, 2022, was reported directly by the South Carolina Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

South Dakota: For the jurisdictional population for September 2022, see *South Dakota Department of Corrections Average Daily Population, FY 2012 - 2023*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230301235939/https://doc.sd.gov/documents/AdultADPDec2022.pdf>.

Tennessee: For the jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, see the “TDOC Facilities” and “TDOC Backup” numbers in *Tennessee Felon Population Update, September 2022*, page 4, table “Incarcerated Felon Populations, Fiscal Years 2012/13 - 2022/23, as of September 30, 2022.” <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/correction/documents/FelonSeptember2022.pdf>.

Texas: Texas was not able to report its jurisdiction numbers for June 30, 2022, or September 30, 2022, by time of publication. Instead, Texas was able to report an “on-hand” population number, which is substantially lower because it does not count certain people held in local jails for the state Department of Criminal Justice. To account for these differences, Vera researchers estimated jurisdiction numbers for Texas, combining the “on-hand” populations reported by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for June 30, 2022, and September 30, 2022, with statistics from the Texas Commission on Jail Standards

(TCJS) for July 1, 2020, and August 1, 2022 (TCJS has stopped publishing jail population statistics). Using this method to estimate jurisdiction numbers between the years 2015 and 2018—adding together the on-hand population with the number of people held in local jails on parole violations, people convicted of felonies awaiting transfer, and people with a state jail status—produced numbers that are very similar to reported total jurisdiction numbers. They differ by an average of 391 people between 2015 and 2018, or 0.2 percentage points.

Utah: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Utah Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Vermont: For the jurisdictional population for October 3, 2022, see *Vermont Department of Correction Jail Population as of 10/03/2022*.

<https://doc.vermont.gov/sites/correct/files/documents/October%202022%20Population%20Reports.pdf>.

Virginia: The jurisdictional populations for September, 2022, and prior quarters reported here were calculated by combining information from the Virginia Department of Corrections Monthly Population Summary, <https://vadoc.virginia.gov/general-public/population-reports/>, with information from the Compensation Board’s records on the number of people held in local jails that the state is responsible for (SR felons), reported through the Local Inmate Data System, <https://www.scb.virginia.gov/lids.cfm>.

Washington: For the average daily jurisdictional populations in September 2022 see, *Washington Department of Corrections, Average Daily Population of Incarcerated Individuals, Fiscal year 2023*. <https://www.doc.wa.gov/docs/publications/reports/400-RE002.pdf>.

West Virginia: For the jurisdictional populations for September 30, 2022, see *COVID-19 testing and case information, West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation*, table, “Correctional Centers (prisons).” https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Documents/COVID19_DCR_2022_12-29.pdf.

Wisconsin: For the jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, see *Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Persons in Our Care on 09_30_2022*, page 1 table, “Adult Institutions,” and page 2 table “Probation and Parole in Custody.” <https://doc.wi.gov/DataResearch/WeeklyPopulationReports/09302022.pdf>.

Wyoming: The jurisdictional population for September 30, 2022, was reported directly by the Wyoming Department of Corrections in response to a Vera public information request.

Endnotes

¹ The full report and accompanying dataset can be found at <https://www.vera.org/publications/people-in-jail-and-prison-in-2022>.

² See New York University Public Safety Lab, “Jail Data Initiative,” <https://jaildatainitiative.org/>.

³ See Safety and Justice Challenge, “Measuring Progress: Jail Trends in SJC Sites,” <https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/measuring-progress-jail-trends-in-sjc-sites/>.

⁴ See Laura M. Maruschak and Todd D. Minton, *Correctional Populations in The United States, 2017-2018*, (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020), 2, table 1: “Number of persons supervised by adult correctional systems in the U.S., by correctional status, 2008-2018,” <https://perma.cc/NC37-ZGHN>.

⁵ See Janet Lauritsen and Nicole White, *Seasonal Patterns in Criminal Victimization Trends*, (Washington DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), 7, <https://perma.cc/AWX7-4YS5>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ See “State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020-2022, Vintage 2022,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/pepstat/2020s-state-total.html>.

⁸ See E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2020 - Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/prisoners-2021-statistical-tables>; and Zhen Zeng, *Jail Inmates in 2021 - Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/jail-inmates-2021-statistical-tables>.

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The Vera Institute of Justice is powered by hundreds of advocates, researchers, and policy experts working to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they’re fair for all. Founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City, Vera is now a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government leaders for change. We develop just, antiracist solutions so that money doesn’t determine freedom; fewer people are in jails, prisons, and immigration detention; and everyone is treated with dignity. Vera’s headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York, with offices in Washington, DC, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. For more information, visit vera.org.

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