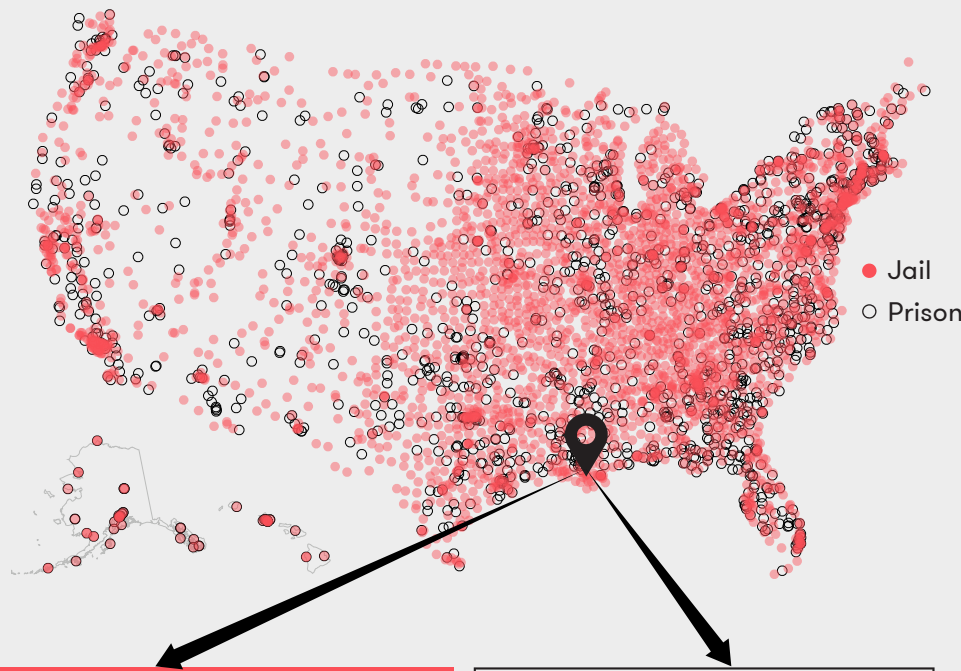


Amite County

MARCH 2021

MISSISSIPPI

There are a staggering **1.8 million people** behind bars in the United States, a number so big it can make mass incarceration seem abstract.¹ But mass incarceration is a local problem, driven by more than **3,000** county-run jails and local justice systems and nearly **18,000** police departments.



30 people
were in the Amite County jail on a typical day in 2009.

79 people
from Amite County were in state prison at the end of 2016.

Jails are primarily funded by county-level taxpayer dollars and are used to lock up people who are awaiting trial but have not been convicted of the charges they are facing. The vast majority of people in jail are simply too poor to pay bail. Some jails also hold people serving shorter prison sentences, and many jails rent beds to the state prison system or federal authorities—like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Most jails are run by elected sheriffs or jailers.

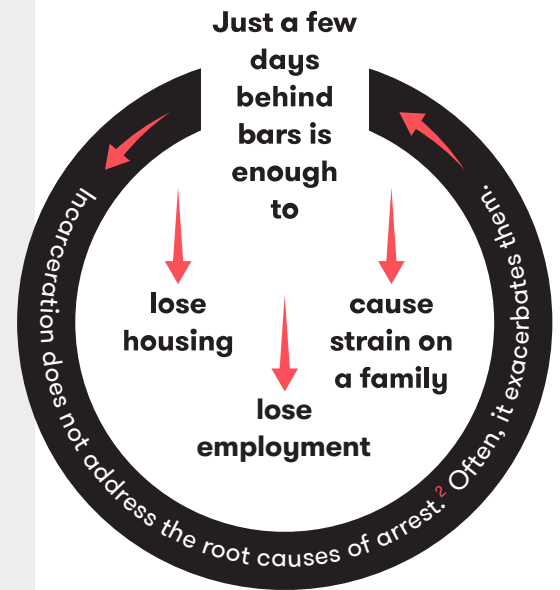
Prisons are primarily funded by state and federal tax dollars and hold people serving sentences of more than a year. Prisons are run by state departments of corrections and are managed by wardens. Fewer than 9 percent of incarcerated people are held in private prisons.

This fact sheet will

help you understand who is locked up in your county jail and how this impacts your community.

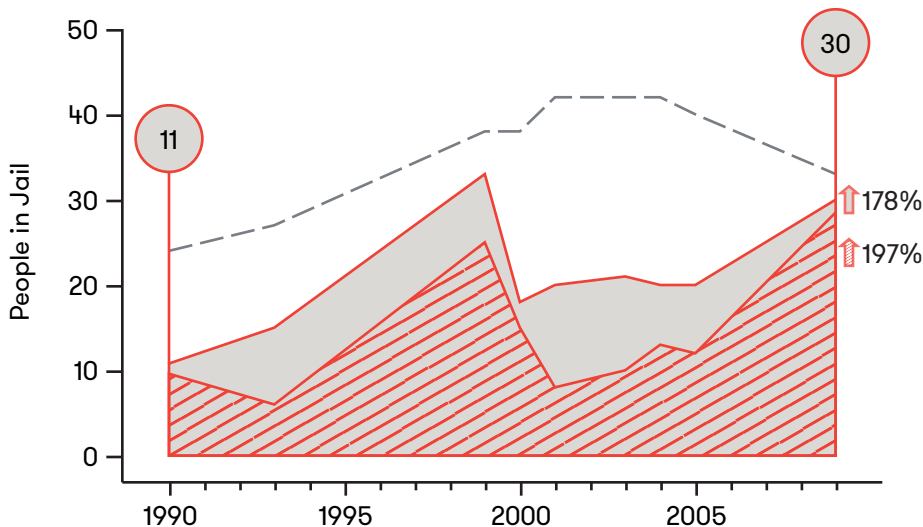
Use it to:

- Explore trends
- Talk about their impact
- Change the system



County jail population

█ Total jail population - - - Jail capacity
▨ Pretrial jail population



Rising incarceration

On an average day in 2009, 30 people were being held in the county jail, 91 percent of the total capacity. The 178 percent increase in incarceration since 1990 does not necessarily reflect an increase in serious crime.

Cost

Jail costs make up a sizable portion of the county budget with no return on investment in terms of enhanced public safety. As counties face increasing budget constraints, reducing jail spending has a big impact.

Pretrial detention

29 people were detained pretrial on a typical day in 2009. Many are sitting in jail simply because they cannot pay bail.



People held in jail pretrial are likely to receive more severe prison sentences than those released before trial.⁴

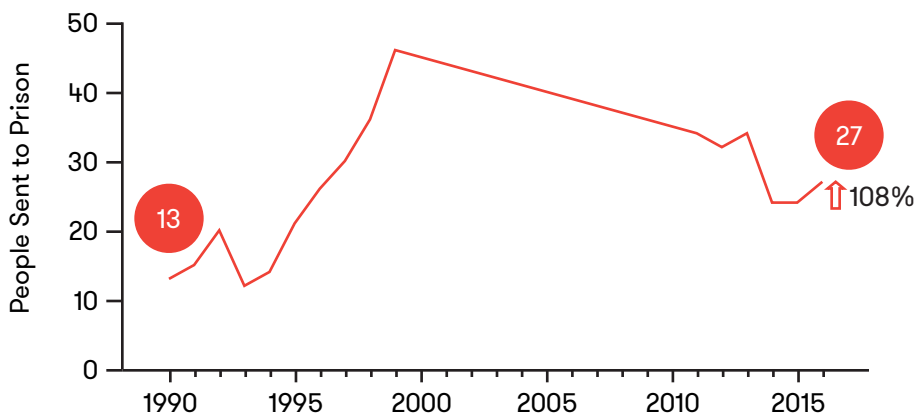
Nearly **everyone** who goes to prison first spends time in the local jail.

Public health

Jails have revolving doors, often churning the same people in and out. Even before COVID-19, jail stays led to worse physical and mental health outcomes.⁵

Admissions to State Prison

— Total prison admissions

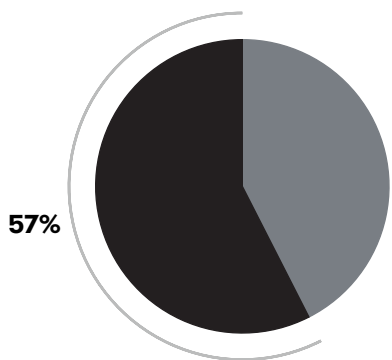


Increase in prison admissions

The rate of prison admissions in Amite County has risen 108 percent since 1990.

Note: Prison admissions reflect current sentencing practices more clearly than the prison population. This is because the prison population, which includes people serving long sentences, changes more slowly in response to reforms.

Different agencies using the county jail (2018)



17 People held for Amite County

23 People held for other counties

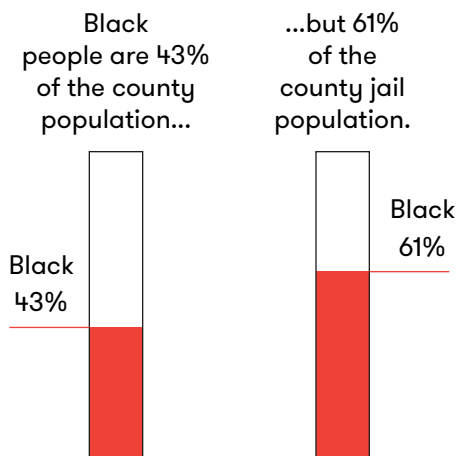
Cashing in on incarceration



On a typical day, 58 percent of people being held in the county jail fill beds “rented” to other agencies. The county gets paid a per diem to incarcerate or detain them.

Most counties charge fines and fees for court costs and jail stays. This further traps people in cycles of poverty.

Racial disparities in criminalization (2013)



Black people are treated more harshly **at every stage** of the criminal legal system.⁸

Understanding disparities



Racial disparities begin with who gets stopped by the police and multiply throughout the legal system. When charged with similar offenses as white people, Black people are more likely to be detained pretrial, convicted, and given harsher sentences.⁷ Seemingly “color-blind” policies may still disproportionately impact communities of color.

People of every race and ethnicity are incarcerated at higher rates than they were in 1970. The county's white incarceration rate has grown 1,067 percent since 1990. Latinx people are also overrepresented in the nation's jails, yet common misclassification of ethnicity leads to distorted, lower estimates of Latinx incarceration.

Locking up loved ones



2 in 3

Two-thirds of women in jail across the country are mothers of young children.⁹



1 in 2

More than half of all people who are in jail because they couldn't make bail are parents to young children.¹⁰



1 in 2

Nearly half of adults in the United States has had an immediate family member in jail or prison.¹¹



Each of these officials makes decisions that lead to criminalization and incarceration in your community:

Police and the sheriff

→ decide who gets stopped, who gets arrested, what they're charged with, and whether or not they're booked into jail.

Prosecutors

→ decide who gets diverted and who gets prosecuted and on which charges. They also make bail recommendations, control most of the evidence in a case, offer plea bargains, and make sentencing recommendations.

Probation and parole officers

→ decide supervision rules and requirements, what costs people under supervision must shoulder, and whether to reincarcerate someone for inability to meet those requirements.

Judges

→ decide who gets released or detained pretrial and who must pay a money bond to secure freedom. A judge or jury determines whether someone is found guilty and selects the terms of a sentence.

City, county and state legislators

→ decide spending priorities for the community, control the purse strings that fund each of these systems, and enact local policies. State legislators write the criminal code, determining what constitutes an offense.

These officials each have the power to make other choices.

As a community member, **YOU** have influence over decision-making in Amite County. You can get involved with or start local efforts to shift power into the community and end mass incarceration in Amite County.

Citations

- ¹ Vera Institute of Justice, People in Prison and Jail in 2020 (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, forthcoming January 2021).
- ² Pretrial Justice Institute, "3DaysCount™ For State-Level Change," February 5, 2020, <https://perma.cc/W48K-NL58>.
- ³ The jail expansion projects listed in this report are based on information obtained from publicly available local news sources.
- ⁴ Léon Digard and Elizabeth Swavola, Justice Denied: The Harmful and Lasting Effects of Pretrial Detention (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2019), <https://perma.cc/XUL6-JGEF>.
- ⁵ Ingrid A. Binswanger, Marc F. Stern, Richard A. Deyo et al., "Release from Prison — A High Risk of Death for Former Inmates," New England Journal of Medicine 356, no. 2 (2007), 157-165, <https://perma.cc/BWL5-6F34>.
- ⁶ Jacob, Kang-Brown and Jack Norton, "More Than a Jail: Immigrant Detention and the Smell of Money," Vera Institute of Justice, July 5, 2018, <https://perma.cc/LVZ6-ALCS>.
- ⁷ The Sentencing Project, Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities in the U.S. Criminal Justice System (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 2018), <https://perma.cc/RV24-P42S>.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Wendy Sawyer, "How Does Unaffordable Money Bail Affect Families?" Prison Policy Initiative, August 15, 2018, <https://perma.cc/L6TC-DMG4>.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Brian Elderbroom, Laura Bennett, Shanna Gong et al., Every Second: The Impact of the Incarceration Crisis on America's Families (Washington DC: FWD.us, 2018), <https://perma.cc/F546-L52Z>.

Data

This fact sheet uses data from four U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data series and is supplemented with data obtained directly from the Amite County Sheriff's Office for the more recent years for which BJS data is not yet available, when available. The Annual Survey of Jails provides data through 2018; the National Corrections Reporting Program provides data through 2016; the National Prisoner Statistics program provides data through 2017. A complete dataset and with documentation is available on Vera's GitHub.

Version: Data current as of February 22, 2021.

Acknowledgments

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Credits

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For more information

For questions, contact backyards@vera.org.