



# Jails in Indian Country, 2021, and the Impact of COVID-19, July–December 2020

SUMMARY | NCJ 304631

AUGUST 2022

A total of 2,180 inmates were held in 80 jails in Indian country at midyear 2021, an 8% increase from the 2,020 inmates held in 82 facilities at midyear 2020. The increase follows a 30% decline in the inmate population from midyear 2019 to midyear 2020. The midyear 2021 inmate population was 25% lower than the midyear 2019 population, when 2,890 inmates were confined in Indian country jails. This decline was attributed mainly to responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted from both expedited releases and a reduction in admissions.

## Growth of inmate population in 2021

From midyear 2020 to midyear 2021, the inmate population in facilities rated to hold 50 or more inmates saw the largest increase (up 10% or 130 inmates), followed by facilities rated to hold 25 to 49 inmates (up 5% or 30 inmates). The inmate population in facilities rated to hold fewer than 25 inmates remained relatively stable.

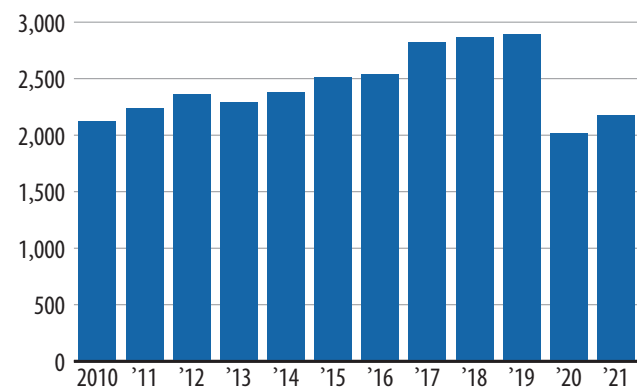
While the overall inmate population increased, the rated capacity of Indian country jails remained relatively stable. As a result, the jail occupancy rate increased from 48% at midyear 2020 to 52% at midyear 2021.

## Changes in staffing

Jails in Indian country employed an estimated 1,580 persons at midyear 2021, down 8% from midyear 2020 (1,710) and 16% from midyear 2019 (1,880). During the 2-year period from midyear 2019 to midyear 2021, the number of jail operations staff (correctional officers, guards, and other staff who spent more than half of their time supervising inmates) declined 18% (down 240). Since midyear 2020, these staff experienced the largest decline (down 13% or 160 jail operations staff).

## Number of inmates held in Indian country jails, midyear 2010–2021

Number of inmates



Note: Counts are as of the last weekday in June. For 2013 to 2021, data were imputed for nonresponse and rounded to the nearest 10.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Survey of Jails in Indian Country, 2010–2021.

## Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

From July to December 2020, about 10,680 COVID-19 tests were conducted on persons held in Indian country jails. About 6% of the tests were positive. Of the 31,020 persons admitted during that period, more than a third (34% as a percentage of admissions) were tested for COVID-19, up from 10% tested from March to June 2020. From July to December 2020, about 22% of admitted persons (6,740) received expedited release in response to the pandemic.

About 19% of the 1,580 staff had a positive test for COVID-19 from July to December 2020. This was nearly four times the positive rate from March to June 2020 (5% of the 1,710 staff at midyear 2020).

The full report (*Jails in Indian Country, 2021, and the Impact of COVID-19, July–December 2020*, NCJ 304631), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at [bjs.ojp.gov](https://bjs.ojp.gov).