

# **GEORGIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA LANDSCAPE REPORT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



**Carl Vinson  
Institute of Government**  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

**Public Welfare  
Foundation**

# Introduction



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# PURPOSE OF REPORT

The **Georgia Criminal Justice Data Landscape Report** is provided as a service to the public and to policy makers interested in Georgia's criminal justice system.

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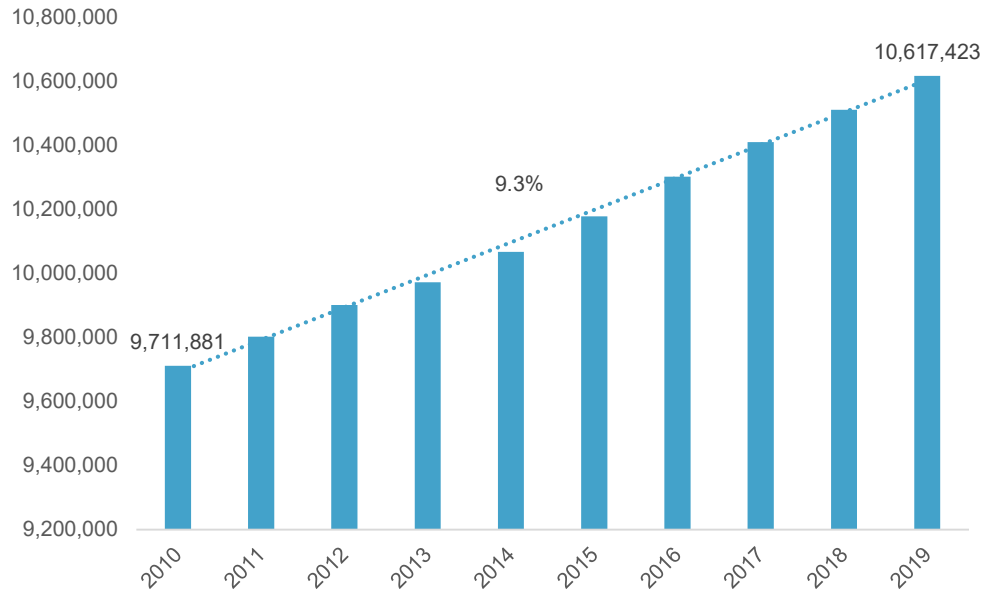
This report is intended to be a reference and

- Contains a look back at the past decade of data on Georgia's adult and juvenile justice systems
- Serves as a single go-to source for data, charts, and explanatory narrative to offer context, historical background, and insights on criminal justice trends in Georgia
- Highlights the impacts of criminal justice reform on incarceration and community supervision



# DEMOGRAPHICS

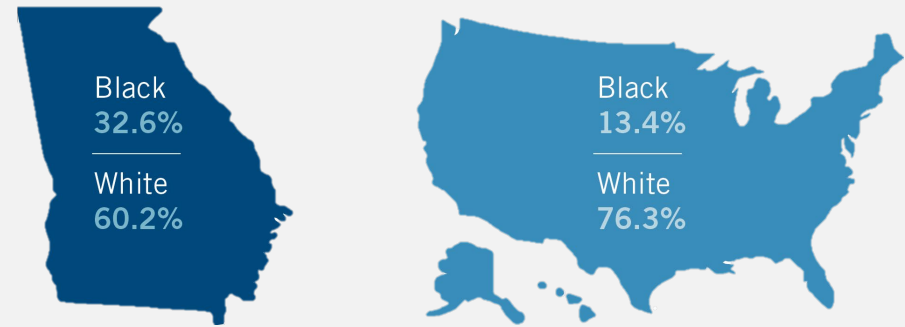
Georgia's population increased 9.3% from 9.7 million in 2010 to 10.6 million in 2019.



Source: US Census Bureau

The proportion of Georgia's population that is Black is more than twice that of the US as a whole.

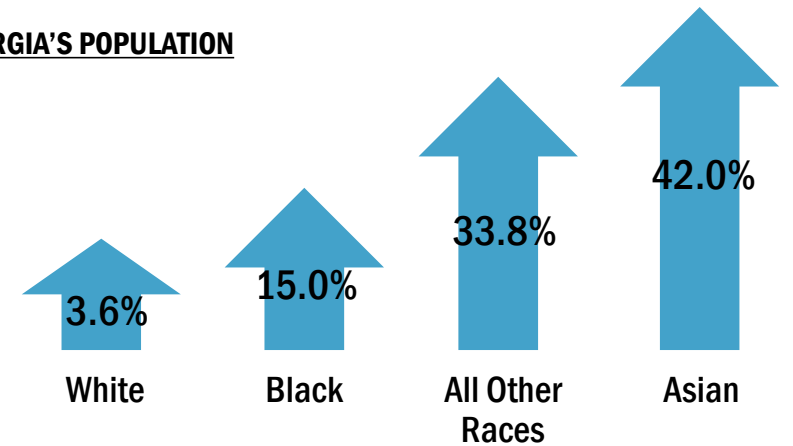
## PERCENTAGE OF GEORGIA'S POPULATION THAT IS BLACK AND WHITE COMPARED TO THE US, 2019



Source: US Census Bureau

## PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN GEORGIA'S POPULATION BY RACE, 2010-2019

Note: "All Other Races" includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and people who identify as two or more races.



Source: US Census Bureau

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

A series of legislative changes starting in 2012 under the direction of Governor Nathan Deal and the [Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform for Georgians](#) transformed state criminal justice policy, law, and funding.

Beginning in 2011, Governor Nathan Deal undertook reforms to the criminal justice system in Georgia. The need and desire to tackle criminal justice reform came about as a result of several factors:

- The 4th highest rate of prison incarceration in the country
- The Department of Corrections budget had more than doubled since 1990
- The average probation sentence in Georgia was more than double the national average

Six significant pieces of criminal legislation were passed during Governor Deal's eight years in office.

**HB 1176**  
2012

**HB 242**  
2013

**HB 349**  
2013

**SB 365**  
2014

**HB 310**  
2015

**SB 174**  
2017



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

## HB 1176 (2012)

- First of Governor Deal's criminal justice reform laws
- Raised the threshold for felony theft from \$500 to \$1,500
- Created degrees of severity for crimes such as burglary, forgery, and theft
- Provided alternatives to incarceration for low-risk, nonviolent offenders who committed drug and property offenses
- Allowed imposition of graduated sanctions in response to probation violations
- Allowed courts to order electronic monitoring for all offenders
- Provided a \$10 million investment in accountability courts

## HB 242 (2013)

- Also called the Juvenile Justice Reform Act
- Eliminated mandatory minimums for certain youth in the justice system
- Focused use of out-of-home placements on higher-level offenders; prohibited use for status offenses
- Focused resources on evidence-based practices to reduce recidivism
- Required the use of assessment instruments before detaining youth in a secure facility
- Allowed alternative form of supervision for lower-risk, lower-need youth in the justice system

## HB 349 (2013)

- Created higher education grant for use upon release for those who complete their GED while incarcerated
- Allowed judges discretion in sentencing in some drug-related and Seven Deadly Sins cases
- Defined unsupervised probation
- Allowed restoration of a suspended driver's license for limited use by drug and mental health accountability court participants to facilitate participation in court-ordered programs

## SB 365 (2014)

- Created Program and Treatment Completion Certificate
- Required the Department of Corrections to develop reentry programs for returning citizens

## HB 310 (2015)

- Consolidated felony probation supervision under new Department of Community Supervision
- Created Board of Community Supervision to oversee private and governmental misdemeanor probation providers

## SB 174 (2017)

- Implemented probation and parole reforms
- Created behavioral incentive date (BID)
- Created additional eligibility for early probation termination
- Allowed for transition to unsupervised probation



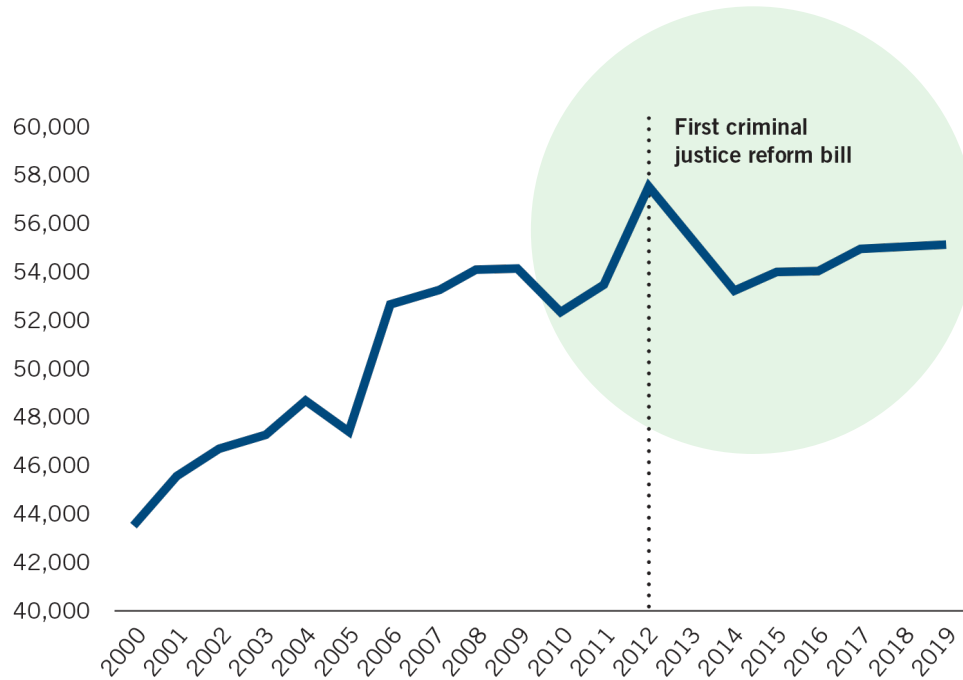
# Arrests and Incarceration



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# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IMPACT

**INDIVIDUALS INCARCERATED IN GEORGIA PRISONS, 2000–2019**



## # OF ADULTS INCARCERATED

peaked at 57,570 in 2012, fell nearly 8% through 2014, and then increased just 3.6% since

## TRENDS



Number of individuals serving **SENTENCES OF FIVE YEARS OR LESS** decreased as use of alternative sentences increased



Number of individuals under **COMMUNITY SUPERVISION** 4.3% lower in 2020 than in 2017



Between 2009 and 2018 **YOUTH ARREST RATE FOR VIOLENT OFFENSES** decreased 49.6%

Source: Kaplan



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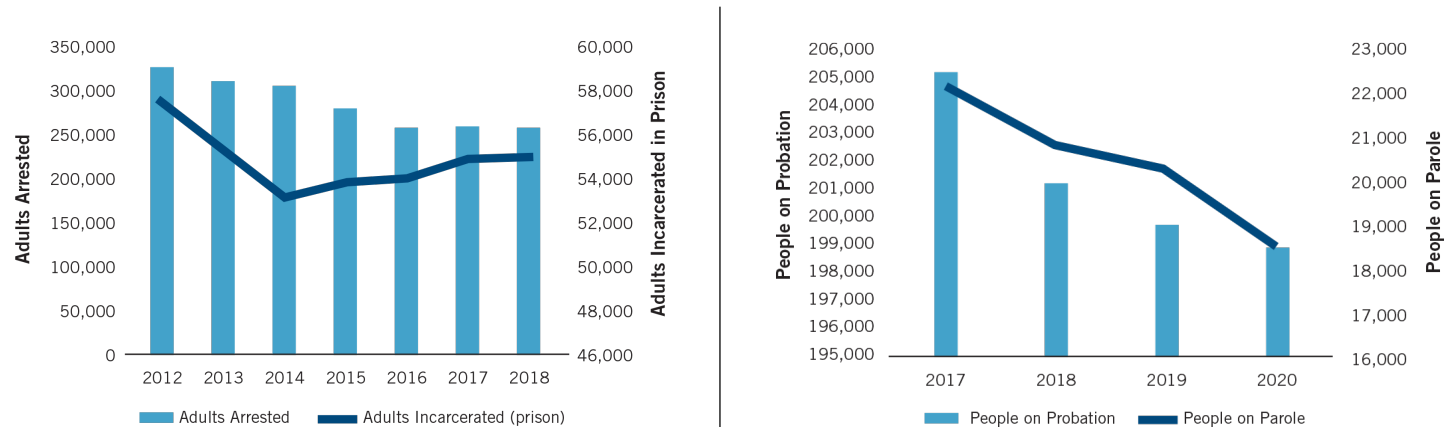


# ARRESTS AND INCARCERATION

The data show a decrease in the number of adults arrested. The number of adults incarcerated in prison has moderated since the enactment of criminal justice reform, which began in 2012.

Similarly, the number of adults on probation and parole has decreased since 2017.

## ADULTS

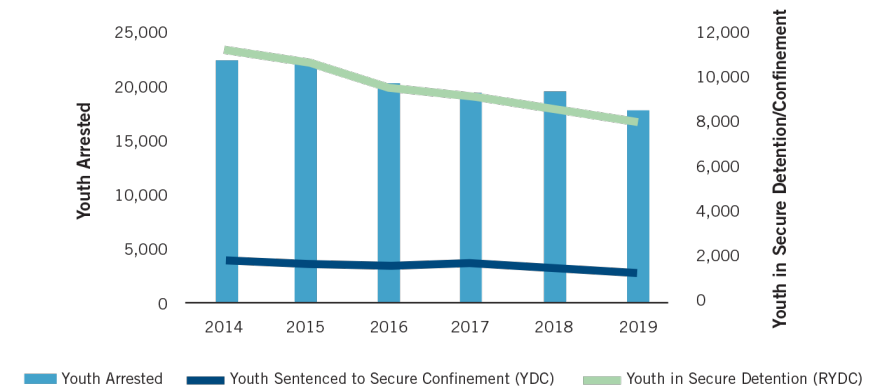


Note: Incarceration data are from June of each year  
Source: Kaplan

Source: Georgia Department of Community Supervision

The data show that the number of youth detained in a regional youth detention center (RYDC) or sentenced to a youth development campus (YDC) has trended down since juvenile justice reform in 2013.

## YOUTH



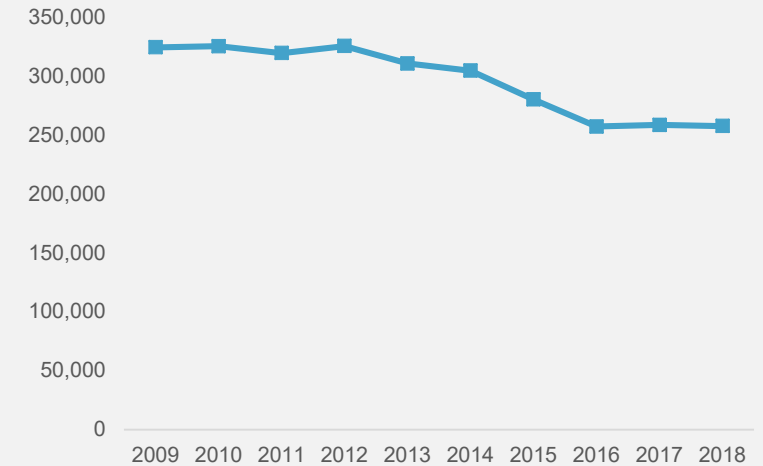
Sources: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget; Georgia Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Juvenile Justice Data Exchange

# ARREST RATES 2009–2018

The total number of adult arrests in Georgia declined 20.6%, while the arrest rate dropped 28.1%.

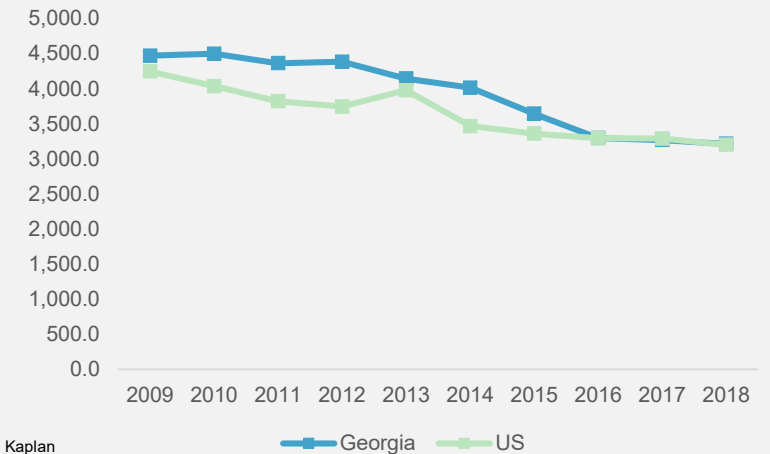
- From 2009 to 2015, Georgia's adult arrest rate was higher than that of the US overall. However, in 2016, Georgia's rate dropped to a similar level as the US and remained consistent with the national rate through 2018.
- The male adult arrest rate was more than twice that of females.
- The arrest rate for Black adults fell 40.9%, compared to a 14.3% drop for White adults and a 37.6% decrease for adults of All Other Races (people of Asian or Native American race).

**TOTAL NUMBER OF ADULT ARRESTS IN GEORGIA, 2009–2018**



Source: Kaplan

**ARREST RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION IN GEORGIA AND THE US, 2009–2018**



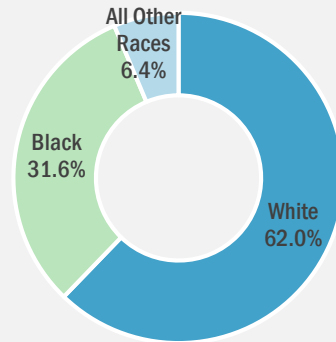
Sources: US Census Bureau; Kaplan



# ARRESTS BY RACE

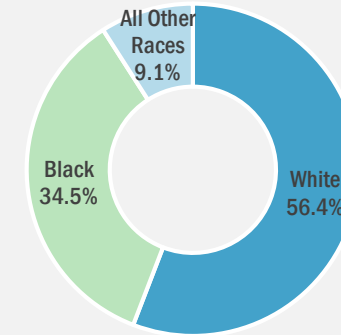
## ADULTS

GEORGIA'S ADULT POPULATION, BY RACE, 2018

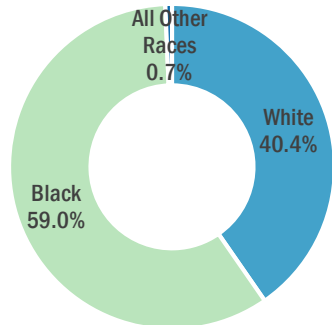


## YOUTH

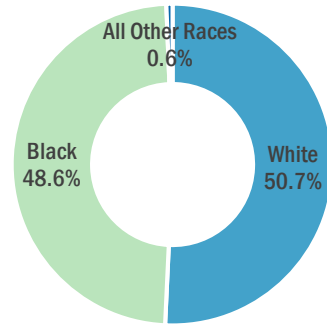
GEORGIA'S YOUTH POPULATION, BY RACE, 2018



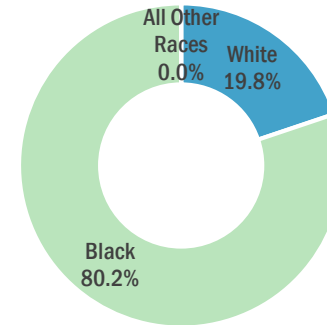
ADULT ARRESTS FOR VIOLENT OFFENSES IN GEORGIA, BY RACE, 2018



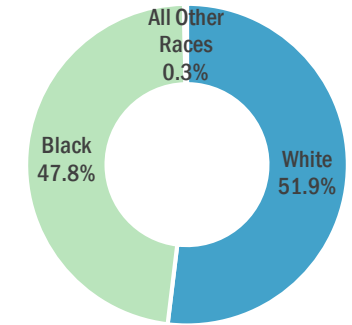
ADULT ARRESTS FOR DRUG OFFENSES IN GEORGIA, BY RACE, 2018



YOUTH ARRESTS FOR VIOLENT OFFENSES IN GEORGIA, BY RACE, 2018



YOUTH ARRESTS FOR DRUG OFFENSES IN GEORGIA, BY RACE, 2018



Sources: US Census Bureau; Kaplan

Note: "All Other Races" in the adult population data includes Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races. "All Other Races" in the arrest data includes Asian and Native American.



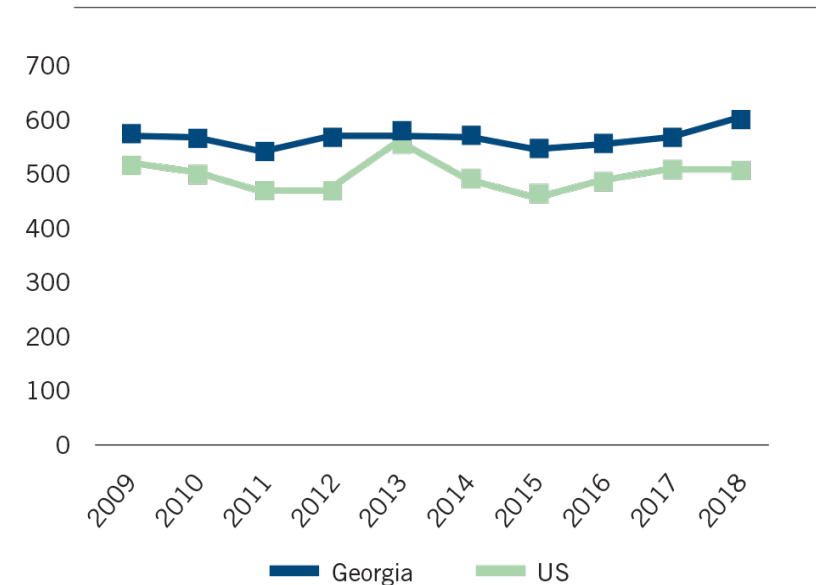
# ARRESTS FOR DRUG OFFENSES

**Georgia's adult arrest rate for drug offenses is higher than the national trend, and the number of arrests for drug offenses in Georgia is trending up.**

The arrest rate per 100,000 population for drug offenses in Georgia increased 5.4% from 2009 to 2018, compared to a decrease of 2.6% in the US overall.

Georgia saw a 16.3% increase in the number of arrests for drug offenses during the same period.

**ARREST RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION FOR DRUG OFFENSES  
IN GEORGIA, 2009-2019**



Sources: US Census Bureau; Kaplan

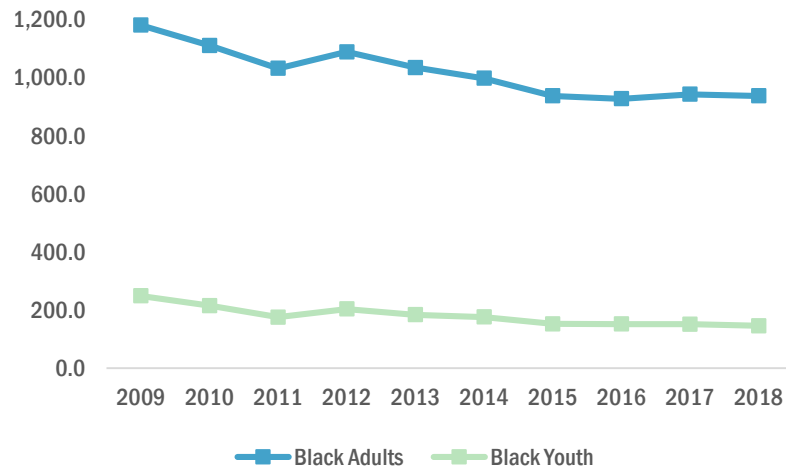


# ARRESTS FOR DRUG OFFENSES RACE AND SEX

## RACE

- The number of arrests of White adults and adults of All Other Races climbed from 2009 to 2018.
- The arrest rate for both Black adults and Black youth declined.

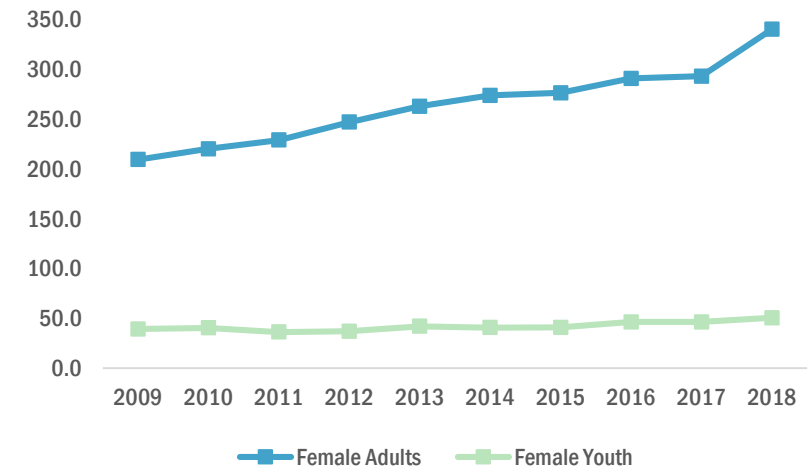
**ARREST RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION FOR DRUG OFFENSES IN GEORGIA,  
BY RACE, 2009-2019**



## SEX

- The arrest rate of both female adults and female youth in Georgia trended up from 2009 to 2018.

**ARREST RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION FOR DRUG OFFENSES IN GEORGIA,  
BY SEX, 2009-2019**



Sources: US Census Bureau; Kaplan



# Adult and Youth Incarceration



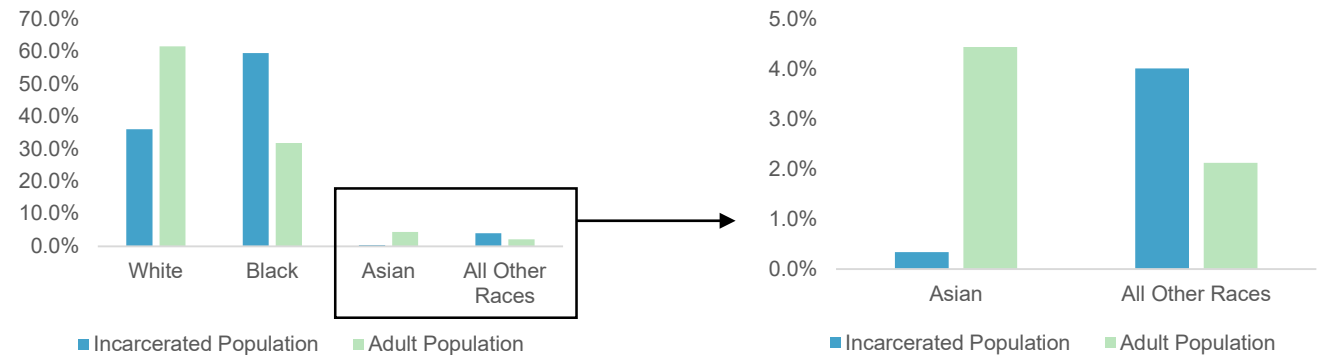
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# PRISON POPULATION BY RACE

White adults accounted for 61.6% of Georgia's overall adult population, but only 36.1% of the incarcerated population in June 2019.

In contrast, Black adults accounted for only 31.8% of the overall adult population, but almost 60% of the incarcerated population.

**PROPORTION OF PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN GEORGIA PRISONS  
COMPARED TO THE OVERALL ADULT POPULATION, BY RACE, JUNE 2019**



Note: "All Other Races" includes Indian, Latinx, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Unknown, and Other. Races within the Other category are not specified in the data. Latinx is included in All Other Races because it is considered a race in the incarceration data; however, in the population data, people of Latinx origin can be of any race. The percentages of All Other Races may be overstated due to the inclusion of Latinx in the number of people incarcerated.

Sources: US Census Bureau; Georgia Department of Corrections



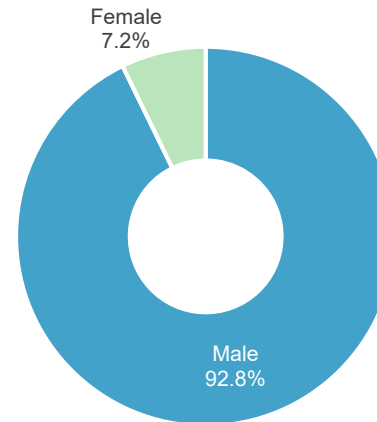
# PRISON POPULATION BY SEX

Males dominated the incarcerated population in June 2019.

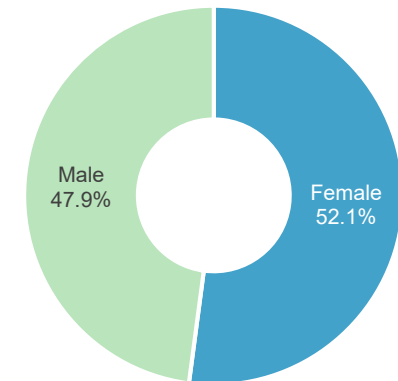
While males made up 47.9% of the adult population in Georgia, they represented almost 93% of the incarcerated population.

## PROPORTION OF PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN GEORGIA PRISONS COMPARED TO THE OVERALL ADULT POPULATION, BY SEX, JUNE 2019

PEOPLE INCARCERATED



OVERALL ADULT POPULATION



Sources: US Census Bureau; Georgia Department of Corrections





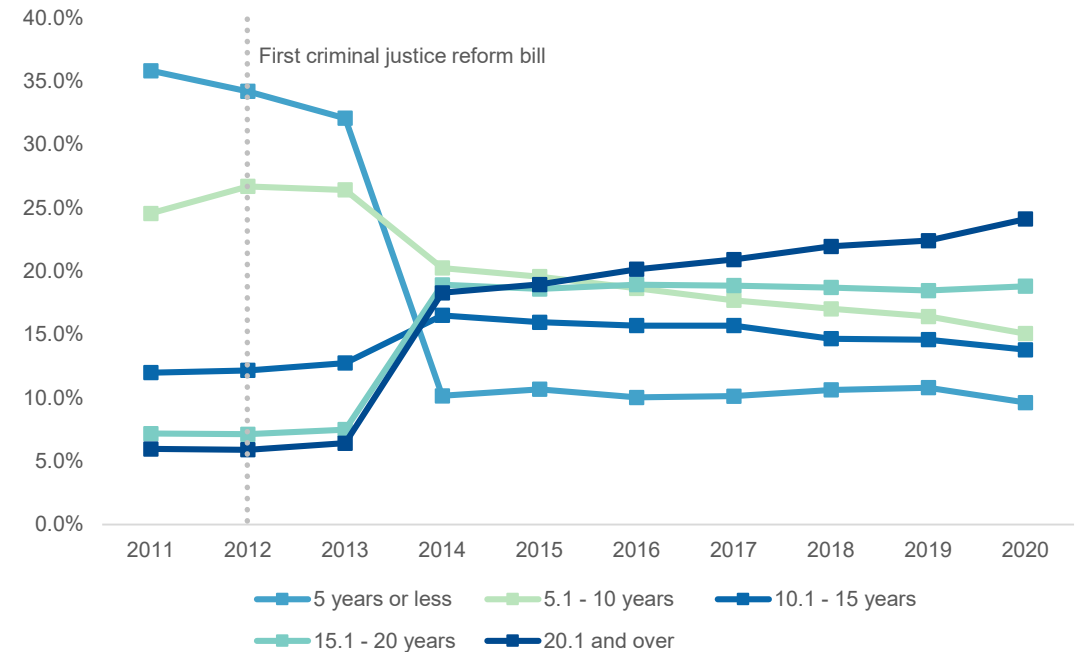
# PRISON SENTENCES

Adult criminal justice reforms established a new baseline for sentence length for people incarcerated in the state prison system.

Criminal justice reforms allowed for alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent crimes and higher thresholds for felony theft, leading to a sharp decline in the percentage of people with a prison sentence of five years or less, from 32.1% to 10.2% between June 2013 and June 2014.

Sentences between five and 10 years also declined.

**PROPORTION OF PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN GEORGIA PRISONS, BY LENGTH OF SENTENCE, 2011-2020**



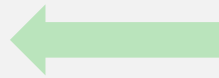
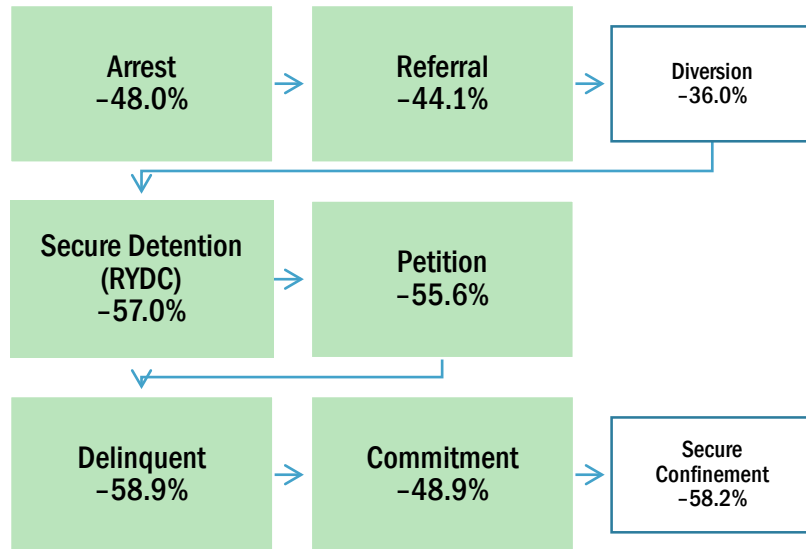
Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to the exclusion of certain categories. Excludes life and death sentences.

Source: Georgia Department of Corrections

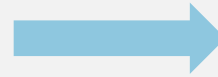
# JUVENILE JUSTICE DECISION POINTS

## PERCENT CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF YOUTH AT EACH JUVENILE JUSTICE DECISION POINT, 2010-2019

### WHITES

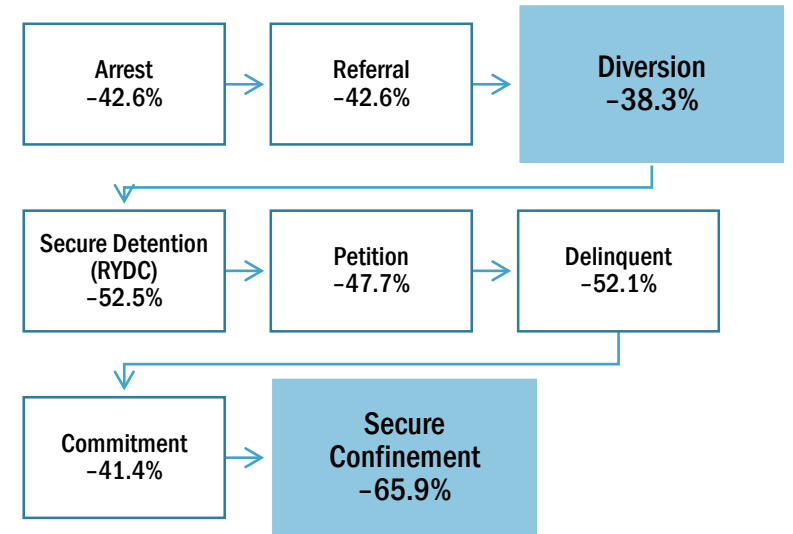


The number of White youth involved in the juvenile justice system declined the most at six decisions points—arrest, referral, secure detention (RYDC), petition, delinquent, and commitment.



The number of Black youth decreased the most at the diversion and secure confinement (YDC) decision points.

### BLACKS



Note: "All Other Races" include Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Other/Mixed. Latinx is considered a race in this data set.

Source: Georgia Juvenile Justice Data Clearinghouse, Juvenile Justice Data Exchange



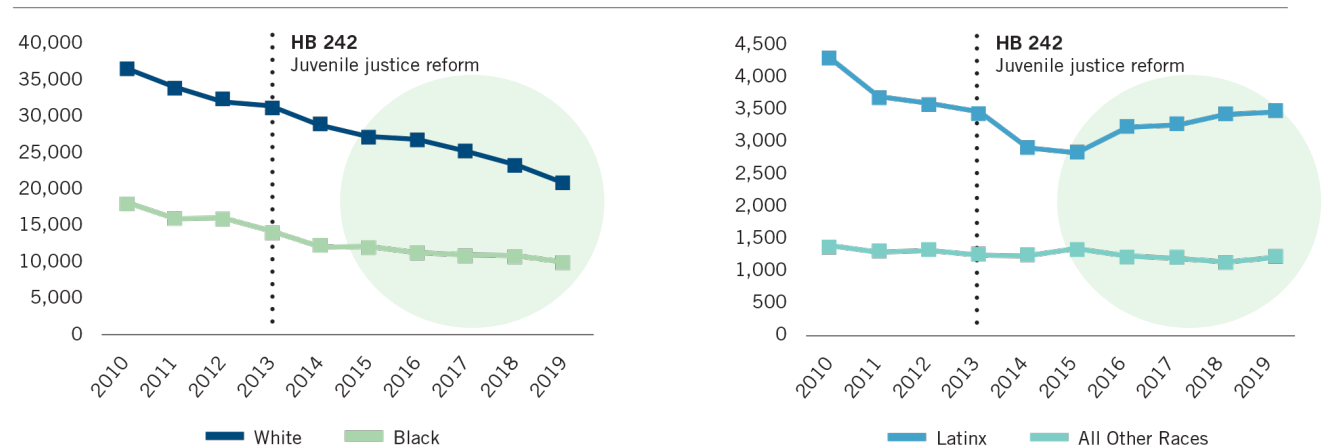
# LATINX YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The data show an increase in Latinx youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

From 2015 to 2019:

- The number of Latinx youth referred to the juvenile justice system increased from 2,850 in 2015 to 3,467 in 2019.
- The number of youth sentenced to secure detention declined for all racial groups since 2015 except Latinx.
- The percentage of Latinx youth increased at seven decision points in the juvenile justice system: referral, diversion, secure detention, petition, delinquent, commitment, and secure confinement.

**NUMBER OF YOUTH REFERRALS IN GEORGIA, BY RACE, 2010-2019**



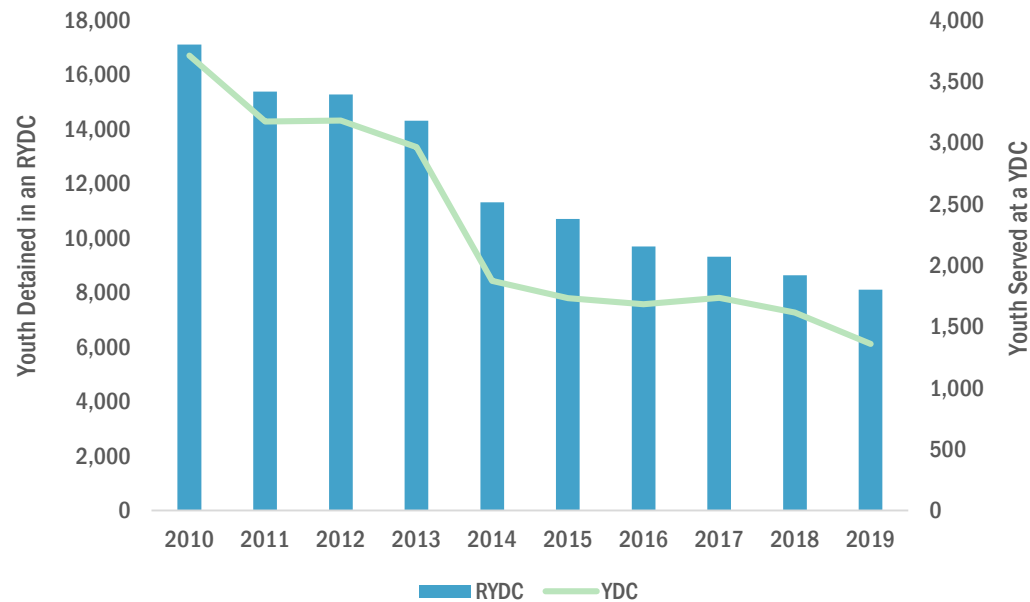
Source: Georgia Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Juvenile Justice Data Exchange



# JUVENILE JUSTICE DECISION POINTS

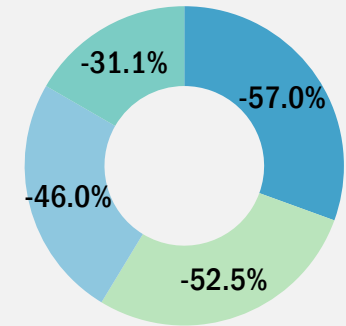
The number of youth admitted to regional youth detention center (RYDCs) decreased 52.6% from 2010 to 2019, while the number of youth served at youth development campuses (YDCs) decreased 63.3%.

**NUMBER OF YOUTH DETAINED AT AN RYDC AND SERVED AT A YDC IN GEORGIA, 2010-2019**



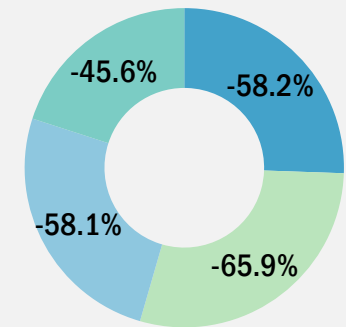
Source: Georgia Juvenile Justice Data Clearinghouse, Juvenile Justice Data Exchange

## RYDC



White Black Latinx All Other Races

## YDC



White Black Latinx All Other Races

Source: Georgia Juvenile Justice Data Clearinghouse, Juvenile Justice Data Exchange

# COVID-19 Pandemic Impact



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# COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON COUNTY JAILS

Data available for 2020 reflect the impact of the pandemic on the criminal justice system and the people adjudicated and incarcerated.

Incarceration data reflect the impact of courts being closed and having minimal operations for a significant part of 2020 due to emergency judicial orders.

With limited court activity and fewer trials, more people arrested were allowed to await their court date at home rather than in local jails. The domino effect was that fewer people were convicted and incarcerated.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, between March and June 2020, the state saw a total reduction of 26.9% of people in county jails. After June 2020, the number of people incarcerated in county jails increased 14.1% through November 2020.

## CHANGES TO THE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN GEORGIA COUNTY JAILS AWAITING TRIAL OR SERVING A SENTENCE, JUNE 2015–DECEMBER 2020

	BEFORE COVID-19			DURING COVID-19		
	June 2015 – December 2019			March – December 2020		
	Average Number	Awaiting Trial	Serving Sentence	Average Number	Awaiting Trial	Serving Sentence
Georgia	23,592	64.3%	21.7%	20,540	67.3%	19.7%
Rural Counties	4,964	53.3%	20.1%	4,493	55.1%	19.3%
Urban Counties	18,627	68.1%	22.1%	16,046	71.8%	20.7%
Atlanta MSA	11,157	65.8%	24.1%	9,468	69.9%	21.5%
Rest of the State	12,435	63.1%	19.6%	11,072	65.3%	18.2%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Institute of Government would like to thank the analysts, writers, editors, and graphic artists who helped gather, analyze, visualize, and describe the data in the report. Each section of the report was developed in consultation with subject matter experts and was reviewed by state agency data experts when possible.

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## Carl Vinson Institute of Government



The Carl Vinson Institute of Government is a public service unit of the University of Georgia that has been providing training and technical assistance to governments in Georgia for more than 90 years. The mission of the Institute of Government is to promote excellence in government. We work to increase the capacity of governments in Georgia to better serve their constituents through training, applied research, technical assistance, and technology solutions. The Institute conducts nonpartisan research that helps partners make better data-informed decisions. The Institute of Government has compiled data to inform decision-making for years. The Georgia County Guide is one example of an annual data report in which county-level data are compiled in a single location. The Institute's website [Georgiadata.org](https://georgiadata.org) provides interactive and static table data on a variety of topics. Criminal justice is just one of many search topics on [Georgiadata.org](https://georgiadata.org), allowing the public and policy makers to access and filter data at the county level and by demographic variables.

## Public Welfare Foundation

## Public Welfare Foundation

For over 70 years, Public Welfare Foundation has supported efforts to advance justice and opportunity for people in need. Today, the Foundation's efforts focus on catalyzing a transformative approach to justice that is community-led, restorative, and racially just through investments in criminal justice and youth justice reforms. These efforts honor the Foundation's core values of racial equality, economic well-being, and fundamental fairness for all.