

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/the-impact-of-new-york-bail-reform-on-statewide-jail-populations>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

New York's recent bail reform law, which was passed in April 2019 and amended on July 2, 2020, was expected to reduce the footprint of jail incarceration by limiting the use of money bail. The new law mandated pretrial release for the vast majority of nonviolent charges and required that judges consider a person's ability to pay bail.

A comprehensive impact evaluation is necessary to understand the successes and limitations of these reforms, as well as their unintended consequences. The Vera Institute of Justice is conducting a three-and-a-half-year study to examine how front-end reforms at arrest and arraignment impact back-end outcomes, including the use of jails for pretrial detention and other custody types.

This brief, the first of Vera's six-part jail brief series, explores the early impact of bail reform on jail populations by examining statewide incarceration trends between January 2018 and June 2020. The brief also explores early impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on jail admissions and populations.

Bail reform led to a substantial reduction in jail incarceration, driven mainly by a decline in pretrial admissions for low-level and nonviolent charges. However, despite the overall decreased incarceration rate, existing racial disparities may have been aggravated both in New York City and statewide jails.

SPECIAL REPORT (SINGLE)

PUBLICATION

ARTICLE

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