

Incarceration

A Vera Institute of Justice Research Symposium

April 16 and 17, 2020

The Vera Institute of Justice invites the submission of papers to an interdisciplinary symposium exploring the use of incarceration in the United States.

The unprecedented scale of incarceration in the United States has many political, economic, and social effects. We hope that you will join us for a research symposium that explores changes in the carceral landscape and their impacts on American society.

This second symposium leverages the uniquely detailed historical dataset of incarceration in local jails and state prisons that Vera developed to explore the use and effects of incarceration at the county and state level. The Vera dataset is sourced from the Bureau of Justice Statistics data collections: Jail admission and population data is sourced from the Annual Survey of Jails (1985-2017), Census of Jails (1970-2013), and Death in Custody Reporting Program (2000-2013). Prison admission and population data is sourced from the National Corrections Reporting Program (1983-2016), and supplemented with data from state departments of corrections, when available. The dataset has been updated with more recent data made available by BJS in the last year. New methods of data aggregation have improved the quality of the estimates by gender and race. The dataset has a broader set of measures. The revised dataset will be available mid-January.

County-level variability makes for more robust, theoretically-grounded studies of the causes and impacts of changing rates of incarceration seen across the United States. It is largely county officials—judges, prosecutors, people who manage jails—that decide how communities use incarceration (i.e., who is sent to jail and prison, and for how long). Furthermore, social dynamics and policy changes at various political scales have led to reduced jail and prison populations in some locales, and increased populations in others, as well as shifts in the use of carceral control such as probation and electronic monitoring, phenomena that can be masked in the state-level data used in most studies of incarceration's impacts.

We invite submissions from advanced graduate students, faculty, independent or policy researchers. We expect that a number of papers responsive to this call will provide new insights on the geography and effects of incarceration--the health, social, and economic consequences for individuals and communities--and insight into emerging policy issues and problems. We especially encourage papers that leverage the improved race and gender data, as well as papers on economy and geography.

Papers are asked to engage with the data that is available, but not all papers need to be quantitative or empirical in nature. We welcome submissions from across the social sciences and humanities, economics and data science. Papers currently under peer review may be submitted.

Submissions should include an abstract of 150-500 words and a brief biographical statement and CV. Please submit all materials by Sunday, February 9, 2020

We request that submissions be made online at <https://backyards.submittable.com/submit>.

If you have questions, please contact Vera at trends@vera.org or Jack Norton by mail at 34 35th Street, 4-2A, Brooklyn, NY 11232.

If selected, applicants will be notified by Wednesday, February 26, 2020. Completed papers will be due on Tuesday, April 7, 2020.

Transportation to and from the conference, as well as room and board during the conference will be covered for each selected applicant.

The Vera Institute of Justice works to build and create justice systems that ensure fairness, promote safety, and strengthen communities.

The symposium and the development of the public-use county-level incarceration dataset is funded through the In Our Backyards project by Google.org as part of its Inclusion and Racial Justice work. In Our Backyards is a Vera's research and communications agenda to inform the public dialogue, advance research, and guide change to justice policy and practice on mass incarceration.

Submission deadline: February 9, 2020

Decision by: Feb 26, 2020

Location: New York City, New York

Event dates: April 16 and 17, 2020

Duration: 1.5 day symposium

Host: The Vera Institute of Justice

Photo credit: Jack Norton, 2016. Lackawanna County Jail. Scranton, PA.