

Jail Construction Dataset, 2002-2022: Codebook

Vera researchers collected information on jail construction projects and proposals across the United States from 2002 to 2022, including the cost and size of the project and whether it was an expansion of an existing jail or a new jail construction. Vera also tracked whether, as of 2022, the proposals failed, passed, or were still pending. The research team validated this data through official documents, media sources, public records requests, and phone calls with local jurisdictions.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has collected some of this information through its Census of Jails, but data collection on these variables has been inconsistent. Information on the year of construction and year of renovation is available prior to 2007 (in 1970, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1999, and 2006).¹ In 1978, 1988, and 1993, the census also collected data on the year in which the facility was first used as a jail.²

Vera's data set includes the following variables:

- **JID:** Eight-character ID for the jail jurisdiction. The first five characters are the Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) code of the county where the jail is located.
 - Variable type: character
- **Project_year:** Year in which the project took place.
 - Variable type: character
- **FIPS:** Five-character FIPS code for the county or county equivalent in which the facility is located.
 - Variable type: character
- **County_name:** Name of county in which facility is located.
 - Variable type: character
- **State_abbr:** The postal code state abbreviation for the state in which the facility is located.
 - Variable type: character
- **Project_type:** Type of jail construction project.
 - Variable type: character
 - Values
 - New jail
 - Jail expansion
- **Project_status:** The status of the project proposal as of 2022.
 - Variable type: character
 - Values
 - Passed
 - Pending
 - Failed

- **Project_amount:** The total cost associated with the project in dollars.
 - Variable type: numeric
 - Min: 50,000
 - Max: 8,700,000,000
 - Median: 15,000,000
- **Jail_capacity_before:** The total capacity of the facility prior to the project.
 - Variable type: numeric
 - Min: 0
 - Max: 3,940
 - Median: 67.5
- **Jail_capacity_after:** The total capacity of the facility after the project.
 - Variable type: numeric
 - Min: 11
 - Max: 5,111
 - Median: 222
- There are also several Source variables with hyperlinks to web pages that Vera researchers collected this information from.

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The Vera Institute of Justice is powered by hundreds of advocates, researchers, and policy experts working to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they're fair for all. Founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City, Vera is now a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government leaders for change. We develop just, antiracist solutions so that money doesn't determine freedom; fewer people are in jails, prisons, and immigration detention; and everyone is treated with dignity. Vera's headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York, with offices in Washington, DC, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. For more information, visit vera.org. For more information about this dataset, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research fellow, at jkangbrown@vera.org.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Census of Jails 1970 (ICPSR 7641); Census of Jails 1978 (ICPSR 7737); Census of Jails 1983 (ICPSR 8203); Census of Jails 1988 (ICPSR 9256); Census of Jails 1993 (ICPSR 6648); Census of Jails 1999 (ICPSR 3318); and Census of Jails 2006 (ICPSR 26602). See "Census of Jails (COJ)," BJS, <https://perma.cc/9M5L-7DEL>.
- ² BJS Census of Jails 1978 (ICPSR 7737); Census of Jails 1983 (ICPSR 8203); and Census of Jails 1988 (ICPSR 9256). See "Census of Jails (COJ)," BJS, <https://perma.cc/9M5L-7DEL>.