
Fiscal and Policy Implications of COVID-19

The Cost of Jails and Jail Population Shifts in Kentucky

November 6, 2020

Meeting of the Kentucky Jail Task Force

How much do Jails Cost?

A preview of jail budget data in Kentucky counties

Research Questions

- What are the costs incurred by counties to house people in jail?
- How much of county budgets are spent on jails?
- How much revenue do counties receive from housing people in jail for other counties, for the state, and for the federal government?
- How much revenue do counties collect in the form of jail fees?
- What are potential cost savings that could be achieved from a reduction in the jail population?

How much do jails cost in Kentucky?

The average county spent **\$2,656,555**, or **20%** of its total budget, on jail expenses. This amounts to **\$101** per resident

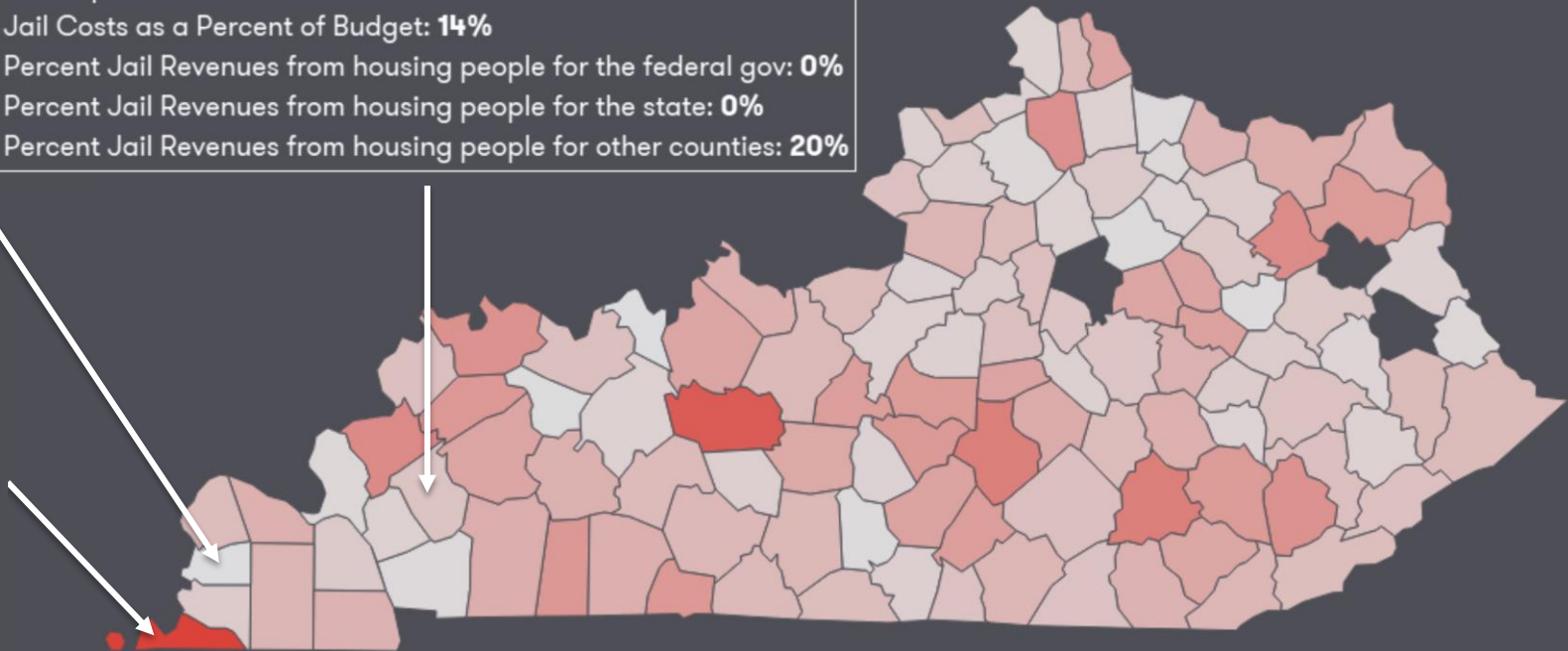
Across the state, counties spent a total of **\$308,160,358** on jail expenses in FY2019

There is significant variance in how much counties spend on jails as a proportion of the budget: from **3%** to **72%** of the total budget, and from **\$5** to **\$1,113** per resident

Carlisle County
Urbanicity: Rural
Jail Type: No Jail
Residents: 4,760
Total Jail Expenditures: **\$98,149**
Per Capita Jail \$: **\$21**
Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **3%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **0%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **0%**

Caldwell County
Urbanicity: Rural
Jail Type: Life Safety Jail
Residents: 12,747
Total Jail Expenditures: **\$848,031**
Per Capita Jail \$: **\$67**
Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **14%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **0%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **20%**

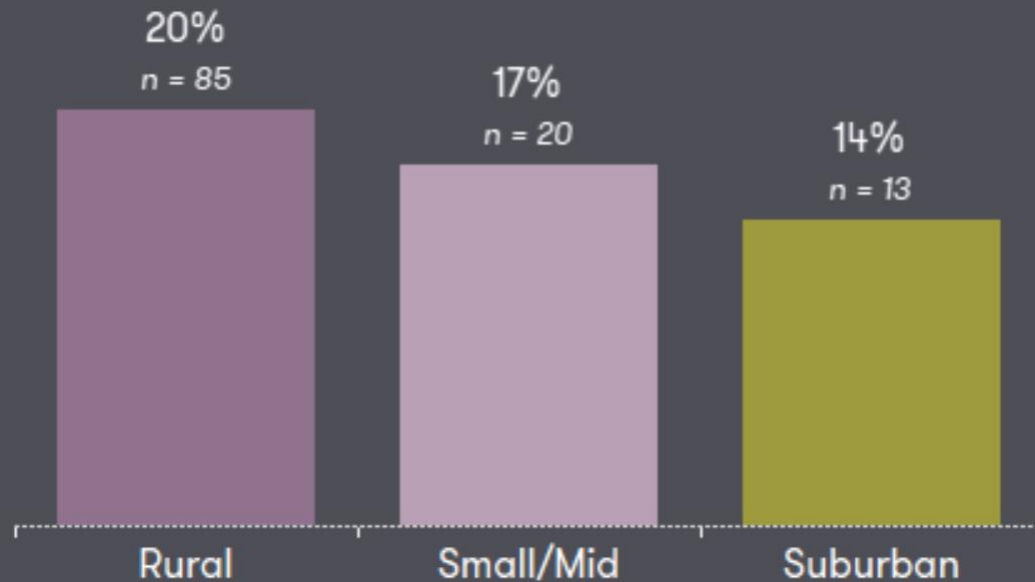
Fulton County
Urbanicity: Rural
Jail Type: Full Service Jail
Residents: 5,969
Total Jail Expenditures: **\$6,643,879**
Per Capita Jail \$: **\$1,113**
Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **72%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **69%**
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **0%**



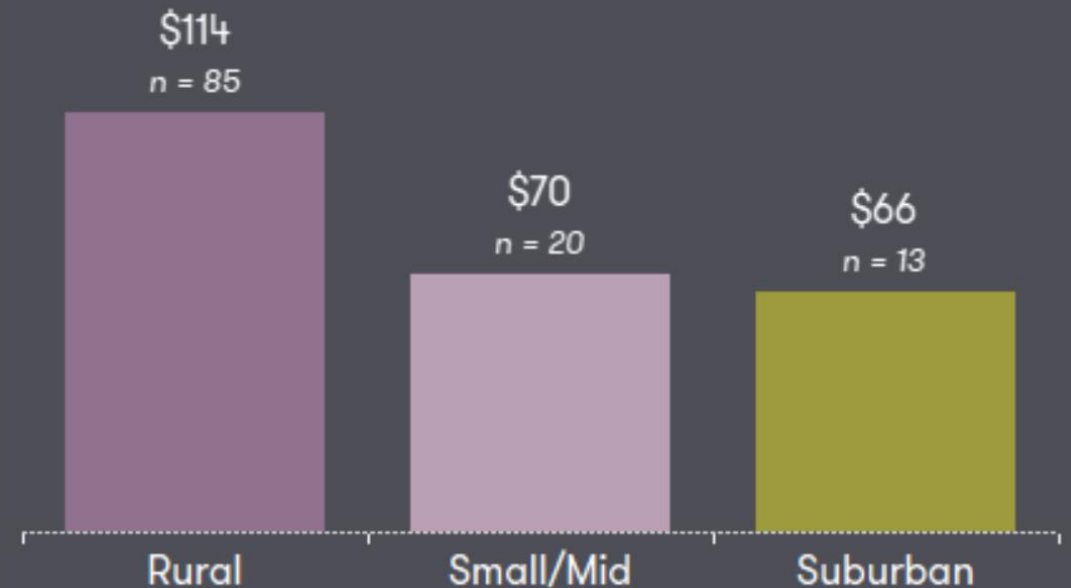
Jail Expenditures as a Percent of Budget
3% 72%

Rural counties spend a greater share of their budgets and more per capita on jail costs than counties home to smaller cities or suburban counties

Average Jail % of Budget by Urbanicity, FY 2019



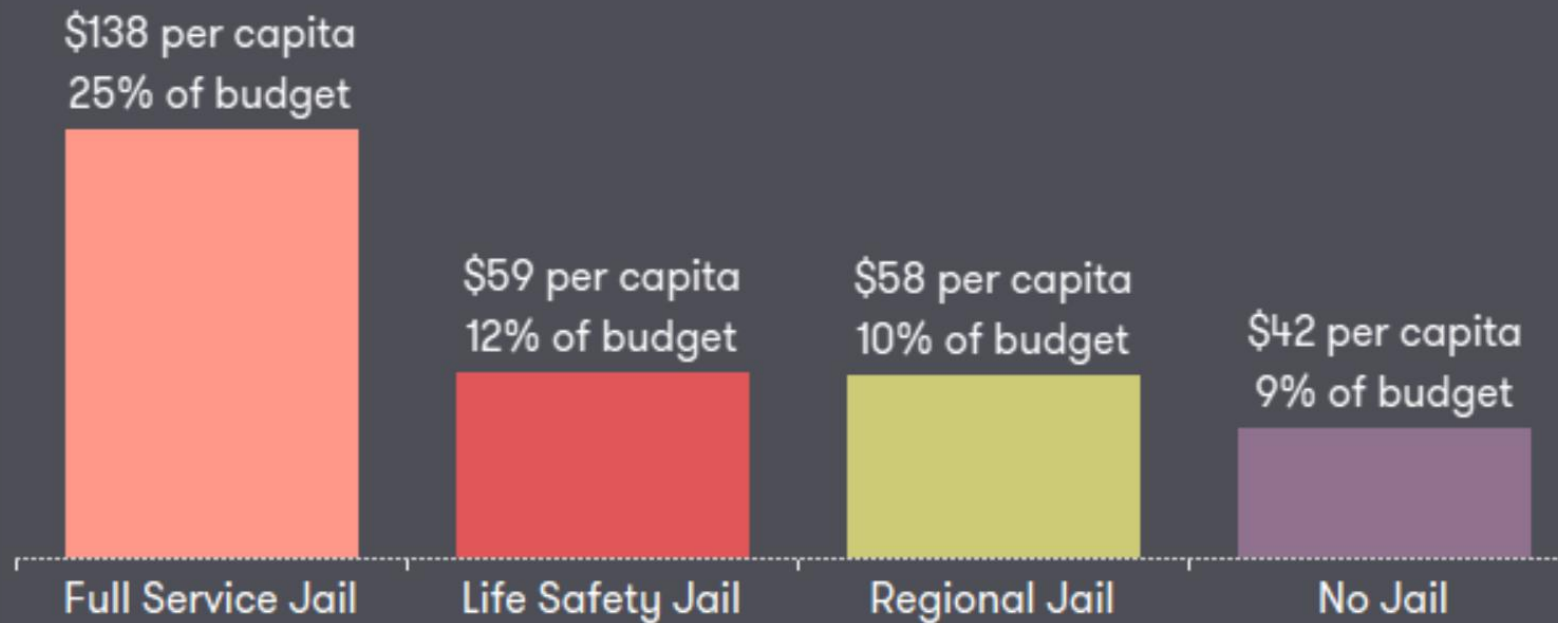
Average Jail \$ Per Capita by Urbanicity, FY 2019



**Fayette & Jefferson Counties are not included in this analysis. Vera would classify Jefferson County as the state's only major urban county, and Fayette the largest of the small to midsize counties.*

Counties without a full service jail spend significantly less per capita and as a percent of the total budget to house people in jail

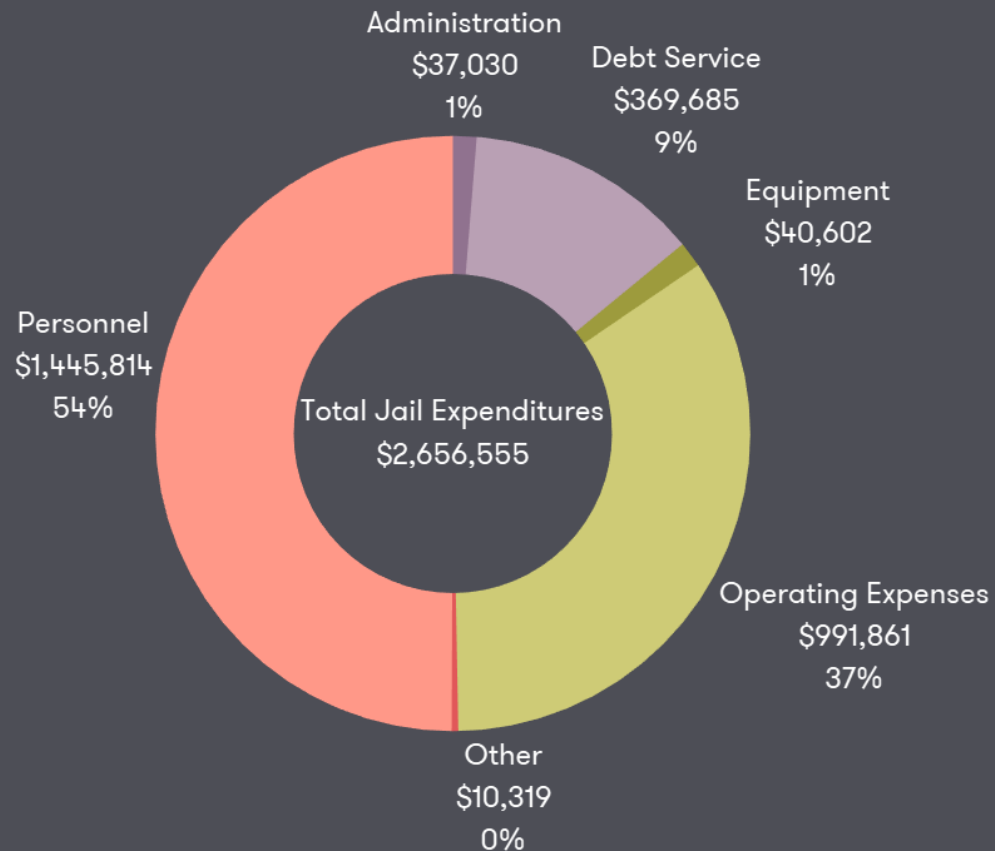
Average Jail \$ Per Capita and Jail % of Budget by Jail Type, FY 2019



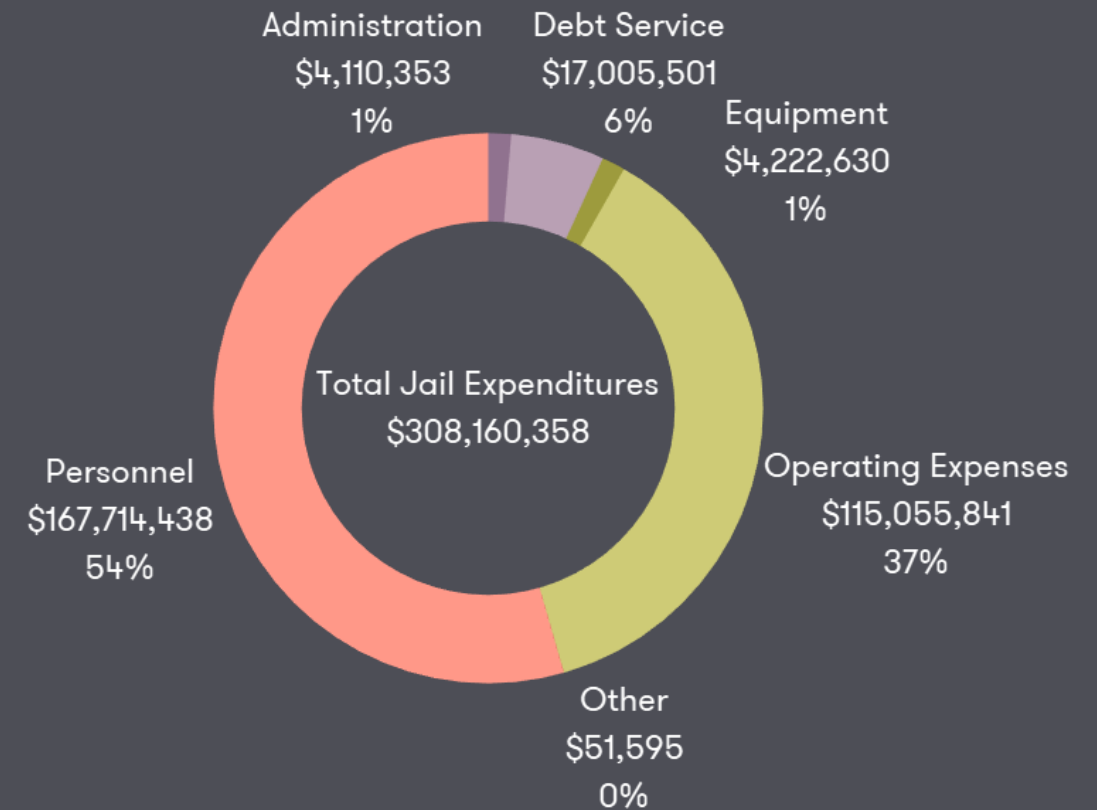
Kentucky has 73 full service jails, 3 Life Safety jails, 4 regional jails, and 40 counties with no jails

Personnel costs (salary + employee benefits) make up the majority of jail expenditures (**54%**), followed by Operating Expenses (**37%**)

Jail Expenses by Type, Average Across Counties

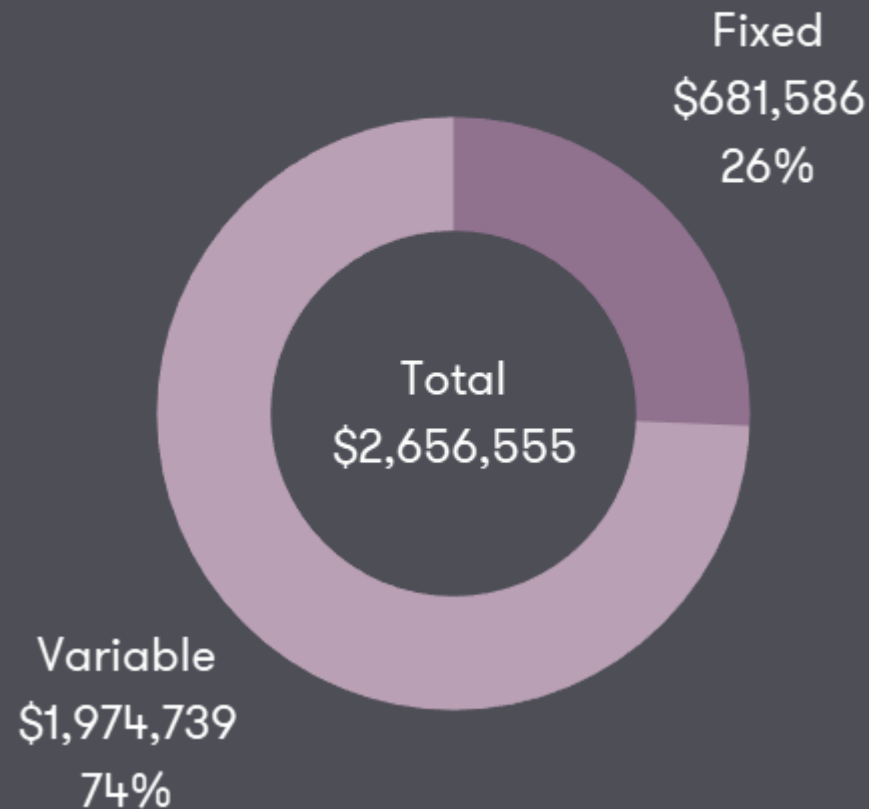


Jail Expenses by Type, Total Across Counties

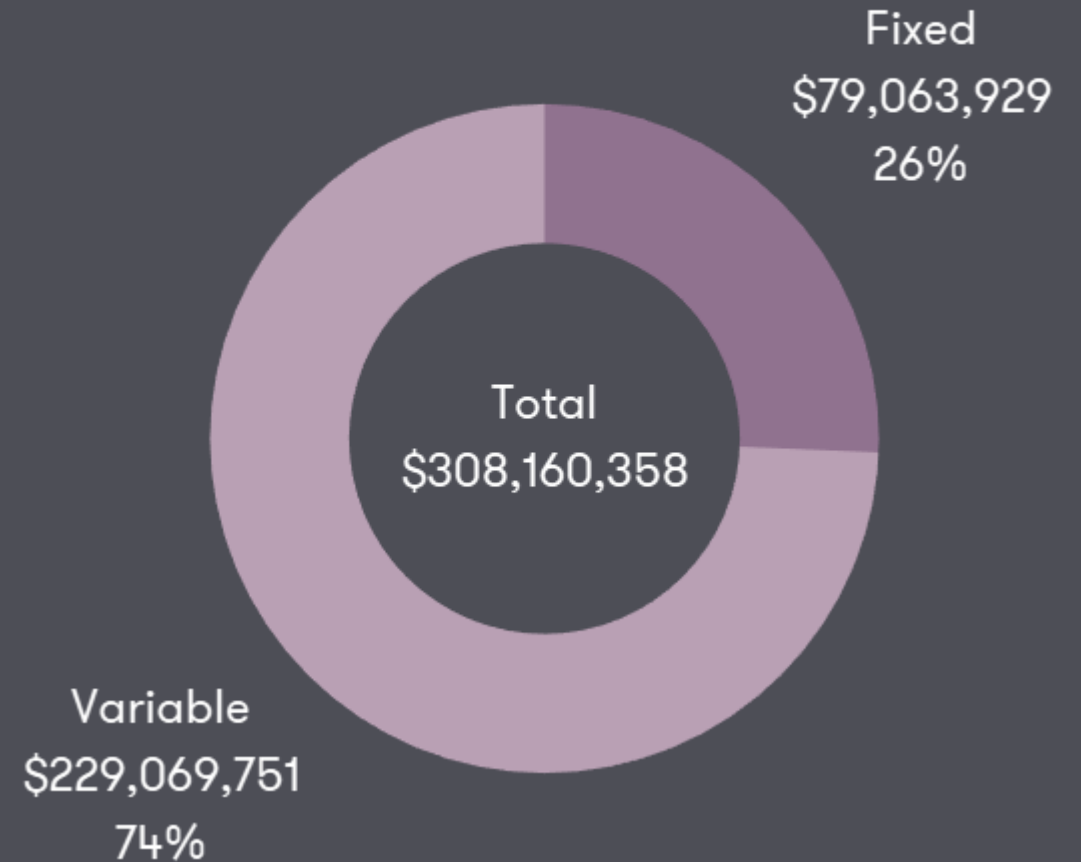


On average, 75% of jail costs are variable, but this varies widely by county

Jail Expenses by Cost Class, Average Across Counties



Jail Expenses by Cost Class, Total Across Counties



Top expenses for counties without jails tend to be contracts, the jailer's salary and benefits, and transportation costs

Anderson County Jail Expenditures (No Jail)

Total County Budget, FY 2019: \$9,180,443

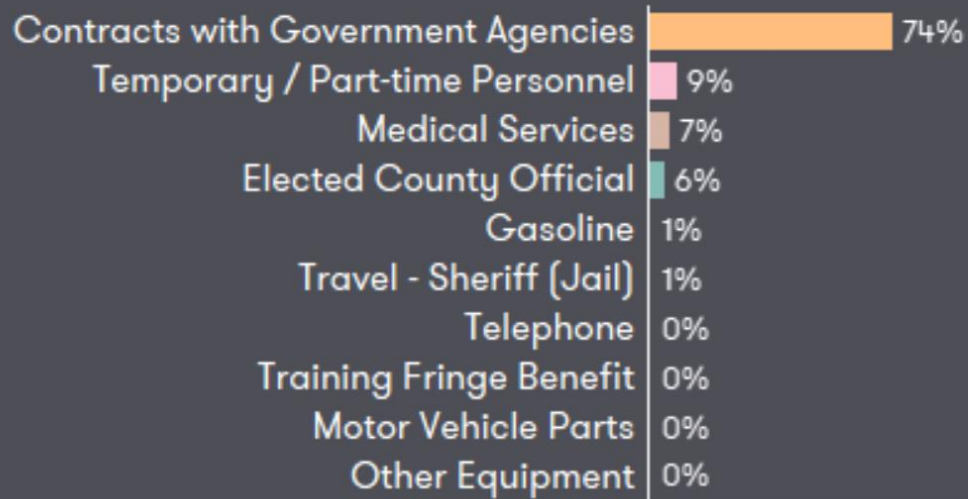
Total Jail Expenditures: \$927,882

Jail % of Budget: 10%

Jail \$ Per Capita: \$41

Resident Pop: 22,747

Top 10 Costs



Hart County Jail Expenditures (Full Service Jail)

Total County Budget, FY 2019: \$9,507,414

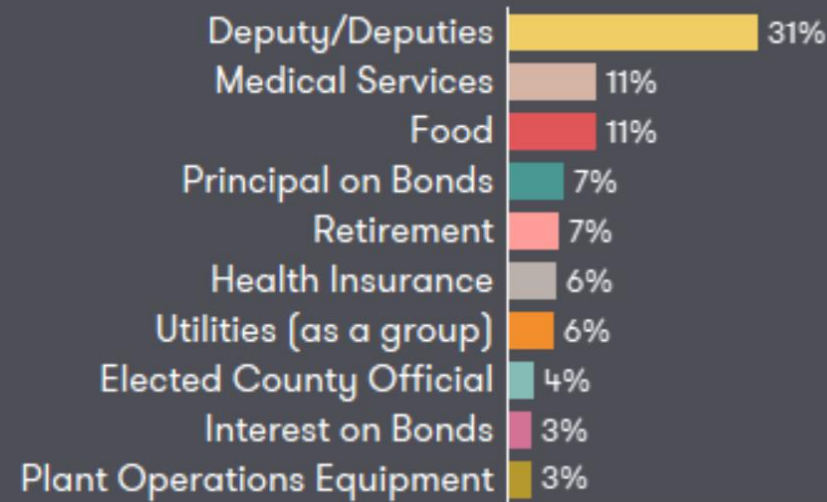
Total Jail Expenditures: \$2,452,240

Jail % of Budget: 26%

Jail \$ Per Capita: \$129

Resident Pop: 19,035

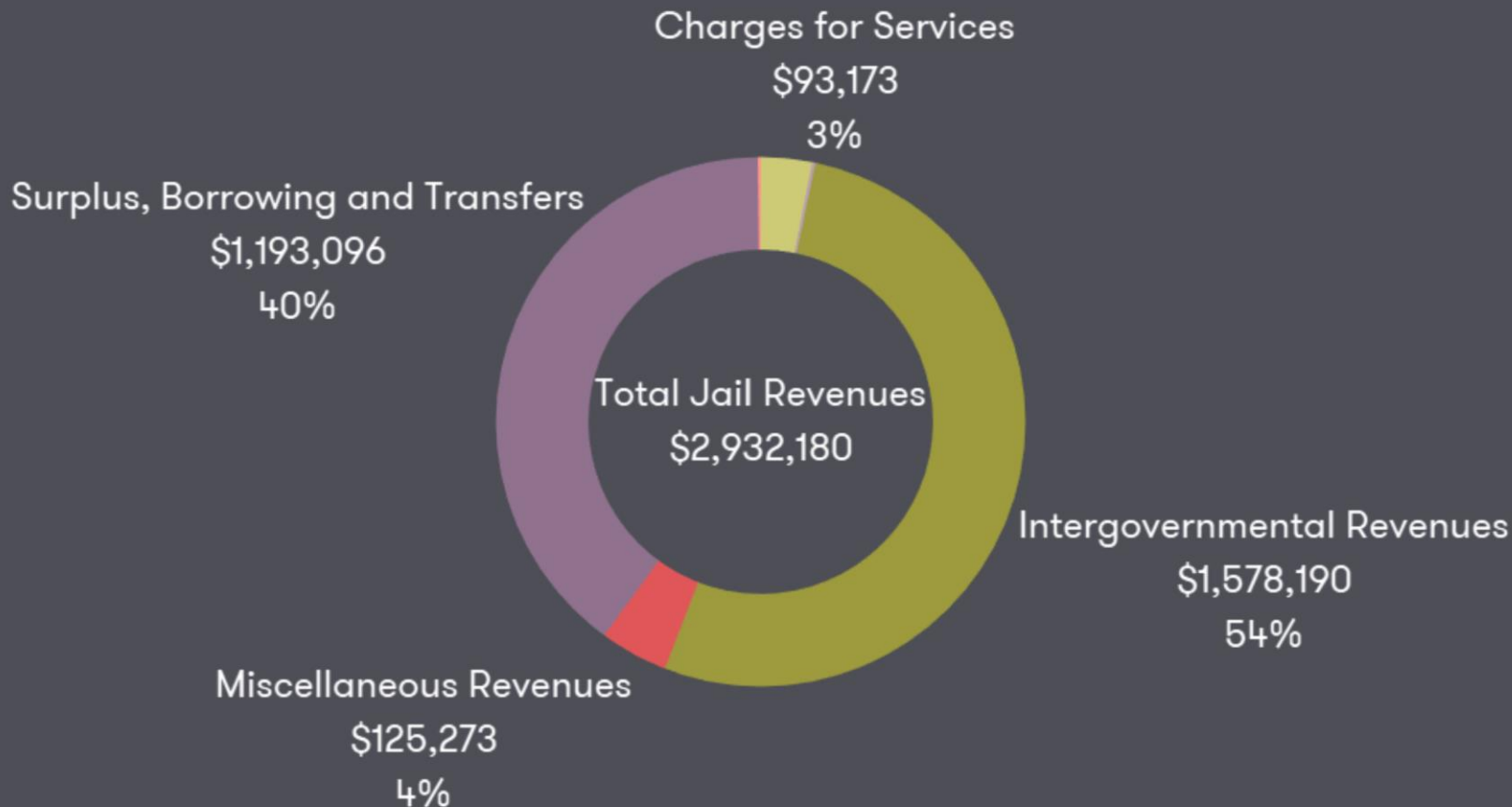
Top 10 Costs



What are the major sources of jail revenue?

Intergovernmental revenues make up the majority of jail revenues (54%), followed by surplus, borrowing and transfers (40%)

Jail Revenues by Type, Average Across Counties



- Most intergovernmental jail revenues came from the state (**76%** of all intergovernmental revenues and **41%** of the jail budget on average). The majority of state revenues (**79%**) are for Class D felon and housing people for the DOC
- Some counties receive **up to 86%** of their jail revenue to house people for the KY DOC , and **up to 60%** of their jail revenue to house people for the federal government

How much revenue do counties receive from
other government entities for housing people
in jail?

In FY 2019, the average county* received \$949,756 (or **24%** of its jail revenues) to house people for the KY DOC

Casey County

Urbanicity: Rural

Jail Type: Full Service Jail

Residents: 16,159

Total Jail Expenditures: **\$3,499,722**

Per Capita Jail \$: **\$217**

Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **45%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **86%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **4%**

Henry County

Urbanicity: Suburban

Jail Type: No Jail

Residents: 16,126

Total Jail Expenditures: **\$571,835**

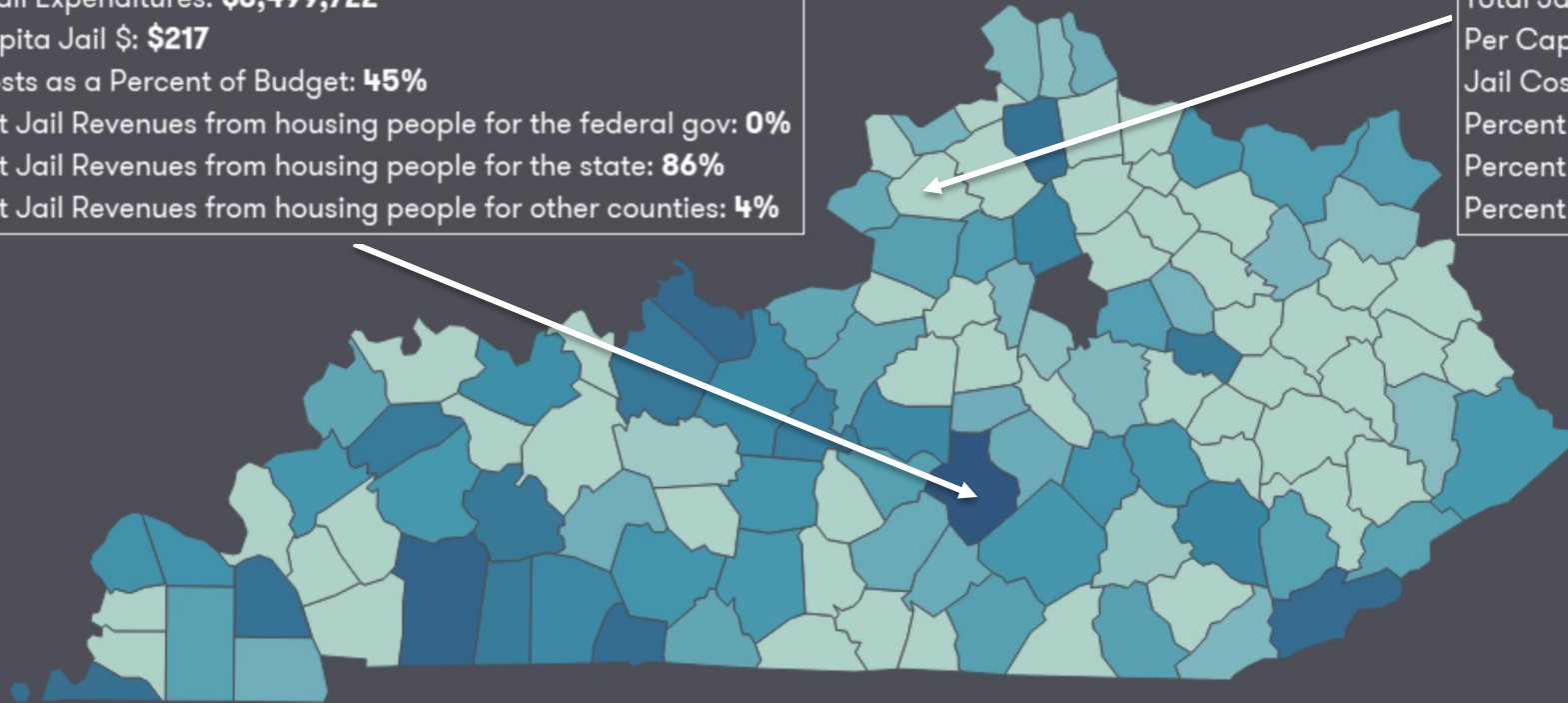
Per Capita Jail \$: **\$35**

Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **9%**

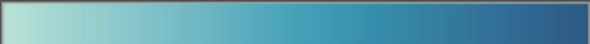
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **0%**

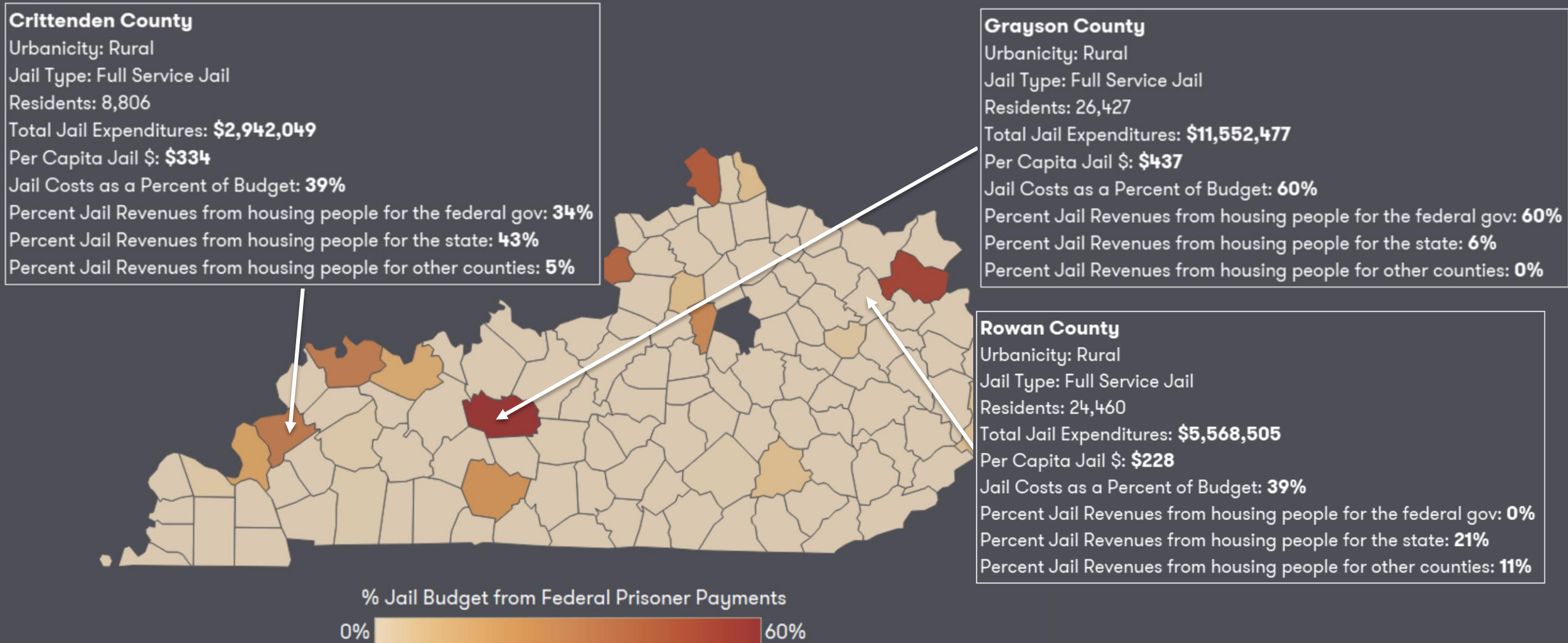
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **0%**



% Jail Budget from State Prisoner Payments

0%  86%

In FY 2019, the average county* received \$1,333,201 (or 17% of its jail revenues) to house people for the federal government



In FY 2019, the average county* received \$264,672 (or 8% of its jail revenues) to house people for other counties

Leslie County

Urbanicity: Rural

Jail Type: Full Service Jail

Residents: 9,877

Total Jail Expenditures: **\$3,492,399**

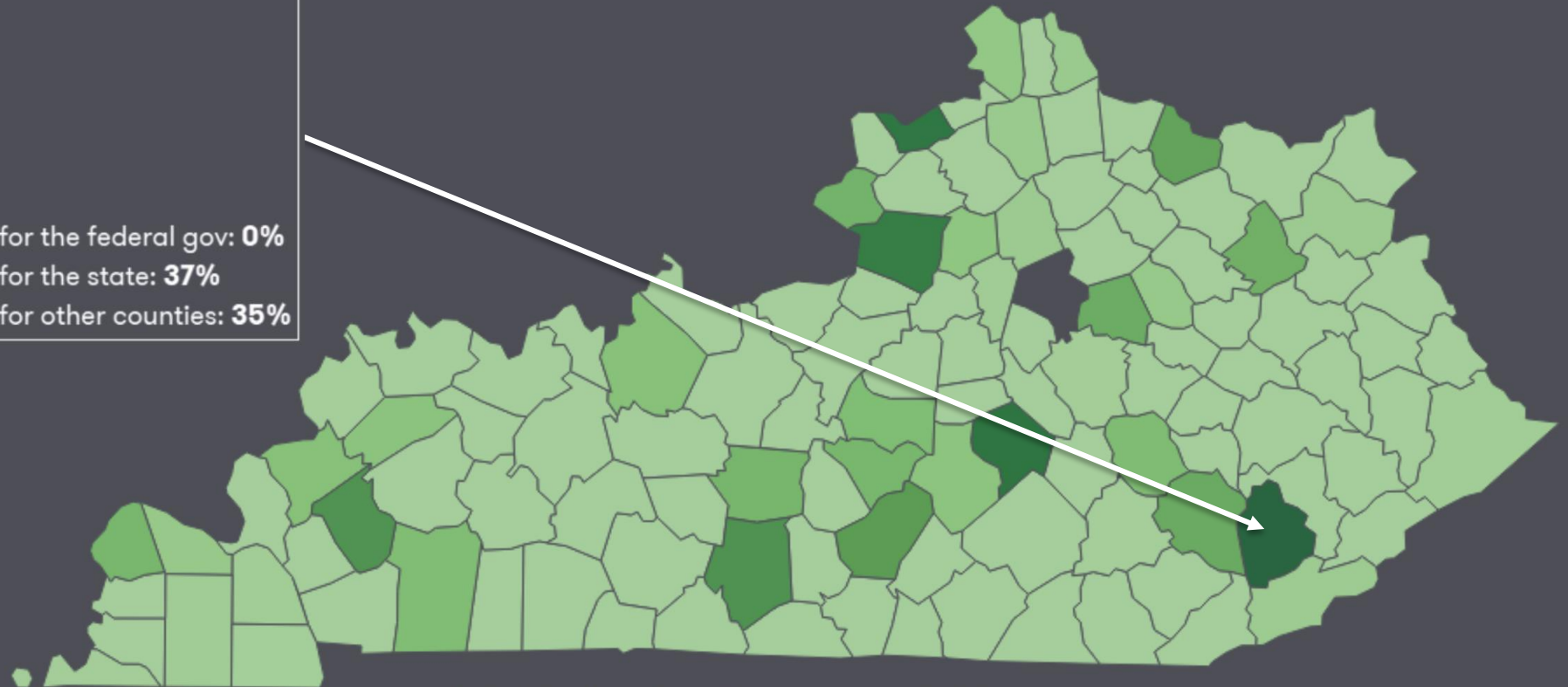
Per Capita Jail \$: **\$354**

Jail Costs as a Percent of Budget: **36%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the federal gov: **0%**

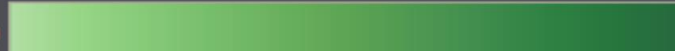
Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for the state: **37%**

Percent Jail Revenues from housing people for other counties: **35%**



% Jail Budget from Intercounty Jail Payments

0%

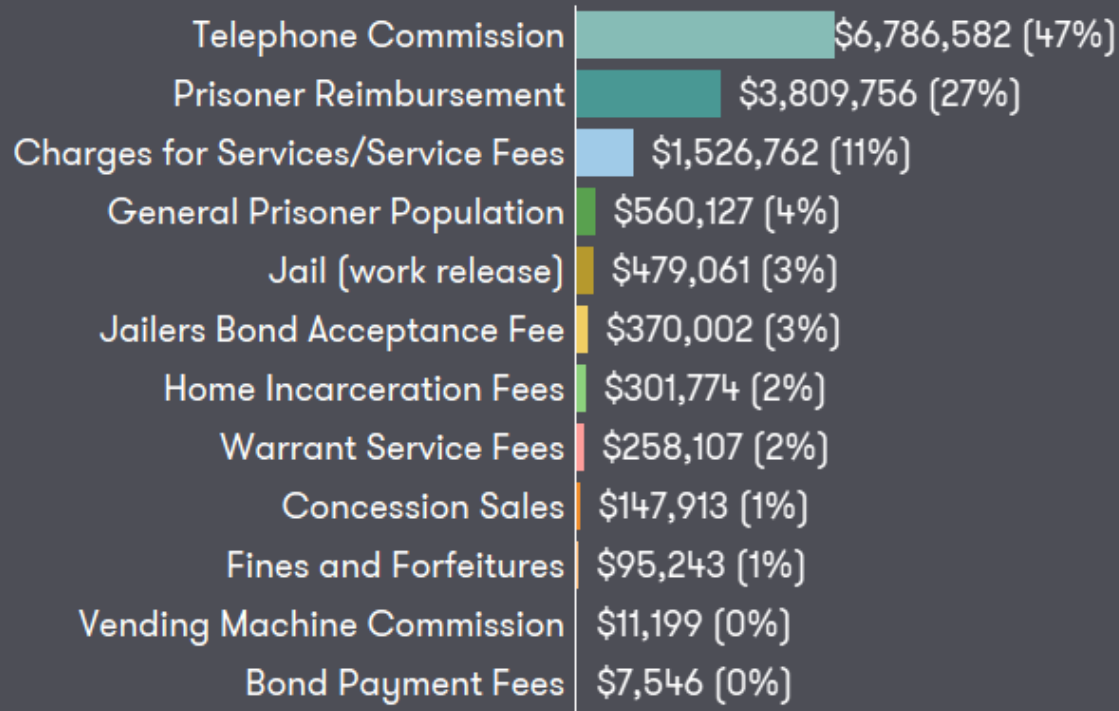


35%

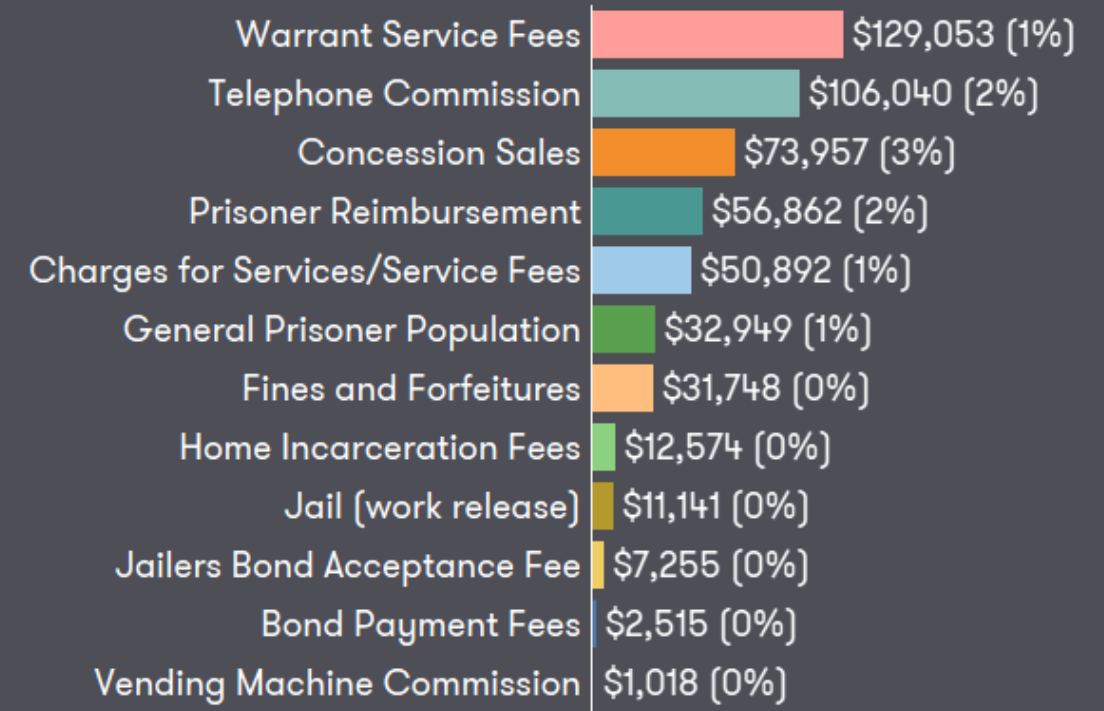
How much revenue do counties collect via
fines, fees and charges?

The average county derives only 4% of its jail revenues from fines and fees, but this represents more than 14 million dollars extracted from some of the state's poorest residents

Total dollar amount and % of jail revenue received from jail fees, FY2019



Average dollar amount and % of jail revenue received from jail fees, FY2019



What should counties do to reduce their jail costs?

- Since counties are responsible for expenses related to the locally held jail population, a reduction in the number of people held in jail pretrial and on misdemeanor offenses would lead to a reduction in variable expenses in the short term, with some savings from fixed expenses also expected on the medium-long term
- These savings could be redirected toward other types of investments that better promote community safety, including alternatives to incarceration, affordable housing, and treatment programs for mental illness and substance use
- These savings would also potentially offset the revenue lost from not charging user fees
- We are currently working on a tool that would allow you to estimate the potential cost savings associated with reductions in the jail population for your county

Data Source & Notes

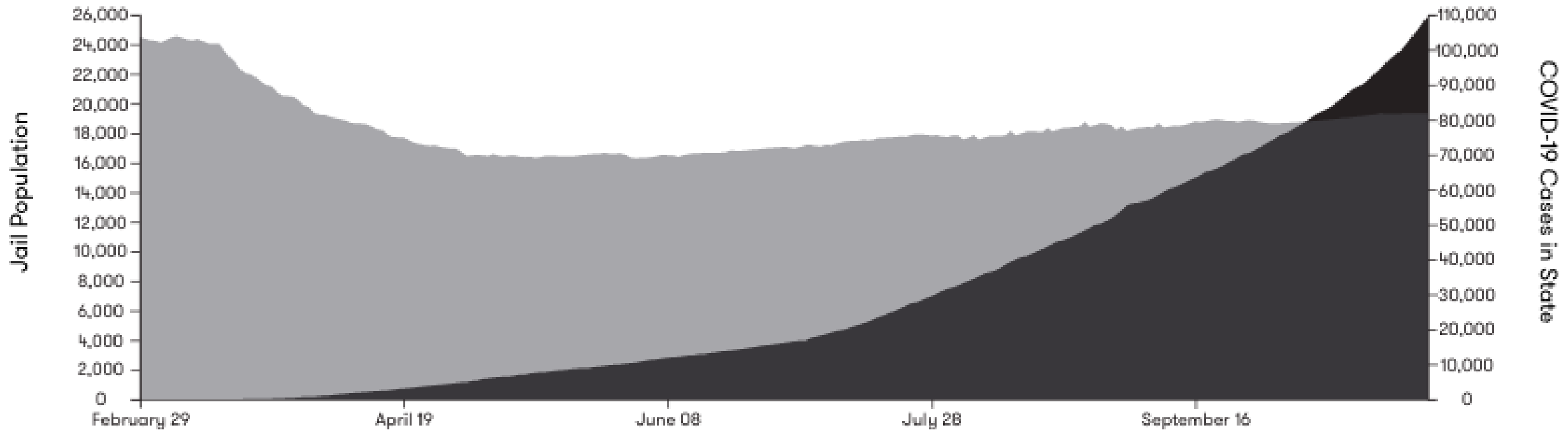
- Budget data for this analysis comes from the Office of State Budget Director disbursement & receipt reports available for download from the [Kentucky Department for Local Government website](#)
- Data is for fiscal year 2019 (2018-2019)
- Jail Expenditures:
 - Includes all expenditures tied to the office of the jailer, the housing of class D felons in county jails and work release for people being held for the state, regardless of which fund these expenditures originate from
 - Also includes debt service expenses, administration expenses, and capital project expenses from the jail fund or jail construction fund
 - Excludes expenditures related to Juvenile Detention Services
- Jail Revenues:
 - Includes all revenues listed under the jail fund or jail construction fund
 - Also includes specific jail-related revenue items tied to funds other than the jail fund or jail construction items
- Missing Data for Some Counties:
 - Data on jail expenditures is missing for Elliott and Johnson Counties
 - Data on jail revenues is missing for Boyd County
 - Data on both jail expenditures and revenues is missing for Fayette and Jefferson Counties

Jail Population Shifts

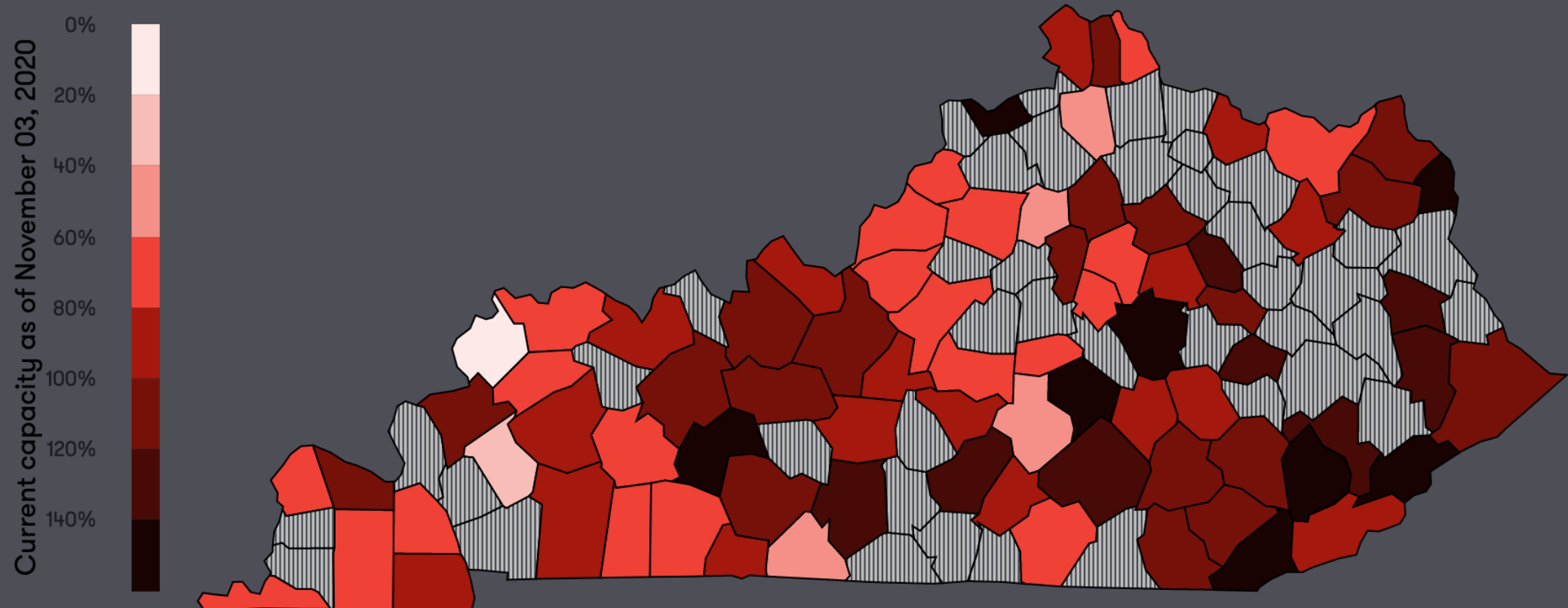
Changes in Kentucky's Jail Population in Response to COVID-19

What is the Current State of Jail Incarceration in Kentucky?

On October 30, there were 19,338 people in jail and 109,244 COVID-19 cases in Kentucky

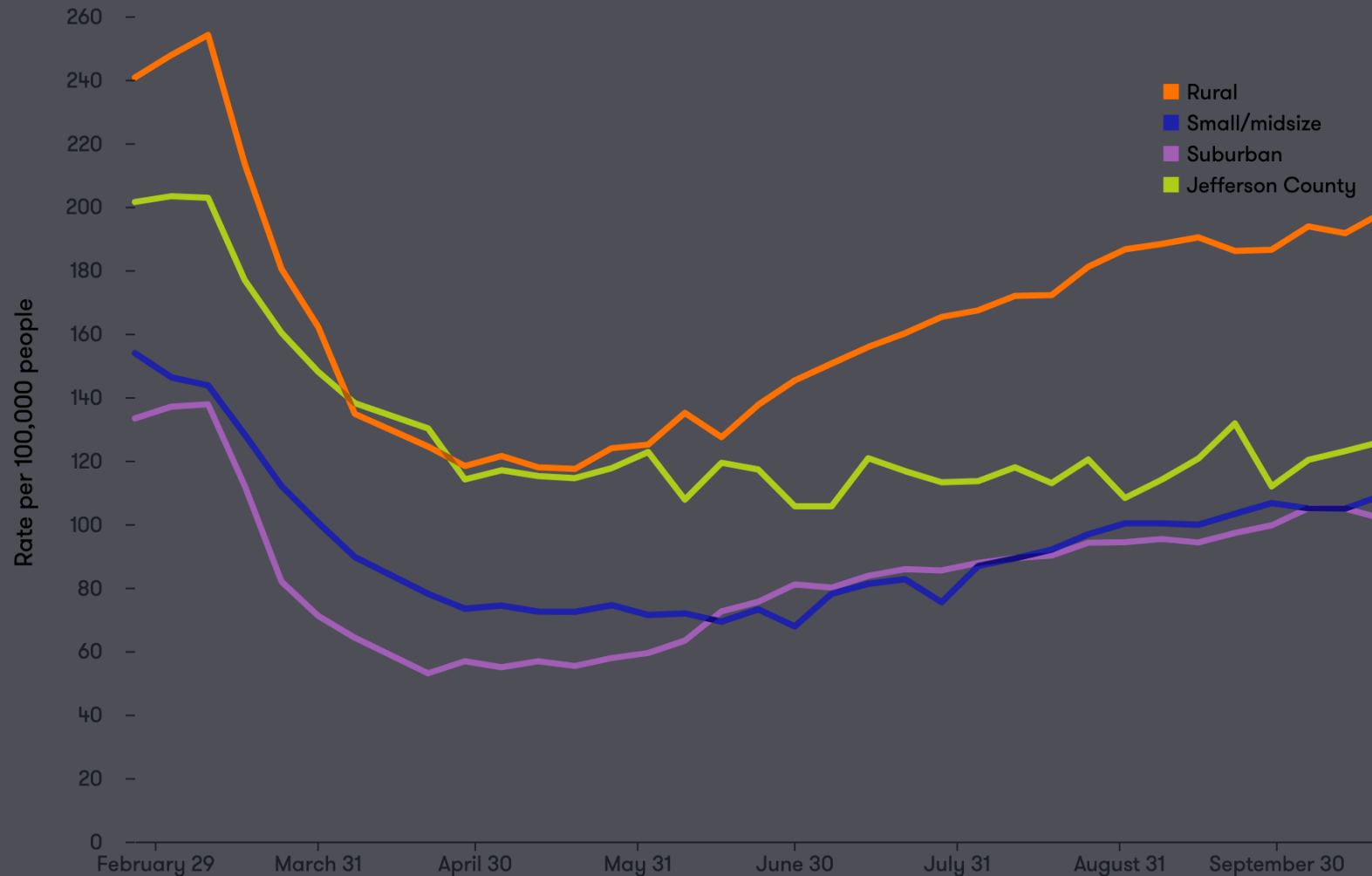


49 jail facilities in Kentucky are currently operating at or above capacity; 8 are operating above 150 percent capacity.



On January 30, 2020, before policies were adopted to reduce jail populations to prevent the spread of COVID-19, **79 facilities (64%)** were operating at or above capacity

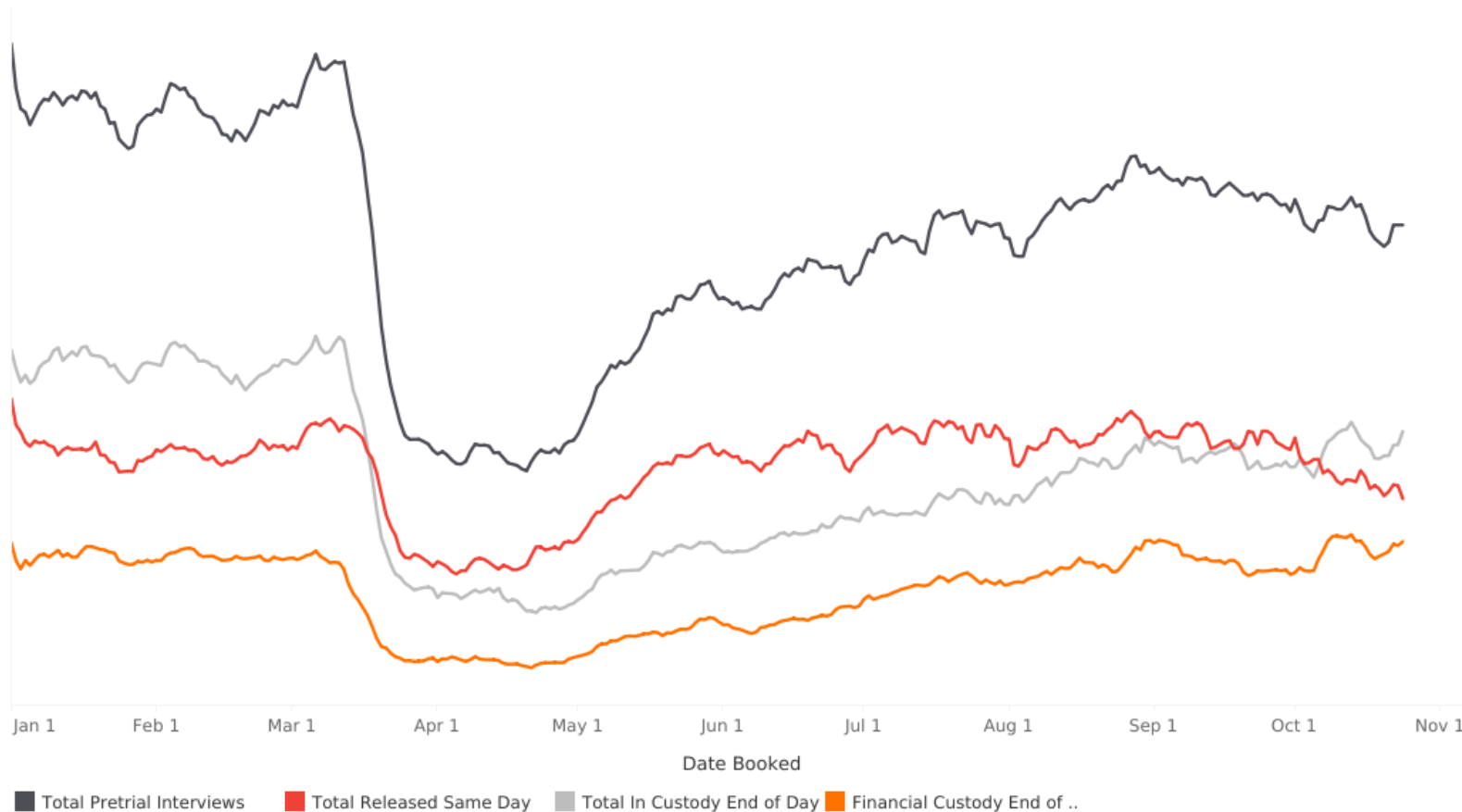
The Local Jail Population Has Rebounded the Most Sharply in Rural Kentucky Jails



Between April 20 and October 24, bookings increased 107 percent;
detention on unaffordable money bail increased 284 percent.

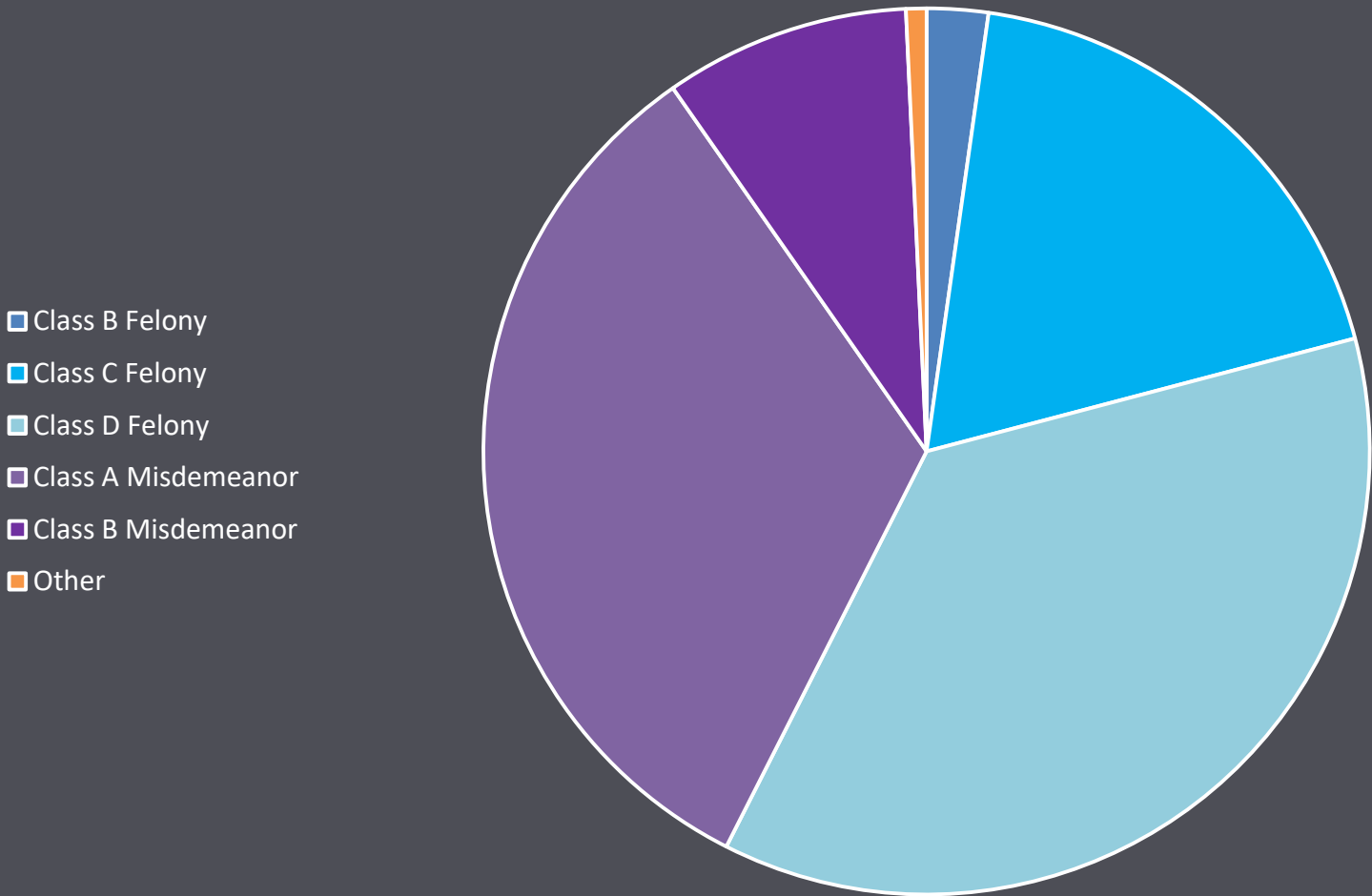
Kentucky Jail Bookings

Total Pretrial Interviews, Total People in Custody, People in Financial Custody and People Released the Same Day
7-day Moving Average, January 1, 2020 to October 24, 2020



On November 1, 37 percent of people with pretrial interviews were held on money bond; the majority were charged with Class D felonies and Class A Misdemeanors

Same Day Financial Custody on November 1, 2020

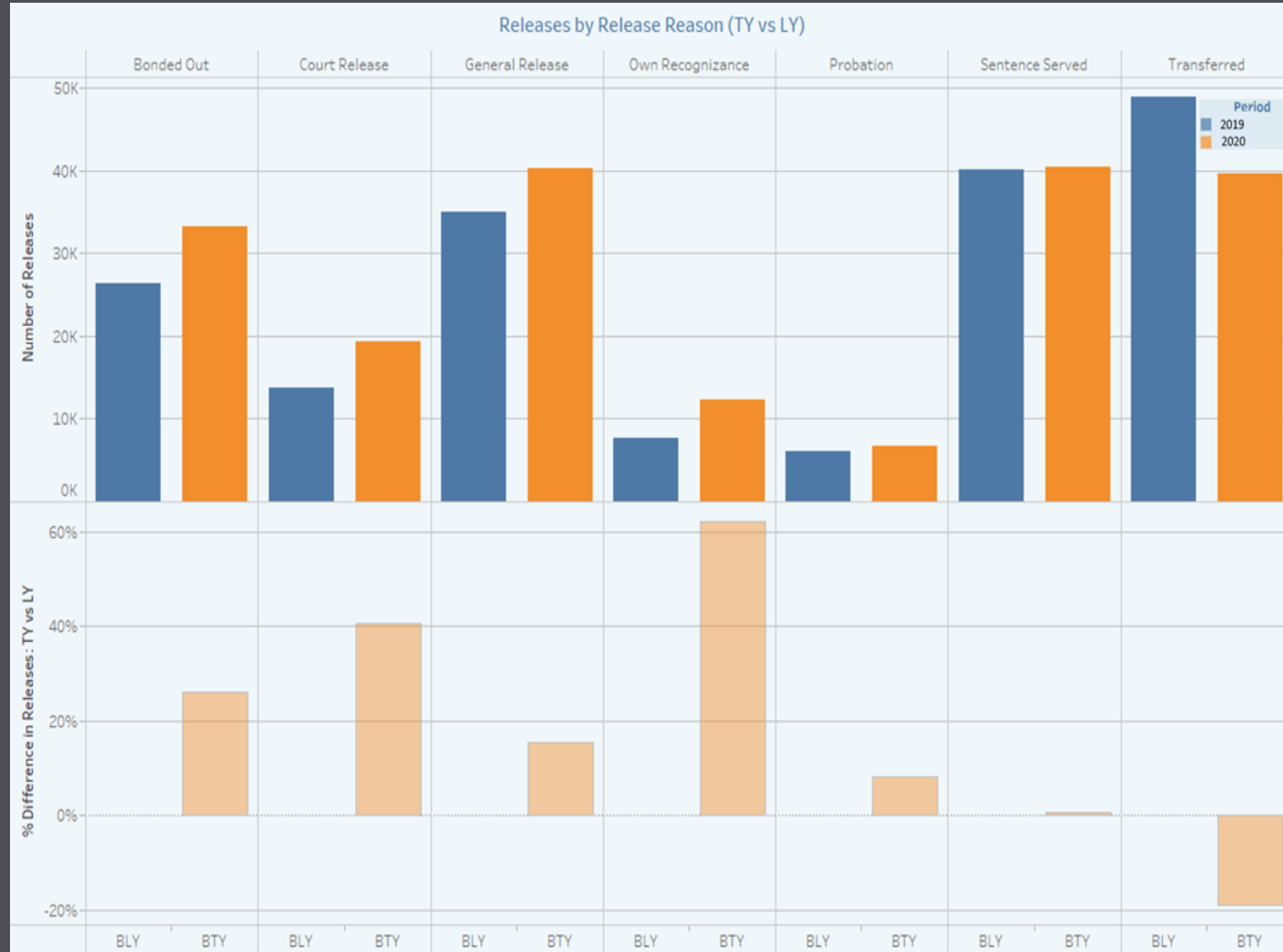


How did Jail Bookings and Releases Change in Early 2020?

Nationally, bookings declined the most for Court, Driving, and Drug offenses



Increased releases were driven by people bonding out and being released by courts



Recommendations:

- Reduce bookings into jail, including for court related charges
- Divert people with behavioral health needs away from the justice system
- Expand the nonfinancial release of high-needs people, and refer more people with low and moderate needs to community-based services and supports so that pretrial services can effectively allocate services
- Narrowly tailor the imposition of money bail to people who pose a clear and convincing risk to public safety
- Individually tailor the imposition of particularly onerous conditions of pretrial release, including drug testing and GPS monitoring

Data Source & Notes

- Data on total jail populations and jail capacity is from the Kentucky Department of Corrections' [Weekly Jail](#) reports.
- COVID-19 case data is from the [New York Times](#).
- Data on pretrial bookings and same-day outcomes is from Kentucky's Pretrial Release Information Management System (PRIM), as provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts.
 - The number of total pretrial interviews reflects the number of people booked into pretrial custody from 6pm the day prior to 6pm the day reported, while the "in custody" population reflects the people who were still in jail that day. They may or may not still be detained.
- National bookings and admission data was produced by Appris for a forthcoming whitepaper published in partnership with Vera.

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