

Washington Rural Jails Network

A Community-Engaged Research Network



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“We’re at an unprecedented time in our nation’s history where fixing our broken justice system is not only possible but, in some places, it has already become a reality. Looking ahead, it’s imperative that we empower and resource overlooked rural counties so they can implement locally tailored reforms.”

Nancy Fishman | Former Vera Institute of Justice Project Director

Whitman County Spotlight

Washington Rural Jails Network is a community-engaged project at Washington State University led by the Department of Sociology

In 2019, the Vera Institute of Justice awarded WSU & UGA each a \$235,000 grant, funded by Arnold Ventures, to pilot a hub site to document and understand trends in rural incarceration.

The project had several goals:

- ☑ Gather and analyze administrative jail data from select rural counties in Washington.
- ☑ Build knowledge of specific factors affecting jail population trends.
- ☑ Gain perspective of justice-involved and justice staff via interviews
- ☑ Share lessons from research and data analysis with local representatives and stakeholders.

Sheriff’s offices in **Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Okanogan, and Whitman** counties shared jail data for January 2015 to June 2020.



Key Facts

1. Failure to Appear was the dominant driver of pretrial incarceration and jail re-entry.
2. One in 10 pretrial jail admissions were for DUI.
3. Most pretrial jail admissions for assault (72%) were for domestic violence.
4. One in 10 pretrial jail admissions were drug-related.

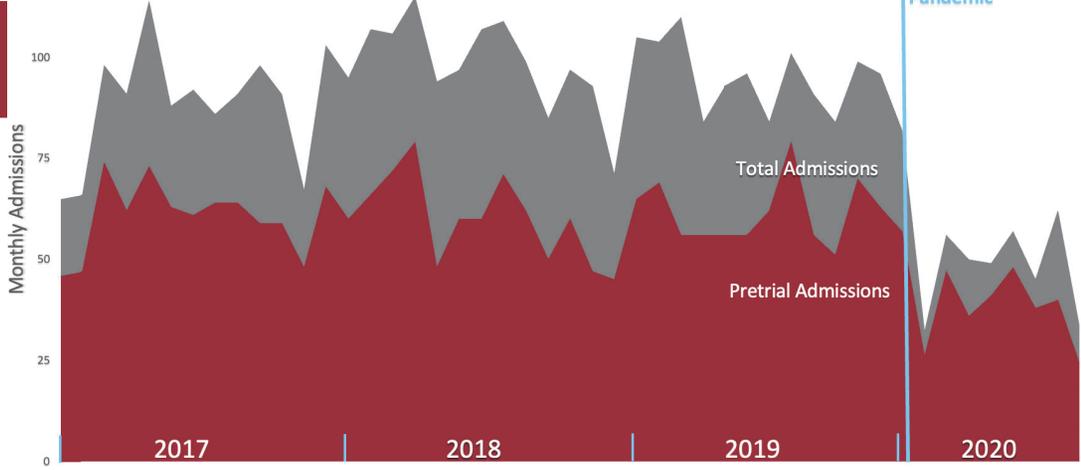
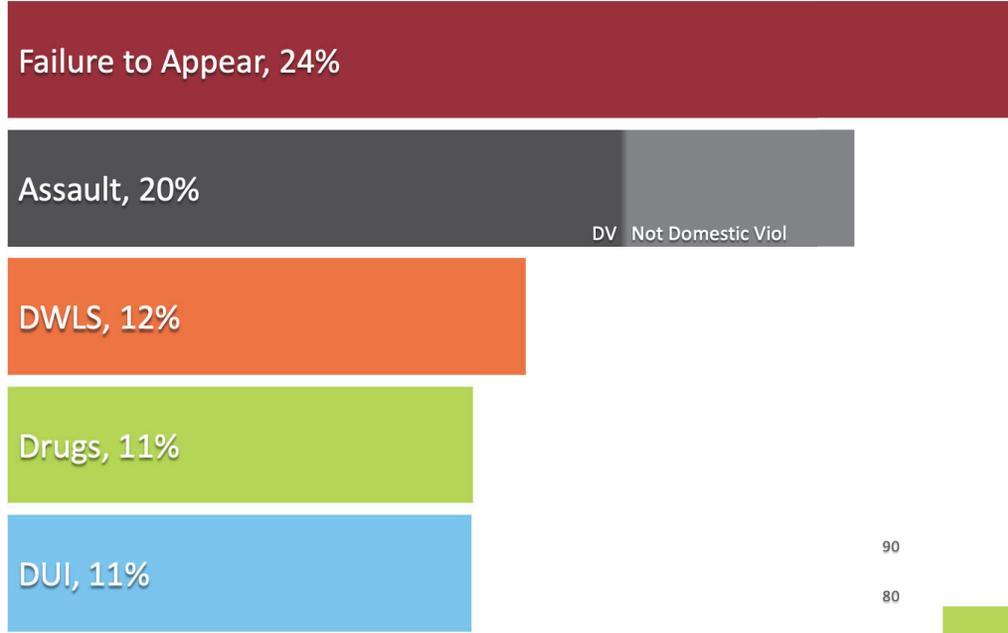
“My license is suspended. And the only reason it is suspended is because part of the fines that I have is a fine to the DMV or the DOL... And I just haven’t paid the fine. It is, like, 195 bucks. I haven’t paid the fine ... Admittedly, like right now, I don’t have the money to pay the fine ”

- 49 year-old white man

One in 4 people were booked into jail pretrial for “failure to appear”

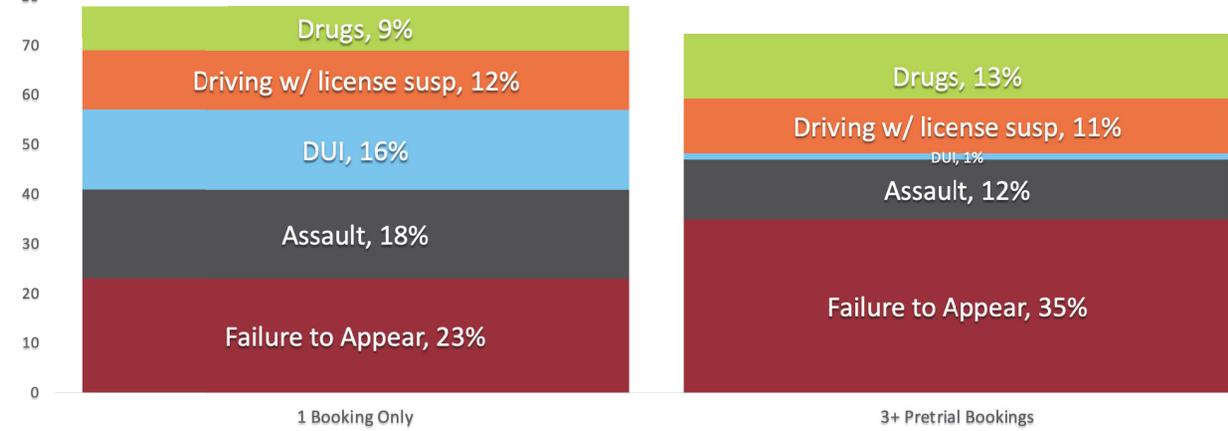
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Pretrial jail admissions were stable until drastic declines in early 2020

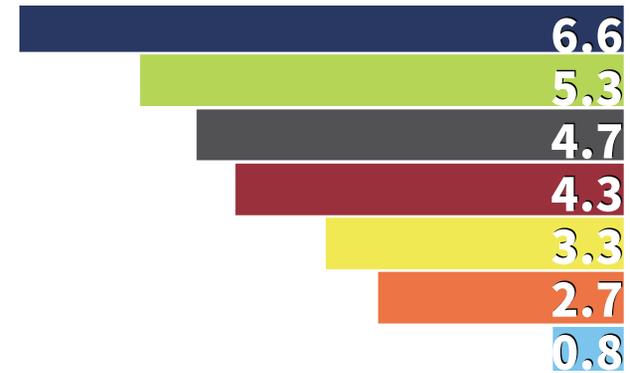


Rural Context:
 Rural counties like Whitman face resource constraints, staffing shortages; limited health, mental health, and substance treatment services; and scant communication, transportation, and legal infrastructure.

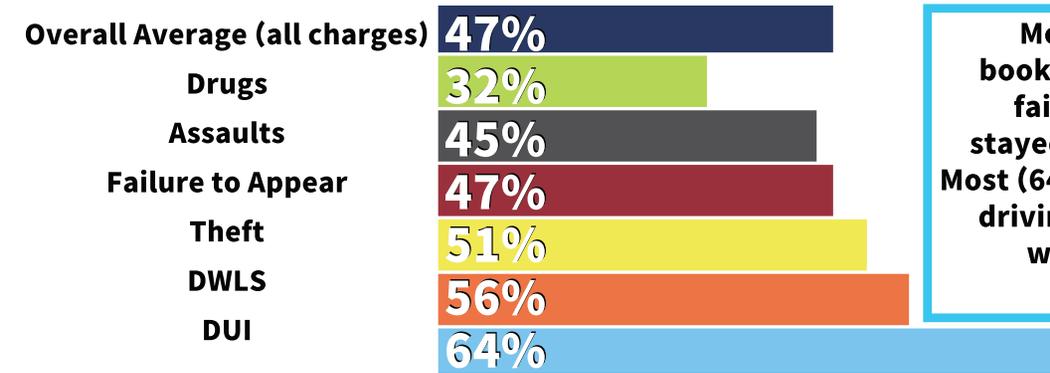
Failure to Appear is a significant driver of reentry



Average # of pretrial days spent in jail by charge



% of people who spend 24 hours or less in jail pretrial by charge



More than half of people booked into jail pretrial for failing to appear in court stayed longer than one day. Most (64%) jailed at arrest for driving under the influence were released within 24 hours.

