

# UNLOCK THE VOTE

## ARIZONA, PART 2

Jail-Based Voting in Arizona's  
August 2020 Primary Election



**PREPARED BY**

The Arizona Coalition  
to End Jail-Based Disenfranchisement  
*votefromjail.org*

# BACKGROUND

---

The United States imprisons more human beings than any other country in the world, and Arizona has one of the highest incarceration rates in the US. The criminal punishment system incarcerates Black, Latinx, and Native people at significantly disproportionate rates; in addition, Arizona employs a cash bail system, meaning that thousands of Arizonans are in jail simply because they cannot afford to post bail.

This year, 2.3 million people are incarcerated across the country, and more than 630,000 of those people are in local jails, which often get left out of the larger criminal (in)justice conversation. In Arizona, an estimated 14,000 people are detained in county jails each night, and the majority of these people retain their civil rights, not having been convicted of a felony. However, county officials have been shown to repeatedly and systemically deny the right to vote to people incarcerated in pre-trial detention.

In July 2020, the Arizona Coalition the End Jail-Based Disenfranchisement published a report, Unlock the Vote Arizona, to gather findings on jail-based voting (JBV) procedures in each of Arizona's 15 counties. The majority of counties -- including Maricopa, the nation's fourth largest county and the county that holds 60% of Arizona's population -- received an F. Not only was there a lack of congruency around best practices, these counties failed to produce written and practicable policies that facilitate robust voter education and voter registration; failing to produce a robust policy blatantly creates barriers to access to the ballot for jail-based voters.



---

**This is voter disenfranchisement, and it hurts low-income people, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color the most.**

A month after the publication of Unlock the Vote Arizona, the state held its Primary Election on August 4, 2020. The election gave the counties an opportunity to implement improved JBV procedures and increase the participation rate of voters in jail from March 2020's dismal participation rate of 0.27%. This report, Unlock the Vote Arizona Part 2, tracks the August 2020 JBV participation rate by county and statewide. Statewide, the participation rate for all registered voters was 36.4%, according to the Secretary of State's official election canvass. In county jails, this report finds, the rate was 2.2%.

A true democracy is attainable, and it necessitates the full participation of community members in decision-making processes that affect their everyday lives. The state, elected officials, and county officials have a responsibility to ensure the safety of our communities, which includes the ability to participate in democratic processes. Refusal to respond to records requests, failure to produce written policy and implement a voter engagement plan -- despite being offered guides -- as well as blatant barriers to ballot access, is voter disenfranchisement.

The wild west political arena of the old southwest where those with power maintain power and are not accountable to the masses cannot be a narrative that moves forward. We hope to unlock a future where we all thrive.



# METHODOLOGY

---

This report serves as a follow-up to our previous analysis of jail-based voting procedures in each of Arizona's 15 counties. In this report, we have gathered data on how many incarcerated voters were successfully able to cast their ballot from jails during the August 4, 2020 Primary Election. This election was open to all eligible voters that were registered at least 29 days before the election.

For each county, we gathered the county's procedural score (A through F) from our July report, the estimated population of incarcerated eligible voters in the county's custody on August 4, the number of ballots requested from voters in the county's custody, and the number of ballots successfully voted from voters in the county's custody.

We requested data from all 15 counties on the population of the county jails on August 4, and we received responses from Gila, Cochise, Coconino, Yuma, and Navajo counties. For Apache, Greenlee, Graham, Mohave, and Pinal counties, we estimated the August 4 jail population through booking lists we obtained from these counties on September 16, either through publicly available documents or via public records requests. For La Paz County, we estimated the August 4 jail population through a booking list obtained on July 21 via a records request. Santa Cruz County booking lists were not available.

*Maricopa County has not responded to any of our records requests, so we do not report data from them.*



---

We then estimated the eligible voter population in each county's jail(s) by multiplying the estimated jail population by 0.6, our conservative estimate of the rate of voter eligibility in Arizona's jails.

We collected data on the number of ballots requested and voted from voters in each county's jail(s) through formal records requests to each county's Sheriff's and Recorder's Offices. You can view which offices responded on Page 16. In some counties, more ballots were requested than were voted, which can be the result of 1) the ballot requester was not an eligible voter; 2) the county failed to deliver the ballot to the voter in adequate time; 3) the ballot requester received their ballot but chose not to vote it; or 4) another scenario.

Finally, we determined the participation rate by dividing the number of ballots voted from each county's jails(s) by the estimated population of eligible voters in that county's jail(s).

# RESULTS

---

Out of the counties that we analyzed, only two county jail systems had JBV participation rates above 10%. Arizona voters in jail had an estimated participation rate of 2.2%, compared to an overall state participation rate of 36.4%.

**Voters in jail, on average, voted at a rate 1/16 of that of voters across the state. This is voter disenfranchisement, plain and simple.**

The nine counties that we were able to analyze had JBV participation rates ranging from 0% (Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai Counties) to 30% (Graham County). Graham and Navajo Counties had the highest participation rate (30% and 13%, respectively), but their smaller jail populations did not significantly bring-up the average. Full results, as well as a county-by-county breakdown, can be viewed below.

Overall, counties failed miserably to provide incarcerated voters with sufficient access to voter registration information, voter education, and ballots.

The responsibility to end jail-based disenfranchisement is shared by multiple entities: County Sheriffs, County Recorders and Election Directors, the Secretary of State, and the State Legislature.

**We call on each of these offices, especially the Sheriffs, to show integrity and promote democracy by creating and enacting free, fair, and safe jail-based voting procedures.**



# COUNTY PARTICIPATION RATES

---

Coconino County	<b>1%</b>
Gila County	<b>6%</b>
Graham County	<b>30%</b>
Mohave County	<b>5%</b>
Navajo County	<b>13%</b>
Pima County	<b>1%</b>
Pinal County	<b>0%</b>
Santa Cruz County	<b>0%</b>
Yavapai County	<b>0%</b>
Statewide	<b>2%</b>

The following counties failed to respond to a request for ballot data: Apache, Cochise, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, and Yuma Counties.



# APACHE COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	C
Eligible Voter Pop.:	41
Ballots Requested:	?
Ballots Voted:	?
Participation Rate:	?



**NOTES:**

Apache County overall has relatively strong voting and voter education protocols in place, but lacks meaningful registration procedures. They did not respond to any requests for data on the Primary Election.

# COCHISE COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	F
Eligible Voter Pop.:	125
Ballots Requested:	?
Ballots Voted:	?
Participation Rate:	?



**NOTES:**

Cochise County has existing written policy on voting procedures that indicates a somewhat strong degree of coordination between the Sheriff's office and the Recorder's office, but the policy states incarcerated voters are encouraged "to participate in voting when they are out of custody" and seems to provide minimal assistance in helping voters initiate the process.



# COCONINO COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	<b>F</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>169</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>2</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>2</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>1%</b>



Coconino County provided a flyer with voting deadlines and procedures with a number to call free of charge, but they provided no voter registration outreach. Their voting procedure allows incarcerated voters to cast their ballots early but provides no protections for late-jailed voters. Only their Recorder's office responded to our records request; we have received nothing to date from their Sheriffs' office.

# GILA COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	<b>D</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>85</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>6</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>5</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>6%</b>



Gila County educates incarcerated people about voting opportunities both by verbally informing them and posting fliers; that being said, registration processes are lacking, and Gila County is still in the process of securing bilingual educational materials. They follow the Secretary of State's voting procedure. Both their Sheriffs' office and Recorder's office responded to our records request.



# GRAHAM COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	<b>A</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>10*</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>22**</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>3</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>19%</b>

**30%**

Graham County showed the most thorough procedure of all the counties. Coordination between the two offices is particularly strong. In the 2020 Election, they plan to hold an in-person voter registration session with additional information about the upcoming election and how to vote. They also guarantee access to the ballot for voters incarcerated after the absentee ballot request deadline by using a special education board.

\*The estimated population comes from a 09/17 booking list, which may explain its smaller size compared to ballots requested.

\*\*Many of the people who requested ballots were not registered, which illustrates the need for voter registration access within county jails.

# GREENLEE COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	<b>D</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>18</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>?</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>?</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>?</b>



Greenlee County shows strong coordination between the Recorder's and Sheriff's office throughout the process, but from the information made available to us, showed no proactive voter education process to inform incarcerated people about the opportunity to vote, which is a unique and promising feature of their program. In-person registration is available upon request, and the procedure ensures ballots will be delivered to late-jailed voters who arrive after the deadline for absentee ballot requests, but want to vote. Procedures will remain in place during Covid-19, with precautions recommended by the Health Department.



# LA PAZ COUNTY

- July Procedure Score: **F**
- Eligible Voter Pop.: **?**
- Ballots Requested: **?**
- Ballots Voted: **?**
- Participation Rate: **?**



La Paz County provided us with minimal information in July, and neither their Recorder's office nor their Sheriff's office responded to our August records requests. While the Recorder's office offered assistance to jail staff in helping voters, there were no records of any established voter education or registration protocols.

# MARICOPA COUNTY

- July Procedure Score: **F**
- Eligible Voter Pop.: **?**
- Ballots Requested: **?**
- Ballots Voted: **?**
- Participation Rate: **?**



Maricopa County has made indication of the presence of coordination between the Sheriff's and Recorder's offices. The county has made few discernible efforts to improve voting access, despite the Coalition's best efforts to work with them to develop procedures. Neither the Recorder's office nor the Sheriff's office provided up to date responses to our records request.

# MOHAVE COUNTY

July Procedure Score: **C**  
Eligible Voter Pop.: **182**  
Ballots Requested: **21**  
Ballots Voted: **9**  
Participation Rate: **5%**



Both the Mohave Recorder's and Sheriff's offices have shown themselves to make actual and repeated efforts to both educate voters about their opportunities to register and vote, followed by the necessary procedures to ensure voting capacity by jailed voters. For the August 2020 primary election, the Recorder and Sheriff's offices coordinated to send phone blast to incarcerated voters both to register to vote and to cast a ballot. Only the Recorder's office responded to our records request; we have heard nothing to date from the Sheriff's office.

# NAVAJO COUNTY

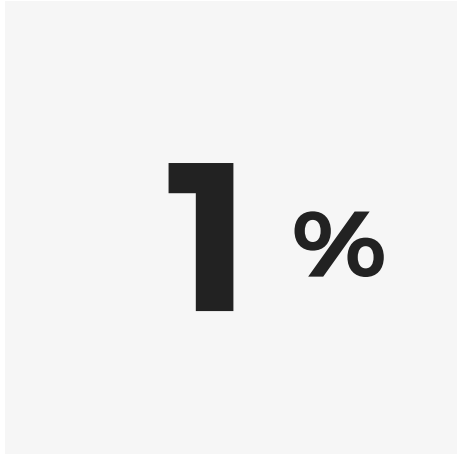
July Procedure Score: **F**  
Eligible Voter Pop.: **152**  
Ballots Requested: **20**  
Ballots Voted: **19**  
Participation Rate: **13%**



The Navajo County Recorder's office and Sheriff's office coordinated on determining the eligibility of incarcerated voters requesting ballots, and provides their own jail-voting procedure, though it does not account for late-jailed voters. Only the Recorder's office responded to our records request; we have heard nothing to date from the Sheriff's office.

# PIMA COUNTY

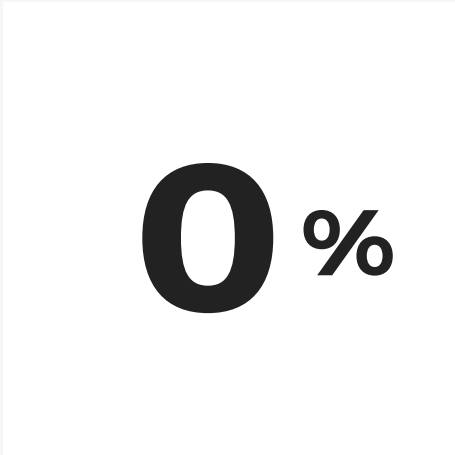
July Procedure Score:	<b>F</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>833</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>8</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>7</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>&lt;1%</b>



Though the Pima County Recorder's and Sheriff's office show exemplary voter procedures, allowing for the use of special election boards to assist late-jailed voters, neither office indicates efforts to educate jailed voters of their rights to vote and register from jail. Only the Sheriff's office responded to our August records request; we have heard nothing to date from the Recorder's office.

# PINAL COUNTY

July Procedure Score:	<b>F</b>
Eligible Voter Pop.:	<b>328</b>
Ballots Requested:	<b>0</b>
Ballots Voted:	<b>0</b>
Participation Rate:	<b>0%</b>



Pinal County has shown little to no coordination on jail voting between the Recorder's and Sheriff's offices. All jailed individuals are communicated their right to vote by the Facility Handbook, provided as a sentence in a 30 page document, but proactive attempts to register and educate voters appear to be minimal. Both the Sheriff's office and Recorder's office responded to our August records request.

# SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

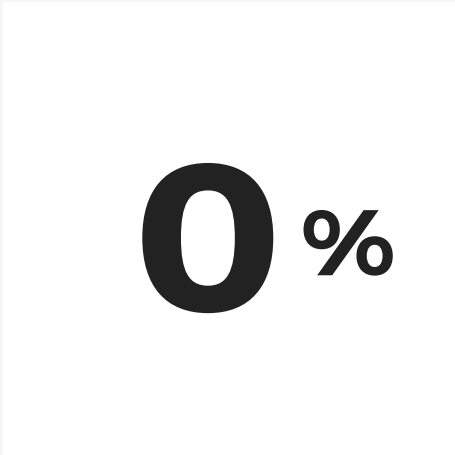
July Procedure Score: ?  
Eligible Voter Pop.: ?  
Ballots Requested: 0  
Ballots Voted: 0  
Participation Rate: ?



Santa Cruz County has shown significant coordination between the County Recorder's and Sheriff's offices and overall show one of the stronger procedures: jailed voters are provided accessible information on elections and voter registration, and the County makes active attempts to help jailed voters vote. Though the county was still not permitted outside access during COVID-19, the Recorder's office made a point to acknowledge coordination with the Sheriff to make voting accessible. Only the Recorder's office responded to our records request; to date we have heard nothing from their Sheriff's office.

# YAVAPAI COUNTY

July Procedure Score: F  
Eligible Voter Pop.: 293  
Ballots Requested: 0  
Ballots Voted: 0  
Participation Rate: 0%



Yavapai County has shown coordination between the County Recorder's and Sheriff's offices. While jailed persons are communicated their ability to vote and register to vote, no procedures are outlined to actively or meaningfully educate voters of their capacity to vote from jail or to register them to vote. Only the Recorder's office responded to our records request; we have heard nothing from the Sheriff's office to date.

# YUMA COUNTY

July Procedure Score: **F**  
Eligible Voter Pop.: **208**  
Ballots Requested: **?**  
Ballots Voted: **?**  
Participation Rate: **?**



Neither the Recorder's office nor the Sheriff's office responded to our records request.



---

The following chart shows which offices responded to the records request and the survey:

County	Records Request
Apache	Neither
Cochise	Neither
Coconino	Recorder
Gila	Both
Graham	Sheriff
Greenlee	Neither
La Paz	Neither
Maricopa	Neither
Mohave	Recorder
Navajo	Recorder
Pima	Sheriff
Pinal	Both
Santa Cruz	Recorder
Yavapai	Recorder
Yuma	Neither





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

Many thanks to all the members of the Arizona Coalition to End Jail-Based Disenfranchisement for their contributions to this report and to the movement. Special thanks Campaign Legal Center Program Assistant Kate Bock for her work compiling and analyzing mountains of data.

Learn more about the Coalition's member organizations:

*Mass Liberation Arizona is building power to end mass incarceration and divest from the carceral system in Arizona. We are a directly-impacted people's organization headquartered in South Phoenix with a growing membership in Black communities and inside prison facilities throughout the state. Learn more at [masslibaz.org](https://masslibaz.org).*

*American Friends Service Committee-Arizona (AFSC-AZ) works to reduce the size and scope of the punishment system in Arizona using research, documentation, and advocacy to advance sentencing reform, halt prison expansion, and improve conditions of confinement. Learn more at [afscarizona.org](https://afscarizona.org).*

*Jamaar Williams and Eleanor Knowles are attorneys with the Maricopa County Public Defender's Office.*



---

*All Voting is Local fights to eliminate needless and discriminatory barriers to voting before they happen, to build a democracy that works for us all. It is a collaborative campaign housed at The Leadership Conference Education Fund, in conjunction with the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation; the American Constitution Society; the Campaign Legal Center; and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. For more information about All Voting is Local, visit [allvotingislocal.org](http://allvotingislocal.org) and follow us on Twitter @votingislocal.*

*The nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center (CLC) advances democracy through law at the federal, state and local levels, fighting for every American's rights to responsive government and a fair opportunity to participate in and affect the democratic process. [Learn more](#) about us.*

*Arizona Advocacy Network and Foundation is devoted to defending and deepening Arizona's commitment to democracy. We provide a consistent voice in defense of democracy at the Arizona Legislature, with elections officials, and in our communities. Learn more at [azadvocacy.org](http://azadvocacy.org).*

*[Poder in Action](#) is a human rights organization that builds power to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression and determine a liberated future as people of color in Arizona.*

---

*The Arizona Center for Empowerment educates, empowers and engages our state's working families to create solutions to issues of social and economic justice. Learn more at [empoweraz.org](https://empoweraz.org).*

*Arizona Coalition for Change empowers everyday people to transform their community through building civic power, just and equitable schools, and safer neighborhoods.*

Learn more about the Coalition's work at [votefromjail.org](https://votefromjail.org).