

## 1. BACKGROUND

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic in places of detention primarily focused on the urgent public health risks of transmission. However, intersecting social and structural dynamics of transmission and public health responses suggest a broader scope of impact on the health of people in custody. A review of current knowledge of the impacts of the pandemic on people who experience imprisonment is essential to inform ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery, emergency preparedness, and to address persistent health and healthcare inequities.

## 2. METHODS

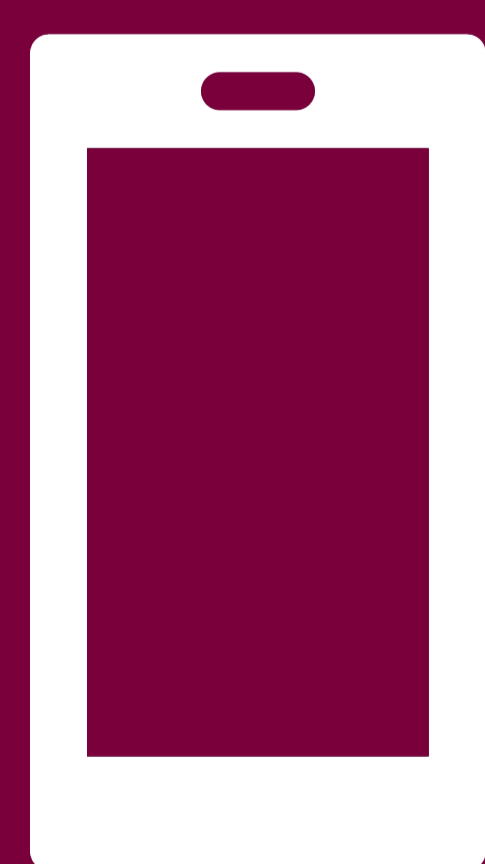
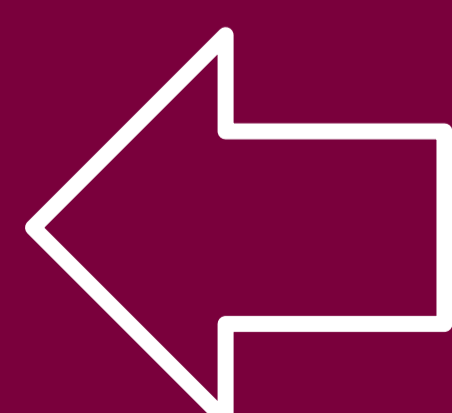
We searched databases of peer-reviewed literature in October 2021. We included original research conducted in or after December 2019 on health outcomes directly and/or indirectly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic among adults in custody or within 3 months of release.

To assess risk of bias in each study we used the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research and the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Studies Reporting Prevalence Data. We qualitized quantitative data and extracted qualitative data, coded data, and collated similar data into categories.

Prospero registration: 239324.

## 3. RESULTS

- 2092 studies screened; 62 included
- 54 quantitative studies and 8 qualitative
- Conducted in the USA (40), Europe (9), UK (7), Brazil (4) and Canada (2).



Scan the QR code to read the paper

Kim et al. PLOS ONE 2022.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0268866>

## 4. FINDINGS

### Burden of COVID-19 infection

- Cumulative incidence of COVID-19 2.9-10 times higher in custody than in the nonincarcerated population.
- Higher % positivity compared to the nonincarcerated population.
- 0-10% of cases in custody hospitalized.
- High mortality rate relative to nonincarcerated population.

### Other affects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health

- Increase in all cause mortality in incarcerated populations.
- Reduced access to health services and substance use treatments. Loss of education and training programs.
- Absence of visits negatively affected relationships with family.
- Three studies reported increased support and compassion from staff, while two found increased tension and conflict between staff and people in custody.
- Negative impact on mental health exacerbated by isolation and anxiety related to infection risk and uncertainty.
- One study reported a 57% increase in suicide attempts and self-harm events.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Incarcerated populations experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 infection, COVID-19 mortality and all-cause mortality. The pandemic was associated with worse access to health and other services, increased isolation, and negative impacts on mental health and relationships with family.

There is a lack of data on health impacts beyond the short-term effects of COVID-19 infection itself, and a need to understand experiences and outcomes for people outside the context of the USA. As part of a broader public health agenda to address the harms of the carceral system, future emergency prevention and preparedness efforts should explicitly consider carceral settings and incarcerated populations. Future work should examine evidence published after October 2021.