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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERVIEW AND JAIL PROJECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2021, the Santa Barbara County Chief Executive Office asked MW Consulting to analyze county criminal justice trends, project the long-term jail population, and explore policy options to reduce the jail population. This report projects the long-term jail population based on historical data, overall county population growth, and assumptions about changes to the system resulting from the pandemic. Finally, this report analyzes the impact of policy and practice changes on the long-term jail population.

In order to do this, the report provides an overview of criminal justice trends in Santa Barbara County, including the analysis of publicly available crime, arrest, filing, probation, and jail data as well as detailed individual level records from the Probation Department and the Sheriff's Office. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of how crime and the response to crime has changed over time. Numerous law changes and the global pandemic have all had impacts on the criminal justice system as well as the individuals who move in and out of the system. This report describes how these trends have changed in Santa Barbara County relative to neighboring counties and counties with similar populations. It also examines the details of who is on probation and how the makeup of probationers has changed over time. The report also looks at how the jail population has changed over time, including the type of individual who is in jail on a given day and how long they stay.

The findings below show that the criminal justice population in Santa Barbara County has been declining over time. Prior to the pandemic arrests, filings, the probation population, and the number of jail inmates were all trending downward. In 2020, arrests and jail inmates declined sharply, largely due to the pandemic, with the probation population declining sharply in 2021 after the passage of AB 1950.¹ Based on historical data and assuming a return to pre-pandemic practices, the jail population projections model estimates that the future jail population will fluctuate between 800 and just over 900 inmates throughout the 2020's. However, there are practices and policy choices available that can impact the long-term population. As seen in the findings below, individuals in jail are there for a complex set of reasons. The policy options described below are designed to reduce the jail population while keeping individuals with the most serious offenses in jail. These policies are estimated to reduce the long-term daily jail population by more than 200 beds.

1. Diversion for certain individuals with no more than one prior booking.
2. Reduce the average length of stay of those with arrest warrants.
3. Expand the use of electronic monitoring.
4. Reduce jail reincarceration of probationers.
5. Reduce the length of stay for those transferred to the state.

¹ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1950

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Santa Barbara County's property and violent crime rates have both increased in recent years. Both property and violent crime rates were down between 2010 and 2018. Since 2018, both rates have increased, with violent crime rates at the highest level since 2010. While still below California's rates, Santa Barbara's property crime rate was nearly the same as the United States', and for the first time since 2011, the violent crime rate was higher than the United States' violent crime rate.

Arrest rates and filing rates have continued to fall throughout the decade. Both arrest and filing rates have been falling in Santa Barbara and in California. Despite the increase of crime in recent years, the arrest and filing rates continued to fall.

The number of individuals on probation has fallen over the past five years. The probation population at the end of 2021 was around 2,200 and had fallen by more than 50 percent compared to the middle of the decade.

Individuals on probation in 2021 were more likely to be over 35, male, and Hispanic than those on probation in 2011. The percentage of individuals who were Hispanic and on probation increased from 51 percent to 61 percent of the population between 2011 and 2021. However, because of the steep decline in the probation population, there were still fewer Hispanic people on probation in 2021.

In 2021, individuals on probation were less likely to be on supervision for a misdemeanor or drug offense. In 2021, only 9 percent of individuals on probation were there for a drug offense compared to 27 percent in 2011. Individuals with misdemeanors made up 34 percent of the population in 2011 and only 25 percent in 2021.

Individuals on probation rarely exit unsuccessfully. From 2011 to 2021, between 6 and 13 percent of those on probation exited unsuccessfully.

The jail population fell slightly between 2011 and 2019, then fell steeply at the start of the pandemic. The jail population was near a ten-year low before the pandemic, then fell by nearly 400 beds immediately following the start of the pandemic. This was largely driven by the Judicial Council's zero-bail policy.

The jail population increased around 100 beds immediately following changes in county practice in October of 2021. Changes in policy and practice directly impact the jail population. When the practice of zero-bail for warrants was no longer used, the jail population immediately increased.

The percentage of jail inmates that are unsentenced increased during the pandemic. Through most of the decade, 60 percent of the jail population was unsentenced. By 2021, that percentage had increased to over 80 percent.

Jail bookings fell throughout the decade, with the steepest decline following the start of the pandemic. Bookings were down 18 percent between 2011 and 2019 and down 40 percent between 2011 and 2021.

Jail length of stay increased throughout the decade. Jail length of stay increased 13 percent between 2011 and 2019 and increased 22 percent between 2011 and 2021.

While most individuals in jail had a booking for a new offense, only 10 percent of jail bed usage was for individuals with only a new offense. Individuals often enter the jail through a complex set of events. While more than half of 2021 bookings were for a new offense only, those bookings had a short average length of stay and made up only a small percentage of the jail bed usage.

Between 2019 and 2021, the most common booking type for an individual in jail was for both a new offense and probation violation. In 2021, nearly one out of four jail bed days were used by individuals with a new offense and a probation violation.

More than half of individuals booked into jail had at least one prior booking. Most individuals had at least one prior booking, with one out of eight having 10 or more prior bookings. Those with at least one prior booking accounted for 80 percent of the jail bed usage.

The long-term jail population is projected to remain between 800 and 900 beds. The jail population is projected to stay relatively flat throughout the decade, as is the overall population in Santa Barbara County. The long-term average length of stay and booking rate prior to the pandemic was also relatively flat, with a slight downward trend.

Changes in policy and practice can reduce the long-term jail population. Policy choices listed below² are estimated to reduce the long-term jail population by more than 200 beds.

² See Table 7 for more details.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY JUSTICE OVERVIEW

This section is designed to compare general criminal justice trends in Santa Barbara County over time to a group of comparison counties³ that are either neighboring counties or counties with similar populations. Publicly available data was used to compare high level crime, arrest, probation, and jail trends across time and across jurisdictions. The graphs below examine data from 2010 to the most recently available data. For many of the measures there is a significant lag in data reporting, and 2021 data is not yet available.

CRIME RATES

Crime data in the United States have been collected in a uniform way since 1930. Crime data is normally reported in the broad categories of property and violent crime. Property crime includes arson, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Many other crimes such as drugs, driving, or weapons crimes are not reported in these categories. To create a rate, the number of crimes is divided by the population and then multiplied by 100,000 to create a rate per 100,000 people. The crime rates described below use the standard categories that have been commonly reported for decades.

Crime rates were obtained using the California Department of Justice Open Justice Tool⁴ for 2010 to 2020. Santa Barbara County's property crime rate is lower than both the rate for California and for the United States overall (Figure 1). From 2016 to 2018,⁵ the property crime rate in Santa Barbara County declined by 23 percent. However, most of that decrease was lost in the next two years when property crime increased 15 percent, returning to 2017 levels. When compared to nearby counties, Santa Barbara had lower property crime rates than Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties, but higher property crime rate than Ventura County until 2020.⁶ By 2020, Santa Barbara County had a higher property crime rate than the comparison counties (see Figure A1 in the Appendix).

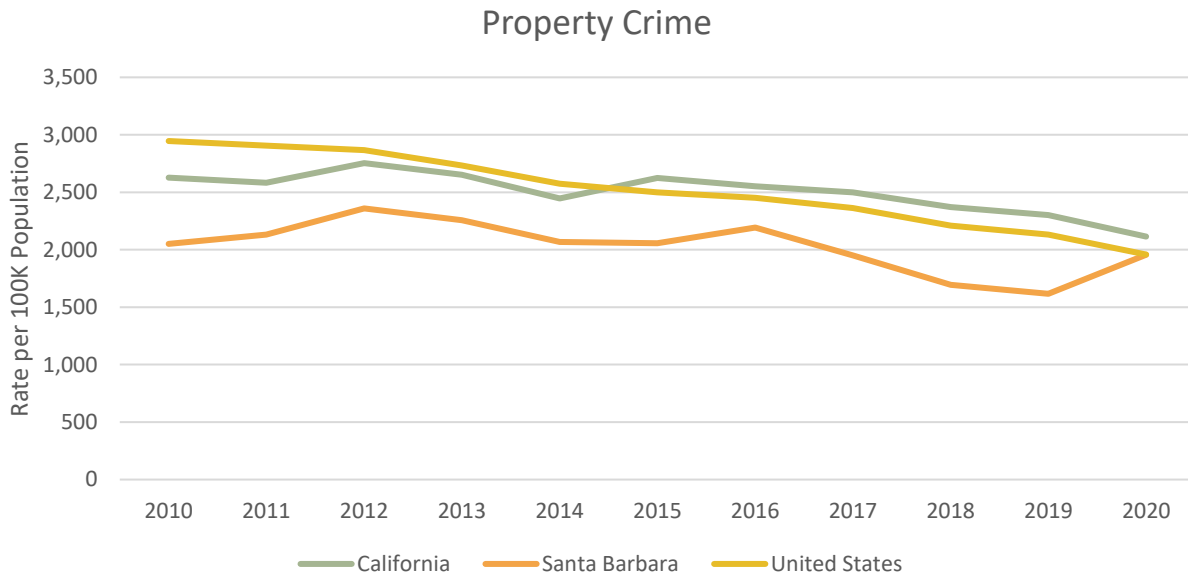
³ Those counties include Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma, and Ventura.

⁴ California crime rates can be found here: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/crimes-clearances>. United States crime data can be found here: <https://crime-data-explorer.app.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>. To create rates, California population data was taken from the Department of Finance and the Census Bureau was used for the United States population.

⁵ 2019 crime data from Santa Maria was undercounted in the publicly available data. The steep increase between 2019 to 2020 is overstated in Figure 1 and Figure 2. But the increase between 2018 to 2020 is accurate.

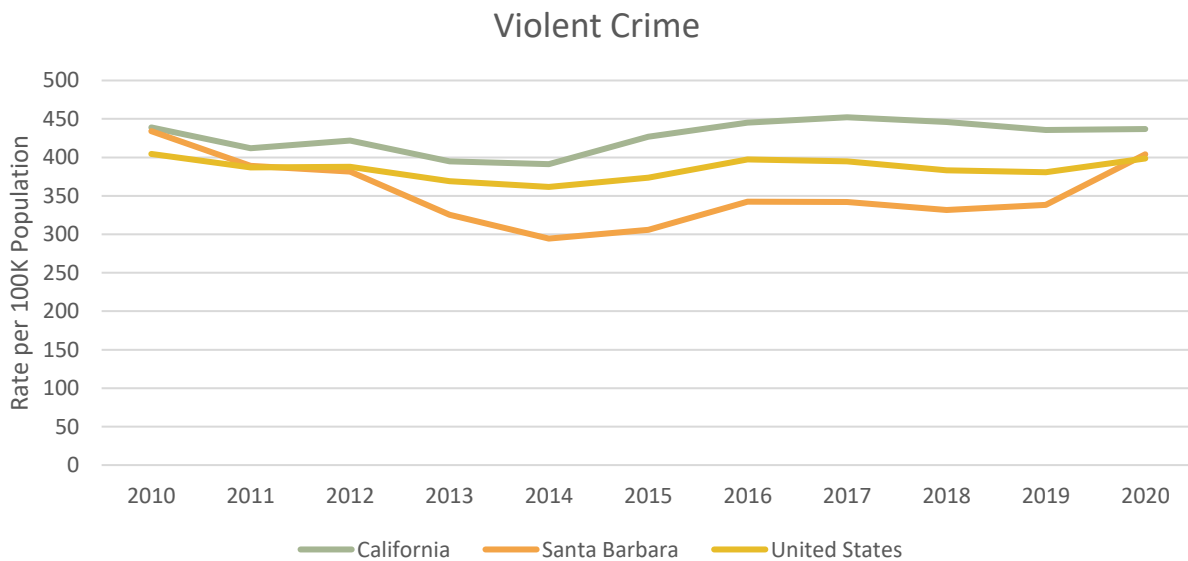
⁶ See graph A2 in the appendix.

FIGURE 1.



Similarly, Santa Barbara County’s violent crime rate had been lower than both the United States’ and California’s violent crime rates through 2018 (Figure 2). The violent crime rate for Santa Barbara County dropped steeply from 2012 to 2014, but then began rising in 2016 and remained stable through 2018. From 2018 to 2020, the violent crime rate rose by 22 percent, slightly exceeding the United States’ violent crime rate, but still below California’s rate. Santa Barbara County’s violent crime rate is higher than all the comparison counties except for Sonoma County (Figure A3).

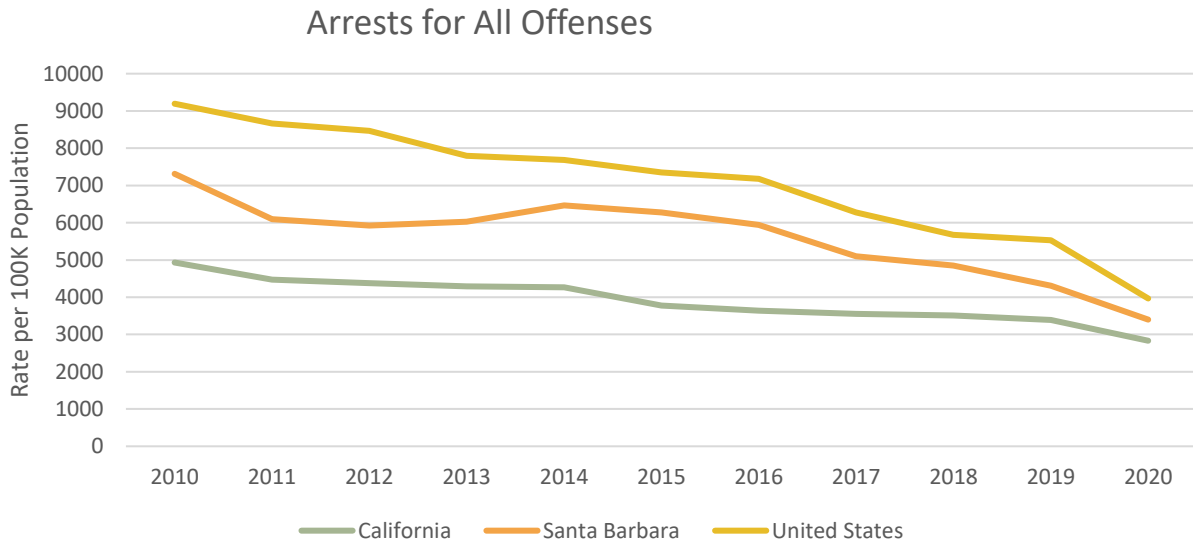
FIGURE 2.



ARREST RATES

Arrests are not measured using the same categories as the Uniform Crime Reporting; therefore, it is difficult to compare arrest trends to crime trends. While both property and violent crime rates rose in Santa Barbara County from 2018 to 2020, the overall arrest rate continued to decline. From 2010 to 2020, the arrest rate fell rapidly around the country and was down in Santa Barbara (54 percent), California (43 percent), and the United States (57 percent).⁷

FIGURE 3.



Both misdemeanor and felony arrests have fallen in Santa Barbara County and all the comparison counties. The largest decline in felony arrests occurred in 2015 with the passage of Proposition 47. This caused many crimes that were previously felonies to become misdemeanors. In 2020, Santa Barbara County's felony arrest rate was slightly higher than the comparison counties, but still at the lowest level in the data collection period (Figure A5). Santa Barbara County had the largest decline in misdemeanor arrests of any of the comparison counties. In 2020, the misdemeanor arrest rate was below two of the comparison counties and above two of the comparison counties (Figure A6).

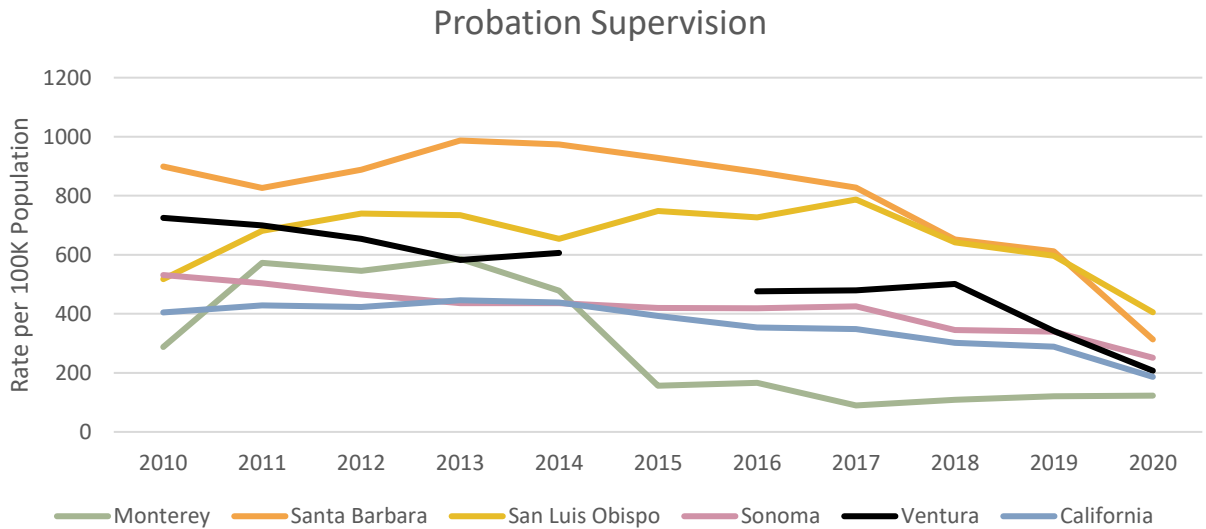
While not shown in this section (see Figures A7 and A8), both felony and misdemeanor court filings per 100,000 people fell between 2011 and 2020. In Santa Barbara County, the felony filing rate fell by 24 percent and the misdemeanor filing rate fell by 40 percent. This was similar to trends in the comparison counties. The next two sections, jail incarceration rates and probation supervision rates, are both impacted by falling arrests and filing rates.

⁷ California and county arrest data can be found here: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/arrests>. To create rates, California population data was taken from the Department of Finance population data.

PROBATION SUPERVISION RATES

Santa Barbara County's probation supervision rate⁸ was higher than the comparison counties and the state as whole in each of the years from 2010 to 2019. In 2020, the county's probation rate dropped below San Luis Obispo's rate, but was still higher than California as a whole and the other comparison counties. Since 2013, Santa Barbara County's probation rate has declined rapidly, decreasing the most between 2019 to 2020 by nearly 50 percent.

FIGURE 4.



JAIL INCARCERATION RATES

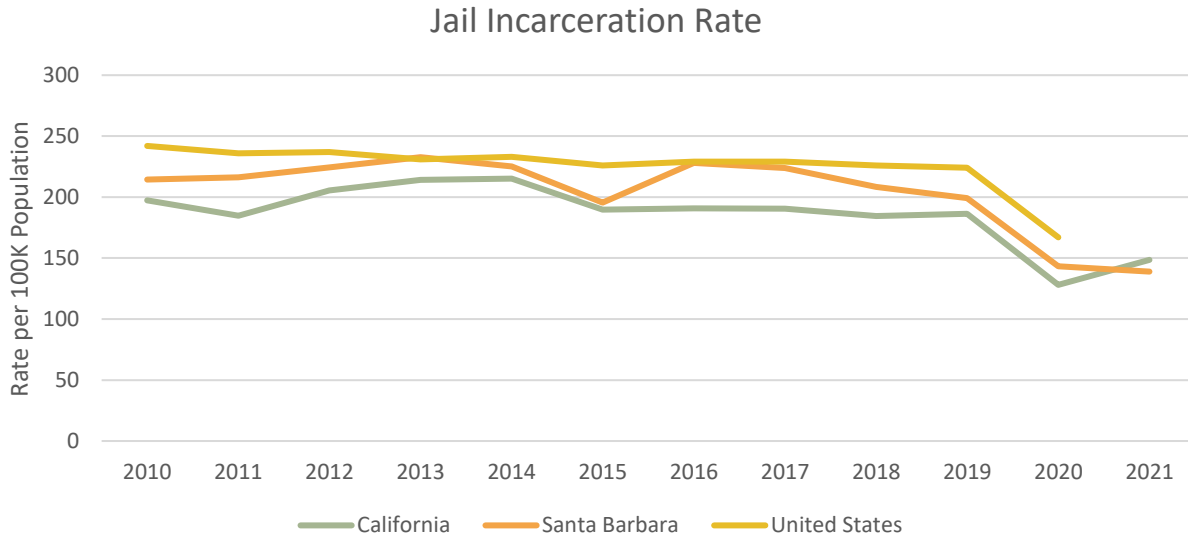
Santa Barbara County's jail incarceration rate⁹ was higher than the average incarceration rate for all of California counties until 2021, but lower than the US rate from 2010 to 2020 (Figure 5). In 2013 to 2014 and 2016 to 2017, Santa Barbara approached the jail incarceration rate for the United States. Across the United States, jail populations declined as a response to the pandemic. From 2019 to 2020, the United States incarceration rate fell by 25 percent, the California incarceration rate fell by 31 percent, and Santa

⁸ California and county probation population data can be found here: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/adult-probation-caseload-actions>. To create rates, California population data was taken from the Department of Finance population data.

⁹ The national jail incarceration rates were calculated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji20st.pdf> and the California data came from the Board of State Community Corrections: https://www.bscc.ca.gov/m_dataresearch/.

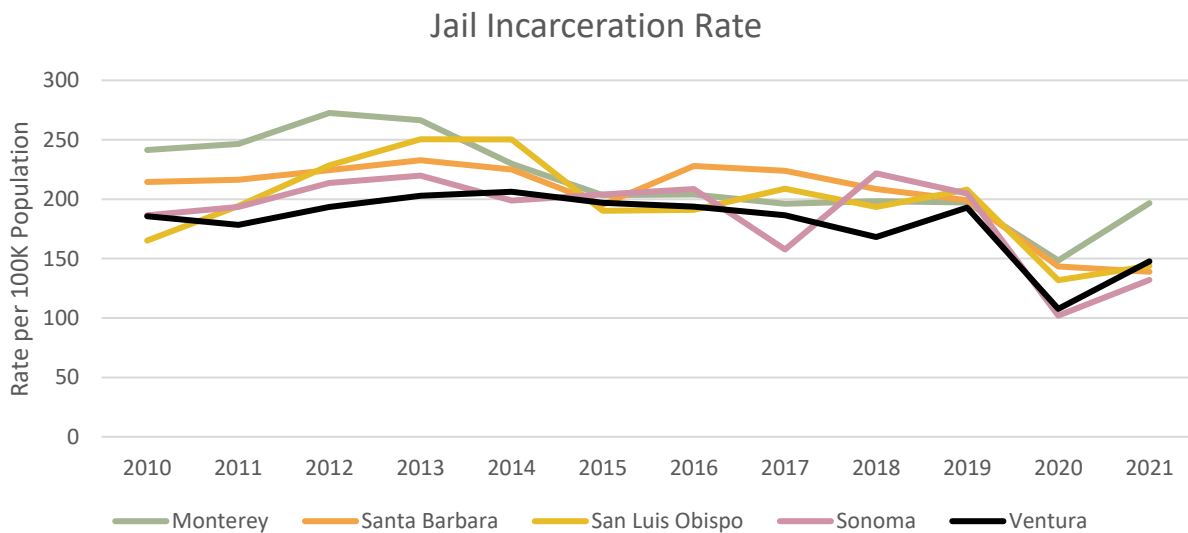
Barbara County’s incarceration rate fell by 28 percent. For each of these jurisdictions, 2020 had the largest decline in incarceration over the 10-year period.

FIGURE 5.



All comparison counties saw a similar decline in the jail incarceration rate in response to the pandemic, falling between 25 percent and 50 percent from 2019 to 2020. While Santa Barbara County’s incarceration rate remained flat from 2020 to 2021, all comparison counties’ incarceration rates increased, ranging from a 9 percent to a 37 percent increase (Figure 6). In 2021, Santa Barbara County’s incarceration rate was similar to the rate of all comparison counties except Monterey County.

FIGURE 6.

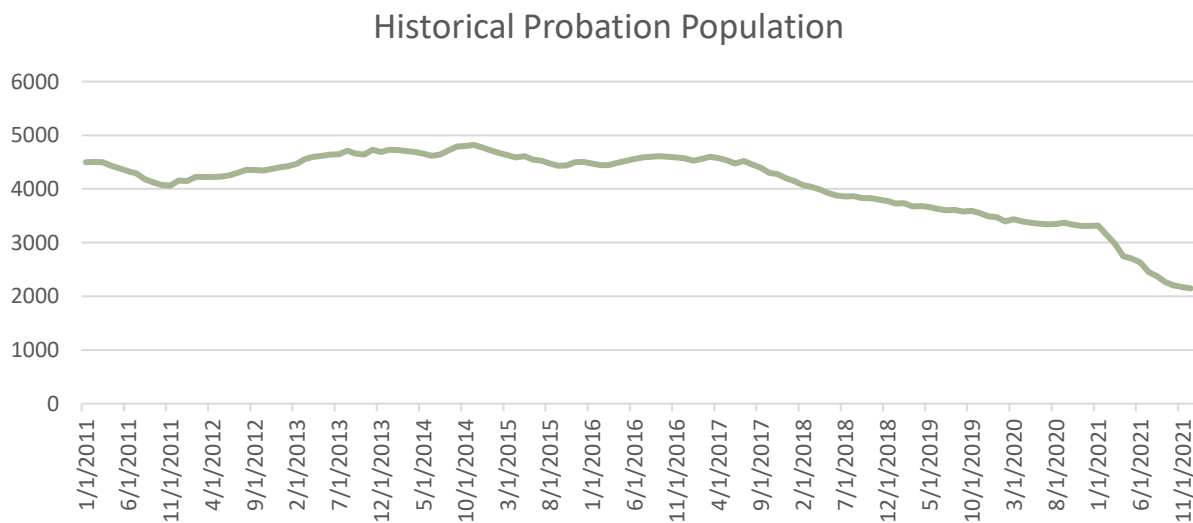


PROBATION

When individuals are convicted of a crime, they can be placed on formal or informal supervision. This analysis focuses on those placed on formal supervision. The Santa Barbara County Probation Department provided individual level data¹⁰ for those starting or ending formal probation between January 1, 2011, and December 31, 2021. The data included demographic information, crime detail, supervision type, risk level, time on supervision, and release reason. The probation data was also joined with jail booking data to examine the crossover between probationers and jail inmates.

As seen in the charts above, Santa Barbara County has historically supervised a greater proportion of individuals than the state as a whole and the comparison counties.¹¹ However, that has begun to change with the number of individuals supervised declining rapidly over the past five years (Figure 7). Between 2011 and 2017, the number of individuals on supervision at a given point in time fluctuated between 4,000 and 5,000. In early 2018, the population dropped below 4,000 and continued a steady decline to 3,300 at the end of 2020. This decline was mostly due to fewer individuals starting formal supervision. Assembly Bill 1950¹² went into effect in January of 2021 and reduced the length of stay for probationers to two years for most felonies and one year for misdemeanors. This change further reduced the population, and by the end of 2021, there were fewer than 2,200 individuals on probation. This is a reduction of over 55 percent from the peak of the previous decade.

FIGURE 7.



¹⁰ See the appendix for a description on how the individual data was analyzed.

¹¹ The county has historically sentenced many individuals convicted of felonies to five years of probation while other counties have used shorter probation sentences.

¹² https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1950

As the probation population declined, the demographics of those on supervision also shifted. Individuals who were on probation in 2021 were more likely to be 35 or over, to be Hispanic, and to be male (Table 1). Based on Santa Barbara County census data, the general Hispanic population increased from 43 percent in 2011 to 46 percent in 2021.

TABLE 1.

Probation Population Demographics

Age	2011	2021
18-24	25%	13%
25-34	34%	37%
35-44	21%	27%
45-54	15%	14%
55+	5%	9%
Race/Ethnicity	2011	2021
Black	5%	5%
Hispanic	51%	61%
Other	4%	4%
White	40%	30%
Gender	2011	2021
Female	23%	16%
Male	77%	84%

As the probation population has decreased over time, the crime makeup of individuals on supervision has shifted. In 2021, individuals on probation were more likely to be convicted of a person crime and much less likely to be convicted of a drug crime. In 2011, more than one out of three individuals on supervision were convicted of a misdemeanor. By 2021, that had dropped to one out of four.

TABLE 2.

Probation Population Crime Type

Crime Category	2011	2021
Alcohol	10%	11%
All Others	16%	24%
Crimes Against Persons	24%	42%
Drugs	27%	9%
Property Offenses	22%	14%
Crime Level	2011	2021
Felony	66%	75%
Misdemeanor	34%	25%

The Santa Barbara County Probation Department supervises two main population types: standard supervision and realigned supervision. In December 2021, the standard supervision population made up 82 percent of the probation population, with the realigned making up 16 percent, and other supervised individuals accounting for the remaining 2 percent. Probation assesses each probationer’s risk level and assigns a low, medium, or high value based on their risk score. This risk score determines the supervision level and helps inform the programming that individuals receive. The risk level is very different between the two populations, as most of the realigned population is high risk and the standard population is more evenly distributed between the three levels (Table 3).

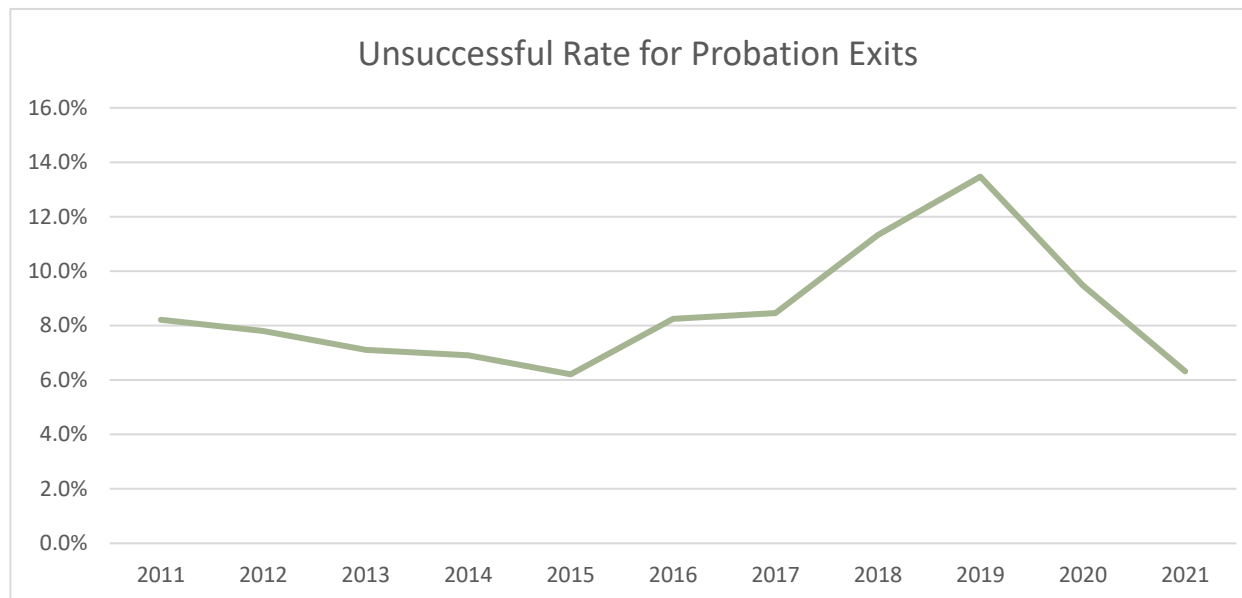
TABLE 3.

Risk Level by Supervision Type for Those on Supervision December, 2021

Risk Level	Standard Sup Pop		Realigned Sup Pop		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	660	40%	26	8%	686	35%
Medium	364	22%	27	8%	391	20%
High	611	37%	273	84%	884	45%
Total	1635	100%	326	100%	1961	100%

Few probationers exit supervision unsuccessfully. From 2011 to 2021, the unsuccessful rate fluctuated between 6 and 13 percent (Figure 8). This rate doubled between 2015 to 2019, then fell over the past two years and is now near the 11-year low. While the vast majority of probationers are successful, most still spend time in jail while on supervision. For those exiting supervision between 2019 and 2021, nearly two out three had at least one jail booking while on supervision. The average probationer had 1.7 jail bookings while on supervision and spent nearly three months in jail while being supervised.

FIGURE 8.



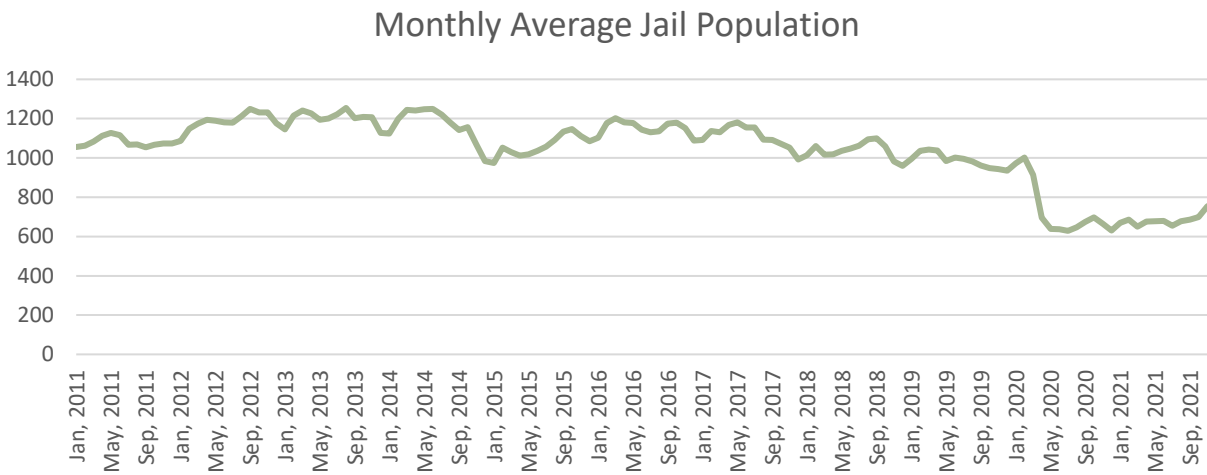
JAIL

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office provided individual level data¹³ for those booked or released from jail between January 1, 2011, and January 24, 2022. The data included demographic information, crime detail, sentence date, booking and release type, time in jail, and arresting agency. The jail data was also joined with probation data to examine the crossover between probationers and jail inmates. This individual-level data was used for the analysis below.

Between 2011 and 2019, the Santa Barbara County jail population remained relatively flat, fluctuating between 1,000 to 1,200 inmates. Near the end of the decade, the population started to slowly trend downward, but was still around 1,000 inmates on any given day (Figure 9). While crime rates, arrest rates, and filing rates all trended downward during much of this time period, the overall jail population remained mostly flat between 2011 and 2019.

¹³ See the appendix for a description on how the individual data was analyzed.

FIGURE 9.



After years of a relatively flat jail population, the population fell in early 2020 when the pandemic disrupted most areas of everyday life. As governments tried to figure out how to continue operations both safely and effectively, law enforcement adjusted who they arrested and booked, the courts instituted zero bail for many crimes, and probation adjusted how they supervised clients. Each of these factors influenced the number of individuals in jail on a given day. Figure 10 shows the daily jail population during the start of the pandemic through the most recent available data. The two orange lines represent specific changes in policy and practice. The first line shows the date that the California Courts began their zero-bail policy. Even before the official policy was in place, the jail population had declined from just under 1,000 to around 750 individuals. The population continued to decline and settled at just over 600 in May of 2020. The population continued to stay between 600 to 700 until October of 2021. Near the end of October, the practice of zero-bail for warrants was no longer used, increasing the jail population by around 100 beds. The data used for this report went through the middle of January 2022. There were over 800 individuals in jail at this point in time.

FIGURE 10.



As the jail population declined, the demographics of who was incarcerated also shifted. Those who were in jail in 2021 were more likely to be 35 or over, to be Hispanic, and to be male (Table 4). Based on Santa Barbara County census data, the general Hispanic population increased from 43 percent in 2011 to 46 percent in 2021.

TABLE 4.
Jail Population Demographics

Age	2011	2021
18-24	25%	14%
25-34	34%	41%
35-44	21%	26%
45-54	15%	12%
55+	5%	7%
Race/Ethnicity	2011	2021
Black	6%	6%
Hispanic	57%	62%
Other	1%	2%
White	36%	30%
Gender	2011	2021
Female	13%	10%
Male	87%	90%

TABLE 5.
Jail Population Crime Type

Crime Cat	2011	2021
Alcohol	11%	5%
All Others	22%	24%
Crimes Against Persons	33%	42%
Narcotics and Drugs	21%	14%
Property Offenses	13%	15%
Crime Level	2011	2021
Felony	72%	81%
Misdemeanor	28%	19%

As the jail population has decreased over time, the crime type of the most serious new offense has also changed. In 2021, individuals in the jail were more likely to be incarcerated for a person crime and less likely to be incarcerated for a drug or alcohol offense. In 2011, more than one out of four individuals in jail had a most serious offense that was a misdemeanor. By 2021, that had dropped to less than one out of five.

As described above, the demographics and offense type of those in jail has changed over time. Figure 11 shows that the percentage of the jail population that is unsentenced¹⁴ has also increased over time, reaching 80 percent in 2020. As the jail population dropped in 2020, the number of unsentenced inmates fell less rapidly than sentenced inmates. As court processing slowed down, fewer individuals were sentenced, creating a higher percentage of unsentenced individuals in jail.

FIGURE 11.



The graphs above display the jail population on a given point in time. The jail population is determined by two factors: the number of people who are admitted to jail and the number of days they spend in jail. For example, if a jail system has one admission every day and each of those people stay for 365 days, the jail will end up with 365 people on a given day. If instead, 100 people per day were admitted to the jail, each staying 3.65 days, the jail will also end up with 365 people on a given day. As seen in Table 6 below, the number of jail bookings has been decreasing over time. Even before the pandemic, jail bookings were down 18 percent. Since the pandemic, jail bookings have further declined. In 2020, they were nearly half of what they were in 2014. All booking types declined, but the Other Booking category declined the most by nearly 60 percent from 2011 to 2021. The Other Booking category includes remand, warrants, and detainer bookings, all down by well over 50 percent, with remand bookings down the most at nearly 87 percent.

¹⁴ The unsentenced population is not always easy to determine as some inmates are in jail on multiple charges, some of which are unsentenced and some of which have already been sentenced. If the most serious offense did not have a sentence, the inmate was considered to be unsentenced.

TABLE 6.

Jail Bookings by Type and Year

Year	New Arrest Only	New Arrest and Other Booking	Other Booking Only	Total
2011	7253	1907	5927	15087
2012	7179	2041	6080	15300
2013	7325	2164	6201	15690
2014	7904	2050	6323	16277
2015	7366	2322	6192	15880
2016	6893	2434	6501	15828
2017	6031	2299	6084	14414
2018	5547	2306	5595	13448
2019	5339	2178	4852	12369
2020	4444	1467	2458	8369
2021	4989	1597	2427	9013
Change '11-'19	-26%	14%	-18%	-18%
Change '11-'21	-31%	-16%	-59%	-40%

While bookings declined during this time period, the overall length of stay increased (Table 7). The length of stay for New Arrests with Other Bookings and Other Bookings Only both increased over this time period with the length of stay for those booked for a New Arrest Only falling. Overall length of stay continued to increase in 2021, but that increase was driven by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the State Hospital not accepting transfers during part of this time due to the pandemic. The decline in bookings from 2011 to 2019 is mostly offset by an increase in length of stay, explaining why the jail population was mostly unchanged during this time period. However, from 2019 to 2021, the admission decrease was much larger than the small length of stay increase, resulting in fewer individuals in jail in 2020 and 2021.

TABLE 7.

Jail Releases by Booking Type and Release Year (ALOS in Days)

Year	New Arrest Only (ALOS)	New Arrest and Other Booking (ALOS)	Other Booking Only (ALOS)	All (ALOS)
2011	7	57	33	24
2012	7	71	35	26
2013	6	70	34	26
2014	6	72	35	26
2015	5	62	32	24
2016	5	68	30	25
2017	7	68	30	26
2018	8	66	31	27
2019	6	66	32	27
2020	6	67	38	27
2021	6	81	43	29
Change '11-'19	-16%	16%	-5%	13%
Change '11-'21	-21%	41%	30%	22%

Individuals enter the jail through a complex series of events. For example, one individual booked in November 2021 was booked with three new arrests (one felony vandalism and two misdemeanors), three arrest warrants, and a probation violation. This example is not unique, as many of the individuals entering the jail are booked on multiple charges with a mixture of new arrests, warrants, and probation violations. In 2021, a little over half of the individuals who were booked into the jail were booked with only a new arrest and no warrants, violations, or other booking types. But those individuals had very short average lengths of stay and made up only 75 jail beds or 10 percent of the jail population (Figure 12). The figure below shows that 57 percent of the jail bed usage in 2021 is from people who were booked into jail with a new offense. However, like the example above, many of those individuals had additional reasons that they spent time in the jail. The most common admission type for jail bed usage in 2021 is an individual booked with a probation or parole violation and a new crime. Individuals with these booking types made up 29 percent of the jail bed days in 2021.

FIGURE 12.

Jail Bed Usage by Admission Type, 2021 Releases

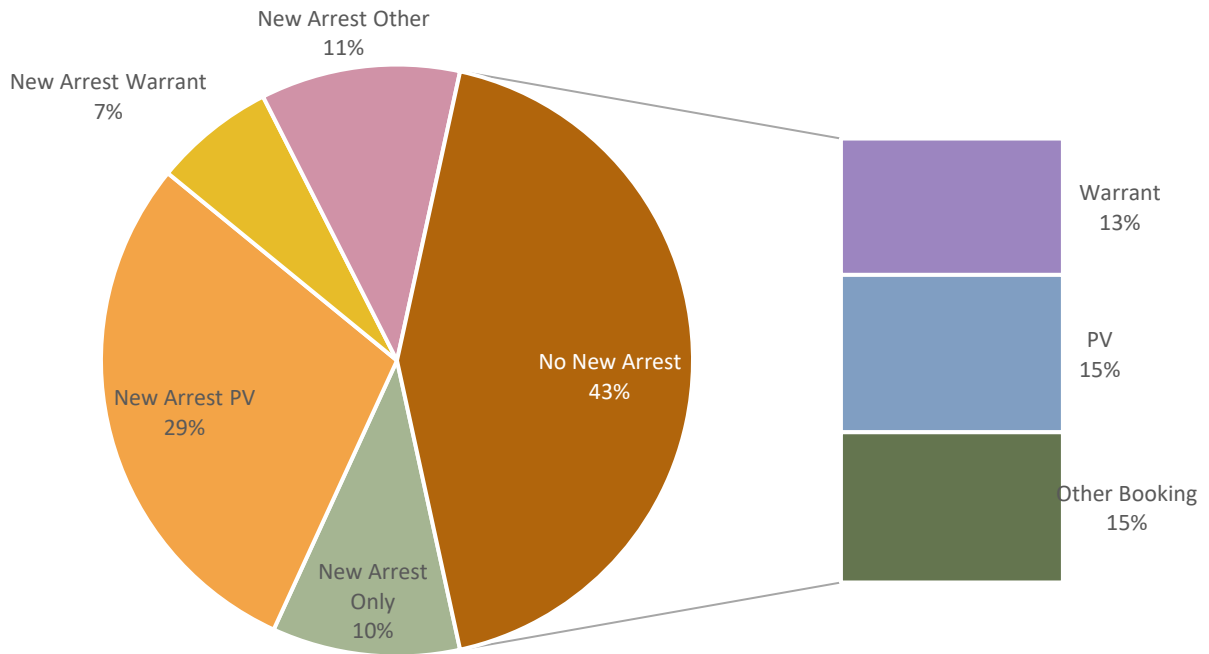


Figure 13 shows the bed impact for various booking types before and during the pandemic. If any booking had a probation or parole violation, it was included in that category. If a booking had a warrant, but no probation or parole violation, it was included in the warrant category. If there was no warrant, probation, or parole violation, the booking was included in one of the other three categories. This graph shows the bed impact over the past three years by each booking group.¹⁵

While those with a probation violation occupy the most jail beds, most also have an arrest for a new offense that accompanies their probation violation (Figure 14). Very few probation violations are in jail for only a technical violation, seen in Figure 14 with a booking type of detainer. Overall, the impact of probation violations on the jail has decreased during the pandemic. In 2019, probation violations made up 47 percent of the jail population. By 2021, it had dropped to 35 percent, a roughly 200 bed reduction.

¹⁵ Around 85 percent of the PV categories is for probation violations, with the remaining 15 for parole violations.

FIGURE 13.

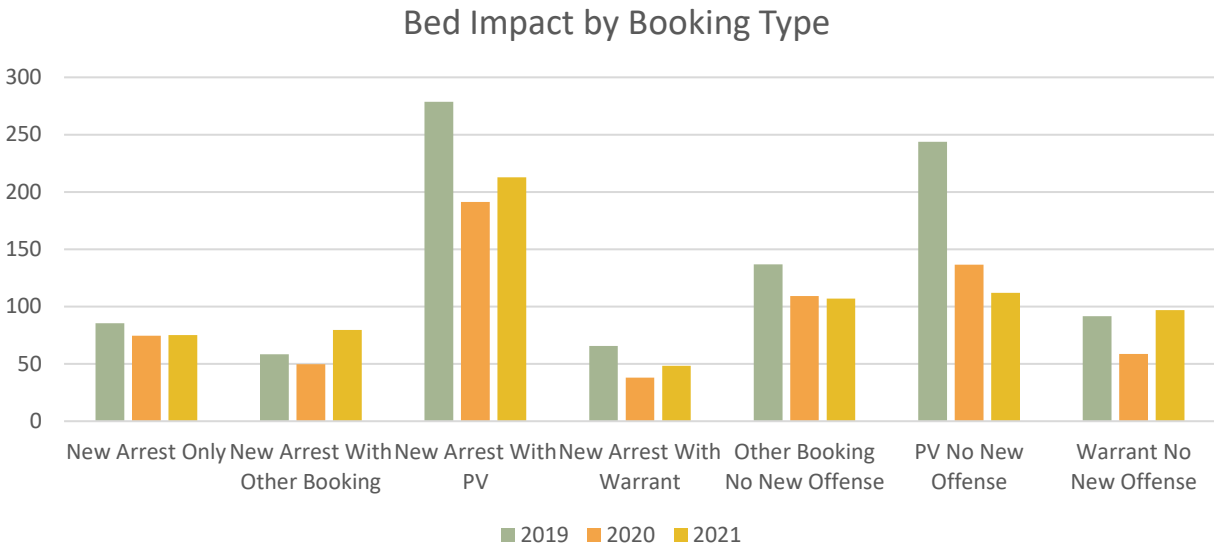
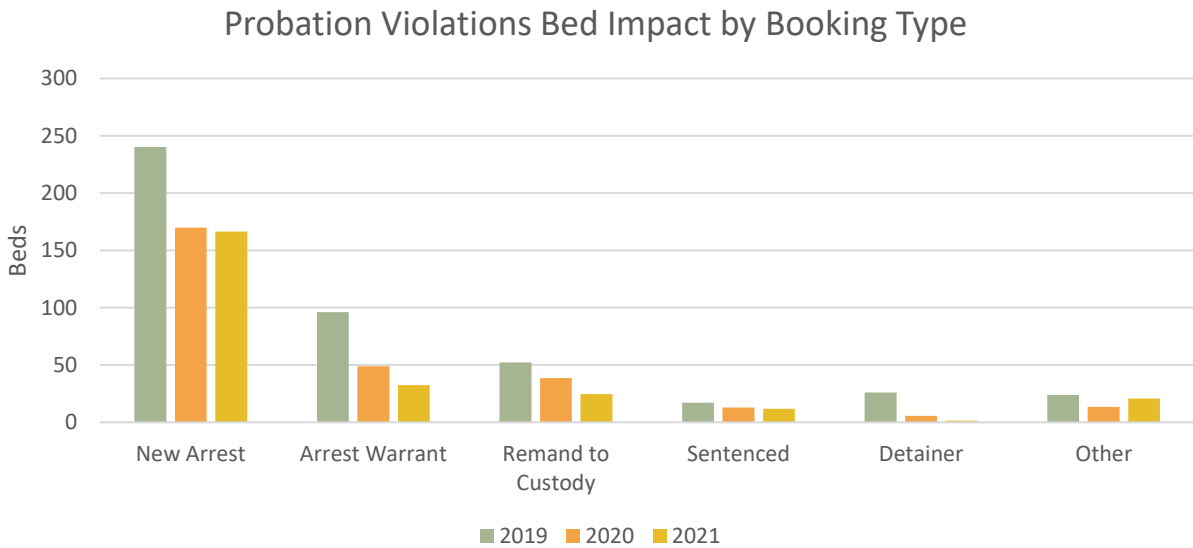


FIGURE 14.



Finally, the impact of individuals who were booked multiple times was examined. Figure 15 shows the number of previous bookings by individuals who were booked into the jail in 2021. For individuals booked in 2021, every previous unique booking since 2011 was counted. Just over half of the individuals booked in 2021 had been booked in the Santa Barbara County jail at least once since 2011, with one out of eight having been booked 10 or more times. Fourteen individuals were booked over 50 times, with one person having 155 previous bookings since 2011. While 45 percent of bookings had no previous Santa Barbara County booking since 2011, those bookings only accounted for 19 percent of the jail bed day usage. This means that 81 percent of the jail bed days were used by individuals with at least one prior booking. The data below, along with the probation bed usage graphs above, shows that individuals who have previous involvement in the criminal justice system have a huge impact on the jail population.

FIGURE 15.



PROJECTIONS AND POLICY CHOICES

As discussed above, the long-term jail population is determined by the number of daily admissions multiplied by the average length of stay in days. To project Santa Barbara County’s future jail population, it is necessary to estimate the number of individuals who will enter the jail in future years, as well as how long those individuals will stay. Future jail populations are difficult to estimate because many factors can influence the number of people booked into the jail. Future crime and the severity of those crimes, law enforcement’s response to those crimes, economic conditions and county budgets, population demographics, law changes, local practice changes, and the values of elected officials all factor into future jail populations. Over the past two years, criminal justice systems were drastically impacted by a completely unexpected pandemic, making it even more challenging to predict future jail populations. While there are challenges and risks to predicting the long-term jail population, it is still important to use the best data that is available along with reasonable assumptions based on that data to project the future population.

To project the future jail population, historical length of stay and booking data was examined. Based on individual level data provided from the Sheriff’s Office, the annualized average length of stay increased by nearly 1 percent between 2011 and 2019. The booking rate, or the number of bookings per county resident, declined by an annualized rate of 2.6 percent from 2011 to 2019. County level at-risk¹⁶ population forecasts were analyzed to account for population growth in future years. Santa Barbara

¹⁶ The at-risk population was based on the age distribution of people in the jail. This distribution was used with population estimates from the California Department of Finance (https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Forecasting/Demographics/Documents/P2B_County_Age.xlsx) to create a weighted average of the expected population growth in the county.

County is expected to have little to no population growth over the next 10 years for the age demographic that is most likely to enter the jail. The jail projections model uses these three factors: the booking rate growth, average length of stay growth, and the at-risk population growth to predict the number of people in jail over the next ten years. However, due to the steep decline in the jail population because of the pandemic, the pre-pandemic jail trends (2019 and earlier) must be matched to the current jail population. The model assumes that the current jail population (February 1, 2022) will move toward the pre-pandemic trend over the next 36 months. By December of 2024, the model assumes that the jail projections will follow the same long-term pattern as the pre-pandemic data. Finally, the jail model considers seasonal fluctuation in the jail population, as November, December, and January typically have 2 to 5 percent fewer people in jail.

Based on the assumptions derived from individual level jail records and state demographic forecasts, Santa Barbara County's jail population is expected to increase to over 900 beds in the coming years, then slowly decrease over the rest of the decade to around 800 beds (Figure 16).

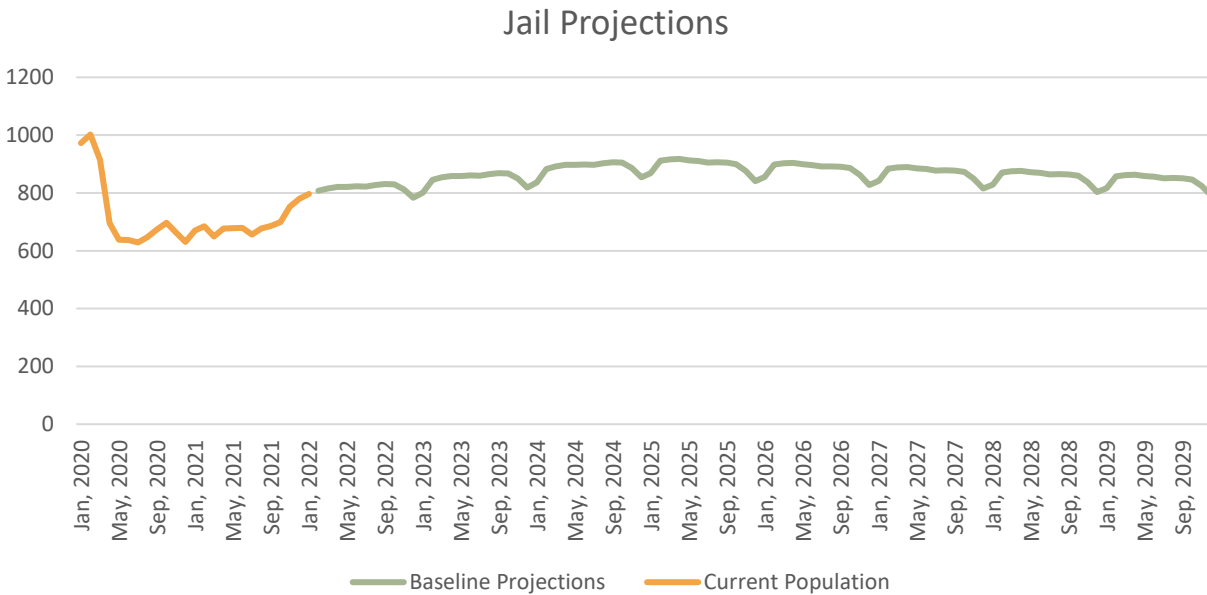
There are a number of factors that could cause the actual jail population to diverge from the projections:

1. **Opening of the North County jail.** Over the past three years, the Santa Barbara Police Department has booked misdemeanors at twice the rate of the Santa Maria Police Department. If the Santa Maria Police Department books misdemeanants into the new jail at a similar rate to Santa Barbara Police Department, an additional 27 jail beds will be used.
2. **Increasing crime rates.**¹⁷ While crime rates are not always directly linked to jail bookings, an increase in violent crime may lead to a higher usage of jail beds. Over the past decade, arrests and filings in Santa Barbara County have not increased when crime has increased, meaning the jail population has not gone up with increasing crime. If that relationship changes, higher crime rates may result in more jail bed usage.
3. **Reduction in probation length of stay due to AB 1950.** The probation population has sharply decreased over the past two years.¹⁸ As shown in the previous section, a large portion of the jail population has a probation violation as one of their booking reasons. With fewer people on probation, there may be less jail bed usage for violations.
4. **Expanded use of pretrial services.** Over the past two years, the pretrial supervision population has expanded from 100 to over 500. It is still too early to estimate the impact on the jail population, but continued expansion of pretrial services may reduce future jail populations.
5. **Continued impact of the pandemic.** The projections below assume the system will gradually return to pre-pandemic levels over the next three years, but that could change based on the risk and severity of future outbreaks.

¹⁷ See Figures 1 and 2.

¹⁸ See Figure 7.

FIGURE 16.



The projections above show the expected jail population based on analysis of historical data and assumptions about how future bookings and length of stay will change. The projections assume that policy and practice will be similar to what was seen in the past, with the exception of the recent changes in policy and practice during the pandemic. However, there are levers that can be pulled to impact the long-term jail population. Any policy or practice that changes the future number of annual admissions or changes the future average length of stay will impact the long-term jail population. A number of policies are described below that can reduce the long-term jail population. These policies are based on discussions with local stakeholders but would require careful planning and investments to reduce the future jail population effectively and safely.

1. **Use of diversion for individuals with no more than one prior booking, no probation or parole revocations, and no violent, sex, or driving under the influence offense.** Those over 25 with an arrest warrant were also assumed to be ineligible for diversion. The estimates presented in the table below assume that 75 percent of individuals who meet the criteria above would receive diversion. This policy option corresponds to the recommendations previously made to the Board of Supervisors to expand the use of diversion programs in the criminal justice system. The Yolo County District Attorney’s Office has recently expanded their use of felony diversion with a goal of diverting 10 percent of felony filings.¹⁹ In recent months, Yolo County has exceeded that goal, diverting more than 20 percent of felony filings. The criteria used for this estimate represent well under 10 percent of felony bookings.

¹⁹ <https://www.measuresforjustice.org/commons/yoloda/goals>

2. **Reduce the average length of stay for those with felony and misdemeanor arrest warrants.** For misdemeanor warrants, those with domestic violence offenses, driving under the influence offenses, crimes against children, and probation or parole violations were excluded. It was assumed that the length of stay for misdemeanor warrants would drop from an average of nine days to three days. For felony warrants, it was assumed that driving under the influence offenses, person and sex offenses, and probation and parole violations would be excluded. The current average length of stay for these individuals is 52 days. It was assumed that the new length of stay would be three days. As seen in the analysis above, those with a warrant booking make up a significant portion of the jail population.
3. **Expanded use of electronic monitoring for those who are sentenced or remanded to custody.** For individuals with misdemeanor offenses, it was assumed domestic violence offenses would not be eligible. For individuals with felony offenses, it was assumed that person offenses, sex offenses, and individuals with more than one previous booking would not be eligible. This policy option corresponds to the recommendations previously made to the Board of Supervisors for a shared sentencing alternative between the Sheriff and Probation departments.
4. **Reduced jail reincarceration of probationers by 15 percent.** The Santa Barbara County Probation Department has worked to establish effective programs to reduce recidivism. The department was the first in the state to partner with the Pew Charitable Trust's Results First Initiative to analyze the effectiveness of their programs and estimate the costs and benefits of those programs. As a result of this work, the department shifted resources into more effective programs. Despite the careful attention to recidivism reduction, many probationers continue to occupy jail beds during their time on probation. As seen in the analysis above, the most common booking type for individuals in jail is a probation violation with a new offense. Further investments in evidence-based programs and monitoring of those programs could reduce recidivism and reduce the number of jail beds used by probationers.
5. **Reduced length of stay for those transferred to the state.** In 2019, the length of time from jail booking to release to a state institution was 220 days. During the pandemic, that number increased to 245 days in 2020 and 344 days in 2021, as the state did not allow counties to transfer inmates for portions of each of those years. Even prior to the pandemic, these individuals were staying in jail for more than seven months on average. The table below shows the impact of reducing this length of stay to 180 days. The Sheriff's Office has been working to restore competency for the Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) population and has successfully reduced the length of time those individuals are incarcerated prior to restoration. However, the majority of individuals transferred to the state are sent to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the Sheriff's Office has no ability to reduce their length of stay. This policy option corresponds to the recommendations previously made to the Board of Supervisors to resolve aged cases more quickly.

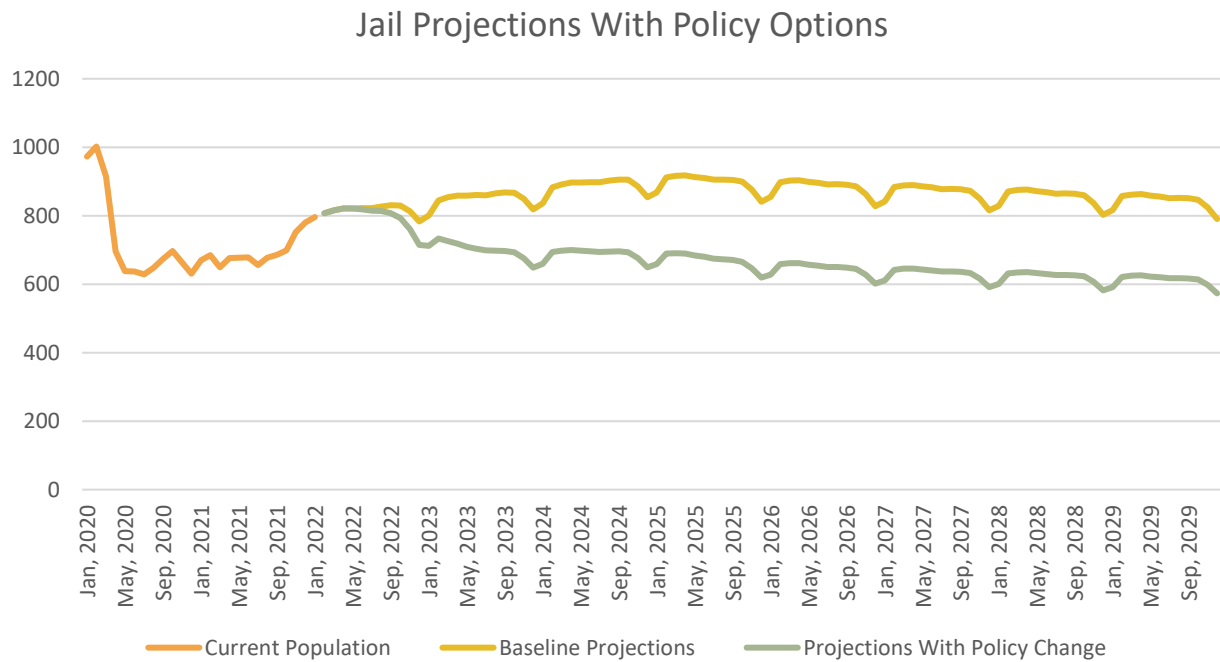
TABLE 7.

Policy Option	Assumptions	Bed Reduction
1. Expanded diversions	Applies to individuals with one or fewer prior bookings, no probation or parole violations, no DUI, no violent or sex offense. For those over 25, only new arrest bookings are included. Assume 75 percent of individuals with felony bookings meeting these criteria will be diverted.	17
2. Reduced jail time for those booked with a warrant	For misdemeanor arrest warrants: excluded DV, DUI, crimes against children, and probation and parole violations. For felony arrests warrants: excluded DUI, person and sex offenses, and probation and parole violations	64
3. Expanded the use of electronic monitoring	Applies to those who are sentenced or remanded to custody. Excluded DV offenses for misdemeanors and person and sex offenses that are felonies. Also assumed that those with felonies would have no more than one prior booking.	70
4. Reduced jail reincarceration for probationers	Estimates the impact of reducing return to jail for probationers by 15 percent.	63
5. Reduced jail length of stay for those transferred to the state	Estimates the impact of reducing the length of stay of individuals transferred to the state to 180 days.	40

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office has already taken steps to reduce the time that individuals spend in jail waiting for an available state hospital bed. Beginning in November of 2020, they made 10 jail beds available for the IST population through their Jail Based Competency Treatment Program (JBCT). The individuals who went to the JBCT instead of being transferred to the State Hospital spent significantly less time in jail. The time to transfer was 182 days for those who went to the JBCT compared to 255 days for those who went to the state hospital. They also spent less time back in jail after competency was restored: 38 days compared to 82 days. Once individuals were transferred, the time to restoration was also significantly shorter: 69 days compared to 164 days. Overall, the JBCT saved 14 jail beds by transferring individuals more quickly. Those 14 avoided jail beds were offset by the 10 beds used for the program. However, the cost of the 10 beds is reimbursed by the state. The Sheriff's Office would like to expand the JBCT to 15 beds, which will likely reduce jail usage by seven additional beds.

If Santa Barbara County can implement each of these policy options, the long-term jail population is expected to be reduced by over 200 beds to around 600 people in jail on a given day by the end of the decade. The policy impacts above are calculated using standard forecasting techniques and include the best assumptions based on the analysis of hundreds of thousands of individuals-level records from county data. However, the policy options described above require agency collaboration and investment of additional resources to be successful. It was beyond the scope of this study to estimate the costs and effort involved to implement each of the policy options. Figure 16 shows the combined impact of the policy options based on the assumptions described above.

FIGURE 16.



APPENDIX

DATA METHODOLOGY

Individual level data was provided by both the Santa Barbara Probation Department and Sheriff's Office. Both agencies provided data that included detailed information about the individual, their reason for entering and exiting, and each crime that led to their admission to probation or intake to jail. The records included anyone who entered or exited from January 1, 2011, through December 31, 2021. Over 50,000 probation records and nearly 500,000 jail booking records were analyzed.

Before analyzing the probation records, two steps were needed to prepare the data. The first step was to choose one record per admission cycle. When a probation cycle overlapped, the first admission and the last release was chosen. The charge with the most serious²⁰ offense was chosen to represent that probation stay. The second step was to remove the time that the individual was on warrant status from the overall supervision length of stay and the supervision population count.

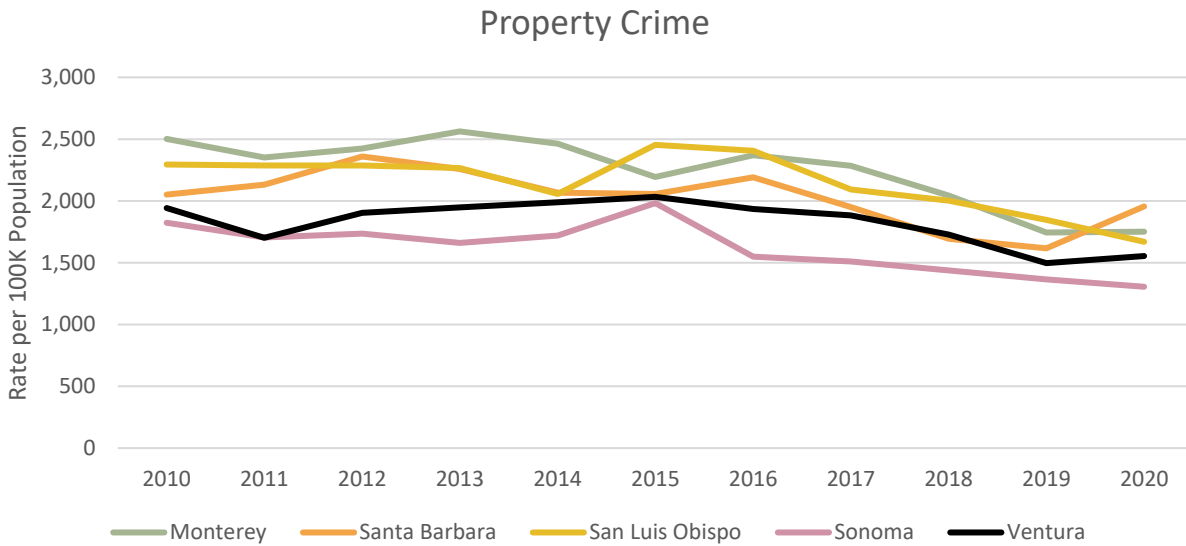
Similarly, it was necessary to flatten the jail records so that there was one record per booking. The most serious charge was chosen using the same criteria as described above. When there were overlapping booking dates, the first booking date and the last release date were chosen to capture the time an individual was in jail. When an individual had multiple booking types, those with an "On View" (or new arrest) booking were chosen. Additional booking types were also captured so that the population could be analyzed multiple ways. Individuals often have multiple charges, some of which have been sentenced and some of which are unsentenced. To determine if an individual was unsentenced, the status on the most serious charge was used.

ADDITIONAL COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRENDS

Prior to 2020, Santa Barbara County's property crime rate was most often in the middle of the comparison counties. The rise in crime in recent years resulted in Santa Barbara County having the highest property crime rate among the neighboring counties.

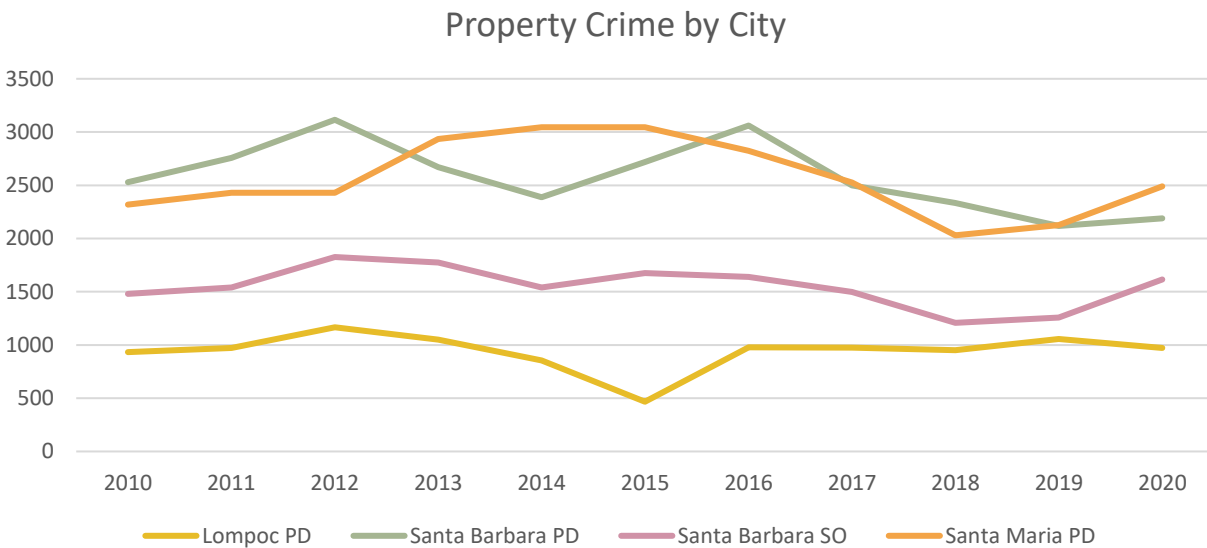
²⁰ This was found using the Department of Justice crime hierarchy.

FIGURE A1.



When examining property crime between the largest policing agencies, reported property crime has been up the most in Santa Maria²¹ and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, rising 28 percent and 34 percent respectively since 2018. Preliminary data from Santa Maria shows that property crime continued to rise in 2021.

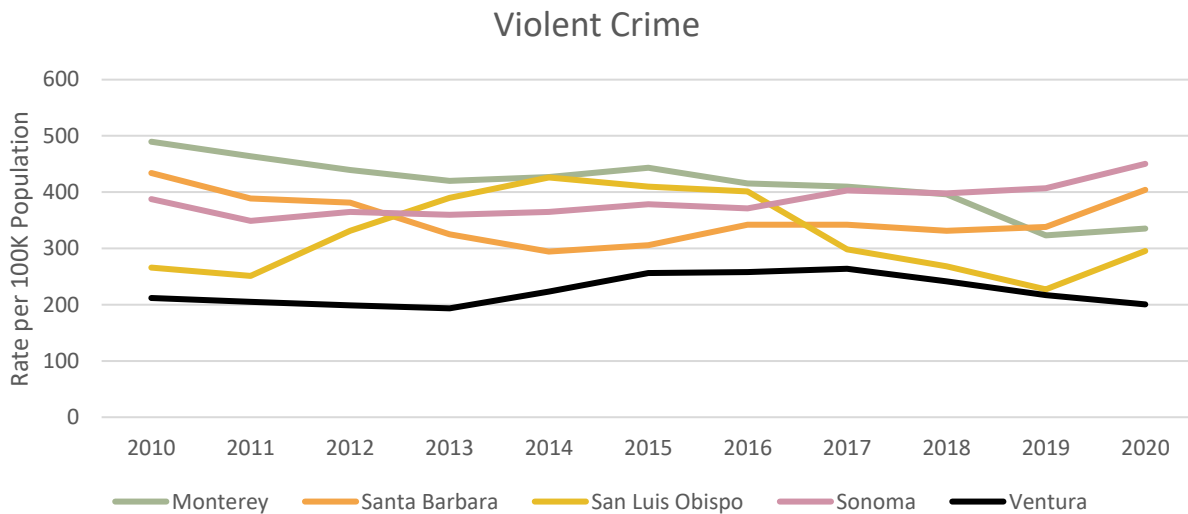
FIGURE A2.



²¹ Due to data errors in the publicly reported crime data for Santa Maria, data provided directly from the Santa Maria Police Department was included in figures A2 and A4

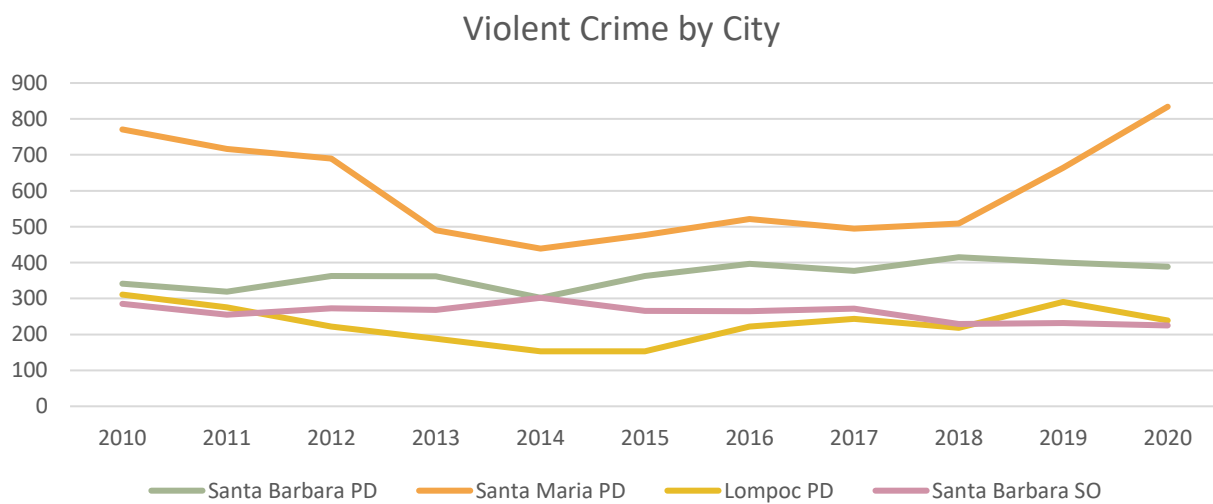
Historically, Santa Barbara County’s violent crime rate has been in the middle of the comparison counties. The rise in crime in recent years resulted in Santa Barbara County having a higher violent crime rate than all neighboring counties except for Sonoma County, as well as the highest violent crime rate since 2010.

FIGURE A3.



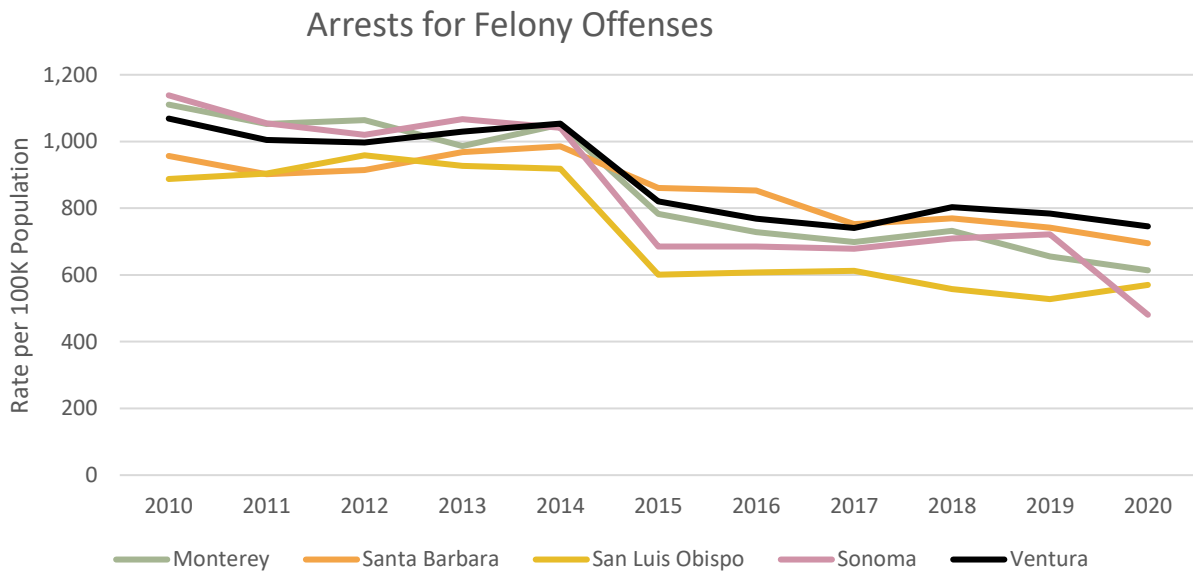
When examining violent crime between the largest policing agencies, reported violent crime has increased the most in Santa Maria, rising 68 percent since 2018. Preliminary data from Santa Maria shows that violent crime dropped in 2021.

FIGURE A4.



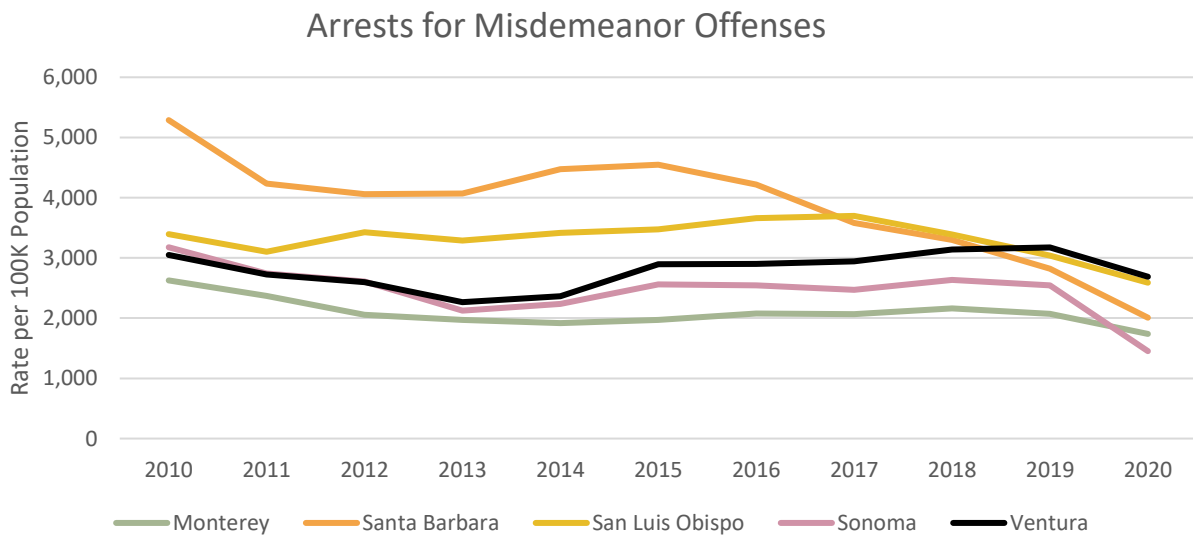
From 2014 to 2020, Santa Barbara County’s arrests for felonies declined by 30 percent, but remained higher than all comparison counties except for Ventura County. All five counties experienced a steep decline in felony arrests from 2014 to 2015, largely due to Proposition 47.

FIGURE A5.



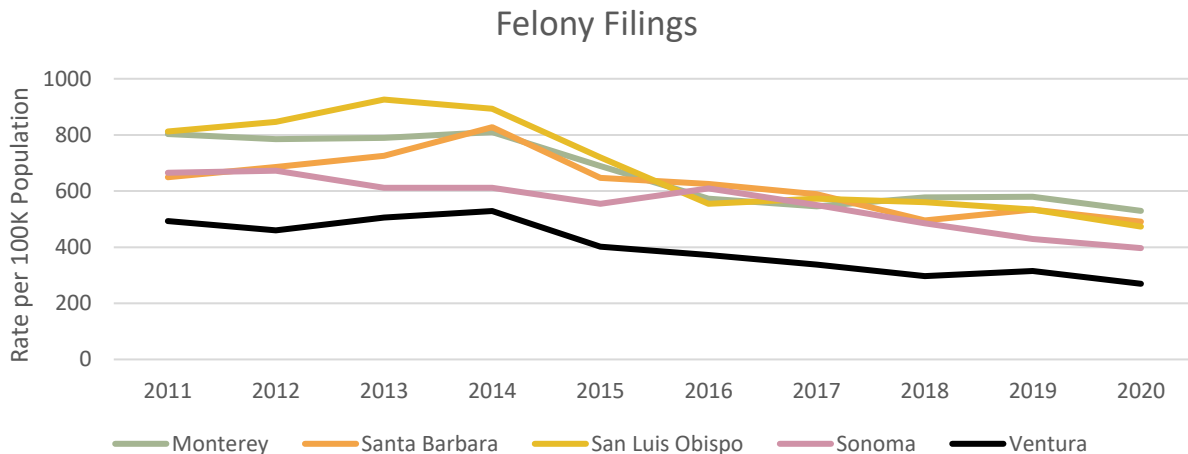
Over much of the ten-year period, Santa Barbara County had the highest rate of misdemeanor arrests. The misdemeanor arrest rate fell faster in Santa Barbara County than the comparison counties (62 percent decline between 2010 and 2020) and was in the middle of the comparison counties by 2020.

FIGURE A6.



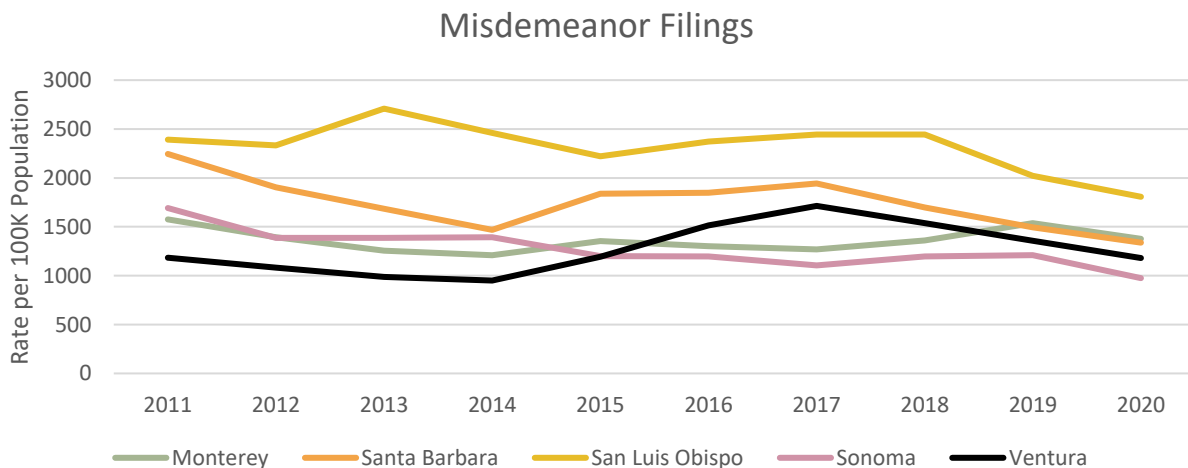
Felony filings²² for Santa Barbara County and the comparison counties fell steeply from 2014 to 2016, then continued to decline more slowly through 2020. Over this period, Santa Barbara County’s felony filing rate was in the middle of the comparison counties.

FIGURE A7.



Over much of the ten-year period, Santa Barbara County had more misdemeanor filings per capita than Monterey, Ventura, and Sonoma counties. Only San Luis Obispo had more misdemeanor filings per capita than Santa Barbara County. In 2017, Santa Barbara County’s misdemeanor filings began falling and dropped below Monterey County by 2020.

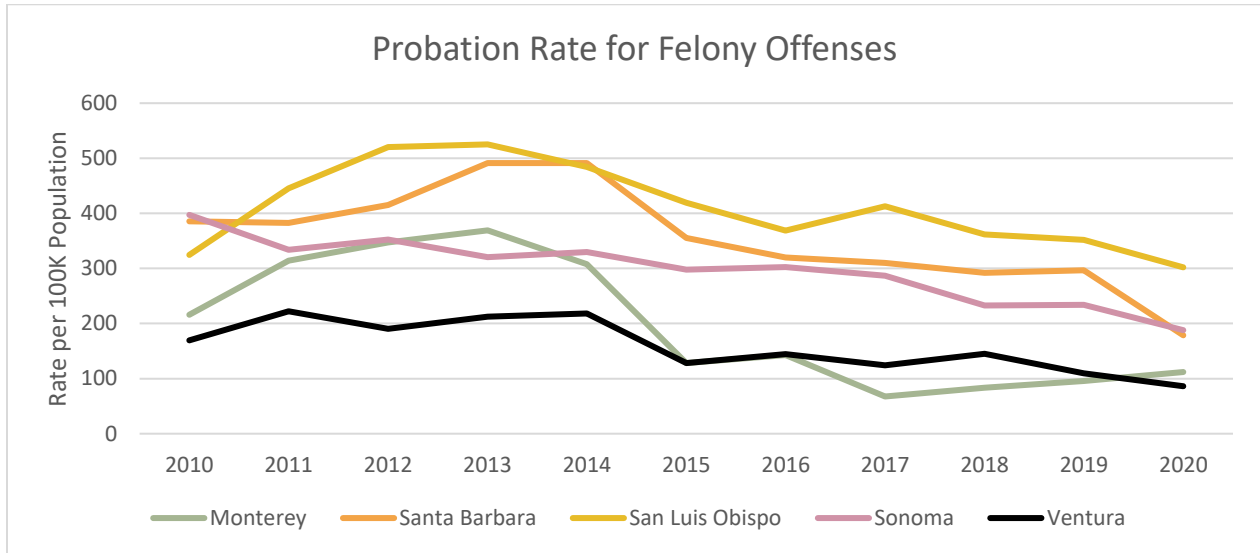
FIGURE A8.



²² Data sources: filings (fiscal year): <https://www.courts.ca.gov/dashboard.htm>

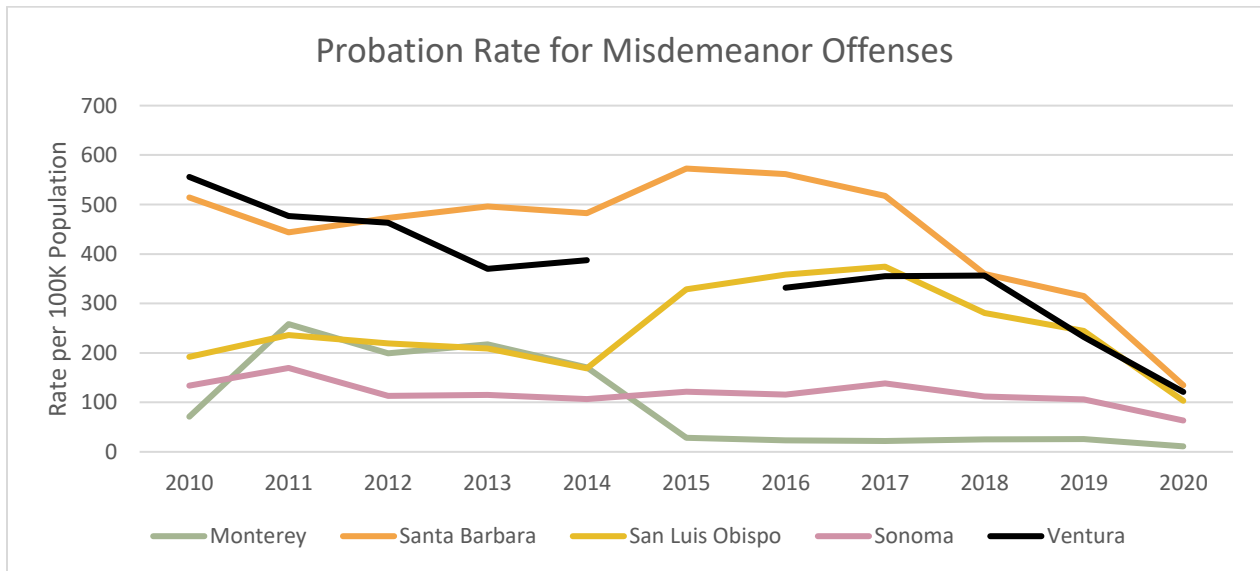
Santa Barbara County’s felony probation rate has fallen by 63 percent since 2014. In 2020, the rate was in the middle of the comparison counties.

FIGURE A9.



Santa Barbara County’s misdemeanor probation rate peaked in 2015 and has since fallen by 76 percent. Even after the steep decline, the rate was the highest among the comparison counties.²³

FIGURE A10.



²³ 2015 Ventura County misdemeanors removed due to data quality.