

# Attachment A



JANUARY 8, 2024

# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

UPDATED ANALYSIS:  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERVIEW AND JAIL PROJECTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

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In June of 2022, MW Consulting completed a report titled *Santa Barbara County Criminal Justice Overview and Jail Projections*. This summary is an update to that report, including jail and crime data over the past 18 months. We requested booking and release data from the Sheriff's Office that includes records through November of 2023. We also accessed more recent crime statistics from the California Department of Justice and more recent county level incarceration data from the Board of State Community Corrections. The most recent publicly available data are used in the analysis below to update crime and incarceration rates. The individual level data from the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office is used to update the booking, release, and jail population analyses. The detailed jail data and updated demographic projections from the California Department of Finance are used to update the long-term jail projections.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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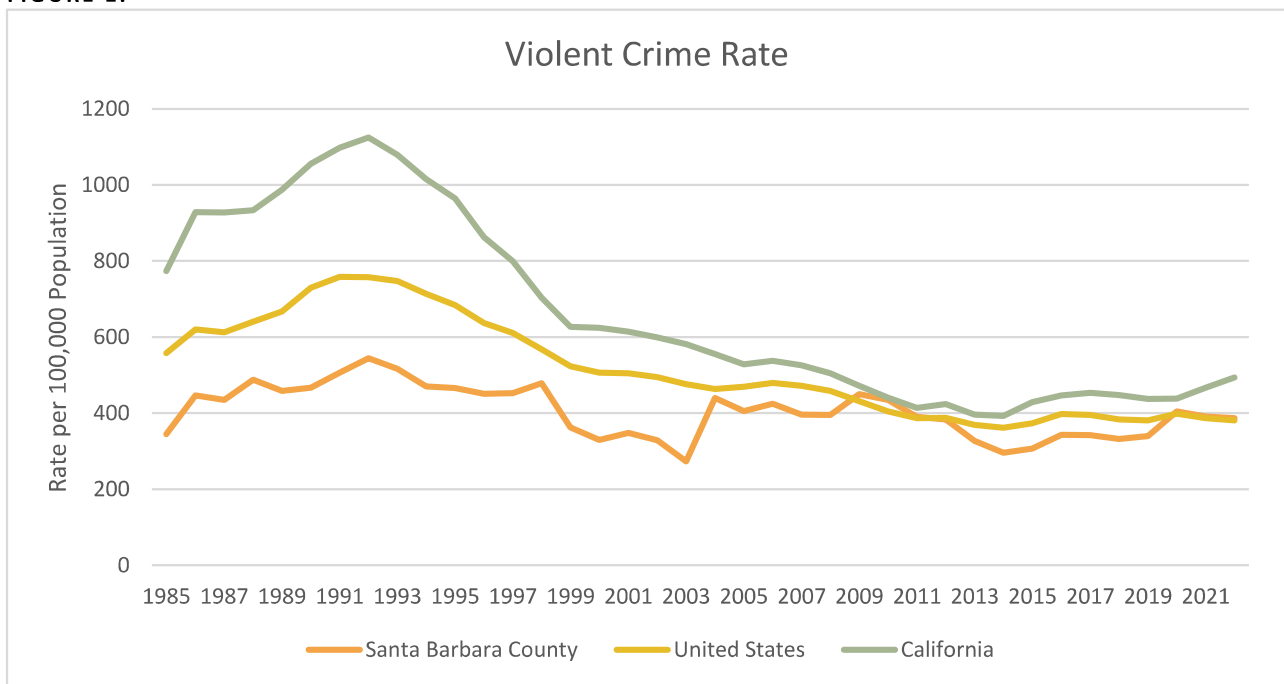
- Santa Barbara County's property and violent crime both increased during the pandemic. However, both fell in 2022 and are similar to historic levels.
- Santa Barbara County's 2022 property and violent crime rates were below California's crime rates and similar to the United States' crime rate.
- Santa Barbara County's 2023 incarceration rate is higher than California's incarceration rate and well below the most recently reported rate for all jails across the country.
- The number of people in jail in Santa Barbara County fell sharply during the pandemic, reaching a low of around 550. Since the end of 2021, the jail population has stabilized at an average of 760 inmates.
- Jail bookings have been up every year since the pandemic, with nearly 10,500 bookings over the most recent 12-month period.
- The average length of stay has been increasing over time with the first significant drop occurring in 2023.
- The jail population is projected to grow 5.6 percent over the next 10 years, driven by the projected increase in the at-risk population of the county. This gradual increase is expected to increase the average jail population to just under 800 beds in future years.
- Two out of three individuals booked in fiscal year 2023 have been previously booked. More than one out of three individuals have been booked five or more times.
- The county is working on policy and practice changes to reduce the longer-term jail population, but it is still too early to estimate the impact of these changes.

## SANTA BARBARA CRIME AND INCARCERATION 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 crime 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 Tool<sup>1</sup> for 1985 to 2022. Santa Barbara County's violent crime rate increased sharply in 2020 but has declined over the past two years. Over the past 27 years, the violent crime rate has averaged around 400 violent crimes per 100,000 people, similar to the most recent reported data in 2022. Santa Barbara's 2022 violent crime rate was slightly higher than the United States violent crime rate and 28 percent lower than California's violent crime rate.

**FIGURE 1.**



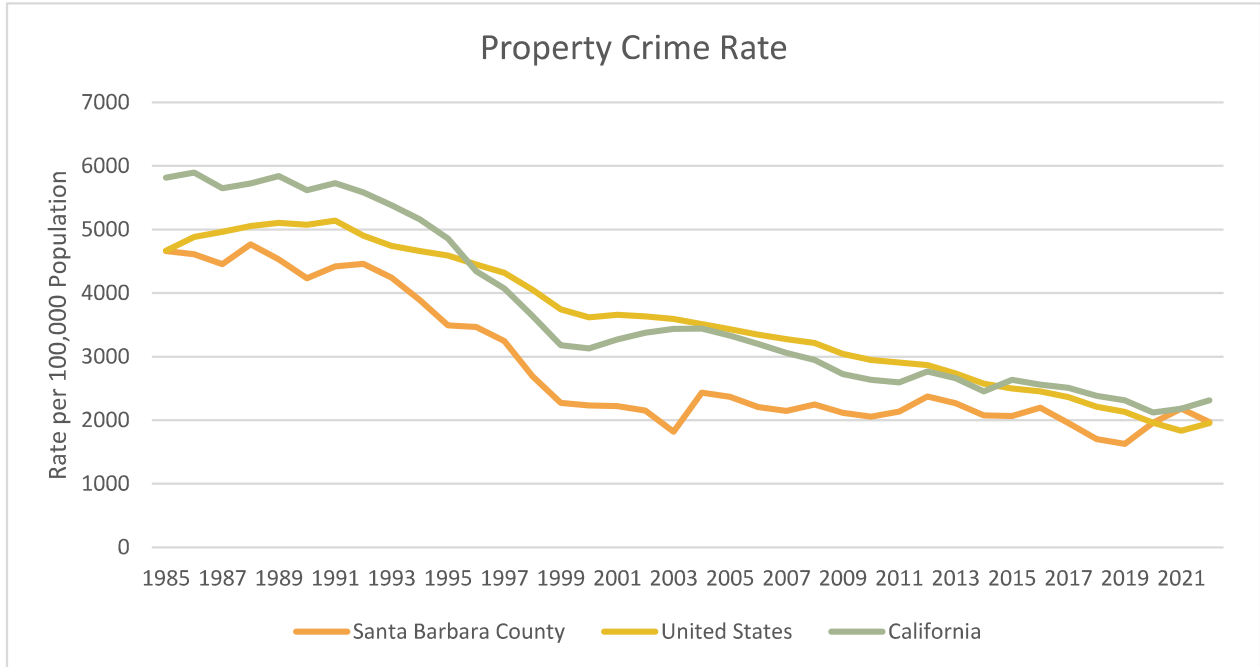
Santa Barbara's property crime rate has followed a similar trend to California's and the United States' property crime rate, falling steeply throughout the 1990s. Over the past 20 years, Santa Barbara's property crime rate has averaged just under 2,100 annual property crimes per 100,000 people. The

<sup>1</sup> 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://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/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.

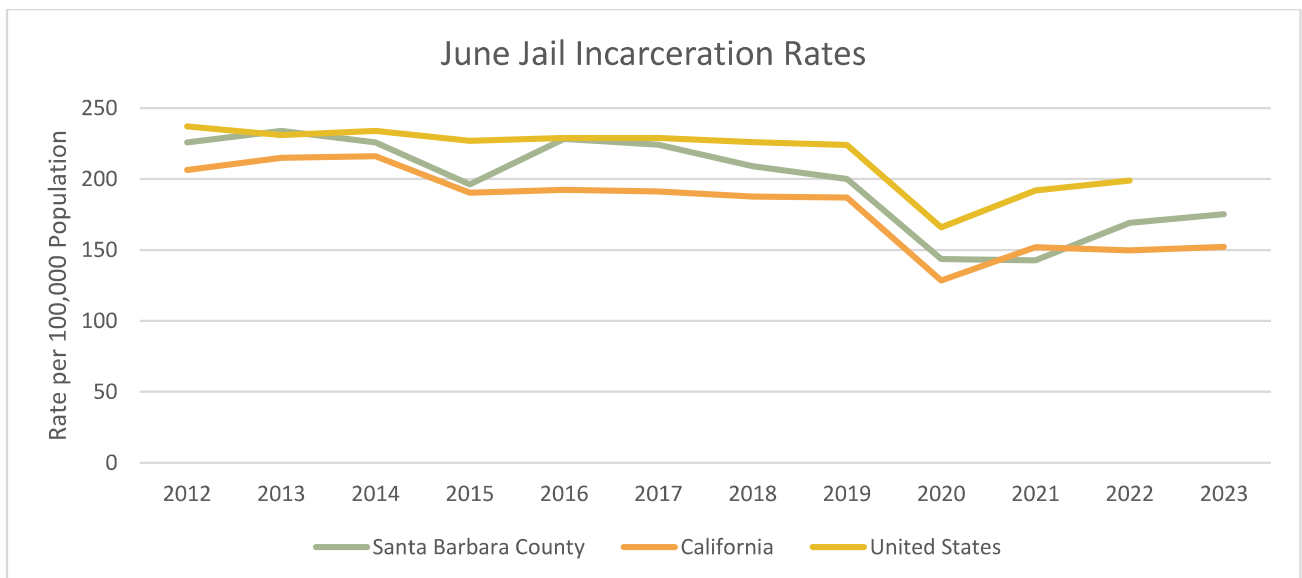
county's property crime rate increased in both 2020 and 2021 and decreased in 2022, leaving the current rate below the 20-year average. The county's 2022 property crime rate was slightly higher than the United States' property crime rate and 17 percent lower than California's property crime rate.

**FIGURE 2.**



Santa Barbara County's incarceration rate has increased since falling sharply during the initial months of the pandemic. Recent data is not available for the United States, but the 2022 mid-year incarceration rate for the United States was much higher than Santa Barbara's incarceration rate. Santa Barbara's 2021 incarceration rate was slightly lower than California's incarceration rate, but California has had a lower incarceration rate than Santa Barbara County in all other years.

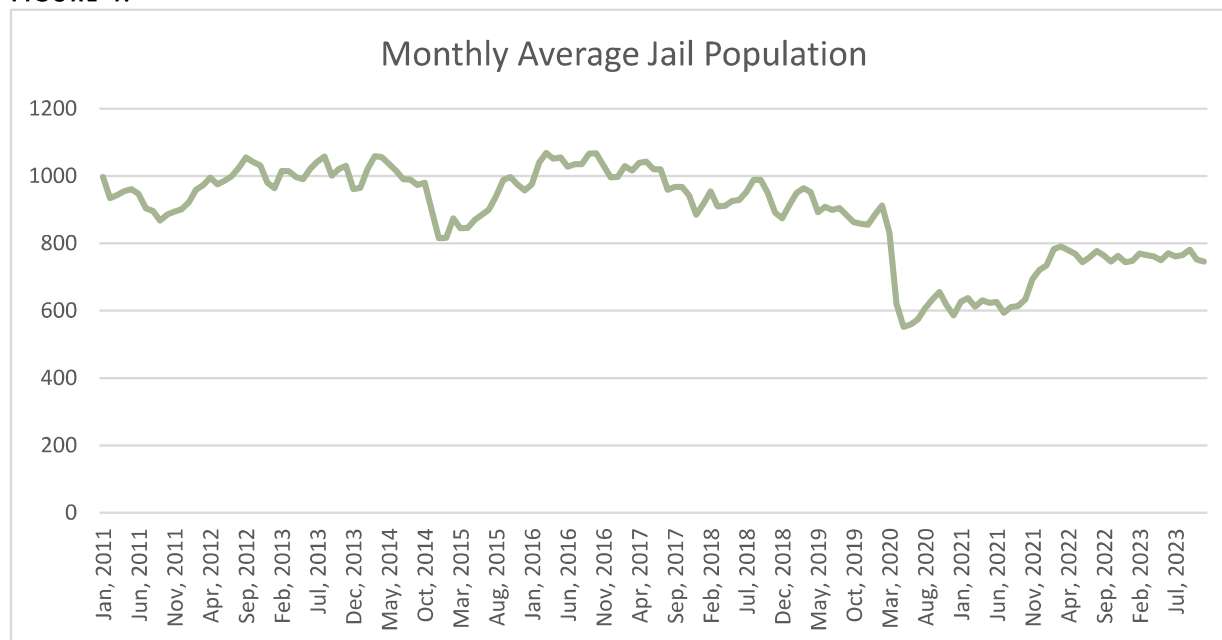
**FIGURE 3.**



## JAIL ANALYSIS

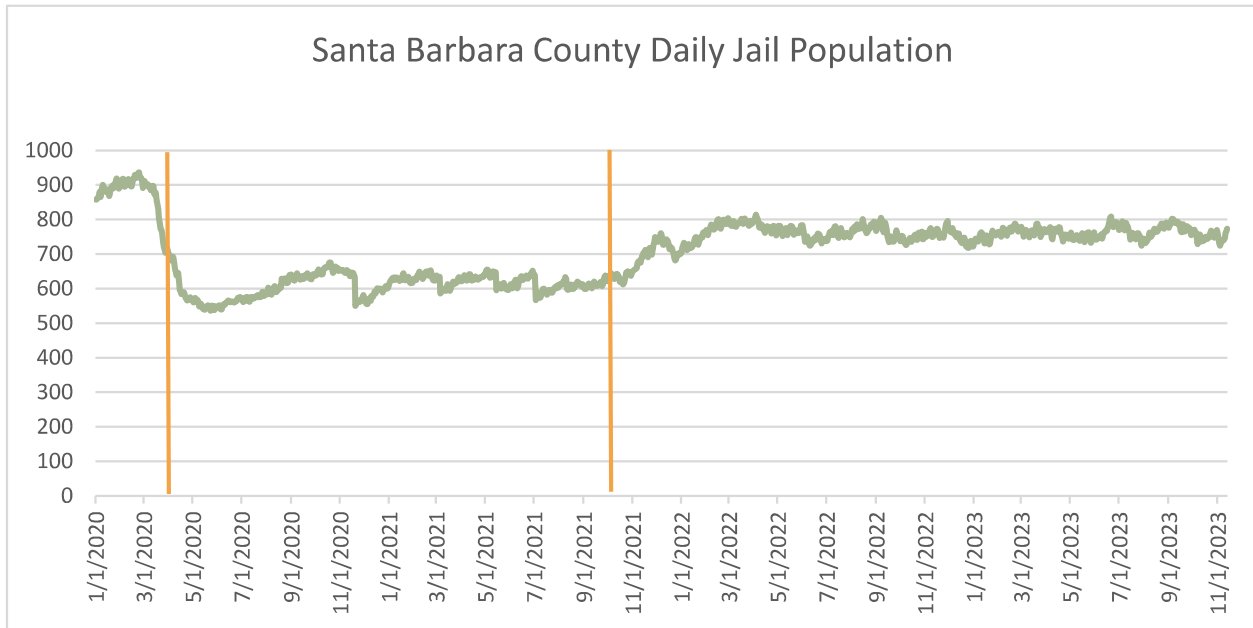
The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office provided individual level data for those booked or released from jail between January 1, 2011, and November 13, 2023. The data includes demographic information, crime detail, sentence date, booking and release type, time in jail, and arresting agency. The data presented below has one notable difference compared to the previous report. This summary removes from the analysis individuals on alternative sentencing. Our earlier report included these individuals, resulting in a higher jail population and longer average length of stay estimates.

**FIGURE 4.**



Between 2011 and 2019, the Santa Barbara County jail population remained relatively flat, fluctuating between 800 to over 1000 inmates. Near the end of the decade, the population started to slowly trend downward, but was still around 900 inmates on any given day. After years of a relatively flat jail population, the population fell sharply 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 5 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 around 900 to around 700 individuals. The population continued to decline and settled at around 550 in May of 2020. The population continued to stay between 550 to 650 until October of 2021. Near the end of October, the practice of zero-bail for warrants was discontinued, increasing the jail population by over 100 beds. The data used for this report contained records through the middle of November 2023. At that time there were around 750 individuals in jail.

**FIGURE 5.**



When the previous report was written, the jail population was just starting to increase due to the October policy change. Also, it was unclear whether the jail population would increase after opening the North County jail. Based on the updated data, the jail population has leveled out, and there does not appear to be an increase in the population after opening the new jail.

Since the previous jail report, the overall population of the jail and the overall make up of who is in jail has remained mostly unchanged. The average jail population for the first half of November 2023 was 12 beds, or 1.6 percent, higher than the average population in January of 2022.

Jail bookings have declined sharply since 2011, hitting a low during the pandemic. Since 2020, bookings have increased each year, and in 2023<sup>2</sup> they were more than 20 percent higher than the 2020 low. The average length of stay had steadily increased since 2011, with the only substantial decrease happening in 2023. Since 2020, both bookings and average length of stay have increased, resulting in an increase in the jail population from the pandemic lows. In 2023, the increase in bookings was offset by a decrease in length of stay, resulting in a stable jail population over the past two years.

Historical Jail Bookings and Average Length of Stay		
Year	Bookings	ALOS
2011	15827	20.6
2012	15767	22.5
2013	16147	22.1
2014	16864	22.0
2015	16466	20.3
2016	16390	22.5
2017	14952	23.5
2018	13910	24.8
2019	12931	24.6
2020	8629	24.4
2021	9272	26.7
2022	10011	29.9
2023	10484	26.7

<sup>2</sup> Booking data went through November 13, 2023. For the 2023 values a full calendar year was used that included the last month and a half of 2022. The average length of stay for 2023 included all releases through November 13, 2023.

## JAIL PROJECTIONS

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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, economic conditions and county budgets, population demographics, law changes, local practice changes, and the values of elected officials all factor into future jail populations. In 2020 and 2021, 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.

In our previous report, the jail population projections were based on pre-pandemic trends in the average length of stay, bookings, and the projected population growth in Santa Barbara County. At the time of the previous report, there was little expected growth in Santa Barbara County's at-risk<sup>3</sup> population. When all of these factors were included in the projections model, we predicted that the population would rise from the pandemic lows, but the long-term population would trend downward.

Over the past two years, the jail population has averaged 760 inmates on a given day. The pandemic policies and practices are no longer in place. The jail population appears to have stabilized at a lower baseline than prior to the pandemic. The long-term pre-pandemic trends in bookings and average length of stay do not seem to be relevant for predicting future jail population growth. Since we do not have a reliable historical baseline, the new baseline jail projections assume no growth in the booking rate or average length of stay, which is consistent with the past two years following the elimination of zero bail for warrants. In July of 2023, the California Department of Finance (DOF) updated their demographic projections for California counties. Based on the current age and gender breakdown of the jail population<sup>4</sup> on November 1, 2023, and the updated population projections, we created a weighted average of the estimated at-risk population growth for the county. Between 2023 and 2033, Santa Barbara County's at-risk population growth is expected to be 5.6 percent. We expect this to directly increase the number of individuals booked into jail over this period. The projections presented below are entirely driven by the estimated increase in the country's population and historical monthly fluctuations in the jail population.

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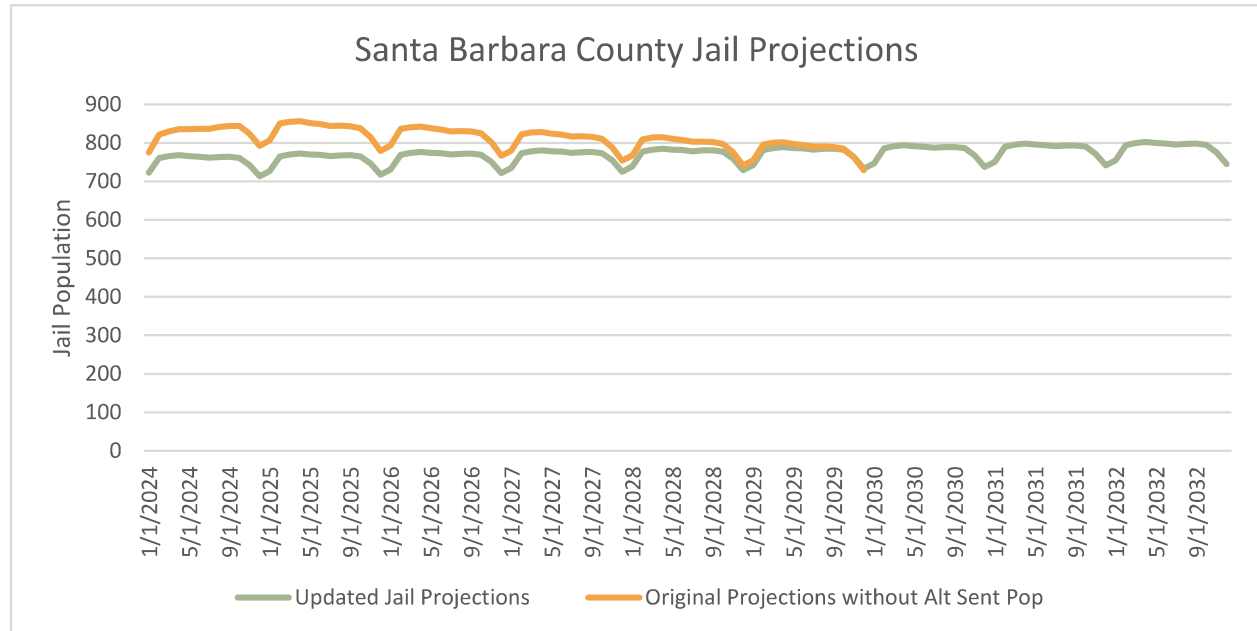
<sup>3</sup> The at-risk population was based on the age distribution of people in the jail. This distribution was used with population estimates from the California Department of Finance ([https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2023/07/P2C\\_County\\_Age-Group\\_Sex.xlsx](https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2023/07/P2C_County_Age-Group_Sex.xlsx)) to create a weighted average of the expected population growth in the county.

<sup>4</sup> The jail population was broken down into five-year age groups for both men and women. These five-year age groups were compared to the Department of Finance expected population growth for Santa Barbara County to estimate an overall 10-year growth rate for those who are the highest risk for occupying a jail bed.



The new projections are lower than the previous projections<sup>5</sup> over the next several years. This is because the previous projections assumed the jail population would slowly return to long-term pre-pandemic levels. From the start of 2022 through November of 2023, the jail population has been flat and has not returned to the pre-pandemic levels. By 2029, the two sets of projections are nearly the same. This is because the long-term population forecast was updated by the DOF to reflect more people moving into the county than previously anticipated.

**FIGURE 6.**



Without changes in policy or practice, the current jail population is expected to average around 760 inmates. By the end of the ten-year projections, the population is expected to rise by 5.6 percent to just under 800 inmates in jail on a given day.

## POLICY CHANGES

The jail projections presented above assume that policy and practice continue as they have for the past two years. However, the County is actively working on policies and practices that will reduce the future jail population. These are either in the planning stage or at the very beginning of implementation, so data are not yet available to make estimates on the potential impacts of each policy. There are also data gaps in what is currently collected by the county. For example, it is not currently possible to identify individuals who are booked into jail and diagnosed with a mental health disorder. This makes it impossible to project the impact of Rapid Diversion on the overall jail population. There are a number of policies that the county is working on implementing described in the table below.

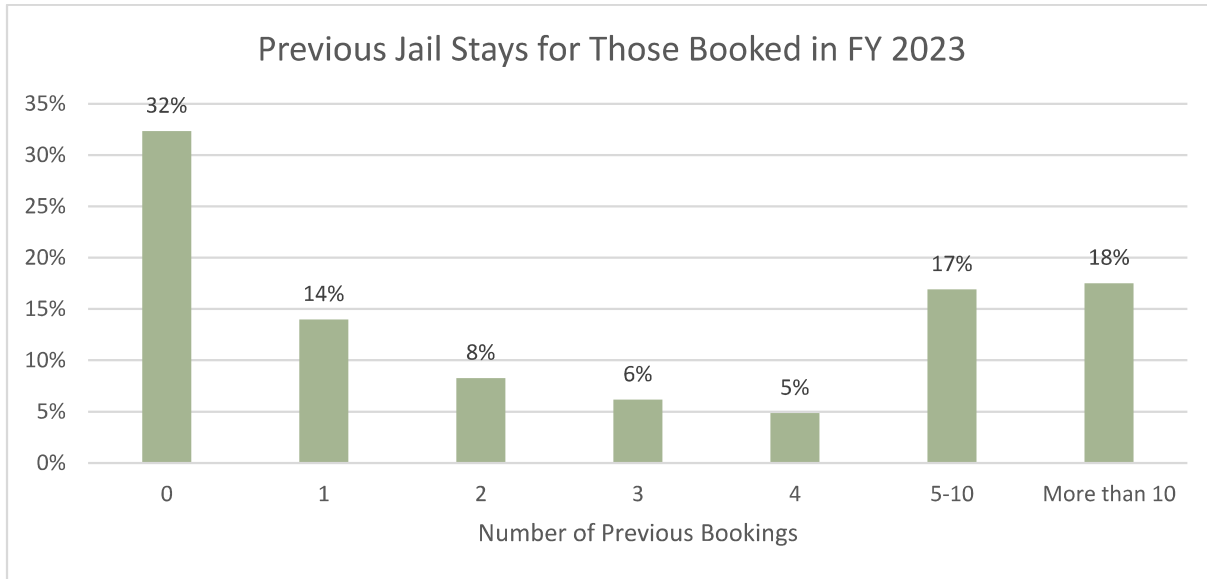
<sup>5</sup> The original projections in this summary will not match the projections from the earlier report because the alternative sentencing population has been subtracted out. This was done by subtracting the average alternative sentencing population over the past 12 months from future monthly jail projections.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>
Rapid Diversion	This is designed to divert individuals out of jail who have a mental health diagnosis. Certain violent offenses and criminal histories are excluded from eligibility.	This could have a large impact, but it is not currently possible to track the mental health population in the jail. This makes impact estimates impossible.
Alternative Sentencing	Probation has recommended ways to expand and enhance the use of alternative sentencing. This includes earlier release of those who will be supervised by probation, the improvement of screening and enrollment, and the establishment of criminal history and offense guidelines.	The Sheriff's Office estimates an increase of 50 percent in the use of alternative sentencing, or around a 30 bed decrease in the jail population.
Treatment Facility	Planning stages.	Unknown.
Additional Mental Health Beds	Creation of four additional mental health beds.	Four bed reduction.
Pre-Filing Diversion	Expansion of pre-filing misdemeanor restorative justice program to the entire county.	This is a practice that will likely help reduce recidivism without a clear measurable impact on the jail population.
CARE Court	Helps people with untreated mental health disorders receive treatment and services through a court ordered Care Plan.	This is a practice that will likely help reduce recidivism without a clear measurable impact on the jail population.
Early Representation	The program will pilot in the North County, but there is not yet any data to analyze. It provides early representation for clients. Research has shown that it can reduce the length of time individuals spend in jail.	In San Francisco, individuals receiving early representation were twice as likely to be released at arraignment. In Santa Clara, it reduced length of stay from 29 days to six days for those with early representation.
Familiar Faces	This is a cross-departmental initiative with a multi-disciplinary outreach team focused on serving high-need individuals who are reluctant to engage in services.	This is a practice that will likely help reduce recidivism. Additional detail on specific criteria and number of planned clients served is needed for a bed impact estimate.

Many of the above policy changes are designed to reduce recidivism and impact future admissions into jail. Most individuals booked into jail have been previously booked. Figure 7 shows that over two out of three individuals booked into jail in fiscal year 2023 had at least one booking in Santa Barbara County

since 2011. Over one out of three individuals had at least five bookings over this time, and over 100 individuals had 40 or more bookings. While we are not yet able to estimate the impact of the policies listed above, effective recidivism reduction strategies have the potential to impact a large portion of jail admissions.

**FIGURE 7.**



## CONCLUSION

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Santa Barbara County's property and violent crime rates fell in 2022 and are below California's crime rates. The number of people in jail has stabilized over the past two years, with between 700 to 800 people in jail on a given day. The population is up from the pandemic lows, but still well below the pre-pandemic population. The Department of Finance projects that Santa Barbara County's population will grow over the next 10 years. We expect this increase in county residents to result in a small increase in the jail population if no action is taken to reduce the number of intakes or the average length of stay in jail.

The county has begun to take several steps to reduce the jail population. The policies listed above are all designed to reduce the jail population through diversion, reduced length of stay, and recidivism reductions. The goal is to reduce the jail population while maintaining public safety through increasing services to reduce recidivism and keeping the most dangerous individuals in jail. It is not possible to estimate the jail bed impact for most of the policies listed above as there is currently insufficient data to track the impacts. We will continue to closely monitor the jail population and provide updated estimates as data becomes available.