

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID PANDEMIC ON THE COUNTY JAIL POPULATION IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

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Criminal Justice Mapping Analysis; Jail Population (Post-Covid)

Executive Summary: Criminal Justice Report; Custody

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day prompted a national outcry for greater racial and social equity, particularly in the field of criminal justice. On June 11 of this year, the Board of Supervisors listened to nearly six hours of public testimony on the subject of racial inequities in the criminal justice system. In reviewing various aspects of the criminal justice system in the county, one of the most significant issues, both locally and nationally, is the need to reduce the number of incarcerated people.

Concurrently, the county's response to the COVID-19 virus resulted in the lowest jail population in decades. The Board asked the County Executive Office and the leaders of the criminal justice departments (Sheriff, District Attorney (DA), Probation and Public Defender (PD)) to return with an analysis as to why this had occurred and with thoughts and recommendations as to whether the jail population could be maintained at a significantly lower level and, if so, how?

Since mid-March, the jail population has dropped almost 37% from an Average Daily Population (ADP) of **900-950** persons to **550-600** persons. These figures have remained constant for nearly four months. Three distinct factors are driving this lowered population:

1. A significant decrease in the number of physical arrests in the field
2. A significant increase in the number of people being released under pre-trial supervision, with and without electronic monitoring
3. The increase in the option of taking arrestees to locations other than jail (e.g. the CREDO47 center, Crisis Stabilization, etc.)

It is difficult to determine the impact on public safety of the release of several hundred persons into the community who would previously have been incarcerated. This report provides specific data points as to the actions taken and how those actions contributed to the lowered jail population. It also lists seven actions taken in response to the COVID pandemic and eight additional recommendations all of which could contribute to the long-term reduction of the ADP.

In March, the Judicial Council of California (JCC) issued Emergency Order #4 that eliminated the bail requirement for a number of offenses. This made a number of inmates immediately eligible for release. In June, the JCC rescinded this order, but permitted counties to keep its provisions in place. The Santa Barbara County courts have chosen to maintain the order for the time being.

Until the court system, and society as a whole, is able to resume activities at the levels seen Pre-COVID, it will be difficult to fully assess the impact of the steps that were taken and make some decisions as to which responses should become aspects of normal operations. Appendix A in this paper lays out a number of potential steps, both those occurring in response to COVID as well as some additional steps that might contribute to the lowering of the ADP.

All of the Criminal Justice Departments and Behavioral Wellness (BeWell) contributed to the preparation of this report.

Background

Two major events have occurred, indeed are occurring, in 2020 that have significantly impacted criminal justice. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and demands for increased racial and social equity in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis have accelerated the discussions concerning needed changes in the field of criminal justice. Most specifically, the ongoing discussion about the purpose of the county jail and who belongs there have been brought into sharp focus.

Prior to the events of 2020, the two areas of greatest concern were the population of mentally ill persons in custody in the county jail and the percentage of inmates who were awaiting trial, but who had not been convicted. With respect to mental illness, the estimated percentage of such inmates ranged from 14% (the percentage of inmates receiving psychotropic medications) to 55% (the percentage of inmates who had ever received services from Behavioral Wellness). The national average in county jails around the country hovers at 33%.

While the Average Daily Population (ADP) within the jail has fallen significantly over the past several years, the figure of **55%** of inmates who have received services from Behavioral Wellness at some point in their lives) has remained constant. Additionally, over the last three years, the number of inmates currently in jail and currently receiving mental health services from BeWell prior to incarceration has also remain steady at around **5%** (**4.4% – 5.3%**). The percentage of inmates who have ever received medication from BeWell was relative stable from 2017-2020 (**19%-22%**), but rose sharply in 2020 to **27.5%**.

The number of inmates awaiting trial has remained fairly steady at around 65%. This number is not entirely accurate or definitive for two reasons. First, those inmates who have been sentenced on one charge, but are pending trial on a second charge are still defined as pre-trial even though they are not eligible for release. Secondly, inmates who have been arrested where that arrest triggers a probation/parole violation may also be seen as being pre-trial event though they are not eligible for release. This second category also skews the number of misdemeanors being held in the jail facility.

In 2016, the Board of Supervisors voted to participate in a national program, Stepping Up, that was brought forward by Sheriff Brown. The program focused on identifying departure points for persons suffering mental illness who committed crimes that were a direct function of their illness. The challenge was, and is, to create an alternative to jail where such persons can be taken. Related to this effort is to create a location where people who are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs can be taken instead of jail and be introduced to services as appropriate.

In 2019, the county executive office undertook an effort to doing a broader analysis of the county's criminal justice system entitled the Criminal Justice Mapping project. All of the criminal justice departments and Behavioral Wellness participated in this effort. While the focus of the effort remained on finding alternatives to jail for mentally ill persons, a secondary objective was to determine what actions could be taken that would result in lowering the jail population without endangering public safety. As a direct result of this effort, the county applied

for and received three grants that all have the potential to have a direct impact on the efforts described above. These grants include:

The State Hospital Diversion Grant is a three-year grant that brought \$3.1million to the county over three years. The objective of the grant is to determine if persons, charged with a felony, who had found Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) or were in danger of such a finding could be restored to competency within the community rather than going to the state hospital. This County Executive Officer oversees this grant and Behavioral Wellness administers it.

The CREDO47 grant (formerly referred to as the Community Diversion Grant/Prop47) is a three-year grant that brought nearly \$6 million over three years to the county. Its objective is to identify persons who have been arrested for various *minor* crimes and divert them into treatment or programming as an alternative to court and potentially jail. The grant funded a co-response team that consists of a deputy sheriff and a behavioral wellness specialist who respond together to calls involving persons experiencing a mental health crisis. They also do follow up on such calls that are handled by patrol deputies. The program has been enormously successful. From March to May 2020, the co-response teams responded to **759** calls, only **10 (1.3%)** of which resulted in an arrest. The Public Defender is responsible for this grant and Behavioral Wellness administers operational oversight.

The third grant was a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant awarded to the Sheriff's Office, which funded two additional co-response teams for three years. The grant provided \$2,145,000 over three years to the Sheriff's Office and Behavioral Wellness. It funded two co-response teams.

In May 2019, the Probation Department launched a Racial and Ethnic Disparity study group through the Community Corrections Partnership. The overall goal was to develop a systematic approach to addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system. During the first year, the study group focused on providing implicit bias training to justice partner agencies. They also extracted data on the race and ethnicity of justice-involved individuals initially from two justice partner agencies, Sheriff and Probation.

In 2019, the Public Defender launched the concept of Holistic Defense. The basic premise was that the public defense bar would not just help the client prevail with their legal issues, but instead would help them regain control of their life. This program has the potential to significantly reduce recidivism over the long term.

The Public Defender's Office also obtained a Bureau of Justice Assistance Technical Assistance grant through the Center for Court Innovation. This grant helped focus the Criminal Justice Mapping Group's effort to improve efficiency in the court process and consequently lower the Average Daily Population in the jail. The CCI made a site visit in the fall of 2019 and had just finalized its action plan when the COVID pandemic occurred.

When the COVID pandemic broke out, perhaps the area of greatest concern was the county jail. With an average daily population of just under 1,000 inmates and several hundred staff members who move in and out of the facility 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, there was great concern that the disease could sweep through the facility with devastating consequences, both for the inmates

and the broader community. The reality of this scenario has been driven home by the COVID outbreak at the Lompoc Federal Penitentiary.

A related area of concern is the court system where everyone involved is constantly in close proximity to each other in physical settings that are difficult, if not impossible, to mitigate. While the courts are not part of county government, the interrelationship between the courts and the Criminal Justice partners is inseparable. Beginning in mid-March, every department involved with criminal justice took significant steps to lower the jail population.

In March, the Judicial Council of California issued Emergency Order #4 that eliminated the bail requirement for a number of offenses. This made a number of inmates immediately eligible for release. In June, the JCC rescinded this order, but permitted counties to keep its provisions in place. The Santa Barbara County courts have chosen to maintain the order for the time being.

In June, each department responded to a three-question survey. These questions were:

1. *What actions did you take in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic related to Criminal Justice?*
2. *What were the impacts of those actions?*
3. *Which of those actions do you recommend continuing beyond the pandemic?*

Actions and Impacts in Response to the COVID19 Pandemic

Court Services

The Courts closed all of their operations with the exception of in-custody arraignments and in-response to orders issued by the State Judicial Council, eliminated bail for a large number of offenses. Many of the persons ordered to be released due to this provision would previously have remained in custody.

In cooperation with the Sheriff's Office, Public Defender, District Attorney and General Services, the courts approved and instituted a system that permitted video arraignment. This process enabled inmates to move through the criminal justice system and, where appropriate, be released pending trial. It is estimated by the Public Defender's Office that at least 275 of their clients have been arraigned via Zoom.

Sheriff – Custody

The Sheriff's Custody Branch has arguably been the most significantly impacted of all the criminal justice partners. They have responded to this crisis with a high level of innovation that resulted in an unprecedented lowering of the inmate population and virtually positive COVID tests for inmates. As part of their disease prevention protocols, they began isolating all new bookings in the Inmate Reception Center (IRC) for the first 14 days of their incarceration.

The Custody Branch was instrumental in the implementation of virtual arraignment and court appearances. They developed a process to cite all new persons charged with crimes list with the Zero Bail Schedule (JCC Order #4).

They also moved the CAP release that is the number of days prior to the completion of a sentence that an inmate can be released early, from 21 to 30 days.

Table 1: Custody Monthly ADP in Main Jail/ MSF (March-June 2019-2020)

Month/ Average Daily Population (ADP)	Actual Number (Monthly Average)	% Change
March	964 / 827	-14.2%
April	954 / 617	-35.3%
May	889 / 556	-37.5%%
June	900 / 569	-36.8%

A data point that reflects activity, particularly as a function of arrest is admissions. Most admissions are a function of arrest by field law enforcement, either Sheriff or Police Departments. While these numbers do not reflect unique individuals (that is one person may account for several arrests), it is an interesting reflection of field activity.

Table 2: Custody Admission into the Jail (March-June 2019-2020)

Month / Data	Actual Numbers	Change in # of distinct actions	% Change
March	1038 / 714	-324	-31.2%
April	1099 / 467	-632	-57.5%
May	1080 / 575	-505	-46.8%
June	1002 / 574	-428	-42.7%

During the initial COVID outbreak, the use of electronic monitoring has held relatively stable. At the time of this report, data for March and April was not available. During the first week of May, the number of persons on Electronic Monitoring rose by **9.5% (67/74)**. However, it stayed flat during the first week of June and declined by **9.9%** compared to 2019.

In preparation for this report, arrests and citation data comparing March thru May for 2019 and 2020 was requested from the four city police departments. To date we have received data from the Lompoc, Santa Barbara and Santa Maria Police Departments.

Table 3: Arrest/Citation trends for Police Agencies (March-May 2019-2020)

Agency/Offense Type	Felonies	% Change	Misdemeanors	% Change	Citations	% Change
Santa Barbara PD	342 / 239	-30.1%	486 / 219	-54.9%	953 / 421	-55.8%
Santa Maria PD*	1580/ 435	-72.5%				
Lompoc PD	37 / 50	+26%	80 / 64	-20%	33 / 47	+42.4%

- * Santa Maria Felony/Misdemeanor/Citation data not disaggregated

Sheriff – Law Enforcement

Without question, the most obvious gateway for admission to the county jail is physical arrest. Prior to the COVID outbreak, all felonies and many misdemeanors were booked into the county jail by both Sheriff’s patrol deputies and city police officers. One of the most significant changes made by Sheriff’s law enforcement was greater utilization of the citation and complaint process as opposed to physical arrests.

In addition, the Sheriff’s Office suspended out of state extraditions, except for the most egregious of cases. Patrol deputies also strove to maximize the utilization of the CREDO47 Stabilization Center (i.e. the Sobering Center) and the Crisis Stabilization Unit in order to divert people away from the jail. (See Table 11.)

Table 4: Decrease in arrests/citations by Sheriff: March-May (2019-2020)

March – May	Arrests	% change	Cites	%change
Felonies	288 / 176	-38.9%	14 / 31	+121.4%
Misdemeanors	509 / 273	-46.4%	798 / 575	-27.9%
Totals	797 / 449	-43.7%	812 / 606	-25.4%

The impact of this decrease in enforcement efforts did result in an increase in overall reported Part I crime, the most dramatic of which was larceny/theft. The emphasis on reported crime is significant as both potential victims and mandated reporters have much more limited opportunities to report such activity under the stay-at-home orders. This latter may also account for the drop in burglaries due to more persons being at home during the day.

Table 5: Reported Crime data to Sheriff / March-May (2019-2020)

Offense/Year	2019	2020	% Change
Homicide	1	1	N/A
Rape	2	5	N/A
Robbery	8	12	+50%
Agg Assault	48	42	-12.5%
Burglary	111	82	-26.1%
Larceny/Theft	330	435	+31.8%
Auto Theft	17	20	+17.6%
Part I Total	517	596	+15.3%
Part II Total	2199	1503	-31.6%

Part I crimes are the most serious felonies. Part II crimes are considered lesser offenses, generally misdemeanors.

The Sheriff’s Office also temporarily closed the Isla Vista Foot Patrol station. This was done in response to the closing of in-person classes in March 2020 at UCSB, which resulted in a substantial reduction to the population in Isla Vista. Patrol deputies responded to calls for service from Goleta and patrolled at random. Over time, the Sheriff’s Office had to bring back a portion of its IVFP personnel to cover increased calls for service during weekend nights, but the majority are still assigned elsewhere. It is worth noting that UCPD has also pulled back from Isla Vista.

While dispatch data does not report the number of calls for service Isla Vista apart from the rest of the unincorporated county, it does report for Goleta, as they are a contract city. There has been a significant drop in calls-for-service at the Goleta Station and throughout the entire county.

Table 6: Calls for Service/Countywide & Goleta (March-May 2019-2020)

CFS / Year	CFS County	% Change	CFS Goleta	% Change
Total	16597 / 11860	-28.5%	3954 / 3536	-10.6%

Probation

Prior to the COVID outbreak, pre-trial assessment and supervision was transferred from the courts to the Probation department. Consequently, the role of the Probation department in facilitating the release of the maximum number inmates from the county jail while ensuring public safety was critical. The Probation department reviewed over 700 county jail inmates, many with multiple cases to determine their court status. Then completed ex-parte reports with release recommendations on those with lower VPRAI (*Virginia Pretrial Risk Assessment Instrument*) risk scores. Suitable inmates were released from jail on their own recognizance (OR) or on Pretrial Supervised Release. Discharge planning was done in partnership with all Criminal Justice Stakeholders

The Probation Department implemented a shared e-mail network to address Probation recommendations related to sentencing and/or pre-trial release. Network included DA, PD and local defense Bar. The use of this e-mail group, in close collaboration with the defense bar, facilitated clients signing documents to expedite their cases. This helped overcome the issue of attorney’s not having easy access to their clients.

Probation also participated in the Virtual Arraignment process with Sheriff and Court Services.

During the initial stages of zero bail jail releases, Probation partnered with EOC and General Services to facilitate Project Room Key. This state-funded program sought to utilize temporary hotel placements for 18 individuals released from the jail without an immediate housing plan in place. All of these individuals have transitioned to other housing options.

Table 7: Probation Department Data Points (March-May 2019-2020)

Data Point/Change	2019-2020 actual	2019-2020 % change
Supervised Pre-Trial Release	192 / 298	+55%
Persons on GPS Monitoring (pre-trial/month average)	24.7 / 66/7	+170%
SM Juvenile Hall (ADP)	40.5 / 31.8	-21.5%
LPBC	16.3 / 14.3	-12.3%

Public Defender

As previously mentioned, the Public Defender launched the concept of Holistic Defense. This program has enormous potential to reduce recidivism.

The Public Defender worked together with the DA's Office to expedite transmission of discovery documents via electronic means. This was an area of significant concern prior to the COVID Outbreak. This problem is one of three strategic plan areas associated with the sixth Amendment grant from BJA, administered through the Center for Court Innovation. This area needs to receive significant attention in anticipation of the reopening of the courts.

The Public Defender also participated in remote (virtual) meetings with clients. However, they reported significant problems in implementing this, in terms of both technology and the availability of physical space. The PD's Office also launched a significant media campaign concerning court closures and the attendant confusion for individual clients. This effort included both Spanish and Mixteco outreach.

District Attorney

The District Attorney's Office participated in the development of the virtual arraignment & hearing process. They were also involved in the expedited discovery process. Specifically, the office agreed to provide the Public Defender's Office with documents relevant to arraignment proceedings via electronic discovery. This was done before court in the South County and during court in the North County.

Due to the fact that the courts were closed for operation during the reporting period, and continue to remain closed, with the exception of in-custody arraignments), the District Attorney's Office was put into a holding pattern from the perspective of moving the day-to-day operations of the county's criminal justice process. The office did provide significant leadership in continuing to advocate for victims of domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse, all crimes whose victims are currently deprived of the traditional avenues for seeking assistance.

Table 8: District Attorney's Data Points (March-May 2019-2020)

Data Point/Activity	Total Number	% Change
Total Reports Submitted	4534 / 3184	-29.8%
In-Custody Reports	1067 / 657	-38.4%
Misdemeanor Reports	3704 / 2461	-33.6%
Child Abuse*	28 / 24	-14.3%
Child Sex Abuse*	37 / 17	-54.1%
SARTS/CALM* (Child Forensic Interviews)	40 / 21	-47.5%
Sexual Assaults	35 / 36	+2.8%

**CALM was not doing forensic interviews up until June due to COVID and Child Abuse Reporting is down during COVID due to lack of mandated reporters.*

Law enforcement activity declined during the reporting period in terms of arrests and citations. However, there are still a number of cited persons who cases are scheduled to come back before the court when the court processes resume. The District Attorney estimates that there are at least 1700 pending cases with future court dates as yet undetermined. One of the more interesting data points is the estimated number of persons who will Fail to Appear (FTA) for their court dates with a subsequent impact on the DA’s Office and the jail population.

Table 9: Citations Pending Court Date (March-May 2019-2020)

Month/ Number	Actual number of cites	Percentage Change
March	657 / 796	+21.2%
April	805 / 678	-15.8%
May	783 / 328	-58.1%
Total	2245 / 1802	-19.7%

Table 10: Citations resulting in Bench Warrants (March-May 2019-2020)

Month/Number	Warrants Issued	% of Total (Table 9 2019)
March	164 / 67	24.9%
April	210 / 0	26%
May	194 / 0	24.7%
Total	568 / 67	25.3%

Behavioral Wellness

Before the COVID outbreak, the focus on population control/reduction efforts related to the county jail focused on finding alternative locations for the placement of persons suffering from mental illness who had been arrested. This effort continued during the COVID Response, but with a renewed intensity.

Behavioral Wellness made some significant adjustments in an effort to respond appropriately to COVID related issues. BeWell coordinated with the Sheriff’s Custody staff to do mental health assessments via telephone and later via virtual means (e.g. Zoom). Their ability to do this was limited by federal reimbursement policies until those policies were changed. This allowed for such services to be delivered remotely without a corresponding loss of revenue. BeWell will conduct a review as to the efficacy of such remote service delivery.

Behavioral Wellness also made greater use of the CREDO47 Center (i.e. the Sobering Center) as well as the Crisis Stabilization Unit to accommodate those persons transitioning from jail to the community. These facilities also served as an alternative to jail for law enforcement personnel. They also expanded the outreach of the CREDO47 unit to accommodate Officers from the Santa Barbara Police Department.

Table 11: Behavioral Wellness Data Points (March-June 2020)

Data Points	Numbers actual	% Change (2019-2020)
Persons treated at CREDO47	149	Site not active in 2019
Co-Response Calls for Service	1016 (10 arrests thru May)	Team not active in 2019
ADP at the PHF	15.1 /16 beds available	2019 not available

Summation

Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the criminal justice departments (Sheriff, District Attorney, Probation and the Public Defender) initiated a number of response protocols to mitigate the impact of the virus. One of the most significant results of these responses was the lowering of the Average Daily Population (ADP) by close to 37%. This figure has held constant since mid-March. Additionally, the number of admissions, a good indicator of field activity, dropped dramatically starting in mid-March with the implementation of the stay at home orders.

The data compiled for this report make clear that the reduction in the jail population occurred primarily because of two factors:

1. A dramatic decrease in the number of physical arrests in the field
2. The dramatic increase in the number of persons being released on pre-trial supervision, with and without electronic monitoring
3. The increase, though slight, in the option of taking arrestees to locations other than jail (e.g. the CREDO47 center, Crisis Stabilization, etc.)

The ADP reduction produced by the COVID response protocols has been clear and significant. What is less clear is the long-term public safety impacts of this reduction to the jail population. While Part I crime has risen slightly, there are several areas in which it is not clear whether the lower rate of occurrence or the lack of statistical data represents a true downward trend. It may reflect a dynamic in which victims may have been unable to report offenses due to the stay-at-home orders. The Sheriff’s Office reported that the re-arrest rate for persons initially released as part of the various criminal justice protocols is approximately 11% for the entire county through June.

Until the court system, and society as a whole, is able to resume activities at the levels seen Pre-COVID, it will be difficult to fully assess the impact of the steps that were taken and make some decisions as to which responses should become aspects of normal operations. Appendix A in this paper lays out a number of potential steps, both those occurring in response to COVID as well as some additional steps that might contribute to the lowering of the ADP.

All of the recommendations described in Appendix A should become part of the ongoing agenda for one or more of the criminal justice workgroups.

Appendix A: Potential Future Actions

Recommended Continued Actions

1. Continue the virtual court hearings and arraignments. Expand telephonic and video access to clients who are in custody by all criminal justice stakeholders. (Sheriff-Custody/ Probation/Public Defender)
2. Continue and enhance the program of collaborative jail discharging (Probation/Public Defender)
3. Expand the use of pre-trial supervision, absent community safety concerns (Probation / Sheriff-Custody)
4. Create a bail-modification working group to make recommendations concerning the modifications of the bail-schedule based on the COVID response experience with a goal of making bail less restrictive. (All)
5. Through a countywide law enforcement committee, continue the use of the citations in lieu of physical arrest when appropriate. Conduct a review of the 1700 pending citations to make recommendations as to which sections are appropriate to continue issuing citations. (DA/Sheriff)
6. Make greater use of electronic monitoring and other alternative sentencing options (Sheriff/Probation)
7. Continue implementation of the KPMG recommendations as appropriate. (All)

Recommended New Actions

8. Strengthen the capacity of the Criminal Justice Data Committee with the addition of dedicated staff to ensure the involvement of all Criminal Justice partners including Behavioral Wellness. (Probation)
9. Expand the capacity for electronically signing court documents
10. Develop an MOU between the criminal justice partners to create and operate an electronic cloud-based discovery receptacle.
11. Develop a strategic action plan for Stepping Up with clearly defined objectives.
12. Make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on the action plan developed in collaboration with the Center for Court Innovation, with a timeline for implementation.
13. Consider directing a review of criminal records relative to possession of cannabis with strong consideration to expunging such records where appropriate.

14. Review all out of custody complaints for to determine eligibility for diversion under the CREDO 47 Diversion eligibility. (District Attorney/Public Defender)

15. Conduct a review of 5-year probation terms to determine suitable candidates for early termination of probation (Probation/District Attorney)

Note: All of these recommendations will require ongoing collaboration among the Criminal Justice Partners. They are several committees and workgroups that require the partners to meet regularly. These recommendations should become part of the ongoing agenda. These groups include:

- Community Corrections Partnership (workgroup)
- Criminal Justice Data Committee
- Criminal Justice Planning Group (Oversees the Center for Court Innovation action plan)
- Stepping Up
- Grant Oversight Committee

Appendix B: Metric Tables (March- May; 2019 / 2020)

- 1. Average Daily Population (ADP) in the county jail**
- 2. Number of Admissions into the county jail**
- 3. Arrest and Citation Trends by outside police agencies**
- 4. Arrest and Citation trends by Sheriff's Law Enforcement Branch**
- 5. Crime Data reported to the Sheriff's Office (includes contract cities)**
- 6. Calls for Service, countywide and Goleta**
- 7. Probation Department Data Points**
- 8. District Attorney Data Points**
- 9. Criminal Citations Pending Court Dates**
- 10. Criminal Citations resulting in Bench Warrants**
- 11. Behavioral Wellness Data Points**