



# Recidivism at the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center, 2019- 2023

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## Introduction

Recidivism remains a fundamental concept in criminal justice research and policy (National Institute of Justice, 2024). Researchers typically define recidivism as an arrest or reincarceration of a released inmate, and correctional administrators often link it to concerns about public safety and jail population management. The phenomenon of inmates cycling repeatedly through correctional facilities places a significant burden on criminal justice systems, as repeat offenders have been estimated to be responsible for a substantial proportion of all offenses committed in any given year (Stolzenberg et al., 2024).

Although recidivism is a foundational concept in criminology, researchers face considerable challenges in studying it, regardless of how it is measured. As Alper et al. (2018) noted, measuring recidivism requires three elements: a starting event, a measure of failure, and a follow-up period. Each measure of failure carries inherent limitations, and no single measure can capture all criminal behavior by a released inmate. For example, using a new booking as the measure of failure fails to account for arrests that do not result in bookings, crimes that do not lead to arrests, crimes that result only in informal sanctions such as warnings, and crimes that go unreported entirely.

More recent critiques have focused on the limitations of the binary “fail-no fail” classification traditionally used to categorize individuals as recidivists. Scholars who question the traditional binary approach to measuring recidivism suggest that more nuanced indicators may provide additional insight when measured or reported alongside the binary measure, including alternative operationalizations that capture crime frequency or severity (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022). These critics have also recommended developing measures of success, such as educational attainment, employment, housing, and personal well-being outcomes, and considering group inequalities in recidivism patterns (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022). Despite these measurement limitations, recidivism remains a valuable metric for indicating whether and how quickly inmates return to custody.

In this report, we examine patterns of recidivism among 64,754 unique inmates booked into the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) between 2019 and 2023. We first present overall booking counts across this period, along with booking volume per inmate and as a proportion of total bookings. We then describe the demographic composition of inmates released from the MDC during our study period and present the highest charges associated with each inmate. Finally, we analyze recidivism rates among inmates released annually from 2019 to 2023, using the release date as the starting event, a return to MDC custody as the measure of failure, and follow-up periods ranging from one to five years.

## Bookings per Inmate per Year

We tallied annual bookings by inmate to identify whether an inmate had one, two, three, or four or more bookings per calendar year. As overall booking volume declined, the share of inmates with a single booking per year increased, whereas the share with multiple bookings decreased. The proportion of inmates with one booking per year ranged from 71.3% in 2019, when total bookings peaked, to 78.6% in 2021, when total bookings were at their lowest.

The percentage of inmates with two bookings per year showed less variation, ranging from 16.9% in 2019 to 13.9% in 2021. Inmates with three bookings per year followed a similar pattern, declining from 6.7% in 2019 to 4.5% in 2021, as did inmates with four or more bookings per year, decreasing from 5.1% in 2019 to 3.1% in 2021.

Although inmates with multiple bookings constituted a minority of the inmate population, they accounted for a substantial share of total annual bookings. Inmates with two bookings per year

contributed between 22.6% of all bookings in 2019 and 20.6% in 2021. Inmates with three or more bookings contributed the largest share in 2019 (29.8%) and the smallest in 2021 (20.9%). Overall, inmates with more than one booking per year generated between 41.5% (2021) and 52.4% (2019) of all bookings, while inmates with only one booking generated between 47.6% (2019) and 58.5% (2021).

Table 1. Annual Bookings per Inmate per Year

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total Bookings</b>	25,405	17,733	14,441	15,325	17,566
<b>Bookings per Inmate per Year</b>					
1 Booking	71.3%	75.5%	78.6%	76.5%	73.9%
2 Bookings	16.9%	15.2%	13.9%	15.0%	15.9%
3 Bookings	6.7%	5.2%	4.5%	4.6%	5.9%
4 or More Bookings	5.1%	4.1%	3.1%	3.9%	4.3%
<b>Proportion of Annual Bookings by Bookings per Year</b>					
Inmates with 1 Booking	47.6%	53.5%	58.5%	55.1%	51.6%
Inmates with 2 Bookings	22.6%	21.5%	20.6%	21.6%	22.2%
Inmates with 3 Bookings	13.4%	11.0%	10.1%	10.0%	12.3%
Inmates with 4 or More Bookings	16.4%	14.0%	10.8%	13.3%	14.0%

The number of bookings per inmate per year illustrates that inmates with one booking per year generally account for more than half of all bookings. Inmates with multiple bookings per year accounted for a significant proportion of bookings during the study period.

### Demographics of the Released Population

The number of unique inmates released from the MDC varied considerably between 2019 and 2023. In 2019, 17,171 inmates were released from the MDC. This figure decreased by 24.0% to 13,051 in 2020, followed by an additional 16.2% decrease in 2021. Releases then increased slightly in 2022 (1.4%) and more substantially in 2023 (12.6%). The difference in the number of releases by year was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 [4, N = 64,754] = 1631.6, p < .01$ ). However, Cramer's V, which measures the strength of association between variables, was only 0.08, indicating a very weak association. In other words, while the observed differences were unlikely to have occurred by chance alone, the practical magnitude of these differences was minimal and may have been detected only due to the large sample size.

The demographic composition of inmates released from the MDC remained relatively stable throughout the study period (see Table 2). From 2019 to 2023, we observed a minor decrease in the proportion of released inmates aged 26 or younger, accompanied by corresponding slight increases in the proportion of inmates aged 27 to 39 and those aged 40 or older. The proportion of male inmates increased slightly, while the proportion of female inmates decreased. We also observed a slight decrease in the proportion of inmates identified as Hispanic and an increase in the proportion identified as "Other." Changes among White, Native American, and Black inmates were similarly minor.

**Table 2. Demographics of Released Inmates, 2019-2023**

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Releases	17,171	13,051	10,941	11,095	12,496
<b>Age at Release</b>					
26 or younger	25.1%	24.5%	24.1%	22.1%	21.4%
27 to 39	45.2%	44.9%	46.9%	47.5%	46.2%
40 or older	29.7%	30.5%	29.1%	30.4%	32.4%
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	72.6%	74.1%	74.7%	74.0%	74.4%
Female	27.4%	25.9%	25.3%	26.0%	25.6%
<b>Race/Hispanic Origin</b>					
Hispanic	47.1%	47.7%	47.7%	46.3%	43.7%
White	32.8%	31.2%	30.5%	32.6%	33.0%
Native American	10.1%	10.3%	10.8%	10.4%	10.1%
Black	6.5%	6.9%	7.1%	6.7%	6.9%
Other	3.5%	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	6.3%

### Charges of the Released Population

In addition to demographic information, we collected charge data for each released individual, including the booking charge level (e.g., first-degree felony [F1], second-degree felony [F2]) and the charge category (e.g., homicide, robbery, sexual offenses). We assigned each inmate the highest charge level based on statutory severity and the highest charge category based on offense seriousness. These two classifications did not always correspond to the same charge. For example, if an inmate was charged with armed robbery (an F2 offense) and drug trafficking (an F1 offense), the F1 drug trafficking charge would be classified as the highest charge level; however, the armed robbery, as a violent offense, would be classified as the highest charge category.

From 2019 to 2023, we observed a notable increase in the proportion of released inmates with felony charges, particularly for F1, F3, and F4 felonies (see Table 3). In 2019, 30.5% of released inmates had a felony as their highest booking charge; this proportion increased each year, reaching 43.5% in 2023. Corresponding decreases occurred in misdemeanor warrants, remands, and retakes, and, to a lesser degree, in misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor charges.

Across all felony categories, year-over-year increases were statistically significant. F1 releases increased significantly each year, except between 2021 and 2022, while felony probation violations decreased significantly between 2022 and 2023. Misdemeanor charges decreased significantly from 2019 to 2020 and from 2021 to 2022. However, Cramer's V was 0.06, indicating a very weak association between charge level and year. While the observed differences were statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance, they were small in magnitude. These patterns suggest a modest shift toward booking individuals with more serious offenses, though other factors likely contributed to these changes as well.

**Table 3. Charge by Level at Release, 2019-2023**

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Releases	17,171	13,051	10,941	11,095	12,496
All Felonies	30.5%	34.5%	36.4%	40.7%	43.5%
F1	0.5%	0.4%	0.9%	1.0%	1.4%
F2	4.1%	4.3%	3.9%	3.7%	4.0%
F3	5.9%	6.5%	7.4%	8.2%	8.5%
F4	20.1%	23.4%	24.1%	27.8%	29.6%
Misdemeanor	29.6%	28.4%	30.4%	27.8%	27.8%
Petty Misdemeanor	2.8%	2.6%	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%
Parole Violation	2.0%	1.6%	2.8%	2.5%	2.0%
Felony Probation Violation	6.5%	7.5%	8.2%	8.6%	6.8%
Felony Warrant, Remand, Retake	10.6%	10.6%	8.7%	9.5%	10.5%
Misdemeanor Probation Violation	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	0.6%
Misdemeanor Warrant, Remand, Retake	16.5%	13.6%	10.7%	7.8%	6.3%
Other (Federal or Out of County Hold, Here for Court, Not a Charge, or Unknown)	0.9%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%

For felony, misdemeanor, and petty misdemeanor charges, we assigned a category based on an internally developed hierarchy to identify the most serious charge type (see Table 4). Our hierarchy ranks violent offenses as the most serious, followed by drug offenses, property offenses, DWIs, and other offenses.

Over the study period, the proportion of inmates released with violent charges as their most serious offense increased from 21.7% in 2019 to 26.4% in 2023. Several violent offense categories showed small increases, including homicide (0.3% to 1.0%), robbery (0.8% to 1.2%), assault or battery (16.7% to 19.2%), and other violent offenses (1.6% to 2.6%). Kidnapping charges increased by 0.4 percentage points since 2019. Sexual offenses remained relatively stable at approximately 0.3% in most years, with a slight 0.1 percentage point increase in 2022. The proportion of inmates released with drug-related offenses as their most serious charge also increased, rising from 10.3% in 2019 to 15.7% in 2023. Property offenses similarly increased from 7.0% to 10.2% over the same period. DWI charges, as the most serious offense, increased by less than half a percentage point from 2019 to 2023. The remaining charge categories, which included weapons, judicial interference, and public order offenses, decreased from 8.5% to 5.2%.

**Table 4. Hierarchy of Charges by Category at Release, 2019-2023**

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Releases	17,171	13,051	10,941	11,095	12,496
Violent	21.7%	25.4%	26.4%	25.4%	26.4%
Homicide (Any Death)	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%
Kidnapping	2.1%	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%
Robbery (Any)	0.8%	1.0%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Sexual Offenses	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Assault or Battery	16.7%	20.4%	20.5%	18.9%	19.2%
Other Violent Offenses	1.6%	1.4%	2.0%	2.4%	2.6%
Drug Offenses	10.3%	10.6%	11.4%	12.1%	15.7%
Property Offenses	7.0%	7.0%	8.3%	11.8%	10.2%
DWI	15.5%	12.9%	17.3%	15.9%	15.8%
Weapons, Judicial Interference, Public Order, Other, Unknown	8.5%	9.5%	5.5%	5.4%	5.2%
Not a Charge (Parole or Probation Violation, Warrant, Remand)	37.0%	34.6%	31.1%	29.4%	26.5%

## Recidivism

We calculated monthly recidivism rates for inmates released from 2019 to 2023 (see Table 5). These rates reflect the percentage of inmates who returned to custody during each specific time interval, not cumulative percentages. For example, the second-year recidivism rate captures inmates who returned to custody during months 13 through 24 following release, excluding those who had already returned during the first year. As shown in Table 5, most recidivism occurs within a year of release, particularly in the months immediately following release. Among inmates released in 2019, 9.3% were booked into MDC within one month of release, representing nearly one in four returning inmates that year. Recidivism rates declined from 2019 through 2021, then increased in subsequent years.

The one-month recidivism rate decreased from 9.3% for inmates released in 2019 to 7.3% in 2020, 5.2% in 2021, and 5.7% in 2022, before increasing to 6.5% in 2023. One-year recidivism rates followed a similar pattern. Among inmates released in 2019, 39.1% returned to custody within one year. This rate decreased to approximately 34% for inmates released in 2020 and 2021, then increased to 37.5% in 2022 and 40.2% in 2023. The one-year recidivism rate for inmates released in 2023 was slightly higher than in 2019 (40.2% vs. 39.1%), although the one-month rate remained lower (6.5% vs. 9.3%).

Among inmates who did not return during the first year, recidivism during the second year increased across cohorts, rising from 7.7% for inmates released in 2019 to 10.2% in 2020, 11.6% in 2021, and 11.9% in 2022. Third-year recidivism rates among those still at risk increased from 4.1% in the 2019 cohort to 5.9% in the 2020 cohort and to 6.2% in the 2021 cohort. Fourth-year recidivism increased from 2.9% for inmates released in 2019 to 4.0% for those released in 2020. Fifth-year recidivism was 2.4% for the 2019 cohort. Over the five-year follow-up period, 56.2% of inmates released in 2019 returned to custody, whereas 43.8% did not.

Table 5. Recidivism by Month and Year, 2019 to 2023

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Releases	17,171	13,051	10,941	11,095	12,496
<b>Return to Custody by Month</b>					
Month 1	9.3%	7.3%	5.2%	5.7%	6.5%
Month 2	6.4%	5.4%	5.2%	6.1%	6.5%
Month 3	5.0%	3.9%	4.4%	4.6%	5.1%
Month 4	3.7%	3.1%	3.1%	3.7%	3.9%
Month 5	3.0%	2.7%	2.7%	3.5%	3.5%
Month 6	2.7%	2.4%	2.4%	2.8%	2.8%
Month 7	2.1%	2.2%	2.2%	2.4%	2.5%
Month 8	1.6%	1.7%	2.3%	2.1%	2.4%
Month 9	1.5%	1.7%	1.8%	1.6%	2.3%
Month 10	1.3%	1.4%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Month 11	1.1%	1.2%	1.8%	1.6%	1.5%
Month 12	1.2%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%
<b>Return to Custody by Year</b>					
Year 1	39.1%	34.2%	34.0%	37.5%	40.2%
Year 2	7.7%	10.2%	11.6%	11.9%	--
Year 3	4.1%	5.9%	6.2%	--	--
Year 4	2.9%	4.0%	--	--	--
Year 5	2.4%	--	--	--	--
New Booking/Recidivism	56.2%	54.3%	51.8%	49.3%	40.2%
No Subsequent Bookings	43.8%	45.7%	48.2%	50.7%	59.8%

## Recidivism Charge

We tracked recidivism for up to five years following release, with the length of follow-up varying by release year (five years for 2019, four years for 2020, three years for 2021, two years for 2022, and one year for 2023)<sup>1</sup>. Of the 64,754 released inmates, 31,833 (49.2%) had no subsequent booking. The remaining inmates returned to custody at least once. We categorized these bookings using the same charge levels and categories applied to the release charges.

F4 felonies accounted for just over one in four recidivism bookings (26.9%; n = 8,868). Higher level felonies comprised progressively smaller proportions of bookings: 6.2% for F3 felonies, 3.6% for F2 felonies, and 0.9% for F1 felonies. Felony warrants, remands, and retakes (18.8%; n = 6,193) and misdemeanors (17.5%; n = 5,749) also accounted for notable proportions of bookings, as did felony probation violations (11.2%; n = 3,688) and misdemeanor warrants, remands, and retakes (9.7%; n = 3,204). The remaining bookings consisted of petty misdemeanors (2.2%; n = 734), parole violations (1.1%; n = 368), misdemeanor probation violations (1.0%; n = 334), and other charges (0.8%; n = 263). Overall, F4 felonies and misdemeanors together accounted for 44.4% (n = 14,617) of recidivism bookings.

The proportion of F1 offenses varied from 0.5% (n = 45) to 1.1% (n = 61 and n = 58, respectively), peaking in 2021 and 2022. F2 offenses remained relatively steady across years, varying by less than one percentage point (ranging from n = 179 in 2022 to n = 318 in 2019). F3 felonies showed modest variation, ranging from a low of 5.4% (n = 522) to a high of 7.0% (n = 499 and n = 399, respectively). F4 offenses, the most common felony type, increased year over year from 22.9% (n = 2,209) in 2019 to 31.2% (n = 1,569) in 2023. Felony probation violations and felony warrants, remands, and retakes generally increased between 2019 and 2023, whereas

<sup>1</sup> We measured recidivism using the first booking after release from MDC custody; subsequent bookings were not included in this analysis.

parole violations, petty misdemeanors, misdemeanor probation violations, misdemeanor warrants, remands, and retakes, and misdemeanors typically decreased during the same period.

**Table 6. Recidivism Type by Charge Level and Year**

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	All
Years of Exposure	5 Years	4 Years	3 Years	2 Years	1 Year	Years
All Felonies	32.1%	38.3%	39.1%	41.4%	41.6%	37.6%
F1	0.5%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%
F2	3.3%	3.9%	3.9%	3.3%	3.7%	3.6%
F3	5.4%	7.0%	7.0%	6.3%	5.7%	6.2%
F4	22.9%	26.4%	27.1%	30.7%	31.2%	26.9%
Misdemeanor	18.4%	18.2%	17.9%	16.6%	15.0%	17.5%
Petty Misdemeanor	2.4%	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%	2.2%
Parole Violation	1.1%	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%	0.3%	1.1%
Felony Probation Violation	10.1%	9.8%	13.8%	11.8%	11.6%	11.2%
Felony Warrant / Remand / Retake	18.4%	17.0%	15.5%	21.1%	23.4%	18.8%
Misdemeanor Probation Violation	1.0%	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%	0.7%	1.0%
Misdemeanor Warrant / Remand / Retake	14.9%	11.1%	8.5%	4.7%	4.6%	9.7%
Other (Federal or Out of County Hold, Here for Court, Not a Charge, or Unknown)	1.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.8%

For the 18,873 recidivism bookings classified as felonies, misdemeanors, or petty misdemeanors (57.3% of the 32,921 total bookings), we assigned a charge category. Of these bookings, just under one in five involved a violent charge (18.8%), with assault or battery charges comprising the largest share (14.0%). Drug charges accounted for 14.7% of bookings, while property offenses accounted for 10.9%. DWI bookings comprised 6.7% of all categorized bookings, and the remaining 6.3% consisted of weapons, judicial interference, public order, and other charges. Overall, violent, drug, and property offenses represented the majority of categorized bookings.

Recidivism for violent offenses varied from 16.3% to 21.0% across the study period (see Table 7). Assault or battery was the most common violent offense category, ranging from 11.4% to 15.8% between 2019 and 2023. Sexual offenses were the least common category, decreasing from 0.2% in 2019 to 0.1% in 2023. Weapons, judicial interference, public order, and other offense categories generally decreased year over year, with a slight increase from 2022 to 2023. Drug offenses increased every year except 2021, nearly doubling from 11.6% in 2019 to 20.5% in 2023. DWI and property offenses showed inconsistent trends between 2019 and 2023, with lower rates in 2019 followed by modest increases and subsequent decreases. The remaining returns to custody were not classified by charge category; these included bookings involving federal holds or U.S. Marshals Service holds, emergency mental health evaluations, parole or probation violations, and warrants.

**Table 7. Recidivism by Category by Year**

Release Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Years of Exposure	5 Years	4 Years	3 Years	2 Years	1 Year	Years
Violent	17.8%	21.0%	20.4%	18.2%	16.3%	18.8%
Homicide (Any Death)	0.2%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%
Kidnapping	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%
Robbery (Any)	0.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Sexual Offenses	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Assault or Battery	13.7%	15.8%	15.3%	13.5%	11.4%	14.0%
Other Violent Offenses	1.3%	1.5%	1.6%	1.2%	1.6%	1.4%
Drug Offenses	11.6%	14.0%	13.5%	16.6%	20.5%	14.7%
Property Offenses	8.6%	9.7%	12.1%	14.2%	11.8%	10.9%
DWI	6.6%	7.0%	8.1%	6.4%	5.2%	6.7%
Weapons, Judicial Interference, Public Order, Other, Unknown	8.3%	6.8%	5.2%	4.7%	4.9%	6.3%
Not a Charge (Parole or Probation Violation, Warrant, Remand)	47.1%	41.4%	40.7%	39.9%	41.2%	42.7%

### Charge Comparisons, Year 1

In the first year following release from the MDC, between 34.0% and 40.2% of inmates were booked back into custody, depending on the year of release. Among all released inmates (n = 64,754), 67.8% (n = 43,897) had a felony, misdemeanor, or petty misdemeanor as their highest charge at release, enabling comparison of charge severity between release and subsequent booking. Research suggests that increases in charge severity are relatively rare, though such increases play a notable role in New Mexico legislative decisions (Moore et al., 2023).

Additionally, the severity of offending generally decreases with age, suggesting that charge severity should generally decline over time within our sample (Liu et al., 2011). To examine changes in charge severity, we compared each inmate’s release charge to their new booking charge and assigned one of five categories:

- Lower Level: the new charge was less severe than the release charge
- Same Level: the new charge was the same severity as the release charge
- Higher Level: the new charge was more severe than the release charge
- Not a Charge: the new booking was for a parole or probation violation, warrant, remand, or similar non-charge reason
- No Subsequent Booking: the inmate was not booked back into the MDC

Inmates released with an F1 felony or a misdemeanor had the lowest likelihood of returning to custody within the first year: 74.9% of F1 felons and 76.5% of misdemeanants had no new bookings. Inmates released with F2 or F3 felonies and petty misdemeanors had similar proportions, with no new bookings. Inmates with an F4 felony as their initial charge were the most likely to return to custody; only 50.7% had no subsequent booking within the first year. Overall, 64.2% of released inmates were not rebooked into the MDC within 1 year.

Among inmates who returned to custody, the most common reason was a non-charge booking, such as parole or probation violation or warrant (see Table 7). However, the proportion returning on non-charge bookings varied by release charge level, ranging from 7.6% for misdemeanor releases to 23.2% for F4 felony releases. Inmates released on petty misdemeanor charges had the highest rate of return on a more severe charge (22.4%), while inmates released with an F2 felony had the lowest (0.3%). Similar variation occurred for inmates returning with a less severe charge (ranging from 0.5% for misdemeanants to 15.2% for

F2 felons) and for inmates returning at the same charge severity (ranging from 1.9% for petty misdemeanants to 15.6% for F4 felons).

Overall, 64.2% (n = 28,199) of inmates had no subsequent booking in the first year following release. Among those who did return, the most common outcome was a non-charge booking (15.1%; n = 6,628). When inmates returned on a new charge, they most often returned at the same severity level (10.2%; n = 4,480), followed by a higher severity level (5.5%; n = 2,425) and a lower severity level (4.9%; n = 2,165). These analyses were based on a sample of 43,897 inmates measured at their first year of release, regardless of cohort. A chi-square test indicated statistically significant differences between release charge level and return to custody level ( $\chi^2$  [20, N = 43,897] = 6,645.5, p < .01). However, Cramer's V was 0.195, indicating a weak association between these variables.

**Table 7. Release and New Charge Level Comparison, Year 1**

	Lower Level	Same Level	Higher Level	Not a Charge	No Subsequent Booking
F1 (n = 529)	10.6%	3.0%	N/A	11.5%	74.9%
F2 (n = 2,597)	15.2%	4.0%	0.3%	19.4%	61.0%
F3 (n = 4,634)	14.7%	4.5%	2.2%	16.3%	62.3%
F4 (n = 15,914)	5.9%	15.6%	4.6%	23.2%	50.7%
Misdemeanor (n = 18,678)	0.5%	8.8%	6.6%	7.6%	76.5%
Petty Misdemeanor (n = 1,545)	N/A	1.9%	22.4%	13.1%	62.5%
Total (n = 43,897)	4.9%	10.2%	5.5%	15.1%	64.2%

We conducted a similar analysis comparing charge categories between release and subsequent booking. Each inmate's release charge category was compared to their new booking charge category and assigned one of five classifications:

1. Lower Category: The new charge was in a less severe category than the release charge
2. Same Category: The new charge was in the same category as the release charge
3. Higher Category: The new charge was in a more serious category than the release charge
4. Not a Charge: The new booking was for a parole or probation violation, warrant, remand, or similar non-charge reason
5. No Subsequent Booking: The inmate was not booked back into the MDC

Inmates released with a DWI charge had the fewest returns to custody, with 83.4% having no subsequent bookings in the year following release (see Table 8). Approximately 66.7% of inmates with violent or public order charges also had no subsequent bookings within the first year. Inmates released with drug or property offenses had the lowest rates of no subsequent bookings, at 47.0% and 44.1%, respectively.

Among inmates who returned to custody, the most common reason was a non-charge booking, such as a parole or probation violation or warrant. However, the proportion returning on non-charge bookings varied considerably by release charge category, ranging from 5.9% for DWI releases to 25.6% for drug releases. Returns on higher-category charges occurred least often for drug releases (4.1%) and DWI releases (3.4%), and most often for property releases (15.3%) and public order releases (14.6%). Returns on lower-category charges occurred most often for violent releases (8.2%) and drug releases (9.1%), and least often for property releases (3.1%) and DWI releases (1.4%). The highest rates of return in the same category were observed for drug offenses (14.1%), property offenses (12.8%), and violent offenses (11.7%).

Overall, most inmates had no subsequent bookings within the first year following release. Among those who returned, the most common outcome was a non-charge booking (15.1%; n = 6,628), accounting for 42.2% of all inmates who returned to custody. The next most common outcome was a return in the same charge category (10.4%; n = 4,566), followed by a return in a lower category (5.3%; n = 2,179) and a return in a higher category (5.0%; n = 2,325). Within the non-charge category, felony warrants accounted for many bookings (40.4%), and misdemeanor warrants accounted for 20.7%. The remaining non-charge bookings consisted of felony probation violations (26.2%), felony remands or retakes (3.7%), parole violations (2.6%), misdemeanor probation violations (2.4%), misdemeanor remands or retakes (2.1%), temporary detention orders (1.3%), limited release or domestic violence arrests (0.3%), and federal or U.S. Marshals Service holds (0.2%).

**Table 8. Release and New Charge Category Comparison, Year 1**

	Lower Category	Same Category	Higher Category	Not a Charge	No Subsequent Booking
Violent	8.2%	11.7%	N/A	13.4%	66.7%
Drug	9.1%	14.1%	4.1%	25.6%	47.0%
Property	3.1%	12.8%	15.3%	24.7%	44.1%
DWI	1.4%	6.1%	3.4%	5.9%	83.4%
Public Order / Other / Unknown Charge	N/A	6.1%	14.6%	11.5%	67.8%
Total	5.3%	10.4%	5.0%	15.1%	64.2%

## Conclusion

From 2019 to 2023, 64,754 unique inmates were released from the MDC. During the first year following release, 37.2% of these inmates returned to custody. Among inmates released from 2019 to 2022, an additional 10.0% returned during the second year. The annual recidivism rate decreased to 5.3% in the third year following release, 3.4% in the fourth year, and 2.4% in the fifth year. Over the five-year period, the most common booking charges were F4 felonies (26.9%; n = 8,868), followed by felony warrants and remands (18.8%; n = 6,193), and misdemeanors (17.5%; n = 5,749). By category, 42.7% (n = 13,682) of bookings were for non-charge cases such as parole or probation violations. An additional 18.8% (n = 6,181) were for violent charges, primarily assault or battery. Drug offenses accounted for 14.7% (n = 4,826) of bookings, and property offenses accounted for 10.9% (n = 3,573).

These findings indicated that inmates who returned to custody were most likely to do so shortly after release. When a new booking occurred, it was more likely to involve a non-charge reason or a charge of the same level and category as the original offense. This pattern is consistent with the age-crime curve, a life-course criminological concept that posits that the severity of offending decreases with age (Liu et al., 2011). Although public perception often assumes that criminal behavior escalates with each subsequent offense, our findings suggested that recidivism was more likely to involve offenses of equal or lesser severity. These results are consistent with prior research conducted in Bernalillo County (Moore et al., 2023).

Within the first year following release, we found that nearly two-thirds of inmates (64.2%) did not return to custody. Among those who did return, 15.1% of all releases were for non-charge bookings. An additional 10.2% of inmates returned with a charge at the same level or in the same category as their original offense, while the remainder were roughly evenly distributed between lower- and higher-severity charges. This pattern suggested that, when it occurred, recidivism was unlikely to involve a more serious offense than the original charge.

This study has several limitations worth noting. Our measure of failure was a return to custody at the MDC, which did not capture arrests that did not result in bookings, crimes that did not

lead to arrests, unreported crimes, or crimes that remained undetected. Additionally, we lacked access to information on bookings at other facilities, meaning that individuals booked into jails in other counties or admitted to state prison facilities would not appear in our recidivism counts. Relatedly, we lacked data on sentencing or incarceration outcomes for the charges, which limited our ability to determine whether individuals were subsequently incarcerated in state prison rather than returned to the MDC and thus lacked adequate exposure time in the community (i.e., the opportunity to return to jail). For these reasons, our results may underestimate the true extent of recidivism, particularly for individuals who were subsequently sentenced and incarcerated. Furthermore, the data used in this analysis extended only through 2023, and recidivism patterns may have shifted in subsequent years. Despite these limitations, using return to local jail custody as a measure of recidivism is consistent with methodological approaches employed in other county-level recidivism studies (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, 2020; Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, 2016).

Despite these limitations, we compiled detailed data from the MDC to construct release charge and new booking charge variables, which allowed for more in-depth analysis. The resulting dataset enabled comparisons across release years and charge severity levels. Future researchers may wish to broaden the definition of recidivism to include arrests or bookings outside of Bernalillo County. Researchers might also consider incorporating release data from the New Mexico Corrections Department to examine state prison releases and subsequent returns to Bernalillo County, which would provide a more comprehensive understanding of recidivism patterns. Additionally, extending the analysis beyond 2023 would allow researchers to determine whether the patterns observed in this study have persisted.

This study provided a detailed description of recidivism among the MDC population. Policymakers may find this information valuable for developing or expanding programs that support released inmates and reduce recidivism. The MDC or local courts may also wish to use these findings to inform the creation or expansion of inmate programs or to update risk assessment tools.

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