



CENTER FOR
APPLIED RESEARCH
& ANALYSIS

Review of the Metropolitan Detention Center Population

Prepared By:

Paul Guerin, Ph.D.

Elise M. Ferguson, M.A.

Prepared For:

Bernalillo County Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council

May 2025

Executive Summary

Nationally, jail populations decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic and have since increased to almost their pre-COVID-19 levels. Because the U.S. has thousands of local criminal justice systems and at least 3,116 local jails (Prison Policy Initiative, 2024), this national trend has varied across the nation. From 2019 through 2024, jail populations decreased by 15.3%, while the MDC experienced a 30.3% increase in population.

Notably, the MDC population has remained below the McClendon cap of 1,950, approximately 90% of the design capacity of 2,236 beds, for more than 8 years and is currently at approximately 80% of capacity. This has occurred during a period when reported crime, arrests, and court case filings have fluctuated, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Crime peaked in the 1990s and has generally decreased since then. Changes in the jail population are driven by the combination of two factors: 1) bookings and 2) length of stay. Over the last 10 years, as indicated in Figure 9, the system has implemented numerous long-term and short-term initiatives that have impacted the number of bookings and length of stay of inmates. Some long-term initiatives that include bail reform, the court case management order, preliminary hearings, and the early plea program have reduced the length of stay and the daily population.

Recent increases in the MDC population have resulted from an increase in bookings, particularly an increase in the percentage of bookings for felony charges and felony warrants. Related to this is the increase in felony bookings in which a pretrial detention motion has been granted. The size of the jail population is also impacted by the high annual return to the MDC of 40% and the large proportion of the jail population served by the Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) despite the large number of resources spent on reducing these populations.

Several courses of action exist for the local criminal justice system to manage the jail population without affecting public safety. These include controlling felony court case processing times, as noted earlier in this report, reducing the high rate of return of some offenders, and reducing the size of the PSU population.

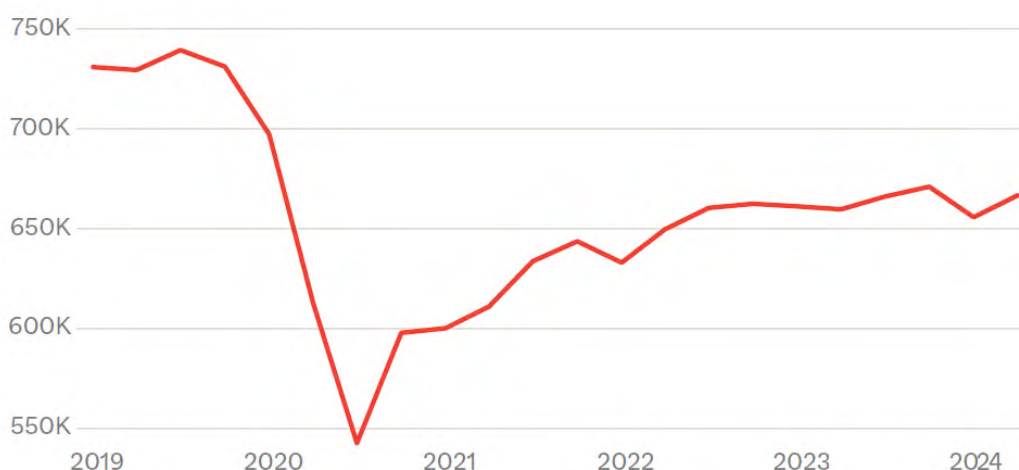
Overview of Jail Populations

Nationally, jail populations decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic and have since increased to almost their pre-COVID-19 levels. This national trend has varied across the nation because the U.S. has thousands of local criminal justice systems and at least 3,116 local jails (<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2024.html>).

An October 2024 report by the Vera Institute (Kang-Brown & Zhang, 2024) shows that in spring 2024, there were 75,900 fewer people in jail in the U.S. compared to mid-2019 and 121,00 more people in jail compared to mid-2020 (Figure 1).

From 2019 to 2024, of the 27 states with available data, most states showed declines in both jail and prison populations (Kang-Brown & Zhang, 2024). In most states where Vera had enough data for precise estimates, jail populations in 2024 had not returned to 2019 levels. Interestingly, from fall 2022 to spring 2024, there is an emerging trend shift, with more states experiencing smaller decreases or increases in jail and prison populations. New Mexico, like several other states, experienced a mixed trend. From 2019 through 2024, the total prison population decreased by 16.4%, and jails experienced a 15.3% decrease. From fall 2022 to spring 2024, the state prison population increased by 3.8%, and local jail populations decreased by 1.4%.

Figure 1. *People in Jail, 2019 - 2024*



Like the national jail population, the MDC population decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average monthly population of the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) hit a low of 1,062 inmates in April of 2021 (see Figure 2). Since April 2021, the population has increased nearly every month, and in December 2024, the average population was 1,767, an increase of 68.5% over four and a half years. In October 2024, the average daily population was 1,803, the highest of the MDC population since December 2014. The MDC has a design capacity of 2,236 beds, but cannot exceed what is known as the McClendon Cap of 1,950 inmates. This capacity limit on the population is part of the McClendon lawsuit and is approximately 90% of the design capacity. To operate safely, jails should maintain an average daily population below the design capacity. This is necessary for various reasons, including allowing for safe fluctuations in population. The population has been increasing and is closer to the McClendon Cap than ever in the last 8 years. **From 2019 through 2024, the total national prison population decreased by 16.4%, and jail populations decreased by 15.3%. The MDC experienced a 30.3% increase in population.** In December 2024, approximately 80% of the beds were occupied compared to 74.3% nationally in jail jurisdictions of similar size for the most recent year this information was available.

Figure 2. MDC Population 2017 - 2024

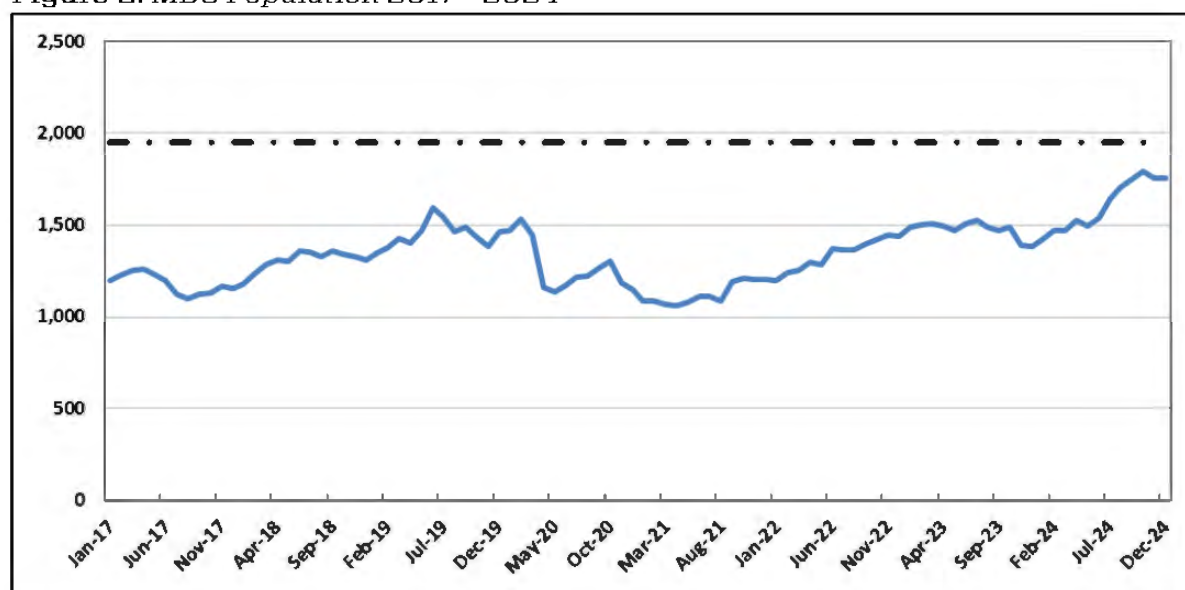
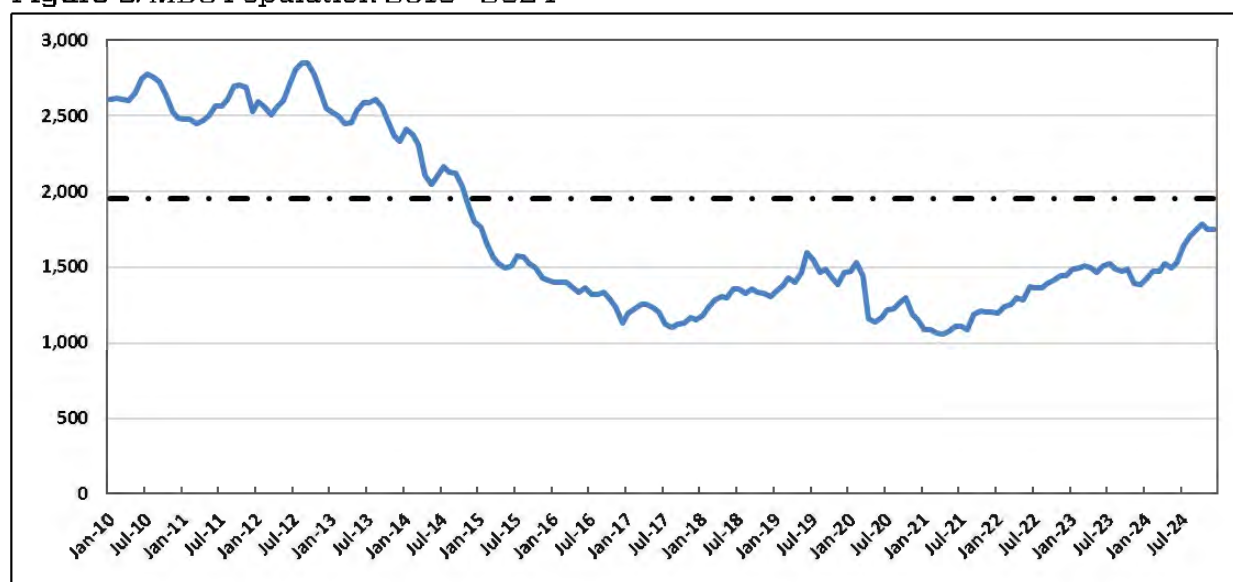


Figure 3 is like Figure 2 but shows the MDC population from January 2010 through December 2024 to provide a longer historical view of the population. Nationally, jail populations peaked in 2009, and in the reported time frame in this figure, the MDC population peaked in August 2012 with an average in-custody population of 2,846 and an average of 184 inmates in the Community Custody Program (CCP).

Figure 3. MDC Population 2010 -2024



Crime in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque

A variety of factors help explain the long-term trend in the decline in the U.S. jail population and MDC population. This includes several decades of declines in violent

and property crime rates, with an increase in certain violent crimes beginning in 2021, especially murder, which began declining in 2023 and has continued declining through 2024. As crime has generally declined, so have arrests and jail populations. The nationwide arrest rate has fallen steadily over the long term.

Additionally, changes in criminal laws, as well as changes in how crimes are prosecuted and sentenced, have played a role in declining jail populations and incarceration rates. While generally downward, this pattern has varied nationally based on local practices. For example, in 2022, the Texas jail population was 6% higher than the 2019 level (Kang-Brown et al., 2023)

This section briefly reports crime in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque. This overview provides context for the jail population. While crime trends in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque have always exceeded national crime trends, they have also trended downward. Figure 4 reports the Albuquerque reported crime trend compared to the national crime trend through 2023, the latest date for which we have data for Albuquerque. Nationally, the crime trend continued to decrease in 2024.

Figure 4. *Albuquerque and US Crime Rate, 1990 - 2023*

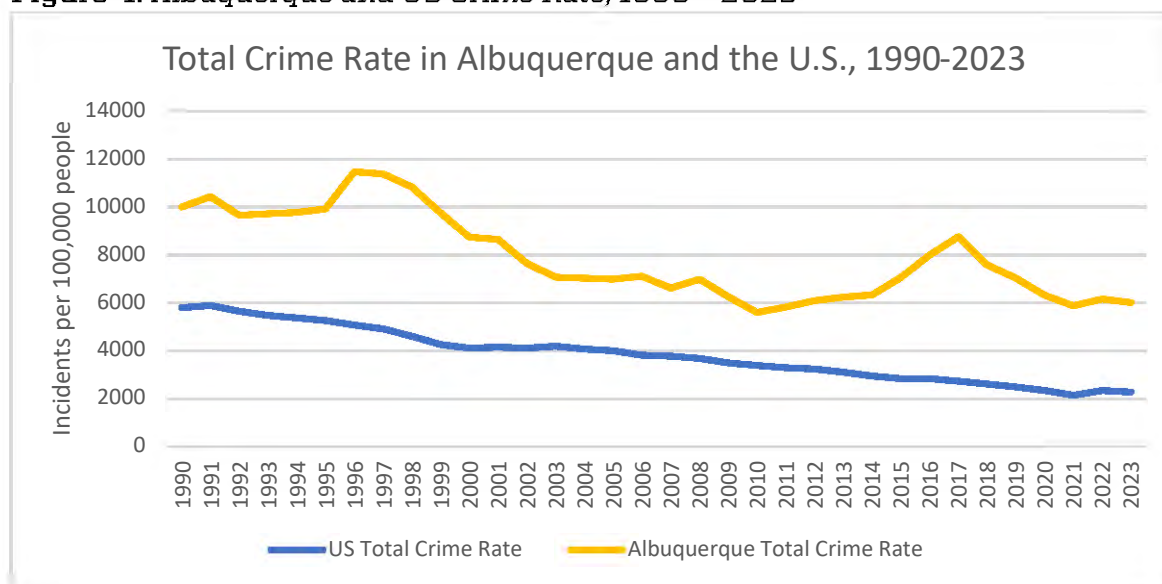


Figure 5 reports the Albuquerque crime rate compared to other cities. These comparison cities are used because they are similar to Albuquerque in demographics and population. Like the comparison sites, Albuquerque's total crime rate decreased between 1990 and the end of 2023. Over most of the time frame, Albuquerque's crime rate was higher than that of most comparison cities. Most comparison cities experienced increased crime rates between the early 1990s and 1998, and between approximately 2013 and 2017, with the Albuquerque crime rate increasing most notably between approximately 2015 and 2017, when it began to decrease

Figure 5. Albuquerque and Comparison Cities Crime Rate, 1990 - 2023

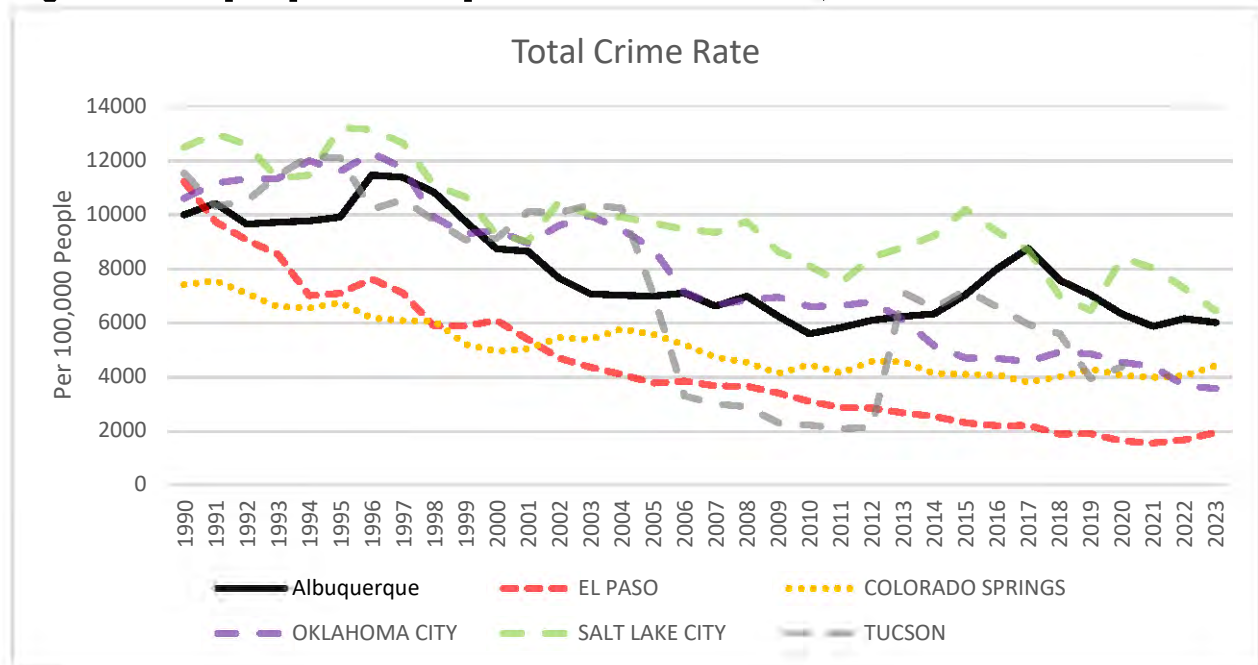
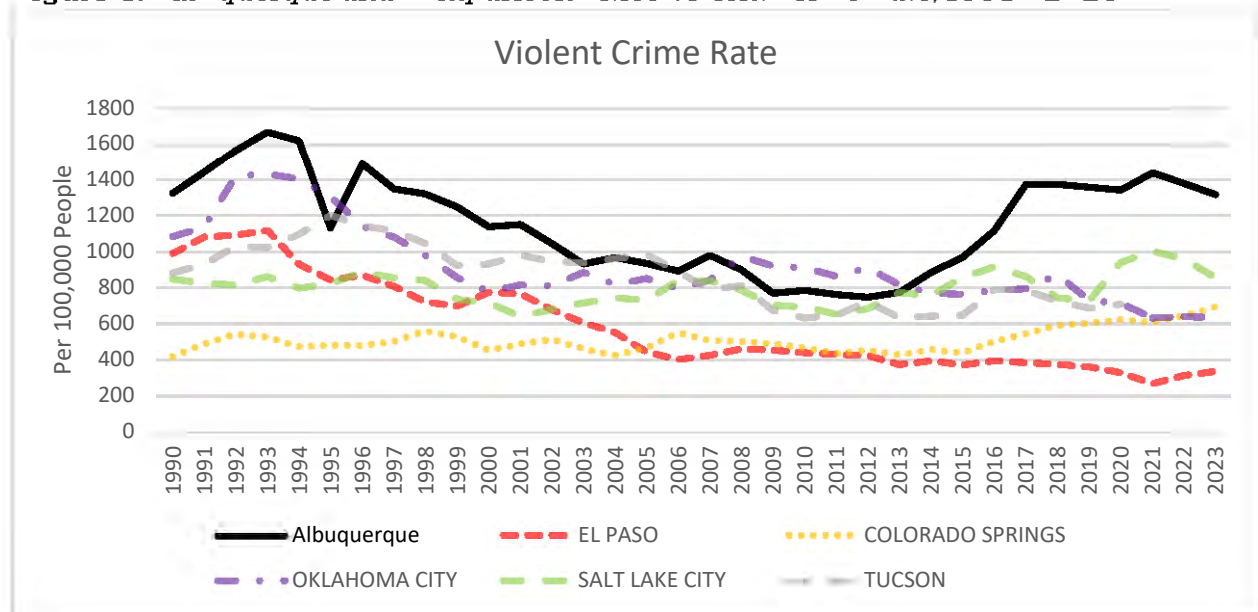


Figure 6 reports the violent crime rate that includes the crimes of murder, robbery, and aggravated assault. The Albuquerque violent crime rate has almost always been higher than that of any other comparison city. In 2014, violent crime began to rise and remained at about 1,400 crimes per 100,000 people. Since 2021, there have been slight decreases in the rate, which remains well above that of comparison cities.

Figure 6. Albuquerque and Comparison Cities Violent Crime Rate, 1990 - 2023



Crime Change Factors

Many factors are possible reasons for the general decline in crime since the 1990s, and no single commonly recognized explanation exists. Also, while crime has been trending down since the 1990s, this trend has not been uniform and has varied across the U.S.

A Brennan Center report (Roeder et al., 2015) Various reasons, including social, economic, and environmental factors, were noted, including an aging population, changes in income, changes in alcohol consumption, and decreased unemployment. Increases in the number of police and changes in policing strategies, including CompStat, a data-gathering strategy used to identify crime patterns and target resources, helped reduce crime. The report also found that incarceration has not had an impact on crime reduction. Since the 1970s, many policymakers have pushed for longer penalties and other sanctions, including mandatory minimums and enhanced sentences, believing that swift, sure, and severe punishment is key to public safety. The relationship between crime and incarceration is complex, and incarceration does not appear to have a significant impact on overall crime rates. (Loeffler & Nagin, 2022). The study by Loeffler and Nagin (2022) reached the same conclusion as most other U.S.-based studies that have found no evidence of a post-conviction specific deterrent effect of imprisonment. After years of decline, crime increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on violent crime. It is not clear what caused this increase after 2019. Some of the discussed factors include the role of firearms in violent crimes, increased unemployment and socioeconomic instability, and disruptions to daily and community life.

Arrests in Bernalillo County and Using Court Case Filings as a Proxy for Arrests

Reported crime data and arrest data for Bernalillo County and Albuquerque are limited. The two departments that cover the majority of Bernalillo County and Albuquerque (the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department [BCSD] and the Albuquerque Police Department [APD]) do not routinely report crime or arrest data that can be used to measure crime trends or arrests. The FBI's data via the Uniform Crime Reports is not current or timely. Data for 2024 will not be available until approximately September 2025 and so is of limited use to report current trends. There are also known problems with these data (<https://www.vera.org/news/yes-the-new-fbi-data-is-poor-quality-but-weve-always-needed-better>).

Several online data sources are available that report national and local crime trends. The Real Time Crime Index (<https://realtimecrimeindex.com/>) reports crime on a 45-day lag using data published by local law enforcement agencies. Not all these agencies report all offense types or complete data by offense type for each reporting period. APD only reports homicides, and BCSD does not report at all. No other law enforcement agency in New Mexico is included among the hundreds of agencies in the index. The Council on Criminal Justice (<https://counciloncj.org/crime-trends-in-u-s-cities-year-end-2024-update/>) also provides U.S. crime trends reports for large

U.S. cities that have consistently reported monthly data since approximately 2018 for 13 offenses. Data for Albuquerque is only available for homicide.

In 2015, in collaboration with the City of Albuquerque and Virginia Tech's Social Data Analytics Lab (SDAL) with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies we combined arrest data from the Albuquerque Police Department (APD), the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department (BCSD), the New Mexico State Police (NMSP), and booking data from the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) to measure arrest trends. While successful in this endeavor, it was time-consuming and labor-intensive. One reason for this is that there is no unique identifier in the different record management systems to match arrests. For this reason, we relied on using names and other identifiers and statistical techniques that required "fuzzy" matching to match arrest cases among the four information systems.

Using court case filings in Bernalillo as a proxy for arrest is possible and practical. New Mexico has a unified court system. This includes consolidation of the court structure, centralized management, including an electronic information system, and centralized budgeting and state financing. All criminal citations or complaints in New Mexico result in a criminal court case filing. Further, because these data exist in a single dataset, collecting and matching data across multiple law enforcement agencies with different management systems is unnecessary.

In this section, we use court case filings as a proxy measure of arrests in Bernalillo County. We use this information later to understand how arrests and court case filings impact jail admissions and length of stay.

Figure 7 reports the total number of court case filings by month from January 2017 through December 2024. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, court case filings began decreasing in early 2020, increased in approximately January 2023, and reached their pre-pandemic level in approximately mid-2024. Case filings have generally continued to increase since early 2023.

Figure 7. Court Case Filings 2017 -2024

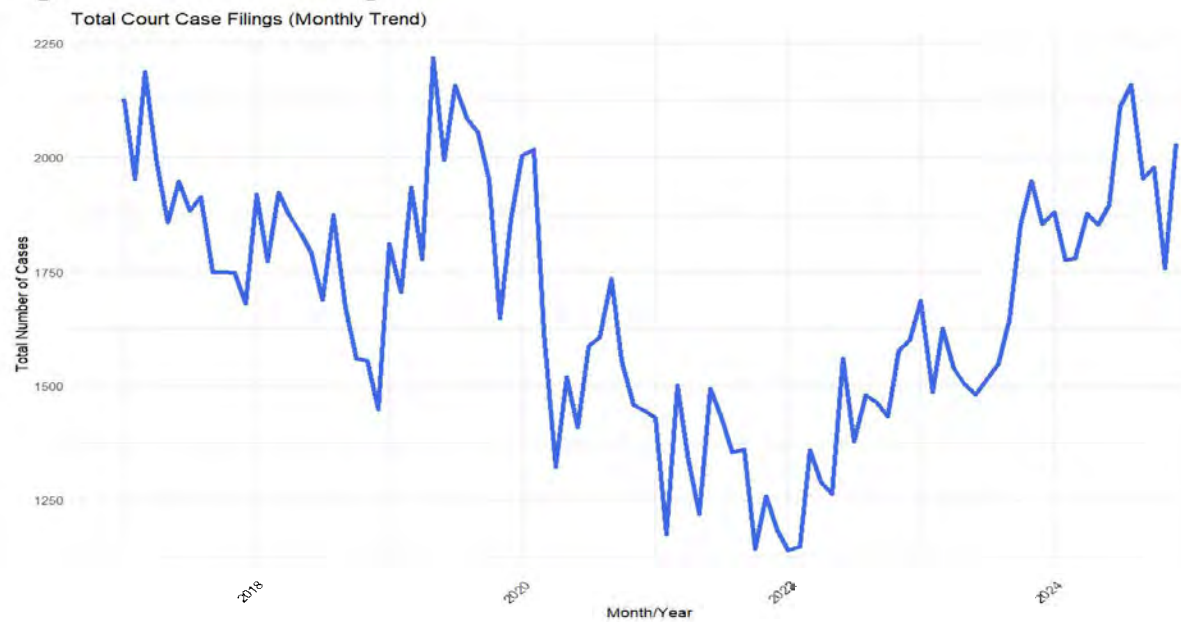
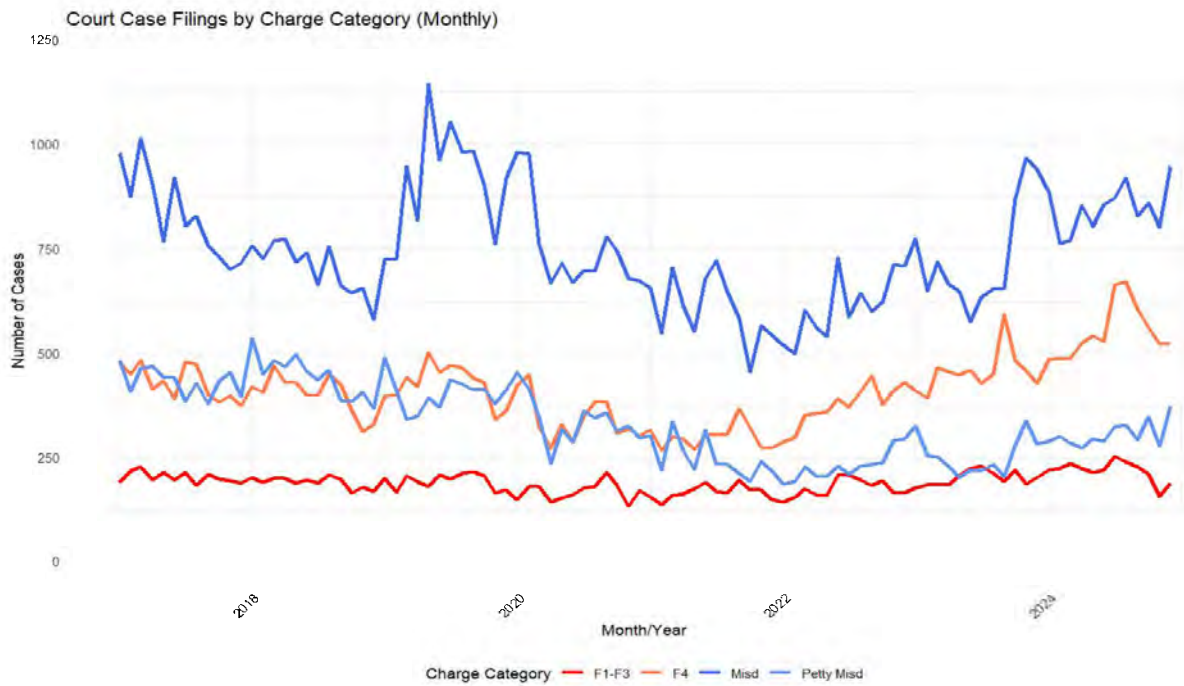


Figure 8 reports the same information displayed in Figure 7, but by charge level. The figure includes case filings for petty misdemeanors, misdemeanors, 4th degree felonies, and the combination of 3rd, 2nd, and 1st degree felonies. Since 2017, petty misdemeanors have decreased with small increases since the pandemic's peak in early 2022, but are still below the numbers occurring up to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Court case filings for more serious felonies (F1, F2, and F3) have been increasing slightly since mid-2022, and the number of case filings is less than that of petty misdemeanor case filings. Case filings for 4th-degree felonies have increased since late 2021. Misdemeanor cases have accounted for the most significant number of case filings for the entire reporting period, and like 4th degree felony cases have been increasing since late 2021, but are still less than the number of case filings that occurred in 2019, leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 8. Court Case Filings by Charge Severity 2017 – 2024

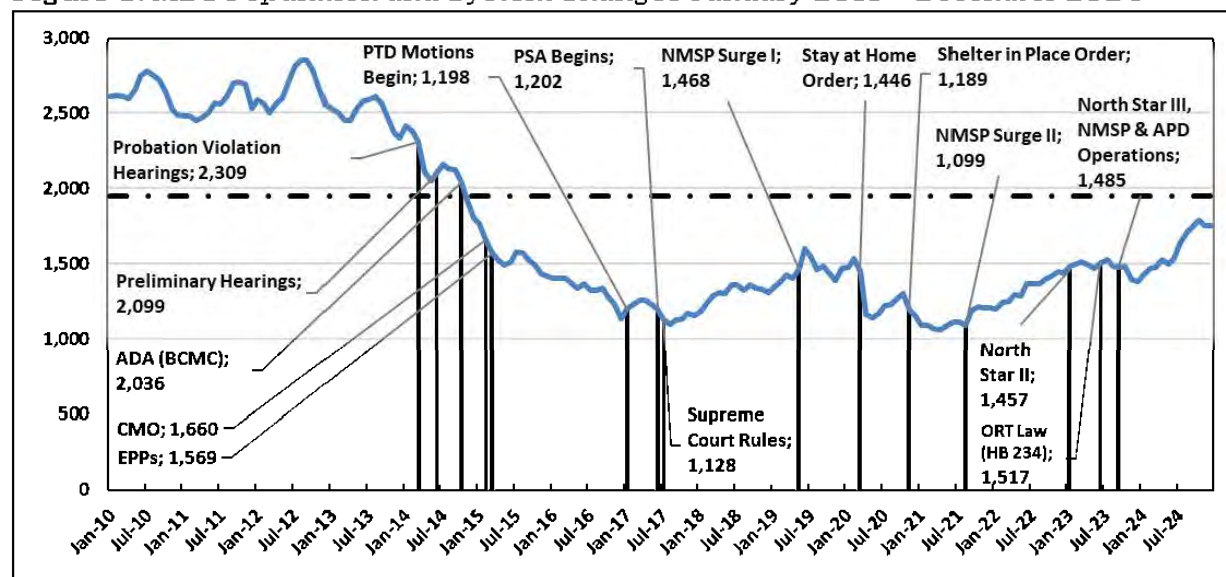


MDC Population Change

Changes in criminal justice system policies have occurred in New Mexico and Bernalillo County. Figure 9 below is a duplication of Figure 3 that plots some of the changes in policy and statute in New Mexico that have impacted local jail populations.

As shown, the MDC population began decreasing from its peak in late 2012, and by mid-2013, it was below 2,500 inmates.

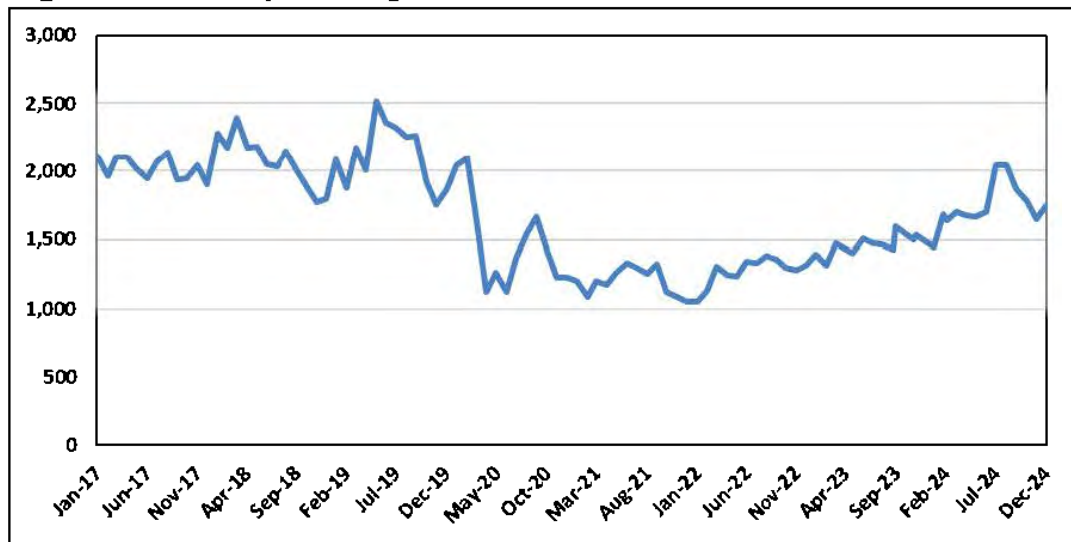
Figure 9. *MDC Population and System Changes January 2010 - December 2024*



As we have mentioned in other reports and in the national literature, two things contribute to jail populations: jail admissions and length of stay measured in days. The remainder of this report reviews various factors that impact jail admissions, length of stay, and their impact on the MDC population.

Bookings

Since January 2017, bookings into the MDC were at their lowest (approximately 1,050) in December 2021 and January 2022. Monthly bookings have increased since January 2022, reaching over 2,000 in July and August 2024. Like court case filings, the number of bookings is approaching pre-COVID-19 levels. The increase in bookings related to arrests and court case filings is contributing to the increase in the population.

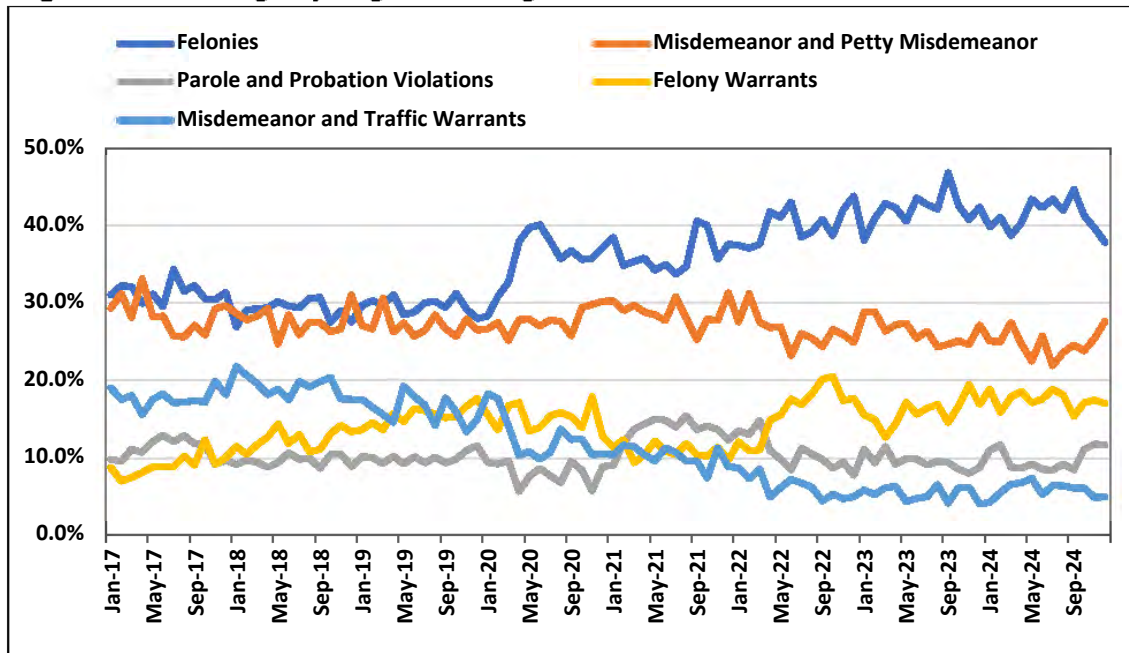
Figure 10. *Monthly Bookings*

Bookings by Highest Charge

Figure 11 reports the percentage of bookings by their highest charge. Beginning in early 2020, felony bookings began to comprise a larger portion of all bookings, increasing from approximately 30% to more than 40% in 2024. Fourth-degree felonies account for approximately 75% of all felony bookings. First-degree felonies account for approximately 4% of felony bookings, second-degree felonies about 5%, and third-degree felonies 15% of felony bookings.

Misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor bookings have decreased slightly from approximately 30% of all bookings in early 2022 to approximately 25% of all bookings in 2024. Felony warrants have increased from approximately 15% of all bookings in early 2020 to currently comprising just less than 20% of all bookings. Probation and Parole violations have changed slightly over time but continue to comprise approximately 10% of all bookings. Most (~90%) of Probation and Parole violations are for felony crimes. Misdemeanor and Traffic warrant bookings have decreased from approximately 20% of all bookings in 2019 to approximately 5% of all bookings in 2024. Approximately 65% of all bookings are for new crimes, and 35% are for warrants, probation, and parole violations. Approximately 25% of all bookings are for misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor new crimes or misdemeanor warrants and misdemeanor probation violations. **The increase in the proportion of bookings for felonies and felony warrants is contributing to the increase in the jail population.** Individuals booked into the MDC on felony charges and felony warrants are more likely to have longer lengths of stay in the jail compared to the other types of listed charges, and these bookings contribute to the increase in the population.

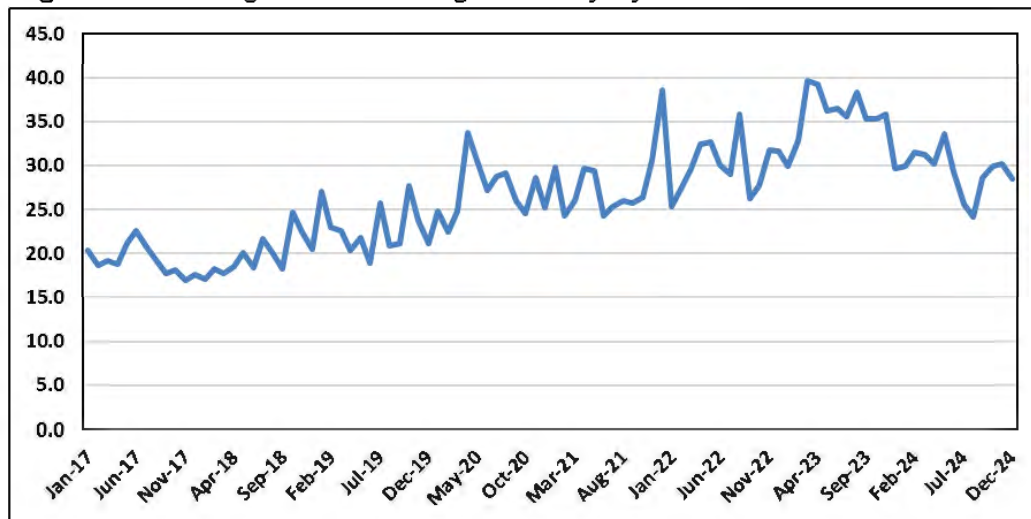
Figure 11. *Bookings by Highest Charge*



Release Length of Stay

From January 2017 through mid-2023, the release average length of stay increased from approximately 20 days to approximately 40 days. The length of stay then decreased to about 25 days and has increased to approximately 30 days since July 2024.

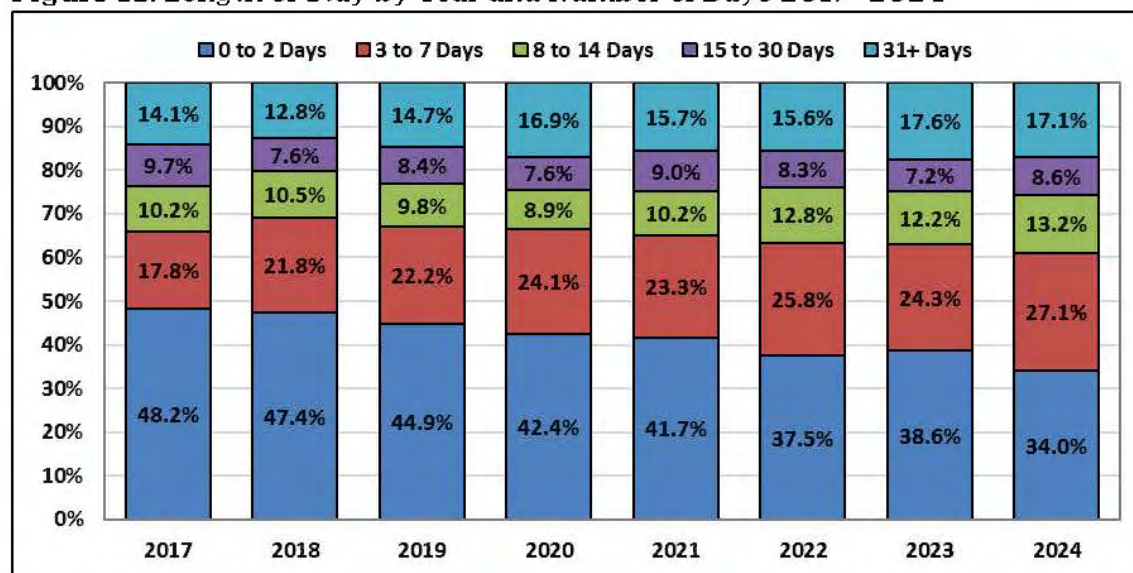
Figure 12. *Average Release Length of Stay by Month*



Length of Stay Categories

Figure 13 reports the release length of stay by year and number of days. Since 2017, the portion of the population with a release length of stay between 0 and 2 days decreased from 48.2% to 34% of all releases. Since 2022, the percentage released in 0 to 2 days has accounted for between 34% and 38.6% of all releases. In 2024, the percentage of all releases between 0 and 2 days was the lowest for the reporting period. As the percentage of releases between 0 and 2 days reduced, the percentage released between 3 and 7 days and 31+ days increased.

Figure 13. Length of Stay by Year and Number of Days 2017 -2024



Preventive Detention

Figures 14 and 15 report on preventive detention (PTD) motions beginning January 2017. PTD motions generally increased from June 2017 through approximately September 2018, when they peaked at approximately 200 a month and then began to decrease. Between late 2018 and 2023, PTD motions ranged between approximately 80 and 120 per month. Since January 2024, PTD motions have been above 120 motions a month.

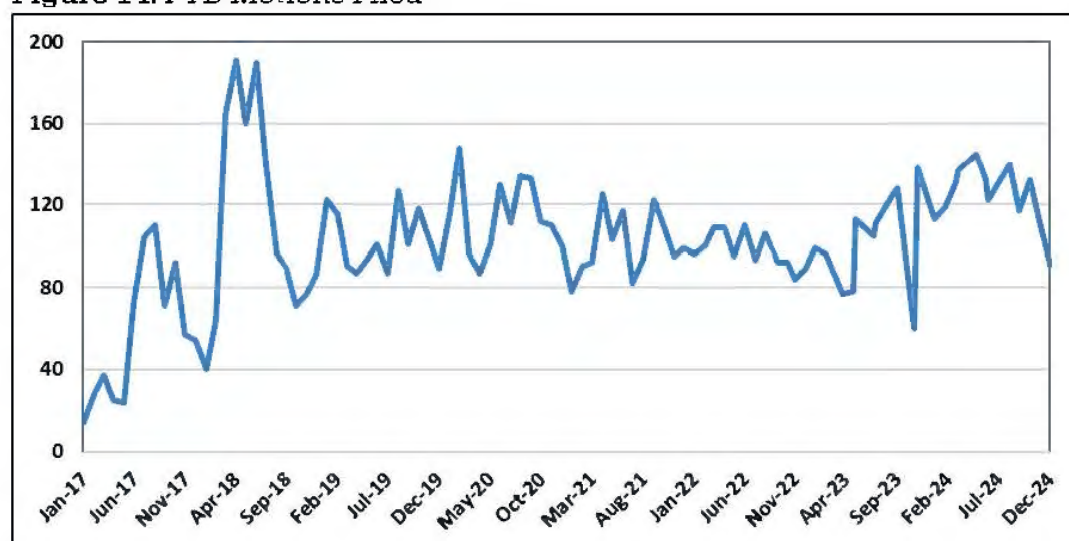
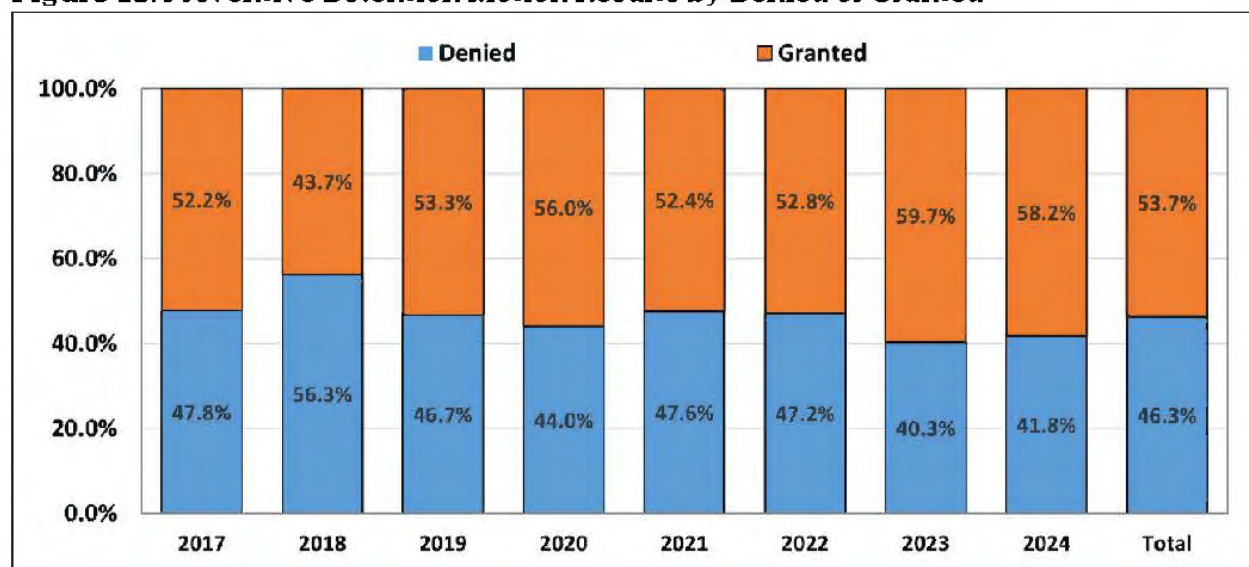
Figure 14. *PTD Motions Filed*

Figure 15 reports PTD motions by granted and denied. The small number and percentage of cases withdrawn or dismissed were removed from this review. The portion of PTD motions granted has varied by year, with a low of 43.7% granted in 2018 and a high of 59.7% granted in 2023, followed by 58.2% granted in 2024. Since 2017, 53.7% of all motions have been granted, and 46.3% have been denied.

Figure 15. *Preventive Detention Motion Results by Denied or Granted*

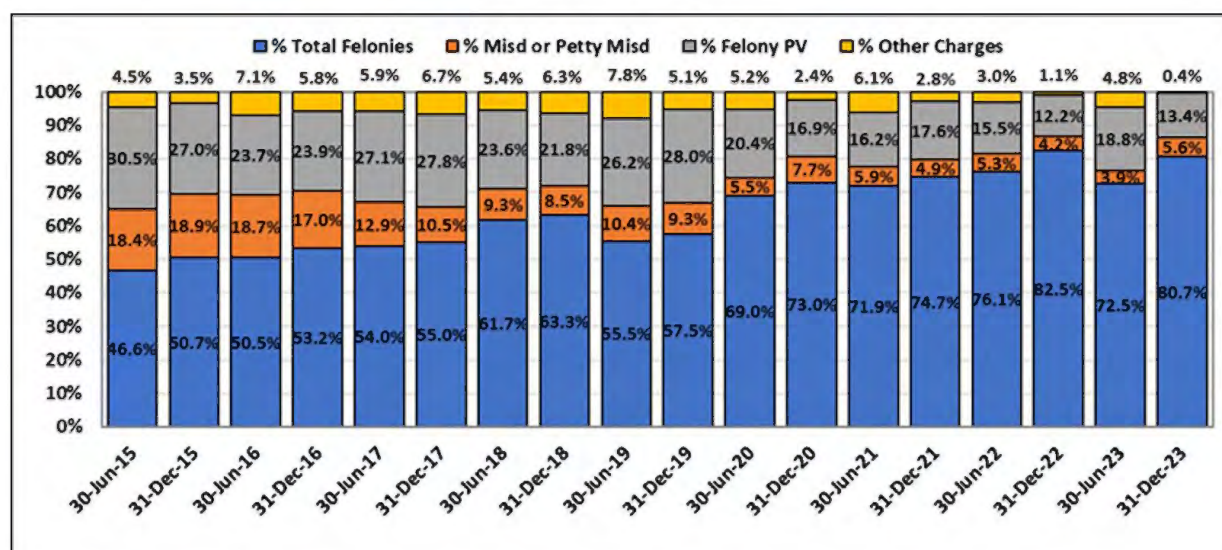
The number of PTD motions filed tracks the number of felony cases filed. The increase in PTDs, specifically granted PTDs, increases the length of stay for those inmates and impacts the population. We reviewed the length of stay (LOS) for inmates with a granted or denied PTD motion released by October 2024 to determine how the average LOS is impacted by whether the motion was denied or granted. For those with a denied PTD motion, the average LOS was 29.9 days, with a median LOS of 8.3 days.

For granted PTD motions, the average LOS was 264 days, with a median LOS of 203.3 days. From 2017 to October 2024, the median LOS for all released inmates was 2.8 days, with an average LOS of 25.5 days. Denied PTD motions add several days to the LOS for a defendant, while a granted motion results in an average length of stay of more than eight months.

Confined Population

Over time, the composition of the confined population has changed. This is partly due to the policy and system changes described in Figure 9. These changes have led to fewer bookings on misdemeanor warrants, traffic warrants, and petty misdemeanor and misdemeanor charges (Figure 11) and an increase in the proportion of bookings on felony charges. Figure 16 documents these changes between June 2015 and December 2023. On December 31, 2023, inmates with felony charges comprised approximately 80% of the MDC population compared to approximately 47% on June 30, 2015. Conversely, petty misdemeanors and misdemeanors comprised 18.4% of the population on June 30, 2015, compared to 5.6% on December 31, 2023. This significant change in the confined population's composition has increased the inmates' average length of stay and the MDC population. The length of stay of the population is discussed in Figure 11.

Figure 16. *Confined Population*



Recidivism

Figure 17 measures recidivism, defined as a new booking into the MDC for individuals released in 2015, and tracks new bookings through December 2022. Approximately 40% of those booked in 2015 recidivated and were booked at least one more time in the same year. Two years after release, up to 9 years after release, another 24% of those released had been booked again. In the 9 years following release, approximately 64% of those released had been booked at least once more.

Figure 17. *Cumulative 9-Year Recidivism Rate of Inmates Released in 2015 Defined as a New Booking*

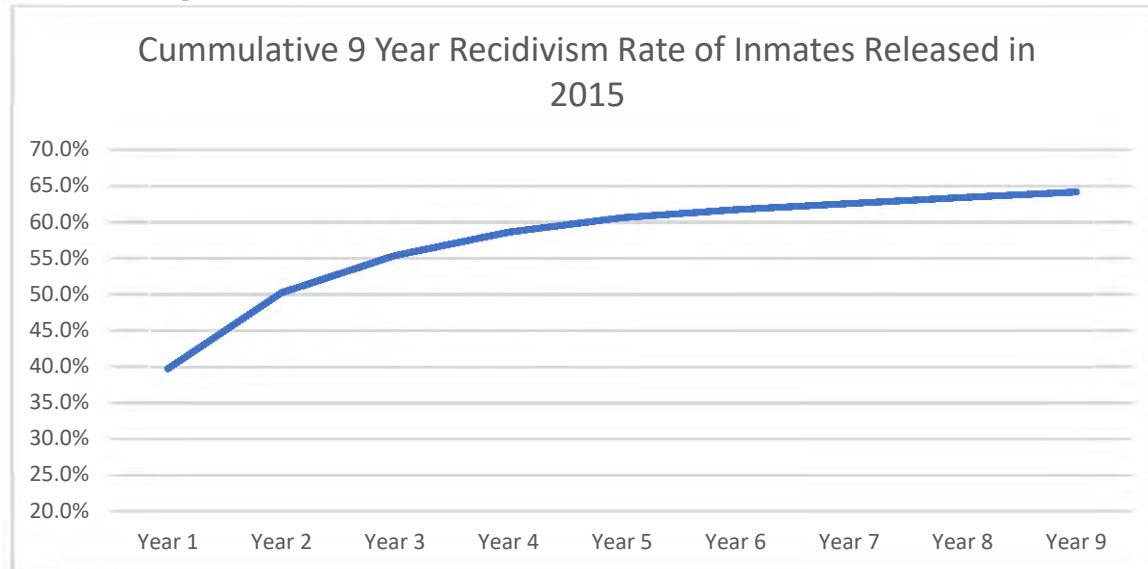
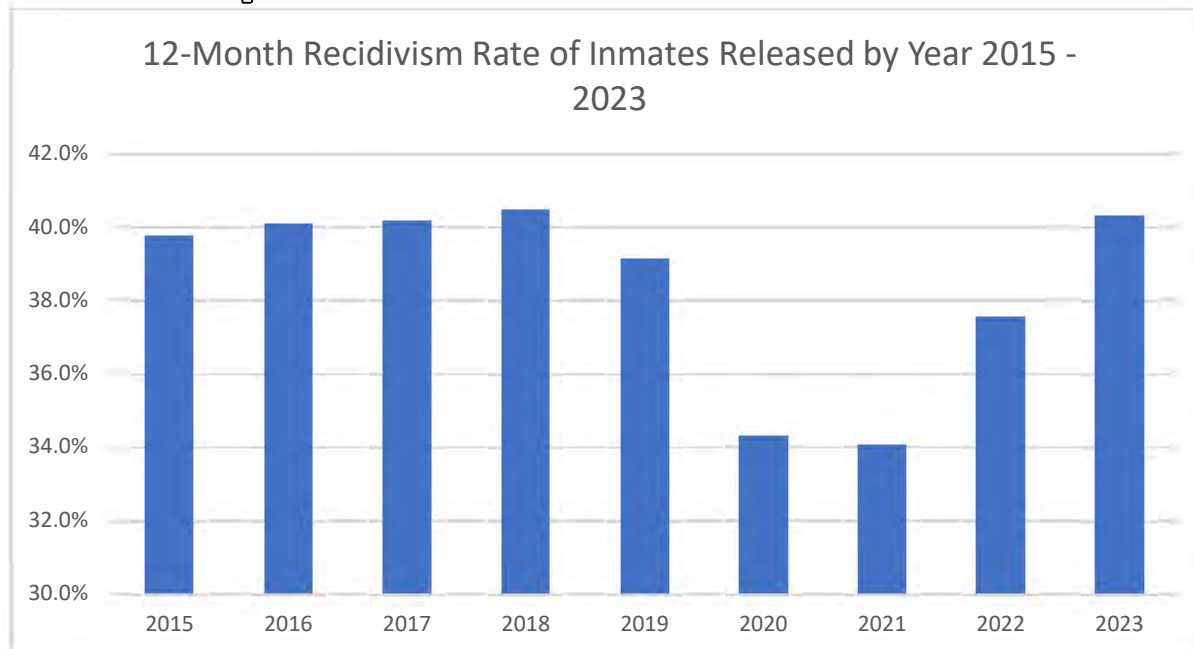


Figure 18 reports the annual recidivism rate of individuals released by year from 2015 through 2023, defined as a new booking. The annual rate remained at approximately 40% until the COVID-19 pandemic, when it decreased to 34% in 2020 and 2021 and increased to 40.3% in 2023.

The two figures report the cumulative and annual recidivism rates defined as a new booking. Importantly, this only includes new bookings and not arrests. This is an important distinction for two reasons. First, this measure includes bookings for technical violations for events like warrants and probation violations that are not new crimes. Second, bookings do not include arrests that did not lead to a new booking for crimes that resulted in a citation or summons. This is important because we know the composition of bookings has changed over time, with the primary change being the increase in bookings for felony crimes and felony warrants and a decrease in bookings for misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors.

Figure 18. 12-Month Recidivism Rate of Inmates Released by Year 2015 -2022, Defined as a New Booking



Psychiatric Services Unit

It is also important to note that the percentage of the population served in the MDC Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) has remained between 40% and 45% of the total population since we have been reviewing this population, and going back to at least May 2012. Less is known about this population because we lack consistent and reliable data on individuals served by the PSU. It is well known and understood that individuals who suffer from mental health disorders, including alcohol use disorders, are disproportionately represented in jail populations, and the lack of care or inadequate care in the community can lead to incarceration (<https://www.samhsa.gov/communities/criminal-juvenile-justice/about>). Better understanding the population served by the PSU and the portion that frequently transitions in and out of the jail could lead to more complete interventions that would reduce this population, impact the high rate of recidivism noted above, and reduce the overall jail population.

Discussion

The U.S. has experienced a long-term decline in violent and property crime rates, with an increase in certain violent crimes beginning in 2021, especially murder, which began declining in 2023 and has continued declining through 2024. As crime has generally declined, so have arrests. The nationwide arrest rate has fallen steadily over the long term. At the same time, crime trends in New Mexico, Bernalillo County, and Albuquerque have always exceeded national crime trends; they have also trended downward. What is not well understood is why reported crime in New Mexico,

including Bernalillo County and Albuquerque, has consistently exceeded national crime trends. Nationally, the crime trend continued to decrease in 2024, and according to available Albuquerque Police Department (APD) data, reported crime decreased slightly in Albuquerque from 2023 to 2024.

Nationally, jail populations peaked in 2009, and the MDC population peaked in August 2012 with an average in-custody population of 2,846 and an average of 184 inmates in the Community Custody Program (CCP). During the COVID-19 pandemic, jail populations decreased nationally and have since increased to almost their pre-COVID-19 levels. This national trend has varied because the U.S. has thousands of local criminal justice systems. New Mexico, like several other states, experienced a mixed trend. From 2019 through 2024, the jail population decreased. From fall 2022 to spring 2024, the state prison population increased by 3.8%, and local jail populations decreased by 1.4%. The MDC population has been increasing and is higher than ever since July 2014. **Between 2019 and 2024, the MDC experienced a 30.3% increase in population.**

Jail populations are increasing and may continue to climb in the next few years, not because of changes in crime but because courts have recovered mainly from the slowdowns caused by the pandemic, and policies and legislation that will keep more people in jail longer.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, court case filings began decreasing in early 2020, increased in approximately January 2023, and reached their pre-pandemic level in approximately mid-2024. Case filings have generally continued to increase since early 2023. Since 2017, petty misdemeanors have decreased with small increases since the pandemic's peak in early 2022, but still are below the number occurring up to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Court case filings for more serious felonies (F1, F2, and F3) have been increasing slightly since mid-2022, but the number of case filings is less than that of petty misdemeanor case filings. Case filings for 4th degree felonies have increased since late 2021 and misdemeanor cases have accounted for the most significant number of case filings for the entire reporting period and like 4th degree felony cases have been increasing since late 2021 but are still less than the number of case filings that occurred in 2019 leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since January 2017, bookings into the MDC were at their lowest (approximately 1,050) in December 2021 and January 2022. Monthly bookings have increased since January 2022, reaching over 2,000 in July and August 2024. Like court case filings, the number of bookings is approaching pre-COVID-19 levels. Beginning in early 2020, felony bookings began to comprise a larger portion of all bookings, increasing from approximately 30% to more than 40% in 2024. Felony warrants have increased and comprise less than 20% of all bookings. **The increase in the number of bookings and the proportion of bookings for felony charges and warrants contributes to the increase in the jail population.** Individuals booked into the MDC on felony charges

and felony warrants are more likely to have extended stays in jail than other types of bookings. Research has found that courts can control how quickly cases move from indictment to resolution without sacrificing justice or due process (<https://www.ncsc.org/courttools/trial-court-performance-measures>).

American Bar Association (ABA) standards recommend that 90% of felony cases be resolved within 120 days, and 98% within 180 days. The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Model Time Standards note that 90% of cases should be resolved in 180 days. (Van Duizend et al., 2011). On December 31, 2023, an estimated 1,147 individuals were held in the MDC on felony charges, and 250 of these inmates had already been held 180 or more days. Reducing the length of stay from 50% to less than 180 days would have saved 125 beds and reduced the population by 8.9%. On December 31, 2023, 90 individuals were jailed for felony probation violations. Fifteen of these inmates had been held 60 or more days. Reducing the length of stay by 50% to less than 60 days would have saved seven beds and reduced the population by .05%.

PTD motions generally increased from June 2017 through approximately September 2018, when they peaked at approximately 200 a month and then began to decrease. Between late 2018 and 2023, PTD motions ranged between approximately 80 and 120 per month. Since January 2024, PTD motions have been above 120 motions a month. The portion of PTD motions granted has varied by year, with a low of 43.7% granted in 2018 and a high of 59.7% granted in 2023, followed by 58.2% granted in 2024. Since 2017, 53.7% of all motions have been granted and 46.3% have been denied. In February 2025, 60.2% of PTD motions were granted. Inmates with granted PTD motions spend more extended periods in jail. This, combined with the increase in total and felony bookings, has contributed to the increase in the jail population. On any given day, approximately 40% of the felons held in the MDC have a pending or granted PTD.

The one-year MDC recidivism rate, defined as a new booking into the MDC following release, is approximately 40%. In 9 years following release, approximately 64% of those released had been booked at least once more. Recidivism most frequently occurs within the first year following release, and the high rate of return to MDC contributes to the increasing population. **Reducing this high rate of return to the jail will reduce the number of bookings and the jail population.** Bernalillo County has implemented several best practice reentry initiatives described in the transition from jail to community initiative (TCJI) (<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/justice-policy-center/projects/transition-jail-community-tjc-initiative>), but has not yet experienced the benefits of these practices, at least as measured by returns to jail and reintegration outcomes. Bernalillo County is also part of the National Association of Counties (NACo) Stepping Up Initiative intended to reduce the overincarceration of people with mental illnesses. The proportion of the population that is in the MDC and actively served by the Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) has remained approximately the same since May 2012.

The composition of bookings and the confined population has also changed over time. Since late 2019, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, bookings decreased, and in late 2024, they began approaching pre-pandemic levels that were routinely above 2,000 bookings per month. Since 2017, the composition of bookings has also changed, with a larger percentage being for felonies and felony warrants. The decrease in the overall number of bookings, combined with initiatives that decreased the length of stay, led to reductions in the overall jail population. The change in the composition of bookings focused on increased proportions of felony and felony warrant bookings has led to changes in the composition of the MDC confined population. Inmates confined with felony charges have increased from approximately 50% of the population on June 30, 2015, to 80% of the confined population on December 31, 2023. This has more recently contributed to an increase in the population. In conjunction with this, increasing the percentage of felony cases with granted preventive detention motions has increased the jail population. **The consistently high recidivism rate and the proportion served by the PSU impact the size of the jail population. Reducing the recidivism rate and size of the PSU population will reduce the MDC population.** While the County and local criminal justice system has various initiatives in place designed to at least partly reduce the rate of return in general and of those who become clients of the PSU in particular none of these initiatives have led to a decrease in the proportion of the population who recidivate and are booked or are served by the PSU.

Notably, the MDC population has remained below the McClendon cap of 1,950, approximately 90% of the design capacity of 2,236 beds, for more than 8 years and is currently at approximately 80% of capacity. This has occurred during a period when reported crime, arrests, and court case filings have fluctuated, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Crime peaked in the 1990s and has generally decreased since then. Changes in the jail population are driven by the combination of two factors: 1) bookings and 2) length of stay. Over the last 10 years, as indicated in Figure 9, the system has implemented numerous long-term and short-term initiatives that have impacted the number of bookings and length of stay of inmates. Some long-term initiatives that include bail reform, the court case management order, preliminary hearings, and the early plea program have reduced the length of stay and the daily population.

Several courses of action exist for the local criminal justice system to manage the jail population without affecting public safety. Two of these include controlling felony court case processing times, as noted earlier in this report, reducing some offenders' high rate of return, and the size of the PSU population.