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BOOKINGS

INMATE POPULATION MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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San Diego
ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

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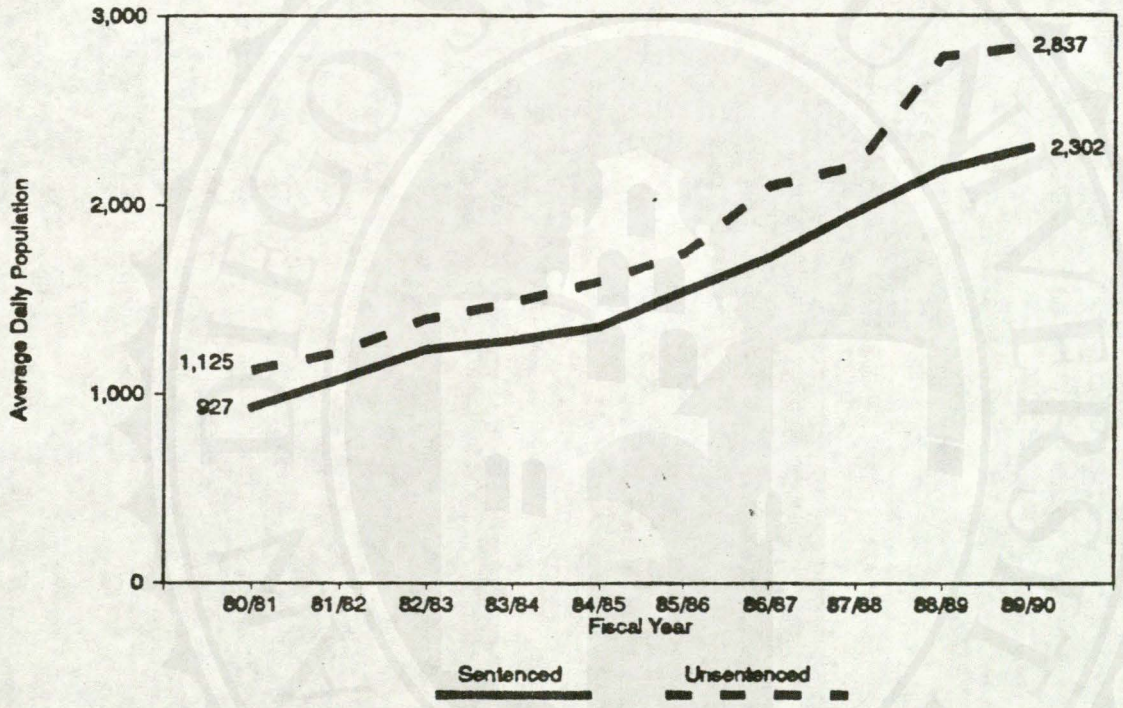
Sentenced and Unsentenced Inmates

Figure 2 shows the trends in the average number of sentenced and unsentenced inmates over the past ten years. Over this period, the number of presentence inmates has more than doubled, from an average of 1,125 to 2,837 (152%). The sentenced population increased at a similar rate, from 927 inmates to 2,302 (148%). Unsentenced inmates accounted for over half the jail population in all years, and represented 55% of the total in FY 1989-90.

Figure 2
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION
Sentenced and Unsentenced Inmates
FY 1980-81 to FY 1989-90



SOURCE: Sheriff's Department and Probation Department

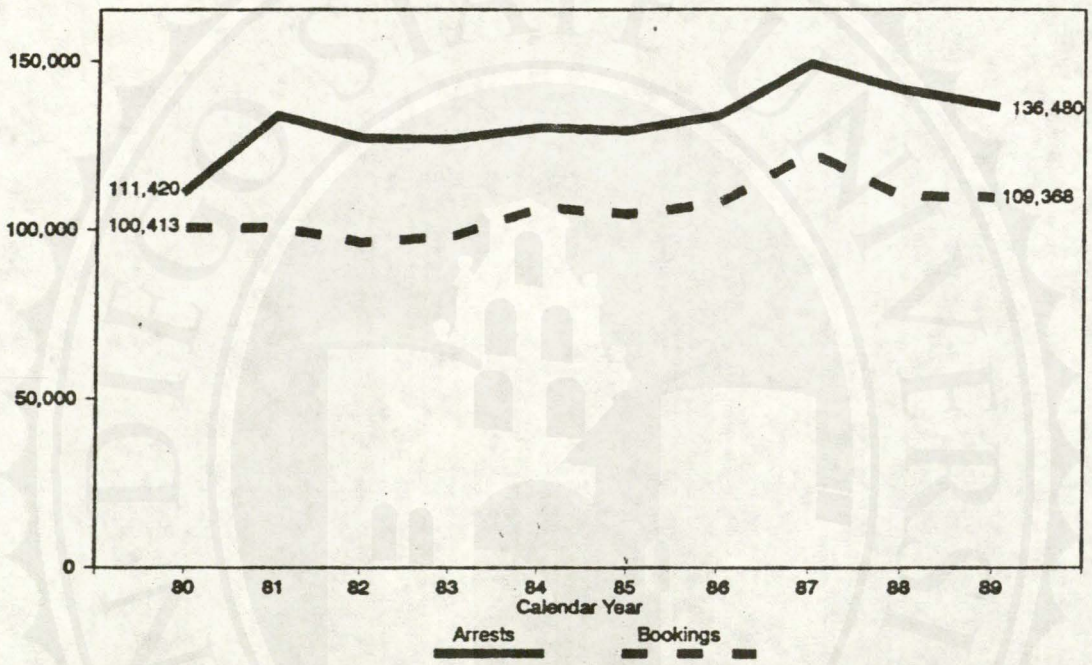
BOOKINGS

Three key elements affect the number of inmates in custody: bookings, or admissions; releases; and the length of time in custody. Several factors can influence the number of new inmates booked into local jail facilities. The number of arrests and law enforcement citation policies have a direct impact on admissions of unsentenced inmates. The number of arrests is affected by the level of crime in the community and population changes. The courts also have a direct impact through issuance of bench warrants and sentences to local custody. Additionally, probation and parole violators are placed in custody by law enforcement and corrections personnel pending hearings. Finally, some inmates are booked and held for other Federal, State, and municipal agencies.

Arrests and Bookings

Arrests have the greatest impact on the number of inmates admitted to the jail, although most of the arrestees are released within a few days. Over the past ten years, the number of arrests has increased at a greater rate than bookings (Figure 3). Adult misdemeanor and felony arrests rose 22% (from 111,420 in 1980 to 136,480 in 1989), while new bookings in the Sheriff's jails increased 9% (100,413 to 109,368). In 1980, there were 11,017 more arrests than bookings. In 1989, the difference increased to 27,112, reflecting increased use of field and stationhouse misdemeanor citations.

Figure 3
TOTAL ADULT ARRESTS AND NEW BOOKINGS
San Diego County, 1980-1989



SOURCE: Bureau of Criminal Statistics and Sheriff's Department

The peak in both arrests and bookings occurred in 1987. Since that time, bookings and arrests have declined. The reduction in arrests is due to a decline the number of misdemeanor arrests. The number of felony arrests has continued to increase. The decline in misdemeanor arrests may be related to jail crowding. In some cases, officers may be charging arrestees with felony offenses to ensure jail booking. Also, officers may be writing fewer citations for minor misdemeanor offenses because of the expectation that nothing will happen, even if the defendant fails to appear in court.

In April 1987, the Superior Court ordered the Sheriff to discontinue booking minor misdemeanor offenders when the Central jail was at the court-ordered capacity. For the most part, the only misdemeanor offenses resulting in jail booking are violent crimes and offenses involving drugs or alcohol. Even defendants with bench warrants for failure to

appear or contempt are not booked, unless the bail exceeds a specified amount. As a result of changes in booking practices, the nature of the jail population has changed, with an increase in more serious offenders. This has implications for security needs in the future.

Misdemeanor Citations. Since the early 1980's, San Diego County law enforcement agencies have increased the use of field and stationhouse citation release as an alternative to booking arrestees into jail. California Penal Code Section 853.6 states that misdemeanor arrestees shall be cited and released with a promise to appear before a magistrate unless specified conditions exist which would justify placement in custody.

During 1990, The San Diego Police Department purchased a trailer which is used as Misdemeanor Arrest Processing Center at the Central station to process arrests that, in the past, would have resulted in jail booking. Other departments use existing facilities to process and hold some arrestees prior to release. Stationhouse release has advantages over field citation release because the arresting officer can obtain information to verify the identity of the arrestee and determine if there are outstanding warrants prior to release.

Jail Bookings by Offense

Table 5 presents new jail bookings of sentenced and unsentenced inmates by highest charge. Data available prior to July 1989 were provided by the County Department of Information Services on monthly reports for each Sheriff's facility by type of offense. Data on offense had to be tabulated manually; therefore, the comparison of bookings by offense is limited to a six-month period (January to June of 1989 and 1990). In July, 1989, SANDAG began receiving computer tapes of booking data which allow a more detailed analysis of charges for sentenced and unsentenced inmates. In previous time periods, highest booking charge was not tabulated by sentence status. About 1% to 2% of all bookings involve sentenced inmates.

Between 1988 and 1989, there was a significant drop in misdemeanor bookings as a result of efforts to reduce the jail population to meet the court-ordered capacity at the Central jail. Since that time, the number of misdemeanor bookings has increased, but the total has not reached the level of 1988 bookings (37,047 during the first six months).

In the first six months of 1989, 27,199 inmates were booked for misdemeanor offenses, increasing to 31,961 in the same period of 1990 (18%). The increase is associated with a 27% rise in bookings for driving under the influence (DUI). Legislation enacted January 1, 1990 lowered the blood-alcohol level for driving under the influence from .10 to .08. Almost all arrests for DUI result in jail booking; however, the length of time spent in custody averages only a few hours.

An increase also occurred in other misdemeanor bookings, from 15,487 to 17,104 (10%). This may be related to a rise in bookings of sentenced inmates (Table 5).

The increase in felony bookings was not as high as in prior years. The number of bookings rose from 20,896 in 1989 to 21,106 in 1990 (up 1%). However, there was a substantial increase in felony bookings for violent offenses, from 1,998 to 2,487 (24%). This increase may be related to the rise in the number of reported violent crimes during the first half of 1990 compared to the prior year (19%).

TABLE 5

NEW BOOKINGS, BY OFFENSE TYPE
MEDIUM/MAXIMUM SECURITY DETENTION FACILITIES
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, JANUARY - JUNE, 1989 AND 1990

Offense	1989	1990	Change
FELONY			
Violent Offense	1,998	2,487	24%
Property Offense	6,356	6,822	7%
Drug Offense	6,543	6,257	-4%
Other Vehicle Code[1]	468	559	19%
Other Felony	5,531	4,981	-10%
Total Felony	**20,896**	**21,106**	**1%**
MISDEMEANOR			
DUI	11,712	14,857	27%
Other Misdemeanor	15,487	17,104	10%
Total Misdemeanor	**27,199**	**31,961**	**18%**
OTHER	1,538	2,284	49%
TOTAL NEW BOOKINGS	**49,633**	**55,351**	**12%**

NOTE: The data include sentenced and unsentenced inmates booked at all Sheriff's detention facilities.

1. Excludes motor vehicle theft

SOURCE: Sheriff's Department

The number of bookings for felony drug offenses was down 4%. The downward trend in drug-related bookings may be due to changes in enforcement or charging practices, or it may reflect a decrease in the level of felony drug activity. From 1988 to 1989, there was a slight decrease in adult felony drug-related arrests (2%). Arrest data for 1990 are not available.

Bookings increased 49% for charges other than local felonies and misdemeanors, from 1,538 to 2,284 in 1990. This is still below the number booked in 1988 (2,733). The other bookings include: probation violations; out-of-county bookings; and federal charges.

Level of Offense. Another way to analyze changes in the type of offense for those booked into Sheriff's jails is to calculate the proportion of the total bookings at each level, including felonies, misdemeanors, and other bookings. During the first six months of 1990, 58% of all bookings were for misdemeanors, up from 55% in 1989 (Table 6). Again, this is may be due to the change in DUI statutes and the increase in sentenced bookings. The proportion for felonies dropped from 42% in 1989 to 38% in 1990.

TABLE 6

NEW BOOKINGS, BY LEVEL OF OFFENSE
MEDIUM/MAXIMUM SECURITY DETENTION FACILITIES
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, JANUARY - JUNE, 1989 AND 1990

Level of Offense	1989	1990	Change
Felony	42%	38%	-4%
Misdemeanor	55%	58%	3%
Other	3%	4%	1%
Total	49,633	55,351	12%

SOURCE: Sheriff's Department

Sentence Status

Table 7 presents new bookings for Sheriff's jails by sentence status for FY 1988-89 and FY 1989-90. Total bookings increased 10%. In FY 1988-89, 99,533 inmates were booked compared to 109,368 in the following year. Of these, most were unsentenced at the time of booking. The number of unsentenced bookings rose 9%, from 98,450 to 106,853.