COVID-19 Impact on Oregon's Public Safety Systems

March 2022

Oregon Criminal Justice Commission

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The mission of the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission is to improve the legitimacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of state and local criminal justice systems.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. Regional and National Context 2
3. COVID-19 & Public Safety System Trends 6
4. Divergent Patterns by Race and Ethnicity 13
5. Discussion 17

Figures

Figure 1 – Police Traffic Stops (Tier 1)2 7
Figure 2 – Arrests 8
Figure 3 – Felony and Misdemeanor Cases Filed in Court 9
Figure 4 – Prison Admissions 10
Figure 5 – Prison Releases 11
Figure 6 – Probation Intakes 12

Tables

Table 1 – Change in Violent Index Crime Rates from 2019 to 2020 2
Table 2 – Change in Property Index Crime Rates from 2019 to 2020 3
Table 3 – January to September FBI Preliminary UCR – Western States, 2020 and 2021 3
Table 4 – January to September FBI Preliminary UCR – Oregon and Major Cities, 2020 and 2021 4
Table 5 – Police Stops by Race/Ethnicity, Tier 1 Agencies 13
Table 6 – Arrests by Race/Ethnicity 14
Table 7 – Court Cases Filed by Race/Ethnicity 14
Table 8 – Prison Admissions by Race/Ethnicity 15
Table 9 – Prison Releases by Race/Ethnicity 15
Table 10 – Probation Intakes by Race/Ethnicity 16

1. Introduction

As part of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) 2020 Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) Grant funding, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) examined the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on Oregon's public safety systems. These impacts are found in distinct changes in patterns of crime, police stops, arrests, case processing, and prison admissions and releases. This report presents an initial, high-level perspective on the changes that occurred during the pandemic as seen in these administrative data.

This report presents monthly, aggregated state-level data for the year prior to the onset of the pandemic and all subsequently available data. Here the CJC presents these impacts from several angles. First are the changes observed between the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) statistics for 2019 and those for 2020. Comparisons are made between Oregon, California, Washington, the entire Western US, and the nation. Differing from other parts of the country, Oregon saw declines in both total violent crime and total property crime over this period. These patterns in Oregon, however, varied by both crime type and region of the state and may have changed after 2020.

Second, simple linear trends are presented for Oregon's major public safety systems, where data are available. Basic linear trend lines are plotted in Figures 1-6 for both the March 2019 to March 2020 period and for the COVID-19 period. Some public safety systems maintained relatively consistent operation patterns through the pandemic, while others experienced a precipitous drop in individuals in that system followed by a slow rebound toward the pre-COVID-19 trend, and still other systems saw significant decreases in individuals entering that system and may have fundamentally different patterns of operation going forward.

Finally, the CJC examined trends by race and ethnicity group in each of these systems. The CJC compared the simple, pre-COVID-19 trend for each group to the actual counts for the most recently available month. Differences between race/ethnic group were found, but additional research is required to determine the extent to which race and ethnicity were causal factors in these differences, particularly in light of county, regional, agency, crime type, and other demographic factors that may systematically vary by race and/or ethnicity and may have had varied systemic changes during the pandemic. This additional analysis will be a focus of future CJC research.

Section 2 presents comparisons of the UCR between Oregon and other relevant states and regions. Section 3 shows the pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 trend comparisons. Section 4 provides the comparison of public safety system involvement across race/ethnic group considering COVID-19. Section 5 then discusses these patterns, highlights the shortcomings of this analysis, and charts a way forward for additional research related to identifying the effects of COVID-19 on Oregon's public safety systems.

2. Regional and National Context

Crime patterns changed nationwide with the COVID-19 pandemic as people spent more time inside their homes and less time in public places. National research on the topic has focused on patterns in major cities, where data have been most readily available. This research has found that, when considered as a whole, crime has declined during this period. This drop in crime rates was most pronounced for property crimes, which fell substantially with the exception of non-residential burglary and car theft.[1] Conversely, the estimated effect of COVID-19 on violent crime varied by study, which in turn varied by the cities included in the research, the timeline of study, and the study's methodology.[2] One notable exception is that researchers have generally found that homicides and gun violence increased during this period, despite finding mixed patterns of violent crime as whole.

Here the CJC provides summary statistics to couch Oregon in this broader research. FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) statistics provide standardized estimates of reported crime rates for each state as well as for the nation, allowing for comparisons across states and regions. The UCR report for 2020 was released in September 2021 and allows for a comparison between pre-COVID-19 UCR data in 2019 and 2020 data, which was immersed in the COVID-19 pandemic from early March 2020 onward. These data show that Oregon differed in COVID-19 patterns from its neighboring states as well as from the country as a whole, most notably having a slight decline in violent crime compared to increases in many other areas.

Table 1 shows the change in the violent index crime rates from 2019 to 2020. The Oregon violent index crime total rate dropped by 0.6 percent, but the murder rate increased by six percent and the aggravated assault rate by five percent. Oregon's rate increases are of a lower magnitude, however, than rate increases in murder and aggravated assault for the Western US[3] as well as for the US as a whole. Nationally the murder rate increased by 28.9 percent and the aggravated assault rate increased by 11.7 percent. The rates of rape decreased by 17.5 percent in Oregon and the robbery rate declined by seven percent. The Western US saw an overall increase in violent crime rate by one percent, while the US Total violent crime rate increased by 4.6 percent.

Table 1 – Change in Violent Index Crime Rates from 2019 to 2020

Violent Index Crime	Oregon	California	Washington	Western US[3]	US Total
Murder	6.2%	30.6%	45.3%	26.2%	28.9%
Rape	-17.5%	-9.0%	-24.2%	-11.3%	-12.0%
Robbery	-7.0%	-14.3%	-4.2%	-11.3%	-9.6%
Aggravated Assault	5.1%	7.9%	1.8%	7.6%	11.7%
Index Violent Crime Total	-0.6%	<0.1%	-3.2%	1.0%	4.6%

Table 2 reports the change in the property index crime rates from 2019 to 2020. The Oregon total property index crime rate dropped by 4.6 percent. Larceny-theft dropped by 6.4 percent and burglary dropped by 5.5 percent, while motor vehicle theft increased by 6.2 percent. Nationally the motor vehicle theft rate increased by 11.4 percent and increased by 15.3 percent in the Western States. The overall drop

[1] Some cities disaggregate shootings and homicide, but the FBI's UCR statistics track these in a single category. *See* Abrams, D.S. 2021. "COVID and crime: An early empirical look." *Journal of Public Economics*, 194. 104344.
[2] *See, for example*: Ibid; Schleimer, J.P., et al. 2021. "Physical Distancing, Violence, and Crime in US Cities during the Coronavirus Pandemic." *J Urban Health,* November.; Lopez, E. & R. Rosenfeld. 2021. "Crime, quarantine, and the U.S. coronavirus pandemic." *Criminology & Public Policy*, 20. 401-422
[3] The FBI defines the Western US Region as Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

in property index crime was not limited to Oregon, as the Western States saw a drop in property crime of 5.8 percent and the US Total dropped by 8.1 percent.

Table 2 – Change in Property Index Crime Rates from 2019 to 2020

Property Index Crime	Oregon	California	Washington	Western US[3]	US Total
Burglary	-5.5%	-4.4%	13.7%	-3.9%	-7.7%
Larceny-Theft	-6.4%	-15.6%	-4.5%	-10.4%	-10.9%
Motor Vehicle Theft	6.2%	18.9%	9.4%	15.3%	11.4%
Index Property Crime Total	-4.6%	-8.4%	0.2%	-5.8%	-8.1%

Preliminary data are available to compare the first 3 quarters of 2020 to those of 2021 for Oregon's cities with populations over 100,000, as seen in Tables 3 & 4. Some notes of caution when interpreting these data: first, some regions had notable changes in crime rates from 2019 to 2020, but then the rates remained relatively constant in 2021. Conversely, some regions remained relatively constant from 2019 to 2020, but had a large change in 2021. The data presented below may suggest, for example, that crime is relatively high or sharply rising in an area whereas a longer trend may show that crime has been relatively constant and the uptick may just be due to normal variation. These data, thus, require further scrutiny to definitively identify trends. Second, some researchers have noted that there are complex criminal behavior patterns that have occurred because of COVID-19 and policy responses to the pandemic.[4] Summary statistics as presented below cannot describe these nuanced patterns and behaviors.

We first summarize these data with the totals of figures from reporting cities for each state in the Western US in Table 3. There is considerable variance across Western states regarding both violent crime and property crime trends. Few obvious inferences are available from these data, except for the fact that Hawaii and Nevada were the only two states that saw declines, and declines of a large magnitude, between 2020 and 2021. While it would require more research to identify this cause, one likely contributor to this pattern is the significant decline in tourists to these two states over this period.

Table 3 – January to September FBI Preliminary UCR – Western States, 2020 and 2021

All Reporting Cities*	Violent Crime			Property Crime		
	2020	2021	% Change	2020	2021	% Change
Oregon	4,568	5,425	18.8%	41,047	40,600	-1.1%
Arizona	1,799	1,853	3.0%	9,029	8,961	-0.8%
California	6,085	6,212	2.1%	26,718	28,912	8.2%
Colorado	12,960	13,826	6.7%	73,516	83,904	14.1%
Hawaii	1,843	893	-51.5%	18,252	12,919	-29.2%
Idaho	921	923	0.2%	4,838	3,941	-18.5%
Montana	684	870	27.2%	3,622	3,833	5.8%
Nevada	9,822	7,969	-18.9%	39,558	41,546	5.0%
New Mexico	5,645	6,238	10.5%	21,115	19,728	-6.6%
Utah	1,617	1,777	9.9%	12,537	12,439	-0.8%
Washington	7,471	8,446	13.1%	59,530	61,777	3.8%

* UCR reporting is highly inconsistent across states. Note, for example, that California's total figures are of a similar magnitude to New Mexico, Nevada, and Oregon, despite California having a considerably larger population. This is because California cities are not well represented in these figures.

[4] Boman & Gallupe. 2020. "Has COVID-19 Changed Crime? Crime Rates in the United States during the Pandemic." *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. 45, 537-545., for example, finds that individuals who once may have committed minor crimes in peer groups may have shifted towards individual violent crime because of lockdowns. See: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-020-09551-3

Table 4 presents the figures for each Oregon city that reported UCR figures and the largest cities that reported to UCR over the relevant period. One pattern reported by researchers has been an increase in violent crime and gun crime since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic along with declines in other types of crimes. These data show that the Portland, Hillsboro, and Salem areas saw high increases in violent crime rates during this period and were the drivers of the statewide increase shown in Table 3. Further, the Portland and Seattle-Tacoma areas saw some of the highest increases in violent crime among these cities from 2020 to 2021. Conversely, Bend saw the largest decline in violent crime with Eugene also reporting a slightly lower level of violent crime. Beaverton, Bend, Eugene, Hillsboro, and Salem all saw declines in property crime rates over this period.[5] These preliminary data may suggest that violent crime rates increased relative to the 2019-2020 pattern, whereas property crime continued to trend downward but at a lower rate of decline. These data may also suggest a notable difference between the Portland Metro-Salem region and the rest of the state. Additional research is required to further dissect these distinct patterns.

Table 4 – January to September FBI Preliminary UCR – Oregon and Major Cities, 2020 and 2021

All Reporting Cities*	Violent Crime			Property Crime		
	2020	2021	% Change	2020	2021	% Change
Beaverton, OR	181	187	3.3%	1,701	1,617	-4.9%
Bend, OR	142	128	-9.9%	1,535	1,132	-26.3%
Eugene, OR	522	514	-1.5%	5,292	4,555	-13.9%
Gresham, OR	368	368	0.0%	2,248	2,288	1.8%
Hillsboro, OR	182	209	14.8%	1,630	1,582	-2.9%
Portland, OR	2,669	3,436	28.7%	23,520	25,125	6.8%
Salem, OR	504	583	15.7%	5,121	4,301	-16.0%
San Diego, CA	3,911	4,043	3.4%	17,362	19,355	11.5%
Denver, CO	4,706	5,106	8.5%	24,075	32,073	33.2%
Las Vegas MPD, NV	6,984	5,718	-18.1%	28,136	29,958	6.5%
Albuquerque, NM	5,645	6,238	10.5%	21,115	19,728	-6.6%
Salt Lake City, UT	1,401	1,548	10.5%	10,421	10,694	2.6%
Boston, MA	3,381	2,882	-14.8%	9,826	8,082	-17.7%
Detroit, MI	10,615	10,455	-1.5%	16,049	14,556	-9.3%
Minneapolis, MN	3,769	3,850	2.1%	14,930	13,224	-11.4%
Kansas City, MO	6,129	5,029	-17.9%	14,572	13,747	-5.7%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC	5,937	5,735	-3.4%	23,005	22,032	-4.2%
Cleveland, OH	4,734	4,837	2.2%	12,114	10,358	-14.5%
Memphis, TN	11,369	11,894	4.6%	26,698	25,037	-6.2%
Dallas, TX	8,921	8,288	-7.1%	34,750	31,637	-9.0%
Houston, TX	21,794	21,470	-1.5%	72,982	69,844	-4.3%
San Antonio, TX	8,944	7,835	-12.4%	42,477	43,066	1.4%
Seattle, WA	3,646	4,193	15.0%	26,985	27,857	3.2%
Tacoma, WA	1,367	1,817	32.9%	9,000	9,747	8.3%
Milwaukee, WI	6,915	7,016	1.5%	11,354	17,699	55.9%

In sum, some forms of violent crime saw pronounced increases across the nation during the first year of the pandemic, particularly homicides and aggravated assaults, with violent crime as a whole increasing. Oregon, conversely, saw a minor decline in the overall index of violent crime in 2020, but preliminary numbers show a likely increase from 2020 to 2021. Where property crime saw nationwide declines in

[5] For additional information see Oregon's recent UCR briefs:
https://www.oregon.gov/cjc/CJC Document Library/2019_FBI_UCR_OregonReleaseBrief.pdf
https://www.oregon.gov/cjc/CJC%20Document%20Library/2020_FBI_U CR_OregonReleaseBrief.pdf

2020 (excepting motor vehicle theft), the decline in property crime in Oregon was not as large as that seen at a national scale. There is significant variation across the state, however, which requires additional research to describe and explain more precisely.

The total number of adults in custody also trended downward during this period. Nationally, the number of adults in custody declined sharply from 2019 to 2020. The total count of adults in custody in state and federal facilities in the US declined by 15% over this period with only Alaska seeing an increase. This represents an acceleration of the downward trend in state and federal facility populations that was occurring prior to 2019. Delays in case processing due to COVID-19 also led to a 40% decline in state and federal facility admissions,[6] which will likely have a continued impact on total population of adults in custody in the future.

[6] Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2021. Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf

3. COVID-19 & Public Safety Systems Trends

This section presents the actual monthly data (gray line) as well as the pre-COVID-19 onset trend line (yellow dashes) and post-COVID-19 onset trend line (blue dots) for several of the major public safety systems in Oregon in Figures 1-6. The systems for which count data are available over this period include police traffic stops among large police agencies, arrests, cases filed in the courts, prison admissions, prison releases, and probation admissions.[7] These data are presented for the year prior to March 2020, when lockdown restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic began and all subsequent data through time of writing.[8]

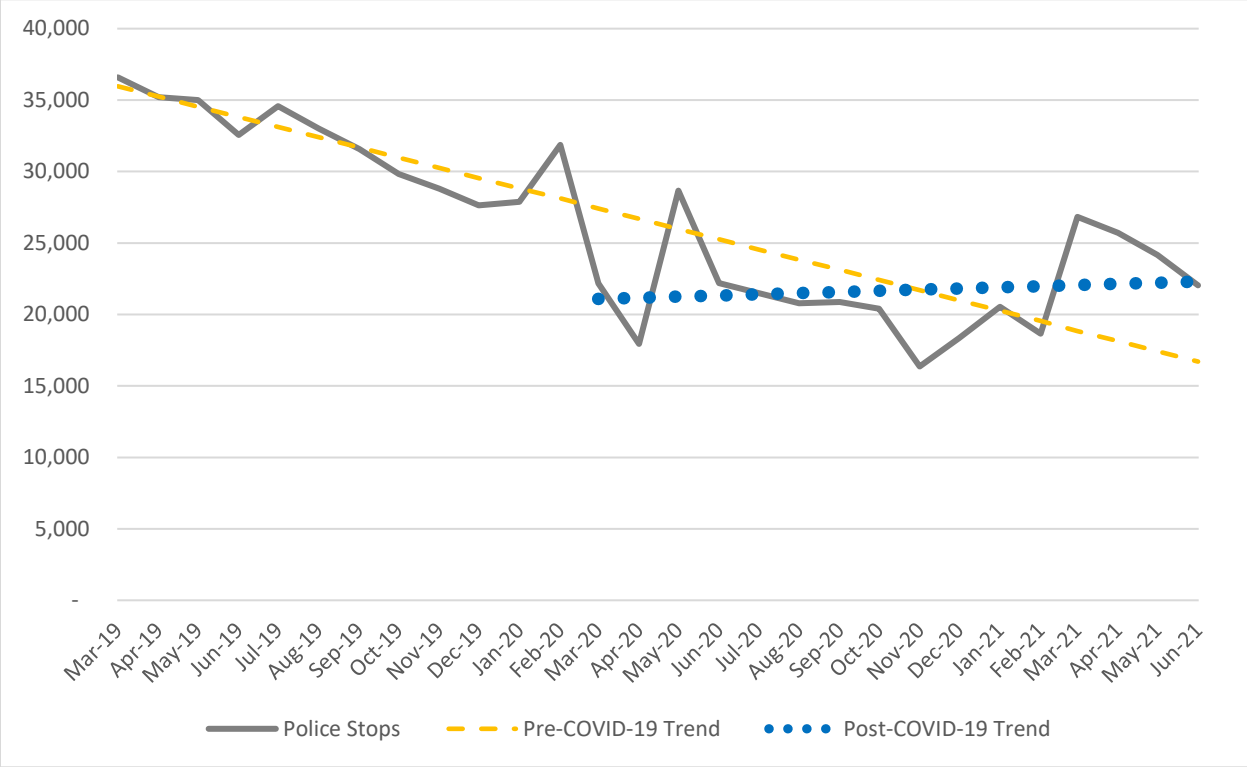
COVID-19 has had a wide range of effects on public safety systems. Traffic and pedestrian stops conducted by the largest state agencies[9] had been steadily declining prior to the onset of COVID-19. While there was an immediate drop in stops around March 2020, the trend subsequently flattened and returned to a level that exceeds what we'd expect based on the pre-COVID-19 trend. Arrests were also steadily declining prior to the pandemic and then had a steep decline with the pandemic's onset. Arrests thereafter rebounded slightly and have since stayed relatively flat. Conversely, the total number of felony and misdemeanor cases filed in courts were relatively unchanged during the pandemic, showing a temporary drop in the first few months of the pandemic followed by a relatively fast rebound to the pre-COVID-19 trend line. Prison admissions were, similarly, declining prior to COVID-19, but then saw a steep drop at the beginning of the pandemic followed by a flat return to a level we would expect based on the simple pre-COVID-19 trend. Prison releases were relatively constant over time prior to the pandemic and largely maintained this pattern during the pandemic. There were, however, two spikes in releases that coincided with the Governor's executive actions. Finally, probation admissions saw a similar pattern to prison admissions, where there was a steep drop beginning in March 2019 then followed by a steady return to a level we would expect based on the pre-COVID-19 trend. The extent to which these changes were a direct result of responses to the pandemic or caused by other factors (e.g., agency or government policy changes, slower case processing via virtual conferences) is difficult to address without more nuanced data and requires additional research.

All the systems described here were impacted by policy changes that occurred during the period of study and were largely unrelated to COVID-19. Most notably, Measure 110, which decriminalized possession of small amounts of drugs, was passed during this period and was implemented in February 2021. The extent to which Measure 110 has impacted these systems remains an open question, particularly when compounded by the ongoing pandemic.

[7] These data do not include those booked in jail. Jail data are not currently gathered on regular basis at the state level.
[8] Most recent data availability varies by database.
[9] Police agencies with 100 or more officers. These are identified as "Tier 1" agencies in the STOP analysis. See the STOP report for more details, https://www.oregon.gov/cjc/CJC%20Document%20Library/STOP_REPORT_2021_FINAL.pdf

Traffic stops conducted by the largest police agencies in Oregon were trending downward prior to COVID-19. This trend continued after March 2020 and for the remainder of 2020, but there was more volatility in month-to-month stop counts, as seen in Figure 1.[10] Then in 2021 there was a large uptick in stops in the first half of the year, resulting in an overall flat trend in stops during the COVID-19 period. Thus the overall trend suggests that total stops did, at the least, rebound back to the level that we would expect based on the pre-COVID-19 trend, but we are unable to tell whether stops would have flattened out in this way had COVID-19 not happened.

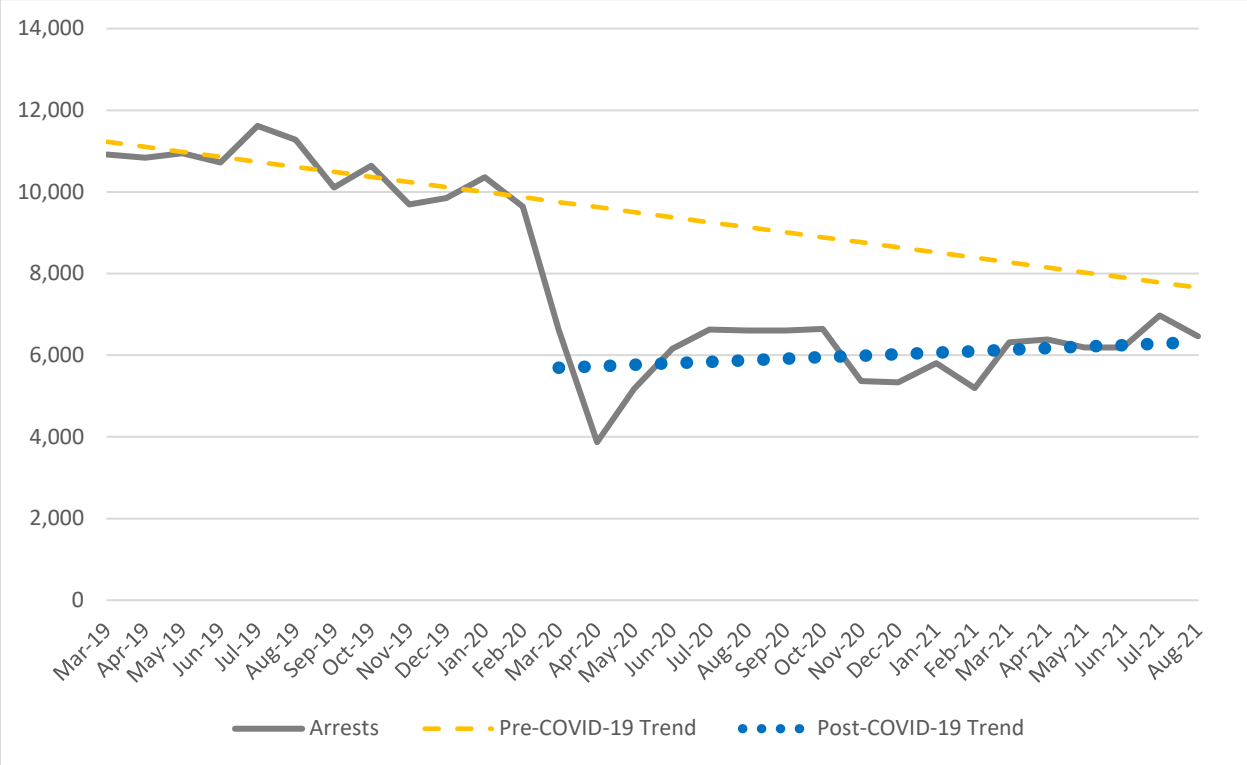
Figure 1 – Police Traffic Stops (Tier 1)[2]



[10] STOP data collection began in 2018 with Tier 1 agencies, the largest agencies in Oregon. These agencies are responsible for the majority of police stops in Oregon and are the only agencies for which the CJC has data for the full period from March 2019 to June 2021.

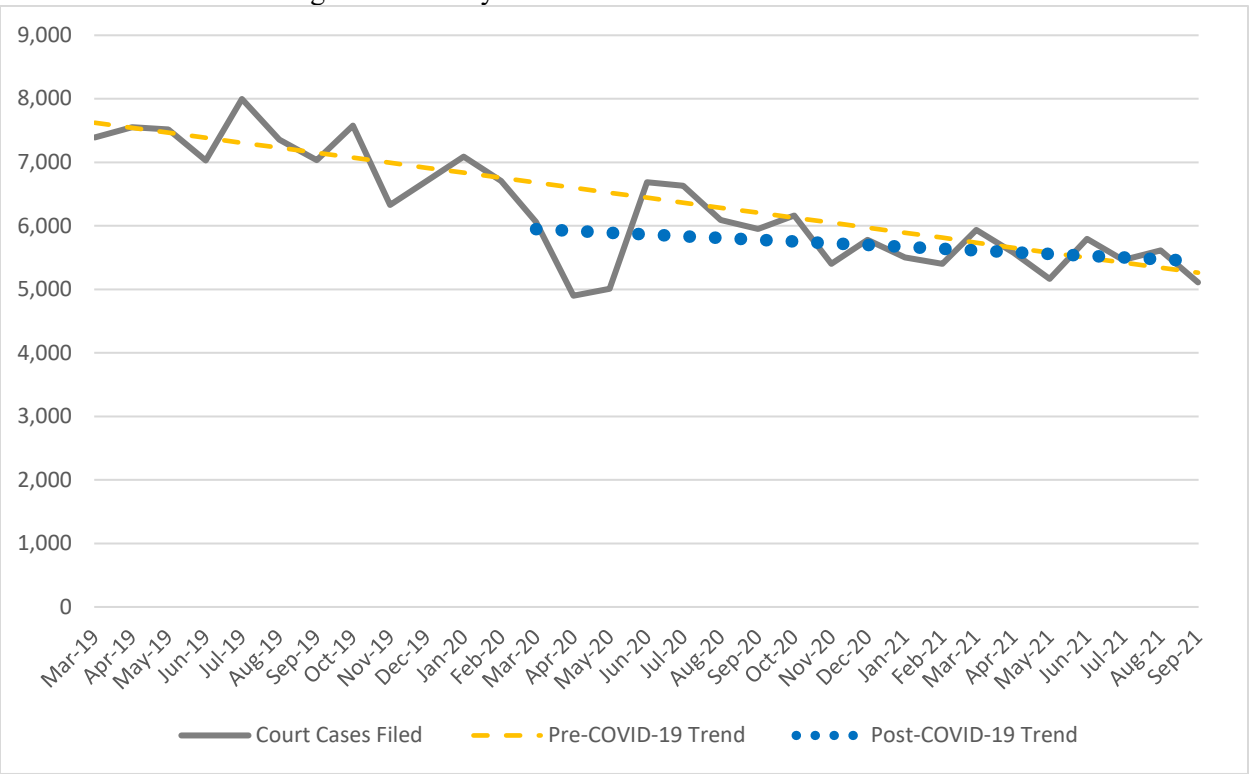
Like traffic stops, arrests were steadily declining in the year prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, as seen in Figure 2. There was also a precipitous drop in arrests in March and April 2020 but, differing from traffic stops, arrests did not quickly rebound thereafter. Rather, arrests remained relatively constant at this lower level in the year after March 2020 and thus may be steadily returning to the pre-COVID-19, slightly declining trend line. A widely reported trend in the state since the onset of the pandemic has been a spike in the use of citations-in-lieu of arrest, where a citation along with a designated court date for arrestable crimes is issued rather than arresting the subject. The more widespread use of citations-in-lieu was adopted by many agencies to reduce jail crowding and thereby reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within jails. The extent to which these policing patterns and practices represent either new baselines or temporary shifts remains an open question. Nevertheless, the trend in arrests appears to be returning to the level we would expect based on the pre-COVID-19 trend.

Figure 2 – Arrests



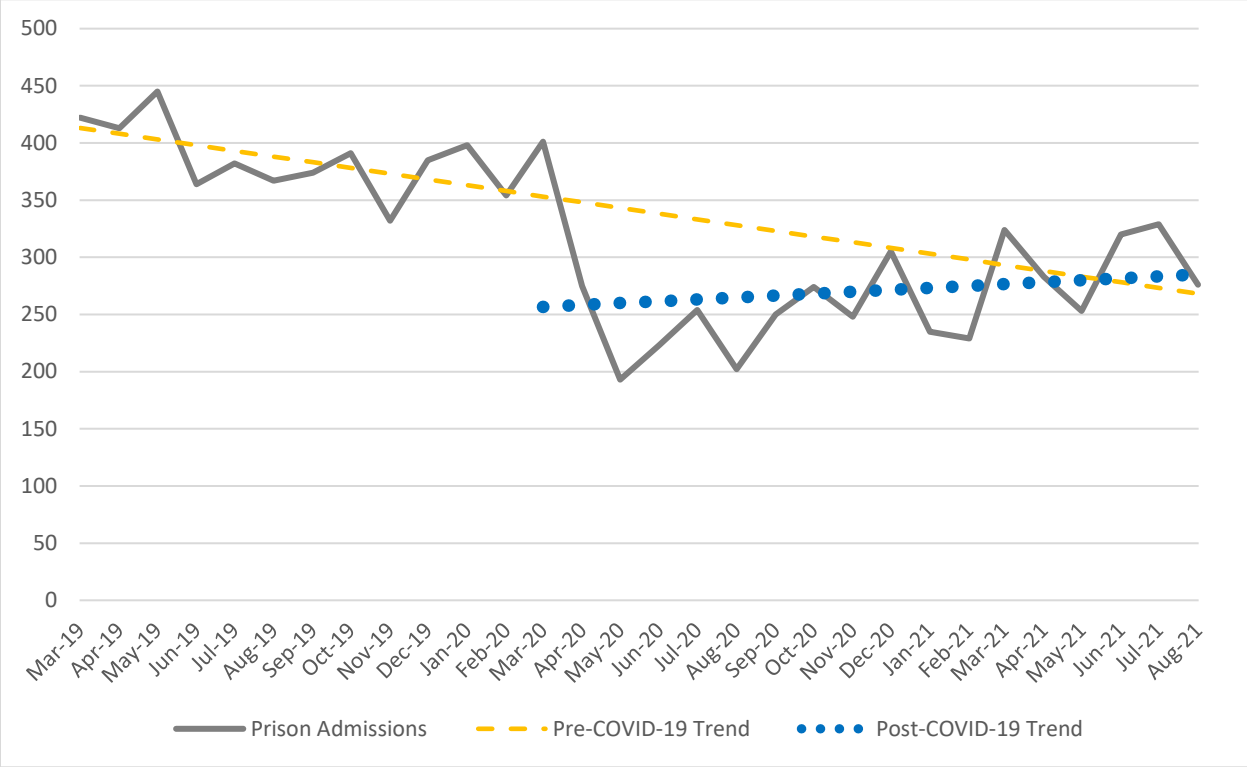
Felony and misdemeanor cases filed in the courts were also trending downward pre-COVID-19, as seen in Figure 3. This trend remained predominantly unchanged through the pandemic but included a pronounced drop in cases filed around the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. By the summer of 2020, however, the total cases filed returned to the pre-COVID-19 pattern. Importantly, the cases filed metric used here is an incomplete view of case processing trends in the courts since it does not measure time to disposition, pretrial detention rates, likelihood of conviction, sentencing type, sentence length, failure to appear at court dates, and other key case processing metrics. Nevertheless, this suggests that despite the drop in arrests, the overall interactions with public safety systems as represented by total cases filed quickly returned to the pre-COVID-19 trend. This supports the anecdotal evidence that officers shifted away from arrests and toward citations-in-lieu during this period, which would lead to lower arrests but keep cases filed relatively constant. Other bottlenecks in the court system, however, may have had downstream impacts on prison and probation admission levels.

Figure 3 – Felony and Misdemeanor Cases Filed in Court



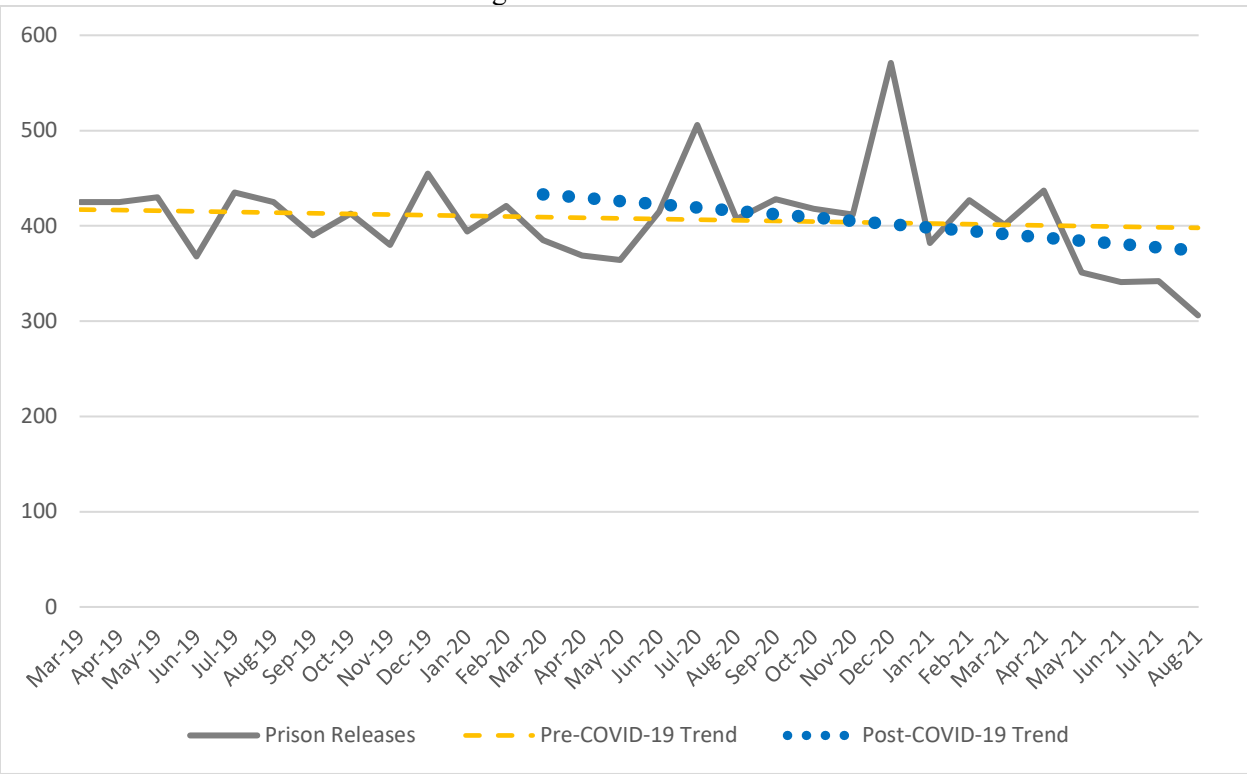
Prison admissions were also declining prior to COVID-19, but this trend accelerated beginning in March 2020 and then flattened by summer of 2020, which is like the patterns seen for arrests. Several factors are known contributors to this downward trend and may complicate our understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on prison admissions. Nevertheless, and like other systems, there was a pronounced drop in admissions in early 2020 followed by a return to the pre-pandemic linear trend. We may expect this downward trend to resume, but the wide-ranging impacts of these changes are yet unknown especially considering the lasting impacts of COVID-19.

Figure 4 – Prison Admissions



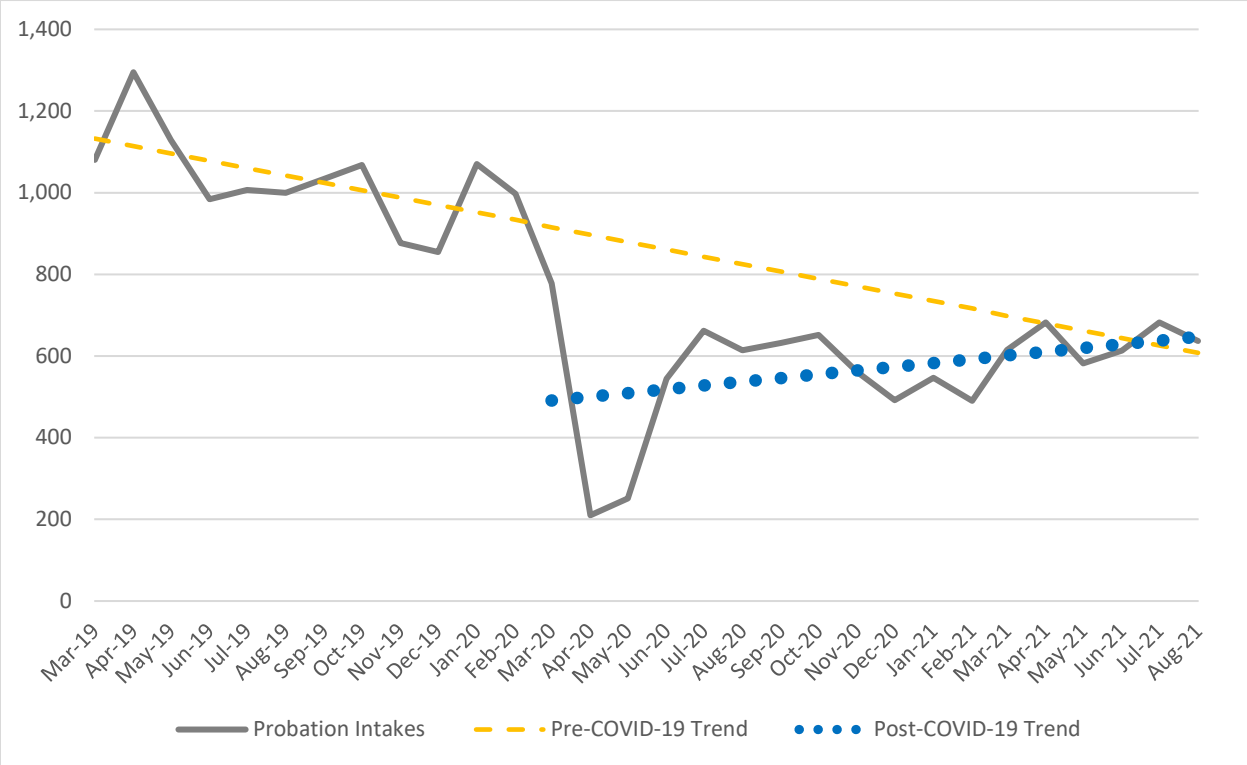
Declining prison populations have been driven by declining admissions (Figure 4) and relatively constant prison releases (Figure 5), but increased use of short-term transitional leave as well as generally shorter sentences are also contributors to this decline. The relatively flat trend in prison releases was maintained over the current study's timeline, but the COVID-19 period was also marked by the early release of many adults in custody and the issuing of several commutations. Nevertheless, the final three months in the prison release data show a decline in prison releases relative to overall flat trend. This downward trend may represent a rebalancing following the spikes in early releases in 2020. That is, those early releases may have originally been slated to occur starting in Summer 2021, so recent declines in prison releases may simply be because the releasable population is lower than it otherwise would have been. Another possible explanation is that the precipitous drop in prison admissions beginning in March 2020 had a delayed impact on releases, roughly in line with the length of the shorter sentences of admittees. Disentangling these explanations requires additional research.

Figure 5 – Prison Releases



Probation program intakes, as seen in Figure 6, saw a similar trend to prison admissions. Probation also saw a pronounced decline in intakes with the onset of the pandemic, which was then followed by a relatively flat pattern that gradually returned to a level we would expect based on the pre-pandemic linear trend. The drop in intakes due to COVID-19, however, was much more drastic for probation. Relative to prison admissions, probation sentences are, in general, for lower-level offenses. These less-severe cases may have been temporarily deprioritized by courts bogged down by adjusting to case processing during the pandemic and/or some of these cases may have received a non-prison, non-probation sentence. Additional research would be needed to identify which, if any, of these explanations are valid.

Figure 6 – Probation Intakes



4. Divergent Patterns by Race and Ethnicity

This section presents a comparison of COVID-19's impact across race and ethnic groups. For each of the systems depicted in the previous section (i.e., police stops, arrests, court cases filed, prison admissions, prison releases, and probation intakes) a comparison is made between a pre-COVID period and the last available data at the time of writing. Monthly counts for some of these groups are low, so even small variations in these monthly counts can lead to seemingly large percent changes for that group, even if the changes are due to normal variability. To account for these normal, month-to-month variations we use a 3-month average for each of the pre-COVID-19 period and post-COVID-19 period in these comparisons.

There are several issues with this simplistic approach and the subsequent interpretations of these data. First, little can be said about why these patterns are present. In police stops, for example, it may be the case that disparities are entirely due to some groups disproportionately occupying "essential" occupations and thus occupying a relatively larger proportion of the commuting population during the pandemic. Conversely, these differences may be due to strategic redeployment of police resources due to staff shortages and/or policy changes. Second, bottlenecks early in case processing may lead to seeming disparities at the sentencing and post-incarceration stages if these bottlenecks are more severe in specific jurisdictions with higher populations of specific groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests there has been variability in processing capacity across jurisdictions, but the interplay between this variability and the respective defendant populations is not explored here. Finally, these comparisons are just a snapshot in time, where taking a different period for comparison may lead to different patterns. This section offers a different angle than the prior section that relied on trend lines to plot simple, expected patterns for overall populations. Here a simple comparison is made for each race and ethnicity group tracked in the data before and after COVID-19, omitting trends from before or after the pandemic.

Table 5 presents the percent change from the 3 months prior to COVID-19 onset in March 2020 and the last 3 months of police stops in the year 3 STOP data. All groups except Latinx saw a 17% or greater drop in the average number of police stops per month over this period. The Latinx group saw a 0.9% increase. These data can say little about why the Latinx group remained constant while each other group saw notable declines. There may also be other complicating factors in the interpretation of these data, such as seasonal variation in police stop patterns, and these data can say little about the reasons for police stops and how those reasons may vary across groups and police agencies.

Table 5 – Police Stops by Race/Ethnicity, Tier 1 Agencies

Race/ Ethnicity	Police Stops (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (04/21-06/21)	
Asian	1,004	834	-17.0%
Black	1,574	1,224	-22.3%
Latinx	3,663	3,696	0.9%
Native	178	128	-28.4%
White	22,018	17,589	-20.1%
Overall	29,122	23,963	-17.7%

Table 6 displays the difference between average monthly arrests in the 3 months prior to COVID-19 and the average monthly arrests from July to August 2021. Like police stops, arrests dropped significantly over this period, but dropped to a much greater extent for non-Latinx groups relative to Latinx groups. Overall, average arrests dropped 35% between these two periods, but only 4.7% for the Latinx group. Notably, the Asian group did see fewer arrests as well, but these dropped by a smaller magnitude (21.7%) relative to white, Black, and Native groups.

Table 6 – Arrests by Race/Ethnicity[11]

Race/ Ethnicity	Arrests (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (07/21-09/21)	
Asian	120	94	-21.7%
Black	596	393	-34.1%
Latinx	1,092	1,040	-4.7%
Native	177	128	-27.6%
White	7,564	4,731	-37.5%
Overall	9,948	6,459	-35.1%

Table 7 shows a slightly different pattern in court case filing than the stop and arrest data shown above. Overall, there was a 21% drop in average cases filed between the two periods, but the Asian, Latinx, and Native groups were all below this average drop in cases filed. In the Latinx and Asian cases, this may be due to a relatively higher number of Latinx cases entering the system from stops and arrests. But other potential explanations require more investigation. For example, Black cases filed dropped to a greater extent than the state as a whole between these periods. One possible explanation is that Oregon's Black population is highly concentrated in Multnomah County and the county experienced notable changes that could influence cases filed over this period which may be driving this decline in cases filed for the Black group. This and other explanations for these patterns in cases filed require more investigation.

Table 7 – Court Cases Filed by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	Cases Filed (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (07/21-09/21)	
Asian	65	55	-14.4%
Black	429	289	-32.6%
Latinx	994	928	-6.6%
Native	96	91	-5.2%
White	4,868	3,649	-25.0%
Overall	6,832	5,394	-21.0%

[11] Note that the LEDS database does not keep information on ethnic identity. Here the CJC leverages a probabilistic correction based on census and other data sets to identify arrests that are most likely to be Latinx. See, https://www.oregon.gov/cjc/CJC%20Document%20Library/RaceCorrectionTechDocFinal-8-6-18.pdf

Average monthly prison admissions also saw a notable decline between these periods, as seen in Table 8, dropping 18.6% overall. Similar to cases filed, average Latinx and Native admissions dropped at a lower rate than the state as a whole, whereas Asian and Black groups saw lower average prison admissions when compared to pre-COVID-19 data. These patterns, especially for the Latinx group relative to other groups, may be due to the Latinx group's larger relative involvement earlier in case processing.

Table 8 – Prison Admissions by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	Admissions (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (06/21-08/21)	
Asian	6	4	-29.4%
Black	34	26	-23.3%
Latinx	60	53	-11.7%
Native	11	10	-6.2%
White	265	215	-19.0%
Overall	379	308	-18.6%

Table 9 shows the change in patterns of average prison releases over this period. Here, Latinx and Asian releases from prison remained closer to the pre-COVID-19 average relative to other groups. Black and Native American releases saw large drops in monthly averages. As discussed in Section 3, some of this may be due to individuals in these groups being disproportionately released earlier in the pandemic. This pattern, however, likely holds across all these groups and partially explains why prison releases, on average, are lower despite there being an uptick in commutations during the pandemic.

Table 9 – Prison Releases by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	Releases (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (06/21-08/21)	
Asian	5	5	-6.7%
Black	41	27	-34.1%
Latinx	68	58	-15.1%
Native	15	10	-34.1%
White	293	229	-21.8%
Overall	423	330	-22.1%

Probation intakes saw a significant decline from the pre- to post-COVID-19 periods, dropping about a third from pre-COVID-19 levels, as seen in Table 10. The declines were the largest for the Asian and Black groups, each declining more than 40% from the pre-COVID-19 averages, whereas the Latinx and Native American groups' declines where each under 20%. Again, some of these patterns are at least partially due to patterns seen earlier in case processing, but the full extent of these effects is difficult to disentangle.

Table 10 – Probation Intakes by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	Probation Intakes (3-month avg.)		Percent Change
	Pre-COVID (12/19-02/20)	Last Available (06/21-08/21)	
Asian	14	8	-41.5%
Black	60	33	-44.1%
Latinx	154	127	-17.5%
Native	13	10	-18.4%
White	729	464	-36.4%
Overall	974	644	-33.9%

Section 3 above showed that most public safety systems in Oregon have returned, roughly, to the pre-COVID-19 trend in cases processed/entered after an initial downward spike beginning around March 2020. The results shown in the current section show that this return to the pre-COVID trend was differentially experienced across race and ethnic groups. What this section does not show, however, is why these patterns exist. There may have been changes in work, commuting, and social patterns that varied across groups that led to changing crime patterns; police may have changed the distribution of services and patrols across their localities; court actors likely reorganized and reprioritized cases; and changing policy has led to sentencing changes and earlier release for some of those involved in those public safety systems. The patterns identified in this section require further research to identify which of these explanations and to what extent each of these explanations contribute to these disparities.

5. Discussion

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had widespread impacts in Oregon's public safety systems. Some systems, notably the courts, have shown few changes regarding the total number of individuals entering the system. Other public safety systems, however, had large shifts in populations in their respective systems. The prevailing patterns in these systems going forward are to-be-determined. This initial analysis has taken a high-level perspective on the effects of COVID-19, leaves many important questions unanswered, and suggests that additional, more rigorous analysis is warranted.

The current analysis does little to uncover the underlying explanations regarding the changes in public safety systems or the lack thereof. The CJC, for example, has heard from the courts that video conferencing has been a strong mitigating factor in satisfying case deadlines and avoiding many bottlenecks in the system, but it remains unclear if this has had an equal effect across courts along the urban/rural divide, by defendant socioeconomic status, or by crime type. These questions of equity and barriers to accessing the system bear important lessons for effective case management, particularly if the courts retain some portion of this new videoconferencing capacity going forward.

Systems that saw significant changes often have known or plausible causes for those changes. The details of how these changes came to be, however, and whether these changes will be retained going forward remains unknown. A prominent example is the increase of citations-in-lieu-of-arrest after March 2020. The CJC has heard directly from police and jail commanders that this shift occurred, but the scale of the change is unclear and as well as how these changes overlapped with the impacts of Measure 110. Further, nationwide protests following the death of George Floyd may have had varied and extensive police responses. The extent of these responses is difficult to quantify.

There are also several criminal justice patterns that have been found in other localities that would require additional research in Oregon. First, there has been an increase in violent crime nationwide. Many places have seen an uptick in homicides and gun violence. There are several compelling explanations for this increase over this period and it is challenging to disentangle these explanations. The CJC plans to do a more detailed examination of how violent crime changed over this time, what types of violent crime saw the biggest changes, and the extent to which domestic violence played a role in these changes.

An additional crime category that was impacted by COVID-19 was driving crimes, as there was a drastic drop in the number of people on the roads, but also purported upticks in speeding and motor vehicle theft. There may be further shades of difference in the changes between different types of driving crimes since, for example, bars were closed for an extended period and so there may have been a lower proportion of DUIIs, but there were also fewer drivers on the road and so perhaps more opportunities to speed. These and other driving-related patterns also require further exploration.

The CJC will further scope these and other COVID-19 related questions. COVID-19 impacted all aspects of life and disentangling these impacts, particularly relative to other co-occurring and major criminal justice police changes and events, is an important yet challenging endeavor. Through a combination of SAC grant and legislative-based funding sources, the CJC will continue to examine these impacts.