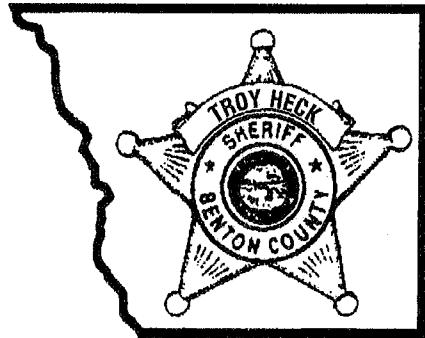


# BENTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

581 Highway 23 NE • P.O. Box 159 • Foley, MN 56329  
Administrative: (320) 968-7201 • FAX: (320) 968-6885  
Jail: (320) 968-8180 • FAX: (320) 968-6347  
Records: (320) 968-8150



**Troy Heck, Sheriff**  
**Neal Jacobson, Chief Deputy**

04-08-25

Benton County Commissioners,

For many years it has been tradition for the sheriff to provide an annual report to the board to summarize the activities of the Office of Sheriff over the past year. The purpose of this report is to provide a broad overview of the activities conducted in the office to help strengthen communication and awareness of our services to the people of Benton County. It is my hope that this report will accomplish this goal. Should you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Troy Heck  
Sheriff

## Executive Summary

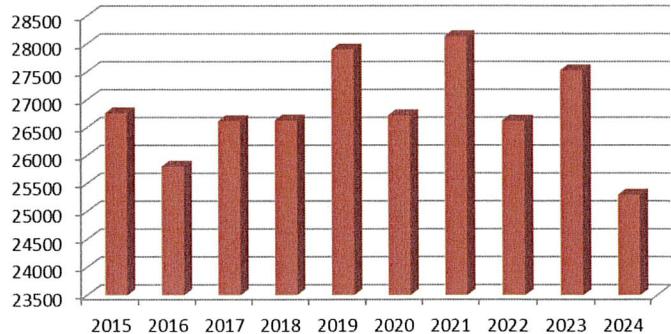
A high performing team generates results. A review of the data from 2024 and previous years demonstrates that the team focused on public safety in Benton County is generating results. Law enforcement agencies, the courts, probation agencies, and the public have all done their part to create a falling crime rate and the safe community we enjoy today. For the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the crime rate and number of reported crimes has fallen in the unincorporated areas where our office holds primary jurisdiction. However, some dark clouds persist in the bright skies of our crime statistics. Interpersonal conflict in the form of domestic violence and harassment complaints continue their prominence as our two most frequently reported crimes. Finding solutions to these issues remains a priority of our work.

The critical task of recruiting and retaining excellent staff remains another priority. To address the needs of our team, we continue working to improve our wellness efforts. We have also undertaken a marketing campaign to highlight for prospective candidates the benefits of working at the Benton County Sheriff's Office.

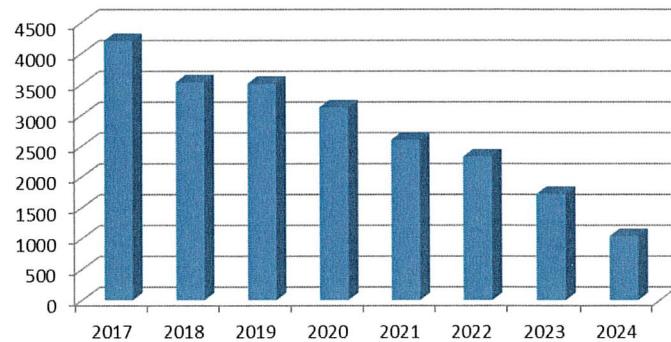
Our office metrics demonstrate consistent modest decreases in demand and activity. While all aspects of the sheriff's office remained busy and engaged with the community, it is fortunate that demand for public safety services was lightened in 2024.

Community outreach and crime prevention efforts remain a primary focus. An engaged and involved community is our best defense against crime in our neighborhoods. It is our hope that the information contained within this report will aid in generating a closer connection to the people and the communities we serve.

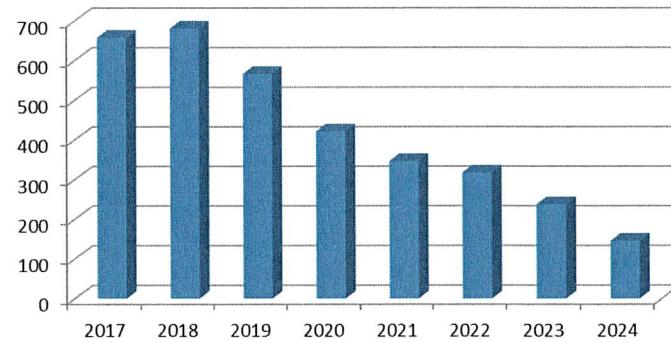
**ICRs by Year**



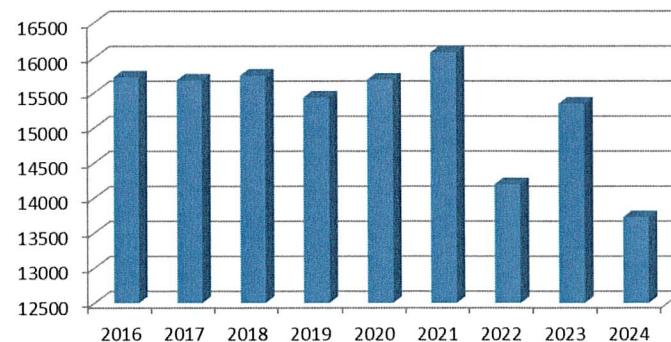
**Crime Rate by Year**

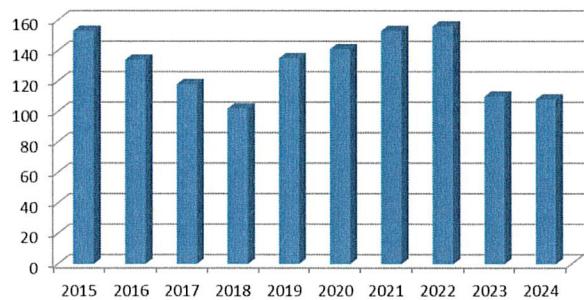
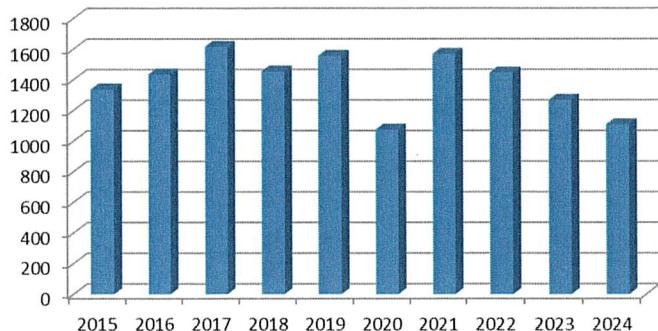
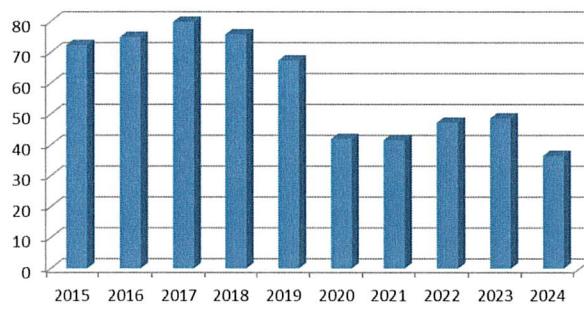


**Total Crimes by Year**



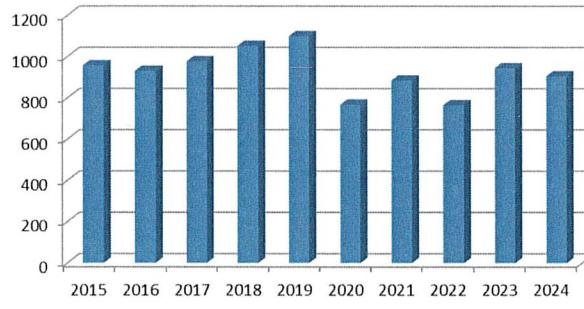
**Patrol Division Calls for Service**



**Cases Assigned to Detectives****Arrest Warrants****Jail Avg Daily Population**

## Top 5 most reported crimes for 2024

1. Domestic Violence
2. Harassment
3. Theft
4. Fraud
5. Illegal Dumping

**Civil Process Service**

## Annual Report

When analyzing data, we watch for trends. What constitutes a trend can be open to interpretation. However, a consistent decrease in a measured activity over 7 years has the appearance of a solid trend. The year 2024 was the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row that Benton County saw a decrease in crime rate and number of reported crimes. A sociological construct as complex as crime and its causes is influenced by many factors. Attributing a consistently falling crime rate with a single cause would be arrogant or foolish at best. What can be said with some authority is that the systems in place and conditions present in Benton County are functioning effectively to reduce the prevalence of crime. Law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and corrections are all part of this well-functioning system. The work of county Human Services, crime prevention efforts, and an engaged public contribute to the systems that create a safe community. We are fortunate to be part of this high-functioning system and eager to continue working with our partners and the public to see how many more gains can be made in reducing crime in Benton County.

One troubling trend emerging from the data is an increase in the prevalence of interpersonal conflicts like domestic assault or harassment calls. The year 2024 marks the second consecutive year that domestic assault was the most often reported crime and the second consecutive year harassment has occupied a place in the top five. We have made both topics a subject of our routine crime prevention messaging. We have also collaborated with our public safety partners to discuss ways in which this trend can be addressed.

All the metrics contained within the 2024 annual report show modest reductions in demand for public safety services within the Benton County Sheriff's Office. This reduced demand for our services is a welcome sign that our public safety efforts are creating safer spaces for residents and businesses. Reduced demand for reactive services, like response to crimes, provides additional time for proactive work. This proactive work includes more time patrolling neighborhoods and solving local problems creatively.

Shortages of qualified candidates who meet the standards required of those who work in public safety continues to be a significant issue for our office and law enforcement agencies statewide. Candidate pools for licensed peace officer positions grow shallower every year. We continue to see declining enrollment in law enforcement programs throughout the state, raising concerns of a coming critical shortage of peace officers. Recruitments for non-licensed positions prove to be equally challenging as workers find a wealth of opportunities when deciding where they wish to obtain

employment. The peace and safety enjoyed by the people of Benton County is dependent upon talented individuals stepping forward to serve and better their communities. We've incrementally increased our efforts to address the wellness of our public safety team to aid in retention. The creation of a Wellness Committee and deployment of a Peer Support Team and wellness app are intended to help our team remain healthy and productive both at work and in their personal lives. To assist in recruiting our next team members, we have created and distributed a marketing campaign to reach the people we need to join us in keeping Benton County safe.

### **Mission and Vision statements**

The mission of the Benton County Sheriff's Office is:

To keep Benton County safe by enforcing laws, providing public safety services, and building community partnerships with respect and integrity.

Our vision for Benton County:

The Benton County Sheriff's Office strives to reduce crime and build community trust while ensuring accountability to the people we serve.

### **Public Safety Answering Point services**

The Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), also known as the dispatch center, is the first point of contact for a majority of the public who are seeking public safety assistance. The Benton County PSAP answers not only incoming 911 calls but also administrative calls for the Benton County Sheriff's Office, Foley Police and Fire departments, Rice Police and Fire departments, and Sauk Rapids Police and Fire departments. Once a call or request for service is received, the PSAP dispatches appropriate emergency services using the public safety radio system. The calls received in dispatch which generate a public safety response for any of the agencies in Benton County are recorded on an Initial Complaint Report (ICR). In 2024, the Benton County PSAP generated 25,297 ICRs. This was 2,231 fewer ICRs than 2023. The time from 12:00 pm to 11:00 pm generated the highest number of ICRs with the time period from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm representing the peak hours. Of the 25,297 ICRs made in 2024, 15,173 were generated between 12:00 pm and 11:00 pm, representing 59% of all calls. Fridays generated the most ICRs in the PSAP, while Sundays generated the fewest ICRs. The months of May through October were the busiest months in the PSAP. In 2024 our PSAP transitioned from our legacy call processing equipment to a modern Next Generation 911 ready system. This transition has gone well in regards to the processing and delivery of calls into the PSAP. However, the data collection and reporting in this

system remains a work in progress. Due to this technical difficulty, data regarding the volume of calls received in the PSAP is incomplete for 2024 and won't be included in this year's report.

### **Civil Process and Warrant division**

One of the statutory duties of the sheriff is to serve and execute civil papers, court orders, and arrest warrants. In 2024, the sheriff's office received 906 requests to serve civil process, 39 fewer than 2023. Civil summons made up the lion's share of the work in 2024 tallying up 351 of the 906 requests. The next 5 most common classes of legal process were harassment restraining orders & orders for protection, subpoenas, writs of recovery, and order to show cause. The sheriff's office conducted 14 mortgage foreclosure sales in 2024, four fewer than in 2023. For the year, 1,109 arrest warrants were received in the sheriff's office, 160 fewer than in 2023.

### **Patrol Division**

The most visible and recognizable division in the Benton County Sheriff's Office is the patrol division. These are the uniformed deputies on patrol who respond to calls for service, investigate crimes, and perform proactive patrols. In 2024, 13,724 ICRs were assigned to units within the Benton County Sheriff's Office (1,620 fewer than in 2023), most of which were handled by the patrol division. Traffic stops accounted for the single largest category of activity for the patrol division in 2024. Assistance to the public and other agencies, medical emergencies, suspicious activity reports, animal-related incidents and alarms were the next 5 most common functions performed by the patrol division. The 5 most reported crimes in Benton County in 2024 were Domestic Violence, Harassment, Theft, Fraud, and Illegal Dumping. The majority of ICRs assigned to our office were generated between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm, with a spike in calls for service between 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm. Fridays saw the most activity within the patrol division with Sundays showing the least activity. June, July, and August represented the busiest months for calls within the Patrol Division.

In 2021, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) made changes to the system used by criminal justice agencies to report crimes. Prior to 2021, crimes were broken down into Part 1 crimes and Part 2 crimes. Part 1 crimes were the most serious offenses and include violent crimes against a person. Part 2 were less serious offenses and include some minor person offenses and less serious property crimes. In 2021, the BCA instituted the Minnesota Crime Data Explorer system, changing these crime categories to Group A crimes and Group B crimes. Group A crimes include serious

crimes against a person, property, and society. Group B crimes are less serious crimes and include:

Bad Checks	Nonviolent Family Offenses
Curfew/Loitering/Vagrancy Violations	Liquor Law Violations
Disorderly	Peeping Tom
Driving Under the Influence	Trespass of Real Property
Drunkenness	All Other Offenses

The BCA does not provide a means to access agency-specific statistic on Group B offenses. Due to this limitation, this report is only able to comment upon trends in Group A offenses. According to the 2023 data set from the Minnesota Crime Data Explorer, Benton County's Group A crime rate<sup>1</sup> was 1,723. The 2023 BCA Uniform Crime Report reported Minnesota's overall crime rate was 4,086, meaning that Benton County's Group A crime rate in 2023 was 58% lower than the state average in 2023. An examination of 2024 data from the Minnesota Crime Data Explorer showed Benton County's Group A crime rate declined to 1,038. Statewide crime rate data for 2024 is not yet available. This marks the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of a declining crime rate in Benton County.

Within the 13,724 ICRs assigned to the Benton County Sheriff's Office staff are a number handled by administrative or support staff. These include records checks (242), permits to carry a pistol (642), and permit to purchase a pistol (183). For 2024, our applications for permits to carry were down by 8% and our applications for permits to purchase were up by 9% when compared to 2023 numbers.

### **Investigative division**

The investigative division of the Benton County Sheriff's Office is tasked with investigating and solving felony level crimes and other crimes requiring more in-depth examination. In 2024 there were 108 cases assigned to this division, a 2% decrease from 2023. Of those 108 cases, 94 cases were cleared, creating an 87% clearance rate for the Investigative Division. The Investigative Division is also tasked with receiving and securing items of evidence at the Benton County Sheriff's Office. In 2024, the evidence room received 472 items.

### **Violent Offender Task Force (VOTF)**

The Benton County Sheriff's Office is a participating member of the Central Minnesota Violent Offender Task Force. This group of investigators work on in-depth investigations aimed at arresting the most dangerous and violent criminal offenders.

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<sup>1</sup> "Crime rate" is a term used in evaluating criminal statistics. It is the number of crimes reported by law enforcement per 100,000 in population.

Much of their work is focused on combating drugs and gang activity in Central Minnesota. As sheriff, I have stressed to our two full time staff members assigned to this unit the importance of working long term investigations aimed at arresting those who distribute the largest quantities of illegal drugs and those who are at the highest echelon of leadership in local criminal gangs. These investigations require time and patience, which is often difficult to express in terms of numbers. VOTF investigators continued to see a steady supply of controlled substances coming into Benton County and a steady demand for them as well. Methamphetamine continues to be the most commonly found controlled substance in VOTF investigations, however fentanyl remains a growing threat to the area. Fentanyl, more than any other street drug, results in far more fatal or near fatal outcomes for users. In 2024, VOTF investigators took off the street almost 2 kilograms of methamphetamine, over 750 fentanyl pills, over 17 grams of fentanyl powder, almost 1 kilogram of cocaine, about 80 grams of psilocybin mushrooms, 2 firearms, and about \$2,500 in cash associated with controlled substances. As part of our crime prevention efforts, VOTF investigators conduct educational presentations to the community on the dangers of drugs and the current trends in the world of drugs and gangs.

### **Jail division**

For 2024, the jail had an average daily population (ADP) of 36.48 inmates, a decrease of 12.12 ADP compared to 2023. The jail booked in a total of 1,526 inmates in 2024, 55 fewer bookings than in 2023. Of these 1,526 inmates, 1,188 of them were males and 338 were females. The average length of an inmate's stay in 2024 was 8.73 days, a decrease of 2.49 days when compared to 2023.

Like all jails across the state, Benton County struggles to cope with the influx of inmates battling mental illness. Managing individuals with mental illness in a jail setting presents a challenge for staff to maintain the safety and security of both the inmate and the safety and security of our staff. Individuals with mental illness can engage in unpredictable, unhealthy, and sometimes violent behavior. Unless this societal issue is addressed in meaningful ways, we anticipate that jails will continue to be a repository for under-served individuals with mental illnesses to languish in a facility that was neither designed nor intended to treat them.

In an effort to recoup some of the costs associated with housing prisoners, the Benton County Jail charges a booking fee, a work release fee, and (for inmates serving a sentence after being convicted) a daily boarding fee. For 2024, the jail collected a total of

\$30,261.91 in these fees. To make the most efficient use of the jail space in our facility, the jail boards inmates for other criminal justice agencies for a daily fee. For 2024, the jail collected just over \$51,000.00 in jail revenues from prisoner boarding.

Our Sentenced to Service (STS) crew transitioned from a state-based program to a county-based program in 2021. In 2024, STS crew work was limited due to low inmate numbers on the crew and the need to have the crew leader work open shifts within the jail. From the beginning of the year through mid-July, the crew had no projects. From mid-July through the end of 2024, the crew worked on 15 projects within Benton County. These projects included work performed for Benton County, Watab Township, Langola Township, and the Foley School District. Three inmates performed work on the STS crew, working off 7 days of jail time and \$880.00 in fines in 2024.

### **Volunteers**

The Benton County Sheriff's Office is fortunate to have dozens of citizens who are willing to volunteer their time to assist us in our mission.

The Benton County Mounted Patrol is a volunteer organization whose mission is to use horses and riders in providing assistance with crowd control, search and rescue, and other law enforcement functions. This group puts in many hours of training to ensure their readiness for such missions. The Mounted Patrol also provides security at the Benton County Fair and other similar events in the county. In 2024, Mounted Patrol members worked a total of 465 hours.

The sheriff's office maintains a group of citizens who serve this office and our community as reserve deputies. These non-licensed volunteers assist in several capacities, such as providing traffic direction, performing winter cabin checks, staffing entry points at the county fair, and several other duties appropriate for non-licensed staff. In 2024, the 11 volunteer reserve deputies performed a total 475 hours of service on various projects.

The sheriff's office also has approximately 80 individuals who volunteer in the jail to assist with various programs provided to the inmates. In 2024, these volunteers performed 1,207 hours of work in programs in the jail. The Benton County Sheriff's Office is very grateful for the assistance provided to our mission by these volunteers.

### **Public outreach**

Our outreach efforts are an important part of a proactive approach that aims to prevent future problems and build rapport between law enforcement and the community. In 2024, 526 DARE students in six Benton County schools were presented with the DARE curriculum. Our Police Activities League program continued in 2024 as a great

opportunity for our staff to work with Foley and Rice police officers in building rapport with children aged 5 to 15 on a weekly basis throughout the summer. Our office also hosted full classes of Youth Snowmobile and Youth ATV certification courses.

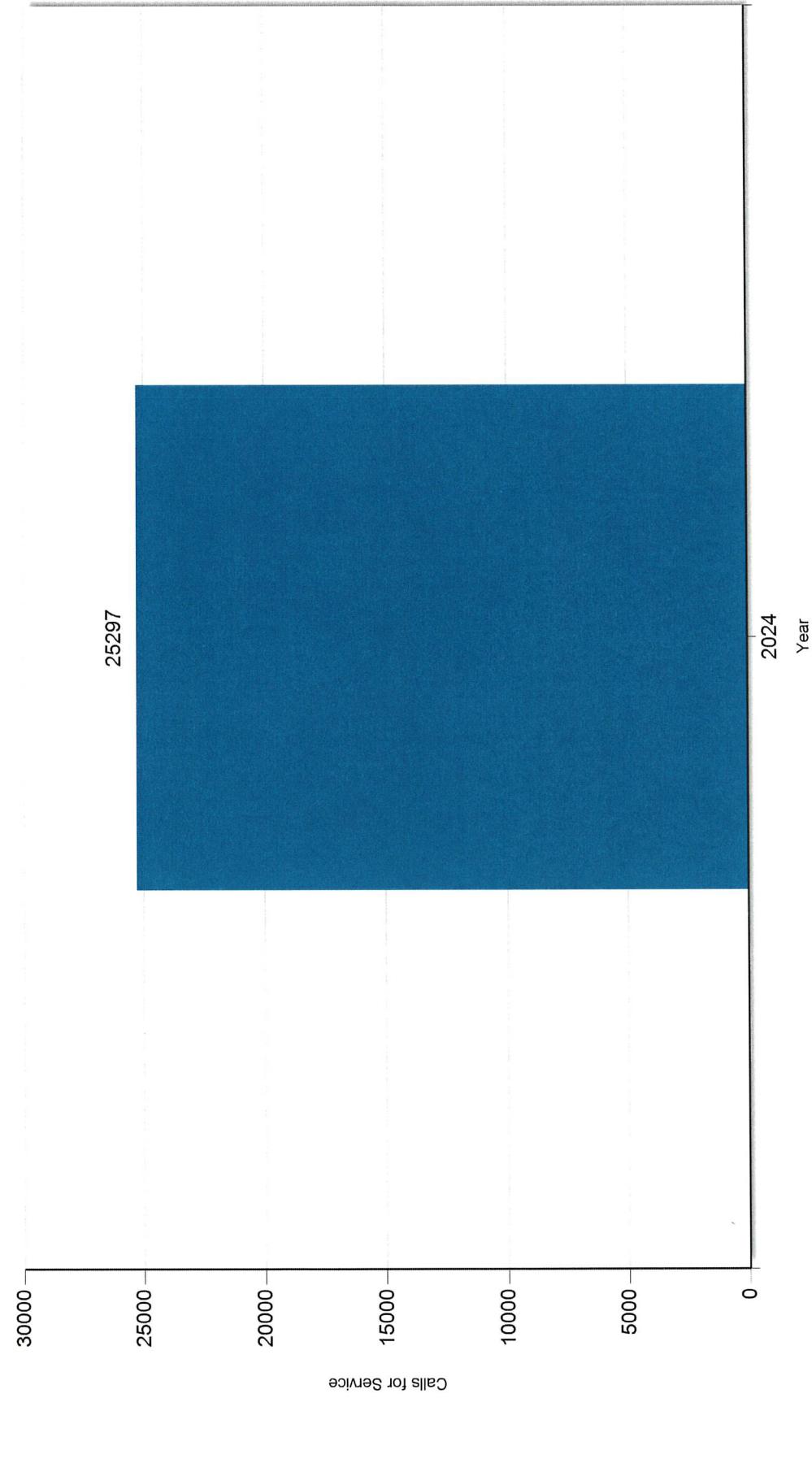
### **Social Media and Print Media**

In 2024 the Benton County Sheriff's Office continued to make use of our Facebook, X, and Nextdoor accounts to distribute information and crime prevention strategies. For those not already following us, our X account may be found @BentonMNSheriff and our Facebook page is found at Facebook.com/BentonMNSheriff. Our audience on all these social media platforms continues to grow regularly. On a number of occasions, we have successfully used social media to obtain leads on criminal investigations and locate individuals with active warrants. In 2024 our office continued our partnership with the Benton County News and Sauk Rapids Herald to provide a once monthly column on crime prevention and safety topics. The goal of this column is to enhance the safety of Benton County citizens by reaching out to a wider audience with our crime prevention messages. We hope to use these tools to help make Benton County a safer place.

# CAD Calls for Service Yearly

Start Date: 1/1/2024

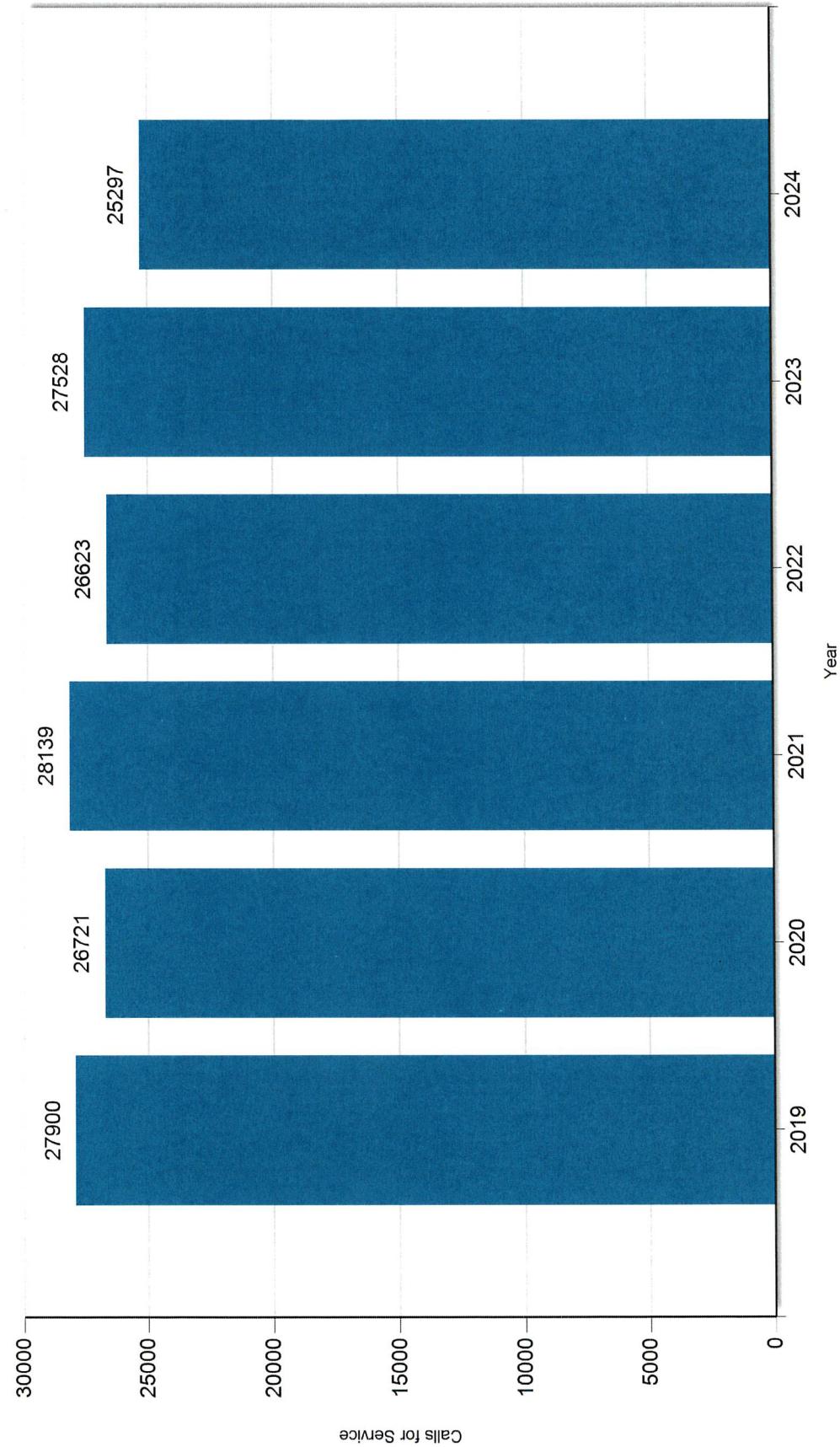
End Date: 12/31/2024



## CAD Calls for Service Yearly

Start Date: 1/1/2019

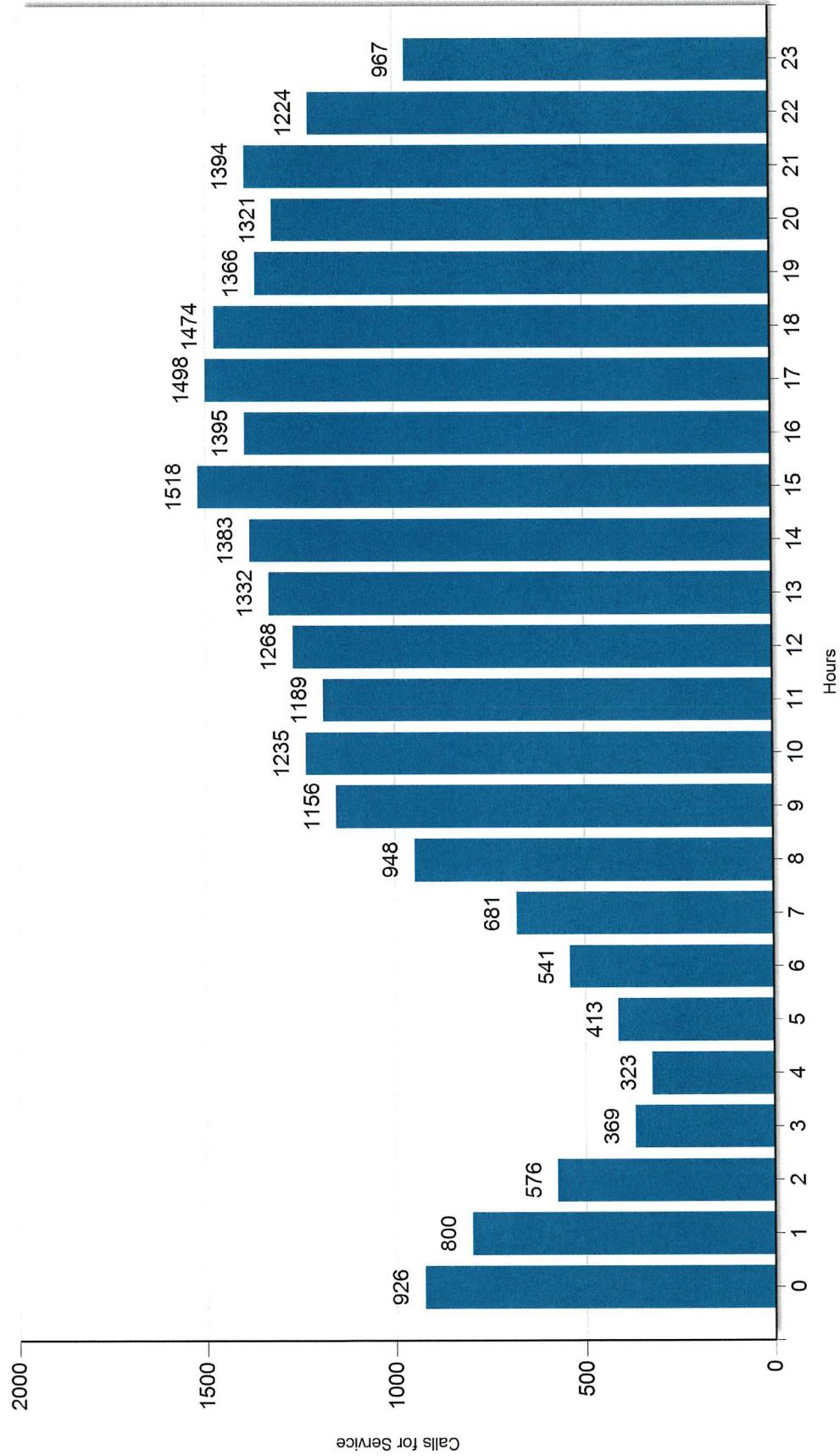
End Date: 12/31/2024



## CAD Calls for Service Hourly

Start Date: 1/1/2024

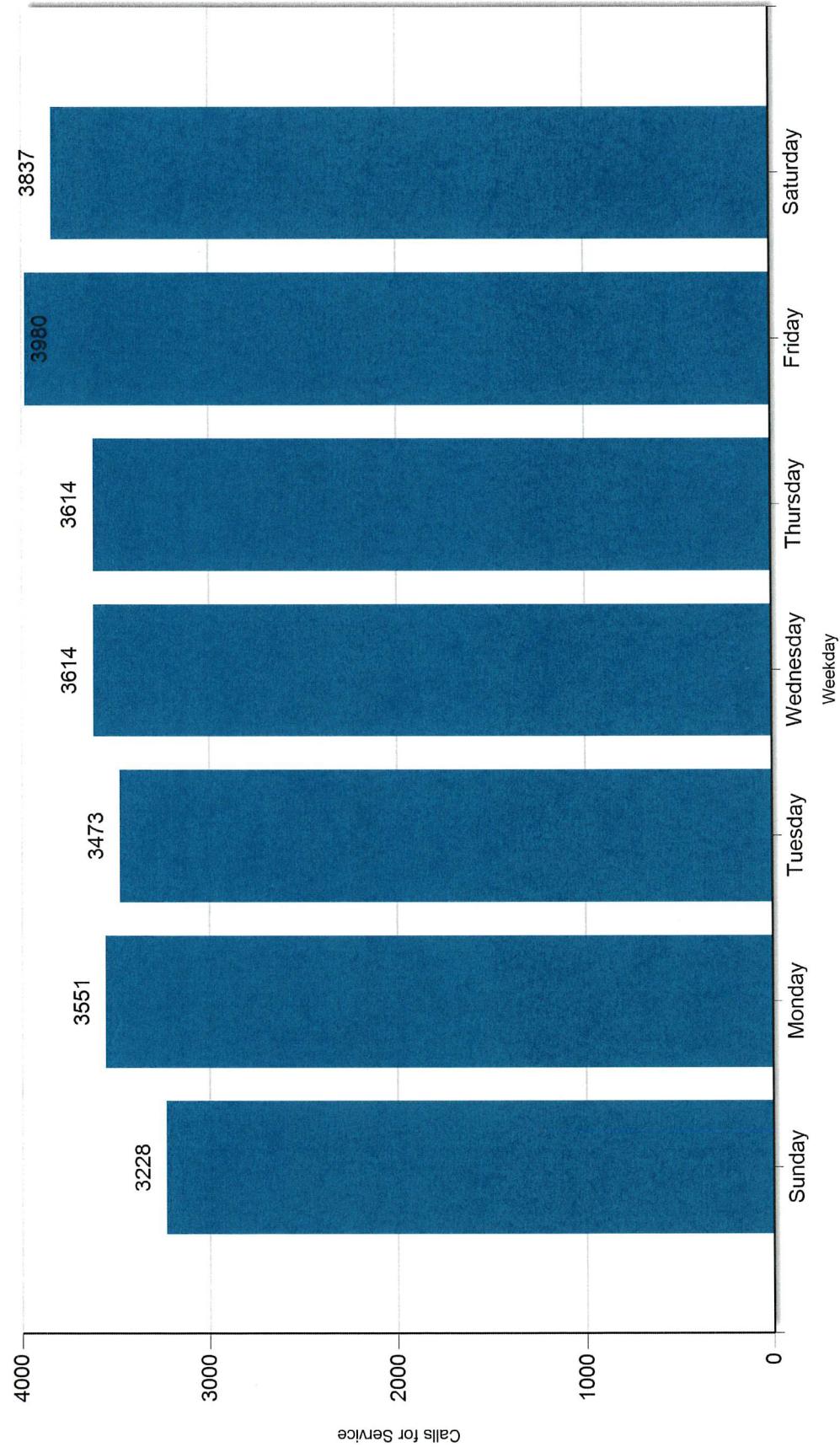
End Date: 12/31/2024



# CAD Calls for Service Day Of Week

Start Date: 1/1/2024

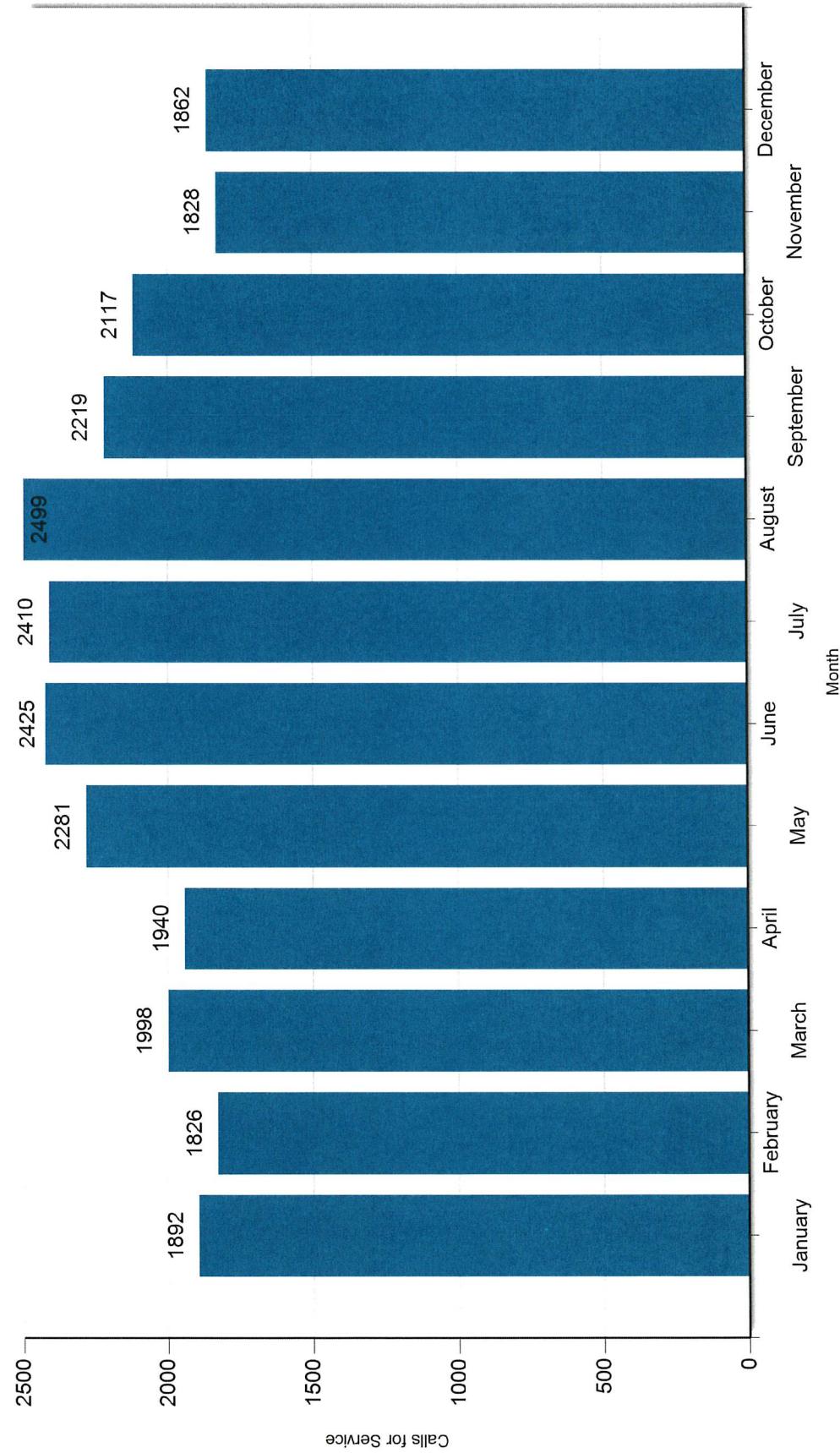
End Date: 12/31/2024



# CAD Calls for Service Monthly

Start Date: 1/1/2024

End Date: 12/31/2024



## 2025 Civil Counts

Type	Count
Amended Criminal Domestic Abuse No Contact Order	1
Amended Harassment Restraining Order	5
Amended Order for Protection After Motion to Modify	2
Answer	1
Cancellation of Contract for Deed	2
Domestic Abuse No Contact Order	2
Duplicate Certificate Fee	1
Eviction Summons and Complaint	51
Ex Parte Order Granting Petition for Harassment Restraining Order	70
ExParte OFP	31
Extension of Order for Protection	3
Finding of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order for Judgment	2
Juvenile CHIPS	31
Letter	1
Mechanics Lien Sale	5
Mortgage Foreclosure Sale	14
Motion	1
Notice	5
Notice of Eviction	1
Notice of Expiration of Redemption	5
Notice of Hearing	34
Notice of Intent to Terminate	1
Notice of Intention to Redeem	2
Notice of Mortgage Foreclosure Sale	18
Notice of Motion and Motion	15
Notice of Sale	2
Order	2
Order Denying Harassment Restraining Order After Hearing	2
Order Denying Petition for ExParte HRO	7
Order Denying Petition for ExParte OFP	4
Order for Commitment Hearing	1
Order for Continuance	6
Order for Dismissal of Order for Protection	1
Order for Harassment Hearing	38
Order for Hearing	5
Order for Protection	1
Order for Protection Following Hearing	10
Order Granting Harassment Restraining Order After Hearing	16
Order Reduced Redemption	1
Order to Appear for Modification OFP	1
Order to Show Cause	48
Petition	3
Redemption	3
Statement of Claim and Summons	10
Subpoena	98
Summons and Citation	7
Summons and Complaint	243
Summons and Petition	40
Trespass Notice Form	1
Writ of Execution	2
Writ of Recovery	50



## Incident Summary by Incident Type

Date Range: 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Incident Type	# of Incidents
911	2285
Traffic Stop	1698
Warrant	1040
Permit	1004
Assist	687
Agency Assist	668
Medical	460
Warrant File	458
Tzd	378
Suspicious	323
Miscellaneous	321
Animal	255
Alarm	251
Records Check	242
Attempt To Locate	218
Welfare Check	179
Car Killed Deer	177
Driving	164
Traffic Accident	162
Vehicle	159
Civil Process	147
Civil	141
Void	125
Background Check	118
Human Services Report	104
Property	101
Traffic Hazard	101
Request For ????	98



## Incident Summary by Incident Type

Date Range: 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Accident	89
Domestic	86
Harassment	79
Theft	77
Child	76
Administrative	75
Fire	69
Fraud	68
Test	62
Extra Patrol	59
Disturbance	58
Bcat	49
Dumping	48
Jail Incident	45
Dui/dwi	40
Transport	37
Dvs	35
Trespassing	35
Assault	29
Vulnerable Adult	29
Gun	28
Burning Complaint	24
Suicidal Person	23
Violation Court Order	23
Burglary	22
Utility Problem	21
Dispute	20
Criminal Damage To Property	19
Death	19



## Incident Summary by Incident Type

Date Range: 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Missing Person	19
Lift Assist	18
Repo Vehicle	17
Emergency Management	16
Alert	15
Police Proactive Visit	15
Unwanted	14
Compliance Check	13
Drunk	13
Hit & Run	11
Open Door	11
Predatory Offender	11
Predatory Offender Registry	11
Tow	10
911 Text	9
Disorderly Conduct	9
Fireworks	9
Terroristic Threats	9
Unwanted Person	9
Dnr Violation/complaint	8
Gas Leak	8
Weather	7
Special Event	6
Controlled Substance	4
Escort	4
Parking	4
Rms Import	4
School Bus Stop Arm Violation	4
Fleeing	3



## Incident Summary by Incident Type

Date Range: 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

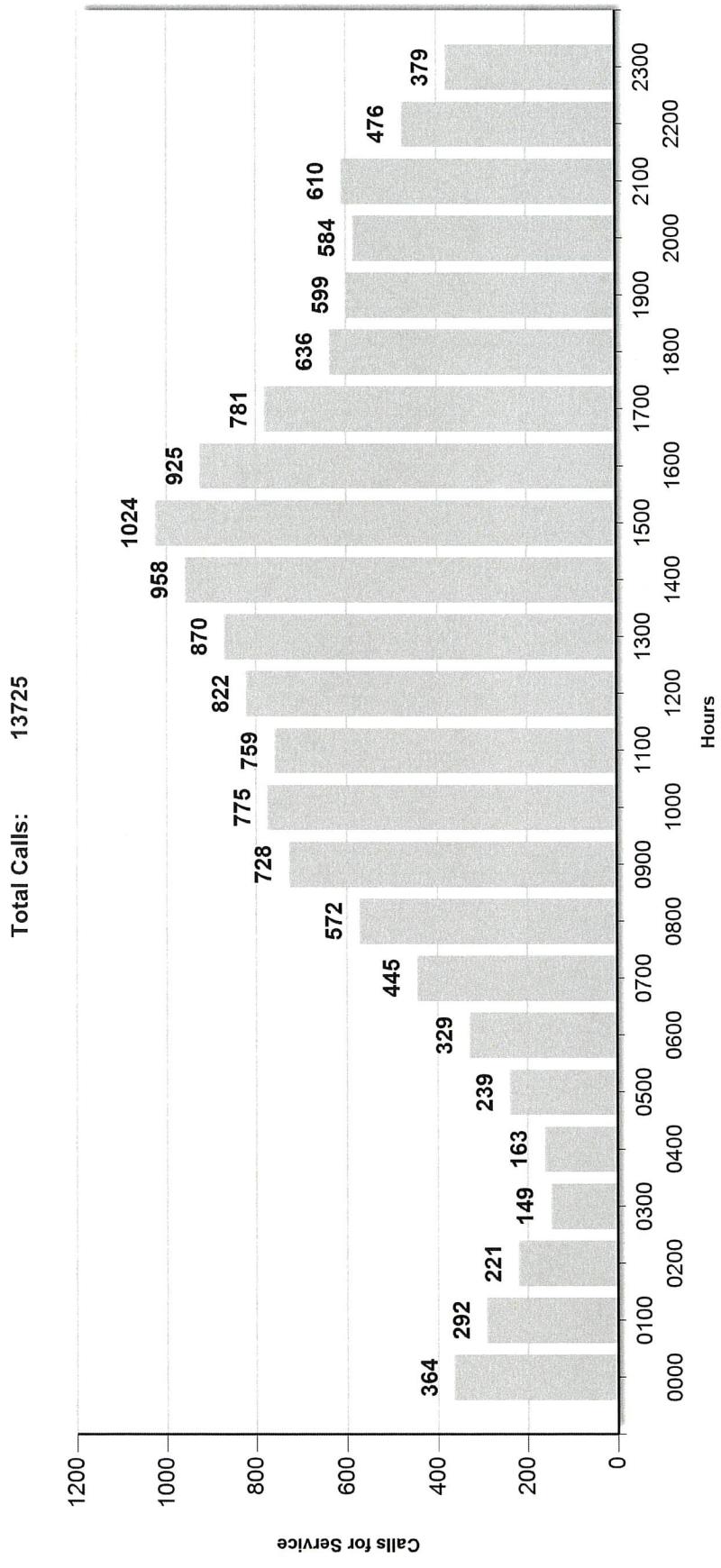
Search Warrant	3
Cabin Check	2
Citation	2
Environmental Complaint	2
Obscenity	2
Water	2
Aircraft Complaint	1
Alcohol Violations	1
Arrest	1
Barricade	1
Bomb Threat	1
Checks	1
Drowning	1
Emergency Message	1
Kidnapping	1
Liquor Violation	1
Obstructing	1
Train	1

**Total: 13724**



## Calls for Service Hourly

1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

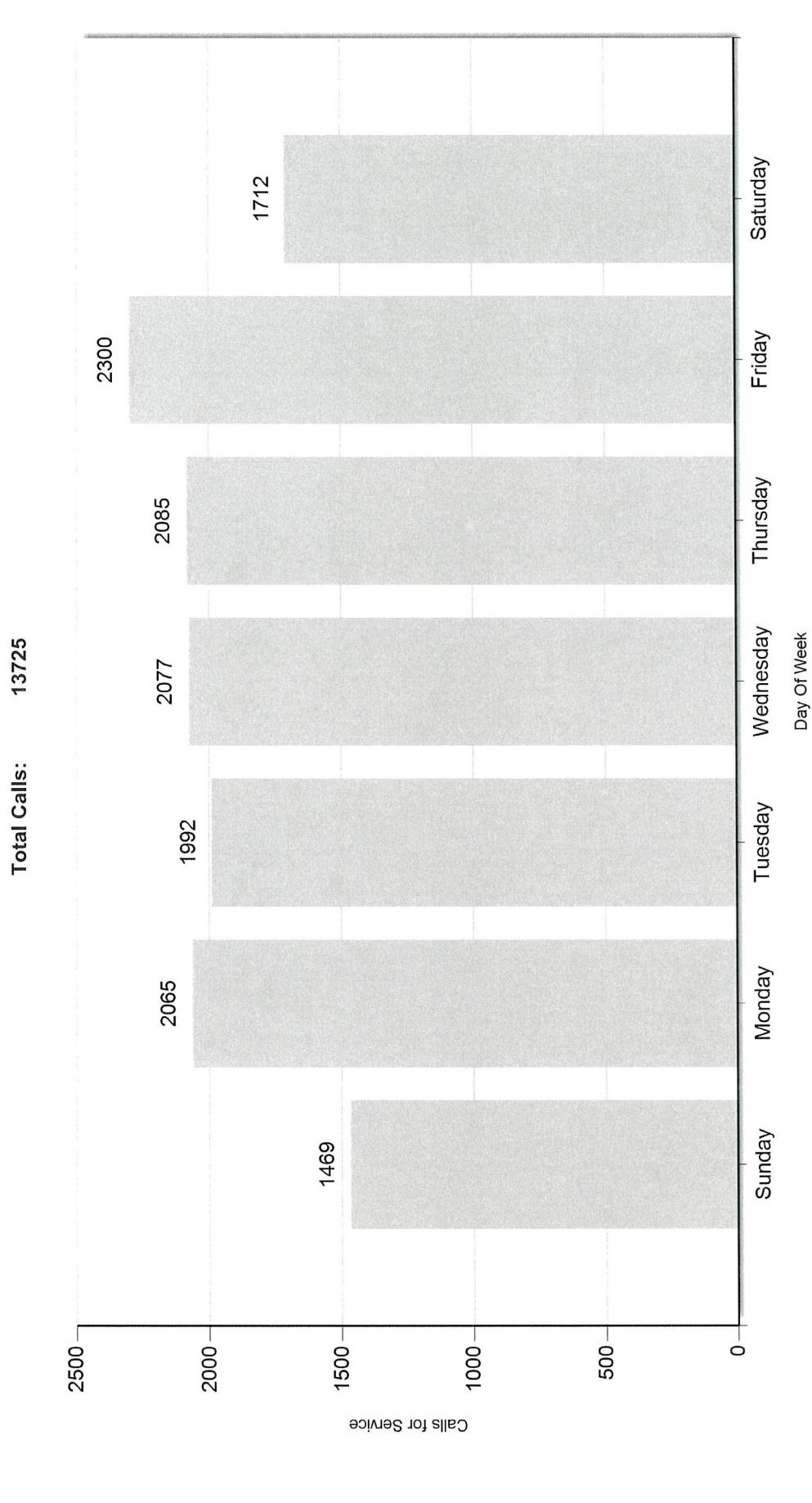




## Calls for Service Day Of Week

Start Date: 1/1/2024

End Date: 12/31/2024

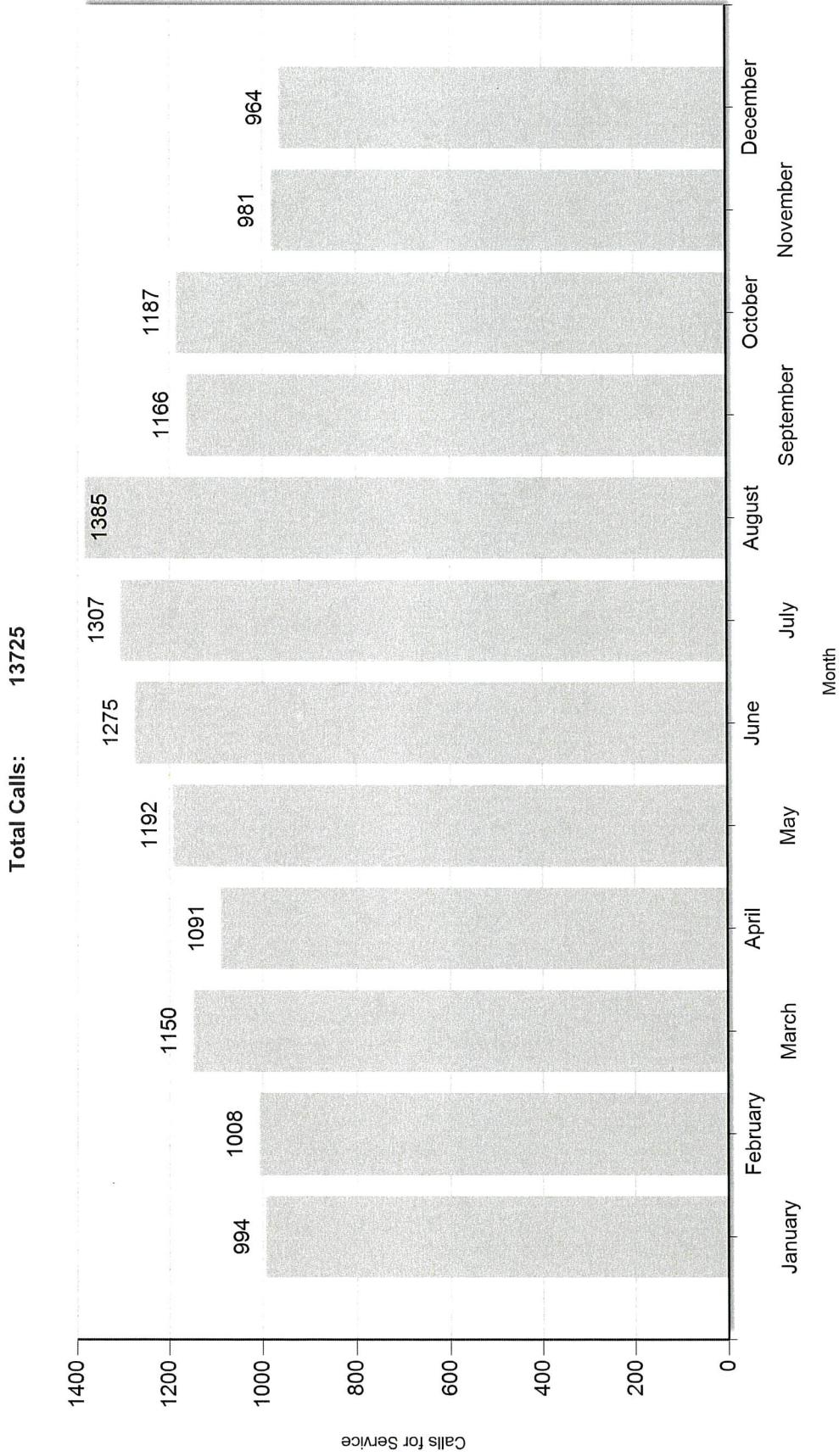




## Calls for Service Monthly

Start Date: 1/1/2024

End Date: 12/31/2024



<b><u>BCSO 2024 Investigative Division Statistics</u></b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase/(Decrease)</b>
<b>Total Cases Investigated:</b>	108	110 -2
<b>Total Cases Cleared:</b>	94	97 -3
<b>Clearance Rate:</b>	87%	88% -1
<b><u>Types of Crimes:</u></b>		
Burglary	11	3 +8
Child Physical Abuse	1	1 0
Criminal Sexual Conduct	14	4
PREA	2	4 -2
Vulnerable Adults	7	9 -2
Death	3	2 +1
Other Person Crimes	4	5 -1
Other	61	53 +8
Conflict Cases	0	1 -1
Internal Investigations	5	5 0
Background Investigations	38	23 +15
Investigation Requests	33	41 -8
Requests Evidence Copies	190	193 -3
Search Warrants	56	56 0
<b><u>Property Room</u></b>		
Items Received:	472	679 -207

**BENTON COUNTY JAIL**

581 HIGHWAY 23 NE

Phone: 3209688180

Fax: 3209686347

**Census Report (Details)****Date From : 01/01/2024 00:00      Date To : 12/31/2024 23:59**

Statistics		Statistics for inmates held more than 24 hours	
Males	1188	Males	650
Females	338	Females	161
Total Count	1526	Total Count	811
Total Inmates Released during period	1509	Average Length of Stay	16.42
Total Inmates in Jail at end of period	17		
Total number of days Inmates were held	13316		
Number of Days in the period	365		
Average Daily Population	36.48		
Average Length of Stay	8.73		