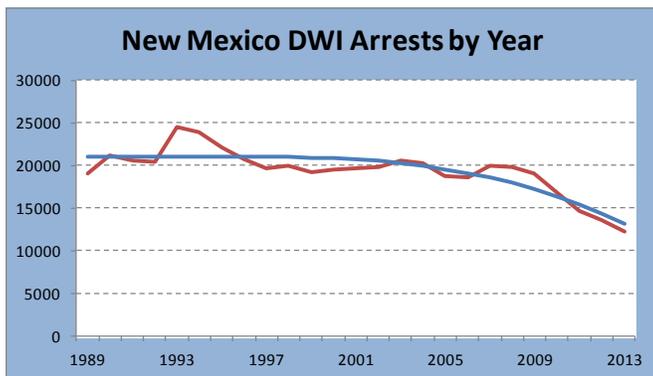


## New Mexico DWI Enforcement Trends, 2013 – FAQ

**New Mexico DWI arrests have declined dramatically in recent years.**

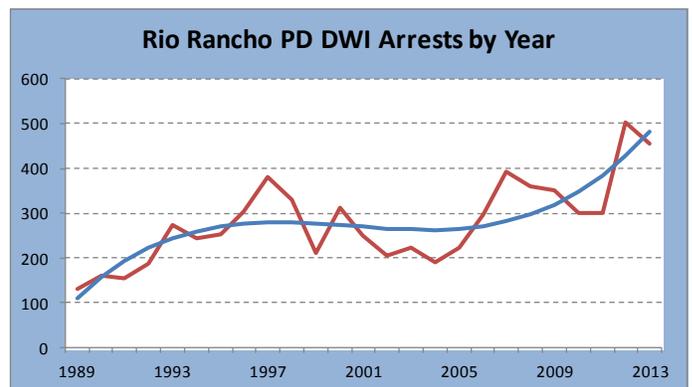


This graph shows New Mexico DWI arrests by year of arrest, as reported by police agencies to the NM Motor Vehicle Division. In the graph, the red line marks the arrest counts by year, and the blue line shows a smoothed curve to illustrate the trend. DWI Arrests have fallen dramatically since 2010, and the evidence indicates that the decline is due to changes in law enforcement efforts rather than to reduced DWI behavior by drivers.

In order to identify the roles in this trend by region and police agency, we can compare recent arrest levels to past levels. If we tried to compare only the most recent year's count to a prior year, that comparison might be misleading due to random variation in each year's values. To study changes between recent years and prior ones, then, we compare averages of several years. We calculated the recent level, defined as the average of the DWI arrest counts for 2011, 2012, and 2013. We then compared that value to prior arrest levels, calculated as the average of the annual arrest counts for 2005-2010. Comparing the recent level to the prior level, then, lets us reliably assess the overall recent trend for each agency compared to their prior level of effort, and to compare different agencies' performances to look for variation. The results were illuminating.

### **Which Police Agencies are doing the most to increase efforts against DWI in New Mexico?**

Three Police agencies lead the way toward revitalizing DWI enforcement in New Mexico, according to new data from New Mexico state agencies. **Rio Rancho Police Department** raised its recent DWI enforcement efforts to their highest levels ever, with a 31% rise in average arrest counts in those years compared to prior levels. The **Doña Ana County Sheriff's office** showed a 22% rise in recent DWI arrests compared to their prior levels, to the highest levels in its history. The **Sandoval County Sheriff's Office** showed a 34% rise in DWI arrests over that period, returning it to its prior high levels of the late 1990's.

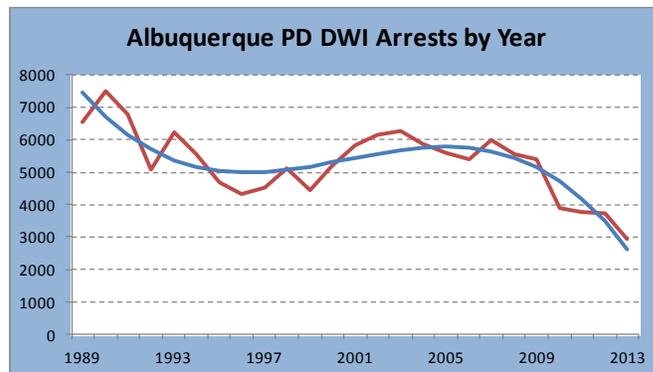


## What is happening with DWI enforcement in urban areas?

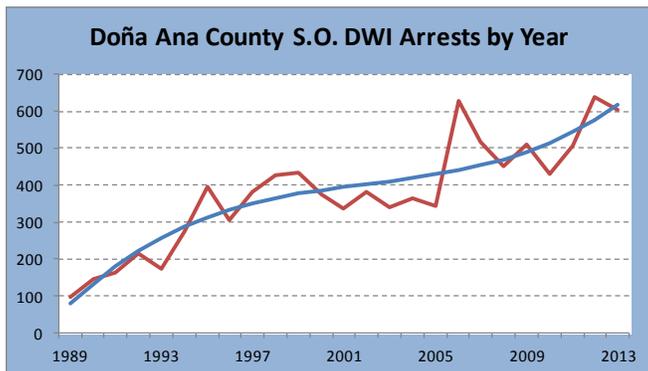
Rio Rancho PD's vigilance against drunk driving produced in 2012 and 2013 the City's highest DWI arrest counts in 25 years, by far. The Agency's strong efforts contrast to a very disappointing 28% decline in DWI arrests by municipal police agencies statewide compared to the prior level. Among the agencies with the biggest declines in municipal police arrests were:

Albuquerque Police Department (down 35%), Clovis Police Department (down 46%), Española Police Department (down 48%), and Gallup Police Department (down 31%).

Most New Mexico alcohol-involved crashes happen in urban areas, but the fatal ones tend to occur in rural areas where speeds are higher, making crashes more severe. Even for rural crashes, though, many rural DWI trips originated in urban areas, and strong urban DWI enforcement can reduce rural DWI, too.



## What is happening with DWI enforcement in rural New Mexico?

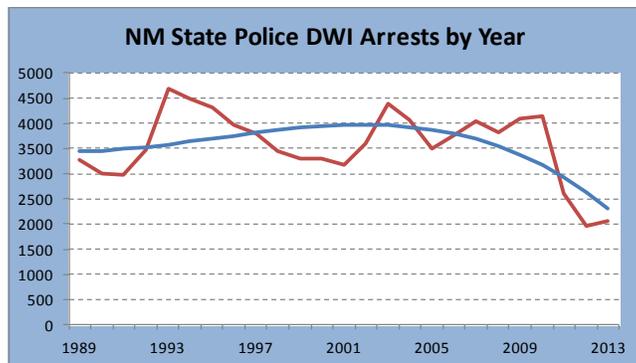


As is typical for most years, 73% of New Mexico alcohol-related crash deaths in 2013 occurred in rural areas (though many of those incidents started with drinking activities in cities). Rural DWI enforcement is in the hands of Sheriffs' offices and the State Police. The Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office saw its recent average arrests rise 22% in 2011-2013, compared to the prior level, and the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office saw its average arrests rise 34%. Yet DWI

arrests from all rural enforcement overall in New Mexico dropped 30% for the comparable period.

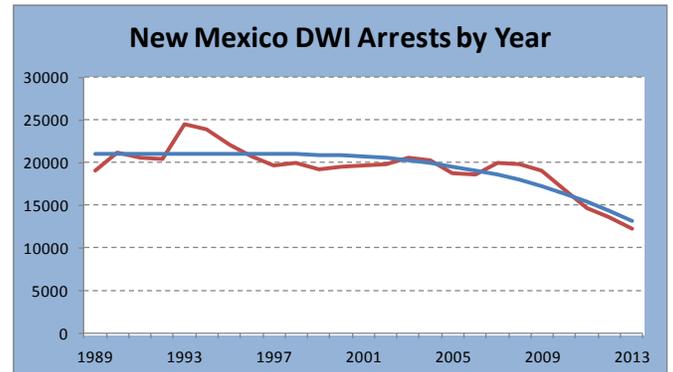
DWI arrests for Sheriffs' offices overall fell by 16%, and DWI arrests by the State Police fell by 43%. The biggest drops among sheriffs' offices for the larger NM counties were observed in Santa Fe County (down 40%) and San Juan County (down 34%).

While DWI arrests by Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office rose 22%, State Police arrests in that same county fell 68%. While Sandoval County Sheriff's Office arrests rose 34%, State Police arrests in that county fell 27%. The differences illustrate how agency policies and practices affect DWI enforcement. Of course, State Police must respond to many competing priorities, staff and funding pressures, and variations in state political leaders' and funding agencies' guidance; sheriff's offices also face their own forms of those pressures.



## What is the overall trend in New Mexico DWI enforcement?

Recent DWI arrests in New Mexico declined 28% from the prior averages. The 2013 arrest count is down 50% from the 1993 level, though the population has increased 29%. Arrests peaked statewide in 1993, in response not to any increase in DWI behavior on the roads that year but rather to intense media and political focus on the DWI issue. DWI enforcement tends to vary not with drunk driving volume but rather according to policies of public and police officials. Public health officials estimate that only one drunk driving trip in 200 results in arrest, so there are always lots of drunk drivers that law



enforcement can pursue. Based on that figure, there were about 2.5 million DWI trips in 2013 in New Mexico, and 12,249 of them resulted in arrests. NM DOT officials say that some police agencies indicate that they are having a hard time finding impaired drivers to arrest, but clearly Rio Rancho and Doña Ana County officials are finding more than ever.

## Did arrests drop because there was less drunk driving?

Both rural and urban alcohol-involved crash deaths declined 12% over the study periods, yet overall DWI enforcement in each type of area fell far more. Non-alcohol-involved crash deaths fell by 19% over the same period, and all evidence is that the main factors for decline in both non-alcohol-involved and alcohol-involved crash deaths were the economic recession, reduced travel volumes, unemployment, higher gasoline prices, and better vehicles that absorb crash energies better. If anti-DWI policies were reducing DWI behavior, alcohol-involved crash deaths would decline more than non-alcohol crashes – yet they did not.

## Why might DWI enforcement effort have declined?

- **Competing priorities** Agencies indicate that the decline in DWI enforcement is due to reduced police staffing, budget pressures, recruiting troubles, competing priorities such as increased call volumes, and leadership focus on other issues (e.g., property crimes in Albuquerque, or reduced State Police budgets in State government).
- **Vacant positions** When DWI becomes lower priority, agencies move officers to other duties occasionally, or permanently, and DWI enforcement positions may be left unfilled.
- **Insufficient staff** Staffing and recruiting limitations have made it hard for police to keep up with calls for service, leaving them with less staff for handling other tasks such as DWI enforcement.
- **Excessive reliance on overtime** State reliance on funding overtime-based DWI enforcement means that DWI work competes with other overtime needs for scarce officer time, so sometimes work is not done even when funds are available.

- **Poor use of resources** Poor management by state funding agencies or police agencies can concentrate DWI enforcement at the times and places most convenient for the agencies or officers' schedules, rather than at the times and places most appropriate for reducing risks of crashes. For example, police often concentrate DWI enforcement effort near bars for easier hunting, missing the large amount of drunk driving that originates away from bars.
- **Reduced locally funded efforts** The State has allowed agencies to use federal and state funds for enforcement while reducing their own efforts, resulting in reduced total effort and also violating federal rules against "supplanting."
- **Record system failures** State record systems of crashes have greatly deteriorated in recent years, so data is not timely and police receive little guidance from maps or time-and-place ranking analyses that could make their enforcement work more targeted and effective.
- **Low priority on enforcement funding** State managers choose to spend too much of DWI prevention funding on expensive advertising production, purchase of advertising time, and other strategies of limited effectiveness, rather than more effective investments in DWI enforcement.
- **Poor distribution of enforcement funding** DWI enforcement is almost nil in October and early November each year due to recent state management problems that delay funding at the start of each federal fiscal year.

**For detailed counts by agency & more, see [www.accountablegovernment.org/dwirpts.htm](http://www.accountablegovernment.org/dwirpts.htm)**

*Source: DWI Resource Center, May 2, 2014*