



Crime Trends in California

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The 2023 crime statistics presented here have been adjusted for reporting errors by the Oakland Police Department and incomplete reporting by several law enforcement agencies.

California's violent crime rate rose somewhat in 2023 and remains above pre-pandemic levels.

- ▶ California's overall violent crime rate increased by 1.7%, from 495 crimes per 100,000 residents in 2022 to 503 in 2023. Like the rest of the nation, California saw a jump in violent crime in the first year of the pandemic. The state's violent crime rate is still up by 15.4% compared to 2019.
- ▶ In 2023, homicides and rapes decreased by 13.7% and 3.0%, respectively, while robbery (theft with force) and aggravated assault increased by 3.8% and 1.7%. Robberies have been ticking up since 2021 but remain 3.1% below their pre-pandemic level.
- ▶ The state's violent crime rate has fluctuated over time. From 1960 to 1980, rates spiked from 236 to 888 violent crimes per 100,000 residents; after dipping in the early 1980s, rates climbed to a peak of 1,115 per 100,000 residents in 1992. Violent crime then fell steadily, reaching a 50-year low of 391 in 2014. Since then, it has been trending upward, with increases in seven of the past ten years.

Homicides and some other violent crimes have been declining after a notable pandemic surge.

- ▶ California's homicide rate jumped by 42.5% between 2019 and 2021; it is down 18.9% since 2021, but still higher than in 2019 by 15.5%. And while the increase in aggravated assaults during the pandemic appears to have slowed down, the rate is up 27.4% compared to 2019.
- ▶ Homicides and aggravated assaults that involve guns surged by 54.3% and 65.7% between 2019 and 2021. Since 2021, both rates have declined (by 22.5% and 7.1%, respectively) but remain 19.6% and 53.9% above 2019 levels. Although robberies involving a firearm are 11.5% higher in 2023 compared to 2019, the share of robberies that involve firearms has declined from 23.6% to 20.5%.

Property crime fell slightly in 2023, but some categories are above pre-pandemic levels.

- ▶ The 2023 property crime rate is 2,294 per 100,000 residents, a 0.8% decrease from 2022 and 0.3% below its 2019 level—since 1960, rates have been lower only in the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. Of all reported property crimes in California in 2023, 63% were larceny thefts, 15% were burglaries, and 22% were auto thefts.
- ▶ Larceny (theft without force) and burglary (entering a residential or commercial structure with the intent to steal) decreased by 2.4% and 6.7% in 2023 and are now 7.7% and 10.0% below their 2019 level.
- ▶ Auto theft increased by 8.6% in 2023 and is now 42.9% higher than it was in 2019. Shoplifting continued to surge, rising by 39.9% in 2023; the rate is 29.3% higher than in 2019. While commercial burglaries decreased by 8.3%, they remain 6.8% above their pre-pandemic level. Theft of car accessories—including catalytic converters—fell by 19.4%, the first decrease since 2020; this rate is 52.0% higher than in 2019.

Crime rates vary dramatically by region and category.

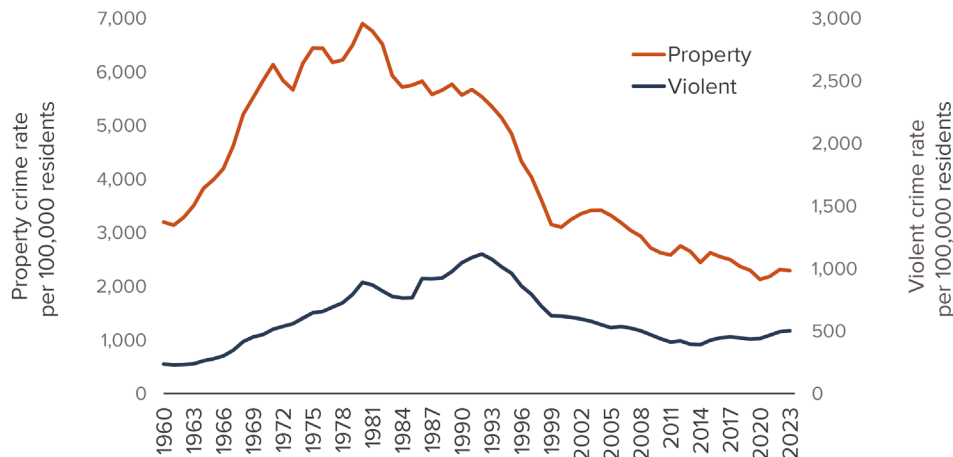
- ▶ The lowest violent crime rate—at 338 per 100,000 residents in 2023—was on the southern coast and border (Imperial, Orange, San Diego, and Ventura Counties). The lowest property crime rate was in the Sierra region—1,166 per 100,000 residents.
- ▶ The highest violent crime rate was in the San Joaquin Valley, which had 641 violent incidents per 100,000 residents. The highest property crime rate was in the San Francisco Bay Area, at 3,167 per 100,000 residents.

Most counties saw increases in violent crime and decreases in property crime in 2023.

- ▶ Of the state's 58 counties, 32 saw violent crime increases in 2023. Rates increased by 20% or more in 7 counties—but 5 of these counties have small populations and see few violent crimes, which make wide rate swings more common.

- ▶ Violent crime rose in 9 of the state's 15 largest counties; 3 saw increases of at least 10%. Ventura County faced the biggest jump, 47.2%, but its rate remains the lowest among the 15 largest counties. The other large counties with double-digit increases were Alameda (39.2%) and Kern (13.9%),
- ▶ Property crime decreased in 46 counties in 2023—including 9 of the 15 largest. The property crime rate dropped by at least 10% in 29 counties—including 3 of the 15 largest: Kern (-15.8%), Fresno (-12.6%), and Santa Clara (-10.6%).
- ▶ Property crime increased in 6 of the 15 largest counties: Alameda (28.0%), San Joaquin (10.2%), Contra Costa (7.7%), San Bernardino (6.6%), Los Angeles (4.7%), and Orange (1.0%).

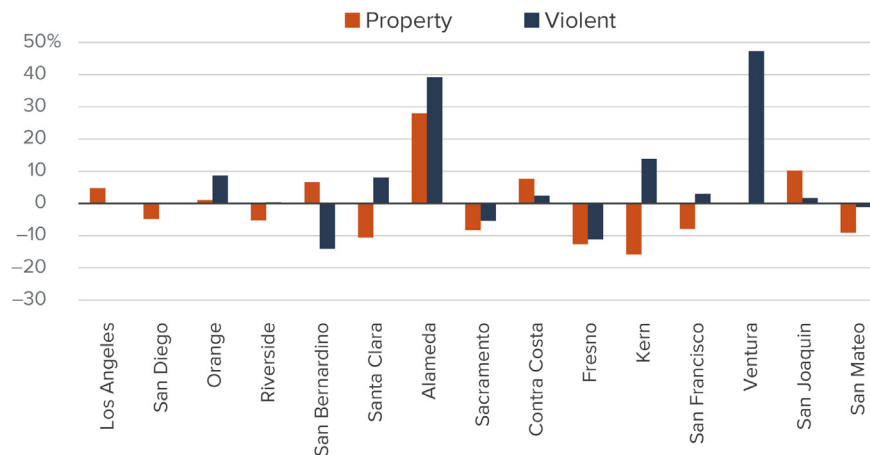
California's property crime rate remains historically low, but the violent crime rate is still above its pre-pandemic level



Sources: Authors' calculation based on Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report 1960–2002 and the California Department of Justice's Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Crimes and Clearances Files, 2003–2023.

Note: Property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny theft (including non-felonious larceny theft); violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Property crime rates decreased in most of the state's 15 largest counties in 2023



Source: Authors' calculation based on the California Department of Justice's Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Crimes and Clearances Files, 2022–2023.

Notes: Chart shows the change in crime rates from 2022 to 2023 in California's 15 largest counties, sorted by population size. Property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny theft (including non-felonious larceny theft); violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Sources: Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report; California Department of Justice's Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Crimes and Clearances Files; and California Department of Finance's Demographic Research Unit, County Population Estimates. Notes: Likely due to data entry or clerical errors, the Oakland Police Department's reported number of assaults involving firearms in January and assaults involving other weapons in October are 8–10 times larger than the reported numbers in any other month over the past decade. We adjusted these numbers based on the average of the two months before and after January and October. Additionally, a number of law enforcement agencies—including large agencies such as the San Jose Police and San Bernardino Sheriff's Departments—did not report crime numbers for some months in 2023. We made adjustments based on the share of each crime reported in the same months in 2022.