

CRIME TRENDS IN CALIFORNIA

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► California's crime rate has increased—but remains at historically low levels.

The state's overall crime rate increased somewhat between 2011 and 2012, from a historic low of 2,999 to 3,179 per 100,000 residents. California's crime rate had increased steadily through the 1960s and 1970s, peaking in 1980 at 7,833 crimes per 100,000 residents. Between 1980 and 2012, the crime rate fell about 59%, a larger decrease than the nationwide decline of about 45%. In 2012, California's overall crime rate was lower than the U.S. rate of 3,246 per 100,000 residents and ranked 25th among all states.

► After a long decline, violent crime has gone up slightly.

After reaching a 45-year low in 2011, California's violent crime rate went up slightly in 2012, to 422 per 100,000 residents. Between 1960 and 1980, the state's violent crime rate increased from 239 to 894 violent crimes per 100,000 residents—a staggering 274% rise. After declining in the early 1980s, the rate rose to a peak of 1,120 in 1992. Since then, violent crime has declined substantially. In 2012, California's violent crime rate was higher than the national rate of 387 per 100,000 residents and ranked 16th among all states.

► Property crime has increased noticeably.

The number of property crimes increased by 7.6% between 2011 and 2012, driving the property crime rate from 2,586 to 2,757 per 100,000 residents. Property crime had been much higher in the past, growing from 3,177 per 100,000 residents in 1961 to a 50-year peak of 6,939 in 1980. After that, property crime fell almost 63% and reached a 50-year low in 2011. Despite the recent increase, California's property crime rate remained below the national rate in 2012 and ranked 24th among all states (up from 30th in 2010). Of all reported property crimes in California in 2012, 61% were larceny thefts, 23% were burglaries, and 16% were auto thefts.

► The increase in auto thefts is substantial and coincides with the implementation of realignment.

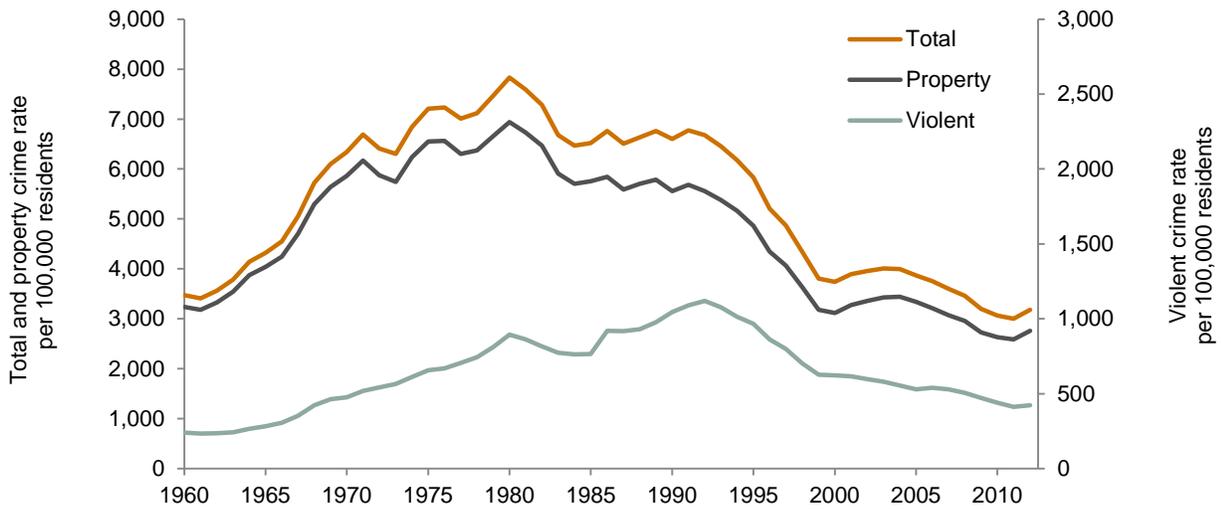
All three property crime types have been on the rise since the October 2011 rollout of public safety realignment, which shifted responsibility for thousands of felons from the state to the counties. Most notable are the increases in auto thefts, which were up by more than 20% in each of the last few months of 2012 compared to the same months in 2010. Comparing each month in 2011 to the same month in 2010 reveals that auto vehicle thefts started to rise in the same month that realignment began. By contrast, monthly data on violent crime does not reveal any changes coinciding with the implementation of realignment.

► Crime rates vary dramatically across the state and by category.

The state's highest property crime rate in 2012 was in the relatively poor San Joaquin Valley, at 3,976 per 100,000 residents. This was almost twice the lowest rate of 2,184 per 100,000 in the Sierra region, which includes the small rural eastern counties from Alpine to Inyo. The violent crime rate was also highest in the San Joaquin Valley (614); it was lowest on the south coast, which includes San Diego (286). Robbery varies most widely across regions: in 2012, the robbery rate in the San Francisco Bay Area (199 per 100,000 residents) was almost seven times higher than the rate in the Sierras (29). By contrast, larceny theft rates are the most uniform across the state: in 2012, the highest rate was 2,236 incidents per 100,000 residents, again in the San Joaquin Valley, and the lowest rate, again in the Sierras, was 1,297. After the San Joaquin Valley (640), the San Francisco Bay Area had the second highest auto theft rate (576), while the lowest rates were on the central coast (279) and in the Sierras (141). In the state's most populous region, the Greater Los Angeles area, crime rates in all categories were close to the statewide rate.



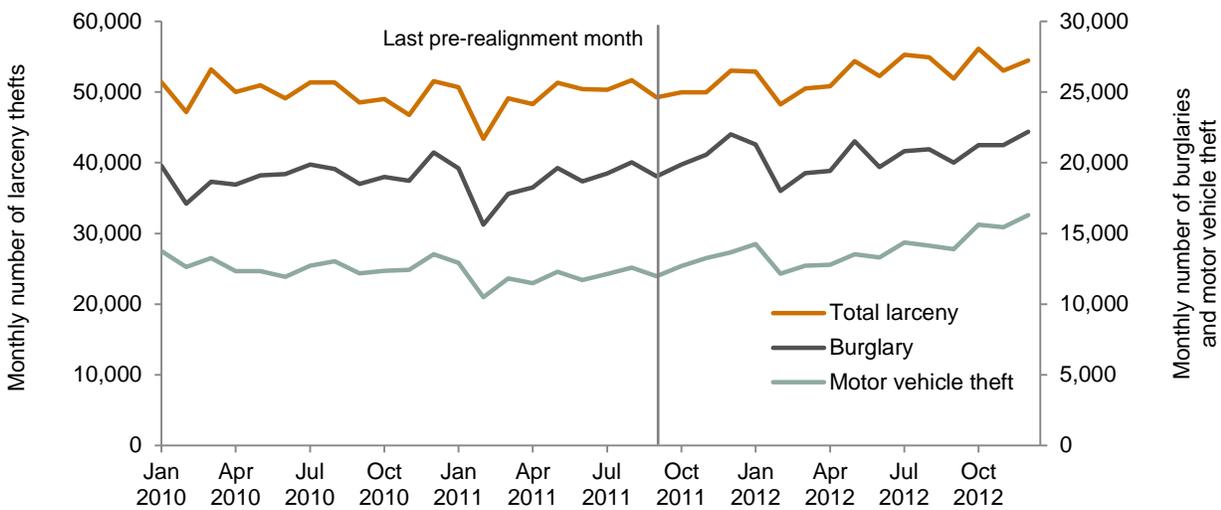
California has experienced a long-term decline in crime rates



Source: Author 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, 2003–2012.

Notes: Total crime rate combines violent and property crime. Violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault; property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny theft (including non-felonious larceny theft under \$400).

After a long-term decline, property crime has increased



Source: Author calculation based on California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Crimes and Clearances Files, 2010–2012.

Sources: Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report 1960–2012 and the California Department of Justice’s Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Crimes and Clearances Files, 2003–2012.

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