

Staff Memorandum 2024-08 California Crime Data for 2023

This memorandum is to update Committee members on recently-released 2023 crime data. The source of the data is local law enforcement reports to the California Department of Justice.¹

Compared to 2022, California’s violent crime rate increased 3.3% in 2023. The property crime rate decreased 1.8%. (Violent crime is homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crime is burglary, car theft, and larceny-theft.) Offense-specific data is below.

California crime rates, 2023 vs. 2022

Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Agg. assault	Burglary	Car theft	Larceny -theft	Arson
-15.79%	-4.62%	+2.95%	+4.64%	-7.76%	+7.49%	-3.20%	-31.75%

These trends should be treated with caution. A larger-than-usual number of agencies did not report full data in 2023, including the San Jose Police Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department.² Because some of the differences in crime rates for 2023 compared to 2022 were relatively small, they could change if full data was reported.

California crime rates, 1969–2023

Rate is per 100,000 population

— Violent crime — Property crime

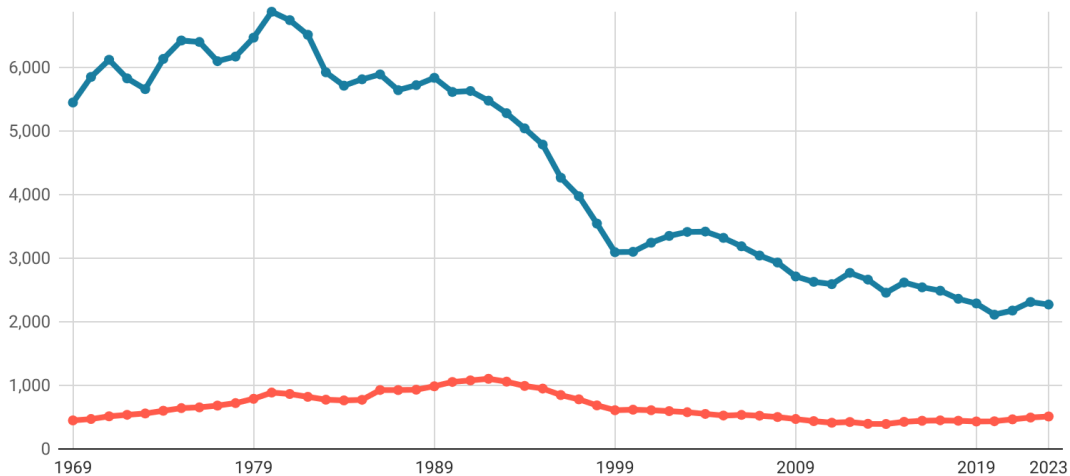


Chart: Committee on Revision of the Penal Code • Source: California Department of Justice, Crime in California, Table 1 • Created with Datawrapper

¹ See Penal Code §§ 13010–13012; 13020–13023. Statewide crime rates in this memorandum are generally taken from Table 1 of the California Department of Justice’s *Crime in California* reports.

² *Crime in California 2023*, 5; Crimes and Clearances “READ ME”, OpenJustice, 14–16 (June 2024).

California violent crime rate, 1969–2023

Rate is per 100,000 population

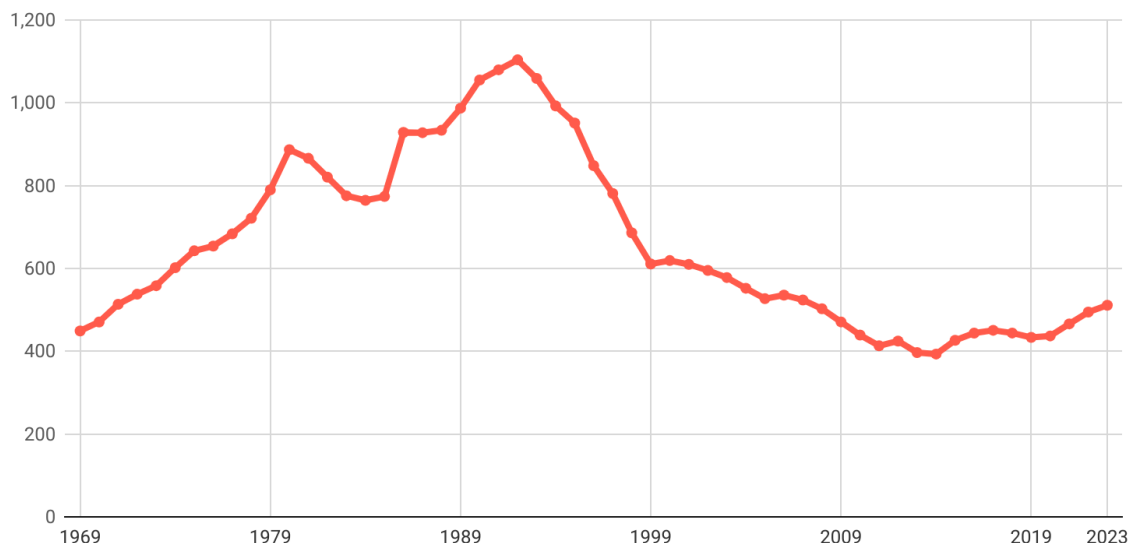


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Compared to pre-pandemic levels, the violent crime rate is 18% higher in 2023 than it was in 2019. The property crime rate is essentially the same, with a 0.77% decrease in 2023 compared to 2019. The 2019 property crime rate was the lowest recorded since at least 1969.

The City of Oakland was a significant outlier in the crime data. Recent reporting also suggests that the crime data from Oakland submitted to the California Department of Justice may not be accurate — in particular, a 236% increase in aggravated assaults may actually have only been a 10% increase.³ If Oakland is removed from the 2022 and 2023 data, the 2023 statewide violent crime rate decreased by 1.37% and the property crime rate decreased by 3.57% compared to 2022.⁴

³ Rachel Swan and Dan Kopf, *Oakland has been publishing misleading crime data for years*, San Francisco Chronicle, July 10, 2024 (“Apart from the weekly reports, the year-end crime data that Oakland submitted to the state Department of Justice several months ago appears to have a major error. ¶ It states that in 2023, aggravated assaults more than tripled compared with 2022 — from 3,329 to 11,169 — after remaining steady in prior years. No one in the Oakland Police Department could explain the implausible rise. In the city’s year-end crime report, assaults rose from 3,222 in 2022 to 3,531 in 2023.”).

⁴ Population data from the Department of Finance’s 2023 & 2024 population estimates was used to recalculate the crime rates. Crime counts were taken from OpenJustice.

The statewide homicide rate declined 15.8% in 2023 compared to 2022. After an increase during the COVID-19 pandemic — a trend seen throughout the United States⁵ — California’s homicide rate is now close to its pre-pandemic level (4.8 in 2023 vs. 4.2 in 2019). The 2019 homicide rate was the lowest recorded in California history since at least 1966.

California homicide rate, 1969–2023

Rate is per 100,000 population

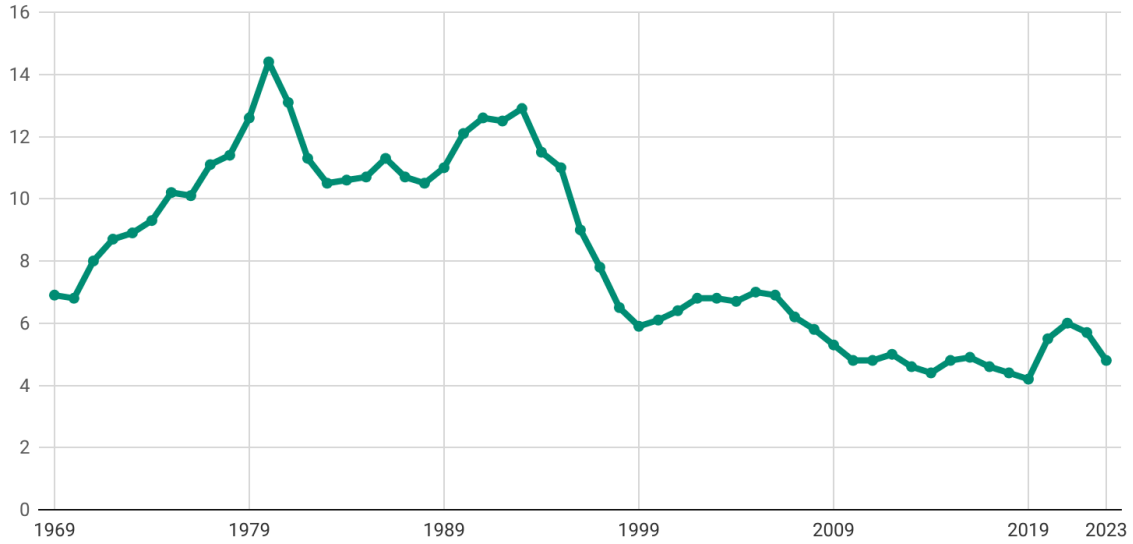


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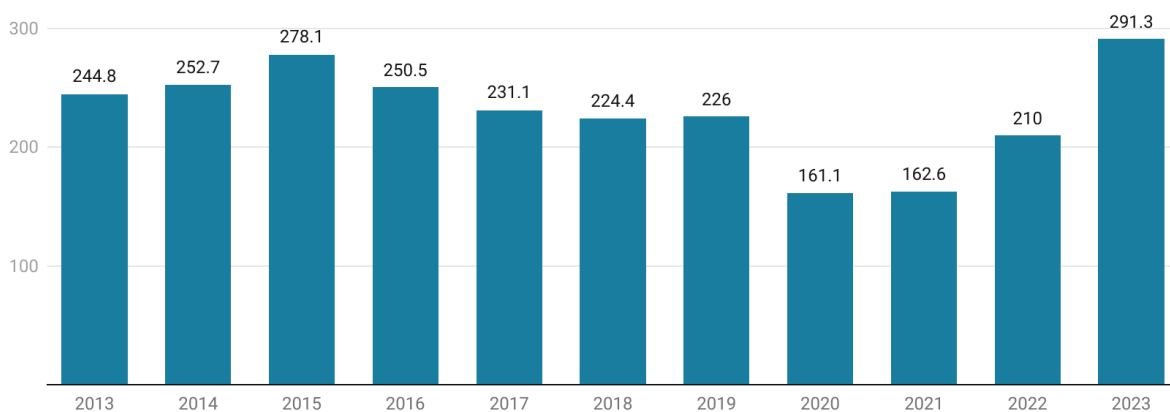
⁵ See, e.g., Ernest Lopez and Bobby Boxerman, *Crime Trends in U.S. Cities: Year-End 2023 Update*, Council on Criminal Justice (January 2024).

The data also contains information about a number of specific theft offenses, including shoplifting and theft of car-parts.

California's shoplifting rate increased 39% in 2023 compared to 2022. The 2023 rate is 29% higher than the pre-pandemic rate in 2019. Note that shoplifting in this data is defined using a generic definition from the FBI and — unlike the California Penal Code definition of shoplifting — includes all thefts from stores regardless of value, not just those below \$950.⁶

California shoplifting rate, 2013–2023

Rate is per 100,000 population



Shoplifting is theft from a store regardless of value.

Chart: Committee on Revision of the Penal Code • Source: California Department of Justice, Crime in California, Tables 11 & 52/53. • Created with Datawrapper

Some of the increase in this rate may be attributable to increased reporting to law enforcement as some jurisdictions saw very large increases in shoplifting reports in 2023 compared to 2022.⁷ For example, shoplifting reports increased 314% to the Sacramento Police Department and 348% to the Sacramento Sheriff's Department in 2023.

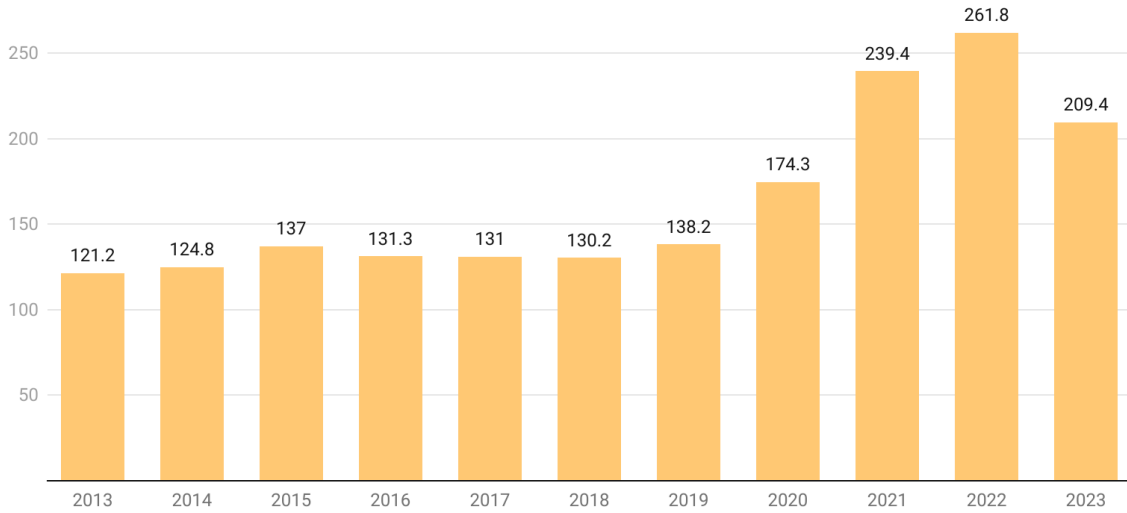
⁶ FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, Summary Reporting System (SRS) User Manual, 46–47, June 20, 2013. See also Penal Code § 459.5 (California's shoplifting offense).

⁷ See generally Ishania Desai, *Sacramento City Attorney's Office warned Target it could face fines for retail theft calls*, The Sacramento Bee, July 8, 2024 (noting a 331% increase in calls for services for theft, robbery, and shoplifting from the three Target stores in the City of Sacramento); Susie Nelson and Rachel Swan, *One Target store. One huge spike in shoplifting reports. What does it mean for San Francisco?*, San Francisco Chronicle, November 27, 2021 ("A closer look at the data shows that the spike in reported shoplifting came almost entirely from one store ... Did the store see a huge spike in shoplifting in September? No, said [the] store manager ... The store was simply using a new reporting system implemented by the police that allows retailers to report crime incidents over the phone.").

The rate of thefts of parts from cars — which should include catalytic converter theft — declined 20% in 2023 compared to 2022. The 2023 rate is 52% higher than the pre-pandemic rate in 2019.

California car-part theft rate, 2013–2023

Rate is per 100,000 population



Data includes the theft of any part or accessory attached to the interior or exterior of a motor vehicle in a manner that would make the part an attachment to the vehicle or necessary for the operation of the vehicle.

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Staff looks forward to discussing this data with the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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