



# **CRIME & DELINQUENCY IN CALIFORNIA 1997**



California Department of Justice  
Division of Criminal Justice Information Services  
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# CRIME & DELINQUENCY IN CALIFORNIA

1997



*The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is:*

- *To collect, analyze, and report statistical data, which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process;*
- *To examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system;*
- *To promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.*

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# attorney general's message

California's crime rate is the lowest rate in 30 years. All six major crime categories have dropped for the fourth consecutive year.

- California Crime Index rate is down 6.9 percent as compared to last year.
  - Violent crimes are down 7.9 percent.
    - Homicide is down 13.3 percent.
    - Forcible rape is down 2.2 percent.
    - Robbery is down 15.0 percent.
    - Aggravated assault is down 4.2 percent.
  - Property crimes are down 6.5 percent.
    - Burglary is down 5.8 percent.
    - Motor vehicle theft is down 7.3 percent.

During the Three Strikes era, the violent crime rate in California dropped 26.2 percent with a 29.3 percent drop in the six major crime categories and homicide is down nearly 40 percent. Every one of us has a neighbor, work colleague, friend, loved one or family member who was not a victim of crime due to the fact that nearly 800,000 crimes have been prevented in our state during the Three Strikes era. These are crimes which would have occurred had the previous crime pattern continued unabated. They include more than 215,000 violent crimes, 4,000 murder victims, and more than 6,000 victims of rape.



While some pundits and policy-makers stubbornly refuse to consider it, most Californians understand that changes such as community-oriented policing, Three Strikes and the restoration of the death penalty are working just as they were intended to work – deterring many crimes before they create new victims and shutting the prison door on hyperactive career criminals.

The drop in crime also continues in felony juvenile arrests. From 1992 to 1997, the juvenile felony arrest rate dropped 23.3 percent, with the juvenile homicide arrest rate dropping 52.8 percent. While serious juvenile offenses have been dropping, status offenses – truancy, incorrigibility, running away and curfew violations – have increased more than 48.7 percent. In comparison, during the last five years of the 1980s, California experienced the exact opposite with status offenses down 17.5 percent, juvenile felony arrest rates up 11.9 percent, and the juvenile homicide arrest rate up 150.6 percent. This illustrates law enforcement's commitment to lowering juvenile crime and stopping kids before they start down the wrong path.

We have seen a tremendous change in our crime rate. California is dramatically counteracting the crime waves of the 1960s and 1970s, and the relative tranquility of the 1950s is by no means an unrealistic goal. We should not start to waver now and become complacent. We need to look at what has worked – "Three Strikes and You're Out," the restoration of the death penalty and community-oriented policing – and continue our commitment to driving down California's crime rate.



# highlights

## **CRIMES** *(See pages 2-23.)*

- *The California Crime Index (CCI) rate increased from 898.1 in 1952 to its peak of 3,922.1 in 1980. The CCI then dropped to 2,381.4 crimes reported per 100,000 population in 1997. (Source: Table 1.)*
- *The CCI rate decreased for the sixth consecutive year. From 1996 to 1997, the CCI rate decreased 6.9 percent. (Source: Table 1.)*
- *From 1996 to 1997, violent crimes decreased 7.9 percent in rate. Property crimes decreased 6.5 percent in rate. (Source: Table 2.)*
- *In 1997, the homicide rate reached its lowest point since 1970 at 7.8 per 100,000 population. (Source: Table 1.)*

## **ARRESTS** *(See pages 26-63.)*

- *The 1997 total felony arrest rate of 6,290.2 per 100,000 population at risk reached an all-time low. (Source: Table 16.)*
- *In 1997, the misdemeanor arrest rate per 100,000 population at risk decreased for the tenth consecutive year. Meanwhile, the felony arrest rate increased 1.7 percent after two years of decline. (Sources: Tables 16 and 17.)*
- *Since 1992, the rate of juvenile felony arrests decreased 23.3 percent while juvenile misdemeanor arrests increased 2.2 percent and status offenses (truancy, incorrigibility, running away, and curfew violations) increased 48.7 percent. (Source: Table 17.)*



- *From 1992 to 1997, the homicide arrest rate decreased 39.0 percent. The rate of juvenile arrests for homicide offenses has decreased 52.8 percent since 1992.* (Source: Table 22.)
- *Since 1992, the narcotic arrest rate dropped 29.1 percent while the dangerous drug arrest rate increased 83.2 percent.* (Source: Table 22.)

## **DISPOSITIONS** *(See pages 66-75.)*

- *In 1997, more than six out of ten adult felony arrest dispositions resulted in a conviction.* (Source: Table 39.)
- *Probation with jail continues to be the most frequent sentence given.* (Source: Table 41.)
- *In 1997, 18.5 percent of the adults convicted of violent offenses and 25.8 percent of those convicted of drug offenses were sentenced to state institutions (prison, CRC, and CYA).* (Source: Table 41.)

## **ADULT CORRECTIONS** *(See pages 78-85.)*

- *Since 1992, the rate of adults under state supervision has increased 24.1 percent and the rate of adults under local supervision decreased 4.0 percent.* (Source: Table 44.)
- *Local supervision accounted for approximately 60 percent of all adults under supervision throughout the 1992-1997 period.* (Source: Table 44A.)

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