

PUBLIC SAFETY



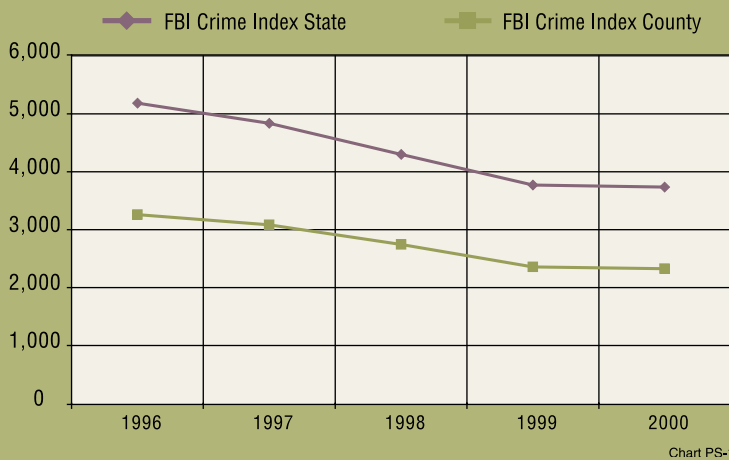
Courtesy of Ventura County Sheriff's Department

Public safety is an important component of both our actual well being and our *perception* of our well being. On one hand, our community and our personal well being are endangered if we are truly at risk. Beyond that, however, additional risk emerges from the *perception* that we are not safe. We may seek to leave the community, withdraw from it, or view others in a more hostile way, even if our own personal risk is not high. Furthermore, both the reality and the perception of public safety is important for the county's image as a good place to live and a good place to do business.

Ventura County is fortunate overall in having low crime rates. The FBI regularly reports that the county is one of the safest counties in the West and, indeed, in the entire United States. But this does not mean that our county and its communities have no public safety problems. As with so many other indicators, public safety indicators reveal great disparity throughout the county. Some cities are deeply afflicted with public safety issues while others are not. And these problems change from issue to issue. While cities with greater poverty also have greater crime rates generally, some public safety indicators -- domestic violence calls, for example -- point to a different pattern. Not all public safety issues are ghetto-ized in the poor cities within the county.

OVERALL CRIME RATES

FBI CRIME INDEX FOR CALIFORNIA AND VENTURA COUNTY



WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The FBI Crime Index tallies the number of crimes against persons and property reported in a region annually (see the Glossary for a complete definition of the Index). The values reported in our table represent the number of crimes per 100,000 population for the reporting period.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

The FBI Crime Index is the most prominent and widely used measure of criminal activity in the U. S.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Both the State of California and Ventura County have seen declining levels of criminal activity over the past several years, as would be expected in times of comparative economy prosperity. Ventura County has crime rates significantly below those for the State of California overall.

CRIMES IN COUNTY COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The Ventura County Sheriff's Department collects and publishes data descriptive of the levels of crimes against persons and property in the cities and unincorporated areas within the county.

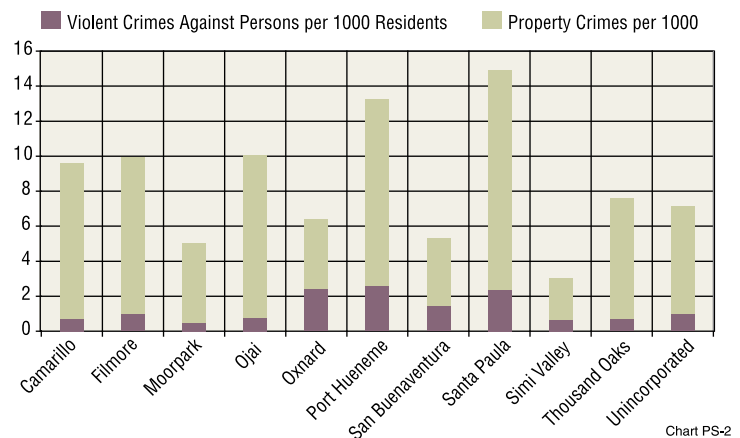
WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

While overall measures of crime in the county are useful indicators of the relative position of the county compared to other regions and trends over time, it is also important to examine public safety conditions at the level of the communities in which people live and work.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The data presented here indicate that there are substantial differences among communities in the county. The rates of crimes against persons are as much as 3 times higher in some communities within the county (Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Santa Paula) than they are in others (Camarillo, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks). Similarly, rates of crimes against property range from lows in Ventura and Moorpark to rates 3 to 4 times higher in Port Hueneme and Santa Paula, with the other cities falling inbetween. This suggests that it is important for each community to examine its own public safety profile and tailor its efforts at prevention and protection accordingly.

CRIMES BY CITY IN VENTURA COUNTY



JUVENILE FELONY ARRESTS

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

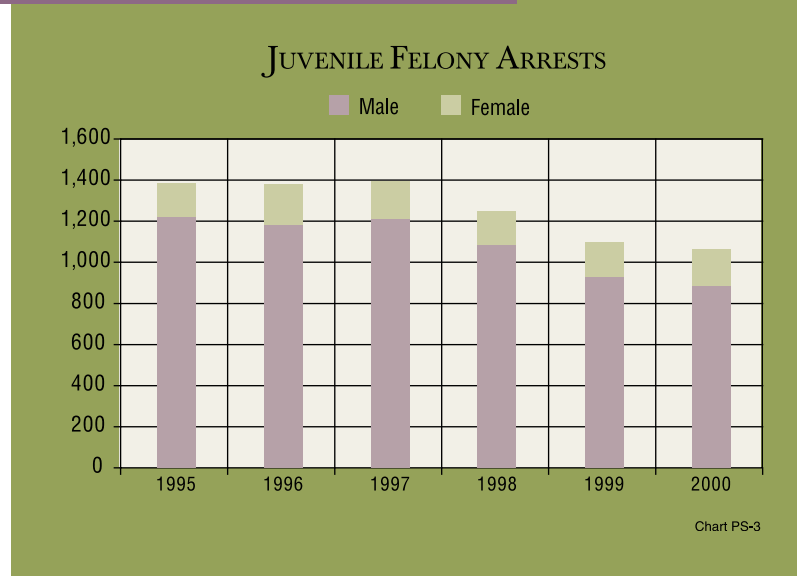
The measure is the number of arrests of youth under 18 in various crime categories, including major and minor crimes.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

The measure is important because of the impact of being exposed to the criminal justice system at an early age. In particular, a high juvenile arrest rate suggests gang or truancy activity that may serve as a precursor to violence and other crimes. Compared with the overall crime rate, it is a telling indication of how youth in particular are interacting in a community.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Arrests among juveniles have been declining in the last few years. Ventura County peace officers make between 1,000 and 1,400 juvenile felony arrests per year. Between 80% and 90% of those arrested are males. Juvenile felony arrests were steady between 1995 and 1997. However, between 1997 and 2000, they dropped almost 25%, from 1,394 to 1,061. The number of juvenile misdemeanor arrests has also declined, but less dramatically. This figure dropped from 4,458 in 1998 to 4,002 in 2000, a drop of approximately 10%. Females constitute a larger percentage of juveniles arrested on misdemeanor charges, usually representing about 30% of all arrestees.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALLS

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of 911 calls in Ventura County pertaining to domestic violence, including violence to children.

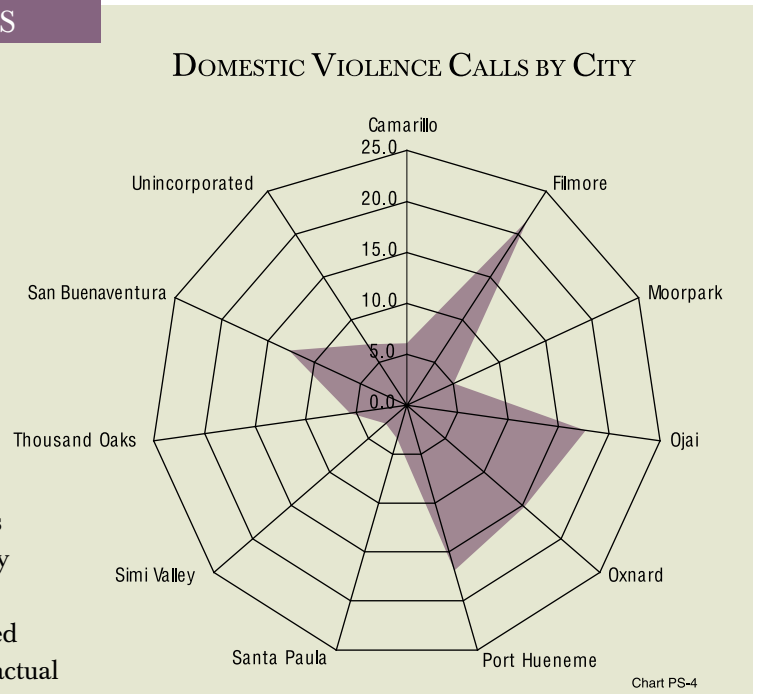
This measure includes attacks with weapons, heavy objects, hands, fists, and feet. This statistic is measured as the number of calls per 1,000 people.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Domestic violence has tragic implications for the health and well-being of adults and children, and directly affects the families to which they belong. Domestic violence may also be an indicator of overall community health. It is important to note that this measure covers only reported domestic violence calls for emergency assistance, not actual incidents of domestic violence, which may go unreported.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Historic data on domestic violence is unavailable countywide or by city; however, recent statistics at the municipal level indicate the following: City-by-city, rates vary dramatically on domestic violence calls. The highest rate is found in Fillmore (21.6 calls per 1,000 residents), followed by Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Ojai (15 to 17 calls per 1,000). Lowest rates are in Simi Valley (2.7) and Santa Paula (3.5).



EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIMES: SHERIFF

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The Sheriff's Department maintains detailed records of the number of calls for assistance it receives, how these calls are classified (emergency, routine, etc.), and how long it takes to respond to a call. The data reported here concern response times (how long it takes a unit to reach the scene) for calls classified as emergencies. See the Glossary for a fuller definition.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

How quickly law enforcement officials can respond to emergency situations relates directly to the protection of citizens and property, and the apprehension of wrong doers.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

As the charts suggest, there are differences in response times to emergency calls handled by the Sheriff in the cities in the county compared to those for the unincorporated areas. This is not an unexpected result given the great distances to be covered in the more rural areas. The Sheriff's Department reports response times in terms of confidence intervals – for example, the probability that a call will be answered in not less than “x” minutes nor more than “y” minutes. Over the past decade, the Sheriff's Department has been successful in reducing the variation in response times to emergency calls (which now average about 5 minutes), while the range in variation of response times in the unincorporated areas has remained about the same. Average response time in both types of areas has increased modestly in recent years.

SHERIFF EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIMES - CITIES

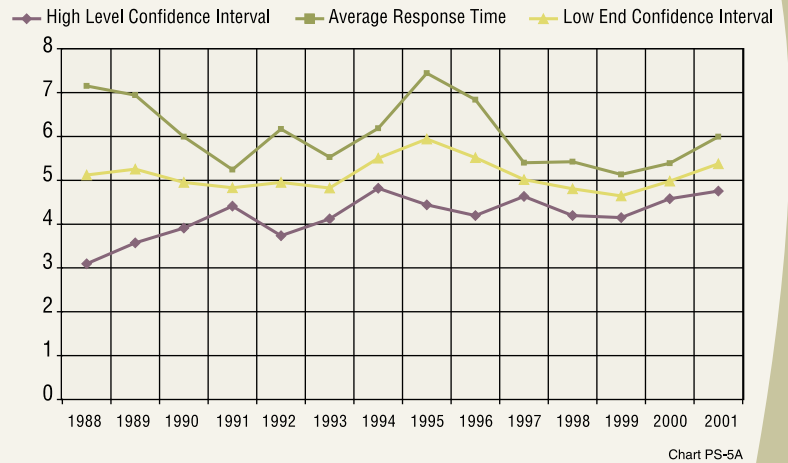


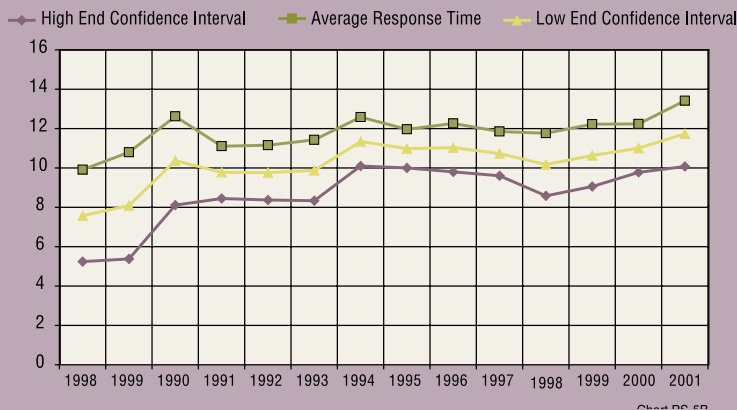
Chart PS-5A

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIMES - COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The Ventura County Fire Department provides a range of emergency response services to designated parts of the county. It is important within the Department's internal procedures to seek to determine the exact nature of a reported emergency so that the appropriate response of personnel and equipment can be made. Response times are classified according to the nature of the service needed: fire, rescue or emergency medical services.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIMES BY VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT



WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

As in the case of all emergencies, risks to persons and property are reduced when response times are low.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2001, Fire Department emergency response times were lowest for rescue and emergency medical situations. As with the Sheriff's Department, response times are somewhat longer in more rural areas. The average response time for fires is less than 6 minutes and under 5 minutes for rescue and EMS situations.