



## FACT SHEET: Police, Prisons, and Public Safety in California

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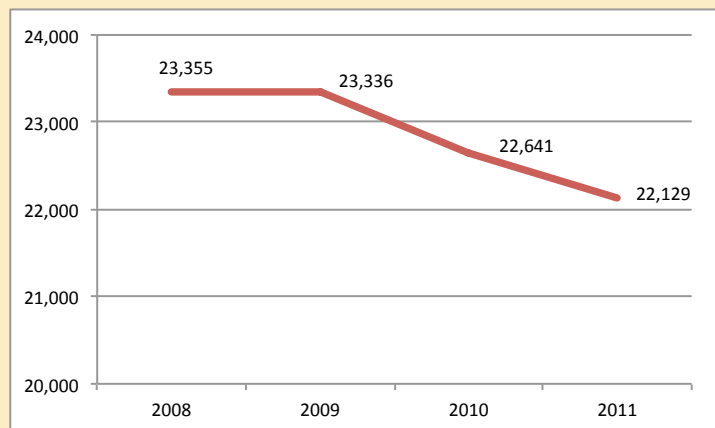
Recent research indicates that the number of police officers is being cut in the majority of California cities, despite the importance of police to public safety. Research also tells us that prisons are much less effective at protecting the public, but prison expenditures continue to rise. A 2011 briefing by the Brookings Institution calculates that expenditures on police and youth prevention programs have a much larger cost-benefit impact on crime than more investments in prisons.<sup>1</sup>

**Police Departments across the state have been shrinking.** The losses in numbers of officers on the street are a result of layoffs and cutbacks as well as attrition through retirement or other departures. A few cities are attempting to fill police vacancies, but progress in this area is slow, and there are real questions about whether cities can sustain these investments. Further, there may be cutbacks in federal funding to support local police through the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, which will further reduce city police forces.

According to the Police Executive Research Forum, "...it is undeniable that when 40% of police departments are still facing upcoming cuts in their total funding, the field of policing is suffering."<sup>2</sup>

### Total Police Officers in 25 California Cities, 2008-2011

2011 Population over 140,000 (includes Los Angeles)

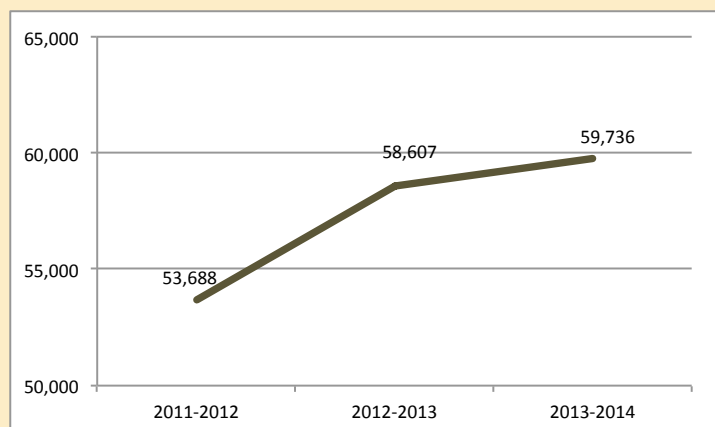


Source: FBI, Crime in the United States, 2008-2011.

Statewide, the number of sworn police officers has been steadily declining for several years. In addition to the FBI numbers for 2008 to 2011, **9 out of 11 cities contacted through an informal telephone poll reported continuing declines for 2012.**

### Total Budgeted Positions in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR),

2011-2014



Source: California Budget, Department of Finance.

There is mounting research that suggests that **investing in police rather than expanding corrections is a more effective public safety strategy**—a matter of prevention instead of reaction. For example, a review of 14 studies on the subject shows a link between higher numbers of police officers and a reduction in crime, especially property crime.<sup>3</sup>

### Corrections Staffing, 2011-2014

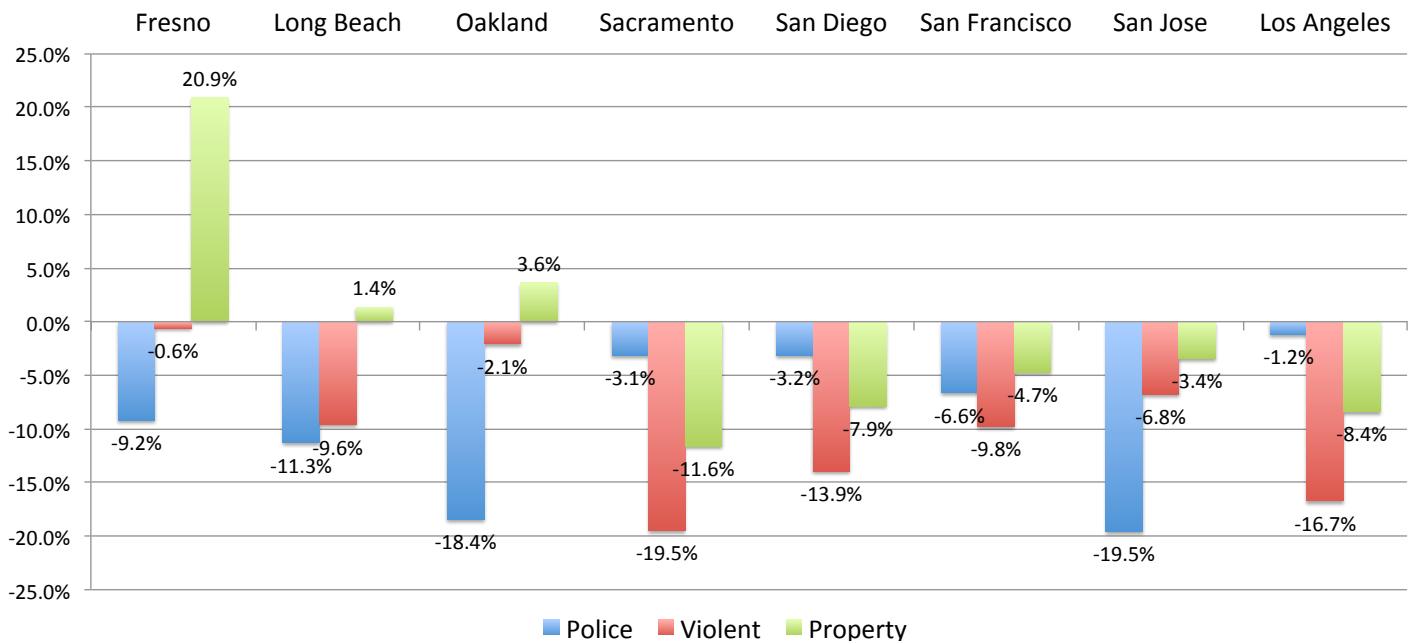
Positions Allocated in the California Budget

CDCR Positions	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014 <sup>5</sup>
Total Positions	<b>53,688</b>	<b>58,607</b>	<b>59,736</b>
Adult Parole	<b>2,489</b>	<b>1,895</b>	<b>1,405</b>

**California is not following this public safety strategy.** Instead, local police forces are diminishing, as are parole officers, who form part of community corrections.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the numbers of state prison staff are increasing.

### Percent Change in Police, Violent and Property Crime, 2009-2011

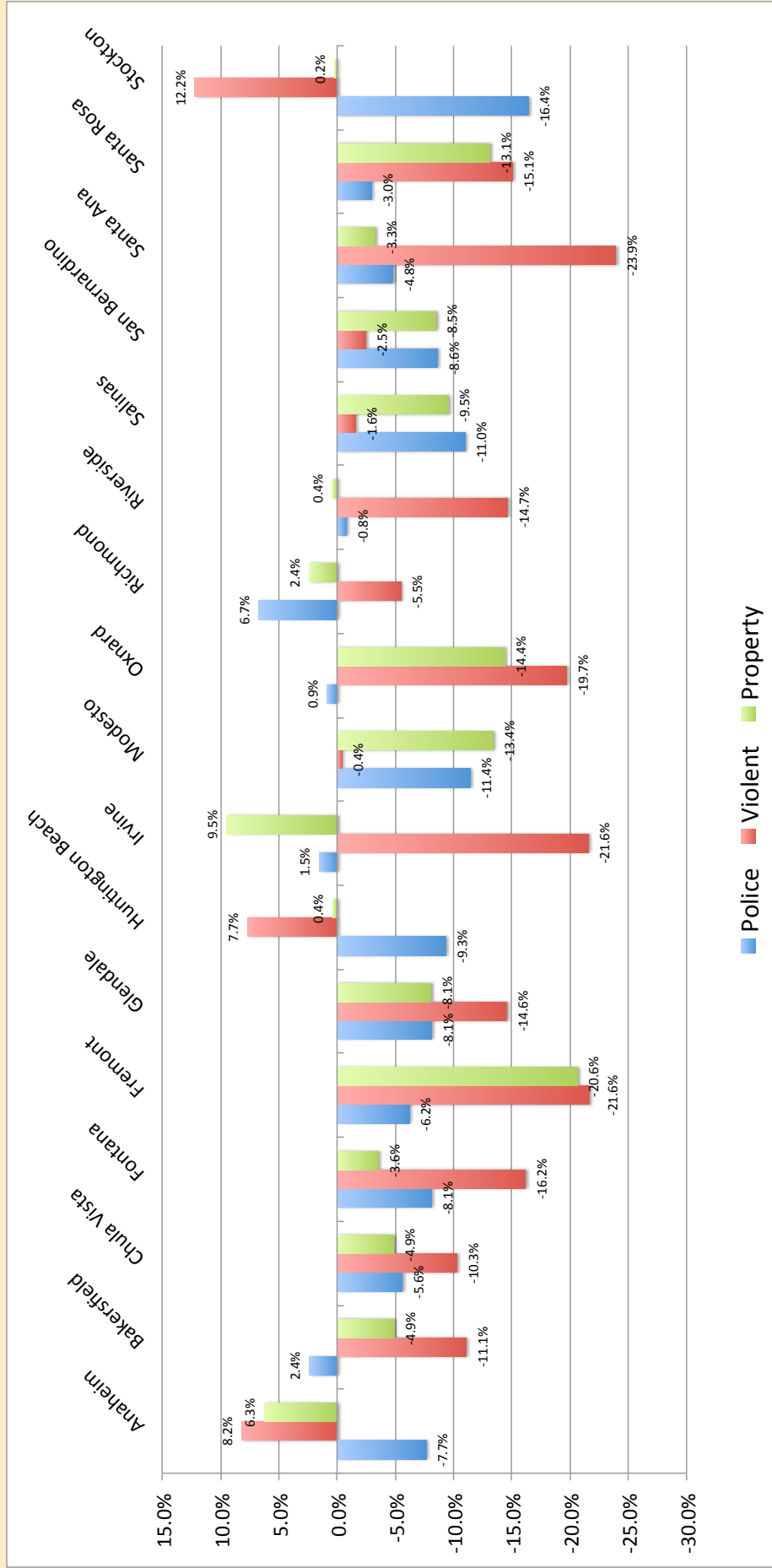
Cities with Population from 400,000 to 1,400,000 and Los Angeles



Between 2009 and 2011, the number of police officers declined in every major California city (population greater than 400,000). In all of these cities, violent crime also decreased during the same time period. Three of eight cities saw an increase in property crime. Of the surveyed cities, this increase in property crime was most pronounced in Fresno.

## Percent Change in Police, Violent and Property Crime, 2009-2011

Cities with Population from 140,000 to 400,000



Between 2009 and 2011, in 17 mid-size California cities, all but 4 had a reduced number of police officers; a majority of these forces declined between 5% and 12%. Three such cities—Anaheim, Huntington Beach, and Stockton—have seen an increase in violent crime during the same period. Property crime has risen in 6 cities—Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Richmond, Riverside, and Stockton.

**Crime in many cities has begun to climb**, following a prolonged period of steady decline. Estimates based on preliminary FBI crime data for 2012 compared to 2009 show an increase in violent or property crime, or both, in 15 of 25 cities.<sup>6</sup>

Crime rates are affected by a complex set of factors; therefore, their relationship to numbers of police officers is not entirely clear. However, there are some data that suggest a significant correlation.<sup>7</sup> California has confronted major cutbacks in a range of education, social service, health care, and child welfare budgets, which has weakened the community social safety net and undoubtedly

contributed in some measure to crime rates. Over the past several years, California has reduced funding for Medi-Cal by \$1.4 billion, social services grants by over \$510 million, and child welfare and foster care by \$121 million.<sup>8</sup> Cities have also lost funds for economic development. Even with the passage of the new tax revenues from Proposition 30, general fund spending is still a lower percentage of the California economy than it was in all but two of the past 40 years.<sup>9</sup>

**Under Realignment, responsibilities have shifted from the state to the counties**, placing an extra burden on local law enforcement and probation.

## **California may need to rethink its criminal justice expenditures. Could some of the state savings from Realignment and the decarceration of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) be shared with police departments?**

### NOTES:

1 Phillip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, (2011). *More prisoners versus more crime is the wrong question*. Brookings Policy Brief Series #185, 2011. From <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/12/prisons-cook-ludwig>

2 PERF. (2013). *Policing and the Economic Downturn: Striving for Efficiency Is the New Normal*. Washington, DC: Author. From [http://policeforum.org/library/critical-issues-in-policing-series/Economic\\_Downturn.pdf](http://policeforum.org/library/critical-issues-in-policing-series/Economic_Downturn.pdf)

3 Bradford, B. (2011). *Police Numbers and Crime Rates—A Rapid Evidence Review*. From [http://www.academia.edu/796325/Police\\_numbers\\_and\\_crime\\_rates\\_-\\_a\\_rapid\\_evidence\\_review](http://www.academia.edu/796325/Police_numbers_and_crime_rates_-_a_rapid_evidence_review)

4 This fact sheet draws on data from the *FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States*. We reviewed data from a selection of cities over 140,000 in total population in 2012. Crime data for 2012 are estimated from 6-month figures—January to June, 2012. From <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011>

5 *California State Budget, 2013-2014, Corrections Budget Detail*. From <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/pdf/GovernorsBudget/5210.pdf>

6 *FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States*. Various years. From <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr-publications#Crime>

7 Bradford

8 *Cuts in California: How billions in budget cuts will affect the Golden State*, New York Times, Dec., 2011. <http://projects.nytimes.com/california-budget/health>

9 California Budget Project, Sept. 2012, *What would Proposition 30 mean for California?* From [http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2012/120911\\_Proposition\\_30\\_BB.pdf](http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2012/120911_Proposition_30_BB.pdf)