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# UNDERSTANDING COLORADO'S CRIME TRENDS:

LOCAL PROGRESS, NATIONAL STANDING

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### **Mitch Morrissey - CSI Owens Early Criminal Justice Fellow**

Mitch Morrissey was the elected District Attorney for the 2nd Judicial District (JD), from 2005 to 2017. Prior to 2005, Mitch was a trial lawyer in the Denver District Attorney's office beginning in 1983. Mitch is internationally recognized for his expertise in DNA technology, applying that technology in criminal prosecutions, and working to ensure that DNA science is admissible in court. He has trained law enforcement officers and prosecutors throughout the United States, in the Middle East, in Central America, and Canada. A veteran prosecutor, Mitch introduced the first DNA evidence used in a criminal trial in Denver. The DNA Resource Section at the Denver DA's website became a resource for people interested in forensic DNA throughout the world.



### **Jimena Sanchez - Research Analyst**

Jimena Sanchez is a Research Analyst at the Common Sense Institute, joining CSI in 2024. Jimena recently graduated from the University of Denver, where she completed a major in Political Science with minors in International Studies, Sociology, and Marketing. Her academic background reflects a deep commitment to understanding complex global issues and the social dynamics that shape them. With her degree and experience at CSI, Jimena brings a unique interdisciplinary perspective to her work, combining her knowledge in political science with insights from sociology and marketing to drive impactful projects.



### **Cole Anderson - Deputy Director of Policy & Research**

Cole Anderson is the Deputy Director of Policy & Research with Common Sense Institute. He joined CSI in June of 2022.

Before joining CSI, Cole attended the University of Denver where he double majored in Economics and Public Policy, fostering his passion for pressing policy issues. His work at CSI has covered a variety of topics including crime, healthcare, foster care, and workforce issues among other topics.

## ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

**Common Sense Institute** is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions concerning the future of free enterprise and aims to have an impact on the issues that matter most to Coloradans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI employs rigorous research techniques and dynamic modeling to evaluate the potential impact of these measures on the economy and individual opportunity.

## TEAMS & FELLOWS STATEMENT

CSI is committed to independent, in-depth research that examines the impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI's commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of our researchers, economists, and fellows. At the core of CSI's mission is a belief in the power of the free enterprise system. Our work explores ideas that protect and promote jobs and the economy, and the CSI team and fellows take part in this pursuit with academic freedom. Our team's work is informed by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect the institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take positions.

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# INTRODUCTION

Colorado's crime trends present a mixed picture: rates have fallen from recent peaks, but the state still ranks among the highest in the nation for both violent and property crime. According to 2024 data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Colorado placed 8th in violent crime and 3rd in property crime. These rankings suggest that recent improvements have not been large enough to materially improve Colorado's standing relative to the rest of the country.

While the most recent Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) data show that property crime rates have declined since their Covid-19 peak, the state still ranks among the worst in the country. Based on a 2023 CSI report, the cost of all crime per resident in Colorado (in 2020 dollars) was \$4,627, and the total cost to the state was over \$27 billion, underscoring that these elevated crime rates translate into direct costs for Coloradans.<sup>1</sup>

This report examines state-level trends using 2025 CBI data and ranks Colorado against the nation using 2024 FBI data. This comparison provides a comprehensive view of recent in-state progress and how Colorado compares nationally.

**Ultimately, the key question is not simply whether crime has fallen from its pandemic-era peak, but whether Colorado is improving fast enough to stop ranking among the nation's highest-crime states.**

## KEY FINDINGS

### Based on FBI Data, Colorado Crime Rates Remain Among the Highest in the Nation

- Colorado placed 3rd in aggregated crime in 2024, which includes the property and violent crime ranks.
- Colorado ranked 8th in its violent crime rate in 2024.
- Colorado ranked 3rd in its property crime rate in 2024.

### Crime Rates in Colorado's Top 10 Most Populous Counties Based on CBI Data

- Adams County's property and violent crime rates continue to be the highest among Colorado's top 10 most populous counties.
- Arapahoe County's violent crime rate has decreased by 13% from 2008 to 2025.
- Douglas County saw the greatest jump from 2008 to 2025 with its violent crime rate increasing by 477%.
- Pueblo County experienced the largest declines in both property and violent crime rates among Colorado's 10 most populous counties, with property crime falling 72% and violent crime declining 70% between 2022 and 2025.
- All counties experienced declines in property crime from 2024 to 2025, with Pueblo County recording the largest decrease (-60%) and Weld County the smallest (-9%).

### Certain Crime Rates Have Increased, While Others Decreased

- Property crime levels in Colorado have declined to their lowest point since 2008, the first year of available CBI data, indicating a notable long-term improvement.
- Shoplifting crimes increased by 40% from 2021 to 2025.
- Human trafficking in Colorado (commercial sex acts and involuntary servitude) increased by 304% from 2015 to 2025.

# AGGREGATE CRIME RANK

How does Colorado rank across major crime categories? Figure 1 illustrates the overall crime rankings across the United States. Colorado placed 3rd highest in aggregate crime in 2024. This ranking encompasses Colorado's 2024 property and violent crime ranks. Property crime includes burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Violent crime includes murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

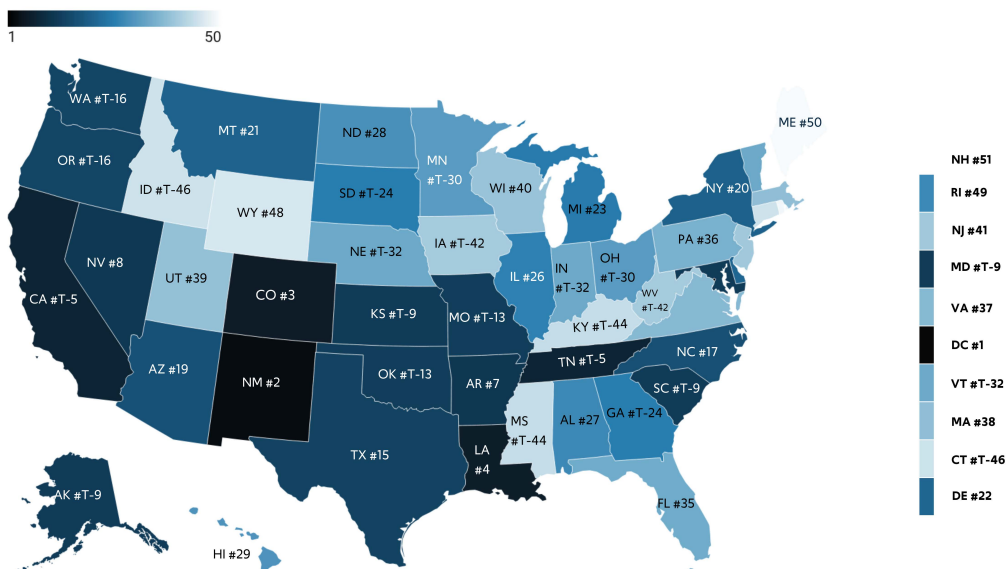
While New Mexico has a higher aggregate crime ranking than Colorado, other neighboring states like Wyoming, Utah, and Nebraska have lower aggregate crime ranks. This contrast presents an important question that deserves more research: to what extent is crime dictated by regional factors versus state-specific policies and conditions?

While national rankings highlight Colorado's relative standing, they do not capture recent crime changes within the state. To better understand these recent changes, more timely data from the CBI provides a better picture of how crime has changed across Colorado.

FIGURE 1.

## 2024 Aggregate Crime Rank

In 2024, Colorado placed third in aggregate crime ranking that includes property and violent crime ranks.



These rankings are calculated by averaging the property and violent crime rankings.  
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) • Created with Datawrapper



# CRIME IN COLORADO (CBI)

CBI's 2025 data show that Colorado's property and violent crime rates are moving in the right direction, but many categories remain elevated relative to a decade ago.<sup>ii</sup> Figure 2 shows that while short-term declines are common, several offenses are still above their levels from 10 years earlier.

**FIGURE 2.**

Change in Colorado Crime Over the Years*				
	1-Year	3-Year	5-Year	10-Year
<b>Crimes Against Persons**</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	-20%	-46%	-30%	22%
Aggravated Assault	-12%	-11%	11%	77%
Simple Assault	-3%	-1%	6%	14%
Human Trafficking (Combined)***	14%	85%	197%	304%
<b>Crimes Against Property</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-32%</b>	<b>-26%</b>	<b>-17%</b>
Burglary	-21%	-31%	-33%	-36%
Wire Fraud	12%	40%	180%	133%
Shoplifting	-5%	37%	26%	-6%
Motor Vehicle Theft	-38%	-62%	-43%	4%
<b>Crimes Against Society</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Drug/Narcotic Violations	-8%	-3%	10%	-6%
Drug Equipment	1%	34%	87%	47%
Prostitution	-22%	57%	85%	-39%
Weapon Law Violations	-16%	-20%	-10%	41%

\*Timeframe: One-year is 2024-2025, three-year is 2022-2025, five-year is 2020-2025, and ten-year is 2015-2025

\*\*Not all categories are included in Crimes Against Persons, Crimes Against Property, and Crimes Against Society

\*\*\*Human Trafficking (Combined) includes Commercial Sex Acts and Involuntary Servitude

## Violent Crime

The CBI includes the following categories in violent crime: murder, aggravated assault, non-consensual sex offenses, and robbery.

Violent crime in Colorado has declined from its early-2020s peak, but it remains above the levels that prevailed through most of the 2010s. Figure 3 shows that, throughout the 2010s, the state's violent crime rate averaged 3.86 per 1,000 individuals, compared to 4.51 per 1,000 individuals in 2025. However, the 2025 number is lower than the rate (5.27 per 1,000 individuals) in the early 2020s. From the period of 2010-2019 to the period of 2020-2024, the violent crime rate increased by 33%.

FIGURE 3.

### AVERAGE VIOLENT CRIME RATES OVER TIME

**3.86**  
PER 1,000 INDIVIDUALS



2010-2019 VIOLENT CRIME RATE

**5.27**  
PER 1,000 INDIVIDUALS



2020-2024 VIOLENT CRIME RATE

**4.51**  
PER 1,000 INDIVIDUALS



2025 VIOLENT CRIME RATE

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation

Between 2021 and 2025, all major categories of violent crime declined, with the largest decreases observed in robbery (-37%) and murder (-33%), followed by non-consensual sex offenses (-29%) and aggravated assault (-6%).

Violent crime rates in Colorado's 10 most populous counties saw a decrease from 2024 to 2025. However, all counties on this list, except Arapahoe, Larimer and Weld, are at violent crime rates above their 2008-level violent crime rates. The most notable change happened in Adams County with rates increasing from 4.39 in 2008 to 10.21 per 1,000 individuals in 2025. Figure 4 shows the changes that occurred between these years.

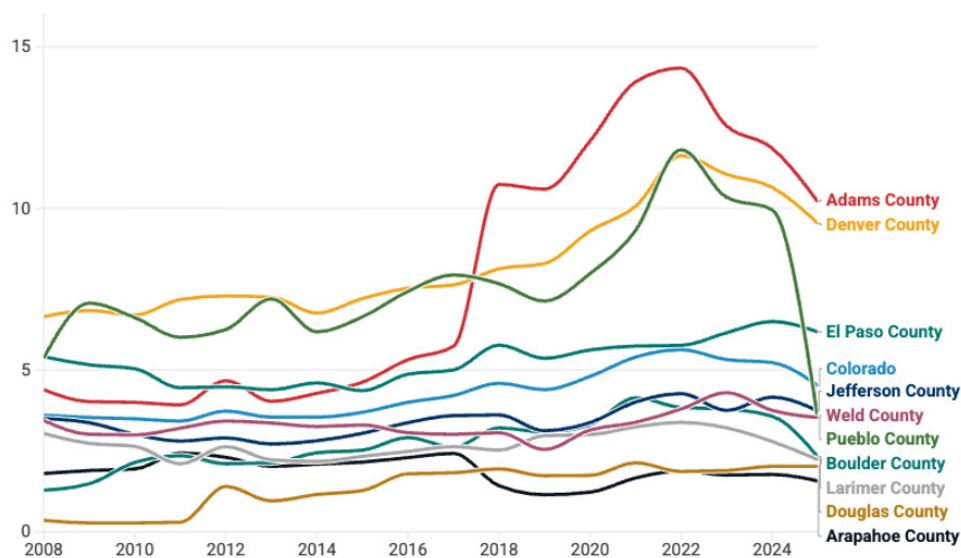
FIGURE 4.

Change in Violent Crime by County (2008 to 2025)			
County	2008	2025	Change from 2008 to 2025
Adams County	4.39	10.21	133%
Arapahoe County	1.8	1.57	-13%
Boulder County	1.28	2.32	81%
Colorado Average	3.6	4.52	26%
Denver County	6.65	9.54	43%
Douglas County	0.35	2.02	477%
El Paso County	5.41	6.18	14%
Jefferson County	3.5	3.74	7%
Larimer County	3.04	2.23	-27%
Pueblo County	5.37	3.52	-34%
Weld County	3.44	3.53	3%

Figure 5 shows 2022 as a peak year for many counties' violent crime rates. Pueblo County saw the largest decrease from 2022 to 2025 (-70%).

FIGURE 5.

### Violent Crimes in Colorado's Most Populous Counties (per 1,000)



Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation

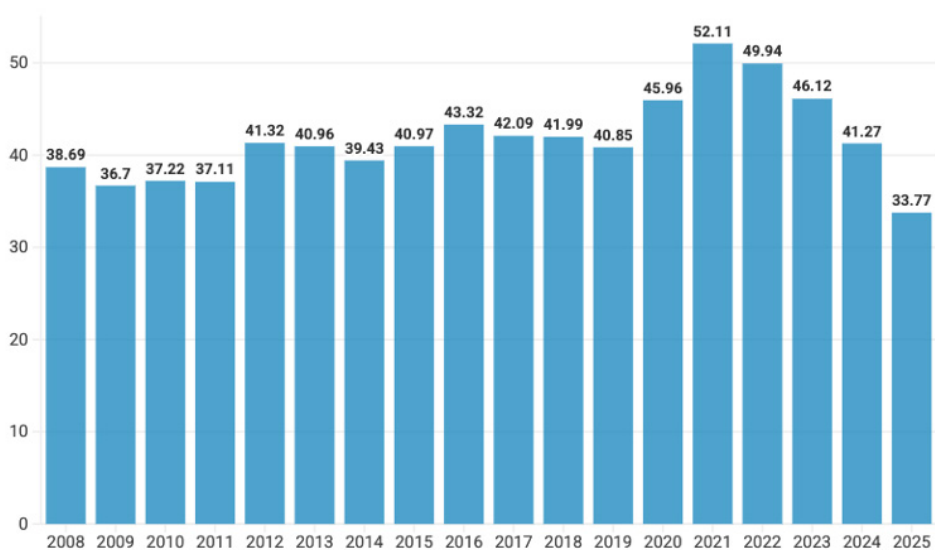


## Property Crime

The categories included in the CBI's Crimes Against Property include the following: Arson, Bribery, Burglary/Breaking & Entering, Counterfeiting/Forgery, Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property, Embezzlement, Extortion/Blackmail, False Pretenses/Swindle/Confidence Game, Credit Card/Automated Teller Machine Fraud, Impersonation, Welfare Fraud, Wire Fraud, Identity Theft, Hacking/Computer Invasion, Robbery, Pocket-picking, Purse-snatching, Shoplifting, Theft From Building, Theft From Coin Operated Machine or Device, Theft From Motor Vehicle, Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts/Accessories, All Other Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft, Stolen Property Offenses.

**FIGURE 6.**

### Colorado Property Crime Rate (per 1,000)



Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI)



Across Colorado's 10 most populous counties, property crime rates were higher in 2025 than in 2008, but that long-term comparison masks important shifts within the period.

Douglas County saw the greatest jump from 2008 to 2025 with its property crime rate increasing by 172%. Meanwhile, Arapahoe County saw the largest decrease during this period with its property crime rates decreasing by 42%.

One category of property crime is identity theft, which decreased by 74% from 2015 to 2025. This decline was the largest among all property crime categories during this period.

Statewide property crime fell 35% from 2021 to 2025, dropping from a peak of 52.11 incidents per 1,000 residents to 33.77. By 2025, the property crime rate had fallen to its lowest level in the CBI data series, which begins in 2008. Figure 6 illustrates the property crime rate over the years.

Between 2021 and 2025, several property crime categories rose notably, including wire fraud (+100%), shoplifting (+40%), extortion/blackmail (+38%), and hacking/computer invasion (+13%). Although these increases may have been influenced by pandemic-related conditions, the lack of full reversion in the following years may suggest these trends are not temporary.

In a November 2025 report, CSI examined the economic effects of retail theft.<sup>iii</sup> Under current Colorado law, shoplifting penalties are structured as follows:

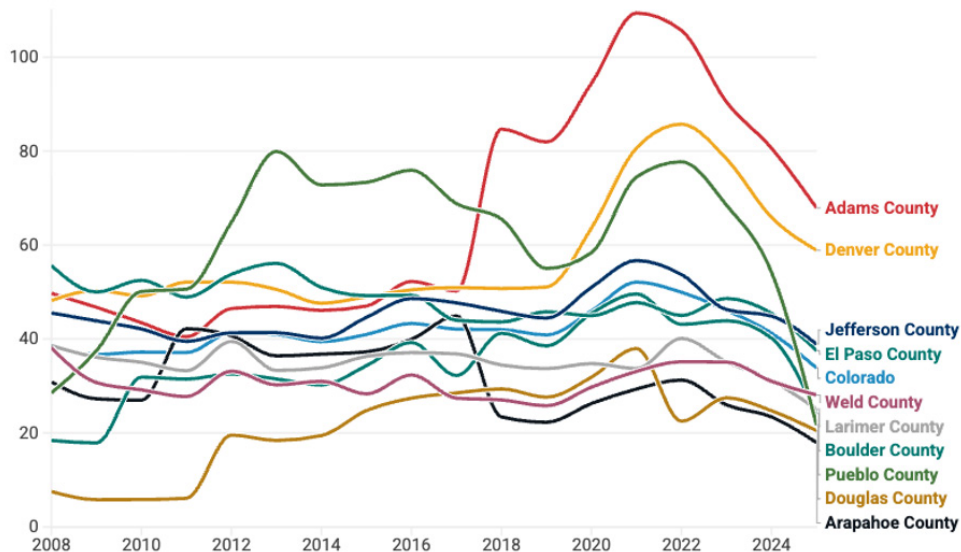
- **Petty offense:** Up to 10 days in jail and/or up to \$300 in fines if an individual steals less than \$300 worth of goods.
- **Misdemeanor:** Up to 364 days in jail and/or up to \$1,000 in fines if an individual steals at least \$300 worth of goods, but less than \$2,000.
- **Felony:** One to 24 years in prison and/or \$1,000 to \$1,000,000 in fines if an individual steals items worth \$2,000 or more.<sup>iv</sup>

Statewide, theft from motor vehicles and theft of motor vehicle parts and accessories both saw declines in their number of incidents, -51% and -62%, respectively from 2021 to 2025.

Property crime in Colorado's 10 most populous counties increased significantly during the pandemic period. The magnitude of the surge varies significantly by county, with Adams County emerging as a clear outlier. Figure 7 demonstrates the change in property crime rates in Colorado's most populous counties since 2008.

**FIGURE 7.**

**Property Crimes in Colorado's Most Populous Counties (per 1,000)**



Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation



# CRIME ACROSS THE UNITED STATES (FBI)

According to the FBI's 2024 crime statistics, Colorado ranked 8th in the United States in terms of violent crime and 3rd in property crime.<sup>v</sup> Colorado's top 10 ranking raises important questions about how state-level policy decisions, law enforcement capacity, and population changes may be influencing public safety outcomes.

## Violent Crime

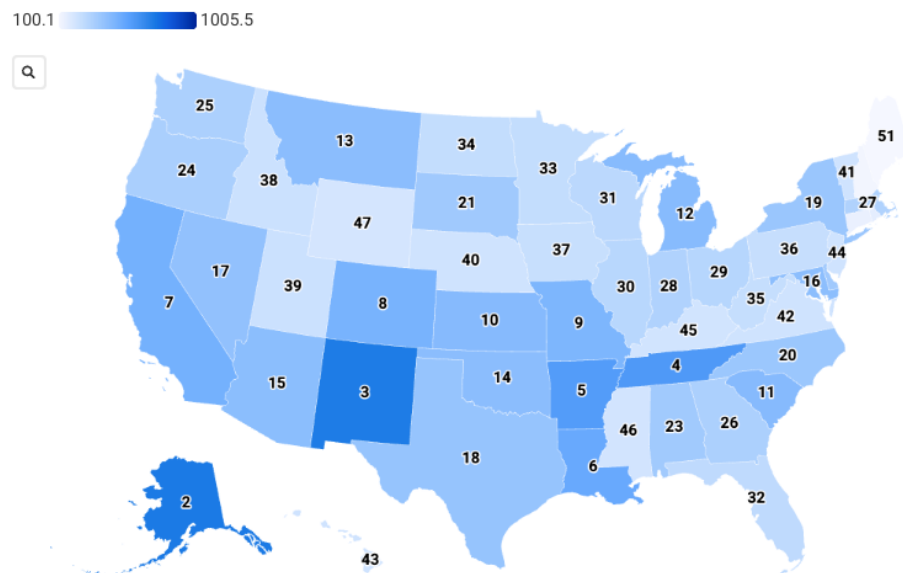
The FBI's violent crime includes murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Colorado placed 8th in the nation for violent crime in 2024. Colorado held the same ranking in 2022 and 2023. The state's high violent crime ranking is somewhat unique among western states. Only New Mexico and California are in the top 10 in the United States while states like Nevada, Oregon, and Washington are somewhere in the middle. Figure 8 shows the violent crime rate rankings by state.

**FIGURE 8.**

### 2024 Violent Crime Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants)

Colorado ranked 8th in its violent crime rate.



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation



# Property Crime

Included in the FBI's property crime rates are the following categories: burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. The FBI provides 3 broad categories which creates a standardized measure for national comparisons. In contrast, the CBI's crimes against property provides a more detailed breakdown of these crimes with over 20 categories.

Colorado ranked 3rd in property crime rates in 2024, up from 4th in 2023, a deterioration in its national standing.

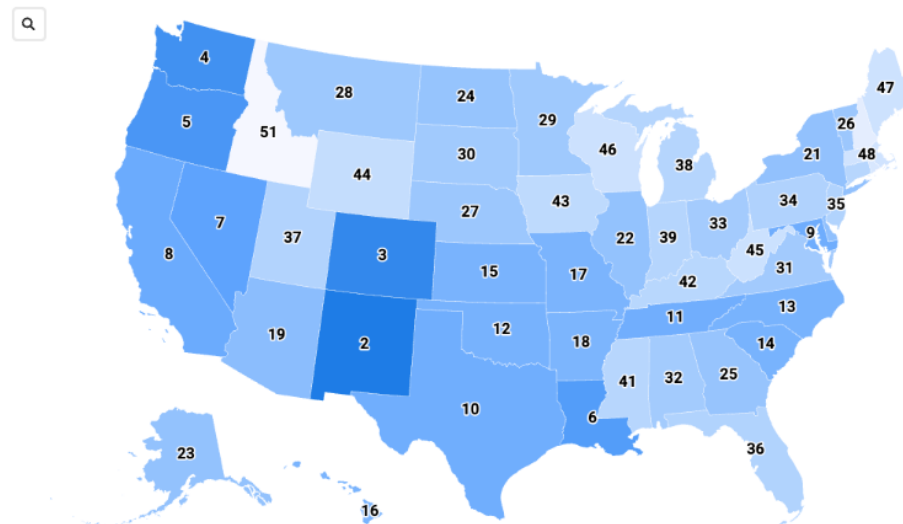
The western part of the United States is home to some of the highest property crime rates in the country. Colorado, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada all have relatively higher crime rates per 100,000 inhabitants and rank in the country's top 10. Figure 9 shows the property crime rate rankings by state.

**FIGURE 9.**

## 2024 Property Crime Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants)

Colorado ranked 3rd in its property crime rate.

736.3  3693.4



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation





## BOTTOM LINE

Although Colorado's crime rates have improved since the early 2020s, the state continues to perform poorly when compared to the rest of the nation. In fact, the state remains among the highest in the nation for both violent and property crime. Colorado, along with the majority of states, has seen crime rate declines since they peaked during and around the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent declines in these rates are an improvement but fall in line with general crime rate improvements seen across the country following the pandemic. Colorado's continued high ranking in both violent and property crime relative to other states suggests that the state is following a broader national trend more than experiencing a meaningful improvement in its relative public safety standing.

Closing this gap will require a deeper understanding of the factors that drive Colorado's elevated rates of crime, and a continued focus on policies that improve public safety outcomes, with an understanding that current policies are not showing improvement relative to other states.

## SOURCES

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