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COST OF CRIME IN OREGON

STATISTICS SUBSTANTIATE THE RISING
PUBLIC CONCERNS OVER CRIME

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ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Common Sense Institute	1
Teams and Fellows Statement.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Key Findings.....	6
COST OF CRIME.....	7
Crime In Oregon In 2023 Imposed A Staggering \$14 Billion Economic Burden On Individuals, Communities, And Public Systems	7
City Level Perspective On Crime.....	12
Measure 110 And Drug Epidemic In Oregon	15
The Cost Of Drug-Related Crime In The United States.....	17
Economic Costs Of Drug-Related Crime.....	17
CRIME IN OREGON – A BRIEF HISTORY	19
The Budgetary Cost Of Crime In Oregon.....	21
Crime Trends In Oregon: A Historical Perspective	23

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INTRODUCTION

Public concern over crime in Oregon has intensified, with a significant majority of residents expressing dissatisfaction with local government responses. A May 2024 poll revealed that 78% of Portland-area voters disapprove of how local authorities are handling crime, reflecting widespread unease across various demographics. This sentiment is further underscored by a December 2023 survey, where 74% of respondents expressed worry about becoming crime victims, and 90% were dissatisfied with public safety.

These concerns are substantiated by recent crime statistics. Between 2019 and 2023, Oregon experienced a 10% increase in violent crime, contrasting with a 4% national decline. Notably, the state's murder rate surged by 53%, more than double the national increase of 22%. Aggravated assaults rose by 23% in Oregon, surpassing the national uptick of 10%. While property crimes in Oregon decreased by 11%, this reduction lags behind the national decline of 23%. Motor vehicle thefts in the state escalated by 28%, outpacing the national rise of 15%.

While Oregon has experienced a long-term decline in crime rates over the past 40 years, recent trends indicate stagnation and, in some categories, concerning reversals. For example, violent crimes like aggravated assault and property crimes such as motor vehicle theft have risen sharply in the last decade, reflecting challenges that demand renewed attention. This report focuses on these recent developments to provide an understanding of today's public safety landscape, while historical trends offer valuable context.

These trends suggest that policy decisions may have influenced the state's crime dynamics. For instance, the 2020 decriminalization of certain drugs under Measure 110 was initially supported by 58% of voters. However, by 2023, 56% favored repealing the measure, indicating a shift in public opinion possibly due to increased crime and public disorder.

In this report, we analyze Oregon’s crime landscape using data from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting program and apply the cost estimation methodology developed by Miller et al. This approach provides a comprehensive assessment of both tangible costs—such as medical expenses, lost productivity, and property damage—and intangible costs, including quality-of-life impacts. By quantifying these costs, CSI aim to elucidate the economic burden of crime in Oregon and inform policy discussions on effective crime reduction strategies.

Understanding the multifaceted costs of crime is crucial, especially when evaluating policies that may inadvertently contribute to rising crime rates. This analysis seeks to provide a data-driven foundation for policymakers and the public to make informed decisions that balance reform initiatives with the imperative of ensuring public safety.

Average 5 year Change in Crime Rates in Oregon vs. U.S

Oregon lags behind the national average in crime rate reductions, primarily due to increases in violent crime rates over the past five years and slower progress in reducing certain crime rates compared to national averages.



The average crime rates were calculated for the periods 2023–2019 and 2018–2014. The percentage change in the average crime rates between these intervals was then determined.

KEY FINDINGS

- The total economic cost of crime in Oregon for 2023 is estimated at **\$14.9 billion**. Violent crimes, while making up only 25.9% of reported incidents, accounted for 64.73% of total costs, or approximately **\$9.6 billion**.
- Oregonians bore a significant economic burden from crime in 2023, with **5.19% of their average annual income** consumed by the total cost of crime, including **3.34% attributed to violent crimes alone**.
- Between 2020 and 2023, **violent crime in Oregon increased by 24.3%**, and overdose death rates rose by 28.9%, underlining the deep intersection between substance abuse and crime. Synthetic opioid-related deaths, including fentanyl, nearly doubled during this period, highlighting the growing public health crisis.
- Measure 110, decriminalizing small amounts of drugs, faced challenges due to delays in funding addiction treatment. This policy, while aiming to reduce incarceration, coincided with rising overdose deaths and violent crime rates, prompting renewed debate about its effectiveness.
- Public safety concerns remain high among Oregon residents. A May 2024 poll showed **78% of Portland-area voters disapproved** of local government responses to crime, with **74% expressing worry** about becoming crime victims.
- Underreporting of crime, particularly for violent offenses like rape, suggests the true scale of criminal activity is significantly higher than reported. Adjusted estimates indicate far more than the officially recorded **479,317 incidents statewide**.
- **Public safety spending in Oregon is projected to reach \$6.1 billion**, more than triple the amount from a decade ago. Rising corrections costs, driven by an aging prison population and increasing healthcare needs, further strain state resources.

COST OF CRIME

Crime in Oregon in 2023 imposed a staggering \$14.9 billion economic burden on individuals, communities, and public systems.

The total economic cost of crime in Oregon in 2023 was an estimated \$968.8 million, impacting individuals, communities, and public systems well beyond the immediate harm to victims.

This includes an estimated 479,317 reported incidents spanning violent and property offenses. Among these, 124,184 were violent crimes—such as murder, rape, robbery, and assault—and 348,757 were property crimes, including motor vehicle theft, burglary, and larceny. However, official figures only scratch the surface of the true crime landscape. National data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) reveal that many crimes go unreported, particularly violent offenses, indicating the actual number of crimes committed in Oregon is likely far higher.

The NCVS provides reporting rates for different crime types, measured as the number of crimes reported per 1,000 individuals. For example, only **22.5 incidents of rape or sexual assault** per 1,000 individuals are reported, compared to **1.7 robberies** and **2.6 assaults**. Property crimes exhibit similarly low reporting rates, with **9 burglaries**, **6.1 motor vehicle thefts**, and **83.1 thefts** reported per 1,000 individuals.

When these reporting rates are factored in, the gap between reported crimes (captured by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system) and actual criminal activity becomes apparent, highlighting the significant underreporting of crime in Oregon.

To estimate the economic cost of crime, this analysis employs the methodology developed by Miller et al., as published in the *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*. This framework calculates both tangible and intangible costs associated with crime, providing a comprehensive view of its economic burden. Tangible costs include direct monetary losses such as medical expenses, lost wages, property damage, and public service expenditures on law enforcement, adjudication, and corrections. Intangible costs, meanwhile, capture the profound psychological and emotional toll on victims, represented through quality-of-life losses derived from jury award data. The Miller framework offers a rigorous approach to valuing these costs by combining real economic losses with the broader societal impacts of victimization.

For violent crimes, the costs are particularly high. A single murder, for example, imposes an estimated economic burden of **\$9.1 million**. This staggering figure is driven primarily by quality-of-life losses, which are valued at **\$5.15 million per incident**. These losses account for the emotional suffering of victims' families and the societal impact of losing a life. Additionally, lost productivity—reflecting the future earnings and household contributions of the victim—adds another **\$1.8 million** per murder. Medical costs, public service expenditures for law enforcement and adjudication, and other tangible expenses contribute to the remainder of the total cost. This methodology captures not only the immediate costs of a murder but also its lifetime consequences, ensuring a comprehensive estimate.

Rape, while less costly than murder, imposes an average economic burden of **\$289,928 per incident**, with over 70% of this figure attributable to intangible quality-of-life losses. The remaining costs include medical and mental health expenses, as well as lost productivity for victims. Assaults, which are among the most frequently reported violent crimes in Oregon, carry an average cost of **\$50,072 per incident**, while robberies impose a cost of **\$29,215 per incident**. These figures highlight the profound financial and social impacts of violent crimes, even when their frequency is lower than property crimes.

Property crimes, though less severe on a per-incident basis, represent a significant aggregate burden due to their high frequency. In 2023, Oregon recorded **348,757 incidents of larceny or theft**, making it the most common crime category in the state². Each theft carries an average cost of **\$1,600**, which includes property loss and public service expenditures. Similarly, motor vehicle thefts, with an average cost of **\$11,015 per incident**, and burglaries, at **\$3,206 per incident**, contribute heavily to the state's overall economic burden of crime.

The disparity between reported and unreported crimes further complicates the picture. For instance, while the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data capture crimes brought to the attention of law enforcement, the NCVS indicates that a substantial share of criminal activity goes unreported. Violent crimes are especially underreported, with many victims citing fear of retaliation or distrust in the justice system. When adjusted for underreporting, the total number of crimes committed in Oregon likely far exceeds the reported figure of 479,317 incidents, with violent crimes accounting for a significant portion of the unreported activity.

One of the key insights from the Miller et al. framework is the disproportionate economic impact of violent crimes relative to their frequency. While violent crimes represented only about **25.9% of all reported incidents** in Oregon, they account for the vast majority of total costs due to their severity and long-term consequences. Intangible quality-of-life losses dominate the cost estimates, comprising over 75% of the total costs for violent crimes. By contrast, property crimes, though more frequent, impose a smaller economic burden per incident but remain significant due to their volume.

While violent crimes represented only about 25.9% of all reported incidents in Oregon, they account for the vast majority of total costs due to their severity and long-term consequences.

Cost of Crime In Oregon, 2023

Number of crimes and cost per crime breakdown

	Crimes 2023	Medical	Mental Health	Work	Property Loss	Public Services	Quality of Life	Adjudication & Sanctioning	Perpetrator Work Loss	Total Tangible	Total Cost
Murder	245	\$14,270	\$13,850	2,259,316.00	\$244	\$185,007	\$5,808,795	\$594,275	\$219,760	\$3,286,722	\$9,095,517
Rape, No Child Sex Abuse	7135	\$2,012	\$4,750	5,652.00	\$219	\$197	\$265,082	\$7,977	\$4,038	\$24,846	\$289,928
Police-Reported	1228	\$4,306	\$7,522	8,868.00	\$219	\$1,143	\$394,972	\$46,351	\$23,463	\$91,871	\$486,843
Other Sexual Assault	2161	\$774	\$1,827	2,174.00	\$84	\$197	\$101,955	\$3,068	\$1,553	\$9,677	\$111,632
Robbery	10912	\$1,609	\$181	3,975.00	\$1,590	\$398	\$13,771	\$5,034	\$2,658	\$15,444	\$29,215
Police-Reported	2642	\$2,195	\$227	5,422.00	\$1,597	\$1,642	\$18,109	\$20,790	\$10,979	\$42,852	\$60,961
Assault	76802	\$1,902	\$205	4,267.00	\$54	\$2,685	\$25,432	\$10,673	\$4,854	\$24,640	\$50,072
Police-Reported	38361	\$2,090	\$466	2,678.00	\$98	\$5,376	\$26,134	\$21,368	\$9,719	\$41,794	\$67,928
Intimate Partner Violence, NCVS	25600	\$841	\$223	1,651.00	\$81	\$17	\$31,437	\$0	\$0	\$2,813	\$34,250
Arson	1329	\$3,062	\$52	4,187.00	\$24,264	\$4,975	\$7,945	\$4,463	\$1,708	\$42,711	\$50,656
Burglary	37771	\$0	\$0	29.00	\$2,040	\$268	\$0	\$391	\$479	\$3,206	\$3,206
Police-Reported	13971	\$0	\$0	49.00	\$3,582	\$724	\$0	\$1,058	\$1,294	\$6,706	\$6,706
Larceny/Theft	348757	\$0	\$0	19.00	\$578	\$236	\$0	\$693	\$75	\$1,600	\$1,600
Police-Reported	79602	\$0	\$0	39.00	\$1,308	\$1,032	\$0	\$3,036	\$328	\$5,743	\$5,743
Motor Vehicle Theft	23083	\$0	\$0	126.00	\$7,724	\$670	\$0	\$1,686	\$809	\$11,015	\$11,015
Police-Reported	17413	\$0	\$0	146.00	\$8,973	\$888	\$0	\$2,235	\$1,072	\$13,315	\$13,315
Fraud	19387	\$0	\$0	82.00	\$2,591	\$91	\$0	\$2,124	\$105,203	\$110,091	\$110,091
Buying Stolen Property	1359	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$0	\$1,642	\$0	\$8,023	\$2,874	\$12,539	\$12,539
Vandalism	33696	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$485	\$29	\$0	\$3,365	\$1,204	\$5,083	\$5,083
Weapons Carrying	5777	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$0	\$98	\$0	\$3,395	\$1,740	\$5,233	\$5,233
Prostitution/Pandering	287	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$0	\$98	\$0	\$222	\$115	\$435	\$435
Drug Possession/Sales	7623	\$0	\$0	0.00	\$0	\$6,273	\$0	\$3,607	\$1,849	\$11,729	\$11,729
All Violent Crime	124184	\$1,681	\$521	8,193.00	\$464	\$2,132	\$51,969	\$8,775	\$3,947	\$25,713	\$77,682
All Crimes	479317	\$435	\$135	2,148.00	\$1,212	\$889	\$13,464	\$5,530	\$7,282	\$17,631	\$31,095

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, CSI calculations using Miller et. al. framework

The total economic cost of crime in Oregon for 2023, estimated at **\$14.9 billion**, underscores a substantial financial burden. Violent crimes, while accounting for only **25.91%** of all reported incidents, are responsible for **64.73%** of these costs, translating to approximately **\$9.65 billion**. This disproportion highlights the severe repercussions that violent offenses have on societal and economic structures.

Murder ranks as the most financially draining crime with 245 occurrences costing the state a staggering **\$2.2 billion**. This cost is primarily composed of quality-of-life losses, reflective of the profound societal and emotional toll inflicted by such tragedies. The economic impact of **rape and sexual assault** is similarly severe, cumulating to **\$2.1 billion**, with the overwhelming majority stemming from the intangible losses borne by the victims and the community.

Assault, as the most frequently reported violent crime, generates significant economic implications totaling **\$3.8 billion**. This highlights the broad and sustained impact these offenses have on Oregon's public systems and the overall well-being of its residents. The collective economic impact of property crimes, though individually less severe per incident, still contributes a significant burden due to their prevalence. **Larceny and theft**, the most common offenses, result in costs totaling **\$558 million** primarily due to the high volume of incidents.

Motor vehicle theft and **burglary** add further strain, with costs amounting to **\$254 million** and **\$121 million** respectively, demonstrating the tangible impacts of these crimes on individual victims and public resources. The financial ramifications of **fraud** also stand out, with total losses surpassing **\$2.1 billion**, encapsulating both direct and systemic financial impacts on businesses and governmental functions. Vandalism, although less critical, still poses substantial costs of **\$171 million** primarily due to property damage and subsequent public service expenditures.

These figures illustrate the extensive financial repercussions of crime across Oregon, driven predominantly by violent offenses that, despite their lower frequency relative to property crimes, impose a disproportionately higher economic burden.

Total Cost of Crime in Oregon, 2023 (Millions of Dollars)

	Crimes 2023	Medical	Mental Health	Productivity	Property Loss	Public Services	Quality of Life	Adjudication and Sanctioning	Perpetrator Work Loss	Total Tangible	Total Cost
Murder	245	\$3.5	\$3.4	\$553.5	\$0.1	\$45.3	\$1,423.2	\$145.6	\$53.8	\$805.2	\$2,228.4
Rape, No Child Sex Abuse	7135	\$14.4	\$33.9	\$40.3	\$1.6	\$1.4	\$1,891.4	\$56.9	\$28.8	\$177.3	\$2,068.6
Police-Reported	1228	\$5.3	\$9.2	\$10.9	\$0.3	\$1.4	\$485	\$56.9	\$28.8	\$112.8	\$597.8
Other Sexual Assault	2161	\$1.7	\$3.9	\$4.7	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$220.3	\$6.6	\$3.4	\$20.9	\$241.2
Robbery	10912	\$17.6	\$2	\$43.4	\$17.4	\$4.3	\$150.3	\$54.9	\$29	\$168.5	\$318.8
Police-Reported	2642	\$5.8	\$0.6	\$14.3	\$4.2	\$4.3	\$47.8	\$54.9	\$29	\$113.2	\$161.1
Assault	76802	\$146.1	\$15.7	\$327.7	\$4.1	\$206.2	\$1,953.2	\$819.7	\$372.8	\$1,892.4	\$3,845.6
Police-Reported	38361	\$80.2	\$17.9	\$102.7	\$3.8	\$206.2	\$1,002.5	\$819.7	\$372.8	\$1,603.3	\$2,605.8
Intimate Partner Violence, NCVS	25600	\$21.5	\$5.7	\$42.3	\$2.1	\$0.4	\$804.8	\$0	\$0	\$72	\$876.8
Arson	1329	\$4.1	\$0.1	\$5.6	\$32.2	\$6.6	\$10.6	\$5.9	\$2.3	\$56.8	\$67.3
Burglary	37771	\$0	\$0	\$1.1	\$77.1	\$10.1	\$0	\$14.8	\$18.1	\$121.1	\$121.1
Police-Reported	13971	\$0	\$0	\$0.7	\$50	\$10.1	\$0	\$14.8	\$18.1	\$93.7	\$93.7
Larceny/Theft	348757	\$0	\$0	\$6.6	\$201.6	\$82.3	\$0	\$241.7	\$26.2	\$558	\$558
Police-Reported	79602	\$0	\$0	\$3.1	\$104.1	\$82.1	\$0	\$241.7	\$26.1	\$457.2	\$457.2
Motor Vehicle Theft	23083	\$0	\$0	\$2.9	\$178.3	\$15.5	\$0	\$38.9	\$18.7	\$254.3	\$254.3
Police-Reported	17413	\$0	\$0	\$2.5	\$156.2	\$15.5	\$0	\$38.9	\$18.7	\$231.9	\$231.9
Fraud	19387	\$0	\$0	\$1.6	\$50.2	\$1.8	\$0	\$41.2	\$2,039.6	\$2,134.3	\$2,134.3
Buying Stolen Property	1359	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2.2	\$0	\$10.9	\$3.9	\$17	\$17
Vandalism	33696	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$16.3	\$1	\$0	\$113.4	\$40.6	\$171.3	\$171.3
Weapons Carrying	5777	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0.6	\$0	\$19.6	\$10.1	\$30.2	\$30.2
Prostitution/Pandering	287	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0.1	\$0	\$0.1	\$0.1
Drug Possession/Sales	7623	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$47.8	\$0	\$27.5	\$14.1	\$89.4	\$89.4
All Violent Crime	124184	\$208.8	\$64.7	\$1,017.4	\$57.6	\$264.8	\$6,453.7	\$1,089.7	\$490.2	\$3,193.1	\$9,646.9
All Crimes	479317	\$208.5	\$64.7	\$1,029.6	\$580.9	\$426.1	\$6,453.5	\$2,650.6	\$3,490.4	\$8,450.8	\$14,904.4

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, CSI calculations using Miller et. al. framework

City Level Perspective on Crime

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program compiles data from different law enforcement agencies, including city police departments, county sheriffs, and state agencies. City police report crimes occurring within municipal boundaries, while county or state law enforcement agencies report offenses that take place in unincorporated areas or outside city limits.

Portland, with a rate of **66 index crimes per 1,000 residents**, has the highest index crime rate among Oregon cities, reflecting the challenges of policing densely populated urban centers. Smaller cities like Coos Bay (**63**) and Seaside (**60**) also report notably high rates, which may be driven by localized factors such as economic challenges or tourism-related activity. Conversely, rural and suburban areas such as Banks, Columbia City, and Gervais report significantly lower rates at **5 crimes per 1,000 residents**, highlighting the relative safety of less densely populated regions.

In 2023, Portland faced substantial costs from criminal activity, with the total economic burden reaching **\$52.1 million** across all reported offenses. Violent crimes alone accounted for **\$22.9 million**, reflecting the significant impact of these offenses on the city's public safety and resources.

Among violent crimes:

- Murder resulted in the highest individual cost, with 83 reported cases incurring \$15.4 million in total costs.
- Assault was the most prevalent violent crime, with 9,201 incidents contributing \$49.5 million, highlighting the strain on healthcare, law enforcement, and judicial systems.
- Robbery accounted for 1,215 incidents, with a total cost of \$2 million, while rape and sexual assault collectively added \$361,135.

Property crimes also imposed a considerable economic toll:

- Larceny/Theft led the category with 23,738 reported cases, resulting in \$24.5 million in costs.
- Motor Vehicle Theft, with 8,147 incidents, added another \$7.2 million to the total.
- Other offenses, including burglary and arson, collectively contributed an additional \$297,338.

Drug-related crimes, such as **drug possession and sales**, accounted for **486 incidents**, with a total cost of **\$3 million**. This underscores the intersection between substance abuse and broader criminal activity in the city.

Lesser-known but impactful crimes included **vandalism**, with **10,346 cases** costing **\$300,034**, and **fraud**, with **3,474 cases** costing **\$316,134**. These highlight the wide-reaching economic implications of non-violent crimes.

Overall, Portland's crime landscape in 2023 reflects the significant financial and social challenges posed by both violent and non-violent offenses. The data underscores the need for targeted interventions to address the underlying causes of crime, including substance abuse and economic disparities.

Cost of Crime for Portland, 2023

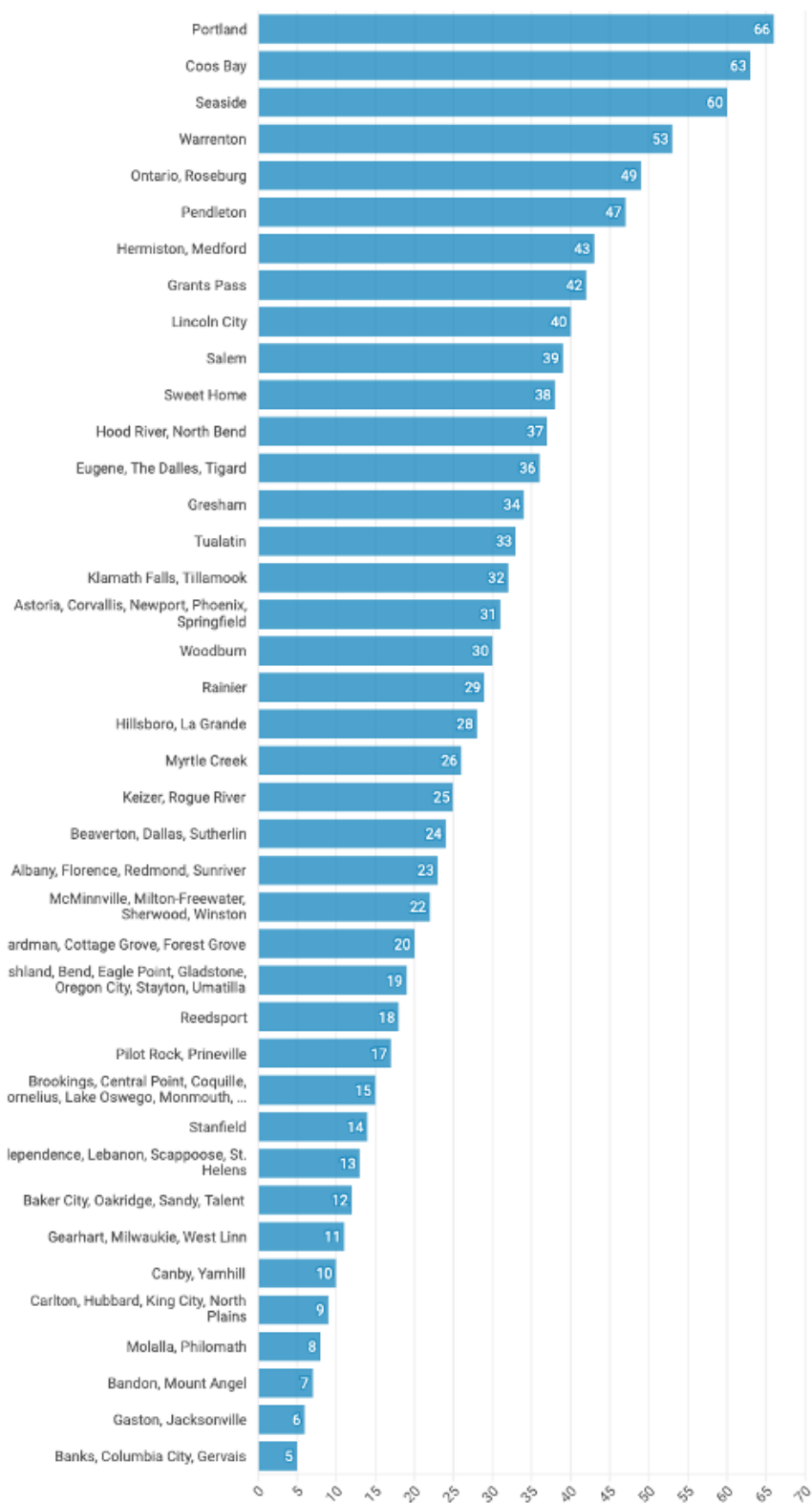
Number of crimes and total cost of crime in Portland

Crime Type	Number of Crimes 2023	Total Cost
Murder	83	\$15,355,581
Rape, No Child Sex Abuse	282	\$322,326
Other Sexual Assault	197	\$38,809
Robbery	1,215	\$1,995,030
Assault	9,201	\$49,464,576
Arson	18	\$89,550
Burglary	287	\$207,788
Larceny/Theft	23,738	\$24,497,616
Motor Vehicle Theft	8,147	\$7,234,536
Fraud	3,474	\$316,134
Buying Stolen Property	52	\$85,384
Vandalism	10,346	\$300,034
Weapons Carrying	945	\$92,610
Prostitution/Pandering	172	\$16,856
Drug Possession/Sales	486	\$3,048,678
All Violent Crime	10,781	\$22,985,092
All Crimes	58,643	\$52,133,627

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, CSI calculations using Miller et. al. framework • Only accounts for police reported crime

Index Crime Rate of Oregon Cities, per 1000 resident

Index crimes are **violent crimes** of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, aggravated assault, rape, robbery and the **property crimes** of burglary/breaking and entering, motor-vehicle-theft and larceny/theft.



FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program

Measure 110 and Drug Epidemic in Oregon

Between 2020 and 2022, Oregon experienced a significant rise in both drug-related deaths and violent crime. Overdose death rates surged from 17,336 per 100,000 people in 2020 to 22,614 per 100,000 people in 2023, representing a 28.9% increase³. Violent crime rates followed a similar trajectory, rising from 259 incidents per 100,000 residents in 2020 to 322 per 100,000 residents in 2022, a 24.3% increase. These trends reflect the growing intersection of drug use and crime in the state, with overdose deaths serving as a proxy for the prevalence of drug use.

The implementation of Measure 110 in 2020 introduced a significant shift in Oregon's approach to drug policy. By decriminalizing possession of small amounts of drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine and reallocating cannabis tax revenues toward addiction treatment, the measure aimed to reduce incarceration rates and address systemic racial disparities in the criminal justice system. However, the policy faced immediate challenges. Most funds designated for addiction treatment and recovery programs were not distributed until August 2022, leaving a critical gap in resources during the measure's early implementation phase.⁴

In parallel, the state witnessed dramatic increases in deaths related to synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, which rose from 393,181 in 2020 to 650,938 in 2023. Deaths involving psychostimulants with abuse potential, including methamphetamine, climbed from 161,550 in 2020 to 308,707 in 2023. These figures underscore the rapidly growing impact of synthetic drugs on Oregon's communities. Synthetic opioid-related deaths rose sharply from 393,181 in 2020 to 650,938 in 2023, reflecting statewide trends. These increases strained public health and safety resources, as the visible impacts of drug addiction, including homelessness and drug-related crime, became increasingly apparent in urban centers.⁵

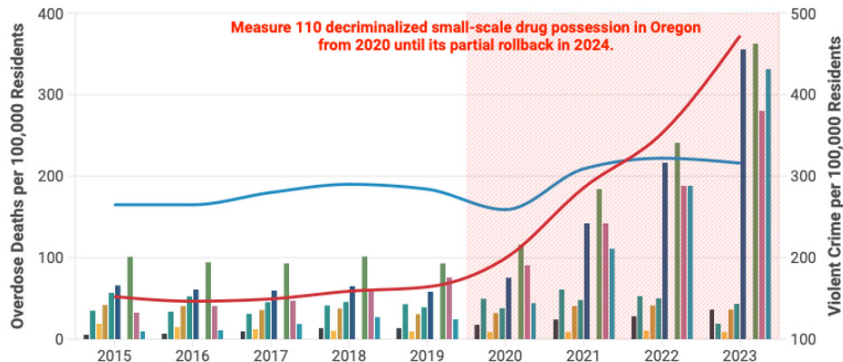
Law enforcement agencies expressed concerns about adapting to Measure 110, particularly the lack of enforcement tools to address public drug use and its consequences. Critics argue that the policy, while well-intentioned, unintentionally encouraged open drug use and reduced accountability mechanisms for addressing addiction. These concerns, coupled with rising overdose and violent crime rates, prompted state lawmakers to revisit the policy in 2024. New legislation reintroduced criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of certain drugs, while continuing to prioritize treatment over incarceration, reflecting an attempt to balance public health and safety.⁶

Oregon’s experience with Measure 110 highlights the complexities of addressing drug addiction and its societal impacts. While the policy succeeded in reducing some drug-related arrests and introduced a framework for addiction recovery, its implementation revealed significant challenges. The sharp rise in overdose deaths and violent crime during its rollout underscores the importance of balancing harm reduction strategies with effective resource allocation and enforcement policies. As Oregon continues to refine its approach, these data-driven insights provide valuable lessons for other states considering similar reforms.

Violent Crime and Drug Overdose Deaths

Though limited data exists on drug related offenses, the trend in overdose death data from the CDC reveals a concerning resemblance to the trend in violent crime.

- Violent Crime Rate
- Drug Overdose Death Rate
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Methodone
- Natural & semi-synthetic opioids
- Natural & semi-synthetic opioids, incl. methadone
- Natural, semi-synthetic, & synthetic opioids, incl. methadone
- Opioids
- Psychostimulants with abuse potential
- Synthetic opioids, excl. methadone



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, National Center for Health Statistics • The numbers represent the rate for 100,000 residents
 The total overdose death rate reflects cases where multiple substances may have contributed to a single death, while rates for substance-specific categories can overlap, leading to higher combined rates.

The Cost of Drug-Related Crime in the United States

Drug use does not just contribute to public health crises; it also drives significant criminal activity, adding a substantial burden to society. Using data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) on offenses involving offender's suspected use of drugs and narcotics, it is possible to estimate the proportion of crimes where drug use played a role.

Based on NIBRS data, drugs were involved in **5.5% of murders, 3.2% of rapes, 2.3% of assaults, and 47.1% of drug possession or sales offenses** in 2023. These figures underline the role of drugs not only in violent crimes but also in offenses like vandalism, fraud, and property crimes. While violent crimes remain a critical concern, property crimes and other offenses tied to drug activity further emphasize the wide-ranging impacts of substance abuse on communities.

ECONOMIC COSTS OF DRUG-RELATED CRIME

The financial impact of drug-related crimes is immense. In 2023, the total cost of crimes involving drugs in the United States was estimated at **\$968.8 million**, with violent crimes accounting for approximately **\$333.8 million** of this total. These costs reflect expenditures on law enforcement, legal processes, incarceration, healthcare, and lost productivity, as well as the broader societal toll of crime.

Violent crimes such as murder, rape, and assault are among the most expensive offenses:

- **Murder:** With a drug involvement rate of 5.5%, the total drug-related cost of murder was \$122.6 million in 2023.
- **Rape (No Child Sex Abuse):** Drug-related costs were estimated at \$66.2 million, with 3.2% of cases involving drugs.
- **Assault:** Accounting for \$88.4 million in drug-related costs, assaults constituted the largest financial burden among violent crimes.

Beyond violent crimes, property and other offenses also contribute significantly:

- **Drug Possession/Sales:** With nearly half (47.1%) of these offenses linked to drugs, the cost reached \$42.1 million.
- **Fraud:** Though fewer cases involved drugs (0.9%), the high cost per offense led to a total cost of \$19.2 million.
- **Vandalism:** At a drug-related rate of 1.0%, vandalism cost an estimated \$1.7 million.

The data reveals a disproportionate economic burden from offenses that involve drugs, even when their prevalence within a category is relatively low. For instance, while only **0.8% of larceny/theft cases** involved drugs, the widespread nature of this offense resulted in total costs of **\$4.5 million**. Similarly, drug-related motor vehicle thefts, at **0.6%**, added **\$1.5 million** to the economic toll.

The Cost of Crime with Drug Involvement: 2023

In 2023, drug-related crimes accounted for over \$968 million in costs, with violent offenses making up \$333 million.

Crime Category	Number of Offenses - 2023	Cost of Offenses	% Drugs Involved	Total Cost (in millions)
Murder	245	\$ 9,095,517	5.50	\$122.562
Rape, No Child Sex Abuse	7135	\$ 289,928	3.20	\$66.196
Police-Reported	1228	\$ 486,843	3.20	\$19.131
Other Sexual Assault	2161	\$ 111,632	3.20	\$7.72
Robbery	10912	\$ 29,215	1.60	\$5.101
Police-Reported	2642	\$ 60,961	1.60	\$2.577
Assault	76802	\$ 50,072	2.30	\$88.449
Police-Reported	38361	\$ 67,928	2.30	\$59.933
Intimate Partner Violence, NCVS	25600	\$ 34,250	2.30	\$20.166
Arson	1329	\$ 50,656	2.70	\$1.818
Burglary	37771	\$ 3,206	1.40	\$1.695
Police-Reported	13971	\$ 6,706	1.40	\$1.312
Larceny/Theft	348757	\$ 1,600	0.80	\$4.464
Police-Reported	79602	\$ 5,743	0.80	\$3.657
Motor Vehicle Theft	23083	\$ 11,015	0.60	\$1.526
Police-Reported	17413	\$ 13,315	0.60	\$1.391
Fraud	19387	\$ 110,091	0.90	\$19.209
Buying Stolen Property	1359	\$ 12,539	6.60	\$1.125
Vandalism	33696	\$ 5,083	1.00	\$1.713
Weapons Carrying	5777	\$ 5,233	9.20	\$2.781
Prostitution/Pandering	287	\$ 435	3.50	\$0.004
Drug Possession/Sales	7623	\$ 11,729	47.10	\$42.112
All Violent Crime	124184	\$ 77,682	3.50	\$333.781
All Crimes	479317	\$ 31,095	6.50	\$968.784

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, CSI calculations using Miller et. al. framework • Non-exact matches were mapped based on logical alignment with related categories: 'Rape, No Child Sex Abuse' and 'Other Sexual Assault' were mapped to 'Sex Offenses' (3.2%), 'Intimate Partner Violence, NCVS' to 'Assault Offenses' (2.3%), and 'Vandalism' to 'Destruction/Damage/Vandalism' (1.0%). Police-reported subcategories inherited their parent categories' percentages, and averages were used for broad categories like 'All Violent Crime' (3.1%) and 'All Crimes' (6.5%).

CRIME IN OREGON – A BRIEF HISTORY

Oregon’s public safety landscape has seen profound transformations over the decades, characterized by rising crime rates through the 1960s and 70s, significant legislative reforms in the 1980s and 90s, and a steady decline in crime rates in subsequent years. These shifts can be better understood through the lens of **index crimes**, which serve as a standardized measure of public safety. Comprising violent offenses—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—and property crimes—burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson—index crimes provide a consistent framework for tracking criminal activity. As shown in the figure, Oregon’s index crime rate rose steadily for decades, peaking in the late 1980s before a significant decline following policy reforms.⁷

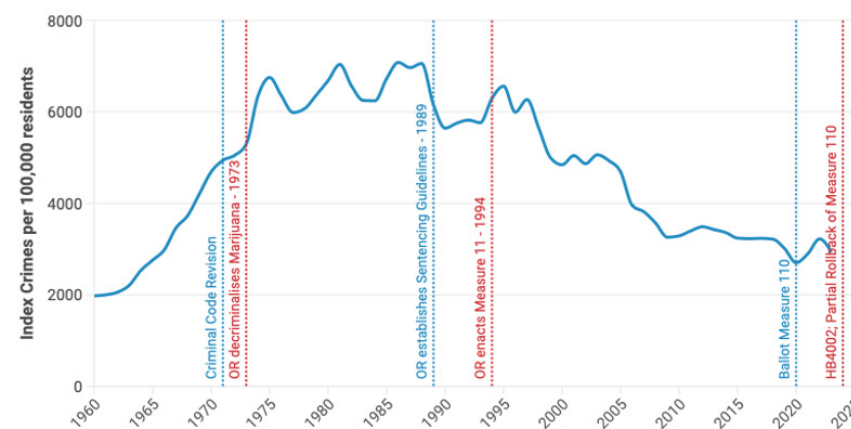
The crime wave of the mid-20th century reflected national trends as urbanization, rising drug use, and social shifts contributed to sharp increases in both violent and property crimes. Property crimes such as burglary and theft dominated Oregon’s statistics, while violent offenses, although less frequent,

also increased significantly. By the late 1980s, Oregon’s index crime rate had reached its highest point, underscoring the need for systemic reforms.

Oregon’s public safety landscape has undergone significant transformations over the decades, marked by rising crime rates through the 1960s and 70s, legislative reforms in the 1980s and 90s, and a gradual decline in crime rates. These changes can be analysed through the lens of **index crimes**, a standardized category that includes violent offenses such as murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, as well as property crimes like burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft,

Index Crime Rate in Oregon: 1960-2023

Oregon experienced steadily rising crime rates from the 1960s through the late 1980s, followed by a sharp decline in the 1990s and early 2000s, with recent years showing a stabilization at lower levels.



FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Index crimes comprise violent crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, as well as property crimes including burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft.

and arson. As shown in Figure X, Oregon’s index crime rate rose steadily over decades, peaking in the late 1980s before declining through the 1990s and stabilizing in more recent years.

The crime wave of the mid-20th century reflected broader national trends, with societal shifts, urbanization, and increased drug use contributing to sharp increases in both violent and property crimes. In Oregon, property crimes such as burglary and theft dominated, while violent crimes, although less frequent, also saw significant increases. By the late 1980s, Oregon’s index crime rate reached its peak, highlighting the need for systemic policy responses.⁸

Legislative measures introduced during this period appear to align with shifts in these crime trends. For instance, the **Sentencing Guidelines of 1989** standardized sentences for felony crimes, promoting consistency and proportionality in sentencing. These guidelines allocated prison resources for severe violent crimes while offering alternative sanctions, such as probation, for lower-level offenses. This structured framework aimed to manage Oregon’s criminal justice resources more effectively.⁹

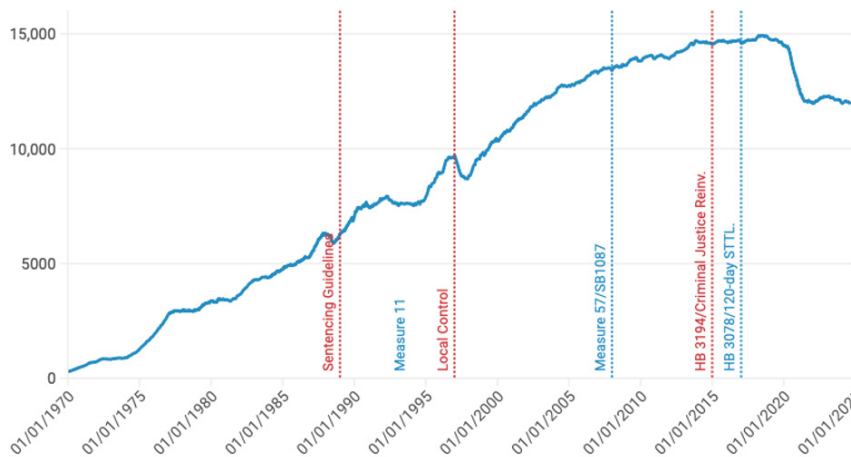
In 1994, **Measure 11** introduced mandatory minimum sentences for 16 serious crimes, including murder, rape, and robbery, and required juveniles aged 15 and older charged with these crimes to be tried as adults. The timing of Measure 11 coincides with a notable decline in Oregon’s violent crime rates, suggesting a potential relationship between stricter sentencing policies and reduced crime. However, multiple factors, including demographic shifts, economic conditions, and advances in policing during the 1990s, likely influenced the observed reduction.^{10 11}

As seen in Figure, the 1990s marked a turning point for Oregon’s index crime rates, with declines observed in both violent crimes, such as aggravated assault and robbery, and property crimes, including burglary and motor vehicle theft. These patterns align with broader national trends during this period, suggesting that both local reforms and nationwide factors contributed to the reduction.

Despite these declines, property crimes have continued to present challenges, often linked to economic conditions and substance abuse. In response, **Measure 57**, passed in 2008, enhanced penalties for repeat property offenders while introducing treatment-focused solutions for drug-related offenses. This measure reflects the evolving understanding of the relationship between substance abuse and crime, emphasizing the need for multifaceted approaches to crime prevention.

Oregon Adults-In-Custody Population

With Major Law Changes

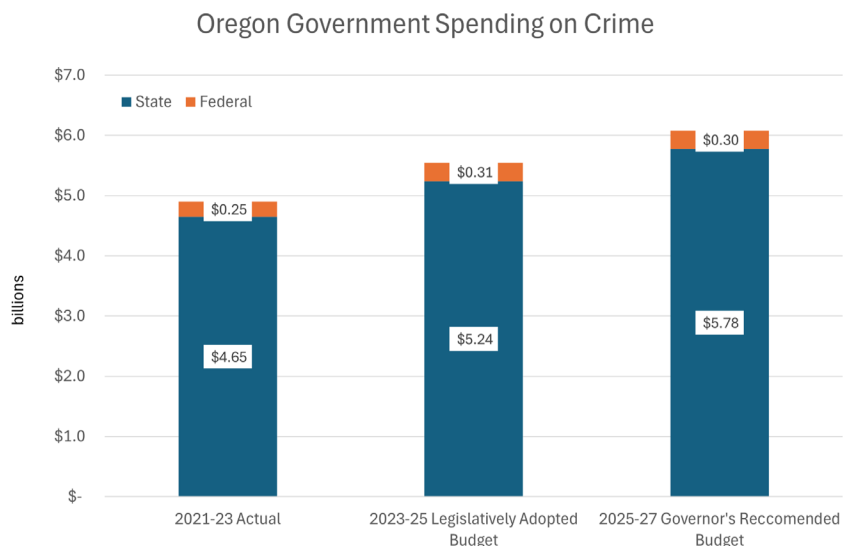


Source: Oregon Department of Corrections

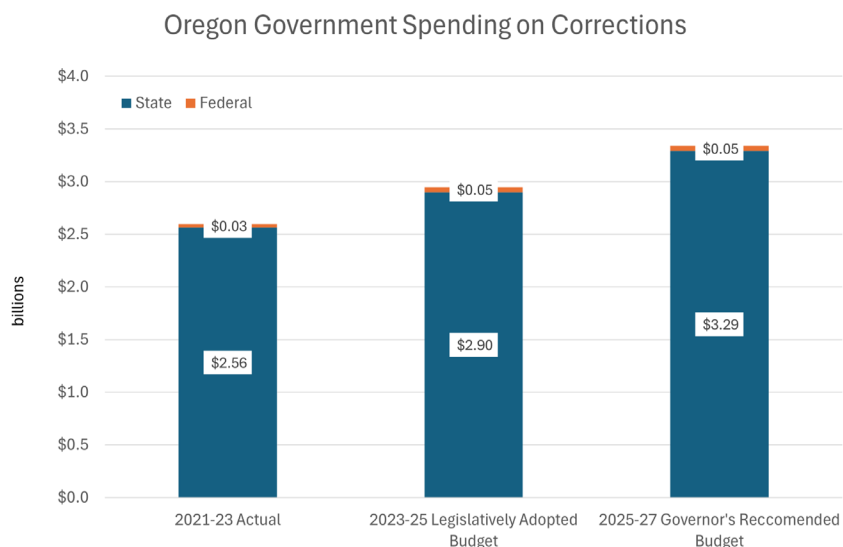
The Budgetary Cost of Crime in Oregon

Budgetary pressures resulting from criminal activity stretch far beyond the costs of incarceration. State and federal spending on public safety in Oregon (excluding Military, Fire Marshall and Emergency Management) are proposed to amount to **\$6.1 billion** in the Governor’s Recommended Budget. This would be more than triple the spending from a decade ago. Local governments also bear a large cost burden for police, courts and jails.

The Governor’s Recommended Budget calls for spending on criminal activity to rise by 9.6% over the next biennium, led by a 13.2% increase in the cost of corrections. Although the number of adults in custody has just begun to rebound from pandemic lows, costs per inmate are rising rapidly. An aging prison population has led to higher costs, particularly for healthcare services as incarcerated adults are entitled to a community standard of care. Incarcerated adults live longer on average than other Oregonians since they do not fall prey to auto accidents, overdoses, cirrhosis and the like. Costs for the youth population are not rising as quickly, since the population served is a function of the amount of funding provided



Source: Oregon Chief Financial Office
Notes: Fiscal Years, Public Safety Budget ex. Emergency Management, Fire Marshall & Military

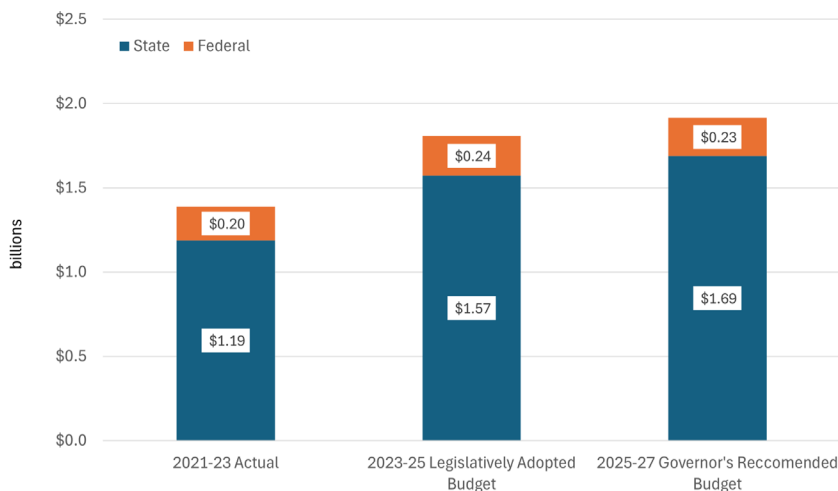


Source: Oregon Chief Financial Office
Notes: Fiscal Years, Includes Dept. of Corrections, Youth Authority and Parole Board

by the legislature. The budget for state police has declined for technical reasons, as the Office of the Fire Marshall is no longer under their portfolio. Similarly, adjudication costs have increased somewhat as the Office of Public Defense Services has been moved to the executive branch.

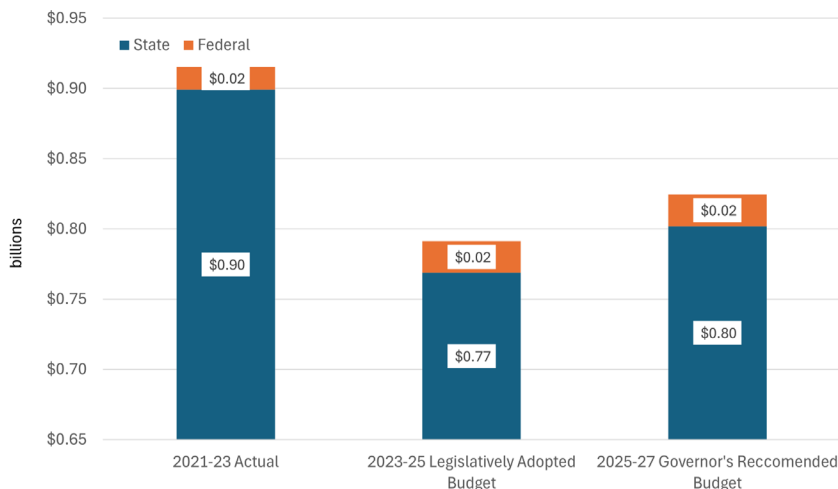
Although the budgetary costs of crime are growing, they have not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels to the same extent as have measures of underlying criminal activity such as arrests or reported crimes. Given the level of index crimes caseloads for youth and adult correctional facilities and the courts would be expected to be higher. Coming out of the pandemic, it was assumed that this disconnect was the result of backlogs in the court system following shutdowns. However, now these backlogs have been cleared, suggesting that other factors are at play. One issue is that a smaller share of people charged with crimes are appearing for court dates. Also, there remains a significant shortage of public defenders in Oregon. Discretion on the part of judges and prosecutors is also clearly playing a role.

Oregon Government Spending on Criminal Adjudication



Source: Oregon Chief Financial Office
 Notes: Fiscal Years, Includes District Attorneys, Criminal Justice Commission, Dept. of Justice, and Public Defenders

Oregon Government Spending on Policing



Source: Oregon Chief Financial Office
 Notes: Fiscal Years, Includes State Police and Standards & Training

Crime Trends in Oregon: A Historical Perspective

Oregon’s crime rates have followed a long-term downward trajectory, consistent with national patterns over the past four decades. This decline can be attributed to demographic shifts, particularly the aging of the baby-boom generation, which reduced the proportion of young, high-risk individuals. However, this trend has stalled in recent years, and certain crime categories have seen sharp increases. Between 2010 and 2023, aggravated assault rose by 45%, and motor vehicle theft surged by 126%, reversing earlier progress and emphasizing the evolving nature of criminal activity in Oregon.

Oregon’s crime trends, measured through the lens of index crimes, highlight a story of dramatic increases, steady declines, and recent fluctuations. Index crimes encompass both violent crimes—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—and property crimes, including burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft (MVT). Together, these categories provide a comprehensive view of the state’s public safety dynamics over the decades.

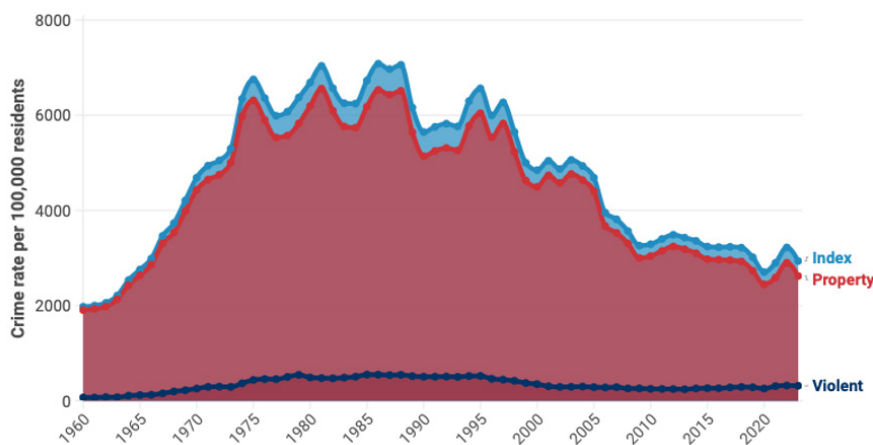
In 1960, Oregon’s index crime rate stood at 1,977.2 per 100,000 residents, with property crimes comprising over 96% of all offenses. Burglary, larceny-theft, and MVT accounted for the bulk of this figure, with larceny-theft alone contributing 1,371.2 per 100,000 residents. Violent crimes, while less frequent, represented a significant portion of societal concerns, with aggravated assault leading the category at 26.0 per 100,000 residents. Over the next two decades, the index crime rate climbed steeply, peaking at 7,036.9 per 100,000 residents in 1981—a staggering 256% increase from 1960.

This surge was driven primarily by property crimes, which rose 244% during this period. Burglary rates quadrupled, increasing from 405.7 in 1960 to 1,967.0 per 100,000 residents in 1981, while larceny-theft rose by 210%, from 1,371.2 to 4,250.8. Motor vehicle theft (MVT) also rose sharply, increasing by 160%, reaching 340.4 per 100,000 residents in 1981. While property crimes made up the majority of offenses, violent crimes saw even sharper relative increases. Aggravated assault, for instance, grew by 869%, from 26.0 in 1960 to 251.9 in 1981, reflecting rising social tensions and shifts in criminal behaviour. Murder, though numerically small, doubled during this period, from 2.4 in 1960 to 4.4 per 100,000 residents in 1981.

The 1990s and early 2000s marked a significant shift, as crime rates began a sustained decline. Oregon’s index crime rate fell by nearly 44% between 1981 and 2006, reaching 3,952.4 per 100,000 residents. Property crimes led this decline, with burglary dropping by 59%, from 1,967.0 in 1981 to 806.6 in 1999, and larceny-theft decreasing by 45% over

Index Crime Breakdown - Property vs. Violent Crimes

Oregon’s index crime rate has been overwhelmingly shaped by property crimes, with violent crimes contributing a smaller share.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports • Index crimes include violent crimes—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—and property crimes—burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.



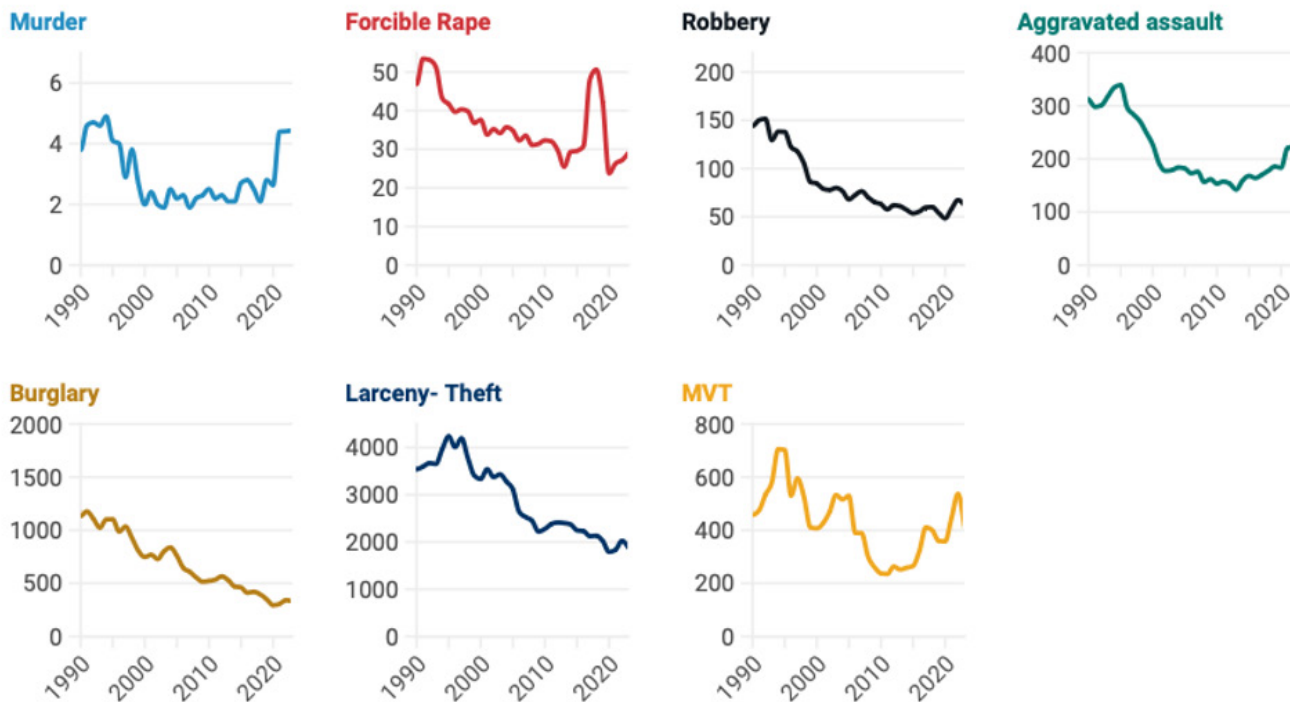
the same period. Violent crimes also showed notable reductions, with aggravated assault falling by 39% between 1981 and 2010, when it reached 153.5 per 100,000 residents. Legislative measures, such as the implementation of Sentencing Guidelines in 1989 and Measure 11 in 1994, likely played a role in these reductions by introducing more consistent sentencing practices and prioritizing violent crime prevention.

Recent years have painted a more mixed picture. While the long-term decline in property crimes has continued, certain violent crime categories have seen renewed increases. Between 2010 and 2022, aggravated assault rose by 45%, climbing from 153.5 to 222.7 per 100,000 residents. Motor vehicle theft experienced an even sharper resurgence, increasing by 126%, from 237.8 in 2010 to 536.3 in 2022, reflecting challenges in addressing specific offenses. Despite these increases, burglary rates have continued to decline, dropping from 645.2 in 2006 to 330.0 in 2023, a 49% decrease.

By 2023, Oregon’s index crime rate stood at 2,937.6 per 100,000 residents, significantly lower than its peak but reflecting recent increases in specific categories such as aggravated assault and motor vehicle theft. Violent crimes contributed 315.9 per 100,000 residents, while property crimes made up the remaining 2,621.7 per 100,000 residents.

Breakdown of Index Crime Rate in Oregon: 1990-2023

Larceny, theft, and robbery rates have shown a consistent decline since the 1990s, while recent years have seen notable increases in rape, aggravated assault, motor vehicle theft, and murder.



FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Index crimes comprise violent crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, as well as property crimes including burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft.

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