

A close-up photograph showing a person's hands being cuffed by a police officer. The person is wearing a grey sweater, and the officer is wearing a dark sweater. The handcuffs are silver metal. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

WCCTV

The Most Common Types of Crime in California

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California is one of the busiest economic hubs in the country, with large construction jobsites and high-traffic retail areas. For business owners and construction managers, this kind of activity comes with one major concern: crime.

The good news is that crime rates across the state have been steadily decreasing, with the California Department of Justice confirming declines in major crime categories in 2024, including violent and property crimes.

The bad news, however, is that specific crimes like larceny-theft remain a serious threat, with **353,739 offenses reported between March 2025 and March 2026**. As a result, industries like construction and retail continue to face higher exposure regardless of what broader statewide trends might suggest.

In this article, we'll break down the most common crimes in California, explain what the data means for businesses, and outline how mobile surveillance can reduce your risk of becoming another statistic.

353,739

**offenses reported between
March 2025 and March 2026**



Crime in California: An Overview

California's crime patterns have changed considerably since the pandemic years. The state's property crime rates reached **2,084 per 100,000 residents in 2024**, an **almost 10% decrease** from the previous year, while the incident rate of violent crimes dropped from **508 incidents per 100,000 residents in 2023 to 481 in 2024**.

Property Crime Rates:

2,084

per 100,000 residents

Violent Crime Rates:

481

per 100,000 residents

Although these kinds of downward trends are meaningful, their context matters, since aggravated assaults (categorized under violent crimes) are still 22% above their pre-pandemic level despite declining in 2024.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), grand theft auto crimes (a type of property crime) **dropped 16.8%** from 2023 to 2024, but it's still **almost 20% higher** than its 2019 numbers. Shoplifting has also trended upward, sitting **48% higher** than pre-pandemic levels.



Shoplifting on the Rise



up 48%

California vs the Rest of the United States

When you look at how California compares to national averages, the bigger picture becomes a lot clearer. The state's violent crime rate was **35.3% higher** than the US average in 2024, and its property crime rate **rose by 18.1%**. California also **ranked number 6** among all 50 states for violent crime offenses.



For businesses in California, these numbers show that the state's crime rates are technically improving but still remain an outlier in comparison to the rest of the country. The crime categories most relevant to commercial businesses, like property crime, remain relatively high.

The Most Common Crimes in California Include:



Most of these crimes carry real and measurable risk for commercial properties and construction jobsites, making investments in better surveillance systems a necessity to protect against potential threats.

6 Most Common Types of Crime in California

Some of the most frequently reported California crimes are also the most relevant to business owners, commercial property owners, jobsite managers, and real estate investors. For example, business owners may be more exposed to certain crimes, such as organized retail crime (ORC), while jobsites are more at risk of larceny-theft.

Here's a quick overview of just how prevalent these crimes actually are:

Crime Type	California	US Avg	vs National Avg
Overall Violent Crime	486	359	+35.3%
Robbery	119	61	+95.1%
Aggravated Assault	326	256	+27.3%
Overall Property Crime	2,078	1,760	+18.1%
Motor Vehicle Theft	428	259	+65.3%
Burglary	306	229	+33.6%
Larceny-Theft	1,345	1,272	+5.7%

1: Larceny-Theft

Larceny-theft is the unlawful taking of property without force, and includes shoplifting and opportunistic jobsite crimes like tool theft. It's by far the most common property crime in California, making up **65% of all reported property offenses** in 2023.

65%
of all reported
property crime in 2023

This type of crime goes beyond retail and into sites and logistics operations that experience larceny-theft from the theft of high-value materials like copper and equipment that's left unsecured at night.

Jobsites with minimal perimeter control and no active monitoring are easy targets, since a lack of visible surveillance and unsecured access points sends the message that there's ample opportunity to commit a crime without being caught.

2: Motor Vehicle Theft

Motor vehicle theft **dropped 16.8%** from 2023 to 2024, marking the first year-over-year decline since 2019. Even so, California is still one of the top 3 states nationally for auto theft. Vehicle thefts made up **20.6%** of all property crimes committed in the state in 2024.



Los Angeles alone had just **under 58,000** vehicle theft cases in 2024, of which **6%** were commercial trucks and trailers, and another **6.4%** were construction and farm equipment. This means that **7,190** vehicles stolen in 2024 had a direct impact on local businesses and construction jobsites.

3: Burglary

Burglary is the unlawful entry (trespassing) into a building or structure with the intent to commit a felony or theft, and it has a direct commercial impact. According to the PPIC, commercial burglaries **increased in 14 of California's 15 biggest counties** between 2019 and 2022, with Fresno, Alameda, and Orange Counties all having more than a **50% increase**, and Santa Clara following closely at **44%**.



Properties like commercial businesses and jobsites are the most vulnerable targets, since the premises are usually partially-staffed after hours. When there is a lack of surveillance or visible security, criminals can enter a property and leave with stolen goods completely undetected.

4: Organized Retail Crime (ORC)

California, in particular, has invested in combating ORC with the state's CHP-led Organized Retail Crime Task Force. The Task Force conducted **879 investigations** in 2024, resulting in **1,707 arrests** and the recovery of over **676,000 stolen items**, valued at around **\$13.5 million**.

These figures highlight the scale of ORC, which the National Retail Federation estimates costs US retailers tens of billions of dollars annually.



5: Robbery

According to U.S. law, robbery involves the use of force or threat to take property from a person who is present at the time. California saw a **7.5% drop** in robberies in 2024 compared to 2023, and robberies involving firearms were also **13.9% lower** in 2024 compared to 2019.

Despite this, commercial robbery is still a major concern, especially for sites with cash transactions or high-value goods like construction equipment on-site. The risk climbs further at locations with thin after-hours security coverage and no visible surveillance infrastructure, especially if workers are unable to defend themselves against armed or aggressive criminals.



6: Aggravated Assault

Although aggravated assault offenses decreased by 4.8% in 2024 from 2023, the rates are **still 22% above pre-pandemic levels**. Assault and battery incidents involving firearms and deadly weapons have declined since their peak in 2021, though they remain **33.6% above 2019 figures**.

**22%
above**



Construction environments and commercial properties after hours are higher-risk settings for workplace violence. That includes a spectrum of offenses, from simple assault to aggravated assault with a weapon.

Which Crimes Pose the Biggest Risk to Businesses in California?

Certain crimes are more likely to affect commercial and public works operations, particularly those with large, open sites with high-value assets. But the common denominator across each of these risk areas is environmental vulnerability, such as sites lacking perimeter visibility or active monitoring.

1 High Value Equipment Theft



2 Metal and Copper Theft



3 Cargo and Vehicle Theft



4 Organized Retail Crime



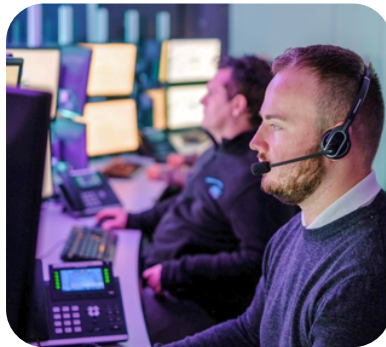
How Mobile Surveillance Helps Reduce Crime Risk

The best way to prevent crimes from happening on your commercial property or jobsite is to have a good mobile surveillance security system in place.



Visible Deterrence

Our solar-powered Surveillance Trailers, camera rentals, and Pole Cameras provide flexible, AI-enabled coverage to deter theft and detect threats in real time, even where on-site power is unavailable.



24/7 Monitoring

Our 24/7 live monitoring, audio warnings, lights, sirens, and optional license plate recognition verify threats, deter crime, and support real-time response and investigations.



Unified Site Visibility

Our cloud platform centralizes multi-site surveillance, video access, real-time alerts, incident reports, compliance records, and system health monitoring in one remote dashboard.

Contact Us

Wireless CCTV LLC
851 International Pkwy
Suite 140
Richardson, Texas
75081

T: 877 805 9475
E: sales@wcctv.com
E: service@wcctv.com

