

Public Safety Spending Reaches Highest Level this Decade in FY 2024–25

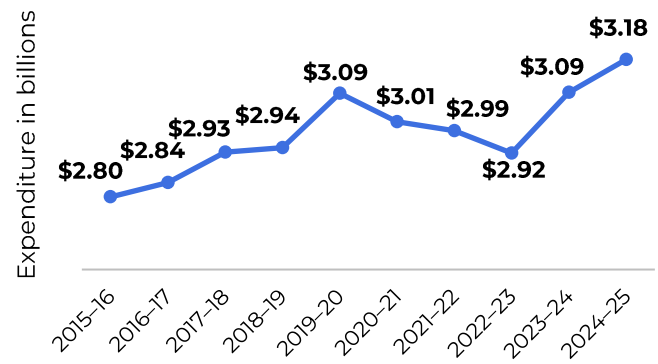
In Fiscal Year 2024–25, the San Diego region’s public safety expenditures reached approximately \$3.18 billion, or about \$960 per resident. This marks the second consecutive year of growth following three years of declines in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with spending now exceeding pre-pandemic levels and reaching the highest inflation-adjusted total in a decade. Consistent with previous years, law enforcement continues to account for nearly half of total public safety expenditures. Within law enforcement, overtime expenditures continue to exceed budgeted amounts across agencies. These highlights are discussed in further detail in SANDAG’s newest CJ Bulletin, [Public Safety Allocations in the San Diego Region FY 2024-25](#).

Highlight 1: Public safety expenditures reach highest level in this decade

Inflation-adjusted public safety spending has generally trended upward over the past decade, rising from \$2.80 billion in FY 2015–16 to \$3.18 billion in FY 2024–25. Although spending declined for three consecutive years following the pandemic, it has resumed an upward trajectory over the past two fiscal years and now stands at its highest recorded level this decade.

Over the past five years, spending increased most notably in Corrections (15%), Public Defense (14%), and Court-related services (9%).

Figure 1: San Diego Region Public Safety Expenditures (FY 2015–16 to FY 2024–25)

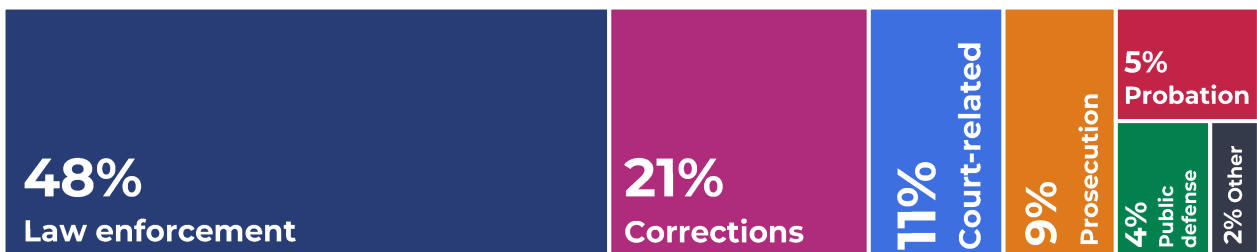


Sources: SANDAG; San Diego County and Cities’ Expenditures

Highlight 2: Nearly half of all public safety spending is spent on law enforcement

Law enforcement accounts for 48% of public safety expenditures in the region (approximately \$1.54 billion). The remaining funds are distributed across six other categories, a breakdown that has remained relatively stable over time.

Figure 1: Allocations of Public Safety Expenditures (FY 2024–25)

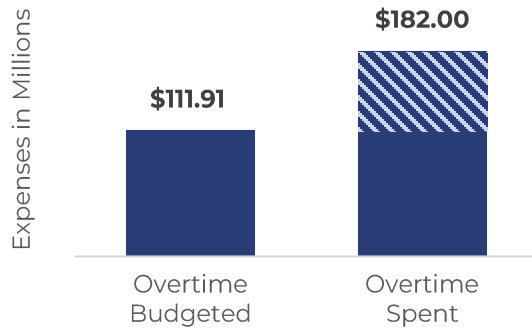


Sources: SANDAG; San Diego County and Cities’ Expenditures

Highlight 3: Overtime spending exceeds budgets across most agencies

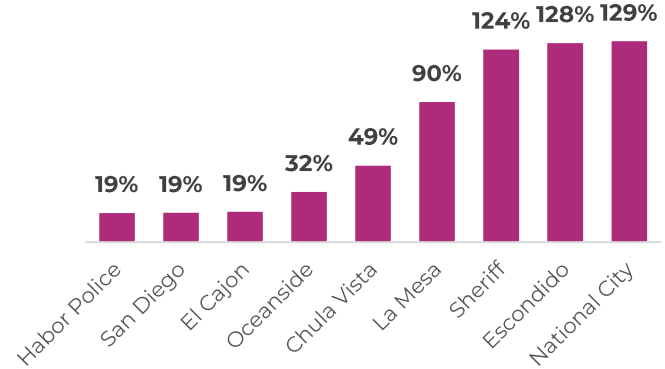
Within law enforcement, allocating funds for overtime is a standard practice that enables agencies to manage unforeseen events and uphold public safety without increasing the number of sworn staff. In FY 2024–25, a total of \$111.91 million was budgeted for overtime expenses across eleven agencies, but \$182.00 million was spent (63% more). Across jurisdictions, all but Carlsbad and Coronado reported exceeding their overtime budgets. Several jurisdictions spent more than twice their budgeted amounts.

Figure 3: Total Law Enforcement Overtime Budget and Actual Expenses



Sources: SANDAG; San Diego County and Cities' Expenditures

Figure 4: Percent Difference Between Actual and Budgeted Overtime by Jurisdiction

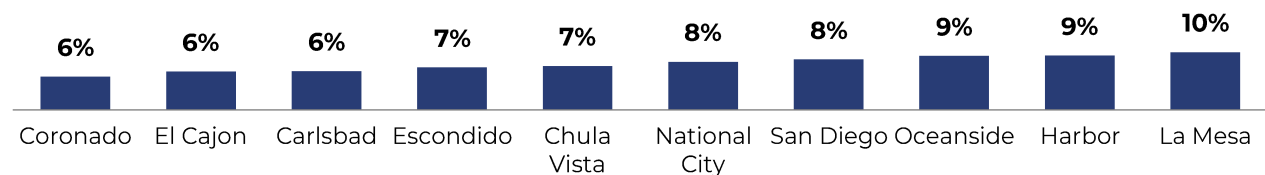


Note: Carlsbad and Coronado are excluded, as they did not exceed their budgeted overtime. Sheriff includes expenditures in Detention Services, Court Services, and Law Enforcement. Sources: SANDAG; San Diego County and Cities' Expenditures

Highlight 4: Overtime accounts for less than ten percent of law enforcement expenditure in most agencies

Although overtime expenditures tend to exceed budgeted amounts, overtime costs represent a relatively small share of overall law enforcement expenditures. In FY 2024–25, overtime accounted for only 6% to 10% of total agency law enforcement expenditures. This suggests that consistent overtime budget overruns may reflect challenges in forecasting overtime needs, rather than overtime being a major driver of overall costs.

Figure 5: Percentage of Total LEA Expenditure Used for Overtime



Note: The Sheriff's Office is excluded as their overtime costs include expenses from several divisions, including Law Enforcement, Court Services, and Detention Services. Sources: SANDAG; San Diego County and Cities' Expenditures

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