

Law Enforcement Sworn Staffing in the San Diego Region

On an annual basis, the Criminal Justice Research Division of SANDAG compiles regional expenditure and staffing information from local agencies to describe how dollars are allocated to different public safety categories (law enforcement, prosecution, public defense, court-related, probation, corrections, and other functions) and how these allocations have changed over time. With the upcoming release of the SANDAG CJ Bulletin, *Public Safety Allocations in the San Diego Region: Expenditures and Staffing for Fiscal Year 2016*, this CJ Flash delves deeper into the region's sworn law enforcement staffing¹. The Public Policy Institute of California² recently released a report that cited research that suggests that increased police staffing is a cost-effective crime prevention strategy. With that in mind, SANDAG conducted a deeper analysis to explore how the number of sworn officers locally compares to other jurisdictions in the nation of both similar and differing population.

#1: Historically, the regional number of sworn officers per 1,000 population has been below the national average. The most recent national statistics are **2.1** in 2015, compared to **1.3** for San Diego County. As Table 1 shows, this number varies nationally by the size of the department, and each of San Diego County's ten departments was below the national average. For example, the average number of officers was 2.9 per 1,000 population for departments serving jurisdictions with populations of one million or greater, while the City of San Diego's figure was 1.5.

#2: While sworn staffing at local agencies has remained relatively stable over the past one year and five years, it is still lower for nine of the ten agencies than it was ten years ago (Table 1) when the country was in recession, a finding also noted by the Public Policy Institute when looking at statewide data.

#3: When looking at the nation by region, the Western states have the lowest number of sworn officers per population (1.6), but California's figure of 2.3 is the second highest, compared to neighboring states (range 1.4 to 2.6). San Diego County's rate of 1.3 is below the state average (Figures 1 and 2).

While crime rates have been at historic lows, 40 of California's 58 counties recently saw increases in violent crime rates, and 41 counties had a rise in property crime rates.³ It is noteworthy that while the San Diego region has had fewer sworn staff per population than many other national jurisdictions, the region's 2015 violent (3.4) and property crime (19.4) rates were lower than the national average (3.7 and 24.9, respectively), as well as compared to other jurisdictions. As national, state, and local leaders strive to maintain public safety, while being responsive to constituents, it is important to consider how local departments can most effectively recruit and maintain qualified and diverse staff who are able to effectively use best practices, including problem-solving techniques and community engagement and partnership.

¹ Law enforcement staffing data compiled from the FBI for the 2015 calendar year. Available on-line at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/police-employee-data/police-employee-data>

² Martin, B., Lofstrom, M., & Hayes, J. (August 2016). Law Enforcement Staffing in California. Available on-line at http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=1081

³ Lofstrom, M. & Martin, B. (August 2016). Crime Trends in California. Available on-line at http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=1036

RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH DIVISION

Table 1: NUMBER OF SWORN OFFICERS PER 1,000 RESIDENT POPULATION BY JURISDICTION SIZE NATIONALLY AND FOR SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Size of Jurisdiction (Number of Agencies Nationally)	Number of Sworn Officers per 1,000 Resident Population	10-Year Change in Staffing
Cities with Populations 1,000,000+ (10)	2.9	
San Diego	1.5	-7%
Cities with Populations 500,000-999,999 (23)	2.4	
Sheriff	1.1	-3%
Cities with Populations 250,000-499,999 (43)	1.9	
Chula Vista	0.9	-18%
Cities with Populations 100,000-249,999 (195)	1.7	
Carlsbad	1.1	-11%
El Cajon	1.2	-12%
Escondido	1.0	-10%
Oceanside	1.2	7%
Cities with Populations 50,000-99,999 (419)	1.6	
La Mesa	1.2	-6%
National City	1.5	-11%
Cities with Populations 10,000 – 24,999 (1,612)	1.8	
Coronado	1.9	-3%

Figures 1 and 2: NUMBER OF SWORN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS PER 1,000 POPULATION BY REGION AND WESTERN STATES

