

May 2020

As the San Diego region entered 2020, the property crime rate was at a 40-year low and the violent crime rate was the fourth lowest since 1980<sup>1</sup>. Since then, we have all been affected by the current public health crisis and the stay-at-home orders, including law enforcement who are on the front lines and local detention facilities focused on maintaining safety for all.

Crime rates can vary based on a number of different factors, including the opportunity to commit a crime, availability of law enforcement to respond and investigate, and other factors such as alcohol and other drug use that may be associated with certain crimes. It is challenging to definitively say what the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 may be on public safety. Possible factors are shown in this infographic.

To help inform our understanding of how some crimes have changed since stay-at-home orders were passed due to COVID-19, SANDAG analyzed crime case data reported across the San Diego region for March and April 2019 and 2020. Crimes were included if the highest or most serious offense was an aggravated assault, simple assault, or larceny. The research team also looked at

### What's the impact of COVID-19 on public safety?

#### Possible short-term impacts

-  *increased...*
-  mental health issues
-  substance use and overdoses
-  opportunities for burglary or vandalism with unoccupied buildings
-  opportunities for financial schemes
-  anonymity with facial coverings
-  conflict between individuals isolating together
-  *decreased...*
-  child abuse reports due to limited contact with mandated reporters

#### Possible long-term impacts

-  *increased...*
-  hate crimes
-  chance of committing a crime due to financial instability or job loss
-  chance of juvenile crime or victimization with schools not open
-  *decreased...*
-  donations and public funding support to community-based organizations that provide services or programs to prevent crime or facilitate community reentry after incarceration

<sup>1</sup> San Diego Association of Governments (To be released May 19, 2020). *Forty years of crime in the San Diego Region: 1980 through 2019*. San Diego, CA. Available online at sandag.org/cj

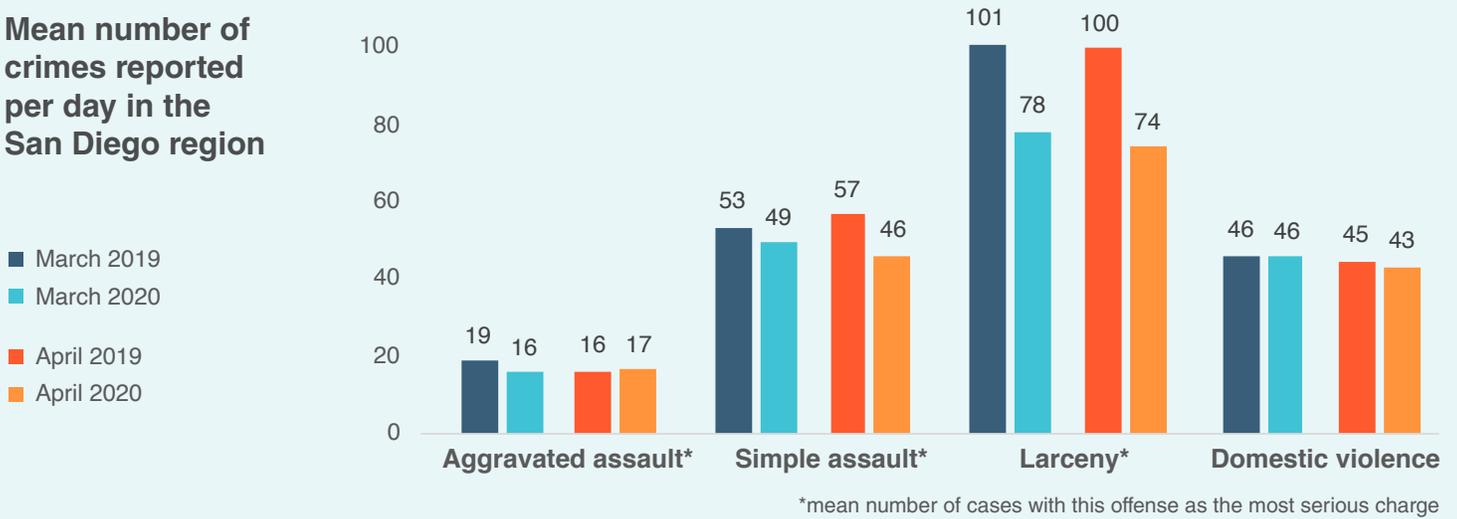
cases identified as involving domestic violence<sup>2</sup>. While the intent of this was to determine if there has been a change over time, it is important to note when interpreting these statistics that this timeframe is relatively short, factors other than the public health crisis could also affect the statistics, and that they can change as ongoing investigations continue.

As the figures below show, larcenies decreased to the greatest degree in both monthly comparisons, which could be expected given the reduced opportunity for this type of property crime with individuals staying home and businesses closed. In addition, both types of assaults decreased in March (aggravated more than simple), but in April, aggravated assaults increased, suggesting that a greater percentage of assaults involved a weapon or resulted in harm. In addition, while domestic violence incidents did not increase, they decreased to a much smaller degree than the other three comparisons.

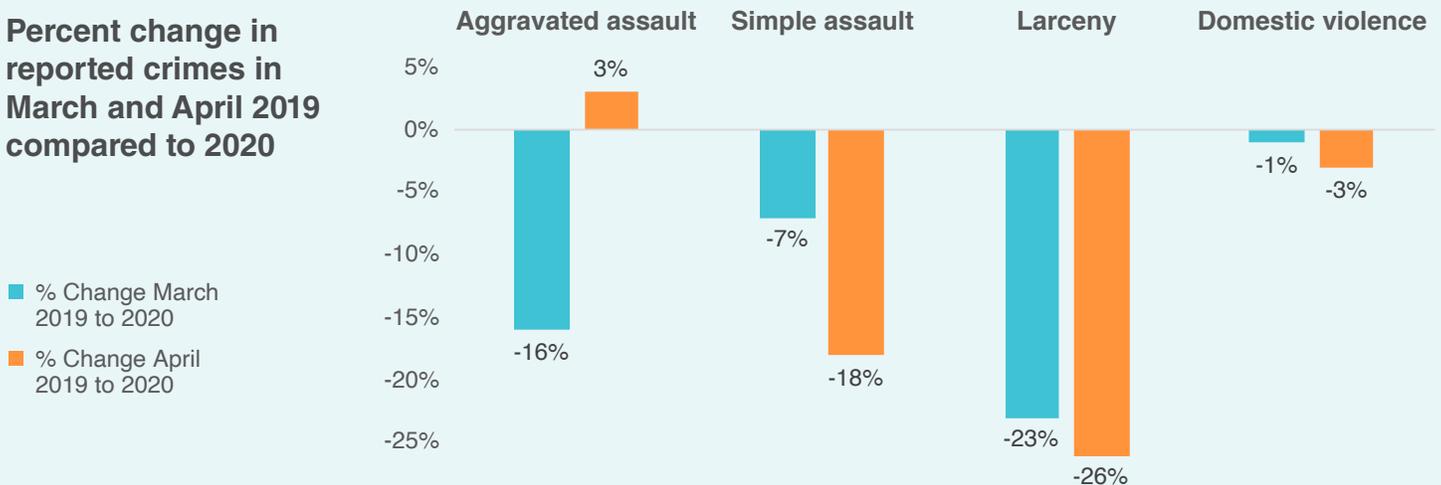
### Take Away

As of April 2020, it appears that the stay-at-home efforts may be having more of an effect on property crime in our communities, as measured by larcenies than violent crime, as measured by aggravated and simple assaults. During the coming months, SANDAG will continue to work with law enforcement across the region to document possible short- and long-term impacts of this public health crisis on public safety.

#### Mean number of crimes reported per day in the San Diego region



#### Percent change in reported crimes in March and April 2019 compared to 2020



<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that domestic violence is not the highest offense and can involve a crime case with an assault or a property-related offense. Also, an increase in reported domestic violence numbers could reflect more incidents, but also greater reporting. Victimization surveys suggest that only 47% of domestic violence incidents were reported to law enforcement in 2018.

## About

SANDAG serves as the region's clearinghouse for information and data. InfoBits publish timely, relevant information to the public while providing context on complex issues facing the region.

[sandag.org](http://sandag.org)

## Definitions

### **Aggravated assault**

The unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by other means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

### **Simple assault**

An assault or attempted assault where no weapon was used or no serious or aggravated injury resulted to the victim. Stalking, intimidation, coercion, and hazing are included.

### **Larceny**

The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles, motor vehicle parts and accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article that is not taken by force and violence or by fraud.

### **Domestic violence**

Includes felony or misdemeanor crimes committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.