



2026 LEGAL SYSTEM ANALYSIS

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Overview

How much has changed in Contra Costa County since its 2018 report on racial disparities?

To begin to answer this question, the Contra Costa County Racial Justice Oversight Body has compiled updated County-level system data into the following report.

History

In 2018, the Contra Costa County Racial Justice Task Force presented its Final Report and Recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors. Among its findings were higher rates of arrest, charging, and conviction for Black individuals across the County.¹

In 2023, the Vera Institute of Justice published the report, “Pushing Forward: Prosecution Reform and Racial Equity across Six Counties”. The report found a number of key findings that require further investigation. Key findings include:

Searches and seizures: Filed drug cases represented 29 percent of the 1,872 referred cases. However, the office dismissed 73 percent of drug cases. However, Black people were twice as likely as white people to be charged with drug possession. Additionally, Black people were 10 times as likely as white people to be charged with misdemeanor gun possession and 14 times as likely to have felony gun possession charges.

Transitional aged youth: From 2016 to 2021, the office prosecuted 513 felony cases for TA youth. Among referred felony cases in 2021, the office issued charges for 46 percent as felonies and 10 percent as misdemeanors, and did not charge the remainder. Felony cases filed on transitional aged youth dropped by 33 percent from 2016 to 2021. However, racial disparities in those filings increased.

Court referrals: Black individuals were 3.8 times more likely than white people to have a referred case and 5.8 times more likely to have a referred felony. Latino individuals were 1.4 times more likely than white people to have a referred case and 1.5 times more likely to have a referred felony.

In 2025, the Center for Policing Equity also made a set of recommendations to the Racial Justice Oversight Body for further analysis on the racial demographics of all police stops, search and discovery rate for contraband, and use of force.

¹ <https://ccc.docsonthecloud.com/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=136407&dbid=0&repo=ClerkofBoard>

Arrests

2015-2024 Misdemeanor Arrest Rates: Contra Costa County

Data Sources and Definitions:

This data for Contra Costa County's Misdemeanor Arrest Rates was accessed through the Department of Justice's Open Justice tool. The data is reported on an annual basis by each law enforcement agency within Contra Costa County. Arrests are defined by the Department of Justice as follows:

"An arrest occurs when a person is taken into custody because a peace officer has reason to believe the person violated the law. Not all arrests result in persons being jailed. Arrestees may be released by the arresting agency, post bail, or be released on their own recognizance to appear in court at a later date. Some are issued citations, much like traffic tickets, which direct them to appear in court at a later date."

In order to analyze arrest trends more accurately over time, arrest counts were standardized using per capita rates. Per capita rates were calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Misdemeanor Arrests}}{\text{Population}} \times 100,000 = \text{Arrest Rate per 100,000 Residents}$$

Population estimates were obtained from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates. The population estimates are included in Appendix A.

Risk Ratios measure the relative likelihood of one group experiencing an outcome (in this case, arrests) compared to a reference group. In this analysis, White residents were used as the reference group, meaning a Risk Ratio greater than 1 indicates that a group experienced higher arrest rates than White residents, while a value below 1 indicates lower arrest rates.

The following formula was used to calculate the Risk Ratios:

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \frac{\text{Arrest Rate of Racial Group}}{\text{White Arrest Rate}}$$

For example:

$$\frac{\text{Black Arrest Rate per 100,000}}{\text{White Arrest Rate per 100,000}}$$

and

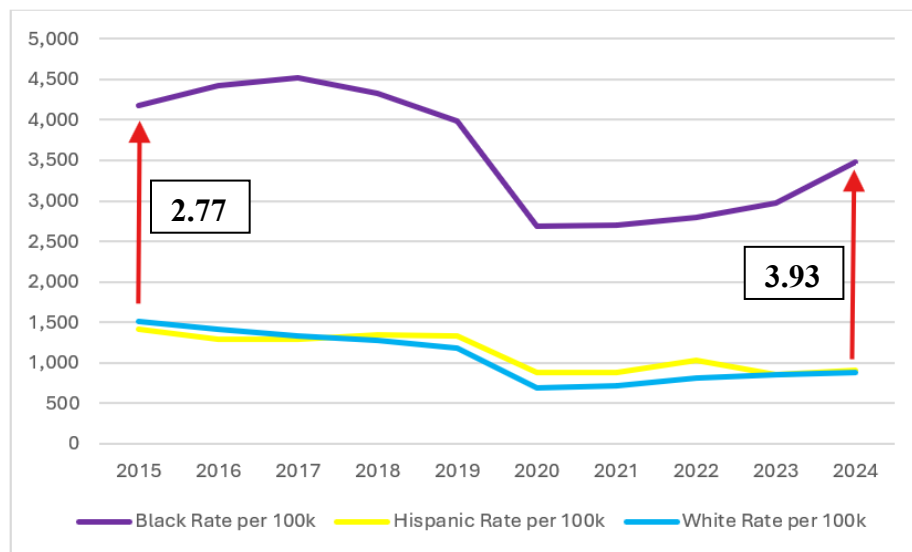
$$\frac{\text{Hispanic Arrest Rate per 100,000}}{\text{White Arrest Rate per 100,000}}$$

The outcomes of the misdemeanor arrest Risk Ratio analysis are available in Appendix B.

Updated Arrest Data:

These rates were then used to create a line chart illustrating changes in arrest rates and racial disparities over time:

Figure 1: Misdemeanor per capita arrest rates across all Contra Costa County law enforcement agencies, by race, from 2015-2024.



The initial analysis shows that misdemeanor arrest rates decreased overall for White, Black, and Hispanic individuals between 2015 and 2024. Misdemeanor arrest rates for Black individuals were substantially higher than those for White and Hispanic individuals across all years analyzed. While arrest rates declined sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, rates for all groups began increasing again in recent years.

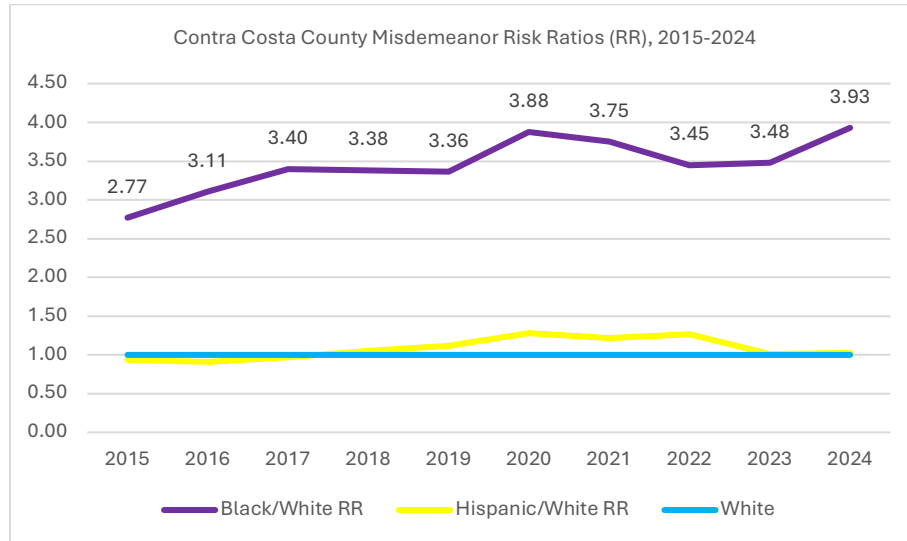
“Misdemeanor arrest rates for Black individuals were substantially higher than those for White and Hispanic individuals across all years analyzed.”

Further analysis was conducted to compare how misdemeanor arrest rates for Black and Hispanic people changed relative to White people over time. To examine these differences, Risk Ratios were calculated.

Below, a line chart is included in Figure 2 to analyze how Risk Ratios for Black and Hispanic residents changed over time. The chart illustrates that the disparity between Black and White

misdemeanor arrest rates increased between 2015 and 2024. In contrast, the disparity between Hispanic and White misdemeanor arrest rates remained more stable.

Figure 1: Misdemeanor arrest rate Risk Ratios across all Contra Costa County law enforcement agencies, by race, from 2015-2024.



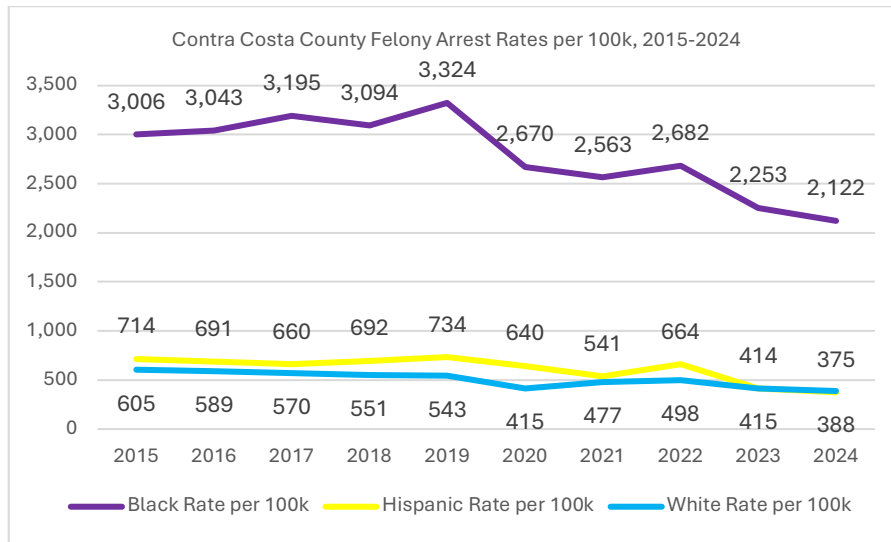
The Black-White misdemeanor arrest gap is increasing over time. We recommend further analysis to better understand the factors contributing to this trend, as the widening disparity is concerning.

“...the disparity between Black and White misdemeanor arrest rates increased between 2015 and 2024.”

2015-2024 Felony Arrest Rates: Contra Costa County

The same methodology used for misdemeanor arrest rates was also applied to felony arrest rates, including the calculation of per capita arrest rates and racial Risk Ratios using DOJ arrest data and ACS population estimates. The following chart illustrates changes in per capita felony arrest rates over time:

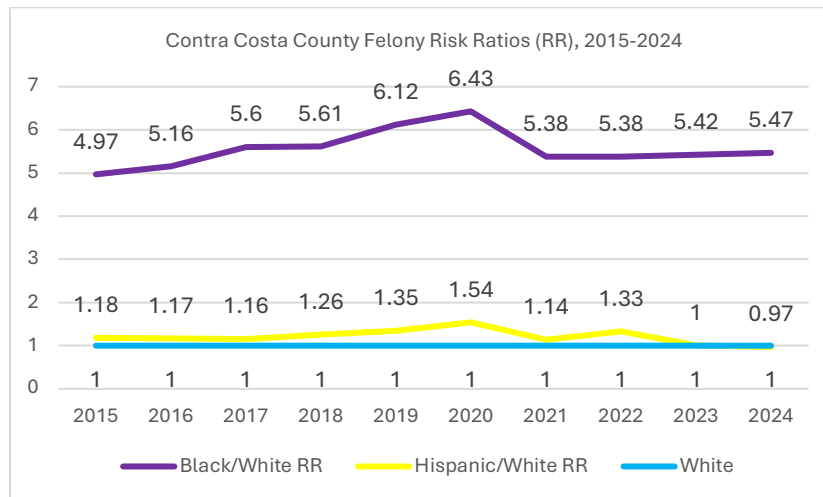
Figure 2: Felony per capita arrest rates across all Contra Costa County law enforcement agencies, by race, from 2015-2024.



Felony arrest rates declined across all racial groups between 2015 and 2024, though Black residents consistently experienced substantially higher rates than other groups. Further research is recommended to better understand why felony arrests are decreasing while misdemeanor arrests are increasing over the same period.

The following chart illustrates the Risk Ratios Black and Hispanic residents and how it changed over time.

Figure 3: Felony arrest rate Risk Ratios across all Contra Costa County law enforcement agencies, by race, from 2015-2024.



The Black-White felony arrest disparity remained consistently high throughout the study period. That gap hit its peak in 2020, when Black individuals were more than 6 times more likely to be arrested for a felony than White individuals. The disparity between Black and White felony arrest rates was higher in 2024 than it had been in 2015. Hispanic-White risk ratios, while increasing between 2015 and 2020 and decreasing after 2022, remained comparatively low and

relatively stable over time. Similar to the trends for misdemeanors, we recommend further research on the widening felony arrest disparity gap and the factors contributing to these patterns.

2024 Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory (RIPA) Board Stop Data

In 2015, The California legislature passed the Racial and Identity Profiling Act, also known as AB 953. AB 953 has numerous provisions aimed at promoting equitable policing practices. Among its requirements, the law prohibits racial and identity profiling by law enforcement, mandates the collection and submission of data on all vehicle and pedestrian stops, and requires the Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory Board to conduct an annual analysis of statewide stop data.

In 2026, the RIPA Board published a report on the 2024 Stop Data. Although the report does not analyze county-specific policing trends, the complete dataset is available on the Department of Justice’s website for the public to access.

Key Definitions and Considerations

“A reportable stop is any detention of a person by a peace officer or any interaction with a peace officer that results in a search. In their reporting, officers must include their perception of the stopped person’s race and identity demographics.”²

RIPA reports use “data collected by the United States Census Bureau to compare the racial and ethnic composition of residential populations with the composition of individuals stopped by law enforcement[,] a common method for monitoring enforcement patterns.”³

“Stop demographics for each police department, sheriff’s department, district attorney’s office, or coroner’s office were compared to their primary city or county of service, respectively.”⁴

Actions defined as a “use of force” include:

- Handcuffed
- Baton Drawn and/or Used
- Chemical Spray
- Electronic Control Device Pointed, Used in Drive-Stun Mode, and/or Used in Dart Mode
- Firearm Point and/or Discharge
- Impact Projectile Point and/or Discharge
- Canine Compliance and/or Canine Bite
- Removed from Vehicle by Physical Contact
- Physical Compliance, and

² <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-quick-facts-2026.pdf>

³ <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-appendix-2026.pdf>

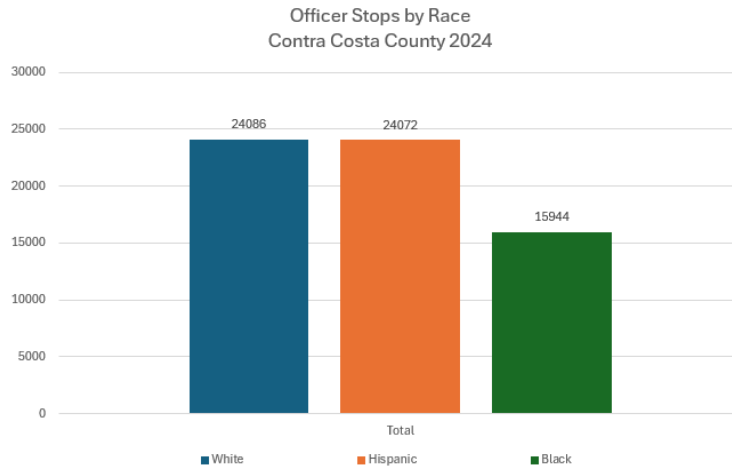
⁴ <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-appendix-2026.pdf>

- Use of Vehicle in Apprehension of Person.⁵

Data Analysis

For this report, the subcommittee analyzed “Total Stops by Race” for the White, Black, and Hispanic population. The stops include any instances where a law enforcement agency conducts a stop within Contra Costa County.

Figure 4: Contra Costa County Total Police Stops, 2024



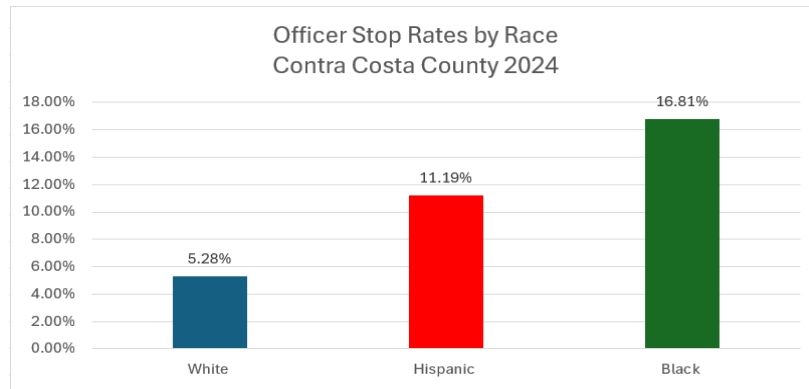
Next, the stop rate was calculated to compare stop patterns across races. The rate is calculated by dividing the total stops for each race by the total population within Contra Costa County for each race.

For example:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Stops for Whites}}{\text{White Population}} \times 100 = \text{Stop Rate}$$

⁵ Use of force actions are further categorized as: lethal force, less-lethal force, and limited force. “Lethal force” includes discharging a firearm. “Less lethal force” includes baton use, canine bites, use of a chemical spray, use of electronic control device, pointing a firearm, and impact discharge. “Limited force” includes handcuffing, other contact, and removal from a vehicle with physical contact. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 11, § 999.226, subd. (a)(17); see Pen. Code, § 16780, subd. (a).)

Figure 5: Contra Costa County Total Police Stops, 2024



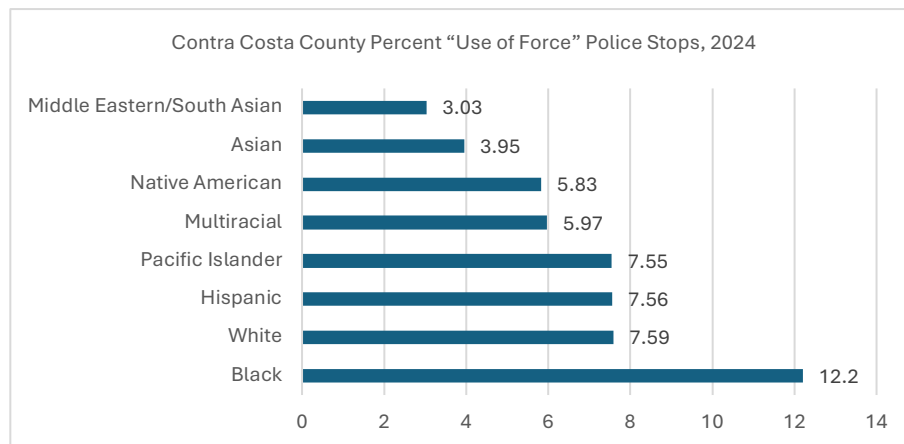
The data shows that

Next, rates of “Use of Force” per stop were analyzed by dividing the number of stops in which force was used by the total number of stops for each racial group. The result was then multiplied by 100 to express the rate as a percentage.

$$\text{Percent Use of Force} = \frac{\text{Number of Stops Involving Force for Race X}}{\text{Total Number of Stops for Race X}} \times 100$$

The following chart shows the percent “Use of Force” per stop for each race.

Figure 6: Use of Force Rates per Stop Across all Contra Costa County law enforcement agencies, by race, 2024



The results show that officers are more likely to use force during stops involving Black individuals. The disparity is significant, while officers use force in about 12.2% of stops involving Black individuals, force is used in about 7.6% of stops involving White and Latino individuals. Therefore, the rate of force used against Black individuals during stops is 1.6 times higher than the rates for White and Latino individuals. Middle Eastern/South Asian and Asian individuals had the lowest reported rates at 3% and 4% respectively. Further analysis is needed to better understand the factors contributing to these disparities, including differences in stop

circumstances. Please review Appendix D for more data on “Use of Force” including a statewide comparison.

2022-2025 Contra Costa County Courts: Filing and Disposition Rates

Contra Costa County Courts reports statistics on the total number of felony and misdemeanor cases filed on an annual basis to the Judicial Council of California (JCC). The JCC then publishes the data in an annual report. They also publish the data on their online dashboards, located on their website.

This report reviews trends in felony and non-traffic misdemeanors filings and dispositions.

Filing refers to the initial act of officially submitting a document, application, or legal charge to a court. Filings are primarily done by the County’s District Attorney’s office.

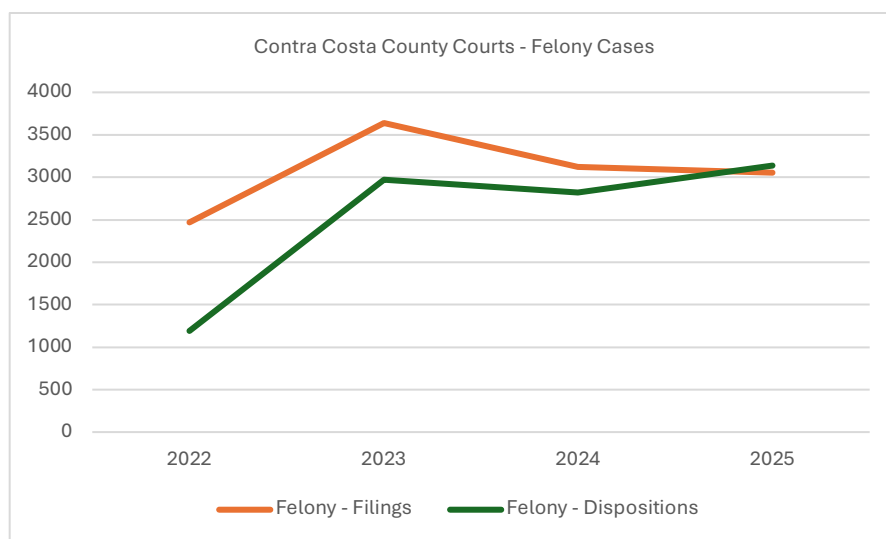
Disposition is the final outcome or status of a case. Potential outcomes include:

- **Dismissed:** The court or prosecutor drops the charges.
- **Acquitted:** The defendant is found not guilty at trial.
- **Convicted:** The defendant pleads guilty or is found guilty.
- **Diversion/Deferred:** The case is delayed pending the completion of court-ordered conditions.

It’s important to note that several years can elapse between when a case is filed and its disposition.

Felony Filings and Dispositions

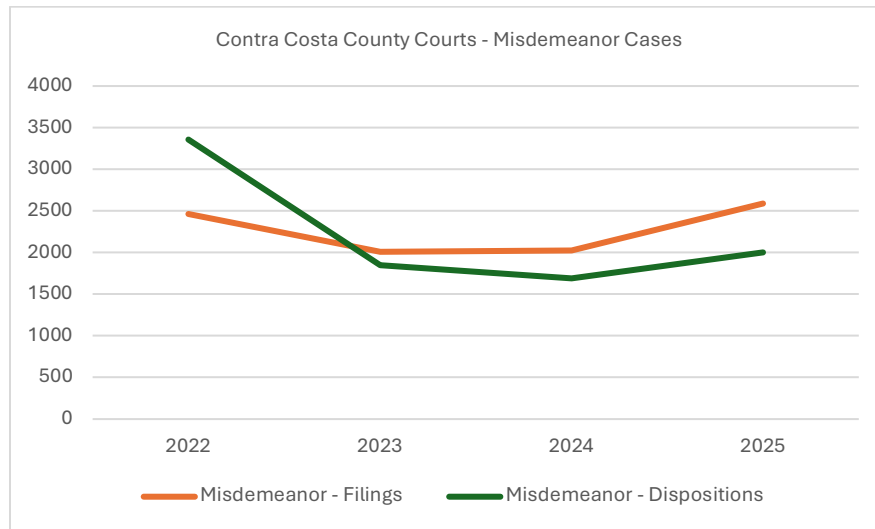
Figure 7: All Felony Filings and Dispositions with Contra Costa Courts, 2022-2025



The chart shows a decrease in felony filings from 2023 to 2025. In contrast, there is a minimal increase in felony dispositions from 2024 to 2025.

Misdemeanor Filings and Dispositions

Figure 8: All Misdemeanor Filings and Dispositions with Contra Costa Courts, 2022-2025



In contrast to felony filings, misdemeanor filings increased between 2024 and 2025. Misdemeanor dispositions are also increasing proportionately. Note that this trend is also reflected in arrest rates, as described earlier in the report. Filing and disposition rates are affected by multiple factors such as arrest rates, court staffing, district attorney staffing, and backlogs. More analysis is needed on rising misdemeanor filings, including defendant race demographics.

Criminal Case Processing Time, by County Superior Courts Fiscal Year 2024–25

In their annual “Statewide Caseload Trends” reports, JJC compares case processing times throughout the state. They present metrics over the course of a two-year period. The most recent report presented data from 2024 to 2025.

County	Felonies <12 Months	Felonies <30 Days	Felonies <45 Days	Felonies <90 Days	Misdemeanors <30 Days	Misdemeanors <90 Days	Misdemeanors <120 Days
California (Statewide)	70%	22%	29%	45%	33%	51%	59%
Contra Costa	35%	10%	17%	30%	8%	29%	42%
Alameda	62%	41%	46%	63%	64%	76%	80%
Los Angeles	74%	22%	27%	43%	36%	56%	63%
Orange	51%	36%	41%	51%	38%	56%	63%
Santa Clara	43%	10%	13%	26%	23%	38%	47%

The data indicate that Contra Costa County processed a smaller proportion of both felony and misdemeanor cases within established time benchmarks than the statewide average and most comparison counties. A notable difference was in felony cases resolved within 12 months, where Contra Costa reported 35% compared with the statewide average of 70%. Similar gaps were observed across misdemeanor processing benchmarks. For misdemeanor cases, where only 8% were resolved within 30 days, compared with 33% statewide.

Criminal case processing times are an important metric because they measure how long defendants wait for a resolution. Delays in case processing can have consequences for individuals who remain in custody while awaiting trial or disposition. This leads to uncertainty for victims, defendants, and their families. This is why timely case resolution is an important indicator of court performance and equity in the justice system.

Because these metrics cannot solely explain the underlying reasons for longer case processing times, such as court staffing levels, prosecutorial practices, or case complexity, we recommend further analysis to identify the factors contributing to these trends.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of criminal justice trends in Contra Costa County, while highlighting several areas where racial disparities continue to persist. Although arrest rates have generally declined over the past decade, Black residents experience substantially higher misdemeanor and felony arrest rates than other racial groups. The analysis also found that the disparity between Black and White misdemeanor arrest rates has widened over time. In addition, the 2024 RIPA stop data indicates that Black individuals experienced the highest rates of force during police stops compared to other racial groups.

The report also identified system trends that warrant additional analysis. Misdemeanor filings and arrests have increased in recent years. At the same time, Contra Costa County processed a smaller proportion of criminal cases within statewide time benchmarks than California overall and many comparison counties. These findings highlight potential areas for further review.

While this report identifies important patterns, it does not explain why these disparities and trends exist. Arrest rates, police stops, charging decisions, court processing times, and case outcomes are influenced by numerous factors that cannot be evaluated through descriptive statistics alone. Additional research will be necessary to better understand the drivers of these outcomes.

Ultimately, this report is intended to serve as a foundation for future analysis rather than an assessment of equity within Contra Costa County's criminal legal system. Continued

collaboration among law enforcement agencies, community stakeholders, and the Racial Justice Oversight Body is essential in promoting equitable outcomes for all residents.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this report, the Racial Justice Oversight Body identified several trends and metrics that require further analysis. Below is a set of recommendations, that are not exhaustive:

1. An in-depth analysis on the increase in misdemeanor arrests.
2. A cause analysis on the increase in racial disparities in misdemeanor and felony arrests.
3. An additional report on legal system interactions and outcomes for youth.
4. An analysis on the racial breakdown of the pretrial population over time.
5. A county-wide, publicly accessible RIPA dashboard.
6. An analysis on the disproportionate use of force by race, including reason for stop, and if a charge was eventually made.
7. An analysis on the racial breakdown of all police stops in Contra Costa County, the reasons, and resulting action.
8. An analysis on who the District Attorney's office files on or not, including race.
9. An analysis on the time to disposition for Contra Costa County Courts that includes race.

References

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Appendix A: United States Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-Year Population Estimates for Contra Costa County

Race	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
White	505074	502828	500221	494370	489677	489135	462252	444489	432652	425412
Black	97762	93005	89378	98242	99615	94463	97612	96166	89726	87183
Latino	285026	288713	294584	297255	300420	295791	310805	311808	321243	331100

Appendix B: Contra Costa County Misdemeanor Arrest Statistics, 2015-2024

Year	Black Rate per 100k	Hispanic Rate per 100k	White Rate per 100k	Black/White Risk Ratio	Hispanic/White Risk Ratio
2015	4,179	1,422	1,511	2.77	0.94
2016	4,426	1,295	1,422	3.11	0.91
2017	4,517	1,295	1,330	3.4	0.97
2018	4,329	1,345	1,282	3.38	1.05
2019	3,988	1,331	1,187	3.36	1.12
2020	2,684	884	691	3.88	1.28
2021	2,696	876	719	3.75	1.22
2022	2,795	1,031	809	3.45	1.27
2023	2,968	857	852	3.48	1.01
2024	3,482	913	885	3.93	1.03

Appendix C: Contra Costa County Felony Arrest Statistics, 2015-2024

Year	Black Rate per 100k	Hispanic Rate per 100k	White Rate per 100k	Black/White Risk Ratio	Hispanic/White Risk Ratio
2015	3,006	714	605	4.97	1.18
2016	3,043	691	589	5.16	1.17
2017	3,195	660	570	5.6	1.16
2018	3,094	692	551	5.61	1.26
2019	3,324	734	543	6.12	1.35
2020	2,670	640	415	6.43	1.54
2021	2,563	541	477	5.38	1.14
2022	2,682	664	498	5.38	1.33
2023	2,253	414	415	5.42	1
2024	2,122	375	388	5.47	0.97

Appendix D: Appendix D: Contra Costa County RIPA Use of Force Statistics, 2024

Race	Total Stops	Force Stops	Force Stops - CA	Percent Force	Percent Force - CA	Disparity vs White	Disparity vs White - CA
Black	15944	1942	101,749	12.2	16.62	1.6	1.9
White	24086	1827	138,779	7.59	8.76	1	1
Hispanic	24072	1821	236,951	7.56	10.8	1	1.23
Pacific Islander	980	74	2,445	7.55	9.14	0.99	1.04
Multiracial	1123	67	6,134	5.97	9.82	0.79	1.12
Native American	223	13	2,325	5.83	17.5	0.77	2
Asian	4988	197	11,969	3.95	4.03	0.52	0.46
Middle Eastern/South Asian	5311	161	8,794	3.03	3.2	0.4	0.37