

# The Colorado Crime Wave: An Economic Analysis of Crime and the Need for Data Driven Solutions

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## 2021 Criminal Justice Fellows



### George Brauchler

Served as the elected District Attorney for the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District from 2013-2021.



### Mitch Morrissey

Served as the elected District Attorney for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District from 2005-2017.

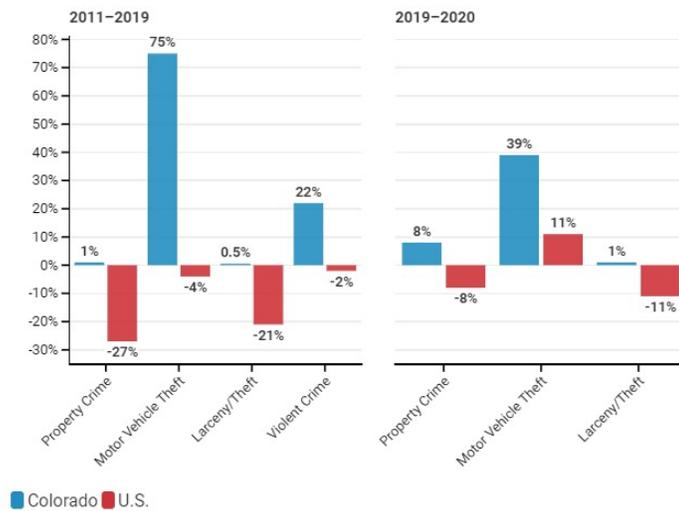
## How big is the crime wave in Colorado?

The average monthly crime rate in 2021 is 28% higher than 2011 and 15% higher than 2019.

- Colorado had the **#1 highest** increase in its property crime rate between 2011 and 2020 among all states.
- Colorado’s violent crime rate in 2020 was 35% higher than 2011; nationally the rate grew only 3%.
  - The 2020 murder rate was 106% higher than in 2011.
  - The rape rate was 9% higher, with assault up 40%.
- Colorado had **the highest** motor vehicle theft rate among all states in 2020.
  - In the last ten years, the Colorado rate has increased by 135%, while the national rate increased just 3% through 2020.

*The 2021 violent crime rate is on pace to be the highest since 1994.*

Change in Crime Rates in Colorado Compared to the U.S. Pre and Post Pandemic



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

**The cost of crime totaled more than \$27 billion in 2020.**

## What is the cost of crime in Colorado?

- While costs are disproportionately felt by victims, \$27 billion in total costs represents an average cost per Coloradan of \$4,762 a year.
  - Total costs equal 77% of the size of the state budget (\$35 billion).

- Tangible costs total \$8.5 billion or \$1.5 billion more than the combined total market value of the Broncos, Nuggets, Rockies, Avalanche, and Rapids (\$6.77 billion).
- Intangible costs related to victim suffering, reduced quality of life, and other societal costs totaled more than \$19 billion.
- Significant increases in organized retail crime and motor vehicle thefts contributed between \$1.2 and \$1.6 billion to total costs.
  - The total cost per vehicle stolen is over \$36,000.

## Multiple warning signs across the system

As a result of multiple reforms, the trends across bond practices, parole rates, and incarceration levels, all point to a system tipping further away from accountability.

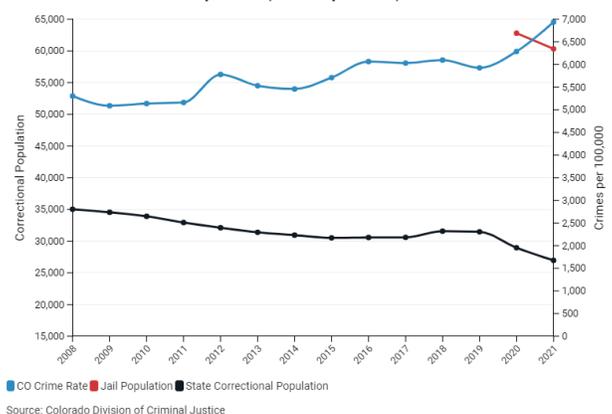
### Bond, Parole and Arrests:

- The number of **Personal Recognizance (PR) bonds in Denver increased by 61%** over the last two years and has even increased for more serious crimes. PR bond issuances have increased by 254% for Class 2 felonies from 2018 to 2020.
- In 2020 there were 538 \$1 bonds issued in Denver and in 2021 there were 562. Between 2017 and 2019, there were only 2.
- In 2021, 70% of arrests were of people who had committed at least one other offense over the prior 3 years. 54% had multiple offenses in the same year.
  - 30% of arrests in Denver in 2021 were of individuals with 5 or more arrests since 2018.

### Incarceration levels:

- Between **2008 and 2021, the Colorado prison population declined by 33%, or by nearly 7,700 inmates.** During that same period the total number of annual **crimes increased by 47%, or by 131,399** annual crimes.
- The recidivism rate in Colorado ranks among the top 5 in the nation.

Colorado Correctional Population, Jail Population, and Crime Rate



## What is the path forward?

- Policymakers must establish more transparent reporting and a public facing dashboard that demonstrates how the current system is supporting communities, victims and individuals returning to society following incarceration.
- There is an urgent need for an interagency task force on organized retail crime.
- Policymakers must understand how changes in the system are leading to worse outcomes.

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