



February 2023

Spotlight on Crime in Colorado Springs

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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2023 Owens – Early Criminal Justice Fellows

George Brauchler served as the elected District Attorney for the 18th Judicial District, Colorado's most populous district, which includes Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln counties, from 2013-2021. As a state prosecutor, he handled the felony cases from the Columbine High School mass shooting case, the Aurora Theater (Batman) mass shooting case, and more recently, the STEM Academy school mass shooting case.

Mitch Morrissey served as the elected District Attorney for the 2nd Judicial District covering Denver, Colorado from 2005-2017. Mitch is internationally recognized for his expertise in DNA technology and applying that technology to solve crimes. He has trained law enforcement officers and prosecutors throughout the United States, the Middle East, Central America, and Canada. He currently runs a company that solves Cold Cases with DNA and Investigative Genetic Genealogy

2023 Local Elections

In 2023, Coloradans will have municipal elections in our most populated cities. To inform these debates CSI will produce reports on the most pressing issues facing Colorado cities: crime, housing, and homelessness for Fort Collins, Denver, Grand Junction, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Aurora.

About Common Sense Institute

Common Sense Institute is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's and Arizona's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions concerning the future of free enterprise in Colorado and aims to have an impact on the issues that matter most to Coloradans and Arizonans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans and Arizonans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI employs rigorous research techniques and dynamic modeling to evaluate the potential impact of these measures on the Colorado and Arizona economy and individual opportunity.

Teams & Fellows Statement

CSI is committed to independent, in-depth research that examines the impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans and Arizonans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI's commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of our researchers, economists, and fellows. At the core of CSI's mission is a belief in the power of the free enterprise system. Our work explores ideas that protect and promote jobs and the economy, and the CSI team and fellows take part in this pursuit with academic freedom. Our team's work is driven by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take positions.

Table of Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHORS	2
2023 Local Elections	2
About Common Sense Institute	2
Teams & Fellows Statement	2
Introduction and Key Findings	4
Key Findings	5
Crime in Colorado Springs	6
Crime in Colorado Springs Relative to Other Large U.S. Cities	11
Crime Rates in Colorado Springs Relative to Denver	12
Spending and Manpower in the Colorado Springs Police Department	13
Who Are the Victims of Crime in Colorado Springs?	15
Conclusion	16
Appendix	17

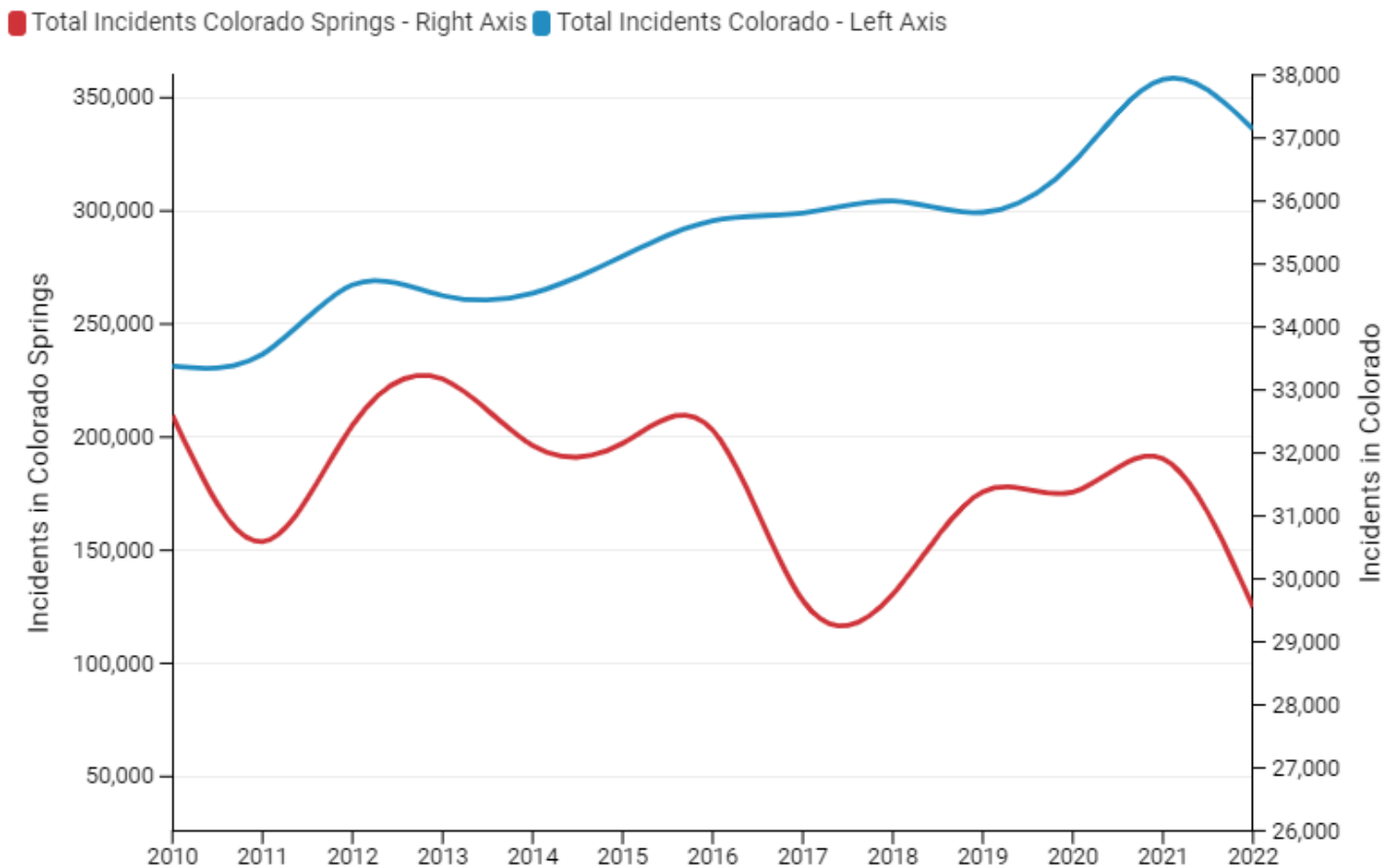
Introduction and Key Findings

Since 2019, crime in Colorado has skyrocketed and has become a major issue for policy makers to focus on across the state. Ahead of local municipal elections, CSI is highlighting important issues, including crime, that voters care about at the local level. This report analyzes the current state of crime in Colorado Springs through the lens of publicly available data on crime levels and rates. Common Sense Institute (CSI) used data from the Colorado Crime Statistics website and from the Colorado Springs Police Department.ⁱ CSI also used data from the City of Colorado Springs Annual Budget and Resource Allocation Reports to analyze the police department budget and manpower.ⁱⁱ

The number of incidents of crime in Colorado Springs, represented by the blue line in **Figure 1**, has fallen by 9.3% since 2010. At the same time, the population has increased by 17.4%, thus lowering the city's total crime rate. This is in contrast to the 45% increase in incidents in the state overall, which is represented by the red line in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 – Number of Crime Incidents in Colorado Springs and Colorado

Total Incidents of Crime in Colorado Springs and Colorado



Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Key Findings

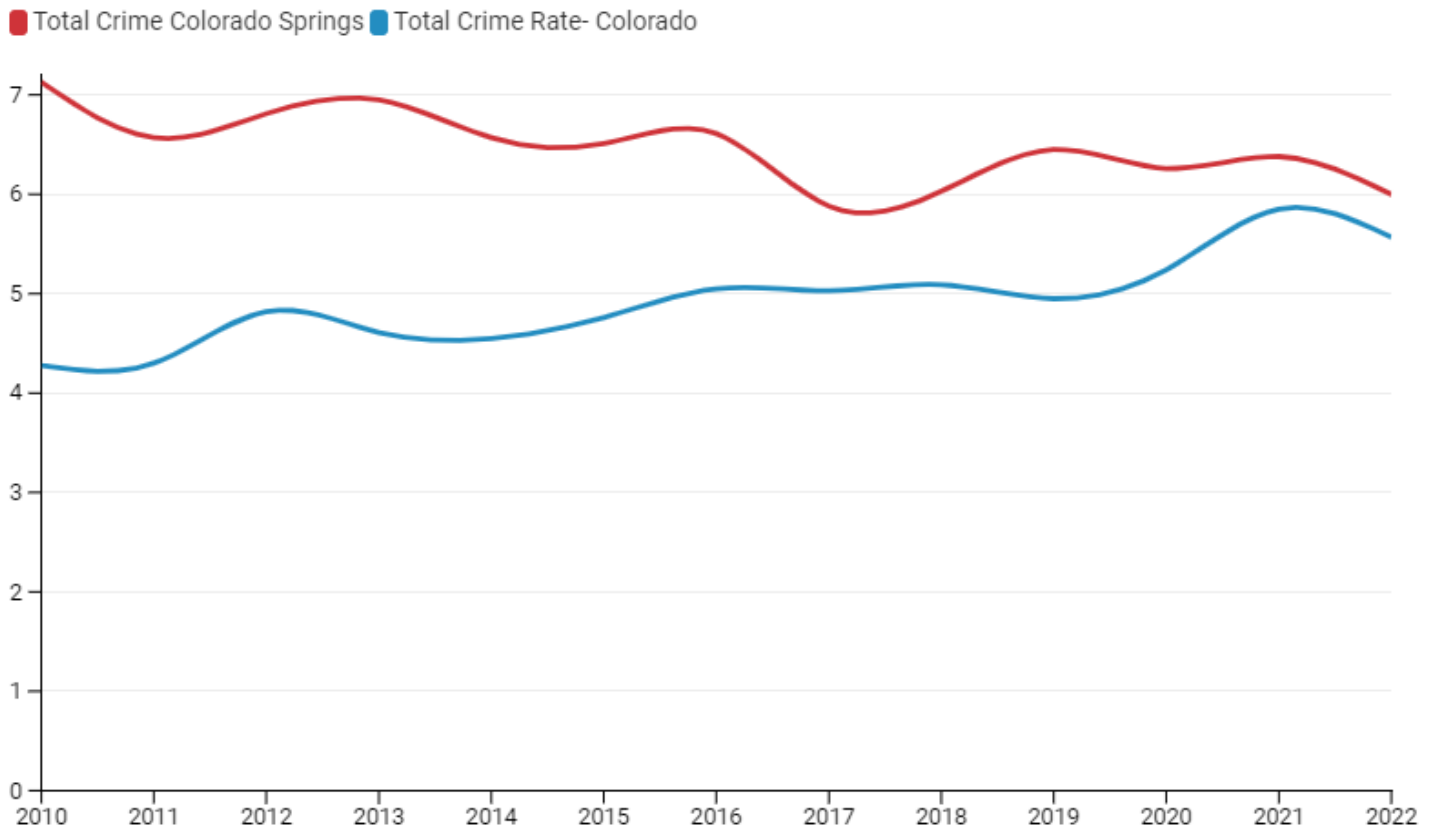
- Total crime incidents in Colorado Springs have fallen by 9.3% between 2010 and 2022. At the same time, total crime in Colorado has increased by 45.3%
- The average monthly crime rate in Colorado Springs has decreased by 15.9% since 2010, driven primarily by a 21.1% drop in the property crime rate and a 23.2% decrease in the rate of crimes against society.
- Nationwide, out of 188 cities of 100,000 or more people, Colorado Springs ranks 13th in arson and 16th in rape in 2022.
- Concurrent with the decrease in the crime rate, spending per resident by the Colorado Springs Police Department has increased by 72.9% since 2010.
- Annual spending in 2022 dollars, on all police functions, increased by 27.3% from \$125 million in 2010 to \$159 million in 2022. This is equivalent to \$322 per resident in 2022.
- Black residents are disproportionately victims of crime in Colorado Springs. Although comprising 5% of the population, they total 15% of crime victims.
- In comparison to Denver, Colorado Springs has a:
 - 33% lower total crime rate,
 - 34% lower rate of crimes against persons,
 - 33% lower rate of crimes against property, and
 - 35% lower rate of crimes against society.
- For specific categories of crime, Colorado Springs is:
 - 21% lower in non-consensual sexual assault,
 - 60% lower in robbery,
 - 64% lower in theft from motor vehicles,
 - 37% lower in aggravated assault,
 - 20% lower in murder,
 - 22% lower in burglary, and
 - 72% lower in auto theft than Denver.

Crime in Colorado Springs

The data in this section come from Colorado Crime Statistics. **Figure 2** shows the evolution of the average monthly crime rates in Colorado Springs and Colorado since 2010. The average monthly crime rate in Colorado Springs has fallen by 15.9% from 7.1 per 1,000 residents in 2010 to 6.0 in 2022. As of 2022, Colorado Springs' crime rate is 7.7% higher than Colorado's. In 2010, Colorado Springs' crime rate was 67% higher than Colorado's. The convergence of crime rates is due to both increased crime throughout the state and decreased crime in Colorado Springs.

Figure 2 – Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents in Colorado Springs and Colorado

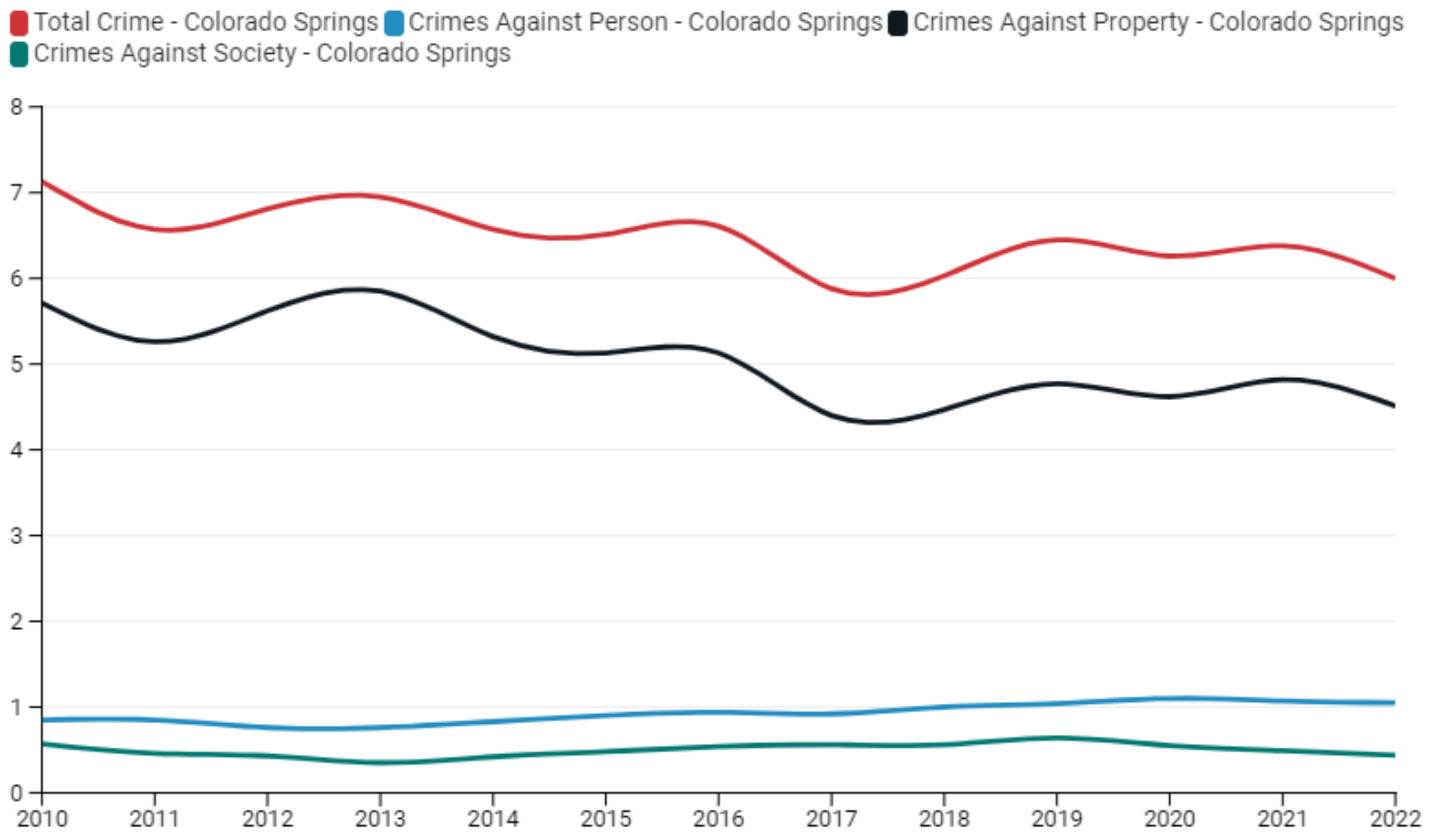
Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents- Colorado Springs vs. Colorado



Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Figure 3 – Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents in Colorado Springs by Major Crime Categories

Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents in Major Crime Categories - Colorado Springs



Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Table 1 shows the average monthly crime rates in 2014, 2018, and 2022, as well as the changes from 2014 to 2018 and from 2018 to 2022 by major crime categories. The total crime rate in Colorado Springs fell by 8.2% from 2014 to 2018 and 0.6% from 2018 to 2022. The rate of crimes against persons increased by 20.8% from 2014 through 2018 before rising by an additional 5.1% from 2018 to 2022. The rate of crimes against property increased by 0.9% from 2018 to 2022 after falling by 16.1% from 2014 to 2018. The rate of crimes against society decreased by 22.8% from 2018 to 2022 after increasing by 33.3% from 2014 to 2018.

Some notable changes in specific crime rates include those of sexual assault, which increased by 28.8% from 2014 to 2018 but fell by 37.1% from 2018 to 2022, robbery, which rose by 27.5% from 2014 to 2018 but declined by 34.5% from 2018 to 2022, aggravated assault, which increased by 29.4% from 2014 to 2018 and increased again by 34.5% from 2018 to 2022, and vehicle theft, which increased by 39.3% from 2014 to 2018 and an additional 5.3% from 2018 to 2022.

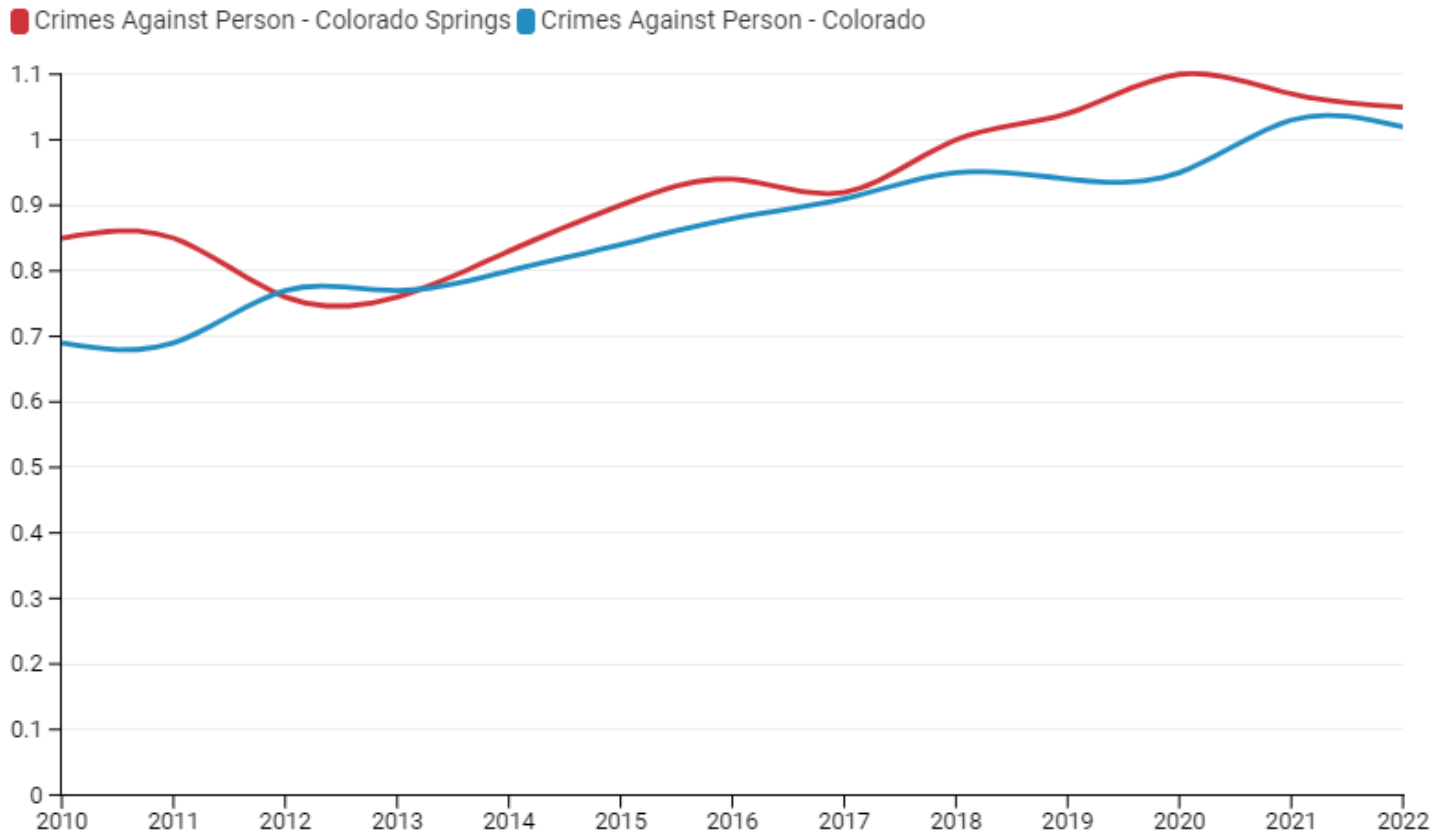
Table 1 – Colorado Springs Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents					
Average Monthly Crime Rate	Crime Rate			Percent Change	
	2014	2018	2022	2014-2018	2018-2022
Total Crime Rate Colorado	4.55	5.09	5.57	11.8%	9.5%
Total Crime Rate Colorado Springs	6.57	6.03	6.00	-8.2%	-0.6%
Crimes against Persons	0.83	1.00	1.05	20.8%	5.1%
Crimes against Property	5.32	4.47	4.51	-16.1%	0.9%
Crimes against Society	0.42	0.56	0.44	33.3%	-22.8%
Sexual Assault	0.14	0.18	0.11	28.8%	-37.1%
Robbery	0.08	0.10	0.06	27.5%	-34.5%
Aggravated Assault	0.22	0.29	0.39	29.4%	34.5%
Shoplifting	0.65	0.46	0.29	-29.4%	-36.1%
Burglary	0.52	0.49	0.45	-4.5%	-8.3%
Weapon Law Violations	0.11	0.12	0.15	16.5%	18.9%
Theft from Motor Vehicles	0.65	0.66	0.63	3.0%	-4.5%
Auto Theft	0.33	0.46	0.48	39.3%	5.3%

Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Figure 4 shows the evolution of the average monthly rate of crime against persons in Colorado Springs relative to Colorado. Colorado Springs’ average monthly rate of crime against persons has generally been higher than Colorado’s, though the difference narrowed in 2021 and 2022. Since the pandemic (2020), the rate has fallen.

Figure 4 – Crimes Against Persons: Average Monthly Crime Rates per 1,000 Residents

Average Monthly Crime Against Person Rate per 1,000 Residents - Colorado Springs vs. Colorado

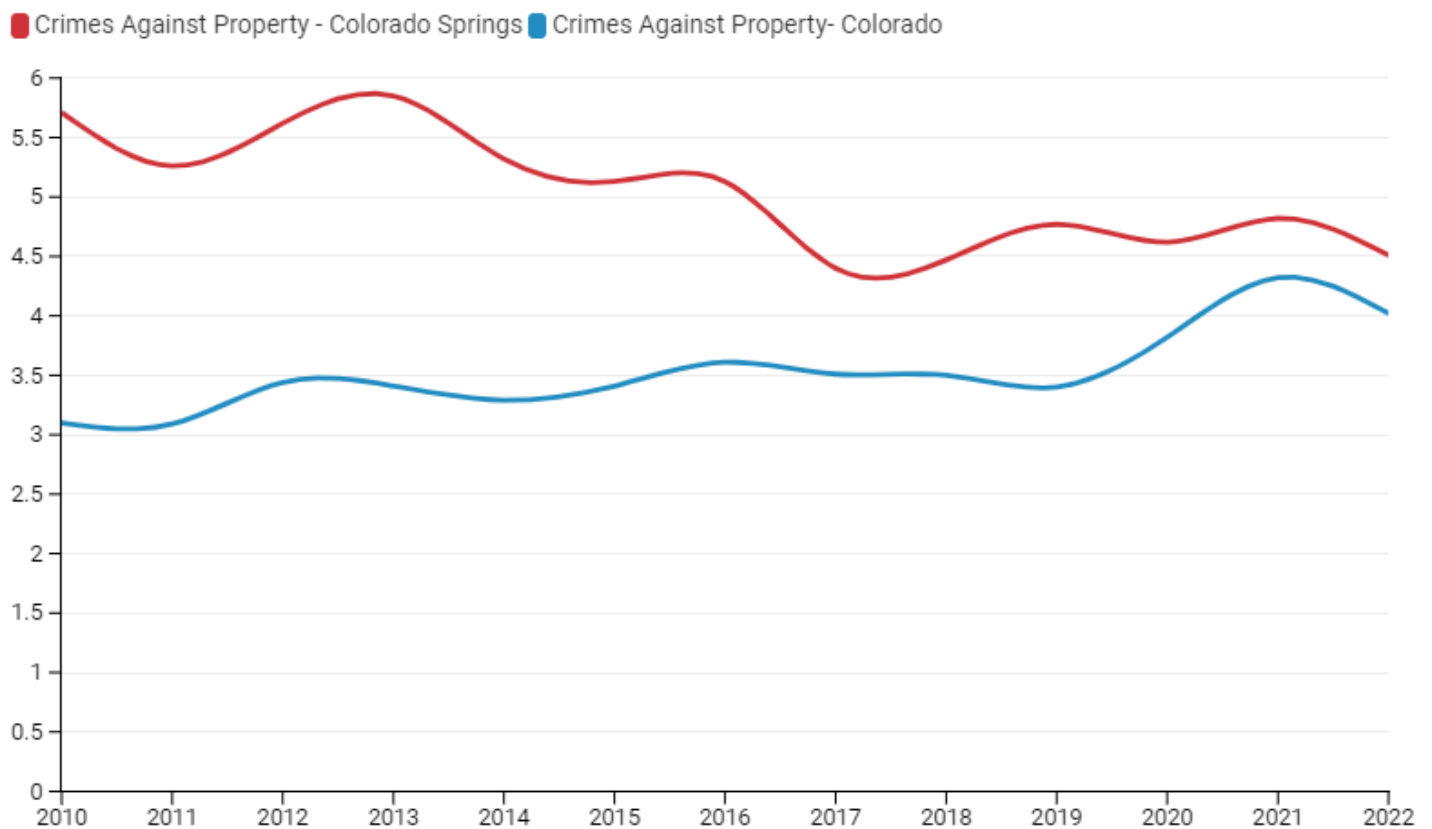


Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Figure 5 shows the evolution of the average monthly rate of crime against property relative to Colorado. Colorado Springs' average monthly rate of crime against property has been consistently higher than Colorado's but is trending downward while Colorado's continues upwards.

Figure 5 – Crimes Against Property: Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 in Colorado Springs and Colorado

Average Monthly Crime Rate Against Property per 1,000 Residents - Colorado Springs vs. Colorado

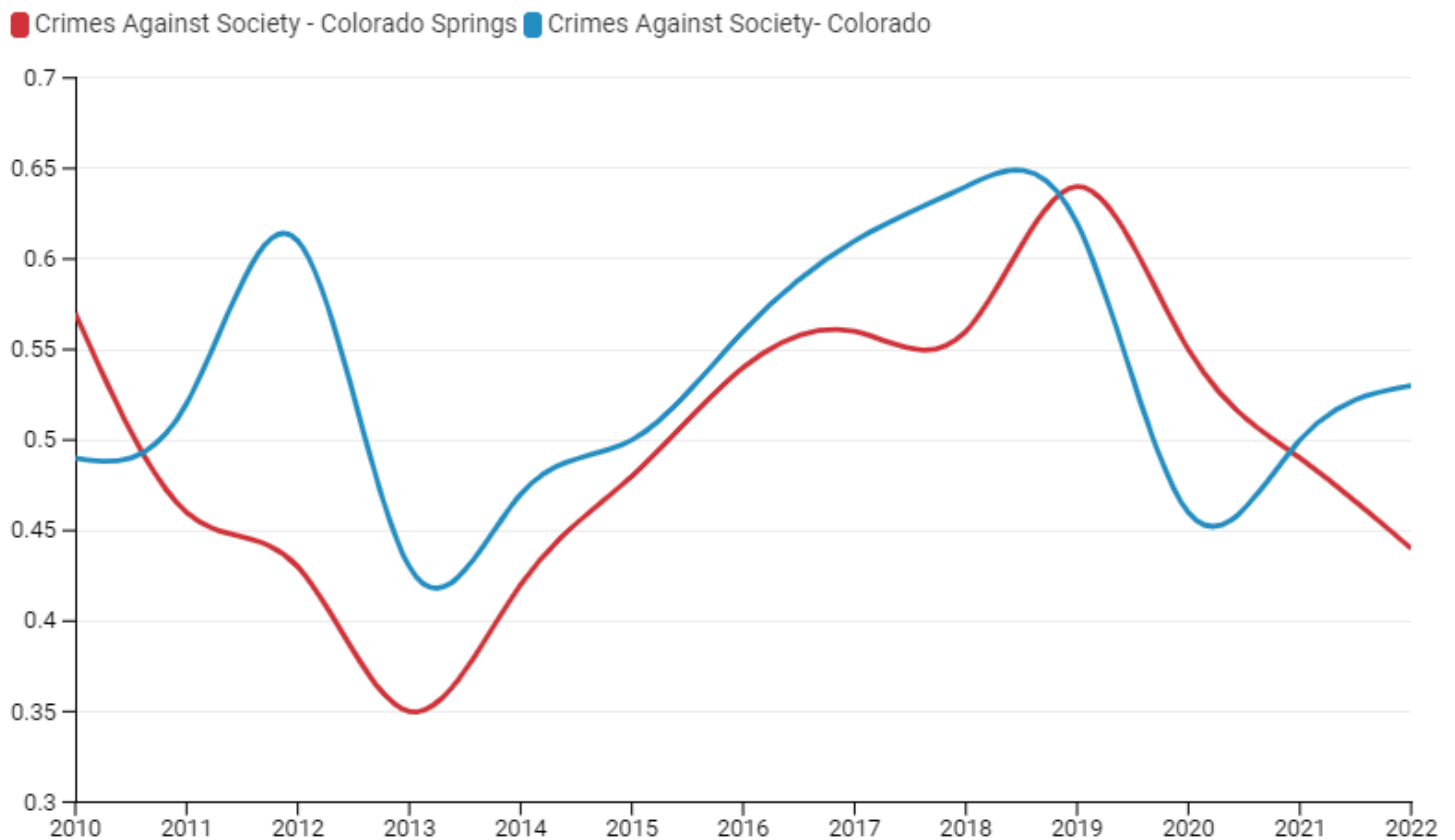


Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Figure 6 shows Colorado Springs’ average monthly rate of crime against society relative to Colorado. Crime against society is a catch-all category that includes drug crime, gambling, and prostitution, among others. Colorado Springs’ average monthly rate of crime against society appears to be positively correlated with Colorado’s, though not in all years.

Figure 6 – Crimes Against Society: Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 in Colorado Springs and Colorado

Average Monthly Crime Rate Against Society per 1,000 Residents - Colorado Springs vs. Colorado



Source: Colorado Crime Statistics

Crime in Colorado Springs Relative to Other Large U.S. Cities

Using the latest report from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) for the third quarter of 2022, CSI converted the number of crime incidents to crime rates based on the populations of each reporting city. 168 cities reported to the UCR in Q3 2021 and 188 reported in Q3 2022. **Table 2** shows Colorado Springs’ rankings across several major crime categories. Areas of largest concern are highlighted. Colorado Springs ranks 13th in arson and 16th in rape in 2022 out of 188 cities with populations of 100,000 or more.

Colorado Springs has much lower crime rates in all categories of crime than Denver (with the exception of arson, in which it ranks 13th and Denver ranks 36th). Colorado Springs is one of six Colorado cities of 100,000 or more people, that did not have a category of crime ranked in the top ten nationally.

Table 2 – 2021 and 2022 FBI 3rd Quarter Colorado Springs Crime Rates Ranked among Reporting Citiesⁱⁱⁱ

	Year	Violent Crime	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Property Crime	Burglary	Larceny/Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft	Arson
Arvada	2021	130	122	127	100	128	42	69	41	25	79
	2022	133	156	123	126	130	61	85	65	36	59
Aurora	2021	29	64	9	21	31	29	47	66	4	15
	2022	17	56	30	12	17	24	54	68	4	29
Centennial	2021	140	115	153	139	132	104	104	115	62	58
	2022	169	168	179	179	157	131	122	149	75	112
Colorado Springs	2021	59	84	31	82	59	51	43	50	47	26
	2022	62	72	16	94	57	51	34	53	50	13
Denver	2021	34	38	20	28	36	6	11	11	2	42
	2022	25	46	10	29	29	6	22	13	3	36
Fort Collins	2021	115	137	74	145	112	111	133	102	121	78
	2022	142	168	133	172	132	120	148	110	138	77
Greeley	2021	74	114	98	78	69	75	82	78	60	115
	2022	54	65	51	69	50	41	74	62	15	18
Lakewood	2021	52	108	49	27	63	8	20	10	8	38
	2022	53	102	60	32	58	14	30	22	8	21
Pueblo	2021	13	25	1	20	18	7	3	13	7	5
	2022	5	17	2	6	8	4	3	8	5	5
Thornton	2021	117	118	17	118	136	46	88	49	23	80
	2022	140	142	24	111	161	49	123	50	23	51
Westminster	2021	100	35	89	81	100	17	64	21	6	34
	2022	128	153	102	92	134	27	78	36	9	35

Quarterly Uniform Crime Report data for the nation are derived from National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) reports voluntarily submitted to the FBI. The FBI Quarterly Uniform Crime Report data release for **Quarter 3, January – September 2022**, was made available on **November 28, 2022**. This report is based on data received from **12,104** of **18,964** law enforcement agencies in the country. The Quarter 3 release presents the number of violent and property crime offenses known to law enforcement for agencies with resident populations of 100,000 or more that also provided data from the previous year.

Crime Rates in Colorado Springs Relative to Denver

Table 3 is a comparison of average monthly crime rates in major crime categories in Colorado Springs and Denver. Colorado Springs has a 33.5%-lower total crime rate, a 34%-lower rate of crime against persons, a 33.2%-lower rate of crime against property, and a 35.3%-lower rate of crime against society. Colorado Springs also has a 21.4% lower rate of sexual assault, a 60%-lower rate of robbery, a 37.1%-lower rate of aggravated assault, a 22.4%-lower rate of burglary, a 63.5%-lower rate of theft from motor vehicles, and a 72.1%-lower rate of auto theft. Orange highlights indicate which of each pair of rates/changes is worse.

Table 3 – Colorado Springs Average Monthly Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents Compared to Denver

Average Monthly Crime Rate	Crime Rate in 2022			Percent Change 2018 – 2022	
	Colorado Springs	Denver	% Difference Colorado Springs Relative to Denver	Colorado Springs	Denver
Total Crime Rate	6.00	9.02	-33.5%	-15.9%	43.5%
Crimes against Person	1.05	1.59	-34.0%	23.7%	22.3%
Crimes against Property	4.51	6.75	-33.2%	-21.1%	59.5%
Crimes against Society	0.44	0.68	-35.3%	-23.2%	-10.0%
Non-consensual Sexual Assault	0.11	0.14	-21.4%	-37.1%	-5.2%
Murder	0.008	0.01	20.0%	28.6%	33.3%
Robbery	0.06	0.15	-60.0%	-34.5%	4.1%
Aggravated Assault	0.39	0.62	-37.1%	34.5%	60.2%
Arson	0.04	0.02	100.0%	50.0%	62.5%
Burglary	0.45	0.58	-22.4%	-8.3%	24.0%
Weapon Law Violations	0.15	0.29	-48.3%	18.9%	57.4%
Theft from Motor Vehicles	0.63	0.96	-63.5%	-4.5%	176%
Auto Theft	0.48	1.72	-72.1%	5.3%	43.5%

Source: Colorado Crime Stats

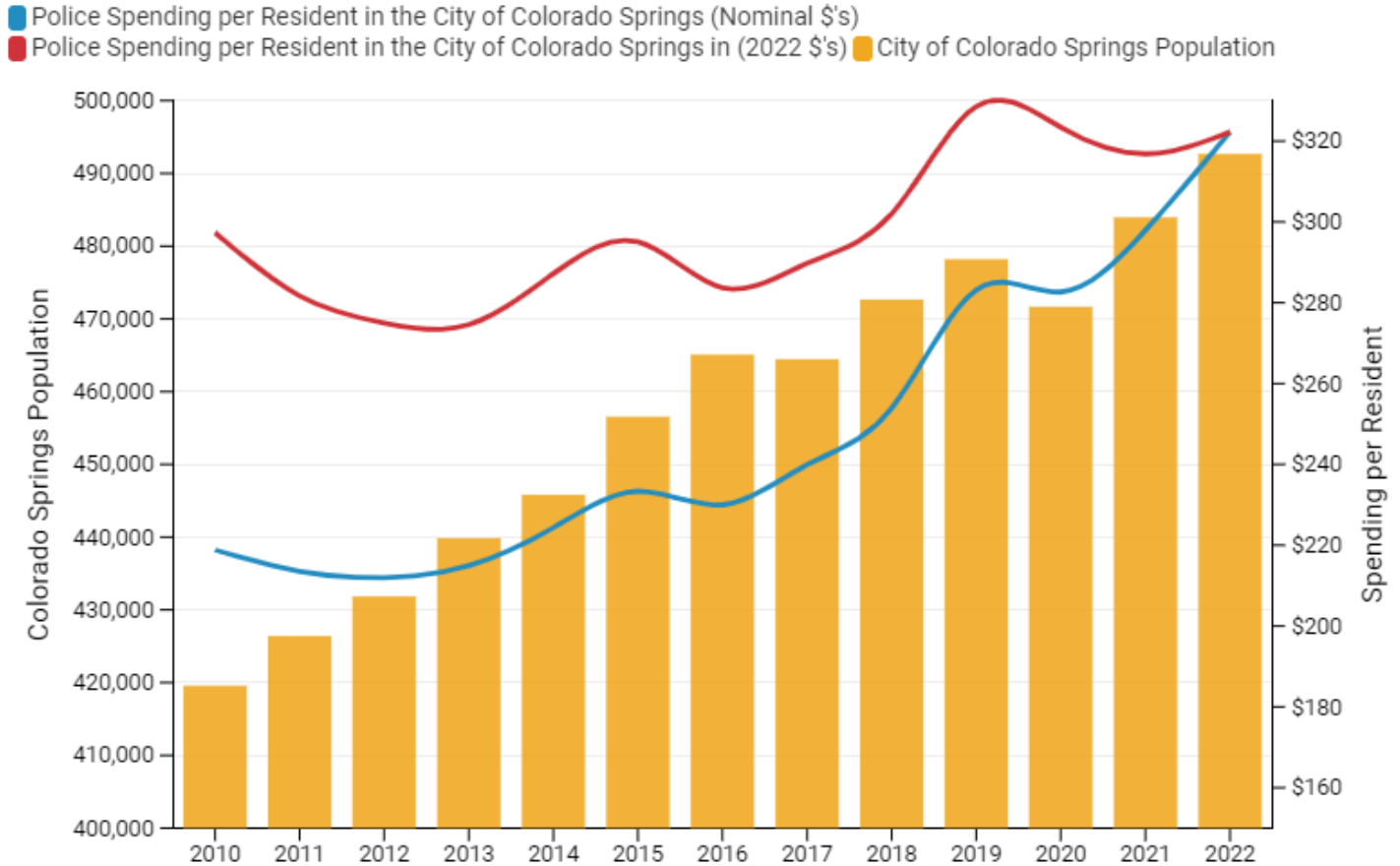
Spending and Manpower in the Colorado Springs Police Department

The crime rate in Colorado Springs has been declining (see **Figure 2**). The Colorado Springs Police Department has had a significant role in crime reduction, so CSI evaluated its budget and workforce data to determine how spending on police protection per resident and the number of police officers per resident have changed over time. **Figure 7** shows the spending by the Colorado Springs Police Department per resident in nominal and 2022 dollars and the total city population. Nominal spending per resident has increased by 47.3% from \$218.82 in 2010 to \$322.22 in 2022. In 2022 dollars, spending per resident has increased by 8.4% from \$297.32 in 2010 to \$322.22 in 2022.

Prior to 2022, spending per resident was increasing rapidly before falling in 2020. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, spending was \$282.63 in nominal terms and \$323.4 in 2000 dollars. Spending declined further in 2021 before rebounding in 2022.

Figure 7 – Spending by the Colorado Springs Police Department per Resident

Spending by the Colorado Springs Police Department per Resident

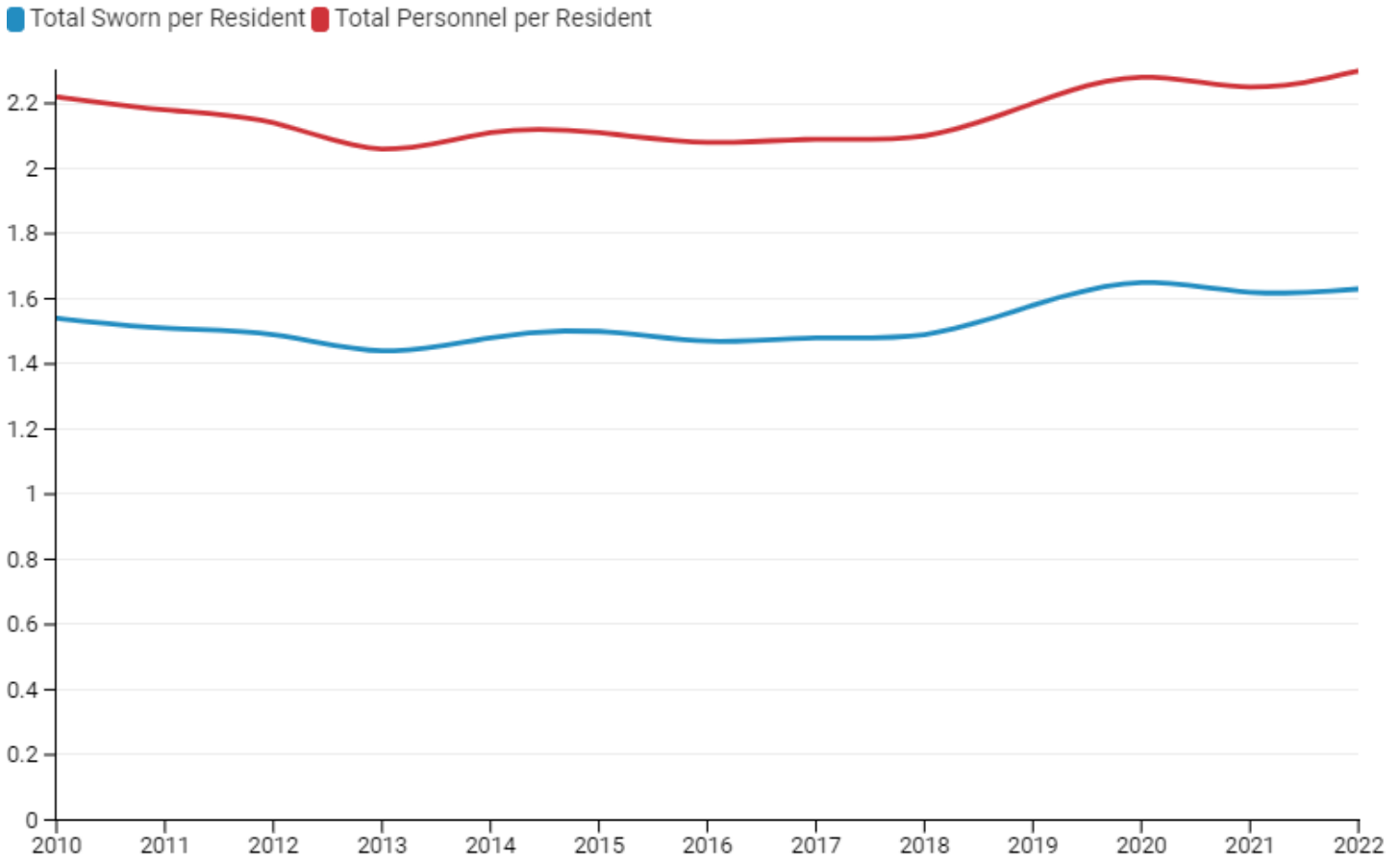


Source: City of Colorado Springs

Figure 8 shows the total personnel and the number of sworn officers in the Colorado Springs Police Department per 1,000 residents from 2010 through 2022. Sworn personnel includes law enforcement officers who have taken an oath to protect the Constitution of the United States, their state, and the laws of their agencies’ jurisdictions. Sworn officers also have the responsibility to ensure the safety and quality of life of the communities they serve. Total personnel per 1,000 residents have increased by 3.6% from 2.22 to 2.3. Sworn personnel per 1,000 residents has increased by 5.84% from 1.54 to 1.63. The share of sworn personnel among total personnel has risen by 2.9% from 69% in 2010 to 71% in 2022, indicating that the police department has not shifted funding from law enforcement duties to other non-law enforcement duties.

Figure 8 – Number of Sworn and Total Positions per Resident in the Colorado Springs Police Department

Colorado Springs Police Department - Personnel per 1,000 Residents



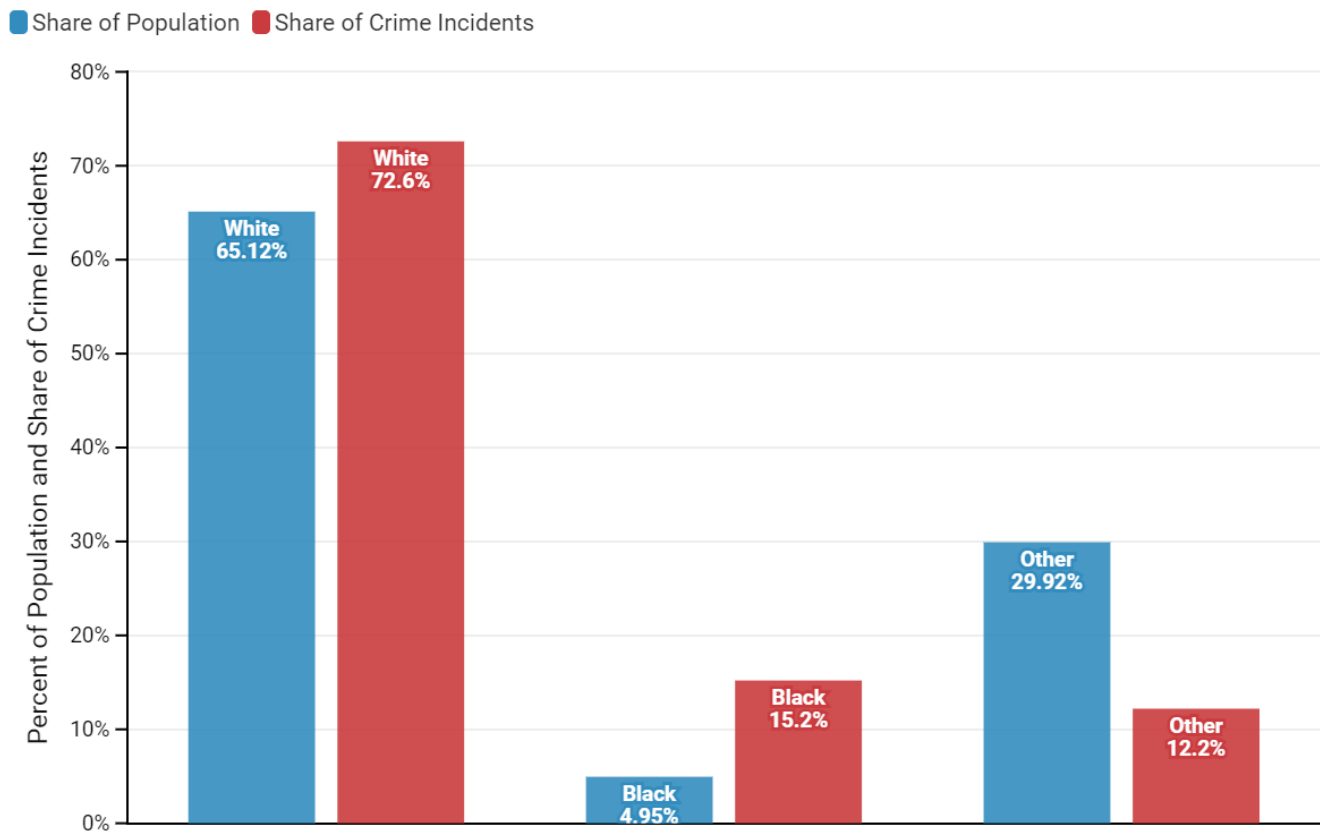
Source: City of Colorado Springs

Who Are the Victims of Crime in Colorado Springs?

As shown in **Figure 9**, Black people in Colorado Springs are victimized by crime at a high rate relative to their share of the population. White people constitute 65% of the population and are victims of 73% of crimes. Black people constitute 5% of the population but are victims of 15% of crimes.

Figure 9 – Crime Victims as a Percent of Population by Race

Share of Total Colorado Springs Population and Share of Crime Incident Victims by Race in 2022



Conclusion

The information in this report is intended to help voters and elected officials better understand the key areas of concern, so as to better focus policy and resource discussions. In contrast to Colorado, the crime rate in Colorado Springs has declined over the past 12 years. Further exploration of the contributing factors will be important to sustain this trend, and to inform other jurisdictions of policies and practices that have contributed to this decline.

Appendix

Table A1 – Crime Rates in the City of Colorado Springs

Category of Crime	2014	2018	2022	Change 2014-2018	Change 2018-2022
Crimes against Person	0.83	1.00	1.05	20.8%	5.1%
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	0.00	0.01	0.01	483.3%	14.3%
Negligent Manslaughter	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Justifiable Homicide					
Kidnapping/Abduction	0.04	0.06	0.07	40.4%	21.2%
Rape	0.06	0.08	0.05	23.0%	-38.5%
Sodomy	0.01	0.01	0.01	37.5%	18.2%
Sexual Assault with an Object	0.00	0.02	0.02	941.7%	-28.0%
Fondling	0.06	0.07	0.04	5.3%	-41.3%
Incest	0.00	0.00	0.00	68.8%	-
Statutory Rape	0.00	0.00	0.00		100.0%
Aggravated Assault	0.22	0.29	0.39	29.4%	34.5%
Simple Assault	0.34	0.42	0.39	21.9%	-5.8%
Intimidation	0.08	0.05	0.08	-34.4%	50.8%
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	0.00	0.01	0.00	200.0%	-77.8%
Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude		0.00	0.00		
Crimes against Property	5.32	4.47	4.51	-16.1%	0.9%
Arson	0.02	0.02	0.04	40.0%	50.0%
Bribery	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Burglary/Breaking & Entering	0.52	0.49	0.45	-4.5%	-8.3%
Counterfeiting/Forgery	0.11	0.10	0.05	-9.2%	-54.2%
Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property	1.47	0.62	0.89	-57.8%	44.5%
Embezzlement	0.00	0.01	0.00		-57.1%
Extortion/Blackmail	0.01	0.01	0.02	25.0%	110.8%
False Pretenses/Swindle/Confidence Game	0.14	0.11	0.05	-20.7%	-54.5%
Credit Card/Automated Teller Machine Fraud	0.02	0.12	0.11	711.1%	-13.0%
Impersonation	0.31	0.05	0.02	-83.2%	-59.7%
Welfare Fraud					
Wire Fraud	0.01				
Identity Theft	0.00	0.28	0.31	11200.0%	10.3%
Hacking/Computer Invasion		0.01	0.01		-27.3%
Robbery	0.08	0.10	0.06	27.5%	-34.5%
Pocket-picking	0.00	0.01	0.00	300.0%	-78.6%
Purse-snatching	0.00	0.00	0.00		50.0%
Shoplifting	0.65	0.46	0.29	-29.4%	-36.1%
Theft from Building	0.21	0.21	0.18	1.6%	-16.0%
Theft from Coin Operated Machine or Device	0.03	0.02	0.02	-39.5%	-17.4%
Theft from Motor Vehicle	0.65	0.66	0.63	3.0%	-4.5%

Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts/Accessories	0.14	0.25	0.35	74.6%	40.1%
All Other Larceny	0.63	0.44	0.53	-30.3%	20.0%
Motor Vehicle Theft	0.33	0.46	0.48	39.3%	5.3%
Stolen Property Offenses	0.02	0.04	0.02	110.0%	-47.6%
Crimes against Society	0.42	0.56	0.44	33.3%	-22.8%
Drug/Narcotic Violations	0.20	0.26	0.16	30.5%	-37.5%
Drug Equipment Violations	0.09	0.14	0.10	56.9%	-31.0%
Betting/Wagering					
Operating/Promoting/Assisting Gambling					
Gambling Equipment Violations					
Sports Tampering					
Pornography/Obscene Material	0.01	0.03	0.02	126.7%	-38.2%
Prostitution	0.01	0.00	0.00	-82.9%	-
Assisting or Promoting Prostitution	0.00	0.00	0.01	50.0%	100.0%
Purchasing Prostitution					
Weapon Law Violations	0.11	0.12	0.15	16.5%	18.9%
Animal Cruelty		0.00	0.00		66.7%
Total	6.57	6.03	6.00	-8.2%	-0.6%

ⁱ [Colorado Crime Statistics \(state.co.us\)](https://colorado.gov/government/agencies/crime-prevention-and-control/colorado-crime-statistics)

ⁱⁱ <https://coloradosprings.gov>