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# COLORADO PUBLIC SAFETY COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

**AUTHORS:** STEVEN L. BYERS, PH.D., DJ SUMMERS



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Steven L. Byers, Ph.D.** is the Common Sense Institute Chief Economist.



**DJ Summers** is the Common Sense Institute's Director of Policy and Research.

## ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

**Common Sense Institute** is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions concerning the future of free enterprise and aims to have an impact on the issues that matter most to Coloradans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans 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 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 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 informed by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect the institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take positions.

## INTRODUCTION

Colorado's latest Public Safety Competitiveness Index report offers a mixed bag. Colorado's Public Safety Competitiveness Index has decreased 2.2% from 2011 to 2023. Coincidentally, Colorado's relative ranking decreased seven spots from 24th to 31st among states and Washington, D.C. Competitiveness with other states has improved in some metrics but has not fully recovered. It has improved in other metrics simply because other states have worsened more.

Colorado's public safety competitiveness dropped slightly in 2023, even though crime rates have improved since 2022. In 2023, the state ranks 31st out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for public safety competitiveness. Colorado ranks one of the highest in the nation for its spending per capita on public safety (7th) but has one of the lowest levels of police per capita.

Other metrics cloak certain Colorado problems. Its drug overdose competitiveness is 25th in the nation and its homelessness per capita competitiveness is 38th. Both have improved since 2011 despite there being more drug overdoses per capita and more homeless persons. Drug overdose rates were worse elsewhere, and Colorado added so many people in the 2010s that the homelessness rate decreased. Neither overdoses nor the unhoused populations have themselves improved. Colorado's crime rate has improved, but only relative to already elevated levels.

Colorado's crime decreased 7.8% from 2021 to 2023. These declines are a drop in the bucket. The crime rate has skyrocketed 25.8% from 2011 to 2023. The rate of crimes against persons is up 2% from 2012 to 2023 and crimes against society is up 15.8% over the same period. Though motor vehicle thefts have dropped 8.2% in the last two years, these thefts are still up 225.3% since 2011.

Public safety is crucial to a state's ability to attract newcomers, keep existing residents, bring in new businesses, and expand those already in the state. Colorado already has seen migration declining and will have economic consequences if corrective actions are not pursued. Colorado leaders should strive to improve absolute outcomes in the public safety index metric, not rest on comparative success.

*Colorado's public safety competitiveness dropped slightly in 2023, even though crime rates have improved since 2022.*

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Colorado's Public Safety Competitiveness Index has decreased 2.2% from 2011 to 2023. Coincidentally, Colorado's relative ranking decreased seven spots from 24th to 31st among states and Washington, D.C.**
- **Colorado's Public Safety Competitiveness Index declined from 74 in 2011 to 73 in 2023 – 31st nationally.** This is driven primarily by a large increase in crime relative to other states and a decline in police per capita.
- **Colorado's Public Safety Spending Per Capita Competitiveness Index improved from 86 in 2011 to 93 in 2023 – 7th best nationally.**
- **Colorado's Drug Overdose Deaths per Capita Competitiveness Index improved from 71 in 2011 to 75 in 2023 – 25th best nationally.**
- **Colorado's Police per Capita Competitiveness Index declined from 77 in 2011 to 70 in 2023.**
- **Colorado's Crime Rate Competitiveness Index declined from 80 in 2011 to 63 in 2023 – 37th nationally.**
- **Colorado's Homelessness Per Capita Competitiveness Index increased from 57 in 2011 to 62 in 2023 – 38th nationally.**
- **The crime rate for all offense types has risen 25.8% from 2011 to 2023.**
- **The rate for crimes against person has risen 48.8% from 2011 to 2023.**
- **The crime rate for crimes against property has risen 22.9% from 2011 to 2023.**
- **The crime rate for crimes against society has risen 12.8% from 2011 to 2023.**
- **Violent crime has risen 52.7% from 2011 to 2023.**

CSI issues a Free Enterprise Report annually. The report assesses the state's competitiveness relative to forty-nine other states and the District of Columbia and provides data and analysis on eight policy areas: education, energy, healthcare, housing, infrastructure, public safety, state budget, and taxes and fees. This report is intended to provide additional details on the state budget competitiveness not covered in the Free Enterprise Report.

The competitiveness indices should be interpreted as follows: an increase (decrease) in an index indicates increased (decreased) competitiveness relative to the other forty-nine states and District of Columbia. Colorado's individual performance may improve, for example, its crime rate may decrease, however, other states may have seen greater decreases, and this will cause Colorado's competitiveness in the crime rate to decline.

# STATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

CSI produces a State Public Safety Competitiveness Index for all 50 states and the District of Columbia consisting of five metrics that capture distinct aspects of public safety: public safety spending per capita, drug overdose deaths, police per capita, the crime rate, and homelessness. Each metric is ranked relative to all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Then the five ranked metrics are equally weighted and summed. This value is ranked again to produce an aggregate measure of public safety as shown in **Figure 1**. Colorado's Public Safety Competitiveness Index was 74 in 2011, then declined to 73 in 2023.

An increase in the Public Safety Competitiveness Index is a positive qualitative change – i.e., the state is more competitive as the index approaches one hundred. Colorado's Public Safety Competitiveness Index shows Colorado's relative ranking decreased seven spots from 24th to 31st among states and Washington, D.C. from 2011 to 2023.

**FIGURE 1 – COLORADO PUBLIC SAFETY COMPETITIVENESS INDEX**



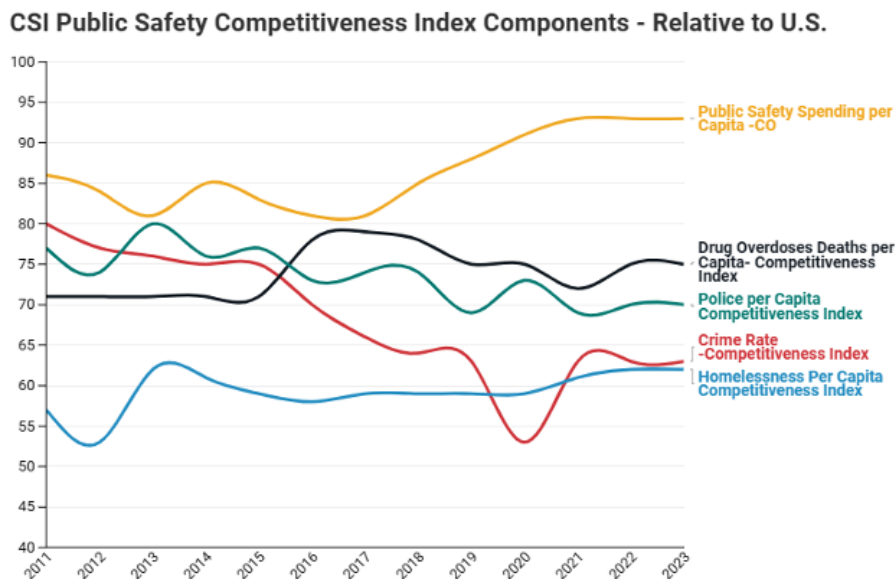
**Figure 2** shows the evolution of the five components included in the Public Safety Competitiveness Index.

The decline in the Public Safety Competitiveness Index was the result of declines in two of the component competitiveness indices and moderate increases in the other three. The Competitiveness Index for Police per Capita declined from 77 in 2011 to 70 in 2023. The Competitiveness Index for the Crime Rate decreased from 80 in 2011 to 63 in 2023.

Meanwhile, the Competitiveness Index for Public Safety Spending per Capita increased from 86 to 93. The Competitiveness Index for Drug Overdose Deaths increased from 71 in 2011 to 75 in 2023. The Competitiveness Index for Homelessness increased from 57 in 2011 to 62 in 2023.

The underlying cause of Colorado’s decline in public safety competitiveness was primarily the result of large decreases in the Police Per Capita Competitiveness Index and the Crime Rate Competitiveness Index relative to other states.

**FIGURE 2 – COLORADO PUBLIC SAFETY COMPETITIVENESS INDEX COMPONENTS**





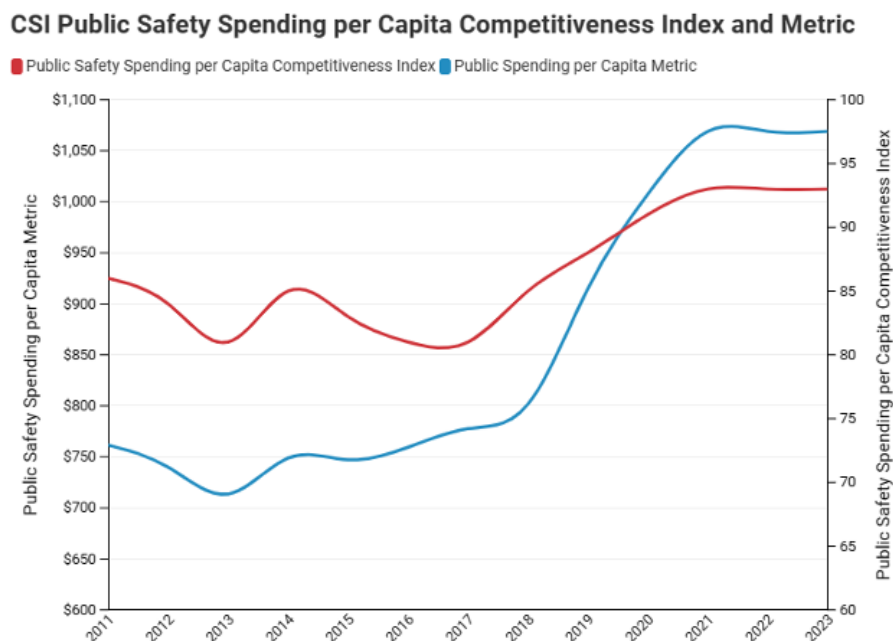
# PUBLIC SAFETY SPENDING PER CAPITA COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC

To determine if Colorado’s change in competitiveness for public safety spending per capita was the result of a change in its performance, the metric underlying the competitiveness index is shown together with the competitiveness index itself (see **Figure 3**).

The index rose from 86 in 2011 to 93 in 2023. This was the result of other states having smaller changes in the underlying metric relative to Colorado. Colorado’s public safety spending per capita rose more than it did in other states.

In 2011, Colorado’s public safety spending per capita was \$761.5. This increased to \$1,069 in 2023, a 40.4% increase.

**FIGURE 3 – PUBLIC SAFETY SPENDING PER CAPITA COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC**





# DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS PER CAPITA - COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC

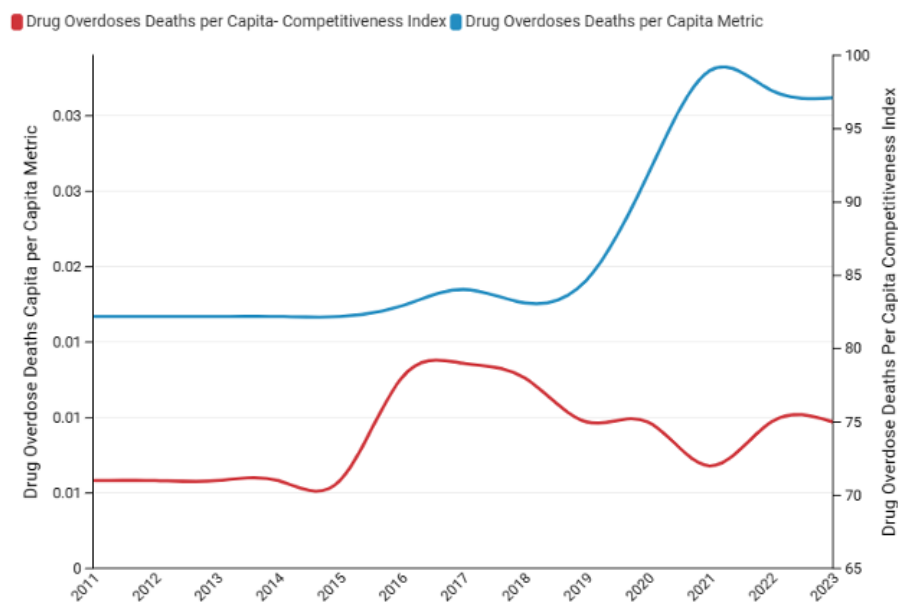
To determine if Colorado’s change in competitiveness in the drug overdose deaths per capita was the result of a change in its own performance or the metric underlying the competitiveness index.

**Figure 4** shows the index and the underlying metric.

The increase in the competitiveness index did not result from a decrease in the rate of overdoses per capita, which rose 86% from 2011 to 2023. Instead, the competitiveness increased because some other states’ overdose rates rose higher.

**FIGURE 4 - DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS PER CAPITA - COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC**

**CSI Drug Overdose Deaths Per Capita Competitiveness Index and Metric**



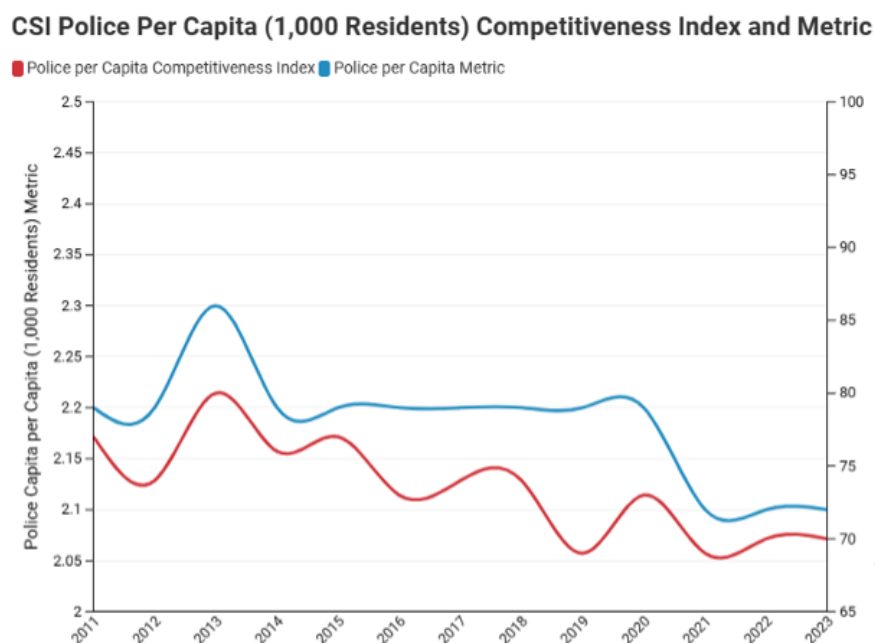
# POLICE PER CAPITA (1,000 RESIDENTS) COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC

To determine if Colorado’s change in competitiveness in the police per capita (1,000 residents) was the result of a change in its performance or larger or smaller changes in the metric in other states, the metric underlying the competitiveness index is shown in conjunction with the competitiveness index, see **Figure 5**.

The decline in the competitiveness index resulted from a decrease in the underlying metric, meaning there are fewer police per capita now.

In 2011, the metric was 2.2 police officers per 1,000 residents. That declined to 2.1 in 2023. As a result, the competitiveness index declined from 77 in 2011 to 70 in 2023.

**FIGURE 5 – POLICE PER CAPITA (1,000 RESIDENTS) COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC - COLORADO**



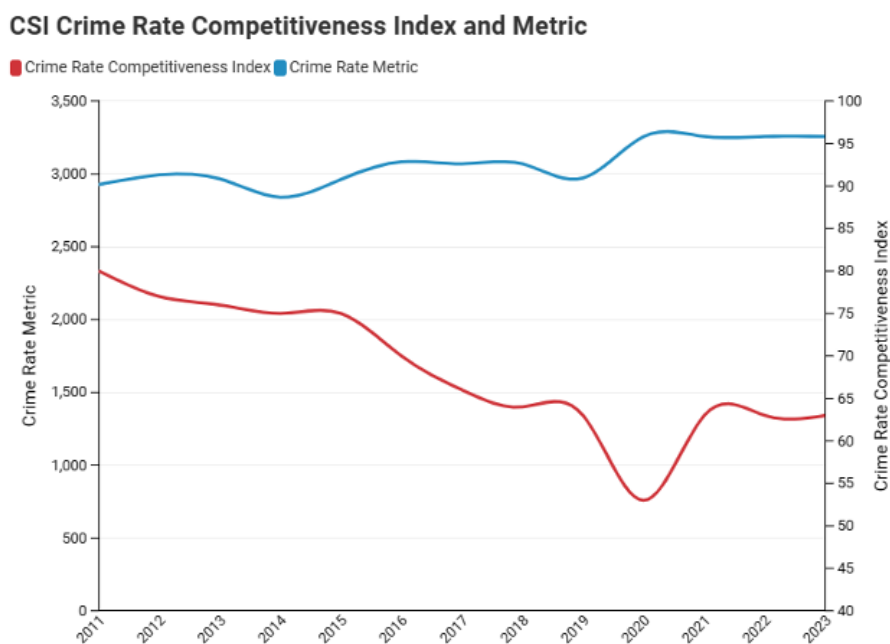
# CRIME RATE COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC

To determine if Colorado’s change in competitiveness in the crime rate was the result of a change in its own performance, the metric underlying the competitiveness index is shown with the competitiveness index (**Figure 6**).

Data from 2011 through 2020 was based on the FBI’s previous data classification. CSI assumes the crime rates for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023 are the same as 2020. The FBI is now using the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) so the next iteration of the Crime Rate Competitiveness Index will use NIBRS.

The decline in the competitiveness index resulted from a large increase in the underlying metric, the crime rate. In 2011, the metric was 2926.5 but rose 11.3% to 3526.9 in 2023. As a result, the competitiveness index declined from 80 in 2011 to 63 in 2023, in the bottom decile nationally.

**FIGURE 6 – CRIME RATE COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC - COLORADO**



## HOMELESSNESS PER CAPITA COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC

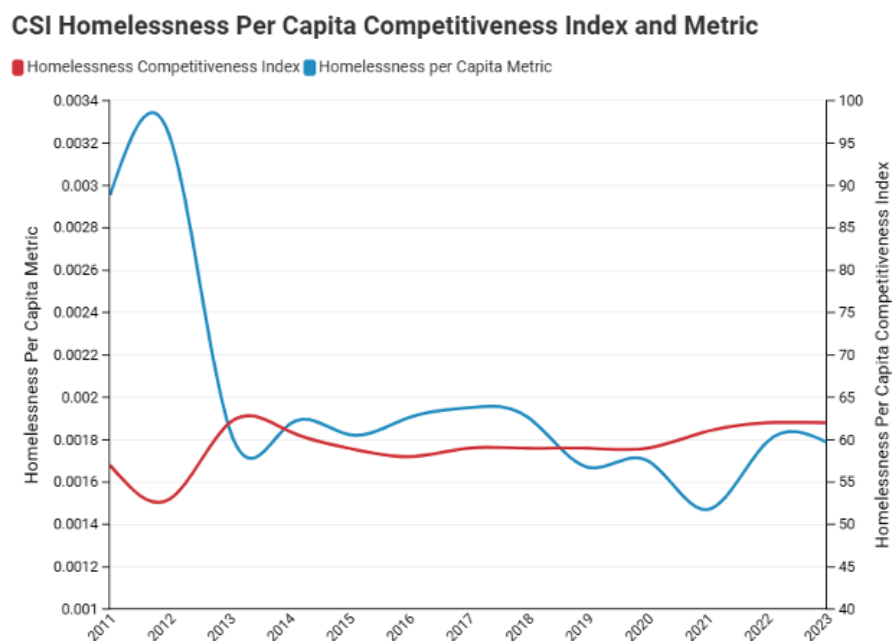
To determine if Colorado's change in competitiveness in the homelessness rate was the result of a change in its performance, the metric underlying the competitiveness index is shown with the competitiveness index (see **Figure 7**). Data for the metric comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) Point-In-Time (PIT) Count done annually in January every year.

The underlying metric declined 40% from 0.003 in 2011 to 0.0018 in 2023. **The decline in the metric was not due to a smaller homeless population but a substantial increase in the state population.**

Other states, meanwhile, saw their homelessness per capita rise.

Because of the decline in the metric for Colorado and large increases in the metric for other states, the Homelessness Per Capita Competitiveness Index rose from 57 in 2011 to 62 in 2023.

**FIGURE 7 – HOMELESSNESS PER CAPITA COMPETITIVENESS INDEX AND METRIC - COLORADO**



## CRIME RATES IN COLORADO 2011 TO 2023

Data shown in **Figures 8 through 11** comes from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation Crime Statistics. These data differ from the data used to calculate the competitiveness index. The two data sets are not comparable.

Shown in **Figure 8**, the crime rate for all offenses rose 25.8% from 2011 to 2023, with the largest increase coming from crimes against person (48.8%), followed by crimes against property (22.9%). The violent crime rate increased 52.7% with murder increasing 94.6% and aggravated assault rising 93.3%.

**FIGURE 8 - AVERAGE MONTHLY CRIME RATE FOR MAJOR CRIME CATEGORIES & VIOLENT CRIMES**

Average Monthly Crime Rate for Violent Crimes				
	2011	2023	Change 2011 to 2023	Change 2021 to 2023
All Offense Types	430.215	541.358	25.8%	-7.76%
Crimes Against Person	69.389	103.243	48.8%	0.19%
Crimes Against Property	309.225	379.925	22.9%	-12.37%
Crimes Against Society	51.599	58.193	12.8%	15.77%
Violent Crime	28.443	43.438	52.7%	-2.59%
Murder	0.230	0.448	94.6%	-12.40%
Aggravated Assault	14.872	29.194	96.3%	6.46%
Non-consensual Sex Offenses	8.133	8.343	2.6%	-20.04%
Robbery	5.209	5.456	4.7%	-12.39%

**Figure 9** shows the crime rate for the subcategories of crimes against person. Negligent manslaughter rose 246.8%, murder and nonnegligent manslaughter rose 94.6%, and kidnapping/abduction rose 51.3%.

**FIGURE 9 - AVERAGE CRIME RATE FOR CRIMES AGAINST PERSON**

Average Monthly Crime Rate for Crimes Against Person				
	2011	2023	Change 2011 to 2023	Change 2021 to 2023
Crimes Against Person	69.389	103.243	48.8%	0.19%
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	0.230	0.448	94.6%	-12.40%
Negligent Manslaughter	0.026	0.089	246.8%	-5.31%
Kidnapping/Abduction	2.260	3.418	51.3%	-7.11%
Rape	3.179	3.352	5.4%	-17.24%
Sodomy	0.813	0.908	11.7%	-21.43%
Sexual Assault with An Object	0.531	0.718	35.2%	-33.51%
Fondling	3.609	3.366	-6.7%	-18.85%
Incest	0.142	0.102	-28.2%	-17.57%
Statutory Rape	0.352	0.188	-46.7%	5.14%
Aggravated Assault	14.872	29.194	96.3%	6.46%
Simple Assault	39.662	51.781	30.6%	0.58%
Intimidation	3.720	9.558	156.9%	6.04%
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	0.020	0.104	420.8%	-7.59%
Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude	0.040	0.030	-25.0%	33.33%

**Figure 10** shows the crime rate for all subcategories of crimes against property. Motor vehicle theft stands out as it increased by 225.3% and was the highest in the nation in 2022 and 2023. Identity theft and hacking /computer invasion showed large increases, mainly the result of very low reporting in 2011.

FIGURE 10 - AVERAGE MONTHLY PROPERTY CRIME RATES

Average Monthly Crime Rate for Crimes Against Property				
	2011	2023	Change 2011 to 2023	Change 2021 to 2023
Crimes Against Property	309.225	379.925	22.9%	-12.37%
Arson	1.544	1.743	12.8%	-10.64%
Bribery	0.119	0.083	-30.1%	-49.75%
Burglary/Breaking & Entering	37.315	29.138	-21.9%	-13.28%
Counterfeiting/Forgery	6.137	4.455	-27.4%	-1.96%
Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property	72.203	77.848	7.8%	-4.13%
Embezzlement	0.782	0.415	-46.9%	-17.00%
Extortion/Blackmail	0.199	1.722	764.4%	31.93%
False Pretenses/Swindle/Confidence Game	8.720	10.638	22.0%	-11.63%
Credit Card/Automated Teller Machine Fraud	7.815	6.958	-11.0%	-1.81%
Impersonation	10.308	3.332	-67.7%	-49.79%
Welfare Fraud	0.020	0.044	122.2%	-70.86%
Wire Fraud	0.777	1.558	100.5%	32.37%
Identity Theft	0.046	12.053	26264.8%	-64.69%
Hacking/Computer Invasion	0.020	1.162	5708.3%	-6.25%
Robbery	5.209	5.456	4.7%	-12.39%
Pocket-picking	0.248	0.286	15.5%	-5.25%
Purse-snatching	0.400	0.337	-15.8%	-18.38%
Shoplifting	23.780	30.763	29.4%	19.83%
Theft From Building	18.723	11.763	-37.2%	-6.68%
Theft From Coin Operated Machine or Device	0.627	0.363	-42.2%	-19.44%
Theft From Motor Vehicle	41.579	40.653	-2.2%	-19.31%
Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts/Accessories	11.042	23.102	109.2%	-21.92%
All Other Larceny	42.805	55.283	29.2%	-1.62%
Motor Vehicle Theft	17.116	55.672	225.3%	-8.16%
Stolen Property Offenses	1.753	5.118	192.1%	-5.84%

**Figure 11** shows the crime rate for crimes against society. The overall crime rate for crimes against society increased 12.8% from 2011 to 2023, with most of the increase coming between 2021 and 2023.



**FIGURE 11 - AVERAGE MONTHLY CRIME RATE FOR CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY**

<b>Average Monthly Crime Rate for Crimes Against Society</b>				
	<b>2011</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Change 2011 to 2023</b>	<b>Change 2021 to 2023</b>
<b>Crimes Against Society</b>	51.599	58.193	12.8%	15.77%
<b>Drug/Narcotic Violations</b>	27.423	24.548	-10.5%	9.01%
<b>Drug Equipment Violations</b>	18.338	19.002	3.6%	51.35%
<b>Betting/Wagering</b>	0.070	0.033	-52.4%	33.33%
<b>Operating/Promoting/Assisting Gambling</b>	0.020	0.026	28.6%	28.57%
<b>Gambling Equipment Violations</b>	0.020	0.021	6.2%	6.25%
<b>Pornography/Obscene Material</b>	0.360	1.833	409.3%	16.03%
<b>Prostitution</b>	0.360	0.248	-31.3%	-10.54%
<b>Assisting or Promoting Prostitution</b>	0.198	0.103	-48.1%	-32.04%
<b>Purchasing Prostitution</b>	0.033	0.035	5.0%	-27.08%
<b>Weapon Law Violations</b>	4.856	11.105	128.7%	-6.62%
<b>Animal Cruelty</b>	0.020	1.301	6404.2%	3.17%



## BOTTOM LINE

Colorado's crime rate has improved in 2023, and the state shows strong spending on public safety. However, the long-term trend still shows a state grappling with an early 2020s crime increase, drug overdose rate increase, and homelessness increase. While this happening, the public safety spending has not gone to keeping the same police per capita as in the past.

Comparatively, Colorado's public safety competitiveness relative to other states is middling among the nation's states and the District of Columbia. To encourage the migration and longevity of residents and businesses, leaders should strive to put Colorado among the nation's best.