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QUALITY OF LIFE

Education

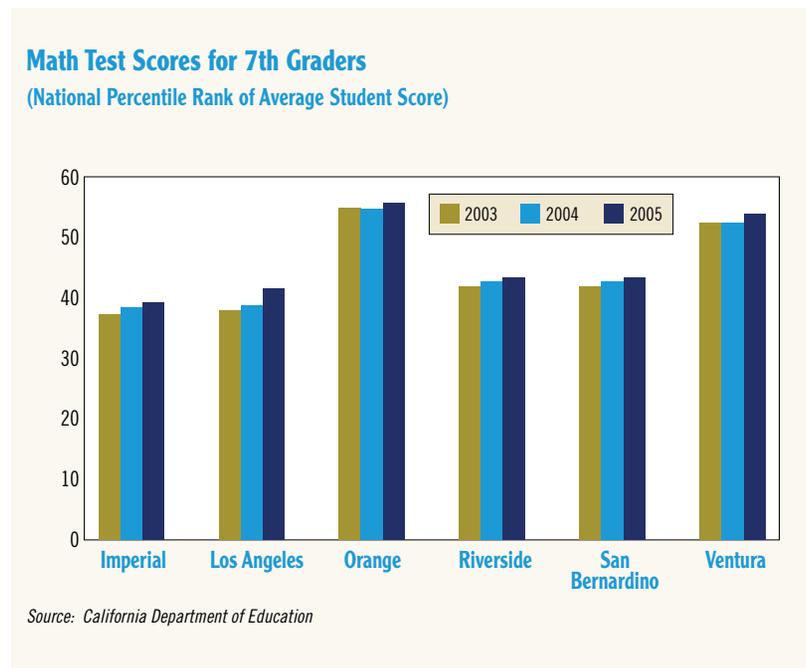
Why is this important?

Student performance is measured through three indicators: 1) test scores for 7th graders, 2) high school dropout rates, and 3) percent of high school graduates completing courses required for the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) entrance. High school dropouts are severely disadvantaged in competing for quality jobs. Performance on the last indicator reflects the potential level of success in pursuing college education by high school graduates.

How are we doing?

Between 2003 and 2005, there were slight improvements in math scores throughout the region relative to the nation. As to the reading test scores, only Los Angeles County achieved some slight improvement during the same period. *In 2005, the 7th graders in the region continued to perform below the national median in reading and math test scores except in Orange and Ventura counties (Figures 71 and 72).* Test scores are affected by several factors including student/teacher ratio on which California continues to have the second highest in the nation. It should be noted that California ranked 44th in math at both 4th and 8th grades. It ranked 48th in reading at 4th grade and 49th in reading at 8th grade.¹

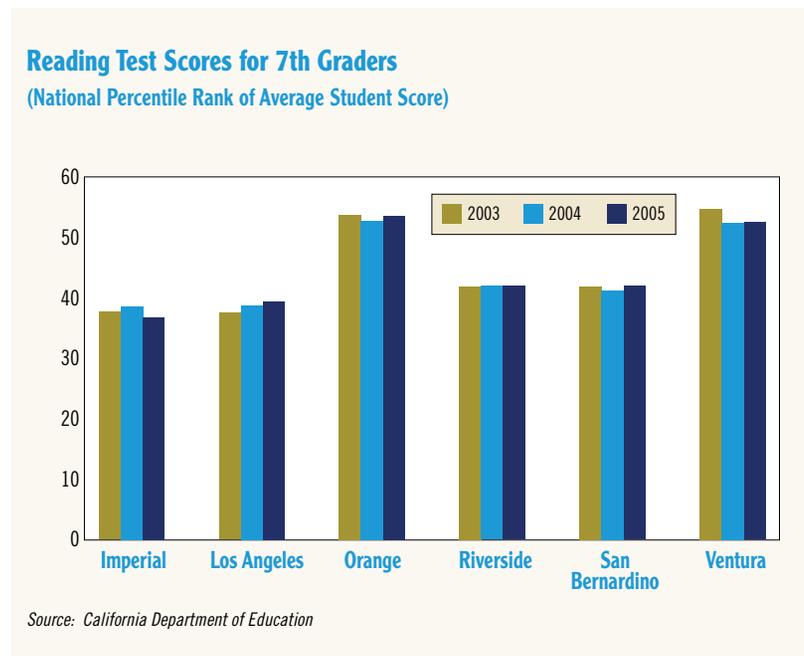
Figure 71



Between 2004 and 2005, dropout rates for high schools increased significantly in San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura counties (Figure 73). For San Bernardino County, its dropout rate increased continuously from about 12 percent during 2000-2001 to almost 20 percent during 2004-2005. While Los Angeles County's dropout rate decreased from 19 to 15 percent, San Bernardino County had the highest dropout rate in the region in 2005.

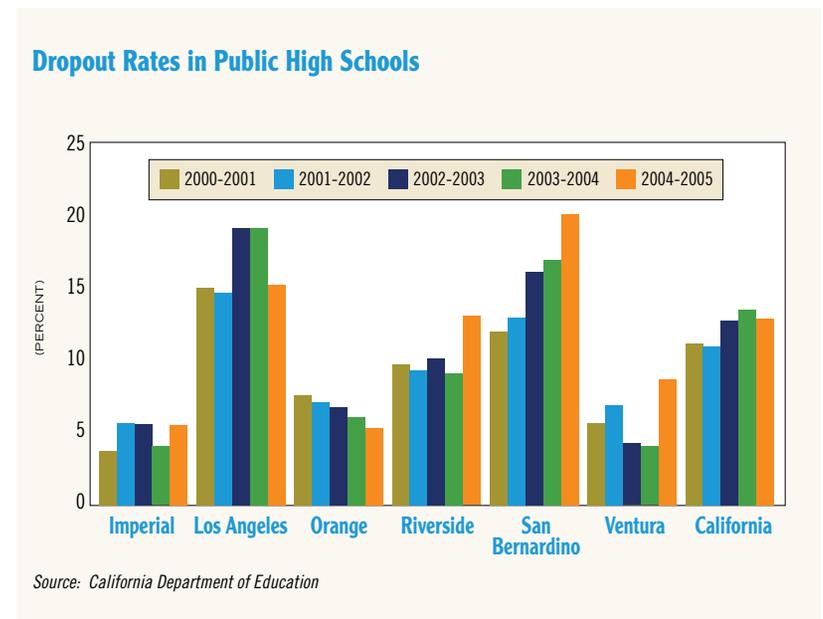
The dropout rate declined slightly at the state level between 2004 and 2005. In 2005, both San Bernardino (20 percent) and Los Angeles (15 percent) counties experienced much higher dropout rates than the state average (13 percent). Within the region, Orange and Imperial counties achieved the lowest dropout rates at about 5 percent. Between 2000 and 2005, dropout rates in Orange County declined steadily. It should be noted that in the 2002-2003 school year, the California Department of Education started using the National Center for Education Statistics dropout rate criteria.

Figure 72



African American and Hispanic high school students across the region, when compared with their White and Asian peers, had significantly higher dropout rates (Figure 74). The disparity was most pronounced in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. For example, in 2005, the dropout rate for African American students in Los Angeles County reached 23 percent, and Hispanic students with 18 percent compared with 8 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and 5 percent for Asians.

Figure 73



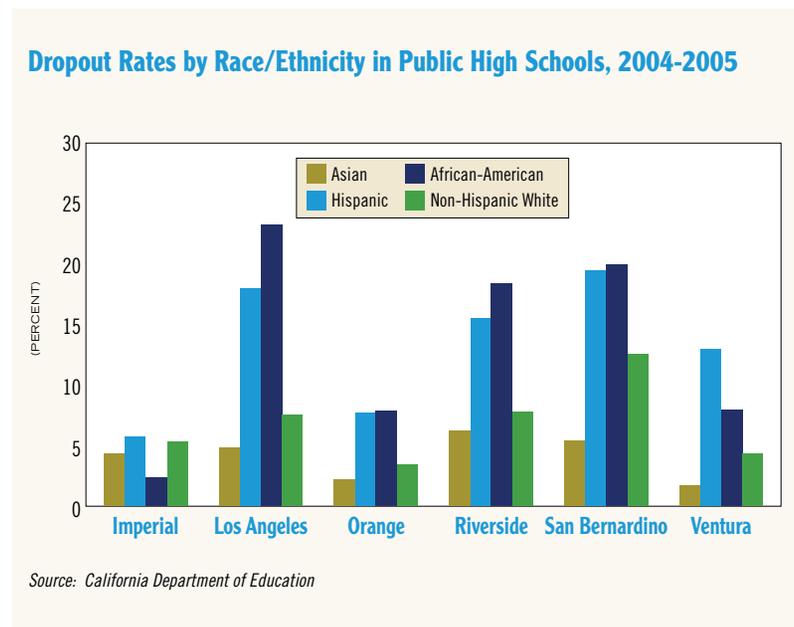
A recent national study found that socioeconomic status - which is based on parents' income and education - rather than race or ethnicity is the key indicator of dropout.² Specifically, African American and Hispanic youth are no more likely to drop out of high school than their white or Asian peers of similar family income and education. The higher percentage of African American and Hispanic students dropping out of high school is primarily because they are overrepresented in the lowest income groups. In addition, though many dropouts (close to 60 percent) eventually do earn a high school credential (in most cases a GED certificate), less than 10 percent earn a postsecondary degree.²

As to the percentage of high school graduates completing courses required for University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) entrance, while Orange and Los Angeles counties made some progress in 2005, Ventura county experienced lower performance. When comparing 2005 with 2000, only Los Angeles, Orange and Imperial counties made some improvements. In 2005, every county in the region had less than 40 percent of high school graduates complete courses required for UC or CSU entrance (Figure 75).

There were also similar patterns of racial and ethnic disparities in the region (Figure 76). In each of the six counties in the region, Asian students consistently had the highest percentage in completing courses required for UC or CSU entrance, while Hispanic students consistently had the lowest. For example, while 60 percent of Asian graduates in Riverside County

completed courses required for UC or CSU entrance, only 43 percent of the non-Hispanic White students, 29 percent of the African students and 26 percent of the Hispanic students achieved the same. Among Hispanics, two-year community colleges are the most frequently used institutions of higher education.

Figure 74

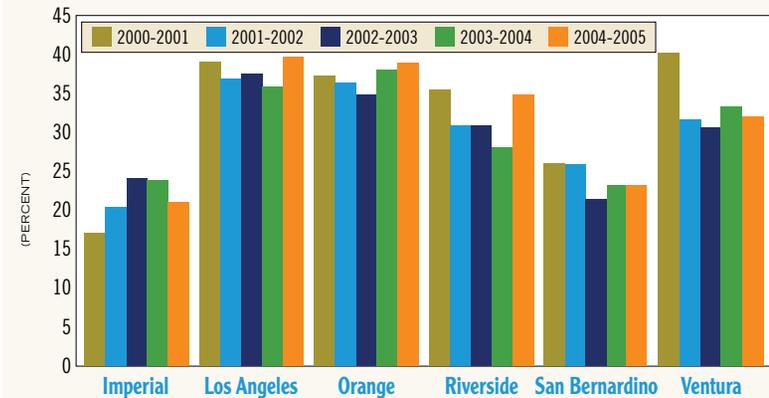


When compared with other states, California has one of the lowest percentages of high school seniors enrolling in 4-year colleges.³ Factors contributing to the low performance of the state include, among others, lack of college preparatory curriculum along with teachers and counselors with adequate training.



Figure 75

High School Graduates Completing Courses Required for UC or CSU Entrance

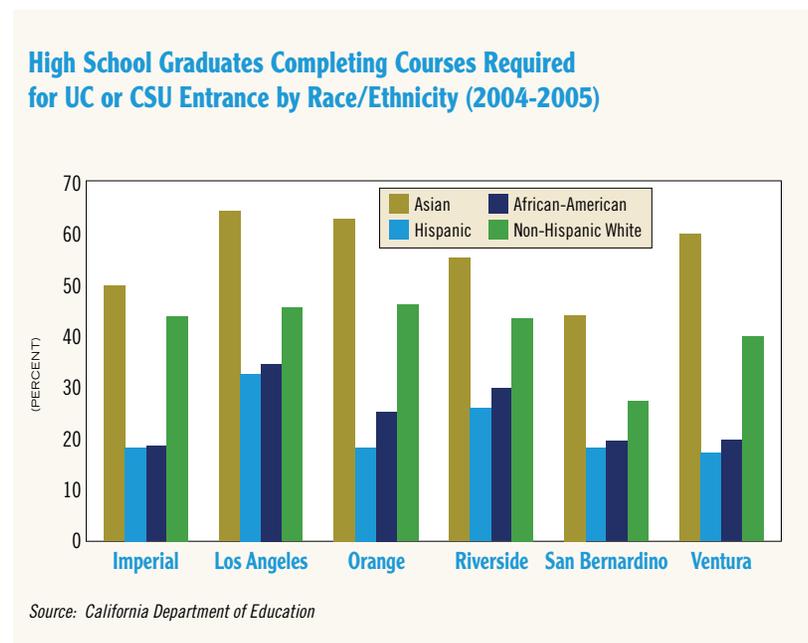


Source: California Department of Education

Between 2000 and 2005, there were noticeable improvements in educational attainment in the region consistent with national trends. During this period, the percentage of adults with at least a high school degree increased from 74 to 77 percent while the percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 25 to 27 percent. Nevertheless, among the nine largest metropolitan regions,

the SCAG region remained in last place in the percentage of adults (77 percent) with at least a high school diploma, and for at least a Bachelor's degree (27 percent) (see Figure 90 page 155).⁴ San Francisco Bay Area had the highest percentage of adults with at least a Bachelor's degree (41 percent).

Figure 76



Within the region and between 2000 and 2005, the costal counties generally achieved more improvements in educational attainment relative to the Inland Empire. For example, in Ventura County, the percentage of adults with at least a high school degree increased from 80.1 to 83 percent while the percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 26.9 to 29.8 percent. However, in San Bernardino County, the percentage of adults with at least a high school degree increased only from 74.7 to 75.9 percent while the percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 16.8 to 17.5 percent. In 2005, Orange County continued to have the highest percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree (34.9 percent), an increase of almost 3 percent since 2000. However, less than 12 percent of adults in Imperial County achieved the same.

Public Safety

Why is this important?

Crime-related activities consume an enormous amount of valuable social and economic resources. The social costs are substantial if less quantifiable, including pain and suffering of crime victims and their families and weakening of community cohesion. The economic costs include loss of productivity due to death or disability resulting from crime, medical costs, and loss of property values in neighborhoods with high crime rates.

How are we doing?

Violent Crimes

In 2005, the violent crime rate in the region declined by almost 11 percent from 2004, larger than the 9 percent reduction during the previous period. At the state level, violent crime declined by about 5 percent between 2004 and 2005 (Figure 77). Violent crime rates in both the region and the state peaked in 1992 and have been declining since then, except for a slight increase in 2000. In 2005, violent crime rate in the region was less than 40 percent of the 1992 level. In addition, the gap between the region and the state in violent crime rates has been narrowing significantly. In 1992, the violent crime rate in the region was 30 percent higher than that in the state. In 2005, the violent crime rate in the region was only 3 percent higher than that in the state.

Violent crimes include four types: homicides, forcible rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults. In 2005, among the 96,140 violent crime incidents, 54,797 (or 57 percent) were aggravated assaults, 35,799 (37 percent) were robberies, 4,084 were forcible rapes (4 percent) and 1,460 (1.5 percent) were homicides. From 2004 to 2005, though the total number of aggravated assaults and forcible rapes declined, there were slight increases in homicide and robbery. During this period, the total number of homicides in the region increased slightly from 1,414 to 1,460. Los Angeles County continued to account for almost three-quarters of all homicides in the region.



Within the region, Los Angeles County achieved the most significant reduction in violent crimes of 14 percent, followed by San Bernardino (-3.4 percent) and Riverside (-2.4 percent) counties (Figure 78). Imperial County, after a 14

percent reduction between 2003 and 2004, saw its violent crime rate increase by 11 percent in 2005. Violent crime rates also increased in Ventura County by almost 9 percent. Almost three-quarters of the violent crimes took place in Los Angeles County. Ventura and Orange counties consistently have the lowest rates of violent crimes in the region and among the large metropolitan areas in the nation (see Figure 91 page 156).

Figure 77

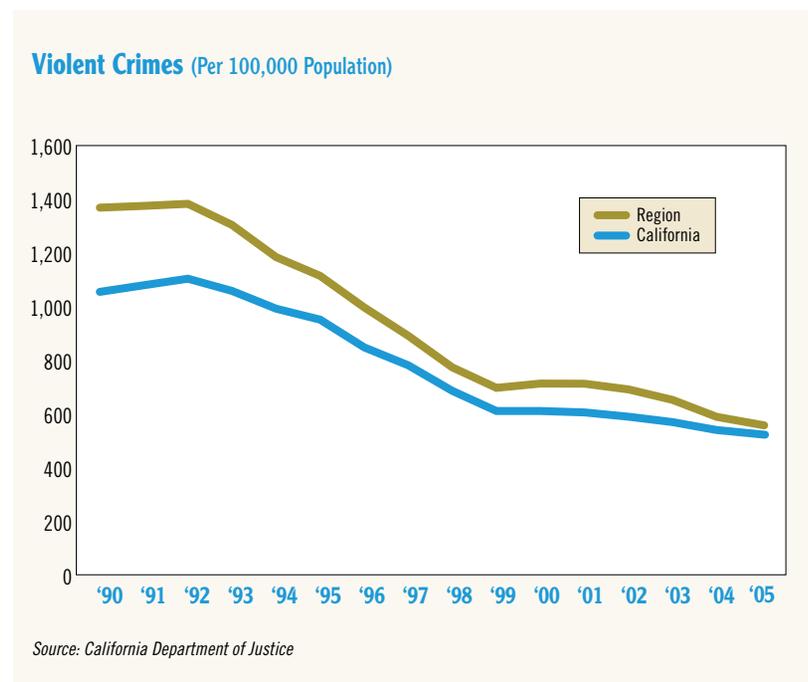
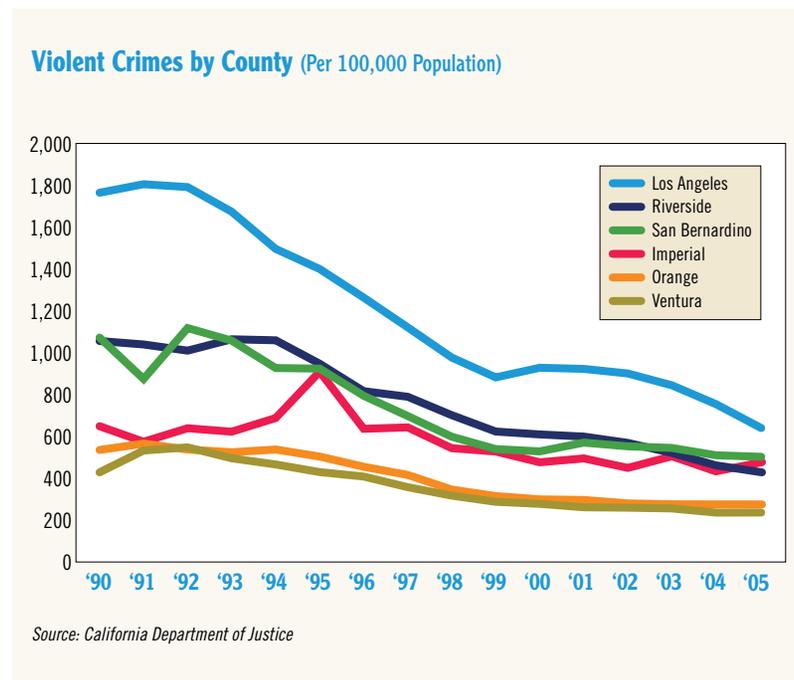


Figure 78

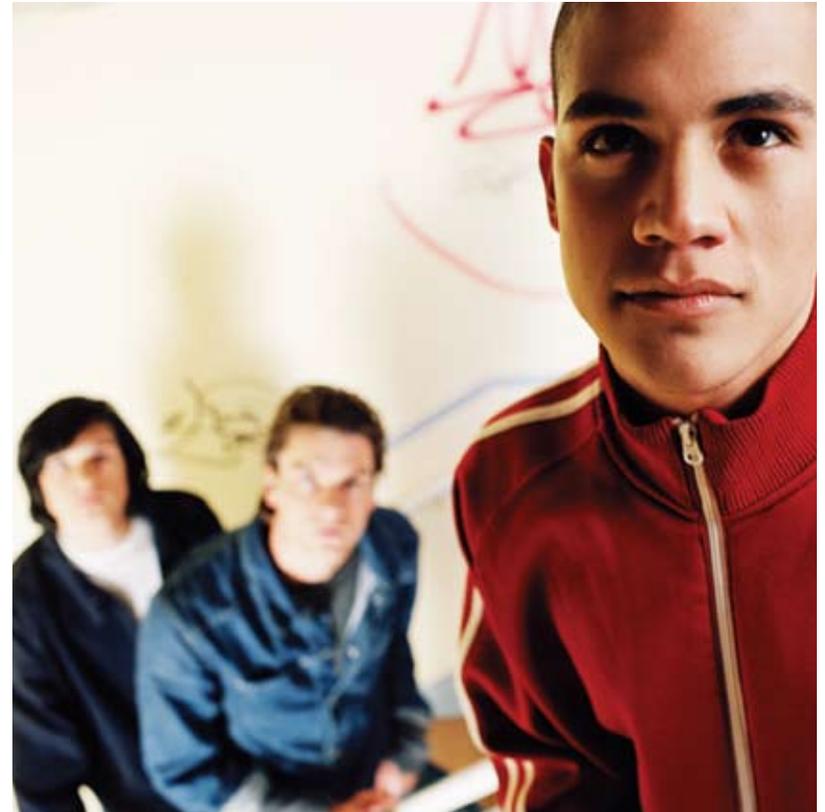
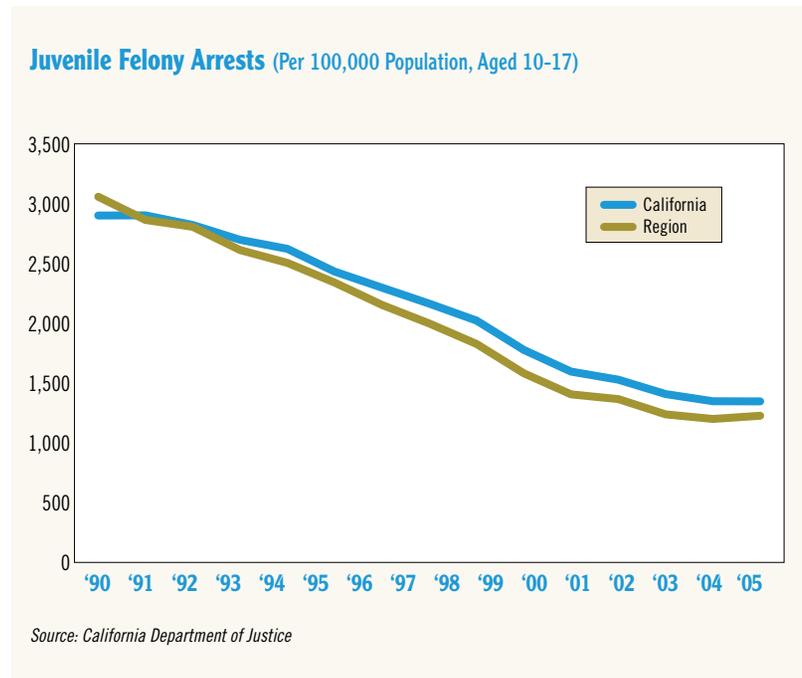


Juvenile Felony Arrests

A juvenile felony offense is defined as a crime that is punishable by death or imprisonment for those aged 10 to 17. From 2004 to 2005, the juvenile felony arrest rate in the region increased by about 3 percent following a 2-percent increase in the previous period. This was in contrast to the trend of continuous decline between 1990 and 2003. Nevertheless, the juvenile felony

arrest rate in the region in 2005 was only about 40 percent of the 1990 level. At the state level, juvenile felony arrest rate increased slightly by 1 percent between 2004 and 2005 (Figure 79).

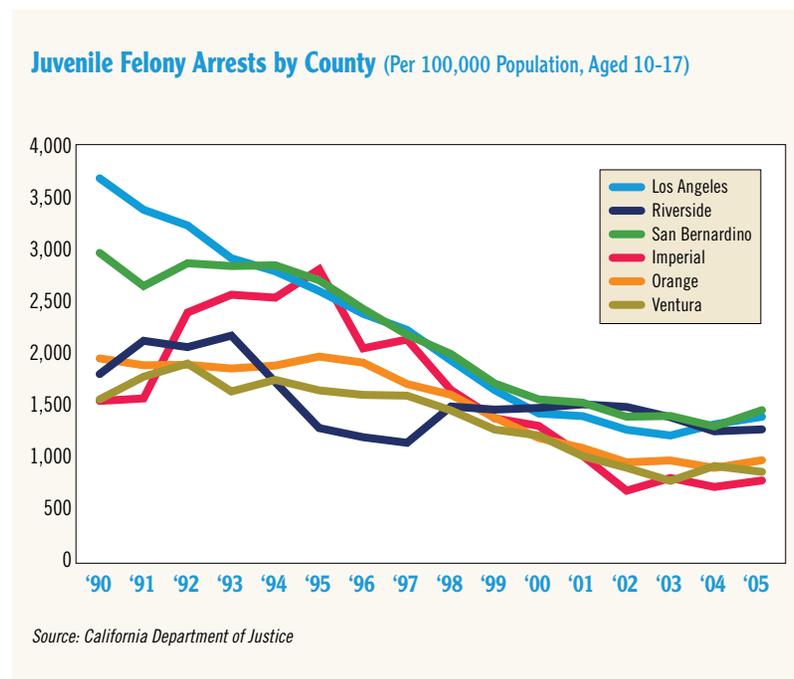
Figure 79



Within the region, juvenile felony arrest rates increased in Imperial (7 percent), Orange (5 percent), Los Angeles County (4 percent) and San Bernardino (3 percent) counties (Figure 80). Only Ventura (-6 percent) and Riverside (-3 percent) achieved reductions. Since 2000, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties have had higher rates in juvenile felony arrest than the other three counties (Orange, Ventura and Imperial).

In 2005, the region had 29,204 juvenile felony arrests. Among them, 5,675 arrests (or 19 percent) were for burglary, 5,207 arrests (18 percent) for theft (including motor vehicles) and another 4,446 arrests (or 15 percent) for assault. In addition, 3,173 arrests (or 11 percent) were for drug law violation. More than three quarters of the total juvenile arrests were males.

Figure 80



Hate Crimes

Between 2004 and 2005, the number of hate crime events and victims in the region increased 4 percent and 2 percent respectively, reversing the trend of decline between 2001 and 2004 (Figure 81). Hate crimes can be in the form of violent crimes (65 percent) or property crimes (35 percent).⁵ As to the motivations for hate crimes, statewide data indicated that about 66 percent of the events in 2004 were due to race/ethnicity/national origin bias followed by about 18 percent for sexual orientation bias and 15 percent for religious bias. About 30 percent of the hate crimes events took place around residences, another 27 percent on highways/streets, 11 percent in schools/colleges, 8 percent in parking lots/garages and 6 percent in churches/synagogues/temples.

The year 2001 was the peak year in hate crimes in the last five years due primarily to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Within the region, Los Angeles County experienced disproportionately higher hate crime incidences. For four consecutive years, about 70 percent of all hate crime events and victims were in Los Angeles County.

Figure 81

