Between 2003 and 2006, the region achieved steady progress in the math test scores for 7th grade.

Education

Why is this important?

Student performance is measured through three indicators: 1) test scores for seventh grade, 2) high school dropout rates, and 3) college readiness measured by the percentage 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. Finally, the educational attainment of the adult population reflects the labor force competitive level in the region.

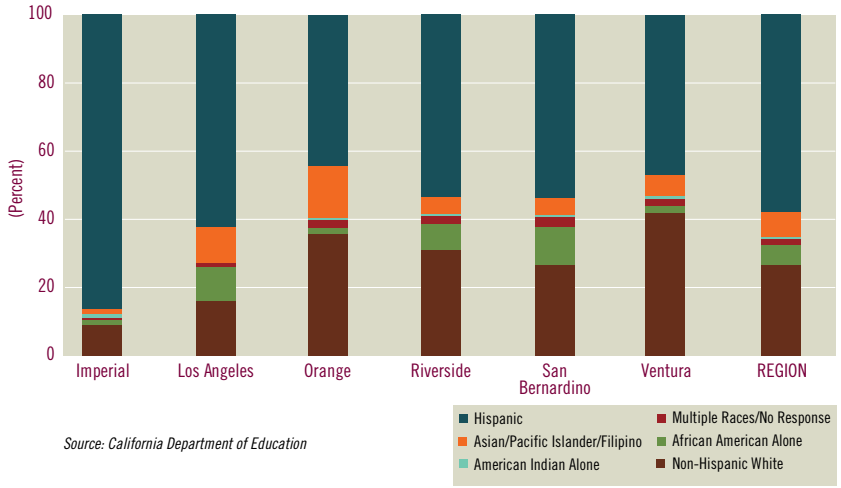
How are we doing?

During the 2005/2006 school year, there were approximately 3.2 million public school students and 150,000 teachers from kindergarten to 12th grade (K-12). The student-teacher ratio was 21.5 in 2006, slightly higher than the state average at 21. Since 2000, total number of students grew by 170,000 (5.6 percent), while the number of teachers rose by only about 4,000 (2.7 percent). The slower growth of teachers was primarily due to the state budget shortfall during 2002 and 2003 that led to teacher reductions. Hence, the student-teacher ratio increased slightly from 20.9 to 21.5 between 2000 and 2006.

Among the 3.2 million students in 2006, about 1.8 million (57 percent) were Hispanics, significantly higher than their share of the general population of 44 percent. In Imperial County, 86 percent of the K-12 students were of Hispanic origin. Non-Hispanic White students accounted for only 860,000 (27 percent), significantly lower than their share of the general population of 36 percent.

Figure 105

K-12 Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2005-2006



Source: California Department of Education

Test Scores

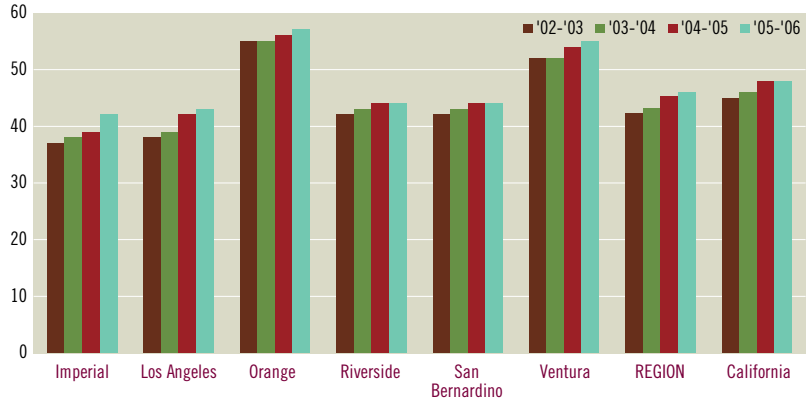
In 2006, the 7th graders in the region continued to perform below the national median in reading and math test scores except in Orange and

Ventura counties (Figures 106 and 107). Since 2000, the region's performance has tracked closely with that of the state.

Between 2003 and 2006, the region achieved steady progress in math test scores relative to the nation. During this period, the national percentile rank of the average student score in the region rose from 44 percentile to 48 percentile, and improvement took place in every county in the region.

Figure 106

Math Test Scores for 7th Grade
(National Percentile Rank of Average Student Score)

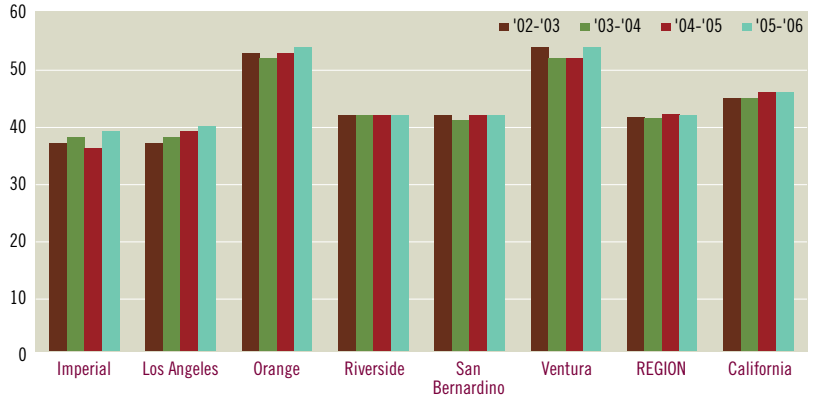


Source: California Department of Education

As to the reading test scores, only Los Angeles and Imperial counties achieved consistent improvements between 2003 and 2006. It should be noted that the share of English learners in these two counties also decreased during the same period. In 2006, the share of English learners in 7th grade ranged from about 17 percent in Ventura and San Bernardino counties to 38 percent in Imperial County (Figure 108).

Figure 107

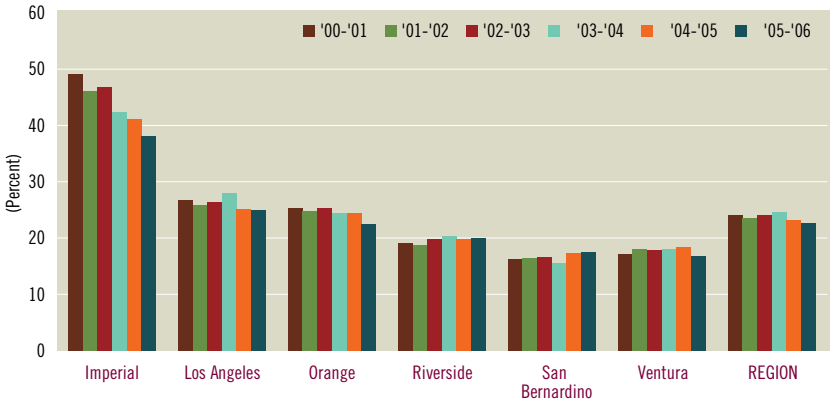
Reading Test Scores for 7th Grade
(National Percentile Rank of Average Student Score)



Source: California Department of Education

Figure 108

Share of English Learners in 7th Grade

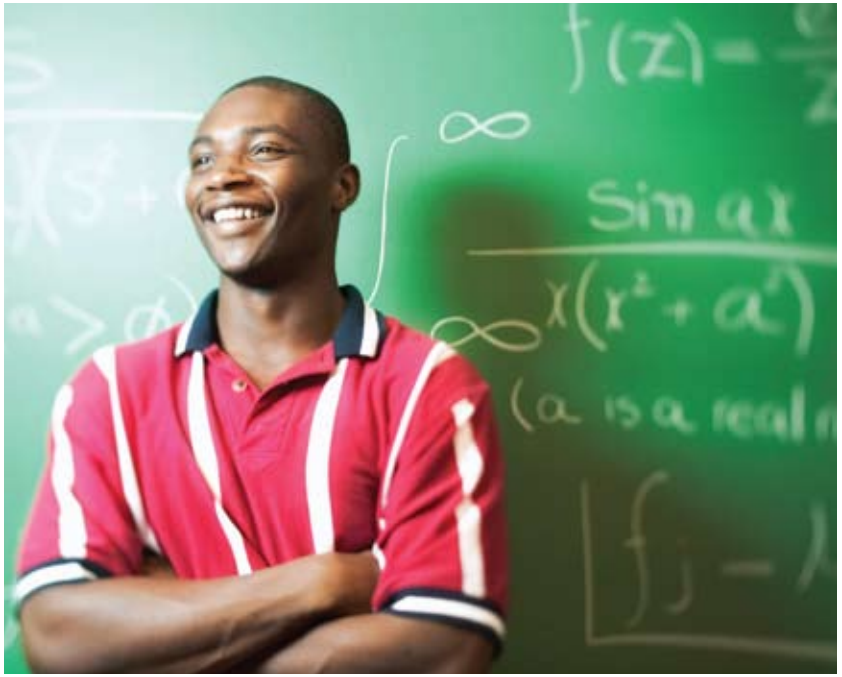


Source: California Department of Education

Test scores are affected by several factors including, for example, the proportion of students who are English learners, and the student/teacher ratio. Between 2000 and 2006, the total number of English learners from K-12 decreased in Los Angeles and Orange counties while increasing in the Inland Empire. Specifically, the number of English learners fell by 7 and 18 percent in Los Angeles and Orange counties respectively. During this period, the number of English learners in Riverside County rose by 19 percent while it grew by 25 percent in San Bernardino County. As to the student/teacher ratio, California continues to have the second highest in the nation, and ranked 44th in math at 4th and 8th grades, 48th in reading at 4th grade, and 49th in reading at 8th grade.[1]

Dropout Rates

Between 2000 and 2006, the dropout rates for high schools in the region rose from 12.1 percent to 15.3 percent, and continued to be slightly higher than the state average at 14.9 percent (Figure 109). In 2006, both San Bernardino (20.6 percent) and Los Angeles (17.5 percent) counties experienced significantly higher dropout rates than the state average.



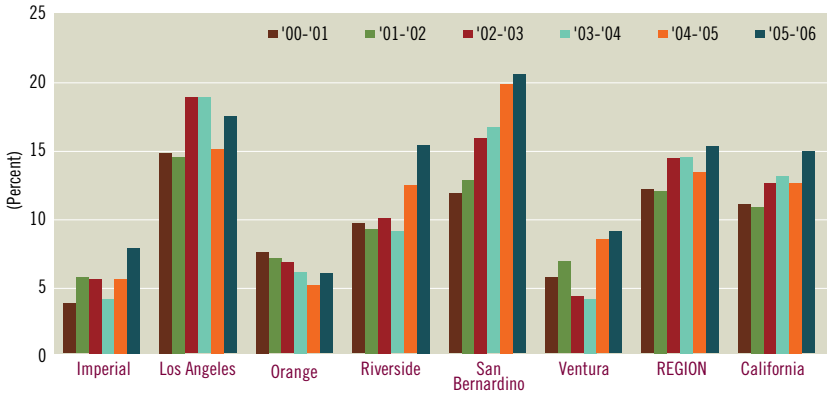
In 2006, every county in the region experienced higher dropout rate than in 2005. *For San Bernardino County, its dropout rate increased continuously from about 12 percent during 2000-2001 school year to almost 21 percent during 2005-2006, the highest in the region.* Between 2000 and 2006, dropout rates also increased significantly in Riverside County.

Within the region, Orange County achieved the lowest dropout rates in 2006 at about 6 percent, slightly higher than its 2005 level after four consecutive years of decline. 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 109

Dropout Rates in Public High Schools



Source: California Department of Education

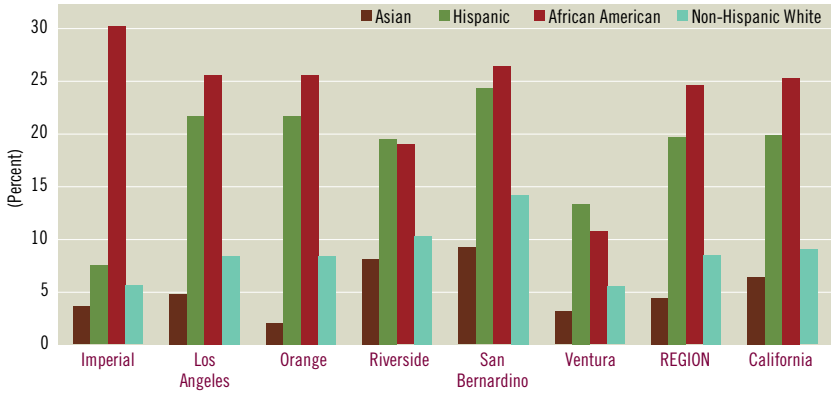
African American and Hispanic high school students across the region and the state, when compared with their White and Asian peers, had significantly higher dropout rates (Figure 110). For example, in 2006, the dropout rate for African American students in San Bernardino County reached 26.4 percent, and Hispanic students with 24.3 percent compared with 14.2 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and 9.2 percent for Asians.

A recent national study found that socioeconomic status - 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 dropouts of high school is primarily because they are overrepresented in the lowest income groups. Dropout rates also appear highly related to student achievement.[3]

As to approaches to prevent high school dropouts, the National Research Council finds no easy solutions.[4] Key features of successful programs in reducing dropouts include, among others, an effective instructional program, early attention to low performance students, more personalized school and more parental involvement.[5] Therefore, increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers particularly in lower-income areas would contribute to reduce dropout rates.

Figure 110

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity in Public High Schools, 2005/2006



Source: California Department of Education

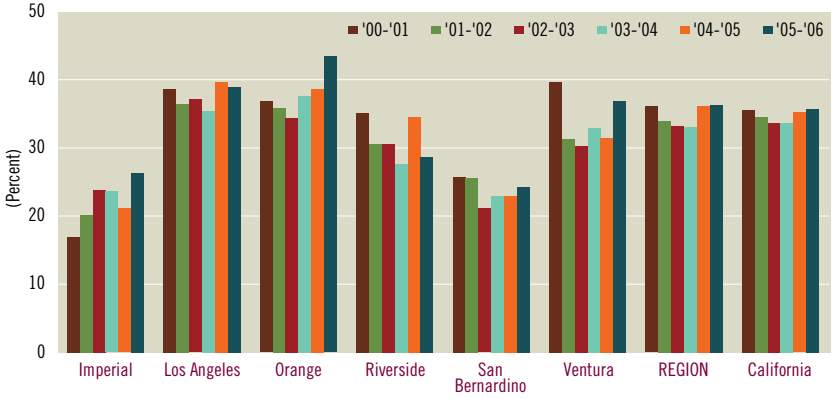
College Readiness

In 2006, only 36 percent of high school graduates completing courses required for University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) entrance. When compared with 2000, there were little improvements in college readiness in 2006 at the regional level, though Orange

and Imperial counties made notable improvement. In 2006, with the exception of Orange County, every county in the region had less than 40 percent of high school graduates complete courses required for UC or CSU entrance (Figure 111).

Figure 111

High School Graduates Completing Courses Required for UC or CSU Entrance



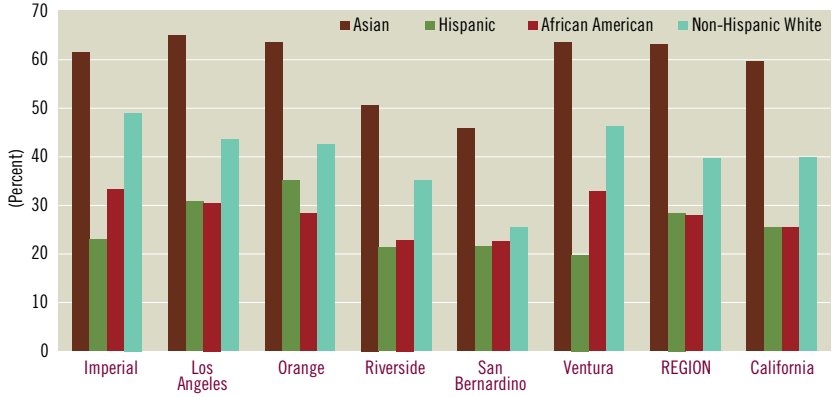
Source: California Department of Education

There were also similar patterns of racial and ethnic disparities in the region with respect to college readiness (Figure 112). In each of the six counties in the region, Asian students consistently achieved the highest percentage in completing courses required for UC or CSU entrance. For example, while 65 percent of Asian graduates in Riverside County completed courses required for UC or CSU entrance, only 44 percent of the non-Hispanic White students, approximately 30 percent of the African and Hispanic students accomplished the same. Among Hispanics, two-year community colleges are the most frequently used institutions of higher education.

When compared with other states, California has one of the lowest percentages of high school seniors enrolling in 4-year colleges.[6] Factors contributing to this low performance include, among others, lack of college preparatory curriculum along with fewer adequately trained teachers and counselors.

Figure 112

High School Graduates Completing Courses Required for UC/CSU Entrance by Race/Ethnicity, 2005/2006



Source:California Department of Education

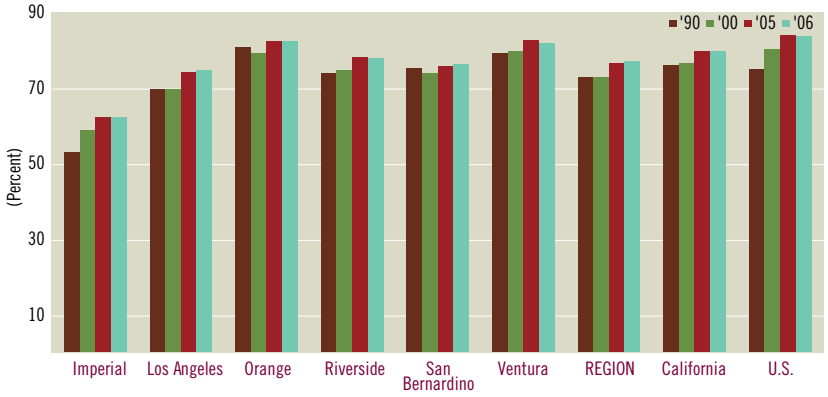
Educational Attainment

Between 2000 and 2006, there were noticeable improvements in educational attainment in the region consistent with national trends. 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 (Figures 113 and 114). However, among the nine largest metropolitan regions, the SCAG region remained in last place in 2006 in the percentage of adults (77 percent) with at least a high school diploma (see Figure 132 page 150), and second to last for at least a bachelor's degree (27 percent) (see Figure 133 page 150). The

Washington DC region had the highest percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree (41 percent).

Figure 113

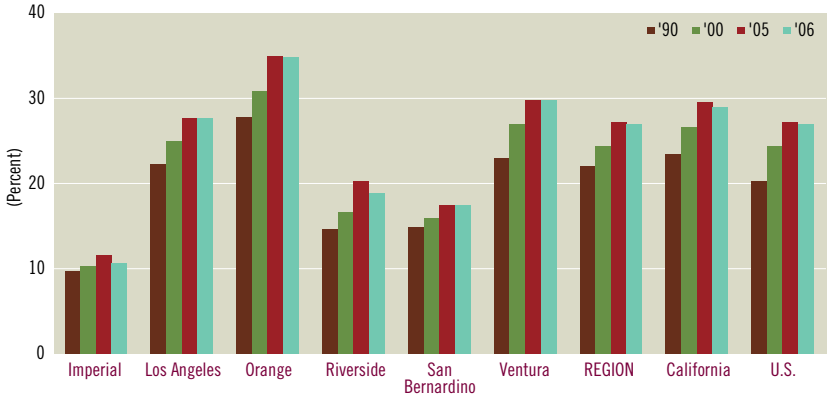
Educational Attainment
(Percent of Persons 25 Years and over with High School Diploma or Higher)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census, 2005 and 2006 American Community Survey

Figure 114

Educational Attainment
(Percent of Persons 25 Years and over with Bachelor's Degree or Higher)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census, 2005 and 2006 American Community Survey

Within the region, Orange County is the only county with educational attainment much higher than the state or national average. There are much greater disparities among counties with respect to the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree than with at least a high school diploma.

Since 2000, the coastal counties have achieved more progress in educational attainment for at least a bachelor's degree than the inland counties. During this period, the coastal counties improved by 2.8 (Los Angeles) to 4 (Orange) percentage points as to the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree, while the inland counties only increased by 0.3 (Imperial) to 2.3 (Riverside) percentage points. In 2006, Orange County continued to have the highest percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree (34.8 percent). However, less than 11 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.

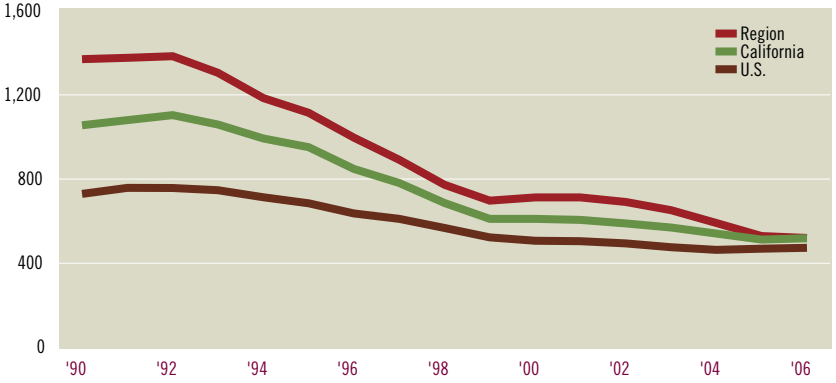
How are we doing?

Violent Crimes

The violent crime rates in the region peaked in 1992 and then began an extended decline to its lowest level in three decades. This is generally consistent with the trends at the state and national levels (Figure 115). In 2006, the violent crime rate in the region was less than 40 percent of its 1992 level. In addition, the gap between the region and the state in violent crime rates has finally been closed, and the gap between the region and the nation has been significantly narrowed.

Figure 115

Violent Crimes
(Per 100,000 Population)



Source: California Department of Justice, California Department of Finance, and FBI 2006 Uniform Crime Report (for U.S. only)

Factors contributing to the extended reductions of violent crime rates since 1992 in the region include, among others, higher rates of incarceration, increased resources toward law enforcement, and improvements in the economic conditions particularly the consistent reductions in unemployment rates.[7] However, since the September 11 terrorist attack in 2001, local police departments have been squeezed by growing domestic security concerns at a time when federal agencies such as the FBI are focusing more on preventing terrorism than assisting local police fighting traditional crimes.[8]

In 2006, the violent crime rate in the region decreased slightly by 1.7 percent from 2005, after an 11-percent reduction during the previous period.

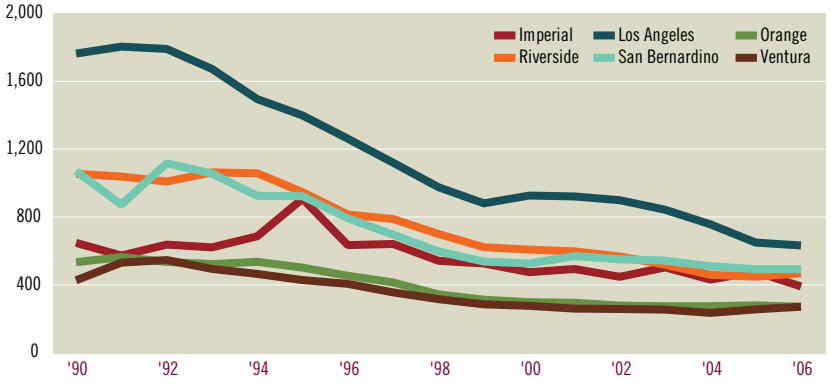
At the state and national levels, violent crime rate increased slightly by 1.2 percent and 1 percent respectively between 2005 and 2006.

Violent crimes include four types: homicides, forcible rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults. In 2006, the region had a total of 95,592 violent crime incidents, a decline of 6 percent from 2005. Among them, 51,849 (or 54 percent) were aggravated assaults, 38,333 (40 percent) were robberies, 4,017 were forcible rapes (4 percent) and 1,393 (2 percent) were homicides. *From 2005 to 2006, though the total number of aggravated assaults and homicide decreased in the region, however, there were increases in robberies.* During this period, the number of robberies increased by 7 percent in the region consistent with the national trend and every county in the region experienced an increase. The number of homicides in the region, however, decreased by 5 percent to be below the 2004 level. Los Angeles County continued to account for almost three-quarters of all homicides in the region.

Within the region, Imperial County achieved the most significant reduction of 18 percent in its violent crimes rate, followed by Orange (-2.8 percent) and Los Angeles (-2.6 percent) counties (Figure 116). Almost three-quarters of the violent crimes took place in Los Angeles County.

Figure 116

Violent Crimes by County
(Per 100,000 Population)



Source: California Department of Justice

In 2006, the violent crime rate in the SCAG region at 520 (per 100,000 population) was only about 10 percent higher than the national average at 474 (per 100,000 population). However, within the region, the violent crime rates in Ventura and Orange counties were 40 percent below the national average in 2006, and only Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties experienced higher rates than the national average (see Figure 134 page 151).

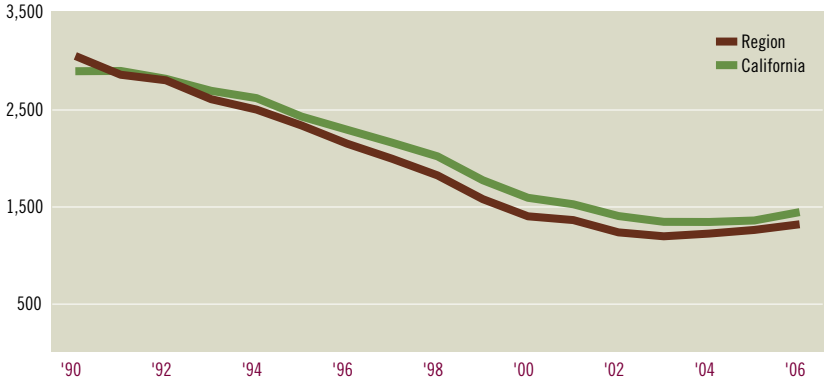
Juvenile Felony Arrests

A juvenile felony offense is defined as a crime that is punishable by death or imprisonment for those aged 10 to 17. In 2006, the region had about 2.33 million juveniles, only a 0.6 percent increase from the previous year. Felonies include crimes such as murder, assault, rape, robbery, burglary, and serious drug offenses. Exposure to the criminal justice at an early age correlates with increased likelihood of criminal activity and incarceration in adulthood.

From 2005 to 2006, the juvenile felony arrest rate in the region increased by almost 5 percent. This was the third consecutive year of increase in contrast to the trend of continuous decline between 1990 and 2003. Nonetheless, the juvenile felony arrest rate in the region in 2006 was only 43 percent of its 1990 level. The state of California had similar performance trends of juvenile felony arrest rate, rising by 6 percent between 2005 and 2006 (Figure 117).

Figure 117

Juvenile Felony Arrests
(Per 100,000 Population Aged 10-17)

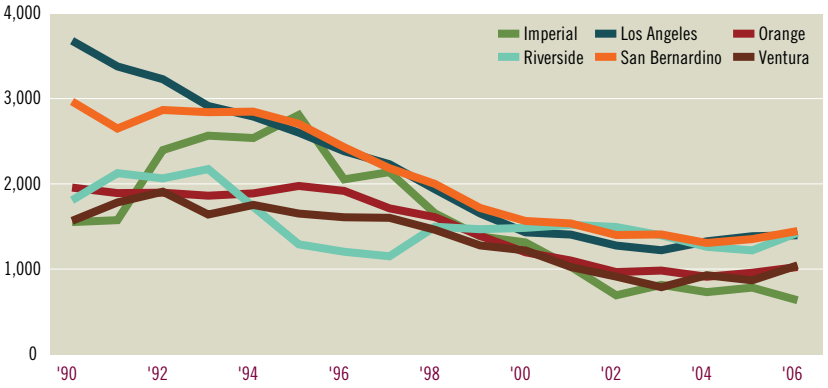


Source: California Department of Justice

Since 2000, the Inland Empire and Los Angeles County have experienced higher rates in juvenile felony arrest than the other three counties (Orange, Ventura and Imperial). Between 2005 and 2006, the juvenile felony arrest rate in Riverside County increased by 17 percent, while it increased by 7 percent in San Bernardino County but only 1 percent in Los Angeles County. Ventura County, though with relatively low level of juvenile arrest rate, saw a 20 percent increase in 2006 while Orange County increased by 7 percent. Only Imperial County enjoyed a 19 percent reduction (Figure 118).

Figure 118

Juvenile Felony Arrests by County
(Per 100,000 Population Aged 10-17)



Source: California Department of Justice

In 2006, the region had a total of 30,754 juvenile felony arrests, 5.3 percent more than that in 2005. Among them, 6,115 arrests (or 20 percent) were for burglary, 5,112 arrests (17 percent) for theft (including motor vehicles) and another 4,355 arrests (or 14 percent) for assault.

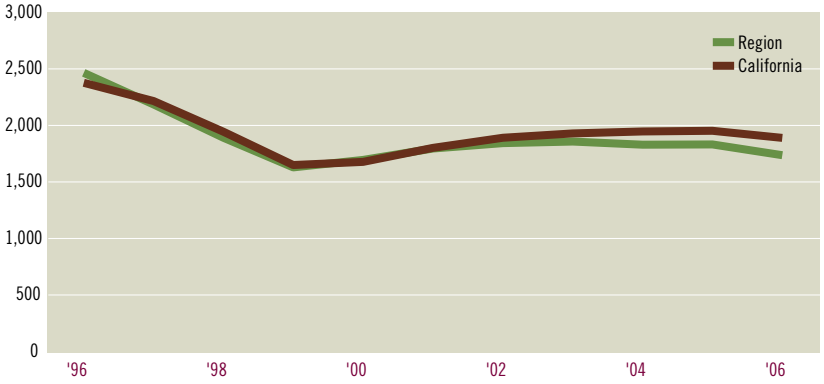
In addition, 2,794 arrests (or 9 percent) were for drug law violation. More than three quarters of the total juvenile arrests were males.

Property Crimes

In 2006, the property crime rate in the region decreased by 5 percent from 2005, just below its 2001 level. At the state level, property crime rate also declined slightly by 3 percent between 2005 and 2006 (Figure 119). Property crime rates in both the region and the state reached their lowest level in 1999 (since 1996) and then climbed up again until 2003. Since 2003, the property crime rate has generally been on a slightly downward path. In 2006, among the 319,355 property crime incidents, they were almost equally split among burglary, motor vehicle theft and larceny-theft-over $400.

Figure 119

Property Crimes
(Per 100,000 Population)



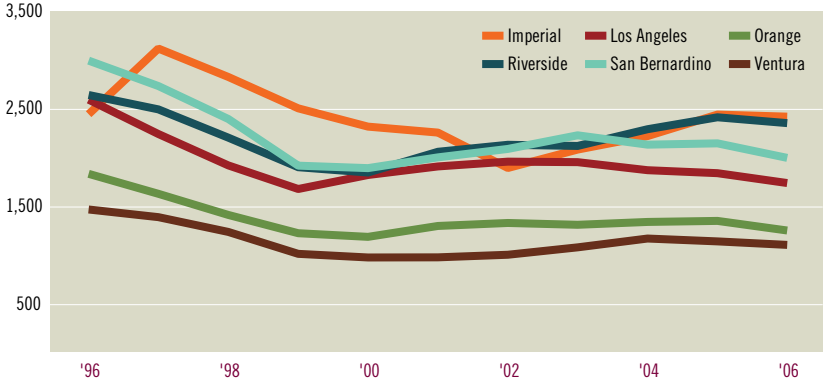
Source: California Department of Justice and California Department of Finance

Within the region, Ventura and Orange counties consistently have the lowest rates of property crimes in the region. Since 2004, Imperial and Riverside counties have had the highest rates of property crimes.

Between 2005 and 2006, every county achieved some reductions in its property crime rate. Specifically, San Bernardino and Orange counties achieved notable reductions of 7 percent respectively (Figure 120).

Figure 120

Property Crimes by County
(Per 100,000 Population)



Source: California Department of Justice

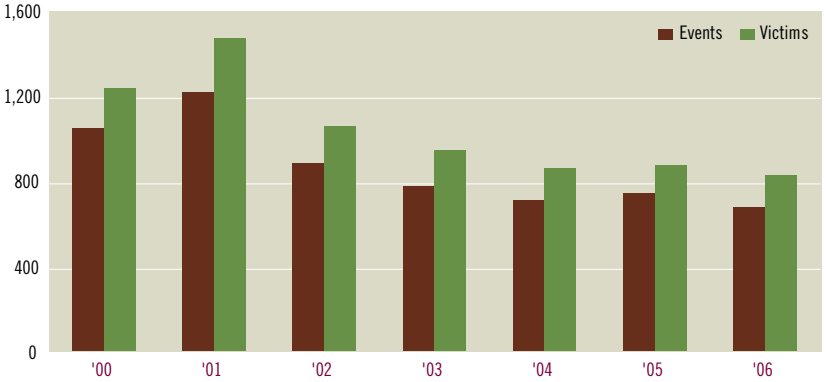
Hate Crimes

Between 2005 and 2006, the number of hate crime events and victims in the region decreased by 9 percent and 5 percent respectively, after a slight increase during the previous period (Figure 121). Hate crimes can be in the form of violent crimes (61 percent) or property crimes (30 percent).[9] As to the motivations for hate crimes, statewide data indicated that about 67 percent of the victims in 2006 were due to race/ethnicity/national origin bias followed by about 19 percent for sexual orientation bias and 14 percent for religious bias. About 32 percent of the hate crimes events took place on highways/streets, another 29 percent around residences, 9 percent in schools/colleges, 8 percent in parking lots/garages and 5 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. In 2006, about two-thirds of all hate crime events and victims were in Los Angeles County, nevertheless, a decline of almost 80 percent since 2000.

Figure 121

Hate Crime Activities



Source: California Department of Justice