

# PROPERTY CRIME TOTAL

## DEFINITION

Property crime includes the offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The object of the theft-type offenses is the taking of money or property, but there is no force or threat of force against the victims. Arson is included since it involves the destruction of property; its victims may be subjected to force.

## TREND

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup></i>
1998	10,951,827	4,051.8
1999	10,204,456	3,742.1
Percent change	-6.8	-7.6

<sup>1</sup>Trend data do not include arson. See page 54.

Property crime dropped to its lowest level since 1978 with an estimated 10.2 million offenses in 1999. The Nation experienced its eighth consecutive year of decline for property crime offenses, representing a decrease of 7 percent from the previous year's total. Five- and 10-year trends indicate the 1999 volume was 15 percent lower than in 1995 and 19 percent lower than the 1990 level.

By region, 41 percent of all property crimes in 1999 were recorded in the Southern States, the most populous region in the country. The Western States accounted for 23 percent of the total; the Midwestern States, 22 percent; and the Northeastern States, 14 percent.

A comparison of 1998 and 1999 property crime volumes showed decreases in all regions of the country. A 10-percent drop was recorded in the West, 7-percent decreases were noted in both the Midwest and the Northeast, and a 5-percent drop was experienced in the South. (See Table 4.)

Property crime fell 7 percent in the Nation's cities collectively from 1998 to 1999. Among city types, cities with populations of 25,000 to 49,999 inhabitants registered the greatest decrease, 8 percent. Suburban counties and rural counties also experienced drops in property crime offenses—8 percent and 7 percent, respectively. (See Table 12.)

A comparison of 1999 property crimes by month indicates that the greatest number occurred in August, and the fewest occurred in February.

Table 2.25

**Property Crime Total by Month**  
Percent distribution, 1995-1999

Month	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
January	8.1	8.0	8.2	8.6	8.0
February	7.2	7.6	7.3	7.5	7.2
March	8.2	7.9	8.0	8.2	8.0
April	7.8	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.9
May	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.4	8.3
June	8.5	8.4	8.4	8.5	8.6
July	9.0	9.2	9.1	8.9	9.0
August	9.3	9.1	9.0	9.0	9.2
September	8.5	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.5
October	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.5	8.7
November	8.2	7.9	8.0	7.9	8.2
December	8.1	8.3	8.3	8.2	8.4

## Rate

The 1999 property crime rate was an estimated 3,742 property crimes per 100,000 inhabitants, down 8 percent from the 1998 rate. Regarding 5- and 10-year trends, the 1999 rate fell 18 percent below the 1995 rate and 26 percent below the 1990 rate.

Geographically, all four regions registered property crime rate decreases compared to 1998 figures. With a rate of 3,795 per 100,000 inhabitants, the West showed

the largest decline, 12 percent. The rates of 2,765 per 100,000 in the Northeast and 3,592 per 100,000 in the Midwest each recorded a 7-percent drop. The South, with a rate of 4,332 per 100,000 inhabitants, experienced a 6-percent decrease.

By population group, cities with populations from 250,000 to 499,999 registered the highest property crime rate, 6,399 per 100,000. The property crime rate in cities outside metropolitan areas was 4,158 per 100,000 inhabitants; in metropolitan areas, 4,016, and in rural counties, 1,680. (See Tables 2 and 16.)

## Nature

In connection with property crime, nearly \$14.8 billion was the estimated total dollar value of property stolen in 1999. The average loss per offense was \$1,449, up from the average loss of \$1,379 recorded in 1998.

Considering the percent distribution of all property crimes in 1999, larceny-theft accounted for the highest amount, 68 percent. Burglary comprised 21 percent of property crimes, and motor vehicle theft accounted for the remaining 11 percent. Based on detailed arson data provided by 11,550 law enforcement agencies, 66,321 arson offenses were reported in 1999. The average dollar loss of property damaged due to reported arsons was \$10,882.

## Law Enforcement Response

The clearance rate for property crimes is generally lower than for violent crimes. Compared to the 50-percent clearance rate for violent crime in 1999, the overall property crime clearance rate was 18 percent. Regionally, property crime clearance rates were measured at 19 percent in the Northeast, 18 percent in the South, and 17 percent each in the Midwest and West. (See Table 26.)

Juveniles only (persons under age 18) were involved in 22 percent of the property crimes cleared by law enforcement nationwide. Juvenile clearances measured 22 percent in the Nation's cities, 20 percent in suburban counties, and 19 percent in rural counties. (See Table 28.)

Law enforcement officers made an estimated 1,644,500 arrests for property crimes, which accounted for 12 percent of total arrests in 1999. When measured against previous years' figures, the 1999 arrest total for property crime was 9 percent lower than the 1998 total, 20 percent less than the 1995 figure, and 26 percent below the 1990 number. Nationwide, juvenile arrests dropped 11 percent compared to 1998 totals, and adult arrests for property crimes decreased 9 percent. (See Tables 32, 34, and 36.)

Seventy percent of all persons arrested for property crimes in 1999 were male. Sixty-eight percent of the arrestees were over the age of 18, and 66 percent were white.

# Figure 2.12

## Property Crime Percent Change from 1995

