

Chapter 13

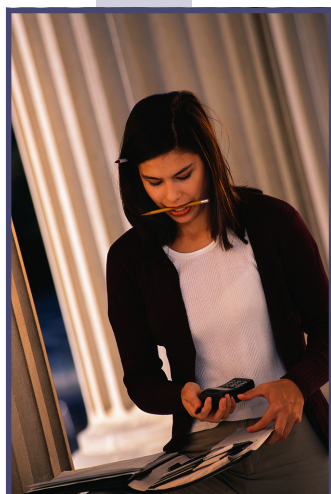
Crime, Violence and Abuse

Crime and public health issues are inextricably linked. Every crime claims a victim, who suffers physical or emotional harm, and exacts a cost to the community. The costs of treating crime victims are enormous, as are the costs of investigation, arrest, prosecution, and sentencing of the perpetrator.

A number of factors can influence crime, including age of the population, population density, modes of transportation and highway systems, economic conditions, cultural factors and educational, recreational and religious characteristics, and effective strength of law enforcement agencies. The frequency of family violence presented here is most likely underestimated. Many cases of abuse and neglect are not reported to authorities because of victims' embarrassment or fear and cannot be included in this report.

Highlights of this chapter include:

- ◆ While the rate of violent crimes in Sonoma County was lower than the California rate from 1999 to 2003, the rate increased significantly over this five-year period.
- ◆ The 2000-2002 Sonoma County homicide rate was significantly lower than the California rate and met the Healthy People 2010 goal.



In this chapter:

Crime	120
Gangs	121
Juvenile Delinquency	122
Domestic Violence	123
Child Abuse and Neglect	124
Elder Abuse	125
Chapter References	126

Crime

Crime in the United States is related to a number of factors, including poverty, social exclusion, wage and income inequality, level of education and other social factors that may affect an individual's propensity to commit criminal acts.¹

The U.S. Department of Justice provides two measures of the level and composition of crime in the United States. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) summarizes the number of selected crimes reported to (and recorded by) police.

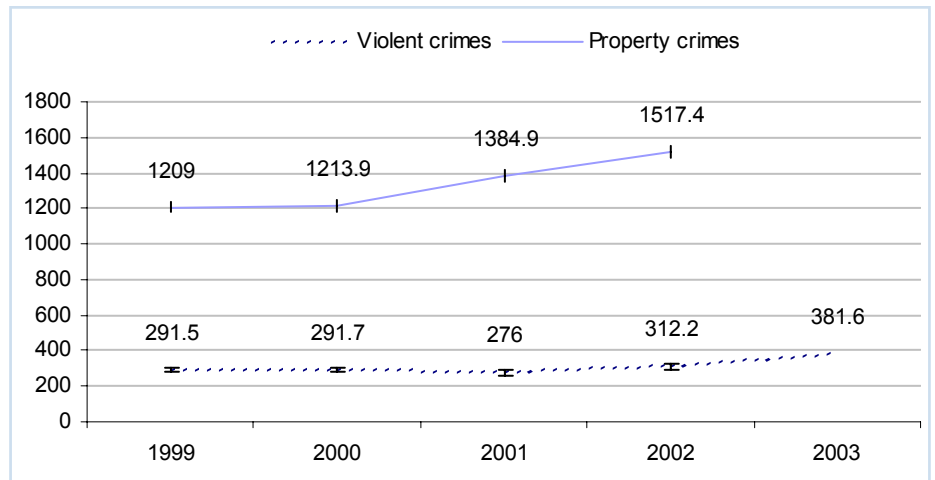
Property crimes are burglary, larceny, and auto theft.

Violent crimes are murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Aggravated assault is an attack or threatened attack with a weapon regardless of whether or not an injury occurred, or an attack without a weapon when serious injury results.

The data on reported crimes are based on reports by local law enforcement agencies.²

Crime rates reflect the "tip of the iceberg" in terms of total criminal activity in a community. Victimization surveys show there is a significant amount of crime committed each year that is not counted in official statistics because it is not reported to law enforcement. Additionally, for multiple crimes committed by an offender at the same

Figure 13.1
Crime Rates* by Type of Crime**, Sonoma County 1999-2003



*Rates are per 100,000 population.

**Property crimes include burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny theft over \$400. Violent crimes include homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Source: California Department of Justice, *Crime and Crime Rates, Sonoma County 1999-2003*.

time, only the most severe is counted in the data.³

Property Crime

During the four-year period 1999-2002, Sonoma County property crime rates (Figure 13.1) were consistently lower than California rates. This rate, however, increased significantly during this time. It is interesting to note that during this time the unemployment rate rose significantly from 2.7% in 1999 to 5.1% in 2002.⁴ Property crime rates through 2002 are not comparable to rates for 2003 due to variations in data reporting.⁵

During 2003, Cloverdale, Petaluma, Windsor and the unincorporated area of Sonoma County had signifi-

cantly lower property crime rates than the overall county rate of 1247.2/100,000.⁶

Violent Crime

From 1999 to 2003, violent crime rate in Sonoma County increased significantly (from 291.5/100,000 to 381.6/100,000). The California violent crime rate for the same time period experienced a significant decrease. Still, the Sonoma County violent crime rate is significantly lower than the California rate (381.6/100,000 compared to 569.4/100,000, respectively).⁷

During 2000-2003, Santa Rosa and Cotati were the only two jurisdictions to have violent crime rates significantly higher than the So-



Table 13.1
Violent Crime Rates* by Jurisdiction,
Sonoma County 2000-2003

City	Violent crime rate
Cloverdale	355.6
Cotati	408.3
Healdsburg	283.7
Petaluma	164.5
Rohnert Park	287.2
Santa Rosa	444.5
Sebastopol	369.8
Sonoma	177.5
Windsor	230.2
Unincorporated area	267.4
Entire County	318.4

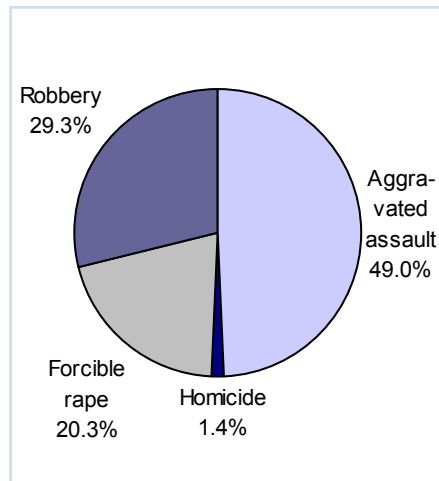
*Rates are per 100,000 population
Source: California Department of Justice
crime statistics, Sonoma County 2003.

sonoma County rate (Table 13.1).
Petaluma, Sonoma, and Windsor
had significantly lower violent
crime rates than the county rate.⁸

Aggravated assault was the pri-
mary contributor to the violent
crime rate in Sonoma County from
1999 to 2003 accounting for almost
half of all violent crimes. Robbery
and forcible rape accounted for 20%
and 12.8% of these violent crimes.
During this time there were 59
homicides in Sonoma County, total-
ing less than 2% of all violent
crimes (Figure 13.2).⁹

The 2000-2002 Sonoma County
homicide rate of 2.9/100,000 was
similar to the county rate for 1999-
2001 and was significantly lower

Figure 13.2
Violent Crimes by Type, Sonoma County
1999-2003



Source: California Department of Justice
crime and crime rates, Sonoma County
1999-2003.

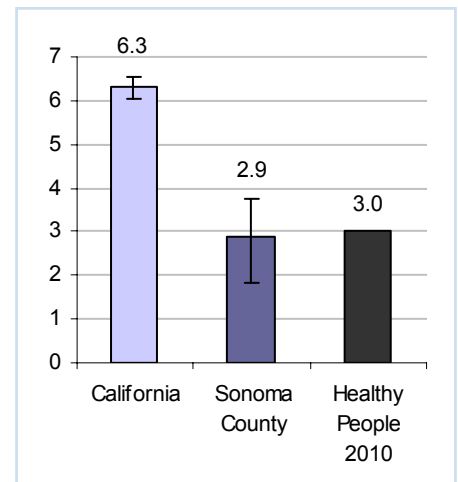
than the California rate. Sonoma
County met the Healthy People
2010 goal of fewer than 3 homi-
cides /100,000 (Figure 13.3).¹⁰

Gangs

Gang violence is a serious public
health problem most widely associ-
ated with young men.¹¹ Youth vio-
lence has spread from major urban
areas to the suburbs and even the
rural communities of California.
Today, gangs attract young people
from all walks of life, socio-
economic backgrounds, races and
ethnic groups. The California De-
partment of Justice estimates that
there could be as many as 300,000
gang members in the state.¹²

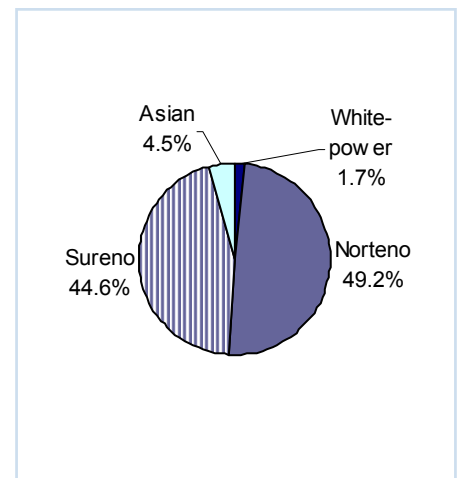
According to the Sonoma County

Figure 13.3
Homicide Rate*, Three-year Average,
Sonoma County and California 2000-
2002



*Rates are age-adjusted and per 100,000
population
Source: California Department of Health
Services, vital statistics death records
2000-2002.

Figure 13.4
Types of Gangs, Sonoma County 2005



Source: Sonoma County Sheriff's Depart-
ment Intelligence Files, April 2005.

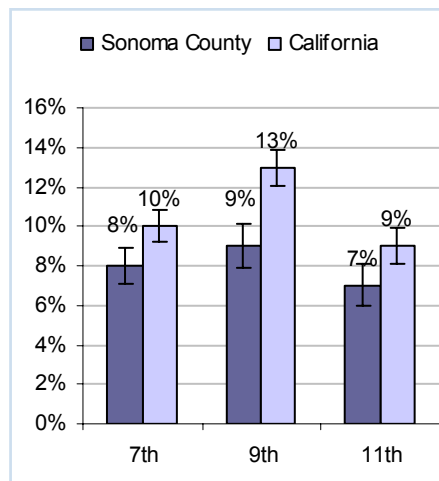
Sheriff's Department, there are four main gang affiliations with an estimated 3,200 gang members in Sonoma County (Figure 13.4).¹³ "Norteros" refers to the largely rural northern California gangs affiliated with Nuestra Familia. Their traditional rivals are "Sureños," who are affiliated with the southern California-based Mexican mafia. The term "Asian gang" refers to both East and Southeast Asian populations. These two broad categories include as many cultural dissimilarities as similarities between populations. White-power gangs maintain a power base derived from racism and bigotry, and they often resort to violence in support of their beliefs.¹⁴

According to the 2004 California Healthy Kids Survey, about 8% of Sonoma County 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students reported ever having belonged to a gang, compared to almost 11% statewide (Figure 13.5). California rates of reported gang affiliation are significantly higher than Sonoma County rates for every grade level.¹⁵

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency, incarceration, and institutional treatment result in significant human and monetary costs in Sonoma County. Youth at risk of becoming criminal offenders generally exhibit the following characteristics: failure in school, family problems, substance abuse and/or mental health problems.

Figure 13.5
Percent of Students in 7th, 9th and 11th Grades who Reported Ever Having Been in a Gang, Sonoma County and California 2004

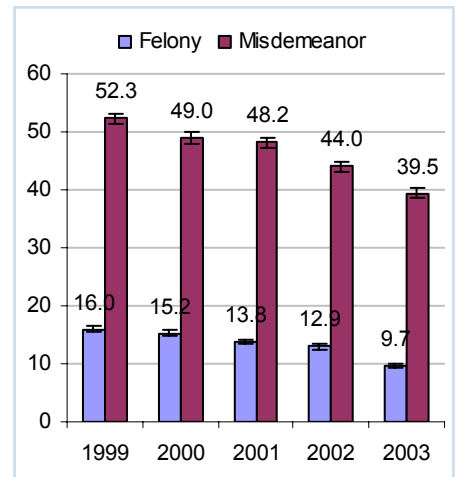


Source: California Health Interview Survey, Sonoma County and California 2004.

Improving medical, mental health and substance-abuse treatment in the community and the juvenile justice system can help to address some of the risk factors that often contribute to delinquency.¹⁶

Numerous factors can influence crime data. For example, among states, the definition of juvenile crime versus adult crime can vary significantly, as well as the definition of who is a juvenile. In addition, different economic and social conditions can affect crime. Among California counties there are factors that affect juvenile arrest rates, such as the availability of law enforcement resources, diversion programs, or other intervention services. For this reason, caution should be used when comparing

Figure 13.6
Juvenile Arrest Rates* by Arrest Type, Sonoma County 1999-2003



*Rates are per 1,000 children age 10-17. Source: California Department of Justice crime statistics, juvenile felony and misdemeanor arrests, Sonoma County 1999-2003.

rates.¹⁷

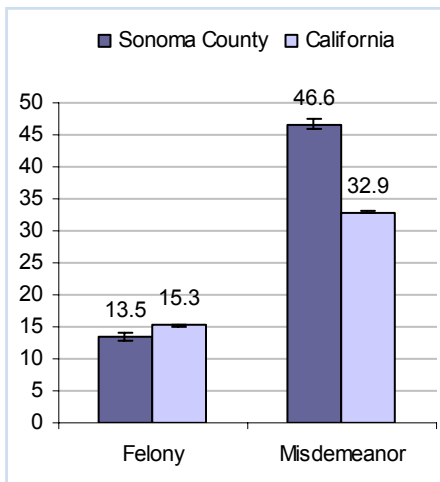
Despite the public's heightened awareness of juvenile delinquency, resulting from media coverage surrounding school shootings and other violent but rare incidents, youth crime has declined significantly over the past decade.¹⁸

The Sonoma County juvenile arrest rates for both felony and misdemeanor crimes decreased significantly each year from 1999 to 2003 (Figure 13.6).¹⁹

Compared to California, Sonoma County had a significantly higher juvenile arrests rate for misdemeanor crimes from 1999 to 2003. The juvenile arrest rate for felony crimes in Sonoma County was sig-



Figure 13.7
Juvenile Arrest Rates* by Arrest Type,
Sonoma County and California 1999-
2003



*Rates are per 1,000 children age 10-17.
 Source: California Department of Justice crime statistics, juvenile felony and misdemeanor arrests, Sonoma County and California 1999-2003.

nificantly lower than the California rate (Figure 13.7).²⁰

Indicators of Crime and Safety (1999), a report issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, found a strong correlation between gangs and both guns and drugs in schools. In 2004, 8% of Sonoma County 7th, 9th and 11th grade students reported carrying a gun to school. The percent of Sonoma County students attending non-traditional schools (alternative schools) who reported carrying a gun to school was 29%.²¹

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence, including aggra-

vated assault and rape, is a public health problem of epidemic proportions. In addition to the immediate trauma caused by the abuse, domestic violence contributes to a number of chronic health problems including depression, alcohol and substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and often limits the ability of individuals to provide a safe environment in which to raise children.²²

The prevalence of domestic violence in a community is difficult to measure due to factors, such as fear of renewed violence or the perception of social stigma, that inhibit victims from disclosing their abuse.

While victims of domestic violence are typically women, abuse to men also occurs. In 2001 in the United States, about 85% of reported victimizations by intimate partners were against women (588,490) and 15% of reported victimizations were against men (103,220).²³ An estimated one in every four children in California is directly exposed to violence as a victim or witness of domestic violence.²⁴

In 2001-2003, there were approximately 10,000 calls to the Sonoma County YWCA Domestic Violence Hot Line. The number of calls increased from 2,751 in 2001 to 3,499 in 2003.²⁵

Data from domestic violence calls for assistance are collected by responding law enforcement agencies. They include all cases which

resulted in a report being written and include both cases where an arrest was made and those where circumstances did not warrant an arrest.²⁶

From 2000 to 2003, Sonoma County rates for domestic violence-related calls for assistance were significantly lower than the California rates, and the rate for domestic violence-related calls for assistance for adults age 18-69 in Sonoma County decreased significantly from 7.6/1,000 to 5.6/1,000.²⁷

Domestic violence-related calls for assistance occur in all cities in Sonoma County. Although 33% of the Sonoma County population lives in Santa Rosa, nearly 53% of domestic violence-related calls for assistance originated from this jurisdiction during 2003.²⁸ In 2003, over 85% of domestic violence-related calls for assistance in Sonoma County involved a weapon of some kind (Table 13.2).

In 2003, the rate of arrests for selected domestic violence offenses in Sonoma County was 1.7/1,000 adults age 18-69. This is significantly less than the comparable California rate (2.0/1,000). In Sonoma County, approximately 73% of these arrests were to men and 27% of arrests were to women.²⁹

In 2003, 383 emergency protective orders were issued and 1,750 domestic violence/sexual assaults were reported in Sonoma County. This is down considerably from

2002 (445 emergency protective orders and 2,884 reports).³⁰

Child Abuse and Neglect

The consequences of child abuse and neglect are both immediate and long-term. Research indicates that children who are victims of child abuse are at high risk of becoming perpetrators of abuse later in life. Child abuse victims are also more likely to commit crimes as juveniles. Most abusers are members of the victim’s family. Males and females perpetrate abuse against their own children at similar rates.³¹

All forms of child abuse are underestimated due to problems with determining the prevalence of child abuse from under-recognition, under-reporting, and a lack of a standardized definition of what constitutes child abuse.³²

Child abuse and neglect is reported as “substantiated” when confirmed by child protection agencies, and as “referred” when reported by an individual or organization but not yet confirmed by child protective services.³³

From July 2003 to June 2004, 3,487 children age 0-17 had one or more referrals for child abuse in Sonoma County, about 30% of which were substantiated.

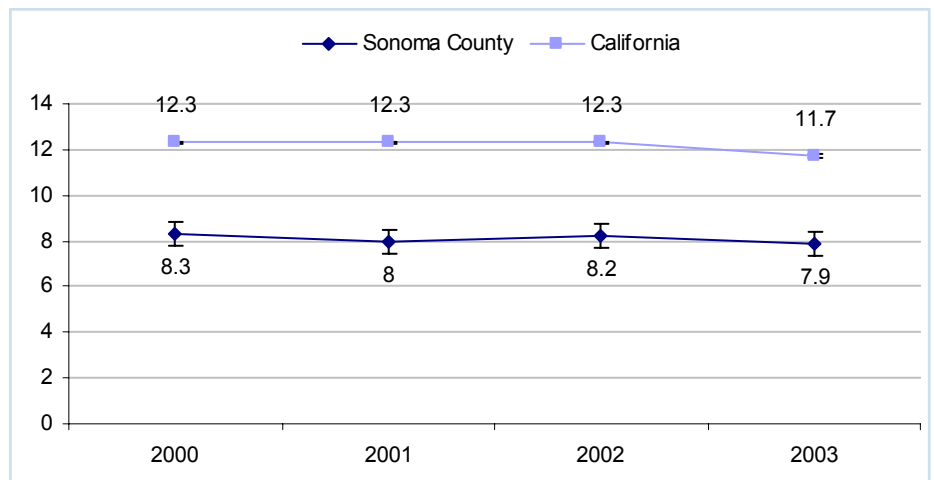
From 2000 to 2003, the Sonoma County rate of substantiated child abuse did not change significantly

Table 13.2
Domestic Violence-related Calls for Assistance by Jurisdiction, Sonoma County 2003

City	No weapon involved	Weapon involved	Total
Cloverdale	17	41	58
Cotati	2	34	36
Healdsburg	28	50	78
Petaluma	30	208	238
Rohnert Park	7	154	161
Santa Rosa	148	794	942
Sebastopol	9	22	31
Sonoma	3	11	14
Windsor	2	31	33
Unincorporated area	11	171	182
Total	264	1,517	1,781

Source: California Department of Justice crime statistics, domestic violence related calls for assistance, Sonoma County 2003.

Figure 13.8
Child Abuse Rates*, Sonoma County and California 2000-2003

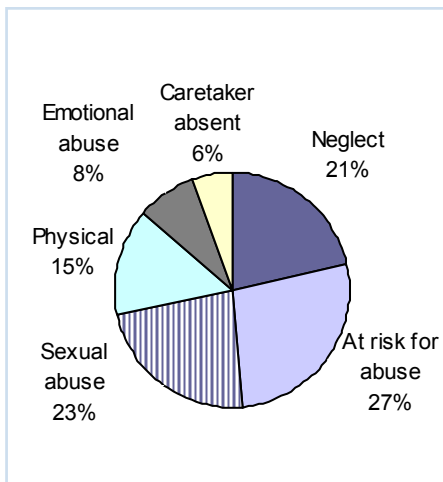


*Rates are per 1,000 children age 0-17 years.

Source: University of California Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research, children with maltreatment substantiations referrals and entries, Sonoma County and California 2000-2003.



Figure 13.9
Substantiated Child Abuse Referrals by Allegation, Sonoma County July 2003 to June 2004



Source: University of California Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research, children with maltreatment substantiations referrals and entries, Sonoma County July 2003– June 2004.

(Figure 13.8). This rate was consistently lower than the California rate during this time and met the Healthy People 2010 goal of 10.3/1,000 children age 0-17.³⁴

In 2003, child abuse rates (substantiated reports) varied significantly by race/ethnicity. Native American and African American children age 0-17 had rates about three times higher than White or Hispanic children.³⁵

Children at-risk for child abuse made up about 27% of the substantiated referrals to Child Protective Services. Sexual abuse and neglect (both general and severe) each made up about one in five of the referrals (Figure 13.9).³⁶

Table 13.3
Types of Elder Maltreatment Substantiated by Adult Protective Services, 2000

Maltreatment	Percent
Self-neglect	41.9%
Physical abuse	20.1%
Caregiver neglect	13.2%
Financial exploitation	9.8%
Emotional abuse	8.1%
Sexual abuse	0.8%
Other	6.1%

Source: National Center on Elder Abuse, adult protective services survey 2000.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse can include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and financial abuse, as well as cases of neglect. Research suggests that elder abuse contributes to psychological and psychiatric conditions, such as depression, post-traumatic stress, learned helplessness and alienation.³⁷

The exact prevalence of elder abuse is difficult to determine because this crime is largely unreported. Many experts agree that 4% of elders age 65+ in this country have been abused or neglected at any given time. Depending on the study, only 1 in 5 to 1 in 14 cases are reported to authorities. The majority of abusers are family members.³⁸

Data from Sonoma County Adult Protective Services show the five-year average rate of elder abuse for 1999-2004 was 19.9/1,000 seniors age 65+.³⁹ The National Center of

Elder Abuse reported a steady increase in elder abuse nationwide, doubling in the past 10 years. With an expected growth of the senior population of more than 100% by 2018, the incidence of elderly and dependent abuse can be expected to increase.⁴⁰

Self-neglect, characterized as the behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her health or safety, is a controversial category in relation to elder abuse. For instance, is abuse occurring if an individual who is competent chooses to neglect their personal health or safety?

There are many factors which may lead one to self-neglect, including dementia, illness and depression. The subsequent intervention necessary for each factor is unique. Self-neglect, if included statistically as a form of elder abuse, represents the highest percentage of cases of elder abuse.⁴¹ A 2000 survey of state Adult Protective Services found that the majority of substantiated elder abuse allegations were for self-neglect (Table 13.3).⁴²



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