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Riverside County Crime Stats Up in First Half of 2016

Posted Aug 16, 2016 12:17 PM PDT
Updated Sep 19, 2016 6:08 PM PDT

RIVERSIDE COUNTY - The first half of 2016 saw the murder rate double and other criminal

Crime data for the January-June period shows overall violent crime surging 14 percent within the agency's jurisdiction.

The violent crime rate is factored using Part I crime data. Part I crimes are classified by the FBI as offenses that include murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, auto theft and larceny. The violent crime component focuses exclusively on murder, rape, robbery and assault.

According to the sheriff's department, there were 27 homicides in the first half of this year in its patrol areas, compared to 14 during the same period in 2015 -- a 93 percent jump.

Looking only at unincorporated communities, the growth rate was an even 100 percent -- 10 murders in the first six months of 2016, compared to five in the first half of 2015.

According to sheriff's officials, the overall Part I crime rate edged up 4 percent from January to June.

Sheriff's statistics showed that robberies spiked by 19 percent, while aggravated assaults grew by 11.4 percent and rapes by 1.5 percent.

More vehicle thefts and larcenies drove the property crime rate up roughly 3 percent year-over-year.

Burglaries were down in the sheriff's patrol areas, numbering 3,150 between January and June, compared to 3,328 during the same period in 2015. Notably, despite overall increases countywide, assaults and auto thefts were also down in the unincorporated communities, dropping 12.6 and 1.5 percent, respectively.

The department contracts with 17 cities to provide law enforcement services, as well as handles enforcement in all of the county areas that are not under municipal governance.

Sheriff's officials did not offer possible reasons for the upsurge in criminal activity, though area public safety representatives have consistently pointed to changes in state law as creating an environment conducive to crime.

Proposition 47, approved by voters in 2014, reduced multiple offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, removing the prospect of prison time for some perpetrators.

Additionally, Assembly Bill 109, passed in 2011, altered sentencing guidelines for so-called "non-serious, non-violent" offenders that emphasized alternatives to jail or prison, making recidivists eligible for "mandatory supervision," a form of probation imposed in lieu of time behind bars.

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