




Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR  
10/25/2005

To: Honorable Mayor and  
Members of the City Council

From:  Phil Kamlarz, City Manager

Submitted by: Douglas N. Hambleton, Chief of Police

Subject: Status of Crime in Berkeley

INTRODUCTION

The City Council has directed the City Manager to provide, on a quarterly basis, information on crime rates in Berkeley, with a particular emphasis on comparison of Berkeley's crime rate to other jurisdictions in the Bay Area.

Chief Hambleton and members of his staff will make a presentation before the City Council on Crime in Berkeley. Many of the items addressed in this written report will be discussed again in the presentation. The presentation will expand the examination of crime in our city and will look at other topics not covered here.

DISCUSSION

The terms Part One Violent Crimes and Part One Property Crimes are used throughout this report. Part One Violent Crimes include murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Part One Property Crimes include burglary, theft, auto theft and arson. These crime classifications are defined in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Handbook, issued by the U. S. Department of Justice. These same classifications have been used by law enforcement since the 1930s as a way to standardize reporting and make consistent comparisons of these specific crimes.

UCR Part One statistics are not intended as a measure of all serious crime. For example, they do not include kidnapping, forgery, child neglect, and some types of sex crimes. They do include most serious crimes. Due to the regular reporting by all jurisdictions over many years the statistics provide a useful tool for making crime comparisons from one year to the next and from one city to another.

Crime Rate Comparison:

The crime rate has been declining in Berkeley over the past several years. This is a trend that appears consistent in many communities in the Bay Area and throughout the nation. In

Berkeley, homicides decreased from 3 in the first eight months of 2004 to 2 in that same period in 2005. Rapes decreased from 14 in 2004 to 13 in 2005. Robberies decreased by 9% with 245 robberies in the first eight months of 2004 compared to 223 robberies in the same period in 2005. Aggravated assaults were the only Part One Violent Crime category that increased. In the first 8 months of 2005, 116 aggravated assaults were reported compared with 109 assaults during that same period in 2004.

The following chart examines the trends in Part One Violent Crime in Berkeley from 2003 to 2005. Based on the trends for the first eight months of 2005, the total Part One Violent Crime rate for the year will be similar to the rates set in 2004.

	2003 Full Year	2004 Full Year	2005 Jan-Aug 8 Months
<b>Homicide</b>	5	4	2
<b>Rape</b>	19	16	13
<b>Robbery</b>	411	352	223
<b>Agg. Assault</b>	158	155	116
<b>Violent Crime</b>	593	527	354

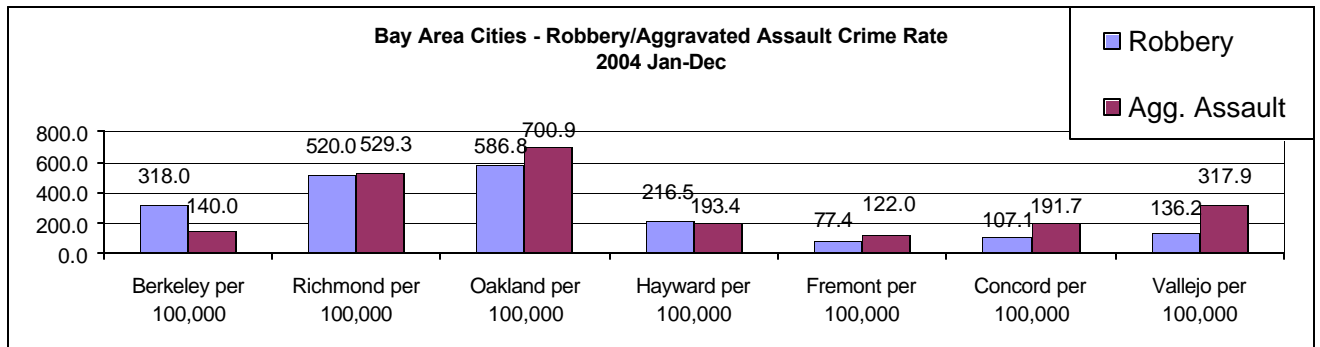
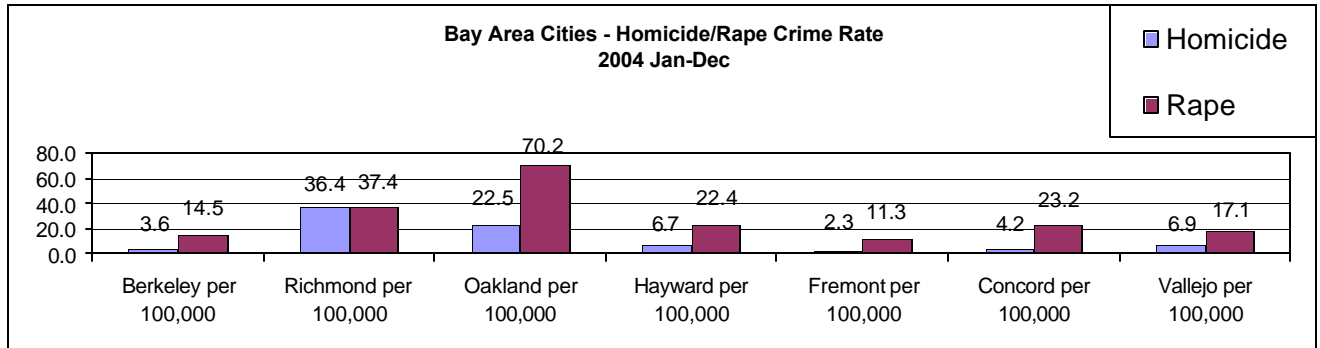
There were 8864 Part One Property Crimes reported in all of 2004. Based on the number of Part One Property Crimes reported in the first eight month of 2005, Part One Property Crimes are expected to decrease by about 9% from the 2004 levels.

The following chart displays the Part One Property Crimes for the past three years.

	2003 Full Year	2004 Full Year	2005 Jan-Aug 8 Months
<b>Burglary</b>	1240	1377	829
<b>Theft</b>	6472	6252	3650
<b>Auto Theft</b>	1348	1189	892
<b>Arson</b>	34	46	19
<b>Total Prop. Crime</b>	9094	8864	5390

For comparison purposes it is informative to look at Part One Crime rates for other communities in the area. Crime statistics for the year 2004 are the latest that are available from the Department of Justice. These following charts show Part One Crime Indexes for some of the larger nearby cities. The term Crime Index is sometimes used when looking at crime data. The index is the relationship between the actual number of crimes and the population of each city. For example, in 2004, Berkeley's aggravated assault index was 140 (for every 100,000 population there were 140 aggravated assaults in 2004).

Part One Violent Crimes

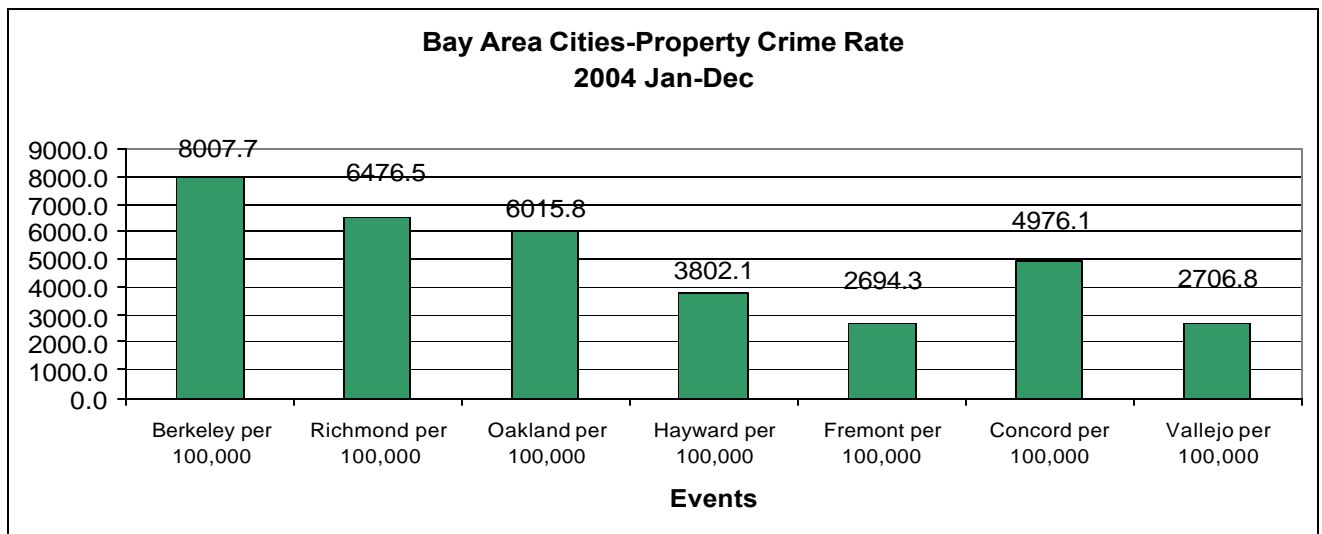


The validity of any crime statistic comparisons depends on the accuracy of the reporting. Last year the BPD discovered that they had been making UCR classification errors that resulted in the reporting of inflated numbers of aggravated assaults. Aggravated assaults are generally felony crimes involving the use of deadly weapons or attacks resulting in serious bodily injury. At one time most California felony assaults were also UCR aggravated assaults.

Due to changes in state law there are now many crimes that are felony assaults by California standards that are not aggravated assaults based on the UCR classifications. Since the early 1990s in California all domestic violence assaults involving any injury have been felonies. Some domestic violence incidents involve deadly weapons and/or serious bodily injury and they should be reported as aggravated assaults. Thankfully, most domestic violence incidents do not involve deadly weapons or serious injuries and these incidents should not be reported to the Department of Justice as aggravated assaults.

For many years Berkeley has been improperly reporting all felony domestic assaults and some other felony assaults that do not involve serious injuries as UCR aggravated assaults. The result has been greatly inflated numbers of reported aggravated assaults and the inaccurate over reporting of the total number of Part One Violent Crimes. This reporting error was corrected starting in the year 2004. The crime data for 2003 has also been corrected, but not until after the incorrect data was reported to the Department of Justice. Due to this error it is not possible to make accurate year-to-year or city-to-city comparisons of Berkeley's aggravated assault statistics for approximately a ten year period.

Part One Property Crimes



The high property crime index is a concern. Since the late 1980s the police have concentrated their attention on violent crime and drug activity that is closely related to violence. They are now developing strategies to address property crimes. These include increased communications and coordination with respect to these non-violent crimes.

The exchange of information is an important component of solving and preventing crime. Earlier this year the Property Crimes Unit of the Detective Bureau started to produce weekly reports that provide crime information to the beat officers. These reports include a Hot Sheet which lists all the outstanding stolen vehicles and a Burglary Summary Sheet, which identifies recent burglaries, M.O. factors, and suspects. Recently, the stolen auto list has been incorporated in the Parking Enforcement Officer's hand-held ticket writing computers. The computers will now alert the officer if the car being issued a ticket is a Berkeley stolen vehicle.

Chief Hambleton is now holding regular meetings with his command staff and other key individuals to work on the analysis and response to crime and disorder problems. The police have also been working with the Human Resources Department to develop a Crime Analyst position. They hope to hire an analyst during the first part of next year. While the analyst will work on all crime issues it is expected that this position will bring additional focus to property crimes.

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