

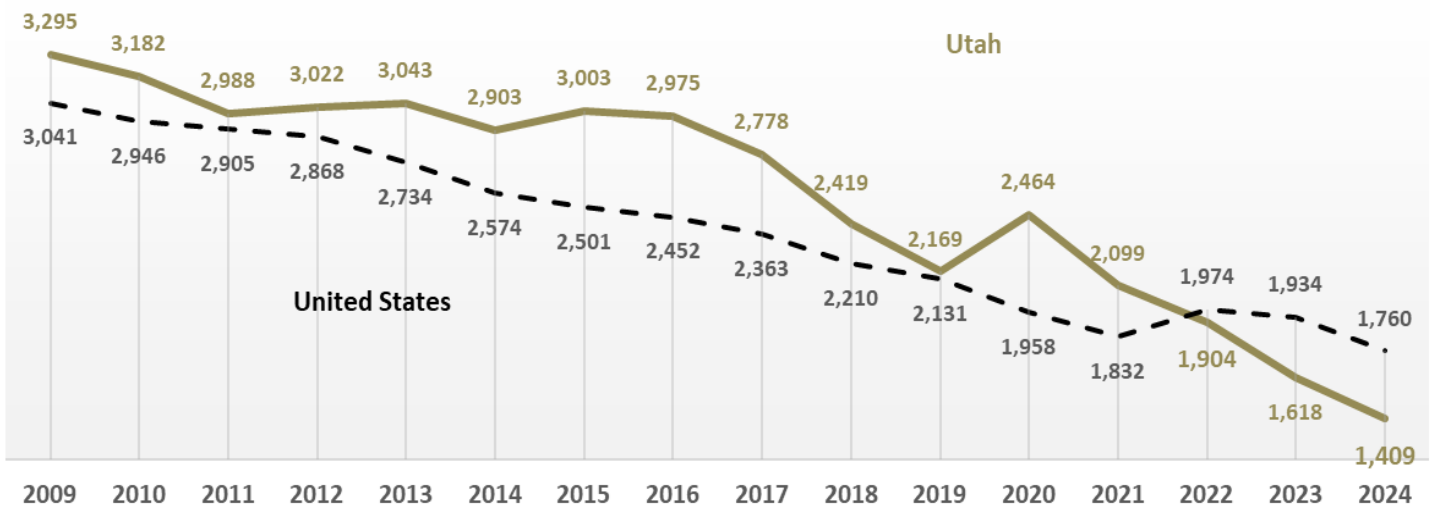
CCJJ Issue Brief: Update on Utah's Crime Rates Since 2020 Spike

August 2025



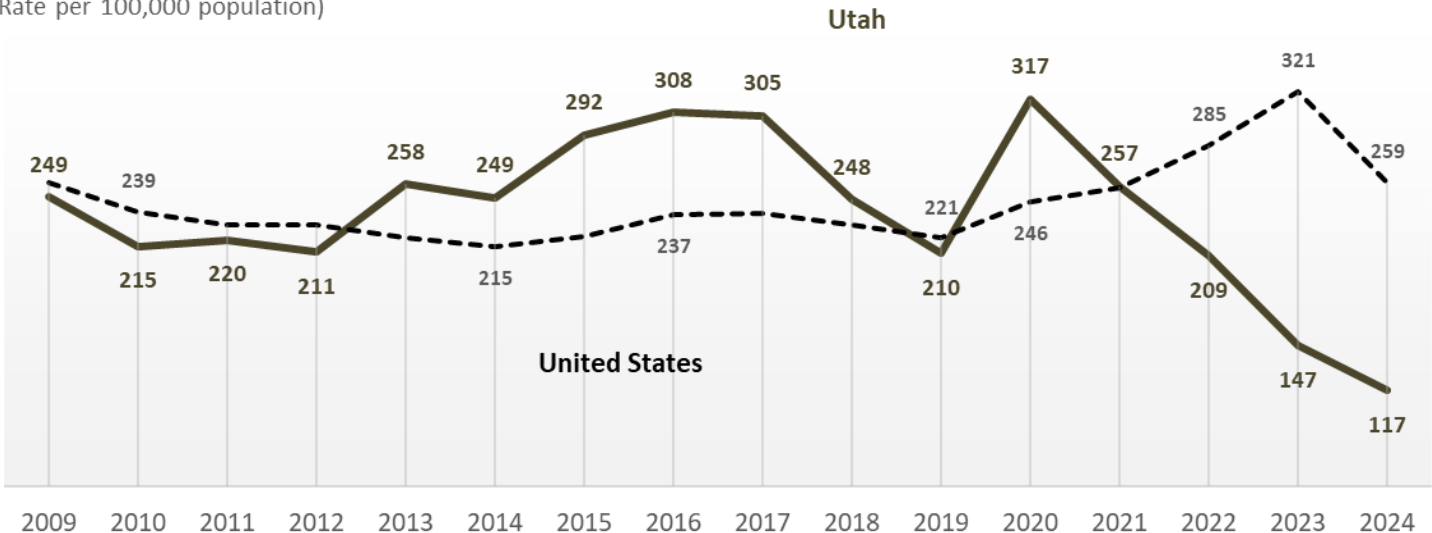
Brief Summary of the 2024 Utah Crime Rate Data

- According to FBI estimates of crimes reported to law enforcement, Utah's property crime rate in 2024 was 1,409 per 100,000 residents. This is a decrease of 13% below the 2023 rate of 1,618 and is **43% lower** than the 2020 property crime rate spike (2,464) amidst the pandemic and social unrest of that year. This 2024 property crime rate is another historic low (this is the fourth straight year setting record lows). Utah's property crime rate is well below the national rate (20% lower) after years of being higher and falling below for the first time in 2022.
 - Property crime is down across all categories: arson, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

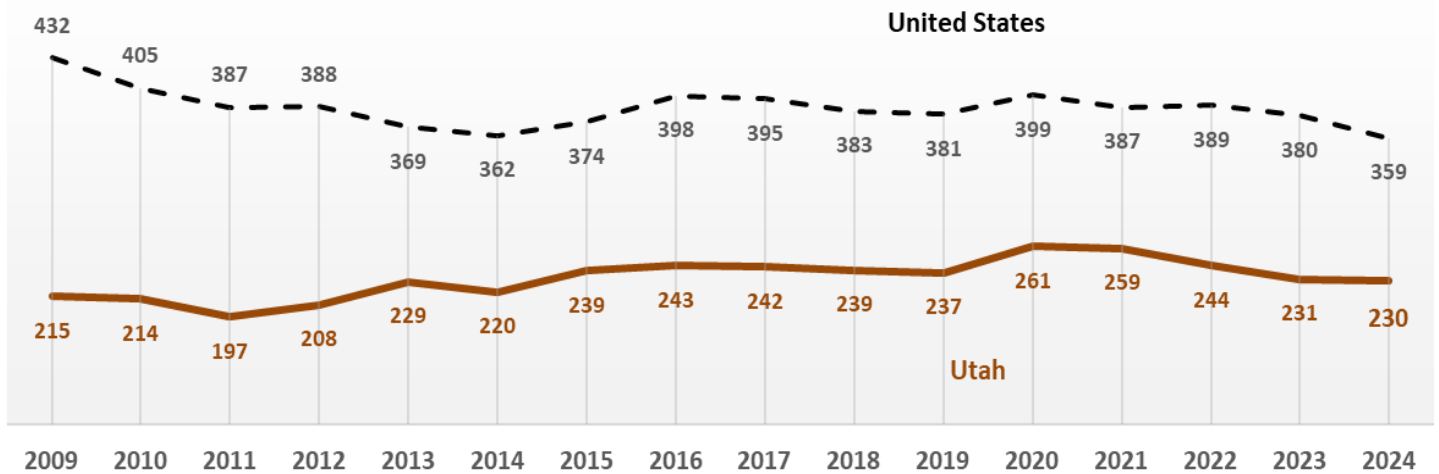


- One property crime, motor vehicle theft, had displayed a particularly alarming increase in 2020 – motor vehicle theft jumped 51% to 317 per 100,000 residents in 2020 from 210 in 2019 (a 25-year low at the time). After dropping significantly in 2021 (to 257 per 100,000 population), 2022 (to 209), and 2023 (to 147), the rate continued its drop in 2024 to 117 (a new historic low), a **53% decrease since 2020**. Compared to Utah, the nationwide rate dropped in 2024 for the first time since 2019 (Utah is 55% lower than the national rate).

FBI UCR **MV Theft** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. National
 (* Rate per 100,000 population)

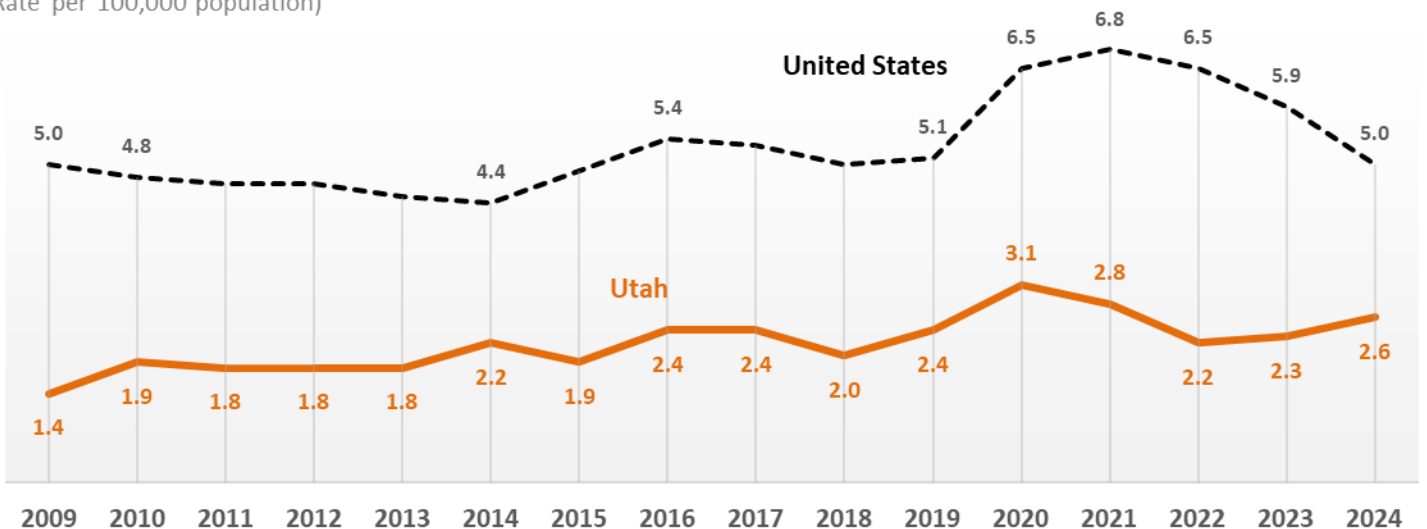


- Utah's violent crime rate in 2024 was 230 per 100,000 residents, which is now lower than the pre-pandemic 2019 rate of 237 (lowest rate since 2014) and shows a **12% decrease** from the recent high of 261 seen during the 2020 spike. Apart from 2020 and 2021 (also elevated at 259 per 100,000 population), Utah's violent crime rate has been fairly stable since 2013. Utah's violent crime rate is generally a third lower than the national rate.
 - In terms of specific categories of violent crime, both robbery (+5% to 27.3 from 25.9) and rape (+3% to 58.0 from 56.3) increased slightly in 2024, though both remain below 2019 levels.
 - Aggravated assaults decreased 4% to 142 per 100,000 population from 147 in 2023, and are now at a rate similar to pre-pandemic levels of 2019 (141) for the first time since the 2020 spike.
 - Homicides also increased slightly in 2024 (see below).



- Within the category of violent crime, the increase in the homicide rate in Utah and across the country from 2019 to 2020 received the most attention. In Utah, the homicide rate in 2020 was 3.1 per 100,000 residents, up from 2.4 in 2019 (and representing a 10-year high). Since then, Utah's homicide rate dropped slightly to 2.8 in 2021, and more significantly to 2.2 in 2022. Since then, however, it has risen slightly in both 2023 and 2024 and stands at 2.6. This is still 16% lower than the recent high in 2020, but now slightly elevated over 2019 levels.
 - 2023 and 2024 rates are affected by [several high profile familicide cases](#) involving multiple victims.
 - Utah's low homicide rates can be particularly sensitive to incidents like these in a given year.

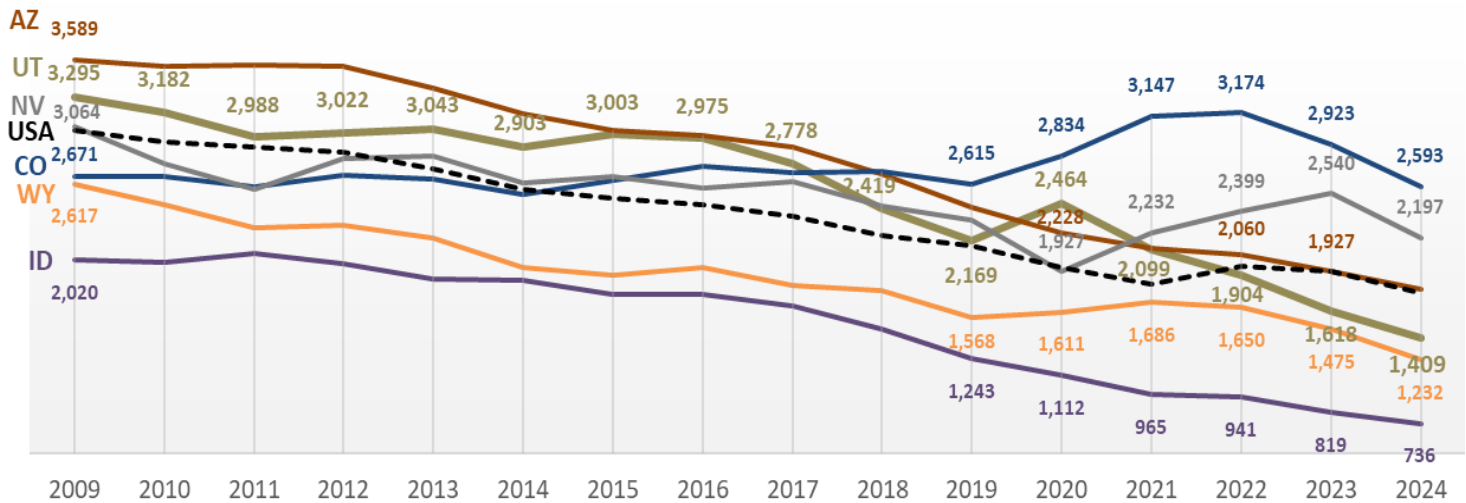
FBI UCR **Homicide** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. National
 (*Rate per 100,000 population)



Putting Utah's Crime Rates in Geographical Context

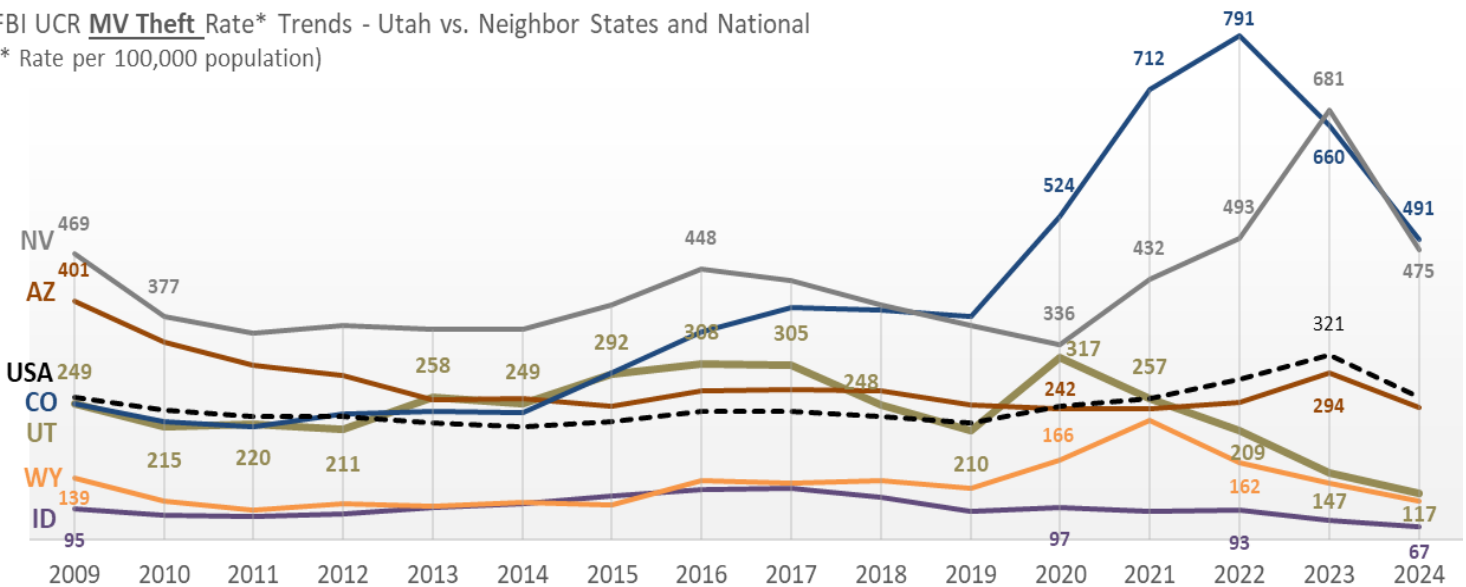
- While not universal, the 2020 increase in crime in Utah was also reflected in the national crime rates and in the rates of Utah's neighbor states (Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada).
- On the whole, property crime has been decreasing nationally and regionally over the past 10-15 years. One exception has been Colorado, where rates were steady between 2010-19 before also experiencing a significant jump in 2020 that continued through 2022 before a drop in 2023 and 2024. Utah had a similar leveling off between 2011-16, which was then followed by a dramatic decrease in property crime between 2016-19 ahead of the jump in 2020. Wyoming (2019-21) and Nevada (2020-23) also experienced an increase in property crime, while Arizona and Idaho did not experience a 2020 spike.
- Utah (-57%), Arizona (-50%), and Idaho (-64%) have had the biggest decrease in property crime rates since 2009. Idaho has had the lowest rates in the region for years, but Utah and Arizona started the period with the highest.

FBI UCR **Property Crime** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. Neighbor States and National
 (* Rate per 100,000 population)



- In contrast to property crime in general, motor vehicle theft rates increased nationally in 2020, as well as in all other neighbor states except for Nevada (which has since spiked) and Arizona (which stayed steady until a slight increase in 2023). Besides Utah, the most dramatic increase was seen in Colorado (+39%), and that trend has magnified over the next two years before subsiding in 2023-24. National rates, as well as rates in Nevada and Arizona, also decreased in 2024 after peaking in 2023.

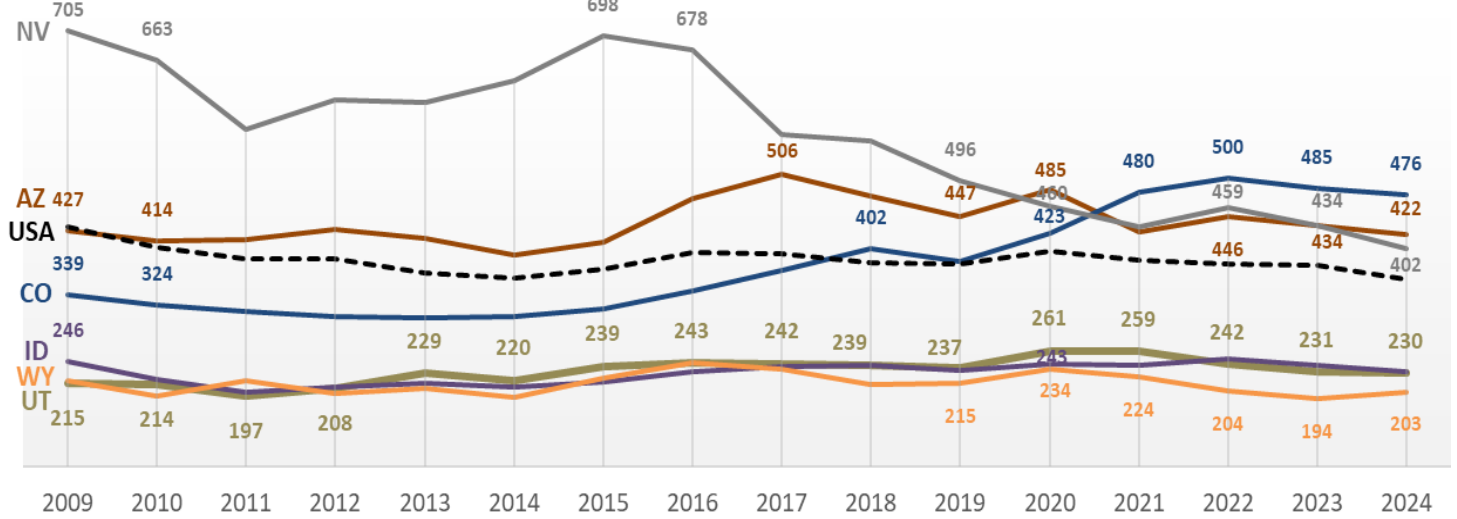
FBI UCR **MV Theft** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. Neighbor States and National
 (* Rate per 100,000 population)



- Utah's violent crime rates have generally been well below national rates (by more than a third) and more in line with neighbors Idaho and Wyoming. In 2020, with the exception of Nevada, the increase in violent crime in Utah also occurred nationally and in all neighboring states. Even with this one-year increase, the violent crime rates in Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming are still well below national rates, and the rates in Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado. As with property crime, Colorado's violent crime rate continued to rise through 2022, while most other states in the region have recovered similarly to Utah.

FBI UCR **Violent Crime** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. Neighbor States and National

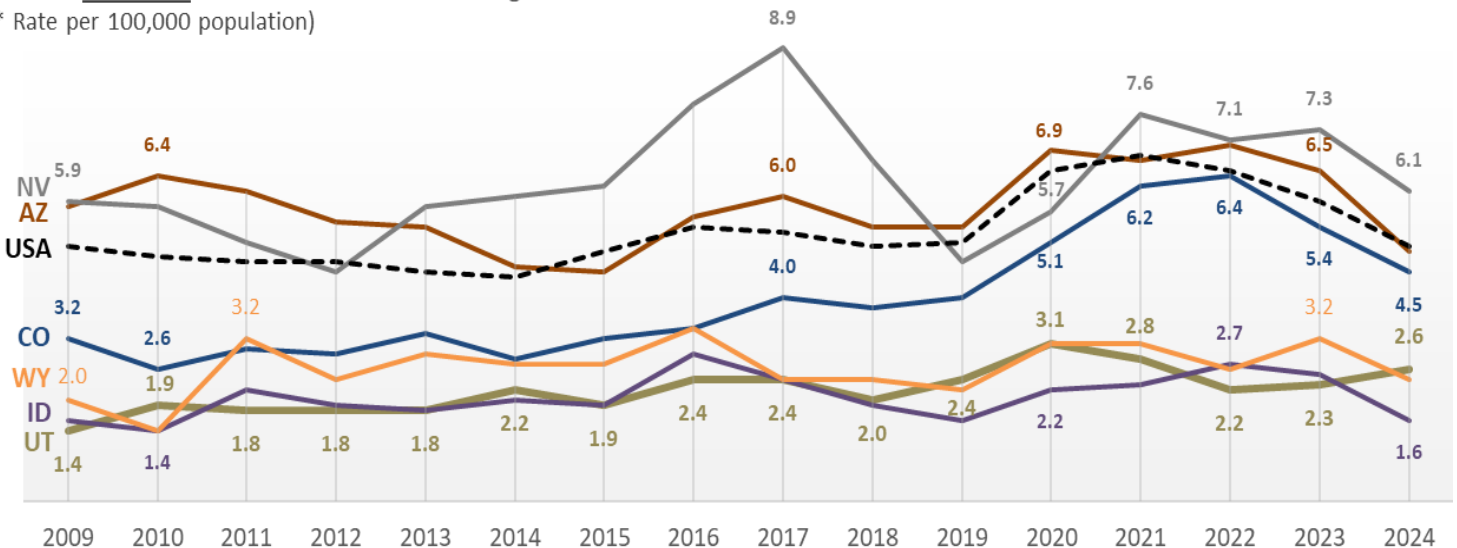
(* Rate per 100,000 population)



- Within the greater violent crime trend, homicide rates also increased in not only Utah, but nationally and in all other neighboring states in 2020. Nationally, homicides increased from 5.1 to 6.4 (+27%) per 100,000. In addition to the 29% increase in the Utah homicide rate, the rates increased in Wyoming (+41%), Idaho (+38%), Arizona (+28%), Colorado (+28%), and Nevada (+21%). Homicide rates continued to climb or stay elevated in Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, and Nevada into 2023, while Utah has had slight increases in its rates the past two years. All states except Utah showed a decrease in 2024, though Utah's rate is still below 2020-21 and only slightly higher than the pre-pandemic rate in 2019. As with general violent crime, Utah, along with Idaho and Wyoming, are consistently well below national rates and the other three states in the region.

FBI UCR **Homicide** Rate* Trends - Utah vs. Neighbor States and National

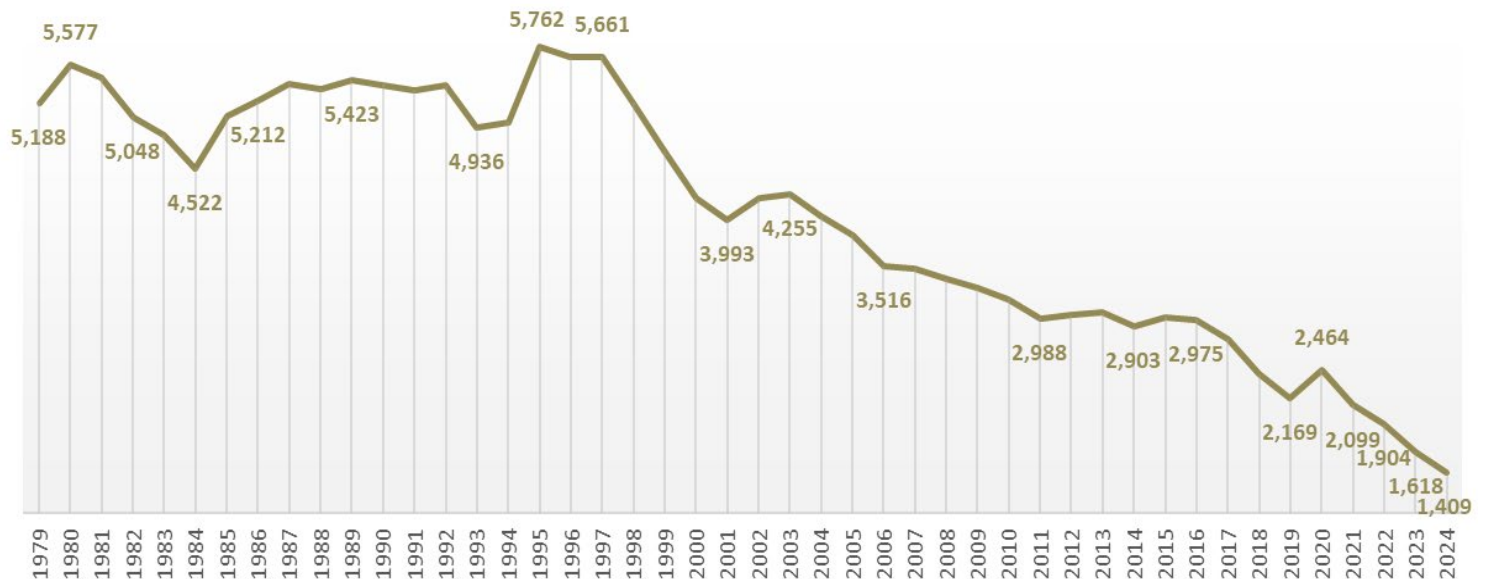
(* Rate per 100,000 population)



Putting Utah's Crime Rates in Historical Context

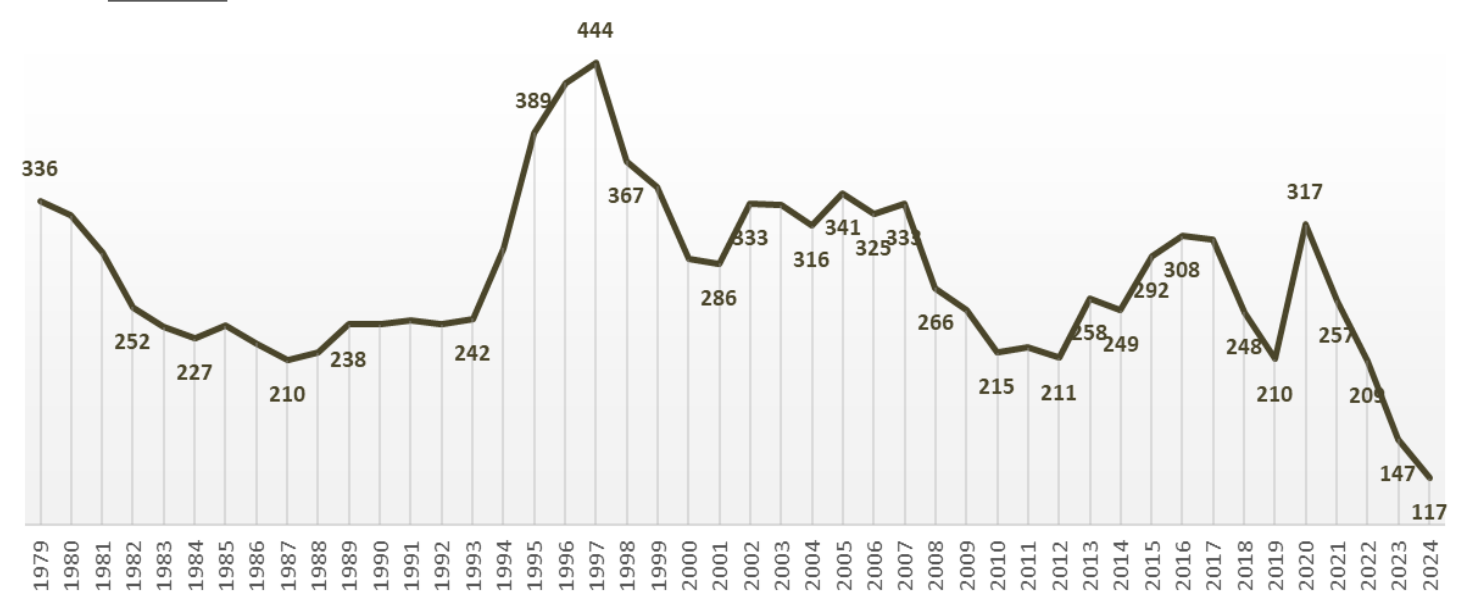
- The figures below show the rates in Utah since 1979 (45 years) for the above crime categories and offenses to provide some additional perspective on any single year rate. While crime has generally been on the decline as a whole in the United States after its peak in the early 1990's, this is not a rule and the trends tend to vary by location and type of offense.
- This trend of general decline has been most pronounced for the category of property crime, though it has been less so for Utah and other states in the Mountain West. Unlike violent crime, where Utah is well below the national average, property crime rates have historically been significantly higher in Utah. The national rate peaked at 5,140 per 100,000 residents in 1991, well below Utah's peak of 5,762 in 1995, and has fallen every year since (except for a small bump in 2001 and 2022) to 1,760 in 2024 (a decrease of 66%). Utah's property crime rate has also fallen significantly, down 76% from the 1995 peak. In contrast to the national rate, however, there was a more pronounced increase starting in 2001 and continuing to 2004, and the rate plateaued around 3,000 between 2011-16 after a steady period of decline, before also declining rapidly between 2016-19. The 2020 rate of 2,464 per 100,000 was still low in historic context despite the increase over the previous year, and the new 2024 rate of 1,409 is less than one-quarter of what the property crime rate was in 1997.

FBI UCR Property Crime Rate* Trends 1979-2024 - Utah



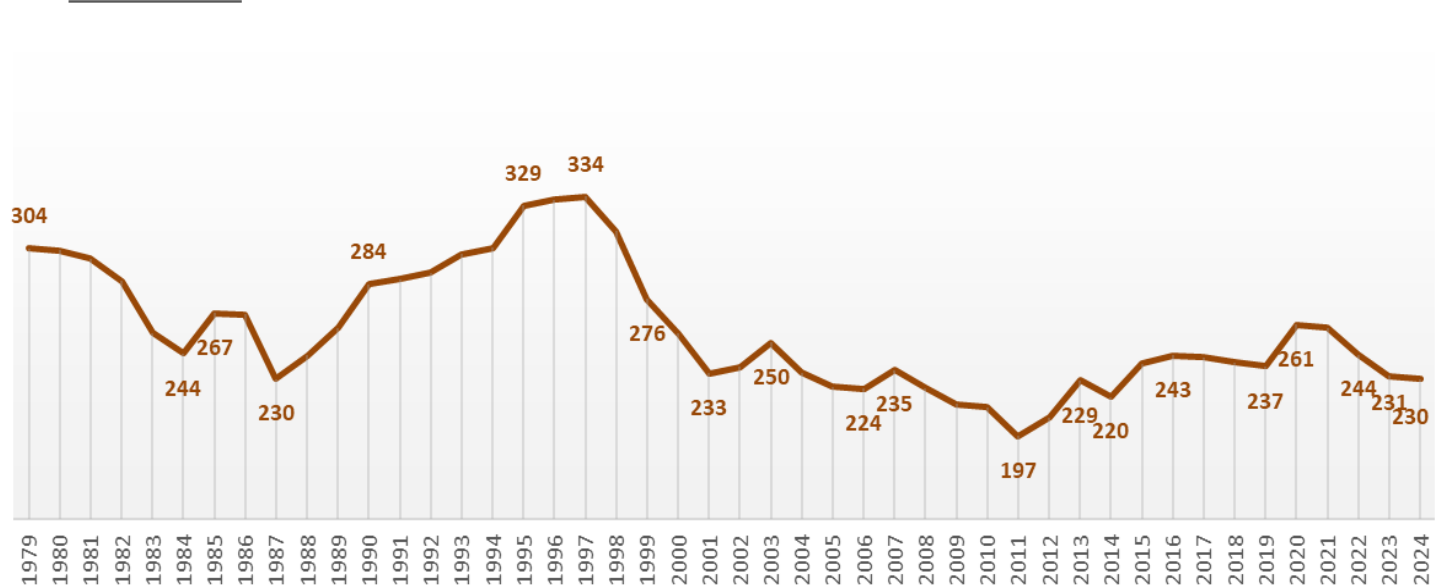
- Within the category of property crime, the dramatic increase in motor vehicle thefts in 2020 was alarming and associated with some common phenomena both regionally and nationally. The figure below, however, shows that motor vehicle theft rates have been much more volatile in Utah over the past 40+ years than property crime in general. The 2020 increase followed the lowest year in this period to that point, and the pattern below suggests this crime tends to be cyclical. The data from the past four years support this as well, with the 2024 motor vehicle theft rate once again down to the lowest in this period.

FBI UCR MV Theft Rate* Trends 1979-2024 - Utah



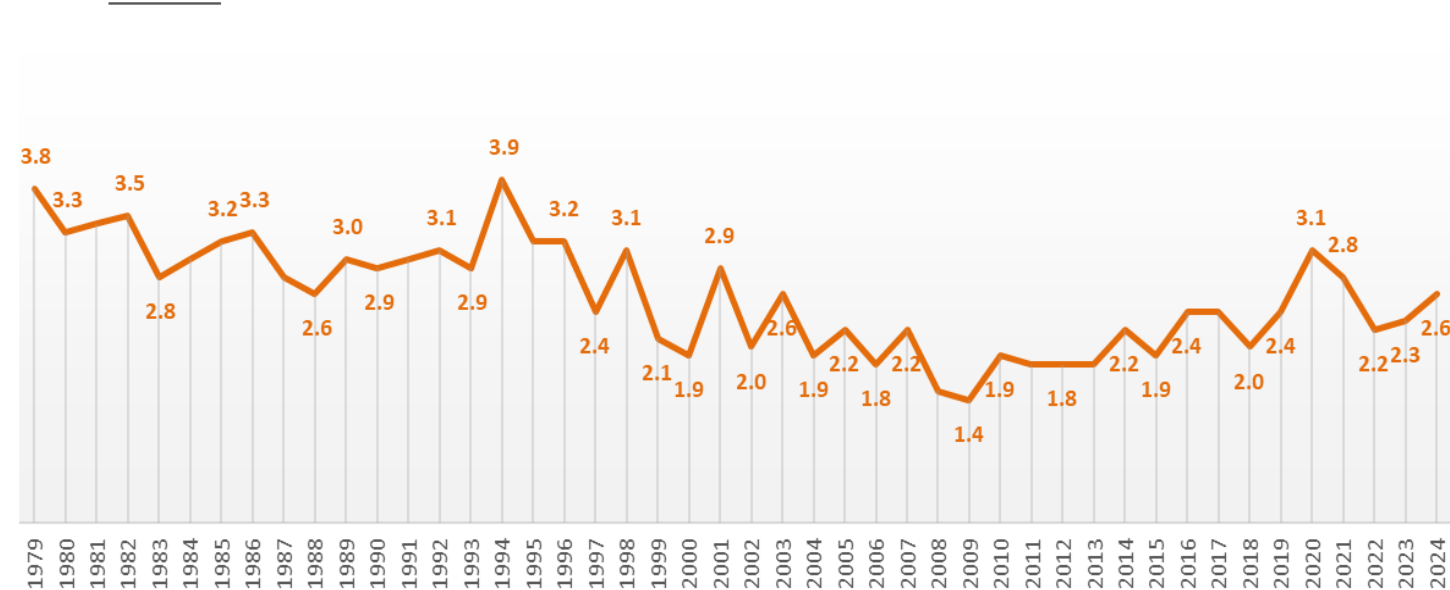
- Nationally, violent crime peaked at 758 crimes per 100,000 residents in 1991, and was in a period of rapid decline until 2011. Since then, it has been slightly up or slightly down, but fairly stable (369 in 2013, 399 in 2020, 381 in 2022, 359 in 2024, 10-year average of 384). Utah, though its rate is hardly ever over 65% of the national rate, shows a similar stabilizing pattern in recent years, with the exception that it started ten years earlier. Violent crime in Utah peaked at 334 crimes per 100,000 residents in 1997 (less than half of the national peak). Since dropping to 233 violent crimes per 100,000 residents in 2001, the year-to-year fluctuations obscure a remarkable stability – since 2001, no rate has been much higher or lower than 30 points outside the 23-year average of 232 (the 44-year low of 197 in 2011 was 35 points lower, the current 2024 rate is just below this average). On the other hand, this larger historical context shown in the figure below does provide a better view of a slight but potentially alarming uptick in violent crime starting with the historic low in 2011 and continuing through 2020. Even with four straight years of decline (2021 to 2024), violent crime in Utah has increased 17% over the past 13 years (this was up 32% between 2011 and 2020). The significant decreases in 2022-24 could be the beginning of a bigger downward trend, or just a continuation of volatility of the past 25 years.

FBI UCR Violent Crime Rate* Trends 1979-2024 - Utah



- As with the general violent crime rate, the homicide rate in the United States peaked in 1991 at 9.8 homicides per 100,000 population. After falling by almost half to 5.5 in 2000, the national homicide rate has had slight ups and downs but has stayed within a fairly narrow range (no higher than 5.8 or lower than 4.4) through 2019 before experiencing the increase in 2020 (to 6.5, the highest rate since 1997) described above for Utah and many other states. In Utah, with the exception of a couple years (the peak of 3.9 in 1994 and the low of 1.4 in 2009), the homicide rate has been within rounding error of 2-3 homicides per 100,000 residents since the early 1980s. The 2020 rate of 3.1, however, was the first time the state had been above 3 since 1998 (also 2.9 in 2001). On the other hand, it is important to consider that Utah's low point for homicides was in 2009, and that other factors over the past decade (i.e., rapid population growth, social change) have contributed to the modest increase since then. Additionally, as discussed in the previous section, this recent increase was not unique to Utah, but is also seen both nationally and in neighboring states. After significantly decreasing to 2.2 in 2022, Utah's homicide rate has ticked up slightly the past two years to 2.6 in 2024. It is too soon to tell if these recent increases are simply a continuance of the historic volatility we see in these rates, or an upward trend to watch.

FBI UCR Homicide Rate* Trends 1979-2024 - Utah



Putting Utah's Crime Rates in Social Context

- This last section outlines some potential social factors that may contribute to changes in reported crime rates. **It is important to remember that crime is a complex social phenomenon with many contributing factors that lead to increases or decreases over time**, and there is rarely one "smoking gun" factor that can explain changes.
- Pandemic – Starting in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on life in the United States (and globally). It is hard to understate the scale of social disruption that this pandemic has caused, and it will take years to unpack the effects on people's lives and behavior, including potential effects on criminal behavior. One concrete example directly related to the criminal justice system was the necessary paring down of the prison and jail populations, as it was very difficult to control the spread of the disease within these facilities. This included both early releases and restrictions on admissions, and though the bulk of this response focused on nonviolent offenders, it is quite possible that this had some unique effects on crime in 2020 (and into 2021).
- Economic Difficulties – Historically, periods of economic downturn have also had effects on crime in the United States, and the pandemic has been associated with significant effects on the economy, including loss of employment and food and housing insecurity. As these conditions have improved in the ensuing years, crime rates have also decreased in many areas.
- Social Justice Movement and Other Disorder – In addition to the pandemic, the summer of 2020 was also a time of protest and social change associated with the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020. The ongoing protests in many cities, including Salt Lake City and other locations in Utah, started in late May and continued through the summer. This movement and the frustrations of many groups associated with it may have directly contributed to some increases in crime (particularly property crime) through the protest activity, with other

potential indirect effects throughout the rest of the year that may be difficult to quantify. The unrest of 2020 continued into 2021, particularly with the events that occurred on January 6 at the U.S. Capitol. These are some recent examples, but periods of great social change, unrest, and disorder can often lead to increases in crime rates, some more localized and others more widespread (particularly with the influence of social media).

- Rapid Population Growth and Change – Apart from the above circumstances unique to 2020 (and continuing into 2021), it is important to also emphasize the ongoing transformations occurring throughout Utah due to the state's rapid population growth. This growth has been steady for years, but the 2020 Census called attention to the fact that Utah was the fastest-growing state in the country between the 2010 and 2020 Census. Across this decade, Utah's population grew over a half a million people (+507,731), which is associated with an increase of 18.4% (the most recent Census estimates in July 2025 show over 300,000 additional residents). While this statewide growth is large, it masks some even more rapid growth in certain counties and municipalities within the state. This type of rapid growth can have an impact on social phenomena such as crime, even though the population number is controlled for in the index rates reported by year. Other population-related factors (i.e., density, effect on services, every day personal effects on citizens) exist that cannot be controlled for by just presenting rates broken down by units of 100,000 population. Much of the population increases are also coming in more rural areas of the state, where in some places the population of a given location may have doubled or increased more than 50%.

Conclusions

- Utah's property and violent crime rates, including most crimes underlying these categories, increased significantly in 2020 over sometimes historically low rates seen in 2019. Both rates, particularly for property crime, have since decreased in 2021 and especially in 2022 and into 2024, and are now back to lower levels than were seen in 2019 before the pandemic and other social disruptions that may have contributed to a spike in crime in 2020.
- While any increase (or decrease) in crime leads people to look for any easy explanation, it is important to examine any changes in the crime rate in context, including looking at national and regional changes, historical trends, and other social phenomena that might provide some additional perspective.
- This brief has examined recent changes in Utah's crime data since an alarming spike in 2020, while also showing that:
 - a) Utah is not unique in most of the recent trends;
 - b) The historical trends in the crime categories and certain specific crimes may be somewhat different than the common narrative (and expectation) of decreasing rates each year; and
 - c) There are important social factors, both ongoing and historically unique to 2020, that may have contributed significantly to the rates of criminal activity observed in 2020, as well as the decreases since.