



# EL CERRITO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## El Cerrito Police Staffing, 2019 Crime Rate Comparison and COVID Update

Dear Fellow El Cerritans,

Recently, I have received inquiries about the staffing level of the Police Department. Due to ongoing budget challenges, the sworn police officer deployment for the department will be 37 police officers, including the Chief, in January 2021. Of this number, 24 sworn personnel will be assigned to patrol our city streets. In the past, sworn police officer staffing was as high as 45 officers.

Many of these inquiries question the need for this number of officers. Several factors drive our staffing model including crime rates, geography, operationally safe staff counts, workloads, and supervisory span of control. In El Cerrito, a minimum of 1 supervisor and 3 patrol officers are on duty at all times of the day and night. This staffing model ensures proper supervision and coverage of our 3 geographic patrol areas in El Cerrito.

At our planned staffing level in January, the ECPD will employ 1.45 sworn police officers for every 1,000 City residents. According to a recent Contra Costa County Grand Jury report<sup>1</sup>, the state average is 1.48 police officers per 1,000 residents. El Cerrito police staffing will drop below the state average.

Of the factors that guide our staffing decisions, we give strong consideration to the City's crime rate. When El Cerrito Officers are out working, they often surprise our community members when they talk about how much crime our city experiences. Shopping, working, living, and learning in El Cerrito can feel quite safe. As a resident myself, I rarely consider that I might be the victim of a crime while I am shopping and enjoying our city. However, El Cerrito experiences significant crime compared to other cities in Contra Costa County. El Cerrito had the fourth highest violent crime rate in Contra Costa County, in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Contra Costa County Grand Jury Final Report 2019-2020"](#). The Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury. April 23, 2020. Retrieved December 3, 2020.

Chart 1: Violent Crime Rate in Contra Costa County, 2019<sup>2</sup>

Rank	City	Population	Violent Crimes	Violent Crime Rate per 100k Residents
1	Richmond	110,567	1,034	930
2	San Pablo	30,990	194	624
3	Pittsburg	72,588	446	611
4	El Cerrito	25,508	152	595
5	Antioch	111,502	648	576
6	Concord	129,295	541	416
7	Pinole	19,250	59	306
8	Brentwood	64,474	166	257
9	Pleasant Hill	34,839	88	252
10	Martinez	38,297	83	216
11	Walnut Creek	70,166	120	170
12	Moraga	17,783	23	129
13	Oakley	42,543	51	119
14	Hercules	26,276	31	117
15	Orinda	19,926	17	85
16	San Ramon	75,995	58	75
17	Danville	44,510	23	51
18	Lafayette	26,638	4	15
19	Clayton	12,265	1	8

Violent Crime includes the categories of Homicide, Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault. The chart below shows the number of each offense El Cerrito experienced in 2019.

Chart 2: Violent Crimes in El Cerrito in 2019, by category

Category	Number of Crimes
Homicide	1
Rape	4
Robbery	91
Aggravated Assault	56

El Cerrito averages around 1 homicide each year and has relatively few instances of rape. Many of the robberies included in the above chart involve shoplifting related incidents that turn into robberies. A simple theft can turn into a serious incident when thieves resort to threats or violence to escape a store with stolen merchandise.

<sup>2</sup> Crime Data Source: [OpenJustice.doj.ca.gov](https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov).

Population Estimate: "[Population and Housing Unit Estimates](#)". United States Census Bureau. May 24, 2020. Retrieved December 2, 2020.

The number of assaults in El Cerrito should be of particular concern. An aggravated assault is committed when someone attacks another with a clear intent to commit serious bodily injury. While 56 assaults are an unacceptably high number, only 4 of these incidents involved a firearm and only 2 involved a knife. Most of the aggravated assault cases in El Cerrito were committed by unarmed perpetrators.

El Cerrito experienced the highest property crime rate in Contra Costa County, in 2019.

Chart 3: Property Crime Rate in Contra Costa County, 2019<sup>3</sup>

Rank	City	Population	Property Crimes	Property Crime Rate per 100k Residents
1	El Cerrito	25,508	1,300	5,096
2	Pinole	19,250	866	4,494
3	Pleasant Hill	34,839	1,484	4,259
4	Richmond	110,567	4,188	3,769
5	Walnut Creek	70,166	2,496	3,544
6	Concord	129,295	4,560	3,511
7	San Pablo	30,990	1,009	3,248
8	Antioch	111,502	3,199	2,847
9	Pittsburg	72,588	1,660	2,274
10	Brentwood	64,474	1,335	2,069
11	Martinez	38,297	570	1,487
12	San Ramon	75,995	1,099	1,439
13	Lafayette	26,638	358	1,342
14	Hercules	26,276	341	1,295
15	Clayton	12,265	155	1,263
16	Oakley	42,543	497	1,167
17	Orinda	19,926	195	976
18	Moraga	17,783	124	696
19	Danville	44,510	296	663

Property crime can come in many forms. In El Cerrito, it is most frequently experienced as retail theft. Our residents experience property crime directly when their homes are burglarized, their cars are broken into, or their packages are stolen.

Your Police Department takes the investigation of crimes seriously. We respond to every reported crime in our city. There are many things that residents can do to impact violent and property crime in El Cerrito. Public awareness that significant crime exists is a crucial part of developing a commitment to prevent crime.

<sup>3</sup> Crime Data Source: [OpenJustice.doj.ca.gov](https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov).

Population Estimate: "[Population and Housing Unit Estimates](#)". United States Census Bureau. May 24, 2020. Retrieved December 2, 2020.

Instances of violence and property crime do not mean that El Cerrito is a bad city to live in. El Cerrito is a great place! The crime we experience reflects the reality that we are interconnected with communities that also face significant challenges.

The Police Department regularly publishes a crime blotter, through [Nixle.com](https://www.nixle.com), that reports out on most crimes that occur in El Cerrito. The ECPD also publishes an annual report that provides more information on these broad categories of crimes. The annual report can be [found here](#).

### **Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Current crime trends during the pandemic response have shown an increase in violent crime in many major cities. Fortunately, this has not been the case in El Cerrito. As of November 1, 2020, violent crime is down 26% compared to the same period last year. Property crime is down 28%. While violent crime is down across the board and property crime is significantly reduced, vehicle theft has increased by 29%.

### **Catalytic Converter Theft Continues**

The theft of catalytic converters, particularly from Toyota Priuses continues to be a significant challenge. If you own a Toyota Prius, I strongly urge you to consider installing a theft prevention device on your catalytic converter. The cost to replace a stolen catalytic converter can be around \$2,500. Protective devices cost much less than this. In addition, if you hear an electric metal saw at night, please call the El Cerrito Police Department at (510) 237-3233. Thieves typically use battery powered reciprocating saws to remove catalytic converters and time is of the essence if we want to catch them.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that this letter has helped increase your awareness of local crime, police staffing, and the threat of catalytic converter theft. Being aware of crime is one of the first steps toward developing a prevention mindset. One last note, I hope you all stay safe and healthy during this unique holiday season.

Warm Regards,

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