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## **New Research Shows Disparate Levels of Police Staffing Across the State, Putting Innocent Californians at Risk**

*First-of-its-kind data highlights dangerously low rates of law enforcement personnel in rural California, illustrates urgent need for additional resources to combat workforce shortages*

**Sacramento, CA** — Today, the [Peace Officers Research Association of California](#) (PORAC) published a new [research brief](#) on the current state of law enforcement staffing shortages in California. The research highlights the challenges experienced by law enforcement in seeking to protect and serve their communities without an adequate number of full-time sworn officers. This first-of-its-kind [research](#) is based on [data](#) from the California Department of Justice, which shows the level of sworn law enforcement personnel across all California counties. The data calls attention to the disparate impacts of staffing shortages across the state which are especially acute for smaller, rural communities who lack the resources to recruit and retain enough officers to maintain public safety. California's rural counties employed an average of 6 sworn officers for every 100 square miles in 2022, compared to an average of 295 sworn officers per 100 square miles in non-rural areas.

“We probably do need to look at subsidizing smaller police departments so they can level the playing field,” **said Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer, Former Chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee**, as quoted in [this CalMatters article](#).

In addition to calling attention to the challenges rural police departments face, PORAC's [research brief](#) explores the current state of staffing statewide, challenges resulting from shortages, core issues behind dips in recruitment and retention, and practical solutions to achieve and maintain an appropriate level of officers that will keep all Californians safe.



“The last few years have been particularly challenging for our profession and resulted in a vicious cycle of fewer new recruits with simultaneously higher rates of retirements and early departures,” **said Brian R. Marvel, President of PORAC**. “This has forced departments to make extremely difficult decisions about where to use their limited resources, and our communities are paying the price. The benefits of investing

in public safety are proven and clear – each additional sworn officer hired [directly correlates](#) to 1.3 fewer violent crimes and 4.2 fewer property crimes per year, primarily through deterrence. How can you argue with that? We can't afford to wait any longer to make a change. It's time to invest in a safer California for everyone."

Key findings from the [research brief](#) emphasize the urgent need for commonsense solutions to address California's law enforcement staffing challenges:

- **California's police staffing levels are at a 30-year low.** The number of patrol officers per 100,000 residents now at its [lowest level](#) since 1991 despite California's population having grown by nearly 10 million people in that same timespan.
- **Departments are struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff, straining our existing workforce.** A 2019 national survey found that 78% of participating agencies had difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates and in California, between 2020-2022, the state lost about 3,600 sworn staff and 1,200 civilian staff, a drop of 4.5% and 3% respectively.
- **Staffing shortages are increasing emergency response times.** In major metropolitan areas like San Diego, wait times for serious crimes increased by more than 15 minutes. For less serious crimes, the wait time increased to nearly two hours. Some rural departments have been forced to forego daytime patrols altogether.
- **California businesses and communities are paying the price.** Citing crime as a significant factor, retailers across the state, including In-N-Out, Nordstrom, and Target, are now being forced to shutter their businesses.

PORAC is committed to working with elected officials on both sides of the aisle to find practical, comprehensive solutions to the current overwhelming law enforcement staffing challenges plaguing departments across the state. We hope what we accomplish here in California can be a model for other states experiencing similar challenges.

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**About the Peace Officers Research Association of California:**

The Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) was incorporated in 1953 as a professional federation of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. PORAC represents over 80,000 public safety members and over 955 associations, making it the largest law enforcement organization in California and the largest statewide association in the nation.