



South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

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VIOLENT CRIME CONTINUES TO INCREASE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

*2020 Preliminary statistics concern law enforcement, emphasize need for
public safety support*

As the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) continues to gather and verify the crime data reported by local authorities across the state for 2020, the agency is releasing preliminary results. The preliminary statistics show a disturbing increase in violent crime in our state.

The rate of murders went up approximately 25% while aggravated assaults were up approximately 9% in 2020. Property crimes continued to decrease except for arson which alarmingly increased approximately 21% after steadily declining in 2018 and 2019.

“As I said last year, I am extremely concerned by the increasing amount of violence in our state including the number of murders and assaults,” said SLED Chief Mark Keel. “I am particularly troubled at the steady increase in the number of murders taking place. We have seen murders increase 51% over the past five years in South Carolina. Gangs, drugs, and criminal’s access to guns continue to play a significant role. In fact, according to the DEA, in 2020 more than 30,000 gangs operate on the streets of America with nearly all involved not only in distributing drugs, but also in committing violent crimes. Yet given this alarming surge, it is very disheartening to see so much effort and attention being directed to anti-public safety legislation that puts criminals back on the street and makes our communities less safe.”

The 2020 preliminary data for violent and property crime compared to 2019 is as follows:

	VIOLENT CRIME		PROPERTY CRIME		
	2019	2020	2019	2020	
Murders	457	571	Burglary	26,662	22,774
Sexual Battery	2,489	2,104	Larceny/Theft	106,247	101,607
Robbery	3,256	3,072	Arson	571	694
Aggravated Assault	19,469	21,272	Motor Vehicle Theft	14,820	14,463

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An Accredited Law Enforcement Agency





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CRIME STATS 2-2-2

“Efforts like sentencing reform often only serve to incentivize criminal conduct,” said Keel. “If we make the prosecution of drug crimes more difficult and we decrease the punishment for breaking the law, the public’s safety becomes more at risk. Drug crimes are inherently violent, and we should not incentivize this criminal behavior.”

Our law enforcement professionals everyday see the personal impact drugs are inflicting on our citizens. Our communities, families, and the addicts themselves are victims to the drugs being brought in our neighborhoods. No family who has lost a loved one such as a child, a mother, father, sister, or brother can be told there are no victims. We need legislative support and community involvement to improve public safety and keep our streets safe. Simply turning a blind eye to crime and not holding criminals accountable is not the answer.”

The data being collected for the 2020 Uniform Crime Report is preliminarily showing the rate of violent crime has increased 5% compared to 2019 and 11% since 2015. Property crimes have dropped approximately 6% in 2020 when compared to the previous year. It will be the sixth consecutive year the number of property crimes has declined.

“I am pleased to see the continued decline in the rate of property crimes but am concerned at the increase of arson incidents,” Keel said. “We’re also encouraged to see the rates for robbery and sexual battery continuing to drop as well.”

Now is the time to work together to improve our law enforcement efforts and capabilities. Professional, accountable law enforcement makes our communities safer. We must work every day to show the public that we are worthy of the respect and trust given to us by the communities we serve. But the reality is, we cannot do it alone.”

The data compiled for the SLED report comes from sheriff’s departments and police departments across the state.

The current data is as of May 27. The full Crime in South Carolina 2020 report is being finalized and is expected to be released by the end of summer.

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NOTE TO REPORTERS: Reminder, these are the preliminary statistics and are current as of May 27, 2021. The data is going through a quality assurance review and the numbers may slightly change when the final report is released.