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**Washington Examiner:**[**Los Angeles district attorney's lax crime policies see teenage felons free to roam streets**](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/fairness-justice/los-angeles-district-attorneys-lax-crime-policies-see-teenage-felons-free-to-roam-streets)

**Tori Richards**

**September 15, 2022**

This is the fourth in a four-part series looking into the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles, as told by people who work there. It’s a world where youth convicted of violent felonies are said to control the jails, while law enforcement is helpless to stop it due to defunding and downgrades to formerly strict laws.

The policies of Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascon are helping fuel a violent crime surge — as teenage felons roam the streets freely despite having committed crimes that once would've landed them behind bars, according to insiders.

For the few violent offenders who enter the crumbling Los Angeles County juvenile jail system, thousands more are still on the streets without having been charged for crimes that once would have resulted in automatic detention. Insiders told the Washington Examiner Gascon's anti-jail stance for juvenile offenders plays a significant role in the subsequent crime spike.

“Our prosecutorial approach should be biased towards keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system and when they must become involved, our system must employ the lightest touch necessary in order to provide public safety,” Gascon wrote in a special directive to prosecutors on Dec. 7, 2020.

This has created an open season for mayhem by youthful criminals, law enforcement officials said.

“There is no accountability for any of these [serious] crimes. If you look at juvy crime across the board, it’s through the roof,” a Probation Department manager said. “Nothing happens to these kids if we catch them. You will be lucky if you even get [home] detention. They are in custody as long as it takes to book them.”

The only offenders who see the walls of Juvenile Hall are killers, rapists, and armed robbers, the manager said. This is exemplified by a California Department of Justice report that said the number of juveniles arrested for felonies last year statewide was 9,162, a decrease of 79% from a decade ago.

“You can walk around with a loaded firearm concealed illegally, and we can’t prosecute it. That is a misdemeanor,” said one of the attorneys within the District Attorney’s Office who is familiar with juvenile cases. “We used to be able to file a felony if there was a prior [conviction]. Now we can’t file anything.”

That is because Gascon has a written policy against filing certain charges, including the use of a gun committed in crimes, while many felonies have been downgraded to misdemeanors by state lawmakers.

Even minors charged with attempted murder may not be locked up. One teenager was sentenced to a group home, where he later committed murder, the manager said. It’s hard to blame police for the lack of arrests when they know charges will not be filed, the manager added.

“When the officers stop arresting and we stop prosecutions, they can say with a straight face: Prosecutions are down. We are doing [a] great job,” the prosecutor said.

To exemplify this, Gascon’s directive ordered prosecutors to stop charging juveniles with certain crimes if they endured trauma in childhood.

“Crimes involving property damage or minor altercation with group home staff, foster parents and/or other youth shall not be charged when the youth’s behavior can be related to the child’s mental health or trauma history,” the directive said.

In addition, insiders say prosecutors are ordered to file the lowest possible charge rather than seek substantial jail time.

“Filings will consist of the lowest potential code section that corresponds to the alleged conduct and mandate one count per criminal act,” the directive said.

Even sex crimes are given a softer touch.

“We will avoid labeling normative adolescent behavior as a sex offense and instead collaborate with appropriate partners to provide effective interventions that reduce recidivism and support a youth’s education and development around healthy sexual behavior,” the directive said.

Youthful criminals are aware of the rule changes, and this has led to the out-of-control smash-and-grab phenomena that began last summer at retailers and home invasion robberies or stalking someone then stealing watches and purses, police said.

“A lot of times, we just cite them out when it used to be a grand theft of a person — a felony,” Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Lt. Craig Walker said. “They get through the revolving door and don’t see it slammed shut and locked behind them. So they will keep doing [crime] like everyone else.”

For Gascon, he sees the new policies as a way to better a child’s life.

“We must invest in community-based services, schools, health and mental health programs and other resources that allow all children to thrive, no matter their zip code, race or gender,” the directive said. “Any court involvement in a young person’s life should be proportionate, for the shortest duration possible and result in a pathway towards a better future for youth.”

**Los Angeles Sentinel:** [**Probation Officers Rally to Demand Support of County Supervisors**](https://lasentinel.net/probation-officers-rally-to-demand-support-of-county-supervisors.html)

**August 25, 2022**

On Tuesday, Aug. 16, more than 300 Los Angeles County Deputy Probation and Detention Services Officers, Supervisors, and Managers rallied before the L.A. County Board of Supervisors Hearing Room to demand that the County Supervisors support Probation by implementing policies and procedures to protect the officers who are suffering unprecedented injuries when breaking up escalating youth-on-youth fights in the juvenile halls and camps.

An average of 25 L.A. County Probation Officers each month are being assaulted by justice-involved youth in L.A. County Probation facilities, a shocking 98% more assaults than in the Orange County Probation Department. And L.A. Probation Officers are 15 times more likely to be assaulted than Custody Assistants and Deputy Sheriffs working in L.A. Sheriff’s Department facilities. While youth on staff assaults in the Probation Halls and Camps are escalating, the Probation profession is under attack by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, whose members have failed to provide the policies, training, and tools to keep officers safe.

“Most of these assaults happen when officers are breaking up fights between youth to stop them from hurting or even killing each other,” said Deputy Probation Officer II Hans Liang, president of the Deputy Probation Officers Union, AFSCME Local 685.

“In June 2022 alone, there were 150 reports of youth-on-youth assaults. Imagine how many more there would be, or how serious these fights would be, if we were not intervening immediately when a fight breaks out? These fights would turn into gang-on-gang riots!”

On April 30, 2021, L.A. County Detention Services (DSO) Officer Michael Wall, a 14-year veteran of the L.A. County Probation Department, was on duty at Central Juvenile Hall. Shortly after physically restraining a youth who led a group attack on another minor, DSO Wall went in pursuit of two youth involved in the assault. The youth ran out the classroom and into the open field in front of the school.

While in pursuit, DSO Wall began to experience medical distress. After eight cycles of CPR in attempt to preserve and revive him, DSO Wall was transported to the hospital where he underwent emergency surgery and subsequently passed away.

“On many occasions, Michael confided in me that he experienced anxiety and felt unsafe working at Central Juvenile Hall,” said Jewel Smith, sister of Detention Services Officer Michael Wall who died in the line of duty in 2021.

“He constantly said he and his co-workers were not given the proper tools they needed to protect themselves or the youth in the institution. I am personally asking the Board of Supervisors to make officer safety a top priority. I also ask that Supervisors listen to the officers about what they need so that the Probation Department can implement policies and procedures that are designed to ensure their safety. I truly hope Michael’s death is the last fatality resulting from a lack of policies and practices that disregard officer safety.”

The lack of support has been demoralizing to professional Probation staff for the last several years; now the Board of Supervisors have exacerbated the situation. On Aug. 3, the County of Los Angeles posted three positions in the newly-created Department of Youth Development (DYD) to do exactly what Probation staff are already doing; however, the new positions require no degree, no criminal background check, and applicants need just one year of experience (two years for the supervisor position). Meanwhile, the pay range for these new DYD positions is $104,772-141,544 per year of taxpayer dollars, 19-46% more than the pay for professional, trained, and degreed Probation Department employees.

More than 300 officers participated in the rally on August 16. (Courtesy photo)

“The population in the juvenile halls and camps has been reduced significantly in recent years, primarily as the result of a change in policy direction by the County Supervisors. Those who remain are very troubled youth – murder, kidnapping, carjacking, armed robbery, and even terrorism charges – who require significantly more intervention and rehabilitative services than kids in community group homes or on home detention,” said Probation Manager Deborah Lares who serves as the elected president of the Professional Managers Association, AFSCME Local 1967. “This translates into needing more officers on staff – and more highly trained and educated professionals – than ever before.”

“Enough is enough,” declared Supervising Deputy Probation Officer Jim Schoengarth, President of the Supervising Deputy Probation Officers Union, SEIU Local 721. “This is a declaration of war against every single one of us – the very men and women who have dedicated our lives to rehabilitating youth to keep them out of prison, to protecting victims’ rights, and to making our streets safe.”

**Los Angeles Times:** [**Column: Violent crime is spiking in Trump’s California. These counties blame everyone but themselves**](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-08-26/column-violent-crime-is-up-in-california-where-it-rose-the-most-may-surprise-you)

**Anita Chabria**

**August 26, 2022**

Homicides are up across California and the blame experts are aiming their outrage at the usual suspects.

Gavin Newsom. Propositions 47 and 57 for lowering penalties on nonviolent crimes and facilitating early prison releases. Progressive district attorneys. Democrats.

But deeper in the data, released Thursday by state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta, is a more complicated story, one that defies those easy narratives of a failed California with its recklessly unsafe efforts at criminal justice reform. The biggest risks for homicides came in conservative counties with iron-fist sheriffs and district attorneys, places where progressives in power are nearly as common as monkeys riding unicorns.

Kern County leads the locales where your chance of being murdered is greatest — with a homicide rate of nearly 14 people per 100,000, compared with about 6 per 100,000 for the state as a whole and 8.5 per 100,000 in Los Angeles County. The number of people annually murdered (a legal term that implies conviction, but you get my point) in Kern has nearly doubled since 2015 to 124 lives last year.

Former President Trump, who legitimately lost the 2020 election, won nearly 54% of the count in Kern. Trump sycophant and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy also prevailed handily in Kern, raking in 64% of votes. My colleague Gustavo Arellano profiled Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood, pointing out that he’s a dying breed of old-school lawman, not one to take the soft approach.

Merced County had the second-highest homicide rate at 9.5 per 100,000 residents. Merced is a political mixed bag, as a “blue wave” of Bay Area refugees and political converts have turned this agricultural stronghold into a nearly equally split county, but one where Democrats are far from a shoo-in to win any election.

Third place goes to Tulare County, running from Delano in the south to a bit north of Visalia, where people were violently killed at a rate of 8.8 per 100,000. Trump took nearly 53% of the vote there in 2020, and McCarthy, who also represents part of the area, took nearly 59%. Recently, after two suspects in a fentanyl bust were released on bail, Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux told Fox News that “California’s system of justice is failing us all.”

It’s safe to say that none of these counties coddle their criminals — presidential leanings don’t define policy, but they are an indicator of how local politicians and law enforcement think about and handle crime. And yet, not only do these counties share the same problems of dark-blue Los Angeles and San Francisco — poverty, homelessness, drugs — they are doing worse on homicides. That’s true, even given the fact that a few killings in less-populated counties can mean big jumps in year-to-year statistics.

Volunteers with signs stand along 19th Avenue urging motorists to recall District Attorney Chesa Boudin in San Francisco, on May 26, 2022. Politically liberal San Francisco could vote out one of the most progressive prosecutors in the country nearly three years after Boudin was elected. His time in office coincided with a pandemic in which brutal attacks against Asian seniors and viral footage of rampant shoplifting fueled a rare campaign to remove him. (AP Photo/Haven Daley)

At the other end of the spectrum is Contra Costa County, which has been successful at beating state averages on crime and has one of the state’s only (along with L.A.'s George Gascón) openly progressive district attorneys, Diana Becton.

Despite an unapologetic focus on “moving beyond a singular narrative of incarceration being the answer to everything,” she told me, the county is holding its own when it comes to safety.

Contra Costa’s murder rate increased slightly from last year — but remains around 4 per 100,000 residents.

So the idea that progressive policies lead to more violent crime just doesn’t pan out, any more than the idea that getting tough dissuades criminals.

Where does that leave us in understanding the numbers?

There are two things we should talk about: guns and NIMBYism.

First, we are swimming in guns. Drowning in them. Becton told me there are now “more guns in the hands of people than I think in history.”

The vast majority of our homicides and aggravated assaults involve guns — in 1,734 out of 2,361 homicides recorded in California in 2021, the weapon was a gun, a 33% increase in firearm-related homicides since 2012. That means about 75% of the time when a Californian is murdered, the cause of death is a bullet. So-called ghost guns, legal guns, automatics, shotguns. You name it, someone committed a crime with it.

Save me your 2nd Amendment emails. I have nothing against legal, responsible gun ownership. But a lot of people who shouldn’t have firearms — because they are felons, domestic abusers, have mental health issues, or are getting ready to open fire on a large crowd, for example — have them anyway. We make it easy.

Becton thinks we need to sit down and prioritize the gun problem, and I couldn’t agree more. Yes, cops take guns away every day and we have a Armed and Prohibited Persons System meant to help remove illegal guns from about 24,500 people who legally purchased weapons but are no longer allowed to keep them.

Bonta said Thursday that his office is overseeing $10 million in grants to sheriffs to help confiscate those guns, but those efforts are like spitting on a forest fire.

We also have a problem with our criminal justice reforms. Just not the ones guys like Sheriff Boudreaux target.

Racist before reforms and still, our system has locked up people of color at alarming rates, while criminalizing health issues including addiction and mental illness. So the changes we’ve put in place to create equity, fairness and compassion are vital to reimagining a paradigm that for too long crushed not just people, but communities.

Where we’ve failed is in supporting and implementing those reforms. When someone is released from prison, diverted from jail or is the victim of a crime, that can’t be the end of the story.

What we lack is capacity to create stability for them — addiction treatment, mental health support, housing, job training, social workers. It’s the same safeguards we lack in other crises such as homelessness, all made worse by the pandemic, crushing nearly everyone under its stress and pain and exhausting the resources we do have.

“Too much, too fast, too little support” is how Yolo County Dist. Atty. Jeff Reisig describes what’s happened with California’s efforts at criminal justice reform. He’s also president of the California District Attorneys Assn., and a middle-of-the-road kind of guy when it comes to justice.

“It doesn’t mean we have to send everyone back to prison, but it means we have to do the tweaks to get people into programs like Care Court,” he said, calling out Newsom’s plan for a system of civil courts to help those with severe mental illness.

Brandi Michalik holds a family portrait that includes her parents and son, Neven, lower left. Neven, allegedly killed a woman while have a psychotic breakdown. He has been in jail awaiting trial for 5 years, much of that in solitary confinement. In Gov. Newsom's proposed Care Courts, could force counties to provide mental health services to people like Neven - he was released from a mental hospital 9 days before the alleged crime and his mom couldn't get him help after that. He is on a waitlist to be moved to a state hospital, but that list is currently 1,500 people long for 4,500 beds. Photographed on May 10, 2022. (Jose Luis Villegas/For The Times)

But I’m starting to think we don’t want to change as much as we say we do.

Most Californians are liberal at a distance, but bring it too close and it just doesn’t make sense here. There may be no better example than the San Francisco neighbors who last year successfully blocked the conversion of a 131-room boutique hotel into permanent supportive housing for people who were previously homeless.

Or what happened a few years ago in Bakersfield when the local hospital protested allowing homeless people to stay in a hotel in an industrial area because it was too close to an employee parking lot.

That intolerance has created an impossible-to-untangle mess of crime, housing, mental health and addiction that endlessly churns around us — all at heart different angles of poverty, race and inequity. People of color are disproportionately among the ranks of our homeless, incarcerated, mentally ill and addicted, and the vast majority of murder victims are Black and Latino.

We are faced with either accepting the solutions really are in our own backyards or embracing the so-called pendulum swing back to solutions that sweep the impoverished behind bars where we don’t have to look at them. Guess how that plays out in conservative places like Kern, Merced and Tulare where poor people of color have long been viewed as suspect, and where the poverty rate hovers near 20%, significantly higher than the state average of about 12%?

Everything is not bleak, thankfully. The figures released this week are outdated, according to Mike Romano, director of the Three Strikes and Justice Advocacy Projects at Stanford Law School. Newsom appointed Romano as chair of California‘s Committee on the Revision of the Penal Code in 2019.

Romano and his team conduct nearly real-time tracking of available crime data in California, so he’s already looking at 2022. So far, he’s seen homicides trend down or stay flat in some of our biggest cities.

Fresno, he said, has seen a huge drop of 29% so far this year. Oakland is down 6%. Los Angeles and San Francisco have remained about even year-over-year. Long Beach and San Diego have ticked up. Other crimes, including robbery, burglary, shoplifting and arson, were all flat or down across the state in 2021, he said.

Overall, violent crime in California is the lowest it’s been since the 1970s, and has been that way for at least 10 years. California has the second-lowest homicide rate of any of the 10 largest states after New York, less than half the rate of states including Illinois, Georgia and Ohio.

We are significantly safer than most other big states, even after a decade of major changes to our carceral system.

So criminal justice reform may be the easiest focus of blame for why some violent crime is up.

But it turns out guns really do kill people, regardless of what the right likes to argue.

And so does NIMBYism, though it’s an uncomfortable culprit to name.

**San Francisco Chronicle:** [**These are the counties California’s prison inmates come from. They’re not always the places with the most crime**](https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/california-prison-population-17408769.php)

A groundbreaking new study shows that the Bay Area sends a smaller share of residents to prison than California as a whole, while some rural, more conservative communities far surpass the state average.

Yet, even in San Francisco, which has one of the state’s lowest prison incarceration rates, the statistics can vary greatly by neighborhood, according to data released by the nonprofit think tank Prison Policy Initiative. The numbers hint at the legacy of discriminatory housing policies and economic inequality, and their lingering consequences for people who get swept up in the criminal legal system.

San Francisco’s incarceration rate was 118 residents imprisoned per 100,000 residents during the 2020 U.S. Census, compared to 310 per 100,000 statewide, but the new analysis found that nine communities in the city have rates rivaling the state average. Among the highest rates were in Bayview, Hunters Point, Sunnydale and Silver Terrace — all historically lower-income and nonwhite.

The causes could be many, and may include disproportionately high levels of policing and historic redlining, when the government actively discouraged investment in communities of color, the study said. During redlining, Bayview, a historically African American neighborhood, was considered among the city’s most “hazardous” areas for investment.

“It’s like a double whammy for these communities,” Emily Widra, one of the study’s authors, told The Chronicle. “Historically they’re predisposed to the sort of limitations that redlining has put on the communities themselves, not the people, and then the people themselves are also being targeted by the criminal legal system.”

Damien Posey, a Bayview-Hunters Point native, said the numbers in Bayview were saddening but not surprising. Posey, founder and executive director of the non-violence and mentorship nonprofit Us 4 Us Bay Area, said neighborhoods like Bayview — and the community organizers working to help them — need more investment from the city to fight generations of disadvantage.

“We’re trying to unravel this crazy yarn ball that’s been wound up since the inception of America,” Posey said.

Income likely plays a large role in imprisonment rates, too. The Chronicle analyzed the data from the Prison Policy Initiative and found that in cities and towns with 50,000 people or more, a little more than half of the variation in incarceration rates was associated with income. Every $10,000 in additional income for a given place was associated with 43 fewer people incarcerated per 100,000.

The data show that mass incarceration isn’t just driven by big cities that have comparatively more people and crime, said Mike Wessler, communications director at the Prison Policy Initiative.

“This data kind of completely busts that myth,” Wessler said.

The study used incarcerated people’s home addresses to map their locations to a census block, the smallest geographical unit measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. They then mapped those locations onto neighborhoods, cities and counties in California. The study was made possible due to a change in state law that requires people in prisons to be listed in census counts as residents of their last address, rather than the location of their cells.

Leave the Bay Area and the incarceration rate can balloon, the research shows. Los Angeles County, home to 10 million people, had an imprisonment rate of 402 per 100,000, and the populous nearby counties of Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange tend to send the most people to prison in the state in raw numbers.

Meanwhile, a number of rural and largely conservative counties in the Central Valley and far Northern California have disproportionately high rates of incarceration.

Kings County, with a population of 200,000, had the highest incarceration rate in the state, with 666 people in state prison per 100,000, researchers found. In June, District Attorney Keith Fagundes lost a re-election bid to fellow Republican Sarah Hacker after Fagundes received widespread scorn for charging two women with murder following stillbirths.

Tulare County to the east, which had the state’s third-highest homicide rate last year, 8.8 homicides per 100,000 residents, had an imprisonment rate of 474 people per 100,000.

Far north, rural counties including Shasta, Tehama, Yuba, Siskiyou, Lake and Del Norte each have incarceration rates more than 1.5 times higher than the state.

In Siskiyou County, the researchers noted, the Yreka Police Department arrested Native Americans at twice the rate at which they’re represented in the city’s population. The Siskiyou County Sheriff’s Office has for years fought allegations of over-policing the growing Hmong American population there. A recent lawsuit accuses the agency of pulling over Asian American drivers — less than 3% of the county population — 12 times more often than other residents in the 85% white county.

On some Native American lands, the researchers found elevated incarceration rates. The Fort Mojave Reservation in Southern California and Big Valley Rancheria in Lake County both have imprisonment rates more than five times that of Los Angeles. In Humboldt County’s sparsely populated Rohnerville Rancheria, the incarceration rate is 10 times the state average.

The Prison Policy Initiative hopes the data will help guide communities in making decisions about law enforcement and alternatives to prison.

“I think any county attorney anywhere in California should take a pretty close look at this data and see where they’re actually incarcerating people from,” Wessler said, adding that they should “use that information to look at their practices.”

**Washington Examiner:**[**Broken bones and PTSD: Guards pay price inside LA's shattered jail system**](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/fairness-justice/broken-bones-and-ptsd-guards-pay-price-inside-las-shattered-jail-system)

**Tori Richards**

**September 14, 2022**

This is the third in a four-part series looking into the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles, as told by people who work there. It’s a world where youth convicted of violent felonies are said to control the jails, while law enforcement is helpless to stop it due to defunding and downgrades to formerly strict laws.

It’s 6 a.m. and time for the first shift at Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall . The probation officer has clocked in, donned protective gear, and is ready to walk into the battle zone.

He’s wondering if inmate X, who was in a foul mood yesterday, will give him career-ending injuries today over not getting an extra lunch tray. But if the officer is lucky enough to escape a hospital stint, he will face injuries of a different sort — intense internal review and possible punishment by the Probation Oversight Commission over deemed excessive force to protect himself.

This is a typical day at work for hundreds of Probation Department officers who guard a violent population of juveniles in four outdated facilities constructed for lesser crimes than murder, carjacking, and rape.

The Washington Examiner interviewed two probation officials to discover what a typical day is like for the men and women who operate the juvenile justice system of approximately 400 inmates. They describe a bleak job with dwindling numbers of colleagues retiring under medical issues, stress, and PTSD.

For those left behind, they work either in a camp with lower-level offenders or a jail housing the most violent. For the jail, it’s typically one officer assigned to a large pod where 15 individual cells are located within a larger day room. Day in and day out, officers are assigned to the same group of teenagers and spend an entire shift inside the pods except for when teenagers attend school or have an hourlong break outside.

“When you leave a shift there, you are destroyed,” said a probation manager. “It is so volatile and unsafe. If someone gets injured by these inmates, they will come back to the same facility with the same juveniles.”

It is a system in which the inmates rule the jails and the outnumbered officers guarding them are kept safe only due to the goodwill of the teenagers in their care. Broken noses, fractured spines, dislocated limbs, and other injuries are common, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors treats this as part of the job by cutting staff and disallowing nonlethal force, the manager said.

The manager described the jail population as the most hardened killers and criminals who have done crimes such as raping and killing an 80-year-old woman in her home and then stealing her car. Another inmate is a double murder defendant. Others are gang members who torture their victims before killing them.

“The only kids we have detained are the most violent, aggressive, assaultive kids who have created the most heinous crimes against society,” the manager said.

Board Chairwoman Holly Mitchell and Probation Oversight Commission Chairman Franky Carrillo did not respond to requests for comment.

According to jail insides, officers spend 8-16 hours locked in with inmates armed only with their wits and a two-way radio. They eat meals with the inmates and take no breaks unless they have to use the restroom — then, a call is placed for a backup officer to fill in for five minutes.

“Multiple times a day, we are threatened — it could be over not getting extra food or not liking the pair of pants they were issued,” the manager said. “It’s over the stupidest thing. Every day we spend trying to figure these kids out because we have been put in such a bad position from the board, which doesn’t have our back.”

Officers told the Washington Examiner that any use-of-force incident is investigated with a “guilty until proven innocent” mindset and they will be fired, then spend another three years trying to get their jobs back. It is easier to let minor incidents go rather than intervene in every infraction, officers say.

Then, when it’s time for school, teachers do their best to quell any behavior problems, but the officers make sure no violence erupts. Each student is assigned a laptop with an intranet for in-class use only.

The students are also given Wi-Fi passwords to use back in their cells to communicate with the outside world. This is allegedly often used to place orders for drugs, which are thrown over facility walls and retrieved when inmates are outside for their hour of exercise, an officer and the manager said.

Students have no incentive to learn and often bully teachers who respond by giving out candy or extra credit toward graduation, a commission report revealed.

The report blamed the lack of student cooperation in learning on a “carceral setting [and] poor quality and inconsistency of classroom instruction.”

Classrooms where the most violent offenders attend school are inside a larger locked cell block for the protection of others. Lower-level offenders are allowed to attend school in a setting that looks like any other high school in America, the manager said.

“They are not in there because they won the honor roll or spelling bee,” the manager said. “These are violent felons. We’ve had kids break through wooden doors to get into another room to attack other inmates.”

Once back in the housing quarters, the inmates usually play video games or watch television. Any fights, including assaults on staff, result in four hours of cell detention. Then, the offender is allowed back in the day room. The Washington Examiner viewed graphic photos of one officer with blood gushing from her nose. Another had an apparent leg fracture, and a third was punched in the eye and had a swollen socket and bruising.

Women officers are treated the worst, with constant taunts of sexual assault. The abuse is daily and violates county standards against sexual harassment and abuse, but nothing is done to fix the situation by the board, the manager said.

When women have filed complaints, insiders say nothing happens.

“They don’t investigate. The perception is they work in this environment and have to put up with it,” the manager said.

At the end of the shift, when it’s time to go home, officers will often be told they need to stay on the job for another eight hours because of staff shortage.

“You may show up at 5:30 [a.m.], get off at 10:30 [p.m.], and go home only to be back at 6 the next morning,” the manager said. “All because we haven’t been able to hire anybody.”

The county is in a hiring freeze and has not exempted law enforcement. Officials estimate a loss of 700 officers over the past several years.

**Washington Examiner:**[**Left-wing celebrities and ACLU activists influencing LA committee to downsize jail numbers**](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/crime/los-angeles-juvenile-jail-defund-police-soros-aclu)

**Tori Richards**

**September 13**

This is the second in a four-part series looking into the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles, as told by people who work there. It’s a world where youth convicted of violent felonies are said to control the jails, while law enforcement are helpless to stop it due to defunding and downgrades to formerly strict laws.

It could only happen in Los Angeles: A big Hollywood producer helps redesign a county commission tasked with downsizing the number of incarcerated youths in the era of "defund the police."
It was 2018, and Scott Budnick, producer of the Hangover movies, was part of a group of social activists who successfully fought for decarceration in California. The end result is community service instead of prison — despite statistics showing this approach isn't keeping residents safe.

Between 2016 and 2021, murders increased 22%, with aggravated assault and rape up 18% and 6%, respectively. Despite this, the number of felony adult arrests was its lowest since 1979, while juvenile arrests have not been this low since before 1966, when record-keeping began, the California Department of Justice reported.

Still, the Los Angeles County Probation Commission was revamped and expanded with additional duties in 2018, increasing the number of commissioners from 10 to 15 members policing the Los Angeles County Probation Department. The agency is the largest probation department in the nation, with more than 6,500 employees and a $900 million budget.

Commissioners would address “a sharp public mistrust of the department [and] a failure in stewardship of public funds,” a report said.

The creation of the commission was driven in part by reports of sexual assault, 11 beatings, and a dozen instances of pepper spray misuse, the report said. It did not state that hundreds of officers are injured on the job, many with fractures and career-ending injuries, one officer said.

But if you ask officers working at the Probation Department, they will say the commission is yet another means to demoralize law enforcement with a layer of critique that automatically supports juvenile inmates in any dispute.

“This probation oversight [commission] is people who don’t like law enforcement,” one high-ranking official told the Washington Examiner. “The Board of Supervisors created it and has monthly meetings with ‘lived experience’ people and community advocates like the ACLU. They drive us in the direction they believe we should go.”

An officer criticized a June visit by Kim Kardashian, who was brought in by Budnick to speak with the most violent offenders in Juvenile Hall, including double murderers.

“This was all a setup for publicity,” the officer said. “Why isn’t she meeting with some of the lesser offenders who we hope to rehabilitate? Instead, it’s killers and rapists who torture people.”

On social media, Kardashian praised the probation staff that assisted with her visit.

“I want to thank Los Angeles County Probation and the superintendent for having me, and to the staff I met — who really believe in redemption and were constantly guiding these young men towards a positive path,” she said.

But away from the superficial glamour of a celebrity visit, critics say the board has created an unsafe system by refusing to staff the facilities at safe levels or allow any repercussions for the youth who create havoc and mayhem, officers said.

As for the adult and juvenile felons released into society who require monitoring by a judge, officers are told by their chief not to issue violations that would result in a return to jail. This backfired recently when a gang member who was under supervised probation murdered two police officers in an ambush shooting at a motel.

Two of the most pressing matters before the commission are the release of all girls from custody and increasing the quality of education for youth in jails. The number of girls in custody has been whittled down to just 35.

Supervisor Hilda Solis said female inmates usually find themselves in jail because they are victims of domestic abuse or trafficked.

“On a national scale, young women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic violence. And as we see on the adult side of incarceration, the setting and environment of camps and halls are not conducive to healing and thriving,” Solis said.

However, a probation manager disagreed, calling the girls in custody hardened criminals who deserve to be where they are.

“We have girls who committed homicides and mass killings and mutilations,” the manager said. “One person took a victim into the Angeles National Forest and mutilated him. They’re not Betty Crocker. They’re not at home baking cookies. Just the mentality that a young girl cannot commit the same crime as a boy is ludicrous.”

The commission investigated the education system for incarcerated students and released a report on March 14, finding that students lacked a “culture of learning” and were “engaged in task avoidance” that included not cooperating with teachers.

An on-site analysis by three commissioners attributed the lack of a quality education to an incarceration setting and poor quality of classroom instruction.

"There is never any forgetting that these are locked facilities," the report said. "While it is not within the ability of lay observers to describe the effect of this on the psychology of students, it seems obvious to commissioners that the stress of the environmental setting impacts the students’ ability to learn."

Students were described as apathetic or antagonistic toward learning and were often given candy or credits toward graduation as rewards to perform basic functions. The report did not discuss the violent crimes committed by students but rather placed the blame for a poor education on teachers and probation officials.

“The Probation Department’s tendency to treat the youth themselves as a constant source of danger leads to the prioritizing of control of student’s movements above all else. The result is carceral environments that make learning more difficult, and for many of the youth, it makes learning impossible,” the report said.

But if you ask the probation officials, they say only the most hardcore criminals are still locked up in Juvenile Hall, and these are not the people who should be allowed to create disturbances. Even in adult prisons, inmates receive college diplomas and learn trades when they abide by the rules.

“We don’t have lower-level detainees,” the manager said. “I wish we did. Those are the ones you could help and deter from a life of crime.”, 2022.

This is the fourth in a four-part series looking into the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles, as told

**Washington Examiner**[**: Inside LA's out-of-control juvenile jails where violence rules in the Newsom era**](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/fairness-justice/inside-las-out-of-control-juvenile-jails-where-violence-rules-in-the-newsom-era)

**Tori Richards**

**September 12, 2022**

This is the first of a four-part series looking into the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles as told by people who work there. It’s a world where youth convicted of violent felonies are said to control the jails, while law enforcement is helpless to stop it due to defunding and downgrades to formerly strict laws.

Imagine a jail where inmates rule over guards who fight for survival daily among killers, carjackers, and vicious gang members.

That's life every day inside Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall.

"Our juvenile halls are on the verge of collapse. I really believe someone is going to get killed at some point," one official told the Washington Examiner.

A series of state and local laws designed to clear California lockups have reached down to juvenile facilities where inmates learn now that they can get away with anything short of murder, officials said.

While politicians have been placing more juvenile offenders in the communities instead of behind bars, those left behind are the worst of the worst.

“The only kids we have detained are the most violent, aggressive, assaultive kids who have committed the most heinous crimes against society,” one Los Angeles County Probation Department manager told the Washington Examiner. “We don’t have a kid who stole a pair of jeans from JCPenney. We have a kid who put a gun to someone’s head and splattered their brains against a wall.”

The Washington Examiner spoke to two veteran probation officials who described a hopeless situation where officers routinely receive catastrophic injuries yet no support from county lawmakers who want a softer approach for juvenile offenders.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department staffs the county’s four juvenile jails, where the number of officers has shrunk by about 700 in recent years. Those who don’t retire from debilitating injuries are being driven out by PTSD, both an officer and a manager said. They declined to be named fearing repercussions.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has downgraded use-of-force guidelines and forbidden the use of standard nonlethal weapons such as pepper spray and Tasers while instituting a hiring freeze creating a short-staffed situation, the officials said.

“We’ve had back injuries, fractures, and broken bones,” the officer said. “One officer recently broke his hip and had to have pins put in. He fell on a concrete floor during a restraint. These are 18-, 19-year-old kids who are used to fighting and a lot more durable than 40- or 50-year-old people.”

The situation has become so dangerous that staff members and officers have started to smuggle in contraband for inmates as a way of buying favor to avoid injury. Items include cellphones, laptops, and drugs.

Los Angeles County has about 600 inmates housed at jails called Juvenile Hall, down from three times that number over the past four years. In 2020, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill that ordered the closure of California’s four state juvenile prisons, which numbered 750 inmates, mostly convicted of violent felonies.

USA - Crime - Juvenile Probation Camp
Barbed wire top fencing and a structure at the Juvenile Probation Camp, Camp Scott in Santa Clarita.
Ann Johansson/Corbis via Getty Images
These prisoners were transferred to less secure county juvenile jail facilities that are not designed to hold inmates charged with major crimes, the officials said. The closure mirrored what has been happening in adult prisons where many felonies have been downgraded and prisoners are transferred locally to serve lesser sentences.

Closing prisons would “enable youth to remain in their communities and stay close to their families to support rehabilitation,” Newsom said at the time. In 2020, state juvenile prisons had populations with 14% convicted of murder, 37% for assault, and 34% for robbery, the Associated Press reported.

Newsom also signed a bill forbidding prosecutors from charging juveniles with a second violent felony while incarcerated. So while adult counterparts still faced additional time in prison, juveniles are now punished for whichever crime is the most severe — whether committed in jail or the initial crime for which they were sentenced. This gives inmates the incentive to assault staff, knowing nothing will happen to them, the officers said.

“I guarantee you, everyone who is working in those institutions are suffering from PTSD,” the manager said. “You cannot confront these kids for any negative behavior. We deal with physical and mental abuse every single day.”

The Washington Examiner also viewed graphic photos of a female officer with blood gushing from her nose and another officer with a huge welt surrounding her eye socket. Many officers and staff members believe it’s easier to deliver contraband to inmates than suffer injuries, the officer said.

Inmates have no incentive to behave because their punishment is simply a few hours locked in their cells and then they are back in a group day room to wreak havoc, the officer said.

“The staff is so scared, the kids will get them to bring a laptop or cellphone — it’s a proactive measure to say, ‘You leave me alone,’” the officer said. “It used to be something as easy as a cheeseburger or a pizza. Now they are using cellphones to order drugs from the outside, thrown over the wall.”

One such situation recently occurred where a female officer was outside with a group of prisoners. Someone threw drugs into the yard and a teenager ordered the officer to retrieve it, but she refused. Later that day, she was jumped by several inmates and assaulted. Her eye socket was fractured, and she is on medical leave along with about 100 other injured officers, the manager said.

“Everyone is so afraid of confrontation. No one believes the officers, and they are believing the detainees,” said the manager recounting a typical internal use-of-force investigation. “The officers want the day to go by without any unnecessary nonsense” so they agree to deliver contraband.

One inmate admitted to receiving drugs regularly from the outside but complained to staff that he paid an employee $500 but didn’t get his shipment, the officer said.

The manager said the situation is so demoralizing that the department couldn’t keep a recent class of recruits who were somehow hired and trained despite a hiring freeze. The class had eight people, and seven resigned the first week.

“It’s a facade — we have no power. These kids are in complete control of everything we do here,” the manager said.

Recently, Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Holly Mitchell toured one of the jails with an entourage and was given an upbeat report that was just “smoke and mirrors,” the manager said.

Mitchell did not agree to an interview for this article. However, Kathryn Barger, the lone Republican on the board, provided a statement saying she directed the chief probation officer to find solutions to the staffing problems.

“I’m deeply concerned about the challenges our Probation Department is experiencing,” Barger said. “The well-being and safety of the juveniles under our supervision is dependent on the county’s ability to fully staff its juvenile halls and camps — it’s a balancing act. You can’t have one without the other. Our path forward must focus on taking immediate action to resolve the department’s workforce challenges. … We need to act with urgency before tragedy strikes.”

Meanwhile, the county is turning some former camps for low-level offenders into jails as the more secure facilities are closed. One of these will be in the celebrity enclave Malibu, where the parameter wall is accessible by the public, allowing outside conversations with prisoners and easy access to contraband.

Malibu was initially built as a baseball camp for teenagers convicted of minor crimes such as shoplifting. In Los Angeles County, District Attorney George Gascon has a platform of trying to rehabilitate teenagers in the community and not charge them with serious felonies, prosecutors told the Washington Examiner. The only ones left behind bars are hardcore criminals.

“They are trying to put this perception out in society that the kids we have detained are kids who grew up in Mayberry and stole candy,” the manager said. “These are violent offenders. They have done home invasions and raped the women in their home. They have stolen cars and run over the people. We have a 14-year-old who committed a homicide in a burglary gone bad. It’s such a misperception that they are low-level, first-time offenders that succeed in a scared-straight environment.”