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Survey Shows that Kern County is #1 for Proposition 36 Case Filings Across the State

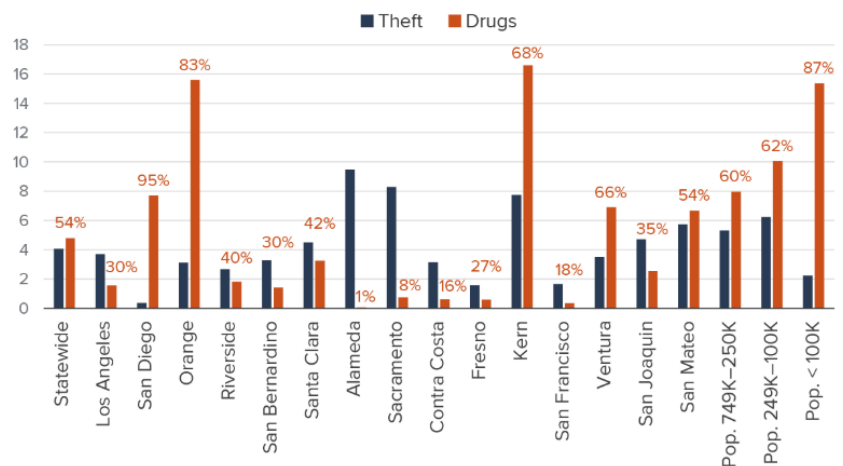
(Kern County) – The Public Policy Institute of California recently released an [article](#) highlighting the early rollout of Proposition 36 and how its implementation varies significantly across California counties. Statewide data from the first 90 days of the law's enactment reveals that Kern County has filed more Proposition 36 cases per capita than any other county in the state.

Proposition 36 — formally known as the Homelessness, Drug Addiction, and Theft Reduction Act — was passed by voters in November 2024 and took effect on December 18, 2024. The law targets repeat retail theft and smash-and-grab crimes with enhanced penalties and adds fentanyl to the list of controlled substances subject to stricter consequences. Importantly, it also provides pathways for non-violent drug offenders to receive treatment through mental health and drug rehabilitation programs, emphasizing long-term public safety solutions.

Figure 1 illustrates that Kern County prosecutors are filing 24 cases per 100,000 residents, the highest rate in California. Of those filings, 68% are related to drug offenses, a clear reflection of the focus on addressing

Prop 36 felony filings vary substantially across counties, especially for drug offenses

Number of felony Prop 36 cases filed (per 100,000 residents)



SOURCE: Judicial Council's Proposition 36 Survey Data, for responses received between February 14, 2025, and February 28, 2025.
FROM: PPIC Blog, April 2025.

Figure 1
Source: Public Policy Institute of California

the county's substance abuse crisis.

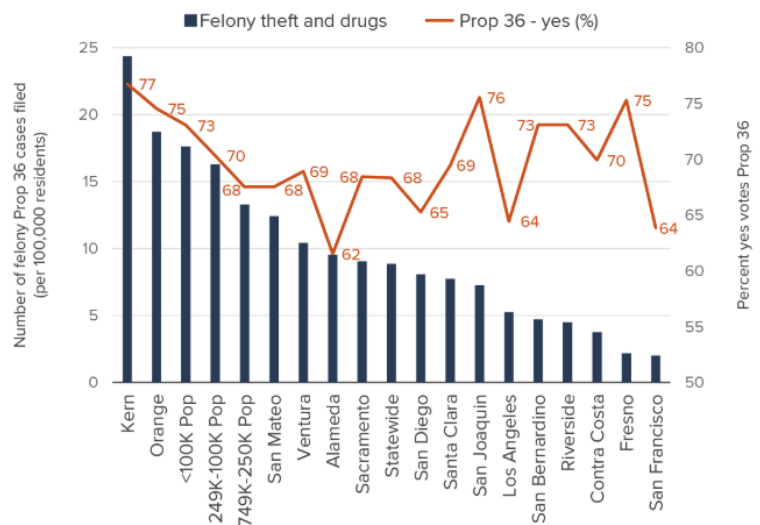
The study also examined the potential link between public support for Proposition 36 and the number of filings per county. Figure 2 demonstrates that while most counties showed little correlation, Kern County stood out. With 77% of voters supporting the measure -the highest approval rate in the state – Kern County demonstrated a strong correlation between public support and enforcement.

The data isn't surprising to the District Attorney's Office as for months leading up to the vote, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer, Kern County prosecutors, and community advocates met with residents during lunch hours and on weekends to inform them about the urgent need for reform. During these conversations, residents voiced deep frustration over rising crime, drug addiction, and visible homelessness impacting neighborhoods. Thanks to the community's attention and support, prosecutors are now better equipped to hold repeat offenders accountable and have dedicated immense efforts toward this solution.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; "In the first 90 days, new Proposition 36 laws have allowed our office to prosecute repeat offenders more effectively than we've been able to in years. We were out there speaking with residents one-on-one, and their message was clear: they want their communities back. We will not let them down. This study reflects the results of our collective effort and the community's trust in our office."

Furthermore, District Attorney Zimmer credits this progress to the strong partnership between the District Attorney's Office and local law enforcement agencies making the arrests. "We're proud of the collaboration in Kern County and remain committed to creating safer communities across our region."

Filing rates vary across counties but do not always track voter support of Prop 36



SOURCES: Judicial Council's Proposition 36 Survey Data, for responses received between February 14, 2025, and February 28, 2025. California Secretary of State, Statement of Vote, November 5, 2024.
FROM: PPIC Blog, April 2025.

Figure 2

Source: Public Policy Institute of California



DDA Bobby Singh (Left) and DDA Larry Fields (Right) collecting signatures at Sam's Club



DA Zimmer and DA Investigator Jerry Whisenhunt collecting signatures at Luigi's.