

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

# Superior Court

## Criminal Case

## Conviction Rate Analysis

Fiscal Years 2020-21 through 2024-25

*Felonies · Traffic Misdemeanors · Nontraffic Misdemeanors*



*Infractions excluded per DA Office methodology*

*Data: Judicial Council of California Court Statistics Reports — [2022](#) · [2023](#) · [2024](#) · [2025](#) · [FY 2024-25](#)*

# 5

FISCAL YEARS OF DATA

## 38,534

Total Dispositions

## 82-86%

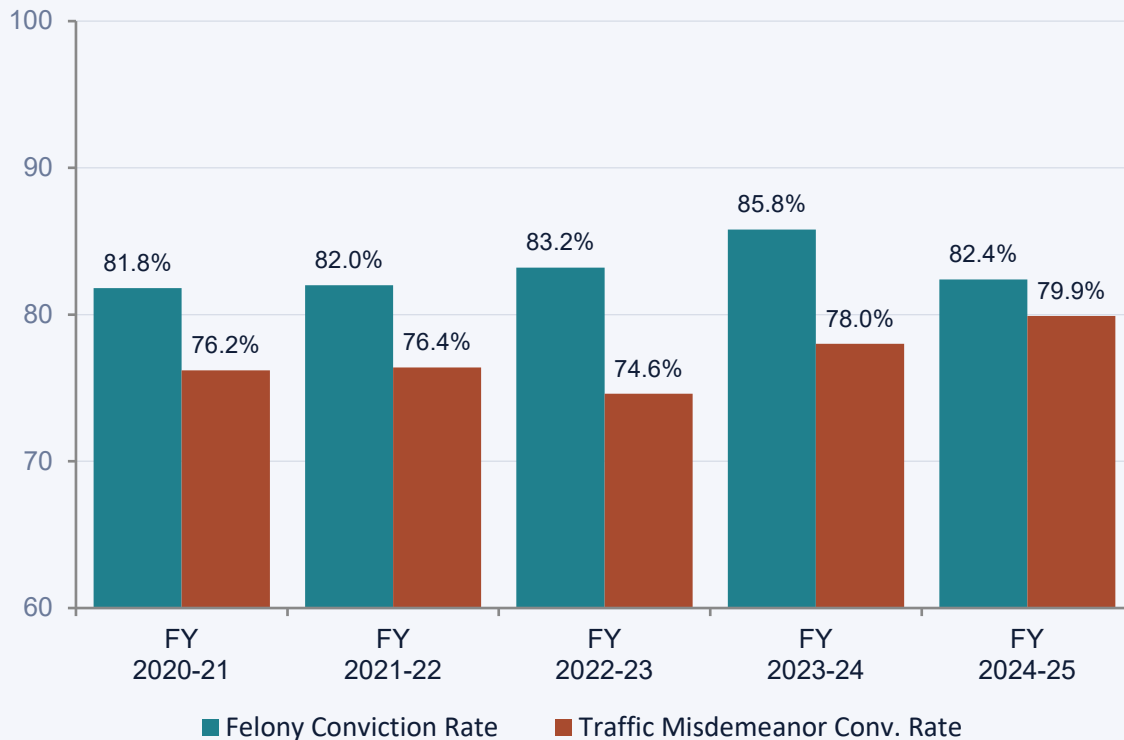
Felony Conv. Rate (avg)

# Conviction Rates: Felonies & Traffic Misdemeanors — FY 2020-21 through 2024-25



CHART 1

Excludes infractions. *Felony rate = (Felony + Misd convictions) ÷ Total felony dispositions. Traffic Misd rate = (Bail forfeitures + guilty pleas + bench/jury trials) ÷ total dispositions.*



## FELONY RATE

**81.8% → 82.4%**

Remarkably stable across 5 years, peaking at 85.8% in FY 2023-24. Strong, consistent prosecution outcomes on felony cases.

## TRAFFIC MISD. RATE

**74.6% → 79.9%**

Steady improvement over the period. Strong guilty plea rates reflect defendant acceptance of responsibility in traffic offense cases.

# SLO County vs. California Statewide FY 2021-22 through 2024-25

COMPARE



Excludes FY 2020-21 statewide data — COVID-era court closures produced incomplete county reporting across California

## FELONY CONVICTION RATE

Fiscal Year	SLO County	CA Statewide	SLO vs. State
FY 2021-22	82.0%	76.7%	+5.3 pts
FY 2022-23	83.2%	76.5%	+6.7 pts
FY 2023-24	85.8%	74.5%	+11.3 pts
FY 2024-25	82.4%	74.5%	+7.9 pts
4-yr Avg	83.3%	75.5%	+7.8 pts

## TRAFFIC MISD. CONVICTION RATE

Fiscal Year	SLO County	CA Statewide	SLO vs. State
FY 2021-22	76.4%	71.8%	+4.6 pts
FY 2022-23	74.6%	68.7%	+5.9 pts
FY 2023-24	78.0%	67.7%	+10.3 pts
FY 2024-25	79.9%	69.1%	+10.8 pts
4-yr Avg	77.2%	69.3%	+7.9 pts

**KEY FINDING:** SLO County has outperformed the California statewide average by **~8 percentage points** on felony convictions and **~8 percentage points** on traffic misdemeanor convictions — consistently, every year. Source: California Judicial Council Court Statistics Reports.

**NOTE:** FY 2020-21 is excluded from the statewide comparison because COVID-19 court closures caused many California counties to submit incomplete or no disposition data that year, rendering the statewide total artificially deflated and statistically unreliable as a benchmark; San Luis Obispo County reported complete data for all five fiscal years.

# The Ethics of Prosecution: Truth Over Conviction Rate

ANALYSIS



*Felonies & Traffic Misdemeanors | Understanding what a conviction rate truly reflects*

## THE PROSECUTORIAL MANDATE

# Seeking TRUTH, not a conviction.

- The ethics of prosecution require that the most important goal is TRUTH — not maximizing convictions.
- We genuinely want an innocent person to be acquitted. We want the guilty to be convicted.
- The strongest cases with the clearest evidence of guilt resolve through guilty pleas before trial.
- A scrupulous DA's office takes the DIFFICULT cases to trial — those with contested facts, complex evidence, or close calls.
- Hard cases naturally produce more hung juries and acquittals. That is not failure — it is justice in action.

## WARNING: The "Perfect" Conviction Rate

A DA's office boasting a near-perfect conviction rate may simply be sandbagging — declining to prosecute or go to trial on any difficult case. This is not justice. It is a performance metric that incentivizes cowardice over principle.

## SLO DA OFFICE POLICY

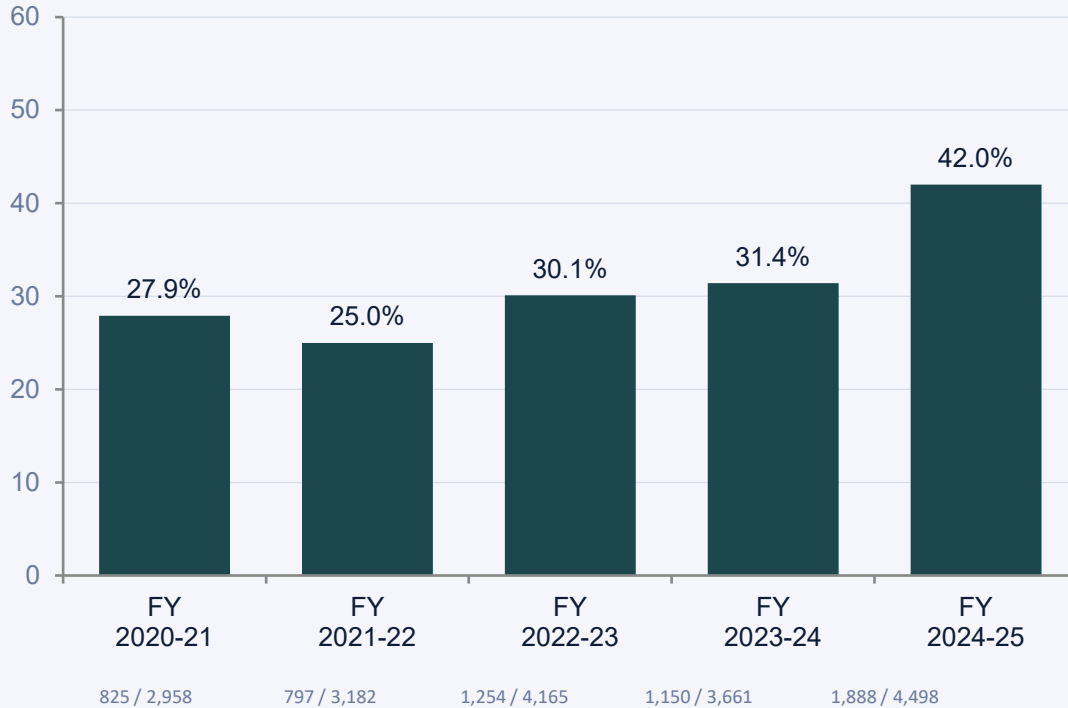
- Deputy District Attorneys are NEVER rated on their jury trial conviction rate.
- We refuse to incentivize prosecutors to avoid difficult trials in order to protect a statistic.
- Strong cases should resolve by plea. Hard cases should go to trial.
- Taking a difficult case to trial — and losing — is not failure. Declining to try it is.
- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is the highest standard in law. When evidence is close, acquittals honor that standard.

# Conviction Rate: Nontraffic Misdemeanors – FY 2020-21 through 2024-25 (low level criminal offenses)

CHART 2



Rate = (bail forfeitures + guilty pleas + bench/jury trials) ÷ total dispositions · "Other Before Trial" (dismissals, diversion) excluded from conviction count



## FY 2024-25 BREAKDOWN

Guilty Pleas **1,863**  
Bail Forfeitures **11**  
Bench / Jury Trial **14**  
Other (dismiss/diversion) **2,610**  
Total Dispositions **4,498**

**Upward Trend:** 25.0% (FY 2021-22) to 42.0% (FY 2024-25)  
— a 17-point gain over 4 years.

## WHY RATES APPEAR LOW

See analysis on next slide

- PC 1385 judicial dismissals over DA objection
- Judicial diversion over DA objection
- Plea agreements in more serious cases usually include dismissal of lower level trailing misdemeanor cases

# Why Nontraffic Misdemeanor Conviction Rates Appear Low

ANALYSIS



*The SLO DA's Office conviction rate reflects a system where outcomes are often determined outside prosecutorial control*

P.C. 1385

## Judicial "Interest of Justice" Dismissals

California Penal Code §1385 empowers judges to dismiss criminal charges "in the furtherance of justice" — even over the explicit objection of the District Attorney.

In misdemeanor court, judges frequently dismiss low-level petty offenses on this basis, citing calendar management, the defendant's circumstances, or a personal assessment that prosecution is disproportionate.

These dismissals are outside the DA's control. Each one reduces the conviction count without reflecting any weakness in the case.

DIVERSION

## Judicial Diversion Over DA Objection

California law grants judges broad authority to divert misdemeanor defendants into treatment or community programs — in many instances even when the District Attorney has specifically objected.

Diversion cases do not result in a conviction. They appear in the "Other Before Trial" column and are counted as non-convictions in the disposition data.

Successful diversion is treated as a dismissal. While this may serve rehabilitative goals, it means the DA's prosecution effort — however strong — produces no conviction.

PLEA RESOL.

## Multi-Case Plea Resolutions

When defendants face multiple simultaneous cases of varying severity, resolution typically involves a plea to the most serious charge with dismissal of the less serious counts.

For example: a felony and a misdemeanor resolved together. The defendant pleads to the felony — a strong conviction result. The misdemeanor is dismissed as part of the agreement.

This is sound case management and the right outcome. But statistically, the misdemeanor dismissal lowers the nontraffic misdemeanor conviction rate while the felony rate remains strong.

# 5-Year Summary: Conviction Rates — SLO County

SUMMARY



FY 2020-21 through FY 2024-25 · Felonies, Nontraffic Misdemeanors, Traffic Misdemeanors · Infractions excluded

Fiscal Year	Total Disps	Felony Conv.	Nontraffic Misd.	Traffic Misd. (DUIs, etc.)
FY 2020-21	5,617	81.8%	27.9%	76.2%
FY 2021-22	6,304	82.0%	25.0%	76.4%
FY 2022-23	8,086	83.2%	30.1%	74.6%
FY 2023-24	7,376	85.8%	31.4%	78.0%
FY 2024-25	8,151	82.4%	42.0%	79.9%
<b>5-Year Change</b>		<b>+0.6 pts</b>	<b>+14.1 pts</b>	<b>+3.7 pts</b>

Note: The "combined" rate blends case types of very different complexity. Felony and traffic misdemeanor rates are independently more meaningful indicators of prosecution outcomes.

Source: [2022 CSR](#) · [2023 CSR](#) · [2024 CSR](#) · [2025 CSR](#) · [FY 2024-25 County Data](#) | Judicial Council of California — San Luis Obispo County Superior Court