

## **Evictions Continue to Decline Statewide**

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During the fiscal year between July 1, 2002 and July 1, 2003, there were almost 8,000 fewer evictions filed in the state of California than the year before. This downward trend has continued since 1997 when California courts processed almost 240,000 evictions compared to just over 166,000 last year, a decline of 30%. Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Ventura, Kern, Alameda, and Tulare counties all decreased in the number of evictions. However, what is probably more significant, the decline is apparently reaching its low point as many of the most populated counties actually showed a slight increase in the number of evictions filed from the year before. San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus and Contra Costa counties all increased their number of evictions.

The available statistics do not break down the reason for the eviction filings, but according to our law firm's internal statistics, most evictions are filed for non-payment of rent followed by behavior issues. Evictions are also filed following foreclosures if the previous owner or their occupants fail to vacate after the transfer of title. Foreclosure filings have been cut way back during the last four years because of low interest rates and a robust economy.

Although a stronger economy is certainly one of the primary reasons why evictions continue to drop, the fact that residential property management has done a better job of screening potential residents for their properties is also a major reason for the decline. The rental housing industry has gradually been moving away from the small owner investment vehicle it used to be, and is now considered a profession in its own right. The increase in professional management has obviously been good for the industry. Residents are happier, as well as owners and managers who can shift their expenses from legal fees and costs to other rising expenses; such as, insurance and maintenance.

The largest number of evictions filed in the state continues to be in Los Angeles County which dropped from 75,496 to 68,548, a decline of almost 10%. The next largest number of evictions filed was reported in San Bernardino County which dropped from 17,969 to 16,423. Orange County and San Diego County landlords filed almost the same number of evictions, 13,320 and 12,872 respectively, with Riverside coming in at 10,963. Riverside and San Diego counties experienced a less than 1% increase and Orange County a 4% increase. Evictions in San Bernardino County dropped less than 2%, and in Ventura County declined by less than 1%, going from 1,981 to 1,975.

In Northern California, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus and Contra Costa County landlords filed more evictions during the fiscal year 2002-2003 than during 2001-2002. The greatest number of evictions filed was in Alameda County with 5,879 followed by Santa Clara with 4,913, Contra Costa with 4,321, San Joaquin with 3,240, Stanislaus with 2,471, Solano with 2,038, Tulare with 1,157 and Sonoma with 1,200. Of these, Alameda County was the only Northern California County to post a lower number of evictions from the year before, a decrease of almost 7%.

Sacramento, San Francisco, and Fresno Counties did not produce unlawful detainer statistics.

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