



California Counties

The first California Legislature (1849-50) divided the state into 27 separate administrative areas, called **counties**. During this period dominated by the Gold Rush, most of the population of the state lived in the region between San Francisco and the mining towns in the Sierra Nevada. Many original counties were small because mountainous terrain or large water bodies made travel and communication difficult. Additional disagreements between mining towns and agricultural districts led to further subdividing, so that the number of counties continued to increase. In 1907, Imperial County became the 58th and final county in the state. San Bernardino County is the largest in area (20,164 square miles), and San Francisco County is the smallest (91 square miles).

Rank of Counties by Population in 2018

1 Los Angeles 10,098,052	21 Monterey 433,212	41 Tehama 63,373
2 San Diego 3,302,833	22 Placer 380,077	42 San Benito 59,416
3 Orange 3,164,182	23 San Luis Obispo 281,455	43 Tuolumne 53,932
4 Riverside 2,383,286	24 Santa Cruz 273,765	44 Calaveras 45,235
5 San Bernardino 2,135,413	25 Merced 269,075	45 Siskiyou 43,540
6 Santa Clara 1,922,200	26 Marin 260,295	46 Amador 37,829
7 Alameda 1,643,700	27 Butte 227,075	47 Lassen 31,185
8 Sacramento 1,510,023	28 Yolo 214,977	48 Glenn 27,897
9 Contra Costa 1,133,247	29 El Dorado 186,661	49 Del Norte 27,424
10 Fresno 978,130	30 Imperial 180,216	50 Colusa 21,464
11 Kern 883,053	31 Shasta 179,085	51 Plumas 18,699
12 San Francisco 870,044	32 Madera 155,013	52 Inyo 18,085
13 Ventura 848,112	33 Kings 150,075	53 Mariposa 17,540
14 San Mateo 765,935	34 Napa 140,530	54 Mono 14,174
15 San Joaquin 732,212	35 Humboldt 135,768	55 Trinity 12,862
16 Stanislaus 539,301	36 Nevada 99,092	56 Modoc 8,938
17 Sonoma 501,317	37 Sutter 95,872	57 Sierra 2,930
18 Tulare 460,477	38 Mendocino 87,422	58 Alpine 1,146
19 Santa Barbara 443,738	39 Yuba 75,493	
20 Solano 438,530	40 Lake 64,148	