



# OJJDP

J. Robert Flores, Administrator

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## JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Office of Justice Programs • Partnerships for Safer Communities • [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov)

# Juvenile Arrests 2003

**Howard N. Snyder**

In 2003, law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.2 million arrests of persons under age 18.\* According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), juveniles accounted for 16% of all arrests and 15% of all violent crime arrests in 2003. The substantial growth in juvenile violent crime arrests that began in the late 1980s peaked in 1994. In 2003, for the ninth consecutive year, the rate of juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses—murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—declined. Specifically, between 1994 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for Violent Crime Index offenses fell 48%. As a result, the juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate in 2003 was at its lowest level since at least 1980. From its peak in 1993 to 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for murder fell 77%.

These findings are derived from data reported annually by local law enforcement agencies across the country to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. Based on these data, the FBI prepares its annual *Crime in the United States* report, which summarizes crimes known to the police and arrests made during the reporting calendar year. This information is used to characterize the extent and nature of juvenile crime that comes to the attention of the justice system. Other recent findings from the UCR Program include the following:

- ◆ Of the estimated 1,550 juveniles murdered in 2003, 40% were under 5 years of age, 68% were male, 50% were white, and 45% were killed with a firearm.
- ◆ Juveniles were involved in 12% of all violent crimes cleared in 2003—specifically, 5% of murders, 12% of forcible rapes, 14% of robberies, and 12% of aggravated assaults.
- ◆ In the peak year of 1993, there were about 3,790 juvenile arrests for murder. Between 1993 and 2003, juvenile arrests for murder declined, with the number of arrests in 2003 (1,130) only about 30% of that in 1993.
- ◆ Females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 32% of those for other assaults in 2003, far more than their involvement in other types of violent crimes.
- ◆ Between 1980 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for simple assault increased 102% for males and 269% for females.
- ◆ The disparity in violent crime arrest rates for black juveniles and white juveniles declined from 6-to-1 in 1980 to 4-to-1 in 2003.
- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft declined consistently and substantially between 1990 and 2003, falling 62%.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations increased 19%, with the increase far greater for females (56%) than males (13%).

\* Throughout this Bulletin, persons under age 18 are referred to as juveniles. See Notes on page 12.

### A Message From OJJDP

*Juvenile Arrests 2003* summarizes and analyzes national and state juvenile arrest data presented in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's report *Crime in the United States 2003*. The Bulletin provides baseline information for those who monitor the nation's progress in addressing juvenile crime.

The juvenile arrest rate for Violent Crime Index offenses declined in 2003 for the ninth consecutive year, falling 48% from its 1994 peak and reaching its lowest level since at least 1980. The rate for each of the Violent Crime Index offenses—murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—has declined steadily since the mid-1990s. Between 1994 and 2003, the decline in the number of violent crime arrests was greater for juveniles (32%) than adults (12%).

Juvenile arrest rates for Property Crime Index offenses also declined in 2003, reaching their lowest level in at least three decades. Between 1980 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for Property Crime Index offenses (burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson) dropped 46%.

Although these and other statistical trends in juvenile crime are encouraging, problems remain. For example, between 1980 and 2003, juvenile arrest rates for simple assault increased 269% for females and 102% for males. During the same period, juvenile arrest rates for drug abuse violations increased 51% for females and 52% for males.

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## What do arrest statistics count?

To interpret the material in this Bulletin properly, the reader must have a clear understanding of what these statistics count. The arrest statistics report the number of arrests made by law enforcement agencies in a particular year—not the number of individuals arrested, nor the number of crimes committed. The number of arrests is not equivalent to the number of people arrested, because an unknown number of individuals are arrested more than once in the year. Nor do arrest statistics represent counts of crimes committed by arrested individuals, because a series of crimes committed by one individual may culminate in a single arrest, or a single crime may result in the arrest of more than one person. This latter situation, where many arrests result from one crime, is relatively common in juvenile law-violating behavior because juveniles are more likely than adults to

commit crimes in groups. This is the primary reason why arrest statistics should not be used to indicate the relative proportion of crime committed by juveniles and adults. Arrest statistics are most appropriately a measure of flow into the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Arrest statistics also have limitations for measuring the volume of arrests for a particular offense. Under the UCR Program, the FBI requires law enforcement agencies to classify an arrest by the most serious offense charged in that arrest. For example, the arrest of a youth charged with aggravated assault and possession of a controlled substance would be reported to the FBI as an arrest for aggravated assault. Therefore, when arrest statistics show that law enforcement agencies made an estimated 197,100 arrests of young people for drug abuse violations in 2003, it means that a drug abuse violation was the most serious charge in these 197,100 arrests. An

unknown number of additional arrests in 2003 included a drug charge as a lesser offense.

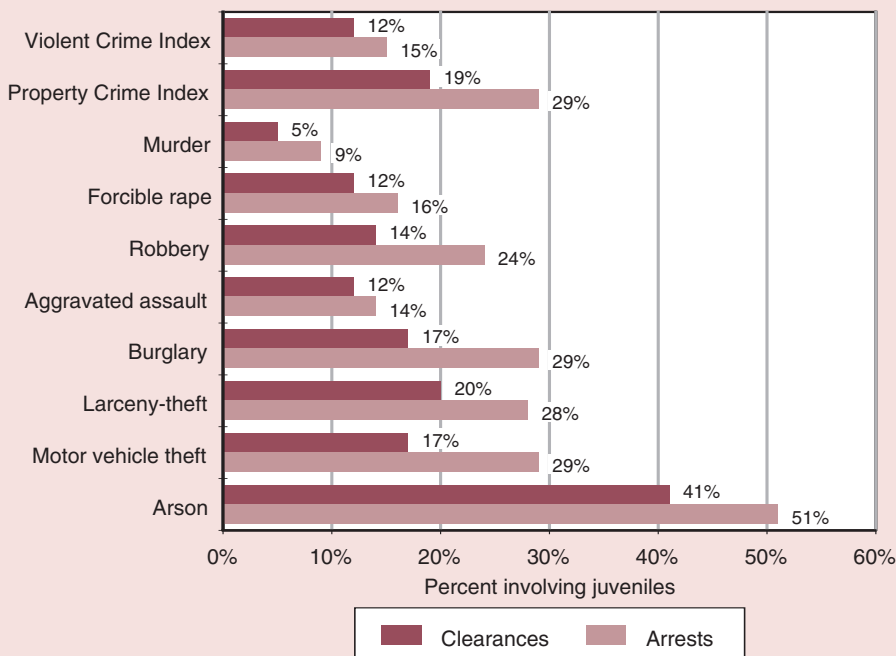
## What do clearance statistics count?

Clearance statistics measure the proportion of reported crimes that were resolved by an arrest or other, exceptional means (e.g., death of the offender, unwillingness of the victim to cooperate). A single arrest may result in many clearances. For example, 1 arrest could clear 40 burglaries if the person was charged with committing all 40 of these crimes. Or multiple arrests may result in a single clearance if the crime was committed by a group of offenders. For those interested in juvenile justice issues, the FBI also reports information on the proportion of clearances that involved offenders under age 18. This statistic is a better indicator of the proportion of crime committed by this age group than is the arrest proportion, although there are some concerns that even the clearance statistic overestimates the juvenile proportion of crimes.

For example, the FBI reports that persons under age 18 accounted for 24% of all robbery arrests but only 14% of all robberies that were cleared in 2003. If it can be assumed that offender characteristics of cleared robberies are similar to those of robberies that were not cleared, then it would be appropriate to conclude that persons under age 18 were responsible for 14% of all robberies in 2003. However, the offender characteristics of cleared and noncleared robberies may differ for a number of reasons. If, for example, juvenile robbers were more easily apprehended than adult robbers, the juvenile proportion of cleared robberies would overestimate the juvenile responsibility for all robberies. To add to the difficulty in interpreting clearance statistics, the FBI's reporting guidelines require the clearance to be tied to the oldest offender in the group if more than one person is involved in the crime.

In summary, while the interpretation of reported clearance proportions is not straightforward, these data are the closest measure generally available of the proportion of crime known to law enforcement that is attributed to persons under age 18.

## The juvenile proportion of arrests exceeded the juvenile proportion of crimes cleared by arrest or exceptional means in each offense category, reflecting the fact that juveniles are more likely to commit crimes in groups and are more likely to be arrested than are adults



**Data source:** *Crime in the United States 2003* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), tables 28 and 38.

## The number of juveniles murdered in 2003 was the lowest since 1984

Each *Crime in the United States* report presents estimates of the number of crimes reported to law enforcement agencies. A large number of most crimes are never reported to law enforcement. Murder, however, is one crime that is nearly always reported. Therefore, murder is the crime for which the FBI data are most complete and most valid.

An estimated 16,500 murders were reported to law enforcement agencies in 2003, or 5.7 murders for every 100,000 U.S. residents. The murder rate in the U.S. was essentially constant between 1999 (the year with the fewest murders in the last 30 years) and 2003. Prior to 1999, the last year in which the U.S. murder rate was under 6.0 was in 1966.

Of all murder victims in 2003, 91% (or 14,950 victims) were 18 years of age or older. The other 1,550 murder victims were under age 18. Fewer juveniles were murdered in the U.S. in 2003 than in any year since 1984. The 2003 figure is 46% below the peak year of 1993, when an estimated 2,880 juveniles were murdered in the U.S.

Of all juveniles murdered in 2003, 40% were under age 5, 68% were male, and 50% were white. Compared with older juvenile murder victims, victims under age 13 in 2003 were more likely to be female (45% vs. 18%) and less likely to be black (40% vs. 54%).

In 2003, 67% of all murder victims were killed with a firearm. Adults were more likely to be killed with a firearm (69%) than were juveniles (45%). However, the involvement of a firearm depended greatly on the age of the juvenile victim. Whereas 14% of murdered juveniles under age 13 were killed with a firearm in 2003, 77% of murdered juveniles age 13 or older were killed with a firearm. The most common method of murdering children under age 5 was by physical assault; in 51% of these murders, the offenders' only weapons were their hands and/or feet.

## The 2.2 million arrests of juveniles in 2003 was 11% fewer than the number of arrests in 1999

| Most Serious Offense                                   | 2003<br>Estimated<br>Number of<br>Juvenile Arrests | Percent of Total<br>Juvenile Arrests |                 | Percent Change |               |               |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
|  |  | Female                               | Under<br>Age 15 | 1994–<br>2003  | 1999–<br>2003 | 2002–<br>2003 |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>2,220,300</b>                                   | <b>29%</b>                           | <b>32%</b>      | <b>-18%</b>    | <b>-11%</b>   | <b>0%</b>     |
| <b>Violent Crime Index</b>                             | <b>92,300</b>                                      | <b>18</b>                            | <b>33</b>       | <b>-32</b>     | <b>-9</b>     | <b>0</b>      |
| Murder and nonnegligent<br>manslaughter                | 1,130  | 9                                    | 11              | -68            | -18           | -10           |
| Forcible rape  | 4,240  | 2                                    | 37              | -25            | -11           | -9            |
| Robbery  | 25,440   | 9                                    | 25              | -43            | -8            | 3             |
| Aggravated assault                                     | 61,490   | 24                                   | 36              | -26            | -9            | 0             |
| <b>Property Crime Index</b>                            | <b>463,300</b>                                     | <b>32</b>                            | <b>37</b>       | <b>-38</b>     | <b>-15</b>    | <b>-3</b>     |
| Burglary   | 85,100   | 12                                   | 35              | -40            | -15           | -1            |
| Larceny-theft  | 325,600  | 39                                   | 38              | -35            | -15           | -3            |
| Motor vehicle theft                                    | 44,500   | 17                                   | 25              | -52            | -15           | -4            |
| Arson  | 8,200  | 12                                   | 61              | -36            | -12           | -3            |
| <b>Nonindex</b>  |  |                                      |                 |                |               |               |
| Other assaults   | 241,900  | 32                                   | 43              | 10             | 5             | 5             |
| Forgery and counterfeiting                             | 4,700  | 35                                   | 13              | -47            | -36           | -8            |
| Fraud  | 8,100  | 33                                   | 18              | -29            | -37           | -9            |
| Embezzlement   | 1,200  | 40                                   | 6               | 15             | -30           | -17           |
| Stolen property (buying,<br>receiving, possessing)     | 24,300   | 15                                   | 27              | -46            | -19           | -5            |
| Vandalism  | 107,700  | 14                                   | 44              | -33            | -11           | 2             |
| Weapons (carrying,<br>possessing, etc.)                | 39,200   | 11                                   | 36              | -41            | -6            | 11            |
| Prostitution and<br>commercialized vice                | 1,400  | 69                                   | 14              | 31             | 23            | 11            |
| Sex offense (except forcible<br>rape and prostitution) | 18,300   | 9                                    | 51              | 2              | 3             | -3            |
| Drug abuse violations                                  | 197,100  | 16                                   | 17              | 19             | -3            | 4             |
| Gambling   | 1,700  | 2                                    | 15              | -59            | 46            | 1             |
| Offenses against the<br>family and children            | 7,000  | 39                                   | 35              | 19             | -24           | -19           |
| Driving under the influence                            | 21,000   | 20                                   | 2               | 33             | -9            | -4            |
| Liquor law violations                                  | 136,900  | 35                                   | 10              | 4              | -22           | -6            |
| Drunkenness  | 17,600   | 23                                   | 13              | -11            | -19           | -6            |
| Disorderly conduct                                     | 193,000  | 31                                   | 41              | 13             | -0            | 6             |
| Vagrancy   | 2,300  | 25                                   | 25              | -50            | -20           | 9             |
| All other offenses<br>(except traffic)                 | 379,800  | 27                                   | 28              | -2             | -12           | -1            |
| Suspicion (not included<br>in totals)                  | 1,500  | 24                                   | 26              | -77            | -74           | -53           |
| Curfew and loitering                                   | 136,500  | 30                                   | 29              | -1             | -18           | -8            |
| Runaways   | 123,600  | 59                                   | 36              | -42            | -18           | -2            |

- ◆ In 2003, there were an estimated 61,490 juvenile arrests for aggravated assault. Between 1994 and 2003, the annual number of such arrests fell 26%.
- ◆ Females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 32% of juvenile arrests for other assaults (i.e., simple assaults and intimidations) in 2003, far more than their involvement in other types of violent crimes. Three of every five juvenile arrests (59%) for running away from home involved a female, as did 3 of every 10 arrests (30%) for curfew and loitering law violations.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, there were substantial declines in juvenile arrests for murder (68%), motor vehicle theft (52%), and weapons law violations (41%) and increases in juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations (19%) and driving under the influence (33%).

**Note:** Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

**Data source:** *Crime in the United States 2003* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), tables 29, 32, 34, 36, 38, and 40. Arrest estimates were developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.

## The juvenile share of crime has declined

The relative responsibility of juveniles and adults for crime is difficult to determine. Research has shown that crimes committed by juveniles are more likely to be cleared by law enforcement than are crimes committed by adults. Therefore, drawing a picture of crime from law enforcement records is likely to give a high estimate of juvenile responsibility for crime.

The clearance data in the *Crime in the United States* series show that the proportion of violent crimes attributed to juveniles by law enforcement has declined in recent years. The juvenile proportion of violent crimes cleared by arrest or exceptional means grew from about 9% in the late 1980s to 14% in 1994, then fell somewhat, remaining near 12% between 1997 and 2003.

Since 1980, the juvenile proportion of murders cleared peaked in 1994 at 10%. Between 2000 and 2003, the proportion was 5%—the lowest proportion since 1987 but slightly above the levels of the mid-1980s. The juvenile proportion of cleared forcible rapes peaked in 1995 (15%) and then fell; however, the 2003 proportion (12%) was still above the levels of the late 1980s (9%). The juvenile proportion of robbery clearances also peaked in 1995 (20%); it fell substantially by 2003 (14%), but was still above the levels of the late 1980s (10%). The juvenile proportion of aggravated assault clearances in 2003 (12%) was slightly below its peak in 1994 (13%) and substantially above the levels of the late 1980s (8%). The juvenile proportion of Property Crime Index offenses cleared by arrest or exceptional means in 2003 (19%) was at its lowest level since at least 1980.

## Juvenile arrests for violence in 2003 were the lowest since 1987

The FBI assesses trends in the volume of violent crimes by monitoring four offenses that are consistently reported by law enforcement agencies nationwide and are pervasive in all geographical areas of the country. These four crimes—murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—together form the Violent Crime Index.

After years of relative stability in the number of juvenile Violent Crime Index arrests, the increase in these arrests between 1988 and 1994 focused national attention on the problem of juvenile violence. After peaking in 1994, these arrests dropped each year from 1995 through 2002, then held constant for 2003. For all Violent Crime Index offenses combined, the number of juvenile arrests in 2003 was the lowest since 1987. The number of juvenile aggravated assault arrests in 2003 was lower than in any year since 1989. The number of juvenile arrests in 2003 for murder and for forcible rape were both lower than in any year since at least 1980. Finally, even with the marginal 3% increase in the number of juvenile arrests for robbery between 2002 and 2003, the counts for these years were still lower than in any year since at least 1980.

In the 10 years between 1994 and 2003, the decline in the number of violent crime arrests was greater for juveniles than adults:

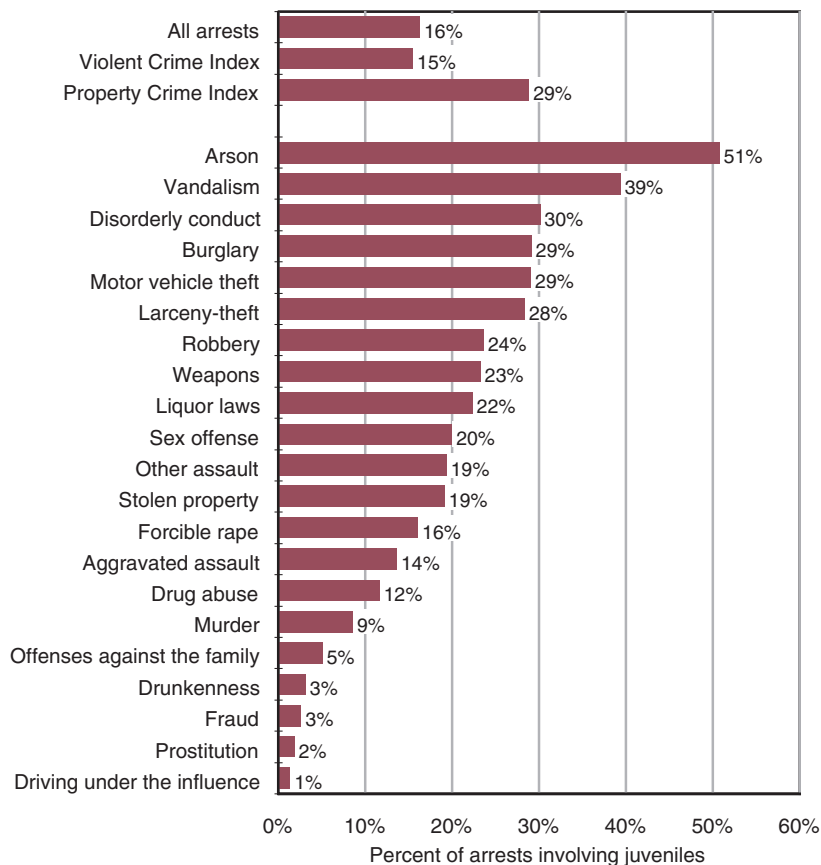
| Most Serious Offense | Percent Change in Arrests 1994–2003 |       |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                      | Juvenile                            | Adult |
| Violent Crime Index  | -32%                                | -12%  |
| Murder               | -68                                 | -30   |
| Forcible rape        | -25                                 | -22   |
| Robbery              | -43                                 | -17   |
| Aggravated assault   | -26                                 | -10   |

Data source: *Crime in the United States 2003*, table 32.

## Few juveniles were arrested for violent crime

In 2003, there were 273 arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses for every 100,000 youth between 10 and 17 years of age. If each of these arrests involved a different juvenile (which is unlikely), then no more than 1 in every 360 persons ages 10–17 was arrested for a Violent Crime Index offense in 2003, or about one-third of 1% of all juveniles ages 10–17 living in the U.S.

### In 2003, juveniles were involved in 1 in 12 arrests for murder, 1 in 9 arrests for a drug abuse violation, and 1 in 4 arrests for a weapons violation and for robbery



Data source: *Crime in the United States 2003* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), table 38.



## Juvenile arrests for property crimes in 2003 were the lowest in at least three decades

As with violent crime, the FBI assesses trends in the volume of property crimes by monitoring four offenses that are consistently reported by law enforcement agencies nationwide and are pervasive in all geographical areas of the country. These four crimes, which form the Property Crime Index, are burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

For the period from 1988 through 1994, during which juvenile violent crime arrests increased substantially, juvenile property crime arrest rates remained relatively constant. After this long period of relative stability, juvenile property crime arrests began to fall. Between 1994 and 2003, the juvenile Property Crime Index arrest rate dropped 46%, to its lowest level since at least the 1970s. More specifically, juvenile burglary arrest rates have been declining since at least the 1970s. Also, in 2003, the juvenile larceny-theft arrest rate and the juvenile motor vehicle theft arrest rate were at their lowest levels since at least the 1970s.

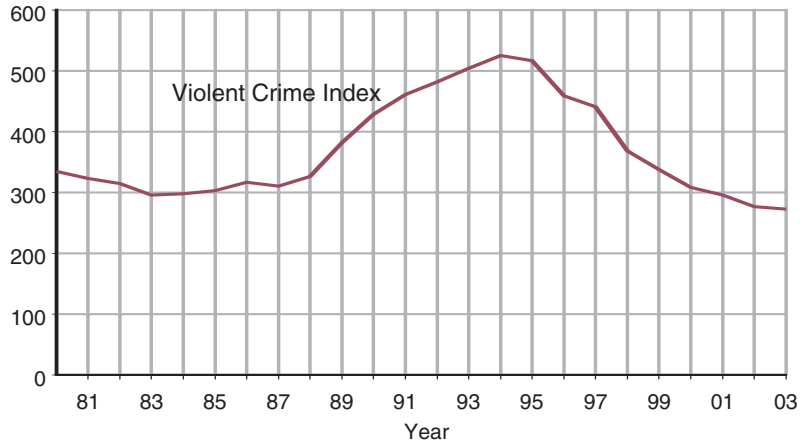
## Most arrested juveniles were referred to court

In most states, some persons under age 18 are, because of their age or by statutory exclusion, under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. For arrested persons under age 18 and under the original jurisdiction of their state's juvenile justice system, the FBI's UCR Program monitors what happens as a result of the arrest. This is the only instance in the UCR Program in which the statistics on arrests coincide with state variations in the legal definition of a juvenile.

In 2003, 20% of arrests involving youth eligible in their state for processing in the juvenile justice system were handled within law enforcement agencies, 71% were referred to juvenile court, and 7% were referred directly to criminal court. The others were referred to a welfare agency or to another police agency. In general, the proportion of juvenile arrests sent to juvenile court increased from 1980 to 2003 (from 58% to 71%). In 2003, the proportion of juvenile arrests sent to juvenile court was similar in cities (70%) and nonmetropolitan (i.e., rural) counties (71%) and somewhat higher in metropolitan (i.e., suburban) counties (75%).

### The juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate in 2003 was lower than in any year since at least 1980 and 48% below the peak year of 1994

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



- ◆ In comparison with the juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate, the rate for young adults (persons ages 18–24), which peaked in 1992, had fallen 34% by 2003 and was also below the rates of the early 1980s.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

### After years of relative stability, the juvenile Property Crime Index arrest rate began a decline in the mid-1990s that continued through 2003

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17

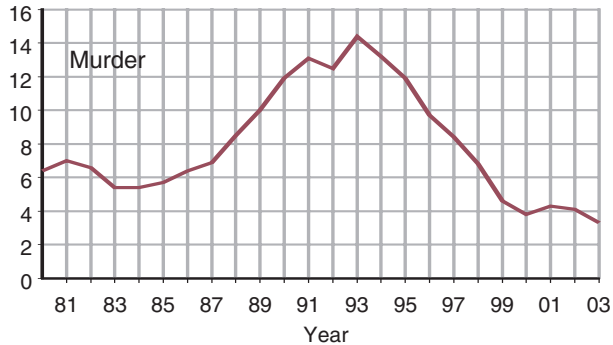


- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for Property Crime Index offenses in 2003 was 46% below its level in 1980.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**In 2003, juvenile arrest rates for murder, forcible rape, and robbery were at or near their lowest levels since at least 1980; the same was not true for the juvenile arrest rate for aggravated assault**

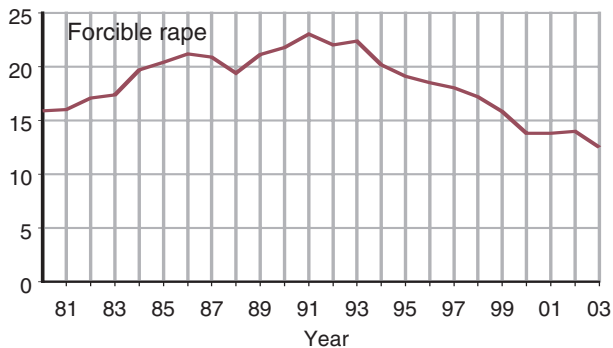
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Murder**

- ◆ In the period between 1980 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for murder peaked in 1993. In that year, there were about 3,800 arrests of juveniles for murder.
- ◆ Between the mid-1980s and 1993, the juvenile arrest rate for murder more than doubled.
- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for murder fell each year from 1993 through 2000. After holding constant in 2001 and 2002, the juvenile arrest rate for murder fell in 2003 to a level 77% below the peak year of 1993 and to half of what it was in 1980.

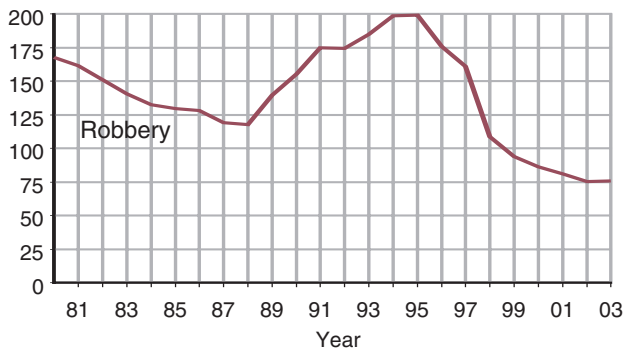
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Forcible Rape**

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for forcible rape did not vary as much as the rates for other violent crimes over the period 1980–2003, although it did follow the same general pattern of growth and decline.
- ◆ In 1991, the juvenile arrest rate for forcible rape peaked for the 1980–2003 period at 44% above its level in 1980.
- ◆ After 1993, the rate fell each year through 2000, then held constant through 2002. In 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for forcible rape then fell again, to its lowest level of the 1980–2003 period.

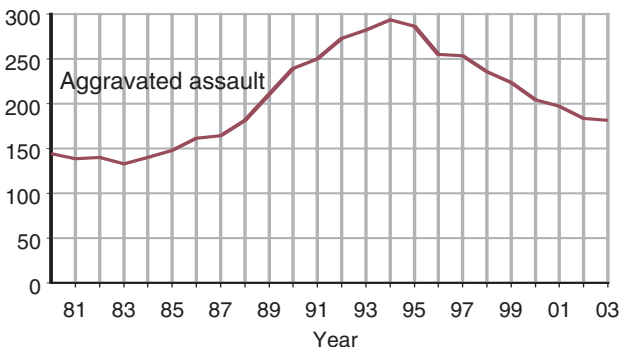
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Robbery**

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for robbery declined during much of the 1980s, falling 30% between 1980 and 1988.
- ◆ In 1989, this trend changed and the rate grew to its highest level of the 1980–2003 period in 1995, 69% above the 1988 level and 19% above its 1980 level.
- ◆ Between 1995 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for robbery fell 62%—to a point that was 55% below its 1980 level and 36% below its previous low point in 1988.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Aggravated Assault**

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for aggravated assault doubled between 1980 and 1994, generally paralleling the arrest rate trends for murder and robbery.
- ◆ Unlike the juvenile arrest rate trends for murder and robbery, the decline (38%) in the juvenile arrest rate for aggravated assault between 1994 and 2003 did not erase the increase that began in the mid-1980s. The juvenile arrest rate for aggravated assault in 2003 was still 26% above the 1980 level.

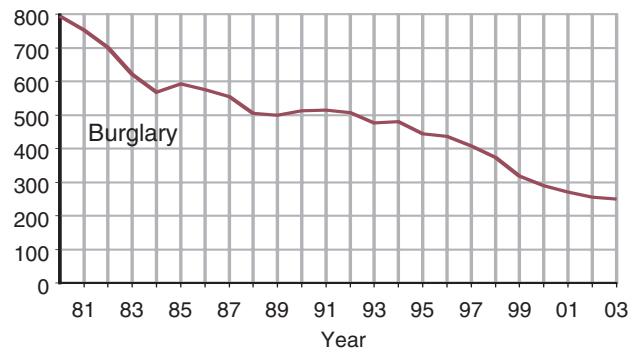
**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**Juvenile arrest rate trends for the four offenses that make up the Property Crime Index show very different patterns over the 1980–2003 period**

**Burglary**

- ◆ Unlike the arrest rate trend for any other Property Crime Index offense, the juvenile arrest rate for burglary declined consistently and substantially between 1980 and 2003.
- ◆ In 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for burglary was less than one-third of what it had been in 1980.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, the number of arrests for burglary declined for both juveniles and adults (40% and 14%, respectively). Similarly, in the 10-year period 1985–1994, the decline was greater for juveniles (19%) than for adults (11%).

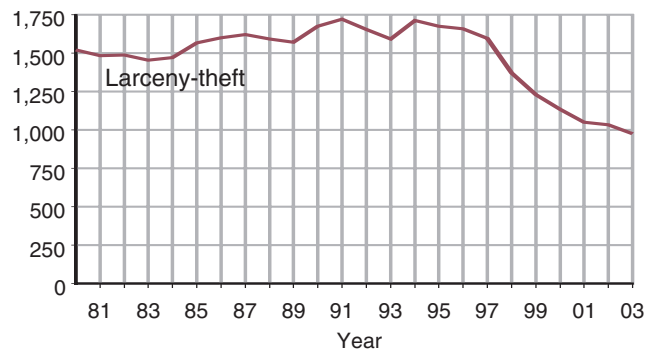
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Larceny-Theft**

- ◆ In 2003, 70% of all juvenile Property Crime Index arrests were for larceny-theft. Therefore, the Property Crime Index arrest rate trend primarily reflects the trend in larceny-theft (including shoplifting—the most common larceny-theft violation) and is influenced to a much lesser degree by the generally more serious property crimes of burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson.
- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for larceny-theft remained relatively constant between 1980 and 1997, then fell 39% in the brief period between 1997 and 2003.

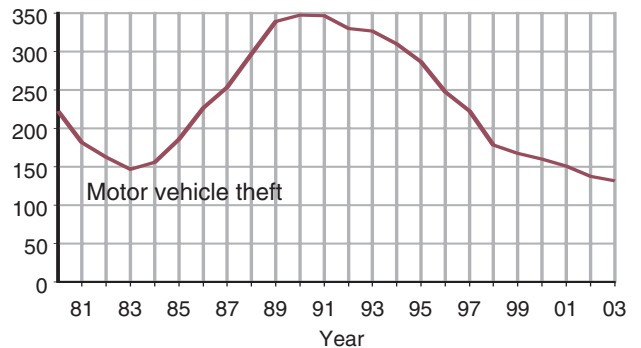
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Motor Vehicle Theft**

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft soared between 1983 and 1990, increasing 137%.
- ◆ After the peak years of 1990 and 1991, the juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft declined substantially and consistently through 2003—falling 62%. So, that by 2003, the rate was at its lowest level since at least 1980.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, the number of arrests for motor vehicle theft declined 52% for juveniles and just 6% for adults.

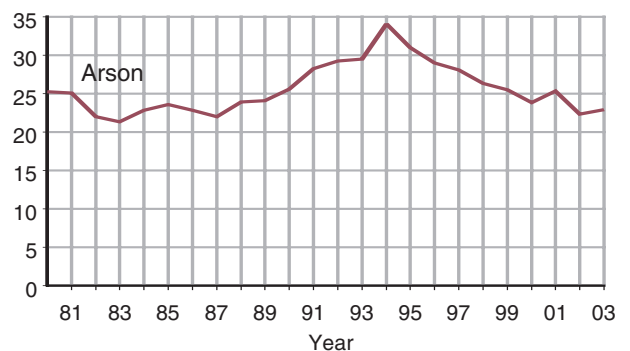
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



**Arson**

- ◆ After being relatively stable for most of the 1980s, the juvenile arrest rate for arson grew 55% between 1987 and 1994.
- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for arson declined substantially between 1994 and 2003, falling in 2003 to a level 33% below the peak year of 1994 and, with the exception of 2002, to its lowest level since 1987.

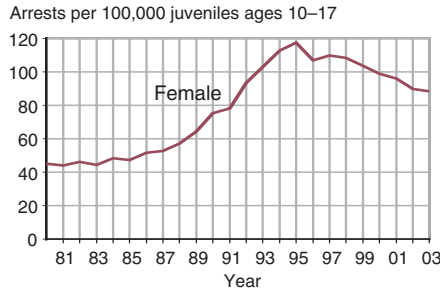
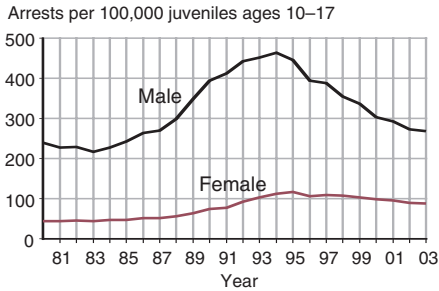
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



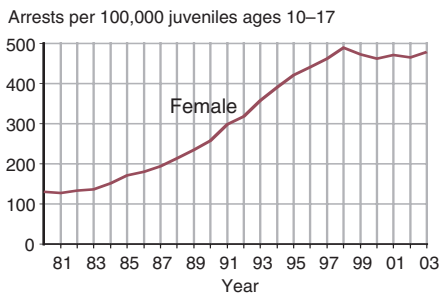
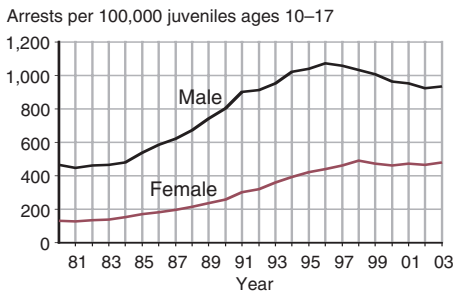
**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**In 2003, the male juvenile arrest rate for aggravated assault was near its 1980 level; in contrast, the female rate was well above its 1980 level**

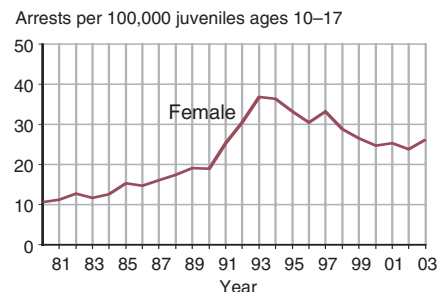
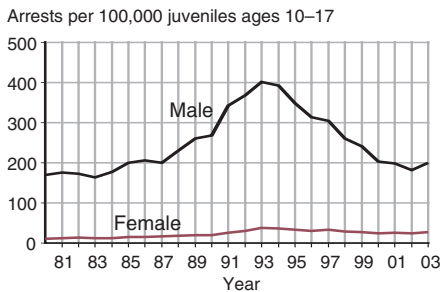
**Aggravated assault**



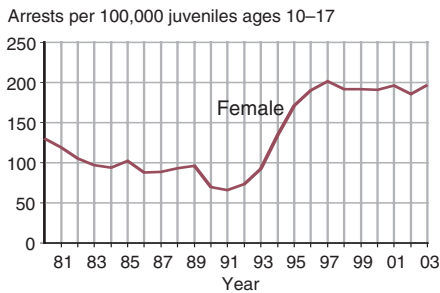
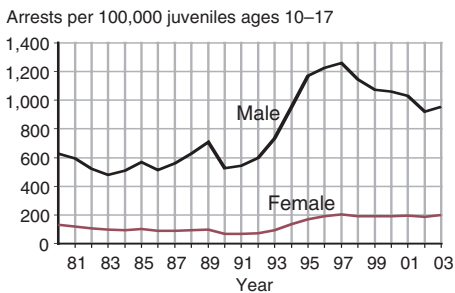
**Other (simple) assault**



**Weapons**



**Drug abuse violations**



- ◆ Between 1980 and 2003, the increase in the female juvenile arrest rate was greater than the increase in the male rate for aggravated assault (96% vs. 13%), simple assault (269% vs. 102%), and weapons law violations (147% vs. 18%).
- ◆ In contrast, the increase in the female juvenile arrest rate between 1980 and 2003 was comparable to the increase in the male rate for drug abuse violations (51% vs. 52%).

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**In 2003, 29% of juvenile arrests involved females**

Law enforcement agencies made 643,000 arrests of females under age 18 in 2003. Between 1994 and 2003, arrests of juvenile females generally increased more (or decreased less) than male arrests in most offense categories.

| Most Serious Offense  | Percent Change in Juvenile Arrests 1994–2003 |      |
|-----------------------|--|------|
|                       | Female                                       | Male |
| Aggravated assault    | -2%  | -31% |
| Simple assault        | 36   | 1    |
| Burglary              | -27  | -41  |
| Larceny-theft         | -19  | -43  |
| Motor vehicle theft   | -44  | -54  |
| Vandalism             | -11  | -36  |
| Weapons               | -22  | -42  |
| Drug abuse violations | 56   | 13   |
| Liquor law violations | 26   | -5   |
| DUI                   | 83   | 25   |
| Disorderly conduct    | 46   | 2    |

**Data source:** *Crime in the United States 2003*, table 33.

Similar gender differences also occurred in arrest trends for adults. Between 1994 and 2003, adult male arrests for aggravated assault fell 15% while female arrests rose 17%. Also, while adult male arrests for simple assault fell 5% between 1994 and 2003, adult female arrests rose 31%. Therefore, the disproportionate growth in female assault arrests was related to factors that affect both juveniles and adults.

In 2003, with the exception of larceny-theft, the percentage of juvenile arrests that involved a female was similar in central cities, in suburbs, and in other communities, outside cities and suburbs.

| Most Serious Offense | Female Percent of Juvenile Arrests, 2003 |                |       |
|----------------------|--|----------------|-------|
|                      | Central Cities                           | Suburban Areas | Other |
| All offenses         | 30%                                      | 28%            | 28%   |
| Aggravated assault   | 24                                       | 22             | 20    |
| Simple assault       | 33                                       | 32             | 31    |
| Burglary             | 13                                       | 10             | 11    |
| Larceny-theft        | 40                                       | 36             | 27    |
| Drug abuse           | 18                                       | 17             | 21    |
| Weapons              | 10                                       | 11             | 11    |
| Vandalism            | 14                                       | 13             | 14    |
| Runaways             | 59                                       | 58             | 57    |

**Data source:** *Crime in the United States 2003*, tables 45, 51, 57, and 63.



## Juvenile arrests disproportionately involved minorities

The racial composition of the juvenile population in 2003 was 78% white, 16% black, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian. Most Hispanics (an ethnic designation, not a race) were classified as white. In contrast to their representation in the population, black youth were overrepresented in juvenile arrests for violent crimes, and, to a lesser extent, property crimes. Of all juvenile arrests for violent crimes in 2003, 53% involved white youth, 45% involved black youth, 1% involved Asian youth, and 1% involved American Indian youth. For property crime arrests, the proportions were 69% white youth, 28% black youth, 2% Asian youth, and 1% American Indian youth.

### Most Serious Offense      Black Proportion of Juvenile Arrests in 2003

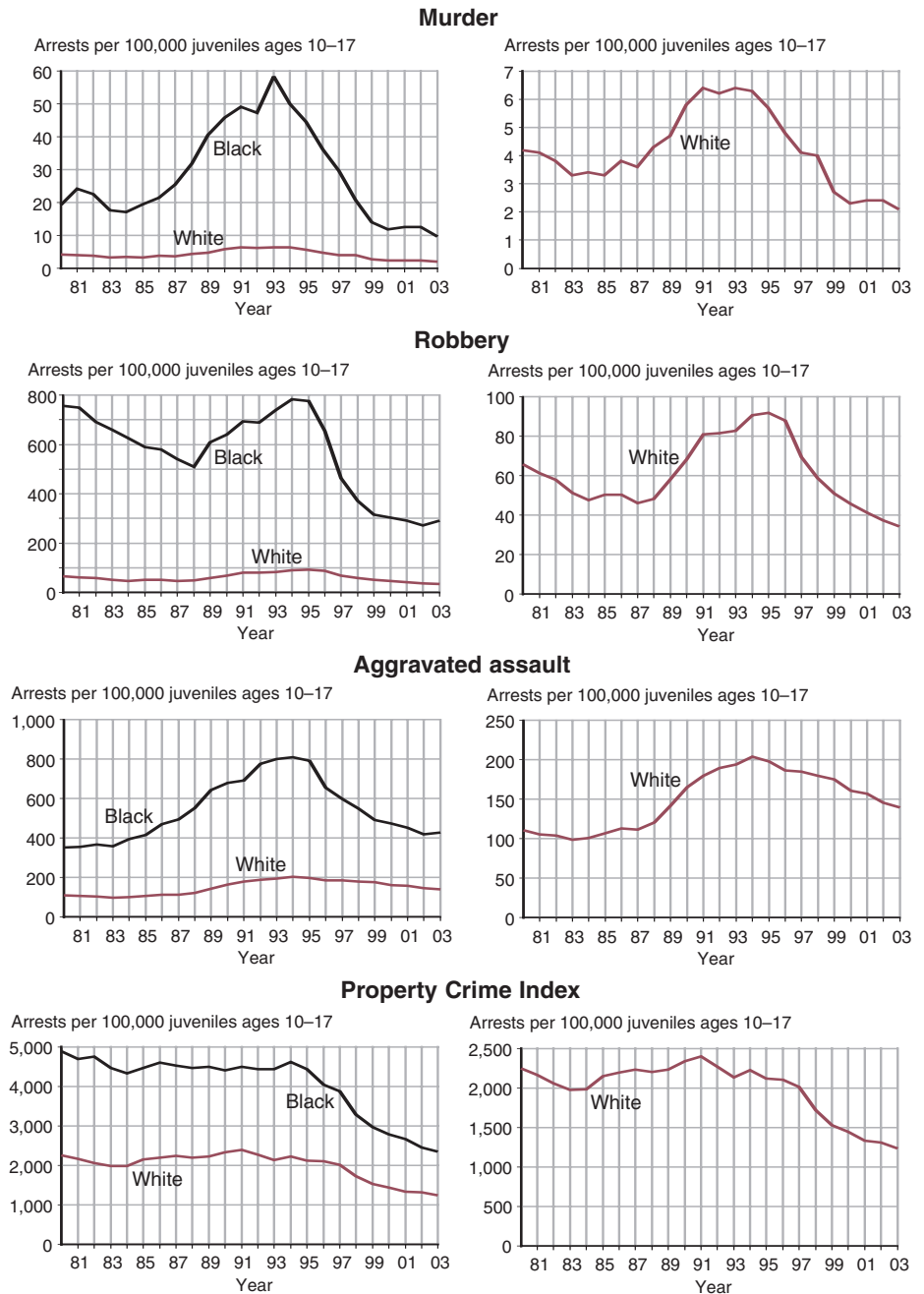
|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Murder                | 48% |
| Forcible rape         | 33  |
| Robbery               | 63  |
| Aggravated assault    | 38  |
| Burglary              | 26  |
| Larceny-theft         | 27  |
| Motor vehicle theft   | 40  |
| Weapons               | 32  |
| Drug abuse violations | 26  |
| Runaways              | 20  |
| Vandalism             | 18  |
| Liquor laws           | 4   |

**Data source:** *Crime in the United States 2003*, table 43.

The Violent Crime Index arrest rate (i.e., arrests per 100,000 juveniles in the racial group) in 2003 for black juveniles (752) was more than 4 times the rates for American Indian juveniles (172) and white juveniles (186) and more than 8 times the rate for Asian juveniles (88). For Property Crime Index arrests, the rate for black juveniles (2,352) was about double the rates for American Indian juveniles (1,366) and white juveniles (1,237) and nearly 4 times the rate for Asian juveniles (614).

Over the period from 1980 through 2003, the black-to-white disparity in juvenile arrest rates for violent crimes declined. In 1980, the black juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate was 6.3 times the white rate; in 2003, the rate disparity had declined to 4.0. This reduction in arrest rate disparities between 1980 and 2003 was primarily the result of the decline in black-to-white arrest rate disparities for robbery (from 11.5 in 1980 to 8.4 in 2003), because the disparity in the arrest rates for aggravated assault changed little (3.2 vs. 3.1).

## Declines in juvenile arrest rates from the mid-1990s through 2003 were substantial for both white youth and black youth

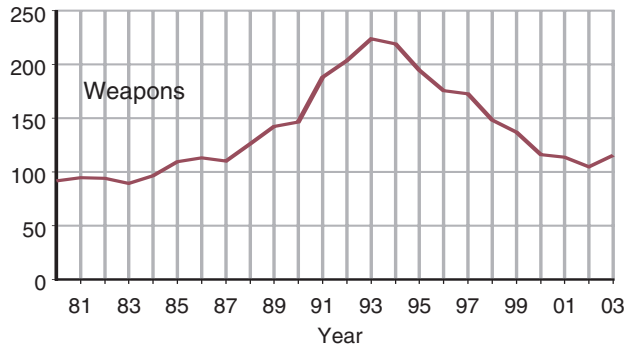


- ◆ Murder arrest rates in 2003 were lower than in any year since at least 1980 for both white and black juveniles. The murder arrest rate for white juveniles in 2003 was only one-third of what it had been in 1993, while the 2003 rate for black juveniles was only one-fifth of its 1993 value.
- ◆ The decline in robbery arrest rates between 1980 and 2003 was greater for black juveniles than white juveniles (62% vs. 48%).
- ◆ The Property Crime Index arrest rates for both white juveniles and black juveniles in 2003 were about half of what they were in 1980.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**The trend in the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations from 1980 to 2003 closely parallels the trend in the juvenile murder arrest rate**

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17

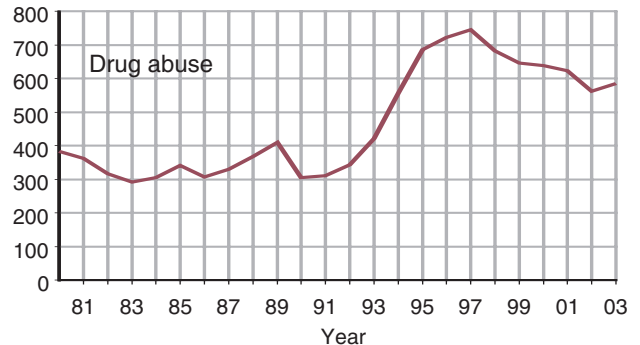


- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations increased more than 140% between 1980 and 1993.
- ◆ The rate fell substantially after 1993. In 2003, it was just 25% above its 1980 level. While the differences in the male, white, and black rates between 1980 and 2003 were similar (18%, 26%, and 27%, respectively), the female rate in 2003 was 147% above its 1980 level.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**While the juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations was relatively constant in the 1980s, it soared in the 1990s**

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17

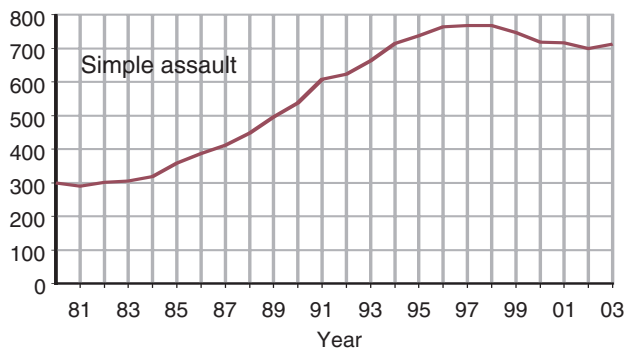


- ◆ Between 1990 and 1997, the juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations increased 145%. The arrest rate declined somewhat between 1997 and 2003 (down 22%), but the 2003 rate was still almost double the 1990 rate.
- ◆ There were clear gender differences in the rate increase between 1990 and 2003, with the male arrest rate increasing 81% and the female rate increasing 184%.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**Unlike the arrest rate trend for aggravated assault, the juvenile arrest rate for simple assault did not decline substantially after the mid-1990s**

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17

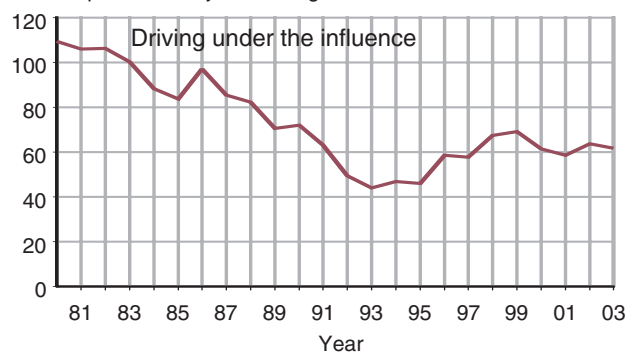


- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for simple assault increased 138% between 1980 and 2003.
- ◆ In 1980, 68% of all assault arrests (i.e., aggravated assault arrests plus simple assault arrests) were simple assaults; by 2003, this proportion had increased to 80%. Most of this increase occurred in the latter half of the 1990s, and may indicate a greater involvement of law enforcement in less serious offenses.

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**The juvenile arrest rate for driving under the influence was cut more than half between 1980 and 1993, falling 60%**

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for driving under the influence in 2003 was 44% below its 1980 level, but 40% above its lowest level in 1993.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 2003, the number of juvenile arrests for driving under the influence increased 33%, while adult arrests decreased 6%. The increase in the number of arrests was far greater for female juveniles (83%) than male juveniles (25%).

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. [See data source note on page 12 for detail.]

**State variations in juvenile arrest rates may reflect differences in juvenile law-violating behavior, police behavior, and/or community standards**

| State                | 2003 Juvenile Arrest Rate* |                     |                      |            |         | State          | 2003 Juvenile Arrest Rate* |                     |                      |            |         |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|---------|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|---------|
|                      | Reporting Coverage         | Violent Crime Index | Property Crime Index | Drug Abuse | Weapons |                | Reporting Coverage         | Violent Crime Index | Property Crime Index | Drug Abuse | Weapons |
| United States        | 76%†                       | 291                 | 1,442                | 594        | 116     | Missouri       | 97%                        | 295                 | 1,728                | 680        | 87      |
| Alabama              | 91                         | 126                 | 764                  | 236        | 31      | Montana        | 60                         | 202                 | 2,175                | 295        | 32      |
| Alaska               | 97                         | 243                 | 2,202                | 487        | 85      | Nebraska       | 86                         | 96                  | 1,820                | 581        | 83      |
| Arizona              | 96                         | 223                 | 1,774                | 820        | 72      | Nevada         | 0                          | NA                  | NA                   | NA         | NA      |
| Arkansas             | 66                         | 130                 | 1,282                | 328        | 64      | New Hampshire  | 69                         | 71                  | 674                  | 452        | 9       |
| California           | 99                         | 364                 | 1,180                | 523        | 181     | New Jersey     | 93                         | 386                 | 934                  | 688        | 214     |
| Colorado             | 71                         | 231                 | 2,051                | 777        | 168     | New Mexico     | 55                         | 220                 | 1,367                | 749        | 174     |
| Connecticut          | 65                         | 290                 | 1,347                | 479        | 90      | New York       | 45                         | 264                 | 1,218                | 569        | 70      |
| Delaware             | 99                         | 595                 | 1,583                | 769        | 147     | North Carolina | 79                         | 310                 | 1,582                | 522        | 179     |
| District of Columbia | 0                          | NA                  | NA                   | NA         | NA      | North Dakota   | 85                         | 45                  | 1,866                | 322        | 33      |
| Florida              | 100                        | 524                 | 2,128                | 765        | 109     | Ohio           | 49                         | 150                 | 1,222                | 443        | 70      |
| Georgia              | 54                         | 266                 | 1,411                | 536        | 153     | Oklahoma       | 100                        | 217                 | 1,591                | 469        | 81      |
| Hawaii               | 100                        | 197                 | 1,387                | 424        | 36      | Oregon         | 91                         | 149                 | 1,721                | 520        | 53      |
| Idaho                | 94                         | 160                 | 2,158                | 482        | 122     | Pennsylvania   | 84                         | 402                 | 1,222                | 559        | 123     |
| Illinois             | 23                         | 944                 | 2,074                | 2,457      | 383     | Rhode Island   | 100                        | 288                 | 1,372                | 579        | 160     |
| Indiana              | 74                         | 317                 | 1,219                | 438        | 28      | South Carolina | 13                         | 47                  | 214                  | 183        | 73      |
| Iowa                 | 90                         | 251                 | 2,099                | 408        | 45      | South Dakota   | 86                         | 108                 | 1,743                | 773        | 82      |
| Kansas               | 48                         | 131                 | 1,055                | 455        | 25      | Tennessee      | 84                         | 223                 | 1,064                | 472        | 100     |
| Kentucky             | 26                         | 229                 | 1,435                | 588        | 56      | Texas          | 94                         | 185                 | 1,282                | 590        | 64      |
| Louisiana            | 73                         | 355                 | 1,842                | 570        | 61      | Utah           | 72                         | 216                 | 2,511                | 568        | 183     |
| Maine                | 100                        | 78                  | 1,866                | 562        | 26      | Vermont        | 77                         | 81                  | 559                  | 322        | 11      |
| Maryland             | 100                        | 505                 | 1,950                | 1,235      | 224     | Virginia       | 75                         | 106                 | 844                  | 377        | 88      |
| Massachusetts        | 70                         | 269                 | 512                  | 337        | 28      | Washington     | 74                         | 246                 | 2,088                | 530        | 113     |
| Michigan             | 96                         | 166                 | 947                  | 325        | 53      | West Virginia  | 45                         | 40                  | 382                  | 157        | 7       |
| Minnesota            | 83                         | 176                 | 1,860                | 579        | 102     | Wisconsin      | 76                         | 184                 | 2,813                | 842        | 176     |
| Mississippi          | 48                         | 136                 | 1,497                | 526        | 70      | Wyoming        | 95                         | 88                  | 1,885                | 769        | 80      |

\* Throughout this Bulletin, juvenile arrest rates are calculated by dividing the number of arrests of persons ages 10–17 by the number of persons ages 10–17 in the population. In this table only, arrest rate is defined as the number of arrests of persons under age 18 for every 100,000 persons ages 10–17. Juvenile arrests (arrests of youth under age 18) reported at the state level in *Crime in the United States* cannot be disaggregated into more detailed age categories so that the arrest of persons under age 10 can be excluded in the rate calculation. Therefore, there is a slight inconsistency in this table between the age range for the arrests (birth through age 17) and the age range for the population (ages 10–17) that are the basis of a state's juvenile arrest rates. This inconsistency is slight because just 1% of all juvenile arrests involved youth under age 10. This inconsistency is preferable to the distortion of arrest rates that would be introduced were the population base for the arrest rate to incorporate the large volume of children under age 10 in a state's population.

† The reporting coverage for the total United States in this table (76%) includes all states reporting arrests of persons under age 18. This is greater than the coverage in the rest of the Bulletin (70%) for various reasons. For example, Florida was able to provide arrest counts of persons under age 18 but was not able to provide the age detail required to support other presentations in *Crime in the United States 2003*.

NA = *Crime in the United States 2003* reported no arrest counts for the District of Columbia or Nevada.

**Interpretation cautions:** Arrest rates are calculated by dividing the number of youth arrests made in the year by the number of youth living in reporting jurisdictions. While juvenile arrest rates in part reflect juvenile behavior, many other factors can affect the size of these rates. For example, jurisdictions that arrest a relatively large number of nonresident juveniles would have higher arrest rates than jurisdictions where resident youth behave in an identical manner. Therefore, jurisdictions that are vacation destinations or regional centers for economic activity may have arrest rates that reflect more than the behavior of their resident youth. Other factors that influence the magnitude of arrest rates in a given area include the attitudes of its citizens toward crime, the policies of the jurisdiction's law enforcement agencies, and the policies of other components of the justice system. **Consequently, comparisons of juvenile arrest rates across states, while informative, should be made with caution.** In most states, not all law enforcement agencies report their arrest data to the FBI. Rates for these states are necessarily based on partial information. If the reporting law enforcement agencies in these states are not representative of the entire state, then the rates will be biased. **Therefore, reported arrest rates for states with less than complete reporting coverage may not be accurate.**

**Data source:** Analysis of arrest data from the FBI's *Crime in the United States 2003* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), tables 5 and 69, and population data from the National Center for Health Statistics' *Estimates of the July 1, 2000–July 1, 2003, United States Resident Population From the Vintage 2003 Postcensal Series by Year, County, Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin* [machine-readable data files available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/popbridge/popbridge.htm>, released 9/14/2004].

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## Data source note

Analysis of arrest data from unpublished FBI reports for 1980 through 1997 and from *Crime in the United States* reports for 1998 through 2003 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, respectively); population data for 1980–1989 from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1980 to 1999* [machine-readable data files available online, released 4/11/2000]; population data for 1990–1999 from the National Center for Health Statistics (prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau with support from the National Cancer Institute), *Bridged-race Intercensal Estimates of the July 1, 1990–July 1, 1999 United States Resident Population by County, Single-year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin* [machine-readable data files available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/popbridge/popbridge.htm>, released 7/26/2004]; and population data for 2000–2003 from the National Center for Health Statistics (prepared under a collaborative arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau), *Estimates of the July 1, 2000–July 1, 2003, United States Resident Population From the Vintage 2003 Postcensal Series by Year, County, Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin* [machine-readable data files available

online at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/popbridge/popbridge.htm>, released 9/14/2004].

## Notes

In this Bulletin, “juvenile” refers to persons under age 18. This definition is at odds with the legal definition of juveniles in 2003 in 13 states—10 states where all 17-year-olds are defined as adults and 3 states where all 16- and 17-year-olds are defined as adults.

FBI arrest data in this Bulletin are counts of arrests detailed by age of arrestee and offense categories from all law enforcement agencies that reported complete data for the calendar year. (See *Crime in the United States* for offense definitions.) The proportion of the U.S. population covered by these reporting agencies ranged from 63% to 94% between 1980 and 2003, with the 2003 coverage being 70%.

Estimates of the number of persons in each age group in the reporting agencies’ resident populations assume that the resident population age profiles are like the nation’s. Reporting agencies’ total populations were multiplied by the U.S. Bureau of the Census’ most current estimate of the proportion of the U.S. population for each age group.

## Acknowledgments

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