

**Outlook for  
California**

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## Introduction

The public's fear of crime, including juvenile crime, is a major concern for policymakers. In California, and throughout the nation, nightly news programs often begin their broadcasts with accounts of violent crime committed by juveniles.

The Legislature and the Governor have enacted numerous laws to address the public's concerns about juvenile crime. Despite these efforts, polls show that the public continues to see crime as one of the most pressing problems in society.

In January 1994, we released our report *Crime in California* describing overall crime trends in the state. This report, while similar, focuses on juvenile crime trends and the juvenile justice system in California.

***Difference Between the Juvenile and Adult Justice Systems.*** California's juvenile justice system is different from the state's adult justice system. This is because society recognizes that many juveniles need to be treated differently from adults. Generally, the juvenile system emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation, while the adult system concentrates on punishment of offenders. The juvenile justice system also consists of a large number of nonlaw enforcement agencies. Social services agencies, schools, and community-based organizations all provide services to both juveniles "at-risk" of committing crimes and to juveniles who have committed crimes.

***The State of Juvenile Crime in California.*** Juvenile crime peaked in California in 1974 and then decreased through 1987.



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This decrease occurred at the same time as the proportion of juveniles in California's population was declining. Juvenile crime has increased since 1987. It is likely that juvenile crime will continue to increase given the projected future increase in California's juvenile population. In order to address this growth in crime, policymakers will have to pursue multiple strategies including prevention, intervention, suppression, and incarceration efforts.

***Contents of This Report.*** We have prepared this report in an effort to help those concerned with addressing the problems of juvenile crime. This report is not designed to present comprehensive answers to all of the questions concerning juvenile crime, but rather it provides basic information on the issues. It does this through a "quick-reference" document that relies heavily on charts to present information.

## What Is Juvenile Crime?

In its simplest definition, “crime” is any specific act prohibited by law for which society has provided a formally sanctioned punishment. This also can include the failure of a person to perform an act specifically required by law.

**Types of Offenses.** Crimes, whether committed by adults or juveniles, are classified by the seriousness of the offenses as follows:

- ◆ A **felony** is the most serious offense, punishable by a sentence to a state institution (Youth Authority facility or adult prison). Felonies generally include violent crimes, sex offenses, and many types of drug and property violations.
- ◆ A **misdemeanor** is a less serious offense for which the offender may be sentenced to probation, county detention (in a juvenile facility or jail), a fine, or some combination of the three. Misdemeanors generally include crimes such as assault and battery, petty theft, and public drunkenness.
- ◆ An **infraction** is the least serious offense and generally is punishable by a fine. Many motor vehicle violations are considered infractions.

Many types of crimes in California can be charged as either a felony or a misdemeanor (known as a “wobbler”), or as either a misdemeanor or an infraction.

Juveniles, like adults, can be charged with a felony, a misdemeanor, or an infraction. However, as we discuss later, juveniles can also be charged with offenses that are unique to youth.

**Categories of Crimes.** In general, felonies, misdemeanors, and infractions fall into one of three broad categories: violent, property, and drug-related. Violent crimes refer to events such as homicide, rape, and assault that result in an injury to a person.

Property crimes are offenses with the intent of gaining property through the use or threat of force against a person. Burglary and motor vehicle theft are examples.

Drug-related crimes, such as possession or sale of illegal narcotics, are generally in a separate category altogether. This is because such offenses do not fall under the definition of either violent or property offenses.

**The Juvenile Justice System Is Different.** The juvenile justice system has evolved over the years based on the premise that juveniles are different from adults and juveniles who commit criminal acts generally should be treated differently from adults. Separate courts, detention facilities, rules, procedures, and laws were created for juveniles with the intent to protect their welfare and rehabilitate them, while protecting public safety.

Under certain circumstances, youthful offenders can be tried either as juveniles or as adults. But even in these situations, their treatment is different from that of adults. For example, a juvenile who is arrested for an “adult” offense can be adjudicated in either juvenile court or adult court; if convicted, he or she can be incarcerated in either a county or state correctional facility or left in the community; and if incarcerated, he or she

can be placed with either other juveniles or adults. In contrast, an adult charged with the same offense would be tried in an adult court; if convicted, he or she would be incarcerated by the state and would be housed with adults.

**Legal Categories of Juvenile Offenders.** Juvenile offenders are generally placed in one of four legal categories depending primarily on the seriousness of the offense committed (see page 6). Two of these categories (“criminal offenders” and “juveniles remanded to superior court”) are for juveniles who have committed adult-like crimes. The other categories (“informal probationers” and “status offenders”) are for youth who have committed less serious offenses or offenses unique to juveniles, like curfew violations.



## Legal Categories of Juvenile Offenders

<p><b>Informal Probationers</b> <i>Welfare and Institutions Code Section 654</i></p> <p>Known as "654s"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Juveniles who have committed a minor offense.</li><li>◆ Probation officers have a great deal of flexibility in placing a juvenile on informal 654 probation.</li><li>◆ Juvenile can be placed on 654 probation if the officer decides that the juvenile is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court or <i>is likely to be</i> under the jurisdiction in the future.</li><li>◆ These juveniles are often diverted into substance abuse, mental health, crisis shelters, or other services.</li></ul>
<p><b>Status Offenders</b> <i>Welfare and Institutions Code Section 601</i></p> <p>Known as "601s"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Juveniles who have committed offenses unique to a juvenile, such as truancy, curfew violation, and incorrigibility.</li><li>◆ They can be placed on formal probation but cannot be detained or incarcerated with criminal offenders.</li></ul>
<p><b>Criminal Offenders</b> <i>Welfare and Institutions Code Section 602</i></p> <p>Known as "602s"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Offenders under the age of 18 years who commit a misdemeanor or felony.</li><li>◆ Subject to the jurisdiction of a juvenile court.</li><li>◆ Can be placed on formal probation, detained before adjudication in a juvenile hall, and/or incarcerated after adjudication in a county ranch or camp or the Youth Authority.</li><li>◆ They are treated differently from adults; they are not "tried," but "adjudicated"; they are not "convicted," but rather, their "petition is sustained."</li></ul>
<p><b>Juveniles Remanded to Superior Court</b> <i>Welfare and Institutions Code Section 707</i></p> <p>Known as "707Bs" or "remands"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Juveniles determined by court as not fit for adjudication in juvenile court.</li><li>◆ Any juvenile age 16 or 17, who commits one of over 30 serious felonies, or juvenile age 14 or older, who commits murder.</li><li>◆ Tried in superior court as an adult.</li><li>◆ If convicted, is sentenced to either a Youth Authority institution or a state prison (if age 16 or over).</li></ul>



## Who Is Treated As a Juvenile in California?

Age	Agency				
	County Social Services	County Probation	CYA (Juvenile Court)	CYA (Criminal Court)	CDC
10 <	10	10			
11					
12			12		
13					
14				14	
15					
16					16
17	17				
18					
19		19			
20					
21					
22					
23					
24			24	24	
25					25

- ◆ Generally, any individual age 18 or older is considered an adult and treated as such in California. Depending on the circumstances, however, someone as young as 14 can be tried in the adult court system and sentenced to the California Department of Corrections (CDC) and housed in the California Youth Authority (CYA); and if 16 years old can be sent to prison. On the other hand, someone as old as 24 can be incarcerated as a juvenile in the CYA.
- ◆ There are over 6,000 offenders incarcerated in the CYA who are age 18 or older. The CYA can accept juveniles younger than age 12 after a review by the CYA Director, however, these offenders generally are kept in the community under county probation supervision.



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## How Much Juvenile Crime Is There in California?

Crime in California, whether committed by an adult or juvenile, is counted in two different ways. One is based on official reports to law enforcement agencies, and is reflected in the national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data and the California Crime Index (CCI) data. Crime is also counted based on surveys of individuals to determine if they have been victims of crime, even though the crime may not have been reported to the police. These data are obtained through national victimization surveys.

***Limited Data Available About Juvenile Crime.*** Many types of data on juvenile crime are not collected or aggregated for the state. For example, we know how many juveniles were arrested for felonies and misdemeanors, but we don't know the disposition of those juvenile arrestees. This is because the state Department of Justice (DOJ) stopped collecting statewide disposition data for juveniles in 1990 for budgetary reasons. As a consequence, we do not know, since 1990, how many juvenile arrestees were adjudicated as juveniles or prosecuted as adults; how many were convicted; how many were placed on probation in the community or incarcerated at the local level. The DOJ reports that it will resume collecting these data in 1995-96.

Consequently, the most currently available data are limited to the number of juvenile arrests, juvenile arrest rates, and the number of juveniles incarcerated at the state level.

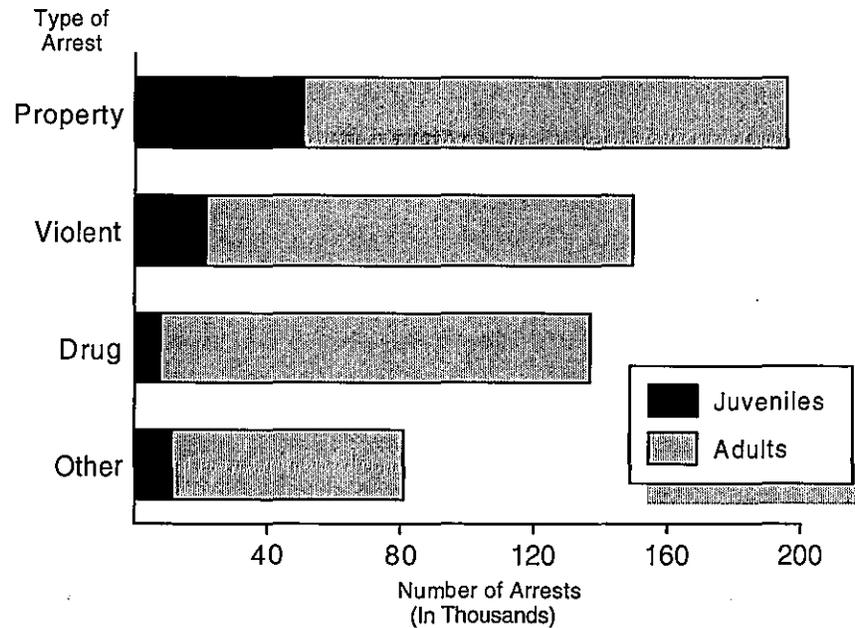
**Arrest “Rates.”** Crime data are often presented in terms of “rates.” A rate is defined as the number of occurrences of an event within a given population. For example, the overall juvenile arrest rate for California in 1993 was 6,772.8, which means that there were about 6,773 juvenile arrests for every 100,000 youth under the age of 18.

**Crime Is Underreported.** Crime statistics (for juveniles and adults) from law enforcement agencies don’t tell the entire story about the extent of crime for two reasons. First, victimization surveys generally show there is a significant amount of crime committed each year that is not counted in official statistics because it is not reported to law enforcement authorities. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 1993 about two-thirds of all crimes went unreported to the police. Specifically, about 50 percent of violent victimizations, almost 60 percent of household crimes, and 70 percent of all personal thefts went unreported.

A second reason crime is underreported is that when several crimes are committed by an offender at the same time, only one (usually the most severe) is counted in the data. For example, if a juvenile offender robbed a store, assaulted a clerk, and killed a customer, only the homicide would be reported.

## Juveniles Account for a Significant Number of All Arrests

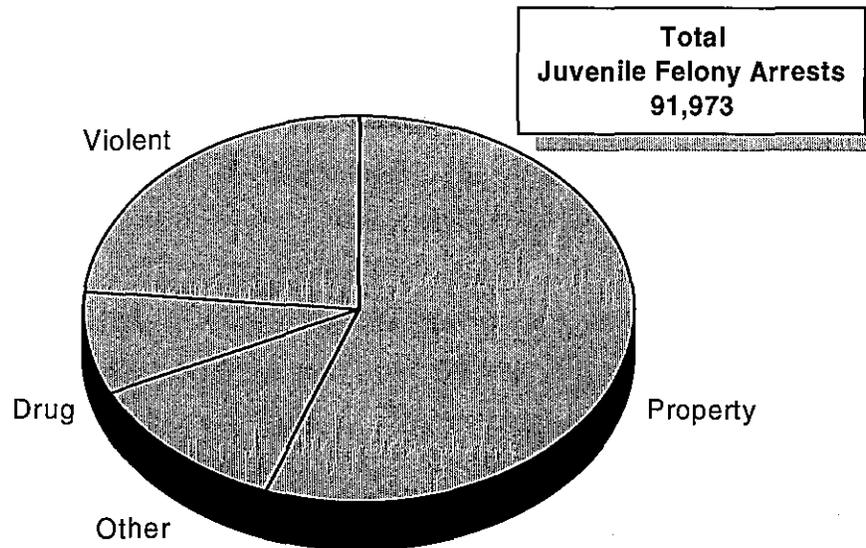
1993



- ◆ In 1993, juveniles accounted for 16 percent of all felony arrests in California.
- ◆ Juveniles accounted for 26 percent of all property arrests and 14 percent of violent crime arrests, in 1993.
- ◆ In 1988, juveniles accounted for 24 percent of property arrests and 12 percent of violent arrests.

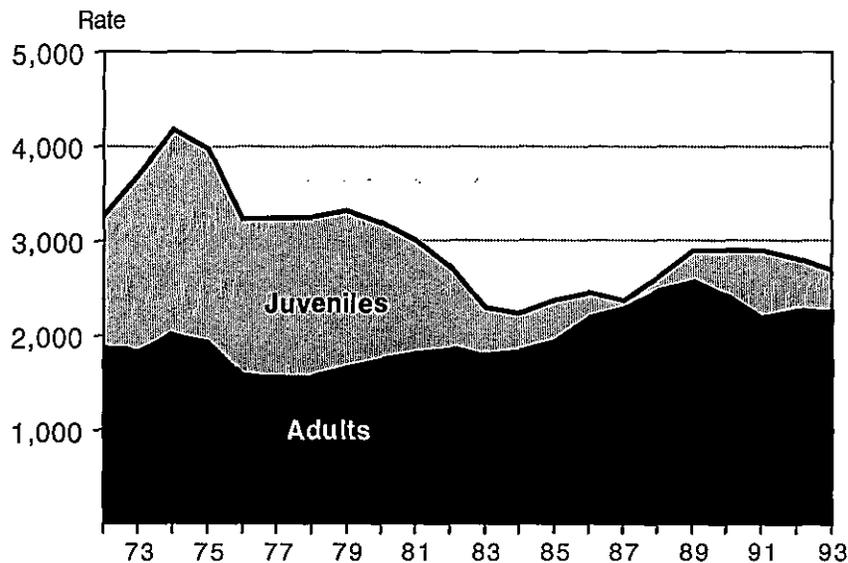
## Most Juvenile Felony Arrests Are for Property Crimes

1993



- ◆ Juvenile arrests for property crime (burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, forgery, and arson) accounted for about 57 percent of all juvenile felony arrests in 1993 and arrests for violent crime (homicide, rape, robbery, assault, and kidnapping) accounted for almost 24 percent of all juvenile arrests.
- ◆ In contrast, in 1988 property arrests accounted for 61 percent of all juvenile arrests, while violent crime arrests accounted for 17 percent.
- ◆ In 1993, there were 2,696 juvenile felony arrests per 100,000 juveniles in California, compared to 2,618 such arrests in 1988.

## Total Arrest Rates Higher for Juveniles<sup>a</sup>

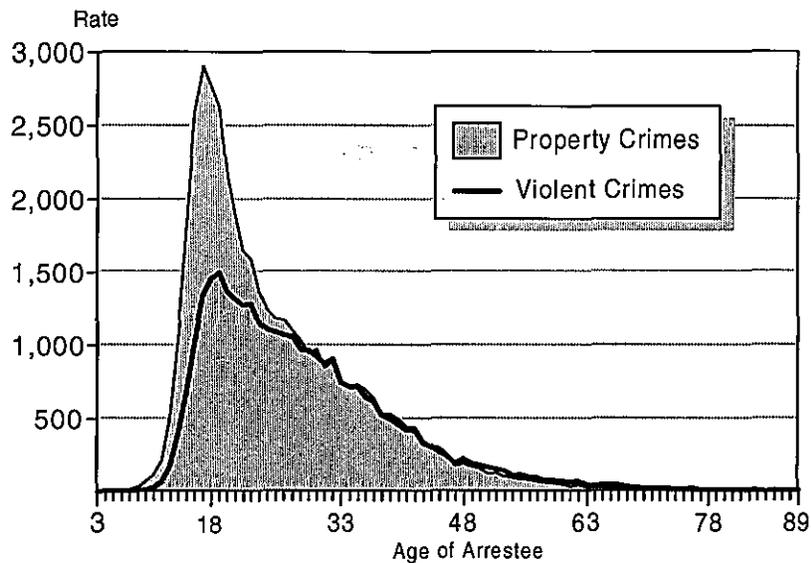


<sup>a</sup> Rate based on total misdemeanor and felony arrests per 100,000 population within each group.

- ◆ Although the arrest rates for juveniles (ages 11 to 17) have consistently been higher than the arrest rates for adults over the past 20 years, they have become much closer in the past five years.
- ◆ There is evidence that a major reason that arrest rates for juveniles are higher than for adults is that young men tend to be arrested in *large groups* on suspicion of committing a crime or at the scene of a crime, although charges may never be filed.
- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates peaked in 1974. This was probably due to demographics, that is, the at-risk juvenile population was a larger proportion of the overall state population.

## Felony Arrest Rates Highest Among Juveniles<sup>a</sup>

### 1993



<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 age-eligible population.

- ◆ Felony arrest rates for juveniles are consistently higher than those for adults.
- ◆ The felony arrest rate peaks at age 16 for property crime and at age 18 for violent crime.
- ◆ Although juveniles have a higher arrest *rate* than adults, juveniles account for a smaller proportion of *total* arrests than do adults (16 percent versus 84 percent). (Data not shown in figure.)
- ◆ While juveniles (11 to 17) accounted for 16 percent of the arrests in California in 1993, they made up only about 9.3 percent of the state's total population.

## How Many Juveniles Become Repeat Offenders?

### Findings:

- ◆ Small number of offenders commit majority of crime.
- ◆ Strong relationship between age at onset of criminal behavior and continued criminality.

### Based On:

- ◆ Research in Orange and Los Angeles Counties.
- ◆ Longitudinal study.

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### Details:

- ◆ In Orange County, between 8 and 12 percent of offenders account for 60 percent of juvenile and subsequent adult crime.
- ◆ In Los Angeles County, research showed similar results.
- ◆ Other studies, including those from foreign countries, have drawn similar conclusions.
- ◆ These repeat offenders are arrested between 4 and 14 times during criminal careers.
- ◆ Younger the arrestee, the greater likelihood of subsequent arrests.

### Caveats:

- ◆ Most individuals arrested as juveniles will not be arrested as adults.
- ◆ Large portion of arrested adults were not arrested as juveniles.



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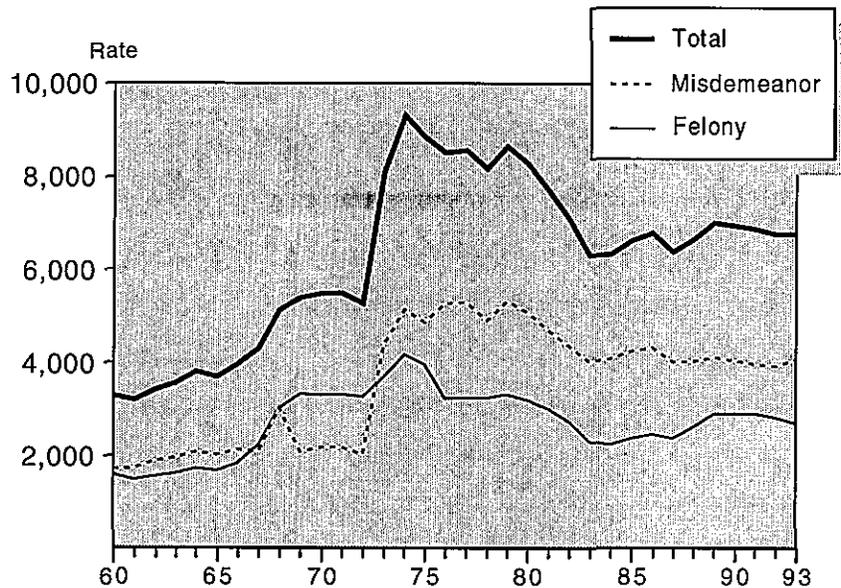
## What Are the Trends in Juvenile Crime in California?

When discussing trends in crime, it is important to consider both the state's long-term and short-term directions of crime. Over time, changes in economic conditions, social conditions and values, lifestyles, residential patterns, and especially demographics can have significant impacts on crime trends. In several charts that follow, we show the trends in juvenile crime for California, as measured by juvenile arrests. In general, the data show that:

- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates peaked in 1974, decreased through 1987, and have increased since then.
- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates for violent crime have exceeded those for adults since 1980, except for three years (1986, 1987, and 1988).
- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates for homicides were below those for adults until 1989. Since then, the juvenile homicide rate has significantly exceeded the adult rate.

Historically, increases in the size of the juvenile population have been a strong predictor of increases in overall crime. Accordingly, we present projections of future changes in California's juvenile population and estimate the potential effect these changes may have on future juvenile crime in California.

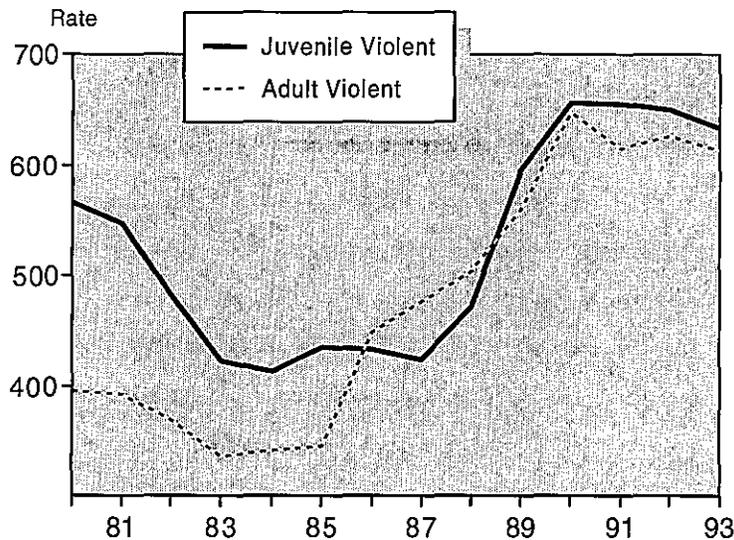
## Juvenile Arrest Rate Peaked in 1974<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 juveniles.

- ◆ Since 1960, juvenile arrest rates increased about 205 percent. During the same period, the state's juvenile population increased about 162 percent, thereby suggesting that a significant amount of the increase in the juvenile arrest rate can be accounted for by the increase in this age population.
- ◆ Total juvenile arrest rates peaked in 1974, when there were 9,313 arrests for every 100,000 juveniles—4,173 felony arrests and 5,140 misdemeanor arrests. The juvenile population (age 11 to 17), as a proportion of California's total population, also peaked in 1974, when this group was over 13 percent of total population.
- ◆ The juvenile arrest rates declined between 1974 and 1987. Since 1987, the juvenile arrest rate has increased 6 percent.

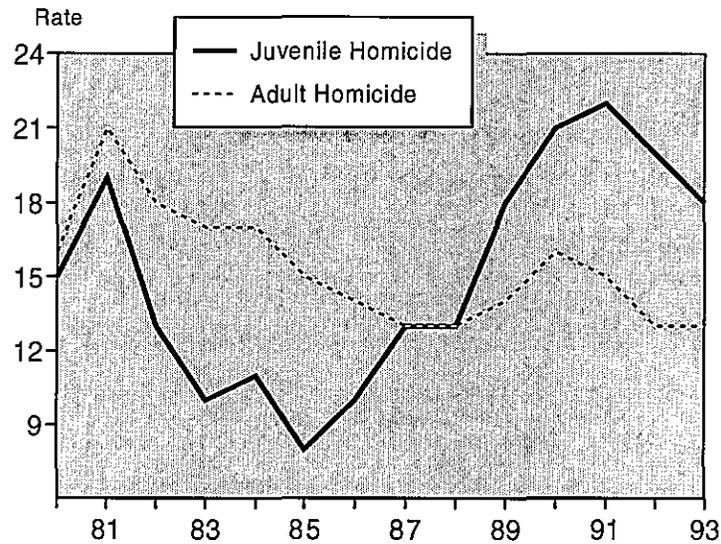
## Juvenile Violent Crime Arrest Rates Exceed Those for Adults<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 age-eligible population.

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes has exceeded that for adults since 1980, except for three years (1986, 1987, and 1988).
- ◆ The gap between the violent crime arrest rates for juveniles and adults was much wider in the 1980s and has since narrowed in the 1990s, with the adult rate coming closer to the juvenile rate.
- ◆ The juvenile violent arrest rate (combined rate for homicide, rape, robbery, assault, and kidnapping) hit a low in 1984; since then, it has increased 53 percent through 1993.
- ◆ Juvenile violent arrest rates increased in part because of the growth of the juvenile population. Research also indicates that violent arrest rates might be increasing because of gang activity and the availability of firearms.

## Homicide Arrest Rates for Juveniles Exceed Those for Adults Since 1989<sup>a</sup>

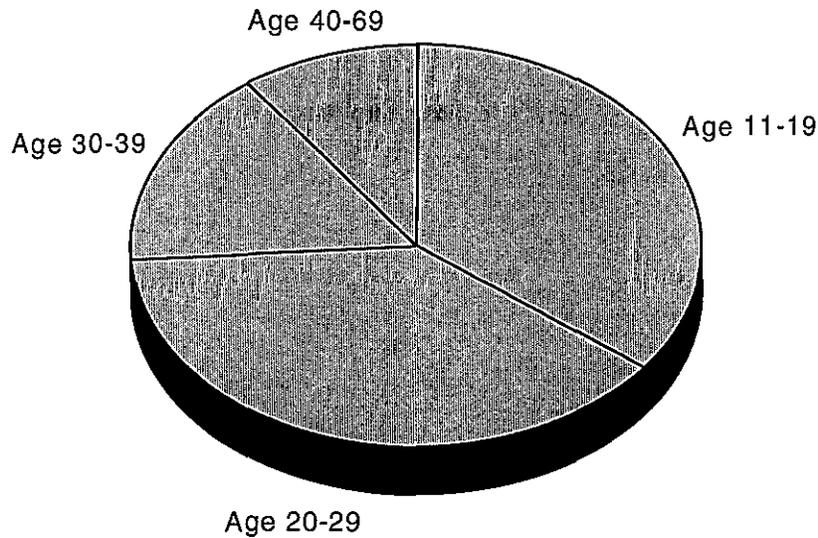


<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 age-eligible population.

- ◆ For most of the 1980s, adult homicide arrest rates exceeded those of juveniles. However since 1989, juvenile homicide rates have exceeded those for adults.
- ◆ Juvenile arrests for homicide hit a low in 1985, increasing 125 percent through 1993.

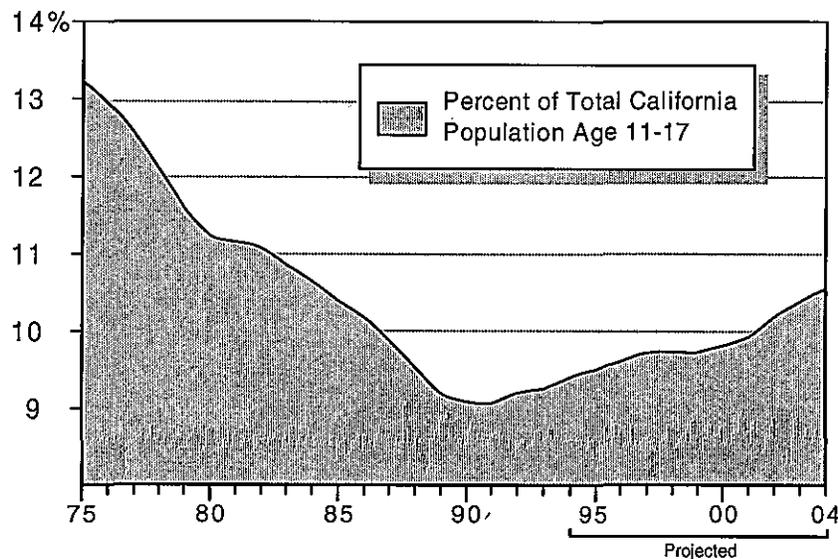
## Youth and Young Adults Account For Most Homicide Arrests

1993



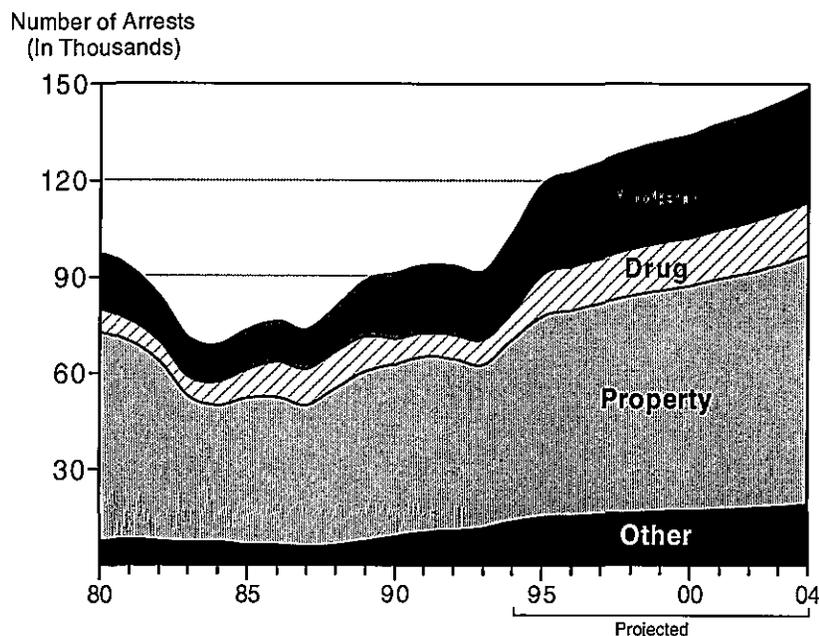
- ◆ Youth and young adults (through age 29) account for almost three-fourths of those arrested for homicide.
- ◆ Almost 20 percent of those arrested for homicide are 11 to 17 years old, and an additional 16 percent are either 18 or 19 years old when they were arrested for homicide.
- ◆ Just over 5 percent of juveniles arrested for homicide are female.
- ◆ All homicide arrests account for 2.2 percent of violent crime arrests.

## California's Juvenile Population Likely to Increase Through 2004



- ◆ California's juvenile population is projected to grow over 20 percent in the next decade (through 2004).
- ◆ The number of juveniles age 11 through 17—the ages of juveniles responsible for 99 percent of juvenile arrests—will increase 33 percent in the next decade.
- ◆ In each year between 1994 and 2004, it is estimated that there will be 2 to 3 percent more juveniles in the age-group most likely to commit crime. In contrast, in the last five years, this age-group experienced an average increase of 1 percent a year.

## Estimated Number of Juvenile Felony Arrests Through 2004



- ◆ Based on the juvenile arrest rates for the past five years and using population projections for juveniles for the next ten years, we estimated the likely growth in juvenile arrest rates through 2004.
- ◆ We estimate that the *number* of juvenile arrests will increase over 29 percent over the next ten years, even if arrest *rates* stay the same. This assumes that the population of 11 through 17 year olds grows from 2.9 million in 1993 to 3.9 million in 2004.
- ◆ The number of arrests for violent crime are estimated to increase over 28 percent through 2004, from 21,590 juvenile arrests in 1993 to over 35,000 juvenile violent arrests by 2004.
- ◆ Our estimate projects the *number* of arrests there will be over time. If the arrest *rate* increases in the future, as it has over the past five years, there would be even more arrests.



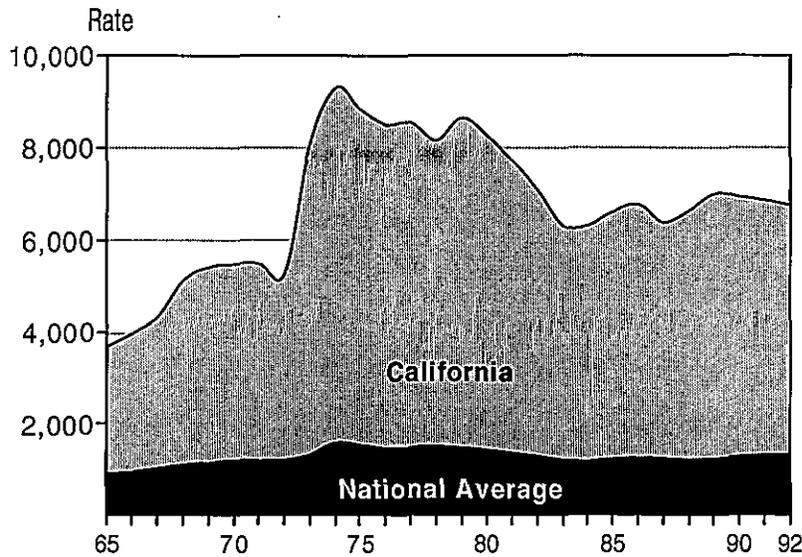
## How Does Juvenile Crime Vary Among States and Within California?

Although there is value in comparing juvenile crime data among different jurisdictions, one should be cautious with such comparisons because numerous factors can influence crime data. For example, among the states, the definition of juvenile crime versus adult crime can vary significantly, as well as the definition of who is a juvenile. In addition, different economic and social conditions can affect crime. In general, we believe that only large industrial states with diverse populations and economies should be compared. These states are more likely to have juvenile populations that resemble California's juvenile population.

Among California counties there are other factors that affect juvenile arrest rates, such as the availability of law enforcement resources, diversion programs, or other intervention services. Comparison of counties should be limited to comparing similar counties—for example, comparing counties whose total population exceeds 500,000. These counties are more likely to have similar juvenile populations.

The most complete information comparing state crime rates is from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The most complete information comparing crime among California jurisdictions is from the California Department of Justice (DOJ) and is available on a county-by-county basis.

## California's Juvenile Arrest Rate Is Higher Than the National Average<sup>a</sup>

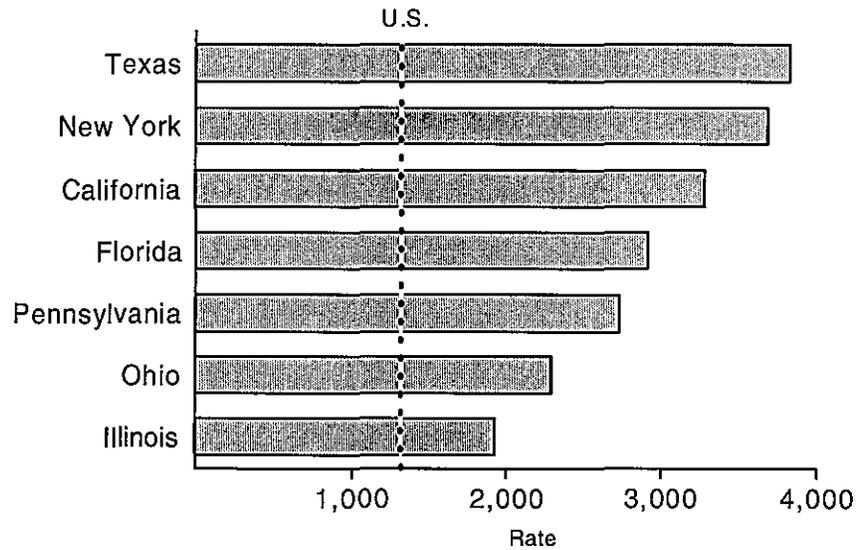


<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 juveniles.

- ◆ Historically, California's juvenile arrest rates have been significantly higher than the national average.
- ◆ National trends are similar to California trends, but they are much less pronounced.
- ◆ In 1992, California's juvenile arrest rate was five times the national average. There are several reasons for this difference, including how different states count juvenile crime. For example, in some states, juveniles age 16 or older who are arrested for felonies are counted with adult arrests; in California, these youth would be counted as juvenile arrests. In addition, California's arrest rates include all felony and misdemeanor arrests, while some states may not include all juvenile misdemeanor arrests. Consequently, we believe national statistics are likely to be understated relative to California data.

## California's Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate Exceeds That for Most Larger States<sup>a</sup>

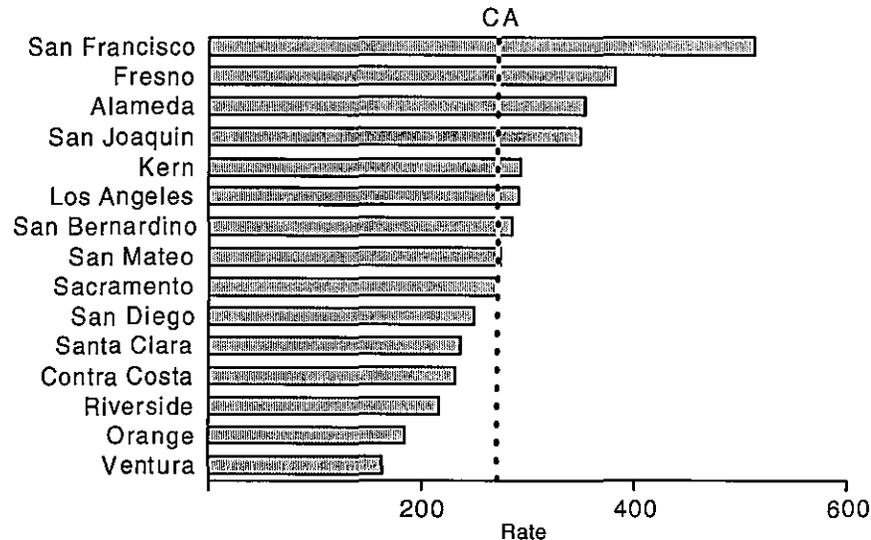
1992



<sup>a</sup> Rate per 100,000 juveniles.

- ◆ California's juvenile felony arrest rate is 17 percent lower than that for Texas and 12 percent lower than for New York, but higher than other large states.
- ◆ New York leads the other states for violent arrest rates, with California third after Florida. New York's violent crime arrest rate for juveniles is 50 percent higher than that for California.

## Juvenile Felony Arrest Rates Vary Among California's Counties<sup>a</sup> 1993



<sup>a</sup> Rate per 10,000 juveniles in counties with total populations of 500,000 or more.

- ◆ San Francisco's juvenile arrest rate is over 50 percent higher than the statewide average. However, San Francisco is the most urbanized county and generally, urbanized areas have higher levels of crime than suburban and rural areas.
- ◆ Riverside County has seen the greatest increase in arrest rates, growing 56 percent from 1984 through 1993. During the same period, the county's juvenile population grew almost 74 percent.
- ◆ Ventura County saw its arrest rate decline 5 percent since 1984, even though its juvenile population remained virtually the same. One reason for the decline could be Ventura County's emphasis on integrated prevention and intervention services for juveniles.

## What Risk Factors Are Identified With Juvenile Crime?

As we noted earlier, a relatively small number of juveniles commit crime. Furthermore, of those juveniles who do commit crimes, the majority of them will only commit one or two offenses. For these individuals, the experience of the juvenile justice system—being arrested by a law enforcement officer, facing their parents, having to spend a night in juvenile hall, interacting with a probation officer or a judge—is enough to keep them from offending again.

Nevertheless, a small number of individuals who are chronic recidivists are responsible for a large proportion of juvenile crime. Much research has shown that these juveniles commit their first offense at an early age (usually age 11), and even at this early age, these juveniles display a variety of serious problems indicative of an “at-risk” juvenile:

- ◆ **Failure in School.** This factor manifests itself at an early age. Failure at school includes poor academic performance, poor attendance, or more likely, expulsion or dropping out of school. This is an important factor for predicting future criminal behavior. Leaving school early reduces the chances that juveniles will develop the “social” skills that are gained in school, such as learning to meet deadlines, following instructions, and being able to deal constructively with their peers.

- ◆ **Family Problems.** This factor includes a history of criminal activity in the family. It also includes juveniles who have been subject to sexual or physical abuse, neglect, or abandonment. It is also manifested by a lack of parental control over the child.
- ◆ **Substance Abuse.** This risk factor includes not just arrests for drug or alcohol possession or sale, but also the effect of substance abuse on juvenile behavior. For example, using alcohol or drugs lowers a person's inhibitions, making it easier to engage in criminal activity. Also, drug abuse can lead to a variety of property offenses to pay for drug habits.
- ◆ **Pattern Behaviors and "Conduct" Problems.** Pattern behaviors include chronic stealing or running away. Juveniles with "conduct" problems can be characterized as those individuals who have not outgrown aggressiveness by early adolescence.
- ◆ **Gang Membership and Gun Possession.** Gang membership and gang-related crime is primarily a juvenile problem. Gang membership, especially at an early age, is strongly associated with future criminal activity. Juvenile gun possession is a factor that "magnifies" juvenile crime by making offenses more likely to result in injury or death.

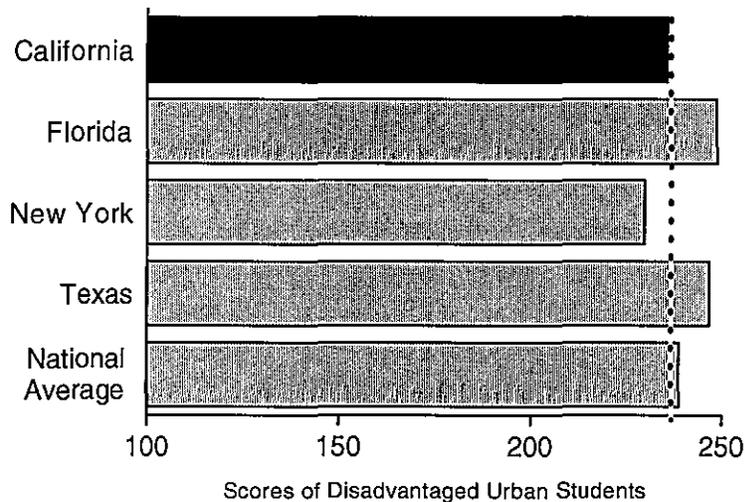
Having these risk factors does not guarantee criminal behavior, but simply increases the likelihood of such behavior. Because young offenders who exhibit multiple risk factors are the most likely to become chronic recidivists—"career criminals"—early intervention that alleviates these problems could potentially have a long-term beneficial impact on the level of future crime.

***What Do We Know About Risk Factors for California?***

Some data are available that provide a picture of what is happening in California for most of the major risk factors. The following charts provide information on some of these risk indicators. We also point out information that is not being gathered which, if it were available, could facilitate decision making.

## California's Eighth-Grader Math Scores Below Comparison States

1992

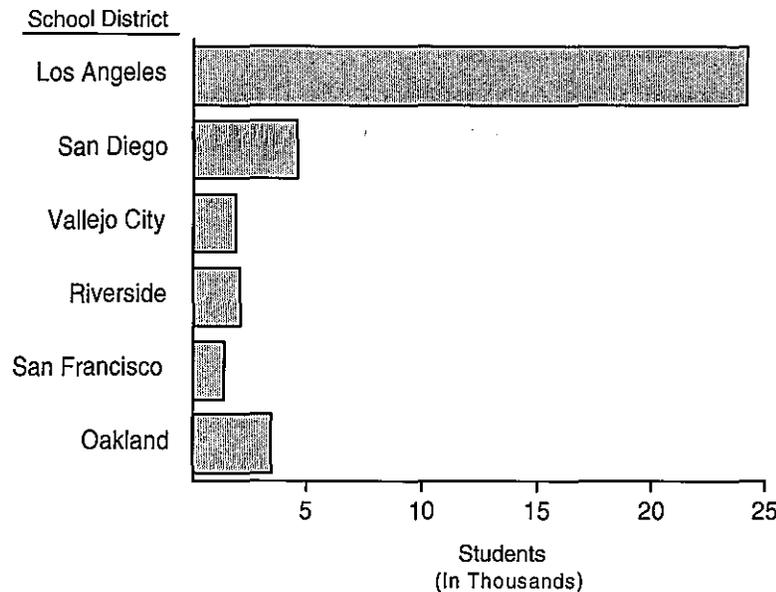


- ◆ The education scores of California's eighth-grade students from disadvantaged urban areas—metropolitan areas in which a high proportion of student's parents are on welfare or are not regularly employed—are lower than similar students in comparison states. California's fourth graders also show poor performance in contrast to other states.
- ◆ Low performance for these age groups does not necessarily mean that students will fail in school and go on to criminal behavior, but it is indicative of a large population with the risk indicator.
- ◆ California and New York have the highest percentage of students from urban disadvantaged areas.



## Students Expelled or Suspended In Six School Districts

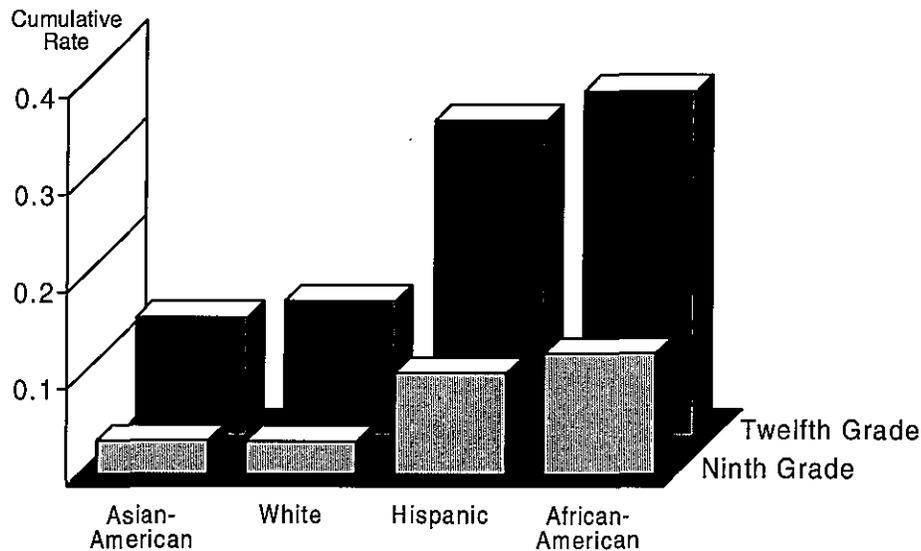
1992-93



- ◆ Out of a total 900,838 students in these six school districts, 37,722, or 4.2 percent, were expelled or suspended in 1992-93. The expulsions/suspensions were for fighting (the primary reason), weapons possession, drugs, or robbery.
- ◆ The expulsions/suspensions ranged from 9.9 percent of the students for Vallejo schools to 2.3 percent of the students for San Francisco schools. In Los Angeles, 24,236 students (3.9 percent) were expelled or suspended, 20,854 for fighting. For all six school districts combined, about 10 percent of the students expelled or suspended were for possession of weapons.
- ◆ Neither the state nor school districts routinely collect expulsion/suspension data. (The data in this figure are from a special 1994 survey.) Furthermore, neither schools nor the state have data on the number of truant students. Consequently, there is no statewide data on the number of at-risk students who do not regularly go to school.

## Significant Number of Students Drop Out by Ninth Grade<sup>a</sup>

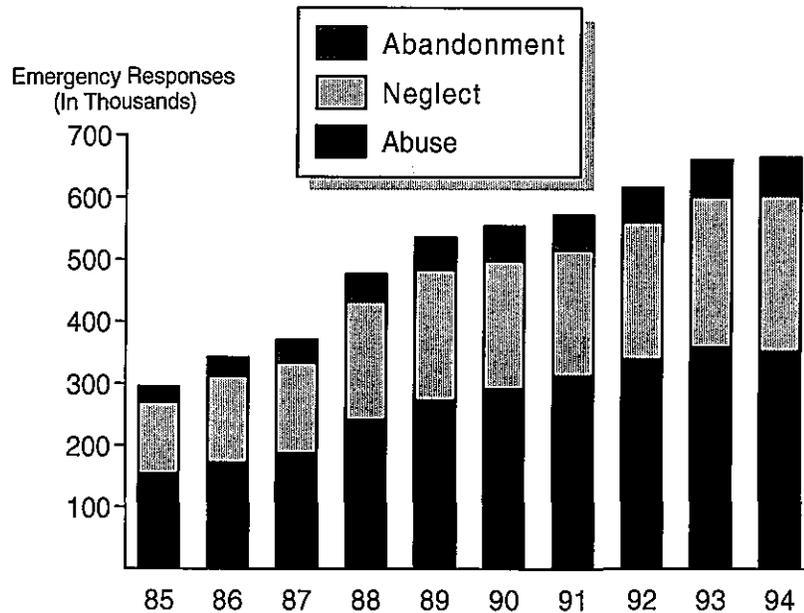
1992



<sup>a</sup> Cumulative number of students who have dropped out of school by the ninth and twelfth grades.

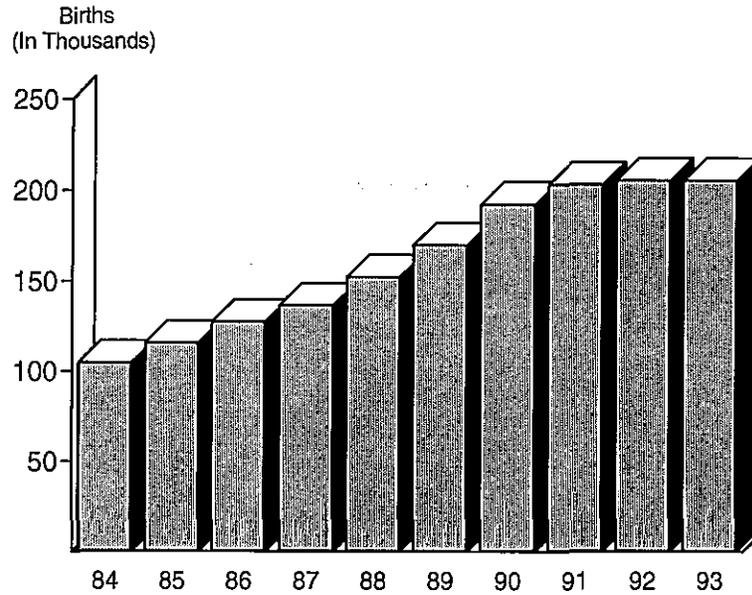
- ◆ By the end of the ninth grade, 11 percent of African-American and Hispanic youths and 3.5 percent of white and Asian-American youths, have dropped out of school. Leaving school at age 14 (approximately the ninth grade) increases the difficulty of these youth finding work which will provide an adequate income.
- ◆ While California's overall dropout rates are declining, the state's rates are still higher than the national average.

## Emergency Responses to Reports of Child Abuse Are Increasing



- ◆ In 1994, county child welfare services staff responded to 664,294 reports of abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, and exploitation), neglect (serious and general), and abandonment. This is a 125 percent increase over the number of emergency responses in 1985. The number of responses has increased at an average annual rate of almost 10 percent.
- ◆ Research, particularly that looking at the origins of violence, suggests that individuals who are subjected to abuse, neglect, or abandonment are much more likely to be violent themselves than those who have not experienced such treatment. In addition, those subject to sexual abuse are more likely to commit crimes as adults, including sex crimes.

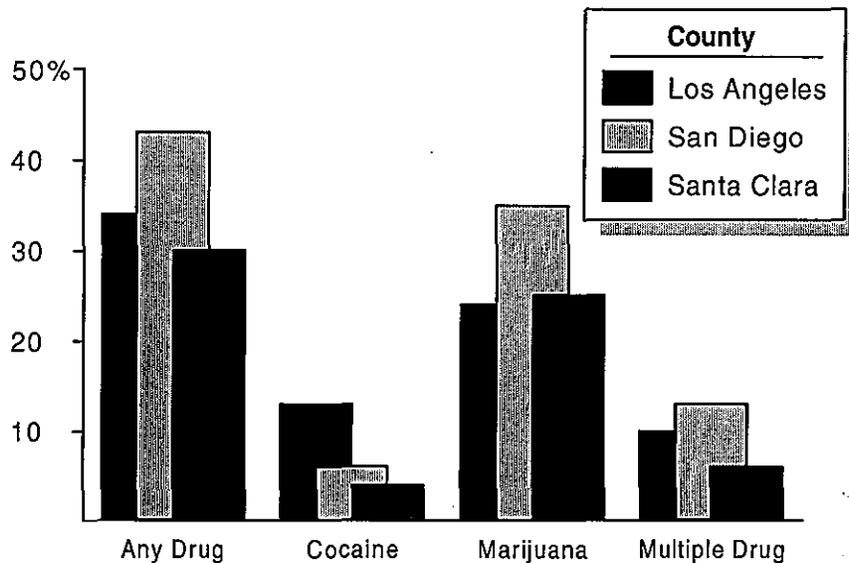
## Out-of-Wedlock Births Are Increasing



- ◆ Out-of-wedlock births in California increased by 97 percent between 1984 and 1993.
- ◆ The out-of-wedlock births occur primarily in single parent families, usually with minimal financial resources.

## Many Juveniles Arrested for an Offense Also Test Positive for Drugs

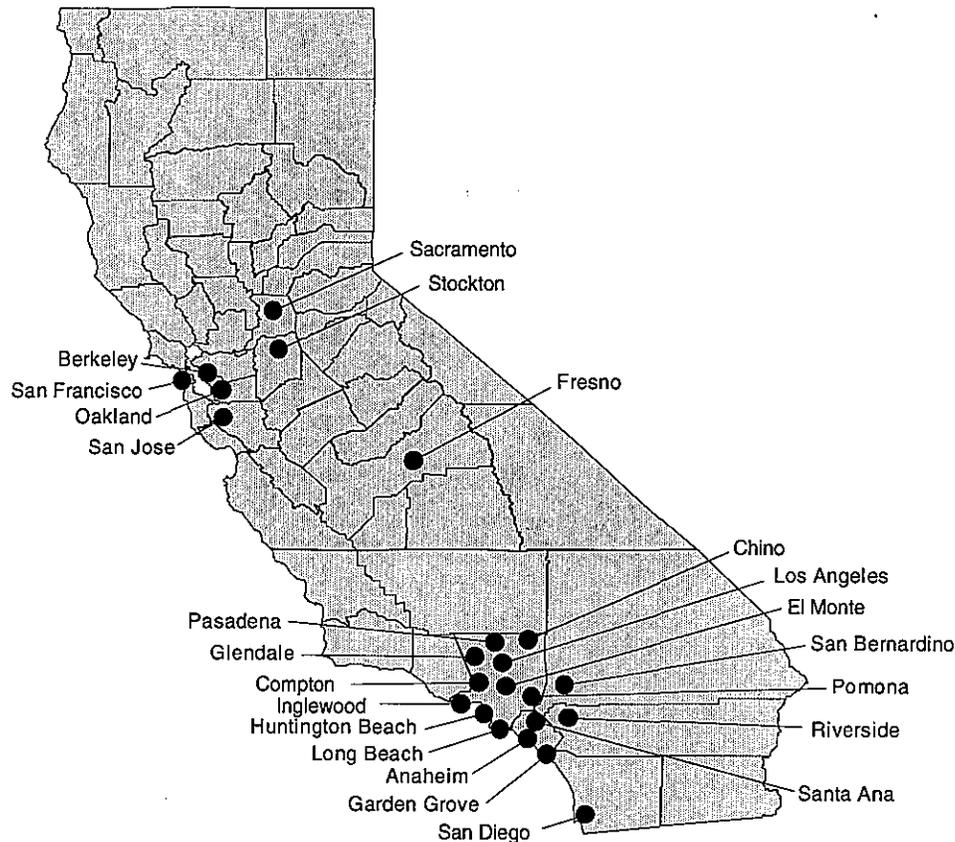
1993



Source: National Institute of Justice, Drug Utilization Forecasting

- ◆ In 1993, 30 percent to 43 percent of the juveniles arrested for an offense also tested positive for drug use in the three counties that participated in the federal Drug Utilization Forecasting program. This federal program randomly tests juvenile and adult arrestees in major metropolitan areas to track drug trends.
- ◆ These juveniles were arrested for crimes ranging from vandalism to murder. Since collecting these data starting in 1990, the rate of positive tests has gone up 10 percent.
- ◆ Alcohol also is an important factor in juvenile crime. The American Psychological Association's report *Violence and Youth* reported that alcohol was a major factor in youth violence because alcohol lowers inhibitions against violent behavior. The report also noted that violence frequently occurs in places where alcohol is consumed. Furthermore, in 65 percent of all homicides, the perpetrators, victims, or both had been drinking. The report also stated that alcohol is a factor in 55 percent of fights and assaults in the home.

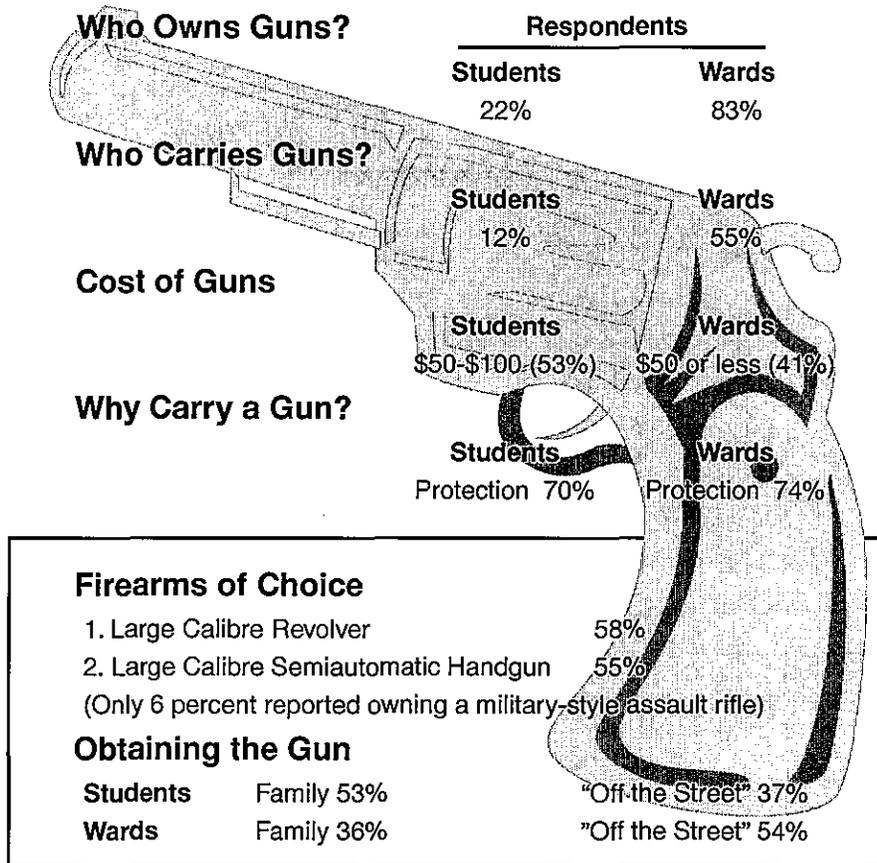
## California Cities Reporting Gang Activity



Source: National Institute of Justice.

- ◆ Gang-related crime is often a violent crime problem. Nationwide, homicides and other violent crimes account for half of all recorded gang-related crimes. In California, gang-related homicide is not accounted for separately, but it is estimated that approximately 25 percent of California homicides are gang-related.
- ◆ The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) reported 503 gangs in its jurisdiction with over 55,000 identified members. The LAPD also reported 8,528 gang-related crimes.

## Nationwide Profile of Juvenile Gun Possession and Use



- ◆ Data for this profile was prepared by the National Institute of Justice, where researchers interviewed students in large urban high schools and juveniles (wards) in detention facilities in four states, including California.
- ◆ The data show that as many as one in eight students carry a weapon to school, that the weapons are easily obtained, and inexpensive.
- ◆ The research found that in addition to carrying guns for protection, wards reported that 63 percent had committed crimes with guns; 40 percent had obtained a gun specifically for use in a crime.



Juvenile Crime—Outlook for California

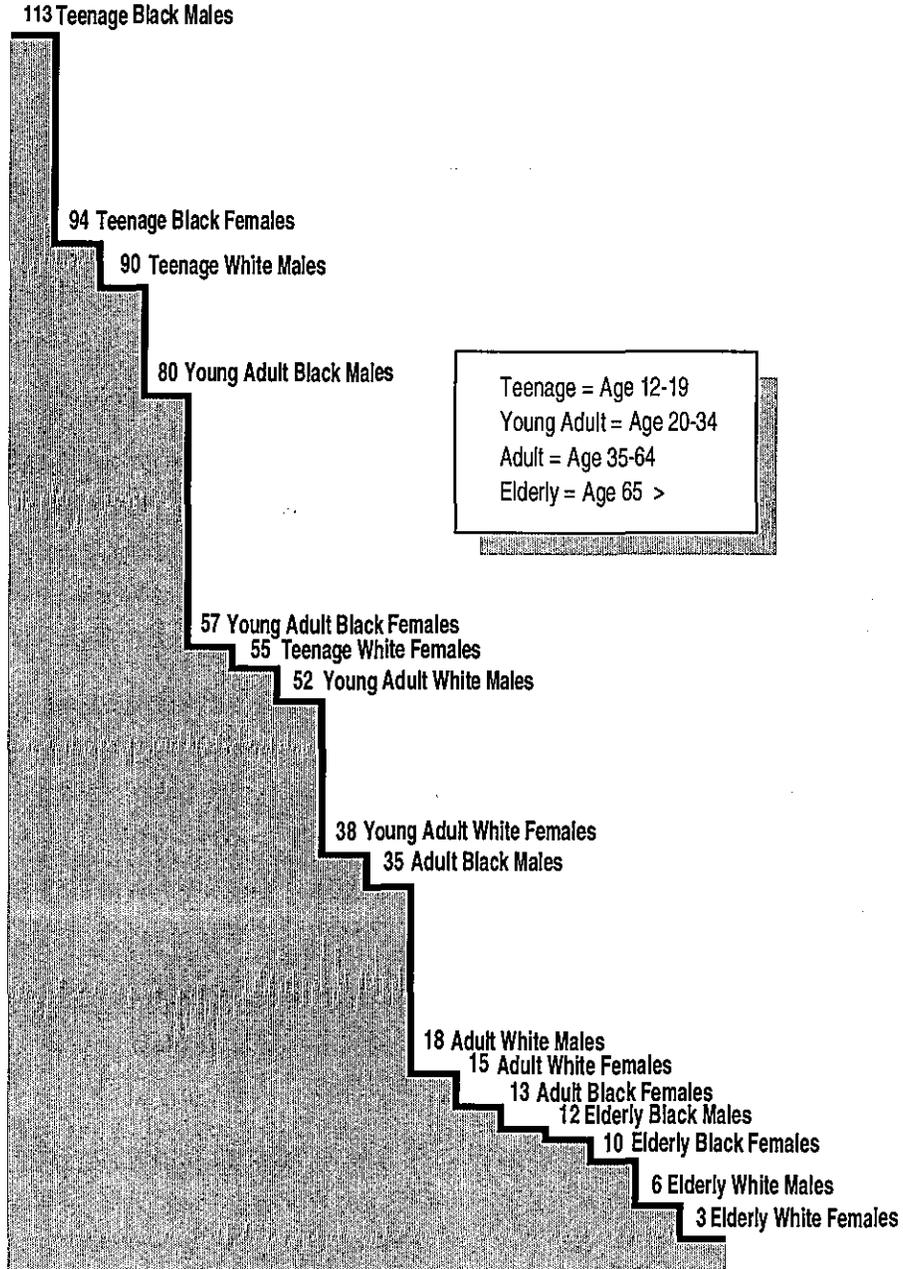
## Who Is Being Victimized by Crime?

National victimization surveys provide a good deal of reliable data about the victims of crime. What these surveys show is that juveniles are disproportionately the *victims* of crime as well as the *perpetrators* of crime. Furthermore, national morbidity and mortality data show that homicide is a leading cause of death for juveniles. The surveys reveal that:

- ◆ ***Groups at the highest risk of becoming victims—teenagers***—are not the ones who generally express the greatest fear of crime. In fact, persons under the age of 20 are almost ten times more likely to be victims of crime than persons over the age of 65.
- ◆ ***Teenagers are most often the victims*** of both violence and personal theft. Teenage black males have the highest victimization rates for violent crime (about 20 percent higher than teenage black females, the next highest group). Teenage white and black males have the highest victimization rates for personal theft.
- ◆ ***Blacks are most often the victims of violence***—the violent victimization rate for blacks is 50 percent higher than for whites.
- ◆ ***Juveniles are much more likely to be killed or injured*** by crime in comparison to other age groups.

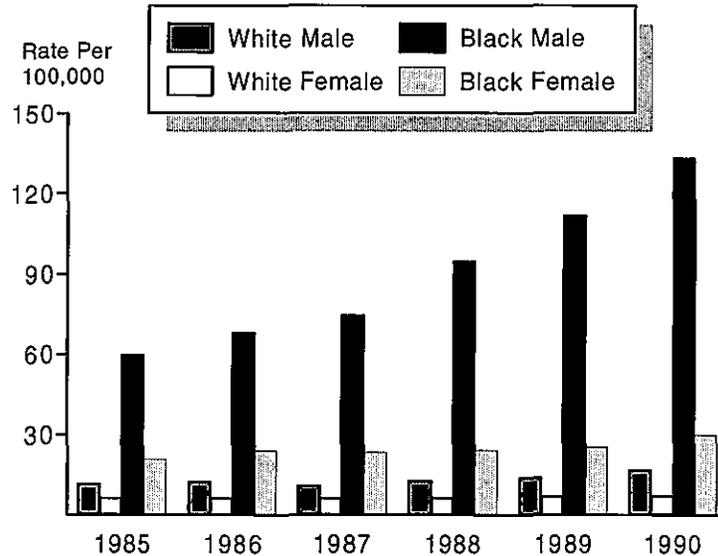
# Victimizations Nationwide Per 1,000 Population

1993



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

## Nationwide Deaths Caused by Homicide For Youth 1-19 Years Old

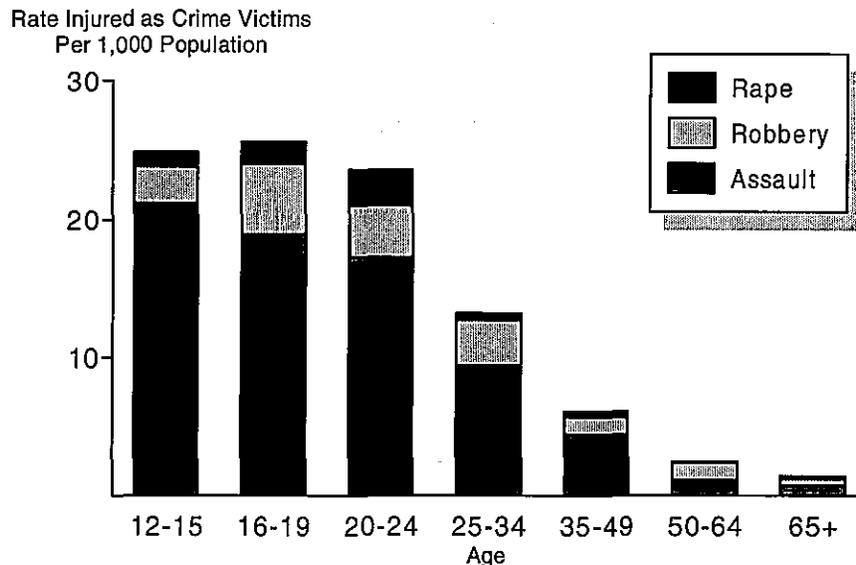


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ◆ Among black juveniles in 1990, homicide was the single leading cause of death (virtually all were firearm homicides), more than three times the number of deaths attributable to motor vehicle accidents.
- ◆ For all juveniles, death by homicide was the second leading cause of death after motor vehicle fatalities, and homicide deaths exceeded death by natural causes.
- ◆ Homicide death rates for all juveniles increased 92 percent between 1985 and 1990, and for black male juveniles the rates increased 184 percent over the same period.

## Juveniles Are Disproportionately Injured As Victims of Crime

1993



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

- ◆ Many more juveniles have reported, as part of victimization surveys, being injured as a result of a criminal act than adults and the elderly. In fact, juveniles, for every category of violent crime, report more injuries than any other age group.
- ◆ Someone age 16 to 19 is 25 times more likely to be injured as a consequence of aggravated assault than someone over 65, and 4 times more likely than someone between the ages of 35 and 49.
- ◆ Juveniles, ages 12 to 19, report more injuries for robberies than all those age 25 and older.

# How Does California's Juvenile Justice System Work?

**Goals of the Juvenile Justice System.** Both California's adult and juvenile justice systems have as one of their goals public safety. California's adult system also has punishment of offenders as a goal, while California's juvenile justice system has a different goal—treatment and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. To this end, the state's juvenile justice system has a broad array of methods and programs for addressing juvenile crime, taking into account the severity of the offense and the background of the offender. These include treatment programs, detention, incarceration, and community supervision. Generally, the system provides for escalating responses to offenses of increasing severity, such as informal probation, formal probation, detention, and incarceration. And, because the system has as a goal rehabilitation, many more agencies have a role to play in California's juvenile justice system than in the adult system, including schools, social services agencies, and community-based organizations.

**The Juvenile Justice Process.** Following the arrest of a juvenile offender, a law enforcement officer has the discretion to release the juvenile to his or her parents, or take the offender to juvenile hall. The county probation department, the agency responsible for the juvenile hall, has the discretion to accept and

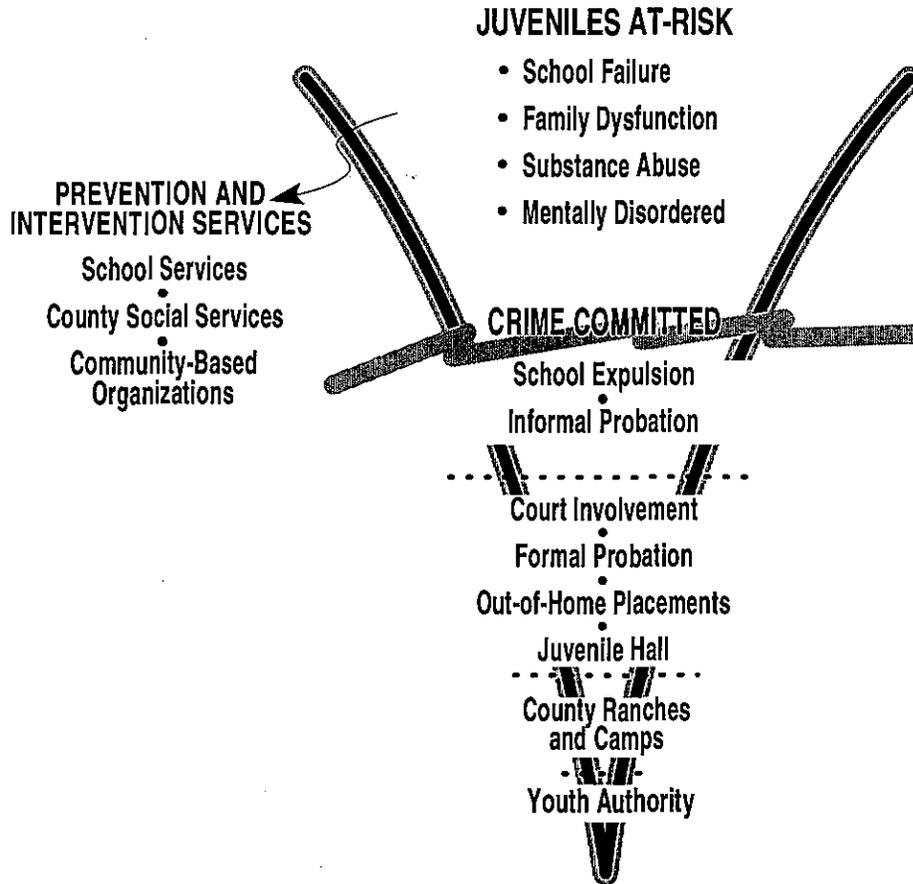
“book” the offender or not, in which case, the disposition of the juvenile is left to the police. Because most of the state’s juvenile halls are overcrowded, mainly with juveniles being held for violent offenses, juvenile halls may accept only the most violent arrestees, turning away most other arrestees.

If the offender is placed in juvenile hall, the probation department and/or the district attorney can choose to file a “petition” with the juvenile court, which is similar to filing charges in adult court. Or, the district attorney may request that the juvenile be “remanded” to adult court because the juvenile is “unfit” to be adjudicated as a juvenile due to the nature of his or her offense. For a juvenile who is adjudicated and whose petition is sustained (tried and convicted) in juvenile court, the offender can be placed on probation in the community, placed in a foster care or group home, incarcerated in the county’s juvenile ranch or camp, or sent to the Youth Authority as a ward of the state. For a juvenile tried and convicted in adult court, the offender can be sentenced to the Department of Corrections, but can be placed in the Youth Authority through age 24.

***The Prominent Role of County Probation Departments.***

County probation departments supervise 97 percent of all juvenile offenders; the remaining 3 percent are committed to the Youth Authority and become a state responsibility. In contrast, about 18 percent of convicted adults are sent to state prison and become a state responsibility. County probation departments make recommendations to judges on placements and sentencing of juveniles, supervise these offenders in the community, provide rehabilitation and training services to probationers, and operate juvenile halls and county ranches and camps.

## Wide Variety of Treatment Services for Juvenile Offenders

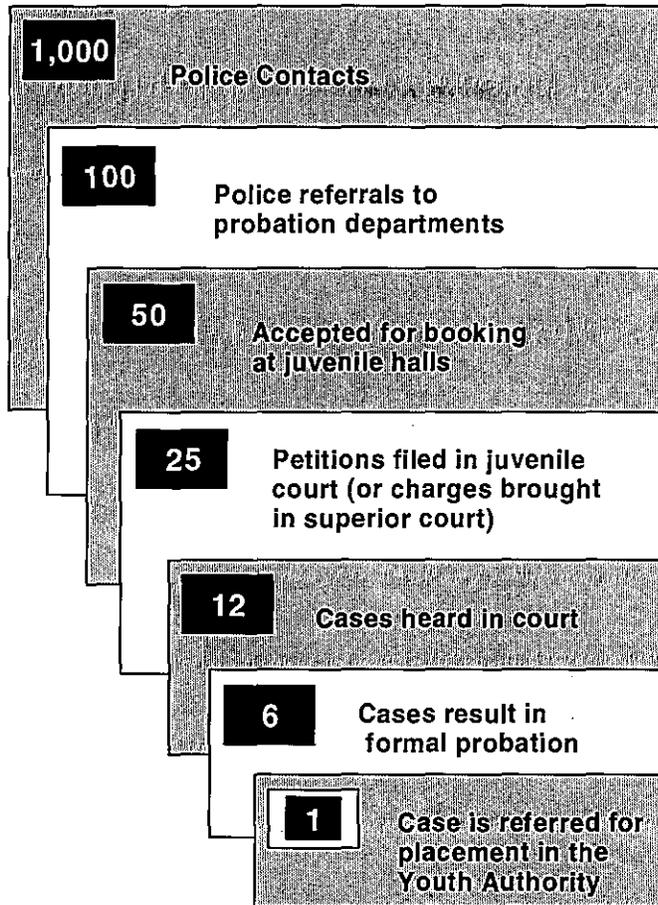


- ◆ Law enforcement and social services agencies, community-based organizations, and schools all can play a role in keeping juveniles from entering the juvenile justice system. Prevention and intervention programs can address risk factors for troubled juveniles or provide services that give young people choices other than criminal activity.
- ◆ If a juvenile commits a crime and enters the juvenile justice system, a juvenile might be handled either formally or informally, depending on the type of offense, the background of the offender, and the availability of resources.

## Who Exercises Discretion in the Juvenile Justice System?

Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Identify truant youths.</li> <li>◆ Expel/suspend students who commit offenses on school grounds, and may or may not notify police of the offense.</li> </ul>
Police/Sheriffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Can warn offenders or cite and release offenders.</li> <li>◆ Detain or arrest juvenile offenders.</li> <li>◆ Transport offenders to juvenile hall.</li> </ul>
Probation Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Decide whether or not to accept and “book” the juvenile offenders into juvenile hall.</li> <li>◆ Make recommendations on whether juveniles should be adjudicated in juvenile court or tried as adults.</li> <li>◆ Recommend placement options—home, foster care, county incarceration, or Youth Authority—to juvenile court judges.</li> <li>◆ Supervise juveniles in the community and in juvenile halls, ranches, and camps.</li> </ul>
District Attorneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ File charges; and reduce, modify, or drop charges</li> <li>◆ Request transfer of juveniles to the superior court.</li> </ul>
Youth Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Incarcerates wards and inmates and supervises parolees ranging in age from 12 to 24 years old.</li> </ul>
Youthful Offender Parole Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Orders the program of treatment for juvenile court-committed wards.</li> <li>◆ Decides when wards are eligible for parole and revokes parole for violators.</li> </ul>

## Typical Outcomes of 1,000 Juvenile Contacts With Police



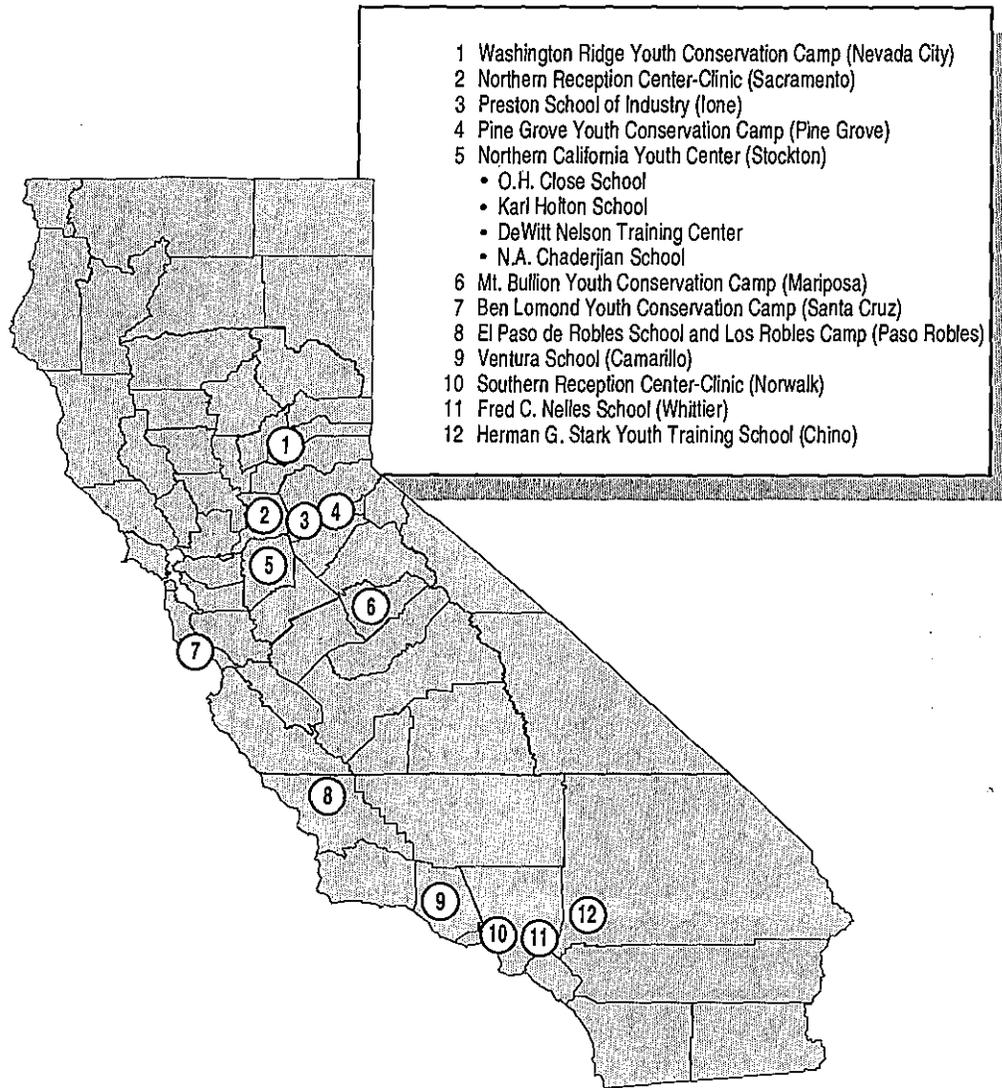
Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

## Profile of Juvenile Offenders

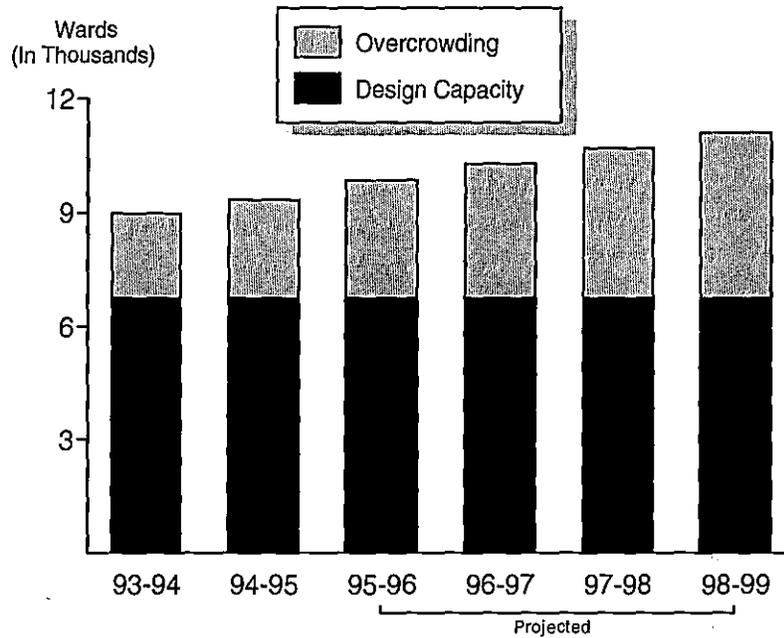
Type of Offender	General Characteristics
<p><b>County Juvenile Probationer</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Male, about 16 years old, equally likely to be white (non-Hispanic), black, or Hispanic</li> <li>◆ From urban area</li> <li>◆ At least one year behind in schooling</li> <li>◆ Committed for property or drug-related offense</li> <li>◆ Likely to have had two or three other contacts (questioning or arrest) with law enforcement prior to most recent arrest</li> <li>◆ Likely supervised at home on probation, after short stay in juvenile hall</li> <li>◆ After completing probation, stands a good chance of not committing a new offense as a juvenile or an adult</li> </ul>
<p><b>State Youth Authority Ward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Male, 19 years old, from Los Angeles or Bay Area, more likely to be Hispanic or black</li> <li>◆ 68 percent were committed for violent crime</li> <li>◆ Has abused alcohol and/or drugs, but not incarcerated for drug-related crime</li> <li>◆ Sixth-grade education level</li> <li>◆ Likely to be committed only once to the Youth Authority, but has been arrested between 8 and 33 times although not charged with a crime in many cases</li> <li>◆ Has been previously incarcerated in county juvenile hall and/or probation camp</li> <li>◆ Average stay will be 21 months, followed by parole in community</li> <li>◆ 45 percent chance of completing parole without committing a new offense as a juvenile or adult</li> </ul>



### California Youth Authority Facilities



## Youth Authority Institutions Are Overcrowded



- ◆ Youth Authority institutional population is expected to grow from 9,400 wards in 1994-95 to over 10,000 in 1998-99.
- ◆ Youth Authority overcrowding is expected to increase from 147 percent in 1995-96, to over 165 percent by the end of 1998-99.
- ◆ Given the currently available facilities, overcrowding is due to two factors. The first is the growth of the state's juvenile population. The second is increasing lengths of stay by juveniles in these facilities. Lengths of stay are increasing for two reasons: (1) wards are being admitted for more serious crimes and (2) overcrowding limits the Youth Authority's ability to ensure that wards get needed program services. When a ward cannot get required program services, he or she is not paroled, thereby staying longer in youth authority facilities.

## Who Is in the Youth Authority?

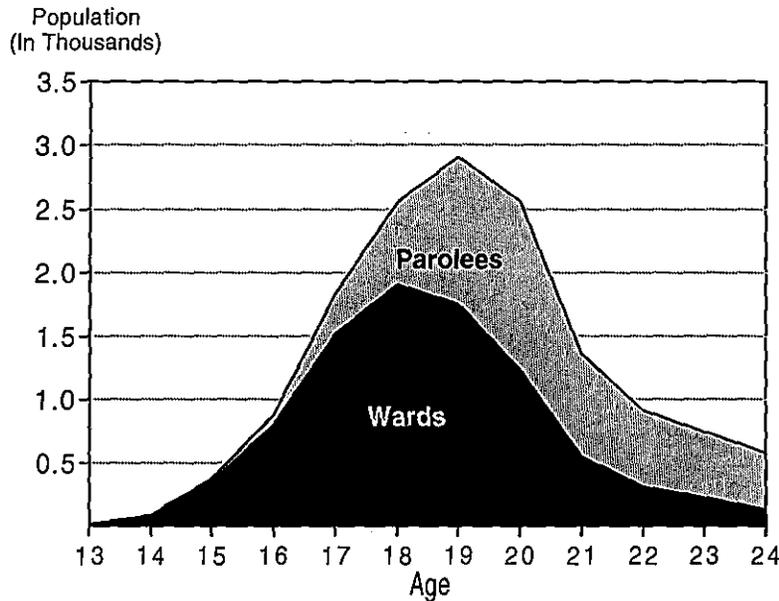
June 30, 1994

Offense	Committing Court		Totals
	Juvenile	Superior	
Assault	1,767	392	2,159
Robbery	1,598	399	1,997
Homicide	944	311	1,255
Burglary	894	98	992
Drug offenses	555	49	604
Vehicle theft	615	15	630
Other sex offenses	251	42	293
Theft	313	15	328
Rape	178	55	233
Other offenses	156	15	171
Kidnap	94	43	137
Arson	58	6	64
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,423</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>8,863</b>

- ◆ Over 68 percent of the Youth Authority population have been incarcerated for violent offenses, over 14 percent for homicide.
- ◆ About 23 percent of Youth Authority wards have been incarcerated for property offenses.

## Most Youth Authority Wards Are Older Than Age 17

June 30, 1994



- ◆ Almost 70 percent of the Youth Authority's incarcerated population is between 18 and 24 years old, and consequently are adults. Over 92 percent of Youth Authority parolees are over age 17.
- ◆ In 1993, for the wards admitted to the Youth Authority, the average age of a juvenile court commitment was 16.4 years old. For Department of Corrections inmates placed in the Youth Authority, the average age at first admission was 19.3 years old.



Juvenile Crime—Outlook for California

## How Much Does Juvenile Crime Cost?

There is no simple answer to this difficult question. Although many studies over the years have tried to quantify the total direct and indirect costs of all crime (adult and juvenile) to government and society, the results have varied, but all conclude that nationwide costs are in the tens to hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Estimating the costs that are unique to juvenile crime is difficult, but the associated costs would probably be substantial.

Some costs of crime (such as the government's direct cost of fighting crime) can be readily estimated. For example, the most recent available data show that in 1992-93, California spent about \$13.8 billion to fight crime, which included the costs for police, prosecution, courts, probation, and incarceration. How much of this cost is attributable to juvenile crime is harder to estimate. However, since a disproportionate share of crime is committed by juveniles, the cost for fighting juvenile crime is likely to be commensurately high.

Other costs cannot be easily measured. For example, many crimes go unreported or even undetected and thus their costs to society are not captured. Also, some costs are "transferred" by manufacturers and retailers to consumers in order to cover their costs for crime prevention activities or losses from crime.

## What Is Considered a “Cost” of Crime?

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-  **Costs to government** to operate the criminal justice system (police, prosecution, courts, probation, incarceration, parole).
-  **Medical costs to individuals and government** because of injuries suffered due to crime.
-  **Property stolen or damaged** resulting from crime.
-  **Loss of productivity to society** because of death, medical and mental disabilities resulting from crime.
-  **Loss of work time** by victims of crime and their families.
-  **Loss of property values** in neighborhoods with high rates of crime.
-  **Pain and suffering of crime victims**, their families, and friends, as well as communities plagued by crime.
-  **Loss of a productive “citizen”** when a juvenile offender is not rehabilitated and continues to commit crime.

## State Incarceration of Juveniles Has the Highest Per Capita Cost

1994-95

	Number of Participants (In Millions)	Average Cost per Participant	
		General Fund	Total Government
<b>Corrections—inmates and wards</b>			
Youth Authority	0.01	\$32,000	\$32,000
Prison	0.1	20,900	20,900
<b>Education—students<sup>a</sup></b>			
K-12	5.2	\$2,530	\$4,200
UC	0.2	11,800	11,800
CSU	0.2	6,038	6,038
Community Colleges	0.9	1,054	2,811
<b>Health and Welfare—beneficiaries</b>			
Medi-Cal	5.4	\$1,500	\$2,300
AFDC	2.6	1,100	2,200
SSI/SSP	1.0	2,100	5,300

<sup>a</sup> Does not include federal funds or lottery funds.

- ◆ Youth Authority wards have the highest cost but are the least numerous. For example, it costs \$32,000 to house a Youth Authority ward in 1994-95, but \$4,200 to educate a student in K-12 school.
- ◆ The costs shown are averages. The range of individual costs is especially large in the Medi-Cal Program. Nursing home patients in the Medi-Cal Program, for example, cost about \$25,000 annually to support.



Juvenile Crime—Outlook for California

## What Are the Policy Implications?

The major policy implications of the data presented in this report are summarized briefly below.

***Recognize the Divergence of Crime Data and Public Perceptions of Crime.*** Juvenile crime, as measured by arrest rates, peaked in the mid-1970s and declined through most of the 1980s, but has started to rise again. While juvenile arrest rates have been increasing recently, they still are below the levels of the 1970s. Juveniles commit a disproportionate number of crimes, in comparison to their proportion of the state's population, while adults are responsible for most crime. One of the state's most alarming criminal trends, though, has been the growth of juvenile arrests for violent crimes, particularly homicide. While these crimes make up a small portion of all crimes committed, they constitute a large part of the public's perception of crime. Both public perceptions *and* crime data should be taken into account by decisionmakers when shaping public policy affecting the state's juvenile justice system.

***Recognize That the Juvenile Justice System Is Different From the Adult System.*** The underlying philosophy of the state's juvenile justice system is to treat and rehabilitate juveniles. In contrast, the adult system has as its primary goal the apprehension and punishment of adult offenders.

In some respects, the current juvenile justice system with its emphasis on rehabilitation reflects an earlier era when juveniles committed relatively minor nonviolent crimes. Today, however, the juvenile justice system is receiving increasing numbers of juveniles who have committed serious violent crimes, some having committed heinous offenses.

Policymakers could make scarce prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation resources go further by defining which offenders are most amenable to treatment. For example, currently a juvenile who commits a ruthless crime and is sentenced to 25 years to life is likely to receive the same array of services in the CYA as a youth who has committed a nonviolent offense. Such a violent offender would have access to both regular and special education, as well as specialized services, such as substance abuse programs. While we are not suggesting that these offenders receive no services, given limited resources, policymakers may want to limit the amount of services to these offenders so that they do not receive *all* of the services the Youth Authority has to offer. This may be especially appropriate in their early years of incarceration, when their return to the community is decades away. Instead, services could be targeted to meet more pressing needs.

***Recognize the Importance of Demographics in Juvenile Crime.*** As we indicated, juveniles commit a disproportionate amount of crime. The decline in juvenile crime, as measured by arrest rates in the 1980s, was due, in part, to the decline in the number of juveniles. The juvenile population is again growing, especially those aged 11 to 17. We estimate that this segment of the population will increase over

29 percent through the year 2004, and that juvenile crime is likely to increase commensurately. For these reasons, it is important for policymakers to recognize that the changing demographics—particularly the increase in the number of juveniles—could result in a return to higher crime rates in the relatively near future.

***Place a Priority on Prevention and Early Intervention.*** The vast majority of juvenile offenders commit just one or two offenses and never offend again. A small number of juveniles commit the majority of criminal offenses and these juveniles—chronic recidivists—often begin their careers at an early age (age 11). They also tend to exhibit at an early age a variety of risk factors, such as school behavior and performance problems, significant family problems, and substance abuse.

Given the high costs of crime to society and research that indicates that efforts to rehabilitate chronic recidivists have limited success, an important course of action is to intervene with offenders at an early age in order to prevent further criminal activity. Early intervention could include a “package” of integrated services—criminal justice, education, social services, substance abuse, and mental health resources.

Additionally, policymakers should consider cost-effective programs that reduce the risk factors of juveniles ever getting involved in criminal activities. For example, programs that keep juveniles from dropping out of school, reduce child abuse, teach parenting skills, preserve families, provide substance abuse treatment (for parents and juveniles), and provide alternatives to criminal “lifestyles” could help to reduce juvenile crime.

**Target Violent Juvenile Crime.** Juvenile arrest rates for violent crime have generally exceeded those for adults since 1980. Given this trend and the negative consequences of violence, crime reduction efforts should be targeted at reducing violent juvenile crime.

Certain types of activities tend to make juvenile crime more violent or magnify the effects of that violence. For example, gang activity is primarily a juvenile problem and leads to a disproportionate amount of violent crime. Gang activity can potentially be reduced if alternatives to gangs are available, either through the schools or the community, and law enforcement suppression efforts are increased.

In addition, juvenile violence could be reduced by limiting the number of firearms illegally possessed by juveniles. Recent research from experiments in Kansas City showed that the use of a limited number of law enforcement personnel whose sole responsibility was to seize illegal guns in gun “hot spots” increased gun seizures by 65 percent and reduced the incidence of violence by 49 percent. A comparison area of the city that did not have such targeted patrols, saw gun-related crime increase slightly during the same period. Part of the increase might have been due to gun-related crime being “displaced” from the targeted areas to other parts of the city.

Finally, research has shown that the use of alcohol is closely associated with violent behavior, especially for juveniles. There are already laws on the books that make it illegal for a person to sell alcohol to a juvenile and for a juvenile

to consume alcohol. Strong enforcement of liquor laws, along with prevention activities, could help prevent juvenile violence.

***Recognize That the Greater Use of Incarceration May Have a Limited Effect on Juvenile Crime.*** There is no question that incarceration has an important role to play in the juvenile justice system. Juveniles who are chronic recidivists, violent, or have severe disorders (such as sex offenders) should be incarcerated. While incarcerated, these individuals will not be able to commit additional crimes. For juveniles, incarceration has the added benefit of providing a variety of services for those in need of them.

However, whether increased imprisonment of juveniles will significantly reduce overall crime is problematic. First, most juveniles are not incarcerated until they have a well-established pattern of criminal activity (Youth Authority wards have often been arrested eight or more times before being sent to the Youth Authority). Alternative punishments that are “swift and certain” after a first offense—such as, making graffiti vandals clean up graffiti—have been shown to be more effective at deterring juvenile crime than the possibility of detention after multiple offenses.

Secondly, because of the continuing growth in the juvenile population, there will always be “new” offenders to “replace” the juvenile offenders who have been incarcerated. With a projected juvenile population increase of almost 30 percent, it would be very expensive for state and local agencies to build a sufficient number of detention beds to incarcerate all juvenile offenders.



***Recognize That Better Information Is Needed to Reduce Juvenile Crime.*** Better information is needed to understand the scope and causes of juvenile crime in California and to develop the most cost-effective methods to combat that crime. For example, policymakers would benefit from knowing the disposition of juvenile arrests.

Also, policymakers need better data on program “outcomes,” in order to determine which programs work and which ones don’t. For example, it would be helpful to know how many juveniles after being incarcerated in county ranches or camps do not commit a new offense, or how many Youth Authority parolees, who have earned their high school diploma, are successful in the community. This type of information would allow resources to be directed to those programs that best lead to the end of criminal behavior.

State policymakers also need better information on gangs and gang-related crime. Currently, crime statistics are not broken out by gang and nongang affiliation; such information would be valuable for committing resources to areas most needing gang suppression. Policymakers also need better information on juvenile gun possession and the use of alcohol. Such data could help reduce the incidence of juvenile crime.

This report was prepared by Clifton Curry under the supervision of Craig Cornett. For information about this report call Mr. Curry at (916) 445-4660. For additional copies contact the Legislative Analyst’s Office, State of California, 925 L Street, Suite 1000, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-2375.





Juvenile Crime—Outlook for California