

LOS ANGELES COUNTY YOUTH CRIME TRENDS

By request of the Los Angeles Public Defender, the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice compiled the following comparative information on juvenile and adult crime in Los Angeles.

In 1980, juveniles accounted for 25.7 percent of all felony arrests and 22.5 percent of all violent crime arrests in Los Angeles County. These numbers have dropped by almost half in the past 25 years. In 2005, juveniles accounted for only 11.9 percent of felony arrests and 13.9 percent of arrests for violence crime. The following table clearly demonstrates the precipitous decline in serious offending among the juvenile population in Los Angeles County.

Los Angeles Juvenile Arrests and Rates, 1980, 1990, 2000 – 2005

	Population age 10-17	Felony Arrests	Felony Rate	Violent Arrests	Violent Rate
1980	951,200	39,157	4,116.8	8,406	883.8
1990	977,900	34,845	3,563.1	9,906	1,022.2
2000	1,127,700	16,121	1,429.5	4,794	422.2
2001	1,192,500	16,755	1,405.0	5,167	433.3
2002	1,258,200	16,044	1,275.2	4,693	373.0
2003	1,308,700	15,971	1,220.4	4,747	362.7
2004	1,254,600	16,635	1,325.9	4,895	390.2
2005	1,274,500	17,648	1,384.7	5,062	397.2
CHANGE, 2005 v. 1980:			-66%		-55%

Source: Compiled from data obtained at Criminal Justice Statistics Center of the California Department of Justice.

In the same 25 years, Los Angeles has experienced a tremendous surge in the arrest of adults, ages 40 through 59.

Los Angeles Adult (ages 40-59) Arrests and Rates, 1980 and 2005

	Population age 40-59	Felony Arrests	Felony Rate	Violent Arrests	Violent Rate
1980	1,548,200	9,268	598.6	2,676	172.8
2005	2,698,100	33,066	1,225.5	7,253	268.8
CHANGE, 2005 v. 1980:			+105%		+56%

Source: Compiled from data obtained at Criminal Justice Statistics Center of the California Department of Justice.

Between 2000 and 2005, 499 L.A. juveniles were arrested for homicide. Other five-year periods in recent history posted much higher numbers for the crime. For example, from 1970 through 1975, 1,041 Los Angeles juveniles were arrested for homicide. Between 1980 and 1985, the number was 1,460 and between 1990 and 1995, the county picked up 1,940 juveniles for homicide.

Throughout California, Juvenile Crime is Down

Today, juvenile homicide arrest rates are at their lowest level since 1967, overall violence at its lowest level since 1969, and rape and felony arrests at their lowest level since statistics were first reported in 1960.

Statewide, juveniles are responsible for the lowest felony arrest rate since 1960, when statistics for juvenile felonies were first reported. Arrests for juvenile homicide are at the lowest rate since 1967 and the violent felony arrest rate matches the rates from the late 1960s.

Meanwhile, the generation raising these juveniles is experiencing an immense increase in felony arrests, both in Los Angeles and throughout the state. The same population is being incarcerated at a rate that is 1200 percent more in 2005 than it was in 1980. California adults, ages 40 through 59, are now incarcerated at a rate that has grown more quickly in the last 25 years than the rates for any other age group.

Consider the Sentencing Policies

The decline in serious crime among California juveniles is a trend that deserves attention. These numbers come at a time when Los Angeles County is utilizing incarceration within the Division of Juvenile Justice facilities (formerly CYA) much less than it did a decade ago. In fact, Los Angeles has reduced its use of DJJ commitments by 77 percent since 1993.

Meanwhile, the enormous expansion in the incarceration rate among 40 to 59-year olds has had no effect on reducing the crime rate among that population.

As the California Legislature sits in special session to consider further expansion of a prison system in crisis, it is time to consider the successes of those populations whose crime rates have decreased. Alternative placements available to juveniles may provide examples of better public safety policy and appropriate alternatives for the offending adult population.

For more information on the decline in juvenile crime throughout California, please see our [July 2006 report: Testing Incapacitation Theory: Youth Crime and Incarceration in California](#). The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice provides this information to assist in the development of sound criminal justice policy.

For more information, visit the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice website at www.cjcj.org