

# CJ CJ

Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

## Quiet Crisis: Youth Violence, Race and Justice in Monterey, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz

Author and Primary Researcher

Elliot Currie

*UC Berkeley Center for the Study of Law and Society*

Project Director

Dan Macallair

*Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*

Research Assistant and Coro Fellow

Roseanna Moore

This research made possible by a generous contribution from  
the David & Lucille Packard Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a preliminary portrait of some key trends in youth violence and the juvenile justice system in Monterey, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties. It is not a comprehensive analysis of the roots of violence or the operation of the juvenile justice systems in this region, but more of a reconnaissance project. It is designed to give an overview of what the data available to us can reveal about the patterns of violence and juvenile justice involvement among young people in these four counties, the relationship of those patterns to race, ethnicity, and gender, and how they have changed over time--specifically, since the mid--1980s. What we found was deeply disturbing.

In a number of ways, life became much more dangerous and more troubled for many young people in this region during the 1990s. They were more likely to be the victims of lethal violence--or its perpetrators; more likely to be arrested for a broad range of violent crimes; and more likely to wind up under the control of county or state juvenile authorities.

But these trends did not affect all youth equally. Young people in some counties fared considerably worse than others, with Monterey County in particular suffering unusually high rates of violence during most of this period; and youth of some racial and ethnic groups fared much worse than others. In particular, the 1990s have seen what can only be described as a crisis among the region's Hispanic youth and among some groups of Asian youth, along with a continuing state of near-emergency among young African-Americans. Minority youths (with certain exceptions) are not only much more likely to be involved in violence, as victims or as offenders, than their Anglo counterparts; more disturbingly, there has been a startling shift in the balance between Anglo and minority youths--especially Hispanic youths--over the past decade. The trend, moreover, has been even sharper for young women than for young men. Some kinds of youth violence appear to have tapered

off from their peak in the mid-1990s. But they remain far higher than they were as recently as the late 1980s.

The same racial and ethnic shift has starkly altered the character of juvenile justice in the region. Since the mid-1980s, youths from these four counties entering the juvenile justice system--whether at the County level or in the California Youth Authority--are increasingly a minority population. As with arrests and victimization by violence, the balance between Anglo and Hispanic youths, especially, has shifted with startling speed. This trend, too, has often been even faster for young women, who now make up a much larger proportion of wards in the region's juvenile system than they did a decade ago. Moreover, there is troubling evidence that minority youths are progressively more over-represented as the dispositions in the juvenile justice system become more severe: they are more often referred to juvenile justice authorities to begin with, but even more likely to be made wards of the juvenile court or incarcerated.

Measured against their share of the region's overall youth population, Hispanic and black youth are now a very disproportionate share of the population under the control of the juvenile justice system--stunningly so in some counties. And data from one county shows that this is true even if we "control" for specific offenses. Minority youths, in other words, are substantially more likely to be made wards of the juvenile court for any of several offenses we investigated than their Anglo counterparts charged with the same offense.

The data we have do not permit us to pinpoint with certainty what lies behind these disturbing trends. We outline a number of crucial issues for future research in the concluding section of this report, with a special emphasis on the need for field studies that explore the attitudes and values of young people themselves and the inner workings of the juvenile justice systems and other agencies of support and control in the region. But the

data make it clear that the troubling trends in youth violence and juvenile justice involvement we describe closely parallel the patterns of economic deprivation in the region, especially among minority families.

The report is organized into 5 parts;

Part 1 looks at trends in juvenile homicide deaths in the four counties;

Part 2 examines trends in arrests of juveniles for violent crimes in the region;

Part 3 examines trends in juvenile justice--both for the region as a whole, and a more detailed look at the role of race and ethnicity in the juvenile justice systems in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties;

Part 4 sets these patterns in the context of some wider social and economic trends affecting youth and families in the region;

Part 5 considers some implications of these preliminary findings and points to several key issues for further research.

## Preface

This report is a preliminary portrait of youth violence and the juvenile justice system in Monterey, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. It is not a comprehensive study of the roots of violence or of the operations of the juvenile justice system in the region, but more of a reconnaissance project, designed to give an overview of what the existing data can tell us about the patterns of youth violence and juvenile justice involvement in these counties, their relationship to race, ethnicity, and gender, and how they have changed over time.

We gathered a very broad range of materials for this project, mainly from three sources: statistical data, including several special data runs we commissioned, from a number of California state agencies, including the departments of Health Services, Justice, Youth Authority, Employment Development, Social Services, and Finance; similar statistical data from county agencies, including reports from county probation departments and special data runs provided by the San Mateo and Santa Cruz County probation departments; and a wide variety of other reports and materials from both public and nonprofit agencies throughout the region. But we emphasize that our findings raise more questions than they can answer.

This project was supported by a grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. Special thanks to Dan Macallair for crucial input and oversight, to Rosanna Moore for enthusiastic and indispensable research assistance, and to Khaled Taqi-Eddin for creative graphics. Many people helped with

requests for information: in particular, this project could not have been completed without the aid of Patti Dillon and Gene Roh of the San Mateo County Probation Department, Jerome Torres of the Santa Cruz County Administrator's Office, Bonnie Collins, Steve Galeria, and Linda Nance of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California Department of Justice; Sherry Fujii of the Vital Statistics Section, California Department of Health Services; and Wayne Spar of the California Youth Authority, none of whom, of course, bear any responsibility for our analysis or conclusions.

## List of Charts

- I. Annual Youth Homicide Deaths, 1986-1997
- II. Youth Homicide Deaths by Race and Ethnicity, 1986-1997
- III. Homicide as a Proportion of Total Youth Deaths, by Race and Ethnicity, 1986-1995
- IV. Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, 1986-1997
- V. Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, by Race and Ethnicity, 1986 and 1997
- VI. Share of Total Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, Anglo Vs. Hispanic Youths, 1986 and 1997
- VII. Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, by Gender, 1986 and 1997
- VIII. Juvenile Robbery Arrests, by Gender, 1986 and 1997
- IX. Juvenile Homicide Arrests, by Race and Ethnicity, 1986-1991 and 1992-1997
- X. Youth Authority Commitments versus Youth Population, by Race and Ethnicity, 1992-1996
- XI. Stages of the Juvenile Justice Process, by Race and Ethnicity, San Mateo County, 1996-1997
- XII. Wardship Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, San Mateo County, 1996-1997
- XIII. Relative Chances of Juvenile Court Disposition and Wardship for Robbery, Anglos versus Hispanics, Santa Cruz County, 1991-1996
- XIV. Youth Homicide Arrests, 1986-1996, and Youth Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity
- XV. Youth Authority Commitments, 1992-1996, and Youth Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity

## Introduction

Our aim in this report was to provide a preliminary sketch of the state of violence and juvenile justice involvement among youths in Monterey, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties. What we found was sobering.

Life became much more dangerous and more troubled for many young people in this region during the 1990s. They were more likely to be the victims of lethal violence—or its perpetrators; more likely to be arrested for a broad range of violent crimes; and more likely to wind up under the control of county or state juvenile authorities.

But these trends did not affect all youth equally. Young people in some counties fared considerably worse than others, and youth of some racial and ethnic groups fared much worse than others. In particular, the 1990s have seen what can only be described as a crisis among the region's Hispanic youth and among some groups of Asian youth, along with a continuing state of near-emergency among many African-American youth. Minority youths (with certain exceptions) are not only much more likely to be involved in violence, as victims or as offenders, than their Anglo\* counterparts; more disturbingly, there has been a startling shift in the balance between Anglo and minority youths—especially Hispanic youths—over the past decade. The trend, moreover, has been even sharper for young women than for young men. Some kinds of youth violence appear to have tapered off from their peak in the mid-1990s. But they remain far higher than they were as recently as the late 1980s.

The same racial and ethnic shift has starkly altered the character of juvenile justice in the region. Since the mid-1980s, youths from these four counties entering the juvenile justice system—whether at the County level or in the California Youth Authority—are increasingly a



minority population. The balance between Anglo and Hispanic youths, especially, has shifted with startling speed. This trend, too, has often been even faster for young women, who now make up a much larger proportion of wards in the region's juvenile system than they did a decade ago. Moreover, there is troubling evidence that minority youths are progressively more over-represented as the dispositions in the juvenile justice system become more severe: they are more often referred to juvenile justice authorities to begin with, but even more likely to be made wards of the juvenile court or incarcerated.

Measured against their share of the region's overall youth population, Hispanic and black youth are now a very disproportionate share of the population under the control of the juvenile justice system--stunningly so in some counties. And data from one county shows that this is true even if we "control" for specific offenses. Minority youths, in other words, are substantially more likely to be made wards of the juvenile court for any of several offenses we investigated than their Anglo counterparts charged with the same offense.

The data we have do not permit us to pinpoint with certainty what lies behind these disturbing trends. We will come back to this issue in suggesting some directions for future research. But other data we gathered make it clear that the trends in youth violence and juvenile justice involvement have emerged simultaneously with deepening economic deprivation in some parts of the region the 1990s, especially among minority families.

We've organized this report into the following 5 sections;

Part 1 looks at trends in juvenile homicide deaths in the four counties;

Part 2 examines trends in arrests of juveniles for violent crimes in the region;

Part 3 examines trends in juvenile justice--both for the region as a whole, and a more detailed look at the role of race and ethnicity in the juvenile justice systems in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties;

Part 4 sets these patterns in the context of some wider social and economic trends affecting youth and families in the region;

Part 5 considers some implications of these preliminary findings and points to several key issues for further research.

## Part 1

### Dying Young: Patterns and Trends in Youth Homicide

Juveniles in this region were considerably more likely to die by violence in the 1990s than they were a few years earlier. That tragic trend has been worse in some counties than others, and much worse among some groups than others.

It is important to keep these troubling developments in perspective. On the whole, this region--with the partial exception of Monterey County--is a relatively low-violence part of the state (and the nation). California's average homicide death rate in the years 1993-95 was 12.7 per 100,000--somewhat above that of the United States as a whole--while the rate for the combined four-county region averaged just under 6 per 100,000. In 1996 and 1997, these four counties--with an estimated population approaching 3 million--suffered considerably fewer homicides than neighboring Alameda County, with less than half the population, alone. /1

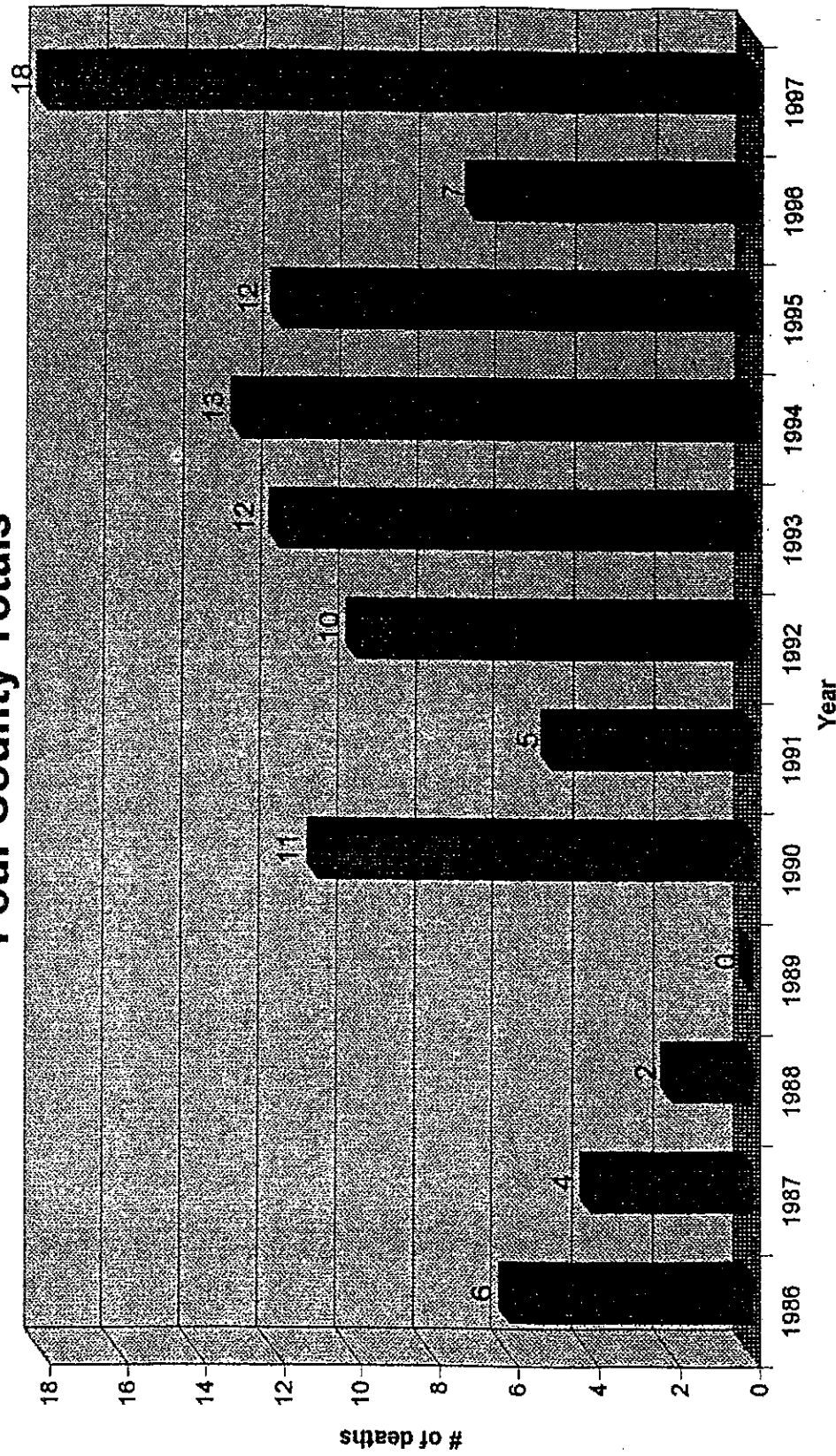
That said, however, two disturbing patterns stand out when we look closely at youth homicides in the four counties: the trend in recent years has been strongly upward, narrowing the gap between this region and other parts of the state; and the racial and ethnic distribution of the risks of dying by violence is increasingly skewed.

In the twelve years from 1986 through 1997, 100 juveniles aged 10-17 were murdered in the four counties (Chart I). Thirty-six of those homicides--over a third of the total--took place in Monterey County, which at the time of the 1990 census contained less than 15 per cent of the 10-17 year-olds in the four-county region. <sup>12</sup> There were more juvenile homicide deaths in Monterey County in this period than in Santa Clara County, with four times the youth population. At the other extreme, Santa Cruz County suffered only five juvenile homicide deaths in twelve years--on average, less than one every two years.

The sharpest increases in youth homicide deaths, however, took place not in Monterey but in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties, where they quadrupled in the second half of this period (1992-97) as compared with the first half (1986-91). For the region as a whole, the average number of youth homicide deaths from 1992 through 1997 was 12 per year; in the previous 6 years, less than 5 per year. The numbers at least doubled in every county except San Mateo, and they nearly doubled there. Nor is this increase simply a reflection of rising population in the region. Since 1990, according to estimates by the state Department of Finance, the number of youths aged 15-19 in the four counties has fallen slightly; the number aged 10-19 has risen, but by less than ten percent--nowhere near the rise in youthful homicides in the nineties. <sup>14</sup>

The geographical disparities in youth homicide deaths in the region are joined--and partly explained--by racial and ethnic ones. Throughout this period, the risks of death by violence

**Chart I**  
**Annual Youth Homicide Deaths (1986-1997)**  
**Four County Totals**



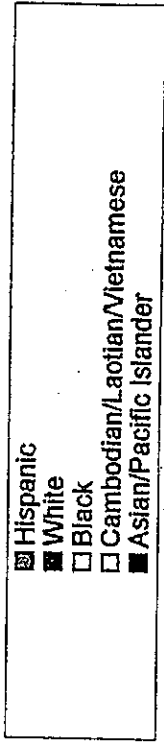
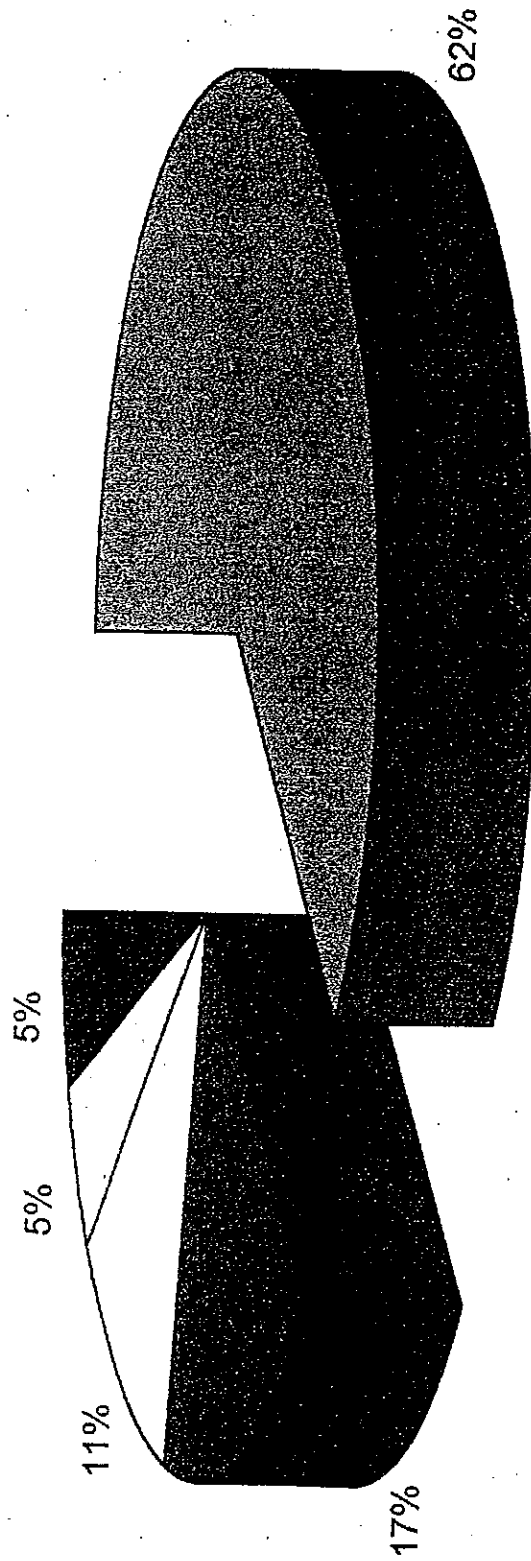
Source: Data from California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section

have been far higher among certain groups than others; and those disparities have increased in recent years (Chart II). For the region as a whole, since 1986,

- White (nonHispanic) youth, who constitute nearly half (47 percent) of the population aged 10-17, were only 17 percent of the victims of youth homicide;
- Black youth, who are just 5 percent of the 10-17 population, were 11 percent of the homicide victims;
- Hispanic youth, slightly less than one-third of the regional youth population, were fully 62 percent of homicide victims;
- There were five homicide deaths among Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Laotian) youths during this period, four of them Cambodian or Laotian alone, and all of them since 1992. There are so few Cambodian or Laotian adolescents in these counties that the 1990 census does not even break out specific numbers for them except in Santa Clara County, where both groups combined were about 6 tenths of 1 percent of the youth population. Yet they account for 1 in 18 youth homicide deaths in the region since 1992.

If we compare the incidence of death by violence with the proportion of the total youth population represented by each ethnic group, we can come up with a rough calculation of the relative risk of violent death for youth of each ethnic/racial group since the mid-1980s. Thus, both blacks and Hispanics face a risk of dying by homicide roughly twice what would be expected from their share of the youth population; Anglos, on the other hand, face a risk only one-third what would be expected given their population share. In relative

## Chart II Youth Homicide Deaths, by Race and Ethnicity (1986-1997) Four County Totals



Source: Data from California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section

terms, the average risk of homicide death among black and Hispanic youth is therefore roughly six times that for Anglos for the twelve year period.

Looking at the period as a whole, however, obscures important shifts over time in each group's risk of death by homicide. From 1986 through 1991, homicide deaths among white-Anglo youth accounted for 21% of the total; from 1992 through 1997, just 15%. Their declining share was largely taken up by Asian youth, whose share rose from less than 4% to more than 12% of juvenile homicide deaths--again, mainly because of several deaths among Southeast Asian youth. The black and Hispanic shares of juvenile homicide deaths remained roughly stable throughout this period. But in absolute terms, the biggest part of the rise in homicide deaths took place among Hispanic youths: of the 44 "extra" deaths in 1992-97 versus the previous 6 years, 59% were of Hispanics, another 18% Asians.

The risks of violent death among the region's youth, in short, already badly skewed by race and ethnicity in the 1980s, became more so in the 1990s. White "Anglo" youths were roughly one in four of the region's juvenile homicide victims in the late 1980s, and less than one in six since 1992. It's important to be clear that this does not mean that Anglo youths are less likely to die of homicide than they were in the late 1980s. On the contrary, homicides among Anglo youth nearly doubled in 1992-97 over the previous 6 years. But deaths among minority youths have risen even faster, thus reducing the Anglo share of the total.

Within this general trend, there are some significant variations in the racial and ethnic mix of juvenile homicides across the four counties. In Monterey County, where the youth homicide rate was by far the worst of the four counties in this period, 29 of the 36 youth homicide victims (80 per cent) during the last twelve years were Hispanic, in a county

where Hispanics are estimated to be slightly less than half of the population aged 10-17. On the other hand, 8 of the 11 homicide deaths among black juveniles (73 percent) in this period took place in San Mateo County; blacks were roughly one in fourteen youth in the County, but over one in four juvenile homicide victims.

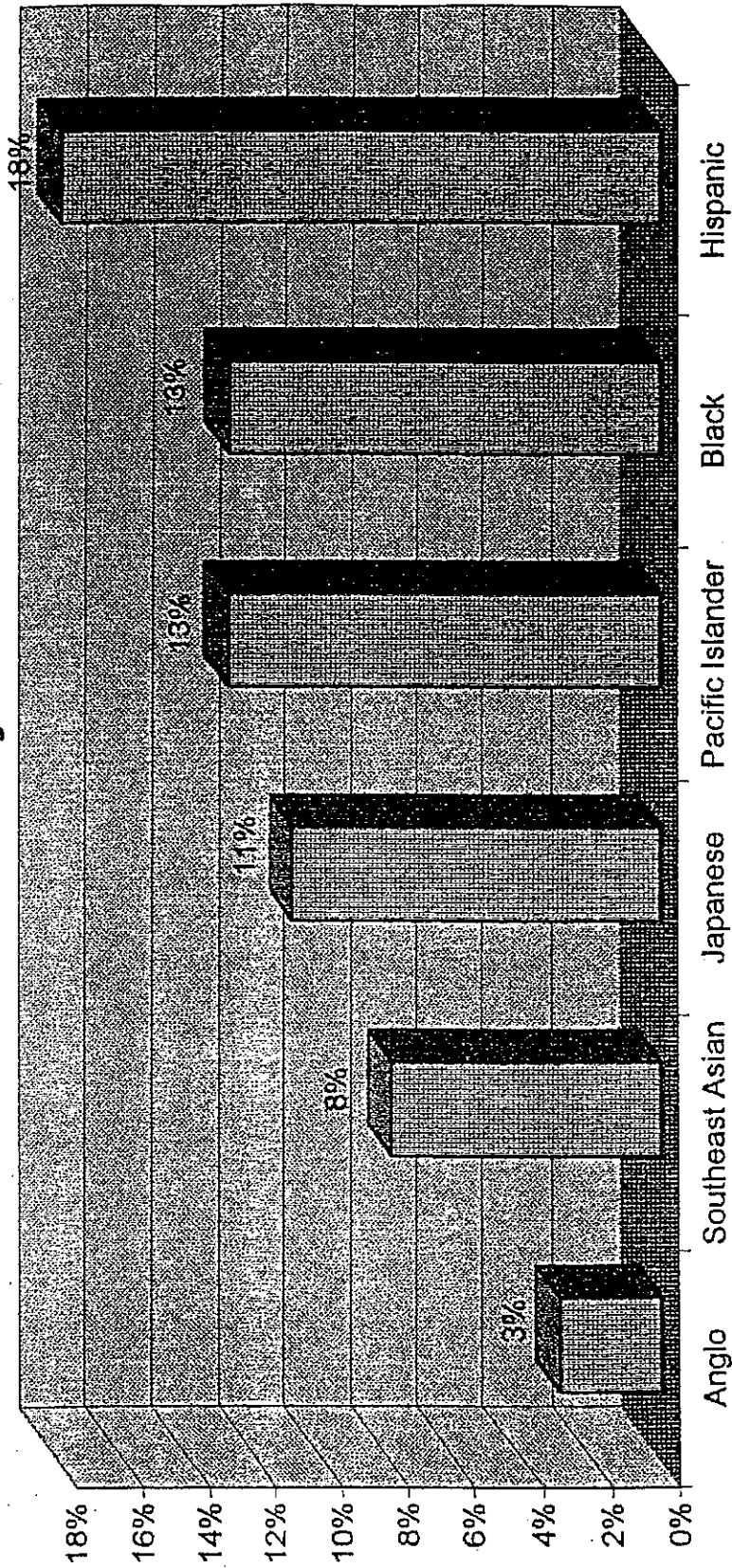
Revealingly, these racial and ethnic differences in homicide deaths are much wider than those for the overall risks of premature death among adolescents. In the region as a whole, death rates--from all causes--among Anglo and Hispanic youths are roughly proportional to their population; they are slightly higher for black and sharply higher for Laotian/Cambodian youths. But that masks stunning differences in the specific causes of death among different racial and ethnic groups. Among white-Anglo youth, only one in 33 deaths is a homicide. Among Laotian and Cambodian youths, the figure is one in 12. For blacks (and Pacific Islanders) it is one in 8, and for Hispanics almost one in 5 (Chart III).

/5

Rising deaths from homicide, indeed, help to explain the somewhat contradictory trends that have taken place in the region's death rates--from all causes--among youth. Since the mid-1980s, the number of deaths has fallen slightly among young people aged 10-17. But that drop masks very different trends for different causes of death. Tragically, the decline in deaths from causes other than homicide--most apparent among whites--has been nearly cancelled out by rising numbers of violent deaths among minority youth.



**Chart III**  
**Homicide as a Proportion of Total Youth Deaths**  
**(ages 10-17), by Race and Ethnicity (1986-1995)**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section

## Part 2

### Trends in Arrests for Violent Crimes

What holds true for youths' risk of victimization by lethal violence is also generally true, with some variations, for their risks of being arrested for violent crimes. As with homicide deaths, only more so, the number of juveniles arrested for violent offenses sharply escalated in the 1990s in these four counties— much faster for youth of some minority groups than for Anglos, and faster for young women than for young men. The result has been not only an overall rise in arrests for violence, but a troubling shift in the relative balance in the risks of arrest among different races, ethnic groups, and genders.

We looked at trends for violent felony offenses as a whole, as well as for two of the most serious; robbery and homicide. To investigate trends in juvenile arrests for violent offenses, we combined California Department of Justice figures on arrests for homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and felony assault--the four standard violent crimes as defined in most official crime statistics--and added figures on arrests for felony weapons offenses.

It is important to note at the outset that interpreting arrest data is a complicated business. Arrest figures usually represent some mixture of two quite different phenomena--the actual level of crime in a given jurisdiction, and the policies of the police in responding to it. For some crimes--especially homicide--arrest statistics are likely to be a fairly good indicator of underlying trends in the offense itself, because arrest practices do not vary much, and because most homicides do result in someone being arrested. For some other violent offenses (like assault), shifts in police practices may have a much greater impact on arrest statistics, and accordingly must be treated more cautiously. But the magnitudes of the rises

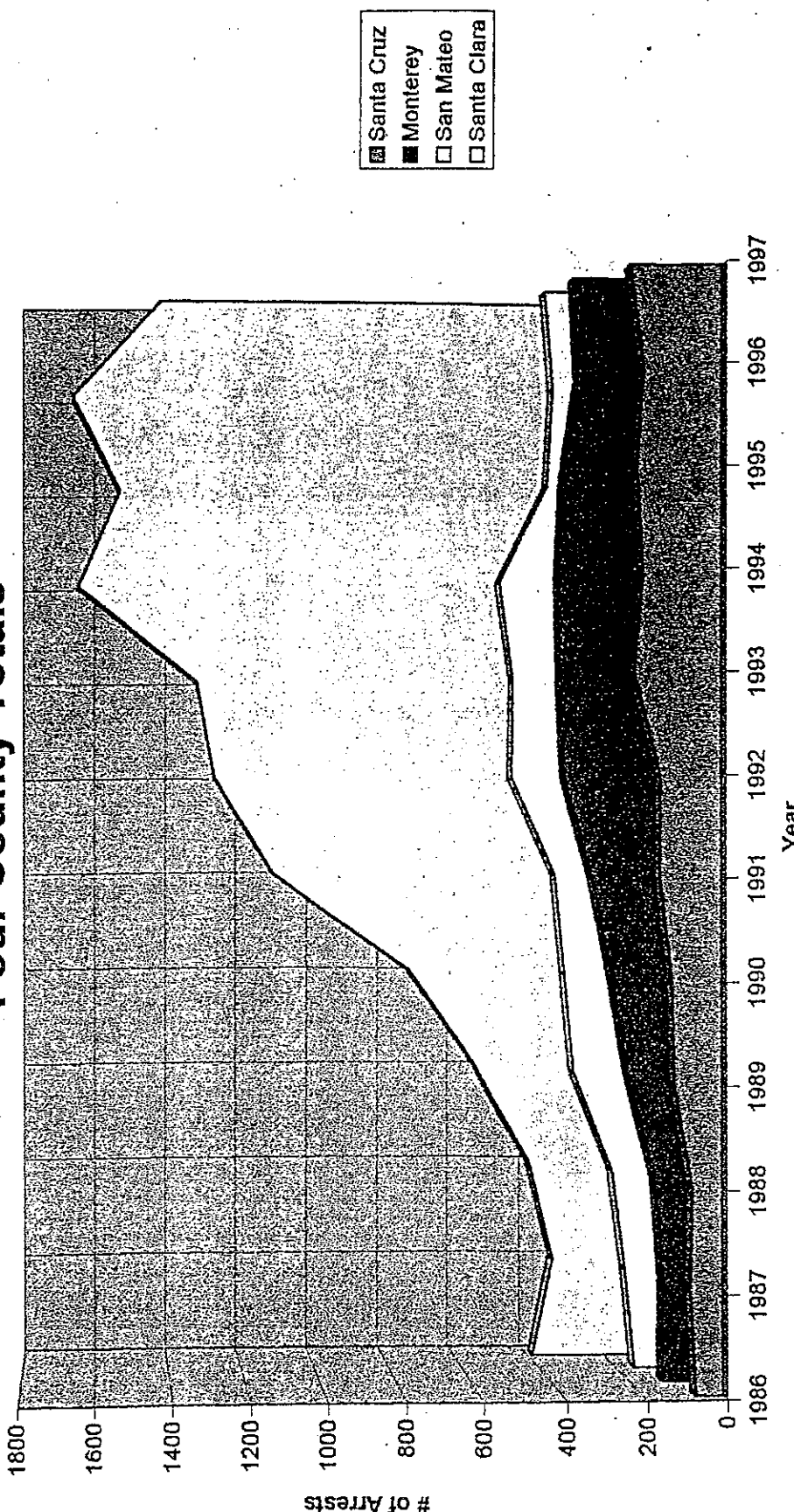
in juvenile arrests for violent offenses in these four counties in recent years are too great to be simply reflections of changes in police behavior.

If we compare the most recent year for which we have data, 1997, with the numbers for 1986, those rises are stunning. For the four-county region as a whole, arrests for violent offenses increased by 230%. Put in absolute numbers, in 1986 720 juveniles in the four counties were arrested for a violent felony offense. In 1997, almost 2400 were (Chart IV). Indeed, more juveniles were arrested in 1997 for weapons offenses alone than for all violent felonies in 1986. <sup>16</sup> The rises are steeper for some violent offenses than others: between 1986 and 1997, juvenile arrests for homicide and forcible rape approximately doubled; arrests for assault tripled, and arrests for robbery quadrupled.

As is true of homicide deaths, however, the general increase masks important differences among the four counties: juvenile arrests increased in all of them, but more so in some counties than in others. The slowest increase--155 per cent--was in San Mateo County. The fastest--267 per cent--was in Santa Clara. Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties fell in between, with increases of 201 and 243 per cent respectively. Thus in the county with the slowest rise in violent arrests, they nevertheless increased two and one half times in this period; in Santa Clara, with the fastest rise, violent arrests among juveniles increased nearly fourfold. Roughly twice as many juveniles were arrested for violent offenses in Santa Clara county alone in 1997 than in all four counties combined in 1986.

The one bright spot in this overall trend is that the number of arrests for violent offenses peaked in the mid-1990s in the region overall, and have tapered off since. Between 1995 and 1997, for example, arrests for these combined violent offenses dropped by about 7% in Monterey and Santa Clara counties, though they remained roughly stable in San Mateo and rose by about 7% in Santa Cruz County. That decline parallels the broader trend in

**Chart IV**  
**Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies (1986-1997)**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. Figures are for combined homicide, rape, felony assault, robbery, and felony weapons offenses.

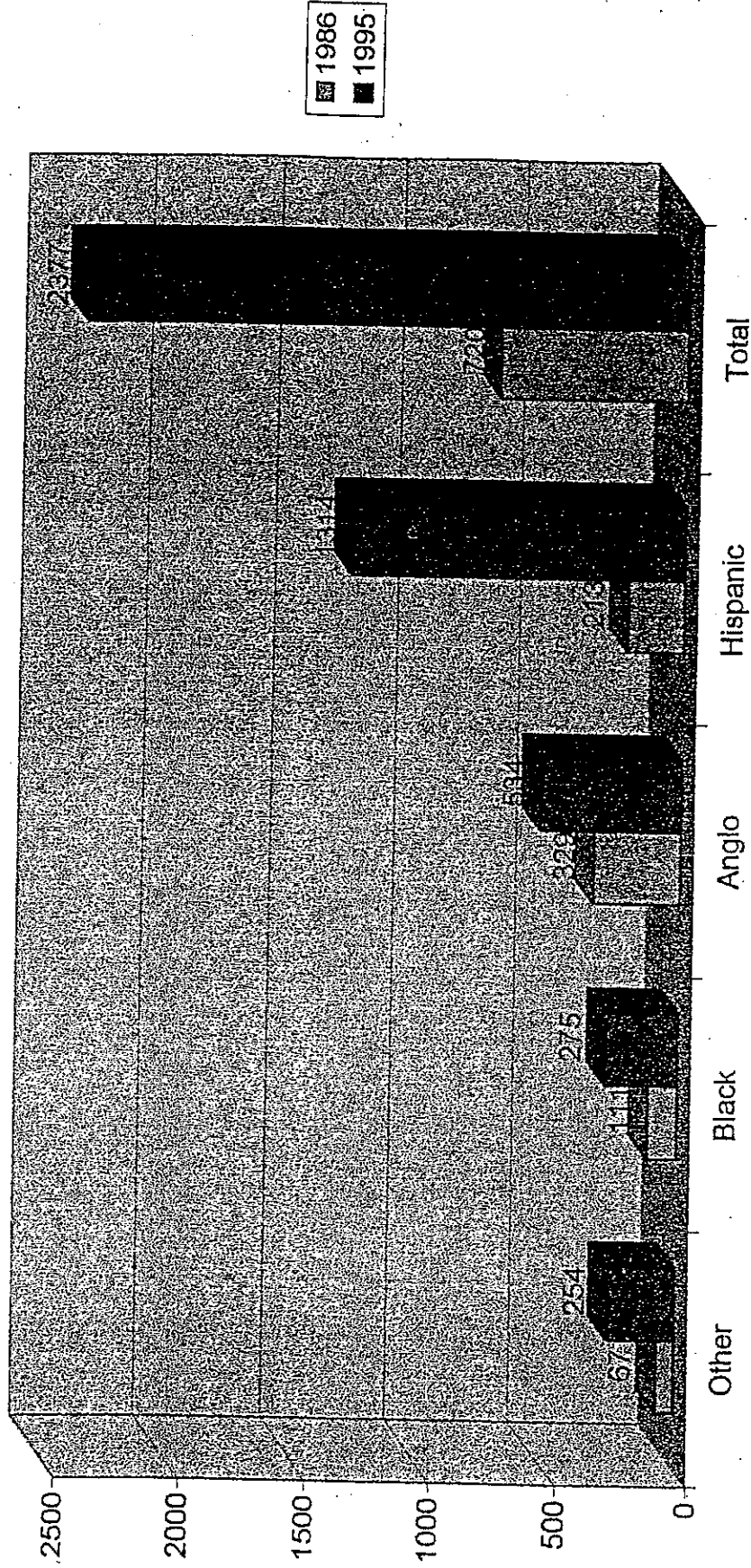
California and in the United States as a whole, but still leaves the number of arrests for violence far higher than in the late 1980s. This remains true even if we adjust the numbers to account for changes in the region's youth population--which in fact declined over the first few years of the 1990s, just as the number of arrests for violent crimes among juveniles were increasing.

Like the rise in homicide deaths, these increases in arrests are closely tied--in sometimes complex ways--with color. The overall rise in arrests in the region represents not only different rates of increase between specific counties, but also between racial and ethnic groups. The data we have from the state Department of Justice are broken down into just four ethnic/racial categories--White/nonHispanic, Hispanic, black, and "other"--which makes it difficult to untangle the trends among different Asian groups (except for homicide arrests, about which more below). Still, some basic patterns are starkly clear.

The overall 230 per cent rise in arrests for violent offenses across the region between 1986 and 1997 combines a relatively small (62 per cent) increase among nonHispanic whites, a 148 per cent rise among blacks, an even higher 279 per cent rise among "other" juveniles, and a stunning 517 per cent rise among Hispanics. Hispanic youth, roughly one-third of the youth population of the four counties, were 55 per cent of those arrested for a violent felony in 1997 (Chart V). NonHispanic whites, slightly under half the youth population, were just 22 percent of violent arrestees. Black youths, just five per cent of the region's juvenile population, were twelve percent of violent arrestees (though down from 14 per cent in 1995).

Moreover, the racial and ethnic distribution of arrests for violent offenses has shifted quite sharply over the past decade--with the biggest change occurring in the relative proportions of Anglo and Hispanic youth in the mix. In 1986 Anglos were about 46

**Chart V**  
**Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, by Race and Ethnicity, (1986 and 1997) Four County Totals**



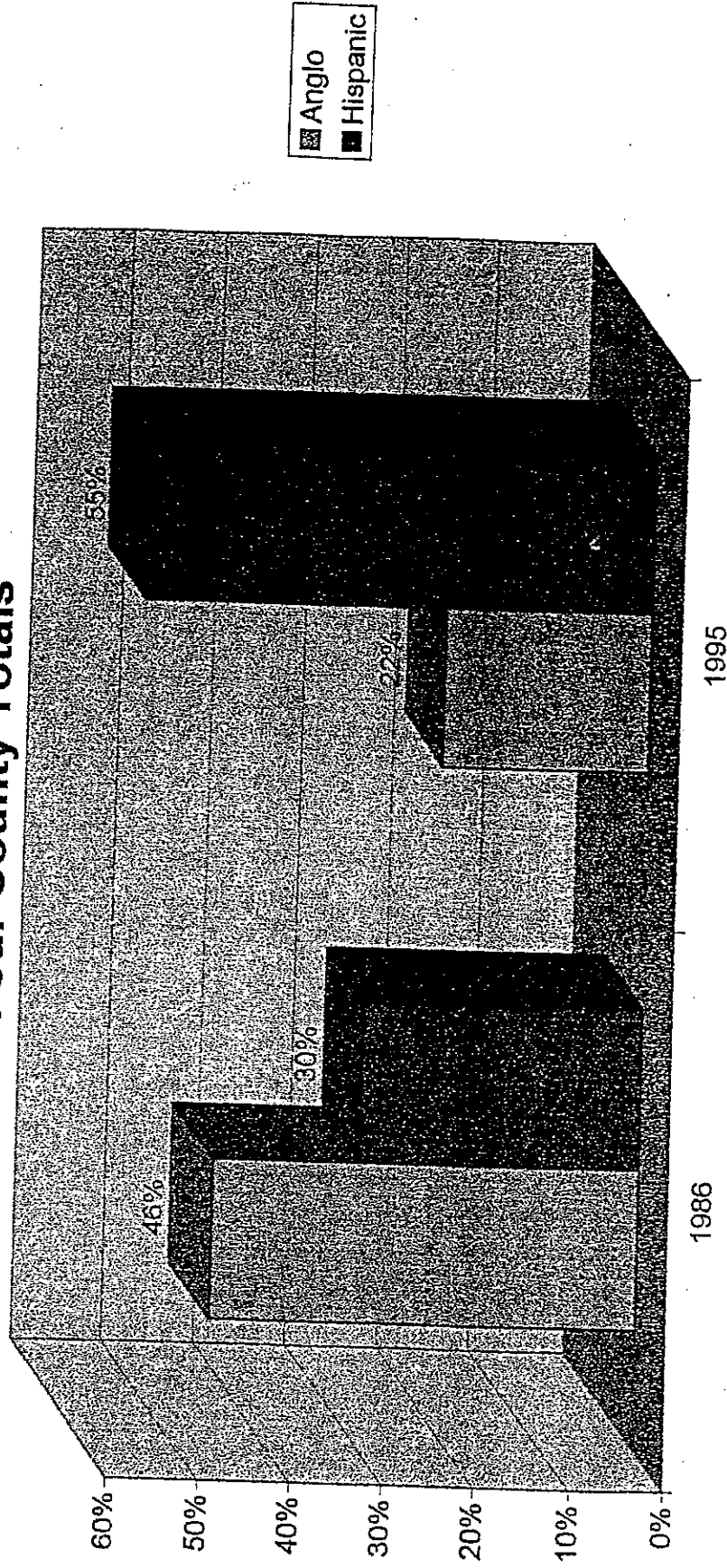
Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

percent of violent juvenile arrestees in the region--roughly equivalent to their share of the youth population. By 1997 their share of the total arrests had been cut by more than half (bear in mind, however, that their actual number of arrests increased). Hispanics began the decade, on the other hand, at about 30 percent of violent juvenile arrests--again, roughly proportional to their share of the youth population--but ended at 55 per cent, far above their share of the youth population. In 1986, for every ten Anglo youth arrested for a violent offense, about six Hispanics were arrested. In 1997, for every ten Anglos arrested for a violent offense, twenty-five Hispanic youths were arrested (Chart VI).

This shift is most dramatic in Santa Clara County, and helps to explain the changing weight of that county in the overall regional picture of violent arrests. Arrests of Hispanic youth for these five violent felonies increased by a startling 639 per cent in Santa Clara County between 1986 and 1997; arrests for "other" youth rose 356 per cent, for blacks 141 per cent, and for nonHispanic whites 64 per cent.

But the Hispanic rise is not the whole story. Again, there are troubling, complex racial variations by county. In San Mateo County, the fastest increase in arrests was among black youth, and it helped cause a startling shift in the racial balance of arrests for violence. In 1986, only half as many blacks as whites were arrested for a violent offense in the County: in 1997, the numbers were about equal. Roughly 7 per cent of the County's youth population, blacks were 23 per cent of violent arrestees in 1997. It's important to note that black youth were an even higher proportion of arrestees a few years earlier--fully 32% in 1995. But the racial disparity remains huge. White-Anglo youths in San Mateo County are only about half as likely to be arrested for a violent crime as we would expect on the basis of their proportion of the population alone; blacks more than three times as likely. Thus the relative risk of a violent arrest is roughly six times higher for black youth than for their white counterparts in San Mateo County. The overrepresentation of black youth is even

**Chart VI**  
**Share of Total Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies,**  
**Anglo vs. Hispanic Youths (1986 and 1997)**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

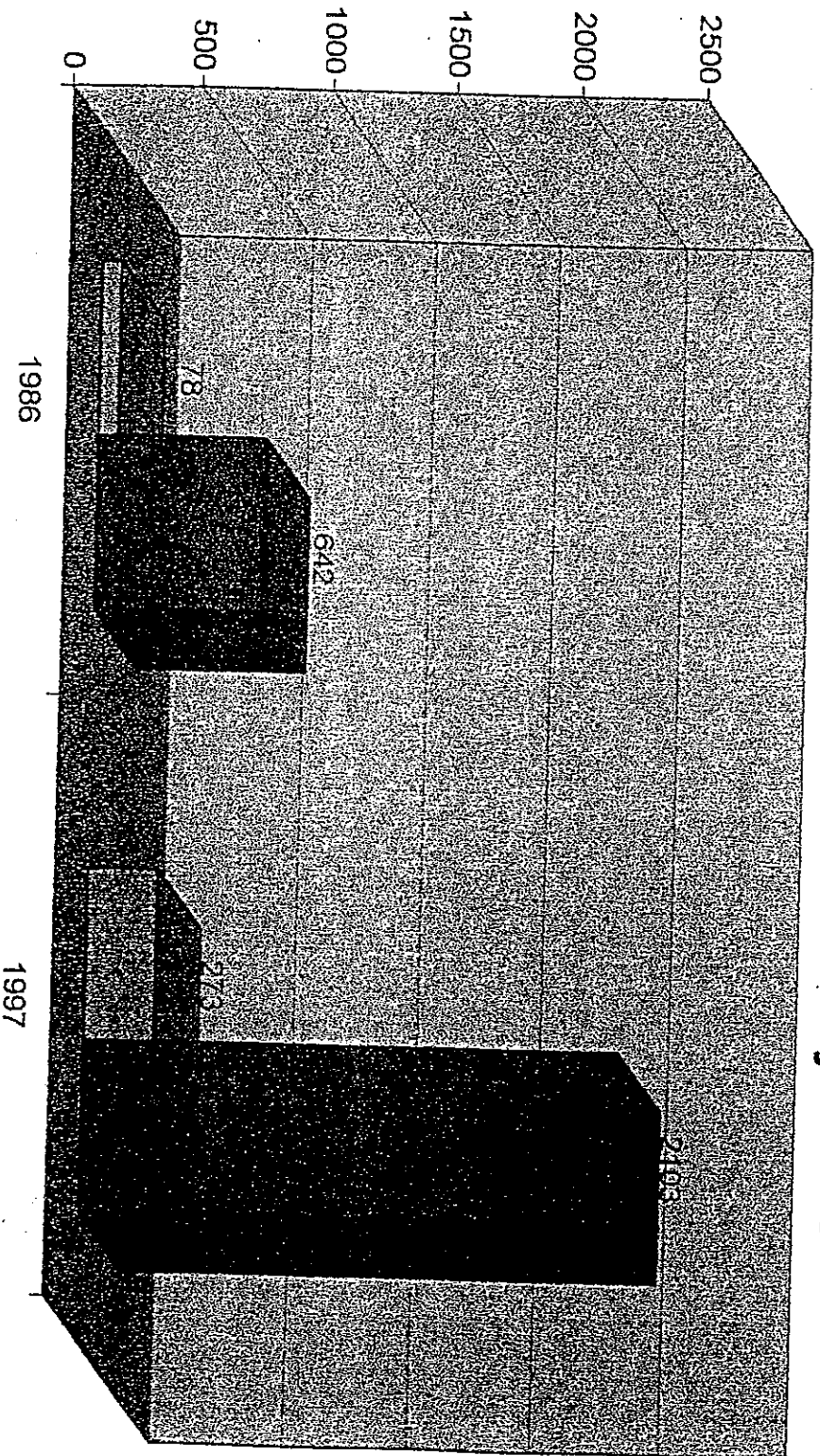


more pronounced for robbery specifically: in 1997, they accounted for 38% of all juvenile robbery arrests in San Mateo County, more than five times what would be expected from their share of the youth population alone.

Again, however, it is important to recognize that arrest levels even for nonHispanic white youths have risen in the region--fastest in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. Almost as many Anglo youths were arrested for robbery across the four counties in 1997 than youths of all racial and ethnic groups in 1986. Whatever was happening with minority youth in this region, in short, was also happening with Anglos--only less dramatically (we suspect that if these data were broken down by income rather than race and ethnicity alone, we would see a much sharper rise among low-income Anglo youth).

Whatever was happening with young people in general, moreover, was happening even more dramatically among young women. The overall 230 per cent increase in juvenile arrests for violent offenses in the region between 1986 and 1997 combines a 228 per cent increase for males and a 250 per cent increase in the number of arrests for females. To be sure, that disparate increase still leaves males much more likely to be arrested for violence than females, but the proportions are narrowing (Chart VII). That is especially true for one kind of violent crime-- robbery. In 1986, only six girls in all four counties were arrested for robbery. In 1997, 66 were--an eleven-fold, or 1000 per cent, increase (Chart VIII). No girls were arrested for robbery in San Mateo County in 1986; in 1997, 14 were. In 1986, girls were less than 5% of juveniles arrested for robbery in the four counties: in 1997, almost 13%. The rise in female arrests for assault, though less spectacular than for robbery, was also steep, roughly tripling over this period. Indeed, the number of female arrests for felony assault alone in 1997 was more than twice the number of female juvenile arrests for all violent felonies twelve years earlier.

# Chart VII Juvenile Arrests for Violent Felonies, by Gender (1986 and 1997) Four County Totals

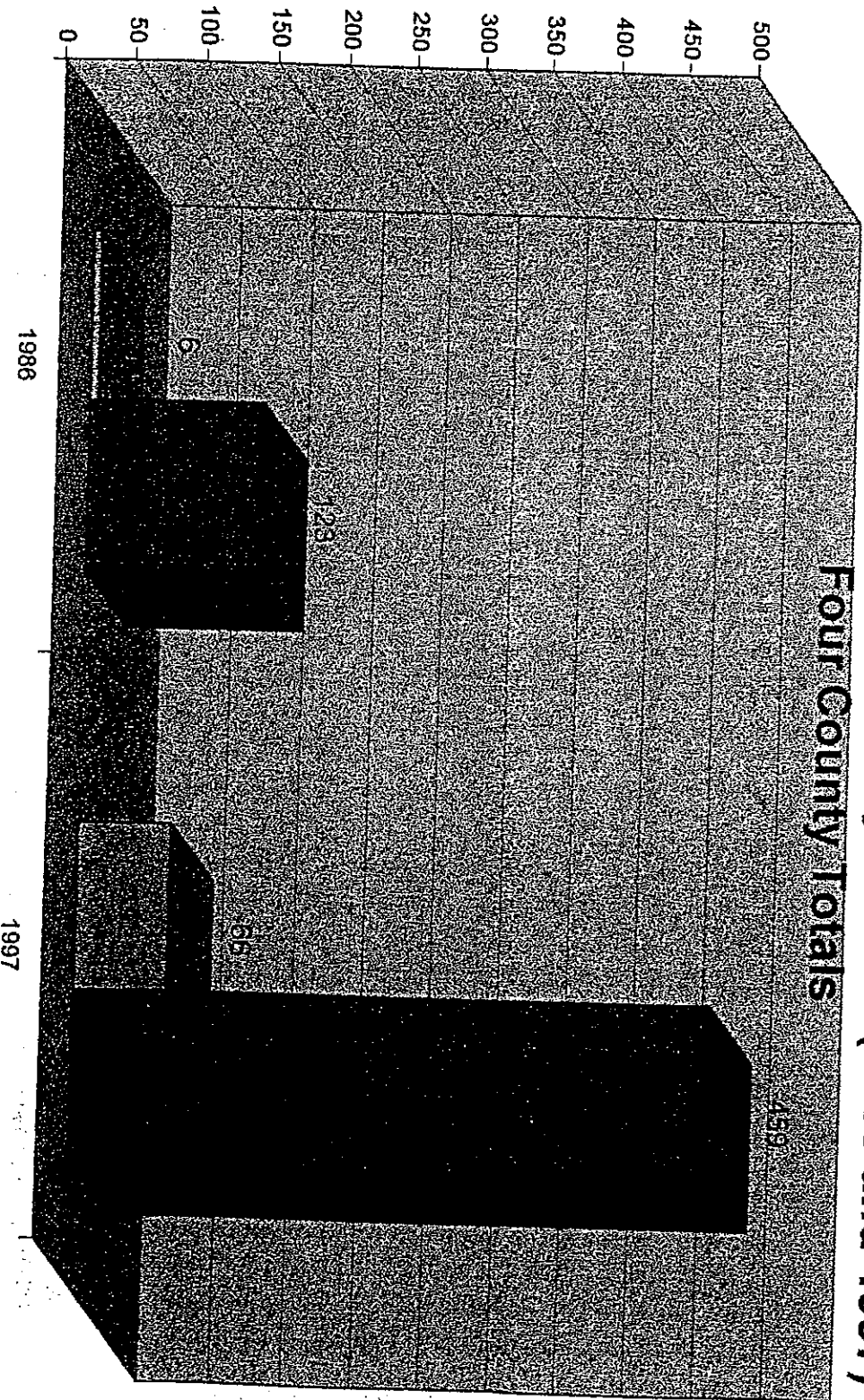


Female  
 Male

Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

# Juvenile Robbery Arrests, by Gender (1986 and 1997)

## Chart VIII



Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

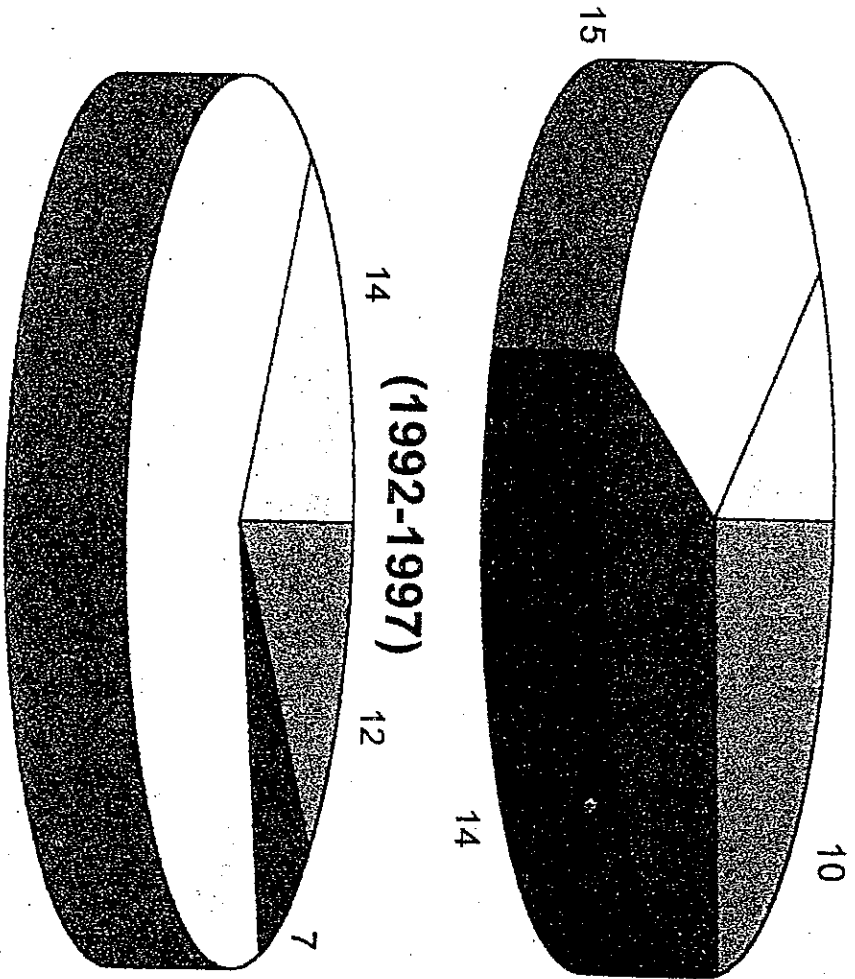
Females  
Males

The pattern of juvenile homicide arrests in recent years is somewhat different from that for the group of violent crimes as a whole; but they too show a sharp upward shift as well as a stunning over-concentration among minority youths and, relatedly, a distinctly uneven distribution among the four counties. Overall, in the four-county region, 134 juveniles were arrested for homicide from 1986 through 1997. But over two-thirds of those arrests took place in the second half of this period. From 1986 through 1991, the region averaged 7 juvenile homicide deaths a year. From 1992 through 1997, it averaged 15. Fifty-five of those 134 arrests--or 41 per cent of the total--took place in Monterey County, with only around 15 percent of the region's population aged 10-17. San Mateo County also had somewhat more homicide arrests than its share of the population, while Santa Clara and Santa Cruz both had fewer. /7

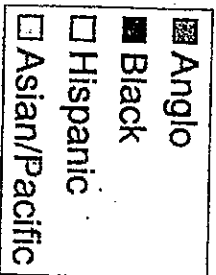
But those overall numbers obscure some important differences in the recent trends among the four counties. Thus, Santa Clara County's juvenile homicide arrests more than doubled in the last six years of this period versus the first six, while the numbers were relatively stable in San Mateo County (and, at a lower level, in Santa Cruz County) across these periods. By far the biggest contributor to the overall increase in juvenile homicide arrests in recent years in the region was the very rapid rise in Monterey County; 45 of the County's 55 homicide arrests since 1986 have occurred since 1992.

As is true of arrests for violent offenses generally, these county differences are closely bound up with race and ethnicity. Forty-five of the 55 juvenile homicide arrestees in Monterey County since 1986 have been Hispanic. Hispanics from Monterey County, indeed, accounted for almost half of all juvenile homicide arrests in the entire region since 1992. The sharp rise in homicide arrests among Hispanic youth--coupled with similarly sharp increases among Asians and a decline among black youths--has shifted the racial and ethnic distribution of youth homicide in these counties significantly (Chart IX). Over the

**Chart IX**  
**Juvenile Homicide Arrests, by Race and Ethnicity**  
**(1986-1991) Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.



period from 1986 through 1991, Anglo youths accounted for almost a fourth of all homicide arrests in the region. From 1992 through 1997, they accounted for only 13%. The black proportion of juvenile homicide arrests fell even more sharply: blacks were an astonishing 35% of arrestees in the first half of the period, and just 8% in the second half. The Hispanic and Asian proportions, meanwhile, have both increased dramatically. Hispanics were 35% of juvenile homicide arrestees in the first half of the period (tied with black youth), and 64% since 1992. Asians shot from 9% of arrestees in the first half to 15% in the second half. Taken together, Hispanic and Asian youth averaged roughly 3 homicide arrests a year from 1986 through 1991, and 12 a year from 1992 through 1997.

The homicide arrest data are broken down in more detail than those for juvenile arrests in general, and allow us to look more closely at the meaning of the increase in arrests among "other" juveniles that appears in the state Department of Justice data. Some Asian groups do not appear at all in the homicide statistics--no Chinese or Japanese youths, for example, were arrested for homicide in the region between 1986 and 1996. Of the 15 Asian and Pacific Islander juveniles arrested for murder in those years, on the other hand (all but four of them since 1993), 5 were Filipino, 4 were Pacific Islanders, and three Southeast Asian. Thus while the overall Asian-Pacific Islander category accounts for fewer homicide arrests than their share of the youth population, a closer look reveals significant concentrations among some groups.

A careful look at the numbers also reveals one further disturbing feature of the recent trends in youth homicide; the growing numbers of very young people arrested for this crime. Of the 123 juveniles arrested for homicide from 1986 through 1996, 17--about one in seven--were 14 years old or younger, and of them 13 had been arrested since 1991. Nine of the 17--slightly more than half--were Hispanic, seven of them from Monterey County alone.

## Part 3

### Race, Ethnicity, and Juvenile Justice

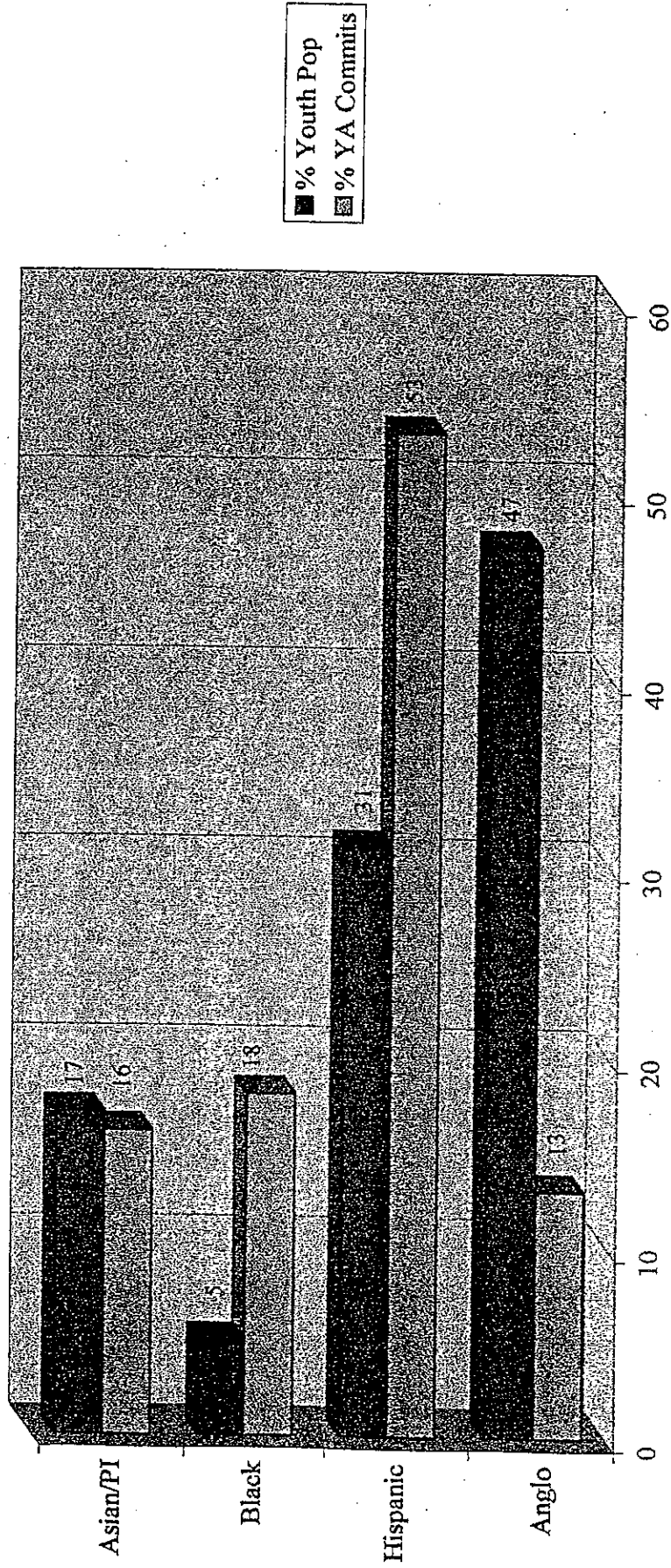
The disturbing trends we've described in youth victimization and arrests for violence are closely paralleled by developments in the juvenile justice system, at both local and state levels, in the four counties.

#### Trends in Youth Authority Commitments

Consider first the changing pattern of admissions to the California Youth Authority (CYA) since the late 1980s. (We begin with data for 1988, because of some difficulty in comparing later CYA data with years prior to that). Other than remand to adult court, CYA is the most severe disposition available for young offenders. And when it comes to CYA commitments, the most important story is not rising numbers--the trends have been uneven since the late eighties--but the dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic mix of youths committed. /8

Of the 1420 first admissions to CYA from the region in the five years from 1992 through 1996, slightly more than half (53 per cent) were Hispanic, 18 per cent black, 16 per cent Asian/Pacific Islander, and just 13 per cent Anglo. In per capita terms, only Asian/Pacific Island youths are sent to CYA at a rate roughly equivalent to their share of the population (though, as we'll see in a moment, that masks very wide differences among different groups within that general category). Anglo youth are sent to CYA at a rate only about a fourth what their population alone would predict. Hispanic youth, on the other hand, have a ratio of CYA commitment to population of 1.7 to 1, while the ratio for black youths is a

**Chart X**  
**Youth Authority Commitments versus Youth**  
**Population, by Race and Ethnicity (1992-1996) Four**  
**County Totals**



Source: Calculated from data supplied by the California Department of the Youth Authority, and population estimates for July 1997 supplied by the California Department of Finance.



troubling 3.6 to 1: that is, black youths in the region are nearly four times as likely to be committed to CYA as would be expected on the basis of their share of the region's youth population (Chart X).

As is true for arrests, the regional averages obscure some even more extreme disparities in individual counties. The Hispanic disproportion, for example, rises to nearly 2 to 1 in Santa Clara and slightly above that in Santa Cruz. The black disparity ranges from 2 to 1 in Monterey County up to an astonishing 6 to 1 in San Mateo County--that is, in San Mateo County, black youths go to CYA at a rate six times what their population share alone would predict. At the same time, Anglo youths are committed to CYA in San Mateo County at a rate only one-fourth what their population would predict.

At first glance, the number of CYA commitments for Asian youths seems to be in rough balance with their share of the region's youth population. But, as is true for victimization by violence and for arrests, that first impression is misleading, because it blurs very different experiences of specific groups within the overall Asian/Pacific Island population. The data we have from the Youth Authority only enable us to break this pattern down for certain groups and not others. But the results for Pacific Islander youth, in particular, are stark. In San Mateo County, where they are most heavily represented in these statistics, Pacific Island youth amount to almost half of CYA commitments in these five years among the entire "Asian/Pacific Island" group. They are about 8 per cent of total Youth Authority commitments from the County in those years, though they are only a little more than 2 per cent of the youth population.

These disparities reflect an extraordinary shift in the racial and ethnic balance of CYA commitments in just a few years. As recently as 1988, white-Anglo youths were 28 per cent of total CYA commitments from the four counties; but over the five years from 1992

through 1996, they were just 13 per cent, a drop of more than half. The proportion of black youths also dropped, slightly--from 21 to 18 per cent--though that decline still left them with the highest relative risk of CYA commitment, given their small share of the region's youth population. Most of the decline in the Anglo proportion was accounted for by the large rise among Hispanics and, to a lesser extent, Asian/Pacific Islanders. The Hispanic share of CYA commitments in the region as a whole rose from 39 per cent in 1988 to 53 per cent in the years from 1992 to 1996; for Asians, it rose from 12 to 16 per cent.

These shifts were especially sharp in certain counties; in Santa Cruz County, for example, Anglos were fully 64 percent of CYA commitments in 1988, and only 27 per cent in the later period; Hispanics, meanwhile, shot from 18 to 67 per cent. In 1988, Anglos were 28 per cent of CYA commitments in Santa Clara County; by 1992-96, their proportion had fallen to an astonishing 11 percent, the lowest anywhere in the region.

#### Juvenile Justice Trends in San Mateo County

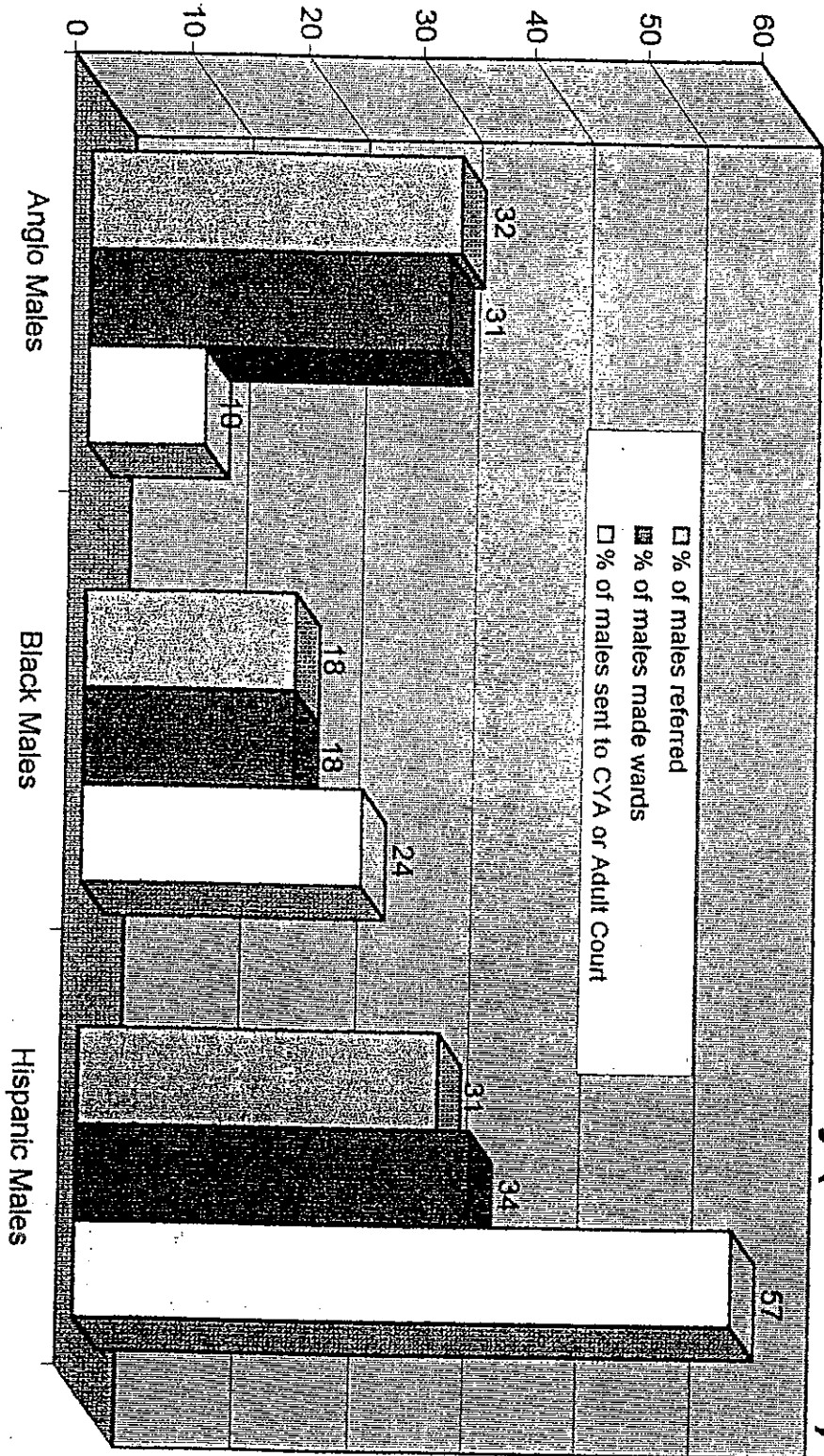
In some respects, these disparities in Youth Authority commitments are even sharper than those for arrests for violent offenses. That raises the question of whether youth of certain groups are being progressively disadvantaged at different stages of the juvenile justice process. The data we have only allow a limited examination of that issue, but some evidence from two counties--San Mateo and Santa Cruz--suggests a disturbing picture. Not only are minority youth increasingly likely to be processed into the juvenile justice system in the first place, but that disparity becomes more pronounced as the dispositions become more severe. Moreover, race and ethnicity have combined with gender in recent years to create a particularly disturbing picture for young minority women.

Let's look first at the distribution of youths at various stages of the juvenile justice process in San Mateo County. <sup>79</sup> A look at Chart XI shows that Anglo males were involved in the system at a rate considerably below their proportion of the County's youth population. Anglos were roughly 40 per cent of the male youth population in the County, but only 32 per cent of minors referred to juvenile probation; 31 percent of those made wards of the court; and only 13 percent of those sent to the CYA in 1996-1997. But the proportions shift in the other direction for Hispanic youths. They were 28 percent of San Mateo County's estimated male youth population, but 31 percent of referrals, 34 percent of male minors made wards, and a striking 67 percent of young men sent to CYA.

The balance is even more sharply skewed for young black men. In 1997, they were an estimated 7 percent of the male youth population in San Mateo County—but 18 percent of those referred to juvenile probation, 18 percent of wards, and 20 percent of those sent to CYA. And the disproportion was even worse for black women; about 7 percent of the county's population of young women, they were fully 27 percent of juvenile referrals and 26 percent of wards. Young black men, in short, were made wards of the juvenile court at a rate almost three times their share of the population, and young black women nearly four times. What the County defines as "Oceanic" youth, meanwhile (Pacific Islanders) were about 11 percent of wards; though we do not have detailed recent population estimates for this group, they were only about 2 per cent of the County's youth population in the 1990 Census, and thus appear to be greatly overrepresented within the juvenile justice system.

These disproportions are also apparent if we focus specifically on the two most severe dispositions available to the juvenile court; being sent to the CYA, or being certified as "unfit" for juvenile court and remanded to the adult criminal justice system. In 1996-1997, 24 San Mateo County youths (21 male, 3 female) received one of those sanctions. Of the 24, 12 were Hispanic (50 percent), 6 were black (25 percent), 4 were Caucasian (17

**Chart XI**  
**Stages of the Juvenile Justice Process,**  
**by Race and Ethnicity, San Mateo County (1996-1997)**



Source: Calculated from data supplied by the San Mateo County Probation Department.

percent), 1 "Oceanic" and one "other." Thus Hispanic youth were overrepresented, relative to their population, at the most severe sanction levels by a factor of nearly two to one and blacks at nearly four to one.

The state of minority youth in the system becomes much more disturbing if, instead of looking at a "snapshot" of the most recent point in time, we track what has happened over the past several years in the County. When we do that, we see a startling shift, in just a few years' time, in different groups' risk of becoming ensnared in the juvenile justice system--a shift that involves not only race and ethnicity, but also gender.

Between fiscal years 1986-87 and 1996-97, there was an overall increase of 80 percent in the numbers of San Mateo County youth made wards of the juvenile court. But though there were increases for every broad racial and ethnic group, the variations are extreme. The number of "Caucasian" males made wards rose by just 10 percent; among black males, the rise was also relatively small--17 percent. But for Hispanic males, it was 135 percent, and for "Oceanic" males a stunning 321 percent.

As sharp as some of these increases are, they are dwarfed by changes in the numbers of young women made wards of the court in this county--especially minority women. Overall, the 80 percent increase in the number of wards in this period breaks down into a 59 percent increase for males--and a 193 percent rise for females. The gender difference appears for every broad racial and ethnic group. While the number of Caucasian males made wards rose just 10%, the number of Caucasian females rose by 78 percent. For young black women, the increase was 408 percent, and for Hispanics, 458 percent. For "Oceanic" women, the rise was from just 3 wards in 1986 to 22 in 1996--or 633 percent.

These changes have greatly altered the composition of the ward population: since the 1980s, it has become both more minority and more female. White males were 38 percent of all youths made wards in 1986, but just 23 percent in 1996. Women, of all races, were 16 percent of wards in 1986 and 26 percent in 1996--an increase of roughly two-thirds, which is very large in itself. But consider what happens when we look specifically at minority women. As a proportion of all youths made wards, black, Hispanic, and "Oceanic" females combined quadrupled in this period--from just 5 percent to 20 percent of all wards.

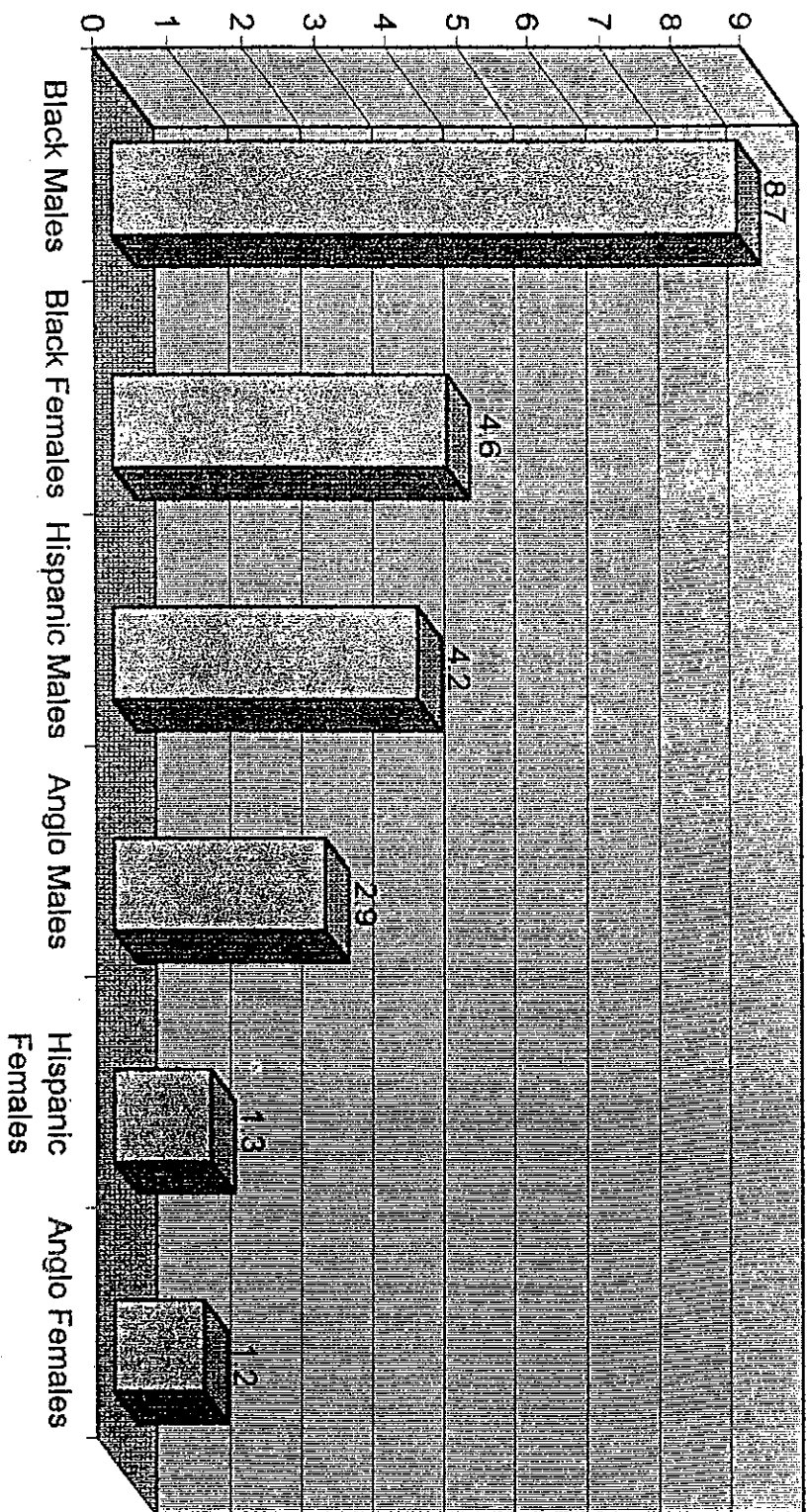
To put this change even more starkly, we can translate some of these figures into a rate of wardship--the proportion of the specific group's youth population made wards of the court in 1996-97 (Chart XII). When we do so, we discover the striking fact that young black women were far more likely than young Anglo men to be made wards of the juvenile court; the number of black female wards was 4.6 percent of the County's estimated black female population aged 15 to 19, while the corresponding figure for white male youth was only 2.9 percent.

#### Race, Ethnicity, and the Treatment of Specific Offenses

Much of the racial and ethnic disparity within the juvenile justice system reflects the higher minority arrest rates for serious offenses, as we've already described. But we also have troubling indications that minority youths are being treated differently for any given offense once they are caught up within the juvenile court system.

Only one county, Santa Cruz, provided us with detailed data on the disposition of specific offenses, broken down by race and ethnicity (we cannot say with certainty, of course, how closely these findings would match those for the other counties). We looked

# Chart XII Wardship Rates, by Race and Ethnicity San Mateo County (1996-1997)



Source: Calculated from data supplied by the San Mateo County Probation Department, with population estimates supplied by the California Department of Finance.

at what happened to youths charged with three offenses--assault with a deadly weapon, robbery, and possession of narcotics or controlled substances. The first two are violent crimes where there were enough cases in this County in recent years to make analysis feasible; the third, an offense for which arrests have been rapidly increasing in the county and which provides considerable room for discretion on the part of authorities. We expected that if minority youths were being disadvantaged within the system, it would show up for all these offenses--and probably more so for drug possession, with the greatest leeway for discretion. And that is exactly what we found.

Consider first the offense of assault with a deadly weapon. To begin with, as with most violent offenses, the number of youths entering the juvenile justice system on this charge increased sharply in recent years--the number detained nearly tripled between fiscal years 1985-86 and 1995-96--and their ethnic distribution shifted dramatically. In 1985-86, 61 per cent of youths detained for assault with a deadly weapon in the County were Anglo. A decade later, just 31 per cent were.

When we look at what happened to youth once in the system, the disparities widen further. We looked at court dispositions for assault with a deadly weapon for the five years from fiscal year 1991-92 to 1995-96. During this period, minority youths were not only more likely than whites to enter the system at all, but considerably more likely to be made wards of the court (including at-home probation, detention in a local juvenile facility, and CYA commitment, among other possibilities)--and considerably less likely to have their cases dismissed. Thus, 45 per cent of Anglos who received a disposition for this offense were made wards of the court, versus 55 and 56 per cent for Hispanic and black youth respectively. On the other hand, 44 per cent of Anglos, but only 29 per cent of Hispanic and 22 per cent of black youths, had assault cases dismissed. Thus, for an Anglo youth the chances of wardship or dismissal were roughly equal; but for a Hispanic youth

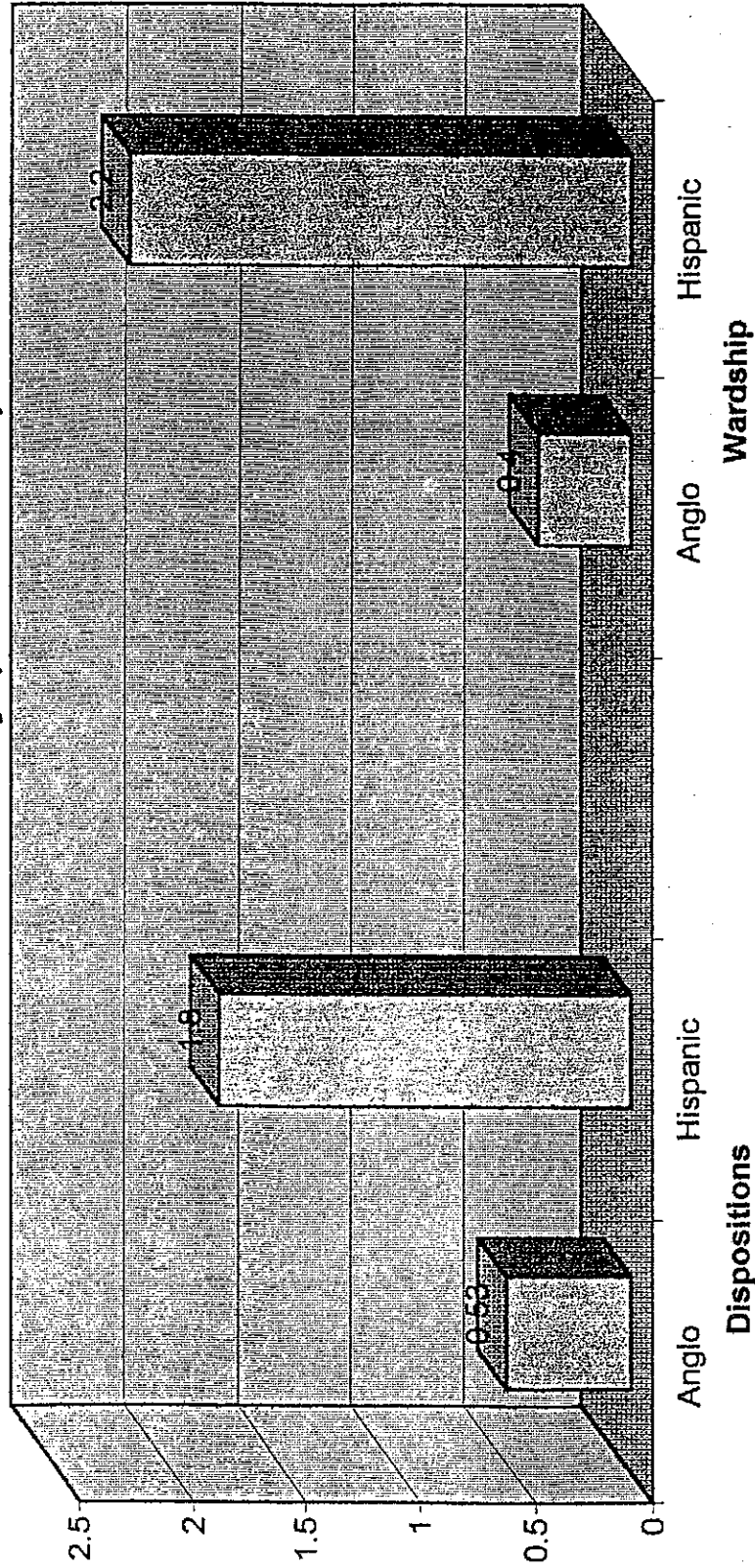


wardship was almost twice as likely as dismissal, and for a black youth 2.5 times as likely. The overall chance that a youth in this county will be made a ward of the juvenile court for assault with a deadly weapon is three and a half times higher for Hispanics, and six times higher for blacks, than for Anglos. Again, a good part of that difference results from the greater likelihood that minority youths will enter the system at all; but not all of it.

The disparities are still more significant for robbery (Chart XIII). Here the numbers for all groups except Hispanics and Anglos are too small to be reliably analyzed, but the contrast between these two groups is revealing. Anglo youth charged with robbery are almost as likely to be dismissed as made wards; the ratio is 1.3 wardships to every 1 dismissal. For Hispanics, the ratio is 4.7 wardships to every one dismissal; that is, a Hispanic youth is almost five times as likely to be made a ward as to be dismissed. Coupled with the increased chances that Hispanic youths will be brought into the juvenile justice system in the first place for robbery, this results in a far higher "risk" of wardship for Hispanic youths than for Anglos--a significant part of which is apparently generated within the juvenile system itself. Based on their share of the county's youth population, Hispanics are 3.4 times as likely to have any juvenile court disposition for robbery as Anglos--but 5.5 times as likely to be made wards.

Moreover, as we predicted, that gap is even wider for an offense that typically involves more system discretion--possession of narcotics or controlled substances. Though wardship is, unsurprisingly, less likely for drug possession than for robbery, there is still a sharp disparity in the likelihood of wardship between Anglos and Hispanics. Anglo juveniles charged with drug possession are significantly less likely to be made a ward of the court than to be dismissed (.7 to 1), while Hispanics are significantly more likely to be made wards than dismissed (1.8 to 1). Combined with the far higher tendency for Hispanics to enter the system to begin with, this creates a startlingly high relative risk of

**Chart XIII**  
**Relative Chances of Court Disposition and**  
**Wardship for Robbery, Anglos vs. Hispanics**  
**Santa Cruz County (1991-1996)**



Source: Calculated from data supplied by County Administrator's Office, Santa Cruz County.

juvenile court wardship for Hispanic youth for possessing drugs. Measured against their share of the county's youth population, the chance of a Hispanic youth having any juvenile court disposition for drug possession is 4.7 times that of an Anglo youth; the chance of being made a ward of the court for a drug possession offense is 7.4 to 1.

We should note that we also found a dramatic disparity between the treatment of Anglos and Hispanics for a related offense--possession of narcotics or controlled substances for sale. Here we did not find significant differences in rates of wardship or dismissal between Anglos and Hispanics--but that was mainly because so few Anglos ever enter the system in the first place for this offense. The glaring fact is that in Santa Cruz County, "possession of narcotics/controlled substances for sale" is an offense category almost entirely occupied by Hispanic youth. Of 68 total court dispositions on this charge in the last five years, 63 (93 per cent) were Hispanics, as were 32 of 36 wards. The relative risk of wardship for Hispanic youth is roughly seventeen times that of Anglo youth for this offense. /11

#### Part 4

#### Poverty, Violence, and Juvenile Justice

What accounts for the troubling rises in violence and in the growing concentration of minority youths in the juvenile justice system? By themselves, the data we've presented can't tell us. But we think it is important to note some striking parallels between these developments and broader socioeconomic realities that have simultaneously affected the lives of young people in this region. In this section, we focus on one of them: the high levels of poverty among some groups, and in some counties, which rose concurrently with the growth of youth violence in the 1990s--and which have persisted stubbornly in the face of the strong economic boom in the region in the last few years. For the data show a

striking congruence between the geographic and racial distribution of poverty and the patterns of victimization, arrests, and juvenile court disposition we've described.

At the start of the 1990s, 16 per cent of Monterey County's children aged 5 to 17 were living below the federal poverty line--double the proportion in San Mateo County and half again that in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties. The worst levels of poverty uncovered by the 1990 Census, however, were among Cambodian and Laotian youth in Santa Clara County. One-third of Laotian--and a stunning 46 per cent of Cambodian--children aged 5-17 were poor in that year. At the other extreme, youth poverty rates among non-Hispanic whites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties were 3.5 and 3.6 per cent respectively. In every County except San Mateo, the next worst rates of youth poverty were among Hispanics--fully a quarter of Hispanic children, for example, were poor in 1989 in Monterey County. In San Mateo County, black youth poverty--at 19 per cent--was the highest of any group, and the disparity between blacks' rate of youth poverty and that of nonHispanic whites (better than five to one) was the highest among major ethnic and racial groups across the four counties.

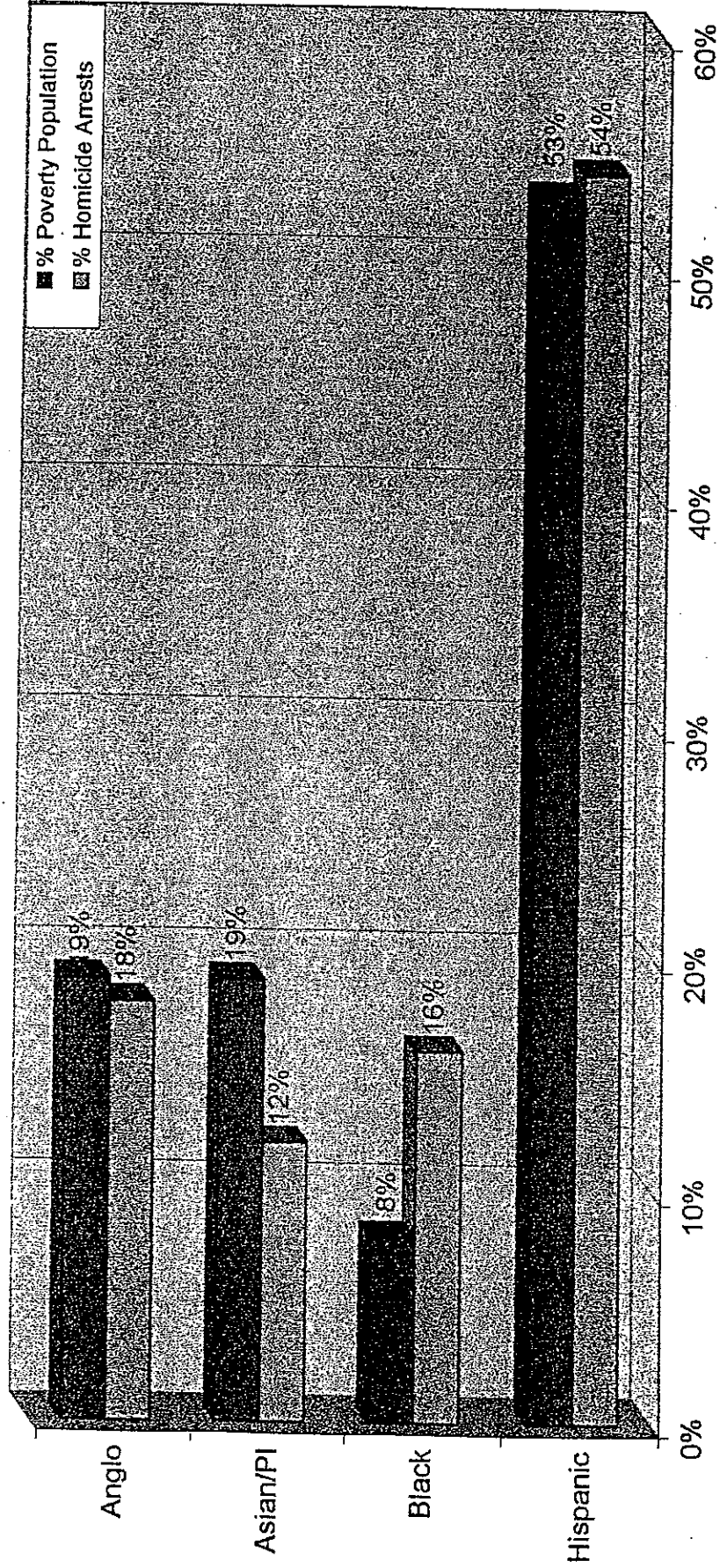
In the early 1990s, moreover, youth poverty rose in all four counties, and the disparities in poverty between the counties widened further--a trend that coincides with rising youth violence in the region as a whole, as well as its its growing overconcentration in Monterey County. By 1993 the poverty rate among 5-17 year olds in Monterey County was estimated at nearly 23 percent--an increase of more than 40 per cent over 1989. /12 Youth poverty shot upward even faster in Santa Cruz County; and it also rose, though at a slower pace, in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. In 1993, Monterey County's youth were nearly three times as likely to be poor as those in San Mateo County, and more than twice as likely as those in Santa Clara County. The rising economic hardship in the region can also be traced in the number of children receiving AFDC. Between 1986 and 1996, that number

increased regionwide by 37 percent--with the fastest increase, 53 per cent, in Monterey County. /13

The 1993 poverty figures--the most recent careful estimates we have--are not broken down by race and ethnicity, so we cannot get a precise estimate of how the rise in poverty in the early 1990s affected different racial and ethnic groups in the region. But once again, data on welfare trends suggests that the racial and ethnic disparities increased in the 1990s. In Santa Cruz County, for example, the number of Hispanic AFDC cases jumped by 56 per cent between 1992 and 1995; in Santa Clara County, there were especially sharp rises after the late 1980s in Hispanic and Vietnamese AFDC recipients. /14

We expected that the varying levels of youth poverty among different racial and ethnic groups in the four counties would resemble, to some extent, their different risks of violence and justice system involvement. That turned out to be even more true than we anticipated. In the region as whole, for example, Hispanics were 53 percent of poor 5-17 year olds in 1989, and 54 percent of juveniles arrested for homicide in the years from 1986 through 1996: NonHispanic whites were 19 per cent of poor youths and 18 per cent of juveniles arrested for homicide (Chart XIV). For black and Asian/Pacific Islander youth, the proportions are not as startlingly equal, but they are far closer than when homicide arrests are compared with their share of the youth population as a whole. Thus blacks were about 8 percent of the youth poverty population and 16 per cent of juvenile homicide arrests; Asian/Pacific Islanders were 19 per cent of the youth poverty population and 12 per cent of juvenile homicide arrests. Thus the black juvenile homicide rate remains higher than expected, but "controlling" in this rough way for poverty reduces the disparity considerably, from more than 3 to 1 to about 2 to 1.

**Chart XIV**  
**Youth Homicide Arrests (1986-1996) and Youth Poverty**  
**by Race and Ethnicity**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section and 1990 U.S. Census.

With some revealing variations, the same pattern appears when we look at individual counties. In Santa Clara, for example, Hispanics were 48 per cent of the youthful poor--and 47 per cent of juvenile homicide arrests. In Monterey County, Hispanics were a stunning 81 per cent of all juveniles arrested for homicide since 1986. But that figure takes on clearer perspective when we realize that Hispanics were fully 71 per cent of poor youths in the county.

San Mateo County presents a somewhat more complex picture. The underrepresentation of Anglo youth among homicide arrestees is matched precisely by their underrepresentation in the youth poverty population--both 21 per cent. The County's relatively high proportion of poor black juveniles helps put in context the sharp black overrepresentation among homicide arrestees; blacks account for 26 percent of homicide arrests and are 17 percent of poor juveniles--still a disparity, but a much reduced one.

Similar parallels appear if we isolate specific areas within these four counties that tend to contribute disproportionately to youth violence and to the population of the juvenile justice system. In Santa Cruz County, for example, a disproportionate amount of violent crime takes place in a few Census tracts--in Watsonville and parts of the city of Santa Cruz--with high levels of child poverty and welfare reciprocity. In Santa Clara County, the highest rate of juvenile justice referrals is in the two San Jose zip codes with the highest proportion of active AFDC cases. The city of East Palo Alto--where 87 per cent of children in the Ravenswood Elementary School District qualify for free or reduced price meals because of low income--has contributed disproportionately to San Mateo County's overall rate of juvenile violence. /15

A strikingly similar picture emerges if we juxtapose each racial/ethnic group's share of Youth Authority commitments with their share of the youth poverty population. As with

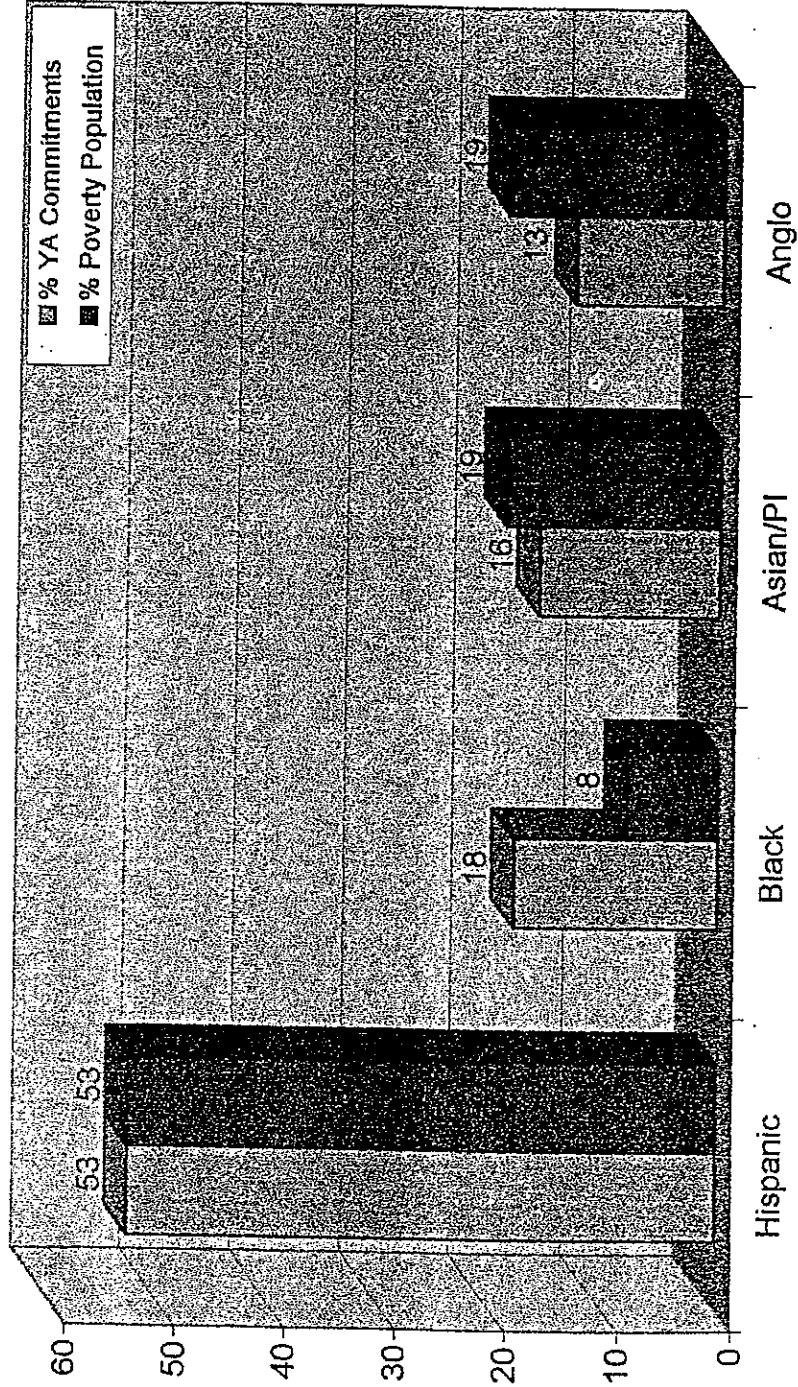
homicide arrests, the proportions are sometimes almost uncannily similar. In the region as a whole, for example, Hispanics were 53 per cent of the youth poverty population at the start of the 1990s—and 53 percent of all Youth Authority commitments from the four counties from 1992 through 1996. Asian/Pacific youth were 19 per cent of the poverty population and 16 per cent of CYA commitments (Chart XV).

The varying risks of poverty among youths are only one facet of a larger constellation of economic uncertainty and exclusion from legitimate opportunity that affects youth of different counties—and of different racial and ethnic groups—in very different degrees, and which we can only touch on here. Widely uneven levels of joblessness and under-employment, for example, are another piece of the picture. In 1990, for example, just as youth violence and arrests were poised to rise sharply in Santa Clara County, the County's official unemployment rate was below five per cent. But it was 19 per cent among Hispanic youth, and 20 per cent for black youth, aged 16-19—in the heart of Silicon Valley, one of the prime job-generating regions in the United States. Moreover, though Hispanic men were more likely than other groups to participate in the County's labor force, they were considerably less likely to work year-round when they did; the proportion of working Hispanic men at work for 50 weeks out of the year was only 58 per cent, versus 73 per cent for Anglo men.

In heavily agricultural Monterey County, these labor market disadvantages were even worse. Overall, the county averaged a high 8.4 percent unemployment rate in 1990. But among young black men the rate was 26 per cent, and among Hispanic men aged 16-19, almost 28 percent. Only 40 percent of Hispanic men, versus over 70 percent of Anglo men, worked year round, a reflection mainly of their concentration in heavily seasonal agricultural labor. At the same time, joblessness among the County's Hispanics showed a troubling tendency to persist even as they got older—in contrast to every other racial and



**Chart XV**  
**Youth Authority Commitments and Youth Poverty**  
**Population, by Race and Ethnicity (1992-1996)**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of the Youth Authority and 1990 U.S. Census.

ethnic group. Among "prime aged" men--those aged 25-64--in 1990, the Hispanic jobless rate remained a very high 13 per cent. Among white-Anglos, it was just 3.4 per cent. /16

That harsh reality is underscored when we look closely at the occupational distribution of Hispanic workers in these four counties. For Hispanics are not only distinctly vulnerable to unemployment and job instability, but also overrepresented in low-wage jobs--and correspondingly underrepresented in better-paying ones. In 1990, Hispanics were about 18 per cent of Santa Clara County's labor force. But they were just 4 per cent of computer scientists, less than five per cent of engineers, and, in a County whose children were increasingly likely to be Hispanic, only 9 percent of teachers. On the other hand, they were 33 percent of private household workers, 54 per cent of building and cleaning workers, and fully 82 per cent of farm workers. /17 The concentration of Hispanic workers in these jobs, along with high unemployment rates and the relative absence of year-round employment, explain the extremely high levels of youth poverty among Hispanics in this county which, as we've seen, show striking parallels with the distribution of youth violence and incarceration.

## Part 5

### Some Implications for Research and Action

In summary, the preliminary evidence we've gathered reveals a troubling portrait of youth, race, violence and justice in this region:

- The risks of death by violence have increased sharply since the mid-1980s, partly offsetting more positive declines in adolescent death rates;

- Arrest rates for serious violent crimes have increased even faster, with especially sharp rises in Monterey and Santa Clara Counties;
- Rising arrests for homicide include a growing number of arrests of children aged 14 and under;
- There has been a dramatic racial and ethnic shift in both arrests and victimization, with sharp increases among Hispanic and some Asian youths matched by declines among Anglos;
- Though the trends for black youth have been uneven, their risks of both arrests for violent crimes and victimization by violence remain disturbingly high;
- Those risks are also unusually high among some Asian youth, especially Southeast Asian and Pacific Islanders in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties;
- Arrests for violent offenses have increased even more rapidly for young women than for young men;
- A fall-off in juvenile arrests for violent offenses since the mid-1990s still leaves them at levels far higher than a decade ago;
- There has been a similar shift in the racial and ethnic mix in local juvenile justice systems and the California Youth Authority;
- Hispanic youths are now a far larger proportion, and Anglo youths a far smaller proportion, of juvenile justice populations than they were just a few years ago;

- Black youths remain even more severely overrepresented than Hispanics, though the Hispanic proportion is increasing faster;
- The rising trend is even sharper for young minority women, for whom the risks of juvenile justice involvement have grown radically in recent years;
- The proportion of black and Hispanic youths in the juvenile justice system generally increases as the disposition becomes more severe;
- In at least one county, the imbalance between Anglo and Hispanic youths shows up even within specific offenses;
- These patterns closely parallel the distribution of youth poverty between counties and among ethnic and racial groups.

Clearly, these broad findings have many implications, both for further research and for social policy and social action.

Though the basic data we've presented give us a general picture of a number of disturbing trends at work among youth in this region, they leave many of the most important questions unanswered. Indeed, given how stark some of these findings are, it is surprising how little we know about what lies behind them. As a result, we can have no more than educated guesses about the most crucial questions they raise for social policy:

- Why did rates of violence rise so much, and so quickly, among Hispanic youth in the region? How much of that rise is gang-related, and what is the structure and evolution of gangs in these four counties? More generally, who, exactly, are the young people these numbers abstractly represent? How much of this growing problem reflects stresses among recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America, and/or tensions between them and groups who have lived in the region longer? What conditions in their families and communities help to explain the rising levels of violence? Are those rises related to policies in the region's schools that affect Hispanic children and adolescents?
- What accounts for the especially high concentration of homicide (and other) deaths among some groups of Asian youth? What are the special difficulties of Southeast Asian families in particular that may contribute? How has the situation of Southeast Asian immigrant families developed over the time they have been in this region? Are there specific issues involving schools and other local institutions that help explain what appears to be a perilous situation for many Southeast Asian children and youths?
- How much of the startling rise in arrests for violent offenses represents actual changes in the level of violent crime among some young people, and how much is attributable to changing police strategies—and perhaps those of public school authorities? We know that in many cities in California (and the nation), police departments have adopted aggressive "anti-gang" initiatives, sometimes backed by local injunctions that forbid youths said to be gang members from associating with each other. How much does that kind of increased surveillance and control affect the level of arrests in this area? And if the effects are significant, what is the impact of those strategies on the juvenile justice system and on the later lives of these young people?

- What are the forces underlying the especially rapid rise in arrests of young women and their increasing representation among juveniles in custody? Does this, too, partly reflect more intensive surveillance and scrutiny of the behavior of young women--especially young minority women--by police and school authorities? Or does it mainly reflect changing attitudes toward violence among young women that result in a real increase in their level of offending? If so, what conditions--in the family, the neighborhood, the schools--help account for these changes?
- Our data also point to some positive developments on the violence front in recent years which we need to explore and, if possible, to learn from. What, for example, accounts for the drop in homicide deaths among African-American youths in the region? More generally, why have arrests of black youths for violent offenses risen more slowly than those for some other groups, so that their share of the total has fallen? Relatedly, why have arrests for violent offenses generally fallen somewhat in the region--following the national pattern--since the mid-1990s? Several potential explanations have been suggested on the national level, including the effects of a booming economy with rising job opportunities for youth, more effective intervention programs or police strategies, and changing attitudes toward violence among youths themselves. But we know little for certain about the real reasons, either for the country as a whole or for this region specifically.
- We need also to learn much more about how, if at all, young people and their families relate to local agencies of social support and intervention. This region, on the whole, is relatively rich in the sheer quantity of services for "at risk" young people. Clearly, however, either those services have not been reaching enough of the young, or were relatively ineffective if they did. Why? /18

- How do we explain the progressive overrepresentation of some minority groups at different stages of the justice process? It seems clear that to some extent, as is true across the country, the racial and ethnic disproportions reflect real-world differences in offending. But that is not the whole story. The growing disproportion between Anglo and Hispanic youths; the evidence of differential dispositions for Hispanics even within specific offense categories; and the continuing overrepresentation of black youths, especially at the more severe levels of disposition; all raise the possibility of systematic discrimination. But though the data suggest that minority youths are in some way systematically disadvantaged in the system, they cannot tell us how this happens, or, accordingly, how to combat it. There are a variety of possible explanations, all leading to different strategies of intervention. Minority youths could, for example, simply have more serious prior records. They could be more often detained or sent to long-term confinement because they are perceived to have weaker family support systems or poorer access to needed services (a growing body of research suggests that all of these can be important in explaining similar disparities in other jurisdictions). / 19
- Relatedly, to what extent are these counties making use of the kinds of programs that have proven to be effective in keeping many young people out of formal custody and reducing racial disparities? We know that diversion to intensive "multisystemic" counseling, for example--working with youth in the context of their families, schools, and neighborhoods to resolve the problems that got them into trouble in the first place--can substantially reduce rates of incarceration and recidivism, even for very serious young offenders. /20 Are county authorities here taking advantage of that success? If not, why not? We know that juvenile probation departments in this region have often had to scrap, or defer, more preventive interventions because of heavy budget constraints. Is money the problem? And if it is, where could strategic infusions of private or public funds do the most good?

To answer these and other questions, what we most need are field studies that take us into the lives of young people themselves and into the operation of the institutions that serve, or fail to serve, them. We need to study the day-to-day workings of the local juvenile justice agencies, for example, which could shed light on why minority youths so often come out with more severe dispositions. We need to study what happens to young people both within the system—including the California Youth Authority—and after they leave it; how they experience whatever programs the system offers, what level of aftercare, if any, they receive, and how they connect, or fail to connect, with families, schools, and job markets when they return to the community. We need careful ethnographic studies of youth themselves, of various racial and ethnic groups, in their natural settings—their values, motivations, and relationships with families, peers, schools, and various official and community-based agencies. As it stands, we hear little of the thoughts and words of young people themselves; but without them, we won't understand the meaning of violence for youth in this region today, or how to develop more effective strategies against it over the long term.

The evidence we've gathered points to a set of youth problems that need urgent attention—from elected officials, practitioners, foundations, and the public. But we don't regard our message as wholly negative. On the contrary, we think the evidence points to profound opportunities for constructive social change. That so many young people, especially minority young people, are in crisis in this area is, on one level, a telling commentary on the limits of the kind of social and economic development that has characterized this region in recent years—its inability to provide full inclusion in the benefits of growth and productivity for everyone. But it is also a sign of opportunities that have yet to be fully seized. It seems clear that a region so rich in economic resources and talent could, if it so chose, create a much better "deal" for its youth than it has done so far. That is especially



true because the most serious problems are so strikingly concentrated—both in specific areas and among specific groups of young people. The opportunity is there; the real question is whether a stronger and better targeted strategy to include all youth more fully in the life of this region can be launched, and who will launch it.

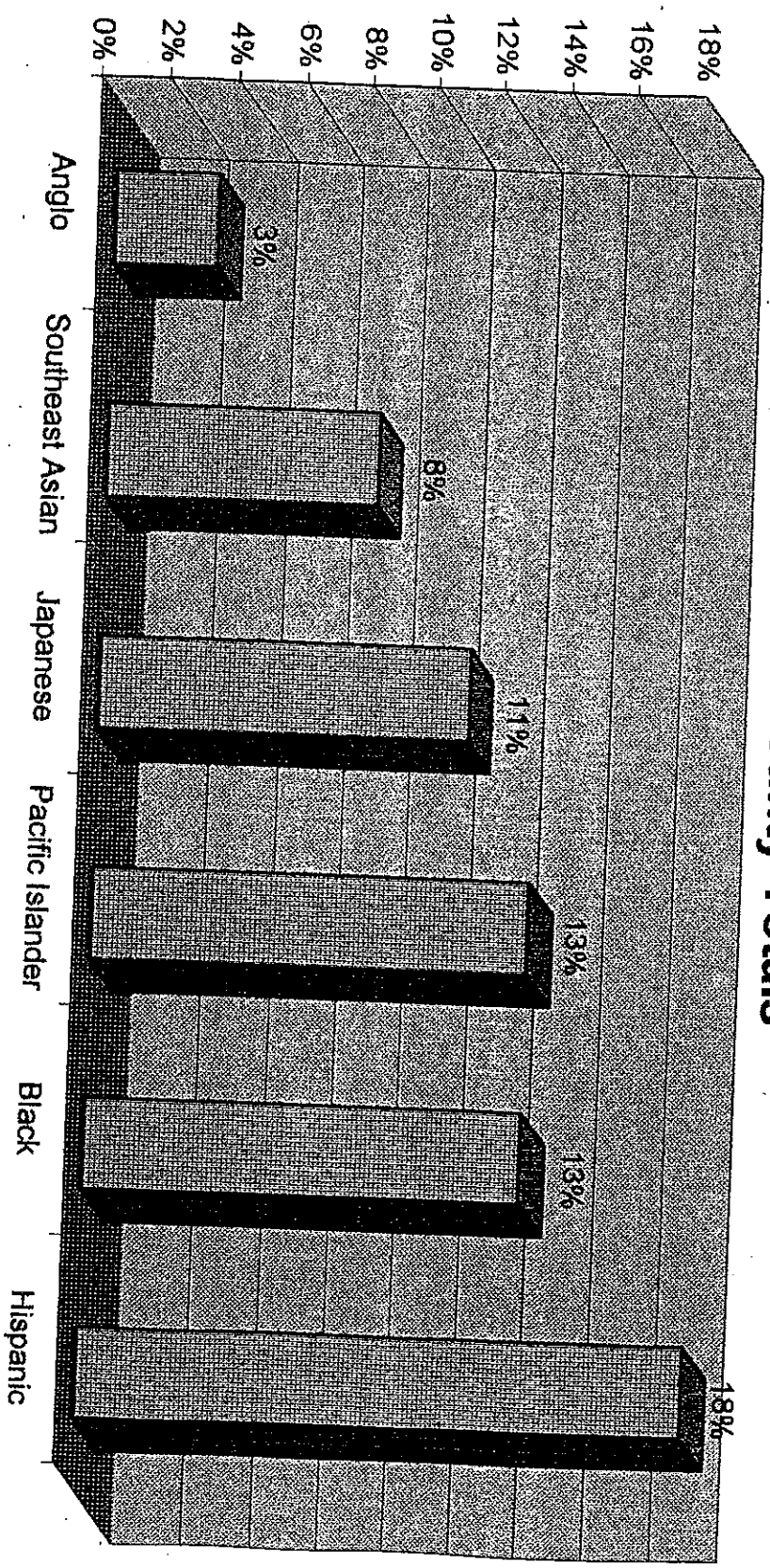
#### Notes

\* In this report, we will use the terms "Anglo" or the more formal "Non-Hispanic white" interchangeably. We should note that Census and other figures on the "Hispanic" population are generally believed to understate its size, partly because of significant undercounting of undocumented immigrants and partly because many people who fit the Census definition of "Hispanic origin" may not define themselves as such.

1. State of California, Department of Health Services, County Health Status Profiles, 1997, Sacramento, 1997, p. 12, and unpublished data from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 1999.
2. Youth population figures are calculated from the 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics: California, various pages.
3. Homicide and other causes of death figures are from special data runs provided to us by the California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section, 1997 and 1999.
4. Based on county population estimates for July 1, 1997, provided to us by the California Department of Finance.
5. This general pattern is similar nationally. In 1995, among young people aged 15-24, homicide accounted for 1 in 14 deaths among nonHispanic whites, 1 in three among Hispanics, and 1 in 2.2 for blacks. U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1995, Hyattsville, MD, 1997, pp. 53-55.
6. These calculations are based on data provided to us by the California Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Information Center, 1997 and 1999.
7. Youth homicide arrest figures from California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 1997 and 1999.
8. The following calculations are based on data provided by the California Department of the Youth Authority, 1997.
9. Figures calculated from special data runs provided to us by the San Mateo County Probation Department, 1997.
10. Indeed, the rapid rise in the number of black women is all that has kept the black proportion of the juvenile system population from declining significantly. Black men as a

- proportion of all male wards have fallen from 24 to 18 per cent in this period, while black women have risen from 15 to 26 per cent of all female wards.
11. Figures calculated from raw data provided by the Santa Cruz County Probation Department. We note that the issue of racial and ethnic imbalance is discussed, though without these specific figures, in Santa Cruz County's Juvenile Hall Needs Assessment Task Force, Action Plan Final Report, June 20, 1996, esp. pp. 28-31, 78.
  12. 1989 figures from the 1990 Census, Social and Economic Characteristics: California. 1993 figures from U.S. Census Bureau, County Income and Poverty Estimates for California: 1993, Washington, DC, March 1997. The 1993 estimates are not precisely comparable to the 1990 Census, because they are derived differently; but they are considered to be quite close.
  13. Figures calculated from California Department of Social Services, Information Services Bureau, Public Welfare in California, June 1986 and November 1996.
  14. United Way of Santa Clara County, Human Service Needs in Santa Clara County, 1993-1994, San Jose, 1994, p. 167; United Way of Santa Cruz County, Community Assessment Project Report, Year Two 1996, LaSelva Beach, Applied Survey Research, 1996, p. 23.
  15. Santa Cruz County Probation Department, SB 1760 Local Action Plan, Appendix B; United Way of Santa Cruz County, Community Assessment Project Report, Year Two 1996, LaSelva Beach, CA., Applied Survey Research, 1996, p. 23.
  16. Data from State of California, Employment Development Department, Civilian Labor Force, Employment, and Unemployment, Monterey County, Santa Cruz County, and San Jose MSA (Santa Clara County), updated October 17, 1997.
  17. Occupational distribution figures from 1990 Census data, as presented in current county reports from State of California, Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division. Other sources confirm the continuing importance of employment issues. See for example, Latino Issues Forum, Latinos and a Sustainable California, San Francisco, 1997, pp. B-3--B-9, for a statewide analysis of Latino employment problems; and the reports from Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County United Ways, op. cit., as well as United Way of San Mateo County, 1993 Needs Assessment Update and Fiscal Year 1994-95 Interim Priorities, San Mateo, 1994, p. 44.
  18. Local observers have often pointed to cultural barriers, as well as a lack of sufficiently assertive outreach efforts, as likely reasons for the lack of utilization of existing services, especially for Hispanic and Southeast Asian residents. See, for example, Santa Clara County United Way, Human Service Needs, op. cit., p. 160
  19. See, for example, Donna M. Bishop and Charles E. Frazier, "Race Effects in Juvenile Justice Decision-Making: Findings of a Statewide Analysis," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. 86, No. 2, 1996; Madeline Wordes, Timothy Bynum, and Charles J. Corley, "Locking Up Youth: the Impact of Race on Detention Decisions," Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, Vol. 31, No. 2, May 1994, pp. 149-165.
  20. For a recent review of the evidence on these programs, see Elliott Currie, Crime and Punishment in America, New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998, Chapter 3; also Scott W. Henggeler, et al, "Multisystemic Therapy: An Effective Violence Prevention Approach for Serious Juvenile Offenders," Journal of Adolescence, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1996, pp. 47-61.

**Chart III**  
**Homicide as a Proportion of Total Youth Deaths**  
**(ages 10-17), by Race and Ethnicity (1986-1995)**  
**Four County Totals**



Source: Data from California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Section