

CALIFORNIA YOUTH CONTINUE STEEP DECLINES IN ARRESTS



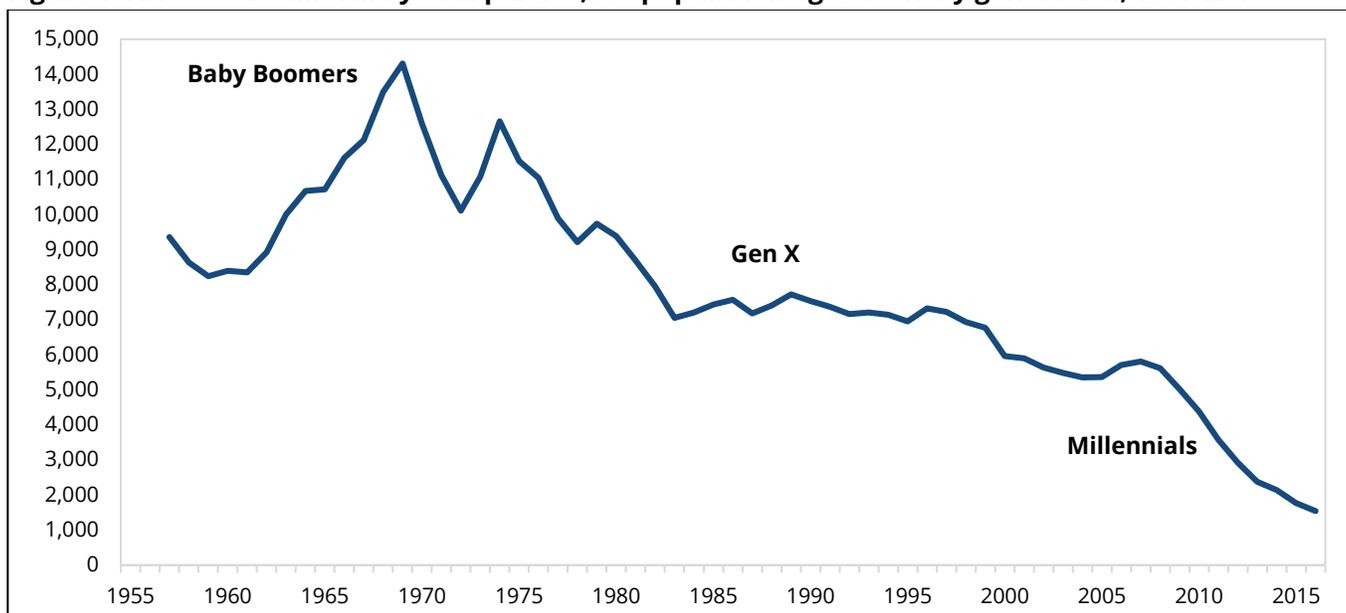
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Fact Sheet

Recently released statistics from the California Department of Justice (DOJ, 2017) show that arrests of youth ages 10-17 declined in 2016, reaching historically low levels. Arrest rates, which are reported to the state by local law enforcement agencies, fell for the ninth straight year in 2016, continuing a decades-long pattern of decline.

Figure 1. Arrests of California youth per 100,000 population ages 10-17 by generation, 1957-2016



Sources: DOF (2017); DOJ (1957-2017).

- **Total arrests of California youth ages 10-17 declined sharply in 2016.**

In 2016, California jurisdictions reported 9,180 fewer arrests of youth ages 10-17 than in 2015, producing a 13 percent decline in the rate of juvenile arrest (DOJ, 2017). These figures continue a general pattern of decline that has persisted for more than four decades (Figure 1). Since 2007, California's youth arrest rate has experienced uninterrupted decreases, falling to record-setting lows year after year.

- **Youth arrests for violent crimes have fallen to less than half the rate reported in 1990.**

In 2016, the arrest rate of California youth for violent crimes, which includes murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and kidnapping, fell to 73 percent below the 1990 rate, 68 percent below 1975's rate, and 8 percent below the 1957 level (the first year statewide juvenile arrest statistics were published). Homicide arrests have also trended sharply downward, falling from a high of 696 in 1991 to just 91 in 2016. Previous research suggests that violent arrests among youth will continue to decline through at least 2020 (CJCJ, 2016a).

- **Millennial youth have the lowest rates of juvenile arrest on record.**

Compared to previous generations, Millennials (born 1982-2004) have dramatically reduced California's rate of juvenile arrest. A number equivalent to 5 percent of Millennials (born 1982-2004) were arrested under age 18 annually. In contrast, 11 percent of Baby Boomers (born 1943-1960), and 8 percent of members of Generation

X (born 1961-1981) were arrested as juveniles. California's enormous, historic plunge in youth crime is also occurring nationally (Males, 2017), and among young adults, but not older adults (CJCJ, 2016; FBI, 2017; Strauss-Howe, 2017).

- **Dramatic improvements in youth safety have coincided with California's justice reform era.**

California's youth crime decline began in the mid-1990s and intensified after 2008. Since 2007, a series of state and local policies have shifted emphasis away from punishment and incarceration and toward rehabilitation and treatment, with direct impacts on the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Through Senate Bill 81 (2007), Assembly Bill 109 (2011), and Senate Bill 1449 (2011), Proposition 47 (2014), Proposition 64 (2016), and Proposition 57 (2016), California has made strides to lessen the punitive impact of its justice system. In the midst of these reforms, youth arrests have fallen sharply, including a 71 percent decline in total juvenile arrests, a 57 percent decline in arrests for violent offenses, and a 58 percent decline in the homicide arrest rate during the nine-year period from 2007 through 2016.

Generation Z (born 2005 or later), which is now joining Millennials in adolescence, so far shows much lower arrest rates for ages under 12 compared to Millennials and previous generations at the same age (see CJCJ, 2016). Each generation of California youth, from Generation X onward, has lowered the state's rate of youth arrest and contributed to increased public safety. Yet the state of California has budgeted for an increased population at its Division of Juvenile Justice and has sponsored a study proposing the construction of new prison facilities for young adult men (DOF, 2017a; Davis, 2017). The state is proceeding as if younger-age crime levels remain high.

Though the specific causes remain unknown, the massive decline in youth and young-adult crime is associated with increased educational attainment among younger Californians (Males, 2015). This indicates investment in education, rather than increased detention, is a more promising approach.

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