

A DECADE OF DECLINES IN VIOLENCE AMONG SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH



Mike Males, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

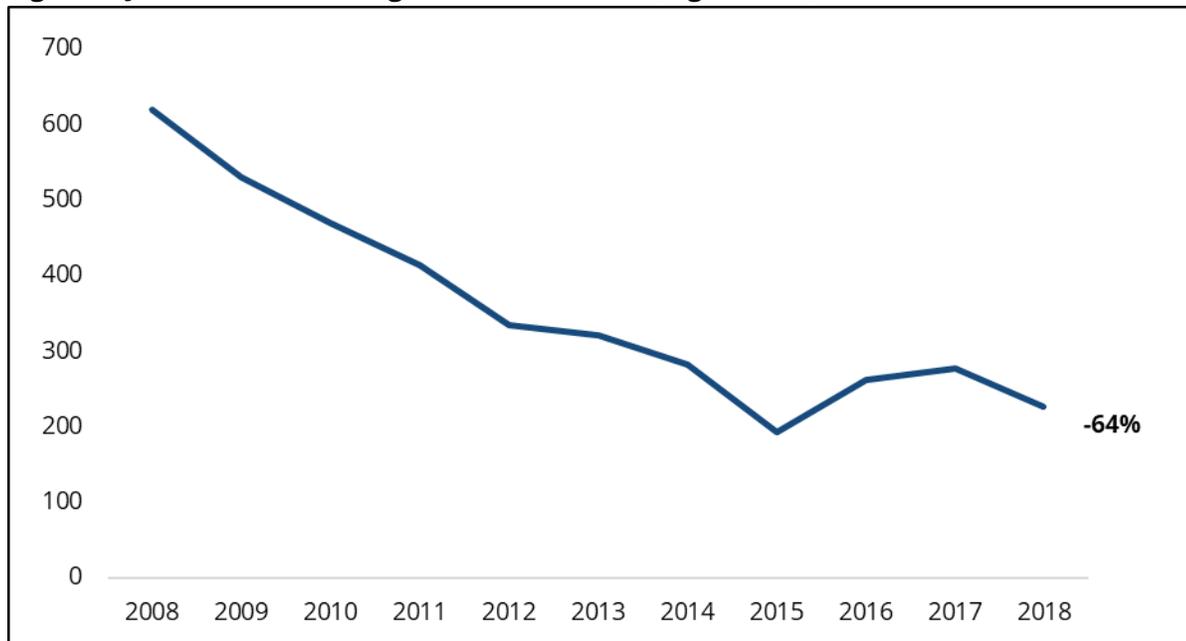
July 2019

Fact Sheet

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance in June, which outlines a plan to close the county’s juvenile hall by the end of 2021 (BOS, 2019). The decision is based on the unprecedented decline in San Francisco youth crime over the past decade which has resulted in a concurrent decline in the juvenile hall population (Tucker, 2019). While crime rates have declined in every category, violent youth crime in San Francisco is now the lowest ever recorded. Today, with a design capacity of 150, San Francisco’s juvenile hall houses less than 30 youth (SFJPD, 2019).

According to tabulations of juvenile hall bookings for violent crimes by the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department (SFJPD), violent youth crimes fell by 64 percent between 2008 and 2018 (Figure 1). For the last three years, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) has failed to specify the offense type for nearly 90 percent of youth arrests in San Francisco (CJCJ, 2018). However, arrest data over the last ten years show declines in violent arrests across all age groups, with youth accounting for the largest drop (SFPD, 2019).

Figure 1. Juvenile hall bookings for violent crimes, ages 11-18, 2008-2018



Sources: SFJPD, 2019. Figure reflects duplicated counts of juvenile hall bookings for person crimes.

This year, 23 homicides were reported in San Francisco through July 18th (Barba, 2019). Of these incidents, one victim was under age 18, seven were ages 18-39, nine were ages 40 and older, and one was not specified (BANG, 2019). The occasional involvement of youths in violent crimes, as with the involvement of older ages, does not constitute a spike nor does it justify regressive policy decisions. In any large city, violent incidents involving all ages occur and must be addressed in ways that promote community wellbeing.

References

- Barba, M. (2019). Chief details 'bad week' as SFPD investigates series of killings. *San Francisco Examiner*. At: <https://www.sfexaminer.com/the-city/bayview-shooting-marks-sfs-third-homicide-in-as-many-days/>.
- Bay Area News Group (BANG). (2019). Bay Area homicides 2019: Map and details including San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco. *The Mercury News*. At: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/01/04/bay-area-homicides-2019-map-and-details/>.
- Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ). (2018). San Francisco police fail to specify charges in nearly 90 percent of youth arrests in 2017. At: <http://www.cjcj.org/news/12363>.
- San Francisco Board of Supervisors (BOS) (2019). Ordinance No. 190392 – Juvenile Hall Closure. At: <https://sfgov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3917990&GUID=3EDAB515-DF4A-44E4-9F22-ADE1BC86C0E4&Options=ID%7cText%7c&Search=117-19>.
- San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department (SFJPD). (2019). Publications. At: <https://sfgov.org/juvprobation/publications-documents>.
- San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). (2019). California Department of Justice. Open Justice. Arrests. At: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/arrests>.
- Tucker, J. & Palomino, J. (2019). Vanishing Violence. *San Francisco Chronicle*. At: <https://projects.sfchronicle.com/2019/vanishing-violence/>.

Please note: Each year, every jurisdiction submits their data to the official databases maintained by appointed governmental bodies. While every effort is made to review data for accuracy and to correct information upon revision, CJCJ cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county, state, or national level.

Contact: For more information about this topic or to schedule an interview, please contact CJCJ Communications at (415) 621-5661 x. 103 or cjcjmedia@cjcj.org.