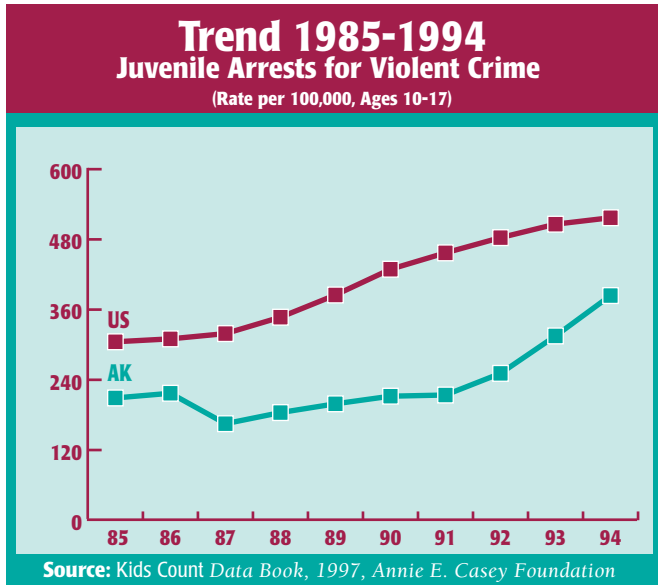




Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Violent Crime



arrested for violent crimes that year—up nearly 4 percent from the previous year.¹ During the late 1980s and early 1990s juvenile arrests for violent crimes increased more than twice as fast as adult arrests for such crimes.²

Impact

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has reported sobering findings of 1990s surveys of teenagers:

- One in seven male students in grades 9 through 12 reported carrying guns within the previous 30 days.³

- Close to 40 percent of students in grades 6 through 12 do not feel safe in school.⁴
- Almost half of 2,000 high school students surveyed in 1993 reported changing their behavior as the result of a crime or the threat of a crime.⁵

What About Alaska?

Since 1994, juveniles ages 16 or older who commit specific violent crimes can be tried as adults in Alaska.⁶ Alaska's 1994 arrest rate for violent crimes was 384 per 100,000 youths (10 to 17)—below the national average of 517. But the Alaska rate grew faster

than the national average between 1985 and 1994—84 percent as compared with 70 percent.

- Alaska's teenagers are imprisoned in long-term secure facilities at a rate of 277 per 100,000.⁷
- The average length of stay for juveniles in secure custody in Alaska is 445 days.⁸
- Estimates of the cost of incarcerating a juvenile for one year in Alaska range from \$50,000 to \$100,000—compared with an average of \$35,000 to \$64,000 in other states.⁹

In late 1995 Governor Tony Knowles convened a Youth and Justice conference; that conference appointed work groups to make recommendations to the governor about ways to reduce juvenile crime.

Spotlight on Prevention: Chronic Offenders

Most teenagers who commit crimes do so only once, according to a 1994 study of juvenile offenders in Orange County, California.¹⁰ But some commit many crimes: just 8 percent of offenders committed 50 percent of juvenile crimes in that county. That study emphasized that early identification and intervention can prevent one-time offenders from becoming chronic offenders.

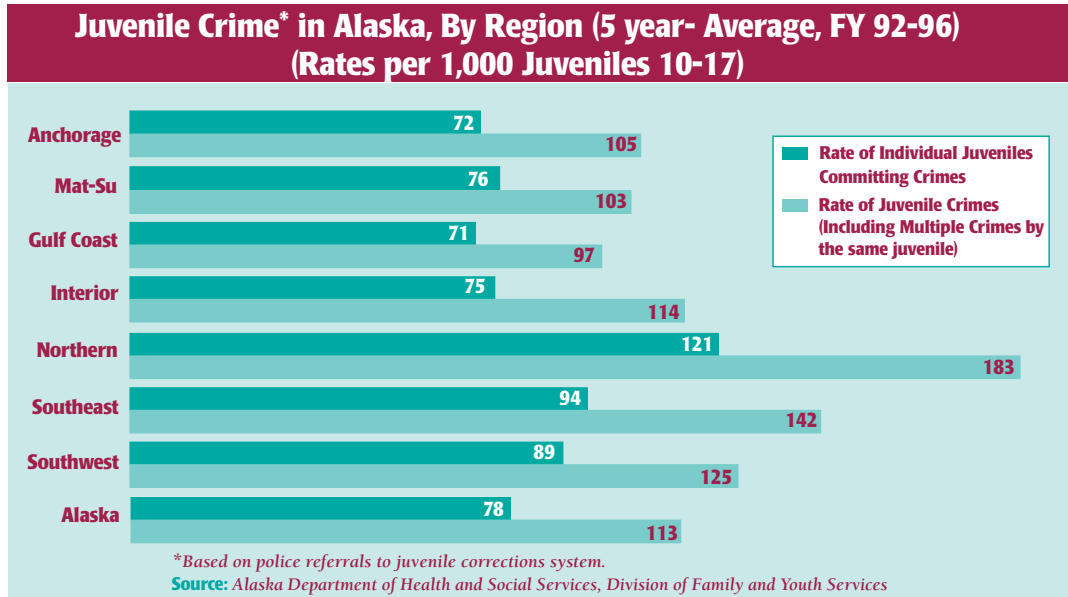
Definition

The arrest rate for juvenile violent crime is the number of arrests per 100,000 juveniles (ages 10-17) for homicide, manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The figures include all arrests of juveniles for violent crimes, including repeated arrests of the same juvenile for different offenses.

Significance

An increase in the number of young people committing violent crimes is a major worry in the U.S. In 1993 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimated that more than 2 million juveniles had been

Juvenile Crime in Alaska



Roger Withington of the Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services provided data for this section.

Definition

A juvenile offender is a person under 18 who has committed a crime and has not been waived to adult court. (For certain violent crimes, juveniles 16 and older are tried as adults in Alaska.) The vast majority are between ages 10 and 17. Crimes range from shoplifting to vandalism to murder.

This indicator shows levels of juvenile crime in Alaska as reflected in police referrals to the juvenile corrections system.

Referrals are a reasonable measure of overall juvenile crime—but it's important to keep in mind that some referrals are dismissed.

Juvenile Corrections System

A number of state and local government agencies have some responsibility for dealing with juvenile crime in Alaska. But it is the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services that is chiefly responsible for working with juveniles charged with crimes.

DFYS juvenile probation officers receive reports of juvenile delinquency from law

enforcement agencies around the state. The probation officers then investigate. Depending on the amount of evidence, the severity of the crime, and other factors, the probation officers may dismiss cases, handle them informally, or send them to juvenile court. Most referrals are handled informally; only about 30 percent go to juvenile court.

When probation officers handle a case informally, they may place juveniles on informal probation and require them to pay restitution to victims, do community service, or take part in other programs. Those who go to juvenile court may be placed on formal probation; may be required to pay restitution to their victims; may be taken out of their own homes and placed in other homes; or may be confined in a juvenile corrections facility.

Juvenile Crime Rates

The figure to the left shows two rates of juvenile crime in Alaska over the 5-year period 1992-1996, based on police referrals to the Division of Family and Youth Services: (1) the rate based on the number of *individual* juvenile offenders per 1,000 juveniles; and (2) the rate based on the number of *crimes* per 1,000 juveniles, including multiple crimes by the same juvenile.

Juvenile Crime in Alaska

The figures show that, on average during the period 1992-1996, about 78 per 1,000 Alaska juveniles broke some kind of law and that there were 113 crimes per 1,000 juveniles. The lowest rates were in the Gulf Coast region and Anchorage, while the highest were in the Northern and Southeast regions.

Crimes By Type and Region

In every region, crimes against property are the most common juvenile

offense, making up half or more of juvenile crime. Crimes against persons make up anywhere from 14 percent of juvenile crime in Anchorage to 21 percent in the Southwest region. Violations of drug and alcohol laws are most common in Southeast and Southwest Alaska, where they make up nearly one-quarter of juvenile offenses, and less in Anchorage, where they make up only 8 percent. Other offenses together account for anywhere from 10 to 20 percent of juvenile crime in regions around the state.

Crime by Sex

Statewide, boys committed 76 percent of juvenile crimes and girls 24 percent over the period FY 1992 - 1996. Those percentages varied little among regions.

Crime By Race

Since at least the 1980s, the federal government has been worried about what analysts call “over-representation” of some minorities in the juvenile corrections system.

Nationwide, the percentages of Black and Hispanic juveniles referred to juvenile corrections systems are higher than their percentages in the total juvenile population. Why juvenile referrals among some minorities are disproportionately high—and how to reduce the high minority rates—are important public policy questions.

Juvenile referrals in Alaska show a similar pattern as in the U.S. as a whole: the percentage of juvenile referrals among some minority groups is much higher than their percentages in the general population. The percentages of Alaska Native and Black juveniles who are referred to the juvenile corrections system are significantly higher than their shares of the juvenile population. (Remember, however, that some referrals are dismissed, so referrals are not an exact measure of juvenile crime.)

Police Reports^a of Juvenile (10-17) Crime, By Region and Type of Crime
(5 year Average, FY 1993-1997)

Region	Type of Crime				Total
	Crimes Against Persons	Crimes Against Property	Violation of Drug and Alcohol Laws	Others ^b	
	Number / Percent	Number / Percent	Number / Percent	Number / Percent	Number / Percent
Anchorage	443 / 14%	1,813 / 59%	230 / 8%	582 / 19%	3,068 / 100%
Mat-Su	114 / 15%	438 / 58%	93 / 13%	107 / 14%	752 / 100%
Gulf Coast	156 / 17%	479 / 54%	167 / 19%	93 / 10%	895 / 100%
Interior	205 / 16%	724 / 57%	169 / 13%	183 / 14%	1,281 / 100%
Northern	105 / 16%	328 / 51%	139 / 21%	78 / 12%	649 / 100%
Southeast	211 / 16%	633 / 50%	302 / 24%	129 / 10%	1,275 / 100%
Southwest	125 / 21%	258 / 44%	136 / 23%	66 / 11%	586 / 100%
Alaska	1,359 / 16%	4,673 / 55%	1,236 / 15%	1,238 / 15%	8,506 / 100%

^a Reports police send to probation officers, who then investigate. These are duplicate counts—meaning they include more than one crime by the same juvenile; duplicated counts show the overall level of juvenile crime.

^b Includes violations of public order laws, weapons laws, and miscellaneous other offenses.

Note: Percentages may add to slightly more or less than 100 because of rounding.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, DFYS

Juvenile Crime in Alaska (continued)

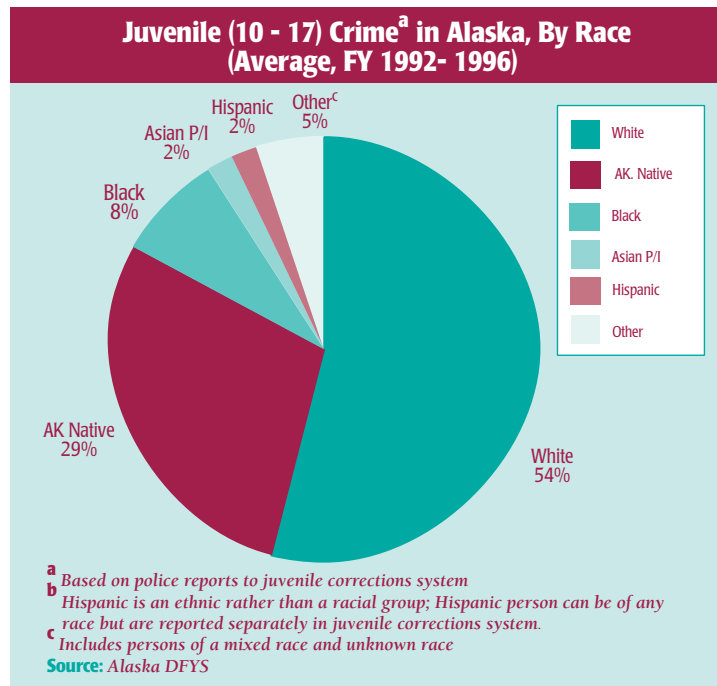
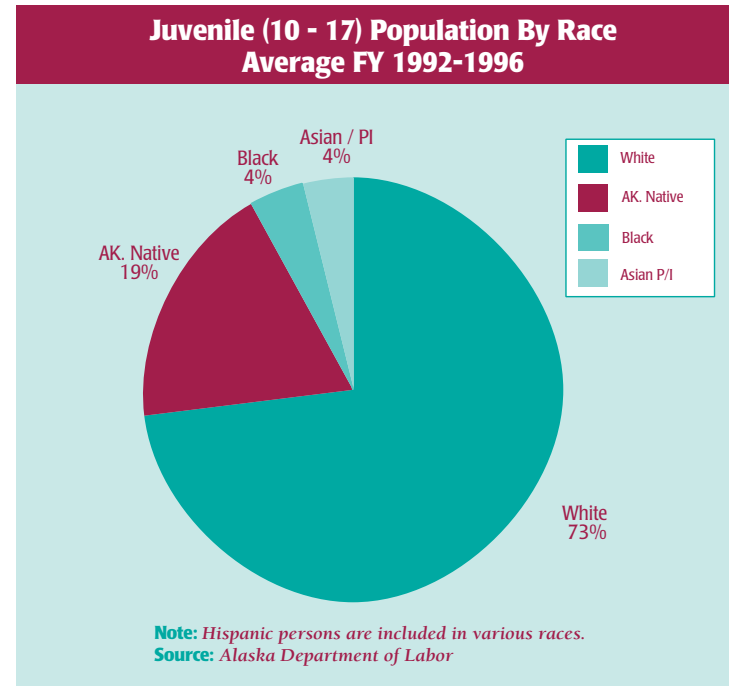


Alaska Natives made up an estimated 19 percent of the juvenile population during the period 1992-1996 but represented 29 percent of the police referrals to the juvenile corrections system. Black juveniles made up about 4 percent of the juvenile population and about 8 percent of juvenile referrals.

But referrals among Native and Black juveniles are not disproportionately high in all regions. In Anchorage and the Interior region, referrals among Native juveniles are about twice as high as their share of the general population. But in the Mat-Su and Gulf Coast

regions, the shares of Native referrals are about the same as the Native share of population. Similarly, Black juveniles are referred at about twice their share of the population in Anchorage and the Interior. But in other regions, where the Black population is small, juvenile referrals among Black youths are low.

White and Asian juveniles statewide are referred for crimes less often than their shares of the population, but there are regional differences. In the Mat-Su region, White juveniles are referred at just about the same rate as their share of the population. Referrals among Asian juveniles in the Gulf Coast region are about double their share of the population.



Police Reports of Juvenile (10-17) Crime By Race and Region (5 - Year Average, FY 1992 - 1996)

Region	White		Ak. Native		Black		Asian / PI	
	% of Pop. ^a	% of Crimes	% of Pop. ^a	% of Crimes	% of Pop. ^a	% of Crimes	% of Pop. ^a	% of Crimes
Anchorage	78	59	8	14	8	17	6	2
Mat-Su	93	90	5	6	1	-	1	-
Gulf Coast	85	78	11	12	0.5	-	3	7
Interior	76	57	16	30	6	10	2	-
Northern	13	4	85	92	-	-	1.5	-
Southeast	73	50	23	34	0.6	-	3.5	-
Southwest	19	9	79	89	0.7	-	1	-
Alaska	73	54	19	29	4	8	4	2

^a Juvenile populations by race and region estimates of Alaska Department of Labor, Demographics Unit
Note: - indicates numbers too small to calculate a rate.
Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, DFYS



¹ *Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995: Annual Report*, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Family and Youth Services, March 1996, p. 25.

² 1992 Juvenile Arrests, FBI Uniform Crime reports, Violent Crime Index (<http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/sfs-9413.txt>)

³ B. Brown, *Trends in the well-being of America's children and youth, 1996*. Washington D.C.: Office of the assistant secretary for planning and evaluating, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 1996, p.140. (Reported in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* [February 1997], p.3.)

⁴ L. Ansley, "It just keeps getting worse," *USA Weekend* (Aug 13-15, 1993), p.5. (Reported in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* [February 1997], p.3.)

⁵ *Between Hope and Fear: Teens speak out on crime and the community*. Washington D.C.: National Crime Prevention Council, National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice (December 1995), p.10. (Reported in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* [February 1997], p.3.)

⁶ *Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995: Annual Report*, Alaska DHSS, Division of Family and Youth Services, p. 26.

⁷ *Report of the Governor's Conference on Youth and Justice* (abridged version), p.v.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gwen Kurtz and Louis Moore, *The 8 percent problem: Chronic Juvenile Offender Recidivism*, Orange County Probation Department, March 1994 (cited in *Making the Connection: Child advocacy and balanced juvenile justice policy*, Juvenile Justice Project, Children's Action Alliance, March 1995).

