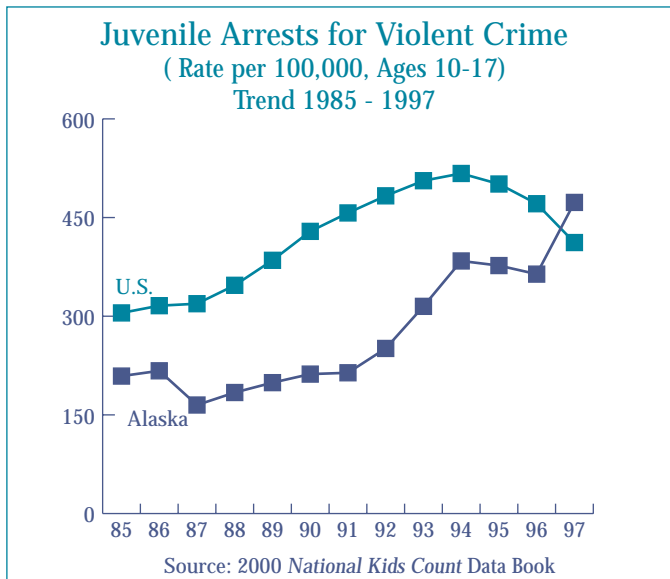


Juvenile Crime in Alaska



October to April is a long time. But there is a great compensation. Spring in the North comes with a leap and a shout and a surge of excitement.

Margaret E. Murie, *Two In The Far North*
Originally published 1957; Reissued 1978,
Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

This section shows two measures of juvenile crime, based on different sources and definitions. The trend graph above shows the rate of arrests for violent crime (homicide, manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) among persons 10-17, in Alaska and on average nationwide.¹ Those figures are reported by the national *Kids Count* program and are based on adjusted data from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Other tables and figures in this section are based on data from the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. They reflect police reports to the juvenile justice system. They include all reports of juvenile crime in Alaska—both violent and other. Keep in mind that while these police reports are the best measure we have of “juvenile crime,” a report is not the same as proof of guilt.

Almost all the juveniles who go through the state’s juvenile justice system are ages 10-17.² The adjacent trend graph (based on federal statistics) shows that after climbing sharply both nationwide and in Alaska between 1987 and 1994, the rate of violent crime among teenagers leveled off in the mid-1990s. But in 1997, violent juvenile crime in Alaska jumped, while continuing to drop nationwide. So for the first time, the rate of violent juvenile crime in Alaska was above the national average.

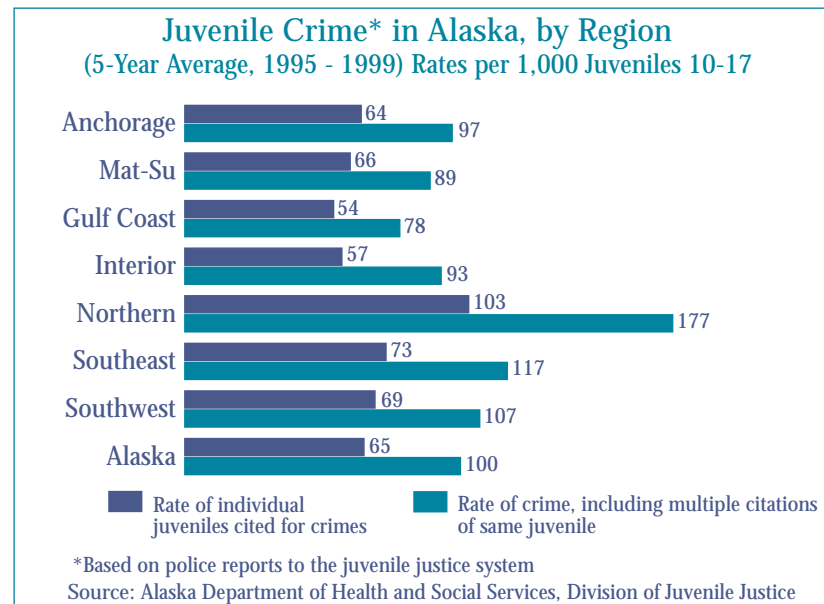
Remember, however, that because Alaska’s population is small—there are only about 86,000 persons ages 10-17—a relatively small change in the number of juveniles committing crimes can make a noticeable change in the rate of crime in a given year. Figures for the next few years will tell us if the 1997 number was an anomaly.

On average, the Division of Juvenile Justice in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services received about 8,400 reports of juvenile crime in Alaska each year between FY 1995 and FY 1999. The rate of individual juveniles

cited in crime reports during that period was 65 per 1,000. Looked at another way, police referred about 6.5 percent of Alaska’s juveniles to the juvenile justice system. The rate of juvenile crime (which counts multiple referrals of the same juvenile) was 100 per 1,000—or about 10 per 100 juveniles.

Rates of reported juvenile crime were highest in the Northern and Southeast regions and lowest along the Gulf Coast.

Crimes against property were by far the most frequent type of juvenile crime throughout Alaska in the late 1990s, making up more than half of all juvenile crime. Crimes against persons made up about 17 percent of juvenile crime statewide, but more than 26 percent in the Southwest region. Violations of drug and alcohol laws accounted for about 12 percent of juvenile crime statewide, but nearly 17 percent in the Southeast region. Other kinds of juvenile



JUVENILE CRIME IN ALASKA (CONTINUED)

crime—including violations of weapons laws and public order laws—accounted for another 17 percent of reported juvenile crimes statewide.

Boys in Alaska and across the U.S. are much more likely to commit crimes than are girls. Nearly three quarters (72 percent) of the juveniles referred to the Division of Juvenile Justice from 1995 through 1999 were boys.

The table at the bottom of the page shows reported juvenile crime by race and region in recent years. A current breakdown of the juvenile population by race and region is not available right now—so we can't say precisely how the share of juveniles of each race referred to the justice system compares with their share in the total population of juveniles.

But we do have a breakdown of the entire Alaska population by race and region (see table on page 57), and that helps us estimate whether juveniles of any race are cited in a disproportionately larger or smaller share of crime reports.

In general, Native and Black juveniles appear to be cited at disproportionately higher rates, compared with their representation in the population, and White and Asian juveniles at lower rates.

However, we know that the Alaska Native population is young—so while Natives make up about 17 percent of the overall Alaska population, they make up more than 21 percent of the population ages 10-17. So comparing shares of the total population by race to shares of reported juvenile crime by race is

ANNUAL POLICE REPORTS^a OF JUVENILE (10-17) CRIME BY REGION AND TYPE OF CRIME (5-Year Average, FY 1995-1999)

Region	Crimes Against Persons		Crimes Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other ^b		Total ^c	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	452	14.5%	16,931	54.2%	271	8.7%	707	22.6%	3,123	100%
Mat-Su	433	16.9	454	57.5	98	12.4	104	13.2	789	100
Gulf Coast	157	18.8	455	54.6	117	14.1	104	12.5	834	100
Interior	221	18.3	626	52.0	176	14.6	182	15.1	1,205	100
Northern	120	17.9	369	55.2	62	9.3	118	17.6	669	100
Southeast	207	17.6	612	52.1	197	16.8	157	13.4	1,174	100
Southwest	158	26.3	289	48.1	68	11.3	86	14.8	601	100
Alaska	1,449	17.3	4,499	53.6	990	11.8	1,458	17.4	8,396	100

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

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

^c Average annual number of crimes.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice.

POLICE REPORTS OF JUVENILES* (AGES 10-17) COMMITTING CRIMES, BY RACE AND REGION (Percentages FY 1995-1999)

Region	Native	Black	White	Asian/Pacific Isl.	Hispanic and Other	Total Number Juveniles Committing Crimes
Anchorage	14.2%	14.2%	60.4%	5.6%	5.6%	10,284
Mat-Su	7.2	1.5	88.0	0.3	3.0	2,652
Gulf Coast	12.0	1.2	76.7	5.5	4.6	2,922
Interior	27.9	9.8	56.7	0.8	4.8	3,706
Northern	89.5	0.6	4.4	1.2	4.2	1,952
Southeast	33.1	1.0	47.9	1.7	16.4	3,686
Southwest	89.1	0.4	8.6	0.2	1.8	1,959
Alaska	28.5%	7.2%	54.9%	3.2%	6.2%	27,161

*Unduplicated reports of juvenile crime—which means juveniles who are cited in more than one crime report show up only once in the numbers.

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

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice.

not completely accurate. When the results of the 2000 federal census are available, we will have accurate figures for juvenile populations by race and region.

PREVENTING JUVENILE CRIME

What can we do to keep children and teenagers from committing crimes?

The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice tries to prevent or reduce juvenile crime through “restorative justice.” This means it tries to hold juveniles accountable for their crimes; to protect the public; to restore victims and communities; and to provide juvenile offenders with services (like treatment for drug use) that will make them more responsible and less likely to commit crimes. Future *Kids Count Alaska* data books will discuss some of Alaska’s juvenile justice programs.

Recent national studies of the problem of juvenile crime offer a number of suggestions:

- Families, schools, and communities need to stop juvenile crime early on by teaching children solid values; intervening strongly the first time a child gets into trouble; and following through to make sure that children face the consequences of their decisions.³
- Opening boys and girls clubs in public housing can reduce juvenile crime. A three-year study by Columbia University of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America found that juvenile crime dropped 13 percent in public housing areas after clubs opened.⁴
- Boys who have a history of being physically aggressive in school are more likely to commit crimes, according to research. Schools could help head off crimes by initiating elementary-school programs to teach children better ways of

resolving conflicts, as well as programs that prevent aggressive students from intimidating or hurting other students.⁵

- The National Council on Crime and Delinquency has found that to prevent juvenile offenders from continuing to commit crimes, it is more effective to establish “small, very intensive programs” that are coupled with “integrated community-based systems” rather than to simply sentence them to juvenile or adult correction facilities.⁶

NOTES FOR JUVENILE CRIME

¹Some states do not collect complete or comparable data on violent juvenile crime, so this indicator is not available for all states.

²Juveniles who commit certain violent crimes are charged as adults and go through the court system rather than the juvenile justice system; numbers of juveniles tried as adults are very small.

³State of California, Little Hoover Commission. (September 1994). *The Juvenile Crime Challenge: Making Prevention a Priority*. Report # 127. Available: www.lhc.ca.gov/lhcdir/127rp.html

⁴Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet: Boys and Girls Clubs of America. (October 1995). Available: www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/b-gclubs.txt

⁵Alaska Youth Data Project. *Youth Clips*, Volume II, Issue 5.

⁶*Kids Count* in Indiana, Indiana Youth Institute. (1996). *Juvenile Justice in Indiana: Facing what works and what doesn't*. Page 36.

ALASKA POPULATION BY RACE AND REGION, 1999

	White	Native	Black	Asian/Pacific Islander
Anchorage	77.2%	8.1%	7.3%	7.3%
Mat-Su	92.4%	5.8%	1.0%	0.8%
Gulf Coast	83.5%	10.5%	0.8%	5.3%
Interior	79.2%	11.6%	6.8%	2.4%
Northern	20.7%	74.5%	0.7%	4.1%
Southeast	75.1%	19.9%	0.7%	4.3%
Southwest	20.4%	75.8%	0.4%	3.4%
Alaska	73.7%	16.8%	4.4%	5.0%

Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, Demographics Unit.

Note: These are percentage breakdowns of the total Alaska population. The proportions of juveniles by region would be somewhat different, especially in the Northern and Southwest regions, where most residents are Alaska Natives. That’s because the proportions of children and teenagers are higher among Natives.

