



Jim and Linda Reinhart's children knew they had to be ready for anything, whenever they climbed into their parents' small plane for a trip across Kachemak Bay. They might, for instance, have to pack lumber for a cabin up a mountain-side, or spend the day fishing in the rain. But when their cousin Molly Ridout visited from Louisiana, they knew Alaska hospitality would guarantee them an easier time.

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Juvenile Crime



The Reinharts lived in Homer, at the tip of the Kenai Peninsula. But like many Alaskans, they had one foot in town and the other in the great Alaska beyond.

They had arrived in Alaska in the late 1960s and invested in a small plane that gave them a ticket to the hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping just a short flight away, in the Kenai Peninsula wilderness. The meat and fish they brought home made up a big part of the food on the table for their growing family.

Visiting in the 1980s, 11-year-old Molly heard many stories from her cousins—stories of long hikes and huge packs; of days spent fishing in downpours; of steep climbs up and wicked descents from apparently endless mountains.

But as the out-of-town guest, she was treated to trips that were purely for the enjoyment of glorious long summer days. Then her uncle would take her and her cousins sightseeing over glaciers and land so Molly could pick wild roses. Or they would spend the day beachcombing for treasures like glass floats that had washed ashore from ocean-going trawlers.

Memories of childhood trips helped draw Molly Ridout back to Alaska, and today she and her husband live outside Anchorage. Her aunt and uncle still live in Homer, as do several of her cousins.

Alaskans were quick to see the advantages of small airplanes for crossing the state's vast, roadless distances, and Anchorage got its first airport in the 1920s. Today, Alaska has seven times the pilots per capita and 14 times the planes per capita as the U.S. as a whole.

DEFINITION

The tables and figures in this section are calculated with data from the Division of Juvenile Justice in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. They are based on delinquency referrals, which include police reports and notices of probation violations. This information shows juvenile crime in Alaska, both violent and other. Keep in mind that while these delinquency referrals are the best measure we have of “juvenile crime,” a referral is not the same as proof of guilt. Almost all the juveniles in the state’s juvenile justice system at any given time are ages 10-17; about 1 percent are under 10 and 3 percent are over 17.¹

SIGNIFICANCE

A recent report by the American Youth Policy Forum, *Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime*, described the severity of juvenile crime in the United States and examined programs around the country that help prevent juvenile crime.² The report found that while rates of juvenile crime have been declining nationwide, Americans still have a number of reasons to be concerned:

- Crime rates are highest among teenagers and young adults.
- Numbers of young people in America are growing.
- Rates of violence among American teenagers are higher than among teenagers in other democracies.
- Many of the causes of delinquency—membership in gangs and exposure to drugs, for example—remain widespread.

The report also outlined what kinds of measures and programs help reduce or prevent juvenile crime:

- Working with young children before problems develop, through pre-school programs, home visits, assistance to parents, and other measures.
- Offering prevention programs in schools; for example, programs to combat bullying and to teach grade-school children how to curb aggressive behavior and develop social skills.
- Enrolling children who behave violently or have other social problems in proven treatment programs; to be most effective, these programs must involve both children and their parents.
- Providing after-school activities for both children and teenagers; such activities can range from recreation programs to classes that help improve grades to opportunities to spend time with mentors.

The report concludes with some recommendations:

- Invest more in community-based services for juvenile delinquents, rather than devoting so much money to juvenile detention centers and training schools. Only about 10 percent of delinquents are sent to detention centers, but such centers account for most spending for juvenile justice. Putting more money and effort into community-based services could help prevent large numbers of juvenile delinquents from going on to commit more serious crimes.

- Collect data on what measures really reduce juvenile crime—and then use the research results to establish programs, rather than relying on practices that are common but often ineffective.
- Monitor how government-funded programs are working and cut off funds for those that are ineffective.
- Bring communities into the fight against juvenile crime. Research has shown that the juveniles most likely to commit crimes are those with no adults who care about them and those who have no positive activities to focus their energies on. Communities need to develop strategies for preventing juvenile crime, and government agencies dealing with juvenile crime should try to build partnerships with community residents and organizations.

DATA

In both Alaska and the nation as a whole, juvenile crime has dropped significantly since the mid-1990s. National figures show a 20 percent decline in the number of juvenile arrests between 1997 and 2001, with declines in almost all types of crime, including murder and other violent crimes.³

On average, Alaska’s Division of Juvenile Justice received about 7,500 referrals a year in the period 1998 through 2002. The rate of *individual juveniles* cited in referrals was 57 per 1,000. Put another way, roughly 5 to 6 percent of Alaskans ages 10 to 17 were referred to the juvenile justice system in recent years. The rate of *juvenile crime* (which counts multiple referrals of the same juvenile) was 85 per 1,000, or 8 to 9 percent.

Juvenile Crime (continued)

Juvenile Crime in Alaska, 1998-2002 and 1993-1997

(Referral Rates per 1,000 Juveniles 10-17)



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

As the figure shows, the rate of individual Alaska juveniles committing crimes was about 20 percent lower from 1998-2002 than it was from 1993-1997. The average number of juvenile crime reports was also down about 20 percent in the most recent period.

As is true nationwide, boys in Alaska are much more likely to commit crimes than are girls. Roughly three-quarters of the juveniles referred to the Division of Juvenile Justice from 1998 through 2002 were boys.

The table showing crimes by region and type in Alaska is a measure of *total* juvenile crime, because it is based on all referrals (including multiple referrals of the same juvenile). Crimes against property are the most common, accounting for 53 percent of annual referrals from 1998-2002. Crimes against persons made up 21 percent of juvenile crime statewide, and violations of drug and alcohol laws accounted for 9 percent. Various other crimes accounted for the remaining 17 percent of juvenile crimes statewide; many of these were violations of probation, but they also included violations of weapons laws and public order laws.

The breakdown of juvenile crime by region in Alaska from 1998-2002 was similar to the breakdown statewide. Crimes against property were the most common crimes in all regions, accounting for roughly 50 to 60 percent of the annual total. Crimes against persons made up close to 20 percent of crimes in most regions, with a low of 18 percent in Anchorage and a high of 33 percent in the Southwest region.

Violations of drug and alcohol laws ranged from 4 percent in the Southwest and Northern

regions to 15 percent in the Interior. Other crimes—including violations of probation—made up anywhere from 11 or 12 percent of crimes in the Mat-Su and Southwest regions to almost 22 percent of crimes in Anchorage.

The table on the facing page, showing the share of juvenile delinquents by region and race, is a measure of *individual* crime—that is, in any given year it includes specific juveniles only once, regardless of how many times they were referred to the juvenile justice system. (However, a juvenile who committed crimes in more than one year—for example, 2000 and 2002—would be included in each of those years.)

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY REFERRALS^a BY REGION AND TYPE OF CRIME (ANNUAL AVERAGE, FISCAL YEARS 1998-2002^b)

Region	Crimes Against Persons		Crimes Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other ^c		Total ^d	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	560	18.3%	1,599	52.2%	241	7.9%	663	21.7%	3,063	100%
Mat-Su	110	19.5%	333	59.1%	54	9.6%	66	11.8%	563	100%
Gulf Coast	159	20.0%	436	54.9%	74	9.3%	125	15.8%	794	100%
Interior	218	23.4%	449	48.2%	135	14.5%	130	13.9%	932	100%
Northern	137	22.2%	356	57.8%	26	4.3%	97	15.8%	616	100%
Southeast	182	20.2%	472	52.3%	93	10.3%	156	17.3%	903	100%
Southwest	202	33.4%	315	51.9%	24	4.0%	65	10.8%	606	100%
Alaska	1,568	21.0%	3,960	52.9%	647	8.7%	1,302	17.41%	7,477	100%

^a These are duplicate counts—meaning they include multiple referrals of the same juvenile; duplicated counts show the overall level of reported juvenile crime. Referrals include police reports and notices of probation violations. Juveniles charged with more than one type of crime in a single referral are included in only one category, with crimes against persons ranked first, property crimes second, drug and alcohol crimes third, and other crimes fourth.

^b The state fiscal year is from July 1 through June 30.

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

^d Annual average number of crimes.

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

TOTAL JUVENILES REFERRED TO JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, BY RACE AND REGION, FISCAL YEARS 1998-2002^a

Region	Native	Black	White	NH/ Pacific Isl.	Asian	More Than One Race	Other	Unknown	Total 1998-02
Anchorage	16.9%	12.6%	58.3%	6.3%	1.7%	3.2%	0.5%	0.5%	10,217
Mat-Su	5.9%	1.0%	88.5%	0.2%	–	1.9%	0.2%	2.4%	2,039
Gulf Coast	12.9%	0.9%	77.0%	0.4%	3.4%	1.5%	0.7%	3.2%	2,735
Interior	30.4%	8.1%	57.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.8%	0.2%	2.7%	3,107
Northern	89.8%	0.8%	3.6%	0.6%	0.3%	1.8%	0.3%	2.9%	1,858
Southeast	37.3%	0.9%	47.7%	0.6%	0.8%	2.5%	0.5%	9.8%	3,002
Southwest	90.5%	0.3%	6.8%	0.3%	0.1%	1.1%	0.3%	0.7%	2,032
Alaska	31.1%	6.5%	53.1%	2.8%	1.3%	2.2%	0.4%	2.5%	24,990

^aThis is an unduplicated count of all individual juveniles referred to Alaska's juvenile justice system from 1998 through 2002. Race is self-reported by juvenile offenders; persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

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

Statewide for the period 1998-2002, about 53 percent of the reported juvenile delinquents were White; 31 percent were Alaska Native; 6.5 percent were Black; close to 3 percent were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders; 1 percent were Asian; and just over 2 percent were of more than one race. About half a percent of juveniles committing crimes classified themselves as "Other," rejecting all the racial groups

listed, and another 2.5 percent were "Unknown," because they didn't report a race.

So how do the shares of crime among juveniles of various races compare with their shares of the total juvenile population (ages 10 to 19), shown in the adjacent table? Statewide in recent years, Alaska Native, Black, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island juveniles were reported for crimes at higher rates than their representation in the total juvenile population, and White and Asian juveniles at lower rates. That pattern also generally held in the various regions of the state, although in the Mat-Su and Gulf Coast regions White juveniles were reported for crimes at about the same levels as their share of the total population.

ALASKA POPULATION, AGES 10-19, BY RACE AND REGION, 2000

Region	Native ^a	Black	White	NH/ Pacific Isl.	Asian	More Than ^b One Race
Anchorage	13.1%	7.1%	68.7%	1.5%	6.2%	3.4%
Mat-Su	11.4%	0.6%	85.6%	0.2%	0.6%	1.5%
Gulf Coast	14.9%	0.5%	78.6%	0.4%	4.1%	1.5%
Interior	19.2%	5.4%	71.0%	0.3%	1.7%	2.3%
Northern	89.9%	0.2%	7.7%	0.4%	1.2%	0.7%
Southeast	29.3%	0.5%	64.6%	0.3%	3.7%	1.6%
Southwest	87.1%	0.3%	10.7%	0.1%	1.2%	0.5%
Alaska	24.3%	3.8%	65.0%	0.7%	3.8%	2.3%

^a Includes all those who described themselves in the 2000 U.S. census as Alaska Native alone or Alaska Native and some other race. Also includes American Indians, who make up about 0.5 percent of Alaska's population.

^b Includes all those who described themselves as being of more than one race, except Alaska Natives and American Indians, who are included under "Native."

Source: 2000 U.S. census figures, adjusted by Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Endnotes for Juvenile Crime

¹A few of those in the juvenile justice system at any given time are over 18, mostly because they committed crimes before they turned 18 and remain on probation or otherwise within the juvenile justice system. Also, those under 18 who commit certain violent crimes can be charged as adults and go through the adult court system, but numbers of juveniles tried as adults are very small.

²Richard A. Mendel, *Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime: What Works—and What Doesn't*. American Youth Policy Forum; supported by Walter S. Johnson Foundation, 2000. Published in partnership with National Urban League, Child Welfare League of America, National Crime Prevention Council, Coalition for Juvenile Justice, National League of Cities, and National Collaboration for Youth. Available at: www.aypf.org/mendel/index.html

³U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Juvenile Arrests 2001," in *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, December 2003.