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Crime Drop II

Young people are leading the newest violent crime decline

by Jeffrey A. Butts

According to the most recent national arrests estimates from FBI data, law enforcement agencies across the United States made 68,000 violent crime arrests involving juveniles under age 18 in 2011. This was a decline of 32 percent compared with 100,000 arrests in 2006. Violent crime arrests involving older youth ages 18 through 24 dropped 12 percent between 2006 and 2011, from 176,000 to 155,000.

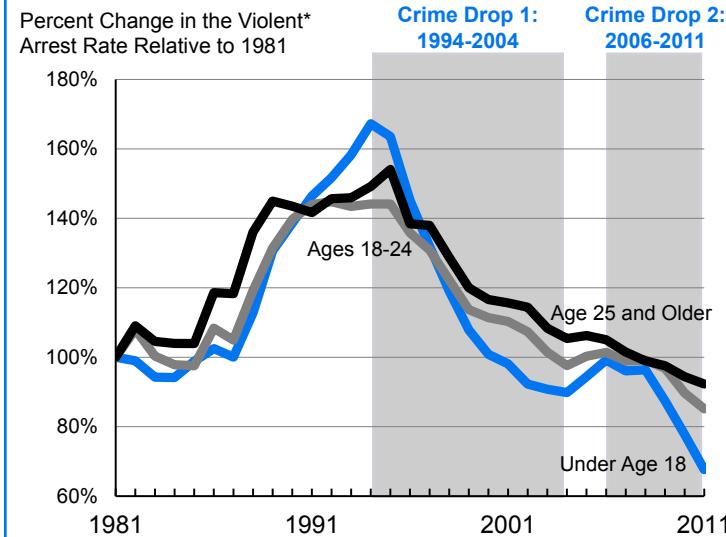
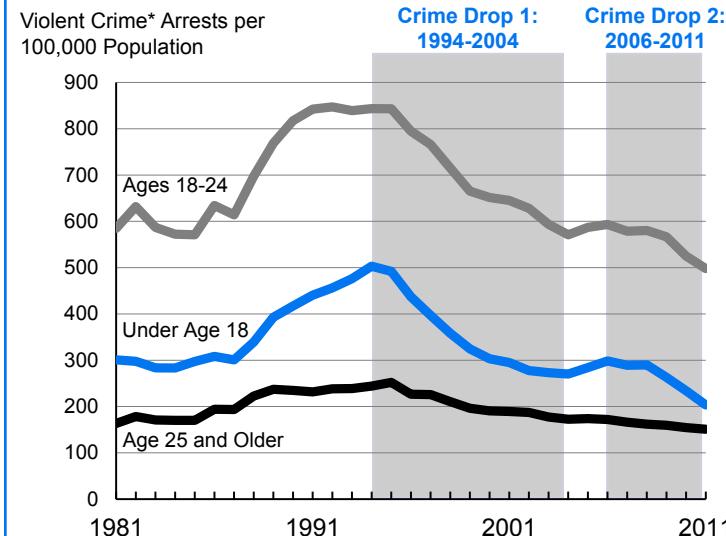
Violent crime arrests of adults over age 24 continued to outnumber those of young people in 2011. Older adults were involved in 312,000 arrests for violent crimes that year. The number of arrests involving older adults also declined less in relative terms. Between 2006 and 2011, adult arrests fell just 7 percent, from 335,000 to 312,000.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, increasing numbers of arrests among juveniles and older youth were disproportionately responsible for the growing rate of violent crime. In recent years, however, young people contributed an even larger share to the declining rate of violent crime. In fact, young people appear to be leading a second crime drop in the United States.

This second crime drop appeared after a brief period of increasing violent arrests between 2004 and 2006. The increasing number of violent crimes between 2004 and 2006 caused great concern at the time, prompting public officials and law enforcement groups to warn of a coming crime wave. That crime wave, however, proved to be small and short lived.

Violent arrests began to decline once again after 2006 and the falling rate of violence continued through 2011, with juveniles and youth ages 18-24 leading the way. By 2011, the violent crime arrest rate for juveniles had dropped 60 percent from the peak year of 1994. The rate for older youth had fallen 41 percent from the 1994 peak, while the arrest rate for older adults was down 38 percent.

Juvenile Declines in Violent Crime Outpace Others



* Offenses in the FBI Violent Crime Index include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Data are from the FBI and the national arrest estimates created by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), with the exception of 2011 estimates which were calculated by John Jay College using the same estimation methods adopted by BJS. See Snyder, H.N. & Mulako-Wangota, J. (2013). Arrest Data Analysis Tool. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Note: Juvenile rates are calculated with ages 10-17 as the denominator.