

Violent Youth Crime in U.S. Falls to New 32-Year Low

by Jeffrey A. Butts

According to new national arrest estimates calculated from data reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), law enforcement agencies across the United States made slightly more than 60,000 violent crime arrests involving youth under age 18 in 2012.

The FBI measures violent crime trends using the four offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The number of youth arrests for all four offenses in 2012 represented a decline of 10 percent compared with 2011, and it contributed to an overall drop of 36 percent since 2003. During the same period, violent crime arrests involving offenders age 18 and older fell just 9 percent.

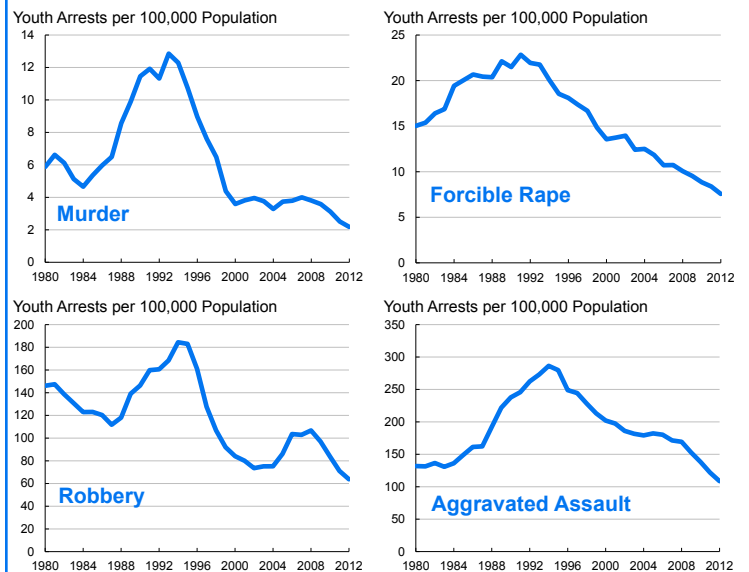
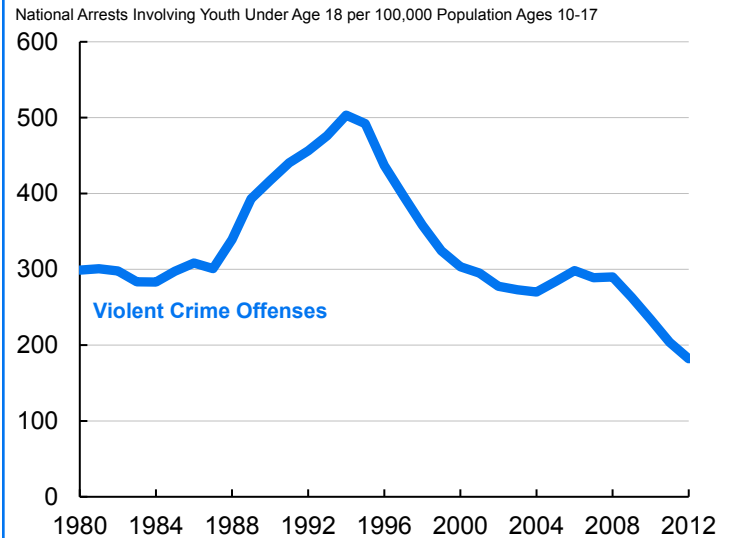
Between 2003 and 2012, the estimated number of youth arrests for murder fell 37 percent, while forcible rape arrests declined 36 percent, robbery arrests dipped 20 percent, and youth arrests for aggravated assault dropped nearly 43 percent.

After controlling for the size of the population, the scale of the decline in violent youth crime is apparent. In 1994, police reported about 500 violent youth crime arrests for every 100,000 10-17-olds in the population. Violent youth crime then fell sharply from 1994 through 2001, before rebounding somewhat through 2008.

After 2008, the arrest rate fell sharply again. In 2008, there were approximately 300 violent youth crime arrests for every 100,000 juveniles in the population. Between 2009 and 2012, the rate of violence plummeted nearly 40 percent to fewer than 190 arrests per 100,000 juveniles.

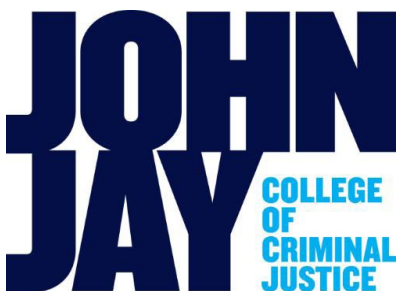
Compared with trends since 1980, the arrest rate for violent youth crime reached a new low every year from 2009 through 2012.

Violent Youth Crime Rates Drop Steadily After 2008



DATA SOURCE:

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program considers violent crimes to include the four offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The national estimates presented here are based on FBI data and published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), with the exception of the estimates for the year 2012 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.) Unlike BJS, however, this analysis calculates juvenile arrest rates using the youth population ages 10-17 as the denominator.



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 524 West 59th Street, Suite 605BMW
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