

Total Youth Arrests for Violent Crime Still Falling Nationwide

by Jeffrey A. Butts

According to national estimates calculated with data released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in September 2016, law enforcement agencies across the United States made more than 50,000 violent crime arrests involving youth under age 18 in 2015, compared with 100,000 ten years earlier.

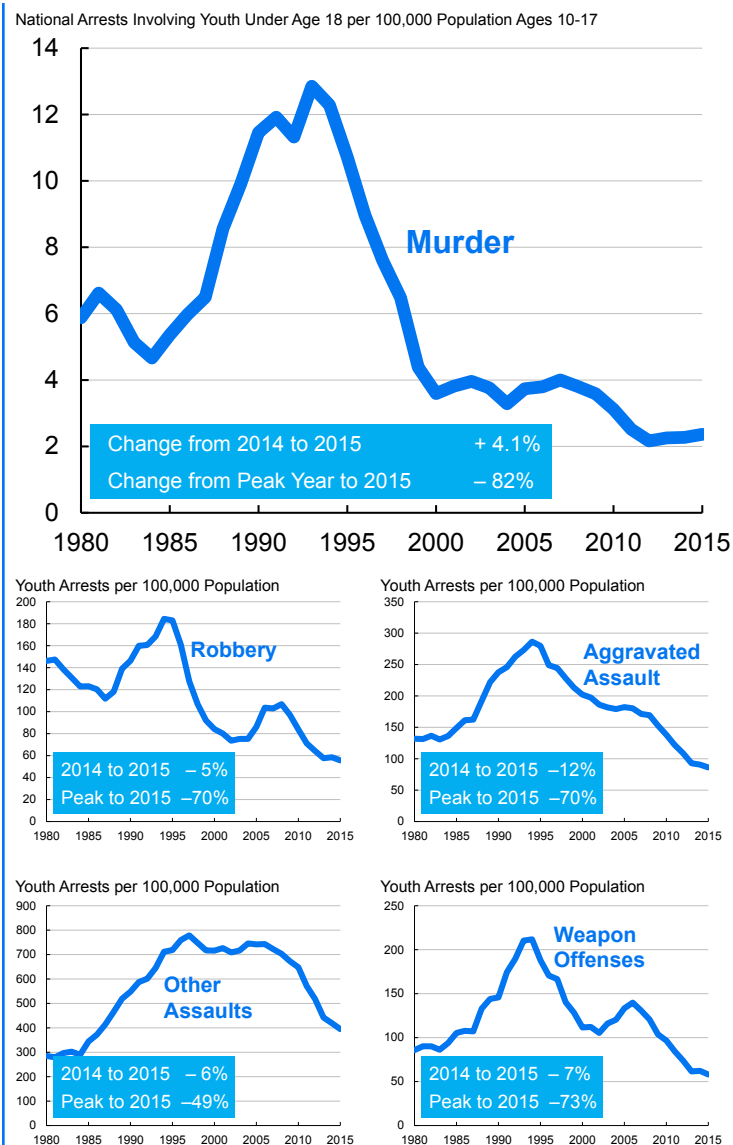
The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting data series tracks violent crime trends using the four offenses of murder, rape*, robbery, and aggravated assault. Youth arrests for these offenses dropped 4 percent between 2014 and 2015, led by a decline of nearly 6 percent in arrests for aggravated assault. The number of youth arrests for homicide, on the other hand, increased 14 percent between 2014 and 2015. Due to the small number of homicide arrests, this change was generated by about 50 arrests nationwide.

When measured in per capita terms, or the number of juvenile murder arrests per 100,000 youth ages 10-17 in the U.S. population, the increase in murder arrests was much smaller: 4 percent. Between 2014 and 2015, the rate of youth murder arrests grew from 2.3 to 2.4 arrests per 100,000.

The effect of the 20-year decline in violent youth crime is clear when viewing arrest rates over the long term. In 1993, police reported about 13 juvenile murder arrests for every 100,000 10-17-olds in the population. By 2015, the murder arrest rate had dropped 82 percent.

Other offenses experienced similar decreases. Youth arrests for robbery in 2015 were 70 percent lower than the peak year in the mid-1990s, while aggravated assault arrests also fell by 70 percent, other assaults were off 49 percent, and the rate of youth arrests for weapon offenses was 73 percent lower than the previous peak.

Serious Youth Crime Down While Murder Arrests Up Slightly



* The FBI recently modified the definition of rape in its compilation of national data, making year-to-year comparisons difficult.

DATA SOURCE: National estimates based on FBI data as published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) with the exception of 2013-2015 estimates which are calculated by John Jay College directly from the FBI reports using the same estimation methods adopted by BJS. (See Snyder, H.N. & Mulako-Wangota, J. (2014). Arrest Data Analysis Tool. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.) Unlike BJS, however, this analysis calculates juvenile arrest rates using the youth population ages 10-17 as the denominator.