

CRIME

In San Francisco, the problems of increasing youth violence, drug abuse, and youth gangs have challenged the juvenile justice system.

Data Source

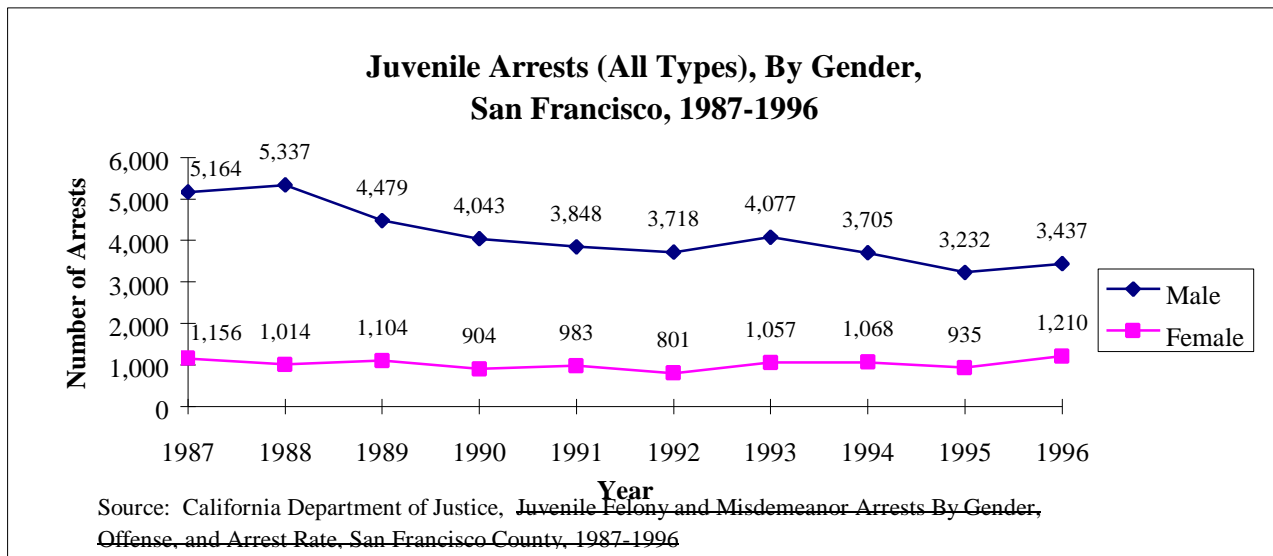
This section of the report presents data mainly on juvenile arrests among children and youth up to age 17. The criminal justice system classifies arrests of individuals 18 years of age and older to be adult arrests, and data segregating young adults from all other adults is not available. It should be noted that in any community, arrest rates reflect policy initiatives, political considerations, police staffing, programmatic changes, and other factors in addition to the actual amount of crime occurring. Arrests do not always result in formal charges, and not all formal charges are sustained (approved or affirmed) in the Juvenile Courts. However, data on arrests is the most readily available, ongoing indicator of the level of crime in communities.

Data for this section was obtained from two sources:

- The California Department of Justice (DOJ) provided county and statewide arrest data, including ten-year trends since 1987. Note that DOJ (and other criminal justice agencies) report only the number of arrests, not the number of unduplicated persons arrested, as a result, one youth can account for more than one arrest.
- The San Francisco Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Action Plan, March 1997 provided data on the patterns of arrests at the neighborhood level, and information on gang activity.

Juvenile Arrests in San Francisco

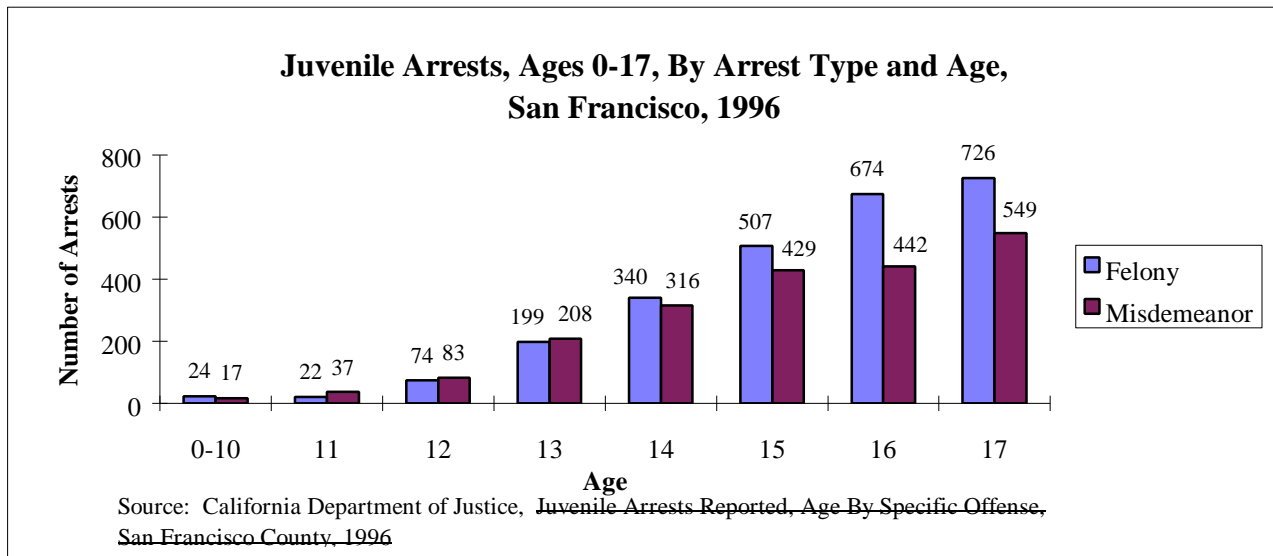
In 1996, there were 4,647 juvenile arrests in San Francisco, representing 8% of all arrests in the City. While this may be high, the number of juvenile arrests declined by 26% from 1987 to 1996, which is



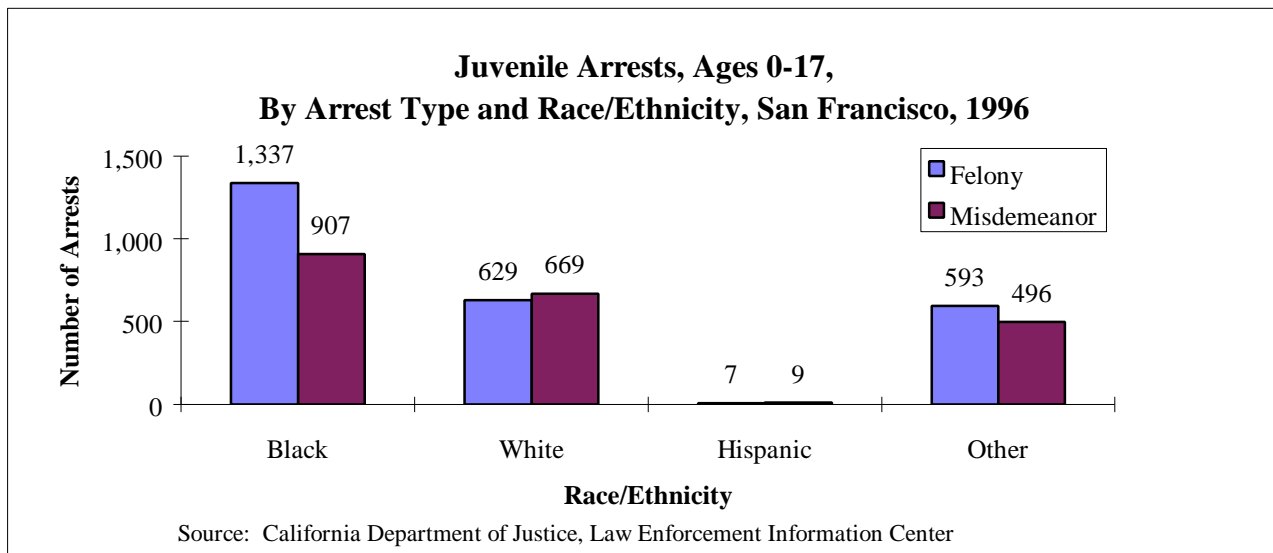
similar to the statewide decrease in juvenile arrests. Males represented three-fourths (74%; 3,437) of juvenile arrests in 1996. Throughout the ten-year period, there were two to five times more arrests

among males than females depending upon the offense. As noted above, arrests represent events rather than people. In fact, some individuals are arrested multiple times, which may help give the impression of overrepresentation of some groups. According to some experts in the field, about 8% of the youth in the juvenile justice system account for the majority of referrals from the Police Department to the Juvenile Probation Department.

By Age. The number of arrests among juveniles increases with age, for both felony and misdemeanor categories. In 1996, arrests among youth ages 15 to 17 represented nearly three-fourths (71%) of all juvenile arrests.



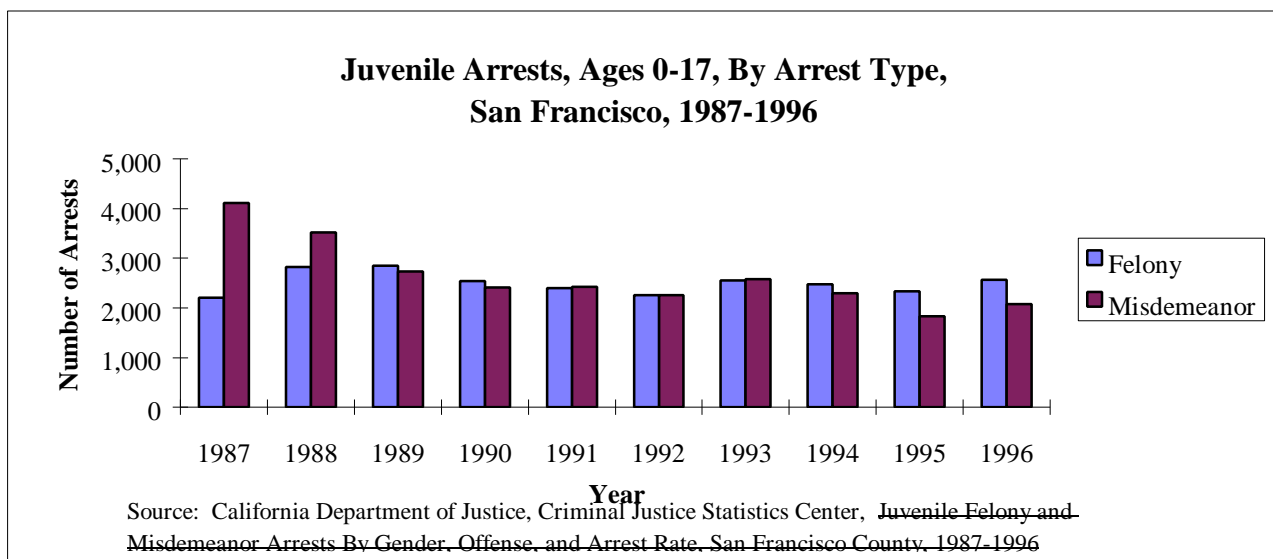
By Race/Ethnicity. African Americans comprise a disproportionately large share of juvenile arrests in the City compared to their representation in the City’s youth population. In 1996, African Americans accounted for 48% (2,244) of juvenile arrests in San Francisco. White juveniles had the second



largest number of arrests (1,298).¹ The third largest number of arrests were among juveniles of “Other” race/ethnicities which includes Asians, with few arrests among Hispanic juveniles, according to Police Department data. As noted earlier in this section, arrests represent events rather than people.

By Time of Day. Analysis of crime patterns reveals that youths ages 10 to 17 are most likely to be involved in crimes in the daytime immediately after school between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. when youth are out of school but before their parents come home from work. In addition, there is more crime during school hours (noon to 2 p.m.) when youth may be leaving school, compared to the later evening hours (9 p.m. to midnight). During the noon to 2 p.m. hours, youth are likely to be both perpetrators and victims of crime.²

By Arrest Type. Arrests are classified as felonies or misdemeanors, with the level of punishment reflecting the severity of the offense. A felony is a crime that is punishable with death or by imprisonment in a state prison. A misdemeanor is a crime punishable by imprisonment in a county jail



for up to one year. In 1996, felony arrests in San Francisco among juveniles accounted for over half (55%; 2,566) of all juvenile arrests. In 1996, both felony (2,566) and misdemeanor (1,081) arrests among juveniles increased slightly after two consecutive years of decline. In the past ten years, felony arrests (2,852) peaked in 1989 and misdemeanors (4,115) were at their highest level in 1987.

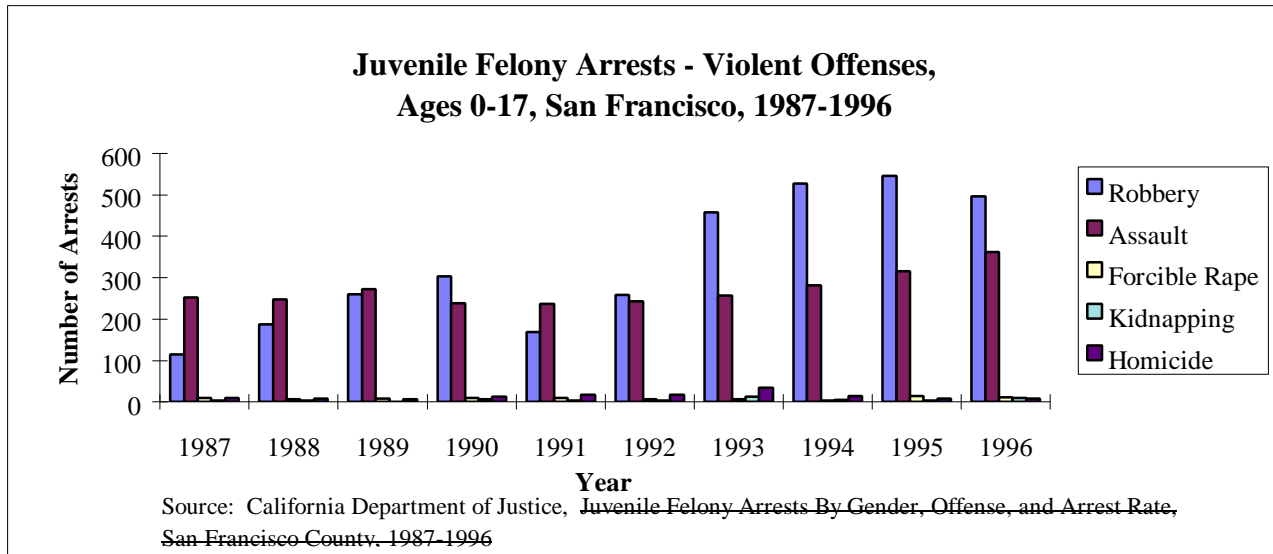
Violent Crimes. The sub-categories of felony arrest include violent, property, drug, sex, and “other” offenses. Violent felony offenses are crimes against people, and include homicide, rape, robbery (stealing by force or threat of violence), aggravated assault, and kidnapping. Arrests for violent crimes are a preferred crime indicator because arrests for violent crimes are less likely to be affected over time by changes in police practice and policy than other types of crime.³

¹ Race/ethnicity categories are shown as reported by the California Department of Justice, e.g., Asians categorized within “Other.”

² Silbert, Mimi H., Delancey Street Foundation, *San Francisco Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Action Plan*, March 1997 (for the Mayor’s Criminal Justice Council and the California Board of Corrections)

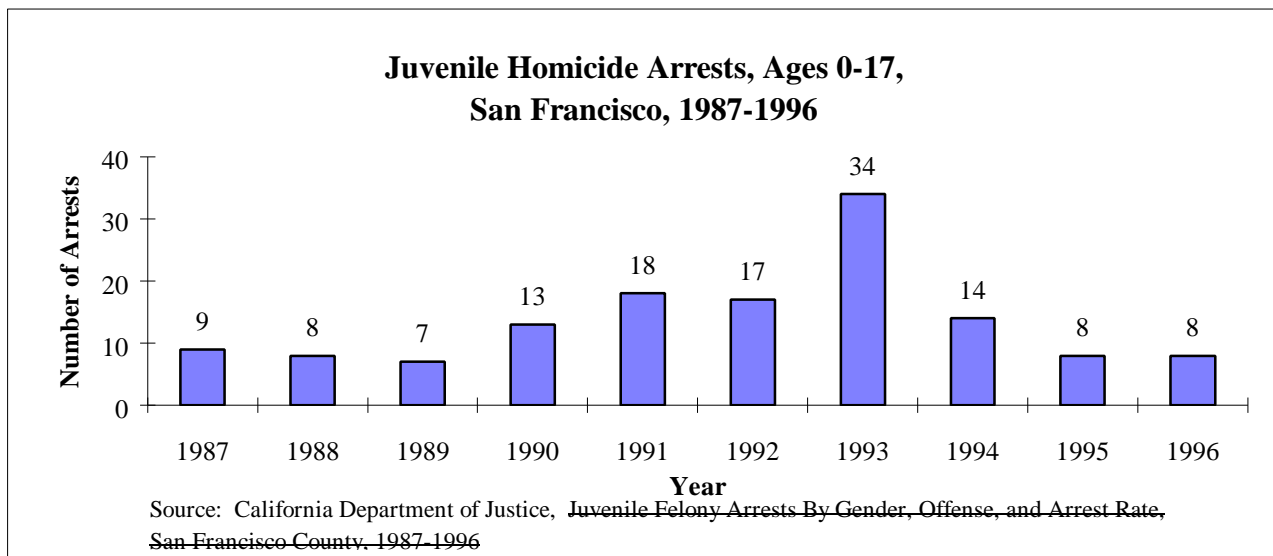
³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Trends in the Well-Being of America’s Children and Youth, 1996*

In 1996, violent felony arrests among juveniles (887), increased to their highest level within the past ten years, and represented the fifth consecutive year of increase since 1991 (435). The majority of juvenile felony arrests in San Francisco are for robbery and assault. The number of robbery arrests



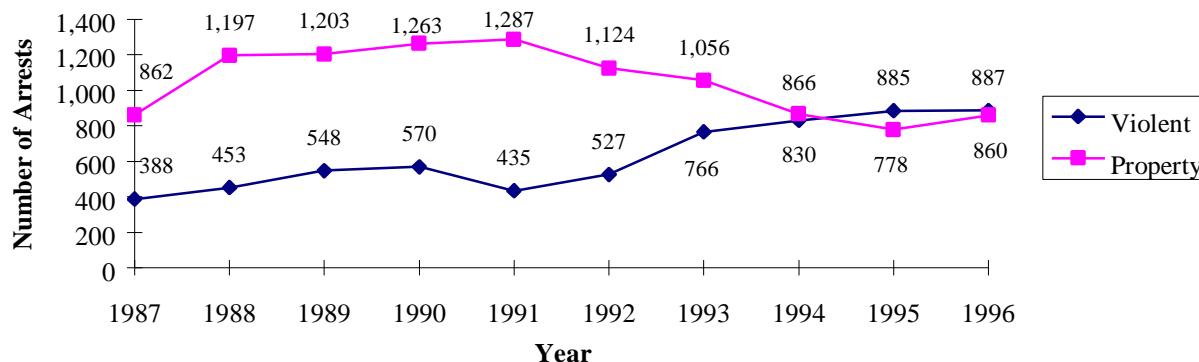
doubled between 1987 to 1996 (from 260 to 496). However, the number of robbery arrests in 1996 decreased to 496, after rising the four prior years. Arrests for assaults increased by 44% from 1987 to 1996 (from 252 to 362). (Refer to the Appendix for more detailed data.)

Of particular concern among violent crimes are homicides, due to the severe nature of the offense. In San Francisco, the number of juvenile arrests for homicide has declined substantially since its peak in 1993 (34 arrests), and by 1996, had returned to pre-1990 levels (8 arrests per year).



Violent and Property Felony Arrest Trends. Within the felony category, property offenses are arrests for crimes against property, including burglary, motor vehicle theft, forgery and check offenses, and

Juvenile Violent and Property Offenses (Felony) Arrests, Ages 0-17, San Francisco, 1987-1996



Source: California Department of Justice, *Juvenile Felony Arrests By Gender, Offense, and Arrest Rate, San Francisco County, 1987-1996*

arson. Property arrests among juveniles have declined by one-third since 1991. This is in contrast to the number of violent felony arrests, which has more than doubled since 1991.

Arrests By Neighborhood. Juvenile crime in San Francisco is concentrated in a few census tracts. In general, specific neighborhoods either have little crime or a high incidence of crime and crimes tend to be concentrated in low-income areas of the City. The Mission has the highest volume of crime, followed by Bayview Hunters Point, the Western Addition, and the Tenderloin.⁴ (Refer to three maps in the Appendix including “Crimes Involving Juveniles, 1996,” “Crimes with Juvenile Involvement per 1,000 population, 1996,” and “Persistent Youth Crime Hot Spots In San Francisco: 1993-1996.”)

Youth Gangs

In 1997, the San Francisco Police Department identified at least 40 different youth and adult gangs in the City, including 1,400 juvenile gang members. The Police Department’s Gang Task Force received 500 cases in 1994. These cases (involving youth and adult gangs) included 56 drive-by shootings (an increase of 37% over 1993), more than 50 gang-related robberies, over 155 gang-related assaults, and over 80 gang-related weapons seizures. The San Francisco Police Department associated the increase in violent crime with drugs and gang activity.⁵ (Additional data on youth gang activity by age groups and race/ethnicity was not available.)

⁴ Silbert, Mimi H., Delancey Street Foundation, *San Francisco Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Action Plan*, March 1997 (for the Mayor’s Criminal Justice Council and the California Board of Corrections)

⁵ Silbert, Mimi H., Delancey Street Foundation, *San Francisco Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Action Plan*, March 1997 (for the Mayor’s Criminal Justice Council and the California Board of Corrections)