

Understanding and Monitoring the “Whys” Behind Juvenile Crime Trends: From Understanding to Leading Indicators

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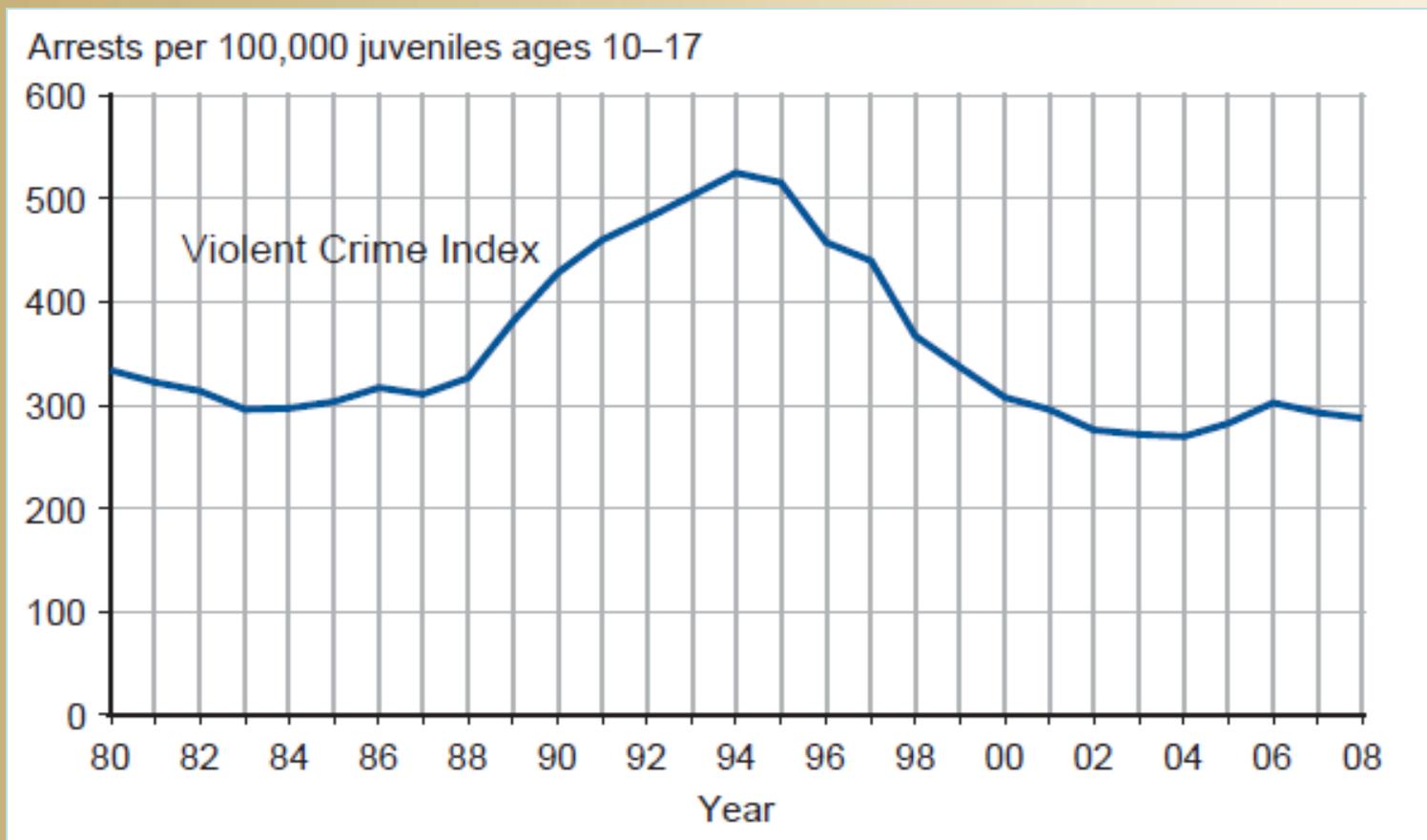
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JUVENILE ARREST RATES FOR VIOLENT CRIME INDEX OFFENSES, 1980-2008



LOOKING BEHIND THE NATIONAL TREND

- **Causes of drop must have affected:**
 - Juveniles/young adults more than older
 - Blacks more than whites
 - Males more than females
- **Social structure of juvenile crime changed during drop period**
 - Biggest drop for co-offending (with juveniles)
 - Less perceived gang offending (NCVS)
 - Less crime against strangers
 - Less gun use
- **Account must explain similar drops in central cities and rural areas**
- **Juvenile drug arrest trends differed from violent arrest trends:**
 - Later, shallower drop for drug arrests
 - Two trends positively correlated for blacks, negatively for whites

WHY THE OJJDP “WHYS” PROJECT?

- Enhance the understanding of the 1993-2000 juvenile crime drop
- Find actual correlates of 1985-2000 juvenile crime trends and rule out non-correlates
- Use correlates in local planning tools that monitor “leading indicators” of juvenile crime trends (e.g., truancy, child abuse) – no new data collection
- Assess policy implications

OUR APPROACH

- Wide ranging review of the literature on conditions, events, and policies that increase or decrease the risk of serious and/or violent delinquency.
- Series of original research projects to fill gaps in knowledge
- Leading indicators models in:
 - Philadelphia
 - Los Angeles
 - Seattle; and
 - Denver

OUTLINE OF PROJECT REPORT

Chapter 1

- Executive Summary

Chapter 2

- Descriptive assessment of the national trends in serious juvenile crime and violence using both the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Chapter 3

- Focuses on trends in measurable conditions in communities, which may contribute to the national trends (e.g. concentration of poverty and employment opportunities).

Chapter 4

- Focuses on cultural factors that influence families, and in turn, children's involvement in delinquent behavior (e.g. risk and protective factors such as family structure, school, religiosity, legitimacy of the justice system, violence in the media, etc.).

Chapter 5

- Evaluation of the impact of prevention programs and practices on juvenile crime trends (e.g. prenatal care programs, police strategies, and public health programs aimed at reducing concentrated poverty).

PRODUCTS FROM THE PROJECT

- Leading Indicator Models: Seattle, Denver, Los Angeles, Philadelphia
- Academic Publications: 4 completed, 2 in process
- Project Final Report (December 2010)
- 5 OJJDP Research Bulletins Summarizing Findings

ACCOUNTING *vs.* CAUSATION

- Leading indicators: causes, correlates, precursors, policies
- Indicators that varied consistently with the 1985-2004 juvenile crime trends
- Plausibility, not certainty

Proposed Community-Level Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Size of the Crime-Prone Demographic Cohort (+)	No	No	Health Dept. Stats
Older Mothers (-)	Yes	Yes	Health Dept. stats Birthrate of children born to teen mothers
Concentrations of Low Economic Opportunity (+)	Yes	Yes	# new claims for food stamps, unemployment
Family Disruption (+)	Yes	Partially	# New TANF Claims # of poor female-headed households

Proposed Community-Level Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Unemployment (+)	Partially	Partially	Plant closures, adverse economic events, # new unemployment claims
Changes in the Drug Market & Punitive Responses from the Criminal Justice System (-)	Yes	Yes	Police data on drug marketing, violent crimes, property crimes, and drug enforcement
Shift in Juvenile Drug Preferences (crack->marij) (-)	Yes	N/A	Police data on drug marketing, violent crimes, property crimes, and drug enforcement

Proposed Cultural and Family-Level Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Cultural Influences			
Changes in the structure of the family	Partially	Partially	Divorce rates: # of single female headed households # of children in household
Legitimacy of Social Institutions (-)			
Schools	Mixed	Partially - Dropout rates inconsistent with trends	Truancy
Religious organizations	Yes	Yes	Youth group participation
Volunteer organizations	Yes	Yes	Participation in community organizations

Proposed Cultural and Family-Level Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Family Decline (+)	Yes	Oversimplified concept	N/A
Family Conditions			
Family size (+)	Yes	No	N/A
Family Conflict (+)	Yes	Yes	Police domestic disturbance calls, abuse reports
Parental control (-)	Yes	Yes	Truancy, curfew violations
Religiosity (-)	Yes	Yes	Youth group participation, Sunday school participation
Children's Exposure to Violent Media (+)	Partially	No	N/A

Proposed Cultural and Family-Level Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Gun ownership/use (+)	Yes	Partially -- complex -- self report surveys indicate guns were still widely available even when the use was declining.	Arrest data for possession of a Firearm Data on handgun production
Handgun Use/ Contagion (+)	Partially	Yes	Juvenile gun crimes (total and at school)
Gang Membership (+)	Yes	Partially	Police estimates of gang membership

Proposed Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators Involving Public Policy

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Primary Prevention Objectives			
Prenatal Substance Abuse/Low Birthweight (+) and Related Conditions (+)	Yes	No	Health Department birthweight stats. Newborns placed in foster care from birth hospital.
Blood Lead Levels (+) and Regulation (-)	Yes	Partially	Child blood lead levels
Preschool Programs (-)	Mixed	Partially	Head Start participation
Target Hardening (-)	Partially	Partially	Licensed alarms, private guards

Proposed Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators Involving Public Policy

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Improvements in Medical Technology and Emergency Services (-)	Disputed	Yes	Trauma center and emergency room openings/ closings,
State and Federal Sanctioning Policy (Higher Incarceration Rates) (-)	Yes (for total crime)	Partially	
Generic Policing Strategies Increased Staffing (-) Order Maintenance Policing (-) Community Policing (-)	Partial Yes Partially	Partial Partial Partial	Officers on patrol Operations reports Operations reports

Proposed Juvenile Crime Drop Explanations and Local Leading Indicators Involving Public Policy

Proposed Explanation	Research Evidence of a Link?	Fit Patterns and Trends?	Potential Local Leading Indicators
Focused Policing Strategies Hot Spots Policing (-) Gun Suppression (-) POP (-) Drug Market Crackdowns(-)	Yes Yes Yes Yes	Partial Partial Partial Partial	Operations reports
1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban (-)	No	N/A	N/A
Shall-Issue Gun Carry Laws (-)	Disputed	Disputed	Law change
Juvenile Justice Practice Changes Transfers to Criminal Court (-)	No	Partially	Number of juveniles transferred, number incarcerated.
Longer stays in Juvenile Facilities (-)	In question.	No	Juvenile commitment lengths.

***NON*- EXPLANATIONS OF 1985-2000 JUVENILE CRIME TRENDS**

- Cohort effects: the “violent predators” of the 1980s
- Changes in the size of the “at risk” juvenile population
- Media violence
- General trust of institutions
- "Family decline“
- Boot camps
- Changes in abortion laws

IMPLICATIONS OF LOCAL JUVENILE CRIME TRENDS, 1985-2000

- Drops were widespread: Need local explanations and local policies
- Child abuse and neglect trends: surprisingly simultaneous with juvenile crime
- Juvenile crime trends trail overall crime trends by about 2 years
- Poverty concentration and religiosity trends: overlooked in crime drop conversations
- Juvenile violence is extremely concentrated:
“Hot kids, hot spots, hot times”

Point Map of Medium to High Juvenile
Arrest Incident Trajectory Blocks
Seattle, Washington
1989 - 2002

Trajectory Groups

- ◊ Group 6
- ✦ Group 7
- * Group 8

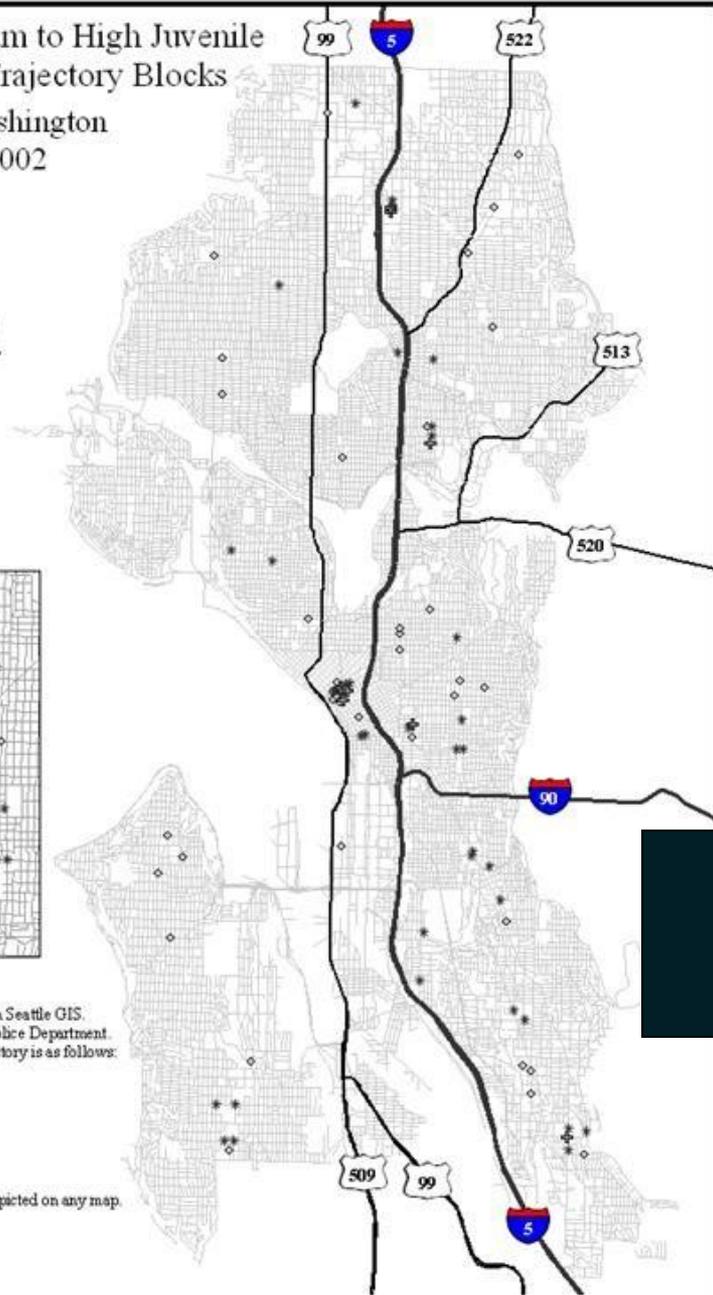
Downtown



Source: All base files were obtained from Seattle GIS.
Crime data was supplied by the Seattle Police Department.
The number of street blocks in each trajectory is as follows:

Group 1	N = 296
Group 3	N = 2,553
Group 4	N = 336
Group 5	N = 67
Group 6	N = 40
Group 7	N = 8
Group 8	N = 38

Trajectory group 2 (N = 26,067) is not depicted on any map.



**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
HOT SPOTS**

POLICY IMPLICATIONS / CONCLUSIONS

- **Juveniles best handled in juvenile system**
- **Strengthening youth bonds to local pro-social institutions such as schools, community and religious organizations:**
 - Pro-social programs, such as mentoring
 - Truancy prevention programs
- **Exposure to violence and child abuse / neglect**
 - Prevention efforts and victims services
- **Co-offending is not necessarily gang offending**
- **Build neighborhood capacity to prevent and reduce crime such as:**
 - Identifying neighborhood crime hot spots
 - Putting resources into hot spots areas;
 - Implementing firearms programs at the local level, e.g., Ceasefire programs

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