

# JUVENILE CRIME IN SAN MATEO COUNTY 1991 REPORT

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# JUVENILE CRIME IN SAN MATEO COUNTY 1991 REPORT

## **PREFACE**

The Criminal Justice Council of San Mateo County prepares this annual analysis of juvenile crime to provide information for planning and implementing juvenile justice programs and policies. This report includes the most current information on juvenile arrests and demographics and highlights important trends. This report draws data from calendar year 1991, the most recent time period for which crime and population statistics are available. San Mateo County's Planning Department, Probation Department, Office of Education, and local law enforcement agencies, and the State of California's Finance Department and Department of Justice (Bureau of Criminal Statistics) provided information for this report.

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### **SUMMARY**

Both the number of juvenile arrests and the juvenile arrest rate increased during 1991. In 1991, a total of 4,675 juvenile arrests were reported, up from 4,350 in 1990, yielding a percentage change of 7.5%. The 1991 arrest rate in San Mateo County was 32.7 per one thousand children, up from 30.5 in 1990. The statewide juvenile arrest rate was 31.2 in 1991. If children under twelve years are not included in the at risk population of San Mateo County, the arrest rate was 45.5 per one thousand children, compared to 44.0 for the state.

All categories of juvenile violations (felonies, misdemeanors and status offenses) increased in number from 1990 to 1991. Misdemeanor arrests continue to make up the majority of arrests of children in San Mateo County (57.6%.) However, felony charges represented a larger proportion of all juvenile arrests in 1991 than in 1990 (an increase of 2.7%,) while misdemeanors and status offenses each accounted for smaller proportions (down 2.6% and 0.1% respectively.) This trend may be due to either an increase in felony crimes committed by children, a shift in arrest policies and procedures, or a combination of the two. Total arrests of juveniles for alcohol and drug violations remained fairly constant in 1991; however, felony arrests for alcohol and drug offenses increased.

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## **CRIMES COMMITTED BY CHILDREN**

In 1991, 4,675 children were arrested in San Mateo County, an increase of 7.5% from 4,350 in 1990. Figure A details recent San Mateo County juvenile arrest trends.

Misdemeanor arrests still account for a majority (57.6%) of arrests, while felony arrests increased to 33.7% of all juvenile arrests, up from 31.0% in 1990. Status offenses remained nearly constant at 8.7% (from 8.8% in 1990.) Figure B shows 1991 juvenile violations, broken down by category.

Over the last few years, misdemeanor and status offense arrests have remained fairly constant, but the number of felony arrests has increased slightly every year since 1986 (with the exception of 1990), yielding an average increase of 9.4% per year. In 1991, there were 1,574 felony arrests of children, a 16.8% increase from 1990. While misdemeanors are up 2.9% from 1990 and status offenses are up 6.3%, violations in these categories have remained generally consistent over the past nine years. Figure C details these trends.

### **Felony Arrests**

Figure D1 details breakdown by percentage of juvenile arrests for felonies in 1991. Burglary, as in past years, accounted for the largest proportion of juvenile felony arrests in 1991, with 441 arrests, or 28% of the total. Also accounting for large shares of felony arrests were motor vehicle theft (252 arrests, 16%) and theft (224 arrests, 14.2%). The increases in these three offenses alone account for 64.6% of the increase in felony arrests. Felony arrests for homicide fell from five to four. Felony arrests for marijuana increased from 24 to 41 and dangerous drugs increased from 7 to 13. The largest percentage increase in felony arrest was forcible rape, up from 7 arrests in 1990 to 15 in 1991.

### **Misdemeanor Arrests**

Petty theft arrests accounted for the largest portion (38.3%) of misdemeanors, with 1,032 arrests; petty theft arrests for 1991 remained nearly constant with 1990 and 1989 levels. Assault and battery was the second most common offense, with 479 arrests, or 17.8% of the total misdemeanor arrests. This figure constitutes no significant change since 1990. Malicious Mischief accounted for 11.0% of misdemeanor arrests, with 297 arrests in 1991, down slightly from 321 in 1990. Figure D2 shows the breakdown of misdemeanor arrests by offense.

### **Status Offenses**

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF ARRESTED CHILDREN

### Age

According to Department of Finance estimates, the number of children (ages one day through 17 years) in San Mateo County increased to 142,755 in 1991. While the estimated population growth was less than 2%, arrests of children increased by 7.5%.

The approximate average age of an arrested child in 1991 was 14.8 years, almost unchanged from 14.9 years in 1990. The approximate average age of a child arrested for a felony in 1991 was 14.9 years, compared to 15.1 years in 1990 and 15.2 years in 1989. This year, then, marks the third straight year that the average age of juvenile felony arrests has decreased slightly. For misdemeanors, the average age also decreased, from 14.8 in 1990 to 14.4 in 1991. For status offenders, the average age rose to 15.1 years, up from 14.6 in 1990.

As in past years, older children are more likely to be arrested than younger children. Because census data for the population of specific age groups is not available for 1991, the arrest rate cannot be accurately determined for each age group. However, arrest data can be broken down into the following age categories: 0-11 years, 12-13 years, 14-15 years, and 16-17 years. Arrest data from 1991 indicates that children from the 12-13 year category and the 14-15 year category accounted for larger portions of juvenile arrests than in previous years. This trend is most marked in the category of felony arrests. Although no age group accounted for as many felony arrests as the 16 to 17 year-olds, all younger age groups accounted for a higher portion of felony arrests than in 1990. (See table.)

Age	1991 Percentage of total Felonies	1990 Percentage of Total Felonies	Percentage Change
0-11 Yrs.	4.7%	4.3%	0.4%
12-13 Yrs.	14.5%	12.4%	2.1%
14-15 Yrs.	38.6%	33.2%	5.4%
16-17 Yrs.	42.1%	50.1%	-8.0%

Table 2 (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

The total number of arrests has increased for each age category since 1990; however, arrests in the three youngest age categories were marked by more significant increases than older age brackets. Table 3 details the changes in total arrests by age category.

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## **POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS**

1. In response to the over-representation of African-American children in the juvenile justice system, the Criminal Justice Council recommends:

- An in-depth examination of the causes of this over-representation.
- A review of existing programs to ensure that they effectively serve San Mateo County's African-American communities.
- Development of new programs to respond to identified needs of the County's children.
- An examination of the County's methods of preventing and punishing juvenile crime in order to reverse the increasing offenses by females and ethnic minorities other than African-Americans.

2. In response to the increase in arrests of younger children in 1991, the Criminal Justice Council recommends:

- An investigation of the causes for an increasing number of arrests of younger children for felonies and other serious crimes.
- Efforts to reduce the incidence of serious crimes not only among older children but also among the younger groups whose crime rates are increasing. Juvenile crime prevention and correction in San Mateo County should be directed with an awareness of these new age-related trends.

3. In response to the general trend of increase in juvenile crime, the Criminal Justice Council recommends:

- A review of the factors which have contributed to a long-term increase in the number of children committed to the California Youth Authority.
- A review of existing commitment policies in order to reduce the number of children incarcerated locally and to develop new programs as alternatives to local incarceration.
- An investigation of the reasons for juvenile offenses and an effort to provide San Mateo County's children with realistic and appealing alternatives to crime.
- Implementation and improvement of crime prevention programs in order to reduce the number of juvenile crimes committed.

Age	1991 Percentage of total Arrests	1990 Percentage of Total Arrests	Percentage Change
0-11 Yrs.	6.4%	5.4%	1.0%
12-13 Yrs.	16.5%	15.4%	1.1%
14-15 Yrs.	35.9%	35.1%	0.8%
16-17 Yrs.	41.3%	44.1%	-2.8%

Table 3 (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

Despite the general decrease in age of arrested children, certain long-term trends remain true: arrests for felonies and misdemeanors increased with age. Status offenders were concentrated among the 14 and 15 year-olds, who represent the smallest portion of the juvenile population. This peak was most dramatic for the runaway category. With 203 runaways, the 14 to 15 year-old group accounted for nearly one half of all runaway.

## Gender

The increase in arrests for females in 1991 was 6.7%, quite consistent with the 7.5% increase in overall arrests. Females constituted 25.5% of juvenile arrests in 1991, nearly unchanged from 25.7% in 1990. Females made up 48.5% of San Mateo County's youth population in 1991. The total number of female arrests increased from 1,116 in 1990 to 1,191 in 1991; violations increased in all categories except status offenses. Nonetheless, females continue to account for the majority of status offenders, with 208 out of a total 407. Females accounted for 129 out of 203 arrest in the runaway category alone. Tables 4 and 5 compare 1990 and 1991 juvenile arrest statistics by gender.

### Female Juvenile Arrests, San Mateo County, 1991 and 1990

	1991	1990	Percentage Change
Felonies	222	202	+9.9%
Misdemeanors	761	696	+9.3%
Status Offenses	208	218	-4.6%
Total	1191	1116	+6.7%

Table 4 (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

**Male Juvenile Arrests, San Mateo County, 1991 and 1990**

	1991	1990	Percentage Change
Felonies	1352	1146	+18.0%
Misdemeanors	1933	1923	+0.5%
Status Offenses	199	165	+20.6%
Total	3484	3234	+7.7%

**Table 5** (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

**Ethnic Background**

School enrollment data highlights the changing composition of San Mateo County's youth population. Enrollment of Latino students (up 1.36%), Filipino students (up 0.10%), and Native American students (up 0.07%) continued to increase in 1991, as it has for several years. Enrollment of African-American students (down 0.17%) and white students (down 1.33%) continued to drop in 1991. Reversing a previous trend, enrollment of Asian and Pacific Islander students decreased slightly, by 0.02% and 0.01%, respectively.

Figure E1 shows the Office of Education's enrollment by ethnicity. Not included in these ethnic demographic statistics are 14,000 San Mateo County private school children and high school dropouts. However, Census data from 1990 indicates that the Office of Education's enrollment statistics differ from population statistics by less than 1% in the case of each ethnic group. (Neither the Census Bureau nor the Department of Finance provides population statistics by ethnicity for 1991.)

Comparisons between Figure E1 and Figure E2, which details juvenile arrests by ethnicity, reveal little correlation between the ethnic composition of juvenile arrestees and the ethnic composition of the entire San Mateo County juvenile population.

Information on juvenile arrests indicates that African-American children are over-represented in the San Mateo County juvenile justice system and that the disparity has continued over a long period. In 1991, African-American children constituted 7.32% of the juvenile population of San Mateo County, yet 20.0% of all juvenile arrests were of African-Americans. The 1991 arrest rate for African-American children in San Mateo County was 86.6 per one-thousand, whereas the arrest rate for children of every other race and ethnicity was only 28.3 per one thousand.

The percentage of Latino children arrested was comparable to the percentage of Latino children in the juvenile population, at 27.0% and 26.14%, respectively. The percentage of juvenile arrestees who were white was far below white children's proportion of the juvenile population at large.

A comparison of the changes in juvenile crime between 1990 and 1991 suggests these trends could be changing. Arrests of African-American children were up only marginally, whereas other ethnic groups showed significant increases. The most marked ethnic change in arrest patterns was a 30.3% increase of arrests of those juveniles classified as "other." This change could perhaps be due to an increase or demographic change in the juvenile population not classified as white, Latino, or African-American.

**Percentage Change in Juvenile Arrests between 1990 and 1991  
by Ethnicity and Severity**

	Latino	White	African-American	Other	Total
Felonies	29.4%	8.5%	0.5%	33.5%	16.8%
Misdemeanors	-7.9%	2.7%	1.7%	26.5%	2.8%
Status Offenses	-8.1%	9.5%	-8.6%	43.6%	6.3%
Total	3.1%	5.1%	0.7%	30.3%	7.5%

**Table 6** (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

**Gang Membership**

Some San Mateo County juvenile police officers reported arrests of children whom police believe to be affiliated with gangs. There were few reports of organized crime activity by gangs; however, some suspected gang members were charged with conspiracy in addition to other criminal offenses, which if proved, increased the potential penalties for the child. The charge of conspiracy implies that gang members previously met and decided to commit a crime.

The Criminal Justice Council is currently creating a task force to investigate the impact of gangs on juvenile crime; this task force will focus on the relation between arrests and gang membership in San Mateo County.

**Geography**

Figures on the permanent residences of arrested juveniles are not available; however, the Probation Department compiles residence statistics on the juveniles under its supervision. Most towns have probation rates of one percent or less, but a few towns have higher rates. Daly City and the combined area of Atherton, Menlo Park, and Portola Valley have probation rates slightly higher than 1%. The data for Redwood City and Woodside cannot be separated and the combined area has a probation rate of 1.7%. East Palo Alto has by far the highest percentage of juveniles on probation, at 3.4%. The county average is 1.2%.

<b>Juveniles on Probation, by City, San Mateo County, 1990</b>			
	Juvenile	Probation Cases	% on Probation
Atherton, MP, PV	7,489	95	1.3%
Belmont	4,266	26	0.6%
Brisbane	536	6	1.1%
Burlingame/Hillsbr.	4,387	31	0.7%
Daly City	22,135	293	1.2%
East Palo Alto	7,699	259	3.4%
Foster City	5,777	49	0.8%
Half Moon Bay	2,149	17	0.8%
Millbrae	3,981	24	0.6%
Pacifica	9,318	30	0.3%
RW City/Woodside	15,557	265	1.7%
San Bruno	8,470	80	0.9%
San Carlos	4,975	55	1.1%
San Mateo	16,082	175	1.1%
South San Francisco	13,114	146	1.1%
Total	125,935	1553	1.2%

**Table 7 (Probation Department)**

The percentages of children under probationary supervision in 1991 are listed by town in Table 5. These percentages are based on 1991 arrest statistics and juvenile population figures from the 1990 census. Unfortunately, no information on juvenile population by city is available for 1991. In Table 5, some towns, such as Atherton, Menlo Park, and Portola Valley, are combined because probationary statistics are sorted by zip code. Thus, the probation rates listed may not accurately reflect the rate for cities within each group.

### **Punishment and Rehabilitation**

Despite the increase in juvenile arrests, locked facility admissions decreased 0.7% in 1991. In San Mateo County, a total of 4,187 children were admitted to Juvenile Hall in 1991, down

from 4,206 in 1990. The average daily population of Juvenile Hall increased 6.9% from 131 in 1990 to 139 in 1991. At Camp Glenwood, 122 commitments were made in 1991, compared to 130 in

1990. In 1991, 34 children were new commitments to the California Youth Authority, down from 39 in 1990. In 1991, 16 children were sent to VisionQuest, down from 22 in 1990. VisionQuest is an outdoor rehabilitation program in Arizona, designed an alternative for children who would otherwise be sent to the California Youth Authority. In 1991 Hillcrest also referred twelve juveniles to the Arizona Boys Ranch, a similar alternative rehabilitation program.

Of all categories of juvenile violations in 1991, status offenses remained the most constant. Status offenders are juveniles who are habitually disobedient or truant, beyond parental control or in violation of curfew ordinances. The total number of status offense petitions increased 6.3% in 1991, from 383 in 1990 to 407, representing 8.7% of all citations or arrests of children.

Most status offenders were runaways, although the number of runaways decreased 29.8% to 203 in 1991. Truancy cases increased from seven in 1990 to 22 in 1991. The change in truancy is difficult to measure because only a small fraction of truants are cited for status offenses. Many schools address truancy through the intervention of school review boards, without involving the juvenile justice system. Curfew violators continued to increase in 1991, from 37 in 1990 to 51 (the 1989 figure was only 8.) The breakdown of status offenses is shown in Figure D3.

### **Alcohol and Other Drug Violations**

The number of arrests of children for narcotics, marijuana and other drug law violations fell from 149 to 144 in 1991, a percentage change of -3.3%. A marked change however, was noticeable in the percentage of drug law violators arrested on felony charges. In 1990, 54.4% of drug law violators were arrested for felonies, while the 1991 figure is 62.5%. In 1991, felony arrests for marijuana increased from 24 to 41 arrests, and arrests for dangerous drugs increased from 7 to 13 instances.

The number of arrests of children for drunkenness and liquor law violations increased slightly, from 161 arrests in 1990 to 169 arrests, a change of 4.9%. In addition, misdemeanor arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol increased from 36 arrests in 1990 to 45 arrests in 1991. Felony arrests for driving under the influence continued to be negligible (one incident).

Despite the low number of arrests for alcohol and drug violations, arrest statistics may not accurately reflect the incidence of drug and alcohol use among the juvenile population addressed in this report. Many juveniles who are arrested for other charges are later found to be drug or alcohol users. Available data provides no means of statistically representing the effect of drug or alcohol use on other juvenile violations.

### **Arrest Trends**

The number of children arrested and the absolute and percentage changes for each offense are disclosed in Table 1.

<u>FELONIES</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>Absolute Change</u>	<u>Percentage Change</u>
Homicide	5	4	-1	-20%
Rape	7	15	8	114%
Robbery	96	82	-14	-14.6%
Assault	129	161	32	24.8%
Burglary	375	441	66	17.6%
Theft	196	224	28	14.3%
Auto Theft	200	252	52	26%
Forgery	22	30	8	36.4%
Arson	24	24	0	0
Narcotics	50	36	-14	-28%
Marijuana	24	41	17	70.8%
Dangerous Drugs	7	13	6	85.7%
Weapons	95	96	1	1.1%
All Other	118	155	37	31.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1348</b>	<b>1574</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>16.8%</b>

#### MISDEMEANORS

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>		
Assault & Battery	468	479	11	2.3%
Petty Theft	1047	1032	-15	-1.4%
Other Theft	13	12	-1	-7.7%
Trespassing	74	105	31	41.9%
Marijuana	43	37	-6	-14%
Other Drugs	25	17	-8	-32%
Drunk	76	86	10	13.1%
Liquor Laws	85	83	-2	-2.4%
Disturbing Peace	113	143	30	26.5%
Mal. Mischief	321	297	-24	-7.5%
DUI	36	45	9	25%
Joy Riding	70	83	13	18.6%
All Other	248	275	27	10.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2619</b>	<b>2694</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

#### STATUS OFFENSES

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>		
Truancy	7	22	15	214%
Runaway	289	203	-86	-29.7%
Curfew	37	51	14	37.8%
Incorrigible	19	70	51	268%
All Other	31	61	30	96.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Total Arrests</b>	<b>4350</b>	<b>4675</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>7.5%</b>

Table 1 (Bureau of Criminal Statistics)

Several different factors may have contributed to the changing numbers in this year's arrest statistics. Arrest patterns are affected by changes in local ordinances, law enforcement policies and procedures, actual crimes committed, demographics, and other sociological considerations.