

# Juvenile Drug Arrests Declining More Than Adult Drug Arrests



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by Jeffrey A. Butts  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Changes in the per capita rate of arrests for drug-related offenses varied by offender age. Between 1980 and 2014 (the most recent data available) and based on statistics compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and disseminated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within the U.S. Department of Justice, the nationwide decline in drug arrests for juveniles was far steeper than the decline in adult drug arrests after the mid-1990s.

Between 1991 and 1997, the arrest rate for juveniles (under age 18) increased sharply, from just under 300 arrests per 100,000 juveniles nationwide to nearly 700 arrests per 100,000. The rate then plummeted, reaching a low of 339 per 100,000 in 2014—lower than the 1980 rate and nearly as low as the lowest rate recorded between 1980 and 1990.

The pattern in adult drug arrests was quite different. Adult arrests, of course, always outnumber juvenile arrests. In 2014, the national estimate of juvenile drug arrests was slightly more than 110,000. That year, there were more than 200,000 drug arrests involving young adults between ages 18 and 20, and nearly 300,000 arrests of adults between ages 21 and 24.

When arrest rates are calculated as the number of arrests per 100,000 population, it is clear that juveniles are far less likely to be arrested for drug offenses. In 2014, the per capita drug arrest rate for 18-20 year-old adults was more than five times higher than the rate for juveniles (1,805 vs 339 per 100,000).

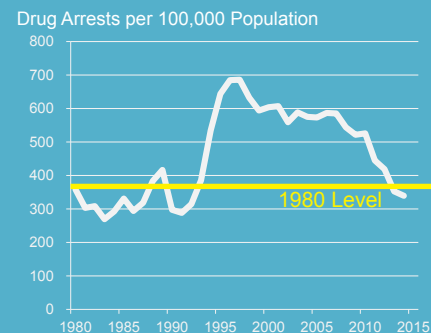
In recent years, however, juvenile arrest rates declined far more than did adult arrest rates. Juvenile arrests increased from 1990 to 1997 and then declined sharply. Adult arrests continued to grow well into the 2000s and then dropped more slowly. Drug arrest rates for 18-20 year-olds did not peak until 2006.

All age groups experienced falling drug arrest rates after 2006, but none of the adult arrest rates declined as much as did the juvenile drug arrest rate. While drug arrest rates for adults increased slightly between 2013 and 2014, juvenile arrest rates continued to decline. Even when the juvenile rate is restricted to ages 15-17, the pattern remains consistent. By 2014, the drug arrest rate for 15-17 year-olds dropped below the 1980 rate for that age group.

## Drug Arrests by Age of Offender: 1980-2014

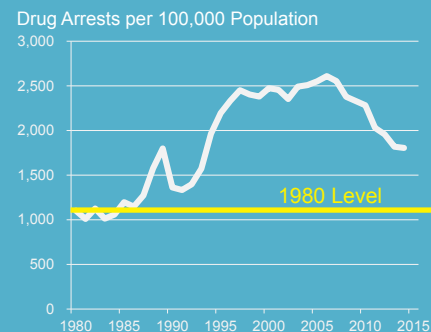
### Juvenile: Ages 10-17

1980 Rate	358
Peak Rate (1997)	686
2014 Rate	339
% Decline from Peak to 2014	-47%



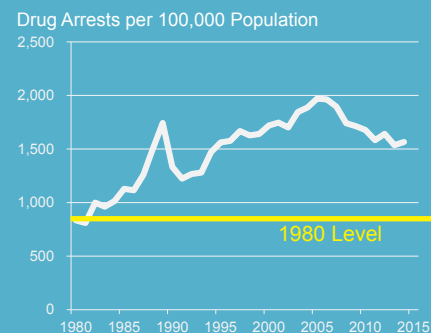
### Adult: Ages 18-20

1980 Rate	1,102
Peak Rate (2006)	2,609
2014 Rate	1,805
% Decline from Peak to 2014	-31%



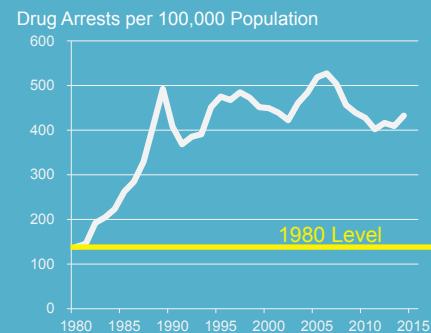
### Adult: Ages 21-24

1980 Rate	834
Peak Rate (2005)	1,971
2014 Rate	1,565
% Decline from Peak to 2014	-20%



### Adult: Ages 25+

1980 Rate	139
Peak Rate (2006)	527
2014 Rate	433
% Decline from Peak to 2014	-18%



Drug arrests include possession, manufacturing and sales of controlled substances.

#### DATA SOURCE:

National arrest estimates for 1980-2012 are from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Estimates for 2013-2014 were calculated by John Jay College using BJS methods. Juvenile rates calculated by BJS represent the number of arrests per 100,000 population ages 0-17. This analysis uses ages 10-17 as the basis for juvenile arrest rates.

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