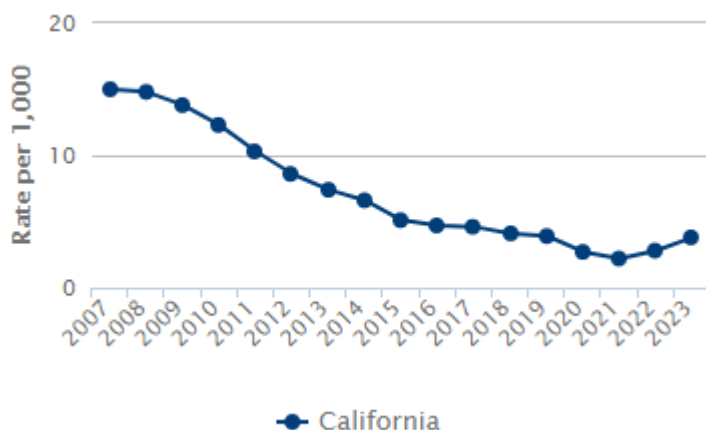


Juvenile Felony Arrests in California

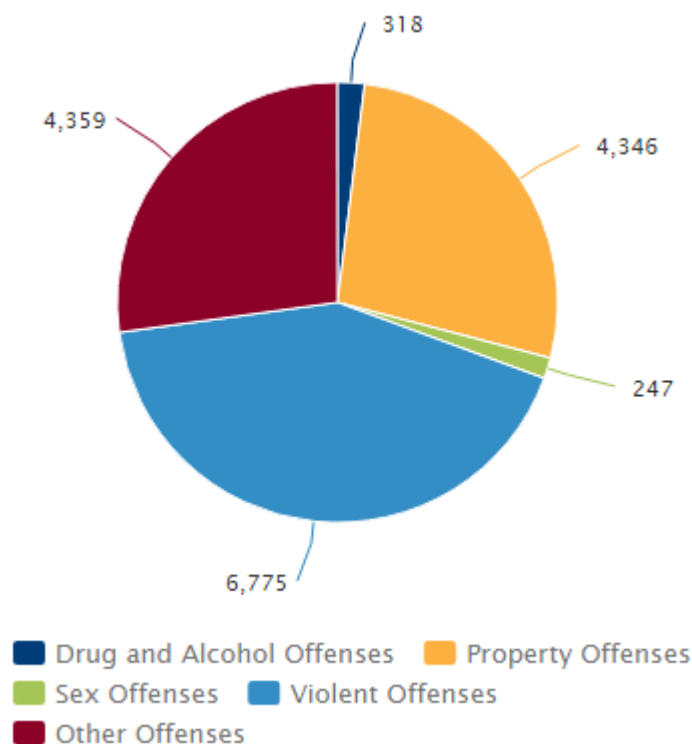
Rate of Felony Arrest Among Juveniles Ages 10-17



Definition: Number of felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17 (e.g., in 2023, the felony arrest rate among California juveniles was 3.8 arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17).

Data Source: California Dept. of Justice, [Crime Statistics: Arrests](#); California Dept. of Finance, [Population Estimates and Projections](#) (Jan. 2025).

Number of Felony Arrests Among Youth Ages 17 and Under, by Type of Offense: 2023
California



What It Is

This topic describes felony arrests among children under age 18. Felonies include violent offenses (assault, homicide, kidnapping, rape, and robbery), property offenses (such as arson, burglary, forgery, and theft), drug and alcohol offenses, sex offenses, and others (such as driving under the influence, hit-and-run, and weapons offenses). Indicators on kidsdata.org include:

- The rate of felony arrest per 1,000 juveniles ages 10-17 overall, by gender, and by race/ethnicity
- The number of felony arrests among youth ages 17 and younger overall, and the number and percentage of felony arrests by gender, by race/ethnicity, and by type of offense

Why This Topic Is Important

Most young people who are arrested are not ultimately convicted of a crime, but those who experience police contact, detention, or incarceration are at increased risk for a number of negative outcomes that can have long-term consequences, such as mental and physical health problems, dropping out of school, difficulty with employment, and re-arrest. Research suggests that adolescence and young adulthood is a phase of development when young people are especially vulnerable to the impacts of law enforcement interaction, and has linked any length of detention or incarceration with a higher likelihood of poor physical and mental health in adulthood.

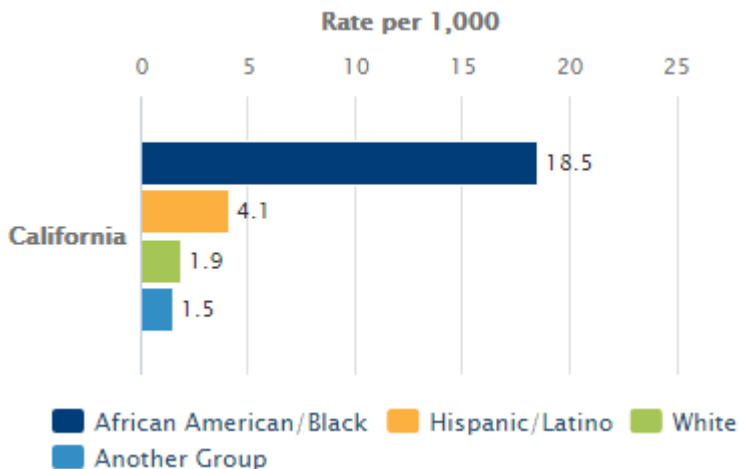
Many youth enter the juvenile justice system with existing health problems. For example, young people with mental health disorders are at least three times more likely to have contact with the system than those without such conditions. More than 65% of youth arrested each year have mental illnesses, and many enter the justice system because health care or other systems are not meeting their needs. Further, the vast majority of these young people have experienced some form of trauma during childhood, and justice system involvement can re-traumatize them, creating further challenges for healthy development.

Juvenile justice involvement is not experienced equally across groups. Youth of color are consistently over-represented at every stage, from arrest to incarceration, and disparate treatment of children of color compared with their white peers has been documented widely. LGBTQ youth also are disproportionately represented in the justice system. These

Definition: Number of felony arrests among youth ages 17 and under, by type of offense (e.g., in 2023, there were 4,346 felony arrests for property offenses among California juveniles).

Data Source: California Dept. of Justice, [Crime Statistics: Arrests](#) (Jan. 2025).

Rate of Felony Arrest Among Juveniles Ages 10-17, by Race/Ethnicity: 2023



Definition: Number of felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17, by race/ethnicity (e.g., in 2023, the felony arrest rate among Hispanic/Latino juveniles in California was 4.1 arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17).

Data Source: California Dept. of Justice, [Crime Statistics: Arrests](#); California Dept. of Finance, [Population Estimates and Projections](#) (Jan. 2025).

Rate of Felony Arrest Among Juveniles Ages 10-17: 2023

Locations	Rate per 1,000
California	3.8
Alameda County	4.0
Contra Costa County	2.9
Fresno County	5.7
Kern County	5.3
Los Angeles County	3.5
Orange County	2.9
Riverside County	1.7
Sacramento County	5.7
San Bernardino County	3.6
San Diego County	3.5
Santa Clara County	3.1

Definition: Number of felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17 (e.g., in 2023, the felony arrest rate among California juveniles was 3.8 arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17).

Data Source: California Dept. of Justice, [Crime Statistics: Arrests](#); California Dept. of Finance, [Population Estimates and Projections](#) (Jan. 2025).

inequities not only affect individuals but also the families and communities around them. Communities with high levels of youth incarceration typically also have higher rates of poverty and inadequate housing, health care, and other resources. To achieve equitable treatment and opportunities for all young people, continued multisector efforts and investments are needed across systems and institutions, as well as an increased focus on providing hope, healing, and support.

How Children Are Faring

Between 1980 and 2020, the felony arrest rate among California juveniles ages 10-17 fell by more than 90%, from 31.9 arrests per 1,000 youth to 2.7 per 1,000. Over the same period, a drop of more than two thirds was recorded in every county with data. After a further decline to 2.2 per 1,000 in 2021, two consecutive years of rising statewide rates followed in 2022 and 2023. Juveniles were arrested for felony offenses at a rate of 3.8 per 1,000 in 2023—similar to levels before the COVID-19 pandemic (3.9 per 1,000 in 2019). This two-year upswing is the first since 2007, and the largest since the late 1980s.

Juvenile felony arrest rates vary widely at the county level, from 1.4 arrests per 1,000 juveniles to 8.9 per 1,000 in 2023. African American/black youth are arrested for felonies at higher rates than their peers in other groups: Statewide, the rate of felony arrest among African American/black juveniles ages 10-17 in 2023 (18.5 per 1,000) was more than four times the rate for Hispanic/Latino juveniles (4.1 per 1,000) and almost ten times the rate for white juveniles (1.9 per 1,000). In 2023, African American/black and Hispanic/Latino youth accounted for nearly 80% of all felony arrests involving juveniles under age 18.

Violent offenses (assault, homicide, kidnapping, rape, and robbery) were the most common type of felony for which California youth were arrested in 2023, at 42%, followed by property offenses (e.g., arson, burglary, forgery, theft) at 27%, and drug/alcohol and sex offenses at 2% each; all other offenses (including driving under the influence, hit-and-run, and weapons violations) made up the remaining 27%. Statewide, boys account for the vast majority of felony arrests among youth under age 18—82% in 2023.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:

<https://sanfrancisco.kidsdata.org/topic/30/juvenile-arrests/summary>



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