

Voices From The Heartland

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Crime statistics—good news and bad news

Recently, *The Times* published the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR) statistics for Lake County.¹ Although these figures give us a picture of overall crime in Lake County, they provide little information about specific populations involved in these crimes. For example, what do we know about Lake County youth and their involvement in crime? Understanding the nature of juvenile crime is of the utmost importance as delinquent youth may continue engaging in criminal behavior into early adulthood.² Moreover, adolescents who become life-long offenders may be at risk for later physical and mental health problems.³

The data used

Arrest statistics were used when analyzing juvenile crime trends. Arrest statistics, but not crime reported statistics, provide information on the juvenile status of the offender. The arrest statistics analyzed were gathered from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NAJCD) website.⁴ The NAJCD compile FBI UCR data, estimate the monthly missing data (as law enforcement agencies in Indiana are *not* required to report UCR data⁵), and release it to the public for research purposes.

According to the FBI, juveniles are defined as persons under the age of 18. An arrest is counted for each person committing the crime. If five people are arrested for one crime, the arrest data reflect five people were arrested. If one person commits several crimes and is arrested, only the most serious offense is recorded as one arrest.⁶

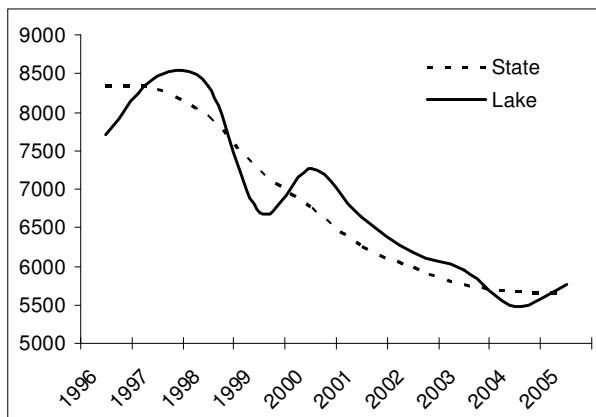


Figure 1 - Juvenile arrest rates, Lake County and Indiana (1996-2005)

Overall trends

The encouraging news is that juvenile arrests have decreased since 1996. In 2005, there were an estimated 3,488 juvenile arrests in Lake County. These numbers reflect a 31% drop in the overall number of juvenile arrests since they peaked in 1997 with 5,057 arrests. The overall Juvenile Arrest Rate (JAR; number of juvenile arrests per 100,000 juveniles⁷) declined 32% from a high of 8,465 in 1997 to 5,760 in 2005. This drop corresponds with Indiana's downward trend in the past decade (Figure 1).

Lake County juvenile arrest rates for index and specific crimes (1996-2005)

The FBI categorizes crime into two major indices: the Violent Crime Index and the Property Crime Index. Other crimes are considered nonindex crimes. The Violent Crime Index consists of the following four crimes: murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The Property Crime Index is comprised of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The Violent Crime Index and Property Crime Index JARs have both dropped between 1996 and 2005 by 26% and 17%, respectively. JARs for both indices, however, remained steady or increased between 2004 and 2005 (Table 1).

Examining all index and nonindex crimes separately shows that a majority of JARs fell between 1996 and 2005 in Lake County. JARs for stolen property, offenses against family and children, DUI, and disorderly conduct, on the other hand, have notably increased since 1996. Additionally, robbery, larceny-theft, weapons law violations, sex offender

violations, and vandalism JARs have resurged since 2000 (Table 1).⁸

Lake County vs. Indiana juvenile arrest rates

Lake County’s and Indiana’s JARs in 2005 were for the most part similar to one another, with a few exceptions. Lake County’s 2005 JAR was notably higher than Indiana’s for six crimes: offenses against family and children (460% higher), robbery (97%), DUI (53%), vandalism (41%), weapons laws violations (34%), and larceny-theft (21%). Lake County juveniles have correspondingly shown less improvement over time in these crimes compared to their Indiana peers.

Conversely, JARs for arson and stolen property were 50% and 27% higher (respectively) for Indiana versus Lake County. Between 1996–2005, Lake County juveniles have shown more improvement than Indiana juveniles in arson and drug abuse JARs.

Drug abuse—a closer look

Although the overall drug abuse JRA dropped 21% in Lake County from 1996-2005, this is somewhat misleading. Drug abuse rates are comprised of two sub-rates: drug possession and drug sale. Separately examining these two sub-rates reveals a disparity in how these rates have changed over time.

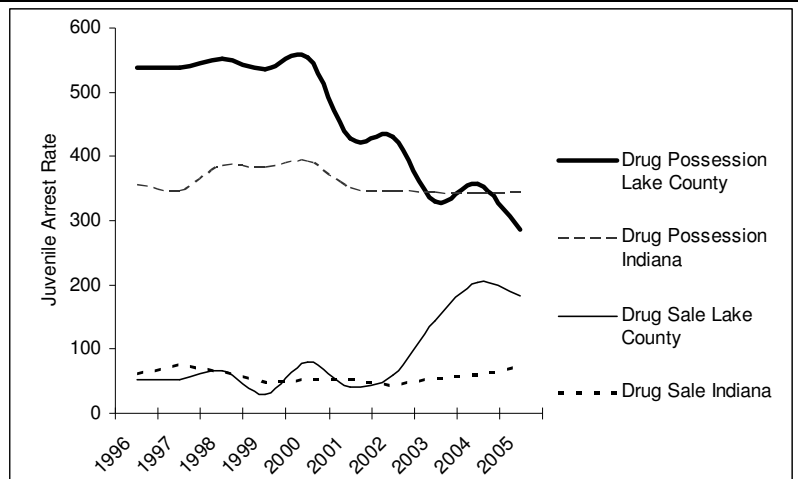


Figure 2 - Drug possession and drug sale juvenile arrest rates in Lake County and Indiana (1996-2005)

While Lake County's drug possession JARs have always remained higher than drug sale JARs, drug possession JARs have fallen 47% between 1996 and 2005. Namely, drug possession JARs for cocaine and synthetic drugs have decreased in Lake County. The drug possession JAR dropped to 16% below Indiana’s 2005 JAR from 51% above the state rate in 1996.

The drug sale JAR has instead escalated (up 254%) since 1996. Rates for selling cocaine and marijuana have driven this increase. The 2005 Lake County drug sale JAR was about 250% higher than Indiana’s; in 1996, the Lake County drug sale JAR was 16% lower than Indiana’s.

Table 1 - 2005 Juvenile arrest rates and percent change for Lake County and Indiana

Offense	Lake Rate 2005	% Change in Rates (Lake)			Indiana Rate 2005	% Change in Rates (IN)		
		1996-2005	2001-2005	2004-2005		1996-2005	2001-2005	2004-2005
Overall Crime	5760	-25	-13	5	5642	-32	-10	0
Violent Crime Index	282	-26	-10	6	248	-33	-19	-8
Property Crime Index	1292	-17	-2	32	1133	-41	-14	-1
Robbery	63	-4	60	39	32	-29	-19	-09
Aggravated Assault	210	-23	-22	-2	207	-34	-20	-9
Burglary	131	-18	-8	13	151	-33	-5	-3
Larceny-theft	1054	-13	3	42	868	-41	-15	-3
Motor Vehicle Theft	96	-48	-31	-6	96	-52	-15	11
Arson	12	-1	-15	-13	18	-22	14	14
Simple Assault	52	-23	21	23	60	13	21	16
Stolen Property	144	72	-24	-3	183	104	-18	4
Vandalism	279	-9	26	44	198	-28	-20	2
Weapons law violations	43	-65	48	3	32	-55	-6	35
Sex Offender	35	-55	27	-1	40	17	17	-12
Offenses against family	301	319	1371	14	57	-15	15	-12
Drug Abuse Violations	459	-21	0	-17	417	-2	3	4
DUI	58	50	26	65	38	22	-22	-14
Liquor Laws	469	-35	-31	1	503	-22	-15	-3
Disorderly Conduct	465	49	-01	-10	456	44	5	-1

Table 2 – Percent change in Lake County juvenile and adult arrest numbers 1996-2005⁸

Offense	Juveniles	Adults	Offense	Juveniles	Adults
Overall Crime	-23%	25%	Stolen Property	74%	771%
Violent Crime Index	-25%	-21%	Vandalism	-07%	44%
Property Crime Index	-17%	3%	Weapons law	-64%	-26%
Robbery	-03%	-16%	Sex Offender	-54%	-12%
Aggravated Assault	-23%	-20%	Drug Abuse Violations	-20%	36%
Burglary	-17%	-09%	Possession	-46%	0%
Larceny-theft	-12%	07%	Sale	258%	302%
Motor Vehicle Theft	-48%	-22%	DUI	52%	-44%
Arson	0%	-17%	Liquor Laws	-35%	66%
Simple Assault	-22%	11%	Disorderly Conduct	51%	-26%

As the Lake County drug possession JAR declined in the last decade, the drug sale JAR increased (Figure 2). This pattern does not hold for the same drug-related JARs in Indiana, where rates have been static since 1996.

Juvenile and adult arrests in Lake County

Compared to Lake County adults, juvenile arrest numbers have more consistently fallen in the past decade. The two exceptions are for DUI and disorderly conduct, as juvenile arrest numbers increased by about 50% and adult arrest numbers decreased by 26% or more. For robbery and arson, adult arrest numbers declined slightly, while juvenile arrest numbers remained steady. Although juvenile and adult arrests increased for both stolen property and drug sale, growth for juveniles was more stunted (Table 2).

Summary

Lake County juveniles today are being arrested for less crime than their 1996 counterparts. These decreases have been greater in the last decade for Lake County juveniles versus adults, and comparable to Indiana's juveniles. Yet, some arrests have shown growth in the last few years. People committed to Lake County youth should investigate why they are being more frequently arrested for offenses against the family and children and drug sales. The juvenile arrest rates for these offenses have exponentially grown since the turn of the century. To a lesser extent, other juvenile offenses on the rise in Lake County (i.e., robbery, stolen property, DUI, disorderly conduct, vandalism, weapons laws, and larceny-theft) should be closely monitored. By taking a vigilant stance now, we can continue to see Lake County youth being involved in less crime and more positive outcomes.

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¹ "FBI: Violence in region down from last year"

http://nwtimes.com/articles/2007/09/25/updates/top_stories/doc46f8fae600ee203788876.txt

² Masssglia, M. (2006). Desistance or Displacement? The Changing Patterns of Offending from Adolescence to Young Adulthood. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 22, 215-239.

³ Piquero, A. R. et al. (2007). Are Life-Course-Persistent Offenders At Risk for Adverse Health Outcomes? *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 44, 185-207.

⁴ U.S. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data [United States]: County-Level Detailed Arrest And Offense Data, 1996-2005* [Computer file]. Various Editions. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [producer and distributor]. Published 2001-2007. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/>

⁵ It should be noted that not all Indiana law enforcement agencies report their UCR data to the FBI on a monthly basis (they are not required by law). Thus, the NACJD uses different formulas to estimate this missing data depending on how many months are missing. Between 1996 and 2005, the years covered in this report, data reported ranged about 60%-80% complete for Lake County. The other 20-40% of this data was estimated off of available data. While some have pointed out flaws in this procedure (e.g., Martz & Targonski, 2002), currently this is our best indicator of year to year change in Lake County juvenile arrests.

⁶ "Juvenile Arrests 2004"

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojdp/214563/contents.html>

⁷ Juvenile arrest rate estimates were conducted according to FBI standards. Arrests were divided by the number of juveniles ages 10-17 in Lake County (numbers were provided by the National Center for Juvenile Justice's website, Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: <http://www.ojdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>). This number was then multiplied by 100,000.

⁸ The 2005 juvenile arrest rates for Murder and Forcible Rape (3 and 7, respectively) were very low. Since they were so low, just two additional crimes committed between years could result in a 100% increase in the JAR. Since these numbers could cause a misinterpretation of the true nature of juvenile Murder and Forcible Rape, they were excluded from Table 1 and Table 2 and other analyses. To obtain these JARs for Lake County and Indiana, please contact Heartland Center.