

Briefing Paper

San Francisco’s changing crime trends

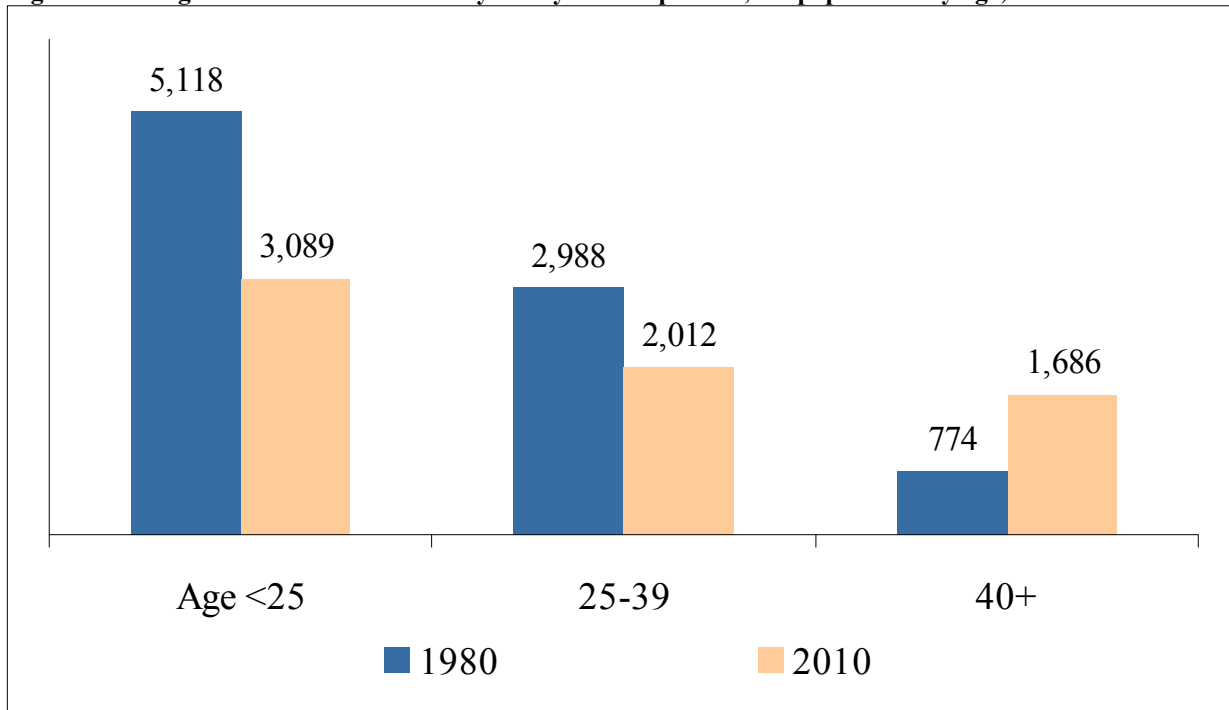
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This briefing paper examines changes in San Francisco’s crime patterns over the past 3 decades. The paper is intended to provide policy makers with an overview of major changes in the city’s serious and petty crime to assist in the development of effective crime policy and resource allocations. The information below contrasts the most recently available year, 2010, with 1980, the first year complete and comprehensive statistics were available.

San Francisco’s crime patterns have aged dramatically

Thirty years ago, youth and young adults under age 25 accounted for a staggering 49% of the city’s felony arrests and 41% of total arrests; today, 27% of total and felony arrests. Meanwhile, crime among over-40 age groups has burgeoned. Both in total numbers and rates per 100,000 age groups, older San Franciscans have become sharply more arrest-prone while younger ages have become much less so.

Figure 1. Change in San Francisco County felony arrests per 100,000 population by age, 2010 vs. 1980



Sources: Criminal Justice Statistics Center (1980, 2010); Bureau of the Census (2012).

Table 1. 1980-2010 rate of total and felony arrests per 100,000 age group population

| Year | Total arrests | | | Felony arrests | | |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Age <25 | 25-39 | 40+ | Age <25 | 25-39 | 40+ |
| | Raw numbers | | | | | |
| 1980 | 19,398 | 19,668 | 8,087 | 7,202 | 5,890 | 1,629 |
| 2009 | 8,704 | 11,013 | 11,752 | 4,527 | 5,861 | 6,290 |
| <u>2010</u> | <u>7,710</u> | <u>9,724</u> | <u>10,480</u> | <u>3,754</u> | <u>4,807</u> | <u>5,075</u> |
| Raw change | -55% | -44% | 45% | -37% | 0% | 286% |
| | Rates per 100,000 population | | | | | |
| 1980 | 13,784.2 | 9,977.9 | 3,841.0 | 5,117.7 | 2,988.1 | 773.7 |
| <u>2010</u> | <u>6,344.5</u> | <u>4,069.8</u> | <u>3,481.1</u> | <u>3,089.1</u> | <u>2,011.9</u> | <u>1,685.8</u> |
| Rate change* | -54% | -59% | -9% | -40% | -33% | 118% |

*Adjusted for population changes by age, 1980-2010. Populations used to calculate arrest rates are ages 10-24 for age <25, and ages 40-69 for age 40+.

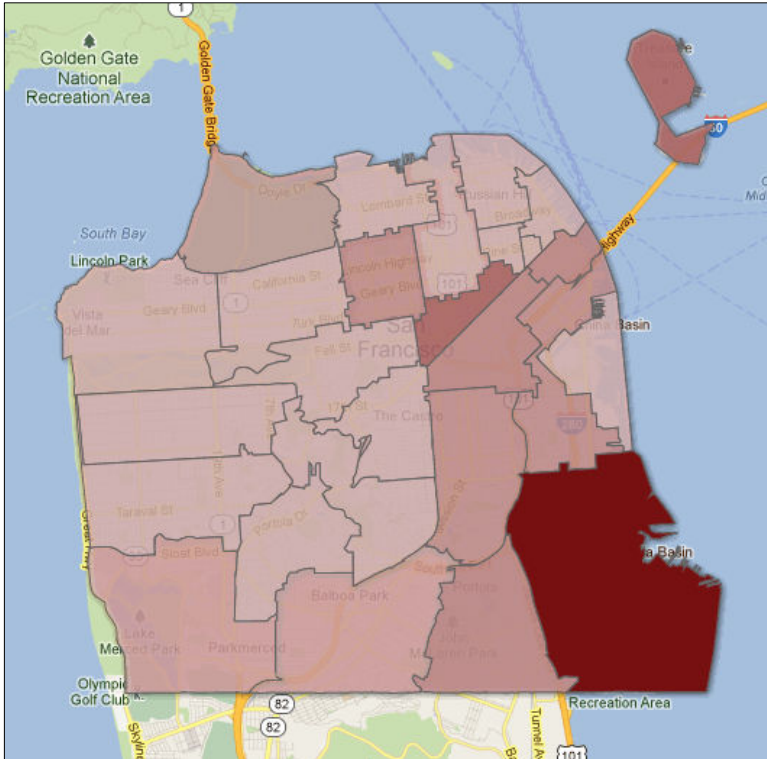
Sources: Criminal Justice Statistics Center (1980, 2010); Bureau of the Census (2011).

The reason? Large increases in drug abuse among middle-agers. Since 1980, illicit drug mortality has stayed largely the same among citizens under age 40 but has tripled in number and doubled in rate among middle agers. Drug arrests, property, and violence offenses, and imprisonments reflect these changes as well. This trend runs counter to conventional assumptions and while health agencies have acknowledged it, it remains largely undetected in crime policy analysis.

Violent crime is concentrated in San Francisco's poorest districts

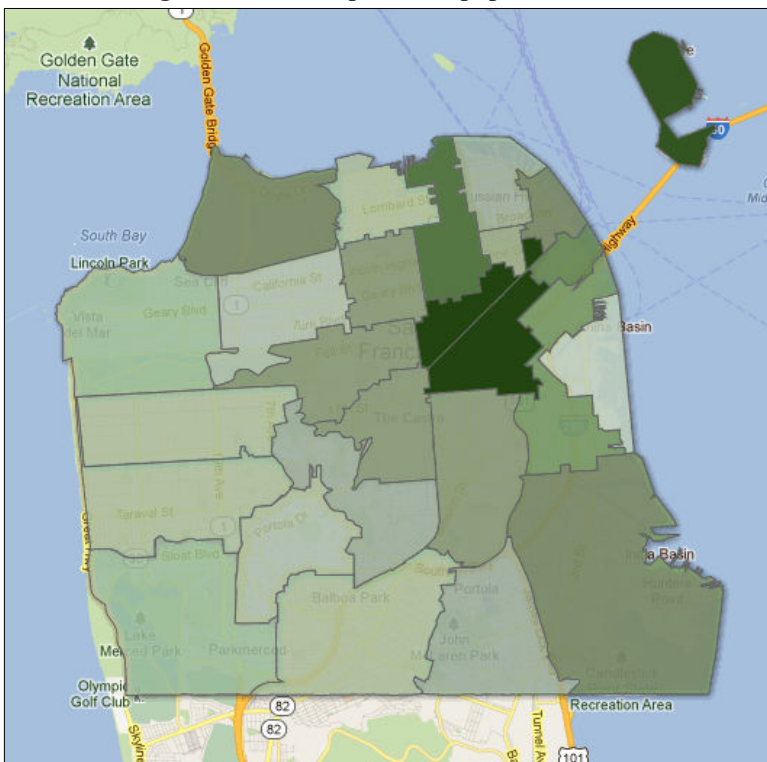
In addition to an aging drug abuse epidemic, the city continues to suffer a related crime problem: violence, often involving drug dealing and gangs, concentrated in the city's poorest districts. Today, while most of San Francisco is as safe as Stockholm, Sweden, just seven of the city's three dozen zipcodes (94124, 94110, 94102, 94112, 94134, 94115, 94122) account for all juvenile and nearly four-fifths of adult homicides. Just four of the city's zip codes (94102, 94103, 94109, 94110) account for nearly 6 in 10 drug deaths. To complicate matters, drug abuse is concentrated in aging whites while firearms homicide and injury is concentrated among young low income African-Americans. Table 2, and charts 2 and 3 below, demonstrate the socio-economic and geographical disparities in violent crime trends by San Francisco County zip code; shaded from high rate (darker) to low rate (lighter).

Chart 2. Homicide-related deaths per 1,000 population



Sources: Center for Health Statistics (2011); Bureau of the Census (2012).

Chart 3. Drug-related deaths per 1,000 population



Sources: Center for Health Statistics (2011); Bureau of the Census (2012).

Table 2. Rates of deaths per 1,000 population over 10 years*

| <u>Zip Code</u> | <u>Homicide</u> | <u>Drugs</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>High Rates in both categories</i> | | |
| 94102 | 2.0 | 10.8 |
| 94103 | 1.3 | 9.7 |
| 94105 | 1.4 | 2.8 |
| 94107 | 1.0 | 2.3 |
| 94109 | 0.4 | 3.3 |
| 94110 | 1.0 | 1.8 |
| 94115 | 1.2 | 1.9 |
| 94124 | 4.2 | 2.5 |
| 94129 | 0.9 | 2.6 |
| 94130 | 2.0 | 4.6 |
| <i>Low rates in both categories</i> | | |
| 94116 | 0.3 | 0.9 |
| 94118 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| 94119 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 94120 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 94121 | 0.2 | 1.0 |
| 94122 | 0.1 | 0.9 |
| 94123 | 0.1 | 0.9 |
| 94125 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 94126 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 94127 | 0.1 | 0.7 |
| 94131 | 0.3 | 1.1 |
| 94133 | 0.2 | 1.2 |
| 94158 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| <i>High rates of homicide / low rates of drug-related deaths</i> | | |
| 94112 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| 94132 | 0.5 | 1.0 |
| 94134 | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| <i>Low rates of homicide / high rates of drug-related deaths</i> | | |
| 94104 | 0.0 | 5.2 |
| 94108 | 0.1 | 1.3 |
| 94111 | 0.0 | 2.6 |
| 94114 | 0.1 | 1.8 |
| <u>94117</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u>1.8</u> |
| Total | 0.8 | 2.0 |

Sources: Center for Health Statistics (2011); Bureau of the Census (2012).

* High and low rates were calculated using a median rate value of 0.3 for homicide deaths and 1.2 for drug-related deaths.

Conclusion

San Francisco has experienced more extreme crime and drug abuse shifts than most cities in California. Extraordinarily affluent populations, dominated by white, Asian, and older age groups, reside near some of the state's most concentrated and severe poverty, led by African-Americans and including Latinos, several Asian ethnicities, and the young.

The city's dual crime trends—murders and violent crime concentrated in low income districts, and drug abuse and related crime diffused across the city including in more affluent areas—are interconnected, not just generationally, but structurally. Widespread drug abuse in affluent areas promotes drug dealer and supplier violence in poorer ones. The data explored in this publication suggests that the explosion in the city's drug abuse and crime rates among older populations, including thousands of deaths over the last decade, require attention in conjunction with violence and drug dealing through open-air markets in the Tenderloin, Bayview, Mission, and other disadvantaged areas.

In light of San Francisco County's increased responsibility to serve the non-serious, non-violent, non-sex offenders locally under criminal justice realignment, there remains a need for strong, proactive efforts to ameliorate San Francisco's severely concentrated poverty and long-term drug use (predominantly narcotics) among an intractably addicted, aging cohort. It is CJCJ's intention that this brief demonstrating the city's dual and interrelated crime problems will aid the City of San Francisco in the development of multi-agency collaborations that address the needs of this aging drug offender population.

References

Bureau of the Census. (2012). 2010 Census Data. Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce. At: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>

Center for Health Statistics. (2011). Death Public Use File (electronic data), 2000-09. Sacramento: California Department of Health Services.

Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2011). *California Criminal Justice Profile*, San Francisco County (annual, 1980, 2010). Sacramento: California Department of Justice, Tables 18, 19. At: http://stats.doj.ca.gov/cjsc_stats/prof09/index.htm

Please note: *Each year, every county submits their data to the official statewide databases maintained by appointed governmental bodies. While every effort is made to review data for accuracy, CJCJ cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county level.*

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