



Juvenile Detention in San Francisco: Analysis and Trends 2006

When a San Francisco youth comes into contact with law enforcement, several important decisions are made to determine whether that child will be detained in the Youth Guidance Center (YGC) or sent home. Detention following an arrest is supposed to serve the purpose of ensuring that a child attends future court dates or commits no further crime. Over the past 20 years, San Francisco's juvenile justice system has been the subject of repeated efforts to reduce its reliance on secure detention. Despite the efforts of city officials and community-based agencies, the current YGC population is currently at record highs. This report provides an analysis of recent juvenile detention trends in San Francisco.

Detention Process:

When youth are arrested for the commission of an offense, the intake process includes a detention screening. A youth may be detained in a juvenile hall for various reasons. The time period for detention before a court hearing alerting the youth to any charges must be no longer than 48 hours. In that time, however, a decision will be made to keep the child in the juvenile hall or to send the child home. That decision may be based on a risk assessment, or the subjective analysis of a probation officer. A risk assessment will consider any previous referrals to the juvenile court, history of substance abuse, escapes from custody, past failures to appear and, the seriousness of the offense. Depending on the risk assessment score, juvenile probation will determine whether the child should be released or detained. It may happen that probation will override the score for various reasons, choosing to detain the child despite a score indicating an appropriate release. An override may also be based on a family's wish to leave the child in the hall, or the fact that a child was arrested out of the county of his or her residence.

Should probation decide to detain the child, a hearing will be scheduled to allow the youth to appear before a judge. The judge will then decide whether continued detention is required or if the child can be returned home on a promise to appear, possibly with other conditions as the judge sees fit.

Methodology:

CJCJ compiled data about the juvenile population vulnerable to detention in the Youth Guidance Center and the population detained there. The data includes number of youth arrested by ethnicity over the last 15 years, the number of youth detained by ethnicity, over the last 15 years, and the rates for both. In addition, CJCJ analyzed the average

daily population by year over the last 20 years at the YGC, and the average length of stay for youth detained during that period.

Between 1992 and 2006, San Francisco's juvenile population, aged 10-17, decreased from 59,089 to 48,331. Despite this decrease, the raw number of referrals to juvenile court, juvenile arrests and detentions of some segments of the juvenile population has remained disproportionately high.

Juvenile Referrals:

In 2005, youth aged 10 through 17 numbered 48,664 in San Francisco County. The overall rate of referral to the juvenile court in 2005, per a population of 100,000 was 6,191.4. The rate of referrals for San Francisco juveniles has decreased by 31.6 percent since 1992. Indeed, the rate of arrest has steadily declined since 1997.

African American juveniles together make up only 12% of that population, yet the rate of referral for these youth ranks highest among all segments of the juvenile population. The referral rate for African American male juveniles is 42,110.8 per 100,000 San Francisco juveniles. Although this rate includes potentially duplicated referrals (the same individual is arrested and referred to the juvenile court more than once in a year), a rate of 42,110.8 indicates that among a small population of only 2,852 individuals, approximately 40 percent has been arrested in the last year.

The second highest rate of referral to juvenile court among the juvenile population in San Francisco occurs among African American girls. That rate, 17,789.2 per 100,000, is up 35 percent since 1992. These high rates considered along with the small portion of the population that African Americans represent in the total juvenile population indicate that a significant proportion of African American youth are exposed to the criminal justice system in San Francisco.

This is not a new phenomenon. Unfortunately, despite long-term awareness of this problem, little has changed. As was stated above, the rate of referral for African American girls has increased since 1992, though the number of arrests has decreased since reaching a high in 2001. The rate of referral to juvenile court for African American boys, on the other hand, decreased steadily between 1992 and 2004. In 2005, the rate increased over the previous year. The 2005 rate is down 19 percent since 1992, though the rate is still egregiously high.

Across both gender and racial divisions, the only increases in the rate of referral occurred among Latina youth and African American female juveniles. Latina youth also represent the only segment of the youth population that has experienced a significant increase in population since 1992. There are 8 percent more Latina youth in 2006 than in 1992.

The most significant reduction in referral rate was seen among the White and Asian male juvenile population, whose rates both decreased by more than 50 percent. Referrals of White female juveniles also decreased by 49.6 percent.

Both Sexes, ages 10-17					
Referrals per 100,000 population					
	All races	Asian/other	Latino	White	Black
1992	9,050.8	3,740.8	6,093.0	5,465.5	32,463.8
1997	9,545.0	2,638.6	7,783.5	5,357.6	37,918.2
2000	8,468.3	2,412.8	7,505.0	5,275.9	35,447.3
2001	8,225.1	2,526.3	7,270.2	4,715.9	35,464.3
2002	7,640.3	2,359.0	6,157.9	3,948.0	34,012.5
2003	6,578.0	2,071.1	5,362.8	2,890.1	29,715.8
2004	6,226.6	1,910.2	5,181.3	2,729.2	28,348.3
2005	6,191.4	1,876.9	5,294.6	2,397.1	30,211.3
Change, 2005 v. 1992	-31.6%	-49.8%	-13.1%	-56.1%	-6.9%

Male, ages 10-17					
Referrals per 100,000 population					
	All races	Asian	Latino	White	Black
1992	14,514.0	6,233.1	10,214.2	8,120.2	51,945.0
1997	13,571.0	3,842.2	11,771.9	8,446.3	52,329.6
2000	11,757.8	3,595.1	11,819.1	7,053.9	45,142.7
2001	11,527.3	4,082.2	11,487.6	6,117.4	45,055.7
2002	10,971.0	3,739.7	9,597.7	5,147.5	46,466.1
2003	9,713.3	3,384.1	8,647.7	3,695.3	41,279.7
2004	9,103.1	2,744.2	8,324.4	3,576.7	39,806.8
2005	9,401.2	2,960.9	9,173.8	3,411.5	42,110.8
Change, 2005 v. 1992	-35.2%	-52.5%	-10.2%	-58.0%	-18.9%

Female, ages 10-17					
Referrals per 100,000 population					
	All races	Asian	Latina	White	Black
1992	3,471.9	1,231.0	1,369.9	2,881.8	13,146.2
1997	5,403.1	1,421.5	3,033.1	2,381.6	24,016.9
2000	5,354.2	1,307.1	3,495.7	3,561.9	25,833.6
2001	5,076.2	1,072.5	3,238.8	3,350.7	25,965.5
2002	4,441.1	1,057.5	2,813.0	2,783.4	21,671.3
2003	3,549.0	819.8	2,177.0	2,109.5	18,115.9
2004	3,447.2	1,111.2	2,172.1	1,919.2	16,476.1
2005	3,106.9	834.4	1,625.7	1,451.3	17,789.2
Change, 2005 v. 1992	-10.5%	-32.2%	18.7%	-49.6%	35.3%

Juvenile Arrests:

The referral rate includes both arrests and non-law enforcement referrals to the juvenile court. Because all youth referred to the juvenile court are potentially susceptible to detention, we focus on referral rates throughout this report. It is important to recognize, however, that juvenile arrest rates in San Francisco are presently lower than they ever have been. Thus, the overuse of detention as a response to decreasing juvenile crime becomes an issue that should lead local policymakers and criminal justice officers to reconsider their strategies and aim for more effective methods to work with the county's youth.

The juvenile arrest rate in San Francisco is substantially lower than any time since numbers have been maintained. When the arrest rates are considered by offense, only the rate for drug arrests was higher in 2005 than in 1975, although it remains much lower than it was throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. Over the last decade, juvenile arrests for all offenses are down, with a single exception. The arrest rate for weapon offenses has increased slightly since 1995.

SF juvenile arrests per 100,000 age 10-17				percent of all arrests that are		
Year	all arrests	felonies	violent	felonies	violent	
1985	10,613.5	3,252.6	802.3	30.6%	7.6%	
	10,723.0	3,667.9	732.9	34.2%	6.8%	
	12,656.9	3,925.8	690.8	31.0%	5.5%	
	13,915.1	5,307.5	849.9	38.1%	6.1%	
	11,175.4	5,243.0	1,007.4	46.9%	9.0%	
1990	9,232.1	4,571.9	1,027.2	49.5%	11.1%	
	8,529.3	4,112.1	745.6	48.2%	8.7%	
	7,784.9	3,823.0	891.9	49.1%	11.5%	
	8,734.7	4,285.9	1,285.9	49.1%	14.7%	
	8,395.9	4,304.8	1,442.5	51.3%	17.2%	
1995	7,806.8	4,273.5	1,617.6	54.7%	20.7%	
	8,899.0	4,848.2	1,674.0	54.5%	18.8%	
	8,074.5	4,157.8	1,477.9	51.5%	18.3%	
	7,533.5	3,589.0	1,276.0	47.6%	16.9%	
	6,867.7	3,293.7	1,151.7	48.0%	16.8%	
2000	6,285.2	3,071.9	1,181.7	48.9%	18.8%	
	5,902.6	2,750.0	1,066.8	46.6%	18.1%	
	5,262.7	2,718.7	1,040.1	51.7%	19.8%	
	4,686.2	2,474.2	1,088.4	52.8%	23.2%	
	3,876.7	2,135.9	893.0	55.1%	23.0%	
2005	4,196.1	2,581.0	891.8	61.5%	21.3%	
1985-89	11,816.8	4,279.4	816.7	36.2%	7.0%	
1990-94	8,535.4	4,219.6	1,078.6	49.4%	12.6%	
1995-99	7,836.3	4,032.4	1,439.4	51.3%	18.3%	
2000-04	5,202.7	2,630.2	1,054.0	51.0%	20.6%	
2005	4,196.1	2,581.0	891.8	61.5%	21.3%	
Change, 2005 vs 1995	-46.3%	-39.6%	-44.9%			

Detention:

Since 1992, San Francisco has reduced its overall rate of juvenile detention by 17.6 percent, as well as its rate of detention per arrests by 20.5 percent. While the reduction is notable because it shows some inclination to maintain youth in the community rather than holding them away from important community, educational and family support, a closer look at detention rates by ethnicity demonstrates a consistent problem plaguing detention practices.

While the detention of the African American male youth population has remained fairly consistent over the last several years after hitting a high point in 2001, it also has been the most consistently high. Concurrently, the detention of African American female youth has increased by 46.6 percent since 1992. Among African American youth referred to the juvenile court, detention was used nine percent more frequently in 2005 than it was in 1992.

The rate of detention considered among those referred to juvenile court demonstrates the shocking overuse of detention for Latino juveniles. The use of detention upon referral to the juvenile court occurs more frequently among Latino youth than all other youth. Although the referral rate of Latino youth ranks third according to the data below, Latino youth are detained after referral to the juvenile court much more often than all other ethnic groups. Since 1992, the number has remained very consistent, and very high.

Juvenile detention rate Both Sexes ages 10-17, by race per 100,000 population						
	All races	Asian/other	Latino	White	Black	
1992	458.1	179.3	349.8	259.4	1,741.8	
1997	598.4	164.9	490.7	298.7	2,390.6	
2000	485.2	119.5	477.2	273.5	2,154.6	
2001	477.8	132.8	437.0	237.8	2,203.7	
2002	449.1	120.7	368.3	231.9	2,123.0	
2003	423.0	126.4	356.9	183.9	1,975.9	
2004	386.8	115.4	332.0	140.0	1,848.3	
2005	377.7	105.9	349.6	123.5	1,903.7	
Change, 2005 v. 1992	-17.6%	-41.0%	-0.1%	-52.4%	9.3%	

Juvenile detention rate Male ages 10-17, by race per 100,000 population						
	All races	Asian	Latino	White	Black	
1992	757.0	307.9	603.8	397.0	2,871.1	
1997	855.7	244.6	709.1	418.1	3,418.8	
2000	688.1	188.5	781.1	341.8	2,795.5	
2001	681.6	225.9	703.7	290.4	2,862.1	
2002	662.8	206.6	622.6	299.2	2,918.1	
2003	652.3	222.1	581.4	254.6	2,865.5	
2004	600.9	181.1	557.3	192.4	2,718.2	
2005	602.6	170.7	620.9	159.9	2,854.1	
Change, 2005 v. 1992	-20.4%	-44.6%	2.8%	-59.7%	-0.6%	

Juvenile detention rate Female ages 10-17, by race per 100,000 population						
	All races	Asian	Latina	White	Black	
1992	152.9	49.8	58.7	125.5	621.9	
1997	333.8	84.3	230.7	183.7	1,398.9	
2000	293.0	55.0	194.8	207.6	1,519.0	
2001	283.4	45.8	182.1	186.6	1,551.7	
2002	243.9	39.7	121.1	166.6	1,335.0	
2003	201.4	35.1	139.2	115.4	1,083.5	
2004	180.0	52.4	116.3	90.0	947.1	
2005	161.6	43.5	92.9	89.5	911.4	
Change, 2005 v. 1992	5.7%	-12.6%	58.2%	-28.7%	46.6%	

Both Sexes: Detentions per 1000 referrals						
	All races	Asian/other	Latino	White	Black	
1992	506.2	1,066.3	2,372.8	587.0	1,453.7	
1997	627.0	1,394.6	2,411.1	853.8	1,525.6	
2000	572.9	1,014.7	2,316.6	632.4	1,387.4	
2001	580.9	939.8	2,315.4	618.5	1,404.5	
2002	587.8	944.2	2,467.8	741.5	1,423.5	
2003	643.0	1,015.6	2,603.0	814.7	1,564.6	
2004	621.3	934.8	2,416.5	737.8	1,540.6	
2005	610.0	859.6	2,372.0	583.7	1,481.9	
Change, 2005						
Change, 2005 v 1992	20.5%	-19.4%	0.0%	-0.6%	1.9%	

Male Detentions per 1000 referrals						
	All races	Asian	Latino	White	Black	
1992	611.4	1,024.0	2,240.1	629.8	780.4	
1997	630.5	1,358.5	2,123.1	792.6	1,154.1	
2000	585.2	966.8	2,092.2	633.1	1,172.3	
2001	591.3	873.0	2,047.1	626.3	1,175.4	
2002	604.1	910.0	2,313.4	735.8	1,078.3	
2003	671.6	1,002.8	2,444.7	933.3	1,107.5	
2004	660.1	975.9	2,360.5	836.3	1,068.5	
2005	640.9	815.3	2,233.3	550.0	1,011.7	
Change, 2005 v. 1992	4.8%	-20.4%	-0.3%	-12.7%	29.6%	

Female Detentions per 1,000 referrals						
	All races	Asian	Latina	White	Black	
1992	472.9	1,282.4	3,506.5	469.7	473.1	
1997	617.7	1,493.3	3,742.5	1,062.9	582.5	
2000	547.3	1,138.2	3,021.9	631.0	588.0	
2001	558.3	1,177.4	3,224.9	604.8	597.6	
2002	549.1	1,058.3	2,980.1	751.8	616.0	
2003	567.5	1,065.9	3,213.1	613.2	598.1	
2004	522.3	837.4	2,622.0	562.5	574.8	
2005	520.1	1,010.9	3,112.2	657.5	512.3	
Change, 2005 v. 1992	10.0%	-21.2%	-11.2%	40.0%	8.3%	

San Francisco Juvenile Detention: Rates per referral, felony and population.								
Year	Total juvenile detentions per:			Raw numbers, detentions, age 10-17		Raw Numbers, age 10-17		
	1,000 arrests	1,000 felonies	100,000 pop	Total	YGC	arrests	felonies	Population
1985	384.4	1,254.4	4,079.9	2,446	2,256	6,363	1,950	59,952
	436.9	1,277.3	4,685.1	2,736	2,553	6,262	2,142	58,398
	455.6	1,468.9	5,766.7	3,239	3,080	7,109	2,205	56,167
	525.5	1,377.9	7,313.0	3,898	3,715	7,417	2,829	53,302
	631.7	1,346.4	7,059.3	3,840	3,652	6,079	2,852	54,397
1990	637.9	1,288.1	5,889.2	3,268	3,128	5,123	2,537	55,491
	598.7	1,241.8	5,106.3	2,979	2,866	4,976	2,399	58,340
	619.3	1,261.2	4,821.5	2,849	2,707	4,600	2,259	59,089
	600.4	1,223.7	5,244.5	3,124	2,974	5,203	2,553	59,567
	656.8	1,281.0	5,514.4	3,173	3,035	4,831	2,477	57,540
1995	733.6	1,340.0	5,726.7	3,133	3,000	4,271	2,338	54,709
	741.2	1,360.5	6,595.9	3,491	3,400	4,710	2,566	52,927
	802.6	1,558.7	6,480.8	3,359	3,274	4,185	2,155	51,830
	879.4	1,845.9	6,624.9	3,354	3,285	3,814	1,817	50,627
	873.4	1,821.2	5,998.4	2,974	2,913	3,405	1,633	49,580
2000	802.5	1,642.0	5,044.1	2,463	2,369	3,069	1,500	48,829
	830.2	1,781.9	4,900.2	2,361	2,302	2,844	1,325	48,182
	876.7	1,697.0	4,613.7	2,218	2,159	2,530	1,307	48,074
	922.9	1,747.9	4,324.7	2,094	2,048	2,269	1,198	48,419
	1,016.5	1,844.9	3,940.5	1,915	1,880	1,884	1,038	48,598
2005	922.6	1,500.0	3,871.4	1,884	1,838	2,042	1,256	48,664
								48,331
1985-89	486.8	1,345.0	5,780.8	3,232	3,051	6,646	2,396	
1990-94	622.6	1,259.1	5,315.2	3,079	2,942	4,947	2,445	
1995-99	806.0	1,585.3	6,285.3	3,262	3,174	4,077	2,102	
2000-04	889.7	1,742.7	4,564.7	2,210	2,152	2,519	1,274	
2005	922.6	1,500.0	3,871.4	1,884	1,838	2,042	1,256	
Change, 2005 vs 1995	25.8%	11.9%	-32.4%	-39.9%	-38.7%	-52.2%	-46.3%	-11.0%

Conclusion:

Youth detention should be reserved for those juveniles facing serious charges, for whom community or home placement is not appropriate, or who have failed at a group home placement and are awaiting a new placement. Based on the data reviewed by CJCJ, it appears that detention is being utilized more frequently for juveniles referred to the juvenile court even though the numbers of total youth involved in the system may be lower. This information, coupled with the high rates of detention among African American and Latino youth, indicates that African American youth are almost three

times as likely to be detained upon arrest than a White youth and Latino youth are almost six times as likely to be detained upon arrest than White youth.

Indeed, in 2005, the total rate of detention per 1000 referrals to the juvenile court was 922, a 25.8 percent increase over the rate in 1995. Per 1000 felonies, juvenile detention occurs at a rate of 1,500.

Because the numbers in YGC have escalated drastically in the last several months, the reasons for which San Francisco children are being detained must be evaluated. The capacity of the San Francisco's new Juvenile Justice Center is 150, or 15 more than the capacity of its aged Youth Guidance Center. The facility was built with the intent to maintain a low average daily population. If current practices continue, however, the Juvenile Justice Center will open with all of its bed already filled.

The disproportionate confinement of African American and Latino in San Francisco should be considered by local policymakers as they continue to seek alternative measures to prevent crime and promote public safety in the county. San Francisco may celebrate the decreased rates of referrals to juvenile court across all ethnicities over the last decade; however, the persistent practice of choosing detention for youth of color rather than alternative options that will build a youth's support in the community does not serve the County's goals to promote the stability and success of all San Francisco residents.

Sources and Note:

Sources include the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department Monthly Reports January through November 2006, Annual Reports 2000 – 2005, and Criminal Justice Statistics Center data.

The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that offers policy analysis, program development and technical assistance in the criminal justice field. For more information, please visit www.cjcj.org.