

**AN ANALYSIS OF SAN FRANCISCO
JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORMS DURING
THE BROWN ADMINISTRATION**

***A REPORT TO THE SAN FRANCISCO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS***

By

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Created in 1992 as a private independent foundation, The California Wellness Foundation's mission is to improve the health of the people of California through proactive support of health promotion and disease prevention programs.

Introduction

In 1996, San Francisco initiated an effort to implement juvenile justice reform. With an unprecedented infusion of over \$20 million in state and federal money, new programs and services were funded through the Mayor's Criminal Justice Council and the Juvenile Probation Department. The central element of these efforts was the establishment of a new decentralized intake system to assess and refer youths to community-based services and reduce unnecessary detention (San Francisco Juvenile Justice Action Plan, 1996). Through the implementation of new services, San Francisco would drastically reduce its historical reliance on custodial detention and free up resources to be reallocated to community-based programs. Reliance on custodial detention is considered detrimental for the following reasons:

- It promotes further delinquency through association with delinquent peers
- It stigmatizes and reinforces a delinquent identity
- It results in harsher treatment by decisions makers throughout the process
- It accelerates further involvement in the juvenile justice system
- It diverts resources from comprehensive community-based interventions
- It reduces involvement and interaction with community-based services
- It increases rejection by local public institutions such as schools;

- It promotes systemic isolation, lethargy, and ineffectiveness
- It results in overcrowding, punitive custody, and abusive conditions.

The City's failure to develop and implement detention alternatives has been noted in at least six major reports in the past four decades. In addition to the damaging effects, the inability to develop and utilize detention alternatives results in unnecessary public expense and ensures that fewer resources will be available for more comprehensive longer-term interventions. Since the juvenile detention rate reflects the system's priorities, the higher the detention rate the more custodial the system (Anne E Casey Foundation; Schwartz and Barton 1998; Kobetz, and Bosarge, 1973; Jefferson and Associates and Community Research Associates, 1987; Jefferson and Associates and Patrick Sullivan Associates, 1987; Steinhart and Steele, 1988; The Mayor's Youth Guidance Center Committee. 1984: San Francisco Bar Association Juvenile Court Committee. 1962).¹

In the past four years, San Francisco has invested nearly \$20 million on juvenile justice reform. This study examines the impact of these reforms on San Francisco's youth detention population. Since successful juvenile justice reform is measured by reductions in detention populations and its disproportionate impact on minority youth, this study attempts to evaluate two issues:

- Did San Francisco juvenile justice reform under the Brown administration lead to reductions in juvenile detention bookings?

¹ The average length of stay in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center is between 12 and 14 days with most youths released within 72 hours. However, given the expense of maintaining bed space for youths who are released in a short period of time raises the issue of why they are detained in the first place.

- Did San Francisco juvenile justice reform under the Brown administration reduce disproportionate minority confinement?²

These questions will be examined through an analysis of youth detention trends in San Francisco over the past 15 years. Since no comparable reform efforts were initiated prior to the Brown Administration, a fair hypothesis would state that a large investment in new programs and services for youths in a county-based juvenile justice system would minimally result in fewer youths booked into detention, and an overall lower detention population (San Francisco Juvenile Justice Action Plan, 1996; Anne E. Casey Foundation). This result would occur if the youth population and youth arrest rates were held constant.

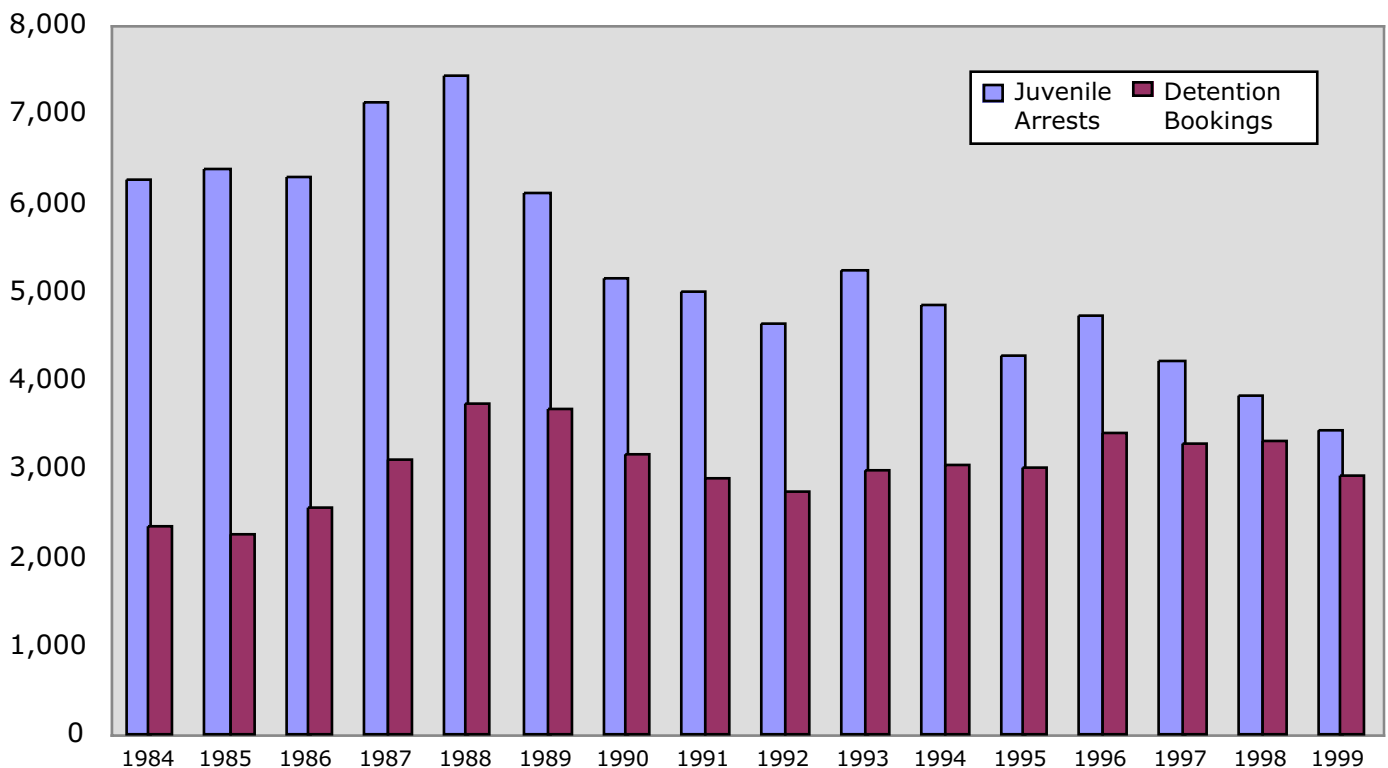
Summary

San Francisco's juvenile detention population has increased.

Results from this study show that the current population at the Youth Guidance Center (YGC) is at historically high levels despite five years of unprecedented investment in new programs and downward trends in youth population and felony and misdemeanor arrests. Based on this analysis there is no evidence that new programs and services initiated over the past five years are resulting in a lower youth detention population.

An analysis of the available data reveals that the percentage and total number of San Francisco youths detained at the YGC is rising (see Figure 1 and Table 1). This increase began in the mid 1990s

Figure 1: San Francisco Youth Guidance Center Annual Average Bookings vs. Juvenile Arrests, 1984-1999



² Reductions in detention occur as youths are transferred to new base programs and services designed as detention alternatives. Because minority youth are disproportionately represented in the detention population, a successful reform effort will reduce this disparity.

and then accelerated during the Brown Administration before leveling off at current rates.

In 1984, for example, 6,247 youths were arrested in San Francisco and 2,334 were booked into the YGC. In 1992, 4,600 youths were arrested and 2,707 were booked into the YGC. However, in 1999, there were 3,405 arrests and 2,913 were booked into detention — an increase in probation department bookings accompanying a sharp decline in juvenile arrests.³

Dividing the 1984-98 periods into five 3-year segments to reduce year-to-year fluctuations (Table 2), and comparing the most recent detention rates for 1999 to 1984-86, revealed the following:

- Detention bookings rose from the equivalent of 378 per 1,000 arrests to 856 per 1,000 arrests, with the result that an arrested juvenile is nearly twice as likely to be confined today as in the 1980s.

Table 1. San Francisco Youth Guidance Center, average annual detention bookings versus juvenile arrests, 1984-99

Year	Detention Bookings	Juvenile Arrests
1984	2334	6247
1985	2256	6363
1986	2553	6262
1987	3080	7109
1988	3715	7417
1989	3652	6079
1990	3128	5123
1991	2866	4976
1992	2707	4600
1993	2974	5214
1994	3035	4831
1995	3000	4271
1996	3400	4710
1997	3274	4185
1998	3285	3814
1999	2913	3405

Sources for tables: Juvenile Probation Department ([1999], 1997-98, 1992, 1990, 1988), Annual Reports, City and County of San Francisco. Criminal Justice Statistics Center (1999, 1992, 1990), California Criminal Justice Profile-San Francisco, California

- Juvenile arrests declined 46%, yet juvenile detention bookings increased 22%.

Table 2. Juvenile detention center holdings, 1984-99

Years	Average daily population	Average stay (days)	Annual detention (days)
1984-86	114	12.0	41,773
1987-89	116	10.0	42,501
1990-92	100	11.7	36,411
1993-95	118	11.7	43,070
1996-98	124	12.3	45,181
1999	119	14.0	43,435
Change, 1990-1992 v 1984-1986	-13%	-3%	-13%
Change, 1999 v 90-92	+19%	+20%	+19%

The recent increase in the average daily population at the Youth Guidance Center, and total youth detention-days (average daily population multiplied by average length of confinement), is all the more striking because both indexes declined from 1984 to 1992. In 1993, these trends reversed and both indexes rose rapidly through the late 1990s. In 1996-99, these key youth confinement indexes reached all-time highs. San Francisco youth are detained in larger numbers, for longer periods, and at greater public expense today despite rapid declines in all forms of juvenile crime.

³ Booking is a decision to formally process a youth into the juvenile justice system following an arrest. At booking youths are questioned, searched, fingerprinted and assessed for risk. The initial decision to detain is at the discretion of the probation department and is historically based on whether the youth presents a danger to themselves or others and is likely to appear at subsequent court hearings. Detention and booking decisions are also based on judgments about the likelihood of a formal petition being filed by the district attorney.

Table 3. San Francisco juvenile detention trends by sex and race, 1988-99

	Percent of juvenile bookings			Percent of juvenile bookings vs percent of juvenile population			
	1988	1992	1999	1988	1992	1999	Change 99/92
Male	86%	83%	72%	1.7	1.6	1.4	-13%
Female	14%	17%	28%	0.3	0.3	0.6	69%
White	16%	17%	12%	0.7	0.8	0.5	-41%
Black	62%	49%	51%	5.1	4.9	5.8	19%
Hispanic	8%	16%	17%	3.0	2.4	2.6	8%
Asian	10%	14%	16%	0.3	0.3	0.4	18%
East Asian	5%	6%	7%	*	*	*	
South Asian/PI	5%	8%	9%	*	*	*	
Native	1%	1%	1%	1.5	1.7	2.0	19%
Unknown	2%	3%	3%				

*population by separate Asian ethnicities not available

The increased rate of detention bookings is unrelated to overall juvenile crime, since the detention rate rose while the felony arrest rate fell. As will be shown, increased detention was also not justified by juvenile violent crime trends since San Francisco’s youth violence arrests declined rapidly after 1995.

Disproportionate confinement of African-American and Hispanic youth worsened in the 1990s.

Table 4 shows striking racial and ethnic differences in arrest and detention patterns, reflected in the changes in the relative confinements of youth by race from 1992 to 1999 (right-hand column). The year 1992 is chosen because it represents the modern low point for juvenile detentions after a general decline in the late 1980s. From 1988 to 1992, the proportion of African-American and Hispanic youth, the most disproportionately confined groups, declined both absolutely and relative to their shares of the city’s youth population. However, from 1992 to 1999, the African-American share of detained

youth rose from 49% to 51% and the Hispanic share from 16% to 17%. Meanwhile the share of white detainees fell from 17% in 1992 to 12% in 1999.

Population changes do not explain these trends. In 1988, African-American youth were 5.1 times more likely to be detained than their share of the youth population would predict. By 1992, that ratio had fallen to 4.7, but then it rose sharply to 5.6 by 1999. A similar pattern can be observed for Hispanic and Asian youth. Meanwhile, white youths’ small detention shares and low ratios of detentions to their populations declined from 1992 to 1999. Thus, while San Francisco’s disproportionate confinement of African American and Hispanic youth had been declining in the early 1990s, it showed a sharp and steady increase from 1992 to 1999. The female share of detainees also rose sharply. (see Table 3). By both criteria — rising juvenile confinement, and increasingly disproportionate detention of the city’s African American, Hispanic, and Asian youth — San Francisco’s situation worsened considerably in the late 1990s

— the period when reforms were supposed to be ameliorating these problems.

Methodology

Figures for juvenile arrests, detention referrals, bookings, and populations by race, Asian and Hispanic ethnicity, gender, and year are available from the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department’s *Annual Report* (1988 through 1997-98). Supervisor Matt Gonzalez obtained figures for 1999 from the department through special request. Further detail on arrests of juveniles by race, gender, offense, and year are shown in *California Criminal Justice Profiles: San Francisco County*, issued annually by the state Criminal Justice Statistics Center. These figures are used to calculate the figures shown in Appendix 3.

Additionally, the Juvenile Probation Department’s 1997-98 report and 1999

offenses (13%), 20 for drug offenses (17%), and 56 (47%) for other offenses, which include misdemeanors and probation violations.⁴

The ideal would be to have the number of detainees by offense for all years. In the absence of direct information, a simple formula can be constructed from arrests by type of offense in past years to predict what the number of detainees for past years should have been. This formula compares the ratio of detainees for each type of offense (violent, property, drug, and other felony or misdemeanor) to juvenile arrests for the same type of offense in 1998. That is, the 1998 figures allow rough calculation of what the juvenile detention population for prior years and in 1999 should have looked like in terms of numbers of youths confined by offense.

Results

Overall juvenile arrests and detention center bookings.

San Francisco’s increase in juvenile detentions is not justified by changes in juvenile crime patterns (Table 4).

Average juvenile detentions per felony arrest, and per felony and misdemeanor arrest, rose steadily and rapidly since the 1980s. One possible reason for these increased detentions might be a rise in the seriousness of juvenile crime, which would lead to more confinements per arrest. However, using 1998 figures for detainee offenses to project the numbers of detainees for previous years from those years juvenile violence, property, drug, and other offense arrests (see methodology) leads to the conclusion that

Table 4. Juvenile detention center bookings per 1,000 arrests, average annual three-year numbers, 1984-99

Year	All offenses	Felonies	Felony+misd
1984-86	379	1226	405
1987-89	512	1330	575
1990-92	592	1209	608
1993-95	634	1224	645
1996-98	788	1551	795
1999	856	1784	862
Change	126%	45%	113%

tabulation lists offenses for detainees on December 31, 1997, 1998, and 1999 (the only years for which such information is reported). In 1997-99, there was an average of 120 juveniles in custody on any given day. Of these, 30 were held for violent offenses (25%), 15 for property

⁴ The average daily population for violent and property offenses are consistent with the predictions of the 1987 Jefferson Report and the 1991 National Council on Crime and Delinquency Report.

Table 5. Actual and predicted detention bookings as a percentage of arrests, average annual levels for three-year intervals, 1984-99

Actual v predicted Year	Ratio	Predicted Totals	Actual Totals	Viol	Prop	Drug	Other
1984-86	0.67	114	171	21	24	12	114
1987-89	0.63	116	184	22	27	34	101
1990-92	0.69	100	144	24	30	20	70
1993-95	0.79	118	149	39	22	21	67
1996-98	0.91	124	136	36	16	23	61
1999	1.1	119	108	27	11	17	54
Change, 1999 vs 1984-86	69%	3%	-39%	27%	-58%	-28%	-50%

recent confinement rates are much higher than in previous years. (see Table 5 and Figure 2)

This analysis shows that San Francisco juveniles in 1996-99 were detained at a much higher rate, and for less serious offenses, than juveniles in past years. For example, if current detention practices were in place in the years 1984 through 1986 when arrest rates were higher, the pattern of juvenile crime then predicts that the average daily YGC population should have been around 180. For arrest rates during years 1990-1992, current detention practice would have resulted in an average daily YGC population of 154. However, the actual detainee averages for these two periods was only 114 and 100, respectively. Despite the rapidly declining arrest rates, the population in the YGC continued to increase before leveling off at its current rate of 120.

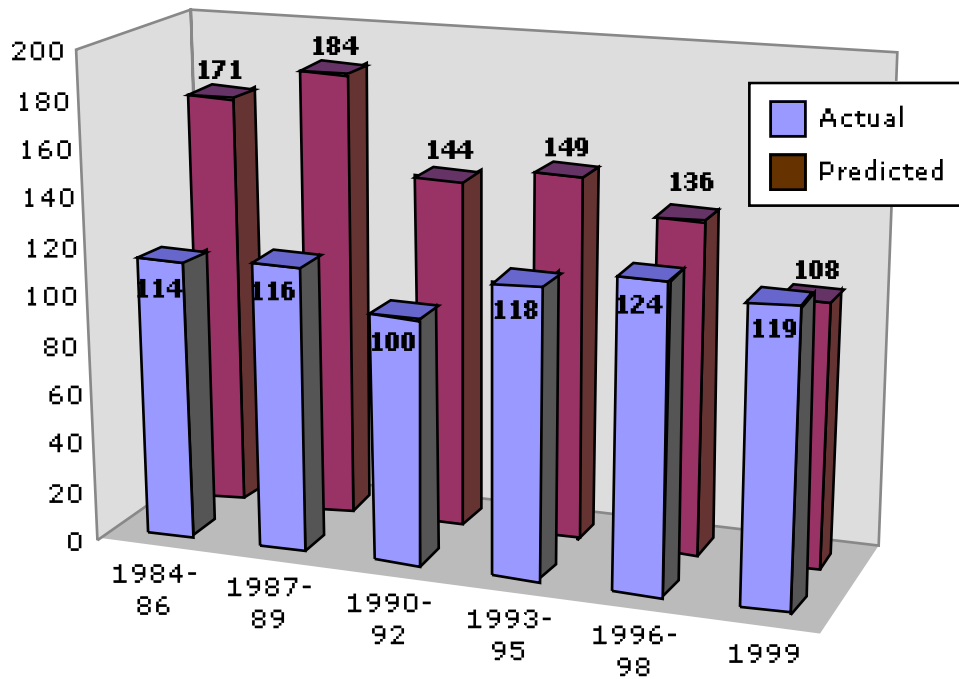
Using 1998 detention patterns and 1999 juvenile arrest patterns, only about 109 juveniles should have been confined on an average day. (Note that the number confined for violent crimes would be slightly higher than in the early 1990s, though considerably lower than in the

mid-1990s, while the number confined for all other offenses would have dropped). Yet the actual ADP was 119 in 1999. Interestingly, the department report shows only 98 juveniles in the detention center on December 31, 1999, a much lower total than for the year as a whole.

Further confirming the fact that San Francisco juvenile crime has not increased in seriousness is the rapidly declining level of two major indicators: juvenile remands to adult court, and post disposition commitments to Log Cabin Ranch or the California Youth Authority. Normally, these indexes would rise if more seriously violent and criminal youth were being arrested. However, Juvenile Probation Department figures show steady, steep drops both in adult-court remands (an average of 10 per year from 1980 to 1995, two in 1999) and commitments to LCR and CYA (an average of 200 per year in the 1980s, dropping steadily to just 59 in 1999).

The detention totals during the 1980s and 1990s show no relationship to youth crime patterns. Instead, actual detention totals show that the average daily YGC population, while rising in the past six

Figure 2: Actual vs. predicted detention bookings, 1984-99



years, was maintained at relatively stable levels for the previous decade despite changes in youth arrest patterns. The fact that the YGC population increased during the late 1990s is further startling given that new programs were introduced during this time specifically designed to reduce the detention population. If detention patterns had remained consistent, 69% fewer youths should have been detained in 1999 than in the 1980s and early 1990s. This reduction in the detention population should have occurred through attrition and without any additional programs or detention alternatives. In short, it appears that as juvenile violent, property, and drug arrests declined in the late 1990s, approximately 70% more juveniles were booked and detained in 1999 for types of offenses that did not result in incarceration in the 1980s and early 1990s. Perhaps more disturbing, these overall trends contain major race and gender discrepancies.

Arrest and detention trends by gender, race and ethnicity, 1992-1999.

What factors contributed to San Francisco’s recent increase in juvenile detention? As noted, juvenile detentions declined from the mid-1980s to 1992 and then rose from 1992 through 1998 and remained stable in 1999. Therefore, special attention is focused on the recent increase in detentions from their low point in 1992 through 1999, the most relevant period in terms of current policy (Tables 6-8). Separate race, ethnicity, and gender data were included in the Probation Department’s annual report in 1992 and 1997-98, and in 1999 tables (in other years, race/ethnicity data is not broken down by sex). The Juvenile Probation Department distinguishes East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Koreans), South Asians (Asian Indians, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Laotians, other Asians), and Pacific Islanders (Filipinos,

Samoans, Native Hawaiians, other Pacific Islanders). Based on this information, the changing arrest and detention rates among the city's various racial and ethnic groups were analyzed.

The Probation Department's juvenile law violations Criminal Justice Profile arrest totals show juvenile violence, property, and drug arrests were considerably lower in 1999 than in 1992. From 1992 to 1999, there was a 33% decline in the number of white youths and a 3% decline in African-American youths arrested in San Francisco. However, during that period, juvenile hall bookings of white youths declined only 26%, and detention bookings of African-American youths actually rose 13%. Similarly, East Asian youth showed a 31% arrest rate decline but a 10% detention-booking increase, and South Asians and Pacific Islanders recorded a 36% arrest decline but an increased rate of detention bookings (up 5%).⁵ The only groups to register an

Table 6. Increase in bookings versus increase in arrests by sex, age, race, 1999 v. 1992

	Change in juvenile:		Booking change v. arrest change
	Bookings	Arrests	
Total	8%	-9%	18%
Male	-7	-20	15
Female	83	37	33
White	-26	-33	12
Black	13	-3	17
Hispanic	20	5	15
East Asian	10	-31	60
South Asian	5	-36	65
Pac Islander	50	10	36
Native	18	100	-41
Other/unk.	-22	8	-28

arrest rate increase were Hispanic and Pacific Islander youths (up 5% and 10%, respectively). However, the Hispanic and Pacific Islander juvenile detention-booking rates increased by 20% and 50%, respectively. Native American arrest totals are very small and display considerable annual fluctuations.

Population changes do not explain these trends. Figures 3 and 4 show rates per

Table 7. Change in per-capita rates of arrests and detention bookings by race and gender, 1992-99

	Change in booking rates*			Change in arrest rates*		
	1992	1999	Change	1992	1999	Change
Age 10-17						
Total	5431	4952	-9%	10730	8282	-23%
Male	8829	7003	-21%	16927	11634	-31%
Female	1844	2834	54%	4187	4820	15%
White	4325	2310	-47%	9112	4362	-52%
Black	16449	17367	6%	30658	27695	-10%
Hispanic	4123	4285	4%	7181	6517	-9%
Asian	1864	2013	8%	3889	2785	-28%
Native	9290	10050	8%	10929	20101	84%

*Rates are bookings and arrests per 100,000 population by age, sex, and year. Populations for San Francisco by race, age, gender, and Hispanic ethnicity are from the Demographic Research Unit, California Department of Finance, whose data tables aggregate Asian ethnicities. Native American rates are based on fewer than 20 cases.

⁵ This figure is not statistically significant because of the overall low numbers of Native Americans.

100,000 population by race and sex for 1988 and 1999. (Rates are bookings and arrests per 100,000 population by age, sex, and year. Populations for San Francisco by race, age, gender, and Hispanic ethnicity are from the Demographic Research Unit, California Department of Finance, whose data tables aggregate Asian ethnicities. Native American rates are based on fewer than 20 cases.)

A more detailed breakdown of San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department detention and juvenile arrest figures show the increase varied greatly by race, gender, and offense

The detailed breakdown shows:

- Girls account for less than 30% of total juvenile detention bookings yet comprised 180% of the entire increase of 206 in total bookings (boys' bookings actually declined by 167, while girls' rose by 373).

- Bookings among white males declined sharply (down 146 by number) over the period, while bookings among black males (down 75) and East Asian females (down 13) declined moderately.
- As a result, the entire increase in detention bookings occurred among African-American, Hispanic, and South Asian and Pacific Islander girls. Smaller increases were recorded among Hispanic and Asian males and white females.
- African-American girls, who account for just one-sixth of San Francisco's juvenile arrests, comprised 120% of the city's entire increase in bookings.
- Hispanic and Pacific Islander girls account for fewer than 4% of the city's arrests but comprised nearly half (46%) of the bookings increase.

Figure 3: San Francisco Juvenile Detention Trends by Sex, 1988-1999

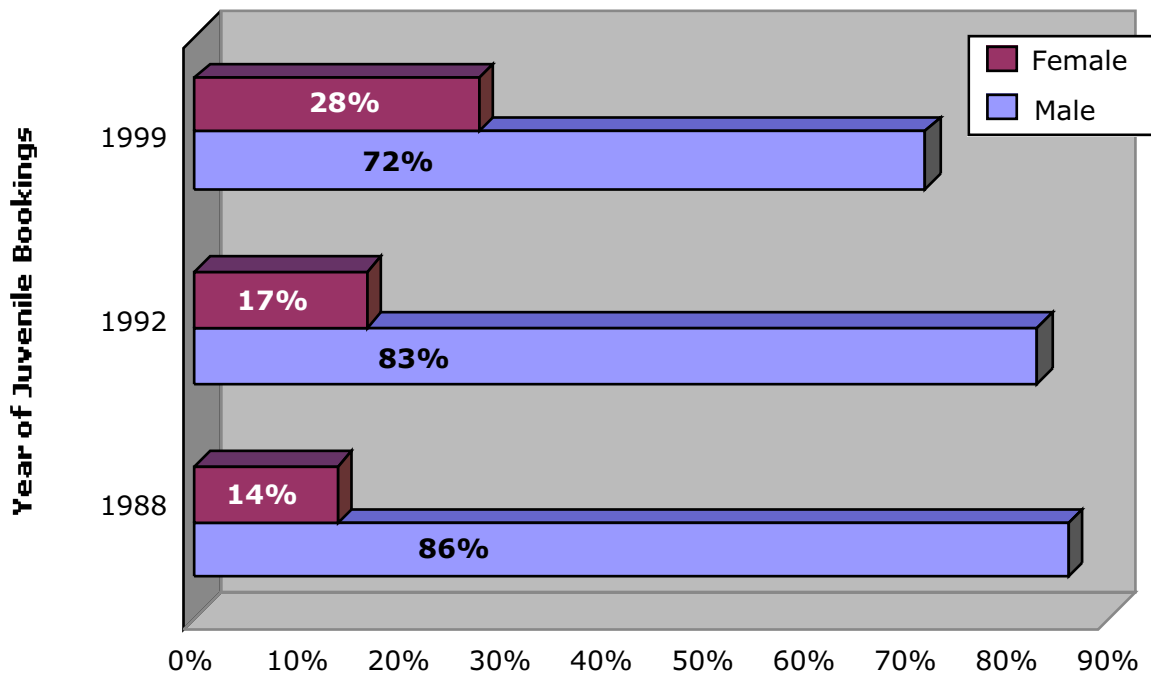


Table 8. Detention referrals by race and gender, 1992-99

Race/gender	Detention referrals		Change, 1992-99	
	1992	1999	Percent	Number
Total	2707	2913	8%	206
Male	2260	2093	-7%	-167
White	354	208	-41%	-146
Black	1085	1010	-7%	-75
Hispanic	389	412	6%	23
East Asian	143	173	21%	30
South Asian/PI	187	218	17%	31
Native	15	16	7%	1
Other	87	56	-36%	-31
Female	447	820	83%	373
White	115	141	23%	26
Black	237	490	107%	253
Hispanic	33	95	188%	62
East Asian	32	19	-41%	-13
South Asian/PI	21	54	157%	33
Native	2	4	100%	2
Other	7	17	143%	10

Thus, instead of reducing San Francisco’s already disproportionate confinement of youth of color, the 1997, 1998, and 1999 figures show sharp increases (detention bookings rose from 83% nonwhite in 1992 to 88% in 1999, while the female proportion rose from 17% in 1983 to 28% in 1999). What factors might explain this enormously disproportionate increase in female and African-American youth detention? Detention bookings by race, gender, and offense are not available. However, juvenile arrest changes (which are not available for race separated by gender) over the 1992-99 period show a peculiar pattern.

Male felony arrests plummeted (down 40%) while female felony arrests skyrocketed (up 58%) over the last seven years. All forms of offenses (violent, property, drug, other felony, and

misdemeanor) fell sharply for boys, led by plummeting rates of property crime. Meanwhile, violence and drug arrests rose sharply, and property and misdemeanors slightly, for females.

In sum, girls of color account for all of San Francisco’s juvenile detention booking increase, from 1992 to 1999. Further, nearly three-fourths of the increase in girls’ arrests consisted of two offenses: drugs and robbery. It is reasonable to assume the biggest reason for increased juvenile detentions is that, amid the sharp decline in male juvenile crime and what appears to be stable arrest levels among East Asian and white juvenile girls in the last seven years, substantially more African-American, Hispanic, South Asian, and Pacific Islander girls are being arrested and detained for felony drug offenses. It is strange that girls’ robbery and

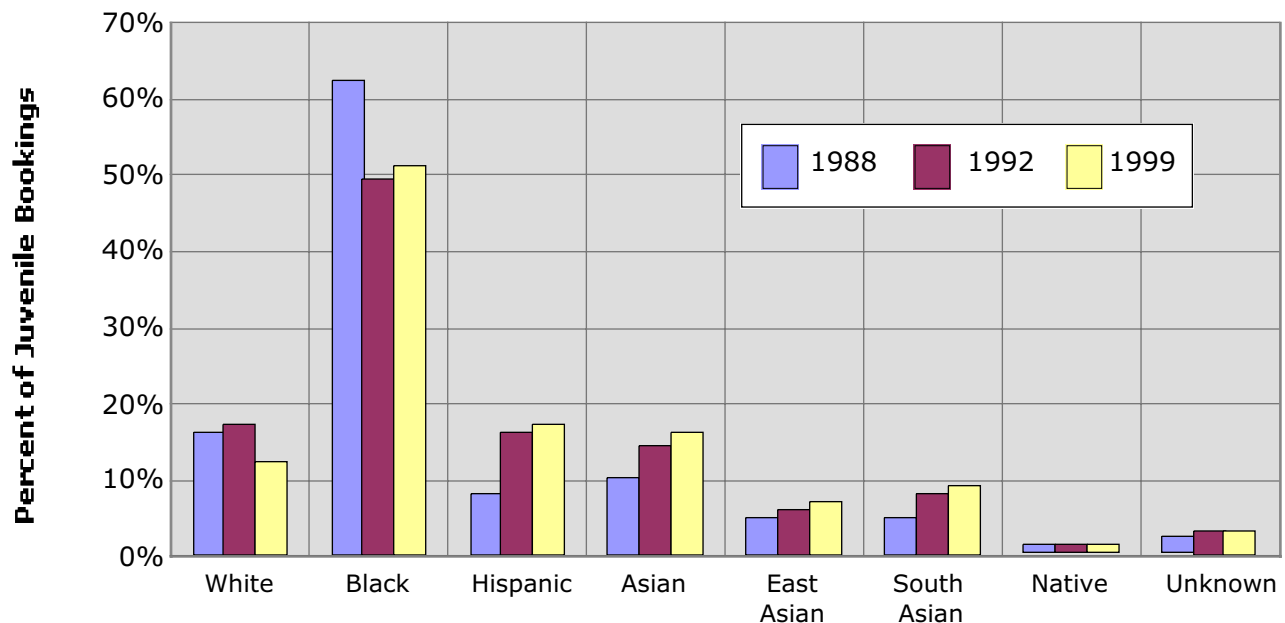
assault arrests should show singular increases when other forms of violent crime do not, or that girls of color should show large increases in drug arrests while boys of all colors do not. In fact, reported crime of all types in San Francisco plunged at a record rate from 1992 to 1999 (violent felonies reported to police dropped 56%, property felonies dropped 45%), with further declines in 2000. Arrest figures indicate the city’s crime drop was led by declines in juvenile offending (also reflected in sharply declining juvenile commitments to long-term confinement in the Log Cabin Ranch and CYA facilities). Therefore, the reasons for the city’s highly selective countertrend — large increases in arrests and detention-center confinements among a small proportion of the population, juvenile girls of color — merit far more study, beginning with whether these represent real increases in offending or changes in law enforcement and detention practices.

Implications/Discussion

In the past 15 years three major studies were completed urging structural reforms of the city’s juvenile justice system. The first of these reports, and the most comprehensive, was the Jefferson Report of 1987. Using experts from the United States Justice Department, the report’s authors concluded that an unnecessary and often counterproductive over reliance on secure confinement exists at the Youth Guidance Center. Institutional and attitudinal barriers prevent the program from achieving a constructive balance between treatment and custody orientation (Jefferson & Associates and Community Research Associates 1987, p. iv).

The authors concluded that the City needed to expand its range of options and reduce its detention population through better screening. If these measures were adopted, San Francisco would only need a 63-bed juvenile hall (Jefferson & Associates and Community Research

Figure 4: San Francisco Juvenile Detention Trends by Race, 1988-1999



Associates 1987; Jefferson & Associates and Patrick Sullivan and Associates 1987).

A subsequent 1990 report by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency concluded that even without increasing the number of alternative programs, significant reductions in the Youth Guidance Center's 135-bed capacity could be achieved. NCCD researchers projected the city's detention population needs to the year 2009 and determined with minor administrative changes in detention practice, the Youth Guidance Center population would decline from a peak of 70 in 1998 to 45 in 2009 (see Figure 5) (Steinhart, McVey, and Steele, 1991).

Based on this recommendation, a construction bond for a 72-bed facility was placed before the voters in 1991 with the support of every major political leader in the City, including then police chief Frank Jordan. Although the bond garnered 57% voter support it failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds vote after the probation officers association, who advocated a much larger juvenile hall, mounted a vigorous campaign to defeat the initiative.

In 1995, juvenile justice reform reemerged as a major issue in the mayoral and district attorney races. Upon his election Mayor Willie Brown promised definitive action in instituting long sought reforms. With an infusion of new state and federal money, the city disbursed over \$20 million between 1996 and 2000 (San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report, 1999). Despite this unprecedented infusion of new resources, current available data shows that these investments are having no discernable effect.

Such a failure to achieve results in reducing detention populations indicates the following:

- Institutional practices within the probation department maintain and protect the present system and resist change
- New programs designed by the probation department were not intended to impact the core elements of the system such as the detention rate
- New initiatives were simply absorbed into the existing structure without effecting substantive changes in routines and practices.

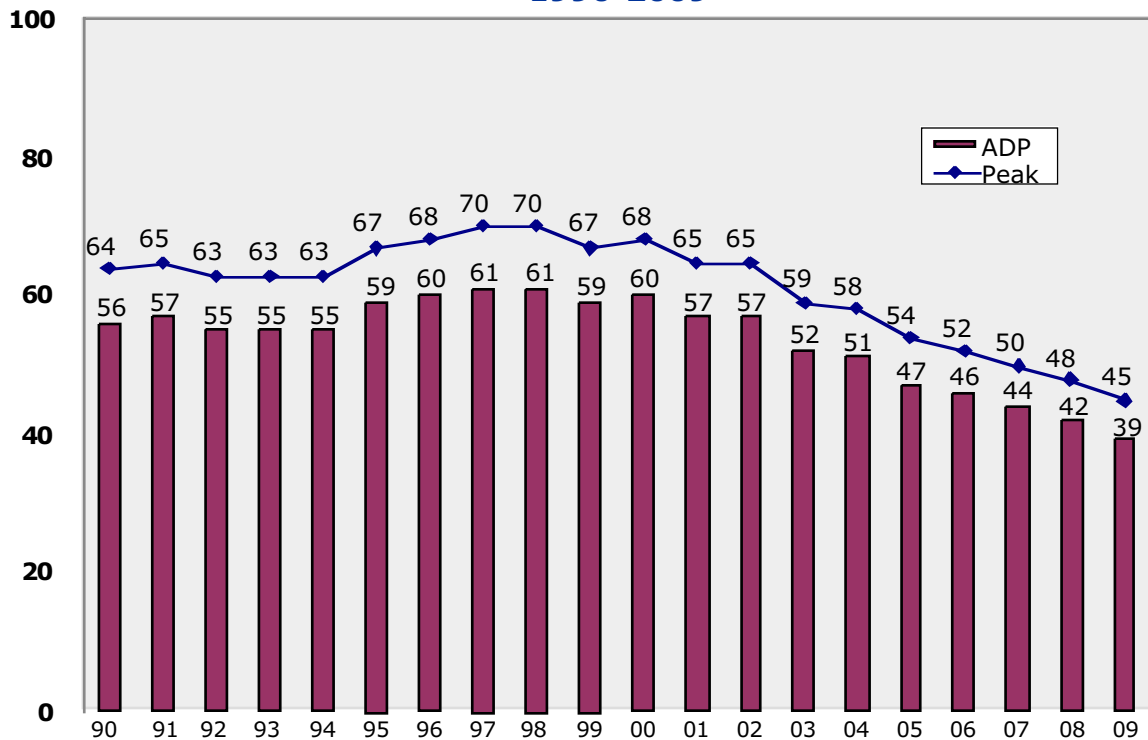
The probation department's historic tendency to maintain the YGC population at stable levels without regard to crime and population patterns was noted in the 1990 NCCD analysis. According to NCCD researchers:

San Francisco in the decade of the 1980s kept its juvenile hall populations at three-fourths or more of rated capacity.

In 1983, when both the at-risk population and juvenile arrests in San Francisco dropped to a low for the decade, the average daily population crested at 122 for the year with 61 days of facility overcrowding (Steinhart, McVey, and Steele, 1991).

The resiliency of the probation department to resist reductions in the juvenile hall population was further demonstrated by a recent United States Justice Department analysis of San Francisco's Detention Diversion Advocacy

Figure 5: San Francisco Youth Guidance Center Revised Projection (based on new detention policies) Average Daily Population and Average Monthly Peak 1990-2009



Source: National Council on Crime & Delinquency

Project (DDAP). The project was established in 1993 by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice to reduce the Youth Guidance Center population and address disproportionate minority confinement. Despite strident opposition from the probation department, the project was highly successful in lowering recidivism rates for high-risk youths when compared to a sample of less severe youths who were detained in the YGC. The project has since been replicated in Washington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. However, the evaluation indicated that as DDAP was removing high-risk youths from the YGC, less severe youths were being detained (Shelden 1999). As a result, the project could not produce reductions in San Francisco’s juvenile detention population.

The Juvenile Probation Department is presently in the process of building a new detention center with an expanded capacity of 150 beds. To qualify for \$15 million in federal subsidies for the project, the City was required to present evidence of a need for expanded capacity (increased detentions resulting from more youth being subject to secure detention). Construction on the new building will begin July 2001.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the city’s investment in juvenile justice reform over the past five years, there is no evidence of system change. Instead it appears that new services and programs were simply marginalized. Marginalization occurs when new programs are designed as simple

adjuncts to current operations, rather than intended to replace core system elements. Although this study does not include 2000/01 detention statistics, there is little reason to expect that the results will change given that the YGC population remains unaltered.

The Brown administration's juvenile justice initiatives have not resulted in system reforms. Instead, to maintain a stable number of youth, it appears a wider pool of lower-risk youths were simply absorbed into the system in order to keep the juvenile hall and the rolls of new programs filled. Such a process is known in corrections, as net widening. Net widening is the process in which lower-risk youths are processed into the juvenile justice system who would not have been processed previously (Shelden 1999). Criminologists have long warned against this practice, given the negative consequences associated with formal justice system processing (Schwartz, Barton, and Orlando, 1991). In addition, expending resources on a lower risk population siphons resources from the higher-risk populations and allows officials to ignore systemic problems.

In summary, this analysis shows that the situation for youths in the San Francisco juvenile justice system has deteriorated over the past five years as more children are subject to significantly higher degrees of confinement than before the reforms began. San Francisco now detains a higher percentage of arrested youth in its juvenile justice system than at any time in recent history and this increase has fallen most heavily on girls and minority youth. The results of this study are particularly disturbing given that such a result could not have occurred without

the acquiescence of the political establishment and elements of the city's progressive community. Because most of the money that has been used to finance new services is short-term state and federal funds, the system will return to its old structure once these funds are expended in the next three years.

Follow-up investigation by the Board of Supervisors should examine the design and impact of new programs funded through the probation department and Mayor Criminal Justice Council. The Board should conduct an independent evaluation of how money was spent and how programs were implemented. In addition, future research should explore the department's development of out-of-home placement options and the effect of youths awaiting placement on the average daily population. Finally, the Board should enlist the assistance of outside experts to provide independent analysis and technical assistance on implementing juvenile justice reform.

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