Volume 26, No. 1

SystemStats

North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center — Governor's Crime Commission

Juvenile Crime and System Activity Trends: 2005-2007

This report delineates short term trends in North Carolina's juvenile justice system with an emphasis on identifying significant changes that occurred between 2005 and 2007. Juvenile arrest data, judicial processing information and detention and youth development center admissions will also be analyzed. Supplemental data, in addition to the activities of these major juvenile justice system contact points, will also be presented in an effort to depict a more robust picture of what has occurred among the state's juvenile justice population between 2005 and 2007.

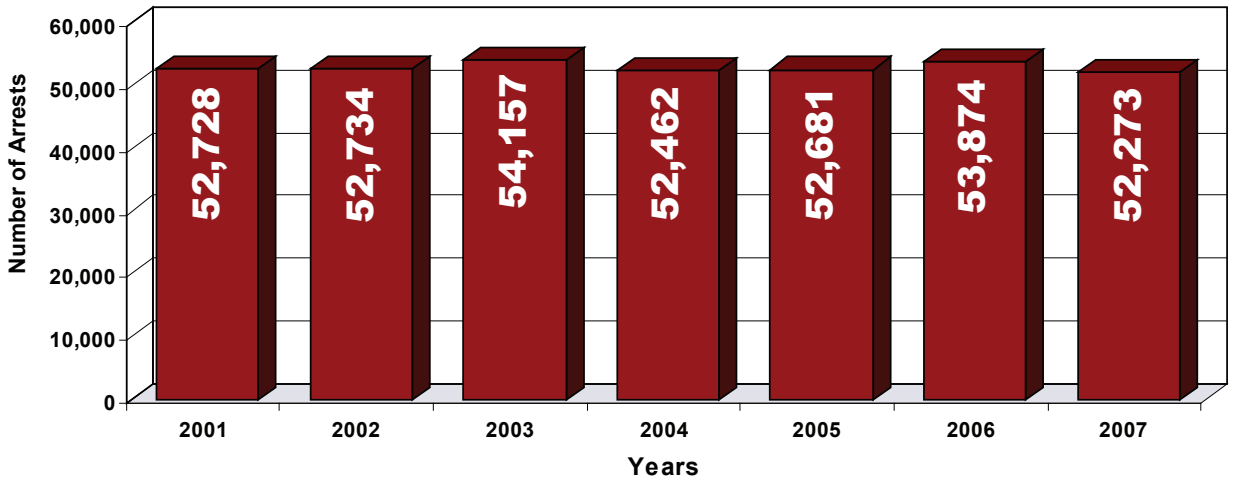
Juvenile Arrests

As Figure 1 reveals, the total number of juvenile arrests experienced a minimal decline of less than 1 percent (0.78 percent) from 2005 to 2007. In 2005 there were 52,681 reported arrests across the state. One year later this number grew slightly to 53,874 and then trended downward to 52,273 in 2007 which is the lowest total number of reported arrests since 1994. The juvenile arrest rate, which is a better indicator as it controls for and varies with fluctuations in the state's juvenile population, was 56 arrests, per 1,000 10-17-year olds, in 2005. By 2007 this rate had dropped to 53.9 arrests per 1,000 for a 3.8 percent decline.

Analyzing total arrests by offense type reveals an increase in several drug categories from 2005 to 2007. Most notably arrests for the sale and manufacturing of synthetic narcotics rose 44 percent followed by increases in arrests for possession of synthetic narcotics (42 percent) and arrests for selling and manufacturing marijuana (33.7 percent). Arrests for possession of marijuana grew 18 percent while arrests for selling and manufacturing opium or cocaine swelled 12 percent. Interestingly, arrests for possessing opium or cocaine dropped 15.7 percent during this same period.

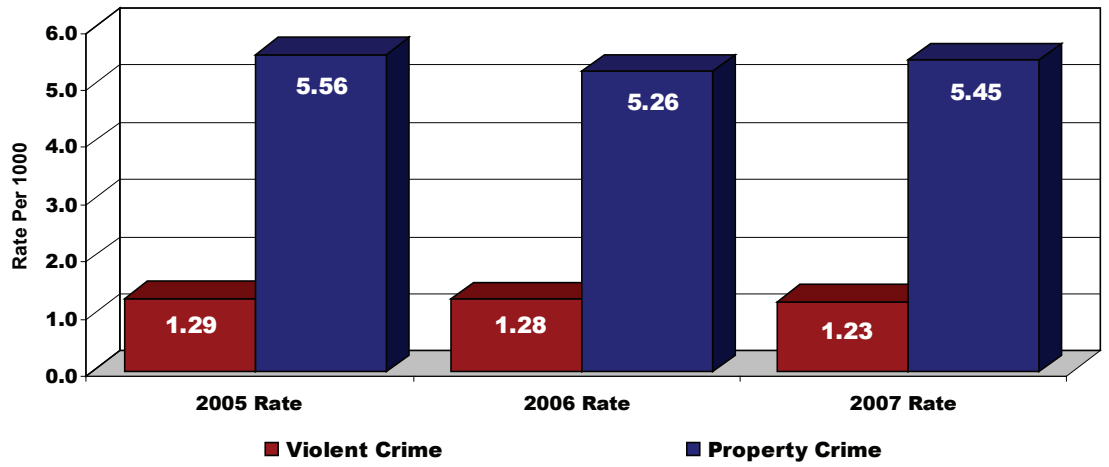
Arrests for all violent crimes dropped a slight 1.1 percent; however, increases did occur for manslaughter by negligence (33.3 percent), robbery (24.1 percent) and murder (6.7 percent). Driving this overall drop in arrests for violent crimes was a substantial decline in aggravated assaults (18.2 percent) and forcible rape (7.2 percent).

Figure 1: North Carolina Juvenile Arrests 2001 to 2007 (Youth Under 18)



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

Figure 2: Juvenile Violent and Property Crime Arrest Rates 2005 to 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

Arrests for property crimes increased 1.9 percent from 2005 to 2007 with a notable increase in burglary arrests driving this small upward tick (9.6 percent). Arrests for larceny-theft dropped less than one percent while arrests for motor vehicle thefts declined by 23.9 percent.

Despite increases in the total number of arrests for several offense categories the arrest rates, per 1,000 youth, declined for both violent and property related offenses. The violent crime arrest rate dropped from 1.3 to 1.2 per 1,000 youth while the property crime arrest rate declined from 5.6 in 2005 to 5.5 in 2007 (Refer to Figure 2).

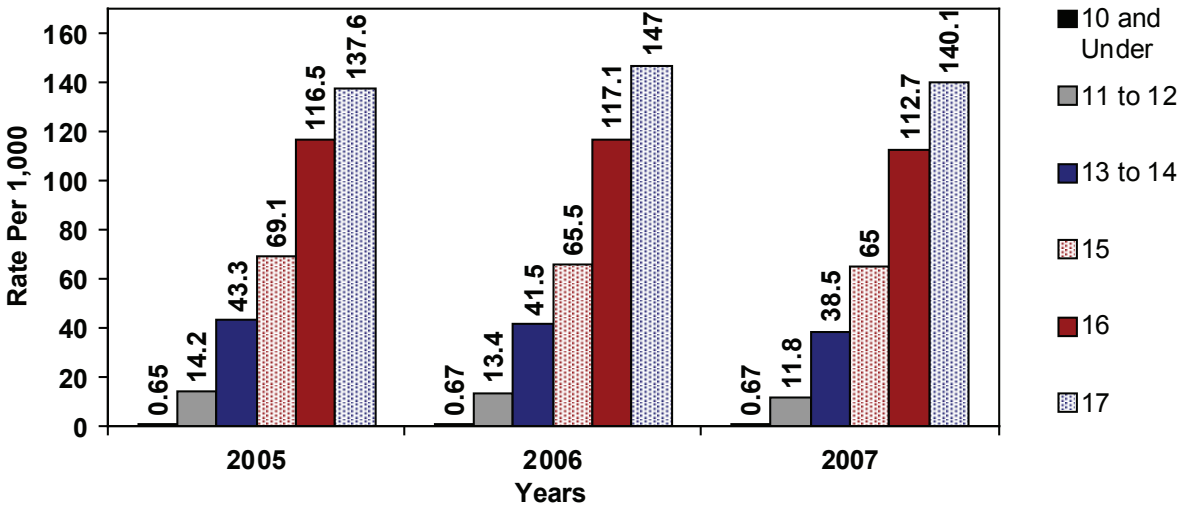
Arrests by Age

As Figure 3 depicts juvenile arrest rates by age have not changed dramatically from 2005 to 2007. Rates for children ten and under remain less than one arrest per 1,000 while the arrest rate for 11 and 12 year olds declined from 14.2 to 11.8 per 1,000 (16.9 percent). Slight declines also occurred for the remaining age cohorts with the exception of 17 year olds; a group whose arrest rate grew from 137.6 to 140.1 per 1,000 (1.8 percent increase).

Arrests by Race

Table 1 presents the total number of juvenile arrests and corresponding arrest rates by race. Total arrests

Figure 3: Juvenile Arrest Rates by Age 2005 to 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

Table 1: Total Juvenile Arrests and Arrest Rates by Race: 2005-2007

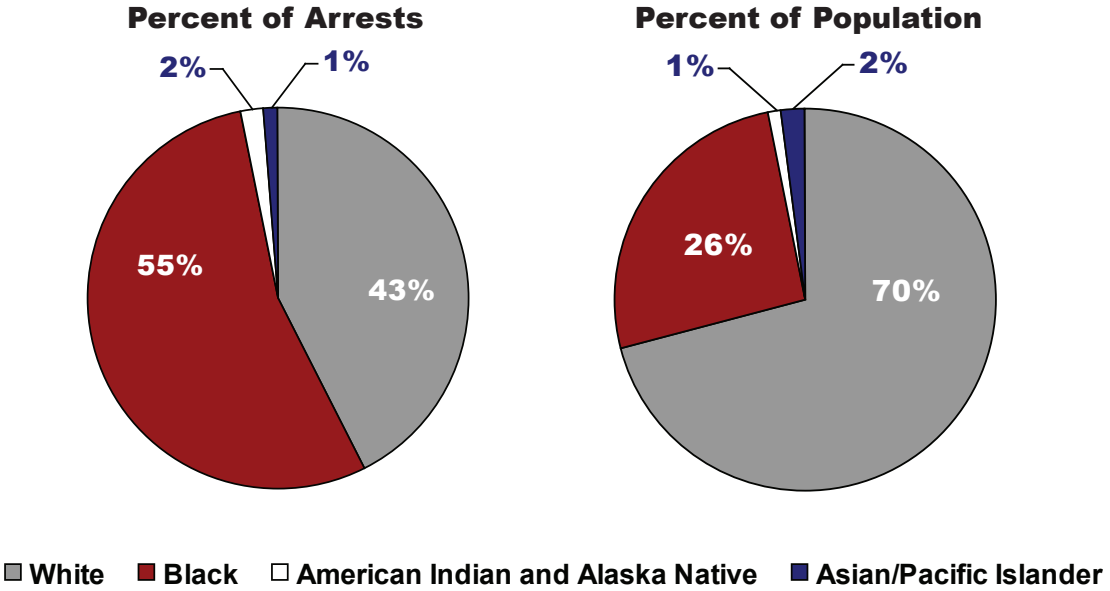
Year	Total Arrests: White	Rate per 1,000	Total Arrests: Black	Rate per 1,000	Total Arrests: Asian/ Pacific Islander	Rate per 1,000	Total Arrests: American Indian/Alaskan Native	Rate per 1,000
2005	22,985	17.6	27,873	50.1	317	6.7	1,184	40.3
2006	23,512	18.0	28,718	51.5	309	6.6	1,127	38.3
2007	22,289	17.1	28,797	51.7	280	6.0	907	30.8
Average	22,929	17.6	28,463	51.1	302	6.4	1,073	36.5

Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

and arrest rates remain highest for African-American youth with a three year trend average of 28,463 arrests or 51.1 arrests per 1,000 non-Hispanic African-American children under 18. While total arrests for American Indian/Alaskan Native youth are low their corresponding arrest rates rank second highest behind those of African-American youth with an average of 36.5 arrests per 1,000 non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Natives. Total arrests for non-Hispanic White youth averaged 22,929 over the three year period with a corresponding arrest rate of 17.6 per 1,000. Arrests of Asian/Pacific Islander youth remain low in North Carolina with a three year average of 302 total arrests or an average of 6.4 per 1,000.

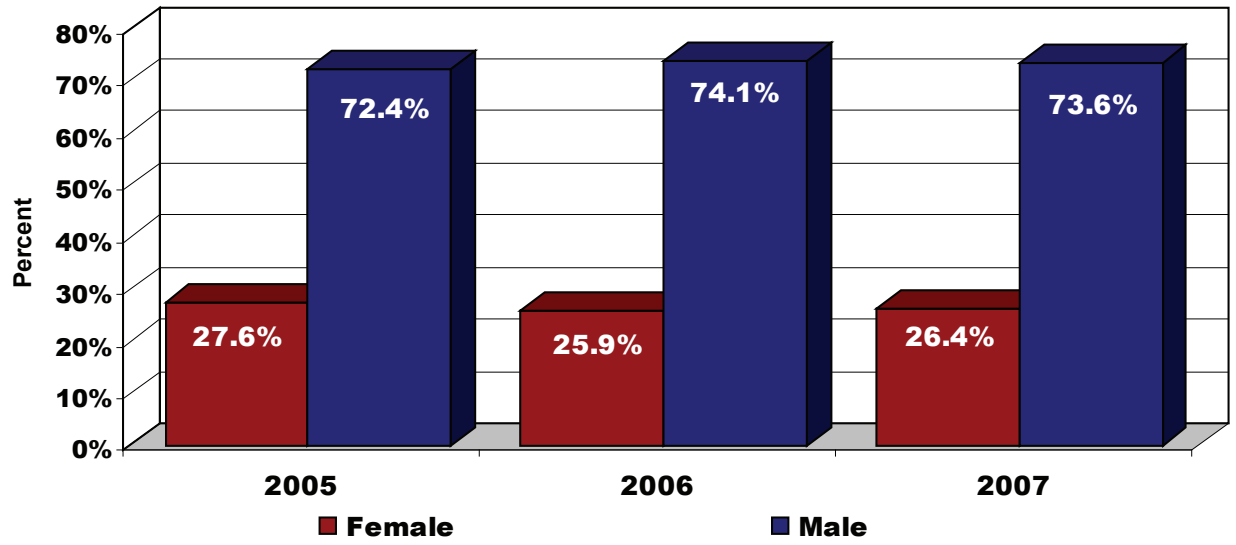
Figure 4 presents arrest data by race for 2007 with the corresponding racial populations. Arrests of African-Americans are twice as great as their representation in the state's juvenile population. During this year African-American youth accounted for 55 percent of all juvenile arrests yet only constituted 26 percent of the state's total youth population. Disproportionality also exists within the American Indian/Alaskan Native group with these youth accounting for two percent of the total arrests and only one percent of the youth population. White youth and Asian/Pacific Islanders were underrepresented when comparing the arrests to population ratios.

Figure 4: Juvenile Arrests and Population by Race 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

Figure 5: Percentage of Juvenile Arrests by Gender, 2005 to 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation: Crime in North Carolina

Arrests by Gender

Male teens continue to be arrested at a much higher rate than their female counterparts with total male arrests being nearly 2.5 times greater. In 2005 males accounted for 72.4 percent of the total number of juvenile arrests (37,932 versus 14,427 female arrests). Comparable findings were found to exist with the 2007 arrest data; a year in which males accounted for 73.6 percent of the total arrests. Arrest rates by gender are presented in the figure below and demonstrate that the arrest rates have remained static for both male and female juveniles over the last three years with no discernable increases or decreases occurring.

Juvenile Court Services*

Juveniles Referred to Court and Adjudication

As Table 2 depicts the number of delinquency petitions, which were filed in the state's juvenile courts, dropped slightly more than 6 percent from 25,232 in fiscal year 2005-2006 to 23,662 in fiscal year 2007-2008. Conversely, filings of undisciplined cases grew from 4,742 to 4,783 over the three-year period. Combined, the total number for both case types increased 5 percent from fiscal year 2005-2006

** The following section reflects data for all juvenile matters in the district courts which includes delinquency cases as well as hearings involving undisciplined, abused, neglected and dependent children.*

Table 2: Delinquent and Undisciplined Petitions Filed in North Carolina Juvenile Courts

State Fiscal Year[1]	Delinquent Cases	Undisciplined Cases	Total
2005-2006	25,232	4,742	29,974
2006-2007	25,537	4,509	30,046
2007-2008	23,662	4,783	28,445
Percent Increase (Decrease)	**(6.2 percent)**	**.01 percent**	**(5.1 percent)**

Source: North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. North Carolina state fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

Table 3: Adjudicatory Hearings for Juvenile Matters in District Courts

State Fiscal Year	Total Hearings
2005-2006	48,099
2006-2007	47,807
2007-2008	44,979
Percent Increase (Decrease)	**(6.5 percent)**

Source: North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

to 2007-2008. Filing rates for delinquency petitions dropped from 26.8 per 1,000 youth in 2005 to 24.4 in 2007 (8.9 percent).

The number of adjudicatory hearings which were handled in the state's district courts declined from 48,099 in fiscal year 2005-2006 to 44,979 in fiscal year 2007-2008. This represents a 6.5-percent drop over the course of the three-year period (Refer to Table 3).

Tables 4 and 5 present information on the number of complaints which were handled both formally (petitioned) and informally (diverted) during fiscal year 2007-2008. A total of 8,761 complaints were managed informally during this year with the greatest percentage being Class 1-3 misdemeanor offenses (77.8 percent). Within this offense category 46.7 percent of the diversions involved Caucasian youth and 44.1 percent involved African-American youth. The percentage of status offending Caucasian teens, which were diverted, was twice as high as the percentage of African-American status offender diversions.

Cases Handled Formally and Informally

As Table 5 (at the top of the following page) depicts a total of 13,442 complaints were handled formally or petitioned during fiscal year 2007-2008. As with diversions Class 1-3 misdemeanors accounted for the largest percentage of petitioned cases (62.3 percent). African-American youth represented slightly more than 50 percent of all formally managed cases with Caucasian teens accounting for 39 percent of the total number of petitioned cases.

Detention and Youth Development Center (YDC) Adminssions

The following section presents trend data on admissions to both detention centers and youth development centers (YDC) over the course of the last three years. Detention centers primarily offer

Table 4: Cases Handled Informally (Non-Petitioned) 2007-2008

Race	Class A –E	Class F –1, A1	Class 1-3	Infraction	Status	Total Complaints
Asian	0	2	22	0	3	27
Black	1	418	3,004	17	300	3,740
Latino	0	34	346	12	74	466
Multi-Racial	0	21	144	1	45	211
Native American	0	2	58	1	10	71
Other	0	2	15	0	4	21
Pacific Islander	0	1	4	0	0	5
Unknown	0	4	23	1	11	39
Caucasian	0	285	3,196	42	658	4,181
Total	**1**	**769**	**6,812**	**74**	**1,105**	**8,761**

Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, NC JOIN (Data includes complaints with a decision date during 2007.)

Table 5: Cases Handled Formally (Petitioned) 2007-2008

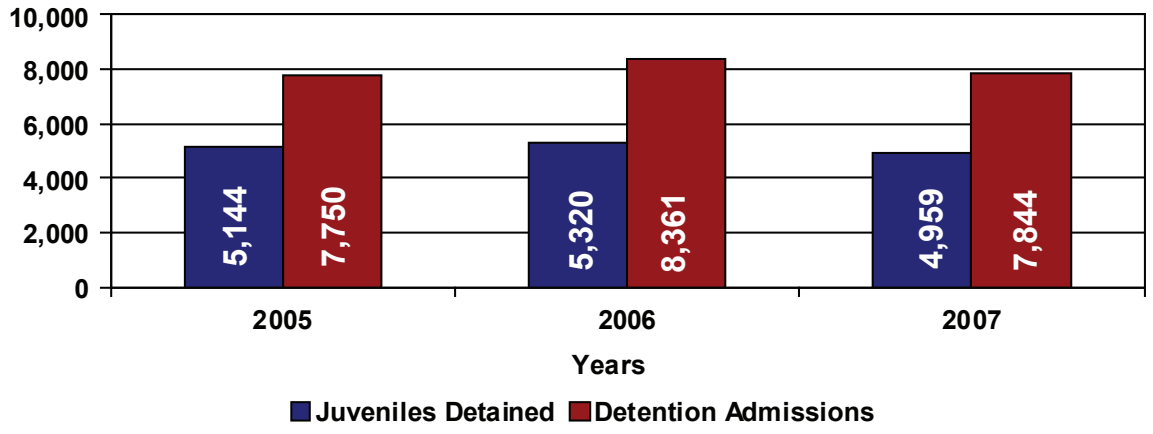
Race	Class A –E	Class F –1, A1	Class 1-3	Infraction	Status	Total Complaints
Asian	0	10	39	0	7	56
Black	199	1,962	4,152	9	470	6,792
Latino	13	132	475	7	69	696
Multi-Racial	6	60	203	1	44	314
Native American	4	26	151	1	47	229
Other	0	7	11	0	5	23
Pacific Islander	0	8	9	0	1	18
Unknown	0	1	13	0	8	22
Caucasian	73	1,094	3,320	18	787	5,292
Total	**295**	**3,300**	**8,373**	**36**	**1,438**	**13,442**

Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, NC JOIN (Data includes complaints with a decision date during 2007.)

short-term commitments for juveniles who are in need of secure custody prior to a court appearance or until another placement can be found. Also, some offenders serve time here as part of a dispositional sanction. Youth development centers offer education, treatment and supervision for those juvenile offenders who are serving time as part of a longer dispositional sanction.

Figure 6 depicts the total number of juveniles who were detained as well as total admissions from 2005 to 2007. The number of detainees declined by nearly 4 percent from 5,144 in 2005 to a total of 4,959 last year. Conversely, detention admissions experienced a negligible increase during the same period rising from 7,750 to 7,844 in 2007. This increase occurred primarily due to a spike of 8, 361 admissions in 2006; thus over the three-year period detention admissions

Figure 6: Juveniles Detained and Detention Admissions 2005 to 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 Annual Report

grew 1.2 percent. Detention admission rates dropped from 8.2 per 1,000 10-17-year olds, to 8.1 in 2007.

Seventy-five percent of the juveniles who were detained in 2007 were male while 81 percent of the detainees were between the ages of 13 and 16.

Figure 7 analyzes these detainees by race and reveals that minority youth were overrepresented for each year. African-American youth constituted the largest percentage of detainees at 58 percent of the total in each of the three years. White youth accounted for 34 percent of total detainees in 2005 and 2006 and a lesser 32 percent in 2007. Latino youth made up 4 percent of the detainee population in 2005 and 2006 with this rate growing to five percent in 2007.

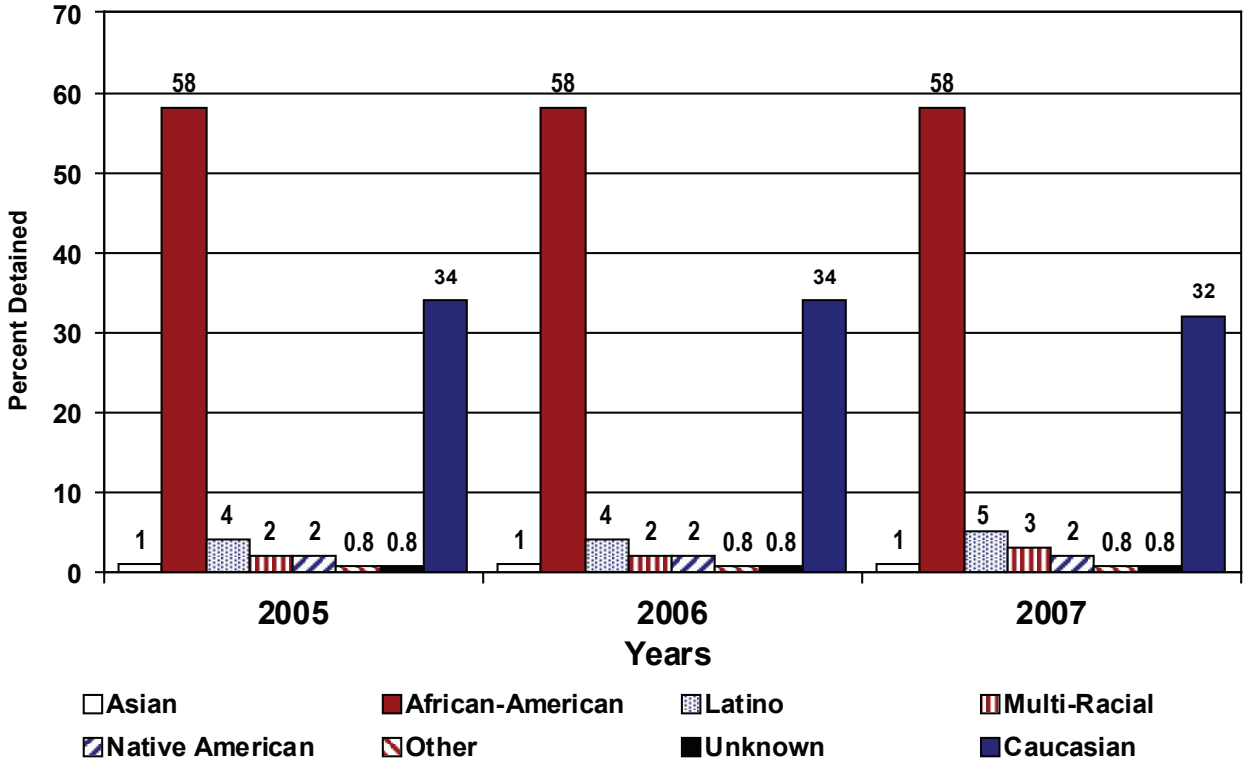
Youth Development Center Admissions

Admissions have dropped precipitously since 1998 due to juvenile code revisions and a concerted effort to explore alternative placements for all but the most serious, violent and habitual offenders. Admissions continue to remain low, compared to over a thousand per year in the late 90's, with 428 commitments in 2005, 486 the following year and 437 last year (Refer to Figure 8). This equates to a short-term increase of only 2 percent. The average length of stay in these facilities ranged from 393 days in 2005 to 386 days in 2007. The development center admission rates have remained less than one per 1,000 youth with .46 per 1,000 in 2005 and .45 in 2007.

African-American youth represented between 71 percent and 75 percent of the total admissions during this period with white youth accounting for 22 percent in 2005 and a lesser 18 percent in 2007. Last year 87 percent of the commitments were male while 44 percent were 15-year old youth, 29 percent were 16-year olds and 17 percent were 14-year olds.

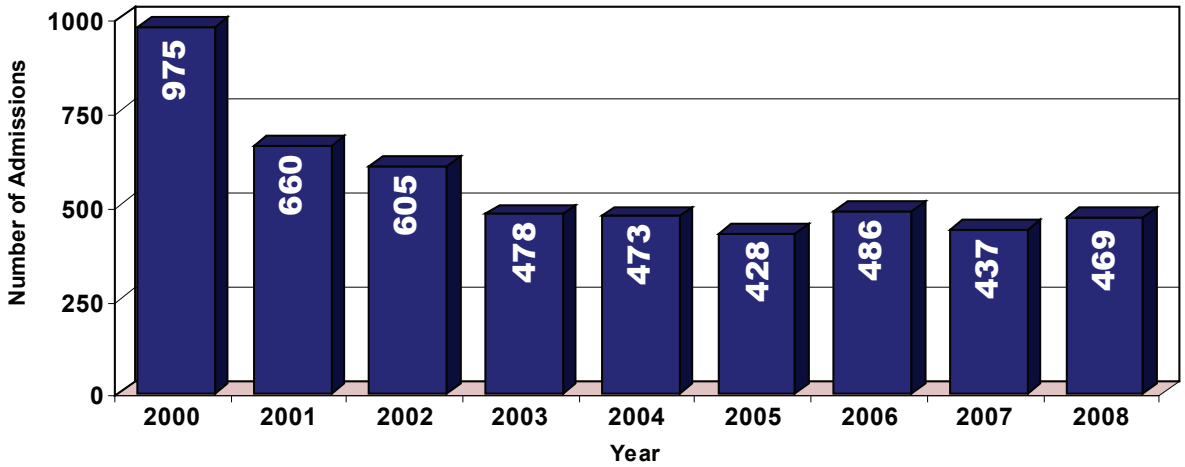
Of the 437 commitments in 2007 over half (57 percent) were for Class F-1 Serious offenses followed by Class A-E Violent Felonies (22 percent) and Misdemeanor A-1 Serious offenses (15 percent). The remaining 6 percent were youth who were committed on minor Misdemeanor Class 1-3 offenses but who also had prior system involvement.

Figure 7: Juvenile Detention Admission by Race (Percent) 2005 to 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007 Annual Report

Figure 8: Youth Development Center Admissions 2005 - 2007



Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2008 Annual Report

Since 2004, the state Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has been collecting assessment and treatment planning data on new YDC admissions. Based on this data, some significant characteristics have been identified about the types of juveniles committed to YDCs to include:

- Conduct Disorders
- Substance Abuse Disorders
- Attention Deficit Disorders
- Multiple Mental Health Diagnosis
- IQ Level of 89 or Below

Other Relevant Social, Economic, Legal and Organizational Factors

School Violence

Table 6 documents the number and rate of reported criminal acts occurring in the state's public schools or at school functions as collected and compiled by the state's Department of Public Instruction. The total number of reported acts increased 8.9 percent from fiscal year 2004-2005 to 2006-2007 with the rate per 1,000 students increasing at a smaller 3.7 percent. Violent acts only account for 4 percent of the total reported offenses with the most prevalent offenses remaining the same throughout the three-year period. These include: possession of a controlled substance, which represented 39.4 percent of all offenses in 2006-2007, followed by possession of a non-firearm weapon (35.6 percent), possession of an alcoholic beverage (9.8 percent), assault on school personnel without serious injuries (8.1 percent), and bomb threats (1.6 percent).

Student Suspension and Expulsion

Short-term school suspensions, which range from one to 10 days, experienced a minimal amount of growth; growing from 301,963, in fiscal year 2005-2006, to 308,010 the following year (2.1 percent). Long-term suspensions, which are 11 or more days, experienced a similar trend growing 2.7 percent during this time period (4,559 to 4,682). On average one out of every 10 students receives a short-term suspension during the typical school year which averages three days. Male students, African-American and American Indian students, ninth graders and students receiving special education are disproportionately represented among those students receiving school suspensions (N.C. Department of Public Instruction, 2007b).

Expulsions continue to be fairly rare with only 81 occurring during the 2006-2007 school year. This was a 14.7 percent decline from the previous year in which 95 expulsions were recorded (N.C. Department of Public Instruction, 2007b).

Table 6: Total Number of Acts Reported (School Violence)

Annual Reporting Year	Total Acts	Acts Per 1000 Students
2004-2005	10,107	7.49
2005-2006	10,959	7.90
2006-2007	11,013	7.77

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Annual Report on School Violence 2006-2007.

Table 7: Number of Unduplicated Investigations and Substantiated Cases of Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency

State Fiscal Year	Number of Investigations	Number Substantiated
2003-2004	113,557	24,205
2004-2005	111,581	20,394
2005-2006	111,150	16,753
Percent Increase (Decrease)	**(2.1 percent)**	**(30.8 percent)**

Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Child Abuse and Neglect

According to the latest Children's Index, as compiled and published by the North Carolina Action for Children organization (2006), a child abuse or neglect case is reported every five minutes in North Carolina. Of the 111,581 cases reported in 2005 85 percent involved neglect, 8 percent abuse and the remaining cases had co-occurring abuse and neglect. The most recent data from the state's central registry indicates there were 113,557 unduplicated child abuse and neglect investigations during fiscal year 2003-2004 of which 24,205, or 21 percent, were substantiated. Two years later this number dropped to 111,150 investigations of which 16,753 were confirmed or substantiated. This represents a lower substantiated case rate of 16 percent contrasted with the 2003-2004 case rate.

Substance Abuse

According to the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (2007) a total of 238,880 people who received services were found to have a mental health diagnosis in 2007. Of this number 65,598, or 27.4 percent, were children. During the same year 57,335 people were served and diagnosed as having a substance abuse disorder with 1,975 being children (3.4 percent).

During fiscal year 2005-2006, 26,514 children and teens were served/admitted to the state's area mental health programs. The following year 19,988 received services with 21,330 being admitted during the last fiscal year. This equates to a 19.5 percent decline over the three-year period (N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, 2008).

Juvenile Gang Crimes

Current juvenile arrest data does not specifically delineate those crimes that are gang related. However, the Governor's Crime Commission conducted a survey in 2004 to determine the extent of youth gangs across North Carolina (Hayes, 2005). This survey of local law enforcement agencies across the state revealed approximately 387 recognized gangs and 8,517 members during 2004. A similar survey administered in 1999 to the same population revealed 332 recognized gangs and approximately 5,068 members.

A third follow-up gang survey was conducted in 2007 and revealed an increasing gang presence across the state with 550 gangs being recognized by local law enforcement agencies in 62 of the state's 100 counties. This study also documented at least 14,500 gang members (Davis, et.al, 2008).

Summary

On the whole, analysis of juvenile crime and systems indicates a slight decline in almost every sector of the juvenile justice system between 2005 and 2007. Areas showing modest increases in activity include detention center admissions, school related offenses, suspensions and expulsions. Despite declines overall, the issue of disproportionate minority contact remains problematic. As juveniles move deeper into the system, a greater number of minorities are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system as compared to a proportion of the general population. As additional and more detailed data become available and the time frame can be expanded, further analysis will be conducted to monitor evolving activities and trends in the system.

A Note on System Stats

With this issue of SystemStats, we are returning to assigning a volume and issue number for each issue. This will provide flexibility in the cases when more or fewer issues are printed in a calendar year. SystemStats has been issued regularly since 1984, making this Volume 26, Issue 1.

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The Governor's Crime Commission was established in 1977 by the North Carolina General Assembly under G.S. 143B-479. Its primary duty is "to be the chief advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety for the development and implementation of criminal justice policy." The Crime Commission is always open to comments and suggestions from the general public as well as criminal justice officials. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts and feelings on the information contained in this publication or on any other criminal justice issue of concern to you.

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