

SECTION V

Juvenile Female Crime: A Special Study

Introduction

National interest in juvenile crime has continued to stimulate examination of characteristics inherent in juvenile arrest patterns. Numerous studies have been published by a myriad of private entities and public agencies, adding to an ever-expanding collection of juvenile crime-specific information. As juvenile crimes, such as those often explored in the media, continue to draw national attention, agencies and individuals alike continue to compile data in the hope of identifying elements germane to combating juvenile crime. In again examining juvenile arrests,¹ the Summary System and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program each provide data through which to explore what appear to be noteworthy differences in the nature and extent of violence in crimes committed by female juveniles when compared to their male counterparts. For the purposes of this study, the term “juvenile” is limited to persons under the age of 18.

Summary Trends²

Since 1987, juvenile female arrests have increased at a faster rate than those of juvenile males. Arrest data indicate that juvenile females make up an expanding proportion of arrests in the total Index category, as well as in the violent crime category. Although the largest percent of juvenile female arrests are for property crimes, data indicate that juvenile females are being arrested in an expanding proportion for violent crimes.

Since 1967, the Nation has seen a 26-percent increase in the overall juvenile arrest rate for Index offenses. Aside from 1974 in which arrests for Index crimes peaked (in comparison to both preceding and subsequent years) for both juvenile males and females, arrest patterns for the sexes differ. Juvenile male arrest rates demonstrate a steady decline from 1974 until 1984, after which they remain relatively stable until 1996 when they again decline. With the exception of 1974, juvenile female arrest data remain relatively stable until 1989 from which time they continue a slow, but steady upward pattern (Figure 5.1).

Though juvenile male and female arrest data for Index crimes do indicate differences in patterns demonstrated by each sex, those differences are slight. Arrest data for violent crimes, however, suggest dramatic changes in female patterns.

The violent crime arrest rate for the total juvenile population shows an increase of 143 percent from 1967 to 1996. Though the juvenile male violent crime arrest rate expanded by 124 percent from 1967 to 1996, the juvenile female arrest rate is nearly triple that figure, 345 percent. Figures from 1967 indicate an arrest rate of 14 juvenile females for every 100,000 juvenile females. In contrast to the 1967 figures, the figures from 1996 indicate an arrest rate of 64 juvenile females for every 100,000 juvenile females (Figure 5.2).

It appears that the nature of the crimes for which juveniles are being arrested has changed over the past 30 years, with the most significant changes occurring over the last decade. In 1967, 9 percent of all Index arrests of male juveniles were for violent crimes, while the remaining 91 percent were for property crimes. In contrast, by 1996, 18 percent of these arrests were for violent crimes, while 82 percent were for property crimes. Arrests of juvenile females indicate a similar pattern. Thirty years ago only 5 percent of all female arrests for Index crimes were for violent offenses. By 1996, the proportion of arrests for violent offenses had grown to 10 percent (Figure 5.3).

In examining arrests of juveniles by sex over the past 30 years, changes in proportions are apparent. In 1967, females constituted 13 percent of all juvenile Index arrests, while males made up the remaining 87 percent. In 1996, the percentage of juvenile female arrestees for Index crimes grew to 25 percent of the total. Juvenile male arrestees, on the other hand, decreased to 75 percent (Figure 5.4). This same gradual change is apparent in the violent crime arrest figures. While juvenile male arrests decreased from 92 percent of total juvenile violent crime arrests in 1967 to 85 percent in 1996, juvenile female arrests increased from 8 percent of the total juvenile violent crime arrests in 1967 to 15 percent in 1996 (Figure 5.5).

Age-specific arrest data also suggest differences between male and female juvenile patterns. While crimes committed by the very young often receive a great deal of attention, in reality they account for very few arrests. Juvenile males show progressively higher arrest rates as they age. In general, 16- and 17-year-old males account for the majority of juvenile violent crime arrests. From the years 1967-1996, the highest arrest rates are attributable to 17-year-old males. The age pattern of the juvenile female arrestee differs somewhat from that of the

¹Section V — Juveniles and Violence appeared in *Crime in the United States, 1991*.

²The juvenile age-specific arrest rates in this study were computed using all agencies that submitted 12 complete months of arrest data to the FBI for the particular year in question. The juvenile population data used in calculation of the rates were provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census as estimated population numbers as of July 1 of the year in question.

Table 5.1
Age Specific Violent Crime Arrest Rate
by Sex (per 100,000)

Year	Juvenile Males					Juvenile Females				
	12 yrs. old and under	13-14 yrs. old	15 yrs. old	16 yrs. old	17 yrs. old	12 yrs. old and under	13-14 yrs. old	15 yrs. old	16 yrs. old	17 yrs. old
1967	24.3	290.8	504.1	689.3	782.6	3.4	43.0	52.2	44.2	38.6
1968	25.9	320.7	547.5	732.3	861.1	2.9	39.8	48.8	49.9	49.7
1969	26.3	340.2	612.1	806.3	922.5	2.9	50.5	62.8	61.7	62.6
1970	25.7	350.6	644.0	837.6	956.8	3.5	57.1	73.2	67.2	65.7
1971	28.7	379.6	703.0	928.3	1044.1	4.0	64.7	90.4	86.7	82.1
1972	30.9	387.0	703.4	933.8	1027.8	4.5	75.6	94.4	92.8	78.2
1973	33.3	423.2	752.9	999.0	1112.4	4.4	71.3	88.8	94.7	86.1
1974	31.4	440.2	853.0	1160.2	1267.3	5.0	78.6	111.5	112.3	104.5
1975	30.4	420.0	831.5	1102.1	1201.3	4.7	72.3	119.1	113.7	104.5
1976	30.1	395.9	763.3	1051.8	1159.6	4.0	71.0	103.4	117.3	105.4
1977	28.9	398.2	743.6	1029.3	1172.1	4.1	65.2	94.1	113.7	107.6
1978	30.3	464.8	870.2	1133.6	1272.2	3.7	69.1	103.5	115.2	115.2
1979	26.1	444.7	823.1	1102.6	1287.6	3.1	72.6	107.9	118.2	111.3
1980	25.1	445.9	876.9	1129.8	1322.1	2.9	69.9	117.1	124.5	129.6
1981	27.4	440.5	863.1	1126.9	1252.8	3.1	72.0	120.3	129.1	115.8
1982	27.1	417.9	815.8	1109.9	1295.4	3.1	70.2	113.7	123.3	129.7
1983	26.9	400.2	783.1	1037.1	1196.1	3.4	65.5	110.5	119.5	114.8
1984	26.3	405.6	761.6	1005.1	1177.2	3.3	69.5	110.8	118.3	116.5
1985	27.5	424.1	769.1	999.4	1179.8	3.0	70.9	107.6	117.5	117.6
1986	24.9	435.5	786.2	1057.0	1224.6	3.2	73.9	110.2	130.4	124.4
1987	27.4	440.3	765.3	1000.3	1193.0	3.3	79.1	118.7	121.1	121.7
1988	26.7	469.7	859.5	1068.4	1233.9	3.7	86.6	135.5	134.9	122.8
1989	31.8	558.8	1031.2	1313.9	1462.8	4.6	106.4	151.0	158.5	155.7
1990	32.7	602.2	1137.4	1525.1	1744.8	4.9	123.2	176.8	193.0	178.7
1991	36.1	651.5	1222.0	1604.0	1841.4	5.2	129.9	191.6	203.5	188.0
1992	37.9	681.3	1210.3	1620.6	1757.2	5.8	144.8	214.1	217.4	195.3
1993	39.0	741.2	1376.3	1756.6	1929.2	6.4	167.4	249.3	253.3	232.5
1994	40.8	789.5	1410.7	1788.8	1922.4	6.9	184.2	272.7	274.8	246.7
1995	42.7	744.5	1344.6	1743.1	1933.9	7.3	180.5	279.4	287.6	258.2
1996	36.3	640.3	1174.6	1500.6	1720.8	6.7	159.0	248.8	255.3	255.1

juvenile male arrestee. With the exception of males aged 12 and under, juvenile females at any age demonstrate a lower violent crime arrest rate than juvenile males. The majority of juvenile female arrests cluster around the ages of 15, 16, and 17. In contrast to arrest rates for 17-year-old males when compared to other males, the 17-year-old females have arrest rates similar to females aged 15 and 16 — suggesting, perhaps, that juvenile female involvement in criminal activity decreases at a younger age (Table 5.1).

Incident-based Trends

Due to the fact that NIBRS is presently in an incipient stage and only 11 states have completed testing for participation in the program, extensive historical databases or nationwide estimates, such as those available with traditional Summary data, do not exist.³ Contemporary NIBRS data,⁴ however, do complement the Summary database by providing an avenue for examining elements of gender-specific juvenile crime which cannot be extrapolated from Summary reports. These data elements include, but are not limited to, such things as characteristics of the victims, relationships of the offenders to the victims, information concerning the weapons used, and the extent of violence as it relates to an incident. NIBRS data also suggest that there are identifiable gender differences in crime patterns. It is important to note that no cities with a population greater than 250,000 contributed NIBRS data to this study. This could affect the findings of certain key attributes, such as weapons, that may vary greatly between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

NIBRS data from 1997 indicate that the victims of both male and female juvenile crimes are predominantly other juveniles; and overall, when limited to incidents in which the offenders are known, offenders tend to victimize juveniles of their same sex. In 1997, the victim of a juvenile crime was another juvenile in 63 percent of incidents involving a male offender; that percentage increases to 70 percent when considering incidents in which the offender was female. Data indicate that juvenile females are most likely to commit offenses against other female juveniles (Figures 5.6, 5.7). There are also NIBRS indicators that juvenile female offenders are two times more

likely than juvenile male offenders to become victims themselves in the course of the offending incident. While it is unsure whether this could be that juvenile females become offenders after they were victimized or become victimized after offending, it does warrant a closer look in future research (Table 5.2).

Preliminary NIBRS data suggest that the victims of crimes perpetrated by both male and female juvenile offenders are often persons known to the offenders. For juvenile male offenders 42 percent of victims fall into the category of acquaintance. Figures are just slightly higher for female offenders; in 45 percent of the incidents in which a juvenile female offender is involved the victim is an acquaintance of the offender (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2
Juvenile Offenders by Relationship to Victim
by Sex

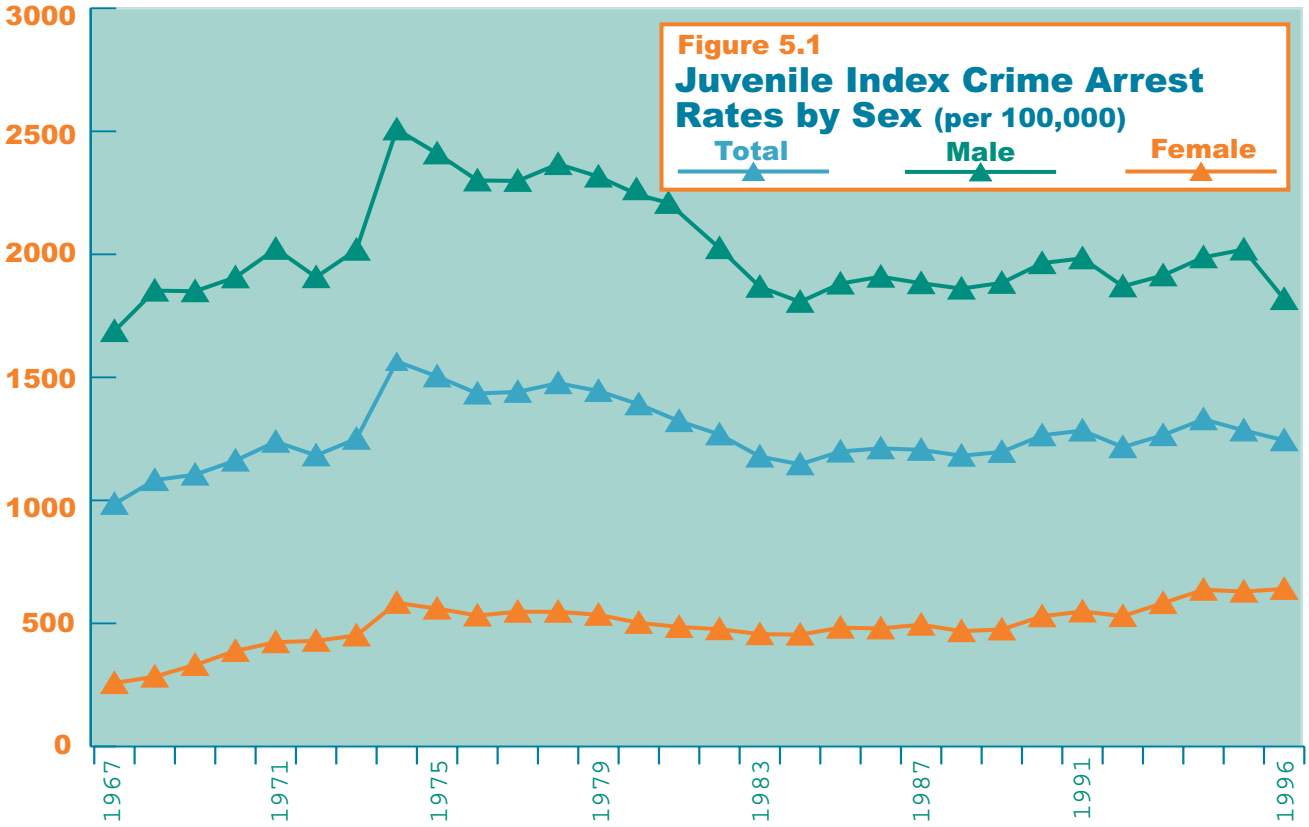
	Relationship of Victim to Offender	Sex of the Offender	
		Female	Male
Known to the Victim	Acquaintance	44.5%	44.2%
	Babysittee	0.2%	0.1%
	Boyfriend/Girlfriend	1.7%	1.9%
	Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend	0.1%	0.1%
	Employee	0.0%	0.0%
	Employer	0.0%	0.0%
	Friend	3.8%	3.8%
	Homosexual Relationship	0.0%	0.0%
	Neighbor	2.3%	2.8%
	Otherwise Known	7.3%	8.3%
	Ex-Spouse	0.0%	0.0%
	Within Family	Child	0.2%
Common-Law Spouse		0.1%	0.1%
Grandchild		0.0%	0.0%
Grandparent		0.5%	0.3%
In-law		0.2%	0.1%
Other Family Member		2.0%	2.0%
Parent		8.7%	5.7%
Sibling		3.6%	3.8%
Stepchild		0.1%	0.1%
Spouse		0.3%	0.1%
Stepparent		0.6%	0.6%
Stepsibling		0.2%	0.4%
Not Known by Victim	Relationship Unknown	7.5%	8.8%
	Stranger	7.6%	14.4%
Other	Victim was Offender	8.3%	4.3%

³ Subsequent to this study, four more states were NIBRS certified.

⁴ It is imperative that the limitations of NIBRS data be recognized and taken into consideration when examining the data. Pages 2-3 contain details.

Figure 5.1
Juvenile Index Crime Arrest Rates by Sex (per 100,000)

Total **Male** **Female**



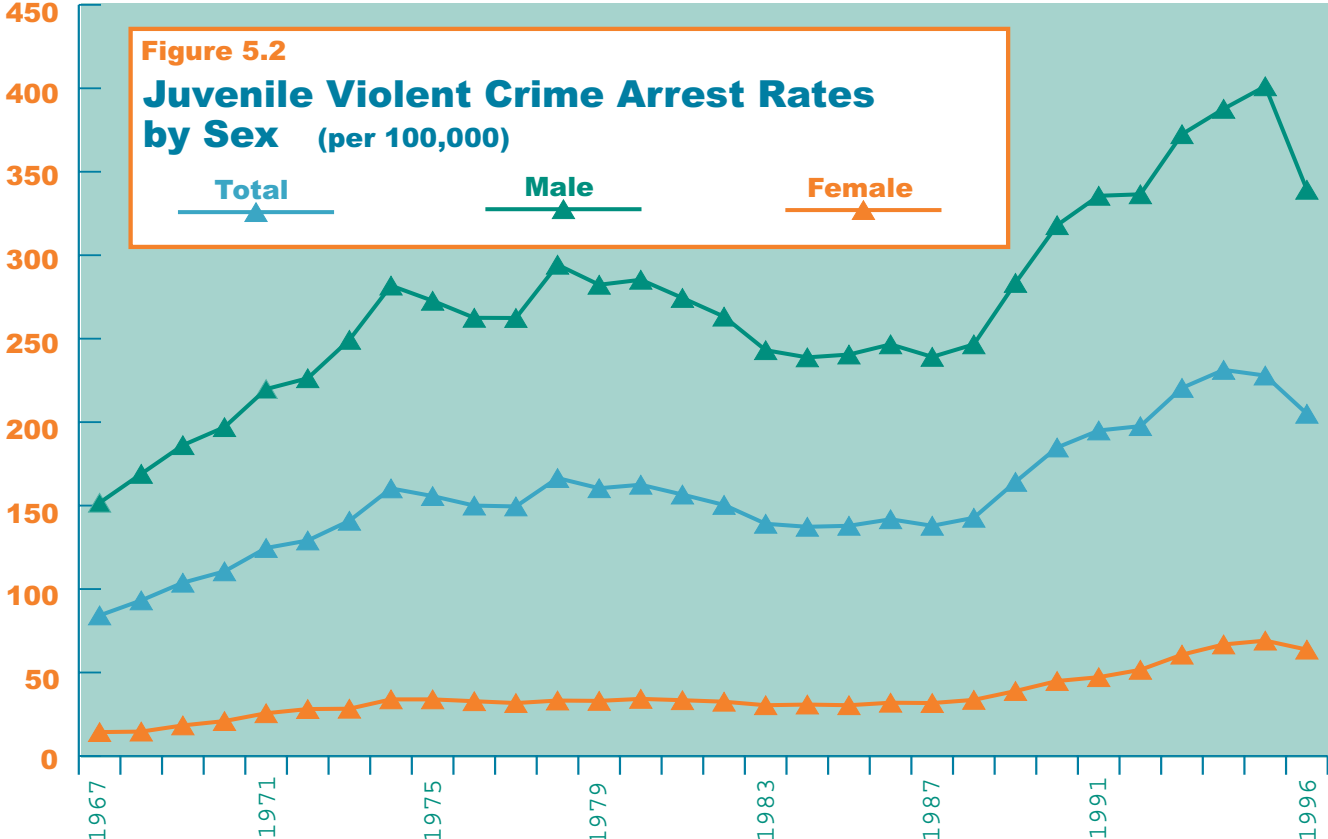


Figure 5.3
Violent Crime Arrests as a Percentage of all Index Crime Arrests for Juveniles (by Sex)

Male % **Female %**

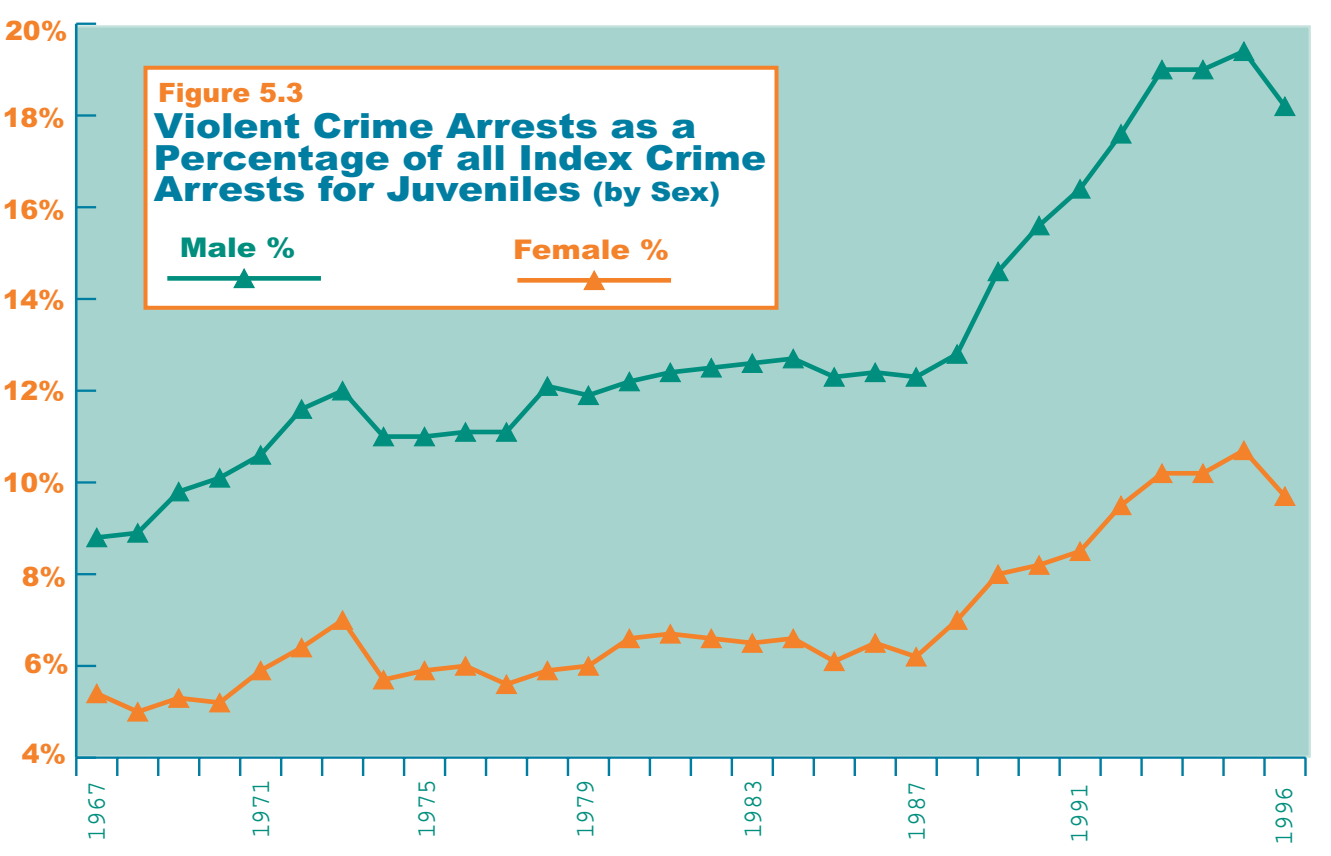


Figure 5.4

Juvenile Females as a Percentage of all Juvenile Index Crime Arrests

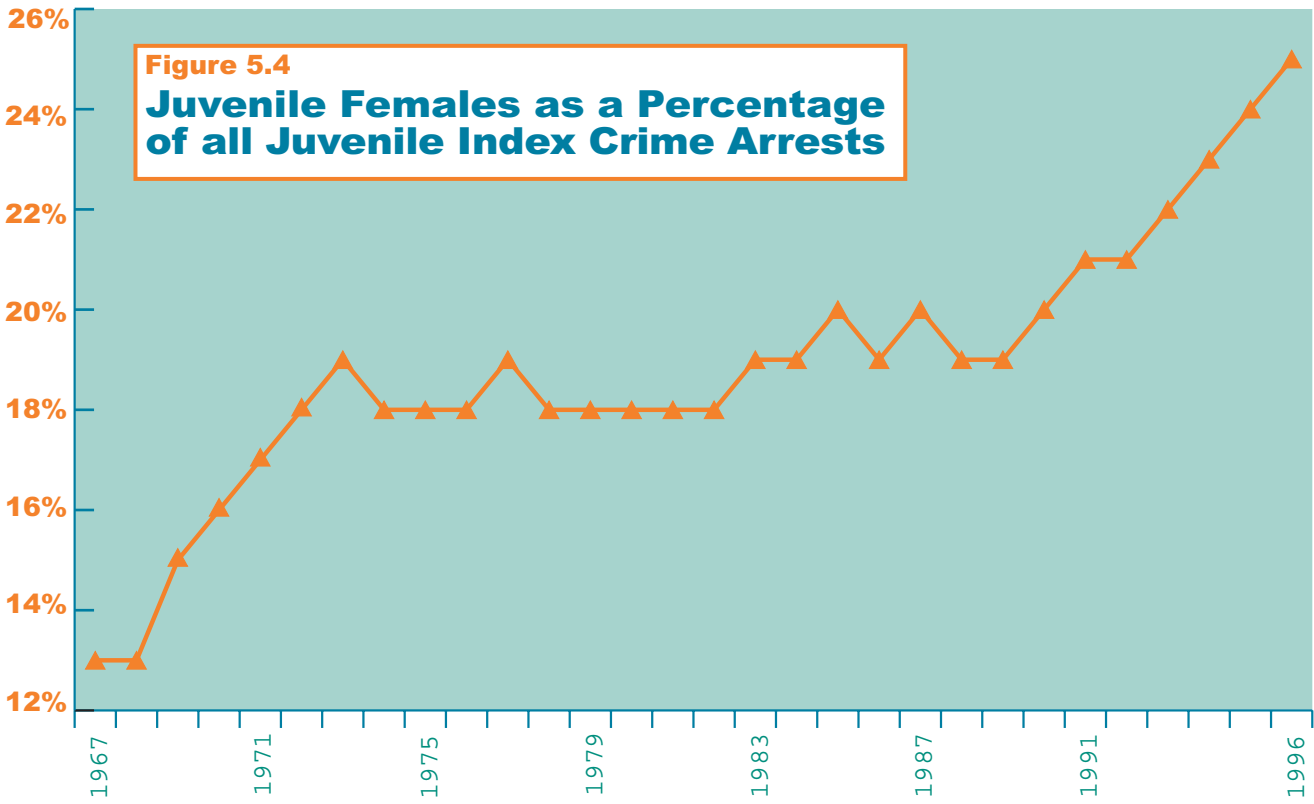


Figure 5.5
Juvenile Females as a Percentage of all Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests

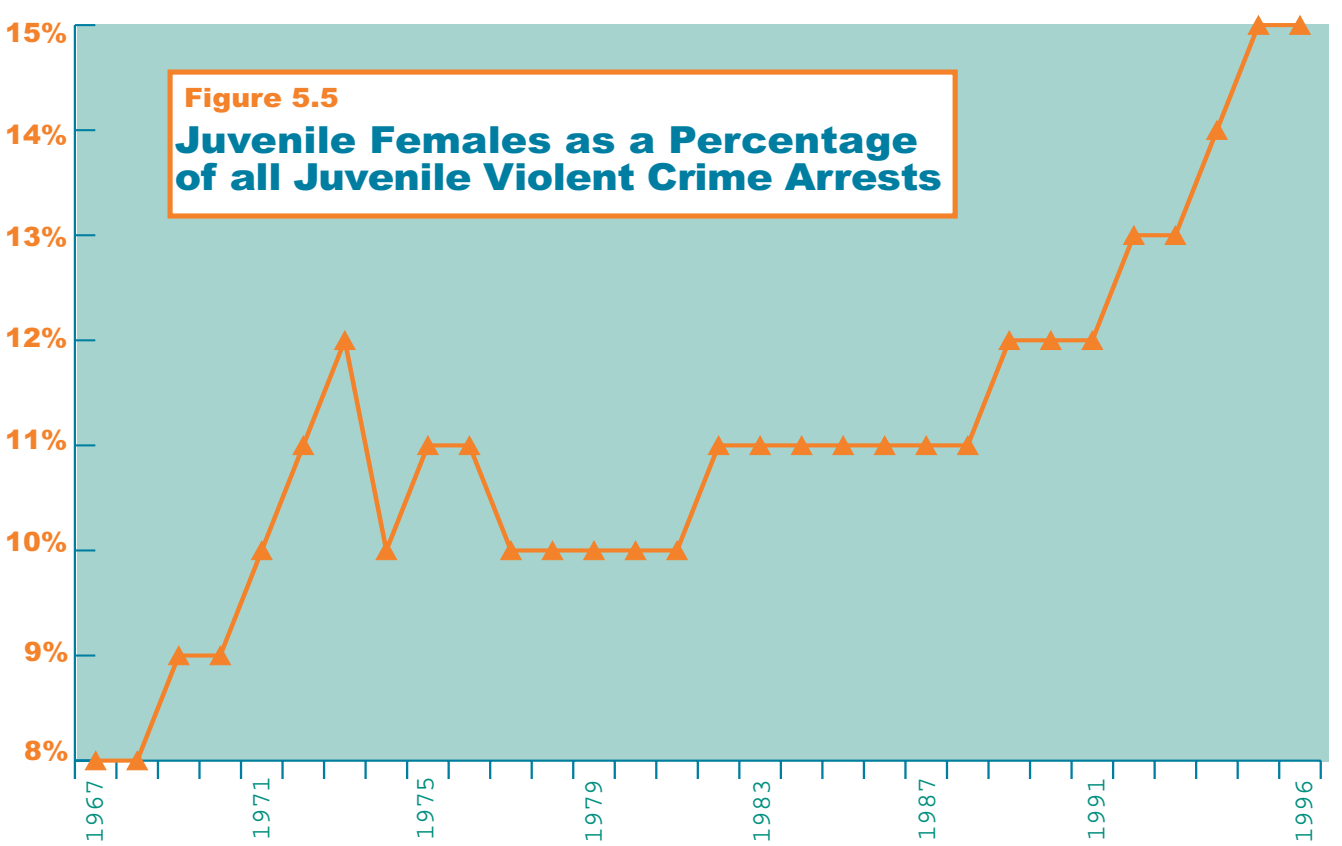


Figure 5.6

Juvenile Offenders By Age of Victim (where age is known)

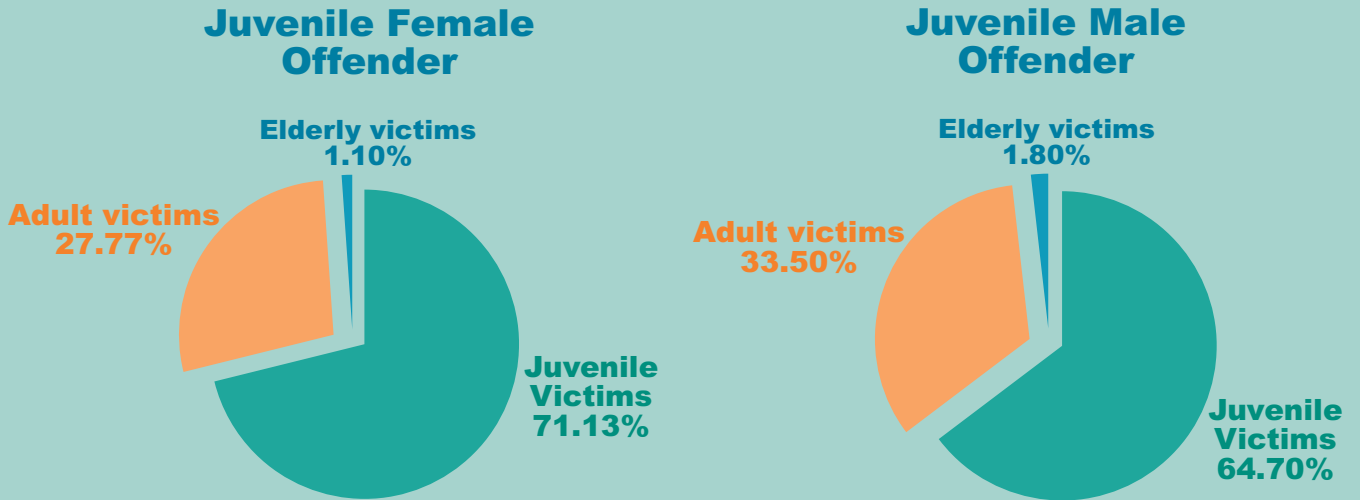
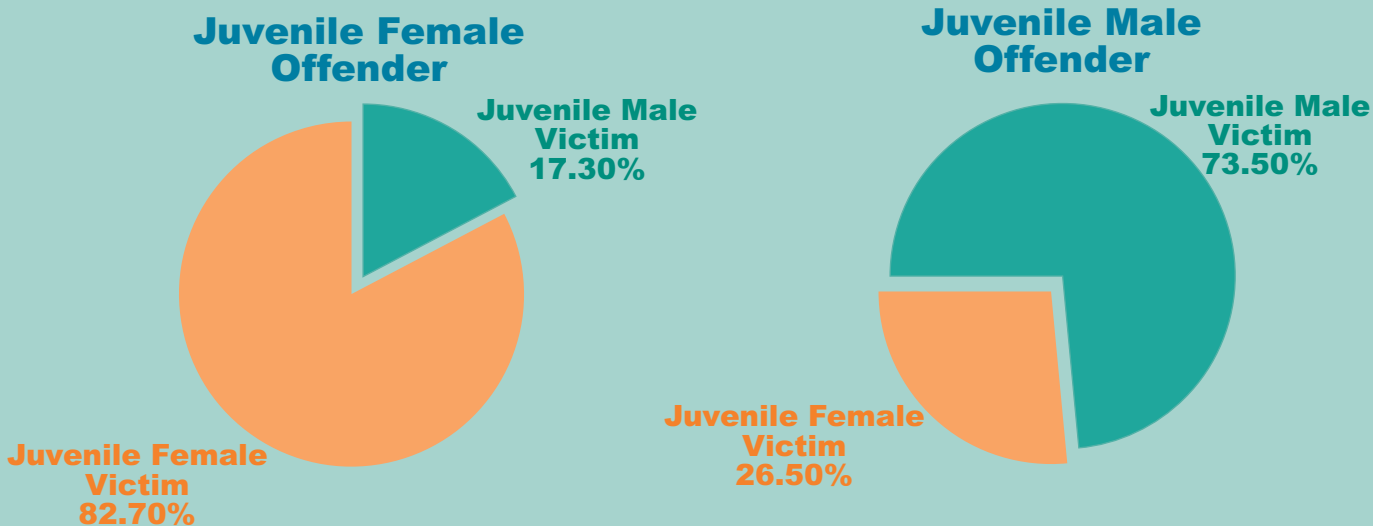


Figure 5.7

Juvenile Offenders By Sex of Juvenile Victim (where sex is known)



While Summary data provide statistics relevant to the trends of juvenile female violence, incident-based data provide more detailed information regarding the elements of violence involved in an incident, including weapons used and extent of injury to the victim. Though handgun use by juveniles continues to receive great attention nationally, according to the NIBRS data under consideration, the weapons most commonly used by juvenile offenders fall into the reporting category of “personal weapons” or “no weapon.” Juvenile females are even less likely to be armed with a weapon than are juvenile males; weapon use by females occurred in only 19 percent of 1997 incidents, while weapon use for males occurred in 31 percent. Juvenile females, however, are slightly more likely than their male counterparts to inflict injury upon their victims. But when inflicted, the injury is likely to be minor in extent (Tables 5.3, 5.4).

Conclusion

Collectively, UCR Summary and NIBRS data indicate that there are essential differences in the nature of crimes committed by juvenile females compared to those committed by juvenile males. Arrest trends show that violent crime is becoming more prevalent among juvenile females. Preliminary evidence based on limited NIBRS data indicates that the violent crimes committed by juvenile females are generally perpetrated against juvenile females and are less violent in terms of weapon usage and severity of injury than those committed by juvenile males. It is hoped that continuing examination of both Summary and NIBRS data can provide significant insight into the complexities of gender-specific juvenile crime.

Table 5.3
Weapon usage in Incidents involving Juvenile Offenders
by Sex

Weapon	Juvenile Male Offenders	Juvenile Female Offenders
Firearm (Type not Stated)	1.3%	0.2%
Automatic	0.0%	0.0%
Handgun	4.7%	1.0%
Automatic	0.3%	0.1%
Rifle	0.5%	0.1%
Automatic	0.0%	0.0%
Shotgun	0.6%	0.2%
Automatic	0.0%	0.0%
Other firearm	1.3%	0.1%
Automatic	0.0%	0.0%
Knife/Cutting Instrument	6.3%	5.4%
Blunt Object	4.1%	3.1%
Motor Vehicle	0.5%	0.4%
Personal weapons	60.9%	73.2%
Poison	0.0%	0.0%
Explosives	0.5%	0.1%
Fire/Incendiary device	0.2%	0.1%
Drugs/Narcotics/Sleeping Pills	0.0%	0.0%
Asphyxiation	0.0%	0.0%
Other	5.3%	3.4%
Multiple weapons	2.6%	2.6%
Unknown	2.7%	2.1%
None	8.2%	7.9%

Table 5.4
Juvenile Offenders by Injury inflicted on Victim
by Sex

Injury	Juvenile Male Offenders	Juvenile Female Offenders
None	54.6%	51.9%
Apparent Minor Injury	40.4%	44.8%
Severe Laceration	2.3%	2.0%
Other Major Injury	1.4%	0.8%
Possible Internal Injury	0.5%	0.3%
Apparent Broken Bones	0.5%	0.2%
Loss of Teeth	0.1%	0.1%
Unconsciousness	0.1%	0.0%