



## DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES

### ***Research Brief – Putting Youth Crime In Maryland in Context*** **September 2023**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION**

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) creates safer communities, transforms young people’s lives, and forges more equitable systems through community-based partnerships that hold youth accountable while building on their strengths and support systems. By providing rehabilitative and restorative services for youth in our care - both in residential programs and in the community - DJS seeks to hold youth accountable while setting them on the path to success.

As part of a comprehensive review of juvenile services in Maryland and in an effort to be “data-driven and heart-led”, DJS has analyzed trends in adult and juvenile arrests. By doing so, we hope to focus policymaking and DJS services and supports in a way that maximizes their public safety and rehabilitative impact.

While youth violence in Maryland is a small portion of general violence trends in Maryland, there is no denying that there is too much gun violence both among and against Maryland’s youth and adults. This *Research Brief* puts data on recent trends in juvenile and adult crime into context to better inform policy and programmatic discussions designed to address the challenge of gun crime facing Maryland today.

Over the past eight months, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services has conducted a thorough review of the agency. The goal from the start was to understand where our challenges lie and where we can improve. Summarized among our findings:

- 1. Juvenile crime represents a relatively small portion of all crime in Maryland.** In 2021, adults represented 93% of homicide arrests. There is a noted increase in youth crime over the past two years; but today, most categories of youth

crime—including violent youth crime—are below pre-pandemic levels and have been declining for more than a decade.

- 2. Young people are more likely to be victims of violent crimes than perpetrators of violent crimes.** The youth share of arrests declined from 2013 through 2021, yet the proportion of juvenile complaints that are for crimes of violence has not changed and the number of youth who were victims of homicide increased significantly. Our report revealed a four-fold increase in the number of young people who were victimized by gun violence over the last decade; and that around nine-in-ten youth who are gun violence victims in Maryland are youth of color.
- 3. Incarceration—while one important tool for accountability—is not the only or most effective course in addressing juvenile crime.** Recent declines in juvenile crime have occurred at a time when leaders in the justice system have made the choice to prioritize community-based rehabilitation over incarceration. Additionally, we know mass incarceration often perpetuates and deepens racial divides. The percentage of people incarcerated in Maryland’s prisons for crimes committed when they were under age 18 is twice the national average (6 percent vs. 3 percent). Nine out of ten people imprisoned in Maryland’s prisons for crimes that they committed before age 18 are people of color. Youth of color in Maryland are more likely to be incarcerated than to receive support services and rehabilitation in the community.

Other data in the report confirm that gun violence by and against young people is particularly alarming; but there is also indication that other categories of youth crime are down:

- There has been an increase in juvenile crime in Maryland over the last two years since its pandemic nadir, but complaints are still below pre-pandemic levels and down sharply—by over 50%—over the past decade.
- The proportion of juvenile complaints that are for crimes of violence has not changed significantly over the past decade.
- The share of crime and violent crime in Maryland committed by juveniles is much lower than the adult share of crime, and similar to national rates and historical trends within Maryland.
- Murder and attempted murder arrests for juveniles in Baltimore City have consistently increased over the past five years, while juvenile arrests for murder across the state fluctuated somewhat through 2021, the last year with available data.
- The number of youth who are victims of violent crimes has increased significantly, with non-fatal shooting victimization of young people quadrupling

statewide over the past decade. Homicides and shootings of youth in Baltimore City, especially, have continued to rise.

- Youth of color are overrepresented in Maryland’s juvenile justice system both as incarcerated youth and victims compared to rates in Maryland’s overall youth population; youth of color are also afforded community options at rates lower than their representation among youth who have been adjudicated delinquent.

To help address the challenges presented in this *Research Brief*, the department has taken the following actions:

- Launched the *Safe Summer* initiative, which provided \$5 million to 12 Maryland counties with high rates of gun violence to occupy young people in safe and productive activities this summer.
- Initiated *The Thrive Academy*, providing wraparound services to youth in Baltimore City and Baltimore County who are at highest risk of gun violence.
- Formed Youth Engagement and Safety Strategies (YESS) Improvement Teams with prosecutors, law enforcement, community leaders, victims, and family members in Baltimore City and Baltimore County to advise the department on approaches to preventing gun involvement by youth in our care.
- Evaluated and infused evidence-based practices into the department’s residential facilities to drive down recidivism among youth at greatest risk of recidivism.
- Began working with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and Department of Human Services to focus resources in Maryland communities with the highest number of shared clients as part of Governor Moore’s “all-of-government” approach to reducing crime and improving communities.
- Launched after school and weekend activities for youth in DJS residential facilities to cut down on idleness.
- Reduced vacancies among our facilities’ direct care staff from 18.4 percent in January to 7.1 percent in August.
- Continued to support legislation to hold young people accountable in the juvenile justice system, where research shows their recidivism rates are lower.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Each year, DJS publishes the [Data Resource Guide](#) with key data about youth outcomes for young people in our care. The Department also periodically disseminates [publications](#) concerning key trends and research affecting young people in the justice system or in Maryland more generally.

As a statewide agency managing youth at all stages of the delinquency process (e.g. intake, community supervision, detention, commitment, etc.), DJS is well positioned to analyze and report data on cases under the jurisdiction of the youth justice system

including those youth with cases transferred from adult court jurisdiction to the juvenile system. For this brief, data from state and federal sources, such as the Maryland State Police and the United States Department of Justice, are also included to put DJS data in a wider context. Note that sometimes these state and federal data are not available as recently as DJS data; in all cases, this report uses the most recently available state and federal numbers.

These sources capture some data on youth charged as adults in Maryland, some of whom would remain under adult court jurisdiction and not be captured in DJS systems, and adults charged as adults, which allows juvenile crime to be analyzed in the context of overall crime trends. Additionally, data on national juvenile and adult crime is included from federal sources which allows comparisons between what is happening in Maryland and in the rest of the country.

For a more complete listing of sources, please see the “Sources” section at the end of this report.

## **FINDINGS**

- I. QUESTION: What is happening with crime by youth in Maryland overall?**  
**ANSWER: Crime by young people in Maryland is mostly down, with recent concerning increases in some offense categories.**

Youth crime and violent youth crime in Maryland are down substantially over the last decade, with a recent troubling increase in some offense categories over the last two years since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that the pandemic impacted all aspects of the juvenile justice system - with schools and courts closed, the low rates of juvenile complaints during FY21<sup>1</sup> (July 1 2020-June 30, 2021) were outliers. Trends since then should be understood in that context.

As **Figure I** indicates, from FY14 to FY23,<sup>2</sup> juvenile complaints<sup>3</sup> referred to DJS intake declined 51 percent. Complaints reached their lowest level – 7,100 – in FY21, the peak year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and have increased since then. Despite these recent increases, overall complaints in FY23 remained 17.0 percent lower than FY20, the last year prior to the pandemic.

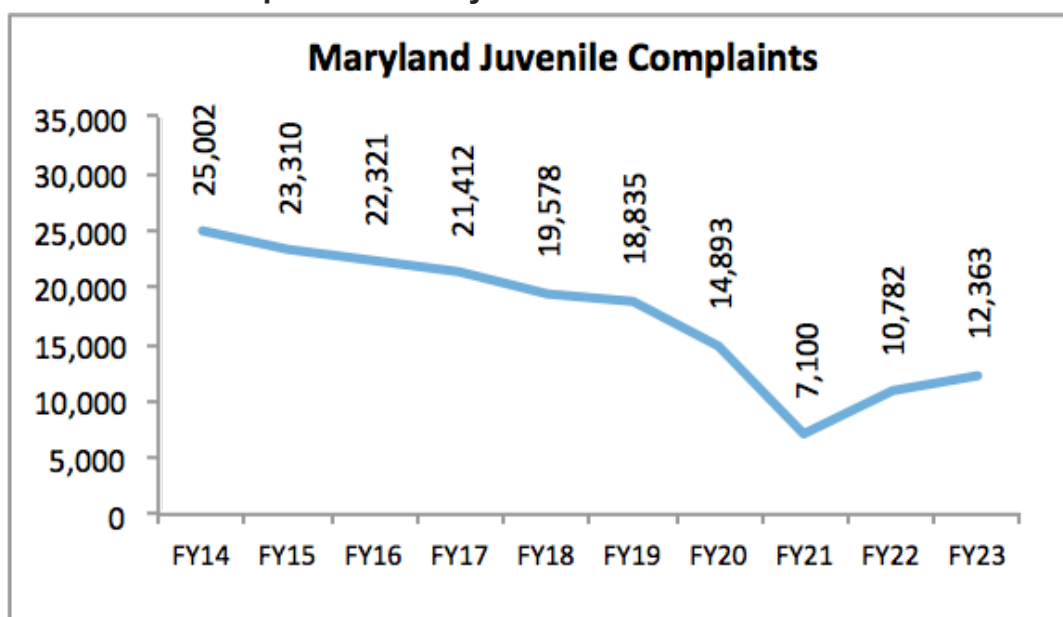
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<sup>1</sup> FY refers to “fiscal year.”

<sup>2</sup> FY23 is the state fiscal year that recently ended – July 2022 through June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Juvenile complaints include all juvenile arrests referred to DJS, as well as citizen, school, and Children In Need of Supervision (CINS) complaints referred to DJS.

Figure I: Juvenile Complaints in Maryland FY2014 - FY2023



Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *Automated Statewide System of Information Support Tools (DJS ASSIST)*.

As **Figures II** and **III** show, for FY22 and FY23, juvenile complaints in all categories – crimes of violence, non-violent felonies, misdemeanors, and ordinance/status offenses – have crept up near, but mostly still lower than, their pre-pandemic levels. It should be noted that these charts represent only youth charged in the juvenile system; they do not include youth automatically charged as adults, unless the court transfers the case to juvenile court.

- Between FY2020 and FY2023, overall crimes of violence fell 16.5 percent. They make up about the same portion of juvenile complaints as they did in FY20.
- Within the broad category of violent crime arrests, some specific offenses rose and others fell during this period. Robbery dropped 30 percent, felony sex offenses fell 21.8 percent and child abuse decreased 66.7 percent. Meanwhile, carjacking increased 85.4 percent and handgun violations rose nearly 220 percent.
- Non-violent felony complaints increased 70.5 percent over FY22 and were 26.3 percent higher than FY20. Non-violent felonies are the only broad offense category that was higher for youth in FY23 than in FY20.
- A surge in auto theft offenses accounts for much of the increase in non-violent felony offenses.<sup>4</sup> Between FY20 and FY23, auto theft complaints to DJS increased 64.6 percent. The number of auto theft offenses referred to DJS more

<sup>4</sup> Carjacking is a violent offense and as such, is not included in this discussion of auto thefts and non-violent felonies.

than doubled between FY22 and FY23, rising from 545 to 1193. During that time, auto theft referrals to DJS increased from 2.9 percent to 5.4 percent.

- Auto thefts have experienced increases nationwide, at least in part due to the “Kia challenge” effect.<sup>5,6,7</sup>
- Misdemeanor complaints and ordinance/status/other violations increased 5.1 percent and 33.5 percent in FY23 over FY22, respectively, but were 22.5 percent and 17.0 percent lower than FY20, respectively.
- Misdemeanors and ordinance/status/other violations accounted for 74.3 percent of juvenile complaints in FY23.
- Crimes of violence (12.6 percent) and non-violent felonies (13.0 percent) each accounted for about 13 percent of juvenile complaints in FY23.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Blackwell, Penelope. (2023, April 10). Gone in 30 seconds: TikTok challenge leading to thefts of Kia, Hyundai cars hits Maryland. *The Baltimore Banner*. <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/local-news/hyundai-kia-thefts-maryland-ICCZU7QOINCYVE2Q7Y635APRMY/>

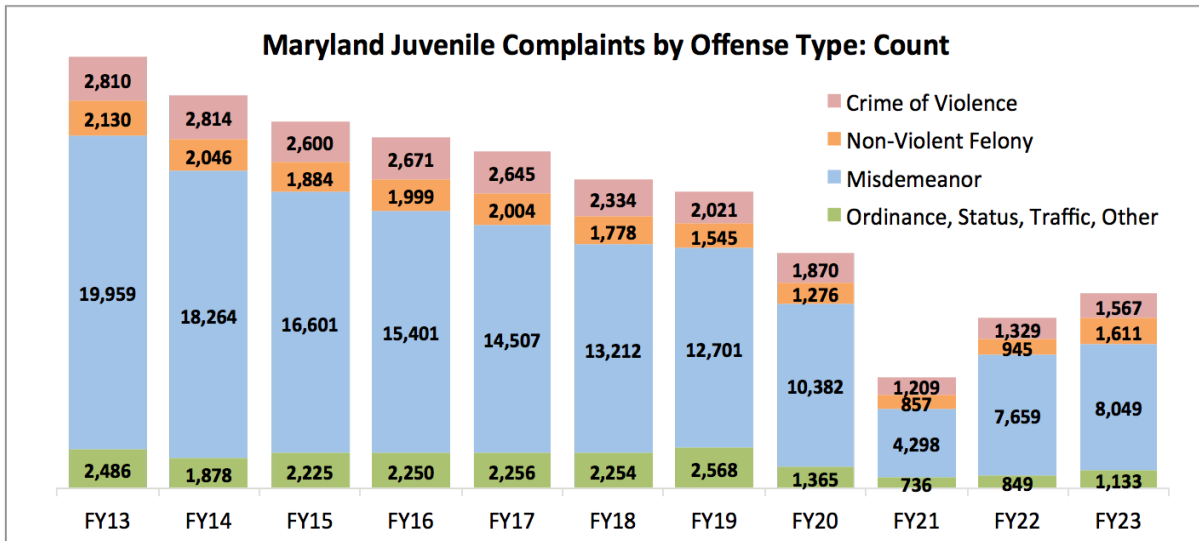
<sup>6</sup> O'Neill, Madeleine. (2023, May 11). Baltimore sues Hyundai, Kia over theft-prone vehicles. *The Daily Record*. <https://thedailyrecord.com/2023/05/11/baltimore-sues-hyundai-kia-over-theft-prone-vehicles-joining-other-cities/>.

Baltimore and other cities have filed suit against Hyundai and Kia for failing to install engine immobilizers, an industry standard for theft prevention, in many models. BPD reports that car thefts of Hyundais and Kias in Baltimore City more than doubled from 2021 to 2022.

<sup>7</sup> O'Neill, Madeleine. (2023, May 19). Class-action lawsuit against Kia, Hyundai reaches \$200M settlement. *The Daily Record*. <https://thedailyrecord.com/2023/05/19/class-action-lawsuit-against-kia-hyundai-reaches-200m-settlement/> Hyundai and Kia reached a \$200 million class action settlement with vehicle owners in May 2023, unrelated to the lawsuit by Baltimore and other cities.

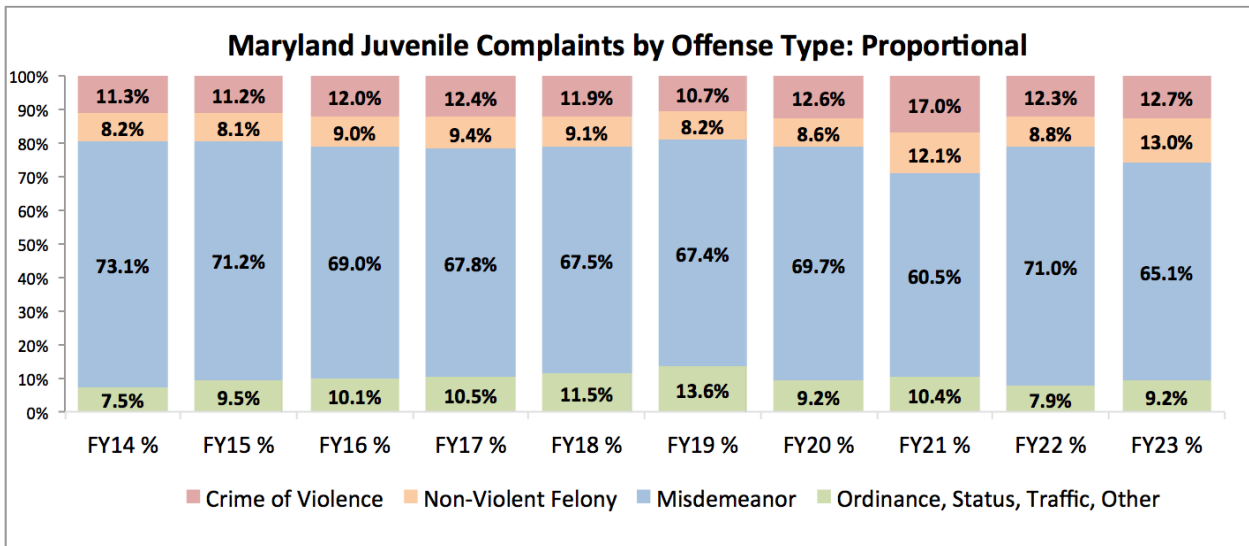
<sup>8</sup> Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *Automated Statewide System of Information Support Tools (DJS ASS/ST)*. This system has been used as the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services client database since 1999.

**Figure II: Maryland Juvenile Complaints by Type: Offense Count**



Data Source: DJS ASSIST System

**Figure III: Maryland Juvenile Complaints by Offense Type: Proportional**



Data Source: DJS ASSIST System

**II. QUESTION: How do youth arrests compare with adult arrests in Maryland?**

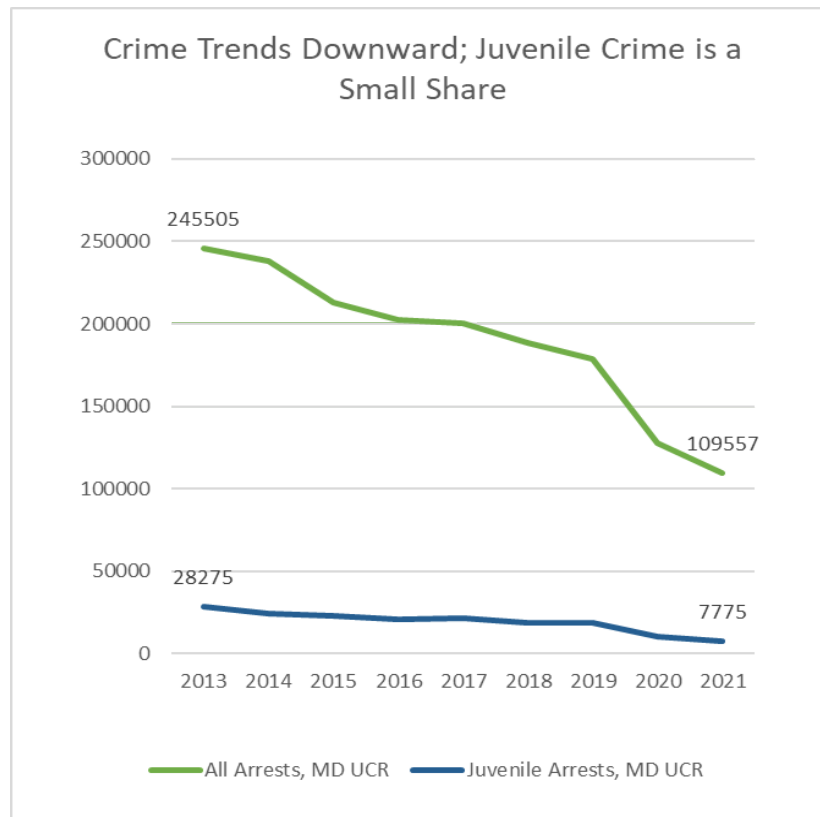
**ANSWER: Youth arrests are a small portion of, and generally track with, adult arrests in Maryland.**

Youth arrests, including for violent offenses, declined sharply from 2013 to 2021 (the most recent year data is available) and made up relatively small--and decreasing--portions of overall and violent crime arrests in Maryland. As of CY21, youth

under 18 accounted for only 1 in 14 arrests. The following charts show overall juvenile arrests and juvenile clearances<sup>9</sup> in the context of all arrests and clearances. Note that: (1) unlike the above juvenile court complaint data, youth charged as adults are included here and (2) this combined data is only available through FY21.

- **Figure IV** shows that overall crime (down 55.4 percent) and youth crime (down 72.5 percent) as measured by arrests have trended sharply downward from CY13<sup>10</sup> to CY21 (the most recent year with available statewide data).
- During this time, between 7.1 percent (CY21) and 11.5 percent (CY13) per year of people arrested in Maryland were juveniles.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure IV: Downward Trend in All Arrests and Juvenile Arrests in Maryland, CY13-21**



<sup>9</sup> "Clearances" are offenses solved for crime reporting purposes, by arrest or exceptional circumstances. Clearances are not identical to arrests. Juvenile clearances are recorded only when all arrested suspects are under age 18. Since clearance rates for adults and juveniles fluctuate from year to year and only a fraction of all crimes result in either arrests or clearances, arrest and clearance rates are not a perfect measure of crime, but are available by age categories to allow for comparisons for adults and juveniles.

<sup>10</sup> CY refers to the calendar year.

<sup>11</sup> Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2021). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.



Data Source: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2021). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- Arrests declined among adults and juveniles through 2021. In CY21, juveniles made up a small share of arrests and crime clearances,<sup>12</sup> in line with their representation in the general public.
- From CY13 to CY19, people under 18 represented 11 to 13 percent of violent crime clearances and 12 to 14 percent of overall crime clearances (**Figure V**).<sup>13</sup> Adults, therefore, represented 87 to 89 percent of violent crime clearances and 86 to 88 percent of all crime clearances during this time.
- In CY20 and CY21, the share of overall and violent crime clearances by young people declined so that, by 2021, youth under 18 made up 8.3 percent of overall and violent crime clearances, while youth under 18 made up 22.1% of the population. Since the vast majority of youth offenses are committed by youth between 11 and 17, it may be more relevant that young people ages 11 to 17 made up 9.0 percent of Maryland's overall population in 2021.<sup>14</sup>
- In CY21, adults represented 91.7 percent of overall and violent crime clearances and 77.9 percent of the state's population.<sup>15</sup>

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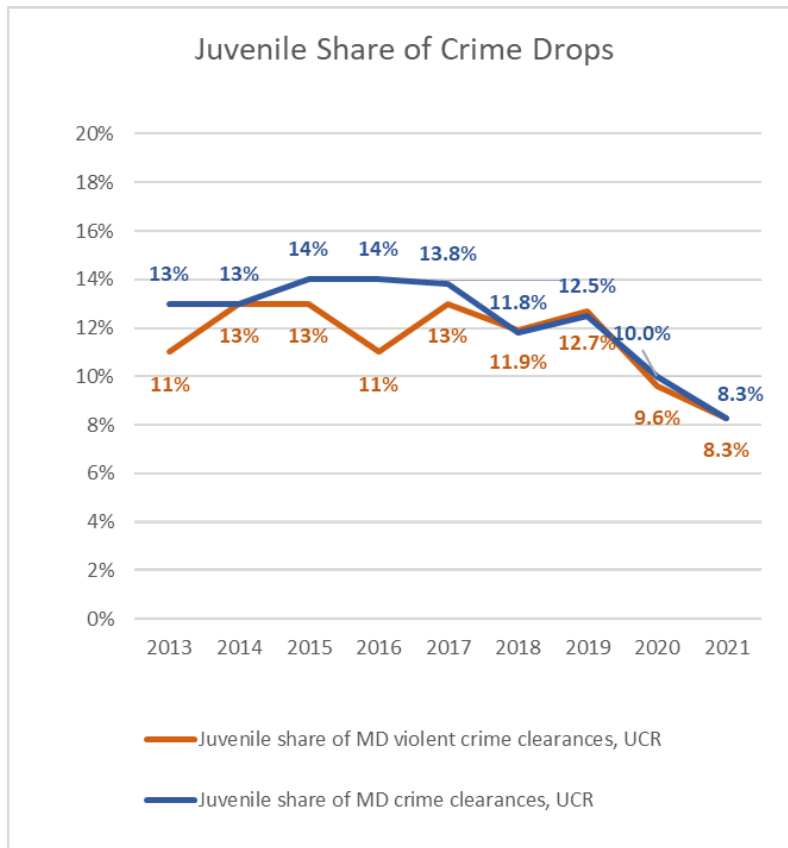
<sup>12</sup> "Clearances" are offenses solved for crime reporting purposes, by arrest or exceptional circumstances. Clearances are not identical to arrests. Juvenile clearances are recorded only when all arrested suspects are under age 18. Clearance rates are reported here because Maryland UCR provides good data for comparing crime and violent crime in adults and juveniles using clearance rates.

<sup>13</sup> *Crime in Maryland* (Maryland State Police Uniform Crime Report) reports juvenile clearance rates rounded to the nearest percentage point through CY17; these trend numbers follow suit despite this paper's general convention of rounding to the tenths place.

<sup>14</sup> United States Census Bureau, Population Division (2022). *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Maryland: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021*. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/state/asrh/sc-est2022-syasex-24.xlsx>

<sup>15</sup> United States Census Bureau, Population Division (2022). *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Maryland: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021*. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/state/asrh/sc-est2022-syasex-24.xlsx>

**Figure V: Declining Juvenile Share of Crime Clearances and Violent Crime Clearances in Maryland, 2013-2021<sup>16</sup>**

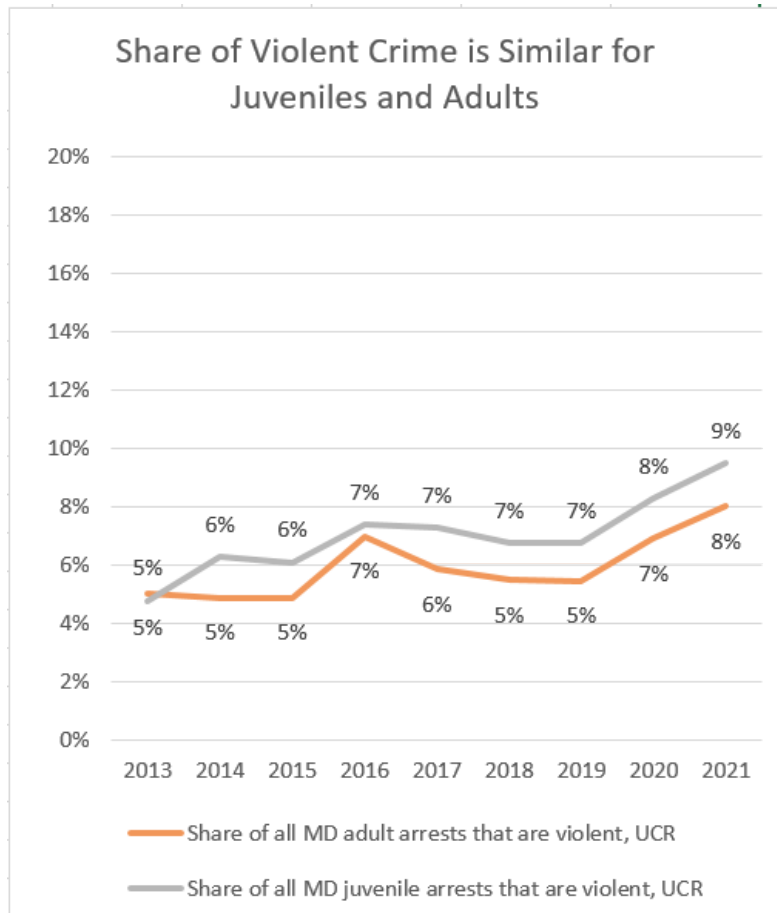


Data Source: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2021). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- The proportion of violent crime arrests is similar among youth and adults (**Figure VI**). Youth arrests for crimes of violence are in line with overall violence trends rather than demonstrating a unique trend.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 12.

**Figure VI. Juvenile versus Adult Share of Arrests That Are Violent<sup>17</sup>**

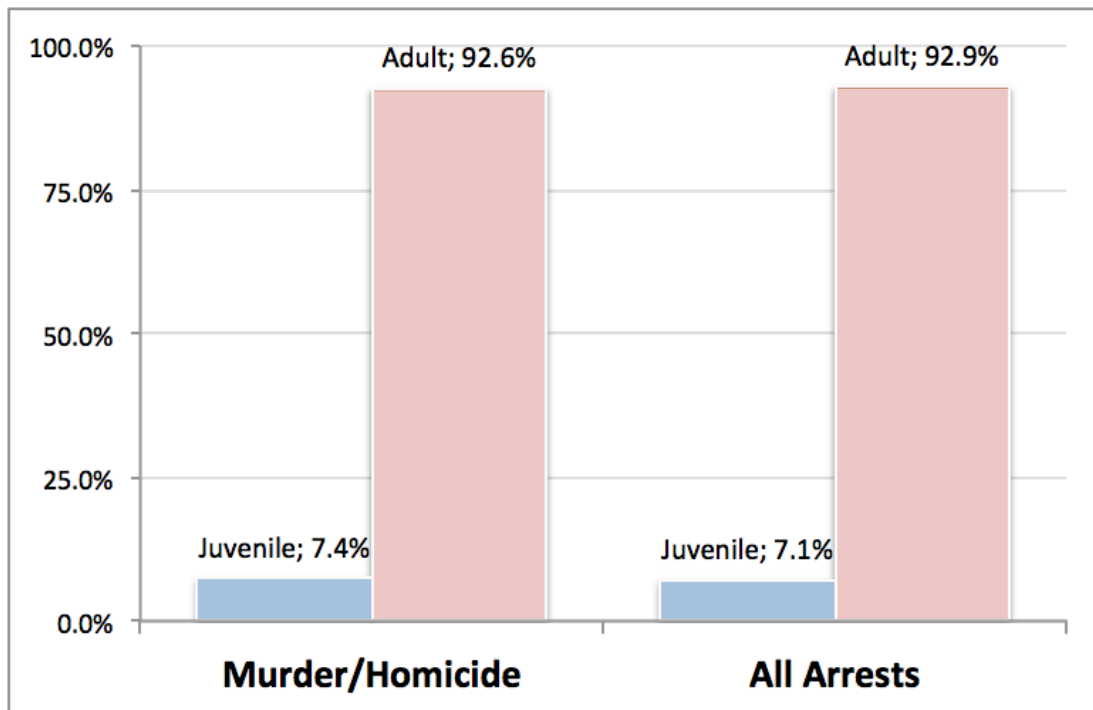


Data Source: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2021). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- Young people under age 18 made up 7.4 percent of all homicide arrests and 7.1 percent of all arrests in Maryland in CY21, while adults made up 92.6 percent and 92.9 percent, respectively (**Figure VII**).
- Put another way, in CY21, there were 12 to 13 times as many adults as juveniles arrested for both homicides and overall crime.

<sup>17</sup> *Crime in Maryland* (Maryland State Police Uniform Crime Report) reports these numbers rounded to the nearest percentage point.

**Figure VII – 2021 Arrests by Crime and Age**



Data Source: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2021). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

<https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Document%20Downloads/2021%20Crime%20In%20Maryland%20Book-3.pdf>.

**III. QUESTION: How does youth crime in Maryland compare to youth crime nationally?**

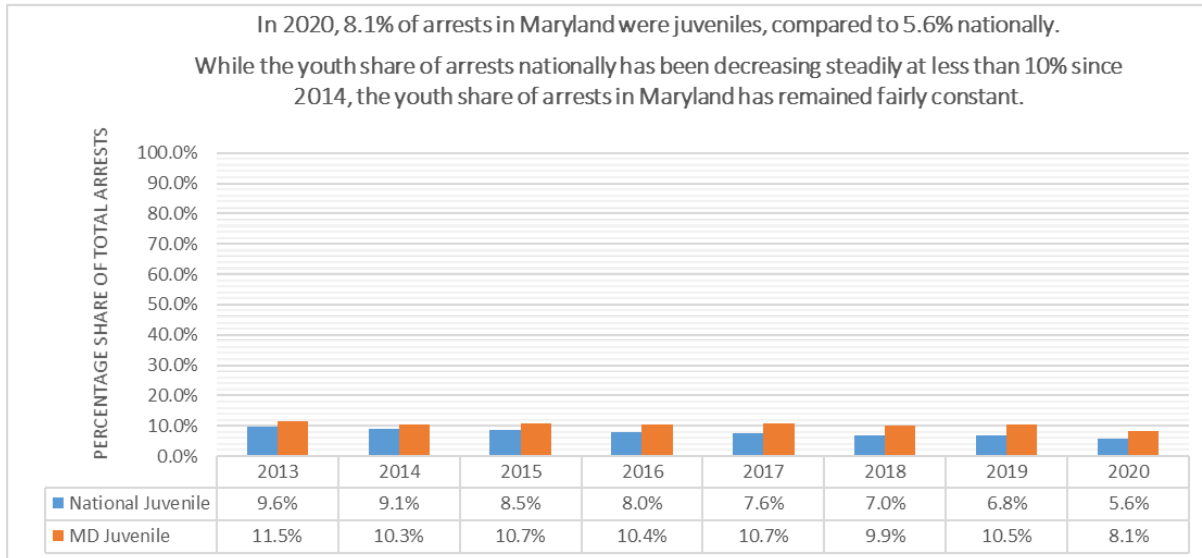
**ANSWER: Youth crime in Maryland mostly mirrors national youth crime trends.**

- Data from a variety of sources show that youth crime in Maryland is generally reflective of youth crime nationally.
- FBI Uniform Crime Report data show that in Maryland, youth ages 10-19 represented 14.9 percent of violent crime offenders in CY21, very similar to the 14.1 percent national youth share of violent crime that year.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation (2021). *Crime Data Explorer* [Data Set]. FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program. <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>.

- As **Figure VIII** indicates, youth in Maryland made up a higher percentage of overall arrests than is the case nationally – 8.1 percent vs. 5.6 percent, respectively.<sup>19</sup>
- The share of total arrests that young people comprised nationally and in Maryland has declined by 4.0 percent and 3.4 percent respectively, from CY13 to CY20.

**Figure VIII. Juvenile Share of Total Arrests in MD and in the US, 2013-2020**

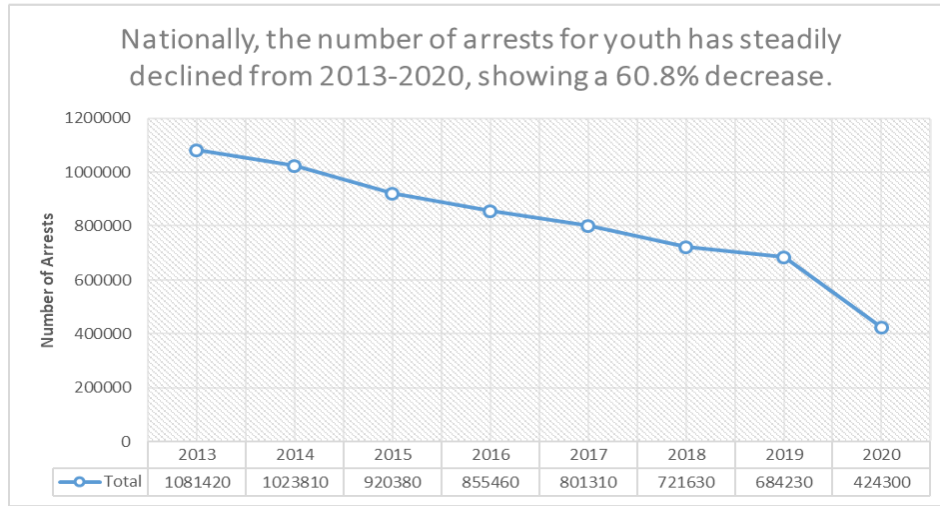


Data Source: OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) (2022). *Statistical Briefing Book* [Data Set]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr\\_trend.asp](https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr_trend.asp); Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2020). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- Youth arrests in Maryland (down 63.3 percent) and nationally (down 60.8 percent) have declined at similar rates from CY13 to CY20 (**Figures IX and X**).

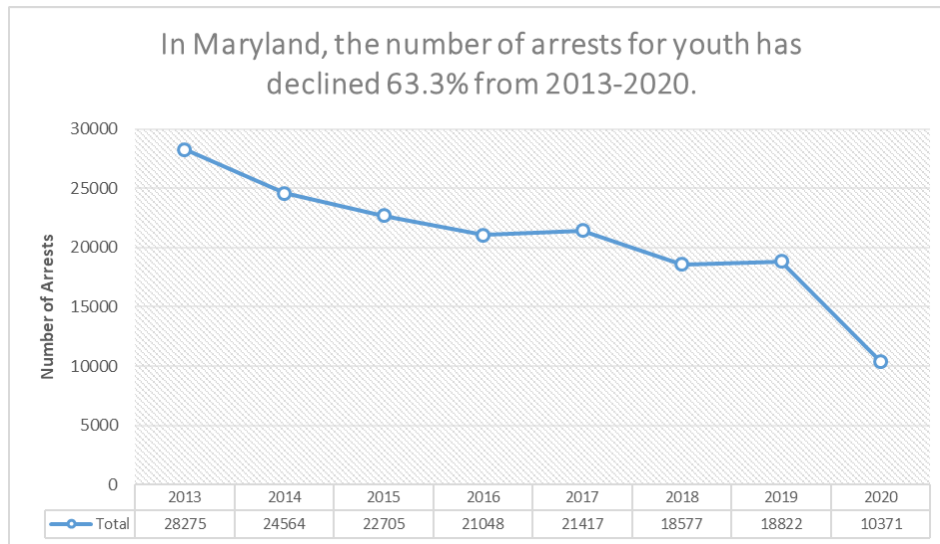
<sup>19</sup> Youth ages 12-17 represent 7.9% of the U.S. and 7.8% of Maryland's overall populations in July 2021. Source: United States Census Bureau, Population Division (2022). *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Maryland: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021*, Online: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/state/asrh/sc-est2022-syasex-24.xlsx>

**Figure IX. National Youth Arrests Decline, 2013-2020**



Data Source: OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) (2022). *Statistical Briefing Book* [Data Set]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr\\_trend.asp](https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr_trend.asp)

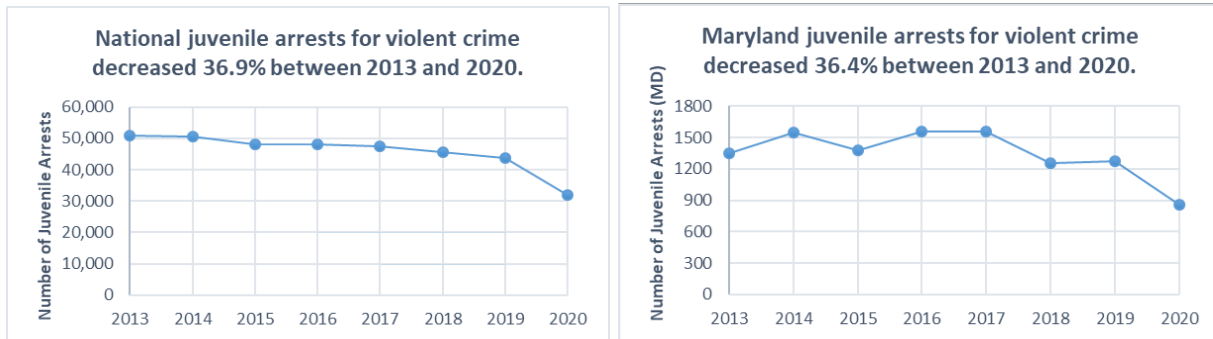
**Figure X. Maryland Youth Arrests Decline, 2013-2020**



Data Source: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2020). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- There were similar declines in youth arrests for violent crimes in Maryland (down 36.4 percent) and nationally (down 36.9 percent) between CY13 and CY20 (Figure XI).

**Figure XI. Juvenile Arrests for Violent Crime, U.S. and Maryland, 2013-2020**



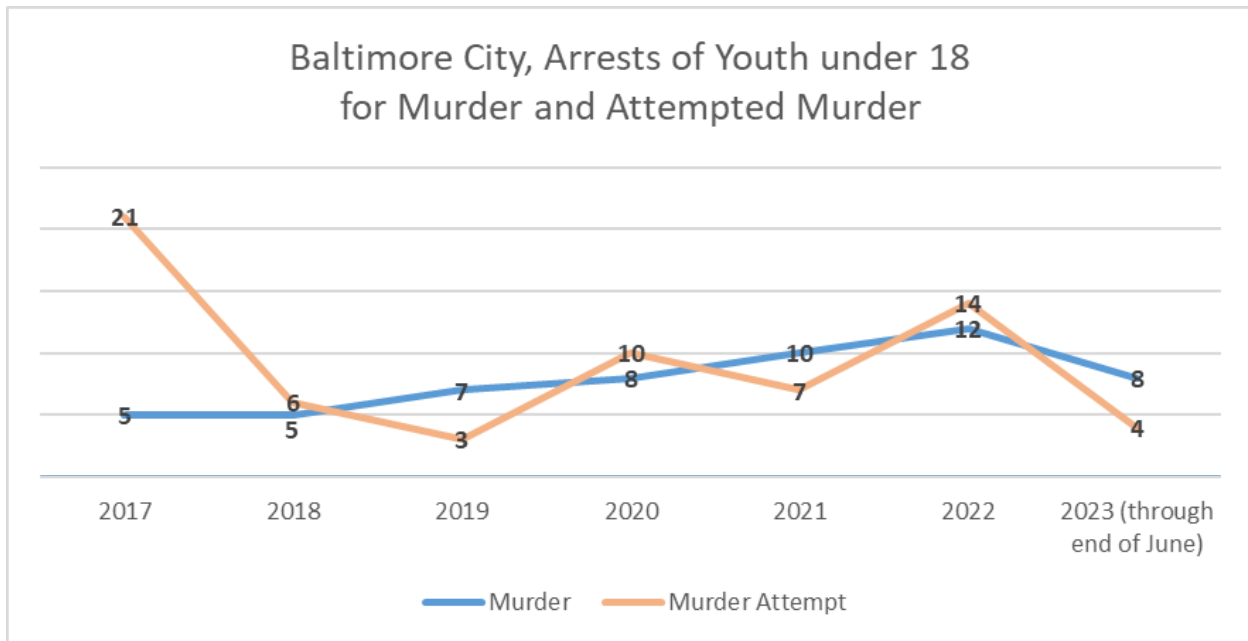
Data Source: OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) (2022). *Statistical Briefing Book* [Data Set]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr\\_trend.asp](https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr_trend.asp); Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2013-2020). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports*.

- In Baltimore City, where it is possible to examine much more recent data, there has been an increase in arrests of youth under 18 for murder over the past six years and a decline in arrests for youth for attempted murder during that time (see **Figure XII**).
- At the same time, with such small numbers of arrests relative to overall homicide and shooting offenses, arrests can be a difficult way to draw conclusions about youth vs. adult crime trends. For example, while there were 8 juveniles arrested for homicides and 4 for attempted homicides in Baltimore City between January and June 2023, there were 141 homicides and 308 additional shootings that occurred in Baltimore City during that same period.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Baltimore Police Department. *Baltimore Police Department Crime Map* [Dashboard]. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/511ba81db3414df3bb474749b69bc258>.

The Public Crime Map data is based on General Offense Reports extracted from BPD's Records Management System.

**Figure XII. Baltimore City Youth Arrest Trends for Murder and Attempted Murder, 2017-2023 (through end of June)**



Data Source: Baltimore City Police Department (2017-2023). Juvenile arrest monthly report. *Juvenile Booking Data Analysis Unit*.

- From CY17 to CY22, arrests of youth for murder statewide fluctuated, while arrests of youth for murder in Baltimore increased (**Figure XIII**).
- Baltimore arrests made up anywhere from 22.7 percent to 58.8 percent of statewide murder arrests of youth from CY17 to CY21<sup>21</sup>.
- Meanwhile, youth ages 11-17 in Baltimore City made up 8.3 percent of the population of youth ages 11-17 in the state in CY21<sup>22</sup>.
- As with Baltimore City data, the statewide arrest trend has limitations for understanding crime trends because arrests occurred for only 35.6 to 60.1 percent of murders in the five years examined, and juvenile arrests constituted only 4.4 to 8.2 percent of those arrests.
- According to DJS Community Services, 13 youth under active DJS supervision have been suspected of homicide or non-fatal shootings/murder attempts that occurred in 2023 through July. 20 youth under active DJS supervision were suspected of such incidents occurring in January-July of 2022; however, since

<sup>21</sup> Please note that this rate is a comparison using data from two different data sources.

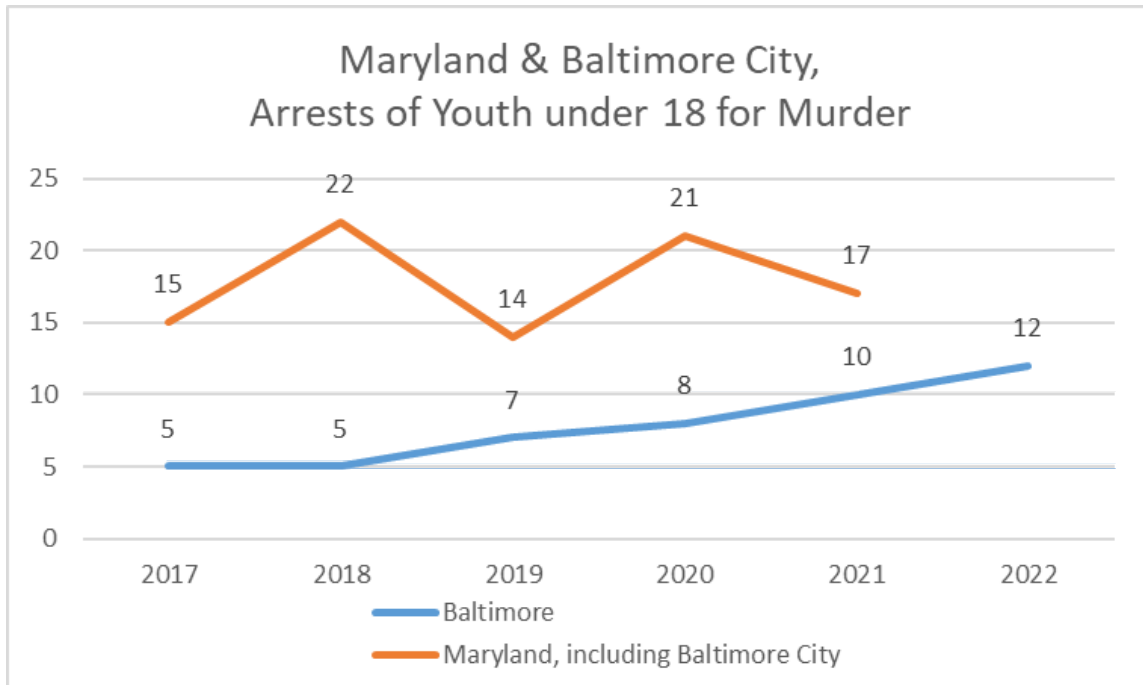
<sup>22</sup> Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (2022). Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2022. Based on Maryland Department of Planning, Population Estimation for Maryland. (1) July 1, 2021 Population by Age (single year), Race, Sex and Hispanic Origin for Maryland; (2) July 1, 2021 Population by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic/Latino Origin for Maryland's Jurisdictions.



suspects are tracked by incident date rather than by date of arrest, charge, or suspicion, 2023 numbers through July may change as additional investigations are completed.

- The rates of recidivism of youth served in DJS committed programs have declined in recent years. The percent of youth released with a new sustained charge within a year dropped from 20.3% to 15.2% between FY2016 and FY2020.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure XIII. Maryland Youth Arrest Trends for Murder<sup>24</sup>, 2017-2022**



Data Sources: Maryland State Police, Central Records Division (2017-2022). *Crime in Maryland: Uniform Crime Reports.*; Baltimore City Police Department (2017-2023). Juvenile arrest monthly report. *Juvenile Booking Data Analysis Unit.*

<sup>23</sup> Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (2022). Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2022. [https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data\\_Resource\\_Guide\\_FY2022.pdf](https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data_Resource_Guide_FY2022.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Maryland State Police *Crime in Maryland* defines murder as a category including nonnegligent manslaughter, “the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another.” Baltimore City Police Department does not define murder in the current report but lists murder attempts separately, as seen in **Figure XII**.

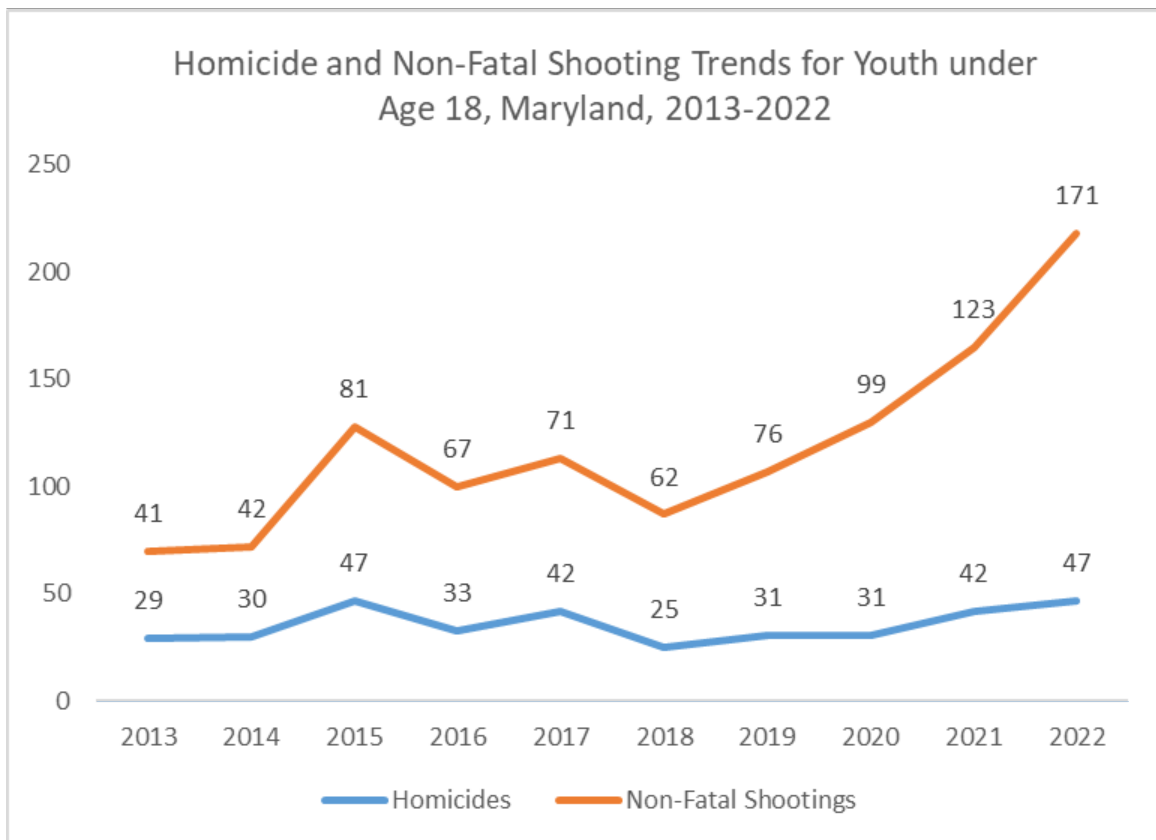
**IV. QUESTION: What is happening with gun victimization of young people in Maryland?**

**ANSWER: The number of young people being victimized by gun violence in Maryland is growing at a disturbing rate.**

Although the general rate of violent crime as a whole in Maryland committed *by youth* under 18 is relatively flat, there has been a very serious increase in the number of Maryland youth who are *victims* of homicide and non-fatal shootings over the last decade.

- Between CY13 and CY22, the number of youth homicide victims in Maryland increased 62.1 percent, from 29 to 47 (**Figure XIV**).
- The number of youths wounded in non-fatal shootings rose 317.1 percent (more than four-fold) from CY13 to CY22, from 41 to 171.
- Data from the beginning of CY23 for homicides and non-fatal shootings of young people under 18 look similar to CY22. Between January and June of 2023, 21 youth were killed by homicide, down from 22 for the same period one year ago.
- From January to June 2023, 73 youth under age 18 were wounded in non-fatal shootings, down from 85 over the same period in 2022.

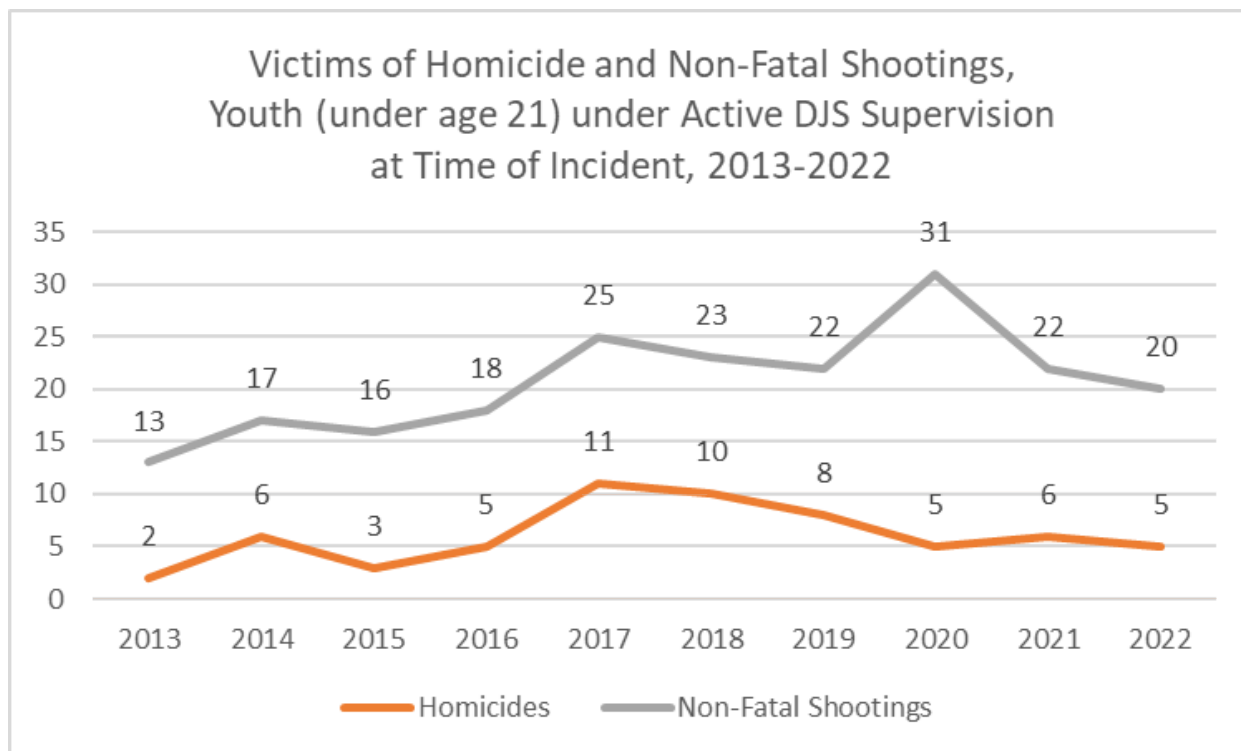
**Figure XIV. Homicides and Non-Fatal Shootings of Maryland Youth, 2013-2022**



Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *DJS Daily Homicide and Non-Fatal Shootings Report* (based on Maryland State Police Data).

- Juvenile homicide victims who were under active DJS supervision at the time of death have fluctuated over the past 10 years, from 2 in CY13 to a peak of 11 in CY17 down to 5 in CY22 (**Figure XV**).
- From January to June of 2023, there have been 7 homicides of youth under supervision, compared to 5 in the same time frame in 2022.
- For CY23, through June, there were 17 non-fatal shootings of youth under supervision, compared to 7 in the same timeframe in CY22.
- Non-fatal shootings of youth under active DJS supervision at the time of the incident have risen, from 13 in CY13 to 20 in CY22. However, the number has fluctuated in the past 5 years, peaking at 31 in CY20.

**Figure XV. Homicides and Non-Fatal Shootings of Youth (under age 21) Under Active DJS Supervision at Time of Incident, 2013-2022**

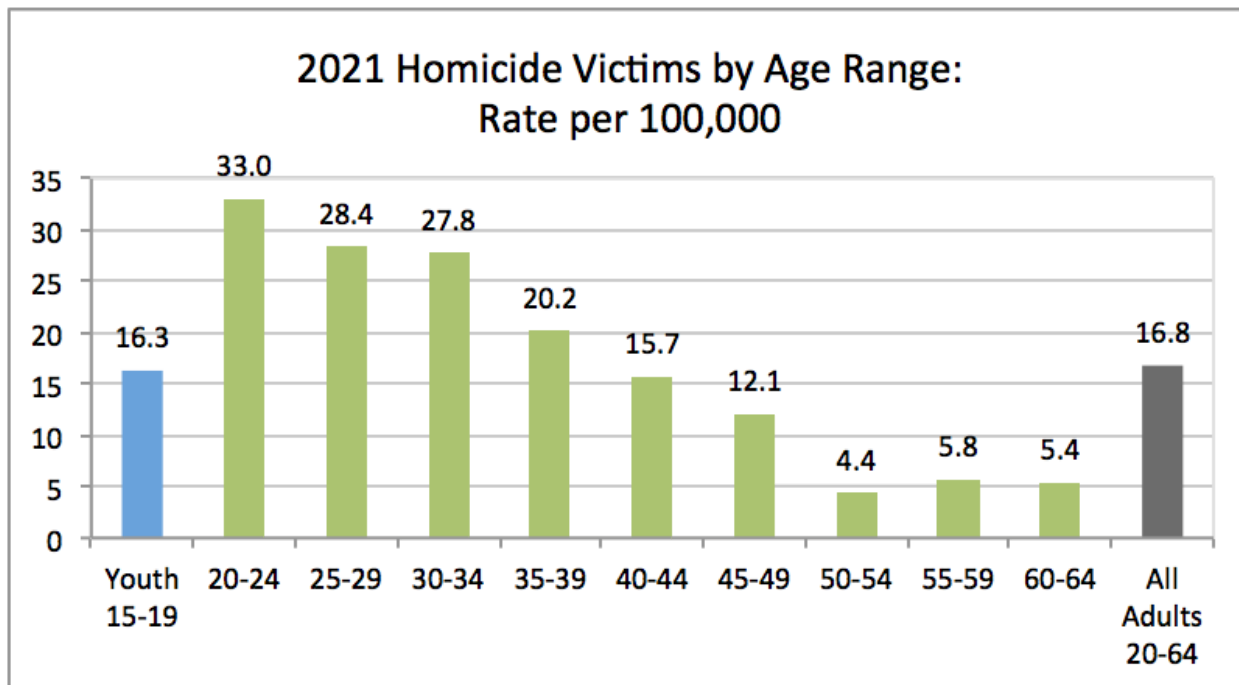


Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *DJS Daily Homicide and Non-Fatal Shootings Report* (based on Maryland State Police Data).

As troubling as these trends are, it is important to note that, compared to adults, the homicide victimization rate for teenagers in CY21 (the most recent year for which there is comparable data from the Centers for Disease Control) was half of the rate for young adults aged 20-24 (**Figure XVI**).

- Teenagers represent the fifth highest age cohort to be victimized by homicide in Maryland in CY21 (behind people ages 20-24; 25-29; 30-34; and 35-39) and were victimized at slightly lower rates than all adults ages 20-64 (16.3 vs. 16.8 per 100,000 in those age groups, respectively).

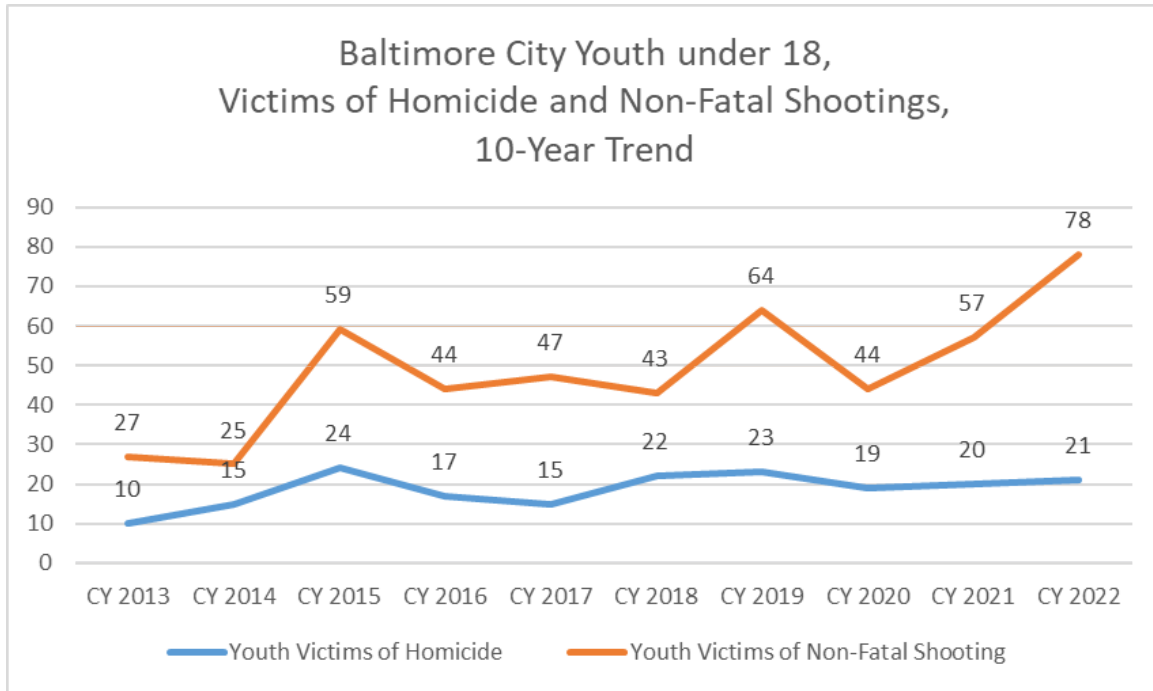
Figure XVI– 2021 Homicide Victims by Age Range



Source: Mike Males (Senior Researcher, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice), personal communication, June 21, 2023. Data retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Underlying Cause of Death by Single Race* [Data Set]. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10-expanded.html>

- The number of youth under age 18 who were victims of non-fatal shootings in Baltimore City has risen sharply in the past decade, an increase of 188.9% from 2013 to 2022 (**Figure XVII**).
- The number of youth under age 18 who were homicide victims in Baltimore City doubled from 2013 to 2022 and has been fairly stable since 2018.
- Between January and June 2023, there were 41 non-fatal shootings of youth under age 18, an increase of 13.8 percent over 36 in the same period in 2022.
- Homicides of youth in Baltimore were down 10.0 percent in January - June of CY23 (9) compared to CY22 (10).

**Figure XVII. Homicide, Non-Fatal Shootings of Baltimore City Youth under 18, 2013-2022\***



Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *DJS Daily Homicide and Non-Fatal Shootings Report* (based on Maryland State Police Data).

\*Includes youth victims of abuse and neglect by a caretaker

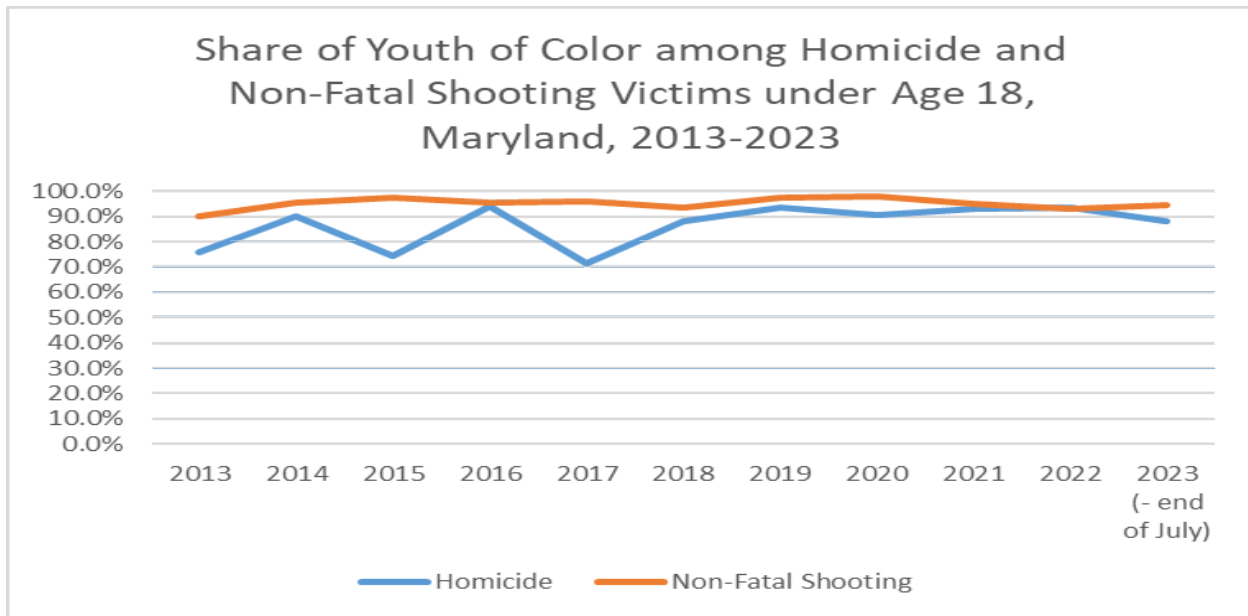
**V. QUESTION: Are youth of color more likely to be victims of gun crime in Maryland than white youth?**

**ANSWER: Yes. Youth of color are far more likely to be gun crime victims than white youth in Maryland.**

Youth of color are much more likely to be victims of homicide and non-fatal shootings in Maryland than white youth (**Figure XVIII**).

- The rate of non-fatal shooting victims under age 18 that are youth of color has been above 90% since at least 2013.
- The rate of homicide victims under age 18 that are youth of color has varied slightly but that rate has been near or above 90% since 2018.

**Figure XVIII. Youth of Color Represent Vast Majority of Homicide and Non-Fatal Shooting Victims in Maryland, 2013-2023\***



Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. *DJS Daily Homicide and Non-Fatal Shootings Report* (based on Maryland State Police Data).

\*Includes youth victims of neglect and abuse by a caretaker

**VI. QUESTION: Is incarceration affecting youth of color more than white youth?**

**ANSWER: Yes. Youth of color are incarcerated in Maryland’s adult and youth correctional facilities at higher rates than their representation in the general public.**

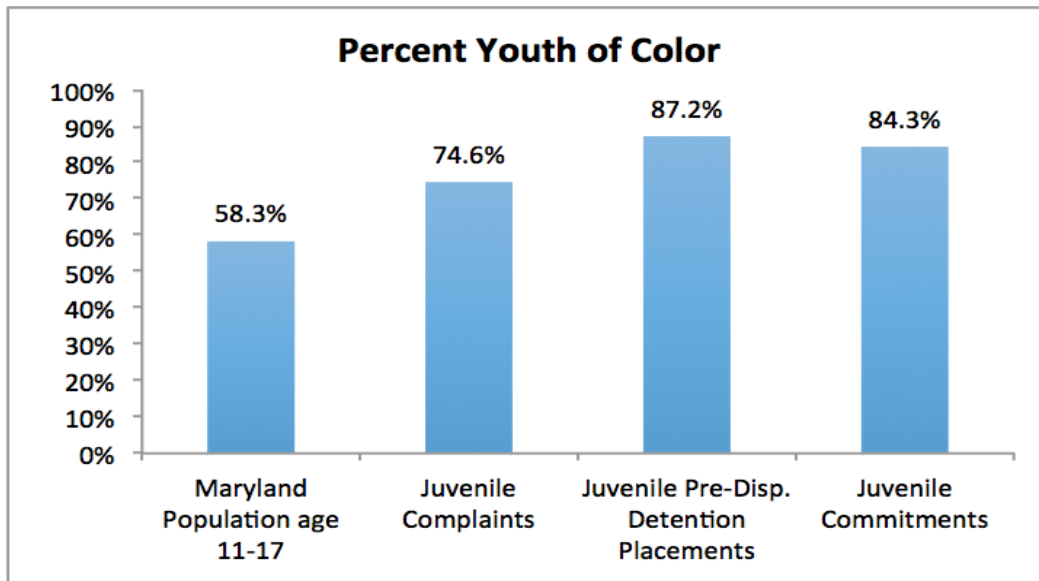
As Figures XIX and XX show youth of color are overrepresented in Maryland’s residential facilities and underrepresented in community based approaches like diversion and probation.

- Youth of color make up 58.3 percent of Maryland’s youth but the proportion of DJS intake complaints involving youth of color increased from 68.9 percent in FY14 to 75.0 percent in FY23.
- Youth of color make up 87.0 percent of detained youth and 84.0 percent of committed youth, respectively (**Figure XIX**).
- Using the U.S. Justice Department’s Relative Rate Index (RRI) to calculate the racial and ethnic disparities in youth justice reveals that youth of color are twice as likely to be detained and committed to custody as white youth in Maryland (**Figure XX**). There is considerable variation in racial disparities at the county

level in Maryland. County-level RRI data are available in the DJS [Data Resource Guide](#) (pdf; see p. 234).

- Conversely, youth of color are *underrepresented* in the use of diversion, and in the use of probation among youth who are adjudicated delinquent (**Figure XVII**).
- Black youth made up 83.3 percent of youth charged as adults and detained in DJS facilities pending transfer in FY22 (83.3 percent Black, 7.4 percent white, 9.3 percent Hispanic/other).<sup>25</sup>

**Figure XIX. Disproportionality at Juvenile System Stages, FY 2023**

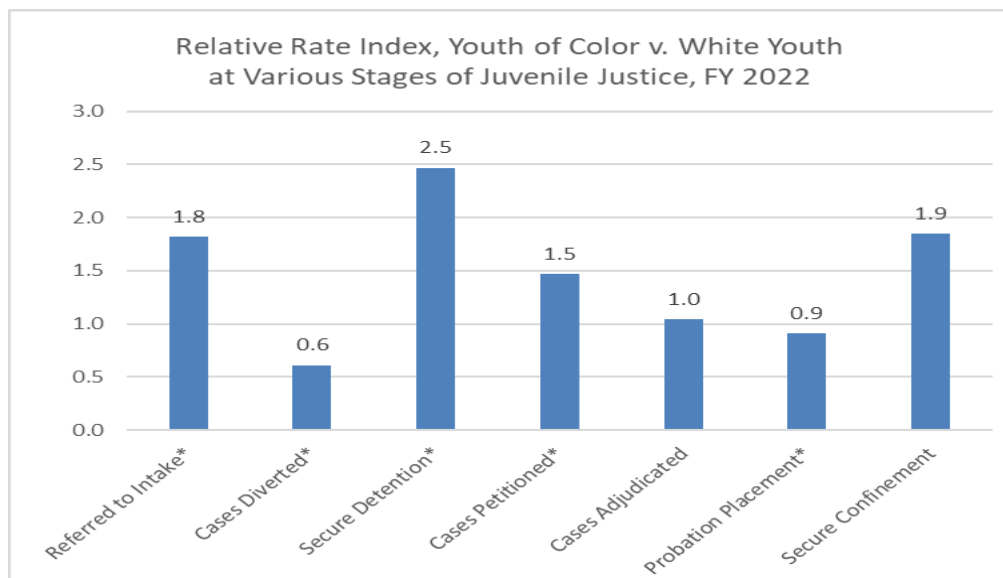


Data Source: DJS ASSIST System, FY 2023 provisional estimates.

<sup>25</sup> Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (2022). *Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2022*. [https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data\\_Resource\\_Guide\\_FY2022.pdf](https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data_Resource_Guide_FY2022.pdf)



**Figure XX. Relative Rate Index, FY 2022**



\*finding is statistically significant

Data Source: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (2022). *Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2022*.

[https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data\\_Resource\\_Guide\\_FY2022.pdf](https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data_Resource_Guide_FY2022.pdf)

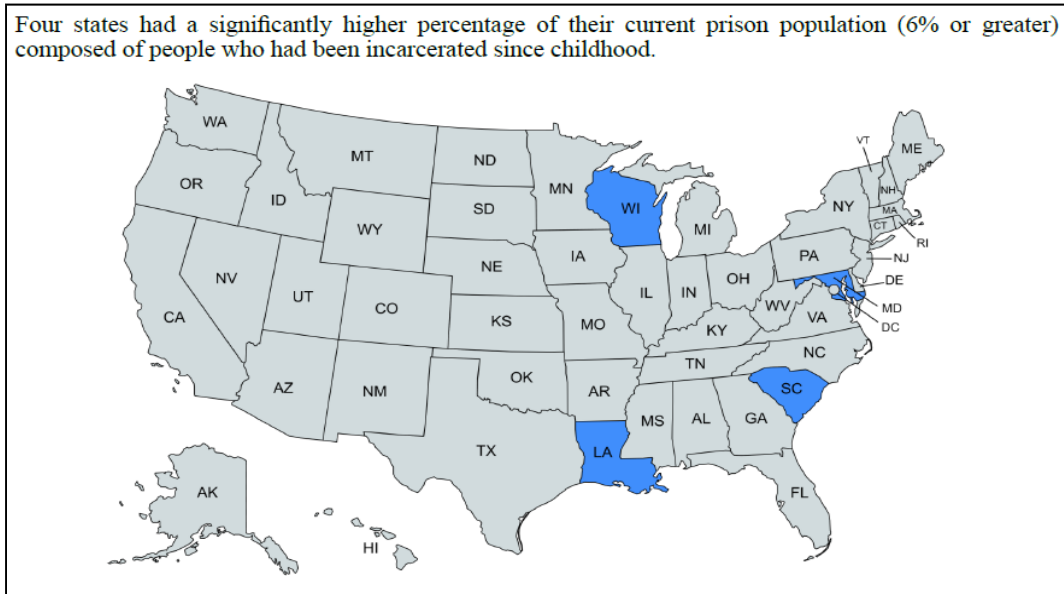
- The percentage of people incarcerated in Maryland’s prisons for crimes committed when they were under age 18 is twice the national average (6 percent vs. 3 percent). Nine out of ten people imprisoned in Maryland’s prisons for crimes that they committed before age 18 are people of color; 81.3 percent of them are Black.<sup>26</sup>
- The racial disparities in Maryland’s prison population are most pronounced among emerging adults ( ages 18 to 24) serving long prison terms. Nearly eight in 10 people who were sentenced as emerging adults and have served 10 or more years in a Maryland prison are black. This is the highest rate of any state in the country.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Conarck, Ben. (2023, May 10). Maryland ranks fourth for rate of prisoners convicted as children. *The Baltimore Banner*.  
<https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/maryland-children-charged-adults-74TP4466UFB2XH7SVAJ45B24BE/>.

<sup>27</sup> Justice Policy Institute. (2019, November). *Rethinking Approaches to Over Incarceration of Black Young Adults in Maryland*.  
[https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Rethinking\\_Approaches\\_to\\_Over\\_Incarceration\\_MD.pdf](https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Rethinking_Approaches_to_Over_Incarceration_MD.pdf).

- Maryland is one of only four states (the others being Louisiana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin) with a significantly higher percentage of its prisoner population who had been incarcerated prior to age 18 (**Figure XXI**).<sup>28</sup>

**Figure XXI. Map of States in the U.S. with More Than 6% of Prison Population Composed of People Incarcerated Since Childhood**



Source: Human Rights for Kids. (2023, May 9). *Crimes Against Humanity: The Mass Incarceration of Children in the United States*.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

### Key Takeaways from Trends

In some respects, the data presented in this *Research Brief* confirm some of the harsh realities of the increases in gun crime and victimization among youth and adults in Maryland and in others, they run contrary to popular assumptions. Data confirm that gun violence by and against young people is particularly alarming and call us to immediate action; but there is also indication that other categories of youth crime are down. To summarize:

- There has been an increase in overall juvenile complaints in Maryland over the last two years since its pandemic nadir, but complaints are still below pre-pandemic levels and down sharply over the past decade.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights for Kids. (2023, May 9). *Crimes Against Humanity: The Mass Incarceration of Children in the United States*. <https://humanrightsforkids.org/publication/crimes-against-humanity-the-mass-incarceration-of-children-in-the-united-states/>.

- The proportion of juvenile complaints that are for crimes of violence has not changed significantly over the past decade.
- The share of overall and violent crime arrests in Maryland of juveniles is much lower than the adult share of such arrests, and similar to national rates and historical trends within Maryland.
- Murder and attempted murder arrests for juveniles in Baltimore City have consistently increased over the past five years, while juvenile arrests for murder across the state have fluctuated somewhat through 2021 (the last year with available data).
- The number of youth who are victims of violent crimes has increased significantly, (with non-fatal shooting victimization of young people quadrupling statewide) over the past decade. Homicides and shootings of youth in Baltimore City, especially, have continued to rise.
- Youth of color are represented in Maryland's juvenile justice system as incarcerated youth and victims disproportionate to their rates in Maryland's overall youth population and are afforded community options at rates lower than their representation among youth who have been adjudicated delinquent.

Recent increases in youth and adult gun violence are deeply concerning and long term gun violence victimization against young people - especially young people of color - are especially troubling. While youth violence in Maryland is not out of step with either adult violence trends in Maryland or trends for juveniles nationally, there is no denying that there is too much gun violence among - and particularly against - Maryland's youth and adults and that decisive action must be taken by government and community alike to protect Maryland's children while holding them accountable.

That said, DJS recognizes it must do a better job of doing our part with respect to the relatively small number of youth in our care on a daily basis (about 2,100 youth) some of whom are at especially high risk of coming to, or committing, gun violence. As such, in addition to informing the public discussion of youth crime, DJS uses these data to respond to and attempt to prevent offending by and against youth in our care. The Department's response to juvenile crime and violent crime is increasingly trauma informed, evidence based, and targeted. National research and practice have shown that when interventions are targeted towards the highest risk youth, address the trauma youth experience from either witnessing or being victimized by violence, build on young people's strengths in a developmentally-appropriate manner, and divert lower risk and younger youth, those interventions yield better outcomes for both youth and public safety. While we are proud that recidivism among youth in our care is declining, we know that we must do more to protect them and the public from harm.

- Towards that end, DJS is working closely and collaboratively with its sister agencies, local government, and community members to launch several initiatives designed to reduce the risk of gun violence among youth under DJS care, while helping young people and communities thrive. In that way, we are holding youth accountable while fulfilling Governor Moore’s promise to “Leave No One Behind.”
- DJS is also proud to be part of Governor Wes Moore’s *Safe Summer* initiative designed to occupy young people throughout this summer (and into the next) in productive, engaging, safe, and fun activities that will make them less likely to commit or come to harm from crime. Through the Governor’s initiative, \$5 million is being spent in 12 counties and statewide on a range of pro-social activities geared towards building on the strengths of young people, many of whom have been involved in delinquent behavior, to set them on pathways for success. This money is disproportionately targeted at Baltimore City and County and Prince George’s County where the highest number of youth are being victimized by and committing gun crime.
- In order to target our resources at DJS youth who are at greatest risk of coming to or committing harm, under the governor’s *Safe Summer* initiative, DJS recently launched *The Thrive Academy* (TTA). Prior to the launch of the The Thrive Academy, DJS had no specific targeted interventions for youth under DJS care who were at greatest risk of being involved with gun violence. TTA will attempt to forecast the youth on DJS’ caseload who are most likely to be the victims or perpetrators of gun violence through data analysis and human intelligence, working jointly with law enforcement, prosecutors, defense attorneys, knowledgeable community members, researchers, philanthropy, and DJS staff. DJS will then offer TTA youth a range of supports and interventions to help redirect them from the dangerous path they are on to one of hope and success. This will include incentives and supports for education and employment; “Life Coaches” with lived experience in the criminal justice system; the opportunity to become “Peace Ambassadors” in their own communities; fun and educational outings; and personal and family relocation assistance if they or their families are in danger. This model has been used successfully around the country and particularly in West Baltimore, where gun violence has declined by 33 percent since 2021, according to a [Baltimore Banner analysis of Baltimore City Police Department data](#).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For a national discussion of Gun Violence Prevention Initiatives, see [https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Effective-Community-Based-Violence-Reduction-Strategies\\_110222.pdf](https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Effective-Community-Based-Violence-Reduction-Strategies_110222.pdf)

- DJS has also established several *Improvement Teams*<sup>30</sup> made up of youth, families, victims, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, researchers, community providers/activists, and DJS leadership to collectively tackle the issue of gun violence by and against our youth. Our YESS – (Youth Engagement and Safety Strategies) Improvement Team will conduct Youth Violence Coordination Meetings with these stakeholders in Baltimore City and Baltimore County initially and later, Prince George’s County – Maryland’s three jurisdictions with the highest amount of gun crime. These Coordination Meetings will provide oversight and guidance to The Thrive Academy process and help ensure that there is better communication, collaboration, and coordination between all critical parties involved in the program. YESS will also help recommend additional gun violence solutions to DJS management to enact beyond the Thrive Academy to youth at some, but lesser, risk of gun violence.
- DJS will also be working in partnership with its sister agencies, specifically the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Department of Human Services to collaboratively invest in neighborhoods throughout Maryland where our departments’ clients live to not only improve their individual chances of success, but to provide increased opportunities for their neighborhoods as a whole to thrive.
- DJS has taken a hard look at the services and conditions in our own facilities by touring and establishing offices for top administrators in several facilities; examining the reports produced by the Attorney General’s Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit and consulting with that unit; regularly reviewing our internal Department of Investigation reports (including specialized reports we have commissioned); and obtaining an independent review of our facilities from national experts provided by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention through the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators. We agree with the concerns expressed in those reports about youth idleness and lack of productive and rehabilitative activities in DJS facilities, many of which we had identified ourselves from inspecting those facilities and speaking with youth and staff about conditions and services there. We immediately started to address the key concerns raised through that thorough set of evaluations by (1) changing leadership within our Residential Services unit, including a new Deputy Secretary for Residential Services and several new facility superintendents; (2) launching a Comprehensive Treatment Model (CTM)

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<sup>30</sup> Improvement Teams are a management tool DJS uses to identify and solve complex problems expeditiously, often enlisting the voices of key stakeholders from community, academia, philanthropy, law enforcement and the legal system, in addition to DJS staff.

infusing evidence-based therapy during and after a youth's stay in our residential programs with assistance from Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the Pew Charitable Trusts; and (3) establishing after school and weekend programming in all of our facilities to reduce idleness and engage young people in productive activities. We also worked hard to reduce the vacancy rate among our facilities' direct care staff from 18.4 percent in January to 7.1 percent in August. As noted above, recidivism rates for youth reentering their communities from our facilities have declined significantly and we are continuing to improve services and conditions to further drive down recidivism and help young people succeed upon their return home.

- In order to address concerns about the perceived inability to respond to crime by young people under age 13 pursuant to the recently-enacted Juvenile Justice Reform Act, DJS launched "Lunch and Learn" briefings in every county in Maryland to brief law enforcement, educators, social services providers, and parents on the ability to refer youth under age 13 for services and for formalized Children in Need of Supervision (CINS) petitions. Since the law's passage, the number of youth referred to the department for CINS services has more than quadrupled statewide and recidivism by youth under age 13 declined from 32.1 percent from June 2021 to March 2022 to 11.1 percent from June 2022<sup>31</sup> to March 2023.
- To productively occupy young people during the summer months, all eight DJS Regional Community Services offices launched a variety of activities as part of the Governor's *Safe Summer* initiative. These ranged from services in communities like working in food banks or animal shelters; to recreational activities like fishing, hiking, and biking; to cultural and educational activities. DJS youth were also employed in various capacities in several government departments including the Department of the Environment, Department of General Services, Department of Natural Resources, and in the Department of Juvenile Services itself. Some of those jobs will continue past the summer.
- And finally, as it did last year, the Department of Juvenile Services will be supporting legislation to eliminate mandatorily trying youth as adults, returning to Maryland's courts the discretion to decide which youth should stay in the more rehabilitative and protective youth justice system, and which youth require adult prosecution and confinement. Prosecuting children as adults has consistently

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<sup>31</sup> The Juvenile Justice Reform Act went into effect in June 2022.

been shown to increase youth crime and violence.<sup>32</sup> Further, a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in July found that youth incarcerated in adult correctional facilities before the age of 18 were at a 33 percent higher risk of mortality between the ages of 18 and 39, potentially through diminished psychological and physical health.<sup>33</sup> In Maryland, all youth automatically charged as adults who are confined pretrial are initially confined in adult jails; 87 percent of youth automatically charged as adults eventually have their cases either dismissed or waived back to the youth justice system or are sentenced by the courts to time served.<sup>34</sup>

A balanced approach to youth justice will focus resources on youth most at risk and neighborhoods most heavily impacted by violence and poverty and will address the trauma these youth have experienced or witnessed, while seeking to consistently hold them accountable and improve outcomes for young people entrusted to the care of the Department of Juvenile Services.

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**The Mission of the Department of Juvenile Services is to transform young people’s lives, create safer communities, and forge more equitable systems through community-based partnerships that hold youth accountable while building on their strengths and support systems.**

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<sup>32</sup> Hahn, R., et al. (2023, August 11). Effects on violence of laws and policies facilitating the transfer for youth from the juvenile to the adult justice system: A report on recommendations of the task force on community preventive services. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 56(RR-9), 1-11.

<sup>33</sup> Silver IA, Semenza DC, Nedelec JL (July 5, 2023). Incarceration of Youths in an Adult Correctional Facility and Risk of Premature Death. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(7):e2321805.

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