

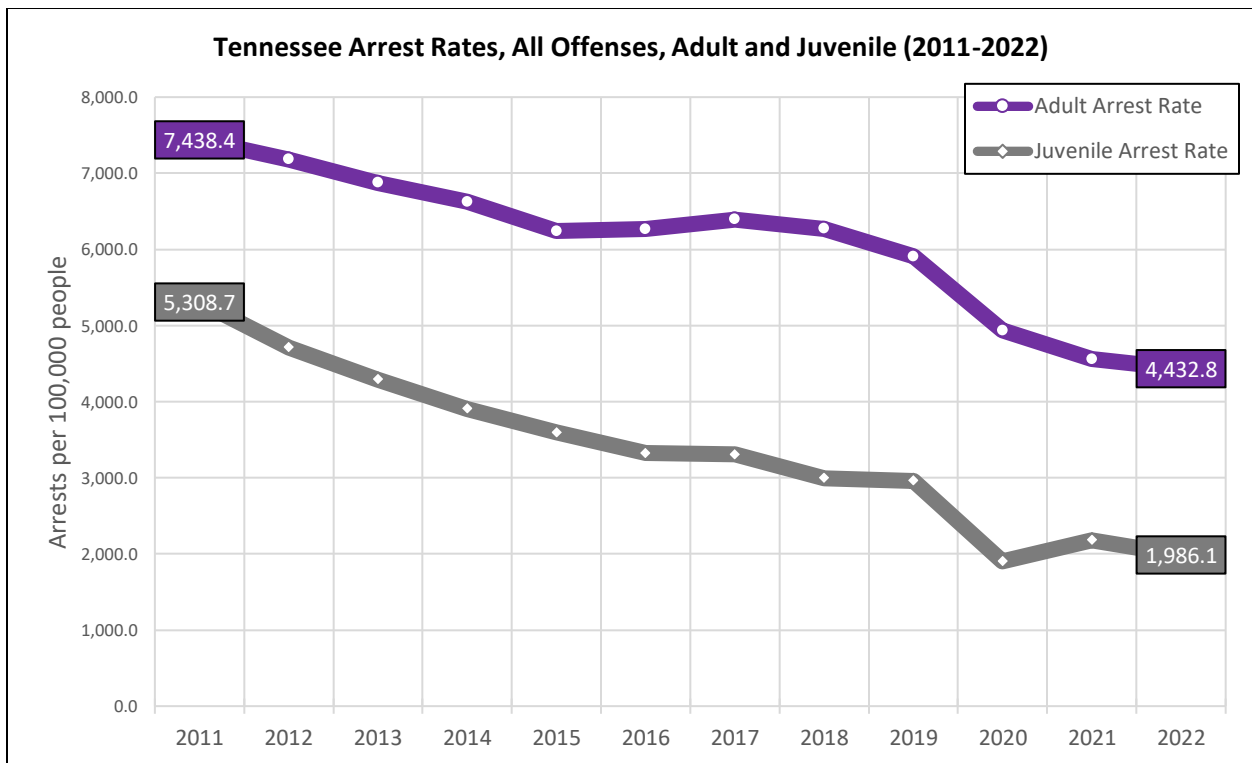


Memorandum

To: Disability Rights Tennessee
From: Josh Rovner, Director of Youth Justice
Re: Juvenile and Adult Crime in Tennessee
Date: August 11, 2023

I have reviewed arrest data from the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation’s “Crime in Tennessee” reports for the years 2011 through 2022, the most recent 12 years for which data are available.¹ These data reveal that youth offending has fallen both in total numbers of arrests and as a proportion of all crime in Tennessee for which arrests have been made.² In Tennessee as elsewhere, juvenile arrests comprise a small proportion of all arrests. People aged 10-17 years olds comprised about 10 percent of Tennessee’s population and 5 percent of all arrests in 2022.

The relevant metric for comparisons among ages is arrest rates: the number of arrests per capita. The juvenile arrest rate is lower than the adult rate. In 2022, people aged 18 years and older were more than twice as likely to be arrested as people aged 10 to 17. Between 2011 and 2022, the adult arrest rate fell by 40 percent; the juvenile arrest rate fell by 63 percent.

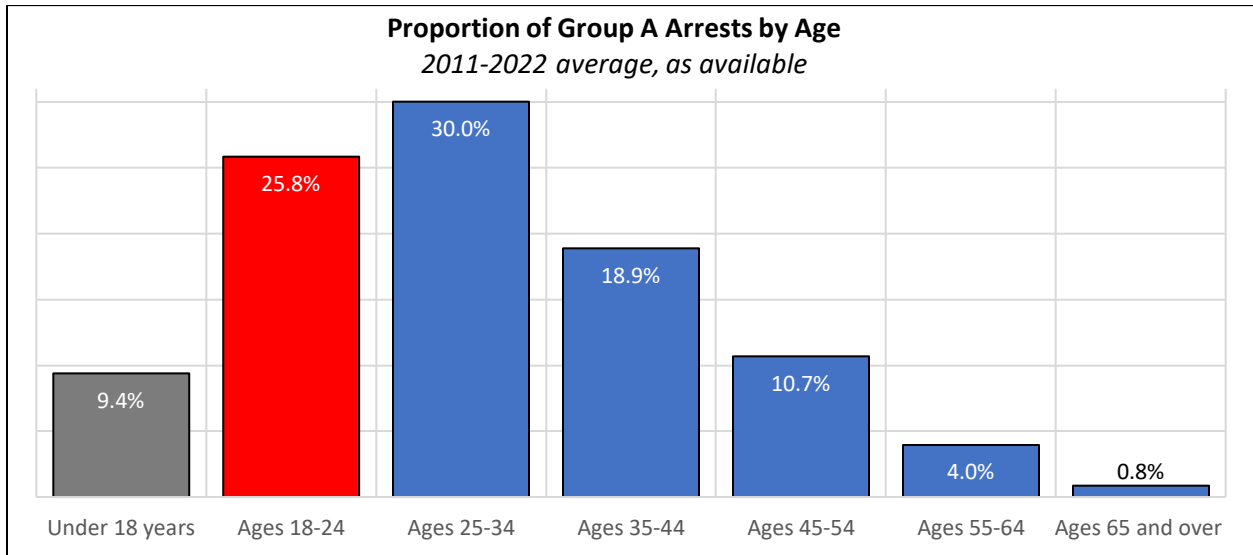


¹ “Crime in Tennessee,” Multiple reports covering 2011 through 2022. Published by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Statistical Analysis Center.

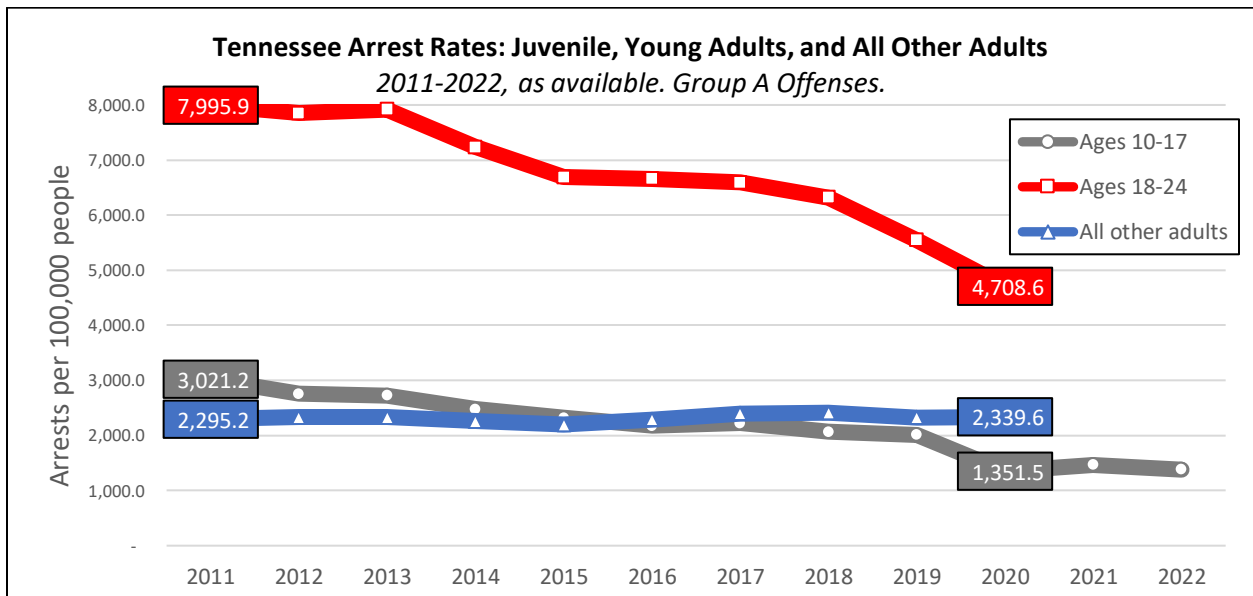
<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/tbi/divisions/cjis-division/recent-publications.html>

² Over the period studied, Tennessee’s closure rate for Group A offenses – the proportion of incidents in which an arrest was made – was roughly 40 percent.

Dividing out Group A arrests reveals that between 2011 and 2022, juvenile arrests averaged 9.4 percent of the total.³ Arrests for young adults are much more common than arrests for juveniles.



As shown above, these data reveal that arrests for young adults are much more common than arrests for people under the age of 18. As a result, I analyzed the arrest rates for three sets of people: juveniles (people between 10- and 17-years old); young adults (aged 18-24 years old); and all other adults.⁴



In a typical year, the Group A arrest rate for young adults (shown in red) is three times higher than for juveniles (shown in gray). Comparing this juvenile arrest rate with the arrest rate for non-young adults reveals that the juvenile arrest rate has fallen while the non-young adult arrest rate has held steady. **In short, the data suggest that the juvenile system is more effective in reducing offending and arrests than the adult criminal justice system. Proposals to move youth into the adult system are likely to increase offending.**

³ The TBI reports specify arrests by age bracket for Group A arrests only. All other arrests are only divided by juvenile and total adult populations.

⁴ Age brackets were reported in 2011 through 2020. Starting in 2021, there are no data available separating out adults of different ages, which is why the blue and red lines stop in 2020.