

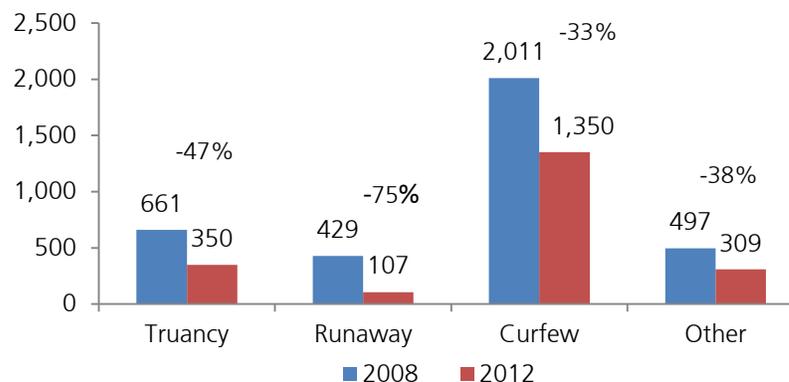
JUVENILE ARRESTS DOWN IN 2012, DRIVEN IN PART BY FEWER ARRESTS FOR STATUS OFFENSES

A recent report by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice¹ explores the issues of juveniles who come into contact with the justice system through a status offense (acts which are considered crimes for juveniles, but not for adults). The report outlines implications associated with arresting status offenders, including the potential harm to these youth by detaining them in facilities with higher risk youth and the need to train frontline responders to better understand and identify the possible causes of truancy (e.g., bullying) or running away from home (e.g., abuse, domestic violence).

How many juveniles in San Diego County are arrested annually, both overall and for status offenses, and how has this changed over time?²

- In 2012, there were 10,250 juvenile arrests across the region, with around one in five (21%) representing an arrest for a status offense. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of these status offense arrests were for a curfew violation, 17 percent for truancy, 15 percent for another type of status offense, and 5 percent for running away.
- Over the past five years, the number of juvenile arrests decreased 44 percent (from 18,301 in 2008 to 10,250 in 2012) and the number of status offense arrests decreased 41 percent (from 3,498 to 2,116).
- Across status offense types, there has been variation in the five-year declines, with the number of arrests for running away dropping the most (75%) and the number of arrests for curfew violations the least (33%) (Figure 1).
- On an average day, there are 8 status offenders detained in local facilities compared to 308 detained for a violent offense, 218 for a property offense, and 157 for a drug, weapon, or other type of offense.³

Figure 1
NUMBER OF JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF STATUS OFFENSES, 2008 AND 2012



A contributing factor to the decrease in juvenile arrests overall, and for status offenses in particular, is the increased focus by law enforcement, faced with limited resources, on more serious offenses by juveniles and adults. Another explanation could be stakeholders' efforts to divert youth from the juvenile justice system by collaborating with community-based organizations, schools, and other entities. These diversion strategies focus on the youth's underlying issues and can be a safeguard for their future involvement in the system. To learn about tools that have been effective alternatives to detaining status offenders, a new Web site launched by the non-profit Vera Institute, www.statusoffensereform.org, may provide useful information.

¹ Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2013). *National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses*. Washington, DC: Author.

² Burke, C. (2013). *Arrests 2012: Law Enforcement Response to Crime in the San Diego Region*. San Diego, CA: SANDAG.

³ San Diego County Probation Department (2013). *Annual Statistical Report 2012*. San Diego, CA: Author.