

THE IMPACT OF RAISE THE AGE



The law has contributed to decreasing youth crime across New York State.

- **Outside of New York City (Rest of State)**, juvenile arrests have decreased 63% over the last 10 years (from 2015-2024). **Serious (“Index Crimes”), which include violent crimes, have decreased 54%** over the same period. ¹
- **In New York City**, juvenile arrests have decreased 77% over the last 10 years (from 2015-July 15th 2025). **Serious (“Index Crimes”), which include violent crimes, have decreased 50%** over the same period. ²

HOW THE LAW WORKS

Before Raise the Age went into effect in 2019, New York was one of two remaining states to prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, regardless of offense. As of 2019, the law changed what happens when a 16- or 17-year-old is arrested for a crime. Instead of adult criminal court, most 16- and 17-year-olds’ cases now move through family court where the goal is accountability and services rather than criminalization.

- **Misdemeanors:** Those who are charged with a misdemeanor offense have their case heard in family court as a Juvenile Delinquent. The court decides if they need supervision through probation, programs, services or treatment, or placement (after the case is adjudicated) through the local department of social services or the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Judges may hold youth in secure or non-secure juvenile detention while the case is pending. Juvenile delinquents do not have criminal records. Family court proceedings are confidential and in some instances the cases can be sealed.
- **Non-Violent Felony Offenses:** Those who are charged with a non-violent felony offense have their case first heard in Youth Parts in adult courts. The case is transferred to family court unless the prosecutor shows there are “extraordinary circumstances,” and that the court should keep the case in the Youth Part of adult court, where adult sentencing applies. Most of these cases are transferred to family court. Family court uses a range of tools including probation, intensive case management, mandated family and individual counseling, detention, and long-term placement in a residential facility. In some cases, family court mandates are more intensive than adult court.
- **Violent Felony Offenses:** Those who are charged with a violent felony offense have their case first heard in Youth Parts in adult courts as an Adolescent Offender. If a 16- or 17-year-old is accused of causing significant physical injury, displaying a deadly weapon like a gun, or engaging in any sexual offense – or if the judge finds other “extraordinary circumstances” – the case remains in criminal court, where adult sentencing applies.

GUNS AND VIOLENCE UNDER RAISE THE AGE

Year after year, data from New York City shows that adolescents under 18 are responsible for less of the violence than 10 years ago – before Raise the Age went into effect. Juveniles now represent a decreasing share of arrests for felony dangerous weapons charges (including gun charges), felony assault charges, and felony robbery charges. Moreover, there is no evidence that older people are using teenagers to carry guns or commit acts of violence after Raise the Age.

Researchers found, “[i]f rising youth violence were caused by policies [like Raise the Age] preventing the prosecution of youth as adults, law enforcement data would show violence among juveniles under age 18 to be distinct and generally worse than trends among adults aged 18 and over.” **That is not the case.**

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UNDER-INVESTMENT IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

As has been widely reported, New York State never delivered on its promise to fund community-based alternatives to incarceration and reentry programs for young people. As of March 2024, it’s been reported that **less than a third of the \$1.5 billion appropriated for the Raise the Age law’s implementation has been spent.** New York City, which accounts for half of the state’s youth justice system population, **has received zero State funding.**

CHANGES TO RAISE THE AGE

Calls to rollback parts of the Raise the Age law to prosecute more 16- and 17-year-olds as adults won’t make our communities safer. New York spent decades treating 16- and 17-year-olds as adults in criminal court, which did not result in reduced crime rates. Violent crime was at its peak in New York when we did just that.

Evidence shows that community-based programs and services for young people who have contact with police is the surest way to promote community safety. This year’s **state budget must include more pathways for unspent state dollars to reach counties and community based organizations,** including adopting the Youth Justice Innovation Fund (S.643/A.8491).

Every county must have a youth justice continuum of services that includes prevention, early intervention, and alternatives to detention, placement and incarceration.

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1 Data Analysis of DCJS Rest of State Data

3 <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2025/08/25/databit202502/>

2 Data Analysis of NYPD Open Data

4 <https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/news-events/news/did-raise-age-lead-more-juvenile-violent-crime-0>