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Minor Role: Youth Under Age 18 and New York City Violence

by Jeffrey A. Butts, Sheyla A. Delgado, and Richard A. Espinobarros

Like much of the United States, New York City recently experienced a surge in violence, especially gun violence. According to the New York City Police Department, the number of people struck by gunfire doubled in two years, beginning in 2020. The number of shooting victims began to decline in 2022, but the scale of violence remains a serious concern for communities and public officials.

News media recently implied juvenile violence was a leading indicator of violent crime in New York City. Police officials proposed that worsening teen violence could be due to New York State's 2017 "**Raise the Age**" law that moved justice-involved youth ages 16 and 17 back into family courts, eliminating criminal prosecution by default as of 2019.

Based on the newest police data, it does not appear correct to attribute recent increases in violence to a law that only affected youth under age 18. Youth aged 17 and younger still account for a small portion of violent crime in New York City. As the incidence of interpersonal violence shifted in recent years, the changes among people under age 18 generally mirrored the scale and direction of trends among adults aged 18 and older.

If rising youth violence were caused by policies 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.

In newly published police data for 2022, youth aged 17 and younger accounted for eight percent of arrests for felony dangerous weapons charges, which was about the same as in 2014 (9%) and slightly less than in 2006 (11%). Youth under 18 represented four percent of arrests for felony assault charges in 2022, half the figure from 2014 (8%) and far less than in 2006 (15%).

Similarly, shooting victimizations in 2022 were concentrated among adults ages 18 to 24 (28%) and those 25 and older (63%). Juveniles accounted for nine percent of shooting victimizations in 2022, down slightly from 2014 (10%). Before the "Raise the Age" law, juveniles often represented 10 to 14 percent of all shooting victims.

Violent crime among New Yorkers aged 17 and younger surged through 2021, likely for the same reasons violence increased among adults, including the social and economic disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Hypothetically, prosecution challenges introduced by state law could have contributed to increased violent crime, but that effect is not evident in New York City police data.

Violence in New York City is Still Predominantly an Issue Involving Adults Age 18 and Older

Arrests for Felony Dangerous Weapon Charges

Age Group	Number			Percent		
	2006	2014	2022	2006	2014	2022
17 & Younger	652	535	454	11%	9%	8%
18 to 24	2,509	2,174	1,977	41%	37%	33%
25 & Older	2,922	3,246	3,564	48%	55%	59%
Total	6,083	5,955	5,995	100%	100%	100%

Arrests for Felony Assault Charges

Age Group	Number			Percent		
	2006	2014	2022	2006	2014	2022
17 & Younger	1,921	1,176	746	15%	8%	4%
18 to 24	3,600	3,810	3,162	28%	26%	17%
25 & Older	7,144	9,936	14,987	56%	67%	79%
Total	12,665	14,922	18,895	100%	100%	100%

Shooting Victimizations (People Struck by Gunfire)

Age Group	Number			Percent		
	2006	2014	2022	2006	2014	2022
17 & Younger	253	145	155	13%	10%	9%
18 to 24	828	594	462	42%	42%	28%
25 & Older	905	671	1,045	46%	48%	63%
Total	1,986	1,410	1,662	100%	100%	100%

Data Source:

Data are provided by the New York City Police Department on the City's [Open Data](#) portal, then inspected and analyzed by John Jay College's Research and Evaluation Center ([JohnJayREC](#)).

Note:

Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding. Percentages were calculated after excluding cases with missing age (e.g., of 1,664 shooting victimizations in 2022, age was not reported for two victims).

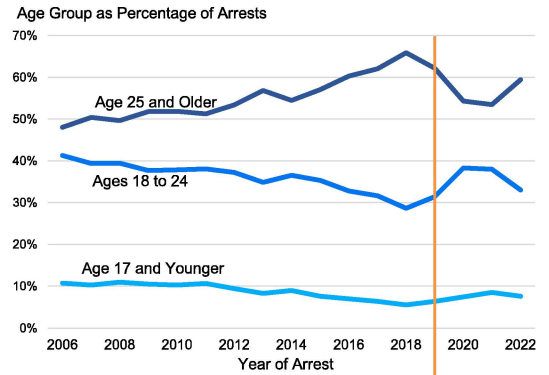
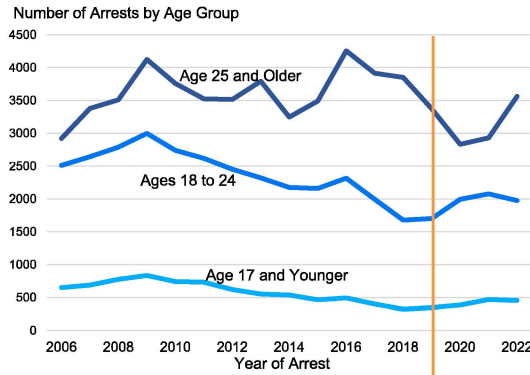
Felony assault arrests involve charges of assault in the first and second degree as well as strangulation in the first degree (NY Penal Law [Article 120](#) & [Article 121](#)). Felony dangerous weapon arrests include charges for firearms or other weapons (NY Penal Law [Article 265](#)).

Shooting victimizations reflect occurrences of gun violence in which at least one person is struck by gunfire. This analysis includes 97 percent of all shooting incidents from 2006 to 2022, specifically those involving between one and four victims.

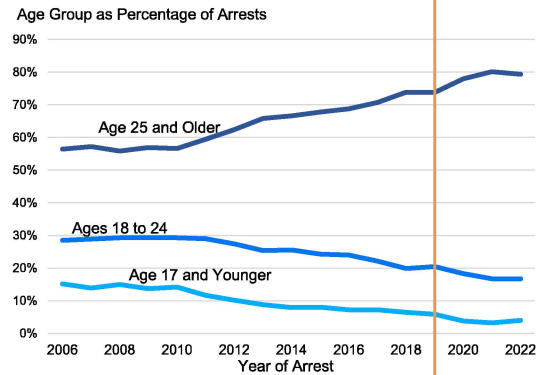
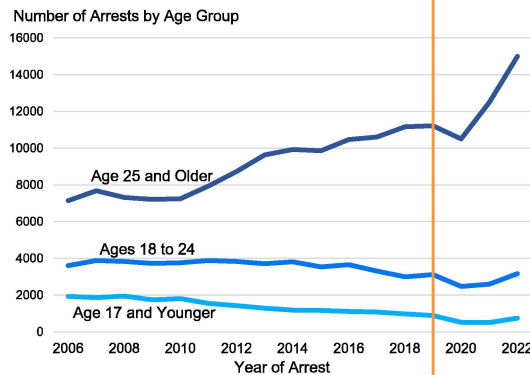
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Arrests and Shooting Victimization by Age Group

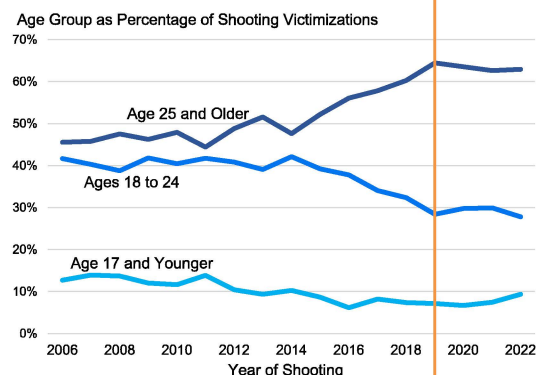
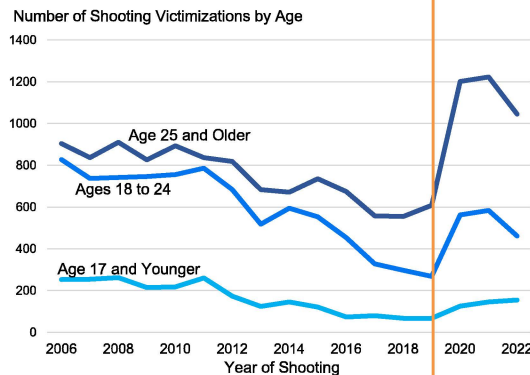
New York City Arrests for Felony Dangerous Weapons



New York City Arrests for Felony Assaults



New York City Shooting Victimization



New York's "Raise the Age" Law fully implemented as of 2019