

Alaska Justice Information Center

FACT SHEET



JUSTICE CENTER

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Drug Possession Arrests Reported in Alaska, 1986–2017 Drug Types by Sex

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This fact sheet presents data on drug possession arrests reported by Alaska law enforcement agencies and obtained from the Alaska Department of Public Safety's annual report *Crime in Alaska* for the years 1986 through 2017. *Crime in Alaska* represents the State of Alaska's contribution to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. The UCR program collects data from law enforcement agencies across the United States. This fact sheet explores the 32-year trend of drug possession arrests in Alaska from 1986 to 2017. This Fact Sheet further expands a previous Fact Sheet (18.05) by exploring drug possession arrests by sex for four distinct drug types (narcotics, marijuana,

synthetic narcotics, & other non-narcotics)¹ measured in the UCR report.

Drug possession arrests

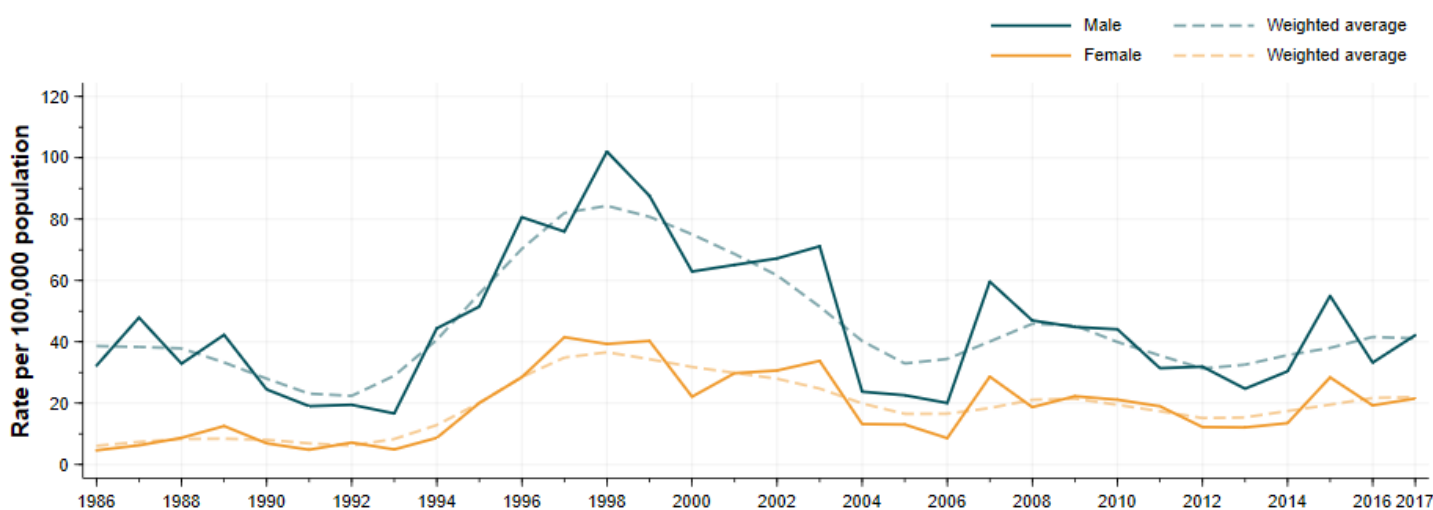
Drug possession arrest rates are calculated per 100,000 residents. The drug possession rates reported here are calculated using population data retrieved from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Division.

Narcotics arrest rates by sex

Figure 1 shows the narcotics possession arrest rates for females and males from 1986 to 2017.

Figure 1.

Alaska drug possession arrests: Narcotics arrest rates by sex, 1986-2017



Source of data: Alaska Department of Public Safety, *Crime in Alaska* (1986-2017)

¹ See "Drug Abuse Violations Definition" on p. 5

On average, females accounted for 28.2% and males accounted for 71.8% of all arrests for narcotics possession reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017.

Overall, the narcotics possession arrest rates for females in Alaska increased between 1986 and 2017. In 1986, the female arrest rate was 4.6 per 100,000 female residents, the lowest recorded rate in this period. The female arrest rate reached its highest point in 1997 at 41.5 per 100,000 female residents, roughly 8.5 times higher than it was just four years prior. The rate sharply dipped from 33.1 per 100,000 female residents in 2003 to 13.2 per 100,000 female residents in 2004. The rate plateaued for two years before it increased again in 2007 to 28.7, more than three times the rate in 2006. In 2017, the female narcotics possession arrest rate was 21.5 per 100,000 female residents.

Similarly, the narcotics possession arrest rates for males in Alaska increased over the 32-year period. In 1986, the male arrest rate was 32.2 per 100,000 male residents. The male arrest rate reached its lowest point in 1993 at 16.7 per 100,000 male residents and its highest recorded rate in 1998 at 102 per 100,000 male residents, a six-fold increase in rate within five years. The male and female arrest rates parallel one another in that they increase and decrease by roughly the same percentages in the same years. The male arrest rate sharply dipped from 71.2 per 100,000 male residents in 2003 to 23.7 per 100,000 male residents the next year. The rate plateaued for two years before it increased in 2007 to 59.6, roughly three times the rate in 2006. In 2017, the male arrest rate was 42.2 per 100,000 male residents.

Marijuana arrest rates by sex

Figure 2 depicts the marijuana possession arrest rates for females and males from 1986 to 2017.

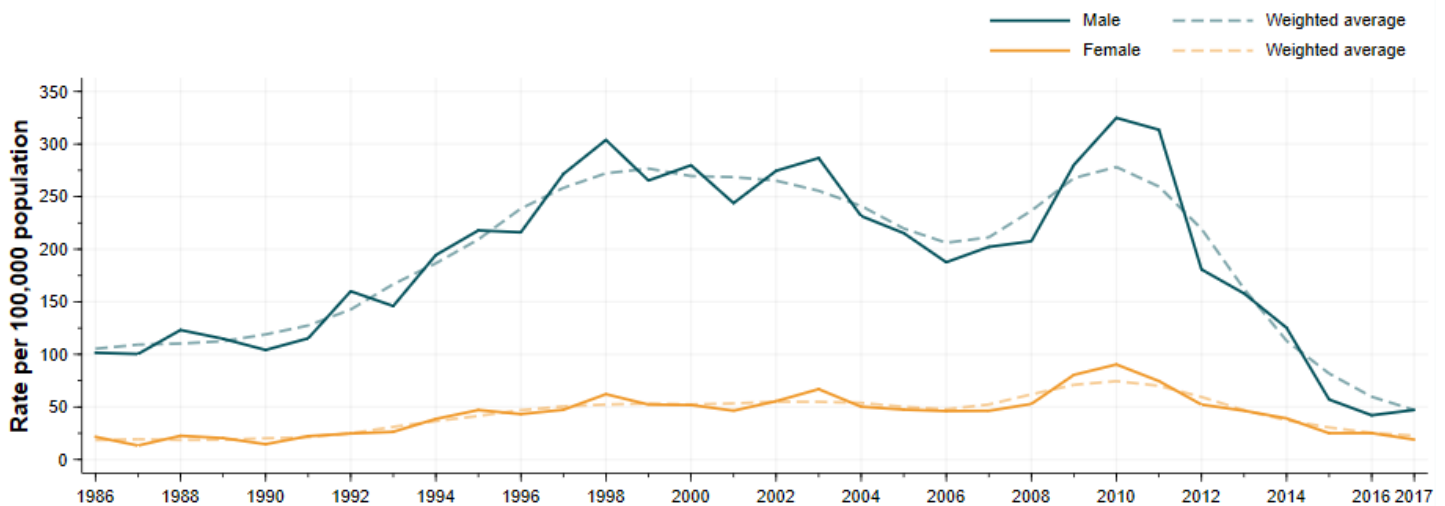
On average, females accounted for 17.5% and males accounted for 82.5% of all arrests for marijuana possession reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017.

The marijuana possession arrest rates for females in Alaska more than quadrupled between 1986 and 2010; the rate increased steadily for more than two decades and returned to 1986-levels by 2017. In 1986, the female arrest rate was 21.6 per 100,000 female residents. The female arrest rate reached its highest point in 2010 at 90.4 per 100,000 female residents. The lowest rate recorded was in 1987 at 13.3 per 100,000 female residents. In 2017, the female marijuana possession arrest rate was 19 per 100,000 female residents, the third lowest recorded rate over the 32-year period.

The trend for marijuana possession arrest rates for males in Alaska showed a parabolic trajectory over the 32-year period. In 1986, the male arrest rate was 101.5 per 100,000 male residents. The trend shows an increase in arrest rates for males that began in 1990. The rate rose to the second highest recorded rate in 1998, at 303.9 per 100,000 male residents. The male arrest rate reached its highest point at 324.9 per 100,000 male residents in 2010 and its lowest recorded rate in 2016 at 42.1 per 100,000 male residents. In 2017, the marijuana possession arrest rate for males slightly increased to 47.2 per 100,000 male residents.

Figure 2

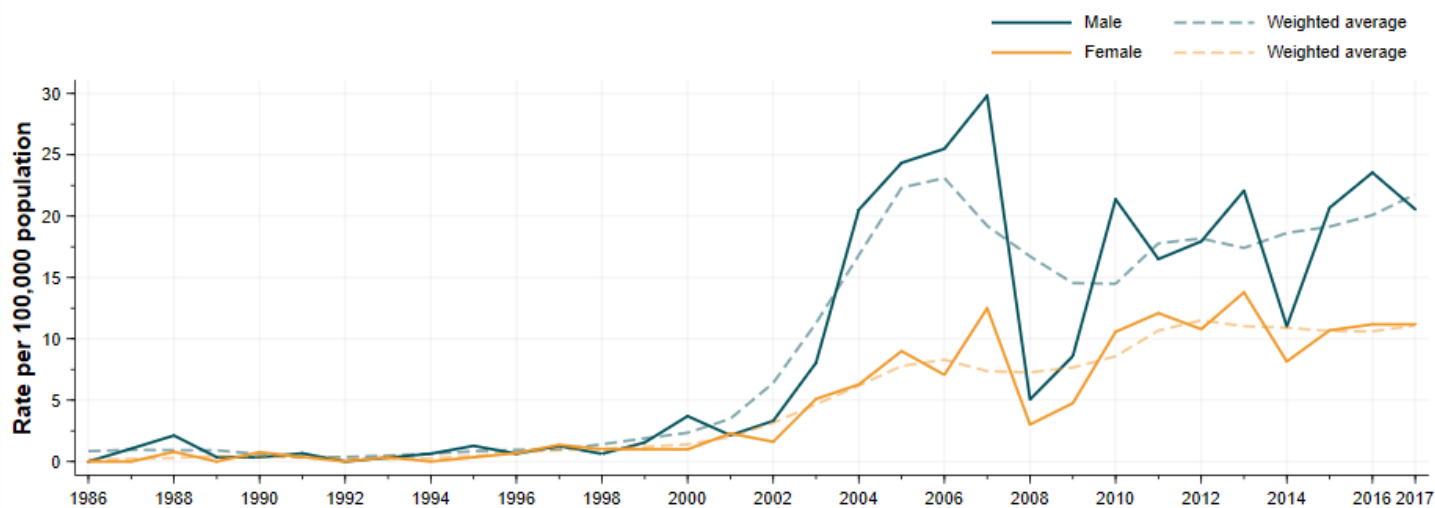
Alaska drug possession arrests: Marijuana arrest rates by sex, 1986-2017



Source of data: Alaska Department of Public Safety, *Crime in Alaska* (1986-2017)

Figure 3

Alaska drug possession arrests: Synthetic narcotics arrest rates by sex, 1986-2017



Source of data: Alaska Department of Public Safety, *Crime in Alaska* (1986-2017)

Synthetic narcotics arrest rates by sex

Figure 3 depicts the synthetic narcotics possession arrest rates for females and males from 1986 to 2017.

On average, females accounted for 31.9% and males accounted for 68.1% of all arrests for synthetic narcotics possession reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017.

The synthetic narcotics possession arrest rates for females in Alaska increased between 1986 and 2017. In 1986, there were zero female arrests. The rate was nearly zero until the early-2000s. The rate increased until 2007 where it reached the second highest recorded rate at 12.5 per 100,000 female residents; it then suddenly dipped to 3 per 100,000 female residents the next year, roughly four times less than 2007. The female arrest rate reached its highest point in 2013 at 13.8 per 100,000 female residents. The rate has remained stable in the 2010s. The average female arrest rate recorded is 4.6 per 100,000 female residents. In 2017, the female arrest rate was 11.2 per 100,000 female residents.

The synthetic narcotics possession arrest rates for males in Alaska also increased over the 32-year period. In 1986, the male arrest rate was 0 per 100,000 male residents. The rate began to increase around 1993 and carried on this trend until 2000. The rate sharply increased from 2001 to 2007, at 29.8 per 100,000 male residents, a 14-fold increase over six years. The trend shows a sudden drop in arrest rates for males in 2008, at 5.1 per 100,000 male residents, roughly six times less than the year prior. The male arrest rate reached its highest point in 2007 and its lowest recorded rate in 1986 and 1992 at 0 per 100,000

male residents. The average male arrest rate recorded is 9.2 per 100,000 male residents. In 2017, the male arrest rate was 20.6 per 100,000 male residents.

Other non-narcotics arrest rates by sex

Figure 4 contrasts the other non-narcotics possession arrest rates for females and males from 1986 to 2017.

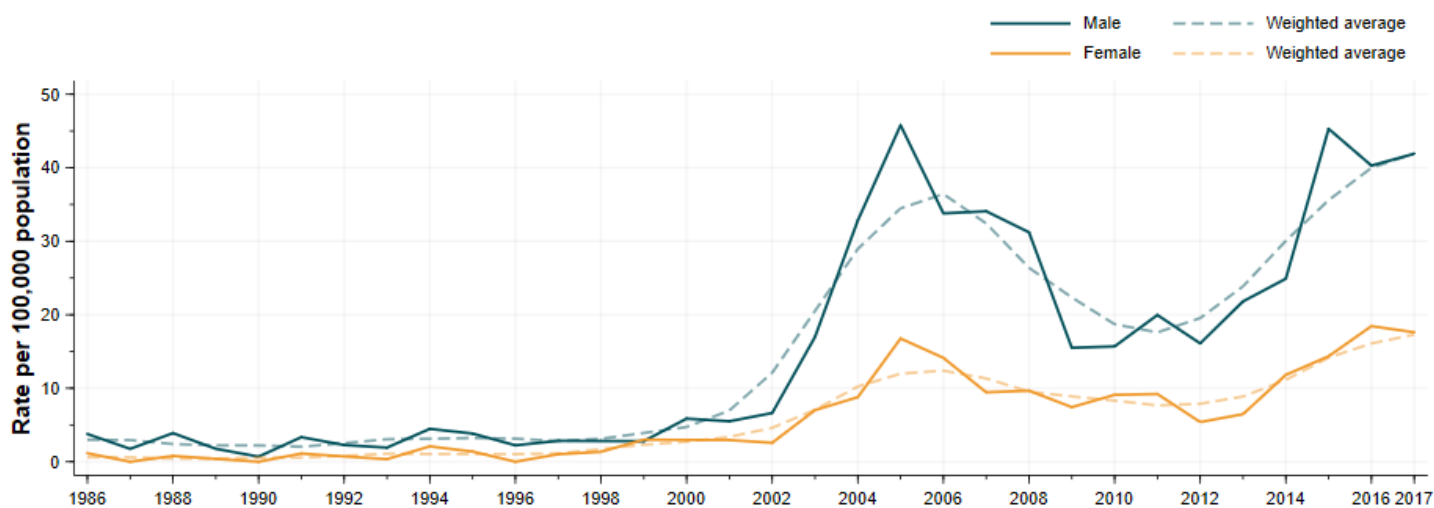
Females accounted for 26.3% and males accounted for 73.7% of all arrests for other non-narcotics possession reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017.

The 32-year trend shows that other non-narcotics possession arrest rates for females in Alaska increased between 1986 and 2017. In 1986, the female arrest rate was 1.2 per 100,000 female residents. The rate reached 16.8 per 100,000 female residents in 2005, the highest rate recorded before 2016. The female arrest rate reached its highest point in 2016 at 18.5 per 100,000 female residents. In 2017, the female arrest rate was 17.6 per 100,000 female residents.

The other non-narcotics possession arrest rates for males in Alaska increased over the 32-year period. In 1986, the male arrest rate was 3.8 per 100,000 male residents. The male arrest rate reached its highest point in 2005 at 45.8 per 100,000 male residents. Within four years, the rate dipped down to roughly one-third of the 2005 rate. The

Figure 4

Alaska drug possession arrests: Other non-narcotics arrest rates by sex, 1986-2017



Source of data: Alaska Department of Public Safety, *Crime in Alaska* (1986-2017)

male arrest rate subsequently climbed to the second highest rate recorded in 2015, at 45.3 per 100,000 male residents. In 2017, the male arrest rate was 41.9 per 100,000 male residents.

SUMMARY

This fact sheet presents data on drug possession arrests reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017 as reported in the Department of Public Safety publication, *Crime in Alaska*.

Overall, males comprise roughly four out of five drug possession arrests in the state of Alaska. The female and male rates parallel one another in that they rise and fall at the same points in most years.

In 2002, the synthetic narcotics and other non-narcotics possession arrest rates sharply increased for both males and females until the mid-2000s before a sharp decline and subsequent increase.

Marijuana possession, the offense with the highest arrest rates, peaked at 90.4 per 100,000 female residents and 324.9 per 100,000 male residents. Synthetic narcotics possession, the offense with the lowest arrest rates, peaked at 13.8 per 100,000 female residents and 29.8 per 100,000 male residents.

Narcotics possession is the only offense that peaked before 2000.

Notes

CALCULATING RATES

Rates per 100,000 populations are calculated by dividing the number of specified events by the total population and then multiplying the total by 100,000. For example, to determine the male narcotics possession arrest rates in Alaska for 2017, we take the total number of recorded narcotics possession arrest cases for males reported in Alaska for 2017 (160), divide it by the estimated 2017 state population for males (379,423), and multiply the quotient by 100,000 to reach the male narcotics possession arrest rate of 42.2 per 100,000 male residents $[(160 \div 379,423) * 100,000 = 42.2]$. Due to Alaska's small population, small changes in the number of reported drug possession arrests can lead to substantial fluctuations in rates.

REFERENCES

All population estimates were retrieved from the State of Alaska, Department of Labor and Workforce Development at: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/index.cfm> (1960 to present).

Crime in Alaska is available online at: <http://dps.alaska.gov/Statewide/UCR.aspx> (2000–2017) and <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/ajic/ucr.cshtml> (1976–1999).

DRUG ABUSE VIOLATIONS DEFINITION

In the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, drug possession falls under the classification of drug abuse violations.

Drug Abuse Violations — The violation of laws prohibiting the production, distribution, and/or use of certain controlled substances. The unlawful cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, use, possession, transportation, or importation of any controlled drug or narcotic substance. Arrests for violations of state and local laws, specifically those relating to the unlawful possession, sale, use, growing, manufacturing, and making of narcotic drugs. The following drug categories are specified: opium or cocaine and their derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine); marijuana; synthetic narcotics—manufactured narcotics that can cause true addiction (Demerol, methadone); and dangerous non-narcotic drugs (barbiturates, benzedrine).

Alaska Justice Information Center



ABOUT

The Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) was established in 2015, with a mission to compile, analyze, and report on criminal justice topics to policymakers, and practitioners in order to improve public safety, to increase criminal justice system accountability, and to reduce recidivism. In 2017, AJiC merged with the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (AJSAC), which was designated as Alaska's statistical analysis center in 1986 by Governor William Sheffield. The fact sheet series was previously published under the AJSAC masthead.

Since 1972, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and its predecessor agency, the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, has provided support to state and territorial governments to establish and operate Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs) to collect, analyze, and report statistics on crime and justice to federal, state, and local levels of government, and to share state-level information nationally. There are currently 53 SACs located in the United States and its Territories. The Alaska SAC is a member of the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA), a national nonprofit organization comprised of SAC directors, researchers, and practitioners dedicated to policy-oriented research and analysis.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Location

The Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) is housed in the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center, which is located on the second floor of the UAA/APU Consortium Library, Suite 213.

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