

Alaska Justice Information Center

FACT SHEET



JUSTICE CENTER

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Drug Possession Arrests Reported in Alaska, 1986–2017

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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.

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

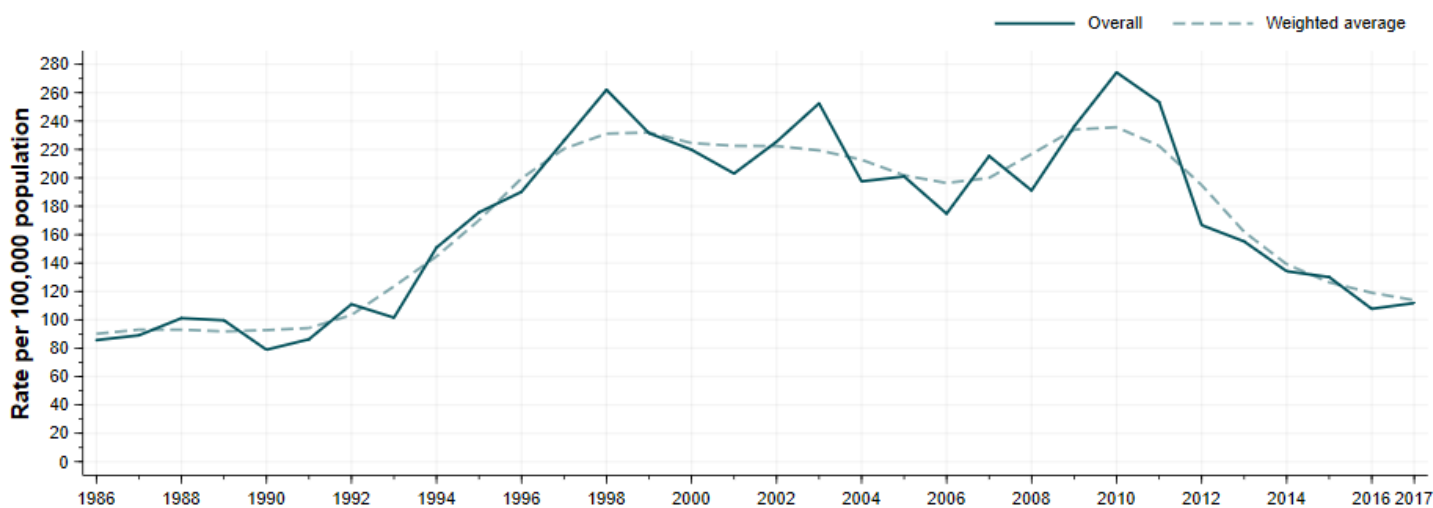
from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Division.

Overall drug possession arrest rates

Figure 1 shows drug possession arrest rates for Alaska from 1986 to 2017. Two trend lines are shown in Figure 1. The solid line shows the actual drug possession arrest rate for each year included in the time series. The dashed line shows a "moving average" trend line for the time series. Overall, the 32-year trend reveals that the drug possession arrest rates in Alaska increased over the period. In 1986, the arrest rate was 85.7 per 100,000 residents. The rate rose to 262 per 100,000 residents in 1998 and peaked in 2010 at 274.3 per 100,000 residents. Since 2010, the rate sharply declined to 107.7 per 100,000 residents in 2016, the lowest recorded rate since the early 1990s, before slightly

Figure 1

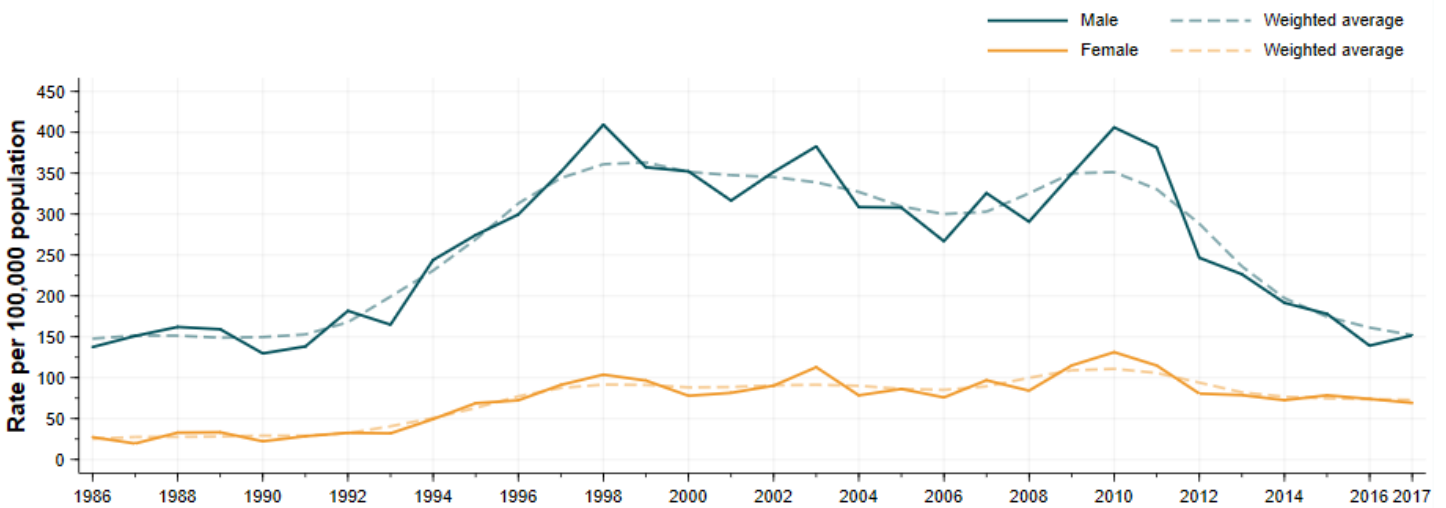
Alaska drug possession arrests: Total arrest rates, 1986-2017



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

Figure 2

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



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

increasing to 111.8 per 100,000 residents in 2017. The lowest rate recorded was in 1990 at 78.9 per 100,000 residents. The average drug possession arrest rate over the 32-year period is 170 per 100,000 residents.

Arrest rates by sex

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

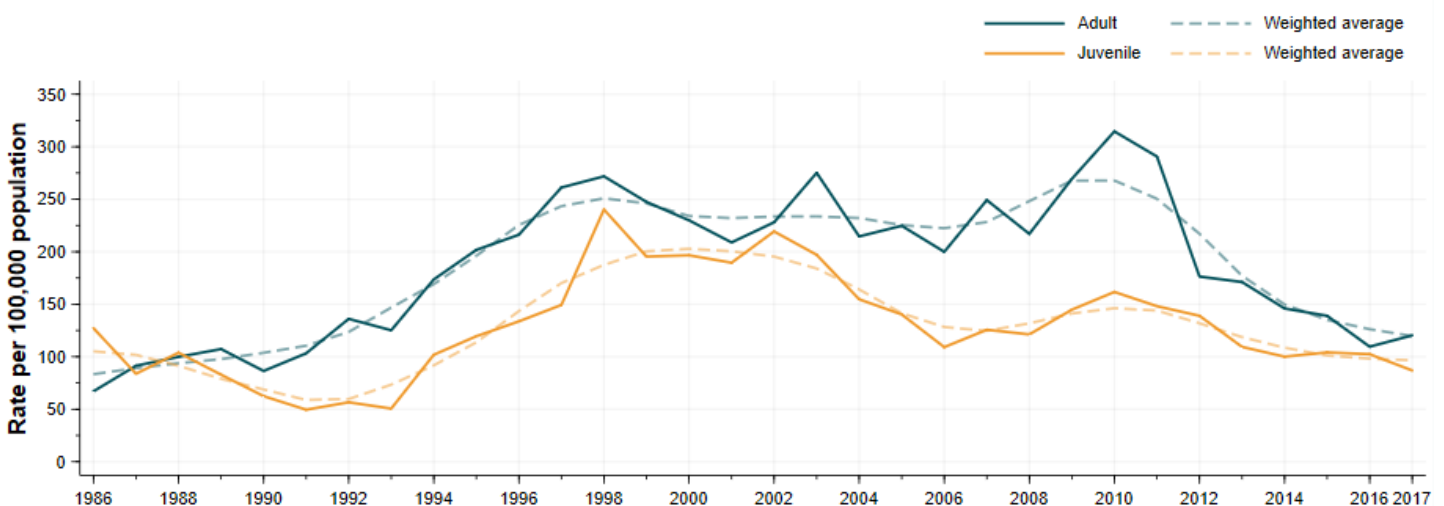
On average, females accounted for 20.8% and males accounted for 79.2% of all arrests for drug possession reported in Alaska from 1986 to 2017.

Overall, the drug possession arrest rates for females in Alaska increased between 1986 and 2017. In 1986, the female arrest rate was 27.4 per 100,000 female residents. In 2017, the female drug possession arrest rate was 69.3 per 100,000 female residents. The female arrest rate reached its highest point in 2010 at 131.2 per 100,000 female residents. The lowest rate recorded was in 1987 at 19.6 per 100,000 female residents.

The drug possession arrest rate for males in Alaska also increased between 1986 and 2017. In 1986, the male arrest rate was 137.5 per 100,000 male residents. In 2017, the male drug possession arrest rate was

Figure 3

Alaska drug possession arrests: Arrest rates by age, 1986-2017



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

151.8 per 100,000 male residents. The trend shows a plateau in male arrest rates between 1998, at 409.4 per 100,000 male residents, and 2010, at 406.1 per 100,000 male residents. The male arrest rate reached its highest point in 1998 and its lowest recorded rate in 1990 at 129.7 per 100,000 male residents.

Arrest rates by age

Figure 3 contrasts the drug possession arrest rates for adults and juveniles. Adults are categorized as anyone 18 years of age or older. Juveniles are categorized as anyone under the age of 18.

Adults accounted for 78.4% and juveniles accounted for 21.6% of all reported drug possession arrests in Alaska over this same period.

The 32-year trend shows that drug possession arrest rates for adults in Alaska increased from 1986 to 1998, plateaued until 2010, and subsequently decreased until 2017. The adult arrest rate in 1986 was 67.1 per 100,000 adult residents, the lowest recorded rate during this period. The highest arrest rate recorded was in 2010 at 314.6 per 100,000 adult residents. The arrest rate in 2017 was 120.4 per 100,000 adult residents, roughly one third of the rate just six years prior.

The 32-year trend reveals a fluid, declining arrest rate for juveniles in Alaska that closely parallels the adult arrest rates' trend. In 1986 the juvenile arrest rate was 127.2 per 100,000 juvenile residents, higher than that of the 1986 adult arrest rate. The juvenile arrest rate

declined until 1991, increased until the late-1990s, and shifted to a declining rate by 2002. The juvenile drug possession rate slightly increased in 2010, and returned to a decreasing trend through 2017. The highest arrest rate recorded was in 1998 at 240.2 per 100,000 juvenile residents. The lowest recorded arrest rate was in 1991 at 49.5 per 100,000 juvenile residents. The arrest rate in 2017 was 86.9 per 100,000 juvenile 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, the drug possession arrest rate plateaued between 1998 and 2010, consistently declined from 2010 to 2016, and slightly increased in 2017. The lowest recorded overall drug possession arrest rate was in 1990.

Rates increased from 1986 through 1998, then declined for all populations from 2010 to 2016.

The adult and male populations drive the overall trend in arrest rates, accounting for roughly four out of every five arrestees during this 32-year period.

The trend shows less discrepancy in arrest rates between males and females, as well as between adults and juveniles after 2010.

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 drug possession arrest rates in Alaska for 2017, we take the total number of recorded drug possession arrest cases reported in Alaska for 2017 (824), divide it by the total estimated state population for 2017 (737,080), and multiply the quotient by 100,000 to reach the drug possession arrest rate of 111.8 per 100,000 residents $[(824 \div 737,080) * 100,000 = 111.8]$. Similarly, to determine the 2017 drug possession arrest rates in Alaska for a specific population, such as adults or females, we take the total number of recorded drug possession arrest cases reported in Alaska for this specific group in 2017, divide it by the estimated 2017 state population for this specific group, and multiply the quotient by 100,000. 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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