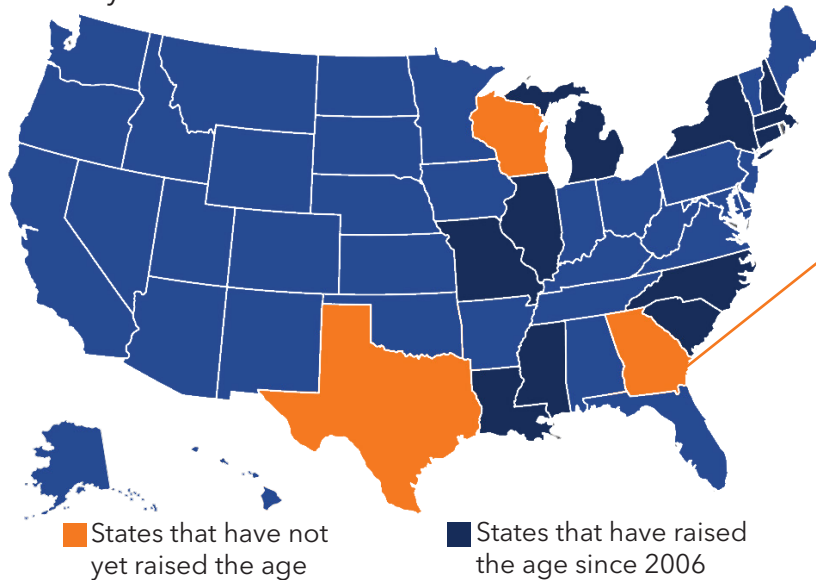




Raising the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

Georgia is **one of only three states** (along with Texas and Wisconsin) that processes all 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system, sending them to adult court rather than through the juvenile justice system.¹



In 2021, in Georgia:

3,018 17-year-olds were arrested.²

Only **6%** of these arrests were for violent crimes.³

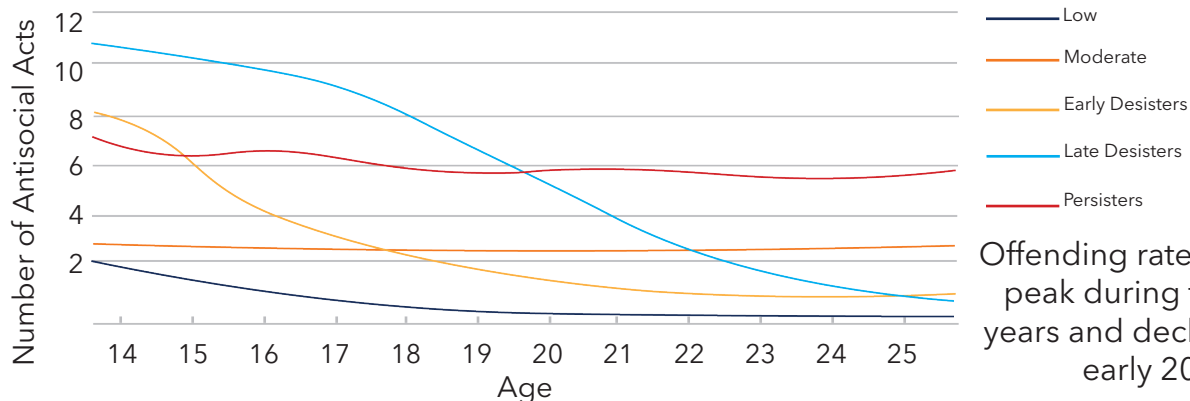
145 counties had **fewer than 50 arrests** of 17-year-olds.⁴

If Georgia raises the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 18, youth as young as 13 charged with certain violent felonies may still be tried as adults. Such crimes include murder, rape, armed robbery committed with a firearm, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy, aggravated sexual battery, and voluntary manslaughter.

WHY RAISE THE AGE OF JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION?

A growing body of research shows 17-year-olds are still in the **adolescent phase** of brain development, a fundamentally different stage than that of an adult. Executive function skills, which allow for self-control, regulating emotions, and understanding different points of view,⁵ are not yet fully developed. When compared to adults, 17-year-olds are:⁶

- less capable of impulse control
- less able to regulate their emotions
- less able to consider the consequences of their actions
- more easily influenced by their environment
- more likely to change course if given the right support



Offending rates typically peak during teenage years and decline in the early 20s.⁷

The U.S. Supreme Court* finds adolescents are **more capable of change** than adults and should be given the **opportunity to rehabilitate**.⁸

*Graham v. Florida (2010)

JUVENILE VS. ADULT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Juvenile courts and juvenile court-ordered plans take a more holistic approach to rehabilitation when compared to the adult criminal justice system. By using a youth's naturally high capacity for change and growth, we can **redirect behavior** into more healthy and socially positive outcomes. In short, responding to a 17-year-old's misbehavior in **developmentally appropriate ways** can reduce the likelihood that the child will commit offenses as an adult.⁹

The juvenile justice system makes use of:

- Mental health treatment/substance abuse counselors
- Evidence-based programs that aid in social skills development, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving skills, and crisis management
- Career development and job readiness training
- Education opportunities
- Diversion programs
- Accountability courts

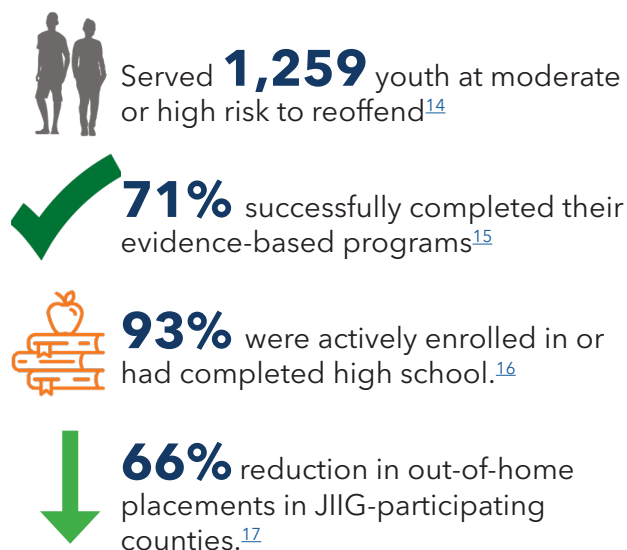
Juvenile courts prepare youth for adulthood while recognizing they are still children.

REDUCING DETENTION RATES WHILE IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY

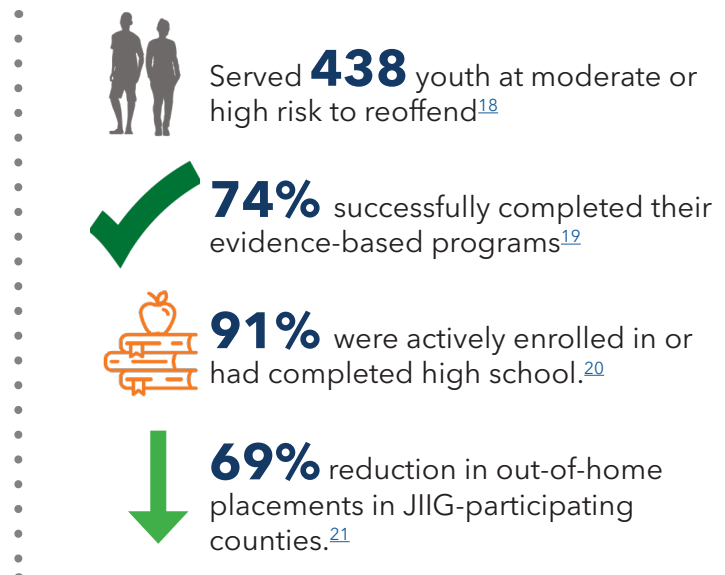
Evidence-based alternatives to detention have been proven to reduce the likelihood of criminal activity.¹⁰ By employing these strategies, Georgia has seen a **42% reduction** in juvenile incarceration since 2013.¹¹

Georgia's Juvenile Justice Incentive Grants (JJIG) and Community Service Grants fund the delivery of evidence-based programs proven effective for juveniles: Functional Family Therapy, Thinking for a Change, Aggression Replacement Training, Multisystemic Therapy, Botvin LifeSkills Training, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, and Connections Wraparound.¹² Together these grants make these therapies available to juvenile court jurisdictions encompassing 99% of Georgia's at-risk youth population.¹³

JJIG IN 2021



CSGs IN 2021



OUTCOMES FROM RAISING THE AGE

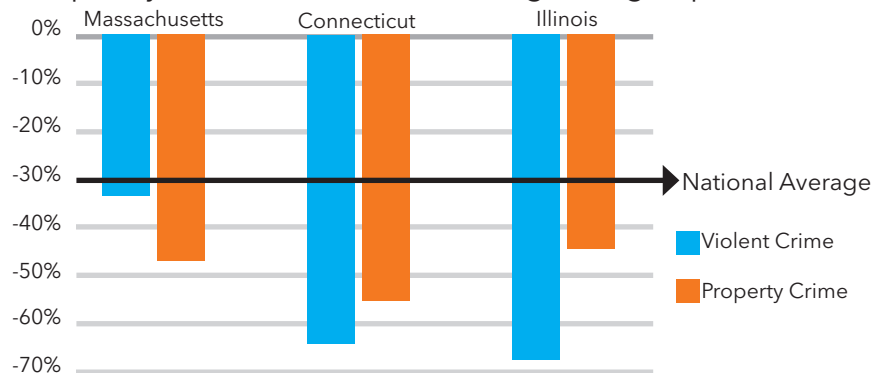
States that have recently raised the age as part of their juvenile justice reform efforts have experienced **no** or **minimal cost increases** while lowering arrest and detention rates.

NORTH CAROLINA: OUTCOMES FROM YEAR TWO

- As of **December 2019**, 16 and 17-year-olds in North Carolina go into the juvenile court system.^{22 23}
- The number of criminal complaints received dropped by **5.4%** from 2020 to 2021.²⁴
- 91%** of offenses committed by 16 and 17-year-olds were non-violent; more than half were minor offenses.²⁵

RAISING THE AGE: EFFECT ON JUVENILE ARRESTS

Connecticut, Illinois, and Massachusetts have seen significant drops in juvenile arrests after raising the age up to 18.²⁶



FAST FACTS

- Nationally, youth are **36 times** more likely to commit suicide in an adult facility than a juvenile facility.²⁷
- In 2020, the average daily caseload of youth in Georgia receiving mental health services was **656**.²⁸
- From 2014-2018, more than **8,000 youth** have received individual or group therapy through evidence-based models delivered by the Georgia juvenile justice system.²⁹
- Data show lower level offenders, when confined with higher level offenders, emerge from incarceration **more inclined** to conduct criminal activity.³⁰

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is the 181st school district in the state.

Georgia Preparatory Academy is the middle and high school within the DJJ school system with 29 campuses across the state in detention and transitional centers. An online version of the Georgia Preparatory Academy is available for youth under DJJ supervision who are unable to return to public high school. Additionally, **Pathway to Success** is an adult education program that offers GED instruction and testing. The **Connections Graduate Program** focuses on re-entry, work skills development, and post secondary options.³¹

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