

THE IMPACT OF “RAISE THE AGE” LAWS

“Raise the Age” has proven to be good fiscal and public safety policy. Concerns about large numbers of older juveniles and their associated costs straining juvenile justice systems have not come to pass, and juvenile crime has continued to decline. Seven states ¹have implemented “Raise the Age” in recent years; four have been able to collect impact data:

CONNECTICUT raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 15 to 17 in 2007, to be implemented in 2010; implementation for 17-year-olds was delayed until 2012.

- The 2007 law’s [fiscal note](#) predicted accelerating extra costs for implementing “Raise the Age”: \$36 million in 2010, \$78.5 million in 2011, and \$100 million in 2012.
- In fact Connecticut’s spending on juvenile justice was [lower](#) in 2011-2012 than it had been 10 years earlier.
- Connecticut’s “Raise the Age” law had no noticeable negative effect on crime; from 2010-2013 successful completions of probation without re-arrest [improved significantly](#). And from 2008-2014, arrests of 15-19 year olds [dropped by over 50%](#), by far the largest drop of any age group in the state.

Statewide arrests in Connecticut by age cohort, 2008-2014:

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65+ |
| -54% | -29% | -11% | 5% | -28% | -35% | -24% | 10% | 32% | 34% | 30% |

ILLINOIS raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 17 for misdemeanants in 2010, and for all 17-year-olds in 2014, as [police and prosecutors](#) preferred “a uniform age of majority”.

- The proposal to move 17-year-old misdemeanants to juvenile jurisdiction was met with [predictions](#) that it would “crowd court dockets, probation caseloads, and detention centers”.
- But even though 18,000 17-year-old misdemeanor cases went to juvenile court in 2010, “[the total number of youth in the juvenile system actually dropped](#) due to decreases in overall crime and juvenile arrests, as well as increased use of diversion options.”
- The number of juveniles in post-trial prisons in Illinois has continued to drop each year since 2010.²

Post-trial juveniles in Illinois Juvenile Prison:

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| 1,195 | 1,162 | 1,144 | 990 | 873 | 782 |

¹ States who have raised the age since 2006—Mississippi, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Illinois, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Louisiana

² Juvenile Justice Initiative, “Impact of Raising the Age of Juvenile Court in Illinois”, August 26, 2015.

THE IMPACT OF “RAISE THE AGE” LAWS

MASSACHUSETTS raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17 in September 2013.

- In 2013, prior to the passage of “Raise the Age”, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) estimated that there would be 3,338 arraignments of 17-year-olds that year, resulting, if the new law were passed, in 1,302 extra detentions and 335 extra commitments for DHS.³
- In 2014, DHS reported that during that year there were just 691 detentions and 165 commitments of 17-year-olds, only about half of what was predicted.⁴

MISSISSIPPI raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17 in April 2010.

- Overall, raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 17 year-olds has not caused spikes in either juvenile facility population or violence observed within these facilities⁵.
- Between [2008](#) and [2012](#), the juvenile population decreased by 21%.
- Before and after the Raise the Age reform, the portion of 17 year-olds or older in juvenile facilities remained around 20%.

Age at Disposition in the juvenile justice system – demographics:

| Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| % of 17 year-olds and older | 19 | 18 | 21 | 21 | 24 |
| Total number of juveniles | 18,535 | 17,539 | 16,584 | 14,568 | 14,690 |

➔
-21%

NATIONAL STUDIES have also shown that “Raise the Age” is good fiscal and public safety policy

- A 2007 study by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) concluded that transfers of youth to the adult criminal justice system “do more harm than good” and found a “**34% relative increase in subsequent violent or general crime for transferred juveniles compared with retained juveniles.**”
- Citing the long-term benefits of reducing recidivism by keeping kids out of the adult system, a 2012 [Texas study](#) found that “**raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction would have a net benefit of \$88.9 million for every cohort of seventeen-year-olds moved into the juvenile system in Texas**”
- A similar 2011 study of a [North Carolina](#) proposal to include 16 and 17-year-old “misdemeanants and low-level felons” under juvenile jurisdiction found that it would bring “**\$52.3 million in net benefits**” annually.

³ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Administrative Office of the Juvenile Court, Memorandum accompanying “Impact of Raising the Age of Adult Criminal Responsibility in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 17 to 18”, March 25, 2013, pp. 22-25.

⁴ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Youth Services, “Raise the Age Legislative Report”, Dec. 12, 2014.

⁵ Institute for Public Health and Justice, “[A Legislated Study of Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction in Louisiana: The future of 17-year-olds in the Louisiana Justice System](#)”, Feb. 1, 2016.