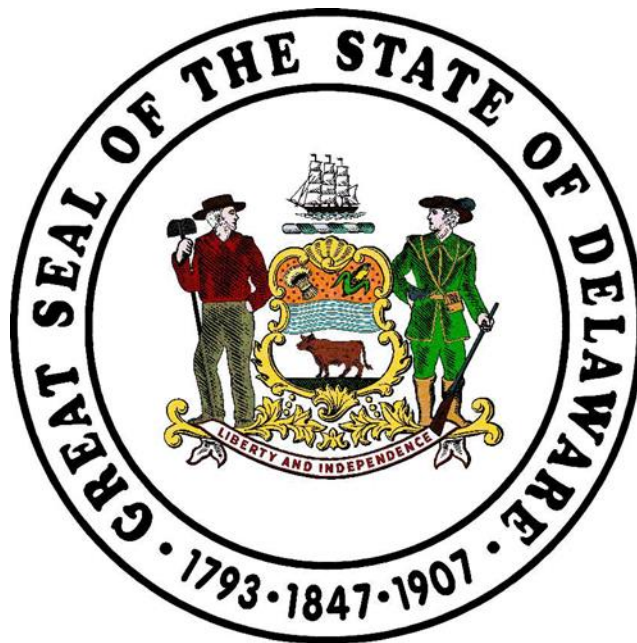


Crime in Delaware 2016 – 2020 Executive Brief



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Prepared by the
Statistical Analysis Center
Delaware Criminal Justice Council
In Conjunction with the
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Crime in Delaware: 2016 – 2020

Executive Brief

An Analysis of Serious Crime in Delaware

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The points of view expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the official position of the United States Department of Justice.

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Please visit our website at <http://sac.delaware.gov/>

Crime in Delaware 2016 – 2020

Executive Brief

This executive brief provides an overview of the findings presented in the full report, *Crime in Delaware 2016 – 2020*. *Crime in Delaware* is the official report of serious crime known to Delaware law enforcement agencies. This report covers data about serious crimes reported to state, county, and local police agencies for the years 2016 through 2020. Serious crimes for the purpose of this report are those the Federal Bureau of Investigation identifies as “Group A Offenses” in the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The “Group A Offenses” are those more serious/significant crimes such as Murder, Rape, Robbery, Theft, etc. Other “Group B” offenses, which are not covered in this report, tend to be more minor in nature, such as Curfew/Vagrancy violations, Disorderly Conduct, and “Other” minor offenses.

Crime in Delaware provides information for 24 Violent, Serious Property, Drug/Narcotic and Other Property and Social offenses reported in Delaware’s implementation of NIBRS operated by the State Bureau of Identification of the Delaware State Police. Additional years of data are included in specific graphs to illustrate long term trends.

The full *Crime in Delaware 2016 – 2020* report contains extensive data and is available on the Statistical Analysis Center’s website (<http://sac.delaware.gov/>).

Detailed, jurisdiction level offense data can be viewed and downloaded from the Delaware Open Data Portal.

<https://data.delaware.gov/Public-Safety/State-of-Delaware-NIBRS-Crime-Report-Totals-by-Jur/8njr-fz7r>

Note: Caution should be used when comparing criminal offense trends involving 2020 totals. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent State of Emergency declarations, court closings, and travel restrictions within the State of Delaware, it is not possible to discern if, or how much, those events impacted year-to-year changes in offense totals.

Key Findings/Trends

The full *Crime in Delaware 2016 – 2020* report contains extensive data and statistics on serious offenses, clearances, adult and juvenile arrests, and crimes against law enforcement officers. This report includes a summary of this data at the state and county levels, followed by a more detailed breakdown based on five major topic areas: 1) Violent Offenses, 2) Serious Property Offenses, 3) Drug/Narcotic Offenses, 4) Other Property and Social Offenses, and 5) Crimes Against Law Enforcement Officers. The data for each topic area is organized by state and county. Below are key findings from this extensive set of Delaware crime data.

Serious Offenses

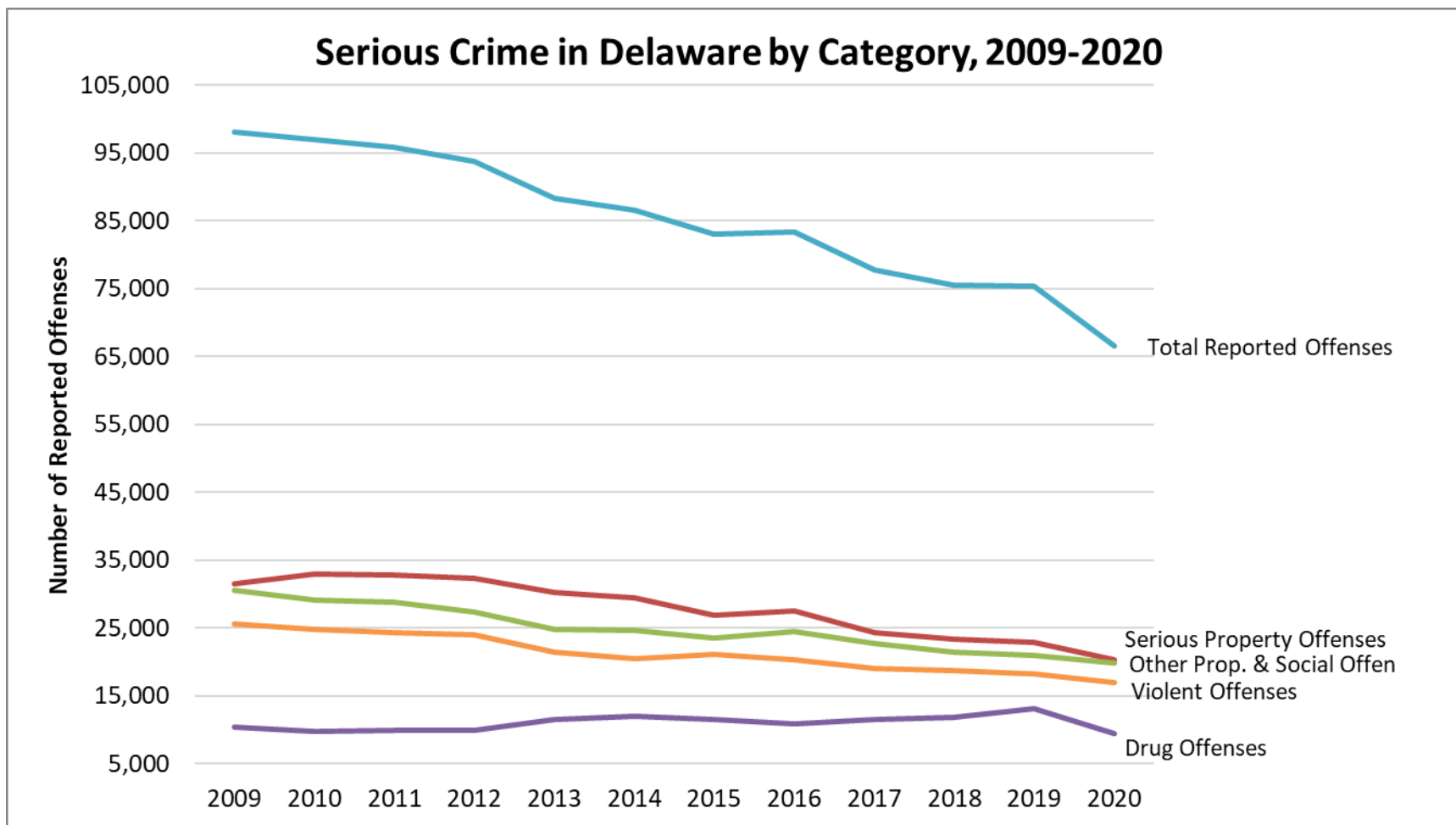
- **Overall, across the state, reported serious crime has decreased notably since 2016.** The number of serious criminal offenses known to police in 2016 was 83,342 compared with 66,567 in 2020, a decrease of over 20% (see Table E-1 and Figure E-1). Data from 2020 shows a continued downward trend in overall offenses since 2009. Offense trends by County are presented at the end of this brief (Figures E4-E6)
 - In New Castle County, the number of total offenses has decreased since 2016 by over 21%. This accounts for 59.2% of the overall Statewide decrease.
 - For Kent County, total offenses in 2020 compared to 2016 decreased over 21%. This accounts for 21.8% of the overall Statewide decrease.
 - In Sussex County, total offenses in 2020 compared to 2016 decreased over 16%. This accounts for 19.0% of the overall Statewide decrease.
- **Statewide violent crime is lower overall.** The number of Violent Offenses reported decreased almost 17% from 2016 to 2020 (see Table E-1 and Figure E-1).
 - In New Castle County, Violent Offenses were almost 20% lower when compared to 2016 while Kent County saw a 21% decline.
 - Sussex County saw a moderate decline of 6% over the same period.
- **There were 84 statewide homicides in 2020 which is a high since this reporting began in 2002 (74 Murder/Non-Negligent Manslaughter, 10 Negligent Manslaughter).**
 - There were 56 homicides in New Castle County in 2020, a high since the beginning of this reporting in 2002.
 - Kent County had 15 homicides in 2020, matching a reporting high.
 - Sussex County experienced 13 homicides in 2020, also a new reporting high.

Note: In 2019 the FBI began including Vehicular Homicides under the Criminally Negligent Manslaughter category. Those offenses were not previously included in the NIBRS Homicide summary totals. This change included 8 Negligent Manslaughter offenses in the 2020 totals (2 in New Castle County, 1 in Kent County, and 5 in Sussex County).

Table E-1: Delaware Statewide Serious Crime Summary, 2016 – 2020

Serious Offenses Reported, 2016 – 2020						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Violent Offenses	20,343	19,115	18,684	18,306	16,936	
Serious Property Offenses	27,565	24,298	23,420	22,872	20,315	
Drug Offenses	10,920	11,545	11,940	13,195	9,476	
Other Property, Social Offenses	24,514	22,776	21,440	20,975	19,840	
Total Offenses Reported	83,342	77,734	75,484	75,348	66,567	
Percent Difference in Serious Offenses Reported						
	16 - 17	17 - 18	18 - 19	19 - 20	16 – 20	Average 16-19 vs 20
Violent Offenses	-6.0%	-2.3%	-2.0%	-7.5%	-16.7%	-11.4%
Serious Property Offenses	-11.9%	-3.6%	-2.3%	-11.2%	-26.3%	-17.2%
Drug Offenses	5.7%	3.4%	10.5%	-28.2%	-13.2%	-20.4%
Other Property, Social Offenses	-7.1%	-5.9%	-2.2%	-5.4%	-19.1%	-11.5%
Total Offenses Reported	-6.7%	-2.9%	-0.2%	-11.7%	-20.1%	-14.6%

Figure E-1: Serious Crime in Delaware by Category, 2009 – 2020



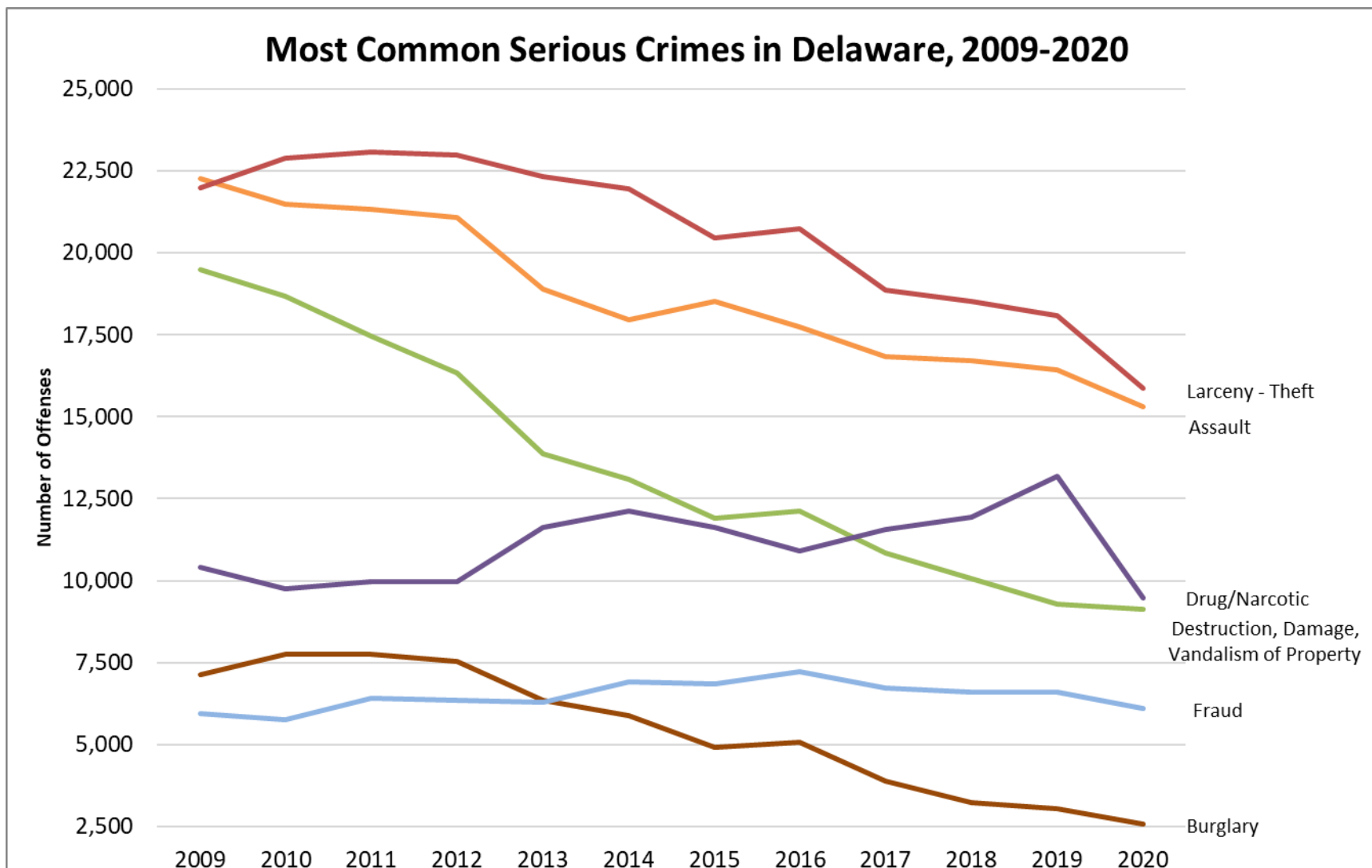
- **The crime rate is lower.** The Statewide Crime Rate decreased from 87.4 offenses per 1,000 persons in 2016 to 67.9 in 2020. This change in the Crime Rate reflects a 20% decrease in the number of offenses and a 3% increase in Delaware’s population.
- **Serious property crime is down.** The number of reported Serious Property Offenses decreased over 26% from 2016 to 2020. This category of offenses has been on an overall decline since 2016. Burglary offenses decreased almost 50% from 2016 to 2020 which continues a long decline since 2011. (See Table E-1 and Figure E-1)
 - In New Castle County, the number of Serious Property Offenses in 2020 was 26% lower compared to 2016. Burglary has decreased 41% from 2016. Larceny decreased almost 26% from a report period high in 2016.
 - Kent County saw an almost 23% decrease from 2016 to 2020. Burglary has decreased 45% since 2016 which mirrors the overall state trend. Larceny offenses decreased 21% over the same period.
 - Sussex County saw over a 31% decrease from 2016 to 2020. Burglary has dropped 67% since 2016, which is the largest percentage decrease of the three counties. Larceny has decreased 19%.
- **Overall Drug/Narcotic Offenses decreased 13% from 2016.** Drug/Narcotic Possession Offenses have decreased almost 6% over this period, while Drug Equipment Offenses decreased 28%. (See Table E-1 and Figure E-1)
 - In New Castle County, from 2016 to 2020 Possession Offenses decreased almost 12% and Drug Equipment offenses decreased 42%.
 - In Kent, there was a 9% decrease in Possession Offenses from 2016 to 2020. Drug Equipment Offenses were down 32%.
 - Sussex County Possession Offenses are up 9% from 2016. Drug Equipment Offenses are down 11%. This is a sudden change after a sharp increase in overall Drug Offenses in 2019.

Note: In December 2015, Delaware passed legislation that decriminalized certain Marijuana Possession Offenses. Depending on various circumstances, these offenses are civil offenses. Due to the Federal Government still recording these offenses as criminal, they are part of the Drug Offense totals in this report.

- ***Fewer Other Property and Social Offenses were reported from 2016 to 2020.*** From 2016 to 2020, there was a 19% decrease in these offenses (see Table E-1 and Figure E-1). Weapon Law Violations saw a 20% decrease. Stolen Property Offenses were 45% lower.
 - Between 2016 and 2020, New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties experienced decreases in Other Property and Social Offenses of 18%, 21%, and almost 21% respectively.
 - Property Destruction/Vandalism Offenses have decreased over 20% across all three counties.

- ***The trends for firearm-related offenses from 2016 to 2020 were mixed.*** Weapons Law Violations (2,174 in 2020) were 7% lower compared to 2016 totals but have been climbing since 2018. Robberies with a Firearm (322 offenses in 2020) decreased 58% from 2016. This significant decline flattened from 2019 to 2020. Assaults with a Firearm (1,537 in 2020) have increased 31% since 2016 and have steadily climbed since 2018.
 - In New Castle County, offenses of Robbery with a Firearm are down 57% since 2016 but did show a small increase (3%) from 2019 to 2020. Assault with a Firearm Offenses have increased 30% since 2016 and continue to climb since 2018.
 - In Kent County, Robbery with a Firearm has shown a 65% decrease from 2016, part of a steady decline. Assault with a Firearm Offenses have increased almost 47% from 2016 totals, continuing a climb since 2017.
 - In Sussex County, offenses of Robbery with a Firearm are down 56% compared with 2016 totals. Assault with a Firearm Offenses have increased 11% since 2016.

Figure E-2: Most Common Serious Crimes in Delaware, 2009 – 2020



Clearances

For crime reporting and analysis purposes, an offense is considered cleared when a suspect is either arrested and subsequently referred for prosecution or cannot be arrested but is otherwise clearly identifiable.

- **Based on 2020 data, offenses in all crime categories were cleared at rates comparable to prior reporting periods** (see Figure E-3). Overall, all crime categories had clearance rates at or near those of previous years, while just over half of the offenses (52.0%) in 2020 were cleared by the end of the calendar year. Drug and Violent Offenses continue to be cleared at high rates (95.8% and 75.4% respectively). Serious Property Offenses and Other Property and Social Offenses were cleared at rates of 27.7% and 36.0% respectively.
 - In New Castle County, 43.0% of all 2020 offenses were cleared, with the highest rates for Drug/Narcotic Offenses (92.6%) and Violent Offenses (68.9%).
 - In Kent County, 59.8% of 2020 offenses were cleared, with Drug/Narcotic Offenses (98.0%) and Violent Offenses (78.7%) being cleared at the highest rates.
 - In Sussex County, 66.0% of all 2020 offenses were cleared, with Drug/Narcotic Offenses (98.1%) and Violent Offenses (85.7%) having the highest rates.

Arrests

- The number of arrests in 2020 decreased 28% compared to 2016 with a 20% decrease in the number of reported offenses over the same period. Declines occurred across all main offense categories (see Table E-2 and Figure E-3). The most notable decreases were for Serious Property Offenses (41% since 2016) and Other Property and Social Offenses (35%). Juvenile arrests were lower across all crime categories during this period (a 50% decrease overall)¹. Total adult arrests were 25% lower with all categories showing decreases. Arrest trends by county are located at the end of this report (Figures E4-E6).
 - In New Castle County, total arrests were 30% lower compared to 2016. Overall, juvenile arrests were 45% lower in 2020, with decreases in arrests for all categories. Juvenile Drug arrests were almost 72% lower. Total adult arrests were 28% lower with all categories decreasing. It should be noted that adult Serious Property Arrests were 52% lower from 2016 to 2020.
 - In Kent County, the number of total arrests was almost 31% lower, with decreases among all four categories. Overall, juvenile arrests were 66% lower than in 2016, with a decrease in all categories between 57% to 82%. Adult arrests were 26% lower, with decreases in all categories.

¹ After exploratory research, the Statistical Analysis Center found that the statewide Juvenile Civil Citation program, along with other procedural changes, appears to have contributed to the decrease in juvenile arrests. This appears most notably in Drug and Larceny arrests.

- In Sussex County, arrests were 21% lower than in 2016 with decreases in all categories. Overall, juvenile arrests were 44% lower than in 2016 overall, with decreases in all categories. The number of total adult arrests was down 19%. While overall Drug Arrests for New Castle and Kent County were down over 20%, Sussex County Drug Arrests were relatively flat from 2016 to 2020(-2%). Drug Offenses were also relatively flat with 2016, increased 1%, while both other counties saw decreases around 19%.

Table E-2: Statewide Arrests for Serious Offenses, 2016 – 2020

Statewide Arrests for Serious Offenses					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Arrests	26,039	23,739	21,695	22,456	18,715
Violent Offenses	9,313	8,591	8,493	8,699	7,616
Serious Property Offenses	7,218	6,201	5,338	5,508	4,235
Drug Offenses	5,300	4,928	4,513	4,807	4,141
Other Property and Social Offenses	4,208	4,019	3,351	3,442	2,723
Total Adult Arrests					
Total Adult Arrests	23,031	21,103	19,416	20,078	17,206
Violent Offenses	7,910	7,356	7,364	7,502	6,911
Serious Property Offenses	6,487	5,530	4,793	4,945	3,840
Drug Offenses	4,937	4,577	4,225	4,541	4,039
Other Property and Social Offenses	3,697	3,640	3,034	3,090	2,416
Total Juvenile Arrests					
Total Juvenile Arrests	3,008	2,636	2,279	2,378	1,509
Violent Offenses	1,403	1,235	1,129	1,197	705
Serious Property Offenses	731	671	545	563	395
Drug Offenses	363	351	288	266	102
Other Property and Social Offenses	511	379	317	352	307

Figure E-3: All Delaware Offenses, Clearances, and Arrests, 2009 – 2020

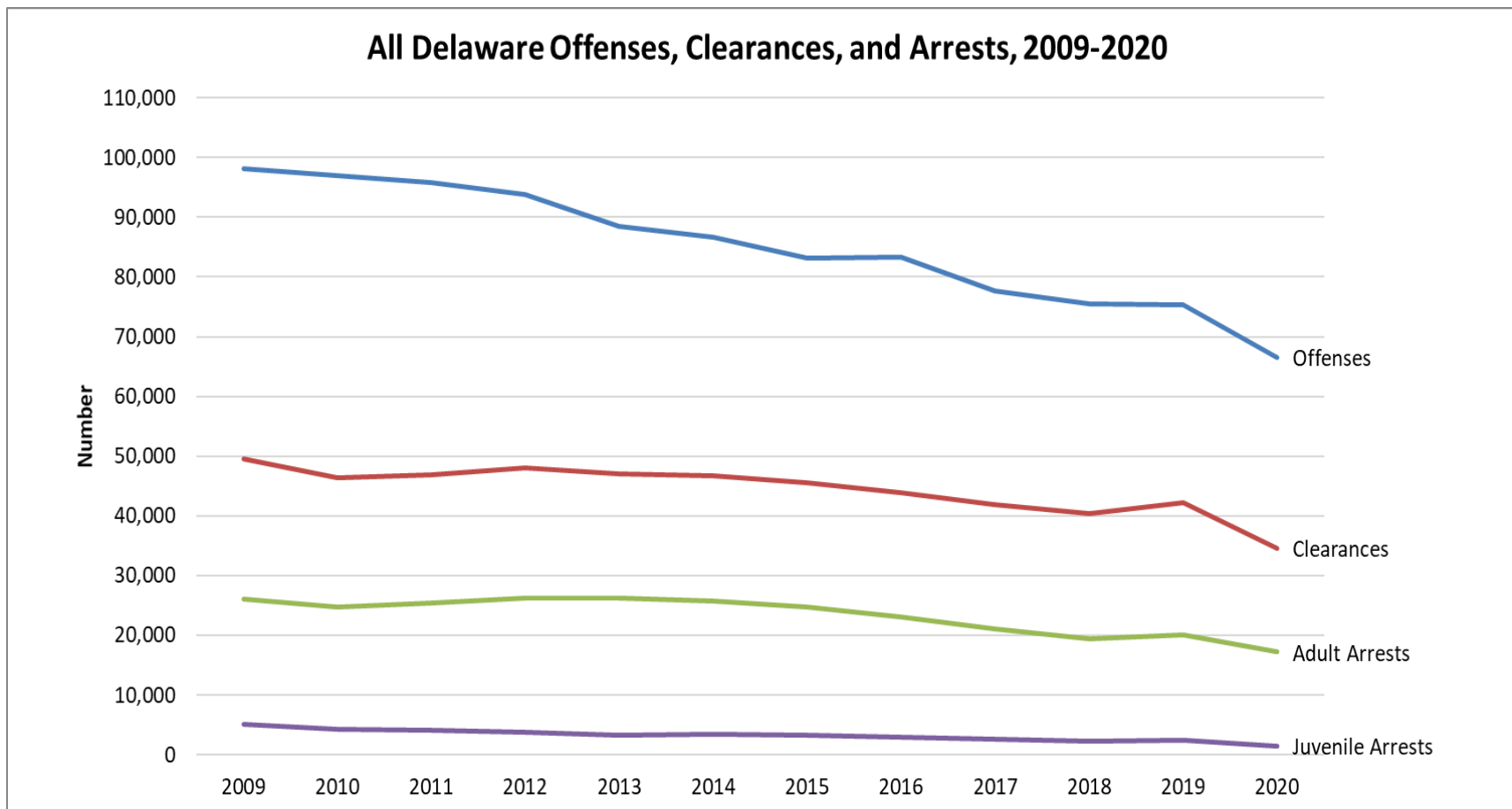


Figure E4: All New Castle County Offenses, Clearances, and Arrests, 2009 -2020

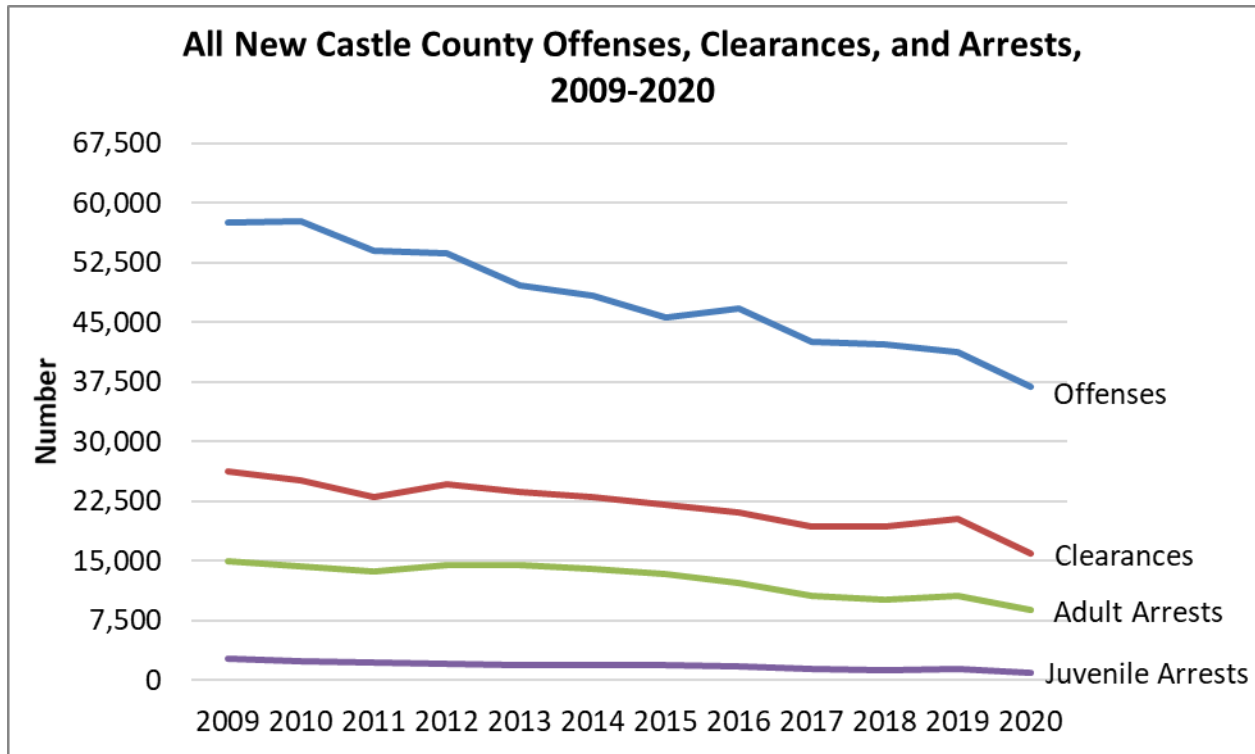


Figure E5: All Kent County Offenses, Clearances, and Arrests, 2009-2020

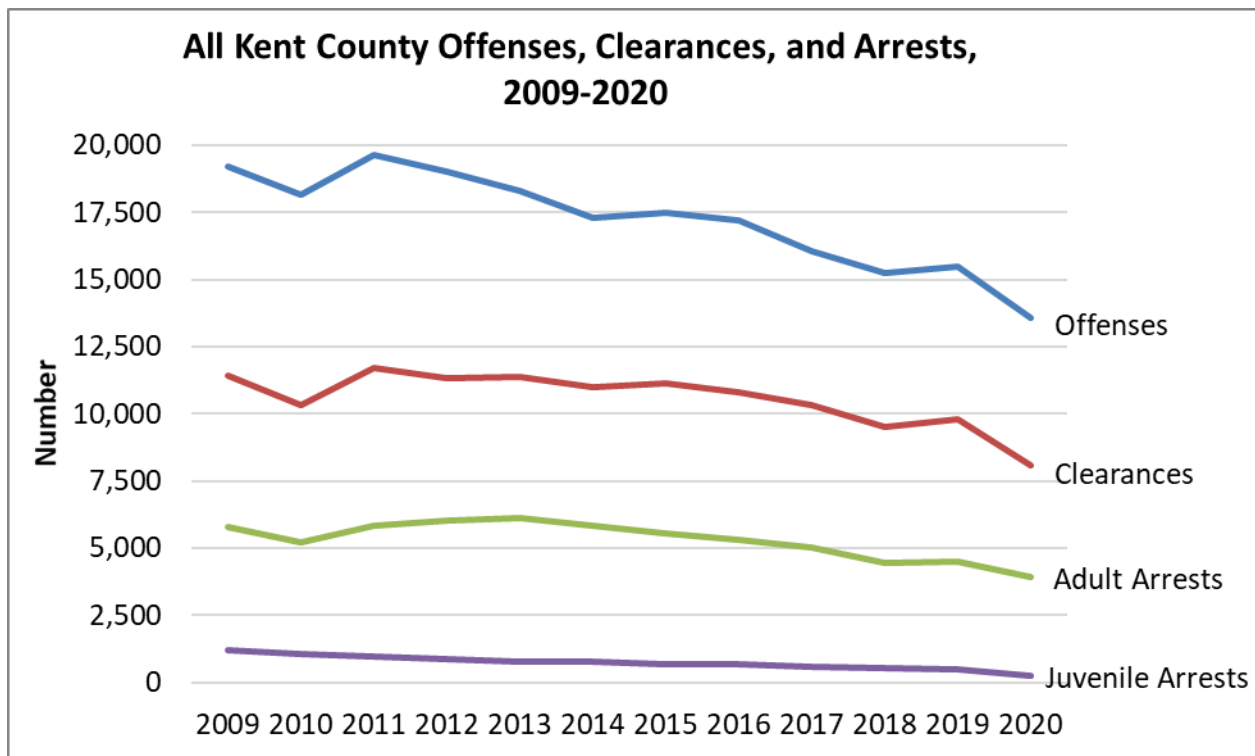
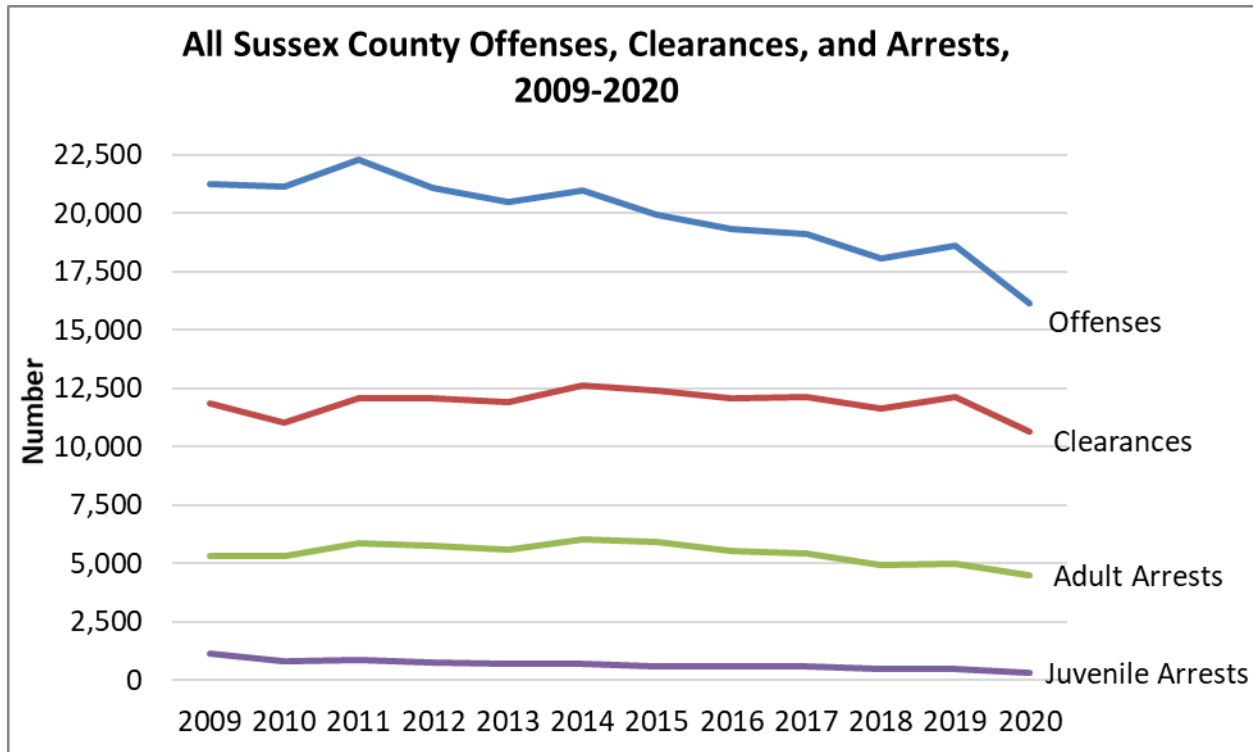


Figure E6: All Sussex County Offenses, Clearances, and Arrests, 2009 – 2020



Violent Crime Against Law Enforcement Officers

- In 2020, 398 assault-related offenses were committed against law enforcement officers, about 4% lower when compared to 2016.** Almost all offenses (96%) were cleared before the end of 2020. Assaults against officers continue to be cleared at rates near or above 95%.

 - In New Castle County, there were 236 Assault Offenses against officers in 2020, up 10% from 2016. About 17% of assaults against officers in 2020 resulted in injury.
 - In Kent County, assaults on officers (53) were 32% lower than 2016 and a report period low. Almost 6% of assaults resulted in injuries in Kent County.
 - Sussex County assaults on officers (109) were down 11% from 2016 while 22% of those assaults led to an injury. Sussex county was the only county that realized an increase in assaults on officers from 2019 to 2020.

Most assault-related offenses occurred while responding to disturbances, attempting an arrest, and handling prisoners. Responding to a disturbance, attempting an arrest, and handling prisoners accounted for just over 64% of assaults against officers in 2020. These activities have accounted for 60-70% of assaults during the 2016 to 2020 period. 69% of all assaults on an officer were from the subject using their hands, fists, or feet. Although firearms were not often used to injure a law enforcement officer (3.8%), they increased slightly from the past two years. The period high of firearm usage in 2017 (6.6%) may be influenced by one incident in 2017 that accounted for many assaults.

No officers were killed in 2020 and just over 17% of assault-related offenses resulted in injuries. Overall, two officers were killed in the line of duty during the 2016 through 2020 period. The percentage of assault-related offenses in 2020 that resulted in injury is comparable to past reporting periods. There were a record 24 attempted homicides of officers in 2017. Eighteen offenses were attributed to the shooting death of an officer and a subsequent stand-off where the subject fired upon multiple responding officers. There were 12 attempted homicides of an officer in 2020. In 2020, 5 attempted homicides were the result of one incident, 3 from another incident, and 2 from yet a third separate incident.

Table E-3: Violent Offenses Committed Against Delaware Law Enforcement Officers, 2016–20

Violent Offenses Against Delaware Law Enforcement Officers 2016 – 2020					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Officers Assaulted	414	407	425	448	398
Officers Killed	0	2	0	0	0
Attempted Homicides on Officers	1	24	0	1	12
Assaults Resulting in Officer Injury	18.8%	17.4%	16.7%	20.5%	17.1%
Assault-related Offenses Cleared	97.1%	93.6%	93.4%	94.4%	95.7%