

AZ JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

*Emerging Young
Adults 18-25 yrs:
Trends, Challenges
and Opportunities
for Arizona's Courts*



EMERGING YOUNG ADULTS 18-25 YRS: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARIZONA'S COURTS

Emerging Young Adults 18-25 yrs 1

Emerging Young Adults 18-25 yrs Handouts 49

Emerging Young Adults 18-25yrs: Challenges, Responses, and Opportunities for Arizona's Courts



Total Adult Probation Population: 87,088

***includes administrative cases**



Standard Probation Supervision: 45,588

Intensive Probation Supervision: 2,678

Interstate Compact Supervised in Arizona: 1,067

Promoting Safe Communities



Successful Completions:

- Standard Probation 79.9% (14,878)
- Intensive Probation 54.4% (1,122)

Community Impact:

- 36,226 Employed Probationers (full/part-time)
- 17,682 Absconders apprehended (about 48 per day)
- 682,338 Community Restitution Hours (\$6,823,380)



Recidivism Rates

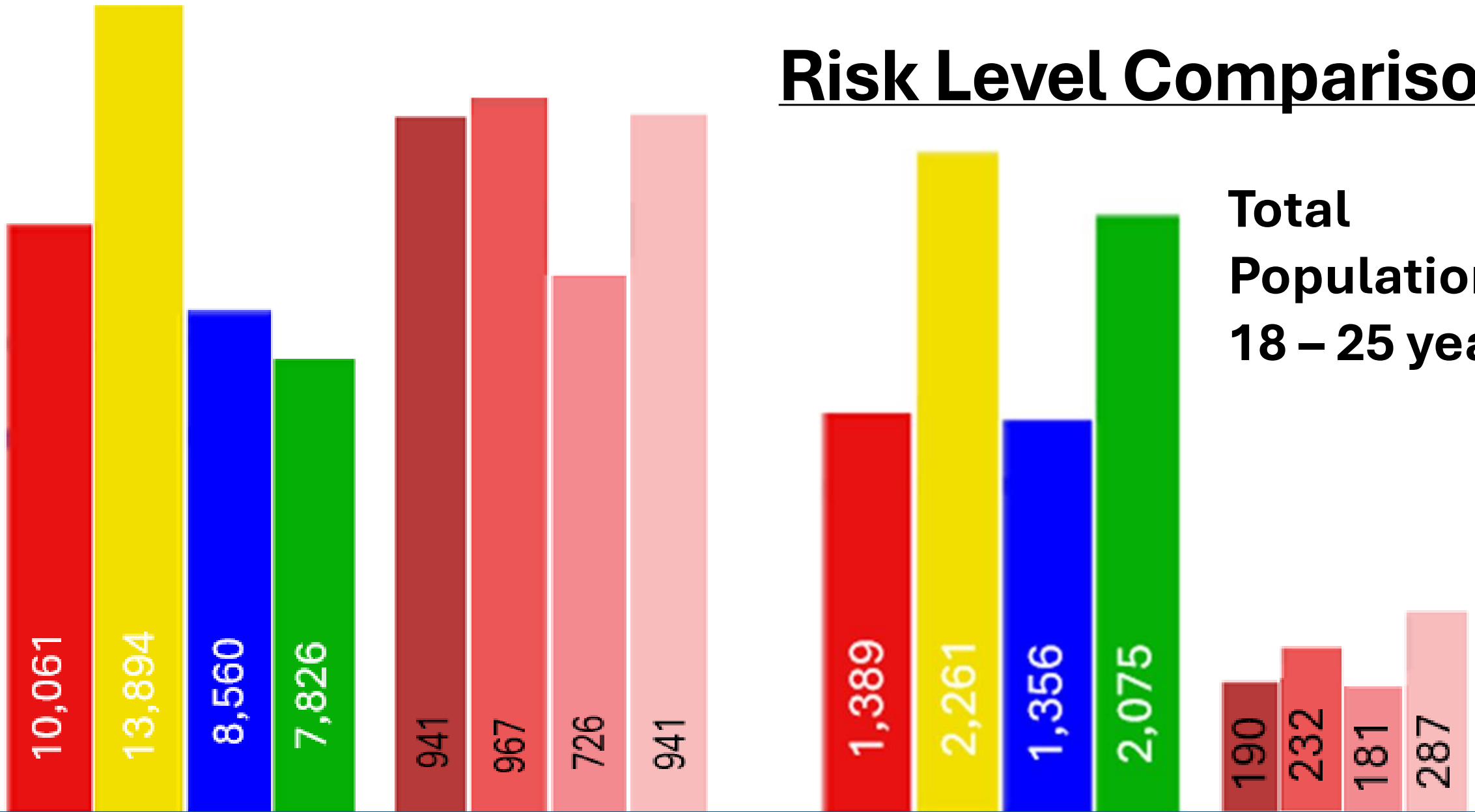
Studies from FY2018 and FY2020 show consistent outcomes:

- **FY2018 Cohort: 88.15%** of probationers did not return with a new conviction within three years.
- **FY2020 Cohort: 87.94%** of probationers did not return with a new conviction within three years.

Overall, nearly 9 out of 10 individuals exiting probation in Arizona reintegrated without a new conviction within three years.

Risk Level Comparison

**Total
Population vs
18 - 25 years**



**Maricopa Total
Population**

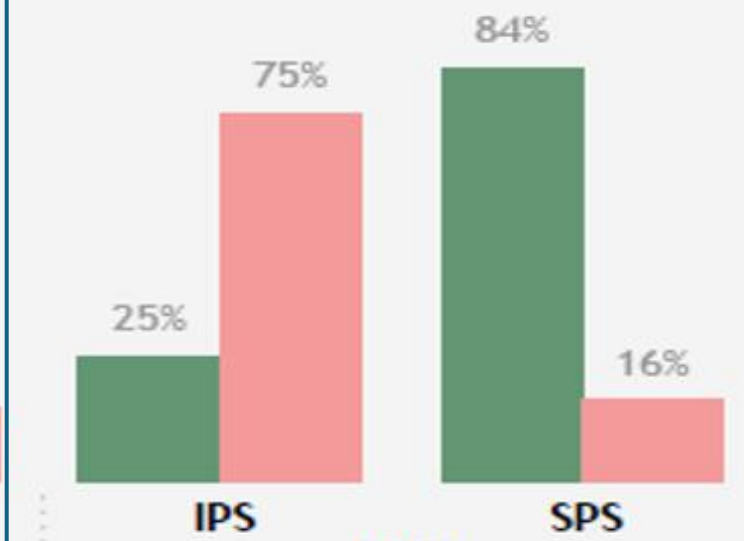
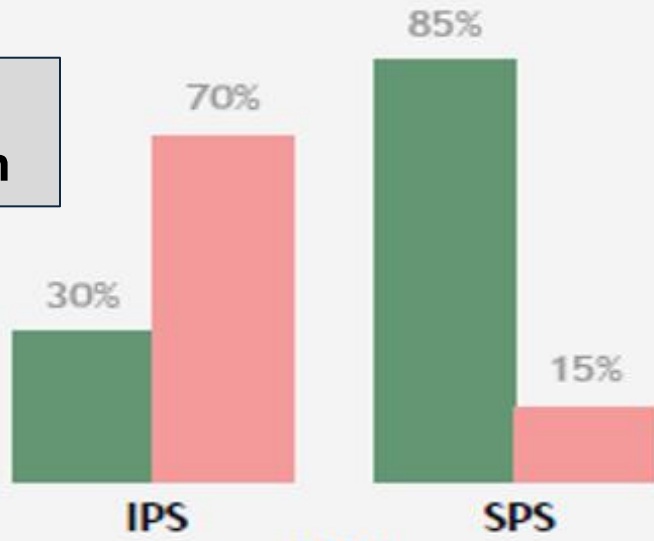
18 - 25

**Pima Total
Population**

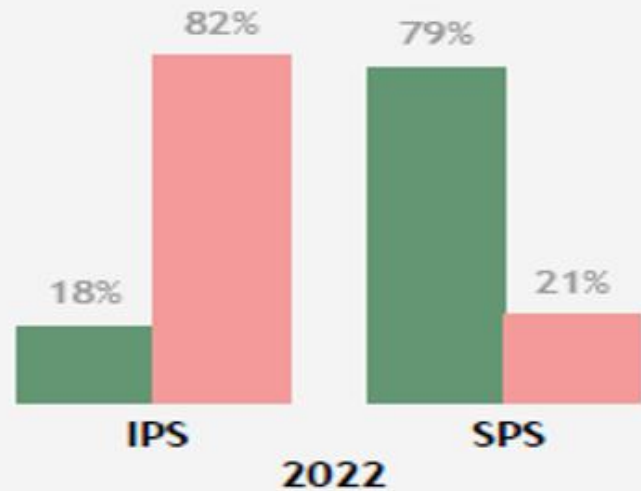
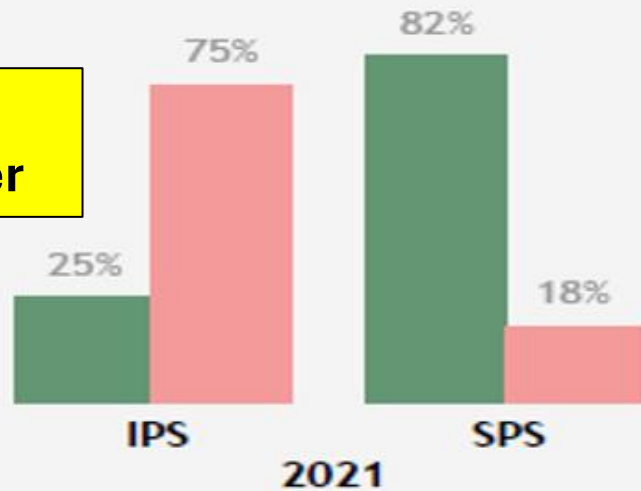
18 - 25

Success and Failure Rates - Intensive vs Standard Supervision FY21-FY23

Direct
Population

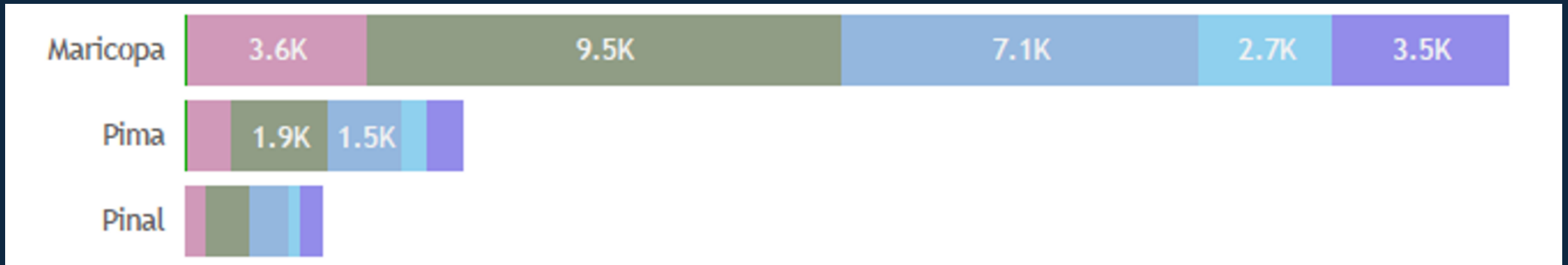


25 Years
and Under



● Success Rates ● Failure Rates

Population by Age Group and County



● < Eighteen ● < Twenty Five ● < Thirty Five ● < Forty Five ● Fifty Six Older ● < Fifty Five

Population Size by County: 25Yrs & Under

County	< Eighteen	< Twenty Five
Maricopa	16	3584
Pima	14	889
Pinal	3	413
Cochise	2	101
Yuma	2	197
Gila	1	26
Yavapai	1	314
Apache	0	49
Coconino	0	114
Graham	0	71
Greenlee	0	10
La Paz	0	8
Mohave	0	141
Navajo	0	90
Santa Cruz	0	26
Total	39	6033



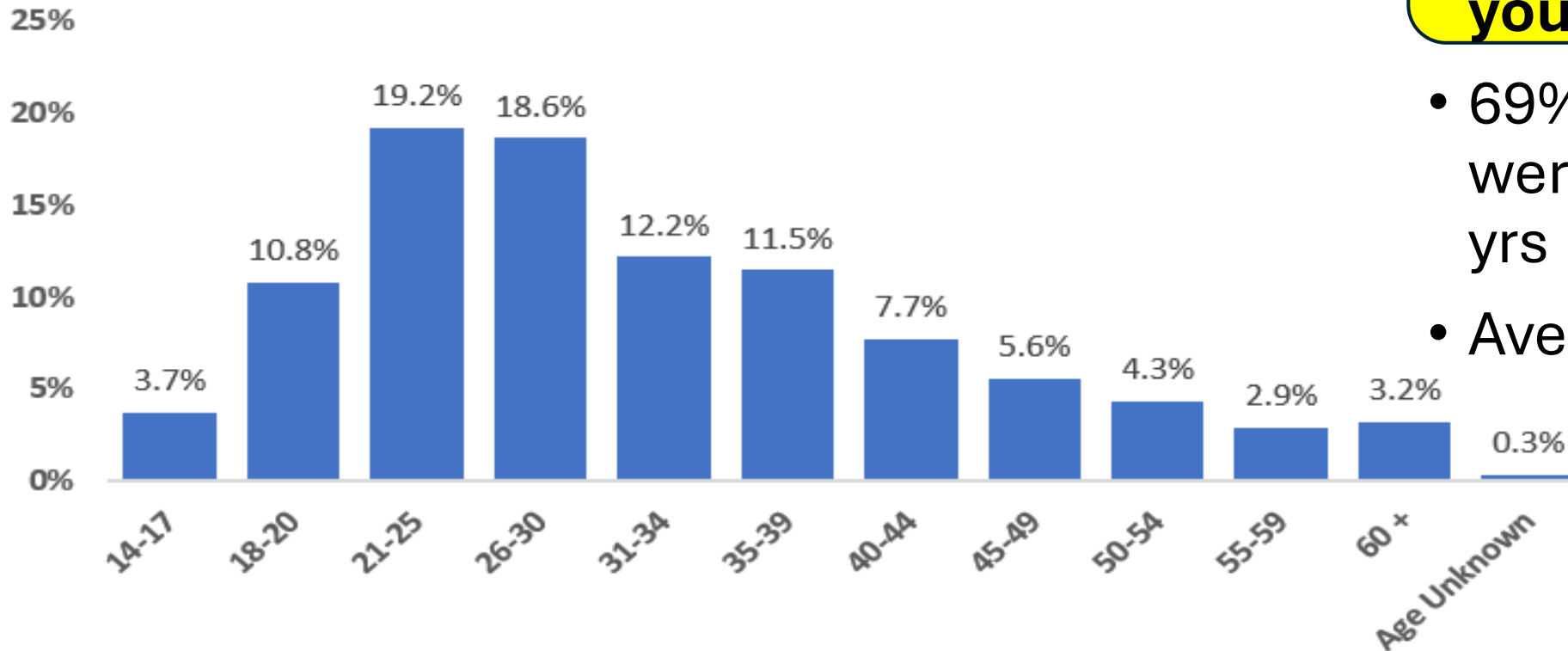
Characteristics of Defendants Charged with Felony Violent Offenses

**Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022*:*

Gender:

- Males (83.4%) | Females (13.7%) | Unknown (2.9%)

Age Distribution of Defendants with Felony Case Filings for Violent Crimes



Age Distribution:

- **52% (slightly over half) were 30 yrs or younger**
- 69% (over two-thirds) were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs
- Average age 32.4 yrs

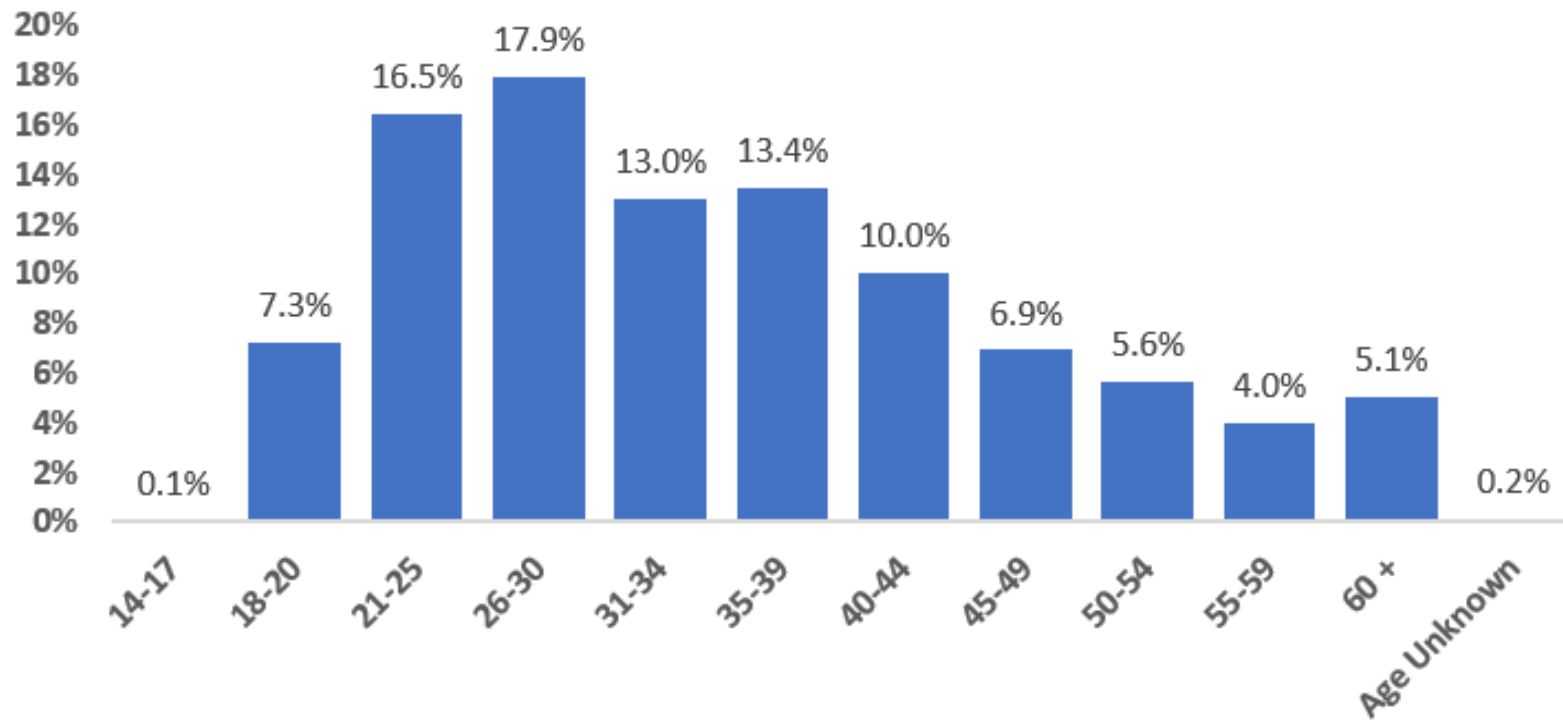
Characteristics of Defendants with Misd. Violent Offenses

LJ Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022

Gender:

- Males (70.4%)

Age Distribution of Misdemeanor Cases for Violent Offenses Filed in Limited Jurisdiction Courts



Age Distribution:

- **57% (slightly over half) were 34 yrs or younger**
- 70.9% were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs
- Average age 35.5 yrs

Characteristics of Defendants with Drug Offenses

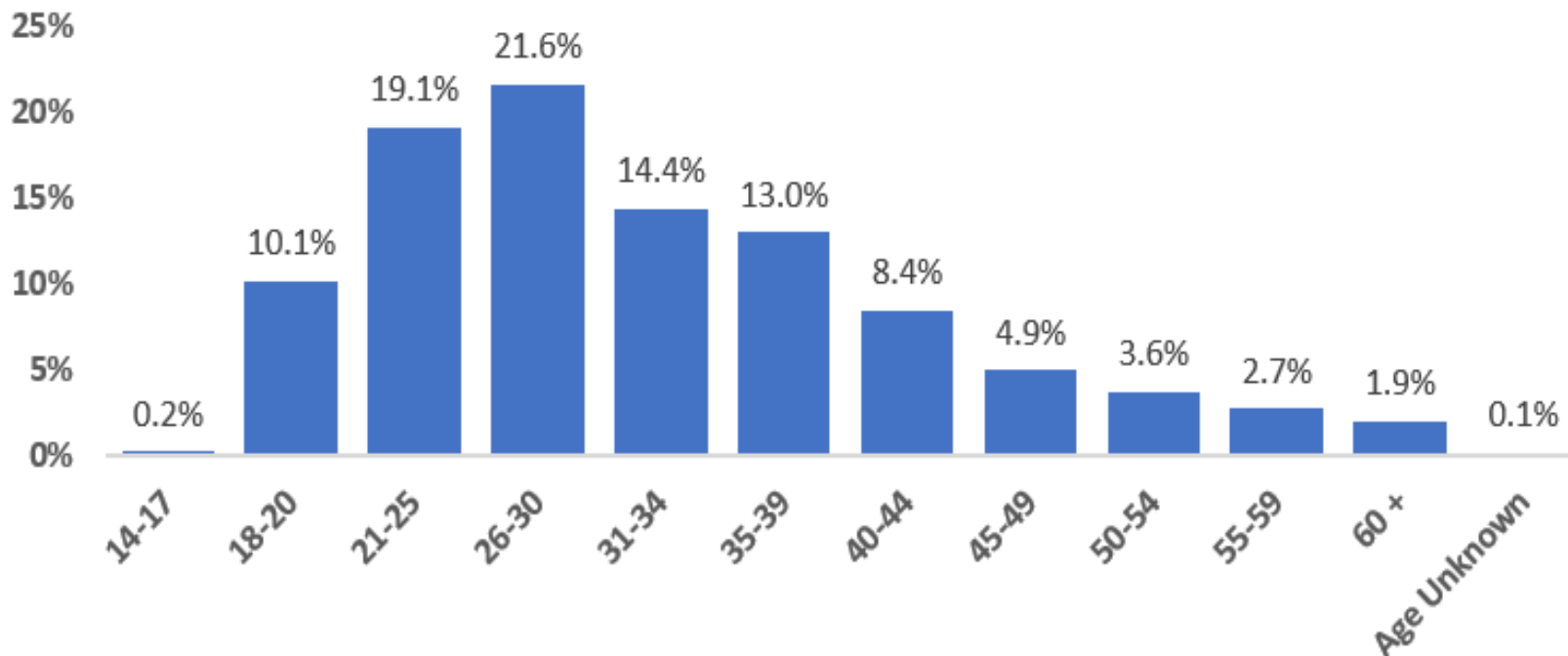
LJ Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022

Gender:

- Males (71.9%)

Figure 7

Age Distribution of Misdemeanor Cases for Drug Offenses Filed in Limited Jurisdiction Courts



Age Distribution:

• **51% (slightly over half) were 30 yrs or younger**

- 76.4% (a little over three-quarters) were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs
- Average age 32.3 yrs

Emerging Adults

Criminal Justice Implications

Higher Risk Levels

More substance use/positive drug tests

Higher rates of drug/substance offenses

Higher rates of violent offenses

Higher rates of Revocation

Higher failure rates

Lower success rates

Social and Health Implications

Less life experience and common knowledge

Minimal or no positive family/supports

Limited education or job skills

Lacking adequate interventions and health care

Need consideration

Need mentors/peers/advocacy

Need life rebuilding and future orientation

How we got here....

2021

NCSC and NCSL, Young Adults in the Justice System. Looked at our data. Had the passion and intention to provide more as a court system.

2022

Pilot treatment court developed. Pima focused on improving supervision and resources, had more conversations, and started TIP.

2025

NCSC juvenile conference with a focus on young adults, more executives and leaders of influence.

2025

Technical assistance from NCSC ECHO training. Created a group of statewide leaders who helped to plan the emerging adult summit.

2026

AOC in coordination with NCSC and statewide stakeholders provided a well attended Emerging Adult Summit.

NCSC - Project ECHO Sessions

- Neuroscience of the Emerging Adult
- Risk Need and Responsivity in TX Courts
- Complementary Services with the Emerging Adult in TX Courts
- Case Planning with the Emerging Adult in TX Courts
- Treatment Services with the Emerging Adult
- Effective Peer Partners in Emerging Adult Courts
- Establishing Effective Relationships with Community Supervision Officers

Emerging Adulthood

Arizona Judicial Conference
June 18, 2026

Adam Fine, PhD

Professor & Director of the Youth Justice Lab
School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Arizona State University



Some material is based upon work supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation Career Award Program under Award No. 2238991. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



**Think About an
Emerging Adult (EA)
You've Worked with
Recently**

What EA *Can* Do

- Understand and explain consequences
- Articulate consequences
- Reason abstractly about risk
- Demonstrate insight in one-on-one conversations

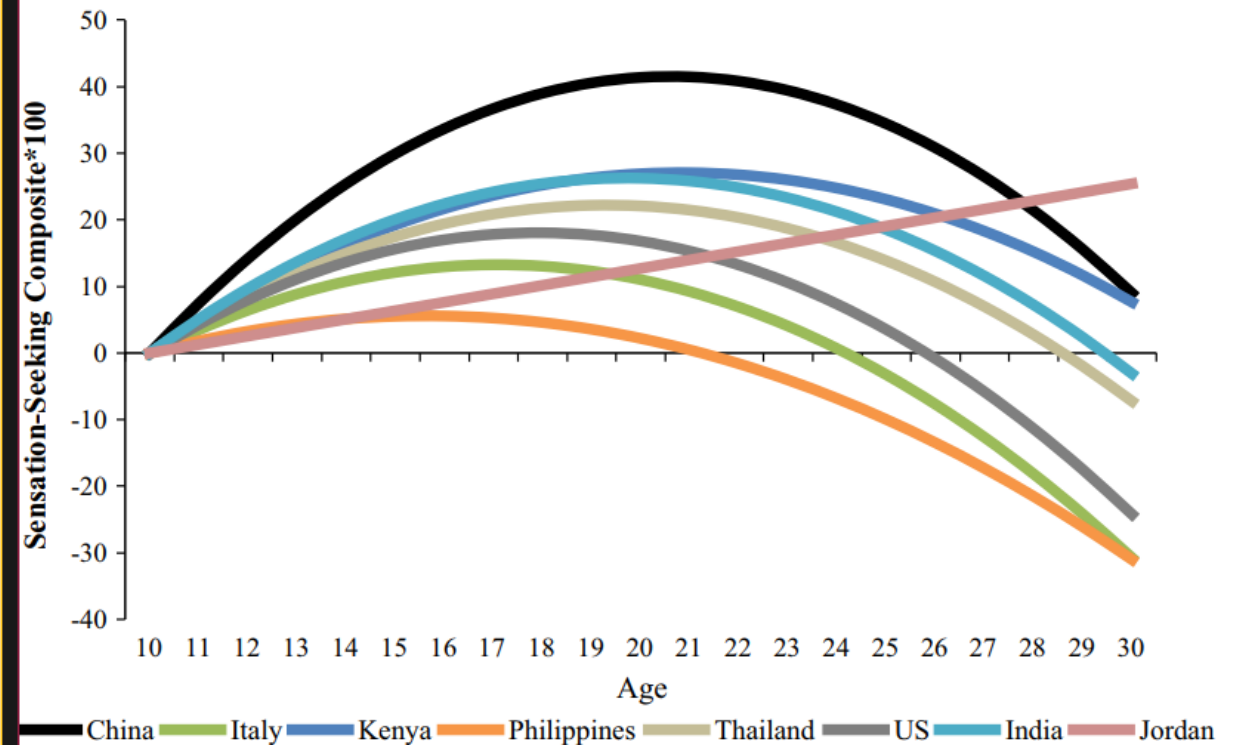
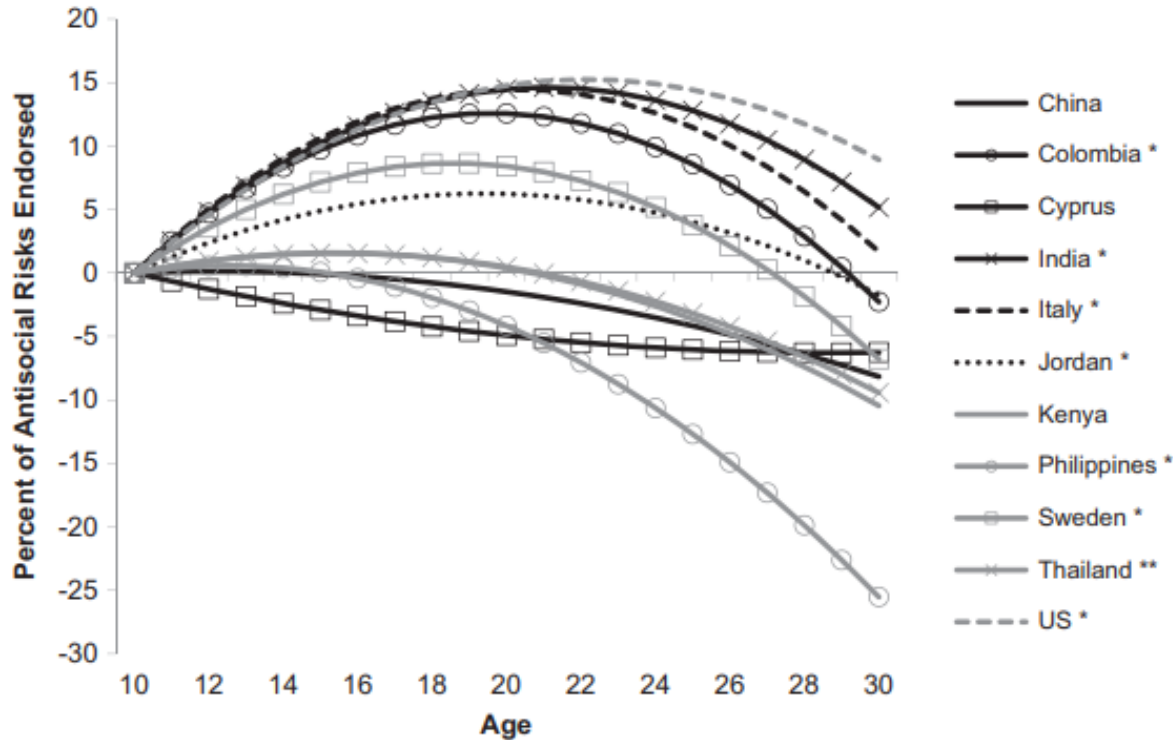


What EA *Struggle* With

- Apply knowledge consistently in real situations
- Override impulses under stress/pressure
- Resist rewards when emotionally charged



Same pattern



Duell, N., Steinberg, L., Icenogle, G., Chein, J., Chaudhary, N., Di Giunta, L., ... & Chang, L. (2018). Age patterns in risk taking across the world. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(5), 1052-1072.

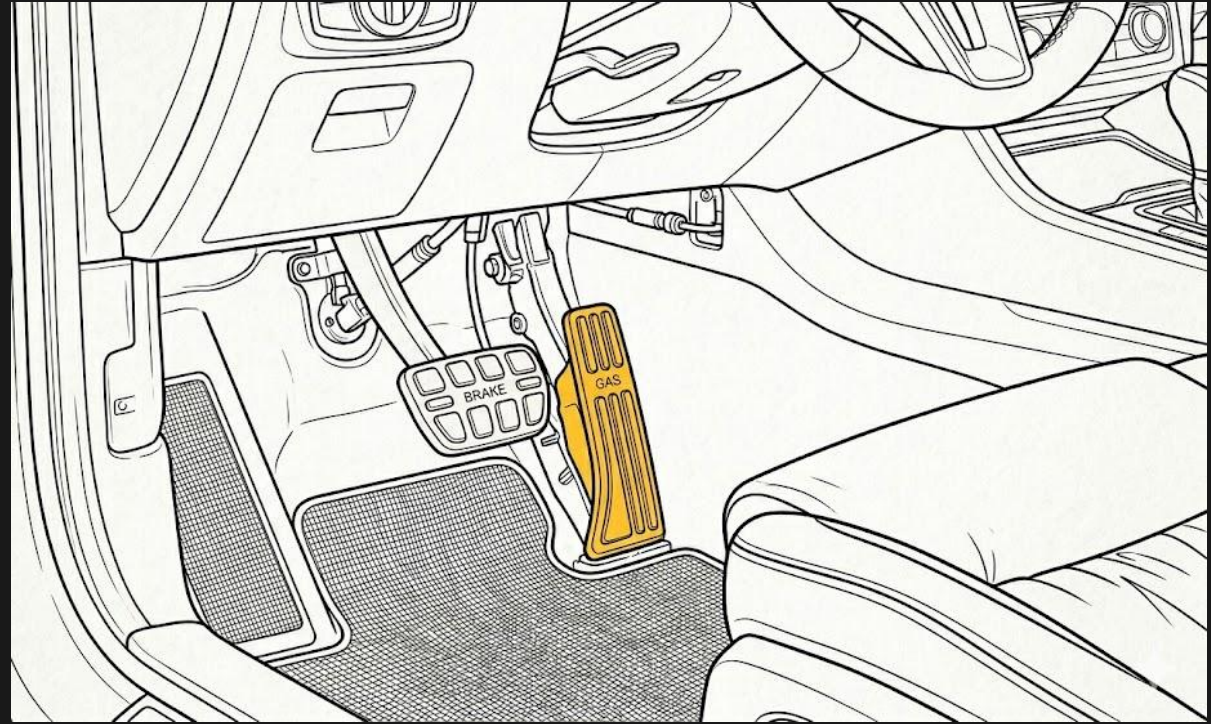
Steinberg, L., Icenogle, G., Shulman, E. P., Breiner, K., Chein, J., Bacchini, D., ... & Takash, H. M. (2018). Around the world, adolescence is a time of heightened sensation seeking and immature self-regulation. *Developmental science*, 21(2), e12532.

Dual Systems

System 1: Gas Pedal

- **What is it:** Socioemotional and Rewards
- **Where is it:** Subcortex and limbic sys.
- **What it does:**
 - Drives motivation, excitement, and novelty-seeking
 - More sensitive to immediate rewards
 - Risky options = more appealing
 - Amplified by peers
- **Developmental pattern:**
 - Develops early
 - Peaks in adolescence and EA

Gas Pedal



Built for Social Connection

Chein et al. (2011): Stoplight Task

- Peers don't change knowledge
- Peers change how rewarding risk-taking feels, and that changes behavior



Not a Defect

Normal, developmentally advantageous design



Built for Exploration

- Move beyond the family unit
- Explore new environments, take social risks, and establish independent identity
- Heightened reward sensitivity makes exploration feel worth it



Built for Learning

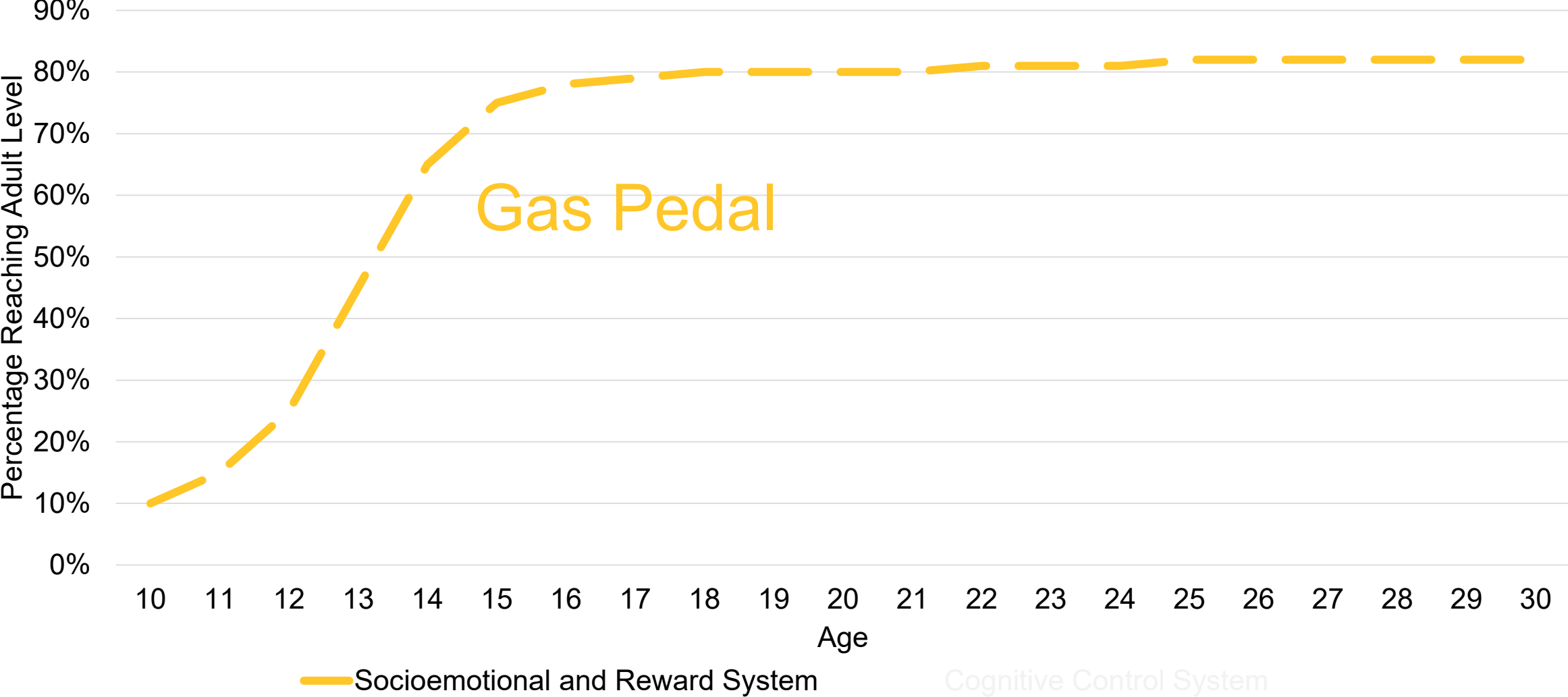
- Brain is highly responsive to experience and capable of rapid learning
- The sensitivity that drives risk-taking *also* enables rapid skill acquisition and social learning



Built for Social Connection

- Sensitivity to peers: mechanism of new community formation

Dual Systems: System 1



See: Shulman, E. P., Smith, A. R., Silva, K., Icenogle, G., Duell, N., Chein, J., & Steinberg, L. (2016). The dual systems model: Review, reappraisal, and reaffirmation. *Developmental cognitive neuroscience*, 17, 103-117.

Dual Systems

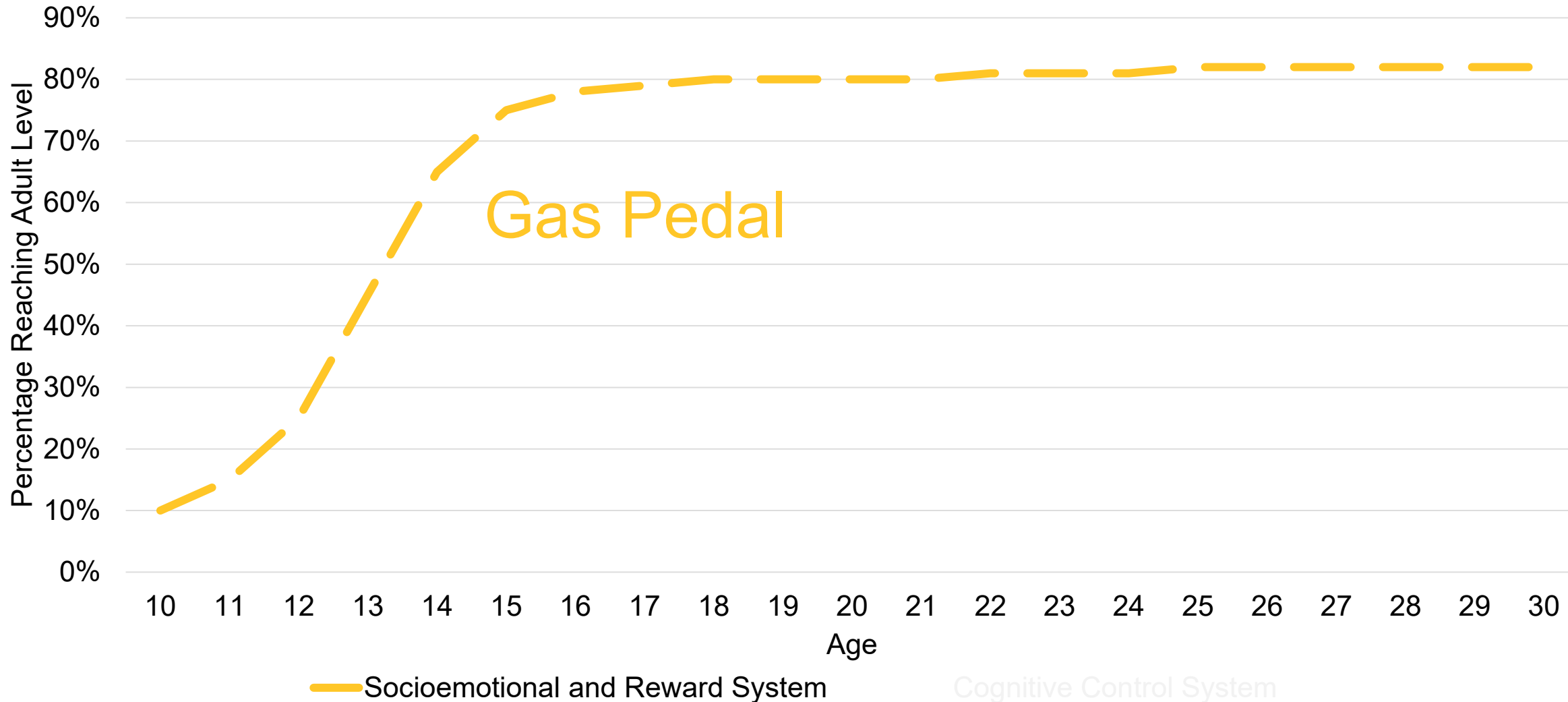
System 2: The Brakes

- **What is it:** Cognitive Control System
- **Where is it:** PFC
- **What it does:**
 - Handles planning/long-term thinking
 - Regulates impulses and emotional responses
 - Weighs risks/consequences
 - Supports consistent, goal-directed behavior
- **Developmental pattern:**
 - Develops slowly into the mid/late 20s

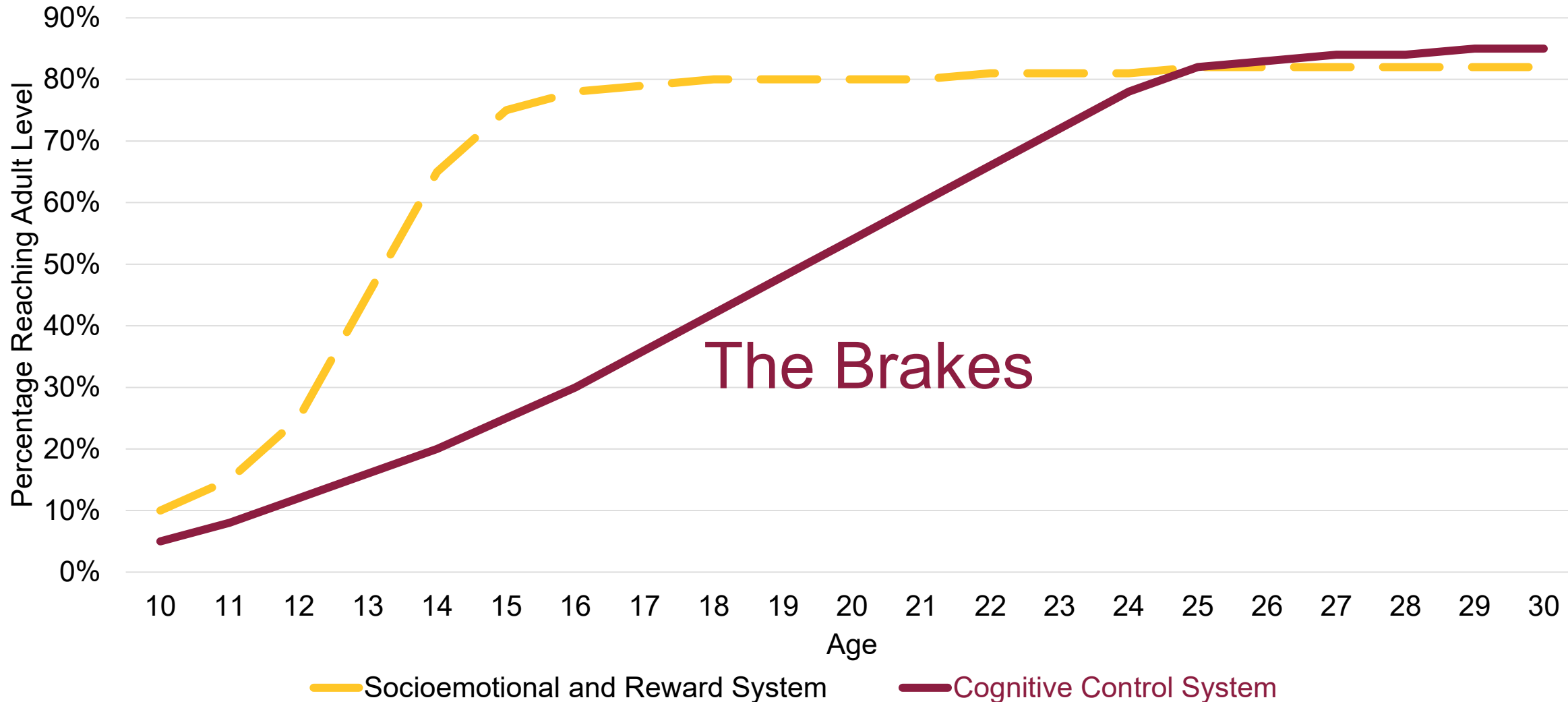
The Brakes



Dual Systems



Dual Systems



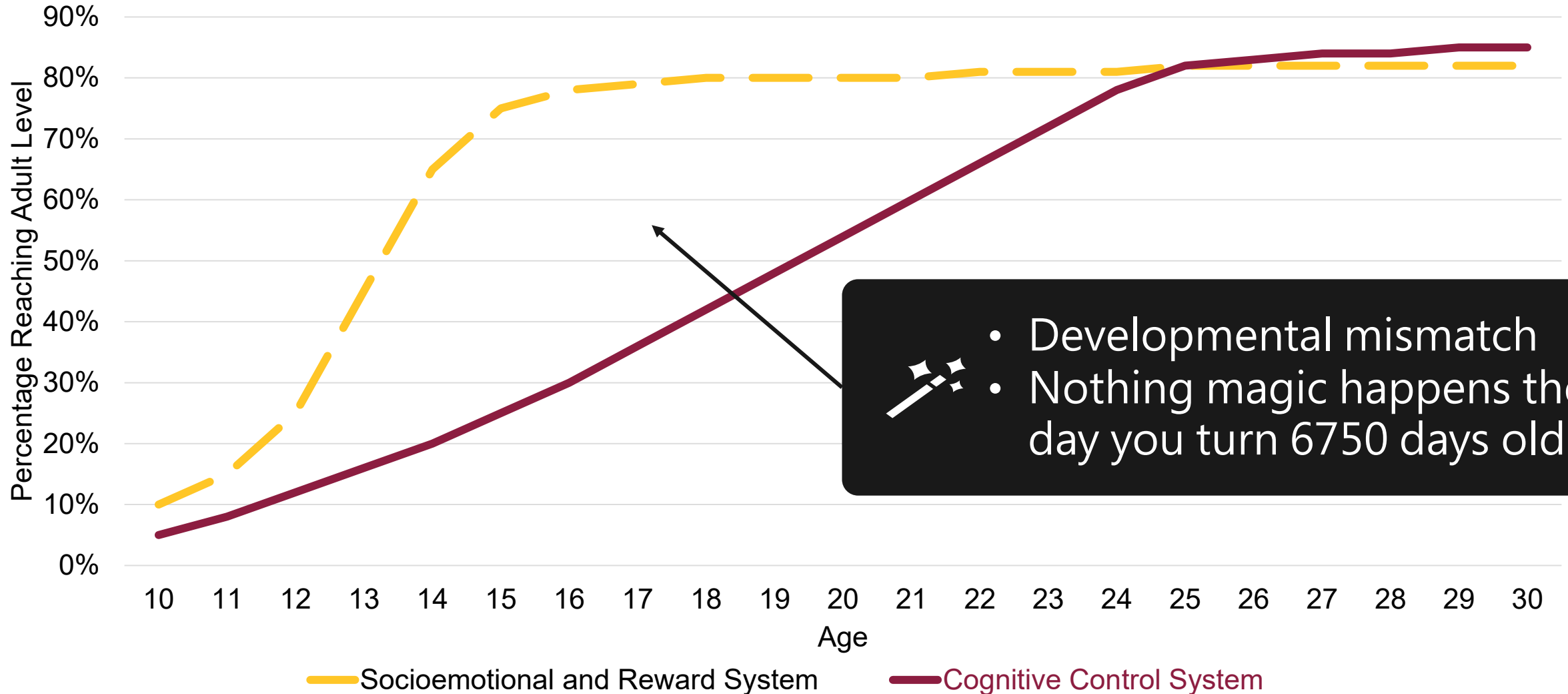
The Brakes

Socioemotional and Reward System

Cognitive Control System

Dual Systems

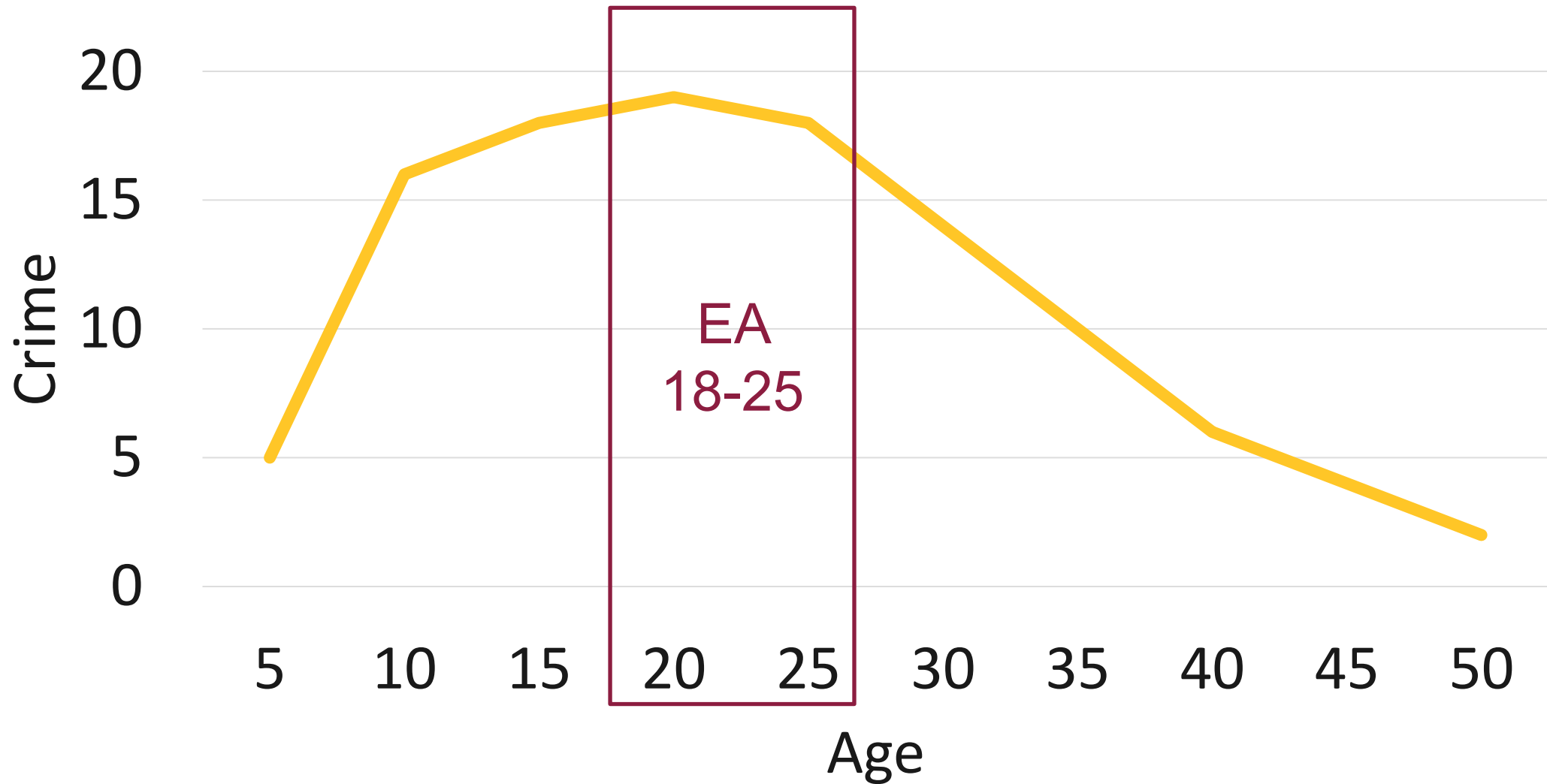
Immaturity Gap



What does this all mean?



What does this all mean?



— Age-Crime Curve

What does this all mean?

J Youth Adolescence (2013) 42:921–938
DOI 10.1007/s10964-013-9926-4

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Age and the Explanation of Crime, Revisited

Gary Sweeten · Alex R. Piquero · Laurence Steinberg

Received: 12 November 2012 / Accepted: 8 February 2013 / Published online: 15 February 2013
© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2013

Abstract Age is one of the most robust correlates of criminal behavior. Yet, explanations for this relationship are varied and conflicting. Developmental theories point to a multitude of sociological, psychological, and biological changes that occur during adolescence and adulthood. One prominent criminological perspective outlined by Gottfredson and Hirschi claims that age has a direct effect on crime, inexplicable from sociological and psychological variables. Despite the attention this claim has received, few direct empirical tests of it have been conducted. We use data from Pathways to Desistance, a longitudinal study of over 1,300 serious youthful offenders (85.8 % male, 40.1 % African-American, 34.3 % Hispanic, 21.0 % White), to test this claim. On average, youths were 16.5 years old at the initial interview and were followed for 7 years. We use multilevel longitudinal models to assess the extent to which the direct effects of age are reduced to statistical and substantive non-significance when constructs from a wide range of developmental and criminological theories are controlled. Unlike previous studies, we are able to control for changes across numerous realms emphasized within differing theoretical perspectives

including social control (e.g., employment and marriage), procedural justice (e.g., perceptions of the legitimacy and fairness of the legal system), learning (e.g., gang membership and exposure to antisocial peers), strain (e.g., victimization and relationship breakup), psychosocial maturity (e.g., impulse control, self-regulation and moral disengagement), and rational choice (e.g., costs and rewards of crime). Assessed separately, these perspectives explain anywhere from 3 % (procedural justice) to 49 % (social learning) of the age-crime relationship. Together, changes in these constructs explain 69 % of the drop in crime from ages 15 to 25. We conclude that the relationship between age and crime in adolescence and early adulthood is largely explainable, though not entirely, attributable to multiple co-occurring developmental changes.

Keywords Age · Crime · Offending · Multilevel regression · Time-varying covariates

Introduction

Most of the age-crime curve is explainable by *changes* in:

33%: psychosocial maturity

49%: peer delinquency, resistance to peers

27%: employment, education, family relationships

What can we do? FORGE Forward



Foster Opportunities for Resiliency, Growth, and Empowerment

Fine, A., Richardson, J. T., Tom, K., Cross, A. R., Hill, R., Kuhl, S., Allen, S., & Morris, T. Under review at the *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*.



This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation Career Award Program under Award No. 2238991. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

What can we do? FORGE Forward



1. Given the right set of supports and resources, every young person is capable of growth

2. Relationships grounded in trust and understanding, rather than just coercion and control, promote meaningful change and personal growth

3. Authentic engagement with young people and their circle of care is essential to supporting positive development and reducing recidivism

4. The most promising path to promoting positive outcomes and reducing recidivism is through positive engagement in prosocial activities that are personally meaningful





 Join the YJL
Partner List



 YJL Website



Thank you

Adam Fine, Ph.D.

Professor and Director of the Youth Justice Lab
School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Arizona State University

 **School of Criminology
and Criminal Justice**
Arizona State University



Emerging Adults Need More - The Benefits of Collaborative Partnerships

Programs - Peer Supports - Emerging Adult Voice

Judicial Conference | June 16,2026 | Jeremy Schall



Target Population – Emerging Adults

Emerging adults (18–25) are in a distinct “in-between” stage, still developing, with unstable roles but high potential for change and growth, which has major implications for how justice, behavioral health, and peer support systems should respond to them.

High risk for justice involvement and recidivism

High potential for change with the right supports

Need developmentally informed responses, not just “adult” systems



C.O.R.E Model

Community, Outreach,
Resources, and Education

The C.O.R.E. program offers outreach, health navigation, benefits assistance, and connection-to-care case management services for individuals who are unhoused and/or justice-involved.

Peer Support Driven

Sanctuary's peer-driven team consists of 90% who are formerly justice-involved and 92% who have lived in substance abuse recovery.

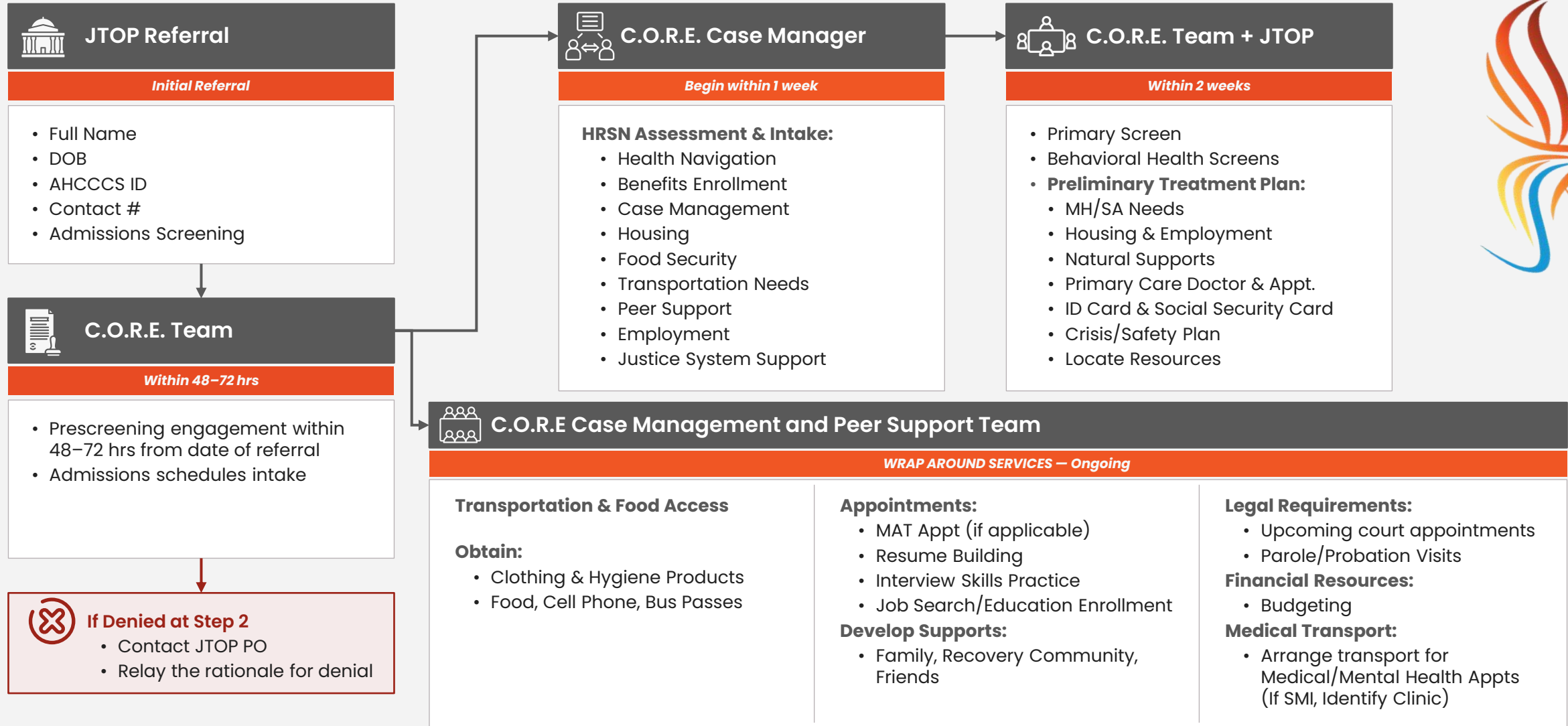




JUVENILE TRANSFER OFFENDER PROGRAM(JTOP)

- Targets juveniles tried as adults, who were under age 18 at the time of offense, who are placed on adult probation.
- Divided into three phases:
 - Phase 1: Intro Phase (Stabilization)
 - Phase 2: Treatment Phase (Engagement/Compliance)
 - Phase 3: Maintenance (Sobriety/Work/School)
- Offers an alternative to Department of Corrections placement, emphasizing community-based supervision and services.
- Probation department assesses based on risk, caseloads, and residency; not all qualify.

C.O.R.E PROCESS MAP



C.O.R.E. CONTACTS
 Charles Sheilds
 Treatment Court Supervisor
 602-446-3323 |
 Csheilds@sanctuaryrecoverycenters.com

C.O.R.E. – JTOP Collaboration in Action

Strong Infrastructure Removes Barriers to Compliance and Success

HOW IT WORKS

Joint assessment and treatment planning (legal + clinical + HRSN goals)

Shared communication (real-time updates)

Unified messaging to youth (consistent expectations, coordinated support)

Warm handoffs (case manager + PO together at key moments)

Accountability + Support (not either/or, but both)

OUTCOMES

93.3% Insurance Enrollment/Service

63.3% Educational Support

90.0% Employment support

86.7% Resume assistance

76.7% Transportation

70.0% Food security/EBT

36.7% Clothing Assistance

63.3% ID/SS Card

36.7% Housing **63.3%** Housing N/A

50.0% Primary Care Physician

10.0% Dental



What the C.O.R.E. – JTOP Partnership Teaches Us

- **Lessons for Arizona's Justice System**
- Emerging adults need more than traditional adult supervision
- Probation + community providers working as one team produces better outcomes.
- Addressing health-risk needs is not "nice to have"; it's central to compliance and recidivism reduction.
- Small changes in language, expectations, and structure can make a big difference.
- Emerging adults can lead their lives when systems believe in them
- The case manager/peer support and the assigned JTOP probation officer work as a unified care team.

Where We're Still Growing

Identified Gaps and Next Steps:

Our focus

Integrate physical and dental health goals into treatment planning and treatment court milestones.

Dental care

83.3% gap (motivation + barriers)

Clinical insight

Once structural barriers are removed, the remaining gaps are motivation, health literacy, and other competing priorities. These require behavioral health interventions, not just logistics.

Primary care linkage

46.7% gap (health literacy + prioritization)

Partnership In Process

Sanctuary partnered with Neighborhood Outreach Access to Health (NOAH)





Integrated Model Benefits

This partnership ensures that:

- **health plan benefits,**
- **housing,**
- **employment,**
- **transportation, and other**
- **natural supports**

are delivered in a coordinated and sequenced manner. They are reinforced through peer support and probation interactions.

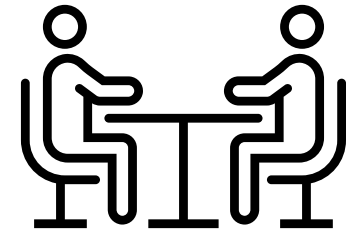
Resulting in high rates of needs met that would not occur without this integrated model.



Meet Our Emerging Adult

Tavion Hampton

Panel and Audience Questions





From the Bench

Is there anything that can be done to better meet the needs of emerging adults?



- Can conditions and expectations be explained differently?
- Is there a way to include the individual's voice?
- Is it possible to include peer supports to strengthen trust, motivation, or accountability?





C.O.R.E. Performance Report 2025

Health Related Social Needs

Juvenile Transfer Offender Program





THANK YOU

Jeremy Schall,

Former Director of Justice Integration - Sanctuary
Recovery Centers

Tavion Hampton,

Student





Thank You!

Shanda Breed,

**Director - Adult Probation
Services**

**Administrative Office of the
Courts**

Arizona Supreme Court

shbreed@courts.az.gov



**Adult Probation Services Division
Administrative Office of the Courts
Arizona Supreme Court**



**Emerging Young Adults 18-25yrs: Challenges, Responses,
and Opportunities for Arizona's Courts**

**ARIZONA
JUDICIAL CONFERENCE 2026**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide participants with an understanding of Arizona's emerging adult population characteristics, current data, developmental needs and opportunities, program partnerships, and efforts underway to leverage resources for better outcomes and safer communities.

PRESENTER INFORMATION

Shanda Breed – Director, Adult Probation Services Division, Arizona Supreme Court will provide Arizona data specific to the emerging adult population, historical background of State efforts to better support emerging adults, and next steps.

Dr. Adam Fine – Arizona State University School of Criminology and Criminal Justice will focus on the importance of using developmentally appropriate interventions to effectively reduce recidivism in the emerging adult. He will challenge the idea that traditional, deterrence-heavy adult justice models effectively manage emerging adults. Drawing on the latest developmental science, the presentation highlights how the gap between cognitive capacity and emotional regulation in the 18–25 age group often causes "command and control" approaches to backfire, triggering defiance rather than compliance.

Jeremy Schall – Former Director of Justice Integration, Sanctuary Recovery Centers will describe how the CORE Program integration with the Maricopa County Juvenile Transferred Offender Program provides needed support to emerging adults.

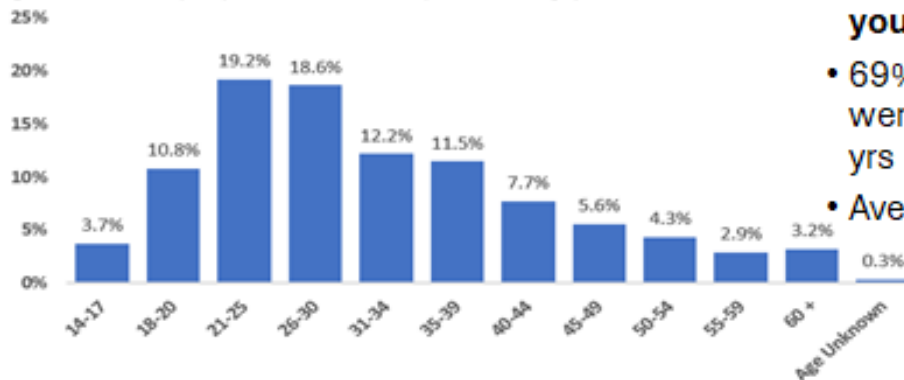
Tavion Hampton – Will provide key insights and describe what made a positive difference for him as he experienced the justice system and supportive programs. (Biography included)

Characteristics of Defendants Charged with Felony Violent Offenses *Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022*

Gender:

- Males (83.4%) | Females (13.7%) | Unknown (2.9%)

Age Distribution of Defendants with Felony Case Filings for Violent Crimes



Age Distribution:

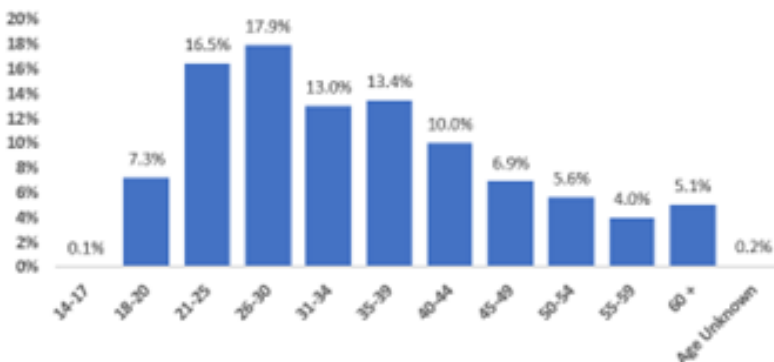
- **52% (slightly over half) were 30 yrs or younger**
- **69% (over two-thirds) were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs**
- **Average age 32.4 yrs**

Characteristics of Defendants with Misd. Violent Offenses *LJ Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022*

Gender:

- Males (70.4%)

Age Distribution of Misdemeanor Cases for Violent Offenses Filed in Limited Jurisdiction Courts



Age Distribution:

- **57% (slightly over half) were 34 yrs or younger**
- **70.9% were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs**
- **Average age 35.5 yrs**

Characteristics of Defendants with Drug Offenses *LJ Case filings for violent crimes from FY 2013 to 2022*

Gender:

- Males (71.9%)

Figure 7

Age Distribution of Misdemeanor Cases for Drug Offenses Filed in Limited Jurisdiction Courts



Age Distribution:

- 51% (slightly over half) were 30 yrs or younger
- 76.4% (a little over three-quarters) were age 21 yrs to 44 yrs
- Average age 32.3 yrs

Emerging Adults

Criminal Justice Implications

- Higher Risk Levels
- More substance use/positive drug tests
- Higher rates of drug/substance offenses
- Higher rates of violent offenses
- Higher rates of Revocation
- Higher failure rates
- Lower success rates

Social and Health Implications

- Less life experience and common knowledge
- Minimal or no positive family/supports
- Limited education or job skills
- Lacking adequate interventions and health care
- Need consideration
- Need mentors/peers/advocacy
- Need life rebuilding and future orientation

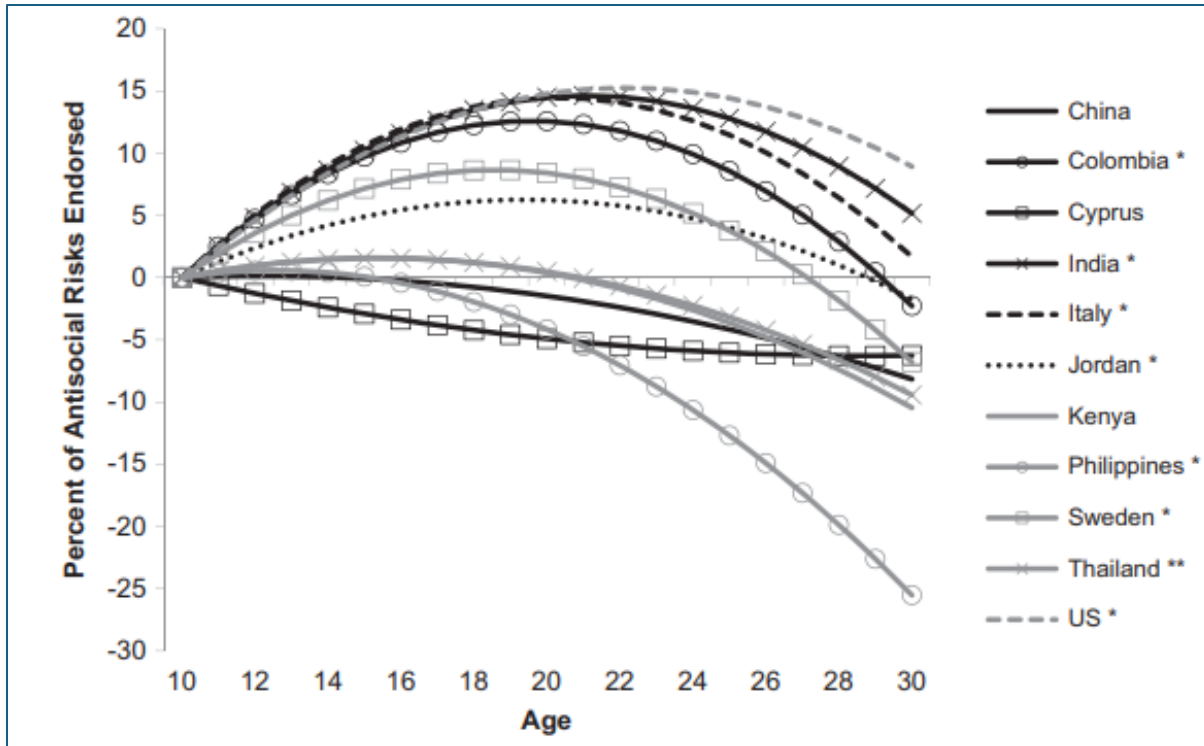
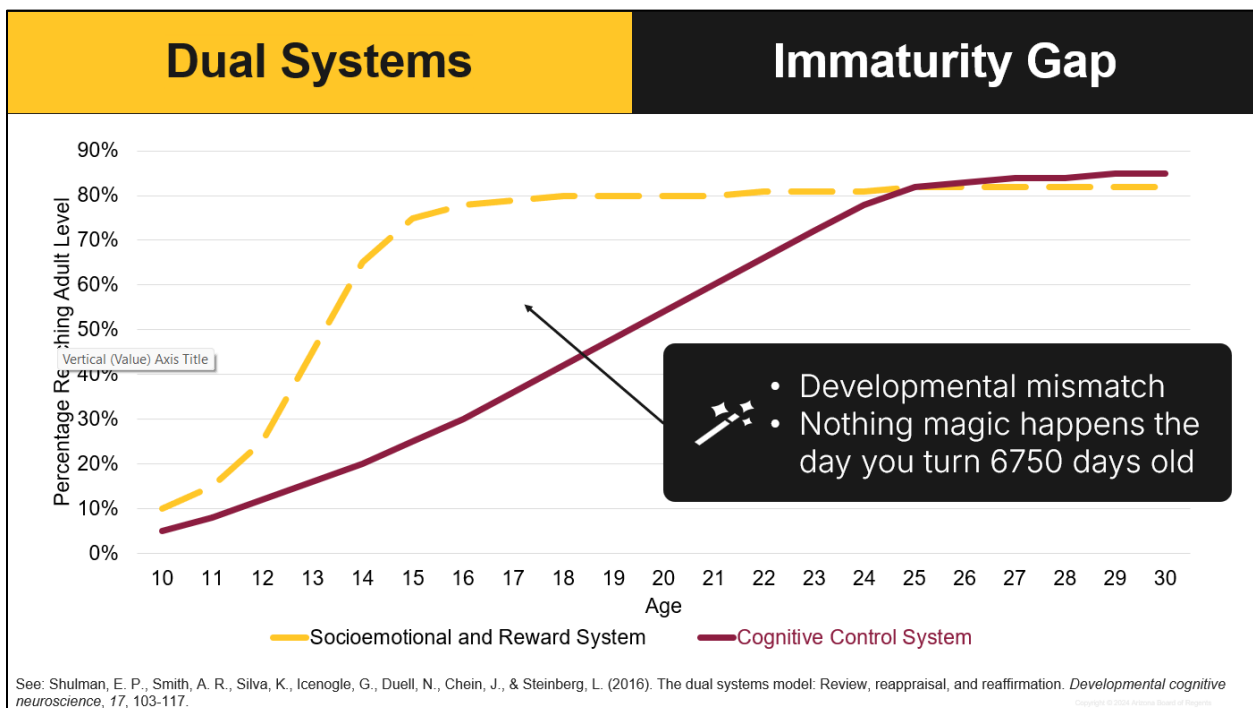


Figure from: Duell, N., Steinberg, L., Icenogle, G., Chein, J., Chaudhary, N., Di Giunta, L., ... & Chang, L. (2018). Age patterns in risk taking across the world. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(5), 1052-1072.



See: Shulman, E. P., Smith, A. R., Silva, K., Icenogle, G., Duell, N., Chein, J., & Steinberg, L. (2016). The dual systems model: Review, reappraisal, and reaffirmation. *Developmental cognitive neuroscience*, 17, 103-117.

What can we do? FORGE Forward



Foster Opportunities for Resiliency, Growth, and Empowerment

Fine, A., Richardson, J. T., Tom, K., Cross, A. R., Hill, R., Kuhl, S., Allen, S., & Morris, T. Under review at the *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*.



This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation Career Award Program under Award No. 2238991. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

What can we do? FORGE Forward



1. Given the right set of supports and resources, every young person is capable of growth

2. Relationships grounded in trust and understanding, rather than just coercion and control, promote meaningful change and personal growth

3. Authentic engagement with young people and their circle of care is essential to supporting positive development and reducing recidivism

4. The most promising path to promoting positive outcomes and reducing recidivism is through positive engagement in prosocial activities that are personally meaningful



This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation Career Award Program under Award No. 2238991. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



C.O.R.E Model

Community, Outreach,
Resources, and Education


The C.O.R.E. program offers outreach, health navigation, benefits assistance, and connection-to-care case management services for individuals who are unhoused and/or justice-involved.

SANCTUARY RECOVERY CENTERS



Peer Support Driven

Sanctuary's peer-driven team consists of 90% who are formerly justice-involved and 92% who have lived in substance abuse recovery.



JUVENILE TRANSFER OFFENDER PROGRAM (JTOP)

- Targets juveniles tried as adults, who were under age 18 at the time of offense, who are placed on adult probation.
- Divided into three phases:
 - Phase 1: Intro Phase (Stabilization)
 - Phase 2: Treatment Phase (Engagement/Compliance)
 - Phase 3: Maintenance (Sobriety/Work/School)
- Offers an alternative to Department of Corrections placement, emphasizing community-based supervision and services.
- Probation department assesses based on risk, caseloads, and residency; not all qualify.

SANCTUARY RECOVERY CENTERS



I grew up moving back and forth between Missouri and Arizona. My father was in prison for seven years, and my grandmother eventually moved us to Buckeye, Arizona. She was very religious and disciplined, and we regularly attended the Kingdom Hall as Jehovah's Witnesses. I believe in God with all my heart, mind, and soul.

As I got older, I wanted to make fast money to help my mom pay the bills. I became involved with people who did not value life, and at the time, I was too young to fully understand what I was getting myself into. Reality hit when my family's lives were threatened. At that point, I didn't care about going to prison—I only cared about protecting my family. Over time, I had to accept that life is not always fair, and I had to learn how to face the consequences of my actions.

I was incarcerated from ages 14 to 18. I got caught up in something I had no business being involved in. Going through the system was difficult, but it changed me. It helped me become someone who values life, cares about others, and truly appreciates freedom.

My message to young people is this: have fun, but don't overdo it, because your future depends on the choices you make today. Life is not always fair, but patience and perseverance pay off. I made it through my sentence and have been working to successfully transition back into society without letting negativity take control of my life. My faith in God has been a major part of that.

At times, I still feel like the world can be a prison in its own way, but my experiences have made me more caring, more understanding, and more forgiving. Being surrounded by negativity showed me the importance of making better choices and staying focused on what truly matters—family, freedom, and growth.

I believe I have been given a second chance to show God and the world who I truly am. I am not defined by my past. I have a conscience, I am intelligent, and I am committed to building a positive future.

My time at Sanctuary helped me realize that there are still good people in the world. The support I received there helped me grow mentally and maintain a positive mindset. To stay focused and avoid negativity, I work two jobs and keep myself busy. I am grateful to have developed this mindset at a young age instead of learning it later in life.

I am thankful for my journey, including the lessons I've learned from my prosecutor and judge. Even though it was difficult, those experiences helped shape who I am today. I now understand the importance of making better choices and taking responsibility for my future.

I believe that young people are the future, and we all have a purpose. My goal is to encourage others my age to stay on a positive path. Whether it's working a job or building a career, we all play a role in keeping our communities strong. It's up to us to step up and lead the next generation.

Stay positive, trust in God, and ask for strength and guidance. Everything else will fall into place.

