



## Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction is a Public Safety Policy

Pathways to Desistance, a major, long-term longitudinal study of over 1,300 serious juvenile offenders, identified factors that led some young people to persist in their offending and those that led to their desistance from crime. The study found that young people – including those with serious offenses – mature psychologically, socially, and cognitively—over time. It went further to reveal that the severity or frequency of offending did not predict future offending, however maturation and the pace young people met developmental milestones was more predictive of offending.

The Pathways to Desistance study conducted a seven-year study of young people who have been adjudicated for serious, violent offenses to identify the factors that are tied to their desistance or persistence in offending and found that of all the factors they studied two stood out: **(1) belief in the legitimacy of authority and (2) meeting adolescent developmental milestones on time.** Young people who stopped their anti-social behavior had significantly increased their psychosocial maturity than those who persisted in offending into their full adulthood. Specifically, young people who had diminished impulse control and diminished suppression of aggression were more likely to persist in offending. In other words, interventions that help young people meet their developmental milestones (through connection to a stable adult, education, employment, physical and mental health, and connection to community) will result in young people desisting from further offending.

**Intervening with young people (teens through mid-20s) with a focus on their positive development into adulthood is more effective in improving youth outcomes, including reducing recidivism.** Interventions that require youth to develop positive decision-making and concrete skills, further their education and engage with their families and other positive adult role models are far more likely to result in increased public safety, particularly compared with policies that push young people into the adult system, increasing their likelihood of recidivism and even escalation into serious, violent crime. Interventions that delay young people meeting developmental milestones, increases the likelihood of persistence in offending behavior. The Pathways to Desistance study examined the factors that are tied to young people's desistance or persistence in offending and found that young people who stopped their anti-social behavior had significantly increased their psychosocial maturity than those who persisted in offending into their full adulthood. Specifically, young people who had diminished impulse control and diminished suppression of aggression were more likely to persist in offending.

**READ MORE:** Laurence Steinberg (2014) *Give Adolescents the Time and Skills to Mature, and Most Offenders Will Stop.* Chicago, IL: MacArthur Foundation."

<https://www.pathwaysstudy.pitt.edu/documents/MacArthur%20Brief%20Give%20Adolescents%20Time.pdf>



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