

ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

FY24 ANNUAL REPORT

(JULY 2023– JUNE 2024)

YOUTH DIVERSION FROM THE FAIRFAX COUNTY COURT SYSTEM



MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS

Fiscal Year 2024 marked the beginning of the Alternative Accountability Program's (AAP) second decade, a testament to its enduring success in providing community-based diversion services to eligible youth. This program offers a crucial second chance, steering young individuals away from the traditional juvenile justice system and towards restorative and rehabilitative pathways. The AAP thrives on a robust multi-agency collaborative partnership, uniting key Fairfax County government agencies with a dedicated non-profit partner. This collaborative approach ensures a holistic and coordinated response to youth delinquency.

In FY24, the AAP had fewer cases (224 cases in FY24 compared to 247 in FY23), but the complexity of the cases magnified the program's vital role in the community. The program encountered a notable rise in cases involving multiple offenders and complex, multi-faceted offenses. This increased complexity significantly extended the time required to facilitate each case, demanding heightened effort in contacting all involved parties, meticulously preparing, and guiding them through the process, and coordinating often intricate joint meeting schedules. Despite these challenges, the AAP maintained its consistently high success rates and low recidivism, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering positive behavioral change.

The program's Restorative Justice (RJ) component fully transitioned back to in-person meetings in FY24, fostering deeper connection and engagement between participants. However, recognizing the importance of accessibility, virtual meetings remained available for individuals with extenuating circumstances, ensuring equitable participation. Educational interventions, particularly the Shoplifting Offender Class, continued to be offered virtually. This strategic decision addressed the logistical challenges posed by serving non-Fairfax County residents and mitigated transportation barriers. Moreover, virtual delivery enabled the AAP to serve a greater number of youth more efficiently, eliminating the need for geographically dispersed in-person classes.

The AAP's impact extends beyond quantitative metrics. Feedback from victims, offenders, and community members consistently highlights the positive regard for the program's Restorative Justice conferences and educational interventions. Participants often appreciate the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, promote accountability, and achieve restorative outcomes. The AAP's proven success and innovative approach continue to position it as a model for other jurisdictions and agencies seeking effective alternatives to traditional juvenile justice systems. Its commitment to restorative principles and community-based solutions demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to addressing youth crime and promoting long-term positive change.

The spotlight on AAP further shone brightly in the fall of 2024 during a community event that included Devon Ke, a participant in an AAP conference and who has since dedicated her continued academic and civic life to promoting restorative justice. Devon received her training in

restorative justice conference facilitation. The program also added three certified restorative justice conference facilitators who come from diverse backgrounds and professions.

We've worked hard to keep AAP in the forefront with professional partners, stakeholders, and the community so it remains an option to address crimes committed by first-time juvenile offenders.

AAP PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

AAP Governance

The Alternative Accountability Program (AAP) is an inter-agency collaboration that employs restorative practices and education as an alternative to traditional criminal justice for first-time juvenile offenders in Fairfax County. The AAP Program partners are:

Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD)
Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)
Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC)
Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services (NCS)
NVMS Conflict Resolution Center (NVMS)

AAP Mission

To help victims of juvenile crimes overcome the harm that has been done to them; to hold first-time juvenile offenders accountable for their crimes; and to lower the number of juveniles entering the justice system in Fairfax County.

Core Goals/Objectives

- Providing victims with a voice in the process to repair the harm they experienced
- Holding youth accountable for the harm they caused
- Reducing the number of juveniles enmeshed in the formal justice system, including youth of color
- Decreasing recidivism

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Referral Process

All complaints involving juveniles are submitted to Juvenile Intake and screened for AAP eligibility. All eligible cases are automatically referred instead of being handled within the traditional juvenile justice system.

Eligibility requires the following:

- Evidence of an eligible crime
- Under 18 years old at the time of the offense
- No prior criminal involvement with AAP or Juvenile Intake
- Juvenile accepts responsibility for their actions and is willing to participate in AAP

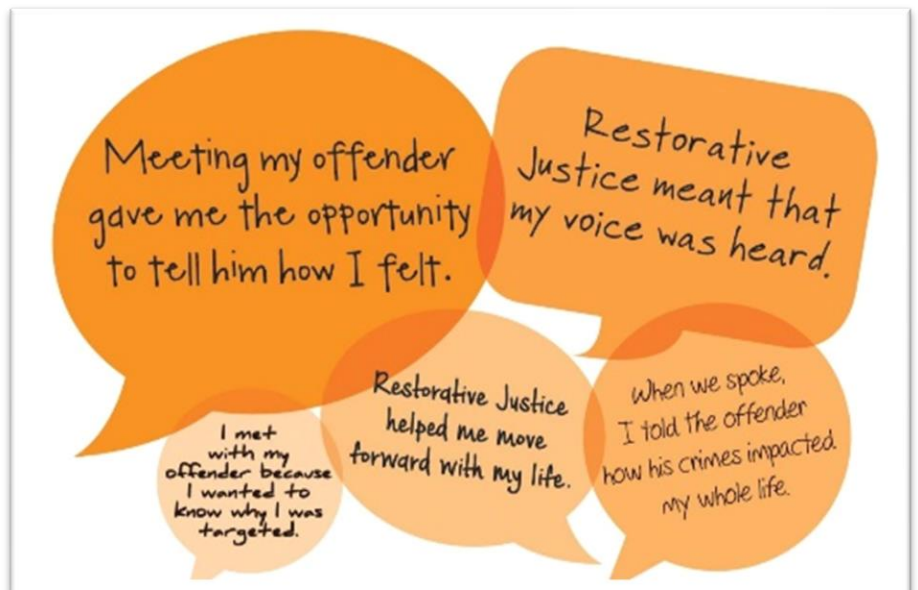
AAP has two intervention tracks – Restorative Justice and Education.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

AAP utilizes a victim-centered family group conferencing RJ model. Offenders and their parent(s) are brought together with victims (and their parent(s) when applicable), and other stakeholders who were directly or indirectly impacted by the incident. When the direct victim is unable to participate, the referring law-enforcement officer may participate on their behalf. Conferences are facilitated by skilled RJ practitioners and focus on the following:

1. What happened?
2. Who was harmed?
3. How can the harm be repaired?

The conference's goals are to achieve a greater understanding between the victim and offender and develop a mutually agreed upon resolution to the matter. Conference agreements are determined by the parties and may result in an apology, completion of community service, financial restitution, or by other means.



Education

AAP utilizes two educational interventions – Core Values and a Shoplifter Offender Class. Educational interventions are used when parties are unable to participate or decline to participate in RJ.

Core Values

Core Values is a one-hour seminar facilitated by trained staff that work one-on-one with offenders. Offenders are asked to identify their personal core values and then engage in a guided conversation that explores whether the actions that got them in AAP align with those values. The conversation concludes with a discussion of how the offender can keep their values at the forefront of their considerations when making future decisions, thus resulting in better decision making and reduced recidivism.

Shoplifter Offender Class

The shoplifter offender class is team-taught by trained staff and a law-enforcement officer. The focus of the class is to educate offenders on the far-reaching impacts of shoplifting. Offenders are given a homework assignment to write a letter of apology to the store(s) they stole from. Letters are reviewed for appropriateness and then forwarded to the store's representative.

BENEFITS OF AAP

For the victim:

- Provides an opportunity to be actively involved in the resolution of their case (RJ participants)
- Provides victims with a voice and an opportunity to express their feelings and needs, which can lead to greater satisfaction and healing

For the offender:

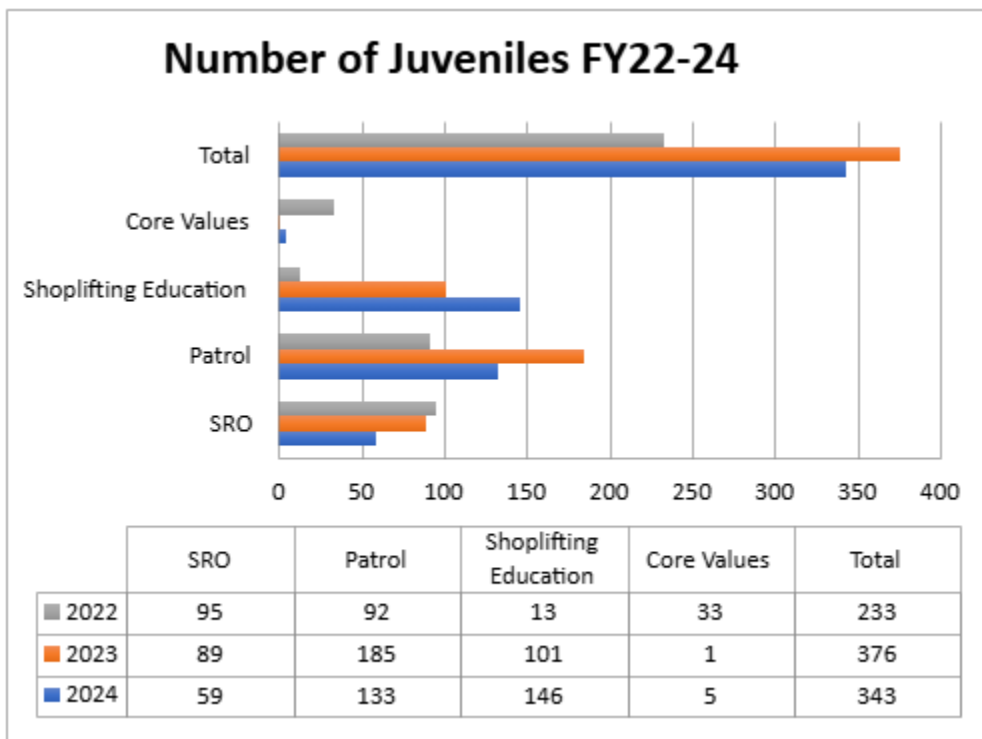
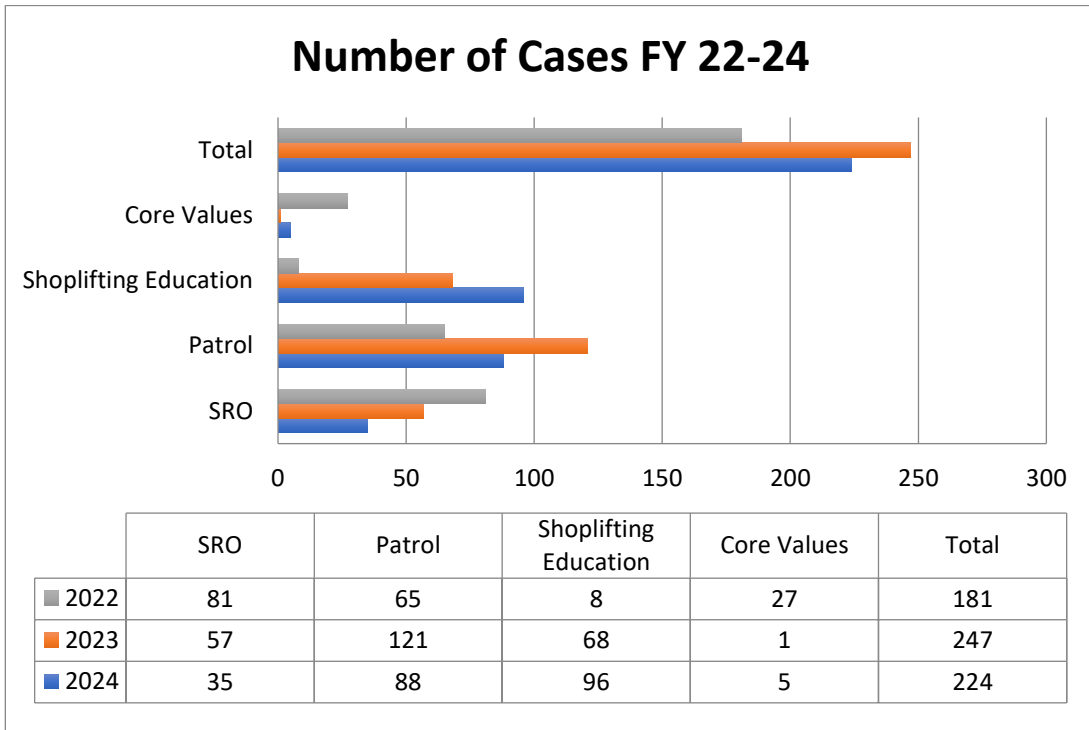
- Provides an opportunity to acknowledge their behavior, learn about its impact on the victim, develop increased empathy and social awareness, and build character
- Avoid long-term risks associated with involvement with the traditional criminal justice system
- Rebuild relationships with victims and community members, fostering trust and promoting reconciliation

For the community:

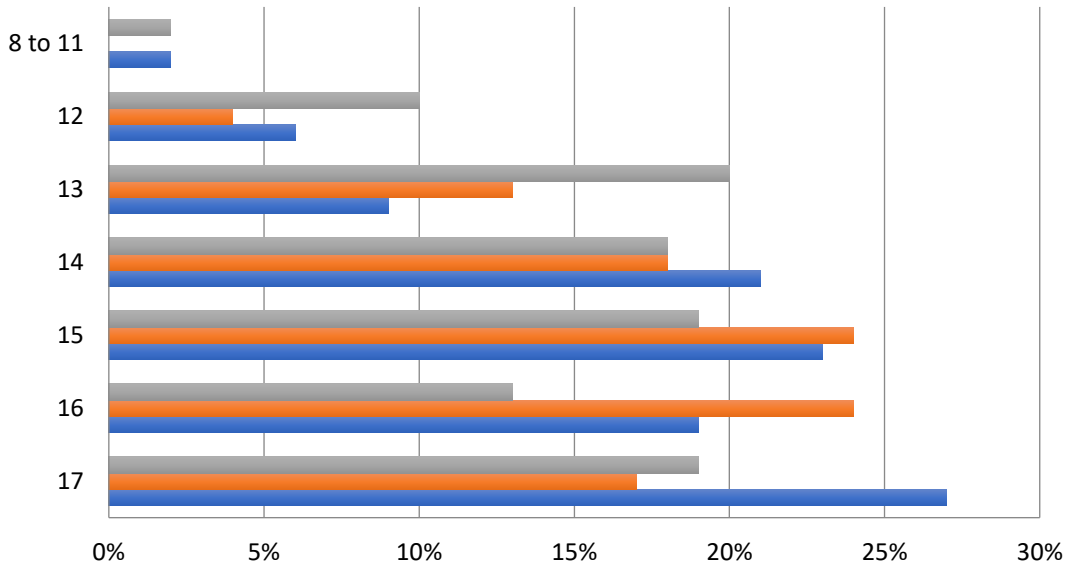
- Provides an alternative response to juvenile crime
- Creates a stronger society by reducing juvenile recidivism of harmful behavior and criminal acts
- Addresses root causes of crime and promotes community involvement, thus contributing to a safer environment for everyone.

METRICS AND OUTCOMES

Cases are separated by the offense location. School Resource Officers (SRO) submit events that occur in the school. Patrol Officers submit events that happened in the community.



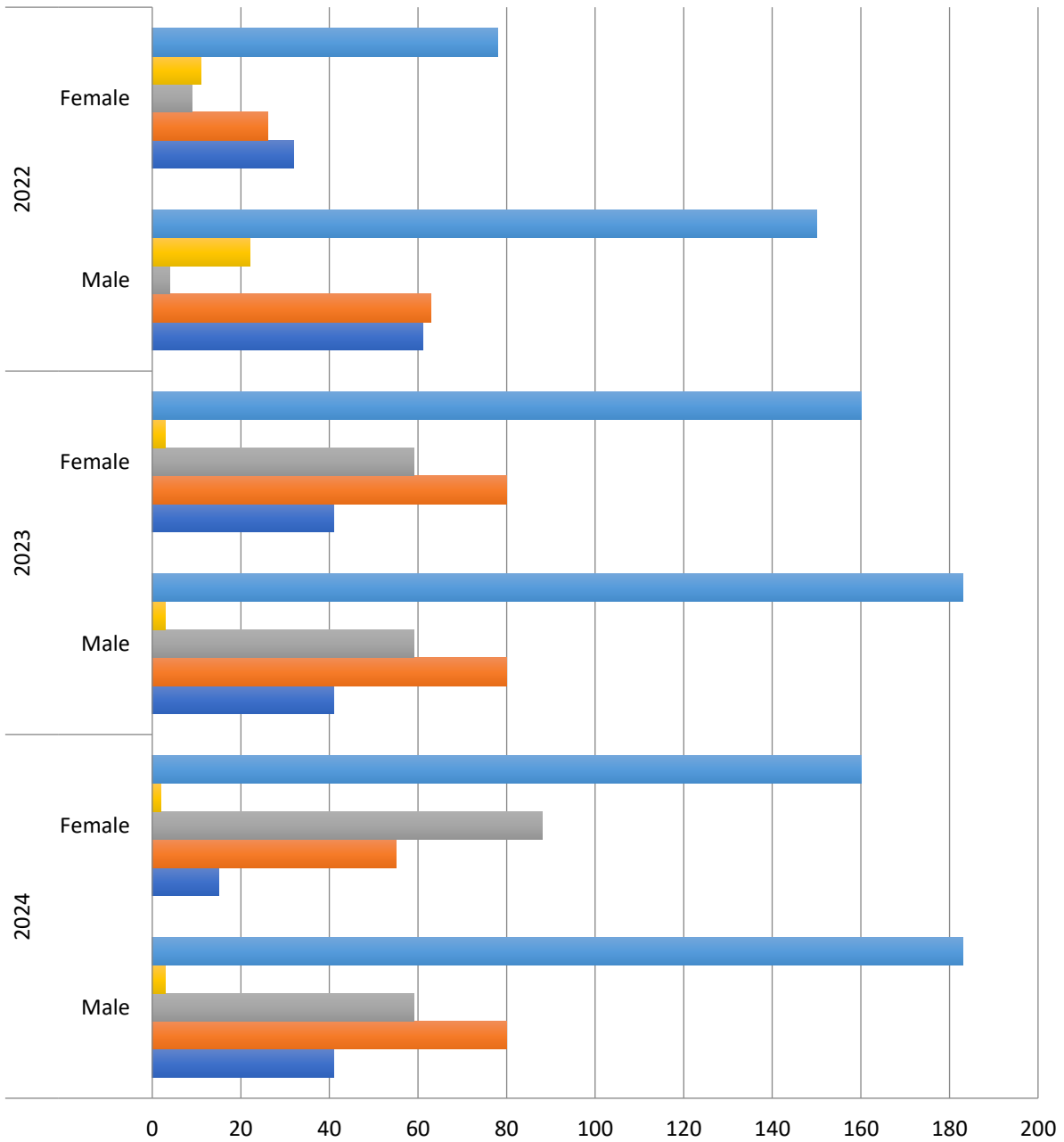
Age Demographics of Offenders FY22-24



	17	16	15	14	13	12	8 to 11
■ 2022	19%	13%	19%	18%	20%	10%	2%
■ 2023	17%	24%	24%	18%	13%	4%	0%
■ 2024	27%	19%	23%	21%	9%	6%	2%

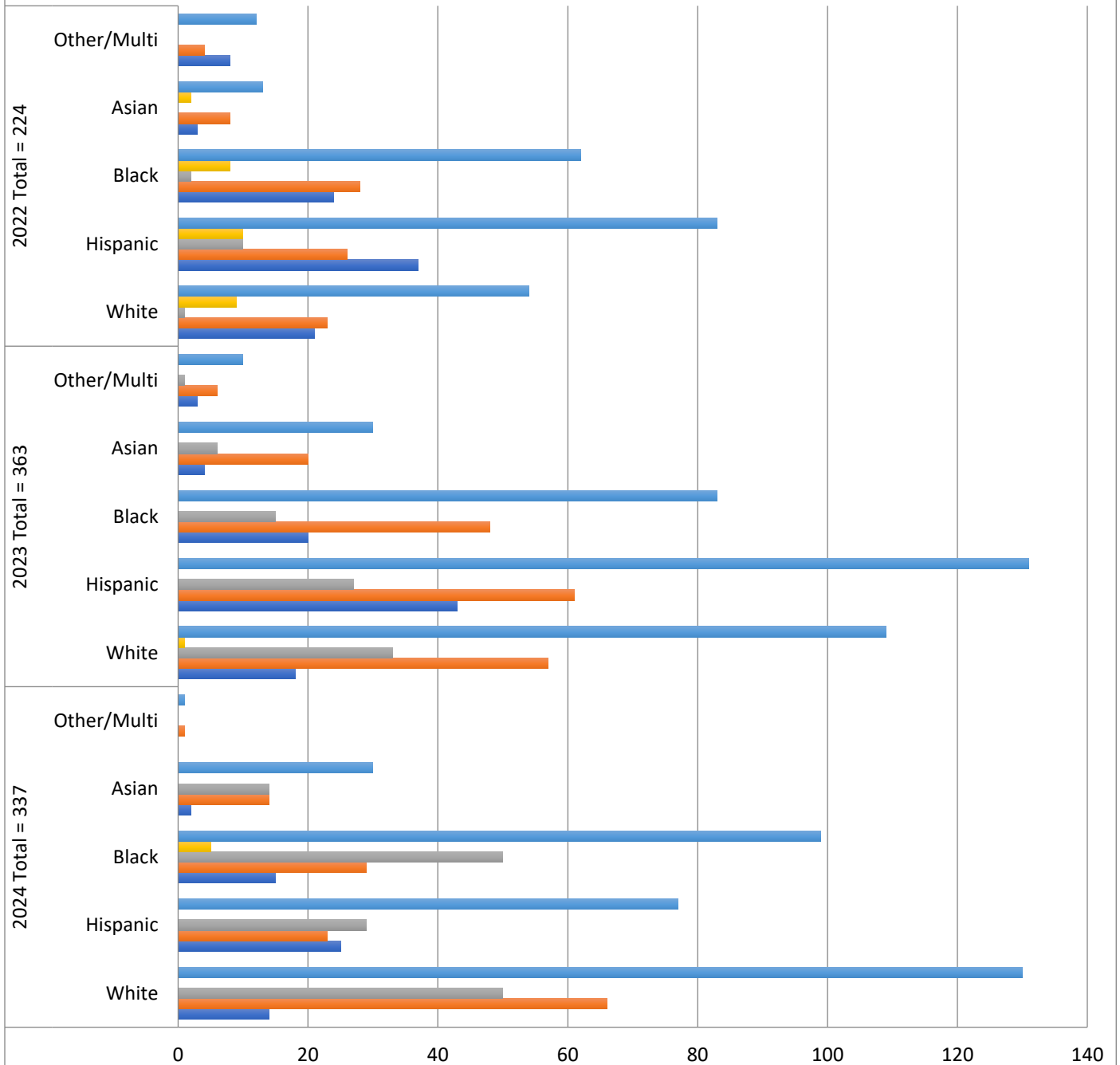


Gender Demographics of Offenders FY22-24



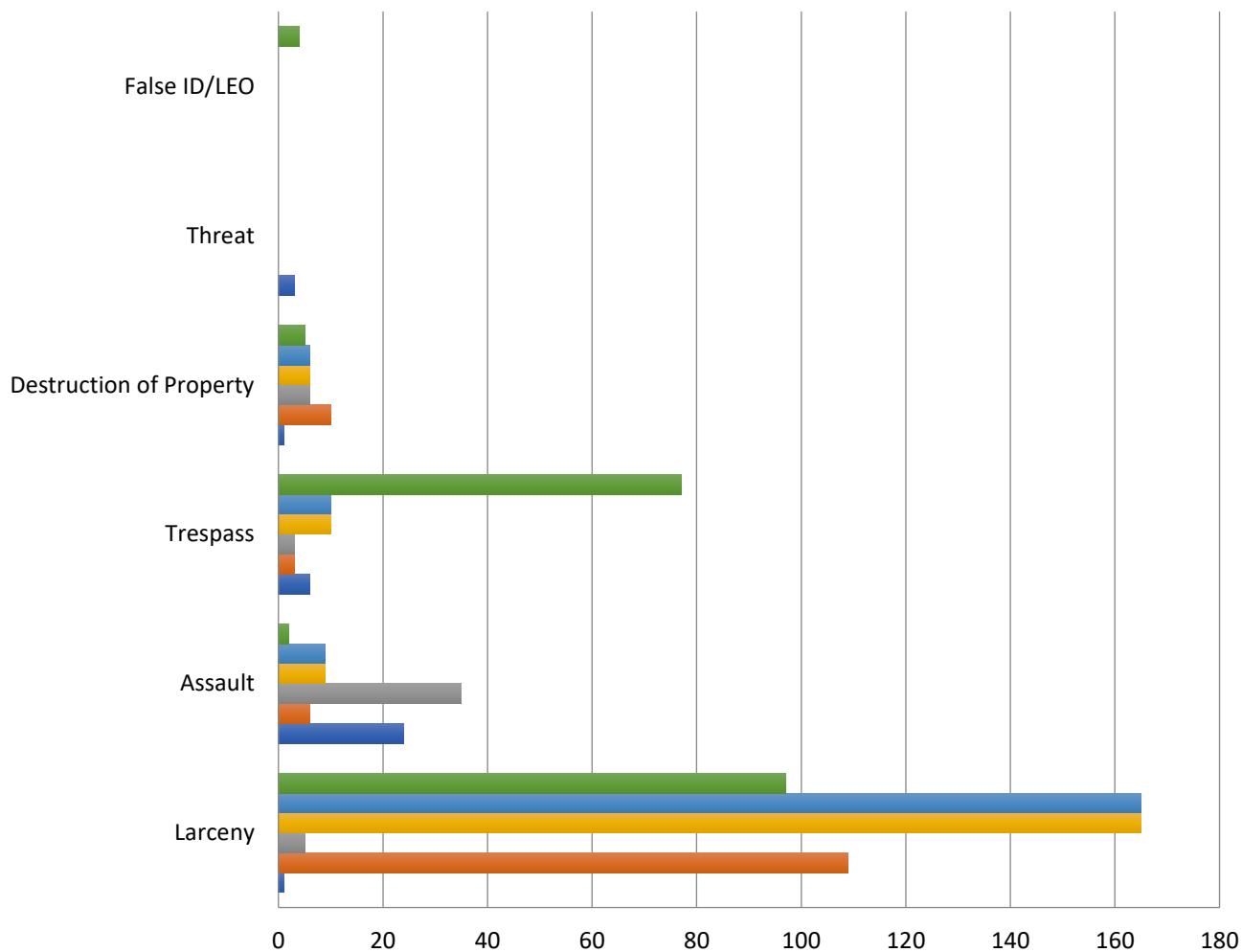
	2024		2023		2022	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Overall	183	160	183	160	150	78
Core Values	3	2	3	3	22	11
Shoplifting	59	88	59	59	4	9
Patrol	80	55	80	80	63	26
SRO	41	15	41	41	61	32

Race/Ethnicity Demographics of Offenders FY22-24



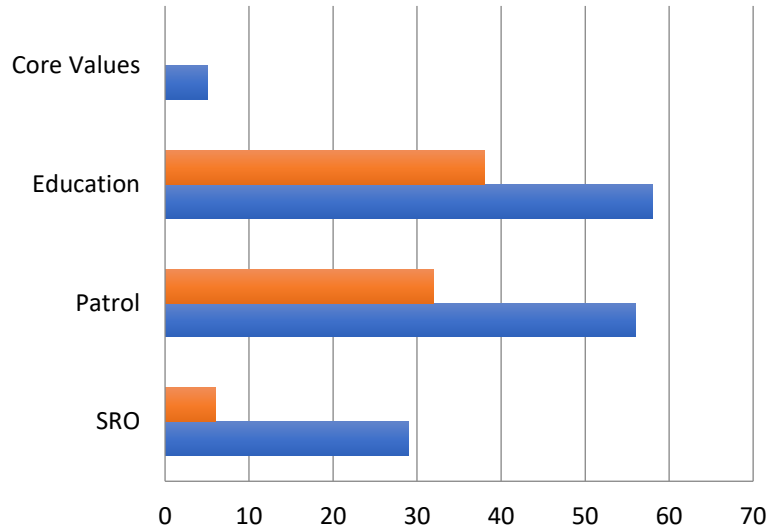
	2024 Total = 337					2023 Total = 363					2022 Total = 224				
	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Other/Multi	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Other/Multi	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Other/Multi
Overall	130	77	99	30	1	109	131	83	30	10	54	83	62	13	12
Core Values	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	9	10	8	2	0
Shoplifting	50	29	50	14	0	33	27	15	6	1	1	10	2	0	0
Patrol	66	23	29	14	1	57	61	48	20	6	23	26	28	8	4
SRO	14	25	15	2	0	18	43	20	4	3	21	37	24	3	8

Top Offenses FY22-24



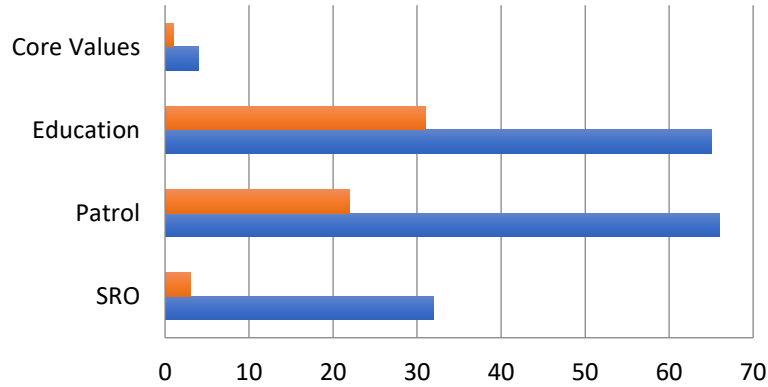
	Larceny	Assault	Trespass	Destruction of Property	Threat	False ID/LEO
■ 2022 Patrol	97	2	77	5	0	4
■ 2022 SRO	165	9	10	6	0	0
■ 2023 Patrol	165	9	10	6	0	0
■ 2023 SRO	5	35	3	6	0	0
■ 2024 Patrol	109	6	3	10	0	0
■ 2024 SRO	1	24	6	1	3	0

Offenders Per Case



	SRO	Patrol	Education	Core Values
2024 Total = 224 Two or More Offenders	6	32	38	0
2024 Total = 224 One Offender	29	56	58	5

Offenses Per Case



	SRO	Patrol	Education	Core Values
2024 Total = 224 Two or More Offenses	3	22	31	1
2024 Total = 224 One Offense	32	66	65	4

IMPACT

Youth: “Something that I find the most helpful in this process is that I was able to speak my mind but also like understand and learn the good I can do. Apologize for my actions and bad I’ve caused.”



Youth: “I realize the actions have probably affected my mom the most. I hurt her and everyone else around me in the childish, immature activities I partook in. But I’ve come to the conclusion that yes my life hasn’t been the best and I’ve had to deal with things, but I can use that as an excuse to make bad decisions that are going to affect my life forever or I can use it as an excuse to rise up and become the best

version of myself.”

Youth: “It helped me realize what I was holding inside and allowed me to reflect on my actions in a peaceful manner. I had to relive a bad decision I made, and it helped me breakdown what I could do better in that situation.”

Youth: “I am truly sorry for shoplifting, and I understand that stealing is wrong. I have always known that stealing is wrong, but I did what I did out of peer pressure, incorrectly normalizing my actions without really thinking that I stole. Not only did I steal, but it was a significant sum and I realize that if I was older this situation could have negatively impacted me much more, so I am grateful that I was able to take advantage of the online shoplifting course, allowing me to reset, think about my actions, and express my remorse.”

Parent: “The most helpful thing about the RJ process is hearing the voices of others and getting a broader understanding of the event and outcomes.”

Parent: Thank you for the program. Because of this program I have peace and less worries. My son will not make that kind of mistake again. I am very optimistic that I will have a good relationship again with my son and more importantly that i will trust him again.”

Patrol Officer: “...gives the juvenile an opportunity to understand how they can correct their actions, and how to interact with others.”

Victim: “The questions asked by the facilitators helped all parties to dig for deeper answers of why and see the extended impacts. I feel satisfied with the communication and answers received.”

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Certifying three new RJ conference facilitators for the AAP program.
- Full implementation of the intake “clearinghouse” to mitigate potential bias in case referral.
- Panel presentation on behalf of the Kazakhstan Mediation Center highlighting restorative justice.
- Resilience/adaptations regarding goals and outcomes.
- Restorative justice training for employees of the Fairfax Neighborhood and Community Services.
- Restorative justice training for Fairfax County Public Schools employees.

GOALS FOR FY25

- Signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding among partners.
- Continue to strengthen the relationship between public schools and law-enforcement to provide alternatives to traditional juvenile justice.
- Expand restorative justice training to youth.
- Promote AAP in a wider community.
- Increase number of restorative justice conference facilitators.
- Increase the number of referrals.
- Increase the number of victims and youth offenders who agree to participate in RJ.
- Help cases and clients be successful in RJ.
- Refine and hone the skills of practitioners.

