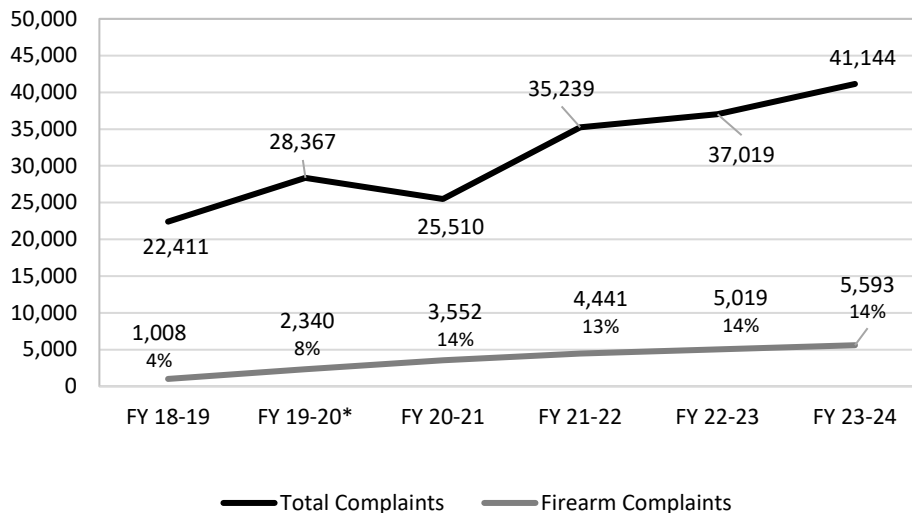


Juvenile Firearm Offenses and Trends

Prior to implementing the increase in juvenile jurisdiction to 16- and 17-year-olds, also known as Raise the Age (RtA), the N.C. Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP), routinely experienced a low volume of complaints related to allegations of juvenile firearm offenses. Subsequent to RtA implementation on Dec. 1, 2019, JJDP now receives complaints associated with juvenile firearm offenses alleged for 16 and 17-year-olds. In the past five fiscal years, juvenile firearm offenses rose from 2,340 annually to more than 5,500 annually related to the population of youth added to juvenile jurisdiction.

Figure 1: Total Complaints and Firearm Complaints
FY 18-19 - FY 23-24
*FY 19-20 is a partial RtA year



Juvenile Subpopulations

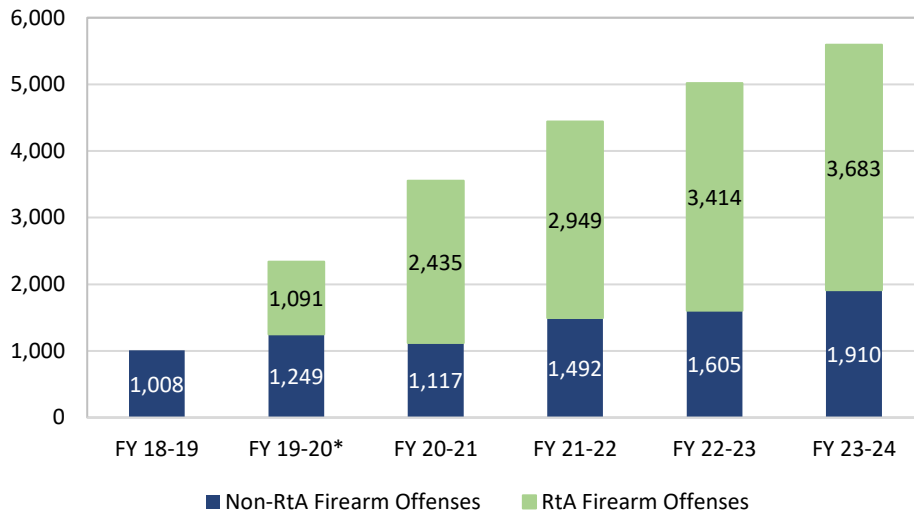
The RtA population (juveniles ages 16 or 17 at offense) is the subpopulation of juveniles primarily driving the firearm offense volume upward. In the past four fiscal years, RtA firearm offenses comprised two-thirds of the firearm offenses alleged. However, it is also worth noting that the non-RtA firearm offenses have increased by almost 90% in the past five years, indicating that the increase in firearm offenses is not driven solely by RtA juveniles.



Figure 2. Non-RtA and RtA Firearm Complaints

FY 18-19 - FY 23-24

*FY 19-20 is a partial RtA year



In the past five years, approximately 22,000 firearm offenses were charged on approximately 8,000 distinct juveniles (some juveniles offended in multiple years). Examining the firearm offense trend at the juvenile level, we see the same pattern, that two-thirds of the distinct juveniles charged with firearm offenses since RtA implementation are RtA juveniles. Prior to and after RtA implementation, juveniles under age 16 were charged at the same volume each year – under 700 juveniles per year. Fiscal year 2020-21 was the first year that more than 500 non-RtA juveniles were charged with a firearm offense.

School-Based Firearm Offenses

Two percent of “school-based offenses” (SBOs) are categorized as firearm offenses. The most recent fiscal year data are considered to reflect the impacts of RtA as well as conditions of schools operating in-person, after limited in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. SBO Complaints with a Firearm, July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

SBO Complaints	SBO Complaints with Firearm	% of Total
13,012	278	2.1%

Firearm Offense Groups

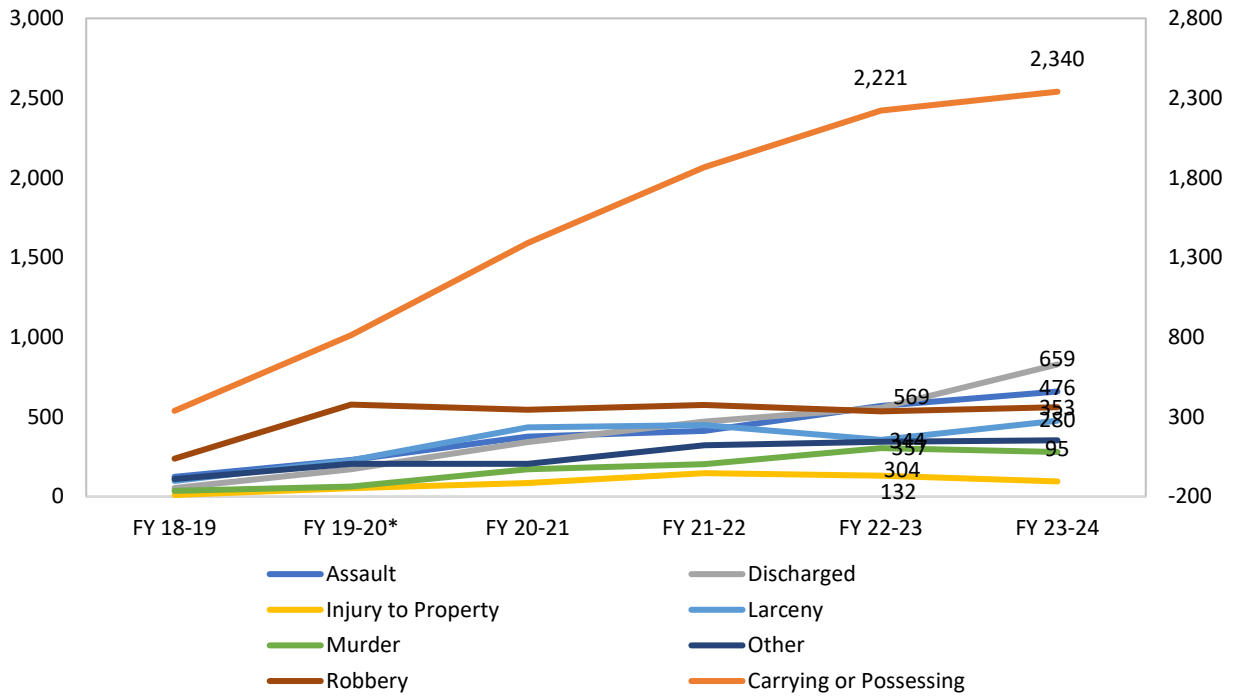
One may ask – What kinds of firearm offenses are charged on juveniles in the juvenile justice system? To answer this question, JJDP grouped similar individual charged firearm offenses. Categories developed include:

- Assault (with a firearm)
- Carry or Possess (a firearm)
- Discharge (of a firearm)
- Injury to Property (with a firearm)
- Larceny (of/with a firearm)
- Murder (with a firearm)
- Other
- Robbery (with a firearm)

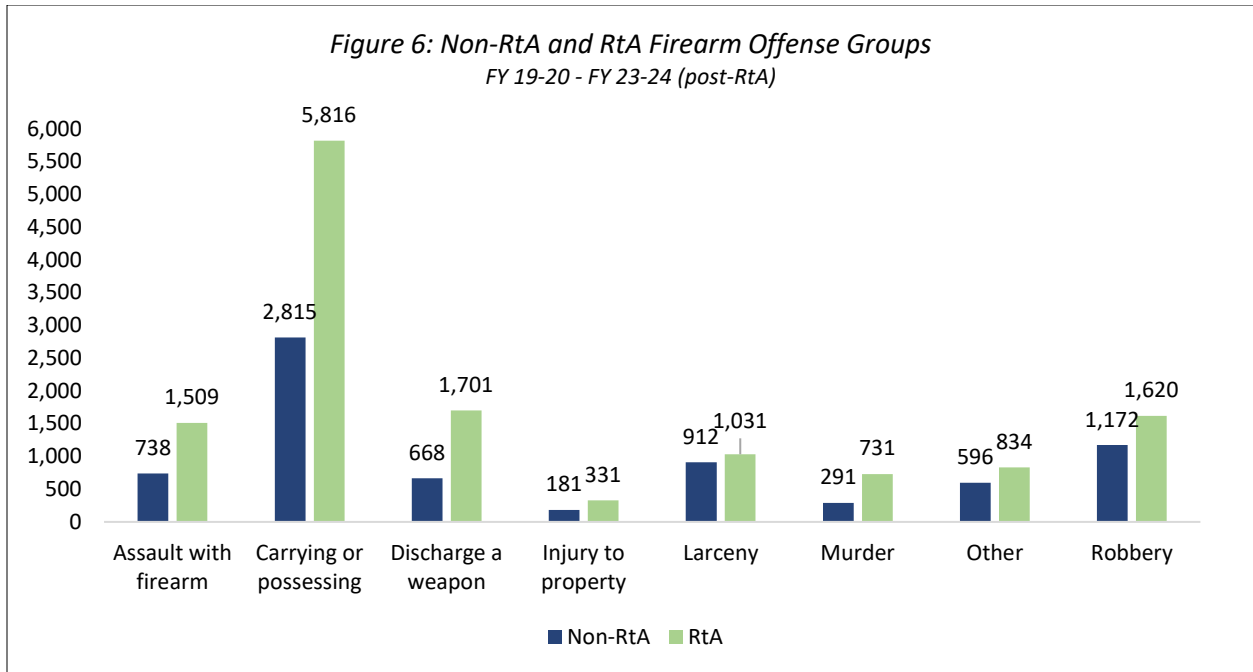
The most common charged firearm offense group is Carrying or Possessing a Firearm. In the past three fiscal years, 43% of firearm offenses involve carrying or possessing a firearm. In fiscal year 2019-20, a

partial Raise the Age year, 813 carrying or possessing firearm offenses were charged. In fiscal year 2021-22, 1,866 were charged in the same group. This firearm offense group has increased by an average of 39% over the past five years or since implementation of Raise the Age. The second most common offense group in the past three fiscal years is Discharged a Firearm at 12%, followed by Robbery with a Firearm at 11%, and Assault with a Firearm at 11%.

*Figure 5: Firearm Offense Group Trend
FY 18-19 - FY 23-24
FY 19-20 is a partial RtA year



When we break down the number of complaints per offense into those received for RtA and Non-RtA youth, we see that while some offenses are relatively equal in RtA and Non-RtA complaints, other offenses show much higher complaints for RtA youth. This is most especially evident with 1) Carrying or Possessing a Firearm, 2) Discharge a Firearm and 3) Robbery with a Firearm groups.



Conclusion

Although it is concerning to public safety to see the firearm offenses increase in the past five fiscal years, the increase in juvenile justice firearm offenses is largely attributable to the additional population of youth added to juvenile jurisdiction. Two-thirds of firearm offenses and distinct juveniles who commit firearm offenses are youth ages 16 or 17. Over the last four years, firearm offenses have consistently comprised about 14% of all complaints. What may be contrary to media coverage, a small proportion of school-based offenses – approximately 2% - are firearm offenses in NC. Another important note about NC juvenile firearm offense trends is that the most frequently charged firearm offense is carrying or possessing, rather than a violent or serious crime. JJDP is taking efforts to bring awareness and education to the issues of safe storage of firearms and juvenile access to firearms through the NC S.A.F.E. Campaign.