



# FACT SHEET

## AFRICAN AMERICAN JUVENILE CONFINEMENT

Youth of color are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system. African American youth are disproportionately overrepresented at every stage of the juvenile justice system from arrest through sentencing.

### Racial Disparities in Juvenile Arrests

- In 2007, the racial composition of the U.S. juvenile population ages 10–17 was 78 percent white, 17 percent African American, 5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent American Indian.<sup>1</sup> Although white youth made up a majority of the juvenile court referral population nationwide, in every offense category—person, property, drug, public order—African American youth were arrested at about two times the rate for white youth.<sup>2</sup>
  - The widest arrest disparities between African American youth and white youth were for violent crimes, for which African American youth were arrested at 3.5 times the rate for white youth.<sup>3</sup>
  - African American youth were arrested for murder non-negligent manslaughter at 7 times and for robbery 10 times the rates for white youth.<sup>4</sup>

**Relative Rate Index (RRI)<sup>5</sup> of National Juvenile Arrests, 2006**

	White	African American	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Pacific Islander
Total juvenile arrests	1,088,376	490,838	18,592	23,361
National RRI	1.0	2.1	0.9	0.4
Violent crime	1.0	3.5	1.0	0.3
Property crime	1.0	2.0	0.8	0.4
Drug (production, distribution, or use)	1.0	2.1	0.6	0.2
Public disorder	1.0	1.7	1.2	0.2

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States*, 2006.

### Juvenile Detention

- In 2006, detention rates for African Americans were more than five times, Latinos more than two times, and Native Americans more than three times those of whites.<sup>6</sup>
- Disparities among youth of color and white youth were highest for violent, drug, and public order offenses.<sup>7</sup>
- Detention rates for violent crime for African American youth were 6.9 times those of white youth.<sup>8</sup>

**Rates of Youth Detained, 2006**

	White	African American	Latino	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Pacific Islander
Total	8,167	11,089	5,993	513	367
National	1.0	5.2	2.4	3.6	0.6
Male	1.0	5.8	2.7	3.4	0.7
Female	1.0	3.5	1.6	4.5	0.4

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*, 2008.

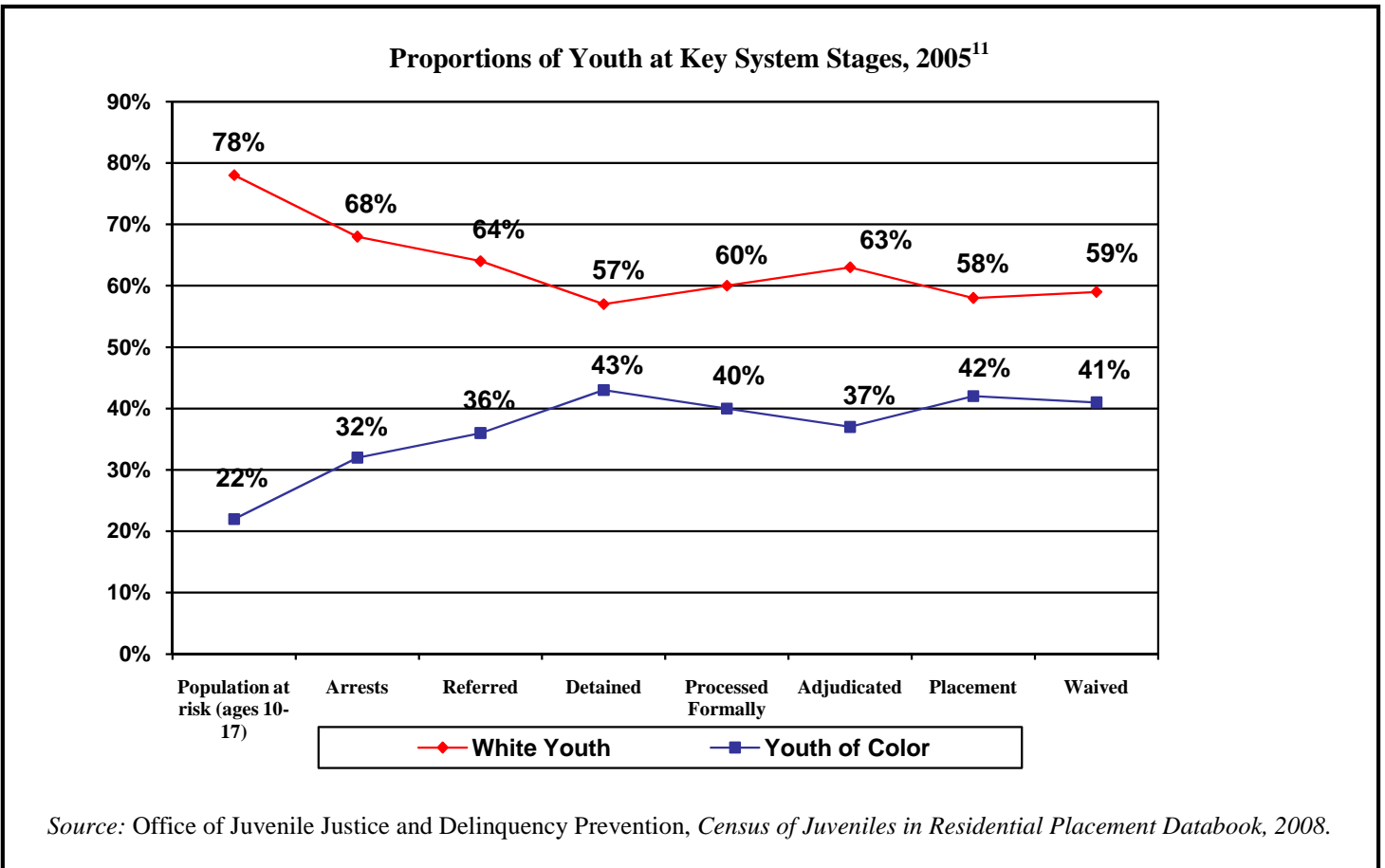
### Committed Youth by Offense Type, 2006

	White	African American	Latino	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Pacific Islander
Total detained	8,167	11,089	5,993	513	367
Total detained	1.0	5.2	2.4	3.6	0.6
Violent	1.0	6.9	2.7	3.3	0.8
Property	1.0	4.4	2.1	3.4	0.7
Drug	1.0	6.1	2.6	2.9	0.5

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*, 2008.

### Overrepresentation at Each Stage of the Juvenile Justice System

- African American youth are disproportionately overrepresented at every stage of the juvenile justice system from arrest through sentencing.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2005, African American youth were
  - more likely to be formally charged in juvenile court, even when referred for the same type of offense as white youth;
  - more likely to be incarcerated in public facilities than white youth when charged with the same offense; and
  - confined on average 61 days longer than white youth, and Latino youth were confined 112 days longer than white youth.<sup>10</sup>

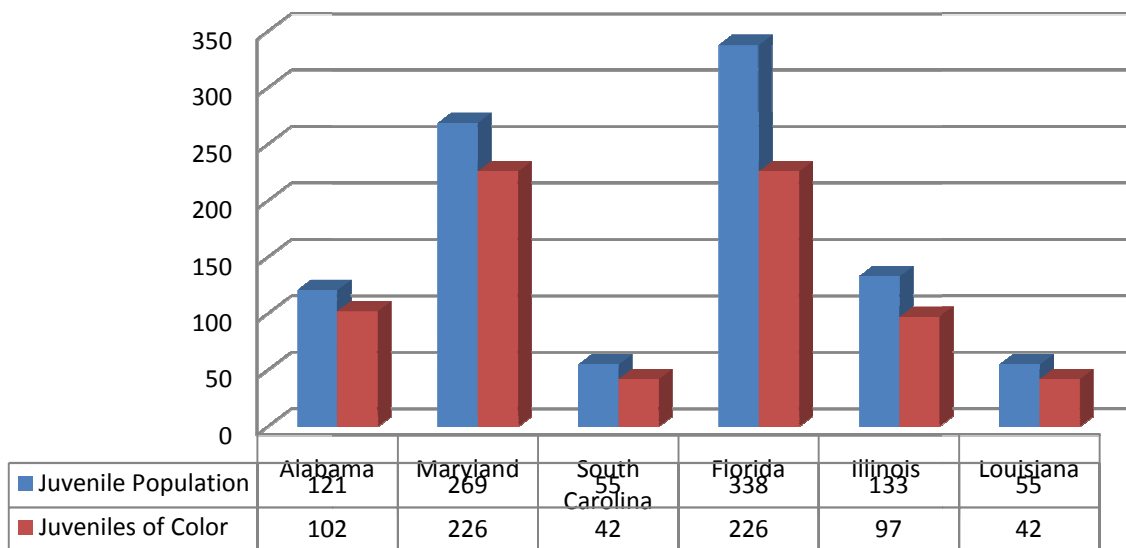


## Juveniles Serving Life Sentences

Based on data collected in 2003 by the Sentencing Project, there is a vast racial disparity among juveniles serving life sentences:

- Of the 6,807 juveniles serving life sentences, 77 percent are youth of color.<sup>12</sup>
- Juveniles serve life sentences in nearly every state, but more than 50 percent of the national population of life sentenced juveniles is located in five states: California (2,623), Texas (422), Pennsylvania (345), Florida (338), and Nevada (322).<sup>13</sup>
- Latinos represent 23.7 percent of juvenile life sentences, considerably higher than the percentage of youth nationwide who are Latino (18.0 percent).<sup>14</sup>
- Racial disparity in juvenile life sentences is quite severe in many states.<sup>15</sup>

### Racial and Ethnic Distribution of Life Sentenced Population



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, 2008.

<sup>1</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*. Available at: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/jcsdb/> (accessed August 21, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The Relative Rate Index measures the rate of one group compared with a baseline group, in this case whites, expressed as an RRI of 1.0. Simply put, this index is a ratio of rates for people of color to rates of whites. The RRI is a method used for assessing the degree of over- or underrepresentation experienced by system-involved youth of color in comparison with white youth.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Hartney and Linh Vuong, *Created Equal: Racial Disparities in the U.S. Criminal Justice System* (Oakland, Calif.: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency. *And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Youth of Color in the Justice System* (Oakland, Calif.: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*. Available at: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/jcsdb/> (accessed August 21, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Ashley Nellis and Ryan S. King, "No Exit: The Expanding Use of Life Sentences in America," 2009, Available at: [http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc\\_noexit.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_noexit.pdf) (accessed August 17, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book* (Baltimore, Md.: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008).