

# Crime - Unlawful Conduct Among Youth

## DESCRIPTION

Although the U.S. still leads the industrialized world in the rate at which it locks up young people, the youth confinement rate in the U.S. is rapidly declining. The juvenile justice system is based on the premise that adolescents and adults have different needs and capacities. Adolescents are still developing mentally, physically and emotionally, as they are forming their identities. As a result, juveniles who break the law should be treated differently than adults who do. Most juveniles in U.S. residential placement are there because of delinquency. The other 5 percent have committed status offenses (behaviors that are illegal for underage persons but not for adults, such as running away and truancy) as their most serious offense. For youth under court supervision, reoffending rates remain unacceptably high.<sup>1</sup> Rearrest rates for youth on probation are 50 percent or greater in many states, while two-thirds of incarcerated youth are rearrested within two years of release. Resources invested in community supervision and services have not consistently produced the desired measurable improvements in youth outcomes, particularly for youth of color who continue to experience persistent disparities and worse outcomes compared to their white peers.<sup>2</sup>

In Minnesota juvenile courts have jurisdiction over youth under age 18 who engage in unlawful conduct, with certain exceptions. In contrast to the adult courts, juvenile proceedings are not criminal proceedings designed to determine criminal responsibility and punishment, but rather they are civil proceedings designed to protect the child from the consequences of his or her own conduct, develop individual responsibility for unlawful behavior, rehabilitate him or her, and at the same time promote public safety.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW WE ARE DOING

Between 2013-2017, there was a 16 percent decrease in admissions to Ramsey County's Juvenile Detention Center (JDC), and a 20 percent decrease in the number of individual youth admitted. Most admissions (75 percent) each year were males. Over the past five years, the average time spent at the JDC has been 9-11 days. In 2017, Ramsey County's Boys Totem Town (BTT) facility served 60 boys. Since 2013 there has been a 65 percent decrease in admissions to BTT. In 2017, 841 Ramsey County youth were served by county probation staff, and 55 percent were black. Over the past five years approximately 50 percent of youth in the system were on probation for six months or less.<sup>4</sup>

## DISPARITIES

An assumption made, often erroneously, is that racial disparities exist because youth of color commit more crime than white youth.<sup>5</sup> While data suggest white youth and youth of color may have different rates of offending for some crimes, the levels of disparity observed are too great to be explained by differences in youth offending patterns alone.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, once youth of color are in the system, research reveals they receive harsher consequences than white youth with similar offenses and criminal histories.<sup>7</sup> Black youth,

## Information to note

- Black youth, ages 10-17, make up 19% of Ramsey County's youth population but accounted for 65% of detention admissions in 2017.
- Since 2013, the number of Ramsey County youth on probation has decreased by 26%.

<sup>1</sup> Sickmund M, Sladky TJ, Kang W, Puzanchera C. Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. EZACJRP. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>. Updated June 1, 2017. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Weber J, Umpierre M, Bilchik S. Transforming juvenile justice systems to improve public safety and youth outcomes. Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. 2018. <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Transforming-Juvenile-Justice-Systems-to-Improve-Public-Safety-and-Youth-Outcomes.pdf>. Published May 2018. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Minn. Stat. § 260B.001, subd. 2. <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/issinfo/cr-juvst.aspx?src=33>. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Ramsey County Community Corrections 2016 Fact Sheets. Ramsey County. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Departments/2016%20Community%20Corrections%20Fact%20Sheets.pdf>. Published April 2017. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Racial and ethnic disparity and disproportionality in child welfare and juvenile justice: A compendium. Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. 2009. [http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/RacialandEthnicDisparity\\_January2009.pdf](http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/RacialandEthnicDisparity_January2009.pdf). Published January 2009. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Huizinga D, Thornberry T, Knight K, Lovegrove P. Disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system: A study of differential minority arrests/referral to court in three cities. 2007. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/219743.pdf>. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>7</sup> And justice for some: Differential treatment of youth of color in the justice system. National Council on Crime and Delinquency. 2007. <https://www.nccdglobal.org/publications/and-justice-for-some-differential-treatment-of-youth-of-color-in-the-justice-system>. Published January 2007. Accessed July 2018.

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ages 10-17, make up 19 percent of Ramsey County's youth population but accounted for 65 percent of detention admissions in 2017.<sup>8</sup> Racial disparities continue to exist and while the number of youth of color admitted to detention has declined, the percentage of youth of color continues to represent a significant majority of detention admissions.

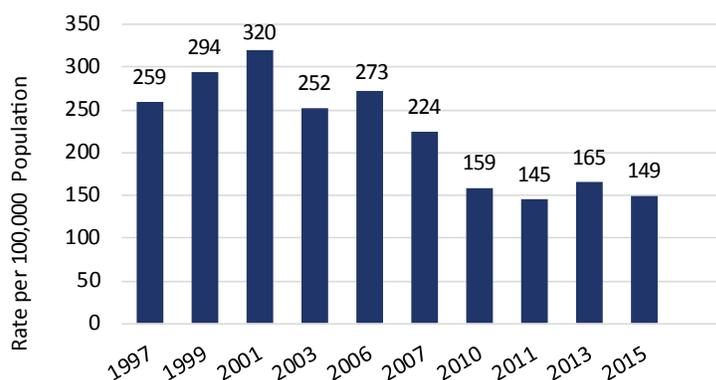
## RISK FACTORS

Youths' likelihood of engaging in delinquency and other problem behaviors are typically organized into the following domains: Individual (e.g., biological and psychological dispositions, attitudes, values, knowledge, skills, problem behaviors); Peer (e.g., norms, activities, attachment); Family (e.g., function, management, bonding, abuse/violence); School (e.g., bonding, climate, policy, performance); and Community (e.g., bonding, norms, resources, poverty level, crime).<sup>9</sup>

## WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

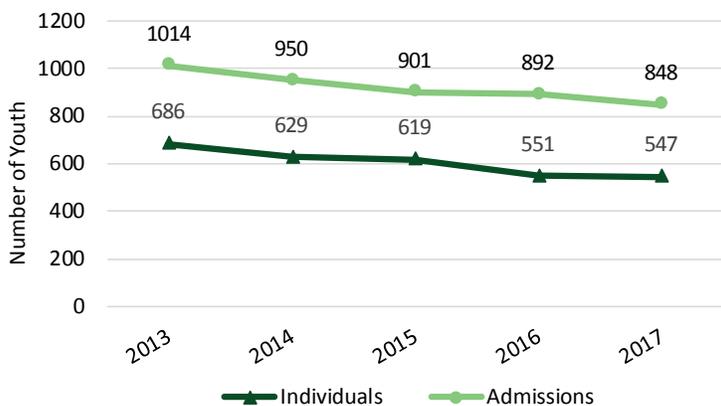
In 2014, Ramsey County began reform work with the Annie E. Casey Foundation called the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), to reduce reliance on out-of-home placement for court-involved youth. Out-of-home placements have a deeply troubling track record including high rates of recidivism, exorbitant costs, reduction in health and safety, and poor outcomes in youth development. By intentionally applying JDAI's approach through data-driven decision making, stakeholder collaboration, increasing community-based alternatives to placement and a laser focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in our juvenile justice system, Ramsey County can substantially reduce reliance on incarceration and out-of-home placement without sacrificing public safety.

Youth Residing in Juvenile Detention, Correctional, and/or Residential Facilities, Minnesota



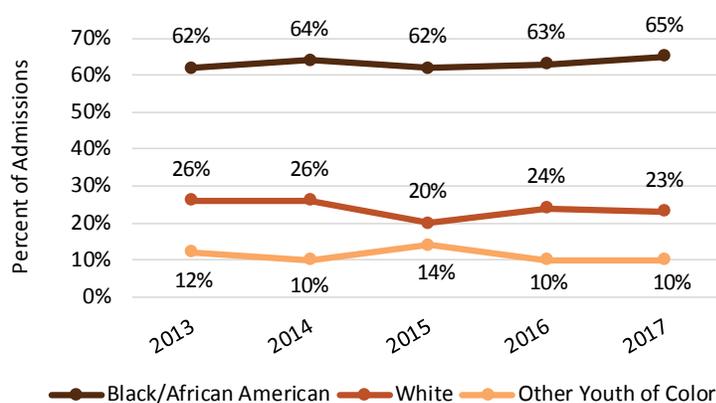
Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.<sup>10</sup>

Admissions to the Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center



Source: Ramsey County Community Corrections.

Admissions to the Juvenile Detention Center, Ramsey County



Source: Ramsey County Community Corrections.

<sup>8</sup> Ramsey County Community Corrections 2016 Fact Sheets. Ramsey County. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Departments/2016%20Community%20Corrections%20Fact%20Sheets.pdf>. Published April 2017. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Risk Factors for Delinquency. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2015. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Risk%20Factors.pdf>. Updated December 2015. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Sickmund M, Sladky TJ, Kang W, Puzanchera C. (2017) "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>. Accessed July 2018.