

An Overview of Youth Justice Data and Research on Promising Practices to Support Youth Development

Education Access and Youth Development Measure J Subcommittee
February 16th, 2021

First, a quick summary of what we know:

1. Most young people who come into contact with the justice system will age out of criminalized behavior without system involvement.
1. At every stage, justice system involvement operates as a negative health exposure and is a major determinant of health equity, youth development, and community wellbeing.
1. Even a first-time arrest disrupts a young person's development and dramatically worsens their chances of graduating high school.

8,133

youth arrests in 2018

In 2018, law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles County reported 8,133 youth arrests to the California Department of Justice. This number does not include a full count of School Police Department arrests although it does include arrests reported by LAPD and LASD.

~80%

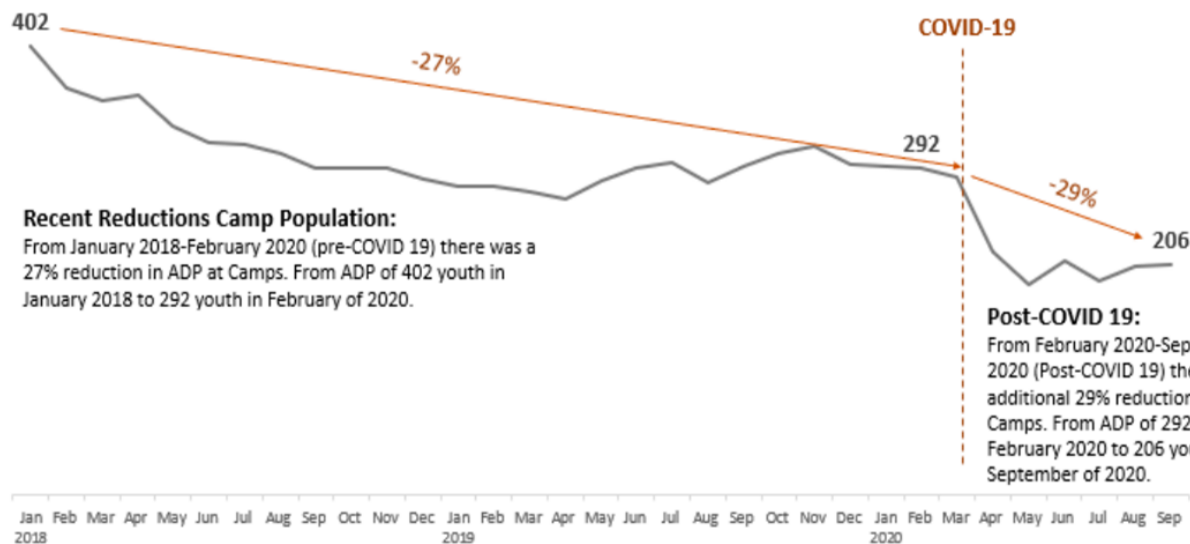
youth arrests each year are for alleged status offenses, misdemeanors, or non-707(b) felonies

Since 2015, a broad collaborative with youth and community leadership has been working together to develop a countywide model for Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) based on this data that would equitably reduce youth arrests and connect youth to community-based services.

430

youth in juvenile halls and camps as of Feb. 2021

For years, several collaborative efforts have worked towards substantially reducing the population of incarcerated youth. In 2020, those efforts culminated in developing plans to divert all eligible youth from the justice system, and transforming the youth justice system to a new, healing-focused model of Youth Development.

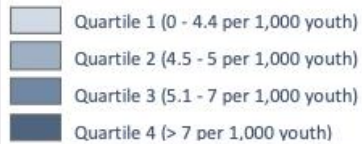


What does available data help us understand about youth justice system involvement in LA County?

**Zip Codes Most Impacted by Youth
Justice System Involvement:**

90011, 90047, 90037 - LA / South Central
93535, 93434 - Lancaster / Quartz Hill
90044 - LA / Athens
93550 - Palmdale
90280 - Southgate
91331 - LA / Pacoima
91766 - Pomona
90059 - LA / Watts/Willowbrook
90201 - Bell Gardens / Cudahy
90805 - North Long Beach

**Figure 3. Youth Arrest Rates in Los
Angeles County by Jurisdiction, 2015**



0 5 10 20 Miles

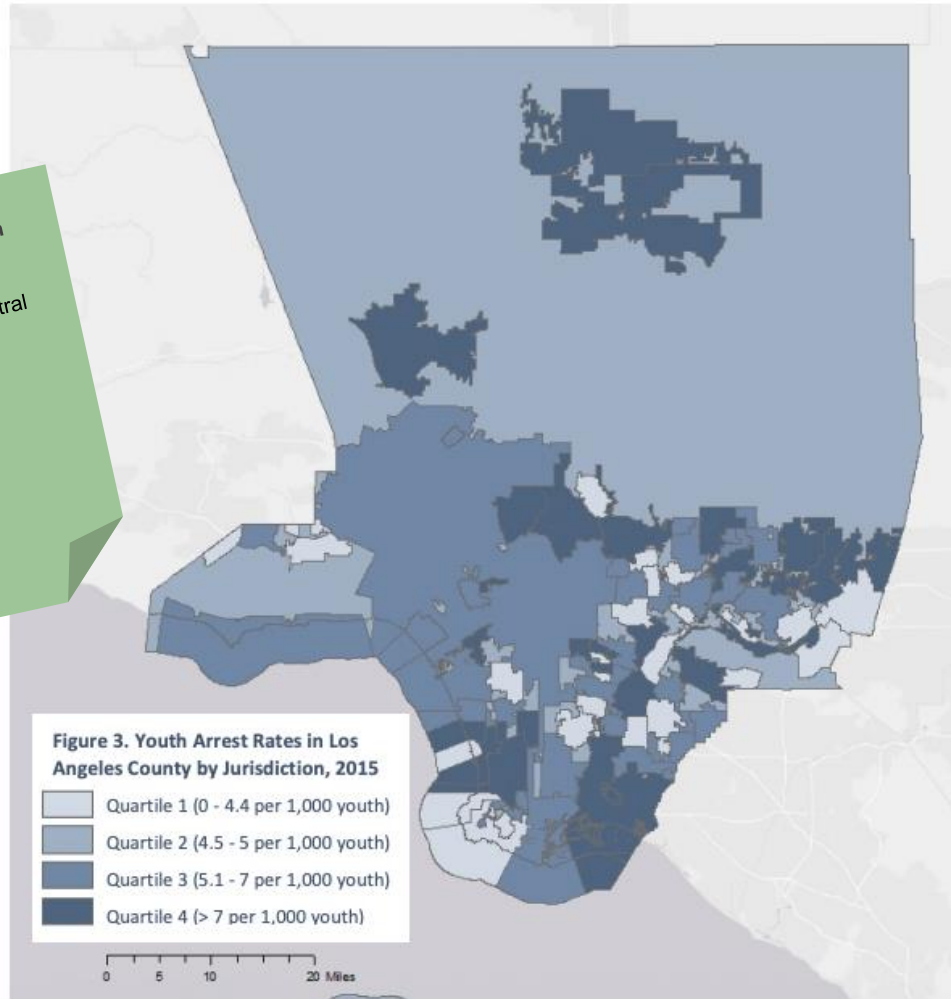
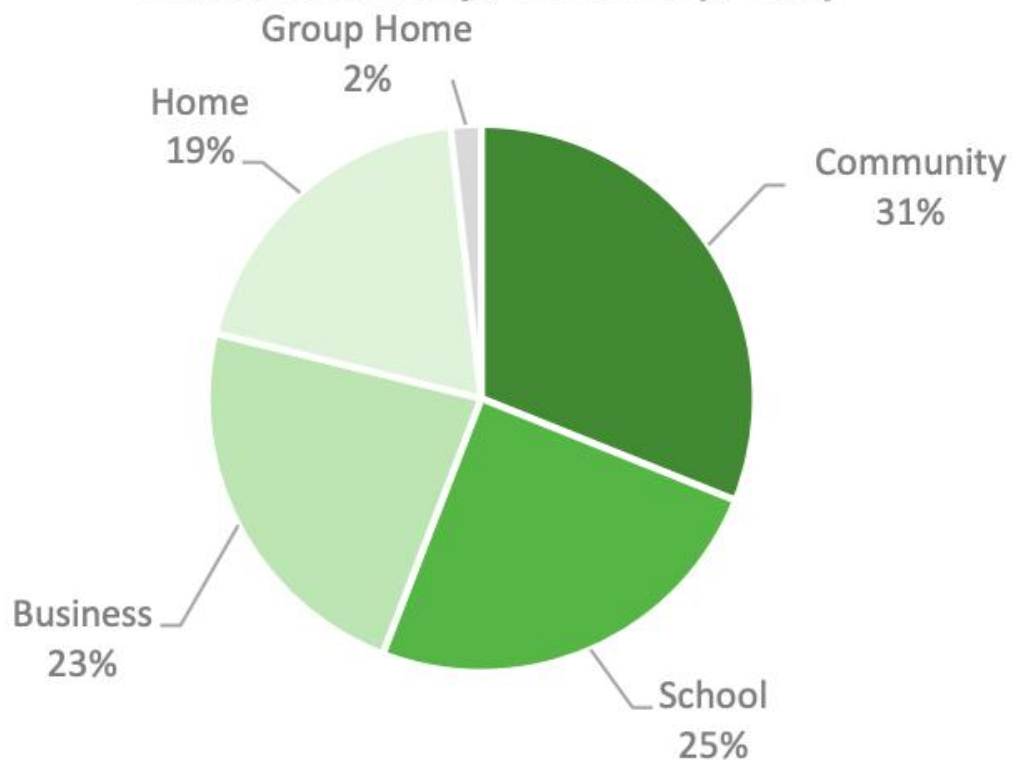


Fig. 7. Formal YDD Referrals by Location of Law Enforcement Stop, Oct. 2020 (n=255)



Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice

64%

Youth identified as dual system youth from 2014- 2016

- “Dual System Youth” -- youth who received at least one child welfare investigation before a juvenile justice petition
- Nearly all dual system youth interacted with the child welfare system before entering the juvenile justice system (94%).
- “Overall, females in all race/ethnicity groups were more likely than their male counterparts to be dual system youth, and Black youth were more likely to be dual system youth than those of any other race/ethnicity.”

Herz, D., Eastman, A. L., McCroskey, J., Guo, L. & Putnam-Hornstein, E. (2021). The intersection of child welfare and juvenile justice: Key findings from the Los Angeles dual system study. Retrieved from <https://www.datanetwork.org/research/dually-involved-youth-investigating-intersections-between-the-child-welfare-and-juvenile-justice-systems-in-los-angeles-county/>

1. Youth of color are more likely than white youth to have their adolescent development derailed by criminalization and arrest.

The arrest rate for Black youth in Los Angeles County is over 6 times higher than that of White youth.

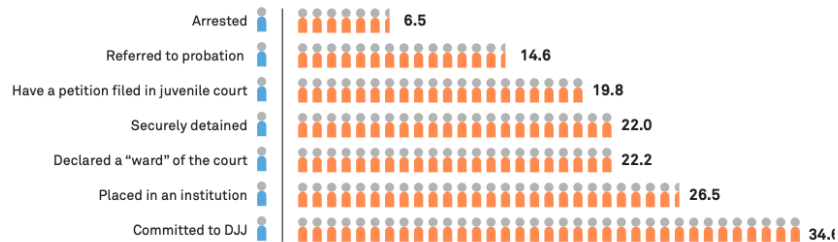
Figure 1: Rate of Arrest per 1,000 Youth in Los Angeles County (2019)



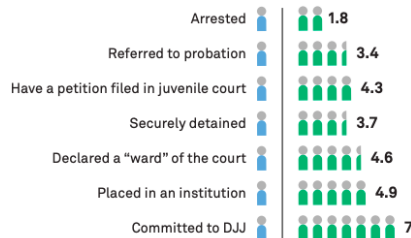
2. Despite incremental reforms to improve practices and facilities, the justice system in Los Angeles County continues to disproportionately harm youth of color at every stage.

Figure 2: Cumulative Disparities for Black and Latino Youth (2018)

For every white Youth (ages 10-17) in LA County, this many Black Youth are ...



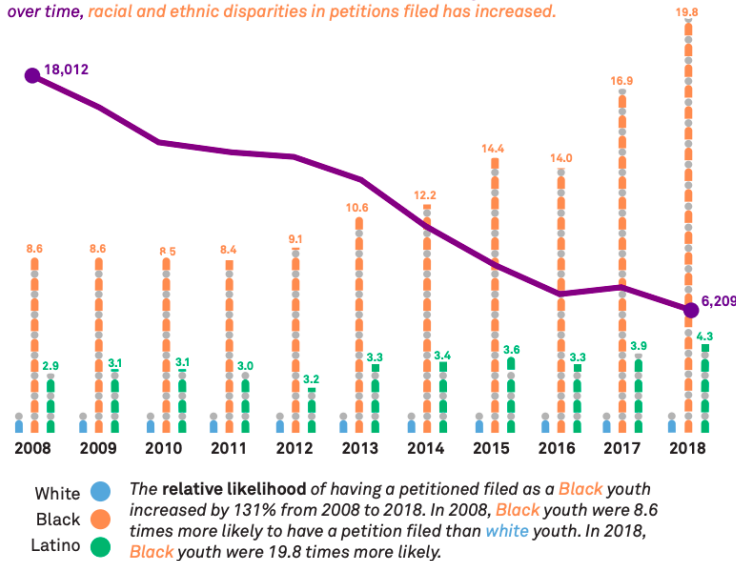
For every white Youth (ages 10-17) in LA County, this many Latino Youth are...



3. In fact, as the number of youth involved in the justice system decreases, disparities have increased over time.

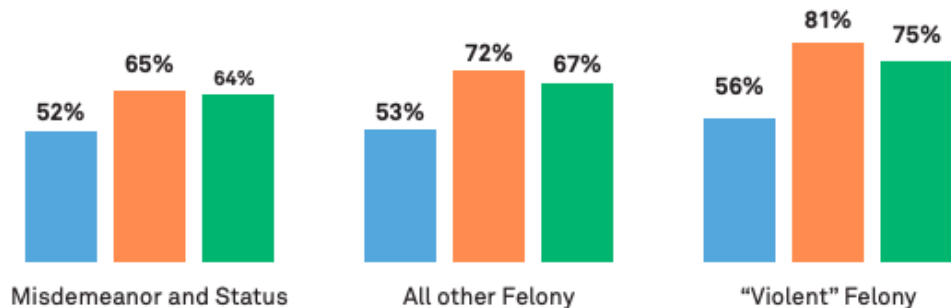
Figure 3: Trends in Total Petitions Filed and Disparity Gap in Petitions Filed for Black and Latino youth (2008-2018)

While the number of petitions filed overall has decreased significantly over time, racial and ethnic disparities in petitions filed has increased.



4. Additionally, racial and ethnic disparities persist across offense categories and are most stark for youth with more serious offenses.

Figure 4: Percent of Referrals to Probation that have a Petition Filed in Los Angeles County (2018)



Whereas 56% of *white* youth referred to Probation for a "violent" felony have a petition filed, 81% of *Black* youth and 75% of *Latino* youth have a petition filed.

5. Addressing these serious inequities in youth justice system involvement requires thoughtful countywide expansion of promising practices to support youth development and reduce justice system involvement and structural solutions for equitable decision-making.

- Prioritize social justice approaches to core competencies of youth development.
- Involve system-impacted youth and families in the design of strategies and systems, evaluation, and funding through civic engagement and employment.
- Reduce the size and scope of the youth justice system through equitable decriminalization and diversion.
- Integrate restorative practices that promote healing and repair harm.
- Connect youth with mentors who are credible messengers.
- Support a community-based continuum of care through reentry in communities most impacted by justice system involvement.

What else does research tell us about promising strategies to reduce involvement in the justice system for Black, Indigenous, and youth of color?

1. Spaces where youth and families can feel supported, access resources, build skills, express themselves, and have fun help youth thrive.

Including but not limited to:

- Youth and community centers
- Integrated strategies that increase safety and reduce violence
- Healing-informed arts
- Bright, colorful, comfortable (i.e., non-clinical) environments
- Activities / services that are accessible to youth / families (e.g., walking distance from homes, schools, public transportation; minimal wait time; co-located)

2. Pathways to civic engagement, leadership, and employment help youth thrive.

Including but not limited to:

- Mentorship and credible messengers
- Opportunities for youth to participate in decisions that impact them and design solutions that reflect their priorities
- Environmental and civic education (e.g., community gardens, participatory action)
- Sustainable, accessible pathways to careers
- Summer job opportunities

3. Strategies that support restorative rather than punitive or criminalizing practices in schools help youth thrive.

Including but not limited to:

- Restorative and transformative justice
- Peacebuilding and crisis intervention
- Alternatives to school-based law enforcement
- Social justice approaches to social and emotional learning
- Meaningful school-community partnerships to increase access to resources

4. When designed and implemented with a focus on equity and strong youth development principles, alternatives to justice system involvement at every stage help youth thrive.

Including but not limited to:

- Strategies that avoid widening the net of justice system involvement.
- Community-based youth diversion models that are individualized and restorative.
- Healing-informed spaces and practices for youth who are not diverted.
- Community-based reentry services for youth who are returning home.

“If our best interest was in mind, the funding that goes to locking us up and keeping us under supervision would go into building stronger support for us in schools, equitably resourcing peacebuilders and mentors, creating youth jobs and pathways to careers, and comprehensive reentry services for youth coming home.”

- Youth Statement from *Youth Justice Reimagined*

Thank you!

Shimica Gaskins

Children's Defense Fund - CA

sgaskins@childrensdefense.org

www.cdfca.org

Taylor Schooley

Department of Health Services,
Division of Youth Diversion &
Development

tschooley@dhs.lacounty.gov

<https://dhs.lacounty.gov/office-of-diversion-and-reentry/our-services/office-of-diversion-and-reentry/youth-diversion-and-development/>

