

Black Disparities in Youth Incarceration

Racial Disparities Persist but Fall from All-Time High

Black youth are more than four times as likely to be detained or committed in juvenile facilities as their white peers, according to nationwide data collected in October 2019 and recently released. In 2015, Black youth's incarceration rate was 5.0 times as high as their white peers, an all-time peak. That ratio fell to 4.4, a 13% decline.¹

Juvenile facilities, including 1,510 detention centers, residential treatment centers, group homes, and youth prisons² held 36,479 youths as of October 2019. (These data do not include the 653 people under 18 in prisons at year-end 2019³ or the estimated 2,900 people under 18 in jails at midyear 2019.⁴)

Forty-one percent of youths in placement are Black, even though Black Americans comprise only 15% of all youth across the United States.⁵ Black youth are more likely to be in custody than white youth in every state but one: Hawaii. Between 2015 and 2019, juvenile placements fell by 24%. During these years, Black youth placements declined faster than white youth placements (54% vs. 36%), resulting in a smaller but still considerable disparity.

Nationally, the youth placement rate was 114 per 100,000. The Black youth placement rate was 315 per 100,000, compared to the white youth placement rate of 72 per 100,000.

Racial disparities grew by more than 10% in 11 states and decreased by at least 10% in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

- In New Jersey, Wisconsin, District of Columbia, and Connecticut, African American youth are at least 10 times more likely to be held in placement as are white youth.
- South Carolina, Tennessee, and Nebraska have seen their racial disparity grow by at least one-third.
- Indiana, New Jersey, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Nevada decreased their racial disparity by at least one-third.

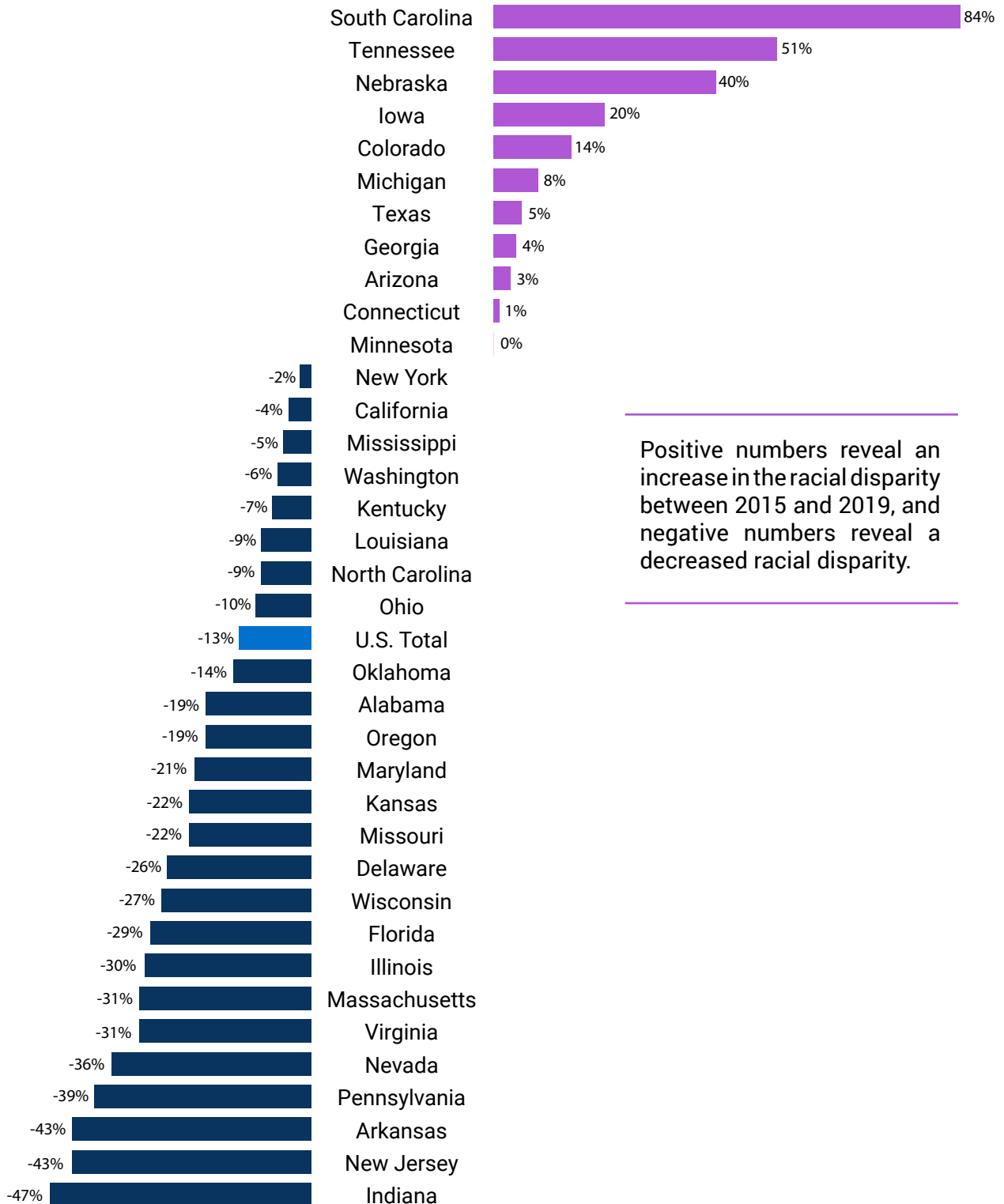
Black/White Youth Placement Rates per 100,000; 2019

State	Black Rate	White Rate	B/W Disparity
Alabama	294	106	2.8
Arizona	240	62	3.9
Arkansas	307	96	3.2
California	433	48	9.0
Colorado	557	76	7.3
Connecticut	74	7	10.6
Delaware	390	44	8.9
District of Columbia	388	35	11.1
Florida	295	90	3.3
Georgia	233	40	5.8
Illinois	218	32	6.8
Indiana	298	138	2.2
Iowa	721	83	8.7
Kansas	405	81	5.0
Kentucky	393	89	4.4
Louisiana	294	49	6.0
Maryland	182	29	6.3
Massachusetts	133	19	7.0
Michigan	458	85	5.4
Minnesota	621	73	8.5
Mississippi	105	27	3.9
Missouri	288	80	3.6
Nebraska	641	69	9.3
Nevada	488	140	3.5
New Jersey	245	14	17.5
New York	168	30	5.6
North Carolina	250	37	6.8
Ohio	433	84	5.2
Oklahoma	281	53	5.3
Oregon	547	146	3.7
Pennsylvania	413	73	5.7
South Carolina	315	63	5.0
Tennessee	124	27	4.6
Texas	345	74	4.7
Virginia	273	57	4.8
Washington	310	60	5.2
Wisconsin	485	43	11.3
U.S. Total	315	72	4.4

The table above and the figure on page 2 are limited to the 36 states and the District of Columbia with at least 8,000 Black residents between 10- and 17-years old.

Numbers in the last column reveal the extent to which Black youth are more likely to be incarcerated than white youth. For example, in Alabama, Black youth are 2.8 times more likely to be held in a juvenile facility than their white peers.

Change in Black/White Placement Disparity; 2015 vs. 2019⁶



Positive numbers reveal an increase in the racial disparity between 2015 and 2019, and negative numbers reveal a decreased racial disparity.

1 Most data in this report are derived from Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Puzzanchera, C. and Kang, W. (2021). *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>

2 Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2020). *Juvenile Residential Facility Census Databook*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/jrfcdb/>

3 Carson, E.A. (2020). *Prisoners in 2019*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 25115. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf>

4 Zeng, Z. and Minton, T. (2021). *Jail Inmates in 2019*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 255608. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji19.pdf>

5 Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2020). *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2019*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>

6 The District of Columbia's racial disparity was undefined in 2015 because there were no incarcerated white youth on the date of the one-day count.