

Latinx Disparities in Youth Incarceration

Latinx Youth 16% More Likely to Be Incarcerated Than White Peers

For a decade, incarceration disparities between Latinx and white youth have fallen, though disparities still remain. As of 2021, Latinx youth were 16% more likely to be placed (i.e., detained or committed) in juvenile facilities as their white peers, according to nationwide data collected in October 2021 and recently released. These data reveal a sharp decline in Latinx-white youth incarceration disparities since 2011; that year, Latinx youth were 76% more likely to be in placement than white youth.¹

Juvenile facilities, including 1,323 detention centers, residential treatment centers, group homes, and youth prisons² held 24,894 youths as of October 2021. (These data do not include the 291 people under 18 in adult prisons at year-end 2021³ or the estimated 2,000 people under 18 in adult jails at midyear 2021.⁴)

Nationally, the youth placement rate was 74 per 100,000 youth in 2021. The Latinx youth placement rate was 57 per 100,000, compared to the white youth placement rate of 49 per 100,000.

A total of 20% of youths in placement are Latinx, and Latinx youth comprise 25% of all youth across the United States.⁵ Latinx youth are more likely to be in custody than white youth in half of states with at least 8,000 Latinx youth (between the ages of 10 and 17), a cutoff that allows for meaningful comparisons

Between 2011 and 2021, juvenile placements fell by 59%. During these years, Latinx youth placements declined slightly faster than white youth placements (a 65% decline vs. 57%), resulting in a smaller but still considerable disparity.

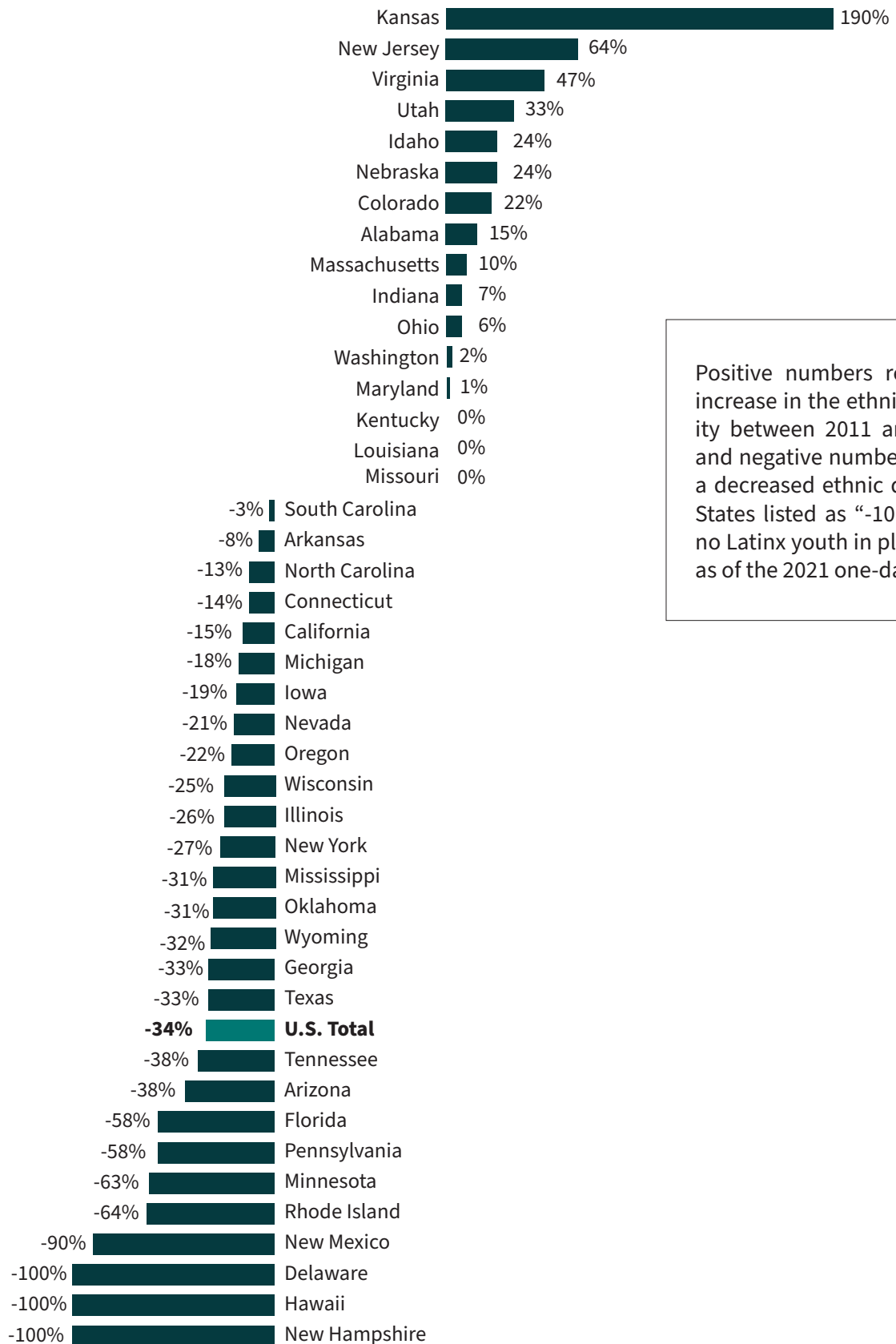
Between 2011 and 2021, ethnic disparities grew by more than 10% in states and decreased by at least 10% in 25 states.

- As of 2021, in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut, Latinx youth are at least 4 times as likely to be held in placement as are white youth.
- Between 2011 and 2021, Kansas and New Jersey saw their Latinx/white disparity increase by at least 50%.
- During these same years, Pennsylvania, Florida, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Delaware, Hawaii, and New Hampshire decreased their disparities by at least half.

Latinx/White Youth Placement Rates per 100,000; 2021			
	Latinx Rate	White Rate	L/W Disparity
Alabama	78	97	0.80
Arizona	31	41	0.76
Arkansas	56	66	0.85
California	67	32	2.09
Colorado	87	49	1.78
Connecticut	13	3	4.33
Delaware	0	52	N/A
Florida	5	52	0.10
Georgia	28	33	0.85
Hawaii	0	18	N/A
Idaho	151	99	1.53
Illinois	18	14	1.29
Indiana	70	93	0.75
Iowa	73	51	1.43
Kansas	160	63	2.54
Kentucky	48	33	1.45
Louisiana	36	55	0.65
Maryland	15	9	1.67
Massachusetts	65	10	6.50
Michigan	53	50	1.06
Minnesota	26	33	0.79
Mississippi	19	24	0.79
Missouri	81	71	1.14
Nebraska	106	51	2.08
Nevada	83	76	1.09
New Hampshire	0	9	N/A
New Jersey	34	7	4.86
New Mexico	37	193	0.19
New York	28	18	1.56
North Carolina	20	16	1.25
Ohio	67	63	1.06
Oklahoma	34	46	0.74
Oregon	147	127	1.16
Pennsylvania	69	49	1.41
Rhode Island	48	63	0.76
South Carolina	46	54	0.85
Tennessee	13	24	0.54
Texas	77	60	1.28
Utah	83	23	3.61
Virginia	51	30	1.70
Washington	63	35	1.80
Wisconsin	53	34	1.56
Wyoming	161	224	0.72
U.S. Total	57	49	1.16

The table above and the figure on page 2 are limited to the 43 states with at least 8,000 Latinx residents between 10- and 17-years old. Numbers in the third column reveal the extent to which Latinx youth are more likely to be incarcerated than white youth. For example, in Alabama, Latinx youth are .80 times as likely (e.g., less likely) to be held in a juvenile facility than their white peers. States listed as N/A had no Latinx youth in placement as of the 2021 one-day count.

Change in Latinx/White Placement Disparity; 2011 vs. 2021



Positive numbers reveal an increase in the ethnic disparity between 2011 and 2021, and negative numbers reveal a decreased ethnic disparity. States listed as “-100%” had no Latinx youth in placement as of the 2021 one-day count.

Endnotes

¹ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2023). “Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.” Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>

² Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2022). “Juvenile Residential Facility Census Databook.” Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/jrfcdb/>

³ Carson, E. A. (2022). Prisoners in 2021-Statistical Tables. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/p21st.pdf>

⁴ Zeng, Z. (2022). Jail Inmates in 2021 – Statistical Tables. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/p21st.pdf>

⁵ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2021). “Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2020.” Online. Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop>



The Sentencing Project
1705 DeSales Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 628-0871

sentencingproject.org
twitter.com/sentencingproj
facebook.com/thesentencingproject
instagram.com/thesentencingproject

This factsheet was created by Josh Rovner, Director of Youth Justice at The Sentencing Project.

Published December 2023.

The Sentencing Project advocates for effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.