

Black Youth Incarceration

Black Youth Almost Six Times As Likely To Be Incarcerated As White Peers

Incarceration disparities between Black and white youth have remained stubbornly high over the past decade. As of 2023, the most recent data, Black youth were 5.6 times as likely to be placed (i.e., detained or committed) in juvenile facilities as their white peers. The disparity is now at an all-time high, based on data that starts in 1997.¹

Juvenile facilities held 29,314 youth as of October 2023. This includes placement in one of our nation's 1,277 detention centers, residential treatment centers, group homes, and youth prisons.² These numbers do not include the 437 people under age 18 in adult prisons at year-end 2022 or the estimated 2,000 people under 18 in adult jails at midyear 2023.³

- Nationally, the youth placement rate was 87 per 100,000 youth.
- Black youth were placed at a rate of 293 per 100,000, compared to the white youth rate of 52 per 100,000.
- 46% of youth in placement were Black, even though Black youth comprised only 15% of all youth across the United States.⁴

In all states with a population of at least 5,000 Black youth between ages 10 and 17, a cutoff that allows for meaningful comparisons, Black youth were at least 2.5 as likely to be in custody than white youth.

Over the last 10 years for which there are data, juvenile placements fell 46%. During this same period, Black-white racial disparities in youth incarceration grew more than 10% in 23 states and decreased by at least 10% in six states. Other trends during this period include:

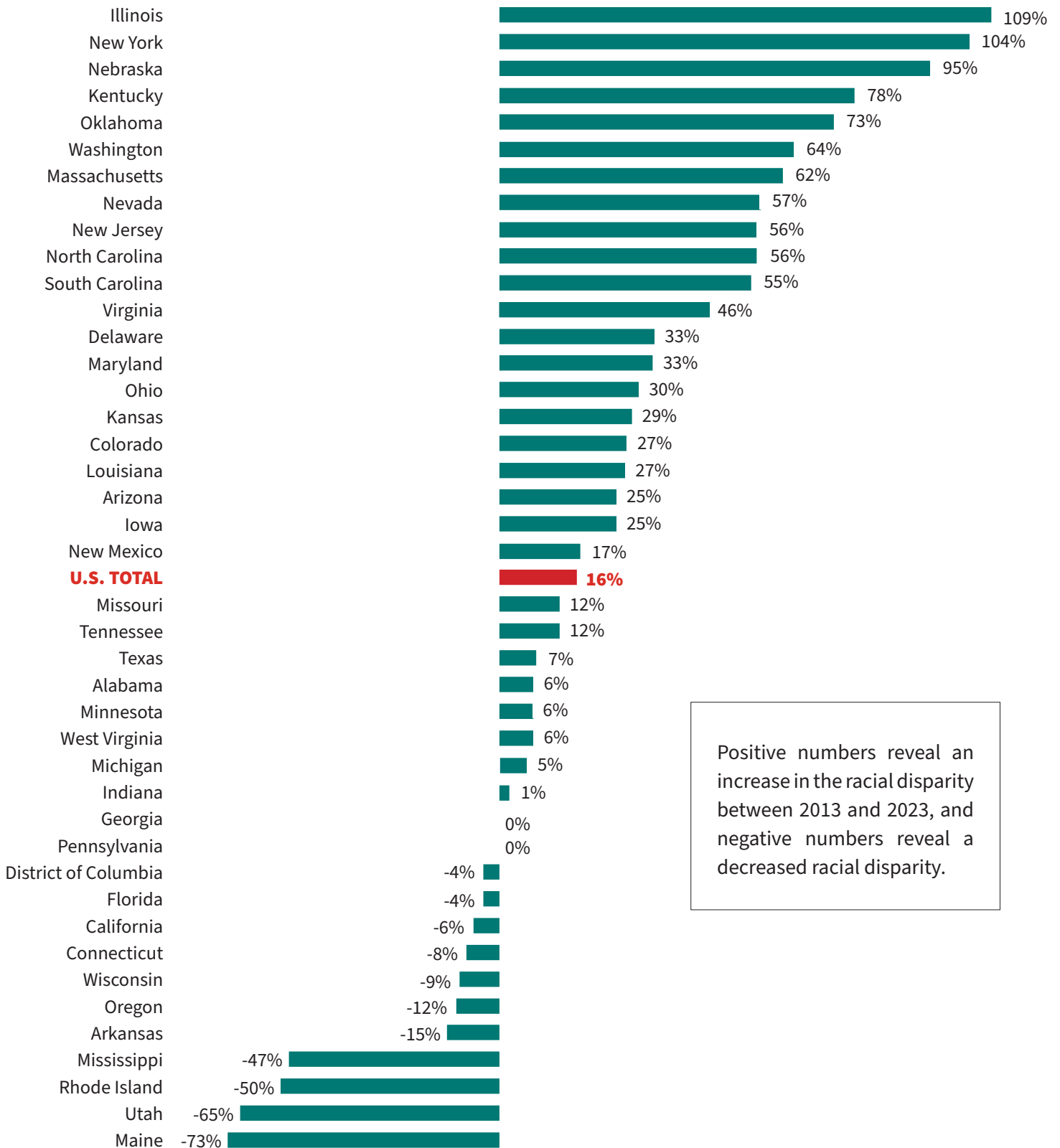
- Illinois and New York saw their racial disparity at least double.
- Maine, Utah, and Rhode Island decreased their racial disparity by at least half.

Black youth were at least 10 times as likely to be held in placement as white youth in New Jersey, Connecticut, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Utah, Illinois, New York, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Delaware.

The table to the right and the figure below are limited to the 41 states and the District of Columbia with at least 5,000 Black residents between 10- and 17-years old. Numbers in the third column reveal the extent to which Black youth are incarcerated relative to white youth. For example, in Alabama, Black youth are 3.4 times as likely to be held in a juvenile facility as their white peers.

Black/White Youth Placement Rates per 100,000: 2023			
	Black rate	White rate	B/W Disparity
Alabama	299	87	3.4
Arizona	192	42	4.6
Arkansas	448	95	4.7
California	275	33	8.3
Colorado	504	47	10.7
Connecticut	86	5	17.2
Delaware	351	33	10.6
District of Columbia	407	94	4.3
Florida	254	72	3.5
Georgia	175	36	4.9
Illinois	231	18	12.8
Indiana	338	90	3.8
Iowa	482	49	9.8
Kansas	555	56	9.9
Kentucky	484	60	8.1
Louisiana	358	51	7.0
Maine	78	29	2.7
Maryland	104	12	8.7
Massachusetts	215	15	14.3
Michigan	269	40	6.7
Minnesota	312	32	9.8
Mississippi	120	36	3.3
Missouri	365	75	4.9
Nebraska	1,029	60	17.2
Nevada	677	95	7.1
New Jersey	241	6	40.2
New Mexico	574	114	5.0
New York	266	21	12.7
North Carolina	165	18	9.2
Ohio	559	77	7.3
Oklahoma	378	30	12.6
Oregon	701	137	5.1
Pennsylvania	380	44	8.6
Rhode Island	451	73	6.2
South Carolina	213	54	3.9
Tennessee	138	21	6.6
Texas	293	63	4.7
Utah	435	33	13.2
Virginia	322	39	8.3
Washington	423	46	9.2
West Virginia	865	225	3.8
Wisconsin	507	31	16.4
U.S. TOTAL	292	52	5.6

Change in Black/White Youth Placement Disparity: 2013 to 2023



Endnotes

¹ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2025). [Easy access to the census of juveniles in residential placement](#). National Center for Juvenile Justice.

² Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2024). [Juvenile residential facility census databook](#). National Center for Juvenile Justice.

³ Carson, E.A., and Kluckow, R. [Prisoners in 2022 – Statistical tables](#) (Table 15). Bureau of Justice Statistics. Zeng, Z. (2025). [Jail inmates in 2023 - Statistical tables](#) (Table 4). Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2025). [Easy access to juvenile populations: 1990-2023](#). National Center for Juvenile Justice.



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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.