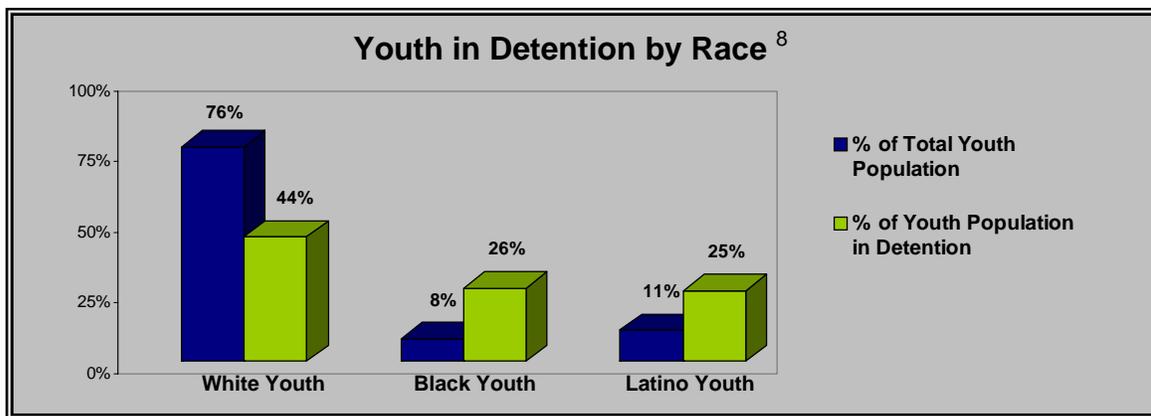


DETENTION IN MASSACHUSETTS: FACT SHEET

- **High Detention Rate for Nonviolent Offenses** – Approximately 53% of all youth detained in Massachusetts are held for non-violent or non-weapon offenses.¹
- **Low Percentage of Commitments based on Detentions** – In 2006, of the 5,438 youth detained in the Department of Youth Services (DYS), only 1,113 (20%) were later committed to DYS custody.²
- **High Detention Rate for Misdemeanor Offenses** – 45% of youth detained in 2006 at DYS were being held on a misdemeanor offense.³
- **Detainees Are Not Just Older Kids** – In 2006, 21% of all DYS detainees were age 14 or younger, and the average age of detainees was 15.4 years old.⁴
- **Average Length of Stay in Detention** – The average length of stay in detention has increased from 17.3 days in 2005 to 18.5 days in 2006.⁵
- **Alternatives to Detention Are More Cost Effective than DYS** – There are approximately 350 detention beds across Massachusetts, with each bed costing approximately \$82,000 per year, costing far more than community based alternatives to detention.⁶
- **Minority Youth Are Overrepresented** – Relative to the total youth population, the ratio of black youth in secure detention is approximately eight times greater than the ratio of white youth in detention, and the ratio for Latino youth is five times greater.⁷



- **Trauma** – The majority of detained youth have a pre-existing trauma history, with one study finding that over 90% of juvenile detainees have experienced at least one traumatic incident.⁹ For these children, many of the experiences that occur in detention can be especially re-traumatizing and destructive.
- **Obstacles for Youth with Mental Disorders** – Youth with mental disorders or low IQs often find it difficult to understand and cooperate with staff instructions and behavioral requirements. These situations can lead to anger, frustration, and even self-destructive behavior such as suicide attempts.¹⁰
- **Educational Needs Are Not Being Met** – Youth in detention are temporarily taken off of their Individualized Education Plans causing a disruption in educational services.¹¹
- **Aging Out (“Desistance Rate”)** – Juveniles tend to grow out of delinquent behavior. Detaining youth for long periods of time may interrupt and/or delay this process, since detainment takes youth away from their natural engagement with family, school, and employment, and causes a disruption in services.¹²

Sources:

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1. Department of Youth Services (DYS). <http://www.mass.gov/dys/>. 2006 data is the most up-to-date information available from DHS.
2. DHS, *Ibid.*
3. DHS, *Ibid.*
4. DHS, *Ibid.*
5. DHS, *Ibid.*
6. Figure courtesy of the Department of Youth Services.
7. Sickmund, Melissa, Sladky, T.J., and Kang, Wei. *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*, 2005, www.ojdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/cjrp.
8. Detention data refers to youth in Massachusetts ages 10-16. Total youth population comes from 2005, and data on youth population in detention refers to 2006. Detention data includes youth previously committed to DHS who are detained and youth who are newly detained. DHS detention data received from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety. For population data, see: Puzzanchera, C., Finnegan, T., and Kang, W., "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations." Online. Available: <http://www.ojdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezapop/>.
9. National Center for Mental Health and Justice, *Trauma Among Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: Critical Issues and New Directions*, p.2, 2007, Citing: Arroyo, W. "PTSD in Children and Adolescents in the Juvenile Justice System," *Review of Psychiatry Series: Vol. 20, Number 1*. Pp. 59-86. 2001. American Psychiatric Publishing.
10. Cohn, Alvin, "Suicides Within the Juvenile Justice System: The Need for Administrative Oversight," *Juvenile Justice Update*, p. 5, October/November 2005.
11. While data is not kept for youth in detention with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), according to DHS 45% of youth who are committed have at one point had an IEP.
12. Justice Policy Institute, *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities*, pp. 6-7. Citing: Golub, A. *The Termination Rate of Adult Criminal Careers*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon. 1990.

Other Sources:

1. Annie E. Casey Foundation website. Information on detention reform as it relates to girls, and information about the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). <http://www.aecf.org/>
2. Building Blocks for Youth, *And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Youth of Color in the Justice System*. <http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/justiceforsome/jfs.html>

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