

JUST THE FACTS: A SNAPSHOT OF INCARCERATED HISPANIC YOUTH

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Overview

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated population of Hispanic[†] youth ages 10–17 in 2008 was 6.4 million, making up nearly 19% of all youth[‡] within that age group.¹ In contrast to the Black and White youth populations, the Hispanic youth population has continually grown since 2000, currently making up one in seven of approximately 47 million Latinos in the country.² While young Latinos are an increasingly significant segment of the U.S. youth population, current juvenile justice statistics indicate that many Latino youth face serious challenges that threaten their future as successful adults and citizens, including disproportionate incarceration rates. In comparison to Whites, Latinos and Blacks make up a larger share of incarcerated youth than the overall population of youth.

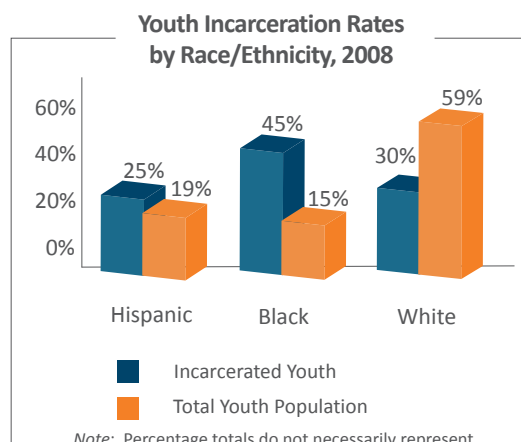
Latino Youth Incarceration Rates

Although data on Latino youth in the justice system are scant, it can be estimated that on any given day, at least 18,000 Hispanic youth are incarcerated[§] in the U.S. for mostly nonviolent offenses, compared to 32,000 Black and 21,000 White youth.³

- Of all incarcerated youth, one-quarter (25%) are Hispanic, while 45% are Black and 30% are White.⁴

More than two in five (41%) of all incarcerated Hispanic youth are held in short-term juvenile detention facilities, compared to 38% of Black and 44% of White youth.

- Of all youth held in these facilities, more than one-quarter (26%) are Hispanic, while 42% are Black and 32% are White.⁵



Source: NCLR calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, "2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement," Current Population Survey. Washington, DC, 2009.

More than one in three (34%) of all incarcerated Hispanic youth is held in long-term secure facilities for youth, compared to 26% of Black and 32% of White youth.

- More than one in four (29%) of all youth held in juvenile long-term secure facilities is Hispanic, while 40% are Black and 32% are White.⁶

Nearly one in four (24%) Hispanic youth is held in an adult facility, compared to 36% of Black and 25% of White youth.⁷

- The United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that from 2000 to 2008, the share of Latino youth under 18 years of age who are in adult prisons rose from 12% to 20%.⁸ By contrast, the rate for Black and White youth declined by six and two percentage points respectively.⁹

* In 2006, NCLR joined the Models for Change Initiative with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Part of this effort is designed to conduct research and provide policy analysis that informs the public about the experiences of Hispanic youth who are involved in the justice system.

[†] The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

[‡] The overall population of youth ages 10–17 in the U.S. in 2008 is estimated at 33.5 million. These data do not include the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico, nor do they reflect the 3% undercount for Latinos reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the last decennial Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

[§] Youth incarceration data are calculated as the sum of the most recent statistics available (e.g., 2006 information on youth who are held in short- and long-term juvenile facilities and 2008 data on youth in adult facilities).

Glossary of Terms

Juvenile—Court term referring to children who are processed within the justice system, usually between the upper age of 17 and lower age of ten, though ages vary across all states and Washington, DC

Incarceration—The process of holding an individual in custody after he or she is found guilty of committing a criminal offense

Nonviolent Offense—An offense to criminal law committed without an act of violence, such as drug, property, or public order (e.g., disorderly conduct) offenses

Juvenile Detention Facilities—A secure, out-of-home facility for children ages 17 and younger awaiting a formal sentence, usually for less than one year

Juvenile Long-Term Secure Facilities—A secure, out-of-home facility for youth who are sentenced to more than one year of incarceration

Adult Facility—A secure, out-of-home prison or jail for individuals ages 18 and older who have committed an offense against criminal law

Endnotes

¹ NCLR calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey (CPS) Table Creator,” Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstc/cps_table_creator.html (accessed February 24, 2010).

² Ibid.

³ Neelum Arya et al., *America’s Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice* (Washington, DC: Campaign For Youth Justice and National Council of La Raza, 2009), <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/57405> (accessed March 2010).

⁴ NCLR calculation using Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008 - Statistical Tables. Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Washington, DC, 2009, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/pim08st.pdf> (accessed February 24, 2010), 17; and National Center for Juvenile Justice, “Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook” (Pittsburg, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2008), <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/cjrp> (accessed February 24, 2010).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ NCLR calculation using Allen J. Beck and Jennifer C. Karberg, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2000. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. Washington, DC, 2001, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/pjim00.pdf> (accessed February 24, 2010), 9; and Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*.

⁹ Ibid.