



# Data Snapshot of Youth Incarceration in Ohio

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Consistent with national trends, youth incarceration in Ohio has declined significantly during the past decade. Notably, however, the average daily population in the state's youth prisons actually increased each year between 2015 and 2019. In 2019, 530 youths were incarcerated in state prisons on average.<sup>1</sup> Reductions in youth incarceration allowed the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) to close five of its eight juvenile correctional facilities (JCFs) between 2007 and 2019.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, more than a third of the DYS budget in 2019 funded state correctional facilities. Furthermore, though racial and ethnic inequities in Ohio's juvenile justice system declined in the past several years, significant disparities persist. In 2018, Black youth accounted for 56 percent of incarcerated youth in Ohio (DYS 2018a), despite representing only 16 percent of people younger than 18.<sup>3</sup>

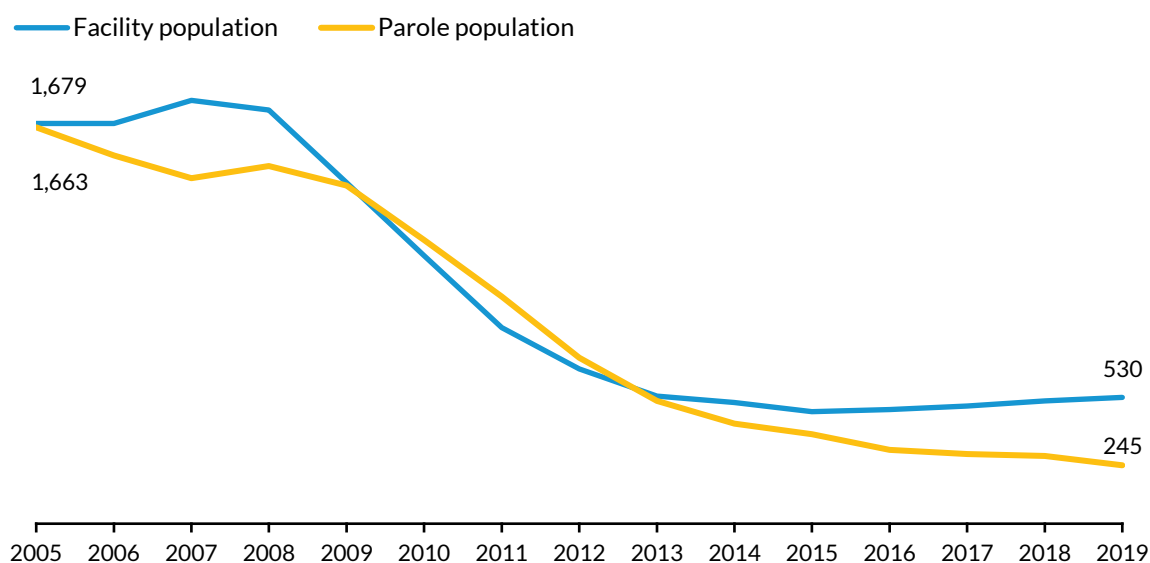
In Ohio, youth adjudicated and committed to DYS are incarcerated in one of three JCFs: Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility, Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility, and Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility (all three facilities exclusively house boys).<sup>4</sup> Ohio DYS also operates four alternative facilities, one that houses boys and three that house girls exclusively.<sup>5</sup> It also oversees 12 community corrections facilities that are alternatives to JCFs for youth adjudicated for felony offenses.<sup>6</sup> In this snapshot, we summarize data on youth adjudicated delinquency, committed to the state, and incarcerated in a JCF. We do not include additional youth detained before adjudication at the county level.

## Youth Incarceration Increased between 2016 and 2019 after a Decade of Decline

Youth incarceration in Ohio has declined over the past 15 years: the average daily youth population in youth correctional facilities fell from 1,679 in 2005 to 530 in 2019 (figure 1).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the state's youth parole population has fallen 85 percent between 2005 and 2019 (from 1,663 to 245).

FIGURE 1

Average Daily Population of Youth in Facilities or on Parole in Ohio, 2005–19



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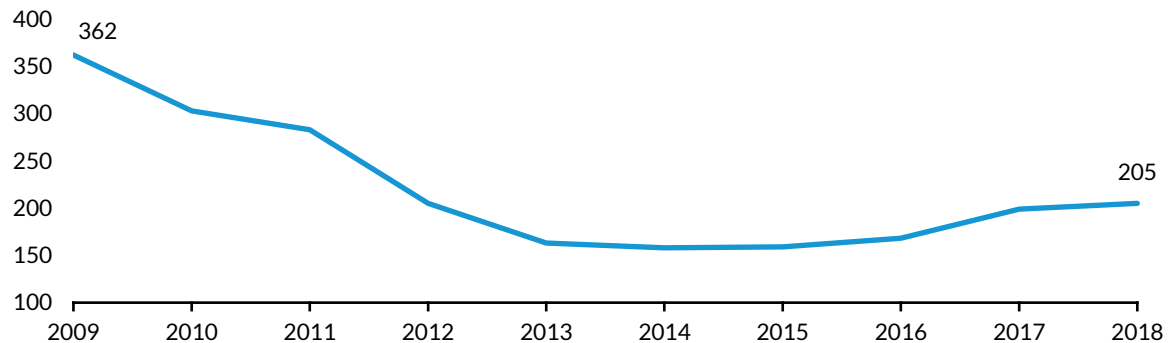
**Source:** Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' [annual fiscal year reports](#), 2005 through 2019.

**Note:** "Facility population" includes the population of youth in Ohio's three JCFs and four alternative facilities.

In December 2019, 390 youths were in JCFs and 69 were in alternative placements (DYS 2019b). Youth in JCFs spent 15.5 months there on average. Youth transfers to adult court reached a low of 158 youths in 2014 but increased to 205 in 2018 (figure 2; DYS 2019c).

FIGURE 2

Youth Transferred to Adult Courts, 2009–18



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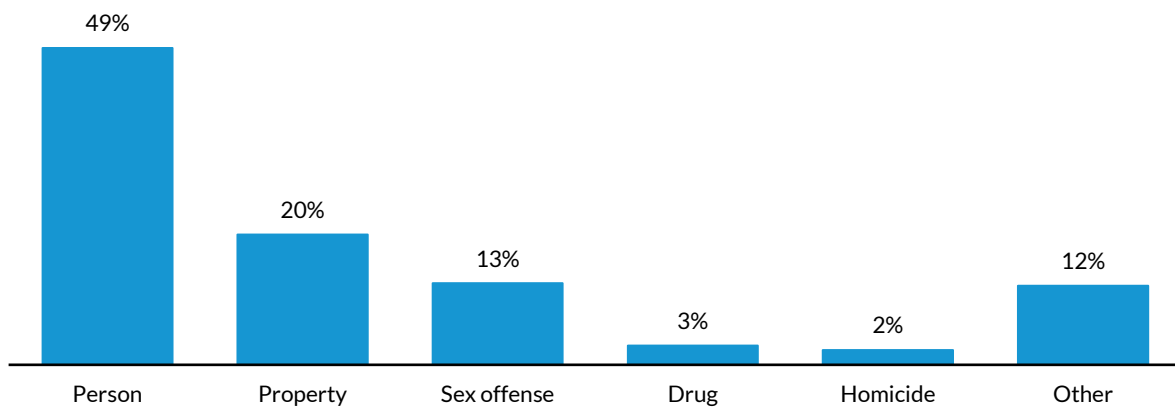
Source: DYS (2019c).

## Three of Five Admissions to JCFs Are for Person or Sex Offenses

In 2019, 64 percent of youth admissions to JCFs were for homicide, person offenses, or sex offenses (figure 3; DYS 2019a). Nearly 25 percent of admissions were for property or drug offenses.

FIGURE 3

Youth Admissions to State Institutions by Admission Type, 2019

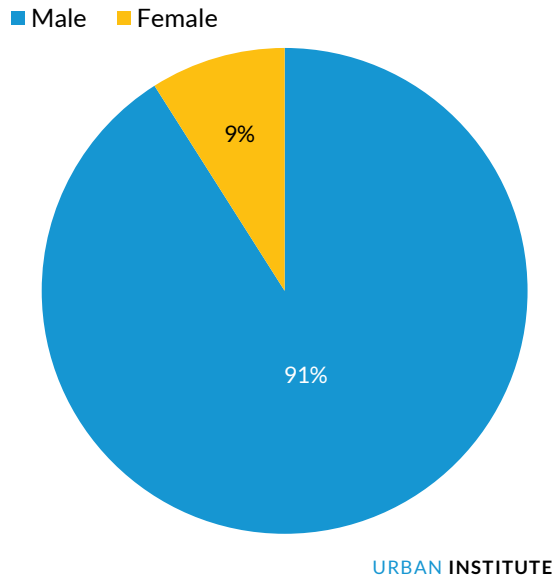


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Source: DYS (2019a).

As of December 2019, 91 percent of youth in JCFs were male (figure 4; DYS 2019b). Of all males in JCFs or alternative placements, 64 percent required mental health treatment. At that time, all females in JCFs and alternative placements required mental health treatment.

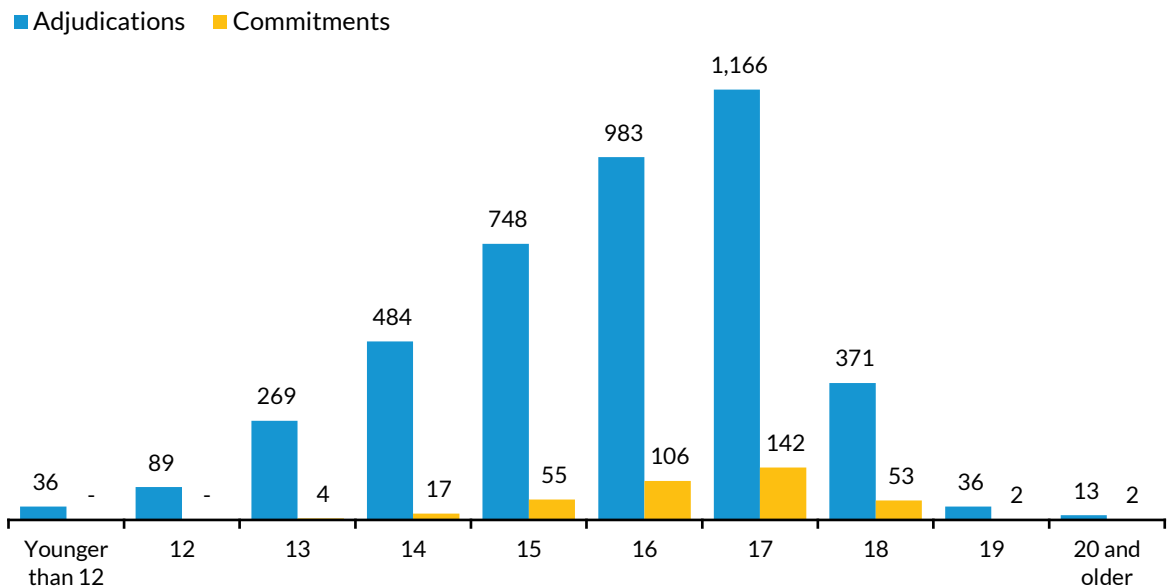
**FIGURE 4**  
**Youth Juvenile Correctional Population by Gender, 2019**



Source: DYS (2019b).

Of youth adjudicated and incarcerated for a felony offense, the largest share were 17 years old (figure 5; DYS 2018b). Some youth younger than 12 were adjudicated, but none younger than 13 were committed.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Youth Adjudications and Commitments for a Felony Offense by Age, 2018**



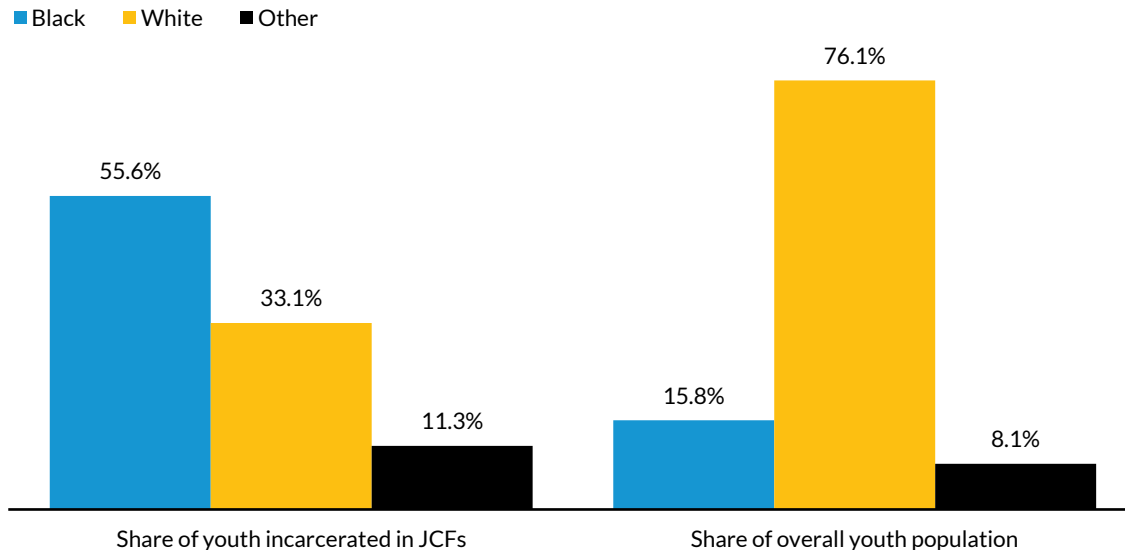
Source: DYS (2018b).

# Ohio Disproportionately Incarcerates Black Youth

Most youth committed to JCFs in Ohio are Black (figure 6). In 2018, 56 percent of youth committed to JCFs in Ohio were Black (DYS 2018a), even though only roughly 16 percent of youth in the state were Black.<sup>8</sup>

FIGURE 6

## Racial Composition of JCFs versus Overall Youth Population, 2018



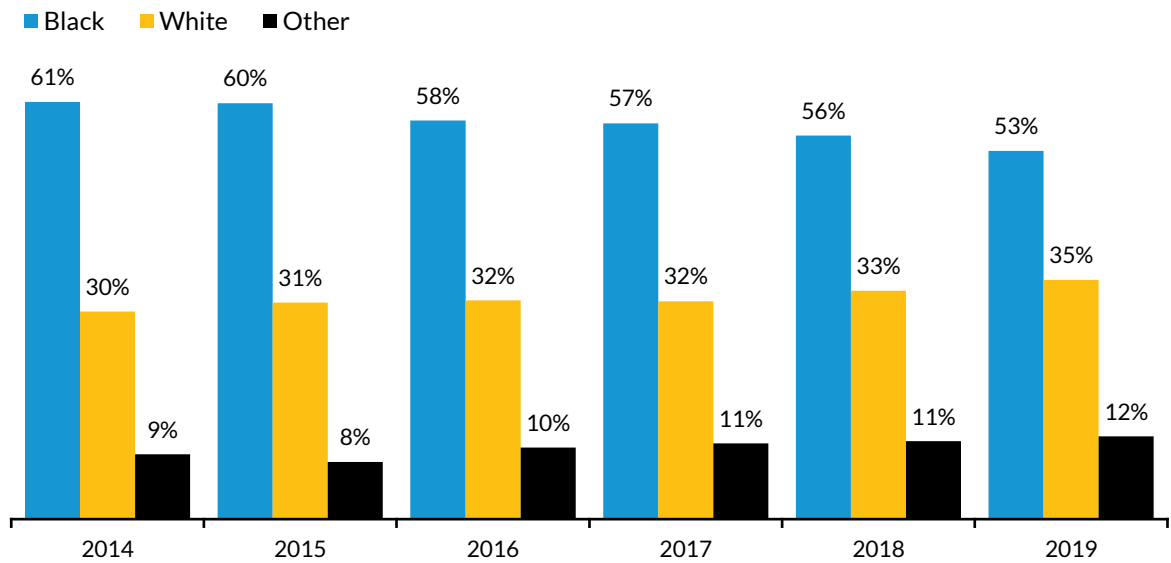
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**Sources:** DYS (2018a); "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018," US Census Bureau.

**Notes:** "Youth population" refers to youth younger than 18. Incarcerated youth are youth under JCF supervision, which includes a few who are older than 20.

Although this disparity decreased between 2014 and 2019, most youth incarcerated in JCFs in Ohio were nonetheless Black (figure 7).<sup>9</sup> In addition, Black youth made up 49 percent of adjudications and nearly 60 percent of commitments (figure 8; DYS 2018b). This means justice-involved Black youth were more likely to be committed after adjudication than white youth.

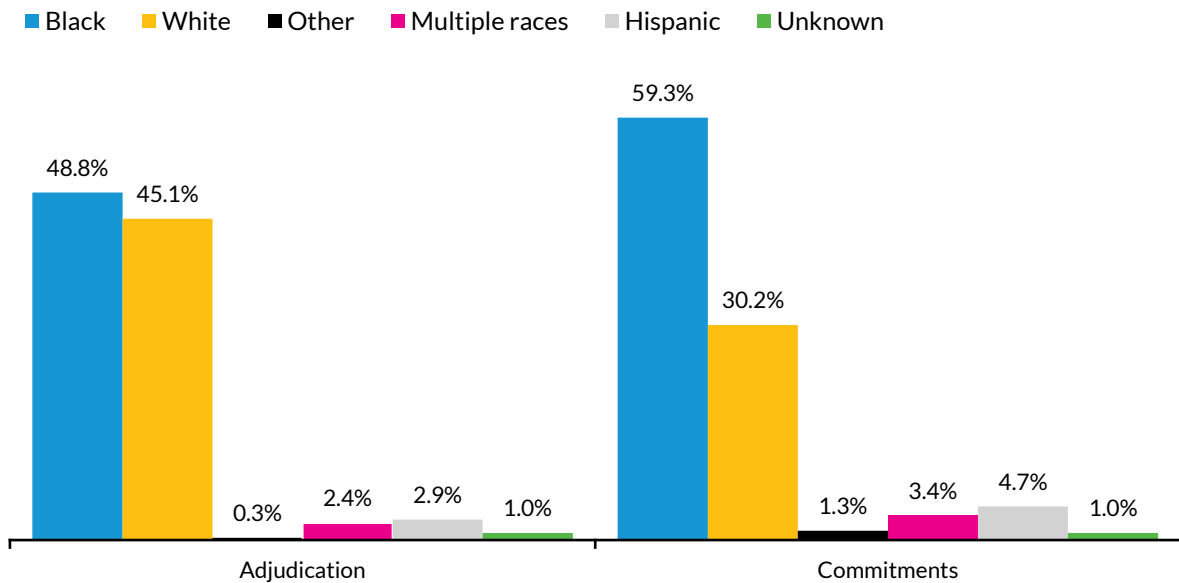
**FIGURE 7**  
**Youth in JCFs by Race, 2014–19**



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Source: Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' [annual fiscal year reports](#), 2014 through 19.

**FIGURE 8**  
**Adjudications and Commitments by Race, 2018**



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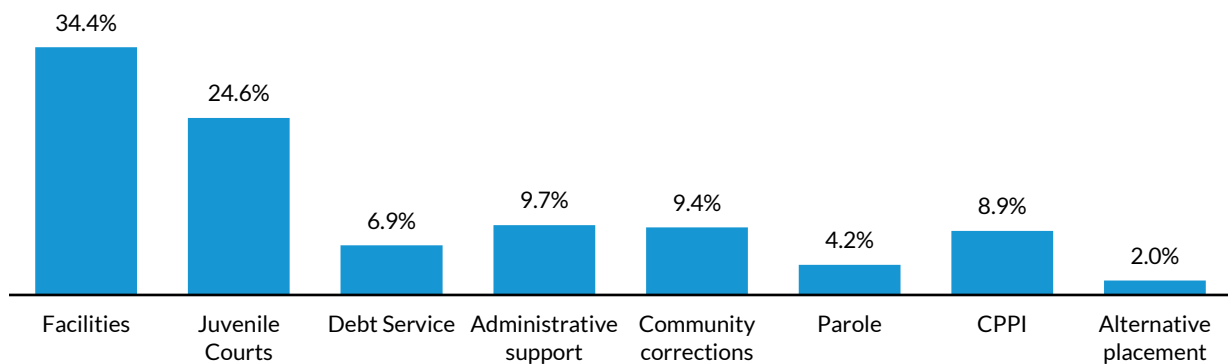
Source: DYS (2018b).

## As Its Youth Incarceration Population Declines, Ohio Still Spends Heavily on Facilities

In 2019, Ohio spent more than \$250 million on the Department of Youth Services, including \$86 million on JCFs (figure 9; DYS 2019a). Only 11 percent DYS expenditures were allotted to community corrections or alternative placements.

FIGURE 9

### Department of Youth Services Expenditures, 2019



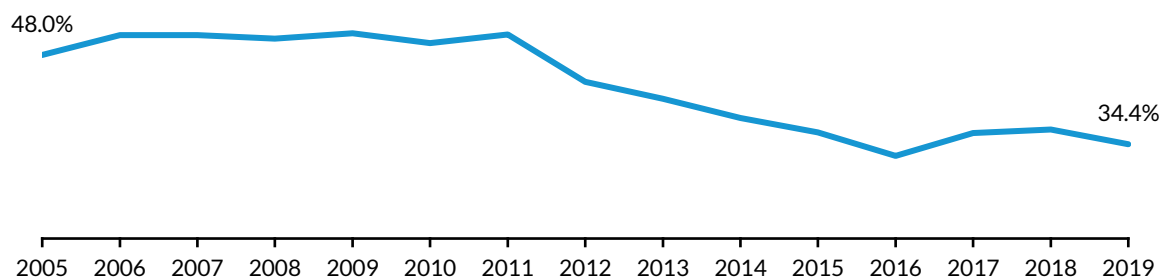
Source: DYS (2019a).

Note: CPPI = Capital-Physical Plant Improvements.

Since 2005, annual DYS expenditures have been roughly \$250 million. However, annual DYS expenditures rose nearly \$30 million between 2017 and 2019 (figure 10).<sup>10</sup> Although DYS closed five of the state's eight JCFs, facility expenditures only decreased 14 percentage points from 2005 to 2019.

FIGURE 10

### Annual Share of DYS Expenditures Spent on JCFs, 2005–19



Source: Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' [annual fiscal year reports](#), 2005 through 2019.

Note: Since 2005, five JCFs have closed and the population of incarcerated youth has decreased.

## Alternative Placements in Ohio

Ohio DYS operates 12 community corrections facilities through the RECLAIM Initiative, which seeks to provide alternatives to youth incarceration.<sup>11</sup> These facilities are intended as alternatives for youth adjudicated for a felony offense. In addition to being less restrictive than JCFs, they also focus on treatment and specialized case management for youth who reside there. The treatment programs community corrections facilities offer include substance use, anger management, and cognitive behavioral therapy.

## Recent Investigation

In December 2019, the US Department of Justice released a special report on sexual victimization reported in juvenile facilities in 2018 (Smith and Stroop 2018). It found that Ohio's Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility had a sexual-victimization rate of 16.7 percent, the second highest in the US. Ohio was identified as a high-rate state and was the only state to reach a statistically significant high rate of juvenile sexual victimization. This is not the only time Ohio DYS was under investigation; from 2008 to 2015, the federal government monitored practices in Ohio JCFs after a lawsuit alleged excessive use of force.<sup>12</sup> In January 2020, Ohio Democrats requested that DYS provide all reports of physical and sexual violence at the three JCFs within six months.<sup>13</sup>

## Notable Reforms and Ongoing Efforts

In the past decade, Ohio closed five JCFs and transferred youth to the remaining facilities and community correctional facility alternatives.<sup>14</sup> These closures reflected a steady decline in the number of youth housed at JCFs and a desire among DYS leadership to save money on facilities. Apart from state-level DYS efforts, many counties have attempted to reduce the number of youth detained in Ohio by using evidence-based practices and focusing on alternative services.

In 2010, Ohio joined the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative to improve juvenile detention across the state.<sup>15</sup> When 2019 began, 14 counties had partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation as part of this initiative. The initiative uses data to direct reform and encourages Ohio counties to seek alternatives to detention.



# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' *Fiscal Year Annual Reports*, 2005 through 2019. These reports are available [here](#).
- <sup>2</sup> Andrew Welsh-Huggins, "Ohio Closing Another Juvenile Detention Facility," *The Repository*, November 21, 2013, <https://www.cantonrep.com/article/20131121/News/131129844>.
- <sup>3</sup> "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018," US Census Bureau, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-national-detail.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Juvenile Correctional Facilities," Ohio Department of Youth Services, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.dys.ohio.gov/Inside-DYS/Juvenile-Correctional-Facilities>.
- <sup>5</sup> "Alternative Placements," Ohio Department of Youth Services, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.dys.ohio.gov/Inside-DYS/Alternative-Placements>.
- <sup>6</sup> "Community Corrections Facilities," Ohio Department of Youth Services, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.dys.ohio.gov/Community-Programs/Community-Corrections-Facilities>.
- <sup>7</sup> Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' annual fiscal year reports, 2005 through 2019. This number includes youth incarcerated in the state's JCFs; the number of JCFs in Ohio has decreased from eight in 2005 to three in 2019.
- <sup>8</sup> "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States and States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018," US Census Bureau.
- <sup>9</sup> Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' annual fiscal year reports, 2005 through 2019.
- <sup>10</sup> Data are from the Ohio Department of Youth Services' annual fiscal year reports, 2005 through 2019.
- <sup>11</sup> "Community Corrections Facilities," Ohio Department of Youth Services
- <sup>12</sup> Jeremy Pelzer, "Ohio's Juvenile Prison System Has Nation's Highest Rate of Sexual Victimization, Survey Finds," *Cleveland.com*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2019/12/ohios-juvenile-prison-system-has-nations-highest-rate-of-sexual-victimization-survey-finds.html.s>
- <sup>13</sup> Jeremy Pelzer, "Ohio Senate Democrats Seek More Info about Sexual Victimization at State Youth Prisons," *Cleveland.com*, January 13, 2020, <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2020/01/ohio-senate-democrats-seek-more-info-about-sexual-victimization-at-state-youth-prisons.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Welsh-Huggins, "Ohio Closing Another Juvenile Detention Facility."
- <sup>15</sup> "Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative," Ohio Department of Youth Services, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.dys.ohio.gov/Community-Programs/Detention-Alternatives>.

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- . 2018b. *Profile of Youth Adjudicated or Committed for Felony Offenses: Fiscal Year 2018*. Columbus: State of Ohio Department of Youth Services.
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- . 2019c. *Profile of Youth Transferred to Adult Court: Fiscal Year 2018*. Columbus: State of Ohio Department of Youth Services.

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