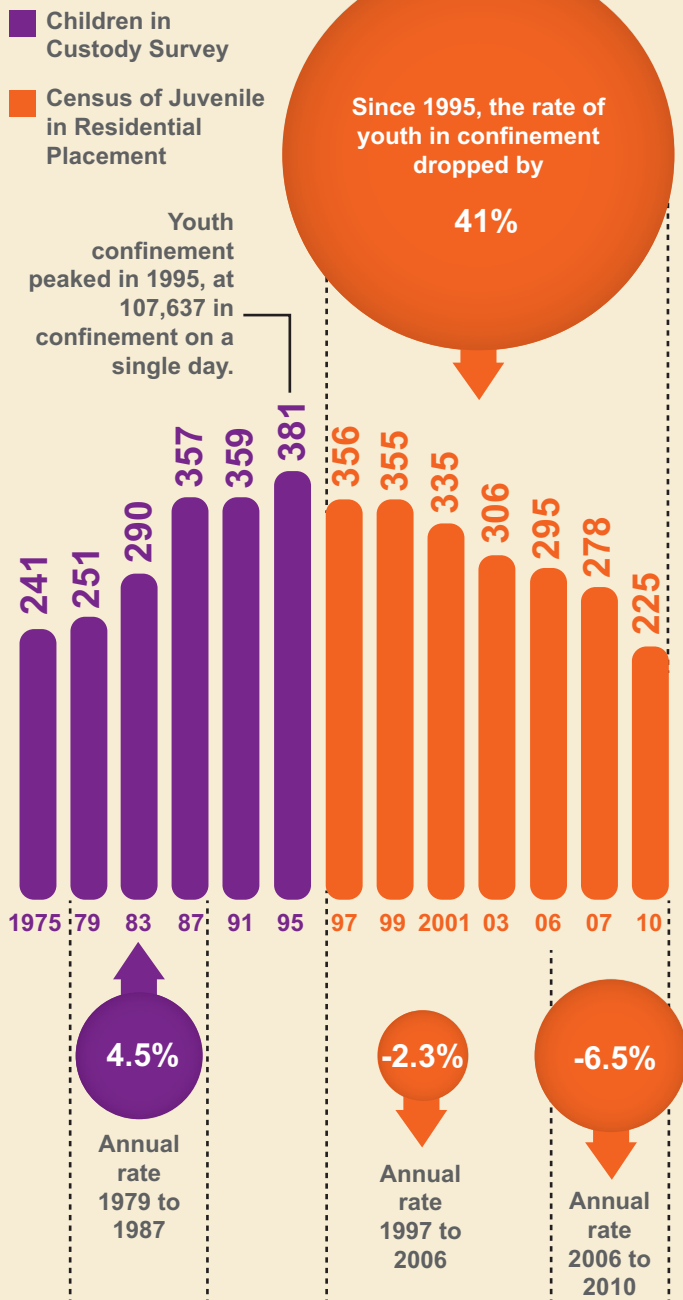


YOUTH INCARCERATION

IN THE UNITED STATES

A sea change is underway in our nation's approach to dealing with young people who get in trouble with the law. Although we still lead the industrialized world in the rate at which we lock up young people, the youth confinement rate in the United States is rapidly declining.

YOUTH IN CONFINEMENT (1975–2010)

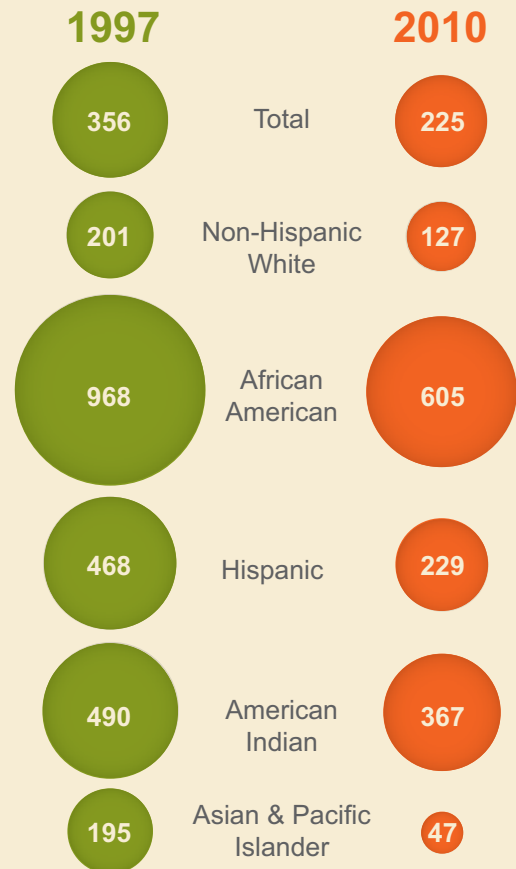


The annual rate of decline from 2006 to 2010 was roughly three times faster than from 1997 to 2006.

DISPARITIES IN CONFINEMENT RATES BY RACE

The decline in confinement has occurred across all of the five largest racial groups, with the biggest declines occurring among Asian and Pacific Islander and Latino youth. However, large disparities remain in youth confinement rates by race.

Youth in Confinement (rate per 100,000)



African-American youth are nearly five times as likely to be confined as their white peers. Latino and American Indian youth are between two and three times as likely to be confined. The disparities in youth confinement rates reflect a system that treats youth of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, more punitively than similar white youth.



MOST YOUTH CONFINED FOR NONVIOLENT OFFENSES

In every year for which data are available, the overwhelming majority of confined youth are held for nonviolent offenses.



**IN 2010
ONLY 1 OF
EVERY 4**

confined youth was locked up based on a Violent Crime Index offense (homicide, aggravated assault, robbery or sexual assault).



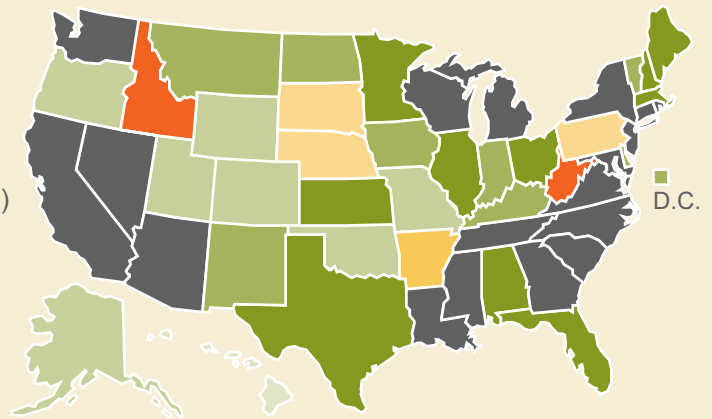
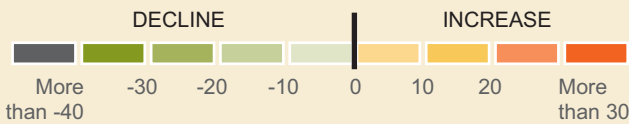
40% OF JUVENILE COMMITMENTS AND DETENTION ARE DUE TO

technical violations of probation, drug possession, low-level property offenses, public order offenses and status offenses (activities that would not be considered crimes as adults, such as possession of alcohol and truancy). This means most youth are confined on the basis of offenses that are not clear threats to public safety.

YOUTH INCARCERATION RATES DECLINED IN MOST STATES

The decline in youth confinement over the past decade has occurred in states in every region of the country. In fact, 44 states and the District of Columbia experienced a decline in the rate of young people confined since 1997, and several states cut their confinement rates in half or more.

Change in Youth Confinement (1997–2010, Rates per 100,000)



MOVING FORWARD

The U.S. juvenile justice system has relied too heavily on incarceration, for far too long. The recent de-incarceration trend provides a unique opportunity to implement responses to delinquency that are more cost-effective and humane, and provide better outcomes for youth, their families and communities.



Limiting eligibility for correctional placements

Safely reducing incarceration requires policies that restrict its use only to youth who pose a demonstrable risk to public safety.



Investing in promising alternatives to incarceration

Improving both public safety and youth development demand more effective interventions than correctional facilities provide.



Establishing small, treatment-oriented facilities for those confined

The relatively small number of youth for whom confinement is justified need facilities that can provide a humane and developmentally appropriate setting in which their delinquent behavior can be treated effectively.



Adopting best practices for supervising delinquent youth in their communities

Safely reducing reliance on confinement requires multiple changes in how systems operate— not just creating more programs.



Changing the incentives

Wherever current policies stand in the way of these reforms—especially wherever systems of financing encourage unnecessary reliance on correctional placements—those policies must be changed.

Sources: Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., and Puzzanchera, C. (2011) "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>
 Smith, Bradford. (1998). "Children in Custody: 20-Year Trends in Juvenile Detention, Correctional, and Shelter Facilities." *Crime & Delinquency*. 44 (4), pp. 526-543. and Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., and Puzzanchera, C. (2011) "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>
 "No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration." (2011) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. <http://www.aecf.org/OurWork/JuvenileJustice/JuvenileJusticeReport.aspx>

