



Latest Data Show Juvenile Confinement Continues Rapid Decline

States cut juvenile commitment rates during a period of falling arrests and emerging reforms

Between 2010 and 2011, the number of committed youth—those locked up as a result of a court-ordered sanction—fell in 43 states, according to the most recent data released by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.¹ The juvenile commitment rate dropped 13 percent during that period.² In 2011, almost 42,000 committed youth were held on any given day in a juvenile corrections facility or other residential placement. This represents 1 in 748 youth across the United States.³

Nationally, the commitment rate dropped 48 percent between 1997 and 2011. The decline between 2006 and 2011 was 33 percent, nearly double the reduction from 2001 to 2006. At the state level, commitment rates in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Mississippi dropped by more than 75 percent, and 16 additional states had declines of 50 percent or more between 1997 and 2011. Rates increased in four states—West Virginia, Idaho, North Dakota, and Nebraska—and the District of Columbia over the same time frame. Commitment rates have been on the decline over the past few years in North Dakota, Idaho, and West Virginia, though they are still higher than they were in 1997.

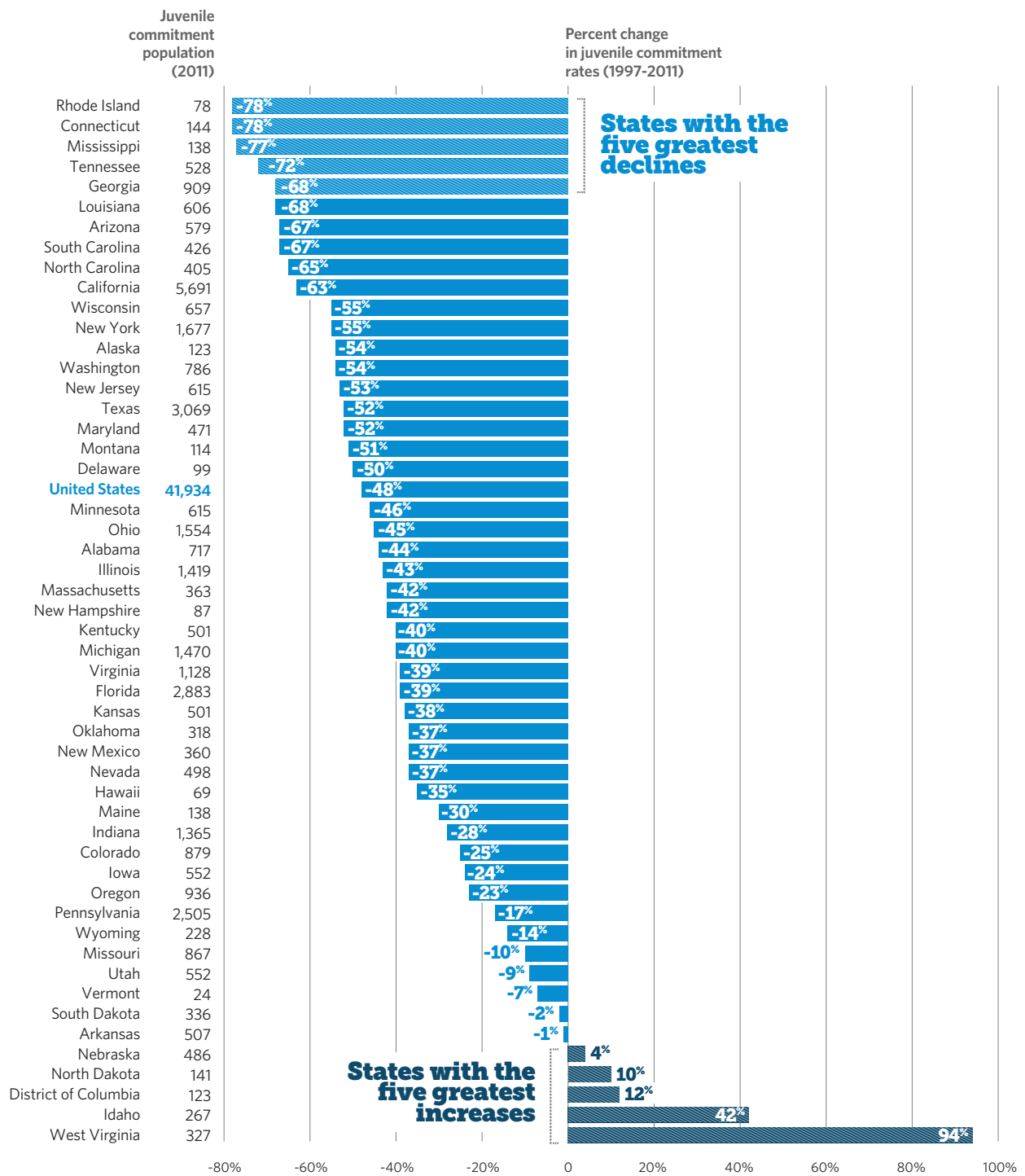
48% Percentage of commitment rate decline nationally between 1997 and 2011.

The national decline follows a parallel drop in juvenile arrests for violent crimes, which have been falling since the mid-1990s. At least 37 states experienced a decline in both juvenile commitment and violent-crime arrest rates between 1997 and 2010.⁴ It is likely that the arrest trends are partially driving the drop in juvenile commitments.⁵ Other factors affecting the decline include actions by state leaders seeking better results from their juvenile corrections expenditures.

States are increasingly recognizing the high cost and low return of placing lower-risk youth in state facilities. Though placement costs vary substantially, many states spend nearly \$100,000 or more per offender annually.⁶ Many policymakers believe that expense would be justified if it improved public safety, but research has demonstrated that residential placements generally fail to produce better outcomes than alternative sanctions, cost much more, and can actually increase reoffending for certain youth.⁷ In some states, nearly half of juvenile offenders released from secure residential facilities are back within three years.⁸

Figure 1

19 States Cut Juvenile Commitment Rates by 50% or more



Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
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A number of states have adopted creative policy solutions to focus costly residential beds on higher-risk youth who have committed more serious offenses. For example:

- **Ohio** implemented RECLAIM Ohio in the mid-1990s and Targeted RECLAIM in fiscal 2010, both of which are performance-based, incentive-funding initiatives that support community-based alternatives for juvenile offenders.⁹ A cost-benefit analysis and evaluation of RECLAIM found that Ohio saved as much as \$45 for each \$1 invested in alternatives, and that outcomes were better for youth in RECLAIM programs than those released from facilities for all but the very highest-risk youth.¹⁰
- In 2007, **Texas** passed Senate Bill 103, a comprehensive package of reforms that included a ban on committing juveniles to secure state facilities for misdemeanor offenses.¹¹ The state also redirected funds to support evidence-based community programs for juvenile offenders diverted from state facilities.¹² The results have been promising: Commitments to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department have declined dramatically since 2007, contributing to \$50 million in annual savings through facility closures and consolidations.¹³ This occurred while the number of juvenile arrests continued to fall and recidivism rates remained steady.¹⁴ To learn more about Texas' juvenile corrections reforms, see our summary brief.
- Beginning in the late 1990s, **Connecticut** piloted and later implemented statewide Multisystemic Therapy, a family-based treatment model that has demonstrated significant reductions in juvenile recidivism.¹⁵ State agencies and community partners worked together to expand its continuum of evidence-based programs for appropriate young offenders in their communities. The state also created a resource center for effective programming to help monitor implementation, provide training, and ensure quality assurance.¹⁶ Even after returning 16-year-olds to the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts in 2010, the number of juvenile commitments remained near its lowest point in a decade and juvenile arrests continued to fall.¹⁷

These states and others are demonstrating that there are alternatives to commitment that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and save significant taxpayer dollars.

Endnotes

- 1 M. Sickmund et. al., *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement* (August 2013), ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp. Note: Data presented here come from the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement which was first administered in 1997. The most recently published results are from 2011. Pew's analysis represents only committed youth, a subset of the broader custody population.
- 2 The commitment rate is equal to the number of committed juvenile offenders in residential placement per 100,000 juveniles in the population (ages 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).
- 3 Sickmund et al., *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*. Note: The national rate of 1 in 751 is calculated by dividing the sum of the total number of youth ages 10 through the upper age of jurisdiction in each state by the number of committed juvenile offenders in the United States.
- 4 C. Puzzanchera (forthcoming), *Juvenile Arrests 2010*. Washington: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; H.N. Snyder (1998), *Juvenile Arrests 1997*. Washington: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Note: Comparisons across data years should be made with caution and could not be made for states that did not report to the FBI in either 1997 or 2010.
- 5 Trends in one-day counts of juveniles in corrections may be more sensitive to arrests than in the criminal justice system because the period of correctional control is truncated at a maximum age, and length of stay in facilities is shorter for juvenile offenders.
- 6 For example: Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, *Five-Year Strategic Plan FY 2014-2018* (December 2012), <http://azdjcc.gov/FactsNews/ADJCPublications/SP14-18.pdf>; Missouri Division of Youth Services, *Annual Report FY 2012* (2013), <http://dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/dys/youth-services-annual-report-fy12.pdf>; Ohio Department of Youth Services, *Annual Report FY 2012* (2013), <http://dys.ohio.gov/DNN/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=MLbGc4fX%2fMA=&tabid=102&mid=544>; California Legislative Analyst's Office, *The 2012-13 Budget: Completing Juvenile Justice Realignment* (February 2012), http://lao.ca.gov/analysis/2012/crim_justice/juvenile-justice-021512.aspx; and Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, *Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2012* (February 2013), http://djj.virginia.gov/About_Us/Administrative_Units/Research_and_Evaluation_Unit/pdf/FY2012_DRG.pdf.

- 7 M.W. Lipsey and F.T. Cullen, "The effectiveness of correctional rehabilitation: A review of systematic reviews." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 3 (2007): 297-320.
- 8 For example: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, *2012 Outcome Evaluation Report* (October 2012), http://dcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0708_Recidivism_Report_10.23.12.pdf; Texas Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates* (January 2013), http://lbb.state.tx.us/Public_Safety_Criminal_Justice/RecRev_Rates/Statewide%20Criminal%20Justice%20Recidivism%20and%20Revocation%20Rates2012.pdf; Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, *Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2012* (February 2013); http://djj.virginia.gov/About_Us/Administrative_Units/Research_and_Evaluation_Unit/pdf/FY2012_DRG.pdf; Indiana Department of Corrections. *Juvenile Recidivism Rates, 2012, (2013)*, <http://in.gov/idoc/files/2012JuvRecidivismRpt.pdf>; and Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, *Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2012* (2012), http://djs.state.md.us/drg/DRG_2012_Whole_book_with_Pullouts.pdf.
- 9 Budget allocation figures for RECLAIM county subsidy funding between fiscal 1994 and 2013 provided by Ohio's Department of Youth Services, March 2013.
- 10 C.T. Lowenkamp and E. Latessa (2005), *Evaluation of Ohio's RECLAIM funded programs, CCFs, and DYS facilities: Cost-benefit analysis, supplemental report*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, http://uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ccjr/docs/reports/project_reports/Final_DYS_Cost_Benefit.pdf; — *Evaluation of Ohio's RECLAIM funded programs, community corrections facilities, and DYS facilities*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, http://uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ccjr/docs/reports/project_reports/Final_DYS_RECLAIM_Report_2005.pdf.
- 11 Senate Bill 103. <http://legis.state.tx.us/billlookup/text.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=SB103>.
- 12 Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, *Annual Report to the Governor and Legislative Budget Board. Juvenile Probation Appropriations, Riders and Special Diversion Programs* (December 2011), <http://tjpd.texas.gov/publications/reports/RPTOTH201202.pdf>; and Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, *Annual Report to the Governor and Legislative Budget Board, Community Juvenile Justice Appropriations, Riders and Special Diversion Programs* (December 2012), <http://jjd.texas.gov/publications/reports/AnnualReportFundingandRiders2012-12.pdf>.
- 13 Texas Juvenile Justice Department (2012), *Strategic Plan 2013-2017*. Austin, TX. <http://tjpd.texas.gov/publications/reports/TJJD%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20-%20JULY%202012.pdf>; Texas Department of Juvenile Justice communication.
- 14 Puzzanchera, *Juvenile Arrests 2010*.
- 15 E.K. Drake, S. Aos, and M.G. Miller (2009), "Evidence-based public policy options to reduce crime and criminal justice costs: Implications in Washington state," *Violence and Victims* 4: 170-196.
- 16 R.P. Franks (2010), *Role of the Intermediary Organization in Promoting and Disseminating Best Practices for Children and Youth*, Farmington, CT: Connecticut Center for Effective Practice, Child Health and Development Institute.
- 17 Sickmund et al., *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*; Puzzanchera, *Juvenile Arrests 2010*; Snyder, *Juvenile Arrests 1997*.

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