

Fact sheet: Race and juvenile justice

Behavior is not the only factor that can push a child into the juvenile justice system. Poor children are more likely to enter the system. So are children with special education needs. The state of Connecticut's own research shows that race and ethnicity alone also play a huge role as children of color are more likely to enter the system and treated more harshly inside it than their white peers.

The reasons commonly cited for this racial imbalance have been disproved by large national studies and three extensive studies here in Connecticut.

“Minority kids are committing more of the crimes”

When we look at national data where youth anonymously report their own behavior, results are similar for young people, regardless of race or ethnicity. But minority youth are more likely to be punished – and punished more severely.

“It’s not race, it’s poverty”

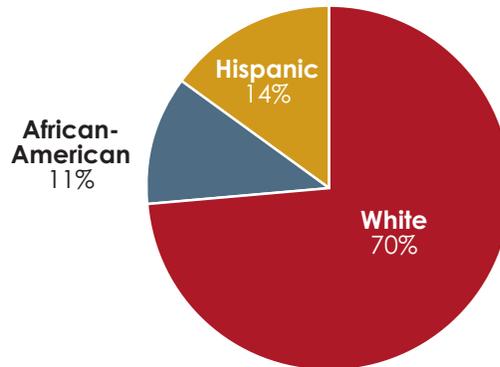
Looking at economic data associated with zip codes, Connecticut studies grouped young people by neighborhood. When they took poverty by neighborhood into account, the differences between outcomes by race and ethnicity were reduced – but they did not disappear. So poverty does not explain all racial disparity.

“Kids who live in cities are more apt to get caught”

Often people argue that minority youth are over-represented in the system because they are more likely to live in cities, where more police are commonly present and more arrests occur. But a review of Connecticut's data showed that the rate of disproportionality was actually worse in the suburbs and rural communities than it was in the cities.

Sources: The Centers For Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Surveys and The Office of Policy and Management's reports on disproportionate minority contact (ctjuststart.org).

**Connecticut
Population by Race**
(US Census, 2012)



**Admission to Juvenile
Detention by Race**
(Office of Policy
and Management, 2015)

