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. 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. 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.

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

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.

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.

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

- 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%. By contrast, the rate for Black and White youth declined by six and two percentage points respectively.

Note: Percentage totals do not necessarily represent all youth who are incarcerated due to data collection methods.

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


² Ibid.


⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.


⁹ Ibid.