



EXAMINING THE EXTENT OF RECIDIVISM IN ILLINOIS AFTER JUVENILE INCARCERATION



Examining the Extent of Recidivism in Illinois after Juvenile Incarceration

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Despite a move away from punitive-oriented correctional approaches and a push towards rehabilitation-oriented correctional approaches, youth recidivism remains a significant issue. Illinois has seen a consistent reduction in juvenile incarcerations likely due to changes in Illinois statutes to decrease the incarceration of juveniles and increase diversion to alternatives. However, juvenile recidivism remains high and less is known about recidivism once a juvenile is no longer within the juvenile court system.

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) researchers used an event-based sampling method to analyze youth rearrest, recommitment to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) (juvenile corrections), and commitment to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) as adults. This study is an update to the 2012 and 2013 ICJIA juvenile recidivism studies. The current study analyzed youth exits between SFY08 and SFY13, with a three-year follow-up. ICJIA researchers linked IDJJ exit records to follow-up admission records using the Youth Identification Number (YIN), a unique identifier that youth retain in IDJJ. First name, last name, and date of birth were used to match youth to Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) records (arrests) and IDOC admission records. This report provides findings from that analysis. Study limitations are provided in the report.

Results

There were 12,299 exits from IDJJ between SFY08 and SFY13 for youth between the ages of 13 and 20. In Illinois, youth may be held in an IDJJ facility or remain on aftercare (parole) until their 21st birthday. Most frequently, youth were initially admitted (prior to their exit) for person or property offenses, Class 2 or Class 1 felonies, and came from predominately from urban counties. Sixty-one percent of IDJJ exits were for Black youth. Overall, recidivism for youth exiting IDJJ remained consistent with the previous ICJIA studies.

Rearrest. Eighty-seven percent (n=10,685) of IDJJ exits were rearrested within three-years, post-release from IDJJ. Of those rearrested, 64 percent were Black, 93 percent were male, and 47 percent were between the ages of 15 and 16. Most frequently, youth were rearrested for non-violent offenses.

Recommitment to IDJJ. Among the IDJJ exits, 55 percent (n=6,777) were recommitted to IDJJ for a new offense or technical violation. Eighty percent of recommitments to IDJJ were for technical violations and the majority of youth recommitted were Black and male. There was an average of 251 days and a median of 176 days to recommitment to IDJJ.

Commitment to IDOC. Fifty-four percent (n=6,680) were committed to IDOC as adults. The average age of youth at time of commitment was 19, with a median of 20. The majority of youth committed to IDOC were Black and male. Most frequently, youth were committed to IDOC for a property of person offense.

Discussion

Despite overall declines in IDJJ admissions, recidivism remains high; however, the current study did not analyze the potential reasons for reduced admissions or other factors related to recidivism. More research is needed to truly determine what are contributing factors to the decline in IDJJ admissions and the consistently high recidivism rates. In addition, future research should consider different outcomes to assess juvenile behavioral improvements and success, including educational/vocational attainment, engagement in prosocial activities and programs (e.g. clubs, sports), skill acquisition, and general quality of life.

Speculatively, overall declines in juvenile delinquency rates, increased use of diversion, more recent state laws, and less frequent contact between juveniles and law enforcement could be contributing to the decline in IDJJ admissions. Regarding recidivism, it may be that IDJJ is reserving incarceration for those juveniles who pose the most serious public safety risk; youth may be struggling with additional needs or require more intensive services; and/or the structure of treatment and aftercare may be insufficient for youth in and exiting IDJJ during the study time period

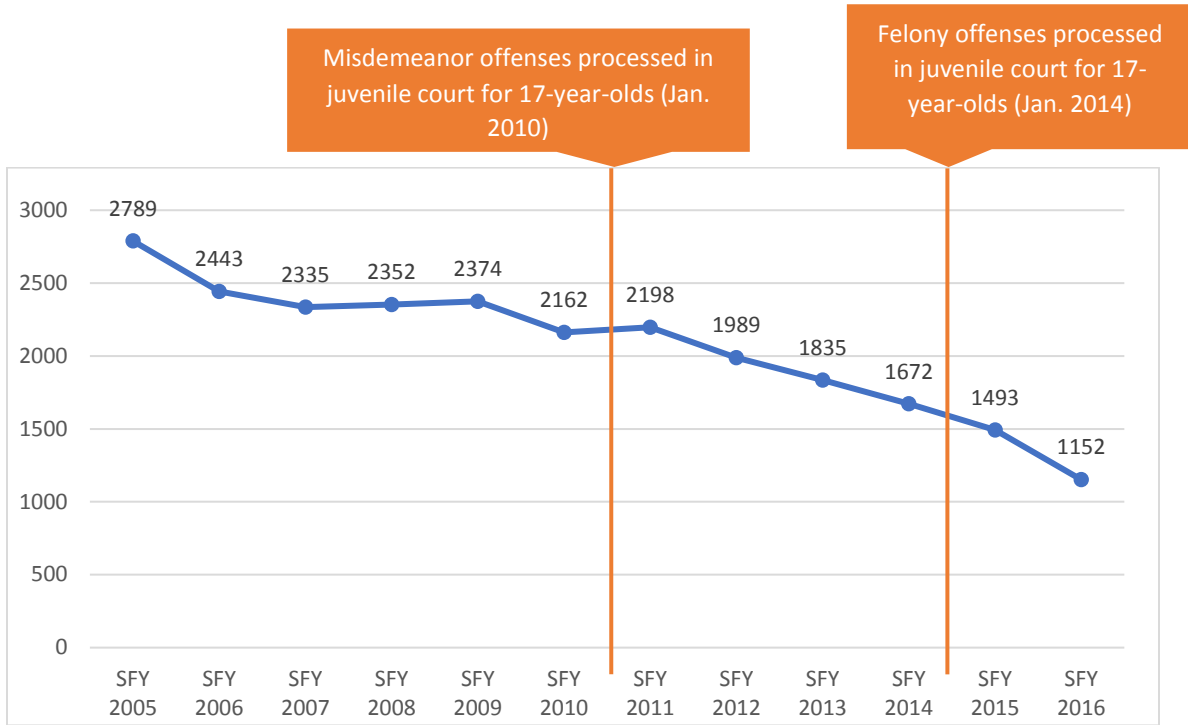
Introduction

At its inception, the goal of the juvenile justice system was to rehabilitate wayward youth, saving them from a life of crime (Rothman, 1980). The first of its kind, the Cook County Juvenile Court was built on the premise of individualized justice and rehabilitation with an emphasis on informal processing for delinquent youth and use of prison alternatives (e.g., probation) (Caldwell, 1961; Fox, 1996). Juvenile correctional facilities were to be reserved for the most serious and/or chronic juvenile offenders, most frequently youth with multiple, complex needs in addition to other factors that may impact their risk to recidivate and reintegrate into the community, as a place for individualized rehabilitation and justice for those who may pose a greater public safety risk.

Recently, the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) has seen a decrease in delinquency commitments (adjudications) to their prison facilities (*Figure 1*). This is likely attributed to several Illinois statutes passed to decrease youth frequency, depth, and time spent in contact with the justice system, while increasing community-based supervision and treatment options, unless the youth presents a danger to the community ([705 ILCS 405/5-120](#)).

On January 1, 2010, misdemeanor offenses for 17-year-olds began prosecution in the juvenile justice system. In 2014, Illinois further incorporated 17-year-old juveniles with felony offenses into the juvenile justice system ([705 ILCS 405/5-120](#)). In 2017, a new law was passed to expand sealing and expunging convictions to more eligible youth and increase restrictions on sharing juvenile record information with the general public sharing. This latter change may impact future research mentioned in the limitations section of this article.

Figure 1
Number of IDJJ Admissions Between SFY08 and SFY16



Source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ admissions data.

Illinois Juvenile Justice System

A juvenile court judge can sentence an adjudicated youth to a delinquency commitment, making him or her ward of the state and remanded to the custody of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ). In Illinois, IDJJ is the organization that oversees all juvenile corrections, which includes juvenile correctional facilities and aftercare (parole). Historically, adjudicated youth were in custody for a period of indeterminate incarceration—a period of incarceration with no set release date—in which a release date was determined by the Illinois Prisoner Review Board. With [Public Act 99-0628](#) beginning January 1, 2017, however, youth release date determinations transferred from the Illinois Prisoner Review Board to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Release from an IDJJ facility must occur prior to the youth’s 21st birthday or prior to the end of a sentence of the maximum incarceration time an adult must serve for the same charge(s), whichever occurs first ([705 ILCS 405/5-710\(7\)](#)). Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice facilities house youth between the ages of 13 and 20. Because youth may be held until their 21st birthday and/or may stay on aftercare (juvenile parole) until their 21st birthday, violations of supervision can result youth 18- to 20-years old being returned to an IDJJ facility.

There are three main ways youth are committed to IDJJ:

- **Court evaluation (or “bring-back” orders)** are legally committed to IDJJ for an indeterminate period of time; however, for court evaluations, judges set a future court date at which the commitment may be vacated.
- **Initial/full delinquency commitment** from juvenile court for a new offense or a new sentence for a supervision revocation case.
- **Technical parole (aftercare) violation** due to non-compliance with conditions of aftercare supervision (parole).

The current study presents recidivism findings for youth committed to a state youth correctional facility from SFY08 to SFY13 and is an update to previous recidivism studies published by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) in 2012 and 2013, the last dates in which Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) recidivism rates were analyzed by ICJIA. Of youth exiting an IDJJ facility who were initially committed to IDJJ on a full delinquency commitment in the previous studies, ICJIA researchers found:

- 63 percent of youth exiting IDJJ were initially incarcerated for non-violent offenses.
- 85 percent of youth exiting IDJJ were initially serving time for felonies.
- 86 percent of youth exiting IDJJ were re-arrested within three years post-release from an IDJJ facility.
- 68 percent of youth were re-incarcerated within three years post-release from an IDJJ facility.
- The most common reincarceration offense post-IDJJ release was for property crimes, accounting for 16 percent of reincarcerations.
- 64 percent of first reincarcerations were for violations of parole conditions.
41 percent of youth were reincarcerated at least once for a new sentence.

For youth initially committed to IDJJ on a court evaluation, ICJIA researchers found:

- Most youth were committed for a non-violent offense, most commonly a property offense.
- 85 percent of youth exiting IDJJ after a court evaluation commitment were serving time for a felony offense.
- 86 percent of youth exiting IDJJ after a court evaluation commitment were rearrested within three years post-release, 93 percent after four years.
- 59 percent of youth exiting IDJJ after a court evaluation commitment were (re)incarcerated as a juvenile or adult within three-years post-release.

Methodology

Design

This article reports on findings using an *event-based sampling method*.¹ Event-based sampling involves examining the rate of failure or success every time a youth is released from IDJJ. This method of evaluating recidivism is appropriate when answering event-oriented policy questions, such as the failure rate of a specified cohort of releases.² Offender-based sampling is an alternative method for examining recidivism rates. This method involves taking a single release for every youth exiting and looking at the rate of failure or success for that individual for that single point in time (Rhodes, Gaes, Luallen, Kling, Rich, & Shively, 2016). The ICJIA researcher analyzed recidivism using the event-based sampling method (see Footnotes for information on offender-based sampling results, where appropriate).

A total of 12,299 juvenile exits from an IDJJ facility occurred between SFY08 to SFY13 and were included in the final sample. This resulted in 7,137 youth who accounted for 12,299 exits from IDJJ.

Measures

Recidivism for this study was measured three ways: rearrests, recommitment to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) for a new sentence or a technical violation, and admission to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). These three measures provided a more complete picture of juveniles' contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems; however, this data did not capture reoffending that was not reported or identified by law enforcement, convictions that did not result in confinement, or arrests where charges were dropped. These recidivism measures also do not capture possible increases in youths' quality of life, including academic achievement, increased prosocial peer relationships, and other enhanced psychosocial functioning.

Data sources. The data extracted for this study included:

- **Arrest records** from the Illinois State Police (ISP) Criminal History Records Information System (CHRI) on prior arrests and arrests made during the three-year post-release period.
- **Juvenile corrections** exit and admission data and demographic information from IDJJ.
- **Adult corrections** admissions data from the IDOC.

Data for this study was extracted in March 2018 with a three-year follow-up for each individual exit from IDJJ. ICJIA researchers linked the IDJJ exit data to ICJIA extracts from CHRI using individuals' first name, last name, and their date of birth. If an exact match was not found, partial

¹ *Textbox Source:* Rhodes, W., Gaes, G., Luallen, J., Kling, R., Rich, T., & Shively, M. (2016). Following Incarceration, Most Released Offenders Never Return to Prison. *Crime & Delinquency*, 62(8), 1003–1025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128714549655>

matches were accepted after manual review. Overall, about 99 percent of IDJJ exits were matched to CHRI data, with about 95 percent exact matches. The other four percent were matched via manual review using exact birthdate and the first three letters of the youth's first and last name. Approximately one percent could not be matched.

Because youth retain the same Youth Identification Number (YIN) over time in IDJJ records, YINs are used to match across IDJJ admission and exit records. The ICJIA researcher matched IDJJ exits to IDOC admissions through SFY17 to identify any adult incarcerations post-release. Youth were linked to IDOC records in the same manner as IDJJ and CHRI matching—using first name, last name, and date of birth for matching. There was no expectation that all youth would match to IDOC records, as it would simply reflect that not all youth exiting IDJJ go on to commit future crime resulting in an adult prison sentence. Of the 12,299 youth exits from IDJJ between SFY08 and SFY13, there were 428 juvenile exits from an IDJJ facility where the youth would likely not be eligible for adult commitment during the three-year follow-up due to their age.³

The ICJIA researcher categorized arrests found in the CHRI system by first finding the most severe arrest charge using the offense class, and then giving priority to the more severe offense category—homicide, sex offense (violent), person offense, property offense, weapons offense, sex offense (non-violent), drug offense, and “other” (driving while intoxicated, disorderly conduct, obstructing justice, traffic and driving offenses, etc.). Violent arrests were considered if the most serious arrest charge for an arrest fell under the Right of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act ([725 ILCS 120/](#)). Some arrests did not have the class specified and were coded as other-unknown.

Sample

The study sample consisted of all juvenile releases from any of the five IDJJ facilities between SFY08 and SFY13. The sample excluded youth committed to an IDJJ facility who were adjudicated in adult criminal court (N=607).⁴ If youth exited IDJJ more than once between SFY08 and SFY13, the earliest exit date was used as the starting point for recidivism. The ICJIA researcher used this time frame to pick up from where the previous ICJIA recidivism research stopped, while also allowing for a minimal 3-year follow-up for recidivism measures. Bostwick and colleagues (2013) analyzed IDJJ releases between SFY05 and SFY07.

Data limitations. There were several limitations. First, in calculating length of stay and days to recommitment to IDJJ or IDOC, some records had dates resulting in a negative total number of days for length of stay and days to recommitment to IDJJ and/or commitment to IDOC. This may be the result of individuals' movements within the juvenile and criminal justice systems, particularly for youth who may be involved in both the juvenile and adult courts simultaneously. This may result in overlapping or conflicting dates identified at admission and

³ Sixteen-year-old youth may be automatically transferred to adult court for first degree murder, aggravated criminal sexual assault, or aggravated battery with a firearm ([705 ILCS 405/5-130](#)).

⁴ Youth can be held in an IDJJ facility who were adjudicated in an adult criminal court due to their age.

exit from each facility.⁵ While the CHRI system provides several benefits to understanding crime in Illinois, it has its own limitations, including:

- Police discretion in choosing to report juvenile arrests and prosecutions for offense equal to or lower than Class A and B misdemeanors into CHRI.
- Actual representation of the juvenile justice system due to this discretion, as some agencies report all offenses, while some report the minimum required.
- Limited and incomplete information on diversion cases, and in general, deficiencies in expected state's attorney information (Devitt & Hughes, 2016).

However, of the 12,299 juveniles exiting IDJJ during the study period, 737 youth exits did not have any prior arrest information, including the arrest information for their committing offense (despite their incarcerated status). This missing information may be due to one or more of the following issues:

- Late or slow onset of police agency implementation LiveScan, the electronic arrest fingerprint submission system.
- Felony juvenile offenders not being fingerprinted upon arrest despite required reporting per the Illinois Criminal Identification Act (20 *ILCS* 2630/5-5) and the Illinois Juvenile Court Act (705 *ILCS* 405/5-301).
- Failure of police agencies to submit arrest and fingerprint records on felony juvenile offenders to ISP.
- Felony juvenile offenders with manual arrest cards and fingerprinting that are not submitted to the ISP by the law enforcement agency for CHRI entry.
- Failure of ISP to enter arrest and fingerprint records received from police agencies on felony juvenile offenders.
- Felony juvenile offenders with manual arrest cards and fingerprinting that are submitted to ISP by the law enforcement agency but not entered into CHRI by ISP.
- Law enforcement preference to refrain from fingerprinting youth, in order to prevent creating a juvenile record.

Data also are limited on indicators that may influence youth recidivism, such as receipt of treatment and services within IDJJ and aftercare, information on youth substance use and mental health; and Department of Children and Family Services involvement. While some the data may exist within IDJJ (e.g. flags for youth substance use by drug type, employment prospects at release, IQ score, etc.) it is not consistently recorded in the data files provided to ICJIA by IDJJ.

In addition, detention and court data to help inform what happens between arrest and sentenced secure incarceration is limited in its availability and utility in this study. While court and detention data exist, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts does not provide individual-level data, as there is no central repository for this information, and the detention data reporting system—Juvenile Management Information System (JMIS)—does not provide any identifying information on which to link the study sample to previous or future detention admissions. This

⁵ There are various reasons as to why this may occur and may be different for each youth. It could be that a youth is admitted to IDOC but is not technically discharged from IDJJ until after they are already in an IDOC facility, for example.

prevents research from understanding of what happens to youth from arrest through juvenile corrections and how the juvenile justice process works at all points in the system, particularly regarding pre-trial, detention, court services, and probation. Further, recidivism measures do not capture possible increases in youths' quality of life, including academic achievement, increased prosocial peer relationships, and other enhanced psychosocial functioning, which are also important outcomes for youth.

Findings

Between SFY08 and SFY13, there were 12,299 juvenile exits for youth between the ages 13 and 20 from the IDJJ.⁶ Because youth can be held in an IDJJ facility and/or remain on parole until their 21st birthday (or maximum time an adult would serve for the same charge, whichever occurs first), individuals ages 18 to 20 are also included in this release cohort.

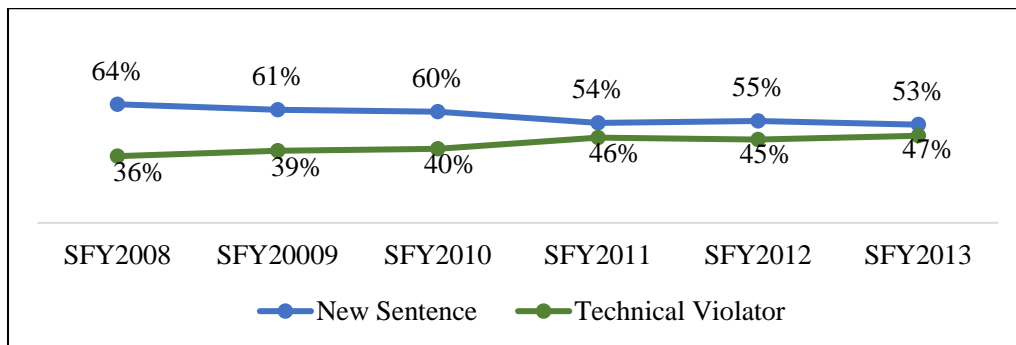
Characteristics of Youth Exit Cohorts

Of the 12,299 IDJJ exits between SFY08 and SFY13, 58 percent were initially admitted for a new sentence.⁷ In each SFY, IDJJ had the following number of youth admissions:

- 2,218 in SFY08.
- 2,323 in SFY09.
- 2,206 in SFY10.
- 2,208 in SFY11.
- 2,015 in SFY12.
- 1,689 in SFY13.

From SFY08 to SFY13, more youth were initially admitted to IDJJ for a new sentence in the first couple years; however, by SFY11, the percentage of youth admitted for a new sentence or a technical violation was almost equal. By SFY13, 53 percent of youth were initially admitted for a new sentence while 47 percent were initially admitted for a technical violation (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2
Percentage of New Sentence and Technical Violation Commitments of Youth Exit Cohorts from IDJJ Between SFY08 and SFY13 (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

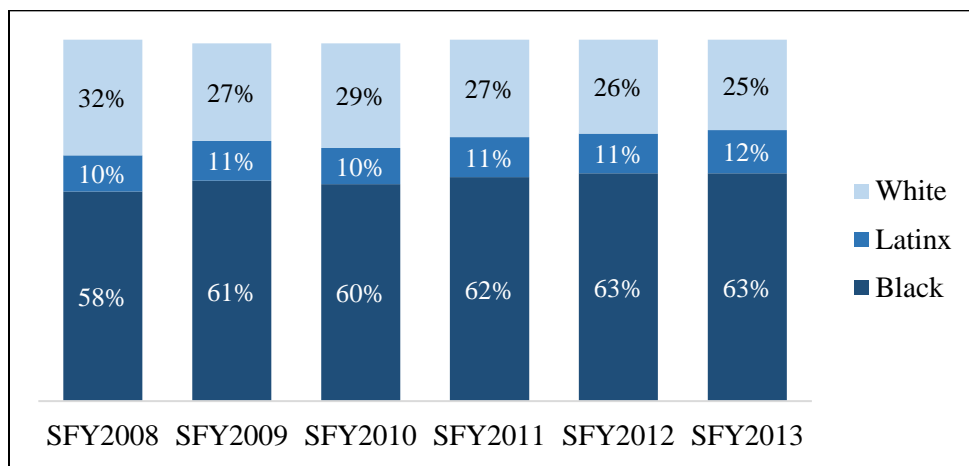
⁶ This excludes juveniles convicted in adult court who were being held at a IDJJ facility. Between SFY08 and SFY13, 607 juveniles were adjudicated in adult court and held in an IDJJ facility due to their age.

⁷ The percentage of new sentence admits and technical violation admits based on offender-based sampling was consistent with the event-based sampling percentages.

Race and ethnicity are categorized together in the IDJJ exit data files. Of the 12,299 youth exits during the period studied, 61 percent were Black, 28 percent were White, and 11 percent were Latinx (Figure 4).⁸ Despite the decline in juvenile commitments, Black youth still experienced a large and increasing disproportion of sentences to IDJJ.

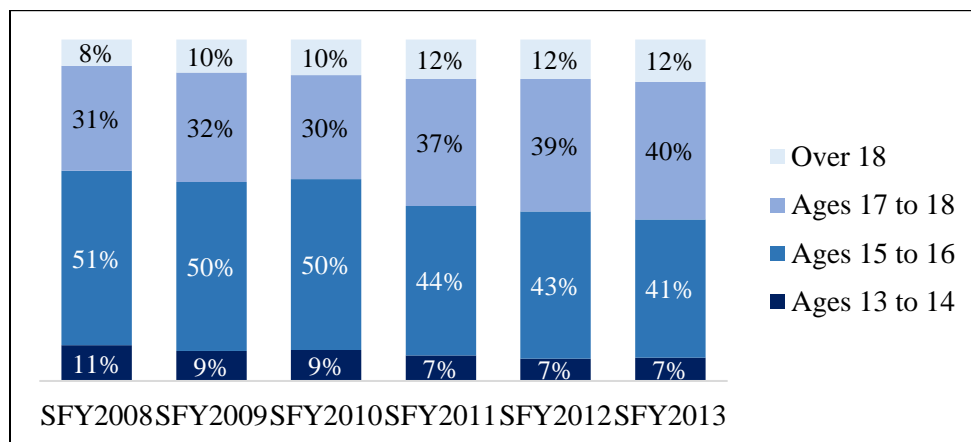
Eighty percent of youth aged 18 years were admitted to IDJJ for a technical violation during the period studied; 46 percent of 17-year-olds were initially admitted for a technical violation between SFY08 and SFY13 (Figure 5).

Figure 4
Percentages of Youth Exits by Race/Ethnicity and IDJJ Youth Exit Cohort Between SFY08 and SFY13 (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

Figure 5
Percentage of Youth Exit Cohort by Age at Admission to IDJJ (N=12,299)



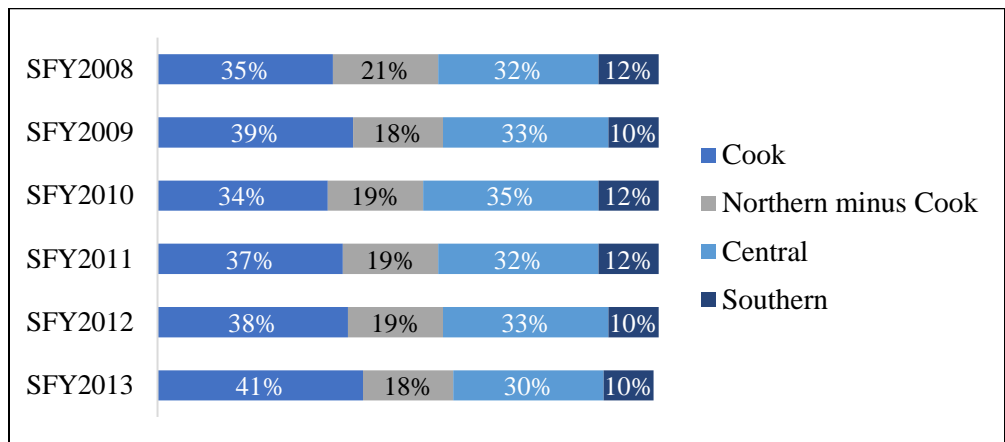
Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

⁸ The percentage breakdown of race/ethnicity in each fiscal year and overall is consistent with event-based sampling percentages.

Just over 90 percent of exits from IDJJ were originally admitted to IDJJ from urban counties, with most entering from the Central region and Cook County (*Figure 6*).⁹ For perspective, about half of Illinois is categorized as mostly urban or completely urban based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of urban and rural.

The majority of youth were admitted to IDJJ for person or property offenses, followed by drug offenses, sex offenses, and other offenses (*Figure 7*). Most frequently, youth were admitted for Class 2 felonies (30 percent), followed by Class 1 (22 percent) and Class 3 felonies (20 percent). Nine percent of youth exiting IDJJ were initially admitted for misdemeanor offenses. Over half of the youth exiting IDJJ in the study were admitted for a non-violent offense.

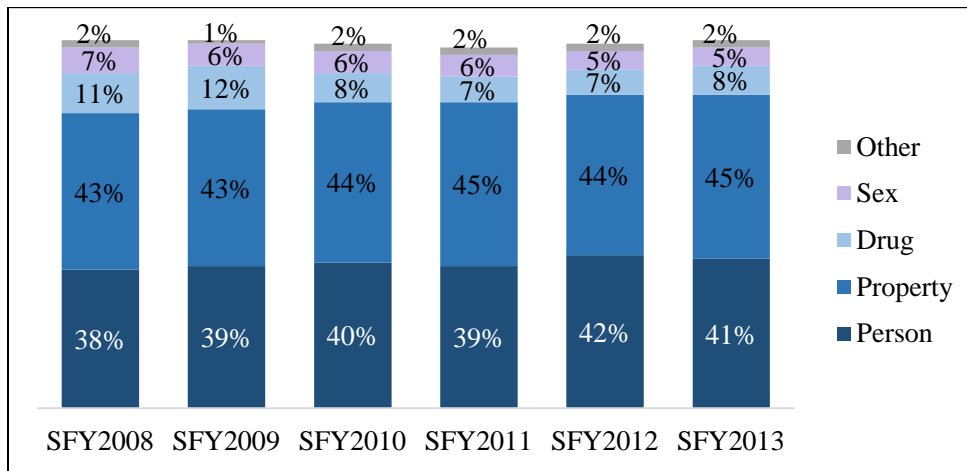
Figure 6
Percentage of Youth from Illinois Regions from which Youth were Initially Admitted to an IDJJ facility by Youth Exit Cohort (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data
Note: Data may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

⁹ Based on offender-based sampling, the admitting county, region, and urban/rural areas were consistent with event-based sampling.

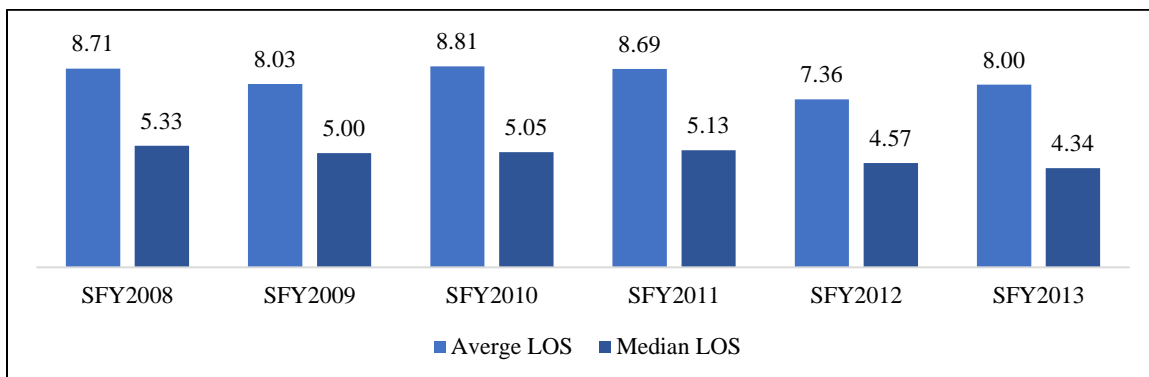
Figure 7
Percentage of Youth Exit Cohort by Admitting Offense Type (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

Between SFY08 and SFY13, the overall average length of stay (LOS) was approximately eight months, with a median of five months. *Figure 8* provides the average and median LOS for each SFY, which has slightly decreased from SFY08 to SFY13. The longest LOS was just over 95 months.

Figure 8
Average and Median Lengths of Stay in IDJJ Facility (in months) by Youth Exit Cohort (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

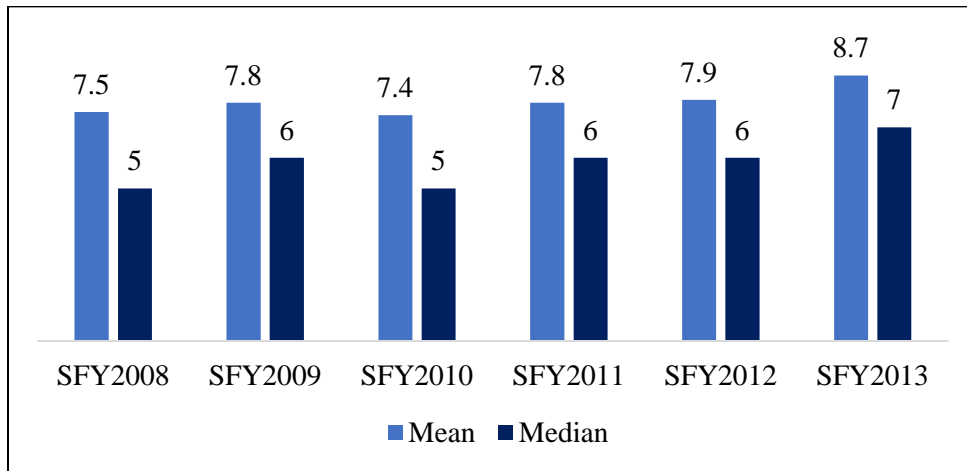
Note: LOS was unknown for 17 youth sampled.

Prior criminal history of the sample. Discussion of priors includes the committing offense arrest, unless otherwise specified.¹⁰ Approximately 94 percent of youth exiting IDJJ had at least one arrest dated prior to the admit date (including their committing offense). About 49

¹⁰ For juveniles, it is more difficult to decipher which arresting offense is related to their admitting offense as conviction(adjudication) and sentence data in CHRI is sparse.

percent of youth exiting IDJJ had served at least one prior additional IDJJ commitment, *not including* their exit commitment. On average, youth sampled had about eight arrests (a median of six prior arrests) including the committing offense (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9
Mean and Median Numbers of Prior Arrests Among Youth Exiting IDJJ Between SFY08 and SFY13 by Youth Exit Cohort (n=11,562)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

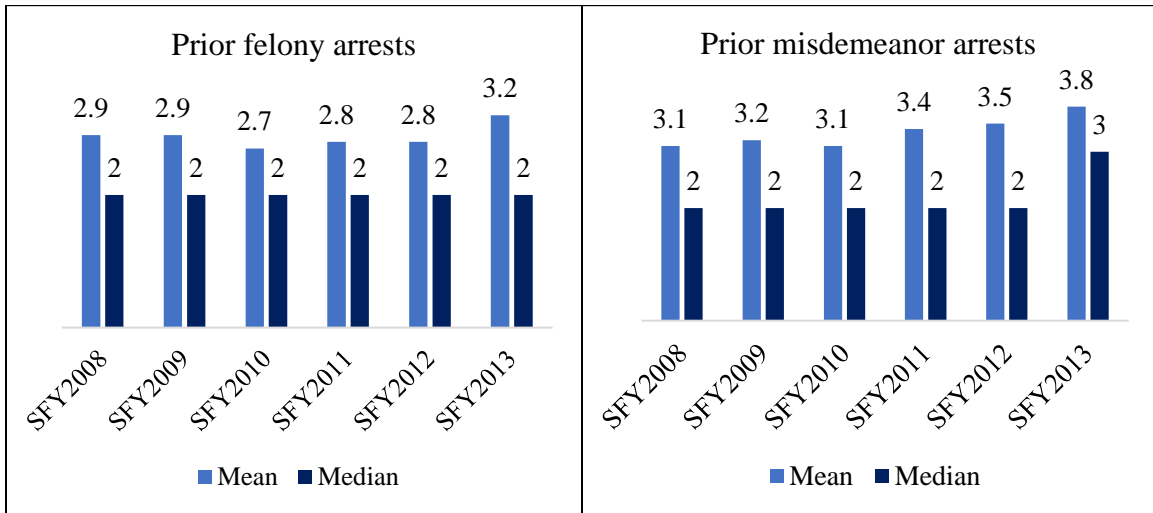
Youth exiting IDJJ had slightly more extensive criminal histories (slightly more prior felonies, misdemeanors, and IDJJ commitments from SFY08 to SFY13) compared to youth exits from prior studies (Bostwick et al., 2013).

The median number of prior felony and misdemeanor arrests from SFY08 to SFY12 was 2 for both prior arrest types; however, in SFY13 this median increased to 3 for both prior misdemeanor arrests and prior felony arrests (including the committing offense). *Figure 9* shows the mean number of prior felony and misdemeanor arrests for each SFY exit cohort.

Per data limitations, the number of prior misdemeanors may be an underrepresentation given that police agencies are not required to report misdemeanor arrests or lower to the Illinois State Police. On average, youth had 2.4 prior violent offense¹¹ arrests and 5.4 non-violent offense arrests, with a median of 2 and 4, respectively. *Figure 10* provides the mean and median number for non-violent and violent arrest priors.

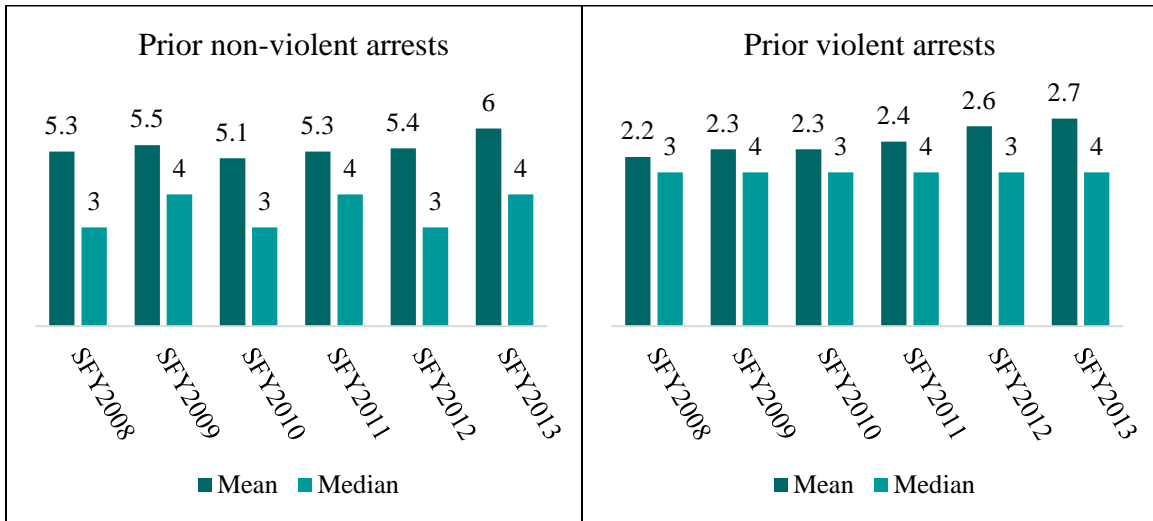
¹¹ Violent offenses were categorized using the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act, which defines a violent offense as any felony in which force or threat of force is used [725 ILCS 120/et seq.].

Figure 10
Average and Median Numbers of Prior Felony and Misdemeanor Arrests by Youth Exit Cohort (n=11,562)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Figure 10
Average and Median Number of Prior Violent and Non-Violent Arrests by Youth Exit Cohort (n=11,562)

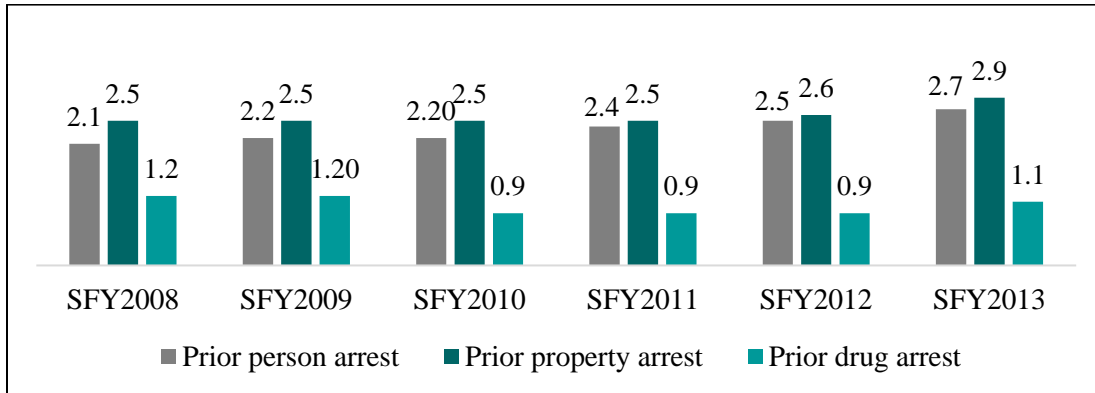


Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Person, property, and drug offenses constituted the majority of prior arrests and were reflective of the offenses for which youth were initially committed to IDJJ. On average, youth had 2.3 prior person arrests, 2.6 prior property arrests, and 1.0 prior drug arrests, with median numbers of 2 prior person arrests, 2 prior property arrests, and 0 prior drug arrest. *Figure 11* provides the

average numbers of prior person, property, and drug arrests by SFY. For sex and weapons offenses, there was a median of 0 and averages that hovered around .16 and .07, respectively.

Figure 11
Average Number of Prior Person, Property, and Drug Arrests by Youth Exit Cohort
(n=11,562)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Note: Means are influenced by high or low cases, which may pull the mean higher or lower.

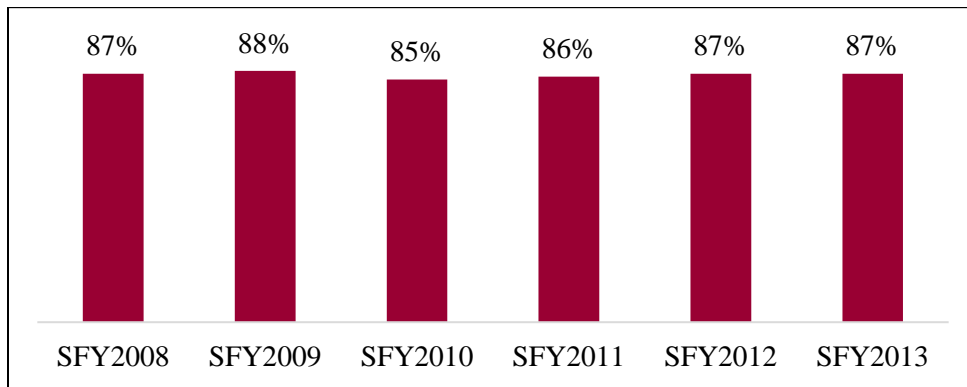
Recidivism Outcomes

Rearrest Outcomes

Of the 12,299 IDJJ youth exits between SFY08 and SFY13, 87 percent were rearrested within three years (n=10,685). This percentage remained consistent during the period studied, averaging 87 percent annually (n=10,685) (Figure 12). Rearrest percentages also were similar to the two previous ICJIA studies. The 2012 and 2013 ICJIA publications found 86 percent of youth exiting IDJJ after a delinquency commitment and for the sample of youth exiting IDJJ after a court evaluation commitment were rearrested within three-years post-release (Bostwick et al., 2013; Boulger et al., 2012).

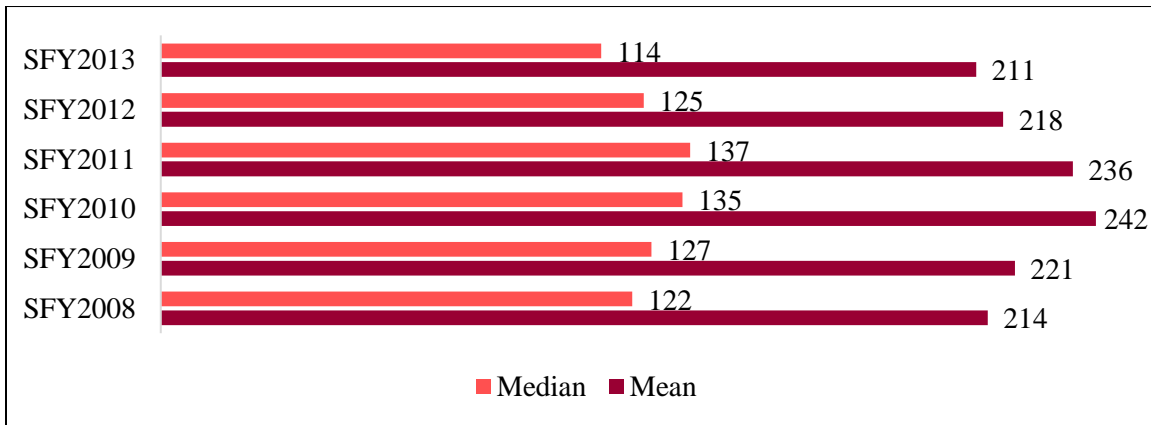
The median and average days to first rearrest were greatest for youth released in SFY10 and SFY11, and shortest for those released in SFY08 and SFY13 (Figure 13).

Figure 12
Percentage of Youth Rearrested within Three Years Post-Release from an IDJJ Facility by Youth Exit Cohort (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Figure 13
Average and Median Number of Days to First Rearrest by Youth Exit Cohort (n=10,683)



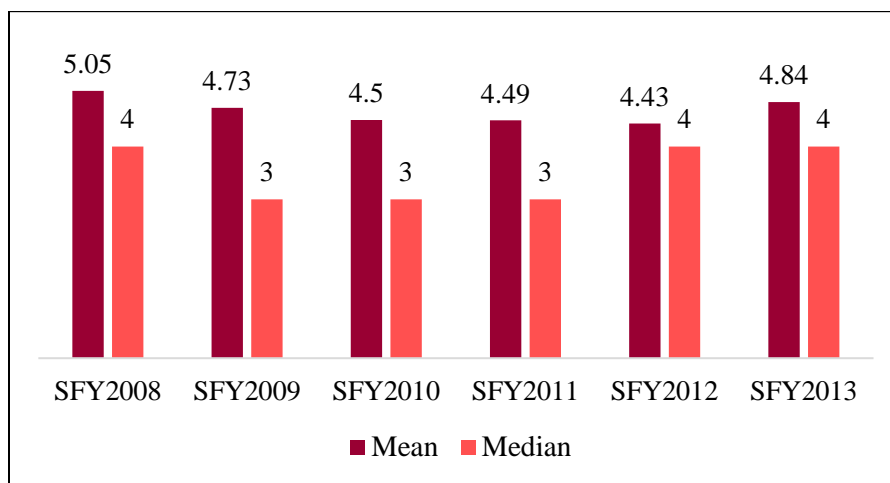
Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Note: Means are influenced by high or low cases, which may pull the mean higher or lower.

Characteristics of youth rearrested post-release. Of the 10,685 youths rearrested within three-years post-release, 64 percent were Black, 93 percent were male, and 47 percent were between the ages of 15 and 16 years old. On average, youth had 4.06 rearrests (median=3.00) within the three-year follow-up period. Of those rearrests, an average of 2.99 were for non-violent offenses (median=2.00), 1.07 were for violent offenses (median=1.00), 1.33 were for felony offenses (median=1.00), 1.79 were for misdemeanor offenses (median=1.00), and .95 were for unknown/other offense class (median=0.00).

Figure 14 provides the mean and median number of rearrests of youth released by SFY. Overall, the average and median number of rearrests dips slightly for youth released in SFY10 through SFY12, but increases for youth released in SFY13 almost to those released before SFY10.

Figure 14
Average and Median Numbers of Rearrests within Three Years Post-Release by SFY Exit Cohort (n=10,683)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of CHRI data.

Note: Means are influenced by high or low cases, which may pull the mean higher or lower.

Of the 7,512 Black youth exits from IDJJ, 90 percent (n=6,791) were rearrested within three years compared to 87 percent (n=1,144) among the total number of Latinx youth exits (n=1,315), 79 percent (n=2,716) among the total number of White youth exits (n=3,429), and 74 percent (n=32) among the total number of other race/ethnicity youth exits (n=43). Within each race/ethnicity category, Black and Latinx youth tended to have higher proportions of rearrests for most offense types.

Youth of all races/ethnicities had higher rearrest percentages for non-violent offenses than for violent offenses. Black youth had a higher proportion of felony offense arrests, whereas White, Latinx, “other” races had higher proportions of rearrests for a misdemeanor offense. Black and Latinx had a higher proportion of rearrests for person offenses, while White or ‘other’ race youth had a higher percentage of rearrests for other offenses. Latinx youth (17 percent) and youth who identified as other race/ethnicity (19 percent) had a higher proportion of rearrests for weapons offenses compared to Black youth (13 percent) and White youth (5 percent) (*Table 1*).

Table 1
Percentage of Rearrest Types by Ethnicity and Offense Type (N=12,299)

	Non-violent	Violent	Felony	Misdemeanor	Other or unknown class	Person offense	Property offense	Drug offense	Other offense
Black youth (n=6,791)	89%	68%	81%	73%	56%	66%	55%	43%	63%
Latinx youth (n=1,144)	91%	71%	69%	81%	54%	69%	50%	37%	69%
White youth (n=2,716)	90%	53%	61%	66%	46%	51%	51%	23%	55%
Other race/ethnicity youth (n=32)	97%	50%	75%	72%	59%	50%	44%	38%	84%
Total youth rearrested (n=10,683)	90%	64%	75%	72%	53%	62%	53%	37%	54%

Note: The bolded percentages are the percentages for any youth rearrests; the other columns are specific to those youth who were rearrested, by race/ethnicity and offense type.

Based on youths' initial age at admission to IDJJ, the percentage of youth rearrested within three years post-release from an IDJJ facility was fairly similar, ranging from 80 percent (14-year-olds) to 89 percent (17-year-olds). Overall, there were small differences in the percentage of youth rearrested for each type of offense and offense class (*Table 2*). Among all ages, youth were more likely to be rearrested for non-violent offenses (between 83 and 91 percent).

Youth ages 13 to 16 were more likely to be rearrested for a felony offense (between 75 and 79 percent), while youth ages 17 to 20 were more likely to be rearrested for a misdemeanor offense (between 73 and 76 percent). Youth ages 13 to 16 and 20-year-olds were more likely to be rearrested for a person offense, while youth ages 17 to 19 were more likely to be rearrested for other offense types, such as driving while intoxicated, disorderly conduct, obstructing justice, and traffic offenses. Compared to their counterparts, youth aged 15 and 16 had a higher proportion of rearrests for weapons offenses.

Table 2
Rearrest Types of Youth Exit Cohorts by Age of Admission and Rearrest Offense Type
(n=10,683)

	Non-violent	Violent	Felony	Misdemeanor	Other or unknown class	Person offense	Property offense	Drug offense	Other offense
Age 13 (n=152)	83%	65%	75%	62%	53%	65%	53%	28%	55%
Age 14 (n=666)	87%	69%	79%	67%	50%	66%	59%	29%	53%
Age 15 (n=1824)	89%	66%	77%	70%	51%	64%	56%	35%	59%
Age 16 (n=3185)	90%	64%	78%	72%	53%	62%	55%	39%	61%
Age 17 (n=2434)	91%	64%	74%	76%	53%	62%	52%	39%	65%
Age 18 (n=1321)	90%	63%	70%	73%	57%	60%	50%	36%	67%
Age 19 (n=794)	90%	63%	67%	72%	57%	60%	46%	38%	66%
Age 20 (n=307)	88%	67%	64%	76%	51%	65%	42%	36%	60%
Total youth rearrested (n=10,683)	90%	64%	75%	72%	53%	62%	53%	37%	62%

Note: The bolded percentages are the percentages for any youth rearrests, regardless of age; the other columns are specific rearrested, by age and offense type.

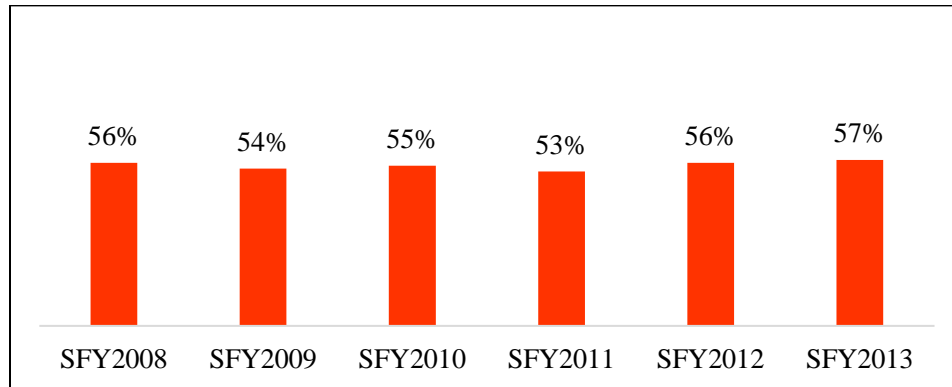
Recommitment To IDJJ

Fifty-five percent of youth who exited IDJJ between SFY08 and SFY13 were recommitted to IDJJ (n=6,777) *Figure 15* provides the breakdown of IDJJ recommitments by SFY of youth exits.

Eighty percent of recommitments to IDJJ were for technical violations. Most of those recommitted to IDJJ were male (93 percent) and Black (65 percent). The average age of youth recommitted to IDJJ was 16.2 (median=16). Youth recommitted to IDJJ most frequently had property or person initial committing offense(s), 44 percent and 39 percent, respectively.

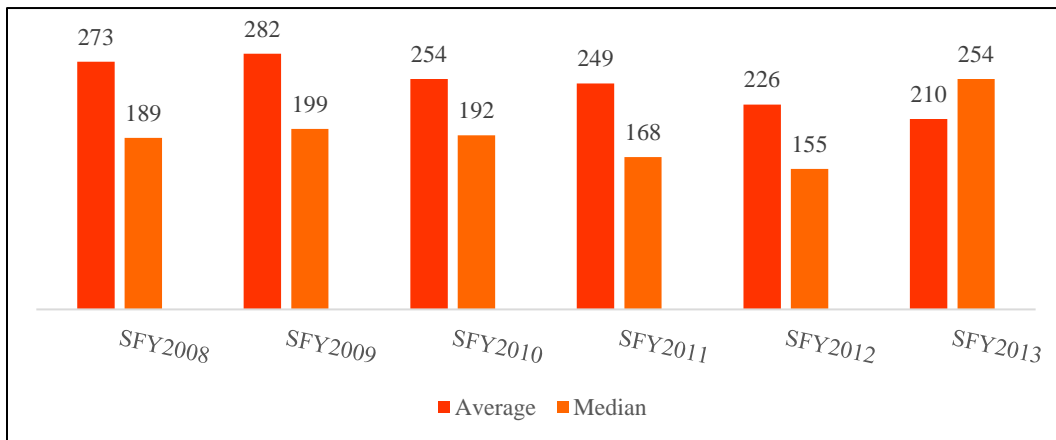
There was a general decrease between SFY08 and SFY13 in average and median days to IDJJ recommitment, (*Figure 16*). Overall, there was an average of 251 days to IDJJ recommitment and a median of 176 days.

Figure 15
Percentage of Youth Recommitted to IDJJ by Youth Exit Cohort (N=12,299)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

Figure 16
Average and Median Number of Days to IDJJ Recommitment by Youth Exit Cohort (n=6,777)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDJJ data.

Note: Means are influenced by high or low cases, which may pull the mean higher or lower.

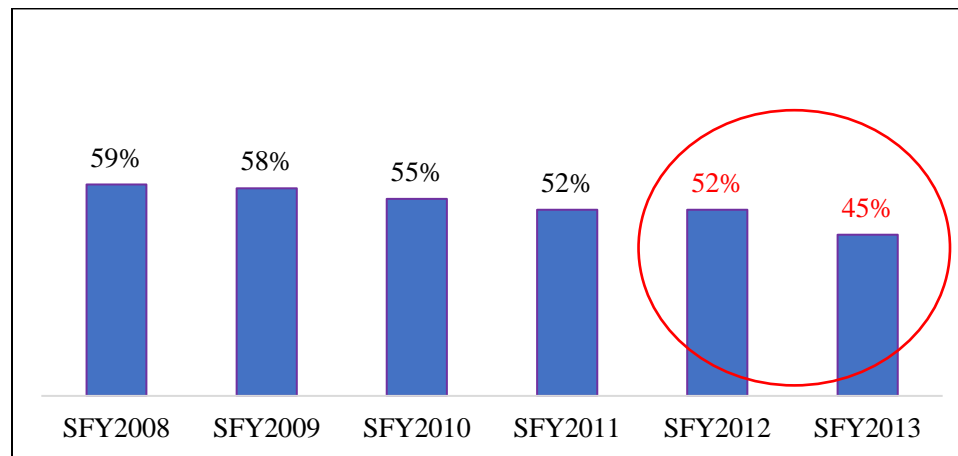
A higher percentage of Black youth were recommitted to an IDJJ facility (65 percent), followed by White youth (25 percent), and Latinx youth (10 percent). Thirty-nine percent of youth recommitted to an IDJJ facility were committed from Cook County and 31 percent were committed from counties in the central region. Ninety-three percent of IDJJ commitments came from mostly urban counties. Younger age groups—13- to 15-year-olds had a higher percentage of commitments to an IDJJ facility, at 78 percent, 72 percent, and 66 percent, respectively, compared to 16- to 20-year-old exits, at 54 percent, 51 percent, 54 percent, 45 percent, and 19 percent, respectively. However, the lower percentage of IDJJ commitments among 17- to 20-year-olds may be a result of those youth aging out of the juvenile justice system.

Commitment to IDOC

Overall, 54 percent of the IDJJ youth exits were committed to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) post-release (n=6,680). *Figure 17* provides percent of commitments to IDOC by SFY.

There should be caution in interpreting the decrease in percent of youth exits released in SFY12 and SFY13 who were then committed to IDOC. This decrease may be the product of the amount of follow-up time for some youth exiting IDJJ who may not have aged out of the juvenile justice system. If a juvenile was admitted at age 13 or 14 in SFY12 or SFY13, it is unlikely s/he would be eligible for the adult system due to age, unless s/he commits an offense at age 16 that would qualify as an automatic transfer to the adult system.

Figure 17
Percentage of Youth Committed to IDOC by Youth Exit Cohort (N=12,299)

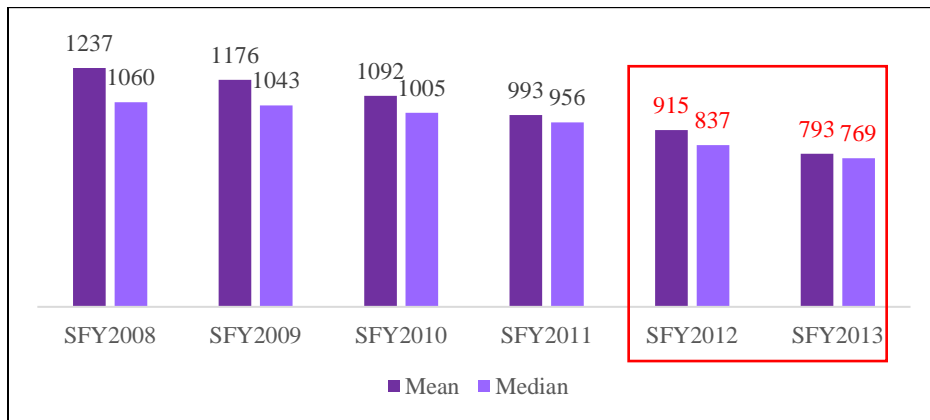


Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDOC data.

Note: SFY2012 and SFY2013 may not be representative of the actual percentages of youth committed to IDOC.

Overall, there was a decrease in average and median days to an IDOC commitment among youth exits from IDJJ between SFY08 and SFY13 (*Figure 18*). The decrease in days to IDOC commitment may also be the product of the decrease in IDJJ commitments over the last several years in attempts to more accurately identify those youth who are not appropriate for IDJJ, potentially reducing future IDOC commitments via decrease justice-system contact; however, more research is needed to understand the potential causes in decline. The SFY12 and SFY13 percentages provide an accurate picture of the downward trend of youth committed to IDOC or if it is the product of youths' age and/or IDJJ policies. Further analysis is needed to determine the drivers of this decrease.

Figure 18
Average and Median Number of Days to IDOC Commitment by Youth Exit Cohort
(n=6,680)



Data source: ICJIA analysis of IDOC data.

Note: SFY2012 and SFY2013 may not be representative of the actual percentages of average and median days to IDOC commitment.

The average age of youth at time of commitment to adult corrections was 19 years old (median = 20 years old). The majority of youth who were committed to IDOC were Black (68 percent), male (97 percent), and committed direct from court—or committed on a new sentence (87 percent). Most frequently, youth were committed to IDOC on Class 2 (30 percent) and Class 4 (25 percent) felony offenses. Of the youth exits from IDJJ, youth committed to IDOC post-release were also most frequently committed to IDOC for a property offense (30 percent) or person offense (42 percent), consistent with initial youth IDJJ committing offenses. However, of the youth exits from IDJJ, far more youth were committed to IDOC for drug offenses (20 percent) than those committed to IDJJ for drug offenses (9 percent).

Youth ages 13 (45 percent) and 20 (47 percent) were less likely to be committed to IDOC after release from IDJJ. Sixteen-year-old youth were more likely than other aged youth to be committed to IDOC (58 percent), followed by 17-year-olds (56 percent), 18-year-olds (54 percent), 15-year-olds (53 percent), 19-year-olds (51 percent), and 14-year-olds (50 percent). A higher proportion of Black youth were committed to IDOC (68 percent) than White (23 percent) and Latinx youth (9 percent).

Discussion

Despite high post-release recidivism rates, the juvenile population incarcerated in IDJJ has decreased over the past several years. Overall declines in juvenile delinquency rates, greater use of diversion, and less frequent use of arrest by law enforcement could be driving the decrease in juvenile incarceration (Walker & Bishop, 2016; National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2014). However, more research is needed to truly determine what is contributing to the decline.

Further, while overall juvenile delinquency rates have been on the decline, there has been very little, if any, sizable impact on disproportionate minority contact (DMC) throughout the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Despite accounting for roughly 18 to 20 percent of the youth population aged 13 to 20, Black youth remain the majority in the juvenile justice system.¹² The disproportion of race/ethnicity in IDJJ is likely a function of disproportionate contact at each previous juvenile justice process point as well, including arrest, referral to juvenile court, case diversion, secure detention, charges filed (petitioned), delinquency findings (adjudication), probation placements, secure confinement in correctional facilities, and transfers to adult court.¹³ While ongoing efforts exist to target DMC, a more centralized, standardized collection of race/ethnicity data at the nine contact points outlined by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) would provide increased accuracy of this information to guide strategies to decrease DMC (Rovner, 2014). This could provide the juvenile justice system greater ability to discern at what point in the system disparities continue to exist and what strategies may best target the issue. Further, these strategies and efforts to decrease DMC should be evaluated and monitored to identify whether these strategies are producing the desired outcomes (Rovner, 2014).

The consistently high percentage of youth recidivism across the past several years may also suggest the juvenile justice system is reserving incarceration only for those juveniles who pose a more serious risk to public safety. Conversely, the high percentage of youth recidivism post-release and the increase in IDJJ admissions for technical violations between SFY08 and SFY13 may suggest youth struggling on aftercare and/or aftercare services, treatment, and structure may be insufficient to reduce risk for recidivism, increasing youths' potential for success in the community.

However, the risk/need assessment used by IDJJ to actuarially assess youths' risk to recidivate and criminogenic needs (or risk factors) was not fully implemented or validated during SFY08 to SFY13, making it difficult to assess if this is the case. The consistent recidivism rate and increase in IDJJ readmissions for technical violations also may be due to lack of sufficient programming and/or inappropriate dosage of evidence-based programming during this time period, but particularly, once they are released back into the community. High-risk youth, compared to their medium- and low-risk counterparts, require a higher "dosage" of treatment and programming—or more intensive, frequent treatment and services (Makarios, Sperber, & Latessa, 2014). In other words, the intensity of treatment may be insufficient and the treatment provided may not be

¹² Youth race populations gathered from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Easy Access to Juvenile Populations data for the state of Illinois between 2008 and 2017.

¹³ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention requires data to be collected at these nine decision points for every county that has more than a 1 percent minority population.

specifically responsive (e.g. matching style of learning of the youth; consideration of youth mental health issues, intellectual limitations, or cognitive disabilities); generally responsive (i.e. emphasis on cognitive-behavioral therapy and wrap-around services); and/or target appropriate needs (or target them sufficiently) to produce reductions in recidivism for moderate- to high-risk youth.

Future research should consider different outcomes to assess juvenile behavioral improvement and success as recidivism is only one aspect of juvenile behavior, and a behavior in which youth may desist over time, particularly in light of aging and maturation processes, and increased saliency of formal and informal social controls (Laub & Sampson, 2001). Other outcomes to consider include education and/or vocation achievements, engagement in prosocial activities and programming (e.g. afterschool programs, clubs, sports), skill acquisition, and youths' overall quality of life. In addition, a general needs assessment of IDJJ treatment, services, and programming within the institution to determine if service provisions are appropriately and adequately addressing youths' criminogenic needs in a way that sets them up for greater success upon reentry into the community. Further, juvenile justice systems can use recidivism and other outcomes as an indicator of how well the system is functioning, using this information to understand and evaluate the impact of programs, policies, and practices on youth behavior and identify areas for improvement (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2014).

Conclusion

During the period examined (SFY08 to SFY13), youth exits were predominately male and Black. The average age of youth upon initial commitment to IDJJ was 16.5 years old and were, on average, 17 years old upon exit during SFY08 and SFY13. Further, the majority of youth released in each exit cohort were Black. Overall, the vast majority of youth released from an IDJJ facility were rearrested within three-years of release (87 percent). Just over half of those youth were recommitted to a juvenile correctional facility, the majority of commitments resulting from technical violations. Additionally, just over half of the youth exits were committed to IDOC, most frequently for Class 2 and Class 4 felonies. A higher proportion of Black youth were rearrested, recommitted to IDJJ, and committed to IDOC compared to White and Latinx youth. The proportion of youth rearrested, recommitted to IDJJ, and committed to IDOC has remained relatively consistent over the past decade, despite decreases in IDJJ's incarcerated population (Bostwick et al., 2013; Boulger et al., 2012).

Future Illinois juvenile recidivism studies will likely be limited when assessing prior criminal history and its impact on future behavior as an independent or interactive factors that may be associated with recidivism due to the automatic and permanent expungement of qualified youth CHRI records, pursuant to new laws passed in Illinois ([20 ILCS 2630/5.2](#)). While seal and expungement laws can help remove barriers to successful reentry, it does make it more difficult to analyze recidivism by removing the ability to analyze how prior criminal history and age at first arrest may affect future behavior. Prior criminal history is generally a significant risk factor associated with future recidivism (Kurlychek, Brame, & Bushway, 2006; Mulder, Brand, Bullens, & van Marle, 2011). This will render future recidivism studies unable to adequately and accurately perform statistical analysis and inference regarding juvenile recidivism, given a significant risk factor will not be accounted for.

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