States at a Glance:
Juveniles in Public Facilities, 1995

by Joseph Moone

On February 15, 1995, public juvenile facilities held 69,075 juveniles in residential custody

Public juvenile facilities include secure and nonsecure facilities used to hold pre- and postadjudicated individuals under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Just under 96 percent (66,236) of juveniles in public residential facilities were held for delinquent offenses, that is, offenses that would also be illegal if committed by an adult. A small number were held for status offenses, that is, offenses that are not illegal for individuals who have reached the age of majority or another age established by law. Status offenses include truancy, running away, possession of alcohol, and ungovernability. Only about 1 percent of juveniles in public facilities were placed in custody for other reasons, including dependency or neglect.

Within a State, whether a juvenile is subject to juvenile court jurisdiction may vary, depending on the specific offense with which the juvenile is charged. Some States also rely more heavily on private facilities, including facilities in other States, than others. Under California law, the California juvenile corrections system can hold offenders adjudicated in juvenile court much longer than other States’ systems. In Connecticut, New York, and North Carolina, 16- and 17-year-olds are not subject to a juvenile court’s delinquency jurisdiction. Ten other States set the maximum age for juvenile court jurisdiction at 16.

The average State juvenile custody population in public facilities was 1,351

Considering the average population by State further illustrates the distribution of juveniles in custody in public facilities. The 15 States with larger than average juvenile custody populations accounted for 74 percent (51,145) of the overall population.

Other indicators also show the asymmetry of the national juvenile custody population. The median custody population in juvenile facilities by State was 715. Only 12 percent of the juvenile custody population was found in States with populations below the median. Juvenile custody populations ranged from a low of 24 (Vermont) to a high of 19,567 (California).

Most of the juveniles in custody in public facilities were held for delinquent offenses

Only eight States (Tennessee, Montana, South Dakota, Missouri, Utah, Indiana, Hawaii, and Iowa) and the District of Columbia had a juvenile custody population that was less than 90 percent delinquent offenders. Nine States (Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia) held only delinquent offenders in public facilities. Nationally, about 96 percent of the juveniles in public facilities were in custody for a delinquent offense.

Two-thirds of the remainder of the population in these facilities was made up of status offenders, with the balance being

| Nearly 96 percent of juveniles in public facilities nationally were there because of a delinquent offense |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Offense Type    | Total Juveniles | Percent         |
| Total           | 69,075          | 100.0           |
| Delinquent      | 66,236          | 95.9            |
| Status          | 1,785           | 2.6             |
| Other           | 889             | 1.3             |
| Unknown*        | 165             | 0.2             |

*The responding agency was unable to classify these juveniles.
nonoffenders such as abused and neglected children. Nationally, only 2.6 percent of the juveniles in public facilities were there for status offenses such as running away, truancy, or liquor law violations associated with age. States with the largest percentage of status offenders in public facilities included Indiana (13.7 percent), Iowa (12.8 percent), Missouri (12.6 percent), and South Dakota (11.5 percent). Only a small number of juveniles were held in public facilities for nonoffenses such as dependency or neglect. Hawaii (17.8 percent) and Iowa (15.2 percent) held the largest percentages. Nineteen States did not hold any nonoffenders in their public facilities.

This information comes from the 1995 Census of Juvenile Detention, Correctional, and Shelter Facilities

Since 1971, the U.S. Department of Justice has conducted a biennial census of facilities that hold juveniles who have committed an offense. Each facility is requested to provide information on the number of juveniles held and the reason for custody. To allow for comparisons between censuses, the reference date for each biennial census is February 15.

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