

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/>

Campaign and Advocacy

1705 DeSales St, NW  
8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202.628.0871  
(fax) 202.628.1091  
[staff@sentencingproject.org](mailto:staff@sentencingproject.org)

1705 DeSales St, NW  
8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202.628.0871  
(fax) 202.628.1091  
[staff@sentencingproject.org](mailto:staff@sentencingproject.org)

Black youth are more than four times as likely to be detained or committed in juvenile facilities as their white peers, according to nationwide data collected in October 2019 and recently released. In 2015, Black youths incarceration rate was 5.0 times as high as their white peers, an all-time peak. That ratio fell to 4.4, a 13% decline.<sup>1)</sup>Most data in this report are derived from Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Puzzanchera, C. and Kang, W. (2021). *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>

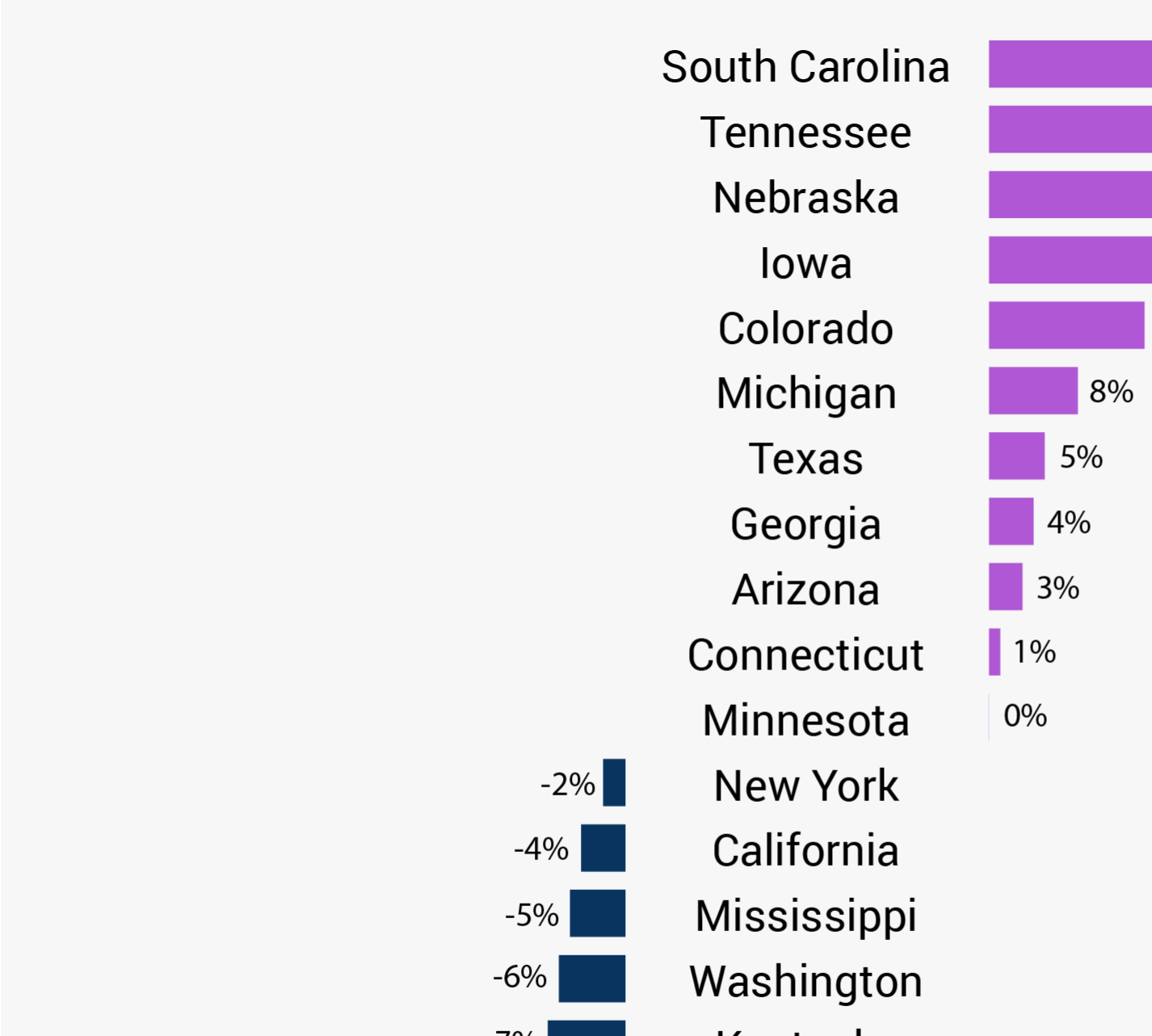
Juvenile facilities, including 1,510 detention centers, residential treatment centers, group homes, and youth prisons<sup>2)</sup>Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2020). *Juvenile Residential Facility Census Databook*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/jrfcdbr/> held 36,479 youths as of October 2019. (These data do not include the 653 people under 18 in prisons at year-end 2019<sup>3)</sup>Carson, E.A. (2020). *Prisoners in 2019*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 25115. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf> or the estimated 2,900 people under 18 in jails at midyear 2019.<sup>4)</sup>Zeng, Z. and Minton, T. (2021). *Jail Inmates in 2019*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 255608. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji19.pdf>)

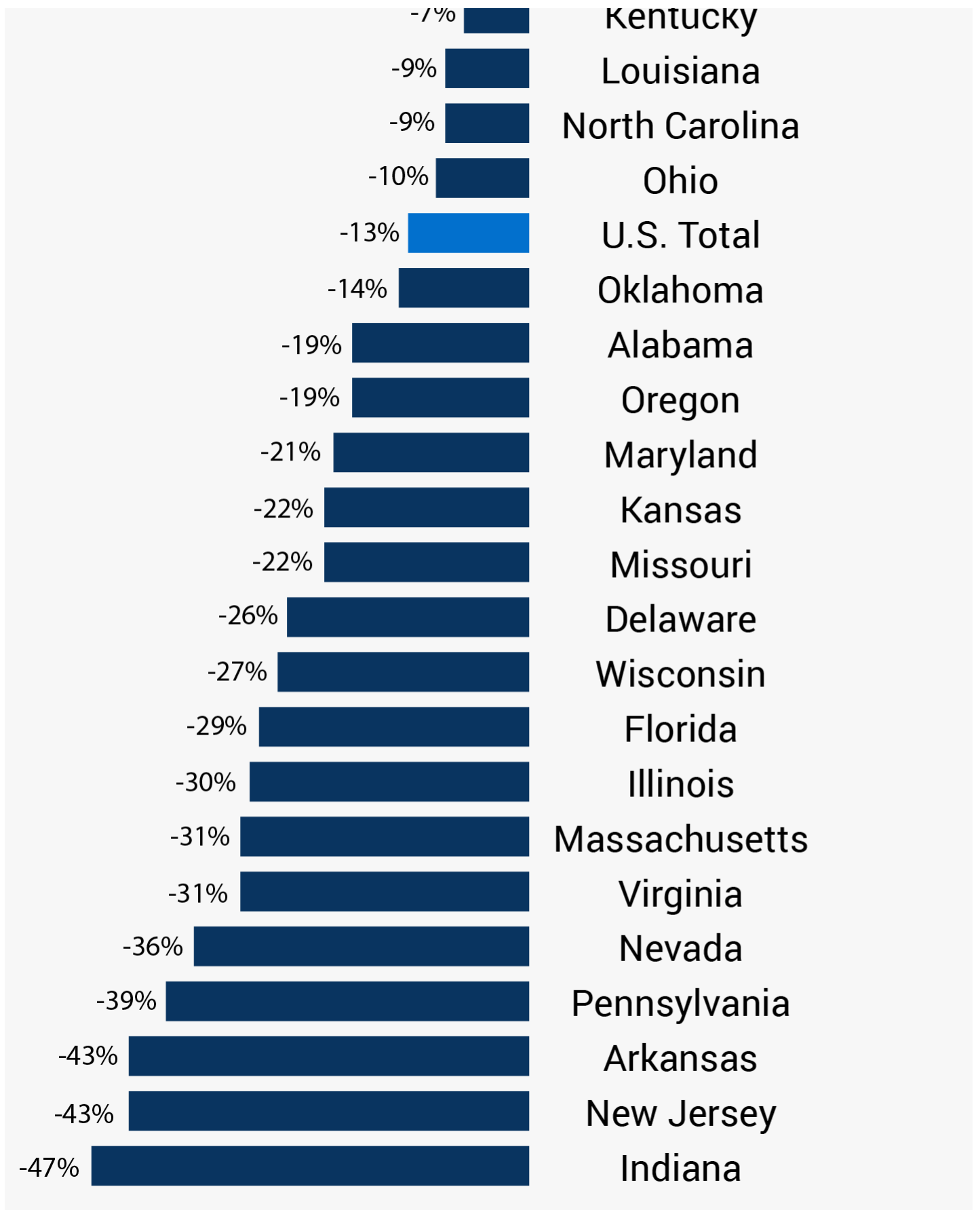
Forty-one percent of youths in placement are Black, even though Black Americans comprise only 15% of all youth across the United States.<sup>5)</sup>Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2020). *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2019*. National Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/> Black youth are more likely to be in custody than white youth in every state but one: Hawaii. Between 2015 and 2019, juvenile placements fell by 24%. During these years, Black youth placements declined faster than white youth placements (54% vs. 36%), resulting in a smaller but still considerable disparity.

Nationally, the youth placement rate was 114 per 100,000. The Black youth placement rate was 315 per 100,000, compared to the white youth placement rate of 72 per 100,000.

Racial disparities grew by more than 10% in 11 states and decreased by at least 10% in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

Positive numbers reveal an increase in the racial disparity between 2015 and 2019, and negative numbers reveal a decreased racial disparity.





Footnotes[+]

People in prison is serving a life sentence

Incarceration

1705 DeSales St, NW  
8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202.628.0871  
(fax) 202.628.1091  
[staff@sentencingproject.org](mailto:staff@sentencingproject.org)

The Sentencing Project (EIN 52-1472546) is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
Copyright 2022 The Sentencing Project All Rights Reserved [Terms of Use](#) // [Privacy Policy](#)