

# Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: Latino Youth

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Counsel

Girls

Crossover  
Youth

African-  
American  
Youth

Latino Youth

LGBTI  
Youth

Mental  
Health/Substance  
Abuse

Specialty  
Courts

School to  
Prison  
Pipeline

## Overview:

Hispanic and Latino youth are a fast growing portion of the youth population both nationally and in Ohio and are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system. This fact sheet will discuss these disparities as well as steps being taken to address and reduce racial and ethnic disparities (RED) [also called Disproportionate Minority Contact – or DMC – under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)].

*Note:* The terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably throughout this fact sheet to describe a youth's ethnicity and Latin American or Spanish ancestry. Hispanic and Latino youth can be of any race, although most commonly identify as White or Black. These terms encompass youth whose families of origin are from different geographic backgrounds as well as youth and their families who have been in the country for varying amounts of time. In addition, Latino and Hispanic youth may not be culturally similar to one another; a recent Pew survey reports that nearly 70% of Hispanic individuals stated that Hispanic individuals in the United States do not have a shared culture.

## National Statistics:

Nationally, nearly a quarter – 24.1% – of youth under the age of 18 are Hispanic youth, and the Hispanic youth population has grown 28% from 2003 to 2013. In 2012, the majority of the Hispanic population was native born (nearly 65%), and of the foreign born population over 11% were U.S. citizens. The largest categories of origin for the Latino population were Mexican (64%) and Puerto Rican (9%). Today, Hispanic people comprise the largest minority population in the US at 17% of the total population, surpassing African-American people who are 13% of the total population.

Linguistically, the vast majority (89%) of Latino youth ages 5-17 speak fluent English whether they are from native born (89%) or foreign born (70%) households. However, individuals 18 years of age and up are less likely to speak English well, especially in foreign born households. These numbers indicate that language access is still an issue for Latino youth, but may particularly be a problem for parents trying to navigate a complicated system.

In the juvenile justice system, Latino youth are overrepresented and, when compared to White youth, are more likely to be formally petitioned by the court, adjudicated delinquent, detained, be placed in a residential placement, and be transferred to the adult criminal justice system.

## Research and Programming:

Reducing RED has been the goal of policy makers and youth advocates both nationally and in individual states. At the federal level, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) requires that states address DMC in their juvenile justice systems to access their full federal program funding amounts. In order to comply, states must track DMC at nine points throughout the system, from arrest to sentencing.

Unfortunately, reducing RED has been an extremely difficult issue to solve, with many jurisdictions struggling to achieve successful reductions in RED. These efforts have been even more difficult for Hispanic youth as many jurisdictions have focused their efforts on African American youth. Successfully implementing initiative programs that reduce RED often requires that these initiatives be driven at the local level; however, some common characteristics can be identified, such as the creation of leadership teams designed to reduce RED, quality-driven data collection and analysis at each point in the juvenile justice process to identify where disparities occur, using objective screening and assessment instruments, and creating and monitoring plans to reduce RED.

Nationally, there are several programs that are designed specifically to address Latino youth. For example, the Southwest Key Program has developed several culturally competent community-based programs to work with thousands Latino youth across the country, including immigrant youth shelters, alternatives to detention, reentry, responsible fatherhood, and mentoring. Youth who participate in Southwest Key's Community Wraparound program, which provides various services including individual and group counseling, evening support group sessions, 24-hour crisis intervention, and links to community resources, have shown a very low rate of rearrest, increased school attendance, and a high rate of youth remaining at home.

## Ohio Data:

Nationally, Ohio has the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest population of Latino residents, and in 2013, Latino youth made up 5.5% of Ohio youth under age 18. Ohio's Latino youth population has grown over 52% in the past ten years, outpacing national growth. Ohio's Latino population is concentrated in urban centers, along the northern boundary of the state, and in the northwest. Ohio collects data on racial disparities in 14 targeted counties: Allen, Butler, Clark, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Richland, Stark, Summit, and Trumbull counties. However, data from other counties are not available, including counties with relatively large populations of Latino youth, such as Lake, Wood, Sandusky, Warren, Delaware, and Ashtabula counties.

In Fiscal Year 2013, Hispanic youth made up 3% of youth adjudicated delinquent for felonies and 5.7% of youth committed to Department of Youth Services facilities. Available data shows that Hispanic youth are much less likely than either White or Black youth to be arrested, but are four times more likely to be referred to the juvenile court than White youth and twice as likely to have a formal petition filed against them. Latino youth are also more likely to be referred to probation and held in secure confinement either pre- or post-adjudication. Most concernedly, Latino youth are transferred to the adult system 10 times more frequently as White youth.

## Ohio's Approach:

Since 2007, Ohio has devoted most of its JJDP A funding to reducing DMC in the state. However, this funding has mostly been targeted toward prevention and early intervention programs for African-American youth. None of the programs are designed specifically to address the needs of Latino youth and – as indicated above – several counties that have relatively large Hispanic populations are not included in Ohio's DMC efforts. In 2012-2014, the Governor's Council indicated that it would spend just under \$2.5 million to continue work on reducing DMC.

## Conclusion:

In recent years, Ohio has dedicated a large amount of time and funding to reducing DMC for youth in the juvenile justice system. However, these efforts may not be sufficiently targeted toward providing services for Latino youth in terms of both culturally competency programming and geography, especially given the disparities that exist. In addition, data collection on minority youth may not accurately reflect the needs of the Latino youth population.

## Resources:

*America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice*, Neelum Arya with Francisco Villarreal, Cassandra Villanueva, and Ian Augarten (2009) available at: [http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CFYJPB\\_CriticalCondition.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CFYJPB_CriticalCondition.pdf)

Department of Youth Services, *2012 Annual DMC Report Update* (2012), available at <https://www.sagtraining.org/State.aspx?State=OH> and *Profile of Youth Transferred to Adult Court: Fiscal Year 2013* (March 2014) and *Profile of Youth Adjudicated or Committed for Felony Offenses: Fiscal Year 2013* (January 2014).

Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice, *Three Year Plan* (2012).

Puzzanchera, C. and Hockenberry, S. (2013). National Disproportionate Minority Contact Databook. Developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/dmcd/b/>

Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2013). Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2012. Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/> and Sickmund, M., Sladky, A., and Kang, W. (2014). "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2011." Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/>

Taylor, Paul, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jessica Martínez and Gabriel Velasco, *When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity* (April 4, 2012), available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>.

Southwest Key Programs, *Programs and Community Connections Program Wraparound Approach*, <http://www.swkey.org/programs/> (last accessed January 12, 2015).

**This fact sheet is one of a fact sheet series about Ohio's juvenile justice system by the Ohio Juvenile Justice Association.**

**If you have any questions, please visit OJJA's website or contact Erin Davies with the Juvenile Justice Coalition at [edavies@jjohio.org](mailto:edavies@jjohio.org) or 614-400-5548.**