

# **THE EFFECT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM ON ARKANSAS'S ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**



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# THE EFFECT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM ON ARKANSAS'S ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The juvenile justice system in Arkansas is in desperate need of reform. If left untouched, it will continue to have severe consequences for the economy and workforce development of the state. While the rest of the country is moving away from incarceration of juveniles unless absolutely necessary, most of Arkansas continues to rely on outdated practices that focus more on revenge than on outcomes. This hurts not only the youthful offenders, but the communities and our state as well. Nationwide, states are striving to make services for youth offenders more constructive and rehabilitative. Meanwhile, Arkansas lags behind even our Southern counterparts. In the last decade, we were the only Southern state with increasing rates of juvenile incarceration.

Incarceration results in detrimental psychological and mental effects. Time spent in a residential facility also has severe negative impacts on the education and employment of juveniles. Any time spent in a residential facility is time away from school and from workforce programs that teach job skills. While this diminishes employment and salary prospects for individuals, it also limits our state's economic growth potential. Other states have recognized this, and it's time Arkansas did too.

In Arkansas, a disproportionate number of teens who are incarcerated are minorities. Extensive research suggests that there are no significant behavioral differences between black and white teens. Even so, youth prison populations have proportions of African Americans many times greater than general population proportions.

On top of the consequences that teens face from incarceration, Arkansas actually spends more to perpetuate this outdated system. The cost of housing teens in residential facilities is compounded by added costs that result from ineffective treatment in youth centers. Instead of rejoining the Arkansas workforce and contributing to the state, the state is leaving teens behind with few options to succeed.

A different approach is required to create a juvenile justice system that works for Arkansans and our state's economic future:

- Prevent interaction with the juvenile justice system in the first place. This means cutting off the “school-to-prison pipeline” in which young people have increasing numbers of interactions with the justice system while in school. These interactions are often for minor infractions that could be better handled outside the justice system.
- When it's necessary to refer young people to court, judges must thoroughly assess the risk that a young person poses to society. With more thorough and accurate evaluations, judges have a better idea who poses a risk to their communities. Only those young people should be in secure confinement.
- The state must fund the Positive Youth Development Grant Act to provide productive after-school activities for at-risk youth. These programs, with strong academic connections and mentorships, have the potential to prevent problems before they start.
- Judges must expand their use of community-based alternatives to youth prisons. These proven programs promote treatment and skill-building and allow young people to stay home and in school. Not only is this approach far less expensive than incarceration, it's more likely to help kids get on the right track. Youth who come out of these programs have a legitimate chance to finish school and become productive contributors to Arkansas's economy.

By dedicating our state to a better juvenile justice system, Arkansas can join the rest of the nation as it moves toward a truly effective treatment system for youth offenders.

## INTRODUCTION

The realization that juvenile incarceration is often ineffective has led to sweeping national reforms over the last decade. But in Arkansas, we're bucking this positive national trend, as rates of juvenile incarceration continue to grow here. Consequences of incarceration impact the education and future employment of juveniles adjudicated as delinquent. Because of this, even a short sentence for a minor offense can lead to detrimental impacts on the workforce development of individuals and the current and future economic prospects of Arkansas. A two-pronged approach aimed at preventing incarceration in the first place and investing in community-based alternatives to incarceration is essential to improving the economic standing of Arkansas and its citizens.



## IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUALS

The juvenile justice system in Arkansas is working at odds with education and career goals we have for our kids. Incarceration within the juvenile justice system can derail graduation goals and limit their future workforce opportunities. Furthermore, the negative outcomes from the juvenile justice system are not applied evenly to all kids, even for similar violations.

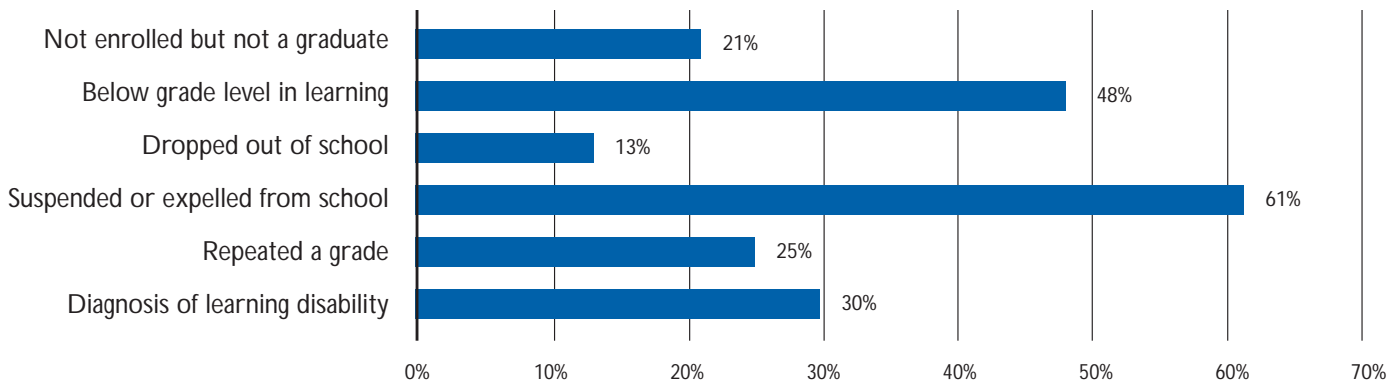
Too often, the legal system sentences juveniles to residential incarceration centers as a one-size-fits-all solution. The juvenile justice system confines teens for a variety of offenses. Teens are incarcerated for petty theft and truancy, which isn't a crime, with others who have committed serious violent felonies such as rape and assault. Young people from the age of 10 are placed in residential facilities that are breeding grounds for violence and abuse<sup>1</sup>.

The resulting impact on teens lasts far beyond the original sentence. Many studies nationwide have found significant differences in the mental health of incarcerated children and those who attended school. A study by the American Academy of Pediatrics described delinquent youths as being "often disenfranchised from traditional health care services". Many children enter incarceration with mental health issues, which are often amplified due to things like inadequate staff training and over-reliance on isolation<sup>2</sup>.

Experience in residential facilities greatly impacts choices made after a sentence. In fact, a 1999 study on youth incarcerated in Arkansas found the experience of incarceration to be the single biggest factor in the likelihood of a teen re-offending<sup>3</sup>. The only reliable service provided by such facilities is confinement. Education, rehabilitation, and other types of potentially impactful services are ineffective in residential facilities and fail to achieve lasting results. In the end, juveniles emerge after their sentences ill-equipped to make the necessary life changes required to avoid falling back into the trap of criminal activities.

During essential years of education and development, a foundation can be created for success in the professional world. Each year and each stage of education provides

Figure 1<sup>6</sup>: PERCENT OF YOUTH IN CUSTODY WITH EDUCATIONAL NEEDS NATIONWIDE (2010)



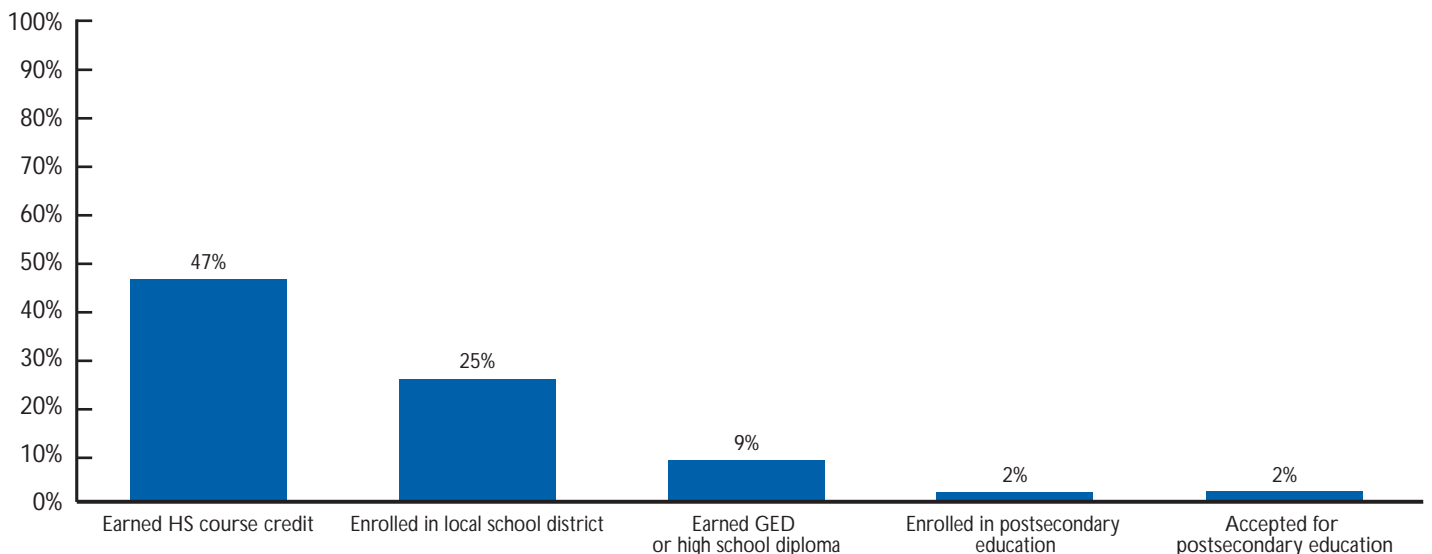
knowledge that is vital to becoming a successful adult. As the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank reports, each year of additional schooling translates to a 10% increase in average annual earnings<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately, this is an opportunity few teens receive once confined to residential incarceration facilities.

Juveniles adjudicated as delinquent are overwhelmingly low-income and behind in school nationwide<sup>5</sup>. Studies show that almost a third of juvenile delinquents in the U.S. struggle with a learning disability. About two thirds of youth offenders in the South tested below their grade level in reading and math. In addition, 25 percent of juvenile delinquents have repeated a grade and 61 percent of students have been suspended or expelled<sup>5</sup>. These students are among the most disadvantaged in the state and are most in need of a strong foundational education. Instead, these teens endure the juvenile justice school system, which is largely ineffective and filled with countless obstacles and barriers.

### CONCURRENT EDUCATION

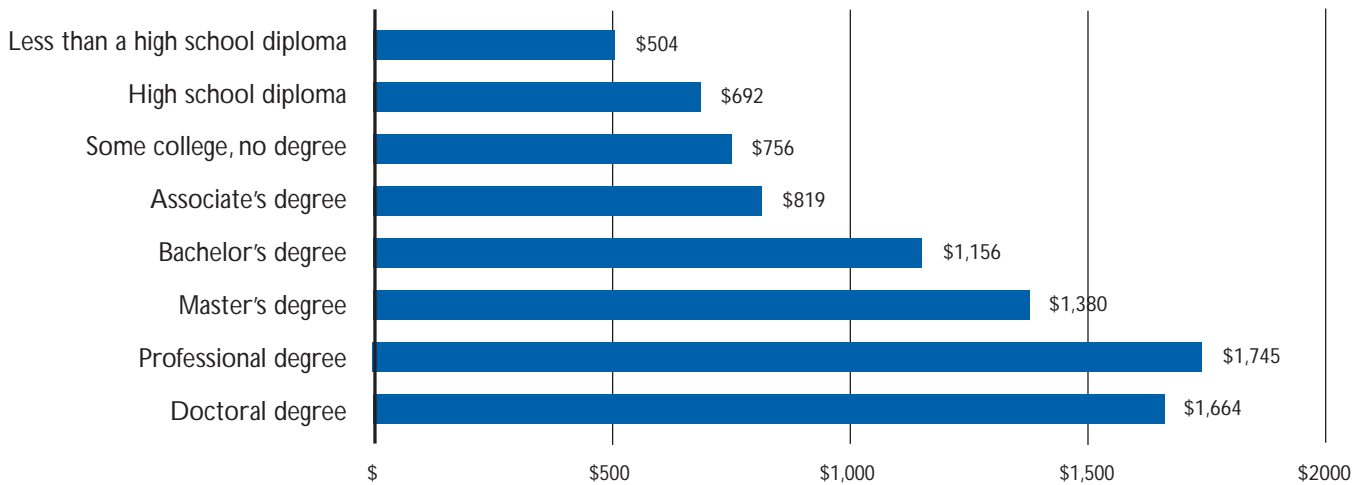
The average cost of funding a school in the juvenile justice system nationwide is estimated to be two or three times the amount it costs to fund a public school per student<sup>6</sup>. Despite this increased investment, juvenile justice schools produce dismal results. Less than half of teens earn any high school credit during their time at the residential incarceration centers. Up to two thirds of youth offenders are shown to drop out of high school after being released from these facilities<sup>6</sup>. The juvenile justice education system places the population most in need of personalized, individual assistance into a large group. Outdated teaching practices cannot keep up with the changing world of technology, leaving students further and further behind. This type of treatment produces ineffectual results that do little to prepare teens for the job market they must navigate in the future. Instead of sending more kids to these inadequate schools, we should be keeping teens in their own communities attending their own schools as much as safely possible.

Figure 2<sup>6</sup>: MEASURES OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN NATION'S JUVENILE SCHOOLS



Educational deficiencies alone greatly hinder future economic prospects. Adults across the nation without a high school diploma face the highest levels of unemployment and receive median wages 27 percent lower than individuals who complete high school<sup>6</sup>. When the juvenile justice system locks up teens at a young age and they fail to complete their education, the experience impacts a lifetime of potential earnings and production.

Figure 3<sup>6</sup>: EDUCATION LEVEL HAS A HUGE IMPACT ON FUTURE SALARY (2016)



National median weekly earnings (\$) for persons age 25 and over

### EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

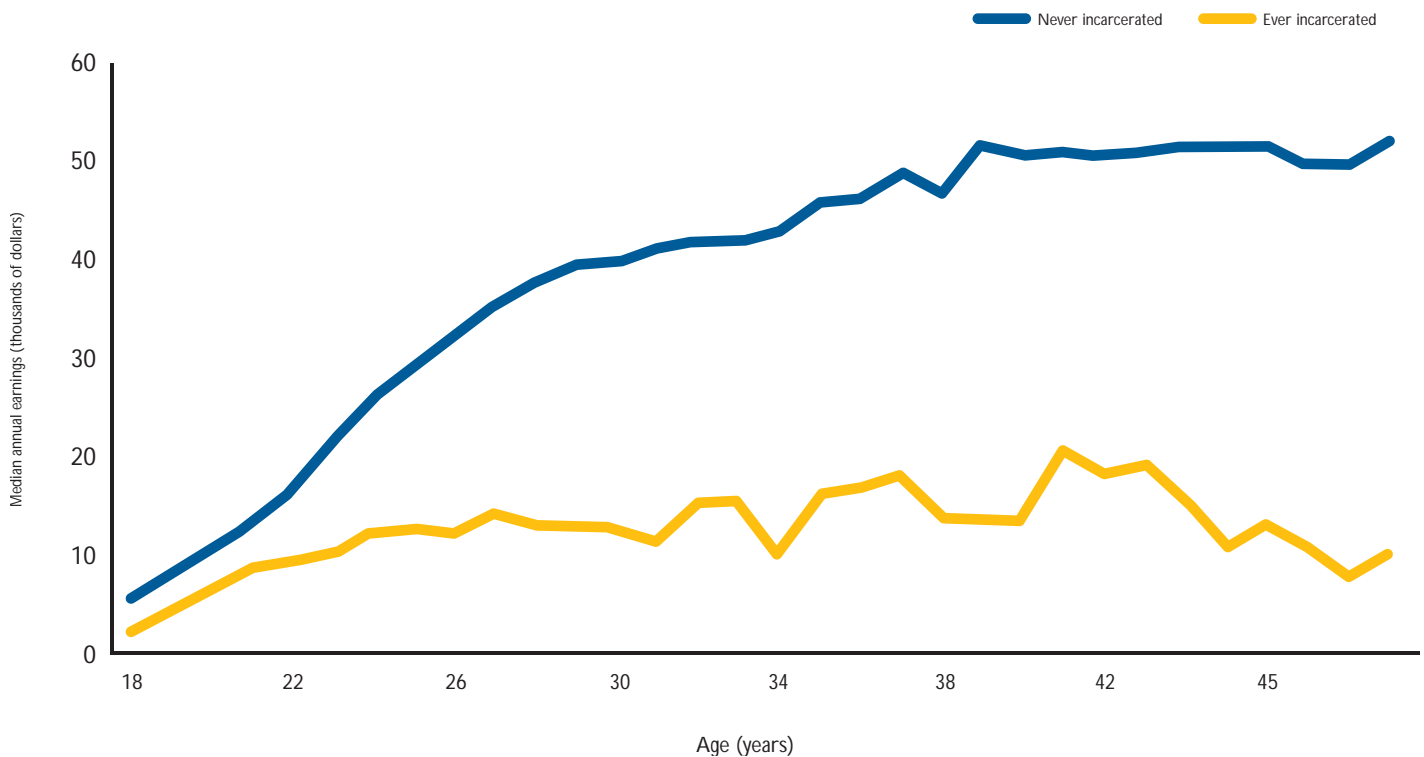
These numbers only cover the educational impact on future employment. Studies show that it is often difficult for individuals who have experienced secure confinement to receive job offers and job interviews. The effects are especially impactful for African Americans. In a study that held all other factors constant including resumes, appearance, and interview skills, individuals who have experienced secure confinement were 50 percent less

likely than comparable others to receive job offers or call backs<sup>7</sup>. These results were twice as prevalent for African Americans than for Caucasian applicants. As a result, lifetime earnings are substantially lower for individuals who have experienced secure confinement, as shown by Figure 4. In a national study controlling all other factors, wages for young males were reduced by 10-20 percent just from direct experience with incarceration. Wage growth over their lifetime was lowered by approximately 30 percent after being incarcerated<sup>8</sup>.



Figure 4<sup>9</sup>: MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS BY AGE, EVER INCARCERATED VERSUS NEVER INCARCERATED (2016)

By age 45 individuals who have never been incarcerated can expect to make \$41,000 more annually than individuals who have been incarcerated at some point during their lives.



Source: BLS n.d.b.; authors' calculations  
 Note: Sample restricted to men between 18 and 49

Regardless of the severity of the offense, the futures of all juveniles are negatively impacted by experience with incarceration. These consequences are due to a block on an already unstable education and a label as a former criminal that usually lasts 3-5 years<sup>10</sup>.

### RACIAL BREAKDOWN OF INCARCERATION IN ARKANSAS

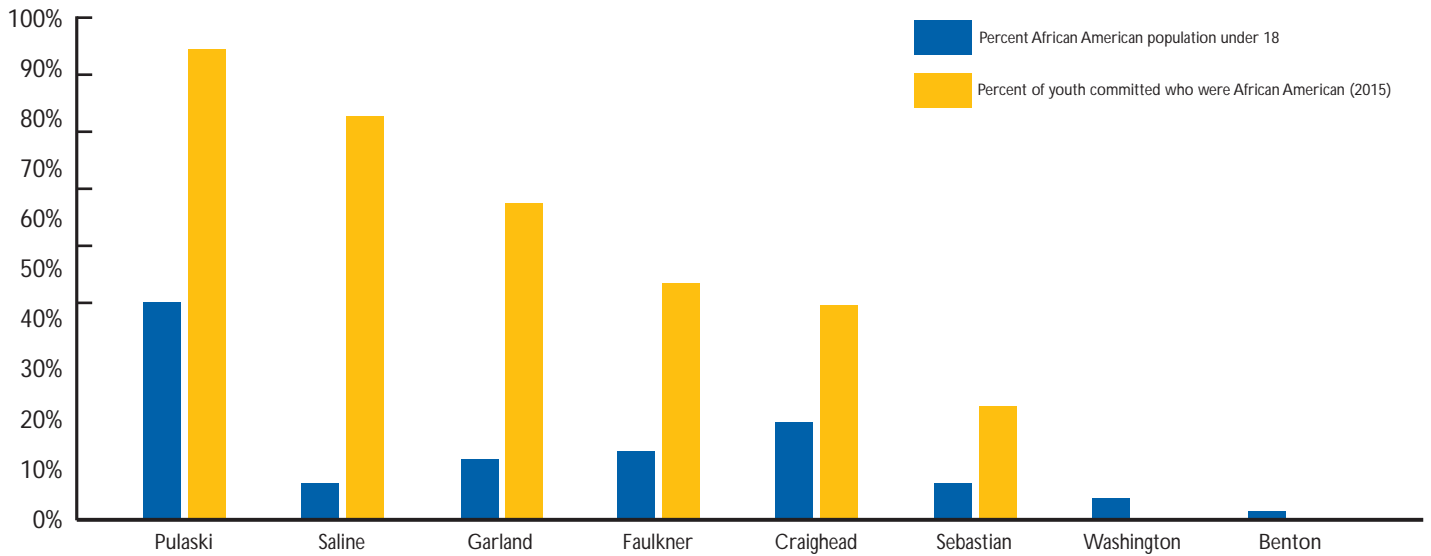
Extensive nationwide studies show no statistically significant difference in the likelihood of criminal behavior between black and white teens. However, across the nation, large discrepancies exist between the proportions of African American and Caucasian children in juvenile residential facilities<sup>11</sup>. A key contributor to the large population of confined black juvenile delinquents is the increased rate of arrest for African American teens<sup>11</sup>.

These trends hold true in Arkansas. In 2015, 57 percent of commitments to the Division of Youth Services were African American. The statewide population is only 15 percent African American<sup>12</sup>.

In some of Arkansas's biggest counties, the proportion of black teens that are locked up is even greater. In Pulaski county, over 94 percent of the 51 teens committed to DYS in 2015 were black<sup>13</sup>. The total under-18 population of Pulaski county is only 44 percent African American<sup>13</sup>. In Saline county, with a child population that is only 7 percent black, 81 percent of youth committed were African American. In Garland county, 63 percent of committed youth were black despite a county juvenile population that is 12 percent African American<sup>13</sup>.

Of these large counties, Washington and Benton were the only ones without disproportionately high rates of committing African American youth. However, their total commitments were also much smaller (only 6 each), meaning that it is harder to draw overall conclusions from these populations.

Figure 5<sup>13</sup>: ARKANSAS HAS LOW BLACK POPULATION RATES, BUT HIGH RATES OF BLACK KIDS INCARCERATED; DISPARITIES IN ARKANSAS'S LARGEST COUNTIES



## IMPACT ON ARKANSAS

The negative consequences do not stop with the individual. Each case has a remarkable impact on the current and future state of Arkansas's economy. Juvenile justice reform presents a golden opportunity rarely available in public policy: We can save money while improving results.

## CURRENT COST

From July 2015 to June 2016, the average bed rate per youth in county juvenile detention centers was over \$27,000 a year, and for residential treatment facilities the bed rate cost per youth was over \$52,000 a year<sup>14</sup>. In 2016 there were 467 total youth commitments.

Extensive data show the negative impact of these facilities on the lives of teens. The state is currently investing a huge sum of money in an outdated and ineffective practice. But that just highlights the direct, up-front costs to the state. Continuing to rely on, and even grow, juvenile incarceration has many costs well beyond the original sentence of a juvenile.

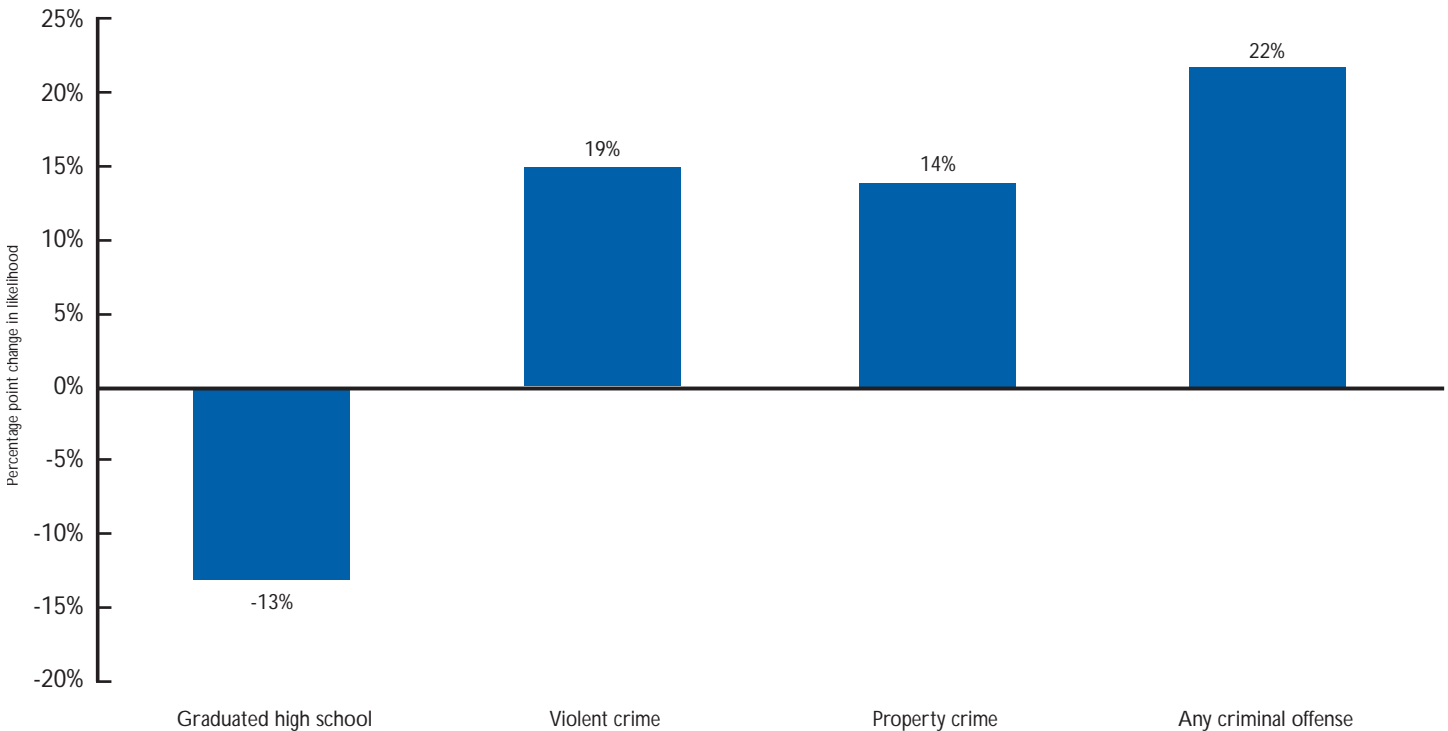
## FUTURE COST

For many teens, incarceration in the juvenile justice system comes at a crossroads in their lives. At this crucial age, a child can be given the tools to success, or left behind. When these children are deprived of the opportunity to develop in a healthy way, the consequences can be devastating for the individual as well as the state. The current juvenile justice system has proven to be ineffective at guiding teens to a better life. This is thanks, in large part, to a reliance on incarceration that produces harmful consequences as shown by nationwide data in Figure 6<sup>15</sup>. Incarcerated juvenile offenders are 13 percent less likely to finish high school and 22 percent more likely to return to prison as an adult when compared to non-detained juvenile offenders.





Figure 6<sup>16</sup>: JUVENILES THAT ARE INCARCERATED ARE LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL AND MORE LIKELY TO RE-OFFEND THAN NONDETAINED JUVENILE OFFENDERS (2013)



Many juvenile delinquents become law-abiding citizens upon release. However, the sad reality is that the juvenile justice system fails to help get kids on the right track. A recent study found that between 52 and 57 percent of juvenile delinquents in the U.S. continue to offend until the age of 25<sup>16</sup>. For a 14-year-old high-risk teen who exits the juvenile justice system without having received the proper aid, chances of finishing a high school education and finding employment are low<sup>16</sup>. Without the help and guidance needed to combat complex personal issues, many teens struggle to overcome the underlying circumstances that led to their original offense.

In those cases, the costs to the state are enormous. For a high-risk youth in the U.S., the estimated lifetime costs to the state range between \$2.6 million and \$4.4 million for a single person<sup>17</sup>. These numbers include costs of

future offenses, future incarceration, future court and police fees, the wages that would have been earned if not incarcerated, and the costs to future victims.

Many juvenile delinquents will never reoffend, but there are still financial consequences for the state. They may struggle to take part in the labor market and help make a positive contribution to Arkansas. A significant reason for this is the lasting burden of ineffective treatment in the juvenile justice system. Without the social and educational tools required to make such a contribution, many former juvenile delinquents rely on support from the state. They struggle to find a job and support their families in an economy stacked against former delinquents and criminals.

## ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

Significant changes to the current juvenile justice system are essential to helping one of Arkansas's most disadvantaged populations. The best way to avoid the negative consequences of the system is to prevent contact in the first place. When such contact is unavoidable, a revamped approach aimed at addressing individual needs can produce impactful results for individuals and the state.

## PREVENTION

While an overhaul of the juvenile justice system will go a long way toward improving the futures of hundreds of teens each year, the far better alternative is to avoid any contact with the juvenile justice system in the first place. Juvenile incarceration is on the decline nationwide, but this trend is not reflected in Arkansas. When compared to other Southern states, Arkansas remains the only place where juvenile confinement populations have increased in the last two decades<sup>18</sup>. (See Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7<sup>19</sup>: ARKANSAS IS THE ONLY SOUTHERN STATE TO INCREASE ITS JUVENILE CONFINEMENT POPULATION FROM 2000 TO 2014

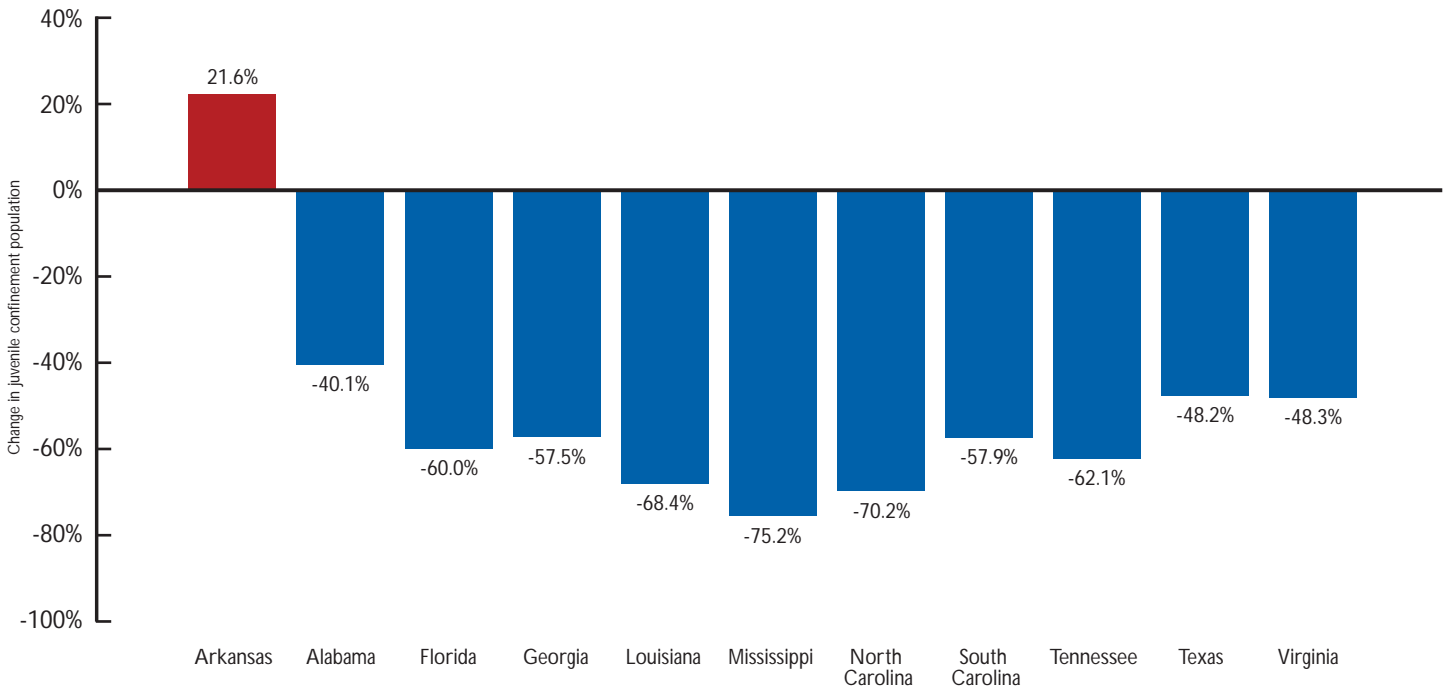
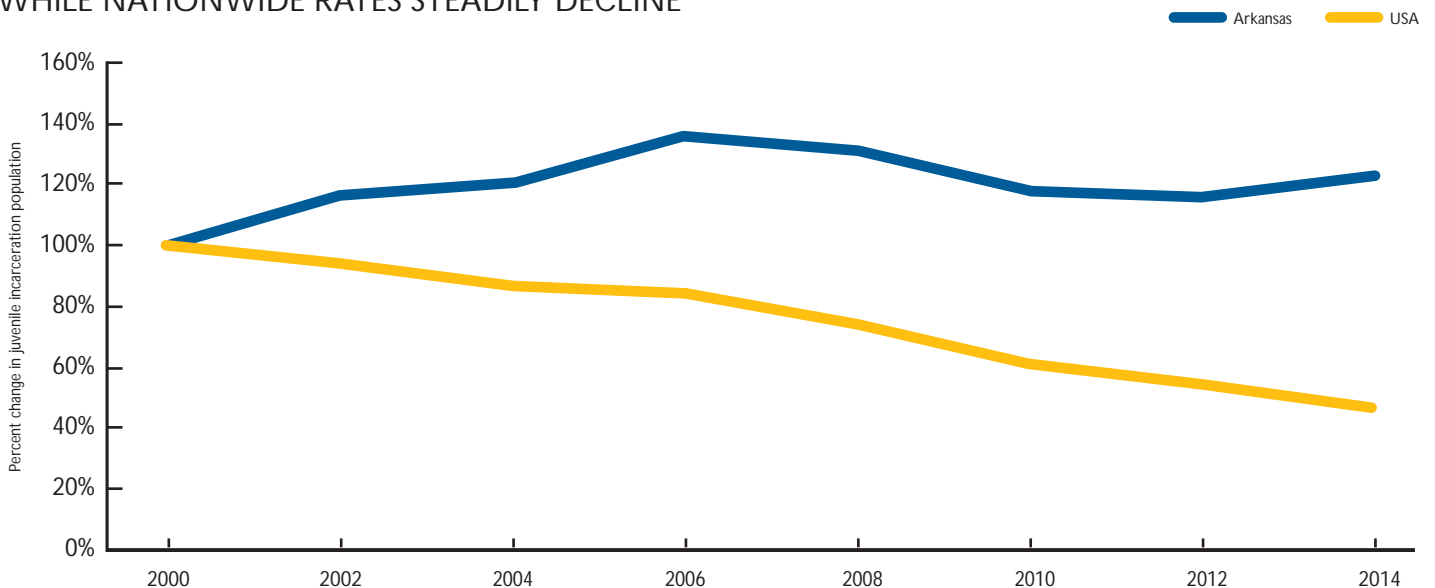


Figure 8<sup>19</sup>: JUVENILE INCARCERATION RATES INCREASE IN ARKANSAS WHILE NATIONWIDE RATES STEADILY DECLINE



A large contributing factor to this increase in juvenile incarceration is the school-to-prison pipeline. Addressing this issue promises to be a monumental step toward reducing involvement in the juvenile justice system.

- **What is the school-to-prison pipeline?**

The school-to-prison pipeline is a term used to describe increasing rates of contact between students and the juvenile and adult justice systems. In the late 1990's an initiative to make schools safer swept the nation. School districts implemented zero-tolerance behavioral policies and brought police officers onto campuses. The result has been a remarkable increase in the numbers of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and arrests. Through these harsh punishment methods, schools are "pushing students into the juvenile justice system"<sup>19</sup>. With a new approach aimed at cracking down on minor offenses to limit serious offenses, behavioral issues once handled within the school are now taken to juvenile courts.

- **Who does it affect?**

These recent trends are not affecting all students equally. A disproportionate amount of severe consequences and arrests have occurred among minority groups, specifically African Americans. Despite conclusive evidence that there is no significant difference in the behavior of African American and Caucasian students, black students in the U.S. are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled<sup>20</sup>.

- **How does the school-to-prison pipeline relate to juvenile justice?**

Interrupting the pipeline is essential to reducing the number of children that come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Any contact can have serious negative consequences on the rest of an individual's life. It is essential that juvenile incarceration is a last resort. This begins by analyzing the current punishment habits of schools to distinguish between issues that can be handled at school and issues that need the additional help of the justice system. Reducing the offenses that call for suspensions and school arrests can keep kids in school and out of the juvenile justice system. Even a small reduction in the number of teens committed to residential incarceration centers will save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

## REFORM

While much can be done to limit contact with the juvenile justice system, there are some cases where there is no other option. For these situations, a revamped approach at juvenile justice is essential to producing effective, long-lasting treatments that aid each teen on an individual level. The current approach of focusing on incarceration is doing little to produce positive outcomes for individuals or the state. It is time to follow the lead of the rest of the nation and turn to proven alternatives to confinement.

- **Who is being incarcerated?**

For those teens who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, the priority should be to reduce the state's reliance on incarceration. A reduction in the number of juveniles sentenced to confinement can begin with addressing the large proportion of teens who are incarcerated even though they pose little to no threat to society. In Arkansas in 2016, around half of incarcerated juveniles committed a felony<sup>21</sup>. Many teens were guilty of misdemeanors and probation violations, crimes that signal no serious danger to society. Current policies, focused on incarceration, criminalize typical adolescent behavior. A teenage mistake can result in a lifetime of consequences. These teens can be affected by youth prisons the most. A study in 2016 found that teens can accrue "criminal capital" during their time in residential centers<sup>22</sup>. When less serious criminals are exposed to a violent atmosphere with other, more serious offenders, the youth centers become a "feeder system" into adult prisons.

- **How can we safely reduce incarceration?**

Efforts are currently underway in Arkansas to address this problem. An essential first step is a system of risk assessment of juveniles. If judges can accurately evaluate young people before sentencing, then hundreds of harmless children can be kept out of incarceration. Pilot programs in Northwest Arkansas and elsewhere have proven successful, and the legislature recently voted to expand the types of risk assessments already used in those jurisdictions<sup>23</sup>. Judges cannot make the best decisions for young Arkansans unless they have all the available information.

- **Have reforms had success in other places?**

Mississippi experienced a 48 percent reduction of its youth confinement population following measures that prioritized restricting the offenses that warranted incarceration<sup>24</sup>. In Texas, youth confinement fell 37 percent after similar reforms were enacted.

- **What takes the place of incarceration?**

In place of incarceration, community-based services that provide personal, family-oriented approaches to rehabilitation and healing provide an effective alternative to youth prisons. These programs are proven to reduce recidivism rates and develop real-world skills required to succeed in life.

- + **Community Wraparound Programs**

In these programs, every youth is assigned a mentor. These mentors are selected from the local community and trained to assist youth offenders. The idea is to engage the entire family and community in a constructive and individualized plan for change.

- + **Community Conferencing Programs**

In this approach, a teen adjudicated as delinquent is engaged in a conference with the parties he or she wronged in the illegal actions. These conferences hold the youth directly accountable and have a positive impact on recidivism rates. Programs in Maryland have found that youth who participated in community conferencing were 60 percent less

likely to reoffend than their counterparts in other traditional sanctions<sup>25</sup>.

- + **School-based Intervention Programs**

A strong partnership between schools and prevention programs is essential. When schools and community organizations work together, minor behavioral issues can be handled without the use of the court system. One district in Georgia saw a 51 percent decrease in felony rates and a 20 percent increase in graduation rates following the implementation of community-based services<sup>26</sup>.

- **Why choose Community-Based Alternatives?**

The key distinguishing trait of community-based programs is their attention on the individual. In large, state-run facilities, teens are treated as a collective group due to limited resources. The personalized approach of community programs is essential for helping teens overcome difficult personal issues. It is only through this smaller scale approach that real progress can be achieved so that teens feel like they receive real help for the future<sup>27</sup>. In addition to proven results of

## Reform Success in Northwest Arkansas

Washington and Benton counties have participated in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) since 2013, implementing many of the recommendations described in this report. The juvenile judges refer youthful offenders to community services whenever possible and work with schools, nonprofit organizations, churches and others to ensure that, as much as possible, the only young people who are incarcerated are those who must be for the safety of the public. Alternatives to detention range from an Evening Reporting Center (where offenders can report after school for structured, positive activities rather than being incarcerated), to family communications classes and outdoor adventure groups through Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts and the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission.

As a result, both counties have seen steep drops in the number of youthful offenders who are incarcerated. Over the past decade, Washington County cut by half the number of young people committed to state lockup with the Division of Youth Services (six

youthful offenders in 2016). Benton County, which had a higher commitment rate than Washington County 10 years ago, has reduced its state commitments by 80 percent (to five in 2016). Both counties have seen similar reductions in the number of young people they detain in county facilities at the local level.

Drew Shover, the Benton County Chief Probation Officer, said he's often greeted with skepticism about whether his county's practices would translate to other judicial districts. But they would, he said. "All I hear is 'We can't do that,' and I come back and say, 'We did that.'"

Benton County is turning much of its large juvenile detention center into a youth shelter. Of course, the county can't send all youthful offenders to alternative services.

"We have kids that are dangerous, and we deal with them," Shover said. "But that's a really small number. For us to commit a youth, it's got to be bad. We have really changed."

effectiveness, community-based alternatives cost Arkansas significantly less. In 2011, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families partnered with HISTECON Associates, Inc. to produce a cost-benefit analysis of potential juvenile justice policy changes. The analysis found the total savings of participating in a local community alternative to be \$213,031 per individual<sup>28</sup>. This number is based on the inexpensive direct costs of treatment in addition to future benefits of higher earnings, lower recidivism, and lower unemployment that result from treatment in community programs.

The mission of community programs is to alleviate disadvantages in a child's life and build skills to aid in future education and employment. Instead of exacerbating issues with educational and social skills, these programs are building up a more productive population that can contribute to Arkansas's economic future. By reducing dependence on incarceration and investing in much more efficient and effective alternatives, Arkansas is investing in a stronger and more capable workforce and a safer society.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Due to the current juvenile justice structure in Arkansas, judges often have few options for youth offenders besides incarceration. Arkansas must increase funding for community-based services to provide youth a viable and effective alternative to incarceration. Once these programs are up and running, the savings from decreased costs due to a smaller incarcerated population will more than offset many of the costs of the community based services. Specifically, the state should:

- Disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by keeping discipline in the schools and limiting out-of-school suspensions and court referrals.
- Reduce incarceration for non-dangerous youth by continuing to expand risk assessment by judges to ensure all teens are properly evaluated before sentencing.
- Expand existing community-based programs that are proven to be cost-effective and successful but have yet to gain strong footing in Arkansas.
- Bring in new programs such as community wrap-around programs, community conferencing, and school-based intervention programs. These services have found success around the nation with missions of individual rehabilitation that are so vital to an effective juvenile reform system.
- Fund the Positive Youth Development Grant Act.

## **Past Juvenile Justice Reforms**

- In 2011, Arkansas legislatures passed a bill that appropriated \$42,857 to the Division of Youth Services for grants to community-based programs. Legislation was also passed to create several alternative schools in Arkansas for youth that are adjudicated by the courts<sup>29</sup>.
- By 2013, progress stalled as the proposed Close to Home Act (SB 335) that sought to include local communities in the services for juvenile treatment and reduce incarceration for youth that posed no threat to society was met with opposition in the Senate<sup>30</sup>.
- From 2014-2015, little action was taken once again as efforts to reduce incarceration for non-dangerous youth were once again halted, this time thanks to crippling budget cuts to the Division of Youth Services. Some progress was made as a DYS Youth Justice Reform Board was created to make recommendations for future changes. A bill was also passed to implement validated risk assessment for youth before sentencing. By providing judges with all available information, the goal of the act is to reduce unnecessary sentencing. This act followed reports that 75 percent of incarcerated youth posed a low to moderate risk to society<sup>31</sup>.



## JUVENILE JUSTICE IN THE 2017 ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

While progress is slowly being made toward juvenile justice reform in Arkansas, there is still much more work that needs to be done. Several positive strides were taken through bipartisan efforts. The new Youth Justice Reform Board made numerous recommendations to lawmakers, but only a few of their ideas were passed.

- In a sweeping bipartisan victory, SB 294 was passed outlawing life without parole sentences for juveniles. This was a huge victory for Arkansas as it was the first state in the South to pass this legislation that gives youth a second chance<sup>32</sup>.
- A step forward was taken to expand the previously approved program that implemented risk assessment for youth before sentencing. The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation seeks to expand risk assessment practices to reduce the number of non-dangerous teens kept in detention centers awaiting trial.
- Increased monitoring and review of youth facilities will also take place following a legislative act that will attempt to hold facilities more accountable.

There were, however, still points of relative inaction that can be improved in the next session.

- After calls for increased funding for community-based alternatives, the Division of Youth Services received an increase of only \$1.3 million to expand community-based alternatives, an amount far below the desired value to significantly expand community services.
- The Arkansas legislature also failed once again to fund the Positive Youth Development Grant Act. While funding was given to a similar program, investment in this more wide-reaching program will have a terrific impact on the children of Arkansas.

As the next legislative session approaches, it is time for our elected officials to invest in our state's future by finding alternatives to youth prisons. For young people who are assessed as not being a threat, a community-based alternative program works. Because it is also cheaper, it's the best solution all around: for the young person, for the community, and for the whole state. The future of our state economy depends on it.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.centerforhealthjournalism.org/fellowships/projects/jury%E2%80%99s-still-out-jailing-truants>
- 2 <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/107/4/799.full.pdf>
- 3 [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09\\_05\\_rep\\_costsofconfinement\\_jj\\_ps.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf)
- 4 <https://files.stlouisfed.org/files/htdocs/pageone-economics/uploads/newsletter/2009/200908.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/cf39e156-5992-4050-bd03-fb34cc5bf7e3/Just-Learning.aspx>
- 6 [https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm)
- 7 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3583356/pdf/nihms-439026.pdf>
- 8 [http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/sticker\\_shock\\_final\\_v2.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/sticker_shock_final_v2.pdf)
- 9 [http://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/median\\_annual\\_earnings\\_by\\_age\\_ever\\_incarcerated\\_versus\\_never\\_incarcerated](http://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/median_annual_earnings_by_age_ever_incarcerated_versus_never_incarcerated)
- 10 <http://www.legalrightsfor youth.ca/crime/having-youth-record>
- 11 <http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Racial-Disparities-in-Youth-Commitments-and-Arrests.pdf>
- 12 <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dys/dysReports/DYS%20FY15%20annual%20report.pdf>
- 13 American Community Survey 2011-2015 estimates Table S0901
- 14 <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dys/dysReports/FY16%20DYS%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
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