

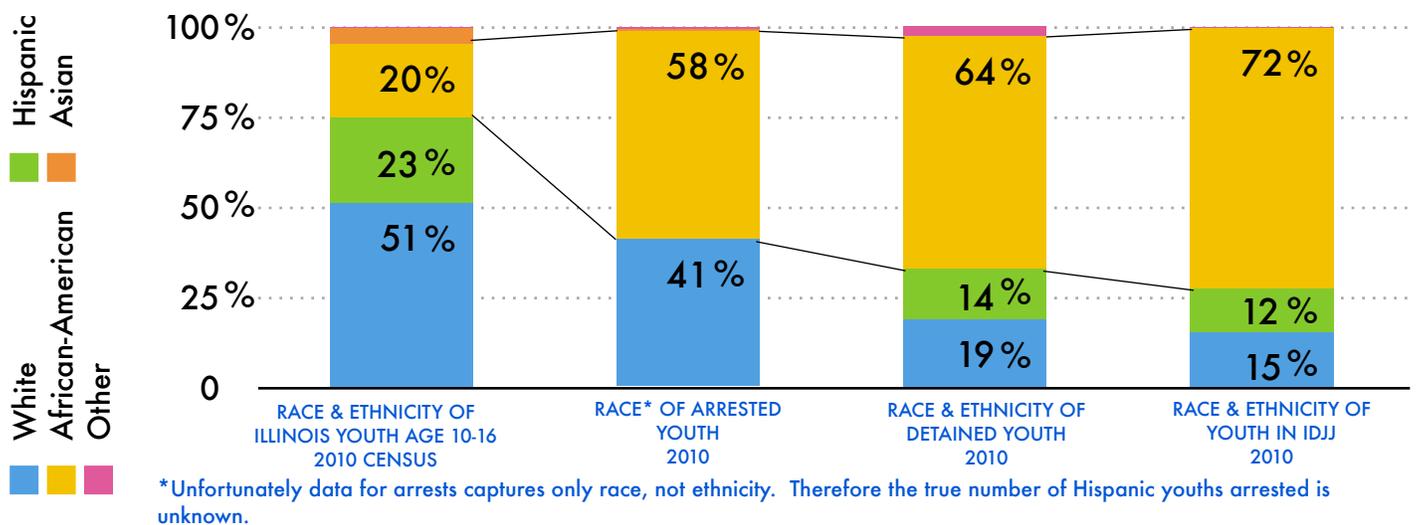
What is DMC?

Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) describes the longstanding finding across the country that the percentage of youth of color involved in the juvenile justice system is larger than the percentage of the same youth in the population. DMC can occur at all points of contact in the juvenile justice system. These core “decision points” are: arrest, diversion, detention, referrals for prosecution, petitions filed, adjudications, probation, secure confinement and transfers to adult court.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention—a component of the U.S. Department of Justice dedicated to improving juvenile justice policies and programs for youth—has identified three reasons to examine racial and ethnic inequalities in a given location: (1) to describe the extent to which minority youth are over-represented, (2) to describe the nature of that over-representation, and (3) to create a foundation for ongoing measurement of DMC and provide the basis for documenting progress in reducing disproportionality.

Do we have DMC in Illinois?

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission's study found DMC at several decision points. This graph shows the racial and ethnic makeup of Illinois' youth population and those **arrested**, **detained**, and **committed** to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ).



Researchers calculate a statistic known as the **Relative Rate Index (RRI)**, which shows the rate at which minority youth are involved in the juvenile justice system compared to their white peers. For arrest, this statistic is calculated based on the demographics of the youth population: African American youth were arrested 3.5 times more often than their white peers despite evidence suggesting that there are similar rates of offending among the two groups (see Kakade et al., 2012; Huizinga et al., 2007).

As they examine other juvenile justice decision points, researchers base the RRI on the demographics of youth in the previous stage of the system. This allows a critical look at where disproportionality is introduced. For example, once they have been arrested, minority youth are about 3 times as likely to be referred to court as arrested white youth.

The RRI for secure detention shows that minority youth who are referred to court are about as likely to be detained as white peers youth who become court-involved. However, as the graphs above show, there is still high disproportionality in detention centers. This appears to be caused by decision-making at arrest and referral to court.

African American youth who are adjudicated delinquent are nearly 5 times as likely to be incarcerated than adjudicated white youth, while adjudicated Hispanic youth are almost 2 times as likely to be confined than adjudicated white youth.

Illinois data can be compared to 2009 national data, which showed that African-American youth made up 16% of the nation's youth population but made up 31% of the country's juvenile arrests. Further, black youth represented 42% of the detention population and 40% of the youth in secure confinement (Puzzanchera, C., 2012).

Awareness of DMC in Illinois

Surveys and interviews of juvenile justice professionals across the state showed a mixed awareness of DMC. When survey respondents understood the concept of DMC, they had varied understanding of its causes. The quotes below come directly from participants in the study.

PERCEPTION OF DMC

53% of the respondents said they had no familiarity with the concept of DMC.

“I think they’ve heard it and they’re familiar with the term and possibly what it means, but I don’t think they really know now that applies to their job sometimes or their role in the juvenile justice system.”

SCHOOL POLICY AND DMC

DMC has been linked to strict zero tolerance policies and increased police presence in schools.

“We put all these police officers in schools, and guess what? We get a lot more kids arrested at schools.”

According to a study done by Project NIA and Loyola University, 75% of the students arrested in Chicago’s public schools were African-Americans, while they represent 42% of all students (Kaba and Nagao 2013).

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM DECISION-MAKING

Respondents described their perception of the most influential factors in the system’s handling of juveniles. These included gang affiliation, family living situation, general demeanor and appearance, parental attitudes and involvement, and success in school. These did not include race, ethnicity, or cultural background: **86% of the respondents said they had not witnessed any discrimination of youth in the system that involved cultural, ethnic or racial background.**

However, other respondents described how the system could benefit from more interagency collaboration and education so that decisions are made more objectively and holistically. More strategic collaboration among juvenile justice professionals could provide the best service to all young people.

“So if you work in the police department or the state’s attorney’s office you really become fixated on what power and tools you have to do the job you’re trying to do. I guess another way of saying this is that we are in the silos and forget that we’re in these silos...”

What Causes DMC?

There is no single cause of DMC, rather there are a number of contributing factors such as the varying use of discretion by juvenile justice professionals, overly rigid legislative and administrative policies, explicit racial biases, a lack of appropriate alternatives to further juvenile justice involvement, or a lack of access to those alternatives. Each of these contributing factors involve some form of disparate decision making from juvenile justice professionals and affects the relationship between young people of color and the juvenile justice system. Because the contributing factors to DMC are varied, complex and often subjective, reducing DMC typically requires strategies that are just as complex and wide reaching.

References

- Huizinga, D., et al., *Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System: A Study of Differential Minority Arrest/Referral to Court in Three Cities* (2012).
- Kaba, M. and Nagao, E., *Policing Chicago Public Schools, Volume 2: Data on School Arrests 2011-2012*. Available online: <http://www.cpdincps.com>.
- Kakade, M. et al., *Adolescent substance use and other illegal behaviors and racial disparities in criminal justice system involvement: Findings from a US national survey*, *American Journal of Public Health* (2012).
- Puzanchara, C. and Adams, B., *National Disproportionate Minority Contact Databook, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* (2012) Available online: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/dmcdab/>.

About the Assessment

The assessment was conducted by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Data collection started in December 2011, focusing on youth involved in the juvenile justice system in 2010. The assessment detailed data from 41 targeted Illinois counties, surveys from 660 juvenile justice professionals (of whom 77% were law enforcement), and interviews of key stakeholders across the state. The assessment was completed in March 2013.

The demographics used in the assessment are from 2000 Census data estimates, which define youth as age 10-16. Of the 558,093 minority youth in Illinois, 98% live in the 41 counties who participated in the assessment.

To Download the Assessment:

www.ijjc.illinois.gov/dmccassessment2013

Questions? Feedback?

Contact Karima Douglas, DMC Coordinator, at 312.861.6600 or kdouglas@youthnetworkcouncil.org

About the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission

www.ijjc.illinois.gov

The IJJC serves as the federally mandated State Advisory Group to the Governor, General Assembly and the Illinois Department of Human Services. The Commission is responsible for ensuring the State’s compliance with the Federal Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). DMC is a core requirement of the JJDPA and the IJJC is already working to reduce DMC across the state by supporting local juvenile justice councils and community providers.