



Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report

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Preface

Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report is the fifth edition of a comprehensive report on youth victimization, offending by youth, and the juvenile justice system. With this release, the report series has adopted a new name (the series was previously known as “Juvenile Offenders and Victims”), but the focus of the report remains unchanged: the report consists of the most requested information on youth and the juvenile justice system in the United States. Developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Institute of Justice, the report draws on reliable data and relevant research to provide a comprehensive and insightful view of youth victims and offending by youth, and what happens to youth when they enter the juvenile justice system in the U.S.

The report offers—to Congress, state legislators, other state and local policymakers, educators, juvenile justice professionals, and concerned citizens—empirically based answers to frequently asked questions about the nature of youth victimization and offending and the justice system’s response. The juvenile justice system must react to the law-violating behaviors of youth in a manner that not only protects the community and holds youth accountable but also enhances youth’s ability to live productively and responsibly in

the community. The system must also intervene in the lives of abused and neglected children who lack safe and nurturing environments.

To respond to these complex issues, juvenile justice practitioners, policymakers, and the public must have access to useful and accurate information about the system and the youth it serves. At times, such information is not available or, when it does exist, it is often too scattered or inaccessible to be useful.

This report bridges that gap by pulling together the most requested information on youth and the juvenile justice system in the United States. The report draws on numerous national data collections to address the specific information needs of those involved with the juvenile justice system. The report presents important and, at times, complex information using clear, nontechnical writing and easy-to-understand graphics and tables. It is structured as a series of briefing papers on specific topics, short sections that can be read independently from other parts of the report.

The material in this report represents the most reliable information on youth and their involvement with the justice system through the 2019 data year. Given the range of information covered by the report, a data-year cutoff had to be established. We elected

2019 as a common anchoring point because all the major data sets required for the report were current through 2019 at the time we began writing. The onset of COVID-19 in 2020 caused some data collections to be substantially delayed and thus unavailable during the writing of the report. Further, the various coronavirus mitigation efforts introduced across the country, such as school closures and stay-at-home orders, likely impacted the type and volume of behaviors that came to the attention of the justice system, and simultaneously necessitated changes to

policies and practices within youth-serving agencies. Therefore, 2019 reflects the experiences of youth and the juvenile justice system unencumbered by the impacts of the pandemic.

We expect that this report will be used mainly as a reference document, with readers turning to the pages on specific topics when the need arises. However, we encourage you to explore other sections when time permits. In each section, you will probably discover something new, something that will expand

your understanding, confirm your opinions, or make you question what you believe to be true.

It has been more than 20 years since the first edition of this report. Since that seminal publication, this report has become a primary source of information on youth victimization, offending by youth, and the justice system's response, and it will provide a context for debates over the direction to take to respond to these important social issues.

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- Sarah Hockenberry (sections on major depressive disorders, education, victims of serious violence, school crime, self-reported drug use, chapters on youth in juvenile court and youth in corrections).
- Melissa Sickmund (chapter on juvenile justice system structure and process).

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