

## Youth in Detention

### DEFINITION

This indicator reports the number of New Hampshire children ages 13 to 17 admitted yearly to the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) per 1,000 children, on average from 2007 to 2009. The SYSC, located in Manchester and operated by the Division for Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS), is the state's only youth detention center. The facility accommodates youth charged with delinquent offenses and awaiting court action (detained), as well as delinquent youth ages 13 to 17 committed by court order (DJJS 2010).

### CONTEXT

Research indicates detained and committed youth have high rates of developmental, behavioral, emotional and leaning disability, and are more likely than children in the general population to suffer from mental illness, to be victims of abuse, and to have a history of substance abuse (Whitley and Cohen 2009). Studies show that commitment and detention impedes educational achievement, decreases the likelihood of stable employment and may provoke, prolong or worsen mental illness. Recent research suggests that detained and committed youth are more likely to carry out delinquent offenses in the future, with more than half of these youth re-arrested within two years of their discharge from SYSC (Justice Policy Institute 2009).

In recent years, the 144-bed-capacity Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) has had an average of 60 youths in residence at any given time, bucking a national trend of overcrowding in juvenile corrections facilities. One wing was closed in 2009 to save money and in 2010 Governor Lynch recommended using two units with 81 beds for emergency shelter and transitional housing to help close the state's budget gap. The legislature ultimately dismissed the governor's proposal. The State of New Hampshire pays about \$375 per person per day to hold detained youth, and \$451 per person per day to hold committed youth at SYSC. The national average per-person per-day cost for juvenile incarceration is \$241, significantly lower than New Hampshire's rate. (DRC 2009 and Justice Policy Institute 2010).

In October 2010, Governor John Lynch ordered an investigation of the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) after the Disability Rights Center reported "a pervasive pattern of inappropriate restraints and excessive use of force" and "widespread disrespectful behavior by staff toward youth." The Disability Rights Center investigation prompted by a 2008 abuse report, found 42 percent of youth incarcerated at

### Children in Detention, 3-year average

By County, 2007-2009

	2008 Population Ages 12-17	Youth development center admissions, 3-year average	Detained and committed youth per 1,000 children ages 12 to 17
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>91,385</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>4</b>
Belknap County	4,006	19	4.7
Carroll County	2,973	6	2.1
Cheshire County	4,924	16	3.2
Coos County	2,029	15	7.6
Grafton County	4,943	15	3.1
Hillsborough County	29,728	132	4.4
Merrimack County	10,128	51	5
Rockingham County	22,059	57	2.6
Stafford County	7,798	37	4.7
Sullivan County	2,797	12	4.2



SYSC as of August 2009 had been restrained. The study found restraint or force was “excessive” in 53 percent of cases where it was used and unjustified in 45 percent of cases. The report highlighted a shortage of alternative community-based treatment programs which may be more effective and less expensive than detention for youth with mental health problems. (West 2010 and Whitley and Cohen 2010).

### NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

A recent state comparison showed the 2007 New Hampshire youth residential placement rate (juvenile offenders ordered to public or private correctional facilities) was 125 placements per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17 compared to a national rate of 279 per 100,000. All of the New England states had rates below the national average and neighboring Vermont had the lowest juvenile residential placement rate at 69 per 100,000. Following a national trend, New Hampshire’s residential placement rate decreased between 1997 and 2008. One study reported that residential placement rates decreased nationally by one third over the nine years from 1997 to 2008 with an even larger decrease in juvenile arrests during the same time period (Sickmund 2010).

The average statewide youth detention and commitment rate over the three years between 2007 and 2009 was 4 per 1,000 youth ages 13 to 17. Rates varied by county from a low of 2.1 incarcerated youth per 1,000 in Carroll County to a high rate of 7.6 per 1,000 in Coos County (DJJS 2010). (see chart on previous page)

### SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Division for Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS). 2010. Department of Health and Human Services.

Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2009). *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2008*. Online. Available: [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov)

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Justice Policy Institute. 2009. *The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense*. Justice Policy Institute. May. [www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org)

Sickmund, Melissa. 2010. *Juveniles in Residential Placement, 1997-2008*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Fact Sheet. February. [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/229379.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/229379.pdf)

Whitley, Rebecca G. and Richard Cohen. 2010. *Investigation Report, Findings & Recommendations: The Use of Force and Restraint and Adequacy of Mental Health Care at the John H. Sununu Youth Services Center*. Disability Rights Center. October 5. [www.drcnh.org/SYSCReport2.pdf](http://www.drcnh.org/SYSCReport2.pdf)