

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Youth Justice Survey

In spring of 2023, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth surveyed youth in Juvenile Detention Centers across the state about their life experiences and what they want legislators and those who work with teens to know. Youth were also asked about what they need more help with.

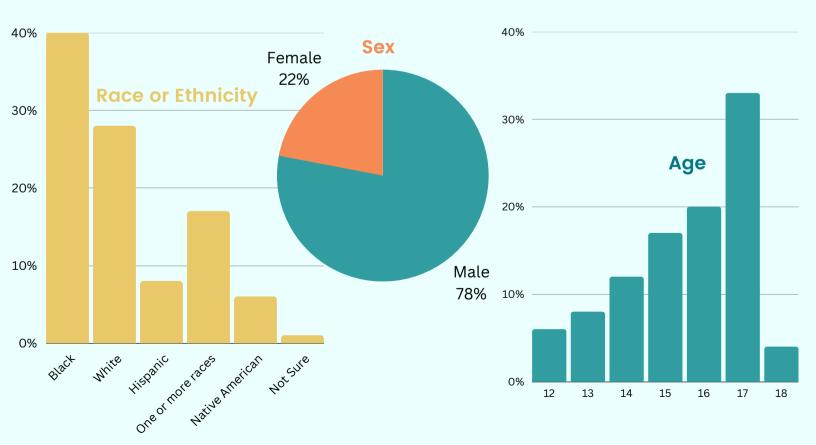


Juvenile Detention Centers with survey responses included:

- Bradley County Juvenile Detention Center
- Bedford County Juvenile Detention Center
- Hamilton County Juvenile Detention Center
- Upper East Regional Juvenile Detention Center
- Madison County Juvenile Detention Center
- McDowell Juvenile Detention Center

- Middle Tennessee Juvenile Detention Center
- Rutherford County Juvenile Detention Center
- Sevier County Juvenile Facility
- Shelby County Juvenile Detention*
- Upper East Regional Juvenile Detention Center

Race, ethnicity, sex and age of survey respondents among those who indicated a race. Approximately 40 percent of respondents did not complete demographic indicators.



^{*}The majority of Shelby County's survey responses do not include responses about how to improve the system, what got them into detention or demographics

Youth Justice Survey



Of youth indicated that someone who lived with them had (or maybe had) been arrested, in jail or detention.

43 percent of youth stated that they or someone they have lived with needed or maybe needed help with mental health or drugs/alcohol.



However, when asked about specific challenges, 45% of those who had previously said no indicated yes on at least one indicating the real percent might be closer to 68 percent.





2023 Youth Justice Survey

Have any of the following happened in your life?

Health

Medical Problems 25%
Used drugs/alcohol 56%
Can't see doctor/dentist 10%

Mental health — 22%

Economics

Not enough money ______26%

Lost place to stay _____12%

Lights/water turned off _____16%

Trouble getting a job **22%**

Adult at home lost job — 15%

Hard to get places/lost car/ride ————16%

Not enough food • 13%

Education

In trouble at school 55%

Failed a class or grade 37%

Miss 10+ days of school 41%

Adversity

No adult help 12%
Family problems 34%
Unsafe Home 12%

Friend/family in gang — 31%

Pregnant 8%

Unsafe/bad neighborhood ———— 29%

Parent died/left/in jail _______32%

Other

Most common experiences among surveyed youth

Used drugs/alcohol
In trouble at school
Missed 10+ days of school
Failed a class or gang
Family problems
Parent died/left/in jail
Friend/family in gang

Among youth who indicated they had faced at least one of these challenges

the average number of challenging experiences was 6.5

65 percent of youth had experienced a health challenge

69 percent of youth had experienced an education challenge

63 percent of youth had experienced a adversity challenge

43 percent of youth had experienced an economic challenge

[&]quot;Physical Abuse Homeless Addiction Short of Funds Sucidal" "loss of family members"

[&]quot;Been shot before and deal with deppresion" "Dad went to prison wen i was about 7" "I was adopted"

What do you need more help with?

- 1. School 45 percent
- 2. Job 31 percent
- 3. GED/Hi-Set 20 percent
- 4. Phone 17 percent
- 5. Adult I can trust 16 percent
- 6. Rides 13 percent
- 7. Mental Health 13 percent
- 8. Legal 13 percent
- 9. Place to live 7 percent
- 10. Medicine/doctor 7 percent

More than half of youth reported needing more help with school or their GED/

True or False -

I have at least one adult I can trust

92%

If my behavior changes, I can stay out of trouble

91%

If my environment changes, I can stay out of trouble

84%

What would you change about school, court, detention, or probation to make it better or more helpful?

Direct quotes from youth were transcribed as written on the surveys

"To make detention better allow more contact with other detaines and instead of keeping us locked in a cell for 18 hours on a week day and 22 hours on weekends give us more rec time"

"Let them understand that detention doesnt help troubled kids, it makes them worse. Courts need better programs for serious trouble kids like me. We need more help than just being thrown in a cell."

"I would change school to a place near my and my family I am talcking with my friend I live near about making a school on our road."

"To have help understanding my math class"

"If I could change this detention center I would better the food for the juviniles and give more contact and communication with parents."

"less holding time before treatment"

"more meeting with probation officer"

"I would change 1 thing in court and that is the Judge and DA hear your part and what you have to say."

"I would put more windows in. And I would also let parents come every once and awhile."

"Getting better food and put money on phone or get more free phone calls."

"I wouldn't change nothing."

"if the court/the judge would listen to people more instead of just his officers."

"More things to do while in detention. Give help for the one's that need."

"School. I would change it if I could be by myself so I can concentrate"

"Really give us a second chance"

"Communicate more with kids instead of gaurdian, kids need to be heard more"

"That they would help more not make it feel like punishment"

"More help for kids in poverty"

"nothing, everything is just the way needed"

"Less bad teachers no bee judged on the gang more food"

What things, people or events led to you being in detention?

Direct quotes from youth were transcribed as written on the surveys

"Being poor I feel like because I was willing to do anything to make money and got to far into my ambitision for money and took a mans life."

"gun point, hanging with gang members, drug's anger, hanging with people who tought me how to steal car's and stuff"

"I cant write my wrongs it dosn't mater today is a new day"

"I like to steal and do bad stuff it's fun to me (in the past) my anger also"

"I made the wrong choices"

"I put myself in detention due to my choices and mistakes but I've learned a valuable lesson"

"I started to do things without thinking about the consequences"

"It was me. I have been seeing a theripist since I was six. I love my parents and they did nothing that has been bad."

"mental health problems, traumitezd and my action"

"My decision making/not feeling heard by dcs so I ran away"

"I have suicidal thoughts and a violishion of a court"

a lot just moving to fast" ""Friends and drugs."

"Around the wrong people" Getting disrupted from other phacilities"

"Asslut Charges" "Gun violence(?) and bad decision making."

"Atmp Murder" "Listening to other people"

"Bad decision" "Losing my cousin."

"Being around the wrong person" "My action"

"being with the wrong people."

"Needing to make money"

"brother and mother and anger" "Nobody but myself"

"Criminal trespassing" "People starting issues for no reason and panicing"

"Drugs" "Want to be like in cool"

"Envirment not thinking, deppresion" "Wrong group of friends."

"False info" "wrong place wrong time"

"for acting up and not listening" "Nothing. I just chose to be a bad kid"

"Frends" "I overdosed at school"



Our mission: We lead systems improvement for all children and families through data-driven advocacy, education, and collaboration.

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