



# GENDER & YOUTH JUSTICE: EXISTING RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

In the past two decades, the United States has experienced a significant and consistent decline in both youth crime and youth involvement with the juvenile justice system. At the peak of nationwide youth arrests in 1996, there were 12,687 boys per 100,000 youth arrested as compared to 4,030 girls per 100,000 youth ([Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention \(OJJDP\)](#)). In 2019 boys' arrest rates had dropped 232 % to 2,833 per 100,000 youth and girls' arrest rates dropped 171% to 1,301 per 100,000 youth (OJJDP). The significance of this decline is not to be understated. However, the differential rates of decline for boys and girls deserve consideration and questioning.

In addition, youth identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are overrepresented in the youth justice system. LGBTQIA+ youth represent 5 to 6 percent of the youth population, however, they comprise 20% of justice-involved youth ([Rubino et al., 2021](#)). Much of this discrepancy flows from the different life experiences and unique challenges facing LGBTQIA+ youth, including familial rejection, targeted harassment from peers, and invisibility within the system. A 2016 study found that LGBQ and gender-nonconforming and transgender (GNCT) youth in the juvenile justice system are more than three times more likely to have been removed from their home by a state agency and more than five times more likely to have been placed in a group or foster home compared with straight and gender-conforming youth ([Irvine & Canfield](#)). Due to increased risk factors and housing instability, one study found that LGBTQ youth were more vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation than their peers, which may lead to juvenile justice system involvement ([Burwick et al., 2014](#)) While LGB and GNC youth were no more likely than peers to be arrested for violent offenses, weapon charges, property offenses, and alcohol or drug offenses, they were twice as likely to be held in secure detention for other offenses, most often related to running away or other status offenses ([Irvine, 2010](#)).

The data point to a need to identify supports for youth that are responsive to their unique identities and needs whether they be cisgender, heterosexual boys or transgender bisexual girls. Expanding support systems to accommodate the full range of intersectional identities of justice-involved youth will better accomplish the goals of the youth justice system: to support all youth so that they can learn from their experiences and grow into adulthood.

The resources on the NYS Youth Justice Institute's [Gender Microsite](#) will provide our state partners and the general public with resources related to gender and sexuality that can better inform them on the unique lens and experiences of girls, gender nonconforming, and LGBTQIA+ youth involved in the justice-system.

Note that the content featured on the microsite is for educational purposes and is not necessarily reflective of the YJI's views. The content will be continuously updated and to nominate resources for inclusion, please fill out this [form](#). For more information, please also see New York State's Office of Children and Family Services' [site on resources for LGBTQ youth](#).

