



**Equity in Focus**

# MASSACHUSETTS JUVENILE JUSTICE DATA BRIEF

## Spotlight on Girls and LGBTQ+ Youth

### Fiscal Year 2025

*A Three-Part Series from the  
Office of the Child Advocate*

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[mass.gov/oca/jjbriefts](https://mass.gov/oca/jjbriefts)

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## About the Office of the Child Advocate

The [Office of the Child Advocate](#) (OCA) is an independent executive branch agency with oversight and ombudsperson responsibilities, established by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2008. The OCA’s mission is to ensure that children receive appropriate, timely and quality state services, with a particular focus on ensuring that the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable and at-risk children have the opportunity to thrive. Through collaboration with public and private stakeholders, the OCA identifies gaps in state services and recommends improvements in policy, practice, regulation, and/or law. The OCA also serves as a resource for families who are receiving, or are eligible to receive, services from the Commonwealth.

## Background

This brief is one in a three-part series from the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) that explores disparities in Massachusetts' juvenile justice system, including those related to geography, race, and gender and sexual orientation.

This brief analyzes Massachusetts juvenile justice system data from fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) by gender and LGBTQ+ status.<sup>1</sup> The data, which is presented by key decision points<sup>2</sup> and, when possible, adjusted for population rates for youth (12-17) and case volume at preceding process points,<sup>3</sup> **highlights how similarly situated youth may experience the juvenile justice system differently depending on their gender and/or sexual orientation.**

The data findings in this report raise important questions about equity and consistency in how Massachusetts youth experience the juvenile justice system. Disparities across gender and sexual orientation may stem from:

1. Differences in youth offending behavior;
2. Uneven access to community-based diversion programs;
3. Variations in policy and use of discretion across the state's 300+ police departments and 11 district attorney's offices; and/or
4. Individual or institutional decision-making by police, clerks, assistant district attorneys, and judges.

Stakeholders should use this data, and the [corresponding data summary infographics](#), as a **starting point for continued inquiry**—to identify what drives system involvement and ensure that responses to youth are **fair, consistent, and community-oriented**. Advancing this understanding is essential to **promoting public safety, reducing unnecessary court involvement, and improving outcomes** for youth across Massachusetts.

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<sup>1</sup> Data on youth whose gender is unknown or was not reported to the data collecting agency has been omitted from this report due to its small number and for improved readability.

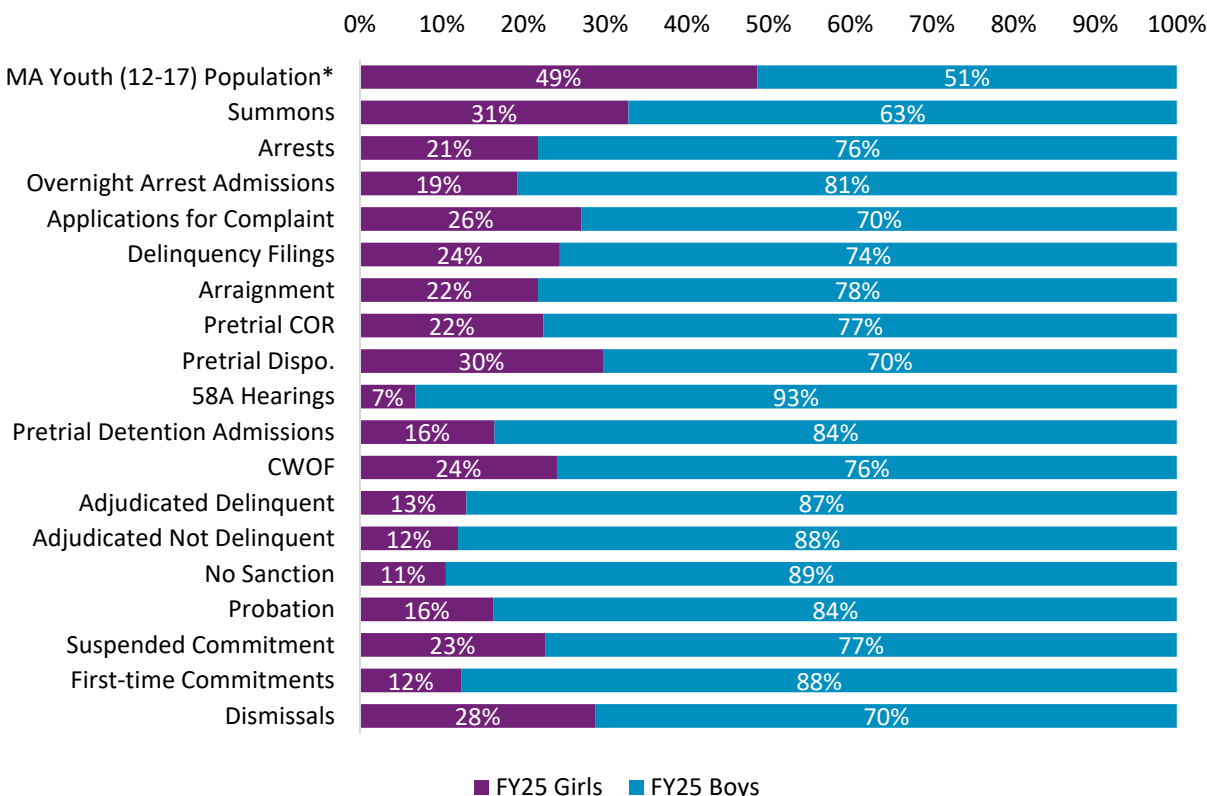
<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the Board's Annual Report for a full description of each process point: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/jipad-2024-annual-report/download>

<sup>3</sup> Population rates are based on OJJDP CY23 estimates retrieved from EZAPOP here: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>; For underlying counts of all the data in this report, see Appendix A.

## Data Findings and Recommendations

Girls and boys each make up about half of the Massachusetts youth population. An estimated 25% of the youth population identify as LGBTQ+. <sup>4,5</sup> Consistent with prior years, in FY25, the overwhelming majority of cases processed in the state's juvenile justice system involved boys (Figure 1). <sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1:**  
*Gender Breakdowns by Process Point (FY25)*



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to the omission of data on youth whose gender was unknown or not reported. Source: Massachusetts population data retrieved from EZAPOP here: <https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>. Summons, arrest, applications for complaint, delinquency filings, arraignments, 58A hearings, and dispositions retrieved between 10/2025 and 1/2026 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes>. Overnight arrest admissions, pretrial detention, and first-time commitment data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services. Pretrial supervision/monitoring cases, and post adjudication probation case starts provided to the OCA by the Massachusetts Probation Service.

<sup>4</sup> Data on Massachusetts youth gender was retrieved from Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2025). Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2023. Online. Available: <https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>

<sup>5</sup> The number of youth who identify as LGBTQ+ was estimated using the MA population for CY23 (ages 14-17) and the results of the 2023 Massachusetts Risk Behavior Survey which showed that 1 in 4 high school aged youth identify as LGBTQ+. Source: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/mclgbtgy-annual-recommendations-fy-2026/download>

<sup>6</sup> Data on LGBTQ+ youth involved with the juvenile justice is only available at certain process points. Please see "Data Notes" below for more details.

## Summary of Data Findings

Key data findings about the use of the juvenile justice system by gender, sexual orientation and gender identity include:

1. **Black girls were 5.4 times more likely to be arrested than white girls, compared to Black boys, who were 3.8 times more likely to be arrested than white boys in Massachusetts.**
2. **The underlying reasons for detention, as well as the specific experiences and needs of detained youth, differ for girls and LGBTQ+ youth compared to boys and straight/cisgender youth<sup>7</sup>:**
  - Girls detained pretrial were more often held on cash bail rather than as a result of a 58A Hearing, were more likely to have DCF involvement, more frequently reported histories of physical abuse and sexual abuse, and reported higher levels of behavioral health concerns than detained boys.
  - LGBTQ+ youth detained pretrial were more often held on cash bail rather than as a result of a 58A Hearing, were more likely to have DCF involvement, more frequently reported histories of physical abuse and sexual abuse, and reported higher levels of behavioral health concerns than detained straight/cisgender youth.
3. **Girls and LGBTQ+ youth committed to DYS for the first time differed from committed boys and straight/cisgender youth in important ways:**
  - Girls with first-time commitments to DYS were committed for delinquency (rather than Youthful Offender) cases and more frequently had DCF involvement than boys.
  - LGBTQ+ youth with first-time commitments to DYS were committed for delinquency (rather than Youthful Offender) cases and more frequently had DCF involvement than youth committed who did not identify as LGBTQ+.
4. **Girls' cases were dismissed more frequently than boys' cases.** While most cases of all genders ultimately result in dismissal, the high rate of dismissals raises concern that girls are formally processed through the court system when diversion at an earlier stage might have better served a youth.

## Recommendations

These data findings confirm what the OCA has regularly heard in interviews with juvenile justice system practitioners: **the juvenile justice system was used differently for girls and LGBTQ+ youth compared to boys and straight/cisgendered peers in the system.** Qualitative interviews

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<sup>7</sup> In FY25, the majority of LGBTQ+ youth detained identified as girls (84%), creating similarities in the trends identified between the two groups.

suggest that in many cases, these differences are because juvenile justice practitioners are using custodial processes – particularly arrest and detention – to ensure a young person’s physical safety even when it is not otherwise warranted by the case details. This includes situations in which youth are homeless, are perceived to be at risk of sexual exploitation, or are engaged in other risk-taking behaviors. This trend is not unique to Massachusetts; research on juvenile justice system use in other jurisdictions suggests professionals feel a stronger need to protect girls—referred to as “protectionism” – in the juvenile justice system more so than boys in the system.<sup>8</sup>

Practitioners in these cases are asked to make difficult decisions, balancing the well-documented harms of justice system involvement with concerns about the immediate safety and well-being of a young person. The state can help promote equity and improve outcomes for girls and LGBTQ+ youth, even in these challenging situations, by:

1. **Providing alternative responses to custodial settings and bolstering community-based support options for youth** with underlying risk/needs, especially for those youth involved in DCF. The Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board, which the OCA chairs, is currently engaged in work that we anticipate will result in recommendations on how the state can improve community support options for youth involved with DCF who are at risk of/cross over from the child welfare system to the juvenile justice system. Some of these support options may also be helpful in preventing the use of custodial processes for girls and LGBTQ+ youth as well.
2. **Addressing racial and ethnic disparities, especially at the policing level.** More detailed recommendations are provided in the OCA’s [brief on racial and ethnic disparities](#). The OCA also echoes the [JJPAD Board’s 2022 recommendations](#) related to arrest-related disparities.
3. **Increasing use of diversion to reduce unnecessary system involvement for youth,** including supporting the state-level Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program ([MYDP](#)) to make sure youth across the state have equal access to diversion opportunities.

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<sup>8</sup> Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2010). Under Lock and Key: Trauma, Marginalization, and Girls’ Juvenile Justice Involvement. *Justice Research and Policy*, 12(2), 25-49. <https://doi.org/10.3818/JRP.12.2.2010.25>

### Data Notes

**Gender Definition:** The OCA recognizes that an individual's gender – which the Office defines as an individuals' inherent sense of self as male, female, both, or neither – may differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. In this brief, however, we rely on the data reported by various agencies, which may be collected and reported by the youth's gender, their sex assigned at birth, or may be unclear.

For more information on the JJPAD Board's data reporting standards, please see:

[Recommended Data Reporting Standards: Recommendations for Reporting Data on Race, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#), and for information on how each entity reports gender and/or sex, see the [JJPAD Data Subcommittee February 2020 Meeting Presentation](#).

**LGBTQ+ Data:** Data on the sexual orientation and transgender status of youth in the juvenile justice system is limited and is currently only publicly reported by the Department of Youth Services (DYS).

### The Initial Stages of the Juvenile Justice System<sup>9</sup>



**KEY TAKEAWAY #1:** In FY25, arrests were used more often for Black girls (compared to white girls) than for Black boys (compared to white boys).

Youth enter the juvenile court system through an “application for complaint.”<sup>10</sup> The **way a youth enters the juvenile court matters**. In Massachusetts, an application for complaint can be initiated by a police officer **issuing a summons** for the youth to appear before the Juvenile Court on a set date or **physically arresting the youth**.

<sup>9</sup> The initial phases of the juvenile justice system include data on the use of applications for complaint including the manner in which youth come to the Juvenile Court's attention (i.e., via an arrest or summons).

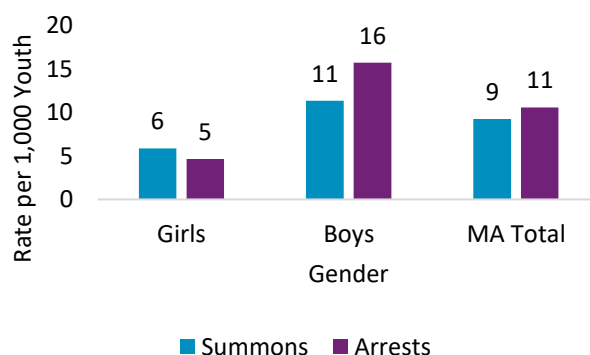
<sup>10</sup> Rates are calculated per 1,000 youth ages 12–17 using county-level youth population estimates; the statewide rate is calculated using the total statewide youth population.

In FY25, girls were about equally as likely to enter the juvenile justice system through arrest or summons, while boys were more likely to enter through an arrest than summons.

Although boys experience a higher overall arrest rate than girls, racial and ethnic disparities in arrests rates were more pronounced among girls.

**Black girls were 5.4 times more likely to be arrested (versus summonsed) than white girls, compared to Black boys, who were 3.8 times more likely to be arrested than white boys in Massachusetts.** Hispanic/Latina girls were 2.5 times more likely to be arrested than white girls, compared to Hispanic/Latino boys, who were 2.8 times more likely to be arrested than white boys in Massachusetts.

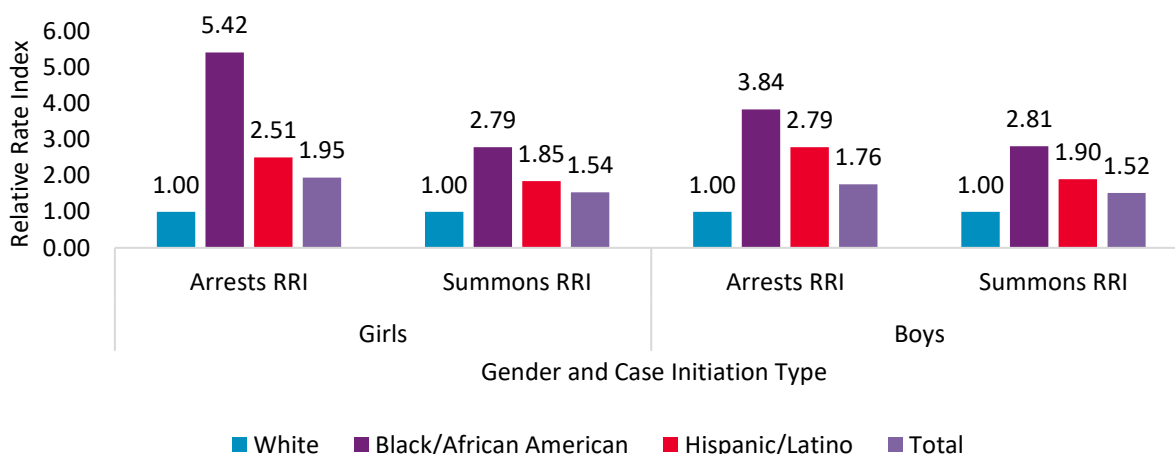
**Figure 2:**  
Arrests versus Summons Rates per 1,000 Youth by Gender



Source: Applications for complaint data retrieved on 10/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/DemographicsofSelectedJuvenileMatters/JuvenileMattersbyRaceEthn>

**Figure 3:**  
Arrests vs. Summons RRI (FY25)



Note: **Relative Rate Index (RRI)** is used to track racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. It compares how often youth of color are involved in the system compared to white youth, after accounting for each group's share of the overall youth population in Massachusetts (based on U.S. Census data). White youth serve as the benchmark and thus always have an RRI of 1.00. An RRI **above 1.00** means youth of color are **more likely** to be involved at a particular stage of the system, while an RRI **below 1.00** means they are **less likely** to be involved. Source: Applications for complaint data retrieved on 10/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/DemographicsofSelectedJuvenileMatters/JuvenileMattersbyRaceEthn>



Unpacking *why* racial/ethnic disparities are starkest for black girls requires an intersectional research approach, which is critical to understanding how different youth experience the juvenile justice system. Examining race, gender, and other identities separately can mask disparities that emerge at their intersection.<sup>11</sup> Research on Black girls, for example, has shown that they face unique risks and pathways into system involvement that are not fully captured by analyses focused solely on race or gender. For example, prominent researchers have addressed the adultification of Black girls (e.g. treating or perceiving Black girls as more mature than their developmental stage).<sup>12</sup>

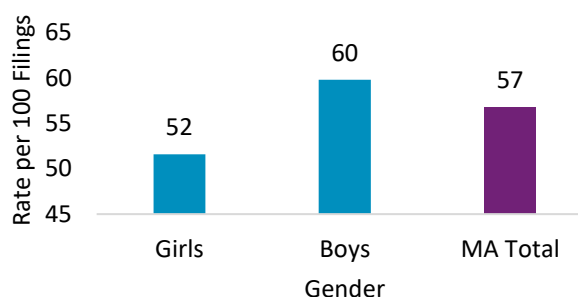
### Arraignments and Pretrial Proceedings<sup>13</sup>



**KEY TAKEAWAY #2: Girls detained pretrial were more often held on cash bail rather than as a result of a 58A Hearing, were more likely to have DCF involvement, more frequently reported histories of physical abuse and sexual abuse, and reported higher levels of behavioral health concerns than detained boys.**

An arraignment marks the point when a youth is formally charged in court—an event that leaves a lasting mark on their record.<sup>14</sup> Girls were less likely to be arraigned after a delinquency

**Figure 4:**  
*Arraignment Rate per 100 Delinquency Filings by Gender*



Source: Delinquency filing and arraignment data retrieved on 12/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/JuvenileCourtCasesArraigned/CountyMapCharacteristics>

<sup>11</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberlé W., et al. (2015). *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected*. African American Policy Forum & Columbia Law School Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. [https://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BlackGirlsMatter\\_Report.pdf](https://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BlackGirlsMatter_Report.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia J. Blake & Thali Gonzalez, Georgetown Law Ctr. On Poverty & Inequality, *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood 2* (2017), <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf>; <https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/National-Data-on-School-Discipline-by-Race-and-Gender.pdf>; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344352948\\_Monitoring\\_the\\_Future\\_national\\_survey\\_results\\_on\\_drug\\_use\\_1975-2019\\_Overview\\_key\\_findings\\_on\\_adolescent\\_drug\\_use](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344352948_Monitoring_the_Future_national_survey_results_on_drug_use_1975-2019_Overview_key_findings_on_adolescent_drug_use)

<sup>13</sup> This part of the juvenile justice system includes data on 58A (“dangerousness”) hearings, pretrial supervision and monitoring, pretrial detention admissions, and the reasons why youth are detained pretrial. To learn more about the Pretrial Phase of the Juvenile Justice system, check out the Board’s 2025 report on this topic: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/improving-massachusetts-juvenile-pretrial-phase-an-assessment-of-the-current-pretrial-system-and-recommendations-for-improvement/download>

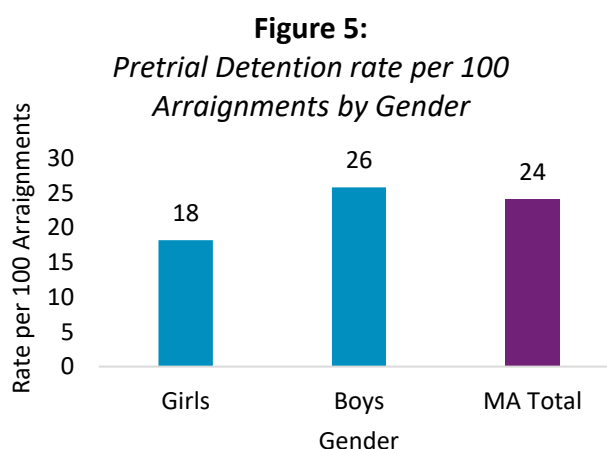
<sup>14</sup> This is the point at which an official “Criminal Offender Record Information” (CORI) record is created. Massachusetts also has “Court Activity Record Information” (CARI) records for youth once the court process begins before an arraignment.

filing<sup>15</sup> than boys – there were 52 arraignments per 100 delinquency filings for girls, compared to 60 per 100 filings for boys.

At an arraignment, judges decide whether to release a youth on personal recognizance, impose conditions of release, or order pretrial detention. Youth may be detained pretrial at arraignment due to a 58A (“Dangerousness”) hearing or if they are unable to meet bail. A youth may also be detained later in the pretrial process due to probation violations or the revocation of bail or personal recognizance.

Girls were detained pretrial at a lower rate than boys. However, the underlying reasons for detention differed by gender, as do the specific experiences and needs of girls who were detained. (Figure 6).

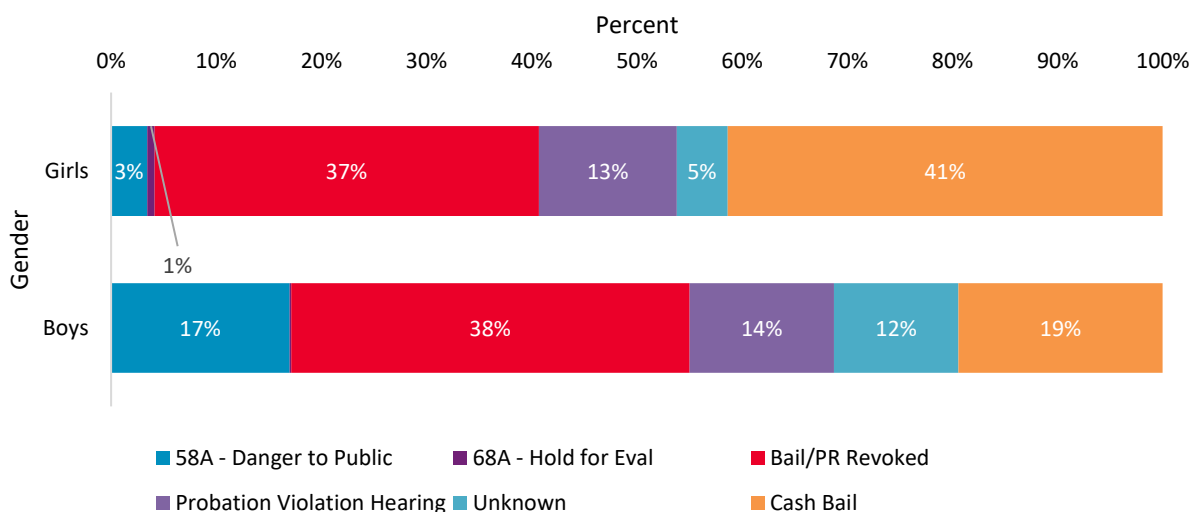
In FY25, **girls were held most often for cash bail, compared to boys who were held most frequently for violations of pretrial conditions of release.** Girls were also held as a result of a 58A (“Dangerousness”) Hearing less frequently than boys.



Source: Arraignment data retrieved on 12/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/JuvenileCourtCasesAraigned/CountyMapCharacteristics> ; Pretrial detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

<sup>15</sup> A delinquency complaint (called a delinquency filing) is issued if a clerk magistrate finds probable cause to believe that a juvenile has committed the delinquent act detailed on the application for delinquent complaint and decides to issue the delinquent complaint.

**Figure 6:**  
*Held in Detention Reason by Gender (FY25)*

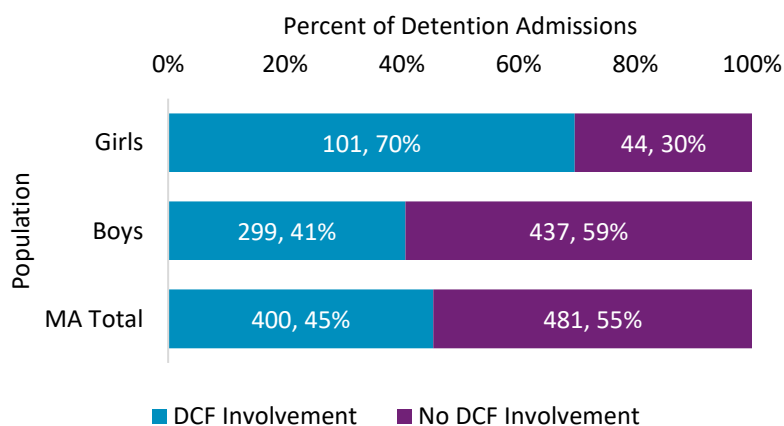


Source: Detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Of the **girls detained pretrial, 70% had DCF involvement at the time of detention, compared to 41% of boys detained pretrial** (Figure 7).

When youth are admitted to detention, they are asked a series of questions related to any prior history of abuse or experience hearing derogatory comments (as required by the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act, or PREA).<sup>16</sup> Girls responded “Yes” substantially more often than boys did for each PREA question, with at least **30% of girls detained pretrial reporting a history of physical abuse, history of sexual abuse, and/or negative**

**Figure 7:**  
*Detention Admissions by Gender and DCF Status*



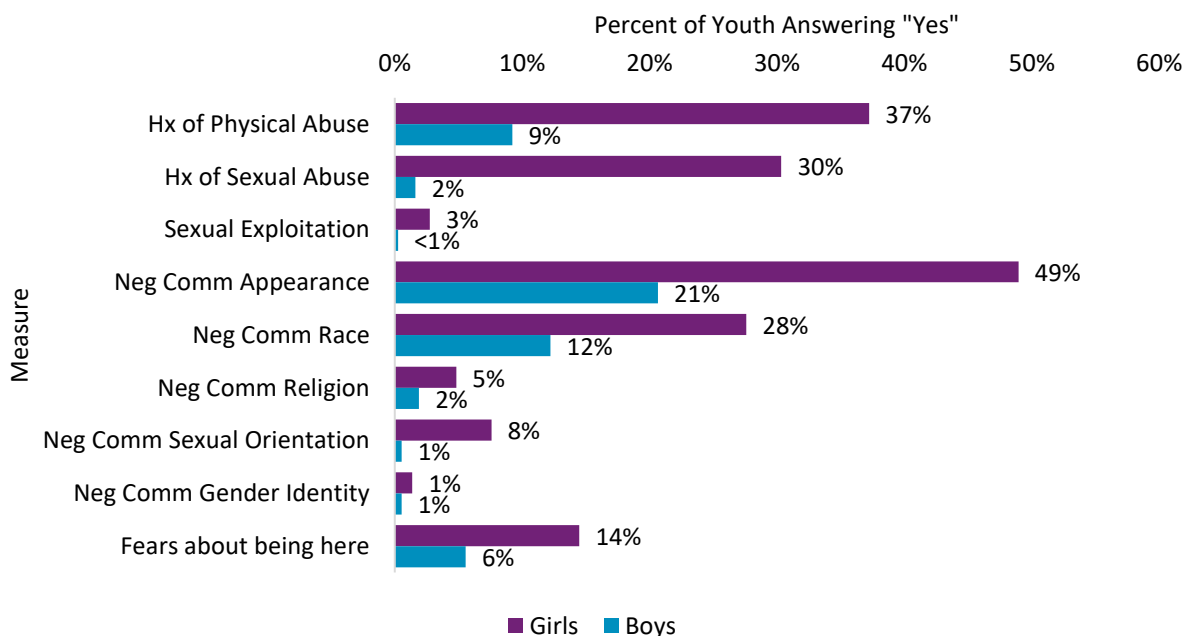
Source: Detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

<sup>16</sup> As a result of the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), youth admitted to detention answer a series of questions related to any history of physical and/or sexual abuse, as well as other questions regarding if youth had ever heard other individuals make negative comments about the youth’s appearance, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion. For more information, see the [JJPAD FY25 Annual Report](#).

comments about their appearance (Figure 8).

Further, girls reported being sexually exploited at substantially higher rates than boys and reported behavioral health concerns more frequently than boys across almost all measures (Figure 9).<sup>17</sup>

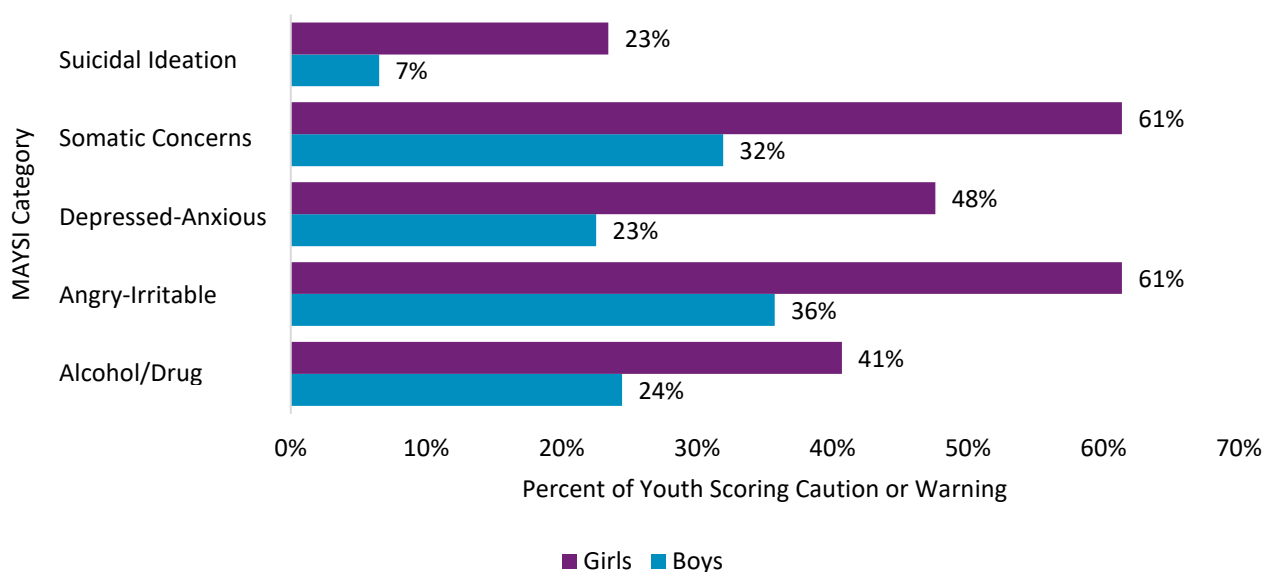
**Figure 8:**  
*PREA Detention YES Responses by Gender*



Source: PREA data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

<sup>17</sup> All youth receive a mental health screening upon first entering a DYS facility. DYS uses the MAYSI-2 (Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-Version 2) behavioral health screening, which was designed to assist juvenile justice facilities in identifying special mental health needs among 12-17-year-olds. For more information, see the [JJPAD FY25 Annual Report](#).

**Figure 9:**  
*Pretrial Detention Admissions by Caution/Warning MAYSI and Gender*



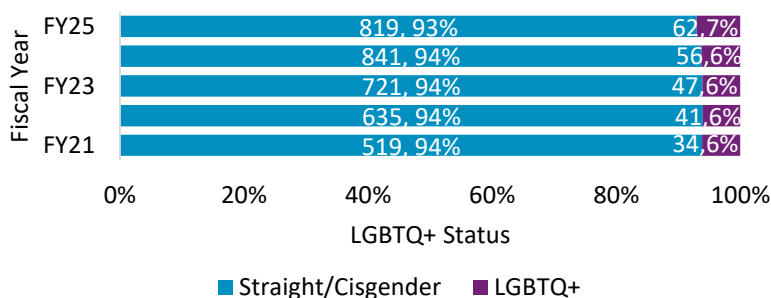
Note: The MAYSI behavioral health screener also includes “Thought Disturbance” as one of the six domains. “Thought Disturbance” is a boys only scale, and therefore has been omitted from this analysis. Source: MAYSI data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #3: LGBTQ+ youth detained pretrial were more often held on cash bail rather than as a result of a 58A Hearing, were more likely to have DCF involvement, more frequently reported histories of physical abuse and sexual abuse, and reported higher levels of behavioral health concerns than youth who did not identify as LGBTQ+.**

In FY25, 7% (n=62) of pretrial detention admissions were for youth who identified as LGBTQ+. <sup>18</sup>

As the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ+ Youth has highlighted in

**Figure 10:**  
*Pretrial Detention by LGBTQ+ Status (FY21-FY25)*

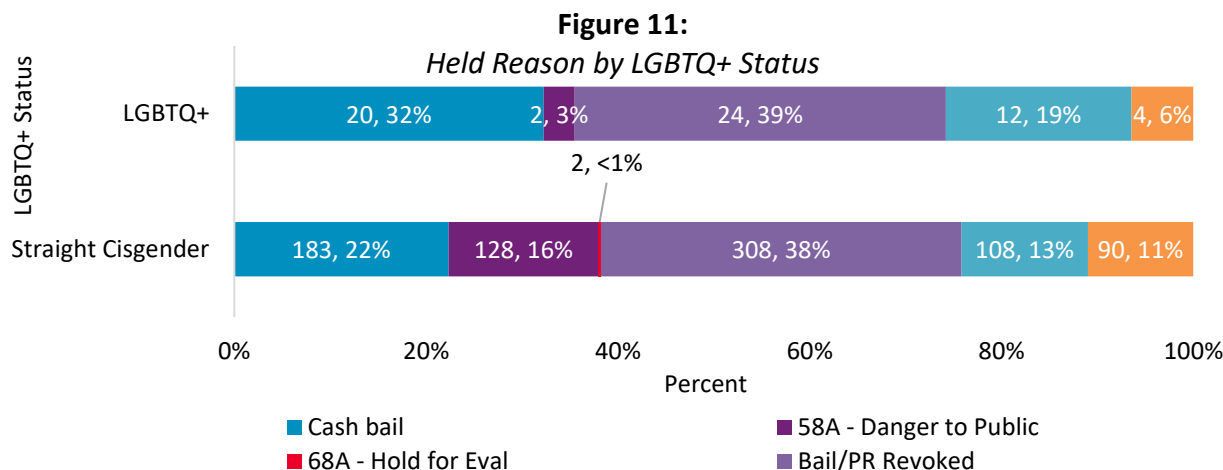


Source: Detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

<sup>18</sup> Currently, DYS is the only juvenile justice system entity that collects and reports data on sexual orientation and gender identity/transgender/intersex status. For the purposes of this report, sexual orientation and gender identity data is aggregated into one category due to low individual case counts and to protect youth confidentiality.

recent reports, this is below national estimates.<sup>19,20</sup>

Consistent with previous years, **youth detained pretrial who identified as LGBTQ+ were held on cash bail (32%) more frequently than youth detained who did not identify as LGBTQ+ (22%).** Detention admissions were much more likely to stem from 58A hearings for straight/cisgender youth (16%) than for LGBTQ+ youth (3%) (Figure 11).



Source: Detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services

Of the 62 detention admissions for youth who identify as **LGBTQ+**, **71% had DCF involvement at the time of their detention admission**, compared to 43% of youth who did not identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> [Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ+ Youth](https://www.mass.gov/doc/mclgbtqy-annual-recommendations-fy-2026/download). Report and Recommendations Fiscal Year 2026.  
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/mclgbtqy-annual-recommendations-fy-2026/download>

<sup>20</sup> The underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ youth detained pretrial in Massachusetts may be a positive sign – or it may be due to underreporting of detained youth who may decide not to disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation status at intake. It is DYS' policy is to revisit this question at each intake and create multiple opportunities for youth to disclose LGBTQ+ status as they build trusting relationships with staff.

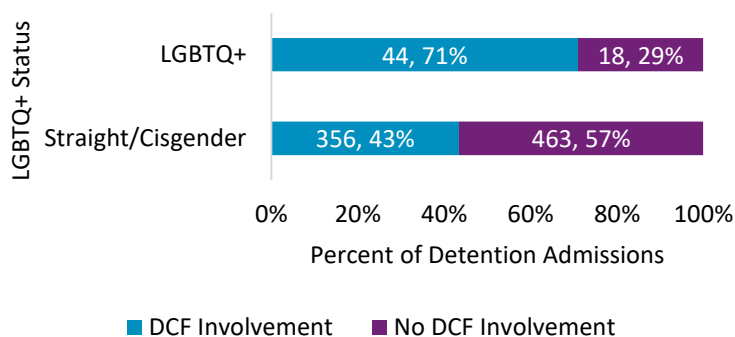
<sup>21</sup> Due to cell suppression concerns, not all breakdowns calculated for pretrial detention can be calculated for first-time commitments.

Youth who identified as LGBTQ+ reported higher levels of trauma at their detention admission than their straight/cisgender peers across all PREA domains, with at least 30% of LGBTQ+ youth detained pretrial reporting a history of physical abuse, history of sexual abuse, negative comments about their appearance, and/or negative comments about their race.

Further, **LGBTQ+ youth reported behavioral health concerns more frequently than youth detained pretrial who did not identify as LGBTQ+ across almost all measures** (Figure 14).

Figure 12:

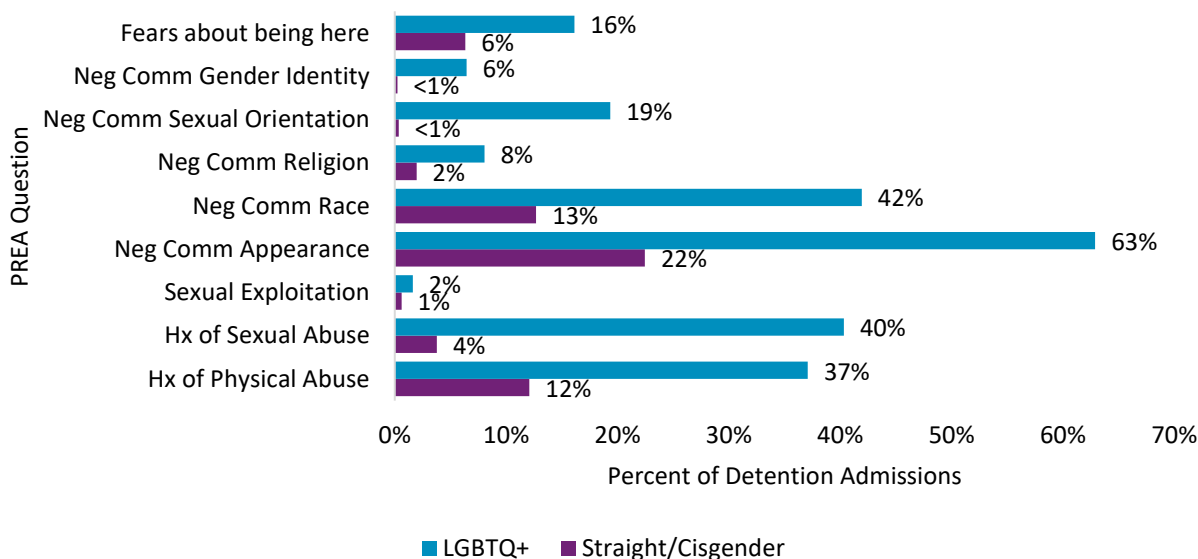
*Pretrial Detention by LGBTQ+ and DCF Status*



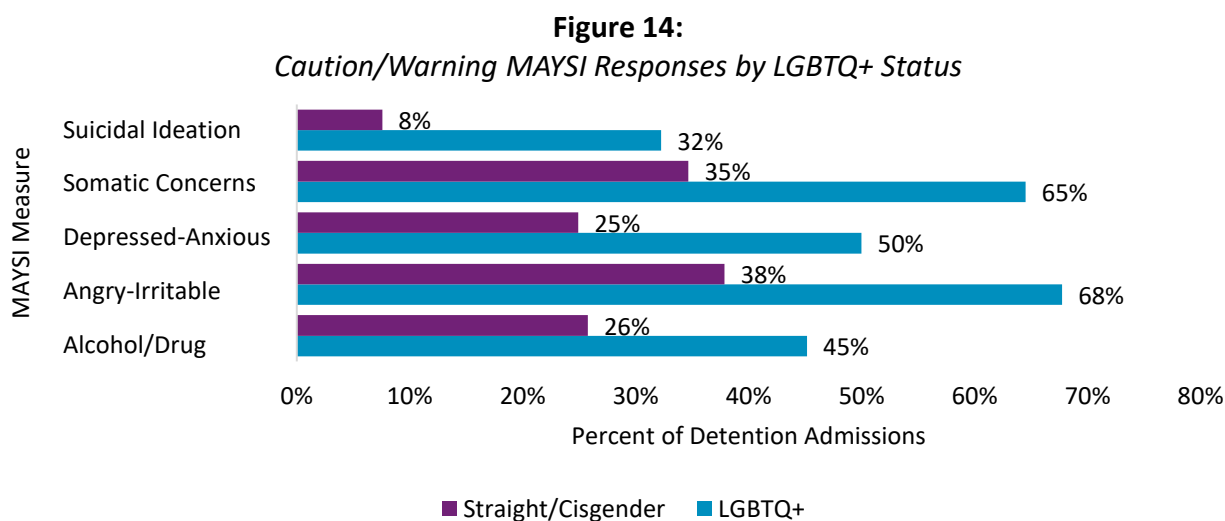
Source: Detention data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Figure 13:

*PREA "Yes" Responses by LGBTQ+ Status*



Source: PREA data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.



Note: The MAYSI behavioral health screener also includes “Thought Disturbance” as one of the six domains. “Thought Disturbance” is a boys only scale. In FY25, 84% of LGBTQ+ youth identified as girls. Therefore “Thought Disturbance” has been omitted from this analysis. Source: MAYSI data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

### Sanctions and Dismissals



**KEY TAKEAWAY #4:** Girls with first-time commitments to DYS were committed for delinquency (rather than Youthful Offender) cases and more frequently had DCF involvement than boys.

When a youth’s case reaches disposition, they may be adjudicated delinquent (“guilty”) or not delinquent (“not guilty”). A youth’s case may also be resolved via a CWO (“continued without a finding”).<sup>22</sup> Sanctions are the outcomes imposed when a youth is adjudicated delinquent—the juvenile court’s equivalent of a “sentence” in adult court. Common sanctions include:<sup>23</sup>

- **Commitment to DYS custody**, sometimes extending up to a youth’s 21st birthday;<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In this report, dismissals are counted separately from dispositions.

<sup>23</sup> The Juvenile Court can also impose or suspend an adult sentence if the youth was adjudicated as a youthful offender. A youthful offender case involves a youth between 14 and 18 years old who is indicted by a grand jury for allegedly committing an offense which, if they were an adult, would be punishable by imprisonment in state prison and who meets any of the following criteria: (1) the youth has previously been committed to DYS; (2) the youth has committed an offense which involves the infliction or threat of serious bodily harm in violation of law; (3) the youth has committed certain firearms and weapons offenses. As defined in M.G.L c119 §52: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/Section52>

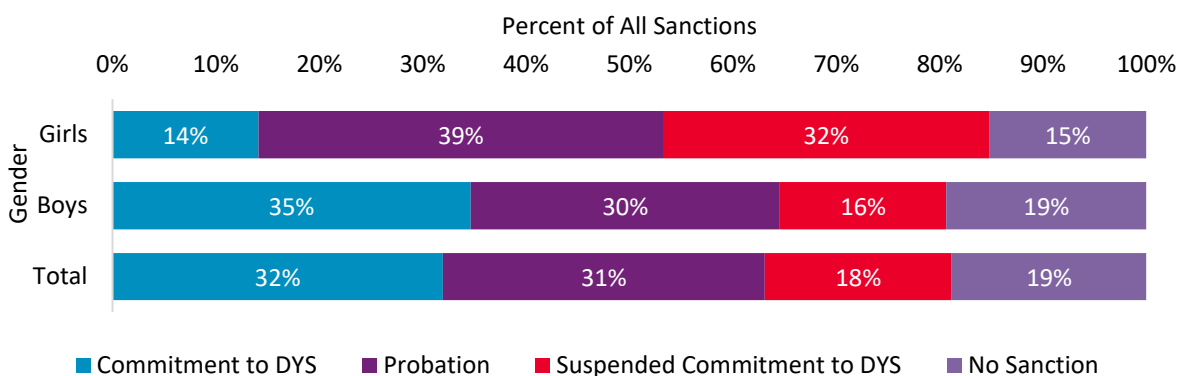
<sup>24</sup> Youth charged as a juvenile, but whose cases are disposed after their 18th birthday can be committed to DYS until they are 19 or 20 years old. Youth with a youthful offender case can be committed to DYS until age 21. (MGL c. 119 §58.) While youth



- **Suspended DYS commitment**, where the youth is supervised by Massachusetts Probation Services (MPS) and only committed if they fail to meet conditions;
- **Probation** supervision through MPS; or
- **No sanction** at all.<sup>25</sup>

The most common sanctions for girls were probation and a suspended commitment to DYS. The most common sanctions for boys were commitment to DYS and probation.

**Figure 15:**  
*Sanctions by Gender*



Source: Data retrieved 11/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here:  
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/MassachusettsJuvenileCourtDelinquencyDismissalsandAdjudications/AdjudicationRates>

Data on first-time commitments to DYS reflects the number of committed youth who have never previously been committed to DYS's custody.<sup>26</sup> **All girls' first-time commitments were delinquency cases. In comparison, 81% of boys' first-time commitments were delinquency cases and 19% were youthful offender cases.**

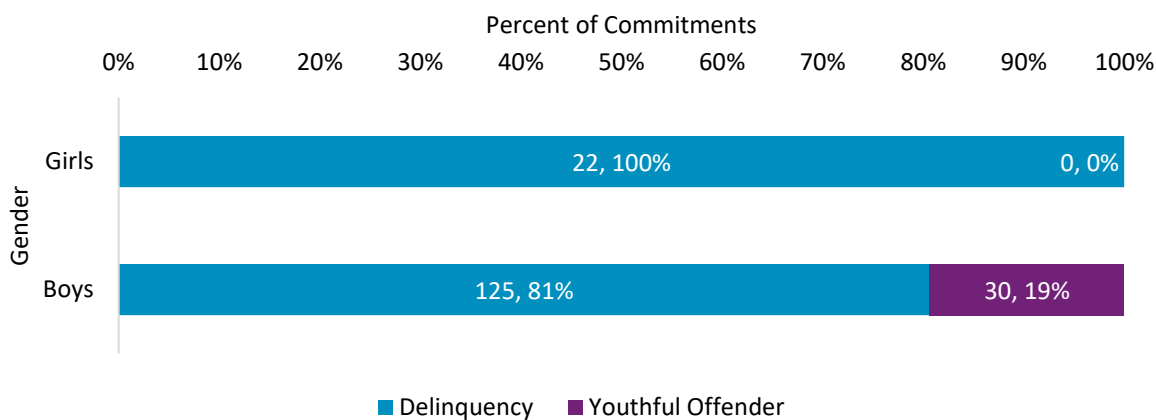
Of all girls committed for the first time, **82% had DCF involvement at time of commitment, compared to 36% of boys.**

are committed to the physical custody of DYS, youth may live in the community or a DYS facility at different points throughout their commitment disposition.

<sup>25</sup> In these cases, judges adjudicate a youth delinquent for a given case and put the case "on file" unless or until a certain circumstance occurs.

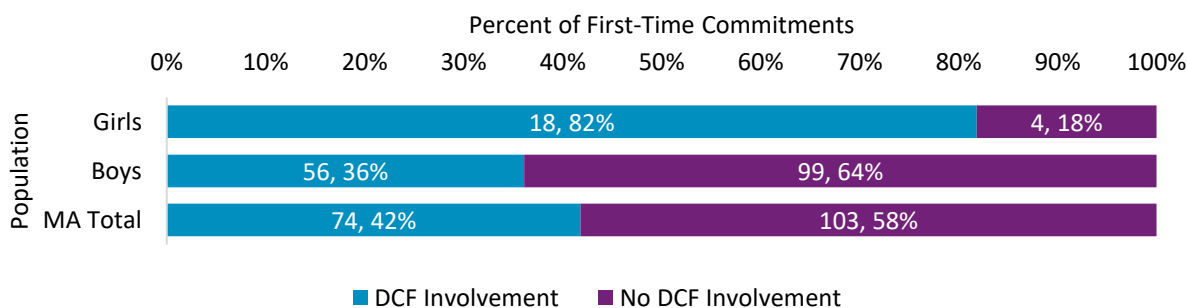
<sup>26</sup> First-time commitment data does not include youth who have been committed previously and are subsequently recommitted to DYS on new charges.

**Figure 16:**  
*Docket Type by Gender*



Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Figure 17:**  
*First-Time Commitments by Gender and DCF Status (FY25)*



Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

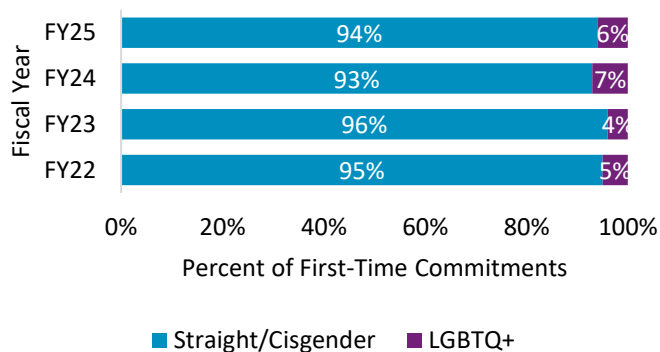
**KEY TAKEAWAY #5: LGBTQ+ youth with first-time commitments to DYS were committed for delinquency (rather than Youthful Offender) cases and more frequently had DCF involvement than youth committed who did not identify as LGBTQ+.**

Of the 177 first-time commitments to DYS in FY25, 6% were for youth who identify as LGBTQ+, consistent with FY24.

Of first-time commitments for **LGBTQ+ youth**:

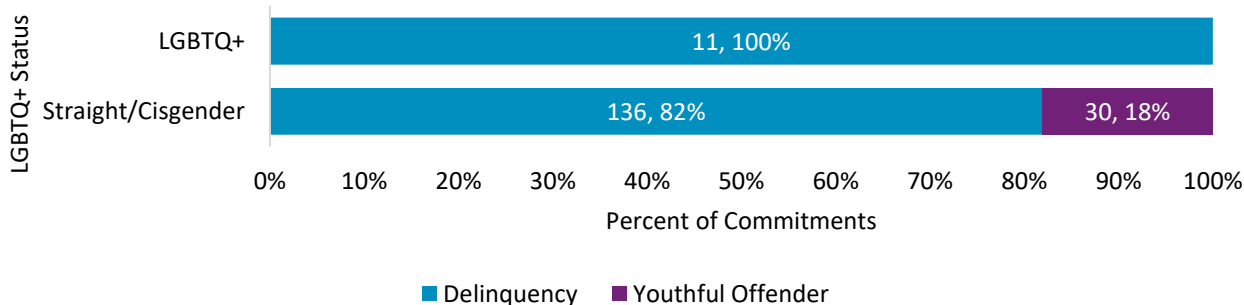
- **100% were for delinquency cases.** In comparison, 82% of first-time commitments for straight/cisgender youth were delinquency cases and 18w% were youthful offender cases.
- **91% (n=10) had DCF involvement at the time of their commitment,** compared to 39% (n=64) of youth who did not identify as LGBTQ+.

**Figure 18:**  
*First-Time Commitments by LGBTQ+ Status (FY22-FY25)*



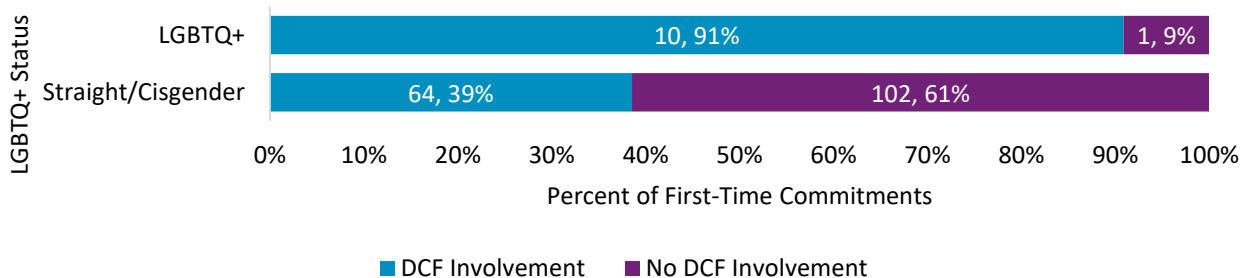
Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Figure 19:**  
*Docket Type by LGBTQ+ Status*



Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Figure 20:**  
*First-Time Commitments by LGBTQ+ and DCF Status*



Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #6: Girls' cases were dismissed more often than boys' cases.**

Cases may be dismissed by a judge at any point in the juvenile justice process post delinquency filing. Cases may be dismissed for several reasons, including because a case was diverted, because a judge or clerk found there was not probable cause, because there was insufficient evidence to continue prosecuting the case at any point pre- or during a trial, or in situations where a victim does not wish to testify. The Trial Court does not report whether the case was dismissed by a judge or withdrawn/*nolle prossed*<sup>27</sup> by a prosecutor.<sup>28</sup>

The data indicates that cases involving girls were more likely to be dismissed than cases involving boys: for every 100 delinquency filings for girls, 78 cases were dismissed versus 63 for boys.

**Table 1: FY25 Dismissals by Gender**

| Process Point                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Total Count | Girls | Boys  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Dismissals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 4,198       | 1,211 | 2,987 |
| Dismissals Per 100 Delinquency Filings                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 65          | 78    | 63    |
| Source: Dismissal data retrieved between 10/2025 and 11/2025 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <a href="https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes">https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes</a> . |             |       |       |

While most cases for all genders ultimately result in dismissal, the high rate of dismissals raises concern that a large number of girls are being formally processed through the court system when diversion at an earlier stage might have better served a youth.

The relatively high percentage of cases involving youth that were ultimately dismissed raises important questions:

- Did the case meet the legal threshold for arrest and filing? A high dismissal rate may indicate that a significant number of cases are filed with insufficient legal or evidentiary support to proceed to adjudication.
- Are similarly situated youth being treated differently at the decision point where someone chooses to formally charge the case rather than divert it or decline prosecution? Differences in dismissal rates may reflect differences in how prosecutors initially decide which cases to formally charge versus divert or decline.
- Even if the case technically met a filing threshold, should it have been handled outside of court in the first place?

<sup>27</sup>An entry on the record of a legal action denoting that the prosecutor will proceed no further in an action either as a whole or as to some count or as to one or more of several defendants. See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nolle%20prosequi>

<sup>28</sup> This number does not include the cases in which youth successfully complete their terms of probation as a result of a case being "continued without a finding" (CWO). In this report, dismissals are reported separately from dispositions to align with the Juvenile Court's public reporting.

## Conclusion

Overall, FY25 data shows that while girls and LGBTQ+ youth make up a small share of the juvenile justice population, their experiences in the state's juvenile justice system differs from those of boys and straight/cisgender youth in consequential ways. These findings underscore the importance of a continued need for local, county, and state practitioners to review practices to reduce unnecessary system involvement, and ensure youth are treated equitably across the Commonwealth.

## Appendix A: Juvenile Justice System Process Points by Gender and LGBTQ+ Status

| Population                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Girl    | Boys    | MA Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| MA Youth Population (CY23)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 234,764 | 248,068 | 482,832  |
| Arrests                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1,089   | 3,906   | 5,114    |
| Summons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1,377   | 2,816   | 4,470    |
| Applications for Complaint (Total)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2,576   | 6,924   | 9,932    |
| Overnight Arrest Admissions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 124     | 519     | 643      |
| Delinquency Filings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1,543   | 4,767   | 6,437    |
| Arraignments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 796     | 2,852   | 3,653    |
| Held at Initial Arraignment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 77      | 460     | 537      |
| Not Held at Initial Arraignment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 706     | 2,362   | 3,068    |
| 58A Hearing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 24      | 331     | 355      |
| Pretrial COR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 391     | 1,349   | 1,748    |
| Pretrial Dispo                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 72      | 170     | 242      |
| Pretrial Detention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 145     | 736     | 881      |
| Detained without Bail Set                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 85      | 593     | 678      |
| Detained with Bail Set                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 60      | 143     | 203      |
| Adjudicated Delinquent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 92      | 615     | 707      |
| Adjudicated Not Delinquent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 9       | 66      | 75       |
| CWOF                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 285     | 897     | 1,184    |
| First-time Commitments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 22      | 155     | 177      |
| Dismissals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1,211   | 2,987   | 4,294    |
| Administrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 194     | 545     | 743      |
| Risk/Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 104     | 537     | 642      |
| Total Probation (RN and Admin)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 298     | 1,082   | 1,385    |
| Source: Massachusetts population data retrieved from EZAPOPOP here: <a href="https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/">https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/</a> . Summons, arrest, applications for complaint, delinquency filings, arraignments, 58A hearings, and dispositions retrieved between 10/2025 and 1/2026 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <a href="https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes">https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes</a> . Overnight arrest admissions, pretrial detention, and first-time commitment data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services. Pretrial supervision/monitoring cases, and post adjudication probation case starts provided to the OCA by the Massachusetts Probation Service |         |         |          |

|       | DCF Involvement (Detention) | No DCF Involvement (Detention) | DCF Involvement (First-Time Commitments) | No DCF Involvement (First-Time Commitments) |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Girls | 101                         | 44                             | 18                                       | 4                                           |
| Boys  | 299                         | 437                            | 56                                       | 99                                          |

**Table 3: DCF Involvement by Gender (Detention and First-Time Commitments)**

|          |     |     |    |     |
|----------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| MA Total | 400 | 481 | 74 | 103 |
|----------|-----|-----|----|-----|

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Table 4: DCF Involvement by LGBTQ+ Status (Detention and First-Time Commitments)**

|                    | DCF Involvement (Detention) | No DCF Involvement (Detention) | DCF Involvement (First-Time Commitments) | No DCF Involvement (First-Time Commitments) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| LGBTQ+             | 44                          | 18                             | 10                                       | 1                                           |
| Straight/Cisgender | 356                         | 463                            | 64                                       | 102                                         |
| MA Total           | 400                         | 481                            | 74                                       | 103                                         |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Table 5: First-Time Commitments Docket Type by Gender**

|          | Delinquency | Youthful Offender |
|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| Girls    | 22          | 0                 |
| Boys     | 125         | 30                |
| MA Total | 147         | 30                |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Table 6: First-Time Commitments Docket Type by LGBTQ+ Status**

|                    | Delinquency | Youthful Offender |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| LGBTQ+             | 11          | 0                 |
| Straight/Cisgender | 136         | 30                |
| MA Total           | 147         | 30                |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Table 7: Held Reason by Gender**

|          | 58A ("Dangerousness") Hearing | Bail/Personal Recognizance Revoked | Probation Violation Hearing | Cash Bail | 68A | Other/Unknown |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|---------------|
| Girls    | 5                             | 53                                 | 19                          | 60        | 1   | 7             |
| Boys     | 125                           | 279                                | 101                         | 143       | 1   | 87            |
| MA Total | 130                           | 332                                | 120                         | 203       | 2   | 94            |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Table 8: Held Reason by LGBTQ+ Status

|                    | 58A<br>("Dangerousness"<br>) Hearing | Bail/Personal<br>Recognizance<br>Revoked | Probation<br>Violation<br>Hearing | Cash<br>Bail | 68A<br>Hearings | Other/Unknown |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| LGBTQ+             | 2                                    | 24                                       | 12                                | 20           | 0               | 0             |
| Straight/Cisgender | 128                                  | 208                                      | 108                               | 183          | 2               | 94            |
| MA Total           | 130                                  | 332                                      | 120                               | 203          | 2               | 94            |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Table 9: Sanctions by Gender

|          | Committed to<br>DYS | Probation | Suspended<br>Commitment to DYS | No Sanction |
|----------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Girls    | 13                  | 36        | 29                             | 14          |
| Boys     | 213                 | 184       | 99                             | 119         |
| MA Total | 226                 | 220       | 128                            | 133         |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Table 10: PREA "Yes" Responses by Gender and LGBTQ+ Status

|                                     | Girls | Boys | LGBTQ+ | Straight/Cisgender |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------|--------|--------------------|
| History of Physical Abuse           | 54    | 68   | 23     | 99                 |
| History of Sexual Abuse             | 44    | 12   | 25     | 31                 |
| Sexual Exploitation                 | 4     | 2    | 1      | 5                  |
| Negative Comment Appearance         | 71    | 152  | 39     | 184                |
| Negative Comment Race               | 40    | 90   | 26     | 104                |
| Negative Comment Religion           | 7     | 14   | 5      | 16                 |
| Negative Comment Sexual Orientation | 11    | 4    | 12     | 3                  |
| Negative Comment Gender Identity    | 2     | 4    | 4      | 2                  |
| Fears about being here              | 21    | 41   | 10     | 52                 |

Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

Table 11: MAYSI "Caution/Warning" Responses by Gender and LGBTQ+ Status

|              | Girls | Boys | LGBTQ+ | Straight/Cisgender |
|--------------|-------|------|--------|--------------------|
| Alcohol/Drug | 59    | 180  | 28     | 211                |



**Table 11: MAYSI “Caution/Warning” Responses by Gender and LGBTQ+ Status**

|                   |    |     |    |     |
|-------------------|----|-----|----|-----|
| Angry-Irritable   | 89 | 263 | 42 | 310 |
| Depressed-Anxious | 69 | 166 | 31 | 204 |
| Somatic Concerns  | 89 | 235 | 40 | 284 |
| Suicidal Ideation | 34 | 48  | 20 | 62  |

Note: The MAYSI behavioral health screener also includes “Thought Disturbance” as one of the six domains. “Thought Disturbance” is a boys only scale. In FY25, 84% of LGBTQ+ youth identified as girls. Therefore “Thought Disturbance” has been omitted from this analysis. Source: Data provided to the OCA by the Department of Youth Services.

**Table 12: Arrests by Race/Ethnicity and Gender (FY25)**

| Race/Ethnicity         | Girls            |                   |                   | Boys             |                   |                   |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                        | Population Count | Number of Arrests | Number of Summons | Population Count | Number of Arrests | Number of Summons |
| White                  | 146,318          | 348               | 557               | 154,489          | 1,384             | 1,151             |
| Black/African American | 23,823           | 307               | 253               | 25,325           | 871               | 531               |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 44,955           | 268               | 316               | 47,604           | 1,188             | 675               |
| <b>Girls Total</b>     | <b>234,764</b>   | <b>1,089</b>      | <b>1,377</b>      | <b>248,068</b>   | <b>3,906</b>      | <b>2,816</b>      |

Source: Massachusetts population data retrieved from EZAPOP here: <https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>. Summons and arrest data retrieved between 10/2025 and 1/2026 from the Massachusetts Trial Court's Tableau Public page here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/vizzes>.

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