

Massachusetts Juvenile Justice System: FY24 Key Data Takeaways & Opportunities for Improvement

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Presentation Outline

1. About the OCA & JJPAD
2. FY24 Key Data Trends
3. Opportunities for State Improvement
4. JJPAD & OCA Projects in 2025
5. Q & A



MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is an independent executive branch agency with oversight and ombudsperson responsibilities. 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.

Contact the OCA's Complaint Line

Any individual can contact the OCA to express concerns, ask questions, or receive resources and information about a service a child or young adult is receiving, or eligible to receive.

OCA Complaint Line staff are experienced clinicians with extensive and diverse expertise in human services, particularly child welfare. Translation services are available in multiple languages.

This is not an emergency/crisis line.

We will get back to you Monday through Friday from
9am to 5pm

Call:

[617-979-8360](tel:617-979-8360)



Online:



<https://oca.my.site.com/s/oca-casewebform>

E-mail:

Childadvocate@mass.gov



The Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board (JJPAD)



Permanent commission created by the Legislature (2018).



Membership consists of representatives of child-serving agencies from the Executive and Judicial Branches, members of the state House and Senate, advocacy organizations and parent representatives



Charged with evaluating juvenile justice system policies and procedures and making recommendations to improve outcomes



Collecting and reporting available aggregate juvenile justice system data



Studying the implementation of any statutory changes to the juvenile justice system



Making recommendations for any statutory changes to improve juvenile justice system

Recent Key Juvenile Justice Legislation

The Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA) - 2018

Raised the age from 7 to 12

Removed Juvenile Court jurisdiction for first-time, lower-level offenses

Allowed judicial diversion pre-arraignment

Introduced new requirements for SRO's, police, and school districts

Revisited juvenile overnight arrest lock-up procedures

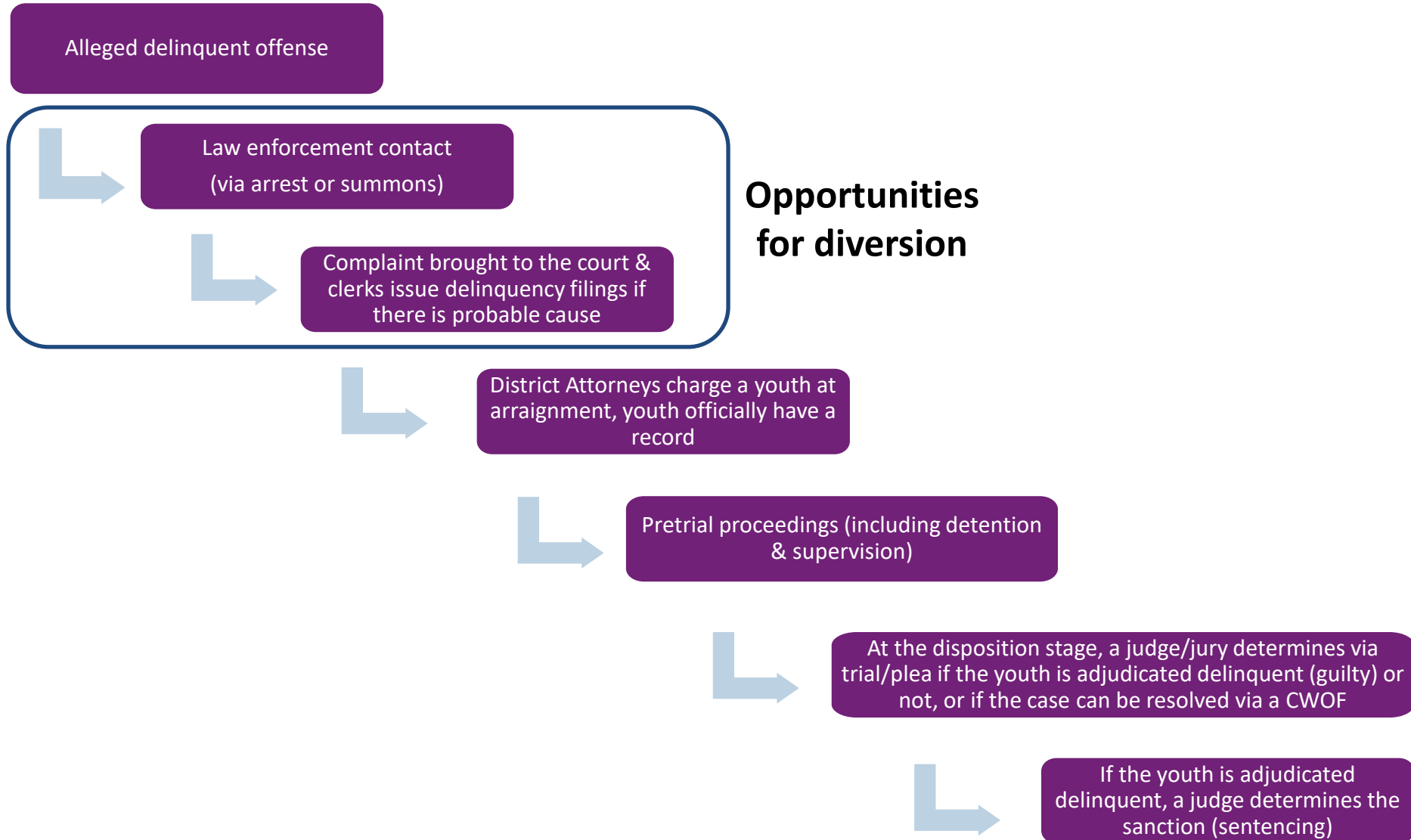
The Policing Bill - 2020

Required POST Commission to set minimum certification standards in a variety of areas, including juvenile operations

Directed DESE to report school-based arrests, citations, and court referrals made each school year

Introduced new requirements for school districts to annually submit MOUs between a district with an SRO and the local police department

The “Typical” Process



Data Notes

- The JJPAD Annual Report looks at FY24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) data
- To the extent available, the data is broken down by
 - Offense severity & type*
 - Race/ethnicity, age, & sexual orientation and gender identity
- The report compares FY24 admissions to changes in admissions since:
 - FY23: the prior fiscal year
 - FY18: pre-Criminal Justice Reform Act



*Offense *types* tell us what kind of offenses youth involved with the justice system are alleged of committing; offense *severity* measures the seriousness of offenses.

JJPAD Board 2024 Annual Report: Key Data Takeaways

MA Juvenile Justice System: FY24 Data Takeaways

1

The increase in entries to the juvenile justice system has slowed significantly in the last year after two years of large increases following the pandemic.

2

Despite the plateau in overall system use, the use of physical custody is increasing.

3

This increase in the use of physical custody is primarily driven by an increase in arrests and detention/commitment admissions for lower-level offenses.

4

The vast majority of youth held in a locked detention facility are not found to be dangerous and not ultimately committed to DYS.

5

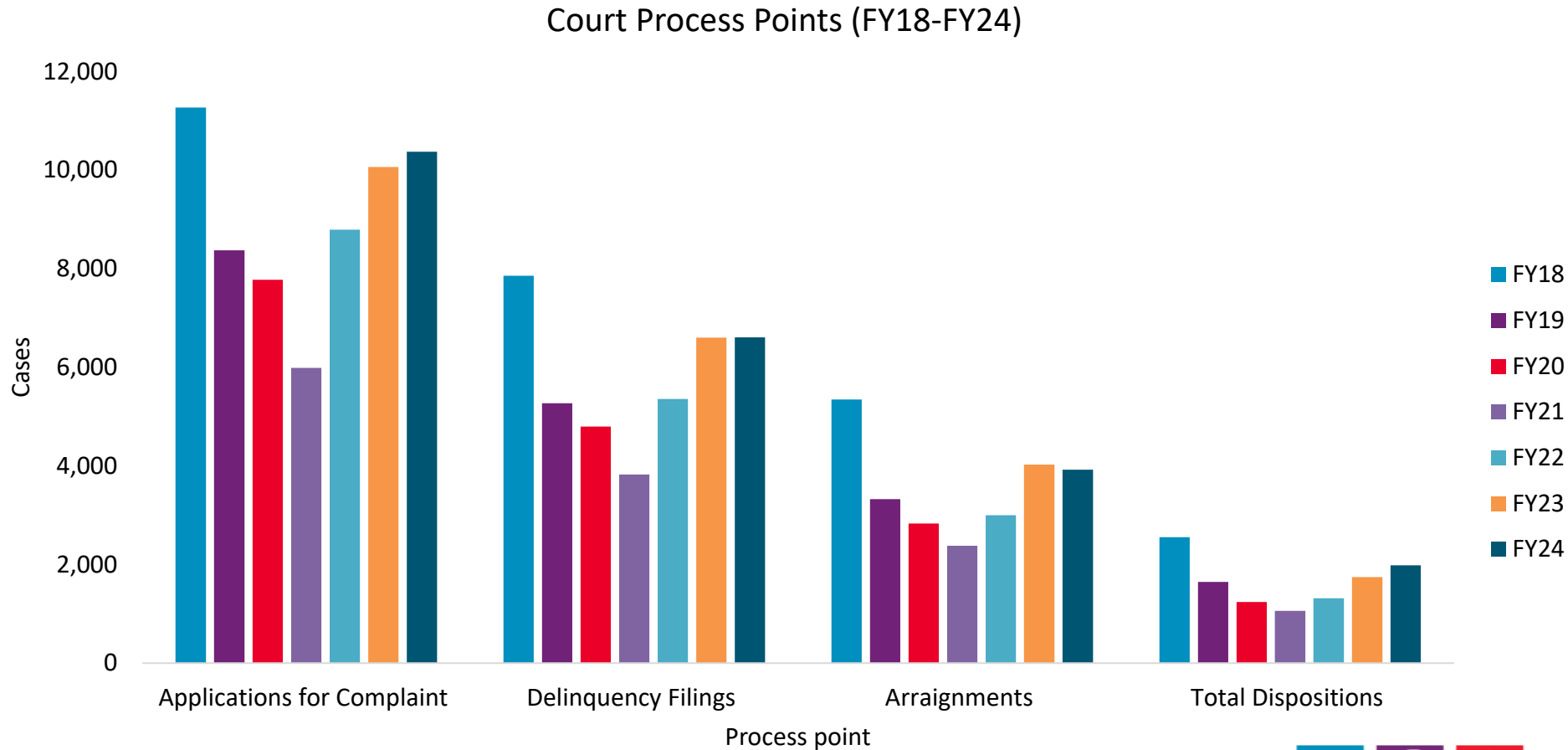
Racial disparities are worsening across many process points.

6

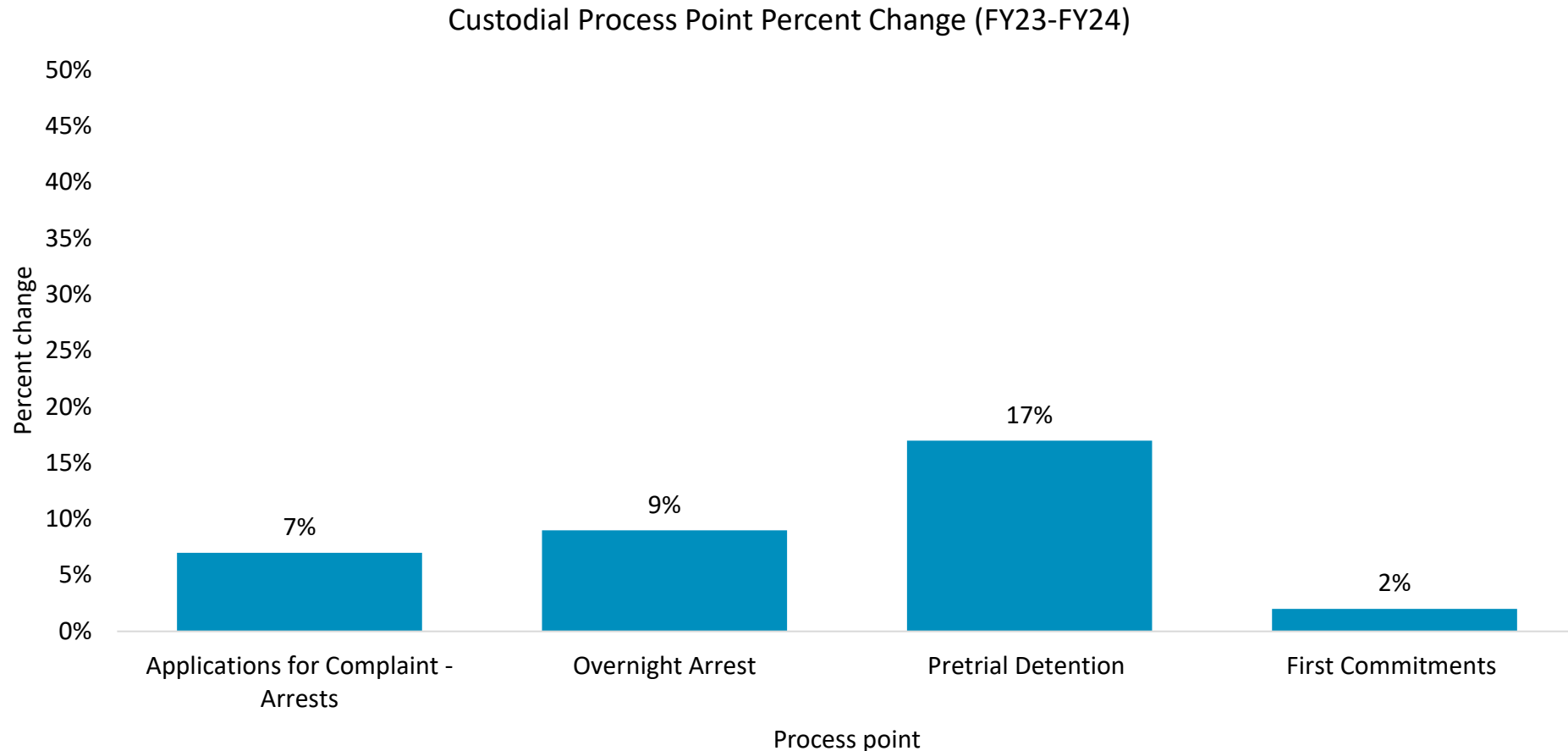
There are significant increases in the use of physical custody for girls.

1. The increase in entries to the juvenile justice system has slowed significantly in the last year after two years of large increases

The use of Massachusetts' juvenile justice system in FY24 was largely consistent with FY23 across most court process points, suggesting that the system has stabilized after the increases in the immediate years after the height of the pandemic.

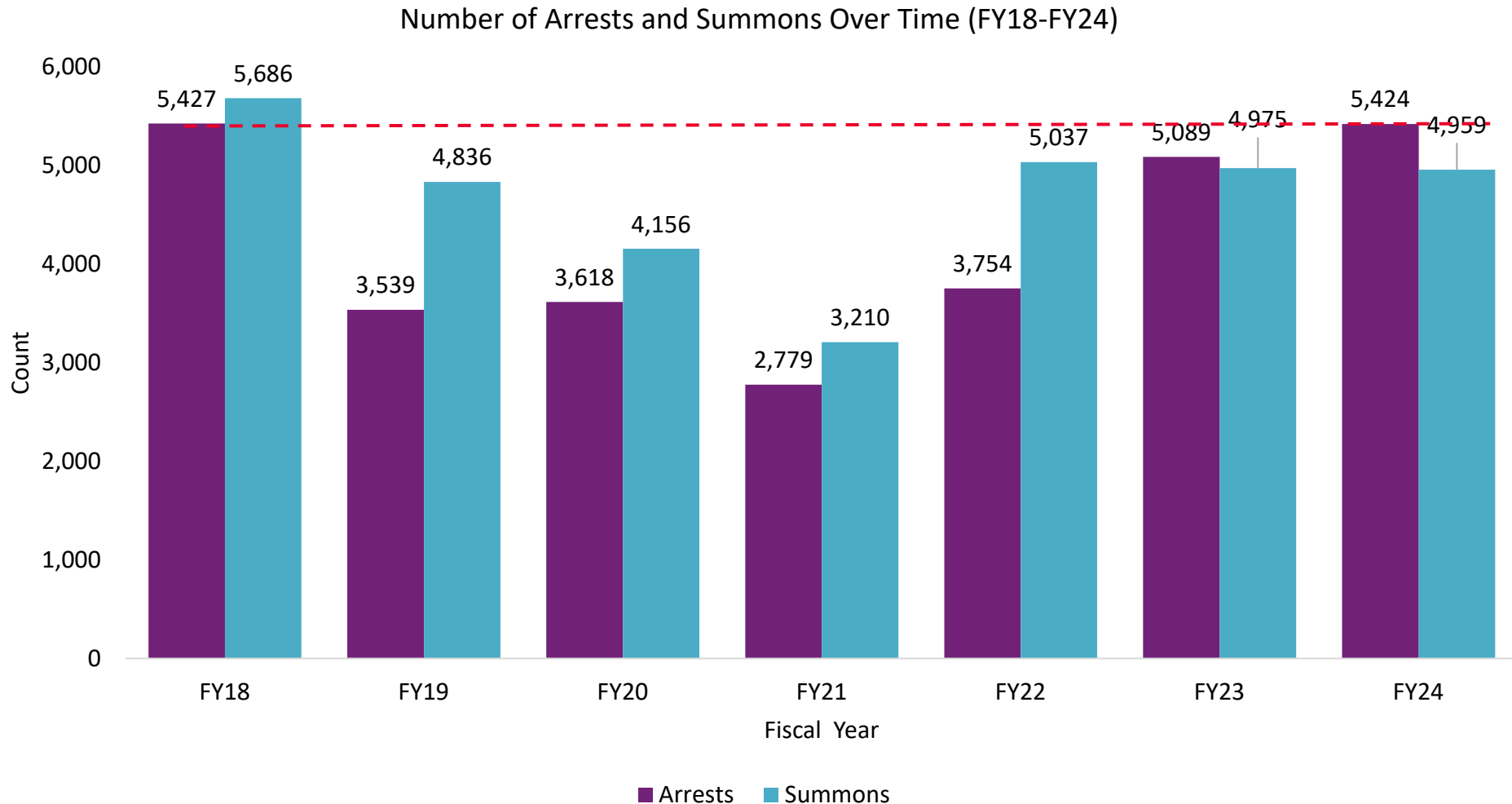


2. Despite the plateau in overall system use, the use of physical custody is increasing

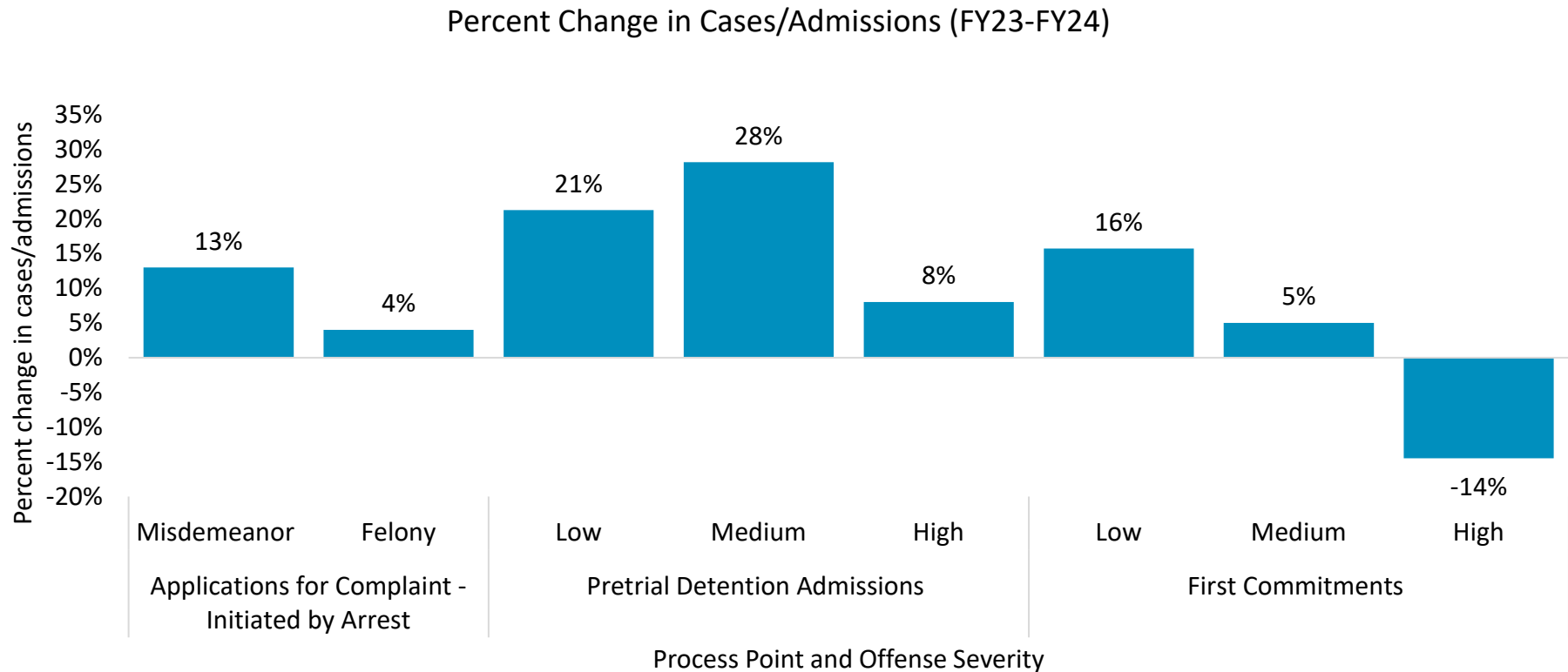


The use of arrest has been steadily increasing over the past few fiscal years, reaching pre-CJRA numbers

Between FY23 & FY24, arrests increased by 7% while summons stayed virtually the same.

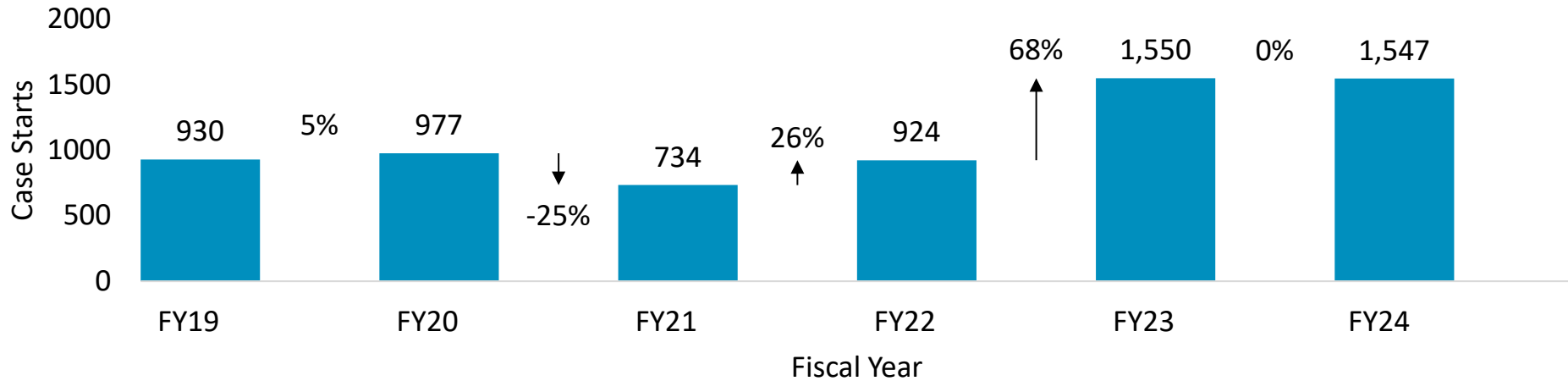


3. Low level offenses are driving up physical custody rates

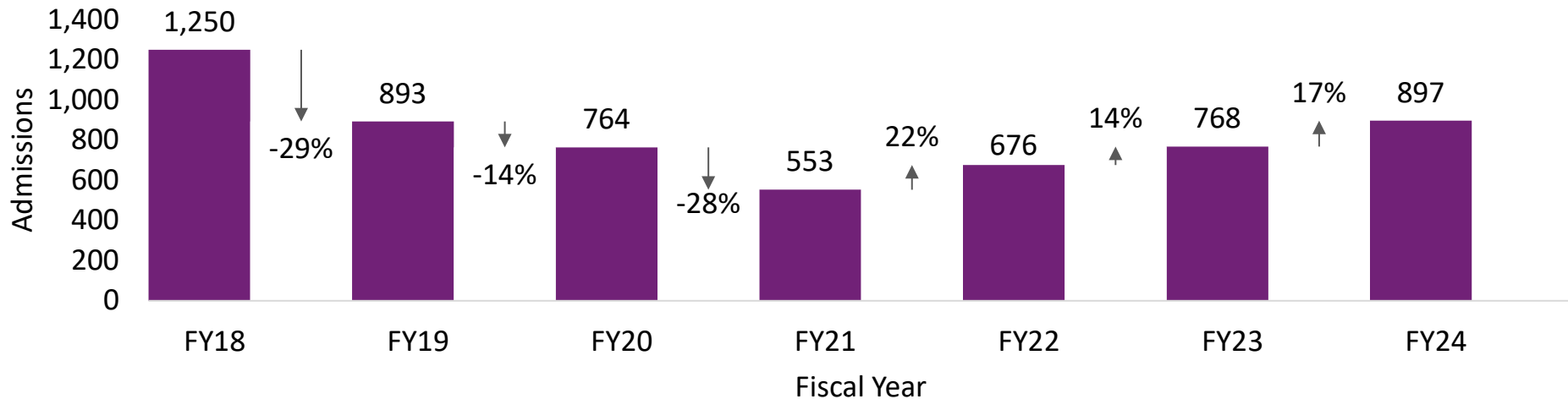


Use of pretrial supervision and detention admissions are also up

Pretrial Monitoring/Supervision Case Starts (FY17-FY24)

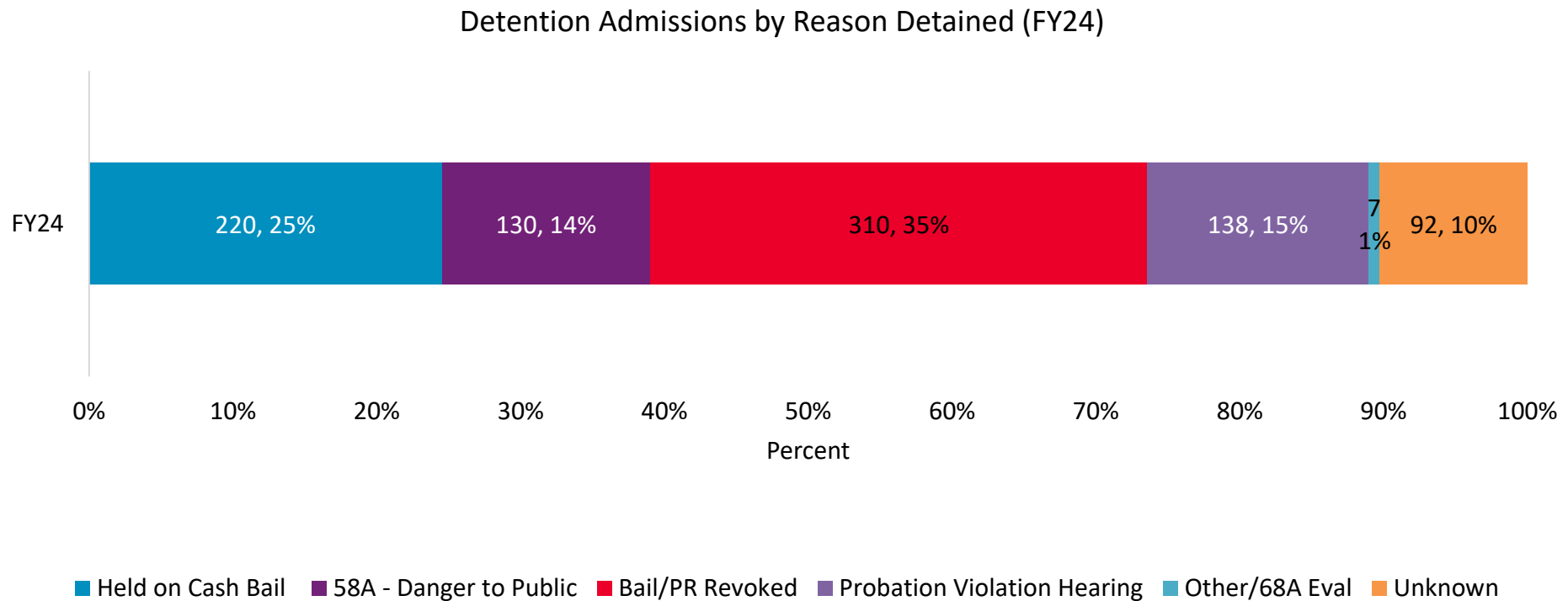


Pretrial Detention Admissions (FY18-FY24)



4. The vast majority of youth held in a locked detention facility are not found to be dangerous and not ultimately committed to DYS

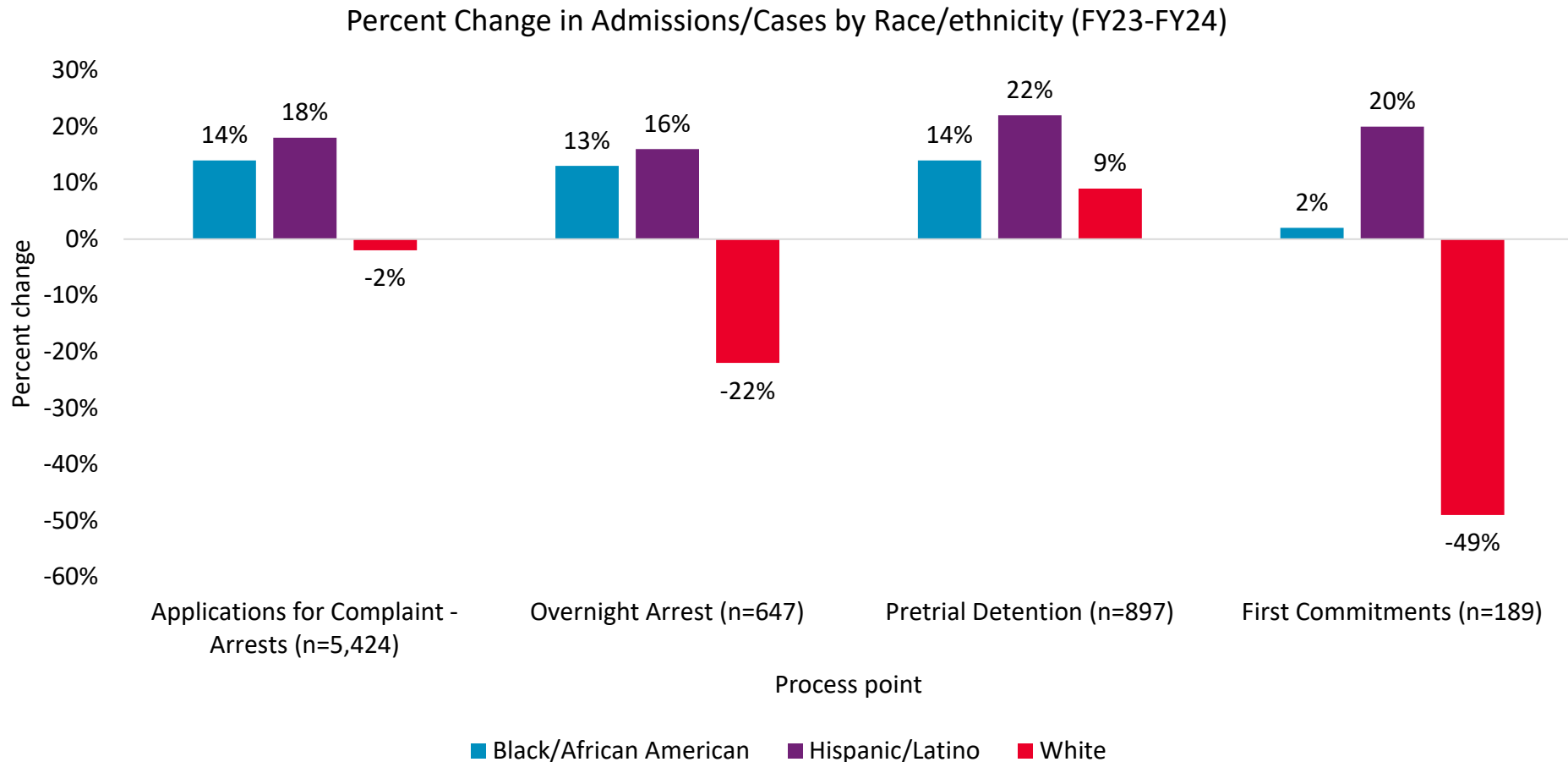
In FY24, 86% of detention admissions were a result of something *other* than a determination that the alleged youth was “dangerous” as a result of a 58A hearing.



In FY24, 87% of pretrial detention admissions did not result in commitment.

5. Racial disparities are worsening across many process points

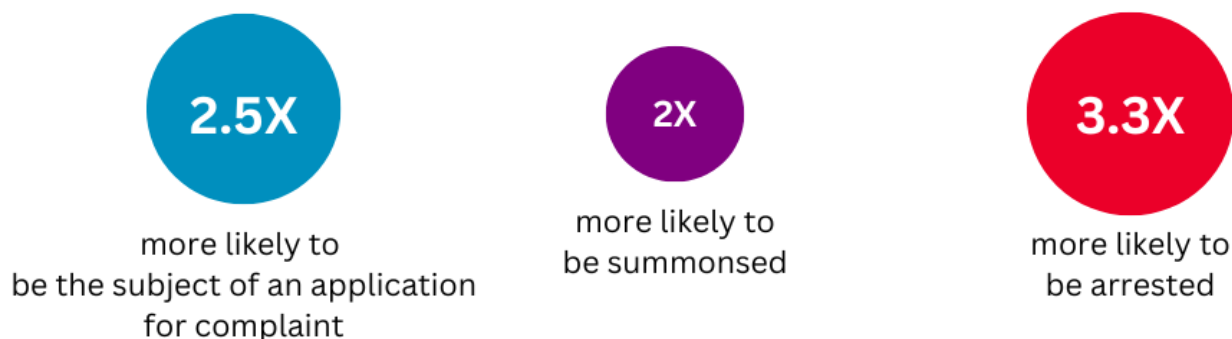
Disparities are worsening as a result of a *decrease* in system use for white youth, and an *increase* in system use for Black and Latino youth between FY23 and FY24.



Disparities are starkest at the “front door” of the juvenile justice system

In FY24, compared to their white peers in Massachusetts...

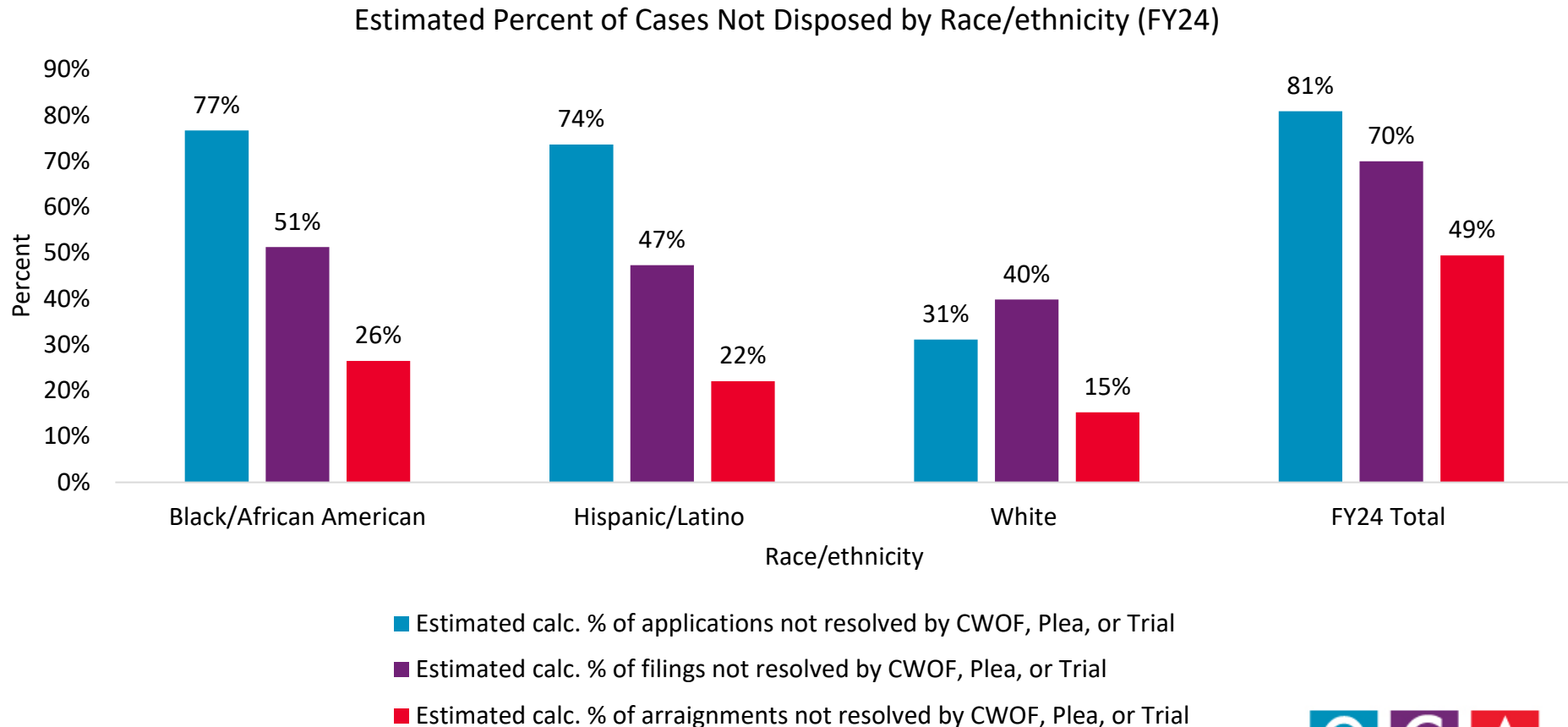
Latino/Hispanic Youth



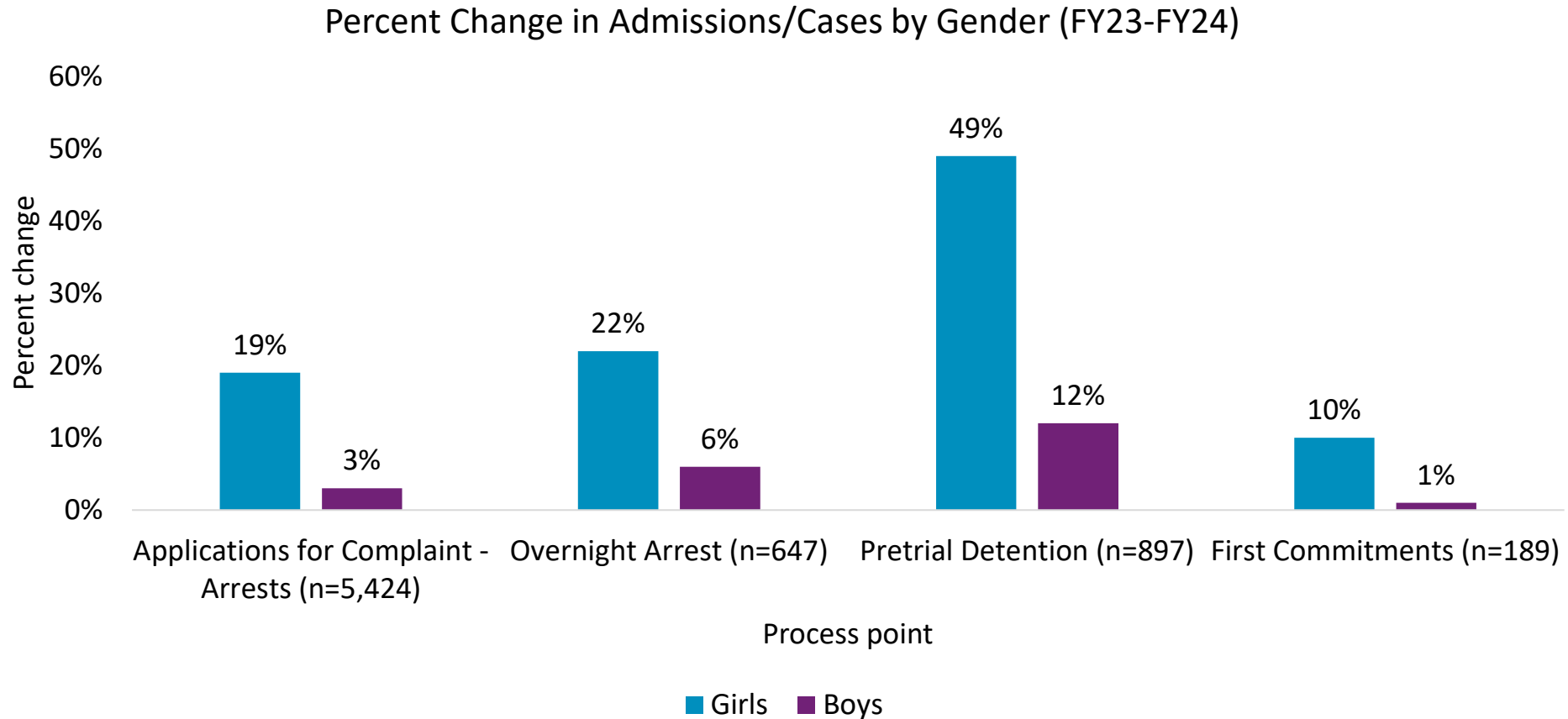
Black/African American Youth



Data show that a greater percent of applications for complaint for Black and Latino youth are dismissed or diverted, compared to white youth



6. There are substantial increases in the use of physical custody for girls



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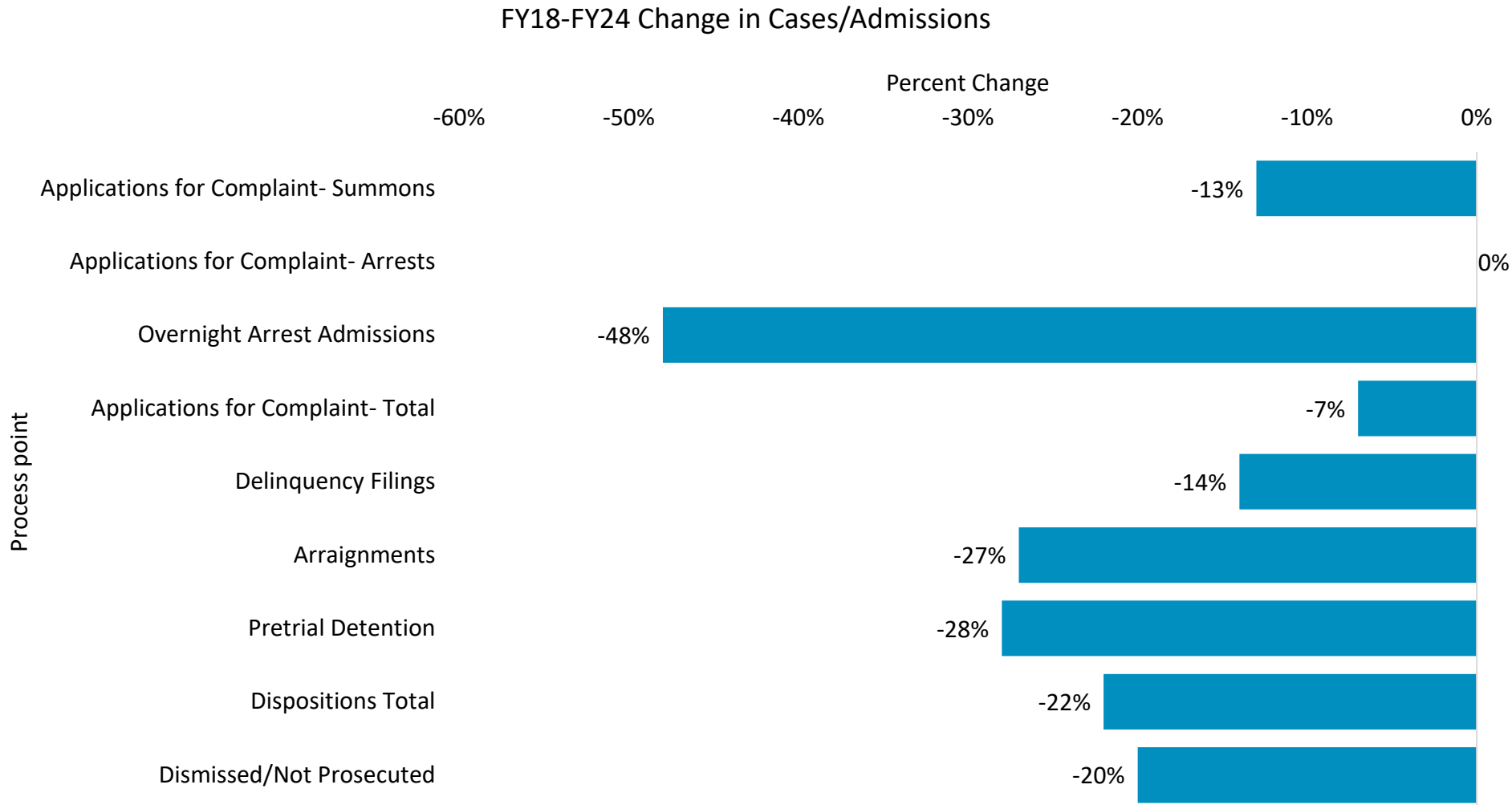
6

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Opportunities for State Improvement

Key state-level reforms have made an impact on the number of young people coming into the system.

The number of youth coming into contact with the juvenile justice system has declined across almost every process point for which the Board has data since the passing of the CJRA



So What Can We Do?

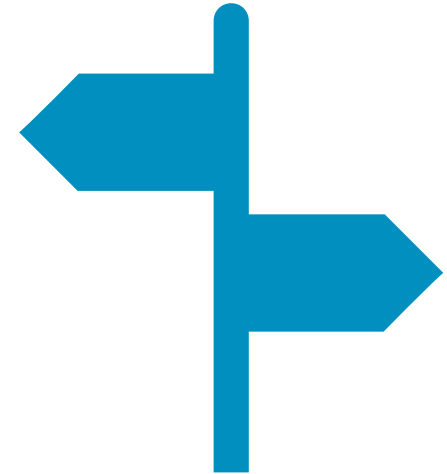
Divert more youth pre-arraignment

Implement pretrial reforms

Review data, policies and decision making on the use of an arrest

Divert more youth pre-arraignment

1. Support funding to expand the [Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program](#) (MYDP)
2. Expand the list of offenses eligible for judicial diversion



Implement pretrial reforms

1. Provide more guidance on setting conditions for youth
2. Redevelop the form used by the juvenile court when conditions are set for release
3. Provide more guidance on the process for revisiting pretrial conditions of release for youth and addressing violations
4. Create a well-resourced continuum of interventions for supervision in the community vs. detention



Review data, policies, and decision making on the use of an arrest

1. Fully implement the 2020 Policing Bill
2. POST Commission should establish minimum certification standards re: juvenile operations
3. Police departments should:
 - ✓ Review internal data to see if there are disparities in arrests at local level
 - ✓ Require officers to document why they decide to arrest youth vs. seeking a summons
 - ✓ Review policies and practices to see if any are contributing to racial and ethnic disparities in arrests

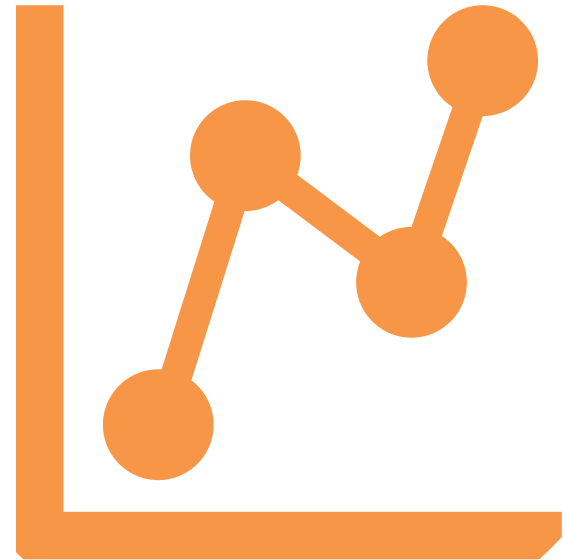


2025 Projects

2025 Projects: OCA Data Briefs

OCA will publish focused data briefs expanding on some of the key themes identified in the JJPAD's 2024 Annual Report:

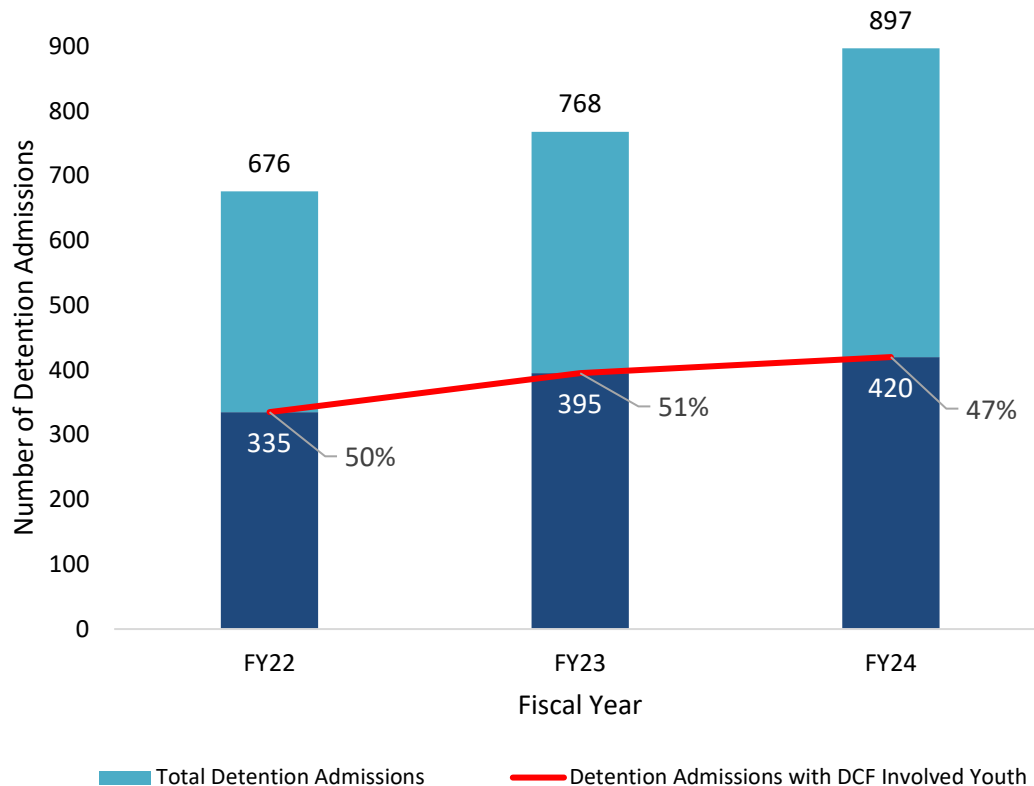
- What is contributing to the racial and ethnic disparities we see at the arrest level?
- Why was there such an increase in system use for girls?
- What county-level differences exist?



2025 Projects:

JJPAD Dually Involved Youth Project

Detention Admissions for Youth with DCF Involvement at Time of Admission as a Percent of Total Detention Admissions (FY22-FY24)



- Almost half of all detention admissions continue to be for youth with DCF involvement, which spurred the JJPAD Board's "Dually Involved Youth" project
- This project aims to understand why youth with DCF involvement become involved with the MA juvenile justice system and make recommendations to the state to better support these youth.

Discussion & Questions

The JJPAD Board wants to hear from you!
Contact us with any questions, ideas, or to share your experiences
with the MA juvenile justice system with us!



E-mail:

Kristine.polizzano@mass.gov

Learn More about the JJPAD

JJPAD Reports:

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/jjpaddctf-legislative-reports-and-key-documents>

Juvenile Justice Data Website:

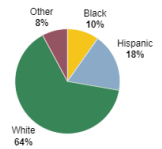
<https://www.mass.gov/resource/massachusetts-juvenile-justice-system-data-and-outcomes-for-youth>

Youth Arrest Data: Demographic and Geographic Breakdowns

"Demographics of youth arrests", below, shows **total arrests and the demographics** of the youth who were arrested over time. From the drop down menu, you can select a demographic variable (race/ethnicity, gender, or age) of interest and see the breakdown of that variable in youth arrests over time. You can also look at data by calendar year or fiscal year, and look at either the total number of arrests in a given category, or the percent change in arrests in that category year over year.

You can also look at the demographic data over time of youth arrested in cities with a population over 50,000 by selecting a city from the drop down menu.

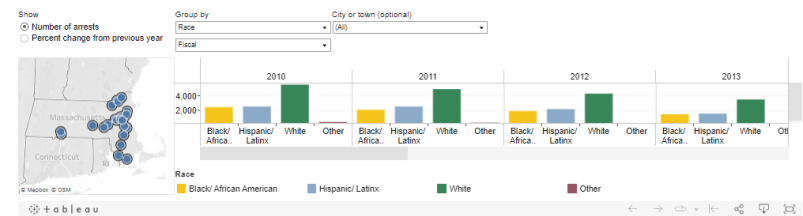
As a point of comparison, this page also includes a visualization showing the racial distribution for **all Massachusetts youth** (not just those in the juvenile justice system) based on U.S. Census data.



Estimated percentages for the race of all Massachusetts youth, ages 12 to 17, in 2020 (Source: [EZAPOP](#)).

[Download this data.](#)

Demographics of youth arrests, statewide and by selected cities



Statewide youth arrests are shown by race, gender, and age group for each fiscal year since 2010. Arrests by demographics can be viewed for selected cities with a population above 50,000. Beginning in FY19, youth under 12 can no longer be arrested or prosecuted in the juvenile justice system as a result of "An Act Relative to Criminal Justice Reform." [\(Download this data\)](#)



Questions? Ideas?

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Website

[https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-
child-advocate](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-child-advocate)