

THE SEXUAL ABUSE TO PRISON PIPELINE

WHAT IS THE SEXUAL ABUSE TO PRISON PIPELINE?

For girls, one of the main predictors of entry into the juvenile justice system is sexual abuse.ⁱ The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline is a term used to describe the pathways of gendered violence that lead girls into the juvenile justice system.

GIRLS IN THE SYSTEM ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Rates of sexual abuse are more than 4 times higher for girls in the system than for boys.ⁱⁱ
- Girls in the juvenile justice system are nearly 2 times as likely as boys to report having experienced 5 or more forms of abuse and trauma.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In South Carolina, 81% of girls in the juvenile justice system reported past histories of sexual abuse.^{iv}
- In Oregon, 76% of girls in the juvenile justice system reported past sexual abuse.^v

HOW DOES SEXUAL ABUSE PUSH GIRLS INTO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

Arrest for Status Offenses

- Status offenses are acts which are only unlawful when committed by youth, such as running away and truancy.
- Girls often engage in these behaviors in response to abuse or trauma; for example, running away to escape an abusive situation at home or in foster care.^{vi}
- Girls are overrepresented among status offenders. Whereas girls only account for 15% of the juvenile detention population, they are 38% of youth detained for status offenses.^{vii}

Dual-System/Crossover Youth

- “Dual-system” or “crossover youth” refer to youth who have had involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Girls frequently cross over from the child welfare to the delinquency system because of their responses to child abuse and trauma that has often gone untreated.^{viii}
- Girls are overrepresented among crossover youth. Girls are between 20% to 25% of the juvenile justice population, but are 33% to 50% of all crossover youth.^{ix}

Arrest of Child Sex Trafficking Victims

- Girls are routinely arrested for prostitution, even though they are legally incapable of consenting to sex and even though federal law defines them as victims of human trafficking.^x
- Trafficked girls also become involved in the juvenile justice system for offenses other than prostitution that are committed as a direct result of their exploitation.^{xi}

GIRLS OF COLOR ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY THE SEXUAL ABUSE TO PRISON PIPELINE

- Black girls are 14% of the youth population, but are 33% of girls who are arrested.^{xii}
- Native American girls are five times more likely than white girls to be incarcerated in juvenile facilities.^{xiii}
- The share of Latina girls in residential placement has almost doubled in the last twenty years.^{xiv}
- Girls of color comprise approximately 62% of girls who are in residential placement.^{xv}

ⁱ Rebecca Epstein, Lindsay Rosenthal, Malika Saada Saar, & Yasmin Vafa, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, Ms. Foundation for Women & Rights4Girls, [The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story](#) (2015).

ⁱⁱ *Id.* at 8.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Id.* at 8-9.

^{iv} *Id.* at 7.

^v *Id.*

^{vi} *Id.*

^{vii} Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., and Puzzanchera, C., US Dep't of Justice, Nat'l Ctr. for Juvenile Justice, [Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement](#) (2017).

^{viii} Epstein et al. *supra* n. i, pp.26.

^{ix} *Id.*

^x *Id.* at 19.

^{xi} Rights4Girls, [The Juvenile Justice System and Domestic Child Sex Trafficking](#) (2017); Shared Hope Intl., [Justice for Juveniles: Exploring Non-Criminal Response Mechanisms for Child Sex Trafficking](#), pp. 5 (2015).

^{xii} *Id.* at 7.

^{xiii} Teresa Wiltz, [American Indian Girls Often Fall Through the Cracks](#), THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS (Mar. 4, 2016).

^{xiii} Sickmund et al., [Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement](#); Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, [Child Population by Race](#) (2016).