

Federal Report Slams Record of Putting Youth in Adult Prison

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Youths who do adult time re-arrested more; minorities do more adult time

A new report released by the [National Institute of Corrections](#) slams the U.S. record of sending juveniles to adult prison, and lists multiple reform ideas for federal, state and local leaders to consider.

In the 1990s, nearly every state in the country took steps to make it easier to try minors as adults and send them to prison, according to the report, “You’re An Adult Now,” which was released in December. The institute is part of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The report comes out as prosecutors in California warn that they may put even more minors in adult prison if state lawmakers proceed with a budget proposal to close the last three [youth prisons](#) operated by the state.

Critics say those California youth prisons, down from a total of 11 and today holding only 1,100 wards, are expensive failures which, historically, had up to 80 percent recidivism rates. Prosecutors argue they’re needed because some counties don’t have the capability of handling high-level young offenders now in state custody.

In assessing the U.S. record of incarcerating minors as adults, the National Institute of Corrections report notes research finding that youth put into the adult criminal justice system are 34 percent more likely to be subsequently re-arrested for crimes than youths that are kept in the juvenile system.

The report also criticizes “significant gaps” in information about the management of an estimated 250,000 minors that are put into adult criminal justice systems every year in the United States.

Research, the report says, has found that African American youths are nine times more likely than whites to get an adult prison sentence. Data for Hispanic youth is less complete, according to the report, but research indicates that Hispanics are 43 percent more likely than white youth to be put into adult prison.

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