Every year, thousands of youth are arrested in Illinois, yet the majority of them do not ever go to court. While about 75 percent of juvenile arrests do not result in formal charges in Cook County, \(^1\) mere arrest records have lasting consequences for youth. Thus, it is critical to examine the trends in juvenile arrests. The Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI) examined the CY2013 arrest records of children age 10 - 17 and found:

- Cook County accounted for a disproportionately large number of juvenile arrests as opposed to the population;
- About 60 percent of juvenile arrestees in Illinois were arrested for misdemeanor offenses. Same percentage for Cook County alone;
- Felony arrests accounted for less than 25 percent of juvenile arrests statewide and in Cook County;
- Class X and murder arrests accounted for less than three percent of all the juvenile arrests statewide and in Cook County;
- Black youth are arrested at a level three times their representation in the Illinois youth population and seven times more than white youth;

and

- Drug arrests accounted for 15 percent of Illinois juvenile arrests and 85 percent were for possessions. In Cook County, 37.4 percent of drug arrests occurred in selective four zip codes: 60644, 60624, 60623 and 60651.

**Illinois Population**

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), there were 1,381,863 youth ages 10-17 in Illinois in CY2013, and 38.2 percent of them resided in Cook County. In addition, 75.9 percent of the state youth population was white, 18.2 percent was black, and 5 percent was categorized as “other.” \(^2\) Of the youth who resided in Cook County (68.5%), 62.6 percent were white and 30.1 percent were black.

**Illinois Arrests**

In CY2013, there were 42,044 arrests made statewide Illinois - a decrease of 10.7 percent from CY2012 (Graph 1). Almost two thirds of youth arrested were 16 and 17 years old, and 79.4 percent were male. While only 38.2 percent of Illinois’ youth lived in Cook County, 66.6 percent of those arrested were from Cook County.

**Majority of Youth Arrested for Misdemeanors**

An average of 60 percent of juvenile arrests reported were for alleged misdemeanor offenses in CY2013. Arrests for alleged Class 1-4 felony offenses accounted for about 20 percent of juvenile arrests both statewide and in Cook County, and the most serious Class X and murder \(^3\) accounted for less than three percent of juvenile arrests. See Chart 1 & 2.
Local law enforcement is only required to report juvenile felony arrest records to the state police for inclusion in the state criminal database. Juvenile arrests for Class A and B are discretionary for inclusion in criminal databases, and Class C misdemeanors are prohibited from inclusion. This indicates that municipalities chose to report misdemeanor arrests to the State Police for inclusion in the statewide database.

Eight zip code areas in south and west sides of Chicago accounted for 33.5% of entire Cook County arrests, even though the areas account for 12.3% of the Cook County youth population. Even given the high concentration of arrests in these zip codes, the majority of arrests were for misdemeanors (59.7%), 24.8 percent were for felonies excluding murder, and 0.1 percent were for murders. See Map 2 on Page 4.

Arrest Happens in Selective Neighborhoods

Juvenile arrests in Cook County were predominantly made for youth in south and west sides of Chicago. Particularly, eight Chicago zip areas (60644, 60623, 60628, 60620, 60624, 60619, 60637 and 60617) had more than 1,000 youth arrested each, while the median of arrests in all the zip codes was five in Cook County. See Map 1 on Page 3.

This high concentration of arrests is not explained by the youth population size. These eight zip code areas accounted for 12.3 percent of the Cook County youth population, but accounted for 33.5 percent of Cook County arrests. For instance, zip code area 60614 (Lincoln Park) was estimated to have a youth population of 2,941, and had the reported arrests of only 29, which is 0.1 percent of the population. On the other hand, zip code area 60644 (Austin) was estimated to have a youth population of 6,192, and had the reported arrests of 1,399, which equates with 22.6 percent of the population. Some areas in Cook County appear to be targeted by law enforcement.

Property Crime as Most Common Offense, not Homicide

Property crime such as theft and burglary was the most common alleged offense for youth. There were 89 arrests for homicide among children age 10 – 17 statewide, which is a nine percent decline from CY2012, accounting for less than one percent of the juvenile arrests statewide (0.1%). See Graph 2.
Map 1. Heat Map of Juvenile Arrests (Age 10-17) Cook County, CY2013

Juvenile arrests are made predominantly West and South side of Chicago. Eight Chicago zip codes account for 1/3 of Cook County arrests. Over 60% of the Cook County arrests were made for misdemeanors.

Arrest data was retrieved from the Criminal History Record Information on March 18, 2014, and provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Arrest numbers are specific to each zip code, and zip codes where there were more than 1,000 arrestees are identified on this map. Some arrest records did not have zip codes entered. This map was prepared by Kanako Ishida (ki@justice.org), Juvenile Justice Initiative, on January 8, 2015.
Even given the high concentration of arrests in these zip codes, the majority of arrests were for misdemeanors (59.7%), 24.8 percent were for felonies excluding murder, and 0.1 percent were for murders.

Arrest data was retrieved from the Criminal History Record Information on March 18, 2014, and provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Arrest numbers are specific to each zip code, and zip codes where there were more than 900 arrestees are identified on this map. This map was prepared by Kanako Ishida (ki@justice.org), Juvenile Justice Initiative, on January 6, 2015.
Racial disparities exist in juvenile arrests with black youth overrepresented in arrests on both a statewide and Cook County level. Although less than 20 percent of the Illinois youth population was black in CY2013, they represented 60.9 percent of the arrests. This means black youth were overrepresented at a level triple their representation in the general youth population (RI=3.3). White youth represented 75.9 percent of the youth population, but only 37.9 percent of the arrests, nearly 50 percent less than their representation in the general population (RI=0.5). See Graph 3. In Cook County, black youth were arrested 2.4 times more than their representation in the general population (RI=2.4).

Black youth were almost seven times more than white youth (RRI=6.70) in Illinois, and 5.66 times more than white youth in Cook County (RRI=5.66).

Furthermore, black youth in Cook County represented almost half of all Illinois juvenile arrests. Almost half (48.5%) of statewide juvenile arrests involved Black in Cook County, although they represent only 11.5 percent of the Illinois youth population. White youth living out of County accounted for 20.1 percent of all Illinois arrests even though they represent 52.0 percent of the Illinois youth population. See Chart 3 and 4.

Thousands of Youth are Arrested for Drug Offenses - Over 85% of Them were for Possession

In CY2013, drug arrests accounted for 15.1 percent of statewide juvenile arrests and 16.2 percent of Cook County juvenile arrests. In Cook County, 85.0 percent of the drug arrests were for mere possession. Of statewide and Cook County drug arrests, 70.0 percent and 68.8 percent were misdemeanors respectively.

Drug arrests disproportionately target black youth despite that white youth are reported to abuse more and harder drugs than black youth. Black youth accounted for 53.9 percent of the statewide drug arrests, a level triple their representation in the general population (RI=3.0). Drug arrests were made predominantly in Cook County (71.3%) and 69.0 percent of Cook County arrests were black, a level 2.3 times higher than their representation in Cook County’s youth population (RI=2.3).

Almost half of the reported juvenile arrests involved black youth in Cook County in CY2013.
Map 3. Zip Code Map of Juvenile Drug Arrests (Age 10-17) in Cook County, CY2013

Arrest data was retrieved from the Criminal History Record Information on March 18, 2014, and provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Arrest numbers are specific to each zip code, and zip codes where there were more than 100 arrestees are identified on this map. Some arrest records did not have zip codes entered. This map was prepared by Kanako Ishida (ki@justice.org), Juvenile Justice Initiative, on January 8, 2015.
Black youth were almost five times more likely to be arrested for drug offenses than White youth statewide (RRI = 5.0) and 4.7 times more often in Cook County (RRI = 4.7). Further, the portion of felony drug arrests was higher among black youth than white youth (37.0% and 15.6% respectively).

**Most of Drug Arrests Happen in West Side of Chicago**

Map 3 on the page 6 shows arrest distribution in Cook County. Over 300 arrests were made for drug offenses in four zip code areas located on the west side of Chicago. While the south side of Chicago had over 1,000 arrests (See Map 1 & 2), the drug arrests were less common.

**Summary**

Across the state, law enforcement made 10.7 percent fewer juvenile arrests in CY2013 compared to CY2012. Most youth are arrested for misdemeanors related to property damage, with a smaller percentage arrested for felonies and very few (less than 2%) for Class X felonies and murder. Cook County accounted for 66.6 percent of the statewide juvenile arrests, which far exceeds their proportionate representation in the state. Data also shows that youth arrested in Cook County were predominantly from the west and south sides of Chicago, but, similar to statewide youth arrestees, they were primarily arrested for misdemeanor offenses.

Black youth were over-represented at the point of arrest across all categories and accounted for almost half of Illinois drug arrests, a level almost triple their representation in the general youth population despite a study’s finding that white youth abuse more and harder drugs. Consequently, the negative consequences of an arrest, such as difficulty obtaining a housing and a job, and getting in an educational program, are disproportionately affecting black youth in Cook County.

Arresting youth for low-level offenses, especially drug offenses, and submitting the records to the State’s database only ensures that once the youth is released he or she is saddled with a criminal record. Essentially, they are stripped of the building blocks for leading a self-sufficient life.

**Data**

Juvenile arrest records are submitted by the state police, and collected in the Criminal History Record Information (CHRI). Data was retrieved from CHRI on March 21, 2014 and provided by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA). If a youth is arrested for multiple offenses, only the most serious offense is used in the analysis. Ethnicity code related to Hispanic are not collected in the CHRI; thus Hispanic youth could be coded in any race (i.e., White, Black or Others). Zip code data are of arrestees, not of the incidents, and the map represents zip codes of residences of youth arrested in Cook County in CY2013.

Youth population data was retrieved from the OJJDP Easy Access to Juvenile Populations. Youth population in specific zip code was calculated using the US Census American Fact Finder “S0101: Sex and Age.” The US Census estimates of the Cook County population was higher than the OJJDP’s estimate.

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**Question?**

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2. Only race codes are used here. White includes White Hispanic and Black includes Black Hispanic. Others include Asian, Indian, and others. Hispanic can be coded any race.
3. Some homicides are categorized either as murder or Class X, and they are mutually exclusive. For instance, if you commit an attempt murder, it is categorized as a homicide in offense type break down and as Class X felony in offense class break down, as opposed to murder.
4. Homicide includes murder.
5. Zip codes are of arrestees and does not necessarily that of arrest locations. If a youth residing in Cook County is arrested out of Cook County, the youth’s Cook County zip code shows up in non Cook arrests. If a youth living out of Cook County is arrested in Cook County, the youth’s non Cook County zip code is included.
6. Youth population in specific zip code areas was calculated based on the population data available in United States Census American Fact Finder “S0101: Sex and Age. 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.” Total youth population in Cook County was retrieved from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Easy Access to Youth Population. US Census estimate of youth population was higher than OJJDP’s estimate.
7. For this breakdown, all the arrests that included drug charges were included.
8. A study by the Department of Psychiatry at Duke University reveals that White youth are much more likely to use substances, especially hard drugs, than black youth. In their study of over 70,000 youth, black youth were, in fact, least likely to develop substance use disorders. Wu, L., Woody, G.E., Yang, C., Pan, J., & Blazer, D. G. (2011). Racial/Ethnic Variations in Substance-Related Disorders among Adolescents in the United States. Archive of General Psychiatry, 68, 1176-1185.