

YOUTH PROSECUTED AS ADULTS IN CALIFORNIA

Addressing Racial, Ethnic, and Geographic Disparities After the Repeal of Direct File

Laura Ridolfi, W. Haywood Burns Institute
Maureen Washburn, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
Frankie Guzman, National Center for Youth Law

November 2017



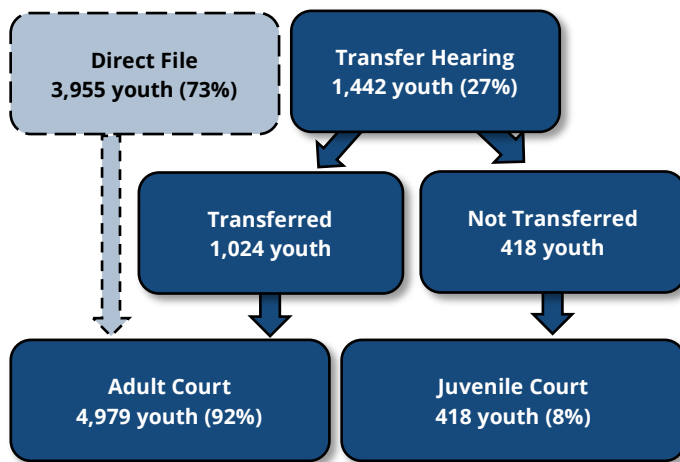
Introduction

On November 8, 2016, California voters enacted Proposition 57, “The Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2016,” which abolished the prosecutor’s power to direct file charges against youth as young as 14 in adult criminal courts, placing the authority to decide whether a youth should remain in juvenile court or be transferred to the adult system in the hands of judges (Prop 57, 2016).

Prop 57 explicitly emphasized rehabilitation for youth, making significant improvements to the process judges use to decide transfer cases. Prior to Prop 57, most youth in a transfer hearing accused of committing a serious felony were presumed to be “unfit” for juvenile court and had the burden of proving their “fitness” for juvenile court treatment. To overcome the presumption of unfitness and remain in juvenile court, these youth had to be found fit

on each of the five statutory criteria, which include the youth’s delinquent history, the circumstances of the alleged offense, and the likelihood of successful rehabilitation in the juvenile justice system.

Figure 1. Pathways into adult criminal court, 2010-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017. Note: The passage of Proposition 57 in November 2016 abolished direct file. Now, many of the youth who would have been direct filed in adult court will receive transfer hearings. 2016 is the last year for which annual reporting will include cases of direct file.

As a result of Prop 57, California has eliminated the presumption that any youth is “unfit” for juvenile court treatment, shifting the burden of proof from the youth to the prosecutor. Prop 57 also eliminated the requirement that the youth prevail on each of the five criteria to remain in juvenile court. Instead, judges must now consider the “totality of the circumstances” in the youth’s case, allowing for a more holistic review of the youth’s life circumstances when deciding whether to transfer the youth to the adult system.

Prop 57 builds upon advances made in 2015 when the California Legislature enacted Senate Bill (SB) 382, which provided extensive guidance to judges on the five criteria for transfer, outlining a number of developmental factors to consider, including a youth’s potential to grow and mature, his or her home environment, prior exposure to childhood trauma, and the adequacy of previous juvenile court services (SB 382, 2015).

SB 382 and Proposition 57 are steps forward for juvenile justice in California, making the developmental milestones of young people and their capacity for change central to any transfer decision. Given the high standard for transfer, few youth should now be transferred to adult court. However, to ensure that SB 382 and Prop 57 are implemented

with fidelity and youth in California have access to the full promise of these reforms, juvenile court judges, defenders, probation officers, and prosecutors must receive comprehensive training not only on the new processes, but also on the principles of adolescent development underlying these reforms. Moreover, it is critical that each county process is closely monitored for adherence to the law.

This report includes data that counties reported to the state, namely the number of youth who received transfer hearings or were direct filed in each county, and whether youth were transferred or remained in the juvenile justice system. However, this report does not include the countless young people adversely impacted by the presence of transfer options. Studying the universe of transfer cases that are ultimately prosecuted in adult court understates the impact of transfer practices. For example, by retaining a pathway into adult criminal court through transfer hearings, California allows prosecutors to continue using the threat of adult court punishment as leverage against youth facing serious charges to obtain a plea agreement favorable to the prosecution.

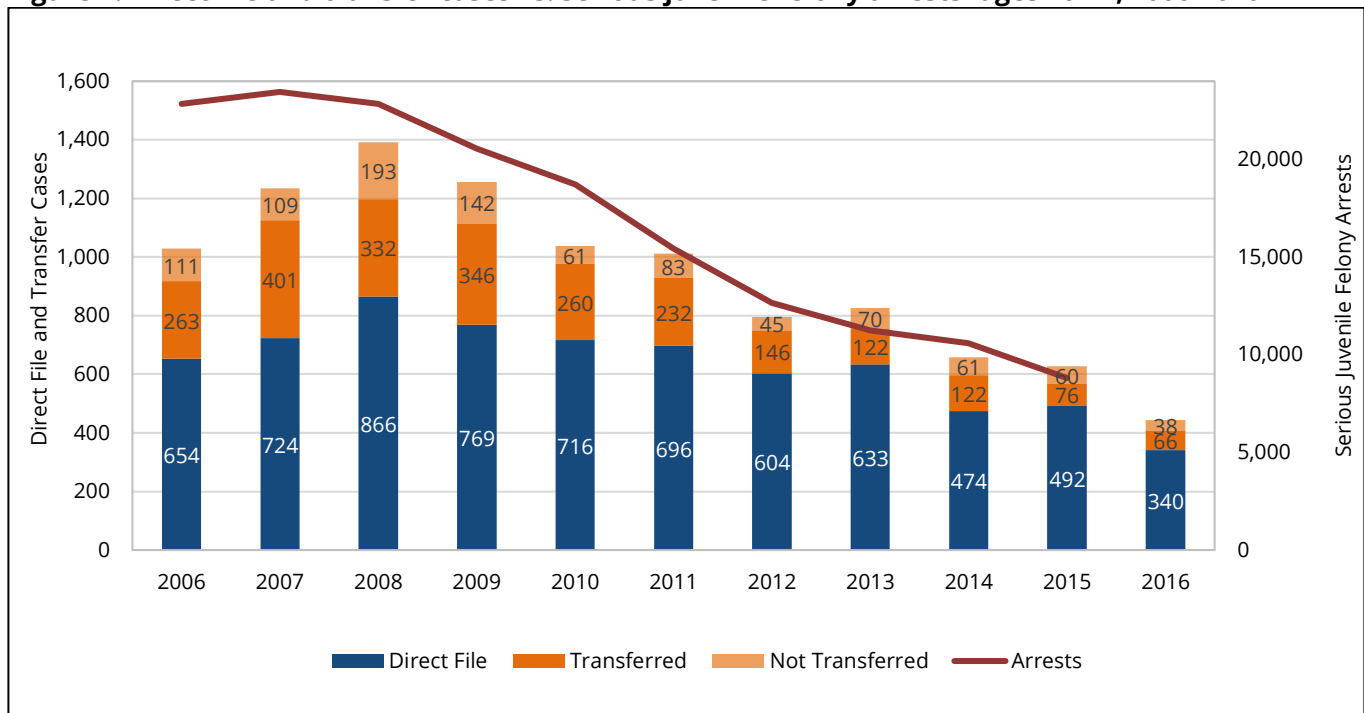
Ultimately, our justice system must honor youthfulness and recognize the value of families and communities in the rehabilitative process. Youth are inherently less culpable than adults and have a unique capacity for change and growth. Unfortunately, all too often, families and community environments are viewed by the justice system as negative factors contributing to a youth's delinquency and warranting removal from the home and community. However, research has consistently shown that incarcerating young people disrupts their social and emotional development and contributes to a host of negative health outcomes later in life (Redding, 2010). Rather than removing youth from their homes and communities, the justice system should make deliberate efforts to rehabilitate youth in their communities and include families in the treatment processes.

Statewide Trends

Over the past decade, serious felony arrests of youth ages 10 to 17 have declined dramatically. These arrests can result in some of the state's most severe penalties for youth, including confinement in the state's youth prison system—The Division of Juvenile Justice—or a life sentence in the adult prison system after prosecution in adult court. Predictably, cases involving youth prosecuted in adult court have also declined over this ten-year period, though less steeply than underlying arrests. From 2006 to 2015, serious felony arrests of youth declined 66 percent, while the number of youth cases prosecuted in adult court fell just 38 percent (Figure 2). Importantly, direct file cases fell just 48 percent over this period, meaning that declines in direct file prosecutions failed to keep pace with reductions in serious felony arrests of youth.

The November 2016 passage of Prop 57 immediately halted the direct filing of new cases against youth in adult criminal court and constrained the number of total filings reported for the year, contributing to a 31 percent decline over 2015 levels. The extent to which counties are now pursuing a transfer hearing in cases that would have been direct filed will not be known until annual data for 2017 are released in mid-2018. However, compared to the near-automatic process of direct file, transfer hearings require prosecutors to invest far more time and resources in bringing a young person's case to adult criminal court. The Prop 57 reforms, therefore, may produce an overall decrease in the number of cases against youth that are petitioned for transfer to criminal courts.

Figure 2. Direct file and transfer cases vs. serious juvenile felony arrests¹ ages 10-17, 2006-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017. Note: 2016 juvenile arrests for youth ages 10-17 by specific offense type were not published by DOJ for 2016. These statistical data were also unavailable via a California Public Records Act request.

Takeaway

From 2006-2015, reductions in transfer and direct file cases did not keep pace with declines in serious juvenile felony arrests. However, from 2015 to 2016, there was a 29 percent decline in attempts to transfer youth to adult criminal court through direct file or a transfer hearing.

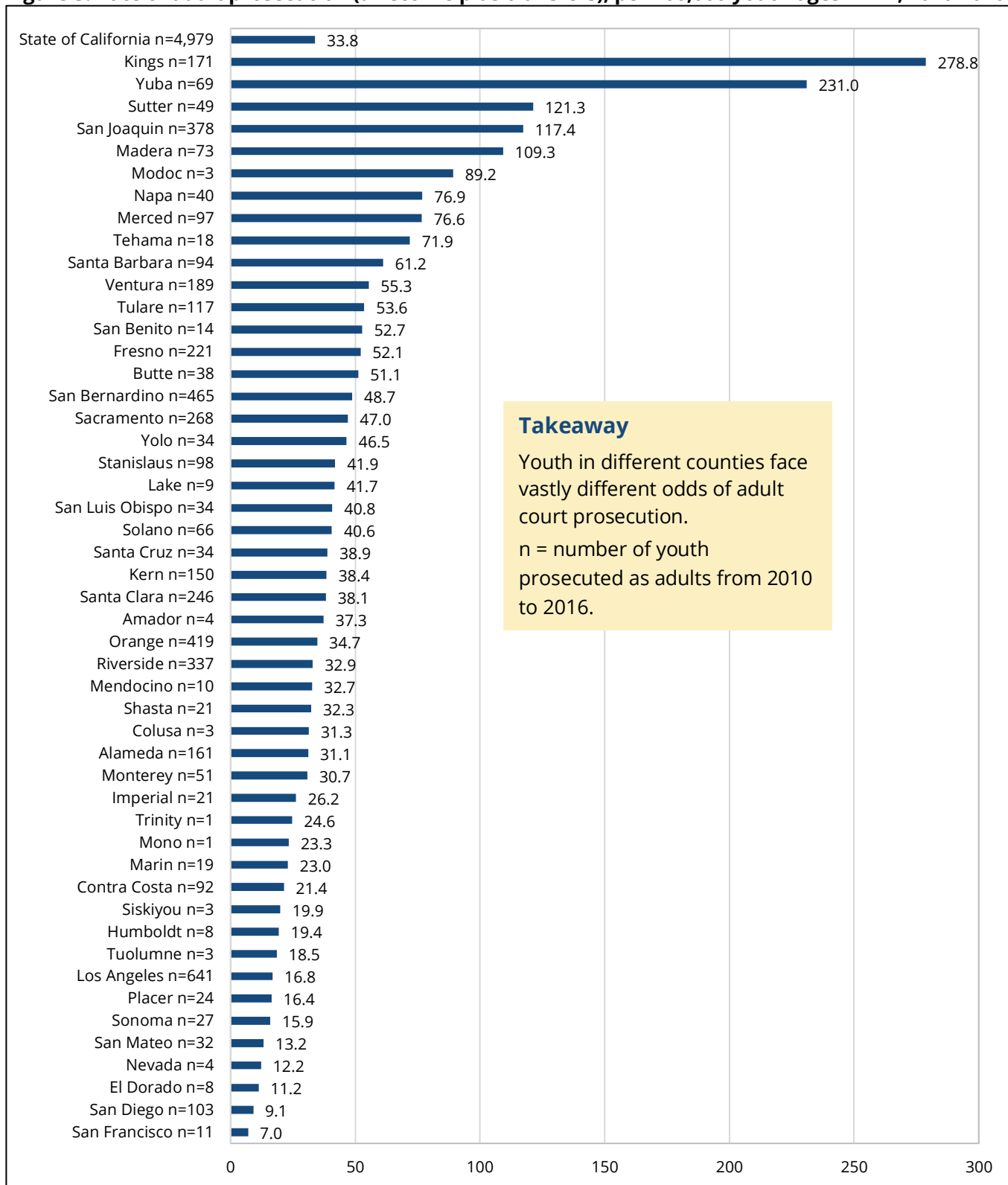
County Variation

Though adult court prosecutions of youth are declining statewide, reliance on judicial transfer and direct file varies substantially across California’s 58 counties. From 2010 to 2016,² nine California counties had no reported cases of direct file or transfer to adult criminal court, while five counties reported rates of adult prosecution (direct file cases plus transfer hearings resulting in adult court) that were more than three times the state average. As shown in Figure 3, youth in California face vastly different odds of being prosecuted in adult court simply because of where they were arrested. For example, youth in San Joaquin County are prosecuted in criminal court at more than four times the rate of youth in nearby Alameda County.

¹ Data are not available on the number of offenses that qualify for adult court prosecution in each county, each year. Therefore, “serious juvenile felony arrests” serve as a proxy for direct file and transfer eligible offenses and include offense categories defined by the California Department of Justice (DOJ), such as homicide, forcible rape, robbery, assault, kidnapping, narcotics, dangerous drugs, lewd or lascivious acts, unlawful sexual intercourse, other sex law violations, and arson.

² Due to year-to-year variations in direct file and transfer hearing data at the local level, this report aggregates data across a seven year period (2010-2016) for its analyses of geographic and racial and ethnic disparities.

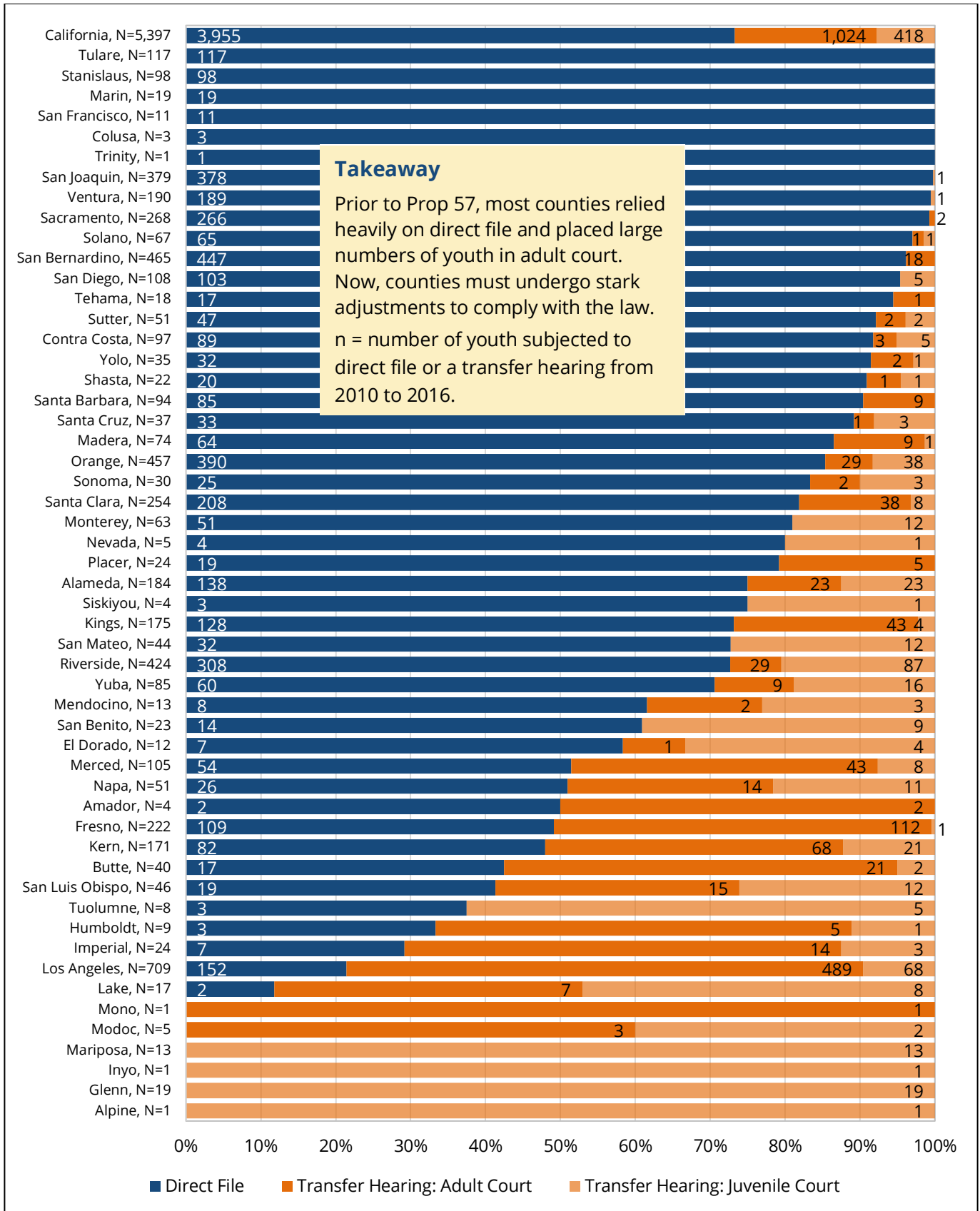
Figure 3. Rate of adult prosecution (direct file plus transfers), per 100,000 youth ages 14-17, 2010-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanchera, 2017.

Until late 2016, youth arrived in adult criminal court along two paths: direct file and transfer hearings. During this period, counties varied substantially in their reliance on direct file compared to judicial transfer, with some exclusively direct filing and others routinely petitioning for a transfer (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Direct file and transfer cases as a share of total potential adult court prosecutions, 2010-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017.

Across a seven-year period, from 2010 to 2016, many large California counties relied heavily or exclusively on direct file, systematically denying youth access to a judicial transfer hearing. During this time, six California counties relied on direct file alone as a method for securing adult criminal prosecution, while an additional 30 counties direct filed at least half of the cases for which DAs sought criminal court prosecution, including San Joaquin County (>99% direct file), Ventura County (>99% direct file), San Bernardino County (96% direct file), and San Diego County (95% direct file).

Given these historical patterns, most California counties must adjust their practices in response to Prop 57. In particular, counties that relied most heavily on direct file must carefully monitor their adoption of transfer hearings by engaging in ongoing case review and providing comprehensive training to juvenile court officers in adolescent development. This monitoring and training is most needed in counties that held few transfer hearings in recent years. For example, from 2010 to 2016, Tulare County direct filed 117 cases and held no transfer hearings. Stakeholders in counties with a high percentage or number of direct file cases, including Tulare, San Joaquin, Ventura, San Bernardino, and San Diego may be encountering the transfer hearing process for the first time. These counties must closely monitor their compliance with transfer hearing procedures and the protections extended to youth through SB 382 and Prop 57.

Whereas some counties gave few youth the benefit of a transfer hearing prior to Prop 57, others held hearings that nearly always resulted in a transfer to adult criminal court. Statewide, from 2010 to 2016, nearly 71 percent of transfer hearing cases resulted in a young person being sent to adult criminal court. The share of cases transferred to adult court should decline if SB 382 and Prop 57's reforms are lawfully implemented. In anticipation of these changes, it is important to monitor counties that have historically exceeded the statewide average for transfers and sent nearly all transfer cases into adult court. For example, Los Angeles County held 557 transfer hearing between 2010 and 2016 and transferred 88 percent of those cases to adult court, suggesting that Los Angeles juvenile courts are more inclined to transfer youth than courts in other counties.

Some California counties reported both a large percentage of direct file cases and an above-average rate of placement in adult court through transfer hearings. In these counties, stakeholders must adjust to the elimination of direct file, while also reforming their existing transfer practices to ensure that hearings do not replace direct file as a means of automatically placing youth in adult criminal court. Although Riverside County reported a higher percentage of direct file than Fresno County, it ultimately retained a larger share of youth in juvenile court due to a more balanced record on transfer hearings (25% of youth were transferred in Riverside County versus 99% in Fresno County). Though Riverside County will see major adjustments resulting from Prop 57, advocates and stakeholders must also monitor counties like Fresno where a moderate number of direct file cases paired with a high percentage of transferred youth resulted in near-universal adult court prosecution.

It is also important to note that counties not listed in Figure 4 were not included because they did not place any youth in adult criminal court through direct file or transfer hearings from 2010 to 2016.³ These counties should serve as models in the post-Prop 57 era when prosecutors must exercise greater restraint in seeking transfer.

³ Nine counties had no youth prosecuted in adult court or did not provide data to DOJ: Alpine, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lassen, Mariposa, Plumas, and Sierra.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Statewide Analysis

Youth of color are significantly more likely than White youth to be prosecuted in adult court, either as the result of prosecutorial direct file (pre-Prop 57) or as the result of being transferred to adult court after a transfer hearing. While the rate of adult court prosecution has declined since 2006 for all youth, substantial racial and ethnic disparities persist in existing practices (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. Rate of adult prosecutions, by race and ethnicity, per 100,000 youth ages 14-17, 2006-2016

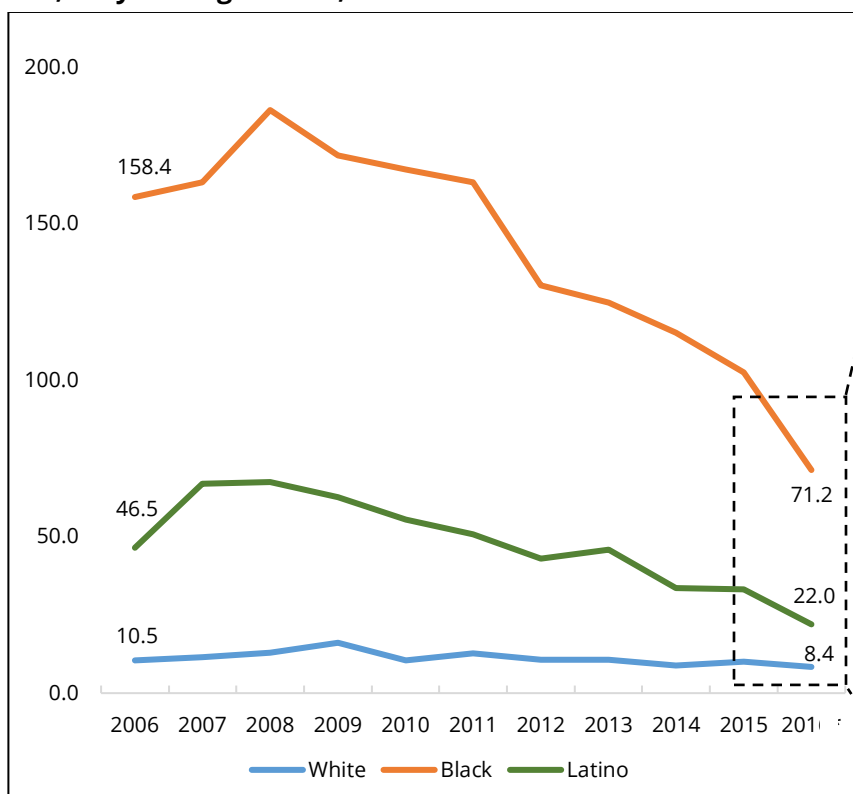
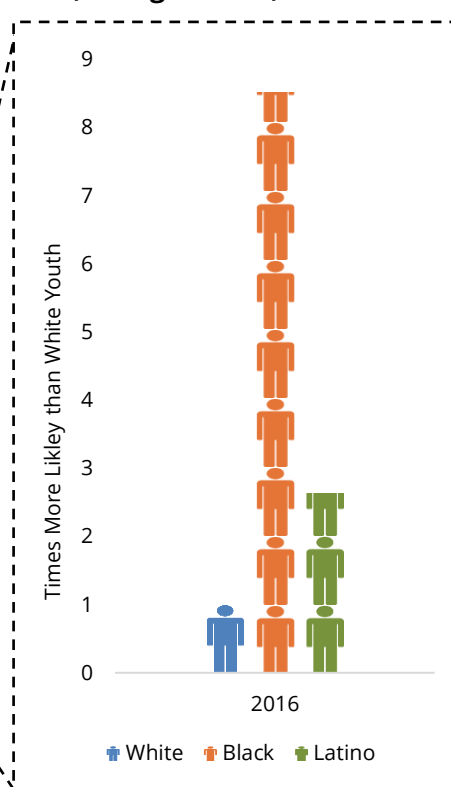


Figure 6. Disparity gap in the rates of adult prosecution, per 100,000 ages 14-17, 2016



Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzzanchera, 2017.

Takeaway

Youth of color were significantly more likely to be prosecuted in adult court from 2006-2016. In 2016, Black youth were 8.5 times more likely than White youth to be tried as adults, and Latino youth were almost 3 times more likely.

Between 2006 and 2016, there were 10,298 cases that were either directly filed in adult court or had a transfer hearing. In 68 percent of the cases, district attorneys directly filed the case in adult court. For the remaining 32 percent, the district attorney filed a motion for transfer.

It is well documented that youth of color are significantly more likely than White youth to have their cases directly filed in adult court (Ridolfi et al., 2016, Ridolfi et al., 2016a). An analysis of cases with transfer hearings reveals that youth of color are also more likely than White youth to be transferred to adult court. For example, between 2006

and 2016, 53 percent of White youth who had a transfer hearing were maintained in juvenile court compared to 27 percent of Black youth and 25 percent of Latino youth (Figure 8).

In the wake of Prop 57, it is critical that the state and counties monitor the extent to which youth of color bear the brunt both of district attorneys’ motions for transfer and of judicial decisions to transfer to adult court.

Figure 7. Trends in direct file and transfer cases, 2006-2016

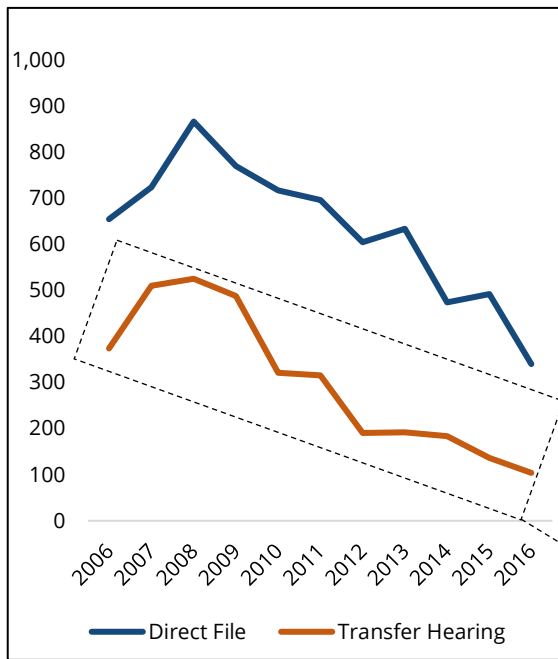
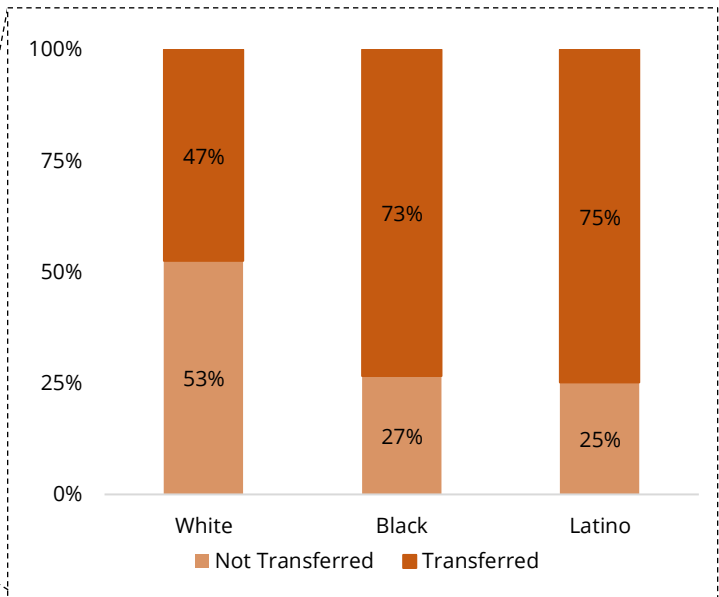


Figure 8. Percent of cases with a transfer hearing that were transferred by race/ethnicity, 2006-2016



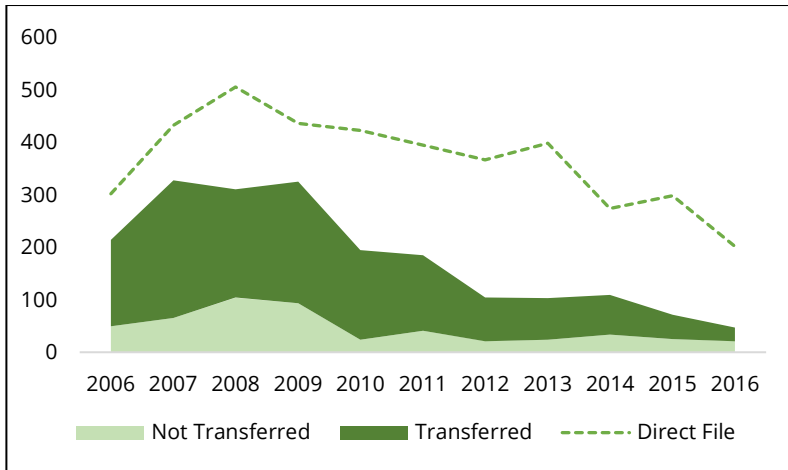
Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzzanchera, 2017.

Takeaway

Youth of color who had a transfer hearing were more likely than White youth who had a transfer hearing to have their cases transferred to adult court.

As illustrated in Figures 9-11, youth of color were more likely than White youth to be directly filed in adult court as opposed to having a transfer hearing. Based on trends from 2006-2016, once they faced a transfer hearing, youth of color are more likely than White youth to be transferred to adult court.

Figure 9. Trends in direct file and transfer hearings for Latino youth, 2006-2016

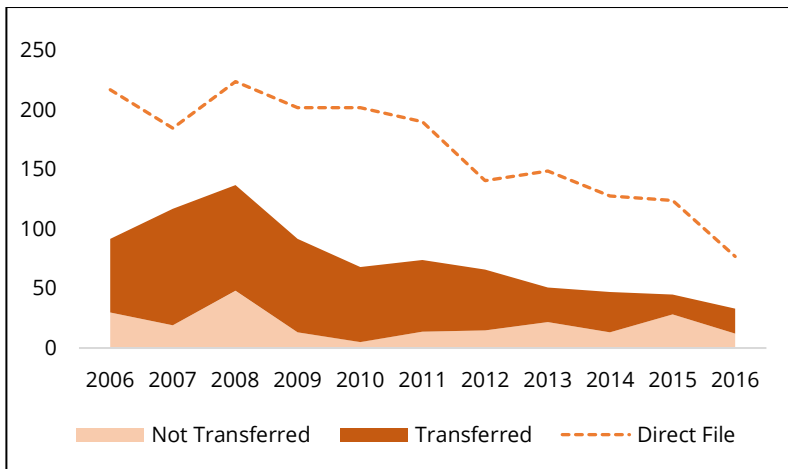


Takeaway

From 2006-2016, there were 6,031 Latino youth who faced adult court prosecution. 4,037 (67%) were directly filed in adult court, and 1,994 (33%) had a transfer hearing.

For those Latino youth who had a transfer hearing, 1,491 (75%) were transferred to adult court, and 503 (25%) remained in juvenile court.

Figure 10. Trends in direct file and transfer hearings for Black youth, 2006-2016

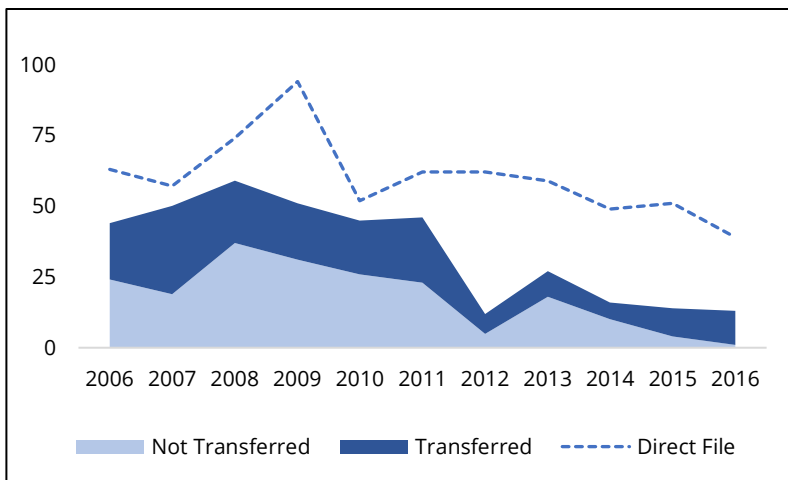


Takeaway

From 2006-2016, there were 2,660 Black youth who faced adult court prosecution. 1,838 (69%) were directly filed in adult court, and 822 (31%) had a transfer hearing.

For those Black youth who had a transfer hearing, 603 (73%) were transferred to adult court, and 219 (27%) remained in juvenile court.

Figure 11. Trends in direct file and transfer hearings for White youth, 2006-2016



Takeaway

From 2006-2016, there were 1,039 White youth who faced adult court prosecution. 662 (64%) were directly filed in adult court, and 377 (36%) had a transfer hearing.

For those White youth who had a transfer hearing, 179 (47%) were transferred to adult court, and 198 (53%) remained in juvenile court.

Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanchera, 2017.

County Analysis

Racial and ethnic disparities in adult court prosecution is prevalent in every county. As Figures 12-15 illustrate, between 2010 and 2016, Black and Latino youth are more likely than White youth to be prosecuted in adult court in all but one county.⁴

Figures 12 and 14 offer a comparison in rates of adult court prosecution for White youth and youth of color. These figures are ranked by the counties that have the highest rate of adult court prosecution for Black youth (Figure 12) and Latino youth (Figure 14). Figures 13 and 15 illustrate the relative likelihood of adult court prosecution for youth of color. These figures are ranked by the counties that have the greatest disparity gap or relative likelihood of adult court prosecution for Black youth (Figure 13) and Latino youth (Figure 15).

Rates and Disparity Gaps: What is the difference between the metrics?

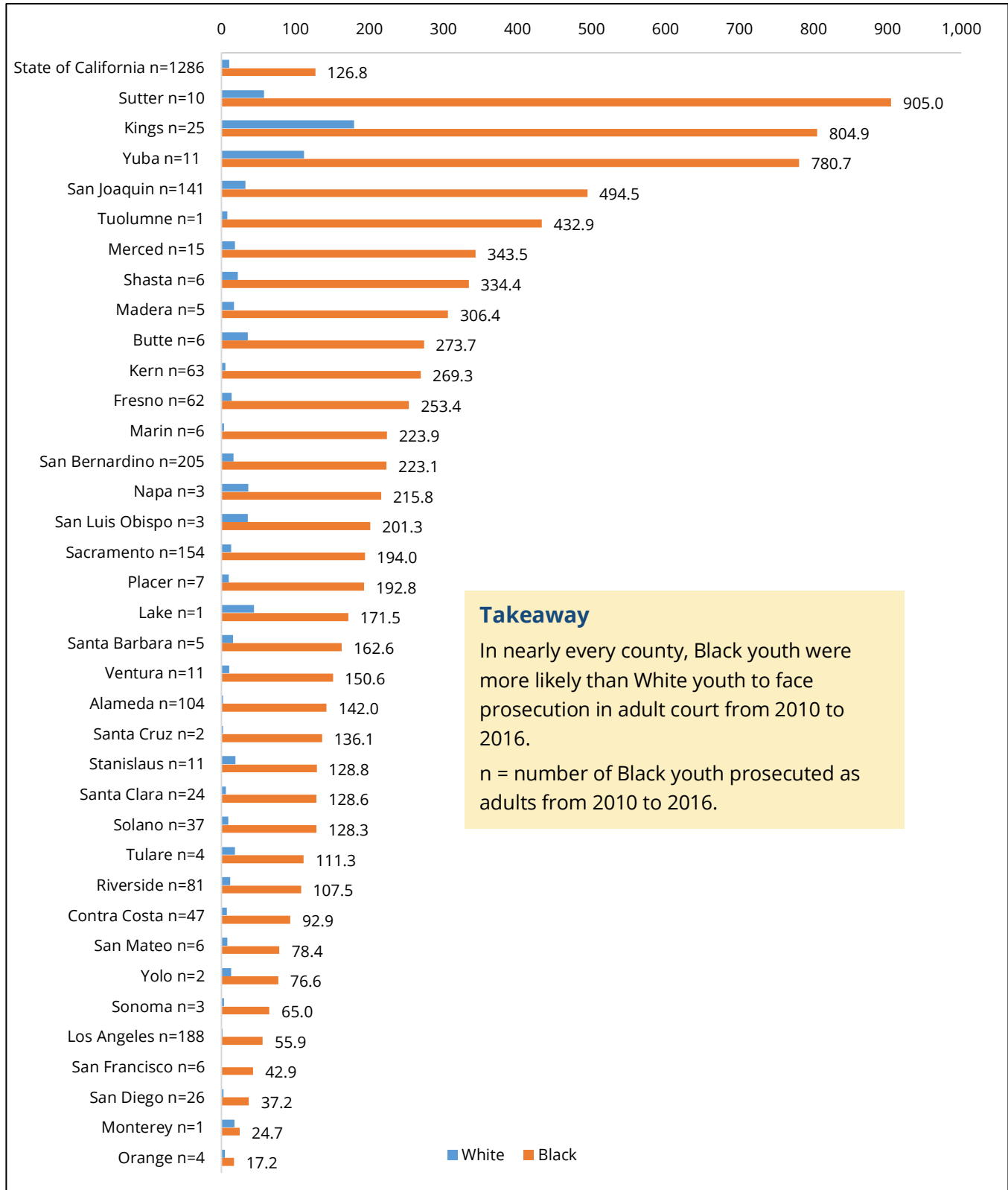
Rates of adult court prosecution tell us how often youth are subjected to adult court prosecution compared to their representation in the population, whereas the *disparity gap* tells us how much more likely Black and Latino youth are to experience adult court prosecution than White youth. It is important to review both metrics to better understand the extent of the harm felt by youth of color.

For example, Kings County had the highest 2010-2016 rate of adult court prosecution, 278.8 youth prosecuted in adult court per 100,000 youth ages 14-17 in the county (see Figure 3). As Figure 12 illustrates, Kings County also had one of the highest rates of adult court prosecution for Black youth (804.9 Black youth prosecuted in adult court for every 100,000 in the population) and for White youth (179.4 White youth prosecuted in adult court for every 100,000 in the population). When these two rates are compared, we can see that Black youth in Kings County were 4.5 times more likely than White youth to be prosecuted in adult court. However, compared to the state average, where Black youth were 12.3 times more likely to be prosecuted in adult court, the disparity gap in Kings County, while still significant, is relatively low.

Alameda County, on the other hand, has a rate of adult court prosecution that is lower than the state average, with 31.1 youth prosecuted in adult court per 100,000 youth ages 14-17 in the county (see Figure 3). As Figure 12 illustrates, Alameda County prosecutes Black youth in adult court at a rate of 142.0 per 100,000 Black youth in the county, which is slightly above the state average, but reports one of the lowest rates of adult court prosecution for White youth (2.2 White youth prosecuted in adult court for every 100,000 in the population). When these two rates are compared, we can see that Black youth in Alameda County are 65.3 times more likely than White youth to be prosecuted in adult court. Compared to the State of California overall, where Black youth were 12.3 times more likely to be prosecuted in adult court, the disparity gap in Alameda County is extremely high.

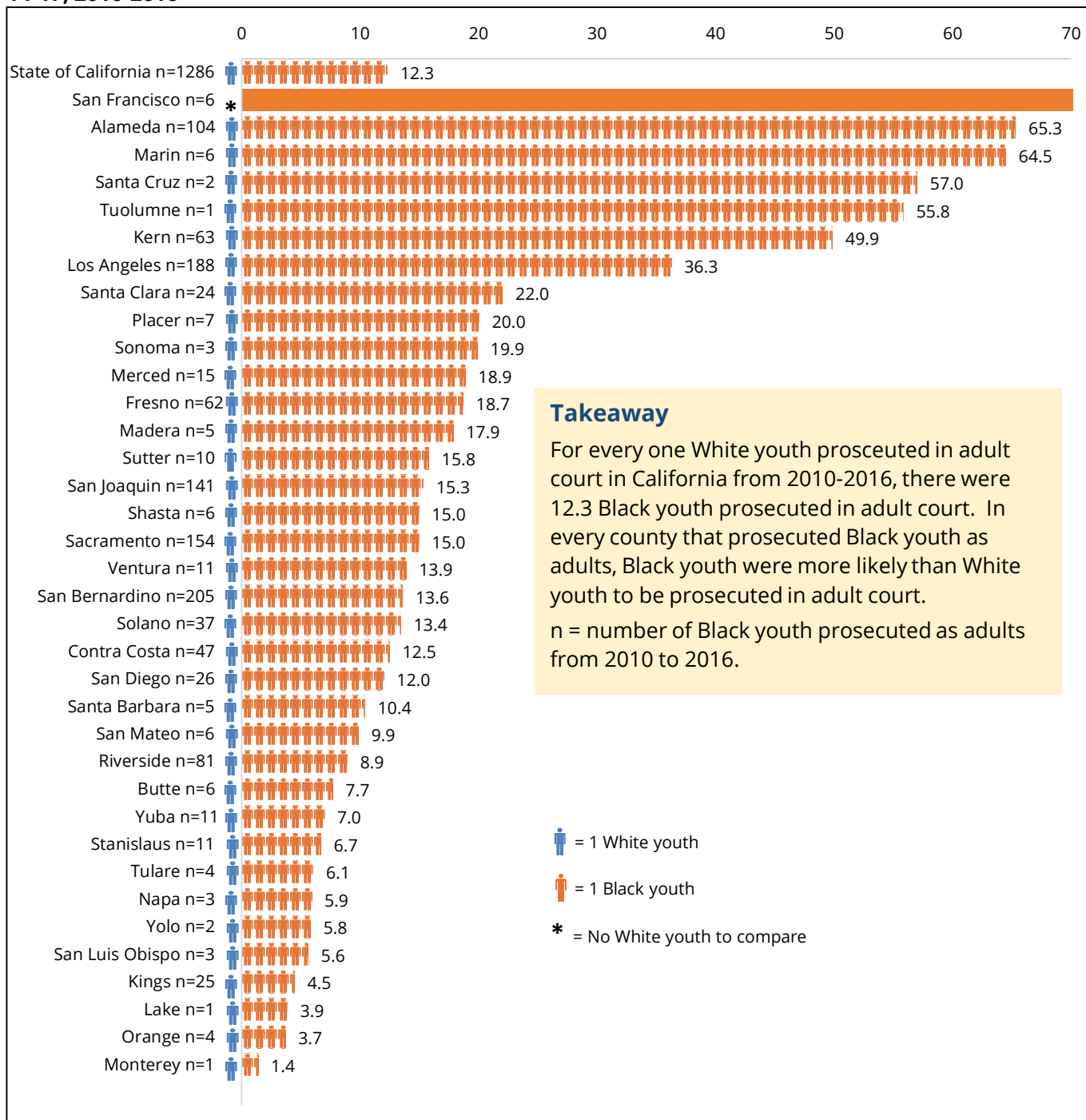
⁴ In Lake County, White youth were more likely than Latino youth to be prosecuted in adult court.

Figure 12. Rates of adult prosecution for Black and White youth, by county, per 100,000 ages 14-17, 2010-2016



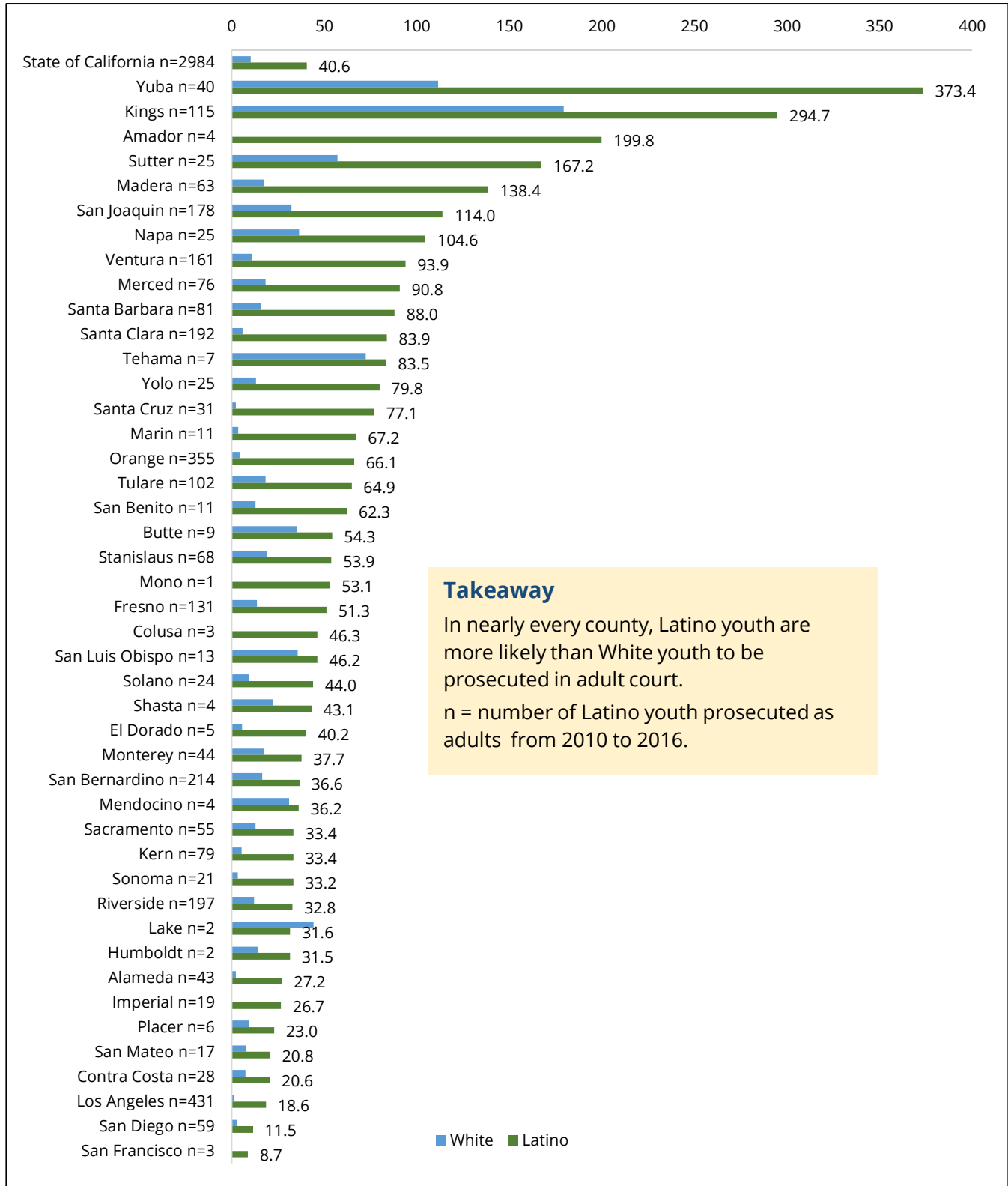
Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanzchera, 2017. Notes: Nine Counties had no youth prosecuted in adult court or did not provide data to DOJ: Alpine, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lassen, Mariposa, Plumas, and Sierra. Thirteen Counties prosecuted no Black youth in adult court: Amador, Colusa, El Dorado, Humboldt, Imperial, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, San Benito, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity.

Figure 13. Disparity gap in the rates of adult prosecution for Black youth, by county, per 100,000 ages 14-17, 2010-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanchera, 2017. Notes: Nine Counties had no youth prosecuted in adult court or did not provide data to DOJ: Alpine, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lassen, Mariposa, Plumas, and Sierra. Thirteen Counties prosecuted no Black youth in adult court: Amador, Colusa, El Dorado, Humboldt, Imperial, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, San Benito, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity.

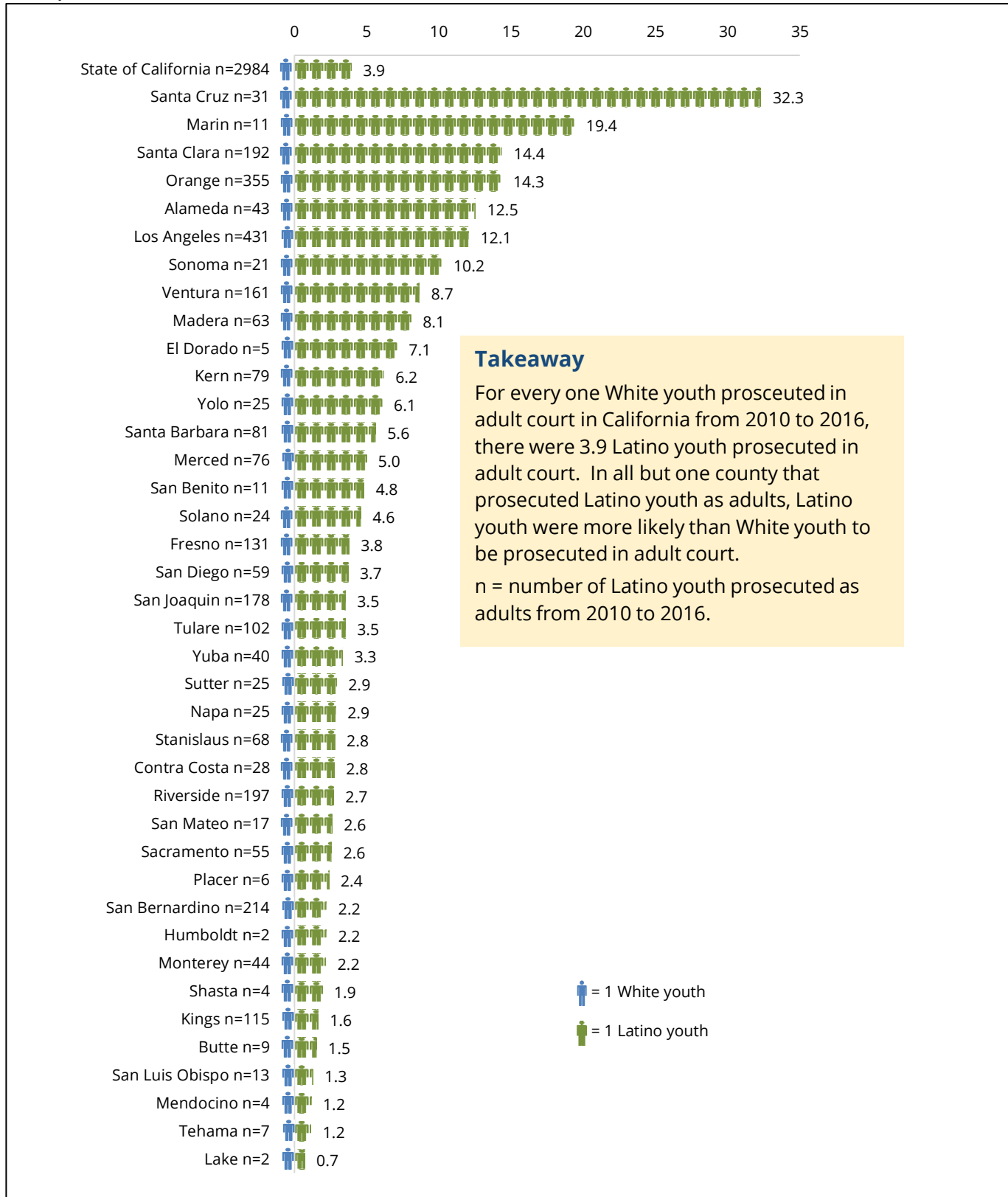
Figure 14. Rates of adult prosecution for Latino and White youth, by county, per 100,000 ages 14-17, 2010-2016



Takeaway
 In nearly every county, Latino youth are more likely than White youth to be prosecuted in adult court.
 n = number of Latino youth prosecuted as adults from 2010 to 2016.

Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanchera, 2017. Notes: Nine Counties had no youth prosecuted in adult court or did not provide data to DOJ: Alpine, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lassen, Mariposa, Plumas, and Sierra. Five Counties prosecuted no Latino youth in adult court: Modoc, Nevada, Siskiyou, Tuolumne and Trinity.

Figure 15. Disparity gap in the rates of adult prosecution for Latino youth, by county, per 100,000 ages 14-17, 2010-2016



Source: DOJ, 2017; Puzanchera, 2017. Notes: Nine counties had no youth prosecuted in adult court or did not provide data to DOJ: Alpine, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Inyo, Lassen, Mariposa, Plumas, and Sierra. Five counties prosecuted no Latino youth in adult court: Modoc, Nevada, Siskiyou, Tuolumne and Trinity.

Recommendations

1. Stakeholder Training:

All systems stakeholders, including juvenile court judges, prosecutors, defenders, and probation officers, must receive comprehensive training in transfer hearing procedures, with particular emphasis on SB 382 and Prop 57 reforms. This training should include a comprehensive review of the developmental factors that must be considered when making a transfer decision. Training is most needed in counties that previously directly filed a large share of eligible youth or transferred youth at high rates into the adult criminal court system.

2. Comprehensive Social Histories:

Probation departments in each county are charged with assessing youth and making a recommendation to the court on a youth's suitability for transfer. These assessments and recommendations should be informed by a comprehensive social history report conducted by a trained social worker who considers the totality of the circumstances in a youth's case and examines all relevant developmental factors, including their maturity, history with trauma, and family and peer influences. In accordance with the law, these reports and the resulting recommendations must address the five transfer criteria holistically from a developmental framework, without undue emphasis on the gravity of a youth's alleged offense. Any probation staff charged with assessing whether a youth should be prosecuted in adult court and writing their social history should be highly trained in adolescent development, the purpose of the juvenile court, and the harms of adult court prosecution.

3. County Data Collection:

Counties must develop a system for collecting data and analyzing juvenile justice data that surpasses the requirements of the Board of State and Community Corrections or the California Department of Justice. Currently, the California Department of Justice collects data on the number of transfer hearings held and the results of those transfer hearings. In the future, counties should collect data on several other key decisions, such as the total number of motions for transfer filed, the number that were withdrawn with a stipulated plea agreement, the number of probation officer recommendations for transfer, and the court's rate of concurrence with those recommendations. (See Appendix B for a summary of the data elements counties must collect and analyze in order to quantify the impact of transfer hearings and better understand racial and ethnic disparities in the system.)

4. Community and Family Involvement:

County stakeholders must include community and family in every stage of the transfer process, treating them as assets, not impediments to a youth's success. Family members often know best what a young person needs to heal and thrive and offer critical context for a holistic social history. They should be regarded as valued partners with insight into the lives of these youth and the most appropriate treatments and placements for them. Similarly, community-based organizations must be permitted to actively engage in the transfer process by working with families to advocate on behalf of youth and developing alternatives to adult sentencing or the out-of-home treatment options ordered by juvenile courts.

Conclusion

Though the number of youth tried as adults has declined in recent years, geographic, racial, and ethnic disparities persist. This suggests that the decision to prosecute youth as adults remains biased and unjust. Considering the differences between young people and adults, the long-term negative impacts on public safety of prosecuting youth in adult courts, and the disparate impact the decision has on youth of color, all transfers of youth to the adult criminal justice system should be eliminated.

In the interim, California must continue to monitor the transfer practices of each county, particularly those counties with historically high rates of direct file and youth transferred to the adult system, and those with little or no experience with transfer hearings.

Eliminating the prosecution of youth as adults would enhance justice and safety for all Californians. Youth sentenced in the juvenile justice system are entitled to education and rehabilitative services not offered in the adult system. Upon release, youth retained in the juvenile justice system are less likely to recidivate and can build greater family connection and economic opportunities later in life (CDC, 2007; Redding, 2010). By returning to a system that treats all youth as youth, Californians would reduce the high cost of unnecessary and harmful long-term incarceration of youth, while improving public safety and expanding opportunities for adjudicated youth to engage in school, work, family, and community.

References

- Proposition 57 (Prop 57). (2016). The Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2016 At: [https://www.gov.ca.gov/docs/The_Public_Safety_and_Rehabilitation_Act_of_2016_\(00266261xAEB03\).pdf](https://www.gov.ca.gov/docs/The_Public_Safety_and_Rehabilitation_Act_of_2016_(00266261xAEB03).pdf).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2007) Effects on Violence of Laws and Policies Facilitating the Transfer of Youth from the Juvenile to the Adult Justice System. At: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5609.pdf>.
- California Senate Bill 382 (SB 382). (2015). SB-382 Juveniles: jurisdiction: sentencing. At: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB382.
- Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice (DOJ). (2017). Direct file and transfer hearing statistics, by county, race, ethnicity, gender, age, offense, and transfer hearing result [data set]. Sacramento, CA: DOJ. Provided by special request, on file with the authors.
- Puzzanchera, C., A. Sladky, and W. Kang. (2017). Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2016. United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. At: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>.
- Redding, Richard E. (2010, June). Juvenile Transfer Laws: An Effective Deterrent to Delinquency? United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. At: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/220595.pdf>.
- Ridolfi, L., M. Washburn, F. Guzman. (2016). The Prosecution of Youth as Adults: A County-level Analysis of Prosecutorial Direct File in California and its Disparate Impact on Youth of Color. At: https://www.burnsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ending-Adult-Prosecution_FINAL.pdf.
- Ridolfi, L., M. Washburn, F. Guzman. (2016a). The Prosecution of Youth as Adults in California: A 2015 Update. At: http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/the_prosecution_of_youth_as_adults_in_california_a_2015_update.pdf.

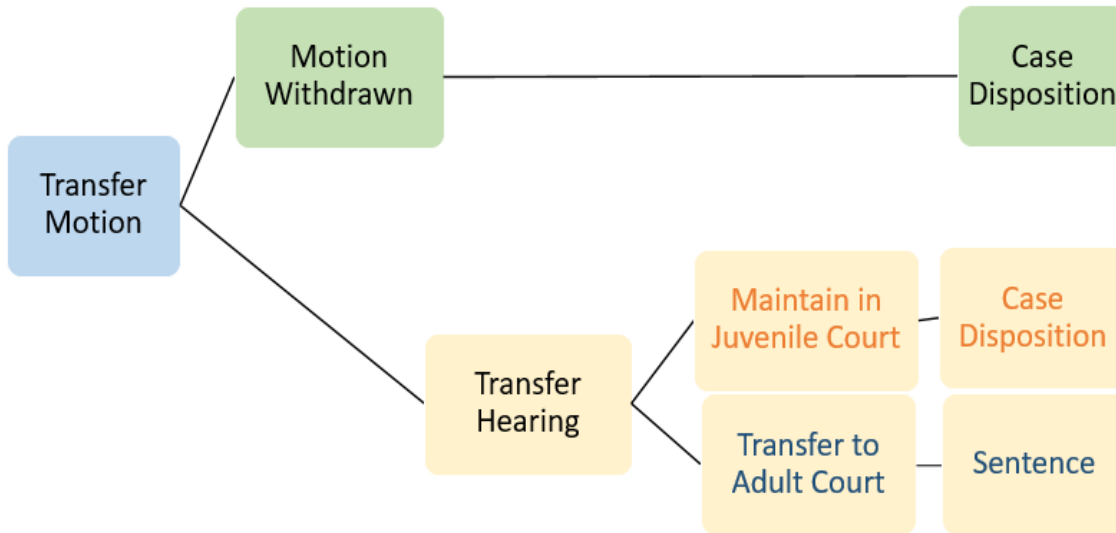
Please note: Jurisdictions submit their data to the official statewide or national databases maintained by appointed governmental bodies. While every effort is made to review data for accuracy and to correct information upon revision, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, and National Center for Youth Law cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county, state, or national level.

Appendix A: Rate of youth tried as adults per 100,000 youth ages 14-17, 2010-2016

	Total		White		Black			Latino		
	Adult Court Cases	Adult Court Rate	Adult Court Cases	Adult Court Rate	Adult Court Cases	Adult Court Rate	X more likely than White	Adult Court Cases	Adult Court Rate	X more likely than White
State of California	4979	33.8	460	10.3	1286	126.8	12.3	2984	40.6	3.9
Alameda County	161	31.1	3	2.2	104	142.0	65.3	43	27.2	12.5
Alpine County										
Amador County	4	37.3	0	0.0		0.0	--	4	199.8	--
Butte County	38	51.3	17	35.5	6	273.7	7.7	9	54.3	1.5
Calaveras County										
Colusa County	3	31.4	0	0.0		0.0	--	3	46.3	--
Contra Costa County	92	21.4	13	7.4	47	92.9	12.5	28	20.6	2.8
Del Norte County										
El Dorado County	8	11.2	3	5.7		0.0	0.0	5	40.2	7.1
Fresno County	221	52.1	13	13.6	62	253.4	18.7	131	51.3	3.8
Glenn County										
Humboldt County	8	19.4	4	14.2	0	0.0	0.0	2	31.5	2.2
Imperial County	21	26.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	--	19	26.7	--
Inyo County										
Kern County	150	38.4	6	5.4	63	269.3	49.9	79	33.4	6.2
Kings County	171	279.1	29	179.4	25	804.9	4.5	115	294.7	1.6
Lake County	9	41.7	6	44.3	1	171.5	3.9	2	31.6	0.7
Lassen County										
Los Angeles County	641	16.8	11	1.5	188	55.9	36.3	431	18.6	12.1
Madera County	73	109.3	3	17.2	5	306.4	17.9	63	138.4	8.1
Marin County	19	23.0	2	3.5	6	223.9	64.5	11	67.2	19.4
Mariposa County										
Mendocino County	10	32.7	5	31.0		0.0	0.0	4	36.2	1.2
Merced County	97	76.7	5	18.2	15	343.5	18.9	76	90.8	5.0
Modoc County	3	89.1	2	86.2	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Mono County	1	23.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	--	1	53.1	--
Monterey County	51	30.7	6	17.4	1	24.7	1.4	44	37.7	2.2
Napa County	40	76.9	8	36.5	3	215.8	5.9	25	104.6	2.9
Nevada County	4	12.2	4	14.8	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Orange County	419	34.7	20	4.6	4	17.2	3.7	355	66.1	14.3
Placer County	24	16.4	10	9.6	7	192.8	20.0	6	23.0	2.4
Plumas County										
Riverside County	337	32.9	34	12.0	81	107.5	8.9	197	32.8	2.7
Sacramento County	268	47.0	29	13.0	154	194.0	15.0	55	33.4	2.6
San Benito County	14	52.7	1	12.9	0	0.0	0.0	11	62.3	4.8
San Bernardino County	465	48.7	36	16.4	205	223.1	13.6	214	36.6	2.2
San Diego County	103	9.1	13	3.1	26	37.2	12.0	59	11.5	3.7
San Francisco County	11	7.0	0	0.0	6	42.9	--	3	8.7	--
San Joaquin County	378	117.4	28	32.2	141	494.5	15.3	178	114.0	3.5
San Luis Obispo County	34	40.8	18	35.7	3	201.3	5.6	13	46.2	1.3
San Mateo County	32	13.2	7	7.9	6	78.4	9.9	17	20.8	2.6
Santa Barbara County	94	61.2	8	15.6	5	162.6	10.4	81	88.0	5.6
Santa Clara County	246	38.1	11	5.8	24	128.6	22.0	192	83.9	14.4
Santa Cruz County	34	38.8	1	2.4	2	136.1	57.0	31	77.1	32.3
Shasta County	21	32.3	11	22.3	6	334.4	15.0	4	43.1	1.9
Sierra County										
Siskiyou County	3	19.9	2	18.6		0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Solano County	66	40.6	5	9.6	37	128.3	13.4	24	44.0	4.6
Sonoma County	27	15.9	3	3.3	3	65.0	19.9	21	33.2	10.2
Stanislaus County	98	41.9	16	19.2	11	128.8	6.7	68	53.9	2.8
Sutter County	49	121.8	10	57.3	10	905.0	15.8	25	167.2	2.9
Tehama County	18	71.8	11	72.4	0	0.0	0.0	7	83.5	1.2
Trinity County	1	24.6	1	31.9	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Tulare County	117	53.6	9	18.4	4	111.3	6.1	102	64.9	3.5
Tuolumne County	3	18.5	1	7.8	1	432.9	55.8	0	0.0	0.0
Ventura County	189	55.4	15	10.9	11	150.6	13.9	161	93.9	8.7
Yolo County	34	46.5	4	13.1	2	76.6	5.8	25	79.8	6.1
Yuba County	69	231.3	16	111.6	11	780.7	7.0	40	373.4	3.3

Note: Rates in Appendix A and Figure 3 were calculated using population estimates drawn from the OJJDP's Easy Access to Juvenile Populations tool at different points during the production of this report. Because this is a live database that is updated periodically, the two sections reflect slightly different vintages of the underlying county youth population estimates. Differences between the two are limited to 0.5 per 100,000 or less and do not affect any finding or conclusion in this report.

Appendix B: Suggested decision points for counties to analyze



- How many motions for transfer were filed?
- What is the most serious offense associated with the motion?

- How many motions for transfer were withdrawn?
- How many of the withdrawn motions had a plea/stipulation?
- What was the most serious offenses associated with withdrawn cases?
- What was the final disposition?

- How many cases were transferred?
 - How often did probation recommend transfer?
 - How often did the court agree with probations recommendation?
- For cases in juvenile court:**
- What were the most serious offenses sustained in juvenile court?
 - What was the disposition of cases in juvenile court?
- For cases in transferred:**
- What were the most serious offenses sustained in adult court?
 - What was the sentence of cases in adult court?



Laura Ridolfi
 W. Haywood Burns Institute
 475 14th Street, Suite 800
 Oakland, CA 94612
 www.burnsinstitute.org
 Iridolfi@burnsinstitute.org



Maureen Washburn
 Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
 40 Boardman Place
 San Francisco, CA 94103
 www.cjcj.org
 maureen@cjcj.org



Frankie Guzman
 National Center for Youth Law
 405 14th Street, 15th Floor
 Oakland, CA 94612
 www.youthlaw.org
 fguzman@youthlaw.org

This report was updated in May 2026 to correct errors in the original. Appendix A contained a miskey in the Black youth case count column that did not affect any rates, disparity calculations, or conclusions. Figure 4's California statewide summary row has been corrected. A typographical error in a Figure 10 text box has also been corrected. No county-level data or conclusions were affected.