

Fact Sheet

Juvenile Life Without Parole

- **The recidivism rate for people serving juvenile life without parole in Michigan is 0.55 percent (or 1 out of 181).** Only one person sentenced to juvenile life without parole has reoffended, and was charged with a non-violent felony (possession of a firearm by a felon).
- Other research has also found very low recidivism for juvenile lifers. A Montclair State University study¹ analyzed 269 people in Philadelphia sentenced to life without parole as juveniles. Of the 269 people, 174 were released, and only 1.14 percent (or 2 out of 174) were reconvicted for any offense. This study aligns with growing bodies of research that show that **people age out of crime, and that lengthy prison sentences do not deter crime, and are costly — as they divert funds from public health and safety initiatives.** The juvenile lifers who were released throughout the time of the study produced a \$9.5 million savings as a result of their release.
- **Michigan has the largest juvenile lifer population in the nation and spends more than \$10 million per year to house juvenile lifers².** In the state of Michigan, over 300 children have been sentenced to life in prison without parole and one in five have been in prison for 25 years or longer. The average cost per person incarcerated in Michigan is \$37,916. This cost doubles when an incarcerated person is over 50 years old.
- **73 percent of the approximately 2,800 children sentenced to life without parole in the United States** (prior to the Supreme Court's ruling in Miller v. Alabama in 2012) **are children of color³.** Black youth made up 61 percent of the juvenile lifer population (prior to 2012) and 70 percent of the juvenile lifer population in 2012⁴.
- Research shows that **a child's brain (and moral character) are not fully developed until the mid 20s⁵.** This research factored into the United State's Supreme Court ruling that mandatory JLWOP sentences for homicide offenses committed below age 18 are unconstitutional.
- **Adverse childhood experiences — traumatic childhood experiences that can result in social, emotional, and cognitive impairment — increase the likelihood of being a victim and someone who perpetuates harm⁶.** Up to 90 percent of justice-involved youth report exposure to some type of traumatic event. On average, 70 percent of youth meet the criteria for a mental health disorder with approximately 30 percent of youth meeting the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)⁷.

1. <https://www.montclair.edu/newscenter/2020/04/30/new-study-finds-1-recidivism-rate-among-released-philly-juvenile-lifers/#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20conducted%20by,of%20parole%20and%20then%20subsequently>

2. <https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/Corrections.asp>

3. <https://cfsy.org/wp-content/uploads/Montgomery-Anniversary-1.24.pdf>

4. <https://cfsy.org/wp-content/uploads/Tipping-Point.pdf>

5. <https://www.juvjustice.org/our-work/safety-opportunity-and-success-project/national-standards/section-i-principles-respon-din-10>

6. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long-term-consequences/>

7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3714673/>

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Last updated Sept. 26, 2023