

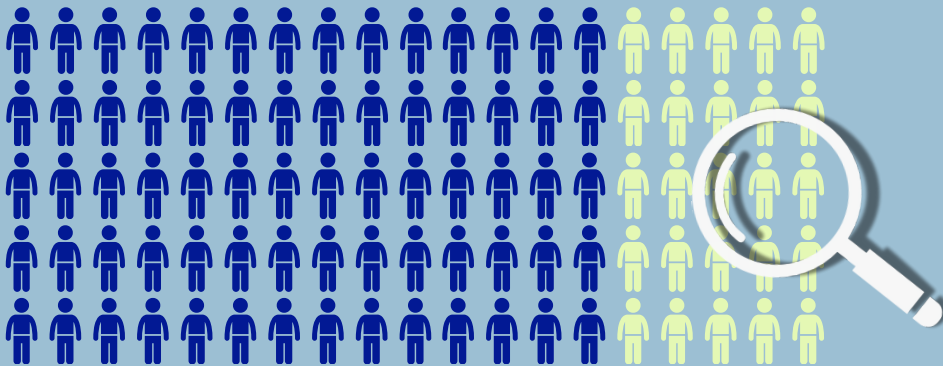
# ***TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES & MENTAL HEALTH RISKS FOR YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM***



A 2024 study<sup>1</sup> identified mental health risk profiles of justice-involved youth and examined the impact trauma and race had on the youths' mental health.

The researchers utilized Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument 2 (MAYSI-2), one of the most commonly used screening tools to identify mental health issues for youth in juvenile justice settings. This study was specifically interested in the interaction of race and gender and their association with trauma experiences.

***Up to 70%***



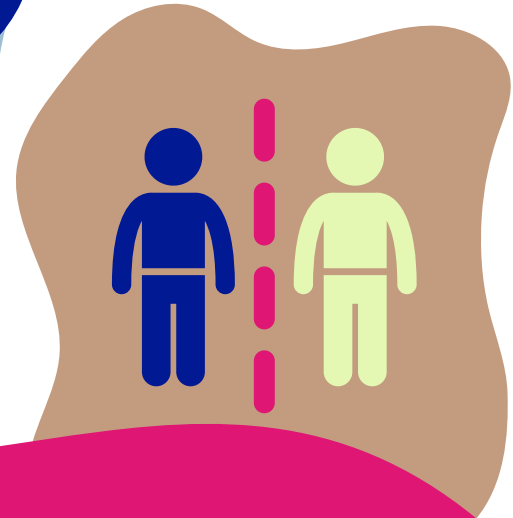
of justice-involved youth have a diagnosable mental health problem, a rate 3x higher than the general youth population.

# ***The Importance of Screening***

When looking at mental health screening, the authors found four groups of adolescents that represented the severity of mental health problems identified through screening conducted at detention intake.

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- *low acuity*
  - *moderate acuity*
  - *moderate acuity with high suicide risk*
  - *high acuity*

These classes represent a specific pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as assessed by the MAYSI-2. Lower values means there is a less serious concern, such as those with the low acuity label, while higher values are more telling of a more serious problem, as can be seen in the high acuity groups.



## ***RESULTS***

The study finds that there are patterns of underlying mental health concerns among youth in the juvenile justice system.

Given the wide prevalence of trauma experienced by justice-involved youth, trauma has been proposed as a “gateway” toward the development of mental health disorders. This trauma exposure, if left untreated, can act as a pathway to the development of more serious mental health problems.

These findings also point to the importance of considering different patterns of MAYSI-2 scores depending on gender and race/ethnicity.

### Sources:

1. *Jaggers, J. W., Lau, C., Howey, W., & Kerig, P. K. (2024). Associations Between Traumatic Experiences and Mental Health Risk Profiles in Youth with Justice System Involvement. Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 0(0).*  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15412040241298282>

### SCAN FOR MORE



Check out the CTRJJ website to learn more about implementing trauma-informed care in juvenile-justice settings.