



What Young People Say Matters

PbS Data Snapshot
October 2022

Introduction

Juvenile justice leaders and professionals are increasingly recognizing the need to listen to the young people we serve to truly understand what they need and how we can best help them become successful, purposeful citizens.

As part of a 2015 cooperative agreement with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice, Performance-based Standards Learning Institute (PbS) developed the PbS Youth Reentry Survey to hear directly from young people about their preparation and readiness for reentry, focusing on the critical transition from confinement to the community or termination of post-placement supervision. The survey questions are based on 11 practice domains that research and field experience pointed to as mostly likely to set young people up to thrive after experiencing the system, including well-being, education, employment, housing, family and community connection. This PbS Data Snapshot shares survey responses showing what young people think, feel and believe. The data offers insights into how juvenile justice agencies can both prepare young people for success and ensure they feel ready.

Prepared and Ready for Reentry

Preparation for a young person to leave juvenile justice custody and/or supervision should begin on the first day a young person is committed to a juvenile justice agency. The goal is to provide young people with the skills and supports they need to have a real second chance when their system involvement ends. It means behavioral and health issues have been addressed, they have completed academic and skill-building courses, experienced positive relationships, received positive feedback, have connections with the community and preparations are in place to respond to their anticipated needs.

In addition to being prepared for reentry, young people need to feel ready and believe they can be successful. To best understand a young person's feelings and beliefs about the future, PbS developed the Youth Reentry Survey. The Youth Reentry Survey asks these questions and many more, giving agencies essential insight into how they might better serve young people.

PbS Data

Performance-based Standards (PbS) has collected more than 5,000 responses to the PbS Reentry Survey by young people exiting secure facilities, community residential programs and community supervision from October 2019 to April 2022.

This PbS Data Snapshot shares the responses of 1,102 young people who left 37 agencies in 29 states participating in PbS from November 2021 through April 2022. The survey respondents reflect the disproportionate confinement of young people across the country: 38% were Black, 26% were Hispanic, 24% were White, 4% were other races including American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander or Asian and 4% identified as Multiracial.



What Young People Said

Most young people said they feel safe. A young person cannot be expected to meet goals and/or comply with requirements if they don't feel safe to go to school, work or be themselves. The good news is most of the young people who responded to the PbS Youth Reentry Survey said they felt safe.

- 95% felt their sexual orientation was respected
- 94% felt their gender and gender identity was respected
- 90% felt their race and cultural heritage was respected and
- 87% felt safe where they were.

Stable housing is a challenge. Upon guidance from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), PbS framed questions that recognize young peoples' hesitancy to self-identify as homeless and asked them to indicate where they sleep "most of the time." The responses showed that while the vast majority (82%) said they would be sleeping most of the time at home with their families, almost a third of those young people also listed a second, third and sometimes fourth place they would be sleeping, such as in a car, significant others' house, shelter or couch surfing.

They need confidence, hope and financial security. Belief in a brighter future is necessary to take on the challenges and barriers young people face when they leave juvenile justice custody, often returning to the same conditions that likely led to their system involvement. Research using the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) data shows hope reduces delinquency and posttraumatic stress while common sense tells us hope reduces feelings of helplessness, increases happiness and is motivation to change. Young people who responded to the PbS Youth Reentry Survey were least hopeful about their finances yet held positive beliefs about their futures.

Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Question
73%	22%	I know my life has a purpose and I have meaningful goals I want to accomplish.
71%	24%	I am going to live a good life when I'm older.
65%	29%	I believe I have some control over what happens in my life.
57%	37%	I am ready to get a job/continue my current employment.
55%	39%	I have a plan for my long-term education and employment that is helpful.
53%	41%	I have the supports I need for a successful reentry.
53%	39%	When things don't go my way, I am good at finding ways to make things better.
44%	44%	I have enough money to buy food and clothing.
32%	49%	It will be easy to pay my rent/ living expenses.

This PbS Data Snapshot was written by Kim Godfrey Lovett, PbS Executive Director.