

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER POPULATION PROJECTIONS: FISCAL YEAR 2020 TO FISCAL YEAR 2024

### INTRODUCTION

North Carolina General Statutes §§ 164-40(b) and 164-42.1(b) direct the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission to develop a computerized simulation model to be used to prepare Youth Development Center (YDC) population<sup>1</sup> projections and to help assess North Carolina's long-term resource needs for juvenile dispositions. The projections are prepared in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ). The computer simulation model used to project the juvenile population relies on empirical information about how juveniles are processed through the juvenile justice system using data extracted from the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN), DACJJ's juvenile management information system.

The YDC projections contained herein were completed in two parts. The Sentencing Commission prepared YDC population projections for all juveniles adjudicated delinquent and disposed on or after July 1, 2019 (new population) and for all juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2019 (YDC stock population), the beginning of the current projection period. The final combined projections consider the decline of the stock population and the new YDC population (new YDC commitments that occur through the imposition of a Level 3 disposition or as a result of a probation violation or a revocation of post-release supervision (PRS)).

### YDC POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND CAPACITY

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act (JJRA).<sup>2</sup> Beginning December 1, 2019, the JJRA increases the age of juvenile jurisdiction so that most 16- and 17-year-olds facing criminal charges may have their cases disposed through the juvenile justice system rather than the adult criminal justice system.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the JJRA includes other provisions intended to affect who comes in contact with the juvenile justice system, such as school-justice partnerships designed to reduce school-based referrals to juvenile courts and juvenile justice training for law enforcement officers.<sup>4</sup>

The changes to the juvenile justice system with the JJRA are expected to have an impact on YDC admissions, YDC releases, and length of stay (LOS) – all critical factors in projecting the YDC population. Raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction will increase the number of youths in the juvenile justice system

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, any reference to the YDC population includes juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

<sup>2</sup> North Carolina Session Law (hereinafter S.L.) 2017-57, s. 16D.4. Additional information can be found at: [https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/JuvenileReinvestmentFactSheet\\_05012017.pdf](https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/JuvenileReinvestmentFactSheet_05012017.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> The increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction will apply to 16- and 17-year-olds at the time of their alleged offense who have no prior adult convictions and are charged with Class H or Class I felonies or non-motor vehicle misdemeanors. This change in jurisdiction applies to offenses committed on or after December 1, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> S.L. 2017-57, s. 16D.4.(aa) and (bb).

by adding a new population of 16- and 17-year-olds and by extending the number of years available for youth to be under the jurisdiction of the system. Any shifts in policy and/or practice regarding the implementation of the JJRA, as well as budgetary allocations for and use of dispositional resources (e.g., community programs), will likely impact the accuracy of the projections. Empirical information on these practices will not be available until complaints are processed through the juvenile justice system under the new law.

For new admissions, two populations are being projected – the population of 10- to 15-year-olds currently under juvenile jurisdiction and the population of 16- and 17-year-olds who will be under juvenile jurisdiction beginning in December 2019. The projected population of 10- to 15-year-olds is based on FY 2019 delinquent disposition and YDC stock data; the projected population of 16- and 17-year-olds is based on FY 2019 adult conviction data.

Table 1 shows the projected YDC population and capacity over the five-year projection period. YDC capacity was provided by DACJJ. These YDC population projections consider the extension of juvenile jurisdiction, which occurs half-way through the first year of the projection period (FY 2020). The YDC population is predicted to be 187 for FY 2020 and 247 for FY 2024.<sup>5</sup> A comparison of the projections with YDC capacity indicates that the projected YDC population will be within available YDC capacity, except in FY 2021. The YDC stock population was 204 on June 30, 2019, and 177 on October 31, 2019.<sup>6</sup>

The current projection is lower than the previous projection because of a decrease in Level 3 dispositions over the past year (from 100 to 83). An increase in the rate of YDC releases also contributed to a lower projection. Substantial changes from year to year on key components of the projections (e.g., admissions, releases, and LOS) can affect their accuracy.

Figure 1 illustrates the historical accuracy of the first year of the juvenile resource projections for the previous five projections in relation to the actual minimum and maximum YDC populations for each fiscal year. Given the small population of juveniles in YDCs and the substantial fluctuations in the population over the course of the year, the accuracy of the juvenile projections is assessed by examining the projected population within the context of the lowest and highest YDC populations over the fiscal year. Ideally, the projection should be closer to the highest population of the fiscal year. In examining the projections since FY 2015, the projected YDC population was typically within the range of the lowest and highest YDC populations for any given fiscal year.

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<sup>5</sup> Separate housing units are required for male and female juveniles. Of the projected YDC beds needed for each year of the five-year projections, 90% are for males.

<sup>6</sup> North Carolina Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice's *Committed Youth Report* (2019).

**Table 1**  
**Youth Development Center (YDC) Population Projections and Capacity**

Fiscal Year	YDC Population as of June 30 <sup>7</sup>				YDC Capacity <sup>8</sup>	Difference between Current Projection and Capacity <sup>9</sup>
	Previous Combined Projection	Current Juvenile Justice Population	Expanded Juvenile Justice Population	Current Combined Projection		
2020	232	176	11	187	216	29
2021	276	183	47	230	216	-14 <sup>10</sup>
2022	283	185	51	236	276	40
2023	287	192	52	244	276	32
2024	N/A	194	53	247	276	29

Note: Prepared in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

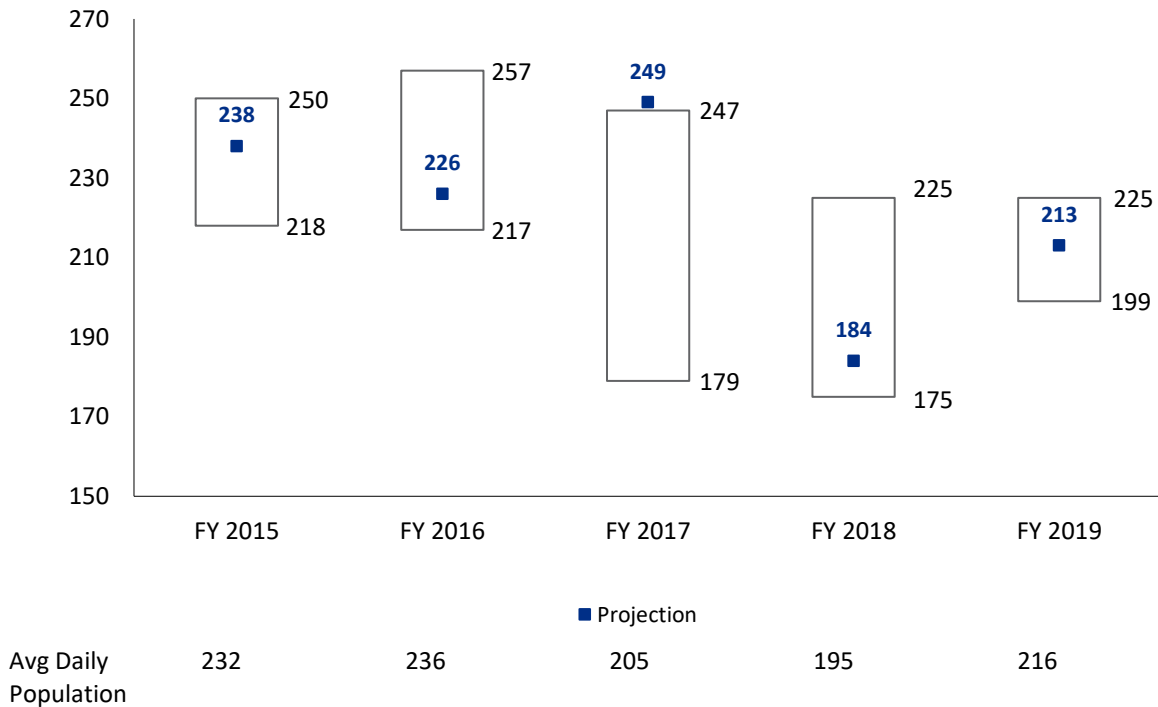
<sup>7</sup> The YDC population projections take into account the extension of juvenile jurisdiction, which occurs half-way through the first year of the projection period (FY 2020). Juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape) are included in the projections.

<sup>8</sup> YDC capacity is contingent on staffing patterns to meet required ratios. It does not include community commitment placements or transition step-down beds, which are alternatives to YDC placement for some juveniles in this population, for all or part of commitment. YDC capacity also does not include flexible space. Per S.L. 2017-57, a new YDC will be constructed (Section 36.2 (d)) and is expected to open in February 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Positive numbers indicate that the current projected population is lower than capacity, while negative numbers indicate that the current projected population is higher than capacity.

<sup>10</sup> DACJJ plans to employ flexible space usage with McWhorter (32-bed housing unit at Stonewall Jackson YDC/Cabarrus Detention Center) and C.A. Dillon Detention Center (a facility with housing potential for 108 beds), especially during FY 2021 and until Rockingham YDC opens in February 2022. DACJJ anticipates that flexible space usage will accommodate the projected bed deficit in FY 2021.

**Figure 1**  
**A Comparison of the Actual Minimum and Maximum Population with the Projected YDC Population**  
**FY 2015 to FY 2019 Projections**



Note: YDC population figures (projected and actual) include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

### ASSUMPTIONS

The projections are based on the following assumptions that were determined using empirical data from the most recent fiscal year (FY 2019):

- Growth Rates:** The projections for the current YDC population assume no growth in delinquent dispositions for the first year, one percent growth in the second year, and two percent growth for the remaining years of the projection period. The projections for the expanded YDC population assume one percent growth in each year of the projection period. The growth rates are based on census projections for North Carolina’s youth population,<sup>11</sup> juvenile justice indicators,<sup>12</sup> and the implementation of the JJRA beginning in 2019.

<sup>11</sup> [www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us) (2019).

<sup>12</sup> In FY 2015, the rate of delinquent complaints was 21 per 1,000 juveniles compared to a rate of 15 per 1,000 in FY 2019, with overall declines noted since the late 1990s (DACJJ). From CY 2013 to CY 2017 overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 16 dropped 18%, and from CY 2016 to CY 2017 overall arrest rates for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 18 dropped 6% (*Crime in North Carolina – 2017*, State Bureau of Investigation, <http://crimereporting.ncsbi.gov>). Delinquent complaints (Class A-I felonies and Class A1-3 misdemeanors) decreased 28% from FY 2015 to FY 2019 and 17% from FY 2017 to FY 2018 (DACJJ).

- *YDC Admission Type:* In FY 2019, 49% of all YDC admissions resulted from a delinquent complaint, 42% from a probation violation, and 9% from a revocation of PRS. The distribution of YDC admissions is assumed to match the distribution from FY 2019. The median lag-time between the imposition of a probation disposition and commitment to a YDC for a probation violation was 8 months. The median lag-time between release from a YDC onto PRS and revocation was 4 months.
- *Level 3 Dispositions:* In FY 2019, 3% of juveniles adjudicated delinquent received a Level 3 disposition (i.e., YDC commitment). Over the projection period, the rate of Level 3 dispositions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent is assumed to match the rate from FY 2019.
- *YDC Length of Stay:* The YDC average LOS was 14 months for all adjudicated juveniles, including juveniles committed to a YDC for a new adjudication, probation violation, or a revocation of PRS. The YDC average LOS for the projection period is assumed to match the average LOS for juveniles released during FY 2019.
- *JJRA:* Until empirical data are available on how complaints are processed under the JJRA, the anticipated increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction requires several assumptions. The estimate for the number of 16- and 17-year-olds who will come under juvenile jurisdiction originates from adult conviction data and assumes that juveniles will be equally likely to receive an adjudication as an adult conviction. The YDC commitment rate for 16- and 17- year-olds is assumed to match the five-year average rate, using data on 15-year-olds where possible. The projections also assume that resources currently available for 10- to 15-year-olds will also be available for 16- and 17-year-olds (e.g., dispositional alternatives to commitment).
- *Court Practices and Policy Changes:* Although the five-year projections account for the increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction, the projections assume no other changes in judicial or prosecutorial behavior. In addition, the projections do not incorporate any potential increases or decreases in the YDC population due to budgetary or policy-driven changes implemented by DACJJ and/or other agencies that provide services for juveniles.

## COMPONENTS OF YDC POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Juvenile Disposition Chart (*see* Table 2), the empirical data from the latest available fiscal year (for 10-to 15-year-olds and for 16- and 17-year-olds), and the June 30, 2019 YDC stock population form the basis of the five-year resource projections. The following sections detail the information on the empirical data that inform these projections.

### FY 2019 Juvenile Delinquent Dispositions

This section highlight the information on the 3,220 delinquent dispositions in FY 2019, including offense classification, delinquency history level, and disposition level.<sup>13</sup> The court’s selection of dispositional alternatives is governed by statute through a graduated sanctions chart that classifies juvenile offenders according to the seriousness of their adjudicated offense (i.e., offense classification) and the degree and extent of their delinquent history (i.e., delinquency history level). A Level 1 or community disposition

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<sup>13</sup> A delinquent disposition is identified from NC-JOIN records as the disposition imposed for the most serious adjudicated offense for a given disposition hearing date during a fiscal year.

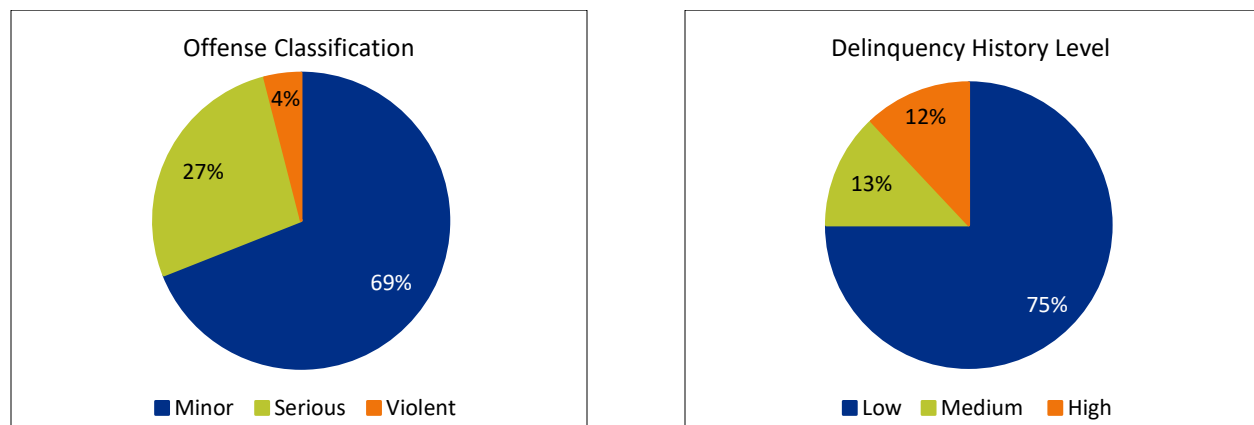
offers the court less restrictive dispositional alternatives (e.g., probation, community-based programs). A Level 2 or intermediate disposition is generally more restrictive than a Level 1 disposition and includes options such as intensive probation, group home placements (e.g., multipurpose group homes), regimented training programs, and house arrest. A Level 3 or commitment disposition provides the most restrictive sanction available to a juvenile court judge – commitment to the DACJJ for placement in a YDC.

**Table 2  
Juvenile Disposition Chart**

Offense Classification	Delinquency History Level		
	Low 0-1 Points	Medium 2-3 Points	High 4 or More Points
<b>Violent</b> Class A-E Felonies	Level 2 or 3	Level 3	Level 3
<b>Serious</b> Class F-I Felonies Class A1 Misdemeanors	Level 1 or 2	Level 2	Level 2 or 3
<b>Minor</b> Class 1, 2, 3 Misdemeanors	Level 1	Level 1 or 2	Level 2

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the 3,220 delinquent dispositions by offense classification and delinquency history level. Of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent in FY 2019, 4% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 27% for a serious offense, and 69% for a minor offense.<sup>14</sup> Further, 75% of the dispositions involved a juvenile with a low delinquency history level, 13% involved a juvenile with a medium delinquency history level, and 12% involved a juvenile with a high delinquency history level.

**Figure 2  
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Delinquency History Level  
Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent**

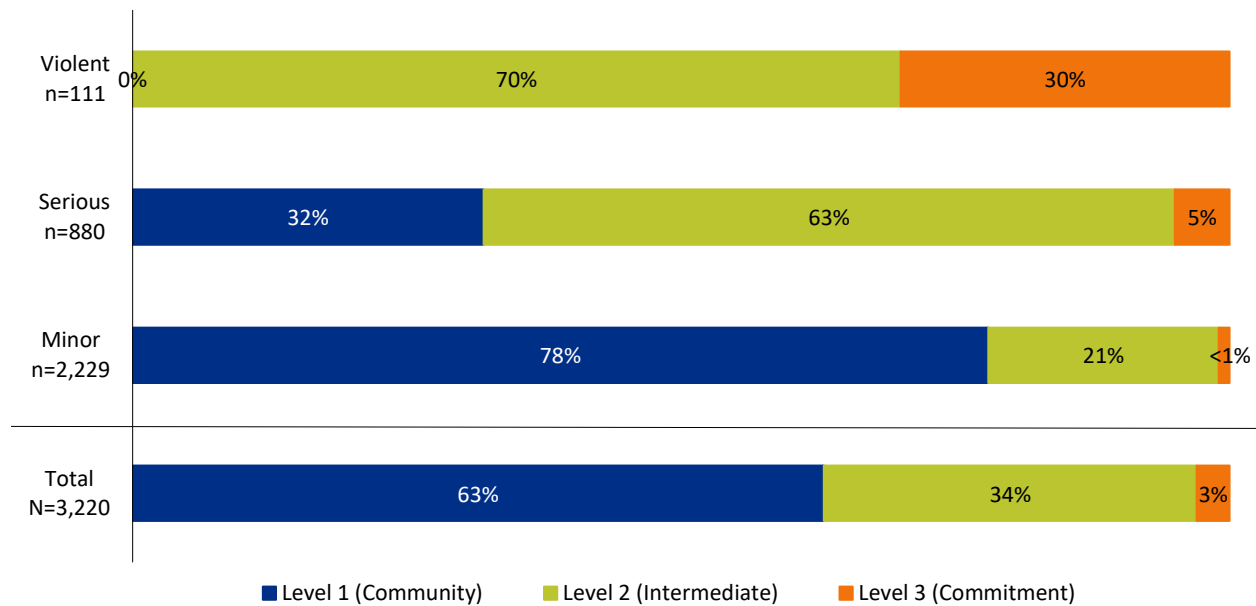


SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2019 Disposition Simulation Data

<sup>14</sup> Overall, 77% (or n=2,493) of the 3,220 dispositions were for misdemeanor offenses. Of the 880 adjudications for a serious offense, 30% (or n=264) were for Class A1 misdemeanor offenses. The remainder were for Class F-I felony offenses.

Figure 3 summarizes dispositions imposed in FY 2019 by offense classification and disposition level. Overall, the court ordered Level 1 dispositions for 63% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, Level 2 dispositions for 34% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, and Level 3 dispositions for 3% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent. Juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense were most likely to receive a Level 1 disposition (78%). Juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent or serious offense were more likely to receive a Level 2 disposition (63% and 70% respectively). Of the 83 Level 3 dispositions in FY 2019, 40% (n=33) were the result of an adjudication for a violent offense, 53% (n=44) for a serious offense, and 7% (n=6) for a minor offense.

**Figure 3**  
**Dispositions by Offense Classification and Disposition Level**  
**Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent**



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2019 Disposition Simulation Data

Table 3 shows how judges used dispositional resources given each combination of offense classification and delinquency history level. As indicated by the vertical “Total” column, the likelihood of the imposition of a Level 3 disposition increased as the seriousness of the offense classification increased (also see Figure 3). Similarly, the likelihood of the imposition of a Level 3 disposition increased as the delinquency history level increased. Overall, more than half (n=1,759) of the 3,220 dispositions involved juveniles with low delinquency history levels who were adjudicated for minor offenses (Class 1-Class 3 misdemeanors).

**Table 3**  
**Dispositions by the Dispositional Chart for Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent**

Offense Classification	Delinquency History Level			Total
	Low 0-1 Point	Medium 2-3 Points	High 4+ Points	
<b>Violent</b> A-E Felonies	Level 2/Level 3  Level 2: 68 (87%) Level 3: 10 (13%) n = 78	Level 3  Level 2: 6 (46%) Level 3: 7 (54%) n = 13	Level 3  Level 2: 4 (20%) Level 3: 16 (80%) n = 20	Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 0 (0%) Level 2: 78 (70%) Level 3: 33 (30%) n = 111 (4%)
<b>Serious</b> F-I Felonies A1 Misd.	Level 1/Level 2  Level 1: 278 (47%) Level 2: 315 (53%) n = 593	Level 2  Level 1: 5 (4%) Level 2: 118 (94%) Level 3: 2 (2%) n = 125	Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 2 (1%) Level 2: 118 (73%) Level 3: 42 (26%) n = 162	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 285 (32%) Level 2: 551 (63%) Level 3: 44 (5%) n = 880 (27%)
<b>Minor</b> 1-3 Misd.	Level 1  Level 1: 1,697 (96%) Level 2: 62 (4%)  n = 1,759	Level 1/Level 2  Level 1: 43 (16%) Level 2: 226 (84%)  n = 269	Level 2  Level 1: 4 (2%) Level 2: 191 (95%) Level 3: 6 (3%) n = 201	Level 1/Level 2  Level 1: 1,744 (78%) Level 2: 479 (22%) Level 3: 6 (0%) n = 2,229 (69%)
<b>Total</b>	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 1,975 (81%) Level 2: 445 (18%) Level 3: 10 (1%) n = 2,430 (75%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 48 (12%) Level 2: 350 (86%) Level 3: 9 (2%) n = 407 (13%)	Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 6 (1%) Level 2: 313 (82%) Level 3: 64 (17%) n = 383 (12%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3  Level 1: 2,029 (63%) Level 2: 1,108 (34%) Level 3: 83 (3%) N = 3,220 (100%)

Note: In FY 2019, there were 91 dispositions (or 3%) with a disposition not specified by the dispositional chart. However, it must be noted that certain provisions of the juvenile code allow a judge to impose a disposition other than those specified by the chart. Under G.S. 7B-2508(e), judges may find “extraordinary needs” and impose a lower level disposition. Under G.S. 7B-2508(d), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for an offense with a previous Level 3 disposition may be committed to a YDC. Finally, under G.S. 7B-2508(g), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a minor offense with four or more prior adjudications may be committed to a YDC.

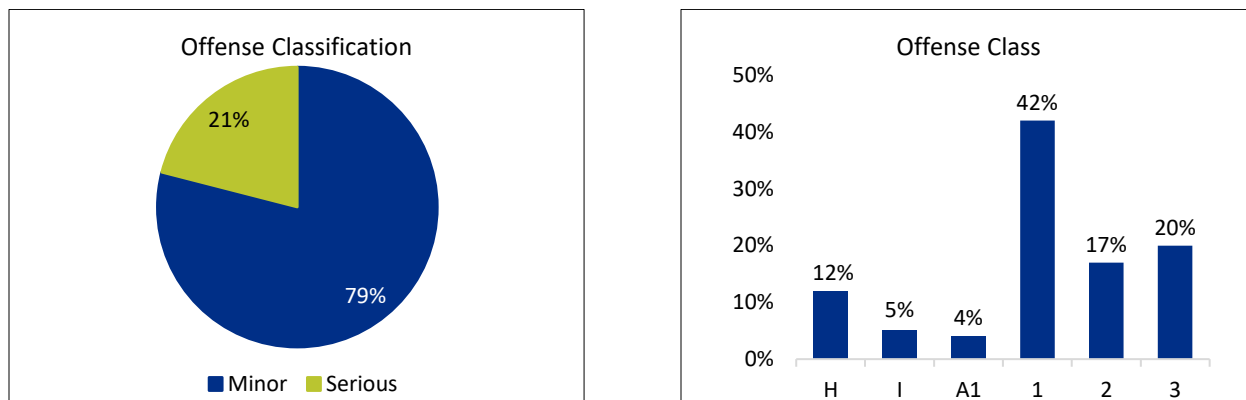
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2019 Disposition Simulation Data

### FY 2019 Convictions for 16- and 17-Year-Olds

As previously noted, the projections use adult conviction data to estimate the number of 16- and 17-year-olds who will come under juvenile jurisdiction beginning December 1, 2019. In FY 2019, 2,993 16- and 17-year-olds were convicted of Class H or Class I felonies or non-motor vehicle misdemeanors. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the eligible convictions by offense classification and offense class. Of the 2,993 16- and 17-year-olds, 21% were convicted of a serious offense (excluding classes F and G) and 79% were convicted of a minor offense. Further, the majority (42%) of the convictions were Class 1 misdemeanors. Overall, 83% of convictions were for misdemeanors, while 17% were for felony offenses.



**Figure 4**  
**Convictions by Offense Classification and Offense Class**



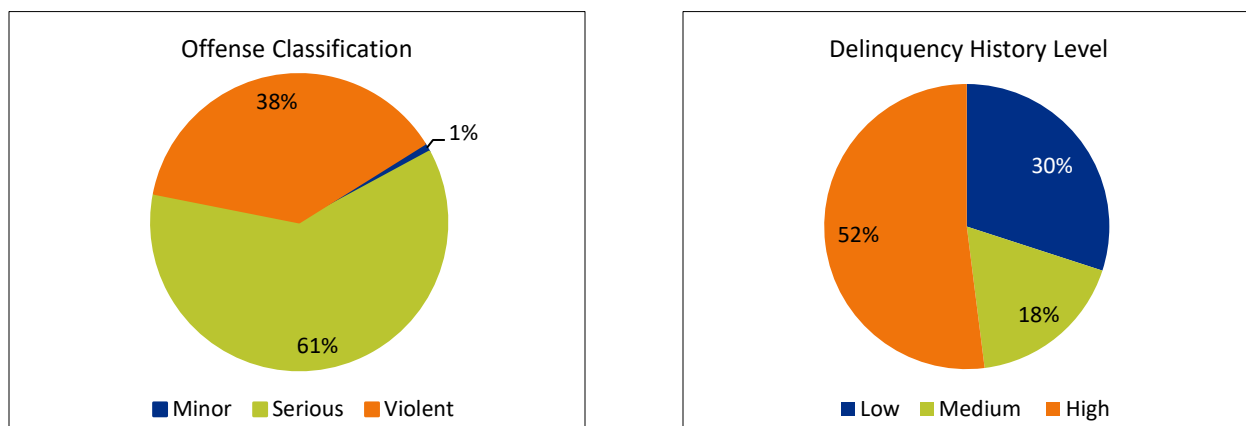
NOTE: The serious offenses exclude Class F and Class G felonies and the minor offenses exclude motor vehicle offenses.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2019 Felony and Misdemeanor Statistical Report Data

**YDC Stock Population on June 30, 2019**

The committed population or stock population – which represents the starting point of the projection – is the number of juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2019, the beginning of the current projection period. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the 204 juveniles committed to a YDC on June 30, 2019 by offense classification and delinquency history level. Almost all of the committed juveniles (95%) were adjudicated with a felony as their most serious offense; 38% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 61% for a serious offense, and 1% for a minor offense. Fifty-two percent of the juveniles had a high delinquency history level, 18% had a medium delinquency history level, and 30% had a low delinquency history level. Overall, 53% were committed to a YDC due to a new delinquent complaint, 41% for a probation violation, and 6% for a revocation of PRS.

**Figure 5**  
**YDC Stock Population**



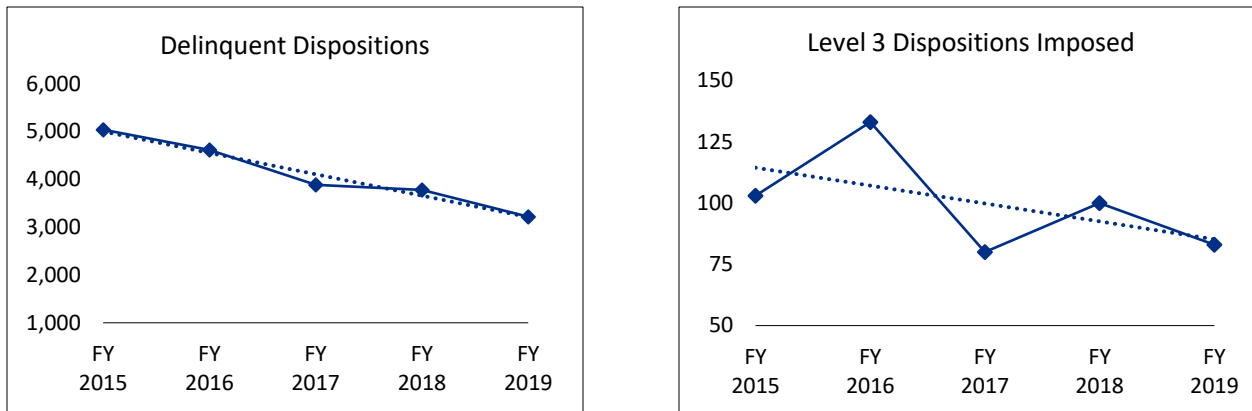
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2019 Disposition Simulation Data

## Juvenile Justice Trends

Changes in the juvenile justice system that affect the number of YDC admissions, the number of YDC releases, or the YDC LOS directly impact the accuracy of the projections. This section highlights juvenile justice statistics showing the year-to-year variations in several key components used to produce the projections.

Figure 6 presents trend data on delinquent dispositions and Level 3 dispositions imposed. Over the past five fiscal years, the number of delinquent dispositions has decreased 25% (from 5,041 in FY 2015 to 3,220 in FY 2019). Delinquent dispositions decreased 15% in the past fiscal year. Level 3 dispositions imposed have generally trended downward, with fluctuations every year, over the past five years. Notably, the number of Level 3 dispositions fluctuated between a high of 133 in FY 2016 and a low of 80 in FY 2017.

**Figure 6**  
**Juvenile Disposition Trends**



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2015 - FY 2019 Disposition Simulation Data

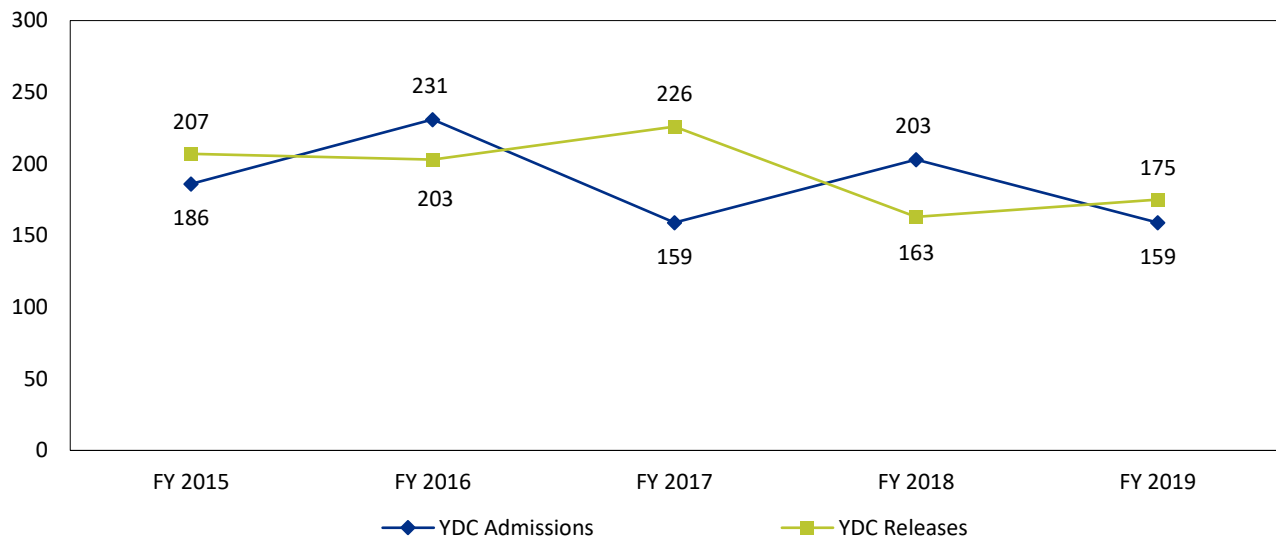
Over the past five years, YDC admissions and releases have fluctuated widely (see Table 4 and Figure 7). FY 2017 was notable for a 31% decrease in admissions and an 11% increase in releases compared to the year before. In FY 2019, admissions decreased by 22% and releases increased by 7%. In FY 2019, the average number of YDC admissions per month was 13, while the average number of YDC releases per month was 15; there were a total of 159 YDC admissions and 175 YDC releases.

**Table 4**  
**YDC Admissions and Releases**

Fiscal Year	YDC Admissions			YDC Releases		
	Total Number	Percent Change	Average Number Per Month	Total Number	Percent Change	Average Number Per Month
<b>2015</b>	186	-15	16	207	-9	17
<b>2016</b>	231	24	19	203	-2	17
<b>2017</b>	159	-31	13	226	11	19
<b>2018</b>	203	28	17	163	-28	14
<b>2019</b>	159	-22	13	175	7	15

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

**Figure 7**  
**YDC Admissions and Releases**



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

The LOS for committed juveniles has remained stable compared to the declines in delinquent dispositions and the fluctuations in Level 3 dispositions, YDC admissions, and YDC releases. In FY 2019, the overall average LOS was 14 months, with little variance noted over the past five fiscal years (see Table 5). The average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a violent offense was 16 months, the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a serious offense was 12 months, and the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense was 7 months.

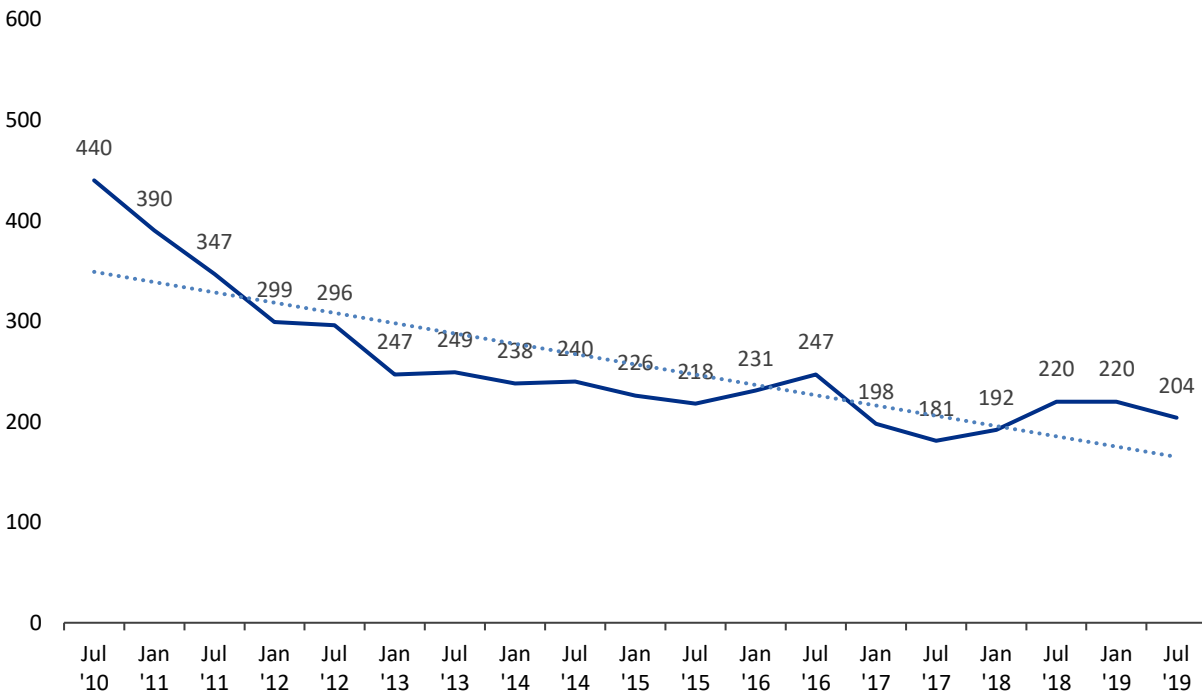
**Table 5**  
**Average Length of Stay for YDC Releases**

Juveniles Adjudicated of a:	Length of Stay (in months) by Fiscal Year					% Change	
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	FY 2018 to FY 2019	FY 2015 to FY 2019
<b>Violent Offense</b>	19	17	16	16	16	0	-16
<b>Serious Offense</b>	13	13	14	12	12	0	-8
<b>Minor Offense</b>	8	10	8	7	7	0	-13
<b>Overall</b>	14	14	13	13	14	8	0

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Figure 8 provides a historical examination of North Carolina’s YDC population. The YDC population has decreased 54% in the past ten years. The leveling of the population between FY 2013 and FY 2016 was followed by another period of decline in population in FY 2017. FY 2018 showed an uptick in the population with a slight decline in FY 2019.

**Figure 8**  
**YDC Population Trends: July 2010 - July 2019**



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, *Committed Youth Report*