

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER POPULATION PROJECTIONS: FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2027

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) population¹ 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 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP). 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), DJJDP's juvenile management information system.

RAISE THE AGE AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act (JJRA)^{2,3} and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact this year's projection, while key legislative changes to the juvenile code following implementation of the JJRA had minimal impact on the current projection.⁴ FY 2022 represents the second full year of data after the JJRA implementation.

While it was anticipated that raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction would increase the number of youth aged 16 and 17 (hereinafter RtA population) in the juvenile justice system, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact the YDC population as shown in Figure 1. As a result of the pandemic, the YDC population decreased 25% in FY 2020 and had a lower average population for each month compared to FY 2019. The population increased 2% over the course of FY 2022 mirroring levels of the YDC population in early FY 2020 (pre-JJRA implementation and pre-pandemic), but still below the average monthly population in FY 2019.

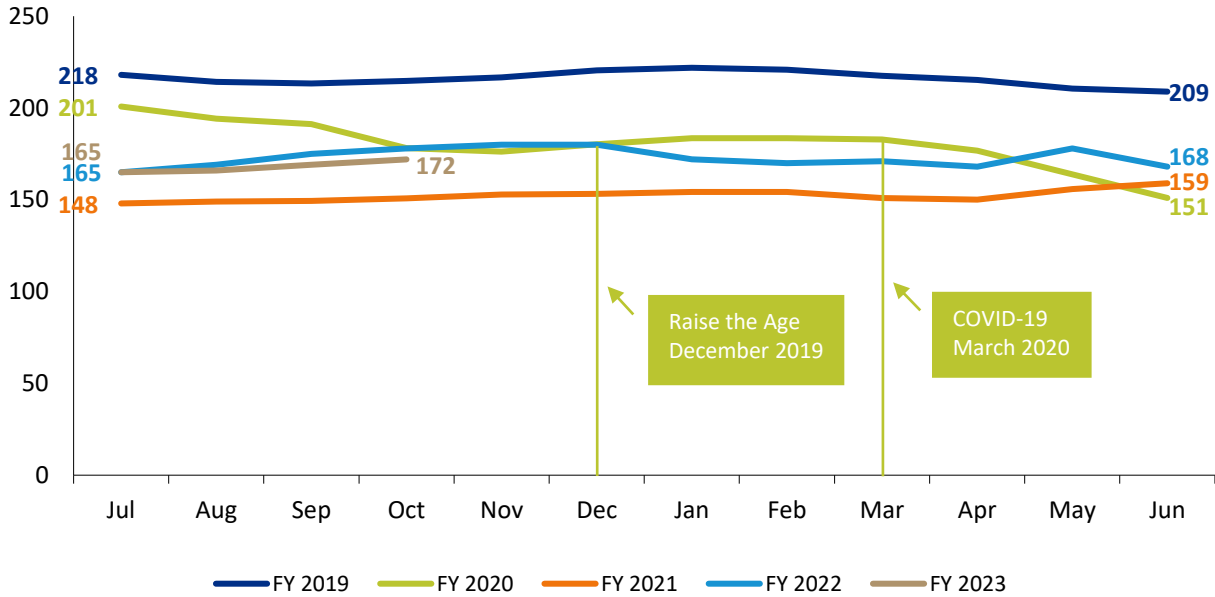
¹ Throughout this document, any reference to the YDC population includes juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

² The JJRA increased the age of juvenile jurisdiction so that most juveniles aged 16 and 17 facing criminal charges may have their cases disposed through the juvenile justice system rather than the adult criminal justice system beginning with offenses committed on or after December 1, 2019. 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.

³ In addition, the JJRA included 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. S.L. 2017-57, s. 16D.4.(aa) and (bb).

⁴ The key changes included minimum age for juvenile delinquency increased to 10 years for most juveniles (G.S. 7B-1501(7) and (27b)), jurisdiction extended for 16- and 17-year-olds depending on type of offense (G.S. 7B-2513(a2) and (a3)), and prosecutorial discretion for transfers and reverse waivers (G.S. 7B-2200.5(d)).

Figure 1
Average Monthly YDC Population by Fiscal Year



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

YDC POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND CAPACITY

The Sentencing Commission prepared YDC population projections for all juveniles adjudicated delinquent and disposed on or after July 1, 2022 (new population) and for all juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2022 (YDC stock population), the beginning of the current projection period. The combined projections account for the decline of the stock population and the changes in 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)).

Table 1 shows the projected YDC population and capacity over the five-year projection period. YDC capacity was provided by the DJJDP. The total YDC population is projected to be 176 for FY 2023 and 196 for FY 2027.⁵ A comparison of the projections with YDC capacity indicates that the projected YDC population will be within available YDC capacity during all projection years. The YDC population was 166 on June 30, 2022, and 176 on November 1, 2022.⁶

The current projection is lower than the previous projection due to the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Substantial changes (e.g., the pandemic) from year to year on key components of the projections (e.g., admissions, releases, and length of stay (LOS)) can affect their accuracy.

⁵ Separate housing units are required for male and female juveniles. Of the projected YDC beds needed for each year of the five-year projections, 91% are for males.

⁶ NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s *Committed Youth Report*.

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

Fiscal Year	YDC Population as of June 30 ⁷		YDC Capacity ^{8,9}	Difference between Projection and Capacity ¹⁰
	Previous Projection	Current Projection		
2023	210	176	186	10
2024	214	188	194	6
2025	215	194	220	26
2026	217	191	220	29
2027	N/A	196	220	24

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

⁷ Juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape) are included in the projections.

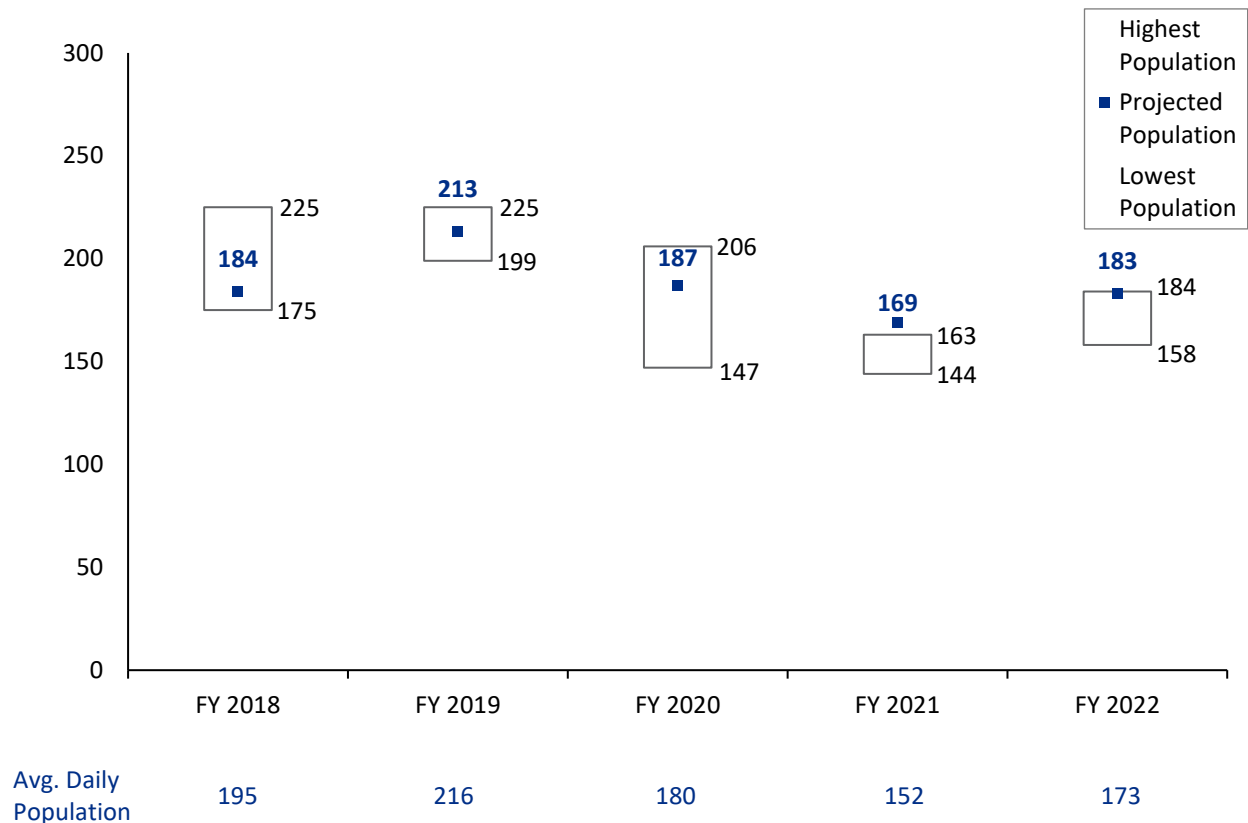
⁸ YDC capacity is contingent on staffing patterns to meet required ratios. It does not include community commitment placements or transition step-down beds, which are alternatives to YDC placement for some juveniles in this population, for all or part of commitment.

⁹ Per S.L. 2017-57, a new YDC will be constructed (Section 36.2 (d)) and is expected to open in Fall 2023. This 60-bed facility is designed to allow for flexible use of housing units, either for detention or commitment purposes. This 60-bed facility is not included in Table 1 YDC capacity as projections indicate the need in 2023 will be for detention beds. In 2022, 8 beds at Chatham YDC and 22 beds at Lenoir YDC are being utilized as detention beds. DJJDP plans to return 8 beds at Chatham YDC to YDC beds in 2024 and 22 beds at Lenoir YDC to YDC beds in 2025. Thirty-two (32) beds at the Cabarrus YDC transitioned to detention beds on February 14, 2022, and will remain detention beds until a YDC bed need arises.

¹⁰ 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.

Figure 2 illustrates the historical accuracy of the first year of the YDC 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 2018, the projected YDC population was typically within the range of the lowest and highest YDC populations for any given fiscal year.

Figure 2
A Comparison of the Actual Minimum and Maximum Population with the Projected YDC Population
FY 2018 to FY 2022 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 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

ASSUMPTIONS

The projections are based on the assumptions provided in Table 2 that were determined using empirical data from the most recent fiscal year (FY 2022) and are assumed to remain throughout the five-year

projection. The growth rates are based on census projections for North Carolina’s youth population,¹¹ juvenile justice indicators,¹² and the implementation of the JJRA beginning in 2019.

Table 2
Assumptions for the FY 2023 to FY 2027 Projections

Growth Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •0% in Year 1 to Year 3 •1% in Year 4 to Year 5
YDC Admission Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •62% of all YDC admissions resulted from a delinquent complaint •26% from a probation violation •12% from a revocation of PRS
Lag-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •10 months for probation violations •5 months for revocation of PRS
Level 3 Dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3%
YDC Length of Stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •12 months
System Readjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •23% increase in semiannual dispositions in FY 2022

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

The five-year projections account for the increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction and 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 DJJDP and/or other agencies that provide services for juveniles.

COMPONENTS OF YDC POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Juvenile Disposition Chart (see Table 3), the empirical data from the latest available fiscal year (for non-RtA and RtA juveniles), and the YDC stock population as of June 30, 2022, form the basis of the five-year projections and are detailed in the following sections.

¹¹ Population growth for North Carolina’s youth aged 10-15 years is expected to decline over the projection period with an increase in the fifth year, while youth aged 16-17 years will experience growth in the immediate future but declines in the later years, www.demog.state.nc.us (2022).

¹² The rate of delinquent complaints was 15 per 1,000 juveniles in FY 2021 and 22 per 1,000 juveniles in FY 2022 (DJJDP). Overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles decreased 25% from FY 2020 to FY 2021. (*Crime in North Carolina – 2021*, State Bureau of Investigation, <http://crimereporting.ncsbi.gov>).

**Table 3
Juvenile Disposition Chart**

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

FY 2022 Juvenile Delinquent Dispositions

This section highlights the information on the 2,959 delinquent dispositions in FY 2022,¹³ including offense classification, delinquency history level, and disposition level.¹⁴ 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 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 be imposed by a juvenile court judge – commitment to the DJJDP for placement in a YDC.

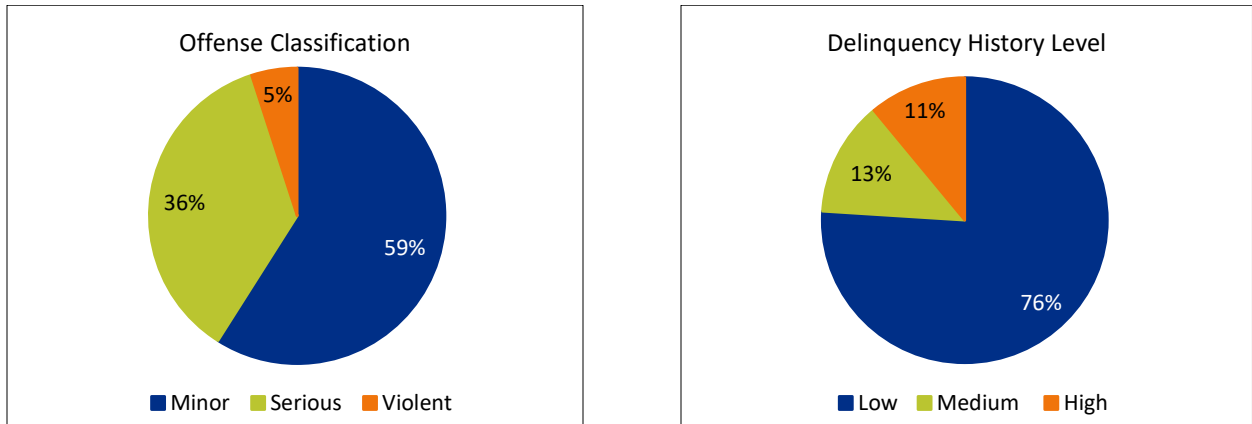
Figure 3 shows the distribution of the 2,959 delinquent dispositions by offense classification and delinquency history level. Of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent in FY 2022, 5% were adjudicated for a Violent offense, 36% for a Serious offense, and 59% for a Minor offense.¹⁵ The majority (76%) of the dispositions involved a juvenile with a Low delinquency history level, 13% involved a juvenile with a Medium delinquency history level, and 11% involved a juvenile with a High delinquency history level.

¹³ The 2,959 delinquent dispositions highlighted in this section include both non-RtA (1,815) and RtA (1,144) juveniles.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Overall, 68% (or 2,001) of the 2,959 dispositions were for misdemeanor offenses. Of the 1,070 adjudications for a serious offense, 24% (or 258) were for Class A1 misdemeanor offenses. The remainder were for Class F-I felony offenses.

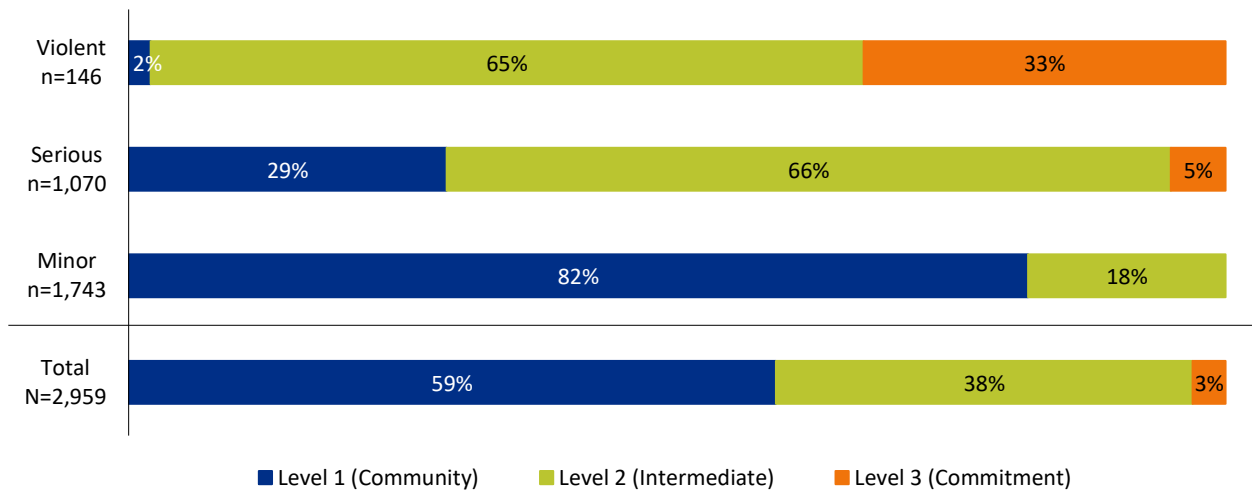
Figure 3
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Delinquency History Level
Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2022 Disposition Simulation Data

Figure 4 summarizes dispositions imposed in FY 2022 by offense classification and disposition level. Overall, the court ordered Level 1 dispositions for 59% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, Level 2 dispositions for 38% 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 (82%). Juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Violent or Serious offense were more likely to receive a Level 2 disposition (65% and 66% respectively). Of the 100 Level 3 dispositions in FY 2022, 48 (or 48%) were the result of an adjudication for a Violent offense, 50 (or 50%) for a Serious offense, and 2 (or 2%) for a Minor offense.

Figure 4
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Disposition Level
Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent



Note: There were 2 (or <1%) Minor offenses with a Level 3 disposition.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2022 Disposition Simulation Data

Table 4 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 4). Similarly, the likelihood of the imposition of a Level 3 disposition increased as the delinquency history level increased. Dispositions for juveniles with Low delinquency history levels who were adjudicated for Minor offenses (Class 1-3 misdemeanors) comprised the largest group – 1,440 (or 49%) of the 2,959.

Table 4
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	
Violent A-E Felonies	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 3 (3%) Level 2: 81 (73%) Level 3: 27 (24%) n = 111	Level 3 Level 2: 5 (63%) Level 3: 3 (37%) n = 8	Level 3 Level 2: 9 (33%) Level 3: 18 (67%) n = 27	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 3 (2%) Level 2: 95 (65%) Level 3: 48 (33%) n = 146 (5%)
Serious F-I Felonies A1 Misd.	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 304 (43%) Level 2: 395 (57%) n = 669	Level 2 Level 1: 11 (6%) Level 2: 172 (93%) Level 3: 1 (1%) n = 184	Level 2/Level 3 Level 2: 138 (74%) Level 3: 49 (26%) n = 187	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 315 (29%) Level 2: 705 (66%) Level 3: 50 (5%) n = 1,070 (36%)
Minor 1-3 Misd.	Level 1 Level 1: 1,393 (97%) Level 2: 47 (3%) n = 1,440	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 27 (15%) Level 2: 154 (85%) n = 181	Level 2 Level 1: 5 (4%) Level 2: 115 (94%) Level 3: 2 (2%) n = 122	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 1,425 (82%) Level 2: 316 (18%) Level 3: 2 (<1%) n = 1,743 (59%)
Total	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 1,700 (76%) Level 2: 523 (23%) Level 3: 27 (1%) n = 2,250 (76%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 38 (10%) Level 2: 331 (89%) Level 3: 4 (1%) n = 373 (13%)	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 5 (1%) Level 2: 262 (78%) Level 3: 69 (21%) n = 336 (11%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 1,743 (59%) Level 2: 1,116 (38%) Level 3: 100 (3%) N = 2,959 (100%)

Note: In FY 2022, there were 83 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. 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. Finally, under G.S. 7B-2508(g1), juveniles adjudicated for an offense that the court finds beyond a reasonable doubt was committed as part of criminal gang activity as defined in G.S. 7B-2508.1 shall receive a disposition one level higher than would otherwise be provided for the class of offense and delinquency history level.¹⁶

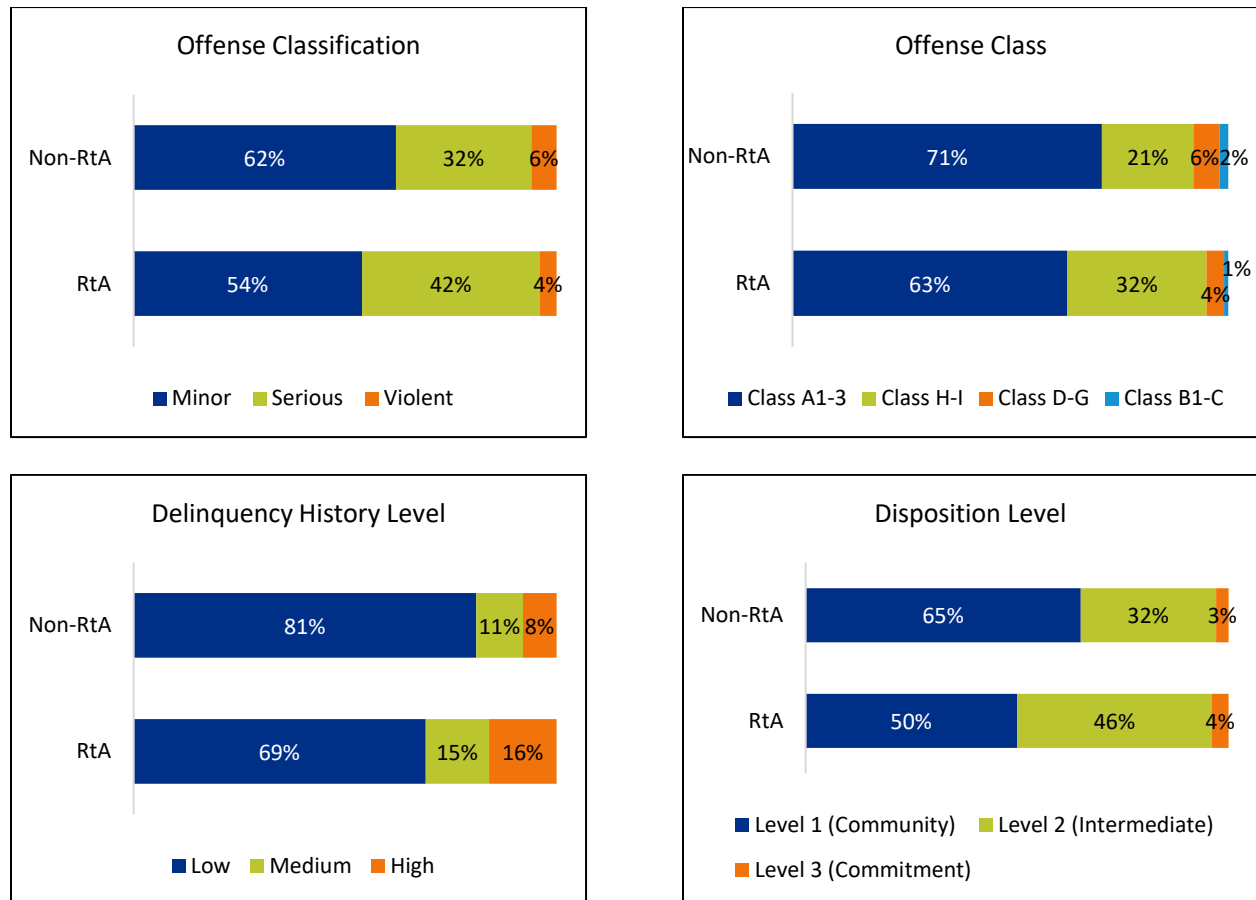
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2022 Disposition Simulation Data

¹⁶ In FY 2022, no juveniles had their disposition level enhanced due to gang activity.

Comparison of Non-RtA and RtA Juveniles

As noted previously, this is the second full year of data for RtA juveniles adjudicated and disposed in FY 2022. Figure 5 examines the differences between the non-RtA and RtA juveniles (61% and 39% of the dispositions respectively). Overall, RtA juveniles were adjudicated of a higher percentage of offenses in the Serious classification, had more contact with the JJS (i.e., higher delinquency history levels), and had more serious dispositions imposed when compared to the younger, non-RtA juveniles.

Figure 5
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Class, Delinquency History, and Disposition Level:
A Comparison of Non-RtA (n=1,815) and RtA (n=1,114) Juveniles



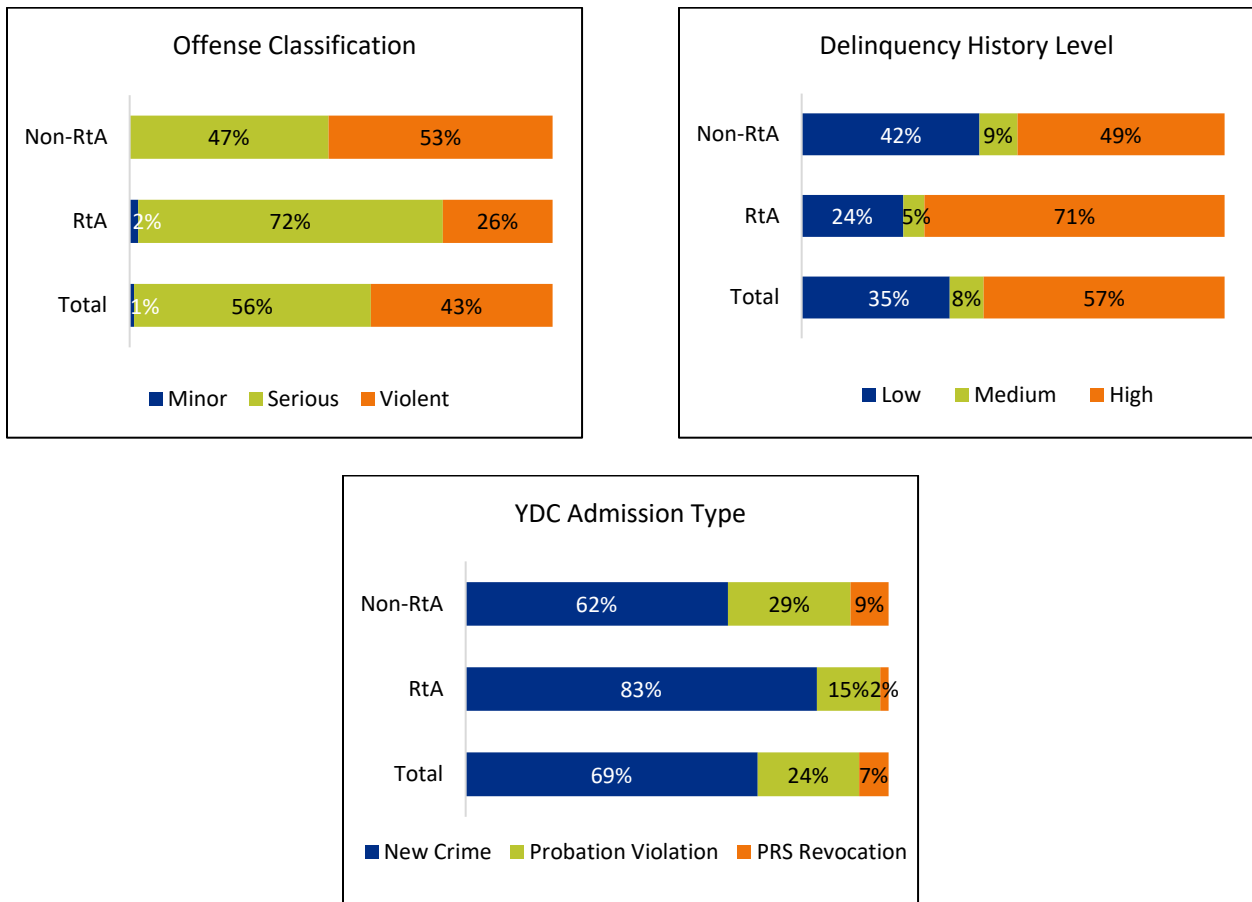
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2022 Disposition Simulation Data

YDC Stock Population on June 30, 2022

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, 2022, the beginning of the current projection period. Figure 6 shows the distribution of the 166 juveniles committed to a YDC on June 30, 2022, by offense classification and delinquency history level for the YDC population as a whole, as well as by age at offense (i.e., non-RtA and RtA). Thirty-five percent (35% or 58) of the YDC population on June 30, 2022, were RtA juveniles. Most committed juveniles (98%) were adjudicated with a felony as their most serious offense; 43% were adjudicated for a Violent offense, 56% for a Serious offense, and

1% for a Minor offense. Three-fourths of RtA juveniles (72%) had committed a Serious offense, while non-RtA juveniles were more evenly split between Serious and Violent (47% and 53% respectively). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of juveniles had a High delinquency history level, 8% had a Medium delinquency history level, and 35% had a Low delinquency history level. RtA juveniles had a higher percentage with a High delinquency history compared to non-RtA juveniles. Overall, 69% were committed to a YDC due to a new crime (i.e., new delinquent complaint), 24% for a probation violation, and 7% for a revocation of PRS. RtA juveniles had a higher percentage entering a YDC due to a new crime compared to non-RtA juveniles.

Figure 6
YDC Stock Population



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2022 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 key components used to produce the projections.

Over the past five fiscal years (FY 2018 to FY 2022), the number of delinquent dispositions has decreased 22% (see Figure 7). The 21% decrease from FY 2019 to FY 2020 can be attributed to the pandemic.

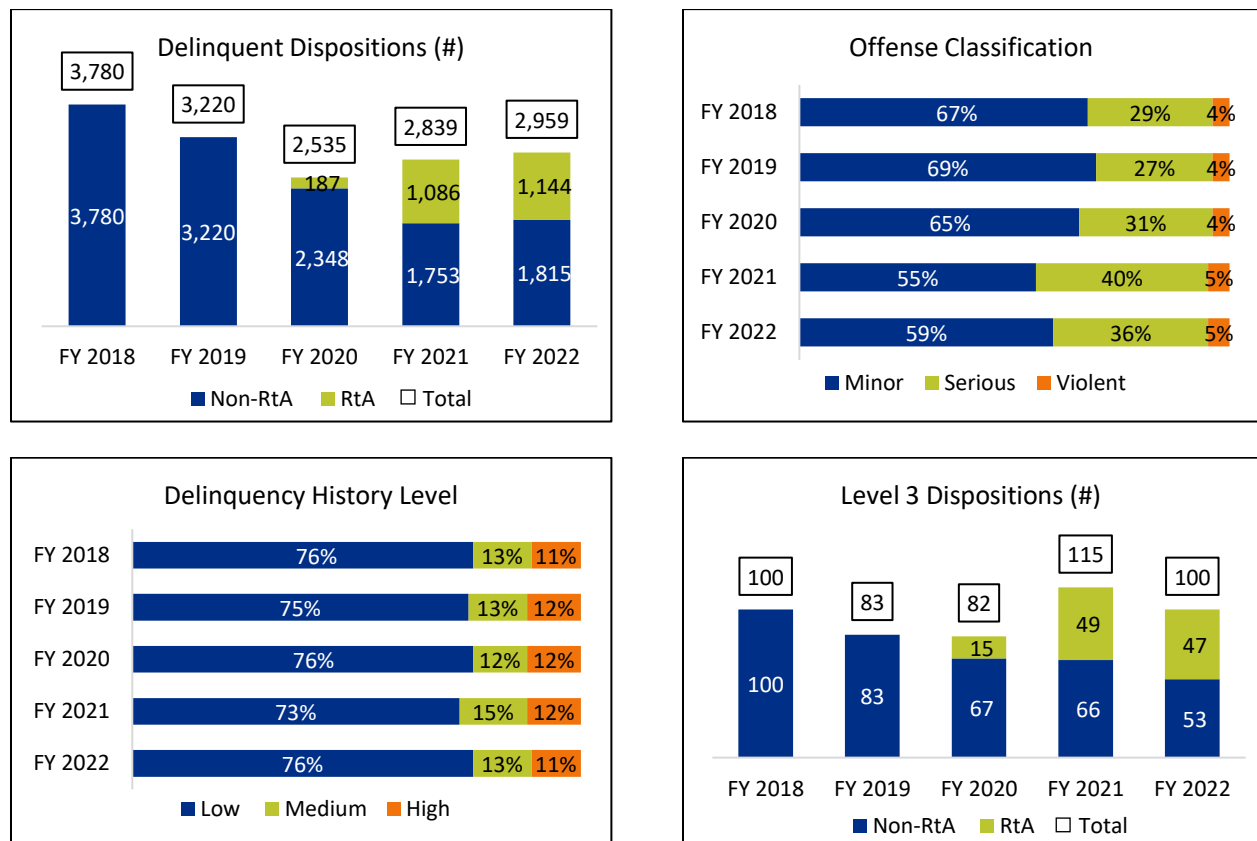
Delinquent dispositions increased by 4% from FY 2021 to FY 2022, with increases for both groups (4% for non-RtA and 5% for RtA). RtA juveniles accounted for 39% of dispositions in FY 2022.

From FY 2018 to FY 2020, the distribution by offense classification remained relatively stable. Shifts occurred in FY 2021 with more juveniles adjudicated of a Serious offense and fewer adjudicated of a Minor offense. That trend continued into FY 2022; these shifts occurred for both non-RtA and RtA juveniles. The number of Violent offenses remained stable for the time period examined.

From FY 2018 to FY 2020, delinquency history trends were fairly stable (see Figure 7). In FY 2022, the delinquency history of RtA juveniles was 69% Low, 15% Medium, and 16% High compared to non-RtA juveniles at 81% Low, 11% Medium, and 8% High.

The number of Level 3 dispositions fluctuated between a low of 82 in FY 2020 and a high of 115 in FY 2021, with a 13% decrease in the number of Level 3 dispositions from FY 2021 to FY 2022 (see Figure 7). Level 3 dispositions decreased 20% for non-RtA juveniles and 4% for RtA juveniles between FY 2021 and FY 2022.

**Figure 7
Juvenile Disposition Trends**



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2018 - FY 2022 Disposition Simulation Data

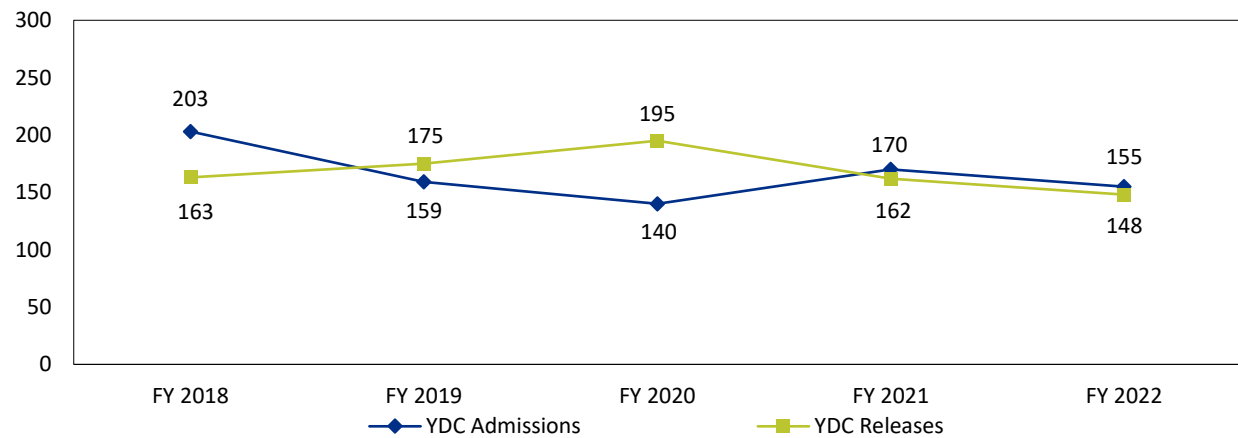
Over the past five years, YDC admissions and releases have fluctuated widely due to impact of the JJRA and the pandemic (see Table 5 and Figure 8). YDC admissions decreased in FY 2019 and FY 2020, while YDC releases increased. For FY 2021, YDC admissions increased, while releases decreased. In FY 2022, admissions and releases decreased by 9% each; the average number of YDC admissions and releases per month was 13 and 12 respectively.

Table 5
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
2018	203	28	17	163	-28	14
2019	159	-22	13	175	7	15
2020	140	-12	12	195	11	16
2021	170	21	14	162	-17	14
2022	155	-9	13	148	-9	12

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Figure 8
YDC Admissions and Releases



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The overall LOS for committed juveniles has remained fairly stable compared to the declines in delinquent dispositions and the fluctuations in Level 3 dispositions, YDC admissions, and YDC releases. In FY 2022, the overall average LOS was 12 months, a slight decrease compared to the previous four years (see Table 6). The average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a violent offense was 13 months, the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a serious offense was 11 months, and the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense was 5 months.

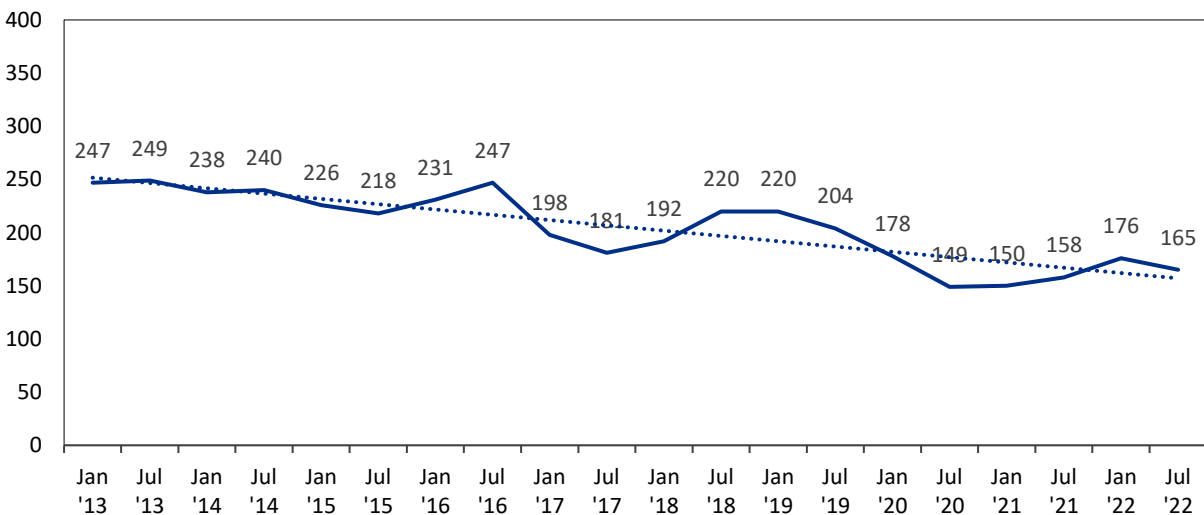
Table 6
Average Length of Stay for YDC Releases

Juveniles Adjudicated of a:	Length of Stay (in months) by Fiscal Year					% Change	
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	FY 2021 to FY 2022	FY 2018 to FY 2022
Violent Offense	16	16	17	14	13	-7	-19
Serious Offense	12	12	14	12	11	-8	-8
Minor Offense	7	7	9	9	5	-44	-29
Overall	13	14	14	13	12	-8	-8

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Figure 9 provides an examination of North Carolina’s YDC population on the first day of each month over the past ten years. Overall, the YDC population has decreased 33%. 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 declines beginning again at the end of FY 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent fiscal year showed an increase in the YDC Population as courts return to normalcy following the pandemic.

Figure 9
YDC Population Trends: January 2013 to July 2022



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