



# MONTANA JUDICIAL BRANCH

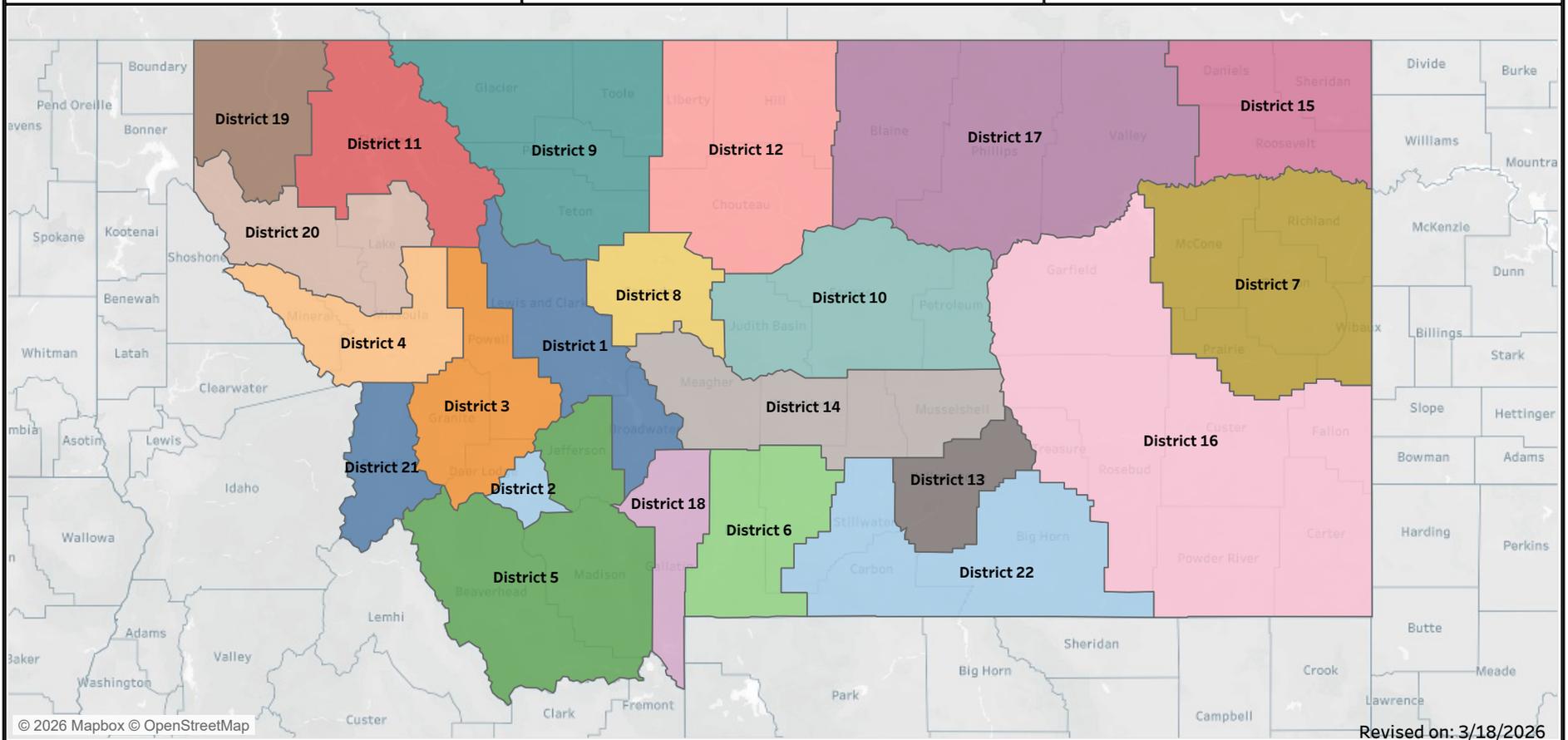
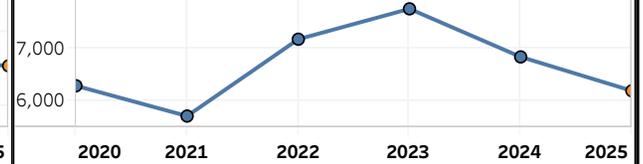
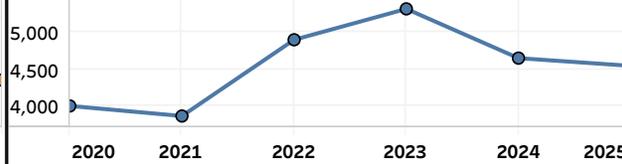
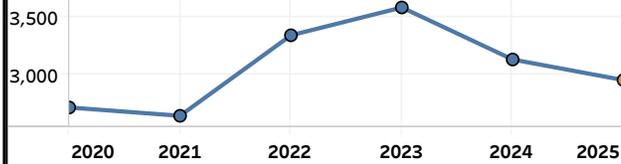
## Youth Court Overview

January 2025 - December 2025

2,952  
TOTAL UNDUPLICATED YOUTH

4,551  
TOTAL REFERRALS

6,201  
TOTAL OFFENSES



Revised on: 3/18/2026

# Montana Youth Court System Overview

How youth enter the Youth Court system and how cases typically move through the process

## Typical youth court pathway

1

### Referral

- Law enforcement
- Schools and community agencies
- Parents/guardians

2

### Juvenile probation intake

- Youth meets with Juvenile Probation Officer
- Parent/guardian present
- Allegations reviewed; next steps determined

3

### Informal resolution (most cases)

- Case managed by juvenile probation
- Accountability plan, supervision, and services
- Designed to respond quickly and appropriately

4

### Formal court process (about 10%)

- Petition filed by County Attorney
- Youth appears before the Youth Court Judge
- Court orders and ongoing oversight as needed

## At a glance

### Statewide Structure



22

Judicial districts with general Youth Court oversight by the District Court Judge

### Youth Court Services

is a statutory function operating within Montana's District Courts

~90% / ~10%

Most referrals are resolved informally; a smaller portion proceed through formal court petition

**Learn More:** Visit the Montana Judicial Branch Youth Courts website: [Youth Courts](#)



**MONTANA SUPREME COURT: Office of the Court Administrator**  
301 South Park Ave., STE 328 Helena, Montana 59620  
(406) 841-2950

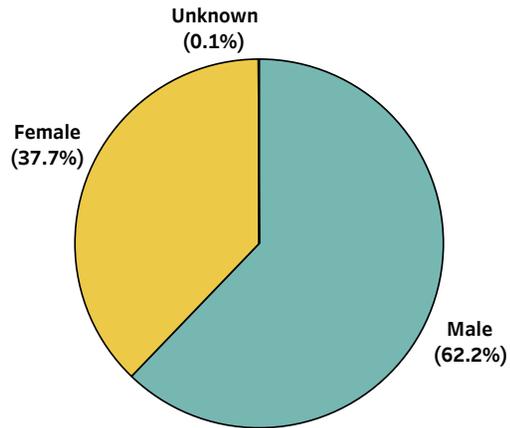
### Montana Youth Court Foundation

- Accountability – Youth acknowledge harm and take responsibility for their actions.
- Community Safety – Responses are designed to protect the public and reduce future offending.
- Competency Development – Youth are connected with services and supports that address underlying behaviors.
- Family Engagement – Parents and guardians play a critical role in the success of youth involved in the system.

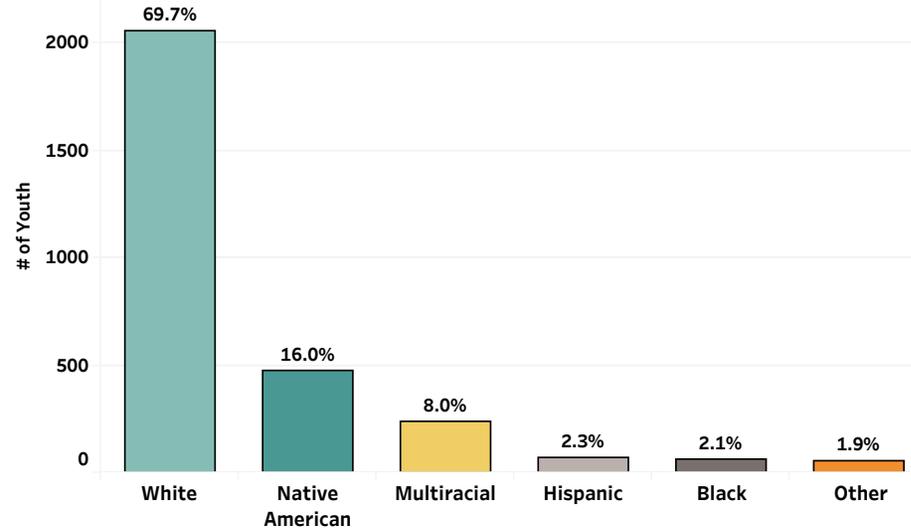
# YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Unduplicated Youth: 2,952

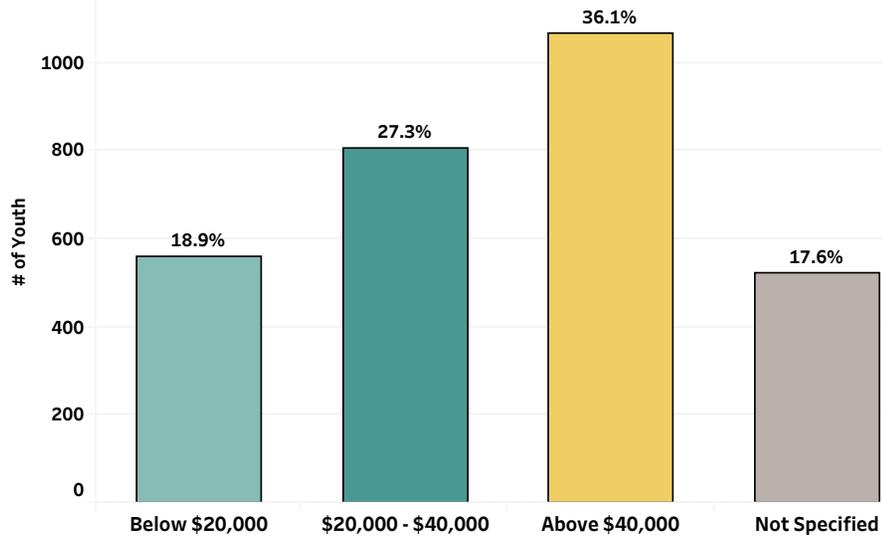
## Gender



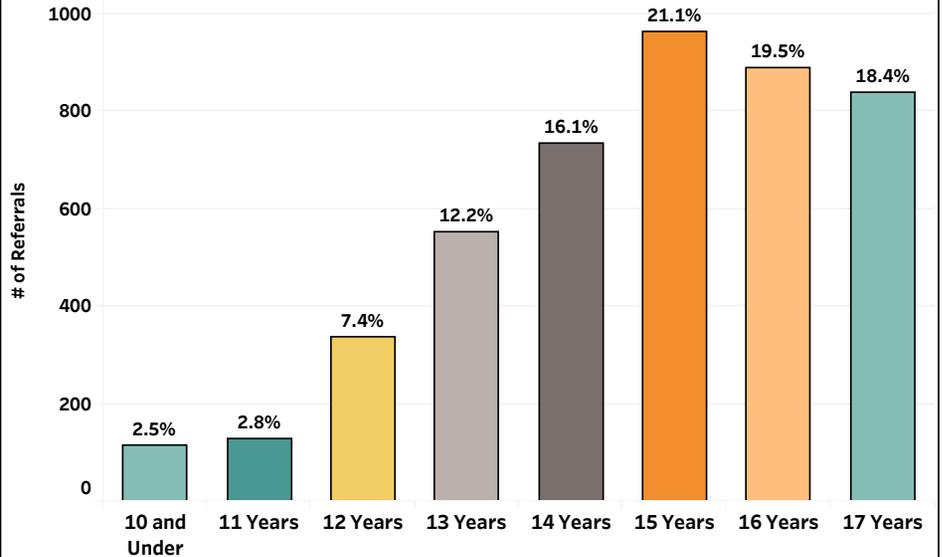
## Race



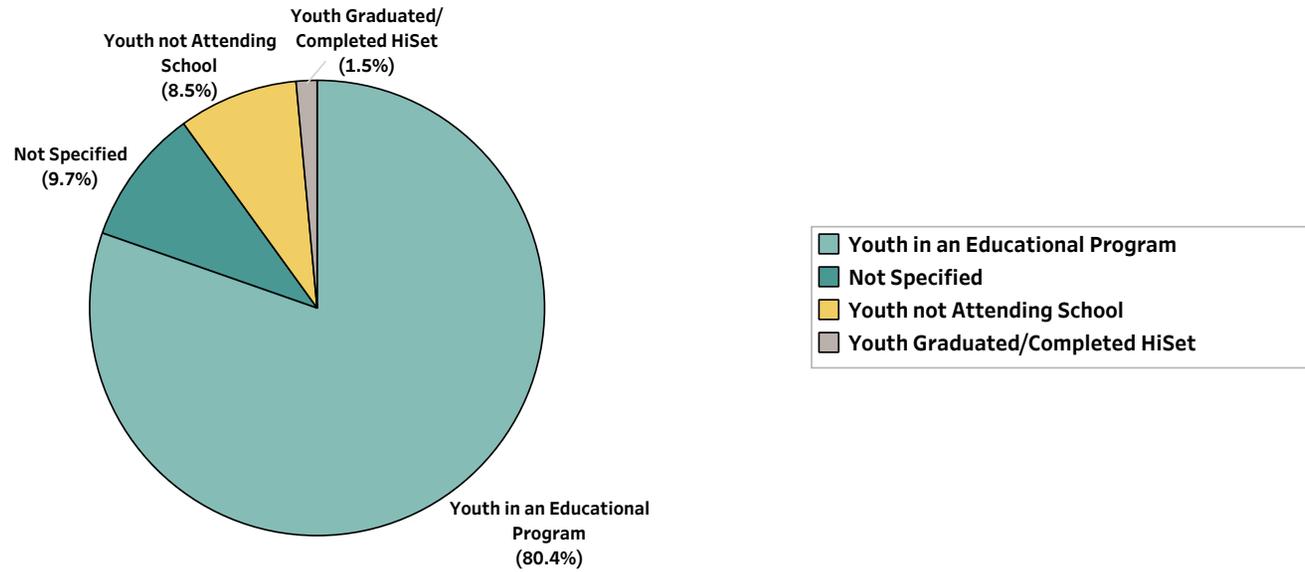
## Family's Household Income



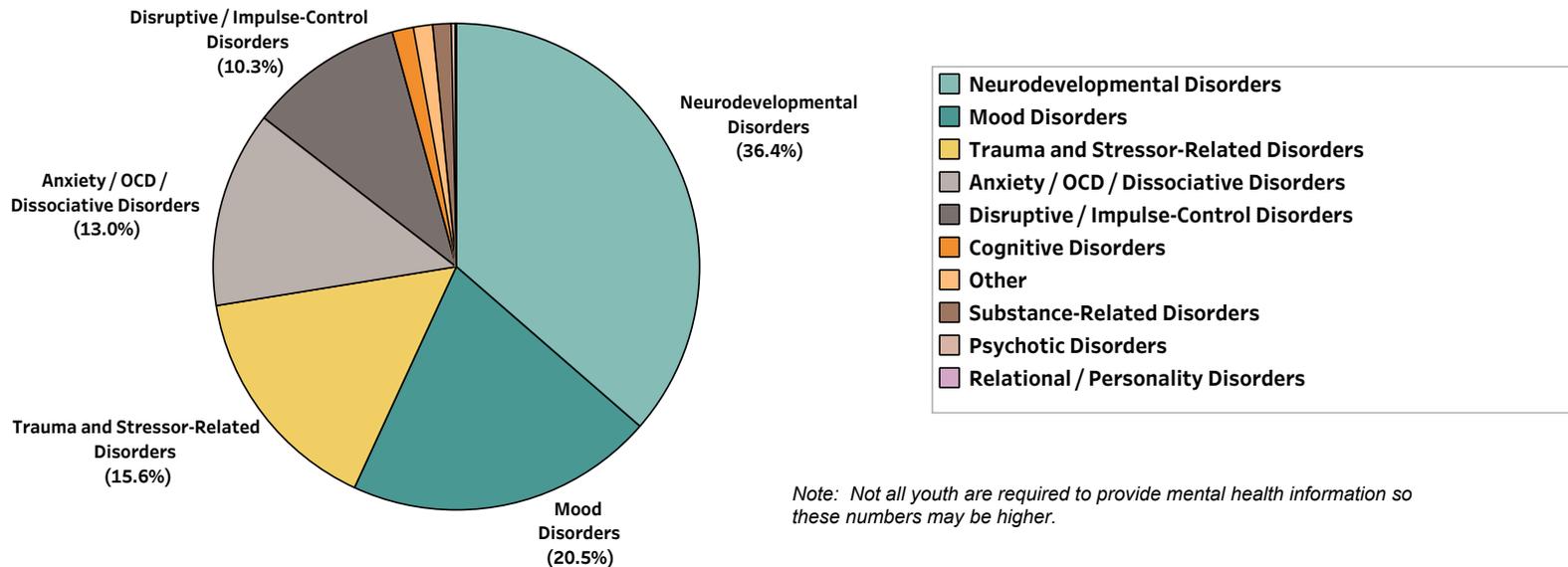
## Age at Time of Offense



### School Participation at Time of Offense



### Mental Health Diagnosis Provided at Time of Offense



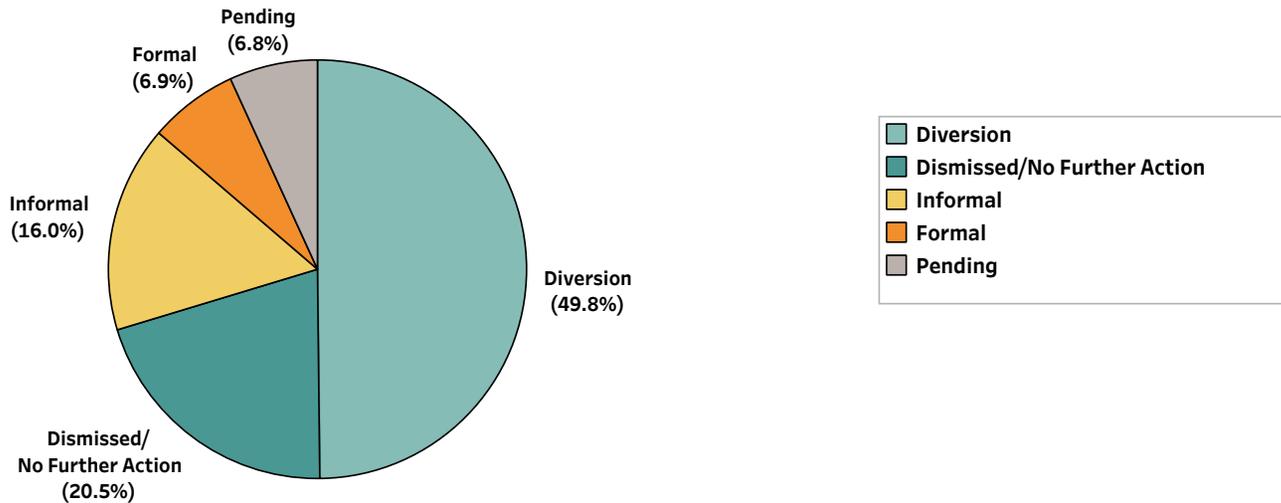
*Note: Not all youth are required to provide mental health information so these numbers may be higher.*

# REFERRALS

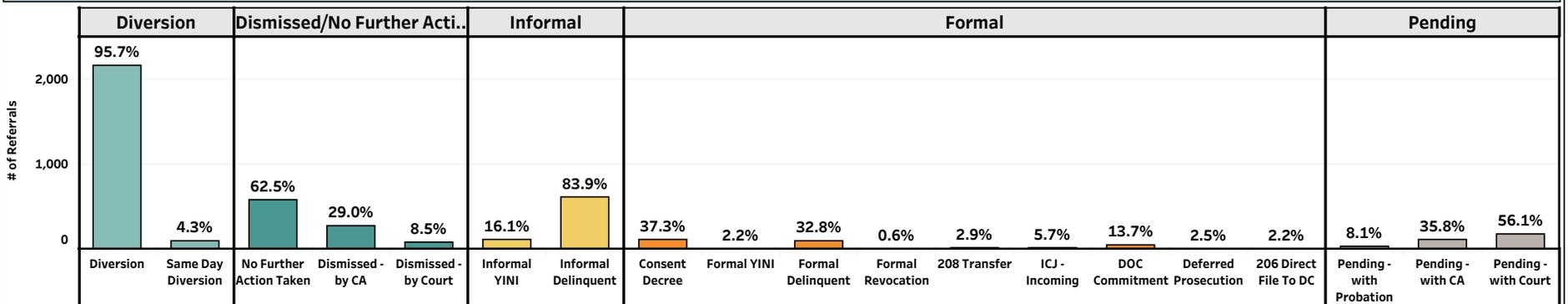
Total Referrals: 4,551

## Type of Disposition Used

- Diversion:** Referral that is diverted from formal or informal probation
- Informal:** Referral handled by Juvenile Probation Officer
- Formal:** Referral in which youth appears before Youth Court Judge
- Dismissed/No Further Action Taken:** Referral in which case is dismissed by Juvenile Probation Officer, County Attorney, or Court
- Pending:** Referral awaiting action from the County Attorney's Office or the Court, or a ticket has been issued, and Juvenile Probation is waiting to see the youth and parent(s), or is awaiting further investigation by law enforcement



## Type of Disposition - breakdown

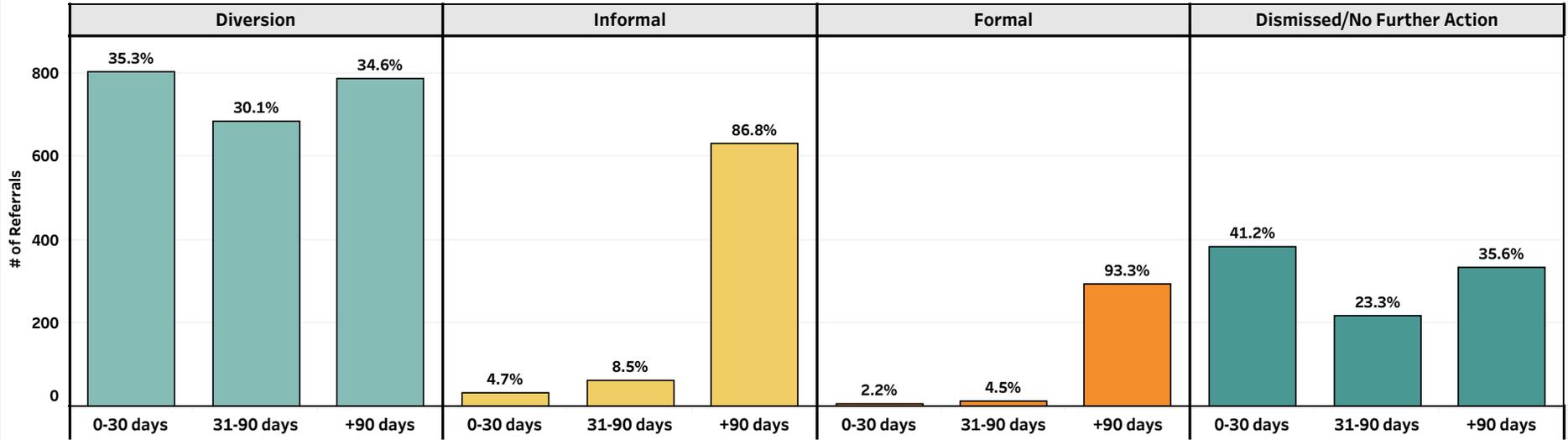


### Average Length of Disposition (includes ALL dispositions)

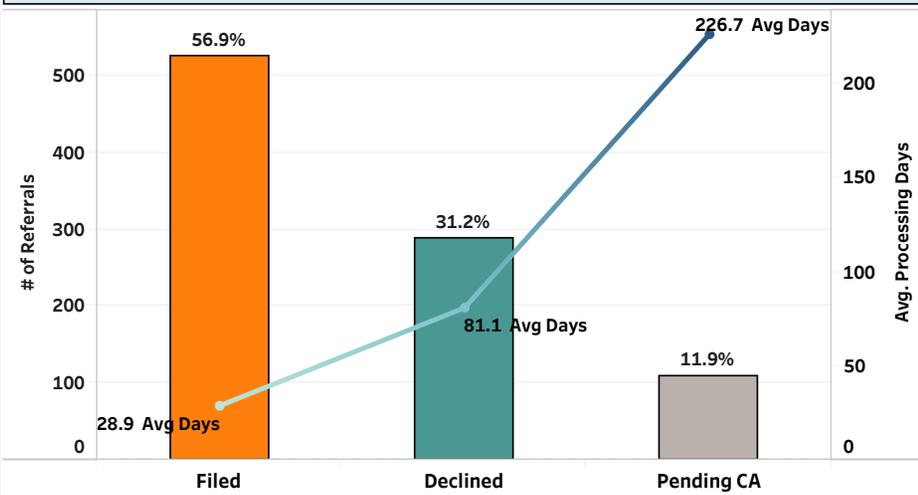
0-30 Days	31-90 Days	+90 Days
29.8%	22.6%	47.6%

Every referral has a disposition, which is comparable to an adult disposition handed down by a Judge.  
 The above chart includes all referrals except those that are in a *Pending* status because in these cases a disposition end date has yet to be determined..

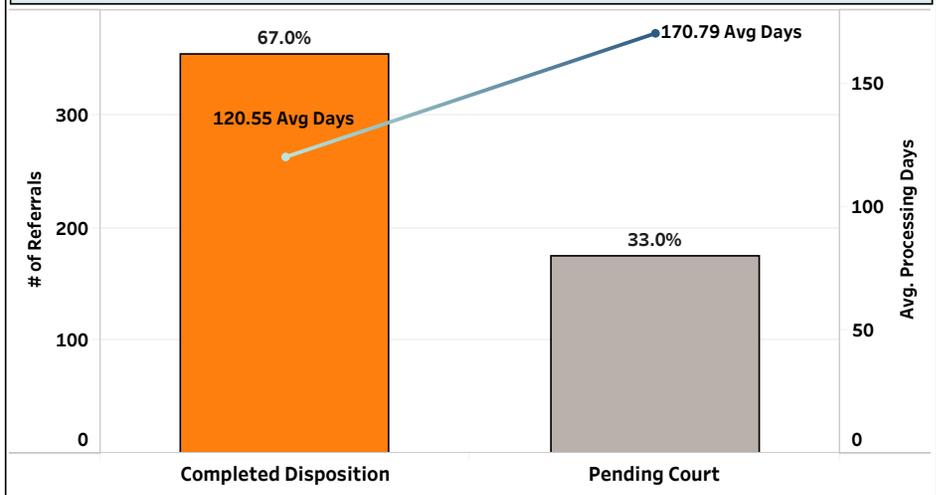
### Average Length of Disposition - By Type



### Formal Referrals to the County Attorney: 926



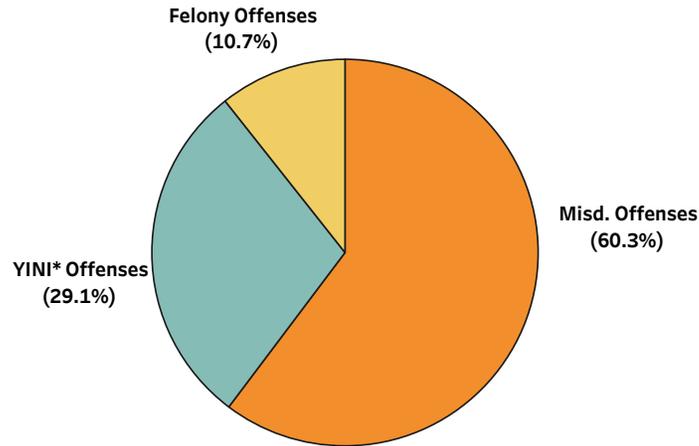
### Formal Referrals to the Court: 527



# OFFENSES

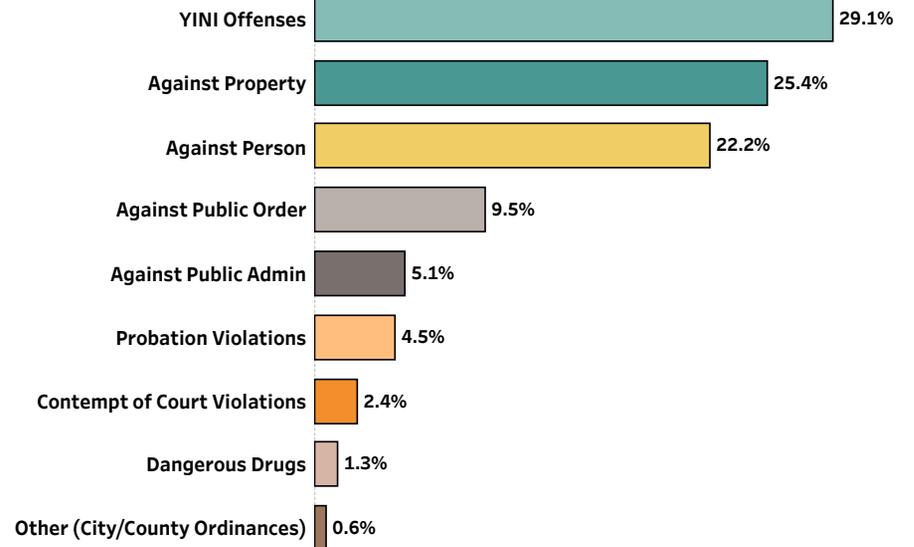
Total Offenses: 6,201

## Offenses by Classification

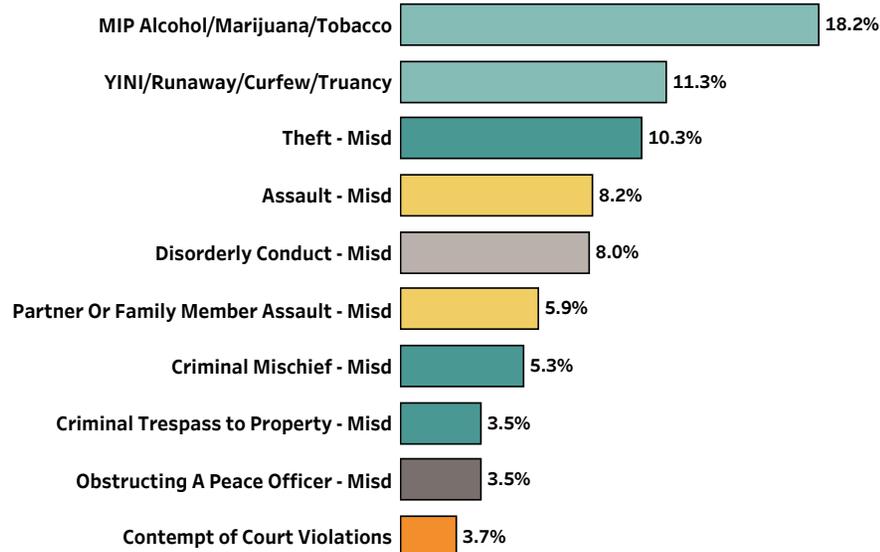


\* Youth in Need of Intervention (YINI) Offenses: These are matters that are offenses because of the youth's age and include such things as a minor in possession of alcohol/marijuana/tobacco, truancy, curfew, or runaway violations.

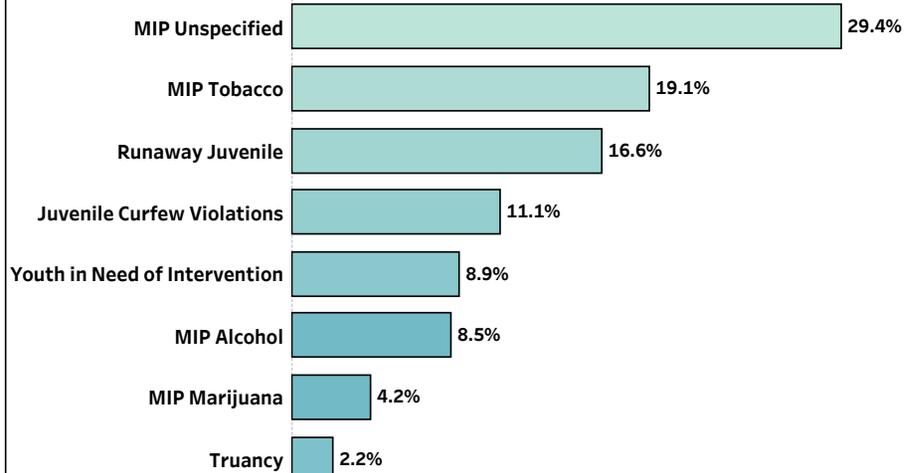
## Offenses by Category



## Top 10 Offenses



## YINI Offense Breakdown



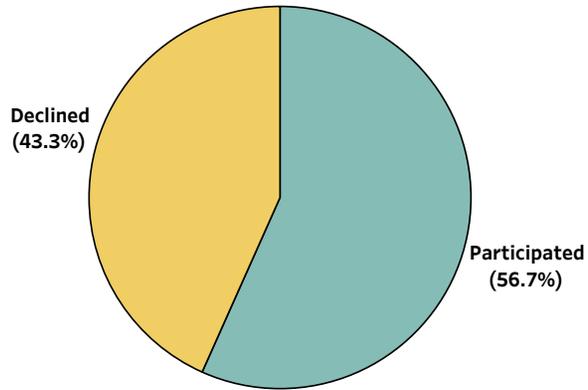
Note: Courts of Limited Jurisdiction also have jurisdiction over MIPs, so this information may not reflect all MIPs cited.

# EXPERIENCES & EXPRESSIONS SCREENER (EES)

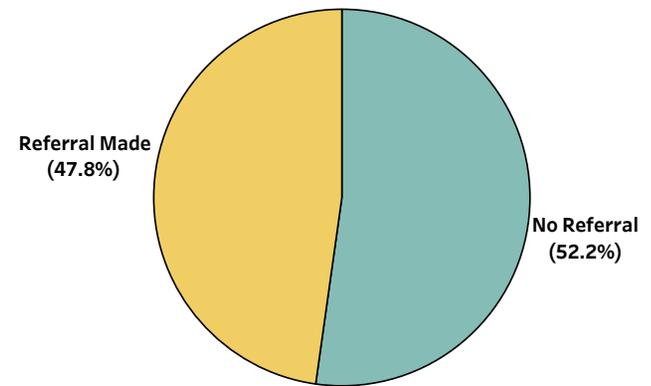
## Experiences and Expressions Screener (EES)

To engage in case planning that addresses trauma and victimization, the Experiences and Expressions Screener (EES) was implemented in 2021 and must be used when a youth is moderate or high risk to reoffend and placed on informal or formal supervision. The following charts include findings from administration of the EES this reporting period.

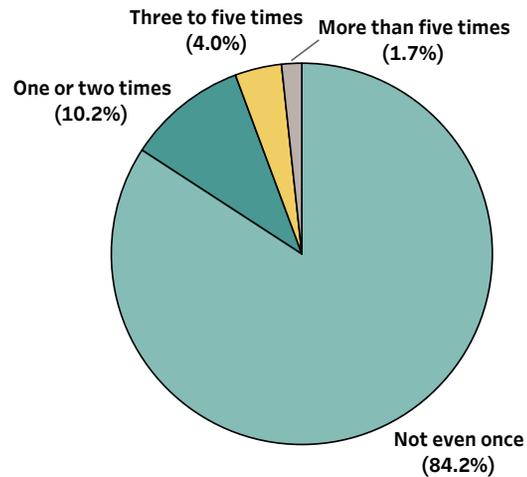
### EES Participation



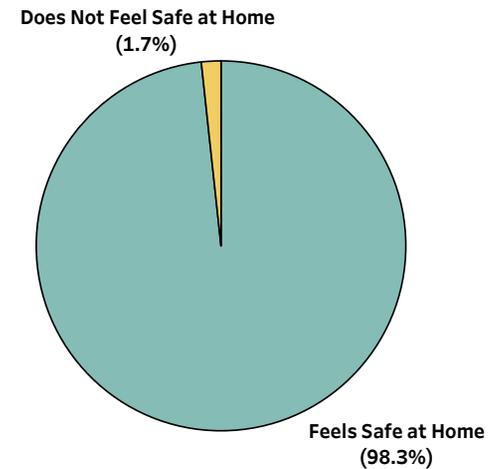
### EES Outcomes



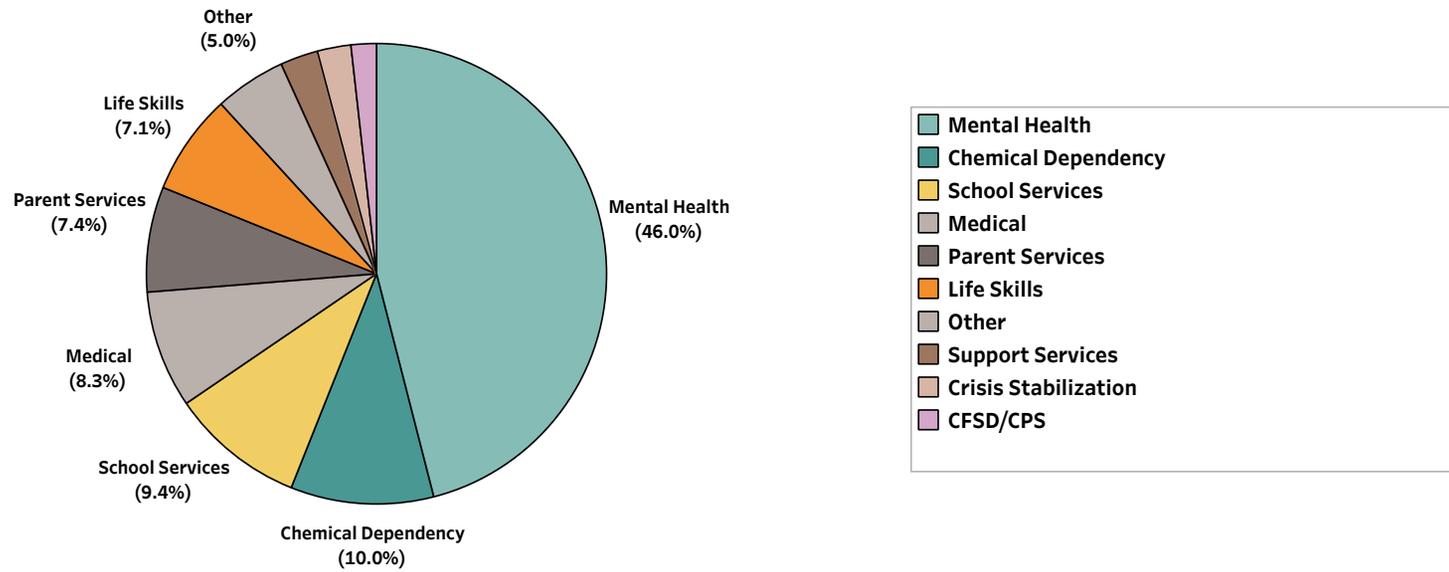
### Thoughts of Suicide



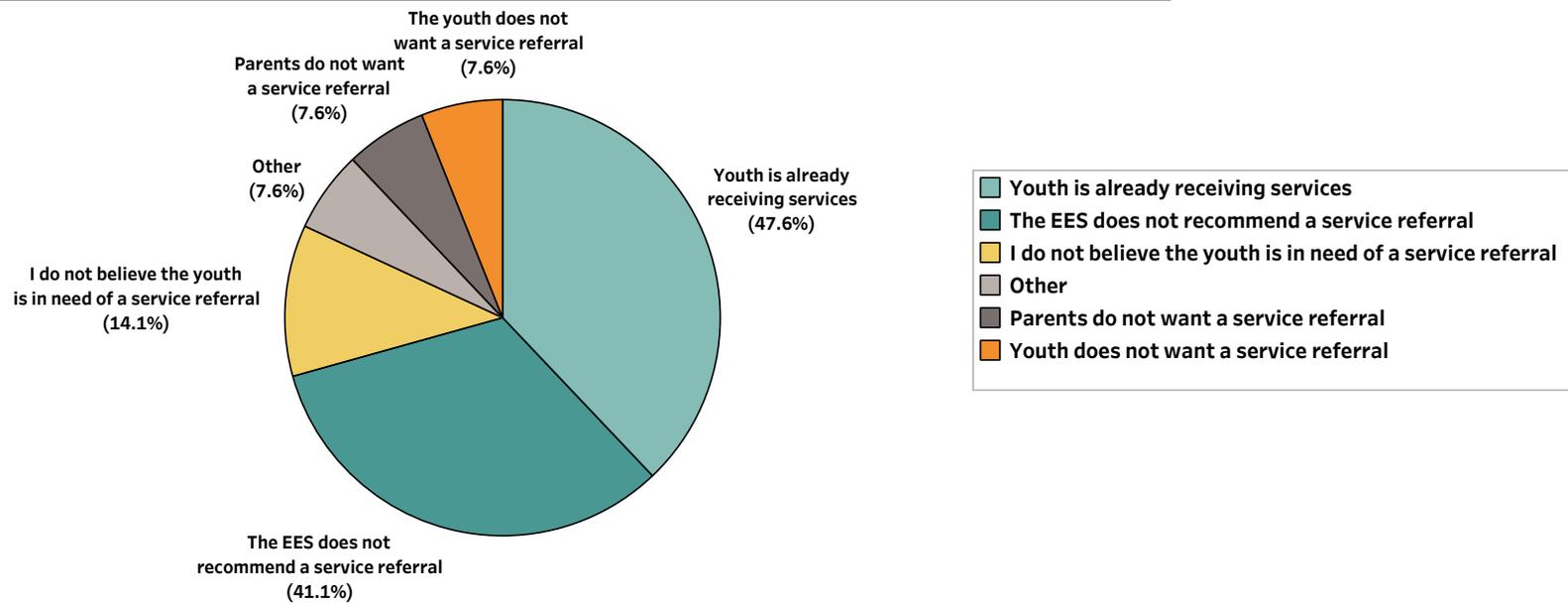
### Feel Safe at Home



**EES: Services Referred To**



**EES: Reasons Not Making a Referral**



# COMMUNITY SERVICE & RESTITUTION

## Restitution

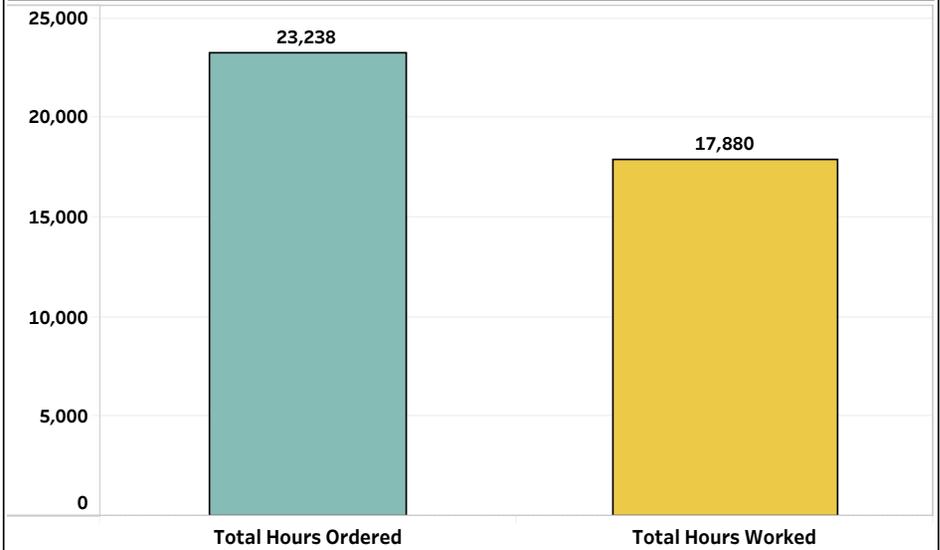
Number of Youth Ordered to Pay Restitution: **201**



\* Restitution collected includes carryover from prior years.

## Community Service

Number of Youth Ordered to Complete Community Service: **1,080**



## Community Service Sweat Equity

Many youth are unable to contribute towards their restitution obligation because they have no family support, are not old enough to get a job, or lack the necessary social skills to get and keep a job. The Community Service Sweat Equity program is offered to youth as an opportunity, by utilizing community service to earn restitution money to repay their victims.

<b>Total Number of Youth that Worked Sweat Equity Hours:</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Total Sweat Equity Hours Worked:</b>	<b>2,130.60</b>
<b>Total Money Earned to Pay Victims:</b>	<b>\$22,478.42</b>

# DRUG TESTING

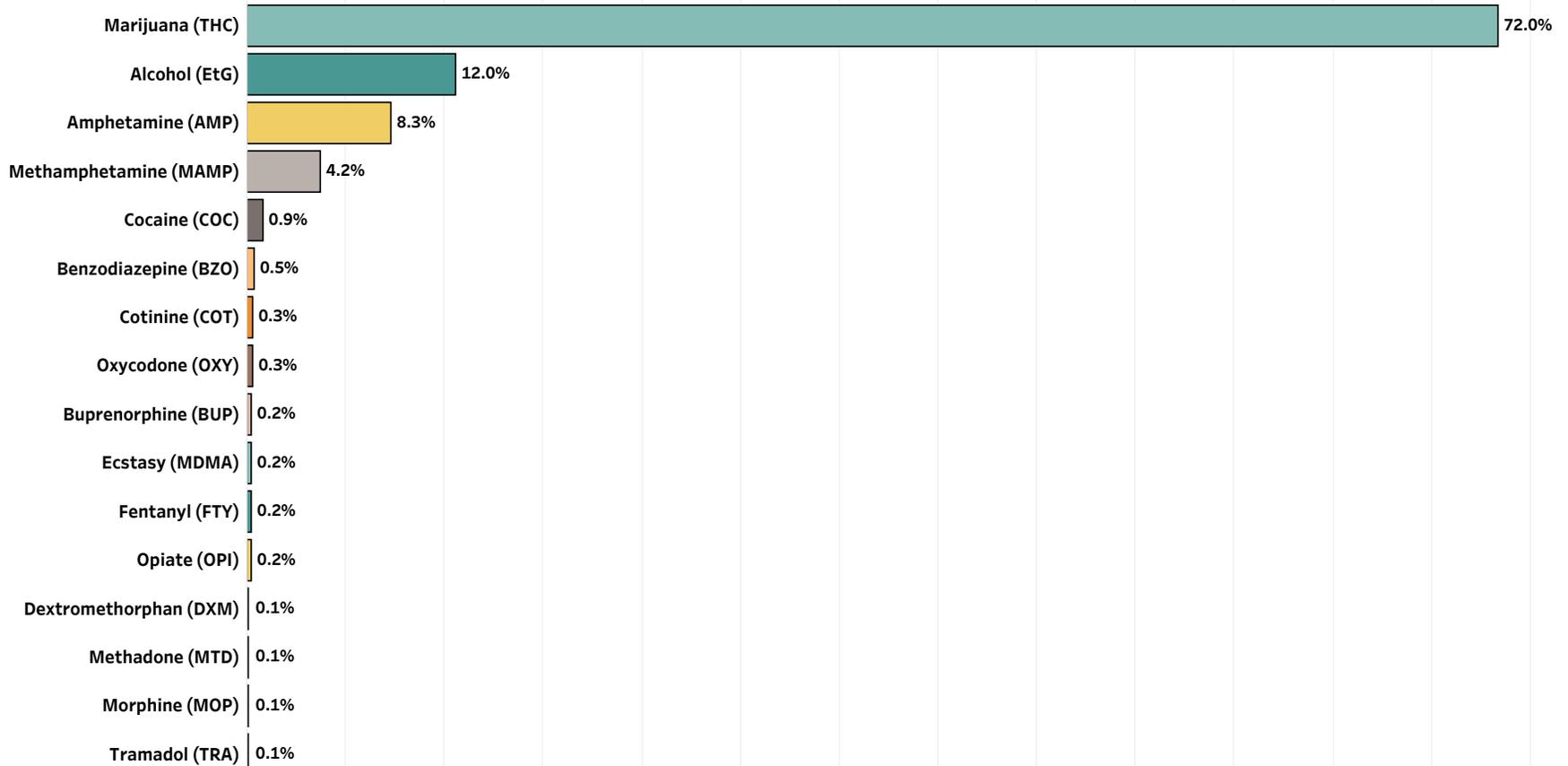
## Resistance to Drugs

Offenders ordered to submit to drug testing are tested randomly unless there is suspicion to believe the youth has recently been using. Youth in a Drug Treatment Court may be required to test more often as required by the judge.

Total Number of Youth Drug Tested: 315  
Total Number of Tests Administered: 1,754  
Total Number of Youth Testing Positive: 218

*Note: A single youth may have tested positive multiple times*

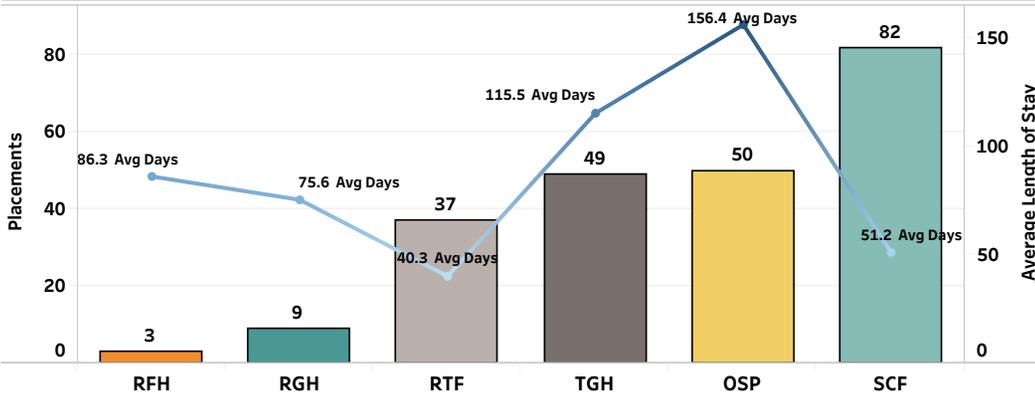
## Drugs Used



# OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS

## Number of Placements & Average Length of Stay (by Placement Type)

230 placements were made in out-of-home placements in 2025. Please note that a single youth may be placed multiple times and other agencies may have been responsible for the placement during this reporting period.

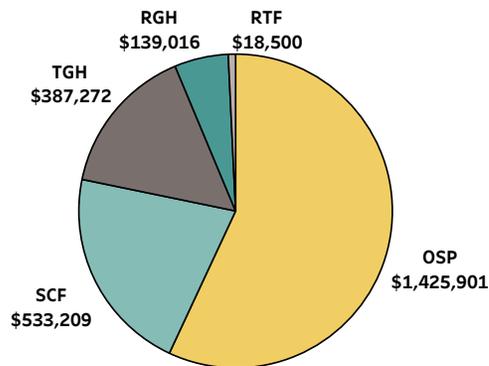


- Foster Home
- Regular Group Home
- Residential Treatment Facility
- Therapeutic Group Home
- Out of State Placement
- Shelter Care Facility\*

\* Shelter Care, the most common placement, is a very short-term placement used when Youth Court is assessing the youth and family's situation.

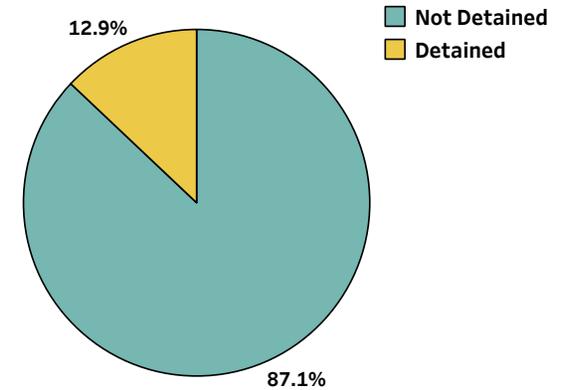
## Placements Costs (by Placement Type)

These are the general fund costs incurred by the Youth Courts of Montana and do not include additional funding sources and cost-shares that may have been made by collaborating agencies (Medicaid, DPHHS, CMHB).



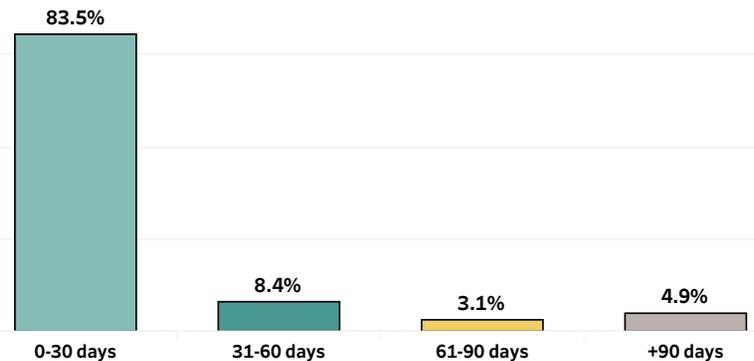
## Detained at Time of Arrest

Youth detention facilities, which are physically restricting youth facilities designed to prevent a youth from departing at will are mostly funded and operated by counties. Local law enforcement officers make the decision to detain them at the time of arrest. (A youth may be placed in detention more than once.)



## Detention - Length of Stay

When a youth is taken into custody, a hearing to determine probable cause must be held within 24 hours, excluding weekends and legal holidays. A hearing is not required if the youth is released prior to the time of the required hearing. If the court determines that continued custody of the youth is necessary and the criteria outlined in the Montana Youth Court Act is met, the youth may be placed in a secure detention facility pending an initial appearance before a youth court judge and placement may continue through time of disposition. (A youth may be placed in detention more than once.)



# DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS COMMITMENTS & CONDITIONAL RELEASE YOUTH

## Department of Corrections Commitments

Only a youth court judge may sentence a youth to the Department of Corrections. Statewide, approximately 2% of all youth referred to juvenile probation are sentenced to the Department of Corrections.

48 youth were committed to the Department of Corrections for placement in a youth correctional facility within the calendar year.

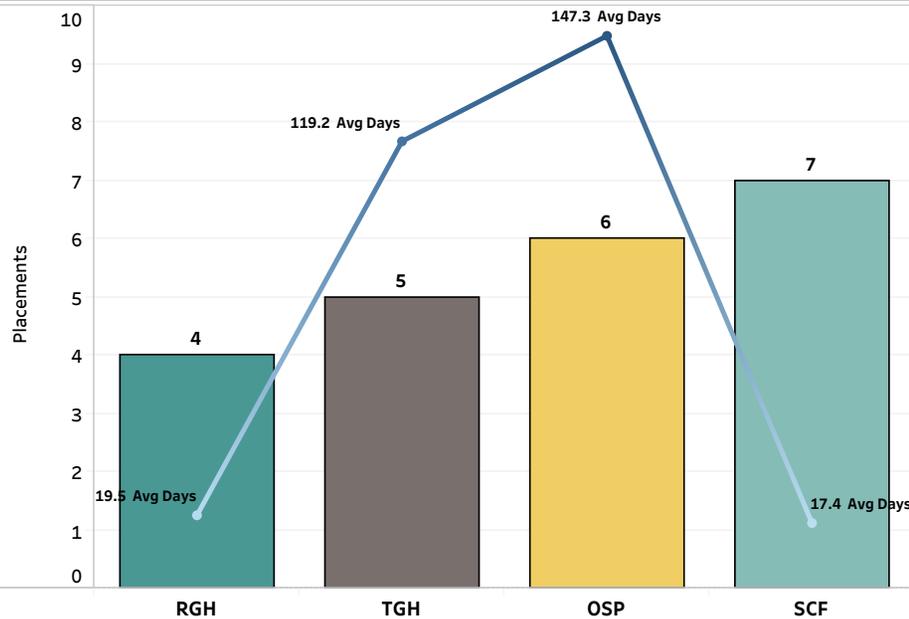


## Conditional Release (CR) Youth

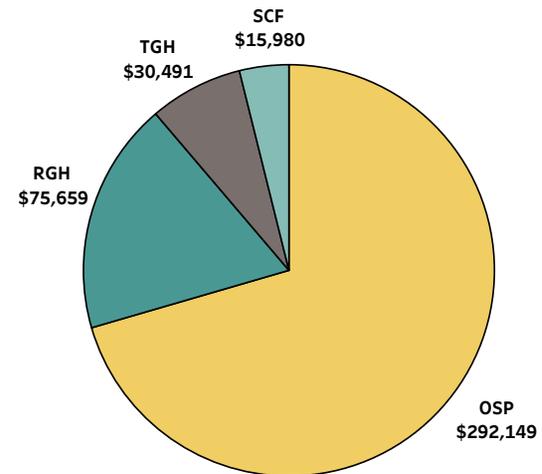
In 2019, Youth Court Services assumed community supervision of youth committed to the Montana Department of Corrections upon conditional release from these facilities.

In 2025, Youth Court Services supervised 80 youth on conditional release. Of these youth, 22 placements were made in a community placement as part of their conditional release plan. Although many youth on conditional release are discharged back to a family member, due to varying factors, some will require a community based placement. *Please note that a single youth may be placed multiple times.*

### CR Youth: Number of Placements & Avg Length of Stay



### CR Youth: Out of Home Placements - Cost

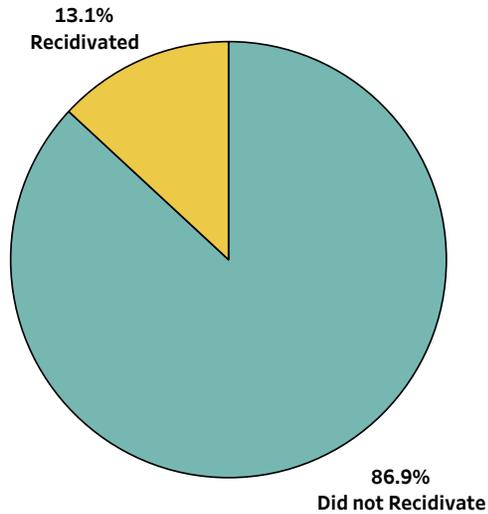


■ Regular Group Home    
 ■ Therapeutic Group Home    
 ■ Out of State Placement    
 ■ Shelter Care Facility\*

# RECIDIVISM

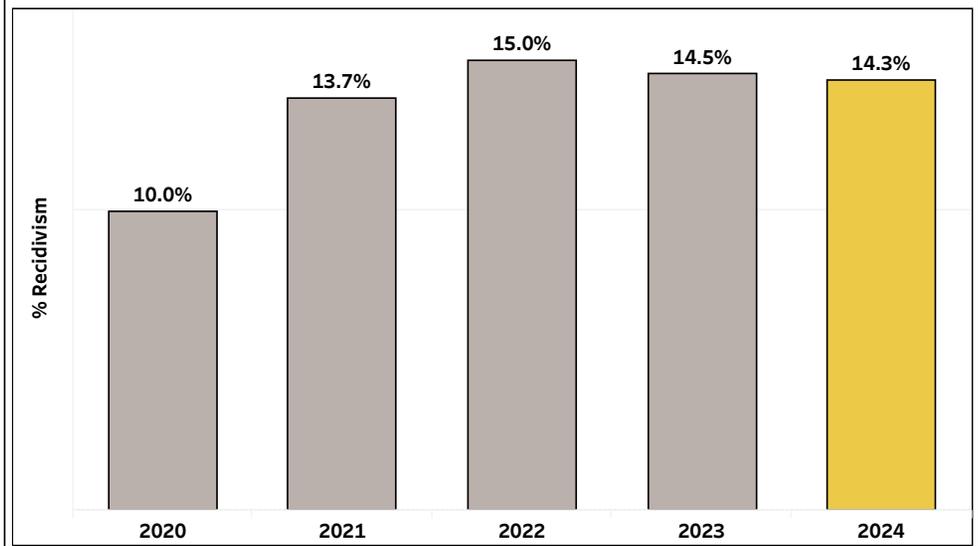
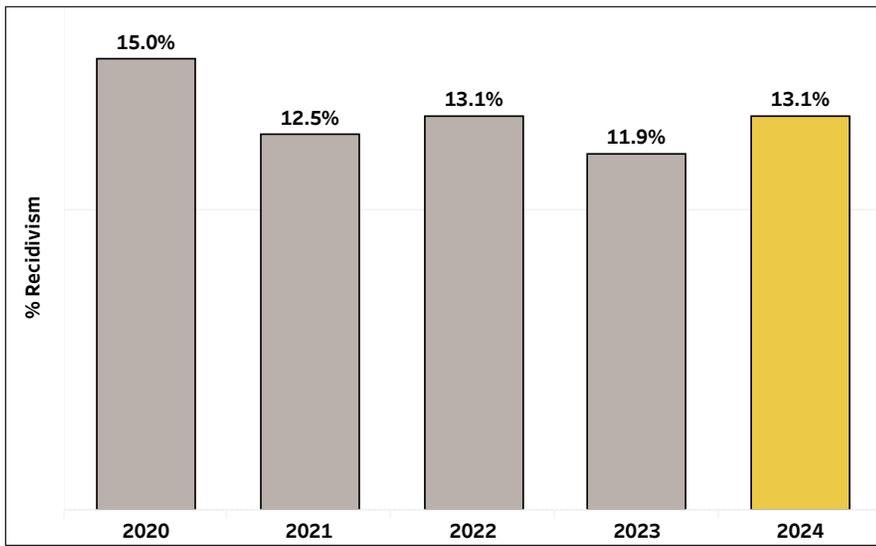
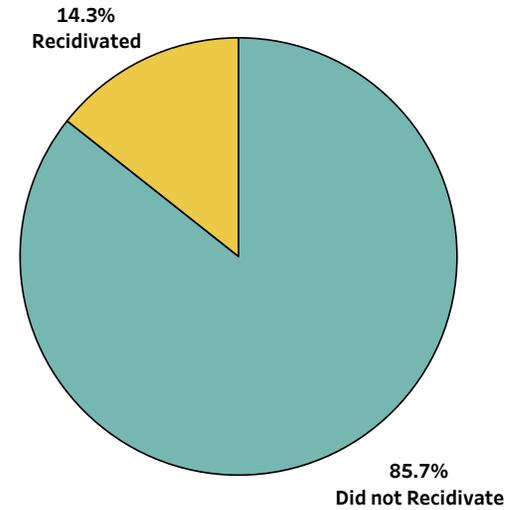
## Recidivism While Under Supervision (2024) –

The occurrence of a new qualifying offense by a youth during a referral period that ends in 2024, where the new offense occurs after the intake date and prior to the disposition end date for that referral.



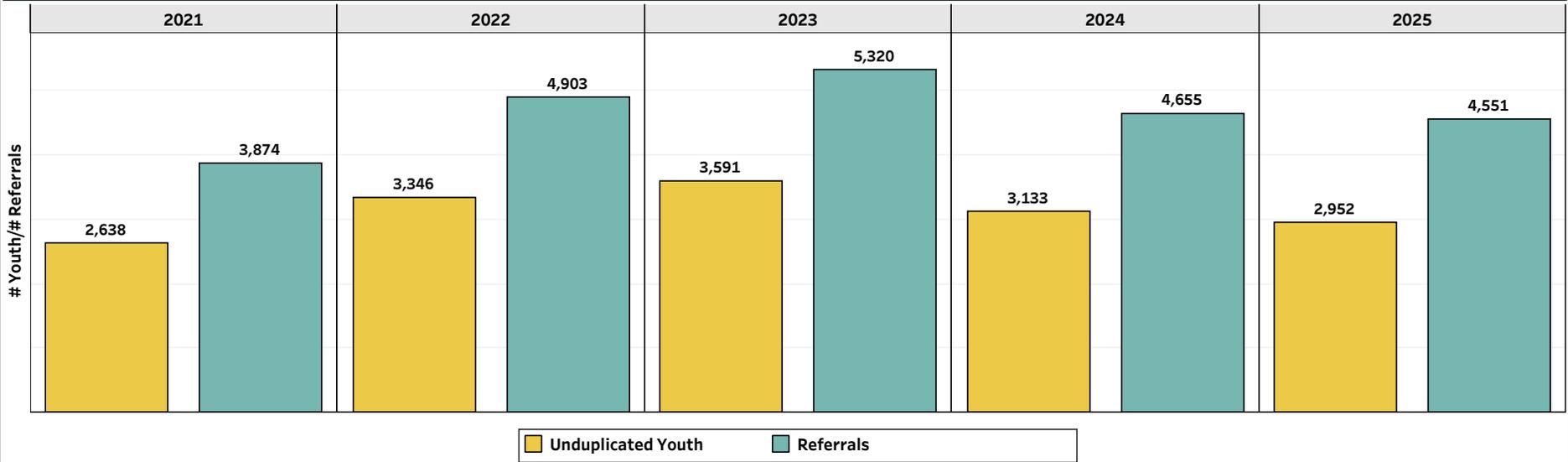
## Recidivism Within One Year Post Supervision (2024) –

The occurrence of a new qualifying offense by a youth during the one-year period following the disposition end date of a referral that ended in 2024, where the new offense occurs after that disposition end date.

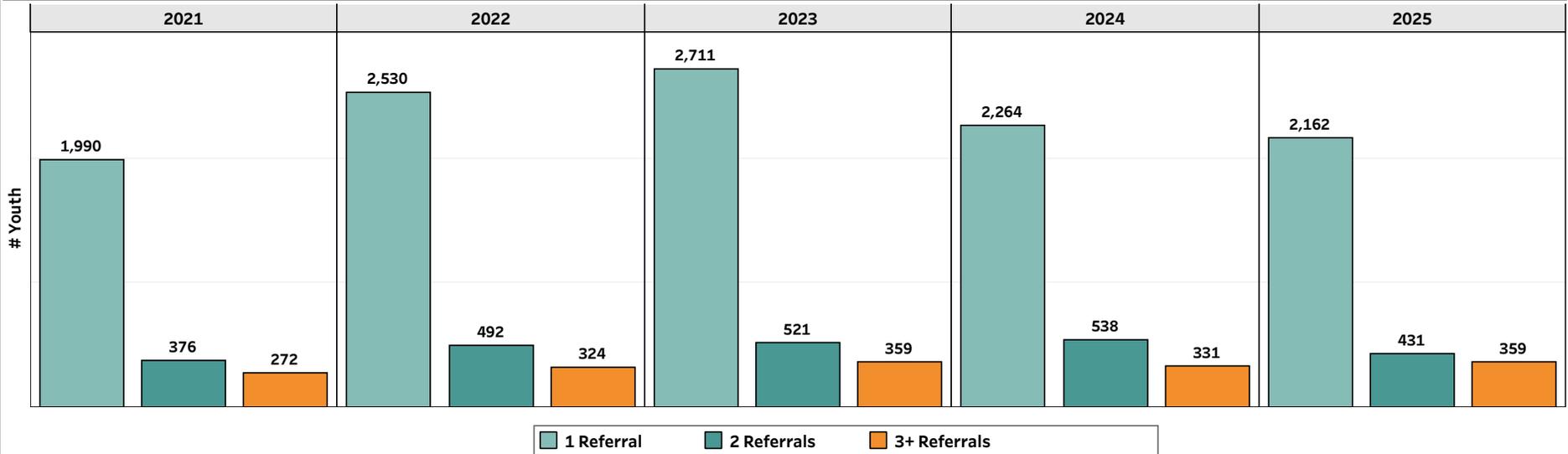


# 5 YEAR TRENDS

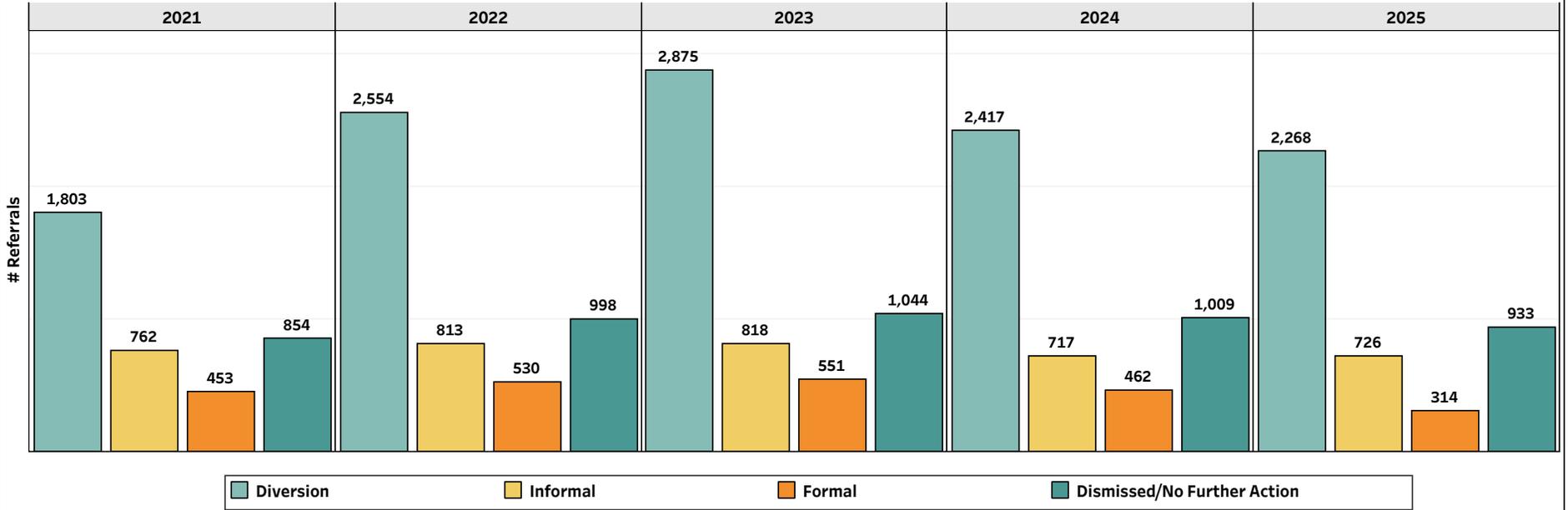
## Unduplicated Youth and Referrals



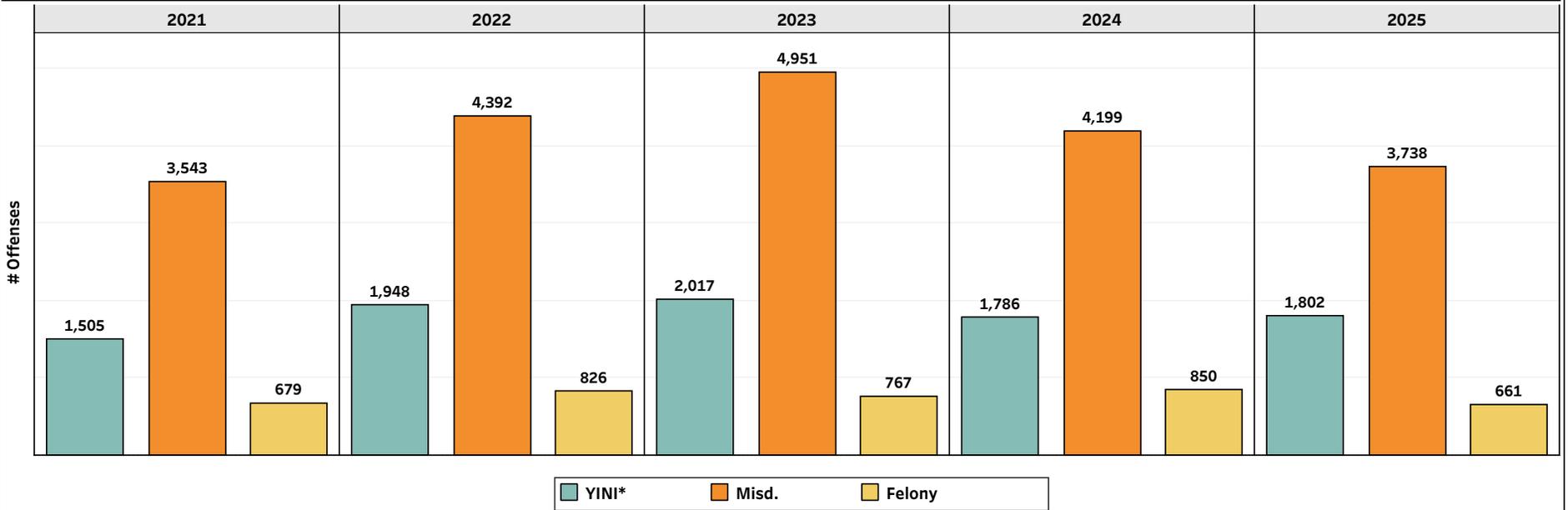
## Referrals per Youth



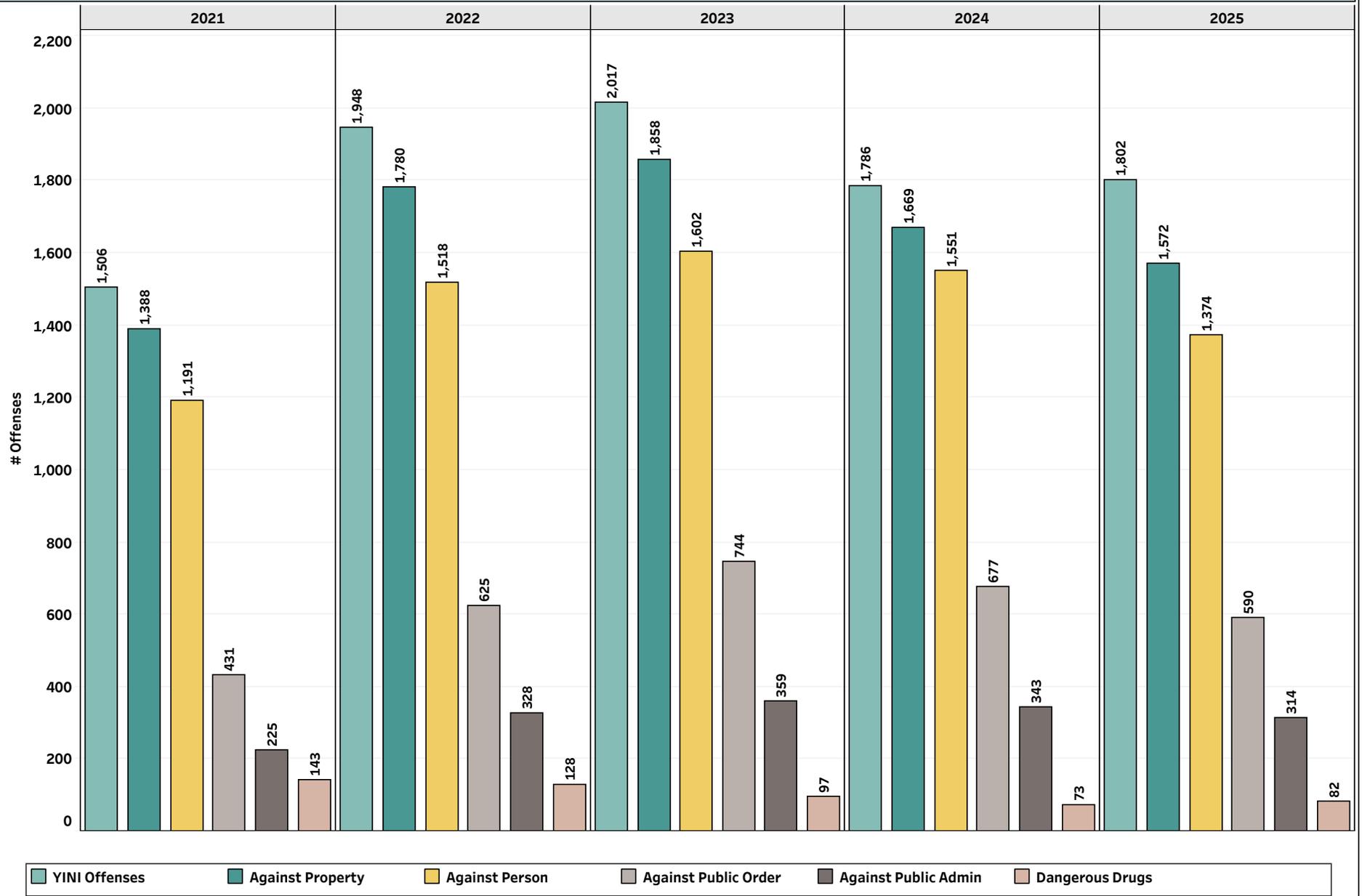
### Type of Disposition Used



### Offense Classifications



## Offense Categories



# YOUTH COURT CONTACTS BY JUDICIAL DISTRICT

## DISTRICT #1

Lewis and Clark, Broadwater

**District Court Judges:** Chris Abbott, Michael McMahon, Mike Menahan, Kathy Seeley

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Leah Lindgren / Contact Number: 447-8228

## DISTRICT #2

Silver Bow

**District Court Judges:** Frank Joseph, Robert "Bob" Whelan

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Kelly Speer / Contact Number: 497-6375

## DISTRICT #3

Deer Lodge, Powell, Granite

**District Court Judge:** Jeffrey Dahood

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Daniel Blando / Contact Number: 563-4031

## DISTRICT #4

Missoula, Mineral

**District Court Judges:** Leslie Halligan, Tara Elliott, John Larson, Jason Marks, Shane Vannatta

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Christine Kowalski / Contact Number: 258-4735

## DISTRICT #5

Beaverhead, Jefferson, Madison

**District Court Judge:** Luke Berger

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Sam Stockett / Contact Number: 683-3760

## DISTRICT #6

Park, Sweet Grass

**District Court Judge:** Brenda Gilbert

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Lesa Maher / Contact Number: 222-4162

## DISTRICT #7

Dawson, Richland, McCone, Wibaux, Prairie

**District Court Judges:** Olivia Rieger, Scott Herring

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Lauren Weiland / Contact Number: 433-3011

## DISTRICT #8

Cascade

**District Court Judges:** Elizabeth Best, John Kutzman, John Parker, David Grubich

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Jason Rippenburg / Contact Number: 604-7657

## DISTRICT #9

Glacier, Pondera, Teton, Toole

**District Court Judge:** Greg Bonilla

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Tasha Stiner / Contact Number: 873-3620

## DISTRICT #10

Fergus, Judith Basin, Petroleum

**District Court Judge:** Heather Perry

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Starr Brown / Contact Number: 538-9242

## DISTRICT #11

Flathead

**District Court Judges:** Heidi Ulbricht, Dan Wilson, Amy Eddy, Danielle Coffman, Paul Sullivan

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Nick Nyman / Contact Number: 758-6277

## DISTRICT #12

Hill, Chouteau, Liberty

**District Court Judge:** Kaydee Snipes Ruiz

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Kevin Buerkle / Contact Number: 265-5481

## DISTRICT #13

Yellowstone

**District Court Judges:** Jessica Fehr, Donald Harris, Thomas Parady, Brett Linneweber, Rod Souza, Mary Jane Knisely, Colette Davies, Ashley Harada, Seth Cunningham, Ed Zink

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Tara French / Contact Number: 256-2843

## DISTRICT #14

Golden Valley, Meagher, Musselshell, Wheatland

**District Court Judge:** Adam Larsen

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Tara French / Contact Number: 256-2843

## DISTRICT #15

Roosevelt, Sheridan, Daniels

**District Court Judge:** Ben Fosland

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Sheana Rose / Contact Number: 765-3468

## DISTRICT #16

Carter, Custer, Fallon, Garfield, Powder River, Rosebud, Treasure

**District Court Judges:** Michael Hayworth, Rennie Wittman

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Sarita Fenner / Contact Number: 874-3418

## DISTRICT #17

Blaine, Phillips, Valley

**District Court Judge:** Yvonne Laird

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Tina Mord / Contact Number: 357-2369

## DISTRICT #18

Gallatin

**District Court Judges:** Peter Ohman, Rienne McElyea, John Brown, Andrew Breuner

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Colleen Tuccillo / Contact Number: 582-2180

## YOUTH COURT CONTACTS BY JUDICIAL DISTRICT

### **DISTRICT #19**

Lincoln

**District Court Judge:** Matthew Cuffe

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Kindra Hageness / Contact Number: 293-9715

### **DISTRICT #20**

Lake, Sanders

**District Court Judges:** Molly Owen, John Mercer

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Amber Harness / Contact Number: 883-7264

### **DISTRICT #21**

Ravalli

**District Court Judges:** Howard Recht, Jennifer Lint

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Clint Arneson / Contact Number: 802-7200

### **DISTRICT #22**

Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater

**District Court Judge:** Matthew Wald

**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer:** Jaime Fredericks / Contact Number: 665-9785