Juvenile correctional administrators reported 865 allegations of sexual victimization in state facilities and 613 in local and private facilities during 2014. This was a significant increase in the 735 allegations in state facilities and 382 in local and private facilities reported the previous year. The rate has more than doubled in the past 6 years, from 19 per 1,000 youth held in state juvenile facilities in 2005 to 47 per 1,000 in 2012. Based on 2-year rolling averages, the rate in local and private facilities was 14 per 1,000 youth in 2012, up from 7 in 2010.

About the allegations

Between 2007 and 2012, juvenile correctional authorities reported nearly 9,500 allegations of sexual victimization in state systems, facilities in Indian country, and locally or privately operated facilities. More than half the allegations (55%) involved youth-on-youth sexual victimization, and the remainder involved staff-on-youth incidents. Upon investigation, 1,686 of the allegations were substantiated, representing 25% of youth-on-youth allegations and 10% of staff-on-youth allegations. The majority of sexual victimization allegations were unsubstantiated (i.e., the evidence was insufficient to determine whether the alleged incident occurred), including 53% of youth-on-youth and 49% of staff-on-youth allegations. Based on substantiated incidents between 2007 and 2012, juveniles were victimized more often in state systems (5.9 per 1,000 youth) than in locally or privately operated facilities (2.3 per 1,000).

Across all facilities, about three-quarters (76%) of substantiated incidents involved youth-on-youth sexual victimization. Less than a fifth (18%) were nonconsensual sexual acts between youth, involving force or the threat of force and penetration. More than a third (35%) were abusive sexual contacts, involving unwanted touching, and a fifth (20%) were determined to be voluntary; however, youth could not legally consent.

Who were the victims?

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the youth-on-youth victims in state systems and three-quarters (74%) of those in local or private facilities were male. More than half (55%) of all victims were white, although whites made up about a third of all detained youth (33% in state systems and 32% in all other facilities). Almost half of victims (47%) were age 15 or younger, though less than a third (30%) of detained youth were in that age group.