

Delinquent youth have more high-risk sex HIV/AIDS behaviors as they age

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Delinquent youth are more likely to have high-risk HIV/AIDS sexual behaviors as they age, including multiple sexual partners and unprotected vaginal sex with a high-risk partner, reports a Northwestern Medicine study. The study tracked the youth 14 years after detention.

"Sex risk behaviors are still more prevalent among delinquent [youth](#) as they age than in the [general population](#)," said first author Karen Abram. "Because most detained youth return to the community, our findings highlight the importance of providing HIV/AIDS preventive interventions before these youths leave detention. We also need to find ways to reach these young adults in the community."

Abram is an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and associate director of the Health Disparities and Public Policy Program at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

The paper was published Jan. 23 in *Pediatrics*.

Fourteen years after detention (median age 30), one-quarter of [males](#) and one-tenth of females had more than one sexual partner in the previous three months. In contrast, a national sample of youth and adults ages 15 to 44 years showed 18 percent of men and 14 percent of women reported having more than one partner during the entire previous year.

The study reported notable gender and racial/ethnic differences. African American males were more than four times likely to have more than one

sexual partner than African American females. Compared with non-Hispanic white males, African American males had more than twice the odds and Hispanic males had 1.6 times the odds of having multiple partners.

Racial/ethnic minorities, especially African Americans, are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system and suffer disproportionately from HIV/AIDS. Although African American youth comprise only 15 percent of the general population aged 13 to 29 years, in 2014 they comprised 39 percent of incarcerated youth and [young adults](#) and 51.7 percent of new HIV infections.

"Relationships are often disrupted by incarcerations, leading to more partners—and often more deviant peers—after release," Abram said.

Participants were part of the Northwestern Juvenile Project, a prospective longitudinal study of 1,829 youth randomly sampled from detention in Chicago and recruited from 1995 to 1998. Participants were interviewed up to 11 times either in the community or in correctional facilities.

Provided by Northwestern University

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