

# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NORTH CAROLINA TEEN COURT ON RECIDIVISM

## Background:

- Juvenile delinquency is a persistent societal issue and reducing recidivism among youth offenders is essential for breaking a generational cycle of crime.
- This research builds on findings from a past study, which found that the Teen court programs reduce juvenile recidivism by nearly 50% in North Carolina.
- The current study applies similar methodologies to assess the effectiveness of Teen Court in Florida, since a weakness of the previous study was that it was conducted in only one state.
- Teen court offers an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system, emphasizing restorative justice principles to rehabilitate first-time offenders.

## Hypothesis:

- This study hypothesizes that Teen court participants in Florida will exhibit lower recidivism rates compared to those processed through traditional court systems by means of restorative justice practices.

## References

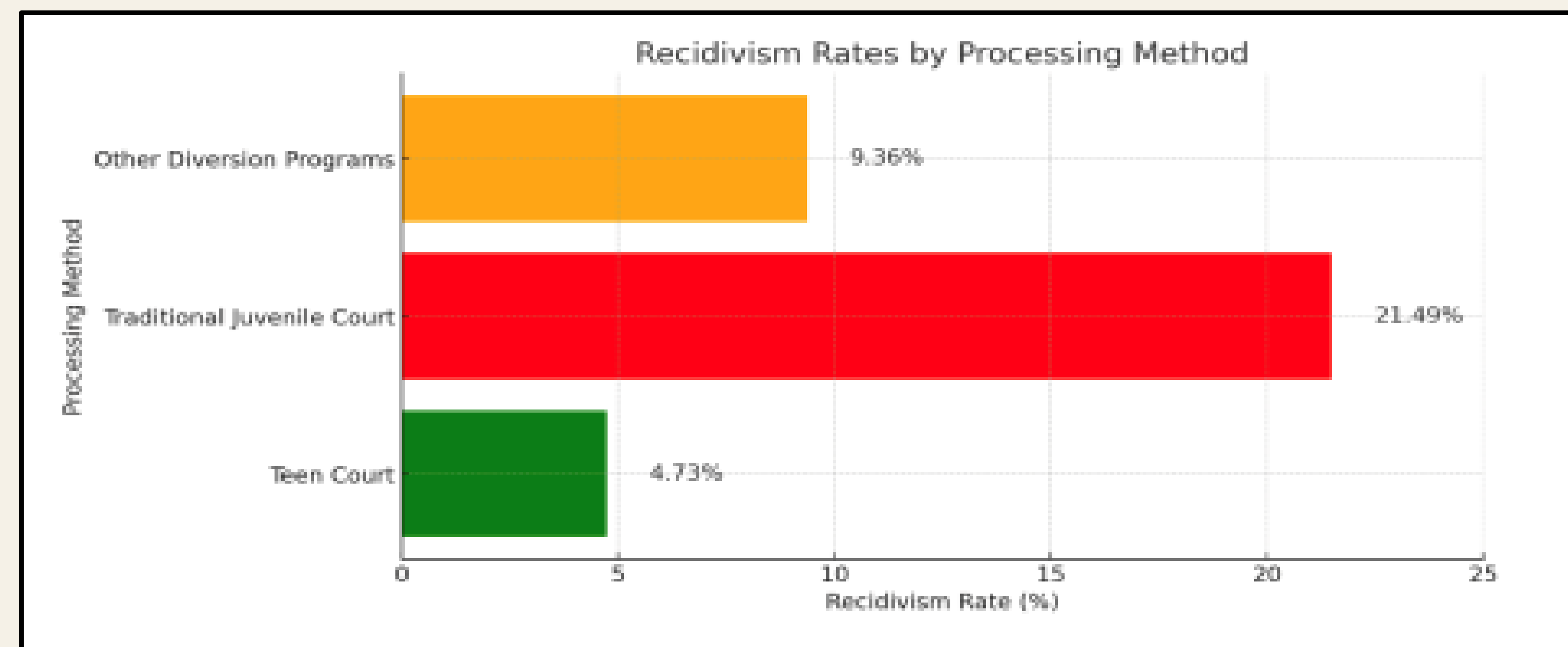
Cockerham, Alexandra, et al. Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, North Carolina, 2024, pp. 1–34, Assessing the Impact of North Carolina Teen Court on Recidivism.

Quintana, Andrew. "Justice for Teens by Teens Unfolds in Teen Court Diversion Program." Tallahassee Democrat, 5 Aug. 2018, [www.tallahassee.com/story/life/causes/2018/08/05/justice-teenagers-unfolds-teen-crime-court-diversion-program/836324002/](http://www.tallahassee.com/story/life/causes/2018/08/05/justice-teenagers-unfolds-teen-crime-court-diversion-program/836324002/).

## Presenter Information

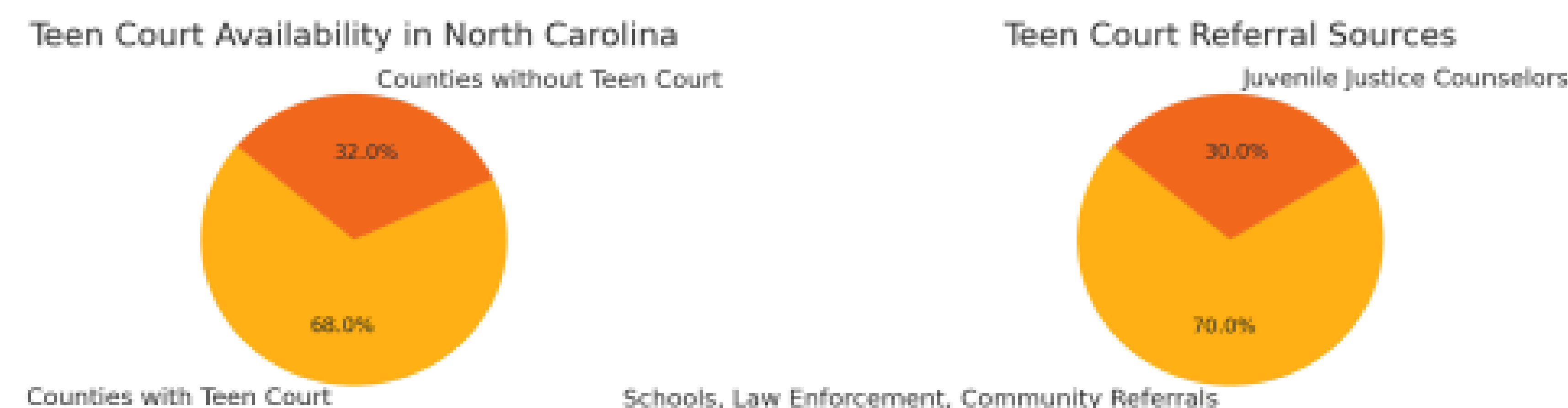
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Lower Recidivism Rates: Youth who complete teen court are significantly less likely to re-offend (4.73%) compared to those in traditional juvenile court (21.49%) or other diversion programs (9.36%).

## North Carolina Teen Court Statistics



- Widespread Use: 68 counties operate teen courts, serving 3,400 youth in 2022, while 32 counties do not have a program.
  - Referral Sources: 70% of youth enter teen court through schools, law enforcement, or community referrals, while 30% come from juvenile justice.

## Methodology:

- Qualitative data was collected on the Leon County teen court process using standard operating procedures approved by the FSU IRB. Observations occurred over multiple hearings and interviews to understand the participant's perspective of the program's impact on the youth.

## Results:

- Although the findings aren't complete, observations show that Teen court has some effect on youth recidivism rates. All youth that go through the diversion program are required to return to more court hearings as actors in the court, and many of them continue to come back as volunteers once their sanction is complete. As seen in the North Carolina observation, such restorative justice practices encourage edification.

## Reflections:

- These findings could provide valuable insights for policymakers. In addition, this research highlights the need for continued investment into alternative sentencing methods that focus on rehabilitation over punishment. Further research should be done focusing on other youth diversion programs and youth court processes in other parts of the country.