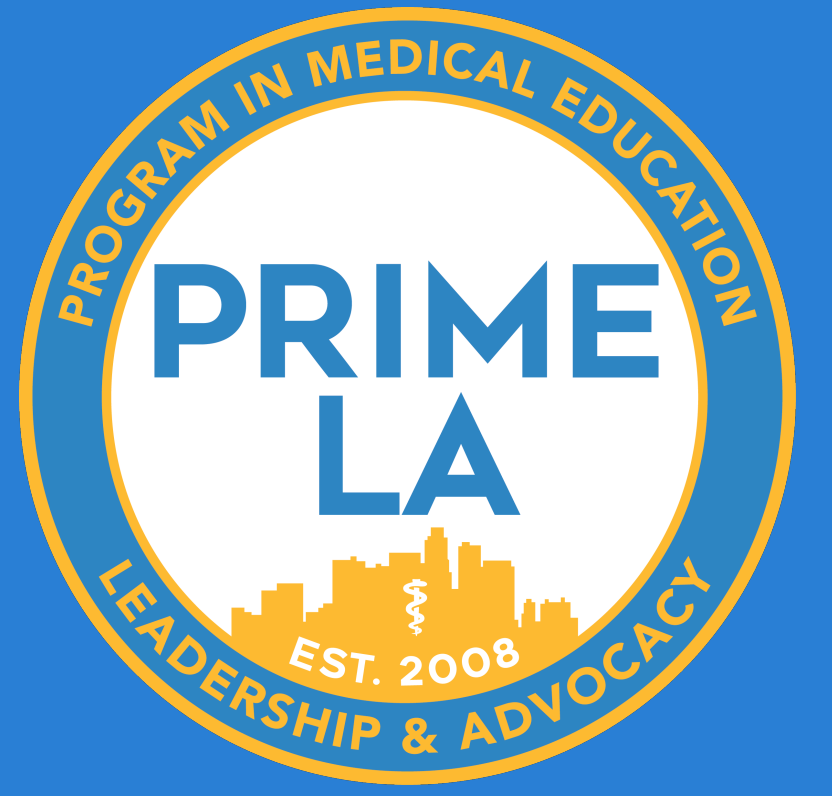




# Impact of COVID-19 on Transition Age Youth during Community Reentry

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## INTRODUCTION

- Transition age youth (TAY), ages 16-24, who are undergoing community reentry after incarceration are a vulnerable group
- They are disproportionately Black and Latinx
- They often lack housing, employment, and are at high risk for substance use and mental health challenges
- With COVID-19 we anticipate that TAY reentering the community following detention will become even more vulnerable to homelessness, joblessness, absence of schooling, recidivism, substance use and contracting the novel coronavirus

## STUDY AIM

- To study the toll of COVID-19 on TAY who are reentering the community from Los Angeles County detention facilities (i.e., jail or juvenile correctional facilities)

## METHODS

### Approach

- Qualitative analysis examining the experiences of TAY during COVID-19 and reentry through mixed methods
- Community partners: Los Angeles County juvenile justice health agencies and probation department

### Data Collection

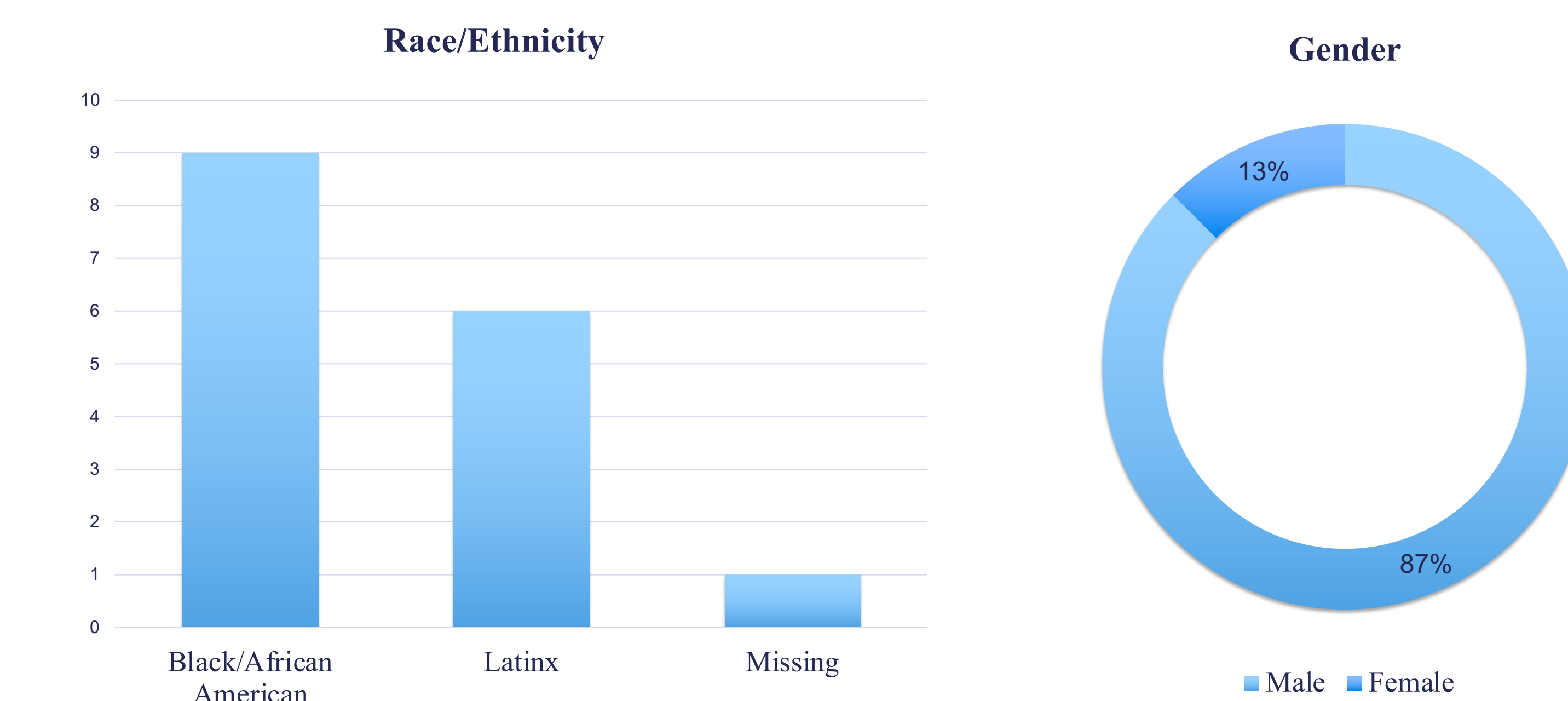
- Youth: longitudinal semi-structured interviews on a monthly basis (n=16) post-release (66 interviews total)

**Analysis:** Interview data audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded in Dedoose software. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts to identify key themes

## RESULTS

Figure 1. Demographics of TAY participants

### Youth (n=16)



## THEMES AND REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES

**COVID-19 as a barrier to goals:** COVID-19 closures hindered TAY from accomplishing their goals such as going back to school, getting a job and clearing court cases

“I got to complete all my court stuff, too. I have eight court cases pending right now [...] And I just need to get them all taken care of. And this whole COVID thing, they keep pushing back my court dates. And the whole COVID thing, it really looks like it's starting to delay things. Because I just want to sit in front of a judge already and talk to the judge and tell them my situation. Because I know that once I tell my judge the situation and tell them that I've been clean for almost a whole year now, I went to a program and everything, I know that they would drop my charges, or reduce my charges and pay a fine, and that's it, bam.” (22-year-old Latino Male)

**Other challenges are more pressing than COVID-19:** focused on meeting basic needs and other difficulties such as housing, employment, probation requirements and the hardships that come with re-incarceration (e.g., leaving their families)

“I don't really care [about the pandemic]. I don't care about nothing else.” “Personally, how I see it. I could care less about the next four years about anything that was going on with anybody that's not me within the next four years. That's not me or my family.” (21-year-old Black male)

**Fewer temptations:** social distancing and stay-at-home orders has made it less appealing to go out

“Oh, yeah. I mean, the main positive is that I just mainly get sober. I mainly get the chance to clean myself up. Knowing that not much is happening, nothing's going on, everything's locked down still. The world is not normal, in other words. The world is not normal, so right now is a good time to actually use it to my advantage.” (22-year-old Latino Male)

## CASE STUDY 1

**Participant:** “James” is a 19-year-old Black male.

**Scenario:** “James” had a job in a hotel but was fired during the pandemic because of the decrease in customers. He then began to experience homelessness and was unable to afford masks which lead to an increase in police harassment. When asked how COVID-19 had made life harder, he responded, “*More people is more grumpy, you know and the masks. I gotta wear a mask everywhere and sometimes I can't afford the mask and stuff like that [...] it's making it even harder for me especially being on the streets because the police be harassing me.*” When “James” was able to get a job he was forced to quit because the permanent housing he was offered required a 2-week quarantine. In “James” opinion the focus should not be on wearing masks during the pandemic but on, “...[helping] us, do something...help [people] get on Section 8 [i.e., assisted-housing program].”

**Finding:** Case highlights how COVID-19 further exacerbated the difficulties that those reentering society usually face. It also demonstrates how “James” minimized COVID-19 and emphasized other issues he felt needed more attention such as meeting his basic needs.

## SUMMARY

- This population had unique experiences during the pandemic due to the fact that they are a group of young formerly incarcerated individuals who are facing issues such as housing, job, and food insecurity
- The pandemic had both negative and positive impacts on TAY
  - Negative: delay of goals and increase homelessness and joblessness
  - Positive: fewer temptations
- Although COVID-19 has been at the forefront for many, TAY reentering the community were more focused on reentry challenges (e.g., homelessness, joblessness and probation orders)

## NEXT STEPS

- Continue data analysis of interviews
- Share results with stakeholders and academic community

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