

News-Coverage Analysis for Justice-Involved Children & Youth in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and Ohio

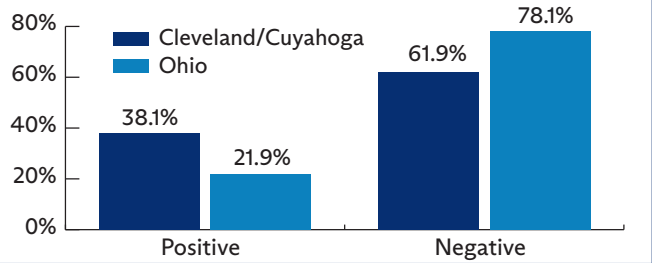
This infographic shows an analysis of digital news coverage from 2022 to 2024 for justice-involved children and youth in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and the state of Ohio generally. Too often, local news coverage of justice-involved children and youth has presented stories in such a way that misconveys young people as primary drivers of crime. This framing of youth as dangerous heightens public fears around safety and can intensify calls for a tougher approach to handling justice-involved children and youths. The full report can be found [here](#).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Ohio media outlets **over-report in general on stories about justice-involved youth**, resulting in disproportionate public attention to youth crime involvement.
- There are **significantly more negative stories than positive stories on justice-involved children and youth** in Ohio, creating and reinforcing a negative impression of youth and their level of crime involvement.
- A **small number of media outlets and journalists are responsible for these sensationalized, negative narratives**. Even fewer publish positively framed stories or explore more nuanced understandings of youth or their experiences in the justice system.
- Journalists and reporters rely on the same types of public leaders for quotes, which are often **used to reinforce negative narratives about young people**.

TONE OF NON-NEUTRAL ARTICLES

Negative news articles are significantly more common than positive ones on justice-involved youth both in Cleveland/Cuyahoga County and in Ohio generally. [While most articles were neutral, the majority of non-neutral articles were negative.] **Some media sources had zero positive stories found during the 3 year review.**



TONE OF ARTICLES BY OHIO COUNTIES WITH MOST ARTICLES

Compared to the rest of Ohio, Cleveland/Cuyahoga County has published more positive as well as negative articles about justice involved youth. A balanced investigative media series can have a big impact.

County	Total number of articles	Proportion of Positives	Proportion of Negatives	Proportion of Neutrals
Cuyahoga	324	21.3%*	34.6%	44.1%
Franklin	153	5.2%	32%	62.7%
Hamilton	72	9.7%	23.6%	66.7%
Lucas	36	2.8%	13.9%	83.3%
Summit	35	5.7%	11.4%	82.9%

**Note that 21.3% goes down to 15.8% without the “Delinquent Series” in the spring of 2024; this in-depth weekly series in Cleveland.com explored Cuyahoga County’s juvenile justice system and the experiences of children and youth who have gone through it.*

AMPLIFYING QUOTES OF PUBLIC LEADERS

Comparing more positive quotes from public leaders (the first three) to more negative ones shows the powerful impact of language.

“Our kids can succeed. Our kids can do anything.”
“We are trying to paint our city and our young people, that they are totally out of control, when we have failed them. We have failed them. We have failed them.”
“If they don’t know how to solve conflict, and they don’t have other options to release the energy, and the pain they feel and the trauma they are subjected to, then how do you expect them to respond when they feel violated, disrespected, and unprotected?”
“What we’re dealing with today in the city of Cleveland are urban terrorists.”
“There is a financial benefit to not send kids to ODYS and I think that equation needs to be eliminated.”
“It is clear that oftentimes, juveniles are crime drivers.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Journalists and editors** should resist sensationalized crime reporting particularly if children and youth are involved.
- The media** should support investigative journalism that goes beyond crime documentation, exploring context and evidence-based solutions, and clarifying the developmental differences between children and adults and their justice involvement.
- Public leaders** should be mindful of the language they use to describe young people and how sensationalized media can influence the public and policy decisions.
- Youth justice stakeholders** should track, educate the public about, and actively challenge misleading media coverage.
- The public** should demand balanced coverage, resist click-bait and sensational headlines, and hold media outlets accountable to provide more in-depth and accurate news stories, especially involving children and youth.



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