



THE PROMISE OF ADOLESCENCE: REALIZING OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL YOUTH

A consensus study
report from

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Committee Members

RICHARD J. BONNIE (Chair)

Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy, Schools of Law, Medicine and the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia

ANNA AIZER

Department of Economics, Brown University

MARGARITA ALEGRÍA

Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School & Disparities Research Unit, Department of Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA

CLAIRE D. BRINDIS

Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies & The Adolescent and Young Adult Health National Resource Center, University of California, San Francisco.

ELIZABETH CAUFFMAN

Department of Psychological Science, University of California, Irvine

MESMIN DESTIN

Department of Psychology, School of Education and Social Policy & Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

ANGELA DIAZ

Department of Pediatrics and Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health & Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

NANCY E. HILL

Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

MICHELLE JACKSON

Department of Sociology, Stanford University

ARLENE F. LEE

Maryland Governor's Office for Children (retired)

LESLIE LEVE

Department of Counseling Psychology and Human Services, College of Education, and Prevention Science Institute, University of Oregon

JENS LUDWIG

Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago

SUSAN VIVIAN MANGOLD

Juvenile Law Center

BRUCE S. MCEWEN

Harold and Margaret Milliken Hatch Laboratory of Neuroendocrinology, The Rockefeller University

STEPHEN T. RUSSELL

Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, University of Texas at Austin

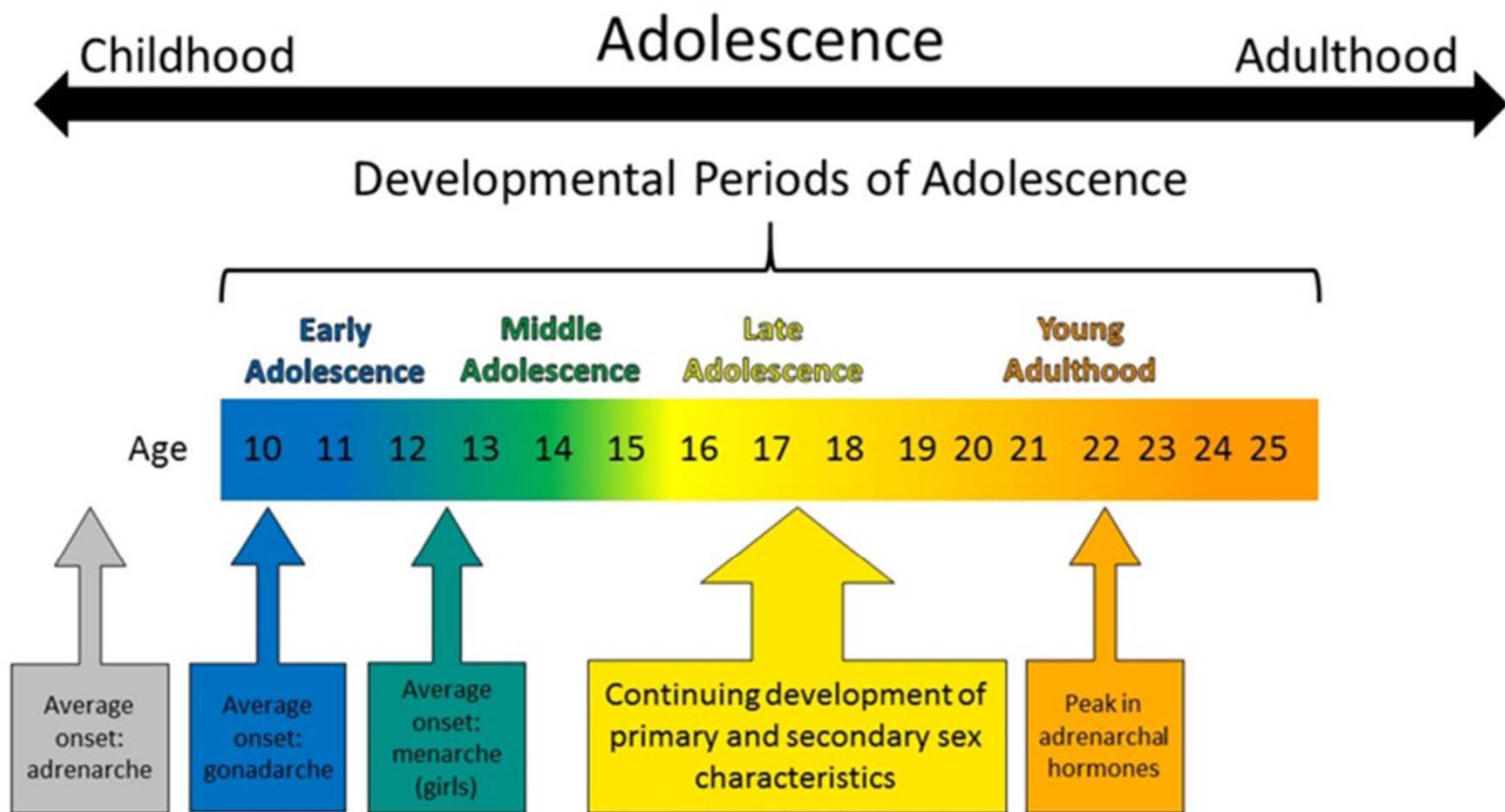
JOANNA LEE WILLIAMS

Curry School of Education and Human Development, University of Virginia

Statement of Task

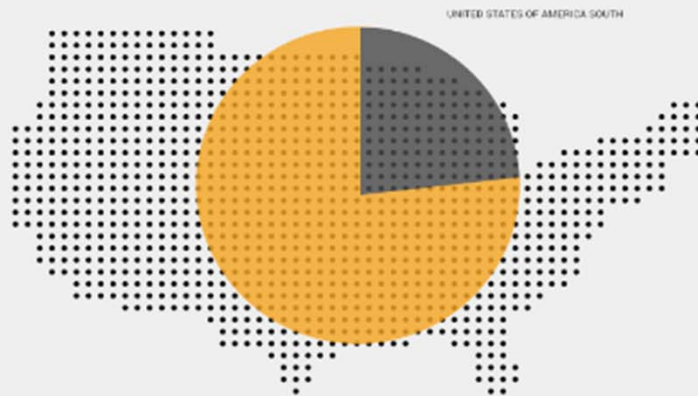
The study sponsors asked the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to provide an evidence-based report that:

- Examines the neurobiological and socio-behavioral science of adolescent development, and
- Explores how this knowledge can be applied to institutions and systems so that adolescent well-being, resilience, and development are promoted and that systems address structural barriers and inequalities in opportunity and access.



2017

There were approximately 73.5 million adolescents ages 10 to 25 in 2017, representing 22.6 percent of the U.S. population.



2020

The adolescent population is expected to become majority-minority by 2020.



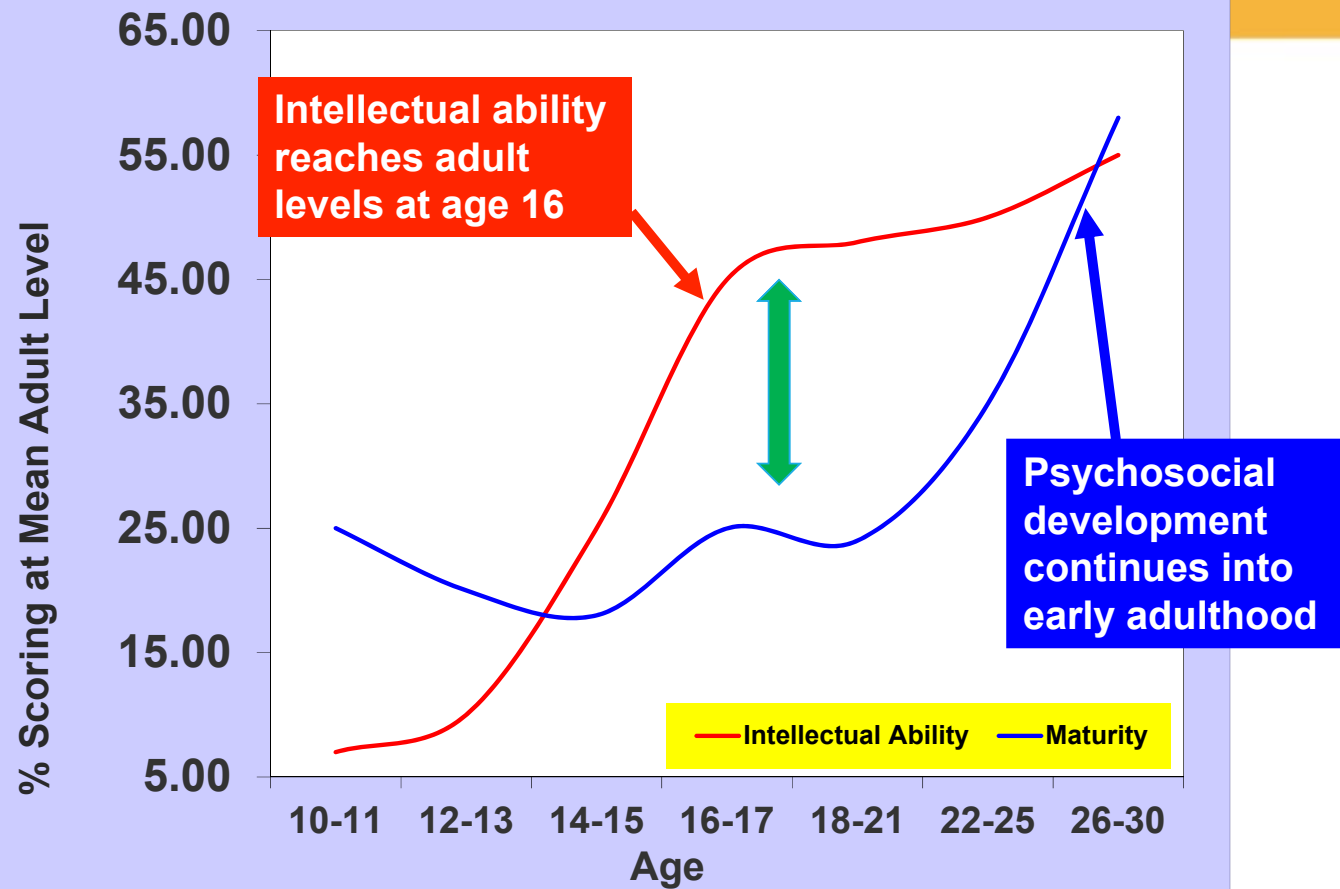
Relative to young children, adolescents have **advanced decision-making skills** and can better seek solutions that are **right for them.**

#PromiseofYouth

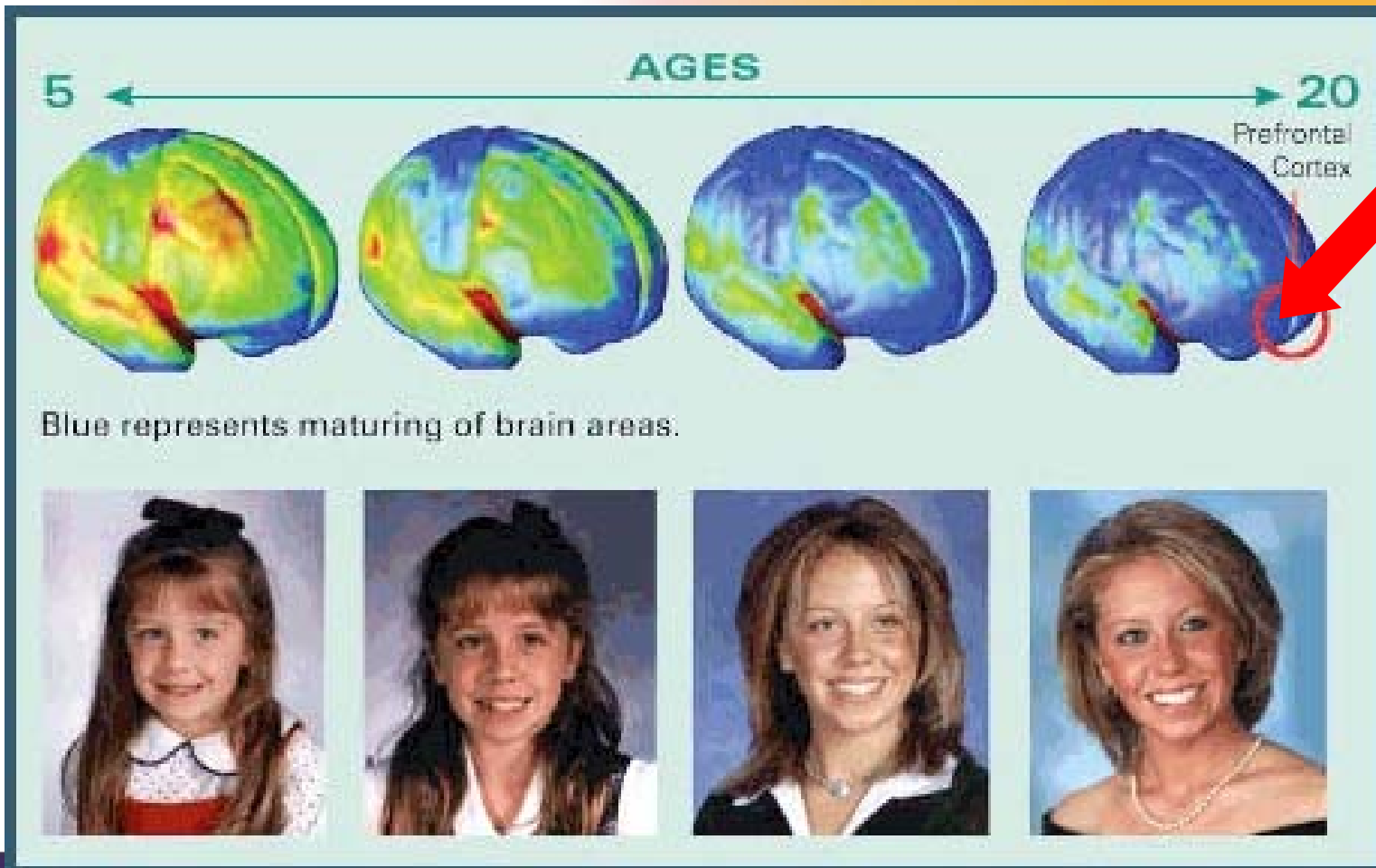
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Adolescent Decision-Making



Steinberg, Cauffman, Woolard, Graham, & Banich, 2009

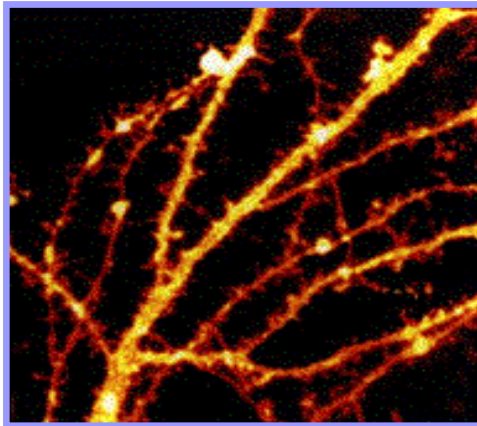


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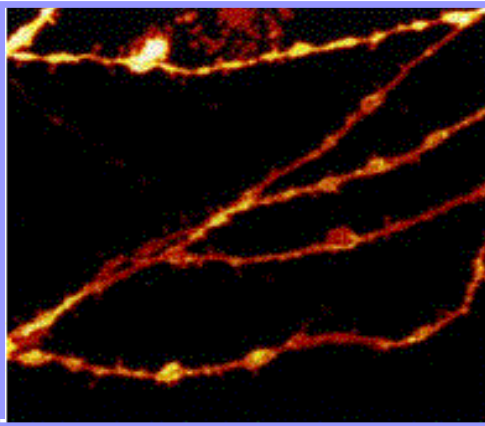
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Increased Myelination

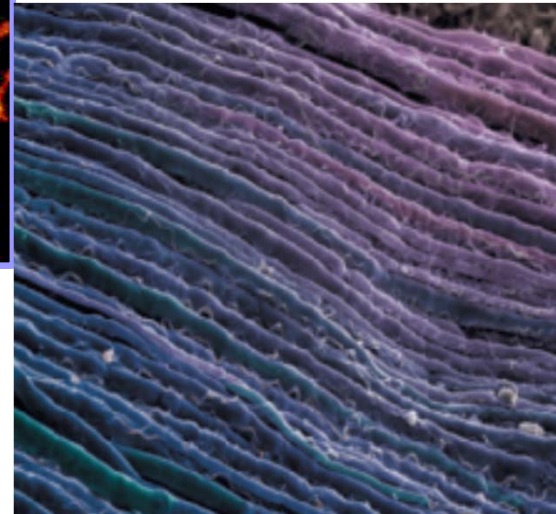
Synaptic Pruning (↓ Grey Matter)



Infancy



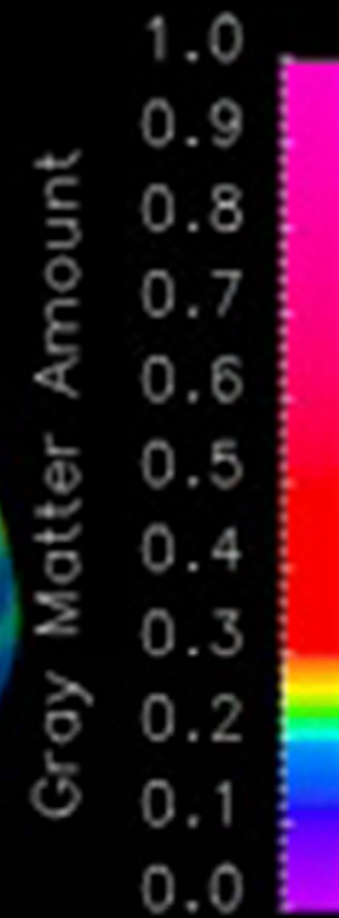
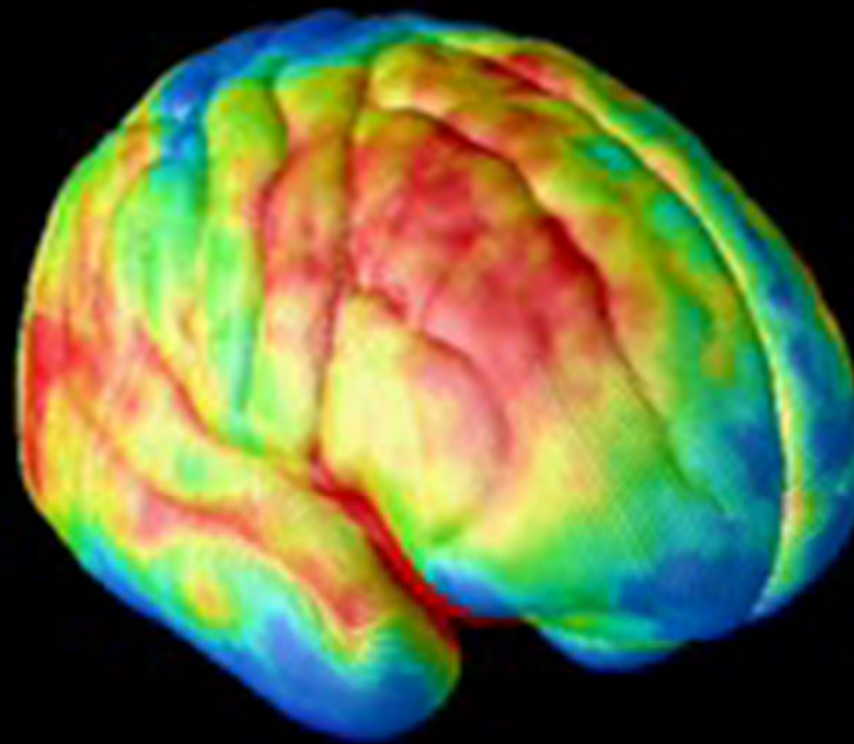
Adolescence

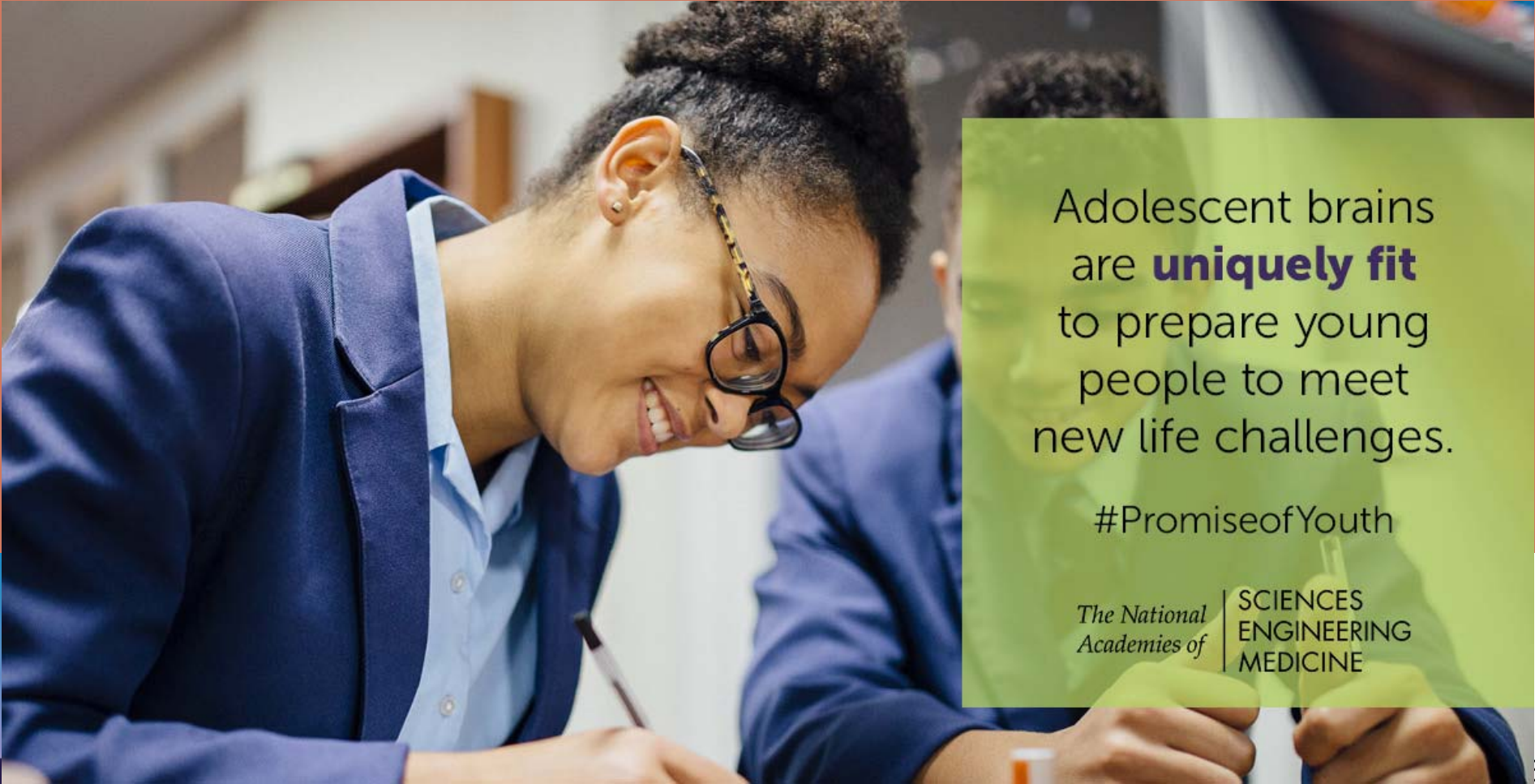


Myelination (↑ White Matter)

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Adolescent brains
are **uniquely fit**
to prepare young
people to meet
new life challenges.

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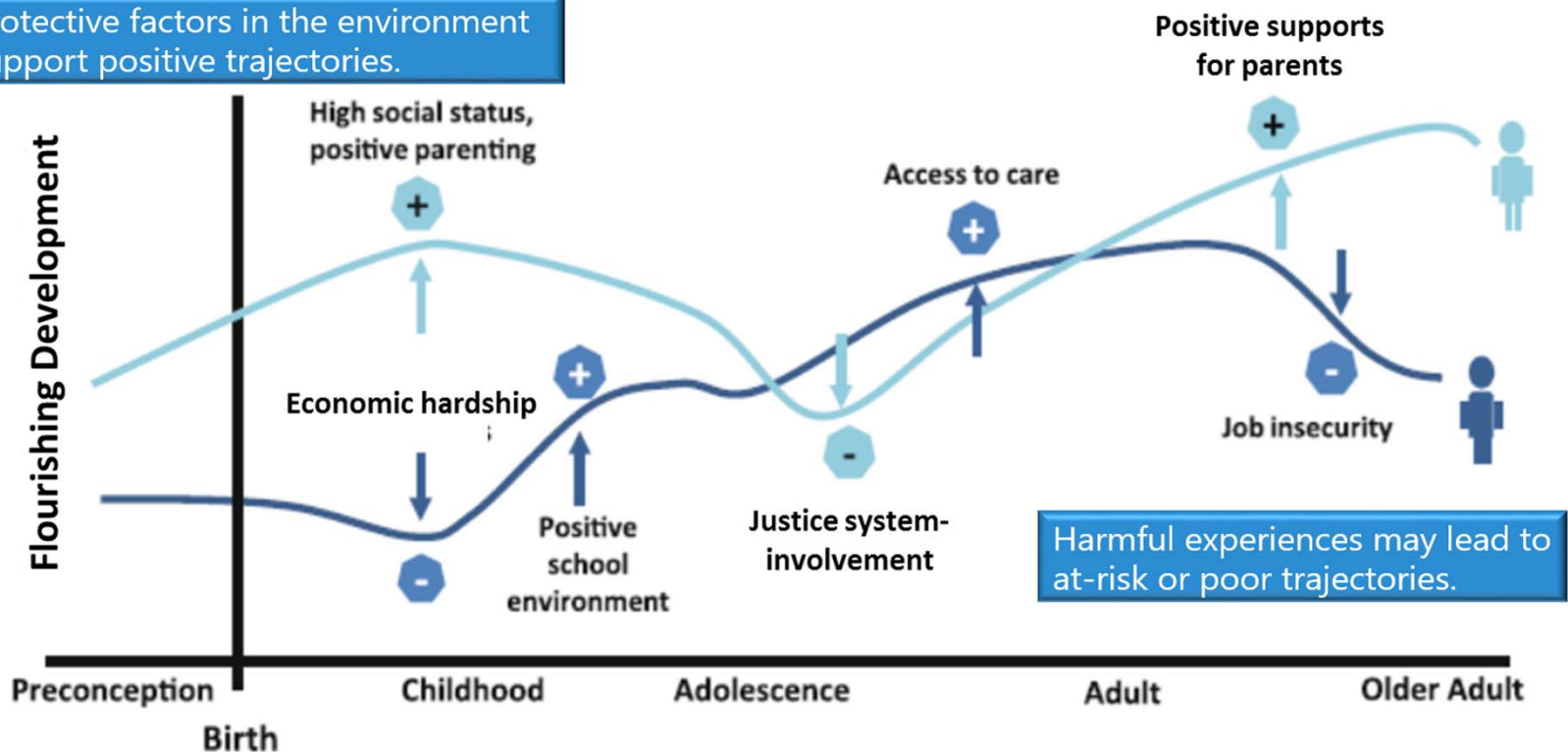
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Epigenetics: Environmental Influences that Shape Adolescent Development

Protective factors in the environment support positive trajectories.



Harmful experiences may lead to at-risk or poor trajectories.

**Adolescence is a period
of great opportunity**
to promote learning and
discovery and to address
the harmful effects of past
negative experiences.

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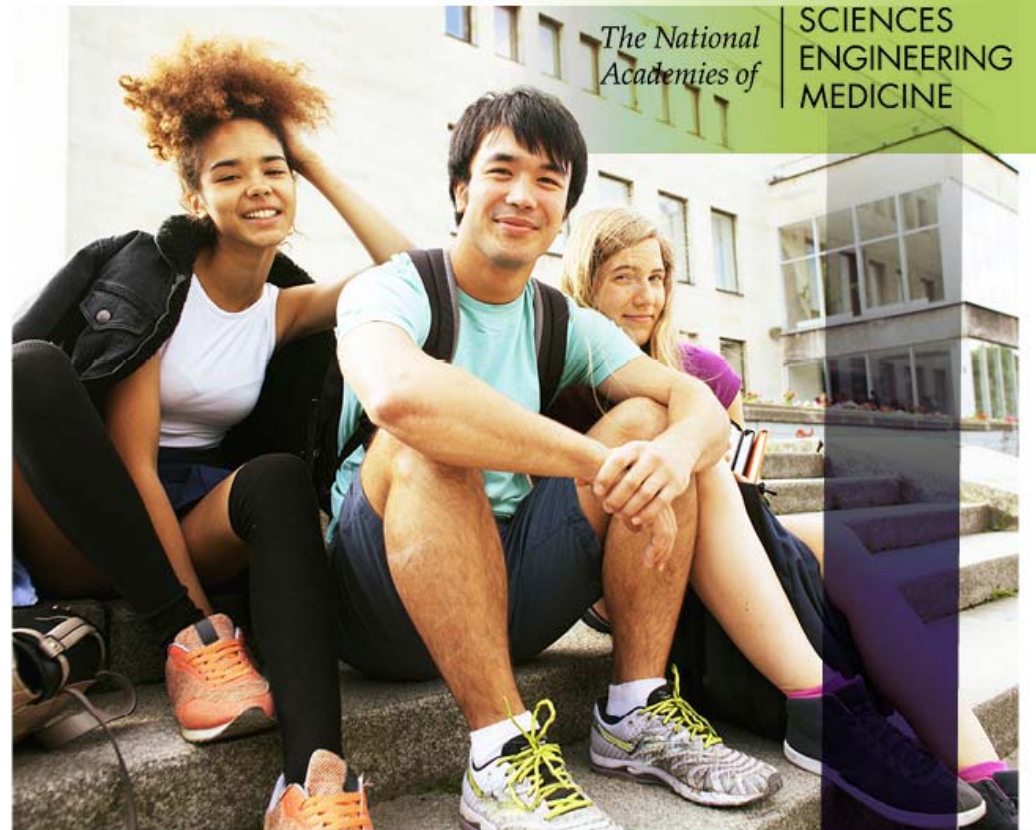
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It's time to **reimagine and redesign the systems** and settings that adolescents most frequently encounter.

Together, we can ensure that millions of young people can impact society for the better.

#PromiseofYouth



Justice System

- Findings regarding adolescent brain development have highlighted the **diminished culpability** of adolescents involved in the justice system and their potential **responsiveness to preventive interventions**.

Justice System

- Recent advances in the science of adolescent development have already had a substantial positive impact on juvenile justice reform. There is unfinished business, however. Most important: **racial and ethnic disparities** in police, prosecutorial, and judicial decision-making persist and in some cases are increasing.

Justice System

- Areas of opportunity for reform within the juvenile justice system include: increased family engagement and greater attention to procedural fairness, such as interactions with police, legal representation for youth, and reduced use of juvenile fines and fees.

Justice System

- Similar reform efforts recognizing the developmental needs of older adolescents and “emerging adults” are developing within the **criminal justice system**, including reducing automatic transfers of juveniles to criminal courts based only on the charged offense, and creating developmentally informed correctional programs for young adults.

State Legislation Consistent with a Developmental Approach

All States

Based upon SCT rulings

- No capital punishment
- No life without parole for non homicide
- No mandatory life without parole

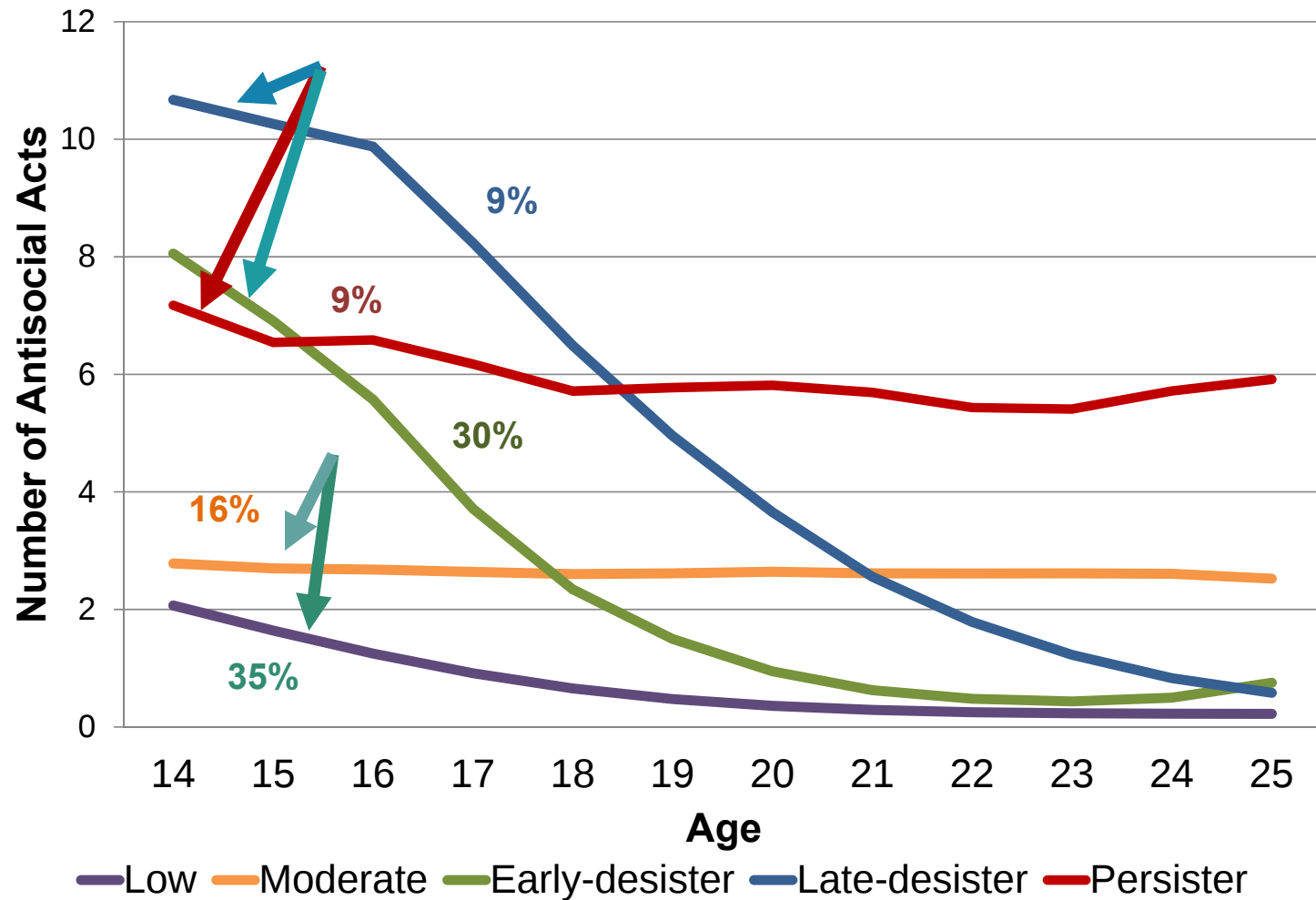
Individual State Reform

- Expansion of services to ages 18- 21
- Limit on use of solitary
- Revision of juvenile sex offender laws if they “are not considered a threat to the public”
- Prohibition on use of shackles
- Prohibition on any restraint “unless serious risk of harming self or others”
- Prevention of prosecution/law enforcement advice to waive counsel



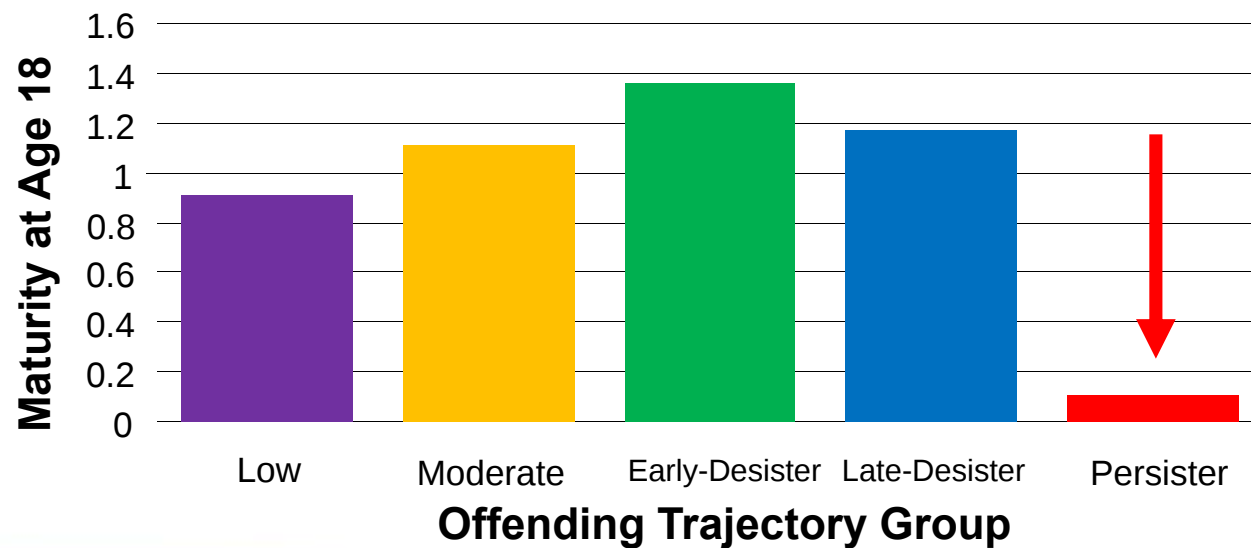
Photograph by Richard Ross – Juvenile (In)Justice Project

MAJORITY OF YOUTH DESIST FROM CRIME

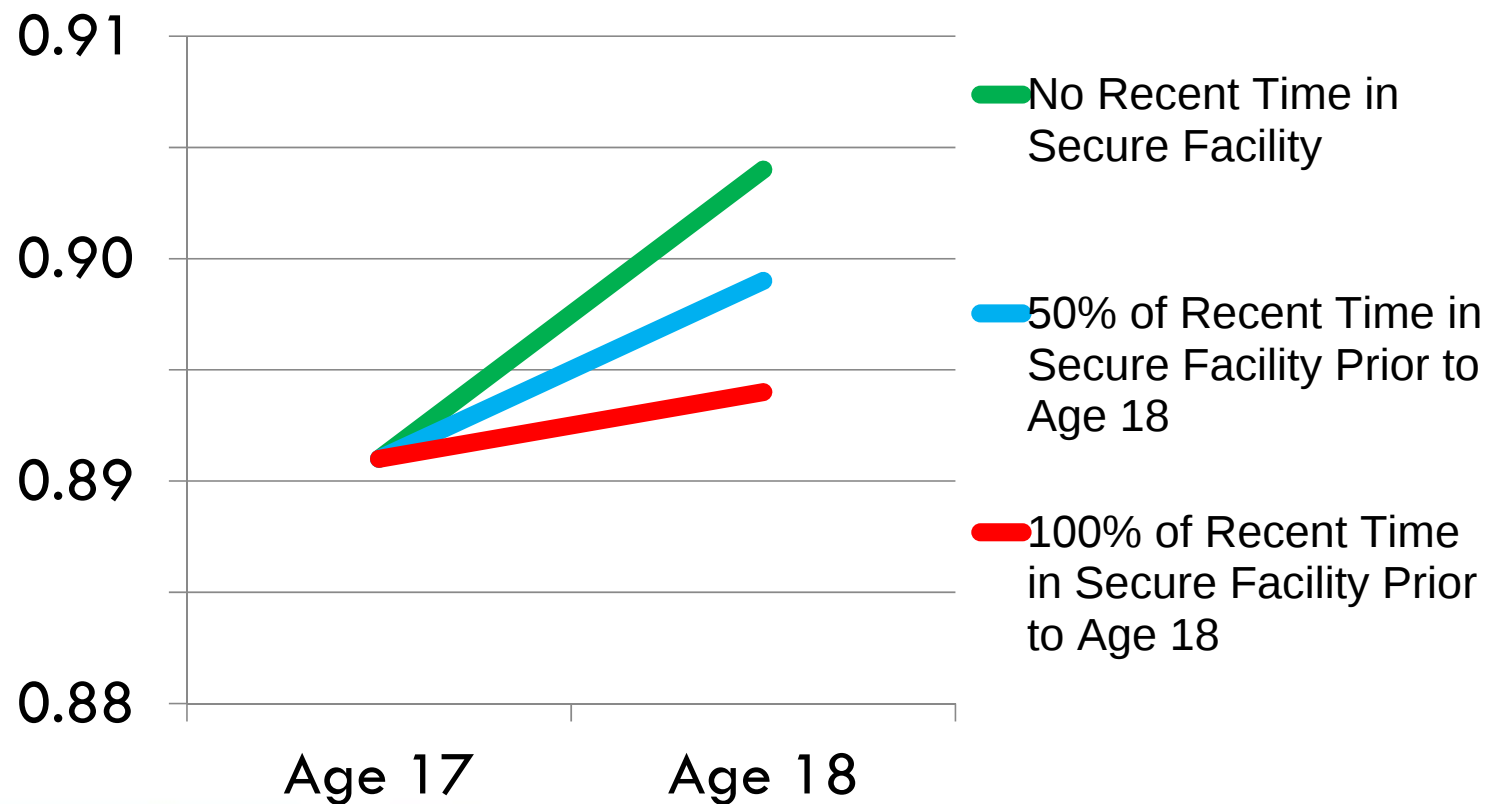


BEST PREDICTOR OF DESISTING FROM CRIME IS BECOMING MORE MATURE

Persistent offenders exhibit lowest levels of impulse control and perspective



JUVENILE INCARCERATION DELAYS PSYCHOSOCIAL MATURITY



Dmitrieva, Monahan, Cauffman, & Steinberg, 2012

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Recommendations

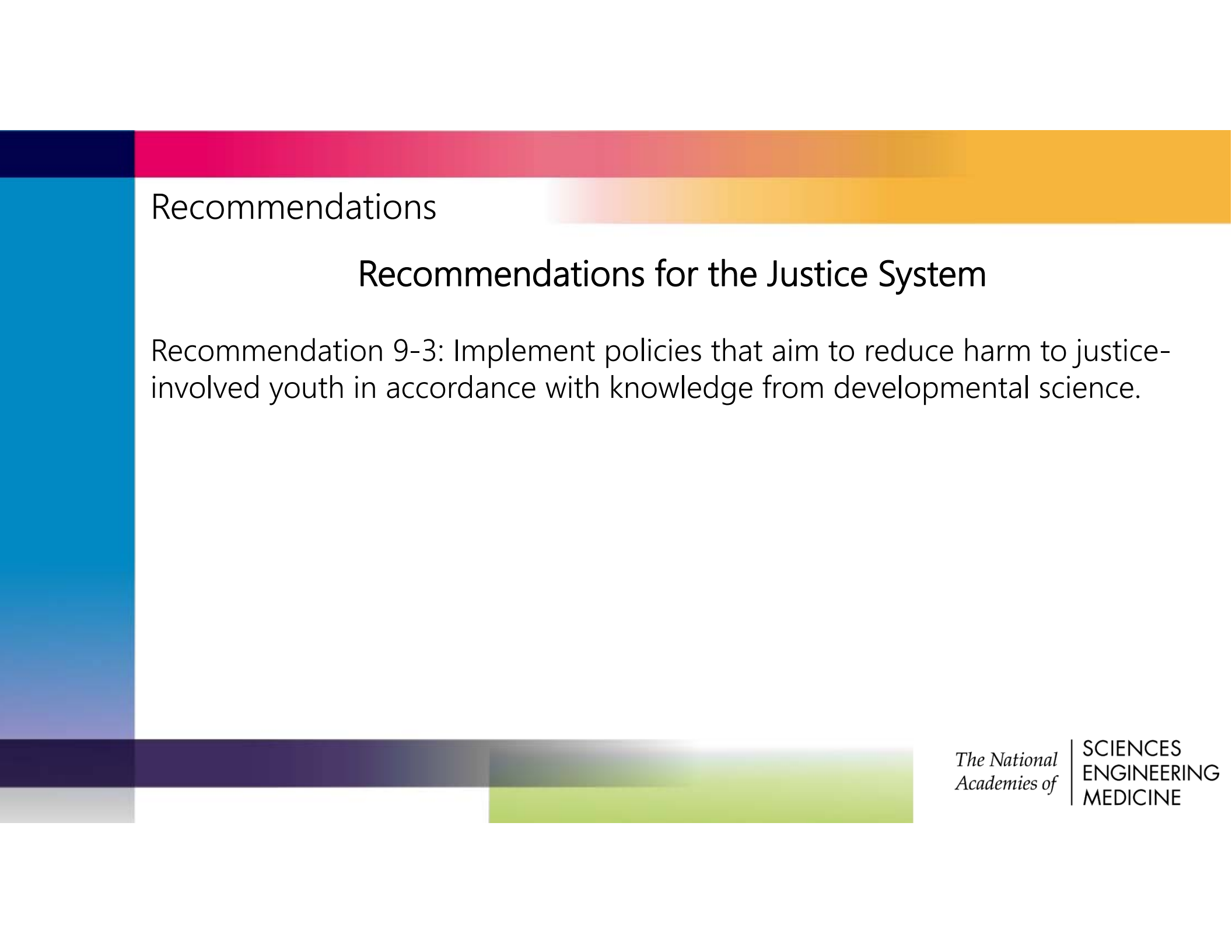
Recommendations for the Justice System

Recommendation 9-1: Reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability status, and sexual orientation or gender identity and expression among adolescents involved in the justice system.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Justice System

Recommendation 9-2: Ensure that youth maintain supportive relationships while involved in the justice system and receive appropriate guidance and counsel from legal professionals and caregivers.



Recommendations

Recommendations for the Justice System

Recommendation 9-3: Implement policies that aim to reduce harm to justice-involved youth in accordance with knowledge from developmental science.



Recommendations

Recommendations for the Justice System

Recommendation 9-4: Implement developmentally appropriate and fair policies and practices for adolescents involved in the criminal justice system.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Justice System

Recommendation 9-5: For those youth in the custody of the justice system, ensure that policies and practices are implemented to prioritize the health and educational needs of adolescents and avoid causing harm.

Conclusion

- Society has a collective responsibility to build systems that support and promote positive adolescent development.
- Systems should reflect a rich understanding of the developmental needs of adolescents and recognition of adolescence as a time of great opportunity to promote learning and discovery and to remediate past developmental challenges.
- Until society embraces this responsibility, the promise of adolescence will remain unfulfilled for millions of youth.
- To fail to build systems that support all youth is to waste human capital, reducing economic growth and exacerbating rising income inequality.
- Creating positive impact through opportunities not only improves trajectories, but also can provide high-impact, cost effective interventions to counteract the effects of childhood stresses and deprivations and prevent negative outcomes in adulthood.

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RESEARCH HAS **FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED
OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW YOUNG PEOPLE
DEVELOP, GROW, AND LEARN.**

Society must embrace this new knowledge in order to
reimagine systems so that all young people can thrive.

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For more information, please contact:

Emily Backes, Study Director, ebackes@nas.edu

Dara Shefska, Associate Program Officer, dshefska@nas.edu

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