



OJJDP FACT SHEET

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator July 2000 #10

Juvenile Vandalism, 1997

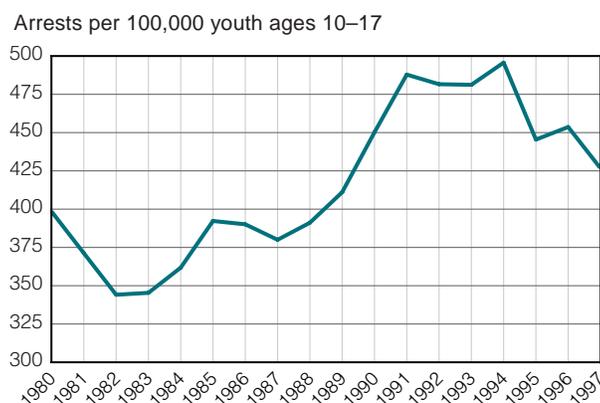
by Anne L. Stahl

Vandalism arrests peak at age 16

Vandalism is defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program as willful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement, or defacement of any public or private property, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or persons having custody or control. In 1997, law enforcement agencies made approximately 136,500 arrests of persons under age 18 for vandalism. These juvenile arrests represented 44% of all vandalism arrests; males accounted for the majority (88%) of the juvenile arrests. Unlike most offenses, the racial distribution of youth arrested for vandalism in 1997 generally reflected their profile in the general population: white (80%), black (18%), American Indian (1%), and Asian (1%). The 1997 vandalism arrest rate peaked at age 16 and then declined for each subsequent age.

Overall, the juvenile arrest rate for vandalism declined between 1980 and 1982 and then gradually increased to reach a high of 496 arrests per 100,000 youth ages 10–17 in 1994. As with juvenile arrest rates overall, the juvenile arrest rate for vandalism declined between 1994 and 1997, and the 1997 rate was nearly the average of the prior 17 years.

Juvenile arrest rates for vandalism, 1980–97



Female arrest rates for vandalism increased steadily between 1981 and 1997, from 61 to 102 per 100,000 youth ages 10–17. As a result, the female proportion of all juvenile arrests for vandalism increased from 8% to 12% during this period. Male arrest rates increased from 1981 through 1991 and then declined.

Formal court processing of juvenile vandalism cases increased between 1988 and 1997

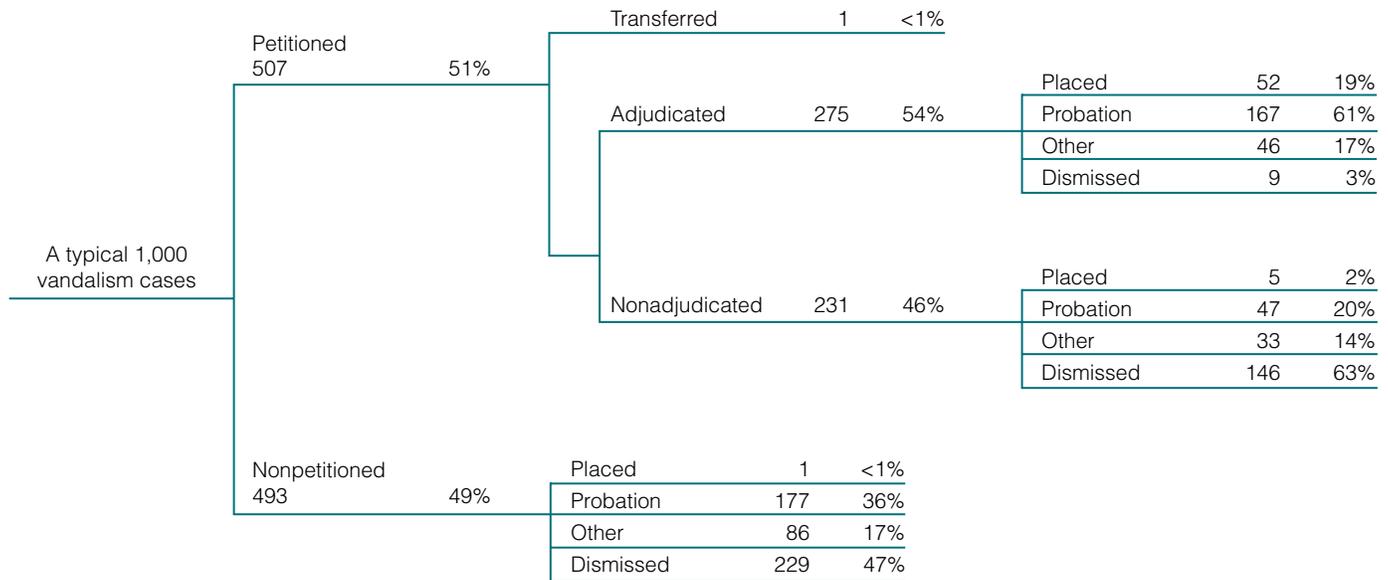
Vandalism was the most serious offense in 14% of all property cases disposed by juvenile courts in 1997. That year, an estimated 114,800 vandalism cases were processed in courts with juvenile jurisdiction. The number of vandalism cases increased 48% (from 81,600 to 123,600 cases) between 1988 and 1994 and then dropped 7% (from 123,600 to 114,800) between 1994 and 1997. A case represents one youth processed on a new referral, regardless of the number of offenses contained in that referral. An individual youth can be involved in more than one case during the year.

When a case is referred to juvenile court, a decision is made to handle the case either formally or informally. When a case is handled informally, without the filing of a petition and an adjudicatory or waiver hearing, the youth may voluntarily agree to comply with certain specified sanctions without a formal court order. In 1997, 49% of the vandalism cases referred to juvenile courts were handled informally. Almost half of these cases (47% or 26,300) were dismissed. In 36% (20,300) of the informally handled cases, youth agreed to comply with probation conditions, and in another 17% (9,900), youth agreed to other sanctions, such as restitution, community service, or fines, without a term of probation.

In 1988, 38% (31,000) of the juvenile vandalism cases referred to juvenile court were handled formally (with the filing of a petition). This proportion increased to 51% (58,200) in 1997. The growth in the proportion of cases that were handled formally, coupled with the large increase in the number of cases referred, resulted in an 88% increase in the number of juvenile vandalism cases handled formally by the courts between 1988 and 1997.

In 1997, 54% (31,600) of formally processed vandalism cases resulted in youth being adjudicated delinquent. Probation was the

Juvenile court processing of a typical 1,000 vandalism cases, 1997



Note: Detail may not equal totals because of rounding.

Data source: Analysis of the National Center for Juvenile Justice's *National Juvenile Court Data Archive: 1997 juvenile court case records* [machine-readable data file].

most serious disposition ordered in more than 60% (19,200) of these cases. In 17% (5,300) of adjudicated cases, youth were ordered to comply with specified sanctions such as restitution, community service, or fines, and in another 19% (6,000), youth were placed in residential facilities.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the Report *Juvenile Court Statistics 1997*. Copies are available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse by calling 800-638-8736. OJJDP also supports distribution of a PC-compatible software version of the data analyzed in *Juvenile Court Statistics*. For a free copy of the software *Easy*

Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, call the National Juvenile Court Data Archive at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, Pittsburgh, PA (412-227-6950). The software can be downloaded from OJJDP's Web site: www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Anne L. Stahl is the Manager of Data Collection for the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by an OJJDP grant.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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Fact Sheet



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