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OJJDP Update on Statistics

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

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Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1990

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In 1990 courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 1,264,800 delinquency cases, a 10% increase over the 1986 caseload. Overall, U.S. juvenile courts processed 113,000 more delinquency cases in 1990 than in 1986. The number of person offense cases increased 29% between 1986 and 1990, while the number of drug offense cases decreased 7%. Half the delinquency cases disposed by courts in 1990 were processed formally with the filing of a petition. Among all cases petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing, 57% were adjudicated delinquent and nearly 3% were transferred to criminal (adult) court. In 1990, 33% of adjudicated delinquents were placed out of the home, compared with 30% in 1986. The number of delinquency cases transferred to criminal court increased 65%. The number of cases involving drug law violations that were transferred to criminal court increased 282%.

These are among the statistics found in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*, the latest in a series of yearly reports on the cases

handled by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Although courts with juvenile jurisdiction may handle a variety of cases, including abuse, neglect, adoption, and traffic violations, *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports focus on the disposition of petitioned and nonpetitioned delinquency cases and petitioned status offense cases. The reports include national estimates of cases handled each year by courts with juvenile jurisdiction, many subnational statistics, and an appendix of caseload statistics for nearly all States and the larger jurisdictions within each State.

Additional findings from *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990* include:

- In 19% of delinquency cases processed in 1990, the most serious charge was a person offense, in 58% a property offense, in 5% a drug law violation, and in 18% a public order offense.
- Juveniles were held in secure detention facilities at some point between referral and disposition in 23% of all

delinquency cases in 1990. The number of detained delinquency cases increased 20% between 1986 and 1990.

- Juveniles were adjudicated delinquent in 57% of petitioned delinquency cases in 1990, compared with 63% in 1986.
- Juveniles were placed on probation in 57% of all adjudicated delinquency cases in both 1986 and 1990.
- Juvenile courts transferred youth to criminal court in 2.7% of formally handled delinquency cases in 1990, compared with 1.9% in 1986.

These national estimates of the cases handled by juvenile courts in 1990 are based on data from more than 1,500 courts that had jurisdiction over 62% of the U.S. juvenile population in 1990.¹

¹For information on the estimation procedure, see the Methods section in this *Update* or in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*. The national estimates for 1986 through 1989 described in this *Update* include revisions made subsequent to publication of earlier reports using these data.

From the Administrator

This *Update* profiles the 1,264,800 delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts during 1990. It summarizes the findings of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*, an analysis of juvenile court data held in the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The National Center for Juvenile Justice maintains the Archive for the

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

These statistics about the handling of delinquent and status offenders by the Nation's juvenile courts provide juvenile justice professionals with a frame of reference—a context to guide their efforts to improve the system's response to juvenile crime. While these statistics alone cannot

explain patterns and trends in juvenile offending, they do draw our attention to their scale and direction. This *Update*, like the larger report on which it is based, is intended as a general reference document for juvenile justice professionals in law enforcement, courts, and corrections.

John J. Wilson
Acting Administrator

The unit of count in this study is a case disposed during the calendar year by a court with juvenile jurisdiction. An individual youth can be involved in more than one case during the calendar year. Each case represents a youth processed by a juvenile court on a new referral, regardless of the number of individual offenses contained in that referral. Cases involving multiple offenses are categorized by the most serious offense, while cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized by the most severe or restrictive disposition.

Delinquency Cases

A delinquency offense occurs when a juvenile commits an act for which an adult could be prosecuted in criminal court. Juvenile courts handled an estimated 1,264,800 delinquency cases in 1990 (table 1). A property offense was the most serious charge involved in 731,700 (58%) of these cases. The most serious charge was a person offense in 239,700 cases (19%), a drug offense in 68,200 cases (5%), and a public order offense in 225,200 cases (18%). In 25% of all delinquency cases handled in 1990, the most serious charge was larceny-theft.

The number of delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts increased 10% between 1986 and 1990. Changes in case volume, however, varied by offense. Large increases occurred in the number of cases involving criminal homicide (64%), motor vehicle theft (63%), aggravated assault (48%), and weapons offenses (43%). Smaller but substantial increases occurred in the volume of cases involving simple assault (27%), arson (17%),

Table 1
Delinquency Cases by Offense, 1990

Offense	Number of Cases	Percent Change	
		89-90	86-90
Total Delinquency	1,264,800	4%	10%
Person	239,700	14	29
Criminal Homicide	2,700	29	64
Forcible Rape	4,400	7	-5
Robbery	28,900	22	9
Aggravated Assault	60,100	21	48
Simple Assault	120,800	11	27
Other Violent Sex Offenses	7,300	9	18
Other Person Offenses	15,600	9	44
Property	731,700	4	8
Burglary	141,400	6	1
Larceny-Theft	318,300	0	3
Motor Vehicle Theft	68,600	0	63
Arson	6,900	2	17
Vandalism	91,700	11	10
Trespassing	48,400	-1	-4
Stolen Property Offenses	27,800	17	-2
Other Property Offenses	28,600	19	37
Drug Law Violations	68,200	-13	-7
Public Order	225,200	3	6
Obstruction of Justice	82,200	1	9
Disorderly Conduct	55,100	14	14
Weapons Offenses	28,800	14	43
Liquor Law Violations	17,400	10	-18
Nonviolent Sex Offenses	12,100	-2	0
Other Public Order	29,600	-19	-17
Violent Crime Index*	96,000	21	31
Property Crime Index**	535,300	2	8

* Violent Crime Index includes criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

** Property Crime Index includes burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

and disorderly conduct (14%). The number of drug law violation cases, however, decreased 7%. Liquor law violations and forcible rape cases also decreased (18% and 5%, respectively).

The number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 1990 was equivalent to 49.6 cases disposed for every 1,000 juveniles in the U.S. at risk of referral (table 2).² This delinquency case rate increased 13% between 1986 and 1990. The case rate for juveniles

charged with person offenses increased 33%, while the rate for drug offenses decreased 4% during this period.

Of all delinquency cases processed by the Nation's juvenile courts in 1990, 59% involved youth age 15 or younger. These younger youth were involved in 60% of person offense cases, 62% of property offense cases, 38% of drug law violation cases, and 51% of public order offense cases. Compared to caseloads of younger juveniles, caseloads of older

²The calculation of the population at risk of referral controls for State variations in the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. Juveniles at risk are defined as youth age 10 or older who would be under the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court according to State law. The upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction is defined by statute. In most States, this age is 17, but upper ages of jurisdiction range from 15 to 18. Between 1986 and 1990, the total population of youth at risk declined 2.8%, from 26,230,000 to 25,480,000.

Table 2
Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.
Delinquency	1,151,400	1,264,800	10%	43.9	49.6	13%
Person	185,300	239,700	29	7.1	9.4	33
Property	679,500	731,700	8	25.9	28.7	11
Drugs	73,300	68,200	-7	2.8	2.7	-4
Public Order	213,300	225,200	6	8.1	8.8	9

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

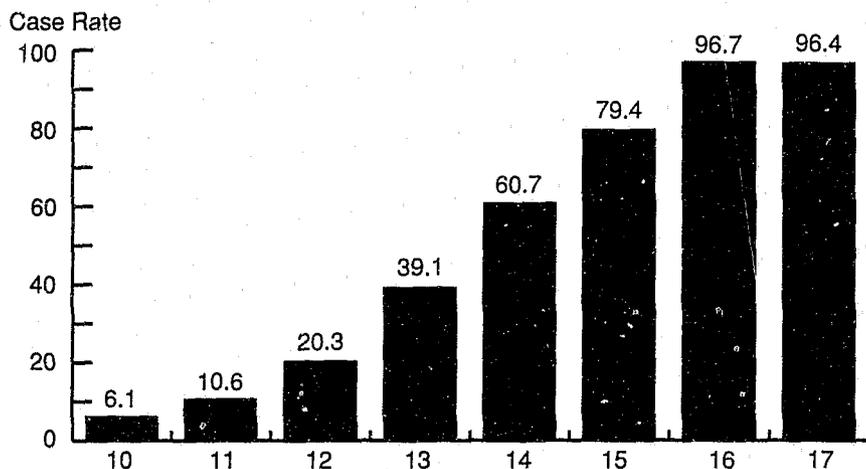
Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 3
Offense Characteristics of Delinquency Cases by Age at Referral, 1990

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Person	20%	18%
Property	62	53
Drugs	3	8
Public Order	15	21
Total	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Figure 1
Delinquency Case Rates by Age at Referral, 1990



Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth in age group

youth had a larger proportion of drug law violations (8% versus 3%) and public order offense cases (21% versus 15%) but a smaller proportion of person offense cases (18% versus 20%) and property offense cases (53% versus 62%) (table 3).³

Delinquency case rates generally increased with age (figure 1). For example, the delinquency case rate for 15-year-olds was 31% higher than the rate for 14-year-olds (79.4 compared to 60.7 per 1,000 youth at risk,

respectively). The only exceptions to this pattern were the case rates for 16- and 17-year-olds, which were nearly equal (96.7 and 96.4, respectively). Drug law violation case rates showed the sharpest age increase. The drug offense case rate for 17-year-olds was more than 300% greater than the rate for 14-year-olds (9.0 compared to 2.2 cases per 1,000 juveniles at risk).

The delinquency case rate for males was more than 4 times greater than the case rate for females in 1990 (78.6 versus

19.2 cases per 1,000 youth at risk). The number of delinquency cases for males and females each increased by 10% between 1986 and 1990 (table 4). The person offense case rate increased 32% for males and 36% for females, while property offense case rates increased 10% and 16%, respectively. Changes in male and female case rates differed most in drug offenses. While the drug offense case rate for males was unchanged, the case rate for females decreased substantially (25%).

In 1990, delinquency cases involving white youth outnumbered those involving black youth by more than 2 to 1, and outnumbered those involving youth of other races by 20 to 1.⁴ However, the delinquency case rate for black youth (101.4 cases per 1,000 at risk) was more than twice the rate for white youth (40.8 per 1,000) and almost three times the rate for youth of other races (33.9 per 1,000). Between 1986 and 1990, the number of delinquency cases involving

³ Care should be exercised when interpreting age, sex, or racial differences in the handling of juveniles; reported statistics do not control for variations in the seriousness of the offense or the prior court history of the juvenile.

⁴ In 1990, whites made up 80% of the Nation's youth population at risk. In both the population and court data, nearly all youth of Hispanic ethnicity were included in the white racial category.

Table 4

Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Sex, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.
Male	935,600	1,027,100	10%	69.6	78.6	13%
Person	149,200	192,200	29	11.1	14.7	32
Property	557,800	594,600	7	41.5	45.5	10
Drugs	60,800	59,100	-3	4.5	4.5	0
Public Order	167,800	181,200	8	12.5	13.9	11
Female	215,800	237,700	10%	16.9	19.2	14%
Person	36,100	47,500	32	2.8	3.8	36
Property	121,700	137,200	13	9.5	11.1	16
Drugs	12,500	9,100	-27	1.0	0.7	-25
Public Order	45,500	43,900	-3	3.6	3.5	0

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 5

Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Race, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.
White	817,400	835,700	2%	38.4	40.8	6%
Person	105,400	133,000	26	4.9	6.5	31
Property	497,000	512,900	3	23.3	25.1	7
Drugs	53,900	36,800	-32	2.5	1.8	-29
Public Order	161,100	153,000	-5	7.6	7.5	-1
Black	303,900	389,100	28%	77.9	101.4	30%
Person	75,600	100,800	33	19.4	26.3	36
Property	163,500	192,800	18	41.9	50.2	20
Drugs	17,800	30,500	71	4.6	7.9	74
Public Order	47,000	65,000	38	12.0	16.9	41
Other Races	30,200	40,000	33%	29.5	33.9	15%
Person	4,300	5,900	37	4.2	5.0	19
Property	19,000	26,000	37	18.6	22.0	19
Drugs	1,600	1,000	-42	1.6	0.8	-49
Public Order	5,200	7,200	37	5.1	6.1	19

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

white youth remained relatively constant, while the number of cases involving black youth and youth of other races increased 28% and 33%, respectively (table 5).

The person offense and drug law violation case rates for black youth (26.3 and 7.9 cases per 1,000 at risk) were four times greater than the corresponding rates for white youth (6.5 and 1.8). Similarly, the property and public order offense case rates for blacks (50.2 and 16.9) were double the rate for whites (25.1 and 7.5). In all offense categories, the case rate for juveniles of other races was lower than the corresponding rate for black or white juveniles.

In 1990, property offenses represented 61% of the white youth caseload, 50% of the black youth caseload, and 65% of the caseload of youth of other races. The black youth caseload involved a higher percentage of person offense cases than those of either white youth or youth of other races (26% compared with 16% and 15%, respectively). Similarly, delinquency cases involving black youth contained a larger proportion of drug law violations (8%) than did cases involving white youth (4%) or youth of other races (2%).

Source of referral

Court intake of delinquency cases can result from referrals by law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, schools, parents, probation officers, and victims. Although there were variations across offense categories, 85% of all 1990 delinquency cases were referred to courts by law enforcement agencies. These agencies referred 84% of person offense cases, 90% of property offense cases, 91% of drug law violation cases, and 67% of public order offense cases (table 6).

Detention

A juvenile may be placed in a detention facility at some point between referral to court and case disposition for a number of reasons: to protect the community from the juvenile, to protect the juvenile,

Table 6

Percent of Delinquency Cases Referred by Law Enforcement, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
Delinquency	83%	85%
Person	79	84
Property	89	90
Drugs	90	91
Public Order	66	67

or both. Also, detention is sometimes necessary to ensure a youth's attendance at scheduled hearings or for evaluation purposes. Youth were detained in 23% (286,300) of all delinquency cases disposed in 1990 (table 7). Nearly half (135,300) of all detained cases in 1990 involved youth charged with property offenses.

The number of detained delinquency cases increased 20% between 1986 and 1990. The number of detained person offense cases increased 38%, while detained property offense cases increased 15% and public order offense cases increased 11%. These increases were similar to the growth in the overall number of person, property, and public order offense cases handled by juvenile courts. In contrast, the number of detained drug offense cases increased 33%, while the total number of drug law violation cases handled by the courts decreased 7%.

The probability that the courts would detain a male or female charged with a person, property, or public order offense changed very little between 1986 and 1990 (table 8). However, the courts' use of detention increased for both males and females charged with drug law violations (from 27% to 39% for cases involving males and from 22% to 28% for females). As a result of these changing detention practices for drug offenders, the overall probability of detention for cases involving males increased from 21% to 24%. Even with the increase in drug law violation detentions, the overall probability of

Table 7

Percent Change in Detained Delinquency Cases, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1986	1990	
Delinquency	238,300	286,300	20%
Person	46,900	64,800	38
Property	117,500	135,300	15
Drugs	19,100	25,400	33
Public Order	54,900	60,900	11

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 8

Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Sex, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
Male	21%	24%
Person	27	29
Property	18	20
Drugs	27	39
Public Order	25	27
Female	17%	17%
Person	19	19
Property	13	13
Drugs	22	28
Public Order	27	26

detention for females did not change over the 5-year period.

In 1990, the likelihood of detention in cases involving black juveniles and juveniles of other races was 29%, while it was 19% for white juveniles (table 9). For youth of all races, the use of detention among all offense categories except drug violation cases remained relatively constant between 1986 and 1990. During this period, the use of detention for drug violation cases increased from 20% to 26% among whites, from 44% to 51% among blacks, and from 20% to 41% among youth of other races.

Table 9

Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Race, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
White	18%	19%
Person	21	23
Property	15	16
Drugs	20	26
Public Order	24	25
Black	27%	29%
Person	30	31
Property	23	23
Drugs	44	51
Public Order	32	30
Other Races	25%	29%
Person	35	38
Property	22	25
Drugs	20	41
Public Order	33	33

Case processing

When a delinquency case is referred to juvenile court, an intake officer, judge, or prosecutor decides whether to handle the case formally or informally. Formal handling involves the filing of a petition requesting an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Informal cases are handled at the intake level, without a petition and without an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

In 1990 half of all delinquency cases were handled formally (figure 2). The likelihood of a delinquency case being petitioned increased slightly between

1986 and 1990, from 48% to 50%. Because of the increased number of cases referred to intake and the greater likelihood of intake filing a petition, the number of delinquency cases processed formally increased 16% (table 10). The number of formally handled delinquency cases involving person offenses increased 30%, while formal property cases increased 11%, formal drug cases increased 24%, and formally handled public order offense cases increased 15%.

Criminal court transfer. The mechanism of transferring a case to criminal (adult) court varies by State. In some jurisdictions, the prosecutor has the authority to file juvenile cases directly in criminal court provided they meet criteria for adult court processing. In other States, the prosecutor must obtain permission from the juvenile court before the transfer can be made. In such

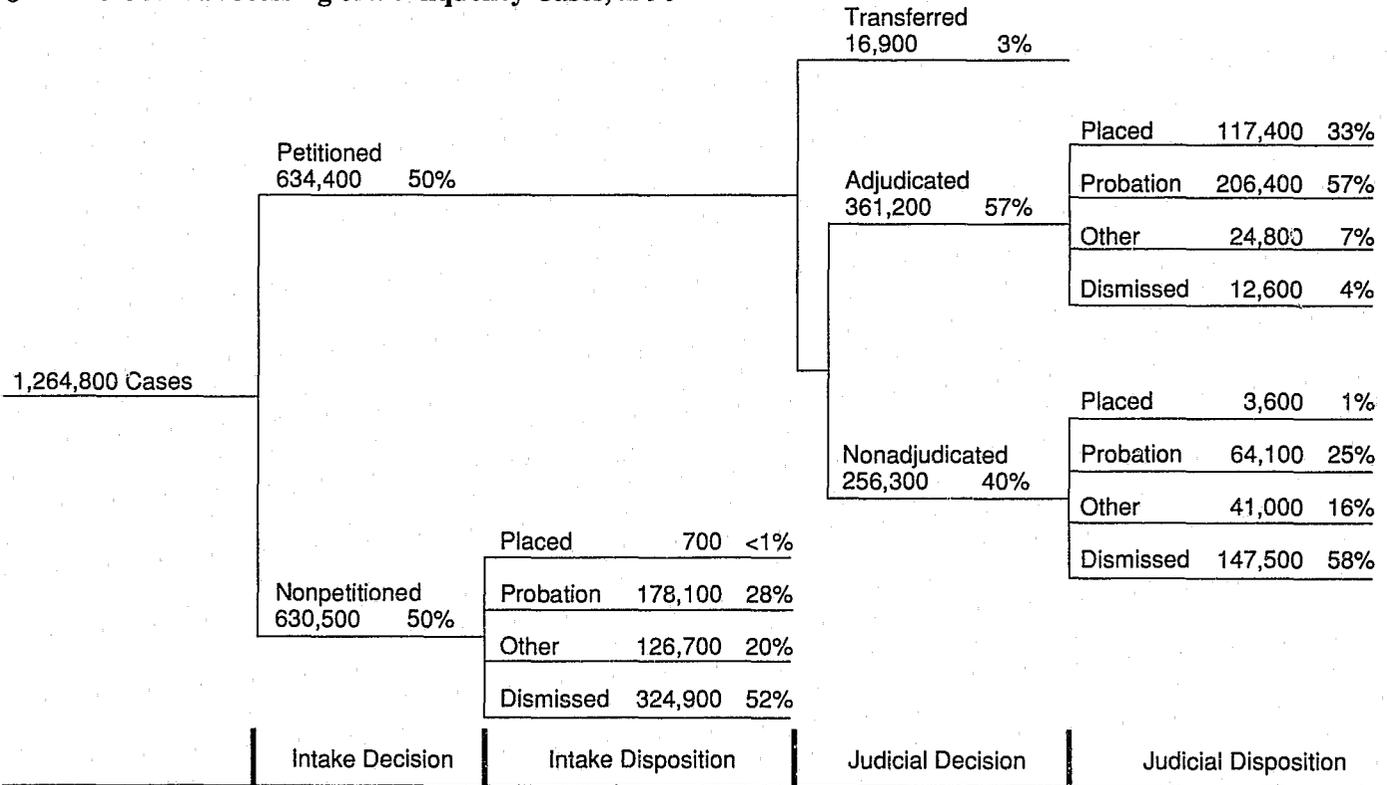
cases, a juvenile court judge decides whether the case should be transferred to criminal court in response to a petition requesting that the juvenile court waive jurisdiction. Denial of the transfer request nearly always results in the scheduling of an adjudicatory hearing in juvenile court.

In 1990, 2.7% of all formally processed delinquency cases were transferred to criminal court, compared with 1.9% in 1986 (table 11). Cases involving person offenses were most likely to be transferred in 1986 (3.1%), while drug cases were most likely to be transferred in 1990 (5.1%). Property offense cases, however, accounted for nearly half of all cases transferred in 1990. The total number of transferred cases increased 65% between 1986 and 1990. During the same period, the number of drug offense cases transferred to criminal court increased 282% (table 12).

Adjudication and disposition. An adjudicatory hearing is held in nearly all formally handled delinquency cases.⁵ During this hearing, the court determines whether the youth will be adjudicated a delinquent. The court then makes a dispositional decision that could include commitment to a residential facility, probation, referral to another agency or treatment program, fines, restitution, or community service. Fifty-seven percent of all formally processed delinquency cases in 1990 resulted in adjudication (table 13); in 33% of these adjudicated cases, juveniles were sent to residential facilities (table 14), and in 57% of the cases they were placed on formal probation (table 15).

⁵ In a small proportion of petitioned cases, the petition is withdrawn before the adjudicatory hearing is held.

Figure 2
Juvenile Court Processing of Delinquency Cases, 1990



Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 10

Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1986	1990	
Delinquency	547,000	634,400	16%
Person	102,800	134,000	30
Property	310,900	343,700	11
Drugs	36,600	45,300	24
Public Order	96,800	111,400	15

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 11

Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
Delinquency	1.9%	2.7%
Person	3.1	4.4
Property	1.8	2.2
Drugs	1.7	5.1
Public Order	0.8	1.0

Between 1986 and 1990, the likelihood that an adjudicated youth would be placed out of the home increased from 30% to 33%. This increase was approximately the same for all offense categories except drug offense cases. In 1990, 37% of drug offense cases resulted in out-of-home placement, compared with 31% in 1986. Among all offense categories, the likelihood of placing adjudicated youth on formal probation changed only slightly between 1986 and 1990.

Petitioned Status Offense Cases

Status offenses are law violations for which an adult could not be prosecuted (possession of alcohol, truancy, running away from home, etc.). Juvenile courts formally handled an estimated 86,900 status offense cases in 1990 (table 16).⁶ In 29,000 (33%) of these cases, the most serious charge was a juvenile liquor law violation. Truancy was the most serious charge in 24,600 cases (28%), ungovernability in 11,500 cases (13%), and runaway in 12,900 cases (15%). Other

⁶In many communities, social service agencies rather than the juvenile courts have assumed responsibility for screening and diverting alleged status offenders. National estimates of informally handled status offense cases are not calculated because of great differences in intake and screening procedures. The national estimates presented here and in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990* focus on formally handled (petitioned) status offense cases. Readers interested in the nature of informally handled status offense cases can review the subnational statistics presented in Chapter 4 of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*.

Table 12

Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1986-1990

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1986	1990	
Delinquency	10,300	16,900	65%
Person	3,200	5,900	85
Property	5,700	7,700	35
Drugs	600	2,300	282
Public Order	800	1,100	35

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 13

Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Adjudicated, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
Delinquency	63%	57%
Person	57	52
Property	63	58
Drugs	67	58
Public Order	65	61

Table 14

Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed Out-of-Home, 1986 & 1990

Offense	1986	1990
Delinquency	30%	33%
Person	32	35
Property	27	29
Drugs	31	37
Public Order	37	39

Table 15

**Percent of Adjudicated
Delinquency Cases Placed
on Formal Probation,
1986 & 1990**

Offense	1986	1990
Delinquency	57%	57%
Person	57	55
Property	59	60
Drugs	58	55
Public Order	50	52

types of status offenses such as curfew violations accounted for the remaining 8,800 cases (10%).

Between 1986 and 1990, the number of formally processed runaway and ungovernability cases decreased 17% and 31%, respectively, while the number of truancy cases and liquor law violation cases increased 13% and 20%, respectively.

More than half (56%) of formal status offense cases in 1990 involved youth age 15 or younger. The most common

status offense for these younger youth was truancy (41%). Liquor law violations were the most common offense among older youth (60%) (table 17).

Overall, males were involved in 59% of petitioned status offense cases in 1990. Nearly three out of four (73%) liquor law violation cases involved males. The majority of runaway cases involved females (62%). Males and females were more equally represented in truancy and ungovernability cases.

White youth were involved in 78% of petitioned status offense cases, which was comparable to their representation in the U.S. youth population. White youth were involved in 75% of runaway cases, 70% of truancy cases, 68% of ungovernability cases, and 92% of liquor law violation cases. The most common status offense for white youth and youth of other races was a liquor law violation (40% and 39%, respectively). Truancy was the most common status offense among black youth (41%).

Source of referral

Law enforcement agencies referred 40% of petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1990. The source of referral varied by offense. Law enforcement agencies referred 89% of liquor law violation cases, 39% of

Table 16

**Percent Change in Petitioned Status Offense Cases and Case Rates,
1986-1990**

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.	1986	1990	Pct. Chg.
Status Offense	84,400	86,900	3%	3.2	3.4	6%
Runaway	15,600	12,900	-17	0.6	0.5	-15
Truancy	21,700	24,600	13	0.8	1.0	17
Ungovernable	16,700	11,500	-31	0.6	0.5	-29
Liquor	24,100	29,000	20	0.9	1.1	24
Other	6,300	8,800	40	0.2	0.3	44

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Table 17

**Offense Characteristics of
Petitioned Status Offense
Cases by Age at Referral,
1990**

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Runaway	18%	11%
Truancy	41	11
Ungovernable	17	9
Liquor	13	60
Other	11	10
Total	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

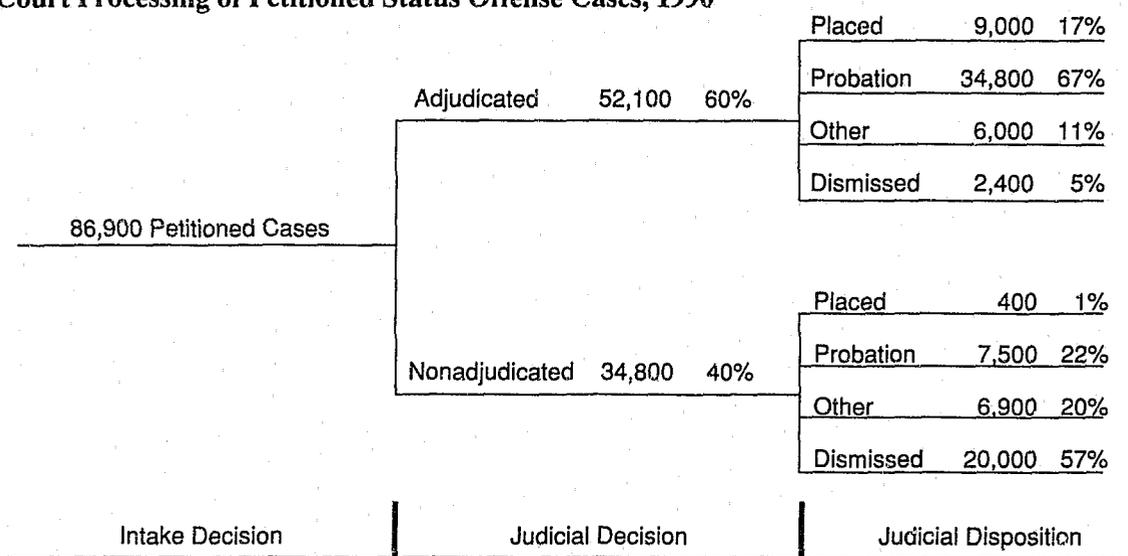
Table 18

**Percent Change in Detained Petitioned Status Offense Cases,
1986-1990**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1986	1990	
Status Offense	12,400	7,400	-38%
Runaway	5,400	2,000	-62
Truancy	1,400	600	-56
Ungovernable	3,200	1,000	-68
Liquor	1,600	2,000	19
Other	800	1,800	137

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Figure 3
Juvenile Court Processing of Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1990



Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

runaway cases, 12% of truancy cases, and 8% of ungovernability cases.

Detention

Detention was used in 7,400 (9%) of the petitioned status offense cases in 1990 (table 18). The number of detained status offense cases declined 38% between 1986 and 1990. A decline in detentions was seen in cases involving charges of runaway, truancy, and ungovernability, while the number of detained liquor law violation cases increased. Detention was least common in cases of truancy (2%), and most common in runaway cases (16%). Liquor law violation offenders and runaways accounted for more than half of all detained status offenders.

Case processing

Sixty percent of petitioned status offense cases in 1990 resulted in adjudication (figure 3). Adjudication was most likely in cases involving truancy (67%) and ungovernability (64%) and least likely in runaway cases (45%). As in delinquency cases, probation was the most

common disposition for adjudicated status offenders. Sixty-seven percent of adjudicated status offenders received probation, 17% were placed outside the home, and 11% received some other sanction such as restitution or community service.

Acknowledgments

This *OJJDP Update* was written by Jeffrey A. Butts, Senior Research Associate, and Eileen Poe, Research Assistant, at the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ). It summarizes the latest report in the annual *Juvenile Court Statistics* series.⁷ The analysis was supported by funds provided to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through grant number 92-JN-CX-0001. Joseph Moone served as OJJDP Program Manager for the Archive.

⁷ Snyder, Howard N., Jeffrey A. Butts, Terrence A. Finnegan, Ellen H. Nimick, Nancy J. Tierney, Dennis P. Sullivan, Rowen S. Poole, Melissa H. Sickmund (1993). *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

About the National Juvenile Court Data Archive

This *OJJDP Update* presents information from the latest *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series started in 1929 and has been the primary source of information on the activities of the Nation's juvenile courts. The data for this report are collected, analyzed, and stored by the National Juvenile Court Data Archive operated by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.

The Archive collects demographic, legal, and dispositional data on more than 700,000 delinquency and status offense cases annually, thus offering the most detailed information available on youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system. In addition to producing the *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports and other topical *Updates* (see related readings), the Archive can provide data files and special data analyses for research and policy purposes.

Glossary of Terms Used in This Report

Adjudication: Judicial determination (judgment) that a youth is a delinquent or status offender.

Age: Juvenile's age at the time the case was referred to juvenile court.

Case Rate: Number of cases disposed per 1,000 youth at risk. The actual population base for the case rate statistic varies by the nature of the case rate. For example, the population base for the male case rate is the total number of male youth age 10 or older who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts. Similarly, the population base for the age 17 case rate is the total number of youth age 17 who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts. (See Youth Population at Risk.)

Delinquent Act: An act committed by a juvenile for which an adult could be prosecuted in a criminal court, but when committed by a juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order when such acts are committed by juveniles.

Detention: The placement of a youth in a restrictive facility between referral to court intake and case disposition.

Disposition: Definite action taken or treatment plan decided upon or initiated in a particular case. Case dispositions are coded into the following categories:

Transfer to Criminal Court – Cases that were waived or transferred to a criminal court as the result of a waiver or transfer hearing in the juvenile court or through prosecutorial actions.

Placement – Cases in which youth were placed out of the home in a residential facility for delinquents or status offenders or cases in which youth were removed from their homes and placed elsewhere.

Probation – Cases in which youth were placed on informal/voluntary or formal/court-ordered probation or supervision.

Dismissed – Cases dismissed (including those warned, counseled, and released) with no further disposition anticipated. Among cases handled informally (see Manner of Handling), some cases may be dismissed by the juvenile court because the matter is being handled in criminal court.

Other – A variety of miscellaneous dispositions not included above. This category includes fines, restitution, and community service; referrals outside the court for services with minimal or no further court involvement anticipated; and those dispositions coded as "other" in the original data.

Juvenile: Youth at or below the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. (See Upper Age of Jurisdiction and Youth Population at Risk.)

Juvenile Court: Any court that has jurisdiction over matters involving juveniles.

Manner of Handling: A general classification of case processing within the court system. Petitioned (formally handled) cases are those that appear on the official court calendar in response to the filing of a petition or other legal instrument requesting the court to adjudicate the youth a delinquent, a status offender, or a dependent child, or to transfer the youth to criminal court for processing as an adult. Some formally handled cases do not involve juvenile court petitions, but are formally transferred to criminal court by prosecutorial actions. Nonpetitioned (informally handled) cases are those cases that duly authorized court personnel screen for adjustment prior to the filing of a formal petition. Such personnel include judges, referees, probation officers, other officers of the court, and/

or an agency statutorily designated to conduct petition screening for the juvenile court.

Petition: A document filed in juvenile court alleging that a juvenile is a delinquent or a status offender and asking that the court assume jurisdiction over the juvenile or asking that an alleged delinquent be transferred to criminal court for prosecution as an adult.

Race: The race of the youth referred as determined by the youth or by court personnel.

White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East. (In both the population and court data, nearly all Hispanics were included in the white racial category.)

Black – A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Other – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.

Unit of Count: The unit of count is a case disposed by a court with juvenile jurisdiction during the calendar year. Each case represents a youth referred to the juvenile court for a new referral for one or more offenses. The term "disposed" means that during the year some definite action was taken or some treatment plan was decided upon or initiated (see Disposition). Within this definition, it is possible for a youth to be involved in more than one case during a calendar year.

Upper Age of Jurisdiction: The oldest age at which a juvenile court has original jurisdiction over an individual for law-violating behavior. For the time period covered by this report, the upper age of jurisdiction was 15 in three States

(Glossary continued)

(Connecticut, New York, and North Carolina), 16 in eight States (Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas), and 18 in Wyoming. In the remaining 38 States and the District of Columbia, the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction was 17. It must be noted that within most States, there are exceptions that place or permit youth at or below the State's upper age of jurisdiction to be under the original jurisdiction of the adult criminal court. For example, in most States if a youth of a certain age is charged with one of a defined list of what are commonly labeled "excluded offenses," the case must originate in the adult criminal court. In addition, in a number of States, the district attorney is given the discretion of filing certain cases either in the juvenile or in the criminal court. Therefore, while the upper age of jurisdiction is commonly recognized in all States, there are numerous exceptions to this age criterion.

Youth Population at Risk: For delinquency and status offense matters, this is the number of children from age 10 through the upper age of jurisdiction. In all States the upper age of jurisdiction is defined by statute. In most States individuals are considered adults when they reach their 18th birthday. Therefore, for these States, the delinquency and status offense youth population at risk would equal the number of children 10 through 17 years of age living within the geographical area serviced by the court. (See Upper Age of Jurisdiction.)

Since 1975, OJJDP has provided all funding for the establishment and maintenance of the Archive. Both OJJDP and NCJJ gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the many State and local agencies that contribute data to the Archive. Their cooperation with requests for data and documentation make this work possible.

Related Readings

For more information about the Archive, write to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 701 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, or call 412-227-6950. To obtain *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*, any of the following *OJJDP Updates* that focus on juvenile justice statistics, or the *Guide to the Data Sets in the National Juvenile Court Data Archive*, write to the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850 or call 800-638-8736 (call 301-251-5500 in Maryland and the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area).

The Juvenile Court's Response to Violent Offenders: 1985-1989, April 1993, NCJ 139558.

Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1989, November 1992, NCJ 138740.

Restitution and Juvenile Recidivism, September 1992, NCJ 137774.

Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1988, February 1992, NCJ 133013.

Arrests of Youth 1990, January 1992, NCJ 133011.

Juvenile Court Drug and Alcohol Cases: 1985-1988, December 1991, NCJ 132073.

Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1987, July 1991, NCJ 126160.

Children in Custody 1989: Public Juvenile Facilities, January 1991, NCJ 127189.

Runaways in Juvenile Courts, November 1990, NCJ 124881.

Juvenile Court Property Cases, November 1990, NCJ 125625.

Growth in Minority Detentions Attributed to Drug Law Violators, March 1990, NCJ 122011.

Juvenile Courts Vary Greatly in How They Handle Drug and Alcohol Cases, August 1989, NCJ 119319.

The Juvenile Court's Response to Violent Crime, January 1989, NCJ 115338.

Study Sheds New Light on Court Careers of Juvenile Offenders, August 1988, NCJ 113460.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the Department of Justice.

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.

NCJ 133011

Methods

Juvenile Court Statistics 1990 defines a juvenile court case as any instance of a youth being referred to court intake for one or more offenses. An individual youth can be involved in more than one case during the calendar year. Cases involving multiple offenses are categorized according to the most serious offense. For example, a case involving a charge of vandalism and a charge of robbery is characterized as a robbery case. Similarly, cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized according to the most severe disposition. A case with a disposition of restitution and placement in a residential facility would be categorized as a disposition of residential placement.

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series uses data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Data are provided by State and county agencies responsible for the collection and/or dissemination of information on the processing of youth in juvenile courts. These data are not the result of a census or a scientifically designed (probability) sampling procedure, nor are they the result of a uniform data collection effort.

National estimates were developed using information from all courts that provided compatible data to the Archive. While juvenile courts with jurisdiction over 96% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some 1990 data to the Archive, not all of this information could be used to generate the national estimates because of incompatibilities in the structure or content of the data files.

Data are provided to the Archive in two forms—automated case-level data and court-level aggregate data. Automated case-level data describing each case's demographic and processing characteristics were provided by 1,212 jurisdictions in 23 States (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). These courts had jurisdiction over 49% of the Nation's juvenile population and handled 587,807 juvenile cases in 1990.

Aggregate court-level data containing simple counts of the number of cases

disposed in 1990 were provided by 345 jurisdictions in 7 States (District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Washington). In 1990, these courts had jurisdiction over 13% of the U.S. juvenile population and handled 143,256 juvenile cases. In all, compatible data were provided by 1,557 jurisdictions, covering 62% of the Nation's juvenile population.

National estimates of court activity were developed using the case-level data base, the court-level data base, and county-level juvenile population estimates, controlling for the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State. The basic assumption underlying the estimation procedure is that dynamics producing the volume and characteristics of juvenile court cases in reporting jurisdictions are shared by non-reporting jurisdictions of similar size. For interested readers, a complete description of the estimation procedure appears in the "Methods" section of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990*.

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