



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator June 2010

## Person Offense Cases in Juvenile Court, 2007

by Sarah Hockenberry

### Person offenses accounted for 25% of all delinquency cases in 2007

U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 409,200 delinquency cases in 2007 in which the most serious charge was an offense against a person. (Person offenses include assault, robbery, rape, homicide, and other crimes involving force or threat of force against persons.) The 2007 person offense caseload was 122% greater than in 1985. In 2007, person offenses accounted for 25% of the delinquency caseload, compared with 16% in 1985.

In 2007, juvenile courts handled 13.1 person offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. The 2007 person offense case rate was

88% greater than the 1985 rate, but 6% less than the peak rate in 1997.

Homicide was the most serious charge in 1,400 cases handled in 2007. This amounted to less than 0.4% of all person offense cases that juvenile courts handled in 2007. The majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (274,900) or aggravated assault (49,600). Together, these two offenses accounted for 79% of all person offense cases processed in 2007.

### Characteristics of offenders

More than half (56%) of person offense cases in 2007 involved white youth, 41% involved black youth, 1% involved American Indian youth (includes Alaskan Native), and 1% involved Asian youth (includes Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander). Between 1985 and 2007, person offense case rates for black juveniles were substantially greater than those for the other racial groups; however, the case rate increased most for white youth (90%), followed by black youth (78%), Asian youth (64%), and American Indian youth (62%). Person offense case rates peaked for all racial groups during the 1990s and declined through the

#### Person offense cases handled by juvenile courts, 1985–2007

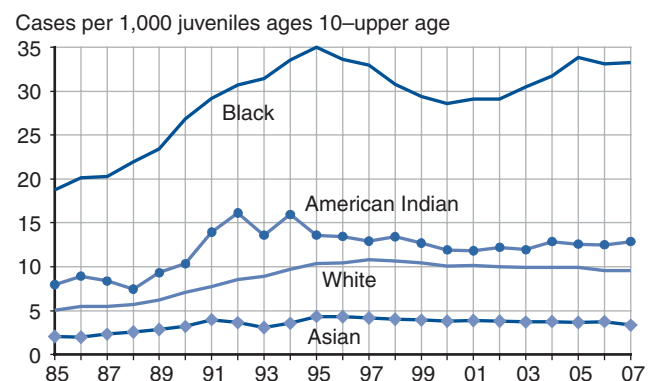
Most severe disposition	1985	2007	Percent change 1985–2007
<b>Cases</b>			
Total person offenses*	184,100	409,200	122%
Violent Crime Index	64,500	86,300	34
Criminal homicide	1,200	1,400	18
Forcible rape	3,300	4,300	31
Robbery	25,600	31,000	21
Aggravated assault	34,400	49,600	44
Simple assault	100,500	274,900	174
<b>Case rate**</b>			
Total person offenses*	7.0	13.1	88%
Violent Crime Index	2.4	2.8	13
Criminal homicide	0.0	0.0	0
Forcible rape	0.1	0.1	10
Robbery	1.0	1.0	2
Aggravated assault	1.3	1.6	22
Simple assault	3.8	8.8	131

\* Total includes other person offense categories not listed.

\*\* Cases per 1,000 youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

**Note:** Percent change is calculated using unrounded numbers.

#### The person offense case rate for black youth increased annually between 2000 and 2005



early 2000s. While the case rates were generally flat between 2000 and 2007 for white, American Indian, and Asian youth, the case rate for black youth increased 16%, almost reaching its 1995 peak rate.

Compared with 1985, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 2007 were about the same age but more likely to be female. In 2007, 61% of person offenses involved juveniles younger than 16, compared with 62% in 1985. Between 1985 and 2007, the relative increase in the female caseload outpaced that of males for person offenses (233% vs. 95%). As a result, the female share of the person offense caseload has grown since 1985. For example, females accounted for about 21% of person offenses for each year between 1985 and 1991. Between 1991 and 2007, the female proportion of the person offense caseload steadily increased to 30%.

Compared with males, the 2007 female delinquency caseload had a greater proportion of simple assault cases (21% vs. 12%) and an equal proportion of aggravated assault cases (3%). Even though assault cases increased both for males and females between 1985 and 2007, the growth in female assault cases exceeded the growth in male assault cases (230% vs. 112%).

## Case processing

Of the 409,200 person offense cases that juvenile courts disposed in 2007, 58% (238,400) were handled formally (i.e., a petition was filed requesting an adjudicatory or transfer hearing). Of these petitioned cases, 60% (143,600) resulted in the youth being adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile justice system, 38% (90,700) resulted in the youth being adjudicated not delinquent, and 2% (4,100) were judicially waived to criminal court.

The proportion of petitioned person offense cases judicially waived to criminal court peaked in 1994, when 2.6% (5,500) of such cases were waived. Since 1994, the likelihood of waiver has declined. By 2007, 1.7% (4,100) of the petitioned person offense caseload was waived. Although the likelihood of waiver has declined, person offense cases were more likely to be waived than cases involving other offenses in 2007. Cases involving males were four times as likely as those involving females to be judicially waived to criminal court in 2007, and cases involving juveniles age 16 or older were more likely to be waived than those involving juveniles younger than 16. In 2007, cases involving American Indian youth charged with a person offense were more likely to be judicially waived than person offense cases involving white, black, or Asian youth.

In 29% (41,200) of the 143,600 person offense cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent in 2007, the most severe disposition imposed was placement out of the home in a residential facility. Probation was ordered in 58% (83,400) of the cases and 13% (19,000) resulted in other sanctions, including referral to an outside agency, fines, community service, and restitution.

Among person offense cases in which youth were adjudicated delinquent, the percentage of youth ordered to out-of-home placement decreased between 1985 and 2007, and the percentage of youth ordered to probation remained the same.

## Demographic and case processing characteristics of person offense cases

Characteristics	1985	1997	2007
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	80%	73%	70%
Female	20	27	30
<b>Age at referral</b>			
15 or younger	62%	64%	61%
16 or older	38	36	39
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
White	59%	61%	56%
Black	39	36	41
American Indian	1	1	1
Asian	1	1	1
<b>Predisposition detention</b>			
Detained	25%	25%	28%
Not detained	75	75	72
<b>Intake decision</b>			
Petitioned	55%	60%	58%
Not petitioned	45	40	42
<b>Judicial decision of petitioned cases</b>			
Adjudicated delinquent	55%	58%	60%
Not adjudicated delinquent	43	40	38
Waived to criminal court	2	2	2
<b>Most severe disposition of adjudicated cases</b>			
Placed	35%	30%	29%
Probation	58	61	58
Other	7	9	13

**Note:** Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

In 2007, those most likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement for person offense cases were youth age 16 or older, males, and American Indian youth. Those most likely to be ordered to probation were youth age 15 or younger, females, and white youth.

## For further information

This fact sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 2006–2007*, which is available through OJJDP’s Web site ([www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp)). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP’s online Statistical Briefing Book ([www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/index.html](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/index.html)) and click on “Juveniles in Court.” OJJDP also supports Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, a Web-based application that analyzes the data files used for the *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. This application is available from the “Data Analysis Tools” section of the Statistical Briefing Book.

Sarah Hockenberry, M.S., a Research Assistant with the National Center for Juvenile Justice, prepared this document as a product of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by OJJDP grant 2009–JL–FX–K129.

*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 Community Capacity Development Office; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART).*