



OJJDP FACT SHEET

J. Robert Flores, Administrator

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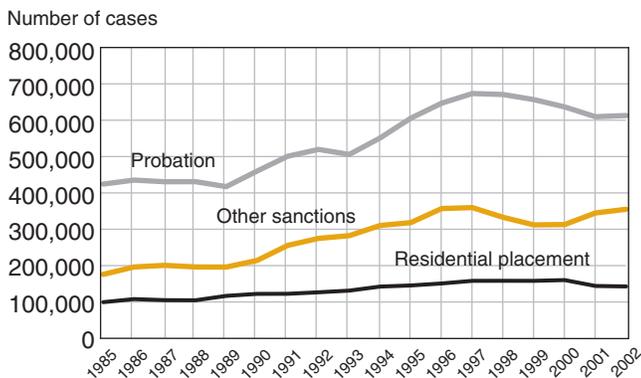
Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 1985–2002

by Sarah Livsey

Nearly 4 of every 10 delinquency cases resulted in probation in 2002

Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled more than 1.6 million delinquency cases in 2002. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in 38% (618,600) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 44% between 1985 and 2002. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 41%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts from 1985 through 2002. The national estimates were generated using information contributed to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The analysis is based on data from more than 2,100 jurisdictions containing 75% of the U.S. juvenile population (youth age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).

Probation was ordered in 55% of the more than 1 million cases that received a juvenile court sanction in 2002



Probation cases accounted for 46% of the increase in delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction (those that were not dismissed or otherwise released).

Probation can be court ordered or voluntary

Some youth are ordered to probation after being adjudicated delinquent (analogous to being convicted in criminal court). In contrast to court-ordered probation, some youth who are not adjudicated delinquent voluntarily agree to abide by certain probation conditions, often with the understanding that if they successfully complete their probationary period, their case will be terminated without any formal processing.

In 2002, adjudicated delinquents ordered to probation (385,400 cases) accounted for 62% of all delinquency cases placed on probation. In the remaining delinquency cases, the youth agreed to some form of voluntary, or informal, probation. The number of adjudicated cases that resulted in court-ordered probation rose 103% between 1985 and 2002 (from 189,600 to 385,400). In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation increased only 5% (from 199,800 to 210,300), reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

Probation was the most likely disposition for cases in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent

Most severe disposition	1985	1993	1998	2002
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Probation	56	56	62	62
Residential placement	30	29	26	23
Other sanction	10	12	9	14
Released without additional sanction	4	3	3	2

Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Most cases placed on probation involve white youth and males

In 2002, 70% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 27% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1985 and 2002, the probation caseload grew 59% for black juveniles (from 104,400 to 165,900) and 38% for

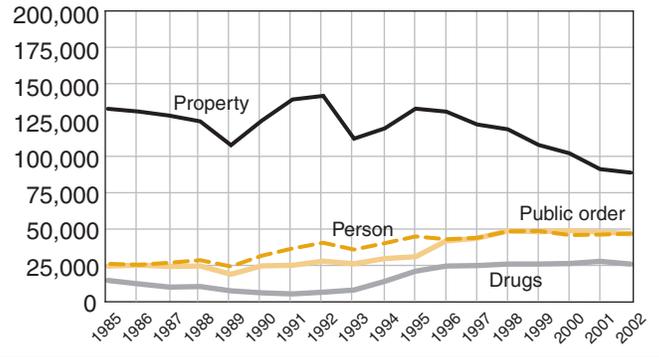
white juveniles (from 314,700 to 433,000). Most cases (74%) placed on probation in 2002 involved males (about 458,300 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload has grown from 18% in 1985 to 26% in 2002. Juveniles who were 14 to 16 years old accounted for 62% (about 384,600 cases) of the probation caseload in 2002.

Property offense cases made up the greatest proportion of the probation caseload

The offense profile of the probation caseload has changed somewhat since 1985. Property offense cases continued to account for the majority of cases placed on probation, but their share of the probation caseload declined. In 1985, for example, property offense cases accounted for 61% of all adjudicated cases placed on formal probation; by 2002, this proportion declined to 38%. As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2002 than in 1985.

The number of person, drug, and public order offense cases placed on informal probation increased nearly 100% between 1985 and 2002, while property offenses cases decreased more than 30% during that period.

Delinquency cases placed on informal probation, by offense



Across offenses, the likelihood of probation for cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent has increased since 1985

Most serious offense	1985	1993	1998	2002
Total	56%	56%	62%	62%
Person	56	56	62	63
Property	57	58	64	63
Drugs	63	54	64	64
Public order	51	53	58	57

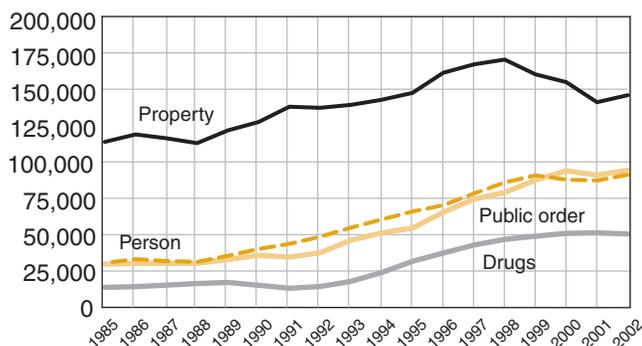
Offense profile of cases placed on probation

Most serious offense	1985	1993	1998	2002
Cases placed on formal probation				
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	16	21	22	24
Property	61	54	45	38
Drugs	7	7	12	13
Public order	16	18	21	25
Cases placed on informal probation				
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	13	20	20	22
Property	67	62	49	43
Drugs	7	4	11	12
Public order	12	14	20	22

Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The number of adjudicated person, drug, and public order offense cases ordered to formal probation more than doubled between 1985 and 2002, while property offense cases increased just 28% during that period

Adjudicated delinquency cases placed on probation, by offense



The offense profile of informal probation cases followed a similar trend. The proportion of informal probation cases that involved property offenses also declined more than 20 percentage points between 1985 and 2002 (from 67% to 43%). As a result, the profile of the informal probation caseload also contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2002 than in 1985.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the forthcoming report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 2001–2002*, which will be available on the OJJDP Web site. To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP’s online Statistical Briefing Book 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 Statistical Briefing Book.

Sarah Livsey, Ph.D., is a Research Assistant with 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.