



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

J. Robert Flores, Administrator

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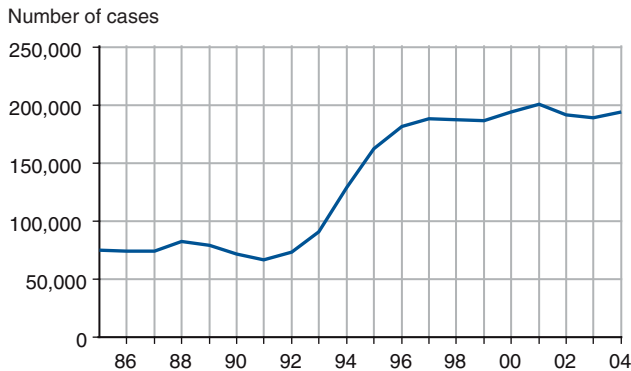
## Drug Offense Cases in Juvenile Courts, 1985–2004

by Anne Stahl

In 2004, juvenile courts in the United States handled an estimated 193,700 delinquency cases in which a drug offense was the most serious charge. Between 1991 and 2004, the number of cases involving drug offenses that juvenile courts handled more than doubled. Drug offense cases accounted for 12% of the delinquency caseload in 2004, compared with 7% in 1985.

NHPI) youth. The female proportion of the juvenile drug offense caseload increased steadily from a low of 12% in 1991 to a high of 20% in 2004.

**The number of drug offense cases that juvenile courts processed in 2004 was 159% greater than in 1985 and 192% greater than in 1991**



### Gender

Males have historically accounted for the majority of drug offense cases processed in juvenile courts and accounted for 80% to 88% of drug violation cases between 1985 and 2004. Males accounted for 77% to 83% of the drug offense caseload for white juveniles, 90% to 94% of the caseload for black juveniles, 70% to 79% for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth, and 76% to 86% for Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander (Asian/

### Characteristics of drug offense cases in juvenile courts

	1985	1995	2004
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	83%	85%	80%
Female	17	15	20
<b>Age at Time of Referral</b>			
15 or younger	43%	42%	43%
16	30	30	29
17 and older	27	28	29
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White	79%	66%	75%
Black	19	33	22
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1	2
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	1	1	1
<b>Predisposition Detention</b>			
Detained	22%	19%	18%
Not detained	78	81	82
<b>Manner of Handling</b>			
Formal	43%	59%	58%
Informal	57	41	42
<b>Outcome of Formal Handling</b>			
Adjudicated	67%	54%	68%
Not adjudicated	32	44	30
Waived to criminal court	1	2	1
<b>Disposition of Adjudicated Cases</b>			
Placed out of the home	25%	26%	18%
Probation or supervision	64	59	67
Other (fines, restitution, etc.)	11	15	15

Detail may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

## Race

From 1985 to 1991, the proportion of the drug offense caseload involving white youth decreased from 79% to 50%. This proportion increased to 75% by 2004.<sup>1</sup> During the same period, the proportion of cases involving black juveniles increased from 19% to 48%, then decreased to 22% in 2004.

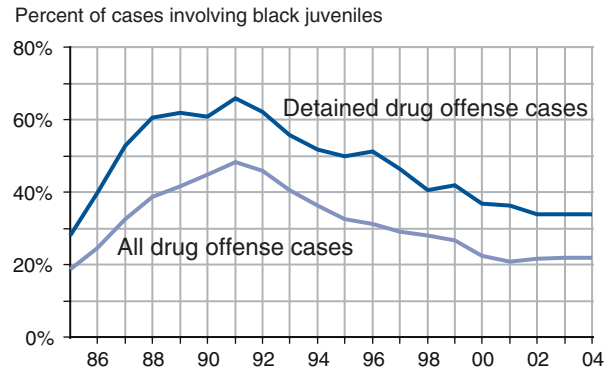
## Detention and Adjudication

In 2004, drug offense cases made up 10% of delinquency cases in which youth were detained; 18% of drug offense cases involved detention at some point between court referral and case disposition. Detention was more likely in drug cases involving youth age 16 and older than youth age 15 and younger (20% versus 16%), males than females (19% versus 15%), and black youth (28%) than youth of any other race (15% for white juveniles, 14% for AI/AN youth, and 22% for Asian/NHPI youth).

In 2004, juvenile courts formally processed 58% of drug offense cases. Between 1985 and 2004, the number of drug offense cases handled with the filing of a petition for adjudication increased 251% (from 31,800 to 111,500). In 2004, 1.3% of formally handled drug cases were judicially waived to criminal court, accounting for 15% of all delinquency cases waived in that year.

The majority (68%) of formally processed drug cases in 2004 resulted in the juvenile being adjudicated delinquent. Of these cases, 18% resulted in a disposition of out-of-home placement, 67% resulted in the youth being placed on probation, and 15% resulted in other sanctions.

**Between 1985 and 1991, the proportion of detained drug offense cases involving black youth increased from 28% to 66%. This proportion has since decreased to 34% but remains greater than the 1985 level**



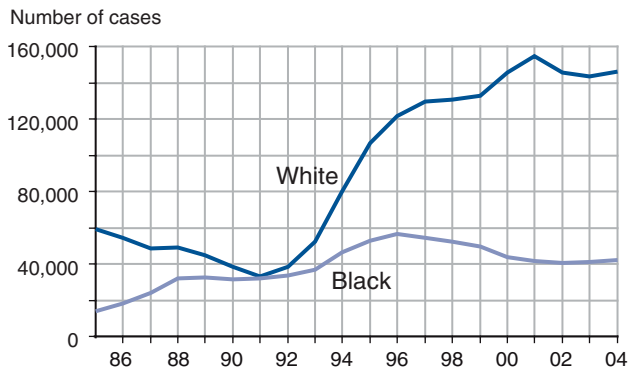
## For Further Information

This Fact Sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 2003–2004*, which is available on 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 Statistical Briefing Book ([www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/index.html](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/index.html)) and click on "Juveniles in Court." From OJJDP's home page, click on "Statistics" and select "Juveniles in Court."

Anne L. Stahl is Manager of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by OJJDP grant 2005–JL–FX–0250.

**Between 1991 and 2004, the number of drug offense cases involving white juveniles increased 341% compared with 32% for black juveniles**



*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).*

<sup>1</sup> Juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race, but most are included in the white racial category.