



Juvenile Justice Bulletin

OJJDP Update on Statistics

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

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Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1992

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Juvenile courts in the United States handled an estimated 1,471,200 delinquency cases in 1992, a 26% increase over the 1988 caseload. The number of cases involving offenses against persons increased 56% between 1988 and 1992, while the number of property offense cases increased 23%. Half the delinquency cases disposed by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction in 1992 were processed formally (that is, a petition was filed charging the youth with delinquency). After being formally petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing in juvenile court, 57% of the delinquency cases were adjudicated delinquent, and approximately 2% were waived to criminal (adult) court. Transfers to criminal court increased 68% between 1988 and 1992, from 7,000 to 11,700 cases annually. Transfers of person offense cases increased 101%. Of the delinquency cases adjudicated in juvenile court in 1992, more than half (57%) resulted in probation, and 28% resulted in out-of-home placement.

These are among the findings to be published in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*, the latest in a series of annual reports on the cases handled by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Although courts with juvenile jurisdiction may handle a variety of cases, including those involving abuse, neglect, adoption, and traffic violations, each *Juvenile Court Statistics* report focuses on the disposition of delinquency cases and formally handled status offense cases. The reports include national estimates of cases handled by juvenile courts, as well as subnational statistics and an appendix of caseload statistics for individual States and the larger jurisdictions within each State.

Other findings from *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992* include:

- The number of criminal homicide cases handled in U.S. juvenile courts declined 9% between 1991 and 1992, although the 1992 homicide caseload

was still 55% higher than the caseload in 1988.

- In 20% of delinquency cases processed in 1992, the most serious charge was a person offense, in 57% a property offense, in 5% a drug law violation, and in 17% a public order offense.

- Juveniles were held in secure detention facilities at some point between referral and disposition in 20% of all delinquency cases disposed in 1992. Nearly half (47%) of these cases involving detention involved a juvenile charged with a property offense.

- The annual number of drug cases involving detention dropped from 27,100 to 22,900 between 1988 and 1991, a decrease of 15%. Between 1991 and 1992, however, drug cases involving detention increased 11%, to 25,300.

These national estimates of cases handled by juvenile courts are based on data from more than 1,500 courts that

From the Administrator

This *Update* profiles the nearly one and one-half million delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 1992. It summarizes the findings of the forthcoming *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992* report, an analysis of data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive.

The National Center for Juvenile Justice maintains the Archive for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Like the larger report from which it is derived, this *Update* is designed to serve as a general reference document for juvenile justice professionals in law enforcement, the courts,

and corrections. It provides a context in which to view their efforts to reduce the impact of crime on our communities, families, and young people.

John J. Wilson
Acting Administrator

had jurisdiction over 57% of the U.S. juvenile population in 1992.¹ The unit of count in this study and in each *Juvenile Court Statistics* report is a case disposed during the calendar year by a court with juvenile jurisdiction. It is possible for an individual youth to have been 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 according to the most serious offense. For example, a case involving a charge of vandalism and a charge of robbery would be characterized as a robbery case. Similarly, cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized by the most severe or restrictive disposition. A case that resulted in probation as well as placement in a residential facility would be encoded as a disposition of residential placement.

Delinquency Cases

Delinquency offenses are acts committed by a juvenile that would result in criminal prosecution if committed by an adult. Juvenile courts handled an estimated 1,471,200 delinquency cases in 1992 (table 1). A property offense was the most serious charge in 842,200 cases (57%), a person offense in 301,000 cases (20%), a drug offense in 72,100 cases (5%), and a public order offense in 255,900 cases (17%). The most common offenses in juvenile delinquency cases in 1992 were larceny-theft (361,600), burglary (156,400), simple assault (152,800), and vandalism (121,700). These four offenses accounted for 54% of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts.

The number of delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts increased 26% between 1988 and 1992. Large increases occurred in the number of cases involving aggravated assault (80%) and weapons offenses (86%). Substantial increases also occurred in the number of cases involving charges

Table 1
Delinquency Cases by Offense, 1992

Offense	Number of Cases	Percent Change	
		91-92	88-92
Total Delinquency	1,471,200	7%	26%
Person	301,000	13	56
Criminal Homicide	2,500	-9	55
Forcible Rape	5,400	10	27
Robbery	32,900	9	52
Aggravated Assault	77,900	16	80
Simple Assault	152,800	14	47
Other Violent Sex Offenses	9,900	13	60
Other Person Offenses	19,800	11	63
Property	842,200	3	23
Burglary	156,400	4	22
Larceny-Theft	361,600	1	16
Motor Vehicle Theft	73,000	2	34
Arson	8,300	10	24
Vandalism	121,700	12	50
Trespassing	58,500	2	17
Stolen Property Offenses	28,900	7	-7
Other Property Offenses	33,700	6	57
Drug Law Violations	72,100	15	-12
Public Order	255,900	11	21
Obstruction of Justice	87,100	8	10
Disorderly Conduct	69,300	13	50
Weapons Offenses	41,000	26	86
Liquor Law Violations	12,500	-7	-26
Nonviolent Sex Offenses	12,900	22	19
Other Public Order	33,000	3	-8
Violent Crime Index *	118,600	13	68
Property Crime Index **	599,400	2	20

* 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. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

of criminal homicide (55%), robbery (52%), simple assault (47%), motor vehicle theft (34%), vandalism (50%), and disorderly conduct (50%).

The number of drug law violation cases decreased 12% between 1988 and 1992, although drug law violation cases increased 15% between 1991 and 1992. Stolen property cases also decreased slightly over the 5-year period from 1988 to 1992, but increased more recently (7% between 1991 and 1992).

Case rates. To examine changes in juvenile court caseloads while controlling for the size of the juvenile population, a case rate was calculated that represents the number of delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts for every 1,000 youth at risk of

¹ For information on the estimation procedure, see the Methods sidebar in this *Update* or in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*. The national estimates for 1988 through 1991 described in this *Update* include revisions made subsequent to publication of earlier *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports.

Table 2

Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.
Delinquency	1,170,400	1,471,200	26%	45.7	55.1	21%
Person	193,200	301,000	56	7.5	11.3	50
Property	684,200	842,200	23	26.7	31.6	18
Drugs	82,200	72,100	-12	3.2	2.7	-16
Public Order	210,800	255,900	21	8.2	9.6	17

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

Table 3

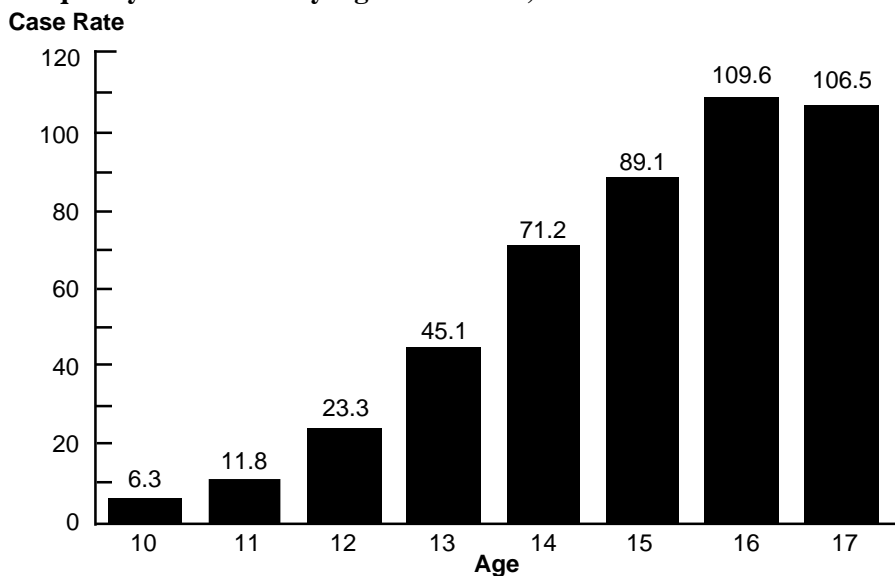
Offense Profile of Delinquency Cases by Age at Referral, 1992

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Person	21%	19%
Property	60	53
Drugs	3	7
Public Order	15	20
Total	100%	100%

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

Figure 1

Delinquency Case Rates by Age at Referral, 1992



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

Delinquency case rates generally increase as the age of the offender increases (figure 1). For example, the delinquency case rate for 15-year-olds in 1992 was 25% higher than the rate for 14-year-olds (89.1 compared with 71.2 per 1,000 youth at risk, respectively), and the case rate for 16-year-olds was 23% greater than for 15-year-olds (109.6 versus 89.1). One exception to this pattern was the case rate for 17-year-olds, which was 3% lower than the rate for 16-year-olds (106.5 compared with 109.6).

Drug law violation case rates showed the sharpest increase relative to a juvenile's age. The drug offense case rate for 17-year-olds was nearly 300% greater than the rate for 14-year-olds (9.2 versus 2.4 cases per 1,000 juveniles at risk). In the other offense categories, case rates for 17-year-olds were always greater than the rates for 14-year-olds, but to a lesser degree—i.e., person

referral to a juvenile court.² The national delinquency case rate increased 21% between 1988 and 1992, from 45.7 to 55.1 cases disposed per 1,000 youth at risk (table 2). The case rate for juveniles charged with person offenses increased 50%. The case rate for drug offenses decreased 16% during the same period.

Age. Of all delinquency cases processed by the Nation's juvenile courts in 1992, 60% involved a juvenile under the age of 16 years. These younger youth

were involved in 62% of person offense cases, 64% of property offense cases, 39% of drug law violation cases, and 53% of public order offense cases. Compared with cases involving older juveniles, cases involving younger youth included a smaller proportion of drug law violations (3% compared with 7%) and public order offense cases (15% versus 20%), but a slightly larger proportion of person offense cases (21% versus 19%) and property offense cases (60% versus 53%) (table 3).³

²The calculation of the population at risk of referral controls for State variations in the ages covered by juvenile court jurisdiction. Juveniles at risk are defined as youth age 10 or older who were at, or under, the upper age of original jurisdiction of the juvenile court according to the laws of their State. In most States, the upper age of original jurisdiction is 17 years, but the ages ranged from 15 to 18 years in 1992.

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

Table 4

Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Sex, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.
Male	951,600	1,194,300	26%	72.4	87.2	21%
Person	154,200	238,400	55	11.7	17.4	48
Property	559,700	685,700	23	42.6	50.1	18
Drugs	70,400	63,400	-10	5.4	4.6	-13
Public Order	167,300	206,800	24	12.7	15.1	19
Female	218,800	276,900	27%	17.5	21.3	22%
Person	39,000	62,700	61	3.1	4.8	54
Property	124,500	156,500	26	10.0	12.0	21
Drugs	11,800	8,700	-26	0.9	0.7	-29
Public Order	43,500	49,000	13	3.5	3.8	8

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

offenses (36%), property offenses (30%), and public order offenses (88%).

Gender. Juvenile courts disposed an estimated 1,194,300 delinquency cases involving male juveniles in 1992, compared with 276,900 cases involving females (table 4). The number of delinquency cases involving males increased 26% between 1988 and 1992, while cases involving females increased 27%. During this 5-year period, the male case rate increased from 72.4 to 87.2 cases disposed per 1,000 youth at risk. The female case rate grew from 17.5 to 21.3 cases per 1,000 between 1988 and 1992.

The 1992 case rate for males charged with person offenses was more than three times greater than the rate for females (17.4 compared with 4.8 cases per 1,000 at risk). Yet the female case rate for person offenses increased more sharply between 1988 and 1992 than did the rate for males (54% compared with 48%). The increase in the case rate for female property offenders was also more steep than the corresponding rate increase for males (21% versus 18%). The proportionate decline in the rate of drug law violations, on the other hand, was greater for females than males (29% compared with 13%).

Race. Between 1988 and 1992, the number of delinquency cases involving white youth increased 21%, and the number of cases involving black youth and youth of other races increased 35% and 46%, respectively (table 5).⁴ In 1992 there were twice as many delinquency cases involving white youth as there were involving black youth. Cases involving whites exceeded those involving youth of other races by 18 to 1. However, the delinquency case rate for black youth (114.2 cases per 1,000 at risk) was more than twice the rate for either white youth (44.9 per 1,000) or youth of other races (40.4 per 1,000).

The person offense case rate for black youth (30.1 cases per 1,000 youth at risk) was more than three times greater

Table 5

Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Race, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.
White	793,900	960,400	21%	38.4	44.9	17%
Person	107,200	170,800	59	5.2	8.0	54
Property	486,200	585,700	20	23.5	27.4	17
Drugs	49,600	37,500	-24	2.4	1.8	-27
Public Order	151,000	166,400	10	7.3	7.8	7
Black	340,400	458,000	35%	88.5	114.2	29%
Person	80,800	120,800	49	21.0	30.1	43
Property	174,900	223,500	28	45.5	55.7	23
Drugs	31,000	32,900	6	8.1	8.2	2
Public Order	53,700	80,900	51	13.9	20.2	45
Other Races	36,100	52,700	46%	32.9	40.4	23%
Person	5,200	9,500	84	4.7	7.3	54
Property	23,100	33,000	43	21.1	25.3	20
Drugs	1,600	1,700	4	1.5	1.3	-13
Public Order	6,200	8,500	38	5.6	6.5	16

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

⁴Nearly all youth of Hispanic ethnicity are included in the white racial category.

Table 6

Percent of Delinquency Cases Referred by Law Enforcement, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Delinquency	83%	85%
Person	80	84
Property	89	90
Drugs	92	93
Public Order	62	69

than the corresponding rate for white youth (8.0 cases per 1,000). The drug offense case rate for black youth was more than four times the rate of whites (8.2 compared with 1.8). Similarly, the property and public order offense case rates for blacks (55.7 and 20.2, respectively) were more than double the rates for whites (27.4 and 7.8). In all offense categories, the case rate for juveniles of other races was lower than the corresponding rates for black or white juveniles.

Property offense cases accounted for 61% of the delinquency cases involving white youth, 49% of those involving black youth, and 63% of those involving youth of other races. The black youth caseload involved a slightly higher proportion of person offense cases (26%) than either the white or other race caseloads (18% of both groups). Delinquency cases involving black youth contained a larger proportion of drug law violations (7%) than did cases involving white youth (4%) or youth of other races (3%).

Source of referral

Delinquency cases are referred to the juvenile court from a number of sources, including law enforcement agencies, social services, schools, parents, probation officers, and victims. Although there were variations across offense categories, 85% of the delinquency cases were referred to the juvenile court by a law enforcement agency. Law enforcement agencies

Table 7

Percent Change in Detained Delinquency Cases, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1988	1992	
Delinquency	237,200	296,100	25%
Person	46,000	72,500	58
Property	112,100	139,200	24
Drugs	27,100	25,300	-6
Public Order	52,000	59,100	14

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

Table 8

Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Sex, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Male	21%	21%
Person	25	26
Property	17	18
Drugs	34	36
Public Order	25	23
Female	16%	15%
Person	18	17
Property	12	12
Drugs	26	26
Public Order	25	22

referred 84% of person offense cases, 90% of property offense cases, 93% of drug law violation cases, and 69% of public order offense cases (table 6).

Detention

Juveniles are sometimes held in secure detention facilities prior to adjudication and disposition. Detention may be necessary for a number of reasons, including protecting the community, protecting the juvenile, ensuring the youth's attendance at scheduled hearings, or for evaluation purposes. Juveniles were detained in 296,100 (20%) of the delinquency cases disposed in 1992

Table 9

Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Race, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
White	17%	18%
Person	20	21
Property	14	15
Drugs	21	26
Public Order	22	23
Black	28%	25%
Person	29	27
Property	22	21
Drugs	52	47
Public Order	30	24
Other Races	26%	22%
Person	32	29
Property	24	21
Drugs	31	19
Public Order	29	22

(table 7). Nearly half of the cases (139,200) involving detention involved juveniles charged with property offenses.

The number of delinquency cases involving detention increased 25% between 1988 and 1992. The number of detentions involving person offense cases increased 58%, those involving property offense cases increased 24%, and detentions involving public order offense cases grew 14%. In contrast, the number of drug offense cases involving detention dipped 6% between 1988 and 1992. The 5-year decline in detention among drug offense cases, however, obscures a more recent increase.

Between 1988 and 1991, the number of drug cases involving detention dropped from 27,100 to 22,900, a decrease of 15%. Drug cases involving detention then climbed to 25,300 in 1992, an increase of 11% over 1991.

The use of detention for delinquency cases changed very little between 1988 and 1992. The use of detention increased slightly for cases involving male drug offenders (from 34% to 36%), and dropped slightly for cases involving females charged with public order offenses (from 25% to 22%). The use of detention, however, was relatively unchanged—declining to 15% from 16% for females and remaining at 21% for males (table 8).

In 1992 the likelihood of detention was 18% for cases involving white juveniles, 25% for those involving black juveniles, and 22% for juveniles of

other races (table 9). In cases involving white juveniles, the use of detention remained relatively constant between 1988 and 1992 among all offense categories except drug law violation cases, which experienced a 5% increase in the likelihood of detention. The use of detention for cases involving black youth decreased from 28% in 1988 to 25% in 1992. For example, in drug cases involving black youth, the use of detention fell from 52% to 47% between 1988 and 1992. Detention was also less likely in 1992 for all types of cases involving youth of other races.

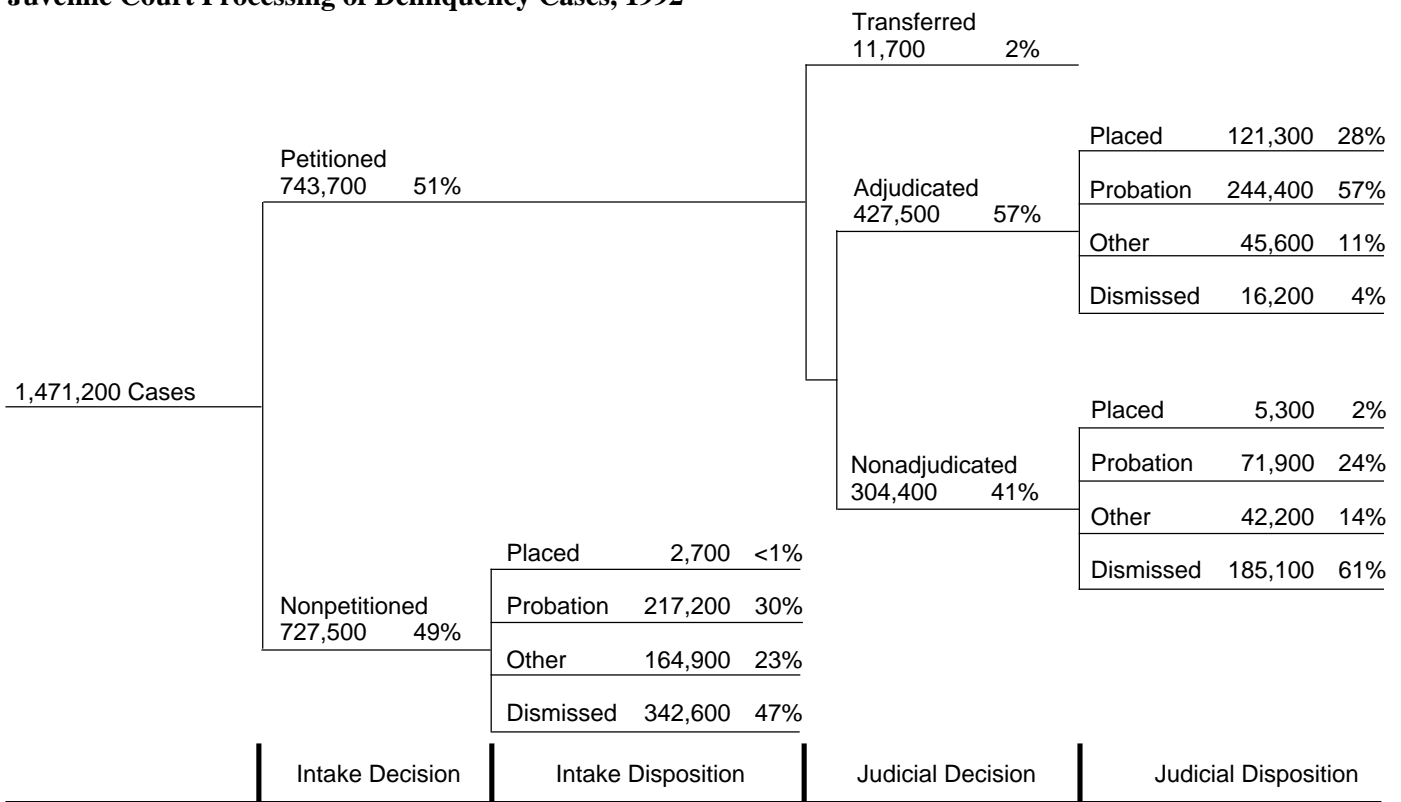
Case processing

When a delinquency case is referred to juvenile court, an intake officer, judge, or prosecutor must decide whether to handle the case formally or informally. Formal handling involves filing a

petition requesting that the court hold an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Informal case handling is conducted entirely at the intake level, without a petition and without an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

Half of all delinquency cases in 1992 were handled formally (figure 2). Formal processing for delinquency referrals increased from 49% in 1988 to 51% in 1992. Because more cases were referred to juvenile court intake and were processed formally, the number of petitioned delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts increased 31% between 1988 and 1992, from 569,600 to 743,700 (table 10). The largest percentage increase was in person offense cases; juvenile courts formally processed 59% more person offense cases in 1992 than in 1988. The number of petitioned property offense cases

Figure 2
Juvenile Court Processing of Delinquency Cases, 1992



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

increased 27%, and petitioned public order offense cases increased 30%. Petitioned drug law violation cases, on the other hand, declined 5% between 1988 and 1992.

Criminal court transfer. One of the first decisions made at juvenile court intake is whether to process a case in the criminal (adult) justice system or in the juvenile court. The mechanisms used to transfer responsibility for a case to the criminal court vary by State. In some States, a prosecutor has the authority to file juvenile cases directly in criminal court provided that they meet certain criteria. In other States, a juvenile court judge must authorize all transfers by waiving the juvenile court's jurisdiction over each case. This report analyzes only cases that were transferred to criminal court by judicial waiver.

The number of transfers to criminal court increased 68% between 1988 and 1992, from 7,000 to 11,700 (table 11). The largest group of transferred cases involved property offenses, accounting for 5,200 of the 11,700 cases transferred in 1992. Between 1988 and 1992, however, the number of transferred person offense cases increased more than twice as fast as the number of transferred property offense cases (101% compared with 42%).

Criminal court transfers represented 1.6% of all petitioned delinquency cases in 1992, compared with 1.2% in 1988 (table 12). The cases most likely to be transferred in 1988 were those involving person offenses (1.9%). In 1992 drug cases were the most likely to be transferred (3.1%). Just 1.3% of cases involving property offenses were transferred to adult court in 1992, but they accounted for nearly half of all transferred cases that year. As a proportion of all transferred cases, however, property offense cases declined between 1988 and 1992, from 53% to 45%. In contrast, cases that involved person offenses increased as a proportion of all transfers, from 29% in 1988 to 34% in 1992.

Table 10

Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1988	1992	
Delinquency	569,600	743,700	31%
Person	104,100	165,200	59
Property	315,900	400,600	27
Drugs	48,400	46,200	-5
Public Order	101,200	131,600	30

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

Table 11

Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1988	1992	
Delinquency	7,000	11,700	68%
Person	2,000	4,000	101
Property	3,700	5,200	42
Drugs	700	1,400	91
Public Order	500	1,000	90

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

Table 12

Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Delinquency	1.2%	1.6%
Person	1.9	2.4
Property	1.2	1.3
Drugs	1.5	3.1
Public Order	0.5	0.8

Adjudication and disposition. Except in cases where a petition for criminal court transfer is granted, an adjudicatory hearing is held in virtually all formally handled delinquency cases.⁵ During this hearing, the juvenile court determines whether the youth will be adjudicated a delinquent. The court then makes a dispositional decision that

Table 13

Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Adjudicated, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Delinquency	61%	57%
Person	55	53
Property	62	58
Drugs	59	60
Public Order	63	59

could include fines, restitution, probation, commitment to a residential facility, referral to another treatment program, or a period of community service.

⁵The petition is withdrawn before an adjudicatory hearing is held in a small number of cases.

Table 14

Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed Out of Home, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Delinquency	29%	28%
Person	31	32
Property	25	25
Drugs	34	32
Public Order	37	34

Table 15

Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed on Formal Probation, 1988 & 1992

Offense	1988	1992
Delinquency	57%	57%
Person	56	55
Property	59	60
Drugs	57	54
Public Order	50	52

Fifty-seven percent of the formally processed delinquency cases in 1992 resulted in adjudication (table 13). In 28% of these cases, youth were placed in a residential facility (table 14). In 57% of cases, the juveniles were placed on formal probation (table 15). In 11% the court ordered juveniles to pay restitution or a fine, to participate in some form of community service, or to enter a treatment or counseling program—dispositions with minimal continuing supervision by probation staff. In a relatively small number of cases (4%), juveniles were adjudicated, but the cases were then dismissed or the youth were otherwise released.

Approximately 40% of formally handled delinquency cases were not adjudicated. Most of these cases (61%) were dismissed by the court, but in 24% of the cases the juvenile agreed to some form of probation. Approximately 2% of cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement. In 14% of nonadjudicated cases, the juvenile agreed to other informal dispositions such as restitution, community service, or referral to an agency for services.

Petitioned Status Offense Cases

Status offenses are acts for which only juveniles can be arrested. The four

Table 16

Percent Change in Petitioned Status Offense Cases and Case Rates, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.	1988	1992	Pct. Chg.
Status Offense	82,200	97,300	18%	3.2	3.6	13%
Runaway	13,200	17,300	31	0.5	0.6	26
Truancy	21,800	26,400	21	0.9	1.0	16
Ungovernable	13,700	10,600	-22	0.5	0.4	-25
Liquor	26,300	30,100	15	1.0	1.1	10
Miscellaneous	7,300	12,900	76	0.3	0.5	68

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

Table 17

Offense Profile of Petitioned Status Offense Cases by Age at Referral, 1992

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Runaway	22%	12%
Truancy	39	11
Ungovernable	14	7
Liquor	12	58
Miscellaneous	13	13
Total	100%	100%

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

Table 18

Percent Change in Detained Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1988–1992

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1988	1992	
Status Offense	8,900	8,200	-8%
Runaway	3,400	2,600	-23
Truancy	700	500	-30
Ungovernable	2,000	1,000	-49
Liquor	1,400	1,800	26
Miscellaneous	1,300	2,200	67

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

major status offense categories analyzed here are running away from home, being truant from school, ungovernability (incorrigibility or beyond the control of one's parents), and underage liquor law violations (minor in possession of alcohol, underage drinking, etc.).

In 1992 U.S. juvenile courts petitioned and formally disposed an estimated 97,300 status offense cases (table 16).⁶ In 30,100 (or 31%) of these cases, the most serious charge was a juvenile liquor law violation. Truancy was the most serious charge in another 26,400 cases (27%), ungovernability in 10,600 cases (11%), and runaway in 17,300 cases (18%). Other miscellaneous status offenses, such as curfew violations, accounted for the remaining 12,900 cases (13%).⁷

Case rates. Juvenile courts processed 3.6 petitioned status offense cases for every 1,000 youth at risk of referral. The total status offense case rate was 13% higher in 1992 than in 1988. The rate for runaway cases increased 26%, the truancy rate increased 16%, and the rate of status liquor law violations grew 10%. The rate of ungovernability cases, on the other hand, declined 25% between 1988 and 1992.

Age. In 1992, 59% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed by juvenile courts involved youth under the age of 16, compared with 56% of the 1988 caseload. The most common status

offense for youth under age 16 was truancy (39%). Among older youth the most common status offense was a liquor law violation, which accounted for 58% of cases involving a youth age 16 or older (table 17).

Gender. Male juveniles were involved in 58% of the petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts during 1992. More than two of every three liquor law violation cases involved males (71%). On the other hand, the majority of runaway cases involved females (62%). Males and females were more equally represented in truancy and ungovernability cases. Fifty-four percent of truancy cases and 51% of ungovernability cases involved male juveniles.

Race. White youth were involved in 75% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed by juvenile courts during 1992. White youth were involved in 75% of runaway cases, 68% of truancy cases, 65% of ungovernability cases, and 87% of status liquor law violation cases. The most common status offense for white youth and youth of other races was a liquor law violation (36% and 46%, respectively). Truancy was the most common status offense among black youth (39%).

Source of referral

Law enforcement agencies referred 47% of the petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts. The source of referral varied by offense. Law enforcement agencies referred 92% of status liquor law violation cases, 50% of runaway cases, 15% of truancy cases, and 10% of ungovernability cases.

Detention

Detention was used in 8,200 petitioned status offense cases (table 18). The number of status offense cases involving detention declined 8% between 1988 and 1992. A decline in detention was seen in cases involving charges of runaway, truancy, and ungovernability, but the number of status liquor law violation cases that involved detention

increased by 26%. Of the four major status offense categories, runaway cases were the most likely to involve detention in 1992. Detention was used in 15% of runaway cases, 10% of ungovernability cases, 6% of status liquor law violations, and 2% of truancy cases. Of the estimated 8,200 petitioned status offense cases that involved detention in 1992, 32% were runaway cases, 22% were liquor law violation cases, 13% involved ungovernability charges, 6% involved charges of truancy, and 27% involved miscellaneous status offenses such as curfew violations.

Case processing

Fifty-six percent of the petitioned status offense cases disposed during 1992 resulted in adjudication (see figure 3 on next page). Adjudication was most

(continued on last page)

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 continues to be 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, which is operated by the National Center for Juvenile Justice in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

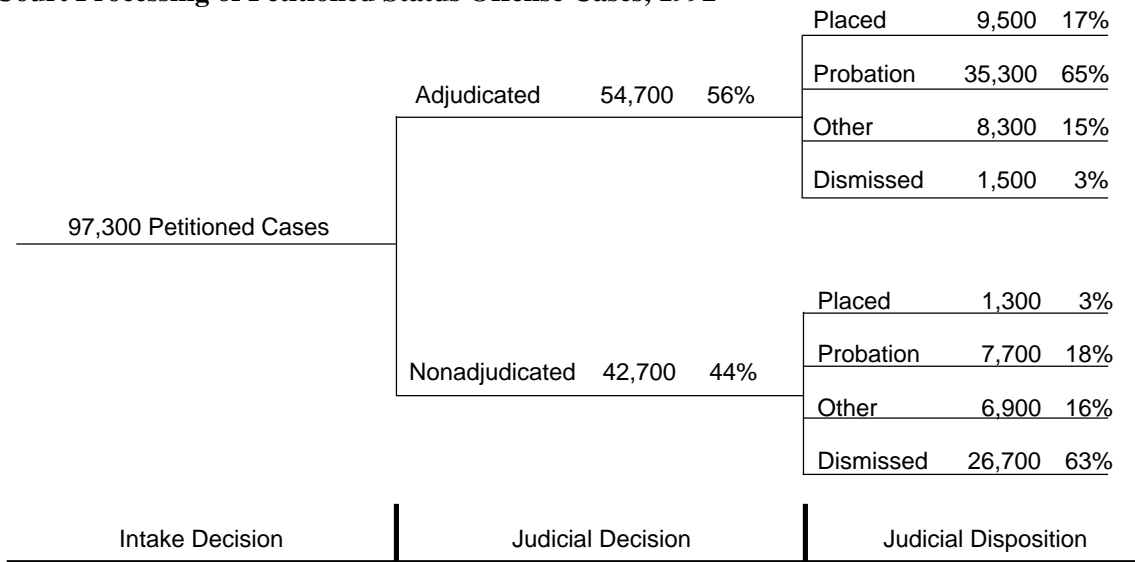
The Archive collects demographic, legal, and dispositional data on more than 700,000 delinquency and status offense cases annually, thus offering the most detailed national information available on youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system. In addition to producing the *Juvenile Court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

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 1992* 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 5 of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*.

⁷Due to the heterogeneity of offenses contained in the "miscellaneous" category, these cases are not always discussed independently. All totals in the tables and figures, however, include "miscellaneous status offenses."

Figure 3

Juvenile Court Processing of Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1992



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

Methods

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series uses data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Data are provided to the Archive by State and local agencies responsible for the collection and/or dissemination of juvenile justice data. The information contributed to the Archive by these agencies is not derived from a probability sampling procedure, nor is it the result of a uniform data collection effort. The national estimates described in this *Update* and in *Juvenile Court Statistics* are developed using information from all courts that were able to provide compatible data to the Archive. While juvenile courts with jurisdiction over 96% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some 1992 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 1,182 jurisdictions in 24 States (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). Together, the contributing jurisdictions from these States contained 45% of the Nation’s juvenile population and handled 608,145 delinquency cases in 1992.

Aggregate court-level data on the number of delinquency cases disposed in a calendar year were provided by 334 jurisdictions in 5 States (Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Washington) and the District of Columbia. In 1992 these jurisdictions handled 163,052 delinquency cases.

Case-level data and court-level aggregate data were provided by a total of 1,516 jurisdictions in 1992. These jurisdictions contained 57% of the Nation’s juvenile population (i.e., age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction).

The national estimates of juvenile court cases reported in *Juvenile Court Statistics* were developed using the Archive’s case-level and court-level data files, and county-level juvenile population estimates that controlled for the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State. The basic assumption underlying the estimation procedure is that the volume and characteristics of juvenile court cases are shaped by the same set of factors in reporting and nonreporting jurisdictions of similar size. For interested readers, a complete description of the estimation procedure appears in the methods section of each *Juvenile Court Statistics* report.

Glossary of Terms

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 population base used to calculate the case rate varies. 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. (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 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 to a criminal court as the result of a waiver or transfer hearing in the juvenile court.

Placement – Cases in which youth were removed from their homes and placed in residential facilities for delinquents or other out-of-home settings.

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 – Miscellaneous dispositions not included above. Includes fines,

restitution, community service, referrals outside the court for services with minimal or no further court involvement anticipated, and dispositions coded as "other" in a jurisdiction's 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 with 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 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. Nonpetitioned (informally handled) cases are screened by duly authorized court personnel for adjustment before filing 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). Under this definition, a youth may 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 (Connecticut, New York, and North Carolina), 16 in eight States (Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas), and 18 in Wyoming (the State of Wyoming reduced the age to 17 in 1993). In the remaining 38 States and the District of Columbia, the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction was 17. 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 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. All States define the upper age of jurisdiction by statute. Most States consider individuals to be adults when they reach 18. 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.)

(continued from page 9)

likely in cases involving ungovernability (69%) and truancy (64%), and least likely in runaway cases (41%). Probation was the most common disposition for adjudicated status offenders. Sixty-five percent of adjudicated status offense cases resulted in probation, 17% resulted in out-of-home placement, 15% resulted in other sanctions such as restitution or community service, and 3% were dismissed.

Acknowledgments

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⁸ Butts, Jeffrey A., Howard N. Snyder, Terrence A. Finnegan, Anne L. Aughenbaugh, Nancy J. Tierney, Dennis P. Sullivan, Rowen S. Poole, Melissa Sickmund, and Eileen Poe (in press). *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

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Additional Information

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 1991* and for more juvenile court information, write to the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850, or call 800-638-8736.

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

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