



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

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Person Offenses in Juvenile Court, 1985–1994

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Person Offenses Up 93% From 1985

In 1994 U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 336,100 delinquency cases in which the most serious charge was an offense against a person. Person offenses include assault, robbery, rape, and homicide. The 1994 person offense caseload was 93% greater than in 1985. Person offense cases accounted for 22% of all delinquency cases in 1994, compared with 16% in 1985.

The number of person offense cases disposed by juvenile courts in 1994 was equivalent to 12.1 cases for every 1,000 juveniles in the United States age 10 or over and potentially under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court in the State where the offense was committed. The person offense case rate increased 83% between 1985 and 1994. The case rate for property offenses, in contrast, increased 16% between 1985 and 1994, while the drug offense

case rate grew 54% and the rate for public order offenses increased 42%.

Homicide was the most serious charge in 3,000 cases, or less than 1% of all person offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1994. The vast majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (177,700) or aggravated assault (85,300). Together, these two offenses accounted for 78% of all person offense cases processed in 1994.

Juvenile courts handled 98% more cases involving offenses included in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Crime Index in 1994 than in 1985. Four offenses make up the Index: homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Homicide cases increased 144%, aggravated assault cases grew 134%, robbery cases were up 53%, and cases of forcible rape climbed 25%.

Characteristics of Person Offense Cases, 1985–1994

	1985	1990	1994
Gender			
Male	80%	80%	77%
Female	20	20	23
Age at Time of Referral			
Under 16 years	61%	63%	64%
16 or older	39	37	36
Race/Ethnicity			
White	58%	56%	57%
Black	40	41	40
Other	2	3	3
Predisposition Detention			
Detained	25%	27%	24%
Not detained	75	73	76
Manner of Handling			
Formal	54%	56%	59%
Informal	46	44	41
Outcome of Formal Handling			
Adjudicated	58%	55%	54%
Not adjudicated	42	45	46
Disposition of Adjudicated Cases			
Placed out of the home	31%	34%	31%
Probation or supervision	56	56	54
Other (fines, restitution, etc.)	8	7	11
Dismissed or released	6	3	4

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Characteristics of Offenders

Compared with 1985, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 1994 were slightly younger and more likely to be female. In 1994, 64% of person offense cases involved juveniles under age 16, compared with 61% in 1985. Females were involved in 23% of person offense cases in 1994, compared with 20% in 1985. More than half (57%) of person offense cases in 1994 involved white youth, 40% involved black youth, and 3% involved youth of other races.

Use of Detention

Nearly one-quarter (24%) of the person offense cases disposed by juvenile courts in 1994 involved the use of detention at some point between referral and disposition. Of the four major offense categories (person, property, drug, and public order), only drug offense cases were more likely than person offense cases to involve the use of predisposition detention (28%).

Case Processing

Of the 336,100 person offense cases disposed by U.S. juvenile courts in 1994, 59% were handled formally (that is, a petition

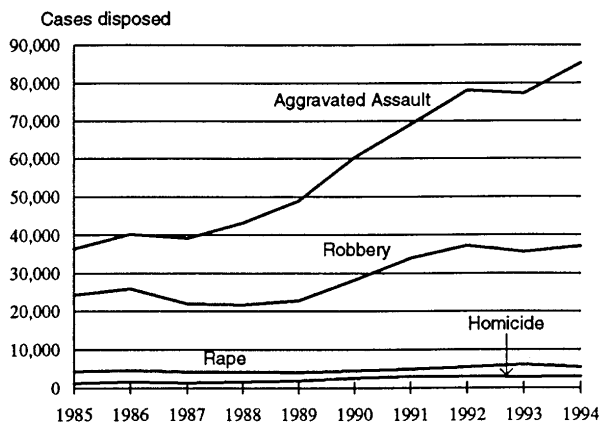
was filed requesting a hearing). Of the individuals in these cases, 3% were waived to the criminal court system where they were subject to conviction as adults, 54% were formally adjudicated in the juvenile court, and 43% were petitioned but not adjudicated.

In 31% of the 106,900 person offense cases that were formally adjudicated by juvenile courts in 1994, the most severe disposition used by the court was placement out of the home. Probation was used in 54%, while 11% resulted in other sanctions, including referral to an outside agency, fines, and restitution. Approximately 4% of formally adjudicated person offense cases were later dismissed for various reasons.

In 1994 an estimated 84,700 person offense cases were formally petitioned by the court but not adjudicated. Most (64%) of these cases were dismissed, but in 21% the youth agreed to informal probation and in 13% to other dispositions. About 2% of non-adjudicated person offense cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement.

More than half (53%) of the 139,100 person offense cases handled informally by juvenile courts in 1994 were dismissed.

Delinquency Cases Involving FBI Violent Index Offenses, 1985-1994



Delinquency Cases Handled by U.S. Juvenile Courts, 1985-1994

Cases Disposed	1985	1990	1994	Percent Change	
				1985-94	1990-94
Person	174,400	243,500	336,100	93%	38%
Property	658,600	751,500	803,400	22	7
Drugs	74,100	71,100	120,200	62	69
Public Order	196,800	233,200	295,600	50	27
Total Delinquency	1,103,900	1,299,200	1,555,200	41	20

Case Rate

Person	6.6	9.5	12.1	83%	27%
Property	25.1	29.3	29.0	16	-1
Drugs	2.8	2.8	4.3	54	56
Public Order	7.5	9.1	10.7	42	17
Total Delinquency	42.0	50.7	56.1	33	11

Note: Percentages are calculated using unrounded numbers.

The remainder resulted in voluntary probation (29%) or other dispositions (18%), while a small number (< 1%) resulted in out-of-home placement.

For More Information

This Fact Sheet is based on the forthcoming report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 1994*. Copies will be available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse by calling 800-638-8736. OJJDP also supports distribution of an easy-to-use, PC-compatible software version of the data files in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1990-1994*, call the National Juvenile Court Data Archive project at the National Center for Juvenile Justice (412-227-6950).

Jeffrey Butts is Project Manager of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by an OJJDP grant. Joseph Moone, Social Science Program Specialist in OJJDP's Research and Program Development Division, serves as the Program Manager.

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