



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator June 2009

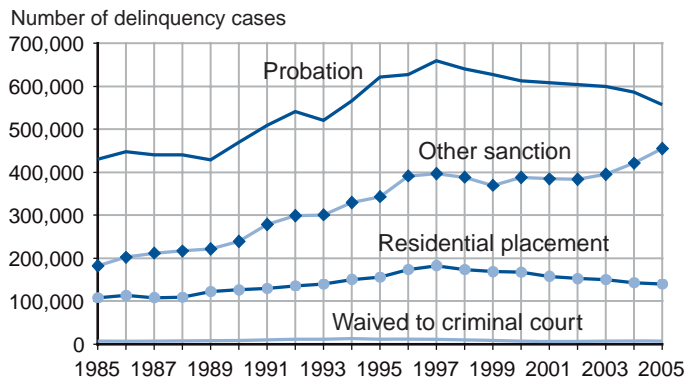
Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 2005

by Sarah Livsey

One-third of all delinquency cases disposed in 2005 received probation as the most serious disposition

Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled 1.7 million delinquency cases in 2005. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in 33% (556,500) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 29% between 1985 and 2005. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 46%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases that juvenile courts processed from 1985 through 2005. 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 80% of the U.S. juvenile population (youth age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State).

Since 1997, the number of cases in which juveniles were placed on probation has declined steadily



- Probation was ordered in 48% of the more than 1.1 million delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction in 2005 (those that were not dismissed or otherwise released).
- Probation cases accounted for 29% of the increase between 1985 and 2005 in delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction.

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 2005, cases in which adjudicated delinquents were ordered to probation (373,400 cases) accounted for 67% of all delinquency

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

Most severe disposition	1985	1997	2005
Total	100%	100%	100%
Probation	57	60	60
Residential placement	32	28	22
Other sanction	11	12	18

Notes: Data for 1997 are presented because it is the peak year for the number of disposed cases receiving probation. Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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

Most severe offense	1985	1997	2005
Total	57%	60%	60%
Person	56	61	63
Property	58	62	63
Drugs	64	63	64
Public order	51	53	52

Note: Data for 1997 are presented because it is the peak year for the number of disposed cases receiving probation.

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 95% between 1985 and 2005 (from 191,500 to 373,400). In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation decreased 19% (from 201,700 to 164,000), reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

Most cases placed on probation involve white youth and males

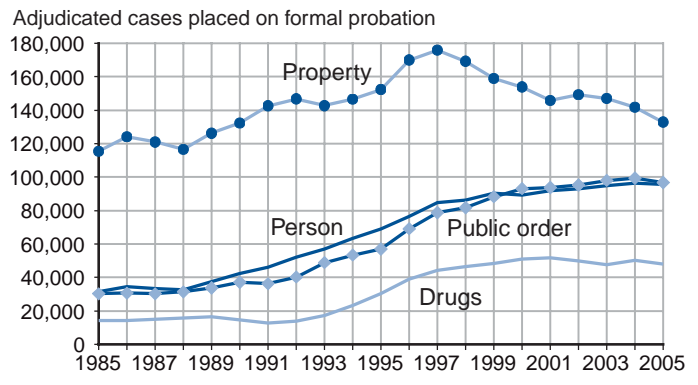
In 2005, 67% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 30% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1985 and 2005, the probation caseload grew 60% for black juveniles (from 104,400 to 167,300) and 17% for white juveniles (from 318,700 to 373,000). Most cases (74%) placed on probation in 2005 involved males (about 410,200 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload grew from 18% in 1985 to 26% in 2005. Juveniles ages 14–16 accounted for 64% (about 357,300 cases) of the probation caseload in 2005.

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

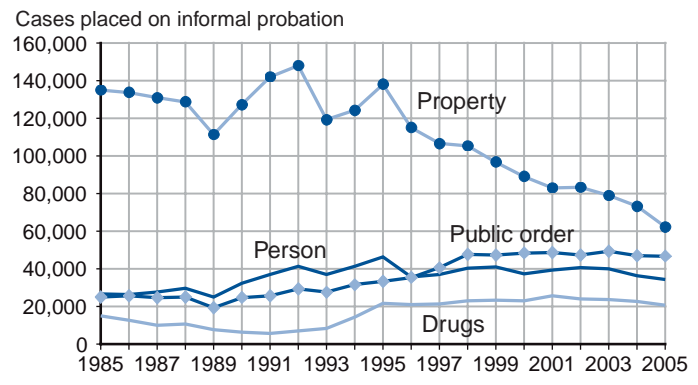
The offense profile of the probation caseload has changed somewhat since 1985. Property offense cases continued to account for the majority of cases placed on probation, but their share of the probation caseload declined. For example, the proportion of adjudicated cases that involved property offenses and received formal probation as the most severe disposition declined more than 20 percentage points between 1985 and 2005 (from 60% to 36%). As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2005 than in 1985.

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 2005 (from 67% to 38%). As a result, the profile of the informal probation caseload also contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2005 than in 1985.

Between 1997 and 2005, the number of adjudicated cases resulting in probation increased for person, drugs, and public order offense cases but decreased for property offense cases



The number of person, drug, and public order offense cases placed on informal probation increased between 1985 and 2005, while property offense cases decreased more than 50% during that period



For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 2005*, which is available through OJJDP's Web site (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) 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 Livsey, Ph.D., a Research Associate 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 grants 2007–JL–FX–0007 and 2007–JL–FX–0022.

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).

Offense profile of cases placed on probation

Most severe offense	Formal probation		Informal probation	
	1985	2005	1985	2005
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	17	26	13	21
Property	60	36	67	38
Drugs	7	13	7	13
Public order	16	26	12	29

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