



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator June 2010

Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 2007

by Sarah Livsey

One-third of all delinquency cases disposed in 2007 received probation as the most serious disposition

Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled 1.7 million delinquency cases in 2007. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in 34% (561,600) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 34% between 1985 and 2007. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 44%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases that juvenile courts processed from 1985 through 2007. The national estimates were generated using information contributed to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The analysis is based on data from more than 2,200 jurisdictions containing 81% of the U.S. juvenile population (youth age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).

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 2007, cases in which adjudicated delinquents were ordered to probation (327,400 cases) accounted for 58% of all delinquency

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

Most severe disposition	1985	1997	2007
Total	100%	100%	100%
Probation	58	60	56
Residential placement	31	27	25
Other sanction	11	13	19

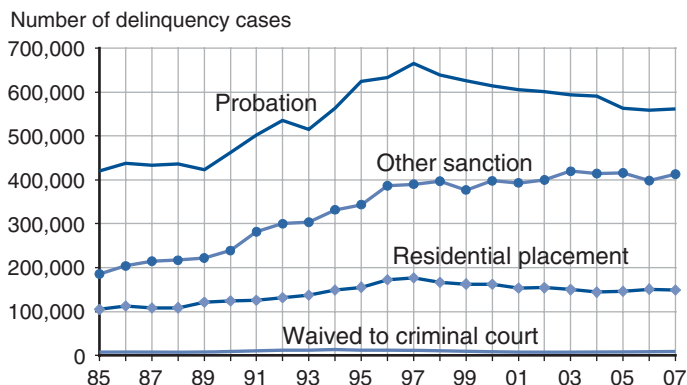
Note: Data for 1997 are presented because it is the peak year for the number of disposed cases receiving probation. Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The likelihood of probation for cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent decreased from 1985 to 2007 except for person offenses which remained the same

Most serious offense	1985	1997	2007
Total	58%	60%	56%
Person	58	61	58
Property	59	62	58
Drugs	65	63	61
Public order	52	53	49

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

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



■ Probation was ordered in 50% of the more than 1.1 million cases that received a juvenile court sanction in 2007 (those that were not dismissed or otherwise released).

■ Probation cases accounted for 34% of the increase between 1985 and 2007 in delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction.

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 69% between 1985 and 2007 (from 193,600 to 327,400). In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation decreased 9% (from 191,100 to 173,100), reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

Most cases placed on probation involved white youth and males

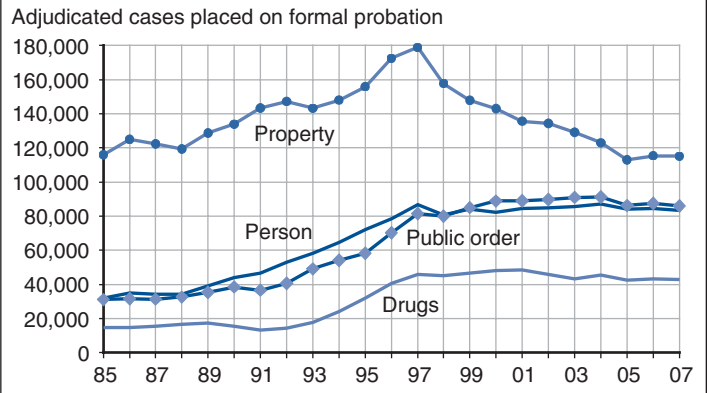
In 2007, 68% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 29% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1985 and 2007, the probation caseload grew 56% for black juveniles (from 105,000 to 164,100) and 23% for white juveniles (from 308,800 to 380,100). Most cases (74%) placed on probation in 2007 involved males (about 414,100 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload grew from 18% in 1985 to 26% in 2007. Juveniles ages 14–16 accounted for 64% (about 361,500 cases) of the probation caseload in 2007.

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

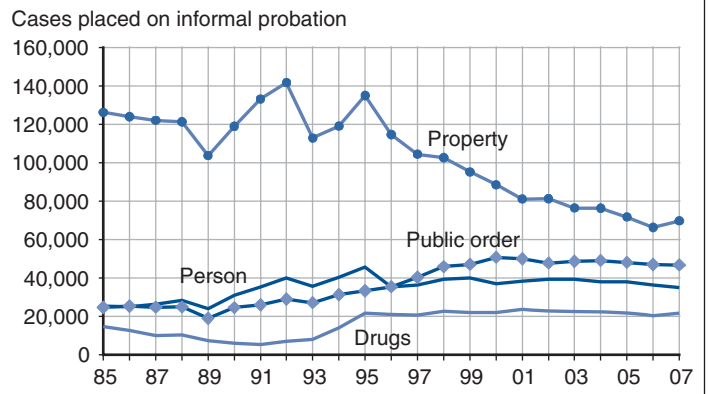
The offense profile of the probation caseload has changed somewhat since 1985. Property offense cases continued to account for the majority of cases placed on probation, but their share of the probation caseload declined. For example, the proportion of adjudicated cases that involved property offenses and received formal probation as the most severe disposition declined between 1985 and 2007 (from 60% to 35%). As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2007 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 between 1985 and 2007 (from 66% to 40%). As a result, the profile of the informal probation caseload also contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2007 than in 1985.

The number of adjudicated person, drug, and public order offense cases ordered to formal probation nearly doubled between 1985 and 2007, while property offense cases decreased 1% during that period



The number of person, drug, and public order offense cases placed on informal probation increased between 1985 and 2007, while property offense cases decreased nearly 50% during that period



For further information

This fact sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 2006–2007*, 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 grant 2009–JL–FX–K129.

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).

Most serious offense	Formal probation		Informal probation	
	1985	2007	1985	2007
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	17	25	13	20
Property	60	35	66	40
Drugs	8	13	8	12
Public order	16	26	13	27

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