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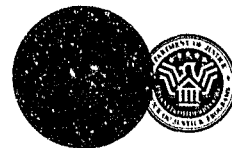
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Juvenile Justice Bulletin

OJJDP Update on Statistics

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

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Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1991

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HCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

In 1991 courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 1,338,100 delinquency cases, a 16% increase over the 1987 caseload. U.S. juvenile courts processed 183,600 more delinquency cases in 1991 than in 1987. The number of person offense cases increased 40% between 1987 and 1991, while the number of drug offense cases decreased 19%. Half the delinquency cases disposed by courts in 1991 were processed formally with the filing of a petition. Among cases petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing, 59% were adjudicated delinquent and 1.5% were transferred to criminal (adult) court. Twenty-nine percent of adjudicated delinquency cases resulted in out-of-home placement and 57% resulted in probation. The number of delinquency cases transferred to criminal court increased 39% between 1987 and 1991. The number of cases involving drug law violations that

were transferred to criminal court increased 152%.

These are among the statistics found in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991*,¹ the latest in a series of yearly reports on the cases handled by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Although courts with juvenile jurisdiction may handle a variety of cases, including abuse, neglect, adoption, and traffic violations, *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports focus on the disposition of petitioned and nonpetitioned delinquency cases and petitioned status offense cases. The reports include national estimates of cases handled each year by courts with juvenile jurisdiction, many subnational statistics, and an appendix of caseload statistics for nearly all States and the larger jurisdictions within each State.

Additional findings from *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991* include:

- In 19% of delinquency cases processed in 1991, the most serious charge was a person offense, in 59% a property offense, in 4% 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. Nearly half (49%) of all detained juveniles were charged with a property offense.
- Juveniles were adjudicated delinquent in 59% of petitioned delinquency cases in 1991, compared with 63% in 1987.
- In 1991 juvenile courts transferred nearly 10,000 delinquency cases to the

¹ Butts, Jeffrey A., Howard N. Snyder, Terrence A. Finnegan, Anne L. Aughenbaugh, Nancy J. Tierney, Dennis P. Sullivan, Rowen S. Poole, Melissa H. Sickmund, and Eileen Poe (1993). *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

From the Administrator

This *Update* profiles the more than one and one-third million cases that came before America's juvenile courts in 1991. It summarizes the findings of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991*, 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

Table 1

Delinquency Cases by Offense, 1991

Offense	Number of Cases	Percent Change	
		90-91	87-91
Total Delinquency	1,338,100	5%	16%
Person	260,300	9	40
Criminal Homicide	2,700	8	86
Forcible Rape	4,700	7	11
Robbery	30,000	7	35
Aggravated Assault	66,100	11	69
Simple Assault	130,600	7	31
Other Violent Sex Offenses	8,600	19	37
Other Person Offenses	17,600	12	46
Property	793,900	8	16
Burglary	148,700	6	14
Larceny-Theft	351,000	9	12
Motor Vehicle Theft	69,500	1	47
Arson	7,300	5	21
Vandalism	103,000	11	24
Trespassing	56,200	15	7
Stolen Property Offenses	27,100	-5	-6
Other Property Offenses	31,100	8	41
Drug Law Violations	59,300	-13	-19
Public Order	224,600	-2	6
Obstruction of Justice	78,900	-6	1
Disorderly Conduct	59,500	7	24
Weapons Offenses	31,600	7	61
Liquor Law Violations	13,400	-25	-32
Nonviolent Sex Offenses	10,400	-16	-12
Other Public Order	30,900	3	-11
Violent Crime Index*	103,600	9	54
Property Crime Index**	576,500	7	16

* 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. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

criminal court system. More than a third (34%) of these cases involved a person offense while 44% involved a property offense.

These national estimates of the cases handled by juvenile courts in 1991 are based on data from more than 1,500 courts that had jurisdiction over 57% of the U.S. juvenile population in 1991.² The unit of count in this study is a case disposed during the calendar year by a court with juvenile jurisdiction. 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. An individual youth can be involved in more than one case during the calendar year. Cases involving multiple offenses are categorized by the most serious offense, while cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized by the most severe or restrictive disposition.

Delinquency Cases

A delinquency offense occurs when a juvenile commits an act for which an adult could be prosecuted in criminal

court. Juvenile courts handled an estimated 1,338,100 delinquency cases in 1991 (table 1). A property offense was the most serious charge in 793,900 (59%) of these cases. The most serious charge was a person offense in 260,300 cases (19%), a drug offense in 59,300 cases (4%), and a public order offense in 224,600 cases (17%). In 26% of cases, the most serious charge was larceny-theft.

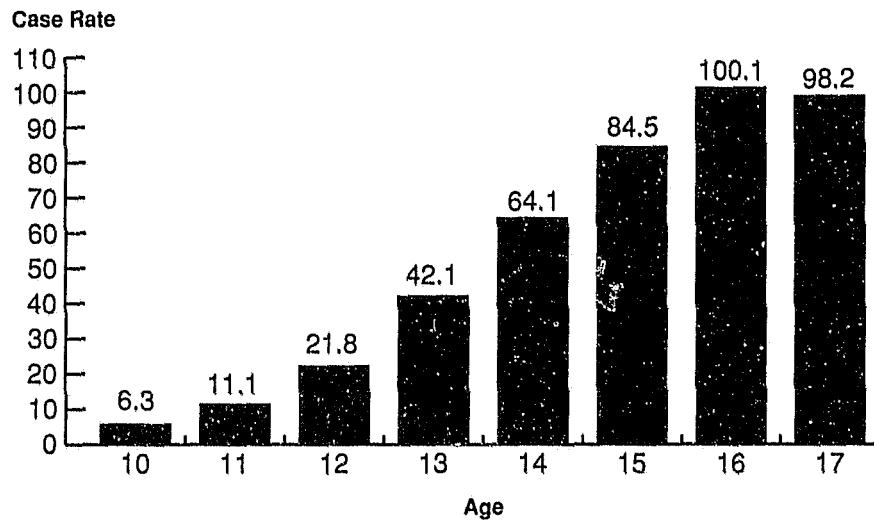
The number of delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts increased 16% between 1987 and 1991. Changes in case volume varied by offense. Large increases occurred in the number of cases involving criminal homicide (86%), aggravated assault (69%), motor vehicle theft (47%), and weapons offenses (61%). Substantial increases also occurred in the number of cases involving robbery (35%), simple assault (31%), vandalism (24%), arson (21%), and disorderly conduct (24%). The number of drug law violation cases, on the other hand, decreased 19%. Liquor law violations and stolen property cases also decreased (32% and 6%, respectively).

The number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 1991 was equivalent to 51.3 cases disposed for every 1,000 juveniles in the United States at risk of referral (table 2).³ This delinquency case rate increased 15% between 1987 and 1991. The case rate for juveniles charged with person offenses increased 40%, while the rate for drug offenses decreased 20% during the same period.

²For information on the estimation procedure, see the Methods sidebar in this *Update* or in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991*. The national estimates for 1987 through 1990 described in this *Update* include revisions made subsequent to publication of earlier reports using these data.

³The calculation of the population at risk of referral controls for State variations in the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. Juveniles at risk are defined as youth age 10 or older who would be under the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court according to State law. The upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction is defined by statute. In most States, this age is 17, but upper ages of jurisdiction range from 15 to 18.

Figure 1
Delinquency Case Rates by Age at Referral, 1991



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

Sixty percent of the delinquency cases processed by the Nation's juvenile courts in 1991 involved youth age 15 or younger. These youth were involved in 61% of person offense cases, 63% of property offense cases, 39% of drug law violation cases, and 52% of public order offense cases. Compared with caseloads of older juveniles, caseloads of younger youth had a smaller proportion of drug law violations (3% versus 7%) and public order offense cases (15% versus 20%) but a larger proportion of property offense cases (63% versus 54%) (table 3).⁴

Delinquency case rates generally increased with age (figure 1). For example, the delinquency case rate for 15-year-olds was 32% higher than the rate for 14-year-olds (84.5 compared with 64.1 per 1,000 youth at risk, respectively). An exception to this pattern was the case rate for 17-year-olds, which was lower than the rate for 16-year-olds (98.2 compared with 100.1). Drug law violation case rates showed the sharpest relative age increase. The drug offense case rate for 17-year-olds was 300% greater than the

rate for 14-year-olds (7.6 versus 1.9 cases per 1,000 juveniles at risk).

The number of delinquency cases involving males increased 16% between 1987 and 1991, while cases involving females increased 14% (table 4). The delinquency case rate for males was more than four times greater than the case rate for females in 1991 (81.3 versus 19.8 cases per 1,000 youth at risk). Between 1987 and 1991, the person offense case rate increased 39% for males and 41% for females, while property offense case rates increased 15% and 17%, respectively. Changes in male and female case rates differed considerably in drug offenses. While the drug offense case rate for males declined 17%, the case rate for females decreased 33%.

In 1991 delinquency cases involving white youth outnumbered those involving black youth by more than 2 to 1, and outnumbered those involving youth of other races by 19 to 1.⁵ The delinquency case rate for black youth (107.8 cases per 1,000 at risk) was more than twice the rate for white youth (41.7 per 1,000) and three times the rate for youth of other races (35.7 per 1,000). Between

⁴Care should be exercised when interpreting age, sex, or racial differences in the handling of juveniles; reported statistics do not control for variations in the seriousness of the offense or the prior court history of the juvenile.

⁵Nearly all youth of Hispanic ethnicity are included in the white racial category.

Table 2
Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.
Delinquency	1,154,500	1,338,100	16%	44.5	51.3	15%
Person	185,400	260,300	40	7.1	10.0	40
Property	683,600	793,900	16	26.3	30.4	16
Drugs	73,400	59,300	-19	2.8	2.3	-20
Public Order	212,100	224,600	6	8.2	8.6	5

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

Table 3
Offense Characteristics of Delinquency Cases by Age at Referral, 1991

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Person	20%	19%
Property	63	54
Drugs	3	7
Public Order	15	20
Total	100%	100%

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

1987 and 1991, the number of delinquency cases involving white youth increased just 8%, while the number of cases involving black youth and youth of other races increased 35% and 31%, respectively (table 5).

The person offense and drug law violation case rates for black youth (27.7 and 7.3 cases per 1,000 at risk) were at least four times greater than the corresponding rates for white youth (6.9 and 1.4). Similarly, the property and public order offense case rates for blacks (54.6 and 18.2) were more than double the rates for whites (26.3 and 7.0). In all offense categories, the case rate for juveniles of other races was lower than the corresponding rate for black or white juveniles.

Property offenses represented 63% of the white youth caseload, 51% of the black youth caseload, and 66% of the caseload of youth of other races. The black youth caseload involved a higher percentage of person offense cases than either the white caseload or the caseload of youth of other races (26% compared with 17% and 16%, respectively). Similarly, delinquency cases involving black youth contained a larger proportion of drug law violations (7%) than did cases involving white youth (3%) or youth of other races (2%).

Source of referral

Court intake of delinquency cases can result from referrals by law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, schools, parents, probation officers, and victims. Although there were variations across offense categories, 85% of the delinquency cases were referred to courts by law enforcement agencies. These agencies referred 83% of person offense cases, 90% of property offense cases, 93% of drug law violation cases, and 68% of public order offense cases (table 6).

Detention

A juvenile may be placed in a detention facility at some point between referral to court and case disposition for a number of reasons: to protect the community from the juvenile, to protect

Table 4
Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Sex, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.
Male	935,000	1,087,100	16%	70.3	81.3	16%
Person	148,500	208,200	40	11.2	15.6	39
Property	557,200	645,600	16	41.9	48.3	15
Drugs	61,900	52,200	-16	4.7	3.9	-17
Public Order	167,300	181,200	8	12.6	13.5	7
Female	219,500	251,000	14%	17.4	19.8	14%
Person	36,800	52,100	41	2.9	4.1	41
Property	126,400	148,300	17	10.0	11.7	17
Drugs	11,500	7,200	-37	0.9	0.6	-33
Public Order	44,800	43,400	-3	3.5	3.4	-3

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

Table 5
Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Race, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.
White	806,600	870,600	8%	38.4	41.7	9%
Person	105,700	144,500	37	5.0	6.9	38
Property	496,200	550,000	11	23.6	26.3	11
Drugs	48,300	29,800	-38	2.3	1.4	-39
Public Order	156,400	146,300	-6	7.4	7.0	-5
Black	313,700	422,700	35%	80.8	107.8	33%
Person	75,000	108,500	45	19.3	27.7	44
Property	165,300	214,200	30	42.6	54.6	28
Drugs	23,400	28,600	22	6.0	7.3	22
Public Order	50,000	71,400	43	12.9	18.2	41
Other Races	34,200	44,900	31%	32.2	35.7	11%
Person	4,700	7,300	57	4.4	5.8	32
Property	22,100	29,700	34	20.9	23.6	13
Drugs	1,700	900	-45	1.6	0.7	-56
Public Order	5,700	6,900	22	5.4	5.5	2

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

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

the juvenile, or both. Detention is sometimes necessary to ensure a youth's attendance at scheduled hearings or for evaluation purposes. Youth were detained in 20% (272,100) of the

delinquency cases disposed in 1991 (table 7). Nearly half the detained cases (132,000) involved youth charged with property offenses.

Table 6
Percent of Delinquency Cases Referred by Law Enforcement, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
Delinquency	83%	85%
Person	80	83
Property	89	90
Drugs	92	93
Public Order	63	68

The number of detained delinquency cases increased 19% between 1987 and 1991. The number of detained person offense cases increased 52%, while detained property offense cases increased 19% and public order offense cases increased 3%. The number of detained drug offense cases, on the other hand, decreased 3% during the same period.

The probability that the courts would detain a male or female juvenile charged with a person, property, or public order offense changed very little between 1987 and 1991 (table 8). However, the courts' use of detention increased for both males and females charged with drug law violations (from 31% to 37% for males and from 24% to 27% for females). Even with the increase in drug law violation detentions, the overall probability of detention for females declined slightly over the 5-year period (from 16% to 15%).

In 1991 the likelihood of detention in cases involving white juveniles was 17%, while it was 26% for those involving black juveniles and 25% for juveniles of other races (table 9). The use of detention remained relatively constant between 1987 and 1991 among all offense categories except drug law violation cases. During this period, the use of detention for drug cases increased from 21% to 25% among whites, and from 28% to 34% among youth of other races. In drug cases involving black youth, however, the likelihood of detention fell slightly between 1987 and 1991, from 49% to 48%.

Table 7
Percent Change in Detained Delinquency Cases, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1987	1991	
Delinquency	228,100	272,100	19%
Person	42,700	64,700	52
Property	110,800	132,000	19
Drugs	22,100	21,400	-3
Public Order	52,600	54,000	3

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

Case processing

When a delinquency case is referred to juvenile court, an intake officer, judge, or prosecutor decides whether to handle the case formally or informally. Formal handling involves filing a petition requesting an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Informal cases are handled at the intake level, without a petition and without an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

Half the delinquency cases in 1991 were handled formally (figure 2). The likelihood of formal processing for delinquency referrals increased from 47% in 1987 to 50% in 1991. Most of this increase was due to changes in the intake decisions governing the handling

of drug law violation cases. In 1987, 55% of drug law violation cases were petitioned to court for formal processing; in 1991, 67% of drug cases were petitioned. The remaining three general offense categories showed only marginal increases between 1987 and 1991 in the proportion of cases handled formally.

Because more cases were referred to juvenile court intake, and intake was more likely to file a petition, the number of formally processed delinquency cases increased 21% between 1987 and 1991, from 547,400 to 664,700 (table 10). The largest percentage increase was in person offense cases. Juvenile courts formally processed 44% more person offense cases in 1991 than in 1987. The

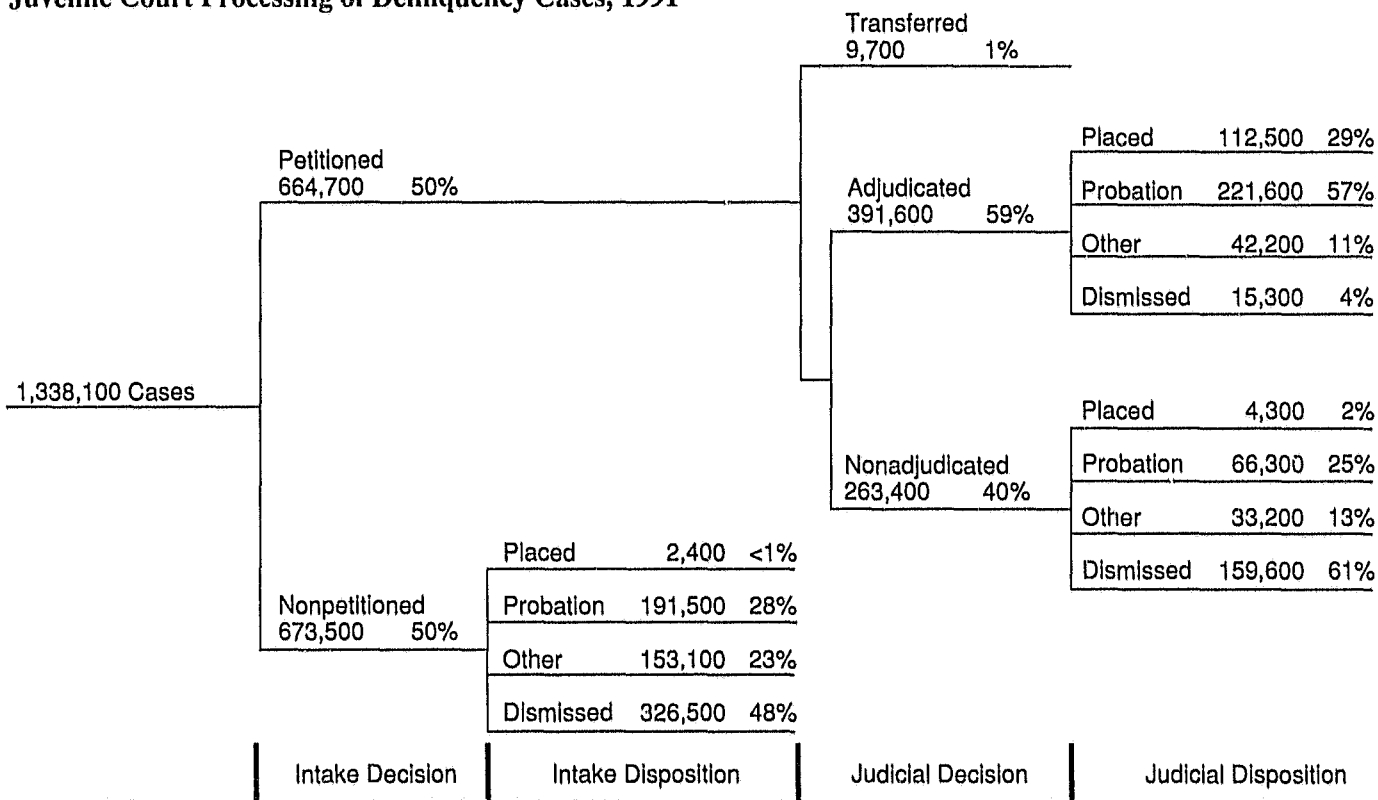
Table 8
Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Sex, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
Male	21%	22%
Person	25	27
Property	17	18
Drugs	31	37
Public Order	25	25
Female	16%	15%
Person	17	18
Property	12	12
Drugs	24	27
Public Order	25	22

Table 9
Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Race, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
White	17%	17%
Person	19	21
Property	14	14
Drugs	21	25
Public Order	23	23
Black	27%	26%
Person	28	29
Property	22	22
Drugs	49	48
Public Order	31	27
Other Races	24%	25%
Person	31	30
Property	21	22
Drugs	28	34
Public Order	29	29

Figure 2
Juvenile Court Processing of Delinquency Cases, 1991



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

number of petitioned property offense cases increased 20%, compared with an 11% increase in petitioned public order offense cases, and a 2% decline in petitioned drug law violation cases.

Criminal court transfer. One of the first decisions made at intake is whether to process a case in the criminal (adult)

justice system rather than in the juvenile court. The mechanisms used to transfer responsibility for a case to the criminal court vary by State. In some instances, a prosecutor has the authority to file juvenile cases that meet specified criteria directly in criminal court. In other cases, a juvenile court judge must authorize all transfers to criminal court.

The judge may decide to waive the juvenile court's jurisdiction over a case in response to a petition requesting criminal prosecution. Denial of a transfer request usually means that the case will be scheduled for an adjudicatory hearing in juvenile court. The data described in this report represent only cases that were trans-

Table 10
Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1987	1991	
Delinquency	547,400	664,700	21%
Person	99,100	143,000	44
Property	308,800	371,800	20
Drugs	40,500	39,800	-2
Public Order	99,100	110,100	11

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

Table 11
Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
Delinquency	1.3%	1.5%
Person	2.0	2.3
Property	1.3	1.1
Drugs	1.5	4.0
Public Order	0.5	0.6

Table 12
Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1987	1991	
Delinquency	7,000	9,700	39%
Person	2,000	3,200	65
Property	3,900	4,200	10
Drugs	600	1,600	152
Public Order	500	600	21

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

Table 13
Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Adjudicated, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
Delinquency	63%	59%
Person	58	54
Property	64	60
Drugs	64	61
Public Order	66	60

ferred to criminal court by judicial waiver.

In 1991, 1.5% of all formally processed delinquency cases were transferred to criminal court, compared with 1.3% in 1987 (table 11). Cases involving person offenses were most likely to be transferred in 1987 (2.0%), while drug cases were most likely to be transferred in 1991 (4.0%). Property offense cases, however, accounted for nearly half the cases transferred in 1991 (44%). The total number of transferred cases increased 39% between 1987 and 1991 (table 12). The number of transferred person offense cases increased 65%, while the number of drug law violation cases transferred to criminal court increased 152%.

Adjudication and disposition. An adjudicatory hearing is held in nearly all formally handled delinquency cases.⁶ During this hearing, the court determines whether the youth will be adjudicated a delinquent. The court then

Table 14
Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed Out-of-Home, 1987 & 1991

Offense	1987	1991
Delinquency	29%	29%
Person	32	33
Property	26	25
Drugs	32	35
Public Order	37	35

makes a dispositional decision that could include commitment to a residential facility, probation, referral to another agency or treatment program, fines, restitution, or community service.

Approximately 40% of formally handled delinquency cases in 1991 were not adjudicated. Most of these cases (61%) were dismissed by the court, but in 25% of these cases the youth agreed to some form of probation, and in 13% youth were given other dispositions. About 2% of nonadjudicated delinquency cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement.

Fifty-nine percent of the formally processed delinquency cases resulted in adjudication (table 13). In 29% of these cases, the youth was sent to a residential facility (table 14). In 57% of these cases, the juvenile was placed on formal probation (table 15). In 11% the court ordered the juvenile 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%), the juvenile was adjudicated, but the case was then dismissed or the youth was otherwise released.

Between 1987 and 1991, the likelihood that an adjudicated youth would be placed out of the home remained unchanged (29%). Only cases involving drug law violations were more likely to result in out-of-home placement in 1991 than they were in 1987 (35% and 32%, respectively).

Petitioned Status Offense Cases

Behaviors for which only juveniles can be arrested are called status offenses. The four major status offense categories are running away, truancy, ungovernability (incorrigibility), and underage liquor law violations (minor in possession of alcohol, underage drinking, etc.).⁷

In 1991 U.S. juvenile courts petitioned and formally disposed an estimated 90,100 status offense cases (table 16).⁸ In 28,300 (31%) of these cases, the most serious charge was a juvenile liquor law violation. Truancy was the most serious charge in 26,000 cases (29%), ungovernability in 11,200 cases (12%), and runaway in 14,900 cases (17%). Other types of status offenses

⁶In a small proportion of petitioned cases, the petition is withdrawn before the adjudicatory hearing is held.

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

⁸In 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 1991* 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 1991*.

Table 15
Percent of Adjudicated
Delinquency Cases Placed on
Formal Probation, 1987 &
1991

Offense	1987	1991
Delinquency	57%	57%
Person	56	54
Property	59	59
Drugs	59	52
Public Order	50	52

such as curfew violations accounted for the remaining 9,700 cases (11%).

Juvenile courts processed 3.5 petitioned status offense cases for every 1,000 youth at risk of referral. The total case rate was 8% higher in 1991 than in 1987. The rate for truancy cases increased 22%, while the status liquor case rate climbed 12%. The case rate for runaway offenses, on the other hand, increased just 1%, and the ungovernable case rate declined 24%.

Fifty-seven percent of the formal status offense cases involved youth age 15 or younger. The most common status offense for these younger youth was truancy (42%). Liquor law violations

Table 16
Percent Change in Petitioned Status Offense Cases and Case Rates,
1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.	1987	1991	Pct. Chg.
Status Offense	82,700	90,100	9%	3.2	3.5	8%
Runaway	14,700	14,900	2	0.6	0.6	1
Truancy	21,200	26,000	22	0.8	1.0	22
Ungovernable	14,600	11,200	-23	0.6	0.4	-24
Liquor	25,200	28,300	12	1.0	1.1	12
Other	7,000	9,700	39	0.3	0.4	38

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk

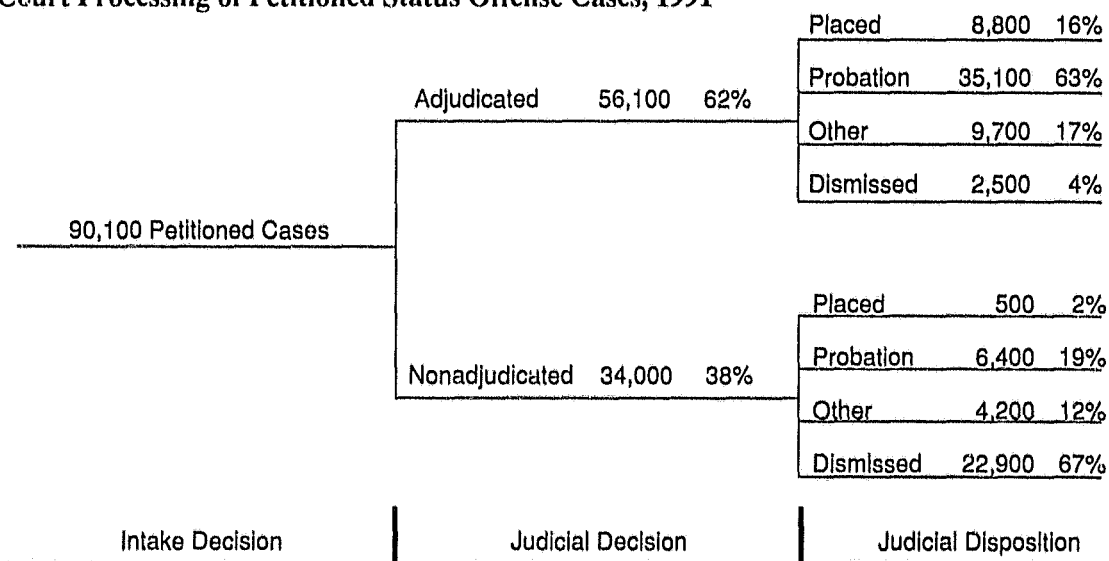
Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percentage calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

were the most common offense among older youth (57%) (table 17).

Males were involved in 59% of petitioned status offense cases in 1991. Nearly three out of four (72%) liquor law violation cases involved males. The majority of runaway cases involved females (61%). Males and females were more equally represented in truancy and ungovernability cases.

White youth were involved in 76% of petitioned status offense cases, which was comparable to their representation in the U.S. youth population. White youth were involved in 75% of runaway cases, 70% of truancy cases, 68% of ungovernability cases, and 88% of liquor law violation cases. The most common status offense for white youth and youth of other races was a liquor law violation (36% and 45%, respec-

Figure 3
Juvenile Court Processing of Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1991



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

Table 17

Offense Characteristics of Petitioned Status Offense Cases by Age at Referral, 1991

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Runaway	19%	13%
Truancy	42	11
Ungovernable	16	8
Liquor	12	57
Other	11	11
Total	100%	100%

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

tively). Truancy was the most common status offense among black youth (41%).

Source of referral

Law enforcement agencies referred 42% of the petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1991. The source of referral varied by offense.

Law enforcement agencies referred 92% of liquor law violation cases, 41% of runaway cases, 12% of truancy cases, and 8% of ungovernability cases.

Detention

Detention was used in 7,700 petitioned status offense cases (table 18). The number of detained status offense cases declined 33% between 1987 and 1991. A decline in detentions was seen in cases involving charges of runaway, truancy, and ungovernability, while the number of detained liquor law violation cases remained unchanged. Of the four major status offense categories, runaways were the most likely to involve detention in 1991. Detention was used in 17% of runaway cases, 9% of ungovernability cases, 5% of status liquor law violations, and 3% of cases involving truancy charges. Of the estimated 7,700 petitioned status offense cases that involved detention, 32% were runaway cases, 20% were liquor law violation cases, and 13% were ungovernability cases.

Table 18

Percent Change in Detained Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1987-1991

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1987	1991	
Status Offense	11,500	7,700	-33%
Runaway	4,900	2,500	-50
Truancy	1,300	700	-44
Ungovernable	2,700	1,000	-64
Liquor	1,500	1,500	0
Other	1,100	2,000	83

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

Case processing

Sixty-two percent of petitioned status offense cases in 1991 resulted in adjudication (figure 3). Adjudication was most likely in cases involving truancy (68%) and ungovernability (67%) and least likely in runaway cases (44%). Probation was the most common disposition for adjudicated status offenders. Sixty-three percent of adjudicated status offenders received probation, 16% were placed outside the home, and 17% received some other sanction such as restitution or community service.

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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 has been 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 operated by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.

The Archive collects demographic, legal, and dispositional data on more than 700,000 delinquency and status offense cases annually, thus offering the most detailed 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.

with requests for data and documentation make this work possible. Joseph Moone serves as OJJDP Program Manager for the Archive.

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.)

Methods

Juvenile Court Statistics 1991 defines a juvenile court case as any instance of a youth being referred to court intake for one or more offenses. A single youth can be involved in more than one case during the calendar year. 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 is characterized as a robbery case. Similarly, cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized according to the most severe disposition. A case with a disposition of restitution and placement in a residential facility would be categorized as a disposition of residential placement.

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series uses data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Data are provided by State and county agencies responsible for the collection and/or dissemination of information on the processing of youth in juvenile courts. These data are not the result of a census or a probability sampling procedure, nor are they the result of a uniform data

collection effort. National estimates were developed using information from all courts that provided compatible data to the Archive. While juvenile courts with jurisdiction over 96% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some 1991 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 23 States (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). These courts had jurisdiction over 45% of the Nation's juvenile population and handled 553,243 juvenile cases in 1991.

Aggregate court-level data containing simple counts of the number of cases disposed in 1991 were provided by 322 jurisdictions in 7 States (District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Washington). In 1991, these courts handled 155,176 juvenile cases. Case-level and court-level aggregate data covering 57% of the Nation's juvenile population were provided by a total of 1,504 jurisdictions.

National estimates of court activity were developed using the case-level data base, the court-level data base, and county-level juvenile population estimates, controlling for the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State. The basic assumption underlying the estimation procedure is that dynamics producing the volume and characteristics of juvenile court cases in reporting jurisdictions are shared by nonreporting jurisdictions of similar size. For interested readers, a complete description of the estimation procedure appears in the Methods section of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1991*.

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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