



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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Delinquency Cases in Juvenile Court, 1992

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Counts and trends

Juvenile courts in the United States processed an estimated 1,471,200 delinquency cases in 1992. Delinquency cases involve juveniles charged with criminal law violations. The number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts increased 26% between 1988 and 1992. Since 1988, cases involving offenses against persons increased 56% while property offense cases increased 23%. During this 5-year period, cases involving charges of robbery and aggravated assault grew 52% and 80%, respectively. Although the number of drug law violation cases was down 12% compared with 1988, the number of drug cases increased 15% between 1991 and 1992.

These national estimates of the cases handled by juvenile courts in 1992 are based on data from more than 1,500 courts that had jurisdiction over 57% of the U.S. juvenile population in 1992. The unit of count in this Fact Sheet is a case disposed during the calendar year by a court with juvenile jurisdiction. Each case represents one 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. For a full description of the methodology used in collecting the data and making the national estimates, see *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992* (OJJDP, forthcoming).

Detention

One of the first decisions made in processing juvenile delinquency cases is whether or not the juvenile should be detained in a secure facility to await the next court appearance. Juveniles are sometimes detained to protect the community from their behavior, sometimes to protect the juveniles themselves, or to ensure their appearance at court hearings. Juveniles were securely detained in 20% of the delinquency cases processed in 1992. Detention was used in 35% of drug law violations, 24% of person offense cases, and 17% of property offense cases. Partly because of the large volume of property offenses handled by juvenile courts, 47% of cases involving detention in 1992 were property offense cases.

Most Serious Offense in Delinquency Cases, 1992

Offense	Number of Cases	Percent Change	
		'91-92	'88-92
Total	1,471,200	7%	26%
Person Offense	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 Offense	9,900	13	60
Other Person Offense	19,800	11	63
Property Offense	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 Offense	28,900	7	-7
Other Property Offense	33,700	6	57
Drug Law Violation	72,100	15	-12
Public Order Offense	255,900	11	21
Obstruction of Justice	87,100	8	10
Disorderly Conduct	69,300	13	50
Weapons Offense	41,000	26	86
Liquor Law Violation	12,500	-7	-26
Nonviolent Sex Offense	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

Intake Decision

After reviewing the details of a case, a decision is made either to dismiss it, handle it informally, or formally process the case by taking the matter before a judge. More than one-fifth (23%) of 1992 delinquency cases were dismissed at intake, often for lack of legal sufficiency. Another 26% were processed informally, with the juvenile agreeing to a voluntary disposition (e.g. probation). Half (51%) of the delinquency cases handled in 1992 were processed formally, and involved either an adjudicatory hearing or a hearing to consider transferring jurisdiction to the adult court.

Transfer to criminal court

During a transfer (or waiver) hearing, the juvenile court judge is asked to waive jurisdiction over a matter and transfer the case to criminal court so that the juvenile may be tried as an adult. Transfer decisions are usually based on the seriousness of the offense, the juvenile's prior record, and the juvenile's amenability to treatment. In 1992, 11,700 delinquency cases were transferred by a juvenile court judge. Transfers increased 68% between 1988 and 1992. Of the cases transferred in 1992, 34% involved a person offense, 45% involved a property offense, and 12% involved a drug law violation. The cases most likely to be transferred in 1992 were those involving drug law violation; 3.1% of formally processed drug law violations were transferred in 1992, compared with 2.4% of person offense cases, and 1.3% of property offense cases.

Adjudication and disposition

Adjudicatory hearings are used to establish the facts in a delinquency case (analogous to determining guilt or innocence) and to decide whether to place the juvenile under the supervision of the court. In 1992 juveniles were adjudicated in more than half (57%) of the 743,700 cases brought before a judge. Once adjudicated, the majority of cases (57%) were placed on formal probation, while in 28% the juvenile was placed out of the home in a residential facility, and 11% resulted in other dispositions (referral to an outside agency, community service, restitution, etc.). In most delinquency cases where the juvenile was not adjudicated, the case was dismissed by the court.

Between 1988 and 1992, the number of cases in which an adjudicated delinquent was ordered by the court to be placed in a residential facility increased 19%, while the number of formal

probation cases increased 24%. In 1992, 57% of probation cases involved property offenses and 20% involved person offenses. Out-of-home placement cases, on the other hand, were slightly more likely to involve person offenses (23%) and slightly less likely to involve property offenses (48%).

Gender

In 1992, four out of five delinquency cases involved a male juvenile (81%). This was the same proportion found in 1988. Males accounted for 79% of person offense cases, 81% of property cases, and 88% of drug law violation cases.

Age

Compared with 1988, the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 1992 involved slightly younger youth. Sixty percent of the juvenile delinquency cases processed in 1992 involved a juvenile under 16 years of age, compared with 57% in 1988. In 1992, juveniles younger than age 16 were responsible for 62% of all person offense cases, 64% of all property offense cases, and 39% of drug law violation cases.

Race

In 1992, 80% of the juvenile population was white and 15% was black. White juveniles, however, were involved in 65% of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts. Black juveniles were involved in 31% of delinquency cases -- 27% of property offense cases and 40% of person offense cases.

For more information

This fact sheet is based on the forthcoming report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*. Copies of the report will be available from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse. Call (800) 638-8736 to obtain a copy. OJJDP also supports the distribution of a PC-compatible software package that contains the data from *Juvenile Court Statistics 1992*. The software is easy to use and can supplement educational and research programs. For a copy of the software, contact the National Juvenile Court Data Archive Project at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 701 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, (412/227-6950).

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