



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

Shay Bilchik, Administrator February 1999 #91

## Juvenile Arson, 1997

by Howard N. Snyder, Ph.D.

### Half of all persons arrested for arson are juveniles

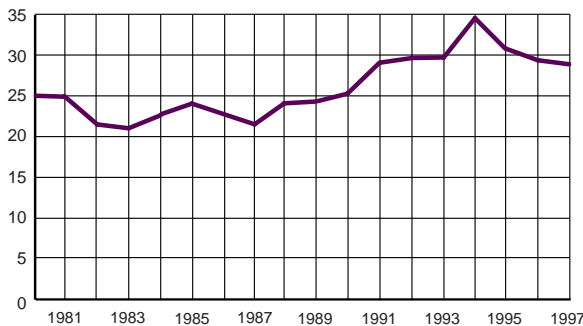
The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines arson as any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc. In 1997, 110,000 incidents of arson were reported to law enforcement agencies in the United States—41 reported arsons for every 100,000 U.S. residents. The arson rate in 1997 was highest in large cities (87 per 100,000 inhabitants) and lowest in rural areas (18 per 100,000 inhabitants). The average financial loss in arsons reported to law enforcement in 1997 was \$11,300.

Eighteen percent of reported arsons were cleared by law enforcement, generally by arrest. Of those arsons cleared by arrest, 46% involved a juvenile (i.e., a person under age 18).

In 1997, a total of 20,000 arrests were made for which the most serious offense was arson. In 50% of these arrests, the person arrested was under age 18. In fact, arson was the criminal offense with the greatest portion of juveniles in the arrestee population. Eighty-nine percent of juvenile arson arrests involved males, 79%

### After the 1994 peak, the juvenile arson arrest rate declined in 1995, 1996, and 1997

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



◆ The juvenile arrest rate for arson increased more than 50% between 1987 and 1994—the largest increase of any property crime.

**Data source:** H.N. Snyder, *Juvenile Arrests 1997*, Bulletin, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998.

### Reporting States with the highest rates of juvenile arson arrests in 1997 were Maine, Oregon, Nevada, and Rhode Island

State	Percent Reporting	Arson Arrests per 100,000 Juveniles Ages 10–17	State	Percent Reporting	Arson Arrests per 100,000 Juveniles Ages 10–17
US	68	29	MO	60	36
AL	94	5	MT	39	9
AK	44	24	NE	94	33
AZ	85	41	NV	46	71
AR	89	11	NH	0	N/A
CA	99	37	NJ	96	45
CO	70	38	NM	68	22
CT	85	30	NY	46	35
DE	41	6	NC	99	28
DC	0	N/A	ND	90	31
FL	0	N/A	OH	55	44
GA	33	35	OK	100	48
HI	97	21	OR	87	74
ID	98	54	PA	47	33
IL	23	26	RI	100	63
IN	57	25	SC	99	22
IA	82	25	SD	45	56
KS	0	N/A	TN	42	38
KY	19	39	TX	97	20
LA	79	21	UT	75	41
ME	94	79	VT	0	N/A
MD	100	38	VA	98	34
MA	83	14	WA	61	53
MI	81	25	WV	96	33
MN	100	21	WI	76	45
MS	37	17	WY	98	31

N/A = The Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Crime in the United States 1997* reported no arrest counts for this State.

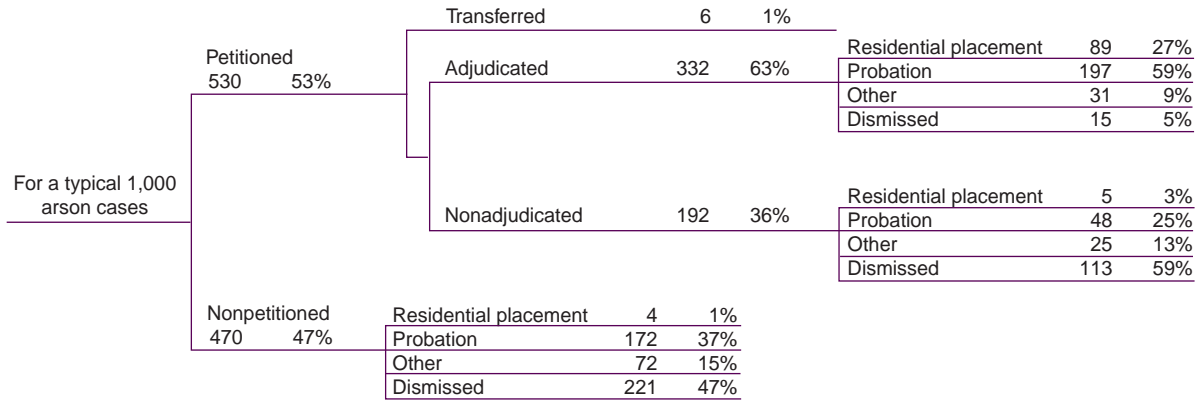
**Source:** Author's analysis of data from *Crime in the United States 1997*.

involved white juveniles, 67% involved juveniles under age 15, and 35% involved children age 12 or younger.

### About 3 in 10 youth adjudicated for arson are placed in a residential facility

When an arson case is referred to a court with juvenile jurisdiction, an intake officer, prosecutor, or judge determines whether

**In 1996, most arson cases were formally processed by the juvenile courts**



**Note:** Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

**Data source:** Author's analysis of the National Center for Juvenile Justice, *National Juvenile Court Data Archive: 1996 juvenile court case records* [machine-readable data file].

the case should be handled formally or informally. This decision is often based on the severity of the offense, the youth's law-violating history, and the ability of the parties involved to come to a mutually agreeable response. Informal case handling occurs without the filing of a petition, without the need for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing, and without a formal court order requiring the youth to comply with specified sanctions.

More than half (53%) of juvenile arson cases disposed by the courts in 1996 were formally processed. About 1% of formally processed arson cases were transferred to criminal court for prosecution of their cases as if they were adults. In about two-thirds (63%) of formally processed juvenile arson cases, the youth were adjudicated delinquent and the court ordered sanctions. Most adjudicated youth (59%) were ordered to a term of probation, 27% were placed in a residential facility, and most of the others were ordered to pay a fine and/or restitution.

In 1996, 47% of all arson cases processed by juvenile courts were handled informally. Nearly half (47%) of these cases were dismissed. In the other half of these informally processed cases, youth voluntarily agreed to comply with probation conditions, pay fines or restitution, and/or enter some form of residential treatment.

Howard N. Snyder is Director of Systems Research at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, which is supported by OJJDP grant funding.

*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 National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.*

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