



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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Person Offense Cases in Juvenile Court, 1988–1997

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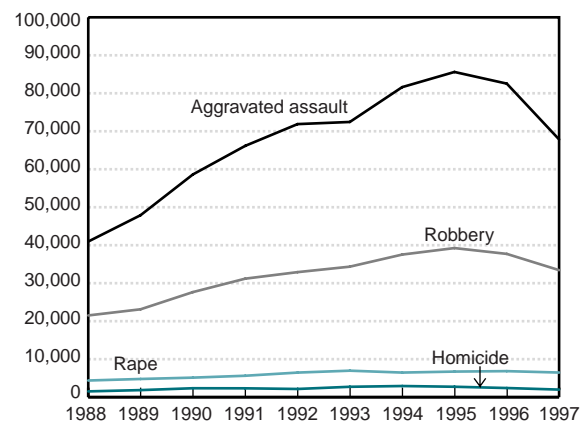
Person offenses accounted for 22% of all delinquency cases in 1997

In 1997, U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 390,800 delinquency cases in which the most serious charge was an offense against a person. Person offenses include assault, robbery, rape, and homicide. The 1997 person offense caseload was 97% greater than in 1988. Person offense cases accounted for 22% of all delinquency cases in 1997, compared with 17% in 1988.

In 1997, juvenile courts handled 13.6 person offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles in the United States age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. The person offense case rate increased 74% between 1988 and 1997. In contrast, the case rate for property offenses increased 5% between 1988 and 1997, while the drug offense case rate grew 99% and the rate for public order offenses increased 48%.

Delinquency Cases Involving FBI Violent Crime Index Offenses, 1988–97

Cases disposed



Person Offense Cases Handled by U.S. Juvenile Courts, 1988–97

Cases Disposed	1988	1993	1997	Percent Change	
				1988–97	1993–97
Total Person Offenses*	198,700	319,500	390,800	97%	22%
Violent Crime Index	68,400	116,500	109,800	61	-6
Criminal homicide	1,500	2,700	2,000	31	-27
Forcible rape	4,400	7,000	6,500	48	-7
Robbery	21,500	34,400	33,400	55	-3
Aggravated assault	41,000	72,400	67,900	66	-6
Simple assault	111,100	172,100	248,800	124	45
Case Rate**					
Total Person Offenses*	7.8	11.7	13.6	74%	16%
Violent Crime Index	2.7	4.3	3.8	42	-11
Criminal homicide	0.1	0.1	0.1	16	-31
Forcible rape	0.2	0.3	0.2	31	-12
Robbery	0.9	1.3	1.2	38	-8
Aggravated assault	1.6	2.7	2.4	47	-11
Simple assault	4.4	6.3	8.7	98	37

Note: Percentages are calculated using unrounded numbers.

* Total includes other person offense categories not listed.

** Per 1,000 youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

Homicide was the most serious charge in 2,000 cases handled in 1997. This was less than 0.5% of all person offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1997. The majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (248,800) or aggravated assault (67,900). Together, these two offenses accounted for 81% of all person offense cases processed in 1997.

Characteristics of offenders

Compared with 1988, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 1997 were younger and more likely to be female. In 1997, 64% (248,700) of person offense cases involved juveniles under age 16, compared with 60% (119,200) in 1988. Females were involved in 26% (102,800) of person offense cases in 1997, compared with 20% (40,400) in 1988. Sixty percent (235,900) of person offense cases in 1997 involved white youth, 37% (144,400) involved black youth, and 3% (10,500) involved youth of other races.

Case processing

Of the 390,800 person offense cases disposed by U.S. juvenile courts in 1997, 58% (228,200) were handled formally (that is, a petition was filed requesting an adjudicatory or transfer hearing). Of the individuals involved in petitioned cases, slightly more than 1% (3,300) were waived to the criminal court system, more than half (55% or 125,500) were formally adjudicated as delinquents in the juvenile court, and 44% (99,400) were petitioned but not adjudicated delinquent.

In 30% of the 125,500 person offense cases that were formally adjudicated by juvenile courts in 1997, the most severe disposition imposed by the court was placement out of the home in a residential facility. Probation was ordered in 56% (70,800) of the

cases, while 9% (11,700) resulted in other sanctions, including referral to an outside agency, fines, community service, and restitution. Approximately 4% (5,600) of formally adjudicated person offense cases were released, i.e., no sanctions were ordered by the court at the adjudicatory hearing.

In 1997, an estimated 99,400 person offense cases were formally petitioned by the court but not adjudicated. Most (61% or 64,400) of these cases were dismissed; in 22% (21,400) the youth agreed to informal probation and in 15% (15,300) to other dispositions. About 2% (2,300) of nonadjudicated person offense cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement.

Half (50%) of the 162,500 person offense cases handled informally (no petition was filed) by juvenile courts in 1997 were dismissed. The remainder resulted in voluntary probation (31% or 50,900) or other dispositions (18% or 29,200), while a small number (less than 1% or fewer than 900) resulted in out-of-home placement.

Characteristics of Person Offense Cases, 1988–97

	1988	1993	1997
Gender			
Male	80%	78%	74%
Female	20	22	26
Age at Time of Referral			
Under 16 years	60%	63%	64%
16 or older	40	37	36
Race/Ethnicity			
White	56%	57%	60%
Black	41	40	37
Other	3	3	3
Predisposition Detention			
Detained	24%	24%	22%
Not detained	76	76	78
Manner of Handling			
Formal	53%	57%	58%
Informal	47	43	42
Outcome of Formal Handling			
Adjudicated	54%	54%	55%
Not adjudicated	44	44	44
Waived	2	3	1
Disposition of Adjudicated Cases			
Placed out of the home	33%	32%	30%
Probation or supervision	55	53	56
Other (fines, restitution, etc.)	7	10	9
Dismissed or released	5	4	4

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

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the forthcoming Report *Juvenile Court Statistics 1997*. Copies will be available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, 800-638-8736. OJJDP also supports distribution of a PC-compatible software version of the data analyzed in *Juvenile Court Statistics*. For a free copy of the software, *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics*, call the National Juvenile Court Data Archive at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 412-227-6950. This software can also be downloaded from OJJDP's home page: www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

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