



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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Person Offenses in Juvenile Court, 1989–1998

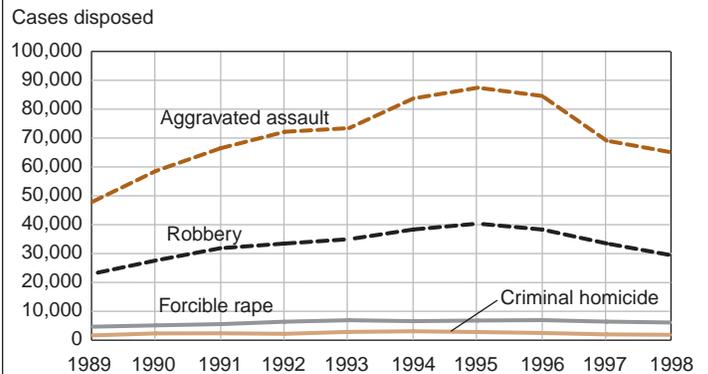
by Meghan C. Black

Person offenses accounted for 23% of all delinquency cases in 1998

In 1998, U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 403,800 delinquency cases in which the most serious charge was an offense against a person. Person offenses include assault, robbery, rape, and homicide. The 1998 person offense caseload was 88% greater than in 1989. Person offense cases accounted for 23% of all delinquency cases in 1998, compared with 18% in 1989.

In 1998, U.S. juvenile courts handled 13.9 person offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. The person offense case rate increased 64% between 1989 and 1998. In contrast, the case rate for property offenses decreased 4% between 1989 and 1998, while the drug offense case rate grew 115% and the rate for public order offenses increased 51%.

Delinquency cases involving FBI Violent Crime Index offenses, 1989–1998



Person offense cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts, 1989–1998

Cases Disposed	1989	1994	1998	Percent Change	
				1989–98	1994–98
Total Person Offenses*	214,300	360,900	403,800	88%	12%
Violent Crime Index	77,300	131,700	102,600	33	-22
Criminal homicide	1,900	3,100	2,000	6	-36
Forcible rape	4,800	6,600	6,000	26	-9
Robbery	22,900	38,300	29,600	29	-23
Aggravated assault	47,800	83,700	65,100	36	-22
Simple assault	115,000	197,800	262,400	128	33
Case Rate**					
Total Person Offenses*	8.5	13.0	13.9	64%	7%
Violent Crime Index	3.1	4.7	3.5	15	-26
Criminal homicide	0.1	0.1	0.1	-8	-39
Forcible rape	0.2	0.2	0.2	10	-13
Robbery	0.9	1.4	1.0	12	-26
Aggravated assault	1.9	3.0	2.2	18	-26
Simple assault	4.5	7.1	9.0	98	27

Note: Percent changes 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 1998. This was less than 0.5% of all person offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1998. The majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (262,400) or aggravated assault (65,100). Together, these two offenses accounted for 81% of all person offense cases processed in 1998.

Characteristics of offenders

Compared with 1989, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 1998 were younger and more likely to be female. In 1998, 64% of person offense cases involved juveniles younger than 16 years old, compared with 62% in 1989. Females were involved in 28% of person offense cases in 1998, compared with 20% in 1989. More than half (62%) of person offense cases in 1998 involved white youth, 35% involved black youth, and 3% involved youth of other races.

Case processing

Of the 403,800 person offense cases disposed by U.S. juvenile courts in 1998, 59% (236,500) were handled formally (that is, a petition was filed requesting an adjudicatory or transfer hearing).

Of these petitioned cases, slightly more than 1% (2,900) were waived to the criminal justice system, more than half (61% or 143,800) were formally adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile justice system, and 38% (92,700) were petitioned but not adjudicated delinquent.

In 27% (39,300) of the 143,800 person offense cases formally adjudicated by juvenile courts in 1998, the most severe disposition imposed by the court was placement out of the home in a residential facility. Probation was ordered in 58% (83,000) of the cases, while 9% (13,300) resulted in other sanctions, including referral to an outside agency, fines, community service, and restitution. Approximately 6% (8,200) of formally adjudicated person offense cases were released (i.e., no sanctions were ordered at the adjudicatory hearing).

In 1998, an estimated 92,700 person offense cases were formally petitioned by the court but not adjudicated. Most (69% or 64,300) of these cases were dismissed. In 13% (12,500) of these petitioned cases, the youth agreed to informal probation; 12% (10,800) of these cases resulted in other dispositions. About 2% of nonadjudicated person offense cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement.

Almost half (48% or 80,400) of the 167,300 person offense cases handled informally (no petition was filed) by juvenile courts in 1998 were dismissed. The remainder resulted in voluntary probation (34% or 56,600) or other dispositions (18% or 30,000), while a small number (less than 1% or about 300) resulted in out-of-home placement.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the forthcoming Report *Juvenile Court Statistics 1998*, which will be available on OJJDP's Web site at ojjdp.ncjrs.org. To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP's *Statistical Briefing Book* (ojjdp.ncjrs.org/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*

Characteristics of person offense cases, 1989–1998

	1989	1994	1998
Gender			
Male	80%	77%	72%
Female	20	23	28
Age at Time of Referral			
Under 16 years	62%	64%	64%
16 or older	38	36	36
Race/Ethnicity			
White	56%	58%	62%
Black	40	39	35
Other	3	3	3
Predisposition Detention			
Detained	25%	23%	22%
Not detained	75	77	78
Manner of Handling			
Formal	56%	57%	59%
Informal	44	43	41
Outcome of Formal Handling			
Adjudicated	57%	55%	61%
Not adjudicated	41	43	38
Waived	2	3	1
Disposition of Adjudicated Cases			
Placed out of the home	33%	31%	27%
Probation or supervision	54	53	58
Other (fines, restitution, etc.)	7	11	9
Dismissed or released	6	6	6

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

Statistics Report. This application is available from the *Statistical Briefing Book*.

Meghan C. Black, Esq., is a Research Assistant with the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by an OJJDP grant.

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