



OJJDP FACT SHEET

September 2001 #34

Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 1989–1998

by Meghan C. Black

More than one-third of delinquency cases resulted in probation in 1998

Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled nearly 1.8 million delinquency cases in 1998. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in about 38% (665,500) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 56% between 1989 and 1998. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 44%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts from 1989 through 1998. The national estimates were generated using information contributed to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The analysis is based on data from nearly 2,100 jurisdictions containing almost 70% of the U.S. juvenile population (youth age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State).

Probation was the most likely disposition for cases in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent

Most Severe Disposition	1989	1994	1998
Total	100%	100%	100%
Probation	55	53	58
Residential placement	31	28	26
Other sanction	10	13	11
Released without additional sanction	4	5	5

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

Probation can be court ordered or voluntary

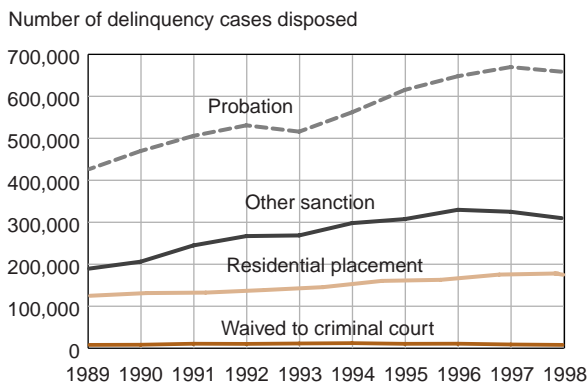
Some youth are ordered to probation after being adjudicated delinquent (analogous to being convicted in criminal court). In contrast to court-ordered probation, some youth who are not adjudicated delinquent voluntarily agree to abide by certain probation conditions, often with the understanding that if they successfully complete their probationary period, their case will be terminated without any formal processing.

In 1998, adjudicated delinquents ordered to probation (366,100 cases) accounted for more than half (55%) of all delinquency cases placed on probation. In the remaining delinquency cases (45%), the youth agreed to some form of voluntary, or informal, probation. The number of adjudicated cases that resulted in court-ordered probation rose 73% from 1989 through 1998. In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation increased 40%, reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

The demographic profile of probation cases changed little since 1989

In 1998, 69% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 28% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1989 and 1998, the probation caseload grew 57% for black juveniles (from 119,800 to 187,500) and 56% for white juveniles (from 293,600 to 458,400). Most cases (76%)

Probation was ordered in 58% of the more than 1 million cases that received a juvenile court sanction



Probation cases accounted for 59% of the increase in delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction (those that were not dismissed or otherwise released).

placed on probation in 1998 involved males (about 503,400 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload has grown in the last decade—from 18% in 1989 to 24% in 1998. Juveniles who were 14 to 16 years old accounted for 62% (about 410,600 cases) of the probation caseload in 1998, up slightly from 61% in 1989.

Property offense cases made up the greatest proportion of the probation caseload

The offense profile of the probation caseload has changed somewhat since 1989. Property offense cases continued to account for the majority of cases placed on probation, but their share of the probation caseload declined. For example, the proportion of adjudicated cases that involved property offenses and received formal probation as the most severe disposition declined 14 percentage points between 1989 and 1998 (from 59% to 45%). As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 1998 than in 1989.

Offense profile of cases in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent and placed on probation

Most Serious Offense	1989	1994	1998
Total	100%	100%	100%
Person	17	22	23
Property	59	51	45
Drugs	8	9	12
Public order	16	19	21

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

Across offenses, the likelihood of probation for cases in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent increased since 1994

Most Serious Offense	1989	1994	1998
Total	55%	53%	58%
Person	54	53	58
Property	57	55	59
Drugs	54	51	59
Public order	50	50	54

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 1998*, which will be available on OJJDP's Web site (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 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.

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.

FS-200134

FS-200134



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