



# Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2014 National Report

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# Chapter 6

## Juvenile offenders in court

Law enforcement agencies refer approximately two-thirds of all arrested youth to a court with juvenile jurisdiction for further processing. As with law enforcement, the court may decide to divert some juveniles away from the formal justice system to other agencies for service. Prosecutors may file some juvenile cases directly to criminal (adult) court. The net result is that juvenile courts formally process more than 1 million delinquency and status offense cases annually. Juvenile courts adjudicate these cases and may order probation or residential placement or they may waive jurisdiction and transfer certain cases from juvenile court to criminal court. While their cases are being processed, juveniles may be held in secure detention.

This chapter quantifies the flow of cases through the juvenile court

system. It documents the nature of, and trends in, cases received and the court's response, and examines gender and race differences. (Chapter 4, on juvenile justice system structure and process, describes the juvenile court process in general, the history of juvenile courts in the U.S., and state variations in current laws. Chapter 2, on victims, discusses the handling of child maltreatment matters.) The chapter also discusses the measurement of racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system—known as disproportionate minority contact (DMC)—and presents trends in certain DMC indicators since 1990.

The information presented in this chapter is drawn from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is funded by OJJDP, and the Archive's primary publication, *Juvenile Court Statistics*.

# The *Juvenile Court Statistics* report series details the activities of U.S. juvenile courts

## ***Juvenile Court Statistics* reports have provided data on court activity since the late 1920s**

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series is the primary source of information on the activities of the nation's juvenile courts. The first *Juvenile Court Statistics* report, published in 1929 by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, described cases handled in 1927 by 42 courts. In 1974, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) took on the project. Since 1975, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) has been responsible for this OJJDP data collection effort through the National Juvenile Court Data Archive project. The project not only produces the *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports but also conducts research and archives data for use by other researchers.

Throughout its history, the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series has depended on the voluntary support of courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Courts contribute data originally compiled to meet their own information needs. The data NCJJ receives are not uniform but reflect the natural variation that exists across court information systems. To develop national estimates, NCJJ restructures compatible data into a common format. In 2010, juvenile courts with jurisdiction over virtually 100% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some data to the national reporting program. Because not all contributed data can support the national reporting requirements, the national estimates for 2010 were based on data from more than 2,300 jurisdictions containing nearly 83% of the nation's juvenile population (i.e., youth

age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).

## ***Juvenile Court Statistics* documents the number of cases courts handled**

Just as the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program counts arrests made by law enforcement (i.e., a workload measure, not a crime measure), the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series counts delinquency and status offense cases handled by courts with juvenile jurisdiction during the year. Each case represents the initial disposition of a new referral to juvenile court for one or more offenses. A youth may be involved in more than one case in a year. Therefore, the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series does not provide a count of individual juveniles brought before juvenile courts.

## **Cases involving multiple charges are categorized by their most serious offense**

In a single case where a juvenile is charged with robbery, simple assault, and a weapons law violation, the case is counted as a robbery case (similar to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program's hierarchy rule). Thus, the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series does not provide a count of the number of crimes committed by juveniles. In addition, given that only the most serious offense is used to classify the case, counts of—and trends for—less serious offenses must be interpreted cautiously.

Similarly, cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive disposition.

For example, a case in which the judge orders the youth to a training school and to pay restitution to the victim would be characterized as a case in which the juvenile was placed in a residential facility.

## ***Juvenile Court Statistics* describes delinquency and status offense caseloads**

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series describes delinquency and status offense cases handled by juvenile courts. The reports provide demographic profiles of the youth referred and the reasons for the referrals (offenses). The series documents the juvenile courts' differential use of petition, detention, adjudication, and disposition alternatives by case type. The series also can identify trends in the volume and characteristics of court activity. However, care should be exercised when interpreting gender, age, or racial differences in the analysis of juvenile delinquency or status offense cases because reported statistics do not control for the seriousness of the behavior leading to each charge or the extent of a youth's court history.

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series does not provide national estimates of the number of youth referred to court, their prior court histories, or their future recidivism. Nor does it provide data on criminal court processing of juvenile cases. Criminal court cases involving youth younger than age 18 who are defined as adults in their state are not included. The series was designed to produce national estimates of juvenile court activity, not to describe the law-violating careers of juveniles.

# Juvenile courts handled 1.4 million delinquency cases in 2010—up from 1.1 million in 1985

## Juvenile court caseloads have grown and changed

In 2010, U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 1.4 million cases in which the juvenile was charged with a delinquency offense—an offense for which an adult could be prosecuted in criminal court. Thus, U.S. juvenile courts handled 3,700 delinquency cases per day in 2010. In comparison, approximately 1,100 delinquency cases were processed daily in 1960.

After a substantial increase between 1985 and the peak in 1997 (61%), the volume of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts decreased 27% through 2010. This is in line with the decrease in the number of juvenile arrests made between 1997 and 2010.

## Law enforcement refers most delinquency cases to court

Delinquency and status offense cases are referred to juvenile courts by a number of different sources, including law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, victims, probation officers, schools, or parents.

Percent of cases referred by law enforcement agencies:

Offense	2010
Delinquency	83%
Person	88
Property	90
Drugs	91
Public order	65
Status offense (formal cases)	
Runaway	62
Truancy	33
Curfew	96
Ungovernability	35
Liquor	90

In 2010, 83% of delinquency cases were referred by law enforcement agencies. This proportion has changed little over the past two

## Youth were charged with a person offense in one-quarter of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2010

Most serious offense	Number of cases	Percent of total cases	Percent change	
			1985–2010	2001–2010
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>1,368,200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>-19%</b>
<b>Person offense</b>	<b>346,800</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>-15</b>
Violent Crime Index	71,000	5	10	-9
Criminal homicide	1,000	0	-18	-23
Forcible rape	3,900	0	17	-15
Robbery	26,300	2	4	22
Aggravated assault	39,900	3	16	-21
Simple assault	237,100	17	133	-17
Other violent sex offense	12,700	1	54	-2
Other person offense	26,000	2	141	-19
<b>Property offense</b>	<b>502,400</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>-29</b>	<b>-24</b>
Property Crime Index	355,500	26	-32	-23
Burglary	90,100	7	-38	-21
Larceny-theft	243,800	18	-27	-19
Motor vehicle theft	16,100	1	-58	-58
Arson	5,500	0	-18	-41
Vandalism	79,400	6	-8	-19
Trespassing	42,500	3	-21	-21
Stolen property offense	14,000	1	-50	-42
Other property offense	11,100	1	-39	-55
<b>Drug law violation</b>	<b>164,100</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>-15</b>
<b>Public order offense</b>	<b>354,800</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>-16</b>
Obstruction of justice	166,200	12	150	-20
Disorderly conduct	101,200	7	124	-6
Weapons offense	29,700	2	48	-12
Liquor law violation	16,400	1	-16	3
Nonviolent sex offense	11,200	1	-12	-21
Other public order offense	30,000	2	-8	-26

■ Property crimes accounted for 37% of delinquency cases in 2010.

■ Although juvenile court referrals increased between 1985 and 2010, the recent trend (2001–2010) is one of decline.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanhera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

decades. Law enforcement agencies are generally much less likely to be the source of referral for formally handled status offense cases (involving offenses

that are not crimes for adults) than delinquency cases. The exception is status liquor law violations (underage drinking and possession of alcohol).

# The long-term growth trend for juvenile court caseloads has been tempered by recent declines

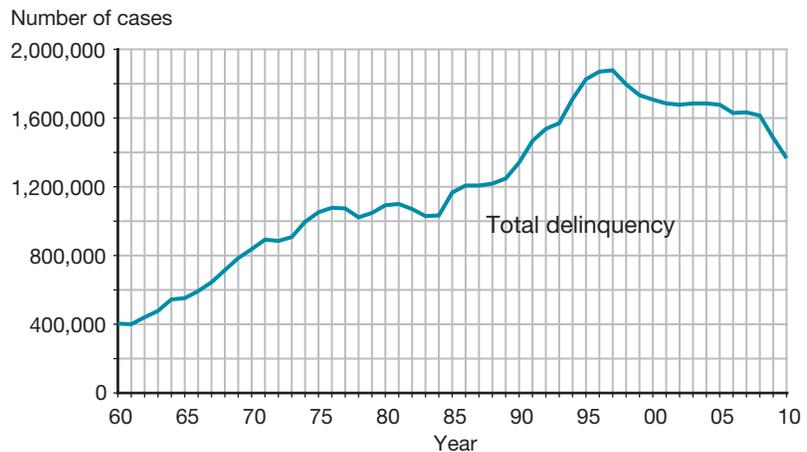
## In most offense categories, juvenile court cases have decreased in recent years

Compared with 2001, juvenile court cases involving offenses in the FBI's Violent Crime Index were down 9% in 2010. More specifically, criminal homicide was down 23%, forcible rape 15%, and aggravated assault 21%. In contrast, robbery cases increased 22% during the period.

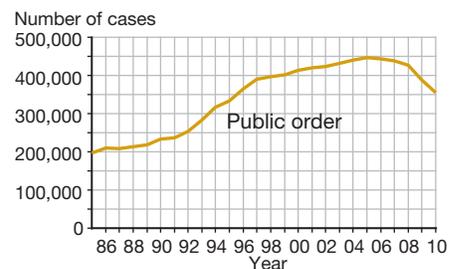
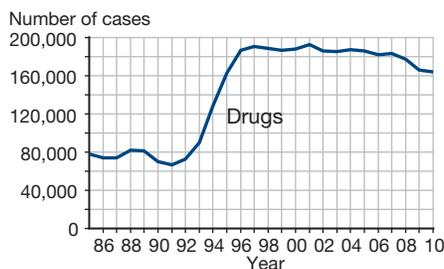
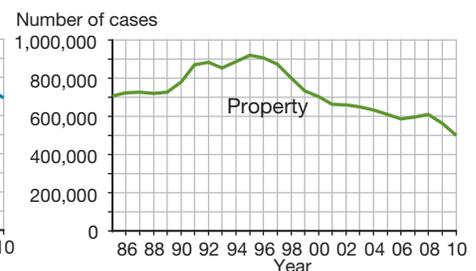
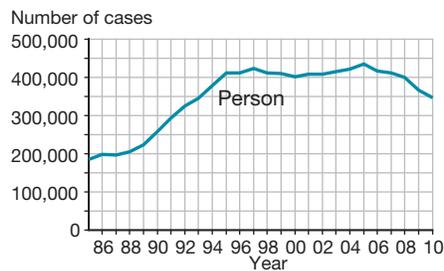
There were also large declines in cases involving property offenses. Motor vehicle theft, arson, and stolen property offenses had declines greater than 40%; larceny-theft and vandalism were both down 19%; and burglary and trespassing were down 21% each. Declines in drug and public order offenses were similar (16% each).

Trends in juvenile court cases largely parallel trends in arrests of persons younger than 18. FBI data show that arrest rates for persons younger than 18 charged with Violent Crime Index offenses and Property Crime Index offenses have dropped substantially since their peaks in the mid-1990s. Drug offenses are a noticeable exception—the FBI data show juvenile drug arrest rates peaking in 2006 and falling 13% through 2010. The court data show a similar pattern in that the number of cases involving drug offenses peaked in 2001 and then declined 15% through 2010.

## Juvenile courts handled 3 times as many delinquency cases in 2010 as in 1960



## Delinquency cases, by offense category



- Between 1985 and 2010, the volume of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts nationwide increased 17%. Delinquency cases dropped 27% from their 1997 peak to 2010.
- Between 1985 and 2010, caseloads increased in three of the four general offense categories. Person offense cases rose 87%, public order offense cases 80%, and drug cases 111%. In contrast, property offense cases dropped 29%.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

**An offense classification may encompass situations with a wide range of seriousness**

The four general offense categories—person, property, drugs, and public order—are each very broad in terms of the seriousness of the offenses they comprise. Within these general categories, individual offenses (e.g., aggravated assault, robbery) may also encompass a wide range of seriousness. For example:

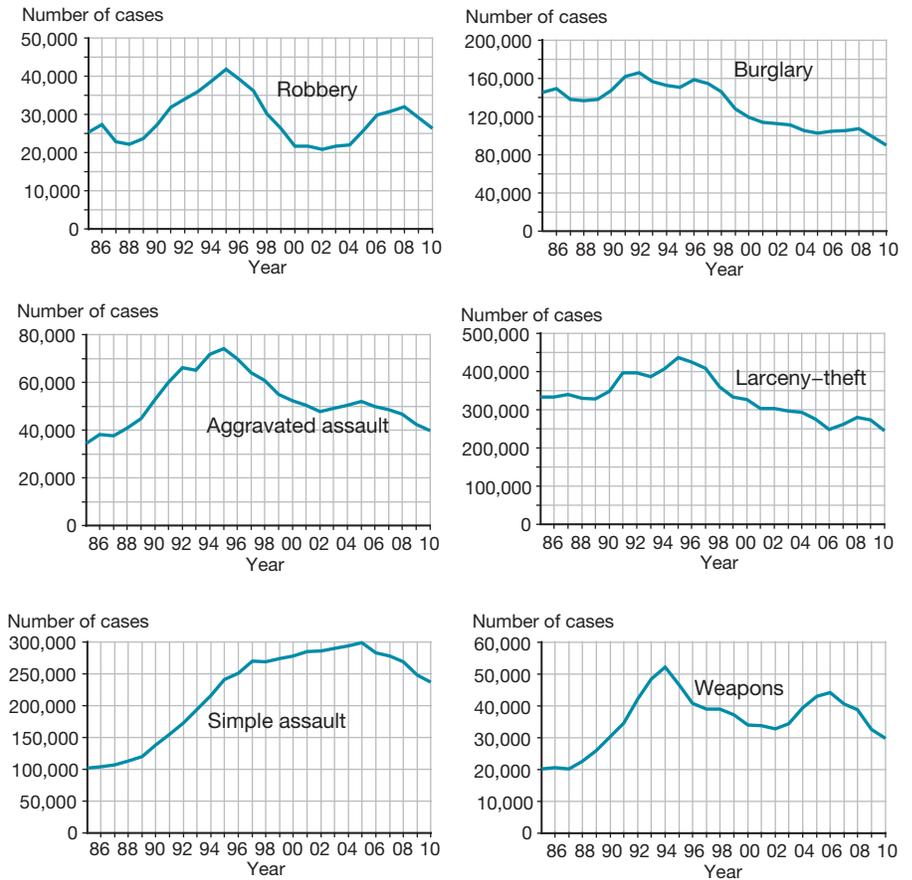
Aggravated assault is the unlawful intentional infliction of serious bodily injury or unlawful threat or attempt to inflict bodily injury or death by means of a deadly or dangerous weapon with or without actual infliction of injury. The following situations are examples of aggravated assault:

- A gang attempts to kill a rival gang member in a drive-by shooting, but he survives the attack.
- A son fights with his father, causing injuries that require treatment at a hospital.
- A student raises a chair and threatens to throw it at a teacher but does not.

Robbery is the unlawful taking or attempted taking of property in the immediate possession of another person by force or threat of force. The following situations are examples of robbery:

- Masked gunmen with automatic weapons demand cash from a bank.
- A gang of young men beat up a tourist and steal his wallet and valuables.
- A school bully says to another student, “Give me your lunch money, or I’ll punch you.”

**Trend patterns for juvenile court caseloads from 1985 through 2010 varied substantially across offenses**



- Robbery cases peaked in 1995, near 42,000, fell through 2002, and increased again by 2010.
- Aggravated assault cases peaked in 1995, at 74,100 and then fell off sharply. In contrast, simple assault cases climbed steadily through 2005, then decreased through 2010.
- Burglary and larceny-theft caseloads peaked in the 1990s and steadily decreased to their lowest levels since at least 1985.
- After a steady decline following the peak in 1994, weapons offense cases increased through the mid 2000s before decreasing again through 2010.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzantera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# Cases increased for males and females through the mid-1990s; since then, cases have declined for males

## Females account for a relatively small share of delinquency cases

In 2010, juvenile courts handled more than 381,000 delinquency cases involving female juveniles—just over one-quarter of all delinquency cases handled in 2010. Females made up a fairly large share of cases in some offense categories—larceny-theft (45%), simple assault (36%), disorderly conduct (35%), and liquor law cases (32%). For other offense categories, the female share of the caseload was relatively small—violent sex offenses other than rape (7%), robbery and burglary (10% each), weapons offenses (12%), and criminal homicide (13%).

Most serious offense	Female proportion
Total delinquency	28%
Person offense	31
Violent Crime Index	19
Criminal homicide	13
Forcible rape	3
Robbery	10
Aggravated assault	26
Simple assault	36
Other violent sex offense	7
Other person offense	29
Property offense	29
Property Crime Index	34
Burglary	10
Larceny-theft	45
Motor vehicle theft	21
Arson	14
Vandalism	15
Trespassing	19
Stolen property offense	15
Other property offense	29
Drug law violation	18
Public order offense	28
Obstruction of justice	26
Disorderly conduct	35
Weapons offense	12
Liquor law violation	32
Nonviolent sex offense	21
Other public order offense	25

## For most offenses, female caseloads have grown more or decreased less than male caseloads

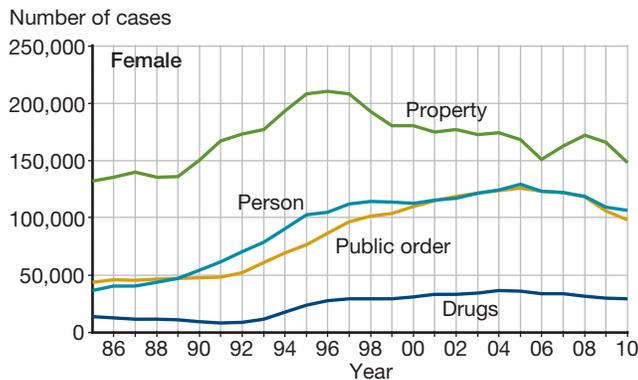
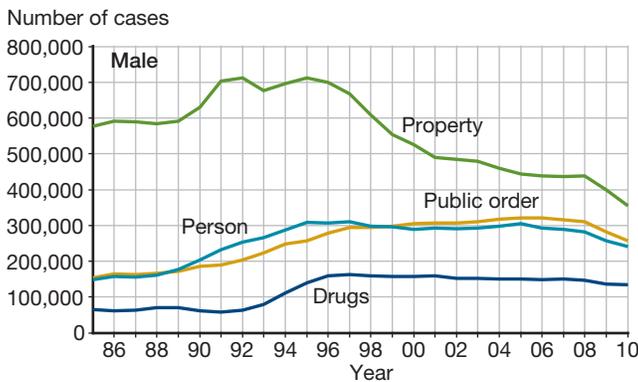
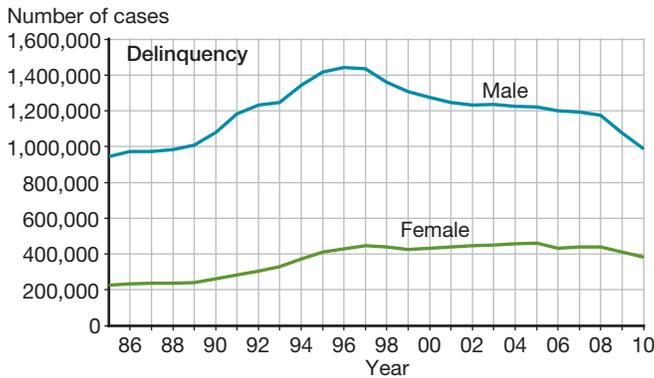
Most serious offense	Percent change			
	1985–2010		2001–2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>-21%</b>	<b>-13%</b>
<b>Person offense</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>-18</b>	<b>-8</b>
Violent Crime Index	3	58	-8	-13
Criminal homicide	-18	-17	-21	-38
Forcible rape	15	85	-15	-18
Robbery	0	58	21	32
Aggravated assault	6	59	-22	-20
Simple assault	102	222	-21	-8
Other violent sex offense	51	118	-4	50
Other person offense	102	359	-24	-3
<b>Property offense</b>	<b>-39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-28</b>	<b>-15</b>
Property Crime Index	-44	14	-28	-12
Burglary	-40	-15	-21	-21
Larceny-theft	-44	21	-27	-7
Motor vehicle theft	-61	-41	-57	-61
Arson	-21	8	-42	-29
Vandalism	-14	41	-20	-16
Trespassing	-24	-3	-22	-21
Stolen property offense	-52	-30	-42	-42
Other property offense	-43	-28	-53	-59
<b>Drug law violation</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>-11</b>
<b>Public order offense</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>-14</b>
Obstruction of justice	147	158	-18	-25
Disorderly conduct	89	236	-11	2
Weapons offense	43	115	-11	-17
Liquor law violation	-26	19	-1	12
Nonviolent sex offense	-15	1	-26	5
Other public order offense	-10	-1	-26	-27

- Between 1985 and 2010, the overall delinquency caseload for females increased 69%, compared with a 5% increase for males.
- Among females, the number of aggravated assault cases rose substantially (up 59%) from 1985 to 2010. In comparison, among males, aggravated assault cases were up 6%.
- Between 2001 and 2010, the number of aggravated assault cases dropped for both males and females, but the decline for males (22%) was slightly greater than the decline for females (20%).

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

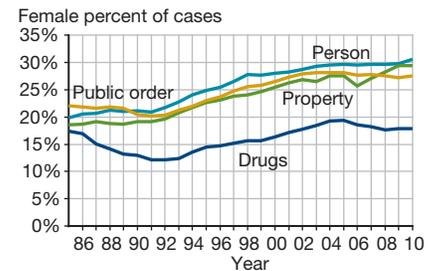
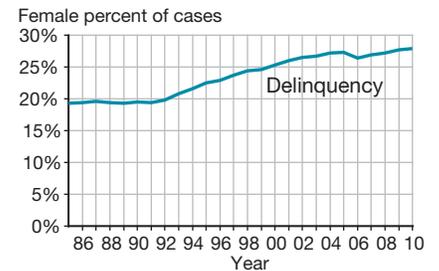
Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

**Juvenile court caseload trends were different for males and females, and the differences varied by offense category**



**The female share of delinquency cases increased steadily through 2002 and then leveled off**

The proportion of delinquency cases that involved females was 19% in 1985; by 2002, it had increased 8 percentage points to 27% and remained close to this level through 2010. The female share of person offense cases rose 12 percentage points between 1985 and 2010 to 31%. The female proportion of property cases went from 19% in 1985 to 29% in 2010, an increase of 10 points. The female proportion of public order cases increased 6 percentage points from 1985 to 2010, up to 28%. Drug offense cases remained fairly level during the same time period—up 1 percentage point to 18%.



- Male delinquency caseloads have been on the decline since the mid-1990s. Female caseloads have not shown a similar decline, although they seem to have leveled off in recent years.
- The decline in male caseloads has been driven by a sharp reduction in the volume of property cases—down 50% from the 1995 peak to 2010.
- For females, the largest 1985–2010 increase was in person offense cases (190%). Drug and public order cases also rose substantially (117% and 126%, respectively).

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanhera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

## In 2010, male and female offense profiles were similar

For both males and females, 2010 caseloads were similar to 2001 caseloads

Compared with offense profiles in 2001, both male and female delinquency caseloads had somewhat greater proportions of person offense cases in 2010.

Offense profile by gender:

Offense	Male	Female
<b>2010</b>		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	24	28
Property	36	39
Drugs	14	8
Public order	26	26
<b>2001</b>		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	23	26
Property	39	40
Drugs	13	8
Public order	25	26

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Despite a reduction in the property crime share of delinquency cases, property cases were still the most common type of case for both males and females in 2010.

In 2010, the male caseload contained a greater proportion of drug offenses than the female caseload. The male and female caseloads contained similar proportions of person, property, and public order offenses in 2010.

Although males accounted for more than twice as many delinquency cases as females in 2010, their offense profiles were similar

Most serious offense	Male		Female	
	Number of cases	Percent of cases	Number of cases	Percent of cases
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>986,700</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>381,500</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Person offense</b>	<b>240,600</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>106,200</b>	<b>28</b>
Violent Crime Index	57,900	6	13,200	3
Criminal homicide	900	0	100	0
Forcible rape	3,800	0	100	0
Robbery	23,600	2	2,700	1
Aggravated assault	29,700	3	10,200	3
Simple assault	152,400	15	84,700	22
Other violent sex offense	11,900	1	800	0
Other person offense	18,500	2	7,500	2
<b>Property offense</b>	<b>354,600</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>147,800</b>	<b>39</b>
Property Crime Index	233,300	24	122,200	32
Burglary	80,700	8	9,400	2
Larceny-theft	135,200	14	108,700	28
Motor vehicle theft	12,700	1	3,400	1
Arson	4,700	0	800	0
Vandalism	67,300	7	12,100	3
Trespassing	34,300	3	8,100	2
Stolen property offense	11,900	1	2,000	1
Other property offense	7,800	1	3,300	1
<b>Drug law violation</b>	<b>134,700</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29,400</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Public order offense</b>	<b>256,700</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>98,100</b>	<b>26</b>
Obstruction of justice	122,200	12	44,000	12
Disorderly conduct	65,700	7	35,600	9
Weapons offense	26,300	3	3,400	1
Liquor law violation	11,200	1	5,200	1
Nonviolent sex offense	8,900	1	2,300	1
Other public order offense	22,400	2	7,600	2

■ Compared with males, the female juvenile court caseload had a greater proportion of simple assault, larceny-theft, and disorderly conduct cases and a smaller proportion of robbery, burglary, vandalism, and drug cases.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# A disproportionate number of delinquency cases involved black juveniles

In 2010, blacks constituted 16% of the juvenile population but 33% of the delinquency caseload

Although a majority of delinquency cases handled in 2010 involved white youth (876,400 or 64%), a disproportionate number of cases involved blacks (451,100 or 33%), given their proportion of the juvenile population. In 2010, white youth made up 76% of the juvenile population (youth ages 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction in each state), black youth 16%, American Indian youth 2%, and Asian youth 5%.\*

Racial profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian
<b>2010</b>				
Delinquency	64%	33%	2%	1%
Person	57	40	1	1
Property	66	31	2	2
Drugs	76	21	2	1
Public order	63	34	2	1
<b>2001</b>				
Delinquency	68%	29%	2%	1%
Person	62	35	1	1
Property	70	27	2	2
Drugs	76	22	1	1
Public order	67	31	1	1

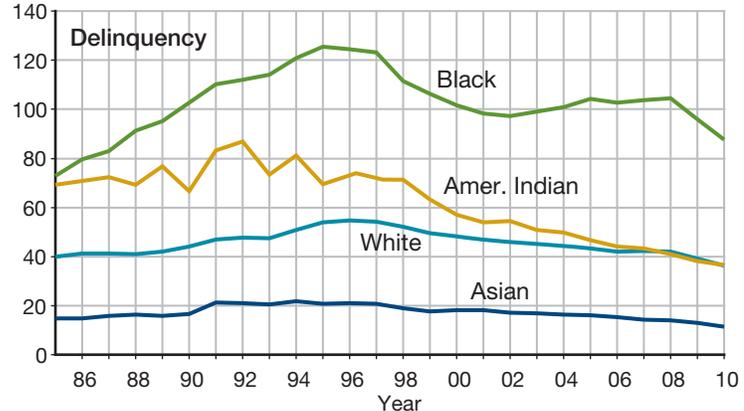
Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

The racial profile of delinquency cases overall had a greater proportion of cases involving black juveniles in 2010 (33%) than in 2001 (29%) and, conversely, a smaller proportion of cases involving white youth. This change was evident in the person, property, and public order offense categories, but not in drugs.

\* Throughout this chapter, juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity can be any race; however, most are included in the white racial category. The racial classification American Indian (usually abbreviated as Amer. Indian) includes American Indian and Alaska Native. The racial classification Asian includes Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

Between 1997 (the year with the greatest number of delinquency cases) and 2010, delinquency case rates declined for youth of all racial groups

Cases per 1,000 juveniles ages 10–upper age



- The delinquency case rate for white juveniles peaked in 1996 (54.8) and then fell 34% by 2010; for black juveniles, the rate in 2010 was down 30% from its 1995 peak (125.5). The delinquency case rate for American Indian youth peaked in 1992 (87.0) and then declined 58% by 2010; for Asian youth, the peak occurred in 1994 (21.9) and fell 47% by 2010.
- In 2010, the total delinquency case rate for black juveniles (87.6) was more than double the rate for white juveniles (36.4) and for American Indian juveniles (36.6); the delinquency case rate for Asian juveniles was 11.6.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanzhera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

## Offense profiles for white youth and black youth differed

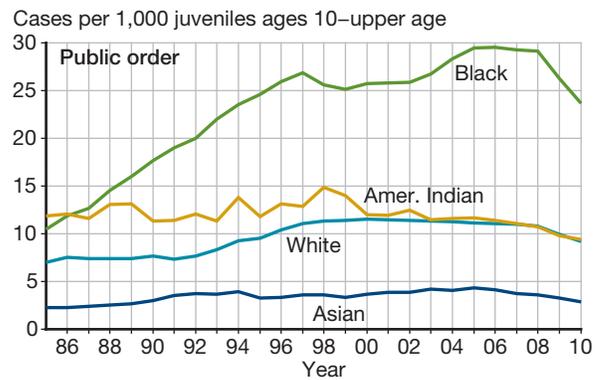
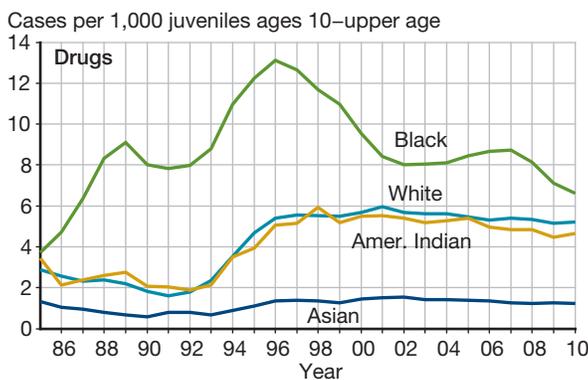
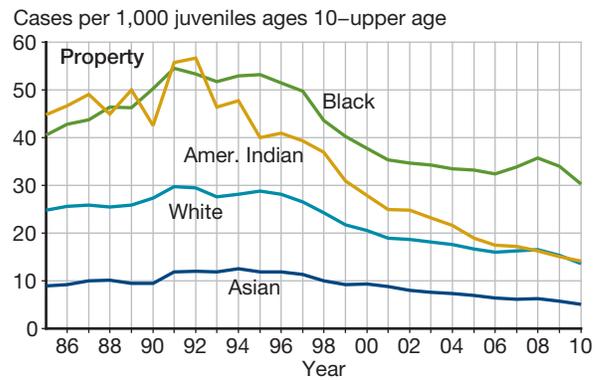
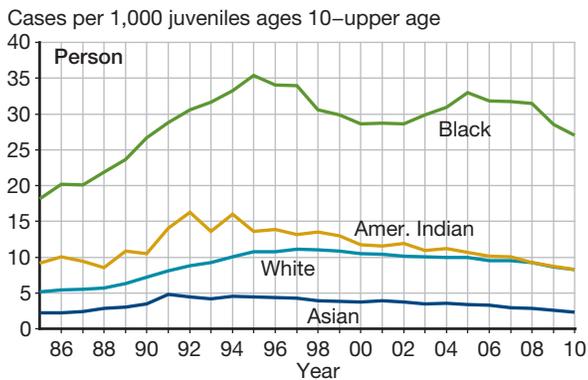
Delinquency caseloads for black juveniles contained a greater proportion of person offenses than did caseloads for white juveniles and those of other races. For all racial groups, property offenses accounted for the largest proportion of cases, and drug offenses the smallest proportion. Person offenses made up a slightly larger share of delinquency cases in 2010 than in 2001 for all racial groups except Asians.

Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian
<b>2010</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	23	31	23	20
Property	38	35	39	44
Drugs	14	8	13	11
Public order	25	27	26	25
<b>2001</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	22	29	21	21
Property	41	36	46	49
Drugs	13	9	10	8
Public order	25	26	22	21

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

**Case rate trends varied across race and offense but, in all offense categories and in nearly all years from 1985 through 2010, the rates for black youth were substantially higher than the rates for other youth**



- Compared with 1985, 2010 person offense case rates were higher for most racial groups—up 60% for whites, 49% for blacks, and 4% for Asian youth. The person offense case rate for American Indian youth decreased 9% during the period. All racial groups experienced recent declines in person offense case rates—down 25% from the 1997 peak for whites, down 24% from the 1995 peak for blacks, down 49% from the 1992 peak for American Indians, and down 52% from the 1991 peak for Asians.
- Property case rates dropped for all races between 1985 and 2010—down 45% for whites, 25% for blacks, 68% for American Indians, and 43% for Asians. Property case rates for both white and black youth peaked in 1991 and then decreased substantially (54% and 44%, respectively). The rate for American Indian youth peaked in 1992 and fell by 75% in 2010, while the rate for Asian youth peaked in 1994 and fell by 59% in 2010.
- Case rates for drug offenses more than doubled from 1985 to the peak in 2001 for white youth (108%) and more than tripled from 1985 to the peak in 1996 for black youth (252%). Since the peak years, rates have decreased 13% for white youth and 50% for black youth. While the drug offense case rate increased 35% for American Indian youth between 1985 and 2010, the rate remained relatively stable for Asian youth, decreasing 6% during the period.
- For white youth, the public order case rate increased 64% between 1985 and the peak in 2000 before declining 20% in 2010. For blacks, the case rate was highest in 2006 and dropped 20% by 2010. Nevertheless, the 2010 rate was 126% above the 1985 rate. The American Indian public order case rate decreased 21% between 1985 and 2010, while the Asian case rate increased 24% during the same period.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchara et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

**In 2010, the disparity between rates for black youth and white youth was lowest for drug cases**

In 2010, case rates for black juveniles were substantially higher than rates for other juveniles in all offense categories, but the degree of disparity varied. The person offense case rate for black juveniles (27.0 per 1,000) was more than 3 times the rate for white juveniles (8.3), and the public order case rate for black juveniles (23.7) was more than 2 times the rate for white juveniles (9.2), as was the property case rate (30.3 for black juveniles vs. 13.7 for white juveniles).

In comparison, in 2010, the drug offense case rate for black juveniles (6.6) was less than 1.3 times the rate for white juveniles (5.2). Although the disparity between black and white drug case rates was relatively small in 2010, that was not always true. In fact, in 1991, the drug offense case rate for black juveniles was nearly 5 times the rate for white juveniles. No other offense reached this extent of disparity between black and white case rates.

**The racial profile for delinquency cases was similar for males and females in 2010**

Among females referred to juvenile court in 2010 for person offenses,

blacks accounted for 41% of cases—the greatest overrepresentation among black juveniles. The black proportion among males referred for person offenses was just slightly smaller at 40%.

Racial profile of delinquency cases by gender, 2010:

Offense	Amer.			
	White	Black	Indian	Asian
<b>Male</b>				
Delinquency	64%	33%	1%	1%
Person	58	40	1	1
Property	65	32	2	2
Drugs	74	23	2	1
Public order	64	34	1	1
<b>Female</b>				
Delinquency	64%	33%	2%	1%
Person	57	41	2	1
Property	66	30	2	2
Drugs	86	11	3	1
Public order	61	36	2	1

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Among females referred for drug offenses, blacks were underrepresented. Although they account for 14% of the population of juvenile females, blacks made up just 11% of drug cases involving females in 2010.

In 2010, American Indian and Asian youth made up 7% of the juvenile population; however, they accounted for less than 4% of cases across all gender and offense groups.

**Offense profiles for both males and females varied somewhat across racial groups**

Among males in 2010, blacks had a greater proportion of person offense cases than whites, American Indians, or Asians. In addition, black males had a smaller proportion of property and drug cases than white, American Indian, or Asian males.

Offense profile of delinquency cases by gender, 2010:

Offense	Amer.			
	White	Black	Indian	Asian
<b>Male</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	22	30	22	22
Property	37	34	39	41
Drugs	16	10	14	12
Public order	26	27	25	26
<b>Female</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	25	34	24	17
Property	40	35	39	53
Drugs	10	3	10	7
Public order	25	28	27	23

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Among females, person offenses accounted for 34% of the cases involving blacks, compared with 25% of the cases involving whites, 24% involving American Indians, and 17% of Asians. As with males, black females had smaller proportions of property and drug cases than all other race groups.

# Although older teens dominated delinquency caseloads, trends were similar for all age groups

**For all ages, 2010 delinquency case rates were lower than rates in the mid- to late 1990s**

In 2010, juvenile courts handled 43.4 delinquency cases for every 1,000 juveniles (youth subject to original juvenile court jurisdiction) in the U.S. population. The overall delinquency case rate peaked in 1996, 45% above the 1985 rate, and then declined 32% to the 2010 level. For all ages, delinquency case rates showed similar trend patterns, although the peak years varied from one age to another. Case rates for older juveniles peaked in 1996 or 1997 and rates for younger juveniles tended to peak earlier in the 1990s. Case rate declines were smaller for juveniles younger than 15 than for older teens.

## Most delinquency cases involved older teens

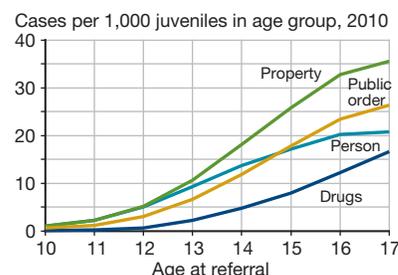
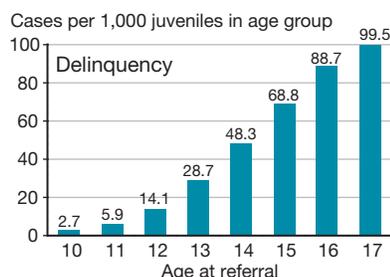
High school-age juveniles (ages 14 and older) made up 83% of the delinquency caseload in 2010; older teens (ages 16 and older) accounted for 48%. In comparison, middle school-age juveniles (ages 12 and 13) were involved in 13% of delinquency cases, while juveniles younger than 12 accounted for 4%. The 2010 age profile of delinquency cases was similar to the 2001 profile.

Age profile of delinquency cases:

Age	2001	2010
Total	100%	100%
Under 12	5	4
12	6	4
13	10	9
14	16	15
15	21	21
16	23	25
17	17	19
Over 17	2	3

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

**Trend patterns for juvenile court caseloads from 1985 through 2010 varied substantially across offense categories**



- In 2010, the delinquency case rate for 16-year-olds was 1.8 times the rate for 14-year-olds, and the rate for 14-year-olds was 3.4 times the rate for 12-year-olds.
- Age-specific case rates increased steadily through age 17 for all offense types. The case rate for 17-year-olds more than doubled the case rate for 13-year-olds for person and property offenses and more than quadrupled for public order offenses.
- The increase in rates between age 13 and age 17 was sharpest for drug offenses; the rate for drug offenses for 17-year-old juveniles was 7.5 times the rate for 13-year-olds.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzauchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

Age profiles varied somewhat across offenses but have not changed substantially since 2001.

Age profile of delinquency cases, 2010:

Age	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 12	5	4	1	3
12	6	4	2	4
13	11	9	6	8
14	16	15	12	14
15	21	22	21	21
16	23	26	29	26
17	16	19	27	20
Over 17	2	2	3	5

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## Why do juvenile courts handle more 16- than 17-year-olds?

Although comparable numbers of 17-year-olds and 16-year-olds were arrested in 2010, the number of juvenile court cases involving 17-year-olds (266,100) was lower than the number involving 16-year-olds (347,700). The explanation lies primarily in the fact that 13 states exclude 17-year-olds from the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court (see Chapter 4). In these states, all 17-year-olds are legally adults and are referred to criminal court rather than to juvenile court. Thus, far fewer 17-year-olds than 16-year-olds are subject to original juvenile court jurisdiction. Of the more than 31 million youth under juvenile court jurisdiction in 2010, youth ages 10 through 15 accounted for 79%, 12% were age 16, and 8% were age 17.

## In 2010, offense profiles of younger and older youth differed

Compared with the delinquency caseload involving older juveniles, the caseload of youth age 15 or younger in 2010 included larger proportions of person and property offense cases and smaller proportions of drug and public order offense cases.

Compared with 2001, the caseload in 2010 of younger juveniles involved greater proportions of person and drug offense cases, the same proportion of public order offense cases, but a smaller proportion of property offense cases. The 2010 caseload of older juveniles involved a greater proportion of person and public order offense cases, and smaller proportions of property and drug offense cases.

Offense profile of delinquency cases by age:

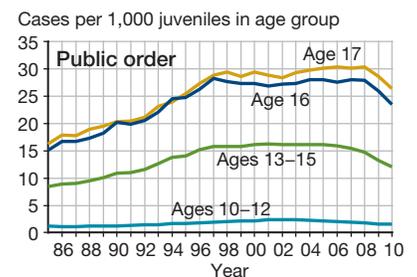
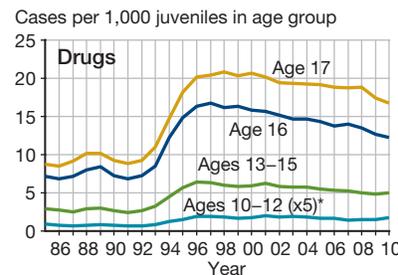
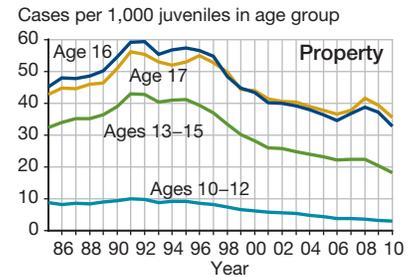
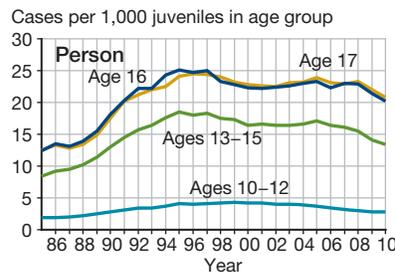
Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
<b>2010</b>		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	29	22
Property	37	36
Drugs	9	15
Public order	24	28
<b>2001</b>		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	27	20
Property	41	37
Drugs	8	16
Public order	24	27

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## The age profile of delinquency cases did not differ substantially by gender or race in 2010

At each age, the proportion of cases was not more than 2 percentage points different for males compared to females. For both males and females, the largest proportion of delinquency cases involved 16-year-olds. Age profiles across racial groups were also similar.

## Between 1985 and 2010, trends in case rates were generally similar across age groups



- With the exception of 10- to 12-year-olds, person offense case rates increased from 1985 through the mid-1990s and then declined through 2010.
- Property offense case rates peaked in the early 1990s for all age groups, then declined through 2010 for ages 10-12 and 13-15 and through 2006 for ages 16 and 17.
- Drug offense case rates were relatively flat for all age groups from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, when they began to rise sharply. Rates flattened out or decreased again for all ages.
- Public order offense case rates nearly doubled for each age group between 1985 and 2004.

\* Because of the relatively low volume of drug cases involving youth ages 10-12, their case rates have been inflated by a factor of 5 to display the trend over time.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchara et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

## Age profile of delinquency cases by gender, 2010:

Age	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%
Under 12	4	3
12	4	5
13	8	10
14	14	16
15	21	22
16	26	25
17	20	18
Over 17	3	2

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## Age profile of delinquency cases by race, 2010:

Age	White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 12	3	4	4	2
12	4	5	5	3
13	8	9	10	8
14	14	15	15	14
15	21	22	21	21
16	25	26	22	26
17	20	18	20	22
Over 17	3	2	2	5

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

# In 1 in 5 delinquency cases, the youth is detained between referral to court and case disposition

## When is secure detention used?

A youth may be placed in a secure juvenile detention facility at various points during the processing of a case. Although detention practices vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, a general model of detention practices is useful.

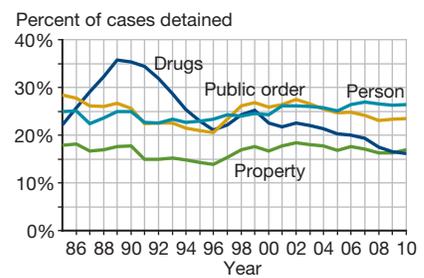
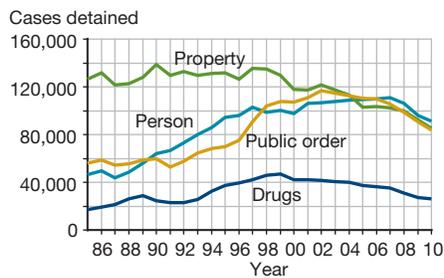
When a case is referred to juvenile court, intake staff may decide to hold the youth in a detention facility while the case is being processed. In general, detention is used if there is reason to believe the youth is a threat to the community, will be at risk if returned to the community, or may fail to appear at an upcoming hearing. The youth may also be detained for diagnostic evaluation purposes. In most delinquency cases, however, the youth is not detained.

In all states, law requires that a detention hearing be held within a few days (generally within 24 hours). At that time, a judge reviews the decision to detain the youth and either orders the youth released or continues the detention. National juvenile court statistics count the number of cases that involve detention during a calendar year. As a case is processed, the youth may be detained and released more than once between referral and disposition. Juvenile court data do not count individual detentions, nor do they count the number of youth detained. In addition, although in a few states juveniles may be committed to a detention facility as part of a disposition order, the court data do not include such placements in the count of cases involving detention.

## The proportion of detained cases involving person offenses has increased

Compared with 2001, the offense characteristics of the 2010 detention

## The number of cases involving detention was higher in 2010 than in 1985 for all but property cases



- The number of delinquency cases involving detention increased 17% between 1985 and 2010, from 245,900 to 286,900. The largest relative increase was for person offense cases (98%), followed by drug offense cases (53%) and public order cases (49%). In contrast, the number of detained property offense cases declined 32% during this period.
- Despite the growth in the volume of delinquency cases involving detention, the proportion of cases detained was about the same in 2010 as in 1985 (21%). The percent of cases detained was highest in 2003 (23%) and lowest in 1995 and 1996 (18%).
- Drug offense cases were the least likely to involve detention—youth were detained in 16% of drug offense cases in 2010. In comparison, youth were detained in 17% of property cases, 24% of public order cases, and 26% of person cases.
- In 1989, youth were detained in 36% of drug cases—the highest proportion of cases detained for any offense during the 1985–2010 period. In fact, no other offense category ever had more than 28% of cases detained.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

caseload changed, involving a greater proportion of person cases and smaller proportions of property and drug cases. The proportion of public order offense cases remained the same.

Person offense cases represented 32% of all detained delinquency cases in 2010, while property offenses accounted for 30% and public order offenses accounted for 29%. Drug offense cases made up the smallest share of detained cases at 9%.

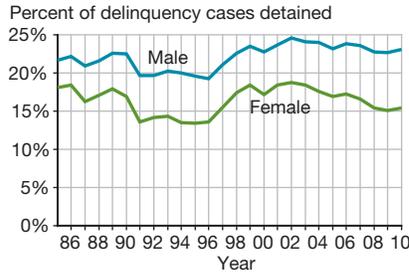
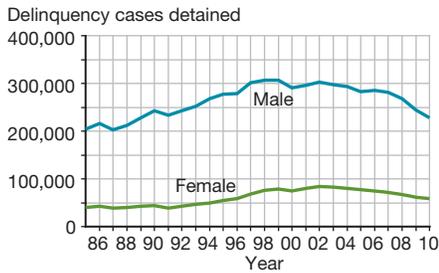
## Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	All cases		Detained cases	
	2001	2010	2001	2010
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	24	25	28	32
Property	39	37	31	30
Drugs	11	12	11	9
Public order	25	26	29	29

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

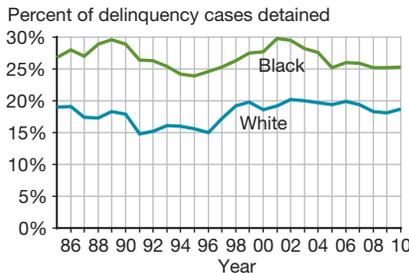
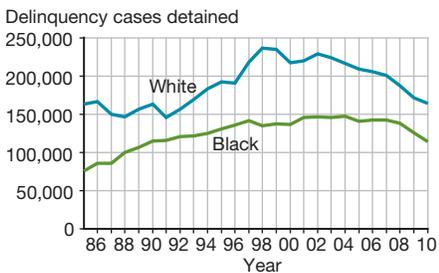
# Use of detention varied not only by offense but also by gender, race, and age

## Males accounted for most delinquency cases involving detention and were consistently more likely than females to be detained



- The number of male cases detained rose 50% from 1985 to 1998 and then dropped 26% through 2010 for an overall increase of 11%. The female trend in cases detained followed a similar pattern, though the change was more substantial; female cases detained doubled (104%) between 1985 and 2002 and then dropped 30% through 2010. The number of female cases detained increased 43% between 1985 and 2010.
- The likelihood of detention was higher for males than for females, but the 1985–2010 trend lines for the percent of cases detained ran in tandem.

## White youth accounted for the largest number of delinquency cases involving detention, although they were the least likely to be detained



- The number of delinquency cases involving white youth who were detained rose 45% from 1985 to its peak in 1998 and then dropped 31%, bringing the level back to a similar level as reported in 1985. For black youth, the number of cases detained nearly doubled (94%) between 1985 and the 2004 peak and then dropped 23% for an overall increase of 50%.
- The likelihood of detention was fairly stable for white youth between 1985 and 2010. The proportion of cases involving detention remained lower for white youth than all other races for most years during the period. While fluctuations occurred in the use of detention for black, American Indian, and Asian youth, the proportion of cases involving detention in 2010 rested at levels equal to, or lower than in 1985 for all race groups.

Note: The number of detained cases involving American Indian and Asian youth are too small to display and result in unreliable trends in the proportion of cases detained.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

## In 2010, the gender disparity in the likelihood of detention was least for drug cases

In 2010, the likelihood of detention in delinquency cases for males was 1.5 times the likelihood for females (23% vs. 15%). Males were more likely than females to be detained in each of the four general offense categories: 2 times more likely for property offenses, 1.4 each for person offenses and public order offenses, and 1.3 for drug offenses.

### Percent of cases detained, 2010:

Offense	Male	Female
Delinquency	23%	15%
Person	29	21
Property	20	10
Drugs	17	13
Public order	25	19

Delinquency cases involving youth age 16 or older were more likely to be detained than were cases involving youth age 15 or younger. Person offense cases for both age groups were more likely to involve detention than were other offenses.

### Percent of cases detained, 2010:

Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
Delinquency	19%	23%
Person	24	30
Property	16	18
Drugs	14	18
Public order	21	26

## The degree of racial disparity in the likelihood of detention varied across offenses

In 2010, the likelihood of detention was greatest for black youth for all but public order offenses—American Indian and Asian youth had slightly greater proportions of public order cases detained (30% and 29%, respectively) than black youth (26%). The overall percent of cases detained for blacks was

1.4 times that for whites, 1.2 times that for Asians, and 1.1 times that for American Indians. The greatest disparity between blacks and other races was in the likelihood of detention in drug cases—the proportion for blacks was nearly 2 times that for whites, 1.5 times that for American Indian youth, and 1.3 times that for Asians.

Percent of cases detained, 2010:

Offense	White	Black	Amer.	
			Indian	Asian
Delinquency	19%	25%	24%	21%
Person	24	29	29	27
Property	15	22	19	15
Drugs	14	25	17	19
Public order	22	26	30	29

### The racial profile for detained delinquency cases was similar for males and females in 2010

In 2010, the black proportion of detained delinquency cases (40%) was substantially greater than the black proportion of the juvenile population (16%) and also greater than the black proportion of delinquency cases handled during the year (33%). The overrepresentation of black juveniles in the detention caseload was greater among person offenses (45%) than other offenses. The black proportion of detained person offense cases was similar among males (45%) and females (43%). Across offenses, for males and females, the black proportion of detained cases was in the 30%–40% range. The one

exception was among detained females referred for drug offenses. Blacks accounted for just 16% of this group—close to their representation in the juvenile population (16%).

Racial profile of detained cases by gender, 2010:

Offense	White	Black	Amer.	
			Indian	Asian
<b>Total</b>				
Delinquency	57%	40%	2%	2%
Person	53	45	2	1
Property	58	39	2	2
Drugs	65	32	2	2
Public order	59	37	2	2
<b>Male</b>				
Delinquency	57%	40%	2%	2%
Person	52	45	1	1
Property	57	40	2	2
Drugs	62	35	2	2
Public order	59	38	2	2
<b>Female</b>				
Delinquency	59%	37%	3%	1%
Person	55	43	2	1
Property	60	37	3	1
Drugs	80	16	3	1
Public order	59	36	3	1

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

### The offense profile of detained cases varied by race and by gender in 2010

For males, the person offense share of delinquency cases was greater among detained cases involving black youth (34%) than among detained cases involving white youth (28%), American

Indian youth (27%), or Asian youth (26%). For black male youth, drug offense cases accounted for 9% of detained cases, compared with 11% for white males and 10% each for American Indian and Asian males.

Among females, blacks had a higher proportion of person offenses in the detention caseload (43%) than did whites (35%), American Indians (32%), or Asians (27%). For white females, drug offense cases accounted for 9% of detained cases, compared with 3% for black females, 7% for American Indian females, and 6% for Asian females.

Offense profile of detained cases by race and gender, 2010:

Offense	White	Black	Amer.	
			Indian	Asian
<b>Total</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	29	36	28	26
Property	30	30	31	31
Drugs	10	7	9	9
Public order	30	27	32	34
<b>Male</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	28	34	27	26
Property	31	31	33	31
Drugs	11	9	10	10
Public order	30	27	31	33
<b>Female</b>				
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	35	43	32	27
Property	25	24	25	27
Drugs	9	3	7	6
Public order	31	30	37	40

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

# The petitioned caseload increased 38% from 1985 to 2010 as formal case handling became more likely

**In a formally processed case, petitioners ask the court to order sanctions**

Formal case handling involves the filing of a petition requesting that the court hold an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Decisionmakers (police, probation, intake, prosecutor, or other screening officer) may consider informal case handling if they believe that accountability and rehabilitation can be achieved without formal court intervention. Compared with informally handled (nonpetitioned) cases, formally processed (petitioned) delinquency cases tend to involve more serious offenses, older juveniles, and juveniles with longer court histories.

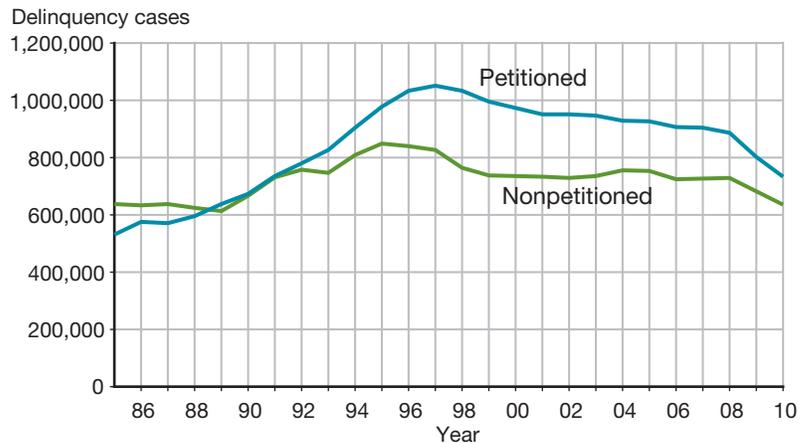
If the court decides to handle the matter informally, the offender agrees to comply with one or more sanctions, such as community service, victim restitution, or voluntary probation supervision. Informal cases are generally held open pending successful completion of the disposition. If the court's conditions are met, the charges are dismissed. If, however, the offender does not fulfill the conditions, the case is likely to be petitioned for formal processing.

## The use of formal handling has decreased in recent years

In 2001, juvenile courts formally processed 56% of delinquency cases. By 2010, that proportion had decreased to 54%. Cases in each of the four general offense categories were less likely to be handled formally in 2010 than in 2001.

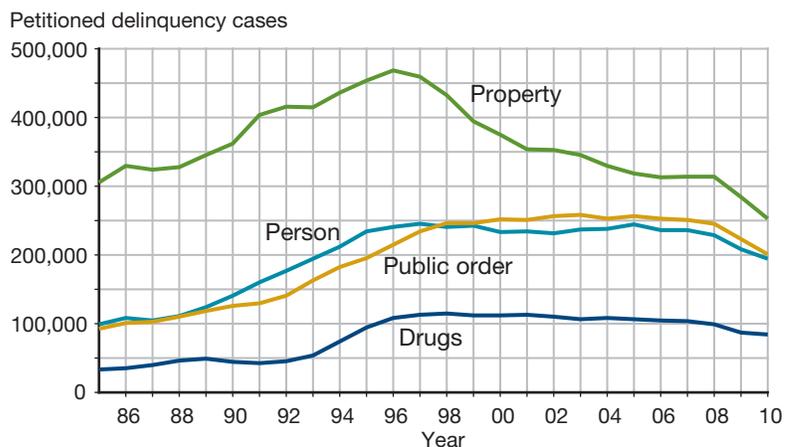
In both 2001 and 2010, property offense cases were the least likely to be petitioned for formal handling, and public order offense cases were the most likely. The likelihood of being petitioned for formal handling decreased the most for drug offense

**The number of petitioned delinquency cases increased 98% between 1985 and the peak in 1997 and then declined 30% by 2010**



- The number of delinquency cases petitioned in 2010 (733,200) was 38% more than the number petitioned in 1985 (530,100). In comparison, the overall number of delinquency cases referred increased 17% in that time.
- Compared with the trend for the petitioned caseload, the trend for nonpetitioned cases was flatter. The number of nonpetitioned delinquency cases increased 33% between 1985 and the peak in 1995 and then declined 25% by 2010 for an overall decrease of 1%.

## Between 1985 and 2010, the petitioned caseload increased for most offense categories



- Between 1985 and 2010, petitioned person offense cases increased 97%, drug of-fense cases 152%, and public order cases 117%. Property cases decreased 17% during the period.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

cases (8 percentage points) between 2001 and 2010.

Percent of delinquency cases petitioned:

Offense	2001	2010
Delinquency	56%	54%
Person	57	56
Property	53	50
Drugs	59	51
Public order	60	57

### The proportion of petitioned cases decreased from 2001 to 2010 for all demographic groups

The likelihood of formal case processing decreased from 2001 to 2010 for both males and females and for all races and ages.

Percent of delinquency cases petitioned:

Offense	2001	2010
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59%	57%
Female	49	44
<b>Race</b>		
White	54	50
Black	62	59
American Indian	53	60
Asian	60	57
<b>Age</b>		
15 or younger	54	50
16 or older	60	57

In 2010, as in 2001, courts petitioned a larger share of delinquency cases involving males than females. This was true for each of the general offense categories. In 2001, courts petitioned a larger share of delinquency cases involving black youth than youth of all other races. In 2010, however, courts petitioned a larger share of American Indian youth than youth of all other races.

### In 2010, juvenile courts petitioned more than 5 in 10 delinquency cases for formal handling, and adjudicated youth delinquent in nearly 6 in 10 of those petitioned cases

Most serious offense	Number of petitioned cases	Percent of delinquency cases petitioned	Number of adjudicated cases	Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>733,200</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>428,200</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Person offense</b>	<b>194,800</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>109,200</b>	<b>56</b>
Violent Crime Index	53,800	76	33,000	61
Criminal homicide	800	80	300	43
Forcible rape	2,900	75	1,700	59
Robbery	22,500	85	14,400	64
Aggravated assault	27,700	69	16,500	60
Simple assault	117,200	49	62,900	54
Other violent sex offense	9,200	72	5,900	65
Other person offense	14,600	56	7,400	50
<b>Property offense</b>	<b>253,000</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>147,200</b>	<b>58</b>
Property Crime Index	178,200	50	105,300	59
Burglary	66,600	74	42,200	63
Larceny-theft	96,000	39	53,500	56
Motor vehicle theft	12,300	76	7,700	63
Arson	3,300	60	1,800	54
Vandalism	40,600	51	22,700	56
Trespassing	17,500	41	9,200	52
Stolen property offense	9,800	70	5,900	60
Other property offense	6,900	62	4,200	61
<b>Drug law violation</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48,900</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Public order offense</b>	<b>201,400</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>122,900</b>	<b>61</b>
Obstruction of justice	120,300	72	76,800	64
Disorderly conduct	40,600	40	22,600	56
Weapons offense	17,000	57	10,200	60
Liquor law violation	4,700	29	3,000	63
Nonviolent sex offense	5,500	49	3,300	60
Other public order offense	13,300	44	7,000	53

- Generally, more serious offenses were more likely to be petitioned for formal processing than were less serious offenses.
- For criminal homicide and robbery, at least 80% of cases were petitioned. The proportion of cases petitioned was lower than 50% for simple assault, larceny-theft, trespassing, disorderly conduct, liquor law violations, and nonviolent sex offenses.
- For most offenses, the youth was adjudicated delinquent in more than 55% of petitioned cases.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

## From 1985 to 2010, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent rose 27%

### Adjudication was more likely for some types of cases than others

Youth were adjudicated delinquent in a smaller proportion of person offense cases than in cases involving other categories of offenses. This lower rate of adjudication in person offense cases may reflect, in part, reluctance to divert these cases from the formal juvenile justice system without a judge's review.

Adjudication rates also varied by gender, race, and age of the youth. The likelihood of adjudication in 2010 was less for females than for males. This was true across all offense categories. Black youth were less likely to be adjudicated than were youth of other races. Cases involving youth ages 15 or

younger were slightly more likely to result in adjudication than cases involving older youth, although older youth had a greater share of cases waived to criminal court.

Percent of petitioned delinquency cases adjudicated:

Offense	2001	2010
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	62%	60%
Female	57	54
<b>Race</b>		
White	63	60
Black	58	55
American Indian	67	69
Asian	60	58
<b>Age</b>		
15 or younger	62	59
16 or older	60	58

### Offense profiles for petitioned and adjudicated cases show a shift away from property cases

Compared with 2001, both petitioned and adjudicated cases had increased proportions of person and public order offenses in 2010. The 2010 offense profile for adjudicated cases was very similar to the profile for petitioned cases.

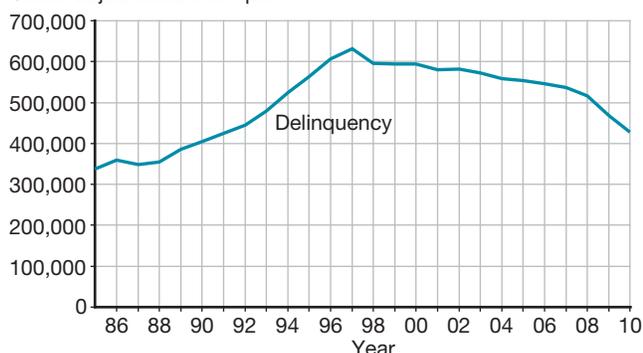
Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	2001	2010
<b>Petitioned cases</b>	100%	100%
Person	25	27
Property	37	35
Drugs	12	11
Public order	26	27
<b>Adjudicated cases</b>	100%	100%
Person	23	26
Property	37	34
Drugs	12	11
Public order	28	29

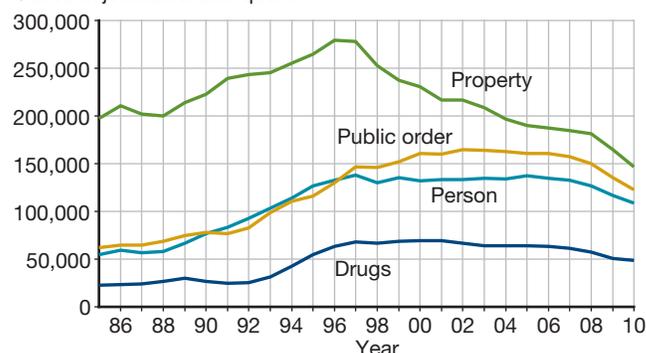
Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## Since 1997, the number of cases adjudicated delinquent decreased for all general offense categories

Cases adjudicated delinquent



Cases adjudicated delinquent



- The number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent increased for most offense categories between 1985 and 2010 (person 99%, drugs 114%, and public order 97%). Only property offenses had a decline in the number of adjudicated cases during the period—down 25%.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanhera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# Most adjudicated delinquency cases result in residential placement or formal probation

## Residential placement and formal probation caseloads saw a shift away from property cases

Compared with 2001, both residential placement and formal probation cases had increased proportions of person and public order offenses in 2010. In 2010, cases ordered to residential placement had a greater share of person and public order cases and a smaller share of property and drug cases than cases ordered to formal probation.

### Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	2001	2010
Residential placement	100%	100%
Person	25	28
Property	36	33
Drugs	10	8
Public order	29	31
Formal probation	100%	100%
Person	24	26
Property	39	36
Drugs	14	13
Public order	24	25

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## Residential placement and probation caseloads decreased between 2001 and 2010

The number of delinquency cases in which adjudicated youth were ordered out of the home to some form of residential placement declined 29% between 2001 and 2010, from 157,800 to 112,600. Similarly, the number of delinquency cases receiving formal probation as the most severe initial disposition following adjudication decreased 25% from 2001 to 2010, from 345,700 to 260,300. The decrease in cases ordered to out-of-home placement or formal probation was consistent with the decrease in delinquency cases at referral (19%) and adjudication (26%).

## In 2010, residential placement or formal probation was ordered in 87% of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent

Most serious offense	Adjudicated cases			
	Number ordered to placement	Percent ordered to placement	Number ordered to probation	Percent ordered to probation
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>112,600</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>260,300</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Person offense</b>	<b>31,300</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>68,300</b>	<b>63</b>
Violent Crime Index	12,400	38	19,100	58
Criminal homicide	200	53	100	42
Forcible rape	600	37	1,000	57
Robbery	6,500	45	7,500	52
Aggravated assault	5,100	31	10,400	63
Simple assault	15,400	25	40,500	64
Other violent sex offense	1,700	29	3,900	65
Other person offense	1,700	23	4,800	66
<b>Property offense</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>93,000</b>	<b>63</b>
Property Crime Index	27,500	26	66,000	63
Burglary	13,800	33	25,800	61
Larceny-theft	10,200	19	35,000	65
Motor vehicle theft	3,100	40	4,000	52
Arson	400	24	1,200	69
Vandalism	4,600	20	15,300	68
Trespassing	1,600	18	5,700	62
Stolen property offense	1,900	33	3,400	57
Other property offense	1,100	27	2,600	62
<b>Drug law violation</b>	<b>9,200</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33,700</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Public order offense</b>	<b>35,300</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>65,400</b>	<b>53</b>
Obstruction of justice	26,200	34	37,300	49
Disorderly conduct	3,400	15	13,700	60
Weapons offense	3,100	31	6,400	63
Liquor law violation	400	13	2,100	69
Nonviolent sex offense	900	26	2,200	65
Other public order offense	1,400	19	3,800	55

- Cases involving youth adjudicated for serious person offenses, such as homicide or robbery, were the most likely cases to result in residential placement.
- Probation was the most restrictive disposition used in 260,300 cases adjudicated delinquent in 2010—61% of all such cases handled by juvenile courts.
- Obstruction of justice cases had a relatively high residential placement rate, stemming from the inclusion in the category of certain offenses (e.g., escapes from confinement, and violations of probation or parole) that have a high likelihood of placement.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' analyses of the National Center for Juvenile Justice's *National Juvenile Court Data Archive: Juvenile court case records 1985–2010* [machine-readable data file].

The number of adjudicated cases receiving other sanctions (e.g. community service, restitution) as their most severe disposition decreased 29% from 2001 to 2010, from 77,400 to 55,200. However, the majority of cases resulting in other sanctions were handled informally.

### Probation was more likely than residential placement

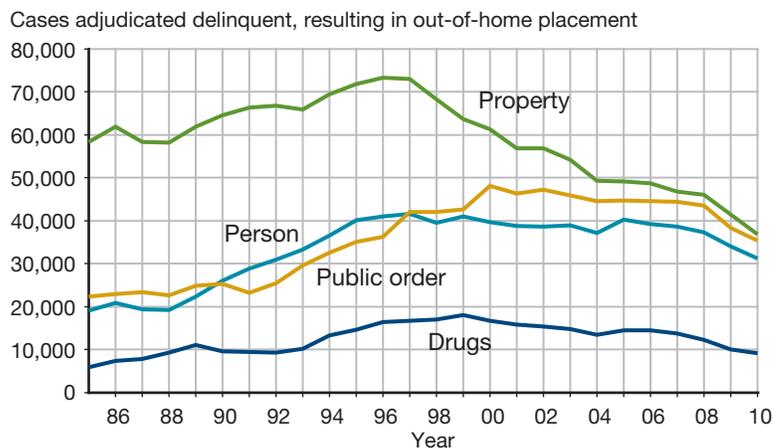
In 26% of adjudicated delinquency cases, the court ordered the youth to residential placement, such as a training school, treatment center, boot camp, drug treatment or private placement facility, or group home. In 61% of adjudicated delinquency cases, probation was the most severe sanction ordered.

Percent of adjudicated delinquency cases, 2010:

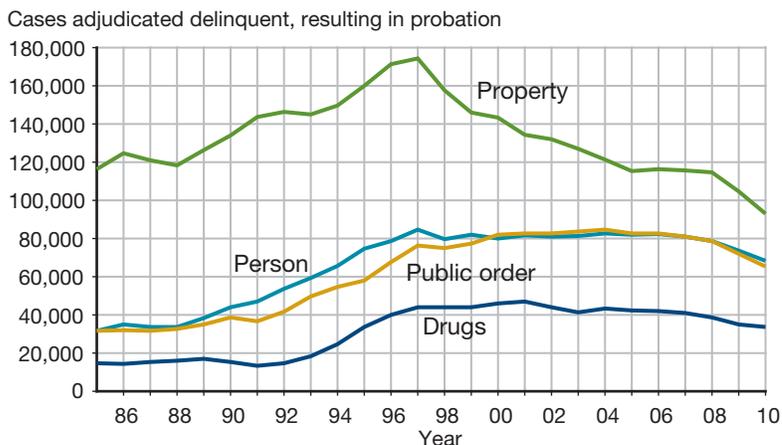
Offense	Residential placement	Formal probation
Total	26%	61%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	28	60
Female	19	64
<b>Race</b>		
White	24	63
Black	30	57
American Indian	27	62
Asian	22	68
<b>Age</b>		
15 or younger	24	64
16 or older	29	57

Once adjudicated, females were less likely than males, and white youth were less likely than black youth or American Indian youth, to be ordered to residential placement. These demographic patterns in the use of residential placement and probation, however, do not control for criminal histories and other risk factors related to dispositional decisions and increased severity of sanctions

### Trends in the number of adjudicated property offense cases ordered to residential placement or probation were different from trends for other offenses



- The number of adjudicated cases in which the youth was ordered to residential placement increased 7% from 1985 to 2010. Residential placement cases rose 64% for person offenses, 59% for public order offenses, and 58% for drug offenses. For property offenses, the number of adjudicated cases resulting in residential placement decreased 37%.



- Between 1985 and 2010, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent and ordered to formal probation increased for most offense categories (person 115%, drugs 130%, and public order 107%). Only property offenses declined during the period—down 20%.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanhera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# How were delinquency cases processed in juvenile courts in 2010?

## Juvenile courts can impose a range of sanctions

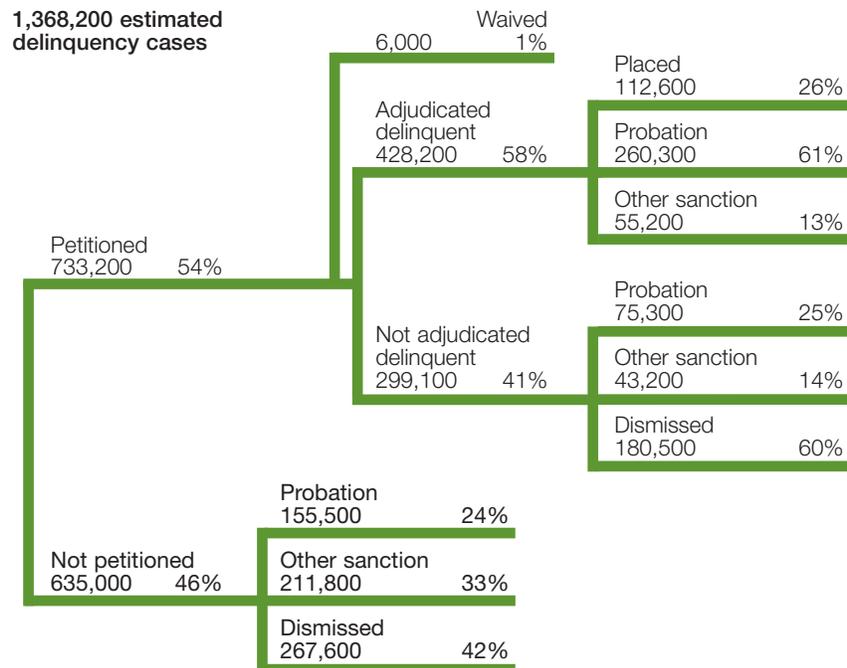
Although juvenile courts handled 46% of delinquency cases without the filing of a petition, more than half of these nonpetitioned cases received some sort of sanction. Juveniles may have agreed to informal probation, restitution, or community service, or the court may have referred them to another agency for services. Although probation staff monitor the juvenile's compliance with the informal agreement, such dispositions generally involve little or no continuing supervision by probation staff.

In 41% of all petitioned delinquency cases, the youth was not adjudicated delinquent. The court dismissed 60% of these cases. The cases dismissed by the court, together with the cases that were dismissed at intake, accounted for 448,200 cases (or 328 of 1,000 cases handled).

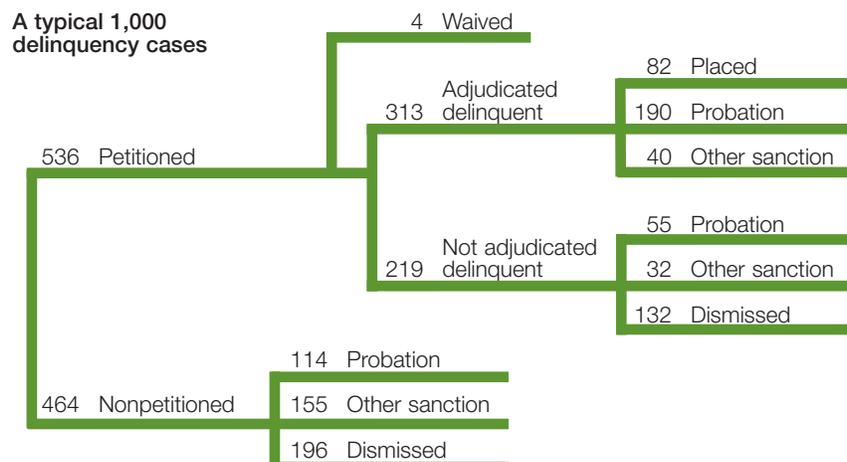
In 59% of all petitioned cases, the courts imposed a formal sanction or waived the case to criminal court. Thus, of every 1,000 delinquency cases handled in 2010, 317 resulted in a court-ordered sanction or waiver.

In 2010, 58% (428,200) of the cases that were handled formally (with the filing of a petition) resulted in a delinquency adjudication. In 61% (260,300) of cases adjudicated delinquent in 2010, formal probation was the most severe sanction ordered by the court. In contrast, 26% (112,600) of cases adjudicated delinquent resulted in placement outside the home in a residential facility.

The most severe sanction ordered in more than 55,000 adjudicated delinquency cases (13%) in 2010 was something other than residential placement or probation, such as restitution or community service



Adjudicated cases receiving sanctions other than residential placement or probation accounted for 40 out of 1,000 delinquency cases processed during the year



Notes: Cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive sanction. Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Annual case processing flow diagrams for 1985 through 2010 are available online at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp)

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

Variations in case processing were more evident between younger and older youth than between males and females in 2010

Offense/ demographic	Number of cases	Intake decision profile (percent of all cases)		Judicial decision profile (percent of petitioned cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of adjudicated cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of non- adjudicated cases)			Informal disposition profile (percent of non- petitioned cases)		
		Petitioned	Not petitioned	Waived	Adjudicated delinquent	Not adjudicated delinquent	Placed	Probation	Other	Probation	Other	Dismissed	Probation	Other	Dismissed
<b>Delinquency</b>	<b>1,368,200</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>42%</b>
Male	986,700	57	43	1.0	60	39	28	60	12	25	14	60	24	32	44
Female	381,500	44	56	0.3	54	46	19	64	16	26	14	60	25	36	38
15 and younger	716,300	50	50	0.2	59	41	24	64	12	26	14	60	26	34	40
16 and older	651,800	57	43	1.4	58	41	29	57	14	24	15	61	23	32	45
<b>Person</b>	<b>346,800</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50</b>
Male	240,600	60	40	2.0	58	40	31	61	8	24	13	63	20	29	51
Female	106,200	49	51	0.3	51	48	21	68	11	26	12	62	21	32	47
15 and younger	205,800	54	46	0.4	57	43	26	66	8	26	13	62	22	32	46
16 and older	141,000	60	40	3.0	55	42	33	58	9	24	13	64	17	27	56
<b>Property</b>	<b>502,400</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>
Male	354,600	56	44	0.8	60	39	27	62	11	29	14	57	25	34	41
Female	147,800	36	64	0.3	52	48	16	68	16	30	15	55	29	40	31
15 and younger	267,800	48	52	0.1	59	41	23	66	11	29	14	57	28	37	35
16 and older	234,600	53	47	1.3	57	42	27	60	13	29	15	56	25	35	40
<b>Drugs</b>	<b>164,100</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>
Male	134,700	52	48	0.9	59	40	20	68	12	30	12	58	29	36	35
Female	29,400	45	55	0.5	56	44	13	72	14	34	13	53	31	36	32
15 and younger	67,400	46	54	0.1	62	38	17	72	11	33	12	56	33	35	32
16 and older	96,800	54	46	1.3	56	43	20	67	13	30	12	58	26	37	37
<b>Public order</b>	<b>354,800</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>46</b>
Male	256,700	59	41	0.3	62	38	31	52	17	18	18	64	23	30	48
Female	98,100	52	48	0.1	58	42	23	56	22	18	16	66	22	35	43
15 and younger	175,400	51	49	0.0	61	39	26	57	17	20	16	64	24	33	43
16 and older	179,400	62	38	0.4	61	39	31	50	19	17	19	65	22	29	50

- Without exception, cases involving males were more likely to receive formal sanctions than cases involving females. For example, in 2010, 61% of all petitioned delinquency cases involving males were adjudicated delinquent or waived to criminal court, compared with 54% of cases involving females.
- Regardless of offense, cases involving youth age 16 and older were more likely to be petitioned and, once petitioned, more likely to be judicially waived to criminal court than cases involving youth age 15 and younger. Although cases involving older youth were less likely to result in a delinquency adjudication than those involving their younger peers, older youth were more likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement following adjudication.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' analysis of Sickmund et al.'s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

### Case processing outcomes varied considerably by race in 2010

Offense/ demographic	Number of cases	Intake decision profile (percent of all cases)		Judicial decision profile (percent of petitioned cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of adjudicated cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of non- adjudicated cases)			Informal disposition profile (percent of non- petitioned cases)		
		Petitioned	Not petitioned	Waived	Adjudicated delinquent	Not adjudicated delinquent	Placed	Probation	Other	Probation	Other	Dismissed	Probation	Other	Dismissed
<b>Delinquency</b>	<b>1,368,200</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>42%</b>
White	876,400	50	50	0.7	60	39	24	63	13	28	14	57	27	33	40
Black	451,100	59	41	1.0	55	44	30	57	13	21	15	65	19	33	47
Amer. Indian	21,100	60	40	1.1	69	30	27	62	11	17	16	67	22	33	45
Asian	19,500	57	43	0.4	58	42	22	68	10	25	15	60	24	36	40
<b>Person</b>	<b>346,800</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50</b>
White	198,900	52	48	1.3	58	40	27	65	9	28	13	59	23	29	48
Black	139,100	62	38	1.8	53	45	31	60	9	21	12	66	15	31	54
Amer. Indian	4,800	60	40	2.5	68	30	34	60	6	17	17	66	19	30	51
Asian	4,000	64	36	1.0	59	40	26	68	6	25	15	60	23	30	47
<b>Property</b>	<b>502,400</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>
White	329,500	48	52	0.7	60	40	23	65	12	32	14	53	28	36	35
Black	156,000	56	44	0.8	55	44	29	59	12	24	14	62	22	36	42
Amer. Indian	8,200	56	44	1.1	68	31	28	62	10	15	16	69	24	34	41
Asian	8,700	48	52	0.3	53	46	19	70	11	28	15	57	26	39	35
<b>Drugs</b>	<b>164,100</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>
White	125,400	48	52	0.8	59	40	16	71	13	34	12	54	31	36	33
Black	34,000	63	37	1.1	56	43	27	62	11	23	11	66	22	34	44
Amer. Indian	2,700	52	48	0.6	72	27	16	75	8	13	12	74	21	36	43
Asian	2,100	54	46	0.4	52	48	17	68	15	27	15	58	27	36	37
<b>Public order</b>	<b>354,800</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>46</b>
White	222,600	54	46	0.2	63	36	29	54	17	20	17	64	25	31	45
Black	121,900	60	40	0.3	57	43	30	50	20	16	19	65	19	32	49
Amer. Indian	5,400	69	31	0.2	71	29	24	60	16	20	16	65	19	32	48
Asian	4,800	67	33	0.2	64	36	23	65	12	21	13	66	19	32	50

- Overall, cases involving black (59%) or American Indian (60%) youth were more likely to be formally processed (i.e., petitioned) than cases involving Asian (57%) or white (50%) youth. Once petitioned, cases involving American Indian youth were more likely to receive formal sanctions than cases involving youth of other races. In 2010, 70% of all petitioned cases involving American Indian youth were adjudicated delinquent or waived to criminal court, compared with 61% for white youth, 58% for Asian youth, and 56% for black youth.
- Across most offenses, adjudicated cases involving black youth were more likely to result in a disposition of out-of-home placement than cases involving youth of other races. This was particularly true for drug offense cases, as more than one-fourth (27%) of all adjudicated cases involving black youth resulted in placement, compared with 17% for Asian youth and 16% each for white and American Indian youth.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

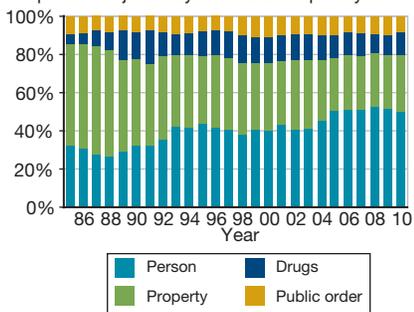
Source: Authors' analysis of Sickmund et al.'s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# By 2010, the number of cases waived from juvenile court to criminal court had almost returned to the low level of 1985

## The profile of waived cases has changed

In the late 1980s, property cases accounted for at least half of all delinquency cases judicially waived from juvenile court to criminal court. In the early 1990s, the property offense share of waived cases diminished as the person offense share grew. By 1993, the waiver caseload had a greater proportion of person offense cases than property cases (42% vs. 38%). Drug and public order cases made up smaller proportions of waived cases across all years. For example, in 2010, 12% of waived cases were drug offenses and 8% were public order cases.

Proportion of judicially waived delinquency cases



The demographic characteristics of judicially waived cases have changed since the 1990s.

Demographic profiles of judicially waived delinquency cases:

Offense	1994	2001	2010
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	94%	90%	92%
Female	6	10	8
<b>Race</b>			
White	54	63	52
Black	43	33	44
American Indian	2	2	2
Asian	1	1	1
<b>Age</b>			
15 or younger	15	17	11
16 or older	85	83	89

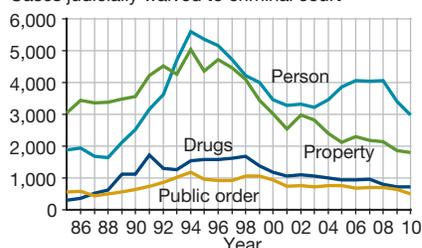
Note: Data for 1994 are displayed because that was the year with the greatest number of total waived cases.

## Juvenile courts waived 55% fewer delinquency cases to criminal court in 2010 than in 1994 (the peak year)

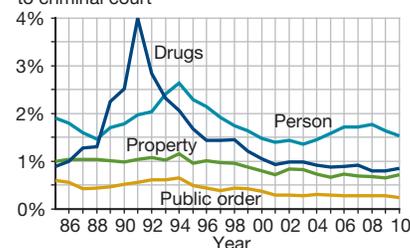
Cases judicially waived to criminal court



Cases judicially waived to criminal court



Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court



- The number of delinquency cases waived to criminal court climbed 132% from 1985 to 1994, from 5,700 cases to 13,300. By 2010, the number of waived cases was 55% below the 1994 peak, an overall increase of 4% since 1985.
- Between 1993 and 2010, person offenses outnumbered property offenses among waived cases. Prior to 1993, property cases outnumbered person offense cases among waivers—sometimes by a ratio of 2 to 1.
- The number of waived person offense cases nearly tripled (198%) from 1985 to 1994 and then declined 47% to 2010, an overall increase of 59% between 1985 and 2010. Over this period, waived property offense cases were down 41%, and waived public order offense cases were down 11%.
- The overall proportion of petitioned delinquency cases that were waived was 1.1% in 1985, reached 1.5% in 1994, and then dropped to 0.8% by 2010.
- For most years between 1985 and 2010, person offense cases were the most likely type of case to be waived to criminal court. The exception was 1989–1992, when drug offense cases were the most likely to be waived.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzananchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

The proportions of judicially waived cases involving females and older juveniles increased between 1994 (the year with the greatest number of waived cases) and 2010, while the proportions of judicially waived cases involving males and younger juveniles decreased. Although the proportion of waived cases involving white youth decreased during the same time period (from 54% to 52%), white youth accounted for the largest proportion of these cases in all years.

### The likelihood of waiver varied across case characteristics

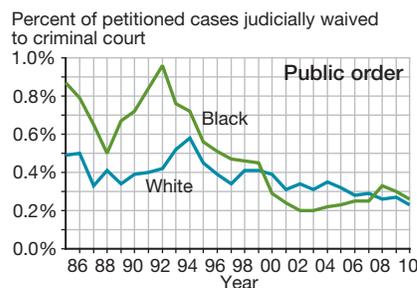
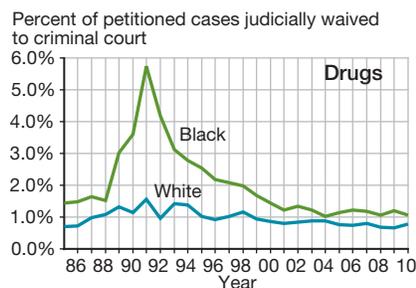
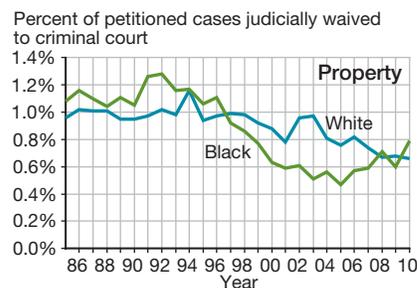
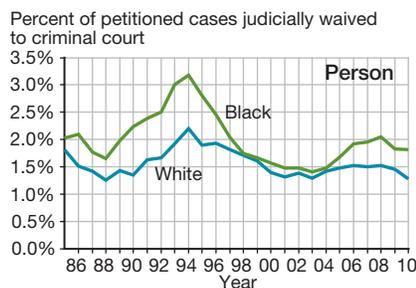
In 2010, the proportion of cases waived was greater for males than for females. This was true in each of the four general offense categories. For example, males charged with person offenses were 6 times as likely as females charged with person offenses to have their cases waived to criminal court. However, this comparison does not control for differences in the seriousness of offenses or a juvenile's offense history.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2010:

Offense	Male	Female
Delinquency	1.0%	0.3%
Person	2.0	0.3
Property	0.8	0.3
Drugs	0.9	0.5
Public order	0.3	0.1

In 2010, black youth were more likely than other youth to be waived for drug offenses. American Indian youth were more likely than any other racial group to be waived for person offenses. Regardless of race, person offenses were more likely to be waived than cases involving other offenses.

### Racial differences in case waivers stemmed primarily from differences in person and drug offense cases



- For most of the period from 1985 to 2010, the likelihood of waiver was greater for black youth than for white youth, regardless of offense category. These data, however, do not control for racial differences in offense seriousness within the general offense categories or differences in the seriousness of juveniles' offense histories.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2010:

Offense	Amer.			
	White	Black	Indian	Asian
Delinquency	0.7%	1.0%	1.1%	0.4%
Person	1.3	1.8	2.5	1.0
Property	0.7	0.8	1.1	0.3
Drugs	0.8	1.1	0.6	0.4
Public order	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2

Cases involving younger juveniles were less likely to be waived than were cases involving older juveniles. This was true for each of the four general offense

categories. For example, among person offense cases, youth age 16 or older were 7 times more likely to be waived than youth age 15 or younger.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2010:

Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
	Delinquency	0.2%
Person	0.4	3.0
Property	0.1	1.3
Drugs	0.1	1.3
Public order	0.0	0.4

# Identifying racial/ethnic disparity in justice system processing helps target efforts to improve fairness

## Research finds evidence of disparity in juvenile case processing

The topic of racial and ethnic disparity in the juvenile justice system came to national attention with the 1988 amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), which required participating states to address disproportionate minority confinement, known as DMC. Recognizing that disparity is not limited to secure confinement and that it may occur at multiple decision points in the justice system, DMC was expanded in the 2002 amendment to the

JJDPA to represent disproportionate minority contact throughout the system. This change required participating states to address juvenile delinquency prevention efforts and systems improvement efforts designed to reduce the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups who come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Under this new conceptualization, as youth pass through the different stages of the juvenile justice system, they make contact with a series of decision-makers, each of whom could render a decision that could potentially result in

disparity. Measuring the disparity at each decision point gives a better understanding of where disparity is introduced and/or magnified in the handling of cases by the juvenile justice system. Disparity can be calculated and measured at nine decision points where juveniles contact the juvenile justice system: (1) arrest, (2) referral to court, (3) diversion, (4) secure detention, (5) case petitioning, (6) delinquency finding/adjudication, (7) probation, (8) confinement in a secure correctional facility, and (9) judicial waiver to adult criminal court.

Research based on this approach to evaluating fairness and identifying disparity has provided insights. Two of the most important lessons are that:

- In most jurisdictions, disproportionate minority representation is not limited to secure detention and confinement; disparity is evident at nearly all key decision points throughout the juvenile justice system.
- Contributing factors are multiple and complex; reducing disparity requires comprehensive and multi-pronged strategies with programmatic and systems change efforts.

## Racial/ethnic disparities often accumulate with deeper system involvement

Research suggests that disparity is most pronounced at arrest, the entry point into the juvenile justice system for most juvenile offenders. As youth proceed through the system, disparate treatment at later stages builds upon disparity at early stages—disparity at detention builds upon disparity at referral to court, which builds upon disparity at arrest. The presence of disparity does not always signify the presence of discrimination. Disproportionality may be the result of cultural and behavioral influences, policing practices,

## It is important to understand key terms when discussing issues of racial and ethnic fairness

**Disproportionality or overrepresentation** refers to a situation in which a larger proportion of a particular group is present at various stages within the juvenile justice system (such as intake, detention, adjudication, and disposition) than would be expected based on its proportion in the general population.

**Disparity** means that the probability of receiving a particular outcome (e.g., being detained vs. not being detained) differs for different groups. Disparity may in turn lead to overrepresentation.

**Discrimination** occurs when juvenile justice system decisionmakers treat one group differently from another group based wholly, or in part, on their gender, race, and/or ethnicity.

**Minority or minority group** is a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with the dominant cultural group. As the term is used in discussions of racial and ethnic fairness in the juvenile justice system, minority status does not necessarily mean the group represents a smaller share of the population. In fact, there

are many places throughout the U.S. where minority groups represent the majority of the population.

Neither overrepresentation nor disparity necessarily implies discrimination, although it is one possible explanation. If racial discrimination is a part of justice system decisionmaking, minority youth can face higher probabilities of being arrested, referred to court intake, held in short-term detention, petitioned for formal processing, adjudicated delinquent, and confined in a secure juvenile facility.

Disparity and overrepresentation, however, can result from behavioral and legal factors rather than discrimination. For example, if minority youth commit proportionately more (and more serious) crimes than white youth, they will be overrepresented in secure facilities, even when there was no discrimination by system decisionmakers.

Research is necessary to reveal the decision points at which disparity occurs and to uncover the dynamics that lead to overrepresentation.

implicit or explicit bias in the justice system or, most likely, a combination of all of these factors.

Jurisdictions differ in the nature and extent of disproportionality in their system. Before a jurisdiction can address disproportionality, they must be able to describe the extent to which it exists. The collection and examination of data at various points of system processing can assist jurisdictions in identifying the existence of disproportionality and, if it exists, determining how it varies across stages, geographic locations, or racial and ethnic groups.

One factor to consider in understanding overrepresentation is that outcomes often depend on the jurisdiction in which the youth is processed. For example, juvenile court cases in urban jurisdictions are more likely to receive severe outcomes (e.g., detention prior to adjudication, residential placement following adjudication) than are cases in nonurban areas. Because minority populations are concentrated in urban areas, this geographical effect may work to overrepresent minority youth at each stage of processing when case statistics are summarized at the state level—even when there is no disparity at the local level.

### The Relative Rate Index is the preferred method of measuring disparity in the justice system

OJJDP developed the Relative Rate Index (RRI) as a tool to identify and measure disparities across the stages of the juvenile justice system by comparing rates of juvenile justice contact experienced by different groups of youth. The RRI takes the relative size of the white and minority populations at each stage of the process and compares it to the immediately preceding stage. The key idea behind the RRI is to quantify the nature of the decisions at each decision point for each racial group and then compare these decisions to

identify the unique contributions to disparity made by each decision point.

For example, after arrest, law enforcement must decide if the youth should be referred to juvenile court intake. The RRI compares the proportions (or rates) of white and minority arrests that are referred to court intake. If the rate of referrals relative to arrests for minority youth is greater than the rate for white youth, then there is disparity. If the rates are similar, then there is no disparity. To simplify the comparison of the rates, the resulting minority rate is divided by the white rate to arrive at a ratio (i.e., the Relative Rate Index). If this RRI is near or equal to 1.0, then there is no evidence of disparity. If the ratio is greater than 1.0 (i.e., the minority rate is larger than the white rate) for decisions that result in youth

penetrating the system farther, there is evidence of disparity and this decision process needs further study to understand why. (For diversion and probation decisions, RRIs *less* than 1.0 indicate that disparity exists.) An RRI of 2.0 would indicate a minority rate double the white rate; an RRI of 0.5 would indicate a minority rate of half the white rate.

The RRI can be applied to any subset of the justice system population. For example, the RRI can be used to assess disparity by gender or age, or to assess disparity by certain offenses.

Although it has been more than a decade since the RRI was introduced, some states still have difficulty gathering the data necessary to calculate RRIs at all nine stages for all minority

### National RRI data show that there is more disparity for black youth at arrest, detention, and waiver to criminal court than at other stages

Processing stage	Relative Rate Index for delinquency offenses, 2010		
	Black	American Indian	Asian
Arrest	2.1	0.8	0.3
Referral	1.1	1.3	1.1
Diversion	0.7	0.7	0.9
Detention	1.4	1.3	1.1
Petition	1.2	1.2	1.1
Adjudication	0.9	1.1	1.0
Probation	0.9	1.0	1.1
Placement	1.2	1.1	0.9
Waiver	1.4	1.6	0.6

- Black youth were arrested for delinquency offenses at more than twice the rate for white youth.
- The diversion rate for black and other racial minority youth was less than the diversion rate for white youth.
- Black youth were detained at a rate 1.4 times the rate for their white counterparts. The RRI for black vs. white waiver rates was also 1.4.
- Although black youth were petitioned to court at a rate 1.2 times higher than white youth, they were adjudicated delinquent at a lower rate (an RRI of 0.9).

Note: An RRI of 1.0 indicates parity and that the rates being compared are equal. An RRI greater than 1.0 means that the rate for minority youth is greater than the rate for white youth. An RRI less than 1.0 means that the rate for minority youth is less than the rate for white youth.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *National Disproportionate Minority Contact Databook* [online analysis].

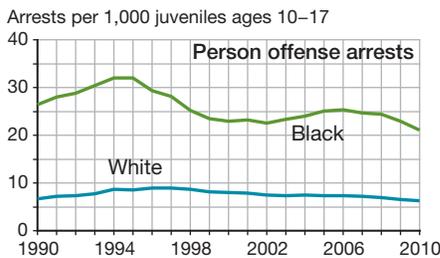
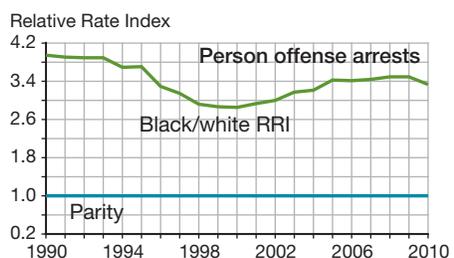
groups. In 2010, 29 states had data for all 9 decision points, and an additional 13 had data for 6 of the 9. However, not all of these states could distinguish youth of Hispanic ethnicity.

Collecting data and calculating RRIs is only the first step in the process of ensuring racial/ethnic fairness in the juvenile justice system. OJJDP has also

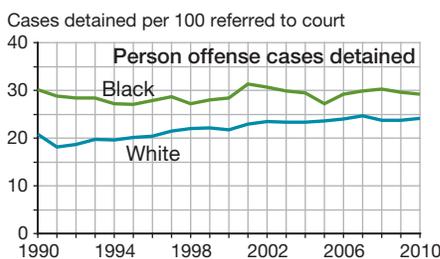
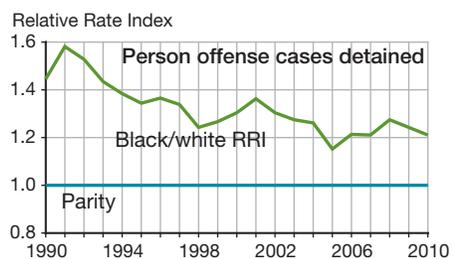
developed a model to address disparity. The initial phase is identification through the RRI. The second phase is assessment and diagnosis, which involves discussing probable explanations for observed disparities, asking questions about the data and information collected, and consulting other data sources to verify explanations. The third phase is intervention, which must

be tailored to the jurisdiction but often includes making administrative, policy, and procedural changes, such as implementing structured decisionmaking tools at various contact points within the juvenile justice system. The fourth phase is evaluation of interventions, and the fifth is monitoring to determine if any modified/new interventions are needed.

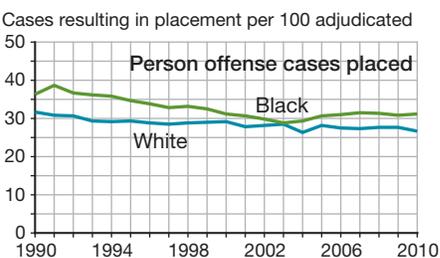
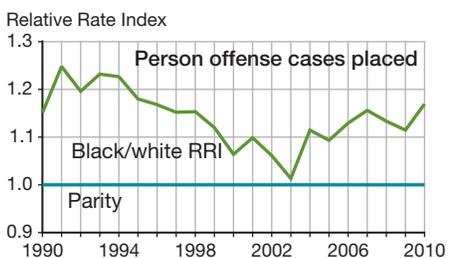
### For person offenses, national data show improvements in the degree of disparity between black youth and white youth for some decision points but not for others



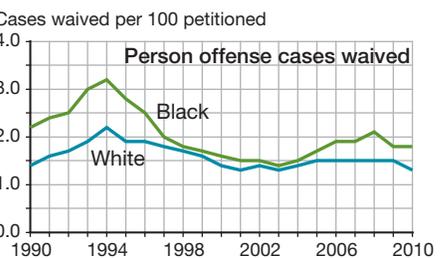
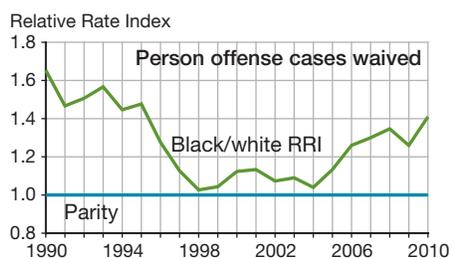
- In 1990, black youth were arrested for person offenses at a rate nearly 4 times the rate for white youth (RRI = 3.9). The arrest RRI dropped below 3.0 during the late 1990s and in 2010 it was up to 3.3.



- The reduction in the person offense arrest RRI was achieved when the arrest rate for black youth declined and the white rate increased between the mid-1990s and the late 1990s. The subsequent increase in the RRI resulted from a modest increase in the arrest rate for black youth coupled with a slight decline in the rate for white youth.



- The black/white RRI for detention for person offenses dropped from 1.6 in 1991 to 1.2 in 2010. The detention rates for black youth and white youth converged over the period; the rate for white youth increased and the rate for black youth remained relatively flat.



- For person offense cases waived, the RRI went from a high of 1.7 in 1990 to levels at or near parity (1.0) between 1998 and 2004 and then rose to 1.4 by 2010. The rate at which petitioned cases were waived declined more for black youth than for white youth from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s.

Note: The parity line displays an RRI of 1.0, which indicates the RRI if the black rate and white rate were equal.

Source: Authors' analyses of Puzanchera et al.'s *National Disproportionate Minority Contact Database* [online analysis].

## Have racial/ethnic disparities improved in the past two decades?

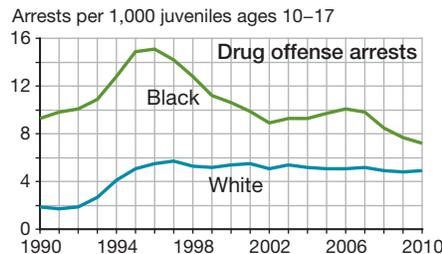
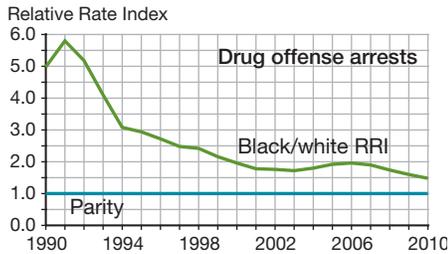
When looking at the national data for total delinquency offenses across the various decision points between 1990 and 2010, improvement in the black to white RRIs was most evident in the detention and waiver stages (24%

and 26%, respectively). Diversion, petitioning, adjudication, and placement had modest improvement (6% for each), and referral to court remained largely unchanged. Disparity at arrest, however, increased slightly (3%).

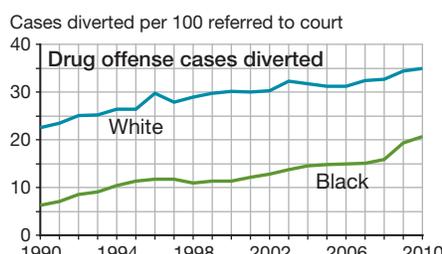
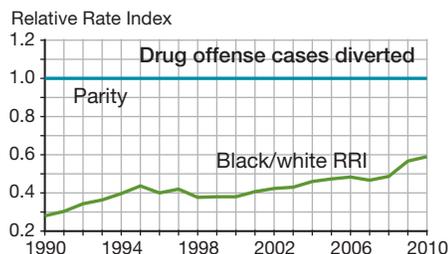
To better understand RRI trends, it is useful to examine RRI patterns for different offenses and alongside the

contributing rate trends for the groups being compared. RRIs improve when the rates for the groups being compared converge. For example, the arrest RRI would improve if arrest rates dropped for black youth and remained constant for white youth, or if arrest rates remained constant for black youth but increased for white youth.

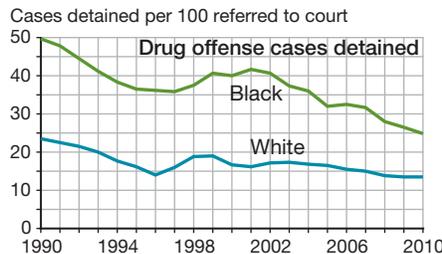
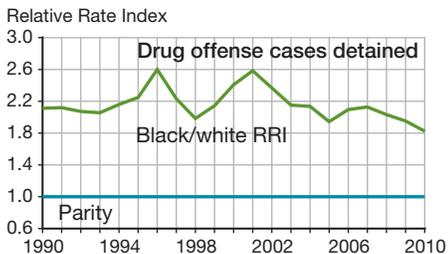
## For drug offenses, national data show the greatest improvements in the degree of disparity between black youth and white youth occurred when the rates for black youth declined and the rates for white youth rose



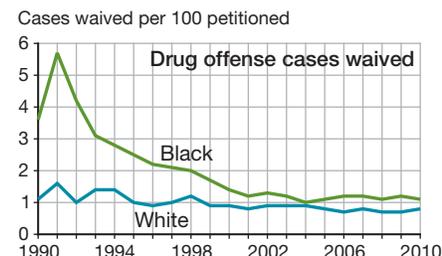
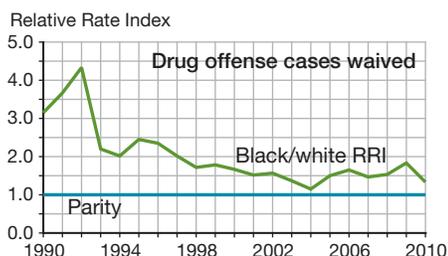
- The black/white RRI for drug arrests dropped substantially from 5.8 in 1991 to 1.5 in 2010. This reduction in disparity resulted when the drug arrest rate for black youth dropped 23% while the arrest rate for white youth increased 163%.



- At the diversion stage, the drug offense RRI showed less disparity in 2010 than in 1990. Although the diversion rate for black youth remained less than the diversion rate for white youth, both races saw large increases in the rate of diversion for drug offenses between 1990 and 2010 (55% for white youth and 229% for black youth).



- For detention, the drug offense RRI dropped 13% between 1990 and 2010 (from 2.1 to 1.8). The detention rate dropped for both race groups, but declined relatively more for blacks (50%) than for whites (42%).



- The black/white RRI for drug offense cases waived to criminal court dropped 74% from the 1992 peak (4.3) to the 2004 low (1.1). A slightly declining waiver rate for white offenders combined with a sharply declining waiver rate for black offenders resulted in the rates converging.

Note: The parity line displays an RRI of 1.0, which indicates the RRI if the black rate and white rate were equal.

Source: Authors' analyses of Puzzanchera et al.'s *National Disproportionate Minority Contact Databook* [online analysis].

## Between 1995 and 2010, the juvenile court's formal status offense caseload increased 6%

### What are status offenses?

Traditionally, status offenses were those behaviors that were law violations only if committed by a person of juvenile status. Such behaviors included running away from home, ungovernability (being beyond the control of parents or guardians), truancy, curfew violations, and underage drinking (which also applies to young adults up to age 20).

Some states have *decriminalized* some of these behaviors. In these states, the behaviors are no longer law violations. Juveniles who engage in the behaviors may be classified as dependent children, which gives child protective services agencies rather than juvenile

courts the primary responsibility for responding to this population.

### States vary in how they respond to status-offending behavior

The official processing of status offenders varies from state to state. In some states, for example, a runaway's entry into the official system may be through juvenile court intake, while in other states, the matter may enter through the child welfare agency. This mixture of approaches to case processing has made it difficult to monitor the volume and characteristics of status offense cases nationally. In all states, however, when informal efforts to resolve the status-offending behavior fail or when

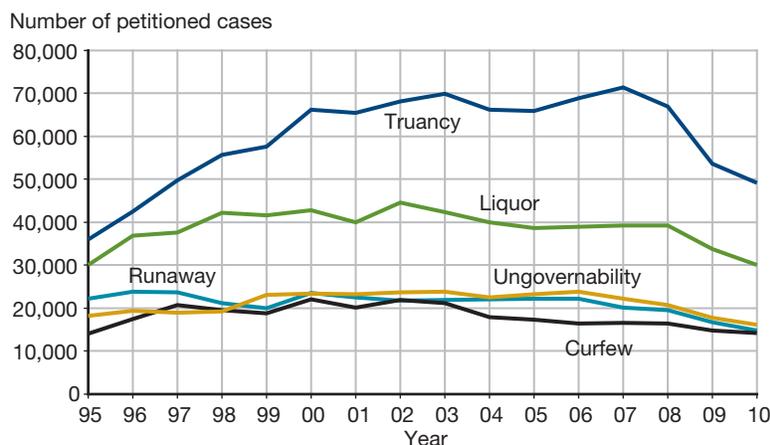
formal intervention is needed, the matter is referred to a juvenile court.

### Compared with delinquency caseloads, status offense caseloads are small

Juvenile courts in the U.S. formally processed an estimated 137,000 status offense cases in 2010. These cases accounted for about 16% of the court's formal delinquency and status offense caseload in 2010. In 2010, juvenile courts formally processed approximately:

- 14,800 runaway cases.
- 49,100 truancy cases.
- 14,200 curfew cases.
- 16,100 ungovernability cases.
- 30,100 status liquor law violation cases.
- 12,600 other status offense cases (e.g., smoking tobacco and violations of a valid court order).

### Between 1995 and 2002, the formally handled status offense caseload increased considerably (59%) and then declined 33% through 2010



- The degree of change in formally processed status offense cases from 1995 through 2010 varied across the major offense categories. Truancy and curfew violation cases increased during the period (37% and 1%, respectively), while runaway and ungovernability cases decreased (33% and 12%, respectively). Despite a 48% growth between 1995 and 2002, the number of petitioned liquor law violation cases was the same in 2010 as it was in 1995 (30,100).

- In 2010, juvenile courts formally processed 4.3 status offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

### Compared with delinquency cases, status offense cases are less often referred by police

Law enforcement agencies referred 60% of the petitioned status offense cases processed in juvenile courts in 2010, compared with 83% of delinquency cases. Law enforcement agencies were more likely to be the referral source for curfew violation cases than for other status offense cases.

Percent of cases referred by law enforcement:

Offense	2001	2010
Status offense	54%	60%
Running away	50	62
Truancy	26	33
Curfew	97	96
Ungovernability	29	35
Liquor	94	90

## Females were involved in 4 in 10 status offense cases formally processed in 2010

Another major difference between delinquency and status offense cases is the proportion of cases that involve females. Although females were charged in only 28% of the delinquency cases formally processed in 2010, they were involved in 43% of status offense cases.

Profile of formally processed cases by gender, 2010:

Offense	Male	Female
Status offense	57%	43%
Runaway	42	58
Truancy	54	46
Curfew	67	33
Ungovernability	58	42
Liquor	61	39

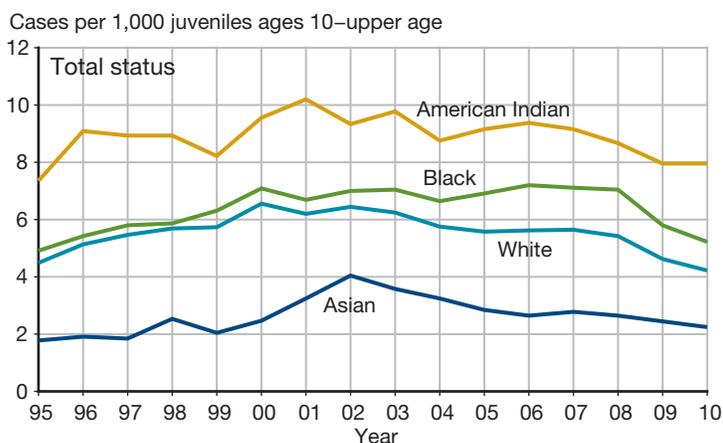
The proportion of cases involving females varied substantially by offense. In fact, the majority of juveniles brought to court for running away from home in 2010 were female (58%).

## In 2010, youth were placed out of the home in 8% of all status offense cases adjudicated

Youth were adjudicated as status offenders in 56% of formally processed status offense cases in 2010. Of these cases, 8% resulted in out-of-home placement and 53% in formal probation. The remaining 39%, largely curfew violation cases, resulted in other sanctions, such as fines, community service, restitution, or referrals to other agencies for services.

Among status offense cases not adjudicated, 69% were dismissed, 19% resulted in informal sanctions other than probation or out-of-home placement, 12% resulted in informal probation, and none resulted in out-of-home placement.

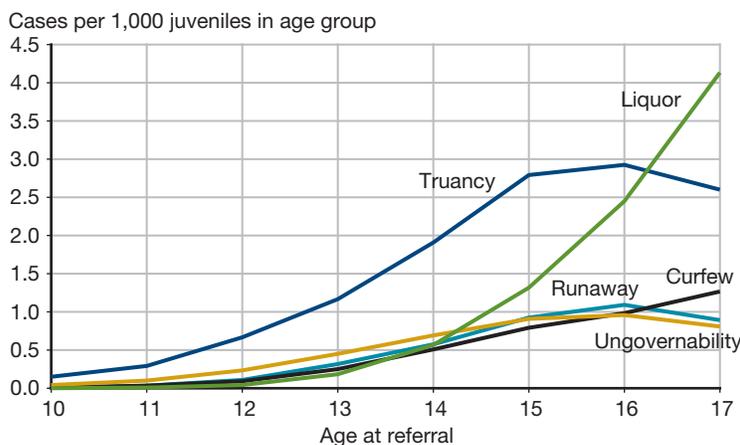
For all years between 1995 and 2010, the total petitioned status offense case rate for American Indian youth was higher than that for juveniles of all other racial categories



- Between 1995 and 2010, petitioned status offense case rates decreased for white youth (6%) but increased for all other racial groups: 7% for blacks, 8% for American Indians, and 26% for Asians.
- In 2010, the overall case rate for petitioned status offense cases was 8.0 for American Indians, 5.2 for blacks, 4.2 for whites, and 2.2 for Asians.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

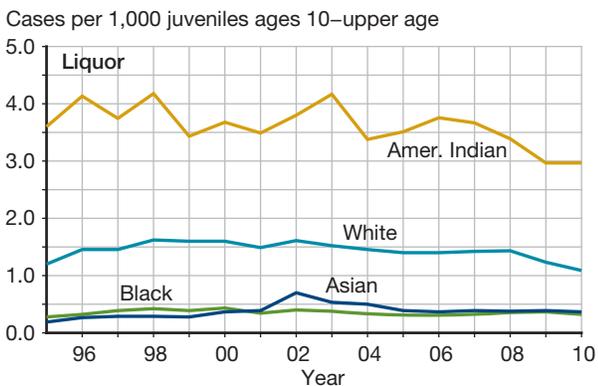
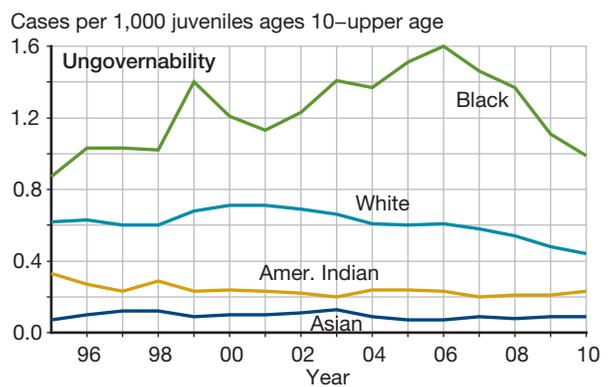
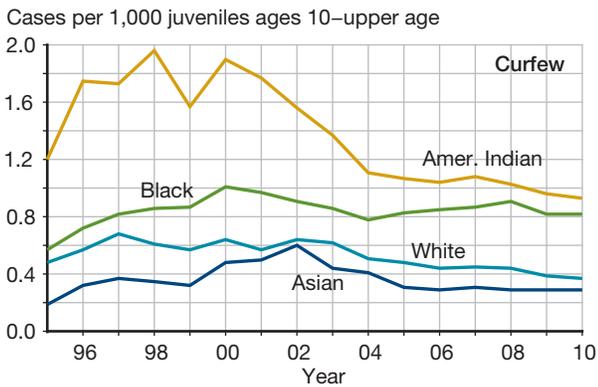
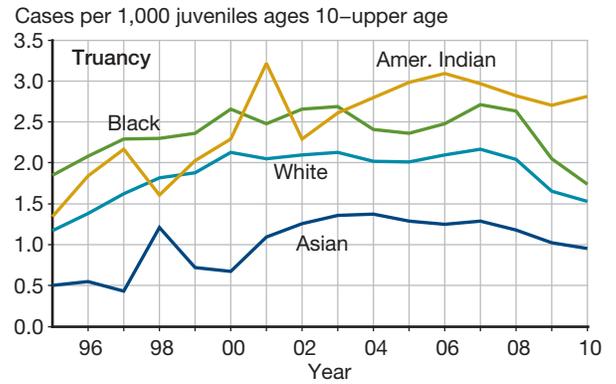
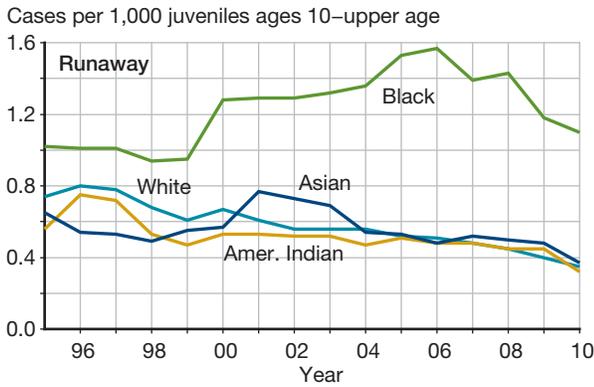
Case rates for most status offenses declined in the older age groups; liquor law violation case rates, however, increased substantially through the juvenile years



- In 2010, 16 was the peak age for truancy, runaway, and ungovernability case rates. For liquor law and curfew violation cases, case rates peaked at age 17. The age-specific case rate patterns were not substantially different for males and females.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

**From 1995 to 2010, case rates for black and American Indian juveniles were higher than case rates for white and Asian juveniles for most status offense categories**



- Runaway case rates decreased for all but black youth between 1995 and 2010. In 2010, the runaway case rate for black juveniles was more than 3 times the rate for whites.
- Truancy case rates increased for whites (31%), American Indians (110%), and Asians (91%) between 1995 and 2010. For blacks, the 2010 truancy rate was 6% less than the 1995 rate.
- Curfew violation case rates for American Indian youth increased 64% between 1995 and 1998 and then declined 53% by 2010 to a level lower than in 1995.
- American Indian juveniles had the highest case rate for liquor law violations in each year between 1995 and 2010.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

# How were petitioned status offense cases processed in juvenile court in 2010?

Of every 1,000 petitioned status offense cases handled in 2010, 295 resulted in formal probation and 45 resulted in residential placement following adjudication

Of every 1,000 status offense cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	557	45 Placed	295 Probation	217 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	443	138 Informal sanction	305 Dismissed	

Of every 1,000 runaway cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	383	67 Placed	260 Probation	56 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	617	77 Informal sanction	540 Dismissed	

Of every 1,000 truancy cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	538	42 Placed	301 Probation	194 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	462	173 Informal sanction	289 Dismissed	

Of every 1,000 curfew violation cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	638	15 Placed	150 Probation	473 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	362	82 Informal sanction	279 Dismissed	

Of every 1,000 ungovernability cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	580	83 Placed	418 Probation	78 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	420	129 Informal sanction	291 Dismissed	

Of every 1,000 liquor law violation cases referred to juvenile court:

Adjudicated a status offender	603	42 Placed	355 Probation	206 Other sanction
Not adjudicated a status offender	397	154 Informal sanction	244 Dismissed	

Notes: Cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive sanction. Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*.

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