



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator December 2011

Person Offense Cases in Juvenile Court, 2008

by Sarah Hockenberry

Counts, rates, and trends

U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 403,300 delinquency cases in 2008 in which the most serious charge was an offense against a person. (Person offenses include assault, robbery, rape, homicide, and other crimes involving force or threat of force against persons.) The 2008 person offense caseload was 119% greater than in 1985. In 2008, person offenses accounted for 24% of the delinquency caseload, compared with 16% in 1985.

In 2008, juvenile courts handled 13.1 person offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. The 2008 person offense case rate was

87% greater than the 1985 rate but 8% less than the 1997 peak rate.

Homicide was the most serious charge in 1,400 cases handled in 2008. This amounted to less than 0.4% of all person offense cases that juvenile courts handled in 2008. The majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (270,200) or aggravated assault (48,000). Together, these two offenses accounted for 79% of all person offense cases processed in 2008.

Characteristics of offenders

More than half (56%) of person offense cases in 2008 involved white youth, 41% involved black youth, 1% involved American Indian youth (includes Alaskan Native), and 1% involved Asian youth (includes Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander). Between 1985 and 2008, person offense case rates for black juveniles were substantially greater than those for the other racial groups; however, the case rate increased most for white youth (88%), followed by black youth (80%), Asian youth (53%), and American Indian youth (37%). Person offense case rates peaked for all racial groups during the 1990s and declined through the

Person offense cases handled by juvenile courts, 1985–2008

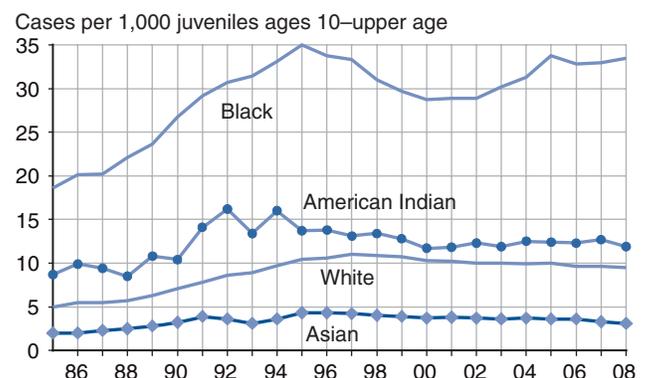
Most severe disposition	1985	2008	Percent change 1985–2008
Cases			
Total person offenses*	183,700	403,300	119%
Violent Crime Index	64,400	86,500	34
Criminal homicide	1,200	1,400	16
Forcible rape	3,300	4,400	33
Robbery	25,600	32,800	28
Aggravated assault	34,400	48,000	40
Simple assault	100,300	270,200	169
Case rate**			
Total person offenses*	7.0	13.1	87%
Violent Crime Index	2.4	2.8	15
Criminal homicide	0.0	0.0	-1
Forcible rape	0.1	0.1	14
Robbery	1.0	1.0	9
Aggravated assault	1.3	1.6	19
Simple assault	3.8	8.8	130

* Total includes other person offense categories not listed.

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

Note: Percent change is calculated using unrounded numbers.

The person offense case rate for black youth increased annually between 2000 and 2008



early 2000s. Although case rates were generally flat between 2000 and 2008 for white, American Indian, and Asian youth, case rates for black youth increased 17%, almost reaching the 1995 peak rate.

Compared with 1985, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 2008 were about the same age but more likely to be female. In 2008, 60% of person offenses involved juveniles younger than 16, compared with 62% in 1985. Between 1985 and 2008, the relative increase in the female caseload outpaced that of males for person offenses (228% vs. 93%). As a result, the female share of the person offense caseload has grown since 1985. For example, females accounted for about 21% of person offenses for each year between 1985 and 1991. Between 1991 and 2008, the female proportion of the person offense caseload steadily increased and was 29% in 2008.

Compared with males, the 2008 female delinquency caseload had a greater proportion of simple assault cases (21% vs. 15%) and an equal proportion of aggravated assault cases (3%). Even though assault cases increased both for males and females between 1985 and 2008, the growth in female assault cases exceeded the growth in male assault cases (226% vs. 108%).

Case processing

Of the 403,300 person offense cases that juvenile courts disposed in 2008, 58% (238,100) were handled formally (i.e., a petition was filed requesting an adjudicatory or transfer hearing). Of these petitioned cases, 58% (139,300) resulted in the youth being adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile justice system, 40% (94,400) resulted in the youth being adjudicated not delinquent, and 2% (4,400) were judicially waived to criminal court.

The proportion of petitioned person offense cases judicially waived to criminal court peaked in 1994, when 2.7% (5,800) of such cases were waived. Since 1994, the likelihood of waiver has declined. By 2008, 1.9% (4,400) of the petitioned person offense caseload was waived. Although the likelihood of waiver has declined, person offense cases were more likely to be waived than cases involving other offenses in 2008. Cases involving males were four times as likely as those involving females to be judicially waived to criminal court in 2008, and cases involving juveniles age 16 or older were more likely to be waived than those involving juveniles younger than 16.

In 31% (43,500) of the 139,300 person offense cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent in 2008, the most severe disposition imposed was placement out of the home in a residential facility. Probation was ordered in 59% (82,200) of the cases and 10% (13,600) resulted in other sanctions, including referral to an outside agency, fines, community service, and restitution.

Among person offense cases in which youth were adjudicated delinquent, the percentage of youth ordered to out-of-home placement decreased between 1985 and 2008, and the percentage of youth ordered to probation remained the same.

In 2008, those most likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement for person offense cases were youth age 16 or older,

Demographic and case processing characteristics of person offense cases

Characteristics	1985	1999	2008
Gender			
Male	80%	72%	71%
Female	20	28	29
Age at referral			
15 or younger	62%	65%	60%
16 or older	38	35	40
Race/ethnicity			
White	59%	63%	56%
Black	39	35	41
American Indian	1	1	1
Asian	1	1	1
Predisposition detention			
Detained	25%	25%	27%
Not detained	75	75	73
Intake decision			
Petitioned	55%	61%	59%
Not petitioned	45	39	41
Judicial decision of petitioned cases			
Adjudicated delinquent	55%	56%	58%
Not adjudicated delinquent	43	42	40
Waived to criminal court	2	2	2
Most severe disposition of adjudicated cases			
Placed	35%	30%	31%
Probation	58	60	59
Other	7	10	10

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

males, and American Indian youth. Those most likely to be ordered to probation were youth age 15 or younger, females, and Asian youth.

For further information

This fact sheet is based on the report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 2008*, which is available through OJJDP's Web site (ojjdp.gov). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP's online Statistical Briefing Book (ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/) and click on "Juveniles in Court." OJJDP also supports Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, a Web-based application that analyzes the data files used for the *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. This application is available from the "Data Analysis Tools" section of the Statistical Briefing Book.

Sarah Hockenberry, M.S., a Research Associate with the National Center for Juvenile Justice, prepared this document as a product of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by OJJDP grant 2010-JR-FX-0031.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.