



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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Person Offense Cases in Juvenile Court, 2005

by Sarah Hockenberry

Person offenses accounted for 25% of all delinquency cases in 2005

U.S. juvenile courts handled an estimated 429,500 delinquency cases in 2005 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 2005 person offense caseload was 133% greater than in 1985. In 2005, person offenses accounted for 25% of the delinquency caseload, compared with 16% in 1985.

In 2005, juvenile courts handled 13.6 person offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. The 2005 person offense case rate was 94% greater than the 1985 rate, but 3% less than the peak rate in 1997.

Homicide was the most serious charge in 1,400 cases handled in 2005. This was less than 0.3% of all person offense cases that juvenile courts handled in 2005. The majority of person offense cases involved charges of simple assault (298,600) or aggravated assault (49,900). Together, these two offenses accounted for 81% of all person offense cases processed in 2005.

Characteristics of offenders

More than half (57%) of person offense cases in 2005 involved white youth, 41% involved black youth, 1% involved American Indian youth, and 1% involved Asian youth. Between 1985 and 2005, 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 (97%), followed by black youth (81%), Asian youth (80%), and American Indian youth (44%). Person offense case rates peaked for all racial groups during the 1990s and declined through the early 2000s. While the case rates were generally flat between 2000 and 2005

Person offense cases handled by juvenile courts, 1985–2005

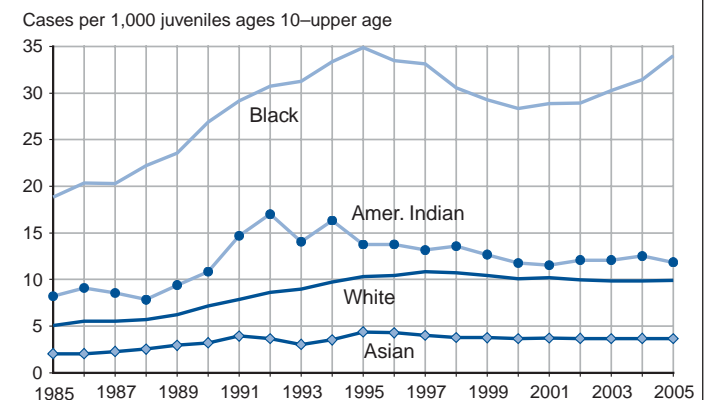
Most severe disposition	1985	2005	Percent change 1985–2005
Cases			
Total person offenses*	184,700	429,500	133%
Violent Crime Index	64,000	81,600	27
Criminal homicide	1,200	1,400	11
Forcible rape	3,600	4,400	22
Robbery	25,500	26,000	2
Aggravated assault	35,700	49,900	49
Simple assault	101,800	298,600	193
Case rate**			
Total person offenses*	7.0	13.6	94%
Violent Crime Index	2.4	2.6	6
Criminal homicide	0.0	0.0	-7
Forcible rape	0.1	0.1	1
Robbery	1.0	0.8	-15
Aggravated assault	1.3	1.6	23
Simple assault	3.9	9.4	144

* 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 2005



for white, American Indian, and Asian youth, the case rate for black youth increased 20%, almost reaching its 1995 peak rate.

Compared with 1985, juveniles involved in person offense cases in 2005 were slightly younger and more likely to be female. In 2005, 64% of person offenses involved juveniles younger than 16, compared with 61% in 1985. Between 1985 and 2005, the relative increase in the female caseload outpaced that of males for person offenses (247% vs. 103%). As a result, the female share of the person offense caseload has grown since 1985. For example, females accounted for about 20% of person offenses for each year between 1985 and 1991. Between 1991 and 2005, the female proportion of the person offense caseload steadily increased to 30%.

Compared with males, the 2005 female delinquency caseload had a greater proportion of simple assault cases (22% vs. 16%) and an equal proportion of aggravated assault cases (3%). While assault cases increased both for males and females between 1985 and 2005, the growth in female assault cases exceeded the growth in male assault cases (71% vs. 56%).

Case processing

Of the 429,500 person offense cases that juvenile courts disposed in 2005, 58% (251,200) were handled formally (i.e., a petition was filed requesting an adjudicatory or transfer hearing). Of these petitioned cases, 1% (3,500) were judicially waived to criminal court, 61% (153,000) resulted in the youth being adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile justice system, and 38% (94,700) resulted in the youth being adjudicated not delinquent.

The proportion of petitioned person offense cases judicially waived to criminal court peaked in 1994, when 2.6% (5,500) of such cases were waived. Since 1994, the likelihood of waiver has declined. By 2005, 1.4% (3,500) 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 2005. Cases involving males were four times as likely as those involving females to be judicially waived to criminal court in 2005, and cases involving juveniles age 16 or older were more likely to be waived than those involving juveniles younger than 16. In 2005, cases involving American Indian youth charged with a person offense were more likely to be judicially waived than person offense cases involving white, black, or Asian youth.

In 25% (37,800) of the 153,000 person offense cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent in 2005, the most severe disposition that the court imposed was placement out of the home in a residential facility. Probation was ordered in 63% (95,800) of the cases and 13% (19,500) 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 2005, and the percentage of youth ordered to probation increased.

Demographic and case processing characteristics of person offense cases

Characteristics	1985	1995	2005
Gender			
Male	80%	75%	70%
Female	20	25	30
Age at referral			
15 or younger	61%	65%	64%
16 or older	39	35	36
Race/ethnicity			
White	59%	59%	57%
Black	39	38	41
American Indian	1	1	1
Asian	1	1	1
Predisposition detention			
Detained	24%	22%	25%
Not detained	76	78	75
Intake decision			
Petitioned	54%	59%	58%
Not petitioned	46	41	42
Judicial decision of petitioned cases			
Adjudicated delinquent	56%	52%	61%
Not adjudicated delinquent	42	46	38
Waived to criminal court	2	2	1
Most severe disposition of adjudicated cases			
Placed	36%	31%	25%
Probation	56	56	63
Other	8	12	13

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

In 2005, those most likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement for person offense cases were youth age 16 or older, males, and American Indian youth. Those most likely to be ordered to probation were youth age 15 or younger, females, and white youth.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 2005*, which is available through OJJDP's Web site (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP's online Statistical Briefing Book (www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/index.html) and click on "Juveniles in Court." OJJDP also supports Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, a Web-based application that analyzes the data files used for the *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. This application is available from the "Data Analysis Tools" section of the Statistical Briefing Book.

Sarah Hockenberry, M.S., a Research Assistant 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 grants 2007–JL–FX–0007 and 2007–JL–FX–0022.

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