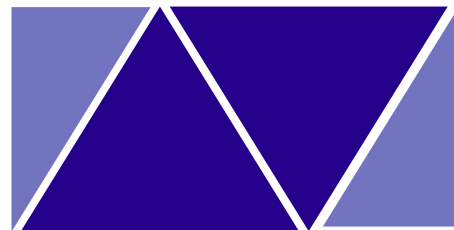


# 2020 JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS



NCJJ | OJJDP | NIJ

# Online resources



## National Center for Juvenile Justice

[ncjj.org](http://ncjj.org)

The National Center for Juvenile Justice's web site describes its research activities, services, and publications, featuring links to project-supported sites and data resources, including OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book, the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice, and the Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation.

## National Juvenile Court Data Archive

[ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda)

The annual *Juvenile Court Statistics* report series is one of many products supported by the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. To learn more, visit the Archive web site.

- ◆ The Archive web site was developed to inform researchers about data sets housed in the National Juvenile Court Data Archive and the procedures for access and use of these data. Visitors can view variable lists and download user guides to the data sets. The site also includes links to publications based on analyses of Archive data.
- ◆ *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics* is an interactive web-based application that allows users to analyze the actual databases that are used to produce the *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. Users have access to national estimates on more than 48 million delinquency cases processed by the nation's juvenile courts between 1985 and 2020. Preformatted tables describe the demographic characteristics of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and how juvenile courts process these cases. Users can also create their own analyses beginning with 2005 data to explore relationships among a youth's demographics and referral offenses, and the court's detention, adjudication, and disposition decisions. This application is available from the "Products & Publications" section on the Archive web site.
- ◆ *Easy Access to State and County Juvenile Court Case Counts* gives users quick access to multiple years of state and county juvenile court case counts for delinquency, status offense, and dependency cases. This application is available from the "Products & Publications" section on the Archive web site.

## OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book

[ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb)

The Briefing Book is a comprehensive online resource describing various topics related to delinquency and the juvenile justice system, including the latest information on youth living in poverty, teen birth rates, youth victims of violent crime, trends in youth arrest rates, and youth in residential placement facilities. The Briefing Book is also a repository for more detailed presentations of juvenile court data than are found in the annual *Juvenile Court Statistics* report.

- ◆ Under the "Juveniles in Court" section of the Statistical Briefing Book, users will find the latest statistical information on trends in the volume of cases handled by the nation's juvenile courts and the court's response (e.g., detention, adjudication, and disposition decisions) to these cases. Juvenile court data are displayed in an easy-to-read, ready-to-use format, using tables and graphs.
- ◆ The Briefing Book's "Juveniles in Court" section includes an interactive tool that describes how specific types of delinquency cases typically flow through the juvenile justice system. Annual summaries are available from 2005 to present for more than 25 offense categories, and include separate presentations by gender, age, and race.



---

# Juvenile Court Statistics 2020

---

Sarah Hockenberry  
Charles Puzzanchera

May 2023

National Center for Juvenile Justice

This report was prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and was supported by grant number 15PNIJ-21-GG-03202-TITL funded by the National Institute of Justice with support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Copyright 2023, National Center for Juvenile Justice, 3700 South Water Street, Suite 200, Pittsburgh, PA, 15203-2363. ISSN 0091-3278.

Suggested citation: Hockenberry, Sarah, and Puzzanchera, Charles. 2023. *Juvenile Court Statistics 2020*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

# Acknowledgments

This report is a product of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (Archive), which is funded by a grant to the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), with support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice. Kaitlyn Sill and Benjamin Adams were the NIJ Social Science Analysts for the project during the various stages of data collection and production of this report.

The report authors are Sarah Hockenberry, Project Manager, and Charles Puzzanchera, Senior Research Associate. Melissa Sickmund is the Project Director of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. In addition, the following Archive staff are acknowledged for their contributions to the collection and processing of the data presented in this report.

Kristy Bach, Program Services Manager

Jeremy Bilfield, Research Assistant

Greg Chamberlin, Computer Programmer

Anthony Sladky, Senior Computer Programmer

Jason Smith, Computer Programmer

Nancy Tierney, Program Manager

*Juvenile Court Statistics* would not be possible were it not for the state and local agencies that take the time each year to honor our requests for data and documentation. The following agencies contributed case-level data or court-level aggregate statistics for this report:

**Alabama**—State of Alabama, Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Alaska**—Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice.

**Arizona**—Supreme Court, State of Arizona, Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Arkansas**—Administrative Office of the Courts, State of Arkansas.

**California**—California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

**Colorado**—Colorado Judicial Branch.

**Connecticut**—Judicial Branch Administration, Court Support Services and Court Operations Divisions.

**Delaware**—Delaware Family Court, Administrative Office of the Courts.

**District of Columbia**—Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

**Florida**—State of Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

**Georgia**—Council of Juvenile Court Judges of Georgia.

**Hawaii**—Department of the Attorney General.

**Illinois**—Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Probation Services Division.

**Indiana**—Indiana Supreme Court, Division of State Court Administration.

**Iowa**—Iowa Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning.

**Kansas**—Supreme Court of Kansas, Office of Judicial Administration.

**Kentucky**—Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Maryland**—Department of Juvenile Services.

**Massachusetts**—Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Michigan**—State Court Administrative Office, Michigan Supreme Court.

**Minnesota**—Minnesota Supreme Court.

**Mississippi**—Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services.

**Missouri**—Office of State Court Administrator.

**Montana**—Office of State Court Administrator, Youth Court Services.

**Nebraska**—Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

**Nevada**—Division of Child and Family Services, Juvenile Justice Programs Office.

**New Jersey**—Administrative Office of the Courts.

**New Mexico**—Children, Youth and Families Department.

**New York**—Office of Court Administration; and Division of Criminal Justice Services.

**North Carolina**—North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

**North Dakota**—North Dakota Supreme Court, State Court Administrator's Office.

**Ohio**—Supreme Court of Ohio; Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court; Franklin County Court of Common

Pleas; Hamilton County Juvenile Court; and Lucas County Juvenile Court.

**Oregon**—Oregon Youth Authority.

**Pennsylvania**—Juvenile Court Judges' Commission; and Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts.

**Rhode Island**—Rhode Island Family Court.

**South Carolina**—Department of Juvenile Justice.

**South Dakota**—Unified Judicial System.

**Tennessee**—Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**Texas**—Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

**Utah**—Utah Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Virginia**—Department of Juvenile Justice.

**Washington**—Administrative Office of the Courts.

**West Virginia**—West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals Administrative Office, Court Services Division.

**Wisconsin**—Supreme Court of Wisconsin.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	iii
Preface .....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: National Estimates of Delinquency Cases .....	5
Counts and Trends .....	6
Case Rates .....	8
Age at Referral .....	9
Gender .....	12
Race .....	18
Chapter 3: National Estimates of Delinquency Case Processing .....	29
Referral .....	31
Detention .....	32
Intake Decision .....	35
Waiver .....	38
Adjudication .....	42
Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement .....	46
Dispositions: Probation .....	49
Case Processing .....	
Overview .....	52
By Offense Category .....	54
By Age .....	56
By Gender .....	57
By Race .....	58
By Selected Individual Offense .....	60
Chapter 4: National Estimates of Petitioned Status Offense Cases .....	63
Counts and Trends .....	64
Case Rates .....	65
Age at Referral .....	66
Gender .....	68
Race .....	72
Source of Referral .....	76
Detention .....	77
Adjudication .....	78
Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement .....	80
Dispositions: Probation .....	82
Case Processing .....	
Overview .....	84
By Offense Category .....	85
Appendix A: Methods .....	87
Appendix B: Glossary of Terms .....	95
Index of Tables and Figures .....	101





# Preface

*Juvenile Court Statistics 2020* describes delinquency cases and petitioned status offense cases handled between 2005 and 2020 by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. National estimates of juvenile court delinquency caseloads in 2020 were based on analyses of 344,961 automated case records and court-level statistics summarizing an additional 36,012 cases. Estimates of status offense cases formally processed by juvenile courts in 2020 were based on analyses of 37,433 automated case-level records and court-level summary statistics on an additional 2,898 cases. The data used in the analyses were contributed to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (the Archive) by nearly 2,400 courts with jurisdiction over 84% of the juvenile population in 2020.

The first *Juvenile Court Statistics* report was published in 1929 by the U.S. Department of Labor and described cases handled by 42 courts during 1927. During the next decade, *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports were based on statistics cards completed for each delinquency, status offense, and dependency case handled by the courts participating in the reporting series. The Children's Bureau (within the U.S. Department of Labor) tabulated the information on each card, including age, gender, and race of the youth; the reason for referral; the manner of dealing with the case; and the final disposition of the case. During the 1940s, however,

the collection of case-level data was abandoned because of its high cost. From the 1940s until the mid-1970s, *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports were based on simple, annual case counts reported to the Children's Bureau by participating courts.

In 1957, the Children's Bureau initiated a new data collection design that enabled the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series to develop statistically sound national estimates. The Children's Bureau, which had been transferred to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), developed a probability sample of more than 500 courts. Each court in the sample was asked to submit annual counts of delinquency, status offense, and dependency cases. This approach, though, proved difficult to sustain as courts began to drop out of the sample. At the same time, a growing number of courts outside the sample began to compile comparable statistics. By the late 1960s, HEW ended the sample-based effort and returned to the policy of collecting annual case counts from any court able to provide them. The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series, however, continued to generate national estimates based on data from these nonprobability samples.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) became responsible for *Juvenile Court Statistics* following the passage of the Juvenile

Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. In 1975, OJJDP awarded the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) a grant to continue the report series. Although NCJJ agreed to use procedures established by HEW to ensure reporting continuity, NCJJ also began to investigate methods of improving the quality and detail of national statistics. A critical innovation was made possible by the proliferation of computers during the 1970s. As NCJJ asked agencies across the country to complete the annual juvenile court statistics form, some agencies began offering to

send the detailed, automated case-level data collected by their management information systems. NCJJ learned to combine these automated records to produce a detailed national portrait of juvenile court activity—returning to the original objective of the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series.

The project's transition from using annual case counts to analyzing automated case-level data was completed with the production of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1984*. For the first time since the 1930s, *Juvenile Court Statistics*

contained detailed case-level descriptions of the delinquency and status offense cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts. This case-level detail continues to be the emphasis of the reporting series.

In 2018, to ensure efficiency and coordination of all Office of Justice Programs (OJP) research activities, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) assumed management of the juvenile justice research, evaluation, and statistical data collection projects funded by OJJDP, including the National Juvenile Court Data Archive.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This report describes delinquency and status offense cases handled between 2005 and 2020 by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Courts with juvenile jurisdiction may handle a variety of matters, including child maltreatment, traffic violations, child support, and adoptions. This report focuses on cases involving juveniles charged with law violations (delinquency or status offenses).

### Unit of Count

In measuring the activity of juvenile courts, one could count the number of offenses referred; the number of cases referred; the actual filings of offenses, cases, or petitions; the number of disposition hearings; or the number of youth handled. Each “unit of count” has its own merits and disadvantages. The unit of count used in *Juvenile Court Statistics (JCS)* is the number of “cases disposed.”

A “case” represents a youth processed by a juvenile court on a new referral, regardless of the number of law violations contained in the referral. A youth charged with four burglaries in a single referral would represent a single case. A youth referred for three burglaries and referred again the following week on another burglary charge would represent two cases, even if the court eventually merged the two referrals for more efficient processing.

The fact that a case is “disposed” means that a definite action was taken as the result of the referral—i.e., a plan of treatment was selected or initiated. It does not necessarily mean that a case was closed or terminated in the sense that all contact between the court and the youth ceased. For example, a case is considered to be disposed when the court orders probation, not when a term of probation supervision is completed.

### Coverage

A basic question for this reporting series is what constitutes a referral to juvenile court. The answer depends partly on how each jurisdiction organizes its case-screening function. In many communities, an intake unit within the juvenile court first screens all juvenile matters. The intake unit determines whether the matter should be handled informally (i.e., diverted) or petitioned for formal handling. In data files from communities using this type of system, a delinquency or status offense case is defined as a court referral at the point of initial screening, regardless of whether it is handled formally or informally.

In other communities, the juvenile court is not involved in delinquency or status offense matters until another agency (e.g., the prosecutor’s office or a social service agency) has first screened the

case. In other words, the intake function is performed outside the court, and some matters are diverted to other agencies without the court ever handling them. Status offense cases, in particular, tend to be diverted from court processing in this manner.

Since its inception, *Juvenile Court Statistics* has adapted to the changing structure of juvenile court processing nationwide. As court processing became more diverse, the *JCS* series broadened its definition of the juvenile court to incorporate other agencies that perform what can generically be considered juvenile court functions. In some communities, data collection has expanded to include departments of youth services, child welfare agencies, and prosecutors' offices. In other communities, this expansion has not been possible. Therefore, while there is extensive data coverage in the *JCS* series of formally handled delinquency cases and adequate data coverage of informally handled delinquency cases and formally handled status offense cases, the data coverage of informally handled status offense cases is limited and is not sufficient to support the generation of national estimates. For this reason, *JCS* reports do not present any information on informally handled status offense cases. (Subnational analyses of these cases are available from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive [the Archive].)

## Juvenile Court Processing

Any attempt to describe juvenile court caseloads at the national level must be based on a generic model of court processing to serve as a common framework. In order to analyze and present data about juvenile court activities in diverse jurisdictions, the Archive strives to fit the processing characteristics of all jurisdictions into the following general model:

**Intake.** An intake department (either within or outside the court) first screens referred cases. The intake department

may decide to dismiss the case for lack of legal sufficiency or to resolve the matter formally or informally. Informal (i.e., nonpetitioned) dispositions may include a voluntary referral to a social service agency, informal probation, or the payment of fines or some form of voluntary restitution. Formally handled cases are petitioned and scheduled in court for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

**Judicial Waiver.** The intake department may decide that a case should be removed from juvenile court and handled instead in criminal (adult) court. In such cases, a petition is usually filed in juvenile court asking the juvenile court judge to waive juvenile court jurisdiction over the case. The juvenile court judge decides whether the case merits criminal prosecution.<sup>1</sup> When a waiver request is denied, the matter is usually then scheduled for an adjudicatory hearing in the juvenile court.

**Petitioning.** If the intake department decides that a case should be handled formally within the juvenile court, a petition is filed and the case is placed on the court calendar (or docket) for an adjudicatory hearing. A small number of petitions are dismissed for various reasons before an adjudicatory hearing is actually held.

**Adjudication.** At the adjudicatory hearing, a youth may be adjudicated (determined to have committed) for a delinquency or status offense, and the case would then proceed to a disposition hearing. Alternatively, a case can be dismissed or continued in contemplation of dismissal. In these cases, the court often recommends that the youth take some actions prior to the final

adjudication decision, such as paying restitution or voluntarily attending drug counseling.

**Disposition.** At the disposition hearing, the juvenile court judge determines the most appropriate sanction, generally after reviewing a predisposition report prepared by a probation department. The range of options available to a court typically includes commitment to an institution; placement in a group home or other residential facility or perhaps in a foster home; probation (either regular or intensive supervision); referral to an outside agency, day treatment, or mental health program; or imposition of a fine, community service, or restitution. Disposition orders often involve multiple sanctions and/or conditions. Review hearings are held to monitor the youth's progress. Dispositions may be modified as a result. This report includes only the most severe initial disposition in each case.

**Detention.** A youth may be placed in a detention facility at different points as a case progresses through the juvenile justice system. Detention practices also vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. A judicial decision to detain or continue detention may occur before or after adjudication or disposition. This report includes only those detention actions that result in a youth being placed in a restrictive facility under court authority while awaiting the outcome of the court process. This report does not include detention decisions made by law enforcement officials prior to court intake or those occurring after the disposition of a case (e.g., temporary holding of a youth in a detention facility while awaiting court-ordered placement elsewhere).

## Data Quality

*Juvenile Court Statistics* relies on the secondary analysis of data originally compiled by juvenile courts or juvenile justice agencies to meet their own information and reporting needs. Although these incoming data files are not

<sup>1</sup> Mechanisms of transfer to criminal court vary by state. In some states, a prosecutor has the authority to file juvenile cases directly in criminal court if they meet specified criteria. This report, however, includes only cases that were initially under juvenile court jurisdiction and were transferred as a result of judicial waiver.

uniform across jurisdictions, they are likely to be more detailed and accurate than data files compiled by local jurisdictions merely complying with a mandated national reporting program.

The heterogeneity of the contributed data files greatly increases the complexity of the Archive's data processing tasks. Contributing jurisdictions collect and report information using their own definitions and coding categories. Therefore, the detail reported in some data sets is not contained in others. Even when similar data elements are used, they may have inconsistent definitions or overlapping coding categories. The Archive restructures contributed data into standardized coding categories in order to combine information from multiple sources. The standardization process requires an intimate understanding of the development, structure, and content of each data set received. Codebooks and operation manuals are studied, data providers interviewed, and data files analyzed to maximize the understanding of each information system. Every attempt is made to ensure that only compatible information from the various data sets is used in the standardized data files.

While the heterogeneity of the data adds complexity to the development of a national data file, it has proven to be valuable in other ways. The diversity of the data stored in the National Juvenile Court Data Archive enables the data to support a wider range of research efforts than would a uniform, and probably more general, data collection form. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program is limited by necessity to a small number of relatively broad offense codes. The UCR offense code for larceny-theft combines shoplifting with a number of other larcenies. Thus, the data cannot be used to study shoplifting. In comparison, many of the Archive's data sets are sufficiently detailed to enable a researcher to distinguish offenses that are often combined in other reporting series—shoplifting can

be distinguished from other larcenies, joyriding from motor vehicle theft, and armed robbery from unarmed robbery. The diversity of these coding structures allows researchers to construct data sets that contain the detail demanded by their research designs.

### Validity of the Estimates

The national delinquency and status offense estimates presented in this report were generated with data from a large nonprobability sample of juvenile courts. Therefore, statistical confidence in the estimates cannot be mathematically determined. Although statistical confidence would be greater if a probability sampling design were used, the cost of such an effort has long been considered prohibitive. Secondary analysis of available data is the best practical alternative for developing an understanding of the nation's juvenile courts.

National estimates of delinquency cases for 2020 are based on analyses of individual case records from more than 2,100 courts and aggregate court-level data on cases from nearly 300 courts. Together, these courts had jurisdiction over 84% of the U.S. juvenile population in 2020. National estimates of petitioned status offense cases for 2020 are based on case records from more than 2,000 courts and court-level data from more than 100 courts, covering 74% of the juvenile population. The imputation and weighting procedures that generate national estimates from these samples control for many factors: the size of a community, the age and race composition of its juvenile population, the volume of cases referred to the reporting courts, the age and race of the youth involved, the offense characteristics of the cases, the courts' responses to the cases (manner of handling, detention, adjudication, and disposition), and the nature of each court's jurisdictional responsibilities (i.e., upper age of original jurisdiction).

With each annual release of data, estimates for prior years are revised and

replaced. There are two primary reasons for this. First, data submissions from contributing jurisdictions, particularly case-level data submissions, can change as newer data files submitted to the Archive replace previously submitted files. Second, the estimation procedure used by the Archive utilizes county level population estimates, which are revised by the Census Bureau each year. Therefore, readers should not compare estimates from *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports produced in different years, but should compare estimates across trending years within a *Juvenile Court Statistics* report.

Since publication of the 2017 *Juvenile Court Statistics* report, the Archive changed the programming language used for imputation and estimation procedures. This change has also allowed for technical improvements to the code itself. Anyone using data from this report for trend purposes should replace any back year data with data produced using the current procedures.

### The Impact of COVID-19 in 2020

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in the United States in March 2020, may have impacted the policies, procedures, and data collection activities regarding referrals to and processing of youth by juvenile courts. Stay-at-home orders and school closures likely impacted the volume and type of law-violating behavior by youth referred to juvenile court in 2020.

While COVID-19 likely impacted the juvenile court caseload, it is not possible to ascertain the true impact from the data submitted to the Archive. Although some data submissions were delayed, data collection procedures remained unchanged. The number of cases handled by juvenile courts has been steadily decreasing since the late 1990s, but the declines have been within a limited range. For example, between 2010 and 2019, the annual year-to-year decline in the number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts ranged from 4%

to 9% and the number of petitioned status offense cases from 3% to 10%. Comparatively, the number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts declined 28% between 2019 and 2020 and the number of petitioned status offense cases fell 32%—the largest 1-year change of the 1985–2020 period for each. It is likely that at least some of the decrease in the number of cases handled by juvenile courts in 2020 was in relation to COVID-19 and the impact it had on the juvenile justice system.

## Structure of the Report

Chapters 2 and 3 of this report present national estimates of delinquency cases handled by the juvenile courts in 2020 and analyze caseload trends since 2005. Chapter 2 describes the volume and rate of delinquency cases, demographic characteristics of the youth involved (age, gender, and race), and offenses charged. Chapter 3 traces the flow of delinquency cases from referral to court through court processing, examining each decision point (i.e., detention, intake decision, adjudication decision, and judicial disposition) and presenting data by demographic characteristics and offense. Together, these two chapters provide a detailed national portrait of delinquency cases.

Chapter 4 presents national estimates of status offense cases formally handled by the juvenile courts in 2020 and caseload trends since 2005. It includes data on demographic characteristics, offenses charged, and case processing.

Appendix A describes the statistical procedure used to generate these estimates. Readers are encouraged to consult appendix B for definitions of key terms used throughout the report. Few terms in the field of juvenile justice have widely accepted definitions. The terminology used in this report has been carefully developed to communicate the findings of the work as precisely as possible without sacrificing applicability to multiple jurisdictions.

This report uses a format that combines tables, figures, and text highlights for presentation of the data. A detailed index of tables and figures appears at the end of the report.

## Data Access

The data used in this report are stored in the National Juvenile Court Data Archive at the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) in Pittsburgh, PA. The Archive contains the most detailed information available on youth involved in the juvenile justice system and on the activities of U.S. juvenile courts. Designed to facilitate research on the juvenile justice system, the Archive's data files are available to policymakers, researchers, and students. In addition to national data files, state and local data can be provided to researchers. With the assistance of Archive staff, researchers can merge selected files for cross-jurisdictional and longitudinal analyses. Upon request, project staff is also available to perform special analyses of the Archive's data files.

Researchers are encouraged to explore the National Juvenile Court Data Archive web site at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/) for a summary of Archive holdings and procedures for data access. Researchers may also contact the Archive directly at 412–246-0833.

## Other Sources of Juvenile Court Data

With support from NIJ and OJJDP, NCJJ has developed two web-based data analysis and dissemination applications that provide access to the data used for this report. The first of these applications, *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985–2020*, was developed to facilitate independent analysis of the national delinquency estimates presented in this report while eliminating the need for statistical analysis software. It also enables users to view preformatted tables, beyond those included in this report, describing the demographic characteristics of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and how juvenile courts process these cases. The second application, *Easy Access to State and County Juvenile Court Case Counts*, presents annual counts of the delinquency, status offense, and dependency cases processed in juvenile courts, by state and county. These applications are available from OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb).

# Chapter 2

## National Estimates of Delinquency Cases

Delinquency offenses are acts committed by juveniles that, if committed by an adult, could result in criminal prosecution. This chapter documents the volume of delinquency cases referred to juvenile court and examines the characteristics of these cases, including types of offenses charged and demographic characteristics of the juveniles involved (age, gender, and race).

Analysis of case rates permits comparisons of juvenile court activity over time while controlling for differences in the size and demographic characteristics of the juvenile population. Rates are calculated as the number of cases for every 1,000 juveniles in the population—

those age 10 or older who were under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter focuses on cases disposed in 2020 and examines trends since 2005.

It should be noted that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in March 2020, may have impacted the policies, procedures, and data collection activities regarding referrals to and processing of youth by juvenile courts. Although COVID-19 likely impacted juvenile court activities, it is not possible to determine the true impact on case processing of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2020.

---

<sup>1</sup> The upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction is defined by statute in each state. See appendix B, the “Glossary of Terms,” for a more detailed discussion on the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. Case rates presented in this report control for state variations in juvenile population.



# Counts and Trends

- In 2020, courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 508,400 delinquency cases.
- In 1960, approximately 1,100 delinquency cases were processed daily. In 2020, juvenile courts handled about 1,400 delinquency cases per day.
- The 2020 juvenile court delinquency caseload was 25% more than the 1960 caseload.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases decreased for all offense categories: property and public order 73% each, drugs 69%, and person 59%.

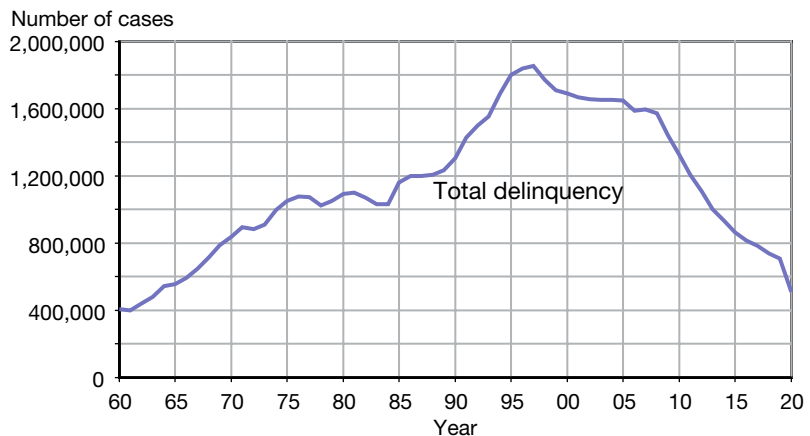
## Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Person	26%	35%
Property	37	32
Drugs	11	11
Public order	26	23
Total	100%	100%

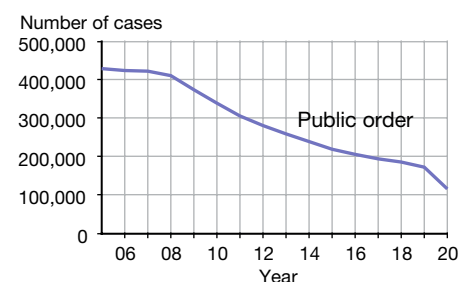
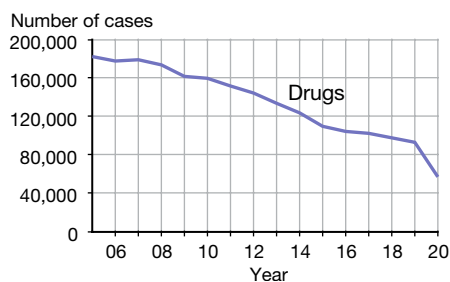
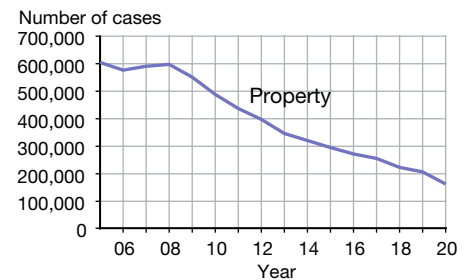
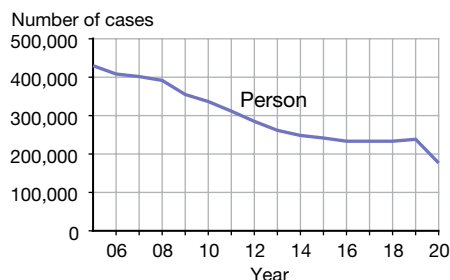
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

- The offense profile of the court's 2020 delinquency caseload was similar to that of 2005, but had a greater proportion of person offenses and smaller proportions of property and public order offenses.

## The number of delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts decreased 69% in the 16 years between 2005 and 2020



## Delinquency caseloads in 2020 for all offense categories were at their lowest level since 2005





## Counts and Trends

In the last 10 years (2011–2020), the number of cases handled by juvenile courts has decreased for nearly all offenses

Most serious offense	Number of cases 2020	Percent change		
		10 year 2011–2020	5 year 2016–2020	1 year 2019–2020
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>508,400</b>	<b>–58%</b>	<b>–38%</b>	<b>–28%</b>
<b>Total person</b>	<b>175,500</b>	<b>–43</b>	<b>–25</b>	<b>–26</b>
Criminal homicide	1,200	60	47	1
Rape	6,500	–21	–13	–22
Robbery	16,200	–27	–12	–16
Aggravated assault	22,100	–28	–10	–17
Simple assault	105,100	–49	–30	–30
Other violent sex offenses	5,900	–42	–14	–19
Other person offenses	18,500	–41	–26	–24
<b>Total property</b>	<b>161,000</b>	<b>–63</b>	<b>–41</b>	<b>–22</b>
Burglary	32,200	–59	–37	–12
Larceny-theft	57,500	–73	–54	–33
Motor vehicle theft	14,500	12	–3	–4
Arson	1,400	–67	–39	–22
Vandalism	29,800	–56	–26	–14
Trespassing	14,900	–61	–39	–21
Stolen property offenses	5,800	–53	–33	–17
Other property offenses	4,900	–47	–24	–25
<b>Drug law violations</b>	<b>56,900</b>	<b>–63</b>	<b>–45</b>	<b>–39</b>
<b>Total public order</b>	<b>115,000</b>	<b>–62</b>	<b>–44</b>	<b>–33</b>
Obstruction of justice	55,100	–63	–47	–31
Disorderly conduct	28,100	–69	–49	–41
Weapons offenses	12,100	–55	–32	–26
Liquor law violations	2,500	–74	–52	–35
Nonviolent sex offenses	8,300	–20	–23	–30
Other public order offenses	9,000	–60	–37	–35

**Note:** Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

- Between 2011 and 2020, offenses with the largest percentage decrease in caseloads included liquor law violations (74%) and larceny-theft (73%).
- Unlike most other offenses, the number of motor vehicle theft cases increased during the 10-year period between 2011 and 2020 (12%), and decreases in recent years were more modest than decreases in delinquency cases involving other offenses.
- Trends in juvenile court cases were similar to trends in arrests<sup>2</sup> of persons younger than 18. The number of juvenile court cases involving robbery and aggravated assault cases decreased during the 10-year period between 2011 and 2020 (27% and 28%, respectively). The number of arrests involving persons younger than age 18 charged with robbery or aggravated assault offenses also decreased during this period (down 50% and 53%, respectively).
- Between 2011 and 2020, the volume of juvenile court cases involving burglary or larceny-theft cases decreased (59% and 73%, respectively), and arrests of persons under age 18 decreased 76% for burglary and 82% for larceny-theft offenses.
- Unlike most other offenses, the number of juvenile court cases involving criminal homicide increased substantially in the 5-year period between 2016 and 2020 (47%), and the number of juvenile arrests involving criminal homicide between 2016 and 2020 increased 11%.

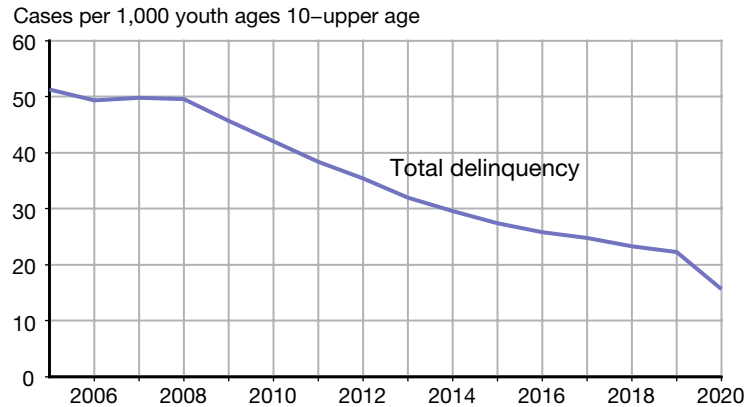
<sup>2</sup> Arrest estimates were developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1980–2014) and the National Center for Juvenile Justice (2015–2020) based on data originally collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and published in their annual *Crime in the United States* reports. Arrest estimates are available from OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book: [www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/qa05101.asp?qaDate=2020](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/qa05101.asp?qaDate=2020).

# Case Rates

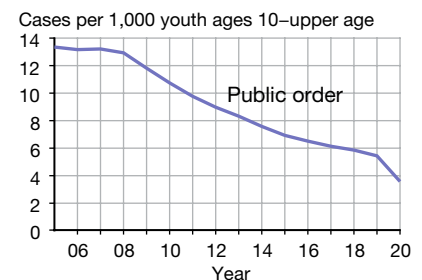
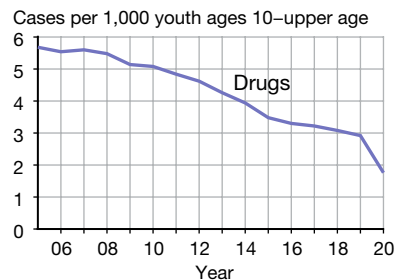
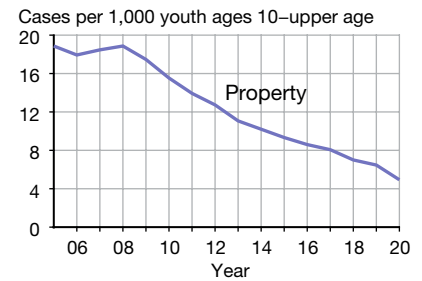
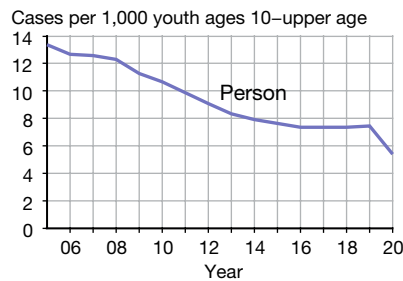
- More than 32 million youth were under juvenile court jurisdiction in 2020. Each age between age 10 and age 16 accounts for about 13% of these youth, thus nearly 91% were between the ages of 10 and 16. Youth age 17 make up a somewhat smaller share of the population (10%) because in a few states the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction is below age 17. In those states, youth age 17 were under the original jurisdiction of the criminal court. (See “upper age of jurisdiction” in the Glossary of Terms, appendix B.)
- In 2020, juvenile courts processed 15.7 delinquency cases for every 1,000 juveniles in the population—those age 10 or older who were under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court.
- The total delinquency case rate remained stable between 2005 and 2008 and then declined 68% to the 2020 level. As a result, the overall delinquency case rate in 2020 was 69% below the 2005 level.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2005 and 2020, case rates decreased 74% for property offense cases, 73% for public order offenses, 69% for drug law violations, and 60% for person offenses.

<sup>3</sup> The percent change in the number of cases disposed may not be equal to the percent change in case rates because of the changing size of the juvenile population.

The delinquency case rate declined from 51.3 per 1,000 juveniles in 2005 to 15.7 in 2020



Between 2005 and 2020, case rates decreased the most for property offenses (from 18.9 to 5.0 per 1,000 juveniles)



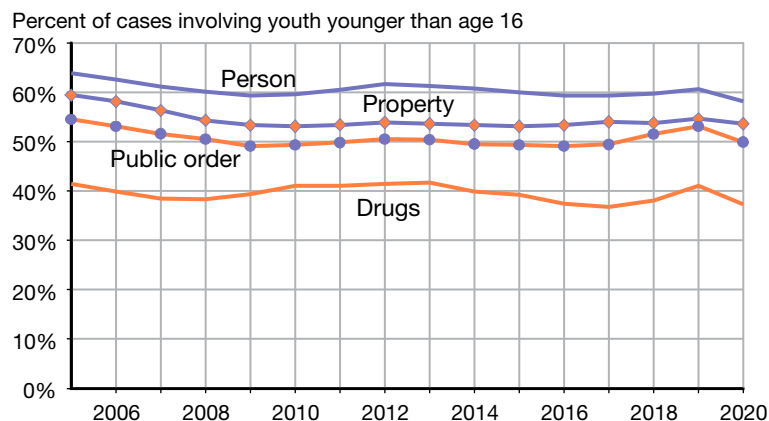
## Age at Referral

Of the 508,400 delinquency cases processed in 2020, 53% involved youth younger than 16, 27% involved females, and 43% involved White youth

Most serious offense	Number of cases	Percentage of total juvenile court cases, 2020		
		Younger than 16	Female	White
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>508,400</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Total person</b>	<b>175,500</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>42</b>
Criminal homicide	1,200	30	10	21
Rape	6,500	59	4	56
Robbery	16,200	46	11	14
Aggravated assault	22,100	52	25	33
Simple assault	105,100	60	37	43
Other violent sex offenses	5,900	70	6	62
Other person offenses	18,500	62	30	58
<b>Total property</b>	<b>161,000</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>43</b>
Burglary	32,200	54	12	38
Larceny-theft	57,500	50	34	43
Motor vehicle theft	14,500	53	22	31
Arson	1,400	73	16	58
Vandalism	29,800	59	20	56
Trespassing	14,900	55	23	47
Stolen property offenses	5,800	46	14	21
Other property offenses	4,900	53	25	45
<b>Drug law violations</b>	<b>56,900</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Total public order</b>	<b>115,000</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>
Obstruction of justice	55,100	43	26	37
Disorderly conduct	28,100	64	36	44
Weapons offenses	12,100	44	10	28
Liquor law violations	2,500	32	35	62
Nonviolent sex offenses	8,300	58	20	57
Other public order offenses	9,000	54	23	52

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

In 2020, juveniles younger than 16 accounted for more than half of all delinquency cases, including 58% of person offense cases



■ The proportion of cases involving juveniles age 15 or younger varied by offense category. Between 2005 and 2020, younger youth accounted for a smaller proportion of drug and public order cases than of person and property offense cases.

■ In 2020, youth younger than 16 accounted for nearly three-quarters (73%) of juvenile arson cases.

### Offense profile of delinquency cases by age group:

Most serious offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
<b>2020</b>		
Person	38%	30%
Property	32	31
Drugs	8	15
Public order	21	24
Total	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>		
Person	29%	22%
Property	38	35
Drugs	8	15
Public order	25	28
Total	100%	100%

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

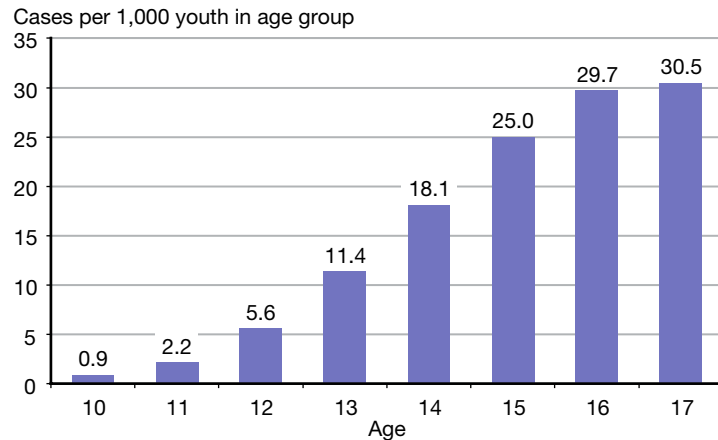
■ Compared with the delinquency caseload involving older youth, the caseload of youth age 15 or younger in 2020 included a larger proportion of person and property offense cases and smaller proportions of drug and public order offense cases.

■ Compared with 2005, the caseload in 2020 for both younger and older youth involved greater proportions of person offense cases, and smaller proportions of property and public order offense cases.

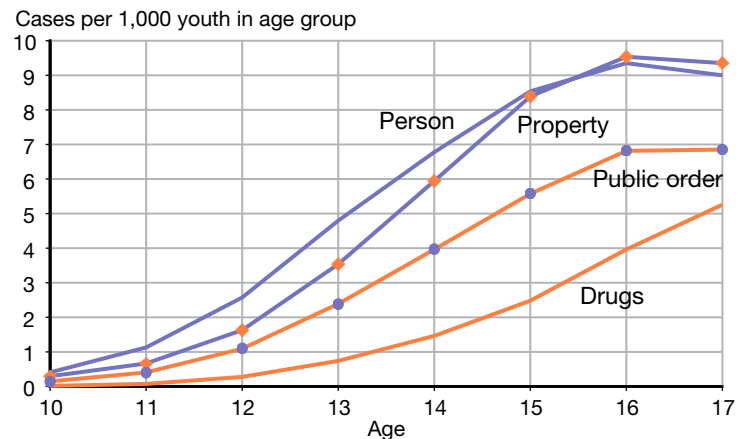
## Age at Referral

- Although, in general, more 17-year-olds than 16-year-olds are arrested, the number of juvenile court cases involving 17-year-olds (101,100) was lower than the number involving 16-year-olds (124,100) in 2020. The explanation lies primarily in the fact that in 5 states 17-year-olds are excluded from the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court. 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.
- In 2020, the delinquency case rate for 17-year-olds (30.5) was nearly twice the rate for 14-year-olds (18.1) and nearly 3 times the rate for 13-year-olds (11.4).
- The largest increase in case rates between age 13 and age 17 was for drug offenses. The case rate for drug offenses for 17-year-olds (5.3) was 7 times the rate for 13-year-olds (0.7).
- For public order offenses in 2020, the case rate for 17-year-olds (6.8) was nearly 3 times the rate for 13-year-olds (2.4) and the property offense case rate for 17-year-olds (9.4) was also nearly 3 times the rate for 13-year-olds (3.5).
- For cases involving person offenses, the case rate for 17-year-olds (9.0) was nearly double the rate for 13-year-olds (4.8).

In 2020, delinquency case rates increased with the referral age of the juvenile



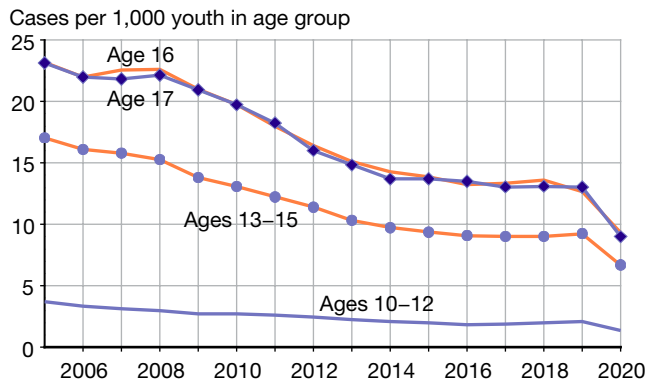
Case rates increased continuously with age for drug offense cases, leveled off after age 16 for public order offense cases, and decreased slightly after age 16 for person and property offense cases



# Age at Referral

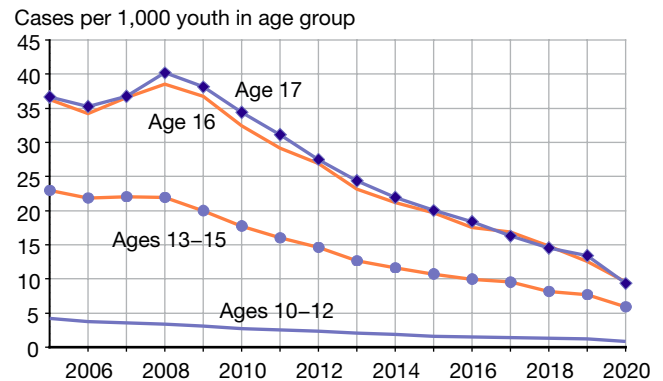
Trends in case rates were similar across age groups between 2005 and 2020 for each general offense category

## Person offense case rates



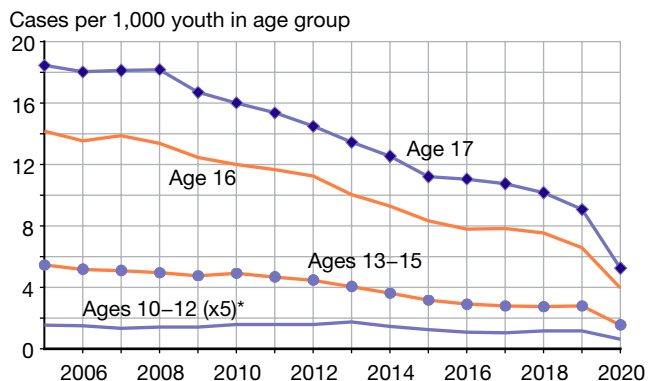
- Between 2005 and 2020, person offense case rates were at their highest in 2005 for all age groups.
- Since 2005, person offense case rates for all age groups declined through 2020: down 63% for youth ages 10–12, 61% each for youth ages 13–15 and 17-year-olds, and 60% for 16-year-olds.

## Property offense case rates



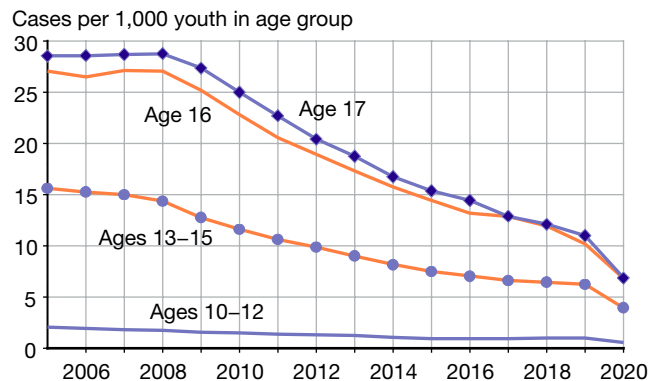
- Property offense case rates were at their highest in 2005 for youth ages 10–12 and 13–15, and peaked in 2008 for youth ages 16 and 17, before declining through 2020.
- Property offense case rates were lower in 2020 than in 2005 for all age groups. In 2020, the case rate for youth ages 10–12 was 79% less than the 2005 rate, the rate for each of the other three age groups was 74% less.

## Drug offense case rates



- Drug offense case rates reached their lowest point in 2020 for all age groups. Compared with 2005, rates in 2020 were 61% lower for youth ages 10–12, 71% lower for youth ages 13–15, and 72% lower for both 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds.

## Public order offense case rates



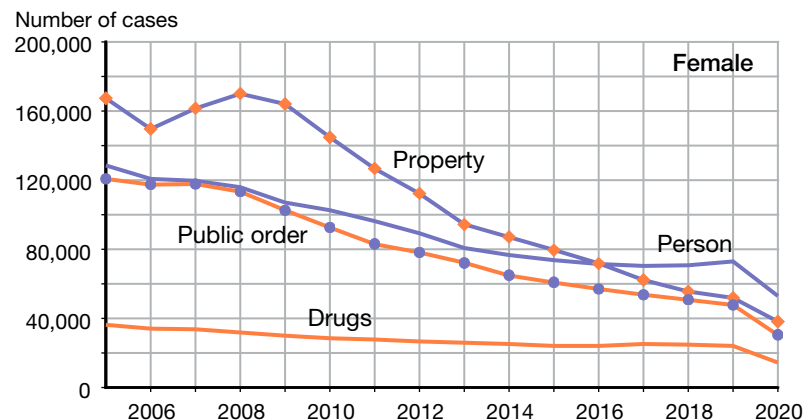
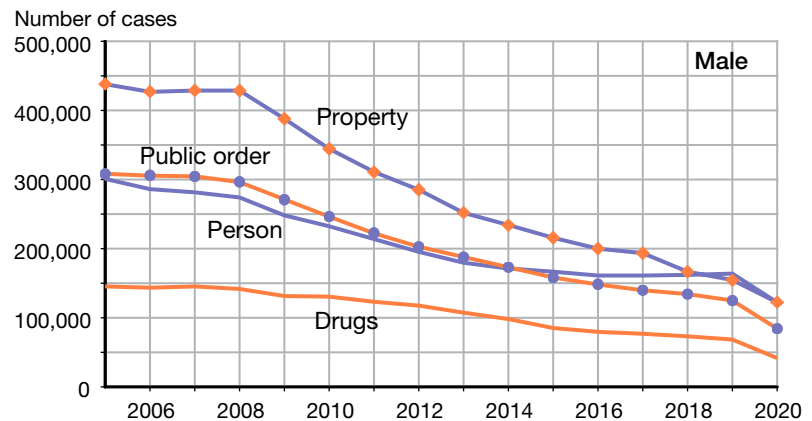
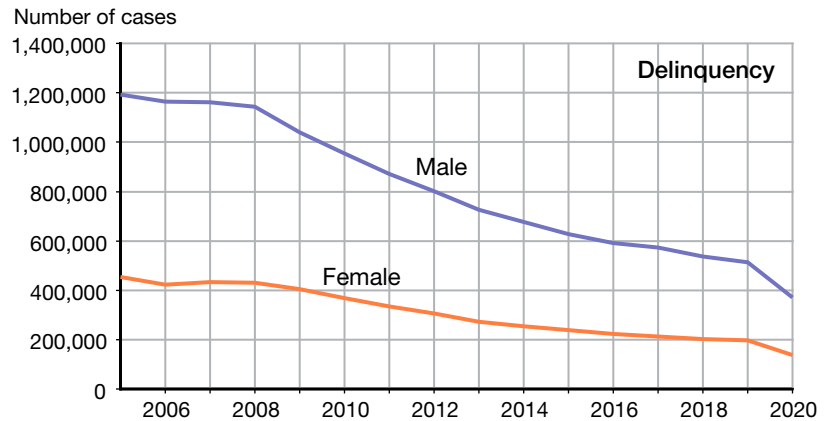
- Public order case rates for all age groups were at their lowest levels in 2020 since at least 2005. Case rates declined 73% for youth ages 10–12, 75% each for youth ages 13–15 and youth age 16, and 76% for youth age 17.

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

## Gender

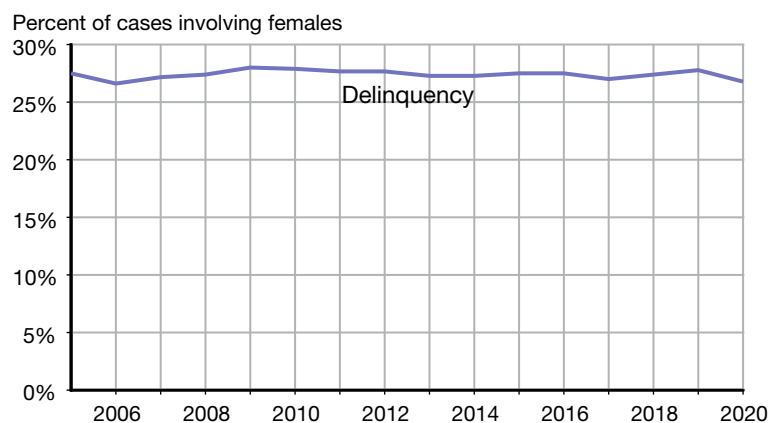
- Males were involved in 73% (372,100) of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2020.
- The average annual decrease in the male and female delinquency caseloads was very similar for all offense types between 2005 and 2020. The average decrease was slightly larger for males than females for cases involving drug offenses (7% vs. 5%) and person offenses (6% vs. 5%), equal for public order (8% each), and slightly less for property (8% vs. 9%).
- Person offense cases decreased 51% each for males and females between 2005 and 2016 and remained relatively stable through 2019 before decreasing again in 2020 (27% for males and 31% for females).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of property offense cases involving males was at its highest level in 2005, and the female caseload peaked in 2008. Between their respective peaks and 2020, the male caseload declined 72% while the female caseload fell 78%.
- Drug offense cases involving males were level between 2005 and 2008, before decreasing 70% through 2020. Drug offense cases involving females decreased steadily between 2005 and 2020, and in 2020 the number of cases was 60% below the level in 2005.
- The public order offense caseload decreased at a similar pace for both males and females between 2005 and 2020 (73% and 75%, respectively).

The overall decline in delinquency caseloads between 2005 and 2020 was similar for males (69%) and females (70%)



# Gender

Females accounted for 27% of the delinquency caseload in 2020 — similar to 2005 (28%)



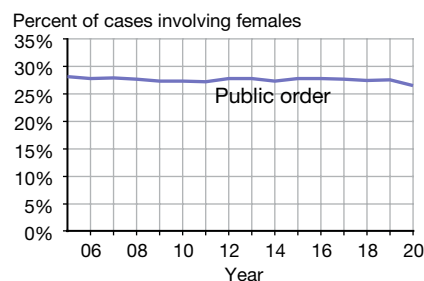
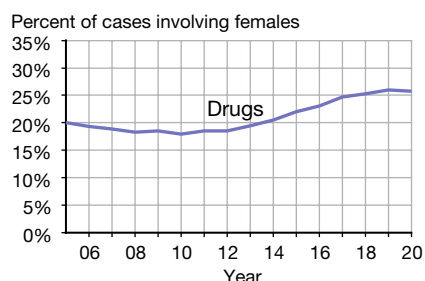
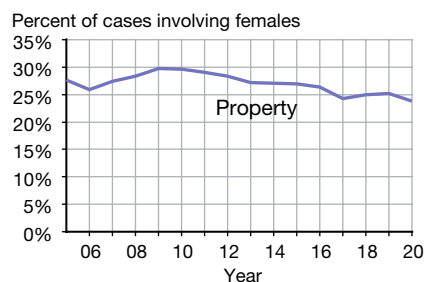
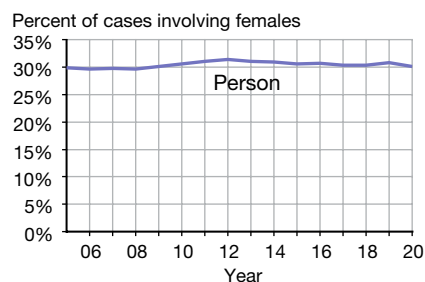
- Between 2005 and 2020, the female proportion of the person offense caseload has remained steady, from 30% to 31%.
- The female proportion of the drug offense caseload decreased from 20% in 2005 to 18% in 2010 and then increased to 26% by 2020.

## Offense profile of delinquency cases for males and females:

Most serious offense	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>		
Person	33%	39%
Property	33	28
Drugs	11	11
Public order	23	22
Total	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>		
Person	25%	28%
Property	37	37
Drugs	12	8
Public order	26	27
Total	100%	100%

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

- For both males and females, the property and public order offense proportions of the delinquency caseloads were less in 2020 than in 2005.
- In 2020, the male caseload contained greater proportions of property and public order offenses than the female caseload.
- The male caseload contained a smaller proportion of person offenses and an equal proportion of drug offenses as the female caseload in 2020.



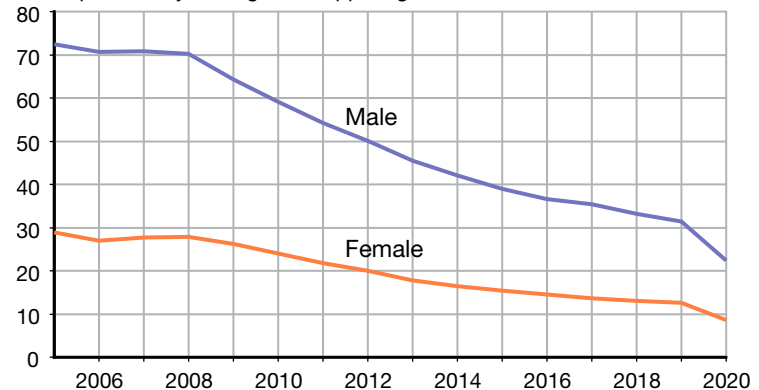


## Gender

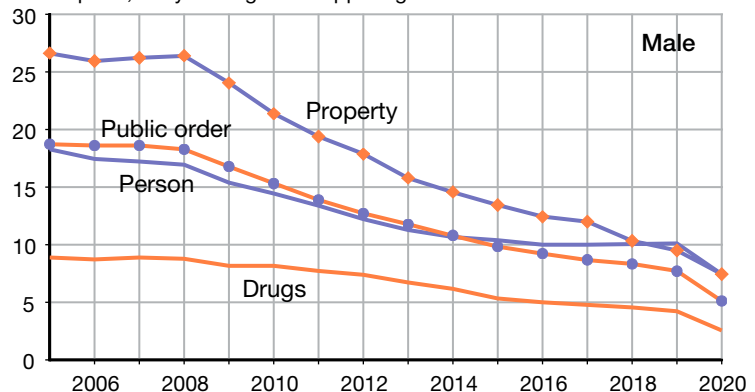
- The decrease in the delinquency case rate was similar for males and females between 2005 and 2020 (69% for males and 70% for females). Most of the decline occurred between 2008 and 2020 (down 68% and 69%, respectively).
- In 2020, the delinquency case rate for males was 2.6 times the rate for females, 22.5 compared with 8.6.
- Regardless of offense type, delinquency case rates were at their lowest levels for both males and females in 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, male case rates decreased 73% for public order offenses, 72% for property offenses, 71% for drug offenses, and 59% for person offenses. Female case rates also decreased, down 77% for property offenses, 75% for public order offenses, 61% for drug offenses, and 59% for person offenses.
- Despite a decrease in the disparity between male and female delinquency case rates between 2005 and 2020, the male case rate for property offenses was 3.1 times that of the female case rate in 2020. The male rate was 2.8 times the female rate for drug offenses, 2.7 times the female rate for public order offenses, and 2.2 times the female rate for person offenses in 2020.

**Despite decreases in case rates for both males and females, the male case rate remained at least twice the rate of females for all years between 2005 and 2020**

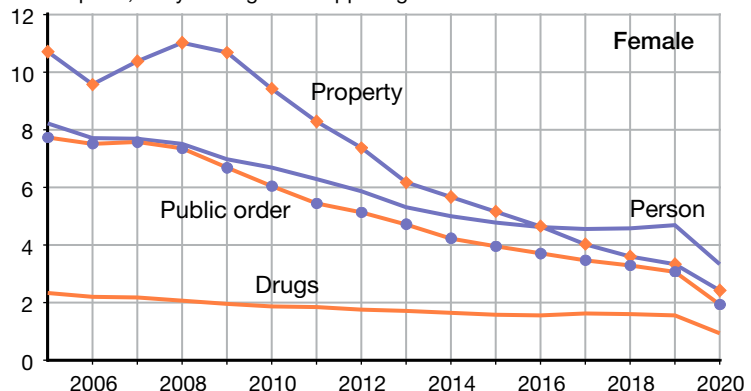
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



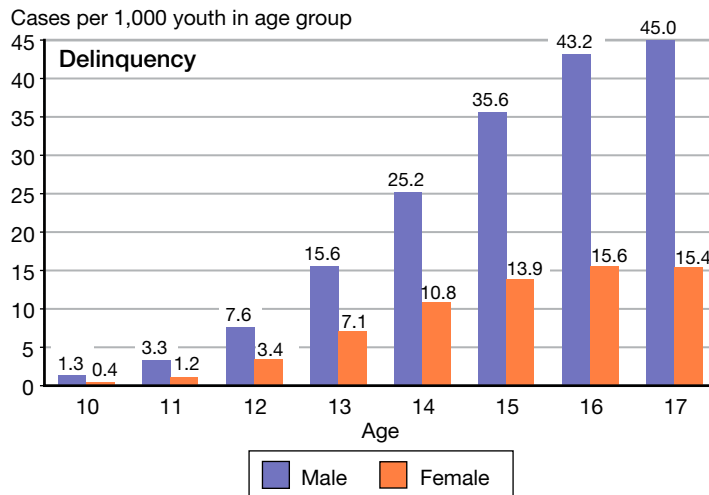
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



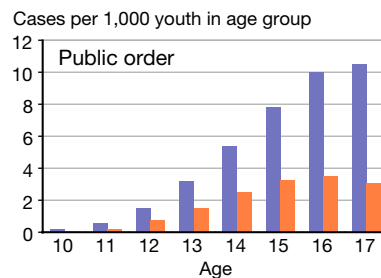
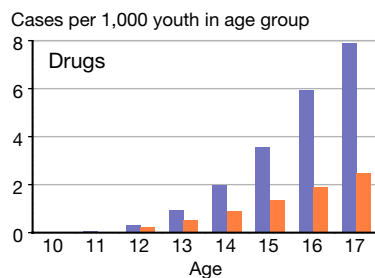
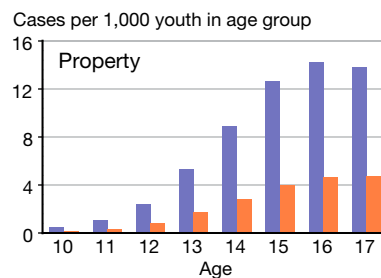
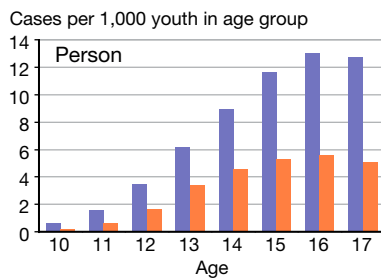


# Gender

In 2020, the delinquency case rate for males increased steadily through age 17; for females the rate peaked at age 16



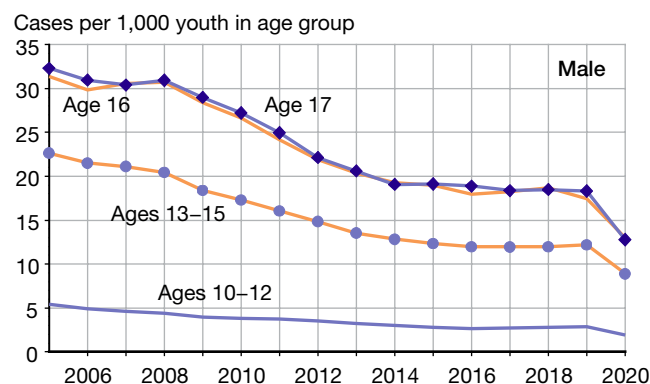
- In 2020, the difference between age-specific male and female delinquency case rates was greatest for the younger youth. The male delinquency rate for 10-year-olds was 3.5 times the female rate; for 11-year-olds, the male case rate was 2.8 times the female rate.
- In 2020, case rates for males increased through age 17 for drug and public order offenses. Male case rates peaked at age 16 for person and property offenses.
- For females, case rates for property and drug offenses increased through age 17, while case rates for person and public order offenses peaked at age 16.
- In 2020, the drug offense case rate for 17-year-old males was 23.5 times the rate for 12-year-old males; among females, the drug offense case rate for 17-year-olds was 11.6 times the rate for 12-year-olds.



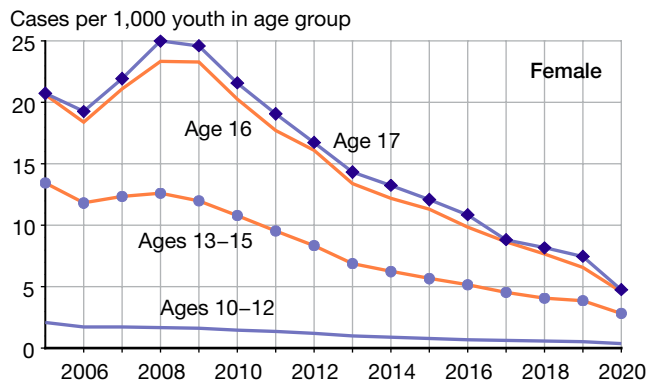
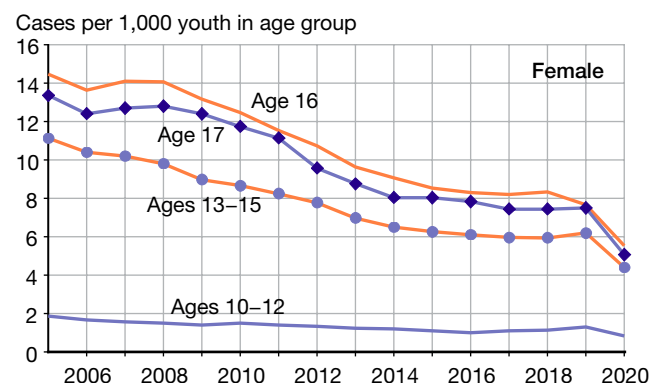
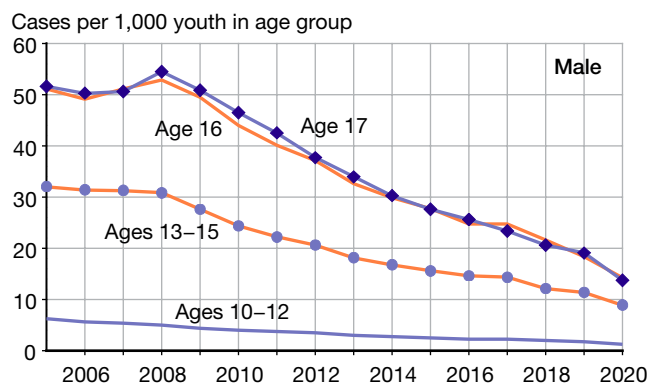
# Gender

Across all age groups and offense categories, case rates for males exceed rates for females; however, rates for both males and females have declined substantially in the past 16 years

## Person offense case rates



## Property offense case rates

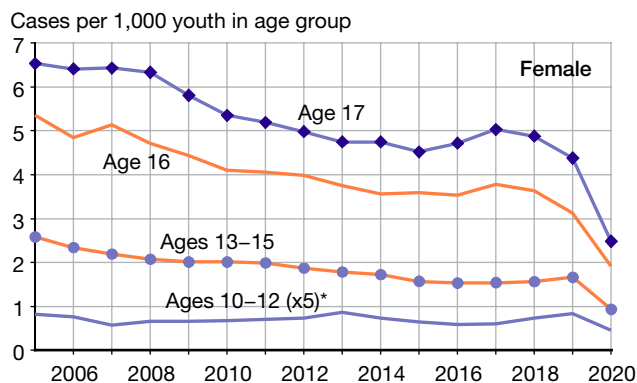
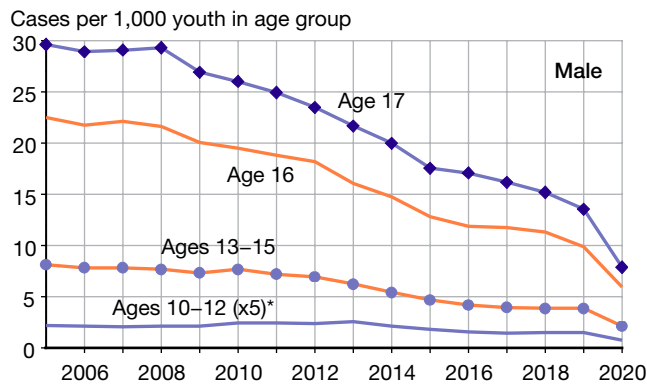


- In the last 16 years (2005 through 2020), male person offense case rates decreased for all age groups: 65% each for youth ages 10–12, 61% for youth ages 13–15, 59% for youth age 16, and 60% for 17-year-olds.
- During the same period, female person offense case rates followed a similar pattern as males, decreasing 55% for youth ages 10–12, 60% for youth ages 13–15, and 62% each for 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds.

- Male property offense case rates decreased to their lowest levels in 2020 for all age groups.
- Between 2005 and 2020, male property case rates decreased 79% for youth ages 10–12, 72% each for ages 13–15 and age 16, and 73% for age 17.
- Age-specific property offense rates for females were at their lowest level for all age groups in 2020.

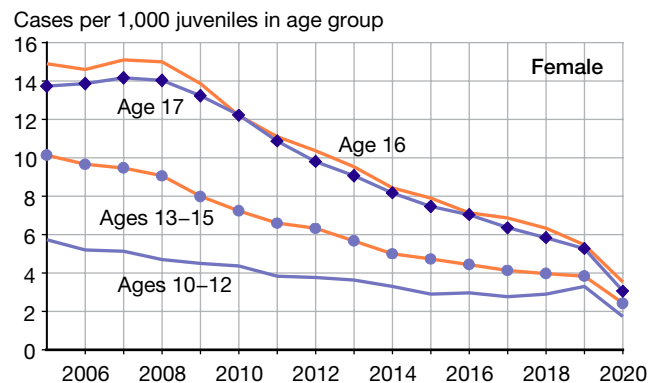
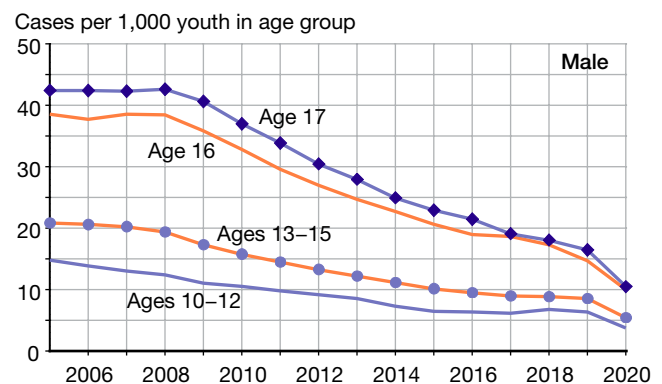
# Gender

## Drug offense case rates



- The male drug offense case rate decreased 66% between 2005 and 2020 for youth ages 10–12, while case rates decreased 74% each for youth ages 13–15 and age 16, and 73% for youth age 17. Most of the decreases occurred between 2008 and 2020 (down 64% for youth ages 10–12, 72% for youth ages 13–15, and 73% each for youth age 16 and 17).
- Following a 33% decrease in the female drug offense case rate for youth ages 10–12 from 2013 through 2016, the rate increased 47% between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by nearly the same amount in 2020 (46%). Female case rates for other age groups decreased relatively steadily between 2005 and 2020: 64% each for ages 13–15 and age 16, and 62% for age 17.

## Public order offense case rates



- Public order offense case rates for all age groups for both males and females in 2020 were at their lowest level since 2005.
- Between 2005 and 2020, public order case rates decreased at a similar pace for both males and females across all age groups. Male case rates decreased 75% for youth ages 10–12, 74% each for youth ages 13–15 and age 16, and 75% for age 17. Similarly, female case rates decreased 70% for youth ages 10–12, 76% each for youth ages 13–15 and age 16, and 78% for youth age 17.

\* Because of the relatively low volume of cases involving male and female youth ages 10–12 for drug offenses, their case rates are inflated by a factor of 5 to display the trends over time.

# Race

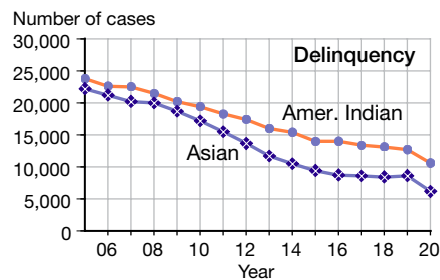
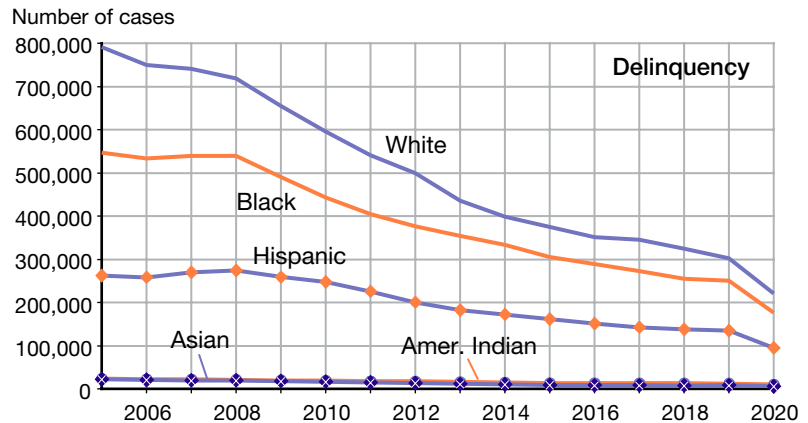
- Between 2005 and 2020, delinquency cases declined 72% for Asian<sup>4</sup> youth and White youth, 68% for Black youth, 64% for Hispanic<sup>5</sup> youth, and 56% for American Indian<sup>6</sup> youth.
- Regardless of race, person offenses accounted for the largest proportion of caseloads, followed by property, public order, and drug offense cases.
- The number of property offense cases involving Black youth and Hispanic youth peaked in 2008 before decreasing through 2020 (68% and 74%, respectively).

<sup>4</sup> The racial classification Asian includes Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

<sup>5</sup> Persons of Hispanic ethnicity are treated as a distinct race group and are excluded from the other four race groups, with one important exception. Data provided to the Archive from many jurisdictions did not include any means to determine the ethnicity of American Indian youth. Rather than assume ethnicity for these youth, they are classified solely on their racial classification; as such, the American Indian group includes an unknown proportion of Hispanic youth.

<sup>6</sup> The racial classification American Indian (usually abbreviated as Amer. Indian) includes American Indian and Alaska Native.

The number of delinquency cases decreased substantially for all race groups between 2005 and 2020



The offense profile for all races had a larger proportion of person offenses in 2020 than in 2005

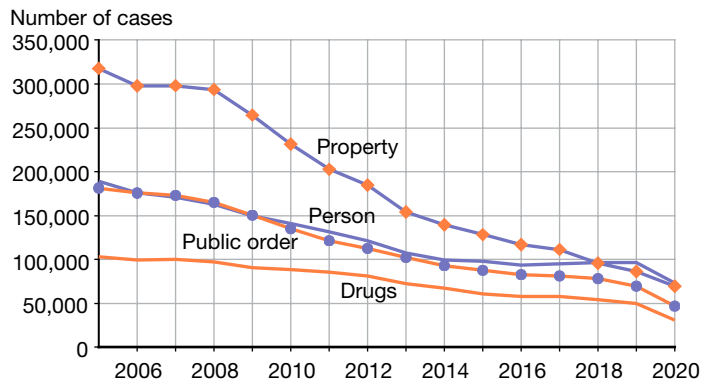
Most serious offense	Offense profile of delinquency cases				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Amer. Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Person	33%	36%	35%	35%	34%
Property	31	34	27	34	32
Drugs	14	6	13	14	12
Public order	21	24	24	17	22
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>					
Person	24%	32%	22%	23%	21%
Property	40	32	35	41	45
Drugs	13	8	12	12	9
Public order	23	28	31	24	25
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

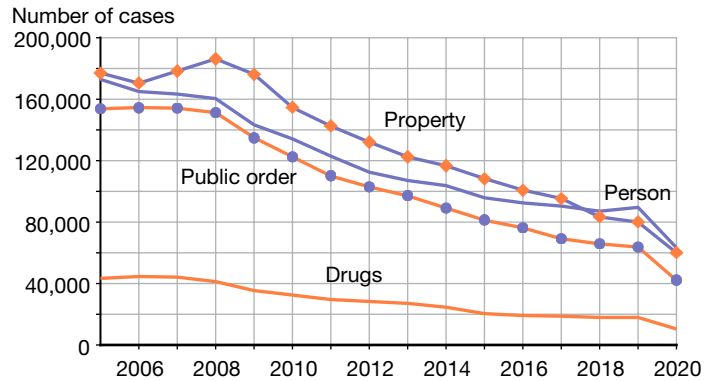
# Race

Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases decreased for all racial groups and offenses

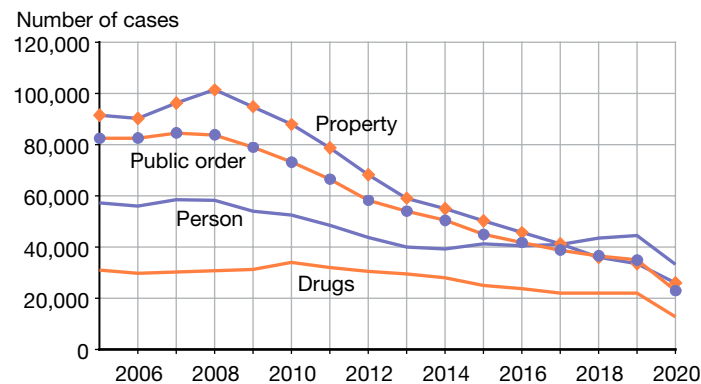
## White



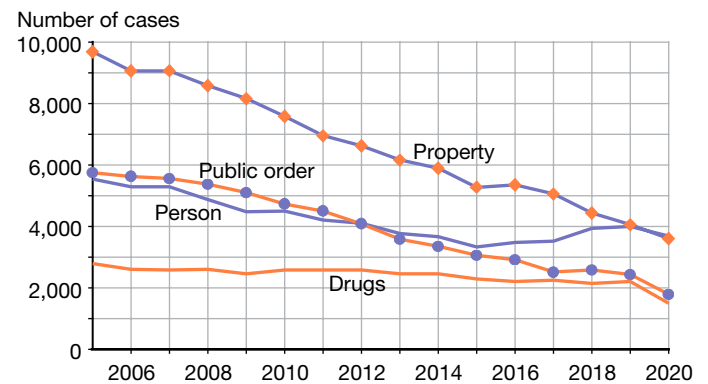
## Black



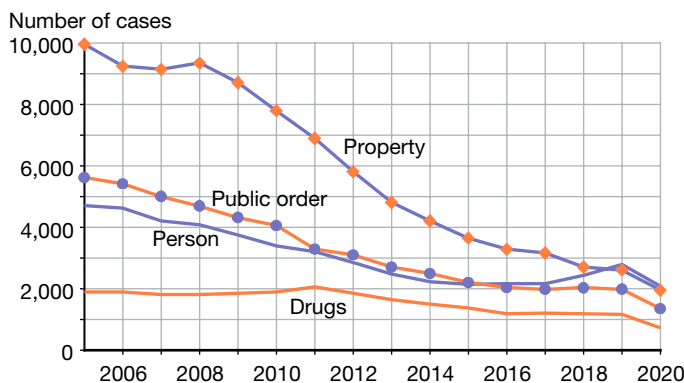
## Hispanic



## American Indian



## Asian



### Percent change in number of cases, 2005–2020:

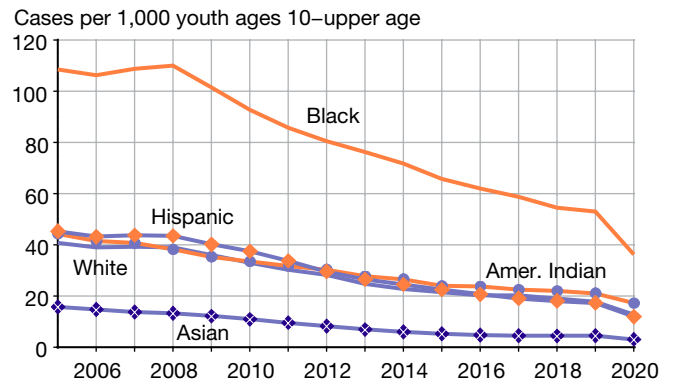
Most serious offense	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
Delinquency	-72%	-68%	-64%	-56%	-72%
Person	-61	-63	-42	-33	-56
Property	-78	-66	-72	-63	-80
Drugs	-70	-76	-59	-47	-61
Public order	-74	-73	-72	-69	-76

# Race

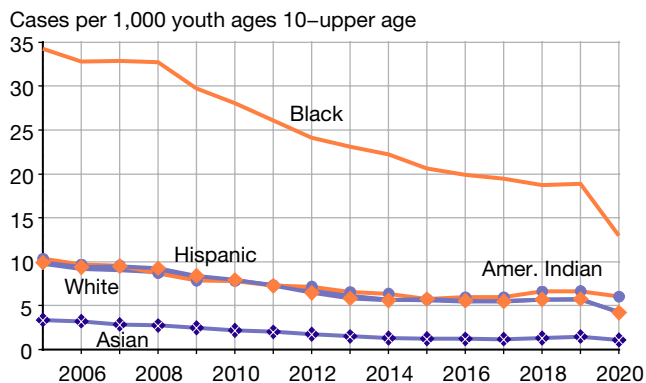
Between 2005 and 2020, delinquency case rates declined for youth of all racial groups: 68% for White, 67% for Black, 74% for Hispanic, 61% for American Indian, and 80% for Asian

- In 2020, the total delinquency case rate was greater for American Indian youth (17.2) than for White and Hispanic youth (12.9 and 12.8, respectively). However, the case rate for Black youth (36.2) was at least double their rates, and nearly 12 times the case rate for Asian youth (3.1).
- In 2020, the person offense case rate for Black youth (13.0) was about 3 times the rate for Hispanic youth (4.2) and White youth (4.3), twice the rate for American Indian youth (6.0), and nearly 12 times that of Asian youth (1.1).
- Case rates in 2020 were lower than in 2005 for each racial group for all four offense categories.

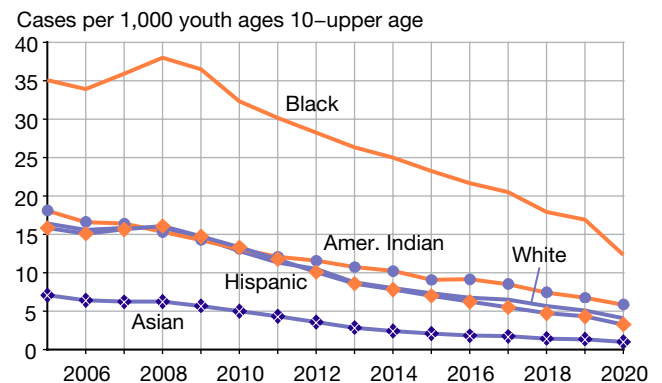
## Delinquency



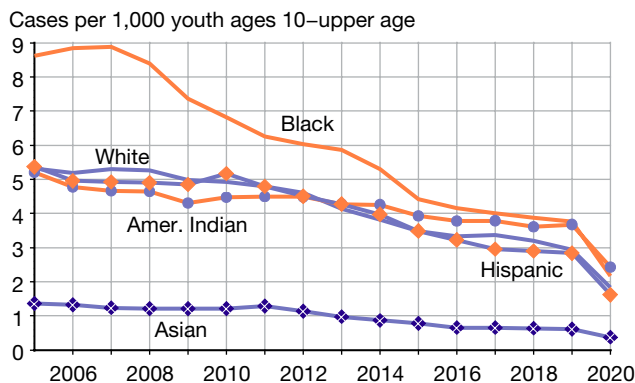
## Person



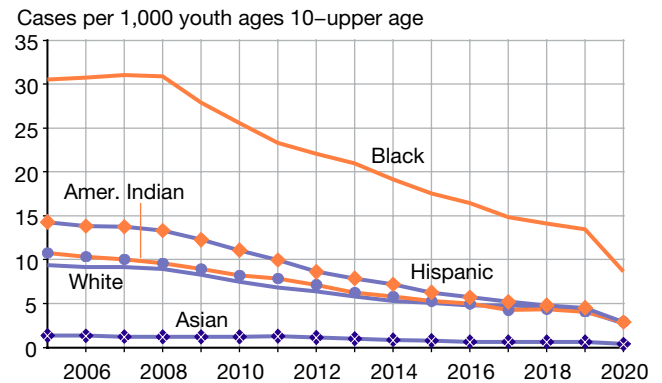
## Property



## Drugs

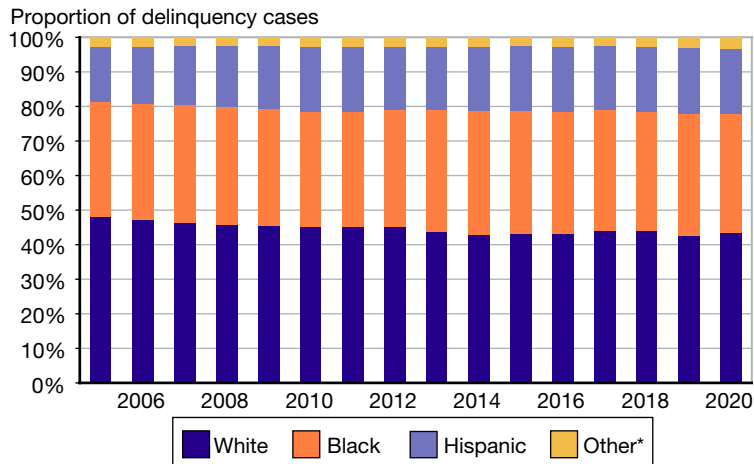


## Public order



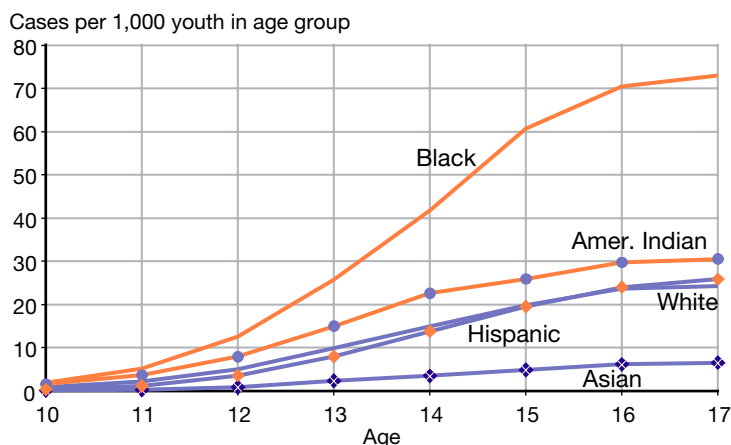
# Race

Although White youth represented the largest share of the delinquency caseload, their relative contribution declined between 2005 and 2020, from 48% to 43%



\* Because American Indian and Asian proportions are too small to display individually, they are combined in the category "Other races."

## Delinquency case rates for youth increased with age for all races



- In 2020, White youth made up 53% of the U.S. population under juvenile court jurisdiction, Black youth 15%, Hispanic youth 24%, American Indian youth 2%, and Asian youth 6%.

### Racial profile of delinquency cases:

Race	2005	2020
White	48%	43%
Black	33	35
Hispanic	16	19
American Indian	1	2
Asian	1	1
Total	100%	100%

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

- The proportion of delinquency cases involving Black youth, Hispanic youth, and American Indian youth increased between 2005 and 2020.

### Racial profile of delinquency cases by offense:

Race	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
<b>2020</b>				
White	42%	43%	55%	41%
Black	36	37	19	37
Hispanic	19	16	23	20
Amer. Indian	2	2	3	2
Asian	1	1	1	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>				
White	44%	52%	57%	42%
Black	40	29	24	36
Hispanic	13	15	17	19
Amer. Indian	1	2	2	1
Asian	1	2	1	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

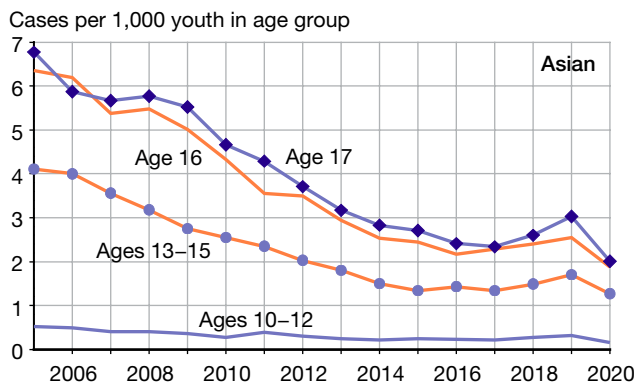
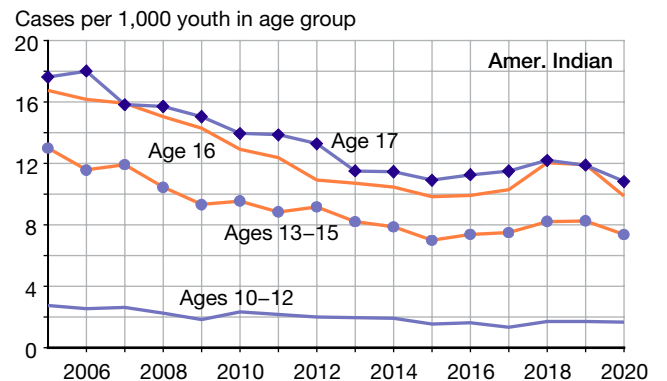
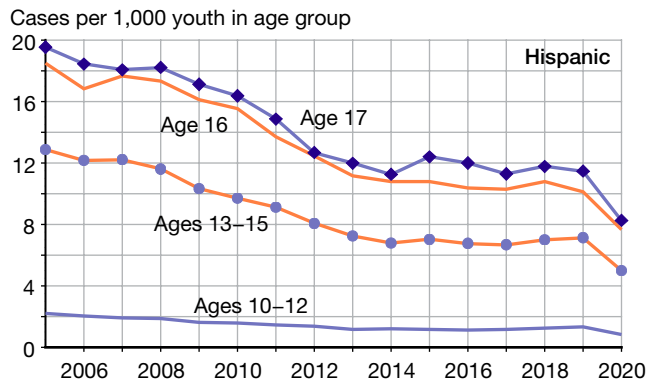
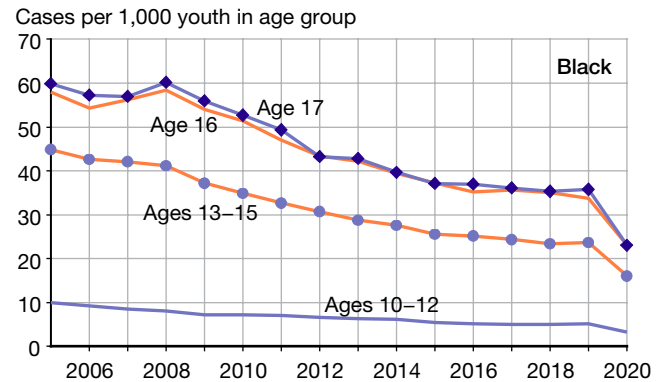
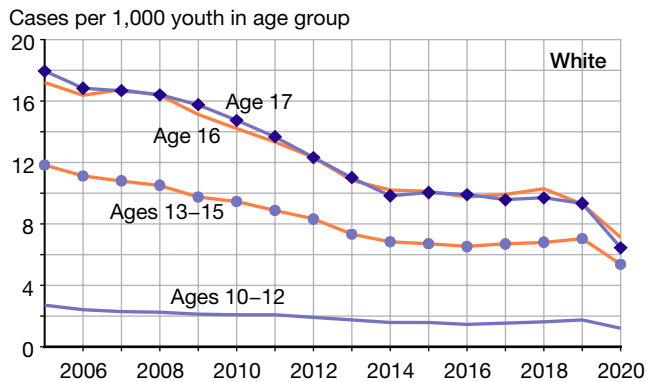
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

- In 2020, the delinquency case rate for 13-year-olds was more than 9 times the rate for 10-year-olds for each racial group.

# Race

Case rates for person offenses in 2020 were lower than those in 2005 for all age groups for all races

Person offense case rates



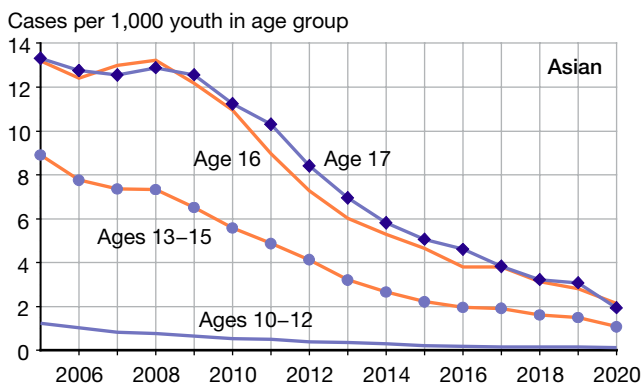
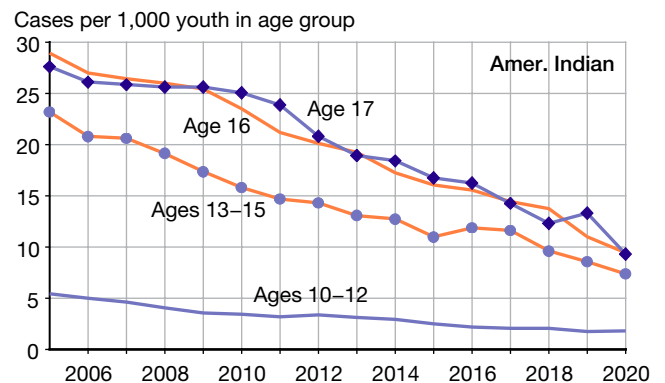
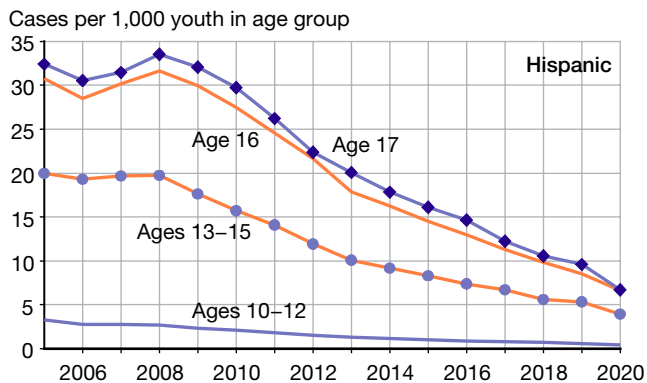
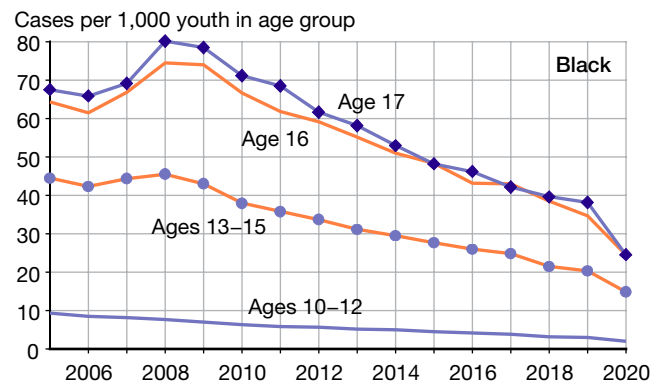
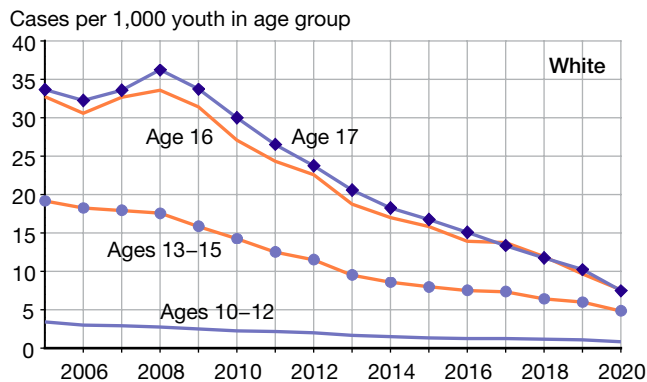
- The pattern of decrease in person offense case rates was similar for Black and Hispanic youth between 2005 and 2020; case rates decreased more for younger youth (ages 10–12 and 13–15) than for older youth (ages 16 and 17).
- Person offense case rates for youth ages 10–12 decreased the most for Asian youth (down 71%) between 2005 and 2020.
- The person offense case rates for 16-year-olds was at its lowest level in 2020 for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian youth. The rate for 17-year-olds was at its lowest level in 2020 for all race groups.



# Race

With the exception of American Indian youth ages 10–12, property offense case rates were at their lowest level in 2020 for all age groups within each racial category

## Property offense case rates

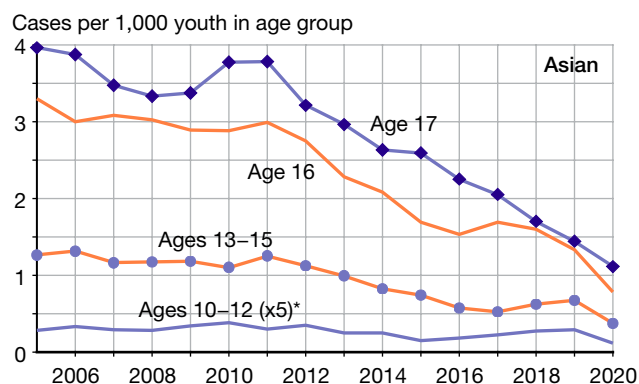
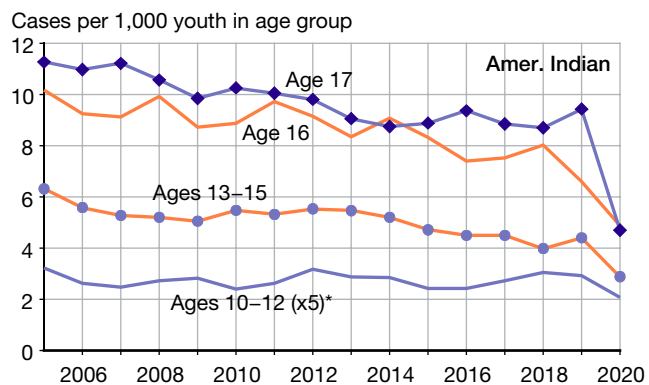
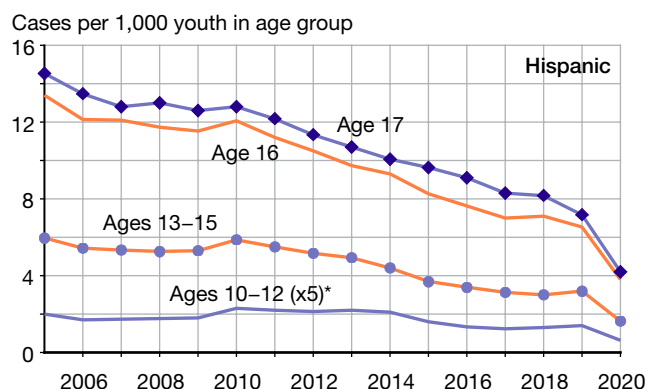
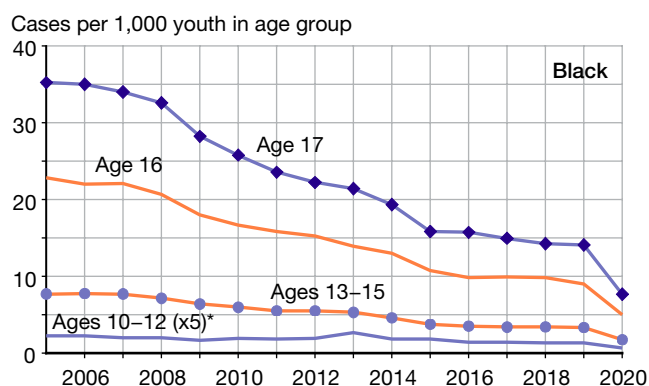
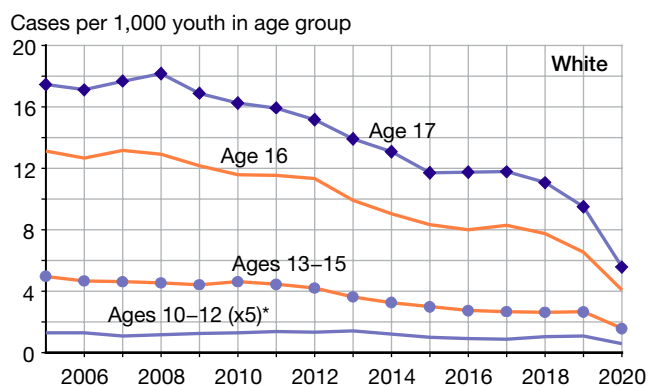


- Between 2005 and 2020, with the exception of White youth, property offense case rates decreased more for youth ages 10–12 and 13–15, than youth age 16 and age 17.
- Property offense case rates decreased the least for Black youth age 16 and age 17 (62% and 64%, respectively), and decreased the most for Asian youth ages 10–12 and ages 13–15 (89% and 88%, respectively) between 2005 and 2020.

# Race

Drug offense case rates for all age groups within each racial category declined in the 16-year period 2005–2020

## Drug offense case rates



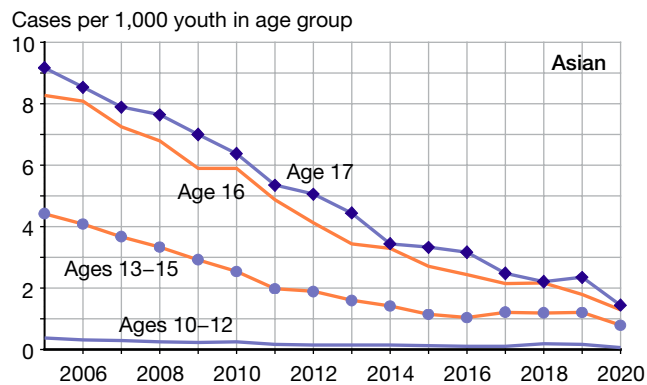
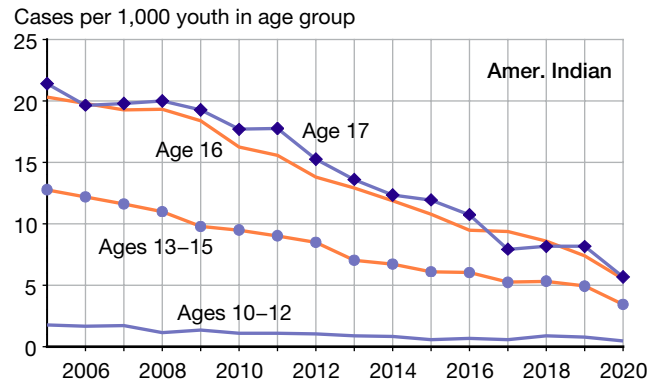
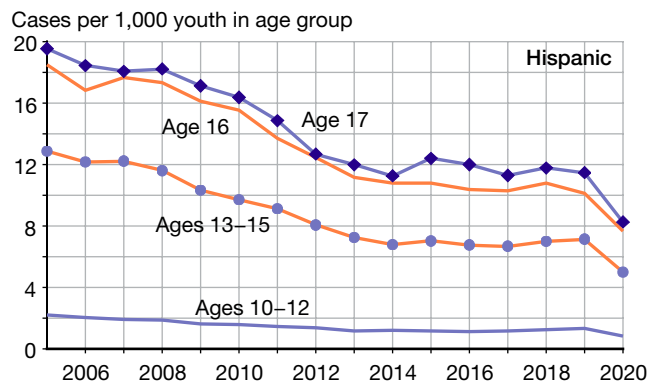
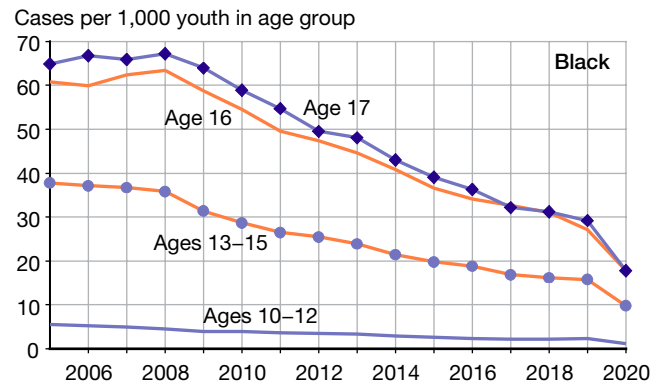
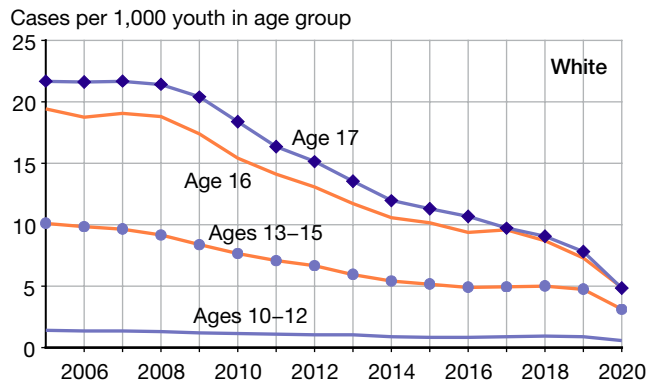
- Although changes in age specific case rates for drug offenses varied by racial group between 2005 and 2020, case rates decreased for all age groups for all races.
- Between 2005 and 2020, case rates for youth age 17 for all racial groups decreased by at least 58%: 78% for Black youth, 72% for Asian youth, 71% for Hispanic youth, 68% for White youth, and 58% for American Indian youth.

\* Because of the relatively low volume of cases involving youth of all races ages 10–12 for drug offenses, their case rates are inflated by a factor of 5 to display the trends over time.

# Race

In 2020, public order case rates were at the lowest level since 2005 for all age groups for all race groups

## Public order offense case rates

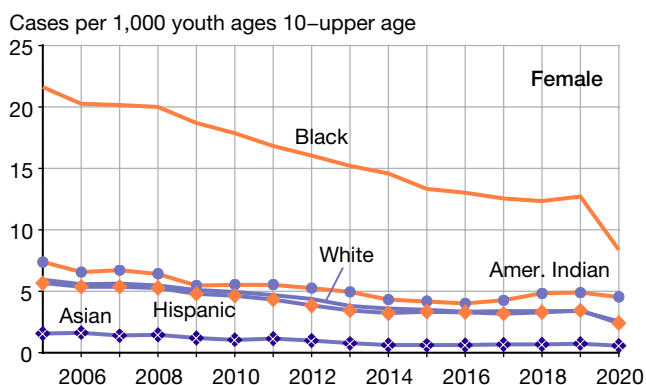
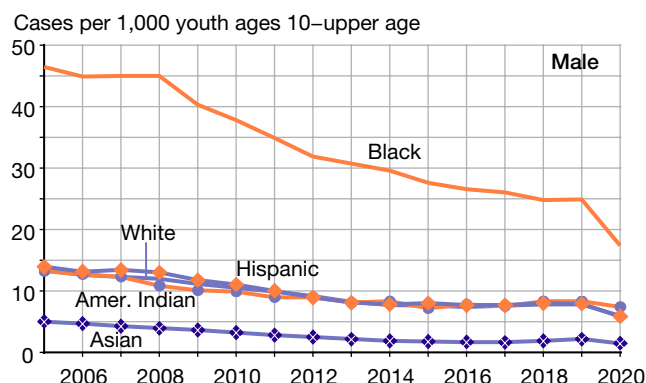


- Between 2005 and 2020, age-specific public order case rates decreased least for White youth ages 10-12 (61%) and most for Asian youth age 16 and age 17 (84% each).
- The trends in public order case rates for Black youth ages 16 and 17 were similar between 2005 and 2020. Case rates peaked in 2008 for both age groups before decreasing to their lowest levels in 2020 (down 72% for 16-year-olds and 74% for 17-year-olds).
- Public order case rates for Hispanic youth decreased at a similar pace for all age groups: 83% for youth ages 10-12, 82% for youth ages 13-15, and 80% each for youth age 16 and age 17.
- The decrease in public order case rates for American Indian youth was similar for all age groups between 2005 and 2020 and ranged between 66% and 68%. The decrease in case rates for Asian youth was also similar for all age groups and ranged between 82% and 84%.

# Race

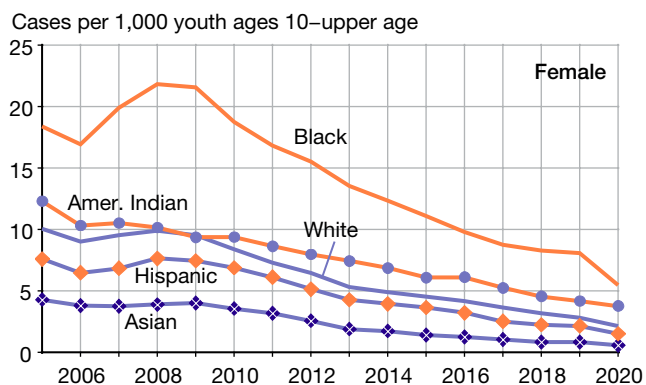
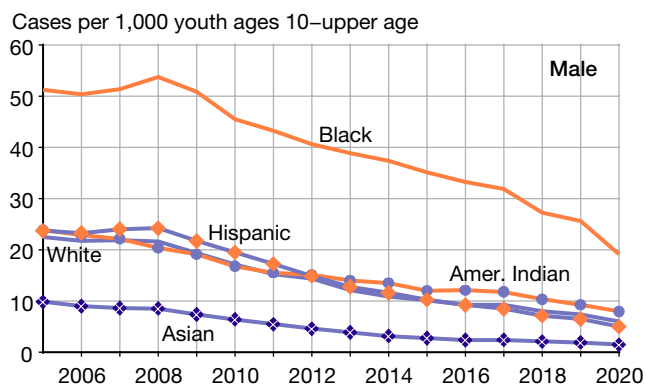
For both males and females, case rates for Black youth were higher than rates for all other racial groups for all offense categories except drug offenses involving females

## Person offense case rates



- For all years between 2005 and 2020, person offense case rates for Black males were 3 to 4 times higher than the corresponding rates for White, Hispanic, and American Indian males, and 9 to 16 times higher than those for Asian males.
- In 2020, the person offense case rate for Black females (8.4) was 17 times the rate for Asian females (0.6), 4.5 times the rate for Hispanic females (2.4), 3.6 times the rate for White females (2.6), and 2.6 times the rate for American Indian females (4.6).

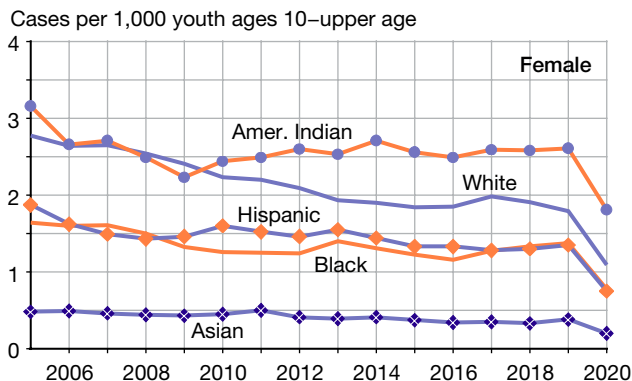
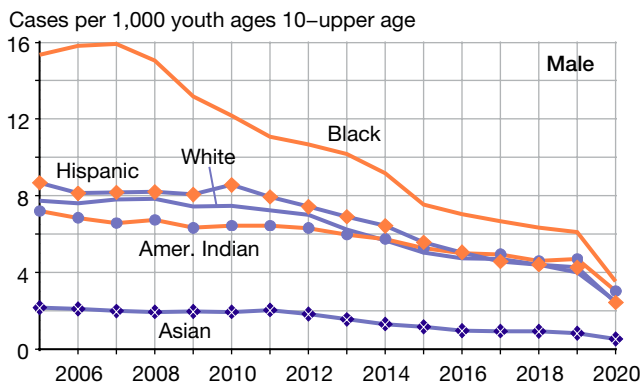
## Property offense case rates



- Among males and females, property offense case rates were lower in 2020 than in 2005 for all racial groups.
- Between 2005 and 2020, cases involving Asian youth showed the largest relative decrease in property offense case rates. During this period, the property case rate for Asian males decreased 85% and the rate for Asian females decreased 87%.

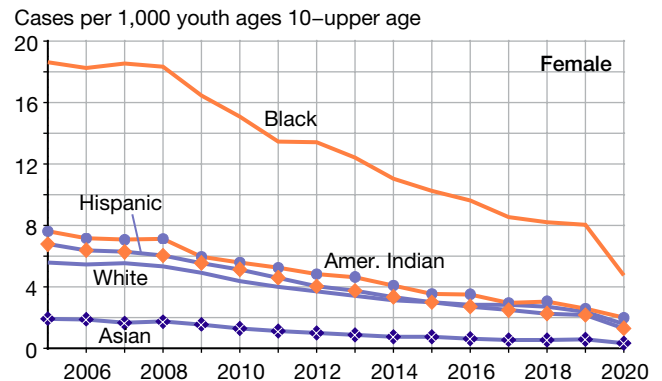
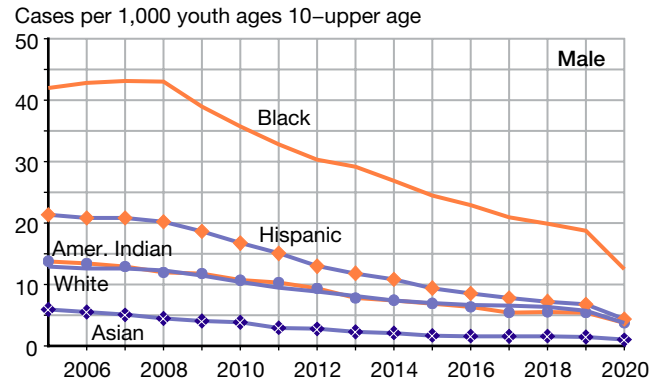
# Race

## Drug offense case rates



- For all years between 2005 and 2020, drug offense case rates were higher for Black males than for males of all other races. In 2020, the rate for Black males (3.6) was 7 times the rate for Asian males, and at least 1.4 times the rate for White males, Hispanic males, and American Indian males.
- In 2020, the drug offense case rate for American Indian females was higher than the corresponding rate for all other race groups: 1.5 times the rate for White females, double the rates for Hispanic females and Black females, and nearly 7 times the rate for Asian females.

## Public order offense case rates



- Between 2005 and 2020, cases involving Asian youth showed the largest relative decrease in public order offense case rates for males and females. During this period, the public order case rate for Asian males decreased 83% and the rate for Asian females decreased 82%.
- In 2020, the public order offense case rate for Black males was nearly 3 times the rate for Hispanic males, more than 3 times the rate for both White males and American Indian males, and 12 times the rate for Asian males.



# Chapter 3

## National Estimates of Delinquency Case Processing

This chapter quantifies the flow of delinquency cases referred to juvenile court through the stages of the juvenile court system as follows.

**Referral:** An agency or individual files a complaint with court intake that initiates court processing. Cases can be referred to court intake by a number of sources, including law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, schools, parents, probation officers, and victims.

**Detention:** Juvenile courts sometimes hold youth in secure detention facilities during court processing to protect the community, to ensure a youth's appearance at subsequent court hearings, to secure the youth's own safety, or for the purpose of evaluating the youth. This report describes the use of detention between court referral and case disposition only, although youth can be detained by police prior to referral and also by the courts after disposition while awaiting placement elsewhere.

**Intake:** Formal processing of a case involves the filing of a petition that requests an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Informally processed cases, on the other hand, are handled without a petition and without an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

**Waiver:** One of the first decisions made at intake is whether a case should be processed in the criminal (adult) justice system rather than in the juvenile court. Most states have more than one mechanism for transferring cases to criminal court: prosecutors may have the authority to file certain juvenile cases directly in criminal court; state statute may order that cases meeting certain age and offense criteria be excluded from juvenile court jurisdiction and filed directly in criminal court; and a juvenile court judge may waive juvenile court jurisdiction in certain juvenile cases, thus authorizing a transfer to criminal court. This report describes those cases that were transferred to criminal court by judicial waiver only.

**Adjudication:** At an adjudicatory hearing, a youth may be adjudicated (judged) delinquent if the juvenile court determines that the youth did commit the offense(s) charged in the petition. If the youth is adjudicated, the case proceeds to a disposition hearing. Alternatively, a case can be dismissed or continued in contemplation of dismissal. In these cases where the youth is not adjudicated delinquent, the court can recommend that the youth take some actions prior to the final adjudication decision, such as paying restitution or voluntarily attending drug counseling.

---

**Disposition:** Disposition options include commitment to an institution or other residential facility, probation supervision, or a variety of other sanctions, such as community service, restitution or fines, or referral to an outside agency or treatment program. This report characterizes case disposition by the most severe or restrictive sanction. For example, although most youth in out-of-home placements are also tech-

nically on probation, in this report cases resulting in placement are not included in the probation group.

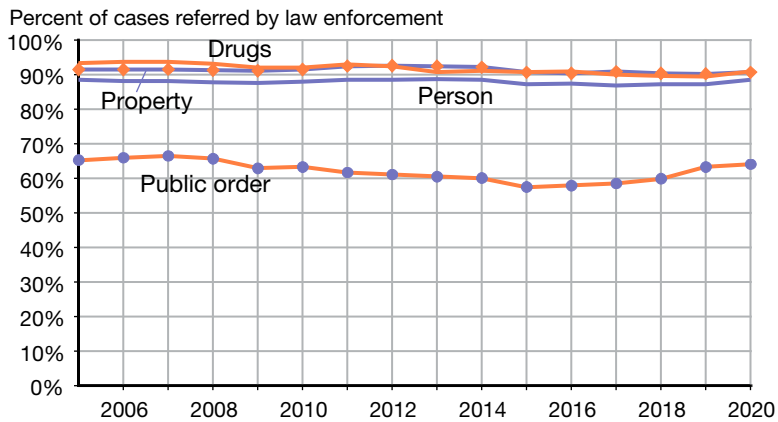
This chapter describes case processing by offense and by demographics (age, gender, and race) of the youth involved, focusing on cases disposed in 2020 and examining trends from 2005 through 2020.

It should be noted that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in March 2020, may have impacted the policies, procedures, and data collection activities regarding referrals to and processing of youth by juvenile courts. Although COVID-19 likely impacted juvenile court activities, it is not possible to determine the true impact on case processing of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2020.

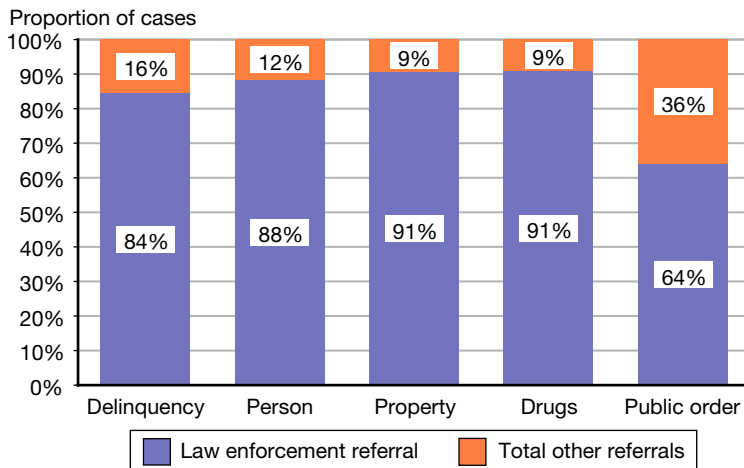


# Referral

## Law enforcement agencies are the primary source of delinquency referrals to juvenile court



## Drug and property offense cases were most likely to be referred by law enforcement, compared with other offense types



### Source of referral profile, 2020:

Referral source	Delinquency	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Law enforcement	84%	88%	91%	91%	64%
School	3	3	1	4	4
Relative	1	1	1	0	1
Other	13	8	8	5	31
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

- Between 2005 and 2020, law enforcement agencies were the primary source of delinquency referrals for each year.
- In 2020, 84% of all delinquency cases were referred by law enforcement; however, there were variations across offense categories.
- Law enforcement agencies referred 91% of both property offense cases and drug law violation cases, 88% of person offense cases, and 64% of public order offense cases in 2020.
- For each year between 2005 and 2020, public order offense cases had the smallest proportion of cases referred to court by law enforcement. This may be attributed in part to the fact that this offense category contains probation violations and contempt-of-court cases, which are most often referred by court personnel.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the proportion of delinquency cases referred by law enforcement ranged between 81% and 84%. The proportion of delinquency cases referred in 2020 was the same as in 2005 (84%).

# Detention

- The number of delinquency cases involving detention decreased 54% between 2005 and 2020 to its lowest level in the analysis period. The largest relative decline since 2005 was for drug offense cases involving detention, down 80%, compared with 72% for public order offenses, 70% for property offenses, and 60% for person offenses.
- Despite the decrease in the volume of delinquency cases involving detention, the proportion of cases detained was slightly larger in 2020 (25%) than in 2005 (24%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the use of detention remained the same for person offense cases (31%) and public order offenses (26%), decreased for drug law violation cases (from 23% to 15%), and increased for property offense cases (from 19% to 22%).

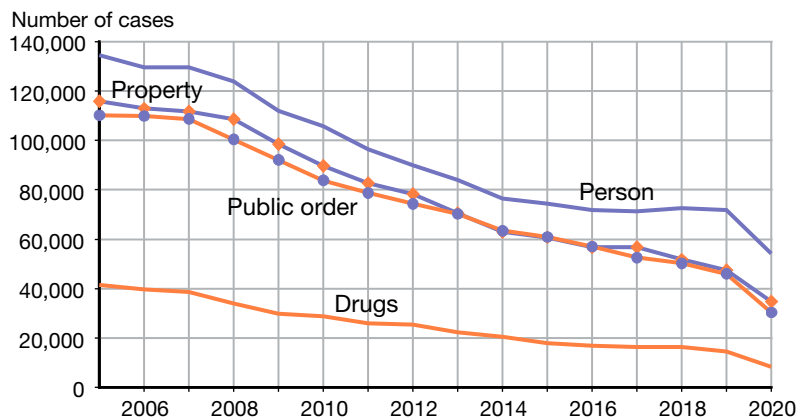
## Offense profile of detained delinquency cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Person	33%	42%
Property	29	27
Drugs	10	7
Public order	27	24
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	402,000	127,700

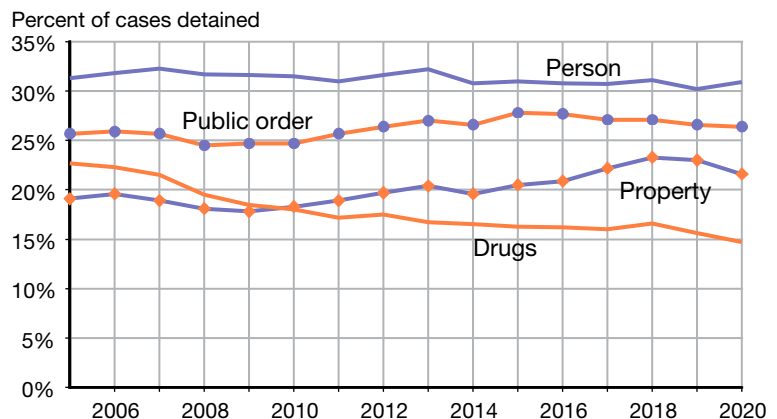
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

- Compared with 2005, the offense characteristics of the 2020 detention caseload had a larger proportion of person offenses and smaller proportions of all other offense types.

## The number of cases involving detention decreased between 2005 and 2020 for all offense categories

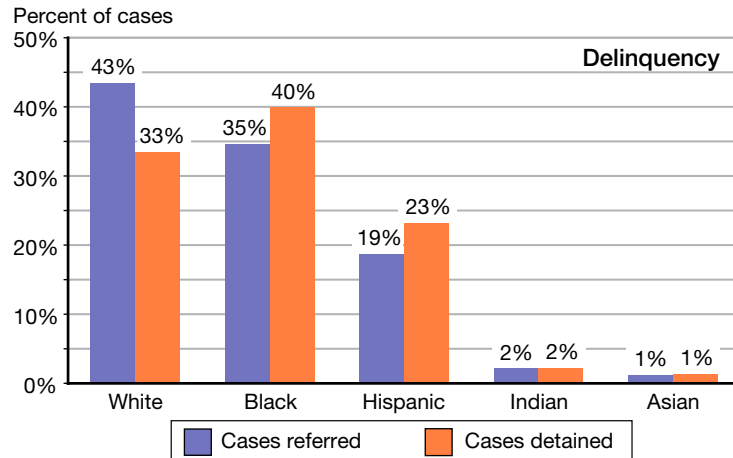


Between 2005 and 2020, the proportions of cases involving detention increased for property offense cases, remained the same for person and public order offense cases, and decreased for drug offense cases

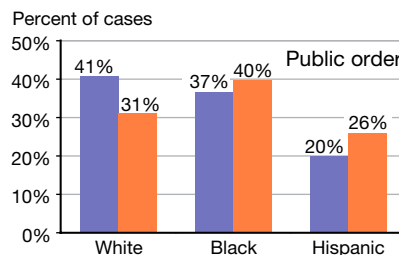
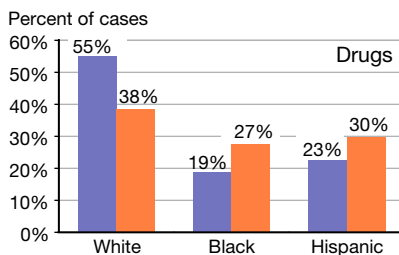
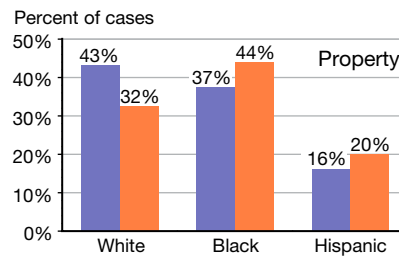
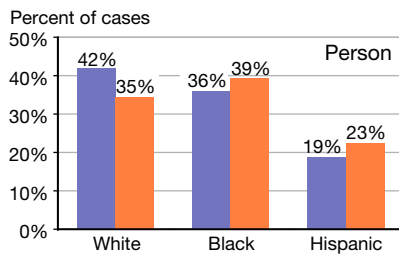


# Detention

**Black and Hispanic youth represented a larger share of the overall detention caseload than of the overall delinquency caseload in 2020**



- In 2020, Black youth accounted for 35% of the overall delinquency caseload, compared with 40% of the overall detention caseload. Hispanic youth accounted for 19% of the overall delinquency caseload and 23% of the overall detention caseload.
- White youth accounted for a smaller proportion of the detention caseload (33%) compared with the delinquency caseload (43%).
- Black and Hispanic youth accounted for larger proportions of the cases detained than of the cases referred for all offense categories in 2020.
- White youth accounted for a smaller proportion of the cases detained than of the cases referred for all offense categories in 2020.



**Note:** Proportions for American Indian and Asian youth are not shown in the offense graphs above because their percentages are too small for display.

# Detention

## Age

- In each year from 2005 through 2020, delinquency cases involving youth age 16 or older were more likely to be detained than were cases involving youth age 15 or younger.
- For all years between 2005 and 2020, person offense cases were more likely to involve detention than were other offenses for both youth age 15 and younger and those age 16 and older.

## Gender

- In 2020, males charged with delinquency offenses were more likely than females to be held in secure facilities while awaiting court disposition. Overall in 2020, 27% of male delinquency cases involved detention, compared with 20% of female cases.

### Offense profile of detained delinquency cases by gender, 2020:

Most serious offense	Male	Female
Person	41%	49%
Property	29	22
Drugs	7	6
Public order	24	23
Total	100%	100%

## Race

- Cases involving White youth were less likely to be detained than cases involving all other racial groups for most years between 2005 and 2020 across offense categories.
- In 2020, person offense cases involving Hispanic youth were more likely to involve detention (37%) than those involving all other races.

### Detention was more likely for cases involving older youth than younger youth, and for cases involving males than females

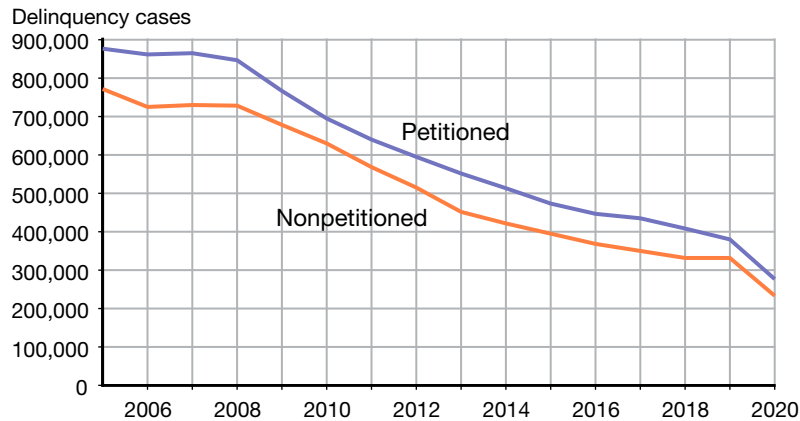
Most serious offense	Percentage of cases detained			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	24%	26%	27%	20%
Person	29	34	33	25
Property	21	22	23	16
Drugs	14	15	16	11
Public order	24	29	28	21
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	23%	26%	26%	20%
Person	30	34	33	28
Property	18	20	22	13
Drugs	22	23	24	19
Public order	24	28	27	23

### Detention was more likely for delinquency cases involving Hispanic youth than cases involving youth of other racial groups

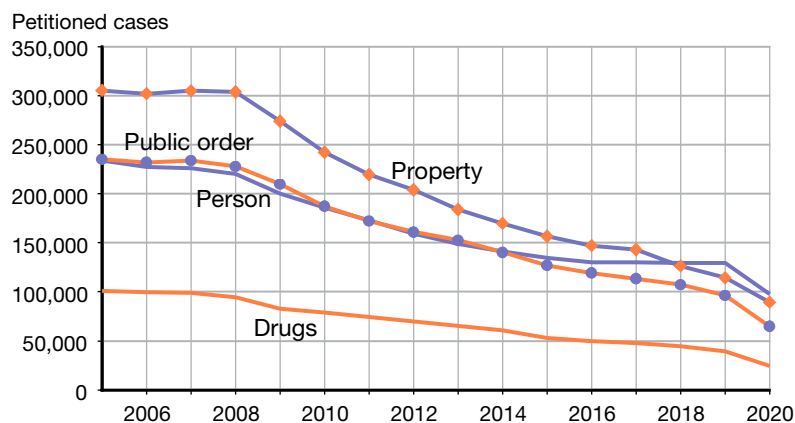
Most serious offense	Percentage of cases detained				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	19%	29%	31%	27%	29%
Person	26	34	37	31	34
Property	16	25	27	23	25
Drugs	10	22	19	16	20
Public order	20	28	34	35	31
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	21%	27%	29%	25%	23%
Person	29	32	37	30	33
Property	17	22	22	19	18
Drugs	17	33	27	20	19
Public order	23	25	31	32	26

## Intake Decision

Each year between 2005 and 2020, delinquency cases were more likely to be handled formally, with the filing of a petition for adjudication, than informally



Regardless of offense type, the number of petitioned cases decreased between 2005 and 2020



- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of delinquency cases handled informally (without filing a petition for adjudication) decreased at a similar rate as the number of cases handled formally. As the overall delinquency caseload decreased 69% between 2005 and 2020, the number of non-petitioned cases decreased 70% and the number of petitioned cases decreased 68% to the lowest levels for each in 2020.
- The largest relative decrease in the number of petitioned cases between 2005 and 2020 was seen in drug offense cases (76%), followed by public order offense cases (72%), property offense cases (71%), and person offense cases (58%).

### Offense profile of delinquency cases, 2020:

Most serious offense	Nonpetitioned	Petitioned
Person	34%	35%
Property	31	32
Drugs	14	9
Public order	22	24
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	232,200	276,300

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

- In 2020, the offense profiles of non-petitioned and petitioned delinquency cases were similar but the non-petitioned caseload had a greater proportion of drug law violations and slightly smaller proportions of all other offense types.

## Intake Decision

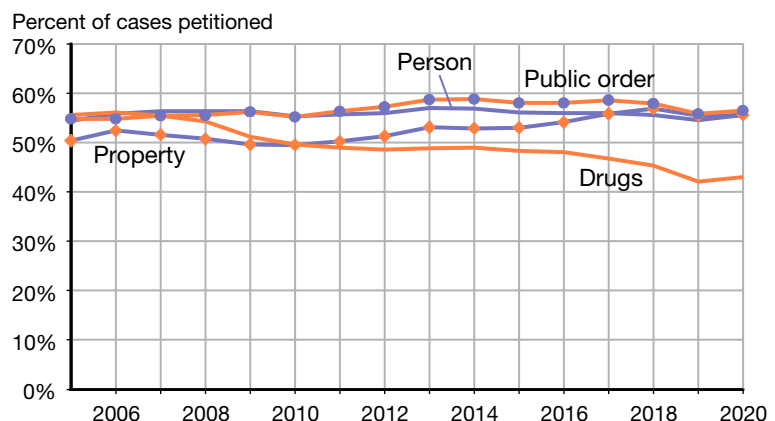
- The overall likelihood of formal handling was greater for more serious offenses within the same general offense category. In 2020, for example, 69% of aggravated assault cases were handled formally, compared with 48% of simple assault cases. Similarly, 66% of burglary cases and 70% of motor vehicle theft cases were handled formally by juvenile courts, compared with 51% of larceny-theft and 41% of trespassing cases.
- Youth younger than 16 accounted for 50% of the delinquency cases handled formally by juvenile courts in 2020; females accounted for 23% and White youth accounted for 40% of petitioned cases.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of formal processing increased: from 50% to 56% for property offense cases, from 54% to 55% for person offense cases, and from 55% to 56% for public order cases.
- In 2020, 43% of drug offense cases were petitioned—a lower percentage than in 2005, when 55% were petitioned.
- Between 2005 and 2010, property offense cases were less likely than cases in each of the other general offense categories to be handled with a petition for adjudication; since 2011, drug offense cases were the least likely.

### In 2020, juvenile courts petitioned 54% of all delinquency cases

Most serious offense	Petitioned cases	Percentage of total delinquency cases	Percentage of all petitioned cases, 2020		
			Younger than 16	Female	White
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>276,300</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Total person</b>	<b>97,400</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>39</b>
Criminal homicide	1,100	89	30	10	22
Rape	4,600	72	61	3	57
Robbery	13,800	85	45	11	14
Aggravated assault	15,100	69	49	22	32
Simple assault	50,200	48	59	34	42
Other violent sex offenses	4,200	71	70	5	63
Other person offenses	8,400	45	55	24	51
<b>Total property</b>	<b>89,500</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>39</b>
Burglary	21,200	66	54	10	38
Larceny-theft	29,300	51	50	28	38
Motor vehicle theft	10,100	70	53	20	28
Arson	1,000	68	71	15	58
Vandalism	14,600	49	57	19	54
Trespassing	6,200	41	54	22	42
Stolen property offenses	4,600	80	46	12	19
Other property offenses	2,500	50	50	26	45
<b>Drug law violations</b>	<b>24,400</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Total public order</b>	<b>65,000</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>
Obstruction of justice	36,500	66	40	25	33
Disorderly conduct	12,100	43	62	34	44
Weapons offenses	8,000	66	39	7	25
Liquor law violations	600	26	31	27	59
Nonviolent sex offenses	4,000	48	55	14	60
Other public order offenses	3,800	42	54	19	53

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

### Between 2005 and 2020, the use of formal processing increased in all general offense categories except drug offense cases



# Intake Decision

**Formal processing was more likely for cases involving older youth than younger youth, and more likely for cases involving males than females**

Most serious offense	Percentage of cases petitioned			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	52%	57%	57%	46%
Person	53	59	59	47
Property	55	57	59	46
Drugs	39	45	45	37
Public order	52	61	59	50
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	50%	57%	56%	44%
Person	52	58	58	47
Property	48	54	55	38
Drugs	52	58	58	46
Public order	51	60	57	50

**Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of formal processing decreased for drug offense cases across all race groups except American Indian**

Most serious offense	Percentage of cases petitioned				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	50%	61%	52%	62%	52%
Person	52	61	54	61	53
Property	50	62	54	62	49
Drugs	41	52	40	56	43
Public order	52	61	56	66	59
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	50%	58%	52%	55%	55%
Person	50	59	54	55	60
Property	48	56	49	51	50
Drugs	50	70	54	50	58
Public order	55	56	53	66	60

## Age

- In each year between 2005 and 2020, delinquency cases involving youth age 16 or older were more likely to be petitioned than were cases involving younger youth.
- In 2020, 52% of delinquency cases involving youth age 15 or younger were petitioned, compared with 57% of cases involving older youth.

## Gender

- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of formal case processing for delinquency cases increased slightly for males (from 56% to 57%) and females (from 44% to 46%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, for both males and females, the likelihood of formal case processing decreased for drug offense cases (down 13 and 9 percentage points, respectively) and increased for property offense cases (by 4 and 8 percentage points, respectively).

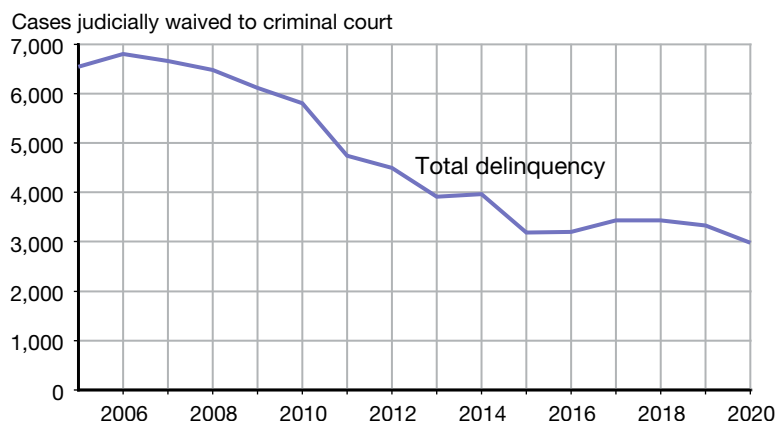
## Race

- The proportion of delinquency cases petitioned decreased slightly between 2005 and 2020 for Asian youth (down 3 percentage points). The use of formal processing was the same in 2020 and 2005 for White and Hispanic youth and increased for Black youth and American Indian youth (by 3 and 7 percentage points, respectively).
- For each year between 2005 and 2019, property and drug offense cases involving Black youth were more likely to be petitioned than were such cases involving any other racial group. In 2020, drug and public order offense cases involving American Indian youth were more likely than those involving Black youth to be handled formally.

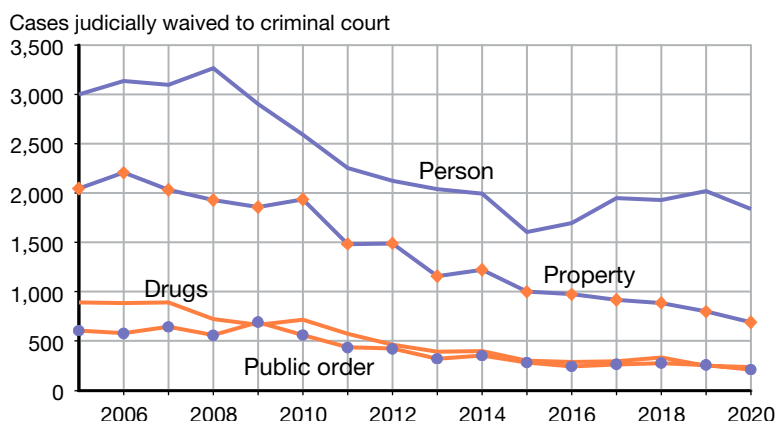
# Waiver

- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of delinquency cases waived to criminal court was at its highest in 2006 (6,800). The number of cases waived in 2020 (3,000) was 56% below the 2006 level.
- The number of judicially waived person offense cases increased 9% between 2005 and 2008, fell 51% to its lowest level in 2015, and then increased 15% by 2020. Despite the recent increase, the number of person offense cases judicially waived in 2020 was 39% less than the number in 2005.
- The number of drug offense cases judicially waived remained stable between 2005 and 2007 before falling 73% by 2020.
- For public order offenses, the number of waived cases decreased 65% between 2005 and 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the largest number of judicially waived cases involved person offense cases.
- Historically, the number of cases judicially waived declined after 1994 and may be attributable in part to the large increase in the number of states that passed legislation excluding certain serious offenses from juvenile court jurisdiction and legislation permitting the prosecutor to file certain cases directly in criminal court.

**The number of cases judicially waived to criminal court decreased 54% between 2005 and 2020**



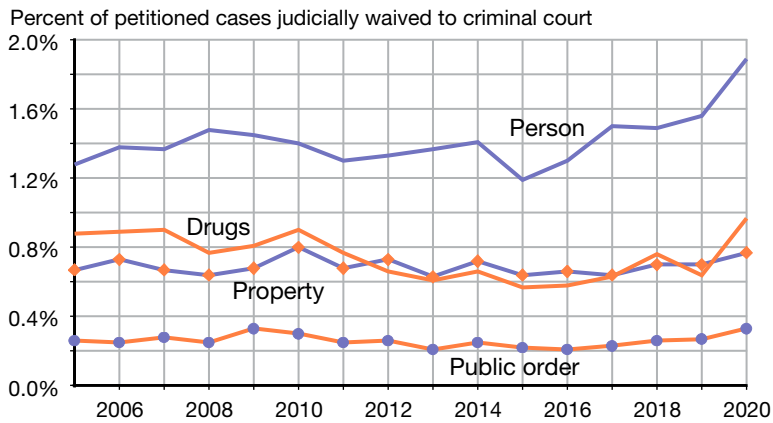
**Since 2005, the number of cases judicially waived to criminal court decreased the most for drug offenses (73%), followed by property (66%), public order (65%), and person offenses (39%)**



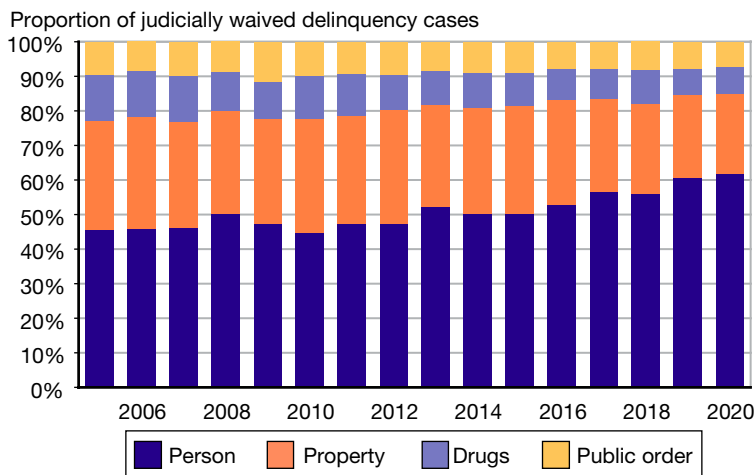


# Waiver

**For all years from 2005 to 2020, cases involving person offense cases were most likely to be judicially waived**



**Between 2005 and 2020, the offense profile of the judicially waived caseload changed—the share of person offense cases increased while the share of most other offense cases decreased**



- Over the 2005–2020 reporting period, the likelihood of waiver for person, drug, and public order offense cases was at its highest level in 2020.
- The proportion of the waived caseload involving person offenses grew between 2005 and 2020. In 2005, person offense cases accounted for 46% of the waived caseload; by 2020, person offense cases were 62% of the waived caseload.
- The proportion of all waived delinquency cases that involved a property offense as the most serious charge was 31% in 2005 and 23% in 2020, and ranged between 23% and 33% over the time period.
- Drug offense cases represented 14% of the judicially waived cases in 2005 and 8% in 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, public order offense cases comprised 7% to 11% of the waived caseload.

# Waiver

## Age

- In 2020, 1.9% of all petitioned delinquency cases involving youth age 16 or older were waived to criminal court, compared with 0.2% of cases involving younger youth.
- For both age groups, the probability of waiver remained relatively stable between 2005 and 2020.

## Gender

- The proportion of person offense cases judicially waived increased from 1.6% in 2005 to 2.4% in 2020 for males.
- The proportion of drug offense cases judicially waived increased from 1.0% in 2005 to 1.1% in 2020 for males and increased from 0.4% to 0.5% for females.

## Race

- The likelihood of judicial waiver among cases involving American Indian youth was the same in 2020 as in 2005 (0.9%); the likelihood for cases involving all other race groups increased.
- In 2020, cases involving person offenses were more likely than other offenses to be waived for youth of all races: 1.2% among White youth, 2.7% among Black youth, 1.7% among Hispanic youth, 1.5% among American Indian youth, and 1.9% among Asian youth.

**Cases involving youth age 16 or older were much more likely to be judicially waived to criminal court than those involving younger youth**

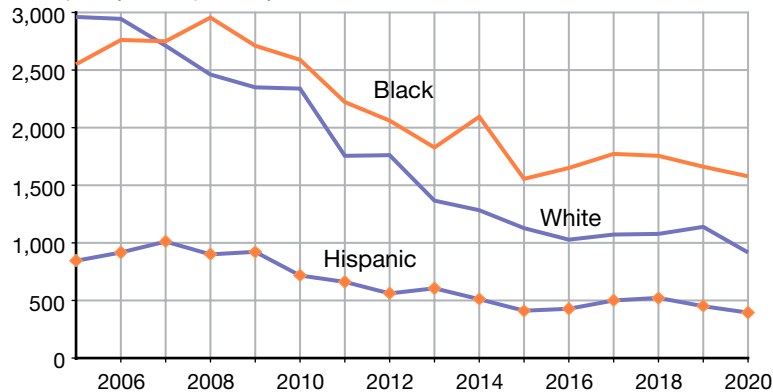
Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases judicially waived			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	0.2%	1.9%	1.3%	0.3%
Person	0.4	3.7	2.4	0.3
Property	0.1	1.5	0.9	0.3
Drugs	0.1	1.4	1.1	0.5
Public order	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.2
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	0.2%	1.4%	0.9%	0.3%
Person	0.4	2.7	1.6	0.4
Property	0.1	1.4	0.8	0.3
Drugs	0.1	1.4	1.0	0.4
Public order	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.1

**Person offense cases involving Black youth were more likely than cases involving White youth to be judicially waived**

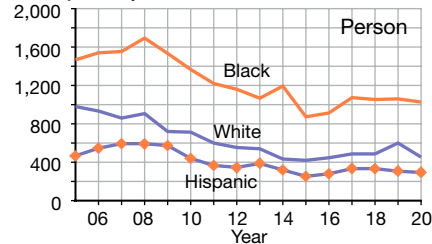
Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases judicially waived				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	0.8%	1.5%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
Person	1.2	2.7	1.7	1.5	1.9
Property	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.7	0.6
Drugs	1.0	1.5	0.4	0.4	NA
Public order	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.0
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%	0.5%
Person	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.2
Property	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.4
Drugs	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.6	0.2
Public order	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3

The number of delinquency cases judicially waived to criminal court was lower in 2020 than in 2005 for all race groups

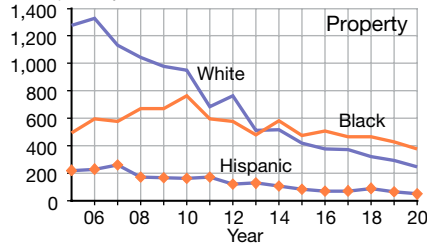
Delinquency cases judicially waived to criminal court



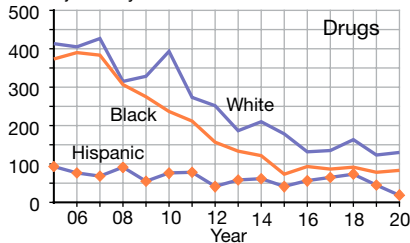
Cases judicially waived to criminal court



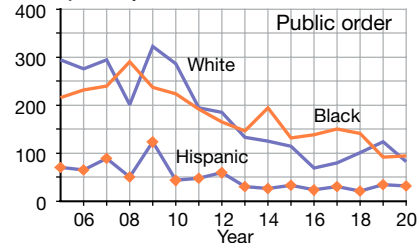
Cases judicially waived to criminal court



Cases judicially waived to criminal court



Cases judicially waived to criminal court



- The number of judicially waived cases involving White youth declined 69% between 2005 and 2020.
- The number of judicially waived cases in 2020 was 38% below the number in 2005 for Black youth.
- The number of judicially waived cases involving Hispanic youth in 2020 was 53% below the 2005 level.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of judicially waived cases decreased the most for property offenses involving White youth (81%) and drug offenses involving Hispanic youth (79%).

#### Offense profile of waived cases:

Most serious offense	White	Black	Hispanic
<b>2020</b>			
Person	50%	65%	75%
Property	27	24	12
Drugs	14	5	5
Public order	9	6	8
Total	100%	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>			
Person	33%	58%	55%
Property	43	19	26
Drugs	14	15	11
Public order	10	8	8
Total	100%	100%	100%

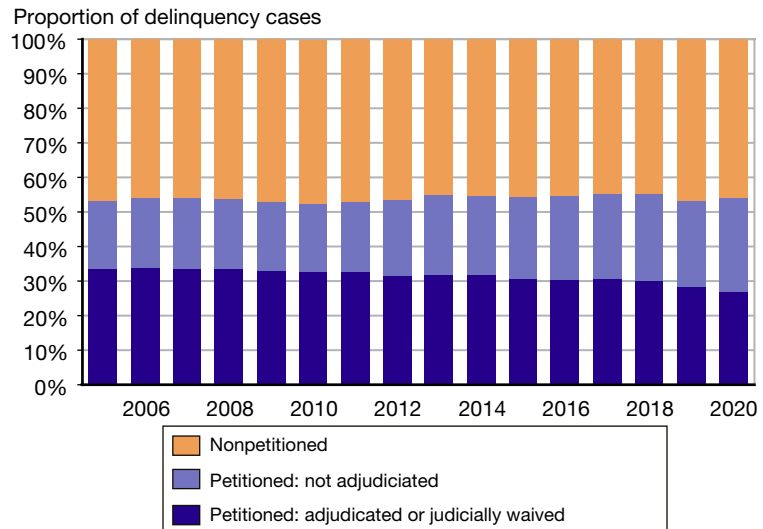
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding. Offense profiles are not presented for American Indian and Asian youth because counts were too small to calculate meaningful percentages.

- In 2020, person offense cases accounted for the largest proportion of judicially waived cases for all racial groups.
- The proportion of person cases waived was largest for Hispanic youth compared with the other racial groups in 2020.

# Adjudication

- In 2005, 34% of all delinquency cases resulted in either adjudication of delinquency or waiver to criminal court. This proportion decreased to 27% in 2020.
- In general, the likelihood of being adjudicated delinquent was greater for more serious offenses within the same general offense category.
- Within the 2020 person offense category, 51% of petitioned aggravated assault cases were adjudicated delinquent, compared with 41% of simple assault cases.
- In the property offense category in 2020, similar proportions of petitioned burglary and motor vehicle theft cases were adjudicated delinquent (53% and 51%, respectively), compared with 47% of larceny-theft cases.
- Among public order offenses in 2020, 54% of obstruction of justice cases were adjudicated delinquent, compared with 41% of disorderly conduct cases.
- Youth younger than 16 accounted for 50% of all adjudicated delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2020, females accounted for 20%, and White youth accounted for 40%.

The proportion of formally processed delinquency cases that resulted in a delinquency adjudication or waiver has decreased since 2005



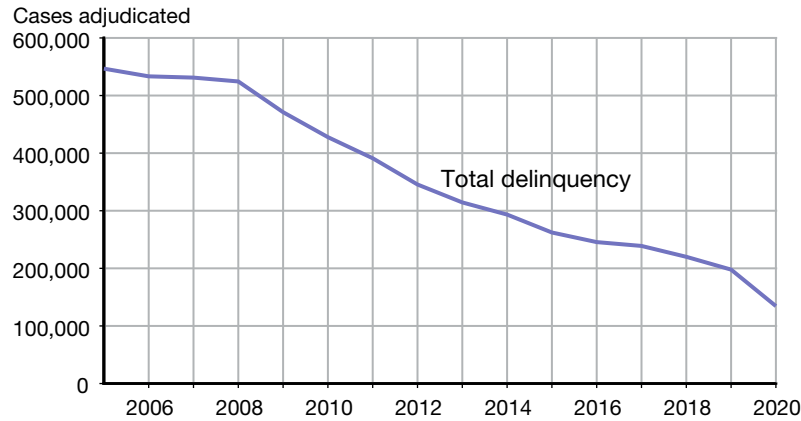
In 2020, youth were adjudicated delinquent in less than half (49%) of petitioned delinquency cases

Most serious offense	Cases adjudicated	Percentage of total petitioned cases	Percentage of all adjudicated cases, 2020		
			Younger than 16	Female	White
<b>Total delinquency</b>	<b>134,200</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Total person</b>	<b>45,700</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>39</b>
Criminal homicide	500	47	34	11	24
Rape	2,500	53	64	3	60
Robbery	8,200	59	45	10	14
Aggravated assault	7,700	51	49	19	33
Simple assault	20,400	41	58	32	43
Other violent sex offenses	2,100	50	71	4	65
Other person offenses	4,300	51	56	21	53
<b>Total property</b>	<b>43,900</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>41</b>
Burglary	11,200	53	54	9	38
Larceny-theft	13,700	47	52	23	41
Motor vehicle theft	5,100	51	55	19	30
Arson	500	48	69	15	57
Vandalism	6,800	47	57	18	57
Trespassing	2,700	43	56	20	47
Stolen property offenses	2,600	56	47	11	19
Other property offenses	1,200	50	53	23	50
<b>Drug law violations</b>	<b>11,800</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Total public order</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>
Obstruction of justice	19,600	54	41	24	34
Disorderly conduct	5,000	41	63	31	50
Weapons offenses	4,300	53	36	6	24
Liquor law violations	300	49	33	24	65
Nonviolent sex offenses	1,900	49	57	11	62
Other public order offenses	1,700	45	55	18	55

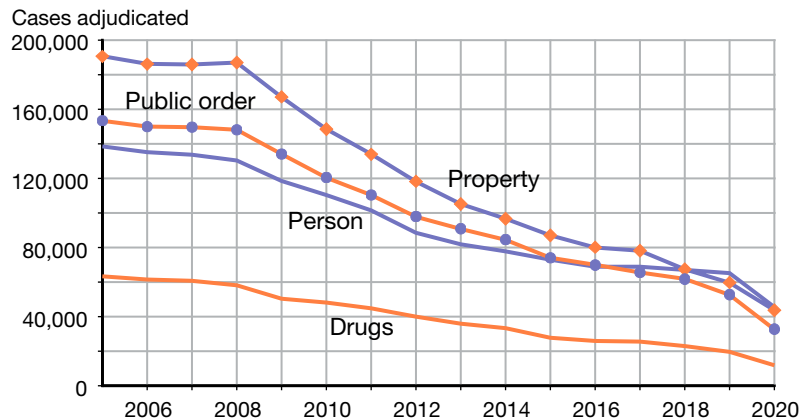
Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

# Adjudication

Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases in which youth were adjudicated delinquent decreased 75%



Since 2005, the number of cases adjudicated delinquent decreased for all general offense categories



- The annual number of delinquency cases in which youth were adjudicated delinquent steadily decreased from 546,200 in 2005 to its lowest level in 2020 (134,200).
- The number of adjudicated property offense cases was at its lowest level in 2020 (from 190,700 in 2005 to 43,900 in 2020).
- The number of adjudicated person offense cases decreased 67% from 138,600 cases in 2005 to 45,700 cases in 2020.
- The number of adjudicated cases decreased 81% for drug offense cases and 79% for public order cases between 2005 and 2020.

## Offense profile of adjudicated delinquency cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Person	25%	34%
Property	35	33
Drugs	12	9
Public order	28	24
Total	100%	100%
Cases adjudicated	546,200	134,200

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

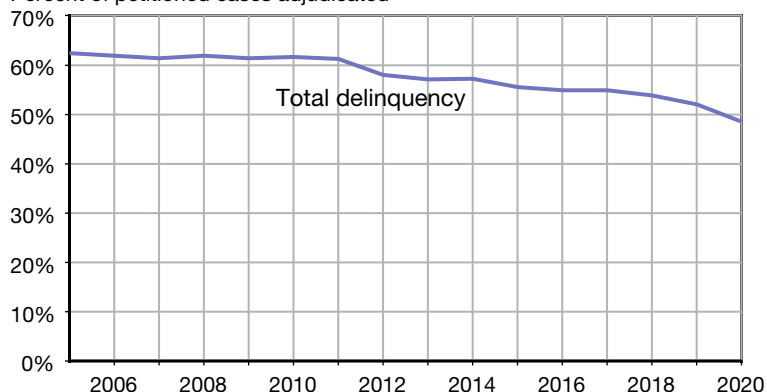
- Compared with 2005, the 2020 adjudicated delinquency caseload included a greater proportion of person offenses and smaller proportions of all other offense types.

# Adjudication

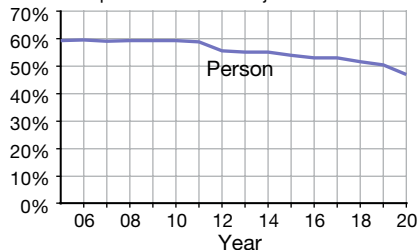
- The likelihood of a delinquency adjudication was less in 2020 than in 2005 for all offense types (by 12 to 15 percentage points).
- The likelihood of adjudication among cases involving a property offense decreased from 62% to 49% between 2005 and 2020.
- The likelihood of adjudication among drug offense cases followed a similar pattern, decreasing from 63% to 48% between 2005 and 2020.
- Among public order cases, the likelihood of adjudication decreased from 65% to 51% between 2005 and 2020.
- Cases involving public order offenses were slightly more likely than any other offense to result in a delinquency adjudication each year between 2005 and 2020.

**The likelihood of delinquency adjudication decreased from 62% of petitioned cases in 2005 to 49% in 2020**

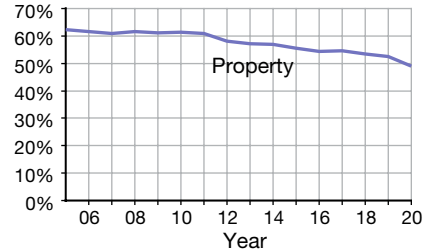
Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated



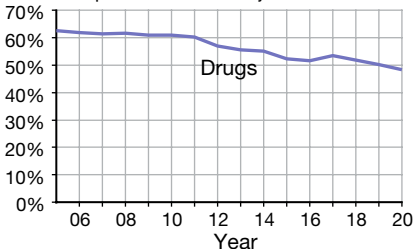
Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated



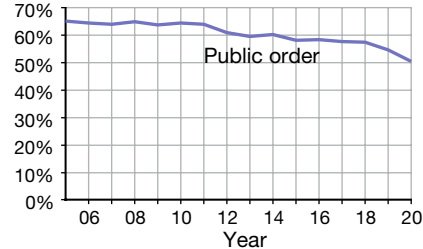
Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated



Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated



Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated



# Adjudication

## Delinquency cases involving younger youth were equally as likely to be adjudicated as those involving older youth

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	49%	49%	50%	43%
Person	46	48	49	41
Property	50	48	51	42
Drugs	49	48	49	45
Public order	50	51	52	46
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	62%	61%	62%	57%
Person	59	58	61	54
Property	62	60	63	55
Drugs	63	58	61	58
Public order	64	65	65	62

## Delinquency cases involving Black youth were less likely to result in a delinquency adjudication than were cases involving youth of all other races

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	49%	45%	54%	52%	52%
Person	47	43	54	53	49
Property	51	45	53	52	52
Drugs	48	46	51	50	NA
Public order	52	46	57	53	56
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	62%	58%	65%	70%	57%
Person	59	57	65	66	56
Property	62	59	64	70	55
Drugs	61	56	62	71	48
Public order	65	60	69	71	64

### Age

- For youth age 15 and younger, person offense cases were less likely than other offense categories to be adjudicated delinquent for each year between 2005 and 2020.
- For drug offense cases involving youth age 16 and older, the likelihood of adjudication decreased from 58% to 48% between 2005 and 2020.

### Gender

- Between 2005 and 2020, male cases generally were more likely to be adjudicated delinquent than were female cases.
- Between 2005 and 2020, for females, the likelihood of a delinquency adjudication decreased for all offense types (between 14 and 18 percentage points).

### Race

- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of a delinquency adjudication decreased 14 percentage points each for White youth and Black youth and 12 percentage points for Hispanic youth.
- In 2020, cases involving Hispanic youth were more likely to result in a delinquency adjudication than cases involving any other race.

## Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement

- The number of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in out-of-home placement decreased 76% from 2005 to its lowest level in 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases involving the use of out-of-home placement decreased 87% for drug offense cases, 79% for public order offense cases, 78% for property offense cases, and 67% for person offense cases.
- Public order offense cases include escapes from institutions, weapons offenses, and probation and parole violations. This may help to explain the relatively high number of public order offense cases involving out-of-home placement.

### Offense profile of adjudicated delinquency cases resulting in out-of-home placement:

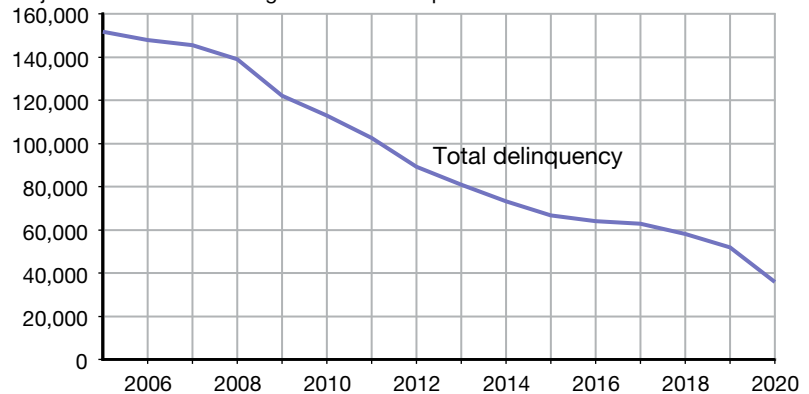
Most serious offense	2005	2020
Person	27%	37%
Property	33	31
Drugs	9	5
Public order	31	27
Total	100%	100%
Cases resulting in out-of-home placement	151,600	35,900

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

- In 2005, property offense cases accounted for the largest share of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in out-of-home placement; in 2020, person offense cases accounted for the largest share.

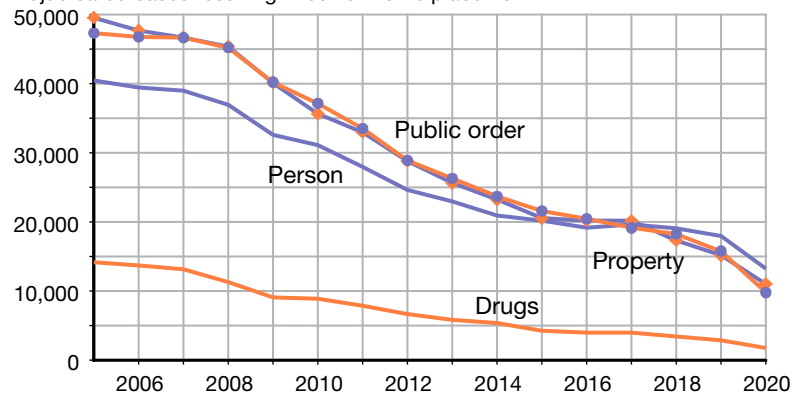
The number of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in out-of-home placement decreased from 151,600 in 2005 to 35,900 in 2020

Adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



In 2020, the number of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in out-of-home placement was at its lowest level for all offense types

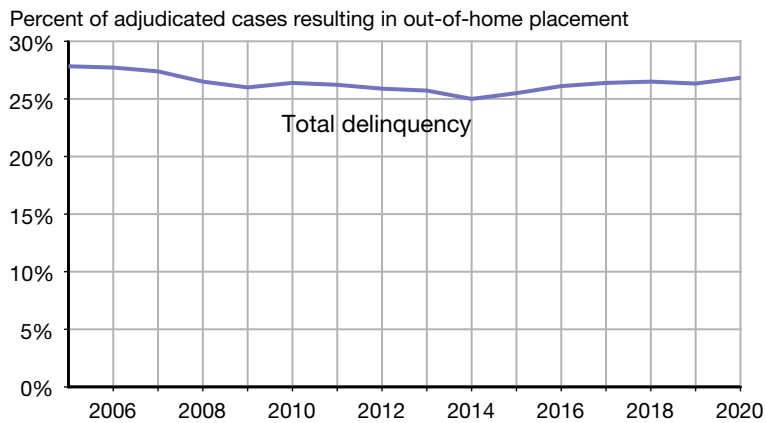
Adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement





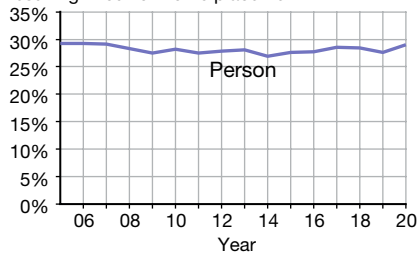
# Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement

The court ordered out-of-home placement in 27% of all cases adjudicated delinquent in 2020

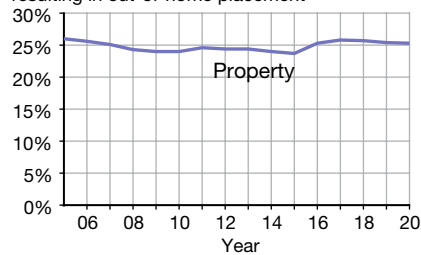


- The proportion of adjudicated delinquency cases that resulted in out-of-home placement was very stable over the period 2005 to 2020, ranging from 28% to 25%.
- The likelihood that an adjudicated case would result in out-of-home placement was also very stable between 2005 and 2020 for person, property, and public order offense cases.
- The proportion of drug offense cases resulting in out-of-home placement declined from 22% in 2005 to 15% in 2020.

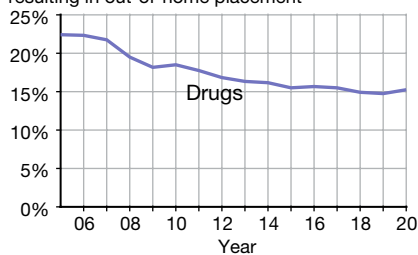
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



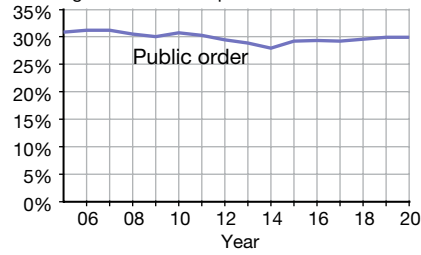
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



## Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement

### Age

- Regardless of offense category, cases involving youth age 16 or older adjudicated delinquent in 2020 were more likely to result in out-of-home placement than were cases involving youth age 15 or younger.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the use of out-of-home placement for youth age 15 and younger declined for drug offense cases and increased for all other offense categories. For youth age 16 and older, out-of-home placement declined for drug and public order offense cases and increased for person and property offense cases.

### Gender

- For males in 2020, person and public order offense cases adjudicated delinquent were most likely to result in out-of-home placement (31% each), followed by property offense cases (27%), and drug offense cases (16%).
- For females in 2020, adjudicated public order offense cases were most likely to result in out-of-home placement (25%), followed by person offense cases (22%), property offense cases (17%), and drug offense cases (11%).

### Race

- After adjudication, the likelihood of out-of-home placement in 2020 was greater for Hispanic and Black youth (31% each) than for American Indian (24%), White (22%), or Asian youth (21%).
- Compared with 2005, the proportion of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in out-of-home-placement in 2020 was the same for Black youth and greater for youth of all other racial categories.

Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of out-of-home placement remained relatively stable but varied by offense

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated, resulting in out-of-home placement			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	25%	28%	28%	20%
Person	26	32	31	22
Property	24	27	27	17
Drugs	15	16	16	11
Public order	28	31	31	25
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	24%	28%	28%	20%
Person	25	31	30	20
Property	23	26	27	16
Drugs	17	18	18	13
Public order	27	33	32	25

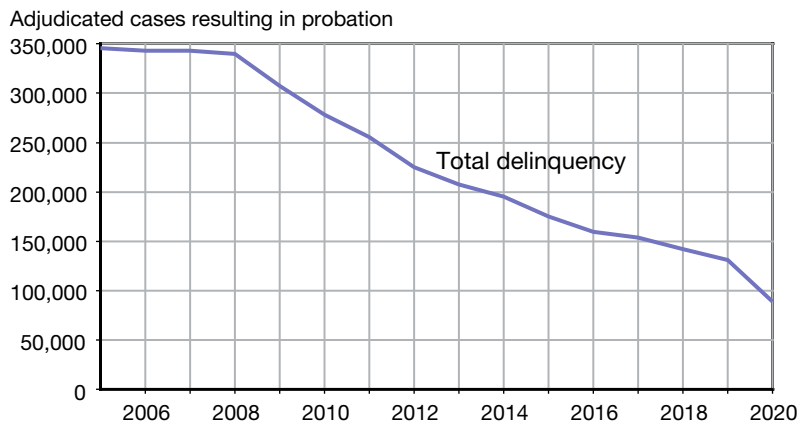
In 2020, adjudicated public order cases involving Hispanic youth were most likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement, across all offense and racial categories

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated, resulting in out-of-home placement				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	22%	31%	31%	24%	21%
Person	23	33	34	28	23
Property	21	29	26	22	NA
Drugs	12	20	18	NA	NA
Public order	24	33	36	24	NA
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	21%	31%	30%	22%	20%
Person	23	30	30	29	23
Property	21	29	27	20	18
Drugs	13	26	21	14	NA
Public order	25	34	36	23	23

NA: Data are not presented because the small number of cases produces unstable estimates.

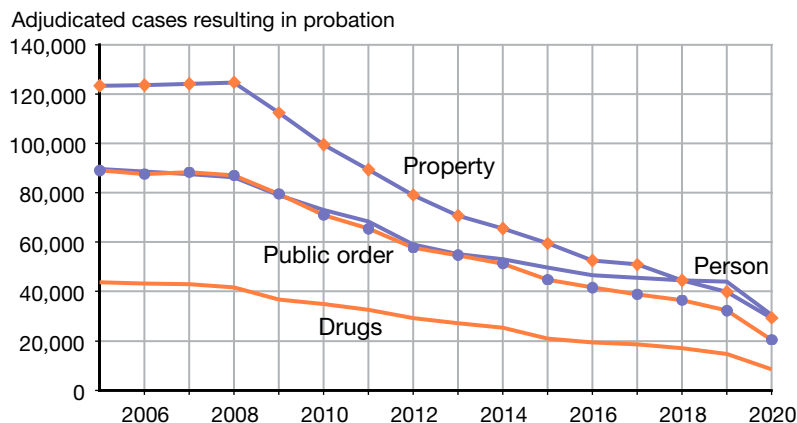
## Dispositions: Probation

The number of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in probation declined 74% between 2005 and 2020



- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in an order of probation decreased at a similar pace as the number of cases that resulted in out-of-home placement (74% and 76%, respectively).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases resulting in probation decreased for all offense groups: 80% for drug offenses, 77% for public order offenses, 76% for property offenses, and 66% for person offenses.

The number of adjudicated property offense cases resulting in an order of probation fell 76% since 2005



## Dispositions: Probation

- Despite a decrease in the volume of cases between 2005 and 2020 (345,600 and 88,700, respectively), the proportion of adjudicated cases with probation as the most restrictive outcome increased slightly from 63% to 66%.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of probation for cases adjudicated delinquent was relatively stable for all offense categories.

### Offense profile of adjudicated delinquency cases resulting in probation:

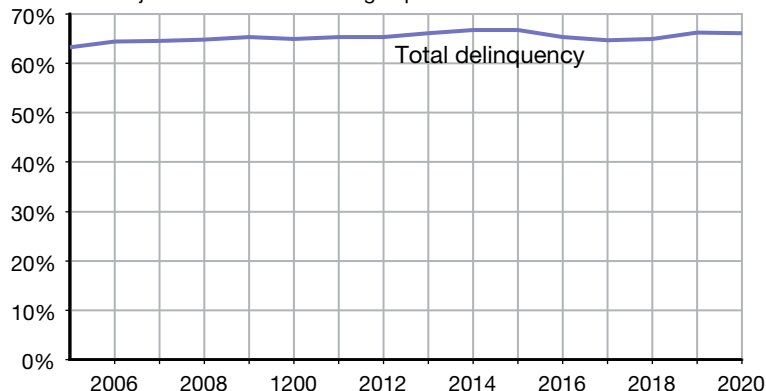
Most serious offense	2005	2020
Person	26%	34%
Property	36	33
Drugs	13	10
Public order	26	23
Total	100%	100%
Cases resulting in formal probation	345,600	88,700

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

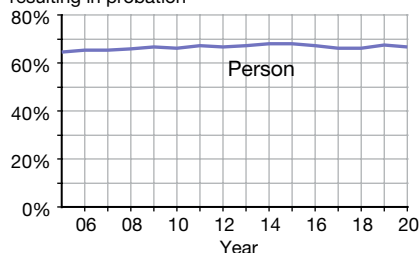
- In 2020, 34% of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in probation involved person offenses, 33% involved property offenses, and 23% involved public order offenses.
- The offense characteristics of cases adjudicated delinquent that resulted in probation changed between 2005 and 2020, with an increase in the proportion of cases involving person offenses and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of cases involving property, drug, and public order offense cases.

### Probation remains the most likely sanction imposed by juvenile courts

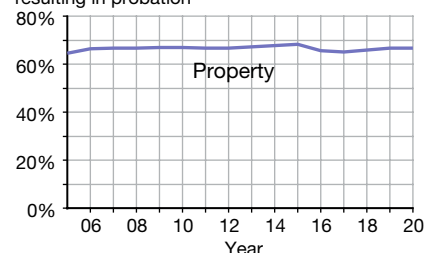
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



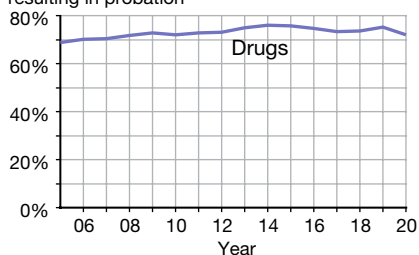
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



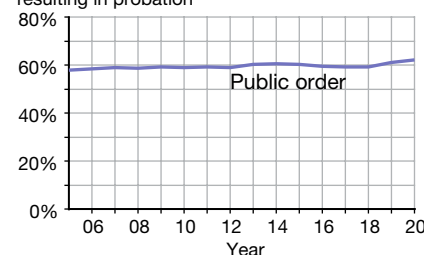
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



## Dispositions: Probation

Cases involving youth age 15 or younger were more likely than cases involving older youth to be placed on formal probation following a delinquency adjudication

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated resulting in probation			
	Age 15 and younger	Age 16 and older	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>				
Delinquency	68%	64%	65%	70%
Person	69	63	65	73
Property	69	65	66	71
Drugs	75	71	72	73
Public order	64	61	62	64
<b>2005</b>				
Delinquency	65%	61%	62%	66%
Person	67	61	63	69
Property	67	62	64	67
Drugs	72	67	68	73
Public order	60	56	57	60

Adjudicated cases involving White youth were more likely than cases involving Black youth to be placed on probation

Most serious offense	Percentage of petitioned cases adjudicated resulting in probation				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Delinquency	69%	62%	66%	68%	71%
Person	72	62	64	68	74
Property	69	63	70	67	NA
Drugs	73	69	75	NA	NA
Public order	63	61	62	67	NA
<b>2005</b>					
Delinquency	64%	61%	64%	66%	67%
Person	66	63	65	68	65
Property	65	62	66	67	69
Drugs	72	63	70	74	65
Public order	58	56	61	59	65

NA: Data are not presented because the small number of cases produces unstable estimates.

### Age

- Among youth age 15 or younger, the overall likelihood of being placed on formal probation increased slightly between 2005 and 2020 from 65% to 68%.
- Among youth age 16 or older, the overall likelihood of being placed on formal probation also increased between 2005 and 2020, from 61% to 64%.
- For both age groups in 2020, adjudicated cases involving drug offenses were more likely to result in probation than cases in other offense categories.

### Gender

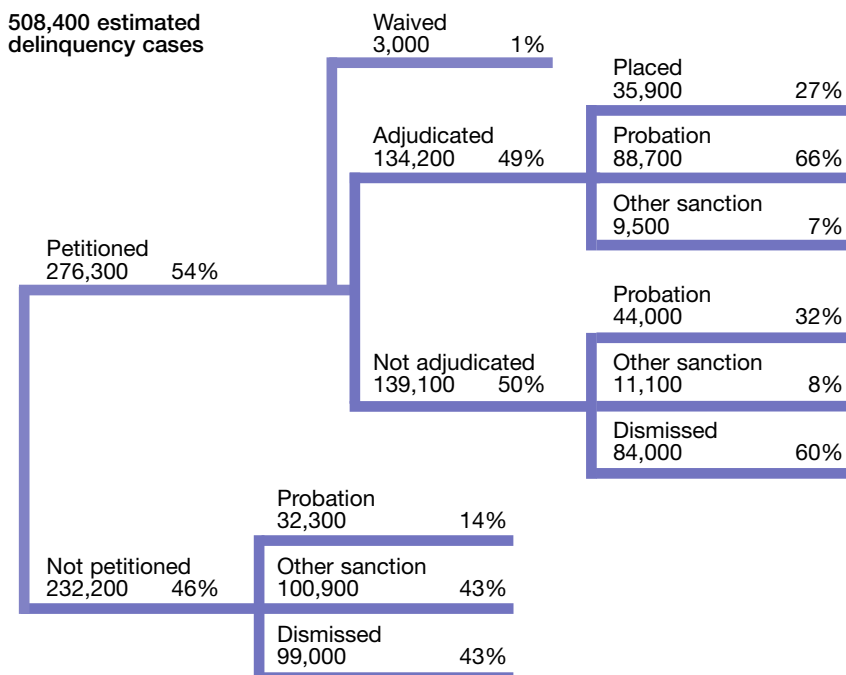
- The overall likelihood of being placed on formal probation increased slightly between 2005 and 2020 for females (from 66% to 70%) as well as males (from 62% to 65%).
- For females in 2020, person and drug offense cases adjudicated delinquent were most likely to be placed on probation (73% each), followed by property offense cases (71%) and public order offense cases (64%).

### Race

- Between 2005 and 2020, the overall likelihood of being placed on formal probation increased for all race groups.
- In 2020, among White youth, drug offense cases that were adjudicated delinquent were most likely to be placed on formal probation (73%), followed by adjudicated person offense cases (72%), property offense cases (69%), and public order offense cases (63%).

## Case Processing Overview, 2020

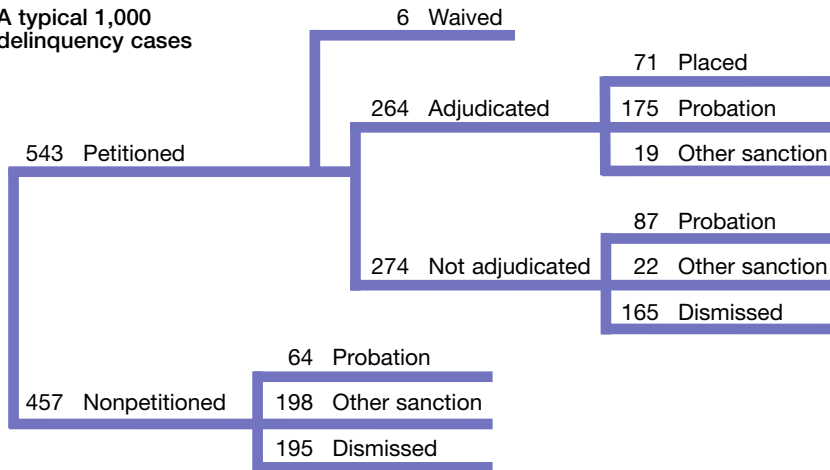
- In 2020, 54% (276,300) of the estimated 508,400 juvenile court cases were handled formally (with the filing of a petition).
- In 2020, 1% (3,000) of all formally processed delinquency cases were judicially transferred to criminal court.
- In 2020, 49% (134,200) of the cases that were handled formally (with the filing of a petition) resulted in a delinquency adjudication.
- In 66% (88,700) of cases adjudicated delinquent in 2020, formal probation was the most severe sanction ordered by the court.
- In 2020, 27% (35,900) of cases adjudicated delinquent resulted in placement outside the home in a residential facility.
- In 7% (9,500) of cases adjudicated delinquent in 2020, the youth was ordered to pay restitution or a fine, to participate in some form of community service, or to enter a treatment or counseling program—dispositions with minimal continuing supervision.
- In 50% (139,100) of all petitioned delinquency cases in 2020, the youth was not subsequently adjudicated delinquent. The court dismissed 60% of these cases, while 32% resulted in some form of informal probation and 8% in other voluntary dispositions.
- In 2020, the court dismissed 43% of the informally handled (i.e., nonpetitioned) delinquency cases, while 14% of the cases resulted in voluntary probation and 43% in other dispositions.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

## Case Processing Overview, 2020

A typical 1,000 delinquency cases



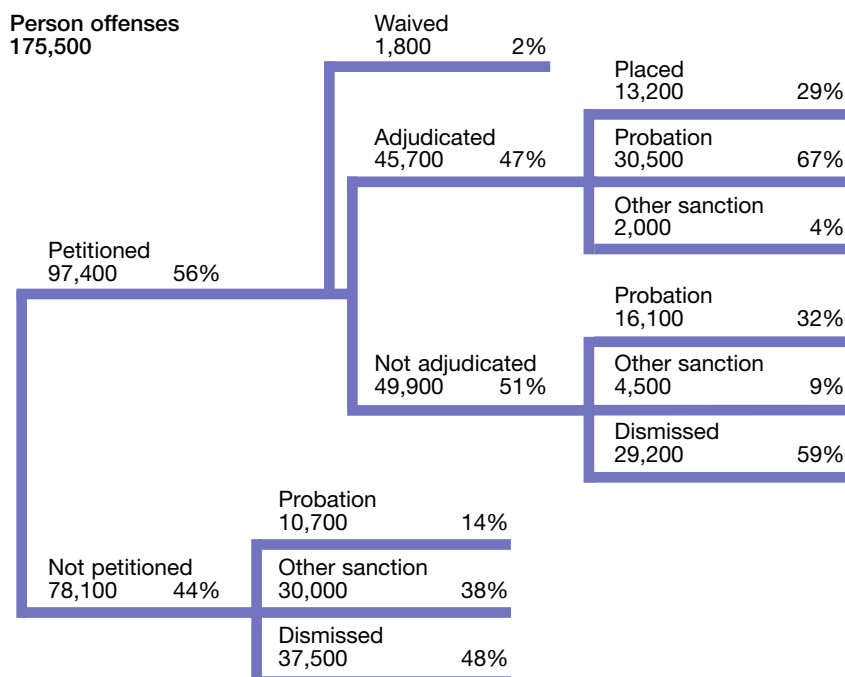
**Notes:** Cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive sanction. Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Annual case processing flow diagrams for 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

- For every 1,000 delinquency cases processed in 2020, 543 were petitioned for formal processing and 457 were handled informally.
- Of the cases that were adjudicated delinquent, 66% (175 of 264) received a disposition of probation and 27% (71 of 264) were placed out of the home.
- In many petitioned delinquency cases that did not result in a delinquency adjudication, the youth agreed to informal services or sanctions (108 of 274), including informal probation and other dispositions such as restitution.
- Although juvenile courts in 2020 handled more than 4 in 10 delinquency cases without the filing of a formal petition, 57% of these cases received some form of court sanction, including probation or other dispositions such as restitution, community service, or referral to another agency.

## Case Processing by Offense Category, 2020

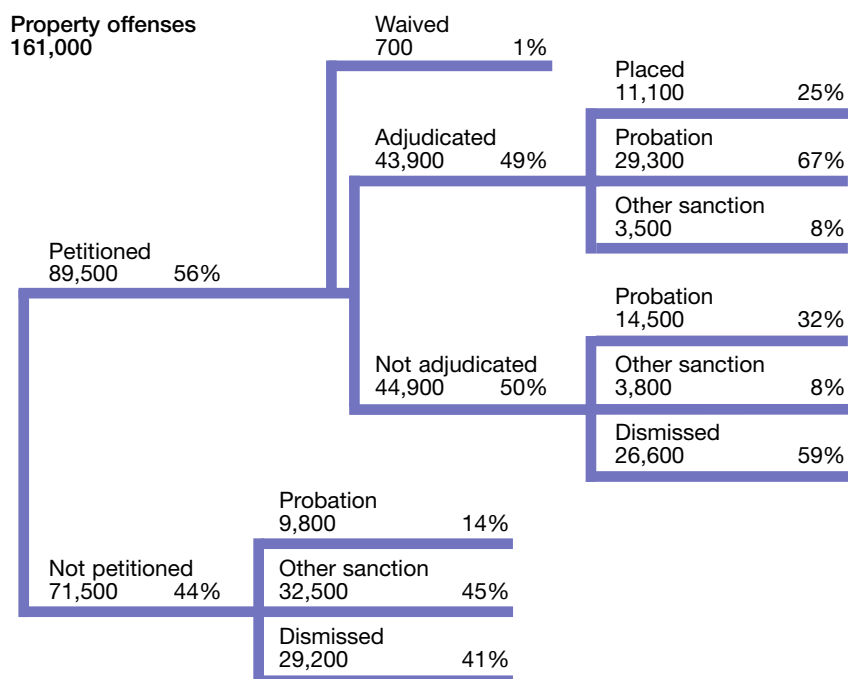
### Person Offense Cases

- In 2020, 47% (45,700) of all formally processed person offense cases resulted in a delinquency adjudication.
- Formal probation was the most severe sanction ordered by the court in 67% (30,500) of the adjudicated person offense cases in 2020.
- In 2020, 14% of person offense cases that were handled informally resulted in probation; 48% were dismissed.
- Juvenile courts waived jurisdiction in 2% (1,800) of all petitioned person offense cases in 2020.



### Property Offense Cases

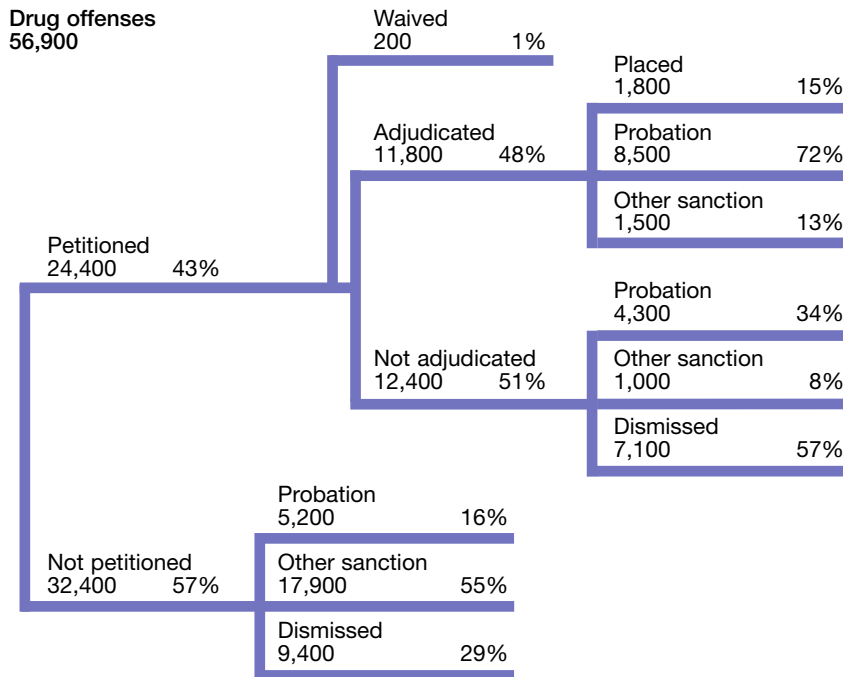
- Juvenile courts handled more than half (56%) of all property offense cases formally in 2020. Of these formally handled cases, 49% (43,900 cases) were adjudicated delinquent.
- In 2020, 29,300 (67%) of the adjudicated property offense cases resulted in probation as the most severe sanction; another 25% (11,100) resulted in out-of-home placement. Other sanctions, such as restitution, community service, or referral to another agency, were ordered in 8% (3,500) of the petitioned property offense cases following adjudication.
- Property offense cases were equally as likely as person offense cases to be petitioned for formal processing. Once petitioned, property offense cases were more likely to result in the youth being adjudicated delinquent than were cases involving person offenses.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

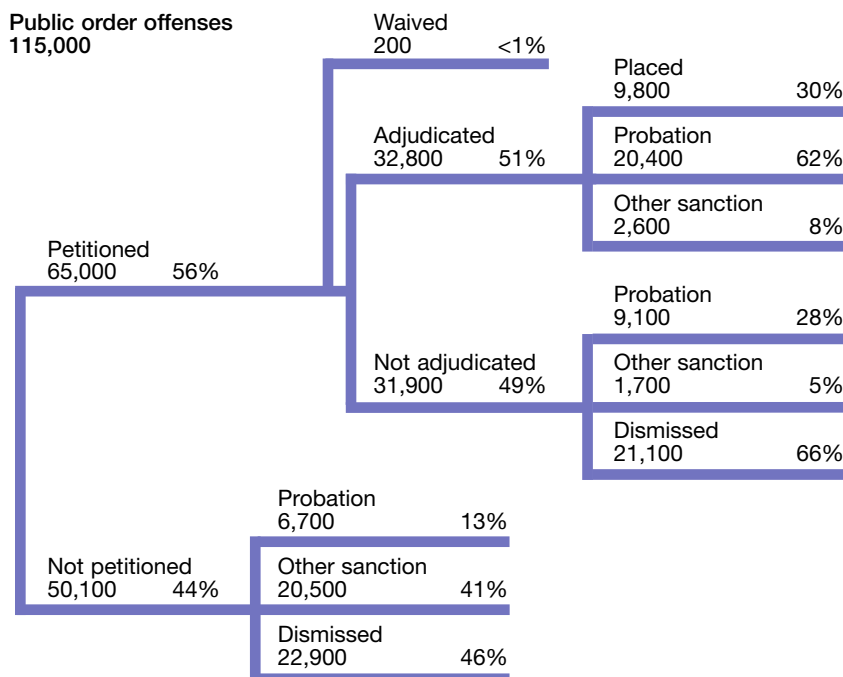


# Case Processing by Offense Category, 2020



## Drug Offense Cases

- In 2020, 48% (11,800) of all petitioned drug offense cases resulted in the youth being adjudicated delinquent; 72% (8,500) of these cases received probation as the most severe sanction, and another 15% (1,800) resulted in out-of-home placement.
- Other sanctions, such as restitution, community service, or referral to another agency, were ordered in 13% (1,500) of petitioned drug offense cases following adjudication in 2020.
- Juvenile courts waived jurisdiction in 1% (200) of all petitioned drug offense cases in 2020.
- More than half (57%) of drug offense cases were informally handled in 2020; 71% of the informally handled drug offense cases resulted in probation or some other sanction.



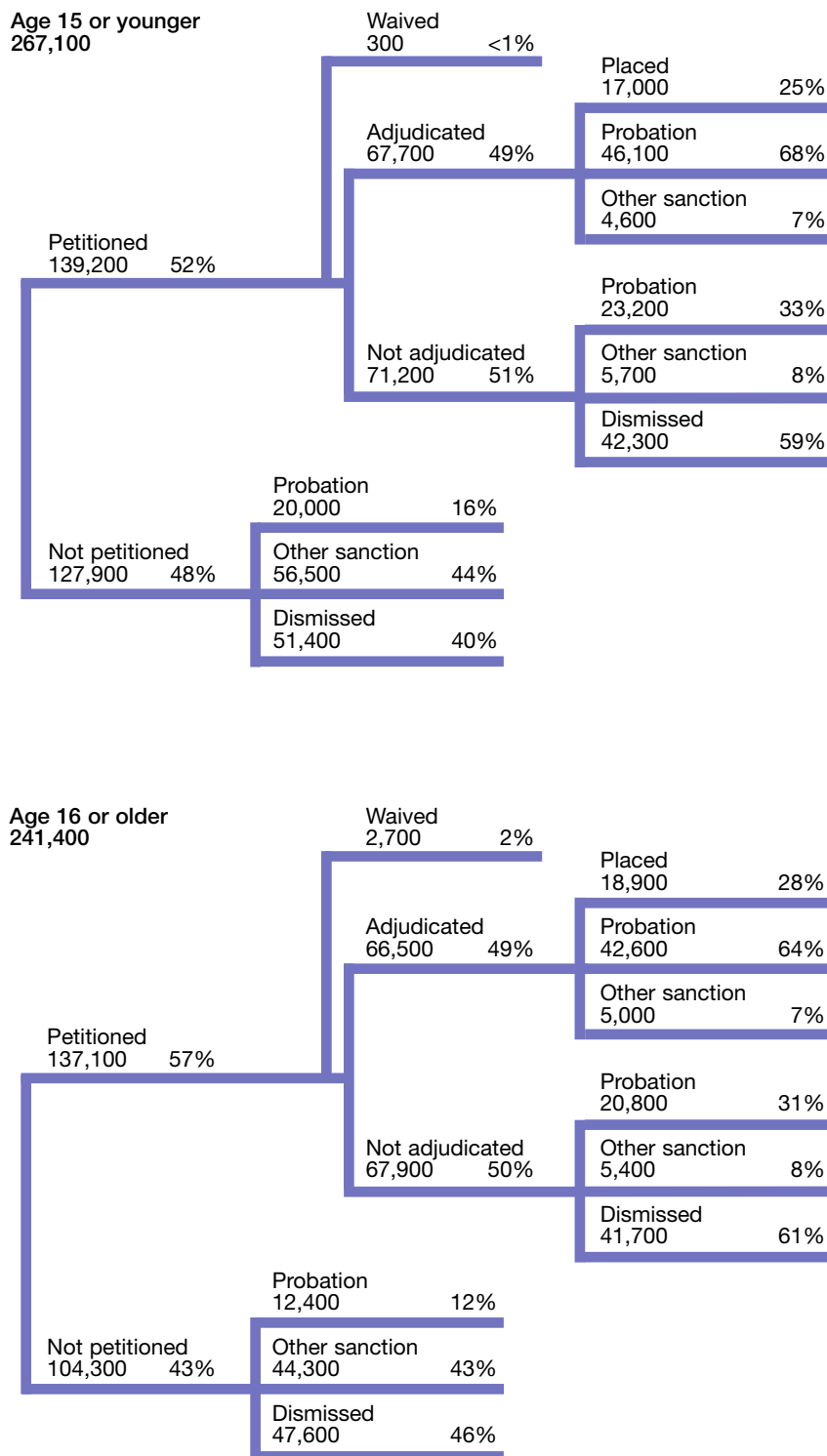
## Public Order Offense Cases

- In 2020, more than half (56%) of all public order offense cases were handled formally, with the filing of a petition for adjudication.
- Once adjudicated, public order offense cases were more likely to result in out-of-home placement (30%) than person offense cases (29%), property offenses cases (25%), or drug offense cases (15%).
- In 2020, 62% of adjudicated public order offense cases resulted in probation as the most severe sanction, 30% were placed out of the home, and 8% resulted in other sanctions.
- In 2020, 44% of all public order offense cases were handled informally. Of the informal cases, 46% were dismissed, while the remaining cases resulted in some form of court sanction.

**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

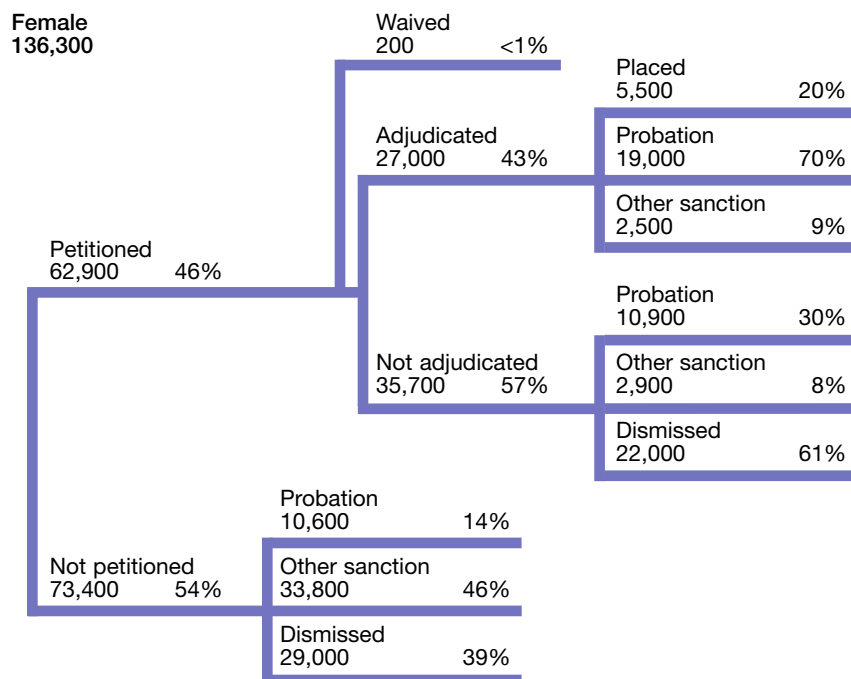
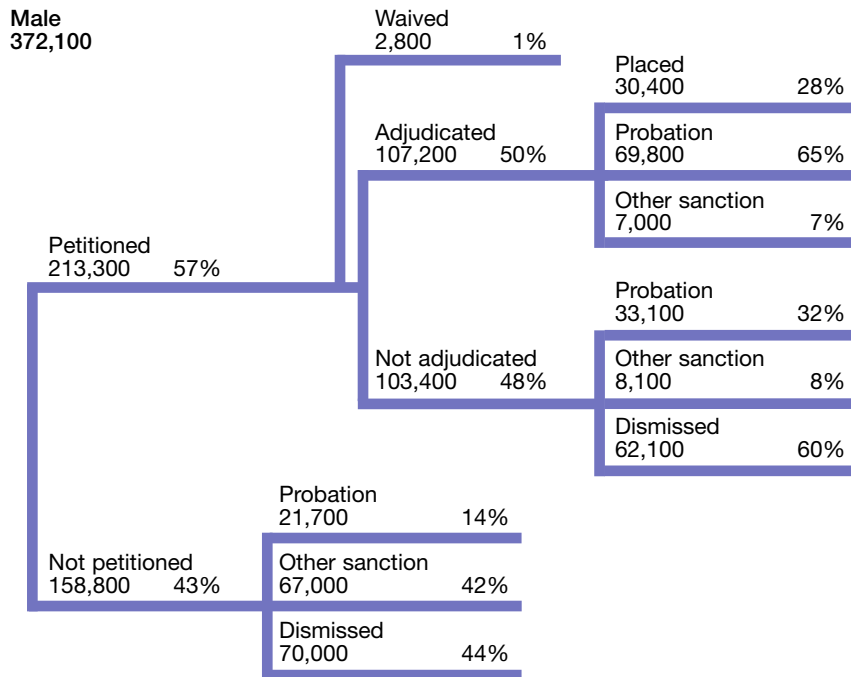
## Case Processing by Age, 2020

- In 2020, 52% (139,200) of all delinquency cases involving youth age 15 or younger and 57% (137,100) of cases involving youth age 16 or older were handled formally with the filing of a petition.
- Petitioned cases involving youth age 15 or younger were equally as likely as those involving youth age 16 or older to be adjudicated delinquent in 2020 (49% each).
- The proportion of petitioned cases waived to criminal court in 2020 was less than 1% for youth age 15 or younger, compared with 2% for youth age 16 or older.
- In 2020, 25% of cases adjudicated delinquent involving youth age 15 or younger and 28% of such cases involving youth age 16 or older resulted in out-of-home placement.
- Probation was ordered as the most severe sanction in 2020 in 68% of the adjudicated cases involving youth age 15 or younger, compared with 64% of adjudicated cases involving youth 16 or older.
- Among cases formally adjudicated in 2020, equal proportions of cases involving youth age 15 or younger and youth age 16 or older resulted in other sanctions (7% each).
- For youth age 15 or younger, 48% of all delinquency cases were handled informally in 2020; of these cases, 16% resulted in a disposition of probation and 40% were dismissed. Among older youth, 43% of all delinquency cases were handled without the filing of a petition for adjudication in 2020; 12% of these cases resulted in a disposition of probation and 46% were dismissed.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

## Case Processing by Gender, 2020

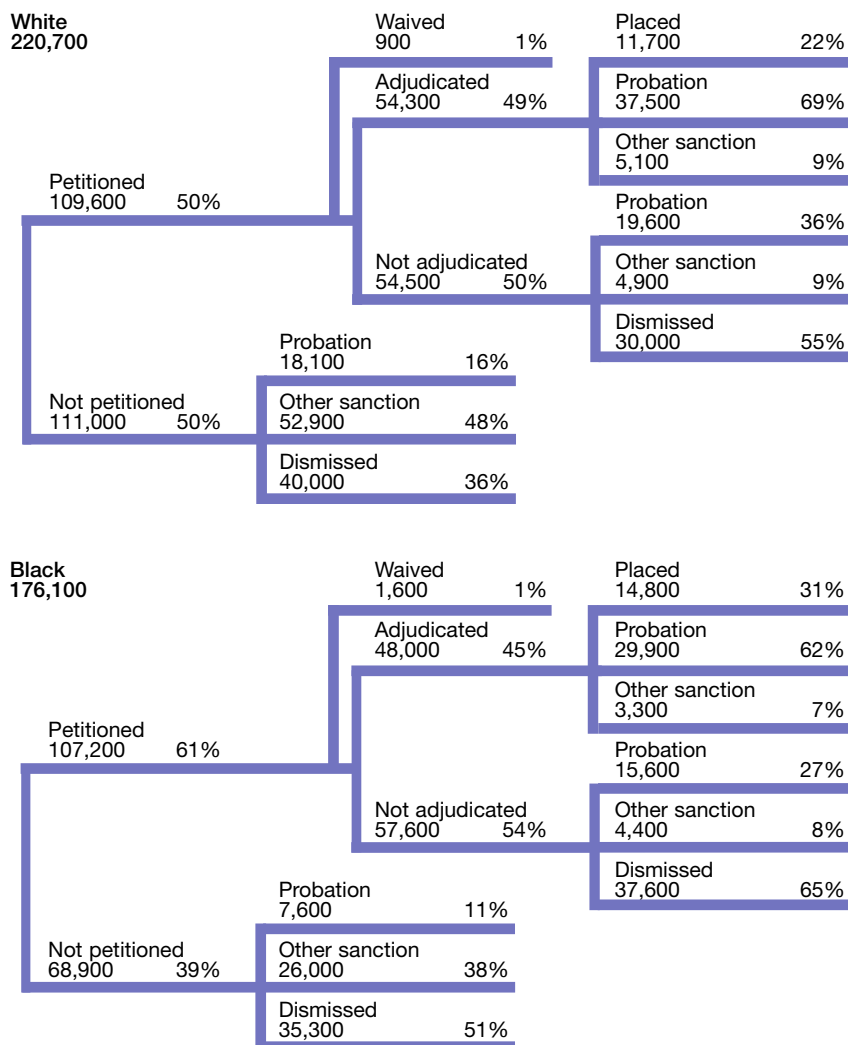


- In 2020, 57% of delinquency cases involving males were handled with the filing of a petition for adjudication, compared with 46% of those involving females.
- Once petitioned, cases involving males in 2020 were more likely to result in a delinquency adjudication than were cases involving females (50% vs. 43%).
- Delinquency cases involving females in 2020 were less likely to be waived to criminal court than those involving males.
- Once adjudicated delinquent, 28% of cases involving males in 2020 resulted in out-of-home placement, compared with 20% of those involving females.
- Of the adjudicated cases involving males, 65% received probation as the most severe sanction, and 7% resulted in other sanctions such as restitution or community service.
- Among adjudicated cases involving females in 2020, 70% received probation as the most severe sanction and 9% resulted in other sanctions.
- Informally handled delinquency cases involving males were equally as likely as those involving females to receive probation in 2020 (14% each); male cases were more likely than female cases to be dismissed (44% vs. 39%).
- In 2020, informally handled delinquency cases involving females were more likely to result in other sanctions than those involving males (46% vs. 42%).

**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

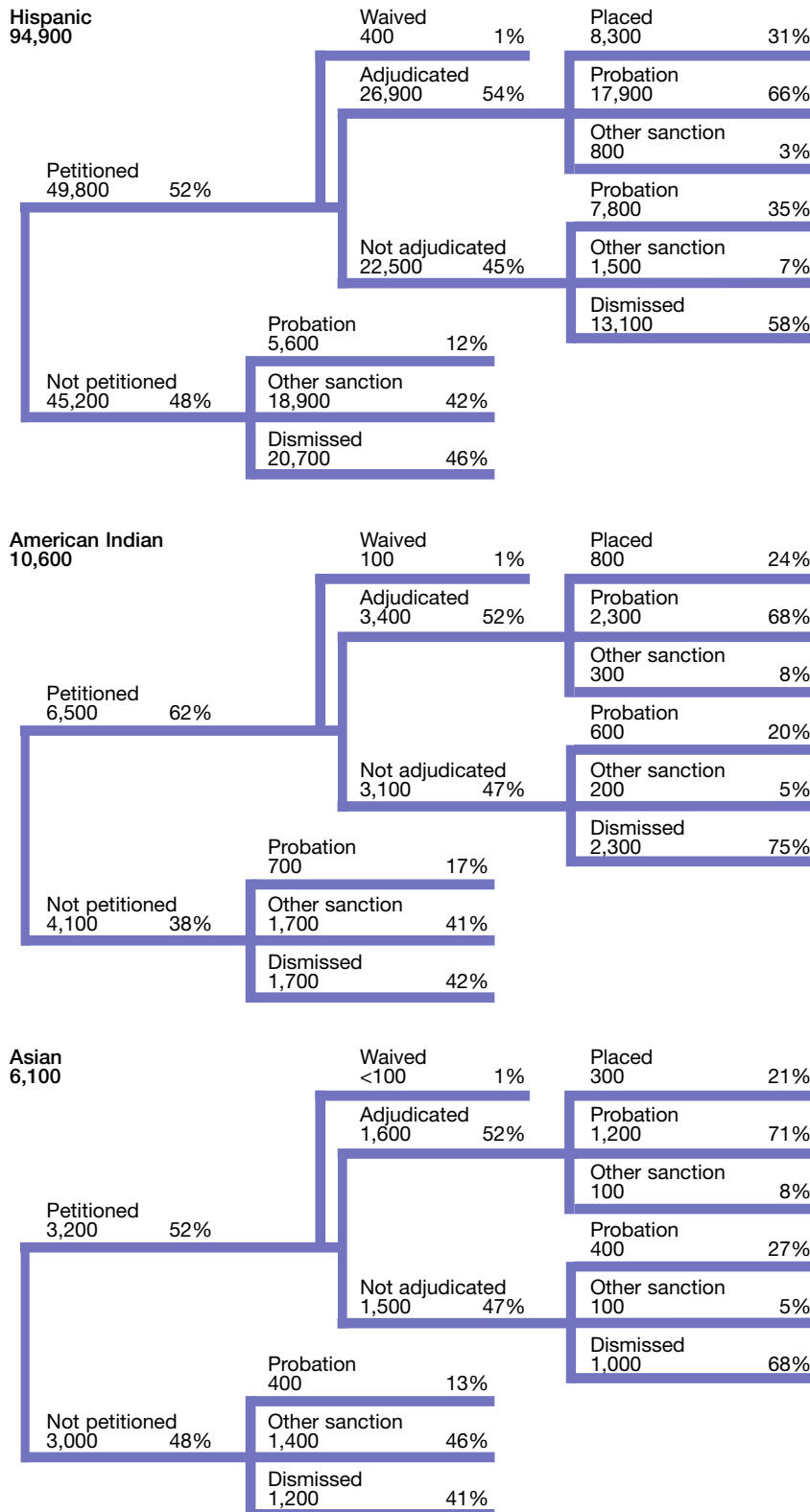
## Case Processing by Race, 2020

- In 2020, delinquency cases involving White youth were less likely to be handled formally (50%) than those involving Black youth (61%), Hispanic youth (52%), American Indian youth (62%), or Asian youth (52%).
- Once petitioned, cases in 2020 involving Black youth (45%), White youth (49%), American Indian and Asian youth (52% each) were less likely to be adjudicated delinquent than were cases involving Hispanic youth (54%).
- For all racial groups in 2020, about 1% of petitioned delinquency cases resulted in waiver to criminal court.
- In 2020, adjudicated delinquency cases involving Black youth and Hispanic youth were more likely to result in out-of-home placement (31% each) than cases involving all other races. Asian youth (21%) and White youth (22%) were less likely than American Indian youth (24%) to be ordered to residential placement.
- For adjudicated cases involving Black youth in 2020, probation was the most severe sanction ordered in 62% of the cases and 7% resulted in other sanctions.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

## Case Processing by Race, 2020



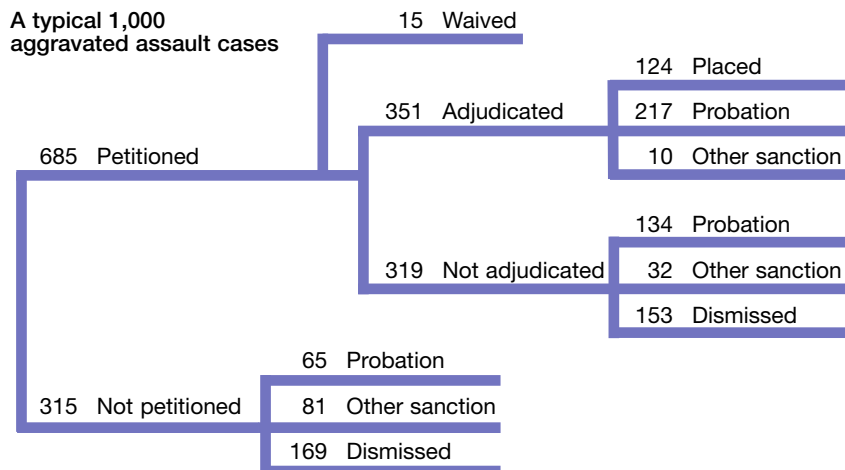
- For adjudicated cases involving American Indian youth in 2020, probation was the most severe sanction ordered in 68% of the cases and 8% resulted in other sanctions.
- In 71% of the adjudicated cases involving Asian youth in 2020, probation was the most severe sanction; 8% resulted in other sanctions such as restitution or community service.
- In 2020, 50% of delinquency cases involving White youth were handled informally, compared with 48% of cases involving Hispanic youth and Asian youth, 39% of cases involving Black youth, and 38% of cases involving American Indian youth.
- Informally handled delinquency cases involving Black youth in 2020 were more likely to be dismissed (51%) than those involving Hispanic youth (46%), American Indian youth (42%), Asian youth (41%), or White youth (36%).
- In 2020, informally handled delinquency cases involving White youth were most likely to result in other sanctions such as restitution, community service, or referral to another agency (48%), compared with cases involving Asian youth (46%), Hispanic youth (42%), American Indian youth (41%), or Black youth (38%).

**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

## Case Processing by Selected Individual Offense, 2020

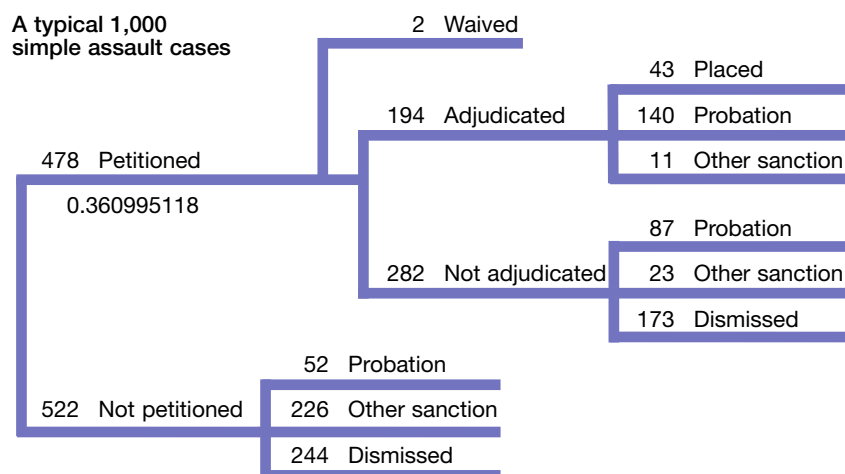
### Aggravated Assault Cases

- Juvenile courts waived 15 of every 1,000 aggravated assault cases to criminal court in 2020, compared with 2 of every 1,000 simple assault cases.
- In 2020, 37% of aggravated assault cases received some formal sanction or were waived to criminal court (366 of 1,000).
- In 2020, 12% of aggravated assault cases received a formal sanction of out-of-home placement (124 of 1,000) and 22% were placed on formal probation (217 of 1,000).
- Of all aggravated assault cases referred to juvenile courts in 2020, 32% were eventually released or dismissed (322 of 1,000)—22% of the petitioned cases and 54% of those that were informally handled.



### Simple Assault Cases

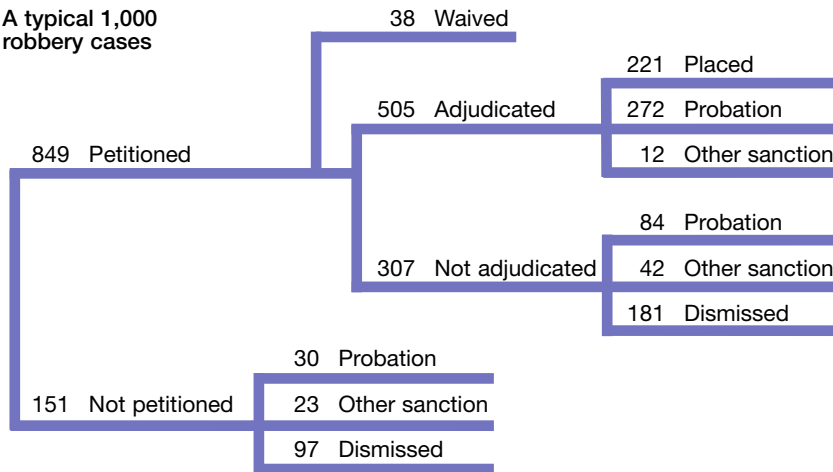
- Of every 1,000 simple assault cases handled in 2020, 196 received some formal sanction or were waived to criminal court.
- In 2020, 4% of simple assault cases resulted in the youth receiving a formal sanction of out-of-home placement (43 of 1,000) and 14% were placed on formal probation (140 of 1,000).
- Youth received informal sanctions in 39% of simple assault cases processed in 2020 (387 of 1,000).
- Of all simple assault cases referred to juvenile courts in 2020, 42% were eventually dismissed (417 of 1,000)—36% of the petitioned cases and 47% of those that were informally handled.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).

# Case Processing by Selected Individual Offense, 2020

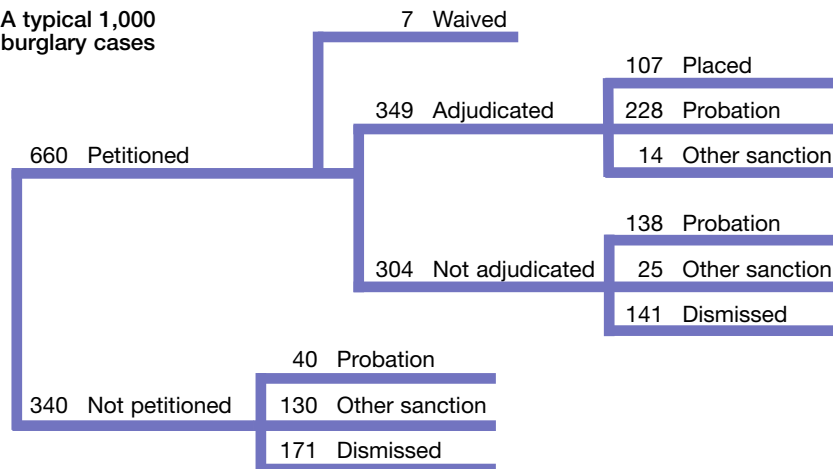
A typical 1,000 robbery cases



## Robbery Cases

- Juvenile courts waived 38 of every 1,000 robbery cases to criminal court in 2020.
- In 2020, juvenile courts ordered formal sanctions or waived jurisdiction in 54% of all robbery cases (542 of 1,000).
- In 2020, 22% of robbery cases received a formal sanction of out-of-home placement (221 of 1,000) and 27% resulted in formal probation (272 of 1,000).
- Of all robbery cases referred to juvenile court in 2020, 15% were not petitioned; the majority (64%) of these cases were dismissed.

A typical 1,000 burglary cases



## Burglary Cases

- Juvenile courts waived 7 of every 1,000 burglary cases to criminal court in 2020.
- Juvenile courts ordered formal sanctions or waived jurisdiction in 54% of all formally handled burglary cases in 2020 (355 of 660).
- In 2020, 107 of 1,000 burglary cases received a formal sanction of out-of-home placement and 228 of 1,000 resulted in formal probation.
- Approximately one-third (34%) of all burglary cases referred to juvenile courts in 2020 were handled informally and half of these cases (171 of 340) were dismissed.

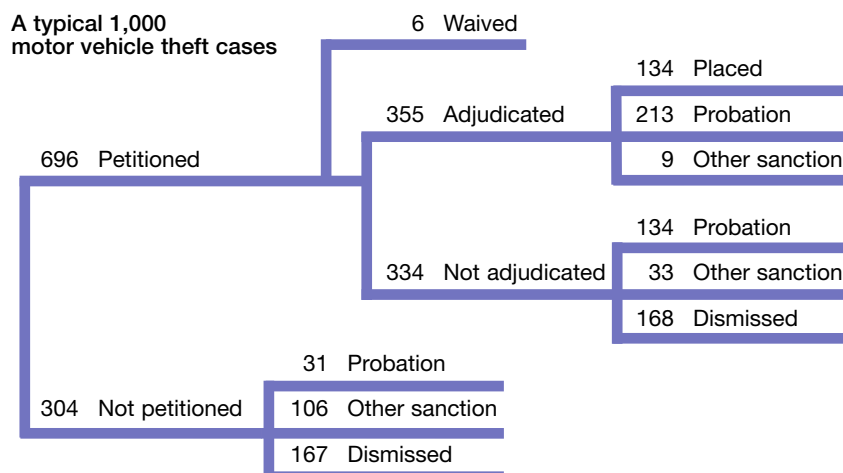
**Notes:** Cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive sanction. Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Annual case processing flow diagrams for 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).



# Case Processing by Selected Individual Offense, 2020

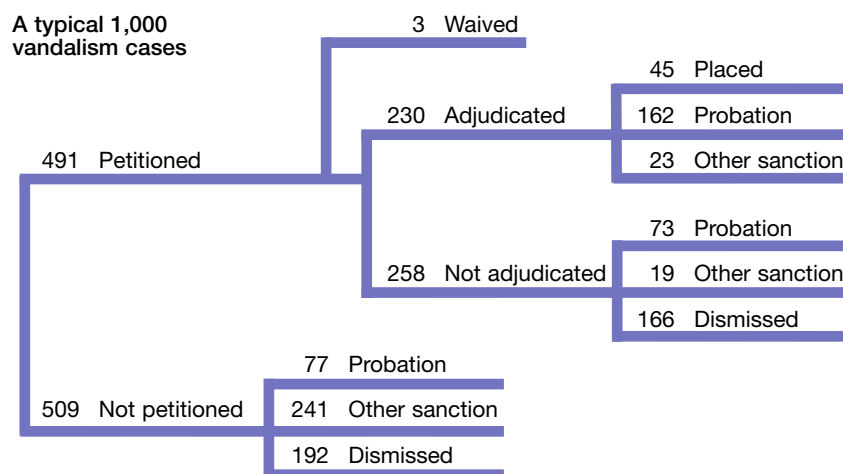
## Motor Vehicle Theft Cases

- Juvenile courts waived less than 1% of motor vehicle theft cases to criminal court in 2020 (6 of every 1,000).
- In 2020, 36% of motor vehicle theft cases referred to juvenile courts resulted in formal court sanctions or waiver to criminal court.
- About 40% of motor vehicle cases adjudicated delinquent in 2020 resulted in out-of-home placement (134 of 355).
- Nearly one-third of motor vehicle theft cases referred to juvenile courts in 2020 were handled without the filing of a petition (304 of 1,000).



## Vandalism Cases

- Juvenile courts waived 3 of every 1,000 vandalism cases to criminal court in 2020.
- Approximately half of vandalism cases referred to juvenile courts in 2020 were handled formally (491 of 1,000). Of these cases, 47% were adjudicated delinquent (230 of 491).
- In 2020, 71% of petitioned vandalism cases adjudicated delinquent resulted in a court sanction of probation (162 of 230), and 19% resulted in out-of-home placement (45 of 229).
- Juvenile courts handled 509 of every 1,000 vandalism cases informally (without a petition) in 2020. Youth received informal sanctions in 62% of these nonpetitioned cases.



**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 2005 through 2020 are available online at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/court/faqs.asp).



# Chapter 4

## National Estimates of Petitioned Status Offense Cases

Status offenses are acts that are illegal only because the persons committing them are of juvenile status. The five major status offense categories used in this report are running away, truancy, curfew law violations, ungovernability (also known as incorrigibility or being beyond the control of one's parents), and underage liquor law violations (e.g., a minor in possession of alcohol, underage drinking). A number of other behaviors, such as those involving tobacco offenses, may be considered status offenses. However, because of the heterogeneity of these miscellaneous offenses, they are not discussed independently in this report but are included in discussions and displays of petitioned status offense totals.

Agencies other than juvenile courts are responsible for processing status offense cases in many jurisdictions. In some communities, for example, family crisis units, county attorneys, and social service agencies have assumed this responsibility. When a youth charged with a status offense is referred to juvenile court, the court may divert the youth away from the formal justice system to other agencies for service or may decide to process the youth formally with the filing of a petition. The analyses in this report are limited to petitioned cases.

Juvenile courts may adjudicate petitioned status offense cases and may order sanctions such as probation or

out-of-home placement. While their cases are being processed, youth charged with status offenses are sometimes held in secure detention. (Note that the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act discourages secure detention of status offenders. States holding large numbers of status offenders in secure detention risk losing a significant portion of their juvenile justice block grant awards.)

This chapter presents national estimates of petitioned status offense cases disposed in 2020 and examines trends since 2005, including demographic characteristics of the youth involved, types of offenses charged, and the flow of cases as they moved through juvenile court processing. (See chapter 3 for a description of the stages of court processing.)

It should be noted that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in March 2020, may have impacted the policies, procedures, and data collection activities regarding referrals to and processing of youth by juvenile courts. Stay-at-home orders and school closures likely impacted the volume and type of behavior by youth referred to juvenile court in 2020. While COVID-19 likely impacted how juvenile courts and agencies handled status offense cases, it is not possible to determine the true impact from the data submitted to the Archive.

## Counts and Trends

- In 2020, U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction petitioned and formally disposed an estimated 57,700 status offense cases.
- The number of petitioned status offense cases processed by juvenile courts decreased 70% between 2005 and 2020.
- The number of petitioned runaway cases processed by juvenile courts decreased 71% between 2005 and 2020 (from 22,600 to 6,500).
- The number of petitioned truancy cases processed by juvenile courts increased 14% between 2005 and 2007 and then declined 59% through 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2006, the number of petitioned curfew cases increased 16% and then declined 85% through 2020 (2,800).
- The number of petitioned ungovernability cases in 2020 (4,800) was 81% below the 2005 level (25,300).
- The number of petitioned liquor law violation cases increased 11% between 2005 and 2007 and then decreased 85% through 2020.

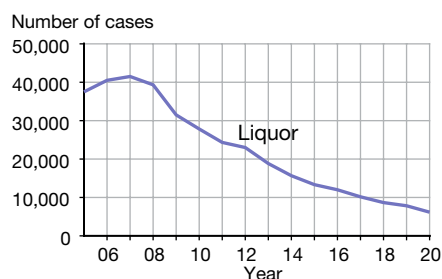
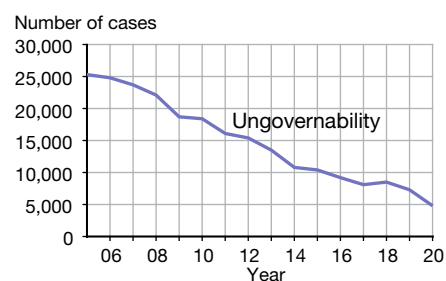
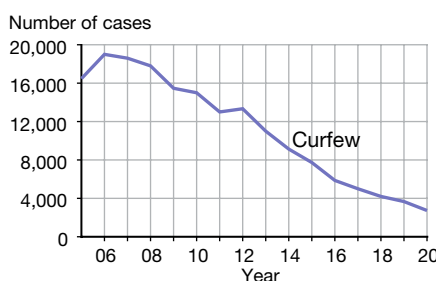
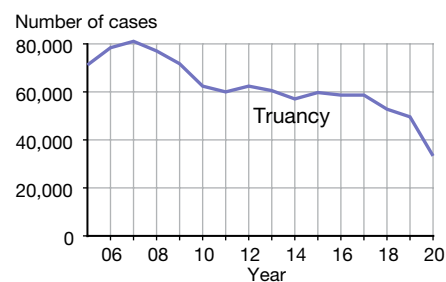
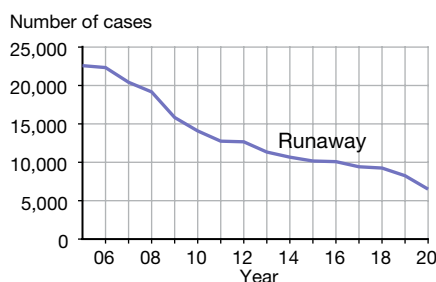
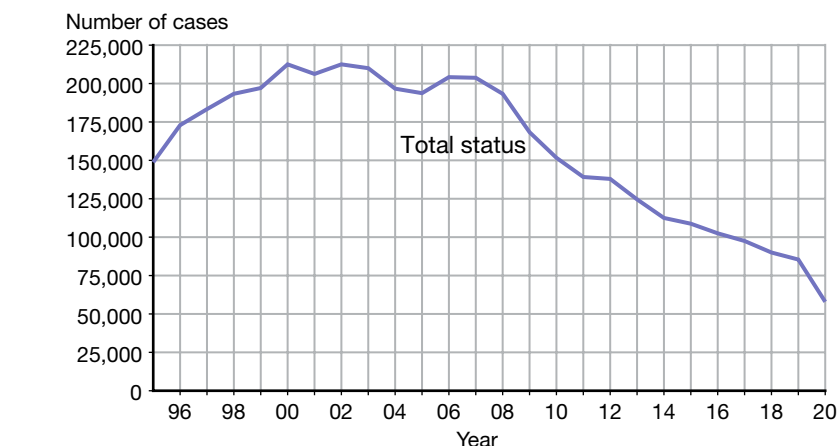
### Offense profile of petitioned status offense cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Runaway	12%	11%
Truancy	37	58
Curfew	9	5
Ungovernability	13	8
Liquor	19	10
Miscellaneous	11	7
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	193,600	57,700

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

- Compared with 2005, the court's petitioned status offense caseload in 2020 involved a larger proportion of truancy and smaller proportions of all other status offenses.

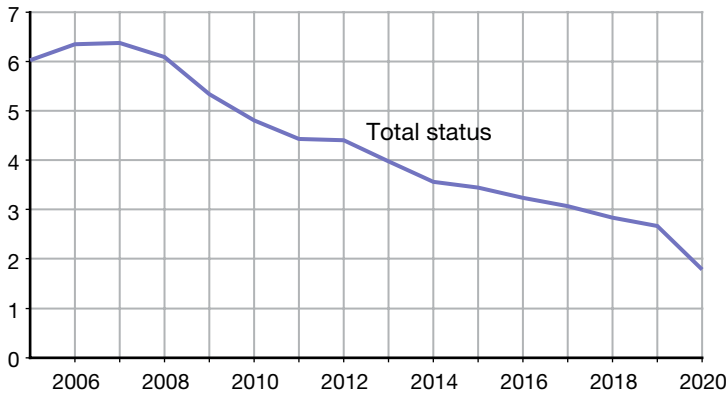
Between 1995 and 2000, the formally handled status offense caseload increased considerably (43%) and then declined 73% through 2020



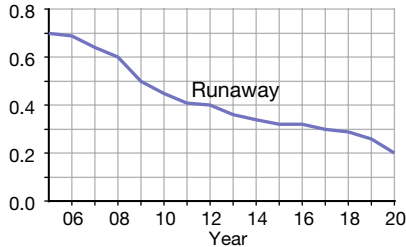
# Case Rates

Petitioned status offense case rates decreased from 6.0 to 1.8 per 1,000 youth between 2005 and 2020

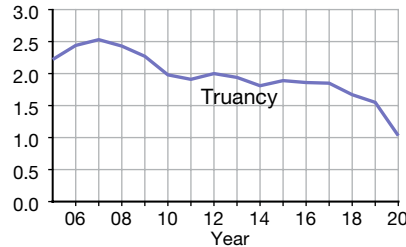
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



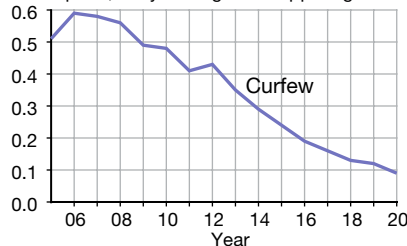
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



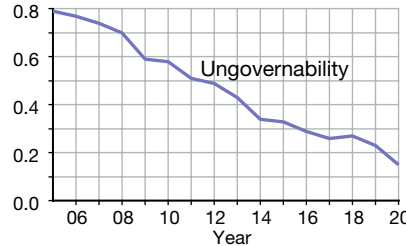
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



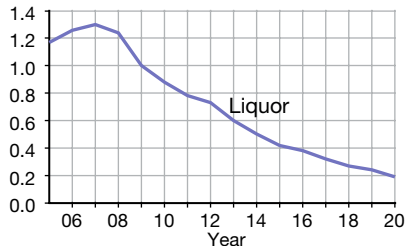
Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



Cases per 1,000 youth ages 10–upper age



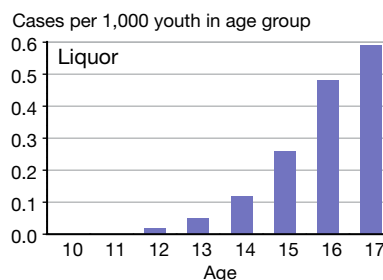
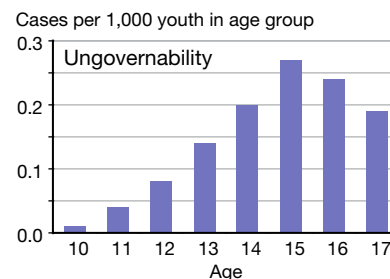
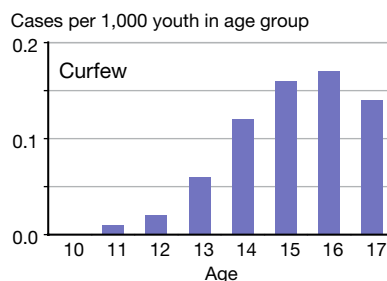
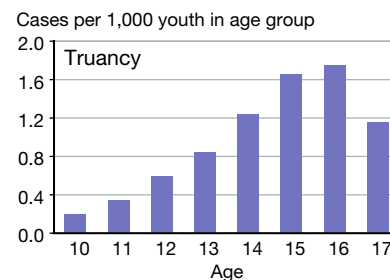
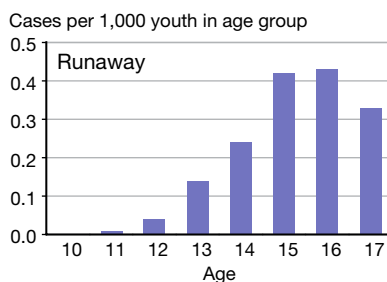
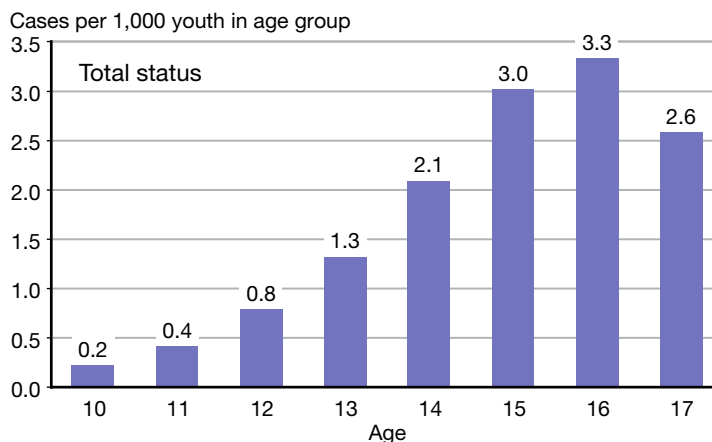
- In 2020, juvenile courts formally processed 1.8 status offense cases for every 1,000 juveniles in the population—those age 10 or older who were under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court.
- The total petitioned status offense case rate decreased 70% between 2005 and 2020.<sup>1</sup>
- Between 2005 and 2020, the petitioned runaway case rate decreased 72%.
- The petitioned truancy case rate increased 14% between 2005 and 2007, and then declined 59% through 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2006, the petitioned curfew violation case rate increased 16% and then decreased 85% by 2020.
- The petitioned ungovernability case rate declined 81% between 2005 and 2020.
- The petitioned liquor law violation case rate increased 11% between 2005 and 2007, and then decreased 86% by 2020.

<sup>1</sup> The percent change in the number of cases disposed may not be equal to the percent change in case rates because of the changing size of the juvenile population.

## Age at Referral

- In 2020, the petitioned status offense case rate for 16-year-olds was 1.6 times the rate for 14-year-olds, and the rate for 14-year-olds was 2.6 times the rate for 12-year-olds.
- The largest increase in case rates between age 13 and age 17 was for liquor law violations. The case rate for 17-year-olds (0.6) was 12.8 times the rate for 13-year-olds (less than 0.1).
- Liquor law violation rates increased continuously with the age of the youth. In contrast, rates for petitioned cases for all other status offense categories were higher for 16-year-olds than for 17-year-olds.

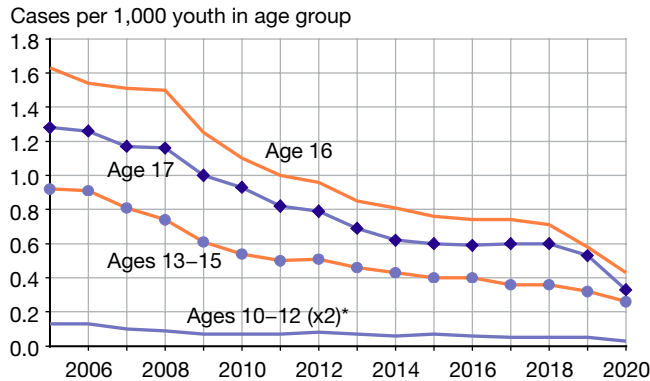
In 2020, status offense case rates increased with the age of the youth through age 16, then decreased for 17-year-olds



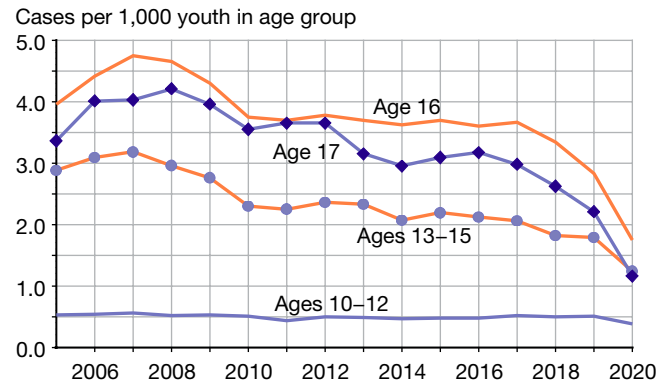
# Age at Referral

Trends in case rates differed across age groups for each general status offense category

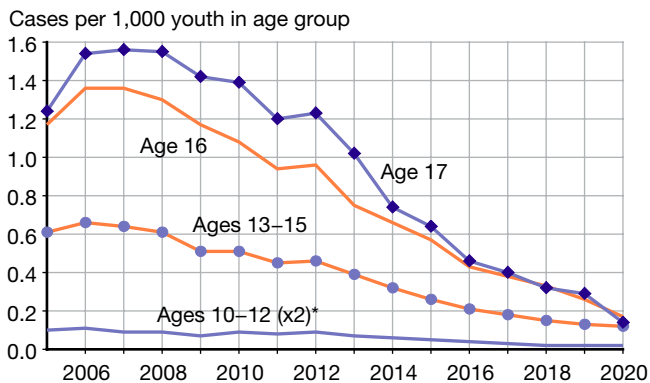
## Runaway case rates



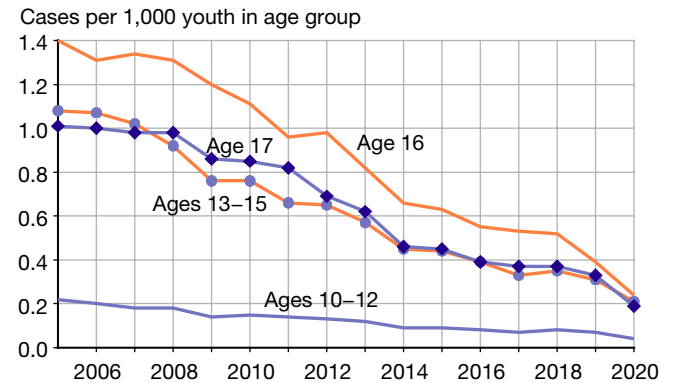
## Truancy case rates



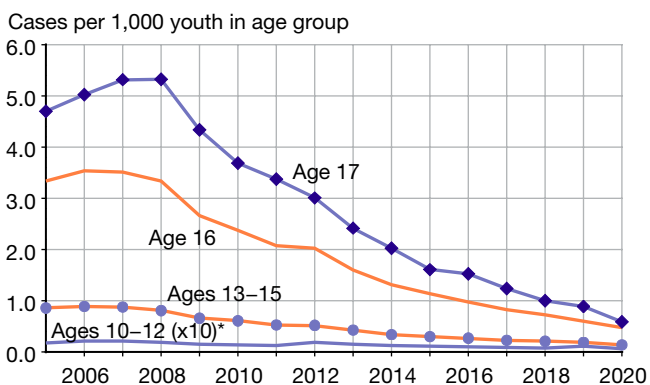
## Curfew case rates



## Ungovernability case rates



## Liquor law violation case rates



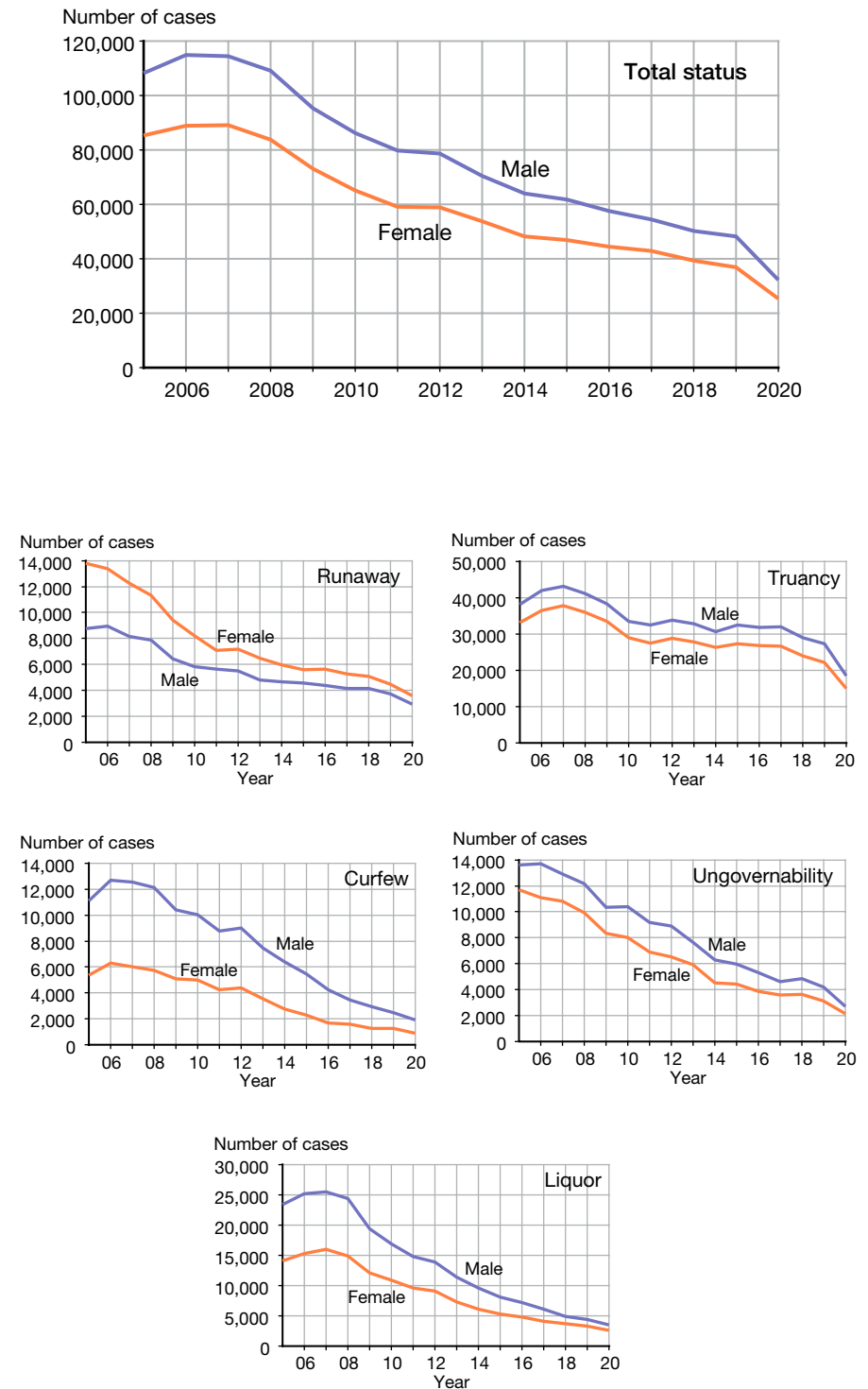
- Case rates for petitioned runaway cases decreased at a similar pace for all age groups between 2005 and 2020; down 75% for youth ages 10–12, 71% for youth ages 13–15, and 74% each for youth ages 16 and 17.
- Truancy case rates decreased the least for youth ages 10–12 between 2005 and 2020 (down 30%), and decreased by at least 56% for all other age groups.
- Ungovernability rates decreased 79% for youth ages 10–12, followed closely by youth ages 13–15 and youth age 17 (down 81% each) and youth age 16 (83%).
- Depending on age, case rates for petitioned curfew offenses and petitioned liquor law violations grew between 2005 and either 2006 or 2008, before decreasing through 2020.

\* Because of the relatively low volume of cases involving youth ages 10–12 for runaway, curfew, and liquor law violations, their case rates are inflated by a factor specified in the graph to display the trend over time.

# Gender

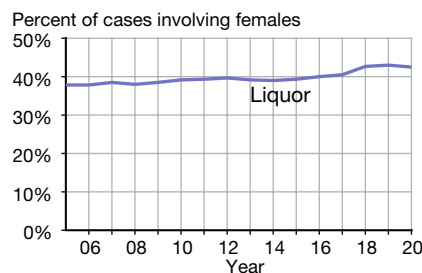
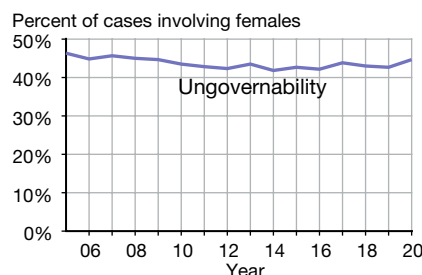
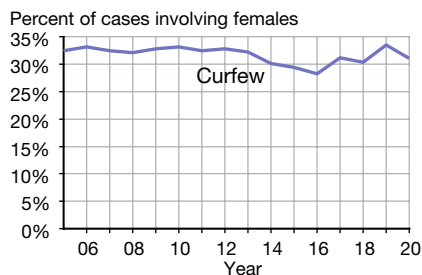
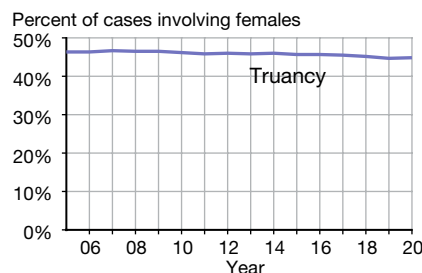
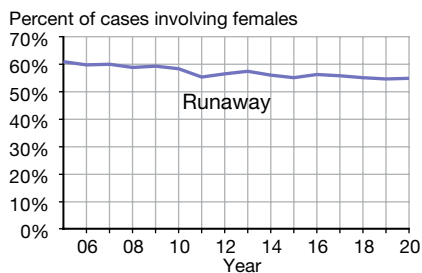
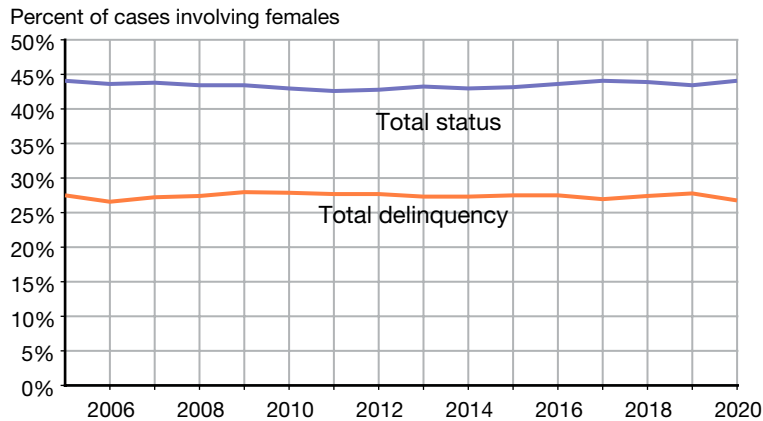
- Overall, the relative decrease in petitioned status offense cases between 2005 and 2020 was the same for males and females (70% each).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the petitioned runaway caseload decreased 67% for males and 74% for females.
- Between 2005 and 2007, the number of petitioned truancy cases increased 13% for males and 14% for females, then decreased through 2020 (57% for males and 60% for females).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of petitioned truancy cases outnumbered all other status offense cases for both males and females.

## Trends in petitioned status offense caseloads revealed similar patterns for males and females



# Gender

Compared with the delinquency caseload, females accounted for a substantially larger proportion of petitioned status offense cases



- Males accounted for 56% of the total petitioned status offense caseload in 2020.
- In 2020, males accounted for the majority of curfew (69%), liquor law violation (58%), and ungovernability and truancy (55% each) cases.
- Females accounted for 55% of petitioned runaway cases in 2020, the only status offense category in which females represented a larger proportion of the caseload than males.

## Offense profile of petitioned status offense cases by gender:

Most serious offense	Male	Female
<b>2020</b>		
Runaway	9%	14%
Truancy	57	59
Curfew	6	3
Ungovernability	8	8
Liquor	11	10
Miscellaneous	9	5
Total	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>		
Runaway	8%	16%
Truancy	35	39
Curfew	10	6
Ungovernability	13	14
Liquor	22	17
Miscellaneous	12	8
Total	100%	100%

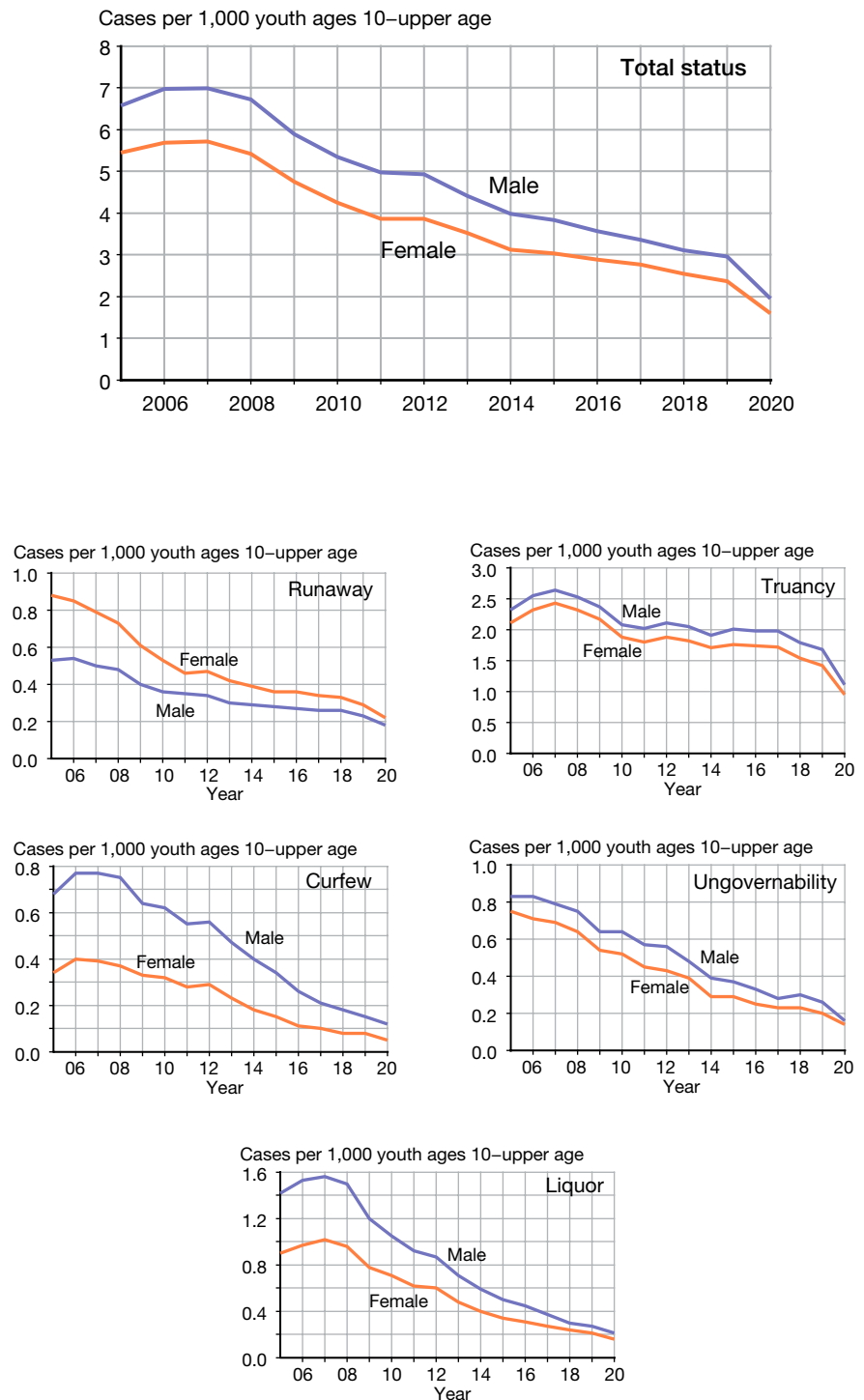
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

- Truancy cases accounted for at least 57% of the petitioned status offense caseload for both males and females in 2020.

## Gender

- The petitioned status offense case rate decreased for both males and females between 2005 and 2020 (70% and 71%, respectively).
- Runaway case rates declined between 2005 and 2020 for both males (67%) and females (75%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the truancy case rate for both males and females was greater than the rate of any other status offense category.
- For both males and females, the case rates for truancy cases increased between 2005 and 2007 (14% and 15%, respectively) before declining through 2020 (58% and 61%, respectively). A similar pattern occurred for curfew cases: male case rates and female case rates increased 14% and 18%, respectively between 2005 and 2006, before declining 85% for males and 87% for females through 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, case rates for ungovernability declined 80% for males and 82% for females.

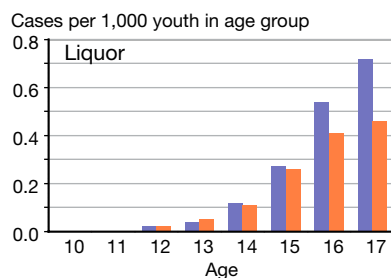
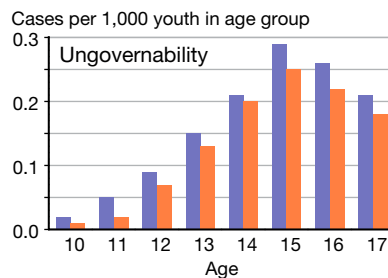
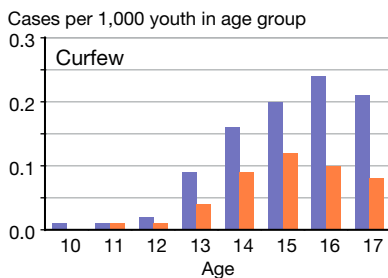
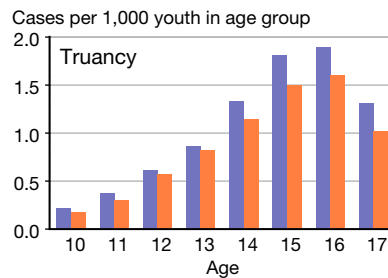
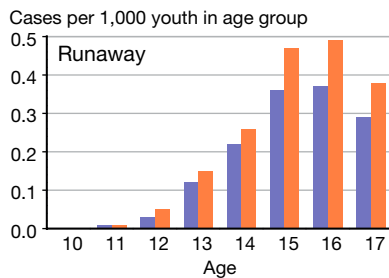
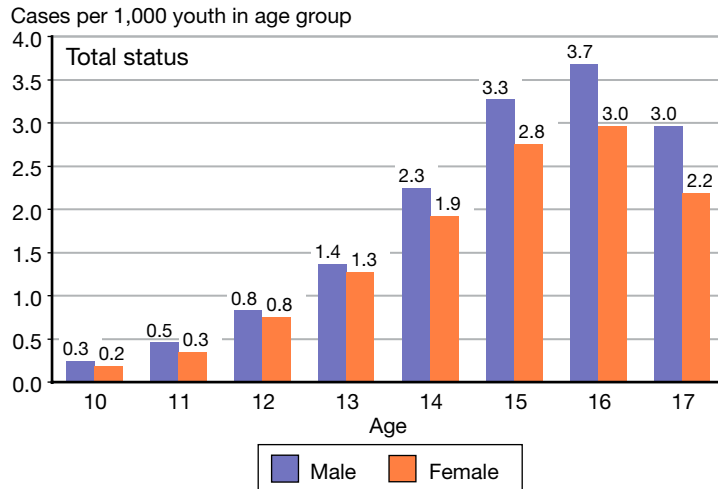
The petitioned status offense case rates followed similar patterns for males and females between 2005 and 2020





# Gender

In 2020, the status offense case rate for males and females increased through age 16 and decreased for 17-year-olds



- After age 11, case rates for running away were higher for females than for males in 2020.
- For petitioned runaway and truancy cases for both males and females, case rates peaked at age 16. Case rates for petitioned ungovernability cases peaked at age 15 for both males and females.
- For both males and females, petitioned status offense case rates increased continuously with age for liquor law violations in 2020.
- Curfew case rates peaked at age 15 for females and age 16 for males in 2020.
- In 2020, curfew case rates for males were at least 1.6 times curfew case rates for females for most ages.
- The largest disparity in the ungovernability case rate between males and females was among youth age 11. The case rate for males age 11 was more than double the case rate for females of the same age.

# Race

- The petitioned status offense caseload decreased the most for White youth (73%) between 2005 and 2020, followed by Black youth (71%) and Asian youth (59%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, across racial groups and offenses, the number of cases decreased.
- In 2020, truancy cases made up the greatest proportion of the caseloads for youth of all race groups.

## Racial profile of petitioned status offense cases:

Race	2005	2020
White	66%	60%
Black	22	22
Hispanic <sup>2</sup>	7	12
American Indian <sup>3</sup>	3	4
Asian <sup>4</sup>	2	3
Total	100%	100%

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

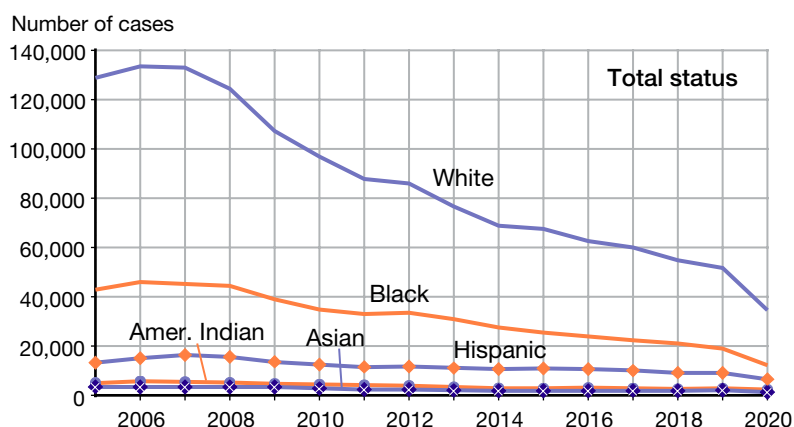
- White youth made up 53% of the population under juvenile court jurisdiction and 60% of the petitioned status offense caseload in 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the proportion of petitioned status offense cases involving White youth decreased and the proportion involving Hispanic youth increased.

<sup>2</sup> Persons of Hispanic ethnicity are treated as a distinct race group and are excluded from the other four race groups, with one important exception. Data provided to the Archive from many jurisdictions did not include any means to determine the ethnicity of American Indian youth. Rather than assume ethnicity for these youth, they are classified solely on their racial classification; as such, the American Indian group includes an unknown proportion of Hispanic youth.

<sup>3</sup> The racial classification American Indian (usually abbreviated as Amer. Indian) includes American Indian and Alaska Native.

<sup>4</sup> The racial classification Asian includes Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

## The petitioned status offense caseload decreased for all racial groups between 2005 and 2020



## The number of petitioned status offense cases decreased more for White youth (73%) than youth of any other race between 2005 and 2020

Most serious offense	Percent change in number of cases, 2005–2020				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Amer. Indian	Asian
<b>Status</b>	-73%	-71%	-50%	-53%	-59%
Runaway	-73	-71	-57	-61	-83
Truancy	-58	-57	-20	-14	-28
Curfew	-84	-81	-83	-84	-92
Ungovernability	-80	-83	-71	-76	-72
Liquor law	-86	-78	-78	-69	-81

## The proportion of truancy cases increased across all racial groups between 2005 and 2020

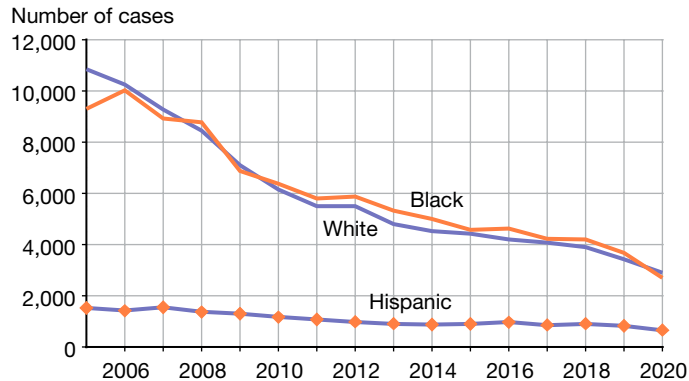
Most serious offense	Offense profile of status offense cases				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Amer. Indian	Asian
<b>2020</b>					
Runaway	8%	22%	10%	5%	7%
Truancy	57	51	70	61	79
Curfew	4	7	4	4	2
Ungovernability	8	13	3	2	2
Liquor law	13	3	9	25	7
Miscellaneous	9	4	4	4	4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>2005</b>					
Runaway	8%	22%	11%	6%	16%
Truancy	37	34	44	34	45
Curfew	7	11	11	11	7
Ungovernability	12	22	6	3	3
Liquor law	24	4	20	38	14
Miscellaneous	12	6	8	9	14
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

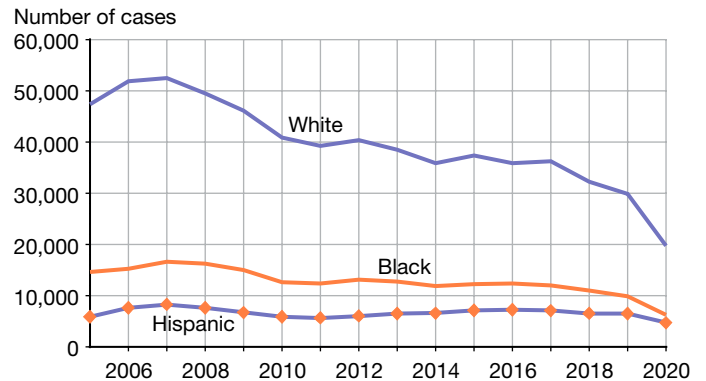
# Race

Between 2005 and 2020, the petitioned status offense caseload declined the most for liquor law violation cases involving White youth (86%)

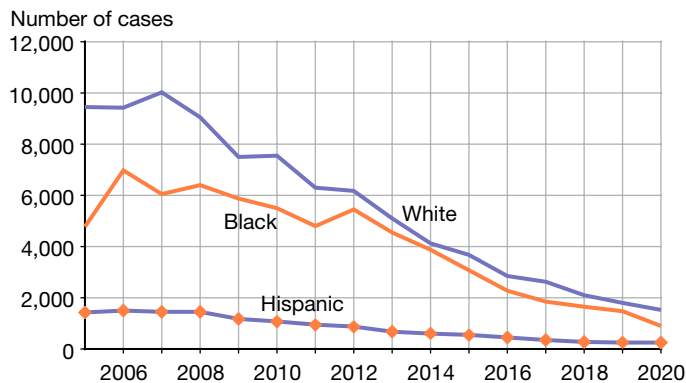
## Runaway



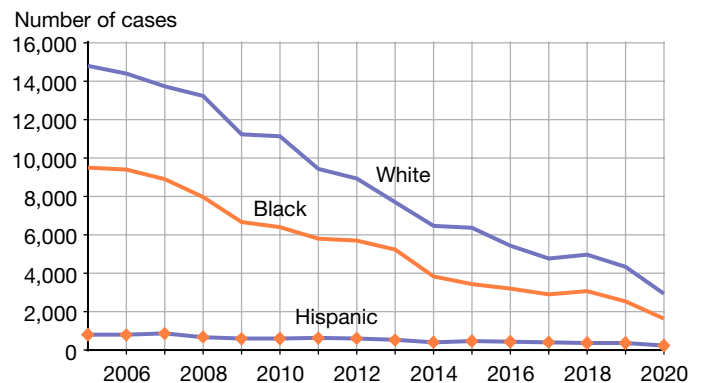
## Truancy



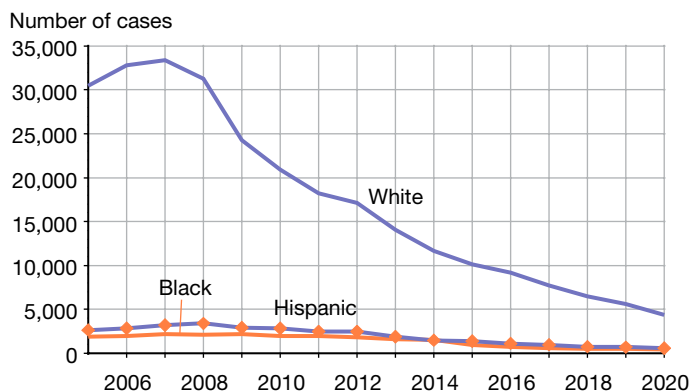
## Curfew



## Ungovernability



## Liquor law violation



- The number of petitioned runaway cases decreased by at least 71% for White youth and Black youth, and by 57% for Hispanic youth between 2005 and 2020.
- The number of truancy cases decreased 58% for White youth, 57% for Black youth, and 20% for Hispanic youth between 2005 and 2020.
- The decrease in the curfew caseload between 2005 and 2020 was similar for White youth (84%), Hispanic youth (83%), and Black youth (81%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of petitioned ungovernability cases decreased by at least 71% for all three race groups.

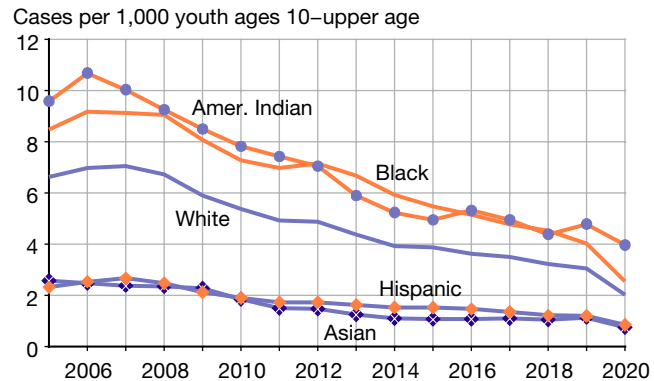
**Note:** Case counts for American Indian and Asian youth are not shown in the offense graphs above because their numbers are too small for display.

# Race

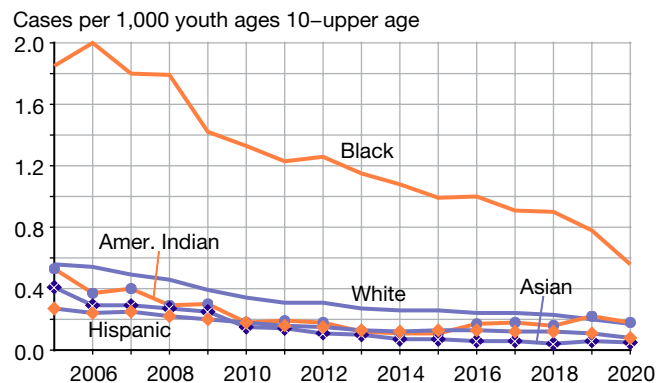
- Between 2005 and 2020, petitioned status offense case rates decreased 71% for American Indian youth, 70% for Black youth, 69% for White youth, 64% for Hispanic youth, and 59% for Asian youth.
- The total petitioned status case rates for American Indian youth and Black youth were similar for all years between 2005 and 2020 and were consistently higher than case rates for all other racial categories.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the run-away case rate decreased 70% for both White youth and Black youth, and 68% for Hispanic youth. Despite declines for all racial groups, the run-away case rate for Black youth in 2020 was about 3 times the rate for White youth and American Indian youth, 7 times the rate for Hispanic youth, and 11 times the rate for Asian youth.
- Compared with all other status offense types, truancy case rates decreased the least for all race groups between 2005 and 2020: down 25% for American Indian youth, 42% for Hispanic youth, 48% for Asian youth, 53% for White youth, and 55% for Black youth.

Between 2005 and 2020, petitioned status offense case rates decreased for all race groups

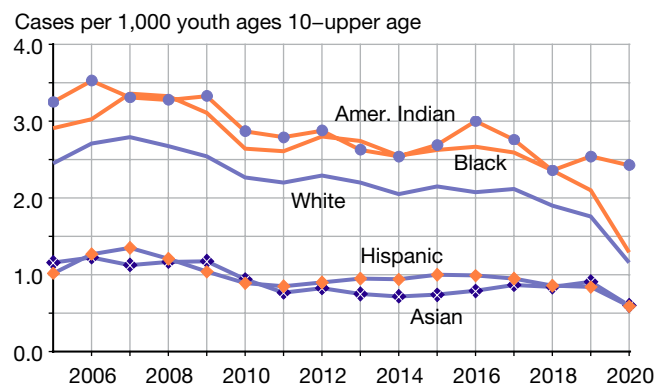
Total status offense case rates



Runaway case rates



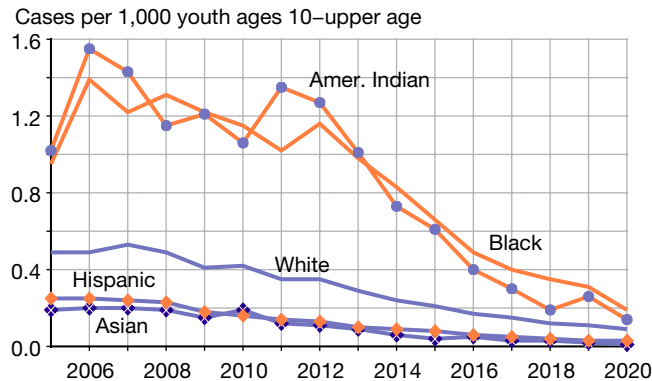
Truancy case rates



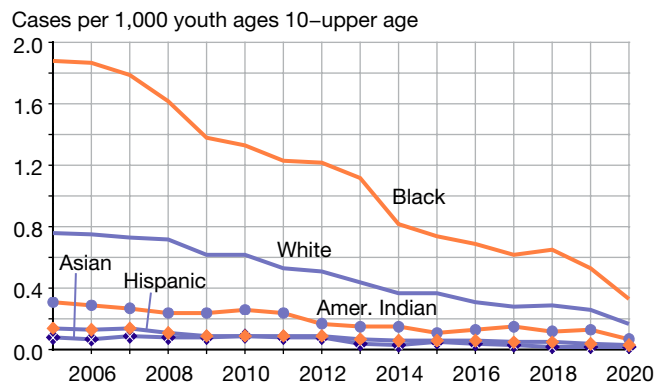
# Race

## Case rates varied by racial group and offense between 2005 and 2020

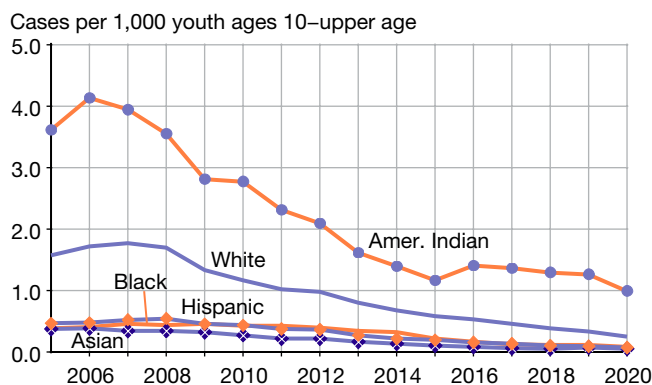
### Curfew case rates



### Ungovernability case rates



### Liquor law violation case rates



- Between 2005 and 2020, curfew case rates decreased most for Asian youth and Hispanic youth (94% and 88%, respectively), followed by American Indian youth (86%), White youth (82%), and Black youth (80%).
- In 2020, the ungovernability case rate for Black youth was nearly twice the White rate.
- American Indian youth had the highest case rate for liquor law violations in each year between 2005 and 2020. In 2020, the liquor law violation case rate for American Indian youth was nearly 4 times the rate for White youth, and more than 11 times the rates for Black youth, Hispanic youth, and Asian youth.

## Source of Referral

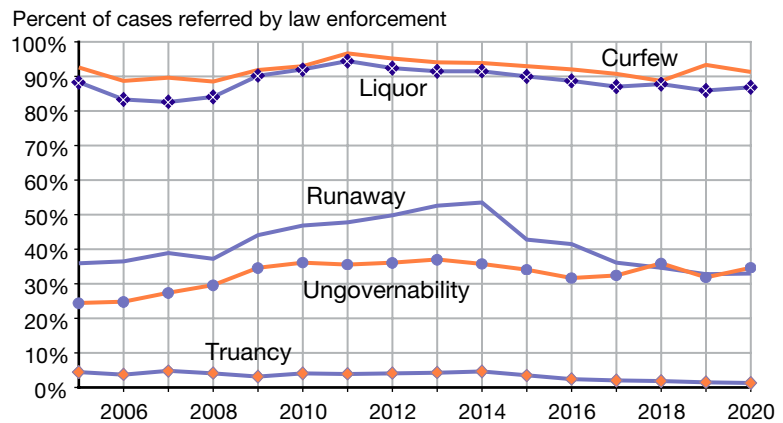
- Status offense cases can be referred to court intake by a number of sources, including law enforcement agencies, schools, relatives, social service agencies, and probation officers.

### Percentage of petitioned status offense cases referred by law enforcement:

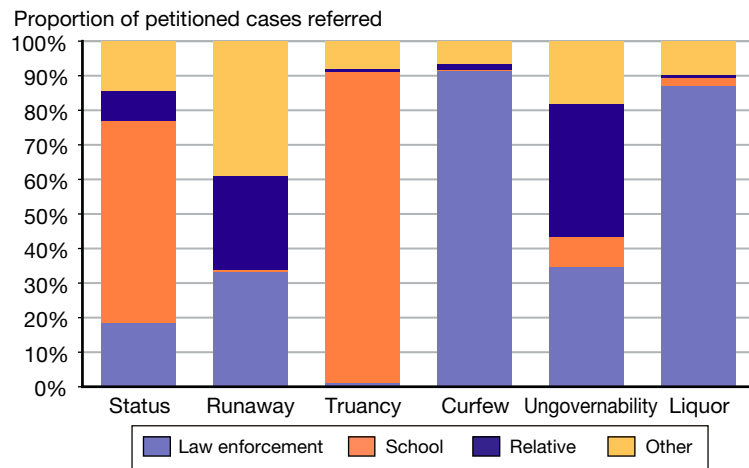
Most serious offense	2005	2020
Total status	33%	18%
Runaway	36	33
Truancy	4	1
Curfew	93	91
Ungovernability	24	35
Liquor law	88	87

- In 2020, law enforcement agencies referred 18% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed by juvenile courts.
- Compared with 2005, law enforcement referred a larger proportion of ungovernability offense cases in 2020.
- Schools referred 90% of the petitioned truancy cases in 2020.
- Relatives referred 39% of the petitioned ungovernability cases in 2020.

### Law enforcement agencies are the primary source of referrals to juvenile court for curfew and liquor law violation cases

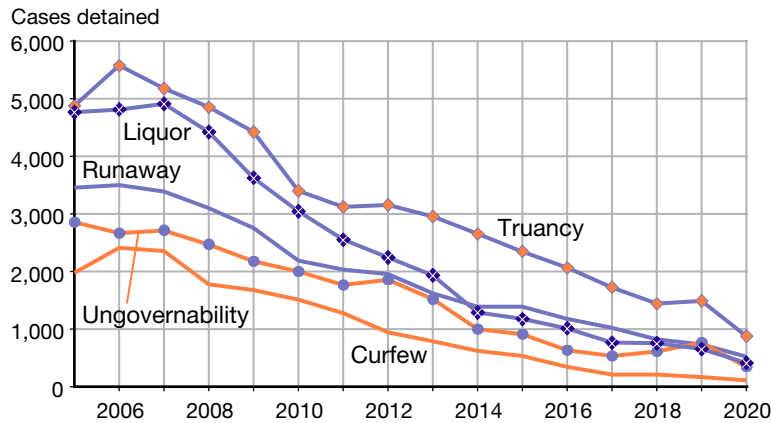


### The source of referral in 2020 for petitioned status offense cases varied with the nature of the offense

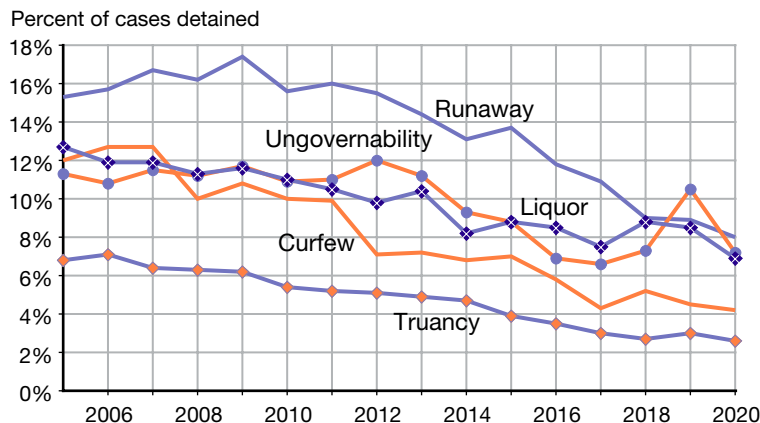


# Detention

The number of cases involving detention decreased substantially between 2005 and 2020 for all case types



Between 2005 and 2020, truancy cases were least likely to involve detention, and runaway cases were generally the most likely



- The number of petitioned status offense cases involving detention decreased 88% between 2005 and 2020 (from 20,100 to 2,500).
- The decline in the volume of petitioned status offense cases involving detention resulted in a smaller proportion of cases detained in 2020 (4%) than in 2005 (10%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of petitioned cases involving detention decreased the most for curfew cases (94%), followed by liquor law violation cases (91%), ungovernability cases (88%), runaway cases (85%), and truancy cases (82%).
- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of detention decreased for all status offense categories.

## Offense profile of detained status offense cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Runaway	17%	21%
Truancy	24	35
Curfew	10	5
Ungovernability	14	14
Liquor law	24	17
Miscellaneous	11	9
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	20,100	2,500

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

- Compared with 2005, the offense characteristics of the 2020 status offense detention caseload involved a greater proportion of truancy and runaway cases, and a smaller proportion of curfew and liquor law violation cases. The proportion of ungovernability cases was the same in both years.

# Adjudication

- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of status offense cases in which the youth was adjudicated for a status offense decreased from 110,400 to 17,100.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated for a status offense decreased for all offense types: curfew and liquor law violation (88% each), ungovernability (85%), and runaway and truancy (82% each).

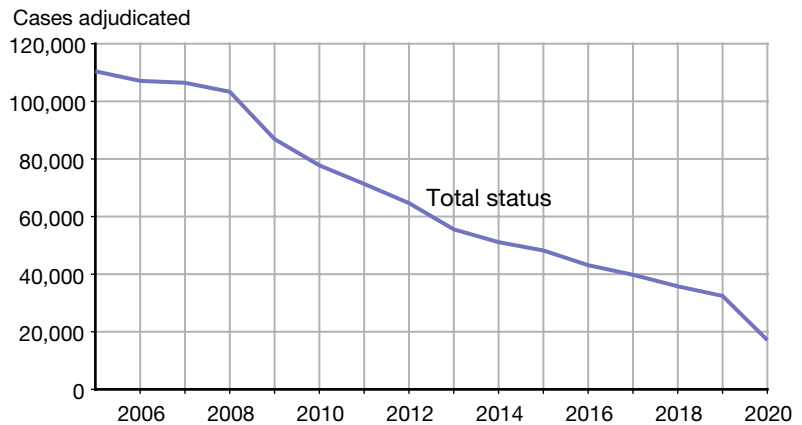
## Offense profile of adjudicated status offense cases:

Most serious offense	2005	2020
Runaway	9%	11%
Truancy	32	36
Curfew	10	7
Ungovernability	13	12
Liquor law	23	18
Miscellaneous	13	16
Total	100%	100%
Cases adjudicated	110,400	17,100

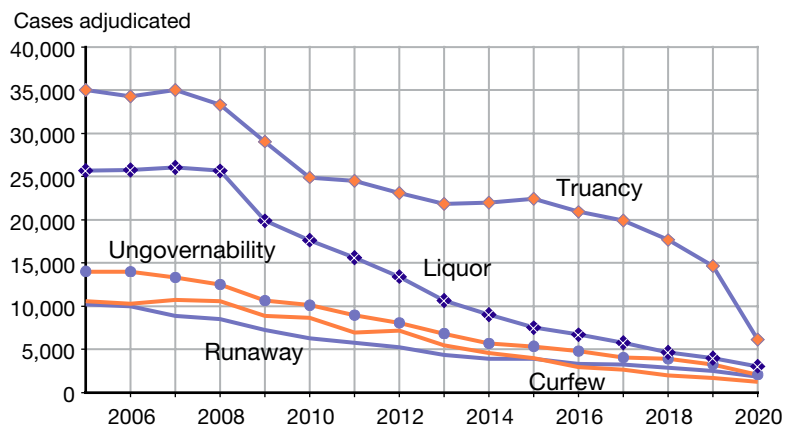
**Note:** Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

- In both 2005 and 2020, cases involving truancy and liquor law violations made up the largest proportions of the adjudicated caseload (excluding miscellaneous cases).
- The 2020 adjudicated status offense caseload had a greater proportion of runaway and truancy offenses and smaller proportions of all other offenses than the 2005 caseload (excluding miscellaneous cases).

Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated for a status offense declined 84%



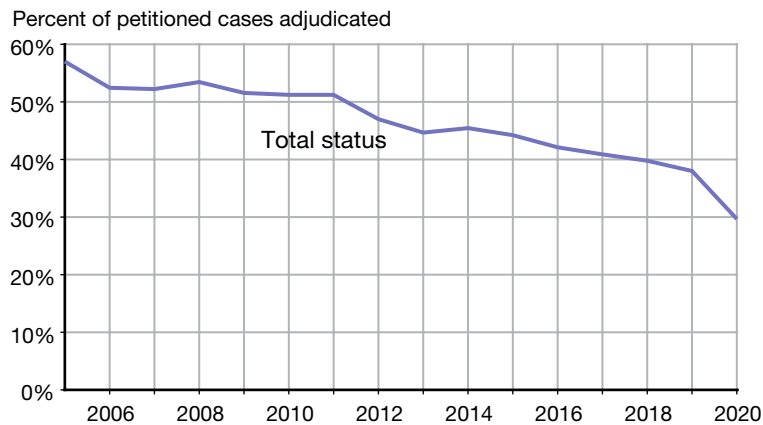
Between 2005 and 2020, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated decreased for all status offense categories





# Adjudication

The likelihood of adjudication for petitioned status offense cases decreased from 57% in 2005 to 30% in 2020



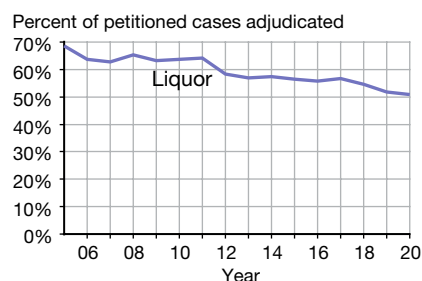
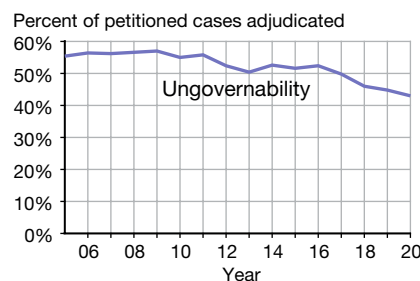
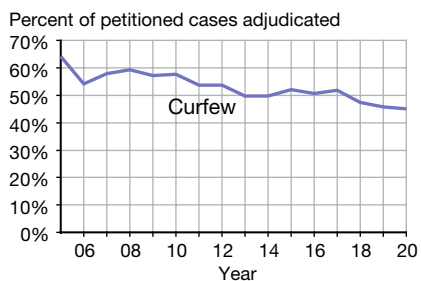
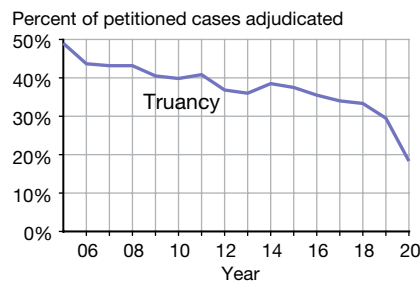
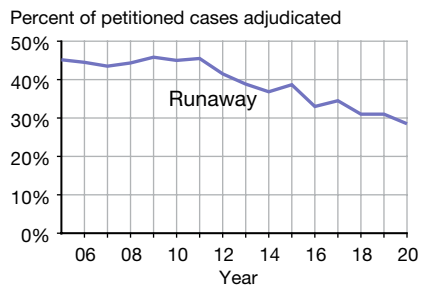
- Among status offense categories in 2020, adjudication was least likely in petitioned truancy cases (18%) and most likely in cases involving liquor law violations (51%).
- The likelihood of petitioned runaway cases resulting in adjudication decreased from 45% in 2005 to 28% in 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the likelihood of adjudication among petitioned curfew cases decreased from 64% to 45%.
- The likelihood of adjudication for petitioned ungovernability cases decreased from 55% to 43% between 2005 and 2020.
- The likelihood of adjudication among petitioned liquor law violation cases decreased from 69% in 2005 to 51% in 2020.

## Percentage of petitioned status offense cases adjudicated, 2020:

Most serious offense	15 or younger	16 or older	Male	Female
<b>Total status</b>	29%	32%	31%	28%
Runaway	30	26	28	29
Truancy	18	19	19	17
Curfew	46	44	46	44
Ungovern.	44	40	43	43
Liquor law	54	49	52	49

Most serious offense	White	Black	Hisp.	Other
<b>Total status</b>	33%	26%	21%	24%
Runaway	32	22	34	NA
Truancy	20	22	11	13
Curfew	57	24	NA	NA
Ungovern.	46	37	NA	NA
Liquor law	52	NA	53	51

NA: Too few cases to obtain a reliable percentage.



## Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement

- The number of petitioned status offense cases in which youth were adjudicated and ordered to out-of-home placement declined from 11,700 in 2005 to 1,400 in 2020.

### Offense profile of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in out-of-home placement:

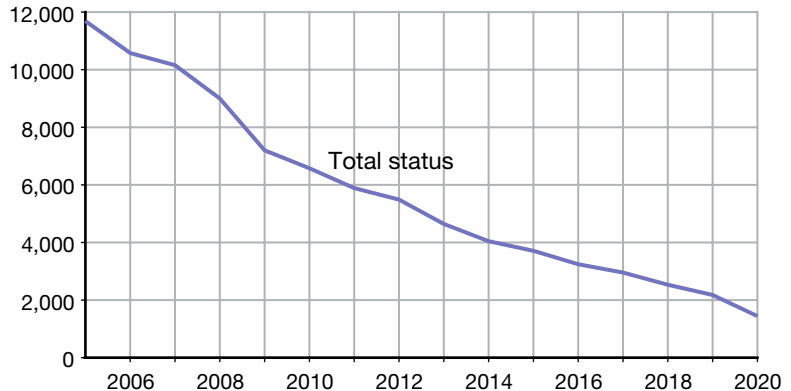
Most serious offense	2005	2020
Runaway	18%	21%
Truancy	26	18
Curfew	2	2
Ungovernability	21	31
Liquor law	14	6
Miscellaneous	19	22
Total	100%	100%
Cases resulting in out-of-home placement	11,700	1,400

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

- In 2005, truancy cases accounted for the largest share (26%) of adjudicated status offense cases that resulted in out-of-home placement; in 2020, ungovernability cases accounted for the largest share (31%).

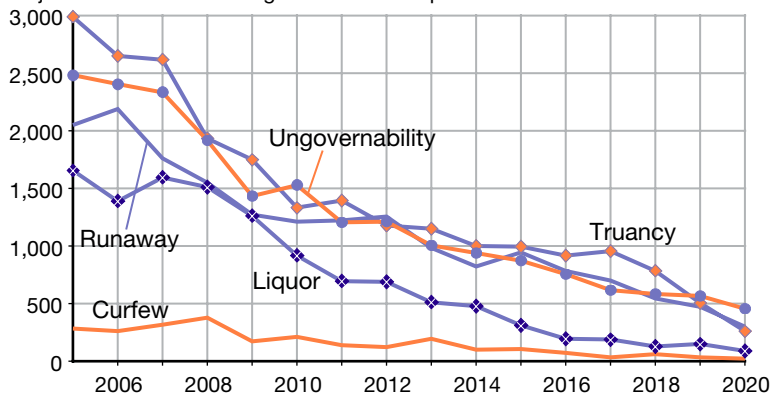
The number of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in out-of-home placement declined 88% between 2005 and 2020

Adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



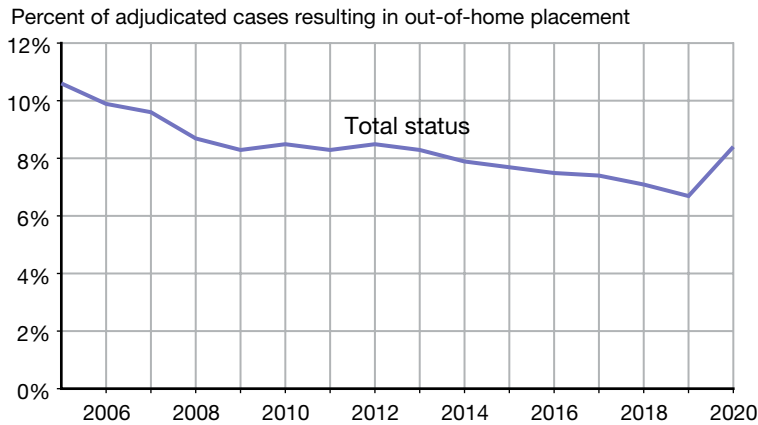
The number of adjudicated status offense cases that resulted in out-of-home placement declined between 2005 and 2020 for all offense types

Adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement

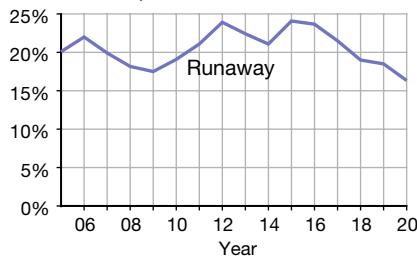


# Dispositions: Out-of-Home Placement

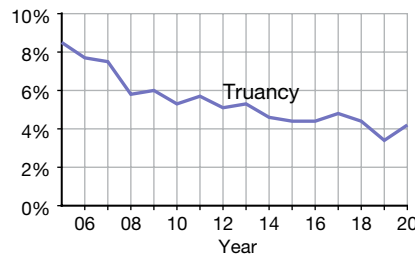
The court ordered out-of-home placement in 8% of all adjudicated status offense cases in 2020



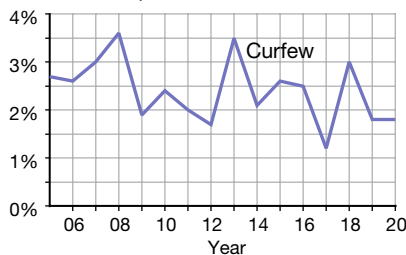
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



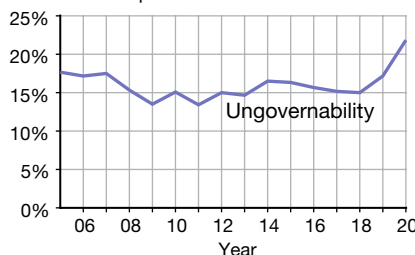
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



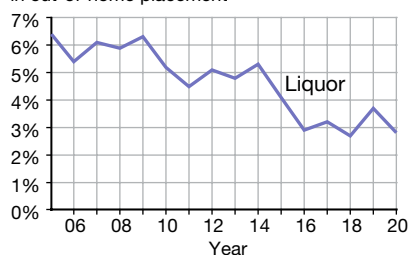
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in out-of-home placement



- The likelihood that an adjudicated status offense case would result in out-of-home placement decreased between 2005 and 2020 for all status offense categories except ungovernability cases, where the likelihood increased.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the largest decline in the proportion of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in out-of-home placement was seen in truancy cases (down 4 percentage points).

## Percentage of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in out-of-home placement, 2020:

Most serious offense	15 or younger	16 or older	Male	Female
<b>Total status</b>	10%	7%	8%	9%
Runaway	20	12	18	15
Truancy	4	4	4	5
Curfew	2	1	2	2
Ungovern.	22	22	21	23
Liquor law	4	2	3	2

Most serious offense	White	Black	Hisp.	Other
<b>Total status</b>	9%	9%	5%	4%
Runaway	18	17	NA	NA
Truancy	5	4	3	NA
Curfew	1	NA	NA	NA
Ungovern.	26	14	NA	NA
Liquor law	2	NA	NA	NA

NA: Too few cases to obtain a reliable percentage.

## Dispositions: Probation

- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in an order of probation decreased 85%, compared with an 88% decrease in the number of cases resulting in out-of-home placement.
- Between 2005 and 2020, the number of adjudicated status offense cases receiving probation decreased for all offense types: curfew (93%), liquor law violation (91%), ungovernability (85%), truancy (82%), and runaway (77%).

### Offense profile of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in probation:

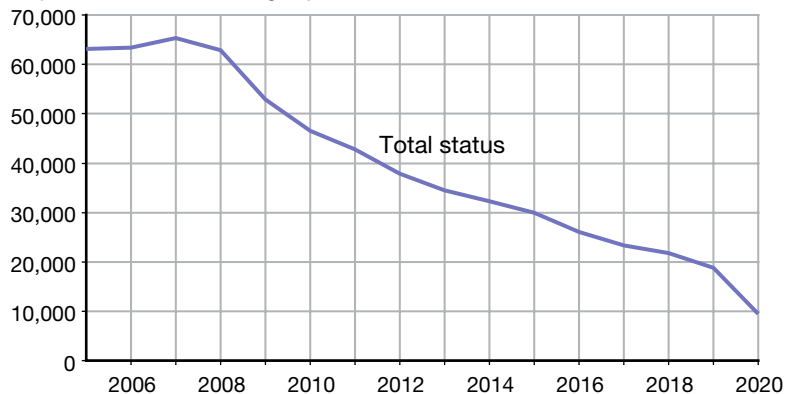
Most serious offense	2005	2020
Runaway	10%	15%
Truancy	36	42
Curfew	5	2
Ungovernability	15	16
Liquor law	24	14
Miscellaneous	9	10
Total	100%	100%
Cases resulting in formal probation	63,200	9,500

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

- In 2020, most adjudicated status offense cases that resulted in probation involved truancy offenses (42%).

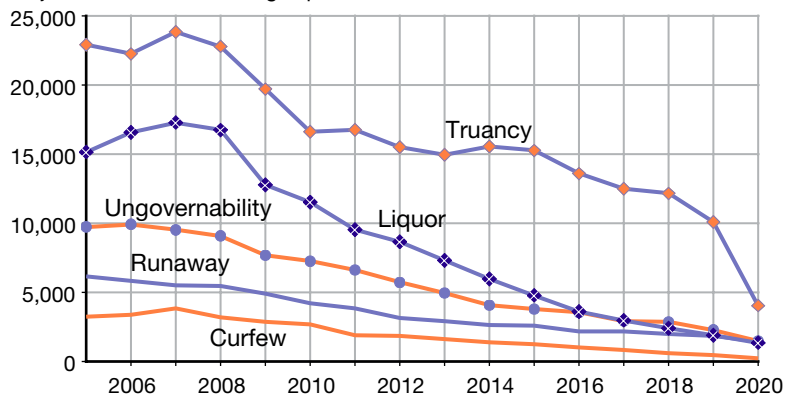
Between 2005 and 2008, the number of adjudicated status offense cases that resulted in probation remained stable and then declined 85% by 2020

Adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Between 2005 and 2020, the number of adjudicated status offense cases that resulted in probation decreased in all major status offense categories

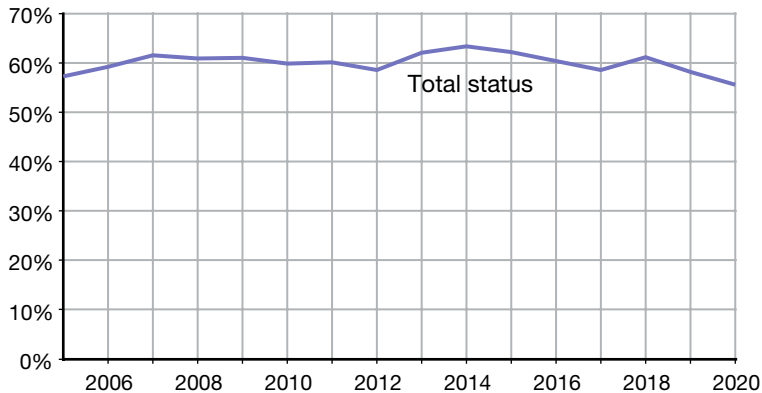
Adjudicated cases resulting in probation



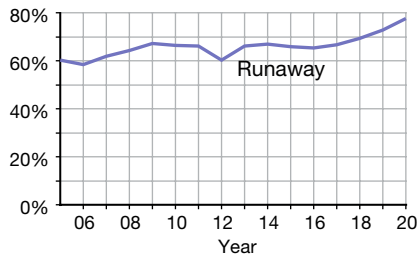
# Dispositions: Probation

Between 2005 and 2020, the use of probation as the most restrictive disposition in adjudicated status offense cases increased for runaway, truancy, and ungovernability offenses

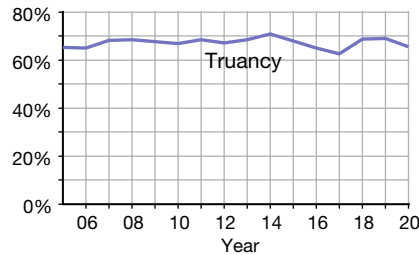
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



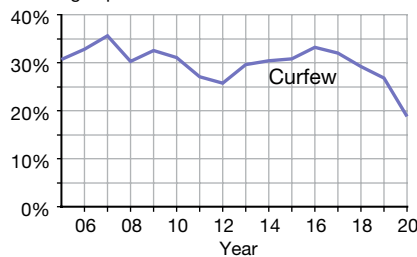
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



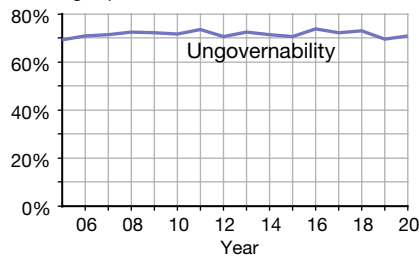
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



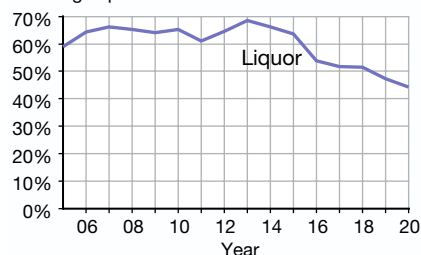
Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Percent of adjudicated cases resulting in probation



Probation was the most restrictive disposition used in 56% of the adjudicated status offense cases in 2020 and 57% of the adjudicated caseload in 2005.

In 2020, probation was ordered in 78% of adjudicated runaway cases, 66% of truancy cases, 19% of curfew violations, 71% of ungovernability cases, and 44% of cases involving liquor law violations.

## Percentage of adjudicated status offense cases resulting in probation, 2020:

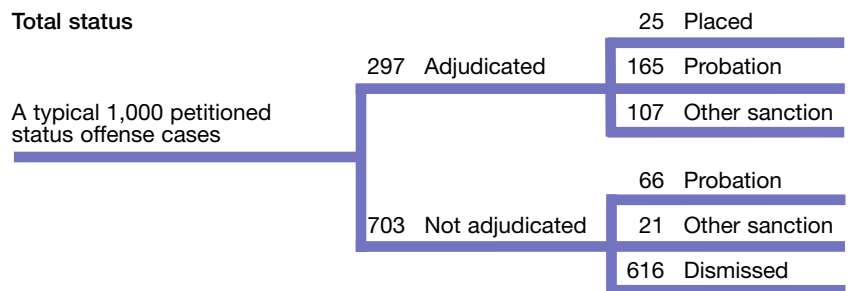
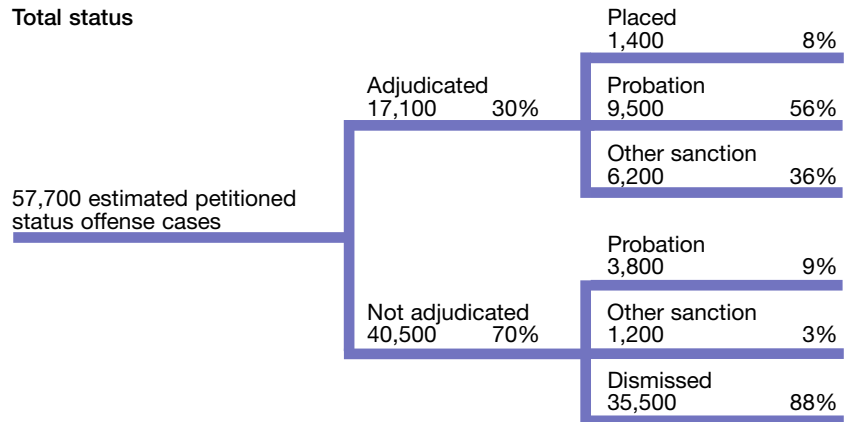
Most serious offense	15 or younger	16 or older	Male	Female
<b>Total status</b>	58%	52%	54%	57%
Runaway	75	82	76	79
Truancy	70	57	67	64
Curfew	17	21	19	19
Ungovern.	71	71	71	71
Liquor law	40	46	45	42

Most serious offense	White	Black	Hisp.	Other
<b>Total status</b>	52%	65%	68%	48%
Runaway	78	74	NA	NA
Truancy	65	69	75	NA
Curfew	13	NA	NA	NA
Ungovern.	67	77	NA	NA
Liquor law	44	NA	NA	NA

NA: Too few cases to obtain a reliable percentage.

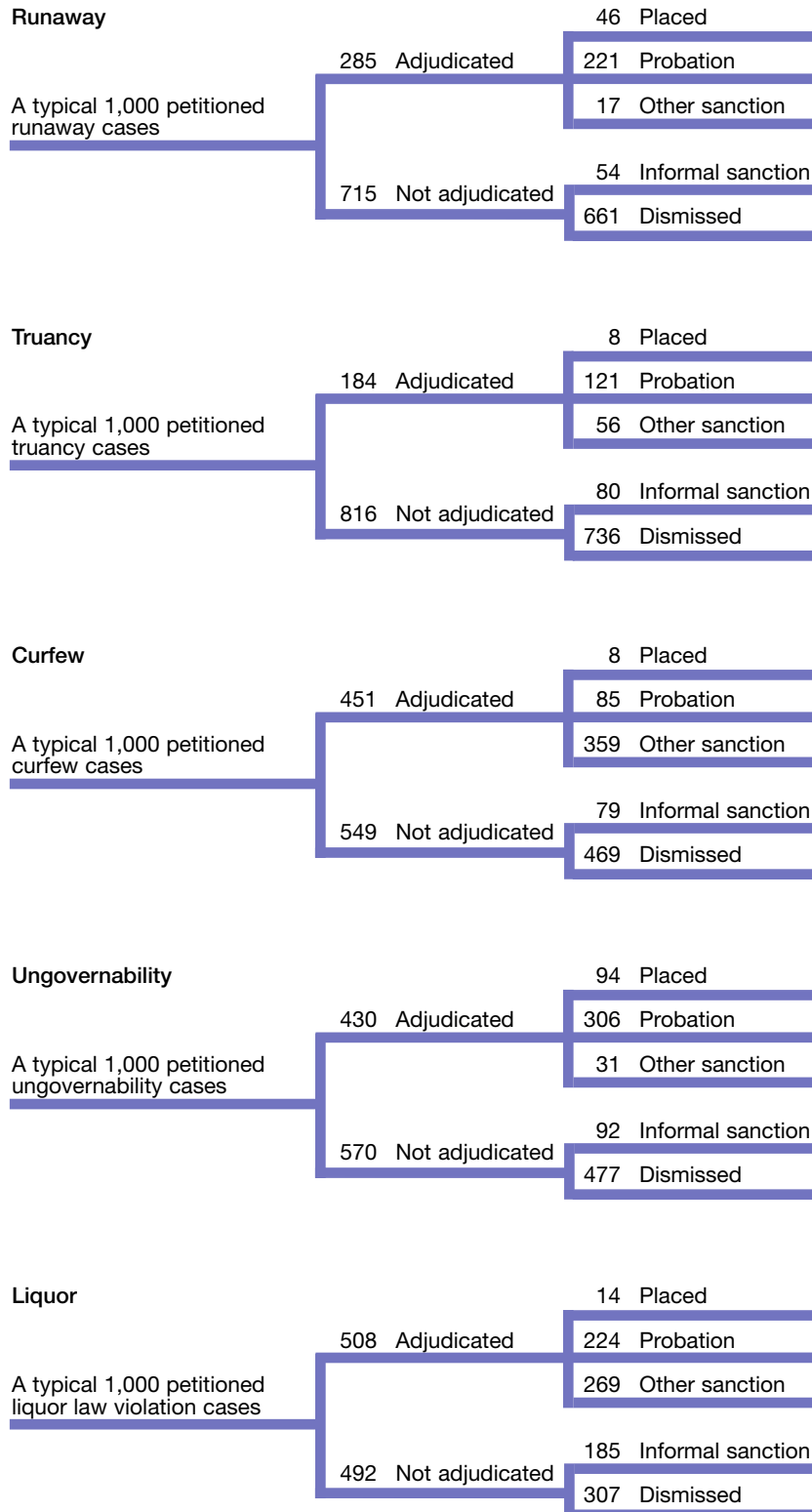
## Case Processing Overview, 2020

- In 2020, 30% of petitioned status offense cases resulted in adjudication.
- In 56% of adjudicated status offense cases, formal probation was the most restrictive sanction ordered by the court.
- In 2020, 8% of adjudicated status offense cases resulted in out-of-home placement.
- Other sanctions were ordered in 36% of adjudicated status offense cases in 2020. These dispositions involve minimal continuing supervision—the youth was ordered to enter a treatment or counseling program, to pay restitution or a fine, or to participate in some form of community service.
- In 70% of formally handled status offense cases in 2020, the youth was not adjudicated a status offender. The court dismissed 88% of these cases, while 9% resulted in some form of informal probation and 3% in other voluntary dispositions.
- For every 1,000 status offense cases formally processed by juvenile courts in 2020, 165 resulted in formal probation and 25 were placed out of the home.



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

# Case Processing by Offense Category, 2020



**Notes:** Cases are categorized by their most severe or restrictive sanction. Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Informal sanctions for nonadjudicated status offense cases include probation and other sanctions voluntarily agreed to by the youth.

## Runaway Cases

- For every 1,000 petitioned runaway cases in 2020, 221 resulted in formal probation following adjudication and 46 were placed out of the home.
- Among petitioned runaway cases in 2020, youth were not adjudicated as status offenders in 715 of a typical 1,000 cases. Of these 715 cases, 92% (661) were dismissed.

## Truancy Cases

- In 2020, of a typical 1,000 formal truancy cases, 121 resulted in formal probation and 8 were placed out of the home.

## Curfew Violation Cases

- In 2020, for every 1,000 petitioned curfew violation cases, 85 resulted in formal probation and 8 were placed out of the home.
- Among petitioned cases involving curfew violations in 2020, youth were not adjudicated as status offenders in 549 of a typical 1,000 cases. Of these 549 cases, 86% (469) were dismissed.

## Ungovernability Cases

- Among the five major status offense categories, juvenile courts were most likely to order youth to out-of-home placement following adjudication in ungovernability cases (94 of 430 cases, 22%), but formal probation was a more likely outcome (306 of 430).

## Liquor Law Violation Cases

- In 2020, for every 1,000 petitioned liquor law violation cases, 269 resulted in other sanctions, 224 resulted in formal probation, and 14 resulted in out-of-home placement.
- In 2020, among petitioned liquor law violation cases, youth were not adjudicated as status offenders in 492 of a typical 1,000 cases.





# Appendix A

## Methods

The *Juvenile Court Statistics (JCS)* series uses data provided to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (the Archive) by state and county agencies responsible for collecting and/or disseminating information on the processing of youth in juvenile courts. These data are not the result of a uniform data collection effort. They are not derived from a complete census of juvenile courts or obtained from a probability sample of courts. The national estimates presented in this report are developed by using compatible information from all courts that are able to provide data to the Archive.

### Sources of Data

The Archive uses data in two forms: detailed case-level data and court-level aggregate statistics. Case-level data are usually generated by automated client-tracking systems or case-reporting systems managed by juvenile courts or other juvenile justice agencies. These systems provide detailed data on the characteristics of each delinquency and status offense case handled by courts, generally including the age, gender, and race of the youth referred; the date and source of referral; the offenses charged; detention and petitioning decisions; and the date and type of disposition.

The structure of each case-level data set contributed to the Archive is unique,

having been designed to meet the information needs of a particular jurisdiction. Archive staff study the structure and content of each data set in order to design an automated restructuring procedure that will transform each jurisdiction's data into a common case-level format.

Court-level aggregate statistics either are abstracted from the annual reports of state and local courts or are contributed directly to the Archive. Court-level statistics typically provide counts of the delinquency and status offense cases handled by courts in a defined time period (calendar or fiscal year).

Each year, many juvenile courts contribute either detailed data or aggregate statistics to the Archive. However, not all of this information can be used to generate the national estimates contained in *JCS*. To be used in the development of national estimates, the data must be in a compatible unit of count (i.e., case disposed), the data source must demonstrate a pattern of consistent reporting over time (at least 2 years), and the data file contributed to the Archive must represent a complete count of delinquency and/or status offense cases disposed in a jurisdiction during a given year.

The aggregation of the JCS-compatible standardized case-level data files constitutes the Archive's national case-level database. The compiled data from

**Table A-1: 2020 Stratum Profiles for Delinquency Data**

Stratum	County population ages 10–17	Counties in stratum	Counties reporting compatible data				
			Number of counties			Percentage of counties	Percentage of juvenile population
			Case- level	Court- level	Total*		
1	Fewer than 14,000	2,675	1,785	241	1,985	74%	76%
2	14,000–50,200	324	243	36	267	82	84
3	50,201–122,000	108	85	9	90	79	85
4	More than 122,000	36	31	7	33	92	90
Total		3,143	2,144	293	2,375	76	84

\* Some counties reported both case-level and court-level data; therefore, the total number of counties reporting delinquency data is not equal to the number of counties reporting case-level data plus the number of counties reporting court-level data.

**Table A-2: 2020 Stratum Profiles for Status Offense Data**

Stratum	County population ages 10–17	Counties in stratum	Counties reporting compatible data				
			Number of counties			Percentage of counties	Percentage of juvenile population
			Case- level	Court- level	Total		
1	Fewer than 14,000	2,675	1,686	104	1,790	67%	68%
2	14,000–50,200	324	220	9	229	71	72
3	50,201–122,000	108	74	2	76	70	73
4	More than 122,000	36	30	0	30	83	83
Total		3,143	2,010	115	2,125	68	74

jurisdictions that contribute only court-level JCS-compatible statistics constitute the national court-level database. Together, these two multijurisdictional databases (case-level and court-level) are used to generate the Archive's national estimates of delinquency and status offense cases.

In 2020, case-level data describing 344,961 delinquency cases handled by 2,144 jurisdictions in 36 states met the Archive's criteria for inclusion in the development of national delinquency estimates. Compatible data were available from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

These courts had jurisdiction over 77% of the nation's juvenile population in 2020. Compatible court-level aggregate statistics on an additional 36,012 delinquency cases from 293 jurisdictions were used from 6 states: (Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, New York, and Wyoming). In all, the Archive collected compatible case-level data and court-level statistics on delinquency cases from 2,375 jurisdictions containing 84% of the nation's juvenile population in 2020 (table A-1).

Case-level data describing 37,433 formally handled status offense cases from 2,010 jurisdictions in 34 states met the criteria for inclusion in the sample for 2020. The states included Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South

Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. These courts had jurisdiction over 72% of the juvenile population. An additional 115 jurisdictions in Indiana and Wyoming had compatible court-level aggregate statistics on 2,898 petitioned status offense cases. Altogether, compatible case-level and court-level data on petitioned status offense cases were available from 2,125 jurisdictions containing 74% of the U.S. juvenile population in 2020 (table A-2).

A list of states contributing case-level data (either delinquency or petitioned status offense data), the variables each reports, and the percentage of cases containing each variable are presented in table A-3. More information about the reporting sample for the current data year and previous years since 1985 is available online at [ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/asp/methods.asp](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/asp/methods.asp).

Table A–3: Content of Case-Level Data Sources, 2020

Data source	Age at referral	Gender	Race	Referral source	Referral reason	Secure detention	Manner of handling	Adjudication	Disposition
Alabama	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL
Alaska	AK	AK	AK	AK	AK	AK	AK	AK	AK
Arizona	AZ	AZ	AZ	–	AZ	–	AZ	AZ	AZ
Arkansas	AR	AR	AR	–	AR	–	AR	AR	–
California	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA
Colorado	–	–	CO	–	CO	–	CO	–	–
Connecticut	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
District of Columbia	DC	DC	DC	–	DC	DC	DC	DC	DC
Florida	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL
Georgia	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA
Hawaii	HI	HI	HI	HI	HI	–	HI	HI	HI
Iowa	IA	IA	IA	–	IA	–	IA	IA	IA
Kentucky	KY	KY	KY	KY	KY	KY	KY	KY	KY
Maryland	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD	–	MD	MD	MD
Minnesota	MN	MN	MN	–	MN	–	MN	MN	MN
Mississippi	MS	MS	MS	MS	MS	MS	MS	MS	MS
Missouri	MO	MO	MO	MO	MO	MO	MO	MO	MO
Montana	MT	MT	MT	MT	MT	MT	MT	MT	–
Nebraska	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	–	NE	–	NE
New Jersey	NJ	NJ	NJ	–	NJ	–	NJ	NJ	NJ
New Mexico	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	–	NM	NM	NM
New York	NY	NY	NY	–	NY	–	NY	NY	NY
North Carolina	NC	NC	NC	–	NC	–	NC	NC	NC
Ohio <sup>1</sup>	OH	OH	OH	OH	OH	OH	OH	OH	OH
Oregon	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
Pennsylvania	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA
Rhode Island	RI	RI	–	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI
South Carolina	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	–	SC	SC	SC
South Dakota	SD	SD	SD	–	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD
Tennessee	TN	TN	TN	TN	TN	–	TN	TN	TN
Texas	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX
Utah	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT
Virginia	VA	VA	VA	VA	VA	VA	VA	VA	–
Washington	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA
West Virginia	WV	WV	WV	WV	WV	WV	WV	WV	WV
Wisconsin	WI	WI	WI	–	WI	–	WI	WI	WI
Percentage of estimation sample	98%	97%	94%	73%	96%	60%	100%	92%	84%

Note: The symbol “–” indicates that compatible data for this variable are not reported by this state.

<sup>1</sup> Data from Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, and Lucas counties only.

## Juvenile Population

The volume and characteristics of juvenile court caseloads are partly a function of the size and demographic composition of a jurisdiction's population. Therefore, a critical element in the Archive's development of national estimates is the population of youth that generates the juvenile court referrals in each jurisdiction—i.e., the “juvenile” population of every U.S. county.

A survey of the Archive's case-level data shows that very few delinquency or status offense cases involve youth younger than 10. Therefore, the lower age limit of the juvenile population is set at 10 years for all jurisdictions. On the other hand, the upper age limit varies by state. Every state defines an upper age limit for youth who will come under the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court if they commit an illegal act. (See “Upper age of jurisdiction” in the “Glossary of Terms” section.) State upper age boundaries can change over time. Historically, most states set this age to be 17 years, while fewer states have set the age at 15 or 16. States often enact exceptions to this simple age criterion (e.g., offense-specific youthful offender legislation and concurrent jurisdiction or extended jurisdiction provisions). In general, however, juvenile courts have responsibility for all law violations committed by youth whose age does not exceed the upper age of original jurisdiction.

For the purposes of this report, therefore, the juvenile population is defined as the number of youth living in a jurisdiction who are at least 10 years old but who are not older than the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. For example, in a state that has an upper age of 16 in 2020, the juvenile population is the number of youth residing in a county who have had their 10th birthday but are not older than 16 (e.g., they have not yet reached their 17th birthday).

The juvenile population estimates used in this report were developed with data

from the Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup> The estimates, separated into single-year age groups, reflect the number of White, Black, Hispanic,<sup>2</sup> American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian (including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander) youth ages 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction who reside in each county in the nation.

## Estimation Procedure

National estimates are developed using the national case-level database, the national court-level database, and the Archive's juvenile population estimates for every U.S. county. “County” was selected as the unit of aggregation because (1) most juvenile court jurisdictions in the United States are concurrent with county boundaries, (2) most data contributed by juvenile courts identify the county in which the case was

<sup>1</sup> County-level intercensal estimates were obtained for the years 2005–2020. The following data files were used:

National Center for Health Statistics. 2012. *Intercensal Estimates of the Resident Population of the United States for July 1, 2000–July 1, 2009, by Year, County, Single-year of Age (0, 1, 2, ..., 85 Years and Over), Bridged Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex* [data file]. Prepared under a collaborative arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau. Available online: [cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged\\_race.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm) [Released 10/26/12, following release by the U.S. Census Bureau of the unbridged intercensal estimates by 5-year age group on 10/9/12].

National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. *Vintage 2020 Postcensal Estimates of the Resident Population of the United States (April 1, 2010, July 1, 2010–July 1, 2020), by Year, County, Single-year of Age (0, 1, 2, ..., 85 Years and Over), Bridged Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex* [data file]. Prepared under a collaborative arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau. Available online: [cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged\\_race.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm) [released on 9/22/21, following release by the U.S. Census Bureau of the unbridged Vintage 2020 postcensal estimates by 5-year age groups on 6/17/21].

<sup>2</sup> In this report, Hispanic ethnicity is handled as a race category. All other racial categories exclude youth of Hispanic ethnicity.

handled, and (3) youth population estimates can be developed at the county level.

The Archive's national estimates are generated using data obtained from its nonprobability sample of juvenile courts. There are two major components of the estimation procedure. First, missing values on individual records of the national case-level database are imputed using hot deck procedures. Then the records of the national case-level database are weighted to represent the total number of cases handled by juvenile courts nationwide. Each stage of the estimation procedure will be described separately.

**Record-level imputation.** The first step in the estimation procedure is to place all U.S. counties into one of four strata based on their youth population ages 10 through 17. The lower and upper population limits of the four strata are defined each year so that each stratum contains one-quarter of the national population of youth ages 10 through 17.

This information is added onto each record in the national case-level database. As a result, each record in the national case-level database contains 11 variables of interest to the *JCS* report: county strata, year of disposition, intake decision, youth's age, youth's gender, youth's race, referral offense, source of referral, case detention, case adjudication, and case disposition.

By definition, the first three of these variables (i.e., county strata, year of disposition, and intake decision) are known for every case in the database. Each of the other variables may be missing for some records and given a missing value code. The estimation procedure for the *JCS* report employs a multistage process to impute information for each missing value on each case record in the national case-level database.

Within a county's set of records in the database there can be two types of

missing information: record-level missing and format-level missing. For many counties, a small proportion of their case-level records are missing valid codes in data elements that are valid for most of the other records from that county. For example, the gender of a youth may not have been reported on a few records while it is known for all the other youth in the county's database. This type of missing value is "record-level missing." There are also counties in which every record in the database has a missing value code for a specific variable. For example, some court data collection systems do not capture information on a youth's pre-disposition detention. Therefore, the variable "case detention" in the national case-level data has a missing value code on each record from that county. This type of missing value is "format-level missing." (Table A-3 indicates the standardized data elements that were not available, i.e., format-missing, from each jurisdiction's 2020 data set.) The imputation process handles the two types of missing values separately.

The imputation of record-level missing values uses a hot deck procedure with a donor pool of records from the same county. First, all the records for a specific county are sorted by disposition date. Then the file is read again, one record at a time. When the imputation software identifies a record with a record-level missing value (i.e., the target record), it imputes a valid code for this target data field. This is accomplished by locating the next record in the county file that matches the target record on all of its nonmissing values and has a nonmissing code in the target data field; this record is called the donor record. The imputation software copies the valid code from the donor record and replaces the missing value code on the target record with this nonmissing value.

Once a donor record is used in the process for a given variable, it is not used again for that variable unless no other matches can be found for another target record. There are a small number of

instances in which no donor record can be found in the county file. When this occurs, the imputation software relaxes its record matching criteria. That is, instead of trying to find a donor record with identical codes on variables other than the target field, the software ignores one nonmissing variable and attempts to find a match on all of the others. In the small number of cases where this does not lead to the identification of a donor record, a second variable is ignored and the file is reread looking for a donor. Although theoretically (and programmatically) this process can be repeated until all variables but county, year of disposition, and intake decision are ignored to find a donor, this never occurred. The order in which variables are removed from the matching criteria are source of referral, detention, offense, adjudication, race, gender, and age.

Since publication of the 2017 *Juvenile Court Statistics* report, the Archive changed the programming language used for imputation and estimation procedures. This change has also allowed for technical improvements to the code itself. Anyone using data from this report for trend purposes should use the *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics* data analysis tool (<https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/>) to replace any back year data with data produced using the current procedures.

**Format-level imputation.** After all the record-level missing values have been imputed, the process turns to format-missing information, or information that is missing from a case record because that court's information system does not report this information on their cases. The process for imputing format-missing information is similar to that used in the record-missing imputation process with the needed difference that the donor pool is expanded. Since all records in a county are missing the target data, the donor pool for format-missing records is defined as the records from all counties in the target record's stratum with the same year of

disposition and intake decision.

Using this expanded donor pool, the imputation process follows the steps described above where a target record (i.e., one with missing data) is identified and the donor pool is scanned for a match. Once a match is found, the missing information on the target record is overwritten and the donor record is flagged as having been used for that variable so it will not be reused for that variable unless all other donors are used. If a donor record cannot be found in the first pass through the donor pool, matching criteria are relaxed until a donor is found.

There is one major exception to this process of imputing format-level missing information. This exception involves the process of imputing missing race for those counties that do not report this data element to the Archive. The racial composition of a court's caseload is strongly related to the racial composition of the resident juvenile population. Creating a donor pool that ignores this relationship would reduce the validity of the imputation process. So for those few data files that did not include race, donor pools were developed that restricted the pool to counties with racial compositions similar to that of the target record's county.

This was accomplished by dividing the counties in the U.S. into four groups defined by the percentage of white juveniles in their age 10–17 populations. This classification was then added to each case record and used as a matching criterion for finding a donor record within the set of potential donor records defined by stratum, year of disposition, and intake decision.

**Weighting to produce national estimates.** The Archive employs an elaborate multivariate procedure that assigns a weight to each record in the national case-level database that, when used in analysis, yields national estimates of juvenile court activity. The weights incorporate a number of factors related to



the size and characteristics of juvenile court caseloads: the size of a community, the age and race composition of its juvenile population, the age and race profile of the youth involved in juvenile court cases, the courts' responses to the cases (intake decision, detention, adjudication, and disposition), and the nature of each court's jurisdictional responsibilities (i.e., upper age of original jurisdiction).

The basic assumption underlying the weighting procedure is that similar legal and demographic factors shape the volume and characteristics of cases in reporting and nonreporting counties of comparable size and features. The weighting procedure develops independent estimates for the number of petitioned delinquency cases, nonpetitioned delinquency cases, and petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts nationwide. Identical statistical procedures are used to develop all case estimates.

As noted earlier, all U.S. counties are placed into one of four strata based on the size of their youth population ages 10 through 17. In the first step to develop the weights, the Archive divides the youth 10–17 population for each stratum into three age groups: 10- through 15-year-olds, 16-year-olds, and 17-year-olds. The three age groups are further subdivided into five racial groups: White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian (including Alaska Native), and Asian (including Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander). Thus, juvenile resident population estimates are developed for 15 age/race categories in each stratum of counties.

The next step is to identify within each stratum the jurisdictions that contributed to the Archive case-level data consistent with *JCS* reporting requirements. The populations of these case-level reporting jurisdictions within each stratum are then developed for each of the 15 age/race categories. The national case-level database is summarized to determine

within each stratum the number of court cases that involved youth in each of the 15 age/race population groups. Case rates (number of cases per 1,000 juveniles in the population) are then developed for the 15 age/race groups within each of the four strata.

For example, assume that a total of 2,669,000 White youth ages 10–15 resided in those stratum 2 counties that reported *JCS*-compatible case-level data to the Archive. If the Archive's case-level database shows that the juvenile courts in these counties handled 10,917 petitioned delinquency cases involving White youth ages 10 through 15, the number of cases per 1,000 White youth ages 10–15 for stratum 2 would be 4.1, or:

$$(10,917 / 2,669,000) \times 1,000 = 4.1$$

Comparable analyses are then used to establish the stratum 2 case rates for the 15 age/race groups, producing the array of case rates shown in Table A-4.

**Table A-4: Case rates (per 1,000 population) of stratum 2 counties that reported case-level petitioned delinquency data**

Race	Age 10–15	Age 16	Age 17
White	4.1	11.6	14.0
Black	17.0	50.2	57.9
Hispanic	4.9	14.9	19.1
Amer. Indian	7.8	18.7	18.1
Asian	1.4	5.3	5.9

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

Next, information in the national court-level database is introduced, and stratum-level case rates are adjusted accordingly. First, each court-level statistic is disaggregated into the 15 age/race groups. This separation is accomplished by assuming that, for each jurisdiction, the relationships among the stratum's 15 age/race case rates (developed from the case-level data) are paralleled in the court-level data.

For example, assume that County A in stratum 2 reported it processed 2,000 petitioned delinquency cases during the year. Also assume that the age/race profile of County A's juvenile population is as follows:

**Table A-5: County A population**

Race	Age 10–15	Age 16	Age 17
White	4,700	3,700	3,600
Black	1,500	525	475
Hispanic	1,250	800	750
Amer. Indian	75	65	60
Asian	275	175	150

The stratum 2 case rates for each age/race group (shown in Table A-4) are multiplied by the corresponding age/race populations for County A (Table A-5) to develop estimates of the proportion of County A's caseload that came from each age/race group. The result of this step produces the following distribution for County A.

**Table A-6: County A age/race profile**

Race	Age 10–15	Age 16	Age 17
White	8.4%	18.7%	22.0%
Black	11.1	11.5	12.0
Hispanic	2.7	5.2	6.2
Amer. Indian	0.3	0.5	0.5
Asian	0.2	0.4	0.4

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

County A's caseload of 2,000 petitioned delinquency cases would then be allocated based on these proportions. In this example, it would be estimated that 8.4% of all petitioned delinquency cases reported by County A involved White youth ages 10–15, 18.7% involved 16-year-old White youth, and 22.0% involved 17-year-old White youth, and so forth across all 15 age/race groups. Applying these proportions to a reported court-level caseload statistic of 2,000 petitioned delinquency cases, results in the following distribution of counts:

**Table A-7: County A distribution of petitioned delinquency case counts**

Race	Age 10–15	Age 16	Age 17
White	166	371	435
Black	220	228	238
Hispanic	57	113	128
Amer. Indian	5	11	9
Asian	3	8	8

The same method is used to disaggregate the case counts reported by those jurisdictions that could only report aggregate court-level statistics across each population stratum. The disaggregated court-level counts are then added to the counts developed from case-level data to produce an estimate of the number of cases involving each of the 15 age/race groups handled by reporting courts (i.e., both case-level and court-level reporters) in each of the four strata.

The juvenile population figures for the entire reporting sample are also com-

puted. Together, these new stratum-specific case counts and juvenile populations for the reporting counties are used to generate a revised set of case rates for each of the 15 age/race groups within each of the four strata.

Stratum estimates for the total number of cases involving each age/race group are then calculated by multiplying the revised case rate for each of the 15 age/race groups in a stratum by the corresponding juvenile population in all counties belonging to that stratum (both reporting and nonreporting).

After the stratum estimates for the total number of cases in each age/race group in each stratum has been calculated, the next step is to weight the records in the national case-level database. This weight is equal to the estimated number of cases in one of the stratum's 15 age/race groups divided by the actual number of such records in the national case-level database. For example, assume that the Archive

generates a national estimate of 8,126 petitioned delinquency cases involving 16-year-old White youth from stratum 2 counties. Assume also that the national case-level database for that year contained 5,340 petitioned delinquency cases involving 16-year-old White youth from stratum 2 counties. In the Archive's national estimation database, each stratum 2 petitioned delinquency case that involved a 16-year-old White youth would be weighted by 1.52 because:

$$8,126 / 5,340 = 1.52$$

Finally, by incorporating the weights into all analyses of the national case-level database, national estimates of case volumes and case characteristics can be produced. More detailed information about the Archive's national estimation methodology is available on request from the National Center for Juvenile Justice.





# Appendix B

## Glossary of Terms

**Adjudication:** Judicial determination (judgment) that a juvenile is or is not responsible for the delinquency or status offense charged in a petition. In this report, the term "adjudicated" refers to the judicial determination that the youth was responsible for the offense, and the term "not adjudicated" refers to the judicial determination that the youth was not responsible for the offense.

**Age:** Age at the time of referral to juvenile court.

**Case rate:** Number of cases disposed per 1,000 juveniles in the population. The population base used to calculate the case rate varies. For example, the population base for the male case rate is the total number of male youth age 10 or older under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts. (See "juvenile population.")

**Delinquency:** Acts or conduct in violation of criminal law. (See "reason for referral.")

**Delinquent act:** An act committed by a juvenile which, if committed by an adult, would be a criminal act. The juvenile court has jurisdiction over delinquent acts. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order.

**Dependency case:** Those cases involving neglect or inadequate care on the part of parents or guardians, such as abandonment or desertion; abuse or cruel treatment; improper or inadequate conditions in the home; and insufficient care or support resulting from death, absence, or physical or mental incapacity of parents/guardians.

**Detention:** The placement of a youth in a secure facility under court authority at some point between the time of referral to court intake and case disposition. This report does not include detention decisions made by law enforcement officials prior to court referral or those occurring after the disposition of a case.

**Disposition:** Sanction ordered or treatment plan decided on or initiated in a particular case. Case dispositions are coded into the following categories:

- **Waived to criminal court**—Cases that were transferred to criminal court as the result of a judicial waiver hearing in juvenile court.
- **Placement**—Cases in which youth were placed in a residential facility after being charged with or adjudicated for a delinquency or status offense, or cases in which youth were otherwise removed from their homes and placed elsewhere.

- **Probation**—Cases in which youth were placed on informal/voluntary or formal/court-ordered supervision.
- **Dismissed/released**—Cases dismissed or otherwise released (including those warned and counseled) with no further sanction or consequence anticipated. Among cases handled informally (see “manner of handling”), some cases may be dismissed by the juvenile court because the matter is being handled in another court or agency.
- **Other**—Miscellaneous dispositions not included above. These dispositions include fines, restitution, community service, referrals outside the court for services or treatment programs with minimal or no further supervision anticipated, and dispositions coded as “other” in a jurisdiction’s original data.

**Formal handling:** See “intake decision.”

**Informal handling:** See “intake decision.”

**Intake decision:** The decision made by juvenile court intake that results in the case either being handled informally at the intake level or being petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or judicial waiver hearing.

- **Nonpetitioned (informally handled)**—Cases in which duly authorized court personnel, having screened the case, decide not to file a formal petition. Such personnel include judges, referees, probation officers, other officers of the court, and/or agencies statutorily designated to conduct petition screening for the juvenile court.
- **Petitioned (formally handled)**—Cases that appear on the official court calendar in response to the filing of a petition, complaint, or other legal instrument requesting the court to adjudicate a youth as a

delinquent, status offender, or dependent child or to waive jurisdiction and transfer a youth to criminal court for processing as a criminal offender.

**Judicial decision:** The decision made in response to a petition that asks the court to adjudicate or judicially waive the youth to criminal court for prosecution as an adult. This decision is generally made by a juvenile court judge or referee.

**Judicial disposition:** The disposition rendered in a case after the judicial decision has been made.

**Juvenile:** Youth at or below the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. (See “juvenile population” and “upper age of jurisdiction.”)

**Juvenile court:** Any court that has jurisdiction over matters involving juveniles.

**Juvenile population:** For delinquency and status offense matters, the juvenile population is defined as the number of children between the age of 10 and the upper age of jurisdiction. In all states, the upper age of jurisdiction is defined by statute. Thus, when the upper age of jurisdiction is 17, the delinquency and status offense juvenile population is equal to the number of children ages 10 through 17 living within the geographical area serviced by the court. (See “upper age of jurisdiction.”)

**Nonpetitioned case:** See “intake decision.”

**Petition:** A document filed in juvenile court alleging that a juvenile is a delinquent or a status offender and asking that the court assume jurisdiction over the juvenile or that an alleged delinquent be judicially waived to criminal court for prosecution as an adult.

**Petitioned case:** See “intake decision.”

**Race:** The race of the youth referred, as determined by the youth or by court personnel. In this report, Hispanic ethnicity is considered a separate race. Each of the other racial categories excludes persons of Hispanic ethnicity. An important exception must be noted. Data provided to the Archive did not always allow for identification of Hispanic ethnicity for cases involving American Indian youth. Specifically, data from many jurisdictions did not include any means to determine the ethnicity of American Indian youth. Rather than assume ethnicity for these youth, they are classified solely on their racial classification; as such, the American Indian group includes an unknown proportion of Hispanic youth.

- **White**—A person having origins in any of the indigenous peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.

- **Black**—A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

- **Hispanic**—A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

- **American Indian**—A person having origins in any of the indigenous peoples of North America, including Alaska Natives.

- **Asian**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, Hawaii, or any of the other Pacific Islands.

**Reason for referral:** The most serious offense for which the youth is referred to court intake. Attempts to commit an offense are included under that offense, except attempted murder, which is included in the aggravated assault category.

- **Crimes against persons**—Includes criminal homicide, rape, robbery,

aggravated assault, simple assault, other violent sex acts, and other offenses against persons as defined below.

- ◆ **Criminal homicide**—Causing the death of another person without legal justification or excuse. Criminal homicide is a summary category, not a single codified offense. In law, the term embraces all homicides in which the perpetrator intentionally kills someone without legal justification or accidentally kills someone as a consequence of reckless or grossly negligent conduct. It includes all conduct encompassed by the terms murder, nonnegligent (voluntary) manslaughter, negligent (involuntary) manslaughter, and vehicular manslaughter. The term is broader than the category used in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), in which murder/nonnegligent manslaughter does not include negligent manslaughter or vehicular manslaughter.
- ◆ **Rape**—Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim. This includes certain statutory rape offenses where the victim is presumed incapable of giving consent. This definition includes the offenses of rape, sodomy, and sexual assault with an object. Unlike the prior definition for "forcible rape," the current definition of rape is gender neutral and does not require force. The term is used in the same sense as the FBI's revised rape definition (implemented in 2013) in the UCR.
- ◆ **Robbery**—Unlawful taking or attempted taking of property

that is in the immediate possession of another by force or threat of force. The term is used in the same sense as in the UCR and includes forcible purse snatching.

- ◆ **Assault**—Unlawful intentional infliction, or attempted or threatened infliction, of injury upon the person of another.
  - ❖ **Aggravated assault**—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 any injury. The term is used in the same sense as in the UCR. It includes conduct encompassed under the statutory names: aggravated assault and battery, aggravated battery, assault with intent to kill, assault with intent to commit murder or manslaughter, atrocious assault, attempted murder, felonious assault, and assault with a deadly weapon.
  - ❖ **Simple assault**—Unlawful intentional infliction or attempted or threatened infliction of less than serious bodily injury without a deadly or dangerous weapon. The term is used in the same sense as in UCR reporting. Simple assault is not often distinctly named in statutes because it encompasses all assaults not explicitly named and defined as serious. Unspecified assaults are classified as "other offenses against persons."
- ◆ **Other violent sex offenses**—Includes unlawful sexual acts or contact, other than rape, between members of the same sex or different sexes against the will of the victim which can

involve the use or threatened use of force or attempting such act(s). Includes incest where the victim is presumed to be incapable of giving consent.

- ◆ **Other offenses against persons**—Includes kidnapping, custody interference, unlawful restraint, false imprisonment, reckless endangerment, harassment, and attempts to commit any such acts.
- **Crimes against property**—Includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, vandalism, stolen property offenses, trespassing, and other property offenses as defined below.
  - ◆ **Burglary**—Unlawful entry or attempted entry of any fixed structure, vehicle, or vessel used for regular residence, industry, or business, with or without force, with intent to commit a felony or larceny. The term is used in the same sense as in the UCR.
  - ◆ **Larceny**—Unlawful taking or attempted taking of property (other than a motor vehicle) from the possession of another by stealth, without force and without deceit, with intent to permanently deprive the owner of the property. This term is used in the same sense as in the UCR. It includes shoplifting and purse snatching without force.
  - ◆ **Motor vehicle theft**—Unlawful taking or attempted taking of a self-propelled road vehicle owned by another with the intent to deprive the owner of it permanently or temporarily. The term is used in the same sense as in the UCR. It includes joyriding or unauthorized use of a motor vehicle as well as grand theft auto.
  - ◆ **Arson**—Intentional damage or destruction by means of fire or

explosion of the property of another without the owner's consent or of any property with intent to defraud, or attempting the above acts. The term is used in the same sense as in the UCR.

- ◆ **Vandalism**—Destroying, damaging, or attempting to destroy or damage public property or the property of another without the owner's consent, except by fire or explosion.
- ◆ **Stolen property offenses**—Unlawfully and knowingly receiving, buying, distributing, selling, transporting, concealing, or possessing stolen property, or attempting any of the above. The term is used in the same sense as the UCR category "stolen property: buying, receiving, possessing."
- ◆ **Trespassing**—Unlawful entry or attempted entry of the property of another with the intent to commit a misdemeanor other than larceny or without intent to commit a crime.
- ◆ **Other property offenses**—Includes extortion and all fraud offenses, such as forgery, counterfeiting, embezzlement, check or credit card fraud, and attempts to commit any such offenses.
- **Drug law violations**—Includes unlawful sale, purchase, distribution, manufacture, cultivation, transport, possession, or use of a controlled or prohibited substance or drug or drug paraphernalia, or attempt to commit these acts. Sniffing of glue, paint, gasoline, and other inhalants is also included. Hence, the term is broader than the UCR category "drug abuse violations."
- **Offenses against public order**—Includes weapons offenses; nonviolent sex offenses; liquor law violations, not status offenses; disorderly conduct; obstruction of justice; and other offenses against public order as defined below.
- ◆ **Weapons offenses**—Unlawful sale, distribution, manufacture, alteration, transportation, possession, or use of a deadly or dangerous weapon or accessory, or attempt to commit any of these acts. The term is used in the same sense as the UCR category "weapons: carrying, possessing, etc."
- ◆ **Nonviolent sex offenses**—All offenses having a sexual element not involving violence. The term combines the meaning of the UCR categories "prostitution and commercialized vice" and "sex offenses." It includes offenses such as statutory rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, solicitation, pimping, lewdness, fornication, and adultery. (Many states have decriminalized prostitution for minors and view this as commercial sexual exploitation of children under Safe Harbor laws.)
- ◆ **Liquor law violations, not status offenses**—Being in a public place while intoxicated through consumption of alcohol. It includes public intoxication, drunkenness, and other liquor law violations. It does not include driving under the influence. The term is used in the same sense as the UCR category of the same name. Some states treat public drunkenness of juveniles as a status offense rather than delinquency. Hence, some of these offenses may appear under the status offense code "status liquor law violations." (When a person who is publicly intoxicated performs acts that cause a disturbance, he or she may be charged with disorderly conduct.)

- ◆ **Disorderly conduct**—Unlawful interruption of the peace, quiet, or order of a community, including offenses called disturbing the peace, vagrancy, loitering, unlawful assembly, and riot.
- ◆ **Obstruction of justice**—Intentionally obstructing court or law enforcement efforts in the administration of justice, acting in a way calculated to lessen the authority or dignity of the court, failing to obey the lawful order of a court, escaping from confinement, and violating probation or parole. This term includes contempt, perjury, bribery of witnesses, failure to report a crime, and nonviolent resistance of arrest.
- ◆ **Other offenses against public order**—Other offenses against government administration or regulation, such as bribery; violations of laws pertaining to fish and game, gambling, health, hitchhiking, and immigration; and false fire alarms.
- **Status offenses**—Includes acts or types of conduct that are offenses only when committed or engaged in by a juvenile and that can be adjudicated only by a juvenile court. Although state statutes defining status offenses vary and some states may classify cases involving these offenses as dependency cases, for the purposes of this report the following types of offenses are classified as status offenses:
  - ◆ **Runaway**—Leaving the custody and home of parents, guardians, or custodians without permission and failing to return within a reasonable length of time, in violation of a statute regulating the conduct of youth.
  - ◆ **Truancy**—Violation of a compulsory school attendance law.

- ◆ **Curfew violations**—Being found in a public place after a specified hour of the evening, usually established in a local ordinance applying only to persons under a specified age.
- ◆ **Ungovernability**—Being beyond the control of parents, guardians, or custodians or being disobedient of parental authority. This classification is referred to in various juvenile codes as unruly, unmanageable, and incorrigible.
- ◆ **Status liquor law violations**—Violation of laws regulating the possession, purchase, or consumption of liquor by minors. Some states treat consumption of alcohol and public drunkenness of juveniles as status offenses rather than delinquency. Hence, some of these offenses may appear under this status offense code.
- ◆ **Miscellaneous status offenses**—Numerous status offenses not included above (e.g., tobacco violation and violation of a court order in a status offense proceeding) and those offenses coded as “other” in a jurisdiction’s original data.

**Source of referral:** The agency or individual filing a complaint with intake that initiates court processing.

- **Law enforcement agency**—Includes metropolitan police,

state police, park police, sheriffs, constables, police assigned to the juvenile court for special duty, and all others performing a police function, with the exception of probation officers and officers of the court.

- **School**—Includes counselors, teachers, principals, attendance officers, and school resource officers.
- **Relatives**—Includes the youth’s own parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other legal guardians.
- **Other**—Includes social agencies, district attorneys, probation officers, victims, other private citizens, and miscellaneous sources of referral often only defined by the code “other” in the original data.

**Status offense:** Behavior that is considered an offense only when committed by a juvenile (e.g., running away from home). (See “reason for referral.”)

**Unit of count:** A case disposed by a court with juvenile jurisdiction during the calendar year. Each case represents a youth referred to the juvenile court for a new referral for one or more offenses. (See “reason for referral.”) The term disposed means that during the year some definite action was taken or some treatment plan was decided on or initiated. (See “disposition.”) Under this definition,

a youth could be involved in more than one case during a calendar year.

**Upper age of jurisdiction:** The oldest age at which a juvenile court has original jurisdiction over an individual for law-violating behavior. At the start of 2020, the upper age of jurisdiction was 16 in five states (Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin). In the remaining 45 states and the District of Columbia, the upper age of jurisdiction was 17. It must be noted that within most states, there are exceptions in which youth at or below the state’s upper age of jurisdiction can be placed under the original jurisdiction of the adult criminal court. For example, in most states, if a youth of a certain age is charged with an offense from a defined list of “excluded offenses,” the case must originate in the adult criminal court. In addition, in a number of states, the district attorney is given the discretion of filing certain cases in either the juvenile court or the criminal court. Therefore, while the upper age of jurisdiction is commonly recognized in all states, there are numerous exceptions to this age criterion. [See OJJDP’s Statistical Briefing Book ([www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/structure\\_process/faqs.asp](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/structure_process/faqs.asp)) for detail on state variations in jurisdictional boundaries.]

**Waiver:** Cases transferred to criminal court as the result of a judicial waiver hearing in juvenile court.





# Index of Tables and Figures

## Delinquency

### Adjudication

Age, 45  
Gender, 45  
Offense, 42–45  
Race, 45  
Trends, 42–45

### Age

Adjudication, 45  
Case flow diagram, 56  
Case rates, 9–11, 15–17, 21–25  
Detention, 34  
Gender, 15–17  
Manner of handling, 37  
Offense, 9–11, 15–17, 18, 22–25, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Placement, 48  
Probation, 51  
Race, 18, 21–25  
Trends, 9, 11, 16–17, 22, 25, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Waiver, 40

### Case counts

Case flow diagrams, 52, 54–59  
Detention, 32  
Gender, 12  
Manner of handling, 35–36  
Offense, 6–7, 12, 19, 32, 35–36, 38–43, 46, 49  
Placement, 46  
Probation, 49  
Race, 18–19, 41  
Trends, 6–7, 12, 18–19, 32, 35, 37, 38, 43, 46, 49  
Waiver, 38, 41

### Case flow diagrams, 52–62

Age, 56  
Gender, 57  
Offense, 54–55, 60–62  
Race, 58–59

### Case rates

Age, 9–11, 15–17, 21–25  
Gender, 14–17  
Offense, 8, 10–11, 14–17, 20–25  
Race, 20–27  
Trends, 8–9, 11, 14, 16–17, 20, 22, 25

### Detention

Age, 34  
Case counts, 32  
Gender, 34  
Offense, 32–33  
Race, 33, 34  
Trends, 32–34

### Gender

Adjudication, 45  
Age, 15–17  
Case counts, 12  
Case flow diagram, 57  
Case rates, 14–17  
Detention, 34  
Manner of handling, 36–37  
Offense, 12–17, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Placement, 48  
Probation, 51

### Race, 26–27

Trends, 12–14, 16–17, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Waiver, 40

### Intake decision, see Manner of handling

### Manner of handling (petitioned, nonpetitioned)

Age, 37  
Case counts, 35–36  
Gender, 36–37  
Offense, 35–37  
Race, 36–37  
Trends, 35–37, 42

### Offense

Adjudication, 42–45  
Age, 9–11, 15–17, 22–25, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Case counts, 6–7, 12, 19, 32, 35–36, 38, 41–43, 46, 49  
Case flow diagrams, 54–55, 60–62  
Case rates, 8, 10–11, 14–17, 20–25  
Detention, 32–33  
Gender, 12–17, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Manner of handling, 35–37  
Placement, 46–48  
Probation, 49–51  
Race, 19–27, 34, 37, 40–42, 45, 48, 51  
Source of referral, 31  
Trends, 6–9, 11–14, 16–17, 19, 21–27, 31–41, 43–51  
Waiver, 38–41

### Petitioned and nonpetitioned, see

### Manner of handling

### Placement (out-of-home)

Age, 48  
Case counts, 46  
Gender, 48  
Offense, 46–48  
Race, 48  
Trends, 46–48

### Probation

Age, 51  
Case counts, 49  
Gender, 51  
Offense, 49–51  
Race, 51  
Trends, 49–51

### Race

Adjudication, 45  
Age, 21–25  
Case counts, 18–19, 41  
Case flow diagram, 58–59  
Case rates, 20–27  
Detention, 33, 34  
Manner of handling, 36–37  
Offense, 19–27, 34, 37, 40–42, 45, 48, 51  
Placement, 48  
Probation, 51  
Trends, 18–20, 22–27, 33–34, 37, 40–41, 45, 48, 51  
Waiver, 40–41  
Source of referral, 31

### Transfer to criminal court, see Waiver

### Trends

Adjudication, 42–45  
Age, 9, 11, 16–17, 22, 25, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Case counts, 6–7, 12, 18–19, 32, 35, 37, 38, 41, 43, 46, 49  
Case rates, 8–9, 11, 14, 16–17, 20, 22, 25  
Detention, 32–34  
Gender, 12–14, 16–17, 34, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51  
Manner of handling, 35–37, 42  
Offense, 6–9, 11–14, 16–17, 19–27, 31–41, 43–51  
Placement, 46–48  
Probation, 49–51  
Race, 18–20, 22–27, 33–34, 37, 40–41, 45, 48, 51  
Source of referral, 31  
Waiver, 38–41

### Waiver

Age, 40  
Case counts, 38, 41  
Gender, 40  
Offense, 38–41  
Race, 40–41  
Trends, 38–41

## Status Offense

### Adjudication

Age, 79  
Gender, 79  
Offense, 78–79  
Race, 79  
Trends, 78–79

### Age

Adjudication, 79  
Case rates, 66–67, 71  
Gender, 71  
Offense, 66–67, 71, 79, 81, 83  
Placement, 81  
Probation, 83  
Trends, 67

### Case counts

Case flow diagrams, 84–85  
Detention, 77  
Gender, 68  
Offense, 64, 68, 72–73, 77–78, 80, 82  
Placement, 80  
Probation, 82  
Race, 72–73  
Trends, 64, 68, 72–73, 77–78, 80, 82

### Case flow diagrams, 84–85

### Case rates

Age, 66–67, 71  
Gender, 70–71  
Offense, 65, 67, 70–71, 74–75  
Race, 74–75  
Trends, 65, 67, 70, 74–75

### Detention

Case counts, 77

---

---

- Offense, 77
- Trends, 77
- Gender
  - Adjudication, 79
  - Case counts, 68
  - Case rates, 70–71
  - Offense, 68–71, 79, 81, 83
  - Placement, 81
  - Probation, 83
  - Trends, 68–70
- Offense
  - Adjudication, 78–79
  - Age, 66–67
  - Case counts, 64, 68, 72–73, 77–78, 80, 82
  - Case flow diagrams, 85
  - Case rates, 65–67, 70–71, 74–75
  - Detention, 77
  - Gender, 68–71
  - Placement, 80–81
  - Probation, 82–83
  - Race, 72–75
  - Source of referral, 76
  - Trends, 64–65, 67–70, 73–83
- Placement (out-of-home)
  - Age, 81
  - Case counts, 80
  - Gender, 81
  - Offense, 80–81
  - Race, 81
  - Trends, 80–81
- Probation
  - Age, 83
  - Case counts, 82
  - Gender, 83
  - Offense, 82–83
  - Race, 83
  - Trends, 82–83
- Race
  - Adjudication, 79
  - Case counts, 72–73
  - Case rates, 74–75
  - Offense, 72–75, 79, 81, 83
  - Placement, 81
  - Probation, 83
  - Trends, 72–75
- Source of referral, 76
- Trends
  - Adjudication, 78–79
  - Age, 67
  - Case counts, 64, 68, 72–73, 77–78, 80, 82
  - Case rates, 65, 67, 70, 74–75
  - Detention, 77
  - Gender, 68–70
  - Offense, 64–65, 67–70, 73–83
  - Placement, 80–81
  - Probation, 82–83
  - Race, 72–75
  - Source of referral, 76





**NATIONAL CENTER FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE  
THE RESEARCH DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES**

---

3700 South Water Street, Suite 200 | Pittsburgh, PA 15203-2363  
(412) 227-6950 | [www.ncjj.org](http://www.ncjj.org)