



Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report

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National Center for Juvenile Justice
3700 S. Water Street, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

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Chapter 6


Youth in juvenile court

Law enforcement agencies refer approximately two-thirds of all arrested youth to a court with juvenile jurisdiction for further processing. As with law enforcement, the court may decide to divert some youth away from the formal justice system to other agencies for service. Prosecutors may file some juvenile cases directly to criminal (adult) court. Those cases that progress through the juvenile court system may result in adjudication and court-ordered probation or out-of-home placement or may be transferred from juvenile court to criminal court. While their cases are being processed, youth may be held in secure detention.

This chapter quantifies the flow of cases through the juvenile court system. It documents the nature of,

and trends in, cases received and the court's response, and examines gender and race differences. (Chapter 4, on juvenile justice system structure and process, describes the juvenile court process in general, the history of juvenile courts in the U.S., and state variations in current laws. Chapter 2, on victims, discusses the handling of child maltreatment matters.) The chapter also discusses racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system and presents an analysis of juvenile court referral histories from a sample birth cohort of youth born in 2000.

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



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

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

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

Throughout its history, the *Juvenile Court Statistics* series has depended on the voluntary support of courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Courts contribute data originally compiled to meet their own information needs. The data NCJJ receives are not uniform but reflect the natural variation that exists across court information systems. To develop national estimates, NCJJ restructures compatible data into a common format. In 2019, juvenile courts with jurisdiction over virtually 100% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some data to the national reporting program. Because not all contributed data can support the national reporting requirements, the national estimates for 2019 were based on data from more than 2,500 jurisdictions containing nearly 87% of the na-

tion's juvenile population (i.e., youth age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).

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

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

Cases involving multiple charges are categorized by their most serious offense

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

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

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

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

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

Juvenile courts handled 722,600 delinquency cases in 2019—down from 1.2 million in 1985

Juvenile court caseloads have decreased and changed

In 2019, U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 722,600 cases in which the youth was charged with a delinquency offense—an offense for which an adult could be prosecuted in criminal court. Thus, U.S. juvenile courts handled 1,980 delinquency cases per day in 2019. In comparison, approximately 1,100 delinquency cases were processed daily in 1960. After a substantial increase (60%) between 1985 and the peak in 1997, the volume of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts decreased 61% through 2019. This is in line with the decrease in the number of juvenile arrests made between 1997 and 2019.

Most delinquency cases are referred by law enforcement

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

Percent of cases referred by law enforcement agencies:

Offense	2019
Delinquency	82%
Person	87
Property	91
Drugs	90
Public order	62
Status offense (formal cases)	18
Runaway	33
Truancy	1
Curfew	93
Ungovernability	31
Liquor	86

In 2019, 82% of delinquency cases were referred by law enforcement agencies. This proportion has changed little over the past two decades. Law enforcement agencies are generally

Youth were charged with a person offense in one-third of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in 2019

Most serious offense	Number of cases	Percent of total cases	Percent change	
			1985–2019	2010–2019
Total delinquency	722,600	100%	-38%	-45%
Person offense	237,000	33	29	-29
Violent Crime Index	53,600	7	-13	-22
Criminal homicide	1,100	0	-4	34
Forcible rape	8,300	1	59	-3
Robbery	18,600	3	-26	-26
Aggravated assault	25,700	4	-14	-25
Simple assault	153,100	21	45	-30
Other violent sex offense	7,500	1	12	-26
Other person offense	22,700	3	118	-38
Property offense	214,500	30	-70	-56
Property Crime Index	145,600	20	-72	-58
Burglary	38,600	5	-73	-55
Larceny-theft	89,600	12	-73	-63
Motor vehicle theft	15,300	2	-57	-2
Arson	2,100	0	-69	-54
Vandalism	35,900	5	-58	-54
Trespassing	19,500	3	-63	-54
Stolen property offense	7,000	1	-77	-51
Other property offense	6,600	1	-64	-35
Drug law violation	96,400	13	25	-40
Public order offense	174,700	24	-11	-48
Obstruction of justice	81,000	11	20	-49
Disorderly conduct	48,300	7	7	-51
Weapons offense	16,000	2	-20	-46
Liquor law violation	4,100	1	-77	-69
Nonviolent sex offense	11,500	2	-12	5
Other public order offense	13,900	2	-57	-44

■ Property crimes accounted for 30% of delinquency cases in 2019.

■ The number of juvenile court referrals decreased 38% between 1985 and 2019; however, during the 10-year period between 2010 and 2019, juvenile court referrals decreased by nearly half (45%).

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

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

much less likely to be the source of referral for formally handled status offense cases (involving offenses that are not crimes for adults) than delinquency

cases. The exceptions are curfew cases and status liquor law violation cases (underage drinking and possession of alcohol).



The juvenile court caseload increased steadily between 1985 and 1997 and then declined to its lowest level in 2019

Juvenile court cases have decreased steadily since the late 1990s

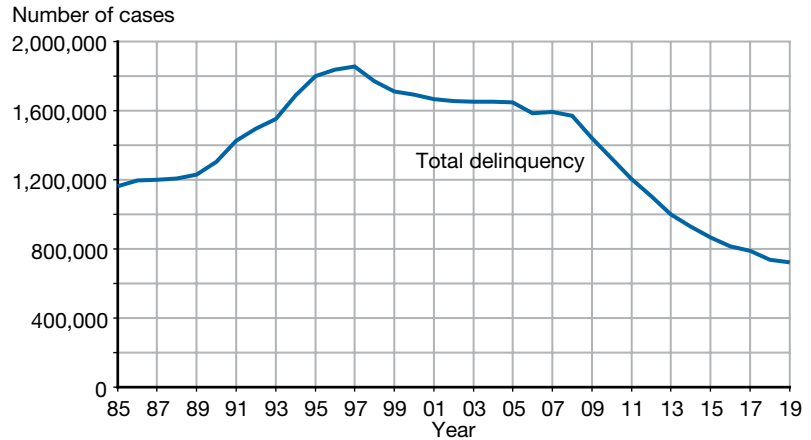
The number of delinquency cases increased 60% between 1985 and the 1997 peak, before decreasing 61% through 2019. Cases involving property or drug offenses followed a similar pattern; property offenses increased 29% through 1995 and drug offense cases more than doubled (147%) through 1997. Both offense types decreased steadily through 2019—down 76% and 49%, respectively. Public order and person offense cases more than doubled to their respective peaks in 2004 and 2005. Public order offense cases decreased 59% through 2019 and person offense cases decreased 45%.

In more recent years, juvenile court cases involving violent crime offenses decreased 22% in the 10-year period between 2010 and 2019. More specifically, robbery was down 26%, aggravated assault 25%, and forcible rape 3%. In contrast, criminal homicide cases increased 34% during the period.

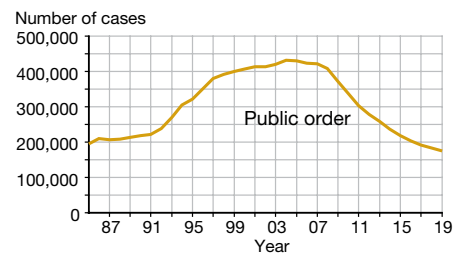
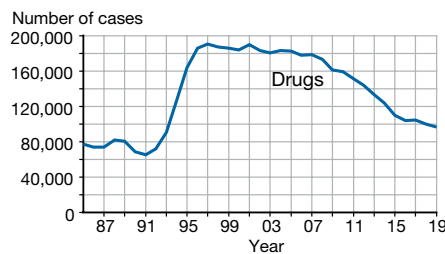
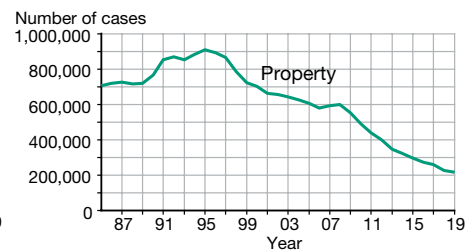
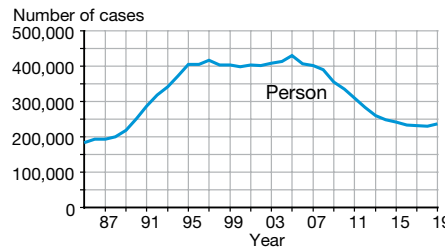
There were also large declines in cases involving property offenses. Larceny-theft cases decreased the most during the 10-year period, down 63%, followed by burglary (55%), arson, vandalism, and trespassing (down 54% each), and stolen property offenses (51%). Motor vehicle theft cases decreased 2% between 2010 and 2019.

Trends in juvenile court cases largely parallel trends in arrests of persons younger than 18. FBI data show that arrest rates for persons younger than 18 charged with violent offenses and Property Crime Index offenses have dropped substantially since their peaks in the mid-1990s.

The juvenile court caseload decreased 38% between 1985 and 2019



Delinquency cases by offense category



- In the 10-year period between 2010 and 2019, caseloads decreased for the four general offense categories. Property offense cases fell 56%, followed by public order offense cases (48%), drug offense cases (40%), and person offense cases (29%). The overall delinquency caseload decreased 45% during the same time period.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

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

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

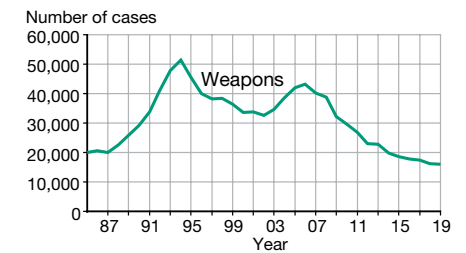
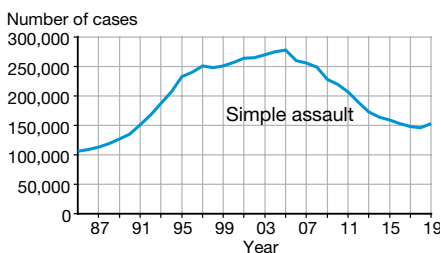
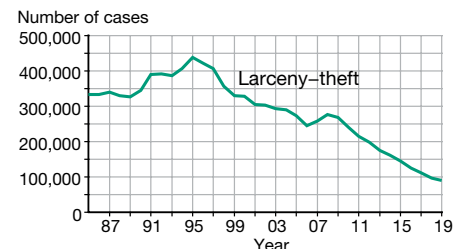
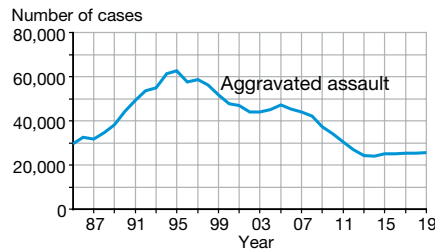
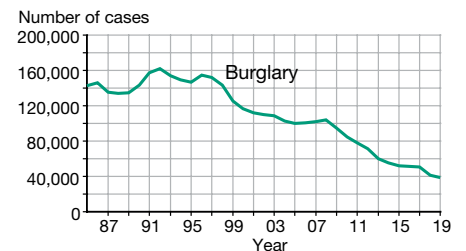
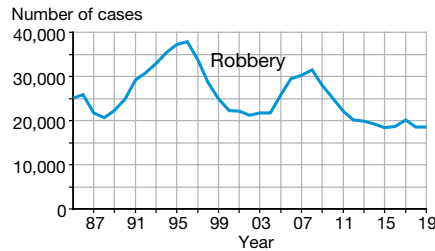
Aggravated assault is the unlawful intentional infliction of serious bodily injury or unlawful threat or attempt to inflict bodily injury or death by means of a deadly or dangerous weapon with or without actual infliction of injury. The following situations are examples of aggravated assault:

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

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

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

Trend patterns for juvenile court caseloads from 1985 through 2019 varied substantially across offenses



- Robbery cases peaked in 1996, fell through 2004, and increased again through 2008, before declining through 2019. As a result, the number of robbery cases in 2019 was 26% less than the number in 1985.
- Aggravated assault cases peaked in 1995, at 62,700 and then fell off sharply. In comparison, simple assault cases climbed steadily through 2005, then decreased through 2019. Unlike other offenses, the number of simple assault cases in 2019 outnumbered the number reported in 1985.
- Burglary and larceny-theft caseloads peaked in the 1990s and steadily decreased through 2019 to their lowest levels since at least 1985.
- After a steady decline following the peak in 1994, weapons offense cases increased through the mid 2000s before decreasing again through 2019.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

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

Females account for a relatively small share of delinquency cases

In 2019, juvenile courts handled more than 200,300 delinquency cases involving females—just over one-quarter of all delinquency cases handled in 2019. Females made up a fairly large share of cases in some offense categories—simple assault (37%), disorderly conduct (36%), larceny-theft (35%), and liquor law cases (33%). For other offense categories, the female share of the case-load was relatively small—violent sex offenses other than rape (6%), robbery and weapons offenses (11% each), burglary offenses (12%), and criminal homicide (14%).

Most serious offense	Female proportion
Total delinquency	28%
Person offense	31
Violent Crime Index	16
Criminal homicide	14
Forcible rape	4
Robbery	11
Aggravated assault	24
Simple assault	37
Other violent sex offense	6
Other person offense	30
Property offense	25
Property Crime Index	28
Burglary	12
Larceny-theft	35
Motor vehicle theft	22
Arson	15
Vandalism	19
Trespassing	23
Stolen property offense	14
Other property offense	26
Drug law violation	26
Public order offense	28
Obstruction of justice	27
Disorderly conduct	36
Weapons offense	11
Liquor law violation	33
Nonviolent sex offense	22
Other public order offense	23

For most offenses, female caseloads have grown more or decreased less than male caseloads between 1985 and 2019

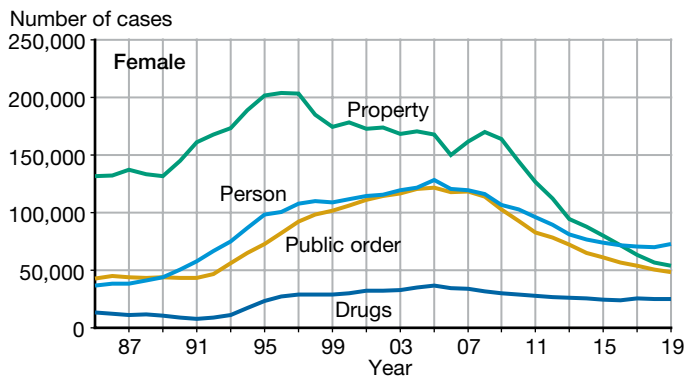
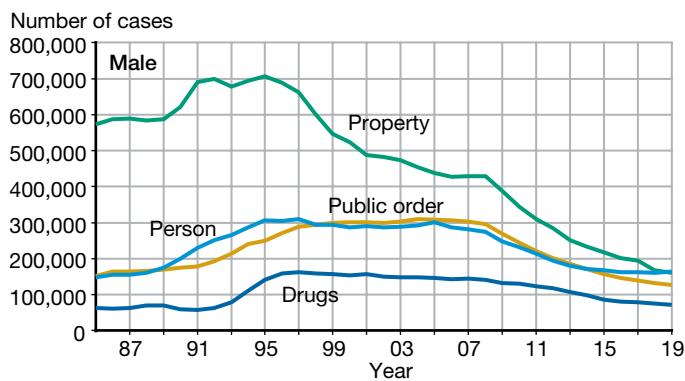
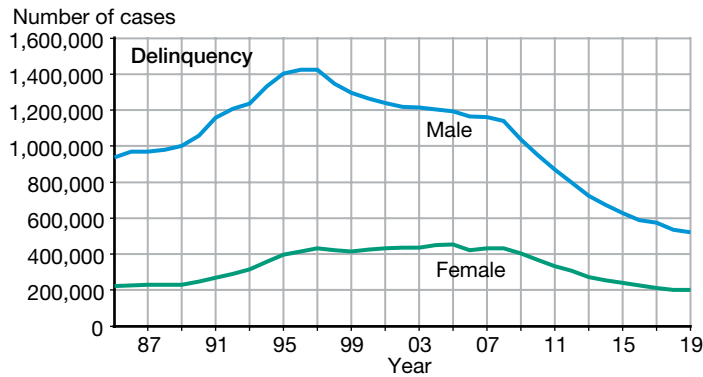
Most serious offense	Percent change			
	1985–2019		2010–2019	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total delinquency	-44%	-11%	-45%	-46%
Person offense	11	101	-30	-29
Violent Crime Index	-17	21	-21	-25
Criminal homicide	-6	5	31	55
Forcible rape	56	161	-3	-3
Robbery	-30	25	-27	-18
Aggravated assault	-20	17	-24	-29
Simple assault	23	110	-32	-27
Other violent sex offense	12	14	-24	-43
Other person offense	81	321	-36	-42
Property offense	-72	-59	-53	-63
Property Crime Index	-74	-62	-53	-67
Burglary	-74	-57	-55	-47
Larceny-theft	-76	-65	-56	-70
Motor vehicle theft	-61	-35	-3	2
Arson	-70	-55	-55	-44
Vandalism	-62	-21	-55	-43
Trespassing	-67	-47	-57	-45
Stolen property offense	-78	-71	-51	-52
Other property offense	-65	-63	-35	-37
Drug law violation	12	84	-45	-13
Public order offense	-17	13	-48	-48
Obstruction of justice	17	28	-50	-48
Disorderly conduct	-11	68	-52	-50
Weapons offense	-23	15	-45	-50
Liquor law violation	-80	-63	-69	-68
Nonviolent sex offense	-17	10	4	9
Other public order offense	-57	-58	-45	-41

- Between 1985 and 2019, the overall delinquency caseload for females decreased 11%, compared with a 44% decrease for males.
- Among females, the number of aggravated assault cases increased 17% between 1985 and 2019. In comparison, among males, aggravated assault cases were down 20%.
- Between 2010 and 2019, the number of aggravated assault cases dropped for both males and females, but the decline for females (29%) was slightly greater than the decline for males (24%).

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

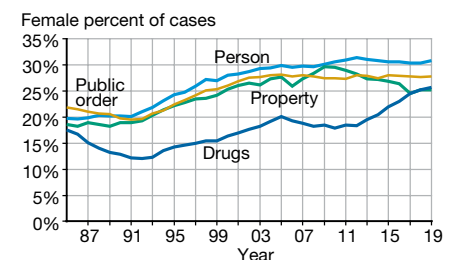
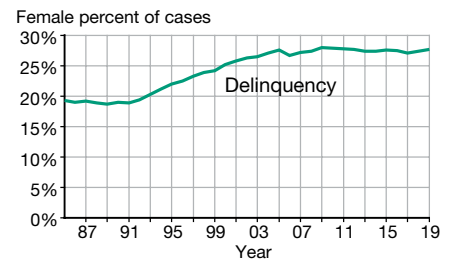
Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

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



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

The proportion of delinquency cases that involved females was 19% in 1985; by 2005, it had increased 9 percentage points to 28% and remained close to this level through 2019. The female share of person offense cases rose 11 percentage points between 1985 and 2019 to 31%. The female proportion of property cases went from 19% in 1985 to 30% in 2009, then decreased to 25% in 2019. The female proportion of drug offense cases increased 8 percentage points from 1985 to 2019, up to 26%. The female proportion of public order cases increased 6 percentage points from 1985 to 2019, up to 28%.



- Male delinquency caseloads have been on the decline since the mid-1990s. The female caseload peaked in 2005 and decreased through 2019.
- The decline in male caseloads has been driven by a sharp reduction in the volume of property cases—down 77% from the 1995 peak to 2019.
- For females, the largest 1985–2019 increase was in person offense cases (101%). Drug law violation cases also rose substantially (84%).

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanzchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.



In 2019, male and female offense profiles were similar

The delinquency caseload changed for both males and females between 2010 and 2019

Compared with offense profiles in 2010, both male and female delinquency caseloads had greater proportions of person offense cases in 2019.

Offense profile by gender:

Offense	Male	Female
2019		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	31	36
Property	31	27
Drugs	14	12
Public order	24	24
2010		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	24	28
Property	36	39
Drugs	14	8
Public order	26	25

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

Person and property cases accounted for equal proportions of the male caseload in 2019 (31% each). In 2019, person offenses accounted for the largest share of the female caseload; in 2010 property offenses accounted for the largest share.

In 2019, the male caseload contained greater proportions of property and drug offenses than the female caseload. In contrast, person offenses accounted for a larger share of the female caseload than the male caseload. The proportion of delinquency cases involving public order offenses was the same for both males and females in 2019.

Although males accounted for more than twice as many delinquency cases as females in 2019, their offense profiles were similar

Most serious offense	Male		Female	
	Number of cases	Percent of cases	Number of cases	Percent of cases
Total delinquency	522,293	100%	200,332	100%
Person offense	163,973	31	73,043	36
Violent Crime Index	44,915	9	8,712	4
Criminal homicide	978	0	157	0
Forcible rape	7,932	2	336	0
Robbery	16,432	3	2,132	1
Aggravated assault	19,573	4	6,086	3
Simple assault	95,999	18	57,129	29
Other violent sex offense	7,127	1	415	0
Other person offense	15,933	3	6,788	3
Property offense	160,494	31	53,992	27
Property Crime Index	105,479	20	40,075	20
Burglary	33,995	7	4,649	2
Larceny-theft	57,867	11	31,734	16
Motor vehicle theft	11,880	2	3,374	2
Arson	1,737	0	317	0
Vandalism	29,114	6	6,754	3
Trespassing	15,044	3	4,463	2
Stolen property offense	5,996	1	990	0
Other property offense	4,861	1	1,710	1
Drug law violation	71,657	14	24,755	12
Public order offense	126,169	24	48,542	24
Obstruction of justice	59,006	11	22,012	11
Disorderly conduct	30,670	6	17,585	9
Weapons offense	14,164	3	1,841	1
Liquor law violation	2,736	1	1,346	1
Nonviolent sex offense	8,953	2	2,523	1
Other public order offense	10,640	2	3,235	2

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

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

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

A disproportionate number of delinquency cases involved Black youth

In 2019, Black youth constituted 15% of the juvenile population but 35% of the delinquency caseload

Although the largest proportion of delinquency cases handled in 2019 involved White youth (310,100 or 43%), a disproportionate number of cases involved Black youth (254,800 or 35%), given their proportion of the juvenile population. In 2019, White youth made up 53% of the juvenile population (youth ages 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction in each state), Black youth 15%, Hispanic¹ youth 24%, American Indian² youth 2%, and Asian³ youth 6%.*

The racial profile of delinquency cases overall had a slightly greater proportion of cases involving Black youth in 2019 (35%) than in 2010 (33%) and, conversely, a slightly smaller proportion of cases involving White youth. The proportion of cases involving Hispanic youth was the same in both years (19%).

Racial profile:

Race/ethnicity	Delinquency	
	2019	2010
White	43%	45%
Black	35	33
Hispanic	19	19
American Indian	2	1
Asian	1	1

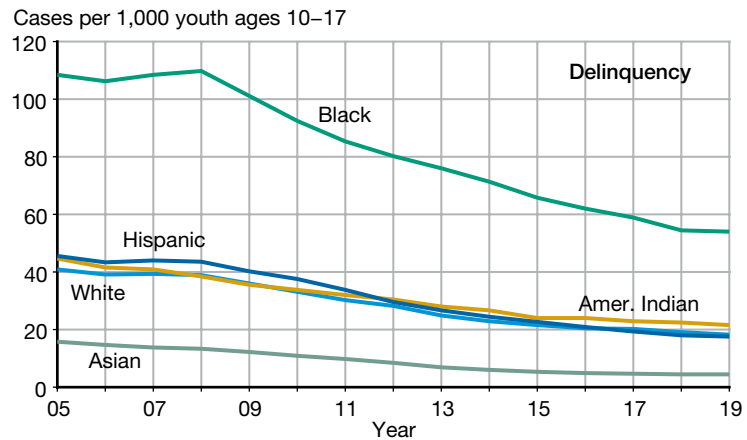
Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

¹Persons 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 do 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.

²The racial classification American Indian (usually abbreviated as Amer. Indian) includes American Indian and Alaskan Native.

³The racial classification Asian includes Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

Between 2005 and 2019, delinquency case rates declined for youth of all racial groups



- The delinquency case rate was at its highest level in 2005 for all racial groups except for Black youth. The delinquency case rate for Black youth peaked in 2008 (109.7) and then fell 51% by 2019. Between 2005 and 2019, the delinquency case rate decreased the most for Asian youth (71%), followed by Hispanic youth (61%), White youth (55%), American Indian youth (52%), and Black youth (50%).
- In 2019, the total delinquency case rate for Black youth (53.9) was more than double the rate for American Indian youth (21.5), 3 times the rate for White youth (18.3) and Hispanic youth (17.6), and nearly 12 times the rate for Asian youth (4.6).

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

The National Juvenile Court Data Archive began including data on Hispanic youth with the 2005 data year

Beginning with the 2005 data year, detailed race estimates developed by the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (Archive) project were expanded to include estimates for cases involving Hispanic youth. As a result of this change, race data are not comparable across all data years presented in this chapter (1985–2019). For the 1985–2004 data period, the Archive project developed race estimates for four race groups (White, Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander) without consideration of ethnicity, and persons of Hispanic ethnicity could be of any race and were included within each of the four racial groups. Beginning with the 2005 data year, persons of Hispanic ethnicity are treated as a distinct race group and

are excluded from the other race groups. For this reason, race estimates for the 1985–2004 data period are not comparable to the race estimates for the 2005–2019 data period. Therefore, in this chapter, racial data are presented only for the 2005–2019 period. An important exception to racial classification must be noted. Data provided to the project 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.

Racial profile, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
White	41	42	53	41
Black	40	32	20	36
Hispanic	16	18	21	22
American Indian	1	2	2	1
Asian	1	2	1	1

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

Offense profiles for White youth and Black youth differed

Delinquency caseloads for Black youth contained a greater proportion of person offenses than did caseloads for all other races. For White, Black, and Hispanic youth, person offenses accounted for the largest proportion of cases, and drug offenses accounted for the smallest proportion of cases for all racial groups. Person offenses made up a larger share of delinquency cases in 2019 than in 2010 for all racial groups.

Offense profile:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
2019				
White	32%	29%	17%	23%
Black	35	32	7	25
Hispanic	31	26	17	25
American Indian	31	33	17	19
Asian	30	32	15	23
2010				
White	24%	39%	15%	23%
Black	30	35	7	27
Hispanic	21	36	14	30
American Indian	23	39	13	25
Asian	20	46	11	24

Note: Rows total 100%; however, detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

In 2019, the disparity between rates for Black youth and White youth was lowest for drug cases

In 2019, case rates for Black youth were substantially higher than rates for other youth in all offense categories, but the degree of disparity varied. The person offense case rate for Black youth (19.1 per 1,000) was more than

3 times the rate for White youth (5.8), as was the property offense case rate (17.4 for Black youth and 5.3 for White youth), and the public order case rate (13.6 for Black youth and 4.2 for White youth).

In comparison, in 2019, the drug offense case rate for Black youth (3.9) was 1.3 times the rate for White youth (3.0). The disparity in the drug offense case rate between Black and White youth decreased since 2006, when the case rate for Black youth was nearly double the case rate for White youth.

The racial profile for delinquency cases was similar for males and females in 2019

Among females referred to juvenile court in 2019 for person offenses, Black youth accounted for 41% of cases—the greatest overrepresentation among Black youth. The Black proportion among males referred for person offenses was slightly smaller at 37%.

Racial profile of delinquency cases by gender and offense, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Delinquency			
	Male	Female	Public order	Drugs
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
White	43	44	41	41
Black	35	35	36	36
Hispanic	19	17	21	21
American Indian	2	2	2	2
Asian	1	1	1	1
Female				
White	39	44	41	41
Black	41	35	39	39
Hispanic	17	16	22	17
American Indian	2	2	3	2
Asian	1	2	2	1

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

Among females referred for drug offenses, Black youth were underrepresented. Although they account for 15% of the population of juvenile females, Black youth made up 13% of drug cases involving females in 2019.

In 2019, American Indian and Asian youth combined made up 8% of the juvenile population; however, they accounted for less than 6% of cases across all gender and offense groups.

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

Among males in 2019, Black youth had a greater proportion of person offense cases than all other race groups. Conversely, Black males had a smaller proportion of drug cases than all other race groups.

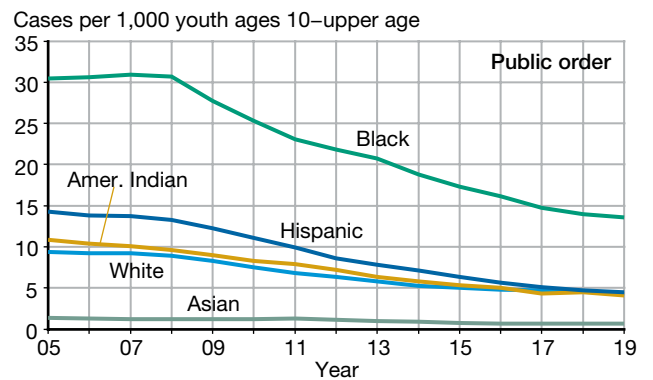
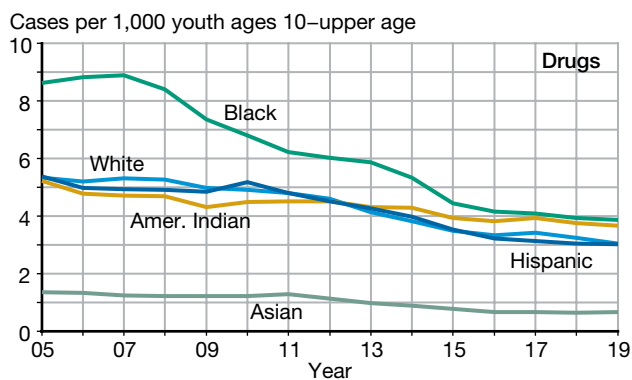
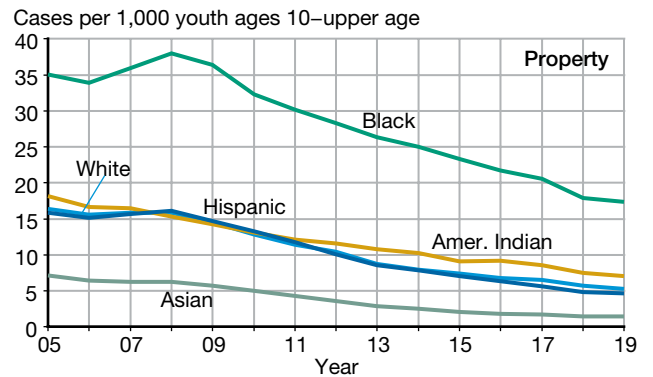
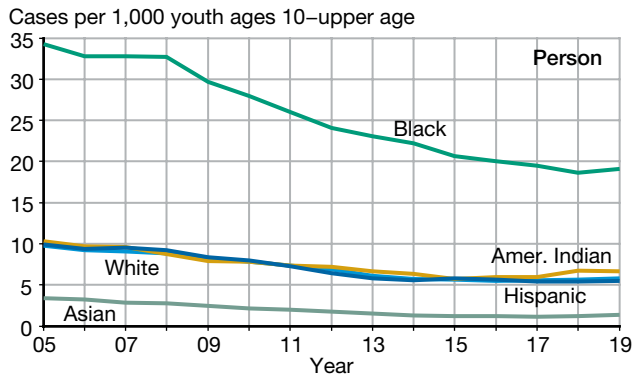
Offense profile of delinquency cases by gender and race, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Male				
White	31%	29%	16%	23%
Black	33	34	8	25
Hispanic	29	27	18	26
American Indian	30	34	16	20
Asian	31	31	15	23
Female				
White	32%	27%	17%	23%
Black	42	27	5	27
Hispanic	36	25	15	23
American Indian	33	31	18	18
Asian	28	34	15	22

Note: Rows total 100%; however, detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Among females, person offenses accounted for 42% of the cases involving Black youth, compared with 36% of the cases involving Hispanics, 33% involving American Indian youth, 32% involving White youth, and 28% involving Asian youth. As with males, Black females had a smaller proportion of drug cases than all other race groups.

Case rates varied across race and offense but, in all offense categories and nearly all years from 2005 through 2019, the rates for Black youth were substantially higher than the rates for other youth



- Compared with 2005, 2019 person offense case rates were lower for all racial groups. In fact, person offense case rates were at their highest level for all race groups in 2005 and decreased substantially through 2019—down 59% for Asian youth, 45% for Hispanic youth, 44% for Black youth, 41% for White youth, and 35% for American Indian youth.
- Property case rates were at their highest levels in 2005 for White, American Indian, and Asian youth, and in 2008 for Black and Hispanic youth. From their respective peaks, property offense case rates decreased the most for Asian youth (down 80%), followed by Hispanic youth (71%), White youth (68%), American Indian youth (61%), and Black youth (54%).
- The drug offense case rate for Black youth increased slightly (3%) between 2005 and the peak in 2007, then decreased 57% through 2019. Drug offense case rates for all other racial groups were at their highest in 2005 and decreased to their lowest levels in 2019 for White, American Indian, and Hispanic youth. The drug offense case rate for Asian youth was slightly higher in 2019 than in 2018.
- In 2019, the decrease in the public order offense case rate was similar for all racial groups: 69% for Hispanic youth, 62% for American Indian youth, 55% each for White and Black youth, and 51% for Asian youth.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchara's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

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

For all ages, 2019 delinquency case rates were lower than rates in the mid- to late 1990s

In 2019, juvenile courts handled 22.7 delinquency cases for every 1,000 juveniles (youth subject to original juvenile court jurisdiction) in the U.S. population. The overall delinquency case rate peaked in 1996, 43% above the 1985 rate, and then declined 64% to the 2019 level. For all ages, delinquency case rates showed similar trend patterns, although the peak years varied slightly between age groups. Case rates for youth between ages 11 and 14 peaked in 1995, while case rates for older youth peaked in 1996 or 1997. The case rate for youth age 10 peaked in 1991. Between 1985 and 2019, case rate declines were greater for youth younger than 15 than for older teens; however, in the 10-year period between 2010 and 2019, case rate declines were greater for youth ages 16 and 17 than for all other ages.

Most delinquency cases involved older teens

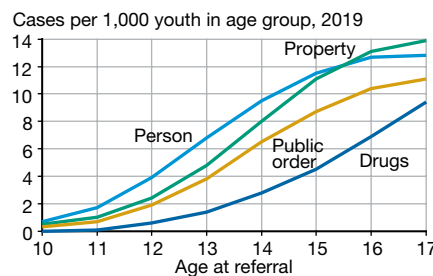
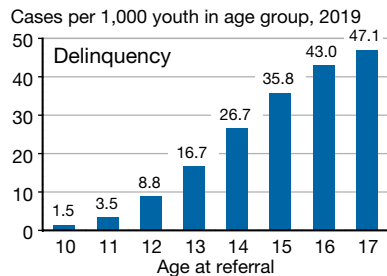
High-school-age youth (ages 14 and older) made up 82% of the delinquency caseload in 2019; older teens (ages 16 and older) accounted for 45%. In comparison, middle-school-age youth (ages 12 and 13) were involved in 15% of delinquency cases, while youth younger than 12 accounted for 4%. The 2019 age profile of delinquency cases was similar to the 2010 profile.

Age profile of delinquency cases:

Age	2019	2010
Total	100%	100%
Under 12	4	3
12	5	4
13	10	9
14	15	15
15	21	21
16	24	26
17	19	19
Over 17	3	3

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

The delinquency case rate increased with the referral age of the youth in 2019



- In 2019, the delinquency case rate for 16-year-olds was 1.6 times the rate for 14-year-olds, and the rate for 14-year-olds was 3 times the rate for 12-year olds.
- Age-specific case rates increased steadily through age 17 for all offense types. The case rate for 17-year-olds was nearly double the case rate for 13-year-olds for person offenses and nearly triple the rate for property and public order offenses.
- The increase in rates between age 13 and age 17 was sharpest for drug offenses; the rate for drug offenses for 17-year-olds was 6.7 times the rate for 13-year-olds.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Age profiles varied somewhat across offenses but have not changed substantially since 2010

Age profile of delinquency cases, 2019:

Age	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 12	5	3	1	3
12	7	5	2	5
13	12	9	6	9
14	17	16	12	15
15	20	22	20	21
16	22	25	29	24
17	16	19	28	18
Over 17	2	2	3	5

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

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

Although comparable numbers of 17-year-olds and 16-year-olds were arrested in 2019, the number of juvenile court cases involving 17-year-olds (135,800), was lower than the number

involving 16-year-olds (173,000). The explanation lies primarily in the fact that 8 states exclude 17-year-olds from the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court (see Chapter 4). In these states, all 17-year-olds are legally adults and are referred to criminal court rather than to juvenile court. Thus, far fewer 17-year-olds than 16-year-olds are subject to original juvenile court jurisdiction. Of the more than 31 million youth under juvenile court jurisdiction in 2019, youth ages 10 through 15 accounted for 78%, 13% were age 16, and 9% were age 17.

In 2019, offense profiles of younger and older youth differed

Compared with the delinquency caseload involving older youth, the caseload of youth age 15 or younger in 2019 included a larger proportion of person offense cases and a smaller proportion of drug offense cases.

Compared with 2010, the caseloads for both age groups in 2019 involved greater proportions of person offense cases and smaller proportions of property offense cases.

Offense profile of delinquency cases by age:

Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
2019		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	37	28
Property	30	30
Drugs	10	17
Public order	24	25
2010		
Delinquency	100%	100%
Person	29	22
Property	38	36
Drugs	9	15
Public order	24	27

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

The age profile of delinquency cases did not differ substantially by gender or race in 2019

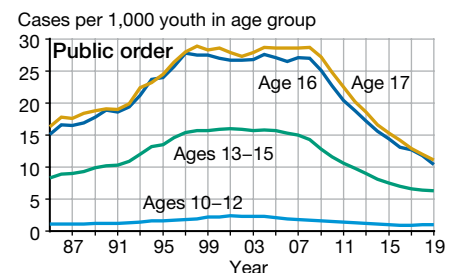
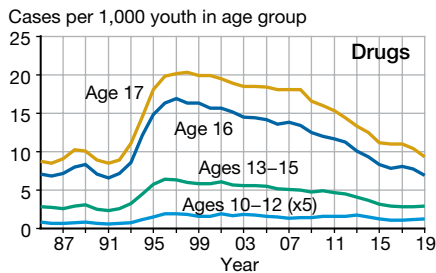
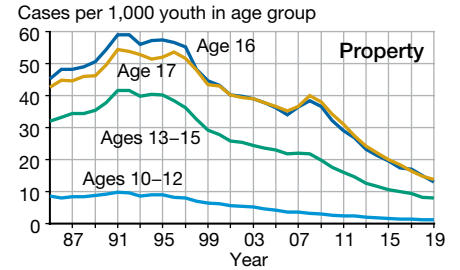
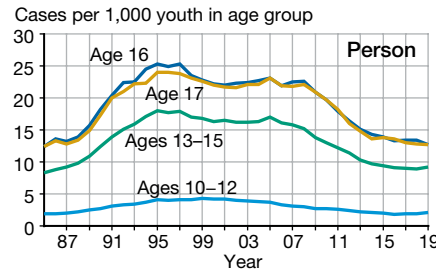
At each age, the proportion of cases was not more than 2 percentage points different for males compared to females. For both males and females, the largest proportion of delinquency cases involved 16-year-olds. Age profiles across racial groups were also similar.

Age profile of delinquency cases by gender, 2019:

Age	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%
Under 12	4	3
12	5	6
13	9	11
14	15	16
15	21	21
16	24	23
17	19	18
Over 17	3	2

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

Between 1985 and 2019, trends in case rates were generally similar across age groups



- With the exception of 10- to 12-year-olds, person offense case rates increased from 1985 through the mid-1990s and then declined through 2019.
- Property offense case rates peaked in 1991 for all age groups, then declined 75% or more through 2019 for each age group.
- For all age groups, drug offense case rates were at their lowest levels in 1991. Between 1991 and their respective peaks in the mid to late 1990s, case rates more than doubled for ages 13–15, 16, and 17 and nearly tripled for youth ages 10–12. Rates then decreased for all ages through 2019.
- Public order offense case rates nearly doubled for each age group between 1985 and the early 2000s. In the 10-year period between 2010 and 2019, the case rate decreased 54% for youth age 16 and 55% for youth age 17.

Note: 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.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Age profile of delinquency cases by race, 2019:

Age	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 12	4	4	2	4	2
12	5	5	4	6	5
13	10	10	9	12	10
14	15	16	15	16	15
15	20	21	21	20	20
16	24	24	25	21	23
17	19	18	19	19	21
Over 17	3	3	4	2	5

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

In 1 in 4 delinquency cases, the youth is detained between referral to court and case disposition

When is secure detention used?

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

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

In all states, law requires that a detention hearing be held within a few days (generally within 24 hours). At that time, a judge reviews the decision to detain the youth and either orders the youth released or continues the detention. National juvenile court statistics count the number of cases that involve detention during a calendar year. As a case is processed, the youth may be detained and released more than once between referral and disposition. Juvenile court data do not count individual

detentions, nor do they count the number of youth detained. In addition, although in a few states youth may be committed to a detention facility as part of a disposition order, the court data do not include such placements in the count of cases involving detention.

The proportion of detained cases involving person offenses has increased

Compared with 2010, the offense characteristics of the 2019 detention caseload changed, involving a greater proportion of person cases and slightly smaller proportions of all other offense groups.

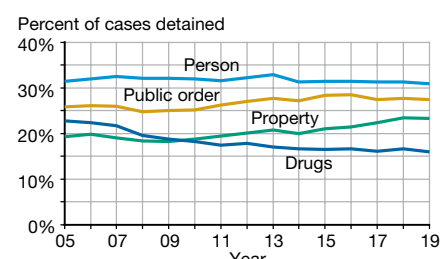
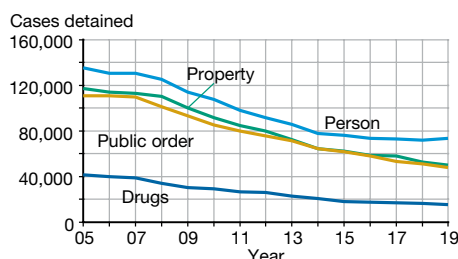
Person offense cases represented 39% of all detained delinquency cases in 2019, while property offense cases accounted for 27% and public order offense cases accounted for 26%. Drug offense cases made up the smallest share of detained cases (8%).

Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	All cases		Detained cases	
	2010	2019	2010	2019
Delinquency	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	19	24	34	39
Property	59	42	29	27
Drugs	5	11	9	8
Public order	17	23	27	26

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

The number of cases involving detention was lower in 2019 than in 2005 for all offense types



- The number of delinquency cases involving detention decreased 54% between 2005 and 2019, from 404,900 to 186,600. The largest relative decrease was for drug offense cases (63%), followed by property and public order offense cases (57% each) and person offense cases (46%).
- Despite the decrease in the volume of delinquency cases involving detention, the proportion of cases detained was about the same in 2019 (26%) as in 2005 (25%). The percent of cases detained was lowest in 2009 (23%).
- Between 2005 and 2019, the proportion of cases detained decreased for all but property offense cases. The proportion of property cases involving detention increased from 19% in 2005 to 23% in 2019.
- Drug offense cases were the least likely to involve detention—youth were detained in 16% of drug offense cases in 2019. In comparison, youth were detained in 23% of property cases, 27% of public order cases, and 31% of person cases.
- In 2013, youth were detained in 33% of person offense cases—the highest proportion of cases detained for any offense during the 2005–2019 period. In fact, no other offense category ever had more than 28% of cases detained.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzzanhera's *Juvenile Court Statistics* 2019.

Detention data prior to 2005 is not compatible with data for 2005 and later

In 2018, the Archive project improved the coverage of detention data used to generate national estimates. As a result of this change, detention data prior to 2005 is no longer compatible with data for 2005 and later. Therefore, data presentations within this chapter only display detention data information for the 2005–2019 data period.

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

In 2019, the gender disparity in the likelihood of detention was greatest for property cases

In 2019, the likelihood of detention in delinquency cases for males was 1.4 times the likelihood for females (28% vs. 20%). Males were more likely than females to be detained in each of the four general offense categories: 1.6 times more likely for property offenses, 1.5 for drug offenses, and 1.3 each for person offenses and public order offenses.

Percent of cases detained, 2019:

Offense	Male	Female
Delinquency	28%	20%
Person	33	26
Property	26	16
Drugs	17	12
Public order	29	22

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

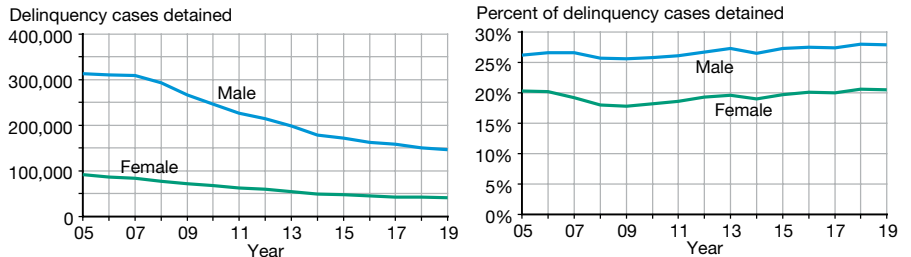
Percent of cases detained, 2019:

Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
Delinquency	25%	27%
Person	29	34
Property	23	24
Drugs	15	17
Public order	24	31

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

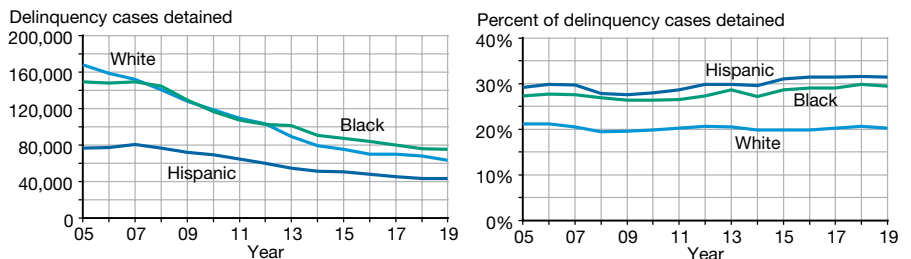
In 2019, the likelihood of detention was greatest for Hispanic youth for person and public order offenses. In 2019, Black and Hispanic youth were equally as likely to be detained for a property offense (27%), while Black youth were more likely than any other race group to be detained for a drug offense (23%). For all years between

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



- The number of cases detained decreased at a similar pace for both males and females between 2005 and 2019; down 53% for males and 55% for females.
- The likelihood of detention was higher for males than for females, but the 2005-2019 trend lines for the percent of cases detained ran in tandem.

Black youth accounted for the largest number of delinquency cases involving detention, but Hispanic youth were most likely to be detained



- The number of delinquency cases involving detention was its highest level in 2005 for both White and Black youth and decreased through 2019; down 62% for White youth and 50% for Black youth. For Hispanic youth, the number of detained delinquency cases peaked in 2007, then decreased 47% through 2019.
- Although the likelihood of detention for Black and Hispanic youth increased slightly between 2005 and 2019, the likelihood of detention was fairly stable for all racial groups during the reporting period. The proportion of cases involving detention remained lower for White youth than all other races for all years during the period.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

2005 and 2019, White youth were less likely to be detained than Black or Hispanic youth. The overall percent of cases detained for Black youth was 1.4 times that for White youth, and Hispanic youth were 1.7 times more likely

to be detained than White youth. The greatest disparity between Black and White youth was in the likelihood of detention in drug cases—the proportion for Black youth was 2 times that for White youth.

Percent of cases detained:

Race/ethnicity	Delinquency	
	2010	2019
White	20%	20%
Black	26	29
Hispanic	28	32
American Indian	26	25
Asian	21	26

Percent of cases detained, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
White	26%	18%	12%	22%
Black	33	27	23	29
Hispanic	37	27	20	36
American Indian	29	23	16	30
Asian	31	20	14	34

The racial profile for detained delinquency cases was similar for males and females in 2019

In 2019, the Black proportion of detained delinquency cases (40%) was substantially greater than the Black proportion of the juvenile population (15%) and also greater than the Black proportion of delinquency cases handled during the year (35%). The overrepresentation of Black youth in the detention caseload was greatest among property offenses (45%) and males (41%). Across offenses, for males and females, the Black proportion of detained cases was in the 30%–40% range. The one exception was among detained females referred for drug offenses. Black youth accounted for just 16% of cases involving females—close to their representation in the population (14%).

Racial profile of detained cases by gender, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Delinquency	
	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%
White	33	36
Black	41	38
Hispanic	23	23
American Indian	2	2
Asian	1	1

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Male	100%	100%	100%	100%
White	35	32	37	31
Black	41	46	30	39
Hispanic	22	20	31	27
American Indian	2	2	2	2
Asian	1	1	1	1
Female	100%	100%	100%	100%
White	34	35	48	36
Black	41	40	16	37
Hispanic	22	21	30	23
American Indian	2	3	4	2
Asian	1	1	2	2

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

The offense profile of detained cases varied by race and by gender in 2019

For males, the person offense share of delinquency cases involving detention was similar for White and Black youth (39% and 38%, respectively) and slightly greater than Asian youth (36%) and Hispanic and American Indian youth (35% each). For Black male youth, drug offense cases accounted for 6% of detained cases, compared with 11% for

Hispanic males, 10% for White males, 9% for American Indian males, and 8% for Asian males.

Among females, Black youth had a higher proportion of person offenses in the detention caseload (49%) than did White and Hispanic youth (44% each), American Indian youth (41%), or Asian youth (37%). For American Indian females, drug offense cases accounted for 14% of detained cases, compared with 10% each for White and Hispanic females, 8% for Asian females, and 3% for Black females.

Offense profile of detained cases by gender, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
Total				
White	40%	26%	10%	25%
Black	40	30	6	25
Hispanic	37	23	11	29
American Indian	36	30	11	23
Asian	36	25	8	31
Male				
White	39%	27%	10%	24%
Black	38	32	6	24
Hispanic	35	24	11	30
American Indian	35	32	9	25
Asian	36	26	8	30
Female				
White	44%	20%	10%	26%
Black	49	22	3	26
Hispanic	44	19	10	27
American Indian	41	26	14	20
Asian	37	21	8	34

Note: Rows total 100%; however, detail may not total 100% because of rounding.



The petitioned caseload decreased 26% from 1985 to 2019 as formal case handling became less likely

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

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

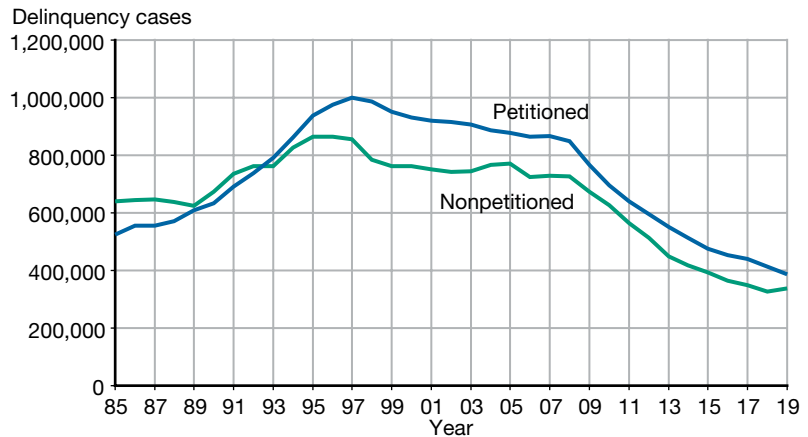
If the court decides to handle the matter informally, the youth agrees to comply with one or more sanctions, such as community service, victim restitution, or voluntary probation supervision. Informal cases are generally held open pending successful completion of the disposition. If the court's conditions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

The use of formal handling has been stable for several years

The use of formal handling changed little between 2010 and 2019, increasing one percentage point from 2010 (53%) to 2019 (54%). Property, and public order offense cases were more likely to be handled formally in 2019 than in 2010. Drug offense cases were less likely to be handled formally, and person offense cases were equally as likely in both years.

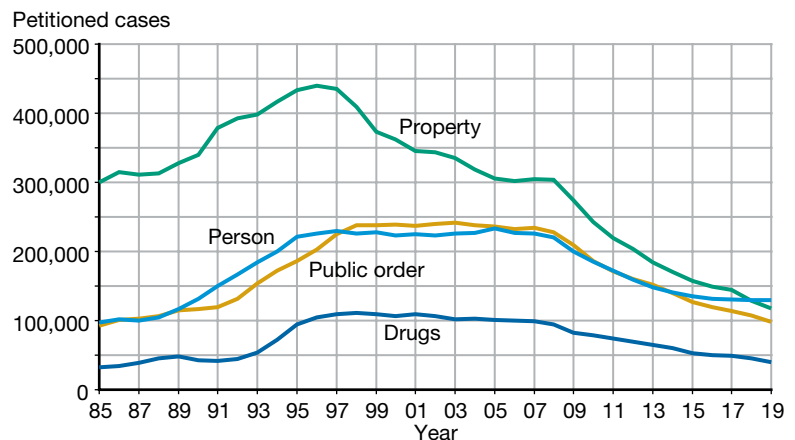
In 2010, property and drug offense cases were less likely than person and public order offense cases to be petitioned for formal handling. In 2019, drug offense cases were least likely.

The number of petitioned delinquency cases increased 91% between 1985 and the peak in 1997 and then declined 61% by 2019



- The number of delinquency cases petitioned in 2019 (386,600) was 26% less than the number petitioned in 1985 (522,900). In comparison, the overall number of delinquency cases referred decreased 38% in that time.
- The trend for nonpetitioned cases was similar to that of petitioned cases. The number of nonpetitioned delinquency cases increased 35% between 1985 and the peak in 1995 and then declined 61% by 2019 for an overall decrease of 47%.

The petitioned caseload decreased for all offense categories in the 15 years between 2005 and 2019



- Between 2005 and 2019, petitioned person offense cases decreased 44%, property offense cases decreased 61%, drug offense cases decreased 60%, and public order cases decreased 58%.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Percent of delinquency cases petitioned:

Offense	2010	2019
Delinquency	53%	54%
Person	55	55
Property	50	55
Drugs	50	42
Public order	55	56

The proportion of petitioned cases changed little for all demographic groups between 2010 and 2019

The likelihood of formal case processing increased slightly from 2010 to 2019 for both males and females as well as for Black and Hispanic youth and for all ages.

Percent of adjudicated delinquency cases, 2019:

Demographic	2010	2019
Gender		
Male	56%	57%
Female	43	45
Race/ethnicity		
White	49	48
Black	59	60
Hispanic	50	52
American Indian	58	56
Asian	52	52
Age		
15 or younger	49	51
16 or older	56	57

In 2019, as in 2010, courts petitioned a larger share of delinquency cases involving males than females. This was true for each of the general offense categories. In both 2010 and 2019, courts petitioned a larger share of delinquency cases involving Black youth than youth of any other race.

In 2019, juvenile courts petitioned more than 5 in 10 delinquency cases for formal handling, and adjudicated youth delinquent in more than half of those petitioned cases

Most serious offense	Number of petitioned cases	Percent of delinquency cases petitioned	Number of adjudicated cases	Percent of petitioned cases adjudicated
Total delinquency	386,600	54%	203,600	53%
Person offense	129,800	55	65,600	51
Violent Crime Index	41,300	77	23,800	58
Criminal homicide	900	82	500	50
Forcible rape	6,000	73	3,200	54
Robbery	15,900	85	9,900	62
Aggravated assault	18,400	72	10,200	55
Simple assault	72,200	47	33,000	46
Other violent sex offense	5,500	72	2,900	53
Other person offense	10,800	48	5,900	54
Property offense	118,200	55	62,600	53
Property Crime Index	82,600	57	44,700	54
Burglary	27,300	71	16,000	59
Larceny-theft	42,700	48	21,500	50
Motor vehicle theft	11,200	73	6,400	58
Arson	1,300	65	700	50
Vandalism	17,900	50	8,800	49
Trespassing	8,500	44	3,700	44
Stolen property offense	5,800	83	3,600	62
Other property offense	3,400	52	1,800	52
Drug law violation	40,400	42	20,400	51
Public order offense	98,300	56	55,000	56
Obstruction of justice	56,200	69	34,100	61
Disorderly conduct	19,700	41	9,200	47
Weapons offense	10,100	63	5,600	55
Liquor law violation	1,100	27	500	45
Nonviolent sex offense	5,300	46	2,700	52
Other public order offense	5,900	43	2,900	49

- Generally, more serious offenses were more likely to be petitioned for formal processing than were less serious offenses.
- For criminal homicide and robbery, at least 82% of cases were petitioned. The proportion of cases petitioned was lower than 50% for simple assault, larceny-theft, trespassing, disorderly conduct, liquor law violations, and nonviolent sex offenses.
- For most offenses, the youth was adjudicated delinquent in about half of petitioned cases.

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

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

From 1985 to 2019, the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent fell 40%

Adjudication was more likely for some types of cases than others

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

Adjudication rates also varied by gender, race, and age of the youth. The likelihood of adjudication in 2019 was less for females than for males. This was true across all offense categories. Black youth were less likely to be adjudicated than were youth of other races. Cases involving youth ages 15 or

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

Percent of petitioned delinquency cases adjudicated:

Demographic	2010	2019
Gender		
Male	63%	54%
Female	57	47
Race		
White	62	53
Black	59	50
Hispanic	66	58
American Indian	69	57
Asian	58	52
Age		
15 or younger	62	53
16 or older	61	53

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

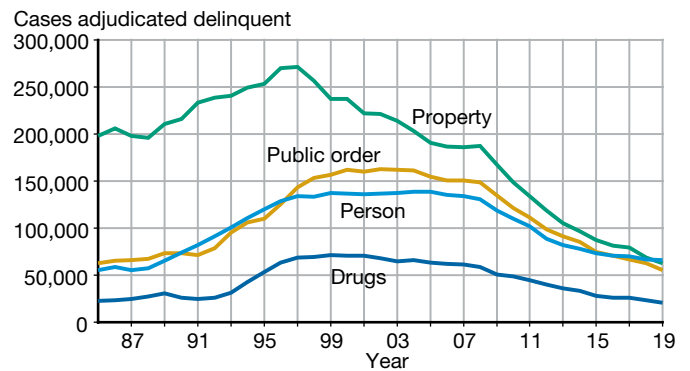
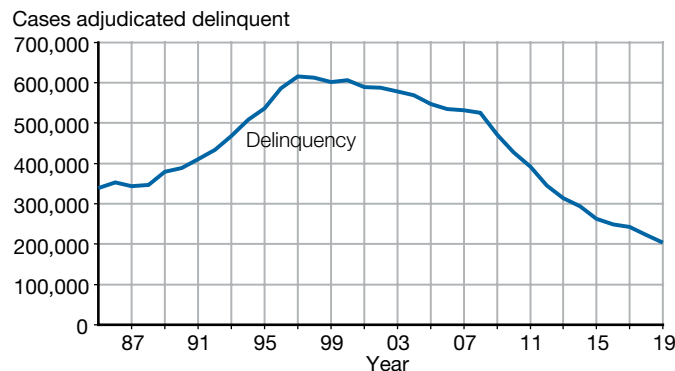
Compared with 2010, both petitioned and adjudicated cases had increased proportions of person offenses in 2019 and smaller proportions of property, drug, and public order offenses.

Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	2010	2019
Petitioned cases	100%	100%
Person	27	34
Property	35	31
Drugs	11	10
Public order	27	25
Adjudicated cases	100%	100%
Person	26	32
Property	35	31
Drugs	11	10
Public order	28	27

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

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



- Although the number of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent decreased 53% since the 2005 peak for person offense cases, the number in 2019 was 19% above the level reported in 1985. For all other offense categories, the number of cases that resulted in a delinquency adjudication was at the lowest level in 2019.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Most adjudicated delinquency cases result in residential placement or formal probation

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

Compared with 2010, both residential placement and formal probation cases had increased proportions of person offenses in 2019. In 2019, cases ordered to residential placement had a greater share of public order cases and a smaller share of property and drug cases than cases ordered to formal probation.

Offense profile of delinquency cases:

Offense	2010	2019
Residential placement	100%	100%
Person	27	33
Property	32	30
Drugs	8	6
Public order	33	31
Formal probation	100%	100%
Person	26	33
Property	36	31
Drugs	13	11
Public order	26	25

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

Residential placement and probation caseloads decreased between 2010 and 2019

The number of delinquency cases in which adjudicated youth were ordered out of the home to some form of residential placement declined 51% between 2010 and 2019, from 113,000 to 55,100. Similarly, the number of delinquency cases receiving formal probation as the most severe initial disposition following adjudication decreased 53% from 2010 to 2019, from 278,700 to 132,200. The decrease in cases ordered to out-of-home placement or formal probation was consistent with the decrease in delinquency cases at referral (45%) and adjudication (52%).

In 2019, residential placement or formal probation was ordered in 92% of cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent

Most serious offense	Adjudicated cases			
	Number ordered to placement	Percent ordered to placement	Number ordered to probation	Percent ordered to probation
Total delinquency	55,100	27%	132,200	65%
Person offense	18,400	28	43,600	66
Violent Crime Index	8,800	37	14,100	59
Criminal homicide	300	61	200	37
Forcible rape	1,000	30	2,200	67
Robbery	4,300	43	5,300	54
Aggravated assault	3,300	32	6,500	64
Simple assault	7,800	24	22,900	69
Other violent sex offense	600	20	2,200	76
Other person offense	1,100	19	4,400	74
Property offense	16,700	27	40,600	65
Property Crime Index	13,000	29	28,400	64
Burglary	5,500	35	9,900	62
Larceny-theft	4,700	22	14,400	67
Motor vehicle theft	2,600	40	3,700	57
Arson	100	23	500	72
Vandalism	1,800	21	6,000	69
Trespassing	600	17	2,500	68
Stolen property offense	900	24	2,400	67
Other property offense	400	23	1,200	69
Drug law violation	3,200	16	14,900	73
Public order offense	16,800	31	33,100	60
Obstruction of justice	12,900	38	19,200	56
Disorderly conduct	1,100	12	5,800	63
Weapons offense	1,600	29	3,800	67
Liquor law violation	100	19	400	74
Nonviolent sex offense	600	22	2,000	74
Other public order offense	500	17	1,900	64

- Cases involving youth adjudicated for serious person offenses, such as homicide or robbery, were the most likely cases to result in residential placement.
- Probation was the most restrictive disposition used in 132,200 cases adjudicated delinquent in 2019—65% of all such cases handled by juvenile courts.
- Obstruction of justice had a relatively high residential placement rate, stemming from the inclusion in the category of certain offenses (e.g., escapes from confinement, violations of probation or parole) that have a high likelihood of placement.

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

Source: Authors' analyses of the National Center for Juvenile Justice's *National Juvenile Court Data Archive: Juvenile court case records 1985–2019* [machine-readable data file].

The number of adjudicated cases receiving other sanctions (e.g., community service, restitution) as their most severe disposition decreased 55% from 2010 to 2019, from 36,500 to 16,300. However, the majority of cases resulting in other sanctions were handled informally.

Probation was more likely than residential placement

In 27% of adjudicated delinquency cases, the court ordered the youth to residential placement, such as a training school, treatment center, drug treatment or private placement facility, or group home. In 65% of adjudicated delinquency cases, probation was the most severe sanction ordered.

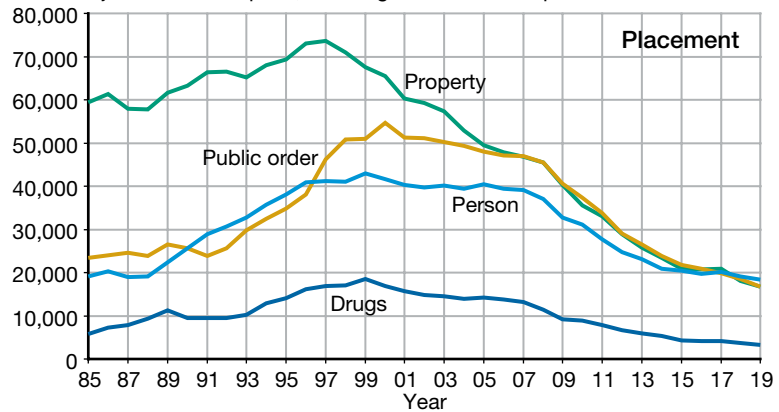
Percent of adjudicated delinquency cases, 2019:

Demographic	Residential placement	Formal probation
Total	27%	65%
Gender		
Male	29	64
Female	21	68
Race/ethnicity		
White	22	68
Black	31	61
Hispanic	31	65
American Indian	25	65
Asian	21	75
Age		
15 or younger	25	67
16 or older	29	63

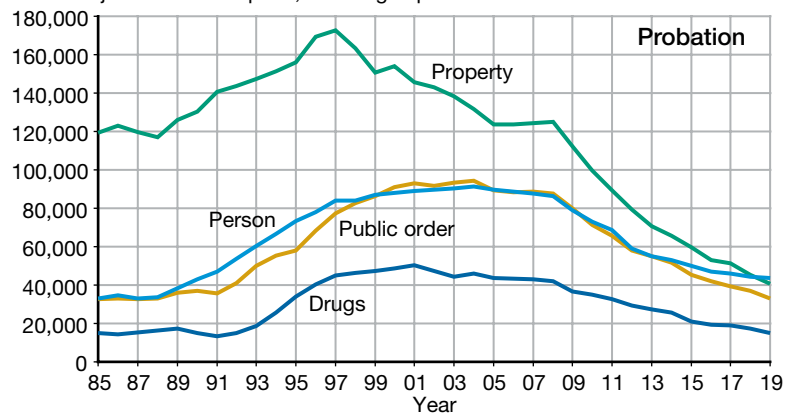
Once adjudicated, females were less likely than males, and White youth were less likely than Black, Hispanic, or American Indian youth to be ordered to residential placement. These demographic patterns in the use of residential placement or probation, however, do not control for criminal histories and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

In 2019, across offenses, the number of adjudicated cases resulting in residential placement or probation reached their lowest level since 1985

Cases adjudicated delinquent, resulting in out-of-home placement



Cases adjudicated delinquent, resulting in probation



- The number of property offense cases ordered to residential placement peaked in 1997, while person and drug offense cases peaked 2 years later, and public order offense cases peaked in 2000. Since their respective peaks and 2019, the number of cases ordered to residential placement declined considerably: property (77%), drugs (83%), person (57%), and public order (69%).
- The pattern for cases ordered to formal probation was similar to that of residential placement. The number of property offense cases ordered to probation peaked in 1997, drug offense cases peaked in 2001, and person and public order offense cases peaked in 2004. For each offense, the decline in the number of cases ordered to probation between their peak and 2019 was similar to the decline for cases ordered to placement: property (76%), drugs (70%), person (52%), and public order (65%).
- As a result, property offenses accounted for a smaller share of cases ordered to placement or probation in 2019 than in 1985, while person and public order offenses accounted for a larger share.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

How were delinquency cases processed in juvenile courts in 2019?

Juvenile courts can impose a range of sanctions

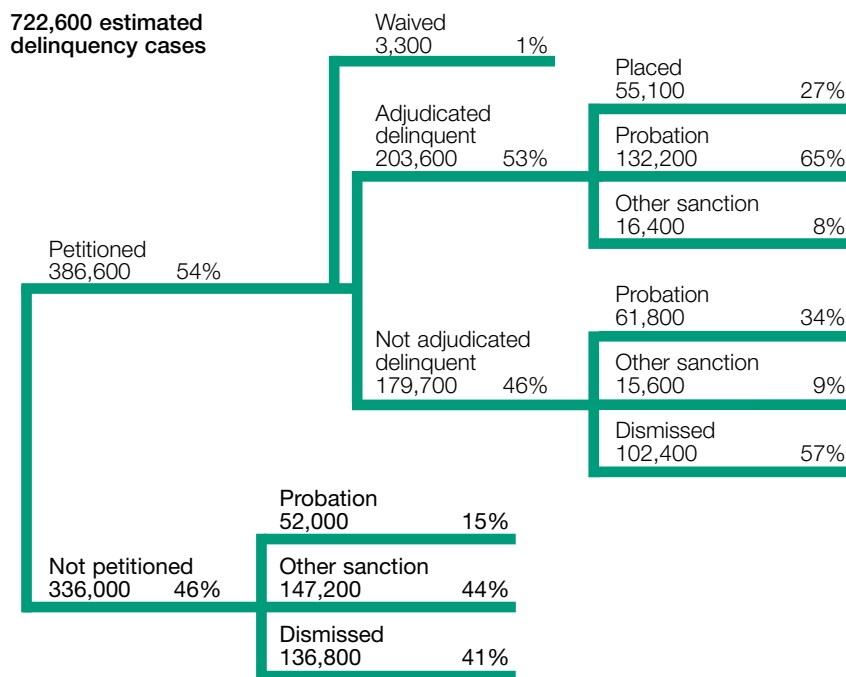
Although juvenile courts handled 46% of delinquency cases without the filing of a petition, more than half of these nonpetitioned cases received some sort of sanction. Youth may have agreed to informal probation, restitution, or community service, or the court may have referred them to another agency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

In 46% of all petitioned delinquency cases, the youth was not adjudicated delinquent. The court dismissed 57% of these cases. The cases dismissed by the court, together with the cases that were dismissed at intake, accounted for 239,200 cases (or 331 of 1,000 cases handled).

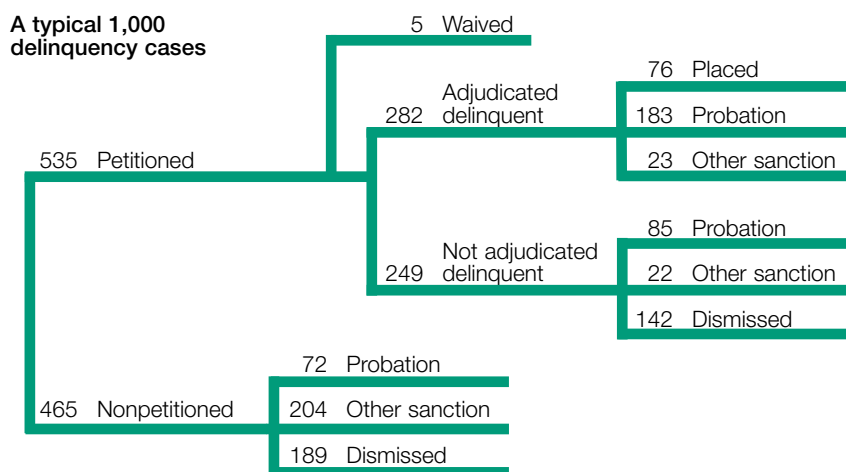
In 54% of all petitioned cases, the courts imposed a formal sanction or waived the case to criminal court. Thus, of every 1,000 delinquency cases handled in 2019, 286 resulted in a court-ordered sanction or waiver.

In 2019, 53% (203,600) of the cases that were handled formally (with the filing of a petition) resulted in a delinquency adjudication. In 65% (132,200) of cases adjudicated delinquent in 2019, formal probation was the most severe sanction ordered by the court. In contrast, 27% (55,100) of cases adjudicated delinquent resulted in placement outside the home in a residential facility.

The most severe sanction ordered in 16,400 adjudicated delinquency cases (8%) in 2019 was something other than residential placement or probation, such as restitution or community service



Adjudicated cases receiving sanctions other than residential placement or probation accounted for 23 out of 1,000 delinquency cases processed during the year



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

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Variations in delinquency case processing were more evident between males and females than between younger and older youth in 2019

Offense/ demographic	Number of cases	Intake decision profile (percent of all cases)		Judicial decision profile (percent of petitioned cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of adjudicated cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of non- adjudicated cases)			Informal disposition profile (percent of non- petitioned cases)		
		Petitioned	Not petitioned	Waived	Adjudicated delinquent	Not adjudicated delinquent	Placed	Probation	Other	Probation	Other	Dismissed	Probation	Other	Dismissed
Delinquency	722,600	54%	46%	0.9%	53%	46%	27%	65%	8%	34%	9%	57%	15%	44%	41%
Male	522,300	57	43	1.0	54	45	29	64	7	35	8	57	16	42	42
Female	200,300	45	55	0.3	47	52	21	68	11	33	9	58	15	47	38
15 and younger	393,400	51	49	0.2	53	47	25	67	8	35	9	56	17	45	38
16 and older	566,400	52	48	0.5	53	46	26	66	8	35	9	56	17	44	39
Person	237,000	55	45	1.6	51	48	28	66	6	34	9	56	15	39	46
Male	164,000	58	42	2.0	53	45	30	65	5	35	9	56	15	37	48
Female	73,000	47	53	0.3	45	55	22	71	7	34	10	56	15	43	42
15 and younger	144,400	52	48	0.4	50	49	25	69	6	36	9	55	16	42	42
16 and older	92,600	60	40	3.1	51	46	31	63	6	33	9	58	13	35	52
Property	214,500	55	45	0.7	53	46	27	65	8	34	9	57	16	45	39
Male	160,500	59	41	0.8	55	45	28	64	7	35	9	56	16	43	41
Female	54,000	44	56	0.3	46	54	18	68	13	32	10	58	15	50	36
15 and younger	117,100	54	46	0.1	54	46	25	67	8	35	9	55	17	46	37
16 and older	97,400	57	43	1.3	52	47	29	63	9	33	9	58	14	43	43
Drugs	96,400	42	58	0.6	51	49	16	73	11	38	10	51	20	52	29
Male	71,700	44	56	0.6	51	48	17	73	10	38	10	52	19	51	30
Female	24,800	36	64	0.5	48	51	12	73	15	40	11	49	21	52	27
15 and younger	39,400	37	63	0.1	52	48	16	74	10	38	10	51	22	52	26
16 and older	57,000	46	54	0.8	50	49	16	72	12	39	10	51	17	51	31
Public order	174,700	56	44	0.3	56	44	31	60	9	32	7	61	14	43	44
Male	126,200	59	41	0.3	57	42	32	59	8	34	7	60	13	41	45
Female	48,500	50	50	0.1	52	48	25	63	12	29	7	64	14	46	40
15 and younger	92,500	51	49	0.0	55	45	28	62	10	32	7	60	14	45	40
16 and older	82,200	62	38	0.5	57	43	33	58	9	32	6	62	12	39	48

- Without exception, cases involving males were more likely to receive formal sanctions than cases involving females. For example, in 2019, 55% of all petitioned delinquency cases involving males were adjudicated delinquent or waived to criminal court, compared with 48% of cases involving females.
- Regardless of offense, cases involving youth age 16 and older were more likely to be petitioned and, once petitioned, more likely to be judicially waived to criminal court than cases involving youth age 15 and younger. Although cases involving older youth were equally as likely to result in a delinquency adjudication as those involving their younger peers, older youth were more likely to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement following adjudication.

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

Source: Authors' analysis of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Delinquency case processing outcomes varied considerably by race in 2019

Offense/ demographic	Number of cases	Intake decision profile (percent of all cases)		Judicial decision profile (percent of petitioned cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of adjudicated cases)			Judicial disposition profile (percent of non- adjudicated cases)			Informal disposition profile (percent of non- petitioned cases)		
		Petitioned	Not petitioned	Waived	Adjudicated delinquent	Not adjudicated delinquent	Placed	Probation	Other	Probation	Other	Dismissed	Probation	Other	Dismissed
Delinquency	722,600	54%	46%	0.9%	53%	46%	27%	65%	8%	34%	9%	57%	15%	44%	41%
White	310,200	48	52	0.7	53	46	22	68	10	36	9	54	18	47	35
Black	254,800	60	40	1.1	50	49	31	61	8	32	8	60	12	39	49
Hispanic	136,100	52	48	0.6	58	41	31	65	4	38	8	54	15	44	42
American Indian	12,900	56	44	0.6	57	42	25	65	11	22	6	71	14	43	43
Asian	8,700	52	48	0.6	52	47	21	75	5	26	10	64	16	49	36
Person	237,000	55	45	1.6	51	48	28	66	6	34	9	56	15	39	46
White	97,800	50	50	1.2	50	49	22	71	6	37	10	54	18	40	42
Black	90,200	60	40	2.0	48	50	31	62	6	31	9	60	11	37	52
Hispanic	42,300	54	46	1.3	57	42	32	65	3	40	8	52	14	41	45
American Indian	4,000	57	43	1.2	55	44	32	63	5	26	7	67	14	41	45
Asian	2,600	56	44	1.4	53	46	21	76	3	25	14	61	20	39	42
Property	214,500	55	45	0.7	53	46	27	65	8	34	9	57	16	45	39
White	89,400	49	51	0.6	54	46	22	68	10	36	10	54	19	49	32
Black	82,100	62	38	0.9	50	49	31	61	9	32	9	59	12	39	49
Hispanic	36,100	54	46	0.4	57	42	29	66	4	40	9	52	14	44	42
American Indian	4,200	57	43	0.2	59	41	21	67	12	19	7	74	17	44	40
Asian	2,800	45	55	0.4	53	47	20	73	7	25	10	65	15	48	37
Drugs	96,400	42	58	0.6	51	49	16	73	11	38	10	51	20	52	29
White	51,500	40	60	0.6	51	49	13	74	13	40	12	48	21	54	25
Black	18,200	52	48	0.7	47	52	19	70	11	33	9	58	16	44	40
Hispanic	23,200	38	62	0.4	53	47	18	75	7	43	9	48	19	50	30
American Indian	2,200	46	54	0.3	58	42	18	65	17	21	7	72	12	50	37
Asian	1,300	43	57	0.2	43	56	14	74	11	31	9	61	19	57	25
Public order	174,700	56	44	0.3	56	44	31	60	9	32	7	61	14	43	44
White	71,500	51	49	0.3	57	43	25	61	14	33	7	59	16	45	38
Black	64,200	61	39	0.2	51	48	34	58	8	32	6	62	11	40	49
Hispanic	34,600	57	43	0.2	64	36	35	61	3	32	6	62	11	41	47
American Indian	2,500	60	40	0.2	59	40	23	64	13	21	5	74	11	36	53
Asian	2,000	61	39	0.2	55	45	22	75	3	25	6	69	9	59	33

■ Overall, cases involving Black youth (60%) or American Indian youth (56%) were more likely to be formally processed (i.e., petitioned) than cases involving Asian or Hispanic youth (52% each) or White youth (48%). Once petitioned, cases involving Hispanic or American Indian youth were more likely to receive formal sanctions than cases involving youth of other races. In 2019, 59% of all petitioned cases involving Hispanic youth and 58% of cases involving American Indian youth were adjudicated delinquent or waived to criminal court, compared with 54% of cases involving White youth, 53% involving Asian youth, and 51% involving Black youth.

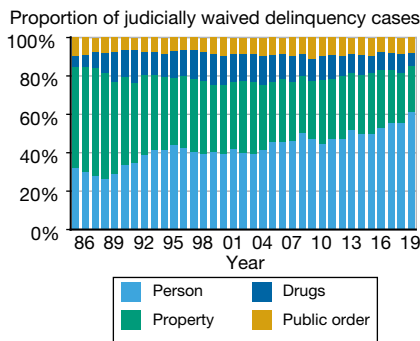
Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' analysis of Puzanchera et al.'s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

By 2019, the number of cases waived from juvenile court to criminal court had decreased to a level below that of 1985

The profile of waived cases has changed

In the late 1980s, property cases accounted for at least half of all delinquency cases judicially waived from juvenile court to criminal court. In the early 1990s, the property offense share of waived cases diminished as the person offense share grew. By 1993, the waiver caseload had a greater proportion of person offense cases than property cases and in 2019, person offenses accounted for 61% of all waived cases. Drug and public order cases made up smaller proportions of waived cases across all years. For example, in 2019, 7% of waived cases were drug offenses and 8% were public order cases.



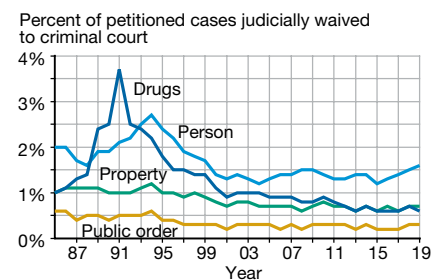
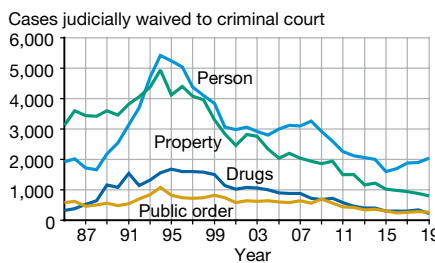
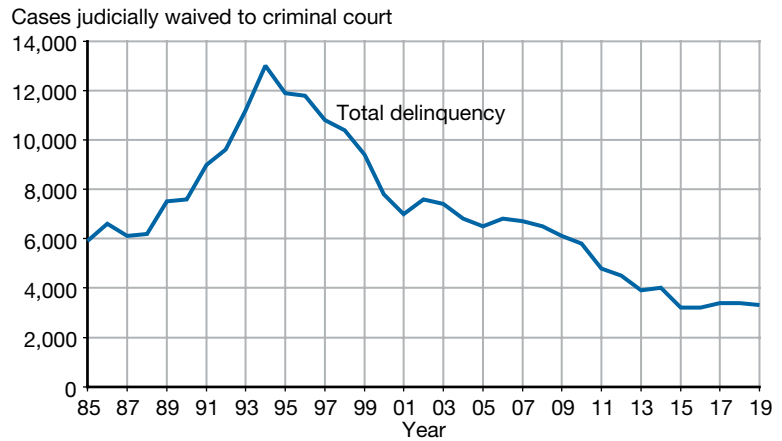
The demographic characteristics of judicially waived cases have changed since the 1990s

Demographic profiles of judicially waived delinquency cases:

Demographic	1994	2010	2019
Gender			
Male	95%	93%	94%
Female	5	7	6
Race			
White	NA	40	33
Black	NA	45	52
Hispanic	NA	12	12
American Indian	NA	2	2
Asian	NA	1	2
Age			
15 or younger	13	12	12
16 or older	87	88	88

Note: Data for 1994 are displayed because that was the year with the greatest number of total waived cases. Race data for 1994 are not compatible with 2010 and 2019.

Juvenile courts waived 75% fewer delinquency cases to criminal court in 2019 than in 1994 (the peak year)



- The number of delinquency cases waived to criminal court climbed 120% from 1985 to 1994, from 5,900 cases to 13,000. By 2019, the number of waived cases was 75% below the 1994 peak, an overall decrease of 44% since 1985.
- Between 1993 and 2019, person offenses outnumbered property offenses among waived cases. Prior to 1993, property cases outnumbered person offense cases among waivers—sometimes by a ratio of 2 to 1.
- The number of waived person offense cases nearly tripled (182%) from 1985 to 1994 and then declined 63% to 2019, an overall increase of 6% between 1985 and 2019. Over the 1985–2019 period, waived property offense cases were down 75%, and waived public order offense cases were down 55%.
- The overall proportion of petitioned delinquency cases that were waived was 1.1% in 1985, reached 1.5% in 1994, and then dropped to 0.9% by 2019.
- For most years between 1985 and 2019, person offense cases were the most likely type of case to be waived to criminal court. The exception was 1989–1992, when drug offense cases were the most likely to be waived.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

The proportions of judicially waived cases changed little for males and females and youth of all ages between 2010 and 2019. In both 2010 and 2019, Black youth accounted for the largest proportion of waived cases.

The likelihood of waiver varied across case characteristics

In 2019, the proportion of cases waived was greater for males than for females. This was true in each of the four general offense categories. For example, males charged with person offenses were 6 times as likely as females charged with person offenses to have their cases waived to criminal court. However, this comparison does not control for differences in the seriousness of offenses or a youth's offense history.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2019:

Offense	Male	Female
Delinquency	1.0%	0.3%
Person	2.0	0.3
Property	0.8	0.3
Drugs	0.6	0.5
Public order	0.3	0.1

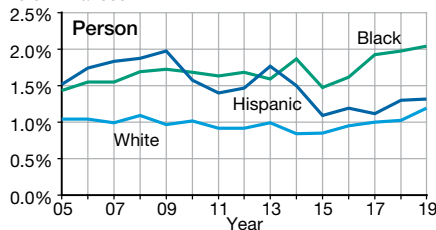
In 2019, with the exception of public order offenses, Black youth were more likely than other youth to be waived for all offense types. Regardless of race, person offenses were more likely to be waived than cases involving other offenses.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court:

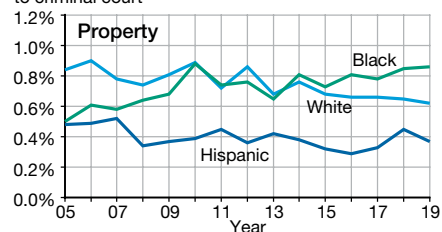
Race/ethnicity	Delinquency	
	2010	2019
White	0.8%	0.7%
Black	1.0	1.1
Hispanic	0.6	0.6
American Indian	0.9	0.6
Asian	0.4	0.6

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

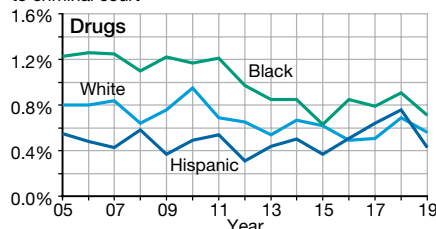
Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court



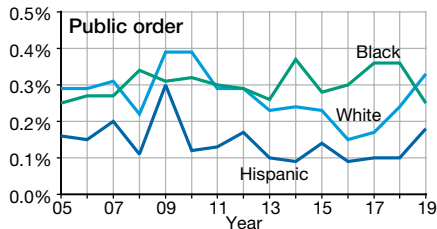
Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court



Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court



Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court



- For most of the period from 2005 to 2019, the likelihood of waiver was greater for Black youth than for White or Hispanic youth, regardless of offense category. These data, however, do not control for racial differences in offense seriousness within the general offense categories or differences in the seriousness of youth's offense histories.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Person	Property	Drugs	Public order
White	1.2%	0.6%	0.6%	0.3%
Black	2.0	0.9	0.7	0.2
Hispanic	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.2
American Indian				
Indian	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
Asian	1.4	0.4	0.2	0.2

Cases involving younger youth were less likely to be waived than were cases involving older youth. This was true for each of the four general offense categories. For example, among person

offense cases, youth age 16 or older were 8 times more likely to be waived than youth age 15 or younger.

Percent of petitioned cases judicially waived to criminal court, 2019:

Offense	Age 15 or younger	Age 16 or older
Delinquency	0.2%	1.6%
Person	0.4	3.1
Property	0.1	1.3
Drugs	0.1	0.8
Public order	0.0	0.5

Identifying disparity in justice system processing helps target efforts to address racial and ethnic fairness

Racial and ethnic disparities have been a long-standing challenge in the juvenile justice system

Youth from racial and ethnic minority groups experience the juvenile justice system differently than their White peers. For example, youth from racial and ethnic minority groups are (and have been) more likely to be arrested, detained, and ordered to residential placement than White youth, and are more likely to be tried as adults in criminal court. Such racial and ethnic disparities often leads to the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority youth—particularly Black youth—at various stages of the juvenile justice system. Despite decades of research to understand and address these disparities, national data suggests that considerably more work is needed to ensure that youth served by the juvenile justice system are treated fairly, and that case processing decisions ensure public safety and equal justice, regardless of youths’ race/ethnicity.

Overrepresentation, disparity, and discrimination have different meanings

Overrepresentation refers to a situation in which a larger proportion of a particular group is present at various stages of the juvenile justice system (such as intake, detention, and residential placement) than would be expected based on their proportion in the general population.

Disparity means that the probability of receiving a particular outcome (for example, being detained in a short-term facility vs. not being detained) differs for different groups. Disparity may in turn lead to overrepresentation

Discrimination occurs if and when juvenile justice system decisionmakers treat one group of youth differently from another group of youth based wholly, or in part, on their gender, racial, and/or ethnic status.

Neither overrepresentation nor disparity necessarily implies discrimination

Discrimination is one possible explanation for disparity and overrepresentation. This line of reasoning suggests that because of discrimination on the part of justice system decisionmakers, youth in racial and ethnic minority groups face higher probabilities of being arrested by the police, referred to court intake, held in short-term detention, petitioned for formal processing, adjudicated delinquent, and confined in a secure juvenile facility. Thus, differential actions throughout the justice system may account for overrepresentation.

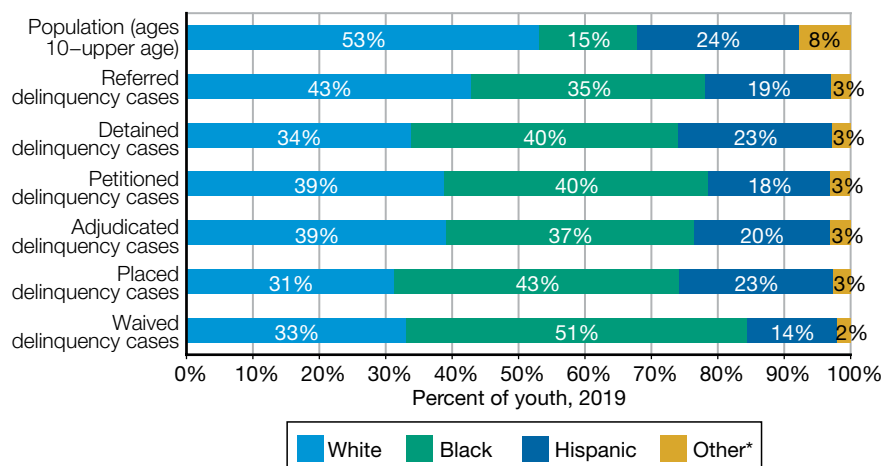
Disparity and overrepresentation, however, can result from factors other than discrimination. Factors relating to the nature and volume of crime committed

by youth in racial and ethnic minority groups may explain disproportionality. This line of reasoning suggests that if youth from certain demographic subgroups (e.g., gender or race/ethnicity) commit proportionately more crime than other youth, are involved in more serious incidents, and have more extensive criminal histories, they will be overrepresented, even if no discrimination by system decisionmakers occurred. Thus, some demographic subgroups may be overrepresented within the juvenile justice system because of behavioral, legal, or structural factors. In any given jurisdiction, either or both of these causes may be operating.

Overrepresentation and disparity exist at many stages of the juvenile justice system

Common methods of assessing racial and ethnic fairness include comparing

Compared with their proportion in the population, Black youth are overrepresented at various juvenile justice decision points



- Disproportionality or overrepresentation refers to a situation in which a larger proportion of a particular group is present at various stages within the juvenile justice system than would be expected based on its proportion in the general population.
- The proportion of Black youth at various stages of juvenile court processing was at least twice their proportion of the youth population in 2019.

*Because American Indian and Asian proportions are too small to display individually, they are combined in the category “other races.”

Source: Authors’ analysis of Puzanchera, Sladky, and Kang’s *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2020* and Sickmund, Sladky, and Kang’s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985-2019*.

In 2019, disparities existed in delinquency case processing between White youth and youth from racial and ethnic minority groups

Case processing stage	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
Case rates						
Cases referred per 1,000 population (10–upper age)	22.7	18.3	53.9	17.6	21.5	4.5
Cases diverted per 100 cases referred	27.6	33.5	20.1	27.9	25.3	31.0
Cases detained per 100 cases referred	25.8	20.3	29.5	31.5	25.2	25.6
Cases petitioned per 100 cases referred	53.5	48.4	60.3	52.3	55.7	51.9
Cases adjudicated per 100 cases petitioned	52.7	52.9	49.6	58.3	57.4	52.3
Probation cases per 100 adjudicated cases	64.9	68.0	61.1	65.4	64.5	74.5
Placement cases per 100 adjudicated cases	27.1	21.7	31.0	30.6	24.6	20.6
Waived cases per 100 petitioned cases	0.9	0.7	1.1	0.6	0.6*	0.6*
Ratio of rates[†]						
Referral rate			2.9	1.0	1.2	0.2
Diversion rate			0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9
Detention rate			1.4	1.6	1.2	1.3
Petitioned rate			1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1
Adjudication rate			0.9	1.1	1.1	1.0
Probation rate			0.9	1.0	0.9	1.1
Placement rate			1.4	1.4	1.1	1.0
Waiver rate			1.5	0.9	0.8	0.9

- In 2019, cases involving Black youth were nearly 3 times more likely to be referred to juvenile court for a delinquency offense than cases involving White youth.
- The diversion rate for cases involving Black, Hispanic, and American Indian youth was less than the diversion rate for cases involving White youth.
- Delinquency cases involving racial and ethnic minority youth were more likely to involve detention than cases involving White youth.
- Cases involving Black youth were more likely to be petitioned than cases involving White youth, but were less likely to result in a delinquency adjudication.
- Cases involving Hispanic youth were 60% more likely to involve detention than cases involving White youth, and 40% more likely to receive a placement disposition.

*Rate based on fewer than 50 cases

[†]The ratio of rates is created by dividing the rates for each racial or ethnic minority group by the White rate. A ratio of 1.0 indicates parity, i.e., the rates for the comparison group are equal. For example, if White youth and Black youth were referred at the same rate, the ratio would be 1.0, indicating the rates for these groups are equal. A ratio greater than 1.0 means that the rate for the racial or ethnic minority group is greater than the rate for White youth. A ratio less than 1.0 means that the rate for the racial and ethnic minority group is less than the rate for White youth.

Note: Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Authors' analysis of Puzanchera et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2020* and Sickmund et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985-2019*.

proportions or using a combination of case processing rates and ratios. When using proportions, the racial/ethnic profile of youth in the general population is compared to the profile at stages of the juvenile justice system. For example, the 2019 youth population was 53% White, 15% Black, 24% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, and 6% Asian, whereas the profile of juvenile court referrals was 43% White, 35% Black, 19% Hispanic, 2% American Indian and 1% Asian. At the point of court referral, Black youth were overrepresented, while White, Hispanic, and Asian youth were underrepresented.

Disparity and overrepresentation are present at arrest

Unlike the national estimates of juvenile court data, national arrest estimates do not account for ethnicity. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence of racial inequities at the point of arrest. Black youth accounted for 17% of the youth population in 2019 (ages 10–17), but accounted for 34% of juvenile arrests. For specific offenses, the level of overrepresentation for Black youth was more substantial: in 2019, Black youth accounted for 48% of juvenile arrests for violent crimes, nearly 3 times their proportion of the youth population.

Profile, 2019:

Race	Population (ages 10–17)	Juvenile arrests
Total	100%	100%
White	75	63
Black	17	34
American Indian	2	2
Asian	6	1

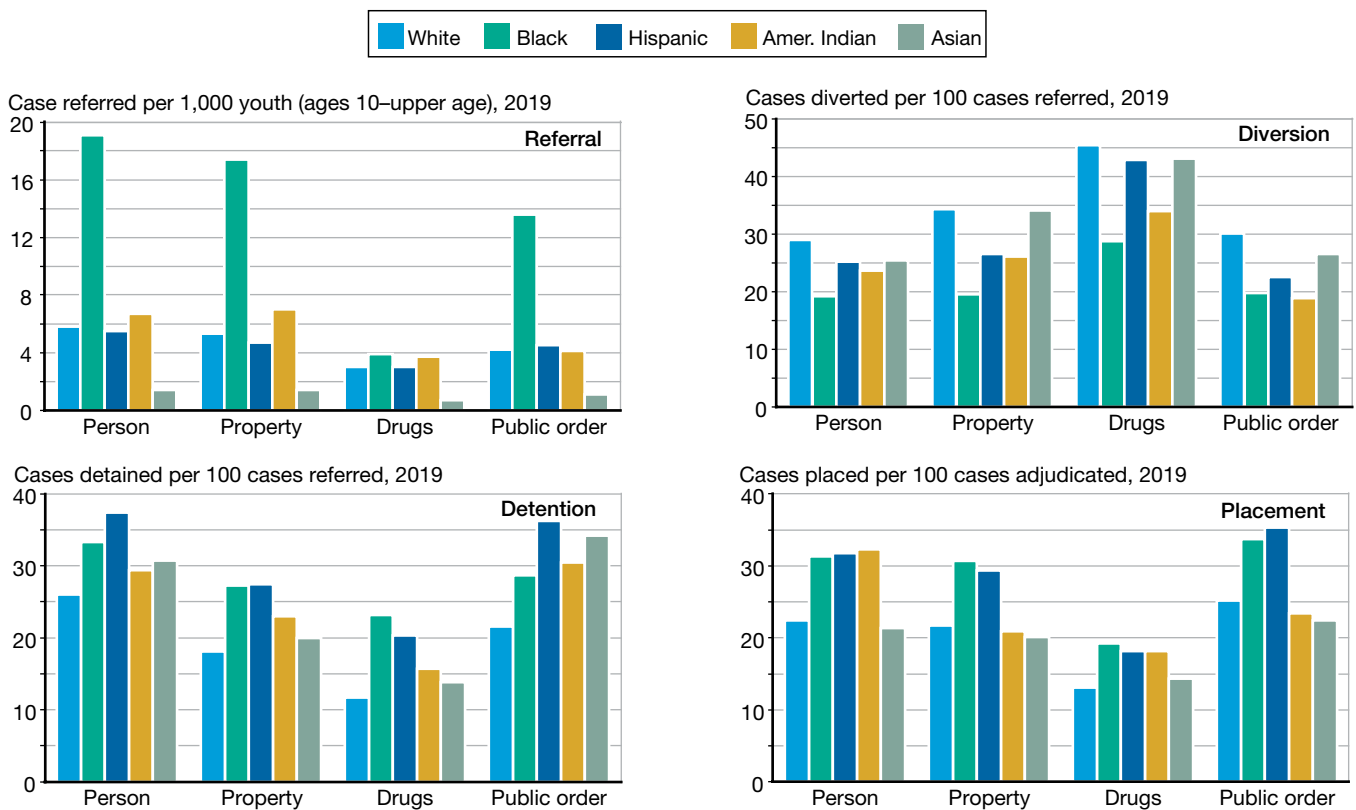
Comparing arrest rates (per 100,000 youth ages 10–17) reveals similar disparities. In 2019, the overall juvenile arrest rate for Black youth was 60% above the rate for American Indian youth, more than double the rate for White youth, and nine times the rate for Asian youth.

Alternatively, calculating case processing rates by race/ethnicity at multiple stages of the juvenile justice system can help identify disparities between racial and ethnic subgroups at different decision points. Comparing the ratio of these rates between racial and ethnic

minority youth and White youth indicate how much more (or less) likely racial and ethnic minority youth experience certain case processing outcomes compared with their White peers. For example, the 2019 juvenile court referral rate for Black youth was 53.9 (per

1,000 youth ages 10 to the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction) compared with a rate of 18.3 for White youth. In other words, Black youth were nearly 3 times ($53.9 / 18.3 = 2.9$) more likely to be referred to juvenile court than their White peers.

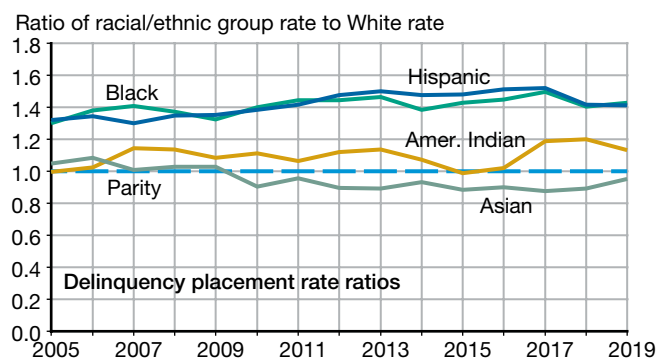
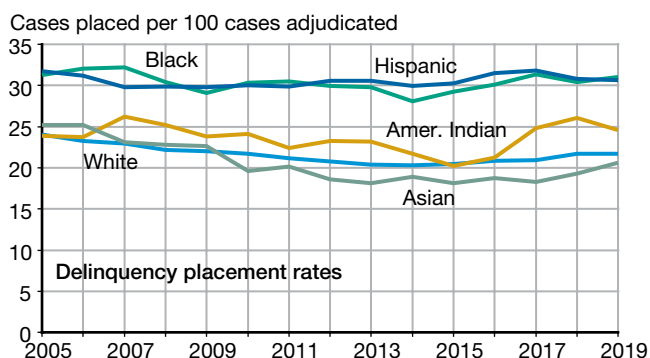
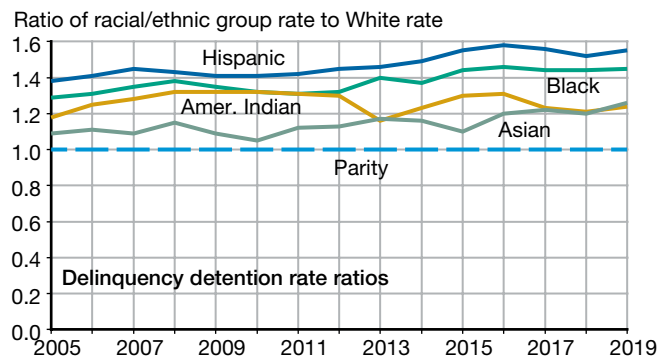
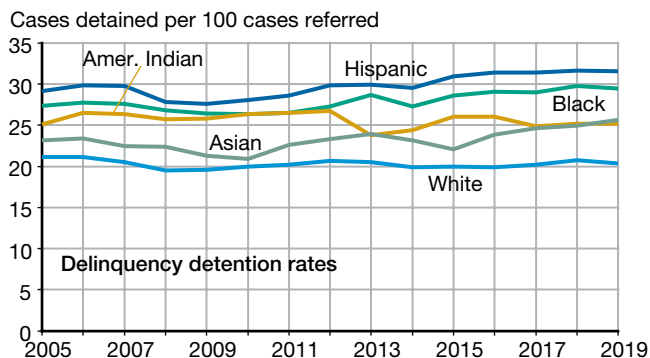
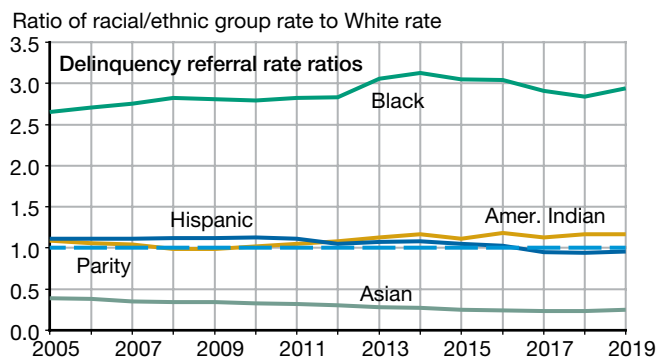
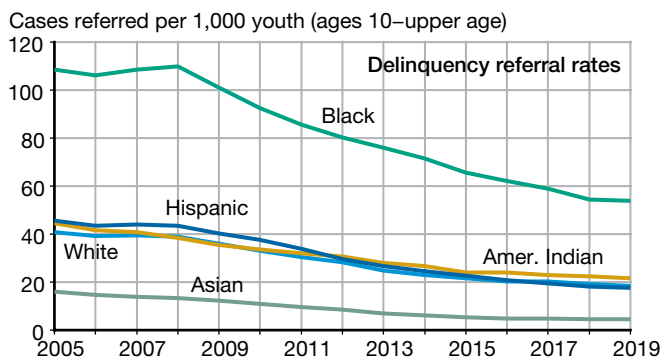
Regardless of offense, detention and placement rates in 2019 were higher for cases involving Black or Hispanic youth than for cases involving White youth



- Across offenses, the referral rate for cases involving Black youth exceeded the referral rates for cases involving youth of other racial/ethnic groups in 2019. For example, the referral rate for cases involving Black youth was more than 3 times the referral rate for cases involving White or Hispanic youth for all but drug offense cases.
- Once referred, cases involving youth in racial and ethnic minority groups were less likely than cases involving White youth to be diverted from formal court processing, regardless of offense. With the exception of public order cases, cases involving Black youth were least likely to be diverted.
- Detention rates were higher for cases involving youth in racial and ethnic minority groups than for cases involving White youth for all offenses in 2019.
- Residential placement rates for adjudicated delinquency cases were higher for cases involving Black and Hispanic youth than for cases involving White youth. On average, placement rates for Black and Hispanic youth were at least 30% higher than the rate for White youth for each offense in 2019.

Source: Authors' analysis of Puzanchera et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2020* and Sickmund et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985-2019*.

Since 2005, the disparity in referral, detention, and placement rates for delinquency offenses between Black youth and White youth has remained high

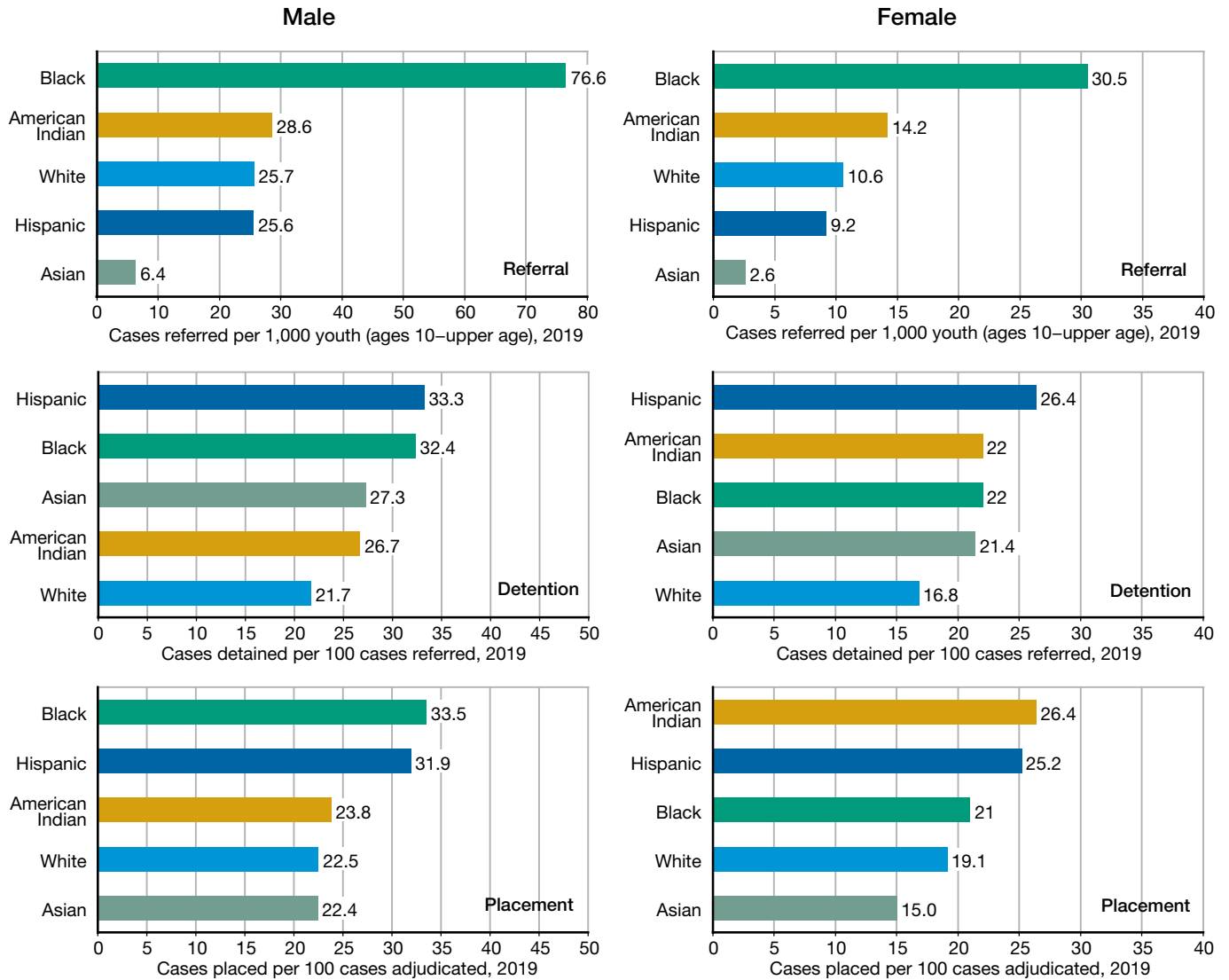


- Each year since 2005, Black youth were considerably more likely to be referred to juvenile court for a delinquency offense than youth of other racial/ethnic groups. On average, the annual referral rate for cases involving Black youth was 3 times the rate for cases involving White youth, more than twice the rate for cases involving American Indian and Hispanic youth, and 10 times the rate for cases involving Asian youth.
- Since 2005, the ratio of Black-to-White detention rates ranged from 1.3 to 1.5, meaning that delinquency cases involving Black youth were 30%–50% more likely to involve detention than cases involving White youth. During the same period, cases involving Hispanic youth were 40%–60% more likely to be detained than cases involving White youth. Similarly, placement rates for delinquency cases involving Black and Hispanic youth were 30%–50% higher than the placement rate for cases involving White youth.

Note: The “parity” line displays a ratio of 1.0, which indicates the ratio of rates if the racial/ethnic minority group and White youth rates were equal.

Source: Authors’ analysis of Puzanchera et al’s *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2020* and Sickmund et al’s *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985-2019*.

Regardless of gender, delinquency cases involving Black youth were most likely to be referred to juvenile court, while cases involving White youth were least likely to involve detention in 2019



- Referral rates in 2019 were highest for cases involving Black youth, regardless of gender. For both males and females, the referral rate for cases involving Black youth was more than twice the rate for cases involving American Indian youth, about 3 times the rate for cases involving White and Hispanic youth, and more than 11 times the rate for cases involving Asian youth.
- For both males and females, detention rates in 2019 were highest for cases involving Hispanic youth. For females, cases involving Hispanic youth were 60% more likely to result in detention than cases involving White youth. Similarly, for males, cases involving Hispanic youth were 50% more likely to result in detention than cases involving White youth.
- Among males, placement rates were highest for cases involving Black and Hispanic youth, each of which were 40–50% higher than the rates for American Indian, White, and Asian youth. Among females, placement rates were highest for American Indian and Hispanic youth, which were 20–30% higher than the rate for Black youth, 30–40% higher than the rate for White youth, and 70–80% higher than the rate for Asian youth.

Source: Authors' analysis of Puzanchera et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2020* and Sickmund et al's *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1985-2019*.

Between 1995 and 2019, the juvenile court's formal status offense caseload decreased 19%

What are status offenses?

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

Some states have decriminalized some of these behaviors. In these states, the behaviors are no longer law violations. Youth who engage in the behaviors may be classified as dependent children, which gives child protective ser-

vices agencies rather than juvenile courts the primary responsibility for responding to this population.

States vary in how they respond to status-offending behavior

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

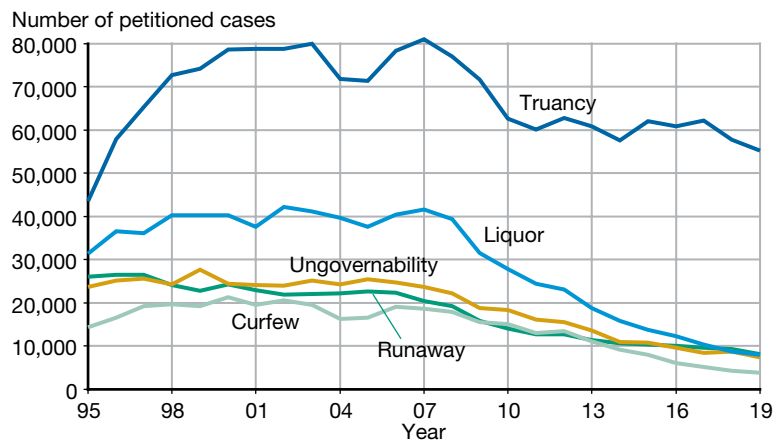
status-offending behavior fail or when formal intervention is needed, the matter is referred to a juvenile court.

Compared with delinquency caseloads, status offense caseloads are small

Juvenile courts formally processed an estimated 90,500 status offense cases in 2019. These cases accounted for about 11% of the court's formal delinquency and status offense caseload in 2019. In 2019, juvenile courts formally processed approximately:

- 8,200 runaway cases,
- 55,300 truancy cases,
- 3,800 curfew cases,
- 7,400 ungovernability cases,
- 7,900 status liquor law violation cases,
- 8,000 other status offense cases (e.g., smoking tobacco and violations of a valid court order).

Between 1995 and 2002, the formally handled status offense caseload increased considerably (43%) and then declined 57% through 2019



- The degree of change in formally processed status offense cases from 1995 through 2019 varied across the major offense categories. Truancy cases increased during the period (27%), while all other offense categories decreased; down 75% for liquor law violations, 74% for curfew violations, and 69% each for runaway and ungovernability cases.
- In 2019, juvenile courts formally processed 5.3 status offense cases for every 1,000 youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

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

Law enforcement agencies referred 18% of the petitioned status offense cases processed in juvenile courts in 2019, compared with 83% of delinquency cases. Law enforcement agencies were more likely to be the referral source for curfew violation cases than for other status offense cases.

Percent of cases referred by law enforcement:

Offense	2010	2019
Status offense	34%	18%
Running away	47	33
Truancy	4	1
Curfew	93	93
Ungovernability	36	31
Liquor	92	86

Females were involved in 4 in 10 status offense cases formally processed in 2019

Another major difference between delinquency and status offense cases is the proportion of cases that involve females. Although females were involved in only 28% of the delinquency cases formally processed in 2019, they were involved in 44% of status offense cases.

Profile of formally processed cases by gender, 2019:

Offense	Male	Female
Status offense	56%	44%
Runaway	45	55
Truancy	55	45
Curfew	66	34
Ungovernability	57	43
Liquor	58	42

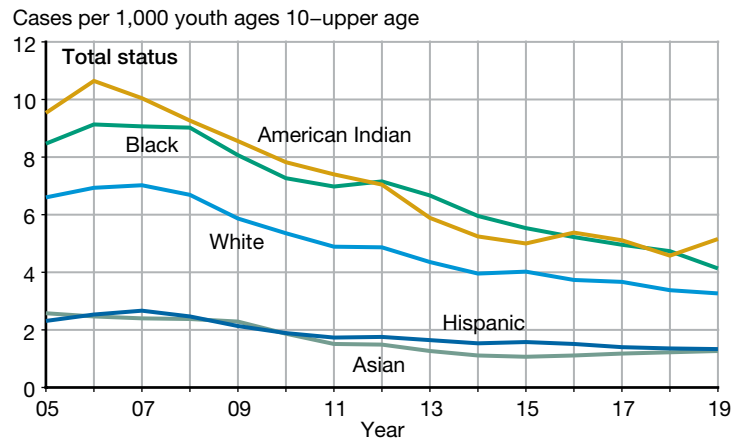
The proportion of cases involving females varied substantially by offense. In fact, the majority of cases processed in court for running away from home in 2019 involved females (55%).

In 2019, youth were placed out of the home in 6% of all status offense cases adjudicated

Youth were adjudicated as status offenders in 36% of formally processed status offense cases in 2019. Of these cases, 6% resulted in out-of-home placement and 58% in formal probation. The remaining 36%, largely curfew violation cases, resulted in other sanctions, such as fines, community service, restitution, or referrals to other agencies for services.

Among status offense cases not adjudicated, 80% were dismissed, 7% resulted in informal sanctions other than probation or out-of-home placement, 13% resulted in informal probation, and none resulted in out-of-home placement.

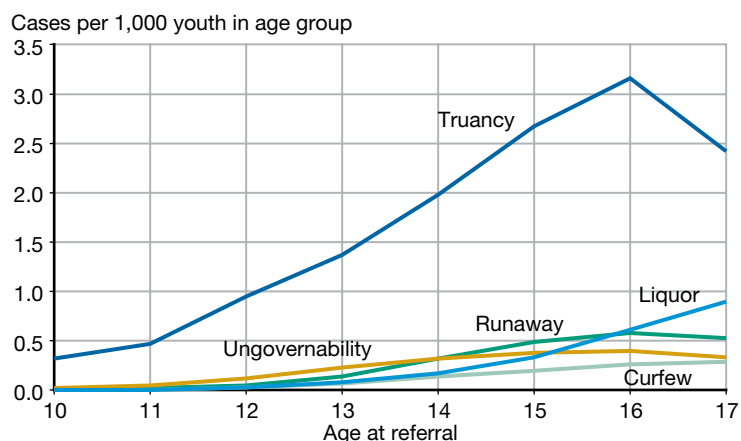
For most years between 2005 and 2019, the total petitioned status offense case rate for American Indian youth was higher than that for youth of all other racial categories



- Between 2005 and 2019, petitioned status offense case rates decreased for all racial groups: 51% each for Black and Asian youth, 50% for White youth, 46% for American Indian youth, and 43% for Asian youth.
- In 2019, the overall case rate for petitioned status offense cases was 5.1 for American Indian youth, 4.1 for Black youth, 3.3 for White youth, 1.3 for Hispanic youth and 1.2 for Asian youth

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

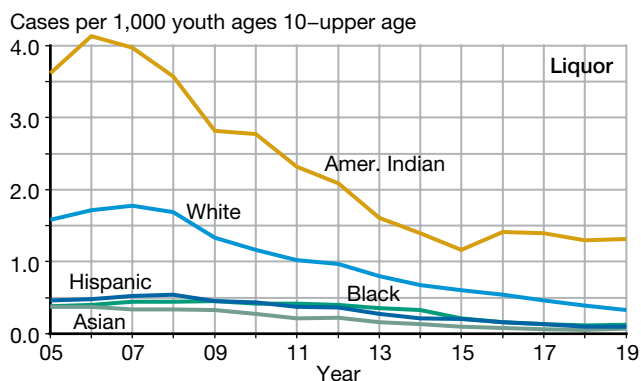
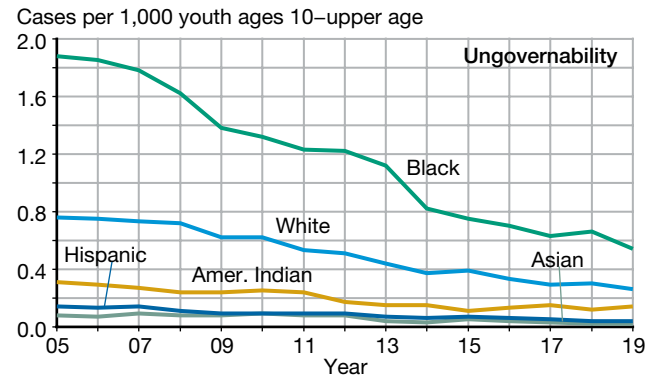
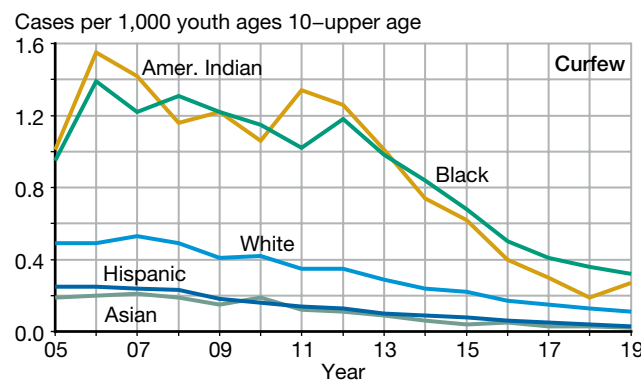
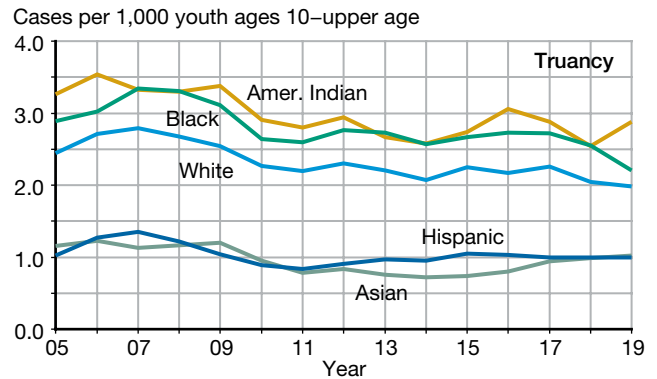
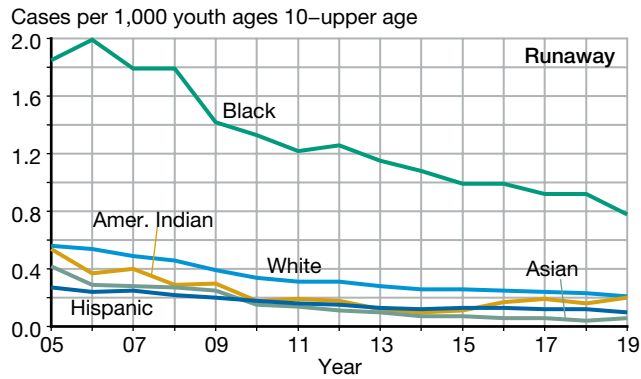
Case rates for most status offenses declined in the older age groups; liquor law violation case rates, however, increased substantially through the juvenile years



- In 2019, 16 was the peak age for truancy, runaway, and ungovernability case rates. For liquor law and curfew violation cases, case rates peaked at age 17. The age-specific case rate patterns were not substantially different for males and females.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

Between 2005 to 2019, petitioned case rates decreased for all racial/ethnic groups across all status offense categories



- Runaway case rates decreased for all youth between 2005 and 2019. In 2019, the runaway case rate for Black youth was nearly 4 times the rate for White youth.
- Truancy case rates decreased the most for Black youth between 2005 and 2019, down 23% compared with 19% for White youth, 12% each for American Indian and Asian youth, and 2% for Hispanic youth.
- Curfew violation case rates in 2019 were at least 67% lower than case rates in 2005 for all racial groups.
- American Indian youth had the highest case rate for liquor law violations in each year between 2005 and 2019.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.

How were petitioned status offense cases processed in juvenile court in 2019?

Of every 1,000 petitioned status offense cases handled in 2019, 209 resulted in formal probation and 23 resulted in residential placement following adjudication

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

364	Adjudicated a status offender	23	Placed
		209	Probation
		131	Other sanction
636	Not adjudicated a status offender	126	Informal sanction
		510	Dismissed

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

315	Adjudicated a status offender	59	Placed
		221	Probation
		34	Other sanction
685	Not adjudicated a status offender	64	Informal sanction
		622	Dismissed

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

278	Adjudicated a status offender	10	Placed
		191	Probation
		77	Other sanction
722	Not adjudicated a status offender	141	Informal sanction
		581	Dismissed

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

457	Adjudicated a status offender	8	Placed
		116	Probation
		333	Other sanction
543	Not adjudicated a status offender	74	Informal sanction
		469	Dismissed

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

462	Adjudicated a status offender	74	Placed
		325	Probation
		63	Other sanction
538	Not adjudicated a status offender	105	Informal sanction
		433	Dismissed

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

522	Adjudicated a status offender	18	Placed
		246	Probation
		258	Other sanction
478	Not adjudicated a status offender	199	Informal sanction
		279	Dismissed

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

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Juvenile Court Statistics 2019*.



Most youth referred to juvenile court are not subsequently referred

Official juvenile court records can be used to understand subsequent offending by youth

Subsequent offending can be examined in a variety of ways, for example selecting youth who were disposed in a specific year or years and determining whether they return to the system for subsequent charges or have subsequent guilty findings. A birth cohort sample, i.e., examining all juvenile court referrals of youth born in a given year, enables an understanding of onset and desistance that is not possible with annual measures of reoffending and can be used to clarify the onset in serious, violent, and chronic offending by youth.

Drawing on data from more than 900 counties from 17 states provided to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, Puzanchera and Hockenberry documented the official juvenile court referral history of 161,057 youth born

in calendar year 2000 who had at least one referral to juvenile court before they aged out of juvenile court jurisdiction in their state. The prevalence rate of juvenile court referral among this sample was 12%, that is, of all youth born in 2000 from the sample counties, about 1 of every 8 youth were referred to juvenile court at least once before reaching the age of majority in their state.

Few youth were initially referred to juvenile court for a violent crime

About 1 in 14 (7%) youth in the cohort were charged with a violent offense (i.e., murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) at their first referral to juvenile court; violent sexual assault and aggravated assault were the most common violent crimes. Although not considered a violent crime, simple assault was by far the most common charge among youth referred for a person offense. Youth re-

ferred for simple assault outnumbered those referred for a violent crime by more than 2-to-1.

Compared with youth referred for a violent crime, a larger proportion (29%) of youth were referred for a property offense, and larceny-theft was by far the most common property offense. About in 1 in 6 (17%) youth were first referred to juvenile court for a status offense, and truancy was most common.

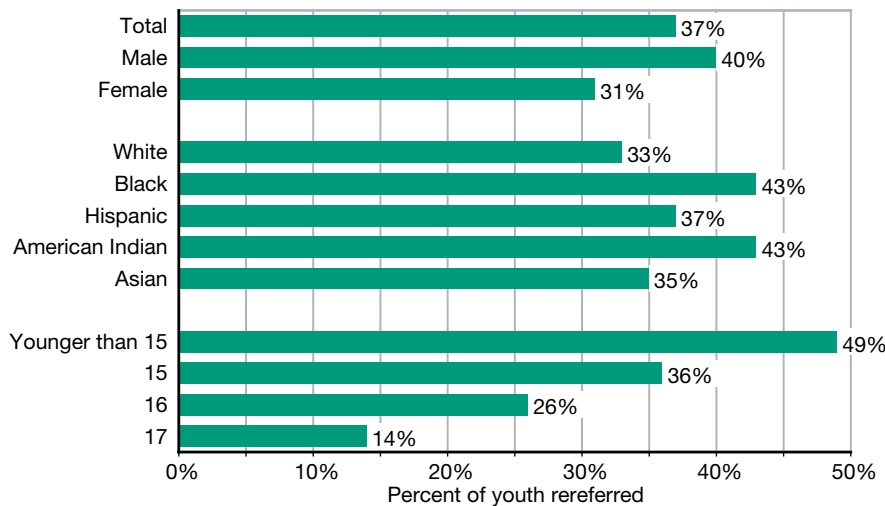
Fewer than 4 in 10 youth were referred to juvenile court more than once

The majority of youth born in 2000 who had been referred to juvenile court for an offense at least once before reaching the upper age of jurisdiction in their state did not return on a subsequent referral. In fact, more than 6 in 10 (63%) of the youth in this cohort were “one and done”—these youth had no evidence of subsequent contact with the juvenile court. Conversely, 37% were subsequently referred to juvenile court.

Overall, males were more likely to return to court than their female peers (40% vs. 31%, respectively), and youth under the age of 15 at their first referral were more likely to return on a subsequent referral than their older peers. Compared with youth of all other races, Black and American Indian youth (43% each) were most likely to be referred more than once, followed by Hispanic youth (37%), Asian (35%), and White youth (33%).

The majority of youth with two or more referrals were male (71%). White youth accounted for the largest proportion (39%) of youth referred more than once, followed by Black youth (35%) and Hispanic youth (22%). Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) youth referred more than once were younger than age 13 at the time of their first referral,

Compared with their counterparts, males, Black and American Indian youth, and youth younger than 15 at first referral were most likely to be rereferred to juvenile court



Source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzanchera's *Patterns of Juvenile Court Referrals of Youth Born in 2000*.

and nearly 4 in 10 (39%) were age 13 or 14.

Characteristic	Profile of youth rereferred
Gender	100%
Male	71
Female	29
Race/ethnicity	100%
White	39
Black	35
Hispanic	22
American Indian	2
Asian	2
Age at first referral	100%
Younger than 10	3
11 to 12	20
13 to 14	39
15	19
16	14
17	5
Older than 17	0

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

Rereferral rates were higher for youth referred for specific offenses in their first case

Overall, youth with a first referral for motor vehicle theft or burglary had the highest likelihood of returning to juvenile court (50% and 49%, respectively). Among youth first referred for a delinquent offense, these two offenses had the highest rereferral rate among males and for all race/ethnicity groups, while robbery and motor vehicle theft had the highest rereferral rates among females. Among youth first referred for a status offense, running away had the highest rereferral rate across gender and age groups, and for White and American Indian youth.

Youth who were initially referred for murder were least likely to return to court (18%). However, this may be in part due to sanctioning of those referred for murder; these youth may have had less opportunity to reoffend if they were serving time in a residential facility or were waived to criminal

court and perhaps incarcerated in an adult prison.

Most serious offense at first referral	Percent of youth rereferred
Motor vehicle theft	50%
Burglary	49
Robbery	47
Running away	46
Ungovernability	46
Vandalism	42
Disorderly conduct	41
Simple assault	40
Aggravated assault	40
Arson	40

Rereferral rates varied by initial case outcome

Returning to juvenile court on a new referral was related to the case disposition of a youth's first referral. Approximately half (49%) of youth who received a formal sanction (i.e., judicially waived to criminal court, or a sanction resulting from being adjudicated for a delinquency or status offense) for their first referral were referred for a subsequent offense.

Of the formal sanctions available in juvenile court, a disposition of residential placement following adjudication is the most restrictive. Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) youth who received a placement disposition returned to court again, compared with 36% of youth whose first referral was dismissed, and 34% of youth who received an informal sanction on their first referral.

The referral histories of youth who were rereferred were long

A juvenile court referral history is defined as the number of times a youth is referred to juvenile court before reaching the upper age of juvenile jurisdiction in their state. Overall, the average history length for youth in the cohort was 2.1 referrals, but this value is strongly influenced by the large num-

ber of youth whose official juvenile court referral histories ended after the first referral. Removing those who were "one and done" allows a better understanding of chronicity among youth with multiple juvenile court referrals.

Of the 59,318 youth with more than one juvenile court referral, nearly two-thirds (63%) recorded two or three referrals over the course of their court, more than one-third (37%) had histories that included four or more juvenile court referrals, and more than one-fourth (26%) had histories involving five or more referrals. The impact that chronically referred youth had on the juvenile justice workload cannot be ignored: chronically referred youth—those with 4 or more court referrals—accounted for 14% of the sample, but accounted for 45% of all the cases generated by the cohort.

Most court referral histories involved nonviolent offenses and fewer than 4 referrals

In broad terms, the continuum of offense seriousness ranges from violent crimes (the most serious) to status offenses (the least serious). For the purpose of discussing the composition of juvenile court referral histories, serious offenses include violent crimes, as well as the following nonviolent crimes: burglary, larceny-theft (excluding shoplifting), motor vehicle theft, arson, drug trafficking, and weapon offenses. Nonserious offenses include a broad range of delinquent acts, such as simple assault, shoplifting, other drug offenses (not trafficking), disorderly conduct, stolen property offenses, and vandalism, as well as status offenses (running away, curfew violations, ungovernability, liquor law violations, and truancy). An individual's referral history may have many attributes: a youth may have one or more violent referrals in the

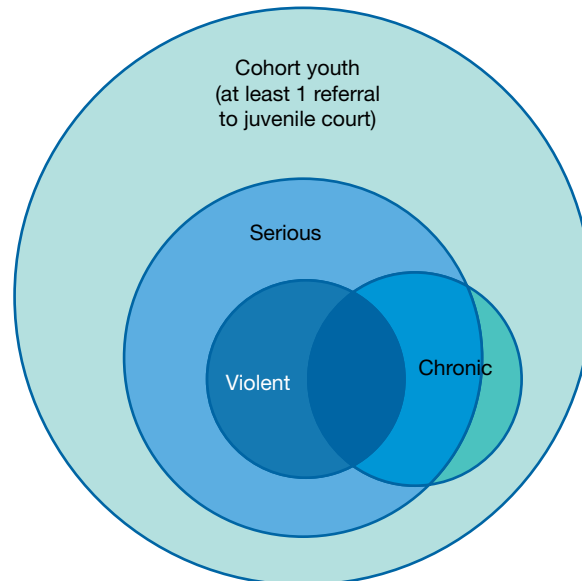
course of their history while also having one or more referrals for a serious nonviolent offense as well as four or more total referrals in their history (chronic). A youth may have a chronic referral history, however, without ever being referred for a violent or serious nonviolent offense. Or they may be referred for one or more serious nonviolent offenses but never for a violent offense.

More than 6 in 10 (61%) youth in the cohort had no serious offenses in their referral history. In fact, the most common referral history for the cohort was not chronic and involved no serious offenses (58%). These histories did not involve any referrals for violence, nor did they include any referrals for serious nonviolent offenses, and the referral history contained fewer than four referrals.

About 1 in 5 youth (21%) had nonchronic histories that included at least one referral for a serious nonviolent offense and no referrals for violence. Additionally, 6% of youth in the cohort had four or more referrals and at least one referral that included a serious nonviolent offense and no referrals for violence. This was the most common referral history pattern for youth with four or more referrals. Taken together, youth with serious but no violent offenses accounted for 27% of youth in the cohort.

About 1 in 8 (12%) youth in the cohort had referral histories that included at least one referral for a violent offense, but only 4% of youth in the cohort had chronic histories—four or more referrals—with at least one referral for a violent offense. The proportion of youth who were chronically violent—youth with four or more referrals for violent offenses—was very small, accounting for 0.1% of youth in the cohort.

A small proportion of youth had court referral histories that were both chronic and violent



Violent includes those referred for the offenses of murder, robbery, violent sexual assault, and aggravated assault.

Serious includes those referred for violent offenses as well as the following nonviolent offenses: burglary, larceny-theft (excluding shoplifting), motor vehicle theft, arson, drug trafficking, and weapons offenses.

Chronic includes those with four or more referrals to juvenile court.

The outer circle represents all officially recognized juvenile court referral histories. The portion of the large circle not covered by the chronic, serious, and violent circles represents referral histories with fewer than four referrals and no referrals for a serious offense. Overlaps represent histories with multiple attributes. The circles and their overlaps are drawn proportional to the number of referral histories with those attributes.

Of a typical 1,000 youth in the cohort:

- 579 had nonchronic and nonserious referral histories; these youth had fewer than four referrals in their history, and none of their referrals involved a serious offense;
- 137 had chronic referral histories;
- 386 were referred at least once for a serious offense;
- 269 were referred at least once for a serious, nonviolent offense;
- 117 had at least one referral that included a violent offense;
- 40 were chronic and violent;
- 1 was chronically violent (four or more referrals for violent offenses).

Data source: Authors' adaptation of Hockenberry and Puzzanhera's *Patterns of Juvenile Court Referrals of Youth Born in 2000*.

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