




JUVENILE JUSTICE STATISTICS

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Violent Crime Cases in Juvenile Court, 2021

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Counts, rates, and trends

In 2021, juvenile courts in the United States processed an estimated 42,300 cases in which the most serious offense was a violent crime. Violent crimes include homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crime cases reached a peak in 1995, when an estimated 112,000 cases were processed. Since the 1995 peak, the number of violent crime cases declined more than 60% through 2021.

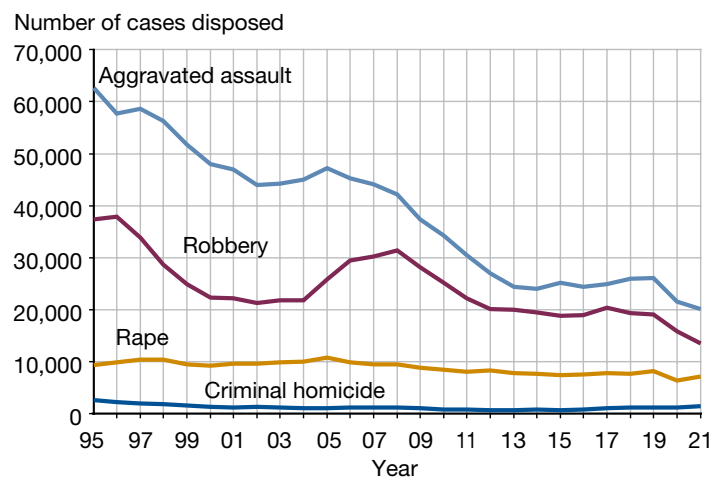
In 2021, juvenile courts handled 1.3 violent crime cases for every 1,000 youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. The 2021 violent crime case rate was three-fourths of the 2012 rate but one-third the 1995 rate.

Criminal homicide was the most serious charge in 1,500 cases, about 4% of all violent crime cases handled in 2021. Aggravated assault (20,200 cases) and robbery (13,500 cases) combined to account for 80% of all violent crime cases handled in 2021.

Most serious offense	1995	2012	2021	Percent change	
				1995–2021	2012–2021
Violent crimes	112,000	56,200	42,300	-62%	-25%
Criminal homicide	2,600	700	1,500	-43	111
Rape	9,400	8,300	7,200	-23	-14
Robbery	37,300	20,200	13,500	-64	-33
Aggravated assault	62,700	27,100	20,200	-68	-25
Case rate*					
Violent crimes	3.90	1.80	1.30	-67	-27
Criminal homicide	0.09	0.02	0.05	-49	104
Rape	0.33	0.27	0.22	-32	-17
Robbery	1.30	0.64	0.41	-68	-36
Aggravated assault	2.18	0.86	0.62	-72	-28

*Per 1,000 youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction.
Note: Case rates and percent changes are based on unrounded numbers.

The number of violent crime cases disposed in juvenile court declined considerably since a peak in the mid-1990s



■ Since 1995, the number of robbery and aggravated assault cases handled in juvenile court fell more than 60%. During the same period, the number of homicide cases fell 43% and the number of cases involving rape fell 23%.

Characteristics of youth

In 2021, the majority (84%, 35,400 cases) of violent crime cases involved males, a pattern that has changed little in the last 10 years. Compared with 2012, a larger proportion of violent crime cases in 2021 involved youth age 16 or older (45% vs 50%). The race/ethnicity profile of youth involved in violent crime cases has changed since 2012. For example, compared with 2012, a larger proportion of the 2021 violent crime caseload included Hispanic youth (19% vs. 22%) and white youth (29% vs. 32%), but a smaller proportion of Black youth (50% vs. 44%).

Demographic characteristics of violent crime cases			
	2012	2017	2021
Gender			
Male	84%	84%	84%
Female	16	16	16
Age at referral			
Age 15 & under	55	51	50
Age 16	24	25	25
Age 17 & older	21	25	25
Race/ethnicity			
White	29	28	32
Black	50	48	44
Hispanic	19	21	22
American Indian	1	1	2
Asian	1	1	1

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Delinquency Estimates

The estimates are based on data from more than 2,300 courts with jurisdiction over 83% of the youth population age 10 through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state in 2021. The unit of count is a case disposed. Each case represents the most serious offense of one youth on a new referral processed by a juvenile court, regardless of the total number of offenses contained in that referral. A youth may be involved in more than one case during the calendar year.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, may have impacted the policies, procedures, and data collection activities regarding referrals to and processing of youth by juvenile courts for an indeterminate period of time. Additionally, stay-at-home orders and school closures likely impacted the volume and type of law-violating behavior by youth referred to juvenile court.

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

Case processing

Approximately 77% (32,700 cases) of the 42,300 violent crime cases in 2021 were handled formally with the filing of a petition requesting an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Of the petitioned cases, most (55%, 18,000 cases) resulted in a delinquency adjudication, 40% (13,200 cases) did not result in a delinquency adjudication, and 5% (1,500 cases) were judicially waived to criminal court.

The majority of adjudicated cases (61%, 10,900 cases) received probation as the most serious disposition and 37% (6,600 cases) received a disposition of out-of-home placement (e.g., a long-term secure facility, residential treatment center, or a group home). The disposition profile of adjudicated violent crime cases changed little between 2012 and 2021.

Case processing characteristics of violent crime offense cases			
	2012	2017	2021
Predisposition detention			
Not detained	45%	47%	48%
Detained	55	53	52
Intake decision			
Not petitioned	20	23	23
Petitioned	80	77	77
Judicial decision of petitioned cases			
Not adjudicated	34	36	40
Waived to criminal court	4	4	5
Adjudicated	63	60	55
Disposition of adjudicated cases			
Placed	38	38	37
Probation	59	59	61
Other	3	3	3

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

For more information

To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit the “Youth in Court” section of OJJDP’s online Statistical Briefing Book (ojjdp.ojp.gov/statistical-briefing-book/court). OJJDP also supports *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics*, a web-based (ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs) application that lets users analyze the data used in this fact sheet.

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