



Report Highlights

Chapter 1—Juvenile Population Characteristics

- The juvenile population is increasing similarly to other segments of the population. In fact, population projections indicate that the juvenile proportion of the U.S. population will hold constant through 2050. (p. 2)
- The racial character of the juvenile population is changing. The Hispanic portion of the juvenile population will increase. The growth in the U.S. juvenile population (ages 0 through 17) between 2000 and 2020 will be far greater for Hispanic (58%) and Asian (59%) juveniles than for Native American (16%), black (9%) or white (7%) juveniles. (p. 2)
- Although the proportion of juveniles living below the poverty level has declined substantially from its peak in 1993, it is still considerably larger than that of older Americans. (p. 7)
- Seven out of 10 juveniles in the U.S. live with married parents. (p. 10)

Chapter 2—Juvenile Victims

- In the 10 years from 1993 to 2002 the number of juveniles murdered in the U.S. fell 44%, to the lowest level since the mid-1980s. (p. 20)
- While there was a large increase and then a large decline in the murders of male juveniles between 1980 and 2002, the annual number of murdered juvenile females remained relatively constant. (p. 21)
- On an average day in 2002 about four juveniles were murdered, roughly 2 white and 2 black youth. Adjusting for the differences in their numbers in the general population, this means that in 2002 the risk of a black youth being murdered was four times that of a white youth. (p. 22)
- Between 1980 and 2002, at least 3 of every 4 murder victims ages 15–17 were killed with a firearm. (p. 23)
- Persons ages 7–17 are about as likely to be victims of suicide as they are to be victims of homicide. (p. 25) In most States juvenile suicides are more common than juvenile homicides. (p. 26)
- Between 1980 and 2001, for every 10 white juveniles murdered, 26 were juvenile suicide victims. In contrast, for every 10 black juveniles murdered, there was one black juvenile suicide victim. For every 10 Hispanic juveniles murdered, there were three juvenile suicide victims. (p. 25)

- One of every four violent crime victims known to law enforcement is a juvenile, and most of these victims are female. (p. 31)
- More than one-third of juvenile victims of violent crime known to law enforcement are under age 12. (p. 32)
- About two-thirds of violent crimes known to law enforcement with juvenile victims occur in a residence. (p. 36)
- Few statutory rapes reported to law enforcement involve both juvenile victims and juvenile offenders. The majority of victims were females (95%)—most of whom were ages 14 or 15. Male offenders were much older than their female victims. For example, almost half (48%) of the offenders of 17-year-old females were over age 24—at least a 7-year difference in age. (p. 37)
- One-third of all kidnap victims known to law enforcement were younger than 18. The peak age for being kidnapped is 20 for females and 2 for males. The kidnappings of children younger than 12 were most likely to be committed by a family member—primarily a parent. Among female victims ages 15–17, about two-thirds were kidnapped by an acquaintance and one-quarter were kidnapped by a stranger. (p. 40)
- Annually about 19 in 1,000 children below the age of 18 are missing from caretakers. Only a small fraction of missing children were abducted (about 10 in 100)—most by family members (8 in 10). Runaway youth account for nearly half of all missing children. (p. 43)
- Teens ages 15–17 accounted for 68% of the estimated 1.7 million youth who were gone from their homes either because they had run away or because their caretakers threw them out. Fewer than 4 in 10 of all runaway/throwaway youth were truly missing—their parents knew where they were staying. Most youth who ran away or were thrown out of their homes were gone less than a week (77%). (p. 45)
- Comparisons of NISMART-1 and NISMART-2 find no evidence of an increase in the incidence of missing children. (p. 46)
- In 2003, child protective services agencies received an estimated 2.9 million referrals alleging that children were abused or neglected. An estimated 5.5 million children were included in these referrals. This translates into a rate of 39 referrals for every 1,000 children younger than 18 in the U.S. population. (p. 51)
- In 2003, child protective services agencies conducted investigations or assessments in 68% of referrals or an estimated 1.9 million reports involving more than 3.4 million children. Nationally, 26% of investigated reports were substantiated, 4% were indicated, and 57% were unsubstantiated. (p. 52)
- Neglect was the most common form of maltreatment for victims in 2003. Law enforcement/ justice system personnel accounted for substantial proportions of victims reported to CPS for neglect (26%), sexual abuse (26%), and psychological maltreatment (30%). Medical personnel reported 27% of medical neglect victims. Nearly half of all physical abuse victims were reported by education (22%) or law enforcement/justice system (21%) personnel. (p. 53)

- The vast majority of perpetrators were parents (80%), including birth parents, adoptive parents, and stepparents. Parents were less likely to commit sexual abuse than were other types of perpetrators. (p. 55)
- Reported child maltreatment fatalities typically involve infants and toddlers and result from neglect. Most child maltreatment fatalities involved families without a recent history with CPS. (p. 56)
- Reunification with parents was the most common outcome for children exiting foster care. However, the number of children adopted from public foster care increased 40% from 1998 to 2003. Most children adopted from foster care were adopted by their foster parents. (p. 59)


Chapter 3—Juvenile Offenders

- In 2002 one in twelve murders in the U.S. involved a juvenile offender. One-third of murders committed by a juvenile offender also involved an adult offender. (p. 65–66)
- The large decline in the number of murders committed by juveniles from the mid-1990s to 2002 stemmed primarily from a decline in minority males killing minority males. (p. 67)
- While the annual number of murders by juvenile offenders soared and then fell between 1980 and 2002, the murders of family members remained relatively constant. (p. 68)
- Self-reports by juveniles show that two-thirds of youth who reported committing a crime at age 16 or 17 did not report committing a crime at age 18 or 19. (p. 71)
- Juveniles who lived with both biological parents had lower lifetime prevalence of law-violating behaviors than did juveniles who lived in other family types. (p. 72)
- Thirty-two percent (32%) of youth ages 12 to 17 who report recently using alcohol also report using marijuana; in contrast, just 2% of youth who report no recent use of alcohol reported using marijuana. (p. 81)
- The violent crime peak in the after-school hours on school days is seen in the crimes committed by male, female, white and black youth. (p. 86)
- Violent crimes committed with firearms peak between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. for both juvenile and adult offenders. (p.88)
- Unlike violent crimes, the timing of shoplifting by juveniles is similar on both school days and nonschool days; however, the peak times are still between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. (p. 89)
- In 2003, high school students responding to a national survey reported having property stolen or damaged at school (1 in 3) more often than fighting at school (1 in 8). Fear of school-related crime kept 5 in 100 high schoolers home at least once during the prior month. (p. 73)
- Six percent of high school students said they carried a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or club) on school property in the past 30 days—down from 12% in 1993. The proportion that carried a weapon to school was about one-third of those who said they had carried a weapon anywhere in the past month. In addition, 6% of high schoolers reported carrying a gun anywhere in the past month, down from 8% in 1993. (p. 74)

- Half of high school seniors (51%) surveyed in 2003 said they had tried illicit drugs at least once. The figure was lower for 10th graders (41%) and 8th graders (23%). Marijuana was the most common drug used—46% of seniors said they had tried marijuana. About half of those who had used marijuana said they had not used any other illicit drugs. (p. 75)
- In comparison, more than three-quarters of seniors said they had tried alcohol. Even among 8th graders, alcohol use was common: two-thirds had tried it. (p. 75)
- Perhaps of greater concern are the juveniles who indicated heavy drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the preceding 2 weeks. Recent heavy drinking was reported by 28% of seniors, 22% of 10th graders, and 12% of 8th graders. (p. 76) The good news is that past month alcohol use in 2004 for all three grades was at or near its lowest levels since the mid-1970s. (p. 79)
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for high school students, accounting for 77% of all deaths in 2002 among teens ages 14–17. Three in 10 high school students said that in the past month they rode in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking. In addition, 3 in 25 high school students said that in the past month they drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol. (p. 77)
- In 2003, fewer than 1 in 3 high school students said they were offered, sold, or given drugs at school in the past year. (p. 77)
- Change in students' use of marijuana and alcohol is tied to their perception of possible harm from use and unrelated to perceived availability. When the perceived risk of harm (physical or other) from use of marijuana or alcohol increased, use declined; when perceived risk declined, use increased. (p. 80)
- Although the number of law enforcement agencies reporting gang problems appears to have stabilized, and the prevalence of youth gangs declined in nonurban areas, gangs remain a substantial urban problem. Gang members are responsible for a disproportionate share of violent and nonviolent offenses. (p. 82–84)
- Unlike violent crimes and property crimes, juvenile arrests for drug law violations peaked during school hours on school days and in the late evening hours on nonschool days. (p. 89)
- Juvenile arrests for weapon law violations peaked during school hours on school days and in the late evening hours on nonschool days. (p. 89)

Chapter 4—Juvenile Justice System Structure and Process

- In 37 states and the District of Columbia, the oldest age for original juvenile court jurisdiction in delinquency matters is 17. In 10 states (Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin) it is 16. In the remaining three states (Connecticut, New York, and North Carolina) it is 15. (p. 103)
- In 2004, statutes in 14 states open delinquency hearings to the general public. In 21 other states, delinquency hearings are open for some types of cases. In the remaining 16 states, hearings are generally closed or are not presumed open or closed. In 45 states, media can



gain access to juvenile offenders' identities in some or all delinquency cases without requesting permission. (p. 108)

- In 44 states, school notification laws require that schools be notified when students are involved with law enforcement or courts for committing delinquent acts. In some states notification is only required for serious or violent crimes. (p. 109)
- All states allow certain juveniles to be tried in criminal court or otherwise face adult sanctions. (p. 110) The expansion of state transfer laws has slowed considerably in recent years. (p. 113)
- Some juvenile offenders are handled by federal rather than state or local authorities. Federal prosecutors may retain certain serious cases involving a “substantial federal interest.” Juveniles handled federally may also be “transferred” for criminal (adult) prosecution. (p. 117–118)
- From FY 1994 through FY 2001, almost 3,000 youth were committed to the Federal Bureau of Prisons for crimes committed before the age of 18. Just over half (55%) were committed as delinquents rather than as adults. The vast majority of those delinquents were American Indians (82%). American Indians made up a smaller proportion of the youth committed as adults (31%). (p. 118)

Chapter 5—Law Enforcement and Juvenile Crime

- Law enforcement agencies made 2.2 million arrests of persons under age 18 in 2003. The most serious charge in almost half of all juvenile arrests in 2003 was larceny-theft, simple assault, a drug abuse violation, disorderly conduct, or a liquor law violation. (p. 125)
- A greater proportion of female arrests (20%) than male arrests (15%) involved a person younger than age 18. (p. 126)
- Between 1994 and 2003, juvenile arrests for violent crime fell proportionately more than adult arrests. (p. 127)
- The female proportion of juvenile arrests increased substantially between 1980 and 2002 for the crimes of aggravated assault, simple assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, weapons law violations, liquor law violations, and curfew and loitering law violations. (p. 128)
- The juvenile violent crime arrest rate is at its lowest level in a generation. The juvenile violent crime arrest rate in 2003 was below the levels of the 1980s. (p. 132)
- The juvenile arrest rate for burglary in 2003 was one-third of what it was in 1980. (p. 138)
- The juvenile arrest rate for simple assault in 2003 was more than double what it was in 1980. (p. 142)


Chapter 6—Juvenile Offenders in Court


- Juvenile courts handled 1.6 million delinquency cases in 2002—up from 1.1 million in 1985. However, the volume of delinquency cases has declined since 1997 for most offense categories (11% overall). (p. 157)

- The 2002 delinquency caseload contained a smaller share of property offenses and a larger share of person offenses than in 1985. (p. 158)
- The female proportion of delinquency cases increased steadily from 19% in 1991 to 26% in 2002. (p. 161)
- In 2002, blacks were 16% of the juvenile population but 29% of the delinquency caseload. The black proportion was greater for person offense cases (37%) and lower for drug cases (21%) than for property (28%) or public order (29%) cases. (p. 163)
- In 1 in 5 delinquency cases in 2002, the youth was detained between referral to court and case disposition. Detention was most likely for person offense cases (25%) and least likely for property offense cases (17%). (p. 168)
- White youth accounted for the largest number of delinquency cases involving detention, although they were the least likely to be detained. (p. 169)
- Juvenile courts' use of formal handling has increased. In 1985, juvenile courts petitioned 45% of delinquency cases. In 2002, that proportion had increased to 58%. (p. 171)
- Juvenile courts adjudicated youth delinquent in nearly 7 out of 10 petitioned cases. For most offenses, the youth was adjudicated delinquent in more than 60% of petitioned cases. (p. 172)
- Formal probation was ordered in 62% of adjudicated delinquency cases in 2002—in 23% the youth was ordered to residential placement. (p. 174)
- Juvenile courts waived fewer cases to criminal court in 2002 (7,100) than in 1985 (7,200). In 2002, waived cases accounted for less than 1% of petitioned delinquency cases. For most years between 1985 and 2002, person offense cases were the most likely type of cases to be waived to criminal court. The exception was 1989–1991, when drug cases were the most likely to be waived. (p. 186–187)

Chapter 7—Juvenile Offenders in Correctional Facilities

- Nationally fewer than 97,000 juvenile offenders were held in juvenile residential facilities on October 22, 2003. This translates to a custody rate of 307 offenders in custody for every 100,000 juveniles in the population. (p. 197–198 & 201)
- Although 6 in 10 juvenile facilities were privately operated, public facilities held 6 in 10 juvenile offenders. (p. 197)
- After many years of increases, the juvenile custody population declined in 2001—the 2003 count was lower still. (p. 199–200)
- Juveniles detained while awaiting juvenile or criminal court hearings or awaiting placement elsewhere accounted for 25% of the 1-day count in 2003. The 2003 count of detained juvenile offenders was 26,269. In comparison, the count of juveniles committed by the court to the facility was 69,007. Person offenders accounted for the largest proportion of both the detained and the committed populations. (p. 197 & 200)
- Females made up a small share of the custody population (14,590 or 15%). (p. 206)

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- A greater proportion of females than males were detained. Detained youth accounted for about one-quarter of male delinquents, but more than one-third of female delinquents. (p. 208)
 - Females were more likely than males to be held for simple assault, technical violations, and status offenses. (p. 210)
 - The decline in black juveniles in custody led the overall 1997–2003 custody population decline. The number of black youth in custody dropped 12%. In comparison, the number of white youth held dropped 5%. (p. 211)
 - Even with the large drop in the black custody population, the 2003 custody rate was highest for black youth (754/100,000). The rates were lower for Asian (113), white (190), Hispanic (348), and American Indian youth (496). (p. 213)
 - On the day of the 2003 data collection, 34% of committed offenders and 3% of detained offenders had been in placement 6 months since their admission. The median time in placement thus was 15 days for detained offenders, 105 days for offenders committed to public facilities, and 121 days for those committed to private facilities. (p. 215)
 - JRFC data suggest that crowding is a problem in a significant number of residential facilities, but there are signs of improvement. In 2002, 30% of the facilities reported residential populations at the limit of available standard beds, and 6% had more residents than standard beds. Facilities that were at or over capacity held 34% of residents in 2002, down from 40% in 2000. (p. 223)
 - Most juvenile offenders are held in facilities that screen for mental health needs and suicide risk. Facilities that had an in-house mental health professional screen all youth for mental health needs held 57% of juvenile offenders. Facilities that screened all youth for suicide risk held 88% of juvenile offenders. (p. 225–228)
 - Deaths of juveniles in custody remain rare. In 2002, 24 juvenile facilities reported a total of 26 deaths. In comparison, facilities reported 30 deaths to the 2000 JRFC, and in 1994 juvenile facilities reported 45 deaths of juveniles in custody. If death rates for the custody population were the same as for the general population—taking into consideration age, sex, race, ethnicity, and cause of death—more than 60 deaths would have been expected for the 2002 custody juvenile population. This is more than double the actual number of deaths that were reported to JRFC. (p. 229)
 - Youth entering juvenile facilities are at greater risk of suicide than similar youth in the U.S. population. The suicide rate in juvenile facilities in 2002 was nearly equal to the rate for similar youth in the U.S. population. While any suicide while in custody is unacceptable, these two points imply that while in custody a youth’s risk of suicide is actually reduced. (p. 229)
 - Officials reported more than 2,800 sexual violence allegations in juvenile facilities in 2004–3 in 10 were substantiated. Girls were more likely than boys to be sexually victimized. The rate of sexual allegations was higher for state-operated facilities (22.6/1,000 beds) than for local and private facilities (16.5/1,000 beds). (p. 230–231)

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- Reoffending data from studies of juveniles released from state incarceration found that rearrest rates were substantially higher than rates based on other measures of recidivism. Across studies with a 12-month follow-up period, the average rate of rearrest for a delinquent or criminal offense was 55%, the average reconviction or re adjudication rate was 33%, and the average reincarceration or reconfinement rate was 24%. (p. 234–235)
 - On a typical day in 2004, about 7,000 persons younger than 18 were inmates in adult jails. Nearly 9 in 10 were being held as adults. (p. 236)
 - Between 1990 and 1999 the under-18 jail population increased more than 300% while the adult jail population rose 48%. Between 1999 and 2004, the adult jail population increased 19%, while the under-18 jail population dropped 25%. The decline was driven by the reduction in the number of under-18 inmates held as juveniles. (p. 236)
 - Between 1997 and 2004, while prison populations grew, the number of prisoners under age 18 fell 54%. (p. 237)
 - The Supreme Court decision in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) prohibits the death penalty for youth younger than 18. In the modern death penalty era (since 1973) 22 offenders were executed in the U.S. for crimes they committed when they were younger than 18. All of these offenders were male. Only 1 of these offenders was 16 at the time of his crime, the rest were 17. Most of these offenders were legally adults for the purposes of criminal responsibility in the state where they committed their crimes (18 of 22). More than half (13 of 22) were executed by the state of Texas. (p. 239)

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