



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator December 2011

Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 2008

by Sarah Livsey

One-third of all delinquency cases disposed in 2008 received probation as the most serious disposition

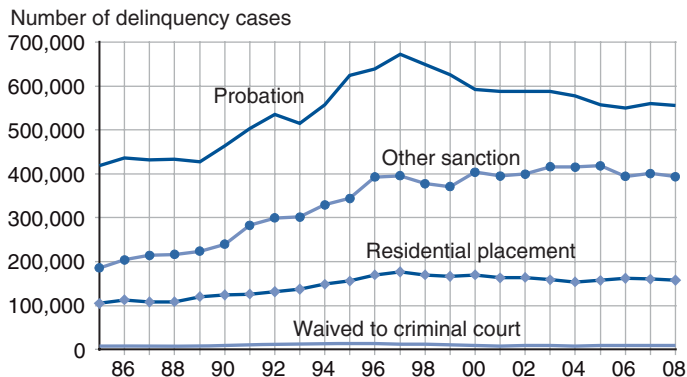
Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled nearly 1.7 million delinquency cases in 2008. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in 34% (556,300) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 33% between 1985 and 2008. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 43%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases that juvenile courts processed from 1985 through 2008. The national estimates were generated using information contributed to the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The analysis is based on data from nearly 2,300 jurisdictions containing 82% of the U.S. juvenile population (youth age 10

through the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each state).

Probation can be court ordered or voluntary

Some youth are ordered to probation after being adjudicated delinquent (analogous to being convicted in criminal court). In contrast to court-ordered probation, some youth who are not adjudicated delinquent voluntarily agree to abide by certain probation conditions, often with the understanding that if they successfully complete their probationary period, their case will be terminated without any formal processing.

Since 1997, the number of cases in which juveniles were placed on probation has declined steadily



- Probation was ordered in 50% of the more than 1.1 million cases that received a juvenile court sanction in 2008 (those that were not dismissed or otherwise released).
- Probation cases accounted for 34% of the increase between 1985 and 2008 in delinquency cases that received a juvenile court sanction.

Probation remains the most likely disposition for cases in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent

Most severe disposition	1985	1997	2008
Total	100%	100%	100%
Probation	58	60	57
Residential placement	31	27	28
Other sanction	11	13	15

Note: Data for 1997 are presented because it is the peak year for the number of disposed cases receiving probation.

The likelihood of probation for cases in which the youth was adjudicated delinquent did not change much between 1985 and 2008

Most serious offense	1985	1997	2008
Total	58%	60%	57%
Person	58	61	59
Property	59	62	60
Drugs	65	63	63
Public order	52	52	50

Note: Data for 1997 are presented because it is the peak year for the number of disposed cases receiving probation.

In 2008, cases in which adjudicated delinquents were ordered to probation (322,900 cases) accounted for 58% of all delinquency cases placed on probation. In the remaining probation cases, the youth agreed to some form of voluntary, or informal, probation. The number of adjudicated cases that resulted in court-ordered probation rose 67% between 1985 and 2008 (from 193,100 to 322,900). In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation decreased 13% (from 190,300 to 165,600), reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

Most cases placed on probation involved white youth and males

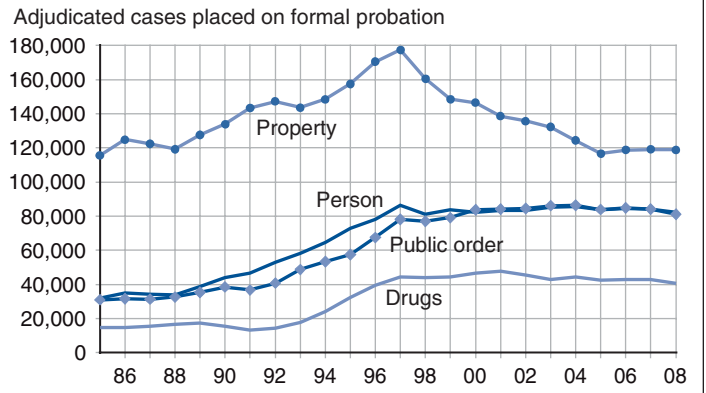
In 2008, 68% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 29% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1985 and 2008, the probation caseload grew 56% for black juveniles (from 104,400 to 163,000) and 22% for white juveniles (from 307,800 to 376,000). Most cases (73%) placed on probation in 2008 involved males (about 407,800 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload grew from 18% in 1985 to 27% in 2008. Juveniles ages 14–16 accounted for 65% (about 359,300 cases) of the probation caseload in 2008.

Property offense cases made up the greatest proportion of the probation caseload

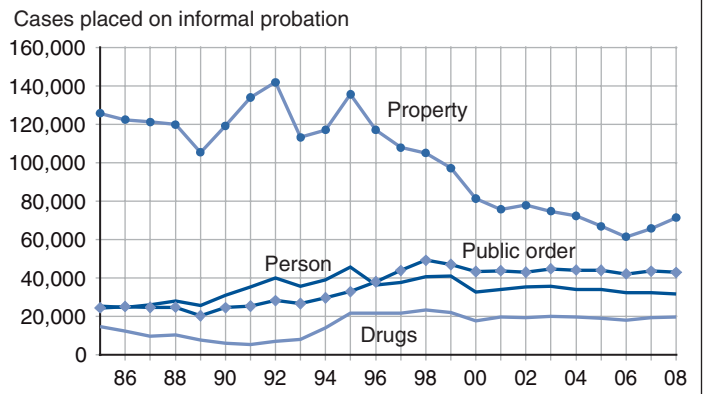
The offense profile of the probation caseload has changed somewhat since 1985. Property offense cases continued to account for the majority of cases placed on probation, but their share of the probation caseload declined. For example, the proportion of adjudicated cases that involved property offenses and received formal probation as the most severe disposition declined between 1985 and 2008 (from 60% to 37%). As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2008 than in 1985.

The offense profile of informal probation cases followed a similar trend. The proportion of informal probation cases that involved property offenses also declined between 1985 and 2008 (from 66% to 43%). As a result, the profile of the informal probation caseload also contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2008 than in 1985.

The number of adjudicated person, drug, and public order offense cases ordered to formal probation nearly doubled between 1985 and 2008, while property offense cases increased just 3% during that period



The number of person, drug, and public order offense cases placed on informal probation increased between 1985 and 2008, while property offense cases decreased more than 40% during that period



For further information

This fact sheet is based on the report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 2008*, which is available through OJJDP’s Web site (ojjdp.gov). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP’s online Statistical Briefing Book (ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/) and click on “Juveniles in Court.” OJJDP also supports Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, a Web-based application that analyzes the data files used for the *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. This application is available from the “Data Analysis Tools” section of the Statistical Briefing Book.

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

Most serious offense	Formal probation		Informal probation	
	1985	2008	1985	2008
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	16	25	13	19
Property	60	37	66	43
Drugs	8	13	8	12
Public order	16	25	13	26