



Juvenile Offenders and Victims

National Report Series

Fact Sheet

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October 2012

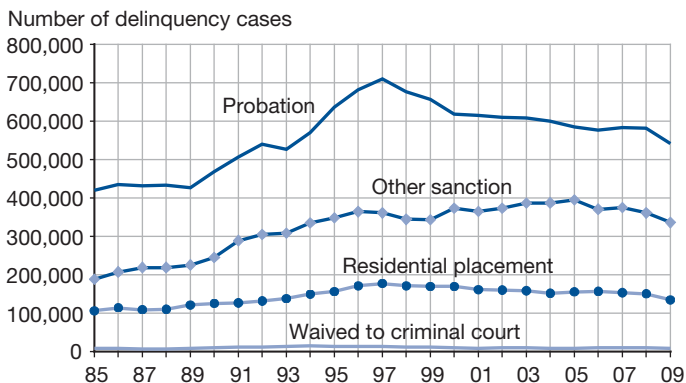
# Juvenile Delinquency Probation Caseload, 2009

Sarah Livsey

## One-third of all delinquency cases disposed in 2009 received probation as the most serious disposition

Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled more than 1.5 million delinquency cases in 2009. Probation supervision was the most severe disposition in 36% (541,400) of all delinquency cases. The number of cases placed on probation grew 29% between 1985 and 2009. During that time, the overall delinquency caseload increased 30%. These findings are based on national data on delinquency cases that juvenile courts processed from 1985 through 2009. The National Juvenile Court Data Archive generated the national estimates based on data contributed from juvenile courts in more than 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).

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



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

Most serious disposition	1985	1997	2009
Total	100%	100%	100%
Probation	57	60	60
Residential placement	31	28	27
Other sanction	11	13	13

Notes: Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding. 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 2009

Most serious offense	1985	1997	2009
Total	57%	60%	60%
Person	58	61	61
Property	59	62	62
Drugs	64	63	67
Public order	51	51	53

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

### 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 probation, their case will be terminated without any formal processing.



In 2009, cases in which adjudicated delinquents were ordered to probation (291,500 cases) accounted for 54% 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 51% between 1985 and 2009 (from 193,000 to 291,500). In comparison, the number of cases that resulted in informal probation decreased 8% (from 189,600 to 174,400), reflecting the trend toward more formal processing of delinquency cases.

### Most cases placed on probation involved white youth and males

In 2009, 68% of cases placed on probation involved white juveniles, 29% involved black juveniles, and 3% involved juveniles of other races. Between 1985 and 2009, the probation caseload grew 52% for black juveniles (from 103,800 to 157,800) and 19% for white juveniles (from 307,600 to 366,600). Most cases (73%) placed on probation in 2009 involved males (about 395,200 cases). However, the female share of the probation caseload grew from 18% in 1985 to 27% in 2009. Juveniles ages 14–16 accounted for 65% (about 351,800 cases) of the probation caseload in 2009.

### Property 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 2009 (from 60% to 36%). As a result, the profile of the formal probation caseload contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2009 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 2009 (from 66% to 44%). As a result, the profile of the informal probation caseload also contained greater proportions of person, drug, and public order offense cases in 2009 than in 1985.

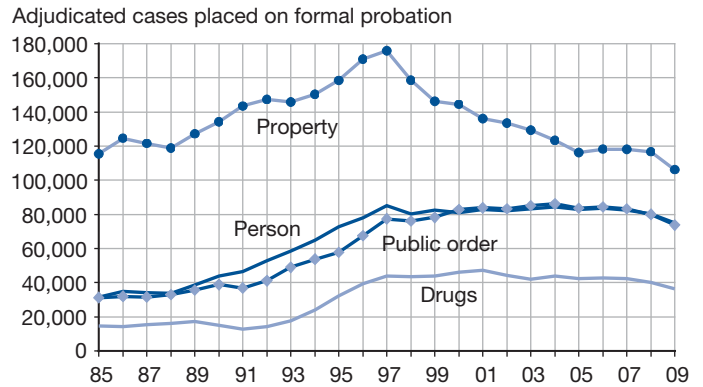
### For more information

This fact sheet is based on the report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 2009*, which is available through OJJDP's Web site ([ojjdp.gov](http://ojjdp.gov)). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP's online Statistical Briefing Book ([ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb](http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb)) and click on "Juveniles in Court." OJJDP

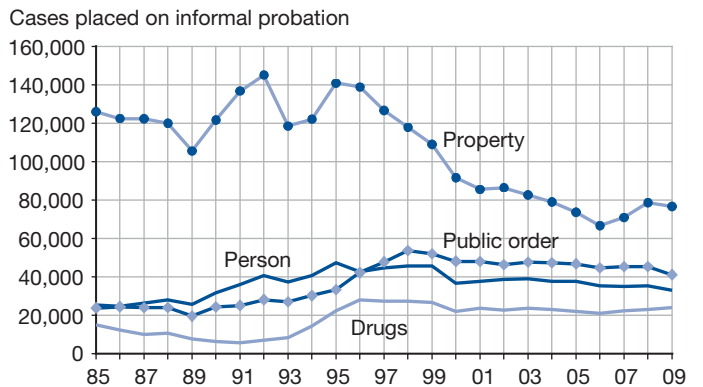
Sarah Livsey, Ph.D., a Research Associate with the National Center for Juvenile Justice, prepared this document as a product of the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by OJJDP grant 2010–JR–FX–0031.

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### Between 1985 and 2009, the number of adjudicated property offense cases ordered to formal probation decreased 8%, while the other general offense categories nearly doubled



### The number of person, drug, and public order offense cases placed on informal probation increased between 1985 and 2009, while property offense cases decreased nearly 40%



### Offense profile of cases placed on probation

Most serious offense	Formal probation		Informal probation	
	1985	2009	1985	2009
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Person	16	26	13	19
Property	60	36	66	44
Drugs	8	13	8	14
Public order	16	25	12	24

Note: Detail may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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.

*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.*