



OJJDP FACT SHEET

September 2001 #36

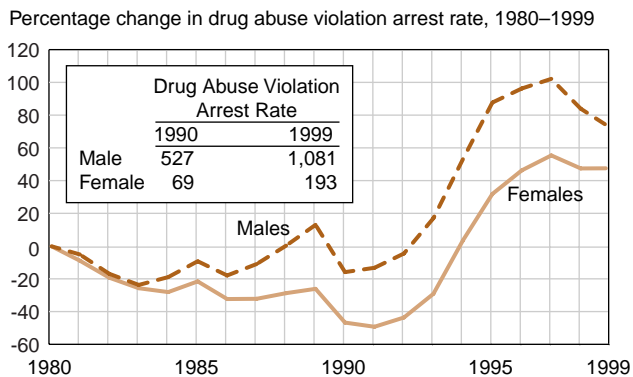
Drug Offense Cases in Juvenile Courts, 1989–1998

by Anne L. Stahl

Drug abuse violations was the criminal offense category with the highest arrest rate in 1999

Drug abuse violations, as defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), include offenses relating to the unlawful possession, sale, use, growing, and manufacturing of narcotic and non-narcotic drugs. In 1999, an estimated 1,557,100 arrests were made in which the most serious offense was a drug abuse violation. Persons younger than 18 years old accounted for 198,400 (13%) of these arrests.

Between 1990 and 1999, the increase in the juvenile drug abuse violation arrest rate¹ was greater for females than for males (177% versus 105%)



- ◆ The juvenile drug abuse violation arrest rate declined 9% between 1998 and 1999.
- ◆ The male juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse law violations was more than five times the female rate in 1999 (1,081 versus 193).
- ◆ In 1999, the juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations was twice the average rate of the 1980s for both males and females.

¹ Arrests per 100,000 persons ages 10–17.

Data source: Snyder, H. (2000). *Juvenile Arrests 1999*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Drug cases in juvenile court: 1989, 1994, and 1998

	1989	1994	1998
Gender			
Male	86%	86%	84%
Female	14	14	16
Age (years) at time of referral			
14 and younger	18%	20%	19%
15	22	23	21
16	30	30	31
17 and older	30	28	29
Race/ethnicity			
White	58%	61%	68%
Black	40	37	29
Other	2	2	3
Predisposition detention			
Detained	36%	24%	23%
Not detained	64	76	77
Manner of handling			
Formal	62%	61%	63%
Informal	38	39	37
Outcome of formal handling			
Adjudicated	65%	58%	63%
Not adjudicated	32	40	36
Waived to criminal court	3	2	1
Disposition of adjudicated cases			
Placed out of the home	36%	28%	23%
Probation or supervision	54	51	59
Other (fines, restitution, etc.)	7	13	11
Dismissed or released	3	7	7

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

In 1999, drug abuse violations was the criminal offense category with the highest arrest rate (586 per 100,000 persons in the population). The juvenile arrest rate for the same category (arrests per 100,000 persons ages 10 to 17) was 649.

The number of juvenile court cases involving drug offenses more than doubled between 1993 and 1998

In 1998, juvenile courts in the United States handled an estimated 192,500 delinquency cases in which a drug offense was the most

serious charge. Drug offense cases accounted for 11% of all delinquency cases in 1998, compared with 8% in 1994. Following a pattern similar to juvenile arrests, juvenile court drug violation caseloads declined from 1989 to 1991 but then increased sharply through 1998. The number of drug offense cases processed during 1998 was 108% greater than in 1993 and 148% greater than 1989.

Males have historically accounted for the majority of drug offense cases processed in juvenile courts. Between 1989 and 1998, males accounted for 84% to 88% of drug violation cases. Among white juveniles, males made up 81% to 84% of the drug offense caseload, and among black juveniles, males accounted for 92% to 94%.

The proportion of the drug violation caseload involving white youth declined from 1989 to 1991 (58% to 49%) and then steadily increased to 68% in 1998. For cases involving black juveniles, this pattern was reversed. The proportion increased from 1989 to 1991 (40% to 49%), then steadily decreased to 29% in 1998.

Since 1990, the proportion of drug cases involving detention has dropped steadily

The proportion of drug violation cases involving detention at some point between court referral and case disposition peaked in 1990 at 38%, representing 26,900 cases. In 1998, this proportion was 22% but represented 43,700 drug violation cases, an indication of the increased drug violation caseload. Although the number of drug violation cases involving detention increased 55% between 1989 and 1998, the number of drug cases not involving detention increased 200% (from 49,600 to 148,800), possibly reflecting a limit of available juvenile detention bedspace.

Between 1994 and 1998, the formally processed drug caseload increased more than 50%

Although juvenile courts handled a slightly higher percentage of drug offense cases formally (with the filing of a petition) in 1998

than in 1994 (63% versus 61%), the number of formally handled drug cases increased more than 50% (from 79,500 to 121,100). In 1998, nearly 1% of formal drug cases were judicially waived to criminal court, accounting for more than 16% of all the delinquency cases waived in that year.

The majority of formally processed drug cases (63%) resulted in the juvenile being adjudicated delinquent, and in 23% of these cases, the most severe disposition was residential placement. The courts ordered probation in 59% of the cases, other sanctions in 11%, and in 7% the juvenile was released with no further sanctions.

In 1998, most formally petitioned drug cases that were not waived or adjudicated were dismissed (67%). In 16% of these cases, the juvenile agreed to informal probation and in another 15% to other dispositions. About 2% of these cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the forthcoming Report, *Juvenile Court Statistics 1998*, which will be available on OJJDP's Web site (ojjdp.ncjrs.org). To learn more about juvenile court cases, visit OJJDP's *Statistical Briefing Book* (ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/index.html) 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 *Statistical Briefing Book*.

Anne L. Stahl is the Manager of Data Collection for the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by an OJJDP grant.

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, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

FS-200136

FS-200136

Fact Sheet 

PERMITS NO. G-91
DOJ/OJJDP
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
PRESORTED STANDARD

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Washington, DC 20531
Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300