

Youth Charged with Offenses

Definition

Public offenses is the number and rate of youth charged with an offense that would be a crime if committed by an adult. *Status offenses* is the number and rate of youth charged with an offense that would not be a crime if committed by an adult.

Data in context

All youth need engaging educational experiences, safe neighborhoods, and guidance from caring adults to become productive adults. Protective factors like educational success and a safe and supportive community reduce delinquency among youth, while exposure to violence and limited employment opportunities increase risk.¹ While some adolescents will engage in delinquent behavior, appropriate and consistently-applied discipline is needed to ensure youth have opportunities to learn from mistakes and become successful contributing adults.²

Nationally, the number of juvenile cases involving violations of criminal law declined by 7 percent between 1995 and 2004.³ In Kentucky, more than 50,000 charges for public and status offenses were filed in 2007 involving nearly 28,000 youth, with youth often charged with multiple offenses from the same incident.⁴ Public offenses are actions considered a crime if committed by an adult, and status offenses are actions not considered a crime if committed by an adult and include charges such as truancy or running away.

Habitual truant and beyond control, both status offenses, were the most common charges in 2007, accounting for 18 percent of all charges.⁵ Twice as many young males were charged with public offenses as females, and more males than females were charged with status offenses, though the difference in number is notably smaller.⁶

Neighborhoods with concentrated poverty often lack protective factors for youth. They also tend to have higher levels of police surveillance, making the activities of poor youth, who are disproportionately likely to be youth of color, more visible to law enforcement.⁷ Low-income youth are more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system, and their families often lack the resources to secure attorneys with low caseloads and adequate training and experience.⁸

Evidence shows that racial bias, though likely

unintentional, contributes to disparities in contact with the juvenile justice system among youth of color.⁹ Disparities among racial groups appear at arrest and are compounded through the juvenile justice process.¹⁰ In Kentucky, African-American youth accounted for only 20 percent of youth charged with offenses in 2007, but they made up 25 percent of youth referred for formal court involvement and 63 percent of all confined youth.¹¹

In Kentucky, more than 20,000 youth were charged with public offenses in 2007, a rate of 372 charges per 10,000 youth ages 10 to 19. Edmonson County had the lowest rate at 78 per 10,000, and Henderson County had the highest rate at 844 per 10,000. During the same year, 9,820 youth were charged with status offenses, a rate of 176 per 10,000 youth. Among counties with rates calculated, Allen, Clay, Lawrence, Marshall, and Spencer Counties had rates less than a third of the state rate, but rates were more than triple the state rate in Gallatin, Harlan, and Lincoln Counties.

Kentucky can reduce youth involvement with the juvenile justice system, a critical step given the higher likelihood of recidivism among court-involved youth, while maintaining public safety.¹² Proven strategies include courts working with schools to reduce the number of referrals for minor misbehavior and jurisdictions addressing underlying causes of status offenses.¹³ Jurisdictions can also reduce racial disparities by thoroughly analyzing data to identify decision points where disparities appear and eliminating unintended bias.¹⁴

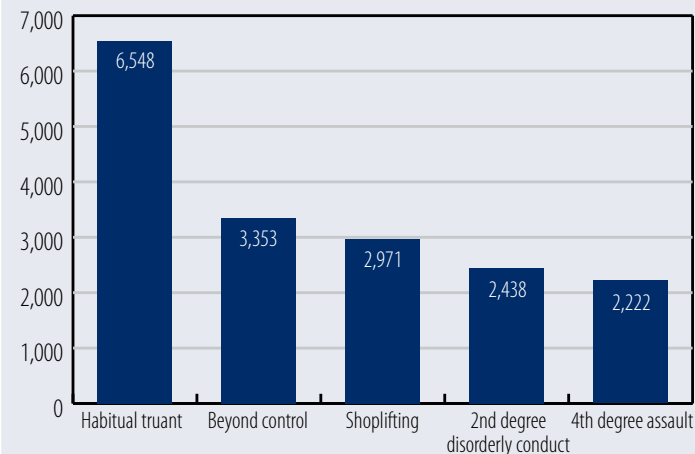
Data Source: Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Designated Worker database.

Data Note: Data do not include all charges added by the court after cases begin the formal court process. Counts reflect youth, rather than charges. Youth may be counted more than once if they were charged for offenses in more than one county.

Rate Calculation: (number of youth charged with public offenses in 2007 * 10,000) / (total number of youth ages 10-19 in 2007)
(number of youth charged with status offenses in 2007 * 10,000) / (total number of youth ages 10-19 in 2007)

1 Arya, N., and Augarten, I. (2008). "Critical Condition: African-American Youth in the Justice System." *Race and Ethnicity Series Policy Brief*, vol. 2. Campaign for Youth Justice. Available at <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org>. Accessed September 2008.

Top Five Juvenile Charges, 2007



Source: Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Designated Worker Database.

- Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities for Juvenile Justice." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- Stahl, A. (2008). "Delinquency Cases in Juvenile Courts, 2004." *OJJDP Fact Sheet*, no. 1. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov>. Accessed October 2008.
- Data obtained from Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Designated Worker Database, September 2008.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities for Juvenile Justice." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- Ibid.
- Nelson, D. (2008). "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform." *2008 National KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- Snyder, H., and Sickmund, M. (2006). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Data obtained from Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Designated Worker Database, September 2008 and from the Department of Juvenile Justice, November 2008.
- Nelson, D. (2008). "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform." *2008 National KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.

Youth charged with public and status offenses (number & rate per 10,000)

	2007			
	Public offenses		Status offenses	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Kentucky	20,744	372	9,820	176
Adair	89	369	86	357
Allen	60	244	12	49
Anderson	87	293	19	64
Ballard	37	378	15	153
Barren	219	424	113	219
Bath	35	245	18	126
Bell	154	424	92	253
Boone	658	410	224	140
Bourbon	83	317	68	260
Boyd	204	352	106	183
Boyle	111	289	28	73
Bracken	22	192	12	105
Breathitt	61	278	82	374
Breckinridge	33	136	92	380
Bullitt	288	280	312	303
Butler	57	331	2	*
Caldwell	79	503	40	255
Calloway	114	243	56	119
Campbell	654	544	282	235
Carlisle	20	318	4	*
Carroll	88	657	52	388
Carter	75	203	55	149
Casey	74	363	52	255
Christian	581	453	227	177
Clark	112	248	92	203
Clay	88	274	18	56
Clinton	59	542	7	64
Crittenden	37	327	8	71
Cumberland	43	513	13	155
Daviess	637	510	251	201
Edmonson	12	78	4	*
Elliott	15	172	9	103
Estill	74	391	25	132
Fayette	995	291	999	292
Fleming	38	195	27	139
Floyd	121	245	108	219
Franklin	271	463	65	111
Fulton	55	633	16	184
Gallatin	87	713	87	713
Garrard	54	244	60	271

	2007			
	Public offenses		Status offenses	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Grant	148	418	68	192
Graves	186	381	40	82
Grayson	164	521	38	121
Green	26	183	17	120
Greenup	120	257	92	197
Hancock	47	381	17	138
Hardin	480	336	171	120
Harlan	117	287	265	650
Harrison	112	468	110	460
Hart	32	133	33	137
Henderson	480	844	98	172
Henry	58	278	45	216
Hickman	24	415	3	*
Hopkins	235	400	63	107
Jackson	38	220	15	87
Jefferson	4,844	529	909	99
Jessamine	264	407	88	136
Johnson	82	284	44	152
Kenton	953	447	411	193
Knott	105	444	37	156
Knox	142	330	124	288
LaRue	31	177	53	303
Laurel	270	371	142	195
Lawrence	40	185	11	51
Lee	26	303	8	93
Leslie	26	180	1	*
Letcher	149	512	101	347
Lewis	55	302	48	264
Lincoln	109	337	63	557
Livingston	24	212	0	*
Logan	95	268	49	138
Lyon	46	612	13	173
McCracken	413	515	128	160
McCreary	165	659	106	423
McLean	42	343	13	106
Madison	331	291	329	289
Magoffin	43	261	52	316
Marion	62	258	32	133
Marshall	142	388	18	49
Martin	32	197	64	395
Mason	94	418	28	124

	2007			
	Public offenses		Status offenses	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Meade	124	305	70	172
Menifee	20	217	12	130
Mercer	68	244	42	151
Metcalfe	58	437	41	309
Monroe	43	306	21	149
Montgomery	102	325	105	334
Morgan	44	262	31	185
Muhlenberg	100	265	84	222
Nelson	148	251	90	152
Nicholas	29	340	39	457
Ohio	79	273	27	93
Oldham	263	327	77	96
Owen	61	408	24	161
Owsley	23	428	16	297
Pendleton	87	393	62	280
Perry	109	291	81	216
Pike	149	179	214	257
Powell	74	441	15	89
Pulaski	215	293	155	211
Robertson	19	629	5	*
Rockcastle	42	204	17	83
Rowan	81	227	43	121
Russell	84	400	31	148
Scott	164	270	93	153
Shelby	207	395	40	76
Simpson	82	357	19	83
Spencer	81	355	7	31
Taylor	155	495	56	179
Todd	42	260	30	186
Trigg	43	261	10	61
Trimble	49	399	13	106
Union	79	308	30	117
Warren	477	331	209	145
Washington	30	190	19	120
Wayne	99	373	30	113
Webster	48	275	13	74
Whitley	210	387	154	283
Wolfe	28	299	19	203
Woodford	70	217	60	186

* Rates were not calculated for counties with fewer than 6 occurrences.