

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 citizens. 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

In Kentucky, when someone brings a complaint of an offense against a youth, the Court Designated Worker program receives those charges and evaluates whether the youth is eligible for a diversion program or their case will require formal court processing. The data presented here represent all youth who had a charge filed with the Court Designated Worker program.

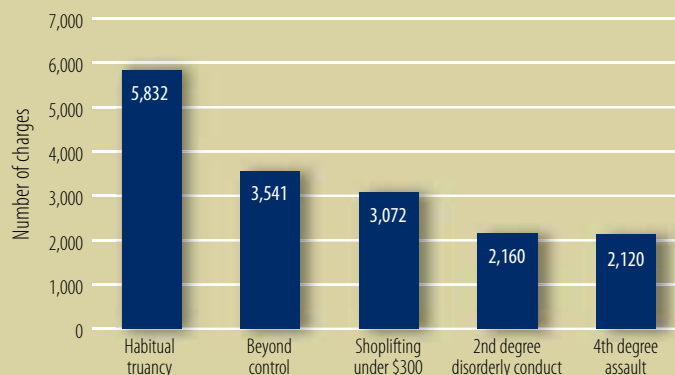
Nationally, the number of juvenile delinquency cases (public offenses) declined by 9 percent between 1997 and 2005.³ In 2008 in Kentucky, nearly 50,000 charges for public and status offenses were filed in 2008 involving more than 26,000 youth, with youth often charged with multiple offenses from the same incident.⁴ Public offenses are actions considered a crime if committed by an adult, and status offenses are actions that would not be considered a crime if committed by an adult, including habitual truancy, being beyond the control of parents or of school, habitual runaway, and certain tobacco and alcohol offenses.

Habitual truancy and beyond control were the top two juvenile charges in 2008 (for public and status offenses combined), accounting for 19 percent of all charges.⁵ More males than females were charged with status offenses, though the difference in number is less than one thousand.⁶ However, twice as many young males were charged with public offenses as females.⁷

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.⁸ National surveys show White youth use and sell drugs at higher rates than African-American youth, yet African-American youth are more likely to be arrested due to the heavier police presence in their neighborhoods.⁹ Low-income youth are more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system, but even when accounting for income levels, race disparities persist.¹⁰

Evidence shows that racial bias, though likely unintentional, contributes to disparities in contact with the juvenile justice

Top Five Juvenile Charges, 2008



Source: Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts

system for youth of color.¹¹ Disparities among racial groups appear at arrest and are compounded through the juvenile justice process.¹² In Kentucky, African-American youth accounted for 20 percent of charges in 2008, 25 percent of charges referred for formal court involvement and 30 percent of bookings into detention facilities.¹³

In Kentucky, 19,666 youth had complaints filed against them for public offenses in 2008, a rate of 353 per 10,000 youth ages 10 to 19. Breckinridge County had the lowest rate at 87 per 10,000 youth, and Henderson County had the highest rate at 785 per 10,000 youth.

During the same year, 9,585 youth had complaints filed against them for status offenses, a rate of 172 per 10,000 youth ages 10 to 19. Among counties with rates calculated for status offenses, Clay, Green, and Washington Counties had rates less than a third of the state rate, but rates were more than double the state rate in Bell, Casey, Gallatin, Grant, Harlan, Lawrence, Martin, and Owsley 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.¹⁴ Proven strategies include courts working with schools to reduce the number of complaints made for minor misbehavior and jurisdictions addressing underlying causes of status offenses.¹⁵ Decision-making points early in the juvenile justice process, such as whether or not to file a complaint against a youth, must be assessed for potential disparate treatment by race to ensure youth of all races receive equitable treatment.

Data Source: Kentucky 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 2008 * 10,000) / (total number of youth ages 10-19 in 2008)
(number of youth charged with status offenses in 2008 * 10,000) / (total number of youth ages 10-19 in 2008)

YOUTH CHARGED WITH PUBLIC AND STATUS OFFENSES

(number & rate per 10,000 youth ages 10-19)

	2008				2008				
	Public Offenses		Status Offenses		Public Offenses		Status Offenses		
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	
Kentucky	19,666	353	9,585	172					
Adair	91	381	82	344	Knox	117	270	81	187
Allen	77	317	59	243	LaRue	59	344	38	222
Anderson	93	313	43	145	Laurel	202	277	117	161
Ballard	35	362	9	93	Lawrence	33	158	171	819
Barren	226	439	133	259	Lee	19	225	16	189
Bath	41	282	32	220	Leslie	31	221	18	129
Bell	151	423	138	387	Letcher	131	458	67	234
Boone	696	425	188	115	Lewis	52	291	53	297
Bourbon	91	350	79	303	Lincoln	137	431	66	207
Boyd	200	346	91	157	Livingston	17	154	4	*
Boyle	133	347	41	107	Logan	108	310	80	230
Bracken	25	220	15	132	Lyon	50	679	11	149
Breathitt	46	211	54	247	McCracken	393	492	113	141
Breckinridge	21	87	59	244	McCreary	120	484	64	258
Bullitt	312	299	200	191	McLean	44	358	19	154
Butler	54	326	4	*	Madison	319	277	295	256
Caldwell	75	478	31	198	Magoffin	28	173	38	235
Calloway	127	272	83	178	Marion	58	238	27	111
Campbell	588	493	256	215	Marshall	114	319	63	176
Carlisle	16	258	6	97	Martin	38	236	60	373
Carroll	73	547	44	330	Mason	70	318	36	163
Carter	69	187	93	252	Meade	112	275	90	221
Casey	102	507	71	353	Menifee	25	277	15	166
Christian	531	411	236	183	Mercer	94	336	37	132
Clark	156	348	151	336	Metcalfe	93	707	41	312
Clay	67	211	6	19	Monroe	47	337	11	79
Clinton	54	500	15	139	Montgomery	120	379	72	227
Crittenden	22	195	25	221	Morgan	35	217	44	273
Cumberland	27	331	25	307	Muhlenberg	83	222	76	204
Daviess	679	546	280	225	Nelson	155	261	110	185
Edmonson	21	136	9	58	Nicholas	18	217	23	277
Elliott	13	149	12	137	Ohio	86	298	29	100
Estill	39	208	23	123	Oldham	244	302	70	87
Fayette	1,048	304	741	215	Owen	28	189	17	115
Fleming	60	308	43	221	Owsley	22	416	19	359
Floyd	87	178	132	271	Pendleton	91	422	49	227
Franklin	242	410	90	152	Perry	122	331	75	203
Fulton	61	702	18	207	Pike	106	128	218	264
Gallatin	61	518	45	382	Powell	54	329	22	134
Garrard	66	302	45	206	Pulaski	255	350	156	214
Grant	126	352	155	433	Robertson	12	405	4	*
Graves	160	329	77	159	Rockcastle	40	197	33	163
Grayson	124	393	58	184	Rowan	75	210	26	73
Green	17	121	6	43	Russell	93	443	27	129
Greenup	105	227	74	160	Scott	159	252	68	108
Hancock	29	233	15	121	Shelby	126	237	43	81
Hardin	509	363	204	145	Simpson	88	388	44	194
Harlan	121	304	175	440	Spencer	74	314	14	59
Harrison	92	387	40	168	Taylor	112	362	33	107
Hart	79	327	45	186	Todd	44	263	35	210
Henderson	441	785	95	169	Trigg	48	294	26	159
Henry	43	209	33	161	Trimble	37	304	11	90
Hickman	17	305	9	161	Union	97	384	20	79
Hopkins	289	501	49	85	Warren	477	326	206	141
Jackson	22	129	21	124	Washington	22	141	8	51
Jefferson	4,212	459	711	77	Wayne	97	369	22	84
Jessamine	283	429	102	154	Webster	49	286	23	134
Johnson	64	224	41	143	Whitley	206	384	152	283
Kenton	818	384	453	213	Wolfe	54	596	30	331
Knott	95	404	60	255	Woodford	89	280	83	261

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