



Juvenile Justice Matters

Juvenile Justice Commission

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Summary Data Report 2004

The current issue summarizes select JJC data for 2004, including commitments from the court, intakes into JJC, average daily population and related information, as well as a brief profile of committed youth and probationers placed in JJC residential programs.

Commitments to the JJC

There were 908 commitments to the JJC by the Family Court in 2004. Seven counties accounted for four of every five (80.6%) commitments statewide. They included: Camden (31.2%), Essex (10.7%), Hudson (10.6%), Passaic (8.8%), Middlesex (6.7%), Mercer (6.4%), and Union (6.3%).

Commitments declined for the second straight year in 2004. Between 2003 and 2004, commitments dropped 21.8%, with nineteen of the 21 counties experiencing reductions. Over the five year period of 2000 to 2004, commitments were down 16.7%.

The commitment rate in 2004 was an estimated 92 commitments per 100,000 youth ages 10 to 17. This figure represents a considerable drop from the previous year's rate of 118.

Profile of JJC Youth

The following is a profile of youth committed to the JJC in 2004, statewide. This profile includes data on the most serious offense leading to commitment, total number of adjudications, and demographic data (i.e., age, gender and race/ethnicity). Profile figures are also provided for probationers placed in JJC residential programs, for comparison purposes.

Committing or Placement Offense: Committed youth were placed with the JJC for a variety of offenses. Nearly one-third (32.5%) of commitments resulted from a technical violation of probation (VOP) rather than a new delinquency offense. The most serious category of offense leading to commitment in the remaining cases was: persons offenses (23.5%), drug offenses (16.9%), property offenses (13.9%), public order offenses, such as disorderly conduct and obstruction of justice offenses (7.9%), and weapons offenses (5.3%). In comparison, probationers were somewhat less likely to be placed with the JJC on a VOP (31.0% vs. 32.5%) or persons (22.5% vs. 23.5%), public order (7.1% vs. 7.9%) or weapons offense (4.8% vs. 5.3%), and somewhat more likely to be placed for drug offenses (18.8% vs. 16.9%) and property offenses (15.8% vs. 13.9%).

Total Adjudications: Committed youth had an average of 6.7 separate adjudications of delinquency. Probationers entered JJC with an average of 5.4 separate adjudications. Note that any given adjudication in a youth's court history might include multiple charges.

Age: The average age of committed juveniles in 2004 was 17.2 years, with four out of five commitments involving youth 16 and older. More than half (57.2%) of commitments were of 16 to 17 year-olds, while an additional 25.0% involved those 18 or older. An additional 16.9% involved youth who were 14 to 15, while the remaining .9% involved youth 13 or younger. Probationers were somewhat younger than committed youth in 2004, with an average age of 16.6 years.

Gender: More than nine out of ten (94.1%) commitments in 2004 involved males. The proportion of commitments involving female juveniles increased somewhat between 2000 and 2004 (from 5.1% to 5.9%). Females comprised 6.9% of the probationers in 2004, a decline from 9.3% in the previous year.

JJC Commitments by County, 2004 & Recent Trends

Rank	County	2004	% Change 02-04	% Change 03-04
1	Camden	283	-13.2%	-25.1%
2	Essex	97	-37.0%	-19.8%
3	Hudson	96	-25.0%	-18.6%
4	Passaic	80	-36.5%	-17.5%
5	Middlesex	61	-37.8%	-19.7%
6	Mercer	58	-37.6%	-13.4%
7	Union	57	-12.3%	-25.0%
8	Atlantic	43	-29.5%	-4.4%
9	Monmouth	32	-17.9%	-5.9%
10	Salem	20	-33.3%	-42.9%
11	Ocean	19	-45.7%	-29.6%
12	Bergen	15	-6.3%	-34.8%
13	Burlington	12	-52.0%	-14.3%
13	Cumberland	12	140.0%	50.0%
15	Gloucester	9	-50.0%	-35.7%
16	Cape May	4	-33.3%	300.0%
16	Somerset	4	-55.6%	-33.3%
18	Hunterdon	2	-60.0%	-33.3%
18	Warren	2	-66.7%	-33.3%
20	Morris	1	-85.7%	-83.3%
20	Sussex	1	-90.0%	-88.9%
Total		908	-28.1%	-21.8%

Race/Ethnicity: In 2004, minority youth continued to account for a large majority (85.4%) of commitments to JJC. African American youth accounted for 66.4%, followed by Hispanic youth (18.6%), and last by other minority youth (0.4%), with White youth accounting for 14.5%. The share of commitments was slightly higher than in the prior year but practically unchanged from 2000 (when it was 85.7%). With reference to probationers, minority youth comprised 89.5% of the total in 2004, a somewhat larger proportion than for committed youth.

JJC Intakes

The number of intakes refers to the actual number of juvenile admissions in JJC reception facilities and programs, including both committed youth and probationers. Overall, JJC intakes declined 2.5% in 2004. There were 1,156 intakes of committed youth into the JJC in 2004. This included intakes of youth committed by the court *and* returns to JJC custody of parole and post-incarceration technical violators. Between 2003 and 2004, intakes of committed youth dropped 13.3%. In addition to intakes of committed youth, there were 717 intakes of probationers to JJC residential and day programs in 2004. This included 436 residential intakes and 281 day program intakes, an *increase* of 21.9% compared with the prior year.

JJC Average Daily Population (ADP)

The number of JJC youth in institutions and residential facilities on any given day (i.e., average daily population) for 2004 was 961, down 16.3% from 2003. This included an ADP for the five secure care units of 540; the Life Skills and Leadership Academy with an ADP of 48; and an ADP of 373 in residential programs (including 14 JJC-operated residential community homes, two contract programs and additional beds allotted to the JJC through an interagency agreement). There was an additional ADP of 91 for six JJC day programs.

ADP as Percent of Bed Capacity. Average daily population was also examined in relation to official facility capacities. For 2004, all JJC institutions/residential facilities combined operated at 83% of full capacity, with the five JJC secure care units operating at 87%.

JJC Bed Need. Overall demand on JJC beds is greater than what is reflected in ADP figures since we must take into account the number of committed youth and probationers awaiting placement with the Commission on any given day. On average there were 10 committed juveniles held in county detention facilities awaiting placement during 2004. Also, there was an average of 27 juveniles on probationer status awaiting residential placements with the JJC. Consequently, taking into account committed and probationer youth awaiting placement, overall demand on JJC beds for 2004 was 998, with JJC bed capacity surpassing bed demand by 14% for the year.

Concluding Comment

Commitments to the JJC declined substantially in 2004, the second straight year in which commitments from the Family Court dropped. In addition, while the number of youth actually entering the Commission in 2004 declined to a substantially lesser extent (due in part to an increase in the number of youth entering as probationers), daily population declined considerably. It is worth noting that frequently over the years there have been fluctuating trends in statewide commitments and JJC population. A new shift may be emerging, with a notable rise in commitments being experienced this year.



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