



STATE OF ILLINOIS

# Circuit Court of Cook County

HONORABLE TIMOTHY C. EVANS, CHIEF JUDGE

## Juvenile Delinquency Petitions: January 2013 – December 2023

Under the Illinois Juvenile Court Act, the purpose of juvenile justice is **rehabilitation**, specifically, “. . . to rehabilitate and to prevent further delinquent behavior through the development of . . . educational, vocational, social, emotional and basic life skills which enable a minor to mature into a productive member of society” (705 ILCS 405/5-101(1)(c)). At each point in the juvenile justice process, the court and the Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department (JPD) provide services and programs aimed at rehabilitating the minors charged with criminal offenses.

This data brief describes juvenile petitions filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County between 2013 and 2023, using data from the Enterprise Justice Case Management System maintained by the Clerk of the Circuit Court. It summarizes the decision to prosecute, outcome of the prosecution, placements on electronic monitoring, and sentences. Additionally, it describes a subset of petitions filed since 2018 in which the juvenile had a charge of vehicular hijacking or aggravated vehicular hijacking.

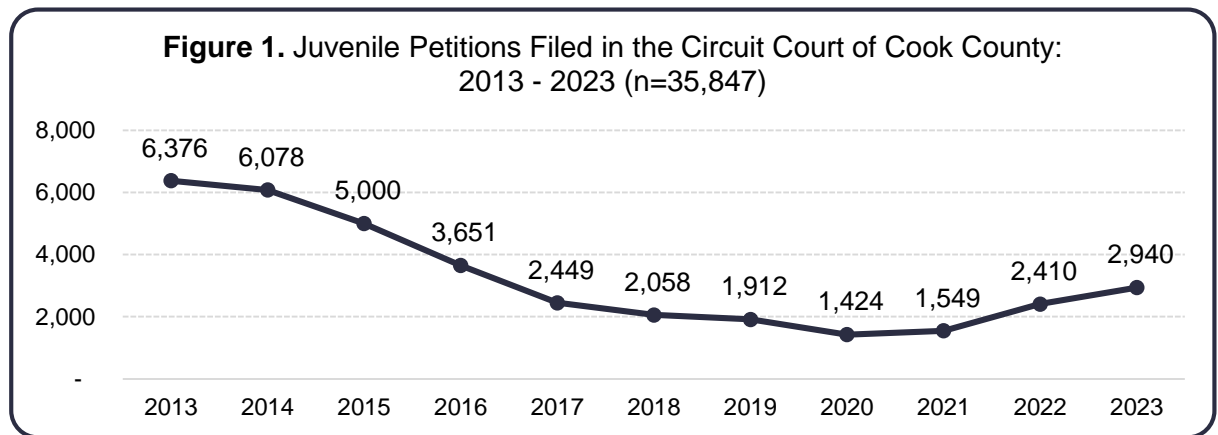
Key takeaways from this data brief include the following:

- **Over the past decade, juvenile petitions have declined by 54%, and person/violent offense petitions have declined by 61%.**
- **About one third of all petitions are not prosecuted.**
  - **In many of these cases, the minor is offered the option of deferred prosecution, with charges dropped upon successful completion.**
- **Of those who are prosecuted, the majority of cases are adjudicated with a finding of delinquency.**
- **The majority of delinquent juveniles are supervised in the community.**
  - **The JPD provides assessment, linkage to treatment and other services.**

### Number of Juvenile Delinquency Petitions Filed January 2013 – December 2023

A total of 35,847 juvenile petition were filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2023.

- Juvenile petitions filed declined by 78%, from 6,376 in 2013 to 1,424 in 2020.
- Annual filings have continued to climb since 2020 (during the onset of COVID-19 time period), with a 22% increase from 2022 to 2023. Overall, annual filings declined by 54% between 2013 and 2023.

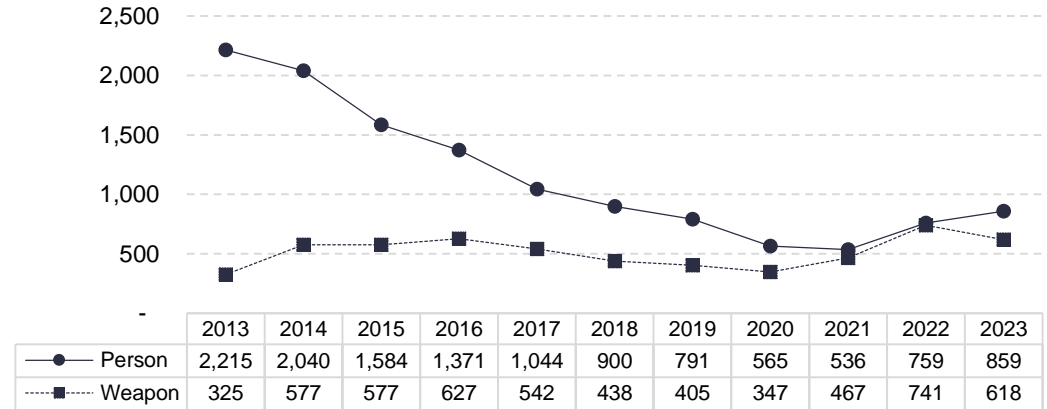


## Juvenile Delinquency Petitions by Top Charge

Figures 2A and 2B show juvenile petition filing trends by top charge between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2023.

- Juvenile delinquency petitions with a person charge as top charge filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County declined by 76% from 2,215 in 2013 to an all-time low of 536 in 2021 amid the coronavirus pandemic. Juvenile petitions with a person charge as top charge have since increased in 2022 and 2023. Overall, petitions with a person charge as a top charge declined by 61% during this decade.
- The overall number of juvenile petitions with a weapons offense as top charge doubled from 325 in 2013 to a high of 741 in 2022; they dropped to 618 in 2023.

**Figure 2A. Juvenile Delinquency Petitions for Person or Weapon Charges: 2013 - 2023<sup>1</sup>**

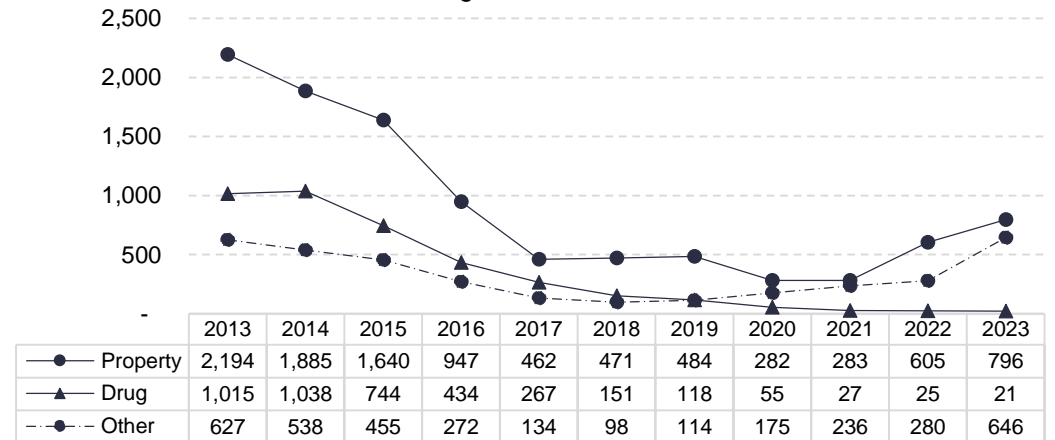


<sup>1</sup> Person charges include murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated battery, assault, battery, and other miscellaneous person offenses. Weapons offenses such as unlawful use of a weapon are possession offenses and do not necessarily involve use of a weapon in the commission of a crime.

Juvenile delinquency petitions with a non-person/non-weapon charge as top charge filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County gradually declined from 2013 to 2019 before falling to an all-time low in 2020 and 2021 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

- Juvenile petitions with a property charge as the top charge and petitions for “other charges” have since increased in 2022 and 2023.

**Figure 2B. Juvenile Delinquency Petitions for Non-Person/Non-Weapon Charges: 2013 - 2023**

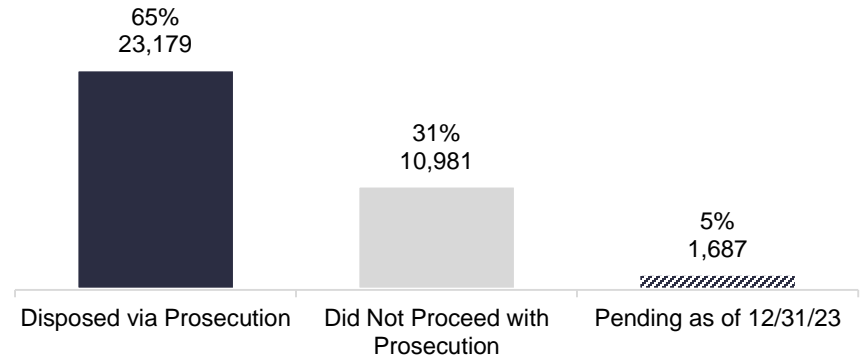


## Juvenile Delinquency Petitions by Decision Whether to Proceed with Prosecution<sup>1</sup>

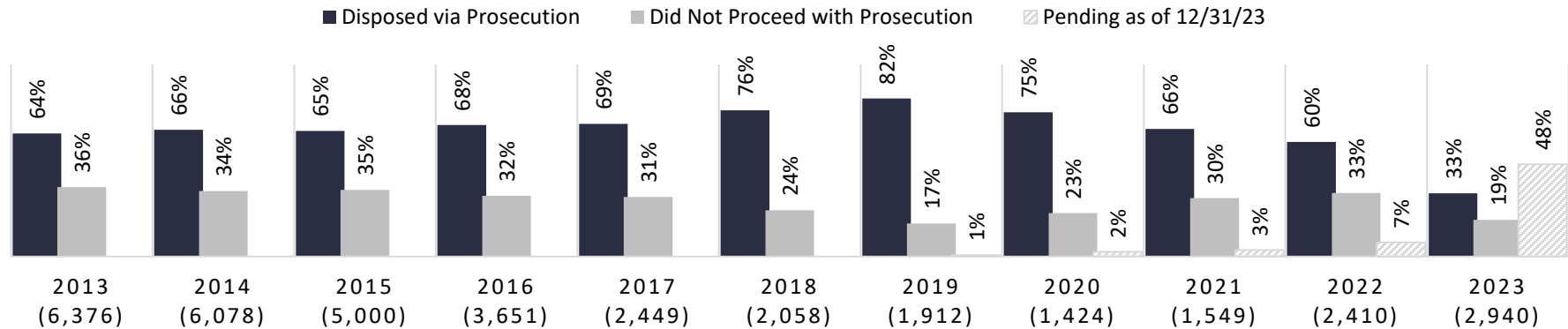
As shown in Figure 3A, of the 35,847 petitions filed from 2013 through December 31, 2023, five percent (n = 1,687) were pending as of December 31, 2023, 31% (n = 10,981) of the juvenile petitions were dismissed or did not proceed with prosecution, and 65% (n = 23,179) were disposed via prosecution.

Figure 3B displays the proportion of petitions that proceeded with prosecution by year. While the overall number of petitions has declined, the proportion proceeding with prosecution rose between 2013 and 2019 and then subsequently declined.

**Figure 3A.** Decision Whether to Proceed with Prosecution: Juvenile Petitions Filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County: 2013 - 2023 (Petition Status as of 12/31/23)



**Figure 3B.** Decision to Proceed or Not to Proceed with Prosecution Trends: January 2013 - December 2023 (Petition Status as of 12/31/23)



Many juveniles charged with nonviolent offenses are offered deferred prosecution.<sup>2</sup> Upon successful completion of the requirements of these programs, their cases are dismissed.

<sup>1</sup> The decision whether to proceed with a prosecution can be either an exercise of prosecutorial or judicial discretion. This category includes cases without a delinquency finding, but with codes for *nolle prosequi*, stricken off with leave to reinstate (SOL), dismissal, or a finding of no probable cause for one or all charges.

<sup>2</sup> The court is currently collaborating with the State's Attorney's Office on a deferred prosecution program, Strengthening Chicago's Youth. Between July 2022 and November 2023, 250 youth successfully completed the program and had all charges dismissed.

## Adjudication Outcomes for Juvenile Delinquency Petitions that Proceeded with Prosecution

Among 23,179 petitions disposed after prosecution, 77% (n = 17,888) were disposed with an adjudication of delinquency by admission of guilt, bench trial, or jury trial across all years examined. Three percent (n = 778) had a finding of not delinquent and 19% (n = 4,513) had another outcome (such as a finding to stand).

**Table 1.** Disposition Outcomes for Prosecuted Juvenile Petitions Filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County:  
January 2013 - December 2023 (Petitions Disposed as of 12/31/2023)

Year Juvenile Petition Filed	Petitions that Proceeded with Prosecution	Not Delinquent		Other Outcome		Delinquent	
		Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent
2013	4,077	160	4%	912	22%	3,005	74%
2014	4,006	189	5%	785	20%	3,032	76%
2015	3,270	107	3%	747	23%	2,416	74%
2016	2,500	76	3%	516	21%	1,908	76%
2017	1,691	59	3%	307	18%	1,325	78%
2018	1,564	42	3%	212	14%	1,310	84%
2019	1,571	31	2%	296	19%	1,244	79%
2020	1,069	14	1%	205	19%	850	80%
2021	1,028	30	3%	211	21%	787	77%
2022	1,437	46	3%	206	14%	1,185	82%
2023	966	24	2%	116	12%	826	86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,179</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4,513</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>17,888</b>	<b>77%</b>

## Sentence Imposed Upon Juveniles Adjudicated as Delinquent

Among petitions in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent, the majority were sentenced to probation (40%) or supervision (13%), followed by other sentence (27%) such as time served. Ten percent of juveniles adjudicated as delinquent were sentenced to the Illinois Department of Juvenile justice (IDJJ), and six percent were sentenced to serve time in the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC).

**Table 2.** Sentence Imposed Among Juvenile Petitions Filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County from January 2023 – December 2023  
(Petitions Disposed as of 12/31/23 with Delinquency Finding = 17,888)

Year of Petition Filing	Petitions with Delinquency Finding	IDJJ		JTDC		Probation		Supervision		Other <sup>1</sup>		Missing	
		Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent
2013	3,005	391	13%	231	8%	1,236	43%	471	16%	639	21%	27	1%
2014	3,032	364	12%	203	7%	1,199	41%	367	12%	868	29%	25	1%
2015	2,416	259	11%	181	7%	934	41%	309	13%	698	29%	26	1%
2016	1,908	219	11%	147	8%	741	41%	169	9%	559	29%	44	2%
2017	1,325	165	12%	98	7%	587	45%	103	8%	334	25%	20	2%
2018	1,310	149	11%	75	6%	596	47%	109	8%	354	27%	24	2%
2019	1,244	86	7%	57	5%	585	49%	81	7%	406	33%	23	2%
2020	850	55	6%	39	5%	326	43%	99	12%	293	34%	29	3%
2021	787	64	8%	38	5%	306	45%	119	15%	220	28%	37	5%
2022	1,185	68	6%	26	2%	468	45%	280	24%	290	24%	48	4%
2023	826	47	6%	14	2%	262	32%	194	23%	155	19%	153	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,888</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7,240</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>2,301</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>4,568</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>3%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes time served, wardship, and finding to stand.

The court must consider all possible sentencing alternatives before committing a minor to the IDJJ, since, as stated above, the purpose of the juvenile justice system in Illinois is to protect and rehabilitate rather than to punish. In addition, except for the offense of First Degree Murder, commitment of a minor to IDJJ is for an indeterminate term, and automatically terminates upon the minor attaining the age of 21 years old, unless the minor is discharged sooner, a decision that is solely made by the IDJJ and not the court.

## Juvenile Probation – Rehabilitation Model

When a minor is sentenced to probation, the court has determined that they may be supervised in the community with an expectation that they will fulfill the conditions of the court's order. The court's ordered conditions are implemented by the juvenile probation officer, who ensures that the conditions and the youth's case plan are aligned. Current data indicate the success of probation in keeping youth out of prosecution for a subsequent offense: less than 10% of youth on probation are held in the JTDC on a subsequently charged offense at any given time.

Minors on probation are screened for needed services and referred to community-based organizations for physical and behavioral healthcare, as well as educational, vocational, and recreation programs. Supervision is informed by standardized risk assessment tools. Contacts with an officer are as frequent as daily for youth at the highest risk and need for services.

Programs and services that have been shown to produce successful outcomes include

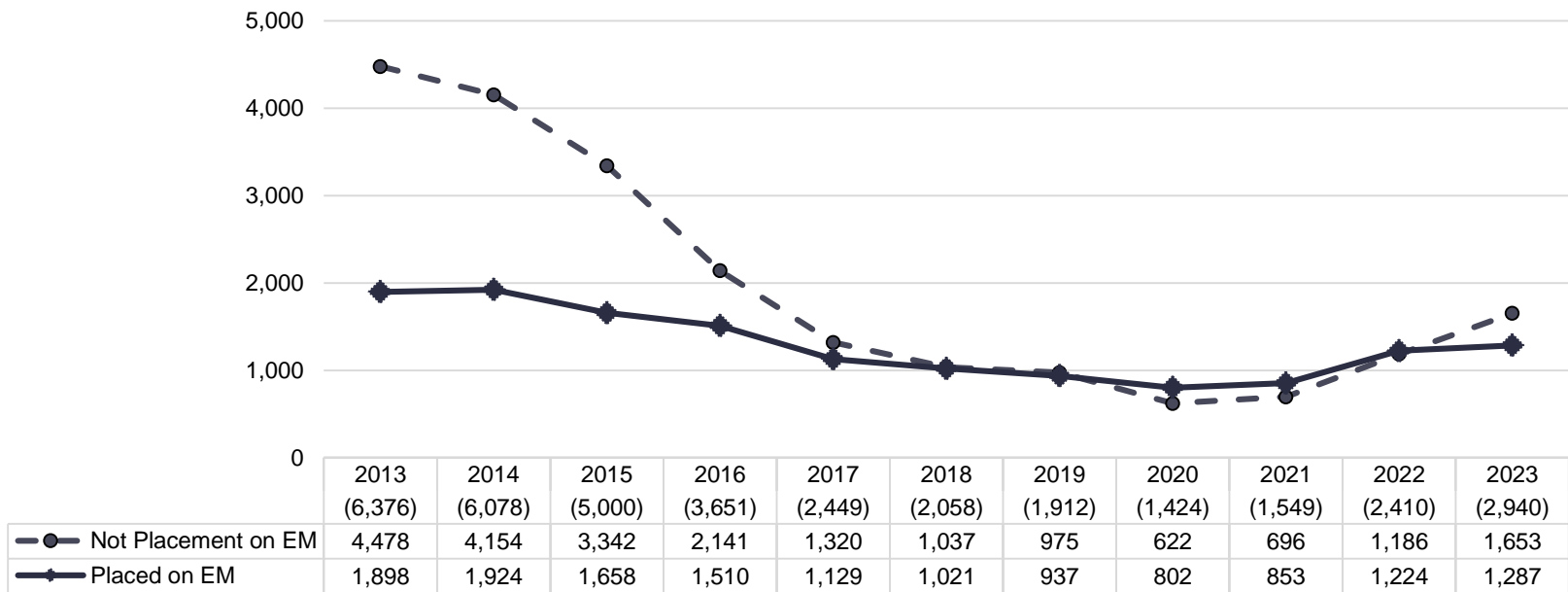
- Reporting Centers where youth are highly engaged in positive youth development activities, including vision-boarding, identity development coaching, employment preparation, and recreational activities.
- Cognitive-behavioral services at local agencies that address anger, aggression and other behavioral challenges.
- Interventions that address substance use, which is closely associated with delinquent behavior.
- Partnering with community-based organizations to support youths' completion of community service activities.

One example of an initiative that supports youths' educational attainment is the Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department **Bridge Builders College Tour** program. This program gives youth on probation the opportunity to travel to visit college campuses, and receive information on enrollment; financial assistance, scholarships, and housing options. It has created pathways to a productive, purpose-filled life for many probation-involved youth. Many of these youth, who did not know that college was an option for them, gained access, enrolled, and attended two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The department offers a Project Lifeline Scholarship to qualified youth.

## Placement on Electronic Monitoring

Minors who are ordered to electronic monitoring are simultaneously referred to a Reporting Center. They attend programming at the reporting center for up to ten hours each day and are screened for needed services, including education and substance use treatment. Parents are consulted to learn the level of supervision capacity in the home. The total number of juvenile cases placed on electronic monitoring declined by 60% between 2013 and 2022, decreasing from 1,898 in 2013 to 802 in 2020 (onset year of COVID-19). The jurisdiction saw an uptick in the proportion of juvenile cases placed on electronic monitoring beginning in 2021.

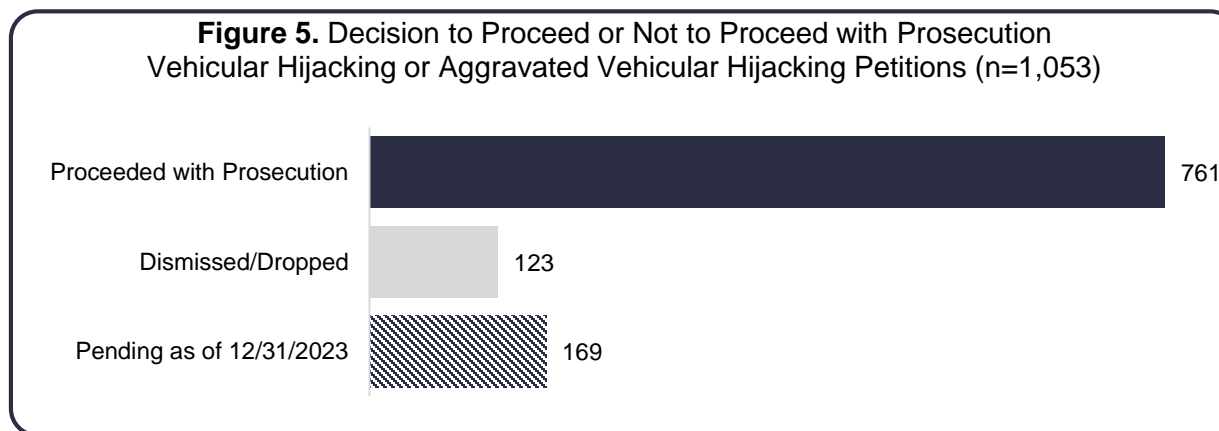
Figure 4. Number of Placement on Electronic Monitoring for Juvenile Petitions Filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County: January 2013 - December 2023



## Subset Analysis - Juvenile Delinquency Petitions of Vehicular Hijacking or Aggravated Vehicular Hijacking, 2018 –2023

This section summarizes a subset of petitions filed from January, 2018 through December, 2023 in which the minor had a charge of vehicular hijacking or aggravated vehicular hijacking. During the timeframe examined, 1,053 petitions were filed with these charges.

- 49% (n = 513) were placed on electronic monitoring during the pendency of the case.
- Of petitions filed through October 2022, data show that 87% of the minors charged were detained at some point in the pendency of the case and spent on average 111 days in the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.<sup>3</sup>
- 761 (72%) of the 1,053 petitions with a charge of vehicular hijacking or aggravated vehicular hijacking were disposed after prosecution. One hundred twenty-three (12%) were dismissed or dropped.<sup>4</sup> As of December 31, 2023, 169 of these petitions were still pending.



- Almost nine out of ten (89%, n = 679 of 761) of petitions initially filed with these charges were adjudicated as delinquent on any charge.<sup>5</sup> Three percent (n = 20) were not delinquent and the remaining 8% (n = 62) had another outcome (such as a disposition in adult court).
- For those 679 with a delinquency finding, the most common sentence was to probation (43%, n = 293 of 679). Eighteen percent (n = 122) were sentenced to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ).

**Table 3. Sentence Imposed Among Juvenile Petitions Filed with a Top Charge of Vehicular Hijacking or Aggravated Vehicular Hijacking (Petitions Disposed with a Delinquency Finding as of 12/31/2023, n = 761)**

Petitions Adjudicated as Delinquent	IDJJ		JTDC		Probation		Supervision		Other <sup>1</sup>	
	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent	Row Count	Row Percent
679	122	18%	18	3%	293	43%	9	2%	230	34%

1. Includes finding to stand, and a small number of petitions where the sentence was missing in the electronic docket.

<sup>3</sup> JTDC data with petition numbers were not available for 2023. Because of data matching issues, not all minors with these charges who were detained in the JTDC could be matched with a record in the JTDC's population management system.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote number 2.

<sup>5</sup> Includes petitions where the minor was initially charged with vehicular hijacking or aggravated vehicular hijacking but found delinquent on a different charge.