

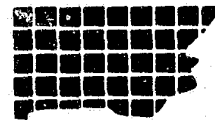
# OFFICE OF JUSTICE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRUG ARRESTS AND NONDRUG ARRESTS  
IN THE OFFICIAL CRIMINAL HISTORIES OF PERSONS BORN IN 1955

JULY 1988

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DIVISION OF  
CRIMINAL  
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NEW YORK  
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U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Criminal Justice Services has completed a study of the relationship between drug crimes and nondrug crimes as depicted in the New York State arrest histories of persons born in 1955.

From this analysis, a number of points may be made. First, it appears that there is a relationship between drug arrests and the number of nondrug arrests.

On average, persons with drug arrests in their histories have more extensive nondrug arrest histories than persons without drug arrests.

The relationship is such that as persons have more drug arrests they tend to have a greater number of nondrug arrests as well.

This is not to say that all persons with drug arrests necessarily have nondrug arrests. In our cohort 45 percent of the persons with drug arrests did not have any other type of arrest.

Persons with drug arrests are more likely to have specific types of nondrug arrests in their histories than those without drug arrests. The likelihood of having specific types of arrests also varies with the number of drug arrests present in an arrest history.

Overall, persons with drug arrests in their histories are no more likely to have at least one arrest for theft (not including robbery), at least one arrest for violence, or at least one arrest for "other" nondrug arrests.

Persons with drug arrests in their histories are more likely (1.7 times) to have one or more arrests for robbery than persons without drug arrests.

Persons with three or more drug arrests are over 4 times more likely to have at least one robbery arrest than persons without drug arrests.

Persons with three or more drug arrests are also more likely to have at least one theft arrest, at least one violence arrest, and at least one "other" arrest than the group having no drug arrests.

The differences in prevalence that have been noted cannot be attributed solely to the observed relationship between the number of drug arrests and the total number of nondrug arrests.

Robbery arrests are still more prevalent among persons with drug arrests than among those without drug arrests even after controls for the number of nondrug arrests are introduced.

Robbery arrests are twice as prevalent among persons with three or more drug arrests, even after controls for the number of nondrug arrests are introduced.

Other crimes of theft are also more prevalent among persons with drug arrests in their histories than among those without drug arrests after controlling for the effect of total number of nondrug arrests.

The above conclusions pertain specifically to prevalence (the number of persons with one or more arrests of each type). A similar pattern was found in analyses of incidence (the frequency of arrests of each type, aggregated across persons). Overall, a greater proportion of the nondrug arrests involve theft and robbery for drug arrestees with nondrug arrests than for persons with only nondrug arrests.

The findings are consistent with those of other research. The cohort members with extensive histories of drug arrests (3 or more) also have extensive histories of nondrug arrests. They look very much like the "violent predator" described by Chaiken and Chaiken (1982), who is heavily involved in a variety of crimes including robbery, assault, and burglary (1982, p. 55). The tendency toward serious theft crimes for persons with drug arrests is consistent with the self-descriptions found for heroin abusers in the work of Bruce Johnson et al. (1985), in studies of arrest populations (see Eckerman et al., 1971, Kozel and Dupont, 1977) and in studies of prison populations (Innes, 1988). This relationship between drugs and nondrug crimes is consistent across these diverse research methodologies. Research based on self-reports of drug use, urinalysis, and official arrest records of drug involvement yield similar conclusions.

## INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the importance to criminal justice policymakers of understanding the relationship between drugs and crime, the Office of Justice Systems Analysis has undertaken the present study. The study explores this relationship as represented in the arrest histories of a group of New York State arrestees. The group analyzed consists of persons born in 1955 and having at least one arrest for a fingerprintable offense during the period 1971 through 1987.

Some research has suggested that drug users are heavily involved in theft-oriented crimes in an effort to have money or goods to purchase drugs (see Inciardi, 1986, p. 135; Johnson et al., 1985, p. 55; Gandossy et al., 1980, p. 48; Chaiken and Chaiken, 1982, p. 55). The present research explores this hypothesis by asking: Do persons with drug arrest histories generally have more extensive arrest histories? Are persons with drug arrest histories more likely to also have arrests for specific types of nondrug arrests than those without drug arrests?

### Data Sources

Data for this analysis came from a special "Offender-Based Transaction Statistics Trends" file that was created from the Computerized Criminal History database maintained by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. This file contains arrest and disposition information for all fingerprintable arrests of adults occurring in New York State for the time period 1970 through 1987. Only the highest arrest and disposition charges are retained in this file. Because the report is limited to persons born in 1955, only arrests since 1971 are included; this marks the beginning of adult criminality for this birth group. The analysis was restricted to a single birth year to control for historical differences in drug involvement and in arrest practices.

Each arrest in an offender's criminal history was classified into one of six groups based on the top arrest charge. Nondrug arrests were grouped into four categories: theft (not robbery), robbery, violence, and other nondrug. Drug arrests were classified into two groups: drug possession/use and drug sale. The particular offenses falling under each category are identified in Table 1.



**TABLE 1  
ARREST CLASSIFICATION SCHEME**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Components</u>
THEFT (not robbery)	Burglary Criminal Trespass 1st degree Grand Larceny Petit Larceny Forgery Other Offenses Relating to Theft (Penal Law Article 165)
ROBBERY	Robbery (Penal Law Article 160)
VIOLENCE	Murder Manslaughter (not vehicular manslaughter) Rape Sodomy Sexual Abuse Aggravated Assault (Includes assault 2nd and assault 1st, as well as reckless endangerment 1st) Simple Assault (Includes assault 3rd, menacing, reckless endangerment 2nd)
OTHER nondrug	Prostitution Driving While Intoxicated Weapon Offenses (Penal Law Article 265) Other Penal Law Offenses (nondrug) Other Fingerprintable Offenses (not Penal Law)
DRUG POSSESSION/USE (includes possession with intent to sell)	Penal Law articles 220 - 221 relating to possession PL 220.03, PL 220.05, PL 220.06, PL 220.09, PL 220.10 PL 220.12, PL 220.15, PL 220.16, PL 220.18, PL 220.20 PL 220.21, PL 220.22, PL 220.33, PL 220.46, PL 220.60 PL 220.65, PL 221.10, PL 221.15, PL 221.20, PL 221.25 PL 221.30
DRUG SALE	Penal Law articles 220 - 221 relating to sale PL 220.30, PL 220.31, PL 220.34, PL 220.35, PL 220.37 PL 220.39, PL 220.40, PL 220.41, PL 220.43, PL 220.44 PL 221.35, PL 221.40, PL 221.45, PL 221.50, PL 221.55

A four-level scale of drug involvement was developed. Persons without any drug arrests in their history were placed in the "no drug arrest" group. Those persons with one or more drug arrests in their history were categorized as: one drug arrest, two drug arrests, and three or more drug arrests. The type of drug involved in the arrests or the type of drug charge (i.e., drug possession or drug sale), was not incorporated into this scale.

The drug arrest histories are summarized in Table 2. Overall, 27 percent of the cohort had at least one arrest for a drug offense. Drug possession arrests were far more prevalent than drug sale arrests. Twenty-four percent of the cohort had at least one drug possession arrest, while only 7 percent of the cohort had any drug sale arrests. From the conditional frequency distributions presented in Table 2, it is clear that multiple drug arrests (as measured by top arrest charge only) do not occur in most individual's arrest histories. Among persons with at least one drug arrest, only 26 percent had multiple drug arrests. Among persons with at least one drug possession arrest, 21 percent had more than one drug possession arrest. For persons with at least one drug sale arrest, 27 percent had more than one such arrest in their criminal records.

**TABLE 2**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF ARRESTEES BORN IN 1955**  
**BY NUMBER OF DRUG ARRESTS WITHIN TYPES**  
**1971-1987**  
**NEW YORK STATE**

<u>DRUG ARREST TYPE</u>	Percent With Drug Arrest	Percent Given One or More Drug Arrests		
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3+</u>
Any Drug	27.1% (25,231)	74.2% (18,727)	14.5% ( 3,653)	11.3% ( 2,851)
Drug Possession/Use	23.5% (21,864)	79.1% (17,284)	13.5% ( 2,953)	7.4% ( 1,627)
Drug Sale	6.7% ( 6,241)	73.3% ( 4,577)	15.6% ( 976)	11.0% ( 688)

## THE DRUG-CRIME RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between the number of nondrug arrests and the number of drug arrests in an arrest history is shown in Table 3. First it should be noted that 45 percent of the persons with drug arrests do not have any nondrug arrests. This percentage declines as the number of drug arrests in a person's history increases. Concentrating on the "3 or more" nondrug arrests column expands on this finding. Persons with only one drug arrest are just as likely to have three or more nondrug arrests as those persons without drug arrests. As the number of drug arrests increases, the percent having three or more nondrug arrests increases as well. While only 1 person in 5 of those persons without drug arrests had three or more nondrug arrests, this ratio increases to nearly 2 in 3 for persons with three or more drug arrests. Similar findings may be found when the specific nondrug arrests are examined (data not shown). This suggests persons with extensive drug arrests are likely to also have extensive nondrug arrests.

Table 4 shows the relationship between number of drug arrests and the likelihood of specific nondrug arrests in an arrest history. Persons with three or more drug arrests have a much higher proportion with nondrug arrests than persons with only one or two drug arrests in their histories. Eighty-eight percent of the former group also have one or more nondrug arrests in their criminal histories. The greater involvement in nondrug arrests of this group is evident within each specific nondrug offense type.

Contrasting the "drug arrest" groups with the "no drug arrest" group provides further information. Persons with one or more drug arrests were 1.7 times more likely to have at least one robbery arrest than those persons without drug arrests. Overall, persons with drug arrests are less likely to have at least one theft, violence or "other" nondrug arrest in their history, but this is generally true only for those groups having a single drug arrest. Persons with three or more drug arrests are over 1.3 times as likely to have at least one theft arrest, 4 times as likely to have at least one robbery arrest, and over 1.6 times as likely to have at least one violence arrest as those persons without any drug arrests. It is only for "other" nondrug crimes that there is little difference in prevalence between the no drug and three or more groups.

Restricting the analysis to only felony nondrug arrests yields even higher prevalence ratios. Overall, persons with drug arrests are more likely to have at least one felony arrest in each offense type except for violence (data not shown). This indicates that persons with criminal histories involving drug arrests tend to be involved in more serious nondrug crimes than those persons without drug arrests in their history.

**TABLE 3**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF ARRESTEES BORN IN 1955**  
**BY NUMBER OF DRUG ARRESTS AND NUMBER OF NONDRUG ARRESTS**  
**1971-1987**  
**NEW YORK STATE**

		NUMBER OF NONDRUG ARRESTS				<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>MEAN</u>
		<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3+</u>		
NUMBER OF DRUG ARRESTS	0	0 0%	43,271 63.8%	10,451 15.4%	14,052 20.7%	67,774 100.0%	2.25
	1	10,041 53.6%	2,960 15.8%	1,668 8.9%	4,058 21.7%	18,727 100.0%	1.96
	2	993 27.2%	660 18.1%	445 12.2%	1,555 42.6%	3,653 100.0%	3.81
	3+	342 12.0%	380 13.3%	317 11.1%	1,812 63.6%	2,851 100.0%	6.29
	TOTAL	11,376 12.2%	47,271 50.8%	12,881 13.8%	21,477 23.1%	93,005 100.0%	2.37

**TABLE 4**  
**PERCENT WITH 1 OR MORE NONDRUG ARRESTS**  
**FOR PERSONS WITH AND WITHOUT DRUG ARRESTS**  
**1971-1987**  
**NEW YORK STATE**

<u>OFFENSE TYPE</u>	<u>NO DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ANY DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ONE DRUG ARREST ONLY</u>	<u>TWO DRUG ARRESTS ONLY</u>	<u>THREE OR MORE DRUG ARRESTS</u>
THEFT (no Robbery)	55.5	41.0 (.74)	32.9 (.59)	56.4 (1.02)	74.6 (1.34)
ROBBERY	7.9	13.4 (1.70)	9.1 (1.15)	19.2 (2.43)	33.8 (4.28)
VIOLENCE	27.4	23.0 (.84)	17.8 (.65)	32.2 (1.20)	44.9 (1.64)
OTHER	43.1	27.8 (.64)	23.0 (.53)	38.0 (.88)	46.2 (1.07)
NONDRUG	100.0	54.9	46.4	72.8	88.0

Note: The numbers shown in parentheses are the ratios of the percentages for the drug history categories to the percent of the "no drug arrest" category.

## CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT VERSUS DRUG INVOLVEMENT

These findings may be due in part to the extensive arrest histories of the three or more drug arrest group. As was noted in Table 3, persons with three or more drug arrests, tend, on average, to have a greater number of nondrug arrests than those with fewer drug arrests. If their arrests are not confined to certain types of crime (i.e., there is a lack of specialization), this would increase the likelihood that any specific type of crime would be present in their arrest histories.

To address this issue additional tables are presented that control for the number of nondrug arrests these persons have. Tables 5 through 7 present prevalence estimates, controlling for the total number of nondrug arrests. The most notable result of controlling for the number of nondrug arrests is the reduction in robbery prevalence differences between those without drug arrests and those with three or more drug arrests. Persons in this particular drug group were still twice as likely to have at least one robbery arrest in their history as those without drug arrests. This group was also more likely to have at least one arrest for theft or violence offenses than the nondrug arrest group and less likely to have "other" nondrug arrests. Also noteworthy is the general change of the ratios from Table 4. Controlling for the number of nondrug arrests produces ratios that are closer to one for all drug history groups. The ratios are also more consistent across the groups with drug arrests suggesting that some of the observed differences are due primarily to the greater number of nondrug arrests among persons with a greater number of drug arrests.

These findings suggest that it is not simply the number of nondrug arrests in a person's history that determine the likelihood that a person will have had an arrest for any specific type of crime, although it has some influence. The simple presence or absence of drug arrests appears to have its own impact on the likelihood of specific nondrug crimes being present in a person's history.

### DRUGS AND CRIMES OF THEFT

From the information presented so far, a picture emerges of persons with drug arrests in comparison with those without drug arrests. First, nearly half of the drug arrest group does not have any other types of arrest on record. As the number of drug arrests increases, the likelihood of nondrug arrests being present increases as well. A comparison of the likelihood of specific types of nondrug arrests being present in a person's history indicates that crimes of theft are more prevalent for persons with drug arrests than for those without drug arrests. The difference in prevalence is most pronounced for those with three or more drug arrests. As demonstrated in earlier tables, this phenomenon cannot be explained just by differences in the total number of nondrug arrests. There appears to be a different crime distribution of nondrug arrests for those drug arrestees having nondrug arrests than for arrestees without drug arrests. These differences are shown in Table 8.

TABLE 5  
 PERCENT WITH 1 OR MORE NONDRUG ARRESTS  
 FOR PERSONS WITH AND WITHOUT DRUG ARRESTS  
 HAVING EXACTLY TWO NONDRUG ARRESTS  
 1971-1987  
 NEW YORK STATE

<u>OFFENSE TYPE</u>	<u>NO DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ANY DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ONE DRUG ARREST ONLY</u>	<u>TWO DRUG ARRESTS ONLY</u>	<u>THREE OR MORE DRUG ARRESTS</u>
THEFT (no Robbery)	61.6	66.8 (1.08)	65.9 (1.06)	67.9 (1.10)	70.3 (1.14)
ROBBERY	7.0	12.3 (1.76)	11.9 (1.70)	11.2 (1.60)	15.8 (2.26)
VIOLENCE	30.0	31.2 (1.04)	30.8 (1.03)	30.1 (1.00)	35.3 (1.18)
OTHER	50.6	44.2 (.87)	45.4 (.90)	45.2 (.89)	36.0 (.71)

Note: The numbers shown in parentheses are the ratios of the percentages for the drug history categories to the percent of the "no drug arrest" category.

**TABLE 6**  
**PERCENT WITH 1 OR MORE ARRESTS**  
**FOR PERSONS WITH AND WITHOUT DRUG ARRESTS**  
**HAVING EXACTLY THREE NONDRUG ARRESTS**  
**1971-1987**  
**NEW YORK STATE**

<u>OFFENSE TYPE</u>	<u>NO DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ANY DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ONE DRUG ARREST ONLY</u>	<u>TWO DRUG ARRESTS ONLY</u>	<u>THREE OR MORE DRUG ARRESTS</u>
THEFT (no Robbery)	72.2	81.5 (1.13)	80.9 (1.12)	82.1 (1.14)	82.8 (1.15)
ROBBERY	11.8	15.6 (1.32)	13.2 (1.12)	17.3 (1.46)	22.5 (1.91)
VIOLENCE	41.2	40.6 (.99)	41.2 (1.00)	40.6 (.99)	38.2 (.93)
OTHER	59.8	51.8 (.87)	53.8 (.90)	50.2 (.84)	46.4 (.78)

Note: The numbers shown in parentheses are the ratios of the percentages for the drug history categories to the percent of the "no drug arrest" category.



**TABLE 7**  
**PERCENT WITH 1 OR MORE ARRESTS**  
**FOR PERSONS WITH AND WITHOUT DRUG ARRESTS**  
**HAVING EXACTLY FOUR NONDRUG ARRESTS**  
**1971-1987**  
**NEW YORK STATE**

<u>OFFENSE TYPE</u>	<u>NO DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ANY DRUG ARREST</u>	<u>ONE DRUG ARREST ONLY</u>	<u>TWO DRUG ARRESTS ONLY</u>	<u>THREE OR MORE DRUG ARRESTS</u>
THEFT (no Robbery)	79.8	86.2 (1.08)	85.2 (1.06)	85.9 (1.08)	89.2 (1.12)
ROBBERY	17.3	26.5 (1.53)	24.5 (1.41)	24.1 (1.39)	34.0 (1.97)
VIOLENCE	51.1	47.3 (.93)	47.6 (.93)	49.4 (.97)	44.4 (.87)
OTHER	63.9	58.8 (.92)	60.6 (.95)	63.9 (1.00)	48.8 (.76)

Note: The numbers shown in parentheses are the ratios of the percentages for the drug history categories to the percent of the "no drug arrest" category.

TABLE 8  
 PERCENT OF TOTAL NONDRUG ARRESTS  
 FOR PERSONS WITH AND WITHOUT DRUG ARRESTS  
 1971-1987  
 NEW YORK STATE

<u>OFFENSE TYPE</u>	<u>NO DRUG ARREST</u> (152,181)	<u>ANY DRUG ARREST</u> (68,512)	<u>ONE DRUG ARREST ONLY</u> (36,671)	<u>TWO DRUG ARRESTS ONLY</u> (13,908)	<u>THREE OR MORE DRUG ARRESTS</u> (17,933)
THEFT (no Robbery)	45.5	52.8	50.9	53.8	55.8
ROBBERY	5.3	8.8	8.1	8.7	10.3
VIOLENCE	17.4	15.5	15.8	15.4	14.8
OTHER	31.8	23.0	25.2	22.1	19.1

Note: The numbers shown in parentheses are the total number of nondrug arrests for each drug arrest group.

Nearly 53 percent of the nondrug arrests for persons classified as drug arrestees were for crimes of theft. In contrast, only 46 percent of the arrests for persons without drug arrests were for theft. When robbery arrests are included with the other theft arrests, the difference increases. Almost 62 percent of the nondrug arrests for those in the drug group were for the combined crimes of theft. Only 52 percent of the arrests for those without drug arrests were for theft or robbery. The differences are even greater when persons with three or more drug arrests are examined. Fully two-thirds of the nondrug arrests among this group were for crimes involving theft. The crime distributions of felony nondrug arrests also differ, with a similar tendency for theft crimes, particularly robbery, to be more likely for persons with drug arrests in their history (data not shown).

### CONCLUSIONS

Persons with drug arrests in their criminal histories generally have more extensive nondrug arrest histories than persons without drug arrests. As persons have more drug arrests in their history they tend to have a greater number of nondrug arrests as well. Even so, 45 percent of those persons with histories containing drug arrests do not have any nondrug arrests.

The total number of nondrug arrests has some bearing on the likelihood of specific types of arrests being present in a person's criminal history. Nonetheless, crimes involving theft, and in particular robbery, are more likely to be present in the histories of persons who also have a history of drug arrests than among those persons without drug arrests, even after controlling for the total number of nondrug arrests. This is especially true for those persons having three or more drug arrests in their history.

These findings are consistent with those of other research. The cohort members with extensive drug arrests seem very much like the "violent predator" described by Chaiken and Chaiken (1982), who is heavily involved in a variety of crimes including robbery, assault, and burglary (1982, p. 55). The tendency toward serious theft crimes for persons with drug arrests is consistent with a number of other studies that have used different study populations and research methodologies (see Johnson et al., 1985; Innes, 1988; Eckerman et al., 1971; and Kozel and Dupont, 1977).

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