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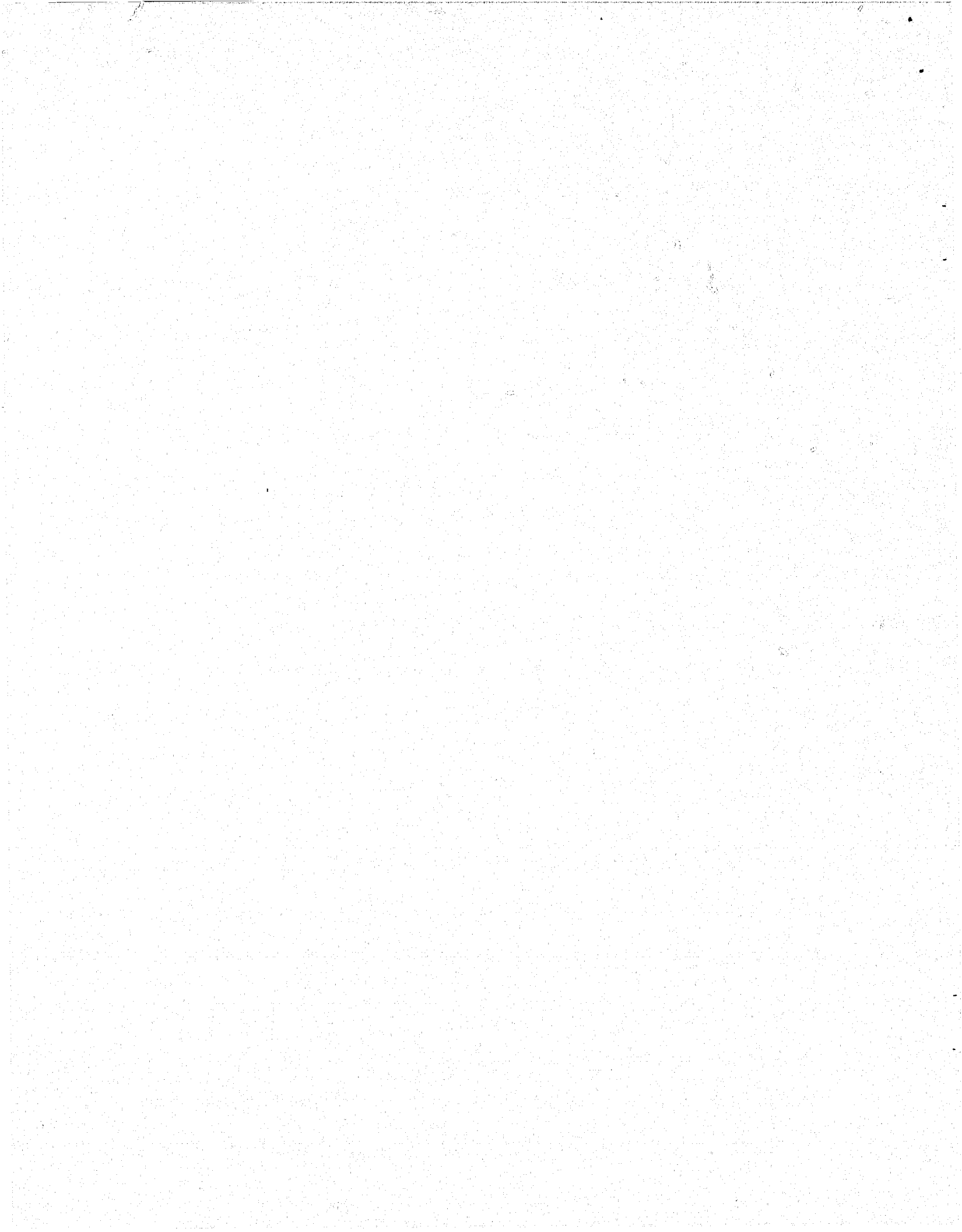
Women in the Criminal Justice Process  
in the District of Columbia:  
An Analysis of Some Recent Trends

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I. The Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the nature and extent of women's involvement in criminal activity in the District of Columbia. A description of the general trends that have occurred between 1973 and 1978 will be provided, along with a more detailed presentation of the difference between male and female criminal trends and the changes in the type of crime females are committing. The three categories of crime that will be examined are violent crimes, index crimes and non-index crimes.

By taking a closer look at specific crimes in these three categories, the trends of female criminality between 1975 and 1978 will be analyzed in more detail in order to determine the nature of the trends of female criminality.

## II. General Trends

Prison population size is determined by two factors:

1) how many are put into prison and 2) how long they stay. Input rates to Corrections presumably are contributed to, or partially determined by, each of the following: crime rate, arrests, pre-trial release policy, convictions and sentences to incarceration. The length of stay is determined by pre-trial and pre-sentencing delay, length of sentence, and parole policy.

Relevant data is only partially available (broken down by sex) in the District of Columbia. The following analysis and conclusions are based on the available data from police and corrections.

Table I presents the number of arrests, admissions to detention, sentences of incarceration and the average daily population for females between 1973 and 1978.

There has been little change in the number of arrests for index crimes for females between 1973 and 1978. There were 1208 females arrested for index crimes during 1973 and 1126 arrests during 1978, or a 7% decrease. The largest annual increase occurred between 1975 and 1976. The number of index crime arrests increased from 1053 during 1975 to 1273 during 1976. Since 1976 the number of arrests of women for index crimes has steadily decreased. There was a 9% decrease between 1976 and 1977 and a further 3% decrease between 1977 and 1978.

Non-index crime arrests of females also experienced its largest annual increase during 1975. Non-index arrests increased from 2909 during 1975 to 3476 during 1976, or a 19% increase. Non-index crime arrests increased again, by 8%, between 1976 and 1977. The trend changed between 1977 and 1978 resulting in a 10% decrease in the number of non-index crime arrests. There were 3746 non-index crime arrests during 1977 and 3351 non-index crime arrests during 1978.

The number of female admissions to detention has fluctuated between 1973 and 1978 with no clear trend. The largest increase occurred between 1974 and 1975. There were 463 admissions to detention during 1974 and 937 admissions during 1975. This represents a 102% increase in admissions while arrests of women were declining by 10% overall. There was a 22% decrease in admissions between 1976 and 1977, and a 5% increase between 1977 and 1978. There appears to be a leveling off in the number of female admissions to detention.

There was a 91% increase in the total number of women sentenced to incarceration between 1975 and 1976. The number of female sentences of incarceration increased from 254 during 1975 to 485 during 1976. The number of sentences of incarceration peaked during 1976 and steadily declined between 1976 and 1978. The number of sentences of incarceration decreased by 9% between 1976 and 1978. In other words, in 1975 there was one carcera-

tion sentence imposed on women for every 15 to 16 arrests. During 1976 through 1978 the ratio was one incarceration for every 10 arrests.

The largest increase in the average daily population of incarcerated women (in both District of Columbia and Federal Bureau of Prisons facilities) occurred between 1975 and 1976. The average daily population in D.C. facilities increased from 79 during 1975 to 147 during 1976. This represents an 86% increase.

There was a 9% decline in the average daily population between 1977 and 1978. The average daily population decreased from 148 during 1977 to 128 during 1978. The D.C. female population in the Federal Bureau of Prisons rose from 57 in 1975 to 87 in 1976 (+53%), and to 101 in 1977 (+16%). It remained basically stable, at 98, for 1978.

The average maximum length of sentence imposed on females is only available for the years 1975 through 1978. The longest average sentence for females occurred during 1975. The impact of these longer sentences was not felt until 1976 when the average daily population increased by 72%.

The number of female arrests, admissions to detention, sentences of incarceration and average daily population all increased dramatically during 1975 and 1976, though the rate of increase in arrests hardly accounts for the much more dramatic

increases in admissions and average population. After 1976 most of these trend indicators began to level off or decline slightly. During 1978 all of the trend indicators explored in this report declined with the exception of detention admissions, which increased marginally (5%), and the average maximum length of sentence, which increased from 18 months to 19 months.

Using a sample of Central Detention Facility population distributions for females, provided by the Office of Automatic Data Processing, the following trends were found in the status of detainees:

1) The proportion of female sentenced felons has remained relatively constant between 1976 and the first quarter of CY 1979. The lowest percent of sentenced felons (27%) occurred during 1977 and the highest percent of sentenced felons occurred during the first quarter of CY 1979 (36%).

2) The proportion of female unsentenced felons has decreased substantially, when the first quarter of CY 1979 (21%) is compared with 1976 (43%).

3) The proportion of sentenced misdemeanants has increased substantially when the first quarter of CY 1977 (33%) is compared with 1976 (7%).

4) The proportion of unsentenced misdemeanants has remained relatively constant between 1976 (19%) and the first quarter of CY 1979 (15%).



The most readily apparent trends that have had an impact on the female population at the Central Detention Facility are the decrease in the percent of unsentenced felons being incarcerated and the increase in the number of sentenced misdemeanants being incarcerated. It is possible that the two are related. One way of reducing a back-log of pre-trial felons is to accept pleas to misdemeanor charges.

### III. A Comparison of Female and Male Arrest Rates

In order to analyze women's trends in arrests it is useful to compare the number of female arrests with the number of male arrests for index crimes, violent crimes and non-index crimes. Table II presents the number of male and female arrests for index and non-index crimes (1971-1978) and Table III presents the number of male and female arrests for violent crimes (1975-1978).

The largest number of arrests of females for index crimes occurred during 1972 (1364) and the smallest number occurred during 1971 (1016). The largest amount of arrests of males for index crimes occurred during 1974 (9344) and the smallest number occurred during 1978 (6043). When index crimes are viewed as a percent of the total amount of crime for males and females, 1971 is the year which had the lowest percent of both male and female index crime arrests (22% and 14% respectively).

Between 1974 and 1977 there was a slow decline in the percent of both male and female arrests for index crimes. This decline ended during 1978 when male arrests for index crimes increased by 1% and female arrests increased by 2% of the total arrests.

During 1972 there was only a marginal (1%) difference between men and women in the proportion of arrests which were for index crimes. The largest proportional difference between males and females occurred during 1971 when male arrests for index

crimes accounted for 22% of all male arrests, and female arrests for index crimes accounted for 14% of all female arrests. The difference between the proportion of arrests for index crimes for males and females averaged 7% between 1973 and 1975. The difference between the proportion of arrests for index crimes for males and females averaged 4.3% between 1976 and 1978. This data gives support to the notion that females are committing index crimes at a rate that increasingly approaches the male index crime rate.

The largest number of arrests for non-index crimes between 1971 and 1978 occurred during 1971 for both males and females (28,752 and 6,402 respectively). The smallest amount of arrests for non-index crime occurred during 1978 (14,243) for males and during 1975 (2909) for females.

The ratios of male to women's arrests for index crimes, non-index crime and violent crime between 1971 and 1978 reveal that women are being arrested for proportionally more of the total arrests, and of index crime arrests in particular, when compared to males. The ratio of male to female index crime arrests was 1:8 for 1971 and 1:5.4 for 1978.

The ratio of male to female non-index crime arrests has remained relatively constant between 1971 and 1978. The ratio of male to female non-index crime arrests was 1:4.5 for 1971 and 1:4.4 for 1978.

Table II illustrates that both males and females are being arrested for proportionally fewer violent crimes between 1975 and 1978 (from 20.1% to 15.6% for men, and from 11.9% to 8.5% for women). There has also been a substantial decrease in the absolute number of males and females arrested for violent crimes. Male arrests for violent crimes decreased each year between 1975 and 1978. Female arrests for violent crimes decreased each year between 1976 and 1978.

There was a sharp decline in arrests for violent crimes between 1977 and 1978. Male arrests for violent crimes decreased by 15% between 1977 (3730) and 1978 (3171). Female arrests for violent crime decreased by 20% between 1977 (471) and 1978 (374).

#### IV. Trends in Types of Offenses Committed by Females

When arrests of females for individual violent offenses are viewed, only arson is being committed more today than four years ago, though robbery did show a high peak in 1976 and 1977. Table VI presents trends for six specific violent offenses. The largest proportional increase in arrests for a violent offense was in the robbery category. Females arrested for robbery accounted for 21.4% of all violent offense arrests of women during 1975 and 26.2% of all violent offense arrests of women during 1978. This was down from 30.9% in 1977.

The proportion of females arrested for murder and aggravated assault was lower during 1978 than during 1975. As previously mentioned, total arrests for violent crime of females decreased steadily between 1975 and 1978.

Every category of non-index arrests for females was proportionally lower during 1978 than during 1975, with the exception of arson, embezzlement and prostitution. In the case of prostitution it should be noted that there was an unusually low number of arrests during 1975, thus inflating these trends. There was a 5.5% increase in prostitution, and only marginal increases in arson and embezzlement (.2% and .5% respectively). The largest proportional decrease in non-index crime arrests of women between 1975 and 1978 occurred in the weapons category. Arrests of females for weapons offenses

decreased from 4.3% of all arrests during 1975 to 2.1% during 1978.

Non-index crime arrests of females remained relatively constant during 1975, 1976 and 1978, and increased only slightly during 1977. The only substantial shift that occurred was the overall increase in arrests for prostitution between 1975 and 1976 (+47%).

V. Costs

The average per capita cost during 1978 for females at the Detention Center was \$30.81. Properly comparable total costs for incarceration of females for the years between 1974 and 1978 may be obtained by multiplying the average daily population for each year, by the 1978 average per capita cost (\$30.81). When this comparison is done 1977 produced the highest daily costs for the Department of Corrections. The annual cost to taxpayers and to the Department for the detention of women rose from \$641,000 in 1974 to \$1,664,000 in 1977 (+160%). It dropped slightly in 1978 to \$1,440,000. Using constant per capita daily costs for the care and custody of women in Federal Bureau of Prison Facilities (\$25.89 for FY 77) costs rose from \$538,600 in 1975 to \$954,400 in 1977 (+77%).

Summary

During 1977 and 1978 females were arrested, admitted to detention and sentenced to incarceration at lower levels than they were during 1976. In addition, the average maximum length of sentence was shorter. These four factors contributed to the 14% decrease in the average daily population for females between 1977 and 1978.

Trends in male and female arrests for both index and non-index crimes have fluctuated between 1971 and 1978, but both males and females were arrested for fewer index and non-index crimes during 1978 than during 1977. There were also progressively fewer arrests for violent crimes for both males and females from 1975 to 1978. The data does not support the notion that females are being arrested for more crimes, more serious crimes, or more violent crimes. In fact just the opposite is true. In spite of this, incarceration costs for women have risen over \$1.5 million for the District of Columbia.



Table I. Women's Trends in Criminal Justice  
in the District of Columbia

Year	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Arrest						
Index	1208	1226	1053	1273	1160	1126
Non-Index	3411	3156	2909	3476	3746	3351
TOTAL	4619	4382	3962	4749	4906	4477
Detention Admissions	694	463	937	1293	1007	1056
Sentences of Incarceration						
Adult			234	439	428	402
Youth			19	37	22	29
Other			1	9	8	10
TOTAL			254	485	458	441
Average Daily Population						
DC	64	57	79	147	148	128
FBP			57	87	101	98
TOTAL			136	234	249	226
Average Maximum Length of Sentence (in months)	-	-	27	23	18	19

Table II. Arrests: Comparison of Male & Female Trends

Index Crime	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Male	8128	8542	7671	9344	8054	7736	6212	6043
% of all male arrests	22%	30%	33%	35%	34%	31%	29%	30%
Female	1016	1364	1208	1226	1053	1273	1160	1126
% of all female arrests	14%	29%	26%	28%	27%	27%	24%	26%
Non Index Crime	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Male	28752	20028	15875	17381	15875	17574	15041	14243
% of all male arrests	78%	70%	67%	65%	66%	69%	71%	70%
Female	6402	3391	3411	3156	2909	3476	3746	3252
% of all female arrests	86%	71%	74%	72%	73%	73%	76%	74%
TOTAL	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Male	36880	28570	23546	26725	23927	25310	21253	20286
Female	7418	4755	4619	4382	3932	4749	4906	4398

Table III. Arrests: Comparison of Male & Female Trends

<b>Violent Crimes</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1978</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>4990</b>	<b>4607</b>	<b>3730</b>	<b>3171</b>
<b>% of all male arrests</b>	<b>20.9%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>15.6%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>% of all female arrests</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
<b>Total Arrests</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1978</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>23929</b>	<b>25310</b>	<b>21253</b>	<b>20286</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>3962</b>	<b>4749</b>	<b>4906</b>	<b>4398</b>

Table IV. Crime-Specific Arrests:  
Index Offenses, FY 75-78

Index Offenses	FY 1975		FY 1976		FY 1977		FY 1978	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Murder & Manslaughter	35	3.3	34+1	2.8	24+1	2.2	20	1.7
Rape	0	-	0	-	4	.3	2	.2
Robbery	101	9.6	153	12.0	146	12.6	98	8.7
Aggravated Assault	268	25.5	295	23.2	240	20.7	190	16.7
Burglary	52	4.9	47	3.7	42	3.7	41	3.6
Larceny	548	52.0	683	53.6	657	56.6	705	62.6
Auto Theft	49	4.6	60	4.7	46	4.0	70	6.2
<b>Total Index Arrests</b>	1053	27.0	1273	26.8	1160	23.6	1126	26.1
<b>Total Arrests</b>	3962		4749		4906		4398	

Table V. Crime-Specific Arrests:  
Non-Index Offenses, FY 75-78

Non-Index Offenses	FY 1975		FY 1976		FY 1977		FY 1978	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Other Assaults	69	2.4	97	2.8	90	2.5	49	1.5
Arson	15	.5	9	.2	14	.4	23	.7
Forgery	110	3.8	90	2.5	92	2.5	84	2.6
Fraud	71	2.5	92	2.6	86	2.3	68	2.1
Embezzlement	16	.5	16	.5	24	.6	33	1.0
Stolen Property	44	1.6	63	1.9	51	1.4	32	.9
Vandalism	41	1.5	51	1.5	32	.9	40	1.2
Weapons	125	4.3	158	4.5	120	3.2	68	2.1
Prostitution	643	22.1	947	27.2	1099	29.3	896	27.6
Other Sex Offenses	24	.9	63	1.9	41	1.1	16	.5
Drugs	344	11.9	365	10.5	349	9.3	377	11.6
Gambling	81	2.8	74	2.1	73	1.9	33	1.0
Other	1316	45.2	1451	41.8	1675	44.6	1533	47.2
Total Non-Index Crime Arrests	2909	73.4	3476	73.2	3746	76.4	3252	73.9
Total Arrests	3962		4749		4906		4398	

Table VI. Crime-Specific Arrests:  
Violent Crimes, FY 75-78

Violent Offenses	FY 1975		FY 1976		FY 1977		FY 1978	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Murder & Manslaughter	35	7.5	34+1	6.5	24+1	5.4	20	5.3
Rape	0	-	0	-	4	.9	2	.5
Robbery	101	21.4	153	28.4	146	30.9	98	26.2
Aggravated Assault	268	56.9	295	54.7	240	50.9	190	50.8
Burglary	52	11.0	47	8.8	42	8.9	41	11.0
Arson	15	3.1	9	1.6	14	3.0	23	6.2
Violent Crime Arrests Sub-Total	471	11.9	539	11.3	471	9.6	394	8.5
Total Arrests	3962		4749		4906		4398	

**END**