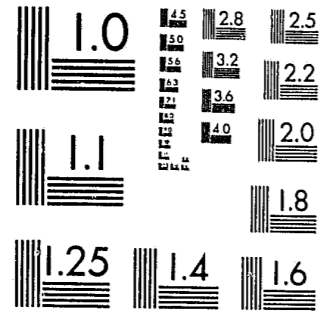


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THE YOUNG CRIMINAL YEARS OF THE VIOLENT FEW

by

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THE YOUNG CRIMINAL YEARS OF THE VIOLENT FEW

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November 15, 1984

The authors of this report are associated with the Federation for Community Planning in Cleveland, Ohio. The Federation engages in action-oriented research, planning and community education in health and human services. Founded in 1913, the Federation is a non-profit, citizen-led organization that numbers more than 200 health, social service and civic organizations as members. For more information about this report, contact the authors at the Federation for Community Planning, 1001 Huron Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44115, 216/781-2944.

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THE YOUNG CRIMINAL YEARS OF THE VIOLENT FEW

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is a serious affliction. It damages the victim, the social fabric of trust, and, perhaps most of all, the individual delinquent. For the youthful law violator, delinquency is a omen of a bad future. Though we have seen that many delinquents for various reasons terminate their careers soon after they begin, we have also seen that there are many who persist. They will become recruits for the adult criminal population, with a potential for ever more destructive behavior and for costly dependency on the apparatus of corrections and welfare. The element of violence to which we have given attention heightens the gravity of their situation and emphasizes the urgent need for new and better solutions for the problems they present. (The Violent Few, p. 142)

Written in 1978, these words reflect the concern of many Americans with the volume and character of juvenile crime. They highlight the growing perception that something is seriously wrong with our society. And they explain why many citizens are uneasy about their own safety, why they have modified their behavior to decrease their vulnerability to crime, and why they have called for stronger measures to address the problem of violent juvenile crime.

In the years since The Violent Few was written, the growing juvenile responsibility for violent crime in the United States has leveled off -- and some sources, in fact, have indicated that the problem of juvenile

violent crime has become less serious. We have found that a relatively small proportion of juveniles commit violent crimes.

Today, we also know that the most serious threat to society is the violent juvenile who is a chronic offender -- arrested five or more times -- involved primarily in non-violent crimes. We know that the vast majority of juveniles involved in violent offenses are not repeat violent offenders. Yet, public concern remains high.

Designed to enhance our understanding of the criminal behavior of juveniles and young adults, this study builds upon the information reported in The Violent Few, which addressed two basic questions:

- (1) What are the social and criminal characteristics of juveniles who are arrested for violent crimes?
- (2) What relationship do these characteristics bear to identifiable violent career patterns?

The Violent Few demonstrated that:

- o Juvenile violent offenders were a very small fraction of the total number of youth. Among all age eligible juveniles in the City of Columbus [Ohio], not more than two percent were arrested for violent offenses.
- o Juveniles do not typically progress from less serious to more serious crimes -- and it is difficult, indeed, to predict violent criminality.
- o Status offenders are not headed down a slope toward confirmed criminality. Fewer than ten percent of the delinquents in the study began their careers with a status offense.
- o Institutional commitment is a disappointing measure of the ability to prevent future delinquency and rehabilitate violent offenders. For those studied, the impact of institutional treatment was basically negative. Time on the street between arrests diminished dramatically after each institutional commitment.

The Young Criminal Years of the The Violent Few continues the analysis of violent juvenile offenders. It expands the analysis of a cohort of violent juvenile offenders and follows them into early adulthood -- the period ending in the mid-twenties. Tracking the adult criminal involvement of 1,222 persons who all had been arrested for at least one violent or assaultive offense as juveniles, it shows that

- o almost 60 percent of these individuals were arrested at least once as a young adult for a felony offense;
- o the first adult arrest was very likely to be prior to age 20;
- o youths who went on to be arrested as adults tended to have more arrests as juveniles, to have begun their delinquent acts earlier and continued them late into their juvenile years, and to have been involved in the more serious types of violent offenses as juveniles; and
- o there is a clear continuity between juvenile and adult criminal careers.

While these results paint a bleak picture of a serious social problem, the data also yield new insights into factors that differentiate between types of offenders and offense patterns -- insights that may help achieve more effective targeting of crime control, rehabilitation and incapacitation programs.

#### The Changing Context of Crime in America

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the juvenile justice system -- and specifically, the juvenile courts, came under increasing criticism.

These criticisms were the result of several factors, including

- o the escalation of crimes of violence committed by juveniles -- a 44% increase between 1969 and 1978;

- o the growing public perception that the system was not working and juveniles weren't being rehabilitated. While some have argued that the system wasn't adequately tested or funded, the public impression was that it had failed;
- o perceptions that juveniles were being denied due process protections; and
- o the fact that non-offenders frequently were being punished more severely than serious juvenile offenders.

In response to public concern and criticism, a series of changes addressed problems within the juvenile justice system. These changes included both closing -- or reducing the number of -- training schools in several states and the adoption of "get tough" legislation in 25 states, which made it easier to try juveniles as adults for serious and violent crimes. In addition,

- o the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which required the removal of non-offenders from secure detention facilities and the separation of juveniles and adults in secure detention, was enacted by Congress;
- o federal court action prevented the administrative transfer of delinquents to adult correction facilities; and
- o some jurisdictions established procedures that ensured that only the most serious juvenile delinquents would be placed in "non-rehabilitative" training schools.

These actions directed the courts to make dispositions that related to the seriousness of the offenses. In the 1970s, however, there was an absence of data on the nature and characteristics of serious juvenile offenders, the numbers involved and the type and patterns of offenses committed. Subsequent studies, including The Violent Few and The Young Criminal Years of the Violent Few, have addressed this void.

#### A Brief Description of the Data and Research Methodology

This study is a cohort analysis, one of the very few attempted in the United States for the investigation of crime and delinquency. It is the only such study that focuses on a cohort of juveniles all of whom have been arrested for a violent offense, as opposed to a cohort of the general delinquent population. Also, it is the only cohort study to date that provides the "transitional" data needed to explore the continuity issue for juvenile violent offenders and adult offenders.

A cohort is a complete universe of persons defined by one or more events. Membership in the cohort for both The Violent Few and this study is defined by birth in the years 1956-1960, arrest for at least one violent offense as a juvenile in Columbus, Ohio and residence in Franklin County, Ohio during the course of the delinquent career.

The cohort consisted of 1,222 members -- including those identified in the original study plus 84 additional people. This present analysis describes violent and other juvenile arrests in Columbus from 1962 to 1978 and follows the cohort members through their early adult careers, if any, up to mid-1983.

Cohort analyses are powerful tools for analyzing the relationships of age, race, sex, age of onset, progression, maturation and termination of criminal behavior. It permits us to explore the issues of chronicity and severity -- and to examine the effects of various dispositions upon future behavior over time.

However, it should be noted that a cohort analysis is limited to a particular universe and generates authoritative propositions for that universe only. Distinguishing between the effects of history and maturation is often difficult -- and gaps or losses of information may be introduced by the inability to obtain a complete data profile, either because the individual or records cannot be located. Therefore, the interpretation of our findings should be approached with caution and over-generalizations should be avoided.

Juvenile and adult arrest records were obtained from the Columbus Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification. Juvenile and adult corrections records were obtained from the Ohio Department of Youth Services and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. Because over 95% of the adult arrests of cohort members occurred in Ohio (identified by the FBI), the corrections records of other states were not sought.

It also should be noted that the setting for the cohort was a metropolitan area of about 750,000 people (in 1970). The Columbus area was not characterized by high unemployment, extensive poverty or juvenile gangs. In addition, the number of arrests for simple assaults was lower in the later years of the study than in earlier years, reflecting the Police Department's altered policy of handling many such cases without making a formal arrest or involving the courts.

#### The Juvenile Years: An Expanded Analysis of The Violent Few

The juvenile arrest records of the 1,222 members of our cohort reflect diverse patterns of criminal activity, ranging from murder and other violent offenses to a broad variety of property and other non-violent offenses. They provide a basis for several assertions about the character and distribution of their juvenile delinquent offenses.

1. A relatively small number of violent juvenile offenders were responsible for most of the arrests -- and a small number of individuals were arrested for violent crime.

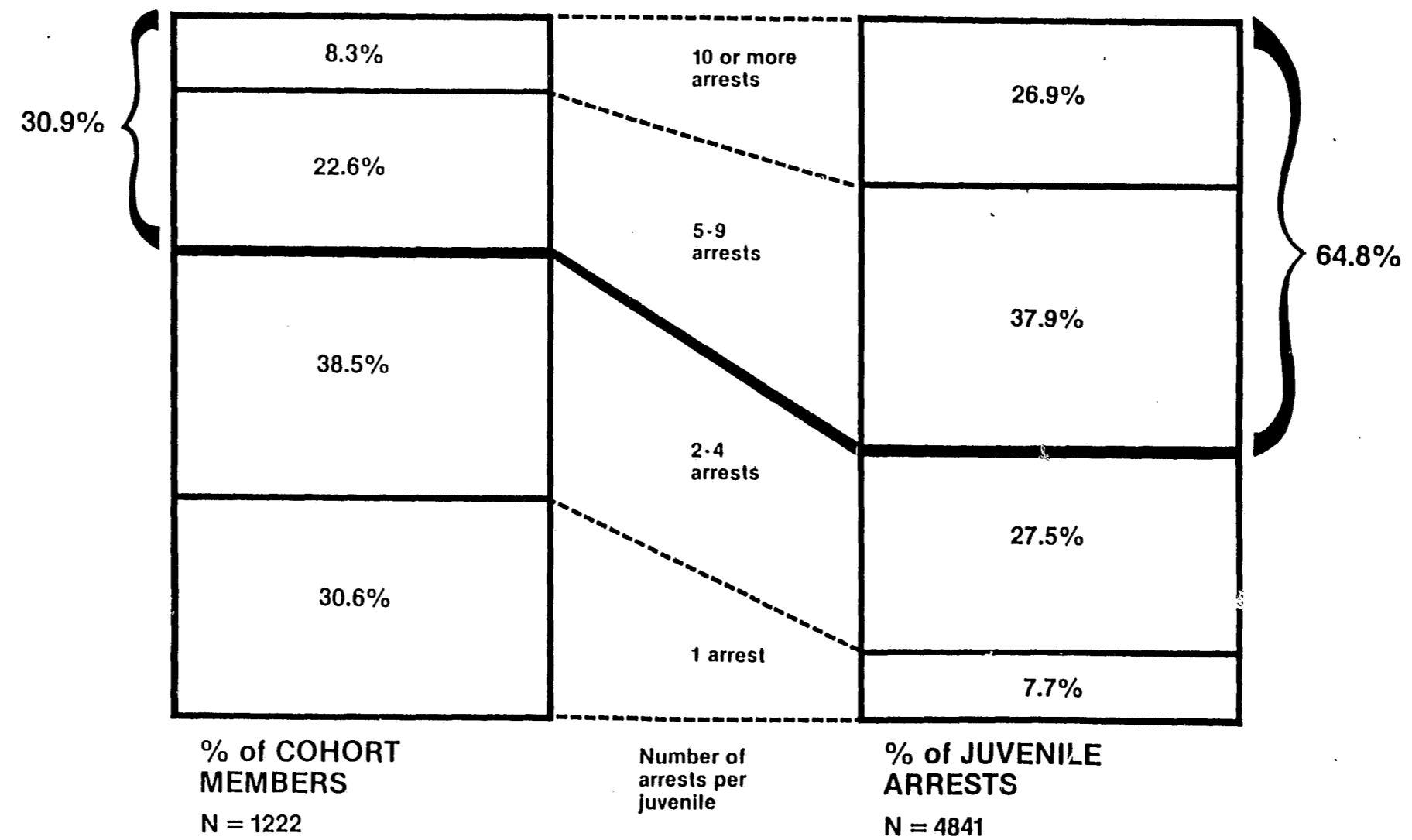
The dominant population in our cohort is repeat and chronic juvenile offenders. Once arrested, the likelihood of a subsequent arrest was high. Sixty-nine percent of those who had one arrest went on to a second juvenile arrest. Nearly one-third were chronic juvenile offenders (arrested 5 or more times), and almost three-quarters of those who had four arrests went on to a fifth.

The chronic offenders arrested five or more times accounted for fully two-thirds of all reported delinquencies for the cohort -- and the 105 youth with ten or more juvenile arrests accounted for more than one-quarter of all juvenile arrests. The juvenile chronic offender also accounted for four out of every ten juvenile arrests for index violence.

2. Males and blacks are overrepresented in the cohort -- and they account for an even greater proportion of juvenile crime.

Males accounted for 84.5% of the cohort, while blacks were represented by about three times their proportion in the general population

Figure 1  
 Number of Juvenile Arrests  
 of Cohort Members



(54.2%). In addition, there were other differences between males and females -- and between blacks and whites. Most notably:

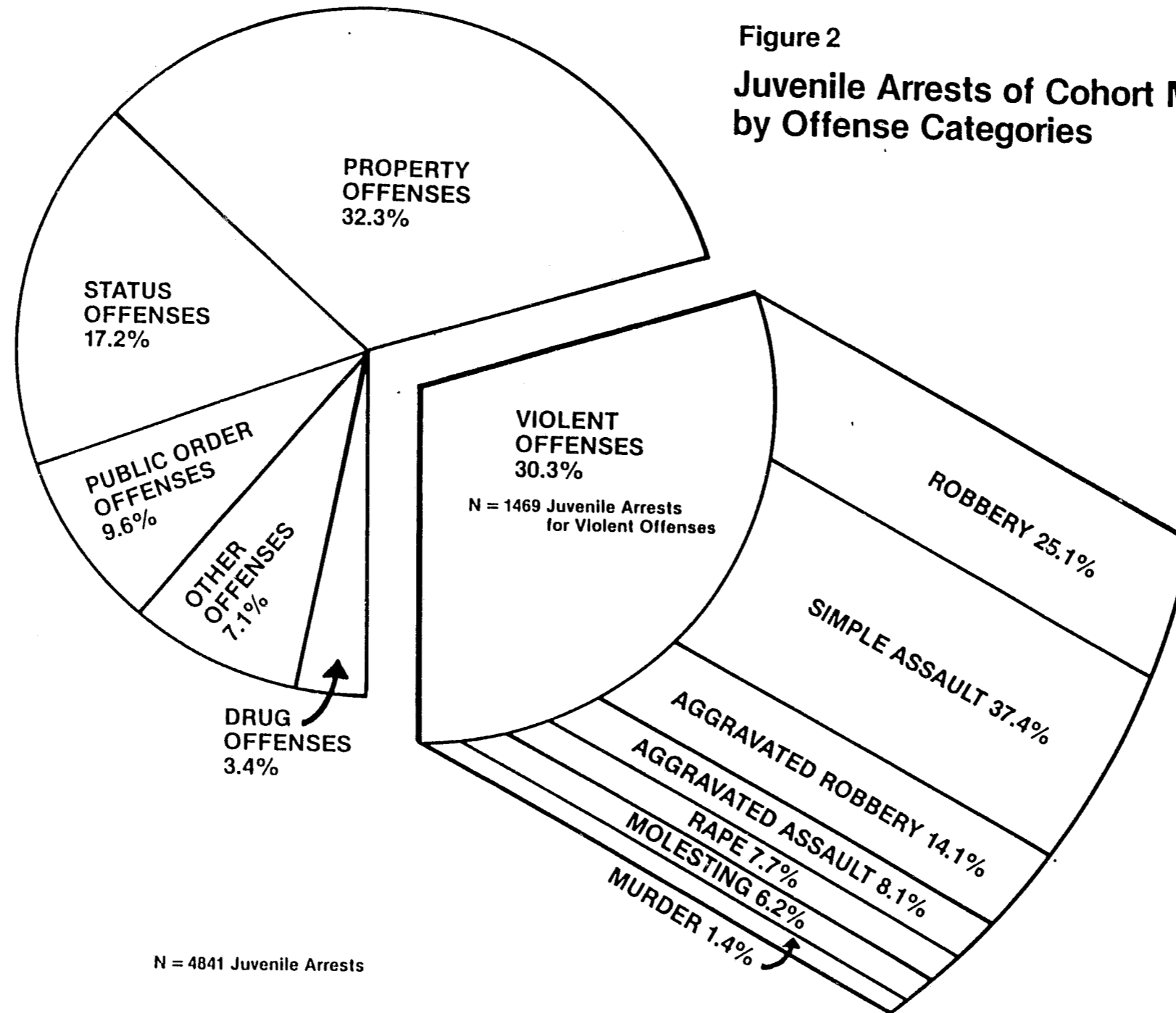
- o females were less likely than males to be arrested for index violent crime -- and almost three-quarters of all the females were arrested for assault and battery as their most serious violent offense;
- o black youth tended to have their first arrest earlier than whites, were arrested for more index violent offenses, institutionalized more often and detained longer; and
- o blacks were more likely to be repeat offenders, while in percentage terms there were more white than black juvenile chronic offenders (that is, five or more arrests as juveniles).

3. Violent juvenile offenders, as a group, do not specialize in the types of crimes committed.

While public concern and the attention of policy makers have been focused in recent years on violent juvenile crime, our data suggest that violent offenses accounted for just over 30% of all juvenile arrests by the cohort. Most frequently, this violence is reflected in assaults (37.4%), robbery (25.1%) and aggravated robbery (14.1%). Murder accounted for just 1.4% of violent juvenile arrests, while rape and molesting accounted for 7.7% and 6.2%, respectively. About 3 out of every five of these arrests were for index violent crimes, while nearly 44% were for simple assault and molestings.

Nonviolent offenses accounted for nearly 70% of the reported juvenile crime. Property offenses were most frequent -- 32.3% -- and status, public order, drug and other offenses accounted for the remaining 37%.

Figure 2  
Juvenile Arrests of Cohort Members  
by Offense Categories





4. Relatively few violent juvenile offenders are repeat violent offenders.

Again, growing public concern and government initiatives have encouraged a perception that an increasing number of youthful offenders are "specializing" in violent crime -- and that these violent youth are responsible for a significant portion of the most serious crimes. Our data do not support this perception. To the contrary, it causes us to reject this popular notion.

Consider, for example, the following facts:

- o The repeat violent offender is a rare occurrence. Only 15.4% of the juveniles examined in this study had been arrested more than once for a violent crime -- and fewer yet (8.1%) for index violence.
- o Only a handful -- 2% or 24 people -- had two or more arrests for index violent offenses and no other arrests at all.
- o Nearly half of all violent youthful offenders had at least one arrest for a property offense; just less than 40% had at least one arrest for a status offense; and over one quarter had at least one arrest for a drug offense.

5. Most violent juvenile crimes do not involve the use of weapons.

In our cohort, weapons were used in about 30 percent of the violent offenses. They were used in all homicides and in just under one-third of the robberies. By definition, virtually all of the aggravated assaults -- and few of the simple assaults -- involved a weapon of any kind. As we will see in our discussion of the adult experience, weapons were used much more frequently in adult crimes.

6. Less than one-third of the juveniles in our cohort had been sent at least once to a state juvenile correctional facility -- but those youth who had been incarcerated generally had a higher arrest rate after release.

Of the 1,222 cohort members, 355 (or 29%) had at least one stay in a state juvenile correctional facility. Nearly half (48.8%) of these individuals were institutionalized a second time, while 44.2% of these juveniles went back a third time. Our data also show that more than 40% of the cohort members spent more than a year in a training school during their juvenile years.

Compared to those juveniles who were never sent to a correctional institution, committed youth were more frequently male, black, first arrested before age 13 and last arrested at age 17. In addition, they were more often repeat or chronic offenders -- and had been arrested for index violence. Finally, juveniles committed to training schools had more arrests on the average -- for a broad range of offenses -- and less time between arrests than those without a commitment.

#### The Transition to Adulthood

In the introductory paragraphs to The Violent Few, the authors write:

The outlines of the nation's future crime problem can be discerned in the nature and volume of juvenile delinquency today. The boys and girls who make up the present caseload of youthful offenders will not all go on to careers in adult crime, but the influences that have entangled them weigh heavily on all their generation. (p. 1)

Not all juvenile offenders go on to careers in adult crime -- and yet, we know very little about the transition from the juvenile to the adult systems of justice. Hence, this portion of the analysis examines that transition -- to expand our knowledge about the characteristics of those juvenile offenders who do (or do not) come into contact with the adult criminal justice system.

Our data provide the basis for three assertions about the transition to adulthood:

1. Nearly 3 out of every five cohort members were arrested at least once for an adult offense.

For those individuals in our cohort, fifty-nine percent were arrested at least once for an adult offense between their 18th and 23rd-27th birthdays. (This figure includes a few juveniles who were arrested as adults before their 18th birthday.)

This 59% figure is a conservative estimate, since state and federal sources under-report misdemeanor offenses and misdemeanor offenders. In addition, some cohort members had or will have their first adult arrest after the data collection was completed in August, 1983.

2. Cohort members arrested as adults were more likely to be male, index violent offenders as juveniles, first arrested at age 12 or younger and committed at least once to a state juvenile correctional facility.

Our data support the view that not all juvenile offenders are equally likely to make the transition to the adult criminal justice system. The 721 cohort members (out of the total cohort of 1,222) who made the transition from juvenile to adult offenders were

- o more likely to be male. Sixty percent of male juvenile offenders became adult offenders, while less than one-third of the female cohort members were arrested as adults.
- o more likely to have been first arrested at age 12 or younger. While the relationship is not as strong here, the data show that nearly two-thirds of cohort members whose first arrest were at age 12 or before were arrested as adults, while only 56% of those whose first juvenile arrest came after the age of 12 became adult offenders.
- o more likely to have been chronic offenders as juveniles. Not surprisingly, one-time juvenile offenders were less frequently arrested as adults (36.1%), while 77.5% of chronic juvenile offenders made the transition to the adult system.
- o more likely to have been index violent offenders as juveniles. Only 53% of juvenile assaulters were arrested as adults, while 63.4% of juvenile index violent offenders made the transition to the adult system. Eight out of ten repeat index violent offenders became adult offenders.
- o more likely to have been committed to a state juvenile correctional facility. More than three-quarters of those juveniles who were institutionalized (76%) were arrested as adults, compared to just over half (52%) of those juveniles who had not been committed to a juvenile training school.

One additional variable that appears to be related to the probability of an individual's transition to the adult system is his/her age at the time of the last juvenile arrest. This linkage points to the continuity of juvenile and adult criminal careers -- and it is to this element that we now turn our attention.

3. There is a continuity between juvenile and adult criminal careers.

We have already seen that juveniles arrested for the first time at an early age -- and who continue to be arrested throughout their juvenile years -- are most likely to be rearrested at 18 or 19 years of age.

Table 1  
Characteristics of Cohort Members Arrested as Adults

	Adult Offenders (N=721)		Total Cohort (N=1222)	% of Total Cohort Members
<b>Sex</b>				
Females	62	of	189	32.8%
Males	659	of	1033	63.8%
<b>Race</b>				
White	332	of	560	59.3%
Black	389	of	662	58.8%
<b>Age of 1st Juvenile Arrest</b>				
≤ 12	254	of	391	65.0%
13 - 15	334	of	595	56.1%
16 - 17	133	of	235	56.6%
<b>Age of Last Juvenile Arrest</b>				
≤ 15	166	of	432	38.4%
16	171	of	264	64.8%
17	384	of	525	73.1%
<b>Number of Juvenile Arrests</b>				
1	135	of	374	36.1%
2-4	293	of	470	62.3%
5+	293	of	378	77.5%
<b>Most Serious Violent Arrest</b>				
Assault	273	of	515	53.0%
Index Violent	448	of	707	63.4%
<b>Training School Commitments</b>				
No Commitments	450	of	867	51.9%
One Commitment	125	of	183	68.3%
More Than One	146	of	172	84.9%
<b>Repeat Index Violent Offenses</b>				
0	273	of	515	53.0%
1	368	of	608	60.5%
2+	80	of	99	80.8%

When not incarcerated, these persons remain active in the criminal justice system -- at least to the termination point for our data collection. At every adult age, there is a small but consistent proportion who are not rearrested, but for the majority of offenders there is a continuity between the arrests of the juvenile and adult years.

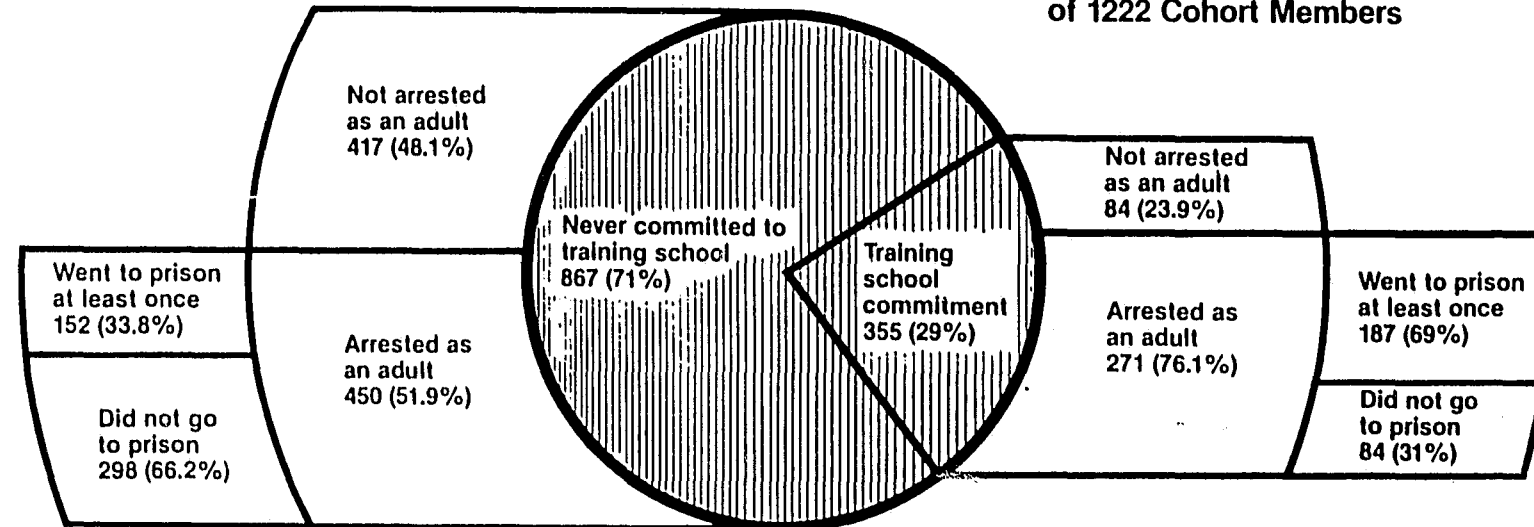
This element of continuity is best reflected in the adult experiences of juveniles who were arrested at the ages of 16 and 17. In our cohort, 70.3% of these individuals were arrested as adults, compared to 38.4% of those cohort members whose last juvenile arrest occurred at 15 years of age or younger.

Continuity also is reflected in the fact that nearly three-quarters of those arrested as adults had their first adult arrest before age 20. In fact, most cohort members with adult arrests (77%) had their last juvenile arrest at either 16 or 17 -- and their first adult arrest before age 20 (71.4%).

The late teen years -- 17 through 19 -- are key ages for the criminal careers of these youth:

- o 17 was the most frequent age to be arrested for an offense of any kind -- and to be arrested for a violent offense;
- o 18 was the most frequent age to be arrested for property offenses;
- o 18 was the most frequent age at which the first adult arrest of any type occurred -- and it was the most frequent age to be arrested as an adult for an index violent offense; and
- o 17 was the most frequent age to be institutionalized as a juvenile -- and 19 was the most frequent age to be first imprisoned as an adult.

Figure 3  
Likelihood of Adult Incarceration  
Following Juvenile Career  
of 1222 Cohort Members



Like most states, Ohio treats youth arrested at ages below age 18 in separate courts and correctional systems from adults -- although it has a legal mechanism for transferring juvenile offenders to the adult system for trial and/or incapacitation. Recognizing that any chronological distinction carries a degree of arbitrariness, one must still ask if the 18-year-old threshold is appropriate, given the available evidence -- at least for this special group of offenders. This is a critical policy issue for our criminal justice system today -- and it is one to which we will return at the end of this report.

Finally, it must be understood that the identification of the characteristics of cohort members likely to continue on to adult criminal behavior does not provide a basis for individual prediction. For example, even among juveniles who spent more than one year in training schools -- the subgroup with the highest probability of an adult arrest -- accurate individual prediction isn't possible. Nevertheless, our analysis of variance indicates that the limited number of variables used in this study explain fully 17% of the variance in a model to predict continuation of criminal activity as adults.

#### The Adult Experience

It is one thing to identify the characteristics of cohort members who make the transition from the juvenile to the adult criminal justice systems. It is another to examine the adult criminal experience of

these 721 individuals -- all of whom were arrested at least once for a violent juvenile offense. It is this task to which we now turn our attention.

Our cohort data indicate that the 721 offenders were arrested a total of 2,958 times during the 5 to 9 years of adulthood observed. They averaged 4.1 arrests per person. As juveniles, these same people had been arrested 3,492 times -- an average of almost 5. Thus, the 59% of the cohort who went on to be arrested as adults accounted for 72.1% of all the juvenile arrests of cohort members.

Our data also allow us to make the following assertions:

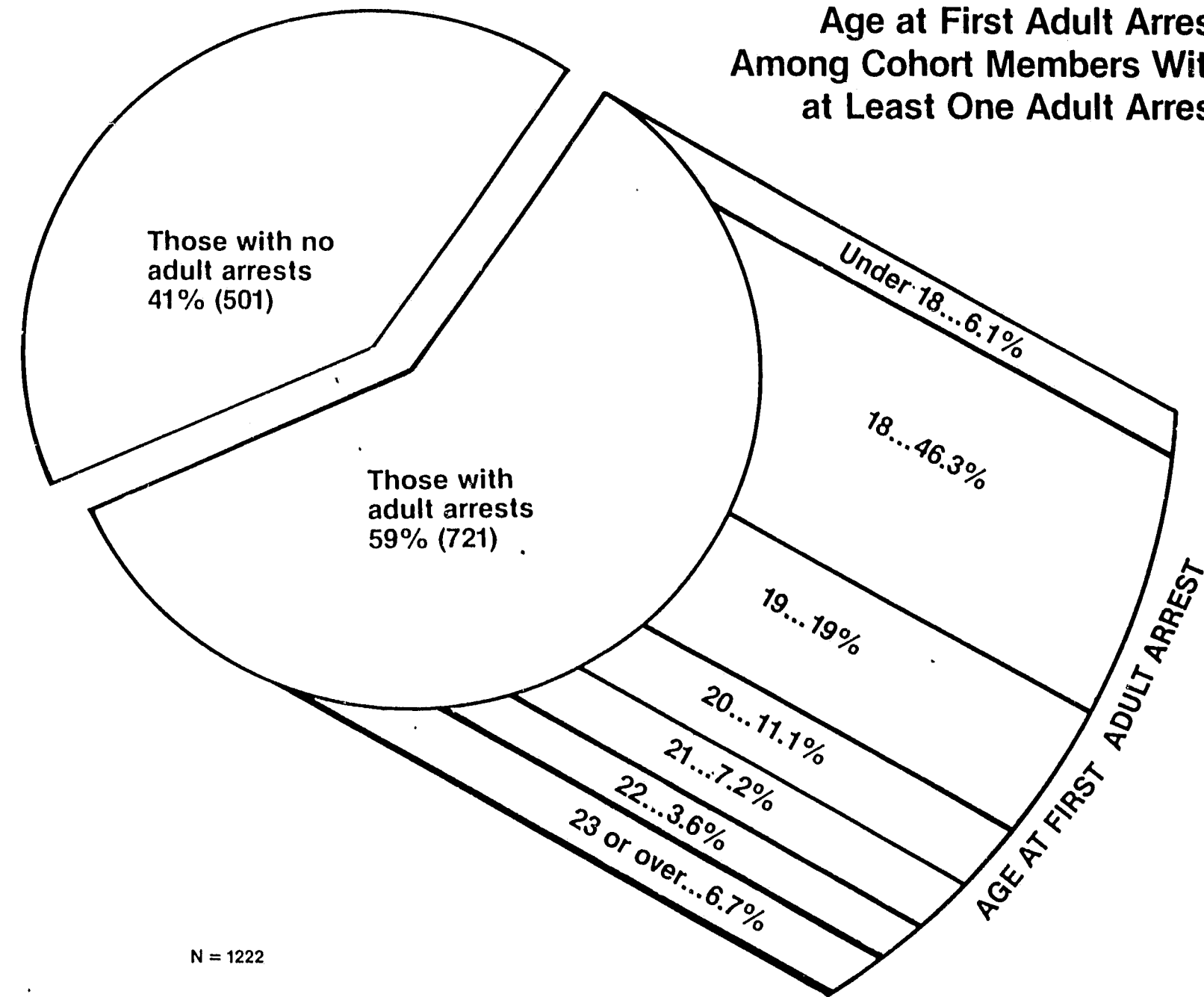
1. Frequency of arrests declines with age.

Among arrests involving 18 to 22 year olds, three out of every ten were 18 years old, while two of ten were 19 and about one of every seven were 22 years of age. In part, the decline in the frequency of arrests may be the result of incarceration.

2. Most adult crimes committed by juvenile violent offenders are not violent.

The 2,958 adult arrests included in this study involved 4,296 charges. One out of every eight charges (12.6%) was index violent in nature -- and another 8% were for minor assaults. Despite the fact that juvenile violence was the major criterion for membership in the cohort,

Figure 4  
Age at First Adult Arrest  
Among Cohort Members With  
at Least One Adult Arrest



N = 1222

there were almost four times as many charges against the adult offenders for non-violent offenses as for violent. As was true for juveniles, property offenses (42.1%) dominated the offense pattern of adults.

3. Four out of ten adult offenders were arrested for at least one index violent crime.

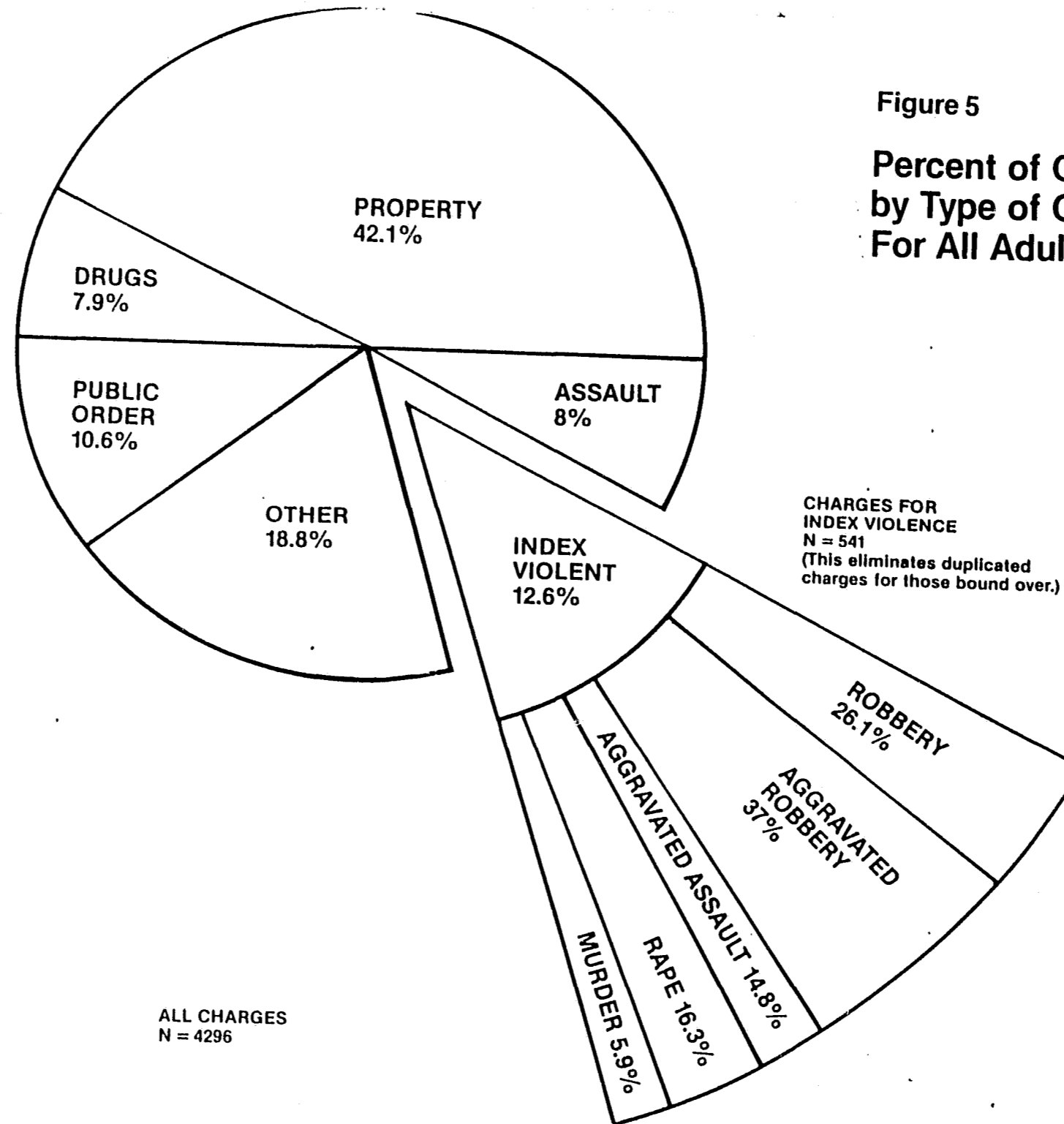
Forty-two percent of our cohort members arrested as adults were charged with at least one index violent offense. This is a lower percentage than these same individuals experienced as juveniles (62%). Yet, in contrast to our findings for juvenile offenders, adults were more frequently repeat index violent offenders (15.5%) -- and among index violent offenders, adults were twice as likely to have three or more arrests for index violent crimes (32.1% as compared to 16.2%).

The distribution of index violent offenses also differed between juveniles and adults. For juveniles, 44.6% of all index violent arrests were for unarmed robbery -- and 55% for more serious aggravated violent offenses. And weapons were used in only one-third of all index violent crimes.

As adults, the cohort members were charged with unarmed robbery one-quarter of the time. Aggravated offenses accounted for fully three-quarters of all index violent crimes. And the more serious violent offenses -- including aggravated robbery and rape -- increased in both absolute and relative terms from the juvenile to adult period.

Figure 5

Percent of Charges  
by Type of Offense  
For All Adult Arrests





4. Almost half of the arrested cohort members were imprisoned as adults -- and about half of those released went back a second time.

Forty-seven percent of those youth arrested at least once as adults were imprisoned -- and 41.9% of these were imprisoned more than once. In addition, almost half (45.7%) of those incarcerated had their first imprisonment by age 20.

For both juveniles and adults, rates of arrest generally increase after each incarceration and the median number of days prior to recommitment -- "street time" -- decreases. Yet, special care must be taken in interpreting these data since some of the adult offenders were "adults" for less than five years during the period of this study.

Juvenile incarcerations -- both in terms of number of commitments and duration -- also increase the probability of that individual going to prison as an adult. However, the number of juvenile arrests is the single most important juvenile variable in explaining who goes to prison as adults. While the data are not unequivocal, it appears that juvenile offenders who age into adulthood -- from 17 to 18 -- are not given a "clean slate" as adults. There is little evidence to suggest that they are given a "free ride" through the first adult arrests.

Finally, these data offer support for the conclusion that those with the greatest penchant for criminal behavior are identified and incarcerated. However, an alternative explanation is that incarceration may actually increase the criminality of offenders in its care.

## Integrating Juvenile and Adult Criminal Behavior

The uniqueness of our data -- with its information about juvenile and adult criminal experiences -- permits us to place the 1,222 cohort members in four categories. First, there are the one-time-only offenders who were arrested for a single violent offense as juveniles -- and then were not arrested again as juveniles or as adults. Second, juvenile assaulters' most serious violent juvenile offense was simple assault -- and they may or may not have been arrested for an adult offense. Third, repeat offenders were those cohort members who were arrested more than once as a juvenile or adult -- and in the case of chronic offenders, were arrested at least five times during their criminal career.

The fourth group are juveniles who were bound over to criminal court and tried as adults for offenses committed before reaching the age of 18. In our cohort, this group consisted of 19 individuals who had a total of 118 juvenile arrests. They were all serious offenders -- measured in terms of the charged offense, the length of their juvenile record, the length of time spent in training schools or a combination of these factors. This special group of offenders had been identified and specially handled by the juvenile and the criminal justice systems -- and they will not be examined further in this analysis.

### 1. The One-Time-Only Offender

One-time-only offenders differ sharply from the other members of the cohort. They have committed a single violent offense as juveniles --

and then do not make the transition into the adult system.

This group of offenders represented 19.6% of our total cohort (239 out of 1,222). The available data tell little or nothing about why these cohort members stopped after one arrest. However, they do indicate that these one-time offenders were

- o more likely to be white;
- o disproportionately female;
- o in most cases, not committed to training schools;
- o usually arrested for non-index violent offenses (55.6%);
- o frequently charged (in one-quarter of the one time only assault cases -- or 34 cases) with an assault that occurred while police were attempting to make an arrest for another -- less serious -- crime.

## 2. Juvenile Assaulters

Of our total juvenile cohort of 1,222 individuals, the most serious offense(s) was simple assault or molesting (in 515 cases). The other 707 people (or 57.9% were arrested for an unarmed robbery or aggravated violent offense).

Our data provide a basis for several comparisons between these two groups of offenders. Juvenile assaulters were more likely to be:

- o female -- nearly three-quarters of all female cohort members had assault as their most serious juvenile violent offense arrest;
- o white -- over 51% of the assaulters were white, while only 42% of the index violent offenders were white;
- o one-time-only offenders -- and less likely to be chronic offenders. While index violent offenders averaged 4.3 arrests, assaulters averaged 3.4 arrests; and

- o first arrested before age 13 -- for both violent and non-violent offenses.

Compared to index violent offenders, juvenile assaulters were less likely to be:

- o committed to training schools (i.e., index violent offenders were 4.5 times more likely to be committed at least once);
- o arrested as adults (53%, compared to 63.4% for index violent offenders;
- o arrested for index violent offenses as adults, although slightly more than one-third of all juvenile assaulters increased the seriousness of their violent offenses with an arrest for an index violent crime as an adult; and
- o sent to prison as adults.

## 3. Chronic Offenders

Chronic offenders can be classified as (a) juvenile chronic -- cohort members with five or more arrests during their juvenile years; (b) adult chronic -- adults with five or more arrests; and (c) total chronic -- the most serious offenders with five or more arrests as juveniles and as adults.

Nearly one-third of the 1,222 cohort members were juvenile chronic offenders by age 18 -- and more than one-third of the adult offenders were adult chronic. One hundred and fifty three cohort members -- or 12.5% of cohort members were total chronics (that is, they were responsible for almost half of all juvenile arrests and more than 45% of all adult arrests). With a total of 2,598 arrests, these cohort members had an average of 17 arrests each.

Not surprisingly, the chronic offender rate in our special cohort of violent offenders is higher than that found in general population cohort studies. For example, in Wolfgang's 1958 male birth cohort, only 7.5% percent of a general population, including those with no police contact, became chronic offenders. However, Wolfgang found that 23% of all youth with at least one police contact ultimately became chronic delinquents.

Despite the greater chronicity in our violent cohort, the comparison with Wolfgang's 1958 cohort shows that chronic offenders were similar in terms of proportion of delinquency among the total cohort for which they were responsible. Sixty-five percent of all juvenile arrests in the violent cohort could be attributed to chronic offenders, while chronic offenders were responsible for 61% of all arrests in the general population cohort. Although the measures of chronicity differ slightly in the two studies, the similar outcomes are striking. Having a violent arrest does not change the pattern of chronicity as it impacts upon total number of arrests in different groups.

Once arrested, the likelihood of a subsequent juvenile arrest is consistently high. Over 69% of those who had one arrest went on to a second -- and 74.7% of those who had four arrests went on to a fifth. This pattern is consistent with findings of other studies, including

general population cohorts. Consistent with our finding of a 74.7% likelihood of re-arrest as a juvenile after the fourth arrest, Wolfgang found a 71% probability for the 1945 birth cohort and an 82% probability for the 1958 cohort. Other studies have found similar results.

Based upon our data, the following assertions can be made about chronic offenders:

- o chronic offenders were disproportionately male, arrested for the first time by the age of 13, and incarcerated in juvenile training schools;
- o three-quarters of the juvenile chronic offenders became adult offenders;
- o more than 50% of all adult offenders were chronic juvenile offenders;
- o the 293 juvenile chronic offenders with an adult arrest were responsible for over half of all adult arrests;
- o 60 of the juvenile chronic offenders (8% of the adult offenders) were repeat index violent offenders as adults -- and they accounted for one-third of all adult arrests for index violence;
- o most juvenile chronic offenders had been incarcerated -- 54% were committed at least once to training schools, and 63.5% with at least one adult arrest went to prison;
- o 70% of adult chronic offenders went to prison at least once; and
- o if there had been no chronic offenders among the cohort, the number of arrests would have been reduced by 50%.

#### Policy Implications

At the outset, it was suggested that the findings set forth in this report provide a rather grim picture of our juvenile justice system --

and more specifically, of the problem of violent juvenile crime. And yet, the data also yield new insights into the characteristics of juvenile and adult offenders -- and valuable information about the development of criminal careers. As such, these data provide the foundation for developing effective crime control, rehabilitation and incapacitation programs.

Based on the findings summarized in this report, it appears that (1) most violent juvenile offenders make the transition to adult offenders; (2) there is a continuity between juvenile and adult criminal careers; (3) a relatively few chronic offenders are responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes; (4) the frequency of arrests declines with age; and (5) incarceration has not slowed the crime rate -- in fact, it seems to have increased the subsequent rate of arrest.

Our findings permit us to address four policy issues:

1. Should society's efforts be targeted at the problem of violent crime -- or should they be designed to attack the persistence of chronic offenders?

It already has been suggested that our data provide no basis for predicting individual violent behavior. Nearly half of all juveniles arrested for violent offenses desist after one or two arrests (for violence). Most juveniles arrested for violent offenses are generalists who commit many more public order and property offenses than they do violent offenses. Juveniles arrested for violent offenses do not

start with minor offenses and with each arrest increase the severity of the offense. In fact, our data indicate that violence is incidental in the chronic and violent offenders' delinquent and crime pattern.

The experience of the federal government's Violent Offender Program reinforces our findings. The program's inability to identify enough repeat violent juvenile offenders in several sites required changes in the definition of the violent offender. Only by modifying the definition of the target population were they able to identify a large enough population for the carrying out of the program.

In contrast, our data clearly indicate that the chronic offender has a high probability of continuing to become involved in criminal activity. For this reason, the violent juvenile offender who is chronic should be the first priority of federal, state and local officials. If we are to have a positive effect on juvenile delinquency, it will come from the recognition that most juvenile chronic offenders begin early, continue unabated -- except for interruptions for incarceration -- and become adult offenders. And it will come from strategies that let chronic offenders know that there are predictable consequences for their anti-social behavior.

2. Given the "continuous" pattern of criminal behavior, why do we persist in treating 16-17 year olds and 18-19 year olds in non-integrated systems?

The decision to define 17 year olds as juveniles and 18 year olds as adults -- as is the case in most states -- is an arbitrary one. It causes us to treat 16-17 year olds and those 18-19 in different sys-

tems, even though the 16-17 year old juvenile offender may be more like the 18-19 year old adult offender than the 14-15 year old. Yet, there is no evidence to suggest that the criminal justice system would be more successful in dealing with 16 and 17 year old youth, nor is there any reason to believe that the juvenile justice system could better handle the 18 and 19 year old offender.

To be sure, the present dual system is not detouring criminal activity. It is essential, therefore, that we consider a variety of changes in court practices, in incarceration practices, and in both institutional and non-institutional programs. Clearly, the answer here is not to toss the juvenile into the adult criminal justice system. The reforms of the past eighty years have been designed, in part, to limit this practice.

It may be appropriate, however, to consider the development of a variety of joint juvenile/adult programs. These initiatives need to ensure continuity and accountability. They must give the juvenile justice system incentives to do things right -- and not merely to "deal" with troubled youth until age removes the system's responsibility for new offenses.

For example, we need to think about developing a youthful offender system that offers programs for young adults (16-19 years of age). These programs would emphasize work readiness, job training and work experience -- as opposed to remedial education as is the case in most training schools today. By the time youth have reached 16, with few

-- if any -- high school credits and are alienated from the school system, the possibility of their becoming re-involved in traditional education is almost non-existent. Hence, we ought to think about "sheltered" employment for many of these youth who have been in the juvenile justice system for all purposes and out of school from the time they were 12 to 14 years of age.

These programs would be designed to help youth "make it" in the non-criminal world. They would learn to balance a check book, pay bills, buy food, talk to employers, conduct themselves in job interviews and hold down a job. Such a subsidized employment program could be structured around a revitalized "CCC program" for young adults -- programs that provide employment, training, work experience and a needed community service.

3. What, if anything, can we do to break the persistence of the violent and chronic offender?

Incarceration has long been viewed as the ultimate means of breaking the pattern of criminal behavior. Yet, our data indicate that the institutional experience -- for both juveniles and adults -- had a negative effect on subsequent criminal activity. While generalizations are difficult, it is clear that few of our juvenile cohort members desisted after a stay in a juvenile training school. This suggests that our juvenile justice system has little deterrent effect on future juvenile -- and adult -- misconduct.

What, then, is the answer? First, it is important that intervention come early and that it not be nominal. To quote the authors of The

Violent Few:

Experience must not suggest that the system is aleatory. A youth must conclude that the decision of the court depends on the mood of the judge, a special word from a probation officer, or his own neatly combed hair. He must expect that there will be intervention and that that intervention will make requirements of him that he must meet.

Such an intrusion into the delinquent's life need not be and usually should not be a term of residential treatment. It must not, however, be merely a scathing reprimand from the bench for "supervision" without supervisory contact. Where violence was part of the offense, the youth in court should be impressed with the true seriousness of the situation. That impression must be reinforced by continuing encounters with representatives of the system at school, in the home, and on the street. Where appropriate, restitution should be required, and where that is either impossible or inappropriate, a community order should be issued and enforced. Sometimes removal from a disorderly and delinquency-generating home may be needed, in which case placement in a foster or group home may be necessary.

In essence, the court system should be designed to ensure some degree of predictable, graduated consequences for illegal acts. Individual conduct may not be predictable, but the justice system's response to criminal behavior must be.

As a general rule, programs designed to meet the needs of juvenile delinquents -- and to detour an emerging pattern of criminal behavior -- should include

- o provisions for close ties to the community to which the youth will return;
- o a flexible, youthful, positive staff who can act as role models for the youth;

- o strict enforcement of rules, with assurances that the facility/program operate in a manner that is consistent with the law;
- o a significant reward structure and activities that allow for success by offenders;
- o group activities -- to the fullest extent possible -- with positive peer cultures;
- o a maximization of choice in decision-making by individuals, with consequences clearly and fully related to the choices made;
- o an opportunity to enhance self-esteem for positive societal activities;
- o work readiness training; job experience and job placement;
- o continuity of care between the program/treatment sequence and integration into the community to which the youth is returning; and
- o supportive services in the community should be available after completion of the program/treatment/sentence as long as the youth needs them.

Finally, it must be recognized that some juvenile offenders cannot be kept out of trouble by any programs in operation today -- or by initiatives envisioned in the foreseeable future. Nor is any single approach appropriate for all juvenile offenders. Yet, we need to develop new technologies and to assess new programs. And we must take those actions -- and modify existing programs -- that offer substantial promise for a better life for our troubled youth.

**END**