

CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
JUVENILE DIVISION

NCJRS

OCT 30 1978

ACQUISITIONS

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RECIDIVISM STUDY OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS

September 22, 1977

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## ACQUISITIONS

I. SOME BASIC DEFINITIONS

Recidivism - a finding of delinquency, violation of probation, or conviction in criminal court for a youth under 17 who already had a finding of delinquency.

Recidivism Rate - the percentage of those with findings of delinquency who get new findings. The new findings are for violent or non-violent offenses, unless otherwise noted.

This study ignored new charges without findings since it was decided to use a strict interpretation of recidivism.

New Findings - either of delinquency or of violation of probation. Findings up to April 1, 1977 were counted. Status offenses are excluded.

Offense - For purposes of tabulation each petition, regardless of the number of counts, is counted as one offense. If a petition has findings both for a violent and a non-violent offense, it is counted as violent.

Violent Offenses - For purposes of this study, violent offenses are limited to rape, robbery, homicide, assault, and battery.

Base Group - in 1974, over 800 youths had findings of delinquency for violent offenses. Over 200 of these went to the Department of Corrections. Those remaining numbered 606. Except where otherwise noted, these 606 are the base group. They are traced from their finding in 1974 through March, 1977 for findings on new offenses.

Base Offense or Base Finding - the violent offense for which there was a finding of delinquency in 1974. If a youth had two such findings in 1974, the first one is the base finding.

II. OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATES

Overall recidivism rates are proportions of the base group with new findings at any time until April 1977. Several such rates are presented. They vary according to violence and seriousness of new offense, and age of offender. (In these overall rates for any recidivism and for violent recidivism, each offender is counted only once, even if he committed two new offenses.)

A. General

Of the 606 juveniles in the base group, 84 had findings for new offenses, violent or non-violent. In other words, the proportion with any overall recidivism was 1 in 7, or 14%.

B. Age

The overall recidivism rate was lower for older juveniles:

Most (337)<sup>1</sup> of the base group were 15 or older January 1, 1974, and so had much less time than the others to commit new offenses as juveniles. These had an overall recidivism rate of 1 in 20, or 5% of that age group.

Those under 15 on January 1, 1974 had an overall recidivism rate of 1 in 4, or 25% of that age group.

C. Violent Recidivism

For almost half (41) of all 84 recidivists, the new findings were for violent offenses. This makes a violent recidivism rate of 7%, or 1 in 14, of the total base group.

D. Multiple Recidivism

Eleven recidivists had findings for more than one new offense: 10 had 2 new findings; 1 had 3 new findings. They make for a multiple recidivism rate of 2%, or 1 in 50, of the base group.

E. Seriousness of Recidivism Offense

In 18 instances the new offense was more serious<sup>2</sup> than the base (1974) offense. Thus only 3%, or 1 in 33, became involved in offenses more serious than that for which they were originally referred.

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<sup>1</sup>One youth who turned 17 before 1974, although his finding was in 1974, is not counted here.

<sup>2</sup>The standards for deciding which offenses were more serious are as follows: 1) Those offenses defined in law as necessarily involving (more) physical harm or contact. Thus rape or battery is considered more serious than robbery or assault. 2) Those as serious as the 1974 finding, but with more counts. There were two such cases. 3) Aggravated battery was considered more serious than (simple) battery; aggravated assault, more serious than (simple) assault.

III: RECIDIVISM BY PREVIOUS COURT HISTORY AND AGE

- A. 368 of the juveniles in the base group had at least one earlier petition. But for many (238 of 606), the 1974 finding was on their first petition.

These first-petition cases will be called first offenders. They may have been arrested or referred to court before, but the 1974 finding was the first petition that was filed.

Those in the base group who had at least one earlier petition before their 1974 finding will be called repeaters. Repeaters need not have had earlier findings, but they had at least one earlier petition that was filed.

- B. Among the 9 to 13 year olds, there is a striking difference in overall recidivism rates which emerges between the 68 first offenders and the 75 repeaters. In this age group, among the first offenders, about 1 in 5 (19%) are recidivists; among the repeaters, 1 in 3 (33%) are recidivists.<sup>3</sup>

- C. Without controlling for age, the recidivism rate of first offenders was only a little lower than that of repeaters:

first offenders	-	12% recidivist
repeaters	-	15% recidivist

- D. Although first offenders were a little younger than repeaters, the recidivism rate for older juveniles (14-16) was almost the same for first offenders and for repeaters.<sup>4</sup>

When isolating groups with higher recidivism rates, age must be considered. But age alone explains no recidivism. For example, 12 year olds and 15 year olds had about the same rate, if one allows for the fact that a 12 year old has more time to commit a new offense before turning 17. Youths less than 15 on January 1, 1974 had about the same overall rate for each age group. (As noted earlier, this averaged 25%.) Deviations from this average are either small or because of the small number of persons a given age, could easily have resulted from chance.

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<sup>3</sup>The difference between these two groups could happen by chance about 1 time out of 10.

<sup>4</sup>For a year-by-year comparison, see the table on Page 15.

IV. YEARLY RECIDIVISM RATE

The yearly recidivism rate is the proportion of the base group committing new offenses in a given year. (A multiple recidivist is counted each year he committed a new offense, but only once a year.)

The base group for a year excludes anyone turning 17 before or during that year.

The yearly recidivism rate increased throughout the years studied. Most notably, from 1975 to 1976<sup>5</sup>, the proportion committing new offenses increased as follows:

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
A. Recidivism Rate for Violent Offenses	4%	8%
B. Recidivism Rate for Non-Violent Offenses	<u>5%</u>	<u>7%</u>
Total Recidivism Rate for Any Offense	9%	15% <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1974 and 1977 were partial years and therefore have been excluded.

<sup>6</sup> The difference between the '75 and '76 rates could be due to chance about one time in 20.

V. RECIDIVISM DURING PROBATION

New offenses committed after probation began numbered 85.<sup>7</sup> Almost half of these (41) were committed during probation. The first five months of probation accounted for 18 of these 41.

Offenses committed in the earlier months of probation were less violent than those committed later. During the first five months, violent offenses were about 1 in 6 (16%) of those committed.

Those recidivists after the first five months of probation committed almost as many violent offenses (31) as non-violent (36).<sup>8</sup>

In other words, the violent proportion of recidivism was about one-third as high during the first five months of probation as it was later:

recidivism first five months	- 16% violent
recidivism later <sup>9</sup>	- 46% violent

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<sup>7</sup> 11 other offenses were committed before, or without indication of probation.

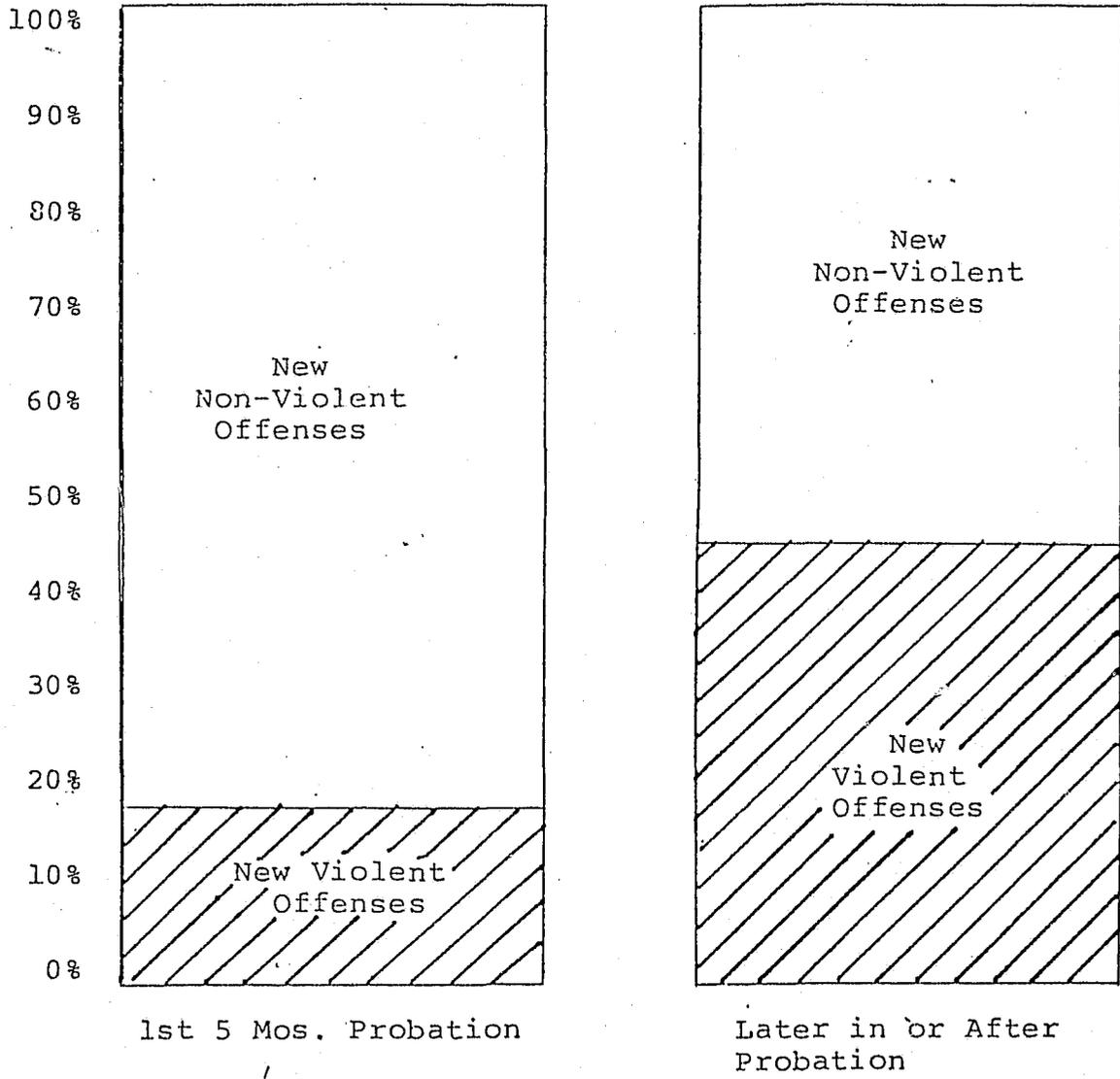
<sup>8</sup> The difference in proportions of violent recidivism committed during the first five months of probation and committed later could result from chance about 1 time in 50.

<sup>9</sup> During the 11th to 15th months of probation, just one of the seven new offenses was violent. These numbers, however, seem too small to be considered statistically significant.

DURING 1st 5 MONTHS OF PROBATION, RECIDIVISM WAS LESS VIOLENT THAN LATER

1st 5 Mos. of  
Probation  
Recidivism Was  
16% Violent:

Later in or  
After Probation  
Recidivism Was  
46% Violent:



VI. RECIDIVISM AFTER PROBATION

A. After probation was terminated, 42 recidivists committed their new offense. For these juveniles, the length of probation was as follows:

6 months or less	- 15 recidivists
7-12 months	- 16 recidivists
13 or more months	- 11 recidivists

B. These three groupings of recidivists have substantially different proportions of violence in their recidivism according to the length of their probation.

Most sharply differing are those with probations of 13 or more months contrasted with the two groups having shorter probations.

Recidivists with shorter probations (a year or less) committed mostly violent new offenses: 17 violent, 16 non-violent offenses<sup>10</sup> (52% violent). This proportion was true for first offenders as well as repeaters.

In sharp contrast are those recidivists with longer probations (13 months or more). They committed 3 violent and 8 non-violent offenses (27% violent).<sup>11</sup>

This is not simply a matter of the shorter the probation, the more violent the recidivism. Among probations of a year or less, the pattern reverses:<sup>12</sup>

Probations 6 months or less	- 41% violent recidivism
Probation 7-12 months	- 63% violent recidivism

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<sup>10</sup> Two recidivists committed two offenses each.

<sup>11</sup> This difference in violence between the longer and shorter probations could be the result of chance about 1 time in 5.

<sup>12</sup> The odds of this being by chance (about 1 in 4) are a little higher than for the difference between probations of a year or less and longer probations.

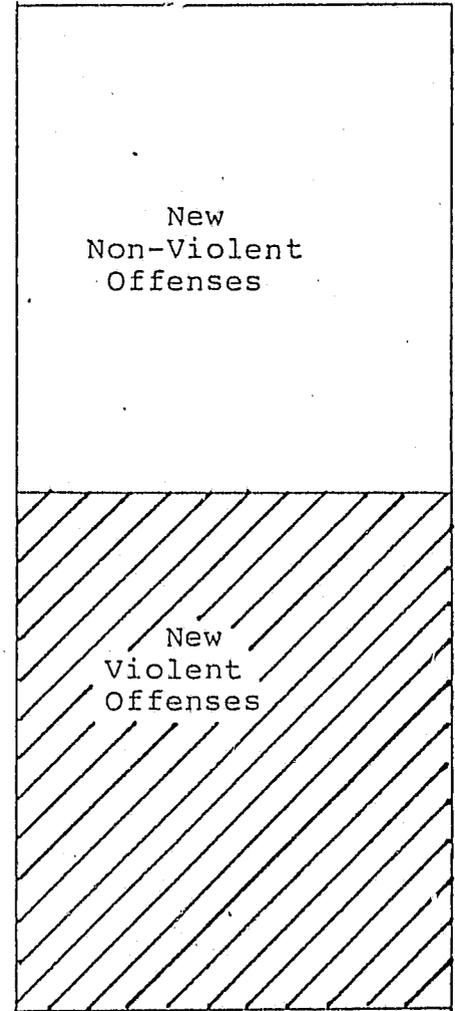
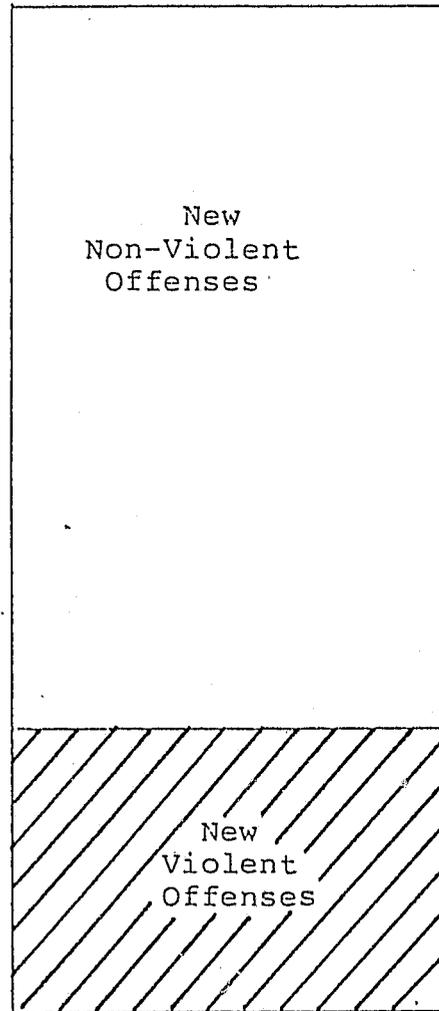
RECIDIVISM WAS LESS VIOLENT AFTER LONGER PROBATIONS

Percentage  
of New Offenses  
That Were Violent

After Probations  
of Over a Year,  
Recidivism Was  
27% Violent

After Probations  
of a Year or Less,  
Recidivism Was  
52% Violent

100%  
90%  
80%  
70%  
60%  
50%  
40%  
30%  
20%  
10%  
0%



Probations Over 1 Year

Probations 1 Year or Less

## VII. MOST COMMON NEW OFFENSES COMMITTED BY RECIDIVISTS

Recidivists committed more new burglaries (33) than any other offense. Next most frequent new offenses were robberies (22), batteries (16), and theft (11).<sup>13</sup>

## VIII. SUMMARY

Some of the most striking discoveries of this recidivism study are as follows:

- A. The overall recidivism rate was 14% (1 in 7).
- B. Of those who were 9-14 years old January 1, 1974, 1 in 4 committed new offenses.
- C. On terminated cases, recidivism was less violent if the probation had been over a year than if it were shorter.
- D. If a new offense were committed while on probation, the recidivism was less violent during the first five months of probation than later.
- E. The recidivism rate was highest among young (9-13 year old) repeaters (compared with young first offenders and older youths). But among older juveniles the recidivism rate was only a little higher for repeaters than for first offenders.

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<sup>13</sup> A more detailed breakdown of offenses is in Table 11 in the Appendix.

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Table 1: OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATES EXPRESSED IN PROPORTIONS  
Proportions of the Base Group Committing New Offenses

<u>Type of Recidivism</u>	<u>Proportion</u>
Any Recidivism, Violent or Non-Violent	1 in 7
Any Recidivism, Violent or non-Violent, Age 15-16 <sup>14</sup>	1 in 20
Any Recidivism, Violent or Non-Violent, Age 9-14 <sup>14</sup>	1 in 4
Violent Recidivism	1 in 14
Double or Triple Recidivism	1 in 50
Graver Recidivism	1 in 33

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<sup>14</sup> Age January 1, 1974. The base group is the youth of that age.

Table 2: OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATES: NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES

	<u>Number of Recidivists</u>	<u>Recidivist Percentage of Base Group</u>
Any Recidivism, Violent or Non-Violent	84	14%
Any Recidivism, Violent or Non-Violent, Age <sup>15</sup> 15-16	17	5%
Any Recidivism, Violent or Non-Violent, Age <sup>15</sup> 9-14	67	25%
Violent Recidivism	41	7%
Double or Triple Recidivism <sup>16</sup>	11	2%
Graver Recidivism <sup>17</sup>	18	3%

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<sup>15</sup> The percentage with new findings before April, 1977.

<sup>16</sup> Age January 1, 1974. Base groups: for 15-16: 337; for 9-14: 268.

<sup>17</sup> One triple and ten double recidivists.

Table 3: OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATE: 9-13 YEAR OLDS

First Offenders	19%	(13 of 68 committed new offenses)
Repeaters <sup>18</sup>	33%	(25 of 75 committed new offenses)

Table 4: OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATE - ALL AGES

First Offenders	12%	(29 of 238 committed new offenses)
Repeaters	15%	(55 of 367 committed new offenses) <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The difference between these two groups could occur by chance about 1 time in 10.

<sup>19</sup> A non-recidivist repeater was dropped from this base group because he turned 17 in 1973 (though his finding was in '74).

Table 5: RECIDIVISM RATE FOR FIRST OFFENDERS AND REPEATERS, BY AGE

	<u>Age</u> <u>Jan. 1, 1974</u>	<u>First Offenders</u>		<u>Repeaters</u>	
		<u>%</u> <u>Recidivist</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>Recidi- Base</u> <u>vists. Group</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Recidivist</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>Recidi- Base</u> <u>vists. Group</u>
Older Juv- iles	( 16	0%	( 0 of 51) <sup>20</sup>	2%	( 2 of 97)
	( 15	7%	( 5 of 73)	9%	(10 of 116)
	( 14	24%	(11 of 46)	23%	(18 of 79)
Younger Juv- iles	( 13	17%	( 6 of 35)	33%	(15 of 45)
	( 12	13%	( 2 of 16)	40%	( 6 of 15)
	( 11	33%	( 3 of 9)	33%	( 4 of 12)
	( 10	33%	( 2 of 6)	0%	( 0 of 3)
	( 9	0%	( 0 of 2)	-	(No Findings this age)

<sup>20</sup> None of the 51 offenders who were 16 years old Jan. 1, 1974 had a new finding.

Table 6: OVERALL RECIDIVISM RATE BY AGE<sup>21</sup>

<u>Age</u> <u>Jan.1, '74</u>	<u>Recidivism</u> <u>Rate</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>Recidivists</u>	<u>Number of Youths</u> <u>That Age</u>
16	1%	2	148
15	8%	15	189
14	23%	29	125
13	26%	21	80
12	26%	8	31
11	33%	7	21
10	22%	2	9
9	0%	0	2
TOTAL	14%	84	605

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<sup>21</sup> Omitted is 1 youth who turned 17 before 1974.

Table 7: NEW OFFENSES: WHEN THEY WERE COMMITTED

<u>Time of New Offenses</u> <sup>22</sup>	<u>Number of New Offenses</u>
During first 5 months of probation	18
During probation, after 5 months of probation were completed	23
After probation	44

Table 8: WHEN NEW OFFENSES WERE MOST VIOLENT

<u>Time of New Offenses</u>	<u>Percentage of New Offenses That Were Violent</u>
During 1st 5 months of probation	16% ( 3 of 19 were violent)
Later in probation	50% (11 of 22 were violent)
After probation	45% (20 of 44 were violent)

Table 9: LENGTH OF PROBATION BEFORE THE MOST VIOLENT RECIDIVISM

<u>Length of Probation</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>New Offenses</u>	
		<u>Violent</u>	<u>% Violent</u>
6 months or less	17	7	41%
7-12 months	16	10	63%
Total: 1 year or less	33	17	52%
More than 1 year	11	3	27%

<sup>22</sup> 11 offenses were committed before, or without indication of probation.

Table 10: RECIDIVISM BY TYPE OF FINDING

<u>Type of Finding</u>	<u>Violent Offense</u>	<u>All Offenses</u>
Conviction, Criminal Court	2	3
Finding of delinquency	29	56
Finding of violation of probation	11	37
TOTAL	42	96

Table 11: NEW OFFENSES, BY TYPE<sup>23</sup>

<u>Violent New Offenses</u>	<u>Number of New Offenses</u>
Homicide	3
Rape	1
Aggravated Battery	7
Battery	9
Aggravated Assault	2
Assault	0
Armed Robbery	6
Strong Armed Robbery	16
<u>Non-Violent New Offenses</u>	
Burglary	33
Theft	11
Unlawful Use of Weapon	4
Other	7

<sup>23</sup> Includes each count with a finding, even if more than one count in a petition.



**END**