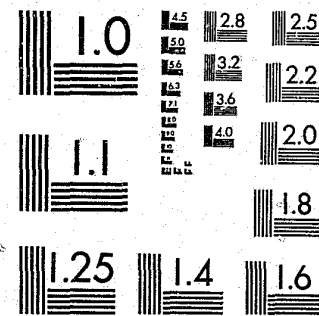


National Criminal Justice Reference Service

ncjrs

This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

11/23/84

RECIDIVISM AMONG FELONS ARRESTED
DURING 1975

May 7, 1982

90141 16106

Frank J. Rogers
Commissioner

William T. Bonacum
Deputy Commissioner

Sherwood E. Zimmerman
Acting Director
Office of Program Development and Research

RECIDIVISM AMONG FELONS ARRESTED
DURING 1975

May 7, 1982

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material in microfilm only has been granted by

New York State Division of
Criminal Justice Services

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

Bureau of Research & Evaluation

Bruce Frederick, Chief
David J. van Alstyne
Thomas J. Harig
Katherine M. Jamieson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH DESIGN AND LIMITATIONS	5
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1975 FELONY ARREST POPULATION	9
Demographic Profile	
Sex	9
Race	9
Age at First Felony Arrest in 1975	9
Region of First Arrest in 1975	12
Previous New York State Arrests	12
Demographic Correlates of Prior Felony Arrests	16
Prior Felony Arrests by Sex of Arrestee	16
Prior Felony Arrests by Race of Arrestee	16
Prior Felony Arrests by Age at First Felony Arrest in 1975	18
Prior Felony Arrests by Region of First Arrest in 1975	18
Type of Crime at First Felony Arrest in 1975	21
FELONY ARRESTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO RECIDIVISTS	24
Felony Arrests in 1975	24
1975-81 Felony Arrests for 1975 First-Time Felons	29
The Impact of Court Disposition on Recidivism	35
RECIDIVISM AND TIME	40
Time to Rearrest for a Felony	40
Average Months Between Arrest Events	40
Average Months Between Arrest Events by Type of Crime	43
OFFENSE PATTERNS AND RECIDIVISM	46

	<u>Page</u>
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	51
Policy Implications	52
Recommendations for Further Research	54
FOOTNOTES	56
REFERENCES	57
APPENDICES	58

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975 by Number of Misdemeanor Arrests Prior to 1975, for all 1975 Felony Arrestees	15
2	Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975 by Sex of 1975 Felony Arrestees	17
3	Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975 by Race of 1975 Felony Arrestees	17
4	Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975 by Age of 1975 Felony Arrestees	19
5	Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975 by Region of Arrest for 1975 Felony Arrestees	20
6	Type of Crime at First 1975 Felony Arrest by Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	22
7	1975 Felony Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Felony Arrests	25
8	1975 Arrest Events for Crimes of Violence vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Arrests for Crimes of Violence	26
9	1975 Robbery Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Robbery Arrests	27
10	1975 Burglary Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Burglary Arrests	27
11	1975 Larceny Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Larceny Arrests	28

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
12	1975-81 Felony Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of Felony Arrests 1975-81, for Persons Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	30
13	1975-81 Arrest Events for Crimes of Violence vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of Arrests for Crimes of Violence 1975-81, for Persons Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	31
14	1975-81 Arrests for Robbery vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of Robbery Arrests 1975-81, for Persons Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	32
15	1975-81 Burglary Arrests vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of Burglary Arrests 1975-81, for Persons Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	33
16	1975-81 Larceny Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of Larceny Arrests 1975-81, for Persons Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	34
17	Subsequent Felony Arrest Status (1975-81) of Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975 by Final Disposition of First Felony Arrest	37
18	Distribution of Subsequent Felony Arrests 1975-81 by Disposition, for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	39
19	Mean and Median Months Between Felony Arrest Events for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	42
20	Months Between First and Second Arrest by Type of Crime, for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	44
21	Distribution of Crime Type Given Kth Arrest Occurring Between 1975-81 for Individuals Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	47

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
22	Rearrest Probability by Type of Next Felony Arrest Given Type of Preceding Felony Arrest for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	49
A-1	Probability of Second Felony Arrest Given First Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	1
A-2	Probability of Third Felony Arrest Given Second Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	2
A-3	Probability of Fourth Felony Arrest Given Third Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	3
A-4	Probability of Fifth Felony Arrest Given Fourth Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	4
A-5	Probability of Sixth Felony Arrest Given Fifth Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	5
A-6	Probability of Seventh Felony Arrest Given Sixth Felony Arrest by Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975	6

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Sex Distribution by Prior Felony Arrest for Persons Arrested for Felonies in 1975	10
2	Race Distribution by Prior Felony Arrest for Persons Arrested for Felonies in 1975	11
3	Age Distribution by Prior Felony Arrest for Persons Arrested for Felonies in 1975	13
4	Regional Distribution by Prior Felony Arrest for Persons Arrested for Felonies in 1975	14
5	Cumulative Percent Rearrested for Felonies During Six Years of Follow-up for Individuals Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the prevalence of recidivism among a cohort of 98,555 persons selected upon their first arrest during 1975 for a felony offense in New York State. For purposes of this study, recidivism is defined as any felony rearrest occurring during the period 1975 through 1981.

Analyses of cohort characteristics indicate that the 1975 felon arrestee population is predominately male (90%), white (57%), young (30% under 20 years of age; 55% under 25 years of age), and most often arrested in New York City (65%).

Fifty-nine percent of cohort members were first-time felons upon arrest. Disproportionately more females (76.1%) than males (56.5%) had no prior felony arrest record, while more nonwhites (50.6%) than whites (34.4%) did have a prior felony arrest record. Some 47 percent of individuals arrested in New York City had prior felony arrests, while only 25 percent of those arrested in Other Metropolitan Planning Areas (Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk and Westchester Counties), and 23 percent of those arrested in Other Areas of the State, had previous arrests.

Over one-fifth (21.5%) of the cohort population experienced a burglary arrest as their first cohort arrest event, while 14.8 percent were charged with assault as their first cohort arrest. Crimes of theft, particularly robbery and burglary, were more likely to be the top charge in the first 1975 arrest event for individuals with a greater number of prior felony arrests.

Data indicate that persons who had two or more felony arrests during 1975 comprised 16 percent of the study cohort, but accounted for 31 percent of all felony arrests occurring during 1975. Those arrested three or more times during 1975 comprised only 3.8 percent of the cohort, but accounted for 11 percent of all felony arrests occurring during 1975. Those with two or more robbery arrests during 1975 comprised only

1.6 percent of the cohort, but accounted for 21.9 percent of all robbery arrests during 1975. Those with two or more burglary arrests during 1975 comprised only 2.8 percent of the cohort, but accounted for 23.7 percent of all burglary arrests during 1975. Those with two or more larceny arrests during 1975 comprised only 1.1 percent of the cohort, but accounted for 15.6 percent of all larceny arrests during 1975.

Among the 1975 first-time felons, only 7 percent were rearrested five or more times between 1975-1981, yet this group accounted for 25.9 percent of felony arrests attributable to first-timers during the period. Only 4.3 percent from this group had two or more robbery arrests during the follow-up period, yet they accounted for 49.4 percent of the group's robbery arrests during follow-up. Almost 8 percent were apprehended two or more times for burglary during follow-up, and accounted for 51.5 percent of the group's burglary arrests from 1975 through 1981.

There was little variation in recidivism experiences among those persons who either were not convicted or were convicted but received nonincarcerative sentences. However, there is an appreciable difference in recidivism between those sentenced to jail versus prison, where 52.1 percent of persons committed to jail versus 44.4 percent of persons committed to prison were subsequently arrested for at least one more felony in the follow-up period. The large number of missing dispositions does, however, pose problems for analyzing the impact of dispositions on subsequent arrest events.

Among the 1975 first-time felons, 16.9 percent had experienced at least one or more subsequent arrests within a year after their initial arrest. Nearly a quarter (24.7%) of this group became recidivists by the second year after their initial arrest. After this initial surge of recidivism, rearrests slowed to where a third (34.6%) of this group had one or more subsequent arrests after six years. Data also show that those persons arrested more often during the 1975-1981 period were also rearrested at a faster rate. For example, those with only two felony arrests during the period averaged 27.3 months between first and second arrest, while those with six arrests during the period averaged 11.1

months between their first two arrests. Those first arrested for burglary, robbery, larceny, and other thefts appear to recidivate somewhat sooner than those arrested for other types of crime. There is some evidence that the elapsed time between the first and second arrest event was typically shorter when both arrests were for the same, rather than for different, types of crime.

Analyses of offense patterns show that the greatest numbers of first-time felony arrests were for burglary (20.8%), assault (15.6%), drug offenses (15.0%), and larceny (13.9%), which together accounted for 65.3 percent of arrests. Almost two-thirds of first-time felons desisted after their first arrest in 1975 and were not rearrested for a felony during the period 1975 through 1981. Among the 35.9 percent of first-time felons who were rearrested at least a second time, their second arrest was most often for burglary (23.9%), larceny (14.4%), robbery (13.7%), or assault (13.4%). These data further show that with each successive arrest there was an increasing likelihood that the arrested felon would continue on to experience a later arrest, and that the arrest would be for burglary, larceny, or robbery. Persons who were first arrested for burglary, robbery, larceny, or assault were, in fact, less likely to desist after the first arrest than those arrested for other crimes. Upon rearrest, those first arrested for burglary, robbery, or larceny were rearrested for those same crimes more often than for any other single crime.

In general, findings generated from this investigation reaffirm the assertions based on Wolfgang research but with several important qualifications. The extent of recidivism is weaker using New York State adult felony arrests and in particular, lacks information regarding the disposition accompanying these arrests. In addition, the period of study and the use of felony crime types imposes further qualification of this information. This study does support the conclusions drawn by Blumstein and associates that prediction based on prior arrests alone will be poor. There are differential patterns of offending behavior among groups of arrestees with varying levels of previous arrests. However, the inability to

control for time at risk due to the missing disposition information makes inferences surrounding differential patterns of offending behavior somewhat tenuous. Without more detailed knowledge of the characteristics of missing dispositions, it cannot be determined whether our analyses overstate or understate these differential effects.

INTRODUCTION

A 1981 New York Times poll of New York City residents found that 59 percent of the respondents had no confidence that a person who tried to rob or mug another would be jailed if caught.¹ Eighty-four percent viewed the crime problem as more serious than it was four years ago; 62 percent expressed this feeling in 1977. The increased visibility of street crime and the community's growing discontent with the treatment of offenders has become a priority issue for criminal justice policy. The problem is aggravated when one considers research which indicates that a large proportion of crime in any one community may be attributed to a small number of offenders who are chronic recidivists.

The research of Wolfgang and associates (1972) documents a cohort of 9,945 Philadelphia boys studied longitudinally for delinquent acts committed up through age 17. Of the 3,475 boys found to be delinquent, 54 percent (N=1,862) were recidivist offenders responsible for 84 percent (N=8,601) of 10,214 total offenses. Furthermore, 6 percent of all boys studied has five or more official police contacts, accounting for 52 percent of all contacts recorded by the police. When the cohort members are followed up to age 30, these chronic offenders comprise 15 percent of the total group and are responsible for 74 percent of the official crime recorded. Perhaps most importantly, this subgroup of offenders committed 84 percent of the personal injury offenses and 82 percent of the serious property offenses attributed to the cohort (Collins, 1977). Along with other findings of this type (e.g., Peterson, et. al., 1980), this study lends quantitative evidence to the supposition that a small proportion of offenders are responsible for an inordinate amount of crime.

In response to this evidence, special criminal justice programs which funnel resources toward handling the chronic recidivist have flourished in recent years. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration sponsored the Career Criminal Program carried out by prosecutors and other criminal justice agents. The program was announced in 1974, and by mid-1975 ten programs had been funded and were in operation. Several other jurisdictions have adopted special prosecution programs and the concept continues to gain acceptance (See Wolfgang, 1980 and Chelmsky, et. al., 1980). The targets of the programs are those crim-

inals who commit serious, usually violent acts, who have previous convictions, and whose incapacitation is viewed as desirable for the defense of society and retributive justice. The programs are designed to provide the means by which law enforcement, prosecution and the courts can give highest priority to the arrest, prosecution and conviction of these persons.

After identifying the chronic recidivist, using the number and type of prior convictions, career criminal programs center on swift dispositions and longer sentences to incarceration. Such measures have found support in recent legislation mandating more stringent sentences for the recidivist offender. In a survey of practitioner attitudes toward the program, Bartolomeo (1980) reports that the program methodology has gained acceptance by prosecutors, judges and law enforcement personnel. Expectations for program success were very high among those individuals responsible for implementing the program.

Most recently, New York's Governor Carey has proposed a Felony Resource Enhancement Program (FREP) to augment resources for the investigation and prosecution of cases involving adult and juvenile recidivists in New York City and 13 counties. The criminal history of offenders will be reviewed and evaluated based on qualifying criteria of offending behavior. Those eligible for the program will be identified and their status as potential FREP candidates will be made available to police and prosecutors. The Governor proposes funding for the investigation and prosecution of the alleged crimes committed by these recidivists, so that they may be successfully prosecuted and convicted. More than \$49 million has been requested in the New York State 1982-83 Executive Budget for FREP-related funds that would enhance a number of criminal justice system components in order to achieve this objective.

In essence, the Governor's plan will assist localities in more effective control and prevention of crime through the support of criminal justice programs concentrating on the chronic offender. The potential for a significant impact on the crime rate is substantial, but depends, in part, on the successful targeting of the recidivist. Identifying the

recidivist and concentrating on his apprehension and conviction will provide one means by which to pursue efforts to reduce street crime.

Through an analysis of criminal histories, arrest data may be used to determine the amount of contact an offender has with the criminal justice system. When examined in the aggregate, this gives an indication of the number and type of arrests that involve the repeat offender and the degree to which felony prosecution programs have the potential to effect crime in the community. New York State Penal Law distinguishes between the predicate and persistent felon, based on the number of prior felony convictions and the time period in which they are obtained. These offenders are subject to mandatory sentences, more severe than those given the first-time convicted felon.

The extent to which the recidivist is responsible for criminal activity in New York State has not been fully investigated to date. Detailed data on rearrests is readily accessed through the DCJS Computerized Criminal History data base and can provide a complete description of arrest incidents involving the repeat offender. What type of characteristics distinguish the recidivist from the non-recidivist? Is there a particular group of arrestees responsible for a significant number of arrests during a follow-up period? What type of offenses characterize these individuals? These are some of the general questions that provide the framework for this investigation. In an overall context, this study serves as the foundation upon which further, more in-depth analyses may be based.

In the following section, the cohort of arrestees will be described along with the research design and its limitations. The analysis then reports on the characteristics of the cohort in terms of demographics, previous arrest history, and top charge associated with the first felony arrest in 1975. The next section analyzes felony arrests attributable to recidivists, and documents both the events occurring in 1975 and the cohort arrests through 1981. Subsequent sections deal with the effects of dispositions on rearrests, patterns of recidivism over time, and the patterns of arrest experienced by the cohort, including transitions from

one offense to another and probabilities associated with specific arrest types. A concluding section explores the implications for criminal justice policy and presents possible strategies for further research surrounding recidivism in New York State.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND LIMITATIONS

This study examines the recidivism experiences of 98,555 persons arrested for felonies in New York State during 1975, 59 percent of whom were first-time felons upon arrest. Cohort entry is established upon one's first arrest during 1975 for a felony, and the top felony charge recorded by police is considered the benchmark arrest event. This cohort is followed for subsequent felony arrests through December, 1981, thus providing a follow-up period sufficient to observe recidivism activity even for most of those who may have been incarcerated after arrest.

Since those persons arrested in any given year are likely to reflect the full spectrum of criminal backgrounds and experiences, this study distinguishes between two groups: (1) all adults arrested for a felony in 1975, and (2) all adults arrested for a felony in 1975 for whom the first 1975 felony arrest was also the first felony arrest in their lifetime. The group of all arrested felons allows analyses of recidivism in light of the diverse criminal backgrounds among cohort members. This group should mirror typical input to the criminal justice system in a given year, thus demonstrating the extent to which the system is confronted by recidivists during a particular period in time. Conversely, the group of first-time felons allows a career-oriented examination of recidivist activity from the initial arrest through later events. The ability to follow this group for up to seven years allows a manageable focus on the nature of their subsequent criminal activity, the frequency of their rearrests, and the rate at which these occur. The distinction between these two groups provides a more detailed view of the characteristics of recidivists and their progression to subsequent criminal activity.

Data for this report are obtained from the Division of Criminal Justice Services' Computerized Criminal History (CCH/OBTS) data base. To be included in the CCH file, a person must have been arrested and charged with committing an offense which is fingerprintable under Section 160.10 of the New York State Criminal Procedure Law. (Fingerprintable offenses include all felonies, all misdemeanors in the New York State Penal Law and selected misdemeanors from other laws such as the Vehicle and Traffic

Law or Tax Law.) A criminal history is an individual offender's record of contacts with the criminal justice system, reflecting significant actions taken by police, district attorneys, courts, probation, correction and parole agencies concerning the offender. The criminal history record includes identification information, information on the charges laid, the disposition of these charges, any sentence resulting, and any correction or parole experiences.

CCH/OBTS data are collected using several vehicles. The arrest/fingerprint card (DCJS-2) is the basic source of information identifying the individual, the arrest charge(s), the arresting agency and the date of arrest. It is completed by the arresting agency and forwarded to DCJS where data are coded and computerized. Information on various court actions from arraignment to final disposition is received from the Office of Court Administration (OCA). Various other data are gathered from the Division of Probation, the Department of Correctional Services, and/or the Division of Parole, and local jails and penitentiaries.

These data are subject to several limitations which qualify the scope of the present study.

- This study reports only arrest events occurring in New York State, since the acquisition, processing, and reporting of data from other states would be unmanageable. This could be problematic, since the easy accessibility of adjacent states from New York metropolitan areas may result in an under-reporting of criminal activity for those geographically mobile offenders.
- For several reasons, this study's documentation of previous criminal activity may be incomplete. First, it is known that the criminal history of some offenders, particularly those with arrests prior to 1969, is only partly computerized, with a manual records examination required to fully quantify their prior arrest events. Given the size of the 1975 arrest cohort, it would be impractical to code uncomputerized data. Further, in some cases arrest charges resident on the data base lack sufficient specificity to determine the felony nature of the arrest. This is most notable for arrests reported prior to September 1, 1967, the effective date of New York's recodified Penal Law. When the CCH data base was developed, such arrests were recorded in an open-ended verbal format, but were not systematically coded according to the new Penal Law coding

structures. Since these arrests were not coded as felonies, they cannot now be identified as prior felony arrests. These problems do not appear to influence the counting and description of subsequent (post-1975) cohort arrest events.

- This study is based on criminal justice acts resulting in the arrest of the individuals. While there is a natural tendency to infer from an analysis of arrest events statements about the offending behavior of all individuals, this temptation should be resisted. The arrest event is a product of many factors including both the actions of the offender and the policies and practices of the law enforcement officers in that community. Further, it is well known that many offenses never become known to the police.
- Due to the segmented responsibility for the reporting of arrest outcomes, dispositions for arrest events (particularly upstate arrests) are often unavailable. This results in the general inability to control for the incarceration experiences of some offenders. This is problematic since recidivism, by definition, is the incidence of failure (arrest) during a discrete "at-risk" period of susceptibility to such failure. Without the ability to subtract incarceration time and arrive at net at-risk time, there is a potential for misstating the prevalence of recidivism among cohort members.
- The use of a felony arrest as the benchmark event rather than a felony conviction prompts concern that some individuals may be defined as benchmark criminals in the absence of knowledge of a judicial determination of this status. Without readily accessible disposition data for the entire arrested felon population, it is possible to inappropriately define an arrested felon as a benchmark criminal when, in fact, his/her arrest was not disposed as a conviction. Such a definitional error at benchmark could misclassify as recidivism the occurrence of a later arrest. However, it is felt that the possible error of misclassifying an invalid or unconvicted arrest at benchmark is likely less problematic than the omission of felons that could result from reduced pleas, dismissals, procedural problems, and the like that would be reflected in disposition data. In short, while some unsubstantiated arrests may enter the analyses using arrest data, many more arrests having prosecutorial merit may be lost to the analyses using conviction data. Nevertheless, these analyses should be interpreted with the caution that some invalid benchmark arrests may be present in the data.
- The Juvenile History System, for documenting specific serious offenses among those under 16 years of age, was not made operational in New York State until 1977 with retroactive coverage to 1975. Therefore, data describing the prior youthful criminal activities of cohort members is not available.
- Sequentially dated arrest event information may be contaminated

by the occurrence of prior crime clearances arising from the benchmark arrest event. Consider, for example, that a burglary arrest often clears several prior burglaries. If the burglary arrest is sequentially recorded as the benchmark event, the sequence of recidivist events may be misplaced, since such clearances represent prior offending behavior and now should make the benchmark event actually a recidivist event.

- While the study uses a 1975 arrest cohort, it is unknown to what extent these data are generalizable to more recent arrest years. Since the initial 1975 cohort arrest events, New York State has altered enforcement of drug, violent felony offense, and juvenile offender laws. While legislation and changing enforcement emphases may somewhat qualify generalizations from these data, they are not likely to seriously limit the study given the large size of the cohort, and the range of cohort member offenses over time.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1975 FELONY ARREST POPULATION

Demographic Profile

This section describes the characteristics of the 1975 felony arrest population used in this study in terms of its distribution on the variables sex, race, age at first felony arrest in 1975 and region in which the first felony arrest occurred. By distinguishing between individuals arrested for a felony in 1975 but never previously arrested for a felony ("first-time felons") and those also arrested for one or more felonies prior to 1975 ("1975 recidivists"), demographic profiles can establish some of the correlates of rearrest and provide background information on the two groups studied in subsequent analyses. Because this section focuses on offender characteristics, only unique individuals are included. That is, characteristics of individuals having multiple felony arrests in 1975 are recorded only as of the first felony arrest occurring in that year.

Sex

Figure 1 displays the sex distribution of the entire population and each of the two subgroups: (1) those who may be classified as recidivists at the first arrest event in 1975 and (2) those who may be considered first-timers at the 1975 arrest event. Felony arrests are clearly a male phenomenon in all three groups. Almost 90 percent of the population is male. Percent male is somewhat lower among first-time felons (86%) and somewhat higher among previously arrested individuals (94%).

Race

For the full population, 57 percent of the individuals arrested for a felony in 1975 were white. After stratifying on the basis of prior felony arrests, Figure 2 shows that the percent of whites is higher among those with no prior record than those having prior felony arrests on file.

Age at First Felony Arrest in 1975

As shown in Figure 3, over 30 percent of the individuals were under the age of 20 at their first felony arrest in 1975 and over

FIGURE 1: SEX DISTRIBUTION BY PRIOR FELONY ARREST
FOR PERSONS ARRESTED FOR FELONIES IN 1975

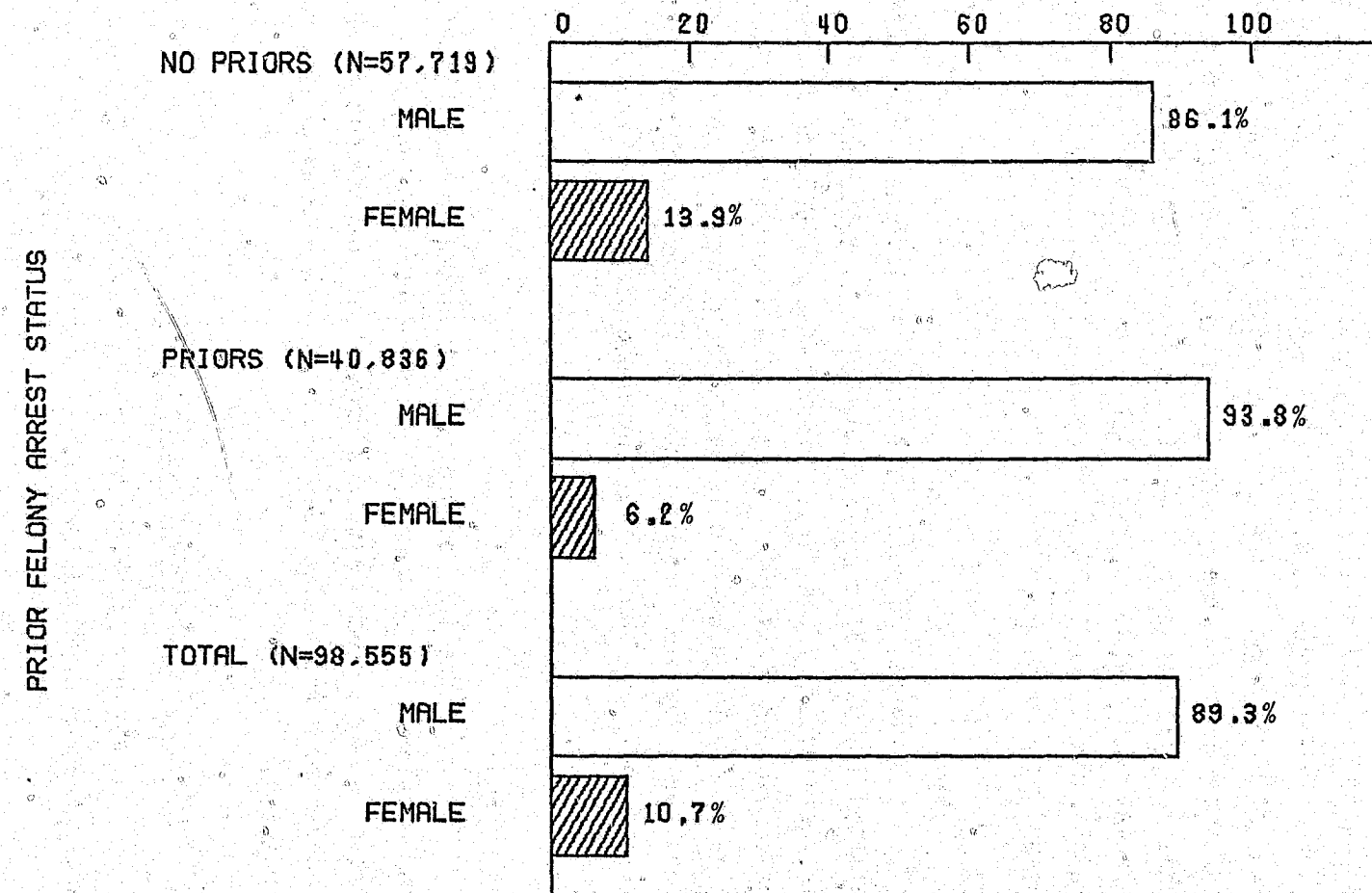
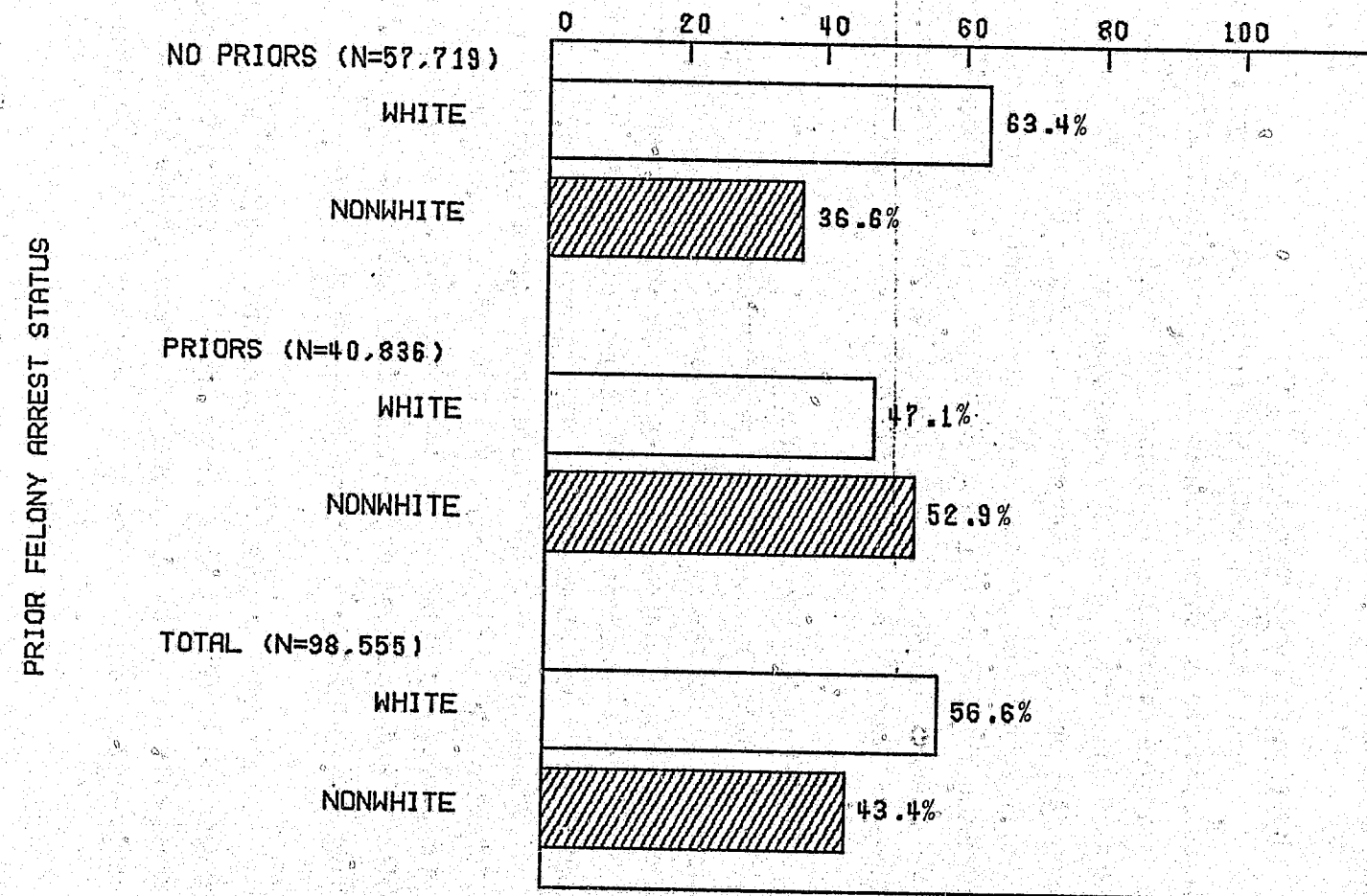


FIGURE 2: RACE DISTRIBUTION BY PRIOR FELONY ARREST
FOR PERSONS ARRESTED FOR FELONIES IN 1975



55 percent were under 25 years of age. As would be expected, stratifying the population into subgroups based on prior felony arrests produces a shift in the age distribution. Among first-time felons, 16 to 19 year olds constitute almost 40 percent of the population while among the subgroup with priors they are less than 20 percent of the population. In part, this is a definitional artifact since arrests occurring before age 16 were not reported to DCJS and this group would have the shortest period in which to have an adult arrest prior to 1975.

Region of First Arrest in 1975

The county in which the first arrest event occurred is classified into one of three geographic regions: (1) New York City, consisting of the five counties or boroughs; (2) Other Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPAs), consisting of Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk and Westchester counties; and (3) all other counties. It is clear from Figure 4 that almost two of every three persons (65%) included in the cohort were arrested for a felony in New York City. For individuals having prior felony arrests, the effect of region is even more pronounced in that three of every four such persons (75%) were arrested in New York City.

Previous New York State Arrests

Table 1 displays the prior arrest histories, within both misdemeanor and felony arrest categories, of the population under study. The percents displayed are based on the total number of persons in the table. It is apparent from the margin totals that, when misdemeanors and felonies are viewed separately, approximately 60 percent of the individuals have no prior record within either specific crime category. If "extensive" prior arrests are defined as five or more previous arrests, then almost 7 percent of the population had an extensive felony arrest history and 4 percent of the population would have been considered to have had an extensive misdemeanor arrest history.

Examination of the joint distribution of misdemeanor and felony arrest histories provides further detail about the criminal histories of these offenders. Slightly over 44 percent of the persons had no previous adult arrest record in New York State for either a misdemeanor or a

FIGURE 3: AGE DISTRIBUTION BY PRIOR FELONY ARREST
FOR PERSONS ARRESTED FOR FELONIES IN 1975

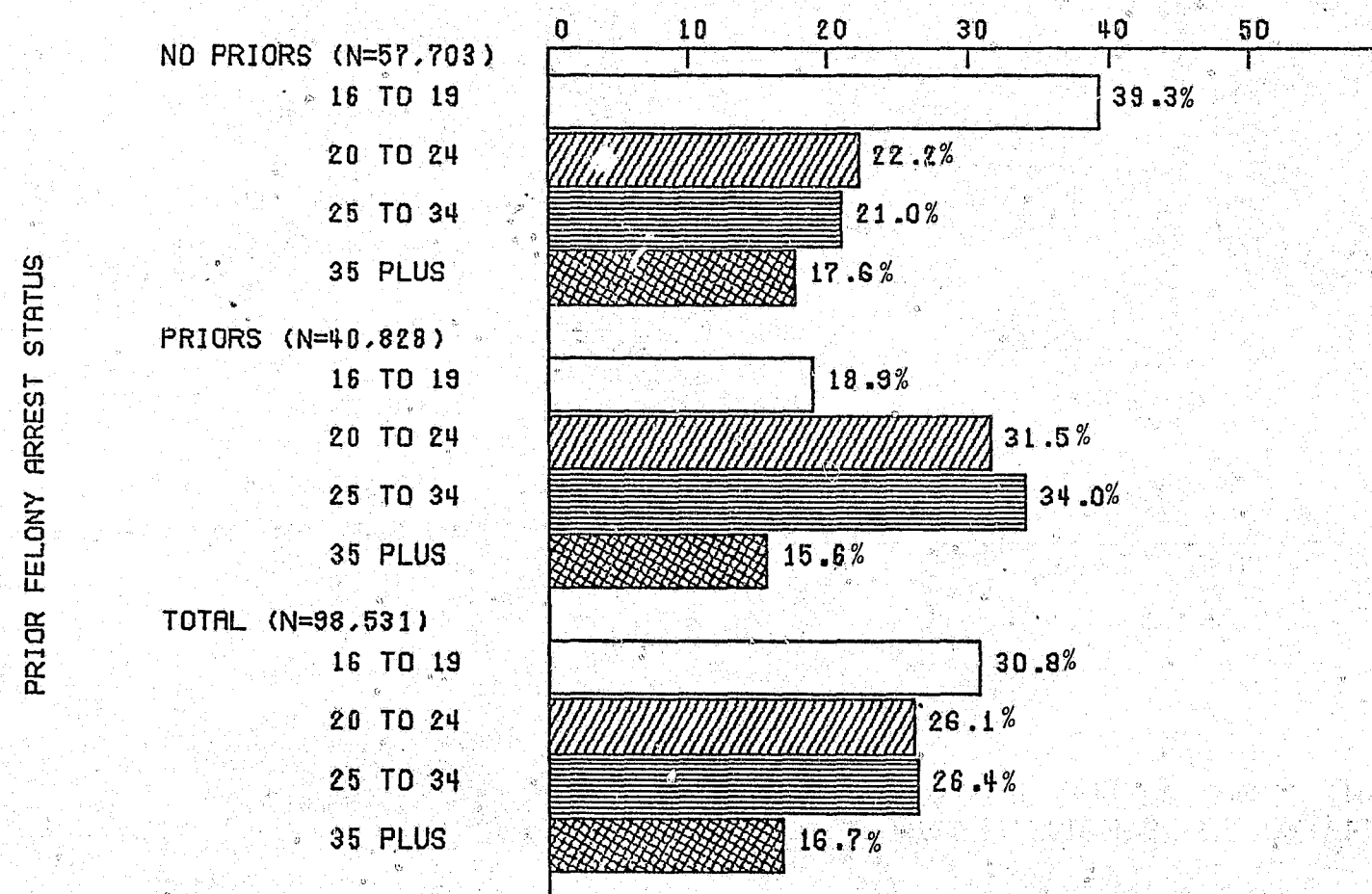


FIGURE 4: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION BY PRIOR FELONY ARREST
FOR PERSONS ARRESTED FOR FELONIES IN 1975

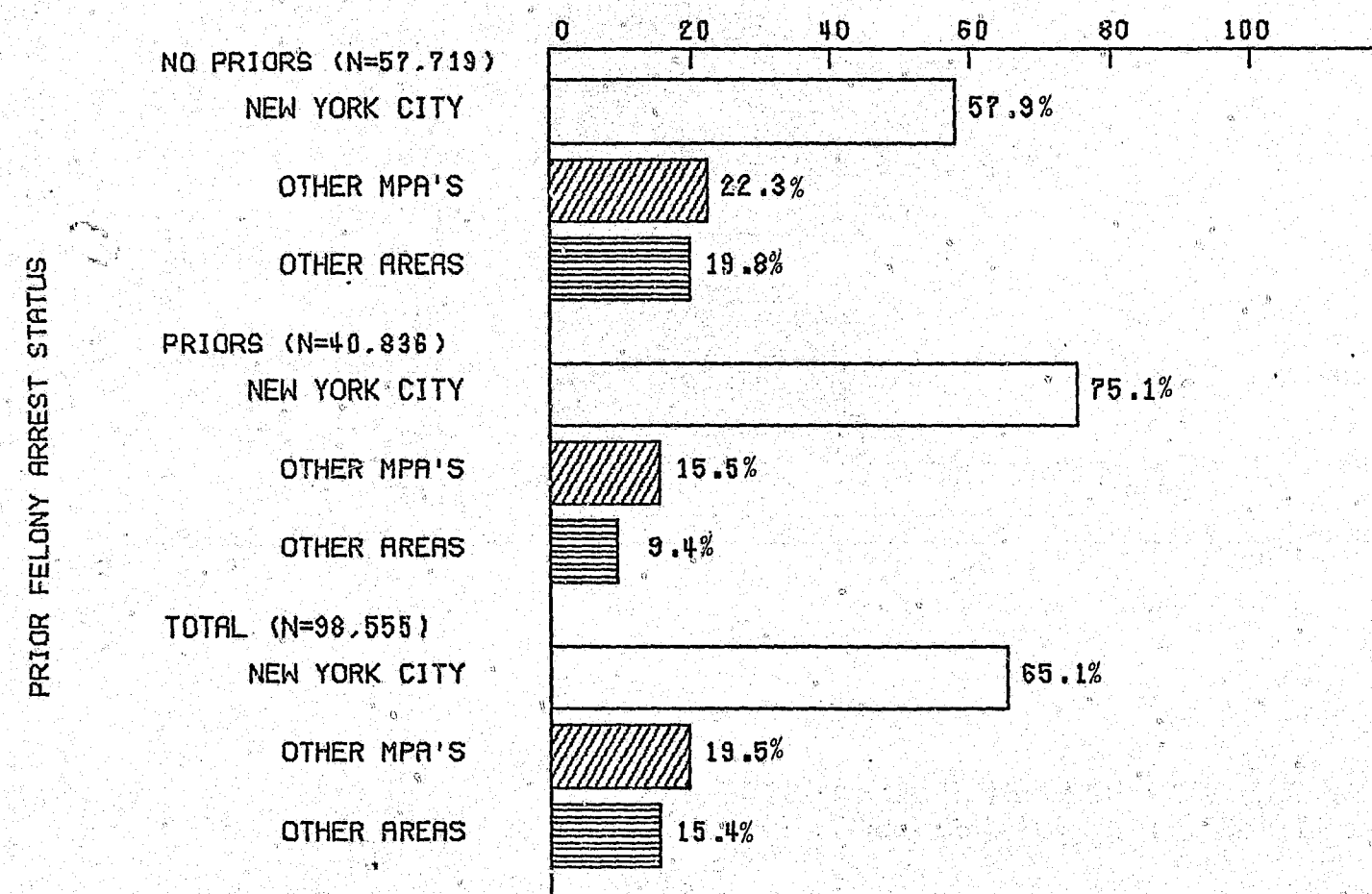


Table 1

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975
by Number of Misdemeanor Arrests Prior
to 1975, for all 1975 Felony Arrestees

	Prior Felony Arrests						Total ^a
	0	1	2	3	4	5+	
0	44.2 ^b (43,520) ^c	8.3 (8,169)	3.4 (3,372)	1.6 (1,607)	0.9 (880)	1.2 (1,141)	59.5 (58,689)
1	9.6 (9,440)	4.4 (4,328)	2.5 (2,428)	1.6 (1,537)	1.0 (973)	1.4 (1,421)	20.4 (20,127)
2	3.0 (2,923)	2.0 (1,972)	1.4 (1,337)	1.0 (973)	0.7 (653)	1.2 (1,230)	9.2 (9,088)
3	1.0 (984)	0.9 (883)	0.7 (722)	0.5 (538)	0.4 (383)	1.0 (947)	4.5 (4,457)
4	0.4 (418)	0.5 (456)	0.4 (365)	0.3 (308)	0.3 (248)	0.6 (631)	2.5 (2,426)
5+	0.4 (434)	0.5 (527)	0.5 (502)	0.5 (461)	0.5 (447)	1.4 (1,397)	3.8 (3,768)
TOTAL ^a	58.6 (57,719)	16.6 (16,335)	8.9 (8,726)	5.5 (5,424)	3.6 (3,584)	6.9 (6,767)	100.0 (98,555)

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bEntries without parentheses are percentages of the grand total, 98,555.

^cEntries in parentheses are actual frequency counts.

felony.² Again using the proposed definition of an "extensive" arrest history, 17 percent of the population may be considered to have had an extensive history of prior arrests for misdemeanors, felonies, or both.

Demographic Correlates of Prior Felony Arrests

As demonstrated in the bar charts presented earlier, the distributions of sex, race, age and region are different for first-time arrestees than for "recidivists" with felony arrests prior to 1975. In order to judge the power of these demographic variables to discriminate between first-timers and recidivists, and to differentiate among varying lengths of prior record, the distribution of prior felony arrests has been determined separately for each category defined by these four variables, and the resulting distributions are compared across the categories. This differs from the earlier analyses, in that, in this section, distributions of prior arrests are examined within demographic categories, whereas the bar charts presented earlier focus on distributions of the demographic characteristics within prior record categories.

Prior Felony Arrests by Sex of Arrestee

Table 2 shows the distribution of previous felony arrests for each sex. Somewhat more than half the males (56.5%) and three-quarters of the females (76.1%) had not been previously arrested for a felony in New York State. Not only were males more likely to have had a previous record, but male recidivists had more extensive histories than their female counterparts. Sixty-one percent of the male recidivists had more than one prior felony arrest, whereas only 46 percent of the female recidivists had more than one prior felony arrest.

Prior Felony Arrests by Race of Arrestee

The distribution of previous felony arrests within racial categories, as shown in Table 3, indicates that nonwhites were more likely to have a previous felony arrest. Whereas over half the nonwhites had previous arrests (50.6%) only one-third of the whites were classified as recidivists (34.4%). Among those individuals classified as recidivists, nonwhites had more extensive prior histories, although the differences

Table 2
Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975
by Sex of 1975 Felony Arrestees

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	% of Male	% of Female	% of Total ^a
None	56.5	76.1	58.6
1	17.0	12.8	16.6
2	9.3	5.3	8.9
3 to 4	9.8	3.6	9.1
5+	7.4	2.2	6.9
TOTAL ^a	100.0 (N=88,004)	100.0 (N=10,551)	100.0 (N=98,555)

Table 3
Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975
by Race of 1975 Felony Arrestees

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	% of Whites	% of Nonwhites	% of Total ^a
None	65.6	49.4	58.6
1	15.3	18.2	16.6
2	7.2	11.0	8.9
3 to 4	7.0	12.0	9.1
5+	4.9	9.4	6.9
TOTAL ^a	100.0 (N=55,806)	100.0 (N=42,749)	100.0 (N=98,555)

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

are less pronounced than those above. Sixty-four percent of the nonwhite recidivists had more than one prior felony arrest. This general pattern is evident even when controls for region of first felony arrest in 1975 are introduced, although differences between racial categories were somewhat more pronounced outside of the New York City region.

Prior Felony Arrests by Age at First Felony Arrest in 1975

Since only adult arrests are included in this study, it would be expected that the percent of individuals having had a prior felony arrest would have been greater among the older age groups, since they would have had the longest time at risk. Table 4 confirms this expectation except for one anomaly. The oldest age group, the group expected to have the highest likelihood of being classified a recidivist, was, in fact, the second least likely to be so classified. Since this group would have had the highest probability of having had arrest events occurring prior to the recodification of the Penal Law in 1967, and since these uncoded events were not included in the present data set, this unexpected result may be due to the misclassification of the older offenders' criminal histories. This would be particularly true for those individuals having low rates of offending, a variable thought to be strongly related to age.

Prior Felony Arrests by Region of First Arrest in 1975

The distribution of previous felony arrests within the three regional categories, as shown in Table 5, indicates that individuals arrested in New York City for a felony in 1975 had a much higher probability of having had a previous felony arrest than did individuals arrested in either of the other two regions. In turn, persons arrested in Other MPAs had a somewhat higher probability of having had a previous felony arrest than those individuals arrested in the Other Areas. While 43 percent of the individuals arrested in New York City had prior felony arrests, 26 percent of individuals arrested in Other MPAs and 22 percent of individuals arrested in Other Areas would have been classified as recidivists. This differential pattern across regions is also evident in the distributions of the actual number of prior felony arrests among those classified as recidivists. Sixty-four percent of the New York City

Table 4
Number of Felony Arrests Prior to
1975 by Age of 1975 Felony Arrestees

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	% of 16 to 19 year olds	% of 20 to 24 year olds	% of 25 to 34 year olds	% of 35+ year olds	% of Total ^a
None	74.6	49.9	46.5	61.5	58.6
1	14.1	18.8	17.5	16.1	16.6
2	5.8	11.0	10.8	8.1	8.9
3 to 4	4.1	12.2	13.0	7.6	9.1
5+	1.4	8.1	12.1	6.7	6.9
TOTAL ^a	100.0 (N=30,390)	100.0 (N=25,674)	100.0 (N=25,983)	100.0 (N=16,484)	100.0 (N=98,531) ^b

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bFor 24 cases the age was missing.

Table 5
Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975
by Region of Arrest for 1975 Felony Arrestees

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	% of New York City	% of Other MPAs	% of Other Areas	% of Total ^a
None	52.2	67.1	74.8	58.6
1	17.4	16.1	13.7	16.6
2	10.1	7.2	5.7	8.9
3 to 4	11.1	6.6	4.1	9.1
5+	9.2	3.1	1.7	6.9
TOTAL ^a	100.0 (N=64,121)	100.0 (N=19,187)	100.0 (N=15,247)	100.0 (N=98,555)

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

recidivists had more than one prior felony arrest, whereas 51 percent of the individuals in Other MPAs and 46 percent of the individuals in Other Areas had more than one previous felony arrest. Because race is associated with region and prior arrest history, the explanatory power of region within racial subgroups was explored. The same general pattern displayed in Table 5 emerged but with one qualification. Among nonwhites, there is almost no difference in the distribution of prior arrests between the Other MPAs and the Other Areas.

Type of Crime at First Felony Arrest in 1975

The Penal Law article number of the top arrest charge in each felony arrest event occurring during or since 1975 was used to classify each event into one of 12 crime types. The interested reader is directed to Appendix B for details of this classification scheme.

Table 6 shows the distribution of these crime types at the first felony arrest event in 1975 within levels of previous felony arrests. Slightly over one-fifth of the total population (21.5%) had an arrest for burglary at the first event in 1975. The next most frequent top charge was assault, with 14.8 percent of the individuals in the cohort charged with this crime at their first felony arrest in 1975.

Comparison of crime type distributions across levels of prior felony arrest history reveals that crimes of theft, particularly robbery and burglary, were more likely to be the top charge in the first 1975 arrest event for individuals with a greater number of prior felony arrests. Whereas persons arrested for robbery constituted only 9.9 percent of the first time felons arrested, they represented 18.4 percent of the arrested population having three to four prior felonies and 17.6 percent of those individuals having five or more previous felonies. In fact, persons arrested for robbery were the second largest group (behind those arrested for burglary) among individuals having two or more previous felony arrests.

While persons arrested for burglary were dominant in all prior

Table 6
Type of Crime at First 1975 Felony Arrest by Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975.

Number of Felony Arrests Prior to 1975	Individuals Arrested	Percent Distribution of Crime Type of First Felony Arrest in 1975												
		Total	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felonies
0	57,712	100.0	2.1	2.9	9.9	15.6	20.8	13.9	3.5	0.9	15.0	5.7	1.5	8.2
1	16,333	100.0	2.8	3.1	13.1	15.3	20.9	12.5	3.4	0.9	12.4	5.6	1.2	8.9
2	8,725	100.0	2.9	2.5	15.6	14.2	22.0	12.8	3.4	0.6	11.5	5.5	0.9	8.1
3 to 4	9,008	100.0	2.8	2.9	18.4	11.7	23.1	13.2	3.7	0.5	10.2	5.5	0.6	7.5
5+	6,767	100.0	2.8	2.5	17.6	10.4	26.0	15.4	2.2	0.3	8.9	4.8	0.6	7.0
TOTAL	98,545 ^a	100.0	2.4	2.8	12.2	14.8	21.5	13.6	3.5	0.8	13.4	5.6	1.2	8.2

^aFor 10 cases the type of crime was missing and not included in the analysis.

felony arrest groups, their dominance was greater among the groups with a larger number of prior felonies. One in five of the first-time felons (20.8%) were arrested for burglary, while burglary was the top charge in the first 1975 arrest for 26.0 percent of those persons with five or more felony arrests prior to 1975.

FELONY ARRESTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO RECIDIVISTS

This section analyzes the proportion of felony arrest events which may be attributed to the recidivists. These analyses rely on two different baseline measures. First, all felony arrest incidents which occurred in 1975 are presented in terms of the number of individuals involved and the number of times they were rearrested for a felony during 1975 only. One of the limitations to interpreting this information is that system processing after arrest influences the total amount of time at risk throughout the year. Those arrested in the latter part of 1975 did not have as great a length of time for rearrest to occur as those apprehended earlier in the year.

In order to introduce some control for this, another set of tables extends the time period to include felony arrests from 1975 through 1981. This second set of analyses focuses on the subgroup of individuals who were first arrested for a felony in 1975, which constitutes a group of individuals with similar prior criminal histories. These persons are examined in terms of the number of rearrests over a seven year time period. The distinction between these two sets of measurements is that Tables 7 through 11 account for all felony arrests that occurred in 1975, while Tables 12 through 16 cover only those felony arrests from 1975 through 1981 which may be attributed to the subgroup first arrested for a felony in 1975. Both sets of tables include all felonies, those involving personal violence, and the frequently occurring offenses of robbery, burglary and larceny.

Felony Arrests in 1975

Tables 7 through 11 show the distribution of felony arrests in 1975 by the number of persons arrested during the year. For all felonies, the cumulative percent column in Table 7 indicates that persons who had two or more arrests during the year comprise 16 percent of the cohort but account for 31 percent of all 1975 felony arrests. Those having three or more arrests constitute 3.8 percent of the cohort but were responsible for 11 percent of all felony arrests. When murder, rape, robbery and assault are combined (see Table 8), the distribution of rearrest for these offenses is similar to that for all crime types.

Table 7
1975 Felony Arrest Events vs. Individuals
Arrested, by Number of 1975 Felony Arrests

Number of Felony Arrests in 1975	Individuals Arrested			Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	* Cum %
TOTAL ^a	98,545 ^b	100.0	100.0	119,924	100.0	100.0
1 only	82,686	83.9	99.9	82,686	69.0	100.0
2	11,973	12.2	16.0	23,946	20.0	31.0
3	2,776	2.8	3.8	8,328	6.9	11.0
4	768	0.8	1.0	3,072	2.6	4.1
5	229	0.2	0.2	1,145	0.9	1.5
6	69	<0.1	0.0	414	0.3	0.6
7	27	<0.1	0.0	189	0.2	0.3
8	13	<0.1	0.0	104	0.1	0.1
9	1	<0.1	0.0	9	<0.1	0.0
10+	3	<0.1	0.0	31	<0.1	0.0

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bFor 10 cases the type of crime was missing and not included in the analysis.

Table 8
1975 Arrest Events for Crimes of Violence vs.
Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975
Arrests for Crimes of Violence*

Number of Arrests for Crimes of Violence in 1975	Individuals Arrested			Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	98,545 ^b	100.0	100.0	38,904	100.0	100.0
0	63,756	64.7	100.0	0	0	0
1	31,443	31.9	35.2	31,443	80.8	100.0
2	2,777	2.8	3.3	5,554	14.3	19.2
3	435	0.4	0.5	1,305	3.4	4.9
4	90	0.1	0.1	360	0.9	1.5
5+	44	<0.1	0.0	242	0.6	0.6

*Crimes of violence include all categories of murder, rape, robbery and assault.

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bFor 10 cases the type of crime was missing and not included in the analysis.

Table 9

1975 Robbery Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Robbery Arrests

Number of Robbery Arrests in 1975	Individuals Arrested			Robbery Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	98,545 ^b	100.0	100.0	16,298	100.0	100.0
0	84,239	85.5	100.0	0	0	0
1 only	12,734	12.9	14.5	12,734	78.1	100.0
2	1,277	1.3	1.6	2,554	15.7	21.9
3	215	0.2	0.3	645	4.0	6.2
4	50	0.1	0.1	200	1.2	2.2
5+	30	<0.1	0.0	165	1.0	1.0

Table 10

1975 Burglary Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Burglary Arrests

Number of Burglary Arrests in 1975	Individuals Arrested			Burglary Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	98,545 ^b	100.0	100.0	27,095	100.0	100.0
0	75,041	76.2	100.0	0	0	0
1 only	20,658	21.0	23.8	20,658	76.2	99.9
2	2,282	2.3	2.8	4,564	16.8	23.7
3	423	0.4	0.5	1,269	4.7	6.9
4	110	0.1	0.1	440	1.6	2.2
5+	31	<0.1	0.0	164	0.6	0.6

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bFor 10 cases the type of crime was missing and not included in the analysis.

Table 11

1975 Larceny Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested, by Number of 1975 Larceny Arrests

Number of Larceny Arrests in 1975	Individuals Arrested			Larceny Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	98,545 ^b	100.0	100.0	16,582	100.0	100.0
0	83,350	84.6	100.0	0	0	0
1 only	14,021	14.2	15.3	14,021	84.6	100.0
2	997	1.0	1.1	1,994	12.0	15.6
3	124	0.1	0.1	372	2.2	3.6
4	38	<0.1	0.0	152	0.9	1.4
5+	15	<0.1	0.0	83	0.5	0.5

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

^bFor 10 cases the type of crime was missing and not included in the analysis.

Those having two or more arrests of this type comprise 3.3 percent of the cohort and were responsible for 19.2 percent of the arrest events for these crimes in 1975.

Robbery, which is an offense involving elements of both violence and theft, is presented separately, as are burglary and larceny. These three crime categories represent those offenses which have a relatively high frequency among the 12 felony crime types. Table 9 indicates that those persons having two or more robbery arrests constituted 1.6 percent of the cohort and accounted for 21.9 percent of all 1975 robbery arrests. For burglary offenses, 2.8 percent of the cohort had two or more arrests during the year, which amounts to 23.7 percent of all 1975 arrests for burglary (Table 10). Finally, the cumulative percent columns in Table 11 indicate that 1.1 percent of the cohort accumulated two or more larceny arrests in 1975, accounting for 15.6 percent of the arrests for this offense. The analysis of 1975 felony events attributed to persons in the cohort indicates that levels of rearrest for offenses having an element of theft are greater than rearrest levels for crimes involving violence.

1975-81 Felony Arrests for 1975 First-Time Felons

The incidence of rearrest for a subgroup of first-time arrestees over a seven year period represents felony arrests attributable to this subgroup only. Persons having their first felony arrest in 1975 (N=57,719) account for 58.6 percent of the total cohort. These persons accumulated 107,606 felony arrests from 1975 through 1981. Table 12 displays the distribution of individuals arrested versus their felony arrest events occurring during the time period. Sixty-four percent of these persons had only one arrest occurring in 1975, and were not apprehended for another felony through 1981. Over 35 percent of this group were rearrested at some point during the time period. Almost 7 percent of the group were rearrested five or more times and account for 25.9 percent of the felony arrests attributable to this group. The statistics indicate that the recidivists who accumulated nine or more arrests represent only 1.3 percent of the group but contribute 7.9 percent of the offenses committed

Table 12
1975-81 Felony Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested,
by Number of Felony Arrests 1975-81, for Persons
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

Number of Felony Arrests 1975-81	Individuals Arrested			Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	57,719	100.0	100.0	107,606	100.0	100.0
1 only	36,993	64.1	100.0	36,993	34.4	100.0
2	9,961	17.3	35.9	19,922	18.5	65.5
3	4,329	7.5	18.6	12,987	12.1	47.0
4	2,429	4.2	11.0	9,716	9.0	34.9
5	1,362	2.4	6.9	6,810	6.3	25.9
6	900	1.5	4.5	5,400	5.0	19.6
7	575	1.0	3.0	4,025	3.7	14.6
8	407	0.7	2.0	3,256	3.0	10.9
9	249	0.4	1.3	2,241	2.1	7.9
10+	514	0.9	0.9	6,256	5.8	5.8

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

Table 13
1975-81 Arrest Events for Crimes of Violence vs.
Individuals Arrested, by Number of Arrests for
Crimes of Violence 1975-81, for Persons
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975*

Number of Arrests for Crimes of Violence 1975-81	Individuals Arrested			Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	57,719	100.0	100.0	33,514	100.0	100.0
0	30,975	53.7	100.0	0	0	100.0
1	22,126	38.3	46.3	22,126	66.0	100.0
2	3,269	5.7	8.0	6,538	19.5	34.0
3	856	1.5	2.3	2,568	7.7	14.5
4	311	0.5	0.8	1,244	3.7	6.8
5+	182	0.3	0.3	1,038	3.1	3.1

*Crimes of violence include all categories of murder, rape, robbery, and assault.

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

Table 14
1975-81 Arrests for Robbery vs. Individuals Arrested,
by Number of Robbery Arrests 1975-81, for Persons
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

Number of Robbery Arrests 1975-81	Individuals Arrested			Robbery Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	57,719	100.0	100.0	13,593	100.0	100.0
0	48,269	83.6	100.0	0	0	100.0
1	6,884	11.9	16.2	6,884	50.6	100.0
2	1,640	2.8	4.3	3,280	24.1	49.4
3	543	0.9	1.5	1,629	12.0	25.3
4	231	0.4	0.6	924	6.8	13.3
5+	152	0.2	0.2	876	6.5	6.5

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

Table 15
1975-81 Burglary Arrests vs. Individuals Arrested,
by Number of Burglary Arrests 1975-81, for Persons
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

Number of Burglary Arrests 1975-81	Individuals Arrested			Burglary Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	57,719	100.0	100.0	24,381	100.0	100.0
0	41,491	71.9	100.0	0	0	100.0
1	11,813	20.5	28.2	11,813	48.5	100.0
2	2,584	4.5	7.7	5,168	21.2	51.5
3	920	1.6	3.2	2,760	11.3	30.3
4	446	0.8	1.6	1,784	7.3	19.0
5+	465	0.8	0.8	2,856	11.7	11.7

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

Table 16
1975-81 Larceny Arrest Events vs. Individuals Arrested,
by Number of Larceny Arrests 1975-81, for Persons
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

Number of Larceny Arrests 1975-81	Individuals Arrested			Larceny Arrest Events		
	N	%	Cum %	N	%	Cum %
TOTAL ^a	57,719	100.0	100.0	15,823	100.0	100.0
0	45,845	79.4	100.0	0	0	100.0
1	9,646	16.7	20.5	9,646	61.0	100.0
2	1,397	2.4	3.8	2,794	17.7	39.0
3	477	0.8	1.4	1,431	9.0	21.3
4	151	0.2	0.6	604	3.8	12.3
5+	203	0.4	0.4	1,348	8.5	8.5

^aBecause of rounding, percents may not add to total.

by the group.

When the arrest events are examined in terms of violent offenses, those persons having two or more arrests for murder, rape, robbery or assault comprise 8 percent of the group and contribute 34 percent of arrests for violence among the group (Table 13). Tables 14 through 16 indicate an even greater frequency of rearrest for the categories of robbery, burglary and larceny. Those having two or more arrests for robbery constitute 4.3 percent of the individuals but account for almost one-half of the robbery arrests in the group. The figures are similar for burglary, where 7.7 percent are apprehended two or more times on burglary charges and account for 51.5 percent of the burglary arrests experienced by these persons from 1975 to 1981. Finally, Table 16 indicates 3.8 percent of the persons were arrested at least twice for larceny but comprise 39 percent of the larceny arrests attributable to the group.

When the group of individuals first arrested for a felony in 1975 was examined over time (Tables 12 through 16), those apprehended twice or more accounted for almost two-thirds of all felony arrests attributable to the group. These chronic recidivists were arrested frequently for crimes involving an element of theft, particularly robbery and burglary.

The Impact of Court Disposition on Recidivism

This section focuses on the first-time 1975 felons and the relationship of the disposition for that first felony arrest to the occurrence of later felony arrests. There are several cautions that should be introduced before presentation of the findings. First, the temporal ordering of the date of final disposition resulting from the first arrest event and the occurrence of further felony arrests is somewhat uncertain. In cases where the individual is released on bail or ROR before trial, there is opportunity for further arrests prior to the final court outcome. This confuses the interpretation of the role of dispositions on further arrests. Another problem arises directly from the absence of final disposition information for many of the arrest

events. Twenty-four percent of the first felony arrests occurring in 1975 did not have final disposition information on the CCH data base as of January, 1981 (see Table 17). Without an understanding of the characteristics of this phenomenon, it is difficult to assess the role of sanctions on later criminal careers. For dispositions resulting in incarceration, it is also crucial that actual time in the community be calculated to determine the time for which persons are at risk of committing further offenses. For example, two individuals may appear to have an equal likelihood of rearrest within a given period of time, yet one has served time in correctional facilities. Both persons may give the appearance of having voluntarily desisted when the actual time at risk was much less for the incapacitated person. Lack of information for the amount of time spent free in the community will result in underestimating the likelihood of rearrest for the group. The degree to which this occurs with the present data base is not known.

The distribution of subsequent felony arrest status by disposition of the first felony arrest event (Table 17) reveals some tentative findings worthy of future research. Overall, 35.9 percent of the first time felons were rearrested for one or more felonies in the six to seven year follow-up period. Among those persons who either were not convicted or were convicted but received nonincarcerative sentences, there was little variation in the percent recidivating, with each group corresponding roughly to the overall distribution. There was no indication that those persons who were convicted but remained in the community were any more likely to have future felony arrests than those persons who were not convicted.

Comparison of persons sentenced to county jail with those sentenced to State prison facilities reveals an appreciable difference. Over half (52.1%) of those persons sentenced to county jail on their first felony arrest were subsequently arrested for at least one more felony in the period. Of those persons sentenced to a State facility, slightly less than half (44.4%) had further felony arrests in the period. It may be that these differences are due in large part to the greater incapacitation effect of longer sentences. That is, those persons sentenced to

Table 17

Subsequent Felony Arrest Status (1975-81) of Individuals First Arrested
for a Felony in 1975 by Final Disposition of First Felony Arrest

Subsequent Felony Arrests (1975-81)	Final Disposition of First Felony Arrest						Total
	No Conviction	Unsupervised Release	Probation	Jail Custody	Prison Custody	Missing Disposition	
None	62.3	66.4	60.7	47.9	55.6	70.2	64.1
One or More	37.7	33.6	39.3	52.1	44.4	29.8	35.9
TOTAL	100.0 (N=21,066)	100.0 (N=11,940)	100.0 (N=7,000)	100.0 (N=2,605)	100.0 (N=1,156)	100.0 (N=13,952)	100.0 (N=57,719)

prison had less time in the community to be at risk of committing a felony and be arrested for that event. Without better measures of "at risk" time and the introduction of statistical controls for factors related to the disposition (e.g., type of crime) this interpretation must remain tentative.

The large number of missing dispositions poses additional interpretation problems. If these cases were distributed equally across the remaining disposition types, a large part of the differences in percent recidivating would disappear. Alternatively, the missing dispositions could be heavily weighted toward particular disposition types, for example, lower court dismissals. In the absence of detailed information on missing dispositions, these hypotheses remain untested.

Not only were persons given jail sentences most likely to have had a subsequent felony arrest, those sentenced to jail were also the most likely among those who did recidivate to have had an extensive number of such arrests. Table 18 shows that 63 percent of the recidivists given a jail sentence for their first felony arrest had two or more subsequent felony arrests and 18 percent had five or more subsequent felonies. Persons receiving prison sentences for the first felony were the least likely to have had extensive subsequent felony arrest histories. Approximately 54 percent of this group had more than one subsequent felony arrest and 9 percent had five or more additional arrests. The subsequent felony arrests of those recidivists who did not receive an incarcerative sentence was at a level most like the prison group. Averaging across no conviction, unsupervised release and probation, 52 percent of these persons had more than one additional felony arrest and approximately 13 percent went on to have five or more subsequent felony arrests.

Table 18

Distribution of Subsequent Felony Arrests 1975-81 by Disposition,
for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975.

Disposition of First 1975 Felony Arrest	Persons Rearrested	Percent Distribution of Subsequent Felony Arrests 1975-81					
		Total	1	2	3	4	5+
No Conviction	7,935	100.0	46.8	20.1	12.0	6.6	14.5
Unsupervised Release	4,013	100.0	48.8	20.0	11.0	7.0	13.2
Probation	2,750	100.0	48.4	21.7	12.2	6.2	11.5
Jail Custody	1,357	100.0	37.1	21.1	14.2	9.2	18.3
Prison Custody	513	100.0	46.2	24.2	14.2	6.6	8.8
Missing Disposition	4,158	100.0	53.3	22.2	10.4	5.6	8.5
TOTAL	20,726	100.0	48.1	20.9	11.7	6.6	12.7

RECIDIVISM AND TIME

It is fruitful to examine recidivist behavior from a time-oriented perspective, since recidivism is, by definition, rearrest during a period of follow-up observation. The following analyses are of interest because they demonstrate that some individuals recidivate at faster rates than others, and that transitions from certain types of crime occur faster than transitions from others. Such analyses provide preliminary groundwork from which to develop risk assessments for various types of persons involved with the criminal justice system.

Time to Rearrest for a Felony

Figure 5 displays the relative speed with which first-time arrested felons were rearrested for felonies during the six years after their first arrest. A year after their initial arrest, 16.9 percent of the first-time felon arrestees had experienced at least one or more subsequent arrests. Nearly a quarter (23.7 percent) of this group became recidivists by the second year after their initial arrest. After an initial surge of recidivism, rearrests slowed to where only slightly more than a third (34.6 percent) of this group had one or more subsequent arrests after six years. The first year after the initial arrest, 4.5 percent of first-time felons had experienced two or more subsequent arrests, and 1.4 percent had actually experienced three or more arrests. After six years, 17.4 percent had experienced two or more arrests and 10.1 percent had experienced three or more subsequent felony arrests.

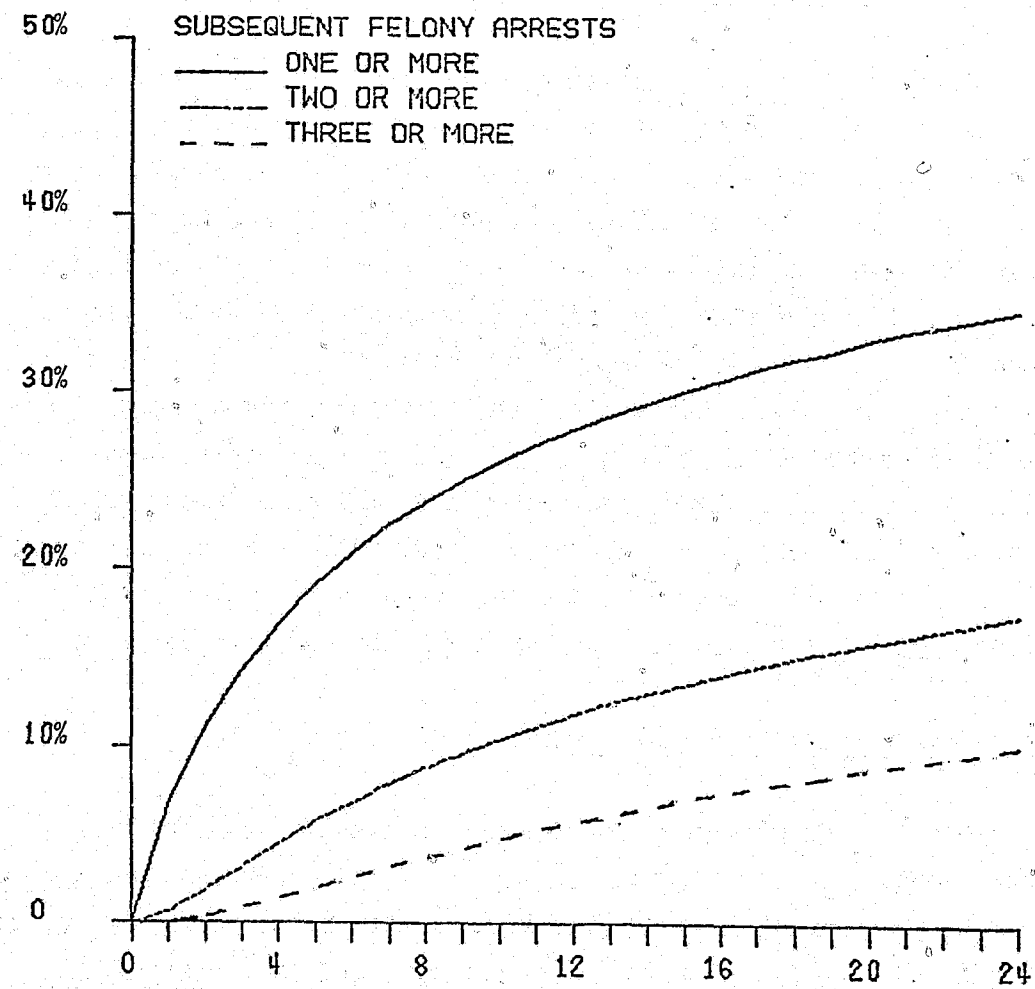
Average Months Between Arrest Events

Table 19 compares the time in months between sequential felony arrests among groups with varying numbers of felony arrests during the 1975-1981 period. These data clearly show that those persons arrested more often during the period were also rearrested at a faster rate. For example, an examination of the elapsed time between the first and second arrest shows that, while those with only two felony arrests during the period averaged 27.3 months between arrests, those with three felony arrests averaged 19.4 months between their first two arrests; those with four felony arrests averaged 15.5 months between their first two arrests;

Figure 5

Cumulative Percent Rearrested for Felonies
During Six Years of Follow-up for Individuals
Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

CUMULATIVE PERCENT REARRESTED FOR FELONY



CALENDAR QUARTERS TO REARREST FOR FELONY

Table 19

Mean and Median Months Between Felony Arrest Events
for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Number of Felony Arrests in Period 1975-1981	Arrest Sequence				
	1st to 2nd	2nd to 3rd	3rd to 4th	4th to 5th	5th to 6th
2	27.3 (21.0)	--	--	--	--
3	19.4 (13.4)	21.5 (15.7)	--	--	--
4	15.5 (10.2)	15.5 (10.4)	18.0 (12.7)	--	--
5	12.8 (8.5)	11.6 (7.5)	14.6 (9.9)	16.2 (11.2)	--
6	11.1 (7.3)	10.2 (6.2)	10.7 (7.3)	12.1 (7.7)	14.9 (10.2)

(Median in parentheses)

those with five arrests averaged 12.8 months and those with six arrests averaged 11.1 months between the first two arrests. Although this finding is intuitively reasonable in retrospect, it could not have been stated with any certainty a priori. It would have been equally reasonable to suppose that the average time between arrests for those arrested twice in the period might have been similar to that for those arrested six times, but that the former had simply desisted earlier in the period. However, this latter supposition is refuted by the present data. Moreover, it does not appear that as an individual accumulates felony arrests, the time period between events decreases. Rather, these data indicate that an individual has a rate of arrest that remains relatively constant over time.

Average Months Between Arrest Events by Type of Crime

Table 20 displays the mean and median time (in months) between first and second felony arrests among those first-time felons rearrested during the follow-up period. Both mean and median statistics are presented because the time distributions are highly skewed. These data demonstrate that those first arrested for burglary were likely to recidivate somewhat sooner than those arrested for other types of crime. For example, those arrested for burglary at their first arrest averaged 19 months to a rearrest, and half were rearrested within 11 months. A similar length of time appears to have elapsed between first and second arrest among those first arrested for robbery, larceny, and other thefts.

It is particularly interesting that the elapsed time between the first and second arrest event was typically shorter when both arrests were for the same rather than for different types of crime. For example, while those arrested for robbery at their first arrest averaged 20 months to any rearrest (half being rearrested within 12 months) these data show that a rearrest for robbery occurred an average of 13 months from the first robbery arrest (with half occurring within six months). The reader is cautioned that where there appear to have been especially short durations between arrests -- for example, arrest to rearrest for murder -- it is suspected that this finding is an artifact of both

Table 20
Months Between First and Second Arrest by Type of Crime,
for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Type of Crime 1st Arrest	Type of Crime 2nd Arrest	Months To 2nd Arrest		%
		Mean	Median	
Murder (N=1,228)	Desist			
	Murder	12	3	72.8
	Others	26	19	2.4
	TOTAL	25	18	24.8
Rape (N=1,649)	Desist			
	Rape	21	11	68.1
	Others	24	16	8.2
	TOTAL	23	15	23.7
Robbery (N=5,696)	Desist			
	Robbery	13	6	47.5
	Others	23	16	16.8
	TOTAL	20	12	35.7
Assault (N=9,027)	Desist			
	Assault	26	20	47.5
	Others	23	16	5.9
	TOTAL	24	17	46.6
Burglary (N=12,028)	Desist			
	Burglary	15	8	54.5
	Others	23	14	19.9
	TOTAL	19	11	25.6
Larceny (N=8,020)	Desist			
	Larceny	15	8	62.4
	Others	21	14	11.1
	TOTAL	20	12	26.5
Other Theft (N=2,034)	Desist			
	Other Theft	17	8	64.4
	Others	20	12	5.2
	TOTAL	20	11	30.4
Arson (N=526)	Desist			
	Arson	14	7	68.4
	Others	21	14	5.3
	TOTAL	20	13	26.3
Drugs (N=8,654)	Desist			
	Drugs	17	10	74.0
	Others	24	17	10.5
	TOTAL	21	13	15.5
Weapons (N=3,270)	Desist			
	Weapons	24	18	71.0
	Others	22	14	4.3
	TOTAL	22	15	24.7
Criminal Mischief (N=851)	Desist			
	Criminal Mischief	16	5	67.9
	Others	25	17	3.3
	TOTAL	24	16	28.8
Other Felonies (N=4,729)	Desist			
	Other Felonies	20	12	71.3
	Others	24	16	11.7
	TOTAL	22	14	17.0

arrests following from the same or closely related crime events. It was also generally the case among other crimes (except assault and weapons arrests) that the time between first and second arrest was shorter when both arrests were for the same type of crime.

OFFENSE PATTERNS AND RECIDIVISM

The preceding sections document the overall prevalence of recidivism among cohort members. Further analyses presented in this section examine longitudinal patterns of offending, in order to study the more dynamic aspects of recidivism. These analyses describe the probabilities of either continuing or desisting one's criminal activities at various points in a criminal career, and attempt to establish links between the incidence of recidivism and the longitudinal pattern of arrest offense types. The accompanying discussion addresses the question of whether recidivists are especially likely to be arrested for particular types of crime, and also examines the switching of offenders' behavior from one type of crime to another. Such analyses can provide some insight into the dynamics of recidivism and help highlight some of the issues and problems surrounding the development of risk assessment methodologies. Caution should be exercised concerning the findings on offense patterns since only arrest events are used in this analysis. Not only do some criminal events never result in an arrest, but to the extent that certain types of crime are more likely to result in an arrest, or that offenders with certain characteristics are more likely to be arrested, offense patterns based on arrests may be biased representations of the actual patterns of offending.

According to data presented in Table 21, the greatest numbers of first-time felony arrests were for burglary (20.8%), assault (15.6%), drug offenses (15.0%), and larceny (13.9%), which together accounted for 65.3 percent of arrests. Almost two-thirds of first-time felons desisted after the first arrest and were not rearrested for a felony during the follow-up period. Among the 35.9 percent (N=20,726) of first-time felons who were arrested at least a second time, their second arrest was most often for burglary (23.9%), larceny (14.4%), robbery (13.7%), or assault (13.4%).

There are two important trends illustrated in Table 21. First, these data show that with each successive arrest there was an increasing likelihood that the arrested felon would continue on to experience a later arrest. For example, 35.9 percent of those arrested a first time

Table 21

Distribution of Crime Type Given Kth Arrest Occurring Between
1975-81 for Individuals Having Their First Felony Arrest in 1975

Kth Felony Arrest in Period	Persons at Risk of Being Arrested for Kth Felony	Percent Arrested for Kth Felony of Those at Risk	Persons Arrested for Kth Felony	Percent Distribution of Crime Type Given Kth Arrest												
				Total	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony
1	—	100.0	57,719	100.0	2.1	2.9	9.9	15.6	20.8	13.9	3.5	0.9	15.0	5.7	1.5	8.2
2	57,719	35.9	20,726	100.0	2.2	2.6	13.7	13.4	23.9	14.4	4.0	0.8	11.2	4.2	1.5	8.0
3	20,726	51.9	10,765	100.0	2.4	2.3	16.3	11.2	24.6	15.6	4.3	0.7	10.4	4.1	1.3	6.8
4	10,765	59.8	6,436	100.0	2.8	2.1	17.3	10.6	26.5	15.4	4.0	0.7	9.6	3.6	1.2	6.0
5	6,436	62.3	4,007	100.0	2.5	2.2	17.6	9.9	26.3	16.4	3.9	0.5	10.1	3.6	1.3	5.6
6	4,007	66.0	2,645	100.0	2.8	2.0	19.1	9.0	25.8	17.5	4.3	0.2	9.8	3.0	1.0	5.9
7	2,645	66.0	1,745	100.0	2.7	1.8	18.5	8.0	25.5	18.3	5.0	0.3	10.4	3.3	1.2	5.0
8	1,745	67.0	1,170	100.0	3.1	2.3	21.4	7.8	25.9	18.6	4.5	0.3	8.0	3.2	1.5	3.5

were rearrested a second time, while 67.0 percent of those arrested a seventh time were rearrested an eighth time. After the fourth or fifth arrest, however, the probability that an additional felony arrest would occur appears to have been relatively constant. Second, these data show that with each successive arrest there was an increasing likelihood that the arrest would be for burglary, larceny, or robbery. For example, these three crime types accounted for 44.6 percent of first felony arrests, but 60.3 percent of fifth arrests and 65.9 percent of eighth felony arrests.

These results raise the question of whether those who gravitated toward crimes of theft early in their criminal activity were more likely to recidivate. Data presented in Table 22 and Appendix A allow comparisons of desisting rates associated with different types of crime. Persons who were first arrested for burglary, robbery, larceny, or assault were less likely to desist after the first arrest than those arrested for other crimes. For example, there were relatively high proportions of desisters among those first arrested for drug offenses (74.0%), murder (72.8%), "other" felonies (71.3%), weapons charges (71.0%), arson (68.4%), rape (68.1%), and criminal mischief (67.9%); in proportion, there were fewer desisters among those first arrested for "other theft" (64.4%), larceny (62.4%), burglary (54.5%), robbery (47.5%), and assault (47.5%). Examination of these data for later arrest sequences also shows arrested felons having desisted less often after subsequent burglary, robbery, larceny, and assault arrests than those arrested for other crimes.

These data also generally show that, upon rearrest, those first arrested for burglary, robbery, or larceny were rearrested for those same crimes more often than for any other single crime. For example, among those whose first felony arrest was for burglary, 19.9 percent were rearrested for burglary compared to 25.6 percent rearrested for any other felony and 54.5 percent who desisted. Among those whose sixth arrest was for burglary, over a third (34.5%) were arrested a seventh time for another burglary. The full transition matrices presented in Appendix A give the analogous probabilities associated with each of the 12 major crime types for each of the six transitions from the first to

Table 22

Rearrest Probability by Type of Next Felony Arrest Given Type of
Preceding Felony Arrest for Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Arrest Sequence	Robbery (Preceding)			Burglary (Preceding)			Larceny (Preceding)		
	Desist	Robbery (Next)	Other (Next)	Desist	Burglary (Next)	Other (Next)	Desist	Larceny (Next)	Other (Next)
1st to 2nd	.475	.168	.357	.545	.199	.256	.624	.111	.265
2nd to 3rd	.388	.224	.388	.407	.261	.332	.438	.185	.377
3rd to 4th	.359	.218	.423	.335	.316	.349	.334	.216	.450
4th to 5th	.385	.211	.404	.345	.314	.341	.283	.242	.475
5th to 6th	.400	.214	.386	.288	.323	.389	.267	.277	.456
6th to 7th	.364	.231	.405	.284	.345	.371	.270	.274	.456

-49-

Arrest Sequence	Assault (Preceding)			Drugs (Preceding)		
	Desist	Assault (Next)	Other (Next)	Desist	Drugs (Next)	Other (Next)
1st to 2nd	.475	.059	.466	.740	.105	.155
2nd to 3rd	.569	.118	.313	.526	.062	.412
3rd to 4th	.497	.138	.365	.440	.251	.309
4th to 5th	.438	.113	.449	.403	.280	.317
5th to 6th	.352	.122	.526	.322	.319	.359
6th to 7th	.447	.127	.426	.355	.359	.286

the seventh arrests.

While these data provide some insight into patterns of offending behavior as measured by arrests, and their relationship to recidivism, the ability of these analyses to contribute toward predicting the occurrence of recidivism remains somewhat limited. Analyses show low to moderate likelihoods of recidivating ranging from .359 (for a second arrest) to .670 (for an eighth arrest) and, though some slight degree of offense specialization has been illustrated, no characteristic or set of characteristics identified in these analyses would suffice for accurate prediction of the recidivists' future activities. This finding is consistent with reanalyses of the birth cohort studied by Wolfgang and associates (Wolfgang, et al., 1972) from which Blumstein and Moitra (1980) concluded that prior record had little predictive value regarding future criminality.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following discussion of the analyses presented in this report centers on the identification of recidivists, the type and number of offenses for which they are arrested, and the frequency with which these arrests occur. Also discussed are some of the implications of the results for criminal justice policy in New York State, including suggestions for future research that could provide more definitive guidance regarding the potential benefits of enhanced prosecution of recidivists.

Over 55 percent of the total cohort (N=55,035) had at least one prior arrest for a misdemeanor or a felony, indicating that over one-half of the cohort had some contact with the criminal justice system prior to the 1975 event. It has also been noted that 41.4 percent of the cohort had one or more felony arrests prior to 1975. Those with prior felony arrests were most often male (93.8%), nonwhite (52.9%), 25 to 34 years old (34.0%), and were apprehended in New York City for the 1975 arrest (75.1%): The first 1975 arrest event for this group most frequently involved burglary charges with the proportion of burglaries greater among individuals with a greater number of previous arrests. Robbery was the next most frequent top charge for the first 1975 felony arrest, followed by assault, larceny and drug-related charges.

Among the first-time 1975 arrestees (N=57,719), 36 percent (N=20,726) were rearrested for a felony at least a second time by December 31, 1981. The total cohort had over 41 percent who were identified as recidivists at the 1975 arrest. Thus, the proportion of the first-time arrestees who were rearrested during the follow-up period parallels the distribution of priors for the total cohort.

With respect to all felony arrests in 1975, the present analysis indicates that a relatively small number of individuals were responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime in that year. Persons with three or more felony arrests in 1975 amount to 3.8 percent of the offenders, while contributing 11 percent of the felony arrests. For the group of first-time arrestees followed through 1981, those with three or more arrests comprise 18.6 percent of the offenders and contribute 47.0 percent of the felony arrests for the group. This tendency was more

pronounced for the property offenses of robbery, burglary and larceny, both for the group of first-time arrestees examined in retrospect, and for the group with arrests prior to 1975.

The rate at which the first-time arrestees experienced rearrest was greatest during the first year following arrest on the initial felony. After the second year of follow-up, individuals were rearrested at a fairly constant rate. Overall, analyses show low to moderate probabilities of recidivating ranging from .359 for a second arrest given the first, to .670 for an eighth arrest given the seventh. Analyses are also presented which indicate that with each successive arrest there was an increasing likelihood that the arrest would be for burglary, larceny, or robbery. Although these results indicate that individuals with a greater number and higher frequency of prior arrests are more likely to recidivate, and that this is especially true for crimes of special concern to the public, they also highlight the difficulty of determining in advance which high risk individuals will, in fact, recidivate, since so many of them desist instead.

Policy Implications

The type and frequency of criminal activity perpetrated by the repeat offender in New York State has practical implications for policy-makers in determining methods for reducing crimes attributable to recidivists. Since over one-half of the cohort in this study had been arrested prior to 1975 on either a misdemeanor or felony and were therefore "known" to the criminal justice system, the theoretical potential for affecting the subsequent felony activity of such individuals is considerable.

While the data indicate that the evidence of rearrest for crimes having an element of theft is somewhat greater than for crimes of violence (murder, rape, robbery and assault), the violent recidivist presents a threat to public safety which warrants special attention. Robbery offenders are of particular concern in that these crimes involve an element of theft in addition to personal violence. Targeting the

recidivist for special police and prosecution programs will most likely focus attention on violent and theft-related offenses which demonstrate a significant amount of rearrests and pose the greatest danger to public safety.

In order to achieve early identification and incapacitation of those persons who would otherwise become chronic recidivists, prediction techniques must attain a much higher level of accuracy than is presently found. The criminal justice system is able to detect and apprehend an offender at a point in the "criminal career" where offending behavior is the most frequent and perhaps the most severe. Presently, however, potentially chronic recidivists cannot be distinguished from the "occasional" felon with any accuracy, except in retrospect.

What can be accomplished through the benefit of hindsight is the incarceration of those offenders with an established pattern of recidivism. Those individuals known to have engaged in frequent and serious criminal activity constitute a serious affront to the norms of civilized society, and may justify on purely retributive grounds, the existence of intensified police and prosecution programs.

From the standpoint of a mixed model, in which retribution and incapacitation are both deemed important, enhanced efforts to incarcerate repeat offenders seem especially reasonable. From this perspective, there is no decision to be made regarding which recidivists are to be incarcerated since incarcerating all of them would be viewed as just retribution. A beneficial side effect would be that included among the individuals incapacitated would be that subgroup who would otherwise have subsequently committed a substantial number of additional crimes. Estimating the degree of this benefit (to be evaluated in comparison to the costs of incarceration), however, requires further research controlling explicitly for variations in time at risk.

The information presented in the present report documents the prevalence, and some of the characteristics, of the recidivist criminal in New York State. However, the investigation represents only an introduction

to the nature and processing of the repeat offender. Some of the possible areas for further recidivism research follow.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several of the limitations outlined earlier in this report qualify the interpretation of the results. In order to increase the utility of the investigation, there are several areas where adjustments may be incorporated into the research design.

Traditional studies of criminal recidivism measure the incidence of rearrest from a benchmark of entry into an at-risk status, for example, release from incarceration or commencement of probation or parole. By firmly establishing periods of at-risk time, the research effort is more assured that statements of desisting behavior are not contaminated by the artifact of incarcerative sentences. Since the present study defined recidivism as a rearrest subsequent to a previous arrest, these data potentially misstate levels of recidivist behaviors. This situation clearly requires that problems in the reporting of dispositions be resolved, for proper accounts of offending behaviors can only be fully documented when complete criminal history data are available.

The limited scope of the present study has not allowed a full assessment of the powers of arrest/disposition-based data to predict the occurrence of recidivist events. The application of multivariate and stochastic (probability) modeling techniques are but two strategies that need to be more fully explored.

The present study has attempted only preliminary investigations into the crime specialization of recidivists. The extent to which recidivists are predisposed toward particular types of crime, and whether there are particular sequences of crime that typically lead to serious types of offending behaviors, or that harbor the benign but chronic recidivist, remain to be determined.

There remains a question on the extent to which incarcerative

sanctions deter the offender from recidivism. Swift, determinant sentences to incarceration serve notice that offending behavior is intolerable and are thought by many to deter crime. Alternatively, one may advocate incarceration as a means of simply incapacitating the recidivist for the defense of society. In either case, however, thorough disposition data are required to assess the association between sentencing patterns and recidivism.

FOOTNOTES

¹New York Times, December 22, 1981.

²The reader should recall the limitations outlined in an earlier section concerning the completeness of the computerized records.

REFERENCES

Bartolomeo, John S. Practitioners' Attitudes Toward the Career Criminal Program. Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 1980, 71 (2), 113-117.

Blumstein, Alfred and Suomo Moitra. The Identification of Career Criminals from "Chronic Offenders" in a Cohort. Law and Policy Quarterly, 1980, 2 (3), 321-334.

Chelmsky, Eleanor and Judith Dahmann. The Mitre Corporation's National Evaluation of the Career Criminal Program: A Discussion of the Findings. Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 1980, 71 (2), 102-106.

Collins, James J. Offender Careers and Restraint: Probabilities and Policy Implications. Final Draft Report. Washington, D.C.: Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice, 1977.

Peterson, Mark, Harriet Braiker and Sue Polich. Doing Crime: A Survey of California Inmates. Santa Monica, Cal.: The Rand Corporation, 1980.

Wolfgang, Marvin E., Robert M. Figlio and Thorsten Sellin. Delinquency in a Birth Cohort. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Wolfgang, Marvin E., Symposium on the Career Criminal Program. Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 1980, 71 (2), 83-84.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Crime-specific Arrest Transitions

Probability of Second Felony Arrest Given First Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

[illegible]

Table A-2

Probability of Third Felony Arrest Given Second Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Second Arrest	(N)	(%)	Third Arrest												Desist
			Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony	
Murder	457	.8%	.046	.007	.077	.055	.057	.048	.007	.002	.042	.028	.007	.033	.593
Rape	544	.9%	.015	.077	.072	.059	.059	.048	.009	.000	.018	.026	.007	.017	.594
Robbery	2,843	4.9%	.016	.017	.224	.055	.102	.077	.021	.003	.042	.026	.006	.023	.388
Assault	2,772	4.8%	.015	.010	.062	.118	.075	.049	.017	.005	.025	.026	.010	.019	.569
Burglary	4,957	8.6%	.007	.012	.072	.052	.261	.078	.026	.005	.033	.014	.007	.026	.407
Larceny	2,981	5.2%	.009	.006	.082	.046	.117	.185	.029	.003	.037	.018	.004	.025	.438
Other Theft	837	1.5%	.017	.014	.048	.041	.130	.100	.063	.001	.038	.013	.005	.037	.492
Arson	171	.3%	.018	.012	.041	.064	.105	.070	.000	.023	.000	.012	.006	.041	.608
Drugs	2,311	4.0%	.010	.006	.039	.037	.058	.039	.017	.001	.212	.026	.006	.023	.526
Weapons	870	1.5%	.026	.010	.063	.067	.067	.041	.021	.005	.062	.048	.007	.041	.541
Crim. Mis.	310	.5%	.010	.013	.065	.106	.113	.042	.013	.006	.019	.010	.023	.026	.555
Other Fel.	1,661	2.9%	.007	.005	.032	.030	.057	.062	.013	.002	.025	.016	.004	.148	.598
TOTAL	20,714	100.0%													.481

Table A-3

Probability of Fourth Felony Arrest Given Third Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Third Arrest	(N)	(%)	Fourth Arrest												Desist
			Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony	
Murder	253	.4%	.047	.004	.075	.067	.063	.047	.012	.004	.043	.016	.008	.012	.601
Rape	248	.4%	.008	.077	.093	.065	.077	.044	.004	.004	.020	.016	.016	.024	.552
Robbery	1,750	3.0%	.021	.015	.218	.066	.127	.085	.015	.002	.042	.020	.007	.022	.359
Assault	1,208	2.1%	.028	.015	.076	.138	.091	.049	.015	.006	.024	.027	.009	.025	.497
Burglary	2,648	4.6%	.012	.013	.083	.052	.316	.075	.028	.006	.028	.018	.010	.025	.335
Larceny	1,677	2.9%	.011	.008	.114	.058	.129	.216	.035	.003	.039	.018	.004	.031	.334
Other Theft	466	.8%	.006	.002	.062	.075	.170	.116	.064	.000	.036	.024	.009	.054	.382
Arson	76	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Drugs	1,117	1.9%	.013	.004	.064	.029	.066	.047	.014	.002	.251	.030	.007	.032	.440
Weapons	441	.8%	.032	.011	.082	.052	.084	.066	.025	.007	.084	.066	.002	.032	.458
Crim. Mis.	140	.2%	.014	.014	.043	.064	.129	.050	.036	.007	.029	.014	.007	.014	.579
Other Fel.	728	1.3%	.011	.011	.048	.038	.087	.071	.022	.001	.022	.018	.003	.154	.514
TOTAL	10,752	100.0%													.402

na = Less than 100 cases.

Table A-4

Probability of Fifth Felony Arrest Given Fourth Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Fourth Arrest	(N)	(%)	Fifth Arrest												
			Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony	Desist
Murder	178	.3%	.051	.011	.084	.079	.067	.051	.006	.000	.017	.034	.000	.028	.573
Rape	137	.2%	.000	.088	.088	.058	.102	.044	.007	.007	.022	.015	.007	.029	.533
Robbery	1,112	1.9%	.022	.014	.211	.065	.100	.087	.020	.003	.049	.021	.008	.016	.385
Assault	681	1.2%	.019	.012	.113	.113	.104	.065	.022	.003	.046	.031	.012	.023	.438
Burglary	1,703	3.0%	.009	.010	.076	.056	.314	.081	.031	.005	.028	.012	.011	.021	.345
Larceny	990	1.7%	.014	.017	.113	.052	.142	.242	.031	.000	.039	.020	.006	.039	.283
Other Theft	258	.4%	.027	.016	.054	.066	.174	.143	.047	.004	.054	.039	.008	.043	.326
Arson	45	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Drugs	615	1.1%	.011	.002	.063	.034	.068	.060	.018	.002	.280	.033	.003	.023	.403
Weapons	245	.4%	.016	.029	.098	.069	.098	.073	.016	.000	.090	.057	.004	.020	.429
Crim. Mis.	79	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Other Fel.	384	.7%	.013	.005	.089	.034	.104	.068	.016	.003	.042	.018	.003	.185	.422
TOTAL	6,427	100.0%													.378

na = Less than 100 cases.

CONTINUED

1 OF 2

Table A-5

Probability of Sixth Felony Arrest Given Fifth Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Fifth Arrest	(N)	(%)	Sixth Arrest												Desist
			Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony	
Murder	99	.2%	.071	.010	.091	.051	.071	.030	.030	.000	.020	.010	.000	.020	.596
Rape	90	.2%	.011	.089	.144	.111	.189	.044	.022	.000	.044	.000	.000	.000	.344
Robbery	705	1.2%	.014	.020	.214	.060	.105	.088	.016	.003	.038	.020	.006	.017	.400
Assault	395	.7%	.028	.013	.119	.122	.157	.073	.013	.003	.061	.028	.008	.025	.352
Burglary	1,053	1.8%	.013	.013	.108	.047	.323	.094	.034	.002	.027	.015	.008	.028	.288
Larceny	658	1.1%	.020	.009	.123	.050	.119	.277	.050	.000	.033	.014	.011	.027	.267
Other Theft	158	.3%	.006	.000	.076	.051	.165	.177	.070	.006	.044	.013	.006	.044	.342
Arson	19	<.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Drugs	404	.7%	.025	.012	.094	.045	.069	.052	.017	.000	.319	.025	.002	.017	.322
Weapons	145	.3%	.034	.007	.138	.041	.103	.055	.007	.000	.048	.076	.000	.021	.469
Crim. Mis.	52	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Other Fel.	224	.4%	.004	.000	.058	.031	.094	.103	.013	.000	.031	.013	.004	.223	.424
TOTAL	4,002	100.0%													.340

na = Less than 100 cases.

Table A-6
Probability of Seventh Felony Arrest Given Sixth Felony Arrest by
Type of Crime: For Individuals First Arrested for a Felony in 1975

Sixth Arrest	(N)	(%)	Seventh Arrest												
			Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Other Theft	Arson	Drugs	Weapons	Criminal Mischief	Other Felony	Desist
Murder	75	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Rape	54	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Robbery	506	.9%	.020	.006	.231	.043	.119	.083	.024	.002	.061	.026	.008	.014	.364
Assault	237	.4%	.013	.025	.143	.127	.089	.068	.017	.000	.038	.017	.008	.008	.447
Burglary	682	1.2%	.015	.012	.088	.045	.345	.089	.026	.006	.034	.023	.007	.025	.284
Larceny	463	.8%	.013	.006	.125	.045	.132	.274	.050	.002	.024	.017	.011	.030	.270
Other Theft	114	.2%	.018	.000	.070	.053	.158	.184	.149	.000	.018	.009	.009	.018	.316
Arson	6	<.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Drugs	259	.4%	.015	.004	.058	.023	.042	.054	.015	.000	.359	.031	.012	.031	.355
Weapons	78	.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Crim. Mis.	26	<.1%	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Other Fel.	143	.2%	.021	.007	.035	.028	.091	.112	.028	.000	.035	.021	.007	.196	.420
TOTAL	2,643	100.0%													.340

na = Less than 100 cases.

APPENDIX B

7

Selection of Top Arrest Charge and Classification of Type of Crime

If more than one felony charge is recorded at arrest, only the most serious charge is selected for classification of the arrest event into a particular crime type. Charge seriousness is determined by the class of offense (A, B, C, D or E), with Penal Law charges having the highest rank, followed by Vehicle and Traffic Laws and then all other law titles. Within Penal Law classes, specific offenses are ranked with personal crimes considered most serious, followed by property crimes, drug offenses and "public order" (e.g., forgery, prostitution) offenses. A detailed description of the charge ranking scheme may be found in the section on coded charges (VIII-J) of the Data Element Definitions (DED) for the CCH database.

The article designation of the appropriate law title for the top felony arrest charge was used to classify the event into one of twelve crime types. The corresponding article numbers and crime types are displayed below.

ARTICLE NUMBER	CRIME TYPE
PL 125	Murder/Homicide
PL 130	Rape
PL 160	Robbery
PL 120	Assault
PL 140	Burglary
PL 155	Larceny
PL 165	Other Theft
PL 150	Arson
PL 220-221	Drugs
PL 265	Weapons
PL 145	Criminal Mischief
--	All Other Felonies ^a

^aincludes felonies for law titles that are not Penal Law Titles and all remaining Penal Law articles not separately enumerated above.

END