

Appendix

Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders—An Assessment of the Extent of and Trends in Officially Recognized Serious Criminal Behavior in a Delinquent Population

■ *Howard N. Snyder*

The nationwide growth in the juvenile violent crime arrest rate between 1986 and 1994, after more than a decade of relative stability, has fueled the public's concerns over the viability of the juvenile justice system. To respond to these concerns, most state legislatures have recently made substantial changes in their state's juvenile justice systems. Some legislation has even removed serious and violent offenders from the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and placed these youth under the jurisdiction of the criminal court. Clearly, the fu-

ture of America's juvenile justice system is being molded by the public's perception of serious and violent juvenile offenders. Therefore, it is important for juvenile justice policymakers, practitioners, and the public to understand the volume of, and growth in, this segment of the juvenile offending population.

This research was designed to place the serious and violent offender in context of the general population handled by the juvenile justice system. Unlike other recent studies that have focused on self-reported delinquent behavior, this work focuses on youth with of-

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This research was supported in part by grants to the National Center for Juvenile Justice from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Grants 95-JN-FX-K008 and 95-JN-FX-0008).

ficial records of delinquency. Although information about self-reported law-violating behavior is essential to understand the development of law-violating careers, the juvenile justice system can respond only to officially recognized delinquent behavior. Therefore, a clear picture of serious and violent juvenile behavior from the perspective of the juvenile justice practitioner is necessary to support the development of policies that guide the justice system's response to juvenile offenders.

This descriptive study was designed to answer a set of basic questions often raised in the debates over juvenile justice policies and procedures:

1. What are the proportions of serious and violent offenders in the officially recognized delinquent population?
2. Are these proportions increasing?
3. Are serious and violent juvenile offenders in recent years being referred for more serious and violent crimes?
4. Are chronic offenders also serious and violent offenders?
5. Is the onset of officially recognized juvenile violence and serious offending occurring at younger ages?

■ Method

To explore officially recognized serious and violent juvenile offending, this study analyzes the juvenile court careers of all persons born between 1962 and 1977 who were referred to the juvenile court in Maricopa County, Arizona, for a delinquency offense prior to their 18th birthday.¹ Another way of classifying this population is to identify each cohort not by its birth year but by the year its members turned 18 years of age and aged out of the original jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system. From this perspective, this study investigates the officially recognized offend-

ing patterns of the juvenile justice "graduating classes" of 1980 through 1995.²

Maricopa County population in 1995 was 2.4 million persons, making it the sixth largest county in the United States. In 1995 the violent crime rate in Maricopa County was 12% greater than the national average, and its property crime rate was 75% above the national average. Maricopa County contains a populous central city (Phoenix) and a rapidly growing and ethnically varied population, and it faces the range of problems found in most large metropolitan areas in the United States. In many ways, it is typical of urban America.

When a youth is arrested in this jurisdiction, the youth (or paper on the incident) is sent to the juvenile court's intake screening office for processing. By policy, law enforcement does not screen the case before sending it to juvenile court intake. Therefore, in this jurisdiction, the juvenile court referral population is comparable to the juvenile arrest population in most other jurisdictions.

To characterize the nature of a juvenile court career, this study counted each of a youth's referrals to juvenile court intake and classified each referral by the most serious charge in the set of charges presented at intake. The most serious offense in each case was classified into one of three general offense categories:

1. *Violent offenses* include the offenses of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, kidnapping, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.
2. *Serious nonviolent offenses* include burglary, serious larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, weapons offenses, and drug trafficking.
3. *Nonserious delinquent offenses* include such crimes as simple assault, possession of a controlled substance, disorderly conduct, vandalism, nonviolent sex offenses, minor larceny, liquor law offenses, and all other delinquent offenses.

TABLE A1.a Trends in Number of Delinquent Careers and Referrals

Class	All Delinquents		Referrals/ Career
	Careers	Referrals	
All	151,209	325,259	2.15
1980	8,312	17,109	2.06
1981	8,160	17,215	2.11
1982	8,523	18,148	2.13
1983	8,385	17,473	2.08
1984	8,193	17,138	2.09
1985	8,191	16,674	2.04
1986	9,071	18,755	2.07
1987	10,100	20,374	2.02
1988	10,700	21,348	2.00
1989	10,312	20,890	2.03
1990	9,801	20,660	2.11
1991	9,678	21,367	2.21
1992	10,091	23,216	2.30
1993	10,019	23,725	2.37
1994	10,429	24,643	2.36
1995	11,244	26,524	2.36

If a referral contained only status offenses (e.g., running away from home, truancy, curfew, underage drinking) or traffic offenses, the referral was excluded from the analyses. All the remaining delinquency referral records were sorted by referral date (earliest referral first), and a rap sheet detailing the youth's juvenile court delinquent career was prepared.

■ Results

Size of the Graduating Classes

A total of 151,209 youth from the juvenile justice graduating classes of 1980 through 1995 had at least one referral to juvenile court intake in Maricopa County for a delinquent offense prior to their 18th birthday (Table A1.a). Thirty percent (or 46,108) of these youth were female (Table A1.b). The number of youth in each class generally increased over time;

however, the increases were not consistent from year to year. Overall, there were 35% more youth (28% more males and 54% more females) in the juvenile justice graduating class of 1995 than in the class of 1980. The sizes of the classes were rather constant between 1980 and 1985. Following a transition year in 1986, the 1987 graduating class was nearly 25% larger than the class of 1985. This class size was roughly maintained from 1987 through 1994. Once again, in 1995, the size of the graduating class abruptly changed, moving out of the range observed in the prior 8 years to a level about 10% above the average class size of the prior 8 years. Although these changes are somewhat related to the growth in the juvenile population within the county during this period, the consistent growth in the general juvenile population within the county cannot explain the abrupt changes in the sizes of the juvenile justice graduating classes between 1985 and 1987 and between 1994 and 1995.

Between 1980 and 1990, the membership in each birth cohort in Maricopa County increased substantially. For example, the decennial census in 1980 found that there were 22,100 seven-year-olds in the county; by 1990 this same birth cohort (who were now age 17) had 27,900 members—a 26% growth over the 10-year period. These figures indicate a substantial net in-migration (and relatively little out-migration) of young persons with this birth year in the county over the time period when these youth were at risk of juvenile court referral. Certainly, a large proportion of each juvenile justice graduating class lived in the county throughout their juvenile years, whereas others moved into the jurisdiction during their juvenile years (ages 7 through 17) and stayed until they aged out of juvenile court jurisdiction. With an unstable population base, the proportion of youth in a birth cohort that were referred to a juvenile court cannot be developed from these

TABLE A1.b Trends in Number of Delinquent Careers and Referrals by Sex

Class	Male Delinquents			Female Delinquents		
	Careers	Referrals	Referrals/ Career	Career	Referrals	Referrals/ Career
All	105,101	255,721	2.43	46,108	69,538	1.51
1980	5,975	13,969	2.34	2,337	3,140	1.34
1981	5,847	13,999	2.39	2,313	3,216	1.39
1982	6,016	14,595	2.43	2,507	3,553	1.42
1983	5,863	13,829	2.36	2,522	3,644	1.44
1984	5,720	13,617	2.38	2,473	3,521	1.42
1985	5,744	13,076	2.28	2,447	3,598	1.47
1986	6,263	14,619	2.33	2,808	4,136	1.47
1987	6,960	15,714	2.26	3,140	4,660	1.48
1988	7,294	16,277	2.23	3,406	5,071	1.49
1989	7,088	15,947	2.25	3,224	4,943	1.53
1990	6,826	16,270	2.38	2,975	4,390	1.48
1991	6,756	16,904	2.50	2,922	4,463	1.53
1992	7,048	18,440	2.62	3,043	4,776	1.57
1993	6,919	18,846	2.72	3,100	4,879	1.57
1994	7,135	19,267	2.70	3,294	5,376	1.63
1995	7,647	20,352	2.66	3,597	6,172	1.72

data with any precision. However, rough estimates (i.e., assuming the birth cohort was equal to the number of 18-year-olds in the county in the graduation year) indicate over the set of 16 birth cohorts that about one of every three youth had a juvenile court referral for a delinquent offense. Roughly 45% of males and 20% of females had at least one referral to the juvenile court for a delinquency offense prior to their 18th birthday. These estimates also show that the proportion of the birth cohort with a juvenile court referral increased somewhat over the 16-year period.

Age at Onset

It is often heard in many juvenile justice policy debates that juveniles are beginning their court careers at younger ages. Over the graduating classes, was there any evidence that members were referred to juvenile court at earlier ages for their first delinquency referral, their first serious nonviolent referral, or their first violent referral? On average,

across all 16 cohorts, the first delinquency referral occurred at age 15.2 years, the first serious nonviolent referral occurred at 15.2 years, and the first violent referral occurred at age 15.8 years. There is no evidence that any of these average entry ages changed from the class of 1980 through the class of 1995.

In addition, there is no evidence from court records that the proportion of the graduating class that began their court careers below age 14 has risen to extraordinary levels in recent years. Across the 16 graduating classes, 26.1% of all youth began their officially recognized delinquent careers below age 14. The class of 1988 had the smallest proportion of delinquent careers beginning below age 14 (21.9%), whereas the proportions in the graduating classes in the early 1980s and mid-1990s average about 28%.

Over the 16 graduating classes, 7.1% of referred youth (and 23.9% of those youth ever referred for a serious nonviolent offense) had their first referral for a serious nonviolent offense below age 14 (Figure A1). Over the graduating classes, these proportions fell and

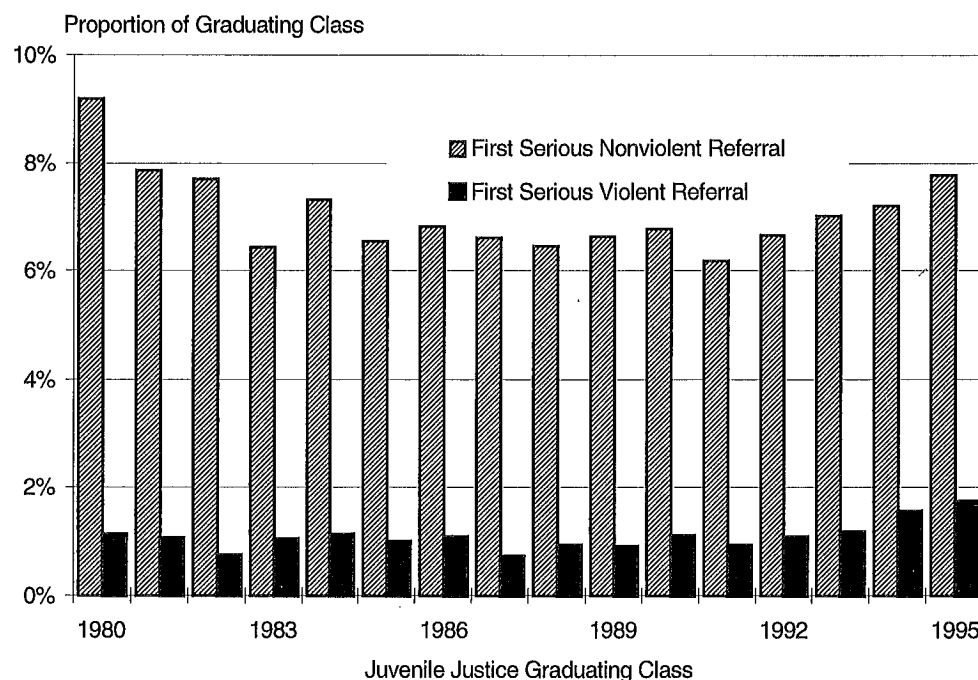


Figure A1. Proportion of Careers With First Serious Referral Prior to Age 14

then increased, staying within a limited range and giving little support for the notion that juveniles in recent years are entering the juvenile justice system at younger ages for serious nonviolent offenses. Over the 16 graduating classes, 1.1% of referred youth (and 13.5% of those youth ever referred for a violent offense) had their first referral for a violent offense below age 14. As with the serious nonviolent referrals, these proportions fluctuated within a limited range over the 16 graduating classes, giving no indication of earlier onset of violent referrals in recent years.

Number of Referrals

The 151,209 youth from the juvenile justice graduating classes of 1980 through 1995

were involved in a total of 325,259 delinquency referrals. Twenty-one percent of referrals involved females. The class of 1995 had 55% more delinquency referrals than the class of 1980. Between the class of 1980 and the class of 1995, the increase in court referrals was greater for females (97%) than for males (46%); however, the male and female increases between the classes of 1986 and 1995 were more consistent, with male referrals increasing 39% and female referrals increasing 49%.

The 55% increase in referrals between the classes of 1980 and 1995 is greater than the 35% increase in the sizes of the graduating cohorts. Thus, youth in the class of 1995 had a higher average number of referrals per career than did members of the class of 1980. Across all cohorts, the average career con-

TABLE A2 Trends in the Offense Characteristics of Delinquency Referrals

Class	All Referrals	No. of Referrals			Percentage of Referrals		
		Serious	Nonviolent	Violent	Serious	Nonviolent	Violent
All	325,259	90,467	75,366	15,101	27.8	23.2	4.6
1980	17,109	4,885	4,097	788	28.6	23.9	4.6
1981	17,215	5,124	4,312	812	29.8	25.0	4.7
1982	18,148	5,200	4,316	884	28.7	23.8	4.9
1983	17,473	4,866	4,111	755	27.8	23.5	4.3
1984	17,138	4,873	4,166	707	28.4	24.3	4.1
1985	16,674	4,728	4,026	702	28.4	24.1	4.2
1986	18,755	5,224	4,443	781	27.9	23.7	4.2
1987	20,374	5,092	4,363	729	25.0	21.4	3.6
1988	21,348	5,388	4,657	731	25.2	21.8	3.4
1989	20,890	5,267	4,514	753	25.2	21.6	3.6
1990	20,660	5,813	4,937	876	28.1	23.9	4.2
1991	21,367	6,287	5,177	1,110	29.4	24.2	5.2
1992	23,216	7,134	5,805	1,329	30.7	25.0	5.7
1993	23,725	7,077	5,689	1,388	29.8	24.0	5.9
1994	24,643	6,767	5,400	1,367	27.5	21.9	5.5
1995	26,524	6,742	5,353	1,389	25.4	20.2	5.2

NOTE: A career could be counted in more than one category.

tained 2.15 delinquent referrals, with 60% having only one referral in their court careers. Over the 16 birth cohorts, males averaged more delinquency referrals per career than females (2.43 vs. 1.51), and males had a smaller percentage of careers with only one referral (54% vs. 73%).

The average number of referrals per career increased significantly across the graduating classes. For the graduating classes in the 1980s, the average number of referrals per career was 2.06 (2.32 for males and 1.44 for females), whereas in the 1990s the average increased to 2.28 (2.60 for males and 1.58 for females). In addition, the proportion of each cohort with only one referral in their careers declined relatively consistently from 62% in the 1980 cohort to 56% in the 1995 cohort. Declines in the proportion of single-referral careers were observed in both the male (55% to 51%) and the female (79% to 68%) cohorts. Therefore, along with the growth in the number of youth in each birth

cohort referred to juvenile court intake, recent graduating classes also averaged more referrals per court career than did previous graduating classes.

Offense Characteristics of Graduating Classes

Compared to the class of 1980, the class of 1995 generated more referrals in each of the general offense categories (Table A2). The increases in the number of referrals for violent and for nonserious offenses were greater than the growth in the size of the juvenile justice graduating classes, whereas the increase in serious nonviolent referrals paralleled the growth in the size of the referral cohort (Table A3). As a result of these differential increases, the offense profile of the juvenile justice graduating classes changed in the recent years. Compared to the class of 1980, the class of 1995 not only had more referrals per

TABLE A3 Changes Between the Classes of 1980 and 1995 (in percentages)

Size of graduating class	35
Delinquency referrals	55
Nonserious referrals	62
Serious referrals	38
Serious nonviolent referrals	31
Violent referrals	76

career (2.36 vs. 2.06), it also had more nonserious (1.76 vs. 1.47) and more violent (0.124 vs. 0.095) referrals per career. In contrast, the average number of serious nonviolent referrals per career changed relatively little between the classes of 1980 and 1995 (0.493 vs. 0.476). Compared to earlier cohorts, the cohorts aging out of the juvenile court's jurisdiction most recently were, on average, brought to court more often for both violent and nonserious delinquent offenses; however, there was no difference in the average frequency with which cohort members were referred for a serious nonviolent (largely serious property) offense.

Delinquent Career Types

Serious nonviolent careers. Although graduating class averages may be useful in some discussions, the assessments of change may be most useful when focusing on individual careers. An individual career may have many attributes; for example, a youth may be a violent offender (with one or more violent referrals in his or her career) while also being a serious nonviolent offender and a chronic offender. One way to address questions concerning the changes in the character of individual juvenile careers is to study each of several career attributes independently.

Over all graduating classes, 29.5% of youth referred had at least one serious nonviolent referral in their careers (Table A4). The proportion of serious nonviolent offenders in each cohort (i.e., the percentage of the cohort with at least one serious nonviolent referral in their career) showed no consistent trend over the classes of 1980 through 1995 (Figure A2). Has the level of serious nonviolent offending changed within individual careers? That is,

TABLE A4 Trends in the Offense Attributes of Juvenile Court Delinquent Careers

Class	All Careers	No. of Careers			Percentage of Careers		
		Serious	Nonviolent	Violent	Serious	Nonviolent	Violent
All	151,209	50,859	44,669	12,212	33.6	29.5	8.1
1980	8,312	2,763	2,421	643	33.2	29.1	7.7
1981	8,160	2,791	2,462	649	34.2	30.2	8.0
1982	8,523	2,852	2,504	685	33.5	29.4	8.0
1983	8,385	2,738	2,455	594	32.7	29.3	7.1
1984	8,193	2,747	2,477	567	33.5	30.2	6.9
1985	8,191	2,723	2,462	554	33.2	30.1	6.8
1986	9,071	2,992	2,667	653	33.0	29.4	7.2
1987	10,100	3,113	2,751	627	30.8	27.2	6.2
1988	10,700	3,238	2,883	644	30.3	26.9	6.0
1989	10,312	3,216	2,857	650	31.2	27.7	6.3
1990	9,801	3,285	2,915	719	33.5	29.7	7.3
1991	9,678	3,504	3,057	888	36.2	31.6	9.2
1992	10,091	3,792	3,283	1,030	37.6	32.5	10.2
1993	10,019	3,704	3,178	1,091	37.0	31.7	10.9
1994	10,429	3,593	3,056	1,085	34.5	29.3	10.4
1995	11,244	3,808	3,241	1,133	33.9	28.8	10.1

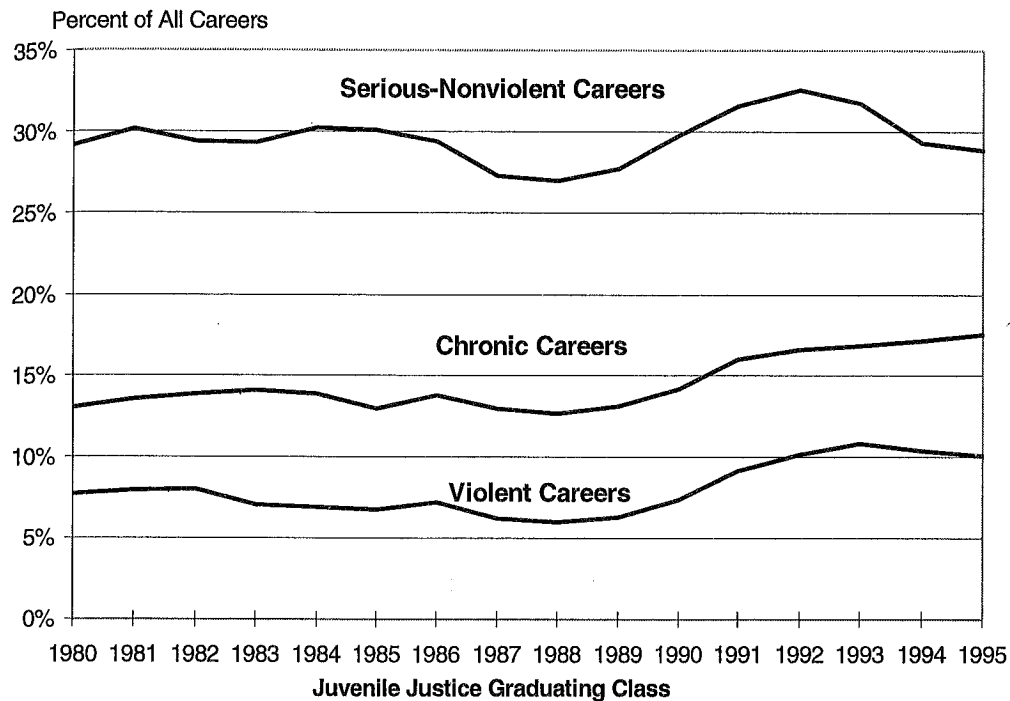


Figure A2. Career Types Within Juvenile Justice Graduating Classes

NOTE: An individual career may be in more than one career type.

were those youth involved in serious nonviolent behavior referred for more of these acts in the later cohorts? To address this point, the career referral rate for serious nonviolent offenses (i.e., the average number of serious nonviolent referrals in careers that had at least one serious nonviolent referral) was developed for each cohort (Figure A3). Overall, youth referred for a serious nonviolent offense were referred an average of 1.69 times for such behaviors in their juvenile court careers. This rate did not change over the 16 cohorts. Therefore, the growth in serious nonviolent referrals observed from the class of 1980 through the class of 1995 was the result of more youth becoming involved in these behaviors and was not caused by an increase in the individual level of youth involvement in serious nonviolent crimes.

Violent careers. The court records show that over all graduating classes between 1980 and 1995, 8.1% of all youth referred had at least one referral for a violent offense in their career (Table A4). The data show, however, that the classes that graduated in the 1990s had a greater proportion of their members charged with a violent offense (Figure A2). A violent offense referral was found in 6% to 8% of the court careers of the classes of 1980 through 1990. After a transitional class in 1991, the proportion of violent offenders in the classes of 1992 through 1995 increased to the 10%-11% level. Therefore, from the juvenile court's perspective, a greater proportion of youth in the recent graduating classes were involved in violent crime.

Were the increases in violent offense referrals in the later graduating classes the result

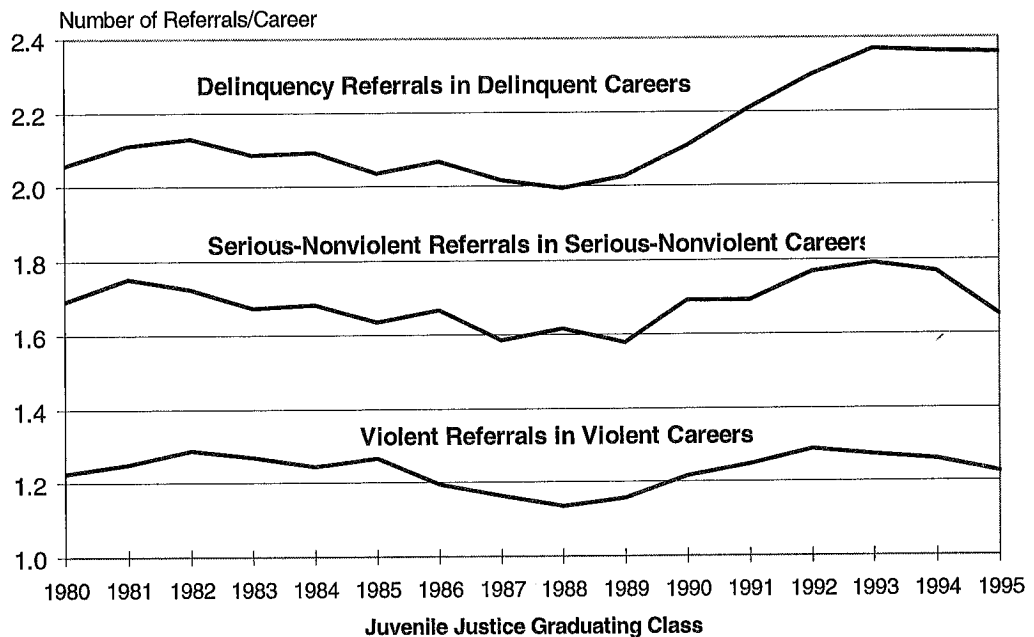


Figure A3. Rate of Offense-Specific Referrals Within Career Type

of increases in the number of referred youth with a violent act in their careers, or had the frequency of violent referrals within an individual career increased? Turning once again to the career referral rates, the average number of violent offense referrals in the careers of youth with a violent offense referral remained constant over the 16 graduating classes, averaging 1.24 violent referrals per career (Figure A3). Across all cohorts, 83% of violent careers (i.e., careers with at least one violent referral) had only one violent referral in the career. That is, 17% of all violent careers over all graduating classes (or 1.4% of all referred youth) had two or more referrals for a violent offense. Over the graduating classes of 1980 through 1995, the proportion of repeat violent offenders fluctuated, reaching a low point of 11% in the class of 1988 and high points of 20% in 1982 and 1992 (Figure A4). Therefore, the substantial increases in violent crime referrals between the

classes of the 1980s and those of the 1990s were primarily the result of a greater number of youth being referred for a single violent offense and not the result of an increase in the level of repeat violent offending by members of the more recent graduating classes.

Very few of the individuals in the 16 cohorts could be characterized as chronically violent offenders. Of the 151,209 youth in these 16 cohorts, 168 had four or more violent referrals in their court records. This was 0.1% of all referred youth and 1.4% of those youth ever referred for a violent offense. Even those with three or more violent referrals in their careers represent just 0.4% of all referred juveniles and 4.8% of violent juvenile offenders.

Chronic offenders. Juvenile policymakers have been actively concerned since the mid-1970s with the chronic offender. Popularized by Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (1972), their

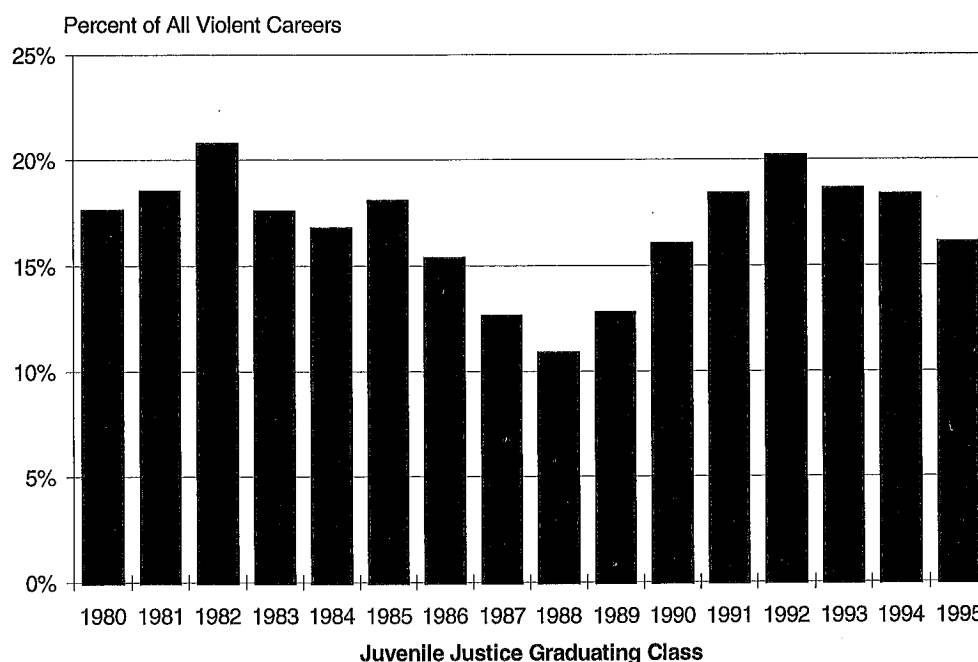


Figure A4. Violent Careers With More Than One Violent Referral

study of police contacts in Philadelphia defined chronic offenders as that small portion of a birth cohort who are responsible for the majority of serious crimes committed by the cohort. In the Philadelphia cohort, for example, 18% of all the males with police contacts were responsible for 52% of all delinquent acts committed by the cohort. In the Philadelphia study, chronic offenders were those youth with five or more police contacts in their juvenile careers. A corresponding definition can be developed using juvenile court referrals. A study of the referral patterns of the complete set of 16 graduating classes finds that 14.6% of youth (those with four or more delinquency referrals before their 18th birthdays) were responsible for a disproportionate number of the cohort's serious referrals. More specifically, these chronic offenders were involved in 44.6% of all referrals, 39.3% of all nonserious referrals, 58.2% of

serious nonviolent referrals, and 60.0% of violent referrals (Table A5).

The later graduating classes contained greater proportions of chronic offenders (Table A6). The court records show that the proportion of each graduating cohort that were chronic offenders (those with four or more referrals) remained constant throughout the classes of the 1980s, averaging 13% of all cohort members (Figure A2). The classes of the early 1990s, however, displayed an abrupt increase in their chronic offender proportions, averaging 17% of the careers in the 1992 through 1995 graduating classes. As a result, chronic offenders in the graduating classes of the 1990s were involved in a greater proportion of referrals in all offense categories.

However, although the number and proportion of chronic careers grew over the cohorts, it is important to realize that the nature of the individual chronic career remained the

TABLE A5 Proportion of Referrals Involving Chronic Offenders (in percentages)

<i>Class</i>	<i>All Delinquency</i>	<i>Nonserious</i>	<i>Serious</i>	<i>Serious Nonviolent</i>	<i>Violent</i>
All	44.6	39.3	58.5	58.2	60.0
1980	42.0	36.4	55.9	56.3	53.7
1981	43.8	37.8	57.9	57.8	58.3
1982	44.4	38.6	59.0	58.6	60.6
1983	43.2	37.5	57.7	56.8	62.6
1984	43.1	37.5	57.0	56.3	61.4
1985	40.7	35.3	54.4	53.5	60.1
1986	42.2	36.4	57.4	57.5	57.0
1987	39.4	34.8	53.2	53.7	50.3
1988	38.7	33.4	54.2	54.9	49.8
1989	39.7	35.1	53.4	53.0	55.5
1990	42.9	37.3	57.2	56.8	59.5
1991	46.7	41.2	59.8	59.3	61.9
1992	49.5	43.9	62.1	61.9	62.9
1993	50.4	44.8	63.4	63.3	63.9
1994	50.8	45.4	65.0	64.6	66.5
1995	50.4	46.5	62.1	62.0	62.4

same. Over the 16 graduating classes, chronic offenders averaged 6.56 referrals in their juvenile court career, were referred for 4.17 nonserious offenses, 1.98 serious nonviolent offenses, and 0.41 violent offenses (Table

A7). These offense-specific referral rates for chronic offenders did not vary in any consistent manner across the classes, although the number of nonserious offense referrals in these careers did increase somewhat in the classes of 1993 through 1995. In all, the court records show that the later classes contained more (not more active, or more serious, or more violent) chronic offenders and that chronic offenders were generally responsible for a greater proportion of all types of referrals in the classes of 1992 through 1995 compared to previous classes.

TABLE A6 Trends in the Proportion of Chronic Careers

<i>Class</i>	<i>All Careers</i>	<i>Chronic Careers</i>	<i>Percentage Chronic</i>
All	151,209	22,115	14.6
1980	8,312	1,085	13.1
1981	8,160	1,106	13.6
1982	8,523	1,183	13.9
1983	8,385	1,183	14.1
1984	8,193	1,138	13.9
1985	8,191	1,066	13.0
1986	9,071	1,254	13.8
1987	10,100	1,310	13.0
1988	10,700	1,360	12.7
1989	10,312	1,358	13.2
1990	9,801	1,395	14.2
1991	9,678	1,548	16.0
1992	10,091	1,674	16.6
1993	10,019	1,690	16.9
1994	10,429	1,792	17.2
1995	11,244	1,973	17.5

Career Attributes of Serious Juvenile Offenders

So far, we have largely been considering selected attributes of delinquent careers without considering their interrelationships. To help visualize the overlapping attributes of delinquent careers, it is useful to divide members of the referral cohorts into eight career categories, which can be labeled using a three-character career index. The first charac-

TABLE A7 Average Offense Profile of Chronic Careers

Class	Referrals/Chronic Career				
	All	Nonserious	Serious	Serious Nonviolent	Violent
All	6.56	4.17	2.39	1.98	0.41
1980	6.62	4.10	2.52	2.13	0.39
1981	6.81	4.13	2.68	2.25	0.43
1982	6.81	4.22	2.59	2.14	0.45
1983	6.38	4.00	2.38	1.98	0.40
1984	6.49	4.04	2.44	2.06	0.38
1985	6.37	3.95	2.41	2.02	0.40
1986	6.32	3.93	2.39	2.04	0.35
1987	6.13	4.06	2.07	1.79	0.28
1988	6.07	3.92	2.15	1.88	0.27
1989	6.11	4.04	2.07	1.76	0.31
1990	6.36	3.97	2.38	2.01	0.37
1991	6.44	4.01	2.43	1.98	0.44
1992	6.86	4.21	2.64	2.15	0.50
1993	7.07	4.42	2.66	2.13	0.52
1994	6.98	4.53	2.45	1.95	0.51
1995	6.78	4.66	2.12	1.68	0.44

ter of the career index is either a *C* or an *X*, indicating that the career has either four or more referrals (chronic, or *C*) or fewer than four referrals (not chronic, or *X*). The second character of the career index is either an *S* or an *X*, indicating whether the career contains a serious nonviolent offense (*S*) or not (*X*). The third character of the career index is either a *V* or an *X*, indicating whether the career contains a violent offense (*V*) or not (*X*). The career indexes are as follows:

XXX: Nonchronic careers with no serious offenses

XSX: Nonchronic careers with at least one serious nonviolent offense

XXV: Nonchronic careers with at least one violent offense

XSV: Nonchronic careers with at least one serious nonviolent and one violent offense

CXX: Chronic careers with no serious offenses

CSX: Chronic careers with at least one serious nonviolent offense

CXV: Chronic careers with at least one violent offense

CSV: Chronic careers with at least one serious nonviolent and one violent offense.

It should be noted that the entire chronic violent offender population is the combination of two groups: CXV and CSV.

Most youth referred to court were never charged with a serious offense (Table A8 and Figure A5). Nearly two thirds (63.9%) of juvenile court careers had fewer than four referrals and had no referrals for a serious offense (XXX). Another 2.5% of careers were chronic offenders with no serious offenses in their careers (CXX). In all, two thirds (66.4%) of all youth referred to juvenile court intake were never charged with a serious offense.

Chronic and violent offenders (CXV and CSV) were 4.2% of the graduating classes. Although 83.0% of chronic offenders had at least one serious (i.e., violent or serious nonviolent) referral, the large majority of chronic offenders did not have a violent referral. More than three fourths (76.7%) of all chronic offenders (i.e., CXV, CSV, CSX, and CXX) had at least one serious nonviolent referral in their careers, and 29.0% had at least one violent referral. More than half (52.6%) of all violent offenders were also chronic offenders, and this proportion changed little over the 16 gradu-

TABLE A8 Frequency of Career Types

<i>Career Type</i>	<i>Career Index</i>	<i>No. of Careers</i>	<i>Percentage of All Careers</i>
Nonchronic with no serious offenses	XXX	96,589	63.9
Nonchronic with at least one serious nonviolent offense	XSX	26,717	17.7
Chronic with at least one serious nonviolent offense	CSX	11,930	7.9
Chronic with at least one serious nonviolent and one violent offense	CSV	5,027	3.3
Nonchronic with at least one violent offense	XXV	4,793	3.2
Chronic with no serious offenses	CXX	3,761	2.5
Chronic with at least one violent offense	CXV	1,397	0.9
Nonchronic with at least one serious nonviolent and one violent offense	XSV	995	0.7
Total		151,209	100.0

NOTE: This information is visually displayed in Figure A5 using a Venn diagram with overlapping circles representing the nonserious, chronic, serious nonviolent, and violent career attributes.

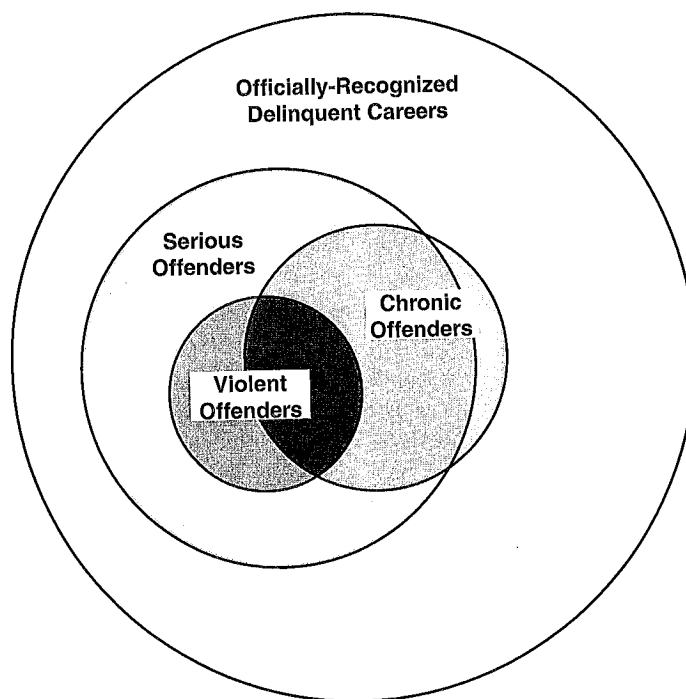


Figure A5. Anatomy of Delinquent Careers Highlighting the Joint Attributes of Chronicity, Serious Nonviolent, and Violent Referrals

NOTE: The outer circle represents all officially recognized delinquent careers. The portion of the large circle not covered by the chronic, serious, and violent offenders' circles represents careers with fewer than four referrals and no referrals for a serious offense. Overlaps represent careers with multiple attributes. The circles and their overlaps are drawn proportional to the number of careers with those attributes.

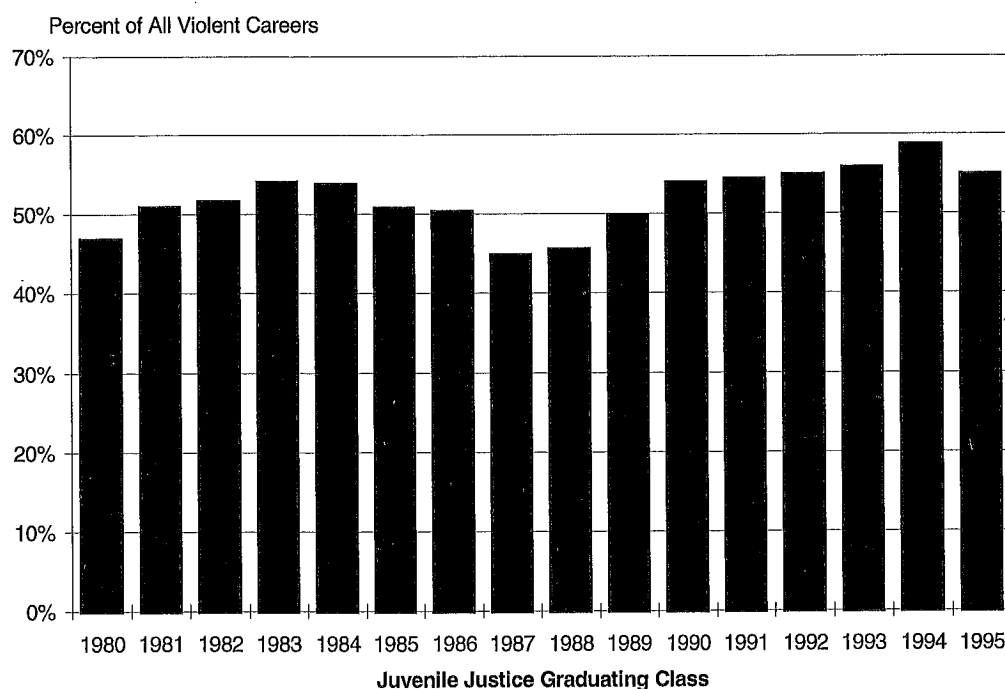


Figure A6. Proportion of Violent Careers That Were Also Chronic Careers

ating classes (Figure A6). Most (78.3%) of the chronic and violent offenders also had at least one serious nonviolent referral in their careers (CSV). In fact, the most common career type containing a violent offense referral was CSV, chronic offenders with both a violent and a serious nonviolent referral in their careers. Nearly 3 of every 5 careers containing a serious nonviolent offense were not chronic (59.8%), and almost 7 of every 8 serious nonviolent careers did not contain a violent offense (86.5%).

The existence of at least one serious nonviolent referral in a career was very common, even in relatively short careers (Figure A7). The court records show that 62% of careers with four referrals to juvenile court intake had at least one referral for a serious nonviolent offense. The likelihood of juveniles having a serious nonviolent offense in their careers was over 90% once the career reached nine re-

errals. In fact, over half of careers with nine referrals contain at least three separate referrals for a serious nonviolent offense.

The existence of a violent referral in a juvenile court career was directly related to the length of a career. As Figure A8 shows, the relation is almost linear, and the slope is far more gradual than that between serious nonviolent referrals and career length. It is as if each new referral to court increases a juvenile's likelihood of having a violent offense in his or her career. Youth with three referrals have a 5% greater likelihood of having a violent offense in their career than those with two referrals. Similarly, those with four referrals have a 5% greater likelihood than those with three referrals, as do careers with 12 referrals compared to those with 11 referrals. A similar linear relationship holds for the second violent referral.

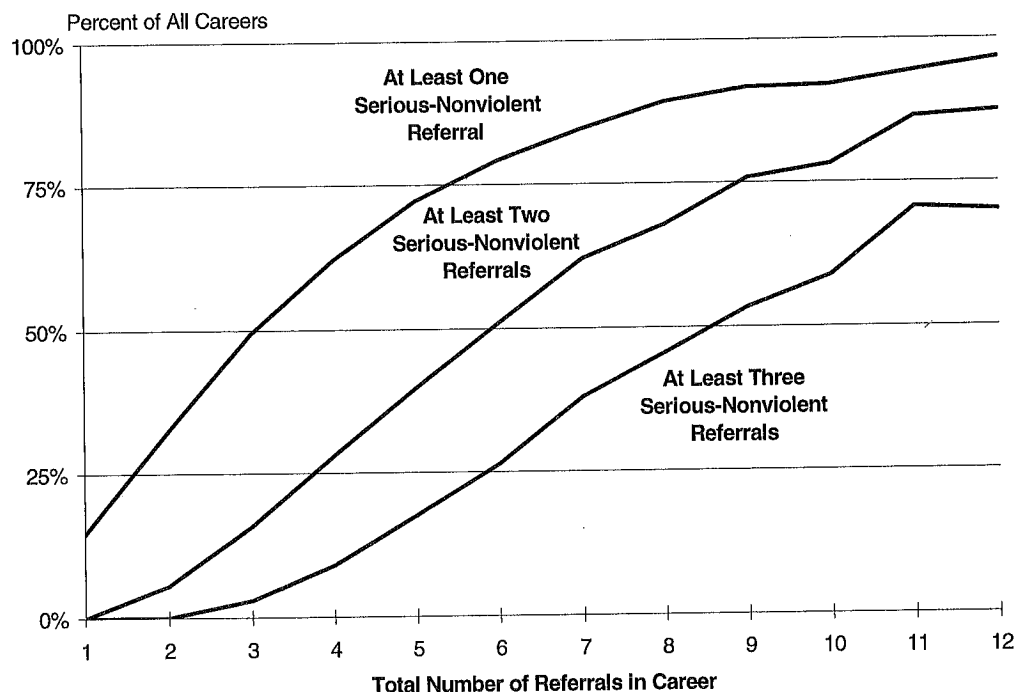


Figure A7. Proportion of Careers With Serious Nonviolent Referrals

■ Conclusions

If this study's community and its juvenile justice system are typical of other jurisdictions in this country, practitioners and policymakers can take some comfort in the fact that the juvenile justice system is largely achieving its goal of successfully intervening in the lives of delinquent youth. First, the large majority of youth referred to the juvenile justice system were referred only once. Although many of these youth may have desisted from delinquent behavior on their own and some may have committed additional delinquent acts that were not detected by law enforcement, the fact is that 60% of those youth referred to juvenile court intake never returned for a new offense. Even the 8% of all referred youth who were charged with a violent offense rarely returned to court charged with a

second violent act. In this community, five of every six of youth charged with a violent offense never returned on a new violent charge. If the public's concern is for repetitive violent youth, this study should help to put that concern in perspective—only 1% of all court-involved youth in the last 16 juvenile justice graduating classes were charged with two or more violent acts.

Practitioners and policymakers should also consider that the world may not be changing as rapidly as they believe. A larger proportion of youth are becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. However, it is not true that a new type of juvenile offender (e.g., a generation of *violent predators*) is emerging in our communities. Compared to the juvenile justice graduating classes of the early 1980s, those of the early 1990s had a somewhat greater proportion of referred youth charged with a violent offense, but the in-

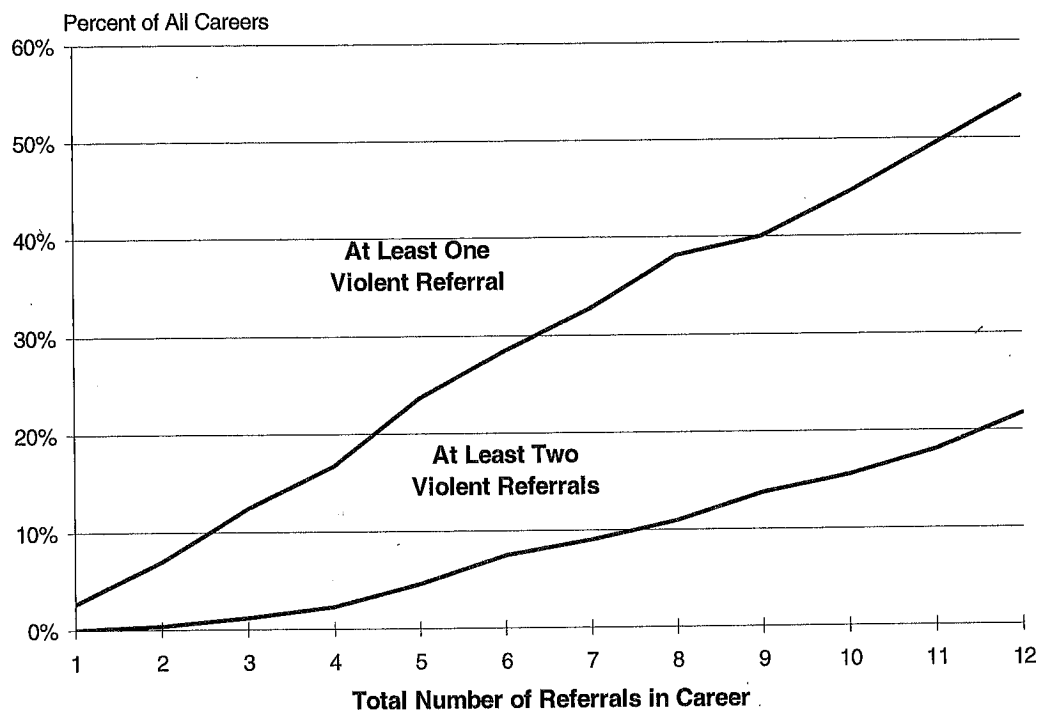


Figure A8. Proportion of Careers With Violent Referrals

crease was not dramatic. In this study the juvenile justice graduating classes in the first half of the 1980s had about 8% of their members charged with a violent offense, compared to 10% in the first half of the 1990s. This is not evidence of a new type of violent offender, especially when it is remembered that the vast majority of violent offenders in the more recent classes (as in previous classes) were charged with only a single violent act.

If there were a new breed of serious juvenile offenders, the court's workload in serious nonviolent crime should also have increased; however, the proportion of a graduating class charged with a serious but nonviolent offense did not change over the 16 classes studied. In fact, much of the growth in referrals for the more recent graduating classes was a growth in referrals for nonserious offenses, an indication that the juvenile

justice system may be spreading its net wider, bringing in more juveniles, not more serious juvenile offenders.

If our society were facing a new type of delinquent offender, this type of offender should be most apparent in the large urban areas in this country, such as the one studied in this research. Based on this study, the empirical evidence for a new type of offender is not there. Too often, changes in policy and practice are based on exceptions and rare events (e.g., the Willie Bosket case in New York or the 6-year-old charged with attempted murder in Richmond, California)—high-profile, unique cases that create the perceptions that drive change. With a growing population and the laws of probability, more of these outlandish events will occur. We must defend against having our understanding of juvenile crime and our evaluations of the juvenile justice system molded by these aberrations.

What we should remember is captured best in this study's finding of the relationship between career length and the existence of a violent crime referral in the career. From this study, it appears that each time a youth returns to court on a new charge there is a greater risk that it will be for a violent crime. To reduce juvenile violence, therefore, we must work to reduce the recidivism of juvenile offenders regardless of the act that has brought them to the attention of the juvenile justice system. And the earlier we successfully intervene in the career, the more effective

the intervention will be in reducing the overall level of violence caused by the members of a juvenile justice graduating class. Waiting to intervene until the youth is officially labeled a violent offender will have little effect on the overall level of officially recognized violent crime because the large majority of this violence is tied to a youth who will commit only one officially recognized violent crime. By the time the label can be applied, the youth's officially recognized violence is over.

■ Notes

1. The data used in this chapter were housed in and made available by the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is maintained by the National Center for Juvenile Justice in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and supported by grants from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. The data were originally collected by the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. The Maricopa County Juvenile Court bears no responsibility for the analyses or the interpretations presented herein, although the court has reviewed a draft of

the chapter and has given its permission for the author to identify the source of the data.

2. Much of the significant research on the nature of juvenile law-violating careers describes the behavior of youth who passed through their juvenile law-violating years in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Many policymakers believe that children today are much different than children 20 years ago. This *graduating class* terminology emphasizes the timeliness of the information in this chapter.