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Delinquency in Southcentral Alaska

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and Nancy Schafer

A recent analysis of four years of aggregate Youth Services data compiled by the southcentral region of the Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services showed that the number of youth referred for delinquent activity decreased between 1984 and 1988. The youth were referred primarily for crimes against property and for drug/alcohol offenses; a very small percentage were charged with crimes against persons.

The analysis was undertaken by the Justice Center in the spring of 1989. The data provide general information about the youths referred for criminal activity, the kinds of offenses for which they were referred

and referral outcomes. The data date from 1984, when the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) assumed from the state judiciary responsibility for juvenile intake services, to the end of 1988.

The Division of Family and Youth Services is a division of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. DFYS is mandated by law to provide services to the vulnerable population, including children, senior citizens, and physically and/or mentally handicapped individuals, who are at risk of victimization. The Youth Corrections section provides services to delinquent children, including field services and institutional services. Probation officers perform field services such

as intake, investigation, supervision of youth, and placement of youth.

The intake officers review all referrals and determine whether petitions should be filed with the court or alternate methods of intake disposition should be used. The intake officer receives, reviews, and processes reports of criminal conduct, authorizes admission and releases from detention, files petitions, and provides for such services to juveniles and their families as diversion programs and referrals to other community resources. Intake officers may release children from detention to the custody of their parents or guardians or to other less restrictive placements such as foster care or emergency shelter. Information about referred youth and their criminal behavior is gathered to assist in the intake officers' decisions.

The southcentral region of DFYS includes the Third Judicial District, an area which stretches from the Matanuska Valley in the north to the Aleutian Islands in the west, the Kenai Peninsula in the south, and Prince William Sound in the east. It is the most populous region in Alaska, containing more than 60 per cent of the state's population. It includes the city of Anchorage as well as small rural towns and villages — a broad spectrum of environments, making comparative analysis especially interesting.

There are five district offices in the region: Anchorage, Kenai, Palmer, Kodiak and Dillingham. With an area population currently estimated by the Department of Labor to be 222,950, Anchorage is
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Data Base Directory Update Available

The Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage has released an expanded and updated version of the *Justice Data Base Directory*, a research catalogue of data banks maintained by Alaska justice system agencies. The directory describes each data base in detail and provides summary background information on the controlling agencies. Originally published in 1988, the work represents the first effort in the country to collect such information on a statewide basis.

The directory now includes information on data bases held by the

- Alaska Office of Equal Employment Opportunity,
- Office of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (Department of Health and Social Services),
- Epidemiology Section of the Division of Public Health (DHSS),
- Bureau of Vital Statistics (DHSS),

- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (Department of Public Safety),

as well as by those agencies covered in the original edition:

- Alaska Department of Law,
- Department of Corrections,
- Department of Public Safety,
- Division of Family and Youth Services (DHSS),
- Alaska Judicial Council,
- Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit,
- Alaska Court System, and
- Alaska Bar Association.

Copies of the *Justice Data Base Directory* may be obtained for \$35 plus \$5 postage and handling through the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Parties who have already purchased the directory will receive the updated material free of charge.

A BJS Report

Federal Criminal Cases,
1980-1987

Between 1980 and 1987 the number of persons prosecuted in U.S. district courts by U.S. attorneys increased 74 per cent. During the same period the number of persons convicted in U.S. district courts increased 49 per cent, and the number sentenced to prison grew by 71 per cent. Persons charged with drug offenses accounted for much of this increase: prosecutions for drugs were up 153 per cent; convictions, 161 per cent; and sentences to prison, 177 per cent. By 1987 drug offenses constituted 33 per cent of all prosecutions by U.S. attorneys, 30 per cent of all persons convicted in U.S. district courts, and 43 per cent of all those sentenced to prison by federal judges.

Suspects and prosecutions in criminal matters investigated by U.S. attorneys

The number of suspects investigated by U.S. attorneys increased 32 per cent between 1980 and 1987, an average annual increase of 4.0 per cent (Table 1).

Over 91,000 suspects were investigated by U.S. attorneys in 1987. The greatest increases in the number of suspects investigated occurred for drug offenses (138%) and fraudulent offenses (49%). (Fraudulent offenses include embezzlement, fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting. Tax fraud is counted as a public order offense.) The number of suspects investigated for regulatory offenses increased 20 per cent between 1980 and 1987, and the number investigated for violent offenses grew by nearly 16 per cent.

The number of suspects prosecuted by U.S. attorneys rose from 31,218 in 1980 to 54,392 in 1987. The overall increase was 74 per cent, and the average annual rate of increase for the 7 years was 8.3 per cent.

As with suspects investigated by U.S. attorneys, the greatest increases in prosecutions by U.S. attorneys occurred for drugs and fraud. The number of suspects prosecuted for drug offenses increased from 7,003 in 1980 to 17,729 in 1987 - an increase of 153 per cent. The number of suspects prosecuted for fraudulent offenses more than doubled during the same period - from 6,250 to 13,415.

Although the number of suspects whom U.S. attorneys declined to

prosecute rose 16 per cent between 1980 and 1987, the proportion of suspects prosecuted increased from 45 per cent in 1980 to 60 per cent in 1987.

Every major offense category contributed to the overall increase. In 1987 almost 70 per cent of the suspects in violent crime cases (mostly robberies) investigated by U.S. attorneys were prosecuted in federal court - up from 62 per cent in 1980. A similar increase occurred in the percentage of suspects in drug cases being prosecuted - from 73 per cent in 1980 to 78 per cent in 1987. A sharp increase occurred in prosecutions of fraudulent offenses. In 1980, 38 per cent of suspects investigated for fraudulent offenses had charges filed against them; by 1987 the percentage prosecuted had risen to 54 per cent.

Of all persons prosecuted, the percentage who were prosecuted for some type of fraudulent offense increased from 21 per cent in 1980 to 25 per cent in 1987; the percentage for persons charged with drug offenses, from 23 per cent to 33 per cent. By contrast, violent offenses dropped from 8 per cent of all prosecutions in 1980 to 6 per cent in 1987, primarily because of a declining number of robbery prosecutions.

Table 1. Suspects Investigated for Prosecution, Prosecuted, or Declined for Prosecution by U.S. Attorneys, by Offense, 1980 and 1987

Most serious offense alleged	Number of suspects whom U.S. attorneys:								
	Investigated for prosecution			Prosecuted in U.S. district court			Declined for prosecution		
	1980	1987	Per cent change	1980	1987	Per cent change	1980	1987	Per cent change
Total *	69,344	91,310	31.7%	31,218	54,392	74.2%	22,525	26,171	16.2%
Violent offenses	3,861	4,460	15.5	2,382	3,107	30.4	1,126	1,088	-3.4
Property offenses	21,429	28,900	34.9	8,321	15,989	92.2	10,428	10,963	5.1
Fraudulent offenses	16,594	24,765	49.2	6,250	13,415	114.6	8,855	9,760	10.2
Other property	4,835	4,135	-14.5	2,071	2,574	24.3	1,573	1,203	-23.5
Drug offenses	9,546	22,729	138.1	7,003	17,729	153.2	1,827	3,752	105.4
Public order offenses	32,622	33,606	3.0	12,696	16,673	31.3	8,539	9,768	14.4
Regulatory offenses	6,218	7,488	20.4	1,936	2,867	48.1	2,879	4,207	46.1
Other public order	26,404	26,118	-1.1	10,760	13,806	28.3	5,660	5,561	-1.7

Note: Suspects are persons investigated in criminal matters by U.S. attorneys. Matters are investigations that a U.S. attorney investigated for 1 hour or more.

* Total for suspects considered for prosecution in 1980

includes 1,884 for whom offenses could not be determined; the 1987 total includes 1,611 suspects with unknown offenses. Other totals, which are subtotals for the suspect population, may include part of the unknowns.

Defendants convicted in U.S. district courts

In 1980, 29,943 defendants were convicted in U.S. district courts (Table 2). By 1987 the number had risen to 44,518. During the same period, convictions for drug offenses increased 161 per cent (from 5,135 to 13,423), accounting for over 50 per cent of the total increase in federal convictions. The larger number of convictions for fraudulent offenses in 1987 made up another fourth of the increase.

The percentage of defendants who were convicted also increased during the period, from 76 per cent to 81 per cent, with the conviction rate for drug defendants increasing from 74 per cent to 85 per cent. Drug offenses accounted for 17 per cent of all defendants convicted in 1980 and 30 per cent of all defendants convicted in 1987. The number of defendants found guilty of fraudulent offenses increased slightly from 22 per cent to 23 per cent of all convictions. Violent offenses accounted for 7 per cent of all convictions in 1980 and 5 per cent of the convictions in 1987.

For the entire 1980-87 period, U.S. district courts convicted 301,757 defendants. Nearly 1 in 5 convictions during this time were for drug trafficking. Robbery was

Table 2. Defendants Convicted in U.S. District Court, by Offense, 1980 and 1987

Most serious offense at conviction	Number of defendants convicted		Per cent change
	1980	1987	
All offenses	29,943	44,518	48.7%
Violent offenses	2,134	2,241	5.0
Property offenses	10,780	14,349	33.1
Fraudulent offenses ^a	6,733	10,443	55.1
Other property	4,047	3,906	-3.5
Drug offenses	5,135	13,423	161.4
Possession	498	2,193	340.4
Trafficking ^b	4,637	11,230	142.2
Public order offenses	11,893	14,500	21.9
Regulatory offenses	1,828	1,847	1.0
Other public order	10,065	12,653	25.7

Note: Detail may not add to total because of a small number of defendants for whom offense could not be determined.

^a Includes embezzlement, fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting but exclude tax fraud.

^b Includes importing, manufacturing, and "other" drug offenses (fewer than 7 defendants in either year).

Table 3. Offenders Sentenced to Prison in U.S. District Court, by Offense, 1980 and 1987

Most serious offense at conviction	Number of defendants sentenced to prison		Per cent change
	1980	1987	
All offenses	13,766	23,579	71.3%
Violent offenses	1,770	1,837	3.8
Property offenses	4,630	6,234	34.6
Fraudulent offenses ^a	2,825	4,610	63.2
Other property	1,805	1,624	-10.0
Drug offenses	3,675	10,196	177.4
Possession	114	609	434.2
Trafficking ^b	3,561	9,587	169.2
Public order offenses	3,690	5,312	44.0
Regulatory offenses	484	601	24.2
Other public order	3,206	4,711	46.9

Note: Detail may not add to total because of a small number of defendants for whom offense could not be determined.

^a Includes embezzlement, fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting but excludes tax fraud.

^b Includes importing, manufacturing, and "other" drug offenses (fewer than 7 defendants in either year).

the only violent crime to rank among the 10 most numerous convictions for the 8 years together. Between 1980 and 1987 convictions for drug possession and weapons offenses replaced robbery and forgery among the 10 most numerous offenses.

Offenders sentenced to prison

The number of convicted offenders sentenced to federal prison increased 71 per cent from 1980 to 1987 (Table 3). This increase during the period reflected both a larger number of persons convicted and increased severity in sentencing. In 1980 U.S. district courts sentenced 46 per cent of convicted defendants to prison; in 1987, 53 per cent.

The number of drug offenders sentenced to prison increased from 3,675 in 1980 to 10,196 in 1987, a gain of 177 per cent. By contrast, the number of offenders sentenced to prison for other than drug crimes increased from 10,091 in 1980 to 13,383 in 1987, a growth of 33 per cent. The larger number of drug defendants sentenced to prison accounted for two-thirds of the total increase in persons sentenced to federal prison, the

remaining third being divided mainly among defendants convicted of fraudulent or public order offenses.

As with defendants convicted, drug trafficking - which includes drug manufacturing and distribution - constituted the largest single offense category for offenders who received prison sentences in 1987.

Drug offenders made up 43 per cent of all those who received a prison sentence in U.S. district court in 1987, compared to 27 per cent of persons sentenced to prison 7 years earlier.

(This article was based on the Bureau of Justice Statistics report NCJ-118311, "Federal Criminal Cases, 1980-87." Copies of the report are available through the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit, Justice Center.)



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Alaska's only truly large city. The Kenai office serves the entire Kenai peninsula (population approximately 39,949). Palmer is the third largest office location in the region and serves the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (population approximately 37,985). All of Kodiak Island is served by the Kodiak office; the island's population is estimated at 13,669. The Bristol Bay Borough was served by the Kodiak office from January to November of 1984, when an office opened in Dillingham. The Dillingham census area has a population of approximately 6,135.

The data used for analysis were gathered from monthly activity reports manually prepared by personnel in each regional office from intake reports. Manual data collection and tabulation are subject to inaccuracies because of the possibility of errors on initial intake forms, errors in transcription and/or errors in addition. The individual segments of the monthly activity reports are not numerically related to each other. Race and sex data were not available for all referrals. Offense data are based on the final charges.

Recent BJS Reports

In addition to the report summarized in the preceding article, the following recent studies and reports from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available from the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Unit:

"Capital Punishment 1988," detailed information on prisoners under death sentences throughout the nation, NCJ-118313.

"Households Touched by Crime, 1988," an examination, using National Crime Survey data, of the dispersion of crime in the United States, NCJ-117434.

Therefore, the data give a general picture which is reasonably accurate, but not precisely so.

From January 1984 through December 1988 a total of 14,637 youth were referred in the southcentral region. The number of referrals decreased 14.2 per cent between 1986 (N=3900) and 1988 (N=3348). The city of Anchorage accounted for nearly two-thirds of all referrals (N=9001), therefore dominating the regional statistics. The total number of referrals in Anchorage decreased steadily over the four-year period. From 1984 to 1988 there was a 17 per cent decrease in the number of Anchorage referrals. The other locations showed more erratic year-to-year changes but, with the exception of Dillingham, all showed lower numbers in 1988 than in 1984.

The youth referred in the region tended to be male and white. In general, males constituted seventy-five per cent of referrals in the region and females twenty-five per cent, a pattern which held from year to year and from site to site. Boys referred tended to be slightly older than girls: the mean age of referral for males was 15.03 years, for females, 14.76 years.

Racial proportions varied by both year and site. Overall, white youth constituted 78.1 per cent of referrals during the four years; Native youth, 11.2 per cent; black youth, 6.6 per cent; Hispanic youth, 1.2 per cent. While white youth remained the largest proportion of all youths referred, there was a steady decline in their numbers each year. They annually constituted a smaller percentage of total referrals; in 1985 they constituted 81.5 per cent of regional referrals, and by 1988, 74.7 per cent of regional referrals, a 20 per cent decrease over the period. Referrals of both Native and black youth increased in number as well as a percentage of the total every year. Referrals of Native youth showed a 31.9 per cent increase between 1985 when 338 referrals were Native to 1988 when 446 referrals were Native. Referrals of black youth rose by 41 per cent during the four years,

though they were fewer in number than referrals of Native youth. The decrease over the years in total referrals is based primarily upon a decrease in referrals of white youth. (See Figure 1.) Recent estimates indicate a decline in the overall population of the region since 1985, thus accounting for the decline in number of referrals. Estimates of population changes by race or age are not currently available.

These patterns did not hold for all sites. Anchorage data, which dominated the data for the region, reflected similar yearly decreases in number of white youth referred and increases in number of minority youth referred. In both Kenai and Palmer the number of white youth referred decreased but their proportion of all youth referred increased. In Kodiak the proportion of white youth rose from 70.1 per cent in 1986 to 72.0 per cent in 1988 although numbers decreased. In Dillingham, where Native youth constituted the majority of all youth referred, the race distribution varied over the years, with white youth constituting 24.1 per cent of all 1986 referrals, 16.3 per cent of all 1987 referrals, and 21.5 per cent of 1988 referrals.

Female arrests in Anchorage, where the number of Native females referred more than doubled over the four-year period, contributed to the regional increase in minority referrals. At other locations the number of Native female arrests tended to remain fairly constant over the period or to decline.

The monthly activity reports divided offenses into categories: crimes against persons, crimes against property, crimes against public order and crimes involving drugs and alcohol. These categories were further divided into felony and misdemeanor offenses. (See Figure 2.)

Youth in the southcentral region of Alaska were not, for the most part, involved in serious or violent activities. Of the 13,489 offenses recorded by youth intake officers, only 13.4 per cent were charged as felony offenses (N=1809). The

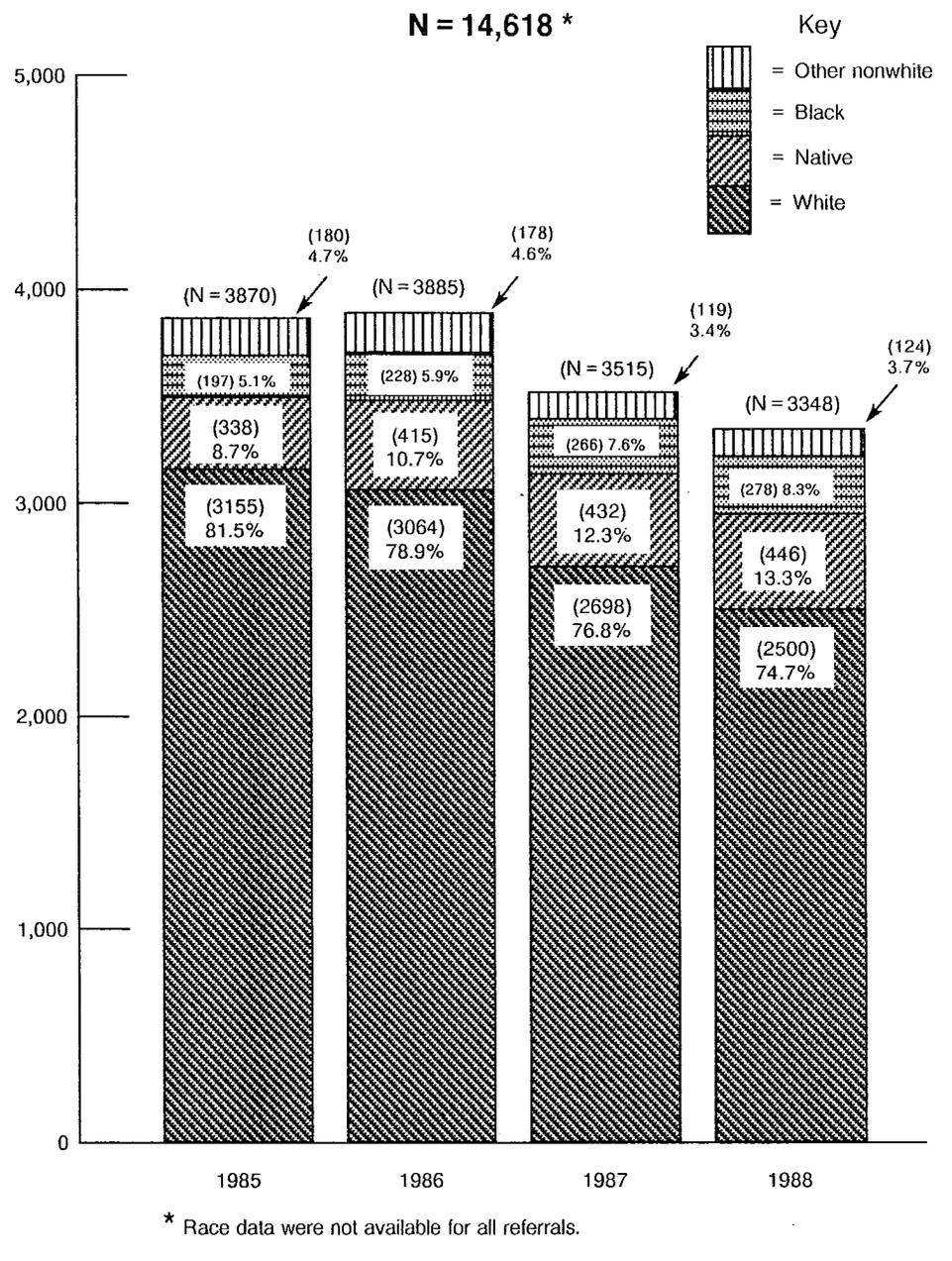
aggregate data show that offenses against the public order and offenses against persons were the smallest categories: 4.9 per cent of offenses were public order offenses (N=666); 7.6 per cent were crimes against persons (N=1027).

The majority of crimes against persons were charged as misdemeanors rather than felonies (75.9%). The violent felony crimes represented in the four years of data for the region included: murder/manslaughter/ criminally negligent homicide (N=5); sexual assault/sexual abuse (N=109); assault (N=97), and armed robbery (N=35). Together felony offenses against persons formed less than two per cent of all offenses listed in the region. During the four years there were five charges in the category which includes murder, manslaughter or criminally negligent homicide; three were reported by the Anchorage office and two by Palmer.

Personal crimes listed as misdemeanors include fourth degree assault, reckless endangerment and sexual abuse of a minor in the fourth degree. These offenses formed 5.8 per cent of the regional total - a proportion which held generally from site to site.

More than two-thirds of all offenses for the region were crimes against property (N=9054). Of these, 16.2 per cent were felony property offenses, which include burglary, theft in the first or second degree, and arson. Burglary was the most frequent of these; 65.2 per cent of felonious crimes against property were burglaries. Anchorage had the largest number of referrals for burglary, but burglary was not as large a proportion of all Anchorage offenses as it was of all offenses in other sites. Misdemeanor property crimes formed 56.2 per cent of all offenses listed in the region (N=7586), and two-thirds of these less serious offenses against property were charges of theft or concealment of merchandise (N=5049). Anchorage data dominated this category: 47.8 per cent of all Anchorage offenses were third or fourth degree theft and second or third degree concealment, a much larger proportion

Figure 1. Annual Referrals by Race of Delinquent Youth Southcentral Alaska, 1985 to 1988

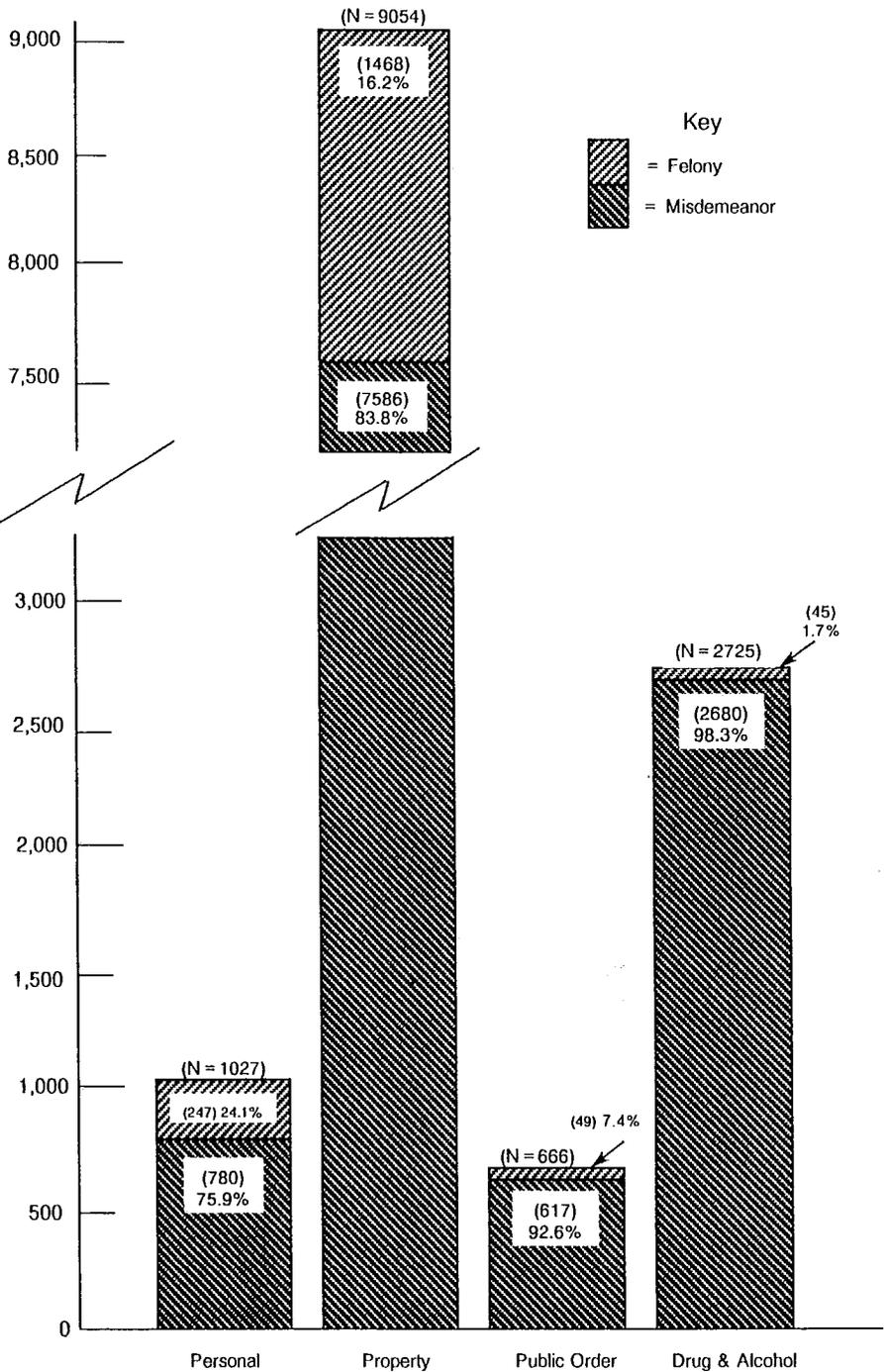


than that for any other location. In Palmer misdemeanor theft formed 28.8 per cent of all offenses; in Kenai, 21.6 per cent; and in Kodiak and Dillingham, 2.2 and 7.2 per cent, respectively. In both Kodiak and Dillingham other misdemeanor property offenses (criminal mischief, criminal trespass) outnumbered theft-related offenses. The data did not permit any assessment of the extent to which these differences in focus relate to differences in urban/rural environments. Criminal

mischief offenses were the second most frequent crime (N=1499) in the misdemeanor property category, constituting 11.1 per cent of all offenses in the region, a proportion which was, unlike theft, fairly constant on a site-by-site basis.

Other than property offenses the only offense category of any size was that of drug and alcohol offenses, which formed just over 20 per cent of all offenses listed for the region. Data from Anchorage reduced the

**Figure 2. Types of Crimes Reported by Severity
Southcentral DFYS, 1985 to 1988
N = 13,472 ***



* Figure does not include referrals for which charges were dismissed.

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reduced the proportion of these crimes for the region, since this category formed only 11.4 per cent of all Anchorage crimes. This crime category formed 35.0 per cent of all Kenai offenses, 23.0 per cent of Palmer offenses, 40.1 per cent of Kodiak offenses and 47.5 per cent of offenses in Dillingham. If Anchorage data were excluded from the regional data, drug and alcohol offenses would constitute one-third of regional offenses.

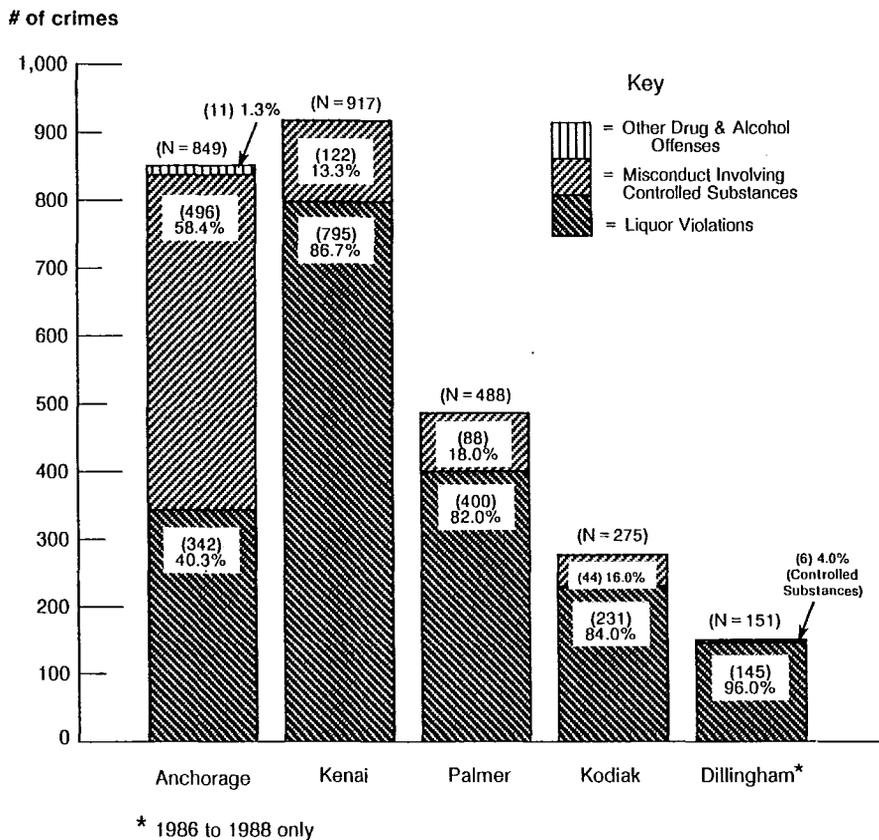
Only 45 of the 2,725 drug and alcohol offenses were classified as felonies. For the most part these offenses were offenses involving manufacture, sale or delivery of controlled substances. Misdemeanor drug and alcohol offenses were, for youth, either possession of specific quantities of a controlled substance or underage drinking. Figure 3 provides a graphic look at misdemeanor offenses in this category.

Misdemeanor drug offenses constituted 27 per cent of the offenses in this category (N=756). Almost two-thirds of the drug-related misdemeanors were reported by the Anchorage office (N=496). Drug offenses were 58.4 per cent of all offenses in this category in Anchorage. At the other sites the drug percentage ranged from a low of 4 per cent (Dillingham) to a high of 18.0 per cent (Palmer). The differences can possibly be explained by the fact that narcotics are more readily available in an urban area.

The violations related to alcohol demonstrated a major difference which is not only proportional but also numeric. Two sites recorded more referrals for alcohol violations than Anchorage. The Kenai office reported 795 alcohol offenses, more than twice the number reported in Anchorage (N=342). Palmer also reported more alcohol-related offenses than Anchorage (N=400).

The proportional differences among the sites underscore the differing local policies regarding this offense. In Anchorage alcohol offenses constituted 4.4 per cent of

Figure 3. Misdemeanor Drug and Alcohol Offense Distribution by Location Cumulative, 1985 to 1988



all Anchorage offenses; in Palmer, 18.9 per cent; in Kenai, 30.2 per cent; in Kodiak, 33.1 per cent; and in Dillingham, 45.6 per cent. In many of Alaska's small communities the strong proscription against alcohol abuse may lead to expectations that laws against underage drinking be strictly enforced. It is also probable that in small cities and towns there are fewer places where one can drink unobserved than there are in a large city. This would lead to an increased likelihood of formal intervention. Because theft and other property offenses form the bulk of offenses charged against Anchorage youth, the police, focusing on these or drug crimes,

may fail to notice underage drinking or choose to handle it informally.

The data reveal that many young people in the southcentral region have engaged in activities which bring them in contact with the police, but these activities tended for the most part to be minor violations of the law. Eighty-six per cent of the offenses in the region were misdemeanors, and more than three-quarters (76.1%) were misdemeanor property crimes or drug and alcohol offenses. Very few youths were charged with crimes against persons (N=1027), and 76.0 per cent of these were misdemeanor offenses (N=780). Crimes against persons constituted a very small

portion of all offenses recorded in the region over the four year period (7.6%), thus suggesting that youth in Alaska are not as violent as has often been assumed.

(Dwight Becker is Regional Administrator of Youth Corrections, Division of Family and Youth Services; Nancy Schafer is an associate professor with the Justice Center; and Emily Read is a research associate with the Center.)

The preceding article is extracted from "Juvenile Offense Behavior in Southcentral Alaska," Anchorage, AK: Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage, 1989. Copies of the entire report are available from the Center.)

Crime Series Videotapes Available

Crime File, a series of videotape programs examining critical issues in criminal justice, is available for showing through the Justice Center. The series, which was produced by the National Institute of Justice and the Police Foundation, covers such topics as search and seizure, the exclusionary rule, television and violence, and drug education.

The programs have been produced for viewing both by justice system professionals and the general public. They are suitable for use in college-level classes.

Further information about *Crime File* may be obtained through the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage (907) 786-1810.

Alaska Department of Corrections Profile of Population

As of July 1989, Department of Corrections had jurisdiction over 5,750 persons.
This number includes:

2,363	persons in Alaska institutions
72	persons in the Federal Bureau of Prisons
5	persons in Minnesota state institutions
152	persons in community residential centers (furloughees)
19	persons in community residential centers (prob-parolees)
497	persons on parole
2,642	persons on probation

Since July 1985, the following increases have occurred:

Persons in Alaska's institutions	up	29%	(1,825-2,363)
Persons in federal and Minnesota prisons	down	58%	(184-77)
Persons in community residential centers	up	54%	(111-171)
Persons on parole	up	124%	(222-497)
Persons on probation	up	19%	(2,226-2,642)

The makeup of the population incarcerated in Alaska's institutions, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Minnesota state prisons has changed during these four years.

	07/85	07/88	07/89	85-89 Change	88-89 Change
Felons-sentenced	1,296	1,706	1,753	+ 35%	+ 3%
Misdemeanants-sentenced	149	79	87	- 42%	+ 10%
Felons-unsentenced	450	408	462	+ 3%	+ 13%
Misdemeanants-unsentenced	114	138	138	+ 21%	+ 10%
Totals	2,009	2,318	2,440	+ 21%	+ 5%

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