

# **Juvenile Justice in WV: Current Research Issues and Selected State Findings**

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# 2004 Data Quality Review

- **Purpose is to ensure an optimum level of data integrity.**
  - Identify and correct missing or erroneous information
  - Review “flagged” records to remove any double-counting of individuals
  - Develop standard queries and reports to facilitate the maintenance of the database
- **Specifics Mailings:**
  1. Identify unique versus duplicate individuals
  2. Eliminate missing/unknown data in specific elements: demographic characteristics, detention status, and date of informal disposition.
  3. Identify and correct case disposition information (e.g., missing dates, cases with no disposition information, adjudications w/o dispositions, etc.)

# Importance of Research-Based Approaches

- Provides probation officers and administrators with the information to make informed decisions.
- Helps us demonstrate effectiveness of strategies and approaches.
  - Successes can then be replicated, failures can be reduced or eliminated.
- Assists in selection and allocation of resources and strategies to deliver those resources.

# Importance of Research-Based Approaches

- Plays a key role in developing long-term policies and practices to reduce future offending.
  - Hopefully, policies based on sound and tested theoretical principles.
- Tests our assumptions and beliefs about “what is happening, and what is really happening”
  - Criminological literature is replete with examples of programs and policies that “should work” or are “believed to work”, but are later found to be ineffective (even counterproductive)

In essence, research (and our knowledge of research methods) *tells us not only what we know, but how we know what we know!*

So, what do we know...

# **Studies on Offenders and Programs: Knowledge Gained**

- **Most delinquents stop committing illegal acts at some point, and most of them stop relatively early.**
- **The empirical literature clearly distinguishes between those who stop offending in adolescence and those that continue offending into adulthood.**
  - **Moffitt (1993) distinguished between “life-course persistent” and “adolescence-limited” offenders.**
- **Roughly 6-8% of offenders are responsible for half of all crimes known to law enforcement.**
  - **Farrington and West (1993), 6% of the entire cohort of 411 London males, accounted for 49% of all recorded convictions up to the age of 32.**

# **Studies on Offenders and Programs: Knowledge Gained**

- **The presence of protective factors can moderate or mediate the effects of risk exposure through early adolescence.**
  - Smith, Lizotte, Thornberry, and Krohn (1995) identified 12 school, family, peer, and individual protective factors that buffer the effects of risk.
- **Official punishment without the introduction of treatment services does not work.**
  - Huizinga, Schumann, Ehret, and Elliot (2004), in a cross-national study JJS processing, arrest and level of sanction had little impact on future delinquency and crime.
- **Low-risk offenders require only low levels of supervision. If low-risk offenders receive intensive supervision, they get worse, not better (Bonta 1991).**

# **Studies on Offenders and Programs: Knowledge Gained**

- **The theoretical approach of community corrections (including probation, when services are provided), should be behavioral, cognitive, and oriented toward skill development (Palmer 1996; Gendreau 1996).**
- **Corrections programs (including probation) must assess, classify, and treat offenders based upon the principles of risk, need, AND responsivity if they are to reduce the likelihood of future offending (Andrews 1995; Gendreau 1996).**

# WV Research Needs

- **Move from description of the population, to studying research questions/topics that provide greater policy guidance.**
  - In WV, little research to date:
    - seeks to explain or describe substantive differences among offender subpopulations;
    - assesses factors most important for determining sentences and case outcomes (including successful completion of probation); or
    - provides information on offenders who are returning to the system.

# WV Research Needs

## Examples:

- Examine race and gender differences in terms of risk and need classifications at pre-sentence.
- Study the impact of gender on case processing decisions, controlling for legal characteristics.
- Study subsets of data by offense type – For instance, assess differences in drug vs. violent offenders in terms of risk, need, demographic characteristics, and dispositions.
- Examine the impact (or “effectiveness”) of previous dispositions on subsequent referrals.
- Conduct a study on “chronic” or “repeat offenders” and assess differences across risk and need classifications, compared to those with fewer referrals or convictions.

# WV Research Needs

- **Conduct explanatory research that includes proper controls.**
  - In most instances, legal history, current offense seriousness, and standard demographic variables.
- **Identify well-established programs for evaluation – both process and outcome.**
  - Use control or adequate comparison groups to determine differences in outcomes.
  - Must examine “program integrity”: implementation, client preservice assessment, program characteristics, staff characteristics, evaluation, and other.

# WV Research Needs

- **Determine availability of programs and impact on service delivery and supervision practices.**
  - Programs provided by probation?
  - Community/“outside” contractors?
- Many probation departments (and other corrections programs) have experienced problems finding any relevant/useful community services to which offenders may be referred.

# WV Research Needs

- **Conduct validation studies of extant assessment and classification tools.**
  - Value is dependent upon:
    - accuracy with which they predict future offending;
    - whether agencies can use the information to structure service delivery to reduce future offense.
- **RE-ASSESSMENT MUST OCCUR!**
  - Initial assessment serves as baseline.
  - Different types of data at different assessment points.
    - Soon after arrest (maybe juvenile intake), at pre-sentence, upon entry to probation/DJS, every 30-days on supervision/program, upon TERMINATION, at 30-days after termination, and 6-month intervals after termination.

# Immediate Data Needs

1. **Adult and juvenile probation data to include, but not be limited to:**
  - Offender characteristics in terms of risk, need, and responsivity – including re-assessments during supervision period;
  - Criminal history and current offense information (not captured by risk assessments);
  - Number and type of offender contacts;
  - Specific services needed by and delivered to the offender;
  - Contacts and services of outside providers;
  - Offender performance measures;
  - Termination and outcome reports for individual offenders.

# Immediate Data Needs

## 2. Close “data gap” on juveniles not referred to probation.

- Missing some status and less serious delinquency offenders.
  - Not sure whether these cases contain systematic variation.
- Results in missing/unknown demographic information which, in turn, inhibits efforts to examine minority and other issues.
- Limits ability to estimate the “true” population of youths handled by the juvenile courts.

# **WV Juvenile Research Reports 2004**

## **Published reports:**

- Turley & Haas (2004, July) *WV Juvenile Arrest Report 2000-2003.*
- Haas & Summers (2004, June) *Racial Disparity and the Juvenile Justice Process: A Multistage Analysis for the State of West Virginia.*
- Hamilton, Haas, & Turley (2004, September) *WV Juvenile Court Statistics 2001-2003.*

## **Research in progress:**

- WV Juvenile Detention and Corrections Report 2001-2003

# **2004 SAC Publications: Selected Findings**

# Juvenile Research in WV: Broad Findings

1. Juveniles account for only a small proportion of crimes known to law enforcement in WV – 7.5%.
2. A vast majority of juveniles are arrested and referred to probation for nonserious offenses.
3. Juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses are substantially less than national estimates – 5.8% compared to 15.0%.
4. Only 11.8% of juveniles processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 were charged with a felony offense.
5. Less than 10.0% of juveniles processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 had a prior record – arrest, adjudication, or probation.

# Juvenile Research in WV: Broad Findings

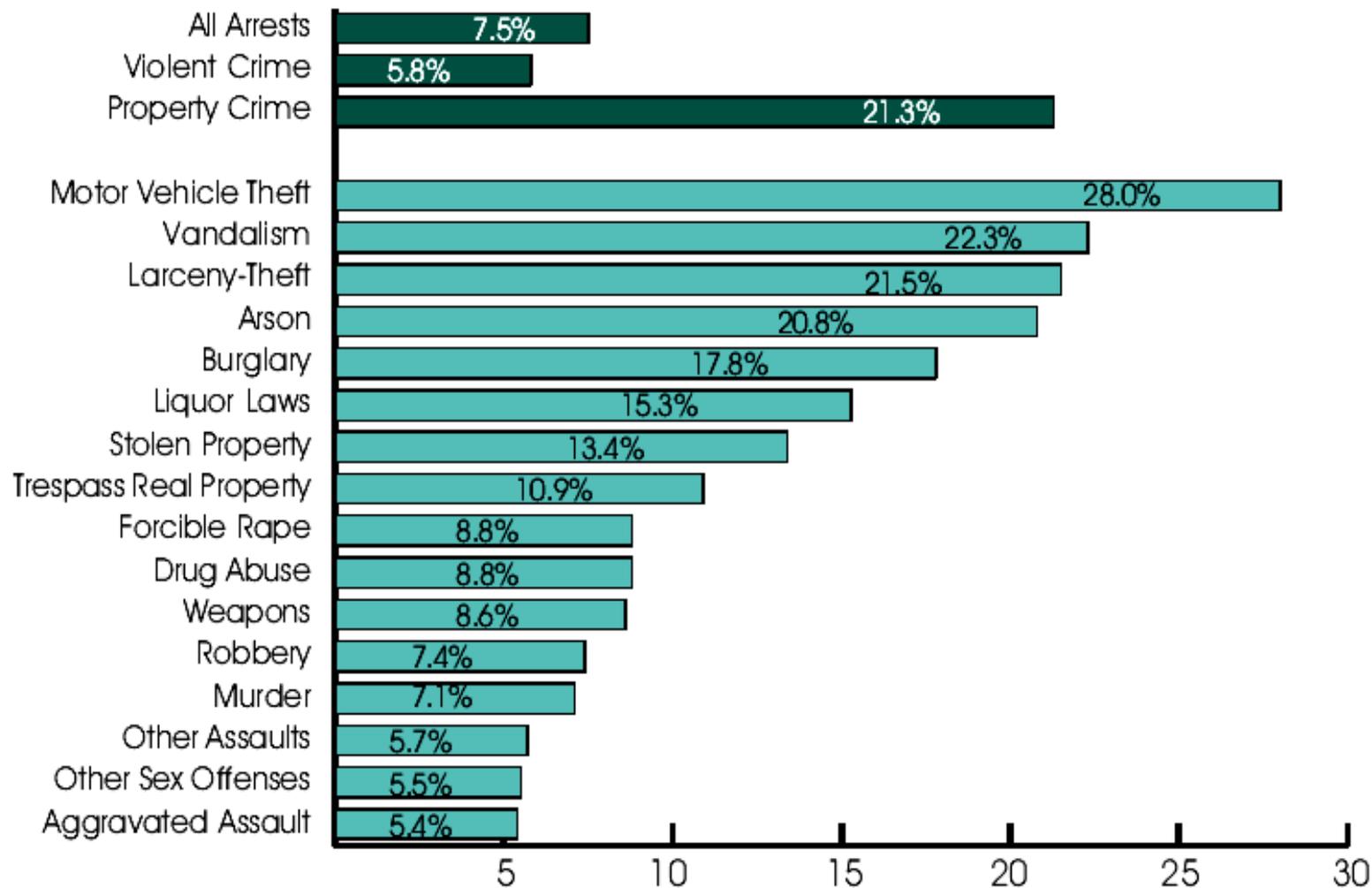
6. A very small percentage of youths referred to juvenile probation were detained prior to adjudication in 2003 – 7.7%.
  - Of those detained, over one-half (55.5%) were detained in a juvenile detention centers.
  
7. Between 2000-2002, there was a sharp decline in juvenile arrests – 27.1%.
  
8. The reduction in juvenile arrests did not correspond to a reduction in juvenile referrals between 2001-2002.
  - Reduction in law enforcement referrals coincided with an increase in non-law enforcement, status offense referrals.
  - Overall, there was a modest reduction in referrals between 2001-2003 – 8.5%.

# **Juvenile Research in WV: Broad Findings**

9. Nonwhite juveniles are overrepresented in arrests and court proceedings compared to their proportion in the population – by approximately 5.0%.
10. Nonwhite youths are more likely to receive harsher dispositions at the informal disposition, predispositional detention, and formal disposition stages, even after controlling for seriousness of offense, prior record, age, and gender.

Graph 1

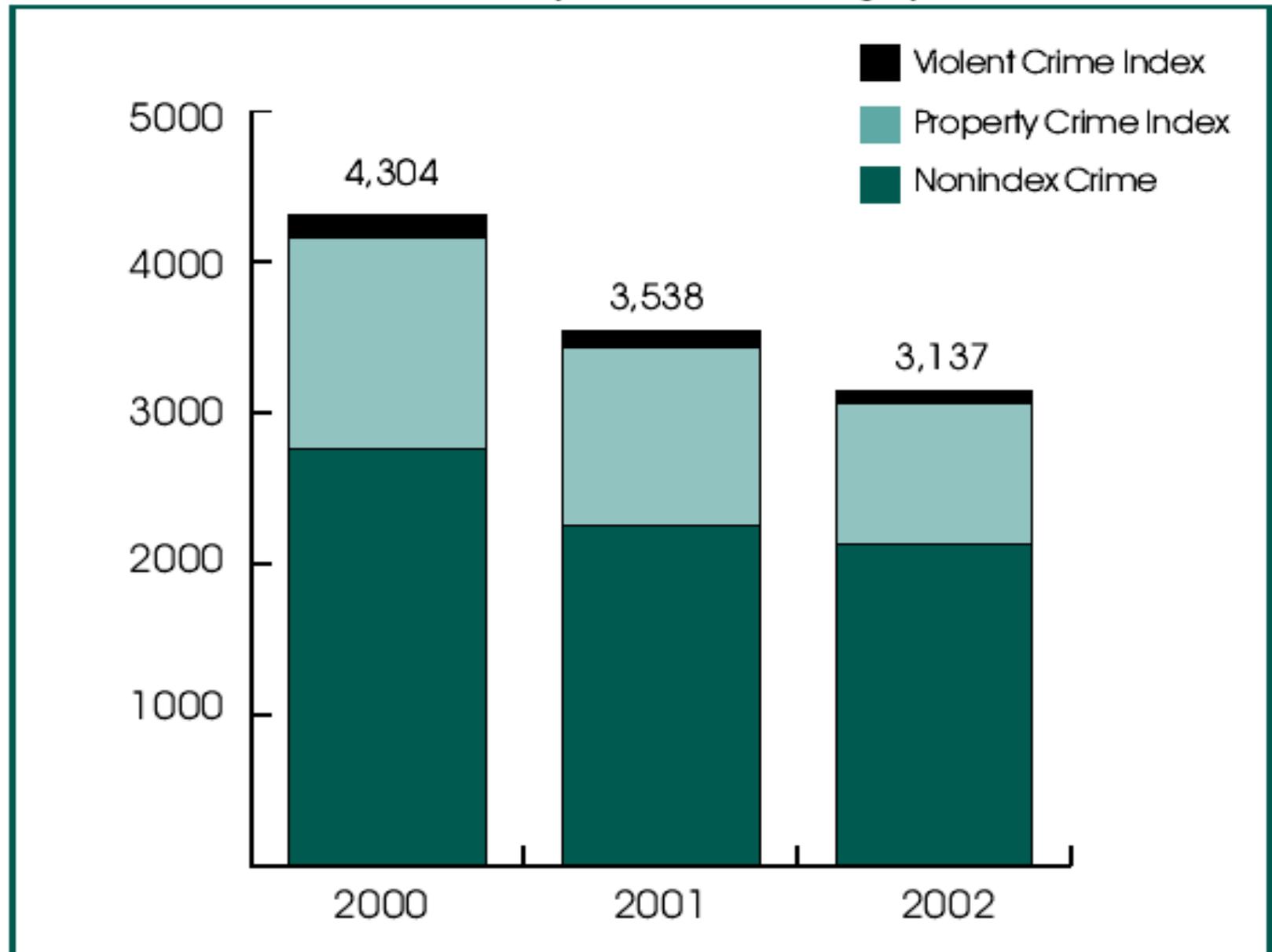
Percentage of all 2002 Arrests Involving Juveniles



Note: Juveniles proportions are calculated based on the total number of arrests where age was reported. Arrestee age was not reported for 34 arrests in 2002.

Graph 2

Total Number of Juvenile Arrests by Crime Index Category: 2000-2002



Graph 3

Juvenile Arrest Rates per 1,000 by Crime Index Category: 2000-2002

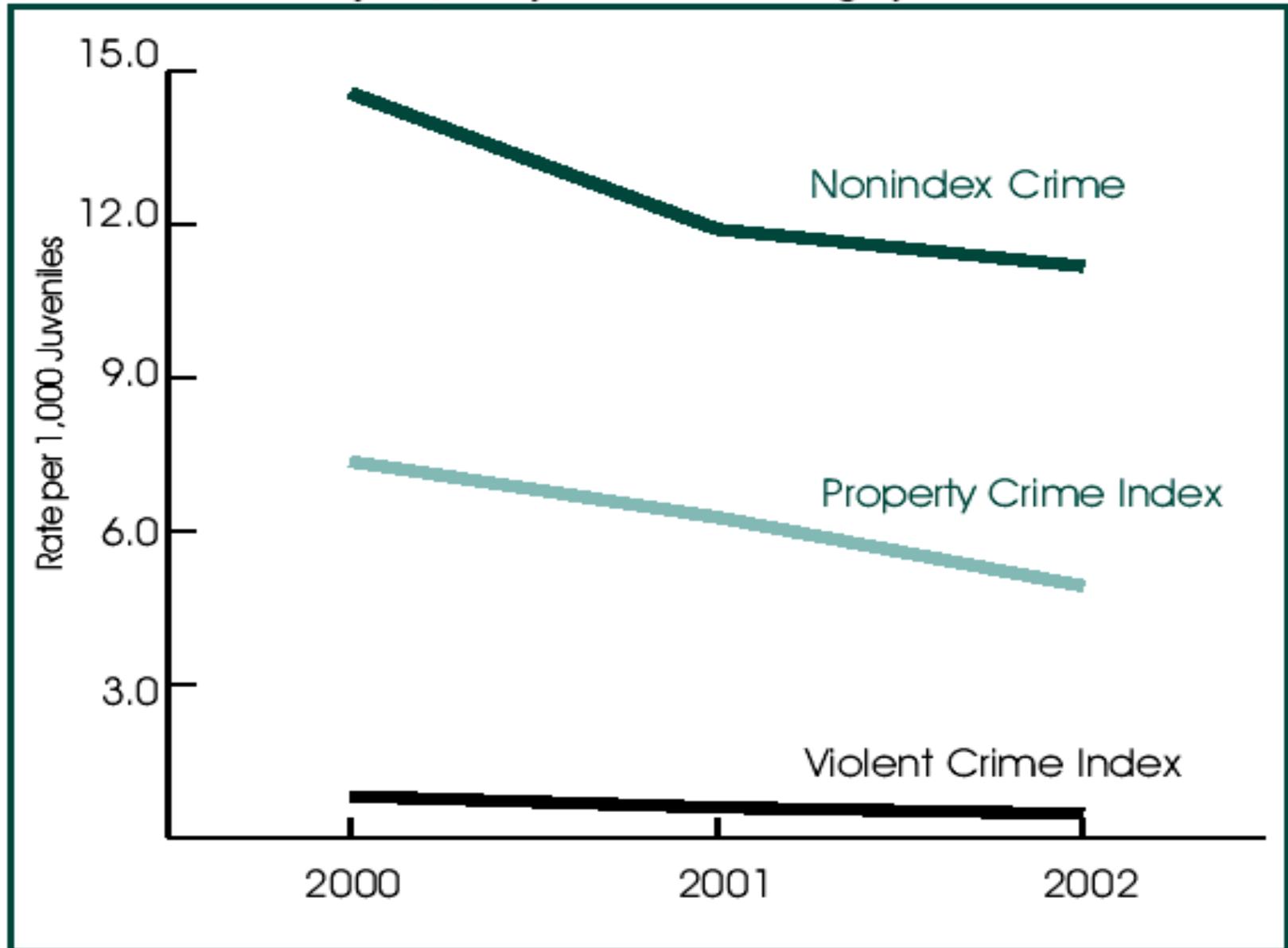


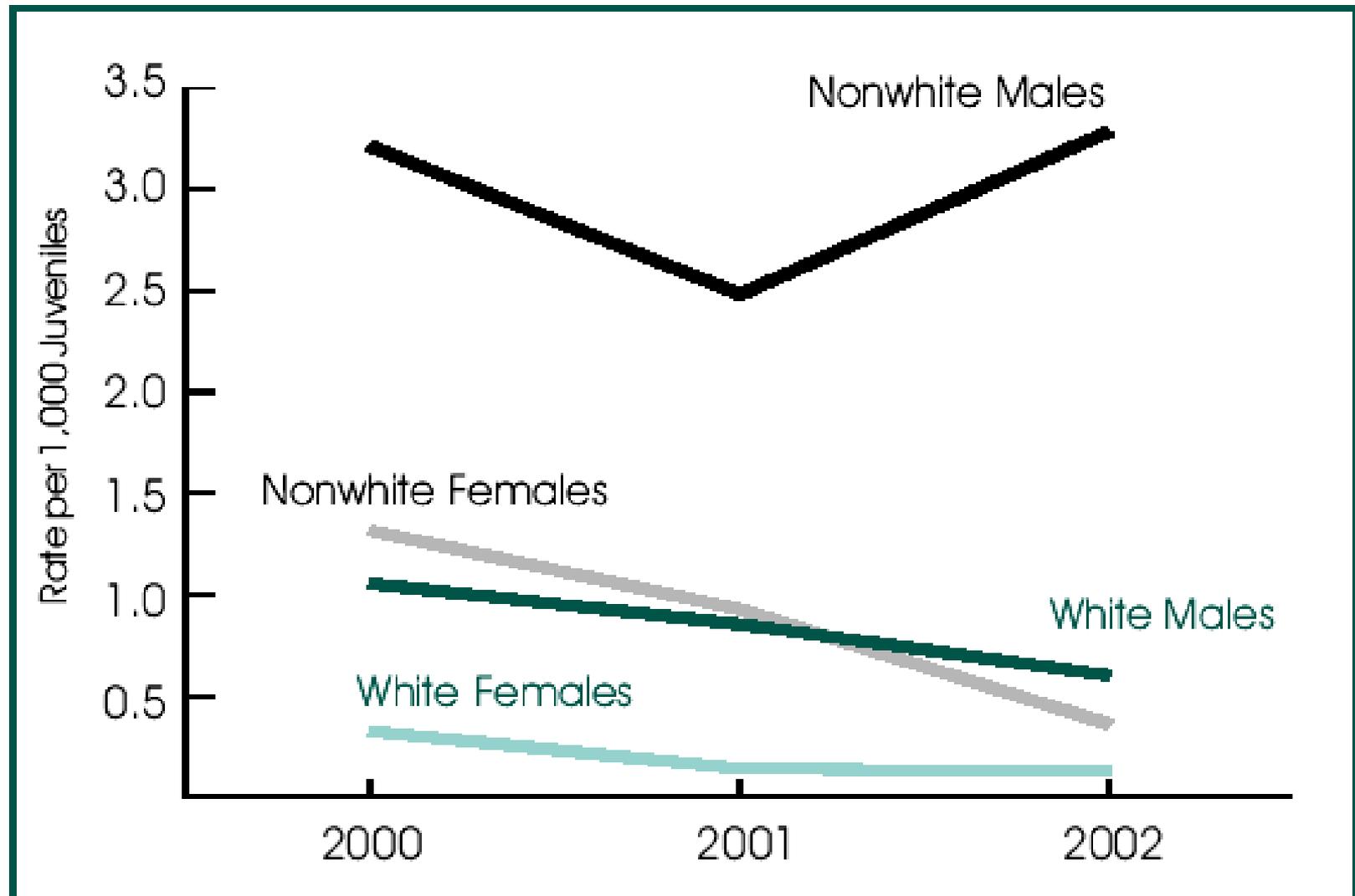
Table 2

## 2002 Nonwhite Proportion of Juvenile Arrests

	<u>Nonwhite Proportion of Juvenile Arrests</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
<b>Violent Crime Index</b>	<b>24.1%</b>
Murder/Nonnegligent Manslaughter	25.0%
Forcible Rape	0.0%
Robbery	30.0%
Aggravated Assault	25.0%
<b>Property Crime Index</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
Burglary	4.8%
Motor Vehicle Theft	18.3%
Larceny-Theft	11.6%
Arson	20.0%
<b>Nonindex</b>	<b>10.4%</b>
Other Assaults	14.7%
Stolen Property	41.9%
Vandalism	12.9%
Drug Abuse Violations	15.2%
Weapons	21.2%
Curfew/Loitering/Vagrancy	18.5%

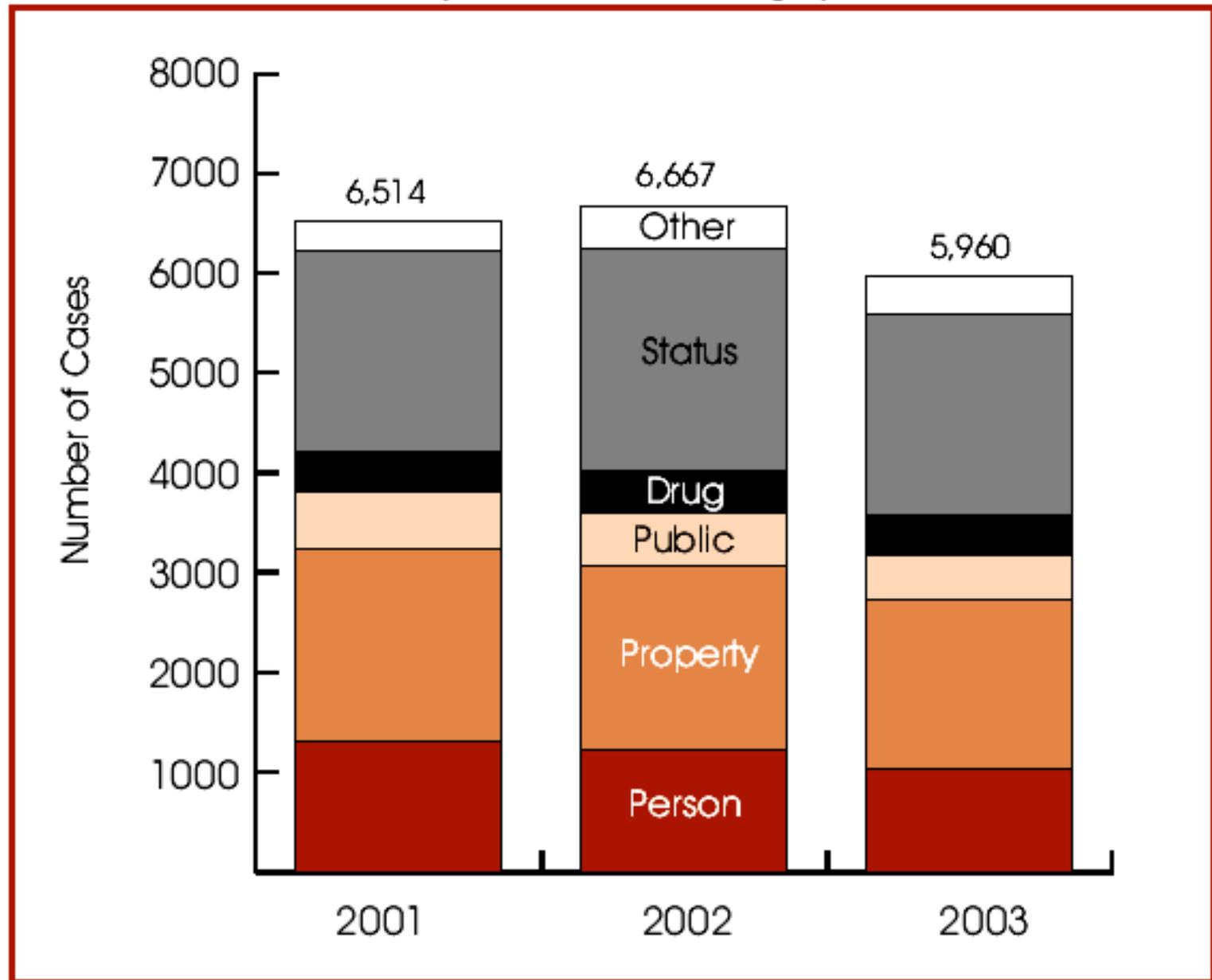
Graph 5

Violent Crime Arrest Rates per 1,000 by Race & Gender: 2000-2002



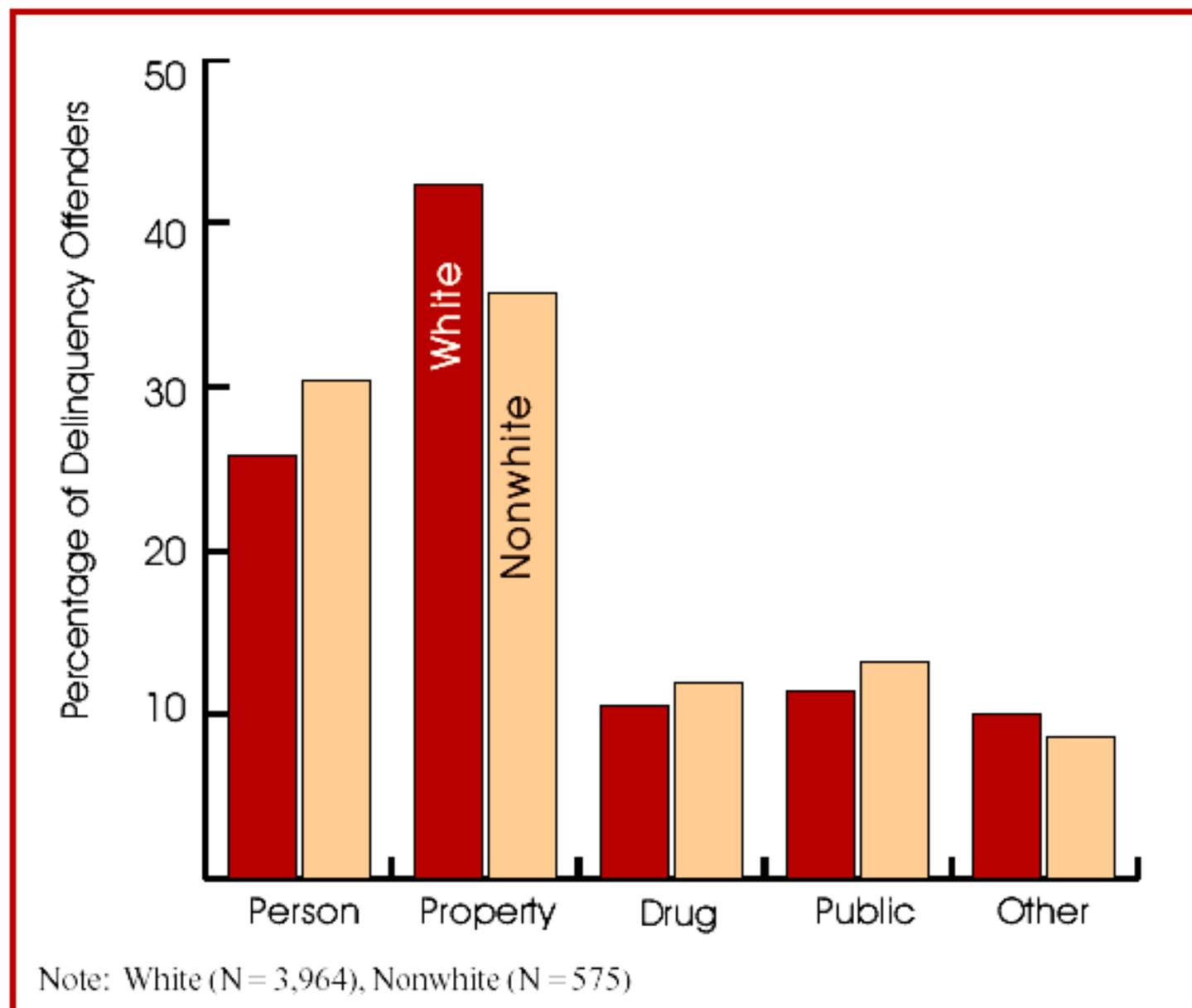
Graph 5

Number of Cases Referred by Broad Offense Category, 2001-2003



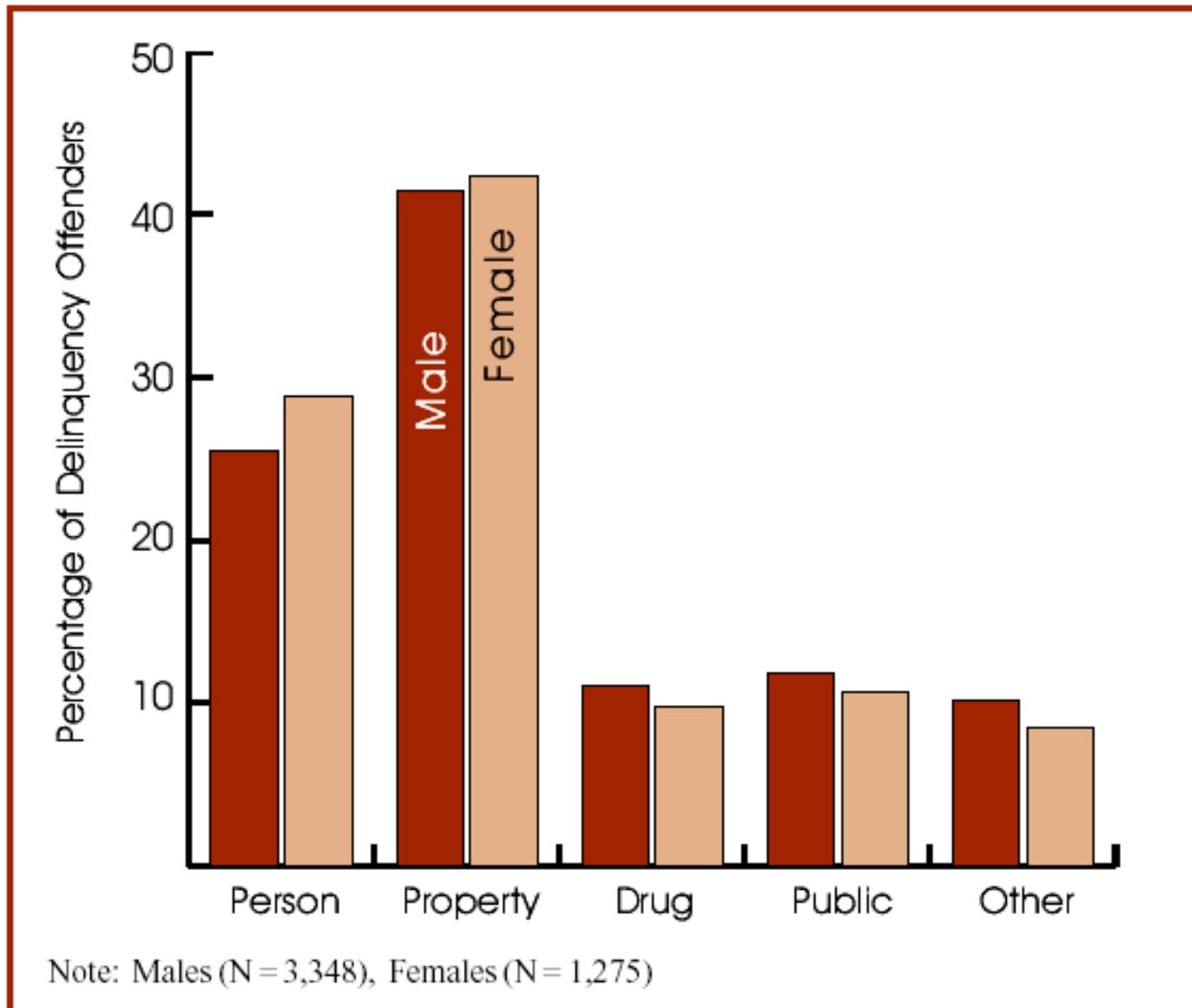
Graph 3

Percentage of Delinquency Offenders by Race and Offense Type, 2003



Graph 1

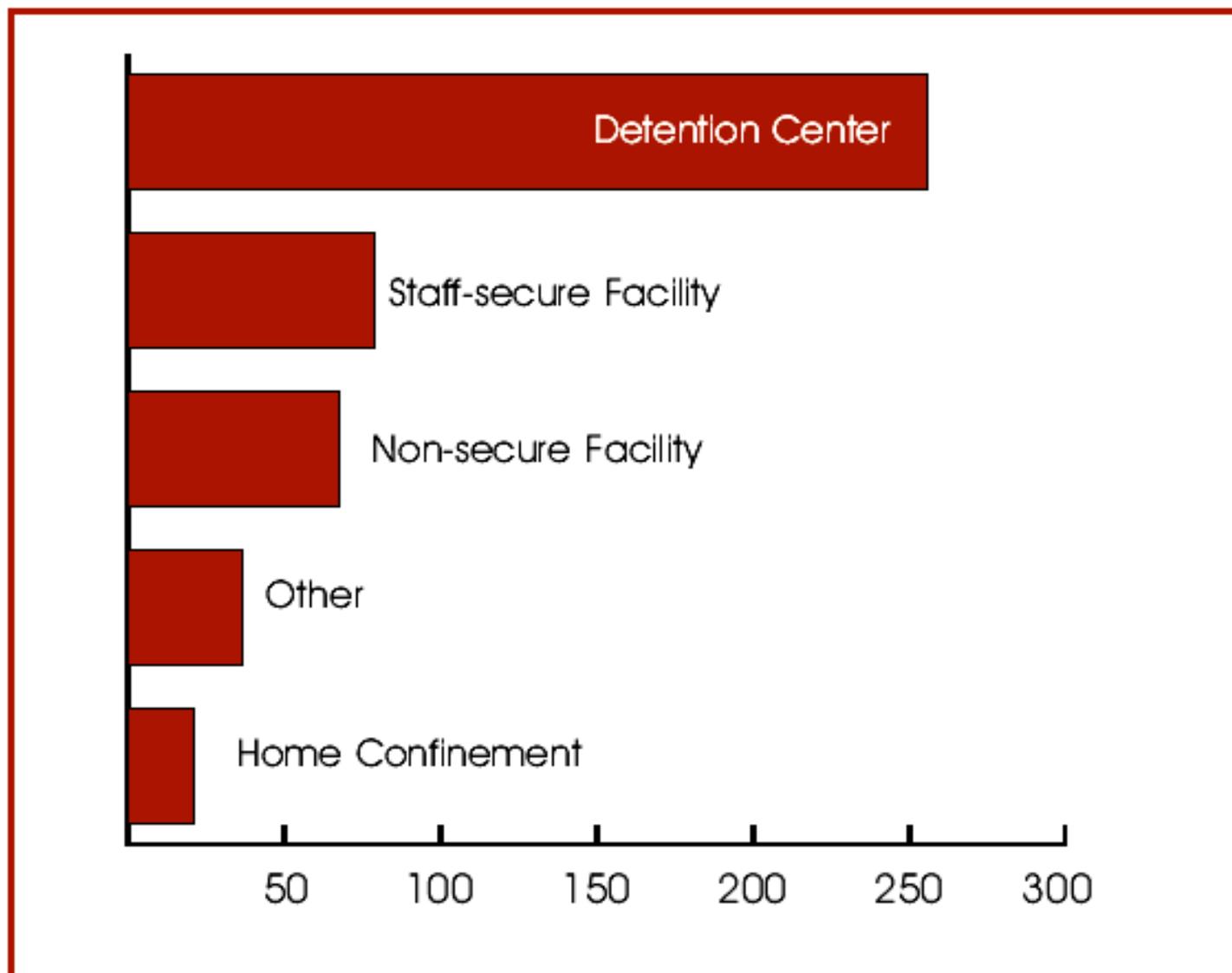
Percentage of Delinquency Offenders by Gender and Offense Type, 2003



Graph 8

Distribution of Predispositional Detention Cases Referred by Location, 2003

(N=461)



Graph 10

Distribution of Cases by Offense Severity and Type of Disposition, 2003

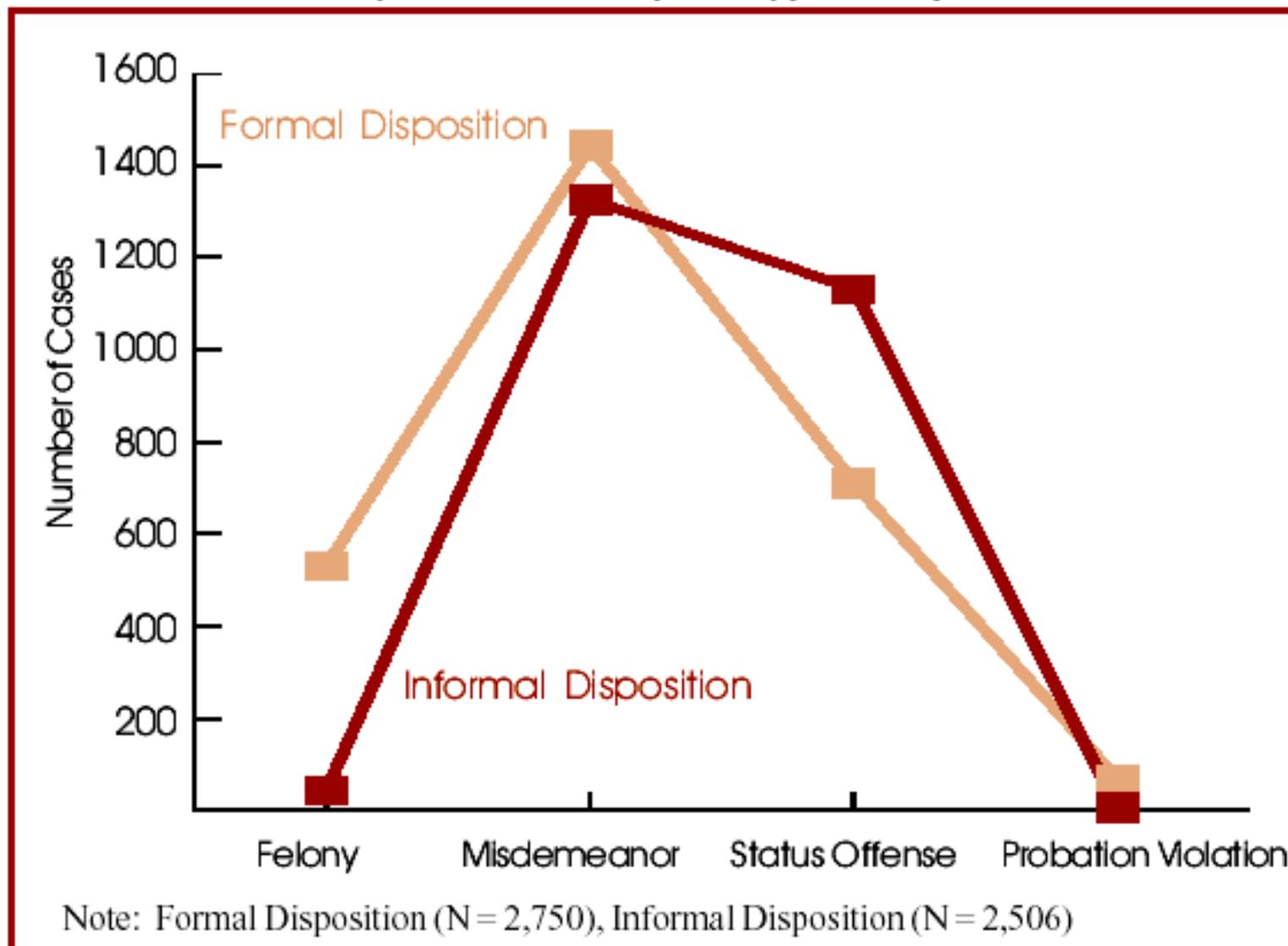


Table 11  
 Distribution of Disposed Cases by Type of Formal Disposition, 2003

Formal Dispositions	Delinquency Offense Cases		Status Offense Cases	
	N	%	N	%
Monitor compliance	35	1.9	15	2.4
Improvement period	670	36.6	227	37.0
Referred to DHHR	12	0.7	132	21.5
Probation	595	32.5	130	21.2
DHHR custody	99	5.4	51	8.3
DHHR custody & probation	207	11.3	34	5.5
Home confinement & Probation	10	0.5	3	0.5
Mental health processing	2	0.1	1	0.1
DJS Custody	107	5.8	4	0.7
Other*	94	2.3	17	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,831</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Other dispositions include the following categories: "other," community service, fine/restitution, and transferred to criminal court.