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CHARACTERISTICS AND DISCIPLINARY RECORD  
OF INMATES IN  
SPECIAL HOUSING UNITS

This report provides information on the characteristics and disciplinary record of a sample of inmates confined in special housing units on a particular day.

Part I presents a statistical profile of the characteristics of the inmates in terms of conviction crimes, sentences, and personal characteristics.

Part II concerns the disciplinary history of special housing unit inmates: the reasons for their confinement, the terms of the confinement, and their misbehavior record prior to and subsequent to the instant admission to the special housing unit.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND DISCIPLINARY RECORD  
OF INMATES IN SPECIAL HOUSING UNITS

Purpose of the Report

The Department supervises the administration of discipline and utilization of disciplinary segregation space, designated as special housing units. Periodically, it reports on the administrative data.

Policy makers, administrators and others are interested in the nature of discipline administration to ensure that the Department and its respective facility administrations are maintaining order and discipline in accordance with established standards.

Part I of the report profiles all inmates in SHU as of a given date (June 2, 1986) in terms of commitment crime, sentence, and personal characteristics. In developing this statistical overview, this report addresses a number of the common inquiries regarding inmates in SHU. For example, are SHU inmates typically younger inmates? Are long termers relatively unlikely to be placed in SHU for disciplinary violations?

Often, these inquiries ask how the SHU population compares to the total inmate population. In view of these questions, this statistical profile provides a series of comparisons between the SHU and total inmate populations with respect to a number of factors. While such comparisons do provide a useful reference point, the findings of this survey should not be interpreted as implying causal relationships. For example, the finding that a category of inmates comprise a large percentage of the SHU population than their percentage of the total inmate population should not be interpreted as meaning this factor is causally related to placement in SHU.

Part II presents detailed data on the disciplinary records of a sample of these SHU inmates. This disciplinary profile is based on information submitted by the involved facilities on these sampled SHU inmates.

PART I: CHARACTERISTICS OF INMATES IN SHU

Definition of SHU

Prior to highlighting the characteristics of inmates in SHU, it is appropriate to clearly identify these inmates.

Under State legislation and regulation, the Department conducts Tier III hearings for inmates allegedly involved in the most serious types of institutional rule violation, such as assaults on facility staff or other inmates. Based on the outcome of these Tier III hearings, inmates may be placed in special housing units for a specified number of days in disciplinary segregation. During this period of time, the inmates in these designated disciplinary segregation cells lose specified institutional privileges.

The Department's maximum security facilities have a specified number of cells in certain areas designated as special housing units for this purpose of disciplinary segregation. Certain medium security facilities also have SHU cells. Most medium security and all minimum security facilities do not have SHU cells and, as such, transfer out inmates who are to be placed in disciplinary segregation.

As such, SHU inmates may be characterized as inmates placed in disciplinary segregation for serious rule violations following a Tier III hearing. It is important to distinguish these SHU inmates from inmates placed in protective custody for their own safety. These protection cases are not included in this survey of SHU inmates.

Total Number of Cases in SHU: June 2, 1986

As of June 2, 1986, a total of 650 inmates were in the Department's special housing units. While the number of inmates in SHU varies over time, the Department's Director of Special Housing/Inmate Discipline indicates that this total is representative of the number of inmates who are typically in SHU.

Facility Distribution

As noted above, not all Department facilities have special housing units.

The table below indicates the number of inmates in these units as of June 2, 1986.

TABLE 1

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>MAXIMUM</u>	
Attica	88
Great Meadow	78
Auburn	73
Elmira	54
Green Haven	47
Clinton General	46
Sing Sing	38
Downstate	33
Coxsackie	31
Eastern	30
Sullivan	18
Clinton Merle Cooper	15
Shawangunk	14
Clinton Annex	13
<u>MEDIUM</u>	
Washington	20
Orleans	19
Wyoming	17
Arthur Kill	7
Bedford Hills	5
Ogdensburg	4
TOTAL	650

Sex

As illustrated by the preceding facility breakdown, only five women at Bedford Hills are in SHU. Less than 1% of the inmates in SHU are women while women comprise approximately 3% of the total inmate population.

Age

One of the most common questions regarding SHU inmates concerns their age. Are these inmates typically younger inmates?

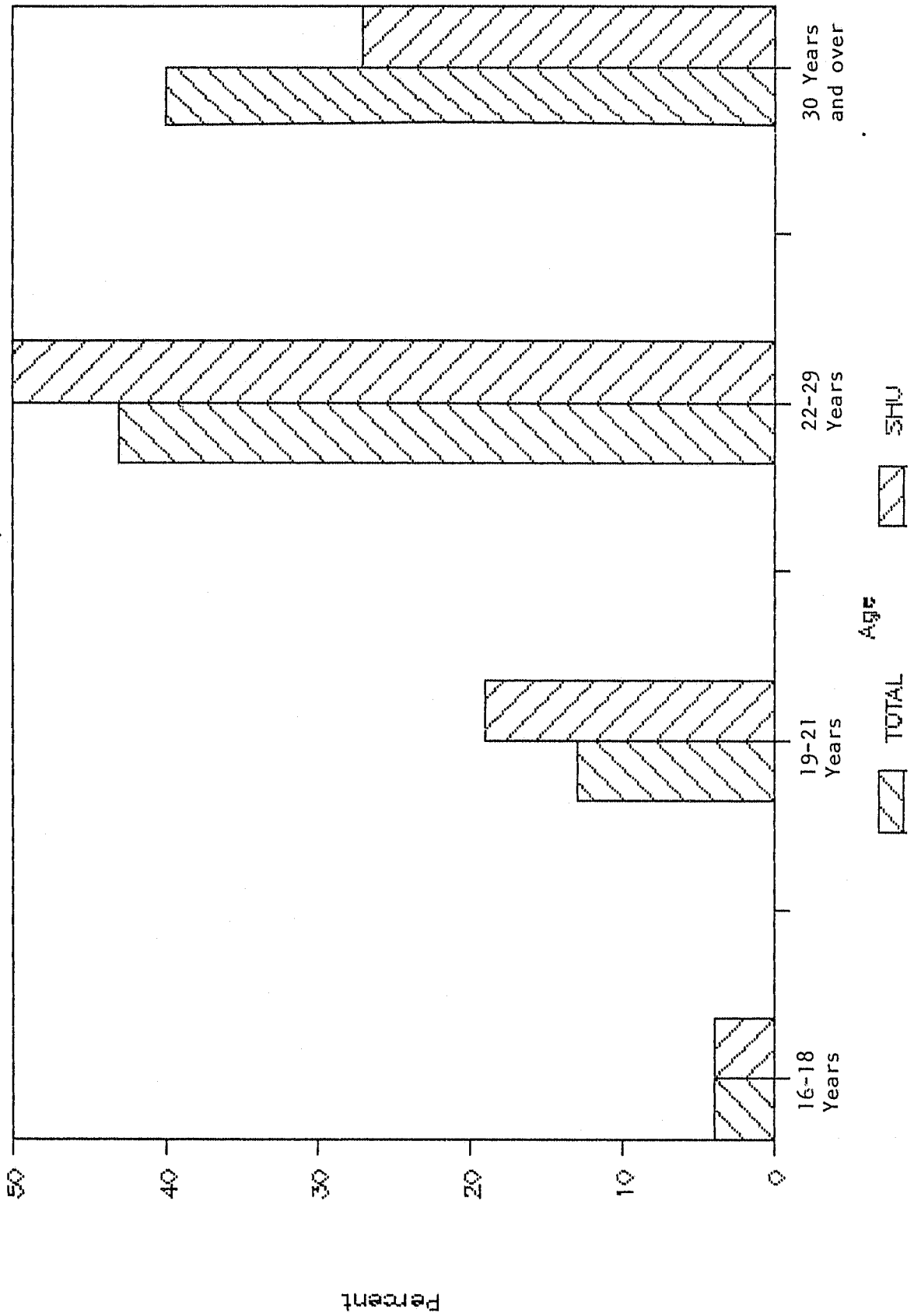
This survey found that SHU inmates, as a group, are younger than the overall inmate population. As illustrated by the graph on the following page, inmates between 19 and 29 years old are over-represented in SHU as compared to their percentages in the overall inmate population.

Inmates under 30 years old comprise 73% of the SHU inmate population as compared to 60% of the total inmate population (see Figure 1).

TABLE 2

<u>Age</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>SHU</u>
16-18 years	4%	4%
19-21 years	13%	19%
22-29 years	43%	50%
30 years and over	40%	27%
Total	100%	100%

Figure 1  
Comparison of Age of Inmates in SHU  
and Total Inmate Population





Sentences

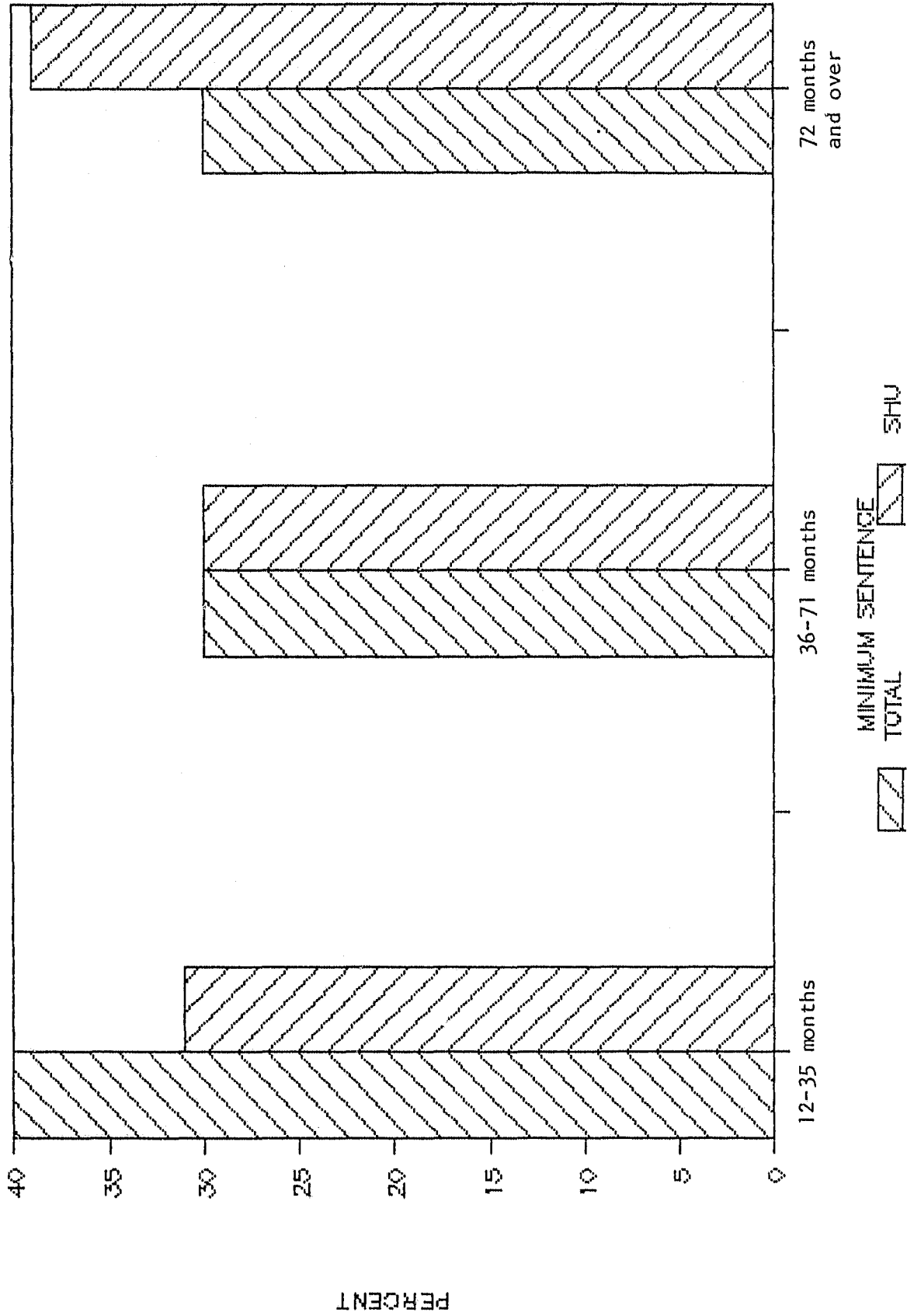
Questions are often asked concerning the sentences of SHU inmates. Are SHU inmates more likely to be inmates with long minimum sentences (long termers) or with relatively short sentences?

This survey found that inmates with relatively long minimum sentences (of 6 years or more) are somewhat over-represented in the SHU population as compared to their proportion of the total inmate population (see Figure 2).

TABLE 3

<u>Minimum Sentence</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>SHU</u>
12-35 months (including unspecified)	40%	31%
36-71 months	30%	30%
72 months and over	30%	39%
Total	100%	100%

Figure 2  
MINIMUM SENTENCE OF INMATES IN SHU  
AND TOTAL INMATE POPULATION



Commitment Year: Time Served

Related to the preceding finding on sentence length, this survey found that recent commitments are not particularly likely to be SHU cases. This finding does not support the frequent comment that recent commitments, who are not institutionalized, are more likely to become involved in serious disciplinary infractions that result in SHU dispositions. (Recent commitments may be more likely to be involved in minor rule violations, but this issue is beyond the scope of this study.)

Nearly half (48%) of the overall inmate population was committed in the last 18 months (1985 and first 6 months of 1986).

In contrast, only 29% of the inmates in SHU were committed in the last 18 months (a notable difference of 19%).

Commitment Crime

Inmates convicted of certain crimes comprise a larger portion of the SHU population than their proportion of the total inmate population. However, most crime categories comprise roughly comparable percentages of total and SHU populations. Robbery cases account for a larger percentage of the SHU population (38%) than the overall population (30%). Similarly, Murder represents 10% of the overall inmate population and 17% of the SHU population. However, Manslaughter cases comprise comparable percentages of the total population and SHU population (7% and 6%, respectively).

On the other hand, Drug cases are under-represented in the SHU population. Fourteen percent (14%) of the total population are drug cases, as compared to 4% of SHU cases.

Ethnic Breakdown

With respect to ethnic categories, this survey found a somewhat higher percentage of Black inmates in SHU and, correspondingly, slightly lower percentages of White and Hispanic inmates.

	Overall Inmate Population	SHU
Black	51%	57%
Hispanic	26%	24%
White	23%	19%
TOTAL	100%	100%

### Conclusion

This statistical profile of SHU inmates both identified certain differences as well as numerous similarities in the characteristics of SHU inmates and the total inmate population.

In reviewing these differences, however, the reader is cautioned against making reaching conclusions concerning relationships between these factors. As noted earlier in this report, the finding that a certain category of inmate is over- or under-represented in SHU as compared to the overall inmate population should not be interpreted as implying any causal or other relationships.

## PART II: DISCIPLINARY RECORD OF INMATES IN SPECIAL HOUSING UNITS

### Data Collection Method

A computer-generated listing of all inmates confined in special housing units on June 2, 1986 provided the universe from which a sample was drawn for analysis. A total of 650 inmates were confined in special housing units in the 20 facilities wherein special housing units exist. An 18% sample (116 cases) provided the data for comparison. It was drawn from reports submitted by 17 of the 19 correctional facilities having special housing units. Facility reports utilized included Attica, Great Meadow, Auburn, Elmira, Green Haven, Clinton General, Clinton Merle Cooper, Clinton Annex, Downstate, Cossackie, Eastern, Sullivan, Shawangunk, Orleans, Wyoming, Arthur Kill, and Bedford Hills.

### Offenses Resulting in SHU Placement

The Department has a rather lengthy and codified listing of misbehaviors for which an inmate may be disciplined. This listing was reduced to eight generic but differential functional categories to facilitate analysis.

As Table 4 illustrates, most of the inmates, 97 or 85%, were committed to a special housing unit for assaulting staff or another inmate, creating a disturbance, or for possession of contraband. Sixty inmates (53%) had been involved in assaults.

TABLE 4

OFFENSES RESULTING IN SHU PLACEMENT  
(N = 116)

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Assault on Staff	25	(22)
Assault on Inmate	35	(31)
Disturbance	19	(16)
Contraband	18	(16)
Theft	2	(1)
Escape	4	(3)
Drugs/Alcohol	12	(10)
Other	1	(1)

SHU Time Assessed for Offenses

Table 5 reveals that thirty percent (30%) of the inmates in special housing are serving terms amounting to 360 days or more, the vast majority for having assaulted staff or peers. Five percent (5%) of the inmates are serving between 181 and 360 days in special housing. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the inmates are serving terms between 60 and 180 days. Finally, eighteen percent (18%) are serving less than 30 to 60 days in special housing.

TABLE 5

SHU TIME ASSESSED FOR OFFENSES  
(N = 116)

	30 Days or Less	31-60 Days	61-120 Days	121-180 Days	181-360 Days	360 + Days	Number (%)
Assault on Staff	0	1	3	4	3	14	25 (22)
Assault on Inmate	1	0	8	11	2	13	35 (31)
Disturbance	2	9	4	1	0	3	19 (16)
Contraband	0	4	6	6	1	1	18 (16)
Theft	0	1	1	0	0	0	2 (1)
Escape	0	0	0	1	0	3	4 (3)
Drugs/Alcohol	2	1	3	5	0	1	12 (10)
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 (1)
Number (%)	5 (4)	16 (14)	26 (23)	28 (24)	6 (5)	35 (30)	116 (100)

Disciplinary Reports Since SHU Admission

The majority (54%) of inmates have not received additional disciplinary reports since admission to special housing. However, 16% have received 5 or more.

TABLE 6

DISCIPLINARY REPORTS SINCE SHU ADMISSION

(N = 116)

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	63	(54)
One	17	(15)
Two	9	(8)
Three	5	(4)
Four	4	(3)
Five	18	(16)

Prior SHU Admissions in Last 12 Months

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the inmates in special housing had not been admitted in the 12 months prior to the instant admission. Three percent (3%) had been admitted 5 or more times.

TABLE 7

PRIOR SHU ADMISSIONS IN LAST 12 MONTHS

(N = 116)

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	84	(73)
One	19	(17)
Two	4	(3)
Three	5	(4)
Four	0	(0)
Five	4	(3)

SHU Time in Last 12 Months Prior to Current Admission

The following table illustrates the distribution of time served by the 32 inmates with prior SHU terms in the last 12 months.

TABLE 8

SHU TIME IN LAST 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO CURRENT ADMISSION

(N = 116)

	None	30 Days or Less	31-60 Days	61-120 Days	121-180 Days	181-360 Days
Number	84	4	7	8	4	9
Percent	(73)	(3)	(6)	(7)	(3)	(8)

Summary

Approximately 2% of the Department's inmates were confined in special housing units for disciplinary reasons on June 2, 1986. Thirty percent (30%) are serving terms of 360 days or more, almost 80% of whom assaulted staff or peers. Most of the inmates are serving terms between 60 and 180 days. Almost 75% of the inmates had not had an earlier commitment to special housing during the 12 months prior to the survey date. The majority of inmates in special housing had not received additional disciplinary reports.