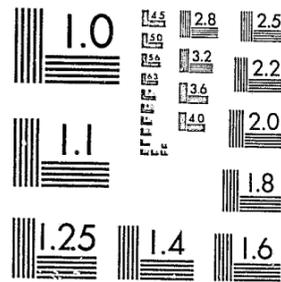


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



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



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

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

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

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

3/22/85

TRENDS IN CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN COMMITTED 1977 - 1982

- An Analysis -

95258

Virginia Department of Corrections
Division of Program Development and Evaluation
Research and Reporting Unit
June 1983

Report No. 82115

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was prepared by James Duke. Inquiries concerning this study should be directed to the Research and Reporting Unit.

Thomas R. Foster, Manager
Research and Reporting Unit

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by
Virginia Department of
Corrections

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents.	ii
List of Tables	iii
Introduction	1
Number and Frequency of Commitments.	3
Race and Sex	4
Age at Commitment.	4
Intelligence	4
Committing Offense	5
Summary.	12

LIST OF TABLES

		<u>Page</u>
Table 1	Record of Juvenile Commitments	6
2	Number of Commitments	7
3	Race and Sex	8
4	Age at Commitment.	9
5	Intelligence	10
6	Committing Offense	11

Introduction

Children who are adjudged delinquent by the court are ideally kept in the community and provided services according to their needs and proclivities. A certain percentage of these children are immediately or finally certified as being too aggressive, recalcitrant or unmanageable --- beyond the community's wherewithal to treat and rehabilitate. For this special group of children the forced solution is to commit them to the care and custody of the State Board of Corrections.

Data on a number of variables about Virginia's committed children have been systematically collected for many years. For each fiscal year, demographic and social background characteristics statistical data have been compiled by number and percentage and published in an annual report entitled "Characteristics of Children Committed to the Virginia Department of Corrections." The raw data used is collected by means of the Direct Care System's Intake, History, Clinical Assessment and Educational Assessment forms submitted by the Reception and Diagnostic Center, the Behavioral Services Unit and the Rehabilitative School Authority.

This report is a statistical description of the characteristics of juvenile court commitments to the Virginia Department of Corrections for the years 1977 to 1982. This study draws on the records of 7,677 children committed over the period 1977 to 1982. Characteristics of these children in terms of annual variations are analyzed and examined for discernible trends: race and sex, age at commitment, committing offense, intelligence and number of commitments (recidivism).

The tool for analysis was time series analysis. A time series is a set of observations taken at specified times, usually at equal intervals. Mathematically, a time series is defined by the values Y_1, Y_2, \dots of a variable Y (committing offense, number of commitments, etc.) at times t_1, t_2, \dots . Thus Y is a function of t , symbolized by $Y=F(t)$. The regression line of Y on t is called a trend line and is often used for purposes of estimation, prediction or forecasting.

In this study the estimation of a trend is achieved by the "moving average method"* which tends to reduce the amount of variation in a set of data. For each variable and its values, the computations were on the percentage of the total population for a particular year, not on the raw figures themselves. The percentage was used to gain a better measure of the trend by reducing the impact of shifts in population totals.

* Murray R. Spiegel. Theory and Problems of Statistics, McGraw Hill Book Company, 1961, p. 289.

Number and Frequency of Commitments

The juvenile commitment rate to the Department of Corrections has been fairly constant over the years. For a long period of time commitments were roughly averaged at 1,500 per year. Over the past ten years the average commitment rate has been about 1,300 per year. The primary reason is that community level services have increased affording alternatives to commitment for delinquents. Also, since 1977 Virginia State code changes have prohibited the commitment of status offenders.

The sequence of commitments (1,370; 1,216; 1,306; 1,261; 1,272; 1,251) for the years 1977 to 1982 (see Table 1) reveal no unpredictable variation. After the removal of status offenders the rate dipped to 1,216 for 1978 and then recovered to maintain a fairly uniform rate 1979 to 1982.

Paralleling the apparent stable commitment rate is the rate of recidivism. Table 1 shows the relative absence of variation in the recidivist rate for the six-year period surveyed. The rate remains more or less fixed in the 16% to 19% range.

Table 2 details the recidivism picture by showing for each year the number and percentage of those children who have records of more than one commitment to the Department. In relation to first commitments, the second and third commitment ratios are firmly established with no statistically detectable trends apparent.

Race and Sex

Table 3 shows that the race and sex variables have no appreciable change over the six-year period considered. The race-sex variables reflected by their annual percentage values can be seen as having only slightly fluctuating ratios. From this, for example, one may reasonably predict that for the near future black male commitments will average around 37% per year while white female commitments will be about 10%.

Age at Commitment

Analysis of children's ages at commitment reveals a modest distribution change over the six-year period. Table 4 reveals the trend has been toward increased commitments at older ages and fewer at younger ages. Downward trends have occurred in the age categories of 11, 12 and 13 with some corresponding upward trend in the age categories of 17 and 18. Nothing in the way of change is noted in the intermediate age categories of 14, 15 and 16. The modal age group in every year studied was the 15-16 year old group.

Intelligence

Table 5 summarizes the categories of intelligence which are essentially without any trends to speak of.

Characteristically, normal intelligence remains the mode of all children committed to the Department of Corrections over the years. For the six-year period survey an average of 48.3% of the children committed had I.Q.'s at the normal level. In the above normal range (110 plus) are an average of 13.7% of the children. Below the normal range 38% of the children have I.Q.'s of 89 or

less. The intelligence picture then does not present a normal distribution and indicates the Department's need to continue to provide programs and services to children who have tested largely in the below average intelligence range.

Table 5 also shows that for each of the six years studied a great number of cases were not reported. It is assumed that all children committed were given an I.Q. test. It is significant that of the six-year total of 7,677 commitments, 2,061 (27%) of the test results were not routinely reported to data processing.

Committing Offense

Table 6 does not support any conclusive trends in the distribution of committing offense categories. They appear to be more cyclical in nature. The principal category, offenses against property (57.9%), fluctuates percentage-wise, as does offenses against persons (15.3%), which does register a very slight upward movement. The only other category with any magnitude is a group of miscellaneous offenses (19.8%) which includes primarily violation of probation or after-care.

Commitment for alcohol and drug offenses represent on the average only 1.6% of total commitments and this percentage reflects a slight decrease over the six-year period.

During the first three years (1977-79) there was a problem of unreported cases, but this was eliminated in the last three years.

TABLE 1

RECORD OF JUVENILE COMMITMENTS TO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

1977 - 1982

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RECIDIVISTS*</u>	<u>RECIDIVIST RATE</u>
1977	1370	223	16%
1978	1216	222	18%
1979	1306	216	16%
1980	1261	202	16%
1981	1272	230	18%
1982	1252	247	19%

* Definition of recidivism: repetition of delinquent or anti-social behavior patterns which results in re-commitment to the State Department of Corrections.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF COMMITMENTS

COMMITMENTS	1977		1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1977-82 AVERAGE	TREND	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
First Commitment	1146	83.7	994	81.8	1090	83.5	1059	84.0	1042	81.9	1005	80.3	1056	82.6	No Trend
Second Commitment	185	13.5	196	16.1	184	14.1	172	13.6	204	16.0	224	17.9	194	15.2	No Trend
Third Commitment	32	2.3	26	2.1	29	2.2	27	2.2	24	1.9	18	1.4	26	2.0	No Trend
Fourth Commitment	5	.4			2	.1	3	.2	2	.2	4	.3	3	.2	No Trend
Fifth Commitment	<u>1</u>	<u>.1</u>			<u>1</u>	<u>.1</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>.1</u>	1		
TOTAL CASES REPORTED	1369	100.0	1216	100.0	1306	100.0	1261	100.0	1272	100.0	1252	100.0			
CASES NOT REPORTED	1		0		0		0		0		0				
TOTAL CHILDREN COMMITTED	1370		1216		1306		1261		1272		1252				

TABLE 3
RACE AND SEX

	1977		1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1977-82 AVERAGE	TREND	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N		%
Black Female	89	6.5	65	5.3	60	4.6	77	6.1	65	5.1	86	6.9	74	5.8	No Trend
Black Male	524	38.2	491	40.4	460	35.2	466	37.0	469	36.9	458	36.6	478	37.3	No Trend
White Female	141	10.3	114	9.4	128	9.8	138	10.9	112	8.8	148	11.8	130	10.2	No Trend
White Male	614	44.8	545	44.8	658	50.4	580	46.0	626	49.2	560	44.7	597	46.6	No Trend
Other Female	2	.2	1	.1									1	.1	
Other Male															
TOTAL CASES REPORTED	1370	100.0	1216	100.0	1306	100.0	1261	100.0	1272	100.0	1252	100.0			
CASES NOT REPORTED	0		0		0		0		0		0				
TOTAL CHILDREN COMMITTED	1370		1216		1306		1261		1272		1252				

TABLE 4
AGE AT COMMITMENT

AGE	1977		1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1977-82 AVERAGE	TREND	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N		%
11	19	1.4	12	1.0	6	.5	6	.5	5	.4	3	.2	8	.6	Downward
12	31	2.3	28	2.3	20	1.5	23	1.8	25	2.0	14	1.1	25	2.0	Downward
13	73	5.3	81	6.7	76	5.8	71	5.6	68	5.4	66	5.3	73	5.7	Slight Downward
14	195	14.2	175	14.4	176	13.5	191	15.1	189	14.9	150	12.0	179	14.0	No Trend
15	401	29.3	335	27.5	347	26.7	350	27.8	336	26.4	311	24.8	347	27.1	No Trend
16	398	29.1	386	31.7	416	32.0	374	29.7	376	29.5	407	32.5	393	30.7	No Trend
17	238	17.4	194	16.0	246	18.9	250	18.2	248	19.5	279	22.3	239	18.7	Slight Upward
18	<u>13</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>.4</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>1.8</u>	16	1.2	Upward
TOTAL CASES REPORTED	1368	100.0	1216	100.0	1301	100.0	1261	100.0	1272	100.0	1252	100.0			
CASES NOT REPORTED	2		0		5		0		0		0				
TOTAL CHILDREN COMMITTED	1370		1216		1306		1261		1272		1252				

TABLE 5
INTELLIGENCE

	1977		1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1977-82 AVERAGE		TREND
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Very Superior (over 130)	3	.3	3	.4	-	-	1	.1	5	.5	4	.4	3	.3	No Trend
Superior (120-129)	23	2.7	11	1.5	17	1.8	24	2.4	21	1.9	22	2.3	20	2.2	No Trend
Bright Normal (110-119)	123	14.1	108	14.9	84	8.7	106	10.6	114	10.5	94	9.7	105	11.2	No Trend
Normal (90-109)	388	44.6	326	44.8	484	50.3	493	49.2	551	50.8	468	48.3	452	48.3	Slight Upward
Dull Normal (80-89)	218	25.0	187	25.7	215	22.3	236	23.6	224	20.6	201	20.7	213	22.7	Slight Downward
Borderline (70-79)	87	10.0	69	9.5	106	11.0	90	9.0	119	11.0	119	12.3	98	10.5	No Trend
Retarded (below 70)	<u>29</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>3.2</u>	57	<u>5.9</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>5.1</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>4.7</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>6.3</u>	45	4.8	No Trend
TOTAL CASES REPORTED	871	100.0	727	100.0	963	100.0	1001	100.0	1085	100.0	970	100.0			
CASES NOT REPORTED	499		489		343		260		187		283				
TOTAL CHILDREN COMMITTED	1370		1216		1306		1261		1272		1252				

TABLE 6
COMMITTING OFFENSE

	1977		1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1977-82 AVERAGE	TREND	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Offense Against Person	150	12.3	174	14.8	151	14.0	208	16.5	180	14.2	207	16.5	186	15.3	Slight Upward
Offense Against Property	658	54.1	730	62.0	677	62.9	698	55.3	667	52.4	771	61.6	703	57.9	No Trend
Offense Against Morality, Decency and Peace	32	2.6	34	2.9	27	2.5	48	3.8	57	4.5	46	3.7	45	3.7	Upward
Offense Against Public Justice and Policy	8	.7	10	.8	9	.8	11	.9	17	1.3	23	1.8	15	1.3	Upward
Children in Need of Services (Status Offense)	125	10.3	25	2.1	(Legislation prohibits commitment of Children in Need of Services)										
Traffic and Vehicle Law Offense	11	.9	12	1.0	2	.2	5	.4	6	.5	7	.6	5	.4	No Trend
Alcohol and Drug Offense	48	4.0	36	3.1	17	1.6	20	1.6	27	2.1	16	1.3	20	1.6	Downward
Miscellaneous Offense	<u>184</u>	<u>15.1</u>	<u>156</u>	<u>13.3</u>	<u>193</u>	<u>18.0</u>	<u>271</u>	<u>21.4</u>	<u>318</u>	<u>25.0</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>14.5</u>	241	19.8	
TOTAL CASES REPORTED	1216	100.0	1177	100.0	1076	100.0	1261	100.0	1272	100.0	1252	100.0			
CASES NOT REPORTED	154		39		230		0		0		0				
TOTAL CHILDREN COMMITTED	1370		1216		1306		1261		1272		1252				

Summary

This report compares multiyear data to identify linear trends in several characteristics of children committed by juvenile courts to the Virginia State Board of Corrections. Data about children has been systematically collected for many years on a number of variables: number of commitments, race and sex, age at commitment, intelligence and committing offense. The tools for analysis included time series analysis with estimation of trends achieved through the "moving average" method.

Based on this data, the results of this study show nothing startling: no breakaway trends, no reversals, no radical divergences that would suggest emergent programmatic changes in existing youth programs.

There is no indication that the Department is getting more serious offenders or that the recidivist rate is increasing. The age distribution of committed children shows little systematic change. The slight change noted here amounted to older children commitments displacing those of younger children.

END