An Examination of Recidivism

in Relation to

Offence Histories and Offender Profiles

Prepared by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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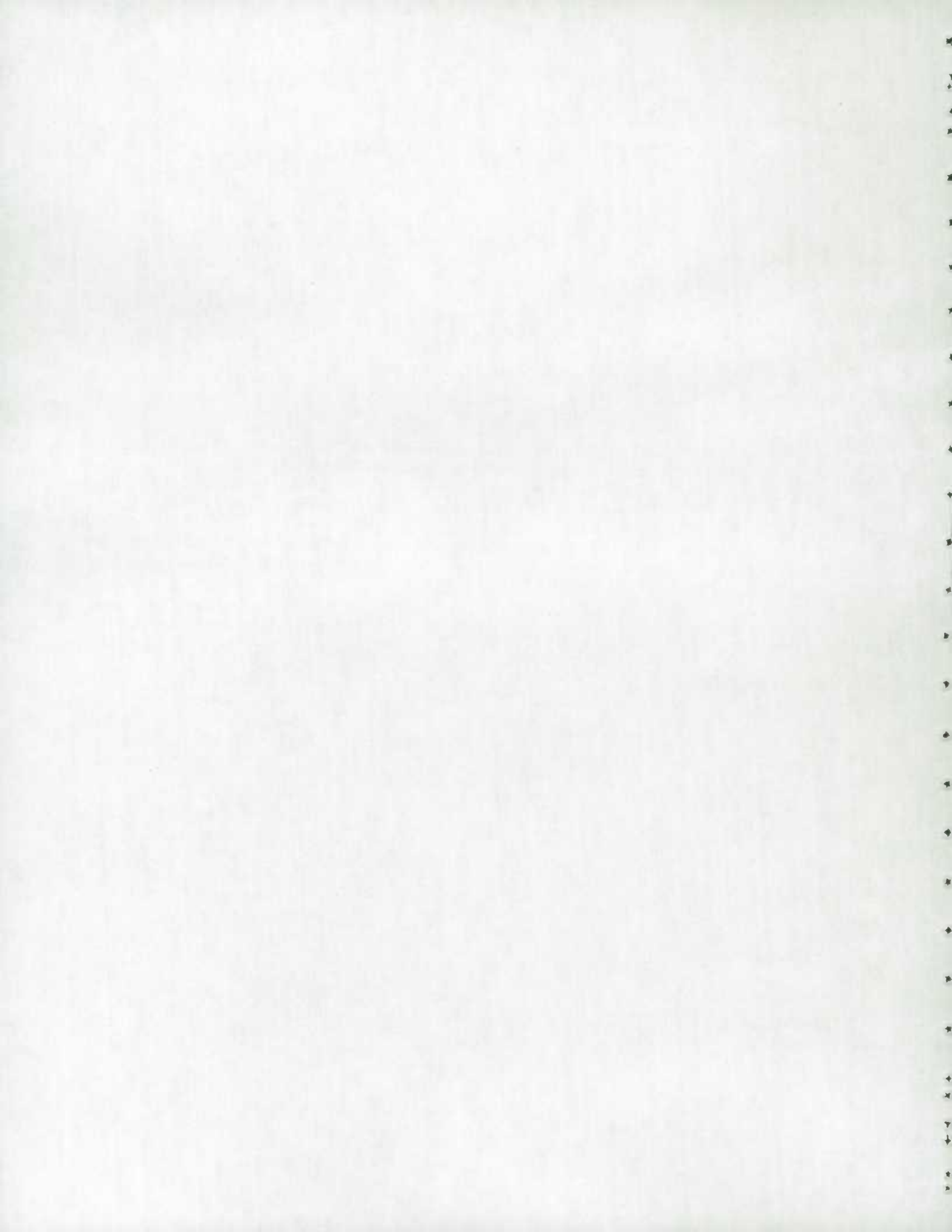
Introduction

In 1991, the Liaison Officers Committee (LOC) directed the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics to develop alternative methods of examining the issue of recidivism using existing information sources. This report explores the use of FPS (Finger Printing Section number) data for the study of recidivism. The FPS research file contains information on persons convicted and entered onto the FPS system from 1982 to early 1985. Included for each offender is general tombstone data and their criminal history. See Appendix D for a glossary of terminology.

The FPS database is currently the only national integrated source of information on offender criminality. Offender criminal histories, as recorded by the FPS system of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), were analyzed to determine whether any offence or demographic patterns could be discerned among repeat offenders. The results of this study are intended to inform the justice community on patterns of criminality and to be used as a prototype for future work in the area of recidivism. Issues related to data quality, coverage and validity were examined through a review of previous evaluations of the database, detailed data analysis and expert advice from RCMP FPS staff.

Previous Evaluations of the FPS System

Prior evaluations have concluded that the FPS system provides a good representation of conviction data in Canada. Overall, these evaluations showed that the FPS system is very accurate. Results were less encouraging with respect to coverage of persons — some offenders were not found on the FPS database due to purging of records (see point 2 below). Nevertheless, the evaluation studies concluded that the FPS research files are the best available source of national recidivism data. The following limitations must be considered in any analysis:

1. Coverage for less serious offences is poorer than for more serious offences.

2. In order to avoid problems associated with purged files, recidivism studies should concentrate on offenders with more recent criminal histories. Files may have been purged because of offender inactivity, death or pardon.

3. Prior to 1983 FPS files were opened for first-time offenders on microfiche and were not entered onto the FPS database until the offender was charged for a subsequent offence. In addition, for a short period during the earlier 1980s, charge records (on microfiche) for one-time offenders were not updated to reflect court outcomes (such as, convictions). As such, the research file used for the current study contains offenders with at least two convictions. This effectively prohibits any comparison of convicted one-time offenders and recidivists. Since 1983, convictions of first-time offenders have been included in the system.

4. Comparing crime profiles of different regions on the basis of FPS data should be done on a limited basis due to differing reporting practices of police departments. In particular, it should be noted that police reporting to the FPS system is not uniform since reporting is done on a voluntary basis.

Study Methodology

This study focuses on adults convicted in 1982 (study population) and traces their criminal histories prior to 1982. In addition, it tracks these offenders over a two-year follow-up period (1983-84). Diagram 1 schematically illustrates the study frame. Information on offences committed by young offenders or juveniles is not included in the study frame. Also, it should be noted that the reference period was prior to the implementation of the Young Offenders Act (April 1985).

Recidivism is defined as "a conviction for reoffence for an indictable or hybrid status (also, known as dual procedure) offence where the conviction has been entered onto the FPS Criminal Record 2 file". As a result, this study examines convicted serious offence recidivists.

Diagram 1 Study Components

RETROSPECTIVE (Criminal History)	POPULATION (Cohort)	PROSPECTIVE (Follow-up)	MOBILITY (Career)
< 1982 * ＊＊ *	1982 * ＊＊ *	Jan Dec 1983 - 1984	includes career

Study Results

Population - 1982 Cohort Description

*   In 1982, a total of 239,470 convictions for indictable or hybrid offences were recorded on the FPS system. These convictions represented 184,914 different cases — or 155,284 unique persons.

*   Regional analysis compared FPS and UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting) data. Results indicated that provincial comparisons would be inappropriate due to different police and court procedure policies.

*   On average, the typical offender was a male in his mid to late twenties. Overall, 90% of offenders were male and 10% were female.

*   The vast majority of cases recorded during 1982 were non-violent. Forty percent were property-related, while a little under one-quarter were for impaired driving offences. Only 7% were for violent offences.

Retrospective Study - Criminal History of Offenders

* Almost 40% of offenders had only one case recorded on the FPS system. On average. offenders had a total of 3.2 cases recorded on the system.

* About 5% of offenders were responsible for 24% of all cases captured by the study frame.

* The average age at which offenders were recorded as first being convicted was about 21 years. It should be noted, that the study examined only adult offenders convicted of serious offences. Males had almost twice the number of career cases and convictions as females.

* A most serious offence (MSO) methodology was used. Of the total cases. 42% had a property-related career MSO. An additional 16% were related to drinking and driving and 12% were violent in nature.

* Active criminals were shown to have started their careers at an earlier age and to have more severe MSOs.

* Offenders were more likely to be reconvicted for offences similar to their career MSO than offenders with different career MSO types. For example, offenders with a property-related career MSO were more likely to be reconvicted of a property offence than offenders with a career MSO involving drinking and driving. Nevertheless, most offenders were convicted of offences different from their career MSO.

* Results indicated that while, overall, criminal careers tend to escalate, they are cluttered with many relatively less serious crimes.

Prospective Study - Subsequent Recidivism

* Of those convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system, 35% of those who had an opportunity to reoffend were reconvicted for a subsequent offence within two years.

* Twenty-four percent of female offenders were reconvicted, compared to 36% of male offenders.

* Reconvicted offenders were younger (26 years) than those who were not reconvicted (29 years).

* Reconvicted offenders had more active careers prior to 1983 and, on average, had more severe career MSOs than did those offenders who were not reconvicted during the follow-up period.

Patterns of Mobility

* In general, offenders within the study frame were not a mobile group: 80% of all offenders remained within one region throughout their criminal career.

* Mobile offenders were more likely to be male, older, and have a more active career than non-mobile offenders. In addition, mobile offenders started their criminal careers at an earlier age than did non-mobile offenders.

Conclusions

Results, in general, were consistent with previous research findings on recidivism supporting the premise that, overall, the FPS system, as of 1985, is a reasonable source of information for recidivism research. However. certain limitations do exist since the FPS system is a police operational tool never intended for use as a statistical database. These restrictions must be recognized in any research efforts or policy applications.

Further investigation on the utility of the current FPS system to study recidivism is required. However, the results of this study indicate that additional research would make a significant contribution to the understanding of the nature of recidivism and recidivists.

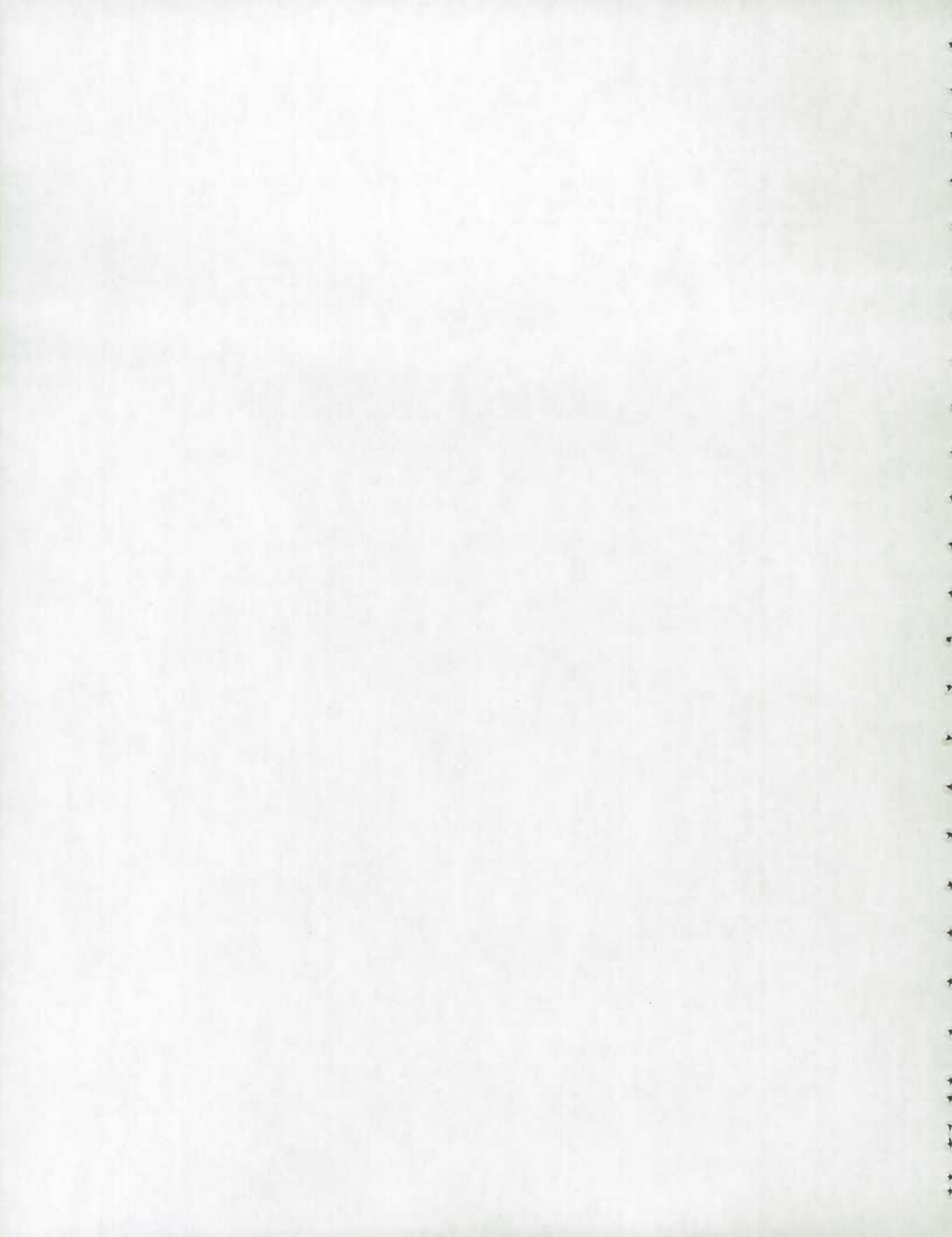## CONTENTS

References

PART A

INTRODUCTION

1.0   BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of repeat offenders has consistently received much attention from the public and criminologists. As crime rates grow and the public becomes more concerned about the economic and personal costs of crime, a better understanding of criminals and patterns of crime is needed. Recidivism research has contributed to criminological thought by testing theories of explanation and prediction and by providing an instrument for program evaluation and measurement of the benefits of offender incapacitation.

This report explores the use of FPS (Finger Printing Section number) data for the study of recidivism. In 1991, the Liaison Officers Committee (LOC) directed the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics to develop alternative methods of examining the issue of recidivism using existing information sources. The Centre subsequently proposed using the FPS research files created in 1985 (see Appendix A for feasibility study). These research files contain information on persons convicted and entered onto the FPS system from 1982 to early 1985. Included for each offender is general tombstone data and their criminal history, as recorded on the FPS system. Appendix B provides detailed information about data contained on the FPS research file created for the current study. In 1992, the LOC approved work on two reports: (1) An examination of recidivism in relation to offence histories and offender profiles; and, (2) Geographic mobility patterns. The current study combines these two reports. Appendix D provides a glossary of terminology used within the report.

The FPS database is currently the only national integrated source of information on offender criminality. No other database provides such a wealth of information. Operationally, this database allows police forces to track offenders across time and across the country. In addition, the FPS database is an invaluable source of information used by defense and crown attorneys and the courts to inform sentencing decisions.

Offender criminal histories, as recorded by the FPS system of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), were analyzed to determine whether any offence or demographic patterns could be discerned among repeat offenders. Particular attention was paid in comparing active and less active offenders, as well as exploring the existence of criminal patterns for repeat offenders. Finally, the present study explored patterns of offender mobility.

The results of this study are intended to inform the justice community on patterns of criminality and to be used as a prototype for future work in the area of recidivism. Issues related to data quality, coverage and validity were examined through a review of previous evaluations of the database, detailed data analysis and expert advice from RCMP FPS staff.

2.0   THE FPS SYSTEM

The RCMP, on behalf of the Canadian Police Services, is responsible for maintaining a national database on all persons fingerprinted for criminal charges. The FPS databases contain criminal history information on persons charged for indictable and dual or hybrid offences (hereafter referred to as hybrid offences).

Information about criminals is submitted by individual police forces to a centralized, automated database and is, in turn, retrieved by individual forces to assist them in their various law enforcement duties. The Identification of Criminals Act provides that police departments have the right to fingerprint a person charged with or convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code of Canada or under a federal statute. When a set of fingerprints is taken by police, it, as well as additional information about the individual and the charged offence, is submitted to the FPS system. The system contains basic personal identifiers and criminal history information.

3.0   ACCURACY AND COVERAGE OF THE FPS SYSTEM

As the FPS system is an operational database, certain practices have limited the extent to which it can be used for research purposes.

The FPS system has been evaluated, on several occasions, to determine whether the data stored on the system are accurate and to what extent the system captures criminal events (see Reference Section). Three independent evaluations were conducted:

1)   Comparison of information on the FPS system with a sample of charges collected from the Ottawa Police Department and Ottawa courts (Superior and Provincial Courts) (Statistics Canada and Solicitor General Canada", 1985a);

2)   Comparison of information on the FPS system with penitentiary admissions as registered on the Offender Information System (OIS) of Correctional Services Canada (Statistics Canada and Solicitor General Canada, 1985b); and,

3)   Survey of police departments to ascertain FPS reporting practices (Statistics Canada, 1985a).

In general, the evaluations concluded that the FPS system provides a good representation of serious conviction data in Canada.

3.1   Accuracy

Overall, the evaluation studies showed that the FPS system is very accurate. Errors between the FPS system and other sources of information were generally of small scale and minor importance. For instance, when compared with the Operational Information System maintained by Correctional Services Canada, errors on the FPS system were detected in only 2% of records. The majority of these errors were related to confusion between consecutive and concurrent sentences.

3.2   Coverage

a)   Persons

Results were less encouraging with respect to coverage of persons. Offenders known to other operational systems were not found on the FPS system for two typical reasons. The first was that, prior to 1983, first-time convicted offenders

were not entered onto the system until a second charge was laid. The second reason for missing persons was due to the deliberate purging of entire offender records according to certain purge criteria such as pardons, deaths or inactive files. Those missing from the FPS system in comparison to other sources ranged from 7 to 14% (see Appendix A for further information).

b)   Cases

The proportion of missing cases on an offender's record was also found to be somewhat problematic depending upon offence type and court decisions. Specifically, under-coverage was greater for hybrid offences and for charges resulting in non-conviction than for indictable offences and convictions. In addition, it was found that the more severe the disposition the greater the coverage, with cases receiving custodial sentences having the greatest coverage (see Appendix A for further information). In part, missing hybrid offences may be a result of an offence being tried summarily.

4.0   UTILITY OF THE FPS RESEARCH FILE FOR RECIDIVISM STUDIES

Further evaluation of the utility of using the FPS research files for the recidivism research was conducted in 1985. Results of this study indicate that the FPS research files are the best available source of national recidivism data. The FPS research files were considered valid to: estimate recidivism rates; determine frequency of recidivism during a follow-up period; examine time intervals between convictions; and, study the seriousness of recidivism in terms of subsequent offences. However, recidivism research would be constrained by certain data quality limitations. As a result, the current study is framed in consideration of those limitations.

These limitations were summarized in a 1992 report (see Reference Section at the end of the report):

1.   Coverage for less serious offences is poorer than for more serious offences.

2.   In order to avoid problems associated with purged files, recidivism studies should concentrate on offenders with more recent criminal histories (see Section 3.2 (a)).

3.   Prior to 1983, first-time offender convictions were not entered onto the FPS system, prohibiting any comparisons between one-time offenders and recidivists. Since 1983, first-time offenders have been included in the system.

4.   Comparing crime profiles of different regions on the basis of FPS data should be done on a limited basis due to differing police force reporting practices. In particular, it should be noted that police reporting to the FPS system is done on a voluntary basis resulting in less than 100% coverage.

        As such, regional analysis should be restricted to examining relative differences rather than absolute differences. In addition, regional analysis should not be conducted at the provincial level.

4.1   Measuring Recidivism

Recidivism has proven to be a difficult entity to measure because of the variety of possible definitions and methodologies and the inherent costs involved in tracing offenders over time.   Depending upon the objective of the study and on end-user requirements, recidivism has been defined as committing a subsequent offence, rearrest (police), reconviction (courts), and re-incarceration (corrections).   To further complicate the matter, some studies have only scored a reoffence if the incident occurred while on some form of supervision, such as probation or parole.   In general, however, most concur that recidivism is a return to criminal activity after having been found guilty of a previous infraction.   The current study uses reconviction as the measure of recidivism.

5.0   STUDY METHODOLOGY AND COMPONENTS

This study focuses on adults convicted in 1982 (study population) and traces their criminal histories prior to 1982 and tracks these offenders over a two-year follow-up period (1983-84).   Diagram 1 schematically illustrates the study frame.   Information on offences committed by young offenders or juveniles is not included in the study frame. In fact, the reference period for the current study was prior to the implementation of the Young Offenders Act (April 1985).

Selecting a relatively recent year (Note: data were obtained in 1985), 1982, effectively minimizes the number of missing files that were purged because of death or inactivity. The study is limited to examining recidivists and will not compare recidivists with one-time offenders since one-time offenders were not included on the FPS system prior to 1983.

To decrease problems of under-coverage in cases, the study includes only indictable and hybrid offences which resulted in a conviction.   While the evaluation studies indicated an under coverage in hybrid offences, it was recommended that, rather than exclude such offences from the analysis, conclusions should be limited to relative differences between groups instead of absolute differences.

Stemming from the evaluation recommendations, recidivism is defined as "a conviction for reoffence for an indictable or hybrid status offence where the conviction has been entered onto the FPS Criminal Record 2 file".   As a result, this study will be examining convicted serious offence recidivists.

Diagram 1 Study Components

RETROSPECTIVE (Criminal History)	POPULATION (Cohort)	PROSPECTIVE (Follow-up)	MOBILITY (Career)
< 1982 * **	1982 * **	1983 - 1984	includes career

Study results are presented in four sections: population analysis, retrospective analysis, prospective analysis, and patterns of mobility.

a)   **Population Study - 1982 Cohort**

The first component of the study examines offenders convicted in 1982. For analytic purposes, for each offender, the last case in 1982 was used. Regional analysis compares the 1982 cohort population with 1982 Uniform Crime Reporting statistics. In addition, offender and case characteristics are presented.

b)   **Retrospective Study - Offender Criminal Histories**

The retrospective portion of the study looks at the criminal histories of those offenders convicted in 1982, as recorded by the FPS system. Issues related to criminal career activity levels, criminal offence patterns over time, and offender characteristics are examined.

c)   **Prospective Study - Follow-up of Offenders**

The study frame allows a prospective analysis allowing for the measurement of recidivism over a two year period (January 1983 to December 1984). Convictions of offenders convicted in 1982, as recorded by the FPS system, are available up to mid-1985. In order to reduce the number of missing cases due to data entry lags, only convictions occurring to the end of 1984 will be included in the study frame. In 1985, the RCMP estimates that there was a one to two month delay in data entry.

Follow-up analysis examines the relative proportion of offenders who recidivate. Comparisons between recidivists and non-recidivists (during the follow-up period) permit the creation of a general recidivist profile based on criminal career patterns and offender characteristics.

d)   **Patterns of Mobility**

Offender mobility over the course of a criminal career (includes cases occurring during 1982 and earlier) was examined. Analysis compared case and demographic characteristics for mobile and non-mobile offenders.

5.1   **The FPS Research File**

One general purpose research file was created from the master files parsed (passed through a coding program) in 1985. The file consists of the adult criminal careers (to the end of 1984) of all adults convicted of an indictable or hybrid offence during 1982 which were recorded on the FPS system. A set of derived summary variables has also been included on the file. Appendix B provides a detailed listing of all variables contained in the file.

The resulting file is quite large and requires a considerable amount of storage space as well as working space. SAS was used to create the file and to conduct the data analysis. In total, there were 780,653 records for 155,284 offenders.
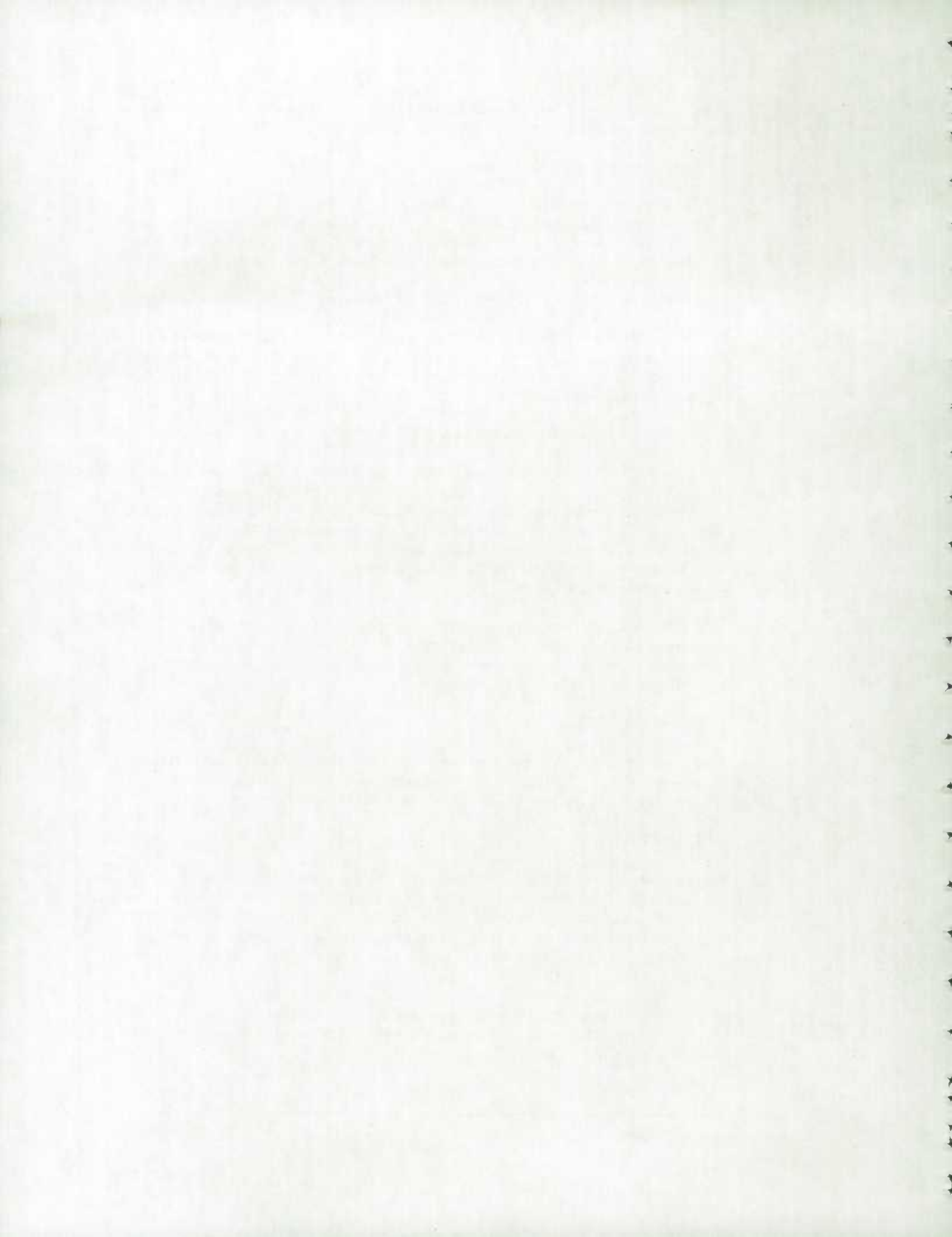
PART B

STUDY RESULTS
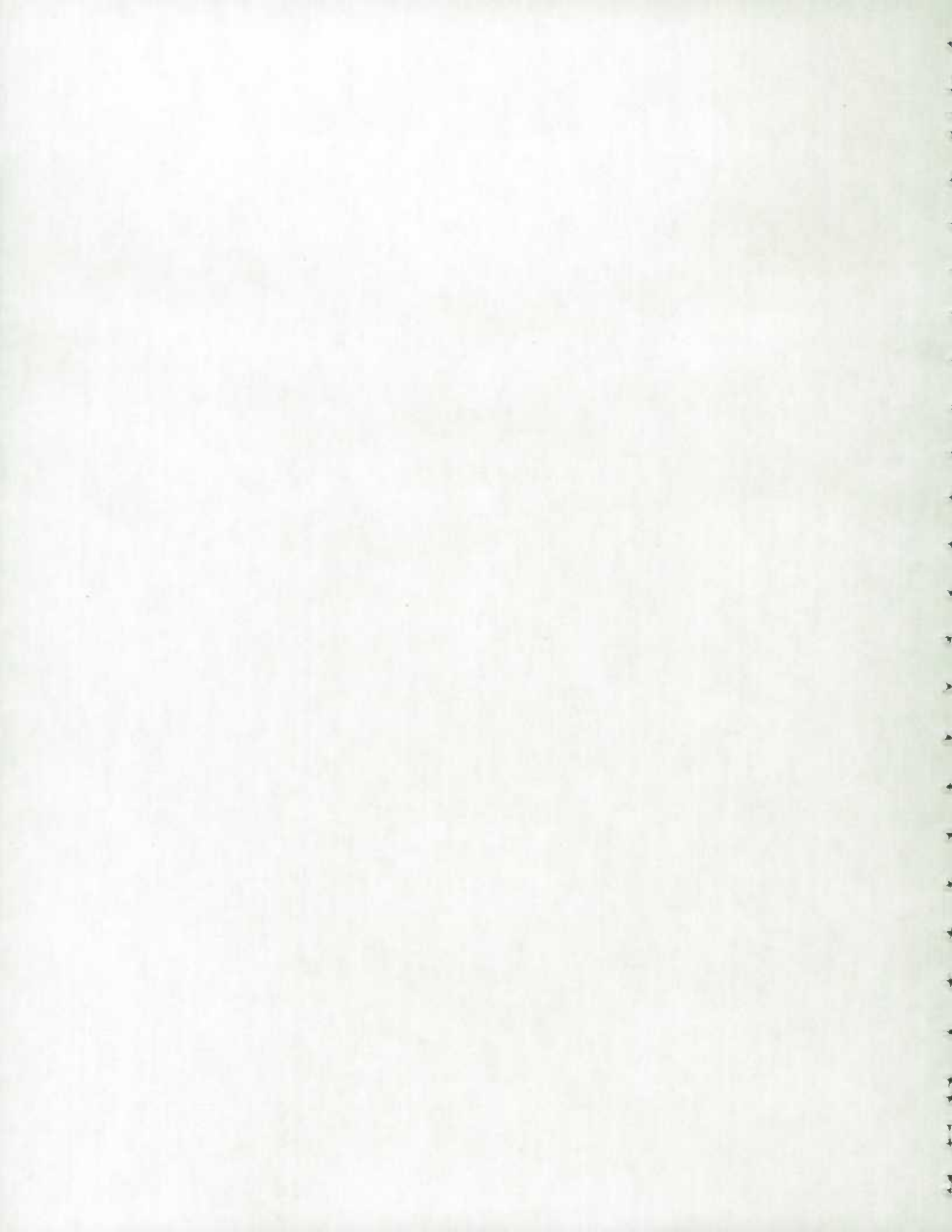
1.0   POPULATION — 1982 COHORT DESCRIPTION

The following analysis does not describe the incidence of crime in Canada, but rather the study universe — that is, offenders convicted in 1982 of an indictable or hybrid offence and recorded on the FPS system.

In 1982, a total of 239,470 convictions for hybrid or indictable offences were recorded on the FPS system. These convictions represented 184,914 different cases — an average of 1.3 convictions for each case. A case is a set of convictions for one offender dealt with on one sentencing day. One or more convictions may be recorded for each case. Finally, these cases represented a total of 155,284 unique persons (see Table 1).

Table 1	
Number of Persons, Cases and Convictions in 1982	
Number of Persons:	155,284
Number of Cases:	184,914
Number of Convictions:	239.470

1.1   Regional Distribution

Ontario accounted for the greatest number of cases (30%), with Quebec (22%) recording the next largest proportion. The western provinces represented over 40% of all cases, while the Atlantic provinces and the territories accounted for less than 6% in total.

Figure 1

Distribution of Cases in 1982: persons convicted (FPS) & charged (UCR)
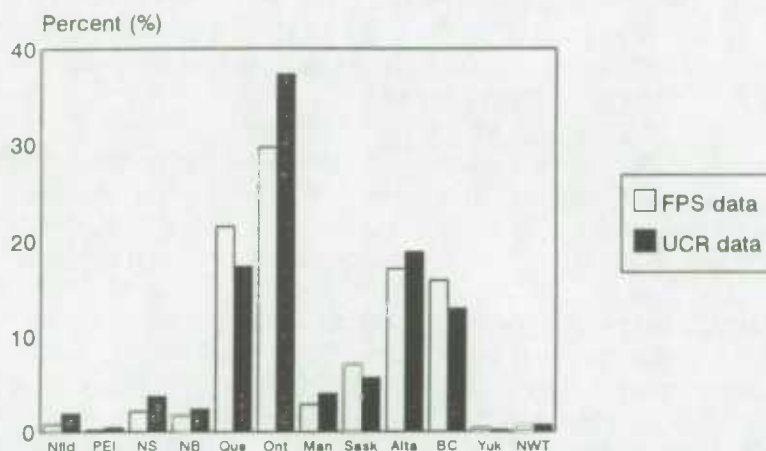
Note: UCR data include indictable and hybrid offences.

A comparison of the FPS system conviction data and adults charged for indictable and hybrid offences as reported by the UCR Survey was done to assess whether the provincial distribution of FPS cases was reasonable. Figure 1 compares the relative distributions of convictions/charges recorded in the FPS system and the UCR survey. Results indicate that the FPS system recorded relatively more cases in Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the Yukon. The UCR survey reported relatively more cases in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba. Also, it should be noted that this analysis can only provide a rough indicator of regional disparity due to the different measurements used (charges for UCR and convictions for FPS).

Differences between the regional distribution of UCR and FPS records may be a reflection of provincial charging practices or court procedures. Furthermore, these differences may be partly a result of inconsistent police reporting to the FPS system or the UCR survey. In fact, provincial differences in police reporting practices were uncovered in evaluation exercises conducted in 1985. These differences are partly due to the fact that reporting to the FPS system is done on a voluntary basis. As a result of these disparities, it would be inappropriate to conduct provincial comparisons using the FPS system. Further investigation on the relationship between data reported to the UCR survey and the FPS system would provide useful information which may permit provincial comparisons using the FPS system.

1.2   Offender Characteristics

A total of 155,284 persons were convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system. On average, the typical offender convicted in 1982 was a male in his mid to late twenties. Specifically, 90% of persons convicted during 1982 were male and 10% were female. The overall average age was about 28 years with over 71% being under 30 years of age. Again caution should be exercised in interpreting these results since the current study is restricted to the examination of adult offenders convicted of relatively serious offences.

1.3   Case Characteristics

During 1982, the vast majority of cases recorded on the FPS system were non-violent. As Figure 2 shows, slightly under 40% were property-related, while a little under a quarter were for impaired driving offences. Only 7% were for violent offences. According to the RCMP, the FPS system is more likely to capture serious offences than less serious offences. For example, the reporting of offences related to impaired driving is often subject to police discretion.

Generally, less serious offences accounted for the greatest proportion of convictions. Theft under $1,000 (34%) and break and enter (27%) accounted for the majority of property offences. Assault (all assaults, excluding sexual assault) accounted for almost 56% of violent offences, with robbery accounting for a further 27%.

Figure 2 compares offence distribution for convictions, as recorded by the FPS system, with persons charged, as recorded by the UCR survey. Results show that the FPS system captured only a very few of the "other federal statute offences". However, of convictions captured by the FPS system, relatively more were property or drug related than offences reported to the UCR survey. These comparisons must be interpreted cautiously as the scoring rules differ slightly for each system (for example, the violent and property offences are scored differently within the UCR survey).

Figure 2

Offence Type Distribution for Convictions (FPS) & Charges (UCR) in 1982
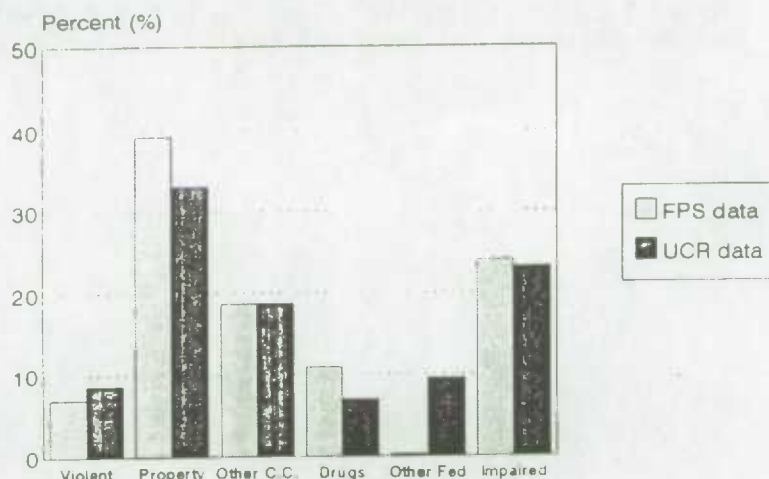
Table 2 provides case characteristic information by most serious offence (MSO). Female participation (i.e., convictions) in crime is more likely to be in property crime than other types of offences, with 60% of cases involving females being property related. A greater proportion of males, on the other hand, were convicted of impaired driving or drug-related offences. Males were also more likely to commit violent offences than females with 7% of males convicted of a violent offence, compared to only 4% of females. However, in spite of these differences, both males and females were still most likely to be convicted of property-related offences.

Table 2

1982 Case characteristics: Most Serious Offence. by sex and age

	Violent Offences	Property Offences	Other Criminal Code	Drug Offences	Other Federal Statutes	Impaired Driving	TOTAL	
TOTAL								
Number	12.912	72.698	34.506	20.083	383	44.332	184.914	
Percent	7.0	39.3	18.7	10.9	0.2	24.0	100.0	
SEX	%	%	%	%	%	%	N	%
Male	7.3	36.9	19.2	11.3	0.2	25.1	165.937	89.7
Female	4.2	60.3	13.5	7.5	0.3	14.2	18.878	10.2
Unknown							99	0.1
AGE	%	%	%	%	%	%	N	%
Under 19	20.0	33.3	24.0	24.7	2.6	23.8	43.937	23.8
20-24	32.3	29.2	33.3	41.3	20.4	30.0	55.417	30.0
25-29	18.9	14.1	17.9	20.4	27.7	17.0	31.498	17.0
30-39	18.5	13.6	15.7	11.4	30.6	16.8	31.051	16.8
40-49	7.1	5.9	6.0	1.8	11.5	7.5	13.900	7.5
Over 50	3.4	3.9	3.1	0.5	7.3	4.9	9.111	4.9
AVERAGE AGE	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	
	27	25	26	24	32	32	28	

Property and drug offenders were slightly younger than persons convicted of other offences. On average, property offenders were 25 years old, while drug offenders were 24. In comparison, violent offenders were about 27 years of age and offenders convicted of impaired driving were about 32 years old. Overall, the average age of offenders captured within the study frame was about 28 years.

2.0 RETROSPECTIVE STUDY —
CRIMINAL HISTORY OF OFFENDERS CONVICTED IN 1982

2.1 Prior Cases and Convictions

The prior criminal careers of offenders convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system were examined. Table 3 provides information on offender career activity levels for the number of cases and convictions. One offender can have more than one case (a case includes all convictions on one sentencing date). Furthermore, a case can have more than one conviction.

a)   Activity Levels

Of the 155,284 persons, 38% had only one case (occurring during 1982) and, for the purposes of this study, are termed one-case offenders. Thirty-five percent had two or three cases, while 28% had more than three.

On average, offenders had a total of 3.2 cases (median=2) recorded on the FPS system, ranging from one case to a high of 77.

Table 3

Career Activity Levels of Offenders Convicted in 1982

Number of Cases	Number of Persons	%	Number of Convictions	Number of Persons	%
1	58,509	37.7	1	49,817	32.1
2 – 3	53,705	34.6	2 – 3	49,678	32.0
4 – 5	19,892	12.9	4 – 5	21,150	13.6
6 – 10	16,705	10.7	6 – 10	20,558	13.2
Over 10	6,473	4.2	Over 10	14,081	9.1
TOTAL	155,284	100.0	TOTAL	155,284	100.0

Looking at previous convictions (again, one case can have more than one conviction): 32% of persons convicted in 1982 had only one conviction; another 32% had two or three convictions; and, 36% had over three convictions. On average, persons convicted in 1982 had 4.2 convictions (median=2) recorded on the FPS system, ranging from one conviction to 90.

Another method of measuring the impact of offender activity is to determine the percentage of all cases for which relatively active offenders were responsible. When those offenders with the highest number of cases are examined, it is revealed that about

five percent of offenders were responsible for 24% of all cases captured by the study frame (see Figure 3). The significance of the active offender becomes even more apparent when looking at convictions. About 5% of all offenders were responsible for 30% of all convictions. It appears that a small group of active offenders is responsible for a very large share of criminal activity. Future analysis might examine the potential impact of incapacitation (through incarceration) of relatively active offenders.

Figure 3

Proportion of Offenders Convicted for Proportion of Cases
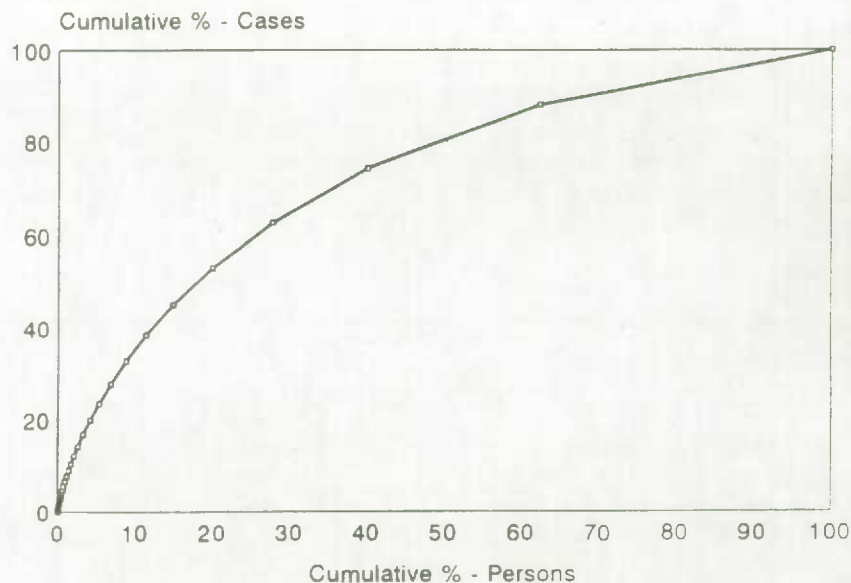
b)   Offender Characteristics

The average age at which offenders were first recorded on the FPS system was about 21 years. The age at first conviction was similar for violent, property and drug related offences. Offenders convicted in 1982 for other federal statutes or impaired driving were on average about 27 years of age at first conviction. Once again, caution should be exercised in interpreting these results. The current study was limited to the examination of adult offenders convicted of relatively serious offences.

Males had almost twice the number of career cases and convictions as did females. Finally, as would be expected, the number of cases in a career increased as the age of an offender increased.

c)   Most Serious Offence

To examine the patterns of crime, a most serious offence (MSO) methodology was used. Each case (defined as all convictions occurring on one sentencing date) is comprised of one or more convictions. For each case, one conviction is selected as being the most serious according to a set of criteria. This selection allows for comparisons within an offender's career and between offenders.

The MSO was selected by ranking the average length of custodial sentence for each offence type in the database (about 780,000 records). Each conviction was then compared to this list and the offence with the highest average sentence length was assigned as the MSO. See Appendix C for further details on MSO methodology.

Of the total cases prior to 1983 (N=495,677), forty-five percent had a property-related MSO. An additional 17% were related to drinking and driving offences and 8% were violent in nature.

Interesting differences were found between offence categories and the number of cases within an offender's career. Table 4 presents the average number of cases within a career by the different offence categories. Those offenders who had a career MSO involving violence were more active than other offenders. Offenders with a career MSO involving impaired driving or other federal statute offences had the least active careers.

Table 4

Average Number of Cases by Offence Type, by Career MSO

CAREER MSO	Total Number of Persons	Average Number of Cases	%
Violent	18,580	5.2	12.0
Property	65,851	3.1	42.4
Other Criminal Code	29,758	3.7	19.2
Drugs	15,544	2.7	10.0
Other Federal Statutes	271	1.4	0.2
Impaired Driving	25,280	1.6	16.3
Total	155,284		100.0

2.2   Career Activity Levels

Length of career was measured by determining elapsed time between last conviction in 1982 and first conviction recorded on the FPS record. The term "career" has been used loosely since we do not have a complete history of each offender's career. The study frame examines offenders convicted in 1982. During this year, an offender may have been beginning his/her career, ending his/her career or been at some point in the middle of a career. As such, for the purposes of this study, the term "career" is defined as the period of time and set of offences captured by the FPS system, from the first recorded conviction up until the end of 1982.

Two different methodologies were used to explore the relationship between criminal career activity and offender/offence characteristics. The first methodology, referred to as "activity level", groups offenders according to the number of cases on their FPS record, up to and including 1982. Three groups were created: 1 career case; 2-3 cases; and, over 3 cases. The second methodology, referred to as the "rate of criminality", measures how busy an offender has been, adjusting for the time period over which the convictions occurred. Analysis using rate of criminality is presented in Section 2.3.

Figure 4

Average Age at First Conviction by Level of Criminal Activity
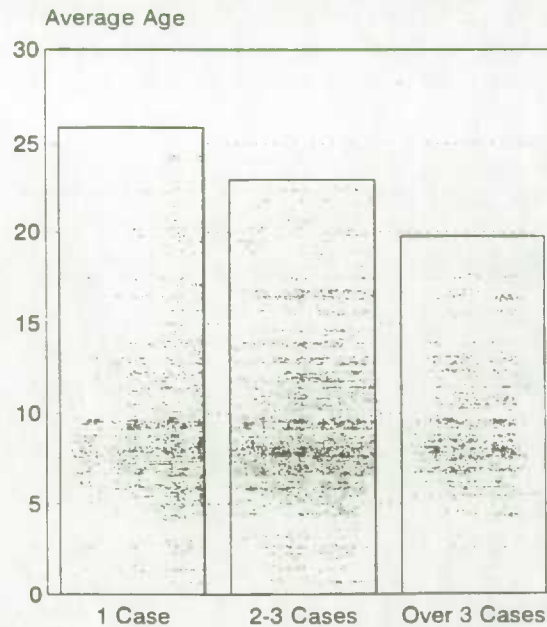
a)   Onset of Criminality

Figure 4 shows the average age of onset of criminality by criminal activity levels. Clear differences are apparent — relatively active offenders started their criminal careers at much younger ages. On average one-case offenders were 26 years old while offenders with more than 3 cases to their career were 20 years old at first conviction (as recorded on the FPS system).

b)   Career MSO Type

During 1982, slightly over one-third of repeat offenders (that is, offenders with more than one case captured by the study frame) were convicted for offences within the same offence category as their career MSO. As Table 5 shows, although offenders in one category do exhibit some propensity to be reconvicted for similar types of offences relative to offenders in other categories, it is clear that most offenders were convicted of offences different from their career MSO. For example, of offenders convicted of a violent offence in 1982, only 33% had a violent career MSO as opposed to 43% with a property career MSO. (Note that offence severity was calculated by average custodial sentence lengths, resulting in some property offences being classified as more severe than some violent offences. For example, assault was ranked lower than break & enter.)

Table 5

1982 Most Serious Offence (MSO) Category by Career Most Serious Offence Category

1982 MSO	Career MSO					
	Violent	Property	Other Criminal Code	Drugs	Other Federal Statutes	Impaired Driving
Violent	33%	43%	19%	6%	0%	0%
Property	16%	60%	19%	6%	0%	0%
Other Criminal Code	22%	48%	25%	5%	0%	0%
Drugs	13%	40%	21%	24%	0%	1%
Other Federal Statutes	30%	37%	27%	4%	3%	0%
Impaired Driving	13%	33%	22%	7%	0%	25%

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of career MSO for offenders with an FPS record of 1 case, 2-3 cases and over 3 cases. Clearly, offenders with longer records tend to have more severe criminal histories. For example, of offenders with more than 3 cases in their careers, 22% had a violent career MSO, compared to 10% of offenders with 2-3 cases and only 6% of offenders with one case. Conversely, 27% of offenders with one case had an MSO involving impaired driving, while only 4% of offenders with more than 3 cases recorded a similar career MSO.

Figure 5

Distribution of Career MSO Type by Level of Criminal Activity
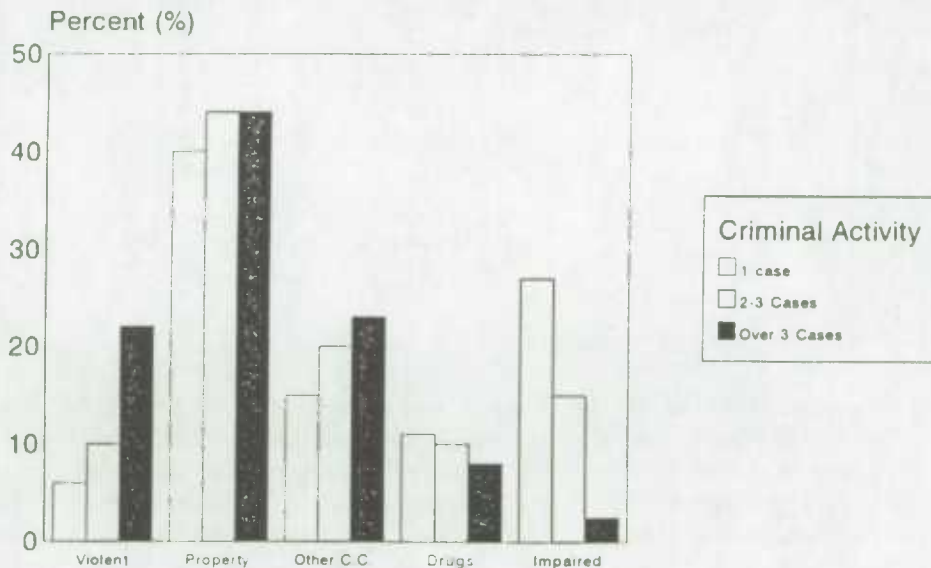
c)   **Career MSO Severity**

An offence severity scale assigned values in ascending order (1 to 38) to each offence. The value was determined according to the average custodial sentence length for each offence type. For example, murder had the highest average custodial sentence length and was assigned the value of 1, while driving with an alcohol level over 80 mg had the lowest average sentence length and was assigned a value of 38. See Appendix C for further information on MSO and offence severity.

Figure 6 illustrates the average career MSO severity by offender activity levels. Offenders with over three cases had an average MSO severity level of 13.5, while offenders with only one case had an average MSO severity level over 25. The MSO severity scale codes more severe offences with lower numbers (see Appendix C for the rank ordering of offence categories). Further examination of the differences between active and less active offenders is warranted.

Figure 6

Average Career MSO Severity by Level of Criminal Activity

Career MSO Severity
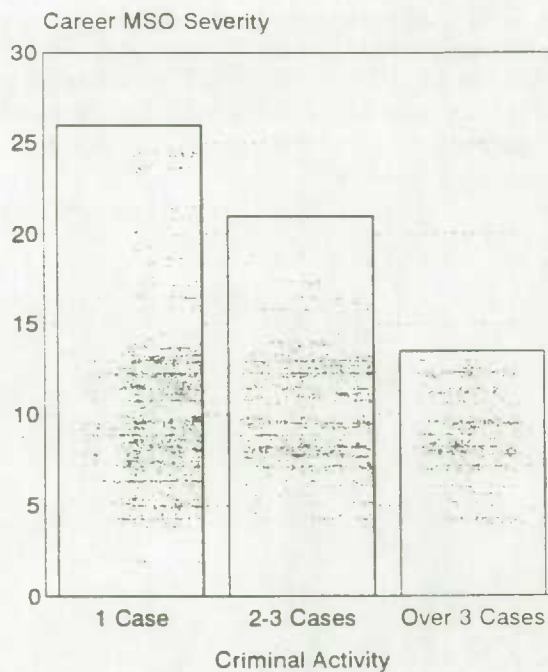
Criminal Activity

2.3   Rate of Criminality

As indicated earlier, relative levels of activity controlling for time were examined using an offender's "rate of criminality". The rate was calculated by dividing the number of convictions in a career by the span of the career (# of convictions/career span). Thus, an offender with 10 convictions over a period of 10 years (rate=1) is grouped differently from an offender with 10 convictions over one year (rate=10). Offenders with only one case were excluded from the analysis. Three groups were created (percentiles 33; 66; and, 100): low; moderate; and, high.

Figure 7

Distribution of Career MSO Type by Offender Criminality Rate
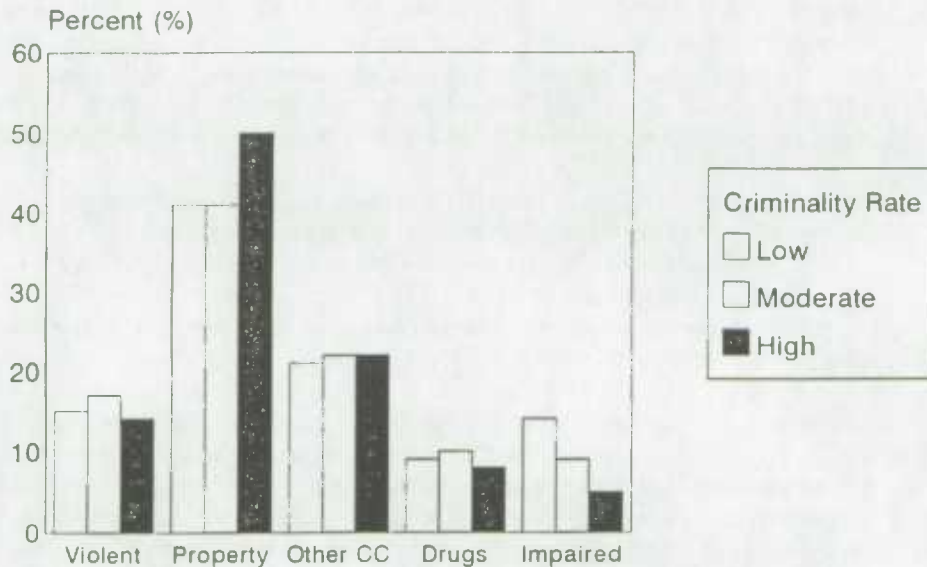
Figure 7 describes the offence distribution of offenders with low, moderate and high criminality rates. Regardless of rate of criminality, the largest proportion of offenders had a career MSO involving a property-related offence. High-rate offenders, however, were more likely to have a property-related career MSO (50%), compared to low or moderate rate offenders (41% for each group). On the other hand, low rate offenders were more likely to have a career MSO involving impaired driving (14%), compared to 9% and 5% of moderate and high rate offenders, respectively. Interestingly, offenders with a moderate criminality rate were slightly more likely than other offenders to have a violent career MSO.

On average, low rate offenders were much older than high-rate offenders (36 vs. 22). However, this disparity was not as great for age at first conviction. High-rate offenders were about 20 years old at first conviction, compared to 23 years of age for low-rate offenders. Finally, females represented similar proportions of offenders in the low, moderate and high criminality groups.

To better understand the measurement of criminality rates, the average number of convictions for each group was examined. The moderate group recorded the highest average at 7.1 convictions per offender. The high-rate group had 6.9 convictions, while the low-rate group had an average of 4.3. These figures suggest that an analysis of recidivist behaviour requires a measurement which recognizes the relationship between the number of offences and the time over which the offences occurred.

2.4   Escalation of Crime

As Table 5 showed, patterns of crime are difficult to detect. Offenders, rather than confining their activities to one type of crime, exhibit diversity throughout their careers On average an offender with more than one case was involved in two different categories of crime.

A common question about repeat offenders is whether they escalate to commit more serious crimes or continue to commit crimes of a similar nature. To examine this issue, a comparison between the MSO for which an offender was convicted in 1982 and the offender's career MSO was made. Overall, for those offenders with more than one case, the majority were convicted (1982) of crimes less serious than their career MSO. Fully 60% recorded crimes less serious than their career MSO. This would suggest that, at any given point in a career, offenders do not continue to commit crimes at the same level, but, in fact, are more likely to commit crimes less serious than their career MSO.

Yet, looking at the general pattern of crime over a criminal's career demonstrates that as the number of convictions increases, the severity of the MSO also increases ($r=.46$, $p<.0001$). Violent offenders (career MSO was violent) recorded an average of 5.2 cases over their careers, compared to 3.1 for property offenders. These seemingly contradictory results may indicate that while, overall, criminal careers tend to escalate, they are cluttered with many relatively less serious crimes.

To more clearly define the typical criminal career, an attempt was made to determine the point within a career that the most serious offence occurred. To do this a measurement called "career peak" was calculated by dividing the case sequence number at the time that the most serious offence occurred by the total number of cases up to and including 1982. Including only offenders with more than one case, the average "career peak" was .78, indicating that an offender's most serious offence typically occurs about three-quarters of the way through a career.

Small differences were found between "career peak" and type of career MSO. Career MSOs involving violence tended to occur somewhat earlier (.72), compared to impaired driving career MSOs (.89). However, no strong relationship between offence severity and career peak was found ($r=.27$, $p < .0001$). Caution should be exercised in interpreting these results as the study frame does not, necessarily, capture an offender's complete career.

2.5   Frequency of Conviction

Frequency of conviction refers to the time lapse between each subsequent case. On average, the elapsed time between cases was two years. This average time differed slightly by age and by sex. Generally, the time between cases increased with an offenders age: offenders less than twenty years of age averaged .7 years between cases; those in their twenties averaged 1.7 years; those in their thirties, 4.3 years; and, offenders over 40 years of age averaged 4.3 years between cases. Finally, females had longer periods between cases (2.3 years), compared to males (2.0 years).

Minimal differences were found for time lags between cases by offence type (included all cases for which a previous case existed). Offenders were grouped into offence categories based on the last case recorded in 1982. Property offenders had slightly less time between cases (1.6 years), compared to violent offenders (2.0 years). Offenders convicted of impaired driving were the exception with an average of 3.5 years between cases. Future analysis on frequency of conviction should attempt to control for opportunity to commit crime (i.e., exclude incarcerated offenders from the analysis).

It has been theorized that as a criminal career progresses, the time between convictions diminishes. To examine this issue, the length of time between each case was compared with the case sequence number. Results indicate that the time between cases is only slightly related to the point within a criminal's career ($r= -.15$, $p < .0001$).

3.0   PROSPECTIVE STUDY — SUBSEQUENT RECIDIVISM

The study frame collected career information on all offenders convicted during 1982 and recorded on the FPS system. To prospectively examine the incidence of recidivism of these offenders, information was collected up to mid-1985.

The following analysis is restricted to a two-year follow-up to ensure that most convictions during 1983/1984 were entered onto the FPS system. According to RCMP staff, there was a lag-time of about 2 months for the entering of conviction data in 1985. Furthermore, subsequent recidivism analysis includes only those offenders who had an opportunity to recidivate. Therefore, offenders who were sentenced in 1982 to terms greater than six years were excluded from the analysis. Six years was selected as offenders with sentences of 6 years or more would not be theoretically eligible for parole during the two year follow-up (1/3 for parole).

3.1   Rate of Recidivism

Of those convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system, 35% of those who had an opportunity to reoffend were reconvicted for a subsequent offence within two years. Furthermore, recidivists had an average of 1.6 cases or 2.3 convictions over the two year follow-up.

Overall, 42% of offenders who recidivated were convicted after 1982 for an offence similar in nature to their career MSO prior to 1983. However, on average, recidivists were involved in offences less serious than their career MSO prior to 1983. In fact, overall, the MSO value recorded during the follow-up period was 25% lower than the average career MSO severity level. Figure 8 describes the relationship between the pre-1983 MSO and the follow-up period MSO. Of recidivists, almost 50% had a career MSO involving a property-related offence, while only 41% of all recidivists had a follow-up MSO involving property. A substantial proportion of recidivists (20%) had a follow-up MSO involving impaired driving, compared to only 11% of recidivists who had a career MSO involving this offence. These results are consistent with those found earlier: criminal careers are often cluttered with less serious offences.

Updating the FPS research file to extend the follow-up period (e.g., to 10 years) of offenders convicted in 1982 would substantially increase the utility of this analysis. This would allow for a truer comparison of recidivists with non-recidivists and would capture a greater portion of an offender's career.

3.2   Comparison of Follow-up Recidivists and Follow-up Non-recidivists

For the purpose of this section, the term "recidivist" refers to persons who were reconvicted during the follow-up period, while "non-recidivists" refers to persons who were not reconvicted during the follow-up period. Female offenders were less likely to recidivate than their male counterparts. Twenty-four percent of female offenders were reconvicted during the follow-up period, compared to 36% of male offenders.

As expected, since younger offenders tend to be more active, recidivists were younger than non-recidivists. The average age of recidivists was about 26 years, while non-recidivists, on average, were 29 years old. Furthermore, recidivists started their careers earlier (21 years) than non-recidivists (25 years). Table 6 compares recidivists with non-recidivists for selected measures.

Figure 8

Distribution of Career (pre-1983) and Follow-up (83-84) MSO Types
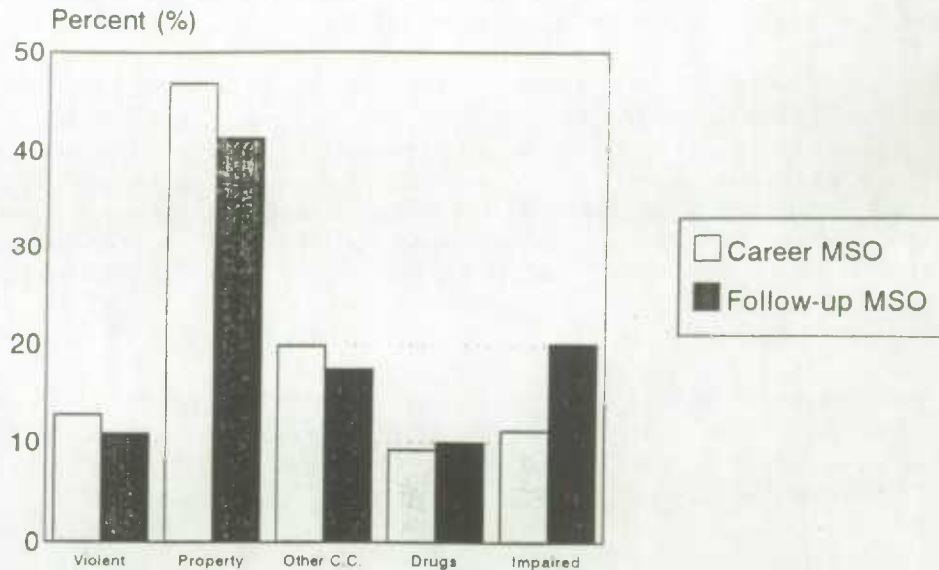
With respect to previous criminal careers, recidivists recorded higher rates of convictions. Perhaps most significant was that recidivists were convicted of more serious offences during their career. Recidivists averaged an MSO severity level of 18, compared to 22 for non-recidivists (Note: severity index is in ascending order with 1 representing murder).

Table 6		
Comparison of Recidivists and Non-recidivists		
	FOLLOW-UP RECIDIVISTS	FOLLOW-UP NON-RECIDIVISTS
TOTAL	34.7%	65.3%
SEX		
Male	93%	87%
Female	7%	13%
AGE AT CONVICTION IN 1982	25	29
AGE AT FIRST CONVICTION	21	25
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CASES (<1983)	4.2	2.7
AVERAGE NO OF CONVICTIONS (<1983)	5.8	3.4
MSO – SEVERITY LEVEL (range 1–38) (lower numbers indicate greater severity)	18	22

Figure 9 compares recidivists and non-recidivists by their most serious offence prior to 1983. Almost 40% of those with a violent or property career MSO were reconvicted during the follow-up period, compared to 30% of drug offenders and 21% of impaired driving offenders.

Figure 9

Percentage of Offenders Re-convicted by Career Most Serious Offence (pre-1983)

Percent (%)

```
50 ┤
   │
   │    39    39
40 ┤  ┌──┐  ┌──┐   37
   │  │  │  │  │  ┌──┐
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30 ┤  │  │  │  │  │  │  ┌──┐
   │  │  │  │  │  │  │  │  │
   │  │  │  │  │  │  │  │  │            21
20 ┤  │  │  │  │  │  │  │  │          ┌──┐
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    Violent  Property  Other C.C.  Drugs  Other Fed  Impaired
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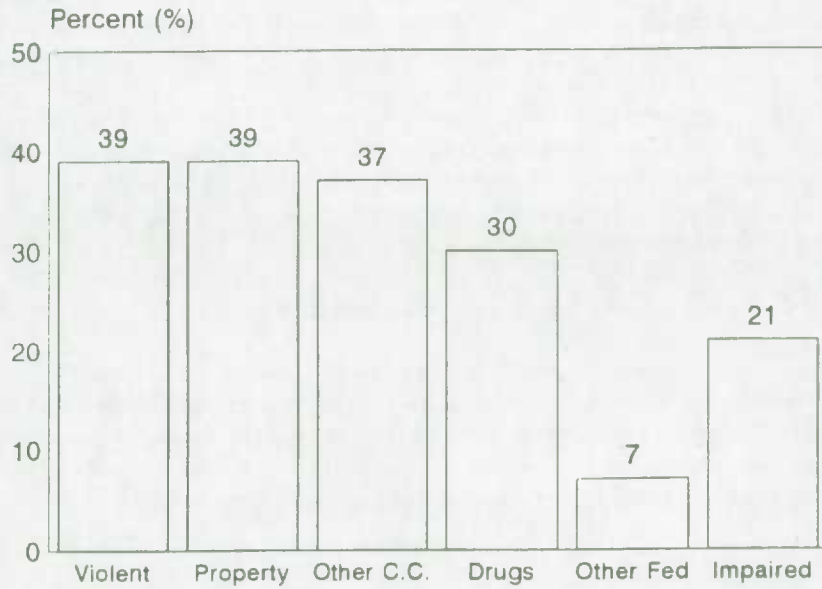
4.0   PATTERNS OF MOBILITY

Offender mobility analysis examined the criminal careers of offenders with more than one case. A criminal career included all cases on the research file up to and including the last case during 1982.

For each case, the FPS system records the province of conviction. Provinces were grouped into regions to examine patterns of mobility: Atlantic (Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick); Quebec; Ontario; Prairies (Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta); British Columbia; and the Territories (Yukon and Northwest Territories). Regional analysis was selected to minimize the effects of variation in provincial FPS reporting practices.

In general, offenders captured within the study frame (prior to 1983) were not a mobile group. Eighty percent of all offenders remained within one region throughout their criminal career. Indeed, a fairly high proportion of offenders were convicted (last case in 1982) in their region of birth (71%). Of those reconvicted during the two year follow-up period, fully 94% were reconvicted within the same region.

4.1   Comparison of Mobile and Non-mobile Offenders

Offenders with more than one case were divided into two groups: those convicted in more than one region; and, those convicted in one region. Offenders with only one case were excluded from the analysis as they would not have had an opportunity to be convicted in more than one region. Overall, 20% of offenders were convicted in more than one region. Table 7 compares mobile and non-mobile offenders.

Table 7

Comparison of Mobile and Non—mobile Offenders

|	MOBILE OFFENDERS	NON—MOBILE OFFENDERS
TOTAL	20%	80%
SEX		
Female	5%	8%
Male	95%	92%
AGE AT CONVICTION IN 1982	31	28
AGE AT FIRST CONVICTION	20	22
NUMBER OF CASES (<1983)	6.5	4
NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS (<1983)	8.7	5.4
MSO — SEVERITY LEVEL (Range 1—38) (lower numbers indicate greater severity)	15	18

As can be seen, some differences exist between mobile and non-mobile offenders. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these results. Over a period of time and an active career, certain results would be expected. For example, offenders with a high number of convictions would be expected to be older and convicted of more severe offences.

Overall, female offenders are slightly less mobile than male offenders, with females representing 5% of mobile offenders, compared to 8% of the non-mobile group. In general, mobile offenders tend to be older (31 vs. 28) and to have started their criminal careers at a slightly earlier age (20 vs. 22). Mobile offenders recorded about one-third more cases and convictions, in comparison to non-mobile offenders.

On average, the career MSO for mobile offenders was 15, compared to 18 for non-mobile offenders. Again, a lower MSO severity level indicates a more serious offence. Figure 10 further examines the relation between offender mobility and career most serious offence. Slight differences were found between mobile and non-mobile offenders with respect to career MSO. Mobile offenders tended to be more violent than non-mobile offenders. Almost 20% of mobile offenders had a violent career MSO, compared to 15% of non-mobile offenders. Furthermore, mobile offenders (4%) were much less likely to have a career MSO involving impaired driving than non-mobile offenders (11%).
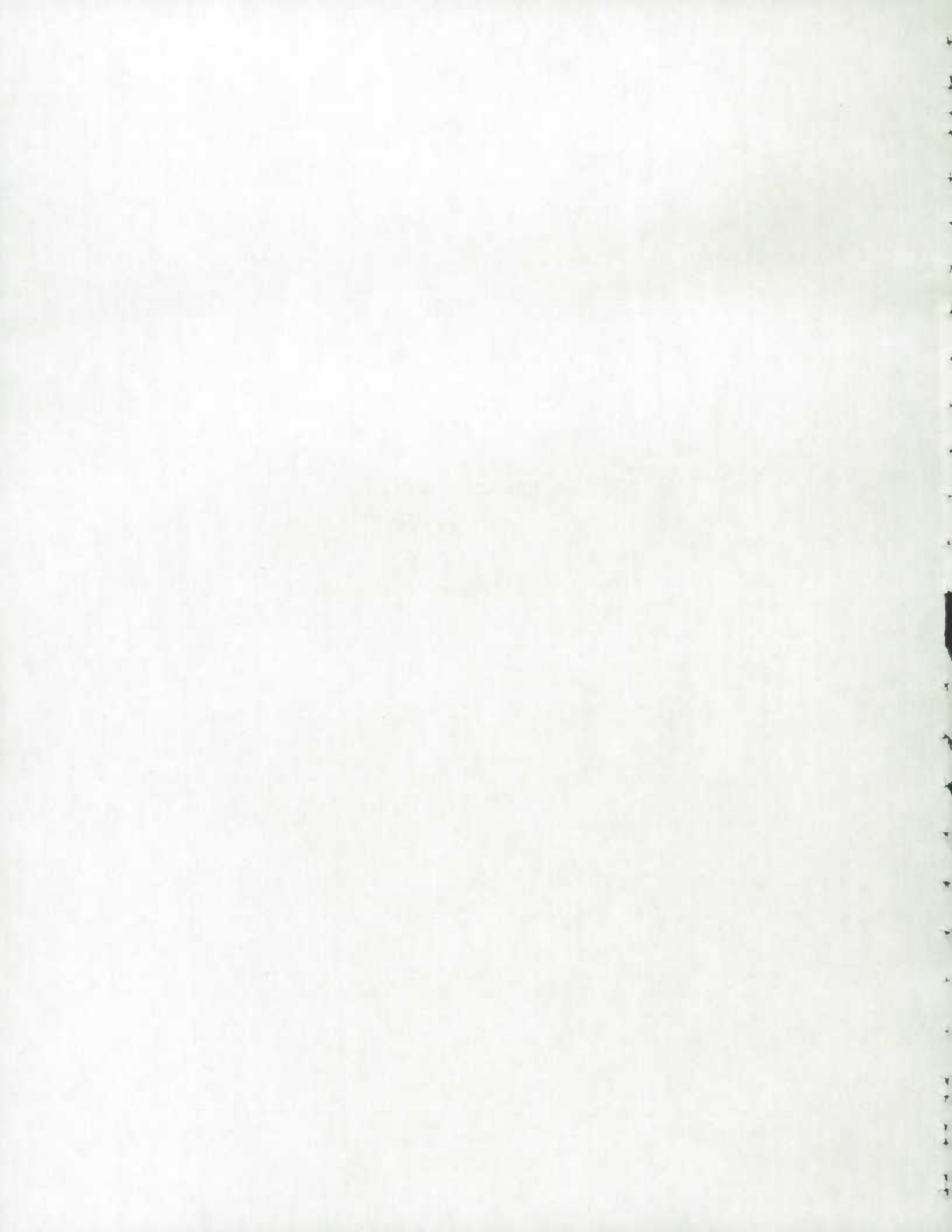
Figure 10

Distribution of Career MSO by Offender Mobility
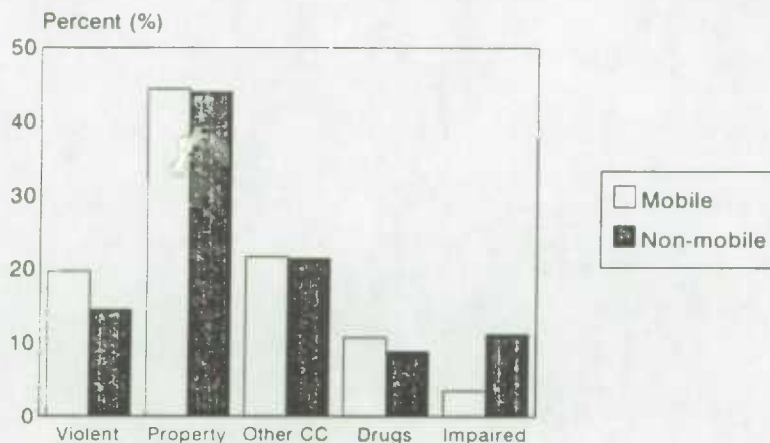
PART C

CONCLUSIONS

1.0   CONCLUSIONS

The FPS system, maintained by the RCMP, is the only national source of information on serious offence convictions in Canada. Although the system has not typically been used for research purposes, information contained in the system is used throughout the justice community to track offenders, investigate crimes and inform the courts prior to sentencing. Prior evaluations have suggested that the database created in 1985 is suited to the study of recidivism. To further assess the FPS research database's utility to study recidivism, the current paper provides a methodological exploration by means of descriptive and statistical analyses.

Analysis was performed on four levels: population analysis for convictions in 1982; retrospective analysis, looking at the criminal careers of offenders convicted in 1982; prospective analysis, looking at the incidence of recidivism of offenders convicted in 1982; and, mobility analysis.

o   **Population analysis** described the regional distribution of cases, as well as offender and case characteristics. This analysis is intended only to describe the FPS system and is not a reflection of crime levels in Canada. In 1982, a total of 239,470 convictions for hybrid or indictable offences were recorded on the FPS system. This represents 155,284 unique persons. On average, the typical offender was a male in his mid-to-late twenties. Overall, females represented 10% of all offenders.

o   **Retrospective analysis** examined offender career activity levels and patterns of crime for 1982 and earlier. Important findings included indications that a small group of active offenders is responsible for a disproportionate number of offences. In addition, the data suggested that escalation in crime severity does occur, although a criminal career is often cluttered with less serious offences. Finally, an investigation of the frequency of conviction was conducted with results indicating that the timing between convictions does not fit any set pattern.

Results showed that, on average, each offender had about 3 cases recorded on the FPS system. Very active offenders were responsible for a disproportionate number of cases: 5% of offenders were responsible for 24% of all cases. These active offenders were also shown to have started their careers at an earlier age and to have more severe most serious offences than less active offenders. Overall, while criminal careers do tend to escalate, they are cluttered with many relatively less serious crimes.

o   **Prospective analysis** looked at the proportion of offenders that were convicted of new offences during a two-year follow-up. A comparison of recidivists and non-recidivists revealed interesting differences.

Overall, 35% of offenders were reconvicted during the follow-up period. Twenty-four percent of female offenders were reconvicted, compared to 36% of males. Reconvicted offenders were younger and had more active careers than did offenders who were not reconvicted.

o	Mobility analysis examined the proportion of offenders that were convicted in more than one region over a career. A comparison of mobile and non-mobile offenders showed that some differences between these groups do exist.

In general, offenders within the study frame were not a mobile group: 80% of all offenders remained within the same region throughout their career. Overall, mobile offenders were found to be male, older, and have more active careers than non-mobile offenders. In addition, mobile offenders started their criminal careers at an earlier age than did non-mobile offenders.

Results, in general, were consistent with previous research findings on recidivism supporting the premise that, overall, the FPS system, as of 1985, is a reasonable source of information for recidivism research. However, certain limitations do exist since the FPS system is a police operational tool (dependent upon voluntary police reporting) never intended for use as a statistical database. These restrictions must be recognized in any research efforts or policy applications.

Future use of the FPS system is, naturally, dependent upon RCMP approval and involvement. Recent changes in the reporting practices of police across Canada may jeopardize the use of the FPS system for national research purposes. Further investigation as to the utility of using the current FPS system to study recidivism is required.

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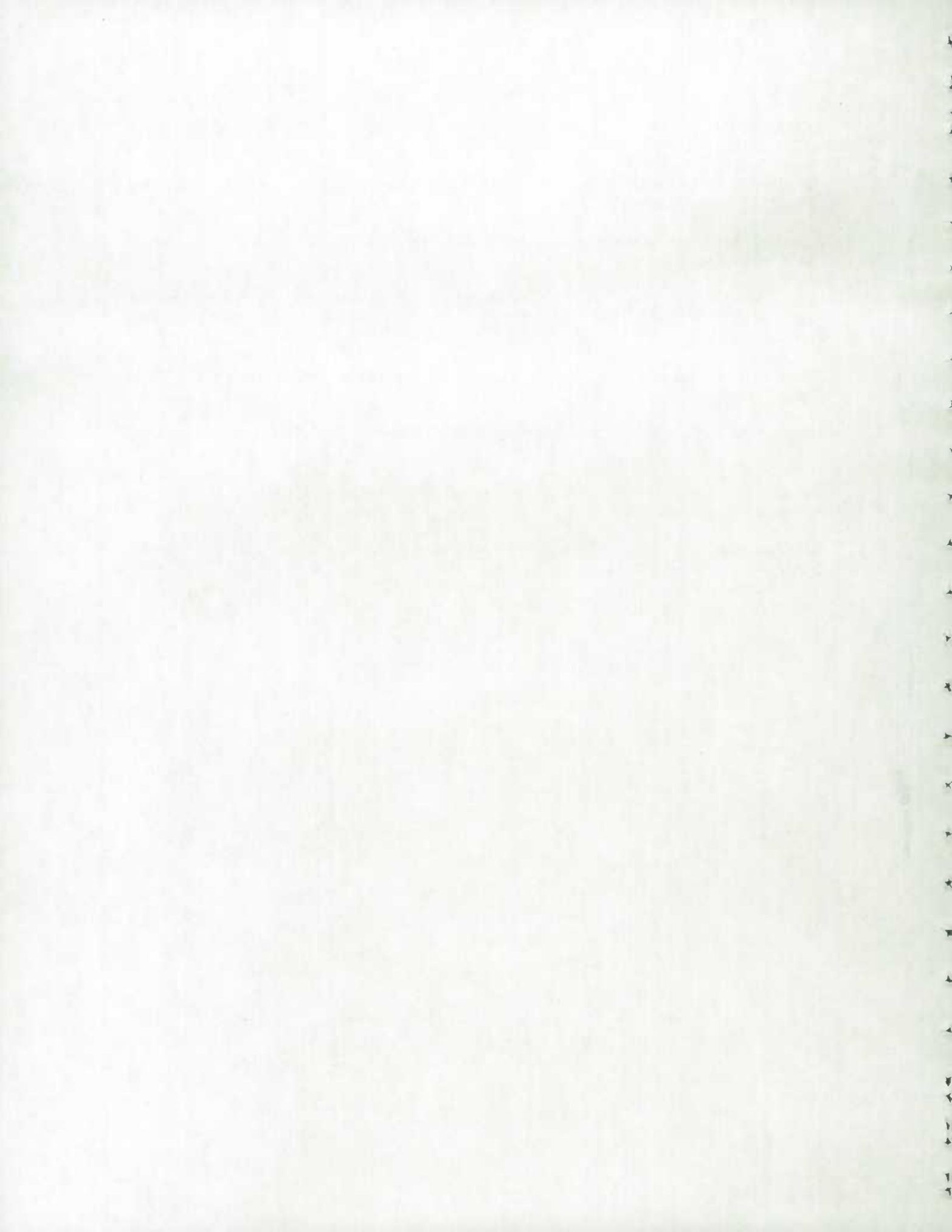
Appendix A

Potential of the FPS Data Base for Recidivism Studies

RECIDIVISM PROPOSAL: THE UTILITY OF THE FPS PROJECT DATABASE FOR RECIDIVISM STUDIES

DRAFT

Integration and Analysis

March, 1992
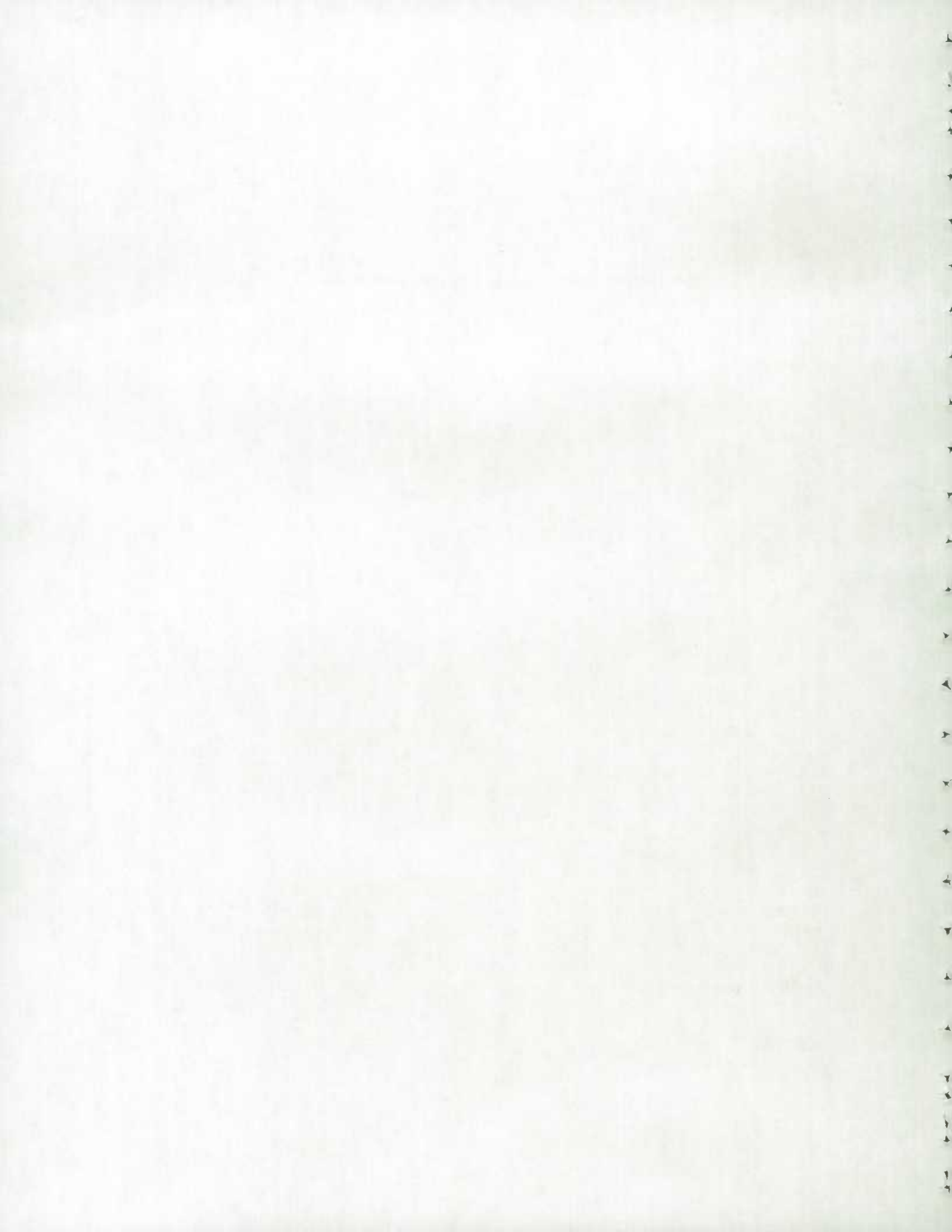
INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Police Service (RCMP) maintains operational databases (FPS-CPIC) of all persons fingerprinted for criminal charges. The result is an information base on criminal history that may be used to compile indicators of recidivism. In the early 1980's, the Centre developed a series of computer programs to convert FPS-CPIC records into a format suitable for research and analysis. Out of this exercise, a number of analytical databases were created.

The Research files contain criminal record information up to 1985, and were created with the intention of providing national sentencing information. However, an evaluation of the databases found them inappropriate for sentencing purposes. As a result, the project was completed and the databases were archived. It was realized at the time that there may be other uses for the information. For example, recidivism was one that was briefly investigated and found to be promising.

During the April, 1991 meeting of the Liaison Officer Committee, the Centre was asked to undertake some studies in the area of recidivism. To fulfil this requirement, in the fall of 1991 the Centre proposed three separate recidivism studies. One of these proposals involved an evaluation of the FPS-CPIC conversion programs and analytical databases currently available at the Centre to determine their potential for recidivism studies.

THE FPS-CPIC DATA CONVERSION PROJECT

In October, 1981 the LOC approved the project 'Feasibility of the uses of Finger Print Services (FPS) and Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) for Adult Courts Programme'. The objective of this project was to examine the potential use of the FPS-CPIC databases, in the absence of a nationally comprehensive and detailed court database, as a source for national court caseload statistics for the Adult Courts Program at the Centre. Two files within the CPIC-FPS systems were identified as the most appropriate for this purpose: the Criminal Record Synopsis (CRS) and the Criminal Record 2 (CR2) files. The CRS file provides summary offender identification information such as gender, place of birth, age, as well as summary offence information flags. The CR2 file provides detailed charge information such as type of charge, statute, section, date and place of sentence, disposition, etc. The CR2 file, however, is in a free textual format, having not been developed with a statistical reporting requirement. The CCJS assumed the task of converting the CR2 file into a format appropriate for research and analysis; a set of computer 'parser' programs were developed to accomplish this objective as well as to combine the two files.

The parser programs which were developed accomplished a variety of tasks, including converting French charges to English, standardizing unformatted textual charge descriptions, converting court locations to standardized geocodes, creating exceptions files for un-convertable records, which subsequently required manual conversion, as well as the editing programs to assist in manually modifying records. As the process of converting the FPS-CPIC files to fixed format files was a multi-step process, numerous intermediary files were also created along the way. This parsing process was successfully used to convert and integrate the FPS-CPIC CR2 and CRS files into a database which could be used for computer analysis and research.

POTENTIAL USE OF THE FPS-CPIC PARSER PROGRAMS AND
THE FPS STATISTICAL DATABASES

FPS-CPIC Parser Programs

The parsed FPS statistical database only contains records up to early 1985. In order to study recidivism using recent FPS-CPIC data, and perhaps producing an up-to-date research file, the possibility of reactivating these parser programs was examined.

Revival of the FPS-CPIC parser programs is not possible for three main reasons. First, the size of the project and the amount of processing involved would make the task a very resource and time consuming exercise. The FPS-CPIC conversion project occurred at a time when Statistics Canada mainframe computing resources were not charged back to the individual programs. However, computing costs are now charged back to users and attempts to convert the FPS-CPIC system files into an analytical database would be prohibitively expensive. Because of the large size of the FPS-CPIC system (several million records), and the complicated process involved in converting the data, the computing resources required to convert these data are enormous.

Second, in the years since the FPS-CPIC conversion project was ended, much of the documentation on how to use the parser programs has been lost or destroyed and some of the computer files have become corrupted over time. Additionally, many of the parser programs would have to be modified in order to work properly within the current mainframe computing environment. Significant resources would be required to attempt a reconstruction of the parser system in its original form.

Any attempts to update the parser programs would be further confounded by a third problem. After the FPS project was ended at the Centre, the RCMP implemented a change in the FPS-CPIC system. For the most part, this would make the current programs obsolete. The cost to rewrite the programs would undoubtedly be greater than the initial investment to create them.

FPS Statistical Databases

As noted previously, the objective of the FPS-CPIC data conversion project was to create an analytical research database. The primary data file resulting from the conversion process consists of approximately 2.5 million charge records for 539,000 persons. Each record includes the offender's FPS number, date and location of sentence, basic personal identification information, offence history flags, and details of charge and sentence/disposition. The data in the primary file has subsequently been further manipulated to create other files in which data are further standardized and categorized into more useful groupings. Three of these files are considered appropriate for the study of recidivism: the first is charge-based and represents a re-working of the 2.5 million charge records. For example, in the primary charge file, Criminal Code sections do not control for past changes to the Code, making offence comparisons difficult. In the modified charge file, new standardized offence categories were created allowing for charge comparisons irrespective of which version of the Criminal Code was in use at the time. The second file uses case as the unit of analysis, where a case consists of all charges for an offender with the same date of sentence. In the third file, a record represents a criminal history summary for each offender.

Although the FPS-CPIC conversion programs are unusable, there are some possibilities for using the statistical databases. These databases contain criminal histories of offenders which are national in scope and which no other database can provide. They can be used for various types of analysis as outlined in an evaluation completed in 1986[1]:

Hung, C.K. Potential of FPS Data Base for Recidivism Studies. Statistics Division, Ministry of the Solicitor General Canada, 1986.

- The estimation of recidivism rates;
- The frequency of recidivism during a follow-up period;
- The time intervals, such as time elapsed between successive convictions, and;
- The seriousness of recidivism in terms of subsequent offences.

These possibilities refer to only some of the analysis which can be undertaken from the database. The data lend themselves to uses that can be related to a host of offender, offence and case characteristics related to recidivism.

QUALITY OF THE FPS STATISTICAL DATABASE

The potential value of the FPS STATISTICAL database as an analytical tool with which to study recidivism is enormous. However, its actual usefulness and the constraints under which recidivism is defined are, in large part, dependent upon the quality of the database. C.K. Hung's 1986 evaluation of the FPS database provides a detailed analysis of this issue. In brief, two issues have been examined with respect to quality of the FPS statistical database: coverage and accuracy.

Limitations in coverage of the FPS database place clear constraints on any proposed recidivism analysis. First, this database, in theory, only collects information on dual and indictable offence charges. Consequently, any study of recidivism using this database will, by definition, exclude pure summary charge information. As well, the decision to forward fingerprint information to CPIC is discretionary and subject to local police policy and practice. As a result, the FPS statistical database also does not reliably report non-conviction information, and there is undercoverage of less serious dual status offences, especially those proceeded with summarily. Pure indictable offence convictions are the only offence groups which are reliably covered by the database. A second consequence of this discretionary practice is that the reporting of information to FPS will vary among police departments, limiting the ability to compare crime profiles of different geographic areas.

The second major limitation in coverage of the FPS statistical database is that of missing offender files. Such files fall into two general categories: 1) the deliberate purging of entire offender case histories according to certain purge criteria such as the pardoning or death of an offender, and; 2) prior to 1983, first offences were maintained on a manual file system and an offender was not entered onto the charge record database until a second charge. The result is that offenders whose files began prior to 1983 are by definition recidivists. First-time or non-recidivist offenders would not be on the system at all. Offender files which began in 1983, however, did so with the first offence.

With respect to accuracy of data, it is considered to be good. That is, the detail contained in the FPS records fairly accurately reflect the actual charges and outcomes.

As a result of limitations in the FPS-CPIC system, the RCMP have developed an automated fingerprint retrieval system called the Automatic Fingerprint Information System (AFIS). The RCMP's entire fingerprint collection has been incorporated into AFIS. It is expected that AFIS will be handling all of the fingerprint searching needs of the central system for the future. The actual potential and practicality of using AFIS as an analytical research database for recidivism, however, is unknown. The utility of the database for this purpose would have to be the subject of a separate evaluation study. The development of any future national recidivism databases will need to further examine AFIS.

DEFINITION OF RECIDIVISM

For the purposes of the proposed studies, recidivism would be defined as:

> A conviction for a reoffence for an indictable or dual status offence where the conviction has been entered onto the FPS-CPIC Criminal Record 2 file.

The limitations inherent in the FPS database constrain the analysis and definition of recidivism as follows:

- coverage for less serious offences is poorer that for more serious offences.

- in order to avoid problems associated with purged files, recidivism studies should concentrate on offenders with more recent criminal histories, ending perhaps no further than ten years ago.

- except for offender files starting in 1983, first offenders were not entered on the system, prohibiting any comparisons between one-time offenders and recidivists. Consequently, a recidivist offender in the proposed studies is one who has previously committed two offences at the time of reoffence. This may, however, be a meaningless distinction as pure summary offence convictions are not entered on the system at all. It is likely that many of the FPS system's 'first offenders' are actually recidivists, having committed prior summary offences.

- comparing crime profiles of different regions on the basis of FPS data should be done on a limited basis due to differing reporting practices of police departments.

PROPOSED RECIDIVISM STUDIES

In order to inform the Initiative on recidivism, to the extent possible with the FPS databases, the Centre has examined the potential of those data. In total, four databases were looked at: the Master File which is the converted RCMP FPS-CPIC file, and three other databases on person, charge and case which were derived from the Master File.

Due to the enormity of the database, the utility of the information was based upon a sample limited to 1,000 records from the Master File and 100 records from the derived files. It is assumed that an examination of these data provided a sufficient basis upon which to propose potential studies. As with any approach using sampling, it is expected that the results are representative of the entire file. However, there are always instances where studies proposed on a sample and carried out on a population may need revisions. It should be remembered that both proposed studies are subject to the restrictions imposed by the FPS database as previously described. It is not expected that this will take away from the general direction of the proposed analysis as noted below.

Upon examination of the sample data, two studies were identified as being possible. These are intended to provide the Initiative with an increased level of quantitative information on recidivism. For the purposes of the proposed studies, the analysis would focus primarily on the three databases (charge, case, person) which were derived from the Master file. The reason is that considerable work had already been completed on re-categorizing the data, resulting in a record format conducive to the studies proposed.

Study 1-   An Examination of Recidivism in Relation to Offence Histories and Offender Profiles

This study would use one year (1982) of data as a base to examine recidivism relative to offence histories and during a two year follow-up period after 1982. The selection criteria would include those offenders with a conviction for an indictable offence in 1982, where the offence was entered on the FPS-CPIC system. As an offender may have more than one charge at different times in 1982, the reference point for the follow-up period would be the offender's last charge occurring in that year.

A two year follow-up period was selected because it is the longest period that the database reasonably allows. Although data are available for part of 1985, they have been excluded from the study because of a time lag in updating charges with conviction information. As the 1985 data are the most recent on the database, the likelihood that these records are incomplete is considerably greater. A two year follow-up period is likely to capture a significant portion of those who recidivate[2].

This study would focus on offences and the patterns of offences for recidivists, for example: the relationships between first offences and subsequent offences; the types of offences for first and subsequent offences; and; time interval analysis between offences. The intention would be to determine the links which may, or may not, exist between the offences of recidivists. For example, do offenders who commit property offences, and continue to offend, commit further property offences; are the subsequent offences of violent offenders also violent; do property offenders recidivate more so than violent offenders and to what extent; or are there no patterns at all. The intention is to control this line of analysis as much as possible using such factors as age, previous history and gender.

In addition to the base year profile, a one day snap shot would be included in the report. By profiling an even smaller portion of the recidivist population it is expected that the patterns could be looked at in more detail. The intention would be to summarize the types of information which are of interest to the Initiative in a format that is useable and from which generalizations can be made about the entire recidivist population. As well, this approach may produce new insights into recidivism through the use of a different analytical perspective.

Detailed recidivism analysis will also be conducted at the provincial level. Inter-provincial comparisons, however, will be limited due to the previously noted disparities among police forces in FPS-CPIC reporting practices.

Study 2-   Geographic Mobility Patterns

The year 1982 would, again, be used as the base year and would include those offenders convicted of an indictable offence and entered onto the FPS-CPIC system. This study would be an analysis of the mobility of offenders across the country during their criminal histories, from 1982 to first offence. A major controlling variable would be the number of prior convictions, assuming that the more offences involved the greater the likelihood that they occurred in different provinces and areas (Census Divisions).

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[2] The Solicitor General Report, Predicting General Release Risk, indicates that a two year follow up period would capture slightly more than 75% of the next convictions of offenders.

The database contains information on both province of sentence and on the Census Division. Using these elements it would be possible to examine, to some extent, the movement patterns of those offender that recidivate, and the time periods involved, and relate them to offence and offender characteristics. For example, explore the extent to which convictions for subsequent offences occur in the same province and in the same area as the first offence. Also, what are the lengths of time between offences, controlling for Census Division and province; in how many different provinces do offenders get sentenced over the course of their criminal histories, and; are there particular characteristics associated with mobility such as age, sex, offence type, etc.

This study will focus on the mobility level of offenders across geographical areas rather than regional comparisons of mobility levels. As such the previously stated limitations of doing detailed regional comparisons of the FPS-CPIC data are minimized.

PLANNED OUTPUTS

Study 1 and Study 2 Reports

For both Study 1 and Study 2, separate reports would be prepared on the results of the analysis on mobility and recidivism profile data from the FPS statistical databases. Also, in preparing the reports, several new databases would be derived from the FPS statistical databases and made available for further recidivism studies if required.

Development of a Sample Research File

Upon completion of one or both of the proposed studies, the resulting information and derived databases could be the basis for a methodological exercise to develop a sample research file. By adding some resources to the work done in the proposed studies, and addressing issues such as confidentiality and release, a sample file could be created as an additional output.

With a sample research file, the extensive "Master File" database would be reduced to a manageable, representative and accessible base of information. Also, it would contain more detailed information what was addressed in either of the two proposed studies. Furthermore, the file could be stratified to more accurately reflect jurisdictional profiles and offence/offender characteristics.

RESOURCES

The databases which would be used for these studies are available and accessible. However, there are approximately 2.5 million records in the largest database (charges) which require substantial computing resources to manipulate. There are also nearly 1.5 million records in the case database and approximately 539,000 records in the person database. To simply read in the data as a first step to analysis and selecting a sample or base year is time consuming and costly. Although subsequent processing requirements would decrease somewhat after the creation of a base year, the processing of records would still be considerable. For these same reasons the learning curve required to completely understand all of the data and data relationships would be considerable. This adds additional uncertainty in accurately determining the amount of time necessary to analyze the information.

Due to the number of records involved, and the analysis proposed, most of the analysis would be done on a mainframe computer. The computing resource policy of Statistics Canada states

that the dollar cost for each Central Processing Unit (CPU) is charged to the program involved. Since considerable resources would have to be dedicated to covering these computing costs, there would be a direct dollar implication for the proposed studies. Based upon the information known at this time, the resources required to complete the three studies are as follows:

Study 1 and Study 2

Computing Costs: $10,000

Human Resources: 1/2 py for analysis
                      1/4 py for programming

The resources which are given assume the completion of both studies. It is expected that each study would require approximately the same amount of time and resources to complete. However, there would be considerable overlap in processing and analysis between these studies. In other words, a considerable amount of the same programming would have to be done whether one or both of the studies were completed. As a result, by eliminating one of the studies the costs are not necessarily reduced by one-half.

Sample Research File

Computing Costs: $3,000

Human Resource: 50 days for methodology
                      1/4 py for analysis

Appendix B

FPS Research File

RECIDIVISM MASTER FILE

Variable Name	Derived	Label	Unit	Type	Length	Min. Length	Description
AFINE	N	FINE AMOUNT	CONV	Num	8	6	Dollar amount of fine for each coviction
AGE	N	AGE AT CONVICTION	CONV	Num	8	3	Age at time of conviction
BIRTH	N	DATE OF BIRTH	PERSON	Num(date)	8	6	Date of birth (yymmdd)
CASE	N	CAREER CASE SEQUENCE NUMBER	CASE	Num	8	4	Case represents all convictions for one sentence date.
CHARNUM	N	CASE CONVICTION SEQUENCE NUMBER	CASE	Num	8	3	Number of charges (convictions) on one sentece date (case).
COUNT	N	NUMBER OF COUNTS FOR CONVICTION	CONV	Num	8	3	Number of counts for each conviction offence.
DATE	N	DATE OF SENTENCE	CASE	Num(date)	8	6	Date of conviction. yymmdd
FPS	N	UNIQUE OFFENDER NUMBER	PERSON	Char	7	7	Unique offender identifier.
LDEFIN	N	DEFINITE SENTENCE LENGTH	CONV	Num	8	5	Definite sentence length associated to each conviction.
LID	N	IN-DEFAULT TIME LENGTH	CONV	Num	8	5	Length of sentnece as a result of default of fine payment.
LINDEF	N	INDEFINITE SENTENCE LENGTH	CONV	Num	8	5	Length of indefinite sentece for each conviction.
CONSEQ	N	CAREER CONVICTION SEQUENCE NUMBER	CONV	Num	8	4	A sequential counter up to the total number of convictions for a career.
PLACE	N	PLACE OF BIRTH	PERSON	Num	8	2	Place of birth - province, other country. 10 = Nfld; 11 = PEI; 12 = NS; 13 = NB; 24 = Que; 35 = Ont; 46 = Man; 47 = Sask; 48 = Alta; 59 = BC; 60 = Yuk; 61 = NWT; 63 = Yuk&NWT; 70 = Canada; 75 = USA; 80 = UK; 85 = Europe; 90 = Other.
PROV	N	PLACE OF CONVICTION	CASE	Num	8	2	Place of conviction - province. (same codes as PLACE)
QINDET	N	INDETERMINATE SENTENCE FLAG	CONV	Char	1	1	Indeterminate sentence - yes/no.
QLIFE	N	LIFE SENTENCE FLAG	CONV	Char	1	1	Life sentence - yes/no
SECI	N	RAW CHARGE SECTION	CONV				Code section
SUBSECI	N	RAW CHARGE SUB-SECTION	CONV				Code subsection
PARAI	N	RAW CHARGE PARAGRAPH	CONV				Code paragraph
SEX	N	SEX	PERSON	Num	8	1	Sex (1=unknown; 2=male; 3=female; 4=missing)
STATUTE	N	CHARGE STATUTE	CONV	Char	2	2	Code statue: CC, FD, GA, HT, JD, LQ, NC, PH
CITY	N	COURT LOCATION	CASE	Num	8	5	City where trial held.
SECTION	N	OFFENCE TYPE	CONV	Num	8	2	Variable XSEC on "charge" file Recode: 11(rape) + 14(sex assault) = Sex Assaul This variable is equivalent to the severity scale (attached)
XXSEC	N	CHARGE PROCESS STATUS	CONV	Num	8	1	Indictable/hybrid offence '.' = release/appeal; 1 = indictable; 2 = dual; 3 = unknown (dual); 4 = summary; 5 = FS not coded; 6 = CC before 1955.

RECIDIVISM MASTER FILE

Variable Name	Derived	Label	Unit	Type	Length	Min. Length	Description
OFFCAT	Y	OFFENCE CATEGORY	CONV	Char			(using variable SECTION create the following categories) VIOLENT = murder (1), manslaughter (3), attempted murder (2), rape (−), sexual assault (7), other sex offences (8), wounding (23), other against person (24), robbery (6) PROPERTY = b&e (13), fraud (19), forgery(16), theft over(18), stolen goods (21), theft under (27), theft mv (00), other theft (20) OTHER CRIMINAL CODE = kidnapping (4), criminal negligence (5), attempt/conspire (9), arson (11), offensive weapons (14), vandalism (28), prostitution (22), public morals (30), gaming and betting (38), CC misc. (25), CC procedural (00), mv fail to stop (26), mv disqualified (29), probation breach (00), CC no number (00), CC before 55 (15) DRUGS = fs narc trafficking (12), fs narc possession (35), fs food&drug (17) OTHER FED = juv delinq (00), defraud govt (32), parole act (33), fs misc. (31) IMPAIRED = mv impaired (34), mv 80 mg alcohol (38), mv breath sample (37) PROVINCIAL = provincial statutes (00)
REGCON	Y	REGION OF CONVICTION	CASE	Char			Code PROV into: (1) Atlantic (prov<=13); (2) Quebec (prov=24); (3) Ontario (prov=35); (4) Prairies (46<=prov<=48); (5) BC (prov=59); (6) Territories (60<=prov<=63); (7) other (prov>=64)
REGBIR	Y	REGION OF BIRTH	PERSON	Char			Code PLACE into: (1) Atlantic (prov<=13); (2) Quebec (prov=24); (3) Ontario (prov=35); (4) Prairies (46<=prov<=48); (5) BC (prov=59); (6) Territories (60<=prov<=63); (7) other (prov>=64)
SPAN82	Y	CAREER SPAN	PERSON	Num	8	5	The calculated difference in days between Date1 and Date82.
AGE1	Y	AGE AT 1ST CAREER CONVICTION	PERSON				Derived from the charge file by calculating age from BIRTH and the first DATE value (first FPS).
DATE1	Y	DATE OF 1ST CAREER CONVICTION	PERSON				Derived from the "charge" file by taking the first DATE value (first FPS)
AGE82	Y	AGE AT LAST '82 CONVICTION	PERSON				Derived from the charge file by calculating age from the BIRTH variable and the last DATE value (last FPS where date=1982)
DATE82	Y	DATE OF LAST '82 CONVICTION	PERSON				Derived from the charge file by taking the last DATE value for convictions until last DATE value in 1982 (last FPS where DATE=1982)
CASE82	Y	NUMBER OF SENTENCE DATES TO end of '82	PERSON	Num	8	4	The last value of CASE in 1982.
CON82	Y	TOTAL NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS TO end of '82	PERSON	Num	8	4	The last value of CONSEQ in 1982.
COUNT82	Y	TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTS TO end of '82	PERSON	Num	8	4	Cumulative total number of COUNTS to end of 1982.
LDEFIN82	Y	AGGREGATE MSO DEFINITE SENT. LENGTH TO '82	PERSON	Num	8	4	Cumulative total of LDEFIN for case MSOs to end of 1982.
PROV82	Y	NO. OF DIFFERENT PROV. SENTENCED TO '82	PERSON	Num	8	4	Frequency count of each unique value of PROV to end of 1982.
REG82	Y	NO. OF DIFFERENT REGIONS SENTENCED TO '82	PERSON	Num	8	3	Frequency count of each unique value of REGCON to end of 1982.
OFFCAT82	Y	NUMBER OF DIFFERENT OFFENCE CATEGORIES	PERSON	Num	8	2	Frequency count of each unique value of OFFCAT to end of 1982.

RECIDIVISM MASTER FILE

Variable Name	Derived	Label	Unit	Type	Length	Min. Length	Description
CASE84	Y	NUMBER OF SENTENCE DATES IN 1983 AND 1984	PERSON	Num	8	3	Total number of cases in 1983 and 1984.
CON84	Y	NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS IN 1983 AND 1984	PERSON	Num	8	3	Total number of convictions in 1983 and 1984.
COUNT84	Y	TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTS IN 1983 AND 1984	PERSON	Num	8	3	Cumulative total of the number of counts in 1983 and 1984.
CASE MSO	Y	MOST SERIOUS OFFENCE WITHIN A CASE	CASE	Num			Most serious offence within a case. (flag)
MSO82	Y	MOST SERIOUS OFFENCE TO 1982	PERSON	Num			Most serious career offence up to the end of 1982.
MSO84	Y	MOST SERIOUS OFFENCE IN 1983 AND 1984	PERSON	Num			Most serious offence in 1983 and 1984.
LAG	Y	TIME BETWEEN CONVICTION DATES	CASE	Num			Time in days between the current case and the previous case.
PRECAT	Y	MSO IN PREVIOUS CASE	CASE	Num			Most serious offence for previous case.
PREPROV	Y	PROVINCE OF PREVIOUS CASE OCCURRED	CASE	Num			Province in which previous case occurred.

Appendix C

Offence Severity Scale

RANK ORDER OF OFFENCES BY AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH

Offence Type	Offence Severity	Number of Cases	Average Sentence Length
murder	1	773	89204
attempted murder	2	796	4292
manslaughter	3	1594	4006
rape	–	1907	2017
kidnapping/abduction	4	2917	1031
criminal negligence	5	1212	859
robbery	6	32967	850
	–	254	577
other sexual offences	8	3581	396
sexual assault	7	9362	347
attempt/conspire	9	33691	303
criminal code procedural	10	10	297
arson	11	4122	285
FS narcotic – trafficking	12	29206	252
break and enter	13	206635	215
offensive weapons	14	39580	191
cc before 55	15	720	168
forgery	16	33989	166
fs food and drug	17	11653	138
theft over	18	84554	131
fraud	19	67832	117
other theft	20	25073	116
stolen goods	21	94705	108
prostitution	22	1718	102
assault	23	79787	91
other against person	24	350	77
cc misc	25	152336	52
mv fail to stop	26	29674	37
theft under	27	221006	37
vandalism	28	60606	35
mv disqualified	29	22774	31
public morals	30	536	23
fs misc	31	3104	19
fs defraud govt	32	717	16
parole act	33	198	15
mv impaired	34	85830	13
fs narc poss	35	98201	10
gaming and betting	36	2263	8
mv breath sample	37	46312	7
mv 80 mg alcohol	38	182912	7

(N = all convictions in study frame)

If xsec (section) = '0' or '.' then delete
Combine xsec = '11' and '14' = sexual assault
MSO was determined by calculating the average sentence length
associated with each offence type for the entire FPS datafile.

Appendix D

Glossary

GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

Career peak

Measures the point in time within a criminal's career that the career most serious offence occurred. Calculated by dividing the case sequence number at the time that the most serious offence occurred by the total number of cases up to and including 1982. Each case is assigned a sequential number (earliest date to most recent date).

Case

A case is a set of convictions for one offender dealt with on one sentencing date. One or more convictions may be recorded for each case.

Career

Length of career was calculated by determining the elapsed time between an offender's last conviction in 1982 and the first conviction recorded on the FPS system. The term "career" has been used loosely since we do not have a complete history of each offender's career. For example, at the end of 1982, an offender may have been beginning his/her career, ending his/her career or been at some point in the middle of a career.

Career activity levels

Analysis measurement which grouped offenders according to the number of cases on their FPS record, up to and including 1982. The current study used three groups: 1 career case; 2-3 cases; and, over 3 cases.

Career most serious offence

Using the offence severity scale (see Appendix C), the most serious conviction during an offender's career was selected.

CCJS

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

Cohort

The study frame examined offenders convicted of indictable or hybrid offences during 1982 and recorded on the FPS system. For each offender, general tombstone information and career offence history were captured. By definition, the study cohort contained repeat offenders.

Conviction data

The study examined only offenders convicted of criminal offences. As such, charge data, where an offender was not convicted, were not included in the study frame

Convictions

A set of convictions is associated with each case on the research file. Each case can have one or more convictions. From a set of convictions (i.e., from one case) a most serious offence was selected.

CPS

Canadian Police Service - now called Law Enforcement Services.

Criminality onset

Measured the age at which an offender was first convicted of an indicatable or hybrid offence and recorded on the FPS system.

Criminality rate

Analysis measurement which grouped offenders according to how busy they were, on average, throughout their career. This measurement adjusted for the time period over which the convictions occurred. The rate was calculated by dividing the total number of convictions by the span of the career. Three groups were created: low, moderate and high criminality rates.

Drug-related offences

Included offences listed under the Narcotic Control Act and the Food and Drug Act.

Offence types

There are three types of offences: summary, indictable, and hybrid. Hybrid or dual offences can be tried as either summary or indictable offences. For the purposes of this report the term hybrid has been used. Hybrid offences are also known as dual or dual procedural offences.

Follow-up recidivists

Offenders convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system that were reconvicted for a subsequent offence during the study follow-up period (January 1983 to December 1984).

FPS System

Finger Printing Section Number System

Impaired driving offences

Included driving a motor vehicle while impaired, driving a motor vehicle while over the legal alcohol limit, and refusal to take a breathalyser. Summary offences were excluded from the analysis.

Hybrid offences

See Offence types.

LOC

Liaison Officers Committee

Mobile offenders

Offenders convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system who, at some point during their career, were convicted in more than one region (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia and the Territories).

Most serious offence

For each case, one conviction was selected as being the most serious. To determine the ranking of seriousness, the average length of custodial sentences for each offence type in the database (about 780,000 records) was calculated. The offence with the highest average sentence length was assigned as the MSO.

Most serious offence severity

An offence severity scale assigned values in ascending order (1 to 38) to each offence. The value was determined according to the average custodial sentence length for each offence type within the study frame. For example, murder had the highest average custodial sentence length and was assigned the value of 1. See Appendix C for further information on MSO and offence severity.

MSO

See Most Serious Offence

Non-mobile offenders

Offenders convicted in 1982 and recorded on the FPS system who were convicted in only one region (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia and the Territories) throughout their career.

One-case offenders

Refers to offenders within the study frame who had only one case recorded on the FPS system.

Other Criminal Code offences

Includes kidnapping and abduction, criminal negligence, attempt/conspire to commit, arson, offensive weapons, vandalism, prostitution, pubic morals, gaming and betting, CC miscellaneous, CC procedural, motor vehicle fail to stop at the scene of an accident and driving a motor vehicle while disqualified. Analysis excluded all summary offences.

Other Federal statutes

Includes defraud of government, offences under the parole act, and miscellaneous federal statutes. All summary offences were excluded from the analysis.

Property-related offences

Includes break and enter, fraud, forgery, theft under and over, stolen goods, theft of motor vehicle and other theft. All summary offences were excluded from the analysis.

Purged files

Refers to files that were purged from the FPS data base because of offender inactivity, death or pardon.

RCMP

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Recidivism

Defined as "a conviction for reoffence for an indictable or hybrid status offence where the conviction has been entered onto the FPS Criminal Record 2 file".

Study frame

The current study examines persons convicted in 1982 for an indictable or hybrid status offence that was entered onto the FPS database. It traces their adult criminal histories prior to 1982 and, in addition, it tracks these offenders over a two year follow-up period (1983-84).

UCR Survey

Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

Violent offences

Includes murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, rape, sexual assault, other sexual offences, wounding, assault, other offences against person, and robbery.