

Memo

To: Mark Blum, Attorney

From: Edward Shepard, Professor of Economics, Le Moyne College

Date: Oct 30, 2006

Re: Evaluation of Crime data for Onondaga County New York

Report on Evaluation of Crime data for Onondaga County New York

This report analyses drug arrest rates for black and white residents in Onondaga County and compares these rates with other similar counties in the region and with New York State as a whole. The estimated arrest rates are calculated by dividing the number of drug arrests by the relevant population. Data on drug arrests are from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Statistics. Population data for New York State and New York counties are from the 2000 U.S. Census for New York State. Arrest rates, per thousand county residents, are calculated for white and black populations each year from 1995 to 2004. (Population values for years other than 2000 are adjusted for population change within the state and within each county.) This evaluation of racial differences in drug arrest rates in Onondaga County identifies surprising results that warrant further investigation. Specifically, the ratio of drug arrest rates for black and white residents indicates that the chances of arrest are substantially greater for black residents than for white residents in Onondaga County. Further, the arrest rate ratios in Onondaga County are also higher than those of similar counties in the region and significantly higher than New York State as a whole.

Table 1 compares the arrest rates for black and white residents in Onondaga County for total drug arrests (excluding violations), and for several categories of drug arrests (narcotics, felony, and sales.) There is an unusually high arrest rate for black residents in Onondaga County compared with white residents. The ratio of arrest rates (black arrest rate divided by white arrest rate) shows how much greater the chances of arrest are for black residents compared with white residents. During the years of the study, the chances of being arrested for drug felonies or drug sales are 20 to 40 times greater for black residents.

A comparison of these Onondaga County arrest statistics with statewide averages and with similar counties in close proximity indicates that these findings are unusual. According to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Statistics, drug arrest rates for black residents within New York State as a whole are about 4 to 5 times higher than that for white residents. Table 2 presents New York State data on black and white arrest rates for crimes, including drugs, from the 2001 New York State Uniform Crime Report. The unique nature of street drug markets in urban areas has sometimes been offered as an explanation by Criminologists for why minorities experience higher drug arrest rates than whites. Because there is statistical evidence that drug use patterns for these two racial groups are similar, higher arrest rates for black residents are not a result of higher rates of drug use. (See the Appendix to this report summarizing recent survey data on drug use from the SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002).

Drug arrest rates and the corresponding arrest rate ratios are also estimated for several nearby counties with similar characteristics to provide comparisons. These arrest rates and corresponding arrest ratios are presented in Table 3 for Erie County and Table 4 for Monroe County. Although the arrest ratios for these two counties also exceed statewide averages, the corresponding arrest ratios in Onondaga County are significantly higher than the arrest ratios in Erie and Monroe counties and significantly higher than NY State as a whole. The higher arrest rate ratios for Onondaga County have persisted over the entire time period included in this evaluation (1995-2004). Unfortunately, the reasons for this outcome cannot be determined from the available data. These findings are surprising and raise important questions, especially given the similar characteristics of the other counties included in this assessment—Onondaga, Monroe, and Erie all have a similar mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Further study, including inspection and evaluation of original arrest reports, would be an important step for

determining the reasons for these different outcomes for black and white residents in Onondaga County.

Table 1. Racial differences in arrest rates for drug offenses in Onondaga County

Onondaga COUNTY	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
County population	463607	462553	461499	460444	459390	458336	458703	459071	459438	459805
White population	393139	392245	391351	390457	389563	388669	388980	389292	389603	389915
Black population	43579	43480	43381	43282	43183	43084	43118	43153	43187	43222
Total	1678	1770	1482	1906	1512	1322	1361	1296	1164	1344
Total white	425	420	428	548	451	379	402	413	388	495
Total	1167	1248	963	1251	1006	890	899	824	706	799
Arrest rate white per 1000	1.08	1.07	1.09	1.40	1.16	0.98	1.03	1.06	1.00	1.27
Arrest rate black per 1000	26.78	28.70	22.20	28.90	23.30	20.66	20.85	19.10	16.35	18.49
Arrest rate ratio	24.77	26.81	20.30	20.59	20.12	21.18	20.17	18.00	16.42	14.56
Controlled Substances	1471	1444	1179	1579	1141	1035	1090	1045	958	1130
Controlled Substances white	318	287	294	429	326	270	312	311	307	390
Controlled Substances black	1069	1063	806	1064	772	717	731	697	599	707
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.81	0.73	0.75	1.10	0.84	0.69	0.80	0.80	0.79	1.00
Arrest rate black per 1000	24.53	24.45	18.58	24.58	17.88	16.64	16.95	16.15	13.87	16.36
Arrest rate ratio	30.33	33.41	24.73	22.37	21.36	23.96	21.14	20.22	17.60	16.35
Felony drug arrests white	174	216	187	222	204	168	175	194	172	227
Felony drug arrests black	784	797	623	764	602	557	567	528	409	506
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.44	0.55	0.48	0.57	0.52	0.43	0.45	0.50	0.44	0.58
Arrest rate black per 1000	17.99	18.33	14.36	17.65	13.94	12.93	13.15	12.24	9.47	11.71
Arrest rate ratio	40.65	33.29	30.05	31.05	26.62	29.91	29.23	24.55	21.45	20.11
Sale drug arrests white	50	55	27	31	50	41	45	32	14	47
Sale drug arrests black	220	146	130	132	122	137	125	140	44	122
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.13	0.14	0.07	0.08	0.13	0.11	0.12	0.08	0.04	0.12
Arrest rate black per 1000	5.05	3.36	3.00	3.05	2.83	3.18	2.90	3.24	1.02	2.82
Arrest rate ratio	39.69	23.95	43.44	38.41	22.01	30.14	25.06	39.47	28.35	23.42

Table 3. Racial differences in arrest rates for drug offenses in Monroe County

Monroe COUNTY Offense Type Monroe county	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
County population	724313	726519	728725	730931	733137	735343	735302	735260	735219	735177
White population	572931	574676	576421	578166	579911	581656	581623	581591	581558	581525
Black population	99231	99533	99835	100138	100440	100742	100736	100731	100725	100719
Total	1997	2322	2137	2654	2650	2498	2010	2304	1835	1774
Total white	590	719	606	784	743	729	634	672	509	657
Total	1294	1471	1417	1792	1864	1730	1354	1605	1307	1090
Arrest rate white per 1000	1.03	1.25	1.05	1.36	1.28	1.25	1.09	1.16	0.88	1.13
Arrest rate black per 1000	13.04	14.78	14.19	17.90	18.56	17.17	13.44	15.93	12.98	10.82
Arrest rate ratio	12.66	11.81	13.50	13.20	14.48	13.70	12.33	13.79	14.83	9.58
Controlled Substances	1727	1961	1749	2256	2222	2062	1631	1832	1493	1440
Controlled Substances white	491	613	477	655	626	620	519	558	448	543
Controlled Substances black	1130	1225	1166	1530	1557	1407	1096	1249	1029	875
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.86	1.07	0.83	1.13	1.08	1.07	0.89	0.96	0.77	0.93
Arrest rate black per 1000	11.39	12.31	11.68	15.28	15.50	13.97	10.88	12.40	10.22	8.69
Arrest rate ratio	13.29	11.54	14.11	13.49	14.36	13.10	12.19	12.92	13.26	9.30
Felony drug arrests white	195	250	257	327	327	299	268	281	193	279
Felony drug arrests black	805	930	928	1242	1256	1166	928	982	841	691
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.34	0.44	0.45	0.57	0.56	0.51	0.46	0.48	0.33	0.48
Arrest rate black per 1000	8.11	9.34	9.30	12.40	12.51	11.57	9.21	9.75	8.35	6.86
Arrest rate ratio	23.84	21.48	20.85	21.93	22.18	22.52	19.99	20.18	25.16	14.30
Sale drug arrests white	61	91	92	153	117	106	95	95	41	47
Sale drug arrests black	210	310	383	642	401	399	318	402	180	149
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.11	0.16	0.16	0.26	0.20	0.18	0.16	0.16	0.07	0.08
Arrest rate black per 1000	2.12	3.11	3.84	6.41	3.99	3.96	3.16	3.99	1.79	1.48
Arrest rate ratio	19.88	19.67	24.04	24.23	19.79	21.73	19.33	24.43	25.35	18.30

Table 4. Racial differences in arrest rates for drug offenses in Erie County

Erie COUNTY Offense Type Erie county	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
County population	959293	957487	955682	953876	952071	950265	946778	943292	939805	936318
White population	788538	787054	785570	784086	782602	781118	778252	775386	772520	769653
Black population	124708	124473	124239	124004	123769	123534	123081	122628	122175	121721
Total	4418	5047	5520	4556	4489	3767	3786	3945	3801	3826
Total white	1603	1729	1595	1371	1517	1386	1522	1552	1651	1872
Total	2554	3126	3699	3010	2836	2312	2201	2346	2081	1874
Arrest rate white per 1000	2.03	2.20	2.03	1.75	1.94	1.77	1.96	2.00	2.14	2.43
Arrest rate black per 1000	20.48	25.11	29.77	24.27	22.91	18.72	17.88	19.13	17.03	15.40
Arrest rate ratio	10.07	11.43	14.66	13.88	11.82	10.55	9.14	9.56	7.97	6.33
Controlled Substances	3938	4478	4959	4090	3910	3205	3104	3331	3220	3278
Controlled Substances white	1323	1434	1351	1161	1268	1165	1213	1309	1414	1617
Controlled Substances black	2370	2868	3404	2772	2513	1983	1830	1979	1747	1589
Arrest rate white per 1000	1.68	1.82	1.72	1.48	1.62	1.49	1.56	1.69	1.83	2.10
Arrest rate black per 1000	19.00	23.04	27.40	22.35	20.30	16.05	14.87	16.14	14.30	13.05
Arrest rate ratio	11.33	12.65	15.93	15.10	12.53	10.76	9.54	9.56	7.81	6.21
Felony drug arrests white	592	654	540	470	565	530	610	580	563	627
Felony drug arrests black	1271	1496	1593	1451	1332	1119	1196	1344	1036	926
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.75	0.83	0.69	0.60	0.72	0.68	0.78	0.75	0.73	0.81
Arrest rate black per 1000	10.19	12.02	12.82	11.70	10.76	9.06	9.72	10.96	8.48	7.61
Arrest rate ratio	13.58	14.46	18.65	19.52	14.91	13.35	12.40	14.65	11.64	9.34
Sale drug arrests white	109	143	126	100	77	75	101	94	75	59
Sale drug arrests black	196	171	234	240	115	125	201	305	117	61
Arrest rate white per 1000	0.14	0.18	0.16	0.13	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.12	0.10	0.08
Arrest rate black per 1000	1.57	1.37	1.88	1.94	0.93	1.01	1.63	2.49	0.96	0.50
Arrest rate ratio	11.37	7.56	11.74	15.18	9.44	10.54	12.58	20.52	9.86	6.54

Appendix: Evidence from government surveys on drug use patterns among black and white Americans.

The following tables are from recent reports of the U.S Government: SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002

Table H.45 Substance Dependence or Abuse in the Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Demographic Characteristics: Percentages, 2002

Demographic Characteristic	TYPE OF PAST YEAR DEPENDENCE OR ABUSE		
	Any Illicit Drug	Alcohol	Any Illicit Drug or Alcohol
TOTAL	3.0	7.7	9.4
AGE			
12–17	5.6	5.9	8.9
18–25	8.2	17.7	21.7
26 or Older	1.8	6.2	7.3
GENDER			
Male	4.0	10.8	12.8
Female	2.1	4.8	6.1
HISPANIC ORIGIN AND RACE			
Not Hispanic or Latino	2.9	7.6	9.2
White	2.8	7.8	9.3
Black or African American	4.2	7.1	9.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.3	12.1	14.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3.5	7.1	8.9
Asian	1.1	3.6	4.2
Two or More Races	4.3	9.8	13.0
Hispanic or Latino	3.7	8.4	10.4

*Low precision; no estimate reported.

NOTE: Any Illicit Drug includes marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used nonmedically.

NOTE: Dependence or abuse is based on definitions found in the 4th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV).

Source: SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002.

Table H.10 Any Illicit Drug Use in Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month among Persons Aged 26 or Older, by Demographic Characteristics: Percentages, 2002

Demographic Characteristic	TIME PERIOD		
	Lifetime	Past Year	Past Month
TOTAL	45.7	10.4	5.8
GENDER			
Male	51.3	12.9	7.5
Female	40.7	8.1	4.2
HISPANIC ORIGIN AND RACE			
Not Hispanic or Latino	46.8	10.4	5.9
White	48.1	10.2	5.9
Black or African American	44.4	13.5	7.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	10.5	4.3
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	*	*
Asian	25.0	4.8	2.2
Two or More Races	53.9	13.7	6.9
Hispanic or Latino	37.2	10.5	4.5
EDUCATION			
< High School	32.0	10.2	6.0
High School Graduate	43.6	10.1	5.8
Some College	53.4	11.6	6.4
College Graduate	50.1	9.8	5.0
CURRENT EMPLOYMENT			
Full-Time	55.8	12.3	6.5
Part-Time	48.7	11.3	6.5
Unemployed	59.8	22.3	13.2
Other ¹	23.8	5.3	3.3

*Low precision; no estimate reported.

NOTE: Any Illicit Drug includes marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used nonmedically.

¹ Retired person, disabled person, homemaker, student, or other person not in the labor force.

Source: SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002.