

Police Contact
Grade 11 /Year 12
Fast Track Project Technical Report
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Citation

Instrument

Huizinga, D. (1991). *Denver Youth Survey: Youth Interview Schedule*. Boulder, Colorado: The University of Colorado, Institute of Behavior Sciences, available from the author, David.Huizinga@colorado.edu

Report

Rains, C. (2004). *Police Contact* (Fast Track Project Technical Report). Available from the Fast Track Project website, <http://www.fasttrackproject.org>

Data Sources

Unscored: C12AH

Scored: POL12

I. Scale Description

Police Contact is a 41-item tool used to interview middle and high school students about their encounters with the police and the justice system during the previous year. Police contact was adapted from the Youth Interview Schedule used in the Denver Youth Survey (Huizinga, 1991).

Police Contact asks a student how many times he or she was arrested during the year, what the charges were for each arrest, and whether the student actually committed the offense. Detailed information is then solicited for the first three arrests, including: Was the student warned and released? Were parents and/or school officials notified? Was the student referred to counseling or sent to a treatment program? Did the case go to court?

If the first arrest resulted in a court appearance, the student was asked several questions, such as: "Were you put on probation?" and "Did you have to pay a fine?" For a second or third arrest that went to court, the student was only asked about probation and whether he/she was sent to a juvenile center.

A student who had a first arrest was asked if his/her friends found out about the arrest. The student was also asked if he or she developed different friends after the arrest, and if so, were the new friends more delinquent than the old friends, less delinquent, or about the same. (Note: the information about the new friends is structured as three separate questions; thus, a respondent could have answered yes to all three.)

A final question inquires whether, except for the arrest(s), the student had been questioned by the police at any other time during the past year, and if so, how many times. Response choices for all items are "yes (1)" and "no (0)," except for the total number of arrests, arrest charges, and number of times questioned.

II. Report Sample

This report contains data collected on cohort 1 of the high-risk control sample (n=155) and the normative sample (n=387, N=463 with overlap) from the twelfth year of the study. Of these, 118 are missing all data, including 105 from the normative group (14 from Durham, 39 from Nashville, 23 from Pennsylvania, and 29 from Washington), and 43 from the control group (5 from Durham, 17 from Nashville, 9 from Pennsylvania and 12 from Washington), with overlap between the normative and control groups. None of the missing data was used in the analyses.

III. Scaling

Police Contact contains no subscales. The students who were not arrested in the past year included 244 students from the normative group and 87 students from the control group (with overlap). Students with no arrests had a score of zero for item 1: "How many times in the last year were you arrested?"

In Year 12, 55 students from the normative and control groups combined (with overlap between normative and control samples) had a record of one or more arrests.

The data on consequences of arrests were analyzed based on a second dataset with each arrest providing an observation, rather than each child. There were a total of 77 arrests, with 55 children providing data.

Finally, a new dichotomized variable, *Arrest*, was created from the first item (the number of times you were arrested last year) to reflect whether the student had been arrested at least once in the past year.

IV. **Differences Between Groups**

A series of independent t-tests were conducted to assess differences between the normative sample and the high-risk control sample for the continuous variables. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between the samples for the two items.

Police Contact T-Tests—Normative vs. Control Items

Police Contact T-Tests for Continuous Scored Variables							
Variable	Normative		Control		DF	t Value	Pr > t
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev			
# of Times Were You Arrested Last Year? (C12AH1)	0.19	0.56	0.29	0.59	343	1.41	0.1582
# Times Questioned by Police in Past Yr (C12AH41)	3.00	3.36	4.07	5.31	28	0.66	0.5163

Chi-square tests of response frequency on the child level data for the normative group and the control group resulted in a significant values for two items: c12ah40 (were you questioned by the police in the past year) and *Arrest* (were you arrested at least once in the past year). Students from the control group were more likely than those in the normative sample to have been arrested in the past year and to have been arrested at least once in the past year.

Police Contact Y12						
Variable	0=No/Did not occur 1=Yes/Did occur		DF	Chi Square Statistic	P-value	N
	Normative Proportions	Control Proportions				
Questioned by Police in the Past Year? (C12AH40)	0.07	0.14	1	4.45	0.035	339
Were You Arrested at Least Once in Past Year? (Arrest)	0.13	0.22	1	5.04	0.025	345

Chi-square tests of response frequency were run using the arrest data for the normative group and the control group and resulted in a significant value for one of the variables: whether the child's new group of friends was the same as the child's old group of friends. Students in the control sample were more likely than those in the normative sample to have friends who were the same as the old group of friends after the arrest. Two variables approached significance: whether the child's group of friends changed after the arrest ($p = 0.06$) and whether the child had to make restitution after the arrest ($p = 0.07$). For both of these variables, the control sample was more likely than the normative sample to have the group of friends change after the arrest and to make restitution after the arrest.

Police Contact Y12 Arrest Data for Youth Arrested at Least Once in Last Year						
Variable	0=No/Did not occur 1=Yes/Did occur		DF	Chi Square Statistic	P-value	N
	Normative Proportions	Control Proportions				
Police Contact Actually Commit Offense? (POL12COM)	0.71	0.67	1	0.13	0.715	62
Police Contact Referred for Counseling (POL12COU)	0.24	0.13	1	1.70	0.192	77
Police Contact Had to Go to Court (POL12CRT)	0.70	0.66	1	0.20	0.655	76
Police Contact Perform Community Service? (POL12CSV)	0.48	0.38	1	0.54	0.463	52
Police Contact Group of Friends Change After Arrest? (POL12FCH)	0.09	0.25	1	3.53	0.060	76
Police Contact Friends Find out About Arrest? (POL12FFO)	0.89	0.88	1	0.02	0.880	76
Police Contact New Friends Less Delinquent than Old? (POL12FLD)	0.75	0.50	1	0.69	0.408	12
Police Contact New Friends More Delinquent than Old? (POL12FMD)	0.00	0.38	1	2.00	0.157	12
Police Contact Sent to a Juvenile/Correctional Center (POL12JCT)	0.27	0.33	1	0.26	0.607	51
Police Contact New Group of Friends Same as old Group? (POL12NGS)	0.00	0.63	1	4.29	0.038	12
Police Contact Pay Fine? (POL12PFN)	0.48	0.62	1	0.92	0.337	52
Police Contact Parents Notified (POL12PNF)	0.93	0.97	1	0.48	0.490	77
Police Contact Put on Probation (POL12PRB)	0.43	0.38	1	0.14	0.708	51
Police Contact Make Restitution? (POL12RES)	0.19	0.43	1	3.37	0.066	52
Police Contact School Officials Told (POL12SCH)	0.26	0.35	1	0.73	0.392	73
Police Contact Diverted to Treatment Program (POL12TRT)	0.20	0.19	1	0.02	0.891	77
Police Contact Child Warned and Released (POL12WRL)	0.70	0.61	2	4.31	0.116	74

V. Recommendations for Use

Analysts should note that a second dataset had to be created, using the original data, in order to accurately reflect the concern with the missingness of the follow-up items for each arrest. Depending on the construct under investigation, information about encounters with the police and the court system collected with the Police Contact tool should be useful to analysts.

VI. Item and Scale Means and SDs

Police Contact contains no subscales. Item means are summarized previously in the count tables.

VII. Item and Subscale Correlations

No correlations are available for these data.