

Police Contact
Grade 8 /Year 9
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: C9AH

Scored: POL9

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 ninth year of the study. Of these, 95 are missing all data, including 82 from the normative group (15 from Durham, 30 from Nashville, 18 from Pennsylvania, and 19 from Washington), and 29 from the control group (5 from Durham, 9 from Nashville, 7 from Pennsylvania and 8 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 282 students from the normative group and 109 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 9, 30 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 52 arrests, with 30 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 was a significant difference between the samples for item c9ah1 (number of times arrested in the past year) with the control sample scoring higher than the normative sample.

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? (C9AH1)	0.10	0.51	0.25	0.76	185	2.01	0.0462
# Times Questioned by Police in Past Yr (C9AH41)	3.18	8.46	1.73	0.88	34.6	-0.98	0.3327

Chi-square tests of response frequency on the child level data for the normative group and the control group resulted in a significant value for one item: *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 at least once in the past year.

Police Contact Y8							
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? (C9AH40)	0.14	0.12	1	0.33	0.566	368	
Were You Arrested at Least Once in Past Year? (Arrest)	0.05	0.13	1	7.30	0.007	368	

Chi-square tests of response frequency were run using the arrest data for the normative group and the control group and resulted in significant values for one variable: whether a child had to perform community service. Students in the normative sample were more likely than those in the control sample to perform community service as a result of their arrest.

Police Contact Y9 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? (POL9COM)	0.64	0.69	1	0.16	0.689	51	
Police Contact Referred for Counseling (POL9COU)	0.30	0.34	1	0.10	0.757	52	
Police Contact Had to Go to Court (POL9CRT)	0.65	0.69	1	0.08	0.775	52	
Police Contact Perform Community Service? (POL9CSV)	0.78	0.33	1	7.20	0.007	36	
Police Contact Group of Friends Change After Arrest? (POL9FCH)	0.09	0.07	1	0.06	0.809	52	
Police Contact Friends Find out About Arrest? (POL9FFO)	0.96	0.83	1	2.09	0.148	52	
Police Contact New Friends Less Delinquent than Old? (POL9FLD)	1.00	0.50	1	1.33	0.248	4	
Police Contact New Friends More Delinquent than Old? (POL9FMD)	0.00	0.00	.	.	.	4	
Police Contact Sent to a Juvenile/Correctional Center (POL9JCT)	0.73	0.65	1	0.28	0.599	35	
Police Contact New Group of Friends Same as old Group? (POL9NGS)	0.00	0.50	1	1.33	0.248	4	
Police Contact Pay Fine? (POL9PFN)	0.39	0.22	1	1.18	0.278	36	
Police Contact Parents Notified (POL9PNF)	1.00	0.90	1	2.52	0.112	52	
Police Contact Put on Probation (POL9PRB)	0.73	0.70	1	0.05	0.829	35	
Police Contact Make Restitution? (POL9RES)	0.00	0.00	.	.	.	36	
Police Contact School Officials Told (POL9SCH)	0.39	0.54	1	1.06	0.304	51	
Police Contact Diverted to Treatment Program (POL9TRT)	0.30	0.36	1	0.16	0.691	51	
Police Contact Child Warned and Released (POL9WRL)	0.70	0.55	1	1.12	0.289	52	

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.