



# Mountjoy Prisoners

## A Sociological and Criminological Profile

Paul O'Mahony Ph.D

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# Foreword

The Department of Justice recognises the need to keep the public as well informed as possible on its activities and plans. It wishes to confine the areas which must, of necessity, remain confidential to the absolute minimum. This is just one of the reasons for the commissioning and publication of this study of the Mountjoy prisoner population.

The work complements, in a comparative sense, an earlier survey carried out by the same author in 1986 and is all the more valuable for this reason. It also takes account of more recent developments, such as the sharp increase in the number of drug addicted persons committed to prison and, of course, the overall increase in the number of committals to prison generally over the last six years or so.

The management of offenders raises major issues which are inextricably linked to the overall response by the State to crime. The day to day management of our prisons currently poses serious and complex problems, all of which need to be addressed. There are many different but equally legitimate views on the way forward. What is beyond any argument is that without the necessary data, validated properly through research, the task will be that much more intractable. This in-depth profile of over one hundred Mountjoy prisoners will make a very valuable contribution, not only in terms of prisons and prisoners, but also in the wider field of criminology.

Finally, the author, Dr. Paul O'Mahony is to be commended on the scholarly and meticulous nature of this work.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This report presents the results of a representative sample survey of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison undertaken in May and June of 1996. The aim is to provide a profile of Mountjoy prisoners which focuses on their social and family background, health status with particular emphasis on substance abuse problems, criminal and penal history, and to a limited extent on their experience of and views on prison life and the prison regime.

### **Mountjoy Prison**

Mountjoy is Ireland's largest prison. It was built in 1850 as one of 16 prisons spread throughout Britain and Ireland that were based closely on the original penitentiary model of Pentonville Prison, which was built in London in 1842. Mountjoy Prison was constructed as a prison of 420 cells designed for single occupancy and located in four wings radiating like spokes from the central hub known as the circle, which contained the prison officers' administrative areas.

The initial regime followed the then innovative solitary confinement 'silent system', in which prisoners were isolated in their cells for the entire period of incarceration — leaving the cell only for one hour's exercise per day and to attend religious services or to slop out night buckets. Prisoners were not allowed to associate and were provided with meals through a hatch in the cell door. They ate alone in their cells. They were also required to work in their cells, being provided with the necessary tools and materials, for example a cobbler's bench or a weaver's loom.

The present day Mountjoy is physically little changed from the original, particularly in respect of the basic cell accommodation, although cell furniture is radically different. However, today many of the cells designed for single occupancy now accommodate two prisoners. Slopping out is still practiced, though prisoners in doubled-up cells are allowed access to toilets at night-time. Facilities for showers are now available. Prisoners still eat in their cells but compared to the initial prison regime there are greatly increased opportunities for prisoners to associate. There is a school, a small gymnasium, and various workshops and each evening there is a recreation period based in the communal areas of the wing, during which prisoners can socialise, watch television, or play pool etc.

The Mountjoy complex originally contained two prisons — the present day Mountjoy Male Prison and the Mountjoy Female Prison. The latter building was very similar in design to the male prison only on a smaller scale with 220 cells. All but one basement floor of one wing of Mountjoy Female Prison was eventually taken over in 1956 as a detention centre for male juveniles and the building was renamed St Patrick's Institution. Until 1991 Mountjoy Female Prison remained in the basement floor of the B wing of what is now known as St Patrick's Institution. However, in that year the woman's prison moved to take over two floors of the D wing of St Patrick's Institution.

In 1975 a totally new prison was built within the walls of the Mountjoy complex. This was the first newly designed and built prison to be commissioned by the Irish Government since independence. It was named as the Training Unit, reflecting its emphasis on education and work training and its provision of training facilities. Although still a closed prison, the Training Unit operated a more liberal regime, including communal eating in a refectory.

More recently, there have been two further accommodation building projects within the complex. One was the 1983 refurbishment of an old abandoned prison infirmary and later prison officers' mess at the rear of the main prison. This refurbished section is now known as the Separation Unit or E block and was originally used to provide accommodation to allow the ending of military custody of civilian prisoners in the Curragh. More recently, it has provided accommodation for forty-six prisoners in 28 cells and has been mainly used to house HIV positive prisoners or those suffering from AIDS.

In 1993 a new Medical Unit was opened adjacent to the main prison. This provides accommodation for 57 and is intended for use by prisoners suffering from AIDS or other diseases. The cells are secure but are fitted out to a much higher standard than the rest of the prison with for example built-in W.C. and washhand basin. These two most recent additions to the accommodation for prisoners within the Mountjoy complex are regarded as integral parts of the Mountjoy Male Prison.

This study focuses only on the Mountjoy Male Prison so the Medical Unit and E Block are included in the sample along with the main prison. However the other prisons within the Mountjoy complex ie. the Training Unit, the Woman's Prison, and St Patrick's Institution are excluded from this study.

Mountjoy Male Prison is both a convict and a remand prison. It holds mainly sentenced adult male prisoners but also a considerable number of prisoners on remand from the District Courts or awaiting trial by jury at the Circuit or Central Criminal Courts. At any one time there are also likely to be a small number of prisoners who have been convicted at court but are awaiting the sentencing process plus a few others

in other relatively rare categories, such as people who have been imprisoned for contempt of court, for breaching a barring order, or pursuant to a bench warrant issued after they failed to appear at court in a proceeding against them.

Mountjoy is the main committal prison in the country, that is the main prison for receiving prisoners committed directly from the courts whether under sentence or on remand. Mountjoy is the committal prison for 20 of the 26 counties. Cork and Limerick Prisons act as committal prisons for the Munster region. However, even remand prisoners initially committed to these prisons tend to be held in Mountjoy if their case is a serious one to be tried at the Central Criminal Court (the High Court sitting in criminal cases) in Dublin.

The only categories of prisoner not committed to Mountjoy are male juveniles and so-called subversive prisoners committed by the Special Criminal Court. The latter are committed directly to Portlaoise Prison. St Patricks Institution is the committal prison (or more correctly 'detention centre' since this nomenclature is used for institutions holding those under 21) for male juveniles. Mountjoy Woman's Prison is the committal prison for women of all ages.

In short, Mountjoy not only houses by far the largest number of prisoners for any Irish prison, averaging about 650 prisoners on any one day but it also handles the vast bulk of new committals under sentence from the courts and of remands from the courts. In recent years Mountjoy's position at the very centre of the Irish penal system has meant that it must handle about 6000 inward prisoner movements per year of whom about 3000 are convicted prisoners under sentence and about 3000 are remand prisoners.

The aim of this study is to provide a profile that is representative not of this huge number of annual committals but of the 650 or so prisoners, who constitute the daily average population of the prison. There are two chief sources of data for the profile. The first is a structured prisoner questionnaire that focuses on the prisoner's demographic characteristics; family background; socio-economic background, especially educational and work history; experience of the penal system and of the current prison regime; health status; and both history and current reality of substance abuse. The emphasis is on relatively straightforward, unambiguous, objective information that is readily amenable to quantitative analysis. However, included in the questionnaire are some opinion-type questions and some open-ended questions which allow the prisoner to expand on an answer in his own words. The details of the prisoner questionnaire are set out in Appendix 1.

## **The Dublin Criminal Record**

The second major source of data for this study is the Dublin Criminal Record (DCR), a centralised register of all significant convictions handed down by all the Irish courts since 1963. This register is held and managed by the Garda Síochána at the Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park. This database in effect provides the criminal histories of all those in the State who have ever received a conviction for a criminal offence other than a motoring offence or other similar minor summary offence. The information on convictions is supplied to Garda Headquarters by the prosecuting garda and again, in the case of sentences of imprisonment, by the prison that receives a newly committed prisoner under sentence from the court.

The list of convictions in the DCR is organised by offender name and date of birth. It itemises convictions received at a single court appearance. This means that it is a record of separate convictions rather than of separate offences. Very frequently, more than one offence is taken into consideration by a judge handing down a sentence. The DCR provides details on the court handing down the sentence, the type of offence, the type of disposal, and the result of any appeal of sentence or conviction. It frequently happens that an offender will receive several concurrent sentences of imprisonment at the one court hearing. In such cases, the details of the major offence and longest sentence only are provided. It follows that the DCR does not provide a comprehensive listings of all the offences 'cleared up', attributed to an individual, and sanctioned by the court. What it does provide is a comprehensive listing of all the different and separate sanctions handed down to an individual by the courts.

It should also be noted that all sentences of imprisonment imposed at separate court hearings do not necessarily lead to separate periods of time actually spent in prison. Many offenders face court proceedings and are sentenced to imprisonment while they are currently serving a sentence of imprisonment. In such cases, unless the new sentence is specifically deemed to run consecutively by the judge, it will be run in with the current sentence. The new sentence will run from the date of sentence but there will be a period of overlap during which, in effect, the offender will be serving two (or more) sentences concurrently.

The main categories of sanction or disposal detailed by the DCR are: fine; disposal under the 1907 Probation Act, ie. the facts of the charge against the accused are found proven but no further action is taken against him or her by the State; bound over for a period, ie. held accountable to be of good behaviour or to keep the peace for a set time; probation supervision; community service order; and imprisonment. These sanctions are not mutually exclusive and occasionally a court imposes a combination of sanctions, for example a fine together with a period of imprisonment. Since the DCR only provides details of successful convictions in the courts, it is not possible



to trace the history of failed prosecutions or to estimate the number of prosecutions against an individual that led to an acquittal or dismissal or other discharge.

### **The relevant research context**

An important aspect of the present study is that it is to a large extent a replication of a similar survey of Mountjoy prisoners which was undertaken precisely 10 years earlier in 1986. The results of the 1986 survey were published in Chapters 4 and 5 of *Crime and Punishment in Ireland* [1]. For convenience, a summary of the main results of the 1986 survey is provided in this report at Appendix 2.

The present study has closely followed the structure of the earlier survey, utilising the same sampling and surveying methodology. The current prisoner questionnaire is a slightly amended and somewhat enlarged version of the original but continuity has been maintained so that useful comparisons can be made. This study and the 1986 study also make similar use of the DCR.

The results of the 1986 study provide a valuable baseline against which many of the results of the present study can be compared. In the body of this report in which the statistical data on the Mountjoy population in 1996 is presented, reference is frequently made to equivalent figures for 1986, especially where there is significant variation between 1986 and 1996. Chapter 9 of this report provides an overview of the more noteworthy changes that have occurred in the prison population over the last decade.

It should be noted that comparisons between Mountjoy in 1986 and 1996 are not all equally meaningful or straightforward since there have been substantial changes to Mountjoy and to the role it plays within the penal system as a whole. For example, the population size of the prison has grown considerably during the 10 years but, because there have been significant changes to the accommodation in the prison in the period with both loss of cells in the main prison and gains in the E Block and Medical Unit, this does not lead in any simple fashion to the conclusion that there is increased overcrowding.

Changes in prisoner characteristics such as age and history of previous convictions are interesting in themselves and they may point to important changes in the character of the prison population. However, these changes refer to Mountjoy Prison only and may in the broader perspective of the whole system be found to reflect penal system policy changes in the use of Mountjoy in relation to other prisons. For example, both convicted and remand sex offenders are today with few exceptions held in Arbour Hill, Wheatfield and the Curragh Prisons, so a decline in the number of sex offenders in Mountjoy, while reflecting an interesting aspect of the current Mountjoy population, does not imply anything generally about the committal of sex offenders to

prison. In fact, the number of sex offenders in prison has risen sharply in recent years and there are now about 350 in the system, of which total only a small number of remand cases are held in Mountjoy.

Similarly, since the opening of Wheatfield as a designated detention centre for offenders under 21, although many older prisoners are also held there, it has been possible for the system to house most of its juvenile offenders in designated detention centres. There has, therefore, been a corresponding decline in the number of juveniles being held in Mountjoy. Any changes in the age structure of the Mountjoy population must be seen in the context of all such operational changes, which impact on the age profile of prisoners in Mountjoy.

The Annual Reports on Prisons [2] and of the Probation and Welfare Service [3] also provide important sources of statistical data on the operation of the Irish penal system, with which it is often useful to compare the results of this study. Unfortunately, both series of reports are somewhat out of date and at the time of writing the most recent Annual Reports both for Prisons and for the Probation and Welfare Service are for 1993.

The Council of Europe has been compiling data on the prison systems of member states for a number of years and this information, published annually in the Council of Europe Penological Information Bulletin [4], offers a valuable context of comparative data for the present study. Ireland makes regular returns to the Council of Europe which amount to a brief census of the prison population on a particular day (January 1st or June 30th of each year). This study makes reference to the figures on the Irish prison population provided by the Department of Justice to the Council of Europe for 1995 and to the international comparative data published by the Council of Europe in December 1995. Another important source of comparative data on European prison systems is the book, 'Western European Penal Systems' [5], which includes a chapter on Ireland, North and South, by Mike Tomlinson. Although survey data on the Northern Irish prison system are not available, that system produces a useful annual report on prisons and an occasional Digest on the criminal justice system [6, 7], which include some statistical returns and which have been referred to in this study.

Another important development has been the commissioning by the British Home Office of the first ever survey of the whole prison system in England and Wales. This study was undertaken in 1991 under the title of 'The National Prison Survey' and its methodology and results are described in two publications of the following year [8, 9]. This study is one of the first comprehensive surveys of the total prison population of any jurisdiction. It is particularly interesting and informative from the Irish point of view because of — despite the huge discrepancy in scale — the enduring similarities and affinities between the Irish and British prison and criminal justice systems. Not only is Mountjoy Prison very similar in design to many of the older British

prisons but there are still remarkable continuities between the prison regimes operated in the two countries and between the respective criminal justice systems, particularly with regard to forms of sanction available to the courts.

‘The National Prison Survey’ covers many of the same areas covered by the 1986 Mountjoy survey (and therefore the 1996 survey also) and often in very similar terms. It, therefore, furnishes a useful bank of comparative data with which to compare the results of the present survey and also statistics on the Irish prison system as a whole. A few of the questions used in the ‘The National Prison Survey’, most notably a small number of opinion-type questions, have been incorporated in the present survey in an identical format in order to facilitate specific comparisons.

The First and Second Scottish Prison Surveys [10,11], which focus less on objective indicators and more on the attitudes of prisoners and prison officers, also provide some useful comparative data. The U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics also carried out a survey of prison inmates in 1991 [12]. This publication provides valuable statistical information on almost three-quarters of a million adult prisoners held in State prisons in the U.S.

There are a number of other recent publications of special relevance to any study of the Mountjoy population. Most significantly, the Department of Justice published in 1994 ‘The Management of Offenders: A Five Year Plan’ [13]. This provides a useful overview of the Irish penal system, including a frank assessment of some of its serious problems and outline plans for future development. It also provides the first ever public reporting on the operation of the Sentence Review Committee (SRG) and draft versions of new Prison Rules to replace the present, largely obsolete 1947 rules and of a new Disciplinary Code for Prison Staff. The Bishops’ Commission for Justice and Peace has published a trenchantly critical review of the draft prison rules [14].

In recent years, both the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) and the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) have published their reports on observational visits to Ireland [15] and both these reports have substantial commentary, some of it highly critical, on Mountjoy Prison. The CPT report was published, as is the norm, by the Irish Government, which simultaneously published its own response to the criticisms raised in the CPT report [16].

The Annual Reports of the Mountjoy Visiting Committee are normally published in the Annual Report on Prisons. However, in recent years due mainly to media pressure these reports have been made available separately so that while the most recent statistical data are in the Annual Report on Prisons for 1993, the Visiting Committee Reports have been published right up to 1996. These reports are often highly critical of aspects of the Mountjoy regime. They provide an important insight into life within the prison, but they have often been controversial and some of their statements and

conclusions have been challenged by the Department of Justice, the Prisoner Officer's Association, and prison management.

Another recent publication of interest is "A Study of Irish Female Prisoners" [17]. This study reports the results of a survey of 100 female prisoners in the women's section of Mountjoy Prison. To some extent it provides a useful complement to the present study. However, its focus is limited mainly to health issues, including psychiatric history, suicidal behaviour and substance abuse, and it does not provide a criminological profile based on the DCR.

Other recent publications which provide useful background material for this study include O'Mahony's articles on the comparison of penal systems in Europe and on recent trends in the Irish penal system [18,19], The annual Garda Report on Crime [20] provides essential background material. The Whitaker Report [21] is still a valuable source book for ideas and analysis and contains much information not available elsewhere. However, it should be read in conjunction with the cogent critique of the report published by the Council for Social Welfare [22].

### **The layout of this report.**

This report is in 9 chapters including the introduction. The chapters deal in turn with: the sampling and research methodology; the demographic and social data on the prisoners, including biographical details on family, work and education; the criminal and penal histories of the prisoners; information on the drug-related experiences of the prisoners; information on drug-related health problems and other health-related issues; the prisoners' response to opinion and attitudinal questions about prison conditions and the regime; statistical analysis of important relationships between the biographical, penal and criminal variables, including measures of the seriousness of their criminal activity; and finally, a chapter drawing conclusions and examining the most significant changes in the prison population between 1986 and 1996 and relevant comparisons with the British and other prison populations.

The three appendices provide a summary of the main findings of the survey of Mountjoy prisoners undertaken in 1986, a list of the questions used in the prisoner questionnaire in the current research, and an examination of the differences between the 108 respondents to the questionnaire and the 16 selected prisoners who either were not available to respond or refused to do so.

## Chapter 2

# Research Methodology and Sampling Procedure

The main period of data collection, comprising personal interviews with Mountjoy prisoners, lasted about two months and took place in May and June 1996. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, though they could vary from 30 minutes to over an hour depending on the particular concerns and problems of the prisoners and the extent to which prisoners wished to expand on answers to open-ended questions. The interviews tended to be appreciably shorter, if the prisoner had never used illicit drugs.

All interviews were undertaken by the author in conditions of total privacy. It is probable that the consistency of the whole interview process was greatly enhanced by the use of only one interviewer and that consequently the reliability and validity of the responses was increased. Audio-taping was not used. The structured questionnaire was the basis for the interview and questions were posed orally by the interviewer and responses were registered by him, thereby avoiding problems arising from possible literacy problems amongst the prisoners. The interviewer was also able to repeat questions or paraphrase them if the prisoner indicated any difficulty in comprehension. Free-form answers to open-ended questions were as far as possible transcribed verbatim.

Except in the case of the Separation and Medical Units, all interviews took place in a converted cell in the A wing near the administration circle at the centre of the prison. This cell had been converted to an administrative office and was normally used by prison governors and Probation and Welfare Officers.

Some time was taken at the start of interviews to explain the nature of the study and the conditions under which the prisoners were participating. Participation was entirely voluntary and there was no compulsion on the prisoners to co-operate and no incentives were offered for compliance. The confidentiality of the whole process was guaranteed by the Department of Justice, in the sense that it was agreed that no one apart from the author would have access to data which identified the different responses. In other words, only the author would know the identities of those participating in the survey and be in a position to match responses with named prisoners. The reported and published data would be anonymous. It would not be possible for

the authorities to trace the prisoner, who made a particular response or to identify the profile of an individual prisoner.

This level of confidentiality was an important assurance for some of the respondents, who might otherwise have been reluctant to participate in an official survey. It was considered essential to the success of the project, particularly as a means of maximising the probability of honest answers to sensitive questions that might involve admissions of illegal behaviour such as drug use in prison or the commission of crime while on bail. However, in general it can be said that most prisoners appeared to be happy to participate and were generally unconcerned about whether or not their responses could be identified.

The US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] states that “personal interviewing of prisoners is the most efficient means — and for some information, the only means — to gather certain data. Independent researchers, studying how truthfully prison inmates respond to survey questions, have found that the responses generally agree with data from official records. Also, findings aggregated from the inmate surveys do not differ appreciably from information reported by correctional authorities, and information from separate surveys fit coherent and consistent patterns.”

A prison officer was assigned to the interviewer during the interview process. This officer located the prisoner selected for interview within the prison and escorted him from his cell, workshop etc. to the interview room. Prisoners were told only that a researcher wished to speak with him. In the small world of the prison it quickly became known that the project was underway and occasionally non-selected prisoners presented themselves to the interviewer, saying they wished to be interviewed. It was not appropriate, however, to include these in the survey. During interviews the assigned prison officer remained outside the closed office but within hailing distance in case of some problem arising. However, there were no untoward events requiring the assistance of the officer and all interviews proceeded without incident.

On completion of the interview phase of the study the computerised criminal records of all the selected prisoners, including both those who were interviewed and those who for one reason or another were not interviewed, were obtained from the DCR section at the Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park. This was sometimes a complicated process since there were occasional discrepancies in names, spelling, and dates of birth that made the matching of records difficult and the DCR is a vast collection of records with multiple duplications of names. However, almost all selected prisoners were eventually matched with their correct criminal record. The exceptions were a small number of cases in which it seemed clear that the prisoner had no official criminal record. Some of these cases were prisoners serving a term of imprisonment on a first conviction and some were remand prisoners without a previous conviction and as yet unconvicted on the current charge. The updating of the DCR was running

between 6 and 12 months behind time when records were being compiled for this study so that most very recent convictions were not yet entered on the record. In such cases details of current sentence were taken from computerised prison records and from the prisoner questionnaire.

The data from the interview and from the DCR were computer-coded and entered together onto a spreadsheet. Analysis was undertaken using both the Datadesk and S.P.S.S. statistical software.

## **The Sampling Method**

The sampling strategy adopted in this study was to interview a one-fifth systematic sample of the Mountjoy Male Prison population, with a sampling frame that included all the prisoners held in the main Mountjoy Prison and in the Separation Unit (E Block) and Medical Unit. A systematic sample of this kind is a quasi-random sample in which, as a first step, a number from 1 to 5 is randomly selected. Then, the sample members are selected from a list of all potential members by taking every fifth case starting from that identified by the first randomly selected number.

The present sample was not taken from a list of Mountjoy inmates as such, but was drawn from a list of the bed spaces in the prison, that is a list of all locations where prisoners slept. In other words, starting from a randomly selected location that accommodated a prisoner overnight every fifth such location in the prison was selected.

The focus on places of accommodation rather than prisoners was necessitated by the fact that the interviewing process would take upwards of 2 months and any sample derived from a list of prisoners before interviewing began would quickly become out-dated because of the rapid turnover of prisoners. Movements in and out of the prison and less common but not infrequent changes of location within the prison would result in an unacceptable level of untraceable sample members. In a prison of about 650 places handling annual committals of about 6000 prisoners a sample taken from a list of prisoners obtained at the beginning of any particular week could easily be out of date and unworkable by the end of the week.

The initial sampling focus on accommodation locations rather than individuals also ensured that all special locations in the prison with at least 5 beds, which might be missed by a straightforward simple random sample of the prison population, would have some representation in the sample. For example, the Separation Unit and the B Basement Unit which contains several communal cells which can hold up to 6 prisoners were certain to be represented by the systematic sampling approach.

This is important because special category prisoners such as those suffering from AIDS or under protection or under discipline are concentrated in these areas. The only

obvious special category of cell accommodation that might be missed with this approach were the several isolation and padded cells which are scattered throughout the prison either singly or in pairs. These cells which total 8 in number provide temporary accommodation for disruptive or emotionally disturbed prisoners or those known to be in a suicidal crisis. As it happens two such cells were selected in the systematic sample. One padded cell was occupied and the prisoner was seen in the cell. The other an isolation cell was unoccupied.

The researcher worked through the prison area by area, taking discrete organisational sections of the prison in turn, that is the 12 wing landings, which accommodate about 30 or 40 prisoners each and the other separate Units. As each particular section was dealt with he was provided with lists of the prisoners currently located there. At this point the individual prisoners who occupied the accommodation locations selected in the systematic sample were identified and interviewed. Given the accommodation crisis in the prison, it is not surprising that all selected accommodation places were currently occupied with the exception of the isolation cell mentioned above.

For the most part this piecemeal method of selection worked well. Most of the selected prisoners were interviewed. Only one prisoner was selected twice because of a change to his cell location during the two months of the interviewing process. He was not replaced in the sample. However, in a number of cases selected prisoners were not available because they were attending a court hearing and so absent from the prison. Some of these prisoners were followed up and interviewed at a later date but a few were granted bail at their court hearing and so did not return to the prison and were not available for interview. These prisoners were not replaced in the sample because the new occupant of their cell was likely to be a different category of prisoner, for example a convicted rather than a remand prisoner. By avoiding replacement in such instances the representativeness of the sample was maintained with respect to such variables as the remand or convicted status of the prisoners.

In addition to the prisoners selected according to the method of systematic sampling of accommodation places as described above, five prisoners were randomly sampled from the list of prisoners who went through the reception process on June 12th 1996. Twenty-seven prisoners were committed to the prison on that day and since they are in the custody of the authorities from the first moment of committal they must be counted as part of the prison population for that day, despite the fact that they have not yet been allocated to cell accommodation. These 5 prisoners have been included as a normal part of the sample of the prison population.

Although the final sample of prisoners was selected in this step by step fashion, it can be regarded as a representative cross-section of the Mountjoy Prison population on a single notional day. There were no significant changes in the operation of the prison or in the use of accommodation throughout the sampling and interviewing phases of



the study. The approach taken minimised the role of bias in selection and ensured the representation of most of the many diverse categories of prisoner that were present in any significant numbers in the prison. Unlike the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8], which did not attempt to interview a number of prisoners whom the prison staff considered dangerous or unlikely to co-operate meaningfully, this survey made an attempt to interview all prisoners, who happened to be thrown up by the fundamentally random sampling process. The selection procedures were under the control of the researcher at all times.

### **Sample size and non-response rate**

In total 124 prisoners were selected for interview and 108 interviews were successfully completed. Ten prisoners refused to be interviewed; three remand prisoners were lost to interview because they were granted bail on a court appearance; and a further three convicted prisoners were lost to interview through their being granted temporary release from the prison, which lasted throughout the interviewing phase.

The overall non-response rate, therefore, was 12.9 percent and the refusal rate was 8 percent. This non-response rate is similar to that for the 1986 survey which was 13.6 percent. Considering the prison setting of the research, the sensitive and personal nature of much of the information sought from the respondents, the lack of any obvious or immediate benefits to them, and the fact that a few prisoners can be expected to be hostile and unco-operative with any 'official' activity such as a survey, the refusal rate of 8 percent is more than satisfactory. These figures compare with a non-response rate of 10 percent and a refusal rate of 5 percent for the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8]. The non-response rate in the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] was 6.3% and in the Second Scottish Prison Survey [11], 19%, although the latter survey attempted to include all prisoners not just a sample.

Given the one-fifth sampling ratio, the figure of 124 prisoners selected for interview — plus one to account for the individual sampled twice — suggests an overall prison population of 625 for the notional day of the survey. This figure is close to but somewhat lower than the official figures given for the prison daily average population for the months of May and June 1996, which tend to fluctuate around 645. However, discarding the 5 members of the sample who were new receptions into the prison on June 10th 1996, the figures from this study suggest that the actual level of accommodation for prisoners was closer to 600 places. It is impossible to account for this discrepancy in precise terms but the explanation is likely to be found in the variability in daily number of new committals to the prison and in the large number of releases occurring on a daily basis, involving transfers to other prisons or temporary releases driven by the pressure from new committals on the limited accommodation in the prison or the often unpredictable granting of bail. While the systematic sampling of accommodation locations reflects the use of cells within the prison at the time of

sampling, there is some considerable flexibility in the use of cells and in particular communal cells can vary in the numbers they cater for each day or even at various times of the day. In addition, ordinary single cells are frequently put into or taken out of commission as double occupancy cells at short notice. In other words, on certain days the number of officially allocated accommodation places in the prison may be somewhat higher than those indicated by the figures in this study and the present sample may to some small extent have undersampled these places.

### **Estimation and confidence intervals**

The aim of any sample survey is to obtain reliable and accurate information from which one may generalize to the whole population. The values of variables found for the sample are used as estimates for the values of the whole population. The ideal approach to providing an accurate description of the characteristics of a group is to collect data on the whole population. However, this approach is both costly in terms of time and resources and unnecessary because the sample survey method can provide estimates of population values that are reliable and accurate enough for most purposes. If a sample survey is conducted in a systematic, scientific manner and obtains a truly representative sample of sufficient size then the data from the sample will provide a very useful guide to population values.

The constraints of operating in a prison such as Mountjoy with a large turnover of prisoners and a large sector of very short stay prisoners has forced the various sampling compromises that have been described above. However, statistically, this sample can be treated as a simple random sample, that is as a fair and unbiased representation of the whole prison population. The strategy of a one-fifth sample and the relatively low non-response rate mean that the achieved sample size is sufficiently large to provide reliably accurate estimates. Appendix 3 presents an analysis of the known similarities and differences between the non-respondents and the achieved sample and between the refusals and the known sample. In general, it can be concluded that the refusals and other non-respondents are not obviously divergent from the sample members who completed the interview and that there is likely to be little systematic bias in the survey results due to the absence of interview data from them.

It is possible to give a picture of the level of accuracy provided by the survey in estimating population values by referring to the statistical concept of confidence intervals. A confidence interval is a range of values, calculated around a sample value, usually a sample mean. We can be confident to a specified degree of probability that this range of values will contain the actual population value. The width of the confidence interval and so the precision and reliability of the estimate depend on the size of the sample and the variability of the value being examined. It is customary to work with a 95 percent level of confidence. For example, 95 percent confidence intervals for a sample mean are calculated in the following manner. The lower extreme of the

range of confidence is calculated by subtracting 1.96 (the 'z value') times the standard deviation of the sample value from the sample mean, and dividing the result by the square root of the sample size. The higher extreme of the range of confidence is calculated by the adding 1.96 times the standard deviation of the sample mean, and dividing the result by the square root of the sample size. In this way one constructs from a sample mean a range within which one can be 95% confident one will find the actual mean of the population from which one has sampled.

A concrete example from the present study will both provide a demonstration of the calculation of confidence intervals and give an indication of the degree of accuracy, that is the statistically predictable closeness of correspondence between sample and population values, afforded by the present sample size.

In the present study it was found that the mean age of the 108 Mountjoy prisoners was 28.3 years. There was considerable variability, however, with ages ranging from 19 to 58 and the statistical measure of this variability, the standard deviation (SD), was 6.9. The square root of the sample size (ie.108) is 10.39 so that the standard deviation divided by the square root of the sample size = 6.9 divided by 10.39 ie .66. The 95% confidence intervals are given by the sample mean (28.3) plus and minus 1.96 (the z value) times this latter quantity. Thus the 95% confidence intervals in the case of the estimate of the population mean for age are 27 years to 29.5 years. Therefore, we can be 95% confident that the mean age of the whole Mountjoy population lies within the relatively narrow band between 27 and 29.5 years. It is clear from this example that the sample size in this study is sufficiently large for sample results for continuous variables to be reasonably accurate reflections of the parameters of the whole population of Mountjoy.

The calculation of confidence intervals for proportions is a somewhat more complicated issue but some statistical texts [23] provide tables which give the 95% confidence intervals for certain discovered proportions for relatively small sample sizes. Taking the finding in this study that 60 of 71 heroin using prisoners (that is 85%) had at some point used intravenously and looking up such a table, we find that the lower and upper 95% confidence intervals are 74% and 92%. This indicates that we can be 95% sure that the underlying Mountjoy population proportion of heroin users who have injected lies between 74% and 92%. In the case of proportions, which are single point estimates, the confidence intervals are not only generally wider than is the case with continuous variables but they will also be wider the closer the discovered proportion is to 50% of the sample.



## Chapter 3

# Demographic Variables, Family and Social Background

### a) Age profile of the prison sample

The age profile of prisoners is important because the predominance of specific age groups and the particular age mix in the prison population are factors which have a major bearing on the climate within a prison and on the character of its regime. Age is obviously a crucial determinant of attitudes and behaviour and one of the most important indicators of personal identity. A predominantly youthful prison population will undoubtedly present different management problems than a predominantly middle-aged population or a very mixed population. The age profile of an adult male prison will diverge in significant ways from the age profile of the adult male population.

Age is one of the most important factors in the commission of crime. The incidence of crime at various ages and the age-related aspects of criminal careers have been widely studied. For example, it has been well-established in Britain that the likelihood of offending increases rapidly from the age of 10, reaching a peak at 17 and 18 years, and, thereafter, declines quite rapidly [24]. A greater proportion of the male population in Britain commit criminal offences at around 17 years than at any other age. Also, at around 17 years offenders tend to commit numerically more offences than both older and younger people who offend.

Farrington [25] and Loeber and Leblanc [26] have provided useful reviews of the role of age and developmental stages in a criminal career. The phenomenon known as 'maturing out of crime' is particularly important, relating as it does to desistance from crime by people as they grow older. Another important aspect of the relation between age and crime is the fact that the earlier the age of a first offence and conviction the more likely it is that a serious and extended criminal career will ensue.

The age profile of the prison population as a whole provides useful evidence on the role of age in crime in Ireland and the results of the 1986 Mountjoy survey indicated that Irish offenders appear to 'mature out of crime' at a considerably earlier age than British and American offenders. The age profile of Mountjoy Prison, however, cannot be taken as representative of the whole system as it holds some categories of prisoner

that are rarely found elsewhere in the system and tend to be older than prisoners in general and does not hold certain categories of prisoner that are younger. For example, Mountjoy holds few sex offenders, who tend to be older than other prisoners and are held mainly in Arbour Hill, Wheatfield and the Curragh Prisons and Mountjoy holds relatively few juveniles, who are concentrated in the detention centres.

There are a number of official sources of information on the age breakdown of people involved with the criminal justice system. The Garda Síochána provide a valuable but limited picture of the age breakdown of all those in a particular year who are convicted or against whom charges have been held proved with respect to indictable crimes. At the time of writing the latest available figures are for 1995.

The Department of Justice provides in its Annual report on Prisons an age breakdown both of all those committed to prison under sentence in a particular year and of the prison population as a whole on the 1st of January of that year. The latter distribution is specially relevant in the present context since it indicates the extent to which the Mountjoy Prison population is or is not representative of the whole prison system in terms of the age of inmates. The latest available figures are for 1993. Table 1 presents these various figures on age distribution along with the results from the present survey.

<b>Table 1: Comparison of the age distribution of various male groups (percentages)</b>					
	< or=20 yrs	21-25 yrs	26-30 yrs	31-40 yrs	> 40 yrs
1996 Mountjoy Survey	5.6	36.3	29	22.6	6.5
1993 Prisoners in custody	33.4	23.4	18.5	16.6	8
1993 All Committals	29	21.6	16.1	18	15.2
1995 All Convictions	46.1			53.9*	
*refers to age category 21 and over					

The percentages in Table 1 refer to different population and sample sizes as follows: 124 in the 1996 Mountjoy survey; 1893 prisoners in custody in the whole prison system on January 1st 1993; 6256 committals to prison under sentence in 1993; and 14063 convictions for indictable offences in 1995.

It is apparent from Table 1, which does not take female convictees or prisoners into account, that the age structure of Mountjoy prisoners differs very significantly from that of the prison population as a whole on any one particular day. Most importantly, while under 6% of the Mountjoy population are under 21 years, about one third of the whole prison population are under 21. Consequently all the older age categories are over-represented in Mountjoy, but especially the 25-30 years category.

It is also clear from Table 1 that most convictions for indictable offences do not lead to a sentence of imprisonment. The very large proportion of convictions for males under 21 years undoubtedly reflects the high level of criminal offending by this age group. However, the 46.1% of all convictions that are for those under 21 translates into only approximately 29% of all committals under sentence that are for the same age group. This sharp reduction reflects the fact that a substantially greater number of the convictions of those over 21 than of those under 21 lead to sentences of imprisonment. In other words, offenders under 21 are more likely to receive a non-custodial sentence on conviction. Many more young persons under 18 years, whose behaviour is giving cause for concern and who admit to misdemeanours, do not appear in the statistics for convictions since they receive instead a formal or informal warning or caution under the Juvenile Liaison Scheme.

Comparison between the age structure of the 1993 committals to prison under sentence and the group in custody in 1993, as shown in Table 1, suggests that those under 21 years are likely to spend on average somewhat more time in prison than older prisoners. They provide 29% of committals to prison under sentence versus 33.4% of the prison population. This is either because they receive longer sentences or because they benefit less from early release or (since the prison population figures include remands) are less likely to be in the category of short-term remands.

The discrepancy for the oldest group, ie. prisoners over 40, is even more marked but in the opposite direction. Fifteen percent of those committed to prison compared to 8% of those actually in custody are over 40. This suggests that this age group receive considerably shorter sentences and/or benefit more frequently from early release or are more frequently short-term remands.

Table 2: Age profiles of various prison systems							
Ireland 1993		U.S. 1991		W. Germany 1990		England and Wales* 1993	
< = 20 years	33.4%	<24years	22%			< = 20 years	14.3%
21-25 years	23.4%					21-24 years	20.4%
26-30 years	18.5%	25-34 years	46%	< 30 years	40%	25-29 years	22.7%
31-40 years	16.6%					30-39 years	24.9%
> 40 years	8%	35-44 years	25%	30-40 years	36%		
		> = 45 years	10%	> 40 years	24%	>= 40 years	17.7%
*Sentenced males							

Table 2 compares the 1993 figures for the Irish prison population with equivalent or near equivalent figures on the prison populations of several foreign jurisdictions. Although these figures are not entirely comparable because they are compiled for

differing age categories, they clearly indicate the anomalous position of the Irish prison population as a whole with respect to its age profile.

Most notably, Table 2 indicates that the number of people under 21 in Irish prisons is very high in comparison with all the other systems and is more than twice the comparable figure for England and Wales. At the other extreme there are proportionately fewer people in prison in Ireland over the age of 30 and many fewer over the age of 40 than in all the other systems. This raises interesting questions, on the one hand, about the use of imprisonment as a sanction for young offenders and, on the other, about the age of desistance from crime in Ireland.

**Table 3: Frequency breakdown of Age of Prisoners**

Age	Count	%
19	3	2.4
20	4	3.2
21	6	4.8
22	12	9.6
23	13	10.5
24	9	7.2
25	5	4.0
26	9	7.2
27	8	6.4
28	7	5.6
29	10	8.0
30	2	1.6
31	4	3.2
32	1	0.8
33	5	4.0
34	2	1.6
35	5	4.0
36	5	4.0
37	4	3.2
38	1	0.8
39	1	0.8
41	2	1.6
42	1	0.8
44	1	0.8
46	1	0.8
47	1	0.8
56	1	0.8
58	1	0.8
	124	

With respect to the present sample, the mean age for the total of 124 prisoners was 28.29 years with a standard deviation of 7.1, indicating considerable variation in the age of prisoners. The members of the sample ranged in age from 19 to 58 years. The modal age, ie. the most common age in the sample, was 23 years.



The age distribution for the total sample of 124 is presented in Table 3. Approximately 38% of the total sample were under 25 years of age and a further 31% were between 25 and 29 years, giving a total of 69% under the age of 30. There were no members of the sample over the age of 60; only 2 over the age of 50; and 6 over the age of 40 but under 50. The proportion of prisoners over 40 years was, therefore, about 6.5%.

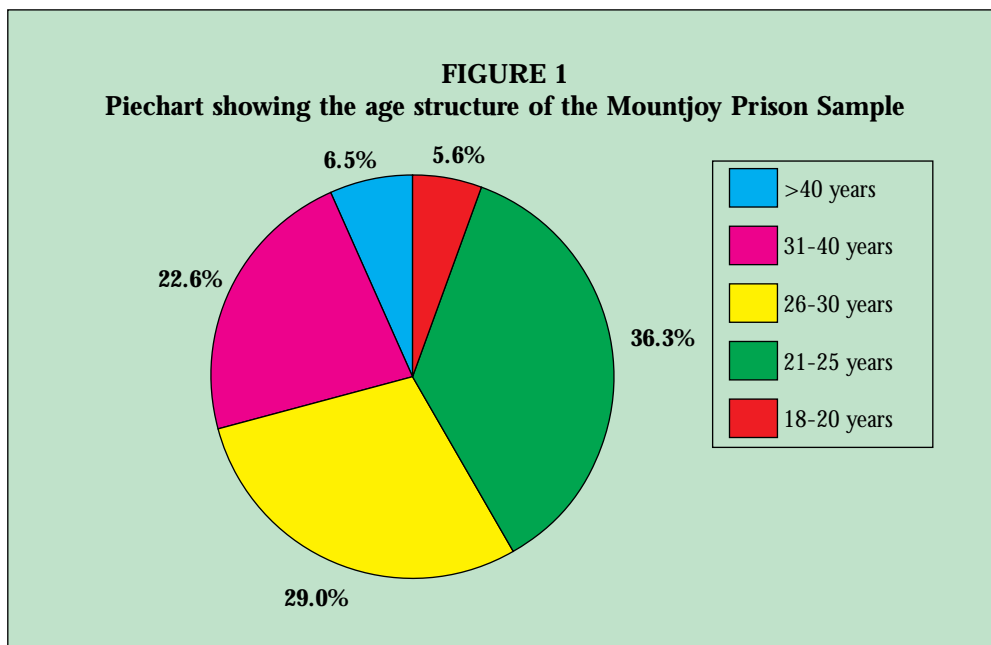
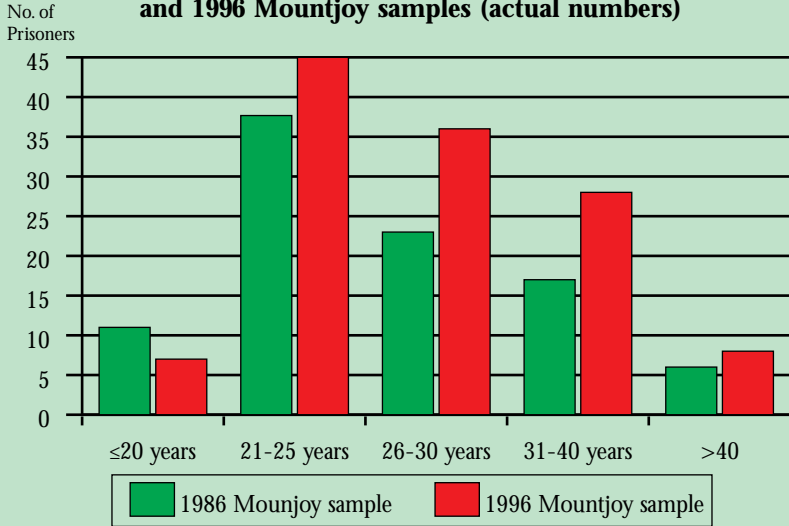


Figure 1 graphs the age breakdown of the sample according to 5 different age categories. The chart clearly illustrates the predominant position of the 21 to 30 years age group in the prison. Prisoners under 21 and over 40 are about equally rare within the prison, but prisoners between 31 and 40 years have a substantial presence in the prison population. About 71%, or almost 3 out of every 4 prisoners, are thirty years of age or younger and about 40%, or around 2 out of every 5, are 25 years of age or younger.

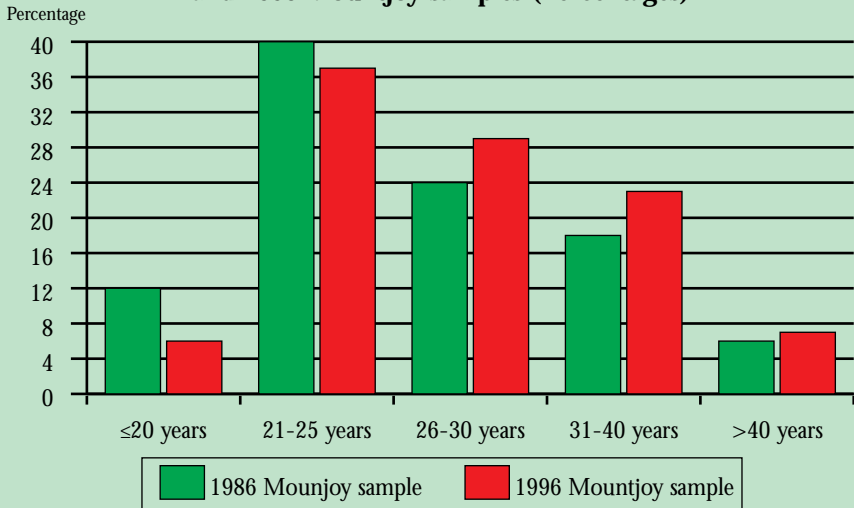
Comparison of the age distributions for the 1986 and 1996 surveys points to considerable change in the age composition of the prison in the past 10 years. The average age of prisoners was 27.28 in the 1986 survey, indicating an increase of almost precisely one year in the average age of the prison population in the 10 year period.

Figure 2 shows that in 1996 there are less prisoners under 21 years in Mountjoy than in 1986 but considerably more in all of the older age categories. Although both surveys were based on one-fifth samples and had similar non-response rates, the numbers involved increased substantially from 95 to 124, reflecting the growth in the prison population. Therefore, the general increase in numbers in 1996 — in all but one category — is entirely predictable and expected.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Comparison between age distribution for 1986**  
**and 1996 Mountjoy samples (actual numbers)**



**FIGURE 3**  
**Comparison of age distribution for 1986**  
**and 1996 Mountjoy samples (Percentages)**



In order to take account of the different baseline figures in the two surveys, Figure 3 looks at the subgroup percentages of the 1996 and 1986 prison samples rather than the actual numbers. Figure 3 indicates that both the under 21 and the 21-25 years categories have declined as proportions of the total in the ten year period despite the fact that the actual number of prisoners in the 21-25 years category has increased as indicated in Figure 2. Figure 3 demonstrates that there has been a notable shift in the age composition of the prison population resulting in those under 25 taking up a lesser and those between 26 and 40 taking up a greater proportion of the prison places. This shift explains the rise in the average age of the prison population. Proportionately the share of places taken by those over 40 has remained almost unchanged.

## **b) Marital Status**

Marriage and increasingly cohabitation are highly significant stages in the maturational and developmental process. For many, marriage or partnership and parenthood represent a personal quantum leap in terms of responsibility, economic obligations, and final separation from the parental home.

Table 4 indicates the marital/cohabitation status of the achieved sample of 108 prisoners. All relationships referred to are heterosexual, as no respondent claimed a stable homosexual relationship. Only 20 (18.5%) of the sample had ever been married and only 9 of these (8.3%) were still married at the time of the survey.

However, a further 50 prisoners (46%) of the sample, had been in a 'common law' relationship. For 23 (46%) of this group the relationship had already ended. Altogether 33 out of 70 prisoners (47%) had been in a relatively stable relationship — the large majority of which relationships had produced children (see section c) — but had separated by the time of the survey. This means that only about 30% of the total sample, whose average age was 28 years, were maintaining established marriages or 'common law' partnerships.

Thus, while only a little more than one in three prisoners had always been single, altogether 72, or about two out of every three prisoners, were currently not in a stable relationship involving living with a partner.

The proportion of ever married people who had separated was 50%. There was, therefore, a higher rate of separation for the ever married group than for the 'common law' cohabiting group (46%). However, these figures are not directly comparable because the married group were on average considerably older and so their marriages had probably been exposed to the risk of breakdown for longer periods than the 'common law' relationships. The ever married had a mean age of 35.6 years compared

to 27.2 years for those who had ever been in a cohabiting relationship. This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 5.6$  prob.  $< .05$ ).

**Table 4: Frequency breakdown of Marital Status of Prisoners**

Marital Status	Count	%
Single	38	35.2
Married	9	8.3
Divorced	2	1.9
Widowed	1	0.9
Legally Separated	1	0.9
Informally Separated	7	6.5
Current Common Law	27	25.0
Past Common Law	23	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	
Currently in a relationship = 36 (33%) Past relationship but none current = 34 (31%) No past or present relationship = 38 (35%)		

The rate of marriage in this sample of Mountjoy prisoners is clearly less than could be expected on the basis of marriage rates for males in the general population. The average age for marriage for males in Ireland is estimated to be 28.5 years [27] and about half of Irish males will be married by this age. This is also the average age of this sample, yet less than one fifth of the sample have ever been married and less than a tenth are currently married. In fact patterns of marriage in Ireland are changing quite significantly and it is now rare for young men under 25 to be married. According to the 1991 Census [28] less than 1% of males under twenty are married and less than 7% of those in the 20-24 years age group. However, about 42% of those in the 25-29 years bracket are married and about 71% of those in the 30-34 years bracket. By contrast, only 8 of the 53 prisoners in these two age groups (15%) have ever been married. So, while it is not remarkable that the younger prisoners are not married there is very clear evidence that as a group these prisoners are far less likely to be married than the general male population of a similar age.

In 1986 a greater proportion of the Mountjoy population had been married (26% versus 18.5% in the present survey) and far less of them had separated (24% versus 50%). There are no precisely comparable figures on cohabitation. The National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] indicated that considerably more of their prison population had been married (29%) and that the rate of marital breakdown for the married group was, at 34%, substantially lower than the figure for the 1996 Mountjoy sample.

Thirty-one percent of the English and Welsh prisoners were in a 'common law' relationship at the time of imprisonment and 40% described themselves as single. The US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] indicated that 45% of the prisoners studied had been married, although there are far less young people in the American than in the Irish prison population. Sixty percent of the ever married American prisoners were no longer married by the time of the survey.

### c) Parenthood

Table 5 shows the number of prisoners who have different numbers of children or none. Only 30, or about 28%, of the members of the sample stated that they had not fathered a child. One in three in the sample claim to have one child and the remaining 42, or 39%, said that they have more than one child. However, large families were rare as only 5 prisoners said they had more than 3 children.

Number of Children	Number of Prisoners	%
0	30	27.8
1	36	33.3
2	23	21.3
3	14	13.0
4	4	3.7
7	1	0.9
Total	108	

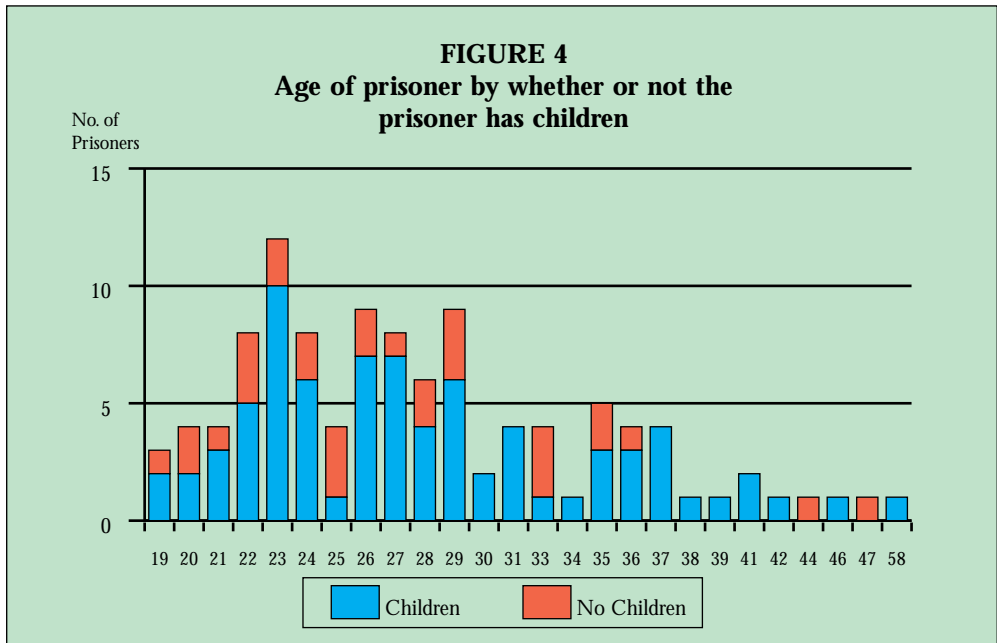
Table 6 examines the relationship between marital/cohabitation status and whether or not the prisoner has a child. Only one of the ever married group did not have children and only 4 of those who had ever cohabited did not have children. Being married did not greatly increase the probability of having children in comparison to being in a 'common law' relationship. On the other hand, a considerable majority of the always single group (62%) did not have children.

The presence of children in a family did not appear to create any barrier to separation, for, in the case of both married and cohabiting groups, a greater proportion of the separated than of those maintaining the relationship had children. More than half (51%) of the ever married or cohabiting prisoners who had children were now separated from their families and not planning to live with their child or children when released. In addition, one must include in the group, who are not planning to live with their child or children when released, the thirteen members of the sample who had always been single but who nonetheless claimed to be fathers. This means that,

in total, 45 of the 78 prisoners (59%) that had children considered themselves permanently separated from child or children and mother. Conversely 41% of those with children (30% of the total sample) were involved in a continuing family relationship.

<b>Table 6: Prisoners' Marital Status and Whether or not they have Children</b>					
	Single	Married	Separated	Present Common Law	Past Common Law
0	25	1	0	3	1
1	13	8	11	24	22
% with Children	38%	89%	100%	89%	96%
0 = No Children    1 = One or more Children					

Figure 4 is a bar chart relating the age of prisoners to whether or not they have children. It is clear from this chart that while there is a somewhat increased probability that a person in the sample over 35 years of age will have children, in general terms those without and with children are spread across the whole age spectrum. In particular it is notable that the younger age groups, ie. 23 years and under, in fact right down to 19, are about as likely to have children as the group aged between 24 and 35 years.



Twelve prisoners stated that they had children by two different women and one further prisoner stated that he had children by 3 different women. The age of prisoners' children ranged greatly from newborns to 24 years. Twenty three prisoners had a child under the age of 5 and 11 had a child of fifteen or older.

There are some very significant changes in this aspect of the prisoners' lives between the 1986 and the present survey. The number of prisoners who have fathered children has increased from 46% to 72%, despite a drop in the proportion of married prisoners. The percentage of married men separated from their families has increased from 29% to 50% and the percentage of all those with children who have never or no longer consider themselves as part of the family unit has increased from 50% in 1986 to 59% in 1996. However, one somewhat more positive finding is that the proportion of all the unmarried prisoners with children, who were continuing in a family relationship with child or children and mother, has increased from 30% to 41%, probably reflecting, in 1996, the wider acceptability of cohabitation in society generally.

#### **d) Place of residence**

The prisoners were asked about their current address and about their area of origin ie. where they lived for most of the time before they were 10 years of age. Only 3 prisoners had current addresses outside of Ireland — in Birmingham, Manchester, and Jamaica. The 2 prisoners living in England had, however, been raised in Ireland. A further two prisoners had addresses in Northern Ireland. There were 2 non-settled travellers and 2 prisoners who were completely homeless and were of no fixed abode on reception into prison. Of the remaining 99 prisoners, only 12 were from outside the Greater Dublin area. There was only one person from Cork and none from Limerick. These, of course, are the two cities in the State with their own prisons. The remaining 11 prisoners were from 10 different towns, ranging in size from Ballymote to Galway (1 each) and all the towns were in the Leinster and Connaught regions.

Dublin prisoners constituted about 85% of the achieved sample. These prisoners came from all corners of Dublin from Tallaght (4) in the south to Coolock (7) in the north and from Blanchardstown (2) in the west to Ringsend (2) in the east. Though a large number of different areas were involved, they were almost all areas characterised by a high proportion of corporation housing and often by the prevalence of opiate drug abuse and high levels of longterm unemployment. Only 6 individuals came from more obviously mixed housing or middle-class areas ie. one each from Rathmines, Kimmage, Sandyford, Bray, Swords, and Santry.

The greatest concentration by far of current addresses of the prisoners was in two areas of the inner city — the D1 north inner city from Sherrif Street to Summerhill (16) and the D8 south inner city from the Oliver Bond flats complex to the so-called

Fatima Mansions complex (17). Four other areas provided residence for more than 4 prisoners. These were: Dublin 7 (8), Clondalkin (7), Coolock (7), and Finglas (6). These six areas alone account for 56% of the population of Mountjoy Prison.

Examination of place of origin as opposed to current address indicated very little mobility amongst the members of the sample, since most prisoners were still living in the area in which they were raised. Only 3 prisoners were raised outside the country — one in Northern Ireland, one in Jamaica, and one in England, and the latter was of Irish parentage and now domiciled in Ireland. Thirteen others were raised in Irish towns and cities outside of Dublin. The remaining 92 (85%) were raised in Dublin, mainly in the areas of current residence. There was, however, evidence of some movement between areas and the most frequent areas of origin were in order: D1, north inner city (17), D2, south inner city (10), Finglas (8), Ballyfermot (8), Coolock (7), D7 (5), and Crumlin (5). Most notably, comparison of the figures for current address and for place of origin indicate some migration out of the Ballyfermot and south inner city areas and into the Clondalkin area.

Mountjoy is the committal prison for 20 of the 26 counties and operates as a remand prison for all the more serious cases being heard in the Dublin courts. The predominance of Dublin prisoners is, therefore, disproportionate, although it should be borne in mind that there is a degree of regionalisation in the prison system. Most prisoners from Munster are housed in the Cork and Limerick prisons and a substantial number of prisoners from the Western and Northern counties are held in Loughan House Prison.

Nonetheless, the homogeneity of the Mountjoy population is remarkable; first because it is overwhelmingly Irish; second because it is overwhelmingly urban; third because it has an overwhelmingly Dublin bias; and finally because its composition is so biased towards residents of such a small number of predominantly working class areas characterised by a high proportion of corporation housing and indeed by many other indices of relative deprivation such as high unemployment rates and opiate abuse.

Prison systems in Europe almost without exception have very high proportions of non-national and foreign born prisoners. This applies both to countries with and those, like Ireland, without a tradition of large-scale immigration. For example, Council of Europe figures [29] tell us that the foreign born segment of the prison population in 1992 in Sweden, Austria, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, and Switzerland were respectively 25%, 26%, 27%, 17%, 15%, 29% and 47%. The January 1st 1996 census of the Irish prison system indicates that 6% of the prison population are non-nationals (born outside the island of Ireland). This is a much higher figure than found in this survey of Mountjoy (2%) and suggests a concentration of foreign



prisoners in other prisons in the system. However, it is likely that some of these non-nationals were people of Irish parentage born outside the country. Several members of the present sample, in fact, had been born in England but their families had returned to Ireland when they were infants and they considered Ireland their place of origin. Even if one accepts the higher figure of 6% as the proportion of non-nationals in the Irish prison system, this is very low by comparison with other European prison systems and confirms the unusual homogeneity of the Irish prison population and especially of Mountjoy Prison.

According to Census figures [28] about 43% of the Irish population have a rural dwelling or live in a town or village with less than 1500 inhabitants. Few of the prisoners in the sample came from this farming and small town and village community. Most of the non-Dublin prisoners came from sizeable towns, which are important regional commercial and industrial centres eg. Galway, Waterford, Kilkenny. There were only 2 exceptions, prisoners, who came from the relatively small towns of Ballymote and Kilcock. Given the general population structure this indicates a very marked under-representation, in the Mountjoy population, of rural people and a corresponding over-representation of people with an urban background.

Finally, the homogeneity of the Mountjoy population is underlined by the considerable over-representation of Dublin people and of people from specific areas within Dublin. This situation shows little change from that prevailing at the time of the 1986 survey when offenders from 5 specific areas of Dublin made up about 50% of the sample.

The over-representation of Dubliners is very evident in relation to general population figures, but is, to a large extent, explained by the hugely disproportionate amount of crime committed in Dublin. According to the 1995 Garda Report on Crime [30], 57% of all reported indictable crime in the State in that year was committed in the Dublin Metropolitan Area, which has less than one third of the country's population. There were 27,000 indictable crimes reported for the north and south inner cities areas alone, an area of little more than one square mile, and this figure is not far short of the total number of indictable crimes (29,872) reported in the whole country outside the cities of Dublin Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford. While the indictable crime rate was 222 per 1000 capita in Dublin's north inner city, it was less than 10 per 1000 capita in some of the counties for which Mountjoy serves as a committal prison eg Mayo, Cavan, and Sligo.

### **e) Household and Housing Type**

The information in Table 7 refers to the living arrangements of the members of the achieved sample and the type of accommodation in which they normally reside. Eight of the prisoners could not give a fixed address and could be classed as homeless. Two

of this group were travellers, who stayed at various halting sites, 4 were regular clients of hostels and 2 were moving around most of the time sleeping where they could — often on the streets. In addition to this group, 11 prisoners lived alone. So in total 19 prisoners, or 18% of the sample, did not live within any family grouping.

Almost a third of the sample lived with their wives or girlfriends and children, although 3 of these were living either with their own or their girlfriend's parents. The largest group (41%) still lived in the parental home and a further 9% lived with other relatives such as grandparents or sisters. This means that only 42 prisoners, or 39%, had set up a home of their own and many of this group were living with wives or girlfriends and children and it may reasonably be assumed that in many of these cases it was the girlfriend who obtained and maintained the accommodation. The total still living with parents and other relatives was 52, or 50% of the sample.

These results are broadly similar to those for the 1986 survey, in which 10% were found to be living alone, 3% were homeless, 55% were living with their parents and 26% with their wives or girlfriends and children. Over the decade, therefore, there has been some decline in the number of prisoners still living with parents and roughly corresponding increases in the numbers living with their own families or clearly classifiable as homeless.

There are considerably more marked differences between the Mountjoy Prison population in 1996 and the prison population in England and Wales as described by the National Prison Survey of 1991. In England and Wales, almost half of the sample (49%) had been living with their spouse or partner and only 23% with their parents or other relatives. The proportion of homeless was similar at 7% but considerably more prisoners in England and Wales were living alone (18%).

**Table 7: Residential Arrangements**

	Living with Parents	With wife/ Girlfriend/ Children*	Alone	With other relatives	Homeless or in hostels etc.
	43(41%)	34(33%)	11(11%)	9(9%)	8(8%)
In House	37	18	2	6	NA
In Flat	6	16	9	3	NA
Rented Owner Occupied	32	26	11	6	NA
	11	8	0	3	NA
*Including 2 living with girlfriend and child at her parents' and one with girlfriend and child at his parents'. Total 105 — Missing data 3					

Sixty percent of the sample lived in houses and 32% in flats. Precisely one third of the houses were owner occupied but only 1 out of the 34 flats. According to Census figures [28], on a national basis less than 7% of the population live in flats and a substantial minority of these own or mortgage the flat. The fact that about a third of the sample live in rented flat accommodation, almost all of it in inner Dublin corporation schemes, is, therefore, a highly distinctive marker for the prison population.

Altogether only 22 of the members of the sample (21%) lived in owner-occupied accommodation but in 14 of these cases the accommodation was owned by parents or other relatives. In other words, a total of only 8 prisoners (7.6%) either owned or held a mortgage on their home. There is little change in this area since 1986 when 22% of the sample lived in owner-occupied homes and 34% lived in rented flats and only 4% owned their own home. The most noticeable difference between the Mountjoy and English and Welsh prisoners in this area is that a much larger proportion of the latter (16% versus 7.6% in Mountjoy in 1996) tend to be owner occupiers in their own right.

The rate of house ownership in the Mountjoy sample both by the prisoners themselves and their parents etc. is evidently extremely low. On a national basis more than 70% of households are owner occupied, that is either owned outright or owned with the help of a mortgage.

## **f) Family Characteristics**

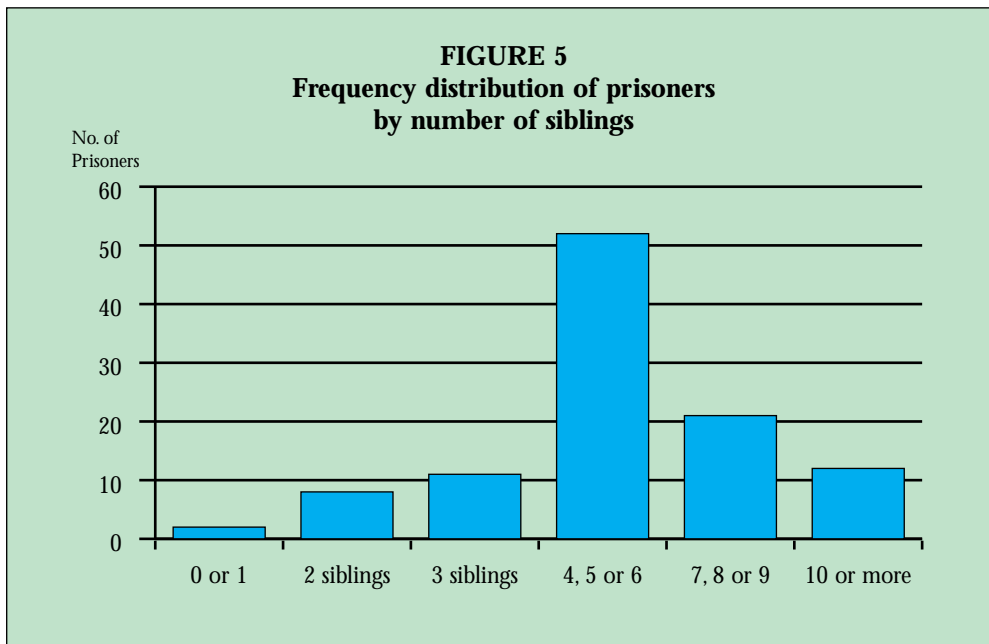
### **Size of the family of origin**

The prisoners had on average 5.7 siblings ( with a standard deviation of 3). In other words, adding in themselves, they came from families that had an average of just under 7 children. Only one prisoner was an only child. In total, only 11 members of the sample, or 10%, came from families with less than 4 children.

The most common sizes of families of origin were 5 and 6 children, and 40 prisoners (37%) came from such families. On the other hand, 33 (31%) came from families with at least 8 children. The average family size for the 1986 sample was almost exactly 8, thus there has been a decline of a little more than 1 child in the average family size of Mountjoy prisoners over the 10 year period. This decline undoubtedly mirrors the national decline in family size in recent years. The average family size fell from 3.45 to 3.21 from 1971 to 1981 [28].

However, it is clear that the average family size of these prisoners is exceptionally high and more than double the national average. In 1991, only 1.4% of women giving birth gave birth to an eighth or higher child. Indeed, only 18.6% gave birth to a fourth or higher child. By contrast, 90% of the present sample were from families of 4 or more children and 31% from families of 8 or more children. In 1981, 38% of

the families in the State were of 4 or more children and only 6% of 8 or more children, although it should be noted that many of these families were not yet complete.



West and Farrington [31] have drawn attention to the evidently significant role of large family size in the genesis of delinquency and crime and Ernst and Angst [32] in their thorough review of the area argue that it is one of the best established facts of criminology that offenders come from larger families than non-offenders.

While the statistical relationship is undoubtedly strong the causal relationship between large family size and criminality is complex and indirect. There are many mediating and confounding variables such as poverty, poor housing, or lack of supervision and parental control, all of which have a more direct influence on behaviour than family size per se. But large family size is very often linked with a syndrome of social and economic problems that can contribute to criminality and, as in this study, it is often found to be one of the most clearcut and powerful statistical markers capable of clearly distinguishing offenders from non-offenders at the aggregate level.

The present results confirm in the Irish context that offenders and especially imprisoned offenders tend to come from large families, but the results for this Mountjoy sample are extreme by international comparison both in regard to the large average family size of 7 children and the wide gap between the average size of prisoners' families and the average in society in general. For example, Kolvin et al [33] in their large-scale, longitudinal study of a cohort of people born in the Newcastle U.K. area

in 1947 has found that offenders come from significantly larger families. However, the average family size of offenders in the Kolvin et al cohort was 3.7, close to half that of the Mountjoy sample, and was only a little more than 1 child per family larger than the average family size ( 2.5) for non-offenders in the cohort.

It is worth noting that there is some evidence from the data on the parenting patterns of members of the sample that suggests a possible breaking of this cycle of large family size. After all, only one member of the sample himself had what might be termed a large family (7 children) and, although most of the sample had not by any means completed their families, that is ceased begetting children, the average age of the prisoners was over 28 years. The increasingly casual approach to fatherhood and the high rate of breakdown in the prisoners' own families, whether within legal marriage or cohabitation, are factors which suggest that these prisoners are less likely even in the longterm to have exceptionally large families.

### **Birth Order**

Birth order within a family has been widely studied as a potential contributory factor in the emergence of delinquency. However, there is a lack of consensus on the nature of the imputed causal influence and there is considerable ambiguity in the research literature. This has led Ernst and Angst [32] to the conclusion that there is little empirical support for theories suggesting a role for birth order in the explanation of delinquency.

Excluding 5 cases from the analysis where there was an only child, or only 2 children, or three children when 2 are twins, there were 103 families in this study. This means there were 103 opportunities for a sample member to be either an eldest or a youngest child. But there were a total of 479 middle-born children in the 103 families, so that the expected ratio of youngest to eldest to middle-born children — under the assumption that this group of offenders are not more likely to be in one category more than another — is 15.5: 15.5: 72. The actual ratio was 20: 15: 68, indicating a slight over-representation of youngest children and a corresponding slight under-representation of middle-born children. In a sample of this size, this is evidently not a major departure from expected values and is unlikely to indicate anything more than chance fluctuation. Furthermore, in 1986, the Mountjoy sample showed an opposite tendency with a slight under-representation of youngest children and slight over-representation of middle-borns. These results, therefore, confirm the view of Ernst and Angst [32] that birth order is not a major factor in the genesis of delinquency.

### **The gender composition of families of origin**

Another issue arising from the composition of an offender's family centers on the role of brothers as models for or instigators of delinquent behaviour. The contagion theory

of delinquency associated with Robins et al [34] amongst others suggests that delinquency will be more likely in families where boys are more numerous than girls and where there are older brothers who can act as delinquent role models for their younger male siblings. In fact, the members of the sample had more sisters than brothers — 299 versus 291, and this result clearly does not diverge significantly from chance expectation.

Furthermore, 8 members of the sample had only sisters, while 5 came from families consisting entirely of boys. However, when the gender of all older siblings only was examined it was found that members of the sample had 161 older brothers compared to 134 older sisters and 19 had only older brothers compared to 15 with only older sisters. This slight preponderance of brothers amongst older siblings offers a modicum of support for the contagion hypothesis, but the results in general suggest strongly that the gender composition of a family is not a very powerful or clearcut influence on criminality.

### **Loss or absence of parents at an early age**

The 'broken home', especially the home broken by marital separation or desertion, has long been suspected as an important contributor to delinquency and criminality. The broken home has been the frequent subject of criminological research and many researchers have established a statistical link between homes broken by divorce, separation, and desertion (and less frequently death and illness) and delinquency. For example, Burt [35], Glueck and Glueck [36], West and Farrington [31] and Offord [37] all report a significantly higher rate of broken homes among delinquents than among control groups of non-delinquents. An Irish study by O'Mahony et al, [38] replicated these findings with a large group of juvenile offenders, but only in the case of those with homes broken by divorce, separation or desertion. In that study the Irish juvenile offender group had experienced divorce, separation or desertion in their family 5 times more frequently than a matched control group. On the other hand, although the juvenile offenders had lost a parent through death slightly more frequently than the members of the control group, this difference did not reach statistical significance.

Very significantly, although the relatively high rate of broken homes in the background of Irish juvenile offenders compared with non-offenders conforms with international research findings, the actual rate of breakdown found in the Irish study is distinctive because it is very low in comparison to results from other countries. In fact, only about 10% of the Irish group came from homes broken by divorce, separation or desertion. This is a very low rate when contrasted with British and American results, which frequently show at least 40% of delinquents to be in the broken home category. This result clearly reflects major cultural differences, including the past absence of legal divorce in Ireland (the first Irish divorce was granted by the High Court in

January 1997), and the much greater prevalence of marriage breakdown amongst the general population of the U.S.A. and Britain than of Ireland.

In fact, recent criminological research has taken a more critical and nuanced look at the evidence on the influence of the broken home on the development of delinquency. This recent research argues, on two separate grounds, that the role of the broken home has been exaggerated. First, writers like McCord [39] contend that it is not the broken home per se which promotes delinquency but other crucial factors, such as marital discord, maternal rejection, paternal deviance poor or inconsistent discipline, and neglectful attitudes, which may be — but are not necessarily — associated with a broken home. McCord believes that, if a home is broken but manages to avoid problems of this kind, the status of the home will not be a factor in the creation of delinquency. Conversely, the intact home which is affected by any of these problems will tend to promote delinquency in its children. Much the same kind of argument applies to the increasingly common situation of single parenting. It appears that it is the quality of parenting provided by the single parent more than the absence of the father (as is the usual case) that is the crucial influence on the behaviour of the child.

A second line of research, which also casts some doubt over the importance of the broken home as such as a cause of delinquency, is the work which demonstrates that, in the past, differences between delinquents and non-delinquents have been exaggerated because of biases against children from broken homes in criminal justice system decision-making. For example, both Nye [40] and Wadsworth [41] have demonstrated that for an ostensibly similar crime the child from a broken home is considerably more likely to be given a custodial sentence by a court than the child from an intact home. Therefore, in studies comparing detained offenders with controls or the general population, the excess of broken homes in the background of the detained is, to some unknown extent, explicable in terms of systematic bias against the child of a broken home rather than in terms of any direct influence of a broken home on the propensity to offend.

Turning, then, to the results from this study, out of the achieved sample of 108 Mountjoy prisoners, 48 had lost 1 or both of their parents due to death by the time of the survey. Twenty-seven had lost a father, 14 a mother and a further 7 had lost both parents. However, only 13 (12%) of this group had lost one or both of their parents due to death before they reached the age of 16 years. Six had lost a father, 5 had lost a mother and 2 had lost both parents before they were 16 years. In fact, 8 of the 13 had lost a parent before they were 10 years. These figures are of the same order of magnitude as found in the 1986 Mountjoy survey, in which 13% of the sample had lost one or both parents by 16 years and somewhat lower than the 1985 study by O'Mahony et al [38] which found that about 17% of the 870 juvenile offenders studied had lost a parent or parents due to death.

On the other hand 30 (28%) of the prisoners in the present sample came from families broken by separation, divorce, or desertion. In addition one individual had been brought up by his grandmother from the age of 4 months, another had been adopted at the age of 3, and a third had been adopted at the age of 12, having lived in institutions until that time. In 29 of these 33 cases, or 27% of the total sample, the separation of parents or of child from parents had occurred before the prisoner had reached the age of 16 years. Taking all early family disruptions into account including those caused by the early death of a parent, we find that just sixty-three, or 58%, of the present sample were brought up by both parents until the age of 16 years.

These figures for the present Mountjoy sample show a very considerable deterioration in the area of family life compared with the results for both the 1985 study by O'Mahony et al [38] and the 1986 Mountjoy survey. The total proportion of prisoners suffering from a disrupted early family situation is much higher and the difference is due mainly to a large increase in the number of families broken by divorce, separation, and desertion. This rate has increased from 10% in the 1985 sample and 13% in the 1986 sample to 27% in the 1996 sample.

The National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] reports that 62% of the prisoners there (compared with 58% in Mountjoy) had spent most of the time up to the age of 16 years with both parents and 19% with just one parent. However, in the England and Wales sample an additional 8% of prisoners had spent most of their childhood in an institution. This gives the same total proportion (27%), for the present Mountjoy sample and for the England and Wales sample, that were brought up in a disrupted family situation, although the present results show that the Mountjoy prisoners are comparatively more likely to come from a single parent situation and less likely to have been reared in an institution.

### **Time in Institutional Care**

The prisoners were also asked whether they had spent any time in institutions for children. Only 14, or 13%, said that they had been in such institutions. Ten of this group were from families that had suffered an early disruption through divorce, separation, or desertion or due to death and the remaining 4 were from intact families. The longest period spent in institutions was 12 years but for most of this group duration in care lasted from between several months and two years. Only 4 of the group had extensive experience of institutional care before they were 10 years of age. In the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] twice as many prisoners (8% versus at most 4% in the present survey) stated that they had mainly been brought up in institutions and twice as many (26% versus 13%) that they had ever been taken into care before the age of 16 years.



## **Family history of imprisonment**

The 108 members of the achieved sample were asked if any first degree relative, i.e. parent, sibling, or child, had ever been in prison. Family history of criminality has been the subject of much research by criminologists, usually within a broader theoretical context emphasizing the role of modelling, social learning, and socialisation in the development of juvenile delinquency. In particular, the research focus has been on the negative influence of a criminal father or a criminal brother in predisposing an individual to crime. Investigations have sought to prove a cross-generational or intra-familial transmission of criminal attitudes and behaviour. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber [42] have published a wide-ranging review of the literature in this area, summarising the substantive findings. They conclude, from an analysis of many different studies, that parental criminality, particularly that of the father, is an important, but moderate predictor of juvenile delinquency. They also report that the available evidence strongly confirms that the presence in a family of one delinquent child appreciably increases the probability that other children in the family will become delinquent.

Studies in this area have used different definitions of criminality. They range from a very inclusive definition based on self-reported offences, through those based on arrests and convictions, to the very narrow but possibly most reliable index of serious criminality — incarceration. Incarceration usually signifies a clearcut and serious involvement in crime and is examined in this study. Altogether 54 members of the sample, or exactly 50%, had a first degree relative who had been in prison. Sixteen prisoners (15%) had a father who had been in prison and in 6 of these cases the father was the only close relative who had been in prison. One mother had been in prison.

Forty-eight prisoners (44%) had a sibling who had been in prison. Forty-six of these had at least one brother who had been in prison (23 a single brother, 14 two brothers, 9 more than 2 brothers). For two prisoners a single sister was the only close relative who had been in prison, but altogether 7 had a sister or sisters who had been incarcerated. Altogether, then, twenty-two of the members of the sample (20%) had more than one sibling, who had been in prison. Five prisoners had more than three siblings who had been in prison, ranging up to 2 cases where 6 siblings had been in prison. Altogether, 88 siblings (78 brothers and 10 sisters) had been incarcerated. However, it is worth noting that this amounts to only 15% of the total number of 590 siblings belonging to the members of the sample. Twenty-seven percent of the total number of brothers of the members of the sample had been in prison. Of course, an unknown percentage of these siblings at the time of the survey would not have reached the age when they would be at risk of incarceration.

In the decade since 1986 there have been some notable changes in this area. In the 1986 Mountjoy survey a considerably smaller proportion of the Mountjoy population

(40% versus 50% in the present sample) had at least one first degree relative who had been in prison. In particular, the proportion whose father had been in prison has more than doubled from 7% to 15%. In both surveys, brothers overwhelmingly predominated amongst the relatives who had been in prison — 37% of prisoners in 1986 and 43% in 1996 had brothers who had been in prison. The proportion of the sample with more than one first degree relative who had been in prison increased from 19% to 28% over the ten years.

The results concerning the brothers of the offenders in the sample are consistent with the international findings on the concentration of crime in a small proportion of families and are, to a limited extent, supportive of theories, such as that of Robins et al [34], on the spread of criminal activity between siblings. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber [42] report that both British and American research shows that between 50% and 75% of delinquents are concentrated in a very small sector of the population. For example, West and Farrington [31] found that 5% of the families, in their prospective, longitudinal investigation of a sample of 400 London working-class children, accounted for half of the criminal convictions of the whole sample. Much of this concentration was accounted for by single members of a family attracting a great many convictions. However, the tendency for delinquency to run amongst boys in the same family also made a substantial contribution to the concentration of crime, since 11% of families in the London study accounted for half of all convicted boys. West and Farrington found that a boy with a convicted brother was two and a half times more likely to become delinquent than a boy with only unconvicted brothers. Although there is evidence that the influence of a criminal brother is significant, it should be emphasised that in the London study only a minority of those who had convicted brothers themselves became delinquent and in the present survey a 54% majority of all the brothers studied (ie. the survey respondents and all their male siblings) had not been imprisoned by the time of the survey despite having one or more imprisoned brothers.

While the present findings are consistent with views that stress the negative influence of a criminal father or brother, it is equally important to note that half of the present sample of offenders come from families where no other member has been imprisoned. While having a criminal father or a criminal brother will, on the whole, increase the chances that an individual will be involved in crime, the relationship is of only moderate strength. A family history of criminality is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for involvement in crime.

### **g) Socio-economic characteristics including educational and work experience**

The role of social class in the generation of criminality is, internationally, an important topic of research, analysis, and public debate. The international research has confirmed

the strong links between various forms of socio-economic deprivation and serious involvement in crime. In recent years, the most impressive and incontrovertible evidence has come from prospective longitudinal research such as that by Kolvin et al [33], who studied a birth cohort of children born in Newcastle, U.K., until they were 33 years of age. Kolvin et al report that only 2% of those who had earned a criminal record by the age of 33 came from social classes I and II, while 56% came from the lowest class. An individual from the lowest class was 3 times more likely to have a criminal record than one from the first 2 classes. Furthermore, an individual's criminal record tended to involve more offences and more serious offences, the lower the class of the individual.

After a wide-ranging examination of the association between rates of offending and various indices of deprivation, Kolvin et al concluded that "the cardinal finding of the Newcastle research is the dramatic increase in the rates of delinquency and criminality in relation to the severity of deprivation in the family of origin". In fact, they found that as many as 60% of males coming from multiply deprived family backgrounds eventually ended up with a criminal record.

There is no equivalent longitudinal Irish research on birth cohorts but there is much compelling descriptive evidence on offender populations suggesting a causal association between socio-economic marginalisation and involvement in crime. Many commentators and analysts have taken the view that this relationship is undeniable. The McBride Commission on the Irish Penal System [43] stated the case in very strong terms: "Virtually the only criminality/deviancy/socially disruptive behaviour we penalise is that which emanates from the most disadvantaged sections of our community". More moderately the authors of "Punishment and Imprisonment" [44], a publication sponsored by the Christian churches in Ireland, stated that "those who suffer to a greater than average degree from unemployment, low income, deficient education, bad housing, and family breakdown are also those more likely than average to commit a crime and to go to prison." The Whitaker Report [21] concluded that "most crime at present originates amongst unemployed youth in disadvantaged areas".

The issues are, of course, by no means straightforward. Two strands of evidence and argument that conflict with a simplistic equation of crime with socio-economic disadvantage are the wide prevalence of middle-class or so called white-collar crime and the much cited fact that most people from highly disadvantaged backgrounds and even many from multiply deprived families do not embark on a criminal career.

The sociologist, Ciaran McCullagh [45] has forcefully challenged the notion that the bulk of crime is committed by working-class offenders on the credible grounds that an immense amount of white collar crime goes unnoticed and unpunished, at least by the conventional apparatus of the criminal justice system. He points to tax evasion,

insider-dealing, frauds by individuals and by corporations, and dramatic cases of corporate and State neglect and irresponsibility, such as the Gulf Oil terminal disaster in Bantry Bay. He argues that crimes of financial dishonesty have a pervasive presence in Irish society but that this is not reflected in official statistical reports on crime or in the prison population, which are both dominated by the general run of burglary and property theft committed by offenders from the recognised, marginalised 'criminal classes'.

On the other hand, the law-abiding behaviour of most people from a deprived background is not a proof that there is no real link between deprivation and criminality but rather that, in causal terms, the link is not one of necessity or sufficiency. Social deprivation is not sufficient in itself to cause criminality and a socially deprived background does not inevitably lead to a life of crime. The undeniable cogency of these types of objection [46] to a naive theory of the role of deprivation in crime points to the need to acknowledge the importance of individual-based factors such as temperament, unique aspects of personal experience, and intellectual, psychological, and physical resources, all of which are likely to interact with adverse aspects of a person's social background to make crime more or less likely.

As West and Farrington [31] have pointed out research clearly demonstrates that "convicted criminals are not typical representatives of their class". Clearly, there is a complex interplay between personal characteristics and the social environment and a simplistic view of the role of social deprivation and social class in crime is inadequate and inappropriate. Farrington [47] has highlighted the complex interplay of person and environment with his statement: "Given the same environment, some people will be more likely to commit offenses than others, and, conversely, the same person will be more likely to commit offenses in some environments than in others."

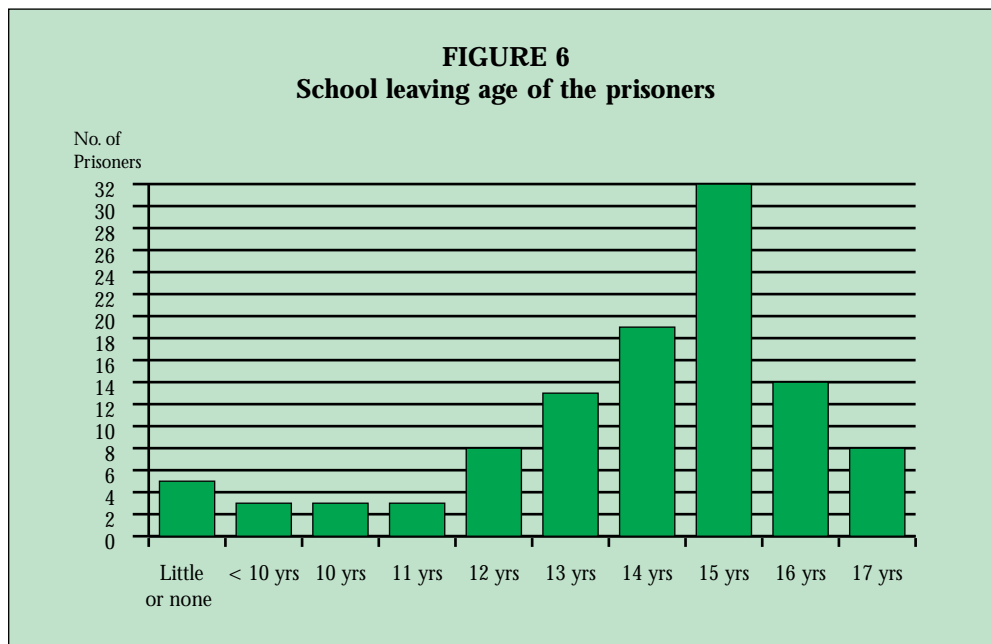
A further complication is the fact that social class membership and, indeed, relative social deprivation are highly complex, multi-faceted phenomena. An individual's position in the socio-economic and class hierarchies is related to many different things, including money, property, power, prestige, type of employment and educational qualifications.

This section focuses on the offender's educational, vocational training and employment history and also on the socio-economic status of the offender's family of origin, as indicated by parental employment patterns. These variables are self-evidently important indicators of general socio-economic status and of an offender's position on the continuum of relative social advantage and disadvantage. They are also relatively clearcut, reliable, and objective indicators, readily amenable to quantitative analysis.

The results for these areas can be usefully placed in the context of earlier results that have touched on questions of relative deprivation. For example, it has already been established that the members of the sample are highly unusual in the degree to which they live in flats and rented accommodation, come from areas noted for chronic employment, and come from very large families and families broken by divorce separation and desertion.

## Schooling

The educational experience and success of the sample was very limited. Eighty-six (80%) of the prisoners had left school before the age of 16 years. Only 8 (7.4%) of them stayed at school beyond the age of 16 years. None had attended a third level institution. Fifteen years, which for these prisoners was the minimum school leaving age, was the most common age for the prisoners to have left school. However, exactly half of the total sample had actually left school before 15 years. Five claimed to have never or very little attended school and a further 6 had not attended school beyond the age of ten years. In total 36, or precisely one third of the sample, had never attended a school higher than the primary or special school level.



Only 27, or exactly one quarter of the sample, had sat public examinations. Three had sat the Junior Certificate and 12 the Intermediate Certificate and a further 10 had sat the Group Certificate. Several of these had failed at all subjects sat and several had done these exams while in prison, through the prison education system. Five prisoners had gone beyond this initial level with 3 progressing to the Leaving Certificate and 2 to Open University exams, the latter through the prison education system.

If this very low level of educational attainment demonstrates a clear tendency for the prison population to have failed educationally, this conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that 63% of the members of the sample claimed to have truanted regularly from school. By contrast, the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] reported that 30% of prisoners claimed to have mostly played truant after 11 years of age. This compared with a figure of 3% truanting in the general population of England and Wales.

Emphasising the extremely poor comparative educational position of this sample of prisoners, it is found that approximately 78% of the general population at present completes the Leaving Certificate and over 80% stays on at school beyond 16 years. A recent OECD [48] report has stated that even amongst the 25-64 years old category of the adult population in Ireland as many as 46% have attained a Leaving Certificate education.

A recent ESRI report [49] is interesting because it shows that the stark level of educational failure amongst this group of prisoners is totally unrepresentative not just of the general population but also of the children of unskilled manual workers. Only 4.6% of the prisoners in this survey had the Leaving Certificate, while 52.5% of all the children of unskilled manual workers attain this standard. By contrast, 97.1% of the children of higher professionals obtain the Leaving Certificate. Generally, only 16.2% of unskilled manual workers' children leave school without any educational qualification whatsoever. None of the children of higher professionals do so and only 2.7% of farmers' children and 5.9% of skilled manual workers' children do so. By comparison a massive 77% of the members of the Mountjoy sample had no educational qualification. Tussing [50], commenting on figures such as these, made the comment, which is particularly pointed in the context of imprisoned offenders, that in Ireland "schooling is part of a vicious circle in which existing inequalities are repeatedly passed on from generation to generation."

Comparisons with the results of the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] are generally unfavourable. The number of prisoners in England and Wales who had left school before the age of 16 years was, at 43%, much lower than the 80% found in this survey. In other respects also the differences between the 2 samples were very marked. For example, only 1% in England and Wales said they had never attended school and 44% ( compared to 23% in Mountjoy ) had attained some formal educational qualification, including 8% at a level higher than 'O' level, the equivalent to the Irish Junior Certificate. Forty-three percent of the English and Welsh sample had no qualifications on arrival in prison compared to the 77% without qualifications in the Mountjoy sample.

Looking back to the results of the 1986 survey of Mountjoy prisoners, it is apparent that there has been little improvement in this area. There has been a slight decline in

the number of prisoners who had not progressed beyond the primary level, from 37% in 1986 to 33% in 1996, and the number obtaining educational qualifications has also increased somewhat from 17% to 23%. However, the proportion of the prison population who had left school before the age of 16 years has actually increased from 78% to 80% and the proportion staying at school or obtaining qualifications after the age of 16 years has actually declined from 11% to 7%.

## **Work Training**

The picture of the work training experience of the members of the sample is somewhat more positive than that of their academic educational experience. In total 57 prisoners (53%) had had some form of skills training. This is a slight increase over the situation in 1986 when it was found that 48% of the sample had some form of vocational training.

Twenty-one prisoners had attended Anco or FAS courses, many for as long as 12 months, and 3 had received training from the Youthreach programme. In addition, 33 prisoners (31%) had some specific work-related training, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training. A considerable proportion of the training had been obtained in prison or on programmes funded by the criminal justice system.

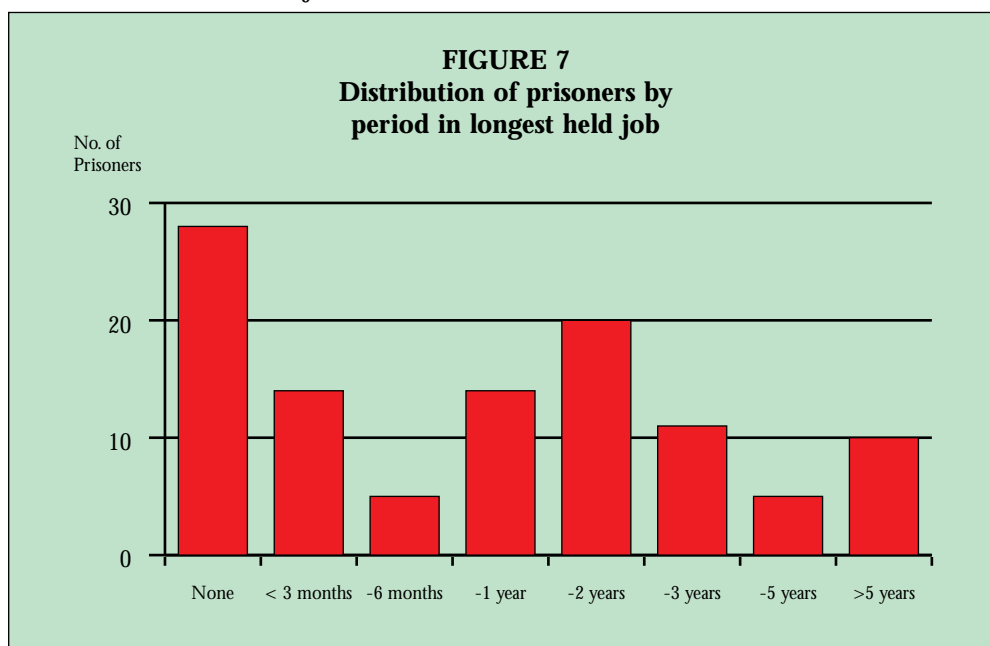
The most common occupations for which prisoners had some training were carpentry/cabinet-making and baking/catering (both 5 cases). Three had trained as mechanics, 2 as tilers, 2 as sheetmetalworkers, and 2 as painter/decorators. Single prisoners had some training in a diverse collection of other occupations, including jockey, plumber, electrician, dry-cleaning operative, carpetlayer, operating theatre technician, storeman, and upholsterer. Ten members of the sample had completed training or had extensive work experience in a specialised area and could be considered as qualified skilled or semi-skilled workers. In addition, a further 6 had more than 1 year's training — for example one individual had spent 3 years as an apprentice plumber, but had not fully qualified. This group of 16 prisoners (15%) may be described as having had substantial working careers and opportunities.

However, generally speaking, exposure to some work training was not a reliable predictor of a stable working career or indeed of significant employment opportunities. Sixteen (39%) of the 41 other prisoners, who had received less extensive work training (ie. excluding the 16 with substantial training and working careers), had in fact never held a 'proper' job. One had worked for one week and one had worked casually. Fourteen, however, described themselves as having never been employed. Surprisingly, the proportion of those who had never worked, in the group of 51 prisoners that had not received any work training, was very similar to the proportion in the group of 57 prisoners that had (29% vs 28%), and substantially less than in the subgroup of 41 of these latter prisoners who had experience of 1 year or

less training (39%). The short training periods experienced by this latter group were generally organised by Anco, FAS, or the prison system.

## Employment history

Ninety-five (88%) of the members of the sample had been unemployed prior to their committal to prison. Only 10 prisoners had been in regular employment and a further 3 had been in casual employment. Twenty-nine (27%) of the sample claimed never to have had a proper job. These figures compare very poorly with the results from the National Prison Survey in England and Wales, which show that only 49% of English and Welsh prisoners were unemployed prior to imprisonment and only 6% of them had never had a job.

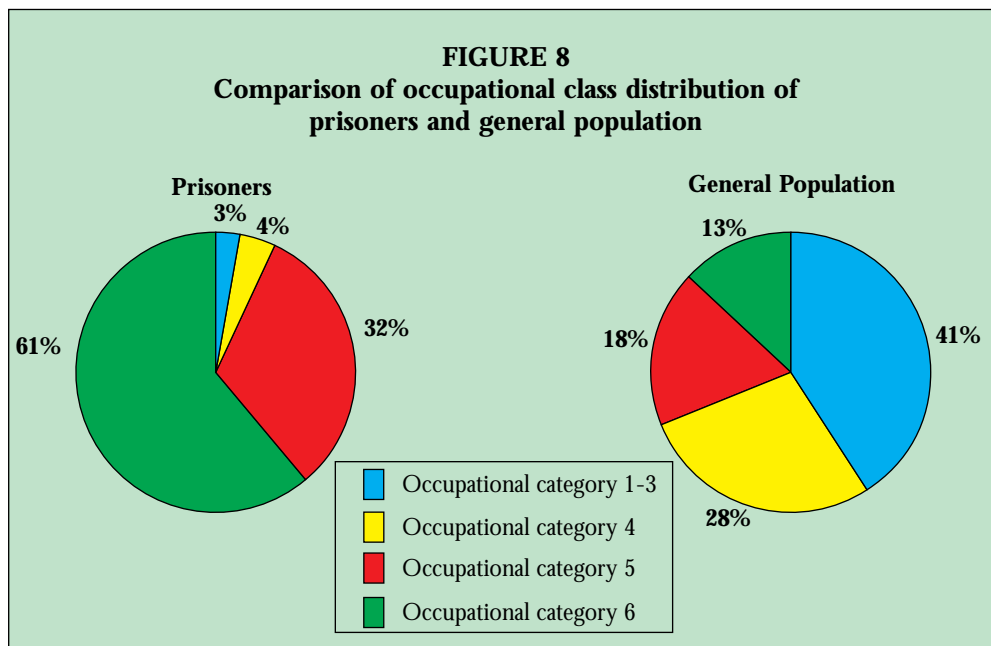


On the other hand, the majority of Mountjoy prisoners had employment experience, some of which was quite substantial. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the achieved sample of 108 prisoners by the duration of their longest held jobs. Forty-six prisoners (43%) had held a single job for at least 1 year (down from 68% in 1986), and 15 of these had been in the one job for more than 3 years. Eight of the 10 prisoners who were in employment prior to imprisonment were from this category of prisoners with experience of relatively longterm employment. At the other end of the spectrum, 48 prisoners (44%) had either no work experience or had never had a job that lasted more than 6 months.

Using the Medico-Social Research Board categorisation system [51], and on the basis of the prisoners' description of their best ever job or most skilful employment, just 3



prisoners were placed in categories 1-3, ie. professional, managerial and other white collar workers. These 3 prisoners were a car salesman, an operating theatre technician, and a taxi company owner. Four were placed in category 4, ie. skilled manual workers. Thirty-five were placed in category 5, ie. semi-skilled manual workers. The majority, 66 prisoners (61%), were placed in the lowest category 6, ie. non-skilled manual workers. This latter group, however, included 29 prisoners who had no significant work experience whatsoever. This distribution is graphed in Figure 8 which compares prisoners with the expected distribution of occupational classes in a representative sample from the general population.



As is clear from Figure 8, while a sizeable majority of the general population have jobs which can be graded as in categories 1-4, only a small minority of the prisoners fall into these categories. Conversely, an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of prisoners are classified in the 2 lowest levels of occupation (93%). Even this result overstates the occupational standing of the prisoners since many of those placed in category 6 had no training or significant work experience and many of the others did not have an established and stable career in their particular occupation. There is a marked disparity between these results and those of the National Prison Survey in England and Wales, which indicate that only 41% of prisoners there could be classified in the two lowest level occupational categories — semi-skilled and unskilled manual labour.

These various data on employment are somewhat confusing since they emphasise various aspects of the reality of the employment history of the prisoners. On the one

hand, the results are undeniably bleak and the rate of unemployment (88%) prior to imprisonment is very high indeed. This is a considerable increase on the results of the 1986 survey of Mountjoy prisoners which indicated that 79% had been unemployed prior to imprisonment. The percentage with no experience of work had greatly increased over the 10 years between the 2 surveys, from 6% to 29%.

The results of the present study are also very much worse than those in the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8], which found that 33% of prisoners were unemployed prior to imprisonment and a further 7% were working in the black economy or living off the proceeds of crime. In England and Wales more than 4 times as many prisoners as in this Mountjoy sample claimed regular employment immediately prior to imprisonment (51% versus 12%).

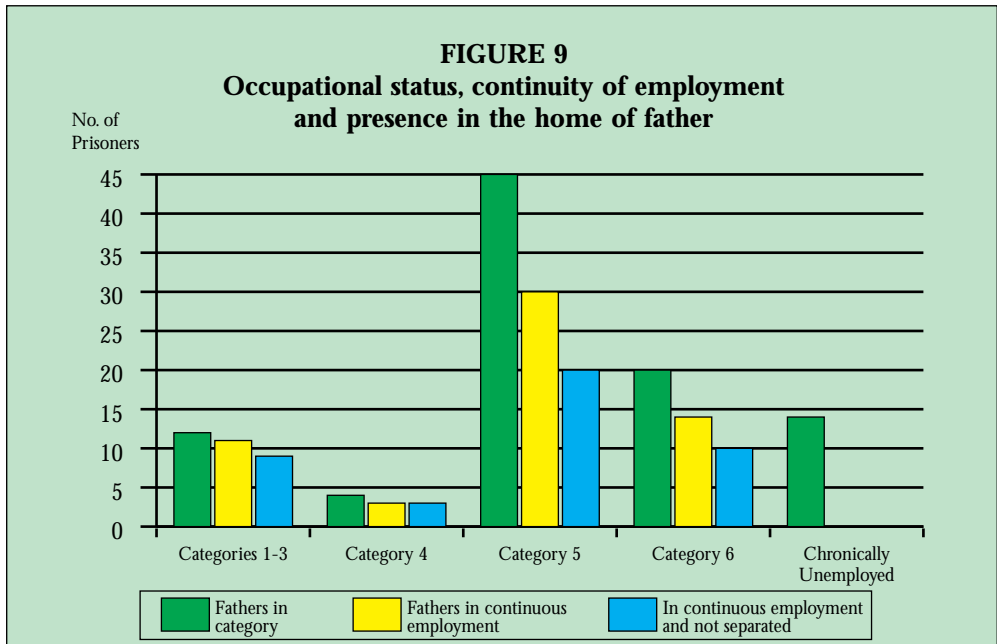
On the other hand, the data also provide clearcut evidence that many in this group of prisoners have benefited from useful vocational training and/or have established a substantial record of stable work experience. The 88% rate of unemployment prior to imprisonment is undoubtedly significant but it is misleading as a guide to the general employment history of the members of the sample. Some of the 77 prisoners, who had worked, had been in gainful and sometimes relatively skilled employment for a total of many years, although the more usual pattern was a disturbed one with intermittent periods of employment, imprisonment, and unemployment. As time went on, periods when the respondent was not in prison tended to be increasingly spent in unemployment. In other words, for the majority of those, who had worked, a great deal of the employment experience was concentrated in the late teenage years and the early twenties. Involvement with drugs and crime and periods of imprisonment in themselves make obtaining and holding a job much more difficult and also probably undermine the motivation to take up employment. Such factors no doubt help explain the very high rate of unemployment immediately prior to imprisonment.

### **Parental employment history**

Of the 95 fathers of prisoners (excluding 13 cases of loss of father to early death etc.) 14 (15%) were described as chronically unemployed and without an occupation. Twelve, however, were placed in categories 1-3, the higher occupational classes. These 12 men were a civil servant, a clerk of works, two farmers, a foreman mechanic, a manager, a salesman, a builder, and 4 business owners. Only 4 fathers were placed in the skilled manual category. The largest category by far was the 5th — semi-skilled manual workers — and included 45 (47%) of the 95 fathers. The most common occupations in category 5 were drivers (10) and roofers (4). The remaining 20 fathers, 21% of the 95, were placed in the 6th category — unskilled manual workers — and the most common occupations given were factory operative (6) and docker (3). However, 22, or 27%, of the 81 ever working fathers were described as normally unemployed or in and out of work. In particular, 15 or one third of the

fathers in the semi-skilled category were either mostly unemployed (7) or in casual employment only (8).

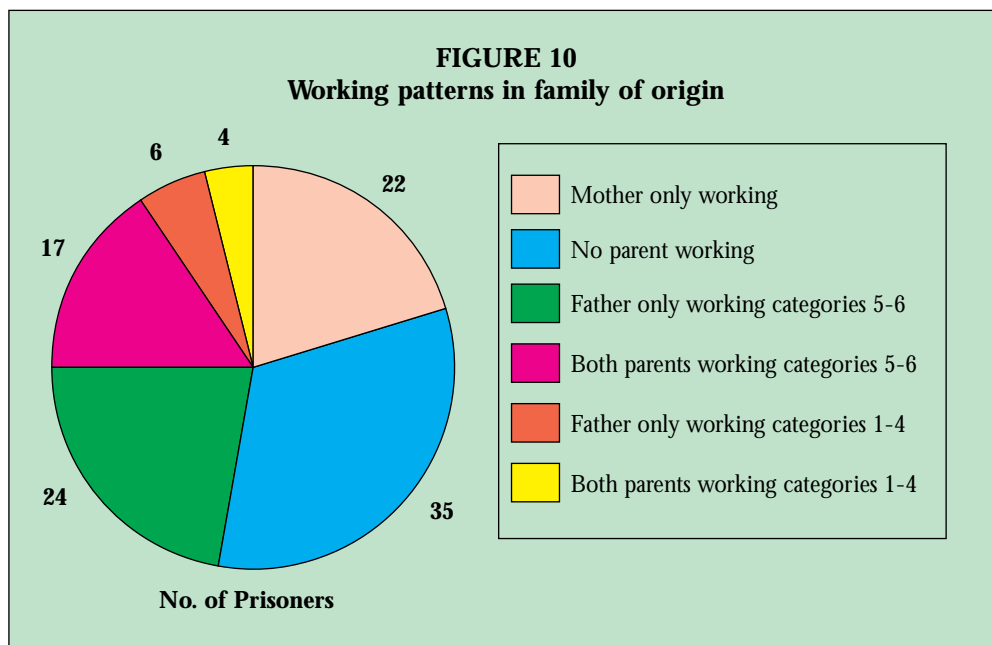
Of the 99 mothers about which there were data, 56 were not normally employed during the prisoners' childhood and adolescence. Of the 43 who had jobs the vast majority were in category 6 — unskilled manual work. Of the 6 mothers who could be classified as having higher level occupations, one was a nurse, one a writer, one a farmer, one a cleaning supervisor, one a cook, and one a turf accountant. The most common occupations for the other mothers were: cleaning (20), factory work (7), and street trading (4). The mothers who were described as working were overwhelmingly in continuous employment (38 of 43) and the remaining 5 were in and out of work. In this regard the mothers differed significantly from the fathers, a large number of who were generally unemployed or only casually employed (23 of 81), although described as having an occupation. In total 43% of the mothers, who had been present in the family home, were working mothers and 38% of them worked continuously.



Closer analysis of the parental employment record and collation of this information with the data on marriage breakdown indicate that the straightforward description of the occupational categories of the fathers of these prisoners could well be presenting a falsely positive picture of the relative stability and comfort of their socio-economic backgrounds. Figure 9 provides a breakdown of 95 prisoners' fathers' work history with respect to continuity of employment and whether or not the father was present in the family home. It can be seen that there is a significant decline — first when the record of continuity of employment is examined and then when presence in the

home is examined. While 81 fathers, (ie. those apart from the 14 chronically unemployed and the 13 who died at an early point or were never known to the prisoner) had a named occupation, many of them in the higher occupational categories, only 58 of them had a record of continuous employment, and only 42 had a record of continuous employment and had not separated from their families. This means that only 39% of this sample of prisoners grew up in a family with a steadily working father.

Even when one includes casual employment and considers both fathers and mothers the total number of prisoners coming from a home where any parent was working, as they grew up, was 73, or 68%. In 21 homes both parents worked, in 30 only the father, and in 22 only the mother. By this more generous criterion, including casual employment, 48% of the prisoners came from homes with a father who worked. Thirty-five percent of prisoners, or just a little more than one in three, came from homes with a working father, who had an occupation in category 5 or above. This group can perhaps be described as coming from a relatively stable and comfortable economic background, although this judgement takes no account of factors such as family size and possible financial and emotional disruptions associated with gambling, debt, alcoholism, etc.



Twenty percent of the total sample came from homes where only the mother worked and in every case the mothers' work was poorly remunerated unskilled labour. This group of 22 can reasonably be added to the group of 35 prisoners (32%), who came from homes where there was no working parent, and jointly classed as homes clearly

marked by economic disadvantage. This conclusion about economic disadvantage is bolstered by the fact that most of these families contained large numbers of children. This amounts to an estimated total of 55 prisoners, or about half of the sample, who came from unusually economically deprived home backgrounds.

### **Summary of main findings**

- The mean age for the total sample of 124 prisoners was 28 years and the age range was between 19 and 58. Approximately 38% of the total sample were under 25 years and about 69% were under 30. Only 6% were over 40 years of age.
- Only 20 of the achieved sample (of 108 prisoners) had ever been married and only 9 of these were still married at the time of the survey. However, a further 46% of the prisoners had been in a common law relationship. For 46% of this common law group the relationship had already ended. Fully 72% of the members of the sample stated that they had fathered a child.
- Only 3 prisoners had current addresses outside of Ireland. A further two prisoners had addresses in Northern Ireland. Of the remaining 99 prisoners, only 12 were from outside the Greater Dublin area. Almost all of the Dublin prisoners were from areas characterised by a high proportion of corporation housing and often by the prevalence of opiate drug abuse and high levels of longterm unemployment.
- Eight of the prisoners could not give a fixed address and could be classed as homeless. In total, 18% of the sample did not live within any family grouping. Almost a third of the sample lived with their wives or girlfriends and children. The largest group (41%), however, still lived in the parental home and a further 9% lived with other relatives such as grandparents or sisters. This means that 39% of prisoners had set up home on their own or with wives and girlfriends.
- Sixty percent of the prisoners lived in houses and 32% in flats. Altogether only 21% of the members of the sample lived in owner-occupied accommodation, and in most of these cases the accommodation was owned by parents or other relatives.
- The prisoners came from very large families that had an average of just under 7 children. Only 10% of them came from families with less than 4 children and 31% came from families with 8 or more children.
- Birth order and the gender composition of the family of origin did not appear to be important influences on the development of criminality in this group.

- Twenty-eight percent of the prisoners came from families broken by separation, divorce, or desertion. Taking all early family disruptions into account including those caused by the early death of a parent, only 58% of the present sample were found to have been brought up by both parents until the age of 16 years. However, only 4 of the group had extensive experience of institutional care before they were 10 years of age.
- Forty-four percent of the sample, had a sibling who had been in prison. Fifteen percent had a father who had been in prison and in 6 of these cases the father was the only close relative who had been in prison. One mother had been in prison. Twenty-seven percent of all the prisoners' brothers had been imprisoned and 46% of all the boys in the prisoners' families.
- Fifty percent of the prisoners had left school before the current legal minimum school leaving age of 15 years. In total 36, or precisely one third of the sample, had never attended a school higher than the primary or special school level. Only 27, or exactly one quarter of the sample, had sat public examinations. Sixty-three percent of the members of the sample claimed to have truanted regularly from school.
- Three prisoners had advanced to Leaving Certificate level and one to Open University level through the prison system educational service.
- In total, 53% of the sample had had some form of vocational skills training, but in many cases this was of a very limited nature. Ten members of the sample had completed training or had extensive work experience in a specialised area and could be considered as qualified skilled or semi-skilled workers.
- Eighty-eight percent of the sample, however, had been unemployed prior to their committal to prison. Nonetheless, the majority of prisoners had employment experience, some of which was quite substantial. Forty-three percent had held a single job for at least 1 year and 15 of these had been in the one job for more than 3 years. At the other end of the spectrum 44% of the sample had either no substantive work experience or had never had a job that lasted more than 6 months.
- Ninety-four percent of prisoners were categorised in the two lowest socio-economic classes according to their best ever job. Thirty-five prisoners were in category 5, ie. semi-skilled manual labour, and 66 in category 6, ie. unskilled manual labour, including 29 who had never had a proper job.
- In 21 of the prisoners' childhood homes both parents worked, in 30, only the father, and in 22, only the mother, but in 35 homes there was no working parent. Only 35% of prisoners came from homes with a working father, who had an occupation in category 5 (semi-skilled manual worker) or above, but 65% came from homes with either a chronically unemployed father or one in the lowest socio-economic grouping.

# Chapter 4

## Criminal and Penal History

### a) Prisoners' self-reports

The achieved sample of 108 prisoners, who responded to the questionnaire, were asked a number of questions about their experience of prison and other sanctions and about their criminal activities.

Only 11 of the 108 reported that they had never been remanded in custody. At the other extreme, 26 prisoners claimed that they had been on remand awaiting trial on at least 6 different occasions.

Twenty-three prisoners (21%) had been in another prison during the current period of imprisonment. Eighty-one prisoners (76%) had benefited, at some stage in their career of imprisonment, from temporary release from prison, whether as a form of early release or of compassionate leave etc. However, with respect to the current period of imprisonment only 7 prisoners (6.5%) had been out of prison on any kind of temporary release. This figure cannot, of course, be taken as in any way representative of the proportion of Mountjoy prisoners who benefit from full temporary (early) release because the sample is naturally composed only of those that have not been granted full temporary release. At the time of the survey there were several hundred Mountjoy prisoners, who were serving their time on full temporary release.

Table 8 presents the reported level of experience of judicial sanctions other than imprisonment and the number of prisoners who had been in prisons other than Mountjoy.

<b>Table 8: Reported experience of other prisons and non-custodial sanctions</b>					
N = 108 Prisoners					
Ever in	No.	%	Ever punished in court by	No.	%
St Patrick's Institution	83	77	Fine	63	58
Open Prison	62	57	Probation of Offenders Act (1907)	54	50
Another Adult Closed Prison	67	62	Probation Supervision	61	56
			Community Service Order	36	33
			Suspended Sentence	47	44

A very large majority of the sample, more than three-quarters, had spent time in St Patrick's Institution. Majorities of the sample had also spent some time in one of the three open prisons in the State — at Shelton Abbey, Shanganagh Castle, or Loughan House — and in a closed adult prison other than Mountjoy.

Majorities of the sample had been fined at court and had at some time been placed on probation. Exactly half of the sample had benefited from a discharge under the Probation of Offenders Act (1907). In other words, they had been found guilty as charged but given no specific punishment. This trial outcome usually occurs only in the case of first offences and minor offences. One third of the sample had been the subject of a Community Service Order, a relatively recent form of sanction involving supervised work in the community under the aegis of the Probation and Welfare Service and first introduced in 1985. A substantial number of the prisoners (44%) had at some point been handed down a suspended prison sentence at court. Only 11 of the sample (10%) reported that they had never been in receipt of any of these 5 types of non-custodial penalty or disposition.

The National Prison Survey in England and Wales found that about 58% of convicted prisoners had been on probation, 40% had been given a suspended sentence, and 34% had done community service. Exposure to these sanctions is clearly similar in the England and Wales prison population and the present Mountjoy sample. However, the National Prison Survey found that 81% of prisoners had been fined and this is substantially more than the 58% found in the Mountjoy sample.

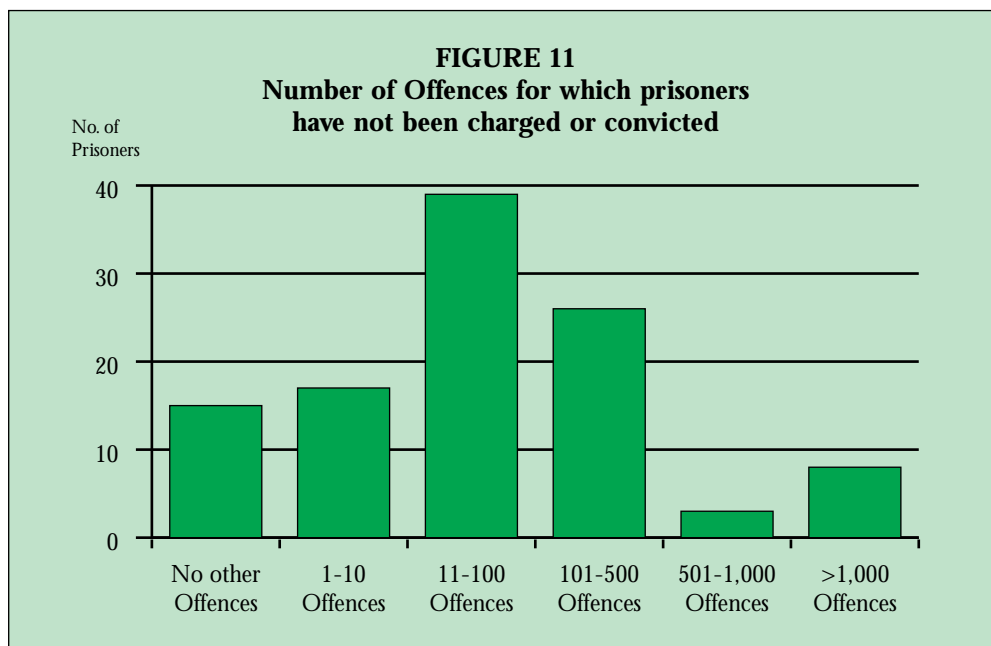
The prisoners were also asked if they had ever committed an offence while on bail or while on temporary release from prison and also whether they had done so when they were last on bail or temporary release.

Seventy-four prisoners (69%) said they had committed crime while on bail. The figure was lower but still high — 61 prisoners (58%) — when the question was confined to the last time they had been on bail. While sizeable majorities had committed crime on bail, smaller proportions of the sample admitted to committing offences while on temporary release from prison. Forty-two percent said that they had ever done so and exactly one third of the sample said they had done so on the last occasion they were on temporary release.

The prisoners were asked: "Roughly how many crimes have you committed that you were never charged or convicted for?" The results are presented in Figure 11. Only 15 prisoners (14%) claimed that they had never gotten away with a crime. A further 17 prisoners (16%) claimed that they had escaped detection and charge for only a small number of offences (10 or under). Seventy-six prisoners (70%) admitted



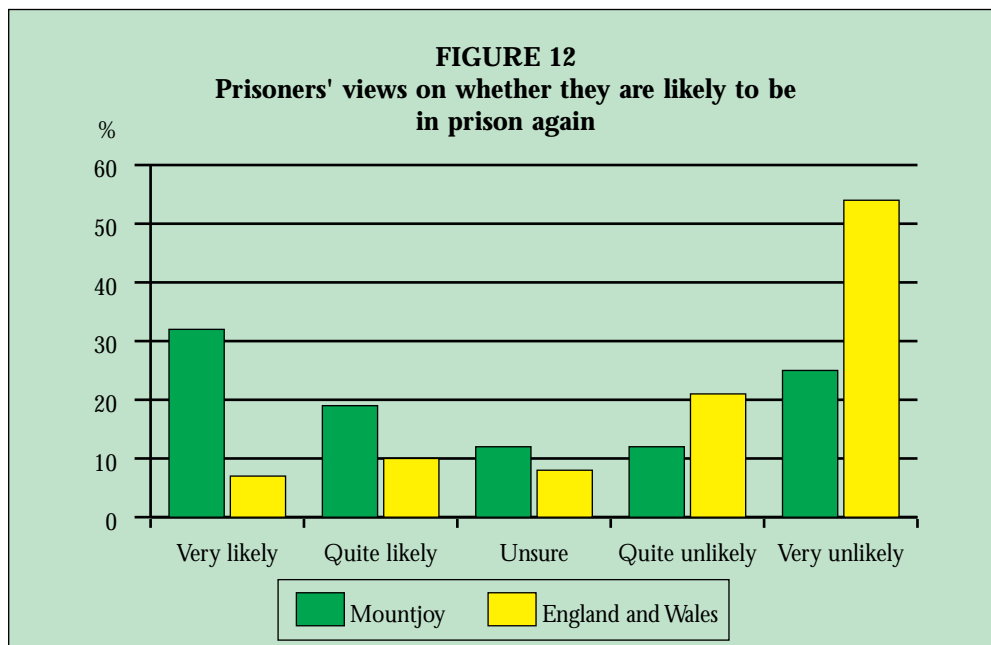
to getting away with more than 10 crimes and, of these, 37 (34%) admitted to getting away with more than 100 crimes, and 8 (7%) with more than a 1,000 crimes.



The prisoners were also asked two questions about their future in crime: “How likely is it that you will commit crime again after your release?” and “Realistically, how likely do you think it is that you’ll be back in prison at some time in the future?”. They answered on a five point scale ranging from ‘very likely’ to ‘very unlikely’. Perhaps surprisingly, given the criminal records of this group, 63% responded that it was quite or very *unlikely* that they will commit crime again after release. A smaller proportion, but still a majority of the sample (51%), responded that it was quite or very *unlikely* that they will be back in prison at some time in the future. On the other hand, 30% of the sample said that it was quite or very *likely* that they will commit crime again and 37% it was quite or very *likely* that they will be back in prison.

Paradoxically, more people said they are likely to be back in prison than said they are likely to commit crime again. This does not chime with their own experience of getting away with crime or the reality of detection and conviction rates. One must assume, therefore, that the responses have in some unknown way been shaped, indeed skewed, by the actual phrasing and terminology of the questions, perhaps the use of the word ‘realistically’ in the question about prison was particularly influential. Despite the implications of these responses, those who expect to be back in prison undoubtedly also expect to be involved in further crime.

The question about future imprisonment was asked in the National Prison Survey in England and Wales in exactly the same terms. It is interesting to note that although less than half of the Mountjoy prisoners said they quite strongly expected to be back in prison again, comparison (see Figure 12) with the National Prison Survey shows that a far smaller proportion of prisoners in England and Wales thought it likely they would be back again to prison. Indeed, more than twice as many English and Welsh prisoners thought it very unlikely they would be returning to prison. Conversely, more than four times as many Mountjoy prisoners than English and Welsh thought it very likely they would be returning.



## b) Remand prisoners

For much of the following analysis, the total selected sample of 124 prisoners, ie. the achieved sample plus the non-respondent group, is used as the base for statistics.

Of the total sample of 124, 22 prisoners (18%) were on remand in Mountjoy Prison, either awaiting trial or, in one case, awaiting sentence following conviction.

This result of 22 remand prisoners for the one-fifth representative sample translates into an estimate of 110 remand prisoners in Mountjoy Male Prison as a whole at the time of the survey. According to Department of Justice figures, there were 205 remand prisoners in custody in the whole prison system in January 1996. This is approximately 10% of the total prison population. These prisoners were scattered over a number of prisons but the greatest concentration of remands by far was in Mountjoy. However, this 10% figure for the detention rate of remands is not a useful

indicator of the throughput of remands in the Irish penal system. For this one must turn to statistics on committal rates.

The latest available statistics are for 1993 and these show that 5870 prisoners were committed to Irish prisons on remand in that year. By comparison there were 6585 prisoners committed under sentence of imprisonment in 1993. This means that in 1993 remand prisoners constituted 47% of all new committals to prison.

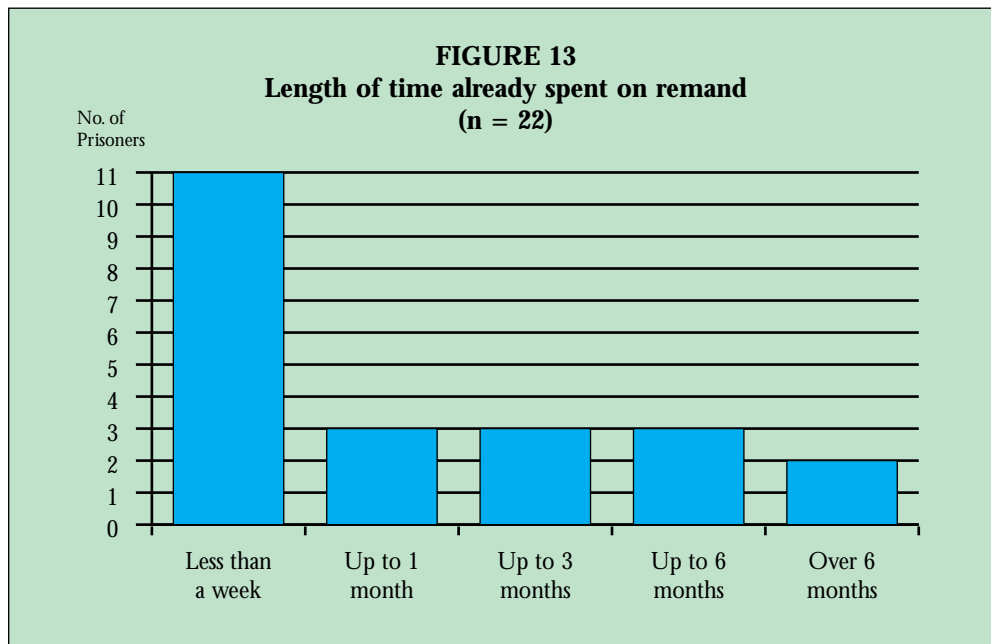
If we add in the prisoners already in custody at the beginning of the year this gives totals of 5969 and 8494 remand and convicted prisoners, respectively, 'handled' by the system in 1993. Of this total of 14463 prisoners dealt with in 1993, therefore, 41% were remands. It should be noted that the total of 14463 does not refer to different prisoners since the one prisoner may well be counted several times, for example as a remand and later as a committal under sentence of imprisonment or indeed as a remand or committal under sentence of imprisonment on more than one occasion in the course of the year.

It is possible to calculate on the basis of these figures that, on average, convicted prisoners in 1993 spent about 7 times longer in prison than remand prisoners and that the average period spent on remand is about 12 days (this compares with an average of about 55 days in England and Wales [54] in 1993). The distribution of periods spent on remand is bimodal with a substantial number of accused persons spending several months in custody awaiting their trial but a very high concentration of accused spending only a few days in prison. The latter group are usually released after providing bail money or sureties that they were unable to provide in court or after a successful appeal to the High Court against an original refusal of bail at a lower court.

Figure 13 presents a distribution of the 22 remand prisoners in the study sample by the amount of time they have spent in prison on remand. The majority have only spent a few days in prison and most of these will be quickly released under the present system. However, following the passing of the bail amendment to the Constitution, it is likely that many more initial refusals of bail in the lower courts will not be challenged or will not be overturned on appeal in the High Court and so the numbers of accused spending the whole period awaiting trial in custody are likely to greatly increase. In the present sample only 5 of the remand prisoners had been in custody for over 3 months.

By international comparison, the Irish situation with respect to remand imprisonment is highly anomalous. In all recent Council of Europe studies Ireland has been found to have one of the lowest proportions of its prison population taken by unconvicted prisoners. For example, a study [52] based on 1991 figures found the percentage of unconvicted prisoners in the system in Ireland on the 1st September was 6.5%. This compared with 21.9% for England and Wales, 30.5% for Germany, 32.8% for Austria,

35.5% for Portugal, 38.8% for the Netherlands, 41.5% for France, and 52.9% for Italy. In other words, a little more than 1 in 20 Irish prisoners was on remand but 1 in every 2 Italian prisoners was on remand.



However, when one turns to statistics on the flow of remand prisoners through prison systems, an entirely different picture emerges. In the same study, figures were available for only Austria, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy and France and the following were the percentages of committals to prison that were unconvicted in those countries, respectively: 57.2, 80.9, 50.9, 84.2, and 77.8. Ireland provided no figure for 1991 but the equivalent figure for 1993 is 47%. It is clear that the Irish rate is of the same order of magnitude as the lower rated countries. In other words, Ireland is not notably untypical in the proportion of committals that are unconvicted, but highly unusual in the proportion of its prison population that is unconvicted. The explanation lies in the fact that the vast majority of remand committals in Ireland spend only a few days in prison and are not actually held until trial.

Another Council of Europe study [53] examined detention rates per 100000 inhabitants. This provides a better indication of the use of detention since it adjusts prison statistics in line with the size of the general population. In this study Ireland was found to have a generally low detention rate including both convicted and unconvicted prisoners. Ireland was placed 25th out of 29 countries and had a detention rate a quarter of that of the highest placed countries. With regard to unconvicted prisoners only, the Irish detention rate was lower still. Ireland was placed 19th of 20 countries with a detention rate which stood at about one eighth of the average for all 20 countries.

However, when one turns to committal (imprisonment) rate per 100,000 of the population, that is the flow or the number sent to prison over a year rather than the stock or the number held in prison at any one time, the situation is totally reversed. Ireland was found to have the highest rate of 20 countries examined. In other words, when unconvicted and convicted committals are taken together, it is found that Ireland commits a greater proportion of its population to prison every year than other European countries. The extraordinary discrepancy between the relatively low size of the Irish prison population and the relatively extremely high use of imprisonment in Ireland is partly accounted for by the peculiar use of remands in custody in Ireland and the normally very short period of remand. The 1996 bail amendment to the Constitution opens up the possibility that most of the people presently remanded in custody for only short periods could in future be held in prison until trial. Such an eventuality would have immense repercussions for the size of the Irish prison population. However, since remand committals in general are at a relatively low rate in the European context there must be other explanations, relating specifically to sentenced committals, for the huge discrepancy between Irish committals and detainees. This issue will be examined in more detail in Section C of Chapter 9.

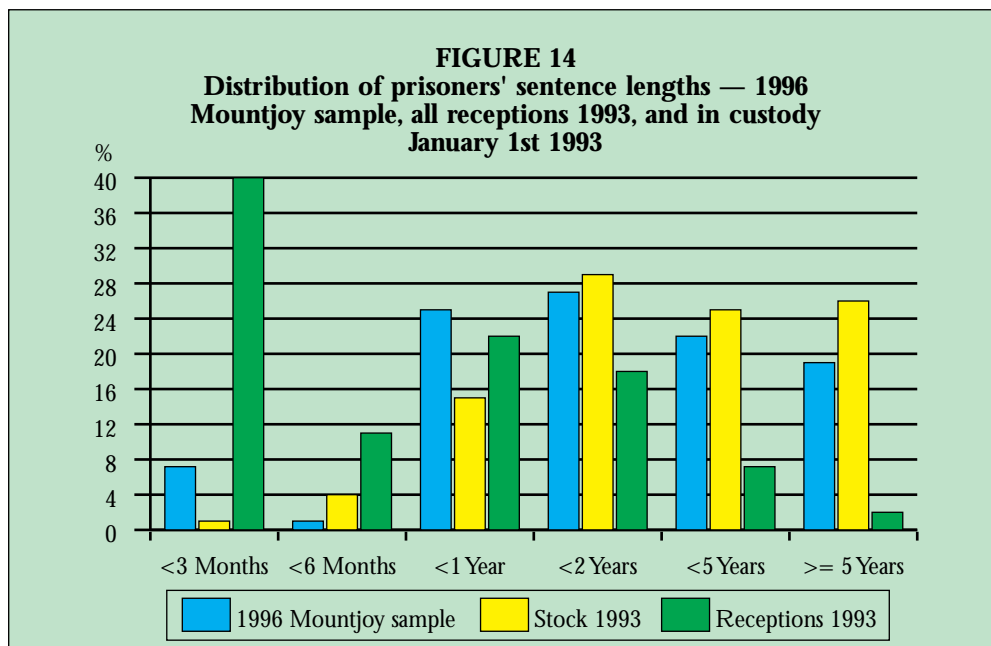
### **c) Sentence Length**

Of the total selected sample of 124 prisoners, 102 were in Mountjoy under sentence of imprisonment. The average length of sentence for this group was 31.5 months, or a little over two and a half years, with a standard deviation of 31.2 months, indicating a very wide range of sentences. In fact, the shortest sentence was 15 days and the longest was twelve and a half years. The average sentence length shows a considerable decline from that found in the 1986 survey, which was almost exactly 3 years.

The distributions of prisoners' sentence lengths for the present sample, for all sentenced committals to the prison system in 1993 and for all prisoners in custody in January 1993, are presented in Figure 14, using the categories normally found in Annual Report [2] statistics. The data on which this figure is based are presented in Table 9. Eight prisoners in the Mountjoy sample had a sentence of under 6 months, 33 under 1 year, and 60 under 2 years. On the other hand, 22 prisoners had a sentence of 2 or more years up to, but not including, 5 years and 19 had a sentence of 5 or more years. So approximately 60% of convicted prisoners had sentences of less than 2 years and 40%, of 2 years or more.

Comparing, first, the 1996 Mountjoy sample with the stock of prisoners in 1993, ie. the whole prison population on census day, it is clear that Mountjoy holds slightly less prisoners in the three longer sentence categories than the prison system as a whole. With respect to all sentences of under one year, the rate in Mountjoy is a little higher than that in the whole prison population in 1993. However, a breakdown of short sentences shows that Mountjoy has more prisoners serving 6 month sentences

and sentences of under 3 months but less serving sentences of exactly 3 months than the prison population as a whole (the < 1 year and < 6 months categories refer, almost entirely, to sentences of 6 months and 3 months, respectively).



Both the Mountjoy sample and the 1993 stock of sentenced prisoners differ markedly from the 1993 committals, that is the newly sentenced receptions into prison, with respect to sentence length. Most significantly, more than half of all new sentenced committals (51%) have a sentence of under 6 months compared with 5% of the 1993 stock and 8% of the present Mountjoy sample. Conversely, only 27% of sentenced committals have a sentence of 1 year or over compared with 80% of the stock and 68% of the current sample. The difference between the stock and the present sample is explained by the somewhat greater concentration of long sentence prisoners in prisons other than Mountjoy, especially Arbour Hill.

**Table 9: Sentences Lengths For 1996 Mountjoy Sample And 1993 Irish Prison Population Stock And Receptions (percentages)**

Sentence length	Mountjoy sample 1996 n = 124	Prison population 1993 n = 1910	Sentenced Committals 1993 n = 6585
< 3 Months	7	1	40
< 6 Months	1	4	11
< 1 Year	25	15	22
< 2 Years	27	29	18
< 5 Years	22	25	7
> = 5 Years	19	26	2

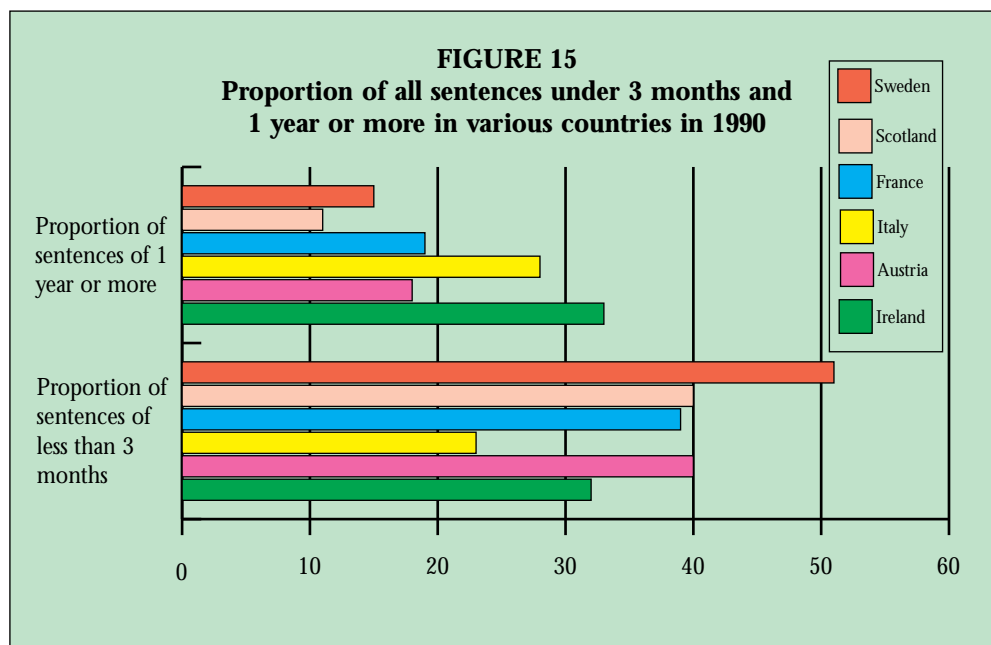
However, it is the difference between all committals and both the stock and present sample that has the most significant implications in regard to the use of imprisonment by the Irish courts. The relatively long average sentence of the prison population at any one time reflects the accumulation of long term prisoners within the system and the enormous turnover of prisoners with short sentences. A prison place used for short-term prisoners (say averaging a month's imprisonment) will house 9 different prisoners in the same period in which a prison place, used by a prisoner with a one year's sentence, will house only one prisoner serving his full sentence. A survey such as the present study will count only 2 prisoners, one for each cell, thus very substantially under-representing the short term prisoners. The turnover of short sentence prisoners will also tend to be accelerated by the fact that it is these (relatively minor) offenders that are most likely to benefit from an early release. Indeed, table 9 implies that a cell holding only prisoners serving sentences of less than 3 months would on average handle 40 different such prisoners in the course of one year. Too narrow a focus on the sentence lengths of the prison population, therefore, will miss the important fact that almost three-quarters of sentences after conviction are for periods of one year or less.

**Table 10: Comparison Of Ireland And England And Wales With Respect To Sentence Lengths Of The Prison Population (stock) And Receptions (committals) To Prison In 1993 (Adult Prisoners Only)**

	England & Wales Committals	Ireland Committals	England & Wales Stock	Ireland Stock
< = 6 Months	46%	76%		
< = 18 Months	28%	15%	26%	47%
< = 4 Years	18%	6%	30%	25%
> 4 Years	8%	3%	44%	28%

Table 10 indicates that about three-quarters of all sentences to imprisonment for adults (those over 21 years) in Ireland are for periods of 6 months or less and only about 9% are for periods of more than 18 months. By comparison in England and Wales [54] less than half of all sentences are for 6 months or less and 26%, or almost three times as many as in Ireland, are for longer than 18 months. The disparity is not so marked when one examines the prison population (stock) as opposed to the flow of committals through the prison system. However, there are still considerable differences with almost twice as many prisoners in Ireland (47% vs 26%) serving sentences of 18 months or less than in England and Wales and a substantially smaller proportion serving sentences of over 4 years (28% vs 44%). According to the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] the disparity between the Irish and American State system is even more remarkable. As few as 11% of sentenced State prisoners in the U.S. have sentences of 2 years or less and as many as 30% of them have sentences of over 15 Years. However, there are a further 250,000 prisoners in local jails in the U.S., who tend to be sentenced for short periods so the figures are not properly comparable.

While the pattern of Irish prison sentences is clearly anomalous in the context of England and Wales and the U.S., it is far less unusual when compared with other European jurisdictions. A recent study under the auspices of the Council of Europe [52] has compared sentencing practice in a number of European countries including Ireland. Figure 15 illustrates some of the results for a selected group of countries. It is apparent that very short sentences amounting to a high proportion of all sentences is by no means an unusual feature in European criminal justice systems. In fact out of this group, Ireland is the second lowest in its relative use of very short sentences. In this group, Ireland is also the highest in its relative use of sentences of 1 year or more. In this group, Ireland is also the highest in its relative use of sentences of 1 year or more. As it happens, in Western Europe, only England and Wales exhibited a higher proportion of sentences of 1 year or more than Ireland.

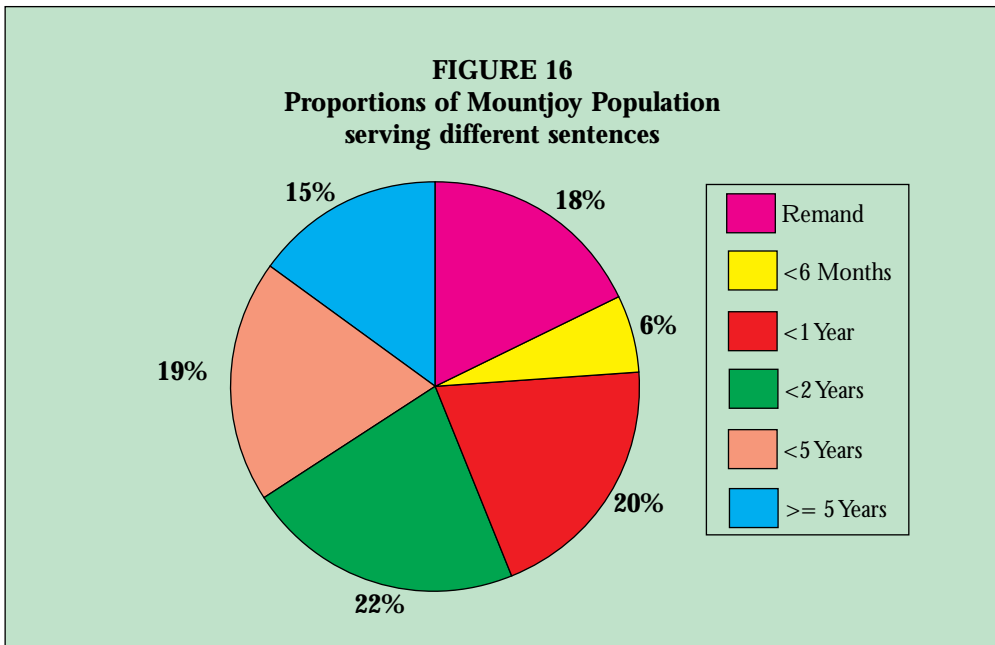


The cross-national comparison of sentencing is a notoriously complex business and must be approached with caution [55, 56]. There are many practical differences between criminal justice systems and in the manner in which countries collate statistics. These inevitably impact on sentencing data. For example, Sweden has a policy of imprisoning motoring and drunkenness offenders for very short periods and this no doubt inflates their statistics for sentences of less than 3 months in relation to other countries such as Ireland. Important issues in judging the use of imprisonment and in making inferences about the relative punitiveness of societies are the number of sentences of imprisonment per capita, the ratio of custodial to alternative sanctions, the number of sentences of imprisonment per 10,000 crimes, and the type and seriousness of crimes that attract sentences of imprisonment as well as the relationship between



the type and seriousness of a crime and the length of sentence. Some of these issues will be addressed in the final section of Chapter 9.

From the Mountjoy prison management point of view, however, it is the distribution of the various sentence types within the prison that is most significant. Figure 16 illustrates the distribution within Mountjoy Prison according to the results of the present survey. The chart includes remand prisoners, who are estimated to form 18% of the Mountjoy population, up from 11% remand prisoners found in the 1986 survey. As indicated in Section B above, remand prisoners fall into 2 main groups — those held on remand until trial, who will be greatly over-represented in the prison population in relation to their share of remand committals, and those released from prison on bail or on appeal against refusal of bail, who will tend to spend only a few days in custody.



The Mountjoy prison population in 1996 is, therefore, dominated by prisoners serving sentences of under 2 years or on remand. Two out of every three prisoners are in these two categories and only 34% of prisoners are serving sentences of 2 years or longer. This is a very considerable drop from the 1986 position when about 48% of the Mountjoy population were serving sentences of 2 years or longer. In 1996, only 15% are serving sentences of 5 years or longer. This is also a reduction from the 1986 position when 21% of the Mountjoy population were serving sentences of 5 years or longer.

From the organisational, prison management perspective, the rate of flow of prisoners through the system, indicated by the ratio of annual committals to prison places is of crucial importance. Mountjoy has about 650 places but deals with about 6000 committals on an annual basis, therefore the ratio of places to prisoners over a year is in the order of 1 to 10. In other words, each prison place is required to hold on average close to 10 different prisoners during the year. The reception process is unavoidably demanding in terms of time and manpower, so this ratio indicates a very high level of organisational strain on resources. The figures on remands and sentence length show that the huge transient, short-term sector of the prisoner flow is largely made up of remand prisoners, who constitute nearly half of the committals but spend an average of only 12 days in the prison, and short sentence prisoners serving periods of less than 3 months, including a large number of fine-defaulters. These two categories of prisoner naturally have a rapid flow through the system and automatically represent very high ratios of prisoner to prison place over a year. The accommodation crisis, however, entails that several hundred prisoners with sentences of 3 months or over will in the course of a year benefit from the early release system. This category, although numerically small in comparison to the remands and very short sentence groups, is essential to the current system of handling the demand on accommodation arising from the huge flow of prisoners through the prison, because, if held in custody, they would use up a very substantial number of prison places on an annual basis.

#### **d) Offence Type**

With respect to sentence length, the stock of prisoners does not, as is clear from the previous section, reflect the flow of prisoners through the prison. There is a far greater concentration of longer sentence prisoners in the prison population than in the flow of committals. Even so, it is evident that the population of Mountjoy Prison is heterogeneous in respect of sentence length. Similarly, the current Mountjoy prison population is very varied with respect to offence types but, because of a natural concentration of the more serious offence categories that attract longer sentences, will also tend not to reflect the distribution of offence types in the flow of committals into Mountjoy or the system as a whole.

Table 11 provides a breakdown of the different offence categories of the 102 convicted prisoners in the current sample. The statistics are based on the 'main' offence, that is where an offender is in prison for two or more different offences, the offence attracting the longest sentence or, where there are equal sentences, the 'most serious' category offence is selected ( for example robbery would be selected over larceny). Offence types are arranged in descending order of length of average sentence. The range of sentences handed down in the various categories are also provided. The percentage of the various offence categories in the present sample are compared with the percentage found in the 1986 survey.

**Table 11: Categories of Offence Type with Average Sentence Length and Range (N=102 Convicted Prisoners)**

	No.	%	% in 1986	Average Sentence in Months	Range
False Imprisonment	1	0.9	0	150	
Manslaughter	1	0.9	8	90	
Wounding and ABH	6	5.9	0	69	42-108
Robbery	28	27.5	18	52	6-120
Possession firearms	4	3.9	5	49	18-81
Misuse of drugs	7	6.9	8	23	6-48
Burglary	16	15.7	16	22	9-36
Larceny	25	24.5	11	15	1-60
Road traffic Acts	4	3.9	12	7	2-12
Criminal damage	3	2.9	9	5	1-8
Post Office Acts etc.	3	2.9	0	4	1-10
Assault	2	1.9	9	3.5	1-6
Disturbing the peace	1	0.9	0	3	
Fine-default	1	0.9	0	15 days	

Apart from the two individual cases of false imprisonment and manslaughter, which attracted sentences of twelve and a half and seven and a half years respectively, the longest average sentence length is 5 years and 9 months for the category of wounding and actual bodily harm. The average for robbery was 4 years 4 months and, for possession of firearms, 4 years 1 months. The averages for both categories are up since 1986, when both had the same average sentence length of 3 years 7 months.

There is a considerable drop in average sentence length for the next group of offence types — burglary, misuse of drugs, and larceny, which all have averages of between 1 and 2 years. The range of sentences for larceny is particularly wide, indicating the disparate types of crime, including fraud and forgery and petty theft, coming under this category. The single severe, 5 year sentence for larceny related to the theft of cars. The range for drugs offences is also wide because it covers offences as different as possession of cannabis and dealing or trafficking in heroin. Compared to 1986 the average sentence lengths for burglary and larceny have increased somewhat (1 year 10 months vs 1 year 5 months and 1 year 3 months vs 1 year 2 months respectively), but the average sentence for offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act has declined from 3 years 4 months to 1 year 11 months.

The remaining offence categories attracted relatively short sentences, but it is interesting that the Road Traffic Acts offences (which included 2 cases of driving without insurance) attracted, on average, sentences twice as long as the assault group. The 1996 figure for Road Traffic Acts offences, at 7 months, is almost identical to that for 1986. There is a steep decline in the average sentence length for criminal damage from 1 year 3 months in 1986 to 5 months. However, in 1986, this category included 2 cases of arson, which attracted long sentences. In 1986, the assault category

included wounding and other serious assaults so the data are not comparable at this point.

It is clear from Table 11 that the dominant offence types in the prison population are property crimes, specifically robbery, burglary, and larceny. These 3 categories account for almost 70% of the current prison population. Crimes of frank violence against the person, ie. false imprisonment (hostage-taking), manslaughter, wounding, and the clearly less serious category of assault account for a relatively small proportion of the prison population (in total 10%). However, it should be noted that robbery and burglary are both classified as crimes against property with violence and that in the former case this violence or threat of violence is always against persons and in the latter, while violence is normally against property in the course of gaining access, there is quite frequently a threat of violence to people who are already on the premises or who return while a burglary is in progress.

The composition of the Mountjoy prison population with respect to offence type has changed quite significantly over the ten years between 1986 and 1996. Most notably, there is a decline in the number of homicide cases in the prison population from 8 to only 1 in 1996. The Road Traffic Acts offences category has also shown a marked decline from 12% to about 4% and the criminal damage category has declined from 9% to about 3%. On the other hand, the larceny category increased sharply from 11% to about 25% and the robbery category has increased substantially from 18% to about 28%. The 3 categories of larceny, burglary, and robbery constituted 43% of the prison population in 1986 and 69% in 1996.

**Table 12: Percentages of various offences types in the sentenced male prison populations of England and Wales and Ireland in 1993**

	England and Wales			Ireland		
	Stock n=31,897*	Flow 69,312	Ratio	Stock 1,893	Flow 6,256	Ratio
	%	%		%	%	
Violence against the person	23	12	0.86	21	9	0.66
Of which Assault	1	3	0.16	7	6	0.34
Sexual offences	10	3	1.66	4	1	1.12
Burglary	15	18	0.38	7	2	0.89
Robbery	15	4	1.72	12	3	1.21
Theft	11	22	0.23	31	27	0.35
Criminal damage	6	3	0.92	5	6	0.28
Motoring offences	3	19	0.07	5	25	0.07
Drugs	9	5	0.88	4	3	0.37

\*excluding fine-defaulters

Table 12 compares the percentages in various offence type categories for the prison populations and the annual flows of sentenced committals in Ireland [57] and England and Wales [54]. The figures under 'ratio' are the ratio of the actual number of prisoners in an offence category in the prison population to the actual number of committal prisoners over a year in that category, expressed as a fraction with the former figure divided by the latter. These figures give an approximate idea of the average effective sentence length for the category — with a low ratio signifying a short sentence and a high ratio, a long sentence.

The general ratio of sentenced receptions to sentenced prisoners was about 2.15:1 in England and Wales but about 3.3:1 in Ireland. This reflects the greater use of shorter sentences in Ireland and also the greater reliance on the mechanism of early release. The authorities in England and Wales publish [54] the average effective sentence length in all the various sentence length categories and, in 1993, this ranged from 41% of sentence in the 18 month category to 49% in the category of 10 years and more. Prisoners on average served 43% of all sentences under 3 months. Similar figures are not available for Ireland but effective prison sentences are undoubtedly lower in almost all categories (with the notable exception of sex offences for which there is no early release) and dramatically lower for the very short sentence category.

Table 12 when compared with Table 11 indicates the extent to which the Mountjoy prison population is not representative of the prison population as a whole. In particular the absence of sexual offenders from Mountjoy is marked given their substantial presence in the prison system as a whole. The rate of violent offenders in Mountjoy is also quite low, partly reflecting the concentration of homicide offenders elsewhere in the system. On the basis of these figures, Mountjoy can be characterised as a prison that specialises in holding burglars and robbers. These groups constitute 43% of the Mountjoy population but only 20% of the total prison population.

Comparing the Irish prison population with that of England and Wales there are some striking differences. If one excludes the relatively trivial category of assault, 22% of prisoners in England and Wales have been convicted of offences of violence against the person compared with 14% in Ireland. There were proportionately more than twice as many sex offenders, burglars, and drugs offenders in the prison population in England and Wales. Most notably, the Irish prison population had almost 3 times as many prisoners sentenced for crimes against property without violence.

Notable proportionate differences in the pattern of committals are the much lower level of committals for burglary and the somewhat higher level of committals for theft and motoring offences in Ireland. In England and Wales offenders sentenced for crimes of violence against the person, excluding assault, were a 3 times larger proportion of all committals.

Turning to the 'ratio' figures, which give a rough guide to the average effective sentence lengths for the various offence types, it is notable that the Irish average sentences for burglary, assault, and theft are somewhat higher than in England and Wales but those for violence against the person, robbery, drugs offences, and criminal damage are considerably lower.

One offence group not included in Table 12 because there is no equivalent category in England and Wales is that of debtors, contempt of court, and sureties cases. In 1993 there were 281 committals under these headings in Ireland (4% of total committals) but only 2 prisoners of this type were in prison at the time of the census. This indicates extremely short stays in prison for this category. Eighteen percent of committals in Ireland were in miscellaneous categories, not covered in Table 12, compared with 11% in England and Wales. In general, these categories related to minor offences.

These contrasts between the two jurisdictions point to significant differences in the practice of sentencing and in the operation of the penal system and also, probably, to differences in the prevalence and seriousness of various types of crime and to different law enforcement approaches in the two countries. In summary, it can be said that the offence profile of the Irish prison population and committals is somewhat less serious with a preponderance of offenders against property with or without violence in the prison population and a preponderance of thieves and motoring offenders amongst committals.

An important point to remember in the interpretation of these comparisons is that they relate in different ways to the general population size in the two jurisdictions. Most significantly, according to these figures, a larger proportion of the Irish population was sent to prison in 1993. The committal rate for sentenced prisoners in Ireland was 178 per 100000 of the general population and in England and Wales it was 139 per 100000. Therefore, all Irish figures should be adjusted upwards in relation to the English and Welsh figures.

The contrasts with some other jurisdictions are even more marked. For example, according to the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] 47% of prisoners have been convicted of crimes of violence against the person including robbery. About 12% of U.S. State prisoners have been convicted for homicide vs 7% in Ireland. The largest difference, however, is in the area of drug crime since 21% of all U.S. State prisoners were convicted for drug-related offences compared with 4% in Ireland. Conversely, the U.S. system holds far fewer prisoners convicted for property crime (25% vs 43% in Ireland).

Of course, it would be incorrect to assume that the current 'main' offence of the Mountjoy prisoners is indicative of the character of their entire criminal career. There

is some specialisation amongst offenders but they are in general characterised by considerable versatility with respect to the types of crime they commit [58, 59]. For example, it would be inappropriate to infer from a current offence of larceny that the offender was not involved in other forms of offending such as robbery or burglary. Equally, it would be wrong to assume that a person in prison for a motoring offence was not involved in other more 'criminal' forms of offending. It is possible that known criminal propensities, ie. a criminal record, partially contribute to the imposition of a custodial sentence for a motoring offence.

In order to fill out the picture of the sample's experience in crime, the complete criminal record to date was examined for each offender and the number of offenders with any history of certain types of offence was determined. The offence types examined were sex offences, drug offences, robbery, possession of a firearm or an offensive weapons, assault, and other violent offences.

None of the convicted Mountjoy prisoners and only one of the remands were in prison for a sex offence, but 5 of them had a sex offence on their record. Only 7 were in prison for drugs-related offences, but 27 had such an offence on their record. There were 28 robbers in the sample, but 49, or almost a half, had at some time been convicted of robbery. Only 4 of the sample had a 'main' offence of possession of firearms, but 30 had at some point been convicted for the possession of a firearm or of an offensive weapon. Most dramatically of all, while only 2 of the sample were in prison for assault, 63 (53%) of them had a conviction for assault on their record. Thirty-two of the sample had convictions for other, usually serious, forms of violence.

When these data are combined they indicate that a very large majority of the sample, despite — for many — the non-violent nature of their current offence, have a record of violence. For example, 68 prisoners (57%), had a record which included robbery and or possession of a weapon. When assault and other violence is added to the picture, 99 of 120 prisoners (83%) qualify as having a record of violent crime.

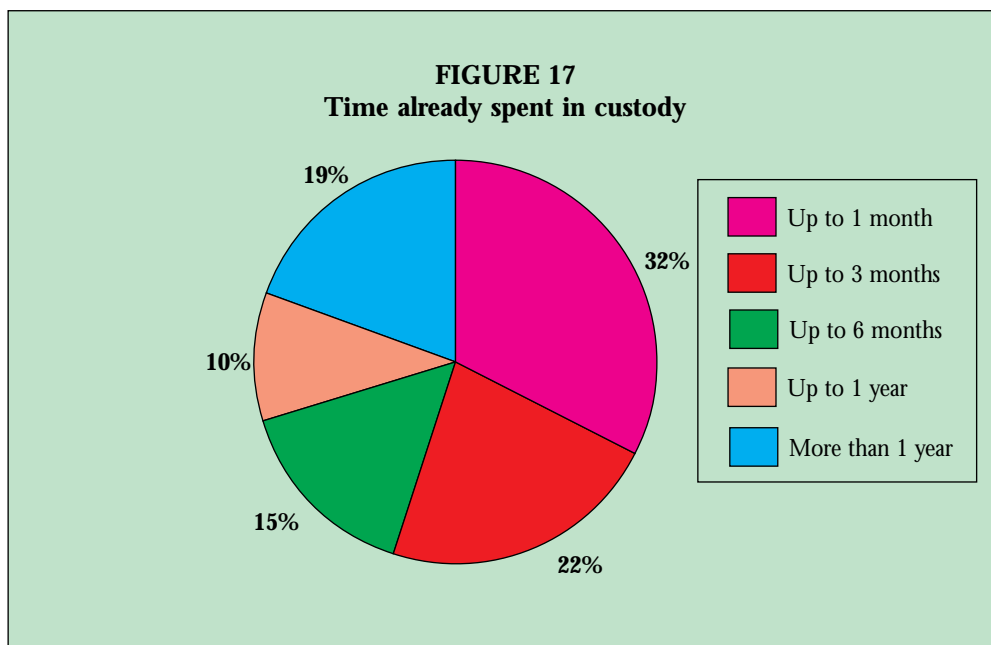
The 25 offenders in the sample with a 'main' conviction for larceny, that is the category covering all forms of non-violent theft, were examined more closely. Eight of these offenders had a past record of robbery and 15, or 60%, had some past conviction for violence. Of the 4 Road Traffic Acts offenders in the prison population, 1 had a previous conviction for robbery and 3 had a previous conviction for an offence of violence. These results point to the possibility that the prison population is more homogeneous with respect to general patterns of offending than might appear from a superficial analysis of 'main' offences.

#### **e) Time served and to be served**

The present representative sample of a cross-section of Mountjoy Prison population also provides a reliable and useful picture of the amount of time prisoners have spent

in the prison and the amount of time they have remaining to serve of their sentences. The distribution of time served is presented in Figure 17. The average time served in the prison was 7.9 months, but this relatively long period reflects the fact that a small minority of prisoners have spent a very long period in Mountjoy, while the majority have spent only short periods of a few months, weeks, or even days. The range was from 1 day to 8 years. In fact, about a third of all prisoners have spent a month or less time in the prison and seven out of ten of the prisoners have been in Mountjoy no longer than 6 months. This proportion has increased since 1986 when it was found that 57% of the Mountjoy population had been in the prison for no longer than 6 months. On the other hand, 29% of the sample had been in the prison for more than 6 months and 19%, or about one in every five, for more than a year. This latter figure is also reduced since 1986 when a little more than a quarter of the prisoners had been in the prison for more than a year.

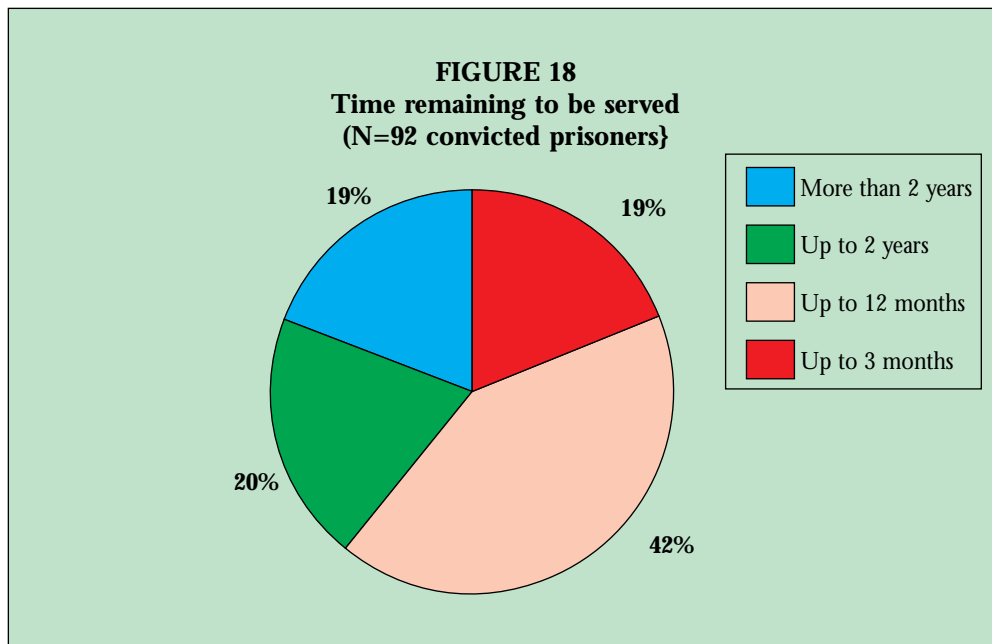
These figures indicate that the longterm segment of the prison population is relatively small and point to the administrative difficulties facing prison management in relation to programmes for offenders of a vocational, educational, or therapeutic nature that can be presumed to demand a substantial and predictable commitment of time.



Turning to the related issue of time remaining to be served, Figure 18 presents the distribution for 92 convicted prisoners. The average time remaining to be served by these prisoners was 16 months, with a range covering periods between 1 week and 6 years 3 months. Thus, the average period left to serve is almost precisely twice the average period served. This suggests the crude estimate that on average prisoners are



about a third of the way through their sentences. Interestingly and, in the context of the very large numbers that have spent only a brief time in the prison, again confirming the dominance within the prison population of transitory short-term prisoners, almost one in five had 3 months or less time to serve. Altogether 61% of convicted prisoners had a year or less left to serve. There was, however, a substantial pool of prisoners (19%) with long periods left to serve of 2 years or more. However, this was less than the equivalent figure in 1986 which was 25%.



Somewhat paradoxically, having spent a longer period in the prison was associated with having a longer period left to serve. Less than a quarter (11 of 46) of those who had been in prison no more than 3 months still had more than a year to serve. On the other hand, three-quarters (15 of 20) of those who had been in the prison for more than a year still had a year or more left to serve.

### **f) Number of convictions and imprisonments**

The statistics in this section are based on a total of 123 cases, ie. the selected sample minus one case where the individual was a foreigner without an Irish criminal record. This group had an average of 14.3 convictions (standard deviation = 11.2) and an average of 10.3 separate sentences of imprisonment (standard deviation = 9.3) — in both cases including the current conviction and sentence of imprisonment. The range of total number of convictions was from 0 to 55 and of total number of imprisonments under sentence from 0 to 44. By separate imprisonment is meant the sentences of imprisonment handed down at different court sittings for different offences. The longest sentence only is counted in instances where more than one sentence is handed

down on the one occasion — unless that is the sentences are consecutive, in which case each consecutive sentence is counted.

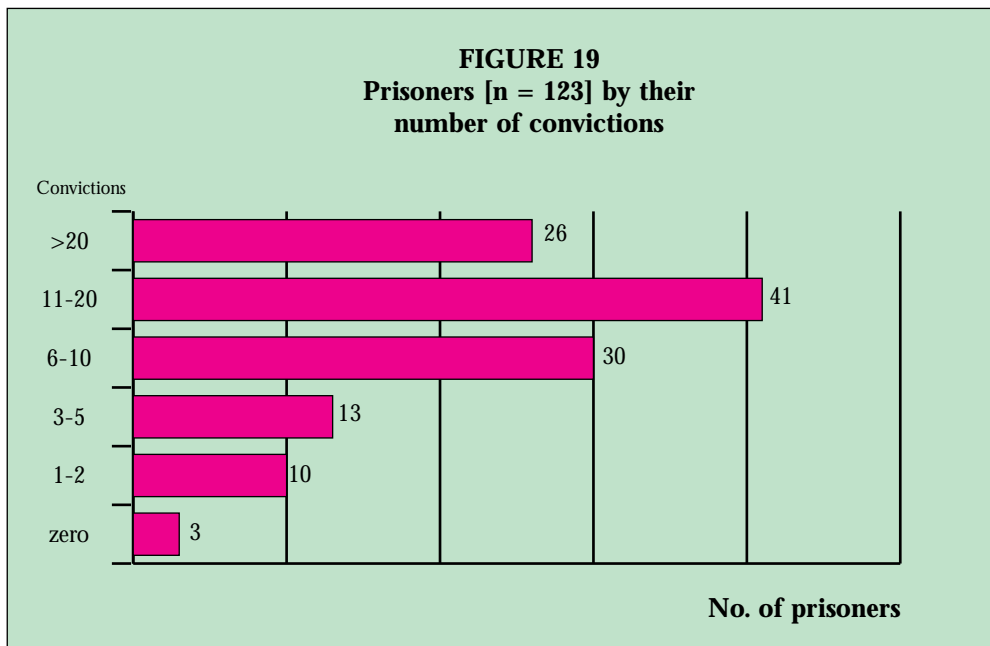
On occasion an offender may receive several sentences which are to run concurrently. This may arise because a variety of offences are dealt with at the same time or because different aspects of an offence are sanctioned separately with concurrent sentences of imprisonment. These are not counted in the total. It should also be noted that sometimes several or even numerous offences are 'taken into account' at the sentencing stage. This means that the discovered average of 10 sentences of imprisonment per prisoner is a considerable underestimate of the actual average total number of sentences of imprisonment that this sample has received and *a fortiori* of the average number of separate offences for which they have received sentences of imprisonment. But the average figure of 10 sentences of imprisonment does realistically reflect the true total of prison time to which they have been sentenced.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that the sample have experienced 10 totally separate episodes of imprisonment under sentence because it frequently happens that an offender, while serving one sentence in prison, will receive another sentence at a new court hearing and will, in effect, then serve the two (or more) sentences concurrently — except in the relatively rare instance where the judge stipulates that the new sentence should run consecutively. It is also unlikely that a prisoner will have served anything like the true total of prison time to which he has been sentenced because of the widespread use of the early release mechanism.

The results for the present sample are broadly similar to those for the 1986 survey of Mountjoy. However, the average number of convictions shows a small decline from 15.5 to 14.3. The average number of separate sentences of imprisonment are almost identical — 10.3 in 1996 compared with 10.4 in 1986. Since the difference between the average number of convictions and the average number of imprisonments is equivalent to the average number of non-custodial sanctions, these figures indicate a reduction since 1986 in the prisoners' experience of non-custodial sanctions, amounting to about one per person on average.

It can be calculated from Figure 19 that only 11% of the sample has received less than 3 convictions, while fully 54% have received more than 10 and 21% have received more than 20. Previous history of convictions is found to be one of the best predictors of reconviction. A recent British study of prisoners' reconviction rates over the 2 years following a conviction [60] has established a steep gradient in reconviction rates, when they are related to the number of previous convictions. This study found that the reconviction rate of those with no previous convictions was 28% and that of those with 1 or 2 previous convictions was 47%, but that of those with 11 or more previous convictions was 72%. Two thirds of the present sample fit into this latter

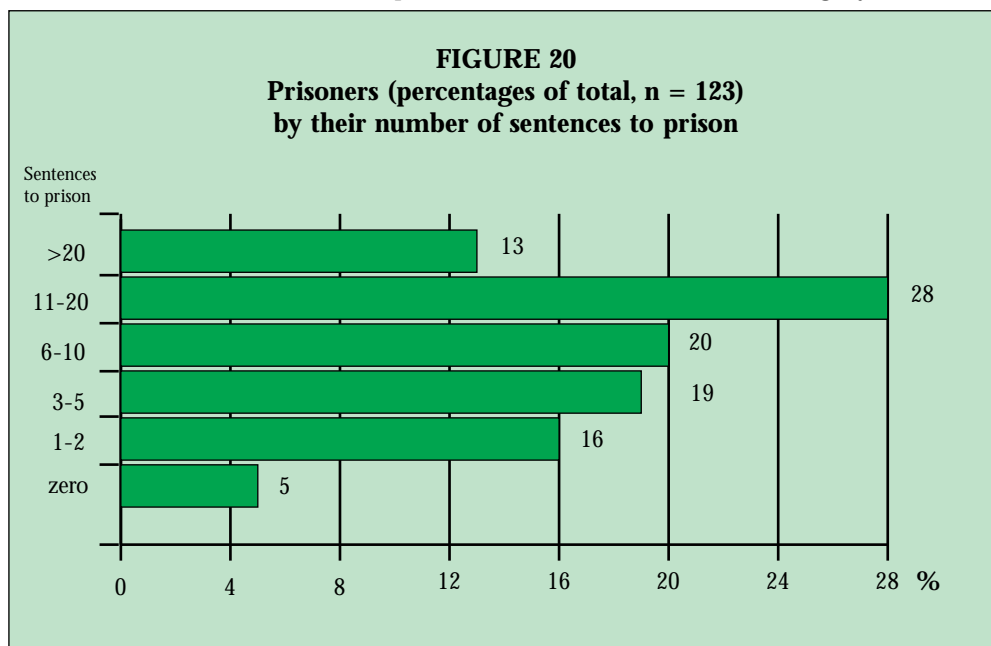
category with, if one extrapolates and applies the results of the British study to the Irish situation, a very high likelihood of reconviction.



There are no reliable statistics available on the previous convictions of the Irish prison population but figures from England and Wales for the adult male prison population in January 1993 make an interesting comparison with the results from the present survey. The contrast is very striking with far more prisoners in England and Wales having very few previous convictions and far less having many. In fact, 17% of prisoners in England and Wales had no previous conviction vs only 2% in Mountjoy; in the category of 1-2 previous convictions the comparison is 15% vs 8%; and in the category of 3-10 previous convictions, 41% vs 35%. Most significantly, only 23% of the prison population in England and Wales had more than 10 previous convictions while 54% of the Mountjoy sample fell into this category.

It is likely that these sharp contrasts would be attenuated somewhat if the comparison was made with the entire Irish prison population. This is because of the concentration in prisons other than Mountjoy of some categories of prisoner, such as homicide, sex, juvenile, and white-collar offenders, all of who are likely to have fewer previous convictions. Nonetheless, the contrast is so marked that it probably does point to a real difference between the jurisdictions in this area and to a far greater prevalence of multiple convictions and to a greater accumulation of convictions in the record of Irish persistent offenders. This perhaps reflects a more rapidly spinning revolving door in the Irish penal system. It is also significant that more than half of the prisoners in this study fall into the category (more than 10 previous convictions) that, according

to research, have a very high likelihood of reconviction and that the average number of convictions for the whole sample, at over 14, is well into that category.



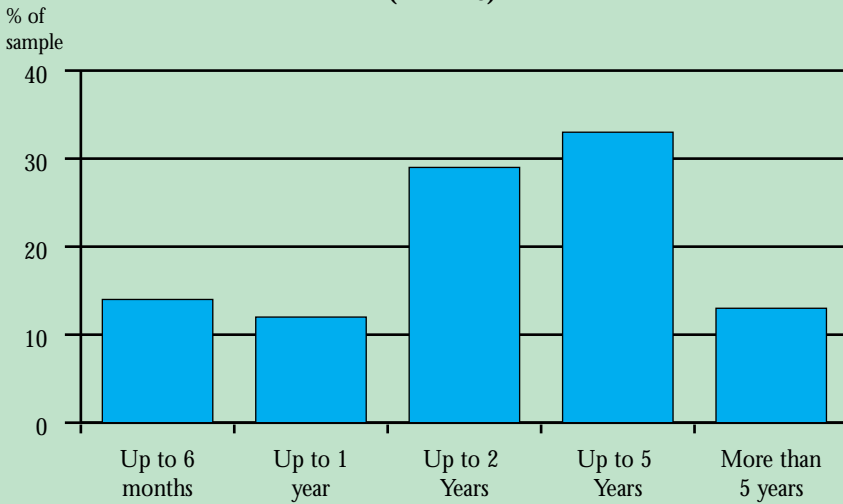
Turning to sentences of imprisonment, it can be seen from Figure 20 that 21% of the sample had less than 3 separate sentences to prison, including 6 offenders who had never received a sentence of imprisonment. Altogether only 9 of the 123 prisoners (7%) had no history of prior imprisonment. Conversely, 93% of the total selected sample had received a prior sentence of imprisonment. Again, this figure is likely to be substantially lower for the Irish prison population as a whole, but it is extraordinarily high and points to the recidivist character of the Mountjoy population. In fact, 41% of the Mountjoy population had received more than 10 separate sentences of imprisonment and 61% more than 5. By contrast, the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] shows that about 40% of prisoners there are in prison for the first time and less than 15% have been in prison more than 5 times. Equivalent figures are not available for England and Wales but since 77% of prisoners there have less than 11 previous convictions of any kind it is highly probable that their percentage of prisoners with more than 10 separate sentences of imprisonment is substantially less than half of that discovered in this Mountjoy sample.

### **g) Longest ever sentence and total of sentences of imprisonment**

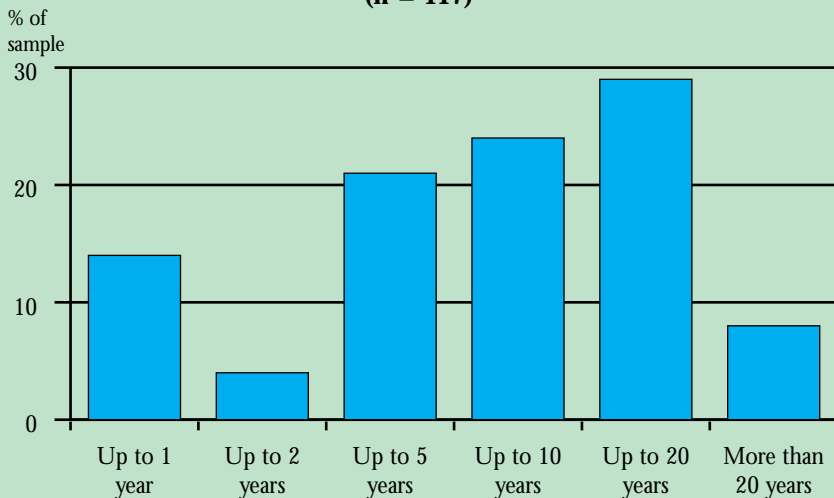
The criminal records of 123 prisoners (excluding the one foreigner with no Irish criminal record) were examined in order to determine their longest ever sentence of imprisonment and the total prison time to which they had been sentenced over their criminal career to date. The longest ever sentence varied from zero to 17 years with

an average of 35 months ( standard deviation = 29.4 months ). The totals of sentenced prison time varied from zero to 42.6 years with an average of 9.4 years (standard deviation = 8.3 years).

**FIGURE 21**  
**Distribution of longest ever sentence length**  
**(n = 120)**



**FIGURE 22**  
**Distribution of totals of sentences to prison time**  
**(n = 117)**



The distributions for these two variables are presented in Figures 21 and 22 respectively. The 9.4 years of prison time was accumulated over approximately 10 sentences on average, indicating an average sentence length for the sample over their entire criminal career of just under one year. This is very similar to the result for the 1986 survey which showed a total of 9.25 years of prison time accumulated over 10.4 sentences on average.

While only a minority of the sample had ever received a sentence longer than 2 years (46%), a substantial majority (61%) had accumulated a total of prison time of more than 5 years, and 37% of more than 10 years. On the other hand, while 26% of the sample had received a longest sentence of 1 year or less, only 18% had over their career to date accumulated 2 years or less of sentences to imprisonment.

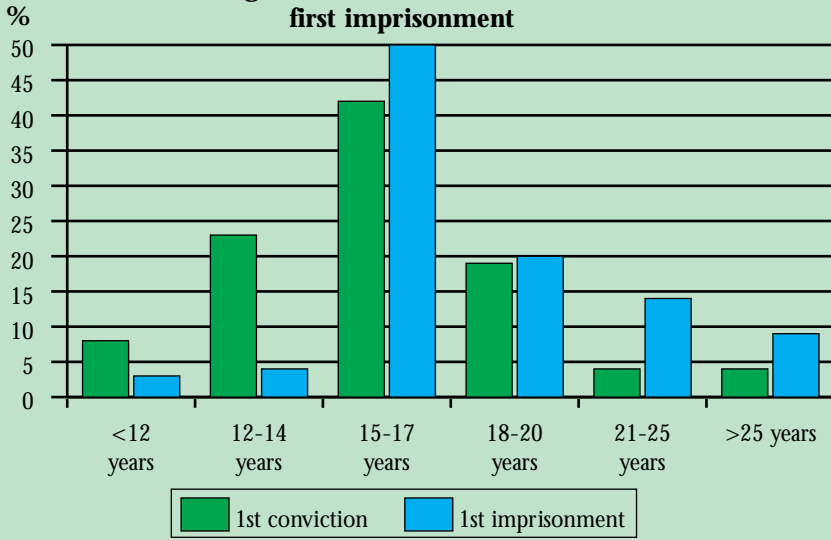
### **h) Age at first conviction and imprisonment**

The average age for first conviction for the sample of 120 prisoners (excluding one foreigner without an Irish criminal record and 3 remand prisoners without a conviction) was 16.8 years (standard deviation = 5). The range of ages of first conviction was from 10 years to 40 years old. Thirty-one percent of the present sample had been convicted by the age of 14 years and 64% by the age of 17 years. Only 8% received their first conviction when they were over 20 years of age. The average age of first conviction was almost identical to that found in 1986 (16.9 years).

Research has shown the age of first conviction to be of critical importance. For example, Kolvin and his associates in Newcastle [33], in their large scale, prospective study of a representative sample, found that males, who had been charged with an offence before the age of 15, had a 78% chance of being charged again before the age of 33 years. On the other hand, those who had not been charged by 15 years had only a 17% chance of being charged at all by the age of 33. Half of the total from Kolvin et al's sample, who had been charged by 33 years, had already been charged before the age of 15, and only 1 in 20 of those who committed no offence between 15 and 33 years had been charged before 15. It is clear that coming to the attention of the police and courts at 14 years or younger is highly prognostic of a criminal future.

Turning to age of first imprisonment or detention, 7% (of 117 prisoners who had received a custodial sentence) had been in custody before the age of 15 and 57% before the age of 18. On the other hand, 23% of the sample received their first sentence of imprisonment when over 20 years of age. The average age of first imprisonment or detention was 18.9 years (standard deviation = 5.5) and the range was from 10 years to 42 years. This figure has risen somewhat since 1986 when the average age of first imprisonment was 18.2 years.

**FIGURE 23**  
**Age of first conviction and of**  
**first imprisonment**



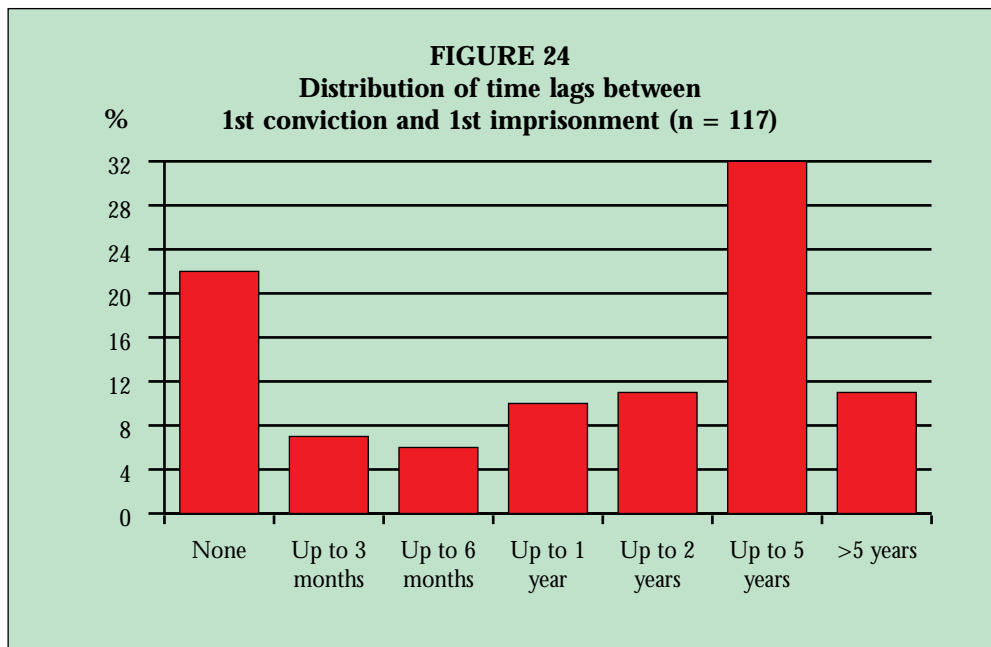
**i) Time lag between first conviction and first imprisonment and experience of alternative sanctions**

The time between first conviction and first imprisonment was examined. This time lag is significant because it indicates the extent to which alternative, non-custodial responses, which include fines, probation, community service, being bound over, unconditional discharge after a finding of guilt, and an entirely suspended prison sentence, may be effective in postponing repeat or more serious offending of a type that leads to imprisonment. The absence of any time lag is also very significant because it indicates that an offender was imprisoned on his very first conviction. Figure 24 presents the distribution of the various time lags experienced by the prisoners.

A considerable minority of the sample (22%) were imprisoned on their first conviction. On the other hand, when an offender did benefit from a non-custodial sentence on first conviction the time lag to first imprisonment tended to be quite long and the average period between first conviction and first imprisonment was 2 years 9 months. For 43% of the sample there was a time lag of over 2 years and for 11% of over 5 years. Only 13% of the sample were imprisoned within 6 months of having received a non-custodial sentence for a first conviction.

The percentage imprisoned on first conviction (22%) is down substantially from the figure in the 1986 survey (36%). However, it is still rather high and an analysis of the crimes for which these prisoners received a custodial sentence on first conviction indicates that they are on the whole not particularly serious offences that evidently

demand a custodial sanction. Of the 26 prisoners, 1 was convicted for the possession of a firearm, 2 were convicted of drug offences including possession of cannabis, 4 for assault, 4 for car-related offences, including having no insurance, 5 for burglary, but by far the largest number — 10 — for larceny.

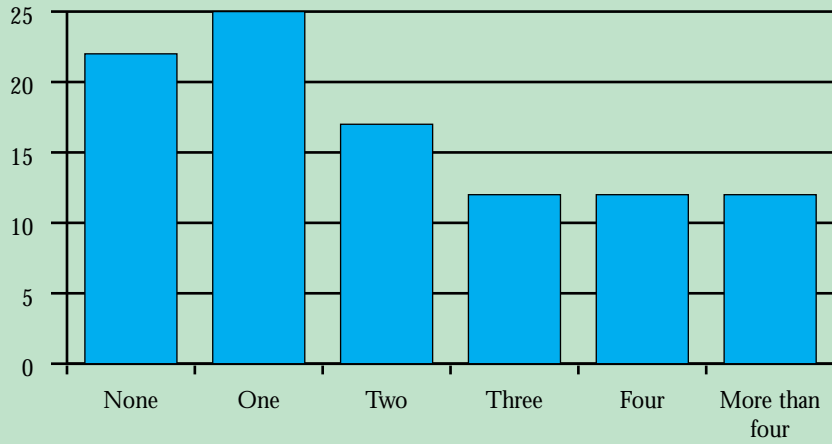


It is clear that a large majority of the sample (78%) received a non-custodial sanction on their first conviction, but there was considerable variation in the number of non-custodial sanctions received before the first sentence of imprisonment. Figure 25 presents the distribution of numbers of non-custodial sanctions experienced before a first imprisonment. While a quarter of the sample benefited from only 1 alternative sanction before being imprisoned, another quarter, approximately, received the benefit of 4 or more (up to 8) alternative sanctions before being imprisoned. It is an interesting question, requiring further research, whether this relatively lenient approach with some offenders can be explained in terms of their form and seriousness of offending or in terms of variation in judicial sentencing and in judicial attitudes.

While 26 prisoners had been imprisoned on their first conviction, only 13 prisoners had never received a non-custodial sanction and 5 of these had been convicted on only one occasion i.e. they were currently imprisoned on first conviction. It was, therefore, quite common for an offender imprisoned on first conviction to receive benefit of a non-custodial sanction on a later conviction. However, 6 prisoners had received between 2 and 6 sentences of imprisonment and yet never benefited from a non-custodial sanction and 2 prisoners had received more than 10 sentences of imprisonment and yet never benefited from a non-custodial sanction.



**FIGURE 25**  
**Distribution of prisoners by the number**  
**of non-custodial sanctions received before**  
**receiving a sentence of imprisonment (n = 117)**



**FIGURE 26**  
**Distribution of prisoners by the number**  
**of non-custodial sanctions received (n = 120)**

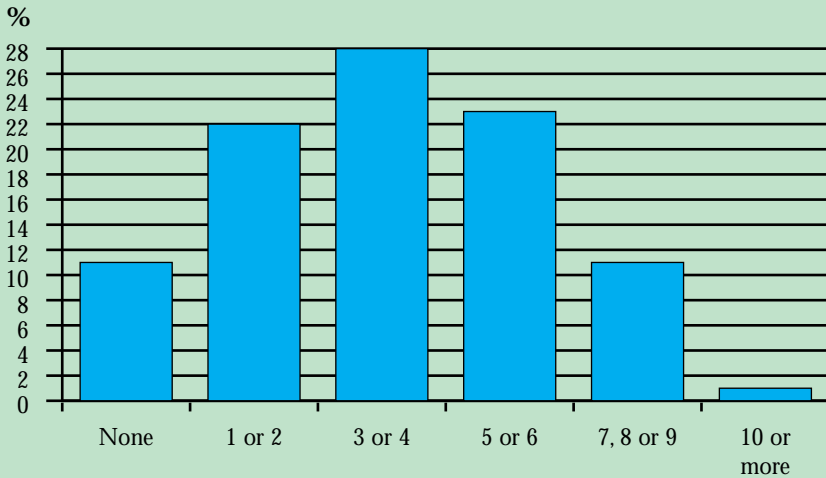


Figure 26 presents the distribution of non-custodial sanctions for the sample. The average for the 117 prisoners was 4.2 (standard deviation = 3.4). This is a reduction of about 1 non-custodial sanction per prisoner compared with the results of the 1986 survey. This, rather surprisingly, indicates a reduction in the use of non-custodial sanctions for the Mountjoy prisoner group. However, because the Mountjoy group

is even more highly selected than in 1986 due to the increased use of early release, this is quite consistent with a possible general increase in the use of non-custodial sanctions by the judiciary with all convicted offenders.

## **Summary of main findings**

- A very large majority of the sample (77%) had spent time in St Patrick's Institution for juvenile offenders. A majority had also been at some time in an Irish Open Prison. Eighty-one prisoners, or 76% of the total sample, had benefited, at some stage in their career of imprisonment, from temporary release from prison. Only 10% of the sample reported that they had never been in receipt of any of the 5 main types of non-custodial penalty or disposition.
- Sixty-nine percent of the sample said they had committed crime while on bail — 58% had committed crime the last time they had been on bail. Forty-two percent said that they had committed crime while on temporary release from prison and exactly one third of the sample said they had done so on the last occasion they were on temporary release.
- Seventy percent of the sample admitted to getting away in the past with more than 10 crimes without detection or charge. Of these, 37 prisoners admitted to getting away with more than 100 crimes, and 8 with more than a 1000 crimes.
- Thirty percent of the sample said that it was quite or very likely that they will commit crime again and 37% that it was quite or very likely that they will be back in prison at some time in the future.
- Of the total sample, 18% were on remand in Mountjoy Prison, either awaiting trial or in one case awaiting sentence following conviction. The average period spent on remand currently is about 12 days. In the present sample only 5 of the remand prisoners had been in custody for over 3 months. While almost half of committals to Irish prisons are remands, because at present remands in custody tend to be very short-term, remands make up less than 10% of the prison population as a whole. The Irish level of committal of remands is moderate in the European context but the Irish level of detention of remands is very low.
- The average length of sentence for the convicted members of the sample was 31.5 months, or a little over two and a half years, with a standard deviation of 31.2 months, indicating a very wide range of sentences. In fact, the shortest sentence was 15 days and the longest was twelve and a half years.
- The Mountjoy prison population in 1996 was dominated by prisoners serving sentences of under 2 years or on remand. Two out of every three prisoners were in these two categories and only 34% of prisoners were serving

sentences of 2 years or longer. Seven percent of the convicted prisoners were serving sentences of under 3 months, 33% of under 1 year, and only 15% were serving sentences of 5 years or longer.

- Each prison place in Mountjoy has, on average, to accommodate almost 10 prisoners in the course of a year. While there are a substantial number of longstay prisoners resident in the prison on any particular day, the large majority of the throughput of prisoners is very transient, ie. mainly very short-term remand and fine-defaulting prisoners. In addition, in order to deal with the demand on accommodation, hundreds of sentenced prisoners annually are released early under the full temporary release scheme.
- The dominant offence types of the prisoners in Mountjoy are property crimes, most especially robbery, burglary, and larceny. These 3 categories account for almost 70% of the current prison population. Crimes of frank violence against the person, ie. false imprisonment (hostage-taking), manslaughter, wounding, and the clearly less serious category of assault account for a relatively small proportion of the prison population (in total 10%).
- The current offence type of the prisoners was not necessarily a reliable guide to their past pattern of offending. Only 7 prisoners were in prison for drugs-related offences, but 27 had such an offence on their record. There were 28 robbers in the sample, but 49 or almost a half of all prisoners had at some time been convicted of robbery. Only 4 of the sample had a 'main' offence of possession of firearms, but 30 had at some point been convicted for the possession of a firearm or of an offensive weapon. Most dramatically of all, while only 2 of the sample were in prison for assault, 53% of them had a conviction for assault on their record. While 8 prisoners were in prison for a serious offence of violence against the person, 32 of the sample had convictions for other, usually very serious, forms of violence on their record.
- The average time already served in the prison was 7.9 months but about 70% of the prisoners had been no longer than 6 months in the prison. Only 19% had been in the prison for a year or more. The average time remaining to be served by the sentenced prisoners was 16 months. Paradoxically, having spent a longer period in the prison was associated with having a longer period left to serve.
- The sample was highly recidivist and had an average of 14.3 convictions and an average of 10.3 separate sentences of imprisonment. Only 11% of the total sample of 124 had received less than 3 convictions, so the remaining 89% could be classed as persistent or repeat offenders. Fully 54% had received more than 10, and 21% had received more than 20 convictions.
- A minority of the sample (46%) had ever received a sentence longer than 2 years in their criminal career; 36% had never received a sentence longer than

1 year; and only 13% had received a sentence longer than 5 years. Nevertheless, a substantial majority (61%) had accumulated a total of prison time of more than 5 years, and 37% had accumulated more than 10 years. Indeed, the average accumulated total of sentenced prison time was 9.4 years with a range of between zero and 42 years.

- Forty-one percent of the sample had been the subject of more than 10 separate sentences of imprisonment, ie. sentences leading to different periods of imprisonment, and 61% of more than 5. Generally speaking, these figures considerably underestimate the number of sentences of imprisonment received because they do not take account of concurrent sentences, which are quite common. The figures also very much underestimate the number of offences for which the prisoners have been found guilty since many single sentences “take into account” numerous offences.
- The average age for first conviction for the sample of 120 prisoners (excluding one foreigner without an Irish criminal record and 3 remand prisoners without a conviction) was 16.8. The range of ages of first conviction was from 10 years to 40 years old. Thirty-one percent of the present sample had been convicted by the age of 14 years and 64% by the age of 17 years. Eight percent were over 20 years at the time of first conviction.
- The average age of first imprisonment or detention was 18.9 years. Seven percent (of 117 prisoners who had ever received a custodial sentence) had first been in custody before the age of 15 and 57% before the age of 18. On the other hand, 23% of the sample received their first sentence of imprisonment when over 20 years of age.
- A considerable minority of the sample (22%) were imprisoned on their first conviction — in most cases for relatively minor offences. On the other hand, when an offender did benefit from a non-custodial sentence on first conviction the time lag between first conviction and first imprisonment tended to be quite long. For 43% of the sample the time lag was over 2 years and for 11% over 5 years. The average length of the time lag for those who were not imprisoned on first conviction was 2 years and nine months.
- The prisoners had, on average, benefited from 4 non-custodial sanctions in the course of their court career. A quarter of the sample received at least 4 non-custodial sanctions before their first sentence of imprisonment. Thirty-five percent had received more than 4 non-custodial sanctions and 12% more than 6, but 11% had been imprisoned yet never received a non-custodial sanction. It was quite common, however, for offenders imprisoned on their first conviction to receive non-custodial sanctions at later convictions.

# Chapter 5

## Substance Abuse

### a) Alcohol and cigarettes

The vast majority of the members of the sample smoked cigarettes (91%). This rate of smoking is more than 3 times the rate for the general adult male population. It also represents an increase on the results for the 1986 Mountjoy survey which showed that 80% of prisoners were smokers.

In 1986, 87% of the sample said that they drank alcohol when free. By 1996, the equivalent figure was reduced very appreciably to 68%. Surprisingly almost one in three of the prisoners claimed never to drink alcohol, although there were a few recovered alcoholics in this group. The reduction in alcohol drinkers is likely to be strongly linked with increasing drug use, in other words with changing preferences in chemical dependence rather than any increase in abstemiousness. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that of 35 prisoners who said they never used alcohol, all but 3 were users of heroin.

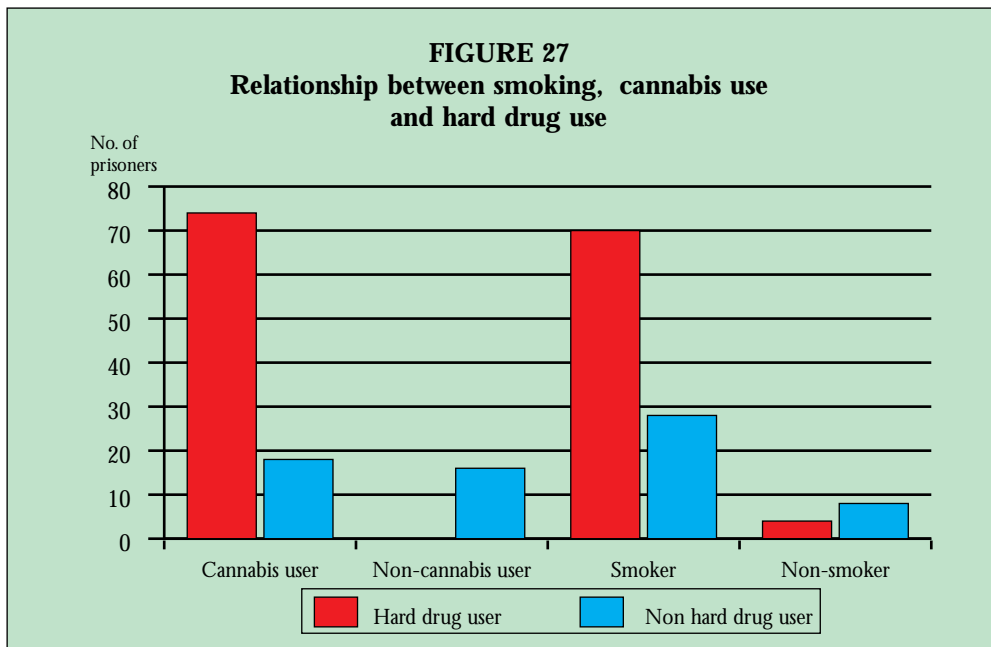
Of the total sample, 20, or 19%, admitted an alcohol problem or had been in treatment for alcoholism. This is more than a quarter (27%) of those who drank alcohol. Two people admitted to a serious alcohol problem for which they had never received treatment. Of the 18 who had been in treatment most claimed that it had been of some value, but 5 claimed that it had been of no use to them. One of these prisoners said that he was not really a problem drinker and had been forced into treatment by the criminal justice system. One person not currently drinking had had treatment for alcoholism in the past.

### b) Cannabis

Almost as many prisoners smoked cannabis as smoked tobacco. Eighty-six percent of the sample said they used cannabis and only 15 prisoners claimed never to have used it. Again, these figures represent a very considerable increase on the position in 1986, when 59% of prisoners said that they had used cannabis.

Of the cannabis smokers, 31% claimed to be only occasional users, 46% regular users and 23% daily users. There was an important relationship between smoking of both tobacco and cannabis and use of more serious drugs, mainly heroin. Of 83 users of opiates, hallucinogens, and stimulants in the sample (71 of whom had used heroin),

all without exception had used cannabis and all but 3 were current cigarette smokers. On the other hand, 18 of the cannabis users had never used more serious drugs and 28 of the cigarette smokers had never done so. These relationships are graphed in Figure:



Cannabis is often described as a gateway drug to heroin but these results, while they confirm a strong association between heroin use and cannabis use and for that matter smoking, do not tell us anything definitive about cause and effect in these relationships. For one thing, it is possible that cannabis or tobacco smoking were actually preceded by hard drug use. It should also be noted that a sizeable proportion of cannabis users (20%) had not used harder drugs and an even greater proportion of smokers had not done so (29%).

A useful statistic for examining the relationships between risk factors and negative outcomes is the Population Attributable Risk Percent (PARP). If we assume that cannabis and tobacco smoking always preceded hard drug use and can be regarded as predictive risk factors for hard drug use, the calculated PARP statistics in this sample are 100% for cannabis and 46% for tobacco. These statistics can be interpreted as indicating that a prisoner who has completely avoided cannabis use will be 100% sure to avoid hard drug use and that 46% of prisoners who manage to avoid becoming smokers will avoid hard drug use.

Although these results indicate very significant links between the tendency to smoke either cannabis or tobacco and the tendency to use hard drugs, they are in a sense a

*reductio ad absurdum* of the gateway theory. It is clear that these results cannot be extrapolated beyond the prison population because it is known that far greater proportions of cannabis and tobacco smokers in the general population do not ever use hard drugs. The equivalent PARP statistics for the general population are likely to be by comparison tiny. Thus, although it may be true that almost all prisoner addicts smoke tobacco, it would be erroneous to infer from this that cigarettes are generally a gateway drug for heroin. The smoking habits of addicts are probably more correctly interpreted as a cultural or lifestyle phenomenon and as a consequence or concomitant rather than a precursor of more serious addiction. Similarly, although the links between cannabis and hard drug use are even stronger, it would be wrong to conclude that this is confirmatory evidence that cannabis is a gateway drug for heroin.

### **c) Heroin and other drugs**

There were 83 prisoners in the sample of 108, who had experience of drugs other than cannabis (77%). A large majority of these (71 out of 83) had used heroin and, for a large majority, heroin was the drug of choice and the main drug of addiction. This amounts to 66% of the total sample, or 2 out of every three prisoners, who had used heroin. Six individuals had used cocaine but not heroin and two, amphetamines but not heroin. One additional prisoner had regularly used ecstasy and another had used it just once. For 2 prisoners the only drug experience apart from cannabis was the use of L.S.D. on just one occasion

For the most part, then, these prisoners were specifically heroin users. However, they did not use heroin in a narrow or exclusive way. They were, in fact, overwhelmingly polydrug users who had experience of, at least on an occasional basis, a wide variety of drugs, including stimulants, such as ecstasy and cocaine, hallucinogens, such as L.S.D., and narcotics, such as heroin and physeptone. All but one of the heroin users had experience of such other drugs, so that in total 82, or 76% of the complete sample, had used drugs other than heroin or cannabis. As as been indicated a small number of prisoners had very limited experience of just one or two drugs but for the most part the members of the sample who used drugs, including those with a clearcut heroin dependency, did so in a promiscuous manner, quite frequently mixing stimulants, hallucinogens, and depressant drugs as they came to hand.

Table 13 presents figures which indicate the relative popularity of various drugs and categories of drugs across the sample of prisoners. As can be seen experience with L.S.D., ecstasy, speed, cocaine and tranquillizers appears to be very widespread in this group of prisoners. Each of these drugs had been used by at least half of the sample. They were, then, almost as widely experienced as heroin itself. In the large majority of cases, however, use of these drugs was occasional and very much secondary to heroin use. Crack cocaine, cough bottles, barbiturates and volatile substances (glue,

petrol etc.) had not been used as frequently but were, nonetheless, quite commonplace having been used by between a fifth and a third of the total sample.

**Table 13: Use of drugs other than Heroin and Cannabis**

Total with any experience = 82 (76%) = % of sample				
Cocaine 60 (56%)	Crack Cocaine 32 (30%)	Speed (Amphetamine) 66 (61%)	L.S.D. 70 (65%)	
Cough Bottles 27 (25%)	Volatiles 37 (34%)	Barbiturates 20 (19%)	Tranquillisers 59 (55%)	Ecstasy 65 (60%)

The distribution of prisoners' main drug habit, if any, is graphed in Figure 28. When asked to describe their main habit 40 prisoners said that it was intravenous use of heroin, 17 the smoking of heroin ("chasing the dragon"), and 9 a combination of smoking and intravenous use. Three more prisoners said they were intravenous users of heroin but described their main habit as a combination of this and cocaine (2 cases) and ecstasy (1 case).

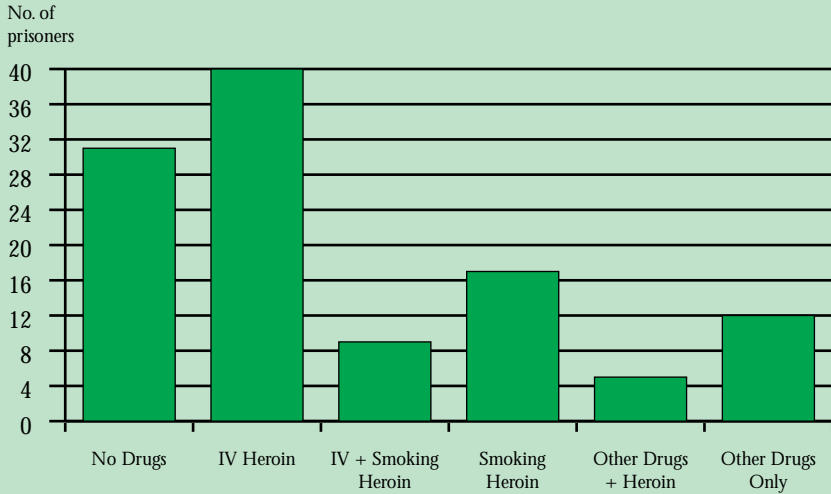
Almost all the intravenous users, whether solely or in combination, had been daily users or very seriously dependent. However, 4 of the smokers only group said they were occasional users without a very strong habit. They are nonetheless included in the heroin smoking group in Figure 28. On the other hand, the remaining 13 prisoners, who described their main habit as solely smoking heroin, had a serious habit, and 7 of them said that they had also used intravenously. Another prisoner had been an intravenous user of heroin but said that his main habit was now physeptone (methadone) taken in syrup form. This person is included in the other drug plus heroin group. One other prisoner said his main habit was a combination of smoking heroin and use of tranquillizers.

Of the prisoners with experience of drugs other than cannabis but not including heroin, 3 described cocaine as their main habit. However, 2 of these said they were only occasional users and not dependent so they have been included in the 'No main habit' group along with non-drug users. Three prisoners described ecstasy as their main habit, two in combination with cocaine and amphetamines respectively, and one using ecstasy solely, but very regularly and in large dosages. Six other prisoners, who had used L.S.D., amphetamines and cocaine, said they had done this only once or a few times and could not be described as having a main drug habit and they too are included in the 'No main habit' group in Figure 28.

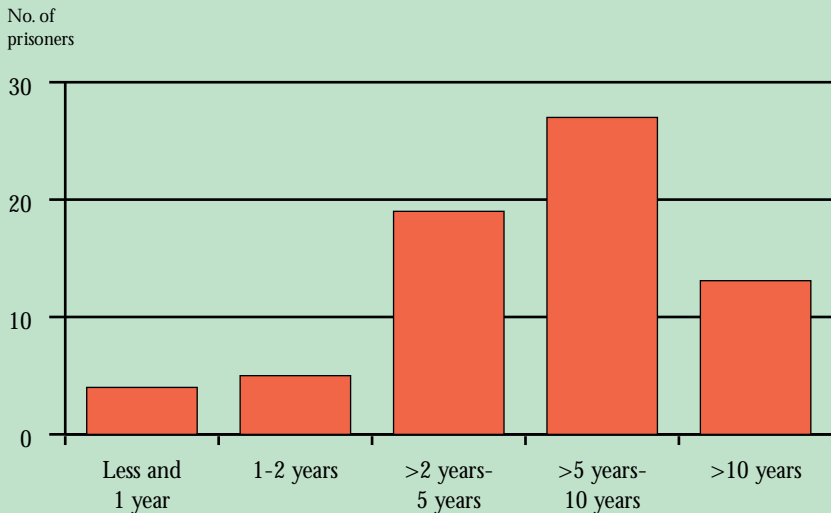


Altogether 71 prisoners mentioned heroin as being in some way part of their main drug habit. Of these, 60, that is 56% of the total sample, had used intravenously. In total 68 prisoners or 63% of the members of the sample were classed as having or having had a serious heroin dependency.

**FIGURE 28**  
**Prisoners' descriptions of main drug habit if any**



**FIGURE 29**  
**Duration of serious heroin habit (n =68)**



It is worth pointing out that of the 25 prisoners who had no experience of drugs other than cannabis, 14, or 56%, had an admitted alcoholic problem. This means that only 11 prisoners out of the 108 did not have experience of either drugs other than cannabis or an alcohol problem. Six of these 11 prisoners had used cannabis.

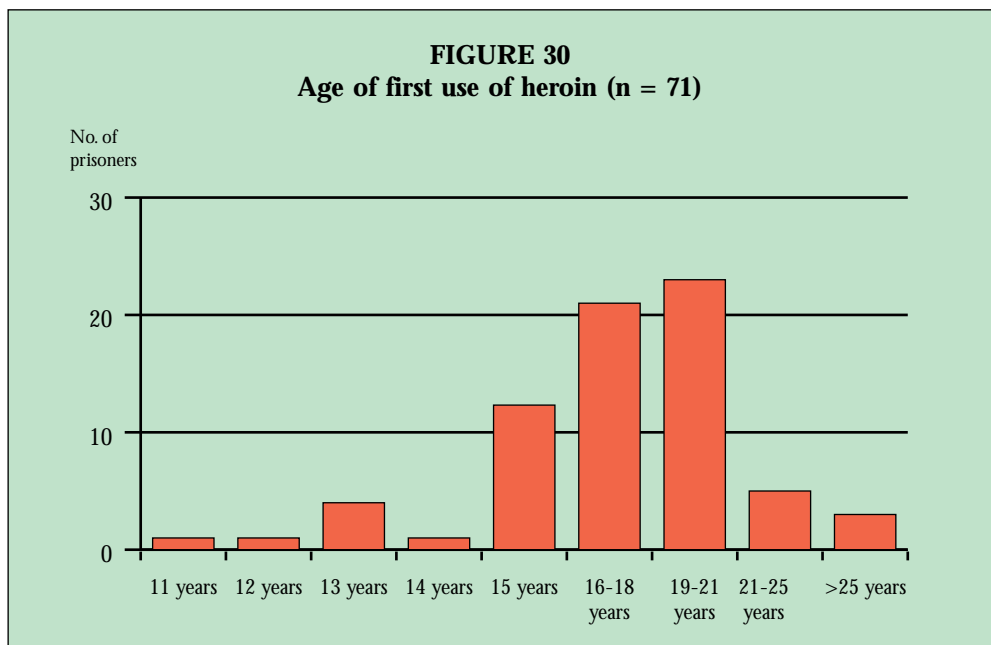
The 68 serious heroin abusers were asked about the duration of their habit. Periods of use ranged from 6 months to 20 years. The average period of use was 7 years (standard deviation 4.6 years). Altogether 9 prisoners from this group had been using for 2 years or less, 46 for more than 2 years but less than 11 years, and 13 had been using for more than 10 years (see Figure 29 ). Forty of the 68 said that their drug habit had been continuous, except for unavoidable interruptions and 28 said that there had been intermittent periods of abstinence during their career of heroin dependence.

The group of 71 heroin users were also asked about their age of initiation into opiates. The average age of initiation was 18 years (standard deviation 3.5 years). Seven had first used opiates before the age of 15 years and 8 had first used when they were over 21 years. The most common (modal) year for opiate initiation was 15 (12 cases). The age distribution for initiation is presented in Figure 30.

The figures on drug use among prisoners clearly demonstrate a significant deterioration from the situation that prevailed in Mountjoy Prison in 1986, at the time of the previous survey. Then 37% of the sample had experience of a drug other than cannabis compared with more than twice that rate (77%) in the present survey. In 1986, 31% of the sample were classed as having a serious drug dependency compared with 63% or again more than twice the rate in this survey. Finally, the proportion with experience of IV use of heroin has increased from 29% to 56% over the 10 years. This is not quite as large an increase as in the other two categories and this fact can be linked to the greater prevalence of smoking heroin as the main modality of use. Eleven of the 71 prisoners (15%), who had used heroin, had never injected. All the heroin users in the 1986 survey had injected. This change reflects the increasing tendency in recent years amongst Dublin addicts generally to smoke rather than inject heroin, as noted by the reports of the Health Research Board [61], which collate statistics on people attending treatment centres. The growth in popularity of smoking heroin and the avoidance of injecting has been most marked in new contacts with treatment centres.

Quite clearly, the results of this survey indicate that the number of prisoners with a drug problem in Mountjoy Prison has greatly escalated over the 10 years to 1996. Indeed, the figures, which are percentages, somewhat understate the growth of the problem because the 1996 rates refer to a significantly larger prison population, so that, for example, in 1996 we are talking about 77% of 650 (501) prisoners rather than 37% of 550 (204) prisoners, who have used drugs other than cannabis.

**FIGURE 30**  
**Age of first use of heroin (n = 71)**



#### **d) Drug use in prison**

Forty-five prisoners, or 42% of the total sample and 63% of those that had ever used heroin, had used heroin while in prison on the current occasion. Of this group of 45, 37 had used intravenously while in prison on this occasion. The 8 other prisoners said they had only smoked heroin while in on this sentence or remand. Five of these were people who used intravenously on the outside, while 3 were normally heroin smokers.

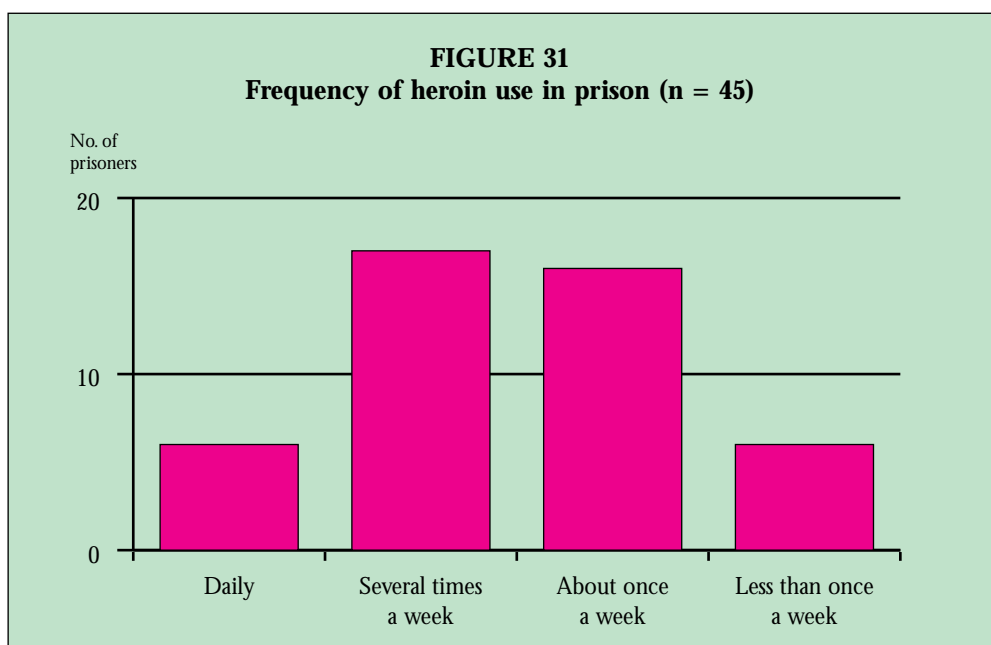
All told, 18 of the 60 people with IV experience claimed not to have used heroin on the current confinement in prison. However, it should be noted that most of this group of 18 had been only a short time in the prison. Eleven had been in prison for a month or less and 5 for a week or less. It can be assumed, therefore that some of this group are likely to use heroin in prison, but had not yet been presented with the opportunity to do so. However, some had made a genuine and determined decision to avoid heroin and three had managed to do so for periods of more than 3 months, in fact for 5 months, 6 months and 18 months.

Only 2 of the 18 remand prisoners had used drugs in prison on this occasion. This means that 48% of the total group of convicted prisoners, that is almost half, had used drugs on this sentence. Perhaps the best indicator of the extent of the drugs culture in the prison is the prevalence of drug use amongst the convicted prisoners who had been imprisoned for at least three months. This group, which excludes the remand prisoners and those in unusual categories such as debtors and barring order cases and

people that are likely to be in the prison for only a very short time, represent the core of relatively longterm prisoners, who are likely to dominate the ethos of the prison. There were 52 prisoners in this group and 29 of them, or 56%, were using heroin in prison on this sentence.

The Second Scottish Prison Survey [11] asked prisoners if they had used drugs in the last 6 months in prison. Forty-five percent said that they had done so, but a large majority were referring to cannabis solely. In fact only 9% claimed to have used heroin in the previous 6 months in prison — less than a quarter of the rate found in this Mountjoy study. Only 5% of the Scottish prisoners claimed to have injected in the last 6 months and this is about one seventh of the Mountjoy figure (35%).

Those using heroin in Mountjoy prison were asked about their frequency of use. Twenty-three said they were using daily or several times a week, 16 about once a week, and 6 less than once a week or only very occasionally. These results are presented in Figure 31. Some of these prisoners suggested that they had a constant supply of heroin available to them, but more often prisoners spoke of considerable difficulty in obtaining supplies and reported that the supply of heroin had become more scarce in recent months due to new measures, such as searches and heightened surveillance of visits. Many of those prisoners, who were not using very frequently, said that they would use heroin as often as they could get hold of it, but that the supply was quite limited and sporadic. Access to heroin appeared to be different in different locations of the prison.



The prisoners were asked about their source of drugs in the prison, but they were not pressed on this question and all did not give a response. In total 17 prisoners admitted that they got drugs into the prison through smuggling during visits. Several others said that they themselves were unable to get drugs into the prison and depended on other prisoners from whom they would buy drugs or obtain drugs by some form of exchange. A few spoke of the existence of known and reliable suppliers amongst the prisoners, with whom it was possible to leave a specific order for a consignment of drugs. No prisoner made mention of any other route of supply; in particular no one made any mention of obtaining supplies from a prison officer or other member of staff.

There was anecdotal evidence from a couple of prisoners to the effect that the more stringent recent measures against drug smuggling in the prison had impacted most dramatically on the supply of cannabis, because of the relative bulk of that drug. This was significant because so many of the prisoners used cannabis and it was suggested that a few of them had resorted to heroin use because of the scarcity of cannabis.

Six prisoners said that their first ever experience with heroin had occurred in prison. One said that this had been on the present sentence. One further prisoner said that he had first used heroin on the outside but had not become dependent until his previous period of imprisonment during which he regularly used heroin.

<b>Table 14: Use of drugs other than Heroin and Cannabis in prison on this sentence or remand</b>				
Total with any experience = 24				
Cocaine 15 (14%)	Crack Cocaine 4 (4%)	Speed (Amphetamine) 9 (8%)	L.S.D. 5 (5%)	
Cough Bottles 0 (0%)	Volatiles 1 (1%)	Barbiturates 6 (6%)	Tranquillisers 6 (6%)	Ecstasy 16 (15%)

Table 14 presents the findings on the prevalence of use of drugs other than heroin and cannabis in prison while on the present sentence. All of the people using these drugs were convicted and also using heroin in the prison. Thus, while only 22% of the total sample used drugs other than heroin and cannabis during the current period of imprisonment, 53% of those using heroin in the prison did so. Ecstasy, cocaine and speed, in that order, were the most common.

### **e) Drug use by prisoners: International comparison**

International comparison of the problem of drug abuse for prison systems is impeded by a lack of research and, where research exists, by definitional ambiguities and confusions. For example, research findings often simply refer to the global category of

drug user and fail to distinguish between cannabis, cocaine, and opiate users and between different levels of use. However, it is clear that drug abuse by prisoners has emerged in the 1980s and through into the 1990s as one of the most serious and urgent problems facing penal systems around the world. A commentator on the Italian prison system [62] has written that “the impact of drug use and distribution on the penal system as a whole cannot be overstressed”. Or again a German commentator [63] has written: “During the late 1980s prisons underwent unprecedented change owing to the influx of prisoners with drugs problems..... Health issues are becoming paramount in the running of prisons — a circumstance which may find prison officers culturally unprepared and professionally untrained”.

It is estimated that approximately 20% of German prisoners are seriously drug dependent. In Italy in 1992, it was found that about 30% of prisoners were drug dependent with this figure rising to 50% in the large cities like Rome and Milan. A number of Spanish surveys [64,65] have estimated the number of regular users of illicit drugs at between 60% and 80% of the prison population, but this is evidently a far broader definition of drug user than that in the Italian and German studies. The Swedish authorities [66] have for many years carefully monitored the drug using status of new admissions into the prison system. In 1991 and 1992 the proportions of new admissions, who were drug dependent, were 40% and 42%, and a large majority of these were daily users. In Holland [67] in 1992 just under a quarter of receptions into prison were registered drug users and 63% of these were seriously heroin dependent.

The US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] provides a useful statistical breakdown of drug use amongst prisoners, which permits meaningful comparison with the results of the present study. In 1991, it was found that 79% of prisoners in State prisons had ever used any drug, including cannabis. Fifty percent had used cocaine or crack and 25% had used opiates. The Mountjoy figures for comparison are 86%, 56%, and 66% respectively. In other words the incidence of drug use in the Mountjoy sample is, in each of the 3 areas, higher than in the US State prison system. Cocaine and crack are the largest problem according to the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] but a larger proportion of Mountjoy prisoners than US State prisoners have used cocaine. Most significantly, the rate of exposure to heroin is more than two and a half times greater in the Mountjoy sample. In the U.S. sample only 31% of all prisoners had ever injected a drug compared to 56% of the Mountjoy sample.

When regular use rather than experience of a drug is examined it is found that 62% of the US State prisoners had regularly used drugs at some point in their lives. Fifty-two percent had regularly used cannabis, 32% cocaine or crack and 15% heroin. Perhaps the most startling figure for comparison here is the 63% of the Mountjoy sample who had been serious, for the most part, daily IV users of heroin. In other words, more of the Mountjoy population are regular serious abusers of heroin than are regular users of any drug, including soft drugs such as cannabis, in the American

State prison population. This is a stark reminder of the unusual seriousness of the drug problem in Mountjoy Prison — indeed more prisoners would appear to be using heroin intravenously in Mountjoy Prison than have ever used it in the U.S. sample. The figures also point up the fact that, where in the U.S. cocaine and crack appear to be a greater problem than heroin use, in Ireland the paramount problem is heroin.

Of course the appropriate base for comparison with the American figures would be the entire Irish prison system. Mountjoy Prison, undoubtedly, has a particularly marked concentration of drug using prisoners, such as is not found throughout the prison system. For example, experience of drug use is likely to be much lower in Arbour Hill which houses mainly sex offenders. The contrasts with American and European figures which generally indicate an egregiously serious drug problem in the Mountjoy population would be considerably moderated if the comparison was with figures for the whole Irish prison system.

### **Summary of main findings**

- Ninety-one percent of the prisoners said they smoked cigarettes.
- Sixty-eight percent of the prisoners said they drank alcohol when free, so just under one third said they did not. Twenty prisoners (19%) admitted to an alcohol problem or that they had been in treatment for alcoholism.
- Eighty-six percent of the sample said they used cannabis. Of the cannabis smokers, 31% claimed to be only occasional users, 46% regular users, and 23% daily users.
- There were 83 prisoners (77%) in the sample, who had experience of drugs other than cannabis. A large majority of these (71 out of 83) had used heroin and, for a large majority, heroin was the drug of first choice and the main drug of addiction. This amounts to 66% of the total sample, or 2 out of every three prisoners, who had used heroin.
- When asked to describe their main habit, 40 prisoners said that it was intravenous use of heroin, 17 said the smoking of heroin ("chasing the dragon"), and 9 said a combination of smoking and intravenous use. In total, there were 60 prisoners in the sample with experience of intravenous use of drugs.
- The prisoners tended to be polydrug users though mainly dependent on and interested in heroin. Sixty-five percent had used L.S.D., 61% amphetamines, 60% ecstasy, and 56% cocaine.
- Of the 25 prisoners who had no experience of drugs other than cannabis, 56% had an admitted alcoholic problem. This means that only 11 prisoners out of the 108 did not have experience of either drugs other than cannabis or an alcohol problem.

- For the 68 serious heroin users, the average duration of use of heroin was 7 years. The average age of initiation with heroin was 18 years. Seven had first used opiates before the age of 15 years and 8 had first used when they were over 21 years.
- Forty-five prisoners, or 42% of the total sample of 108 and 63% of those that had ever used heroin, had used heroin while in prison on the current occasion. Thirty-seven said they had used heroin intravenously in prison, while 8 said they had only smoked heroin in prison.
- Six prisoners said their first ever experience with heroin had been in prison, one on this sentence.
- Only 24 prisoners said they had used drugs other than cannabis and heroin whilst in prison this time. Fifteen percent had used ecstasy, 14% cocaine, and 8% amphetamines.
- Twenty-three prisoners said they were presently using heroin daily or several times a week, 16 about once a week, and 6 less than once a week or only very occasionally.

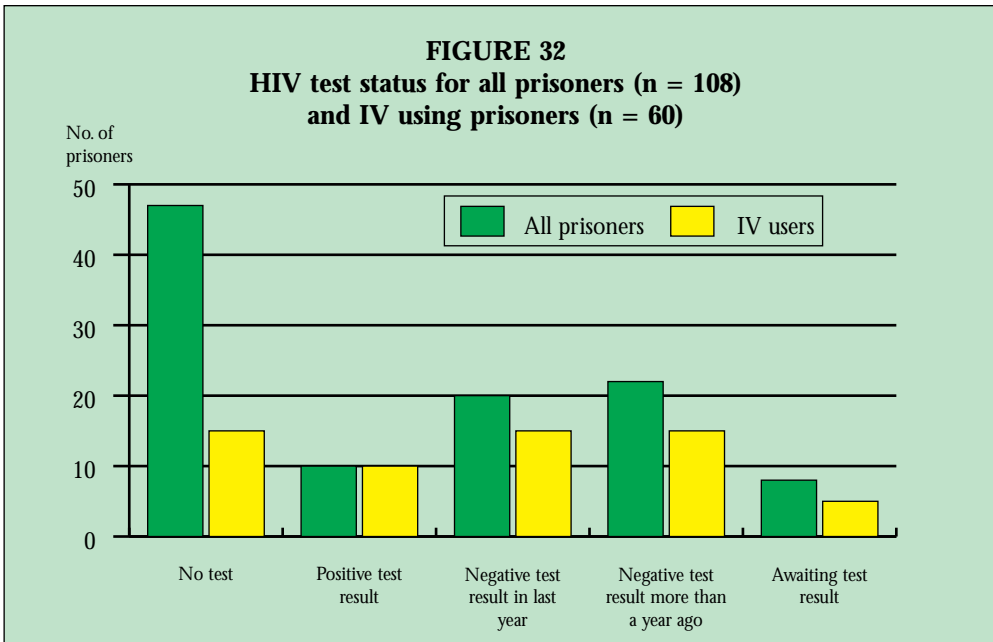


## Chapter 6

# Drug-Related Health Problems and Other Health Issues

### a) Sharing syringes and HIV status

Of the 60 prisoners who had used drugs intravenously, 46 (77%) admitted to having shared syringes and needles and so very probably put themselves and possibly others at risk of HIV infection. This amounts to 43% of the total sample. Of this group who had shared syringes, 13 had never taken an HIV test and were unaware of their HIV status. Two, who had tested positive yet continued to use intravenously, claimed never to have shared since finding out that they were HIV positive.



These figures are very high in comparison to the results of the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12], which found that less than half of the inmates who had injected had ever shared a syringe or needle. In terms of the total populations this indicates that the rate of all American prisoners who had shared (12%) is less than a third the equivalent rate for Mountjoy prisoners (43%). In the Second Scottish Prison Survey [11] only 4% of prisoners admitted to having shared a syringe in the previous 6

months in prison. However, these comparisons should be treated with caution since they compare one single prison with a concentrated drug problem with the national situation elsewhere.

Thirty-seven prisoners, or about one in three of all prisoners, had used intravenously in prison on this occasion and of these 31, or 84%, admitted to sharing a syringe, while the remainder kept their own syringe and claimed never to share it.

Altogether 61, or 56% of the total sample, had undergone at least one HIV test. Ten prisoners had had a positive result (indicating HIV infection), 42 had had a negative result and the remaining 9 were currently awaiting the outcome of the test. This amounts to 9% of the sample who knew they were HIV positive. This is 3 times the rate found in the 1986 survey of Mountjoy.

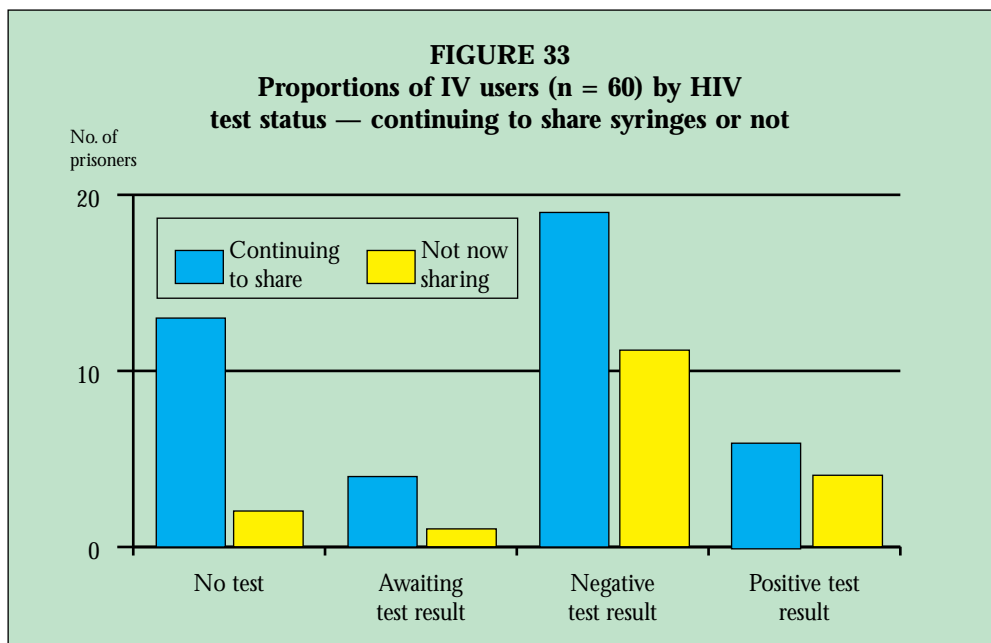
This result suggests an absolute minimum of 50 HIV positive prisoners in Mountjoy at the time of the survey. The number is likely to be considerably larger since this estimate does not include possible HIV positive people amongst the quite large number currently awaiting results, or amongst those who have put themselves at risk and never taken a test, or amongst those who have had a negative test in the past but since put themselves at risk.

As Figure 32 indicates all those who were known to be HIV positive were in the IV drug using risk group. In all, precisely one quarter of the IV users who had been tested and knew their results, tested positive. This result is not much different to the results of HIV testing of 19000 Spanish prisoners (presumably in high risk groups) which indicated that 30% were HIV positive [68]. It is much higher than the results in the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12], which showed that 51% of inmates had been tested for HIV, but that only 5% of IV using inmates, who had been tested and knew the result, tested positive. In the U.S. study 1% of non-IV using prisoners tested positive.

It is worth noting that in Mountjoy exactly a quarter, or 15, of the IV using prisoners had never had an HIV test and a further quarter had not had a test in the last year and most of the latter group had put themselves at risk by sharing in that period. This is the case despite the ready availability of confidential HIV testing within the prison and despite a continuing educational programme to encourage IV users to undertake the test.

Forty-two people were regularly sharing syringes either in or outside the prison and 31 in the prison. Figure 33 graphs the distribution of the 60 intravenous users with respect to HIV test status and whether or not they have shared syringes since they took an HIV test, if they ever did so. It is clear that a very large majority (85%) of those who had never taken a test or were awaiting test results continued to share,

putting themselves at great risk of infection.. However, although still a majority, a considerably reduced majority (63%) of those who had had a test result, either positive or negative, continued to share syringes. Most notably and most alarmingly, 60% of those with positive test results continued to share. These prisoners, of course, being already infected, were not putting themselves at risk but were possibly risking infecting others.



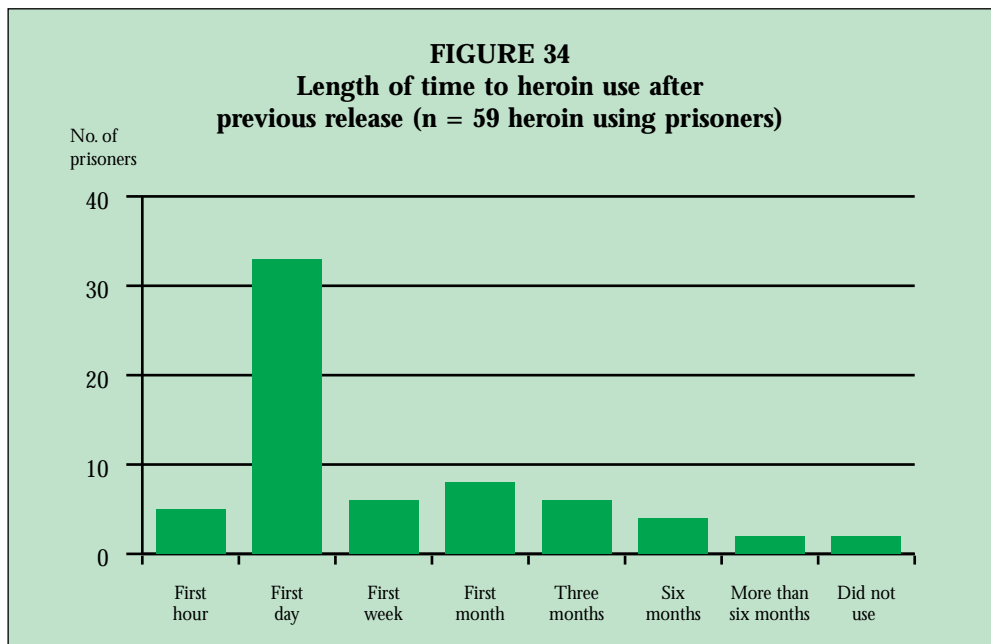
Hepatitis was also a very serious problem for the IV drug using prisoners. Thirty had tested positive for one or other of the varieties of hepatitis. This is 28% of the total sample. Ten other IV users and two non IV using prisoners felt that they might have the disease or strongly suspected that they had it. Of the group of 40 IV using prisoners who either knew they had hepatitis or suspected that they did, 29 were continuing to share syringes, thus putting others at risk of infection.

### **b) Other Drug-related issues**

Altogether, 43 prisoners reported that they had suffered some kind of drug-related illness or disorder, including HIV, hepatitis, and other problems such as abscesses, collapsed veins etc. Two said they had suffered mental illnesses that had been precipitated by drug use.

Thirty-seven prisoners had suffered at least one overdose episode during their drug using career. This means that a little over half of the heroin users had overdosed, and many of them had done so frequently. Sixty prisoners had undergone a medical programme of detoxification, 57 of them in prison.

The heroin users were asked how long it had been until they used heroin when they last left prison. Sixty-six prisoners responded to this question and 7 of these said they had not been using heroin at that time. Of the remainder only 2 said they did not go back on heroin. The majority of the others used within a day of release from prison. The distribution is presented in Figure 34.



Approximately half (36) of the prisoners, who had had or still had a serious drug dependency, said that they had experienced periods of abstinence from the drug unforced by circumstances, such as arrest and imprisonment, since they first developed the habit. Seventy-four prisoners responded to a query about whether or not they would want to be in a drug free zone within prison. Fifty-four, or 73%, said that they would want to give a drug free zone a try, 2 said they were not sure and only 18, or 24%, said they would have no interest in going to a drug free zone.

Seventy-five drug users responded to a question about whether or not they intended to give up drugs. Sixty-six, or 88%, said they they did intend to give up. Only 3 said that they could not see themselves giving up and 6 others equivocated — one, for example, said that he intended to give up but not now while he was in prison. However, to a follow-up question asking “But do you really think you will give up?”, only 11 replied that they did, 46 said no, and 16 were unsure. These results are interesting and point to the deep-seated ambivalence towards their habit that has been identified [69] as a common feature of the addict mentality. A very large majority have the intention to get free of drugs and a large majority would welcome

the opportunity presented by drug free zones within the prison. However, their anti-drug intentions and inclinations clearly coexist with a sense of fatalism and self-directed scepticism with regard to their capacity to abandon drug use.

### **c) Treatment for drug problems**

Forty-one of the 71 heroin using prisoners had experience of some form of treatment other than detoxification. This is 58% of the heroin using group and represents an advance on the results for the 1986 Mountjoy survey which showed that 48% of the opiate users that had been exposed to treatment other than detoxification.

However, in a number of cases the contact with treatment agencies had been minimal and short-lived. For example, 9 of the 41 had only experienced Narcotics Anonymous or less frequently counselling within the prison setting and several of these prisoners claimed to have only attended once or twice. The largest single category of substantial treatment experience was methadone maintenance. Twenty of this group had been on a maintenance programme. In 9 cases the programme was run by a General Practitioner and in 11 cases it was run by a Health Board clinic. Three of this 11 had also received maintenance treatment from a General Practitioner. Six of the twenty with experience of a maintenance programme spoke of ancillary treatment, 5 mentioning attendance at Narcotics Anonymous, and 3 mentioning group and individual counselling. However, a number pointed out that they had continued to inject whilst on the maintenance programme.

The substantial exposure to maintenance programmes represents a total departure from the 1986 survey results in which no prisoner claimed experience of maintenance. This change is clearly related to the fact that methadone maintenance has only become widely available in Ireland since 1986. As indicated by the Health Research Board studies in the area [61], the treatment services have greatly expanded in recent years and numbers in treatment, especially maintenance, have increased as have new contacts with treatment services. The fact that about a third of the heroin using prisoners have experience of maintenance no doubt reflects the changes in the provision of services in society.

Eight prisoners, who had not been on a maintenance programme, spoke of attending Narcotics Anonymous or group counselling or in one case a psychiatrist outside of the prison. Finally, 4 prisoners had been residents in the Coolmine Therapeutic Community, an abstinence based programme. These 4 prisoners tended to have a wide experience of various kinds of treatment in addition to Coolmine. Twenty-five of the 41 prisoners, who had received some form of treatment, claimed that it had been of some value to them, helping them to understand their problem and in some cases helping them to be abstinent for a period. The remaining 16 prisoners said they had got nothing out of treatment.

The prisoners were also asked whether there were any services or facilities they would like to see provided in the prison for their drug problem. Seventy-five drug using prisoners gave a response to this question. By far the most common answer was that maintenance programmes should be provided within the prison. Twenty-two prisoners made this response. On the other hand, 3 prisoners were opposed to the idea of maintenance and thought that prisons should be drug free and 6 more emphasised the need to develop the drug free unit concept. For example, one of these said that there should be a separate drug free prison because you “can’t have a successful drug free unit linked into a prison” and 2 said that the drug free units should be extended but alongside this there should be a policy of tolerance for softer drugs such as cannabis.

Twelve prisoners focused on the detoxification procedure and suggested it could be better. One remarked that the new 2 weeks long detoxification was a marked improvement over the previous 5 days but this group were still generally dissatisfied with it. One said “Two weeks is a load of crap — the birds (in Mountjoy Womens’ Prison) get 6 weeks”. One prisoner specifically sought a detoxification programme at the pre-release stage.

Eleven prisoners spoke of the need for more rehabilitation and counselling and 5 of the prisoners that were seeking maintenance programmes and better detoxification also mentioned that this should be accompanied by more counselling. One each said they would like to see more psychiatric help, more sport, and better pre-release programmes. One prisoner seemed most concerned about education on drugs saying “ I’d like to know an awful lot more about it and what it does to you”.

Seven prisoners said they did not know or had no idea what could be done, although one of these said “If they went about things the right way, it wouldn’t be so bad”. In addition, 5 prisoners took the view that getting off drugs was something that could only be achieved by the individual addict and there was little or nothing useful the prison system could do to help. For example, one said: “No one will give up drugs unless they want to. There’s not a lot you can do.”, and another said: “There’s noone but yourself can help you”.

Although there would appear to be more emphasis on treatment for addiction in Mountjoy in 1996 than in 1986, the provision of treatment for drug using prisoners does not compare well with provision in U.S. State prisons. The US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12] indicates that just over half of all prisoners who had used a drug in the month before admission ( in fact 33% of all prisoners ) had participated in substantial treatment programmes, ranging from “intensive inpatient programmes, through individual or group counselling with a professional, to self-help groups and drugs awareness training.” Forty-four percent of recently drug-using U.S. prisoners had been in professionally led treatment programmes since their arrival in prison.

#### **d) Other health-related issues**

The prisoners were asked if they had a serious illness or disability apart from HIV and hepatitis. Only 14 (13%) said that they did; 2 had TB, 2 asthma, 1 eczema, 1 epilepsy, 4 had lower back pain and 4 had depression or nervous disorder.

Thirty-four prisoners, or just under a third of the total sample, were currently on medication. The most common medication was sleeping pills, which were prescribed for 20 prisoners in total, or 19% of the total sample, many of who were receiving other types of medication. Four prisoners were currently receiving physeptone (methadone) as part of the detoxification process, one of who was prescribed a sleeping tablet and another medication for epilepsy. Sixteen prisoners were prescribed anti-anxiety drugs (tranquillisers), 11 in combination with sleeping tablets. Three prisoners were prescribed a painkiller. Two were in receipt of anti-allergy medication, and one each was receiving AZT (an anti-AIDS drug), an antibiotic, medication for TB, and medication for a stomach problem.

The prisoners were asked: "How long after committal was it until you were physically examined by a doctor?". Sixty-nine prisoners, or 64% of the total sample, said they had not been physically examined at any point after reception into the prison. Twenty-five said they were examined on the first day in prison, 7 more sometime in the first week after the first day, and 7 more at some point after the first week. It should be noted, however, that most of the prisoners saying that they had not been examined had in fact seen a doctor after reception but they were responding to the exact wording of the question and their point was that they may well have spoken with a doctor but did not consider that they had been physically examined.

In response to the separate but linked question about whether they had attended the doctor since coming into the prison, 81, or 75% of the total sample, said they had. Most of these had seen the doctor on several occasions. Twenty-seven, or exactly a quarter of the sample, said they had never seen a doctor in the prison. It should be noted that a sizeable minority of these prisoners had been only a very short time in the prison.

A large number of prisoners — 43, or 40% of the total — had attended one of the psychiatrists from the Central Mental Hospital, who provide a visiting psychiatric service to the prison. However, only 12 prisoners said that they had been seen by one of the Department of Justice psychologists and only 5 more prisoners said they had been seen by other therapists, such as drug counsellors. While 50 prisoners said that they had spoken with a Probation and Welfare Officer, who offers important advice and aid to prisoners in areas such as communication with families and outside agencies, the majority, 58 or 54% of the total sample, said they had never spoken with a Probation and Welfare Officer.

The prisoners were asked the question: ‘‘Have you ever discussed why you committed your offence with a Welfare Officer or other member of staff’’. In the Mountjoy sample only 17 prisoners, or 16% of the total, said that they had discussed why they committed their offence with any staff member. This result is perhaps a reflection on the lack of rehabilitation programmes that involve some element of confrontation of criminal behaviour.

Twenty-two of the prisoners, or almost 1 in 5 of the total sample, had been an inpatient in a psychiatric hospital outside the penal system. Eleven prisoners had been an inpatient in the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum whilst imprisoned, though several had been there for a brief stay for assessment only. There was some overlap between these two groups and 27 prisoners, or precisely one quarter of the sample, had been in either a psychiatric hospital or the Central Mental Hospital.

### **e) Suicidal Behaviour**

Suicide and parasuicide (gestures at suicide) have in recent years become problems of major concern within prison systems. In Ireland, over the last 15 years prison suicides have risen from minimal levels (one every few years) to usually between 3 or 5 a year. Coid [70] reported that in Britain 43 male prisoners per year commit suicide for every 100,000 prisoners. He estimated that this rate is more than three times greater than the rate for the general adult male population. The Irish prison suicide rate tends to be higher than the rate in Britain.

Parasuicidal gestures are even more common in prison and have reached epidemic proportions within specific inmate subcultures in individual institutions. For example, Ross and Mackay [71] describe one institution for delinquent girls in Canada where 86% of all inmates cut themselves during one particular period. Lloyd [72] has provided a valuable review of the literature on prison suicide and Liebling [73] has published an empirical study of the problem in British prisons. Another book [74] has been produced recently looking at international perspectives on the problem.

Little is known, however, about the suicidal behaviour of prisoners, when they are not in prison. It is uncertain whether the unusually high suicide rate and high rate of parasuicidal behaviour, which appears to apply to prisoners when in prison, is maintained, increased or decreased when they are at liberty. It is not clear to what extent prison suicide rates reflect the rates of the specific subgroups of the general population who are disproportionately represented amongst prisoners such as young male drug abusers from disadvantaged areas. Equally, it is not known to what extent prison suicide is a consequence of the peculiar stresses of prison life. It is now well-established, however, that the suicide rate for young males in Ireland has been rising quite rapidly in recent years [75]. Research in Ireland and elsewhere [76] also strongly



indicates that remand prisoners are at much greater risk of prison suicide than convicted prisoners.

The seriousness of the suicide problem in Irish prisons has been officially acknowledged. There has been an internal research review of the problem [77] and an Advisory Group on Prison Deaths has published a report [78], which has led to a new policy of suicide prevention, including the establishment of a suicide awareness group in each prison. In England and Wales, a similar committee has published a valuable report on the area [79]. A Council of Europe study [52] has compared prison suicide rates in Europe. Over the period 1983 to 1991 the Irish average was found to be in the lower range in a comparison of 15 countries. However, that situation has changed in recent years and in a comparison of 17 countries for 1991, Ireland had the fifth highest suicide rate per 10,000 prisoners (18.9). This rate was approximately twice the rate in Italy, England and Wales, and Scotland, three times the rate in Northern Ireland, and more than four times the rate in Sweden.

In the present sample, 30 prisoners claimed that at some point in their lives they had made a suicide attempt. This is 28% of the total sample. The prisoners were further asked if the attempt had been serious and 22 stated that it had. The remaining 8 had all cut their wrists or arms on at least one occasion, but did so as a 'cry for help' and not with any real intention of ending their lives. Of the 22 people who had made a serious attempt on their lives, 6 had overdosed and required stomach-pumping, including one who had been found 'dead' and was in a coma for a week; 7 had cut themselves severely — often severing arteries — and including one who had cut his throat; 6 had been found hanging; 2 had jumped into a river but been rescued; and 1 had placed a shotgun barrel in his mouth and fired but the shot had not gone off.

Nine prisoners claimed that they had made a suicide bid during the present period of imprisonment but in two cases the attempt had been in a prison other than Mountjoy. Only one of these prisoners had never made a suicide attempt outside of prison. Four of these prisoners had slashed at their wrists and described their behaviour as more a 'cry for help' than a genuine attempt on their lives. One had very seriously cut his throat requiring 197 stitches. Three had attempted to hang themselves, one while in an isolation (strip) cell. One of these men described how he had prepared a rope from sheets early in his sentence when he was in withdrawal from heroin but "had not had the bottle to go through with it". The final man had made a obviously serious attempt to blow himself up in his cell using a homemade explosive device put together from domestic substances of which he had managed to get hold.

In the 1986 Mountjoy survey, by comparison, 16 of 95 prisoners (18%) claimed that they had made a serious attempt on their own life, 4 of them on the current sentence. Griffiths and Rundle [80] surveyed a random sample of 100 'run of the mill' male prisoners in London. Of this group, only seven reported having attempted suicide.

The results for both Mountjoy surveys are clearly very significantly higher than those for this London study.

All but one of the 9 prisoners who had made a suicide attempt during the current imprisonment had attended one of the prison psychiatrists. Only 9 of the other 21 prisoners with a history of suicidal behaviour had done so.

There was no clearcut relationship between drug use and suicidal behaviour, since 4 of the 9 prisoners who had attempted suicide during the current prison stay and 11 of all 30 suicide attempters were non-drug users. For the whole group of 30 suicide attempters a chi-squared test indicated no relationship between being a drug user and suicidal behaviour (chi-squared = .57, ns). On the hand there was a strong relationship between suicidal behaviour and whether or not the prisoner had been a psychiatric inpatient outside of prison (chi-squared = 11.6, prob. < .001). Thirteen of the 22 prisoners who had been a psychiatric inpatient had a history of suicidal behaviour.

### **Summary of main findings**

- Of the 60 prisoners who had ever used drugs intravenously, 77% admitted to having shared syringes and needles. Of this group who had shared syringes, 13 had never taken an HIV test and were unaware of their HIV status. Of the 37 prisoners, who admitted to using intravenously in the prison on this sentence, 84% said that they had shared syringes.
- Altogether 56% of the total sample had undergone at least one HIV test. Ten prisoners had had a positive result (indicating HIV infection), 42 had had a negative result, and the remaining 9 were currently awaiting the outcome of the test. However, it was estimated that there were at least 50 HIV positive prisoners in Mountjoy and probably many more. A considerable number of these would not have been aware of their HIV status.
- Exactly a quarter of all the ever IV using prisoners had never had an HIV test and a further quarter had not had a test in the last year. Most of the latter group had put themselves at risk by sharing in that period and a large majority of those never tested continued to share syringes.
- Thirty of the prisoners (28%) had tested positive for one or other of the varieties of hepatitis and 37 prisoners had suffered at least one overdose episode during their drug using career.
- The heroin users were asked how long it had been until they used heroin when they last left prison. Of sixty-six, 7 said they had not been using heroin at that time. Of the remainder, only 2 said they did not go back on heroin. The large majority of the others used within a day of release from prison.

- Forty-one of the 71 heroin using prisoners had experience of some form of treatment other than detoxification. Twenty of this group had been on a methadone maintenance programme.
- Fifty-four of 74 drug (other than cannabis) using prisoners said that they would want to give a drug free zone within the prison a try; 2 said they were not sure about this; and only 18 said they would have no interest in going to a drug free zone.
- Eighty-eight percent of drug using prisoners said they they intended to give up using drugs but only 15% answered in the affirmative to the question, “But do you really think you will give up?”.
- Only 14 of the prisoners (13%) said that they had a serious illness or disability apart from HIV and hepatitis. Their stated illnesses were as follows: 2 had TB, 2 asthma, 1 eczema, 1 epilepsy, 4 had chronic lower back pain and 4 had depression or a nervous disorder.
- Thirty-four prisoners, or just under a third of the total sample, were currently on medication. The most common medication was sleeping pills, which were prescribed for 20 prisoners. Sixteen prisoners were prescribed tranquilizers and 11 of these were also in the group receiving sleeping pills.
- Sixty-nine prisoners (64%) said they had not been “physically examined by a doctor” at any point after reception into the prison. On the other hand, 75% of the total sample said they had attended the doctor since coming into the prison.
- A large number of prisoners (40%) had attended one of the psychiatrists from the Central Mental Hospital, who provide a visiting psychiatric service to the prison. Twenty-two of the prisoners had been an inpatient in a psychiatric hospital outside the penal system. Eleven prisoners had been an inpatient in the Central Mental Hospital.
- Only 16% of the prisoners said that they had ever discussed the reasons why they offend with a welfare officer or other member of staff.
- Thirty prisoners claimed that at some point in their lives they had made a suicide attempt. The prisoners were further asked if the attempt had been serious and 22 stated that it had. Nine prisoners claimed that they had made a suicide bid during the present period of imprisonment, but in two cases the attempt had been in a prison other than Mountjoy.
- There was no clearcut relationship between drug use and suicidal behaviour, since 4 of the 9 prisoners who had attempted suicide during the current prison stay and 11 of all 30 suicide attempters were non-drug users.



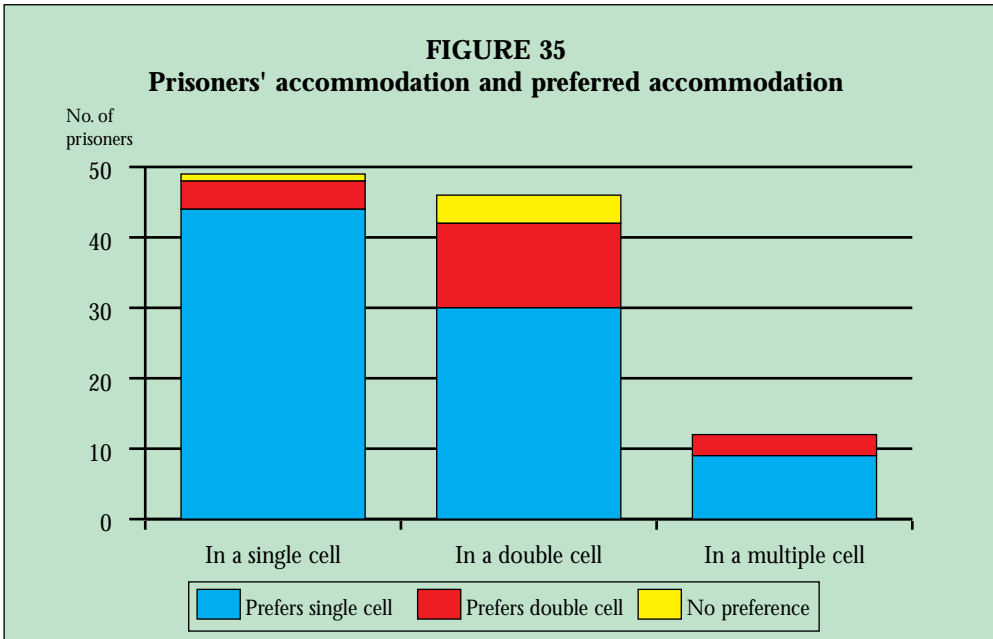
# Chapter 7

## Experience of and Attitudes to Prison Regime and Conditions

### a) Accommodation, food, and hygiene

Forty-nine of the members of the sample, or 45%, were currently accommodated in single cell accommodation and 46 (43%) were in a double cell and 13 (12%) were in multiple occupancy cells. These multiple cells held 3 prisoners (in 1 case), 4 prisoners (4), 5 prisoners (6), and 6 prisoners (2). Mostly these multiple cells were in the B basement, but one each was in the Medical Unit, the A wing, and the B wing.

By comparison, 52% of prisoners in the National Prison Survey in England and Wales had a cell to themselves. When prisons with a dormitory system were ruled out of consideration, 58% of English and Welsh prisoners had a cell to themselves. However, only 18% of remand prisoners in England and Wales were held in single cells and this study indicates a similar situation in Mountjoy where only 3 of 17 remand prisoners (18%) had a cell to themselves. According to the Second Scottish Prison Survey [11] 58% of all prisoners are in single cell accommodation.



Overwhelmingly, the prisoners preferred to be in a single cell. Eighty-three, or 77%, stated a preference for a single cell, 20 (19%) for a double cell and 5 (4%) had no preference. As Figure 35 shows the preference for type of accommodation was related to prisoners' current accommodation type. Around a third of those in double and multiple cells had no particular preference for a single cell, but only a tenth of those in a single cell preferred the idea of a double cell. Many of those who expressed a preference for a double cell stated that this was conditional on their obtaining an acceptable cellmate, preferably a relative or friend or someone from their area.

Of 107 prisoners who responded to the query "Are you generally happy with the food you receive here?", 7 gave a mixed answer stating that they liked some of the diet but not other parts of it. The remaining 100 prisoners were precisely split into half replying "yes" that they were generally happy with the food and half replying that they were not. In the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8] a very similar proportion of prisoners (51% compared to 47% in Mountjoy ) were unhappy with the food, saying that it was bad. However, only 13% of them said they were satisfied with the quality of the food so that in this regard the results for Mountjoy (47%) are much more positive. A much larger proportion of the prisoners in England and Wales (36%) had no opinion about the quality of the food.

Three prisoners had just arrived in the prison. But of the remaining 105, 64 (61%) stated that they could shower once a week, 13 (12%) that they could shower several times a week, 27 (26%) that they could shower everyday more or less ad lib, and one prisoner claimed that he had not had a shower in more than two weeks. Those who could shower daily were mainly prisoners that used the gym and weight-room regularly or that worked in special areas like the kitchens.

Comparison with the results from the National Prison Survey in England and Wales points up the relative inadequacy of the access to showers in Mountjoy. In England and Wales, 66% of prisoners said they had unlimited access to baths or showers in the previous week and a further 12% said they had 3 or more baths or showers in that week. Thus only 16% were in the situation experienced by most Mountjoy prisoners of being limited to one shower a week. It is also of interest that the Northern Ireland Prison Service announced in 1996 that 87.5% of all prisoners now had "access to sanitation" at all times of the day and night. This was partly achieved by the introduction of electronic unlock systems.

## **b) Prisoners' views on the problems of the prison**

The prisoners were given the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the facilities and regime in the prison by way of 3 questions that asked them to describe the 'most inadequate services in the prison', the 'services or facilities they would most like to see provided', and the 'aspects of prison life you find upsetting or irritating'.

This was a clear invitation to raise personal criticisms of the prison and almost all prisoners responded quite readily to this task. A small number had nothing to say on this matter, as exemplified by an individual who stated “I can’t think of anything off hand”. Two prisoners responded positively, one saying that “the facilities are O.K.” and the other stating that “I can’t find fault with them. At the end of the day they do their best. There’s 600 prisoners who don’t give a damn about the facilities or how they use them.” In a similar vein another rather stoic prisoner appeared to express views that might be more expected from the general public — “I tend to think you get what you deserve. I don’t tend to let it (prison life) upset me.”

However, unsurprisingly, the general tone was extremely critical, focusing on a wide range of problems and deficiencies. The prioritising of problems is obviously a subjective matter and prisoners emphasized many different aspects, physical, psychological and social. Some people seemed overwhelmed by the whole experience of prison and offered only a blanket condemnation. For example, one prisoner said “The whole place. I’m not cut out for it.” Another stated “Every aspect is annoying. The clock has stopped till you’re back out. You’re away from reality.”

By far the most common source of specific complaint were the hygiene conditions in the prison. Forty-eight prisoners specifically mentioned toilet facilities, both decrying the inadequacy and condition of the current facilities and the arrangements for their use and also seeking in-cell sanitation provision so as to put an end to the slopping out process. Thirty prisoners mentioned washing facilities and the need for more showers, washhandbasins, etc and for better access to them. Twenty-three prisoners focused on the rundown state of the building itself and in particular the cell accommodation. Many of these complained that their cells were infested with mice and cockroaches and others that the plaster was crumbling and the paintwork peeling.

Apart from the general area of hygiene and physical conditions, the next most common complaint by far was about the attitudes and behaviour of the prison officers, which was mentioned by 41 prisoners, or 38% of the sample. Dissatisfaction in this area was expressed in many different ways but overwhelmingly centred on social and psychological aspects of treatment. Only one prisoner spoke of physical maltreatment and he suggested that he was frequently manhandled out of his cell, although another, who was clearly in some conflict with the prison authorities, said “Using violence on another prisoner is probably the only way I’ll get a transfer out of here. I’ve been told that if I do it on a prison officer the only transfer will be to the mortuary across the road.”

The main emphasis was on lack of respect in dealings with prisoners and on their resentment at being regimented and ordered about. For example, one prisoner said “They treat you like shite, like dirt on a shoe”, another said “Some of the officers treat you like a child” and another said “You’re treated as an object, not an ordinary

object — a vermin object — something dirty and diseased. Eighty percent of them treat you like that, it's like it's part of their training.”

Quite a common theme in these complaints was that some officers are wilfully provocative — that they “rile” and “provoke” prisoners and create “unnecessary hassle”. One prisoner suggested that “officers bring their problems in with them and take them out on the prisoners by giving them verbal abuse.” Several complained that officers had personal favourites amongst prisoners and that this created tension. The general tenor of the changes prisoners desired in this area was nicely summed up by one prisoner who believed that prison officers “should talk more to prisoners — more decently and more politely.”

The dominant role of drugs in prison life was complained about by 23 prisoners. They were concerned about the impossibility of avoiding drugs and drug users and about the widespread health hazards. One prisoner said “The place is filthy — there are syringes everywhere. Its not a prison anymore. Its gone too lackadaisical. Noone cares anymore — it's like bleeding Butlin's.” Taking a more sympathetic view, another prisoner said “It's a waste. Watching people wasting themselves away.” Two non-drug using prisoners claimed to have been needle-pricked by syringes while in prison. One had been pricked through protective gloves when cleaning up a yard. The other had been in the lavatory area and when reaching for toilet paper had been pricked by a syringe secreted in the roll. Other prisoners were clearly acutely concerned about sharing sanitation facilities with people who were likely to be carriers of HIV and hepatitis and they spoke of frequently coming across blood, vomit and excreta.

Twenty prisoners specifically mentioned the need for more treatment for drug addiction within the prison. Some wished for counselling programmes, some for methadone maintenance, and some for needle exchange. Nineteen prisoners focused on the medical services more generally, pointing to the need for substantial improvement in this area. Others areas that attracted substantial numbers of complaints were: the food (19 complaints) — focusing most frequently on the efficiency of distribution, the fact that it was often cold etc.; the experience of confinement (19) — both in respect of the lack of open spaces within the prison compound and in the prison itself, especially in places like the B basement, and the large amount of time spent restricted to cells; visits (17) — the issues were frequency, length, the lack of privacy, the lack of visiting on Sundays, the use of screens, and the inability to hold girlfriends and children in an embrace; idleness and boredom (16) — leading to calls for more occupation and better workshops and more educational resources; and, finally, overcrowding (10) — with respect both to pressure on prison facilities and the lack of single cell accommodation.



Nine prisoners called for better recreational facilities, including three looking for a better gym. There were six complaints about the failures of prison officers to respond to the electronic call system when activated by prisoners in their cells at night. Most of these prisoners said officers were very slow to respond and 2 claimed that a prisoner could go unanswered all night. One of these men said “It’s a lie that they go around every 15 minutes at night”. It should be noted that the official instructions to the prison staff are that cells should be observed regularly at irregular intervals through the night. Designated special observation cases only are observed at 15 minute intervals, otherwise the interval should be of around an hour.

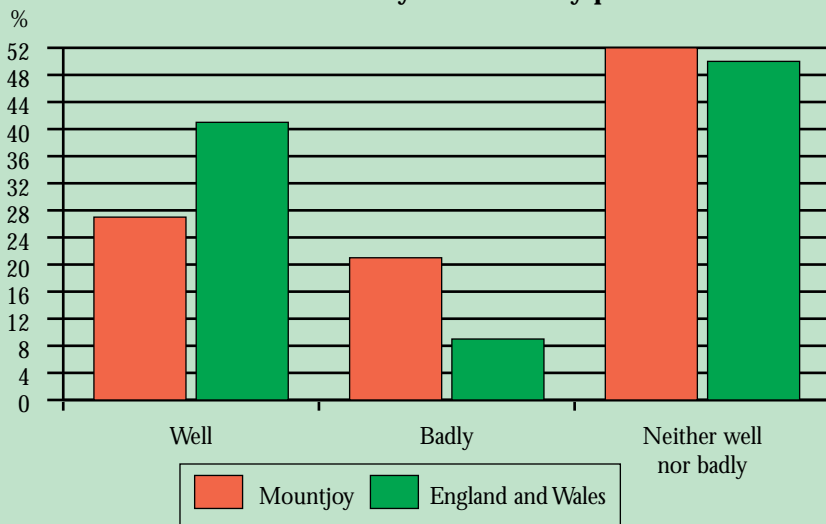
Four prisoners were concerned about the lack of order in the prison and the failure to separate various categories of prisoner. One of these prisoners complained that “a child molestor has been put in a cell with me and also a murderer, who was completely insane — they should have proper places for people like that.” Three prisoners claimed that it was quite normal to have to wait an unconscionable length of time to be provided with some requested service, such as a medical appointment.

A number of other issues were raised by one or two prisoners only. These included dissatisfaction with access to phones, the provision of clothing, the lack of pre-release programmes, the low level of gratuity, and a general lack of privacy.

The National Prison Survey in England and Wales asked similar questions of their sample of prisoners. The main areas of complaint in that survey were treatment by prison officers (mentioned by 25%), bureaucracy and the way the rules are implemented (22%), the amount of time spent in cells (20%), the daily timetable (12%), slopping out (11%), quality of food (10%) and boredom (9%). Most of the results from Mountjoy reflect very similar concerns and emphases in the two groups. However, the one very clearcut difference is in the much more marked focus on hygiene issues by the Mountjoy prisoners. Also the considerable level of concern about the drugs culture within the prison environment is not replicated in the National Prison Survey. If the National Prison Survey data on complaints about treatment by prison officers and about the implementation of rules are aggregated they indicate a similar level of concern with the attitudes and behaviour of prison officers as is found in Mountjoy. Confinement to cell was another problem which raised a similar level of concern in both surveys, although food and idleness were regarded as a problem somewhat more widely in the Mountjoy sample.

The issue of treatment by prison officers was also addressed separately with a question used by the National Prison Survey in England and Wales. The prisoners were asked ‘On the whole, how do you feel you are treated by the prison officers in this prison? Would you say they treat you well, or badly or neither well nor badly. The results for the two surveys are presented in Figure 36.

**FIGURE 36**  
**Prisoners' views on how they are treated by prison officers**



About one in five of Mountjoy prisoners considered that they were treated badly by prison officers. This was more than double the rate for England and Wales, though it should be noted that this is an unequal comparison between a whole prison system and one particular prison that operates under difficult circumstances. While similar proportions in both surveys were non-committal or had mixed feelings, only a little more than a quarter (27%) of the Mountjoy prisoners felt they were treated well by prison officers compared with 41% of English and Welsh prisoners.

Prisoners were asked how well their family, personal, or social problems were handled in the prison. Many prisoners said that they would not look to any one on the staff if they had such a problem. For example, one inmate stated "You could go to the welfare officer but I wouldn't myself. They go in too deep. I'd deal with it myself," and another stated "The help is there if you want it, but I wouldn't go to staff myself." Of the 59 prisoners who gave an answer to this query, 41, or 69%, said that their problem had not been well dealt with and 18, or 31%, said that it had been reasonably well dealt with.

When asked who they could turn to when they have a personal problems, 37 prisoners of 91 responding said that there was no one they felt they could turn to and that they would keep their problems to themselves. Twenty-eight said they would turn to the Welfare Officer in the prison, 11 said they would turn to fellow prisoners, 6 each to the Governor and the Chaplain, 5 to a visiting nun, 3 to the Chief, and 1 each to a

psychiatrist and an Assistant Chief Officer. The notable absentees from this list are ordinary grade prison officers and medical staff.

### **c) Claims about Assaults**

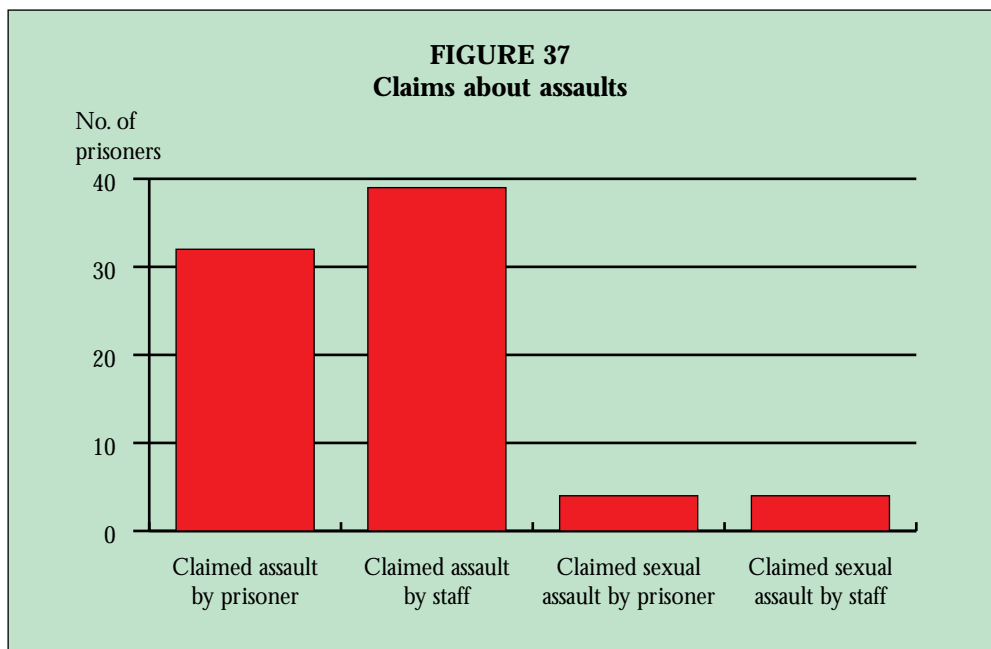
Prisoners were asked if they had ever been either physically or sexually assaulted in prison by another prisoner or by a staff member. The results are graphed in Figure 37. Thirty-two prisoners claimed to have been assaulted by another prisoner and 39 by a prison officer (no other categories of staff were mentioned). Three additional prisoners said they had been restrained in an excessively rough manner by prison officers but would not categorise this as assault. Four prisoners claimed to have been sexually assaulted by another prisoner and four others claimed a sexual assault by a prison officer. One further prisoner said another prisoner had made a sexual approach to him.

None of the claimed sexual assaults involved rape or other clearcut and serious events. Indeed there was considerable ambiguity surrounding most of the incidents and two of the supposed prison officer assaults and one of the prisoner assaults were described as occurring in the course of a violent scuffle and involving a degree of “groping”. One prisoner talked of being involved with a prison officer in “bumps and grinds” and another talked of a “fierce sexual assault” by a prison officer in a prison other than Mountjoy. None of the assaults by other prisoners had progressed to a serious level, although one prisoner had made a complaint to the Governor about his cellmate’s behaviour and another claimed to have been hit many times in the course of resisting the sexual advances of his cellmate.

Altogether 52 different Mountjoy prisoners or 48% of the total sample claimed to have been assaulted in one or other of the 4 categories. In the National Prison Survey in England and Wales, 9% of prisoners said they had been assaulted by another prisoner (the other categories were not covered). However, it should be noted that in England and Wales prisoners were asked only about the last 6 months in prison while the questions in the Mountjoy survey referred to their whole prison career. In the Second Scottish Prison Survey 44% of prisoners claimed that they had been assaulted at some point while in a Scottish prison either by a prison officer or a prisoner. Nineteen percent of them said they had been assaulted by a group of prison officers, excluding episodes of control and restraint.

Most of the assaults by other prisoners were described as rather routine and not very serious affairs. They were described as minor fights involving “just the usual couple of digs”. One prisoner claimed he had been cut with a blade and another that he had been threatened with a blade. Two claimed to have had boiling water thrown over them by other prisoners. Two prisoners told of very obviously serious attacks on them by drug using fellow inmates. One had been attacked by two prisoners in his

cell. One of the attackers, wielding a sweeping brush, had broken his arm. Apparently, these two prisoners were attempting to intimidate the prisoner, who was not a drug user, into getting his girlfriend to smuggle drugs for them into the prison on her visits to him.



Another non-drug-using prisoner claimed he had been confronted by a “junkie” brandishing a syringe in an attempt to force him to inject the drugs into the man’s penis. The drug using prisoner had no other available veins for intravenous drug injection and was unable to successfully carry out the injection himself. The threatened prisoner, who was a martial arts expert, had knocked down and disarmed the “junkie”. However, he had then gone off and found another drug using prisoner, who was willing to inject the man in the penis. One other prisoner claimed to have been scraped with a syringe needle by another prisoner.

Most of the claimed assaults by prison officers were also described as rather routine and not serious. In particular, they were described as almost always occurring in response to some untoward behaviour by the prisoner. One prisoner said that if you are in a fight or argument with another prisoner there is a more severe physical reaction from prison officers than is required but that this is “not really done that often”. Another said “if you’re in a fight, the officers come at you from all angles”.

However, several prisoners suggested that prison officers go beyond the level of force required to suppress a violent incident amongst prisoners or to maintain or re-establish control. One said “I got a good hiding off them after the riot (in 1991)”. They

suggested that prison officers sometimes provoke an aggressive response from prisoners in order that they can have a legitimate excuse for beating up on them. For example, one prisoner said that “they just get smart with you and if you give any cheek back you’ll get whacked and thrown in the pad. They bring in their riot shields, press down on you and lash at you. However, only four prisoners claimed to have experienced a clearly pre-planned assault of a retaliatory or punitive nature. These prisoners spoke of groups of as many as 6 or 7 prison officers, sometimes disguised with “boiler suits and crash helmets with visors” coming into their cell and beating them.

The most common claim was that prison officers were often over-zealous in subduing a disruptive prisoner. For example, one prisoner claimed that he had been assaulted but that it was “not serious — just a few bangs off the wall on the way to the pad”. Another talked of how he had refused to be strip searched and the prison officers had “torn him down to the pad, giving him a few boots and digs along the way”. He claimed that his resultant cauliflower ear and bruises had been seen and noted by the doctor. One prisoner claimed to have received a broken nose when he refused to get out of bed and on another occasion to have received two broken ribs. One other prisoner claimed to have had his nose broken by a prison officer. And another claimed that he had had his finger broken when he refused to strip naked in the padded cell (although this did not occur in Mountjoy Prison).

A small number of prisoners appeared to attract trouble and violent incidents like a magnet. They seemed to be in a constant state of mutual antagonism with the system and caught up in a self-fulfilling cycle of hostile response followed inevitably by aggressive and sometimes repressive reaction. Two prisoners in particular had long histories that included many violent incidents, some of which were evidently serious. One prisoner, who had spent 3 weeks in hospital after being “beaten half to death” by another prisoner, had also had his back fractured with a punch from a prison officer, while making an escape attempt. Another prisoner, who down through the years had “suffered loads of batterings” claimed to have had his arm broken no less than 6 different times.

Despite the high levels of complaint about assault only 18 prisoners said they had made an official complaint about being assaulted and one further individual claimed he had tried to make a complaint but had not been allowed. Most of the majority of prisoners who did not make a complaint said that it was a minor matter best left alone, but a considerable number felt that it would be futile in such circumstances to make an official complaint.

A substantial majority of the members of the sample (59%) also stated that they felt ‘safe from being injured or bullied by other prisoners’. Twenty-nine prisoners (27%) said they did not feel safe and 15 others (14%) were in two minds on this question,

indicating some reservations about their own security. Although, these results are better than might be expected given the claims about assaults they compare poorly with the results in England and Wales, where the National Prison Survey found that only 18% of prisoners said they did not feel safe from injury or bullying by other prisoners.

#### **d) Discipline**

A large number of prisoners had been on a P19 report, that is to say they had been before a prisoner governor, following a reported breach of the prison rules. Forty-nine prisoners, or 45% of the members of the sample, had been on report during the current period of imprisonment. This is a remarkably high rate given the fact that many of the prisoners were remand prisoners or people who had been in the prison for a relatively short length of time. These reports almost always resulted in some form of sanction, whether loss of evening recreation or other privileges or loss of remission of sentence. The proportion of prisoners who had been on report during the current period of imprisonment was appreciably higher in the 1996 survey than in the 1986 Mountjoy survey ( 45% versus 36%).

The prisoners were asked had they ever been in a stripped down (unfurnished) cell or isolation cell at some point in their prison career. Sixty-five (60%) reported that they had. This is usually a disciplinary or control measure. Forty-five prisoners (42%) reported that they had spent time in a padded cell at some point in their prison career, not necessarily in Mountjoy Prison. The padded cell is used to control disruptive prisoners but it is also sometimes used to hold mentally disturbed prisoners or those in a suicidal crisis. These figures are substantially higher than those in the 1986 survey, which showed that 31% had ever been in an isolation cell and 19% had ever been in a padded cell.

The prisoners were asked these same questions in respect of their current period of imprisonment. Thirty-three prisoners (31%) had been in an isolation cell during the current period of imprisonment and 22 (20%) had been in a padded cell. These appear to be remarkably high figures with one in five of a cross-section of the prison population, including many with only short lengths of time in the prison, having spent a spell in a padded cell.

#### **e) Prisoners' views on the Visiting Committee and on complaints procedures**

Prisoners were asked if they were aware of the role of the Visiting Committee to Mountjoy Prison and whether or not they considered that the Committee provided the prisoners with a useful service. Seventy-one of the 108 prisoners (66%) said they

were aware of the Committee's role. Only 24 (22%), on the other hand, had ever taken a problem up with the Visiting Committee.

Forty-seven percent of the sample felt they did not know whether or not the Visiting Committee provided the prisoners with a useful service. Thirty-five percent answered that they believed it did not and only 21%, or approximately one in five of the prisoners, responded that yes the Committee did provide a useful service.

Examining only those 24 prisoners who had taken a problem to the Visiting Committee, it was found that 16 (66%) felt that the Committee did not provide a useful service for prisoners, 5 (21%) were unsure, and only 3 (13%) felt that they did. The experience of taking up an issue with the Committee, therefore, appeared to lead to greater dissatisfaction with the Committee relative to the whole group of prisoners.

The prisoners were also asked whether or not they were satisfied with the formal channels for making complaints that were available to them eg. the Governor, the Visiting Committee. The majority (55%) were not satisfied, 17% said they were unsure, and 27% said that they were satisfied. An even greater majority (66%) stated that they were dissatisfied with the response that prisoners generally get to complaints made through these channels. On this question, 22% were unsure and only 11% of the members of the sample felt that prisoners tended to get a satisfactory response to their complaints.

### **g) Cell lock-up, Occupation and Education**

The vast majority of the members of the sample (84%) said that they had been locked in their cell for between 17 and 20 hours on the previous day. Of these, 76 said that they had been out of cell for 6 hours. Ten prisoners claimed to have been out of cell for less than 4 hours, including one who claimed not to have been out at all and one who said he had been allowed out for only half an hour's exercise. On the other hand the remaining 7 prisoners of the 105, who gave a response to this question, said that they had been out of cell for more than 12 hours. All of these were involved in work in locations such as the kitchen or the officers' mess.

The average out of cell time for this sample of Mountjoy prisoners, therefore, was according to the prisoners' own estimates, about 6 hours. The prison administration would suggest that this is an underestimate and that on average most prisoners are out of cell for at least 7 hours a day. However, this compares with an average of 10 hours per day out of cell for prisoners in England and Wales according to the National Prison Survey. In England and Wales, the Prison Service policy is that prisoners should spend no more than 12 hours locked up in their cells and the requirement placed on the first privately operated prison (Wolds Remand Prison) is that prisoners should not be locked up for more than 9 hours.

Of the achieved sample of 108 prisoners, only 37 described themselves as having some kind of official work occupation during out of cell time. However, there is no requirement on remand prisoners to work, so the more meaningful baseline figure for this analysis is the 90 convicted prisoners. Of these, 35 (39%) described themselves as having an occupation. The jobs ranged from basic cleaning around the landings, through work in the various prison workshops, eg. the leathershop and wood-workshop, to full-time work in the kitchens. Hours worked varied widely from one person who said he had a record-keeping job that took one hour per week to another who claimed to work 112 hours per week. The average period worked in a week was 37 hours. However, this is not a very typical working week since about half worked 20 or less hours per week and at the other extreme 10 or nearly a third worked at least 70 hours.

A group of 42 (47%) out of 90 convicted prisoners were without work and also did not attend the school. Of these, 32 claimed that they had not been offered any kind of work and 10 claimed that they had been offered work but had declined it. One prisoner said the work offered was too dirty, another that he had got fed up working in prison because he was not paid enough, but most of these prisoners, refusing the opportunity of work, said they preferred to hang around the yard. Of the 32 not offered any work, 8 made the comment that they would not want it if offered. This is exactly one in five of the 90 who made it clear they did not want prison work. Some of this group, however, were among the 19 prisoners who made regular and sometimes quite intensive use of the gym and weight-room as a way of passing their out of cell time.

A further group of 12 (13%) out of the 90 prisoners were involved in education through the prison school and could be classed as fully occupied in this way. They were following classes that ranged in coverage from basic literacy instruction, through art and music to Junior and Leaving Certificate and Open University courses. Classes, however, took up varying amounts of time from a couple of hours a week to almost all of out of cell time.

Altogether 24 (27%) of the 90 prisoners attended the school at some point, including a number of those who described themselves as having a prison job. Two more said their name was down on a waiting list for the school and one claimed that he had not been allowed to attend the school. Forty convicted prisoners (44%) made some use of the library, including one illiterate prisoner, who borrowed tapes. Sixteen of the 90 prisoners attended physical education classes run by prison officers.

Twenty-three prisoners said that they were illiterate and a further 8 that they had some significant difficulties in the area of reading and writing. This is a total of 29% of the achieved sample. This group were asked if they were receiving instruction for their literacy problem and if not, why not. Of eighteen responses to this query, 4



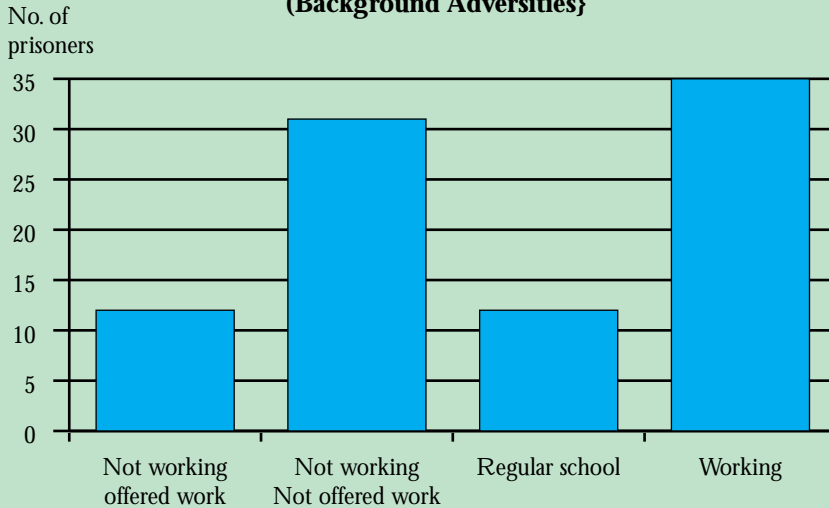
prisoners were attending school for literacy skills training, 5 had been attending the school but had dropped out, two claimed that they were making significant progress in reading on their own, and 7 said that they were not interested in going to the school. Those who had tried literacy classes or were not interested in them tended to cite embarrassment and feelings of humiliation in front of teachers and other prisoners as the main source of their reluctance to attend. One said that his ineptitude in literacy classes had made him angry and frustrated and he thought he was better off avoiding them. Another said “ I am well able to talk. I made most of my money with my mouth — I don’t need all that”.

According to the National Prison Survey in England and Wales, 44% of prisoners attended classes for an average of 14 hours per week. This is considerably more than the case in Mountjoy both in terms of the proportion attending school and the hours spent there. The National Prison Survey also showed that 59% of prisoners in England and Wales, where remand prisoners are expected to work, did prison work. The Second Scottish Prison Survey found that 71% of all Scottish prisoners were assigned work duties. The Mountjoy survey rate of 39% is appreciably lower.

In England and Wales the prisoners’ average working week was 30 hours — considerably lower than the 39 hours for Mountjoy prisoners. However, the figures for the latter group were skewed by the extremely long working hours of a relatively small group of trustee prisoners who worked in the kitchens. The Mountjoy figures also compare poorly with the results of the US Survey of State Prison Inmates [12]. This showed that 70% of almost three-quarters of a million prisoners had work assignments, and that two out of every three of these prisoners, or 47% of all prisoners, worked between 20 and 44 hours per week.

The low level of meaningful employment and school involvement attained in Mountjoy (66% of prisoners including the remands did not have a job and only about a quarter of them used the school) can partly be explained by its committal prison status. Apart from the remand prisoners there are many types of prisoner in Mountjoy who are unlikely to be long in the prison, such as debtors, fine-defaulters, barring order cases, and short sentence prisoners generally. Many of these will not spend very long in the prison or will be quickly transferred out. The prison is not geared to providing programmes for such transitional or short term prisoners, who will in any case have little interest in getting involved in educational or occupational programmes. Inevitably in a cross-sectional sample such as this some respondents will fall into these categories or will have only been in the prison a very short time. This should be born in mind in relation to the results on the provision and take-up of occupational and educational programmes.

**FIGURE 38**  
**Occupation of convicted prisoners (n = 90)**  
**(Background Adversities)**



However, even when length of time in prison is controlled, the level of idleness remains high. In fact, when the results for convicted prisoners who have spent at least six months in the prison are examined, they have precisely the same rate of prison work (39%) as the total group of convicted prisoners. The situation also appears to have greatly disimproved since the 1986 Mountjoy survey when 31% of convicted prisoners compared with 47% in 1996 had no regular work or involvement in an educational programme. In 1986 only 19% of convicted prisoners in the prison for more than 6 months were without occupation and this figure has more than doubled to the 39% for the 1996 group.

**f) Contact with the outside world**

The vast majority of prisoners had received visits from family or friends. Excluding the 6 prisoners, who had only been in the prison for a day or two, only 13 (13%) of the members of the sample had not recieved a visitor. Three of those who had not recieved a visitor had been in the prison for less than a week but 7 of them had been in prison for more than a month and 4 for more than 6 months. The 87% of these Mountjoy prisoners, who have received a visit, compares favourably with the 76% of prisoners in the National Prison Survey in England and Wales, who had recieved a visit in the 3 months prior to interview.

However, only 51 (47%) had ever recieved a letter during the current period of imprisonment. In England and Wales, 90% of the prisoners said that they had recieved

a letter from a family member or friend in the 3 months prior to interview. Thirty-seven prisoners (44%) out of the 84 who had been in prison for at least a month had not received a letter. Nine out of 23 prisoners (39%), who had been a year or more in the prison had not been in receipt of a letter.

While 81 prisoners (75%) had benefited from some form of temporary release from prison at some point in their prison career, eg. compassionate or weekend leave or full temporary release, very few had received temporary release since entering prison on this occasion. Only 7 of the group had been out on temporary release of any kind. Of course many of the prisoners would have not been in the prison long enough for the issue of temporary release to arise. However, it is also relevant to point out that those one finds in the prison on any particular occasion will tend to be the prisoners who are not selected to benefit from temporary release or early release.

### **Summary of main findings**

- Forty-five percent of the the sample were currently accommodated in single cell accommodation, 43% were in a double cell and 12% were in multiple occupancy cells. Seventy-seven percent stated a preference for a single cell.
- About half the sample were generally happy with the food provided, about half not.
- Sixty-one percent of the prisoners stated that they could shower once a week, 12% that they could shower several times a week, and 26% that they could shower everyday more or less ad lib.
- The most common source of specific complaint by prisoners were the hygiene conditions in the prison. Forty-eight prisoners mentioned toilet facilities, both decrying the inadequacy and condition of the current facilities and the arrangements for their use and also seeking in-cell sanitation provision.
- The next most common complaint by far was about the attitudes and behaviour of the prison officers, which was mentioned by 41 prisoners. The main emphasis was on lack of respect in dealings with prisoners and on the prisoners' resentment at being regimented and ordered about. About one in five of Mountjoy prisoners considered that they were treated badly by prison officers and a little more than a quarter felt they were treated well by prison officers
- The dominant role of drugs in prison life was complained about by 23 prisoners. Twenty prisoners specifically mentioned the need for more treatment for drug addiction within the prison.
- Thirty-two prisoners claimed to have been assaulted by another prisoner and 39 by a prison officer at some point in their prison career. Eight prisoners

claimed to have been sexually assaulted by other prisoners or by prison staff. All but one of these claims of sexual assault referred to relatively minor incidents. Most of the claimed assaults by prison officers were also described as rather routine and not serious. Altogether 48% of the total sample claimed to have been assaulted at some point in their prison career in one or other of the 4 categories examined.

- A substantial majority of the members of the sample (59%) also stated that they felt 'safe from being injured or bullied by other prisoners'. However, 27%, said they did not feel safe and 14% said they were in two minds on this question.
- Forty-five percent of the prisoners had been on report during the current period of imprisonment.
- Sixty percent of the prisoners reported that they had spent time in an isolation cell and 42% in a padded cell at some point in their prison career, not necessarily in Mountjoy Prison. Thirty-three prisoners (31%) said that they had been in an isolation cell during the current period of imprisonment and 22 (20%) in a padded cell
- Sixty-six percent of the 108 prisoners said they were aware of the Visiting Committee's role. Only 22%, on the other hand, had ever taken a problem up with the Visiting Committee. Forty-seven percent of the sample felt they did not know whether or not the Visiting Committee provided the prisoners with a useful service. Thirty-five percent answered that they believed it did not and only 21%, or approximately one in five of the prisoners, held the view that the Committee did provide a useful service.
- Fifty-five percent of prisoners said they were dissatisfied with the various official channels for making complaints and 66% said they were dissatisfied with the response to prisoners' complaints made through official channels.
- A large majority of the prisoners (84%) said that they had been out of their cell for less than 7 hours on the previous day. Of the achieved sample of 108 prisoners, only 37 described themselves as having some kind of official work or occupation during out of cell time. Only 39% of all convicted prisoners and 39% of all convicted prisoners, who had been at least 6 months in the prison, described themselves as having an occupation apart from the school. Forty-seven percent of the convicted prisoners did not have a job and did not attend school. At the other extreme 10 prisoners worked an average of at least 70 hours per week mainly in the kitchens.
- Altogether, 27% of the 90 convicted prisoners attended the school at some point, including a small number who described themselves as also having a prison job.

- Twenty-three prisoners said that they were completely illiterate and a further 8 that they had some significant difficulties in the area of reading and writing. Out of 18 of these prisoners, only four were attending school for remedial literacy teaching and a further 5 had at some time attended a prison school for such teaching.
- Excluding the 6 prisoners, who had only been in the prison for a day or two, only 13% of the members of the sample had not received a visitor. However, only 47% had ever received a letter during the current period of imprisonment.
- While 76% of the whole sample had benefited from some form of temporary release from prison at some point in their prison career, eg. compassionate or weekend leave or full temporary release, very few had received temporary release since entering prison on this occasion. In fact, only 7 of the group had been out on temporary release of any kind.



## Chapter 8

# Data Analysis: Multiple Layers and Interconnections

The previous five chapters have for the most part dealt with the data on the prisoners in the survey variable by variable. In this chapter an effort will be made to correlate and cross-tabulate the data in order to fill out the picture of the prisoners' background, personal characteristics, and experience. Discrete variable by variable analysis does help construct the profile of the prisoners but a more detailed and accurate profile can be composed by examining a prisoner's position on a whole set of variables simultaneously. This chapter will provide this kind of analysis with a particular emphasis on the question of social deprivation and will also explore some of the more interesting interrelations between information on the criminal careers of prisoners and data on their background and personal circumstances.

### **a) The profile of social disadvantage**

Before taking an exploratory, multi-dimensional approach to the data, it may be useful to look at characteristics that are shared by a very large majority of the sample since they clearly help delineate a meaningful profile of the prisoners. Characteristics shared by more than two thirds of the sample include: coming from a working-class area of Dublin (about 80%); having a father from the 2 lowest socio-economic classes (94%); coming from a family with at least 4 children (90%); living in rental accommodation (76%); having left school before the age of 16 (80%); having never sat a public exam (77%); and being unemployed prior to this period of imprisonment (88%). In addition, very large majorities of the prisoners smoked cigarettes (90%); used cannabis (86%); were currently or had been users of hard drugs (71%); were never married (81%); but had fathered children (72%).

These characteristics inevitably depict a strong image of relative adversity both in terms of socio-economic background and personal circumstances, which is broadly applicable to the Mountjoy prison population. Mountjoy prisoners as a group have manifestly come from backgrounds of relative deprivation and tend to have a history of educational and occupational failure and of substance abuse. Other severe disadvantages apply to smaller proportions of the prison population but are still comparatively widespread particularly in relation to the general population. For example, more than half of the sample grew up in homes where no parent or only the mother was

working, more than a quarter had literacy problems, and 37% had lost a parent before the age of 15 due to death, desertion, or marital breakdown.

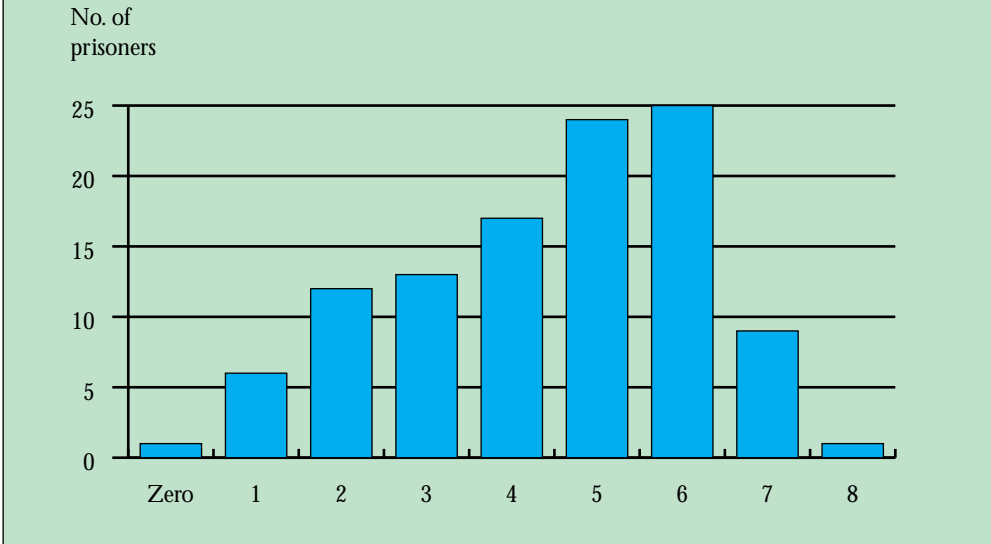
In order to examine the issue of multiple deprivation in a multi-dimensional manner, 8 variables that are unequivocal indicators of relative deprivation in childhood have been selected along with 6 variables that describe more recent or current personal problems and adversities. These 2 sets of variables are presented in Table 15 in order of frequency of occurrence in the sample, along with figures showing the number of prisoners falling into each category.

<b>Table 15: Number of prisoners with various background and personal adversities</b>	
	N = 108
<i>Background Adversities</i>	
Family size — four or more children	97
Left school by 15	85
Father in social class 6 or chronically unemployed	66
No parent working or only mother working	57
No Substantive work or Educational Qualification	49
Loss of Parent before 15	40
Illiterate	31
Parent imprisoned	17
<i>Current Personal Problems</i>	
Heroin user	71
Never held a job lasting more than 3 months	43
Has made a suicide attempt	32
Has hepatitis or is HIV Positive	31
Has been a Psychiatric Inpatient	27
Alcoholic	20

The first group of background variables clearly refer to family, educational, and social influences on the prisoners that predate serious criminality, that are self-evident markers of relative deprivation, and that might be linked — as risk factors — to criminality. A family size of 4 has been chosen as a cut-off point because the ESRI [81] have identified family size of 4 or more children as an important risk factor for poverty. It is a strong predictor of a family being below the poverty line of 50% of national average household income. In this sample the significance of large family size is undoubtedly accentuated by the relative frequency of single parent homes and homes with no regular parental income apart from social welfare payments or with only very low parental income generated by the mother. Figure 39 presents the distribution of the background deprivation indicators in the sample ie. it classifies prisoners with respect to how many of the risk factors each prisoner has been exposed.



**FIGURE 39**  
**Distribution of deprivation indicators**

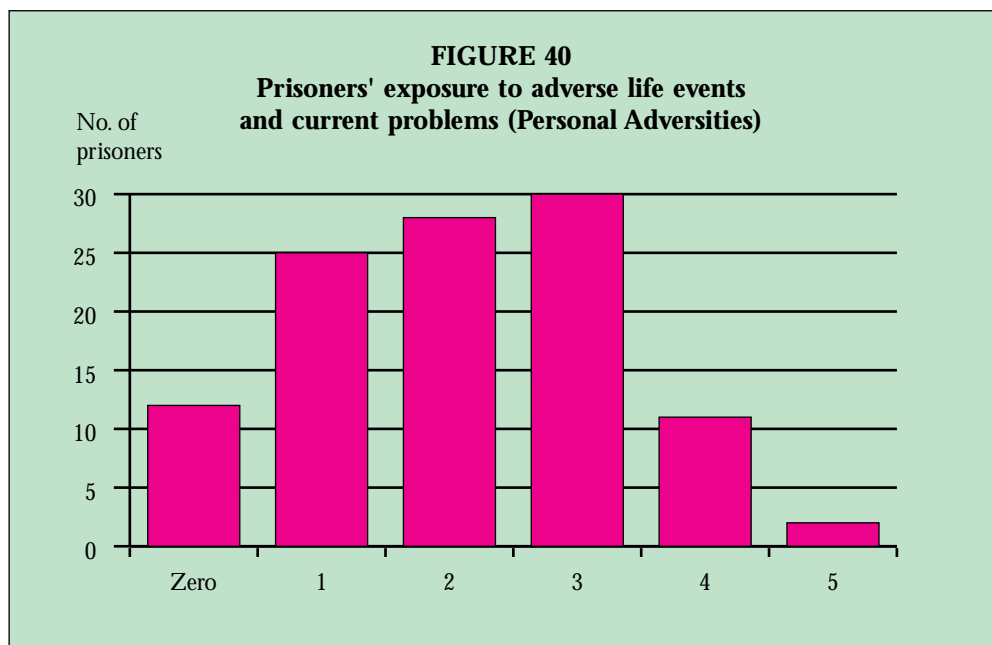


At the extremes of this distribution, which examines the simultaneous prevalence all 8 variables, only 1 prisoner was found to have been exposed to none and 1 prisoner to all of the factors. On average, the prisoners had been exposed to about 4.5 of the 8 factors. Only 18% of the sample of 108 prisoners fell into 2 or less of the deprived groups. On the other hand, 55% fell into 5 or more. Considering that each of the 8 factors reflects a generally unusual and an undeniably severe degree of relative disadvantage, these are striking findings that underscore the highly disadvantaged background of these Mountjoy prisoners.

Turning, then, to the more recent or current personal adversities, this second set of six variables includes obviously severe problems such as heroin and alcohol abuse and illness with HIV or hepatitis. It also includes life events from which one might reasonably infer a degree of emotional disturbance and personal dysfunction — psychiatric inpatient status and an attempt at suicide. Finally, it includes failure to establish any satisfactory record of employment, operationally defined as never having had a job that lasts for longer than 3 months.

Figure 40 presents the distribution of the prisoners with respect to joint exposure to the 6 factors covering various adverse life events and circumstances. Only 12 prisoners did not fall into any of the dysfunctional groups. This means that only 12 prisoners had none of the following problems: a heroin habit, an alcohol problem, a past

attempt at suicide, HIV or hepatitis, a history as a psychiatric inpatient, or no employment lasting more than 3 months. Conversely, 96 (89%) of the sample had experienced one or usually more of these singularly severe adversities. The average for the sample was a little over 2 adversities per person. However, 40% had experienced 3 or more and 12% an incredible 4 or more of these severe adversities.



This set of more or less current and continuing personal adversities are likely to be related to criminal behaviour and attitudes. For example, heroin use in this sample is likely to be strongly associated with property crime and drug dealing. A lack of a decent record of employment is also evidently relevant. However, unlike in the case of the obviously prior background and childhood factors, a clearcut temporal sequence cannot be established for these variables and it is possible that criminal activity itself has a causal role in the emergence of these adversities in the prisoners' lives. For example, the poor employment record may be partly a result of criminal activity and extensive time spent in prison. A heroin habit might have been developed in prison rather than or as well as leading a person into prison. Suicidal behaviour and psychiatric patienthood may also partly arise from a disordered, criminal lifestyle. Nonetheless, these results demonstrate the widespread presence in the prisoners' lives of catastrophic and chronic personal problems. The results point unambiguously to chaotic, disrupted lives that are weighed down by devastating problems that are in important respects additional to their difficulties with the law.

Although there is undoubtedly a complex interaction between personal adversities and criminal behaviour, a question arises concerning the relation of background indicators of disadvantage to the presence or absence of the more contemporaneous personal adversities. In other words, is the degree of disadvantage in the background of the prisoners related to the level of current personal adversity? In order to investigate this question, the sample was grouped according to level on each of the two sets of variables. Level 1 on background disadvantage was defined as the presence of 0-2 factors, level 2, 3-5 factors, and level 3, 6-8 factors. Level 1 on personal adversity was defined as the presence of 0-1 factors, level 2, 2-3 factors, level 3, 4-5 factors. Level 1, therefore, defines a relatively low degree of disadvantage and adversity, level 2, a moderate degree, and level 3, a severe degree involving multiple problems.

**Table 16: Cross-tabulation of levels of personal adversity and background disadvantage**

Columns are levels of Personal adversity Rows are levels of Background disadvantage				
No. of factors	1 (0/1)	2 (2/3)	3 (3/4)	total
1 (0-2)	10	9	0	19
2 (3-5)	24	23	7	54
3 (6-8)	3	26	6	35
total	37	58	13	108

Chi-squared = 17.48 with 4 df p. < .005

Table 16 presents the results for a chi-squared analysis of the association between level of background disadvantage and level of current personal adversity and indicates a strong statistical relationship. Background disadvantage is strongly predictive of current personal adversity. More than half of the least disadvantaged prisoners had no or only one current personal adversity whereas only one tenth of the most disadvantaged group fell into this category. At the other extreme, none of the least disadvantaged prisoners had 4 or 5 adversities but one sixth of the most disadvantaged group fell into this category. This is a powerful demonstration of the influence of background disadvantage on the genesis of severe personal problems such as substance abuse, particularly since it arises from a sample that is almost wholly very disadvantaged in comparison with the general population.

These results confirm the profile of Mountjoy prisoners as that of an egregiously disadvantaged group, socially, economically, educationally and in terms of personal adjustment. However, it should be noted that an imprisoned sample is a highly selected group and that being imprisoned and being kept in prison (that is not benefiting

from the early release mechanism) is an endpoint in a process that has many decision points that work to either draw people into prison or filter them out. Furthermore, in the context of the prison system as a whole Mountjoy is used in such a way that those from relatively more disadvantaged backgrounds are concentrated there. For example, the present Mountjoy sample includes only one of the 350 or so sex offenders, who are presently in the prison system. These offenders, generally speaking, do not share the Mountjoy prisoners' background of extreme socio-economic disadvantage.

More generally, the profile of all the currently imprisoned will no doubt differ in important ways from that of the progressively more inclusive groups who are sentenced to prison, who are convicted, and who commit offences. For example, a great many people are sent to prison each year for motoring offences and for fine-defaulting and these offenders, who are likely to be from a less deprived background than the present sample, as this study has shown, tend to have short sentences and benefit from the early release mechanism to a disproportionate extent and are, therefore, under-represented in the current prison population.

In addition, tacit forms of discrimination may well operate at various discretionary and decision-making points in the criminal justice process. For example, police and prosecution service decisions about whether and how to charge and prosecute suspects and the sentences handed down to offenders by the courts may operate differentially so that people from more deprived backgrounds end up having the greater chance of being imprisoned or of being imprisoned longer for similar type offences. If such biases exist, then the profile of disadvantage of the prison population will tend to exaggerate the correlation between deprivation and offending.

There are also many offences in the so-called white-collar category, which rarely come to light and are even more rarely prosecuted and penalised. This vast but largely unnoticed range of offences, stretching from expense-fiddling through tax evasion and embezzlement to corporate fraud, can only be committed by people in relatively privileged situations of power, trust, and control over money and assets. If these crimes of dishonesty were more frequently punished with imprisonment, then the profile of the prison population would be radically transformed. Indeed, to an extent, a similar transformative process has got underway in the past decade with the ever-increasing use of imprisonment as a sanction for sex offending.

These arguments all lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to resist the temptation to equate in a simplistic manner a manifestly deprived background, such as that found in the present sample of prisoners, with a disposition to offend. Causal theories linking social deprivation with offending must also take account of the large number of

deprived individuals who avoid offending and the large number of people from relatively privileged backgrounds who offend in various ways but often manage to avoid imprisonment.

The pooling of extremely disadvantaged people in a prison like Mountjoy is undoubtedly in part the complex result of the manner in which the criminal justice system operates, which in turn is related to priorities and value systems in broader society. The concentration of deprived people in the prison system relates to the kind of offending that is most frequently punished by imprisonment and the kind of offenders who are most frequently punished by imprisonment as well as to the role of deprivation in the promotion of crime.

While social deprivation is quite clearly neither a sufficient nor necessary cause of criminal behaviour, it is a very significant contributory influence that plays a major role alongside and in interaction with other more individual-centred factors such as temperament and personality, or the specific contingencies of a person's experience, or opportunity, or socialisation within a family subculture that tolerates or even fosters criminal attitudes, or negative peer group influences.

Deprivation and disadvantage operate on various levels to create crime. Although the process is undoubtedly complex, the influence of deprivation and disadvantage on crime can be summarised as follows: first, deprivation and disadvantage undermine the capacity and perhaps the motivation of parents to provide the kind of environment which fosters prosocial behaviour; second, they provide a rationale for an oppositional, subcultural value system that is anti-authority and sceptical of the moral entitlements and claims of the more comfortable majority in society; and, third, they provide direct and immediate motivation for self-gain crime, especially in a modern, affluent, consumer society, which through the media and advertising promotes high material expectations in all its citizens.

**b) The relationship between background disadvantage, personal adversity, and penal and criminal variables**

While the influence of background disadvantage on current personal adversity is quite marked, it is also possible to examine the data from this study in order to analyse the influence of both background disadvantage and personal adversity on aspects of the criminal and penal careers of the sample members. Longitudinal research such as that by Kolvin et al [33], which follows a cohort of the general population over many years, conclusively shows that people from a multiply deprived background are at much greater risk of criminal offending. Furthermore they are much more likely to have a serious, prolonged, and extensive criminal career. The findings of this study, described below, which relate the extent of a Mountjoy prisoner's deprivation to the seriousness of his criminal career, are entirely consistent with Kolvin et al's results.

Tables 17 and 18 present the results of analyses of the association of background disadvantage and personal adversity, respectively, with variables that are related to the seriousness of the individual's criminal career and to specific negative penal outcomes.

The first point to be made about these results is that they appear not to be age-linked. **Age** is an important confounding factor in the interpretation of indicators of criminal career seriousness. For example, the accumulated number of convictions will be a function of time at exposure to risk for conviction, which is largely determined by age. However, in both analyses the least deprived group are in fact on average the oldest so that age per se cannot account for their relatively less severe criminal history.

With just two exceptions the variables in Table 17 exhibit an appreciable gradient indicating an increasingly serious outcome linked to increasing levels of background disadvantage. For example, almost twice as many of the most deprived group have been **in a padded cell** as of the least deprived group.

Even when the contrasts are not statistically significant they tend to point to notable differences in the expected direction. For example, the most deprived group have accumulated a **total of prison sentences** almost 3 years longer than that of the least deprived group, but because the variation in both groups is very large this contrast is not statistically significant. For most of the contrasts, the gap between the most deprived and the moderately deprived tends to be larger than that between the moderately deprived and the least deprived.

<b>Table 17: Background disadvantage and penal and criminal outcomes</b>				
	Level 1 (0-2) N=19	Level 2(3-5) N=54	Level 3(6-8) N=35	Chi-squared
Mean Age	31.5 yrs	27.5 yrs	27.7 yrs	
Ever in padded cell	32%	35%	57%	5.2 p < .05
Heroin user using in prison	56%	53%	81%	5.4 p < .05
Claims assault by staff	32%	32%	46%	n.s.
Imprisoned on 1st conviction	16%	19%	26%	n.s.
Imprisoned as juvenile	53%	78%	83%	6.4 p < .05
				<i>t-test</i>
Mean age at 1st conviction	18.2 yrs	17.1 yrs	15.4 yrs	(Li-L3) t=2.2 p < .05
Mean age at 1st imprisonment	21.1 yrs	19.5 yrs	16.8 yrs	(Li-L3) t=3.3 p < .05
No. of imprisonments	5.7	10	12.5	(Li-L3) t=3.1 p < .05
No. of convictions	8.9	14.7	15.7	(Li-L2) t=1.99 p < .05
No. alternatives before impris.	2.1	2.2	1.8	n.s.
Total sentenced time	95 mts	104 mts	130 mts	n.s.
Longest sentence	48 mts	30 mts	36 mts	(Li-L2) t=1.99 p < .05

Perhaps the most important differences emerging from this analysis are in **age of first conviction** and **first imprisonment**. The most deprived group were first convicted almost 3 years before the least deprived group and they were first imprisoned more than 4 years before the least deprived group. The moderately deprived group take an intermediate position on both variables. This early start to the criminal career is undoubtedly related to the large differences in **mean total number of convictions** and **imprisonments** and **mean total of sentenced prison time**. The most deprived group have received about 16 convictions and about 13 separate sentences of imprisonment compared, respectively, with about 9 and 6 for the least deprived group.

The two variables which do not exhibit the expected gradient, corresponding with level of deprivation, are also interesting. First, all 3 groups benefited from about 2 non-custodial, **alternative sanctions** before they were first imprisoned. This suggests that the early age of imprisonment of the most deprived group is not accounted for by any bias towards imprisonment for this group at the sentencing stage. On the contrary, it suggests that it is more likely to be related to level of criminal activity or at least to level of detected criminal activity. One caveat, however, is that the least deprived group are clearly benefiting from their average of 2 non-custodial sanctions at a much later age than the most deprived group and so the degree of leniency or tolerance exercised is not truly comparable. On average the most deprived group was already imprisoned before the least deprived group reached the average age of first conviction.

**Table 18 : Personal adversity and penal and criminal outcomes**

	Level 1 (0-1) N=37	Level 2 (2-3) N=58	Level 3 (4-5) N=13	Chi-squared
Mean Age	29.4 yrs	27.4 yrs	29.1 yrs	
Ever in padded cell	14%	59%	46%	19 p < .05
Heroin user using in prison	47%	68%	67%	n.s.
Claims assault by staff	14%	47%	46%	n.s.
Imprisoned on 1st conviction	16%	24%	15%	n.s.
Imprisoned as juvenile	73%	76%	77%	n.s.
				<i>t-test</i>
Mean age at 1st conviction	17.7 yrs	16.4 yrs	15.8 yrs	n.s. (Li-L2)
Mean age at 1st imprisonment	20.5 yrs	17.9 yrs	19 yrs	t=2.3 p < .05
No. of imprisonments	8.1	11	11.5	n.s.
No. of convictions	12.6	14.5	15.8	n.s.
No. alternatives before impris.	2.2	1.9	2.5	n.s. (Li-L2)
Total sentenced time	81 mts	119 mts	156 mts	t=2.2 p < .05
Longest sentence	30 mts	38 mts	41 mts	n.s.

Second and going against the general trend, the least deprived group have on average received the longer **longest sentence**. This may well also be a reflection of the later age of first imprisonment of this group and possibly points to a tendency for judges to impose a longer sentence for a similar offence on people who are being imprisoned for the first time as an adult. However, it may also indicate that this group are associated with a somewhat more serious type of offending.

Turning to the relationship between indicators of personal adversity and penal and criminal career outcomes, the results are presented in Table 18. The relationship is not so clearcut in this instance. Only 3 of the variables vary between the three levels of personal adversity to a statistically significant degree — **having been in a padded cell, mean age of first imprisonment, and total of sentenced prison time**. While level 1 prisoners have the most favourable results on almost all the penal and criminal history variables, only the **total of sentenced prison time** displays a statistically significant gradient in which the situation worsens with increasing adversity. In fact, these data indicate that the main differences are between the group experiencing least adversity and the group experiencing a moderate level, ie. 2 or 3 of the personal adversities, who often have the worst results. For a number of variables, such as **mean age of first imprisonment and number of alternative sanctions imposed before first imprisonment**, the moderate group has more negative results than the multiple adversity group.

These less clearcut results in the analysis of the influence of personal adversity on criminal and penal outcomes probably reflect the more complex two-way interactions between the personal adversity variables and aspects of criminal and penal activity.

### c) **Multivariate analysis of the influence of background on the seriousness of offending**

This section uses the multiple regression technique to explore the correlation between both background variables and also aspects of the early penal career of the sample members and 3 indicators of the seriousness of criminal career to date. The analysis refers to the 90 prisoners out of 108 in the achieved sample, who were in prison under sentence. The remand prisoners are eliminated in order to exclude the small number of prisoners without a criminal record.

In addition to the variables which describe childhood disadvantage and personal adversity, the **ages of first conviction and imprisonment** and whether or not an individual was **imprisoned on first conviction** are related in multiple regression equations to 3 dependent variables that reflect the seriousness of the criminal career — the **longest ever sentence** received by an individual, **his total number of separate sentences to prison** and his **total of time sentenced to prison**. Age is also included as an independent variable because it may play an important role in the



prediction of the dependent variables since it is strongly related to time at risk for conviction and imprisonment.

There are two main advantages to the multiple regression technique. First, it makes use of all the variation in the dependent variables, which are continuous variables — most of the other analyses in this chapter lose a considerable amount of variance because they look at a small number of levels of variables or simply dichotomize the sample on a particular variable. Second, multiple regression examines the conjoint, simultaneous influence of the independent, background and early penal history variables on the dependent variable. In this way it takes account of combined effects and inter-correlations between predictor variables and is able to identify the most powerful predictor variables.

**Table 19: Multiple regression equation for total time sentenced to prison**

Multiple R	.64052				
R Square	.41027				
Adjusted R Square	.38595				
Standard Error	74.588				
Analysis of Variance					
	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square		
Regression	4	375433.44	93858.36		
Residual	97	539656.85	5563.47		
F = 16.87046	Signif F = .0000				
Variables in the Equation					
Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Age of 1st Imp	-9.925885	1.555205	-.556507	-6.382	.0000
Age	5.188443	1.217874	.371416	4.260	.0000
No of personal Adversities	14.333002	6.097099	.187751	2.351	.0208
Age ceased Education	-4.085128	2.044782	-.160979	-1.998	.0485
(Constant)	182.557243	50.193176		3.637	.0004

A stepwise multiple regression approach is used. This technique selects from amongst the complete range of independent variables examined to produce the combination of variables that best predicts the dependent variable in a regression equation. Predictor variables have to meet certain statistical conditions for inclusion in the equation. These conditions ensure that only variables that add significantly to the predictive power of the equation are included at each step. Many of the non-included independent variables may be significantly correlated with the dependent variable but they are not included because their predictive power is already largely exhausted by the presence in the equation of variables with which they are inter-correlated. For example, in Table 19, **age of first conviction** is also strongly related to **total of**

**sentenced prison time** but this variable is inter-correlated **with age at first imprisonment** and once the latter (which is the more predictive of the two variables) is included in the equation the former has little more to add to the predictive power of the equation.

The equation for **total of sentenced prison time** is highly significant ( $F = 16.87$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). It accounts for 41% of the variance (as indicated by the R squared value) in the dependent variable. Four variables, **age at first imprisonment**, **age**, **number of personal adversities**, and **age ceased education**, are in the equation which explains 41% of the variance. The sign of the regression coefficient (ie. the B value) indicates the direction of the correlation between that particular independent variable and the dependent variable, whether positive or negative. In this case **age at first imprisonment** and **age ceased education** are both negatively correlated, indicating that **total time sentenced to prison** increases the lower the age at first imprisonment and at school cessation. Conversely the other 2 variables are positively correlated, indicating that that **total time sentenced to prison** increases with **age** and with **number of personal adversities** experienced.

**Table 20: Multiple regression equation for total number of imprisonments**

Multiple R	.63209				
R Square	.39954				
Adjusted R Square	.38116				
Standard Error	6.86471				
Analysis of Variance					
	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square		
Regression	3	3072.84880	1024.28293		
Residual	98	4618.17081	47.12419		
F = 21.73582	Signif F = .0000				
Variables in the Equation					
Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Age of 1st Imp	-.933477	.143583	-.570881	-6.501	.0000
Age	.660713	.112789	.515914	5.858	.0000
Had a job lasting 1 yr.	-3.604733	1.493420	-.204994	-2.414	.0176
(Constant)	11.038850	3.291261		3.354	.0011

The equation for **total number of imprisonments** is also highly significant ( $F = 21.74$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). It accounts for 39% of the variance in the dependent variable. **Age at first imprisonment** is also the most important variable in this equation and **age**, unsurprisingly, again plays a significant role. The third significant predictor variable is whether or not the offender had **ever held a job for a year or longer**.

Those who had done so tended to have experienced fewer separate sentences of imprisonment.

**Table 21: Multiple regression equation for longest ever prison sentence**

Multiple R	.31088				
R Square	.09665				
Adjusted R Square	.08762				
Standard Error	28.66663				
Analysis of Variance					
	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square		
Regression	1	8792.14832	8792.14832		
Residual	100	82177.56982	821.77570		
F = 10,69896		Signif F = .0015			
Variables in the Equation					
Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Age ceased Education (Constant)	-2.487436 70.479419	.760468 10.536551	-.310885	-3.271 6.689	.0015 .0004

The equation for **longest ever sentence of imprisonment** is significant ( $F = 10.69$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not as emphatically so as the two previous equations. The equation accounts for just under 10% of the variance in the dependent variable and only one independent variable — **age ceased education** — fulfills the conditions for inclusion in the equation. This variable is negatively correlated with **longest ever sentence**, indicating that the earlier a person left school the higher his longest ever sentence of imprisonment tended to be.

These exploratory multivariate analyses have identified the age of first imprisonment, the age of ceasing education, the degree of exposure to personal adversity, and the failure to establish a substantial record of employment as particularly strong predictors of the seriousness of a criminal career. The results with respect to early school leaving and early imprisonment are very much in line with international research, which indicates that these are amongst the most significant single factors in, respectively, the genesis of delinquency and the establishment of an extensive criminal career. These findings also confirm the important general role of a background of relative deprivation, which has been separately shown in this study to be related to the emergence of personal adversities, to an early age of first imprisonment and to a poor employment record. A background of relative deprivation is also partly defined by and predictive of early school leaving.

Most significantly, this demonstration of the importance of these factors has emerged in the course of analysis of a data set which is limited with respect to the amount of

variability both in the dependent and the independent variables. In other words, these factors have been shown to be powerfully related to the seriousness of a criminal career in a sample of prisoners that is fairly homogeneous in terms of criminal history and very homogeneous in terms of background and personal circumstances. For example, most of the sample have experienced many separate imprisonments and almost all left school at an unusually early age. It is highly likely that, in a sample representative of the general male population, an equivalent examination of the relationship between these background and criminal history variables would show the important factors identified in this study to be even more powerfully predictive of seriousness of criminality.

Other variables that have been implicated by international research as causal factors in delinquency, such as large family size and a broken family, have not featured strongly in the present multiple regression analyses. This does not in any way imply that they are not important factors in the Irish context or in the background of these Mountjoy prisoners. On the contrary, the results of this study indicate unequivocally that the present sample of prisoners tend to come from very large, poor, lower-class families that have been broken by separation and desertion far more frequently than the general run of Irish families. The nature of the present analysis is such that variables like large family size will not show up as strong predictors of the seriousness of criminality precisely because the prisoners almost without exception come from large families. To establish a statistical correlation between family size and offending, it would be necessary to examine a more broadly based representative sample that included people from all family sizes and people who did and did not offend. It is also possible that some of the mooted causal factors that have not shown up in the present multiple regression analyses, like being from a broken family, are predictive of offending as such but not of the relative seriousness of the criminal career, which is the far more narrowly defined dependent variable studied here.

#### **d) Contrasts of prisoner types**

This section examines six different categories of prisoner in contrast to the remainder of the prison population with respect to a whole series of variables that describe background characteristics such as social class and school leaving age, personal adversities such as drug addiction, and criminal and penal indicators such as the use of drugs in prison and the accumulated number of convictions. The six categories are prisoners who: 1) have a record of violent offending, including robbery but excluding assault, which is common in the criminal history of the sample but often relates to an offence of a technical or trivial nature; 2) have accumulated more than 10 years of sentenced prison time; 3) were first imprisoned before the age of 18; 4) have been sentenced to a period longer than 2 years at some point in their criminal career; 5) report a belief that they will be back in prison at some time in the future; and 6)

report that they have committed more than 100 offences for which they were never charged.

The analyses are based on the data on the 90 prisoners who completed the questionnaire and who were in Mountjoy under sentence. The group of prisoners with a particular characteristic, for example a record of violence, are compared with all the other prisoners. Dichotomous variables like whether or not the prisoner is a drug user are analysed using the chi-squared test and continuous variables like age of first conviction are analysed using the t-test. Only the statistically significant differences are noted. In this way profiles of the six categories of prisoner are constructed. These profiles point to the distinctive characteristics of each category.

**The offenders with a record of violence (n=60)** had accumulated more prison time (by 85 months), more convictions (7 more), more imprisonments (6 more), a longer longest sentence (by 20 months) and were more likely to have more than 10 convictions and a longest sentence of more than 2 years. They had been first convicted and first imprisoned at an earlier age ( by just over 3 years in both cases). Predictably, they were more likely to be in prison currently for a violent offence and, because of the extent of their experience of conviction, to have benefited from 2 or more non-custodial sentences. They had experienced more personal adversities, were more likely to have HIV or hepatitis and to be using drugs in prison.

**The offenders with more than 10 years of sentenced prison time (n=38)** had experienced more convictions (12 more), more imprisonments (11 more), a longer longest sentence (by 25 months) and were more likely to have more than 10 convictions and a longest sentence of more than 2 years. They had been first convicted and first imprisoned at an earlier age ( by 4 years in both cases). Predictably, they had accumulated far more sentenced prison time. However, the difference amounted to an astounding 140 months. They were more likely to have a violent record, to be a drug user, to be using drugs in prison, to have been imprisoned as a juvenile, and to have HIV or hepatitis. They were also more likely to have had an imprisoned first degree relative, to have never worked, to have been exposed to more background disadvantages and personal adversities, and to come from a lower social class. They had left school on average 2 years earlier than the prisoners with less than 10 years accumulated sentences to prison. This cut-off point evidently differentiates two very distinct groups. The prisoners with more than 10 years of sentenced prison time have a clearly worse criminal record in other respects and are also distinguished by their past and current experience of relative deprivation and personal problems.

**The offenders first imprisoned before the age of 18 (n=51)** had accumulated more prison time (by 86 months), more convictions (5 more), more imprisonments (6 more), a longer longest sentence (by 14 months) and were more likely to have more than 10 convictions, a longest sentence of more than 2 years, and a total of

sentenced prison time of more than 10 years. Predictably, they had been first convicted and first imprisoned at an earlier age, but the differences were very large (5 years for first conviction and 7 years for first imprisonment). They were more likely to be in prison for a violent offence and more likely to have a record of violence. They were more likely to be drug users and were more likely to be using drugs in prison currently. They tended to be from a lower social class and to have been exposed to more background disadvantages and personal adversities. They were more likely to have never been employed and less likely to have held a job lasting at least one year. Those imprisoned before the age of 18, then, have a clear profile of background disadvantage and a comparatively serious and extensive criminal and penal history.

**The offenders who have ever been sentenced to a period longer than 2 years (n=46)** were a less distinctive group. They were more likely to have accumulated more than 10 years of prison time and a greater total of prison time (by 54 months). Predictably, they were also more likely to be under a current sentence of longer than 2 years and to have received a longer longest sentence (by 45 months). They were more likely to have a violent record and to be currently in prison for a violent offence. Other than these differences, which have a logical link to the selection criterion, the only significant features of this group were that they were more likely to be using drugs in prison and to claim that they would not return to prison again.

**The offenders who report a belief that they will be back in prison at some time in the future (n=33)** had more convictions (7 more), more imprisonments (6 more), and were more likely to have more than 10 convictions. They had been first imprisoned at an earlier age (by 2 years), but their age of first conviction was not significantly earlier. Interestingly, they were less likely to have a current sentence of more than 2 years and a longest sentence of more than 2 years. Their longest sentence, in fact, was on average 16 months shorter than that of those who claimed they would not be back in prison or were not sure. They were more likely to be drug users and to use in prison currently. They also tended to come from a lower social class, to have experienced more background disadvantages, and were less likely to have had a job lasting at least a year. As a group they were more likely to claim that they had got away with more than 100 offences. This appears to be a particularly socially deprived group of prisoners who have an extensive criminal record characterised by multiple short imprisonments. Their avoidance of long sentences in the course of a highly recidivist career may be linked to their belief that they will be in prison again.

**The offenders who report that they have committed more than 100 offences for which they were never charged (n= 40)** were not a very distinctive group. They differed from those claiming less than 100 undetected and unpunished offenses in only 3 ways. They were more likely to be drug users, to be using drugs in prison currently and to think that they would be back in prison at some time in the future.

## e) Discriminant analyses

Discriminant analysis is another multivariate technique which is mathematically related to multiple regression. It is similar to multiple regression in that it formulates an equation selecting the best predictors of the dependent variable from amongst a set of independent variables, which in this case is the set of variables describing aspects of the prisoners' background and criminal career. Like multiple regression discriminant analysis examines the relationship between the dependent variable and several independent variables simultaneously. However, discriminant analysis is used specifically with dependent variables that can be divided into mutually exclusive groups and its purpose is to classify cases into one or other of these groups. It is, therefore, particularly useful for exploring the correlates of dichotomous dependent variables, ie. variables which divide the sample into 2 groups, and for identifying the characteristics that best distinguish the 2 groups. In this study it is useful for examining the distinguishing characteristics of specific groups of prisoners, in particular those who have been in the padded cell, those who have attempted suicide, and those who have been on a disciplinary report.

In Sections C and D above, the relationship of total of sentenced prison time to the set of independent variables has already been studied. It might be useful as a demonstration of the technique to further examine this relationship using discriminant analysis.

If we divide the sample into 2 groups ie. into groups containing those who have accumulated more than 10 years of prison time and those who have not, then discriminant analysis can be used to identify the characteristics that are important for differentiating the 2 groups. The derived discriminant function equation enables us to assign cases to one or other of the 2 groups and the predictive power of the equation can be evaluated in terms of the accuracy of this classification.

<b>Table 22: Discriminant analysis of the groups with more than and less than 10 years of sentenced prison time</b>			
Classification results:—			
Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		0	1
Group 0 < 10 yrs Prison Time	52	37 71.2%	15 28.8%
Group 1 > 10 yrs Prison Time	38	3 7.9%	35 92.1%
Percent of "grouped" cases correctly classified: 80.00%			

Independent variables with an obvious logical connection with accumulated prison time, such as number of separate sentences of imprisonment, were excluded from the analysis. As can be seen from Table 22, this analysis is quite powerful since 80% of the 90 cases are correctly classified. Only 3 out of 38 prisoners who actually had accumulated more than 10 years prison time were not classified as such on the basis of the equation.

The equation used 3 independent (predictor) variables which were, in order of importance, age of first imprisonment, a record of violent offending, and school leaving age. The prisoners with an early age of first imprisonment and of school leaving and with a criminal record including violence were more likely to have accumulated more than 10 years of prison time. This means that on the basis of information on these 3 variables alone it was possible to predict with considerable accuracy whether or not a prisoner fell into the group with more than 10 years of prison time. This analysis confirms the important roles of early school leaving and first imprisonment, which have already been identified as significant by the multiple regression analysis in Section C. In addition, it emphasises the association between a record of violent offending and the accumulation of a large total of sentenced prison time.

**Table 23: Discriminant analysis of the groups who had and had not been on report**

Classification results:—			
Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		0	1
Group 0 Not on report	46	8 17.4%	38 82.6%
Group 1 Had been on report	44	35 79.5%	9 20.5%
Percent of "grouped" cases correctly classified: 81.11%			

The equation discriminating between prisoners, who had and had not been on report since beginning the current sentence, was slightly more powerful. The equation was about equally successful at identifying those who had and those who had not been on report. The significant variables in the equation were, in order of importance, the age of the prisoner, whether or not he claimed to have been assaulted in prison, whether or not he had HIV or hepatitis, the length of his longest ever sentence, and whether or not he was currently in a continuing marriage or common law relationship. Younger prisoners, those claiming to have been assaulted, those with HIV or hepatitis, those with a longer longest ever sentence, and those not currently married



or in a continuing common law relationship were more likely to have been on report during this sentence.

<b>Table 24: Discriminant analysis of the groups who had and had not been in a padded cell</b>			
Classification results:—			
Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		0	1
Group 0 Never in a padded cell	50	15 30.0%	35 70.0%
Group 1 In a padded cell	40	31 77.5%	9 22.5%
Percent of "grouped" cases correctly classified: 73.33%			

The equation discriminating between prisoners who had and had not been held in a padded cell was only moderately predictive. However, it successfully classified 31 out of 40 prisoners, who had been in a padded cell, on the basis of information on just 3 independent variables. The significant variables in the equation were, in order of importance, whether or not the prisoner claimed to have been assaulted in prison, age of his first conviction, and whether or not he had ever worked. The prisoners who claimed to have been assaulted, who had an early age of first conviction and who had never held a job were more likely to have been in a padded cell at some point in their prison history.

<b>Table 25: Discriminant analysis of the groups who had and had not attempted suicide</b>			
Classification results:—			
Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		0	1
Group 0 Had not attempted suicide	67	17 25.4%	50 74.6%
Group 1 Had attempted suicide	23	18 78.3%	5 21.7%
Percent of "grouped" cases correctly classified: 75.56%			

The equation discriminating between prisoners who had made a suicide attempt and those who had not was only moderately predictive. However, it successfully classified 18 of the 23 prisoners who had attempted suicide. This substantial level of predictive

power was derived from information on 4 independent variables which were, in order of importance, whether or not the prisoner had an alcohol problem, whether or not the prisoner claimed to have been assaulted in prison, whether or not he had HIV or hepatitis, and whether or not he thought it likely he would be back in prison again. Those with a history of alcoholism, with HIV or hepatitis, who claimed to have been assaulted in prison and who thought they were likely to be back in prison again were more likely to have attempted suicide.

The results of these discriminant analyses demonstrate the practical potential of the technique, particularly with respect to developing instruments for the identification of possible suicide attempters, disruptive prisoners or prisoners with disciplinary problems. The present analyses are purely exploratory and no attempt was made to collect data with a clearcut relevance to the identification of, for example, suicide attempters. None the less, moderately successful equations were derived from the available data. It is likely that far more powerful and accurate equations for the classification and identification of subgroups of prisoners could be developed if an attempt was made to capture specifically relevant data.

### **Summary of main findings**

- The Mountjoy prisoners as a group had a profile of stark disadvantage. The large majority of them lived in rented accommodation in poor working class areas of Dublin; came from very large families, where the father was usually employed as an unskilled manual labourer or was chronically unemployed; had left school before the age of 16 without any qualifications; were themselves unemployed before imprisonment; were users of hard drugs; and were never married but had fathered children. More than half of the group grew up in a home where either no parent worked or only the mother worked in a menial job.
- By general population standards a remarkably large minority of the sample were illiterate; had lost a parent in childhood through death or marital breakdown; had never held a job for more than 3 months; had hepatitis or were HIV positive; and had made a suicide attempt.
- Even within this generally disadvantaged group of prisoners there were gradations of disadvantage and through statistical analysis it was possible to show that background disadvantages were strongly linked with current personal adversities such as substance abuse and emotional disturbance. The more disadvantaged prisoners in childhood were much more likely to be currently facing serious personal adversities.
- Statistical analysis also indicated that the prisoners with a more deprived childhood had the more serious criminal careers and the more severe penal outcomes. The more deprived amongst the sample tended to leave school

earlier and to be first convicted earlier. Early conviction and school leaving were in turn found to be strongly predictive of measures of the seriousness of a criminal career.

- The offenders with a record of violence were a distinctive group. They had been first convicted and imprisoned 3 years before the other prisoners and had accumulated 7 more convictions on average. They were more likely to have HIV or hepatitis and were more likely to be using drugs in prison.
- The offenders first imprisoned before the age of 18 had a marked profile of social disadvantage and a comparatively more serious and extensive criminal career including more violence and more convictions generally. They were also more likely to have HIV or hepatitis and were more likely to be using drugs in prison.
- The offenders who stated that they would probably be back in prison again were more likely to be drug users and to be using currently in prison. They were a particularly deprived group with multiple short imprisonments and a relatively early age of first imprisonment but not of first conviction.
- Younger prisoners, those claiming to have been assaulted, those with HIV or hepatitis, those with a longer longest ever sentence, and those not currently married or in a continuing common law relationship were more likely to have been on report during this sentence.
- The prisoners who claimed to have been assaulted, who had an early age of first conviction and who had never held a job were more likely to have been in a padded cell at some point in their prison career.
- Those with a history of alcoholism, with HIV or hepatitis, who claimed to have been assaulted in prison and who thought they were likely to be back in prison again were more likely to have attempted suicide.



## Chapter 9

# In Conclusion: Some Comparisons

### a) Mountjoy Prison ten years on

In the ten years between the 1986 and 1996 surveys, Mountjoy Prison has been subject to considerable structural change in the sense of both changes to the physical plant, such as the building of a new Medical Unit, and system-level, administrative changes which rebound on the way Mountjoy is deployed as a hub at the centre of Irish penal activity, such as the diversion of those convicted of homicide and sexual offences to other prisons.

Mountjoy Prison in 1996 has to accept, just as it did in 1986, the overwhelming majority of remand prisoners and a large majority of convicted prisoners sent to prison by the courts in the State. Over the ten years, this continuing central role for Mountjoy has meant an ever-increasing demand on the limited accommodation in the prison. In 1986, 7,431 convicted and remand prisoners were committed to Irish prisons. By 1993 (the latest year for which figures are available) this had increased to 12,357 and there is little reason to believe that this figure has done anything but rise further since 1993. The substantial rise from 1986 to 1993 represents a 66% growth in the number of committals to prison and Mountjoy has borne the brunt of this enormous increase.

Unsurprisingly, then, one of the most obvious changes in the ten year period is the increase in overcrowding at the prison. The average prison population has increased from 550 to around 650 and while there has been some small increase in available cells, for example through the building of the Medical Unit, there has also been some loss of cells to other functions such as offices, shower rooms etc.. In general the increase in the prison population has been accommodated by an increase in the practice of doubling-up, that is in placing two prisoners in a cell designed for single occupancy. A substantial number of prisoners are also regularly crowded into a small number of multiple cells.

The extra 100 prisoners in the average daily prison population not only signal increased strain on the available cell accommodation but also inevitably entail that all

services and facilities, such as workshops, the school, recreation areas, or the management of visits to prisoners, are severely overstretched.

Of course, the enlarged prison population does not by any means entirely account for the prison's ability to handle the greatly increased number of committals it receives in the course of a year. The 650 prison places have somehow to accommodate on an annual basis over 6000 new arrivals at the prison gate. This is several thousand a year more committals than were received in 1986. Much of this increased flow of committals is made up by remand prisoners who will, with a few exceptions, spend only a very short time in the prison. (It is worth noting that this situation is likely to change following the bail referendum of November 1996, which makes remand in custody for the whole period awaiting trial far more probable. Even before these legal reforms have been implemented, the proportion of the Mountjoy prison population taken up by remands has increased appreciably from 11% in 1986 to about 18% at the time of the survey). However, a large part of the increase is in committals under sentence.

The prison population has grown by about 18% or 100 places, but about 60 of these new places have been taken by remand prisoners. The remaining 40 new places are clearly insufficient to cater for the increasing bottleneck of new arrivals of sentenced prisoners. The consequent, constant pressure on accommodation has been managed partly by the swift transfer of prisoners out of Mountjoy to other prisons, where new places have been provided, but mainly by the use of the early release mechanism. As a result, the general increase in the number of committals has led both to greater overcrowding in the prison and to a substantial increase in the number of convicted prisoners released well before their remission date. At any one time there are several hundred prisoners, who are serving out their sentences on full temporary release from Mountjoy Prison.

The criminological profile of the prisoners in 1996 is still very similar to that found in 1986, despite the general absence from the prison of juvenile offenders and people serving long sentences, particularly homicide or sex offenders, and despite other notable changes in offence types in the prison population. The changes can be summarised as a shift towards a specialisation of the prison in holding property offenders with moderate sentence lengths. In 1996, 69% of the prison population are convicted either for robbery, burglary or larceny. This is an increase from 43% for the same categories in 1986.

There also are significant changes with regard to very short sentence offenders. The increased use of early release has especially benefited minor non-violent, non-property offenders and these now also constitute smaller proportions of the prison population. For example, despite a continued high level of convictions and committals of motoring offenders, the number of these in the prison population has declined dramatically. These various, competing changes have had a net effect such that the

average sentence of Mountjoy prisoners has declined by about 6 months to two and a half years. Consistent with this, smaller proportions of the prison population in 1996 than in 1986 are serving sentences of over 2 years or of over 5 years.

Otherwise, the Mountjoy prisoners of 1996 are very similar to those of 1986 in terms of their criminal history. The average total number of convictions at 14 is down 1 from the 1986 figure, but the total number of separate sentences of imprisonment remains about the same at around 10. Both surveys, therefore, confirm the norm of a criminal history characterised by, in international terms, a remarkable degree of recidivism. The average age of first conviction (at just under 17 years) is almost identical in both surveys, though in 1996 the average age of first imprisonment (just under 19) is somewhat higher by about 6 months.

It is interesting that the 1996 prisoners have benefited on average from one less non-custodial sentence than the 1986 prisoners over the course of comparably extensive criminal careers. This result, however, may reflect the relative infrequency in the 1996 prison population of types of offender, such as motoring offenders, who are perhaps more likely to have received a great many non-custodial sentences rather than any tendency for the judiciary to use non-custodial sanctions less often.

One important index of judicial treatment of offenders is the proportion of the sample sentenced to prison on their first conviction. Analysis of this issue, at first sight, suggests more lenient treatment in 1996, since the proportion imprisoned on first conviction has declined from 36% in 1986 to 22%. This appears to indicate a greater willingness on the part of the judiciary to use non-custodial sanctions, especially with first offenders, but the difference between the two surveys is probably exaggerated by the presence in the 1986 survey of more offenders convicted of first offences, such as rape and manslaughter, that almost inevitably lead to a sentence of imprisonment.

However, when like groups of offenders are compared between 1986 and 1996, there is some evidence of harsher sentences in more recent years. In particular, the average sentences for robbery, burglary and larceny have all increased somewhat. Nevertheless, the total of sentenced prison time accumulated by the 1996 and 1986 samples, over a similar number of separate sentences (10), remained much the same — amounting to about nine and a half years.

The sociological profile of the Mountjoy prison population in 1996 is also recognisably similar to the 1986 profile. In general terms, the Mountjoy population remains remarkably homogeneous — overwhelmingly Irish, urban, indeed Dublin, and working-class. The average age of the prisoners has increased by one year but this undoubtedly reflects the lesser number of juveniles in the prison population. Mountjoy remains very much a young person's prison.

Fifty percent of the Mountjoy prison population in 1986 came from 5 specific areas in Dublin noted for severe levels of socio-economic and cultural deprivation and for other problems such as drug abuse and chronic unemployment. This situation is unchanged and, in 1996, 56% of the prison population came from 6 very similarly deprived communities in Dublin.

In 1996, as in 1986, few prisoners had set themselves up in an independent household and the majority still lived with parents or other relatives. A very large majority from both samples lived in rented accommodation and a large minority in corporation flats. The prisoners in 1996 came from slightly smaller families (of 7 children rather than 8 children on average in 1986), but as a group were still remarkable in comparison with the general population for the size of their family of origin. The families of origin in both surveys were also overwhelmingly from the lower occupational classes and the fathers' history was frequently characterised by intermittent employment or chronic unemployment.

While the general picture of a background and family life of considerable deprivation in 1996 remained very similar to that found in 1986, there were, in fact, some signs of significant deterioration. For example, while, in 1986, 13% of the prisoners came from families broken by separation or desertion (when they were still quite young), by 1996 this rate had more than doubled to 27%. The number of prisoners whose fathers had been in prison also more than doubled from 7% to 15%.

There was also evidence of more disorder in the personal lives of the prisoners. The rate of marriage amongst prisoners was down from 26% in 1986, which was low in terms of general population rates, to 18%. What is more, 50% of the married prisoners in 1996 were separated from their families compared with 29% in the 1986 sample. Despite the lower rate of marriage, 72% of the 1996 sample claimed to have fathered children compared with 42% in the 1986 sample. Confirming the impression of more chaotic personal lives, the percentage of those prisoners with children, who had never or no longer considered themselves as part of a family unit, had increased from 50% in 1986 to 59%.

The crucial area of education shows no clearcut improvement in the situation of Mountjoy prisoners between 1986 and 1996. There was a slight decline in the proportion of prisoners who had not progressed beyond primary or special education from 37% to 33%, but the proportion of prisoners leaving school before 16 years of age actually increased from 78% to 80%.

The employment history of prisoners tends to be considerably more bleak in 1996 than in 1986. Although slightly more of the prisoners (53% compared with 48% in 1986) had some experience of vocational skills training courses, statistics on employment history tended to show disimprovement. In 1996, 88% of the prisoners had



been unemployed prior to imprisonment compared with 79% in 1986. The proportion who had never held a job had increased from 7% to 27% and the proportion who had held the one job for at least a year had declined from 68% to 43%.

It is tempting to speculate that the fact that the profile of the prisoners with regard to crucial aspects of their personal lives is significantly worse in 1996 than in 1986 is associated with the one major change in the prison population not so far noted — the great increase in the number of prisoners with a severe drug problem, most particularly with a long-term opiate habit. From the point of view of the well-being of prisoners, the climate within Mountjoy, and the management of the prison, the increase in drug problems is without doubt the most far-reaching and important change since 1986.

The change is signaled by differences with respect to substance misuse generally. In 1996, 86% of the prisoners had used cannabis compared with 59% in 1986 and 91% were smokers of cigarettes compared with 80% in 1986. On the other hand, the prisoners' interest in alcohol had appreciably declined from 87%, who said they drank alcohol when free in 1986, to 68%, who did so in 1996. However, this transformation is definitely linked to the increased use of opiates, which is often regarded as incompatible with alcohol use.

In the ten years, the proportion of the prison population that had used drugs other than cannabis more than doubled from 37% to 77% and the proportion that could be described as having a serious dependency on a hard drug also more than doubled from 31% to 63%. The rate of exposure to intravenous use of heroin increased from 29% to 56%, despite the fact that in 1996 a considerable number of heroin abusers (11 out of 71) had never injected but had instead developed a heroin smoking habit. By contrast, in 1986 all the heroin abusers were injectors.

These very large proportionate increases concerning drug-related problems do not do justice to the growth of this problem in Mountjoy because they do not reflect the change in the population size. In fact, it is estimated that in 1996 in Mountjoy there were two and a half times as many prisoners, who had used drugs other than cannabis, as in 1986. This amounts in 1996 to about 500 drug using prisoners, which is almost the size of the whole prison population in 1986.

While in 1986 the use of drugs in prison was a minor problem, according to the present survey, 42% of prisoners in 1996 use drugs other than cannabis in prison. In 1996, a small but appreciable number of prisoners even reported that they had first used heroin in prison. In general, the drug users in the present Mountjoy prison population can be characterised as polydrug users who mix and match stimulants, hallucinogens and narcotics at a prodigious rate. However, paradoxically, they can

also be characterised as more firmly attached to heroin as the drug of first choice and the drug of most frequent use than the prisoners in 1986.

The increased level of drug abuse brings with it an increased toll of drug-related health problems as well as ensuring that a drugs-oriented culture predominates amongst Mountjoy inmates. The 1996 sample were 3 times more likely to be known to have contracted HIV and many times more likely to be known to have hepatitis. There did appear to be a better system in place for testing for HIV, since while almost half of the intravenous users in 1986 had never had an HIV test, only a quarter of those in the 1996 sample had not been tested. Also on a more positive note, it was found that more of the heroin users in 1996 (58%) than in 1986 (48%) had experience of drug therapies apart from detoxification. This result largely reflects the recent widespread introduction of methadone maintenance programmes in Dublin. However, despite these small improvements, it was notable in both surveys that many of the prisoners' treatment experiences were rather short-lived and perfunctory and that many of the intravenous users in 1996 had continued sharing needles after an HIV test (including some who had tested positive) and many of these had not had a test for a considerable length of time.

Given the large growth in the number of committals that Mountjoy has to deal with and the changes in the size of the prison population and in its nature — especially in regard to drug problems — it is not surprising that there is also some evidence of a deterioration in the daily regime of the prison and in the disciplinary climate. In 1996, 47% of the convicted prisoners had no prison job and did not attend the school. This compares poorly with the 31% of the prison population in this situation in 1986. In 1986, only 19% of convicted prisoners, who had been in the prison for more than 6 months, did not have some occupation, but by 1996 this figure had risen to 39%. In 1996, 60% of prisoners had been in an isolation cell and 42% in a padded cell, which contrasts unfavourably with equivalent figures of 31% and 19%, respectively, for 1986. Ten years on, the proportion of prisoners who had been on report during their current imprisonment was also up to 45% from 36%. The number of suicides and suicide attempts has also increased considerably over the ten years. All of these changes point to a more strained and difficult environment in Mountjoy Prison in 1996.

## **b) Comparisons with other prison systems**

Throughout this study comparisons have been drawn with the results of surveys of foreign prison systems, most especially with the results of the National Prison Survey in England and Wales [8]. This can be a useful and informative process but it is necessary to exercise considerable caution in drawing conclusions from such comparisons.

In the first place, the present study focuses on Mountjoy Prison alone and although Mountjoy is by far Ireland's largest prison and a prison which plays a central and critical role in the management of the entire penal system, Mountjoy prisoners cannot be taken as representative of the prison population as a whole. The prisoners in Mountjoy are predominantly either recidivist, drug abusing, property offenders with moderately long sentences or transient remand and petty offenders. This profile undoubtedly reflects the majority profile for the whole prison population and the general flow of committals and most other Irish prisons will have a very similar population. However, there are other Irish prisons which largely house prisoners with a very different profile. In particular, long-term offenders convicted of serious violence, including murder and sex offences, tend not to be housed in Mountjoy. These prisoners are often from a different social background than Mountjoy prisoners and tend to have far less extensive and varied criminal records. Juvenile prisoners, white-collar criminals, and minor first-time offenders also tend to be found in institutions other than Mountjoy.

Mountjoy is unusual not just in respect of the particular pool of prisoners it holds but also because of the immense pressure on accommodation and services created by its unique position as the main reception centre for the large majority of remand and convict prisoners in the State. The fact that Mountjoy, with only 650 prison places, deals with over 6000 committals a year means that resources and manpower are constantly over-stretched. The National Prison Survey in England and Wales refers to a system which has about 2.15 sentenced committals per annum for each sentenced prison place, while Mountjoy has close to 10 committals per annum for each prison place and close to 6 sentenced committals per annum for each prison place taken up by a sentenced prisoner. This level of demand and stress on the prison inevitably translates into organisational and control difficulties, a greater potential for tension between prison officers and prisoners, and deficiencies in the provision of services and programmes, especially when the prison is compared with prisons with far more stable populations.

Comparisons between the Mountjoy prison population and other prison populations are, therefore, not entirely valid in the sense of comparing like with like. There are prisons in Ireland such as Arbour Hill, which houses mainly sex offenders, that would provide a very different picture. Equally, there are single prisons in other countries like England and Wales which would be far closer to Mountjoy in terms both of their prison population and their role in the penal system.

If one bears these caveats in mind, it can still be a useful exercise to draw comparisons between the results of this survey and those from foreign surveys. The distinctive features of the Mountjoy prison population and the specific problems of Mountjoy Prison can be illuminated by reference to what is the general norm and the general standard in other prison systems.

The general picture emerging, then, in the comparison with the prison population in England and Wales tends to portray the Mountjoy prisoners as in most respects in a less favourable position. For example, while 88% of Mountjoy prisoners were unemployed immediately prior to committal to prison this was true of only 49% of the prisoners in England and Wales. While only 6% of prisoners in England and Wales had never worked the equivalent figure in the Mountjoy population was about 27%. Similarly, while only 23% of prisoners in Mountjoy had attained any educational qualification, 44% of prisoners in England and Wales had some qualification at the point of reception into prison. Eighty percent of Mountjoy prisoners had left school before the age of 16 compared with 43% in England and Wales and 63% of Mountjoy prisoners claimed to have truanted regularly compared to 30% of the English and Welsh prisoners.

The social class background of prisoners in England and Wales tended to be low in relation to general population norms. Forty-one percent of prisoners were classified as from the two lowest occupational levels compared with 18% of the general population at these levels. However, the Mountjoy prisoners were much more distinctly of lower social class origin. About 83% of the Mountjoy prison population came from families classified in the two lowest socio-economic classes and about 93% of prisoners themselves were placed in these classes.

Prisoners in England and Wales also appear to evince evidence of more independence and maturity and less chaos and disorder in their personal lives. For example, many more prisoners in England and Wales were married (29% vs 18%) and considerably less of the married prisoners had separated from their spouses (34% vs 50%). Almost half of the prisoners in England and Wales were living, when free, with a spouse or partner and family and less than a quarter were still living with their parents or other relatives. In Mountjoy this situation was almost precisely reversed.

Twice as many prisoners in England and Wales than in Mountjoy were owner occupiers of their home in their own right. On the other hand, more than twice as many prisoners in England and Wales were living alone — almost one in five of the total. This may well reflect cultural differences between the two countries.

One in four prisoners in England and Wales had been taken into care before they reached the age of 16 years and this too was twice the rate found in the Mountjoy population. This finding is striking given that the comparison is between the whole prison population in England and Wales and a highly selected Mountjoy prison population with a particularly marked background of deprivation and family disruption. Again this finding may reflect general cultural differences, specifically the more active role played in child-rearing in Ireland by the extended family. Alternately or additionally, it may reflect more developed and interventionist social services in England and Wales.

There were also some notable and significant differences in the criminological profiles of Mountjoy and English and Welsh prisoners. Only 2% of Mountjoy prisoners had no previous convictions compared with 17% of prisoners in England and Wales. At the other end of the scale almost twice as many Mountjoy prisoners (54% vs 23%) had a criminal record showing more than 10 convictions. Indeed, 41% of Mountjoy prisoners had received more than 10 separate sentences of imprisonment and this was more than twice the equivalent proportion of English and Welsh prisoners. These differences would be less extreme if comparison was made between the entire prison populations in both countries but they are so marked that they are likely to remain substantial.

In terms of responses to identical survey questions, there were some substantial and interesting differences. More than twice as many Mountjoy prisoners than English and Welsh said that they were very likely to be back in prison again. On the other hand, four times as many English and Welsh prisoners said they were very unlikely to be back in prison again. These results may be a realistic reflection of the higher Mountjoy recidivism rates and of the fact that the 'revolving door' of the prison spins more rapidly in Ireland.

Far more Mountjoy prisoners than English and Welsh said that they were treated badly by prison officers (22% vs 9%) and far less said that they were treated well by them (27% vs 41%). Also indicative of a generally more tense and volatile prison climate is the fact that 27% of Mountjoy prisoners compared with 18% of English and Welsh prisoners said that they did not feel safe from being mistreated and bullied by other prisoners. Comparable figures are not available for England and Wales, but a similar number of Scottish prisoners (44% compared with 48% of Mountjoy prisoners) claimed to have been assaulted at some time in their prison careers by either an officer or a fellow prisoner.

In terms of living conditions and the daily prison regime Mountjoy prisoners appear to be clearly disadvantaged. While similar numbers are in single cells in England and Wales and in Mountjoy (52% vs 45%), only 26% of Mountjoy prisoners have daily access to showers compared with 66% of English and Welsh prisoners. The average daily out-of-cell time in England and Wales was 10 hours compared with 6 or 7 in Mountjoy.

In England and Wales, 59% of prisoners did prison work, in Scotland, 71% of prisoners had a job, and in the U.S. State prison system, 70% had work usually of a substantial and meaningful nature. In Mountjoy by comparison, only 39% of prisoners had any occupation. Few Mountjoy prisoners were engaged in educational programmes compared with England and Wales where 44% of prisoners attend classes for an average of 14 hours a week.

However, in this consistently negative context, one striking, favourable finding was that 47% of Mountjoy prisoners were generally satisfied with the quality of the food they received compared with only 13% of English and Welsh prisoners. It was also found that Mountjoy prisoners were more likely than English and Welsh to have had a visitor in the last month.

Finally, with regard to the drugs problems of prisoners there was no available data on the position in England and Wales, but comparisons with Scotland and the U.S. suggested that Mountjoy has an exceptionally severe problem especially with the intravenous use of opiates. Some European prison systems such as the Dutch and the Swedish, on the other hand, have a system-wide problem with intravenous drug use of a similar magnitude to that in Mountjoy.

The relative lack of treatment facilities for Mountjoy prisoners was highlighted by comparison with the U.S. State prison system, which provides substantial therapeutic treatment programmes (that is in addition to detoxification) almost immediately after their reception into prison for over half of those using drugs in the month before imprisonment. About sixty-five percent of heroin dependent prisoners in the Netherlands are on methadone maintenance programmes within the prison [64].

While it is not surprising that Mountjoy Prison, which must serve so many different and demanding functions for the Irish prison system, compares badly in many ways with foreign prison systems seen as a whole, it is also worth pointing out that the pattern of increasing pressure from mounting numbers of new committals experienced by the Irish system in recent years is by no means unique. Rising prison populations and increasing numbers of new committals are, indeed, almost a universal problem.

This phenomenon is not confined to jurisdictions which have embraced a strong 'just deserts' philosophy and have a tough 'law and order' political climate such as the USA and the U.K., although the growth of and stress on the penal system is particularly obvious in those countries. For example, in the USA in recent years increasing committals to prison have meant that more than 1500 new prison places must be found each week and Britain has recently commissioned a ship as a prison hulk to help accommodate its burgeoning prison population. However, even countries with a progressive tradition in penal matters like the Netherlands and Germany, which in recent decades had actually managed to reduce its prison population, are now experiencing substantial growth in the prison population and increasing strain on the system. For example, the Netherlands had managed to maintain the principle of one prisoner to a cell until 1994 when pressure of numbers finally forced the acceptance of doubling-up. Prison systems everywhere appear to be undergoing a period of severe crisis and fundamental change. In this context, considerable caution must be exercised when looking to foreign penal systems for models and standards.

### **c) The Irish use of imprisonment**

It has been important at various points in this study to contextualize the data on Mountjoy prisoners by comparing results for the sample with statistics both on the whole prison population, ie. the stock of prisoners within the system on one particular day, and on the flow of committals to the prison system, ie. the throughput of prisoners over one year, for both Ireland and other jurisdictions. Through this process of comparison it has emerged that the Irish prison population and the manner in which the Irish penal system operates are highly unusual in a number of significant ways.

Several features of the Irish prison population are distinctive. The most striking fact is that about a third of Irish prisoners are under 21 years and that this more than twice the number in this category in England and Wales, which itself has one of the highest rates of detention of juveniles in the Council of Europe. The Irish prison population is also distinctive because such a small percentage (under 10%) of all prisoners are unconvicted or unsentenced remand prisoners. Elsewhere in Europe, remand prisoners tend to take up between 30% and 80% of the total prison population and even in England and Wales, which has a similar legal tradition to Ireland, remand prisoners form about 22% of the prison population [53]. The current Irish prison population also tend to be serving relatively short prison sentences. About half of the population are serving sentences of under 18 months and this is twice the equivalent rate for England and Wales. Indeed, 51% of all committals to prison under sentence are for periods of under 6 months and only 27% for periods of over one year. Given the preponderance of short terms of imprisonment it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Irish prisoners also have more extensive criminal records with close to half of the prison population having more than 10 previous convictions compared with only 23% of the prison population in England and Wales.

One fact exemplifies the extraordinary level of strain on the Irish prison system and the unusual manner in which it operates. This is the comparison between England and Wales and Ireland with respect to the ratio of sentenced prisoners committed to prison and the number of prison places available to hold them. In England and Wales, where prison accommodation is under considerable pressure, there are on average 2.15 sentenced prisoners committed to prison every year for each available prison place [64]. In Ireland the equivalent figure is 3.3 sentenced prisoners for each available prison place. Much of the enormous gap between the two countries can be explained in terms of 1) the shorter sentences of Irish prisoners under sentence of immediate custody, 2) the larger number of fine-defaulters, who will spend only a very short time in prison, amongst Irish committals to prison, and 3) the extensive use of early release in Ireland and the consequent low, average effective sentence length for many categories of offender. Irish male offenders are in law expected to serve three-quarters of the sentence length handed down by the court but many of them effectively serve

less than half of this period and some less than a quarter of the sentence handed down by the court.

These facts present a confusing picture of sentencing practice and of the implementation of sentencing that amounts to a virtually impenetrable labyrinth. To help decipher this complex picture, it is helpful to draw a distinction between the detention rate and the imprisonment rate. Detention rate refers to the number of people imprisoned at any one time per 100000 capita of the population, while imprisonment rate refers to the number of people sent to prison per 100000 capita in the course of one year. In other words, the detention rate refers to the stock or the resident population in the prison system at any one time and imprisonment rate refers to the flow or throughput of prisoners over the period of a year.

To understand the use of imprisonment in Ireland it is necessary to attend to both rates. It is necessary to examine who is committed to prison as well as who stays in prison. These are two very distinct groups, mainly as a result of the curious use of remand in custody in Ireland, the large proportion of relatively short sentences handed down by the courts, the large proportion of fine-defaulters amongst those committed to prison under sentence, and the extensive use of the early release mechanism. The large majority of committals to prison are either remands or other categories that generally spend only a very short time in prison. This large majority of committals forms a relatively small minority of the prison population at any one time.

The most common rate used in international comparisons is the detention rate. This is understandable because the detention rate is, in a sense, more definitive since it refers to the actual use of incarceration rather than the intended use as expressed in the decisions of the court. Ireland's aggregate detention rate (ie. the detention rate including all types of person held in custody) is currently about 70 prisoners per 100000 head of population.

It should be born in mind, however, that two countries with the same detention rate can have very different imprisonment rates and thus be making very different use of imprisonment. One prison system with a detention rate of 70 per 100000 might have a relatively stable population because it is composed mainly of long-term prisoners, while another might have a highly transient population because of the rapid turnover of numerous short-term prisoners. The term bifurcation [82] has recently been applied to prison systems that exhibit a growing polarisation of their prison population into two distinct groups of long-term prisoners and very short-term prisoners. From the evidence adduced in this study it is clear that the Irish system can be properly characterised as bifurcated. Indeed, in the Irish case there has been both a marked increase over recent years in the pool of very long term prisoners (especially sex offenders) and also a dramatic increase in the number of prisoners spending a very short period in prison.



Recent studies [52, 53] show that the Irish detention rate of 70 per 100000 of general population is moderate by international comparison. Ireland was recently placed 25th lowest of 29 Council of Europe countries with respect to aggregate detention rate and second lowest in the detention rate for remand prisoners only. However, this is a misleading picture of the Irish use of imprisonment and for a more complete picture it is essential to look at imprisonment rates as well as detention rates and to isolate sentenced from remand rates. When this is done a very different view of the Irish use of imprisonment emerges.

In fact, in 1992, Ireland imprisoned, that is sent to prison, a greater proportion of its citizens than any other country in the Council of Europe. This is to say the use of incarceration by the Irish courts is seen to be extremely high, if we concentrate on the numbers sent to prison rather than on the numbers held in prison at any one time. The imprisonment rate (sometimes also termed the committal rate) in Ireland was 328 per 100000. This was more than twice the rate in France and Italy and four times the rate in Greece and Turkey.

Forty-seven percent of the Irish committals to prison were for remand. Since in most other countries the proportion of remand committals is higher than this Irish figure (for example 79% of French and 85% of Italian committals to prison were remands), it follows that the committal rate under sentence of imprisonment in Ireland is also amongst the highest in Europe and, indeed, that the differences between Ireland and most other countries, when comparison is restricted to sentenced prisoners only, will even more emphatically indicate Ireland's relatively heavy reliance on imprisonment as a sanction.

Indeed, the Irish imprisonment rate for convicted, sentenced persons in 1992 was 174 per 100000. This compared with only 34 per 100000 in France, 24 in Italy, 12 in Portugal, and 90 in the Netherlands. These are remarkable differences and demonstrate a comparatively very heavy use of the sanction of imprisonment by the Irish courts. The only country with a higher imprisonment under sentence rate than Ireland was Norway, at 176 per 100000, but in that jurisdiction there is a policy of very short-term, weekend imprisonments for minor offences and this greatly inflates the imprisonment rate.

The enigma of the Irish use of imprisonment, then, lies in the conjunction of these two sets of superficially conflicting facts. First, there is the irrefutable evidence of relatively frequent resort to imprisonment as a sanction and second there is the manifest reality of a moderate aggregate rate of detention. In other words, there is a remarkable incongruence between the low size of the prison population and the high number of people sent to prison every year. These apparently conflicting statistical pictures can be reconciled and understood, if one focuses on the detention rate for sentenced prisoners alone and if one appreciates the exceptionally important role in

Ireland of various filters that operate so as to exclude certain categories of those committed to prison from the actual prison population by passing them through the prison system very swiftly.

The rapid turnover of remand prisoners in the Irish system accounts for a substantial part of the difference. While 47% of the flow into prison is made up of remand prisoners they occupy less than 10% of prison places. The remand committal to remand detention ratio is much greater in Ireland than in most other prison systems because in Ireland many remands are quickly released on production of bail or after a successful appeal to the High Court, following a refusal of bail. Because such a large number of remand committals take up so little prison space there is a very substantial reduction when moving from the aggregate statistic for imprisonment per 100000 to the aggregate statistic for detention per 100000. It should be noted, however, that there is every prospect that this situation will change in the near future when the legislation implementing the bail amendment to the Constitution comes into force. This legislation will make custody for the full period pending trial more probable and thus impact significantly on the aggregate detention rate.

However, when we disaggregate the detention rate to separate out sentenced prisoners, we find that, in 1992, the detention rate for sentenced prisoners in Ireland was about 63 per 100000. This is considerably higher than the equivalent rate for France (52) and Italy (41), both of which countries had a substantially higher aggregate detention rate than Ireland. It is also much closer to the equivalent rates for England and Wales and Portugal (both 69) whose aggregate detention rates were much higher than Ireland's. In other words, the moderately low aggregate detention rate for Ireland is a combination of a very low remand detention rate and quite a high sentenced detention rate.

However, the discrepancy between the very high Irish aggregate imprisonment rate and the moderately low Irish aggregate detention rate is not fully explained by the fact that the short average stay of remands disguises a relatively high detention rate for sentenced prisoners. For example, while the Irish imprisonment rate for sentenced offenders per 100000 of the general population is much higher than that in both England and Wales and Portugal, the Irish detention rate for sentenced prisoners is still, as we have seen, lower than in those countries.

The remaining difference is partly explained by the greater prevalence in Ireland of short sentences of imprisonment than in England and Wales and Portugal (over 70% of all Irish sentences are for under 1 year and over 50% for under 6 months). In addition and probably more importantly, the remaining difference is partly explained by the greater use in Ireland — in comparison with all other European countries — of early releases propelled by pressure on accommodation rather than by sentence management or resocialisation principles. In short, if Irish prisoners were held for

close to the full term of their sentences, the sentenced detention rate in Ireland would be far higher than the present high rate and easily one of the highest, indeed probably the highest in Europe.

Another crucial dimension to this problem not touched on so far is the relation, in Ireland and other countries, between the use of imprisonment and the incidence and seriousness of crime. When comparing rates of imprisonment under sentence per 100000 capita between countries, there is an implicit assumption that discovered differences reflect different levels of use of imprisonment in comparable crime environments. This is, of course, not the case. Levels of crime and the seriousness of the crime problem vary considerably from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and also between areas within a jurisdiction.

One way of addressing this issue is to look at comparative detention and imprisonment rates per 10000 crimes rather than per 100000 capita in various jurisdictions. The results of such an analysis are predictable in the Irish case, since it is well known that Irish crime rates tend to be low in comparison with those for neighbouring and similar countries. Indeed, the aggregate detention rate per 10000 recorded crimes in England and Wales is about 150, in France 170, in the Netherlands 65, and in New Zealand 80 [56]. The Irish rate is far higher than all of these, standing at about 230 per 10000.

Following the logic of the previous argument about the differences between aggregate imprisonment and detention rates and imprisonment and detention rates for sentenced prisoners only, it is clear that, if the latter rates were calculated per 10000 recorded crimes, they would place Ireland in an even more extreme position as a country which very frequently resorts to the sanction of imprisonment in what is, comparatively speaking, a relatively favourable crime climate.

There are further clues to the nature of Ireland's exceptionally heavy use of imprisonment in other findings made in this study. For example, it was found that, in 1993, 25% of all committals under sentence in Ireland were for motoring offences. Only 3% of committals under sentence in Ireland were for crimes of violence against the person, excluding sex offences and assaults. The comparable figure in England and Wales was 9%. Also in comparison with England and Wales, a larger proportion both of the Irish prison population and of those committed to prison in Ireland have been convicted for crimes against property. Furthermore, about 35% of people committed under sentence in Ireland were committed in default of fine payment. In England and Wales in the 5 years to 1993, fine defaulters constituted only about 26% of all receptions into prison under sentence. Less than 6% of Dutch sentenced receptions to prison were fine-defaulters in 1993 [64].

These various facts both delineate and offer some explanation for the heavy reliance on imprisonment by the Irish courts. There is undoubtedly substantial overlap between the groups of motoring offenders and fine-defaulters sent to prison, but that one third of all committals to prison are fine-defaulters and that about a quarter are motoring offenders goes some way towards explaining how Ireland has such a high rate of imprisonment under sentence despite its relatively low rates of crime. Ireland also has a relatively large proportion of property offenders in its prison population and, with the exception of the recently emerging large pool of sex offenders, a comparatively small proportion of serious offenders against the person with violence. This suggests that property offenders are more likely to receive a custodial sentence in Ireland than elsewhere.

Finally, the comparative use of non-custodial sanctions in different jurisdictions can help illuminate the issue of Ireland's use of imprisonment. In particular, community service orders and probation supervision and similar approaches are relevant. In 1994 in England and Wales, there were 111000 such community-based disposals arising from criminal proceedings, compared with a total of 68500 sentences to custody [60]. Community-based disposals were, therefore, 160% of sentences to prison. In Ireland, on the other hand, in 1993 (the latest year for which figures are available) there were 4020 community-based disposals, including community service orders, probation supervision, and 1251 cases of supervision during deferment of penalty, compared with 6585 sentences of imprisonment. The community-based disposals were, therefore, only 61% of sentences to prison in Ireland. This comparison suggests, especially in the context of higher crime rates and a generally more serious profile of offences committed by the prison population in England and Wales, a much greater readiness to use alternative sanctions there than in Ireland. The area of non-custodial, community-based sanctions would appear to be seriously under-developed Ireland.

The many apparent anomalies in the Irish use of imprisonment, when compared with other jurisdictions, should be thoroughly investigated since they may point to the need for legislative, penal, sentencing, and social reforms. In particular, the very large number of juveniles sentenced to prison (or a place of detention) in Ireland suggests that we might benefit from a careful examination of how other jurisdictions deal with offenders in this age bracket. Given the important role, confirmed by the analyses in the present study, of the age of first imprisonment in shaping a future criminal career, this is an area of considerable relevance and urgency. Indeed, it might be argued, and it would not be inconsistent with the findings of this study, that the imprisonment of juveniles often has a criminogenic rather than a deterrent effect.

Clearly, finding alternative, non-custodial methods for dealing with juvenile offenders provides the most promise for reducing both the moderately high Irish sentenced detention rate, ie. the convicted prison population, and the extremely high Irish rate of imprisonment under sentence, ie. Ireland's heavy reliance on imprisonment as a

sanction. This is the case since juveniles currently constitute about a third of the prison population and about 30% of those sent to prison under sentence. More frequent use of non-custodial sanctions for juvenile offenders would impact on detention and imprisonment rates but might also be more effective than the current reliance on imprisonment in preventing future involvement in crime.

There is also considerable scope for reducing the use of imprisonment as a sanction by finding methods to divert fine-defaulters from prison. After all, this group, which constitutes over a third of those sentenced to prison in Ireland, were initially adjudged not to deserve a custodial sanction. More generally and especially in the area of relatively minor property offending, there would appear to be substantial potential for expansion of community-based sanctions and other alternatives to imprisonment for adults as well as juveniles.

These observations on the use of imprisonment in Ireland only touch in an exploratory way upon this complex topic and the implications of the present analysis must be regarded as at best tentative. It is evident, however, that this is a question of central importance that requires much further study. This view is underscored by present trends which point unambiguously to an ever-increasing prison population. Commitments to prison under sentence have been steadily increasing (by about 70% in the years between 1986 and 1993) and sentence lengths for certain categories of offender, most notably sex offenders, have also been increasing significantly. Furthermore, the bail amendment to the Constitution holds out the prospect of a much larger prison population of remand prisoners. There is also considerable political and popular support for the ending of early releases except as part of a genuine plan for the positive management of sentences and for the explicit purpose of rehabilitation and resocialization. This will also entail a large expansion in prison places.

All of these trends inevitably mean that Ireland's detention rate will in future more accurately reflect its unusually high imprisonment rate. While the Irish courts' comparatively heavy reliance on imprisonment (in a generally more favourable crime environment than elsewhere in Europe) is presently obscured by the various filtering processes that operate as a check on the prison population, it is set to become far more obvious as the role of these filters is diminished and, as a result, the prison population swells. The time is now ripe for a detailed and thorough investigation of sentencing practice in the Irish courts and for a reappraisal of the principles of sentencing and, possibly, a repositioning of imprisonment on the sentencers' scale of punishments.

With regard to Mountjoy Prison specifically, there is real hope that some of its difficulties will be appreciably alleviated by the forthcoming opening of a specialised remand prison of about 400 places at Clover Hill, adjacent to Wheatfield. Presently, remand prisoners constitute 18% of the Mountjoy prison population and about half

of the annual committals to the prison. If Mountjoy was no longer used as a remand committal prison, pressure on the prison's accommodation and services would be greatly reduced and there would be considerable potential for improvement to the regime.

However, there would still be excessive demand on the available accommodation in Mountjoy Prison, and a continuing large flow of very short-term prisoners through the prison, such as debtors, fine-defaulters, those in breach of bail bonds and barring orders, and those in contempt of court. There is a strong case for housing all these types of usually very short-term prisoners in a separate prison, perhaps along with people sentenced for periods of 3 months or less. Such a prison would not require maximum levels of security nor would it need extensive facilities for educational, occupational, or rehabilitative programmes. Mountjoy Prison could then be allowed to develop in a more organised and orderly fashion as a prison with a relatively stable population of offenders with moderately long sentences. In these circumstances, more attention and resources could be devoted to the prison's other serious problems such as drug abuse and to rehabilitative and educational goals.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### Survey of Mountjoy Prisoners 1996

### Questionnaire for Prisoner Interview

\* = open-ended question — otherwise questions have coded response categories.

1. Questionnaire Number:
2. Date Of Birth
3. Date Of Interview
4. Committal Date
5. Sentence/s (Note If Consecutive Or More Than One Or Remand)
6. Release Date
7. Offence/s
8. Marital Status Single \_\_\_ Presently Married \_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_  
Widowed \_\_\_ Legally Separated \_\_\_ Deserted \_\_\_ Informally  
Separated \_\_\_ Current Common Law \_\_\_ Past Common Law \_\_\_
9. No. of Children If Any \_\_\_ Ages Of Children \_\_\_
10. With Whom Do You Have Children?
11. Where Do Children Reside At Present?
12. What Is/Will Be Your Involvement In The Upbringing Of Your Children?\*
13. Current Address Area
14. Place of Origin
15. Main Place of Upbringing To Age 10
16. When Free With Whom Do You Live?
17. Residential Property Owned or Rented or Other?
18. Is It A House/Flat/Hostel/Mobile Home/Other?
- 18b. Where Will You Go On Release?
19. Is Your Father Alive? ——— Year Of Death /Age Of Respondent
20. Is Your Mother Alive? ——— Year Of Death /Age Of Respondent

21. Were Or Are Your Mother And Father Separated? ————— When
22. Did You Have A Non-Biological Parent Or Guardian, When, And In What Circumstances? Including Time In Care Or Reformatory\*
23. Usual Occupation Of Father
24. Was He Usually Employed?
25. Usual Occupation Of Mother
26. Was She Usually Employed?
27. Which If Any First Degree Relatives Have Been Imprisoned?
28. No. Of Siblings — In Order — With Gender And Your Position 1: 2: 3: 4: 5: 6: 7: 8: 9: 10: etc.
29. At What Age Did You Cease Full-Time Education?
- 29b. Were You Playing Truant Much Before That Date?
30. Highest Level School Or College Attended —————
31. Educational Qualifications Gained\*
32. Work Training Experience — Type And Duration \*
33. Have You Ever Been Employed?\*
34. Were You Employed Prior To Committal?
35. How Many Paid Jobs Have You Had?
36. How Long Did Your Longest Job Last ?
37. What proportion of your time since you were 15 have you spent  
In Prison?  
In Education?  
In Employment?  
Unemployed?
38. What has been your Most Skilful Paid Employment?
39. Number Of Convictions
40. Number Of Imprisonments On Conviction
41. Number Of Imprisonments On Remand
42. What Prisons/Detention Centres Have You Served Time In
43. On A Criminal Conviction Have You Been Punished By Fine \_\_\_\_ Probation Act \_\_\_\_ Probation Supervision \_\_\_\_ Community Service \_\_\_\_ Suspended Sentence \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_
44. Have You Ever Committed Crime While On Bail ?
45. Have You Ever Committed Crime While On Temporary Release?
46. Did You Commit Crime When Last On TR Or Bail?
47. Do You Currently Share A Cell?
48. Would You Prefer A Single Cell?
49. Roughly How Many Crimes Have You Committed That You Were Never Charged Or Convicted For?
50. How Likely Is It That You Will Commit Crime Again After Your Release

\_\_\_\_\_

Very Likely

\_\_\_\_\_

Quite Likely

\_\_\_\_\_

Quite Unlikely

\_\_\_\_\_

Very Unlikely



50b. Realistically, How Likely Do You Think It Is That You'll Be Back In Prison At Some Time In The Future

\_\_\_\_\_

Very Likely      Fairly Likely      Not Very Likely      Not At All Likely

51. How Old Were You On Your First Conviction ?
52. How Old Were You On Your First Detention/Imprisonment ?
53. Have You Been On Report This Time ?
54. What Breaches?\*
55. What Punishment?\*
56. Have You Ever Been In A Strip Cell \_\_\_\_ Padded Cell \_\_\_\_ Medical Or Separation Unit Cell \_\_\_\_ Close Confinement \_\_\_\_
57. Have You On This Imprisonment Been In A Strip Cell \_\_\_\_ Padded Cell \_\_\_\_ Medical Or Separation Unit Cell \_\_\_\_ Close Confinement \_\_\_\_
- 57b. How Long Were You Locked Up In Your Cell Yesterday?
58. Have You Any Serious Chronic Illness Or Disability?
59. Have You Undergone An Hiv Test (Many/When Last/In Prison)?
60. Have You Any Serious Infectious Condition \_\_\_\_ HIV \_\_\_\_ If Yes Stage \_\_\_\_ Hepatitis C \_\_\_\_ Other\*
61. This Imprisonment Have You Seen A Psychiatrist? Psychologist? Other Therapists?
62. How Soon After Committal Were You Medically Examined By A Doctor?
63. How Many Times Have You Seen A Doctor?
64. How Many Times Have You Seen A Probation And Welfare Officer?
- 64b. Have You Ever Discussed Why You Committed Your Offence With a Welfare Officer Or Other Staff?
65. Have You Ever Been An Inpatient In A Psychiatric Hospital? Diagnosis?\*
66. Have You Ever Stayed In The CMH? This Imprisonment?
67. Have You Ever Made A Suicide Attempt? No Of Times?
68. Was It Serious? Method?
69. Have You Made A Suicide Attempt On This Imprisonment?
70. Are You Presently On Prescribed Medication?
71. What?\*
72. Why?\*
73. Have You Ever Been Physically Assaulted In Prison By Another Prisoner? Or Staff Member?
74. Have You Ever Been Sexually Assaulted In Prison By Another Prisoner? Or Staff Member?
75. If Yes To Either What Action (Complaint) Did You Take?
76. If None Why ?
- 76b. Do You Feel Safe From Being Injured Or Bullied By Other Prisoners?
77. Are You Generally Happy With The Food You Receive Here?

78. Describe The Prison Work You Do.\* Including Number Of Hours Working In Last Week
79. If Currently Without Occupation Why?\*
80. If Currently Without Occupation Have You Been Offered Occupation?
81. Can You Read And Write?
82. If Not (To A Satisfactory Level) Are You Receiving Instruction Currently?
83. If Not Why Not?
84. Describe Your Use Of The Education Service Including Library/P.E. Including Number Of Hours Spent In Classes In Last Week\*
85. What Are The Most Inadequate Services In The Prison?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

86. Are There Any Aspects Of Prison Life That You Find Upsetting Or Irritating?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

87. What Services Or Facilities Would You Most Like To See Provided?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

87. Have You Been On Temporary Release On Any Sentence?

88. Have You Been Out On Temporary Release While On This Sentence ?

89. Have You Been In Any Other Prison While On This Sentence?

90. Which Prisons?

91. Are You Aware Of The Role Of The Visiting Committee?

92. Have You Ever Been To Them?

93. Do You Think They Provide A Useful Service For Prisoners?

94. How Satisfied Are You With The Channels Available To You To Make Complaints

\_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

\_\_\_\_\_

Satisfied

\_\_\_\_\_

Not Satisfied

95. How Satisfied Are You With The Response Of These Channels To The Complaints Made By Prisoners?

\_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

\_\_\_\_\_

Satisfied

\_\_\_\_\_

Not Satisfied

96. How Well Are Your Family/Social/Personal Problems Handled In Prison?

97. Who Helps You With These Problems?

98. Have You Had Visits In The Last Month?

99. Have You Had Letters In The Last Month?

100. How Often Do You Get A Shower?

101. On The Whole How Do You Feel You Are Treated By The Prison Officers In This Prison

\_\_\_\_\_

Well

\_\_\_\_\_

Badly

\_\_\_\_\_

Neither Well Nor Badly

- 101b. Do You Smoke?

- 101c. When Free Do You Drink Alcohol?
- 101d. In An Average Week How Much?
- 101e. Have You Ever Used Cannabis? How Much?

- |      | A Little  | Regularly | Daily |
|------|---|-----------|-------|
| 102. | Have You Used Cannabis In Prison This Time?   |           |       |
| 103. | What Age When You First Used Cannabis?  |           |       |
| 104. | Have You Ever Used Opiates/Heroin? Which?   |           |       |
| 105. | By Mouth? Smoking?Intramuscular? Intravenous? Snorting?   |           |       |
| 106. | When Did You First Use Heroin/Opiates?  |           |       |
| 107. | When Did You Last Use? In Prison?   |           |       |
| 108. | How Often Do You Use? On This Sentence?   |           |       |
| 109. | By What Method?   |           |       |
| 110. | If By Syringe How Is It Obtained?   |           |       |
| 111. | Have You Ever Used Cocaine? Crack Cocaine? Amphetamines/Speed? LSD? Barbiturates? Glue/Volatiles? Cough Mixtures? Tranquillizers? Ecstasy? Other Drugs?*                |           |       |
| 112. | Have You Used In Prison This Time Cocaine? Crack Cocaine? Amphetamines/Speed? LSD? Barbiturates? Glue/Volatiles? Cough Mixtures? Tranquillizers? Ecstasy? Other Drugs?* |           |       |
| 113. | Any Time In Cocaine? Crack Cocaine? Amphetamines/Speed? LSD? Barbiturates? Glue/Volatiles? Cough Mixtures? Tranquillizers? Ecstasy? Other Drugs?*                       |           |       |
| 114. | Primary Drug Of Misuse? Primary Methodof use?   |           |       |
| 115. | Duration of use? Was use Continuous/Sporadic?   |           |       |
| 116. | Normal Source Of Primary Drug/Other drugs?  |           |       |
| 117. | Normal Source Of Primary Drug/Other drugs In Prison?  |           |       |
| 118. | Describe Use Of Secondary Drugs *   |           |       |
| 119. | Describe Frequency Of Drug Use In Past Month  |           |       |
| 120. | Describe Frequency Of Use In Last Month Before Imprisonment   |           |       |
| 121. | Describe Frequency Of Use In Period Of Greatest Dependency  |           |       |
| 122. | Have You Ever Overdosed?  |           |       |
| 123. | How Many Times Have You Gone Through Detoxification?  |           |       |
| 124. | How Many Times In Prison?   |           |       |
| 125. | Were you Detoxified This Time On Entry To Prison?   |           |       |
| 126. | Describe Periods Of Abstinence Since You First Used Drugs*  |           |       |
| 127. | When You Last Left Prison How Long Was It Till You Took Drugs?  |           |       |
| 128. | Would You Want To Stay In A Drug Free Prison Unit?  |           |       |
| 129. | Do You Intend To Give Up Using Drugs  |           |       |
| 130. | But Do You Really Think You Will Never Use Drugs Again *  |           |       |
| 131. | Have You Suffered Any Drugs Related Illnesses   |           |       |

132. Describe Your Experience Of Treatment —  
Maintenance    Residential    Group Therapy  
Self-Help    Medical/Psychiatric    Other
133. Have Any Treatments Been Of Value To You?\*
134. Is There Any Connection Between Your Drug Use And The Crime You Commit?
135. Are Any Close Relatives Drug Misusers?
136. Are There Any Services Or Facilities You Would Like To See Provided In The Prison For Your Drug Problem?\*
137. What Are Your Plans For Release?\*
138. Will You Have A Job To Go To?

## Appendix 2

# Summary of Findings of 1986 Survey of Mountjoy Prisoners

The average daily population of Mountjoy Prison at the time of the survey was approximately 550. A one-fifth representative sample was taken of 110 prisoners. The following data are derived from 95 successfully completed interviews. The non-response rate was 13.6 percent.

The average age of the offenders was 27.25 years with a range from 18 to 65 years. More than half of the sample were 25 or younger and more than three-quarters were 30 or younger. Older offenders tended to be in receipt of shorter sentences. When certain 'less criminal' offences are excluded, which mainly concerned motoring and debt, and for which older offenders tend to be very frequently sentenced, the over 30 years age group are sentenced to imprisonment at a rate 4 times less than would be expected on the basis of their share of the general population.

The marriage rate for the offenders was less than half that which could be expected on the basis of general population figures — 74% of the sample had never been married. However, 46% of the offenders reported having children, including a third of the single men; but only half of these men lived with their families when free.

A little more than three-quarters of the offenders come from Dublin and about half from 5 particular postal districts in Dublin. With regard to origin, the sample was highly homogeneous being overwhelmingly Irish and of urban background even when from outside Dublin. About 10% of the sample normally lived alone and 55% with their parents — in the case of about a third of this latter group the parents owned their own home. However, while census figures show us that 77% of the population live in owner-occupied homes, 72% of these of offenders lived in rented accommodation.

The offenders come from unusually large families with an average of over 8 children. One third come from families with more than 10 children. No significant birth order effects were found. This group of offenders had experienced a much higher rate of family breakdown, before they were 15 years of age, through separation or desertion but not through death, than would normally be expected in Ireland. However, this

level of early family disruption was very low by comparison with British and American findings.

Fifty-seven percent of the offenders had dropped out of school before they were 15. While 71% of the general population stay on at school after 15 years, only 11% of this sample did so. Only 14% of the offenders had completed an apprenticeship or obtained some other clearly useful vocational training or qualification. For 74% of the offenders their "best ever" job was in the lowest two socio-economic categories, a figure which can be compared with a rate of 31% for the general male population. Almost 80% of the sample had been unemployed prior to the current imprisonment. Indeed, more than two thirds of the offenders had been unemployed for more than half of the time since they were 15 years. On the other hand, about two thirds of the sample had held one particular job for at least a year and one third for at least 3 years. Also, about 1 in 4 of the offenders had held a skilled or white collar position.

Seventy-seven percent of the offenders' fathers were in the lowest 2 socio-economic classes. However, the fathers of about 22% of the offenders had normally been in steady, white-collar or skilled manual employment. It is estimated that 36% of the sample are likely to have come from homes characterised by relatively extreme, economic hardship due either to the absence of the father or less frequently the father's chronic unemployment.

Eleven percent of the Mountjoy Prison male sample were remand prisoners. The average sentence length for the sentenced offenders was slightly more than 3 years, but the most common sentence length was 6 months (14% of sample). Seven percent of sentenced offenders were serving sentences of less than 6 months, 20% sentences of 6 months or less, 54% sentences of at least 2 years and 20% sentences of at least 5 years.

Offence categories ran the gamut from petty larceny and motoring misdemeanours to rape and homicide. The three most common offence categories were Robbery (18% of sentenced sample), Burglary (12%) and Road Traffic Offences (12%). The average sentence length for the various categories of offence ranged from .7 of a year for Road Traffic Act Offences, through 3.3 years for Misuse of Drugs Act Offences and 5 years for sexual offences, to 11 years for homicide. However there was considerable variation within each category, for example for Homicide, including murder and manslaughter, sentences ranged between 3 years and life.

Almost half of the whole sample had been in Mountjoy for less than 3 months and only 10% had been there for 2 years or more. The proportion of a group of offenders, with at least a year left to serve increased the longer that particular group had already spent in prison. Twice as many (60%) of those already in prison for 2 years than of those in prison for less than 3 months (30%) still had at least a year to serve.

The number of convictions received by the sample ranged from 0 to 93, but the average figure was 15.5 convictions. Three-quarters of the offenders had received at least 6 unrelated convictions and more than half had received at least 12. The offenders had, on average, received 10.4 separate sentences of imprisonment per capita. This represented a total of 9.25 years, to which the average member of the sample had been sentenced. On average each offender had received 5 non-custodial penalties for convictions but had been imprisoned for 2 out of every 3 of his convictions.

Fifteen percent of the sample had been detained in a reformatory or similar centre before they were 16 years, 58% had served at least one sentence in St. Patrick's Institution, 28% had spent some-time in the Training Unit and 34% had at least one period of custody in an Open Centre. Of those who had been in prison before, 58% had some experience of a relatively liberal regime in either the Training Unit or an Open Centre. Exactly 10% of the sample had been imprisoned in the U.K., but none further afield.

Thirty-four percent of the convicted sample members, had received their first conviction before they were 15 years, and 80% while they were still teenagers, while the average age was 16.9 years. On the other hand, an appreciable minority, amounting to 8% had received their first conviction when 25 years or older. The average age of first imprisonment was 18.2 years with 66% of the sample having been imprisoned whilst still a teenager. A little more than one third of the offenders were detained or imprisoned on their very first conviction. However, the average period of lag between a first conviction and a first imprisonment (or detention) was 2.2 years. Thirteen percent of the sample had a lag of more than five years between the 2 events, but this group cannot, in terms of their later criminal history, be distinguished as less criminal or as more successful criminals.

Forty percent of the offenders had a first degree relative who had been in prison. Overwhelmingly, these relatives tended to be brothers. Thirty-seven percent of the sample had brothers who had been in prison. Only 7% had a father who had been imprisoned. Altogether about a quarter of all the brothers of the offenders had been in prison. What is more, offenders with imprisoned brothers had considerably more convictions than offenders without such brothers.

About a quarter of the sample had been granted some form of temporary release during their current sentence. This proportion rose to about one half of all those who had been in the prison for at least 6 months. Those receiving temporary release could not be clearly differentiated from those not receiving it.

A little more than a third of the offenders had faced disciplinary charges during their current sentence. Sixteen percent of the total sample had been punished by loss of remission time. The proportion of offenders who had been in prison for at least 6

months, who had received punishment was, at 57%, considerably higher. Of the total, 31% reported that, at some time in their penal history, they had been confined in isolation and 19% that they had spent time in a padded cell.

Forty percent of the sample described themselves as having no occupation in the prison during the day. However, this figure fell to 19% when only offenders, who had been in the prison for at least 6 months, were examined.

Thirty-one percent of the offenders described themselves as chronically disabled or ill or acutely ill. None, however, reported any clearly life-threatening disease, although three were known to be HIV positive. Eleven percent were currently in receipt of prescribed medication for a physical ailment. However, 24% of the sample were receiving psychotropic drugs on prescription — with slightly more than 1 in 5 of all offenders receiving sleeping pills. Combining the 2 groups we find that about one third of the sample were currently prescribed medication.

Eighteen percent of the sample had been an in-patient in a psychiatric hospital outside the prison system. Eleven of the offenders who had been a psychiatric in-patient were not currently prescribed psychotropic medication. Altogether, including the 1 in 4 of the sample who had attended the prison psychiatrist, 41% of the offenders had some experience of professional psychiatric attention.

Eighteen percent of the offenders claimed to have made a serious suicide attempt, including 4 who reported having attempted suicide in prison. In addition 6 other offenders claimed to have made a suicide bid without actually intending to take their own lives. Nine of the 16 offenders claiming a serious suicide attempt had never received any professional psychiatric attention.

Eighty-seven percent of the offenders drank alcohol, 80% were currently smokers, 59% had used cannabis and 37% had used drugs other than cannabis. Thirty-one percent of the sample had a history of persistent, serious 'hard' drug addiction. Of the 29 in this latter group, 27 were users of opiates, mainly heroin and dicanol, and all but one had used drugs intravenously. Three members of the sample were known to be HIV positive and it was estimated that at least three others from the sample were also likely to be HIV positive.

Twelve of the group, who had been daily users of opiates, had been abstinent from drugs for at least 1 month before their current imprisonment. Half of this abstaining group had in fact been abstinent for more than 1 year before imprisonment and could be classified as 'drug free'. Only 5 out of 12 of the abstaining group and 1 out of 6 of the 'drug free' group had been exposed to formal therapy for drug abuse, other than the detoxification process.



Thirty-nine out of 95 offenders had had some kind of psychiatric attention, a further nine not included in the psychiatric group reported having seriously attempted suicide, and a further thirteen not included in either group had been a serious hard drug addict. This means that almost two thirds of the sample would appear to have serious personal and emotional problems apart that is from their criminal behaviour. This number could probably be increased if one examined the area of marital and other relationships and also included alcohol problems which have been shown to be rife in the prison population.

The results of Monaghan's survey of female prisoners indicate that this group are at least as heterogeneous as the male prisoners in Mountjoy. The female prisoner population spans a very large age range, from teenagers to late middle age women. The female prison population is also highly diverse with respect to the type of offender held. Offence types cover the whole spectrum from minor motoring offences to murder, although the vast majority of cases involve theft particularly larceny. Experienced and inured offenders rub shoulders with naive, first offenders, but in general there is a high level of recidivism and most female prisoners have been in prison on several separate occasions. Sentences lengths are also very varied in the female prison population, though short sentences predominant to an even greater extent than is the case with males, since they are the majority of sentences for the 'stock' as well as the 'throughput' of female prisoners.

The female prisoners were found to exhibit most of the personal problems seen in the male prisoner sample but to an even more serious extent. The rate of hard drug abuse, of suicidal behaviour, of psychiatric caseness, and of the use of psychotropic medication were all considerably higher than the equivalent rates for male prisoners. A large majority of female prisoners, and much more than was the case with males, were from the lowest socio-economic grouping. The women prisoners also had a poorer educational and employment record than the male prisoners. In addition almost 40% of the female prisoners had children and it would appear that only a minority of them could depend on the assistance of their childrens' fathers.

## Appendix 3

# Comparison of Respondents and Non-Respondents

There was a total of 16 prisoners from the selected sample of 124 who either refused to co-operate with the study (10 prisoners) or were not available for interview (6). All of the latter group were either attending court and released from the court or were released by the prison on full temporary release before they could be interviewed. There might be some concern that this subgroup of non-respondents differed in important respects from the majority who were interviewed, for example by having more serious offences generally or more sexual offences. In order to investigate this possibility statistical comparison was made between the respondents and non-respondents on a number of variables, using the t-test to search for significant differences.

Only data from the official criminal record for the non-respondents were available. The two groups were of a similar age (28.1 years for non-respondents and 28.3 years for respondents). The current offence types of the non-respondent group were similar to those of the respondent group, ie. mainly larceny, robbery and burglary. None of the non-respondents were in prison for particularly serious offences or for sexual offences with the exception of one prisoner sought in another jurisdiction on a charge of murder. There were no statistically significant differences on any of the criminological and penological variables studied, including current sentence and longest ever sentence. A quarter of the non-respondents were on remand as compared with 17% of the respondent group.

The age of first conviction and the total of sentenced prison time for both groups were very similar (16.6 years for non-respondents and 16.7 years for respondents and 115 months and 112 months, respectively). However, the non-respondents had, on average, approximately 2 more convictions and imprisonments than the respondents (16 for non-respondents and 14 for respondents and 12 and 10, respectively), although this difference was not statistically significant.

These comparisons indicate that there is little in the way of significant differentiation between the non-respondents and the respondents with regard to their criminal careers. It appears reasonable, therefore, to include the non-respondents in the analysis of criminological variables. It also seems reasonable to conclude that the results of the analysis of prisoners' responses to the prisoner questionnaire are not biased to any significant degree by the absence of the non-respondents' responses.

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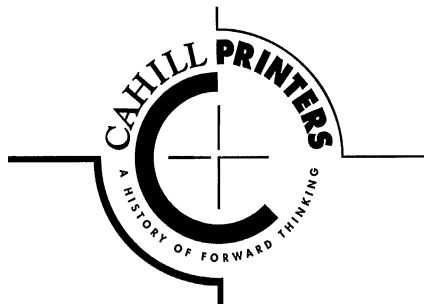
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