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THE EXTENT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN WISCONSIN

Morris G. Caldwell¹

Juvenile delinquency in Wisconsin has increased in seriousness within recent years. Large numbers of delinquent boys and girls have come to the attention of the juvenile courts and other social agencies. Many of these delinquents have been committed to the state industrial schools and reformatories. A large proportion of these juveniles finally graduate from these institutions to the higher levels of crime, and later are sentenced to the state prisons for men or women.

The Wisconsin Survey of Juvenile Delinquency was inaugurated under the leadership of Mr. Frank C. Klode, Director of the State Department of Public Welfare, for the purpose of securing pertinent factual data regarding this problem. He plans to use the data collected on the survey as a basis for a state-wide program of prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency. The survey was completed in 70 counties of the state on January 27, 1941, after approximately five months of intensive field work.²

The survey is primarily concerned with four phases of study: (1) a study of juvenile delinquents; (2) methods of handling juvenile delinquents in the various counties of the state; (3) com-

munity resources available for prevention and treatment; and (4) certain disorganizing influences in community life contributing to juvenile delinquency.

The definition of delinquency used for the purpose of this study is that found in the Wisconsin statutes. However, in order to include those cases coming to the attention of other social agencies, in addition to the courts, the following words were added to the definition: "so that he comes to the attention of a social agency." The revised definition reads as follows:

"The words 'delinquent child' shall mean any child under the age of eighteen years who has violated any law of the state or any county, city, town, or village ordinance; or who by reason of being wayward or habitually disobedient is uncontrolled by his parent, guardian or custodian; or so departs himself as to injure or endanger the morals or health of himself or others, so that he comes to the attention of a social agency."³

The principal social agencies covered by this definition in addition to the courts are: Child welfare agencies, public assistance agencies, probation and parole officers, schools, police and other law enforcing officers, private agencies, private institutions, public health agencies, and other bodies.

¹ Director, Division of Corrections, State Department of Public Welfare, Madison, Wis.

² The field work was supervised by Dr. Morris G. Caldwell, Madison, Wisconsin, and Professor Lloyd V. Ballard, Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin.

³ *Wisconsin Statutes* 48.01(c). The rule of common sense was used in interpreting the statutes. Minor delinquencies such as stealing apples or melons, violating bicycle codes, throwing paint on buildings, and other minor violations were ruled out of the survey.

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MAP 1
LOOSE LEAF OUTLINE MAP

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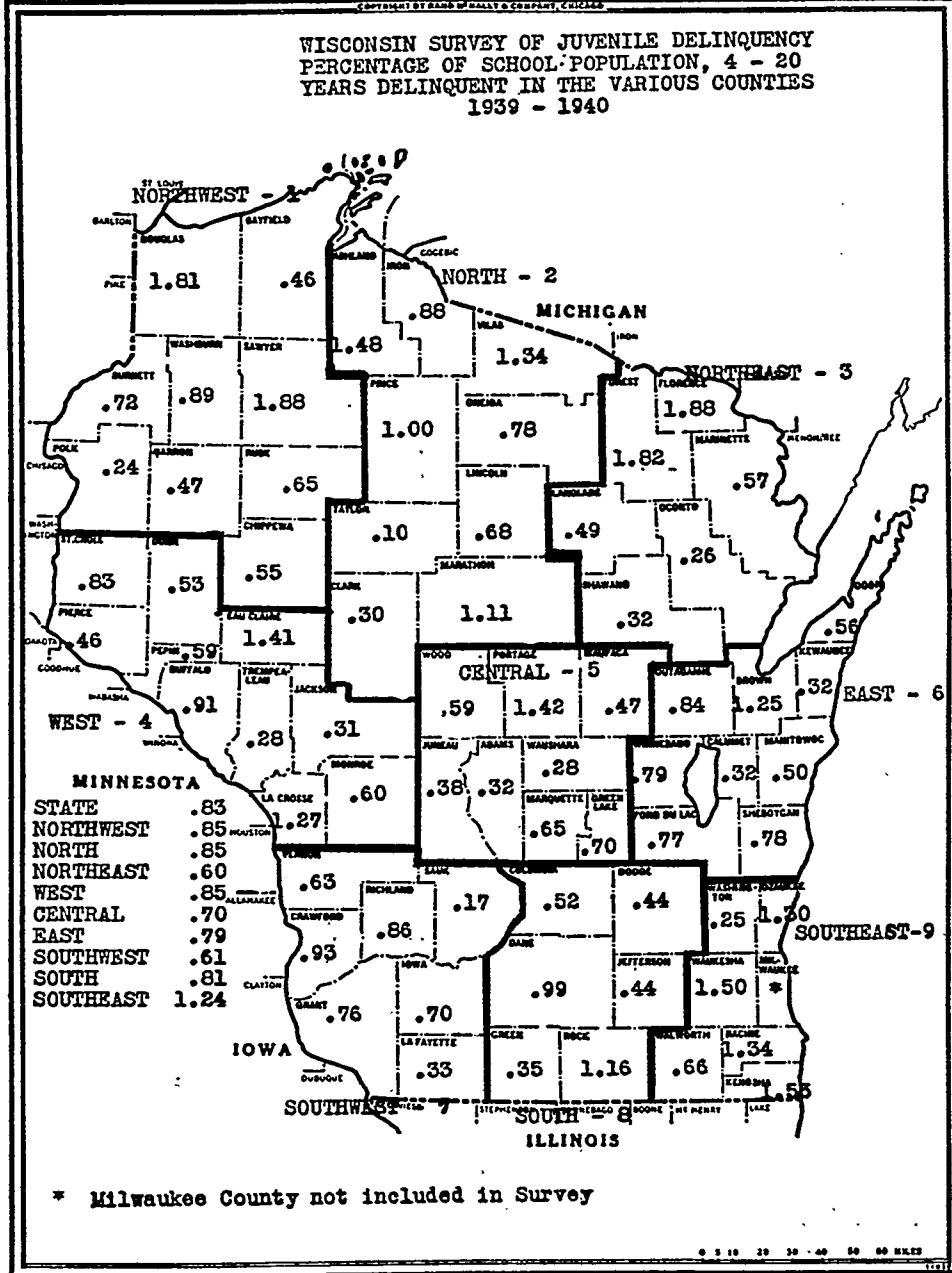


TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ACCORDING TO TYPE OF CASE,
DISTRICT AND COUNTY OF LATEST OFFENSE

Court Cases July 1, 1935—June 30, 1940 and
Non-Court Cases July 1, 1939—June 30, 1940

District and County	Total	Type of Case					
		Court		Non-Court		Cases with Both Records	
		N	P	N	P	N ^a	P ^b
	10,101	5,855	58.0	3,818	37.8	428	4.2
NORTHWEST—1	980	547	55.8	393	40.1	40	4.1
Douglas	474	323	68.1	129	27.2	22	4.7
Bayfield	42	27	64.3	14	33.3	1	2.4
Burnett	40	17	42.5	20	50.0	3	7.5
Washburn	46	13	28.3	33	71.7	..	..
Sawyer	70	6	8.6	64	91.4	..	..
Polk	48	34	70.8	11	22.9	3	6.3
Barron	106	68	64.2	37	34.9	1	.9
Rusk	57	26	45.6	31	54.4	..	..
Chippewa	97	33	34.0	54	55.7	10	10.3
NORTH—2	951	449	47.2	437	46.0	65	6.8
Ashland	180	82	45.5	77	42.8	21	11.7
Iron	52	23	44.2	20	3.8	9	17.3
Vilas	70	50	71.4	19	27.2	1	1.4
Price	90	50	55.5	34	37.8	6	6.7
Oneida	87	63	72.4	24	27.6	..	..
Taylor	25	24	96.0	1	4.0	..	..
Lincoln	75	43	57.3	21	28.0	11	14.7
Marathon	326	94	28.8	215	66.0	17	5.2
Clark	46	20	43.5	26	56.5	..	..
NORTHEAST—3	698	544	77.9	145	20.8	9	1.3
Forest	131	67	51.1	61	46.7	3	2.2
Florence	40	16	40.0	21	52.5	3	7.5
Marinette	290	286	98.6	4	1.4	..	..
Oconto	58	39	67.2	18	31.1	1	1.7
Langlade	78	48	61.5	29	37.2	1	1.3
Shawano	101	88	87.1	12	11.9	1	1.0
WEST—4	1,171	697	59.5	425	36.3	49	4.2
St. Croix	72	26	36.1	46	63.9	..	..
Dunn	50	7	14.0	39	78.0	4	8.0
Pierce	43	23	53.5	19	44.2	1	2.3
Pepin	23	7	30.4	14	60.9	2	8.7
Buffalo	48	16	33.3	28	58.3	4	8.4
Eau Claire	324	198	61.1	100	30.9	26	8.0
Trempealeau	24	14	58.3	4	16.7	6	25.0
Jackson	64	59	92.2	5	7.8	..	..
Monroe	89	65	73.0	21	23.6	3	3.4
La Crosse	434	282	65.0	149	34.3	3	.7
CENTRAL—5	638	391	61.3	218	34.2	29	4.5
Wood	136	98	72.1	34	25.0	4	2.9
Portage	267	141	52.8	112	41.9	14	5.3
Waupaca	109	88	80.7	21	19.3	..	..

^a Number.

^b Percentage.

TABLE I (Continued)

District and County	Total	Type of Case				Cases with Both Records	
		Court		Non-Court		N ^a	P ^b
		N	P	N	P		
CENTRAL—5 (Continued)							
Juneau	34	16	47.0	14	41.2	4	11.8
Adams	17	10	58.8	6	35.3	1	5.9
Waushara	16	12	75.0	4	25.0	..	..
Marquette	21	8	38.1	12	57.1	1	4.8
Green Lake	38	18	47.5	15	39.4	5	13.1
EAST—6	2,059	1,257	61.1	746	36.2	56	2.7
Outagamie	287	124	43.2	150	52.3	13	4.5
Brown	442	223	50.5	206	46.6	13	2.9
Door	61	40	65.6	18	29.5	3	4.9
Kewaunee	23	10	43.5	13	56.5	..	..
Manitowoc	226	160	70.8	65	28.8	1	.4
Calumet	29	17	58.6	12	41.4	..	..
Winnebago	341	216	63.3	112	32.9	13	3.8
Fond du Lac	269	181	67.3	75	27.9	13	4.8
Sheboygan	381	286	75.1	95	24.9	..	..
SOUTHWEST—7	525	263	50.1	255	48.6	7	1.3
Vernon	114	74	64.9	36	31.6	4	3.5
Crawford	60	17	28.3	43	71.7	..	..
Richland	94	52	55.3	41	43.6	1	1.1
Sauk	93	85	91.4	7	7.5	1	1.1
Iowa	44	9	20.4	35	79.6	..	..
Grant	99	22	22.2	77	77.8	..	..
Lafayette	21	4	19.0	16	76.2	1	4.8
SOUTH—8	1,102	419	38.0	597	54.2	86	7.8
Columbia	76	42	55.3	29	38.1	5	6.6
Dodge	122	75	61.5	44	36.1	3	2.4
Dane	445	111	24.9	289	65.0	45	10.1
Jefferson	60	29	48.3	30	50.0	1	1.7
Green	33	17	51.5	16	48.5	..	..
Rock	366	145	39.6	189	51.6	32	8.8
SOUTHEAST—9	1,977	1,288	65.1	602	30.4	87	4.5
Washington	37	23	62.2	14	37.8	..	..
Ozaukee	64	4	6.2	60	93.8	..	..
Waukesha	379	168	44.3	192	50.6	19	5.1
Walworth	152	127	83.6	23	15.1	2	1.3
Racine	900	765	85.0	96	10.7	39	4.3
Kenosha	445	201	45.2	217	48.8	27	6.0

^a Number.

^b Percentage.

The survey data are analyzed for the state, and also in terms of nine economic districts set-up by the Wisconsin State Planning Board.⁴

⁴ See accompanying map. These districts were determined on the basis of 12 economic and social factors as follows: (1) health; (2) productive possibilities; (3) weighted population; (4) occupational trend; (5) employment conditions; (6) per cent of relief burden met locally; (7) relative number of persons on relief; (8) per capita wealth; (9) per capita income; (10)

However, this article is concerned primarily with the findings for the entire state, with the exception of Milwaukee County. The reasons for

relative per capita number of vehicles; (11) schools; and (12) relative tax delinquency. When these factors are graphically portrayed on maps (see publications of Wisconsin State Planning Board) the State of Wisconsin appears as a mosaic of economic and social units instead of one economic and social entity.

making an analysis of the data according to economic district rather than on a county basis are: (1) the close relationship existing between delinquency and economic conditions; (2) the technical problem involved of analyzing the comparatively small number of cases for many of the rural counties of the state on a county basis; (3) the extremely large clerical and statistical tasks of making separate analyses for each of the counties of the state; and (4) the wide-spread use by other state and county departments of government of the district plan established by the Wisconsin Planning Board.

The scope of the survey, according to the foregoing definition of delinquency, covers court cases, non-court cases, and cases with both records. The court cases include all juvenile court cases for the five year period, July 1, 1935-June 30, 1940, and also all cases of juvenile delinquents under 18 years of age coming before the criminal courts for the same five year period, while the non-court cases include all cases of juvenile delinquents coming to the attention of other social agencies for the one year period, July 1, 1939-June 30, 1940. The non-court cases were taken for a one year period only, because of the difficulty of locating records on the cases for previous years. The cases with both records include those court cases which have had a record also with other social agencies during the five year period.

The accompanying Table I, which presents the distribution of juvenile delinquents according to type of case,

economic district, and county of latest offense, reveals a grand total of 10,101 cases for the 70 counties surveyed. The distribution shows 5,855 court cases for the five-year period, 3,818 non-court cases for the one-year period, and 428 cases of juvenile delinquents which have come to the attention of both the courts and other social agencies for the five-year period. These figures do not include Milwaukee County, and therefore, the final total for the state should be increased by the number of juvenile delinquents found in that county. These figures are impressive, if not alarming, and indicate the need for adequate programs of prevention and treatment back in the counties and local communities of the state.

These figures do not indicate fully the extent of delinquency for the state since the non-court cases are only for the last one-year period—July 1, 1939 to June 30, 1940. If the non-court cases are also calculated on a five year basis, a grand total of 25,373 cases is discovered instead of the 10,101 cases previously mentioned.

However, neither a small nor a large number of cases for any county may be especially significant. A small number of cases for any county may merely mean that not all cases of delinquency were discovered by the survey, because of lack of records or failure of the officials and agencies of the community to recognize certain types of behavior as delinquency. On the other hand, a large number of cases for any county may indicate that approximately all the cases of delinquency were discovered by the survey, and that the

county shows an awareness of its juvenile delinquency problem by locating all the cases and treating their maladjustments at an early stage.

Approximately 58 per cent of the total cases for the state are court cases, 38 per cent non-court cases, and 4 per cent with both records. The proportion for each type varies from district to district and from county to county depending upon the prevailing custom of handling delinquent children. The largest proportion of court cases and the smallest proportion of non-court cases are found in the Northeast statistical district, while the smallest proportion of court cases and the largest proportion of non-court cases are found in the South statistical district.

Several statistical problems are involved in the results of the survey. One of these problems is the prevalence of different definitions of delinquency in several counties of the state. Although the statutory definition is universal for the state, nevertheless, different interpretations are placed on the definition in many counties. What is delinquency in one county may not be regarded as delinquency in another county. A second statistical problem, previously mentioned, relates to the practices prevailing in the various counties of handling delinquent children in juvenile court or by other social agencies outside of court. In some counties approximately all cases of juvenile delinquency are handled by the juvenile court; in other counties a large proportion are handled by other social agencies outside of court; while in still other counties they are about

equally divided between the court and other social agencies. In general there are no outstanding differences in the type of cases coming before the courts and those handled by other social agencies outside of court. For instance, the non-court, as well as the court cases, include such offenses as sex delinquencies, illegitimacy, stealing, breaking and entering, operating an automobile without the owner's consent, truancy, and other offenses.

The distribution of juvenile delinquents according to type of case, district, county of latest offense, school population, 4 to 20 years, 1939-1940, Table II, reveals the extent of delinquency for the state, the nine statistical districts, and for the 70 counties during the last year of the survey period, July 1, 1939-June 30, 1940. The percentage of the school population found to be delinquent for the state is slightly over eight-tenths of one per cent (.83 per cent). The percentages delinquent for the nine statistical districts range from .60 per cent for the Northeast district to 1.24 per cent for the South-east district, while the counties range from .10 per cent for Taylor county to 1.88 per cent for Sawyer and Florence counties.

An inspection of the accompanying map, Map 1, shows nine counties in northern Wisconsin and fifteen counties in central and southern Wisconsin which have higher rates of delinquency than the state. High rates of delinquency for the nine northern counties may be explained on the basis of three factors: (1) failure of community leaders to utilize the resources avail-

able for the prevention of juvenile delinquency; (2) lack of adequate facilities and trained personnel for the treatment of juvenile delinquency; and

(3) the presence in this section of the state of certain disorganizing influences in community life contributing to juvenile delinquency, such as unregu-

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ACCORDING TO TYPE OF CASE, DISTRICT, COUNTY OF LATEST OFFENSE, SCHOOL POPULATION 4-20 YEARS 1939-1940, AND PERCENTAGE DELINQUENT

(All cases for last one-year period, July 1, 1939—June 30, 1940)

District and County	Percentage Delinquent	Total	Type of Case		School Population 4-20 Years, 1939-1940
			Court	Non-Court	
State .....	.83	5,413	1,595	3,818	652,061
NORTHWEST—1 .....	.85	531	138	393	62,712
Douglas	1.81	219	90	129	12,083
Bayfield .....	.46	21	7	14	4,556
Burnett .....	.72	25	5	20	3,449
Washburn .....	.89	33	0	33	3,693
Sawyer	1.88	65	1	64	3,453
Polk .....	.24	19	8	11	7,859
Barron .....	.47	48	11	37	10,244
Rusk .....	.65	37	6	31	5,705
Chippewa .....	.55	64	10	54	11,670
NORTH—2 .....	.85	592	155	437	69,919
Ashland	1.48	94	17	77	6,334
Iron .....	.88	25	5	20	2,847
Vilas	1.34	34	15	19	2,542
Price	1.00	57	23	34	5,711
Oneida .....	.78	41	17	24	5,286
Taylor .....	.10	5	4	1	6,714
Lincoln .....	.68	47	26	21	6,910
Marathon	1.11	258	43	215	23,259
Clark .....	.30	31	5	26	10,316
NORTHEAST—3 .....	.60	249	104	145	41,275
Forest	1.82	74	13	61	4,060
Florence	1.88	26	5	21	1,385
Marinette .....	.57	62	58	4	10,855
Oconto .....	.26	21	3	18	8,101
Langlade .....	.49	36	7	29	7,363
Shawano .....	.32	30	18	12	9,511
WEST—4 .....	.85	646	221	425	76,313
St. Croix .....	.83	59	13	46	7,067
Dunn .....	.53	43	4	39	8,118
Pierce .....	.46	27	8	19	5,876
Pepin .....	.59	14	0	14	2,386
Buffalo .....	.91	41	13	28	4,510
Eau Claire	1.41	175	75	100	12,389
Trempealeau .....	.28	19	15	4	6,758
Jackson .....	.31	15	10	5	4,814
Monroe .....	.60	52	31	21	8,601
LaCrosse	1.27	201	52	149	15,794

TABLE II (Continued)

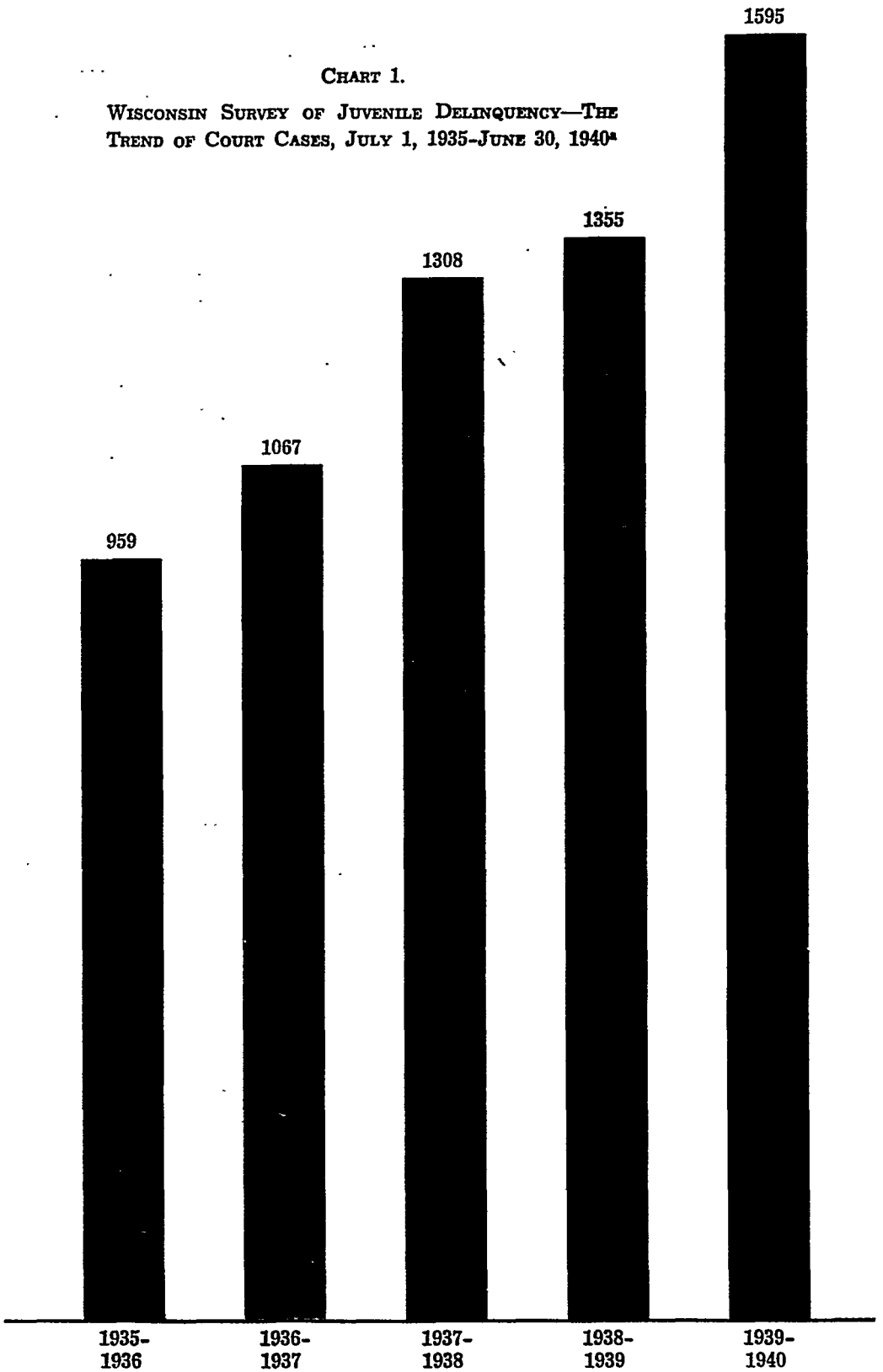
District and County	Percentage Delinquent	Total	Type of Case		School Population 4-20 Years, 1939-1940
			Court	Non-Court	
CENTRAL—5	.70	352	134	218	50,476
Wood	.59	74	40	34	12,642
Portage	1.42	156	44	112	11,011
Waupaca	.47	43	22	21	9,201
Juneau	.38	20	6	14	5,330
Adams	.32	8	2	6	2,480
Wausara	.28	11	7	4	3,913
Marquette	.65	16	4	12	2,478
Green Lake	.70	24	9	15	3,421
EAST—6	.79	1,042	296	746	132,291
Outagamie	.84	169	19	150	20,100
Brown	1.25	272	66	206	21,773
Door	.56	31	13	18	5,579
Kewaunee	.32	15	2	13	4,645
Manitowoc	.50	86	21	65	17,144
Calumet	.32	16	4	12	4,991
Winnebago	.79	169	57	112	21,293
Fond du Lac	.77	127	52	75	16,510
Sheboygan	.78	157	62	95	20,256
SOUTHWEST—7	.61	314	59	255	51,352
Vernon	.63	54	18	36	8,587
Crawford	.93	51	8	43	5,500
Richland	.86	53	12	41	6,145
Sauk	.17	16	9	7	9,288
Iowa	.70	40	5	35	5,749
Grant	.76	83	6	77	10,903
Lafayette	.33	17	1	16	5,180
SOUTH—8	.81	731	134	597	90,413
Columbia	.52	43	14	29	8,195
Dodge	.44	61	17	44	13,726
Dane	.99	325	36	289	32,806
Jefferson	.44	40	10	30	9,139
Green	.35	20	4	16	5,787
Rock	1.16	242	53	189	20,760
SOUTHEAST—9	1.24	956	354	602	77,310
Washington	.25	19	5	14	7,506
Ozaukee	1.30	64	4	60	4,939
Waukesha	1.50	239	47	192	15,885
Walworth	.66	53	30	23	7,975
Racine	1.34	328	232	96	24,491
Kenosha	1.53	253	36	217	16,514

lated taverns, roadhouses, sale of liquor to minors, slot machines and other gambling devices, disorderly tourist camps and resorts, and houses of prostitution. The prevalence of high rates of delinquency for the fifteen central

and southern counties may be due to certain conditions contributing to juvenile delinquency associated with urban life, since most of the larger cities of the state, such as Green Bay, Appleton, Wausau, Stevens Point, Eau

CHART 1.

WISCONSIN SURVEY OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY—THE
TREND OF COURT CASES, JULY 1, 1935-JUNE 30, 1940^a



Claire, La Crosse, Madison, Janesville, Beloit, Waukesha, Racine, and Kenosha, are located in these counties.

The trend of juvenile delinquency during the five-year period covered by the survey may be measured by the

increase of the court cases during the period. The distribution of court cases according to district and year of latest offense—July 1, 1935-June 30, 1940, Table III, shows a progressive increase from 959 cases in 1935-1936 to 1,595

TABLE III.

DISTRIBUTION OF COURT CASES, INCLUDING COURT CASES HAVING RECORDS WITH OTHER SOCIAL AGENCIES, ACCORDING TO DISTRICT AND YEAR OF LATEST OFFENSE, JULY 1, 1935—JUNE 30, 1940.

District	Total	Year				
		7-1-35 6-30-36	7-1-36 6-30-37	7-1-37 6-30-38	7-1-38 6-30-39	7-1-39 6-30-40
Total for State.....	6,283	959	1,067	1,308	1,355	1,595
Northwest—1	587	108	81	114	146	138
North—2	514	93	86	77	103	155
Northeast—3	553	99	99	133	118	104
West—4	746	122	113	147	143	221
Central—5	420	71	67	79	69	134
East—6	1,313	193	218	269	337	296
Southwest—7	270	25	68	55	63	59
South—8	505	67	82	119	103	134
Southeast—9	1,375	180	253	315	273	354

cases in 1939-1940, or an increase of 66.3 per cent. This increase is graphically portrayed in the accompanying chart (Chart 1). The trend of juvenile delinquency is also definitely upward in all the nine statistical districts. However, downward trends are apparent in a few of the rural counties. Marked downward trends may also be observed in certain counties with urban centers, such as La Crosse and Kenosha.

The foregoing data on extent of juvenile delinquency indicate that a

serious situation exists in this state, since over 10,000 boys and girls have started on lives of delinquency and crime during the last few years, and furthermore the trend of delinquency, as measured by the court cases, is definitely upwards. This situation may be greatly alleviated during the next few years as the result of the efforts of Mr. Frank C. Klode, Director, in instituting a state-wide program for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency.

Successful Democracy, Successful Penology:

“When the forces of democracy are victorious, penology will have a great future. Public attention to prison problems in times of international conflict is lacking, and understandably so, but the future is hopeful and optimistic—and days of great advancement are ahead.”—Alexander Paterson, *Commissioner of Prisons for England and Wales.*