

# Exploring the Dynamics of Race and Crime Using NIBRS Data

---

William Clements, Ph.D.  
Vermont Center for Justice Research  
33 College Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Copies and Full Report:  
[www2.norwich.edu/clemmey/vcjr/index.html](http://www2.norwich.edu/clemmey/vcjr/index.html)

# Background

---

- News Investigations
- Public Safety - Arrest Rates - elevated for minorities
  - ▶ Black arrest rates 3X those of whites
- Corrections - Elevated levels of incarceration
  - ▶ Black incarceration rates 2-3X white rate
- Supreme Court Committee
- Growing minority population in Vermont:
  - ▶ Increased from 2% to almost 4% since 1990
  - ▶ Asian population largest

# Objectives

---

- What can NIBRS tell us about differences in crime by race?
- What effect does race exert on arrest outcomes when other factors related to crime are controlled?
- Basis for future study as a baseline.

# Method

---

- Vermont NIBRS data
  - ▶ 101,851 incidents
  - ▶ 33,119 offenders (Segment 5)
  - ▶ 20,000 arrestees (Segment 6)
  - ▶ 30,401 offenses (Segment 2)
  - ▶ 28,535 victims (Segment 4)
  - ▶ 19,480 property/drug records (Segment 3)
- 920 non-white offenders
- Built Flat file from Segments using Incident and ORI as unique identifiers. (See report for details and anomalies.)

# File Schema

Figure 1: Basefile Structure for Offender-Based File

Segment 5 Elements 1 & 2	Segment 5 Elements 36-39	Count Segment 5 Records	Segment 2 Elements 6-13 (most serious offense)	Count Segment 2 Records	Segment 3 Elements 14-22	Count of Segment 3 Records	Total Property Value
Segment 3 Drug Type	Segment 4 Elements 23-35	Count of Segment 4	Number Victims Under 18 Years Old	Number Minority Victims	Number Hispanic Victims	Segment 6 Elements 40-52 (matched to offender)	Count of Segment 6

# Major Descriptive Findings

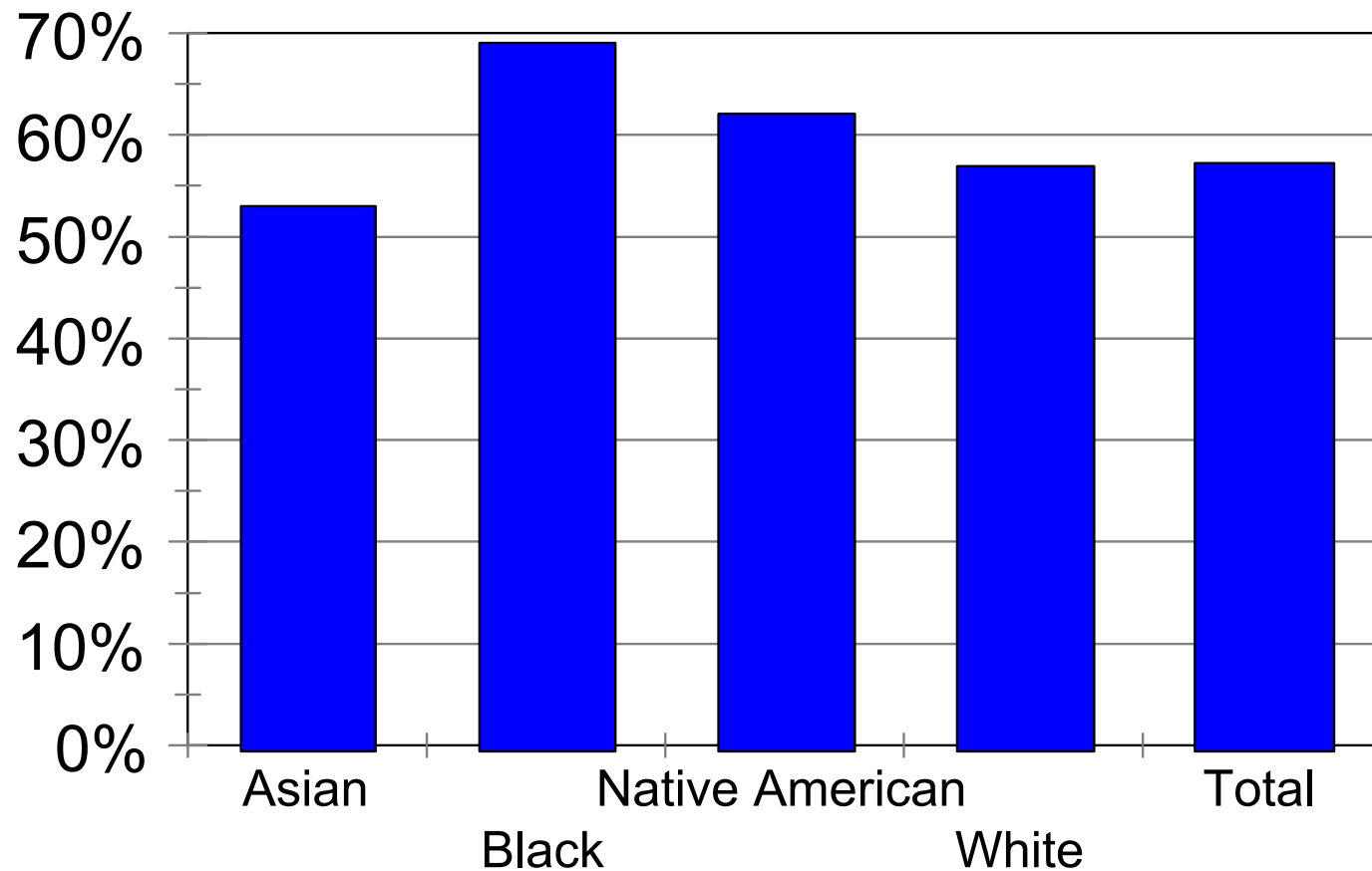
---

- Black offenders comprised the single largest group of minority offenders at 737 and represented 2.3% of the offenders
- The average offender age across racial groups was about 26 years, although American Indian offenders were slightly older, averaging 32 years of age.
- A majority of offenders did not use or possess a weapon while offending
- No significant differences were found in the age-sex distribution of victims
- Typical crime patterns - nothing highly unusual regarding weapons, injury, or relationship.
- Slightly greater involvement of Black and American Indian offenders in violent crimes.

## The Central Descriptive Finding

# Arrest Rates by Race

VIBRS Data 1993-2000



# Modeling Arrest

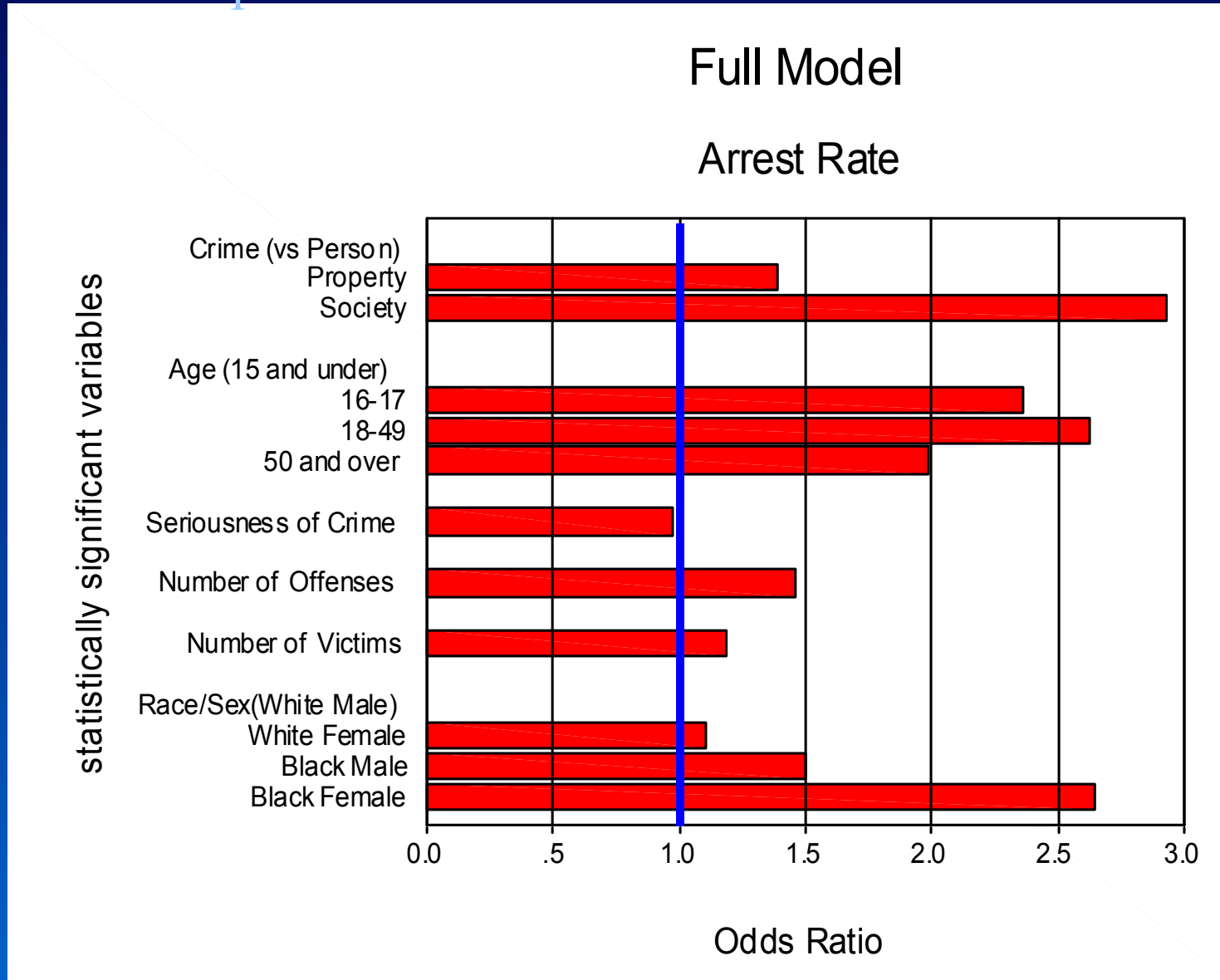
---

Controlling for Crime Related Factors:  
Does the higher arrest rate for Blacks go away?

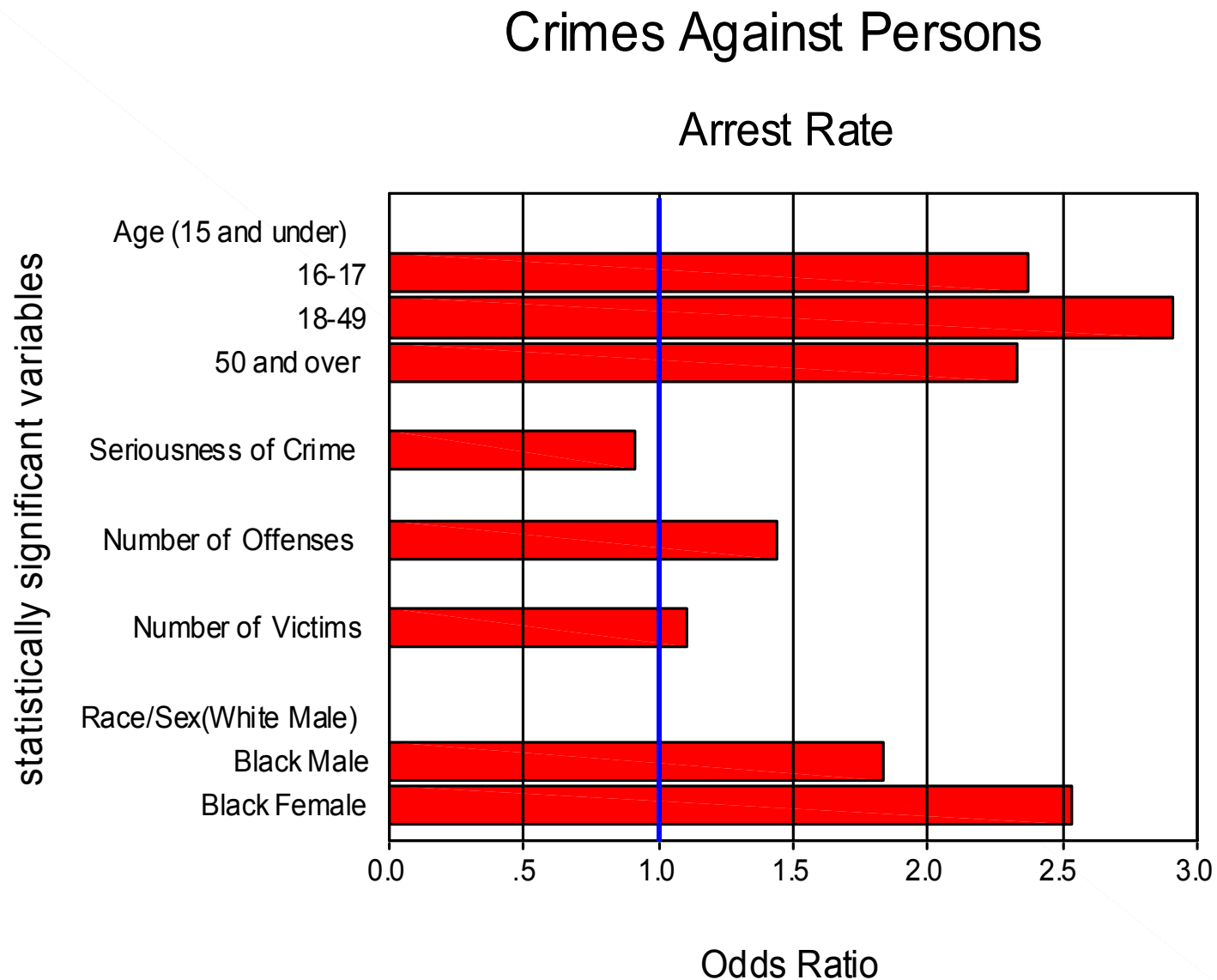
- Logistical regression
- Control for key variables
  - Offender: age, sex, race (independent effects)
  - offense seriousness
  - offense type (person, property, society)
  - number of offenses per incident
  - weapon use
  - victim age, sex and injury
  - drug/alcohol use
  - property value (property crimes)
  - victim-offender relationship (crimes against persons)
  - an offender race-sex interaction term (e.g. white-male, white female, etc.)

# Full Model

Is race a predictor in combination with other variables?



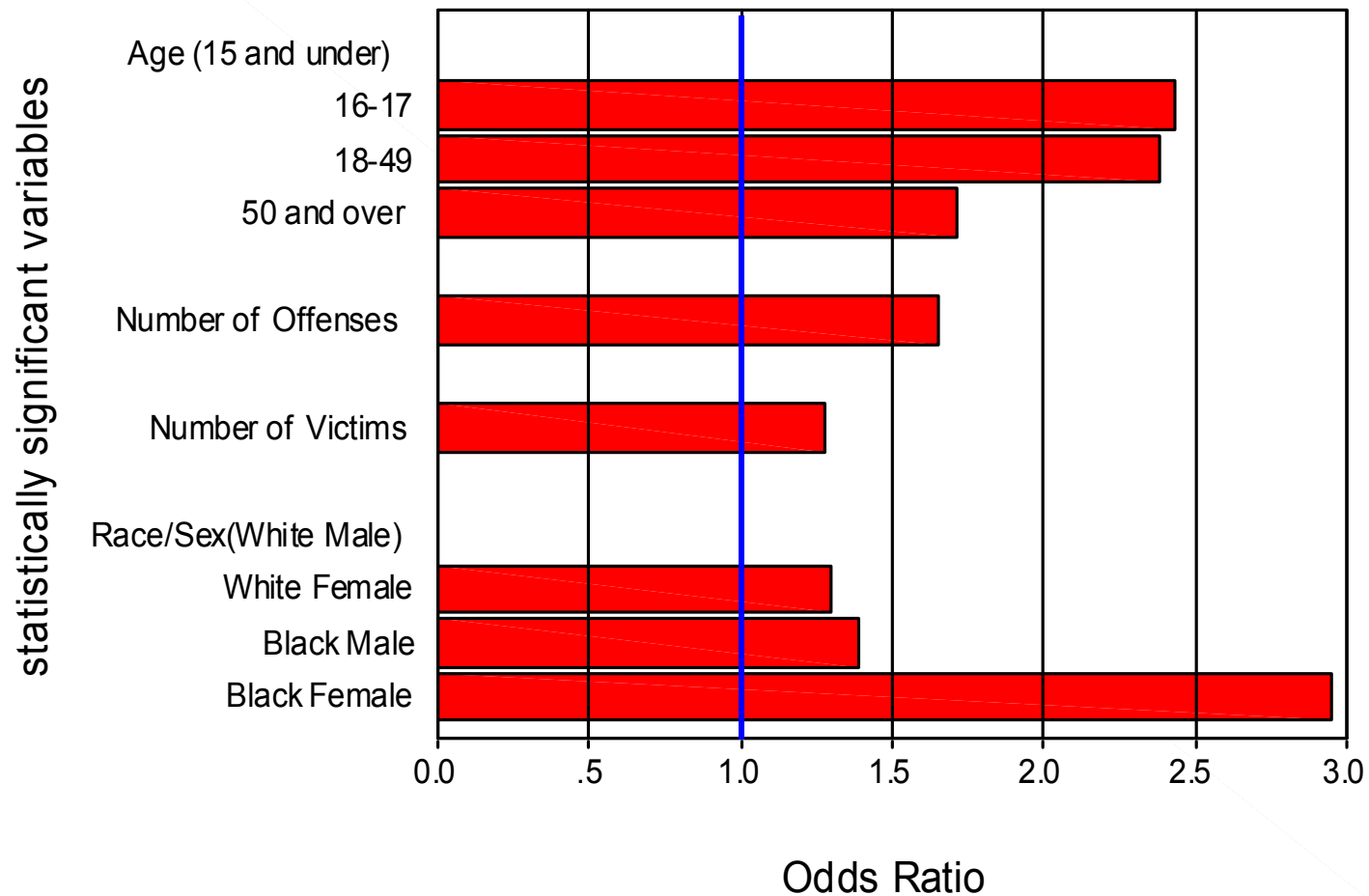
# Crimes Against Persons



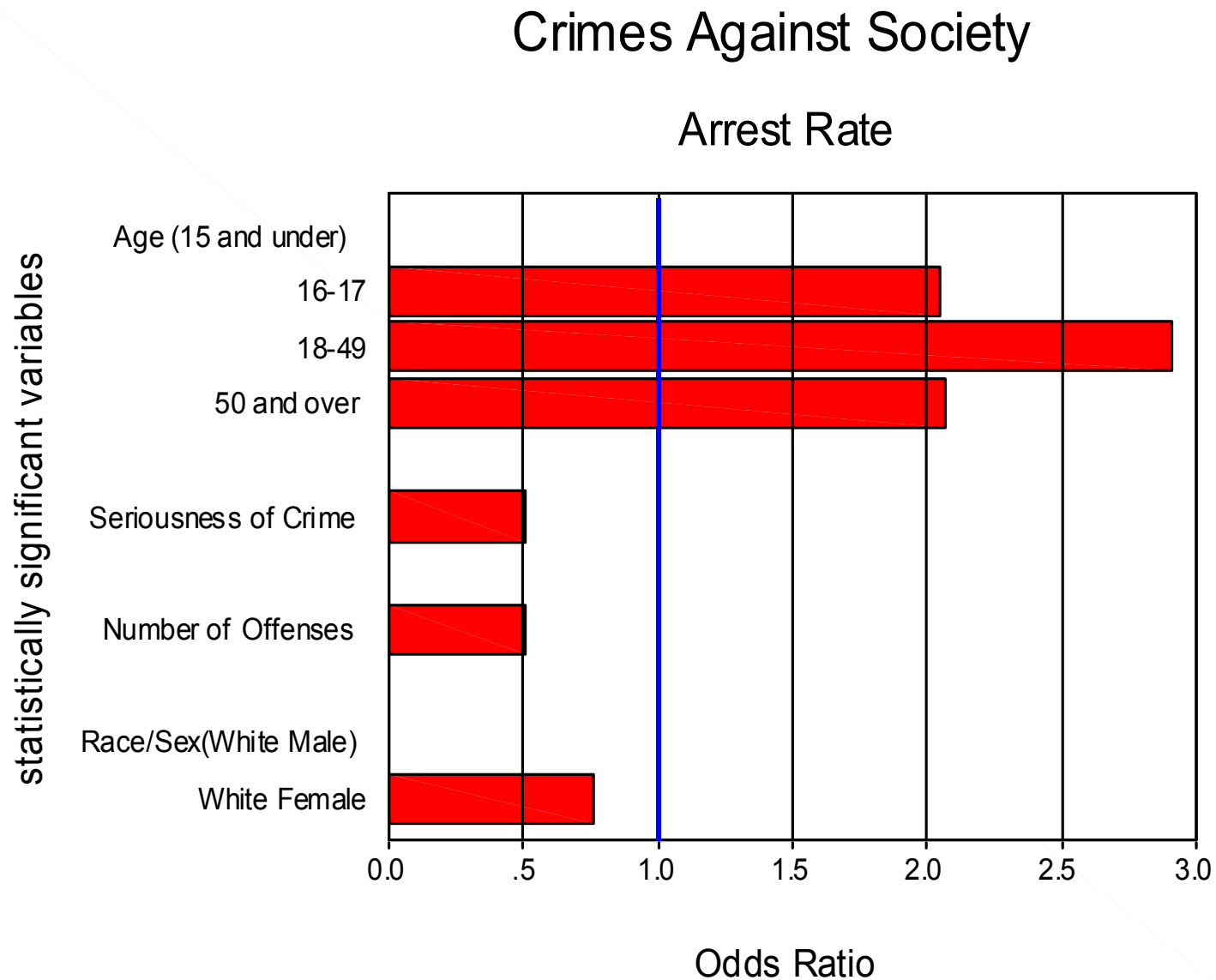
# Crimes Against Property

## Crimes Against Property

### Arrest Rate



# Crimes Against Society (Drugs)



# Conclusions

---

What does this mean and where do we go?

- Observed differences in arrest rates persist when offense factors are controlled - Except for Drug Offenses.
- Primarily Black offenders
- NIBRS is a viable resource for examining this issue.
- Analysis suggests further study - offender-based factors (e.g. criminal history)
- Legislation pending in Vermont