

Gravity Knife Arrests in New York City

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PROJECT SUMMARY:

This report analyzes features of gravity knife arrests made in New York City in the first six months of 2018.

Key Findings:

- There were 885 gravity knife arrests arraigned by Legal Aid in the first 6 months 2018
- 91% of those arrested for gravity knife possession were charged with a misdemeanor compared to 9% charged with a felony
- The Legal Aid Society represents approx. 5 gravity knife cases a day, estimated to about 1800/year
- 10% of the cases also involved charges for intent to use unlawfully
- 88% of people arrested for gravity knife possession are people of color. 85% are Black or Latino
- 96% of people arrested for gravity knife possession are men
- Less than 1% of gravity knife cases in the Bronx are charged as felonies, compared to 42% in Richmond
- 88% of those charged with misdemeanors resolve their cases with non-jail, non-criminal dispositions
- The 49th and 79th Precincts made the most gravity knife arrests

Sample:

The intended sample is all gravity knife cases arraigned by the Legal Aid Society from 01/01/2018/-06/29/2018 (885 cases).

Methods:

Since gravity knives are charged under a generic weapons possession law, all weapons possession cases that could involve gravity knives needed to be reviewed. Therefore, all Legal Aid Society cases with arrest date from 01/01/2018/-06/29/2018 where a client was charged with either 265.01(1) Criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree or 265.02(1) Criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree were initially pulled from Legal Aid Society's internal case management system (2775 cases). The charging documents, in the form of scanned PDFs, for all these cases were obtained. The documents were converted to readable text using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC "Recognize Text" function and then searched for the keywords: "centrifugal", "force", "gravity", and "knife". Every charging document where a keyword was identified was manually read to see if it involved the possession of a gravity knife. This process was repeated for cases where no gravity knife was initially identified using the keyword "grav". If no charging documents were available (64 cases), the attorneys on the case were contacted. There were 13 cases where we were not able to obtain the charging document or contact the attorney. In order to determine the error rate in identifying gravity knife cases, a random sample of ten percent of the cases were manually reviewed by a separate individual. It was determined that approximately 2% of gravity knife cases may have gone undetected through our methods.

Analysis:

This analysis seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How many arrests for gravity knife possession were there in first 6 months of 2018?
-How many gravity knife cases were charged as a misdemeanor versus felony?
-How many cases was the intent to use the gravity knife unlawfully also charged?
- 2) How frequently did each county prosecute gravity knife cases?
- 3) What is the demographic breakdown of the clients charged with gravity knife possession?
-What is the racial breakdown?
-What is the gender breakdown?
- 4) How were gravity knife cases disposed?
- 5) Which precincts had the most gravity knife arrests?

1. Legal Aid Gravity Knife Cases

1.1 Number of Gravity Knife Cases

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
No Gravity Knife	1877	67.96	67.96	67.64	67.64
Gravity Knife	885	32.04	100.00	31.89	99.53
	13			0.47	100.00
Total	2775	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

1.2 Number of Misdemeanor versus Felony Cases

	Freq	%	% Cum.
Misdemeanor	802	90.62	90.62
Felony	83	9.38	100.00

1.3 Number of cases with Intent by Felony/Misdemeanor

	CHARGE SEVERITY	Felony	Misdemeanor	Total
INTENT				
No Intent		73 (9.22%)	719 (90.78%)	792 (100.00%)
Intent to Use Unlawfully		10 (10.75%)	83 (89.25%)	93 (100.00%)
Total		83 (9.38%)	802 (90.62%)	885 (100.00%)

2. Gravity Knife Arrests By County

2.1 All Gravity Knife Arrests by County

	Freq	%	% Cum.
Kings	247	27.91	27.91
New York	232	26.21	54.12
Bronx	220	24.86	78.98
Queens	143	16.16	95.14
Richmond	43	4.86	100.00
Total	885	100.00	100.00

2.2 Arrests Per Capita

According to United States Census' County Population Estimates as of July 1, 2017

COUNTY	Arrests Per 100,000 Persons
Bronx	14.95
New York	13.94
Kings	9.33
Richmond	8.97
Queens	6.06

2.3 Felony and Misdemeanor Cases by County

COUNTY	CHARGE SEVERITY	Felony	Misdemeanor	Total
Bronx		2 (0.91%)	218 (99.09%)	220 (100.00%)
Kings		9 (3.64%)	238 (96.36%)	247 (100.00%)
New York		45 (19.40%)	187 (80.60%)	232 (100.00%)
Queens		9 (6.29%)	134 (93.71%)	143 (100.00%)
Richmond		18 (41.86%)	25 (58.14%)	43 (100.00%)
Total		83 (9.38%)	802 (90.62%)	885 (100.00%)

2.4 Cases with Intent by County

COUNTY	INTENT	No Intent	Intent to Use Unlawfully	Total
Bronx		211 (95.91%)	9 (4.09%)	220 (100.00%)
Kings		232 (93.93%)	15 (6.07%)	247 (100.00%)
New York		185 (79.74%)	47 (20.26%)	232 (100.00%)
Queens		124 (86.71%)	19 (13.29%)	143 (100.00%)
Richmond		40 (93.02%)	3 (6.98%)	43 (100.00%)
Total		792 (89.49%)	93 (10.51%)	885 (100.00%)

3. Demographic Breakdown of Clients Charged with Gravity Knife Possession

3.1 Race And Ethnicity Breakdown

	Freq	%	% Cum.
Asian or Pacific Islander	34	3.84	3.84
Black Hispanic	80	9.04	12.88
Black Non-Hispanic	441	49.83	62.71
White Hispanic	227	25.65	88.36
White Non-Hispanic	103	11.64	100.00
Total	885	100.00	100.00

3.2 Racial and Ethnic Breakdown by county

RACE.ETHNICITY	COUNTY	Bronx	Kings	New York	Queens	Richmond
Asian or Pacific Islander		4 (11.8%)	10 (29.4%)	6 (17.6%)	13 (38.2%)	1 (2.9%)
Black Hispanic		39 (48.8%)	11 (13.8%)	26 (32.5%)	4 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Black Non-Hispanic		88 (20.0%)	163 (37.0%)	103 (23.4%)	74 (16.8%)	13 (2.9%)
White Hispanic		76 (33.5%)	33 (14.5%)	65 (28.6%)	40 (17.6%)	13 (5.7%)
White Non-Hispanic		13 (12.6%)	30 (29.1%)	32 (31.1%)	12 (11.7%)	16 (15.5%)

3.3 Biological Gender Breakdown

	Freq	%	% Cum.
Female	37	4.18	4.18
Male	848	95.82	100.00
Total	885	100.00	100.00

3.4 Biological Gender Breakdown by county

COUNTY	GENDER	Female	Male	Total
Bronx		7 (3.18%)	213 (96.82%)	220 (100.00%)
Kings		15 (6.07%)	232 (93.93%)	247 (100.00%)
New York		10 (4.31%)	222 (95.69%)	232 (100.00%)
Queens		4 (2.80%)	139 (97.20%)	143 (100.00%)
Richmond		1 (2.33%)	42 (97.67%)	43 (100.00%)
Total		37 (4.18%)	848 (95.82%)	885 (100.00%)

4. Dispositions of Gravity Knife Arrests

4.1 Disposition of all Gravity Knife cases (as of February 2019)

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
PLEAD GUILTY-VIOLATION	275	35.30	35.30	31.07	31.07
DISMISSED	234	30.04	65.34	26.44	57.51
WARRANT	106	13.61	78.95	11.98	69.49
PLEAD GUILTY-MISDEMEANOR	103	13.22	92.17	11.64	81.13
ACD	33	4.24	96.41	3.73	84.86
SEALING ORDERED	13	1.67	98.07	1.47	86.33
PLEAD GUILTY-FELONY	10	1.28	99.36	1.13	87.46
COVERED	2	0.26	99.61	0.23	87.68
730 COMMIT	1	0.13	99.74	0.11	87.80
COMBO DISPO PGSI + ACD 170.55	1	0.13	99.87	0.11	87.91
NO TRUE BILL	1	0.13	100.00	0.11	88.02
	106			11.98	100.00
Total	885	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

4.2 Disposition of Felony cases (as of February 2019)

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
PLEAD GUILTY-MISDEMEANOR	24	41.38	41.38	28.92	28.92
PLEAD GUILTY-VIOLATION	12	20.69	62.07	14.46	43.37
DISMISSED	7	12.07	74.14	8.43	51.81
WARRANT	7	12.07	86.21	8.43	60.24
PLEAD GUILTY-FELONY	6	10.34	96.55	7.23	67.47
ACD	1	1.72	98.28	1.20	68.67
COVERED	1	1.72	100.00	1.20	69.88
	25			30.12	100.00
Total	83	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

4.3 Disposition of Misdemeanor cases (as of February 2019)

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
PLEAD GUILTY-VIOLATION	263	36.48	36.48	32.79	32.79
DISMISSED	227	31.48	67.96	28.30	61.10
WARRANT	99	13.73	81.69	12.34	73.44
PLEAD GUILTY-MISDEMEANOR	79	10.96	92.65	9.85	83.29
ACD	32	4.44	97.09	3.99	87.28
SEALING ORDERED	13	1.80	98.89	1.62	88.90
PLEAD GUILTY-FELONY	4	0.55	99.45	0.50	89.40
730 COMMIT	1	0.14	99.58	0.12	89.53
COMBO DISPO PGSI + ACD 170.55	1	0.14	99.72	0.12	89.65
COVERED	1	0.14	99.86	0.12	89.78
NO TRUE BILL	1	0.14	100.00	0.12	89.90
	81			10.10	100.00
Total	802	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

4.4 Disposition Top Charge for Guilty Pleas

	Freq	%	% Cum.
240.2 DISORDERLY CONDUCT	243	85.26	85.26
VTL 509.1 UNLICENSED OPERATOR	21	7.37	92.63
221.05 UNLAWFUL POSSESS MARIJUANA	3	1.05	93.68
240.26 HARASSMENT 2	3	1.05	94.74
110-265.03(3) ATT CRIM POSSESSION OF A WEAPON 2	2	0.70	95.44
140.05 TRESPASS	2	0.70	96.14
VTL 1192.1 OPERATE MV - IMPAIRED	2	0.70	96.84
110-120.10(1) ATT ASSAULT 1	1	0.35	97.19
110-160.10(2)(a) ATT ROBBERY 2	1	0.35	97.54
120.10(1) ASSAULT 1	1	0.35	97.89
155.30(4) GRAND LARCENY 4	1	0.35	98.25
160.05 ROBBERY 3	1	0.35	98.60
220.39(1) CRIM SALE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE 3	1	0.35	98.95
265.03(2) CRIM POSSESSION OF A WEAPON 2	1	0.35	99.30
VTL 1192.2EF OPERATE VEHICLE WITH .08 OF 1% ALCOHOL-	1	0.35	99.65
VTL 511-a.1 FACIL AGGRAVD UNLICENS OPER MV 3	1	0.35	100.00
Total	285	100.00	100.00

5. Gravity Knife Locations

5.1 Top 15 Precincts where gravity knife arrests occurred

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
49th Precinct	31	3.703704	3.703704	3.502825	3.502825
79th Precinct	31	3.703704	7.407407	3.502825	7.005650
47th Precinct	30	3.584229	10.991637	3.389830	10.395480
52nd Precinct	27	3.225807	14.217443	3.050848	13.446328
40th Precinct	25	2.986858	17.204301	2.824859	16.271186
67th Precinct	25	2.986858	20.191159	2.824859	19.096045
70th Precinct	25	2.986858	23.178017	2.824859	21.920904
34th Precinct	22	2.628435	25.806452	2.485876	24.406780
68th Precinct	22	2.628435	28.434887	2.485876	26.892655
101st Precinct	19	2.270012	30.704898	2.146893	29.039548
120th Precinct	19	2.270012	32.974910	2.146893	31.186441
42nd Precinct	19	2.270012	35.244922	2.146893	33.333333
44th Precinct	19	2.270012	37.514934	2.146893	35.480226
48th Precinct	18	2.150538	39.665472	2.033898	37.514124
Transit District 4	18	2.150538	41.816010	2.033898	39.548023

5.2 Top 10 Precincts where felony gravity knife arrests occurred

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
120th Precinct	10	12.658228	12.65823	12.048193	12.04819
121st Precinct	5	6.329114	18.98734	6.024096	18.07229
25th Precinct	4	5.063291	24.05063	4.819277	22.89157
70th Precinct	4	5.063291	29.11392	4.819277	27.71084
7th Precinct	4	5.063291	34.17722	4.819277	32.53012
Transit District	4	5.063291	39.24051	4.819277	37.34940
101st Precinct	3	3.797468	43.03797	3.614458	40.96386
103rd Precinct	3	3.797468	46.83544	3.614458	44.57831
14th Precinct	3	3.797468	50.63291	3.614458	48.19277
32nd Precinct	3	3.797468	54.43038	3.614458	51.80723

5.3 Top 10 Precincts where misdemeanor gravity knife arrests occurred

	Freq	% Valid	% Valid Cum.	% Total	% Total Cum.
49th Precinct	31	4.089710	4.089710	3.865337	3.865337
47th Precinct	29	3.825858	7.915567	3.615960	7.481297
79th Precinct	29	3.825858	11.741425	3.615960	11.097257
52nd Precinct	27	3.562005	15.303430	3.366583	14.463840
40th Precinct	24	3.166227	18.469657	2.992519	17.456359
67th Precinct	24	3.166227	21.635884	2.992519	20.448878
68th Precinct	21	2.770449	24.406333	2.618454	23.067332
70th Precinct	21	2.770449	27.176781	2.618454	25.685786
34th Precinct	20	2.638522	29.815303	2.493766	28.179551
42nd Precinct	19	2.506596	32.321900	2.369077	30.548628

5.4 Stores that sell Gravity Knives

In June and July of 2018, investigators with the Legal Aid Society went to hardware stores in Manhattan and identified 130 stores that sell folding knives that would qualify as gravity knives if police officers can force the knives open with the flick of a wrist. An interactive map of the stores that currently sell those knives, along with pictures of the knives, is available at this link <https://bit.ly/2MX9l8w>

