



Trends & Characteristics of Youth Admitted to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, 1993-2013

NOVEMBER 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Court admissions to IDJJ decreased more than 50% between 2000 and 2013;**
- **By 2013, 50% of all admissions to IDJJ were for parole violations;**
- **By 2013, 10% of court admissions to IDJJ were youth under 15 years old, compared to 18% among youth admitted in 1993;**
- **Between 1993-2013, 50% of female youth committed to IDJJ were for violent offenses, compared to one-third of male commitments;**
- **Between 1993-2013, 12% of court admissions to IDJJ were for drug-law violations, compared to 40% in Illinois' adult prisons.**

Introduction

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) is a state agency responsible for the care and custody of youth adjudicated delinquent in Illinois' juvenile courts and committed to secure confinement in one of Illinois' six Youth Centers. IDJJ has operated as an independent state agency since 2006, after being separated through legislation from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). The analyses included in this research bulletin were developed by students in Loyola University Chicago's Criminal Justice and Criminology graduate program as part of their Applied Data Analysis and Interpretation class. This class project was intended to provide the students with hands on experience performing statistical analyses, applying statistical tests, and interpreting quantitative information. In addition to these educational goals, the project was also intended to provide juvenile justice practitioners and policy makers in Illinois with unique and original analyses regarding how the characteristics of youth committed to IDJJ have changed over the past 20 years.

This research bulletin summarizes the detailed analyses performed by the students so that juvenile justice practitioners and policy makers are aware of the long-term trends in the characteristics of youth admitted to IDJJ facilities between calendar years 1993 and 2013 in terms of the types of admis-

sions (court admissions versus admissions as a result of parole violations), age, gender, and offense type. Understanding these long-term trends and characteristics of the minors involved in IDJJ provides useful insight for practitioners and policy makers as they work to develop strategies to address this population. The analyses performed by the students also identified a number of interesting patterns and trends that raise additional research questions to be examined in the future. For more information about the data used in these analyses, see the "Information Source" section at the end of this document.

Admissions to IDJJ

The first set of analyses examined admissions to IDJJ based on the admission type. There are two broad ways to categorize the type of admission to IDJJ: 1) those resulting from a court admission, which would also include court evaluations, and 2) those resulting from a technical parole violation, where the decision to return to IDJJ is made by the Prisoner Review Board. As shown in Figure 1, page 2, there was a dramatic increase in the total number of admissions to IDJJ between 1993 and 1998. Between 1993 and 1998, total admissions to IDJJ increased from just under 1,700 admissions to almost 3,000 admissions, a 77 percent increase. During this period in the 1990s, increases in admissions were seen for both court commitments



as well as technical parole violators. However, after reaching a peak of just over 3,100 admissions in 2003, total admissions to IDJJ decreased consistently, driven primarily by decreased court commitments. By 2013, total admission to IDJJ has fallen to just under 1,700 admissions, or a 46 percent decrease from the peak in 2003 (Figure 1).

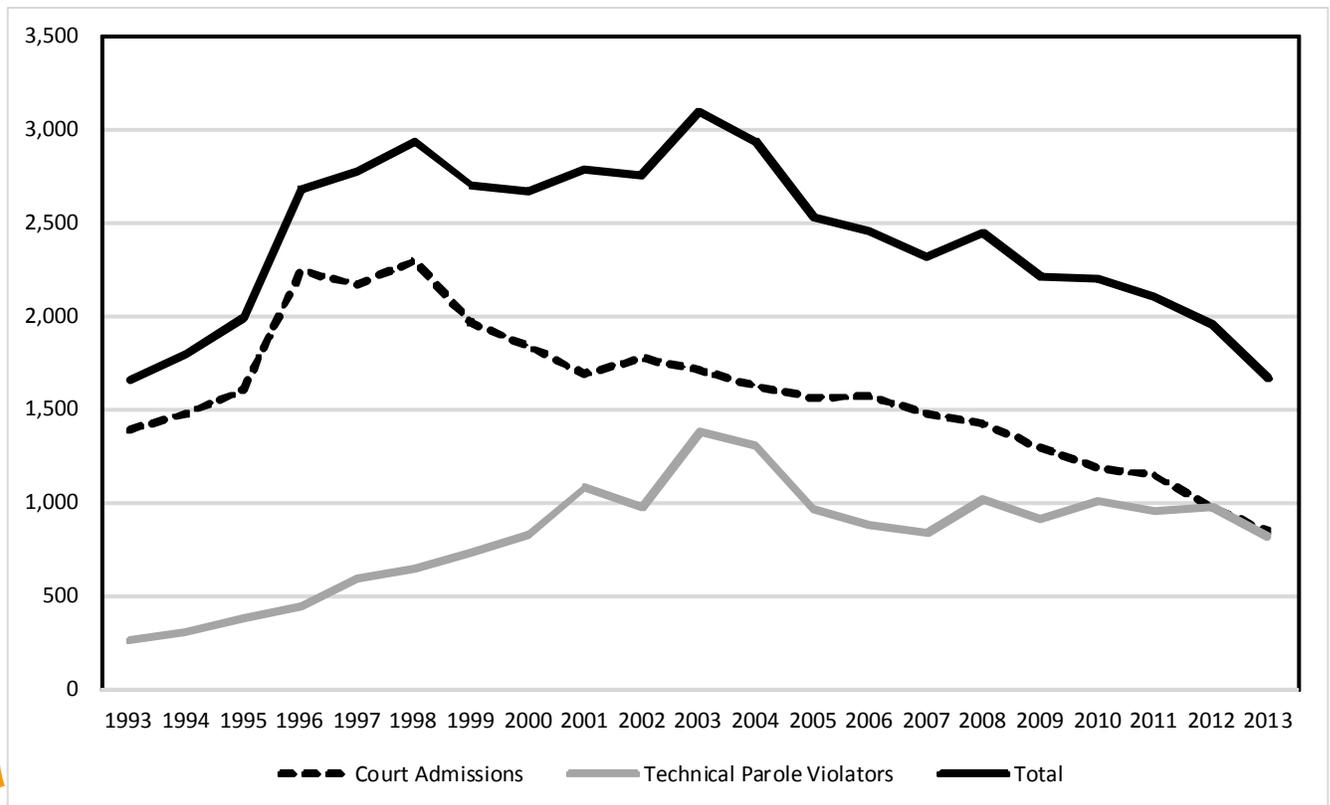
When just admissions resulting from court commitments to IDJJ were examined, a dramatic increase was seen during the mid-1990s, reaching a peak in 1998 of almost 2,300. Following that peak in 1998, court commitments to IDJJ decreased almost every single year, falling to 851 in 2013. In fact, the number of court commitments in 2013 was the fewest during the entire 21-year period examined.

By comparison, admissions to IDJJ as a result of technical parole violations increased pretty consistently between 1993 and 2003,

peaking at 1,382 in 2003, before falling and remaining relatively stable since 2005. In fact, the stability and periodic increases in total IDJJ commitments during the period from 1999 to 2004 were exclusively driven by increases in parole violator admissions, as court commitments had been decreasing since 1998.

Because of the decrease in court commitments between 1998 and 2013, and the increases and/or stability in the number of technical violation admissions, the proportion of all IDJJ admissions accounted for by technical parole violators increased dramatically during the period examined. For example, during the period from 1993 to 1996, technical parole violators accounted for less than 20 percent of all IDJJ admissions, but as seen in Figure 2, that proportion increased consistently, and by 2013, technical violators accounted for 50% of all

Figure 1: IDJJ Admissions, by Admission Type



admissions to IDJJ.

When bivariate analyses were performed to compare the characteristics of those admitted as technical violators versus court admissions, only a few relationships were relatively strong. For example, youth admitted as technical violators tended to be 2 years older than youth admitted from court. To some degree this is to be expected, since technical violators would be older at exit, and then even older by the time they return to IDJJ. Still, this is important to keep in mind since the admission of technical violators will increase the overall age of youth in IDJJ. Furthermore, youth admitted as technical violators also tended to have more prior delinquency petitions than court commitments. The crime class of the offense which originally brought the youth under the custody of IDJJ also differed between the technical violators and the court commitments. For example, of those youth returned to IDJJ as technical violators, a relatively small percent had originally been in IDJJ for

a misdemeanor offense (less than 5%), whereas almost one of out every seven youth admitted from court during the period examined had been adjudicated delinquent for a misdemeanor offense.

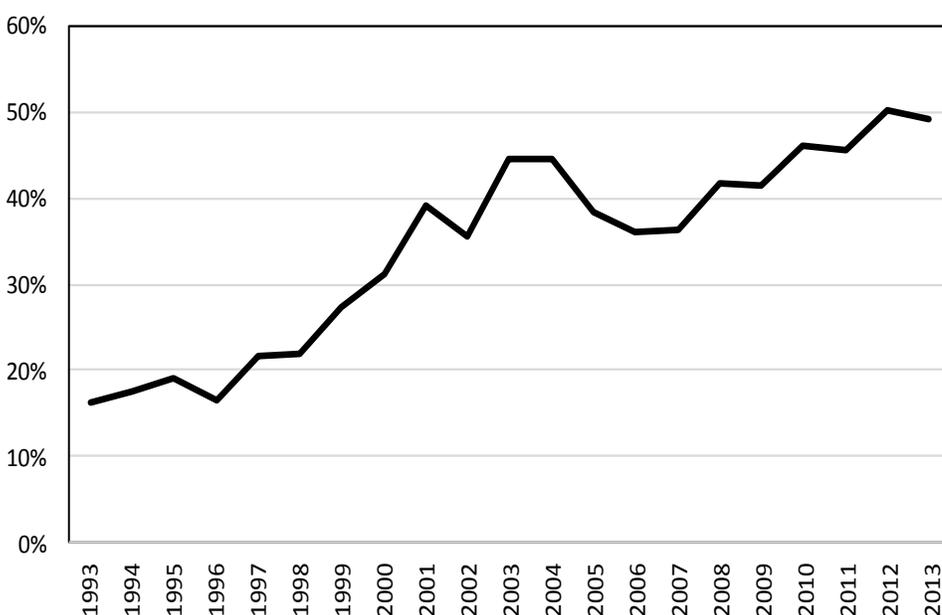
Demographic Characteristics of Court Commitments

The next set of analyses examined court admissions to IDJJ based on various demographic characteristics of the youth, including gender, age, and race.

Gender

As seen in Figure 1, and as described previously, there was a dramatic increase in court commitments to IDJJ during the mid-1990s, reaching a peak in 1998. During this period of significant increases in court commitments, the number of female court commitments increased at a faster rate than males, although females have always accounted for a relatively small proportion of total court commitments to IDJJ (Figure

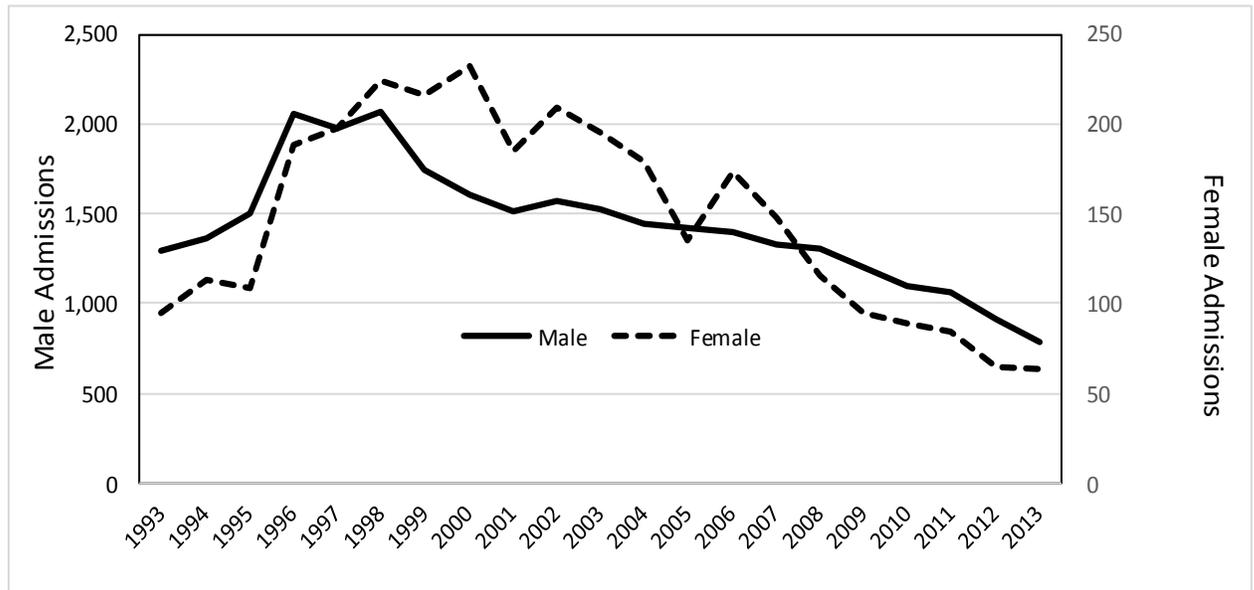
Figure 2: Technical Parole Violators as a Percent of IDJJ Admissions



3). For example, between 1995 and 2000, the number of female court

admissions to IDJJ increased from 109 to 233 (a 133 percent increase), whereas male admissions increased from about 1,500 to 1,600 (a 6 percent increase) during that same period. As a result of these different trends, the proportion of total court commitments accounted for by females increased from 7% in 1993 to almost 13% in 2000, before decreasing. In fact, since 2000, female

**Figure 3: IDJJ Court Admissions,
by Gender**



court admissions to IDJJ have fallen 72 percent, and in 2013 the 63 female court commitments to IDJJ was the smallest annual number during the entire period examined. By 2013, females accounted for 7 percent of total court commitments to IDJJ.

When bivariate analyses were performed to compare the characteristics of female and male youth committed to IDJJ, there were a number of relatively strong relationships. As seen in Figure 4, a much smaller percent of female court admissions to IDJJ came from Cook County than male commitments. Specifically, only 19 percent of females admitted to IDJJ were from Cook County, whereas 39 percent of the males admitted to IDJJ came from Cook County. Thus, while the majority of youth sentenced to IDJJ were sentenced outside of Cook County, a much larger proportion of the females came from outside of Cook County. There were also gender differences seen in terms of the race of committed youth. Roughly one-half of the females admitted to IDJJ were white, compared to only

about one-third of the males. Looked at the other way, 50% of females were minorities, but 68% of males were minorities.

Gender differences were also evident when the crime type and crime class of the crime for which youth were committed to IDJJ were examined. Specifically, almost one-half of all females committed to IDJJ had been adjudicated for a violent offense, compared to about one-third of the males. Further, one-third of the females committed to IDJJ had been adjudicated and committed to IDJJ for a misdemeanor offense, compared to only 13 percent of males committed to IDJJ having been adjudicated for a misdemeanor offense.

Although the average age of female and male youth court commitments to IDJJ were similar, around 15.5 for both groups, the average number of prior delinquency petitions was substantively different: Among females admitted to IDJJ, they had an average of less than 1 prior petition compared to an average of 5 prior petitions for each male admitted to IDJJ.

Age

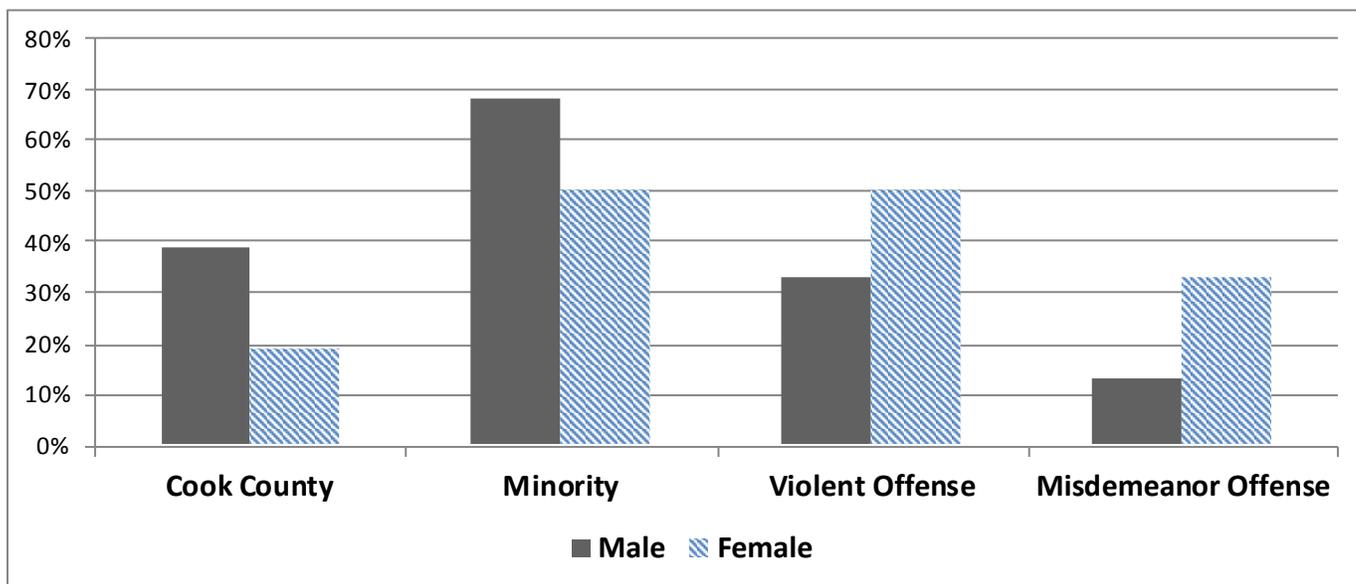
The next demographic characteristic examined was the age of the juvenile at the time of IDJJ commitment. In general, the average age of juvenile court commitments to IDJJ increased during the period examined, rising from an average of 15.4 years old among those admitted in 1993 to 15.9 years old among those admitted in 2013. To more closely examine the age of committed juveniles, youth were split into two groups—those under the age of 15 and those 15 and older at the time of their admission to IDJJ. While court admissions have decreased for both age groups since 2000, the decrease in the number of youth under 15 was larger than the decrease seen among youth age 15 and older. As a result, the proportion of juveniles committed to IDJJ that were under the age of 15 decreased, from 17 percent or more of the admissions between 1993 and 2002, to 10 percent or less since 2010. Because age is a factor related to recidivism, and the fact that youth admitted to IDJJ tend to be getting older, on average, this change has implications for changing recidivism rates for IDJJ over time.

When bivariate analyses was performed comparing age (under 15 or 15 and older) with other characteristics, the largest differences appeared with whether or not the youth was committed from Cook County and if the youth was admitted as a court-evaluation. For example, only about 25 percent of the youth under 15 committed between 1993 and 2003 were from Cook County, compared to 39 percent of the youth 15 and older being from Cook County. On the other hand, a larger proportion of the youth under 15 were admitted as court evaluations (38 percent) than were those youth 15 and older (25 percent were admitted as a court evaluation). Interestingly, despite the difference in age, youth who were under 15 when committed to IDJJ had an average of 4.2 prior petitions, which was just slightly less than the average of 4.5 prior petitions among the older youth committed to IDJJ.

Current Crime Among Court Commitments

The last set of analyses examined court admissions to IDJJ based on the type of offense for which the youth had been adjudicated and committed to IDJJ. In cases where there were multiple offenses a

Figure 4: Comparison of Male and Female IDJJ Admissions, 1993-2013



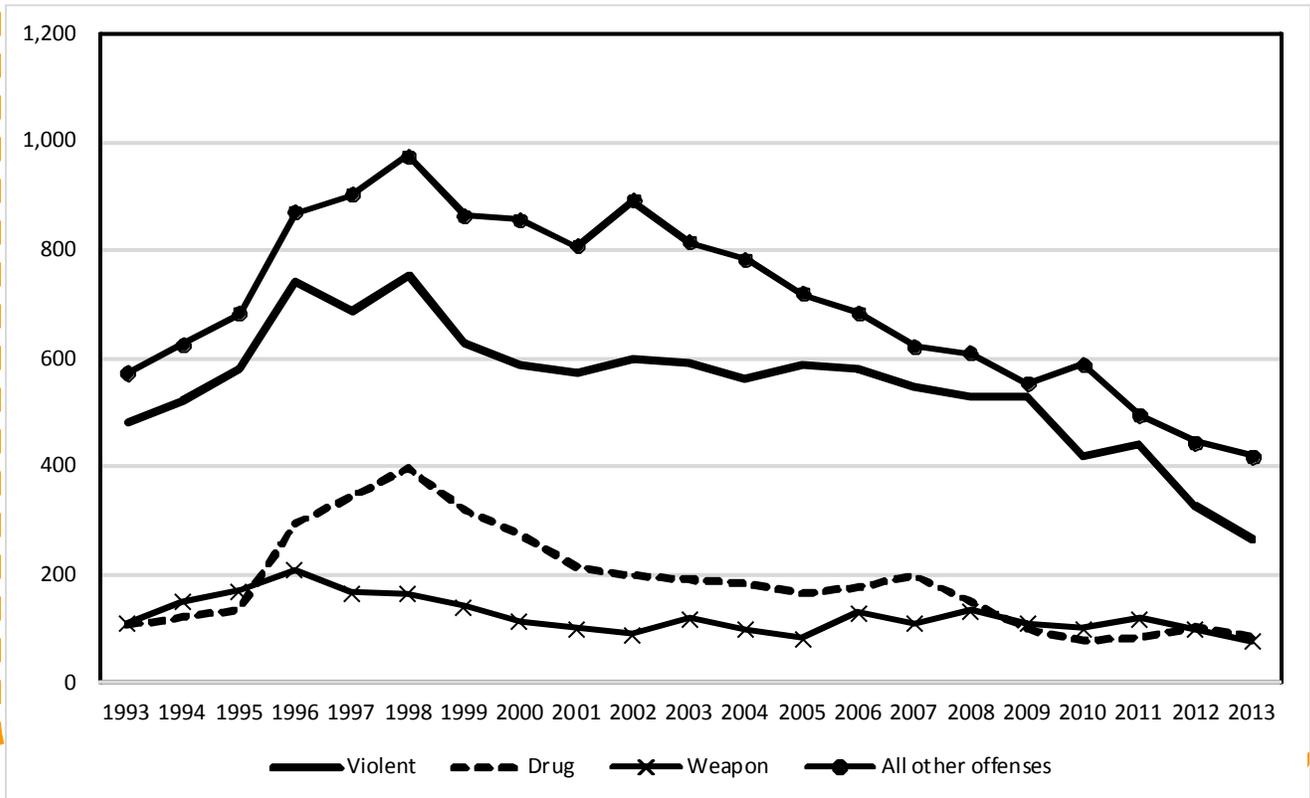
youth was adjudicated/convicted of, the crime that carries the longest sentence (i.e., will hold the youth the longest in an IDJJ facility) is the one included in the analyses. It is also important to keep in mind that the current offense may not be the most serious crime in a juvenile's delinquency record, but rather, the one that resulted in their commitment to IDJJ. For purposes of the analyses presented here, the current offense types that were focused on included violent offenses, drug-law violations, unlawful use of a weapon (UUW) offenses and all other offenses (primarily property crimes). UUW offenses primarily involve the illegal possession of a firearm. Crimes committed with a firearm, such as robbery or battery, are included in the violent offense category.

Figure 5 reveals that, similar to trends discussed earlier, there was a large increase in admissions to IDJJ during the 1990s, with increases of various magnitudes seen across all crime types. For example, be-

tween 1993 and 1998, court admissions to IDJJ for violent crimes increased 56 percent, while admissions for drug-law violations jumped 270 percent. During that same period, admissions for weapon offenses increased 50 percent, and admissions for all other offenses rose by 70 percent. Similarly, since the late 1990s, decreases in admissions across each of the different crimes types were also seen. Because of differences in the magnitude of increases and decreases across the different crime types, the proportion of admissions accounted for by these offenses also change during the period examined (Figure 6). For example, the proportion of court admissions accounted for by violent offenses each year ranged between 30 and 40 percent during the period examined, whereas drug-law violators have accounted for between 6 and 17 percent of all IDJJ court admissions.

When comparisons were made between the current offense type and other char-

Figure 5: IDJJ Admissions, by Current Crime Type, 1993-2013



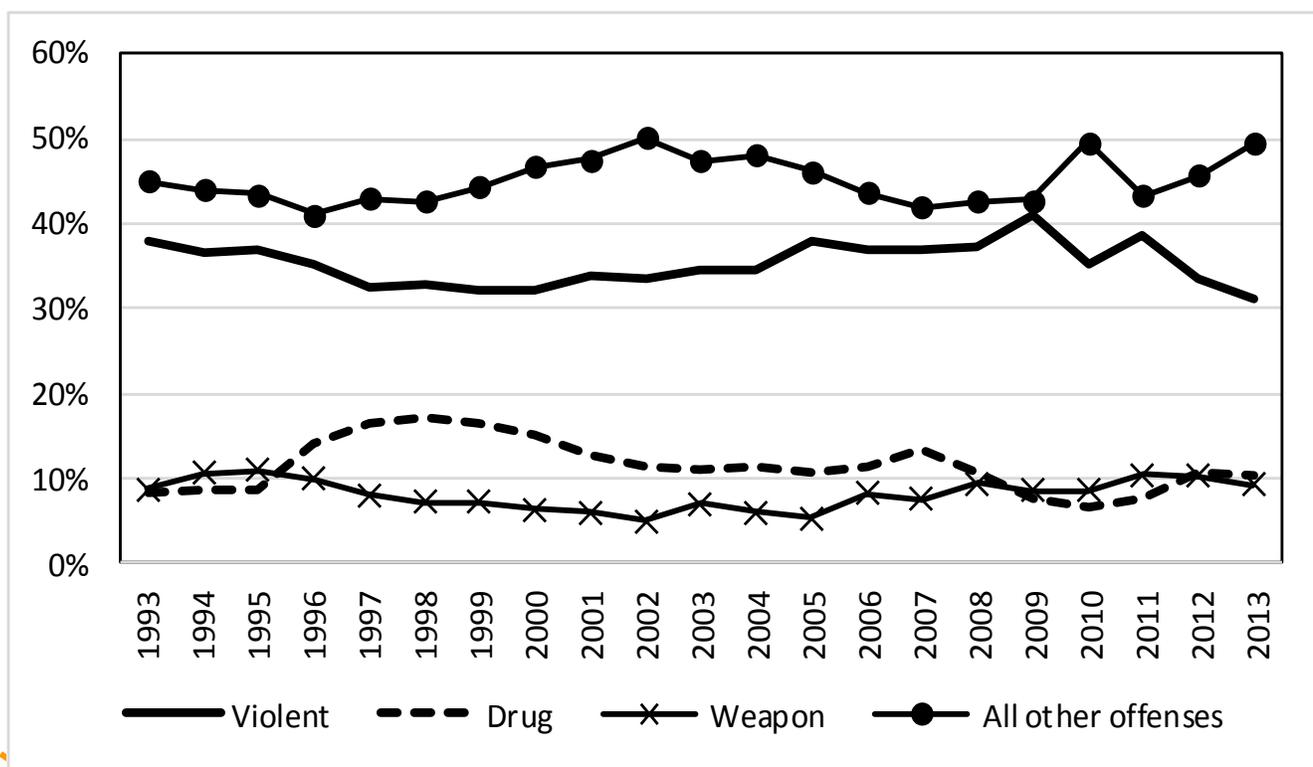
acteristics of the committed youth, a number of patterns emerged. For example, one out of every five juveniles committed to IDJJ for a violent crime were committed for a Class X felony, compared to less than 1% of the non-violent offense commitments. One of the biggest differences revealed in the bivariate analyses between juveniles committed to IDJJ for a drug offenses versus those committed for other offenses was the juvenile's race and committing county. Almost 90% of the juveniles committed to IDJJ for a drug-law violation were African-American, compared to 50% of juveniles committed for other crimes. Similarly, almost 75% of juveniles committed for a drug offense were sentenced in Cook County, compared to 32% of the juveniles admitted for other crimes being sentenced in Cook County. Still, the proportion of IDJJ admissions accounted for by drug-law violations is substantially smaller than among admissions to adult prison in Illinois, where 40% of court admissions were accounted for by drug-law violations during the same time period.

Patterns similar to those seen with the admissions to IDJJ for drug-law violations were seen when admission for weapon offenses were examined. For example, nearly 90 percent of juveniles committed for a weapon offense were non-white, compared to 65 percent of youth admitted for non-weapon crimes. In terms of the youth's committing county, 57 percent of juveniles committed for a weapon offense were from Cook County, compared to 35 percent of youth admitted for non-weapon crimes.

Conclusions

A number of general conclusions can be made based on the preceding analyses. First, during the 1990s, increased admissions to IDJJ both from court as well as those resulting from technical violations of parole were seen. In terms of these increases in court admissions, increased admissions were seen for both male and female youth, as well as across each of the different crime types. However, proportionately larger in-

Figure 6: Percent IDJJ Admissions, by Current Crime Type, 1993-2013





For more information about the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, please contact:

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<https://www.illinois.gov/idjj>

The analyses presented in this report were developed by students enrolled in Loyola's Graduate Program in Criminal Justice and Criminology as part of their Spring 2014 Semester Applied Data Analysis and Statistics class.

For more information about this class, Loyola's Graduate Program in Criminal Justice and Criminology, or the analyses performed by the students, please contact:

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creases were seen in female admissions, as well as admissions for drug-law violations. As a result, the proportion of admission accounted for by females increased during the 1990s, as did the proportion of admissions accounted for by drug-law violators.

However, since the 1990s, decreases in court admissions have been seen across all crime types, both genders, and across different age groups. The other significant trend evident in the analyses is that despite the significant reduction in admissions to IDJJ from the courts since the early 2000s, the number and proportion of admissions accounted for by technical parole violators has not decreased. By 2013, technical parole violators accounted for one-half of all admissions to IDJJ.

In terms of age, it appears that there has been a larger decrease in the number of relatively young youth (i.e., those under 15) committed to IDJJ than among older youth. As a result, the average age of youth committed to IDJJ has increased, from roughly 15.4 during the 1990s and early 2000s, to an average of 15.9 among youth committed in 2013. As a result, the proportion of youth admitted to IDJJ from the courts accounted for by juveniles under the age of 15 has decreased. During the 1990s and early 2000s, roughly 1 out of every 7 youth admitted to IDJJ were accounted for by those under 15 years old, but by 2013, only one out of every 10 youth are that young.

Information Source

The figures on the following pages summarize the characteristics of youth admitted to Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities from 1993 through 2013. The data used to produce the figures were generated from IDJJ's Juvenile Tracking System (JTS), a computer system maintained by IDOC as part of the shared services agreement with DJJ, and were provided by IDOC's Planning and Research Unit. The majority of the data entered into JTS and extracted for statistical analyses come from court documents submitted upon a youth's commitment to IDJJ, and some self-reported information obtained from the youth during the Reception and Classification (R&C) process. More detailed information may be included in the hard-copies of social history reports, assessments, and other documents submitted by county probation departments for youth committed to IDJJ, but the format and degree of detail of this information varies considerably from county to county, and not all of the information provided by committing counties is automated in JTS. In addition, a variety of other information systems are used to track programming, services and behaviors of youth in IDJJ, however, the data are not included in the following analyses.

In the future, students enrolled in Loyola's Criminal Justice and Criminology Applied Data Analysis and Statistics class will perform additional analyses to support IDJJ and other juvenile justice practitioners and policy makers.