



Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice: Overall Arrests in Illinois, by Gender

Research Brief

Prepared by Ela Wiedbusch as part of Loyola's Fall 2017 *Applied Crime and Justice Research: Focus on Women in Prison* class. This class is conducting research to understand the factors that have influenced the trends and patterns of women sentenced to prison in Illinois, and this research brief is one in a series coming from this class.

Data Sources: Data used for this research brief were aggregated from Illinois Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) system records by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA).

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The Center promotes fair, informed, effective and ethical criminal justice approaches through collaborative interdisciplinary research, professional development and targeted projects.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This brief describes custodial arrest patterns and trends for men and women arrested in Illinois between 2005 and 2017. Custodial arrests involve those where the police take someone into custody and fingerprint them. Analyses of arrests over time included arrests for both felonies and misdemeanors, and were based on the state fiscal year (SFY) when the arrest occurred. More detailed analyses were also performed to compare the characteristics of women and men arrested specifically for felony-level offenses in terms of age, race, the county where the arrest occurred, the felony-class of the arrest offense, and the criminal history of the arrestee.

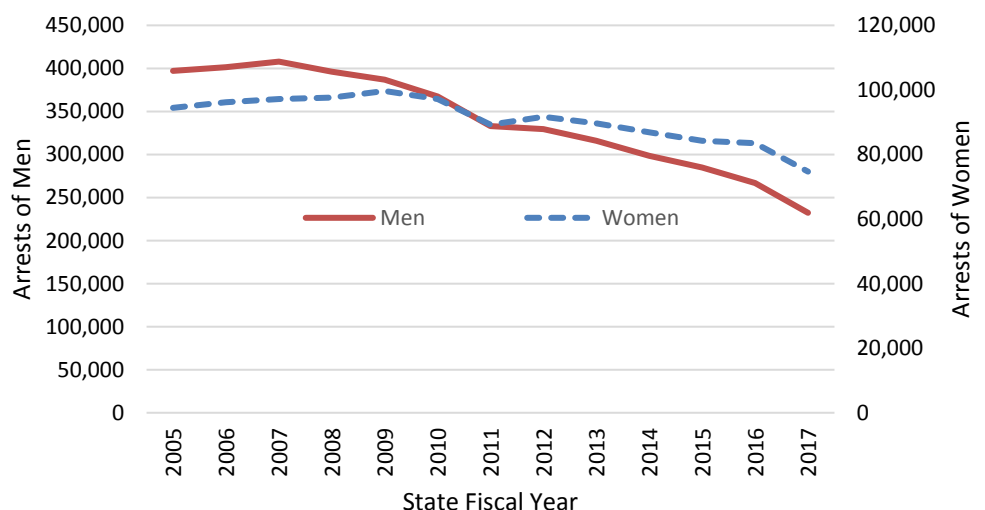
Numbers, Rates and Proportion of Arrests

During the period examined, women accounted for 21% of all custodial arrests in Illinois. Between SFY 2005 and 2017, the number of arrests involving adult women in Illinois for all crimes combined decreased, falling from 94,445 in 2005 to 74,700 in 2017, or about a 21% decrease. Similarly, during that same period, the number of arrests involving men in Illinois also decreased, falling from 397,200 in 2005 to 232,277 in 2017, or a 42% decrease (Figure 1, below).

When arrest rates were examined to account for changes in the population during this period, a similar pattern was evident. Between SFY 2005 and 2017, the overall arrest rate of women in Illinois decreased 22%, falling from 2,380 per 100,000 women between 18 and 64 years of age in 2005 to 1,858 per 100,000 in 2017. By comparison, during that same period, the overall arrest rate of men in

Figure 1: Total Arrests in Illinois, by Gender

(Note: 2 Different Axes)



Illinois decreased 42%, falling from 10,115 per 100,000 men to 5,827 per 100,000 in 2017.

Because the arrest rate for women decreased less than arrests of men in Illinois, women accounted for an increasing *proportion* of the total arrests. For example, in SFY 2005 women accounted for 19% of custodial arrests statewide, but by SFY 2017 they accounted for 24% of custodial arrests.

Demographics of Arrestee and Location of Arrest

The characteristics of women and men arrested specifically for *felony*-level offenses were also compared in terms of age, race, the county where the arrest occurred, the felony class of the arrest, and the criminal history of the arrestee. For these analyses, CHRI data for those arrested during the period from calendar year 2012 to 2014 were examined.

There was a statistically significant, albeit weak, relationship between the arrestee's gender and their age and race. Specifically, women arrested for felony offenses were slightly older than men arrested for these offenses. Women arrested were an average age of 31.7 years old, compared to men, who were an average age of 31.2 years old. In terms of the relationship between gender and race, again, a slight difference was noted: 57% of women and 49% of men arrested for felony offenses were white.

Additionally, there were differences between women and men when comparisons were made as to where the arrest occurred. Women were more likely to be arrested outside of Cook County than men, although the relationship was weak; 64% of women arrested for felony offenses were arrested outside of Cook County, compared to 51% of men.

Current Felony Class and Criminal History

Women and men arrested for felony-level offenses also differed in the classification of their current offense and their prior criminal history. In general, women arrestees tended to be charged with less serious felony-class offenses than men. Of the women charged with felony offenses, 44% were charged with a Class 3 or 4 felony,

compared to 40% of the men. Further, only 3% of women were charged with Murder or a Class X felony, compared to 6% of the men.

Women arrested for a felony also had less extensive criminal histories than men, including fewer prior arrests, convictions, felony convictions and prison sentences. Women had an average of 5.9 prior arrests while men had an average of 9.8 prior arrests. Similarly, 52% of women arrested for felony crimes had prior convictions while 63% of the men had prior convictions. Further, 31% of women arrested for a felony had at least one prior felony conviction while 47% of men had at least one prior felony conviction. Finally, only 14% of the women arrested in Illinois for a felony offense had been previously sentenced to prison, compared to 29% of the men.

Sentencing and Use of Prison

Among the women arrested and convicted for a felony-level offense between 2012 and 2014, 29% were sentenced to prison, compared to 52% of the men convicted of a felony. After statistically controlling for other individual and case characteristics, women were still less likely to be sentenced to prison than men convicted of a felony.

Conclusion

Overall, the number of women and men arrested in Illinois has decreased, although the decrease was larger for men than women. Arrests for non-violent offenses were the most prevalent crimes for both men and women, accounting for 80% of all arrests in SFY 2017. Although the characteristics of women and men arrested for felony-level offenses differed slightly in terms of age and race, larger differences between women and men were noted when comparisons were made by the location of the arrest, the felony class of the offense, and the extent and nature of the arrestee's criminal history.

The large decrease in arrests of women, coupled with their less extensive criminal histories, can be used to better understand the trends in women being processed through the justice system and the likelihood of their being sentenced to prison if convicted of a felony.