



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

Research Brief

Prepared by Beatriz Reiner 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 Source: 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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INTRODUCTION AND TRENDS

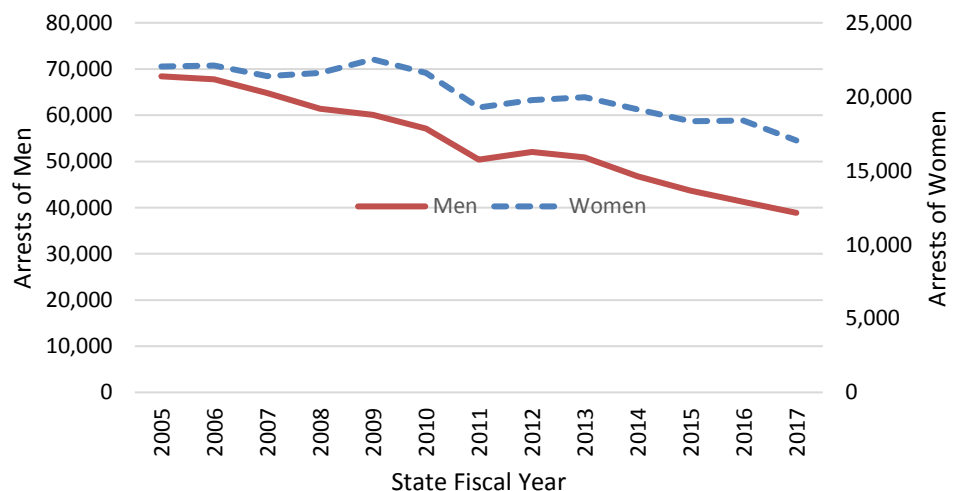
This brief describes custodial arrest patterns and trends for men and women who were arrested for property crimes in Illinois between 2005 and 2017. Custodial arrests involve those where the police take someone into custody and fingerprint them. Analyses of property arrests over time included arrests for both felonies and misdemeanors, and were based on the state fiscal year (SFY) when the arrest occurred. Property crimes include theft, home invasion, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson. 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 Arrest

During the period examined, women accounted for 27% of all custodial arrests for property crimes in Illinois. Between state fiscal year (SFY) 2005 and 2017, the *number* of arrests involving adult women in Illinois for property crimes decreased, falling from 22,033 in 2005 to 17,042 in 2017, or a 23% decrease. Similarly, during that same period, the number of arrests involving men in Illinois for property crimes decreased, falling from 68,418 in 2005 to 38,867 in 2017, or a 43% decrease (Figure 1, below). During SFY 2017, property crimes accounted for 23% of all arrests of adult women in Illinois.

When arrest *rates* were examined to account for changes in the population during the period examined, a similar pattern was evident. Between SFY 2005 and 2017,

Figure 1: Arrests for Property Crime in Illinois, by Gender
(Note: 2 Different Axes)



the property crime arrest rate of women in Illinois decreased 23%, falling from 555 per 100,000 women between 18 and 64 years of age in 2005 to 424 per 100,000 in 2017. By comparison, during that same period, the property crime arrest rate of men in Illinois decreased 44%, falling from 1,742 per 100,000 men to 975 per 100,000 in 2017.

Because the arrests of women for property crimes decreased less than arrests of men in Illinois, women accounted for an increasing *proportion* of the total arrests for property crimes. In SFY 2005 women accounted for 24% of the arrests statewide for property crimes, but by 2017 they accounted for 30% of these arrests.

Demographics of Arrestee and Location of Arrest

The characteristics of women and men arrested specifically for *felony*-level property 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 property crimes were slightly older than men arrested for these offenses. Women arrested for felony property offenses were an average of 31.6 years old, compared to men, who were an average of 29.2 years old. In terms of the relationship between gender and race, again, a slight difference was noted; 58% of women arrested for property crimes were white, compared to 52% of the men arrested for these offenses.

Additionally, there were differences between women and men when comparisons were made as to where the arrest occurred. Specifically, women were more likely to be arrested for property crime outside of Cook County than men, although the relationship was weak; 74% of women arrested for property offenses were arrested outside Cook County, compared to 64% of men being arrested outside Cook County.

Current Felony Class & Criminal History

Women and men arrested for felony-level property 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 arrested for a felony level crime, 65% were charged with a Class 3 or 4

felony, compared to 45% of the men. On the other hand, only 8% of women were charged with a Class X or Class 1 felony, compared to 17% of the men arrested for felony property offenses.

In addition to the *current* felony class of the arrest charge being less serious, women arrested for a felony also had less extensive criminal *histories* than men, including fewer prior arrests, convictions, felony convictions and prison sentences. Of the women, the average number of prior arrests for any crime was 6.1, compared to an averaged 10 prior arrests for men. Similarly, 54% of women arrested for felony crimes had a prior conviction for any offense, compared to 60% among the men. Further, 35% of the women arrested for a felony had at least one prior *felony* conviction for any offense, while 46% of the men had at least one prior felony conviction. Finally, only 16% of the women arrested in Illinois for a felony offense had been previously sentenced to prison, compared to 30% of the men.

Sentencing and Use of Prison

Among the women arrested and convicted of a felony-level property offense between 2012 and 2014, 29% were sentenced to prison, compared to 52% of the men. 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-level property offense.

Conclusion

Overall, the number of women and men arrested for a property crime in Illinois has decreased, although the decrease was larger for men than women. Arrests for criminal damage/trespass and theft offenses were the most prevalent property crimes for both men and women, with these offenses accounting for 80% of all property crime arrests in SFY 2017. Although there were slight differences between women and men arrested for property felony-level offenses when age and race were compared, larger differences were noted when comparisons were made regarding the felony class of the offense, and the extent and nature of the arrestee's criminal history.

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