



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

Research Brief

Prepared by Avery Pankratz 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 METHODOLOGY

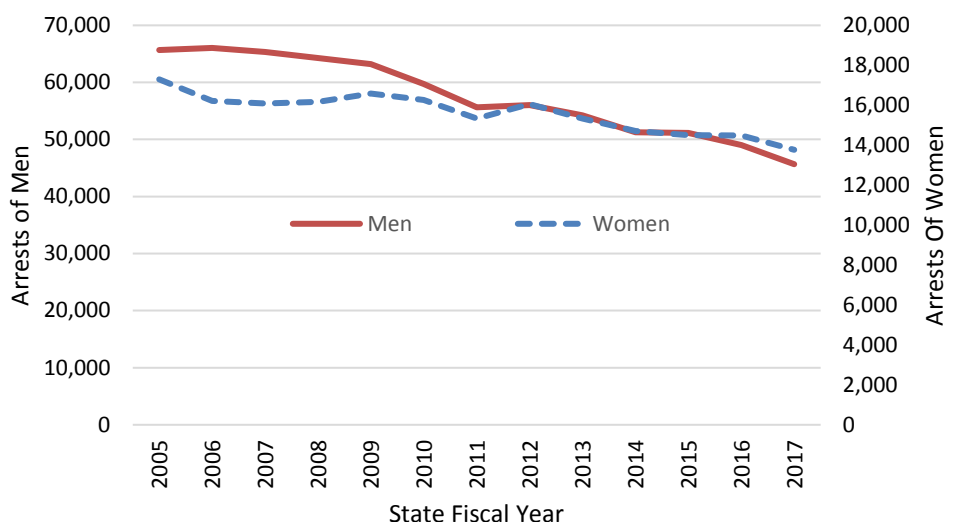
This brief describes custodial arrest patterns and trends for men and women who were arrested for violent crimes in Illinois between 2005 and 2017. Custodial arrests involve those where the police take someone into custody and fingerprint them. Analyses of violent arrests over time included arrests for both felonies and misdemeanors, and were based on the state fiscal year (SFY) when the arrest occurred. Violent crimes include assault, battery, sexual abuse, sexual assault, robbery, homicide, and kidnapping and intimidation. 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 for violent crimes in Illinois. Between state fiscal year (SFY) 2005 and 2017, the *number* of arrests involving adult women in Illinois for violent crimes decreased, falling from 17,296 in 2005 to 13,769 in 2017, or a 20% decrease. Similarly, during that same period, the number of arrests involvement men in Illinois for violent crimes decreased, falling from 65,646 in 2005 to 45,665 in 2017, or a 30% decrease (Figure 1, below). Violent crimes accounted for 18% of all arrests of adult women in Illinois in SFY 2017.

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, the

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



violent crime arrest rate of women in Illinois decreased 21%, falling from 436 per 100,000 women between 18 and 64 years of age in 2005 to 343 per 100,000 in 2017. By comparison, during that same period, the violent crime arrest rate of men in Illinois decreased 31%, falling from 1,672 per 100,000 men in 2005 to 1,146 per 100,000 in 2017.

Because the arrests of women for violent crimes decreased less than arrests of men for those offenses, women accounted for an increasing *proportion* of the total arrests for violent crimes. For example, in SFY 2005 women accounted for 21% of the arrests statewide for violent crimes, but by 2017 they accounted for 23% of these arrests.

Demographics of Arrestee and Location of Arrest

The characteristics of women and men arrested specifically *felony*-level violent 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 violent crimes were slightly younger than men arrested for these same offenses. Women were an average of 28.0 years old, compared to men, who were an average of 28.5 years old. In terms of the relationship between gender and race, again, a slight difference was noted; 50% of women arrested for violent crimes were white, compared to 47% 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 violent crimes outside of Cook County compared to men arrested for that same type of offense, although the relationship was weak; 75% of women arrested for violent offenses were arrested outside of Cook County, compared to 63% of men being arrested outside of Cook County.

Current Felony Class & Criminal History

Women and men arrested for felony-level violent offenses also differed in the classification of their current offense and their prior criminal history. In general, women arrested for felony-level violent offenses tended to be

charged with less serious felony-class offenses than men. Of the women, 41% were charged with a Class 3 or 4 felony, whereas 31% of the men were charged with a Class 3 or 4 felony. Similarly, while only 11% of women were charged with Murder or a Class X felony, 22% of the men were charged with Murder or a Class X Felony.

In addition to the *current* felony class of the arrest charge being less serious, women arrested for violent crimes also had less extensive criminal *histories* than men. Women had fewer prior arrests, with an average of 3.9, than men, who had an average of 7.9. Similarly, only 31% of women arrested for violent crimes had a prior conviction for any offense, whereas 57% of men had at least one prior conviction. More specifically, 20% of women had at least one prior *felony* conviction, compared to 41% of men. Finally, only 7% of the women arrested in Illinois for a violent felony offense had been previously sentenced to prison, compared to 25% of the men arrested for a violent offense.

Sentencing and the Use of Prison

Among the women arrested and convicted of a felony-level violent offense between 2012 and 2014, 36% were sentenced to prison, compared to 58% of the men. Even 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 violent offense.

Conclusion

Overall, the number of women and men arrested for a violent crime in Illinois has decreased, although the decrease was larger for men than women. Arrests for assault and battery offenses were the most prevalent violent crimes among both men and women, accounting for 89% of all violent crime arrests in SFY 2017. Although there were slight differences between women and men arrested for violent felony-level offenses when age and race were compared, larger differences were noted when comparisons were made regarding whether the arrest took place outside of Cook County, the felony class of the offense, and the extent and nature of the arrestee's criminal history.

The decrease in arrests of women for violent offenses, 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.