

Conclusion

Trends and Issues 2008 provides a timely overview of the Illinois criminal justice system. The first document of its kind in more than a decade, this report is intended to serve as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, and anyone else who is interested in crime and justice in Illinois.

Several key points were identified in the data analyses for this report. They include:

- Statewide, more than six million index offenses were reported to law enforcement between 1995 and 2005. This was a 15 percent reduction in total reported offenses from the previous 11-year period, 1984 through 1994.
- Illinois experienced a continual downward trend in the number of reported violent and property index offenses from 1995 through 2005, a trend that also was seen nationwide. From 1995 through 2005, the number of index offenses known to law enforcement decreased by 28 percent.
- Statewide, more than 1.3 million violent and property index arrests were made between 1995 and 2005. This was a 9 percent decrease in total volume of index arrests from the previous 11-year period.
- Between 1995 and 2005, a steady decrease was seen in the number of violent and property index arrests in Illinois. The 33 percent decrease in index arrests statewide was greater than the 24 percent decline reported nationally.
- In 2005, felony and misdemeanor filings accounted for 11 percent of all cases filed in Illinois courts (criminal, civil, traffic, family, and other).
- In 2005, felony filings increased by about 34 percent in urban and collar counties and by 40 percent in rural counties. In Cook County, felony filings decreased 22 percent, while misdemeanor filings decreased 20 percent statewide.
- Incarcerated populations at the local level (county jail), state level (IDOC prisons), and federal level (federal penitentiaries) have increased in size from FY95 to FY05.
- Admissions to IDOC increased in almost every year from 1995 to 2005, with the technical violation and recidivism rates at all-time highs in latter years.
- A 27 percent increase was seen in the juvenile arrest rate from 2000 to 2005.
- A 7 percent increase in the rate of juvenile detention admissions and a 45 percent decrease in court commitments to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice was seen from FY99 to FY04.

- Black youth in Illinois were four times more likely to be arrested and incarcerated in 2004 and four times more likely to be detained in 2005, compared to white youth.
- The statewide rate of domestic offenses was 903 per 100,000 persons in 2005.
- The statewide rate of crimes against children was 309 per 100,000 juveniles in 2005.
- The statewide rate of verified child abuse and neglect was 852 per 100,000 juveniles in 2005.

Trends and Issues 2008 also highlighted special topics in the field of criminal justice that have garnered increased or renewed attention in Illinois over the past few years, including:

- **Gangs.** There are still many recognized street gangs operating in Illinois. Gangs are highly active in illegal drug trafficking activities, with Chicago acting as the hub for drug distribution across the country. Gangs were also found to have a high level of involvement in felonious assault and firearms possession, and a moderate level of involvement in auto theft, burglary and firearms trafficking.
- **Identity theft.** Law enforcement officers face many challenges with identity theft, since information can be stolen simply from a lost wallet, or via technology such as computers, cell phones, and hand-held electronic devices. Statistics from the Federal Trade Commission reveal that in 2006, the Illinois identity theft rate was 78.6 victims per 100,000 persons, making the state 12th in the nation with 10,080 identity theft complaints.
- **Specialized courts.** Community members have an important role to play in helping the justice system identify, prioritize, and solve local problems. Community courts allow victims and residents accessibility to and participation in the justice process. Drug courts provide addicted defendants with drug treatment as an alternative to incarceration. These courts channel non-violent, drug-addicted defendants into highly structured and closely monitored drug treatment programs. Mental health courts are local initiatives that have adopted the drug court model and focus initially on offenders diagnosed with both substance abuse and mental illness. These courts help obtain mental health treatment for individuals accused of crimes and who are mentally ill.
- **Forensic DNA evidence:** One of the best crime-solving tools of the 21st century, DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, represents the intersection of science and criminal justice. Forensic DNA evidence has the ability to solve criminal cases—and even prevent future crime—but the use of DNA to identify and convict criminal offenders is relatively new.
- **Substance abuse treatment in prisons:** Southwestern Correctional Center and Sheridan Correctional Center have drug treatment programs based on a therapeutic community approach. Originally derived from social learning theory, therapeutic communities are highly structured treatment modes using peer groups to address inmate lifestyle issues across multiple dimensions. Drug use and criminal behavior are viewed as disorders of

the whole person, indicating a more comprehensive treatment modality is required above standard drug treatment services alone.

- **Juvenile justice reform initiatives:** There are several Illinois juvenile justice reform initiatives whose goals are improving the juvenile justice process for minors in the system. These initiatives include the Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Initiative, Disproportionate Minority Contact, Juvenile Detentions Alternatives Initiative, Models for Change, and Redeploy Illinois.
- **Human trafficking:** Often referred to as modern day slavery, human trafficking for sex or labor is a growing national and international issue. Commercial sexual exploitation of children in the United States is a multimillion dollar industry supported with revenue from prostitution and pornography.

Analyzing available data and pinpointing emerging criminal justice issues are the first steps in developing innovative, problem-solving strategies. *Trends and Issues 2008* serves as a starting point for information on the latest trends in Illinois crime and law enforcement, the needs and demographics of victims across the state, and innovative court, corrections, and juvenile justice strategies.