

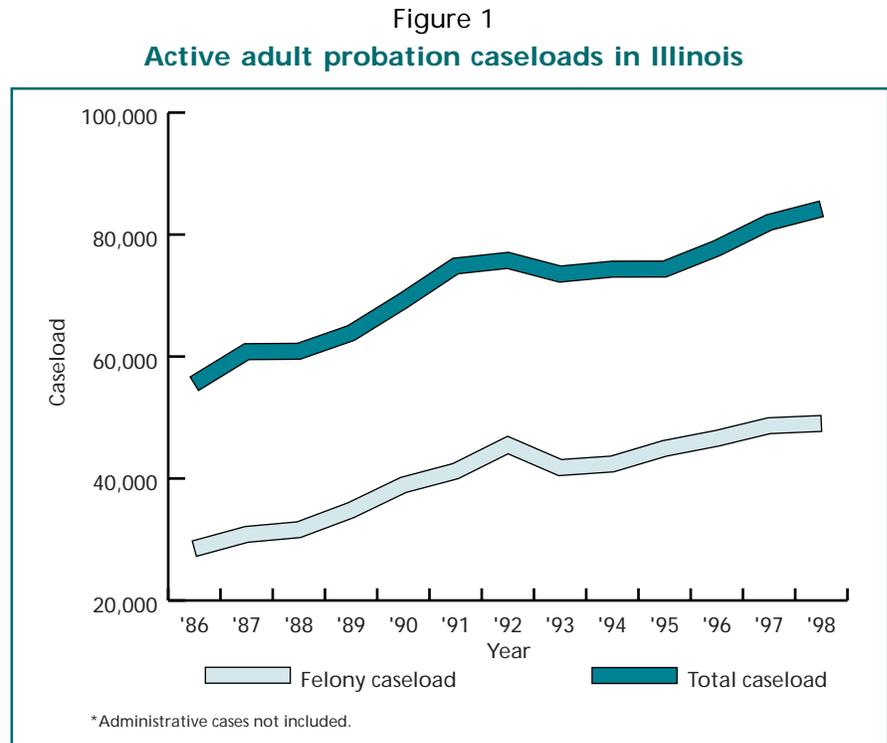
Probation trends in Illinois

By Tracy Hahn

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, the adult probation population grew 3.7 percent in 1998 — exceeding the average annual growth of 3.1 percent since 1990. There were nearly three times as many adults on probation as there were in prison, although the rate of growth in the national prison population has exceeded that of probation in the last decade. When administrative cases, or cases that require significantly less supervision, are included, Illinois probation caseloads totaled 125,578 at the end of 1998. National figures for January 1998 show that the rate of adults on actively supervised and administrative probation (including federal probation) in Illinois was 1,488 per 100,000 adult residents — lower than the national rate of 1,705, and the Midwest rate of 1,664. Illinois' rates are similar to the rates of other states that have major population centers, such as New York (1,393) and California (1,366). However, the Illinois rate is lower than that of Florida (2,101) and Texas (3,140). The difference between state rates, however, may be attributed more to differences in state sanctioning practices and varying natures of the crimes, rather than differences in state probation populations.

Probation caseloads

An increasing number of adult offenders in Illinois are on probation, and probation caseloads exceed



jail and prison populations combined. At the end of 1998, 84,213 adults were on active probation under state jurisdiction, a 15 percent increase since 1993 and almost 3 percent more than 1997 (Figure 1). In 1998, 42 percent of adults on active probation in Illinois were from Cook County. This represents about a 6 percent decline in Cook County adult probation caseloads from 1997 (Figure 2). By comparison, other regions in Illinois experienced increased adult probation caseloads between 1997 and 1998. Both urban and rural counties saw an increase of more than 6 percent, while the five collar counties surrounding Cook County saw an aggregate increase of nearly 25

percent. The increase was most significant between 1993 and 1998, where total active adult caseloads in

Illinois' probation system is operated by the courts and supervision is locally administered by individual probation departments. The Probation Services Division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) oversees the statewide delivery of probation services and provides some financial support. Probationers are supervised by local probation officers and must adhere to court-ordered conditions.

counties outside of Cook increased between 35 and 38 percent.

Statewide juvenile probation caseloads also have increased steadily, with 11,932 juveniles on active probation in Illinois in 1998 — an increase of 43 percent since 1993. When probation, supervision, and other forms of monitoring are combined, the juvenile caseload totaled 19,615. Cook County and rural counties saw increases of 32 and 37 percent, respectively, since 1993; urban and collar counties experienced the largest increases in their juvenile probation caseload, 49 percent and 85 percent, respectively. Cook County accounted for 41 percent of juveniles on probation in 1998, with little change in caseload since 1997. Rural, urban, and collar counties saw slight increases — between 2 and 4 percent — in their juvenile probation caseloads.

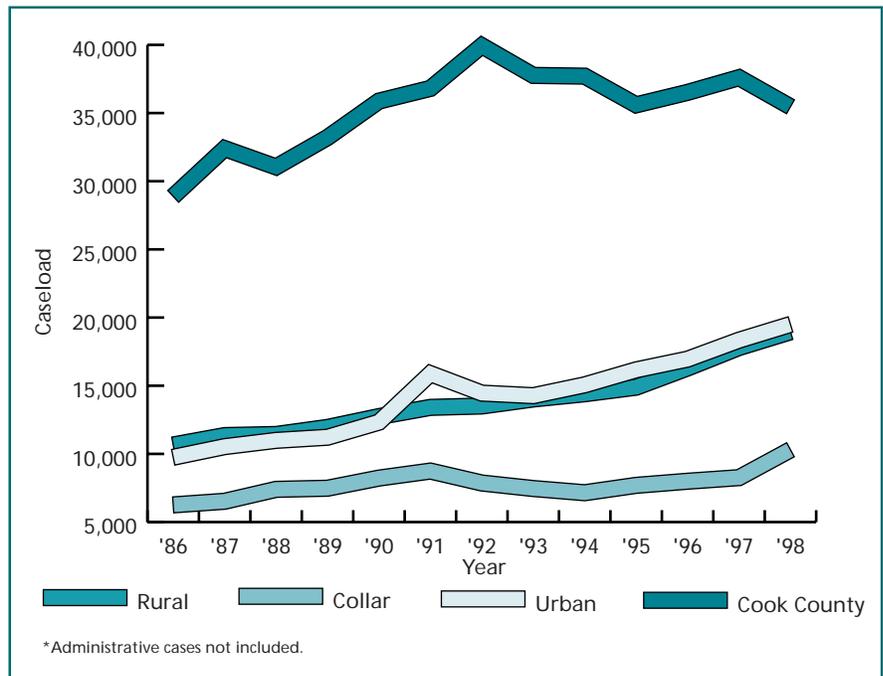
Felony probation

The number of adult offenders on probation for a felony offense also has increased, and probation continued to be the most frequently imposed sanction for convicted felons statewide. In 1998, 49,028 probationers in Illinois, or 58 percent, were serving a felony sentence. Regionally, about 60 percent of active probationers in urban, collar, and Cook counties were serving a felony probation sentence in 1998. Rural counties had the lowest percentage of felony probationers (44 percent).

Felony probation caseloads between 1997 and 1998 increased 7 percent in urban, rural, and collar counties, while Cook County saw a 5 percent decrease. Between 1993 and 1998, felony probation caseloads increased in all regions (Figure 3).

While felony offenders account for the largest proportion of active probationers statewide, non-DUI misdemeanor offenders accounted for nearly one-quarter of the probation caseload in 1998. DUI offenders on standard probation

Figure 2
Active adult probation caseloads by region



accounted for 15 percent of the caseload. Traffic offenders comprised the smallest percentage — about 3 percent of the caseload.

Probation sentences

In 1998, more than 63,800 convicted felons were sentenced in Illinois' circuit courts. More than one-half of the felons received a probation sentence (32,716). Felony probation sentences have increased 176 percent in the last 10 years, while prison sentences have increased 212 percent. For a more detailed discussion of sentencing trends in Illinois, see *Trends and Issues Update Vol. 1, No. 5*.

Characteristics of adult probationers

A 1997 study by AOIC and the Authority provided detailed information on a sample of adult probationers in Illinois. The majority of probationers discharged during the study period were male (80 percent), white (58 percent), and averaged 31 years of age. Probationers from Cook County tended to be slightly older and almost

two-thirds were nonwhite. Regarding prior involvement in the criminal justice system, 61 percent of probationers discharged during the study period did not have a prior adult conviction before they were sentenced to probation. For more information, see *Results of the 1997 Illinois Probation Outcome Study*, published by the Authority in December 1998.

A separate study of adult and juvenile probation intakes during 1990 and 1995 also provided additional information regarding Illinois probationers. According to the 1995 study, the percentage of drug offenders entering probation in 1995 with prior criminal records increased from previous years. In 1990, 44 percent of probation intakes for a drug offense had no prior arrests, and 39 percent had two or more arrests. In 1995, probation intakes for a drug offense showed 24 percent with no prior arrest, but 61 percent had two or more arrests. The study also revealed that the percentage of juveniles entering probation for a drug offense increased between 1990 and 1995. Cook County experienced the most significant

jump, with a threefold increase in the number of juvenile drug offenders entering probation.

Probationers ordered to treatment

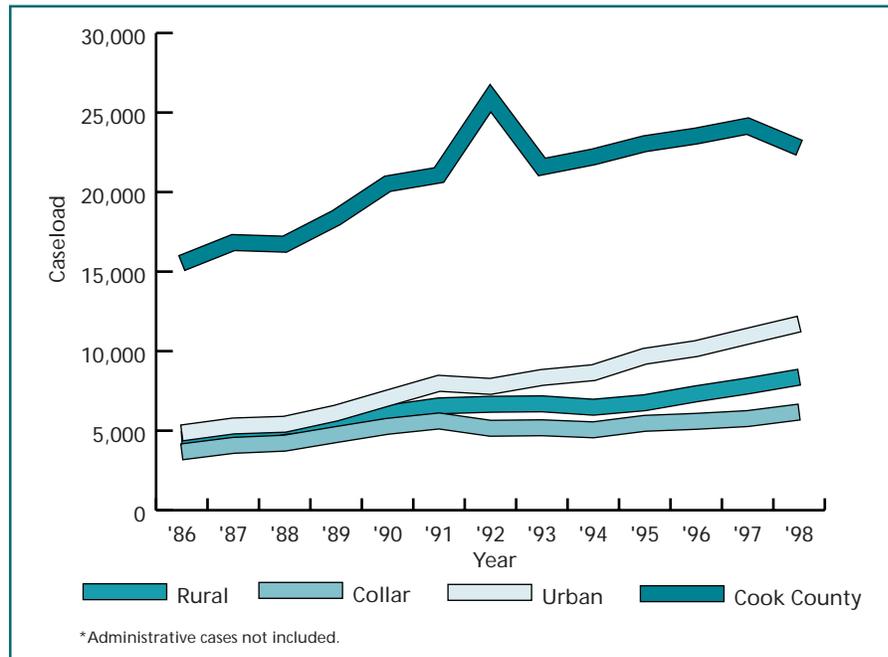
Data suggest a large percentage of probationers in Illinois have a history of abusing drugs or alcohol. The 1997 probation exit survey showed that more than 55 percent of Illinois probationers discharged during the study period had a history of substance abuse involving drugs, alcohol, or both. In adult cases, 17,384 treatment programs were ordered as a condition of probation in 1998. Treatment for drug and/or alcohol abuse was most frequently ordered (55 percent of treatment orders), followed by orders to undergo substance abuse assessment and referral (22 percent), mental health treatment (20 percent), and sex offender treatment (3 percent).

Probation outcomes

The 1997 exit survey regarding outcome and discharge status of probationers revealed that nearly three-quarters of adult probationers in Illinois successfully completed probation. Nearly 14 percent were negatively discharged, indicating there was a revocation of probation for either a technical violation or new offense, or a commitment to the Illinois Department of Corrections. Another 14 percent received neutral discharges, which include unsatisfactory terminations, absent or missing probationers, and other noncategorized discharges.

Those most likely to have a negative discharge from probation include younger probationers with histories of drug abuse and prior involvement in the criminal justice system. Probationers convicted of burglary and drug offenses were most likely to have a technical violation or be rearrested while on probation.

Figure 3
Felony adult probation caseloads by region



Specialized probation

While most adult probationers were placed on standard supervised probation, more serious offenders were placed on Intensive Probation Supervision (IPS), a highly structured surveillance-oriented program that renders the most restrictive supervision in the first part of a

probationer's sentence. Most offenders continued to serve an additional period of supervision after completing the specialized supervision program. The 17 departments that administered specialized probation programs in 1998 reported a combined IPS caseload of 1,347. Cook County reported the highest caseload (720). Because these

About the data

- Annual aggregate data on sentences imposed on convicted felons were taken from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) *Annual Report to the Supreme Court of Illinois*;
- End-of-year probation caseload data and treatment orders were reported to AOIC by individual probation departments and published in AOIC's *Annual Report to the Supreme Court of Illinois*;
- National caseload data were collected from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin *Probation and Parole in the United States, 1998*;
- Probationer-level data were collected by the AOIC's Probation Services Division during a sample period in 1997 and published in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority report *Results of the 1997 Illinois Adult Probation Outcome Study*, and
- Probationer-level intake data were collected by the AOIC's Probation Services Division during a sample period in 1990 and 1995 and published in the Authority report *A Comparative Analysis of Probation Intakes in Illinois*.

programs are equipped to handle high-risk felony offenders, they provide an alternative to incarceration and free up prison space for more serious offenders.

AOIC also has developed specialized DUI probation programs. In 1998, 16 probation departments in Illinois operated specialized DUI programs. Probationers supervised under these programs are determined to be chemically dependent and have had a previous DUI conviction. The program involves referrals to treatment and increased monitoring. While the percentage of adults serving a standard probation sentence for DUI in Illinois increased 10 percent between 1997 and 1998, the number of probationers on specialized DUI probation remained stable, with a caseload of 4,856 in 1998. A majority of these cases were from Cook County (62 percent).

The Authority, through federal funds under the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement

Assistance Program, has provided funding for several specialized probation projects in response to growing concern over the supervision of domestic violence and sex offenders in the community. Specialized domestic violence probation projects operate in 14 counties, and specialized sex offender probation projects have been implemented in eight counties. These projects incorporate treatment, increased office and field contacts, and probation officers specially trained to supervise domestic violence and sex offenders. To better measure the effectiveness of these specialized probation projects, as well as document implementation efforts, many of the projects are evaluated by outside researchers. The evaluation findings aid in policy-making decisions and assist in replicating the projects in other counties.

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