

Females in the juvenile justice system

Although fewer females enter the juvenile justice system than males, the past decade has brought an increase in female involvement with the juvenile justice system. In 2007, National Center for Juvenile Justice research found that female involvement at several points in the juvenile justice system had increased significantly across the nation.¹

This increase signals a greater need for female-specific programming. But before a complete understanding of the breadth and depth of the need for gender-specific programming can be established, the extent to which females are involved in the juvenile justice system must be understood.

The Cook County Bureau of Public Safety established the GIRLS LINK Collaborative to address this issue by changing policies that affect girls in Cook County's juvenile justice system.²² Although GIRLS LINK does not provide services to delinquent females, the program does work to create avenues for participating agencies to be more responsive to gender-based issues. OJJDP has recognized GIRLS LINK as a national model.

The Cook County Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department established Project RENEW (Reclaim Empower Nurture Embrace Womanhood) in 1998. The purpose of Project RENEW is to create female-responsive programming for female probationers. In each RENEW unit, specifically trained probation officers provide gender sensitive services to female probationers. In addition to trained officers, RENEW also offers special judges to hear RENEW units' cases.

Data summary

Female arrests

Females accounted for 21 percent of all arrests statewide in 2005. A total of 39 percent of all female arrests in 2005 were for violent offenses. In comparison, 28 percent of all male arrests were for violent offenses. However, virtually no difference was seen by gender in property crimes—33.5 percent of female arrests and 33.4 percent of male arrests were for property offenses. *Table 14* depicts the type of offenses for which female youth in Illinois were arrested in 2005.

Table 14
Number and percentage of male and female youth arrests
by offense category, 2005

Type of offense	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	
Violent/person	11,136	28.1%	4,039	39.4%	15,175
Property	13,229	33.4%	3,436	33.5%	16,676
Sex	376	0.9%	18	0.2%	396
Drug	6,665	16.8%	641	6.2%	7,308
Status offense	526	1.3%	348	3.4%	875
Weapons	893	2.3%	109	1.1%	1,002
Other	6,785	17.1%	1,667	16.3%	8,454
Total	39,610	100%	10,258	100%	49,886

Source: Computerized Criminal History System

Females in secure detention

Females accounted for 2,927 of 16,916 admissions to secure detention statewide in 2005 (17 percent). *Table 15* depicts the percentage of male and female detainees by type of offense in 2005.

Table 15
Number of youth detainees by gender and type of offense in Illinois, 2005

Type of Offense	Male		Female		Total*
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	
Violent/Person	1,661	23.3%	667	33.4%	2,328
Property	1,749	24.5%	310	15.5%	2,059
Sex	194	2.7%	5	0.3%	199
Drug	370	5.2%	50	2.5%	420
Status Offense	24	0.3%	7	0.4%	31
Warrant	1,459	20.5%	554	27.7%	2,013
Violations	741	10.4%	183	9.2%	924
Other	936	13.1%	223	11.2%	1,159
Total	7,134	100%	1,999	100%	9,133*

Source: Juvenile Monitoring System

* Cook County data by offense type were unavailable.

Females in corrections

While the percentages of females arrested and detained were 21 and 17 percent respectively, the percentage of females committed to IDOC is much lower. In FY04, females accounted for 11 percent of commitments to IDOC (191 of 1,691 commitments). This finding seems to suggest that the offenses committed by female delinquents are not severe enough to warrant a commitment to IDOC. However, as shown by the analysis on arrests for violent offenses, the

percentage of violent offenses allegedly committed by females is slightly higher. These data seem to indicate that females are either diverted from IDOC more often than their male counterparts or commit crimes that are less violent than those committed by males.

Due to the way data is reported in Illinois, comparisons over time by gender could only be conducted on corrections data. Although overall the number of females committed to IDOC had remained relatively low, the number had increased 65 percent, from 116 in FY95 to 191 in FY04. That same year, the number of male commitments increased 9 percent, from 1,376 to 1,500.

Table 16
Number of youth commitments to IDOC by gender, FY95– FY05

Fiscal Year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	
1995	1,384	93%	102	7%	1,486
1996	1,774	93%	139	7%	1,913
1997	1,982	91%	201	9%	2,183
1998	1,958	90%	205	10%	2,153
1999	1,962	90%	225	10%	2,187
2000	1,633	88%	219	12%	1,852
2001	1,457	87%	222	13%	1,679
2002	1,537	89%	187	11%	1,724
2003	1,500	89%	188	11%	1,687
2004	1,500	89%	191	11%	1,691
2005	1,325	92%	109	8%	1,434
Total	18,012	90%	1,988	10%	20,000

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

The percentage of females committed also increased from FY95 to FY05. Female offenders made up only 7 percent of IDOC’s youth population in 1995. The female population peaked in FY01 at 13 percent before slowly dropping to 8 percent in FY05. *Table 16* outlines the number of youth commitments to IDOC by gender from FY95 to FY05.

Notes

¹ Stahl, Anne L., Charles Puzanchera, Sarah Livsey, Anthony Sladky, Terrence A. Finnegan, Nancy Tierney, and Howard N. Snyder, *Juvenile Court Statistics 2003–2004*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice, March 2007.