SPAC
Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council

Average Offender Profiles

Sentencing policy is often driven by high-profile, extreme cases, but most of the offenders we incarcerate are not extreme cases. To focus the discussion on the "Average Joe," SPAC created these snapshots of average offenders in several offense categories.

These snapshots have no predictive value. The snapshots are not meant to affect decisions in individual cases, nor are they descriptive of any one unique person. In each category, there are many people who fall outside the average profile. Nonetheless, the recurring themes in terms of race, age, educational attainment, and recidivism are important for understanding broad outcomes of our sentencing policies.

The Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (SPAC) is a statutorily created council that does not support or oppose legislation. SPAC offers these profiles to stimulate the discussion of how we are using incarceration and what we want our prison system to accomplish. SPAC was created to collect, analyze and present data from all relevant sources to more accurately determine the consequences of sentencing policy decisions and to review the effectiveness and efficiency of current sentencing policies and practices.

Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) and Criminal History Records Information (CHRI) data were used to determine all the features of the profiles. The results reflect the data, including any inaccuracies or gaps. For example, out-of-state criminal records may be missing. Race and ethnicity are as reported by DOC intake. Where possible, the median (50th percentile) was used rather than averages. On some features, cumulative percentages (education) or pluralities (offense and class types) are used. Further methodology is available upon request.

Kathryn Saltmarsh
Executive Director

Michael Elliott
Governmental Affairs & Communications Advisor

Roger Franklin
Data Manager

Nathaniel Inglis Steinfeld
Research Director

Mark Powers
Senior Research Analyst

John Specker
Research Analyst