

Trends in Illinois crime: 1994-1998

By John Doyle

For the fourth consecutive year, the number of index offenses in Illinois has declined. Total index offenses fell to 606,566 in 1998, compared to 666,492 in 1994. Much of this drop was due to a decline in the number of violent offenses. Property offenses also declined, although, not as drastically as violent offenses.

The five collar counties surrounding Cook County experienced the largest regional decrease in the number of violent offenses, dropping 27.4 percent between 1994 and 1998. During the same period, violent crime fell 25.4 percent in suburban Cook County, and 19.6 percent in Chicago. Also during that period, violent crime declined overall in rural communities, although the number of homicides remained relatively unchanged.

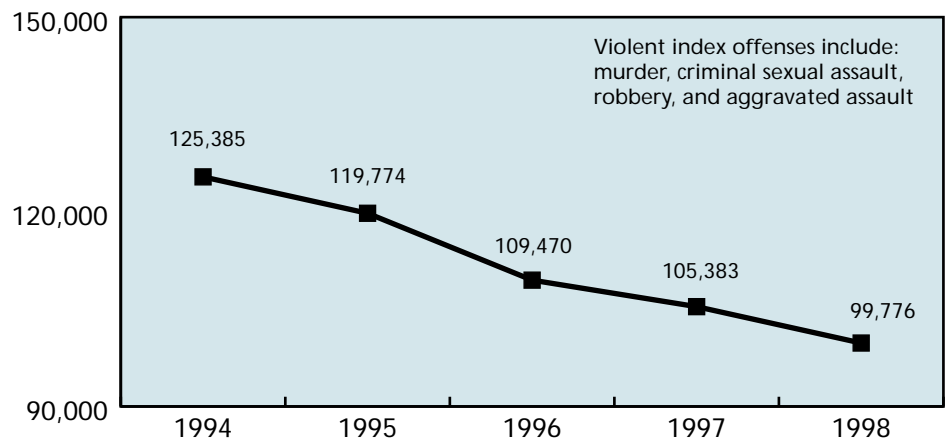
Preliminary figures from the FBI indicate that nationally, serious crime is down for the seventh consecutive year.

Highlights

Between 1994 and 1998 in Illinois:

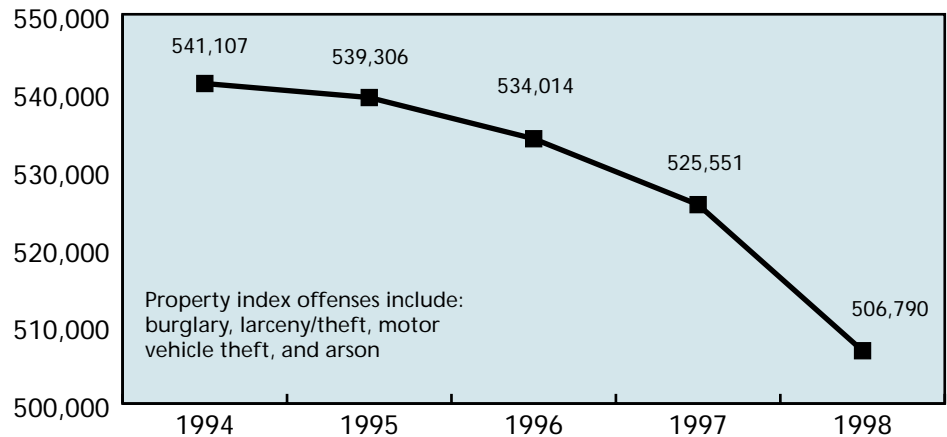
- The number of violent offenses declined 20.4 percent, compared to a 12 percent decline nationally.
- Murders declined by 27 percent.

Figure 1
Violent index offenses in Illinois



Source: Illinois State Police

Figure 2
Property index offenses in Illinois



Source: Illinois State Police

- Criminal sexual assaults fell 19 percent.
- Aggravated assaults, the most frequently reported violent offense, declined 14.8 percent.
- The number of property offenses declined by 6.3 percent.
- Robberies saw the greatest decrease among index crimes, falling just under 30 percent.
- The number of burglaries declined 14.9 percent.

Reported crime and rates decline

Index crimes include violent and property offenses. Violent offenses are

murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property offenses are burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Between 1994 and 1998 the total number of index crimes reported to the Illinois State Police decreased 9 percent. The number of reported property offenses declined by 6.3 percent, and the number of violent offenses declined by 20.4 percent (Figures 1 and 2).

While Illinois' population continues to increase (5.2 percent between 1990 and 1998), the violent offense rate declined from 1,067 offenses for every 100,000 persons in 1994, to 839 offenses for every 100,000 persons in 1998 (Table 1).¹

Based on the 1998 U.S. Census Bureau report, Illinois is the fifth most populous state in the nation. California, Texas, New York, and Florida are the four states with populations greater than Illinois. Table 2 shows the 1994-1997 violent index offense rates for the 10 highest-ranking states (based on population). Based on estimated violent crime rates, Illinois had the second highest throughout the four-year period.² Florida had the highest violent crime rate.

Nationally, the violent offense rate decreased 14.4 percent between 1994 and 1997 (1997 national data is the latest available from the Federal Bureau of Investigations). In Illinois, the decrease was 17 percent. The

Uniform Crime Reports and Crime Rates

UCR program

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program is a nationwide, cooperative statistical effort of more than 16,000 city, county, and state law enforcement agencies. These agencies report police-level data on crime that is brought to their attention to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting section.

In 1972 Illinois instituted mandatory UCR reporting on a statewide basis. Since then, every law enforcement agency in the state has been required to report crime data monthly to the Illinois State Police (ISP). ISP creates and maintains computer files of the Illinois UCR data and supplies this information to the FBI for use in compiling national crime statistics.

After reviewing the index crime data received from local agencies, the Illinois State Police submits this data to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Section. The FBI then uses this data, along with data reported by the other states, to publish *Crime in the United States* on an annual basis.

Crime index

The Crime Index consists of eight crime categories that, when taken together, provide some indication of how much serious crime has occurred in a jurisdiction, region, or state. Each of the eight offenses is called an

“index crime.” There are four violent index crimes — murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault — and four property index crimes — burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In most research, violent crime is analyzed separately from property crime.

Crime rates

Raw crime figures are useful for many purposes, such as for looking at the number of offenses in a single jurisdiction. However, raw numbers are not standardized against the population at risk. In other words, they do not reveal whether a higher amount of crime in one jurisdiction compared with another is a function of the greater number of people who live there. A “crime rate” on the other hand, does provide this type of information. Crime rates are usually calculated as a rate per 100,000 population. The denominator for calculating a crime rate is the “population at risk.” In the case of this report, statewide population figures were used.

$$\frac{\text{Number of offenses} \times 100,000}{\text{State population}} = \text{Offense rate per 100,000 population}$$

largest decrease in the violent offense rate was reported in New York (28.7 percent). Michigan and California both reported decreases of 23 and 21 percent.

New York and California continue to experience the greatest decrease in property offense rates between 1994 and 1997. Property offense rates were down 22 percent in New York, 21 percent in California, 12 percent in Florida and New Jersey, 8 percent in Michigan, 6 percent in Texas, 5 percent

in Illinois, and 3 percent in Georgia. Property offense rates increased slightly in two states: Ohio (3 percent) and Pennsylvania (5 percent).

Notes:

1. According to the most recent estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, Illinois' population increased 5 percent between 1990 and 1998, from 11,446,851 to 12,045,326.

2. Illinois did not submit complete data to the FBI Uniform Crime Division for the years 1994-1998. Consequently, the FBI estimated Illinois' index crime rates.

— *John Doyle is a research analyst with the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.*

Table 1
Number and rate of reported index offenses in Illinois

Violent index crimes	Reported index offenses and rates per 100,000					Percent change in the rate per 100,000
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	1,383 (11.77)	1,226 (10.36)	1,170 (9.88)	1,114 (9.36)	1,008 (8.47)	-28.0%
Criminal sexual assault	7,610 (64.75)	7,234 (61.15)	6,748 (56.96)	6,643 (55.84)	6,156 (51.75)	-20.0%
Robbery	43,085 (366.62)	39,195 (331.32)	35,312 (298.07)	33,434 (281.05)	30,178 (253.68)	-30.8%
Aggravated assault	73,307 (623.78)	72,119 (609.63)	66,240 (559.13)	64,192 (539.61)	62,434 (524.83)	-15.9%
TOTAL	125,385 (1,066.92)	119,774 (1,012.46)	109,470 (924.03)	105,383 (885.87)	99,776 (838.74)	-21.3%
Property index crimes						
Burglary	114,485 (974.17)	107,241 (906.52)	106,366 (897.83)	104,808 (881.04)	97,394 (818.71)	-16%
Larceny/theft	354,832 (3,019.33)	366,246 (3,095.91)	365,866 (3,088.26)	360,192 (3,027.84)	351,431 (2,954.19)	-2.2%
Motor vehicle theft	68,198 (580.31)	62,286 (526.51)	57,921 (488.91)	56,892 (478.24)	54,571 (457.89)	-21.1%
Arson	3,592 (30.57)	3,533 (29.86)	3,861 (32.59)	3,659 (30.76)	3,394 (28.53)	-6.7%
TOTAL	541,107 (4,604.38)	539,306 (4,604.38)	534,014 (4,558.80)	525,551 (4,417.88)	506,790 (4,260.17)	-7.5%

Source: Illinois State Police (ISP), and ICJIA calculations using ISP and U.S. Census Bureau data.

Table 2
Violent offense rates in the 10 largest states

State	Estimated population	Violent index offense rate				Percent change
		1998	1994	1995	1996	
California	(32,666,550)	1,013.0	966.0	862.7	798.3	-21.2%
Texas	(19,759,614)	706.5	663.9	644.4	602.5	-14.7%
New York	(18,175,301)	965.6	841.9	727.0	688.6	-28.7%
Florida	(14,915,980)	1,146.8	1,071.0	1051.0	1,023.6	-10.7%
Illinois	(12,045,326)	1,066.92	1,012.46	924.03	885.87	-17%
Penn.	(12,001,451)	426.7	427.3	432.5	442.1	3.6%
Ohio	(11,209,493)	485.8	482.5	428.7	435.4	-10.4%
Michigan	9,817,242)	766.1	687.8	635.3	590.0	-23.0%
New Jersey	(8,115,011)	614.2	599.8	531.5	492.6	-19.8%
Georgia	(7,642,207)	667.7	657.1	638.7	606.6	-9.2%

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