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Research and Program Evaluation in Illinois: The Extent and Nature of Drug and Violent Crime in Illinois' Counties



A Profile of the Mercer County Criminal and Juvenile Justice Systems

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FOREWORD

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is a state agency created in 1983 to promote community safety by providing public policymakers, criminal justice professionals and others with information, tools and technology needed to make effective decisions that improve the quality of criminal justice in Illinois. The Authority provides an objective system-wide forum for identifying critical problems in criminal justice, developing coordinated and cost-effective strategies, and implementing and evaluating solutions to those problems. The specific powers and duties of the Authority are delineated in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Ch. 20, Sec. 393/7). Two of the Authority's many responsibilities are serving as a clearinghouse of information and research on criminal justice and undertaking research studies to improve the administration of criminal justice.

Since 1994, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has received funds under the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 to document the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the criminal justice system's response to these offenses. As a result of these efforts, the Authority has amassed a large amount of data measuring the extent and nature of drug and violent crime in Illinois and the impact these crimes have had on the criminal justice system. To put this information into the hands of Illinois' criminal justice policymakers in a useful summary format, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has developed profiles of the criminal justice system for each county in Illinois. In 1994, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority produced a series of reports detailing criminal justice system activity levels for each of Illinois' 102 counties. As a result of the positive response by local criminal justice officials, in 1996 the Authority updated and expanded the scope of these reports to reflect current criminal and juvenile justice activity. It is hoped that these 2004 updated reports will be as valuable, if not more, than the original versions. In addition to providing policymakers with an overview of activities across the components of the justice system in their county (law enforcement, courts, and corrections), the profiles also provide perspective by including trends experienced in counties with similar population sizes.

While the data presented in this report are by no means inclusive of all indicators, they do provide a general overview of crime and the criminal justice system's response. In addition, these data are readily available and consistently defined through existing statewide data collection mechanisms.

The information presented in this profile has been provided to the Authority by a number of state agencies, specifically: the Illinois State Police, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, the Illinois Department of Corrections, and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The support and cooperation of these agencies and their staffs have helped make this report an informative and timely source of information on the activities of the criminal justice system in Illinois.



The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's
Web-based clearinghouse of criminal justice data available at:

<http://www.icjia.state.il.us>

I. Introduction

Mercer County, located in northwestern Illinois along the Mississippi River, encompasses a 561 square mile area and had a 2003 population of 17,003, according to estimates by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of the Census. Using these figures, Mercer County was the 65th largest county in Illinois geographically, but 66th largest in terms of population. Combining these two measures, Mercer County had the 21st smallest population density per square mile among Illinois' 102 counties.

As with the previous reports, information specific to Mercer County is presented in comparison with similar counties. To provide more useful comparisons, counties have been separated into four types; 1) Cook County, 2) Collar counties, 3) urban counties (outside of Cook and the Collar counties), and 4) urban counties. Because of its size, Cook County is compared to the rest of the state. The Collar counties are the five that border Cook County (DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry, and Will). Urban and urban counties are defined by whether or not they lay within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (Appendix 1, page 24). Based on these definitions, there are 36 counties in Illinois that are part of a MSA (Cook, Collar, and urban counties) and 66 counties that are not part of a MSA (in other words, urban).

Recent changes to the standard definitions of MSAs have affected the classification of several Illinois counties. The United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas according to published standards that are applied to Census Bureau data. The general concept of a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area is that of a core area containing a substantial population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. Currently defined metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas are based on the application of 2000 standards to 2000 decennial census data and were announced by OMB on June 6, 2003.

Standard definitions of metropolitan areas have changed over time. The term "metropolitan area" (MA) was adopted in 1990 and referred collectively to metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSAs), and primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs). More recently, the term "core based statistical area" (CBSA) became effective in 2000 and refers collectively to metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas.

The 2000 standards require that each CBSA must contain at least one urban area of 10,000 or more population. Each metropolitan statistical area must have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more inhabitants. Each micropolitan statistical area must have at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population.

Under the standards, the county (or counties) in which at least 50 percent of the population resides within urban areas of 10,000 or more population, or that contain at least 5,000 people residing within a single urban area of 10,000 or more population, is identified as a "central county" (counties). Additional "outlying counties" are included in the CBSA if they meet specified requirements regarding residents commuting to or from the central counties.

Changes in the definitions of these statistical areas since the 1950 census have consisted chiefly of: 1) the recognition of new areas as they reached the minimum required city or urbanized area population, and 2) the addition of counties to existing areas due to new decennial census data. In some instances, formerly separate areas have been merged, components of an area have been transferred from one area to another, or components have been dropped from an area. The large majority of changes have taken place on the basis of decennial census data.

Because of these historical changes in geographic definitions, users must be cautious in comparing data for these statistical areas from different dates. For more information, contact the Population Distribution Branch at (301) 763-2419 (U. S. Census Bureau).

Based on these characteristics, Mercer County is one of Illinois' 66 urban counties. Throughout this report, the criminal justice activity trends experienced in Mercer County will be compared to those trends experienced in the other urban counties. This comparison will be realized through the calculation of rates for the activities being analyzed, with the number per 100,000 population the format for all the rates.

II. Law Enforcement Activities in Mercer County

One of the most commonly used indicators of the level of crime in a particular jurisdiction is the number of *Index offenses* reported to the police. There are eight separate offenses which constitute the Crime Index, including murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault (violent Index offenses), burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (property Index offenses). Although these eight offenses do not account for all crimes reported to the police, they are considered to be the most serious, frequent, pervasive, and consistently defined by different law enforcement agencies.

An indicator of the workload that law enforcement agencies place on other components of the justice system is the number of arrests made by police, including those for violent and property Index offenses and drug offenses. Unlike offenses, which are what police must respond to, arrests represent those offenders who may eventually be processed through other components of the justice system, including the courts, county jails, and state and local correctional programs.

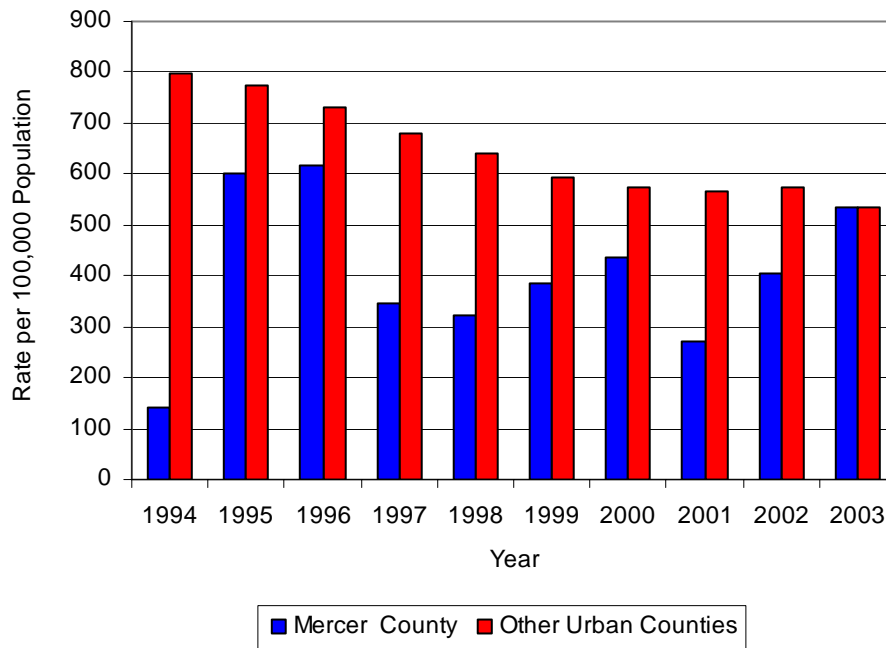
Violent Index Offenses Reported to the Police in Mercer County

The number of violent Index offenses reported to the police more than tripled in Mercer County between 1994 and 2003, from 24 to 91. As in previous years and in most other counties, aggravated assault offenses accounted for the majority (78 percent) of violent Index offenses reported in Mercer County in 2003.

Between 1994 and 2003, the violent Index offense rate in Mercer County also more than tripled, from 142 to 535 offenses per 100,000 population (Figure 1). During that same period, the violent Index offense rate in the other urban counties decreased 33 percent, from 797 to 533 offenses per 100,000 population. The 2003 violent Index offense rate in Mercer County was slightly higher than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 1

Total Violent Index Offense Rates in Mercer and Other Urban Counties



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois State Police and U.S. Census Bureau data

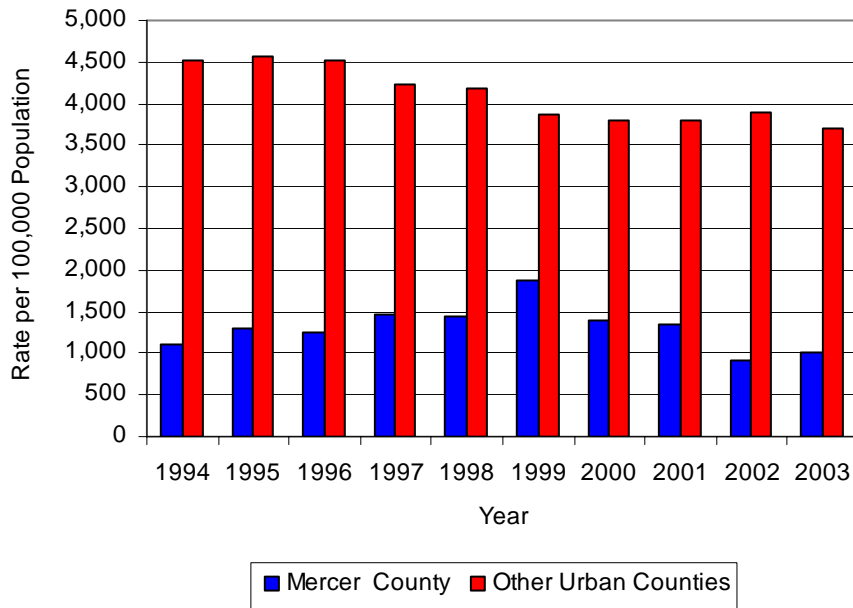
Property Index Offenses Reported to the Police in Mercer County

Between 1994 and 2003, the number of property Index offenses reported to the police in Mercer County decreased 10 percent, from 188 to 170. Thefts accounted for 76 percent of all property Index offenses reported in Mercer County during 2003.

Between 1994 and 2003, the property Index offense rate in Mercer County decreased 9 percent, from 1,100 to 1,000 offenses per 100,000 population (Figure 2). During the same period, the property Index offense rate in the other urban counties decreased 18 percent, from 4,510 to 3,693 offenses per 100,000 population. Mercer County's 2003 property Index offense rate was 73 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 2

Total Property Index Offense Rates in Mercer and Other Urban Counties



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois State Police and U.S. Census Bureau data

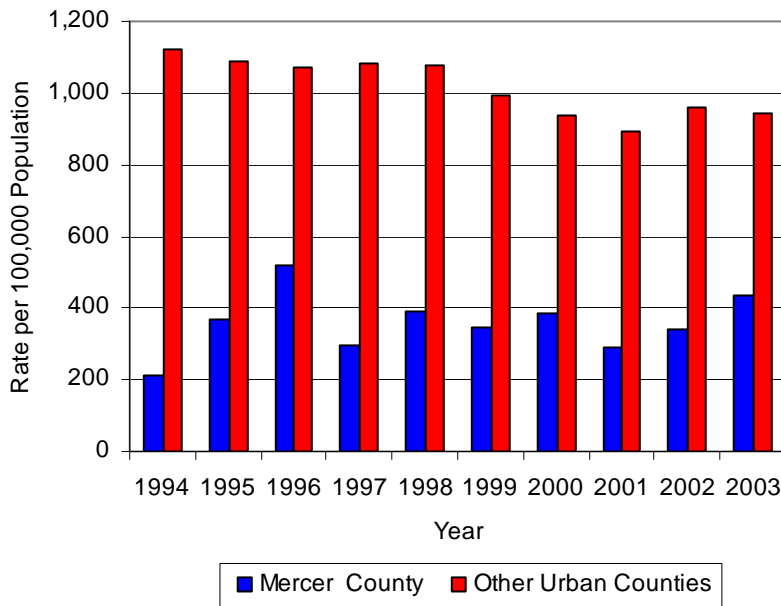
Index Arrests by Mercer County Law Enforcement Agencies

Between 1994 and 2003, arrests for total Index offenses by law enforcement agencies in Mercer County more than doubled, from 36 to 74. The majority of Index arrests was for property Index offenses. Of the 74 Index arrests made in Mercer County during 2003, 45 percent were for violent Index crimes and 55 percent were for property Index crimes. Arrests for theft and aggravated assault accounted for the majority of property and violent Index arrests in Mercer County during 2003. Of all violent Index arrests, 97 percent were arrests for aggravated assault, while thefts accounted for 77 percent of all property Index arrests.

Between 1994 and 2003, the Index arrest rate in Mercer County also more than doubled, from 211 to 435 arrests per 100,000 population (Figure 3). During the same period, the Index arrest rate in the other urban counties decreased 16 percent, from 1,124 to 944 arrests per 100,000 population. In 2003, Mercer County's Index arrest rate was 54 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 3

Index Arrest Rates in Mercer and Other Urban Counties



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois State Police and U.S. Census Bureau data

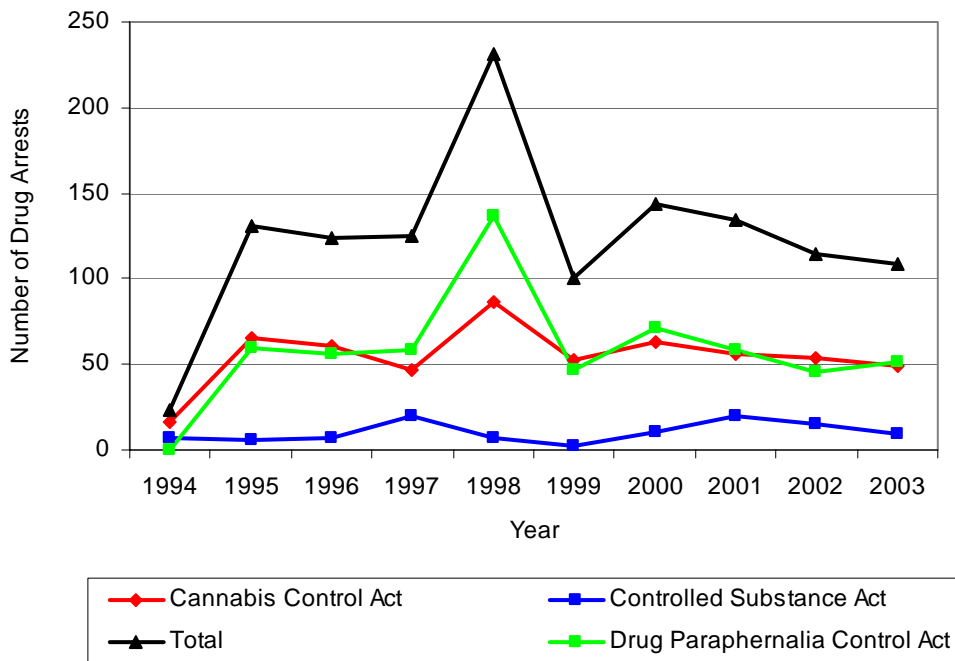
Drug Offense Arrests in Mercer County

Between 1994 and 2003, arrests for total drug offenses (including violations of Illinois' Cannabis Control Act, Controlled Substances Act, Drug Paraphernalia Control Act, and the Hypodermic Syringes and Needles Act) increased nearly four-fold in Mercer County, from 23 to 109 (Figure 4). Drug Paraphernalia Control Act violations accounted for the majority of the increase in total drug arrests, increasing from zero arrests in 1994 to 57 in 2003, or in other words, 63 percent of all drugs arrests in 2003.

During the period analyzed, arrests for violations of Illinois' Cannabis Control Act (which prohibits the possession, sale, and cultivation of cannabis) in Mercer County have consistently out-numbered arrests for violations of the Controlled Substances Act (which prohibits the possession, sale, distribution, or manufacture of all other illegal drugs such as cocaine and opiates). Between 1994 and 2003, the number of arrests for violations of the Cannabis Control Act in Mercer County more than tripled, from 16 to 49, while arrests for violations of the Controlled Substances Act increased from seven in 1994 to nine in 2003 (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Drug Arrests in Mercer County

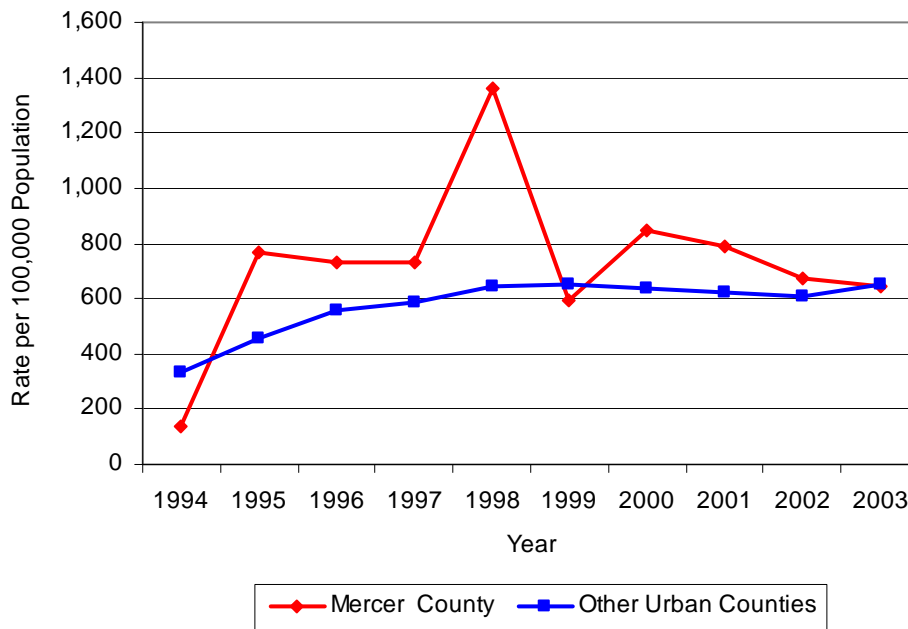


Source: Illinois State Police

Between 1994 and 2003, the arrest rate for all drug law violations in Mercer County increased nearly four-fold, from 135 to 641 per 100,000 population (Figure 5). During the same period, the total drug arrest rate in the other urban counties nearly doubled, from 330 to 654 per 100,000 population. In 2003, the drug arrest rate in Mercer County was 2 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 5

Drug Arrest Rates in Mercer and Other Urban Counties



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois State Police and U.S. Census Bureau data

Drugs Seized in Mercer County

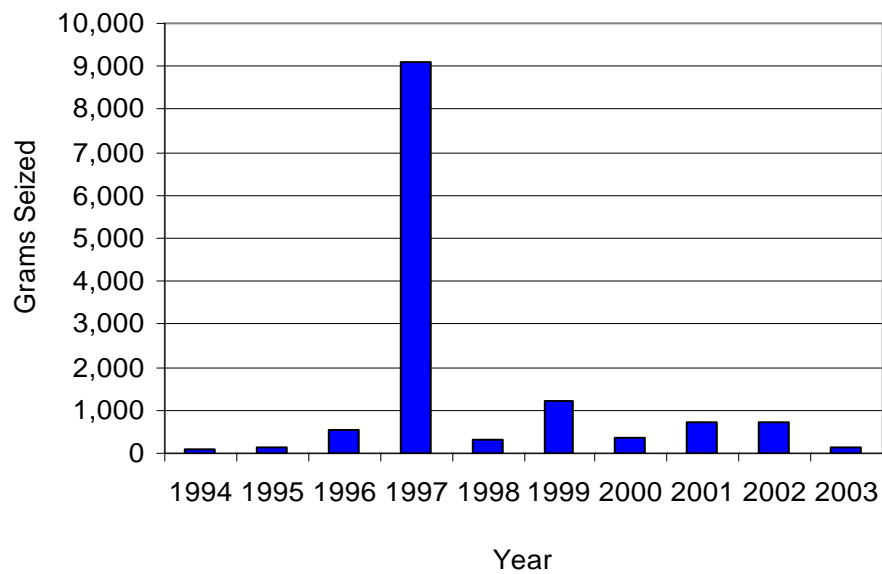
Drugs seized by law enforcement agencies are another indicator of the extent and nature of the illegal drug trade in a jurisdiction. When illegal drugs are seized by law enforcement agencies in Illinois, they are submitted to a crime lab for analysis. Most agencies submit drugs to one of the Illinois State Police crime labs. These labs record the quantity of drugs submitted from each county. This section discusses the quantities of illegal drugs seized and submitted to the Illinois State Police from law enforcement agencies in Mercer County.

Cannabis Seized in Mercer County

Cannabis accounts for the majority of drugs seized in Mercer County and in most Illinois jurisdictions. Although there were large variations in the number of grams of cannabis seized between 1994 and 2003, the quantity of cannabis seized in Mercer County increased 88 percent, from 84 grams to 157 grams, while reaching a period high of 9,119 grams seized in 1997 (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Cannabis Seized in Mercer County



Source: Illinois State Police

During the period between 1994 and 2003, the quantity of cannabis seized in the other urban counties decreased 60 percent, from 1,311,683 grams to 514,477 grams. In 2003, Mercer County had a cannabis seizure rate of 921 grams per 100,000 population, compared to the rate of 19,384 grams per 100,000 population in the other urban counties.

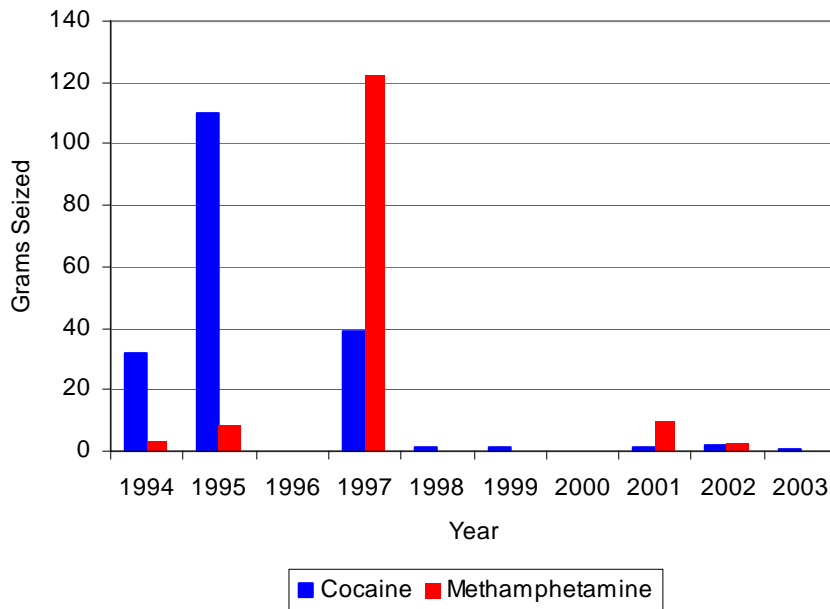
Cocaine and Methamphetamine Seized in Mercer County

During the past decade, it is clear that methamphetamine “activity” in the state has increased drastically and has become a significant drug problem in many jurisdictions. Further, the extent of which law enforcement agencies are encountering methamphetamine has also dispersed across a large area of the state, with most of this being fueled by activities taking place in Illinois’ urban jurisdictions.

During the period analyzed, 147 grams of methamphetamine were seized in Mercer County. Methamphetamine seizures were reported between 2001 and 2003, where the quantity of methamphetamine seized decreased from 3 grams to zero grams (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Cocaine* and Methamphetamine Seized in Mercer County



Source: Illinois State Police

The quantity of methamphetamine seized in the other urban counties increased dramatically during the period analyzed. Between 1994 and 2003, the amount of methamphetamine seized increased from 616 grams to 8,085 grams. In 2003, there were no methamphetamine seizures in Mercer County. The quantity of cocaine seized in the other urban counties decreased dramatically during the period analyzed. Between 1994 and 2003, the amount of cocaine seized decreased 99 percent, from 4,193 grams to less than one gram. In 2003, 305 grams of cocaine per 100,000 population were seized in the other urban counties.

III. Adult and Juvenile Court Activity in Mercer County

Although Illinois has one of the best court reporting systems in the country, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts only collects information regarding the aggregate number of court filings, dispositions, and probation caseloads. Currently, there are no statewide data available on court filings, dispositions, and convictions by offense type. However, detailed offense data are available from the Illinois Department of Corrections for those convicted felons sentenced to prison.

Trends in the number of delinquency petitions filed and adjudicated in juvenile court are also presented. Illinois statutes define delinquency offenses as those committed by someone younger than 17 years old that would be considered crimes if committed by someone 17 years of age or older.

In Illinois, county probation departments are overseen by the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts' Probation Division. This section also presents data on active misdemeanor and felony adult caseloads and the number of juveniles under the supervision of the probation departments in Mercer County and the other urban counties.

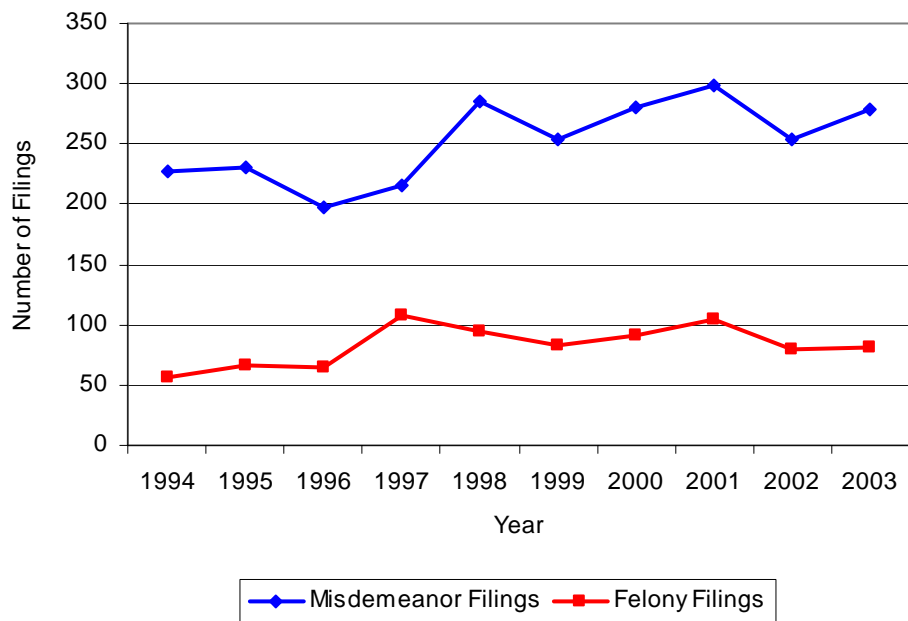
Misdemeanor and Felony Filings in Mercer County

The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts reports data on criminal court cases in two categories: misdemeanors and felonies. After screening a case and deciding it warrants further action, the state's attorney must file formal charges in court. Misdemeanor cases are less serious than felonies and can be punished by a probation sentence of one year or less and less than one year of incarceration. Felony cases, on the other hand, are more serious and can be punished by a probation term up to four years and incarceration for more than one year. When comparing the number of filings across time and across counties, it should be noted that differences in reporting practices exist. For example, when two or more defendants are involved in a single case, some state's attorneys file a single case charging all defendants, while others file a separate case for each suspect.

In 2003, felony and misdemeanor court filings accounted for 14 percent of all filings in Mercer County's courts (civil, traffic, family, and other). Between 1994 and 2003, the number of felony filings in Mercer County increased 45 percent, from 56 to 81 (Figure 8). During the same period, misdemeanor filings increased 23 percent, from 227 in 1994 to 279 in 2003. In 2003, misdemeanor filings out-numbered felony filings by three to one.

Figure 8

**Felony and Misdemeanor Filings
in Mercer County**

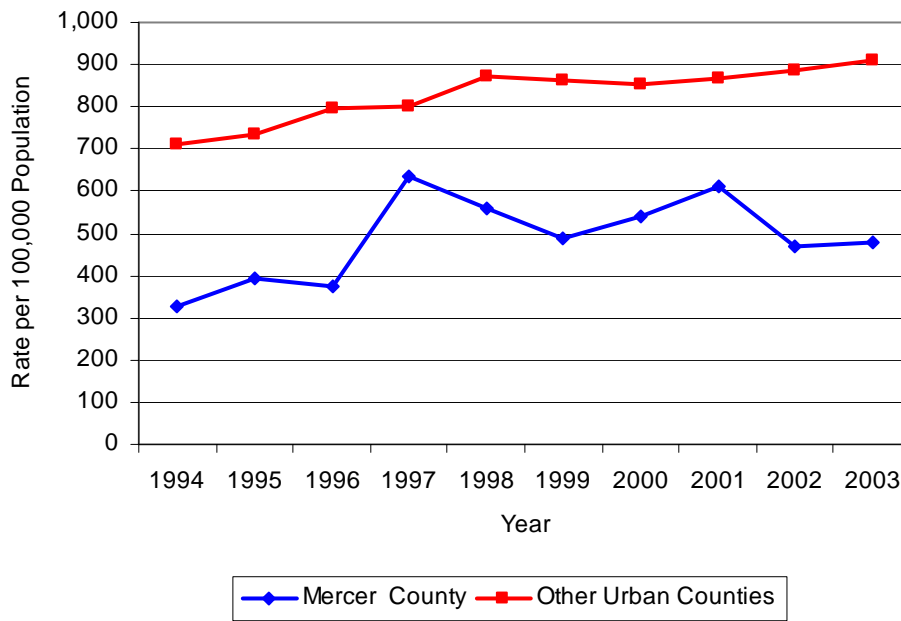


Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Between 1994 and 2003, the felony-filing rate in Mercer County increased 45 percent, from 328 to 476 cases per 100,000 population (Figure 9). The felony-filing rate in the other urban counties increased 28 percent during this period, from 710 to 909 cases per 100,000 population. In 2003, the felony-filing rate in Mercer County was 48 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 9

Felony Filing Rates in Mercer and Other Urban Counties

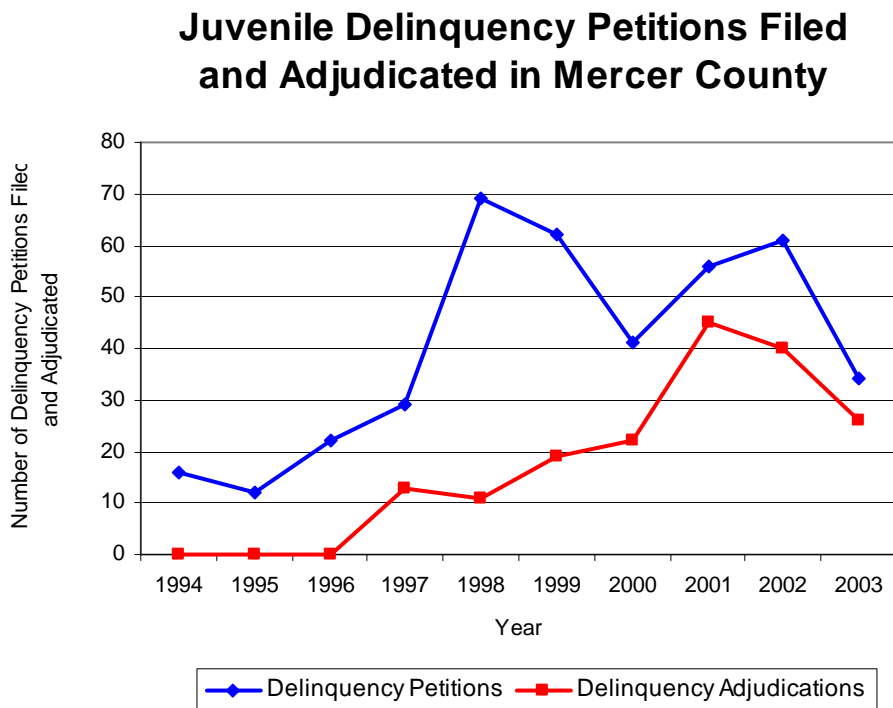


Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and U.S. Census Bureau data

Illinois’ juvenile court system differs in several key aspects from the adult criminal court system. One aspect revolves around the difference in treatment between juveniles and adults: the juvenile court process is somewhat less formal and adversarial; authorities are given much more latitude in determining the proper response to each case. Traditionally, the terminology used to describe juvenile proceedings has been less harsh than that used for the adult criminal process. For example, Illinois’ juvenile courts accept “petitions of delinquency” rather than misdemeanor or felony criminal complaints. However, pursuant to the Juvenile Court Reform Act of 1998, criminal court terms, such as “trial” and “sentencing,” have replaced the less harsh “adjudicatory hearing” and “dispositional hearing” terms.

Between 1994 and 2003, the number of juvenile delinquency petitions filed in Mercer County increased more than doubled, from 16 to 34 (Figure 10). In 2003, 76 percent of the juveniles named in delinquency petitions were adjudicated delinquent. Between 1994 and 2003, delinquency adjudications increased from zero to 26. The majority of cases not resulting in an adjudication were continued under supervision.

Figure 10



Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

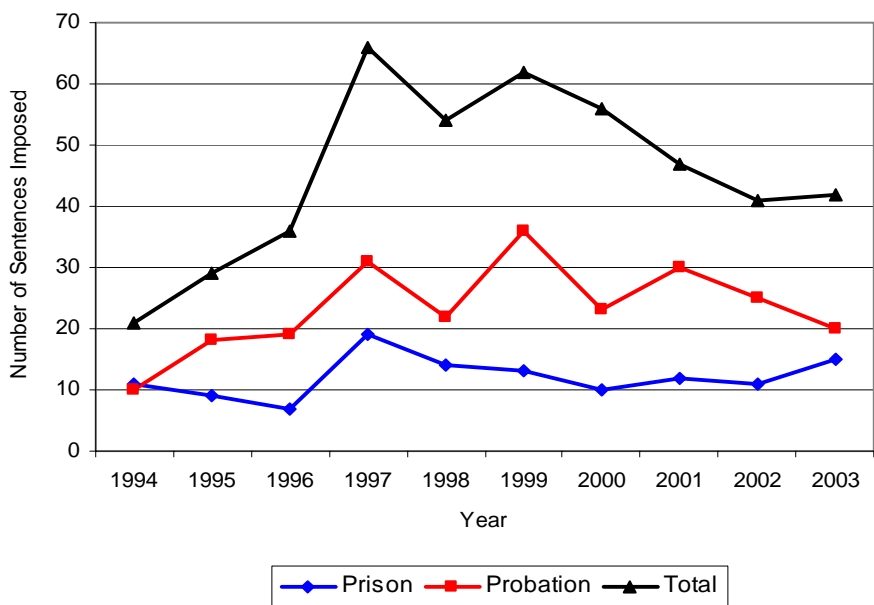
Between 1994 and 2003, the delinquency petition-filing rate in Mercer County also more than doubled, from 821 to 1,865 per 100,000 juveniles. During the same period, the delinquency petition-filing rate in the other urban counties decreased 8 percent, from 1,891 to 1,742 petitions per 100,000 juveniles. In 2003, the delinquency petition-filing rate in Mercer County was 7 percent higher than the rate in the other urban counties.

Anyone convicted of a felony in Illinois can be sentenced either to prison or probation, or receive a conditional discharge. A number of factors influence the type and length of sentence imposed on convicted felons, including the severity of the crime, the offender’s criminal and social history, safety of the community, and legislation affecting certain types of offenses. For some types of convictions a sentence to prison is required by state statute.

Between 1994 and 2003, the number of offenders convicted of a felony and sentenced in Mercer County doubled, from 21 to 42 (Figure 11). The number of convicted felons sentenced to either prison or probation increased during this period. The number of convicted felons sentenced to prison increased 36 percent, from 11 to 15, while the number of convicted felons sentenced to probation more than doubled, from ten to 20. Despite these increases, felony probation sentences decreased as a proportion of total sentences, decreasing from 52 percent in 1994 to 36 percent of all convicted felons in 2003. Similarly, the proportion of felons sentenced to prison remained the same at 48 percent in both 1994 and 2003. In 2003, nearly 17 percent of convicted felons in Mercer County were sentenced to something other than prison or probation.

Figure 11

**Sentences Imposed on Felons
Convicted in Mercer County**



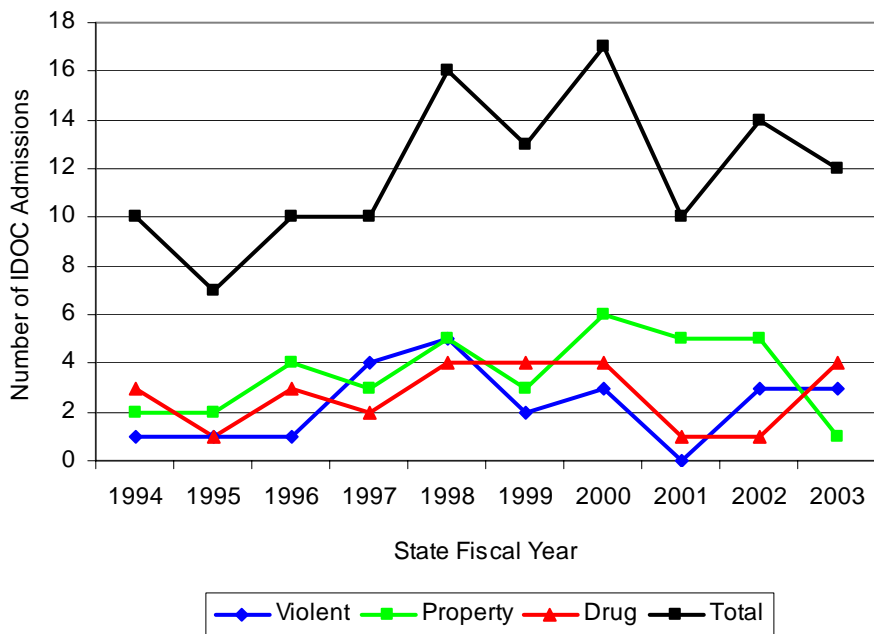
Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Adult Prison Admissions from Mercer County

Between State Fiscal Years 1994 and 2003, the number of admissions to the Illinois Department of Corrections' Adult Division from Mercer County increased from ten to 12 (Figure 12). During this period, the number of admissions increased for violent and drug offenders, while the number of property offender admissions decreased. The number of violent offender admissions increased from one to three, while the number of drug offender admissions increased from three to four. Property offender admissions decreased from two to one, during the same period.

Figure 12

IDOC New Court Commitments from Mercer County, by Offense Type



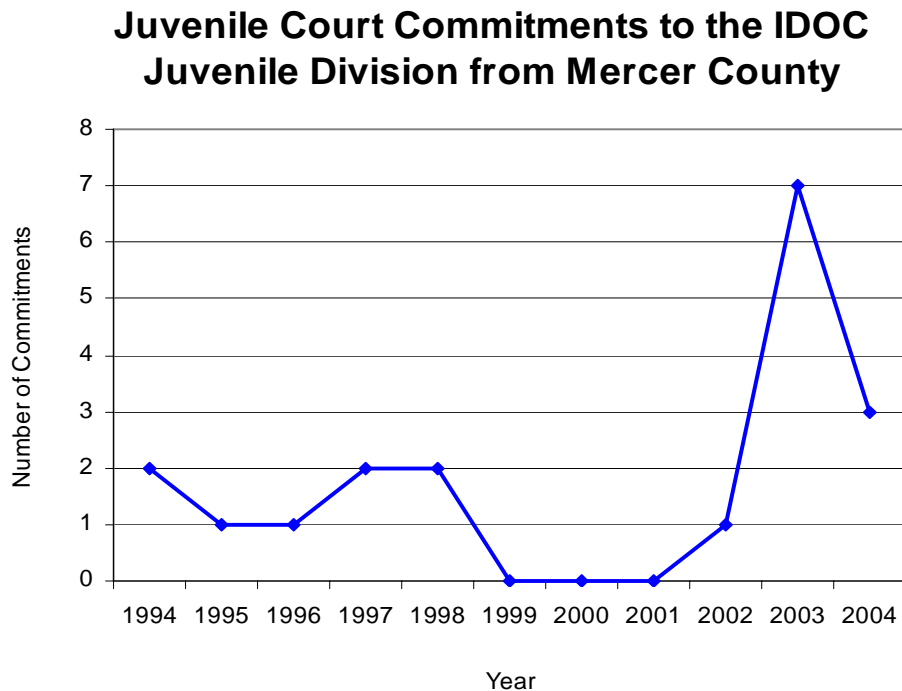
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

In SFY 2004, violent offenders accounted for 25 percent of all admissions from Mercer County, compared to 10 percent in SFY 1994. The proportion of all admissions accounted for by property offenders decreased from 20 percent in SFY 1994 to 8 percent in SFY 2004. Drug offenders also accounted for an increased proportion of all admissions from Mercer County, increasing from 30 percent in SFY 1994 to 33 percent in SFY 2004.

Juvenile Court Commitments to the Illinois Department of Corrections

The Illinois Department of Corrections' Juvenile Division provides long-term custody for youths, 13 to 17 years old, who have been found delinquent by the juvenile court and committed to the IDOC. Youths may remain in an IDOC juvenile facility until they are 21. Between SFYs 1994 and 2004, there were 19 juvenile court commitments to the IDOC's Juvenile Division from Mercer County, increasing from two to three, while reaching a period high of seven commitments in SFY 2003 (Figure 13).

Figure 13



Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

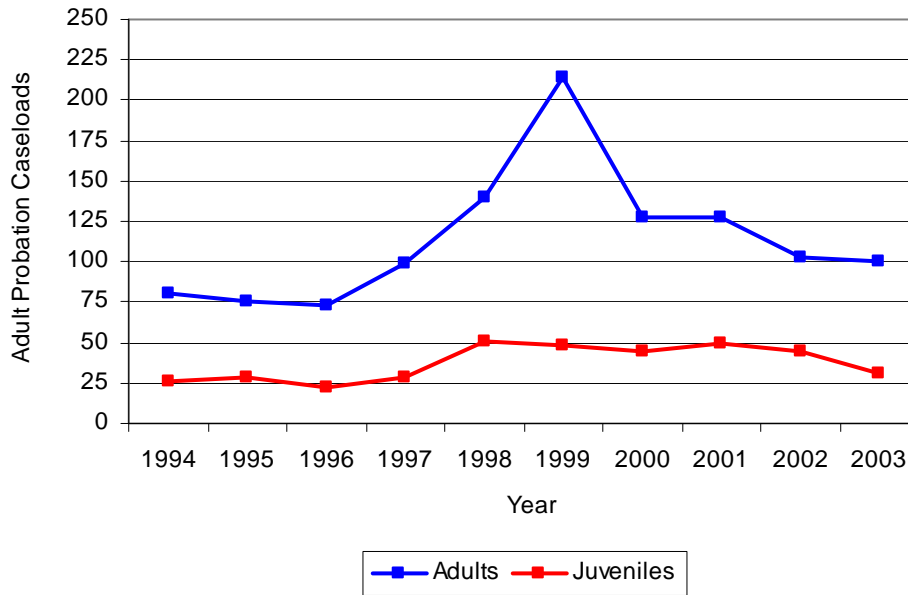
In SFY 2004, Mercer County's rate of 179 commitments per 100,000 juveniles to the IDOC's Juvenile Division was 40 percent lower than the 296 commitments per 100,000 juveniles from the other urban counties.

Adult and Juvenile Probation Caseloads in Mercer County

Between December 31, 1994 and December 31, 2003, the number of active adult probation cases in Mercer County increased 23 percent, from 81 to 100 (Figure 14). In 2003, felony offenders accounted for 61 percent of Mercer County's active adult probation caseload. Between 1994 and 2003, the number of juveniles supervised by the Mercer County Juvenile Probation Department increased 19 percent, from 26 to 31. By comparison, the number of active adult probation cases in the other urban counties increased 29 percent between 1994 and 2003, while the juvenile probation caseloads increased 36 percent.

Figure 14

Total Adult and Juvenile Active Probation Cases in Mercer County



Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

The active adult probation caseload rate per 100,000 population in Mercer County increased 24 percent between 1994 and 2003, from 474 to 588 cases per 100,000 population. During that same period, the active adult probation caseload rate also increased 24 percent in the other urban counties, from 656 to 812 cases per 100,000 population. In 2003, the active adult probation caseload rate in Mercer County was 28 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

IV. Jail Populations in Mercer County

Jail data in Illinois are collected by the Illinois Department of Corrections' Bureau of Inspections and Audits. As with court data, data are not available detailing the specific offenses for which offenders were held in county jails. In addition, between SFYs 1992 and 1994, the IDOC did not collect Illinois jail population data. Data presented SFY 1994 were estimated by the Authority using the reported SFYs 1991 and 1995 data.

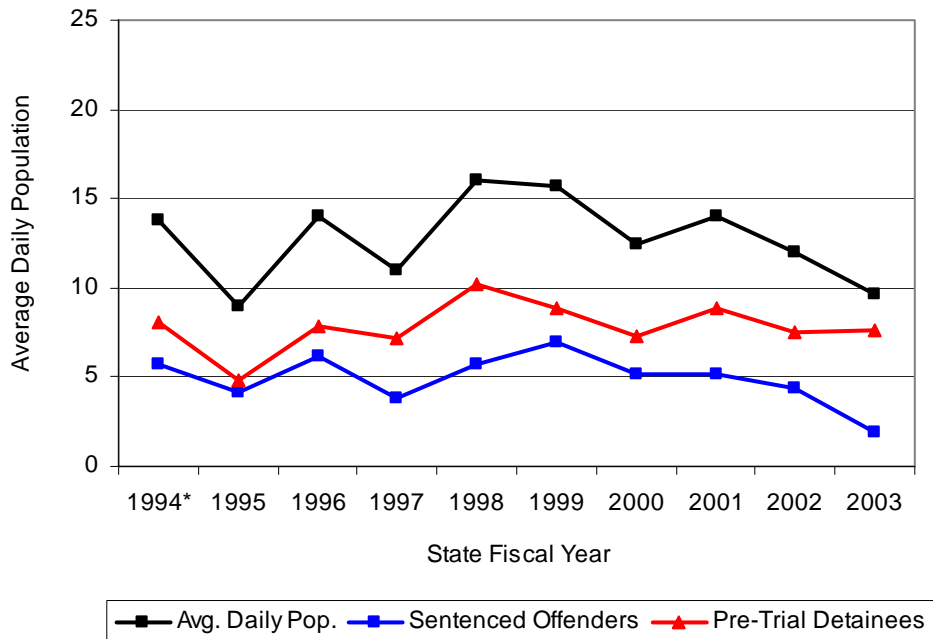
Average Daily Population of the Mercer County Jail

The Mercer County Jail was one of 91 county jails in operation in Illinois during state fiscal year 2003. There are 11 counties that did not operate a jail of their own; they rely on other counties to house their pretrial detainees and sentenced offenders at either a per-diem or contracted rate.

Between SFYs 1994 and 2003, the average daily population of the Mercer County Jail decreased from 14 to ten inmates (Figure 15). During this period, pretrial detainees (those individuals who have been arrested for a crime and are awaiting trial) have accounted for an increased percentage of the average daily population, increasing from 59 percent in SFY 1994 to 80 percent in SFY 2003. Sentenced offenders (those offenders who have been convicted and sentenced to the county jail) accounted for a decreased percentage, decreasing from 41 percent in SFY 1994 to 20 percent in SFY 2003.

Figure 15

Average Daily Population of the Mercer County Jail

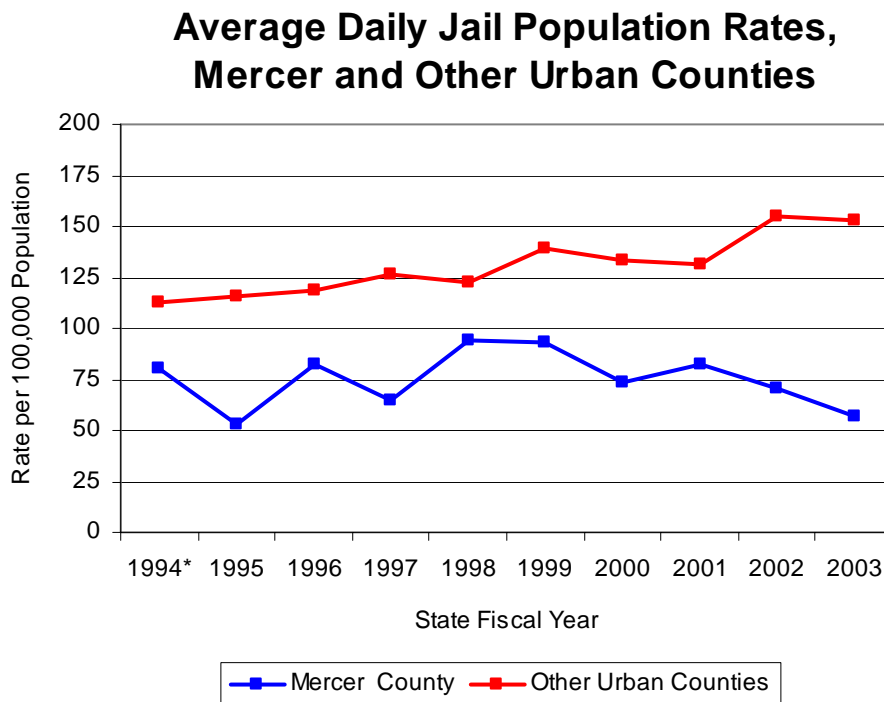


Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

* Information estimated by ICJIA

Between SFY 1994 and 2003, the average daily jail population rate in Mercer County decreased 30 percent, from 79 to 57 per 100,000 population (Figure 16). During this same period, the average daily jail population rate in the other urban counties increased 36 percent, from 113 to 153 per 100,000 population. In 2003, the Mercer County Jail had an average daily jail population rate 63 percent lower than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 16



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois Department of Corrections and U.S. Census Bureau data

* Information estimated by ICJIA

V. Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect in Mercer County

Substance-Exposed Infants in Mercer County

Illinois continues to experience the effects of prenatal substance abuse. In Illinois, if a baby is born and thought to have been exposed to illegal substances or alcohol, either through observation by physicians or toxicology tests, the case is reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). These cases are then investigated by DCFS to verify the child's prenatal exposure to either alcohol or illegal substances. Between State Fiscal Years 1994 and 2004, 96 of Illinois' 102 counties reported at least one case of a substance-exposed infant.

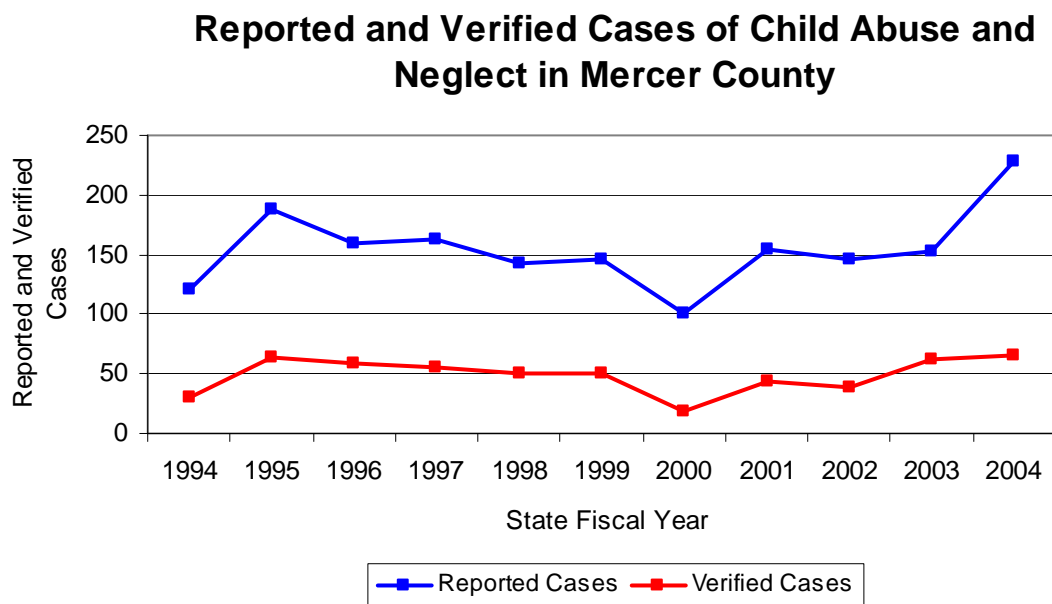
Between SFYs 1994 and 2004, there were two reported and verified cases of a substance-exposed infant in Mercer County. During the same period, the number of reported cases of substance-exposed infants in the other urban counties decreased 41 percent, from 364 to 215, while the number of verified cases of substance-exposed infants decreased 43 percent, from 342 to 196.

Child Abuse and Neglect Cases Reported and Verified in Mercer County

Recent research on the relationship between maltreatment of youth and delinquency has revealed an important distinction between child maltreatment and adolescent maltreatment. Using data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency, researchers have found that youth that were abused during childhood (12 years of age or less) were no more likely to become delinquent than youth who were not abused, but youth who were abused during adolescence (after age 12) were significantly more likely to be delinquent.¹ While prior child abuse may not be linked to juvenile delinquency, studies examining prior child abuse have shown that childhood victimization may be linked to other poor outcomes in youth, including low academic achievement, teenage parenthood (particularly for females), drug use, and symptoms of mental illness.² Additionally, research examining adolescent victimization (including physical and sexual assaults) and adult outcomes has found a correlation between previous victimization and substance abuse, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder in adulthood.³ In Illinois, DCFS investigates reported cases of child abuse.

Between SFYs 1994 and 2004, the number of child abuse and neglect cases reported in Mercer County increased 90 percent, from 120 to 228 (Figure 17). During that same period, 539 cases, or 32 percent of all cases reported, were verified by a DCFS investigation. Verified cases of child abuse and neglect in Mercer County decreased 30 percent between SFYs 1994 and SFYs 2004, from 31 to 50.

Figure 17



Source: Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

¹ Thornberry, P. T., Huizinga, D. and Loeber R. 2004. “The Causes and Correlates Studies: Findings and Policy Implications.” *Juvenile Justice Journal*. 9:1. Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office.

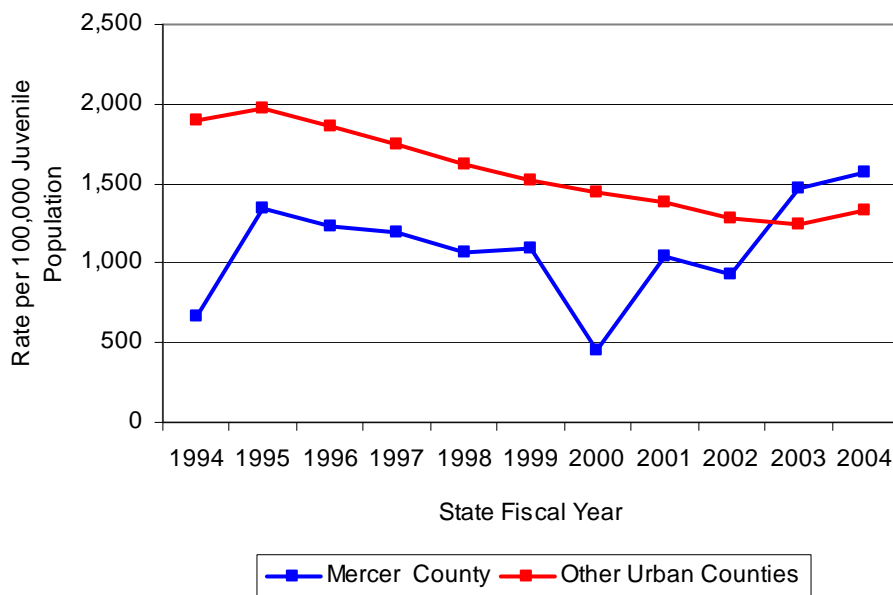
² Kelly, B., Thornberry, T. and Smith, C. 1997. “In the Wake of Childhood Maltreatment.” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

³ Menard, S. 2002. 2002. “Short and Long-Term Consequences of Adolescent Victimization.” *Youth Research Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Between SFYs 1994 and 2004, the rate of verified cases of child abuse and neglect in Mercer County more than doubled, from 668 to 1,569 per 100,000 juveniles (Figure 18). During the same period, the rate of verified child abuse and neglect cases decreased 30 percent in the other urban counties, from 1,901 to 1,334 per 100,000 juveniles. In SFY 2004, the rate of verified cases of child abuse and neglect in Mercer County was 18 percent higher than the rate in the other urban counties.

Figure 18

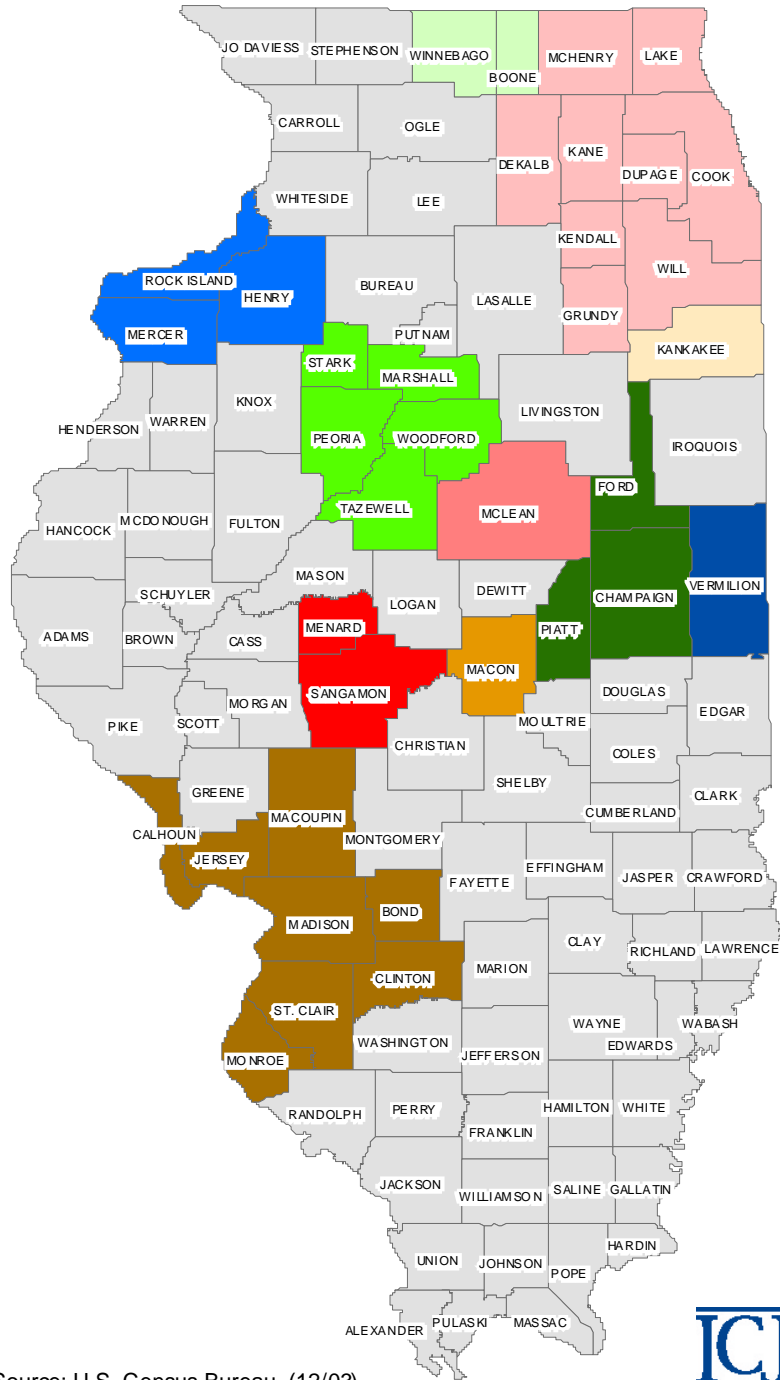
Rate of Verified Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect, Mercer and All Other Urban Counties



Source: ICJIA calculation using Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and U.S. Census Bureau data

VI. Appendix I (Map of Illinois Counties within a Metropolitan Statistical Area)

Illinois Counties, by Metropolitan Statistical Area*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, (12/03)



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