

# Introduction

## Geography and population of Illinois

Illinois has a population of 12.8 million covering an area of more than 55,000 square miles. Although it is the 25<sup>th</sup> largest state geographically, Illinois is fifth largest in terms of population.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 25 percent of the Illinois population resides in Chicago. More than 65 percent of the population lives in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Of the 102 Illinois counties, 36 are designated by population as urban, including Cook and collar counties. All other counties are designated rural. Designations may change over time with population shifts. Urban areas outside Chicago include the Illinois side of the St. Louis metropolitan area, as well as Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington-Normal, and Peoria. *Table 1* lists the number of Illinois residents by geographic area.

**Table 1**  
**Population in Illinois by geographic area, 2005**

<i>Geographic area</i>	<i>Population</i>
Chicago	2,896,021
Cook County	5,303,683
Collar counties	3,060,711
Urban counties	2,711,700
Rural counties	1,687,277
Total	12,763,371

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

White residents make up the majority of the Illinois population (73 percent), followed by black residents (15 percent). Twelve percent of the state population is of Hispanic ethnicity (independent of their race classification). Forty-nine percent of the population is female and 51 percent is male.

## The Illinois criminal justice system

The criminal justice system in Illinois operates as 102 county-level systems with some oversight by state agencies having specific responsibilities, such as probation and corrections. Each county's criminal justice system is comprised of a network of state and local entities. These include:

- Illinois State Police, county sheriff's departments, municipal police departments, and university and college police departments.
- County probation and court services departments.
- Judges, state's attorneys, public defenders, and private attorneys.
- Illinois Department of Corrections.
- County-operated jails.

- Private social service organizations that provide crisis intervention, residential placement, employment, counseling, re-entry, and other services.
- Neighborhood-based and faith-based organizations and coalitions.

Entities focusing strictly on juveniles include temporary detention centers, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, juvenile justice councils, child welfare agencies, and other youth-centered social service providers. The Department of Juvenile Justice was created by state legislation in 2005, separating juveniles from the adult Department of Corrections.

*Figure 1* depicts stages in the criminal justice process. While cases typically flow the same way through county criminal justice systems, variation exists across counties in how specific types of cases are handled. For instance, some counties may offer diversionary programs as alternatives to incarceration, while others have fewer resources.

### **Crime rate trends**

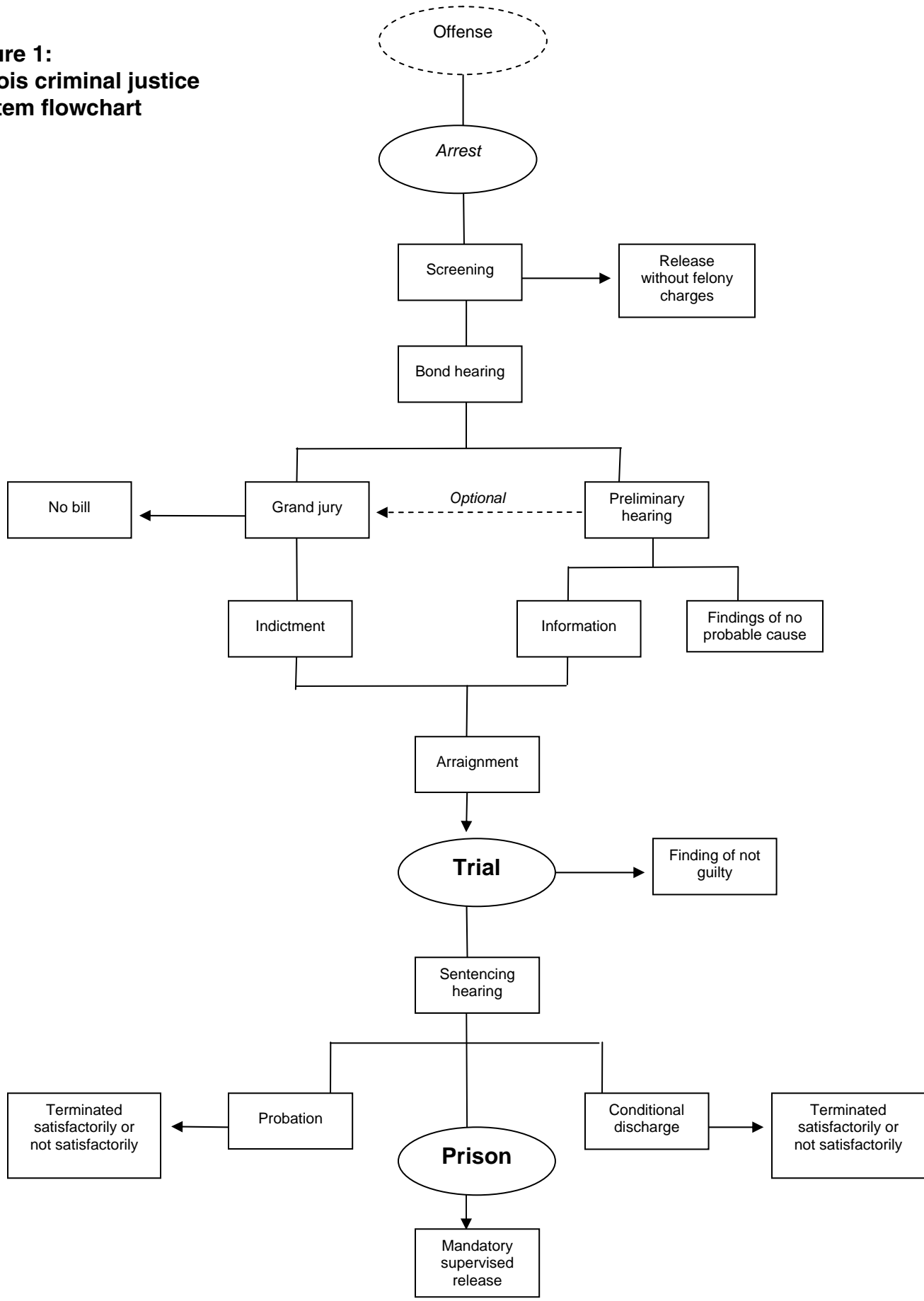
Serious violent crime and property crime have declined nationally since 1993. The estimated number of adult drug-related arrestees has increased, however, and arrests of juveniles for drug crimes have stabilized.<sup>2</sup>

Illinois crime trends parallel what has been seen nationally. Index crimes are made up of four violent crimes and four property crimes. Index offenses include murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In 2005, crime reported to police dropped in the state as a whole for the twelfth consecutive year. In Illinois, from 1995 to 2005, total index offenses reported to police decreased by 28 percent. Arrests involving index offenses also declined during that period by 33 percent. Index offenses are made up of four violent crimes and four property crimes.

According to Illinois State Police, the crime rate fell 2.1 percent in 2006, with the greatest reduction in criminal sexual assault and motor vehicle theft. However, the number of murders and robberies increased by 1.9 percent from the previous year. Firearm-related crime has significantly decreased since 1993, but jumped slightly in 2005.

There has been an increase in the number of females engaging in crime, although female crime rates remain significantly lower than rates of male crime. In 2006, 20 percent of all Illinois arrestees were women. In 1990, six percent of prison admissions were women, but in 2004, they comprised 10 percent of admissions.

**Figure 1:  
Illinois criminal justice  
system flowchart**



## **Emerging crime issues**

### Computer crime

In a statewide survey conducted in 2005, hundreds of Illinois criminal justice professionals listed identity theft as one of several worsening societal problems. Growing numbers of Illinois citizens are experiencing identity theft in many forms—credit card, phone, utility, and bank account transfer fraud. More than 10,000 reports of identity theft were made in Illinois in 2006.

Computers are also used to disseminate child pornography and solicit and exploit youth. An estimated 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet each week, according to the Department of Justice. FBI statistics indicate one in five Internet users in the United States is sexually solicited, usually at home. Parents and schools need to be equipped with the tools to educate children and monitor use of the Internet. Illinois' Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC) was created in 2004 and is housed at the Illinois Office of the Attorney General. About 60 law enforcement agencies statewide are partners of ICAC and work collaboratively to combat online child victimization.

### Methamphetamine use

Illegal drug use and drug dealing was identified by Illinois criminal justice professionals surveyed as another major societal problem. Illegal drugs continue to plague communities. The Office of National Drug Control Policy estimates that \$65 billion is spent each year on illegal drugs in the United States. Of particular concern to criminal justice professionals is the increasing use, manufacture, and distribution of methamphetamine.

Use of methamphetamine, a potent and very addictive stimulant, has been on the rise since the 1990s, particularly in rural areas. Easily made with store-bought ingredients, meth is dangerous to produce and poses serious risks to individuals, families, and communities. By 2004, meth offenses accounted for an estimated 33 percent of arrests in rural areas. However, meth use has grown in urban areas as well and has quadrupled in those areas in recent years.<sup>3</sup> The Illinois State Police and Drug Enforcement Administration indicated that the number of meth labs seized annually by Illinois increased from less than 30 in 1997 to nearly 1,200 in 2005.

## **Using technology to fight crime**

Advancements in technology have helped to fight crime and improve the administration of justice. Technology connects criminal justice agencies and provides quick access to criminal information. It also can assist in information sharing among citizens and victims of crime. One example of this is the effective nationwide AMBER Alert system for missing children. Finally, technology can help law enforcement officers target and investigate crime.

## I-CLEAR

The Citizen and Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting (CLEAR) system is a state-of-the-art information technology system that enables the Chicago Police Department to quickly share crime information. Plans are under way to expand CLEAR to a statewide system called Illinois Citizen and Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting System, or I-CLEAR. The new database will allow all 1,200 police agencies in Illinois to quickly share crime information. I-CLEAR can foster unified strategies to reduce crime, promote criminal justice efficiency, increase accountability between criminal justice agencies, and provide comprehensive information on offender criminal activity.

## Information systems

Information systems that promote sharing among agencies improve the quality of justice and public safety by eliminating redundant data entry, providing timely access to critical information, enabling information sharing, and improving the consistency and reliability of information.

Key criminal justice data systems in Illinois include:

- Automated Victim Notification System. This system provides victims of crime with information regarding case and/or custody status of offenders incarcerated or charged with a crime.
- Criminal History Record Information System. This system provides arrest history, court disposition, and sentencing information on all arrestees in Illinois.
- Illinois Department of Corrections Offender Management Systems. These systems track prisoners from reception and classification through release on parole or mandatory supervisory release.
- Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS). LEADS is a statewide, computerized, telecommunications system maintained by the Illinois State Police and designed to provide the criminal justice agencies with justice-related information at the state and national level.
- Probation On-Line Automated Reporting Information System (POLARIS). Currently in planning, POLARIS will be a centralized data warehouse for collecting individual-level data on probationers from across the state.
- Secretary of State Data Systems. Secretary of State Data Systems are accessible to justice decision-makers and include several databases related to drivers and vehicles.
- State of Illinois Justice Information Networks. The Illinois Century Network and Illinois Frame Relay Service allow the capability to handle justice information related to traffic in Illinois.

## Computer mapping and GIS

Computer mapping and geographic information systems also are valuable technology for criminal justice. This technology allows law enforcement to analyze problems through up-to-date and comprehensive data in their jurisdictions. They also can organize diverse pieces of information visually to identify crime patterns and problem areas.<sup>4</sup> More and more law enforcement agencies are using this technology as a tool to target crime in specific community areas.

## DNA

DNA has emerged as a revolutionary crime-fighting tool because of its uniqueness to individuals. Forensic DNA evidence can rule out suspects, solve crimes, and prevent future crimes. DNA samples are collected from victims, offenders, and crime scenes. All convicted felony offenders, including juveniles, have been required to submit DNA in Illinois since 2002. By 2007, Illinois exonerated 27 individuals of their crimes through post-conviction DNA testing.

## **Criminal justice system trends**

In recent years, the Illinois criminal justice system has utilized the latest research findings to implement innovative programs that help reduce recidivism and improve justice. Specialized drug and mental health courts have been established. Probation departments in Illinois have adopted evidenced based practices. The death penalty moratorium enacted in 2000 has remained in effect in Illinois. Victims continue to be included in the justice process and afforded rights as victims.

At the same time, United States continues to increase its rate of incarceration. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, on June 30, 2006, U.S. prisons or jails held more than 2.2 million prisoners—an increase of 2.8 percent from the previous year. In Illinois, from 1995 to 2005, admissions to state prisons increased 66 percent from 23,753 admissions to 39,477. Current issues of concern regarding incarceration include racial bias in incarceration decisions, the incarceration of non-violent offenders, and prisoner re-entry into society.

## Disproportionate minority contact

Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) is the over-representation of minorities involved in the justice system at any given stage compared to minority representation in the general population. Although DMC is seen in the adult criminal justice system, states have concentrated on juvenile DMC, due in part to the 1988 amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. These amendments authorized the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to require states participating in

formula grants programs to address DMC in their state plans. The 1992 amendments to the Act elevated DMC to a core protection, tying future funding levels to compliance.<sup>5</sup>

In 1997, minority youth comprised 34 percent of all youth in the United States, 62 percent of youth in secure detention, and 67 percent of youth in secure correctional facilities.<sup>6</sup> In 2005 in Illinois, black youth were six times more likely to be arrested and eight times more likely to be detained. In 2004, black youth were five times more likely to be incarcerated. Minority over-representation in the juvenile justice system has caused greater scrutiny of juvenile justice system decision-making and examination of how other factors, such as poverty, contribute to the problem.

#### Sex offender registration

One trend in sex offender management is the development of sex offender registries. Both national and state registries are available and can be accessed by the public through the Internet.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, the Illinois sex offender database was created to identify individuals who have been convicted of certain sex offenses and/or crimes against children and who, therefore, must register as a sex offender or as a violent offender against youth.<sup>8</sup>

As of April 1, 2008, the Illinois sex offender database contained 24,552 registered sex offenders.<sup>9</sup> In 2003, Attorney General Madigan created the Illinois Sex Offender Registry Team to improve the accuracy of the state's registry.

Legislation continues to be enacted that further monitors and restricts the whereabouts of these offenders. While there is public support for these measures against this socially abhorred population of offenders, there has been some criticism that sex offender registration laws are too restrictive, making it impossible for offenders to find housing and work and putting a burden on law enforcement agencies. Increased visibility of offenders may also lead to segregation and harassment by the public.

#### **The future**

The United States and the state of Illinois have seen many changes since the last publication of the *Trends and Issues* report in 1997. The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, greatly influenced federal and state priorities including the allocation of resources and funding for crime. Federal grant reductions for state and local programming resulted, as funds were needed for homeland security and military spending.

Another concern in the wake of large corporate scandals highlighted by the media is white-collar crime. When major companies hide debt and inflate profits, or when corporate executives reap illegal monetary rewards at the expense of stockholders and investors, it can affect the nation's financial markets. In addition, public corruption by government officials remains a concern as federal and state governments continue to expose and prosecute wrongdoing.

According to the FBI, in the next five years, increasing globalization, or an increasing world economy, and new technology will increase the number of terrorists, drugs, weapons, and illegal enterprises entering the United States. Globalization and technological advances will continue to change the face of crime, as well as the ways in which crime is combated.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “Stewards of the American Dream: FY2007-FY2012 Strategic Plan”: 2.

<sup>3</sup> Bauer, Robert and Olson, David, “The Evolution of Meth in Illinois,” Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Research Bulletin (June 2006): 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Higgins, Daniel F., “A Crime Analysts Guide to Mapping” Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (April 2003): 1.

<sup>5</sup> Hsia, Heidi M., George S. Bridges, and Rosalie McHale, “*Disproportionate Minority Confinement: 2002 Update*, Summary, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, September 2004, NCJ 201240: 1.

<sup>6</sup> Hsia, Heidi M., George S. Bridges, Rosalie McHale, *Disproportionate Minority Confinement: 2002 Update*, Summary, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, September 2004, NCJ 201240: 1.

<sup>7</sup> The Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Registry, coordinated by the Department of Justice is on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nsopr.gov/>

<sup>8</sup> Illinois sex offender registry is on the World Wide Web at <http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor/>

<sup>9</sup> Burge, Craig, Illinois State Police, personal communication, April 7, 2008.