The Compiler

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Spring 1998

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Rural crime and justice

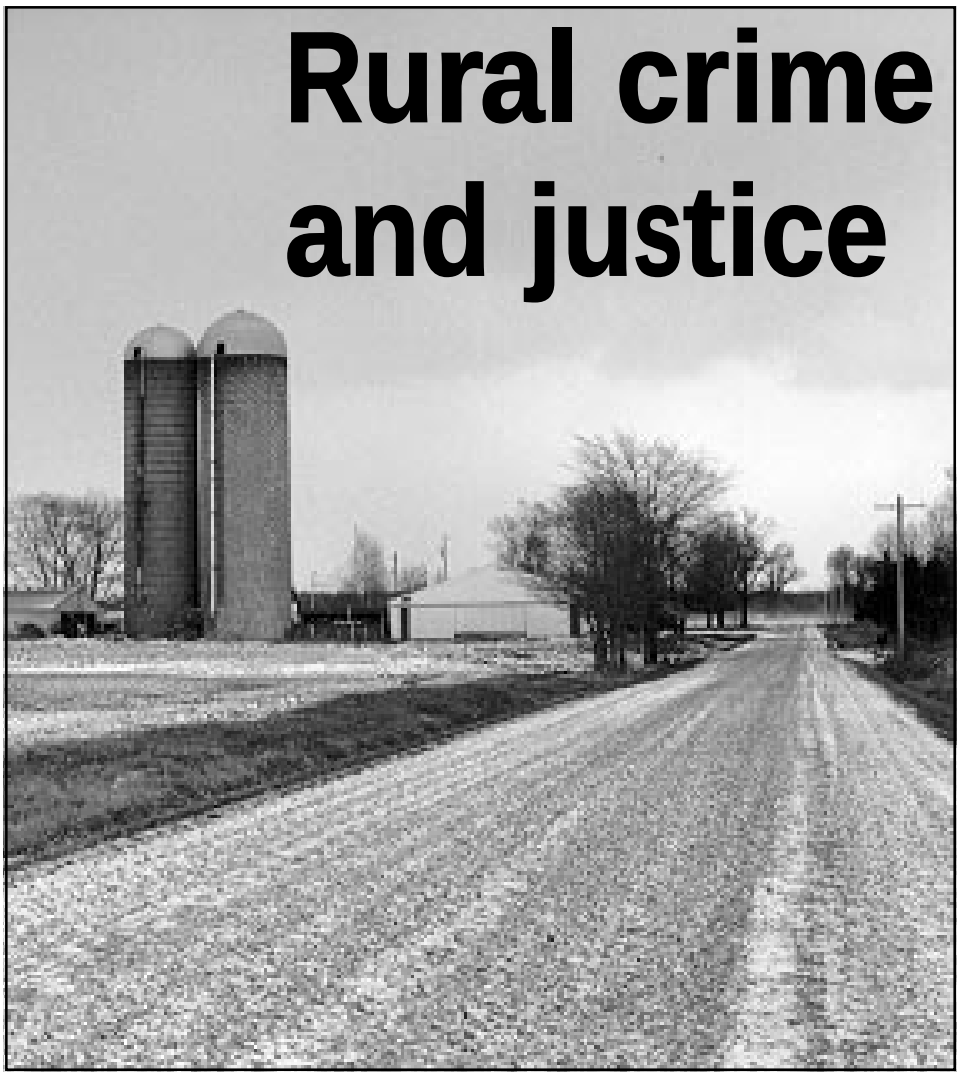

Photo by Daniel Dighton

Rural areas are often overlooked when it comes to analyzing crime and its impact on communities. But these regions are not immune to crime, and their isolation and geography create unique challenges for criminal justice officials. This issue of *The Compiler* focuses on some of those challenges and how they are being met.

The Compiler

Volume 17, Number 4
Spring 1998

THE COMPILER is published quarterly by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Produced by the Office of Public Information

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Created in 1983, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. The Authority works to enhance the information tools and management resources of state and local criminal justice agencies, and it serves as a statewide forum for criminal justice coordination, planning, and problem solving. It also is responsible for research, information systems development, and administration of federal anti-crime funds. The Authority's specific powers and duties are spelled out in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act [20 ILCS 3930/1 et seq.].

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is governed by a 15-member board of state and local leaders from the criminal justice system, plus experts from the private sector. Authority members help develop priorities and monitor their progress. The agency's day-to-day work is carried out by a full-time professional staff working out of the Authority's Chicago office.

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Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, April 1998. Printing order number: 98–003.3 Number of copies: 6,000. ISSN 1059–6569. Printed on recycled paper with soybean-based ink.

In Brief

Hillard joins Authority board

As the newly appointed superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, Terry G. Hillard joins the board of the 15-member Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Hillard, 54, is a 30-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department. Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed him superintendent of the department on Feb. 18. Prior to his appointment as superintendent, Hillard had been chief of the Detective Division, a position he had held since June 1995.

Rape crisis hotline launched in Chicago

Rape victims in Chicago can now call a central, toll-free number for counseling and referral services 24 hours a day. Begun in January, the Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline is staffed by volunteers and counselors trained specifically to work with adult and child victims of sexual violence.

The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA), with funding from the Authority, is supporting the hotline and the participating rape crisis centers: Quetzal Center/CCC, Rape Victim Advocates, and the Harris and Loop centers of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

Hotline "palm" cards fit in a wallet to provide easy reference.

Chicago police reported 2,545 criminal sexual assaults or attempted assaults in 1997. But the rape crisis centers estimated that some 15,000 adults a year are victims of sexual violence in the city. Self-blame, fear of not being believed, fear of retaliation by the attacker, and lack of information on available services are the most frequently cited reasons women do not report rapes, according to the hotline organizers.

Local Law Enforcement Block Grants designated

The Authority is administering $877,519 in federal fiscal year 1997 Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program funds. The Authority sought proposals for the use of these funds from nearly 2,000 law enforcement agencies in Illinois and received 356 proposals requesting more than $5.6 million in funds. Through a review process, the 60 proposals with the highest scores were recommended for funding. These grant funds will support the procurement of equipment such as vehicles, portable radios, mobile data terminals, radar guns, mobile video cameras, and breathalyzers.

Authority to administer juvenile justice grants

The Authority was recently designated to administer $8.7 million under the federal Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant program. The Authority will administer the funds in cooperation with the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. The program is designed to help states and units of local government develop programs that promote greater accountability in the juvenile jus-

tice system. Eligible programs include efforts such as the expansion of juvenile detention and correctional facilities; the hiring of judges, prosecutors, and other juvenile court personnel; and the establishment of court-based programs that target juvenile offenders involved with drugs, firearms, and gangs.

ICASA ad campaign reaps awards

A radio and television public service advertising campaign by the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) has won an ADDY award at the American Advertising Federation's Sixth District competition in Chicago. The public awareness campaign, which features young people pointing out how forcible sex is rape, also won two ADDY citations at the Central Illinois Advertising Association Awards.

The ADDYs were awarded for a television public service announcement called "The Gauntlet." The Omni Communications Group in Springfield produced the campaign and also received local and district ADDY awards. The campaign was funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Victims' Rights Week

National Victims' Rights Week — April 19-25 — was a chance to reflect on how far victims' rights have come since California established the first victim compensation program in the United States in 1965. The first "Victims' Rights Week" was organized in Philadelphia in 1975, and three years later the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence were formed. Congress enacted the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) in 1984 to provide funding for state compensation and assistance programs. In 1992, Maine became the 50th state to create a crime victim compensation program.

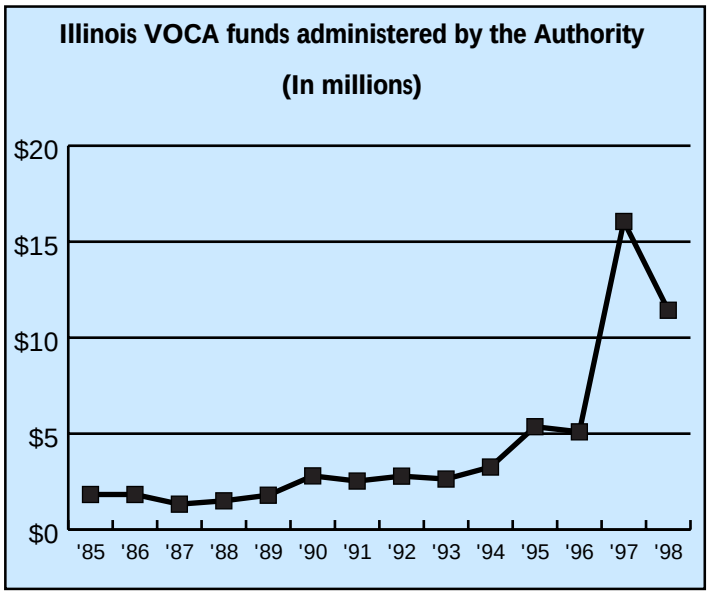
Since 1985, the Authority has administered more than $60 million in VOCA funds for Illinois. The amount of funding available each year is determined by fines collected from criminals in federal courts.

Victims of Crime Act hearings

In April, the Authority conducted its annual public hearings to learn about service needs and determine funding priorities under the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Juvenile crime and the socioeconomic barriers to overcoming domestic violence victimization were topics of two panel discussions as part of the public hearing process for VOCA funds. The hearings were held in Springfield on April 6 and in Chicago on April 8. Following the panel discussions, victim advocates and members of the public spoke out on victim service needs during open hearings.

The panel on domestic victimization focused its attention on reasons why a victim may find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Apart from the emotional and moral obligations that tie battered women to an abusive partner, many women are also economically dependent on their abuser. The panel looked at how issues such as education and literacy levels, job readiness, and unemployment rates create barriers to leaving an abusive relationship.



The panel on juvenile crime looked at the impact on our society of crimes committed by and against juveniles. The panel looked at issues such as the rising number of juveniles committing violent crimes, adult victims of juvenile crime, the disproportionate increase in African-American homicide rates among juveniles, gang violence, school violence, and juveniles as victims of sexual abuse.

The panel discussions and the public hearings will help the Authority identify the greatest needs and establish priorities for VOCA funding in Illinois, which for federal fiscal year 1998 is $11.4 million.

Little Village project featured in BJA report

An evaluation of the Gang Violence Reduction Project in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood is featured in a December 1997 monograph by the Bureau of Justice Assistance: *Improving the Nation's Criminal Justice System: Findings and Results from State and Local Evaluation.* Irving Spergel and Susan F. Grossman, of the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, conducted the evaluation. The four-year project and the evaluation were supported with federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act funds administered by the Authority. Copies of the BJA monograph can be obtained from the Authority: (312) 793-8550.

New brochures

The Authority has recently published two brochures. One is an updated brochure on the Authority, its mission and responsibilities. The other is a *Safety Plan for Domestic Violence Victims*, which offers useful information on developing a safety plan in case it becomes necessary to quickly escape an abusive home environment. Both brochures are available from the Authority.■

Isolation and limited resources create challenges for rural law enforcement

By Daniel Dighton

When Illinois State Police Trooper Tom Taylor was on temporary assignment patrolling the expressways around Chicago several years ago, he didn't worry much about his safety because he knew backup units were always close by.

But back in his regular environment on the lonely roads of rural Richland County, Taylor has a different attitude. In an area where his closest backup may be a county or two away, he knows he has to approach a potentially dangerous situation with more caution.

"You kind of learn to deal with situations like that," Taylor said. "If you're in over your head, you kind of back out of it until help gets there. That's why it's helpful to have a good relationship with the county and city."

Geography and the availability of resources are primary characteristics that distinguish rural law enforcement efforts from those in urban areas. Geography not only affects response times of law enforcement, but also influences the types of crimes committed. By nature of their relative isolation, rural areas are more likely to have problems with burglaries and thefts than with armed robberies and assaults.

Isolation aids burglars

Rural burglaries are perhaps the toughest crimes to solve, said Crawford County Sheriff Tom Weger. The isolation in which the burglary takes place makes it hard to identify and capture the culprits.

Rural isolation certainly played a role in one recent burglary in Crawford County, Weger said. Burglars made off with a truckload of goods from a farmhouse out of which a woman had recently moved. A 90-year-old man living down the road told authorities he saw headlights at the house that night. But he doesn't have a telephone, so he couldn't report the suspicious activity.

Just to the north, in Clark County, Sheriff Dan Crumrin noted that an interstate highway running through his county probably adds to his crime problem, particularly with the transportation of illegal drugs.

Crumrin said he also sees a lot of burglaries, and the problem is compounded by the county's proximity to Indiana. Burglars will flee across the state line, where jurisdictional issues make it more difficult to find and prosecute them, he said.

Cooperation between departments

Law enforcement agencies in rural areas typically have far more limited resources than their counterparts in urban areas. Cooperation between state and local departments, therefore, is crucial.

"We have to rely on each other a great deal," the ISP's Taylor noted.

Designated a community policing officer under the ISP's Geographically

Photo by Daniel Dighton

Illinois State Police Trooper Tom Taylor checks an abandoned car on a highway in Richland County.

Daniel Dighton is a public information officer with the Authority.

Oriented Community Policing program, or Geo-Com, Taylor works closely with local agencies in Richland County, which is southeast of Effingham and has a population of about 17,000.

Geo-Com brings to rural areas the same community policing philosophy being widely implemented in urban areas. Essentially, it focuses on working with residents to identify and solve problems, a concept that is not so different from traditional policing.

"Community policing, when you stop and think about it, is not new," Taylor said. Like traditional policing, he said, it involves working with residents to build rapport and gain their trust. That in turn can lead to bigger things, such as getting information on crack houses or other illegal activities.

"It's a way of thinking and a way of acting," Taylor said, adding that cooperation with other agencies is important to the success of community policing. "We're in here to help each other, and that's the whole point of the thing."

As an example of the cooperation that is part of community policing, Taylor recounted a problem with trucks parking along the narrow shoulder of a highway next to a large Wal-Mart distribution center in Olney. At night, trucks would be backed up along the highway waiting to get into the distribution center. The state police and local authorities saw the situation as a safety hazard, so they went to the city council to find a solution. The council agreed to let the trucks park on a paved road in an undeveloped industrial park in the city. The law enforcement authorities also worked with the state Department of Transportation to put up signs forbidding truck parking on the stretch of highway.

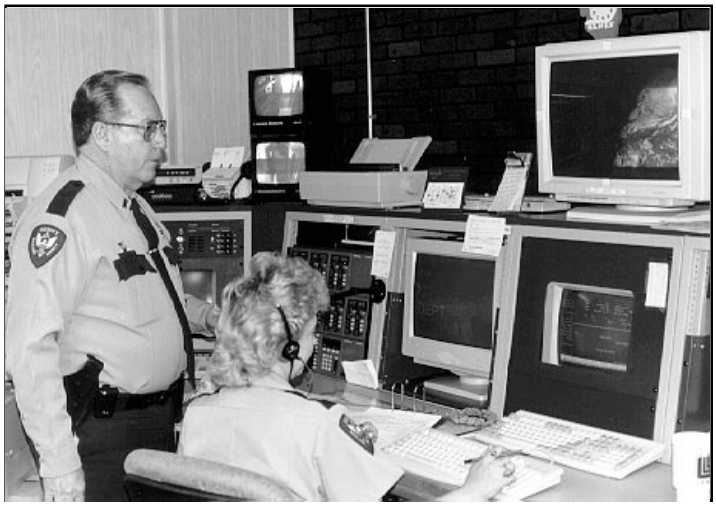


Photo by Daniel Dighton

Richland County Sheriff Gary Dowty watches Telecommunicator Kathy Miller demonstrate the county's new Computer Aided Dispatch system.

Juveniles strain resources

While the sheriffs in Clark and Crawford counties spoke of problems such as burglaries and domestic violence, the latter often accompanied by substance abuse, Richland County Sheriff Gary Dowty said his big problem is juveniles.

Like most small jails, the Richland County Jail doesn't meet state guidelines that require juveniles to be housed apart from adults. As a result, the county spent nearly $62,000 last year to hold them at a facility in nearby Vincennes, Ind.

Handling juveniles, whether it's paying for housing in another county, or transporting them to the Illinois Youth Center in northern St. Charles, is a heavy drain on the resources of small, rural counties like Richland. Dowty has just eight full-time deputies and five correctional officers, and he always sends at least two people when he transports someone.

This year, Dowty has a far different problem involving a juvenile. Since March, a cellblock at the Richland County Jail in Downstate Olney that normally holds four people has held just one: a 16-year-old boy charged as an adult for allegedly bludgeoning to death his half brother, the woman his brother was living with, and her three children.

The killings made news headlines across the state, as much for the sad and brutal nature of the deaths as for their unlikely location: Noble, a quiet farming village of about 800 people eight miles west of Olney. "That's something you see in Chicago or St. Louis," Dowty said.

The unfortunate episode illustrates that rural areas are not immune to the violent crime associated more often with cities. Although such violence is rare, when it does happen it can severely strain the resources of small departments.

Dowty is allowed to hold the 16-year-old in the jail because the youth has been charged as an adult. But the teenager still has to be kept isolated from the other prisoners. So one person occupies one of only three cellblocks in the jail, and probably will for many months to come. The youth also requires extra security any time he is transported to court, mostly as a precaution for his own protection, Dowty said.

Although Richland County is small, it has a strong economy, and several thriving industries have attracted newcomers. With the new faces come new problems.

"I started back in 1965, and you knew everybody then," said Dowty, who has been sheriff since 1994. "Now, we just have all kinds of people in here."

A recent example, he said, was a man arrested for drunkenness and window-peeping. The man only spoke Spanish. So after he was arrested, the sheriff had to call the high school to find someone who spoke the language. When the man appeared in court, an instructor from the local junior college served as an interpreter.

"A few years ago we didn't have anything like that," Dowty said, still amazed at what he sees today and somewhat nostalgic for simpler times. "We're a small farming community."■

Violent crime is down in Illinois, but some property crime is up in rural areas

By David E. Olson, Ph.D.

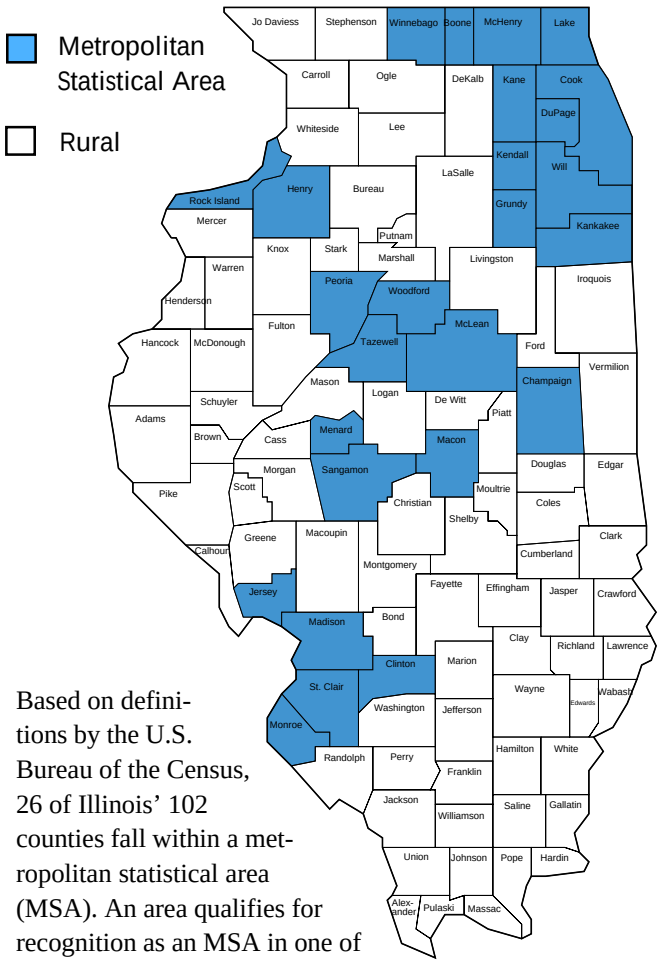
Although many of Illinois' largest counties have recently experienced decreases in the level of crime, a trend mirrored in large cities across the country, this trend has not been seen across all jurisdictions or all types of crime. Specifically, when Illinois' rural and urban jurisdictions are compared between 1993 and 1997, a number of differences in the level of crime and trends in crimes reported to the police are evident. For some types of crime, decreases were experienced in both rural and urban areas, although to varying degrees, while for other crimes the trends are moving in opposite directions. However, despite these trends, overall rates of crime (controlling for the population differences) are considerably lower in rural Illinois. This article examines the levels and trends across specific types of crimes reported to the police in Illinois' rural counties, and compares them to rates and trends in Illinois' urban jurisdictions.

Overall levels of violent and property crimes

Despite overall trends, it is important to note that rural communities in Illinois continue to have relatively low rates of crime (crimes per capita). In Illinois' rural counties in 1997, the rates per 100,000 residents for violent index offenses (murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) and property index offenses (theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson) were considerably lower than in urban areas. For example, the 53,516 property offenses reported to the police in Illinois' rural counties in 1997 translates to a rate of 2,655 per 100,000 residents, compared to a rate of 7,152 per 100,000 in Chicago and 3,790 per 100,000 residents in Illinois' other urban areas. Similarly, the violent index offense rate of 383 per 100,000 residents in Illinois' rural counties was one-sixth the 2,383 violent offenses per 100,000 residents experienced in Chicago, but only 13 percent lower than the violent offense rate (444 per 100,000) in Illinois' other urban jurisdictions during 1997.

David E. Olson is an assistant professor in the Criminal Justice Department at Loyola University Chicago, and a part-time research analyst with the Authority.

Metropolitan and rural areas in Illinois



Based on definitions by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 26 of Illinois' 102 counties fall within a metropolitan statistical area (MSA). An area qualifies for recognition as an MSA in one of two ways: 1) if it includes a city of at least 50,000 residents, or 2) if it includes an urbanized area of at least 50,000 population with a total metropolitan population of at least 100,000. The 76 other counties, which are outside an MSA, are considered rural. These 76 counties are home to almost 2 million of Illinois' 11.8 million residents.

Across the individual property and violent index offenses, rural areas generally had lower crime rates than Chicago and other urban areas, with the exception of criminal sexual assault and aggravated assault. For these two offenses, Illinois' rural counties actually had higher rates per 100,000 population than did urban areas outside of Chicago.

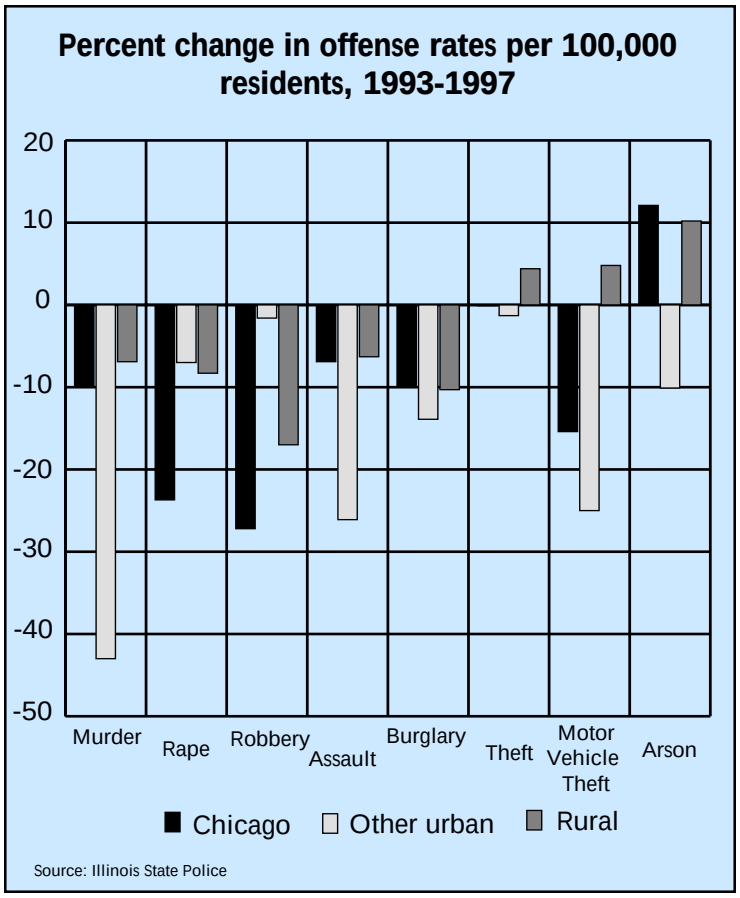
Trends in violent and property crimes

The total number of violent index offenses reported to police in Illinois' rural counties decreased 6 percent between 1993 and 1997, from 8,228 to 7,736. An even more substantial decrease was experienced in urban areas, where violent crimes decreased 18 percent in Chicago and were down 16 percent in other urban areas of Illinois during the same period. When changes between 1993 and 1997 were examined for each violent offense (murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault), decreases were seen across all four offenses in Chicago, other urban areas, and Illinois' rural regions (see graph). However, across the regions and individual violent crimes these decreases varied dramatically. For example, the murder rate in Illinois' urban areas outside of Chicago decreased almost 45 percent between 1993 and 1997, compared to a 10 percent decrease in Chicago and a 7 percent drop in rural areas. Again, it is important to keep in mind that despite the larger decrease in urban areas, the murder rate is still considerably higher in Chicago and other urban areas than in rural Illinois.

Despite recent trends in violent index offenses, however, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of crimes reported to the police are property offenses, and these therefore tend to drive overall crime rates and trends. Across Illinois' rural counties, the total number of property index offenses (including theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson) increased 2 percent between 1993 and 1997, from 52,444 to 53,516. On the other hand, Illinois' urban areas experienced decreases in the total number of property crimes reported to the police, ranging from a 6 percent decrease in Chicago to a 2 percent reduction in other urban areas. As with violent offenses, trends across individual property offenses and regions varied considerably during the period examined. In Illinois' urban areas, for example, every individual property index crime (burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft and arson) decreased between 1993 and 1997, with the exception of arson in Chicago. In Illinois' rural areas, on the other hand, the number of burglaries decreased but each of the other property offenses (theft, motor vehicle theft and arson) increased during that period.

Conclusions

In general, the recently released crime figures for 1997 are welcome news. Across both urban and rural areas of Illinois, the number of violent crimes reported to police has decreased. Similarly, Illinois' largest jurisdictions have also experienced decreases in property crimes, although this positive trend has not been universal across all regions of Illinois. Still, when the differences in population are controlled for, the *rate* of all property and most violent crime in Illinois' rural communities continues to be lower than that experienced in Illinois' urban communities.



These trends and rates should not, however, be taken to indicate that Illinois' rural jurisdictions do not need additional resources or that their crime problems are not serious. In addition, despite recent trends, it should not be assumed that Illinois' urban areas have brought crime under control. Justice agencies across Illinois continue to be limited in terms of the resources available to them and must be prepared for the changes that are taking place in terms of the expansion and migration of drug markets and street-gangs to regions throughout Illinois. For example, seizures of crack cocaine have increased dramatically in Illinois' rural counties since the early 1990s, and have been seen across an increasing number of counties as well. Similarly, in surveys, Illinois law enforcement agencies in rural jurisdictions have indicated increasing gang activity.■

In a rapidly changing world, what lies ahead for law enforcement in rural areas?

By Ralph A. Weisheit, Ph.D. and
L. Edward Wells, Ph.D.

Predicting future levels and patterns of crime is difficult, but it's important for effective criminal justice planning. Planning is particularly important for rural criminal justice agencies, which are likely to have fewer resources to respond to changing crime problems. Further, the media and scholarly researchers have largely ignored rural issues, and aside from a few special interest groups, rural Americans are generally not organized as a visible and influential political force. Thus, rural crime problems may be less visible to the larger society, and when they are recognized, there may be less political pressure to provide the resources necessary to respond.

It is important to recognize that differences among rural areas are often as large as differences between rural and urban areas. Differences in geographical, social, economic, and political conditions across rural settings complicate making broad predictions about rural trends. Thus, the desire to make broad predictions must be balanced against the need to recognize local variations.

Factors likely to influence rural crime trends

Several general factors shape rural crime trends, including economic, demographic, and technological, although these are closely interconnected in practice.

Economic

Rural America includes some of the richest and some of the poorest citizens in the country. In general, the wealthiest rural areas are those adjacent to larger metropolitan centers. Other rural communities realize economic benefits from modern technology and from manufacturers in their areas. Advances in technology have meant that some kinds of work can be done anywhere workers have access to a telephone. Fairfield, Iowa, for example, has about 10,000 people and is nearly 60 miles from the nearest interstate highway. It is home to Telegroup Inc., which sells international telephone services and has annual sales approaching $300 million. Fairfield is also home to Telegroup's major international competitor, Global Link.

Some rural growth has also been the result of modern manufacturing plants moving into rural areas where unions are weak, labor is cheap, state and local taxes are low, and economic concessions are generous. Automobile assembly plants, waste disposal facilities, and government service centers, for example, can bring economic growth to a rural area.

Economic growth often brings population growth, which can bring social disruption and crime. One police chief anticipated that the opening of a large federal building in his area would result in an increase in burglary because "now that people will have jobs they will also have VCRs and other things worth stealing. Until now there hasn't been much for a burglar to take."

Many remote rural communities have not experienced economic growth and have long suffered from poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. For the economically disadvantaged "backwaters" of rural America, there is little reason to believe that circumstances will improve in the near future. In fact, the gap between the richest and the poorest counties is widening. If this trend continues, increases in rural vice, property crime, and the smuggling of black market goods (e.g., drugs, stolen autos) can be expected. Rural drug production will also increase. Rural areas are already important in the cultivation of marijuana and police report a growing number of rural methamphetamine labs. In addition to their contribution to the drug problem, these labs often cause expensive and dangerous environmental problems.

One sign of the desperate economic circumstances of many rural areas is their frenzied efforts to attract prisons. Communities that once fought to keep prisons out now fight to bring them in.

Unfortunately, efforts to spur economic growth in rural areas have sometimes increased crime-related problems while having little impact on the economic vitality of the area. This has been well documented in the case of meat and poultry processing plants. In these plants wages are often so low that full-time employees still have incomes well below the poverty level. In some communities, unemployment rates and the

Ralph A. Weisheit and L. Edward Wells are professors of criminal justice at Illinois State University.

average income have *both* dropped after these plants moved into the area.

Another trend is for the largest meat processing operations to locate in small rural communities of only about 1,000. Because local residents cannot supply the industry's labor needs, companies recruit unskilled immigrants from across the nation, particularly Asians and Hispanics, who are desperate for work. As a result of a large influx of economically marginal workers, these communities often experience dramatic increases in crime, juvenile delinquency, and domestic violence. These groups are also easily victimized. Taking economically dispossessed immigrants and putting them into culturally homogeneous small communities creates a high potential for racial tensions and "hate crimes." In addition, the justice systems in these rural communities may not be prepared to handle culturally diverse populations or to respond to hate crimes.

Widespread feelings of victimization and powerlessness may arise in rural areas that attract industries with working conditions similar to those in many Third World countries. Given rural America's long history of mistrust and hostility toward the government, many have become sympathetic to the arguments of militias and other anti-government groups. The social and economic forces that led to the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995 have not diminished, and seem likely to become even more pronounced over time.

Demographic

Changes in the population will also have an impact on rural crime. Historically, the U.S. population has shifted from rural to urban areas as young workers and families moved from the countryside to the city. The rural population continued to grow because rural families tended to be large, offsetting the effects of out-migration. In the 1990s, these patterns began to change. Populations in rural areas grew because urban residents moved into the countryside in larger numbers. At the same time, rural families were smaller.

People moving from the city tended to either be retirees, commuters, or adults drawn to recreation. As with economic development, population gains are not evenly distributed across rural areas, with the most growth found in communities within commuting distance of metropolitan areas, in retirement communities, and in communities that attracted manufacturing or service industries.

While economically vital rural areas are seeing population increases, economically depressed rural areas still witness a net loss of citizens as young people move out. Growth is likely to also put a strain on criminal justice resources, and to foster divisiveness in rural communities. Research suggests that in rapidly growing rural communities crime rates grow three to four times faster than the population.

Continued population growth and urban sprawl means a steady reduction in the number of rural areas, and a continuous supply of places in transition from rural to suburban or urban. Each year, about 1 million acres of farmland nationwide are converted to urban or suburban use. As fertile farmland is taken out of production, farmers will be pressured to maximize yields on the land that remains. This will mean a greater reliance on pesticides, herbicides, and concentrated fertilizers, and a dependence on expensive high-tech equipment to apply them.

Sold in highly concentrated forms and difficult to tag with identifying markers, the theft of farm chemicals may become simpler and more lucrative than the theft of livestock or farm machinery. A 1992 California report indicated that pesticide thefts were becoming more frequent and more expensive, with a single theft's typical replacement value between $30,000 and $70,000. More recently, officials brought charges against a man for trying to sell $1.5 million worth of stolen herbicide. The most expensive types of herbicide can sell for as much as $115 for only 7.5 ounces, making it possible to carry more than $500,000 of this concentrated herbicide in the back of a pickup truck. Given these prices, the profits for thieves can be substantial, with correspondingly large losses for farmers.

Research suggests that in rapidly growing rural communities crime rates grow three to four times faster than the population.

Because rural population growth is fueled by adult in-migration rather than births, the rural population may be aging more rapidly than that of urban America. Drawn by a lower cost of living, relatively less crime, and a slower pace of life, small towns and rural areas have been popular retirement locations. As the number of retirees continues to grow, the number who retire to rural areas will also grow. The full implications of this demographic shift on crime are unclear, but several outcomes are likely. First, since the crime rate among senior citizens is very low, rural crime rates should remain lower than urban rates. While crime-related calls may go down, other calls for police assistance will increase, since police are the only agency available on a 24-hour basis in many rural areas. Second, crime against the elderly will probably increase, including health insurance fraud, home repair fraud, medical insurance scams, and elder abuse by care providers and family members. Third, some forms of crime by the elderly will likely increase, including Medicare fraud, and the illegal sale of prescription medicines.

Technological

Technology has always had an enormous impact on rural communities. America's shift from being a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban country was largely due to developments in technology, which allowed a smaller number of farmers to produce larger amounts of food and freed a larger percentage of the population to work in nonagricultural activities located in nonrural areas. In recent decades, a reverse migration pattern has occurred as industries, businesses, and people have moved out of metropolitan centers to surrounding areas

This pattern of "a long-term and gradual dispersal of the U.S. population into smaller, less densely settled cities and towns" is driven by technological changes. These changes allow more economic activity and production to take place in less urban locations, as dominant industries change from large-scale manufacturing, which requires large urban centers to be efficient, to information management and services, which do not need to be in urban areas.

The advent of satellite communications, electronic banking, shared computer databases of personal information, and the Internet will generate new kinds of crimes that are electronic or informational in content. Such crimes do not require physical access, proximity, or intervention and do not fit readily under traditional common-law conceptions of crime as physical predatory actions. In the age of satellite and microwave digital communication, crime involving electronic access to information does not depend on physical proximity, but on electronic communication access, which is almost indifferent to physical distance. As new technology reduces the quality-of-life differences between rural and urban settings, it will also make rural citizens as vulnerable as urban residents to new forms of crime, including electronic fraud, theft, vandalism, trespassing, and even personal abuse.

Improved transportation systems have meant that rural areas adjacent to larger cities are increasingly subject to "spillover crime" from urban centers, such as gang activity and robbery. For example, some states have reported an increase in the phenomenon of urban bank robbers going to outlying areas, where they believe the banks will be easier targets. Police have even revived a century-old word to describe these robbers: "yeggs."

Other rural crime issues

Environmental crime includes a range of activities, from illegally dumping hazardous wastes to the activities of militant environmentalists. The extent to which rural areas are used to illegally dump hazardous waste is unknown, but the isolation of many rural areas makes such dumping relatively easy. As the problem of disposing of hazardous waste grows and the cost of legally disposing of waste climbs, illegal dumping in rural areas will increase, as will the risk to the health and welfare of rural residents.

Impoverished rural areas also may be under great financial pressure to serve as legal dumping sites for urban centers. The government estimates there are more than 16,000 landfills and in-ground storage sites that are contaminated and leaking. Most are in small towns and farming communities. We expect a thriving illicit industry to arise that will include everything from clean-up scams, to conducting fraudulent tests for toxins in the ground and water, to the legitimate excavation of these sites followed by the illegal dumping of the contaminated material.

Militant environmentalists are also a concern. For example, Theodore Kaczynski, the "Unabomber," apparently targeted people with connections to advanced technology because he sympathized with a larger movement to protect wilderness areas. To date, radical environmentalists have been particularly active in the West, where efforts to save forests have included sabotage and threats to loggers and government officials. Throughout the country, nuclear power plants generally are located in rural areas and are logical targets for terrorists, domestic or otherwise.

Another likely source of environmental crime concerns the treatment of animals on modern farms. Driven by small profit margins, poultry, beef and pork producers have built larger facilities into which the animals are more tightly packed and in which animals may be born and live most of their lives within a few square feet of space. The waste water from poultry processing plants, leaks in the lagoons that hold the raw sewage from huge corporate hog farms, and the eye-watering odor of some operations has raised concerns among many rural residents. In one small Iowa town, for example, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter wrote:

"The issue has turned meetings here of the county Board of Supervisors into such heated affairs that a panic button was installed so supervisors could summon the sheriff's office. Vandals have struck the construction sites of some corporate hog complexes. The sheriff's department patrols them, and it tracks their sprawl with pins on its wall map" (Kilman, 1995, p. A1).

As beef, pork, and poultry facilities grow larger, they will increasingly become targets of vandalism and sabotage. A related type of sabotage is in the mink industry. Between 1995 and late 1997, there were 43 instances of minks being released from captivity. The incidents involved approximately 75,000 animals. The FBI investigates these crimes as "animal-enterprise terrorism." The activities of these groups appear to be intensifying and spreading to every level of the food distribution chain, including farms and restaurants.

Continuous population growth in the United States will mean that the physical size of rural America will continue to shrink, and the battles over what to do with land and natural resources will become more heated. There is a growing need for the products of industries generally located in rural areas, such as meat processing and nuclear power, which will be producing an increasing volume of

(Continued on page 18)

Victim services stretched far in rural areas

By Katrina Sifferd, J.D.

Providing services to victims in sparsely populated rural areas is a difficult task, and one that requires coordination between multiple agencies in remote areas.

As services to crime victims have become more of a national priority, funding for victim programs has steadily increased. Not surprisingly, most of the funds have gone to urban areas, where most of the crime takes place.

Illinois spent more than $261 million in state and federal funds on victim services in 1997. Most of that ($221 million) was spent by the Department of Children and Family Services for victims of child abuse and neglect.

The remaining $35 million included federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funds administered by the Authority, and also funds administered by the Illinois Attorney General's Office and the Illinois departments of Public Health, Public Aid, and Aging. This funding went to a variety of agencies providing victim services, including programs at state's attorney's offices and domestic violence shelters.

Of the $35 million, nearly $9 million was dispersed under the VOCA, and about $5 million was dispersed under VAWA. Approximately $7.3 million in VOCA funds went to help victims in the state's 26 urban counties. Less than $1 million in VOCA funds went to victim service programs in the 76 rural counties. (The remaining $500,000 in VOCA funds went to statewide programs.) Similarly, about 10 percent of VAWA funds went to rural areas.

The reason for the discrepancy in funding is simple: there are many more crime victims in urban areas than in rural areas. In 1996, urban counties in Illinois accounted for 83.1 percent of the state's population and 89.9 percent of the state's crime. Rural areas made up 16.9 percent of the state's population and 10.1 percent of the state's crime.

Despite the difference in the amount of crime in urban and rural areas, both areas experience the same types of crimes. Actually, for the crimes that are the most psychologically, physically, and fiscally traumatic to crime victims (such as aggravated assault and sexual assault), rates per 100,000 residents are higher in rural areas than in urban areas outside Chicago.

Obstacles to helping rural victims

Rural victim service providers are needed to provide the same kinds of victim services that are available in urban areas. But rural agencies must provide services across large geographic areas.

The distance between victims and service providers is the most common barrier to services in rural counties. In many areas, almost no public transportation is available. The small number of victims in a geographic area may mean that a program must provide services to more than one county, which makes transportation even more of a problem. Many service providers spend valuable time and resources traveling vast distances to bring services to victims.

Victim service programs in rural areas also have a hard time advertising their services. Most agencies try to make local law enforcement agencies, hospitals, and schools aware of their programs so they will get referrals from these institutions. Some programs take out ads in local newspapers to educate the public about their services. One rural victim service provider said she spends a large portion of her time driving down gravel roads and nailing flyers to telephone poles and fence posts. Programs also provide free presentations to community groups to spread the word about services and educate the public about crime prevention.

Typically, rural areas also have less assistance available from established community resources than urban areas.

The distance between victims and service providers is the most common barrier to services in rural counties.

Katrina Sifferd is a senior research analyst with the Authority.

Counties containing a large urban area may provide victim services through law enforcement agencies and hospitals, in addition to prosecutor programs and domestic violence and sexual assault victim programs. Such programs are rare in rural areas, and many rural victim service agencies cannot provide adequate service to all victims because of the lack of other local resources. For example, most victim service personnel located in prosecutor's offices are not licensed social workers or therapists. Therefore, it is impossible for such programs to meet the needs of many victims if they don't have proper resources for counseling. Similarly, an agency serving domestic violence victims cannot provide a much-needed service without a shelter in the area.

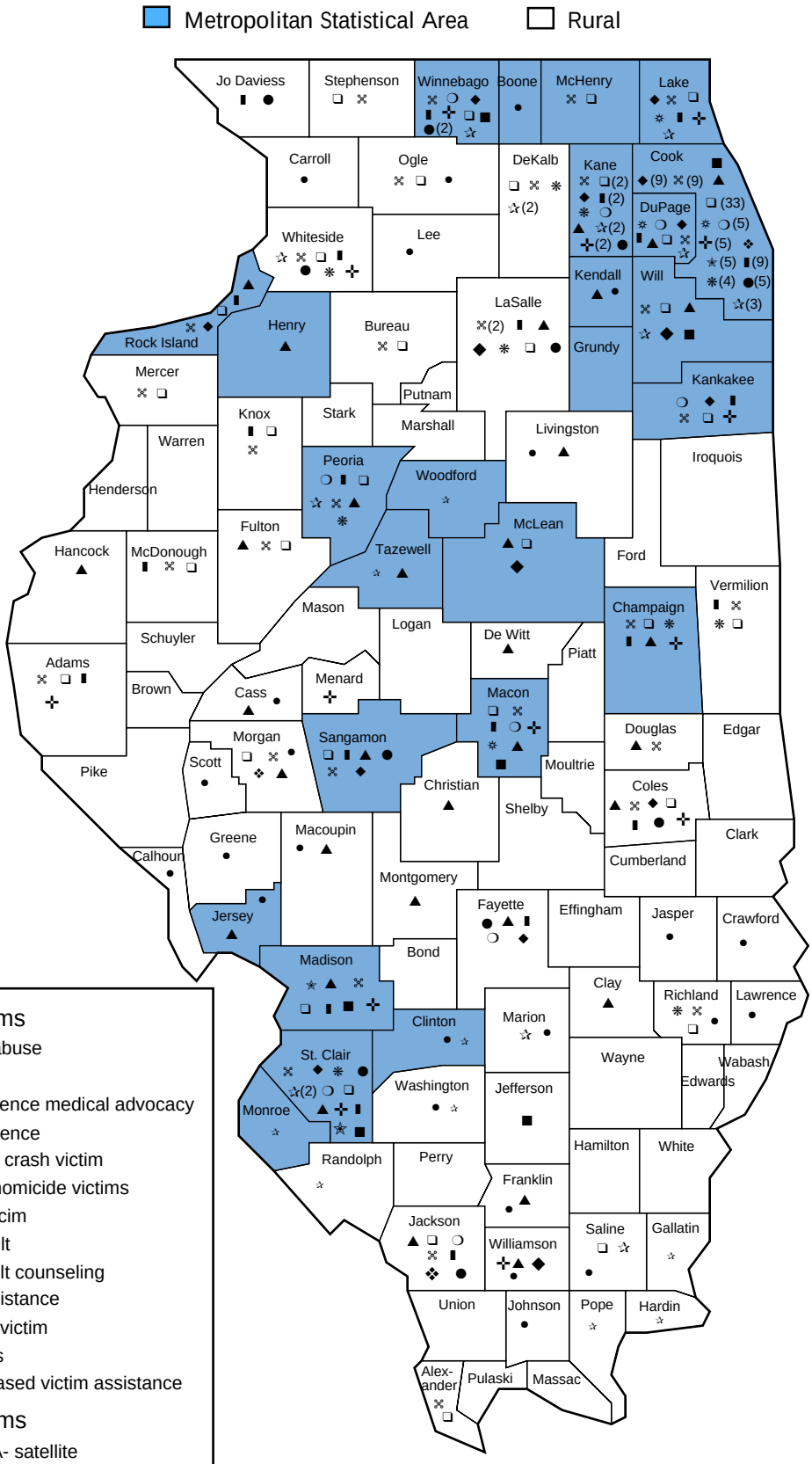
The three most common types of victim service programs in Illinois are those provided by state's attorney's offices, domestic violence victim services, and sexual assault victim services. Each type of agency faces specific hurdles in attempting to serve victims in rural areas. Examples of such difficulties are described below.

Victim programs in state's attorney's offices

Illinois statutes require state's attorneys to provide certain services to victims of violent crime. Generally, the state's attorney's office must notify victims of certain stages of their case. For example, the office must tell the victim the time and date of the trial, as well as of their right to attend each and every court hearing. Victims also have the right to be consulted, when practical, about a guilty plea, and to deliver a victim impact statement at the sentencing phase of the case.

Besides giving victims court notification, prosecutor-based victim programs also try to serve

Programs funded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)



as a source of information about other victim services in the community, such as shelters and the Attorney General's Victim Compensation Program.

Most prosecutor-based victim assistance programs attempt to help all victims of violent crime with cases pending in their county. Some larger programs have a more aggressive outreach program. The Cook County Victim-Witness Assistance Program, for example, with a staff of about 70 people, serves all victims of felony crimes. In some rural counties, where there may be only one prosecutor in the county, a staff person may double as a secretary and a victim specialist. Heavy workloads limit the amount of time that person can spend speaking with victims or helping them with social service referrals.

Glenda Kretzer, who handles victim services in the Marion County State's Attorney's Office, is responsible for the victims of about 500 offenses a month. She tries to notify victims who request it of the defendant's every appearance before a judge. But her duties also include demanding payment on all the bad checks written in her county, assisting in the preparation of jury trials, and requesting the criminal history of defendants for hearings. Finally, she tries to coordinate with the domestic violence victim and child victim advocacy groups in her county.

"Luckily, transportation isn't a problem here," Kretzer said. "We have the South Central Transit System, a public transportation system out of Centralia. If there is an emergency, we use the police to transport victims and witnesses."

Not every county is lucky enough to have someone like Kretzer to serve all victims of defendants with cases pending. About half of the state's attorney's offices in the state do not have a designated victim service provider. Administrative staff or the state's attorney must then deliver statutorily required victim services.

Domestic violence victim services

Many of the state's rural counties have domestic violence programs, and a large portion of these are members of the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV). In fact, domestic violence programs are more common in Illinois than prosecutor-based programs. These programs provide services such as shelter, counseling, court advocacy, public education on domestic violence issues, and practical assistance, such as day care and home maintenance.

Marilyn Reed is a rural advocate for Anna Bixby, a domestic violence victim assistance program that is part of the ICADV. Reed serves victims in Hardin, Gallatin, and Pope counties. She says transportation is the biggest obstacle to providing service to victims in those very rural counties. She provides the majority of services through home visits.

"Let's put it this way: I have a two-year-old car with 87,000 miles on it," Reed said. Some of the people she serves do not have telephones or running water. While in a victim's home, she may do everything from filling out an emergency order of protection, to fetching water from a well or taking the victim grocery shopping.

Reed notifies victims of her services by posting flyers in grocery stores and on roadways. "I go out as far as I can to put up flyers," she said. She also places ads in local newspapers, telling victims about available services.

Other victim services in the area are "few and far between," Reed said. There are no food pantries or shelters in the three counties. If necessary, Reed will take victims to the shelter in Saline County, just to the north. There is only one hospital serving all three counties, which makes seeking medical care difficult.

Victim service providers work out of the state's attorney's offices in Gallatin and Pope counties. However, victims will not come into contact with these programs unless the crimes are reported to police and the offender is charged.

Another important issue to rural domestic violence service providers is local attitudes toward domestic violence. A common attitude in the area is one of "you own your wife," Reed said. Public education is a high priority for many rural domestic violence victim agencies.

Programs serving victims of sexual assault

In Illinois, most of the specialized comprehensive services for victims of sexual assault are provided by members of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA). Those 30 centers, and their 16 satellite centers, offer court and medical advocacy, individual, group, and family counseling, and public education. All of these programs provide services to adult victims and crisis intervention and advocacy for child victims. Many also have specialized counseling for children and nonoffending family members. Generally, victims will learn of these programs from police officers, doctors, schools, or agencies such as the DCFS.

Many of Illinois' youth service agencies also serve adolescent victims of sexual abuse. The Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley (YSBIV) serves young victims in LaSalle, Bureau, Marshall, Putnam, and Stark counties, a total geographic area of 2,863 miles.

Elizabeth Davis, treatment coordinator of YSBIV, said the program mainly serves small towns and villages, where

About half of the state's attorney's offices in the state do not have a designated victim service provider.

"The best thing that has happened in the area of sexual assault and abuse is community awareness," — Elizabeth Davis, treatment coordinator

other social services are either scattered or virtually nonexistent. LaSalle County, the most urban of the five counties served, has only three towns each containing more than 10,000 people.

When the YSBIV first received funding, program staff used newspaper articles to make the communities aware of the services offered in the five-county area. In addition, a staff member went to many of the area schools, doctor's offices, courthouses, and police departments to provide information about the program. Most of the program's clients learn about the program through referral.

"The best thing that has happened in the area of sexual assault and abuse is community awareness," Davis said.

Despite the program's efforts, people in some of the rural communities still have old-fashioned views of sexual assault and abuse. "Some people still feel like, 'It happened to me, and I lived with it, so should you,' " Davis said. Law enforcement can also be lax about pursuing crimes of a sexual nature. Often, the only police officer in a town is from the town and knows everyone in it. The police officer may be reluctant to arrest friends or relatives for crimes within a family, especially for sex crimes.

Master's degree-level therapists with the program are assigned to at least two, and sometimes four, geographic locations and spend much of their time traveling to victims' homes. However, a victim's home is often not the optimum place to provide service. Five program staff members work as "transporters;" they are hired solely to transport victims from their home to one of the program offices for counseling or other services.

"Getting clients to private, safe environments where service providers can work with them is always a challenge," Davis said.

Conclusions

Clearly, funds available to serve victims in rural areas should be used in the most effective way possible. Agencies that will either serve large amounts of victims or the neediest victims should take priority in funding decisions. Law enforcement agencies and state's attorney's offices are well situated to serve victims of all violent crimes. In addition, law enforcement agencies and state's attorney's offices do not need to spend time and money trying to reach victims: the agencies come into contact with all victims who report a crime or who have criminal cases pending.

Law enforcement or state's attorney-based victim services, however, may not be feasible for many rural counties. Often these agencies are not able to support even a part-time victim service provider. Community agencies that serve certain segments of the victim population may be the best way to serve the neediest victims in counties that do not provide services to all victims.

Although sexual assault and domestic violence victim assistance programs serve a small portion of the victim population in an area, these programs provide victims with much-needed specialized services. Many domestic violence or sexual assault programs offer shelter and counseling directly, services generally not available from law enforcement or state's attorney-based victim programs.

Addressing the needs of victims in a rural county with limited resources can actually become easier precisely because of the modest number of victim service agencies. The agencies that do exist have a great opportunity to network together to serve victims. All agencies that provide victim services in a county, including law enforcement departments, state's attorney's offices, and community victim service agencies, should be aware of all other victim service providers in their county – a more difficult task in some urban areas.

Coordination between these providers would facilitate victim awareness and utilization of victim services provided within the county. Law enforcement agencies usually come into contact with victims very soon after the crime has occurred, and they should make victims aware of all the specialized services available in the county. State's attorney's offices also should provide referrals to a large portion of the victim population. In return, community victim service programs should attempt to encourage victims to provide police with information about crimes occurring in the area. These programs may come into contact with victims before a criminal complaint is filed, especially if they are learning of victims from schools or hospitals in the area.

Community programs also should train law enforcement officers and state's attorney personnel to be sensitive to victim issues. Finally, whenever possible, law enforcement could assist community assistance programs and state's attorney's offices by providing transportation for victims attending court hearings or counseling sessions.■

Study looks at unique roles of prosecutors in rural areas

By Nick Maroules, Ph.D.

While much has been written on the role and practice of prosecution, most of this literature examines or assumes large offices in urban contexts. By contrast, very little is known or reported on rural prosecutors, whether in Illinois or elsewhere. A current research project, made possible by funding from the Office of the State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor, focuses on prosecutors from the most rural Illinois counties. The study seeks to identify and describe the unique problems and challenges these individuals face in the role of state's attorney.

The study combines in-depth interviews with comprehensive surveys from 26 state's attorneys of counties with relatively small populations. County populations in the study range from 4,400 to 20,500, while more than half (58 percent) have populations of fewer than 10,600. Most of the prosecutors from these rural counties are technically part-time state's attorneys, theoretically affording them the opportunity to practice civil law in addition to their public prosecution responsibilities. None have an assistant or an investigator. The only staff is a secretary.

The initial research activities in this project included broadly structured interviews with a few state's attorneys. The interviews covered mundane as well as unusual experiences, and engaged the prosecutors in wide-ranging discussions of crimes, criminals, police, judges, resources, and their relationships with people in the county. We also asked them what were some of the most significant challenges they faced as prosecutors.

Based in large part upon the insights gleaned from that process, we designed a comprehensive survey instrument. The survey explores prosecutors' experiences regarding relationships with other criminal justice officials (particularly sheriffs and police), available resources, issues relating to the prosecution of particular types of crimes, sentencing considerations, and community pressures, among others. It seeks to measure prosecutors' attitudes regarding professional and remunerative satisfaction with the position. It also seeks base line information on the number of cases handled, police personnel, jail facilities, and other administrative information. At the time of this writing, the surveys were in the hands of the state's attorneys, and were just beginning to be returned. Following an analysis of the survey data — which includes both fixed-choice and open-ended questions — the research design calls for conducting additional in-depth interviews to elaborate on themes identified in the surveys.

Close relationships in small counties

One area of research focuses on the ways the small populations and informal personal contacts in these rural counties affects the work of state's attorneys. Other studies have documented the tendency of long-term members of rural communities to rely most heavily on informal processes, rather than formal legal processes, for resolving problems (Weisheit, et al., 1996). The initial interviews with prosecutors offered considerable evidence for this proposition. Prosecutors noted the tendency of residents to view the state's attorney as their private lawyer. They spoke of being stopped or called at all hours of the day — at work, on the street, or at home — by people wanting to discuss their speeding tickets, DUIs, probate matters, rumors about drugs, and other issues. They described some of the complex relationships involved in being state's attorney, an elected politician, and a lawyer in private practice (and for some, a small business owner as well) simultaneously. Their descriptions of conversations they have had with people charged with crimes makes it clear that they are as concerned for the person as much as they are the case. In sharp juxtaposition to what one would find in more populous counties, these prosecutors indicate that they rarely recuse themselves from cases when they have a personal relationship with an individual (acquaintance, friend, or even family member) charged with a crime.

The implications of practicing law as a public prosecutor in a rural context are significant — both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, prosecutors' own accounts of their professional practices suggest that they may find themselves

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straddling alternative, if not inconsistent, definitions of justice. On one hand, prosecutors always need to maintain concern for, and attention to, the formal procedural aspects and demands of the law. The few state's attorneys initially interviewed demonstrated considerable attention to the formal law. On the other hand, their discussions revealed considerable concern for the people they deal with.

Accordingly, the early evidence suggests that these prosecutors demonstrate a concern for both models of justice — one procedural and the other substantive, one focused on uniform application of the law, the other on outcomes. The practical side of this would strongly suggest that successful rural prosecutors have developed the ability to effectively negotiate this potentially contradictory pathway, providing residents with a sense of appropriate outcomes while satisfying the formal dictates and procedures of law.

Relationships with sheriffs and police

The initial interviews suggest that some rural prosecutors face serious challenges working effectively with their local sheriffs and/or police. Other conversations with prosecutors revealed, however, that some enjoy excellent working relationships with law enforcement personnel who they view as solid professionals. Those who signaled problems have voiced concerns about the inadequate training and lack of professionalism among sheriffs and police. While current state law requires that every law enforcement officer receive minimal training, some prosecutors suggest that the training is often circumvented, or is otherwise inadequate. As a result, incident and investigative reports are not properly written, crime scenes are not properly analyzed, arrest decisions leave something to be desired, and investigations suffer. Another potential problem concerns the possible lack of continuity among deputies, owing to a high turnover rate in some counties. The survey data will help gauge the extent to which other prosecutors report having similar problems.

The seriousness of such problems, to the extent they exist, is significant. The successful prosecution of crimes requires the close coordination of police and prosecutors. If some prosecutors find it difficult, if not impossible, to rely on local sheriffs or police, investigations are often compromised, and criminal behavior cannot be successfully prosecuted.

Sentencing laws

Some prosecutors have raised concerns about the impact of some sentencing laws on the resources of rural counties. Jail facilities vary widely across these counties. Some have new facilities with multiple cells. Other counties have no jail facilities whatsoever. Where jail facilities are lacking, pursuing a sentence of incarceration against a misdemeanant requires paying a neighboring county to house the offender. In cases in which the law requires a mandatory minimum sentence, prosecutors run the risk of exhausting limited county resources earmarked for such purposes, simply by following the law. This might have an impact on prosecutors' charging practices, a possibility that will be closely examined in the survey and follow-up interviews. Related problems deal with mandatory community service sentences. Many rural prosecutors indicate that their counties do not have the personnel to manage supervision of offenders sentenced to some period of community service. How prosecutors manage to negotiate the competing interests of the law with the limited resources of their counties requires further investigation and study.

Militias

Initial interviews with prosecutors from rural counties indicate that many have had legal experiences dealing with some type of militiamen, freemen, or other anti-government group. Many state's attorneys feel that such groups enjoy considerable ideological support in their counties. At the same time, they point out that any active cells include very few individuals, the majority of whom do not represent serious law enforcement problems. Even though prosecutors said they have dealt with challenges to their authority and to the court's jurisdiction, all indicate having successfully prosecuted such individuals.■

Citation:
Weisheit, Ralph A., David N. Falcone, and L. Edward Wells, *Crime and Policing in Rural and Small-Town America*, Waveland Press: Prospect Heights, 1996.

The Authority's newest McGruff the Crime Dog brochure outlines steps rural residents can take to protect themselves from crime. Copies of the brochure are available from local police departments or the Authority: (312) 793-8550.

Rural law enforcement and the Internet

By Sal Perri

The Internet expansion has become a new community policing tool for the law enforcement community. Agencies in large cities and rural areas alike are using the Internet to reach out to the community. Web sites are being used to showcase a wide range of information, including the structure of the department, crime prevention tips, information on missing persons, crime statistics, and other related information. Citizens are also communicating by e-mail with the chief, sheriff, or other law enforcement personnel to voice concerns about crime in the community or to speak out on other issues.

The following is a small sampling of Illinois rural police departments, and county sheriff's offices that cover some rural areas, which are accessible on the Internet.

Belgium Police Department

The Belgium Police Department in Vermilion County developed a Web site as a crime-fighting and crime prevention tool. The department uses the site to provide residents with the following information: home safety tips, missing children information, the goals of the department, links to other criminal justice related Web sites, and the ability to e-mail Police Chief Brad Phillips. (http://www.danville.net/~bradp/belgium.html)

Sal Perri is a research analyst with the Authority.

Clinton Police Department

Chief Michael J. Reidy Sr. developed the Clinton Police Department's Web site to provide another way to communicate with residents and others interested in crime prevention and the police department. The Web site includes links to holiday safety tips, press releases, departmental roster, D.A.R.E. and Crimestoppers. People also can e-mail the chief directly. (http://www.police.ci.clinton.il.us/cpd.htm)

DeWitt County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Roger W. Massey decided to develop a Web site to promote good public relations and community involvement. "At this point, we are using the Web page more for community policing," Massey said, "but we intend to expand it to include crime fighting information and information on wanted criminals." (http://www.police.ci.clinton.il.us/dcso.htm)

McLean County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Steve Brienen said his department started a Web site to give residents another way to access the department. "We hope to improve public education concerning the services we can provide and also become even more approachable in an informal forum of communication like the internet Web page," Brienen said. "We try to have a bit of fun with it, too, and not be so formal all the time."

The site includes a monthly visit with the sheriff, answers to frequently asked questions, an awards section, a tour of the department, and requirements to become a deputy sheriff. (http://www.mclean.gov/sheriff/sheriff.html)

Rock Falls Police Department

This Web site places an emphasis on reaching high school and middle school students. Chief Larry G. Thoren said that since the local high school and middle school are also on the Web, students are able to electronically interact with the police department. The department's site includes sections on gang prevention/awareness and community policing. It also has the Rock Falls public school page, which showcases the middle school and high school, as well as the Rock Falls Middle School Internet project. (http://www.police.ci.rock-falls.il.us/)

Roscoe Police Department

Chief Richard Lee said his department joined the Internet to be able to communicate more with the people. "I do believe in community policing, and this is one way of informing the people of what is going on," he said. "They also can give the department some feedback." (http://www.bossnt.com/~roscopd/index.html)

Sangamon County Sheriff's Office

Webmaster Jim Gasparin said that the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office developed a Web page to keep up with the times. "The world changes rapidly, as do the ways that we communicate. Our Web page is just one other way in which we can relay information to the public and receive information directly from them." Features of the site include crime prevention tips, D.A.R.E. program information, DUI information, and information on wanted persons. (http://www.fgi.net/sangshrf/index.html)

Resources/Advice

Developing a Web page can be simple or complex — it all depends on what type of information you want to share. The seven law enforcement agencies highlighted above offered the following advice to other agencies interested in joining the Internet:

- A Web site must be updated to be effective.
- Find a good, knowledgeable, computer person on staff to assist you in the development, implementation, and updating of the Web site.
- Get everyone within the department involved with the development of the Web page.
- Make sure you have an officer or two who knows computers and the Internet.
- Use your imaginations, do extensive research, and make your page represent your professional organization.
- Use the resources you have, look within your agency for help, and look to the public for assistance as well.
- Promote the department's Web page.

Getting a Web site on the Internet does not have to be expensive. Some law enforcement agencies Web pages use space donated by an Internet service provider, others share space on the city's computer server, while others purchase space on their own. All it takes is a bit of research.

There are also many resources on the Internet that police chiefs, sheriffs, and Webmasters can consult.

Criminal Justice Internet Applications Online Handbook

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, in conjunction with several other organizations, created this handbook to provide criminal justice agencies with tips they can use to plan, design, and implement a useful Web site. This site also contains an interesting overview of the World Wide Web, how it all started, and why. The document is located at: http://www.acsp.uic.edu/cjWeb/handbook/.

PoliceNet

PoliceNet provides public safety agencies free Web site space on its server and will assist with the design. PoliceNet has also developed a Webmaster handbook. This information can be found at the PoliceNet Web site, http://www.policenet.org.

Spider Net

Spider Net is a law enforcement Webmaster discussion list where members share ideas about Web site development. To subscribe, send an e-mail to John Evans at: evans@compusmart.ab.ca.

CJHTML-L

CJHTML-L is a free, electronic discussion list for criminal justice Webmasters. The topic of discussion is "newsmaking criminology on public computer networks" (CJ pages, HTML, JAVA, promotion, software, chat rooms, awards, content, lists, etc.). Additional information is available from the "Welcome" letter on the CJHTML Web page, located at: http://ua1vm.ua.edu/~sdykeho3/CJHTML-L.html. Webmasters, aspiring Webmasters, and those with an interest in criminal justice Web sites can subscribe to the list by sending an e-mail to LISTSERV@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM with no subject and with this text: SUBSCRIBE CJHTML-L

Office of International Criminal Justice

OICJ has a Web forum section where users can ask questions about the Web page development and how to maintain the site. For further details, visit the OICJ Web page, (http://www.acsp.uic.edu).■

(Continued from page 10)

waste, some of it hazardous. However, as rural America shrinks, efforts to protect what remains are likely to increase. From the clash of these contradictory tendencies, ecological crimes and civil unrest will emerge and intensify.

Conclusion

In the future of rural crime, the probable futures of the rural affluent and of the rural poor will likely be very different, both in their patterns of criminal offending and of victimization. It is also important to understand that rural areas are not self-contained communities. While there are unique features of the rural setting that shape the form and extent of crime, rural crime is also shaped by external circumstances. Rural areas are remote and isolated relative to urban communities, but they are not immune to global, national, and regional forces. Policymakers and rural criminal justice practitioners must plan for the future by keeping one eye on local developments and the other eye on larger and more distant forces.■

Citation

Kilman, Scott (1995, May 4). "Iowans can handle pig smells, but this is something else." *Wall Street Journal*, pp. A1, A6.

[An expanded version of this article, with references, is available from the authors. ***Weisheit****: (309) 438-3849, e-mail: raweish@ilstu.edu.* ***Wells****:(309) 438-2989, e-mail: ewells@ilstu.edu.]*

Motor vehicle thieves hitting rural Illinois

By Gerard Ramker, Ph. D. and
David E. Olson, Ph.D.

As indicated on Pages 6 and 7, Illinois' rural counties experienced different property crime trends than urban regions between 1993 and 1997. While the number of almost all property crimes decreased in urban areas, rural communities have not been so fortunate, particularly in terms of motor vehicle theft.

Between 1993 and 1997, the number of motor vehicle thefts reported in rural jurisdictions increased more than 6 percent, from 1,839 to 1,955. But while the number of reported stolen vehicles for 1997 was significantly higher than the 1993 total, the 1997 number actually represents a one-year decline of 140 thefts, or about 7 percent, in the rural areas.

Decreases in urban areas

Chicago and other urban areas, on the other hand, experienced double digit decreases during that same period. In Chicago, for example, motor vehicle thefts decreased almost 17 percent between 1993 and 1997, while law enforcement agencies in other urban areas received almost 22 percent fewer reports of motor vehicle theft in 1997 than in 1993.

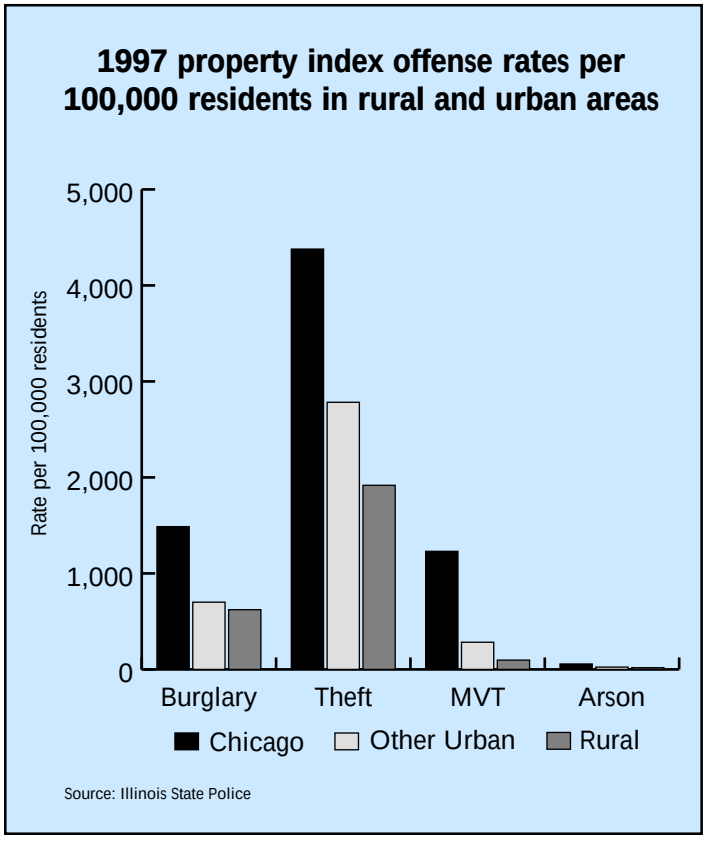
Since 1991, the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council has helped focus intensified law enforcement and prosecution efforts on vehicle theft in metropolitan areas of the state including Chicago, Rockford, Peoria, Joliet, and East St. Louis. It is possible that car thieves have begun to increasingly target rural areas in response to the work of auto theft task forces and special investigative work funded by the Council. Increased public awareness efforts in urban areas may also be playing a role in making rural areas more attractive targets.

According to data analyzed by the Illinois State Police's Motor Vehicle Theft Intelligence Clearinghouse, the state experienced a 7 percent increase in farm equipment thefts between 1996 and 1997, which undoubtedly also factors into rural vehicle theft trends.

Theft rates still lower in rural areas

However, as with all crimes reported to the police, it is important to take into consideration differences in the populations of geographic regions by also comparing crime rates. As with all property crimes reported to the police, including motor vehicle theft, rates per 100,000 residents were markedly lower in Illinois' rural jurisdictions than in either Chicago or other urban areas of the state (see graph). For example, in 1997 there were 1,955 motor vehicle thefts reported to the police in Illinois' rural counties, which translates to a rate of 97 offenses for every 100,000 residents. Thus, the 1997 motor vehicle theft offense rate in rural Illinois was 92 percent lower than the rate in Chicago (1,230 per 100,000 residents) and 65 percent lower than the rate in urban jurisdictions outside of Chicago (283 per 100,000 residents).

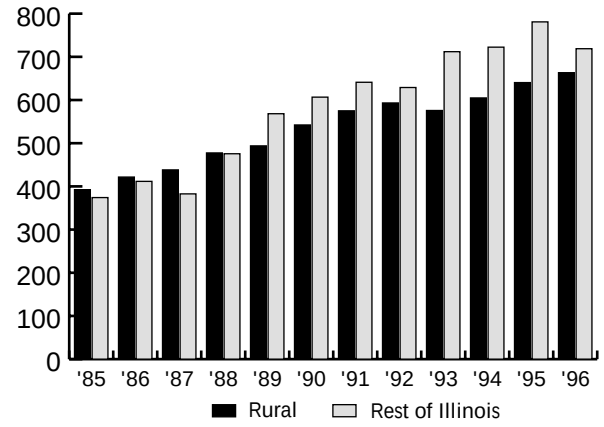
Even though citizens in rural areas are still less likely to be victims of vehicle theft than their urban counterparts, the problem is a significant one. Based on the estimated value of stolen vehicles, the number of reported thefts in rural areas in 1997 equated to nearly a $10 million crime problem. If recent property crime trends continue, vehicle theft will become increasingly costly for rural residents. ■



***Correction**: A photo caption in the winter issue of* The Compiler *misidentified the company for which Dave Ward, a member of the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council's Grant Review Committee, works. He is with State Farm Insurance Cos.* The Compiler *regrets the error.*

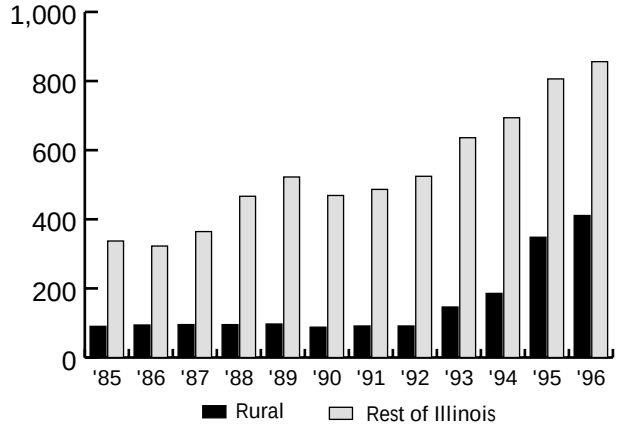
Trends

Felony case filings per 100,000 residents



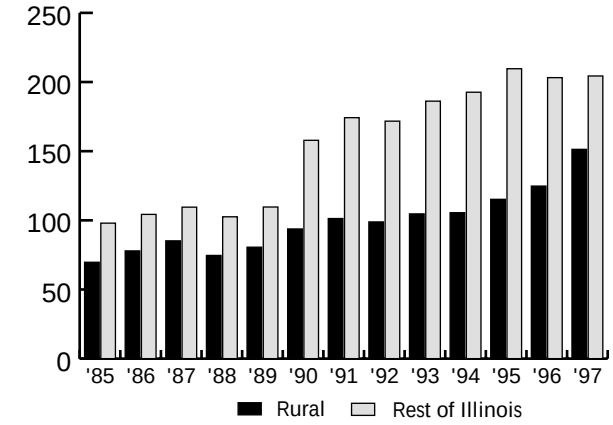
Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Drug arrests per 100,000 residents



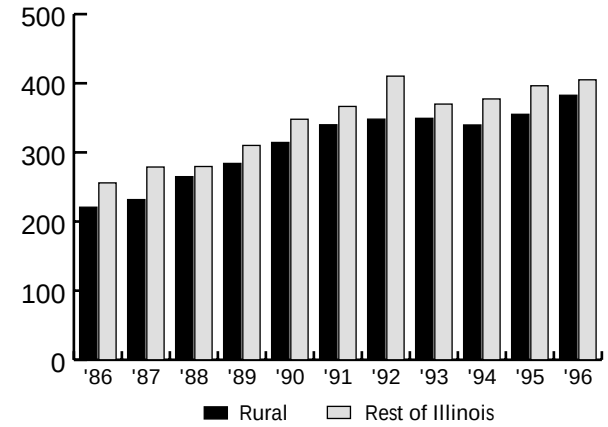
Source: Illinois State Police

Prison admissions per 100,000 residents



Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

Adult probation caseloads per 100,000 residents



Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

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