

Average Joe Felony Conviction Profiles

Sentencing policy is often driven by high-profile, extreme cases, but most of the individuals convicted in Illinois are not extreme. To focus the discussion on the more common cases, SPAC created these snapshots of average felony conviction in several offense categories. These “Average Joe” profiles are the typical people that flow through the State’s criminal justice system. Analysis of criminal history data shows that, out of every 100 convicted felons, 57 are sentenced to probation while 43 are sentenced to prison.

This set of profiles covers offenders *convicted* of a felony. These profiles represent the broader criminal justice system, compared to an earlier examination of people’s profiles who *were released from prison* in 2014. All offender profiles, both these broad *conviction* profiles and *prison* profiles, can be found at:

<http://www.icjia.state.il.us/spac/index.cfm?metasection=publications&metapage=researchreports>

To create these profiles, SPAC relied entirely on Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) data provided by the Illinois State Police. Disposition data from 2017 was used to get the most recent sample of felony convictions. Disposition data from 2014 was used to analyze recidivism patterns. Convictions were included when: (1) the individual was convicted of a felony and (2) the disposition occurred in 2017 (or 2014 for the recidivism analysis). SPAC pulled demographic information, criminal history information and the information about the current case to calculate a composite, average profile.

The results reflect the data as they are, including any inaccuracies or gaps. For example, out-of-state criminal records may be missing. Race (including both race and ethnicity) recorded in these analyses is either self-identified or identified by the arresting authority. The recidivism cohort does not have a reliable measure of race due to Hispanic individuals being classified as white prior to Public Act 98-528, effective January 1, 2015. Therefore, race was not included in the recidivism analyses.

In the profiles, some crimes are referred to as “other or unknown.” This categorization refers to exceptional cases that do not fit into the broad crime categories used or that are missing data, such as the class of offense, in the reporting systems. For example, driving without a license and illegal gambling are felony offenses that do not fall within other major offense categories, such as Person, Property, Sex, Drug, and Weapons. A case that is reported before the charging decision is final may be missing offense class information. Both of these cases would be categorized as other or unknown in the average offender profiles.