



David E. Olson, Ph.D. and Donald Stemen, Ph.D.  
Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology &  
Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice  
Loyola University Chicago  
1032 W. Sheridan Road, Mundelein Center, Room 807  
Chicago, IL 60660  
[dolson1@luc.edu](mailto:dolson1@luc.edu)  
[dstemen@luc.edu](mailto:dstemen@luc.edu)

## **Adult Redeploy Illinois: A Vehicle for Advancing Justice System Effectiveness (Key Takeaways)**

While many view Illinois' criminal justice system as a monolithic organization, it is a complex combination of municipal, county and state agencies across the executive, judicial and legislative branches, and also includes a wide variety of non-profit organizations and community groups. In many ways, each county can be seen as its own justice system—thus, we have 102 local justice systems, and each is unique.

Despite both violent and property crime decreasing 40 percent between 2000 and 2015, the total number of convicted felons under the jurisdiction of Illinois' criminal justice system (on probation, in prison or on mandatory supervised release—MSR or “parole”) has not changed and has averaged around 130,000 adults in Illinois throughout the past 15 years.

At the end of 2015, 60 percent of the roughly 130,000 convicted felons under the jurisdiction of Illinois' criminal justice system were under the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections, with more than 47,000 in prison and more than 28,000 in the community under MSR.

Despite admissions to prison in Illinois decreasing more than 20 percent between state fiscal years (SFY) 2010 and 2016, due to longer lengths of stay in prison, the actual population of Illinois' prisons fell only 6 percent during that same period.

Between SFY 2010 and 2016, two-thirds of all Illinois counties saw a decreasing trend in the number of people sentenced to prison; this is the result of decreases in the number of arrests and felony filings, and/or a decreasing proportion of felons being sentenced to prison.

Reform efforts nationwide and in Illinois have sought to reduce both admissions to prison and length of stay in prison through a variety of mechanisms, including reforms to drug-laws, making non-probationable offenses probationable, changing some felonies into misdemeanors, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of community-based programming and supervision (e.g., probation) through efforts like Adult Redeploy Illinois, and reducing recidivism of those released from prison.

--Continued--

**Adult Redeploy Illinois: A Vehicle for Advancing Justice System Effectiveness  
(Key Takeaways) (Continued)**

Statewide, the proportion of convicted felons being sentenced to prison decreased between 2009 and 2015, a pattern that was evident in about one-half of Illinois' 102 counties.

Sentencing practices in Illinois vary dramatically across the 102 counties, although generally a person's criminal history record and the severity of their current charge are the two most influential factors in sentencing.

An objective measure of the risk of future violence, based on a combination of prior convictions, arrest while current case was pending, and age, had minimal influence over the likelihood that a prison sentence would be imposed on those convicted of felonies in Illinois.

After controlling for the influence of age, race, gender, criminal history and the nature and severity of the current charge, there is still considerable variation in the likelihood that a convicted felon will be sentenced to prison across Illinois' 102 counties. In other words, what county a felon is sentenced in—regardless of their criminal history or other characteristics— influences what sentence they will receive.

Certain characteristics of a county, such as the amount of crime, clearance rates, population characteristics, population density, average income, court practices (i.e., percent of cases going to trial), or political affiliation of voters, did not explain the variation in sentencing practices across Illinois' counties.

Statewide, roughly 25 percent of those convicted of a probationable offense who had never before been convicted of a crime were sentenced to prison, and this proportion varied considerably across Illinois' counties.

Similarly, 20 percent of those convicted of a non-violent, probationable offense who had never before been convicted of a crime were sentenced to prison, and this proportion varied considerably across Illinois' counties.