

FEMALE CRIMINALITY 1970-1980:

THE U.S. and ILLINOIS

April 1983

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ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY
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Introduction

In recent years a good deal of both popular and scientific work has appeared which deals with the extent to which patterns and levels of female crime have been changing (Adler, 1975; Bruck, 1975; Sturgeon and Rans, 1975; 1978; Crites, 1975; Brodsky, 1975; Steffensmeier, 1980a; 1980b; Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier, 1980). The underlying theme which links these works together is a concern with whether men and women exhibit the same patterns of criminal activity, and whether such patterns have changed over time. For example:

- Do men and women exhibit the same arrest patterns?
- Are they arrested for the same kinds of crime?
- Have these patterns changed over the last decade?
- Is there a rise in the number of aggressive and violent female arrestees?

In light of such questions, this report compares criminality patterns for males and females. Such patterns are examined over time in order to assess whether the patterns have remained constant or changed over the last ten years. The validity of popular beliefs, namely, that increased criminality in females is tending towards more

violent and physically aggressive crimes, is examined. In addition, although the report focuses on the state of Illinois, trends are compared with those at the national level.

The analysis presented is based mainly on national arrest statistics from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), and Illinois arrest statistics based on the Department of Law Enforcement's (DLE) Illinois Uniform Crime Reports (IUCR). Other data, including incarceration data, will be used to supplement arrest data. Heavy reliance on official statistics to assess female crime is due primarily to the absence of other representative data sources which include females, and cover extended periods of time. Most research efforts to establish the basic patterns of female crime and/or delinquency have been dependent on arrest data, which is not criminal or delinquent behavior per se. Also, arrest data represents behavior that has been noticed and processed officially, and may not accurately reflect the extent of female criminality. Nonetheless it still represents a rich and useful source of information on female criminality.

Review of the Literature

Many of the earliest researchers who addressed the issue of female patterns of criminality followed the FBI's practice of reporting raw arrest figures (Adler, 1975;

Simon, 1975; Rasche, 1975; Moseley and Gerould, 1975). These researchers calculated percentage change over time based on these raw arrest figures, which they in turn used to argue that there has been an increase in female criminality in recent years. For example, the FBI's Crime in the United States, 1974 (1975: 184) shows an alarming 109% increase in female arrests between 1960 and 1974, compared with a 24% increase in male arrests. It appears there has been a substantial increase in female criminality between 1960 and 1974. However, such results must be carefully scrutinized, since they rely heavily on "rate of increase", which as we shall see below, is not the most desirable measure to use. 1/

There are a number of reasons why the researcher may find it undesirable to rely on such calculations. Some of the major reasons are listed below.

- 1) The number of law enforcement agencies which report to the FBI's UCR may change from one year to the next. Thus, raw arrest figures may fluctuate from year to year as a result of a change in the number of reporting agencies rather than an actual increase

1/ As Rans (1975:2-3) notes, another deficiency of early arrest statistics of the FBI is an inadequate recording of female arrests separate from male arrests during the 1960's.

or decrease in arrests. 2/

- 2) Equally important, is the issue of whether the increase in female arrests is greater than, less than, or about equal to the increase in male arrests for the same period of time (Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier, 1978). Both male and female arrests have increased in terms of raw numbers; the issue is whether they have been increasing at the same rate.
- 3) Raw arrest figures , and "rates of increase" based on such figures, do not take account of population increases during a given period of time. In short, the researcher cannot tell whether increases in the number of arrests represent an increase in crime or simply reflect an increase in population. 3/
- 4) Because traditionally fewer women have been arrested than men, any increase in female arrests is likely to result in a higher "rate of increase". For example, Crites (1975:33) shows that the 450% increase

2/ This is not the case for the Illinois Uniform Crime Reports (IUCR). Agencies which did not report to the Department of Law Enforcement reported to the county sheriff.

3/ For example, if 100 females are arrested for a particular type of offense in a given year, and 1,000 are arrested in the following year, and the total number of females in each year were 1,000 and 10,000, respectively. The rate of increase between these two years was 900%, while the arrest rate remains unchanged.

in female juvenile arrests for negligent manslaughter posted between 1960 and 1974 (FBI, 1975:184) reflects a rise from 2 to 11 arrests. A large rate of increase is achieved rather quickly with a small base figure.

With these caveats in mind, a number of the findings which came from this earlier research must be re-examined.

In order to avoid a number of the pitfalls which arise from relying only upon raw arrest figures, we shall utilize three measures, in addition to raw arrest figures and rates of increase, which are not as problematic.

- 1) Female arrestees as a percentage of all arrestees for a particular offense.
- 2) The arrest rates for both males and females are calculated, and the difference between male and female rates will be used for comparative purposes.
- 3) The proportion of index arrests which are for violent crimes in each sex cohort. This simply tells us what proportion of sex specific arrests are for violent crimes.

These measures are much less likely to be affected by the changing number of reporting agencies, especially when making comparisons over time. Moreover, such measures are unlikely to be effected by population growth or decline, in contrast to raw arrest numbers. By utilizing a number of measures a more reliable picture of the actual trends will result.

Comparing General Trends

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of arrest trends, it is useful to look at some more general trends. Furthermore, it is useful and informative to compare Illinois trends with national trends. By looking at these basic patterns, the reader will be able to put subsequent findings into perspective.

Tables 1 and 2 present raw index arrest figures for the U.S., and the state of Illinois, respectively. 4/ These figures are presented for both males and females, and broken down into violent, property and total index categories. As

4/ Index offenses, which are generally considered more serious, include : murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, vehicle theft, arson, and attempts (see Crime in the U.S., 1980; Crime in Illinois, 1980). Arson has been omitted from the analysis in order to facilitate comparison with years prior to 1980. Rape has been included as an offense for both sexes. Were this offense omitted, the number of male arrests would be underestimated, although it would not markedly effect the number of female arrests.

Table 1

Total Arrests for Index Crimes by Sex, for U.S., 1970-1980*

Year	Males			Females		
	Violent**	Property***	Total Index	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	218,665	836,807	1,058,169	23,240	192,051	215,614
1971	245,788	908,117	1,156,325	27,421	213,210	240,979
1972	269,268	890,007	1,161,910	29,953	224,901	255,205
1973	260,800	851,685	1,115,139	29,582	227,157	257,081
1974	264,481	928,185	1,194,616	30,136	249,399	279,811
1975	332,133	1,196,268	1,531,100	38,320	332,049	370,711
1976	303,433	1,126,549	1,432,374	35,416	319,058	354,732
1977	346,510	1,238,303	1,587,418	40,296	358,001	398,625
1978	400,697	1,336,756	1,737,453	45,423	336,384	431,809
1979	390,566	1,335,113	1,725,679	44,212	375,024	419,236
1980	401,589	1,367,096	1,768,685	44,784	366,149	410,933

* FBI's Uniform Crime Reports in Crime in the U.S., 1970-1980.

** Violent Crimes include homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault and attempts.

*** Property Crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and attempts. In 1979, congressional legislation mandated that the FBI reclassify arson as a Part I index crime. This change was implemented in Illinois with the reporting of 1980 UCR data. Because of this coding change, arson has been excluded from index crimes in 1980.

Table 2

Total Arrests for Index Crimes by Sex, for Illinois 1970-1980*

Year	Males			Females		
	Violent**	Property***	Total Index	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	16,900	53,637	70,619	1,455	11,319	12,784
1971	18,917	56,607	75,598	1,692	12,254	13,961
1972	21,764	44,766	66,530	2,012	11,262	13,274
1973	21,787	63,151	84,938	2,052	15,356	17,408
1974	23,645	75,532	99,177	2,111	18,387	20,498
1975	23,696	82,646	106,342	2,040	20,146	22,186
1976	19,188	78,682	97,870	1,655	19,782	21,437
1977	16,626	75,383	92,009	1,435	20,039	21,474
1978	17,145	79,275	96,420	1,500	21,384	22,884
1979	18,352	81,080	99,432	1,633	21,277	22,910
1980	19,033	92,897	111,930	1,501	23,471	24,972

* Crime in Illinois, 1970, 1971, and the SAC Edition of the Illinois Uniform Crime Reports Arrest Data, 1972-1980.

** Violent Crimes include homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and attempts.

*** Property Crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and attempts. In 1979, congressional legislation mandated the FBI reclassify arson as a Part I index crime. This change was implemented in Illinois with the reporting of 1980 UCR data. Because of this coding change, arson has been excluded from index crimes in 1980.

can be readily observed from table 1, nationally there has been an increase in the absolute number of females arrested for index crimes from 215,614 in 1970 to 410,933 in 1980, a 90.6% increase, as reported in UCR. This is greater than the increase in male arrests from 1,058,169 in 1970 to 1,768,685 in 1980--a 67.2% change. Table 2 shows a similar pattern for the state of Illinois, where there was a 95.3% increase in female arrests between 1970-1980, and a 58.5% increase in male arrests for the same period.

Three observations can be made at both the national level, and for the state of Illinois. (1) More males are arrested for index crimes than females. (2) The number of females arrested for index crimes has increased in absolute terms during the 1970-1980 period. (3) Relatively speaking, the number of females arrested for index crimes has increased at a faster rate than the number of males arrested for index crimes during this period of time.

Females as a Proportion of Arrestees

It is useful to examine these arrest figures in a different manner. Table 3 shows females as a percentage of arrestees for violent, property, and total index crimes. These percentages are plotted over time in figure 1. It can be seen that females, as a proportion of all persons arrested for violent index offenses, have remained fairly constant.

Table 3

Females as a Percent of Arrests for Index Crimes,
U.S., 1970-80

Year	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	9.6%	18.7%	16.9%
1971	10.0%	19.0%	17.2%
1972	10.0%	20.2%	18.0%
1973	10.2%	21.1%	18.7%
1974	10.2%	21.2%	18.9%
1975	10.3%	21.7%	19.5%
1976	10.5%	22.1%	19.8%
1977	10.4%	22.4%	20.1%
1978	10.2%	22.4%	19.9%
1979	10.2%	21.9%	19.5%
1980	10.0%	21.9%	18.8%

WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF INDEX ARRESTS, NATIONALLY, 1970-80

VIOLENT INDEX = □
 PROPERTY INDEX = ○
 TOTAL INDEX = △

DATA ARE FROM THE FBI'S
 UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS,
 1970-1980

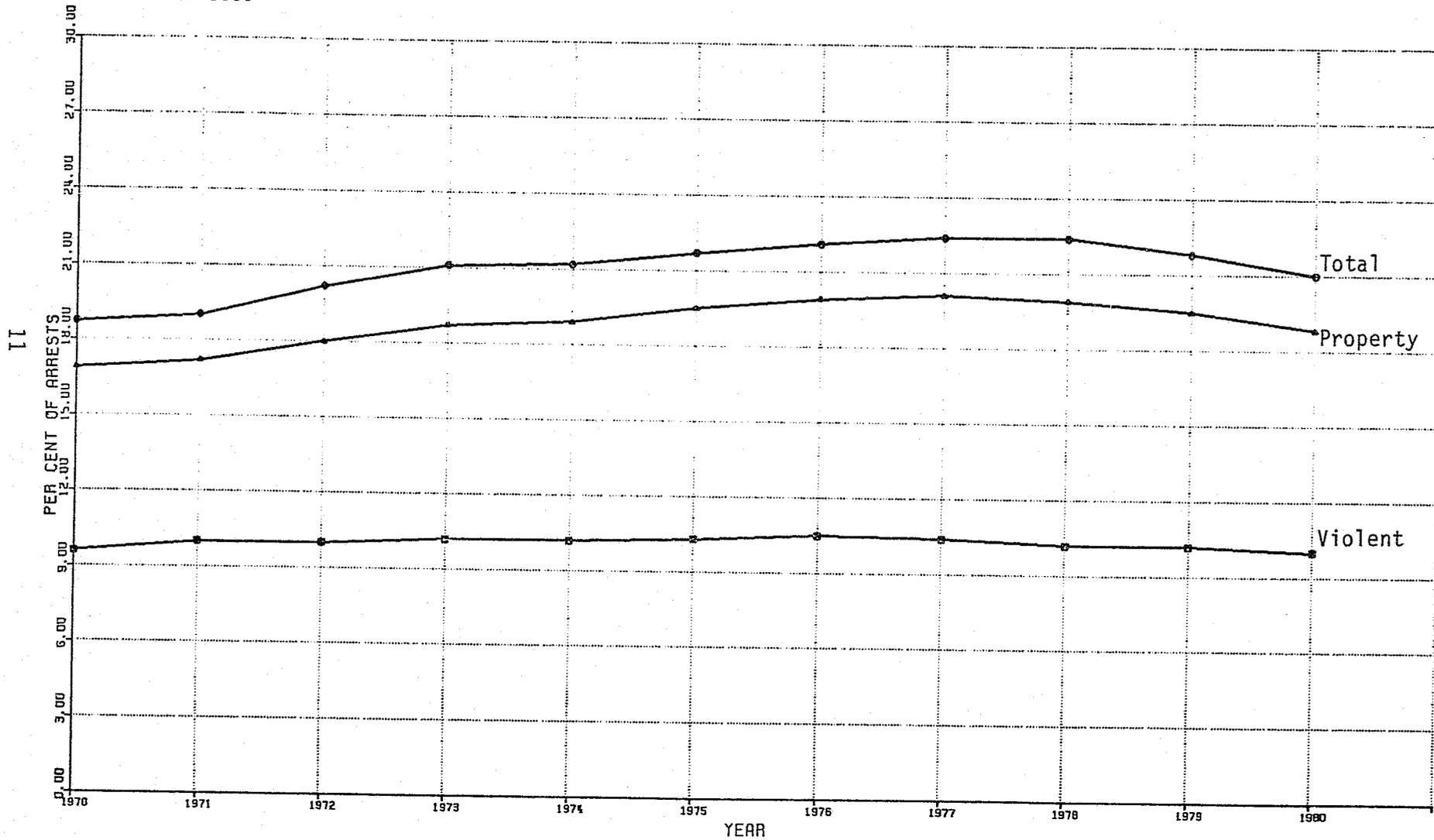


Figure 1

That is, women have represented, and continue to represent, about 10% of the persons arrested for violent index offenses. Or alternatively, males account for about 90% of all arrests for index violent offenses. 5/ With regard to index property arrests, women accounted for 22% of all index property arrests in 1980, up from about 19% in 1970. As a proportion of all index arrests in the U.S., females increased from 16.9% in 1970 to 18.8% in 1980. 6/

Table 4 indicates that a similar pattern is reflected in the state of Illinois (see figure 2). The proportion of violent arrests accounted for by females has remained constant over this period. It can be seen that females have accounted for about 8% of the violent crime arrests during this period, slightly lower than the percentage reported for the nation as a whole.

With regard to index property crime arrests in Illinois, females accounted for 17.4% of these arrests in 1970, and 20.2% in 1980. This proportion has remained fairly

5/ These proportions are consistent with those obtained from victimization surveys. With respect to personal or violent crimes, respondents identified about 10% of the offenders as being female in 1973; 11.4% in 1978; and 11.6% in 1979. For further discussion of offender characteristics, see the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (1976; 1980b; 1981).

6/ This had not changed markedly as of 1981. Females accounted for 10.1% of the arrests for violent index crimes, 21.5% of the arrests for property index crimes, and 19.2% of all arrests for index crimes.

Table 4

Females as a Percent of Arrests for Index Crimes,
Illinois, 1970-1980

Year	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	7.9%	17.4%	15.3%
1971	8.2%	17.7%	15.6%
1972	8.4%	20.1%	16.6%
1973	8.6%	19.6%	17.0%
1974	8.2%	19.6%	17.1%
1975	7.9%	19.6%	17.3%
1976	7.9%	20.0%	17.9%
1977	7.9%	21.0%	18.9%
1978	8.0%	21.2%	19.2%
1979	8.2%	20.8%	18.7%
1980	7.3%	20.2%	18.2%

WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF INDEX ARRESTS, IN ILLINOIS, 1970-80

VIOLENT INDEX = □
 PROPERTY INDEX = ○
 TOTAL INDEX = △

DATA ARE FROM THE SAC EDITION OF
 THE ILLINOIS UNIFORM CRIME
 REPORTS 1970-1980

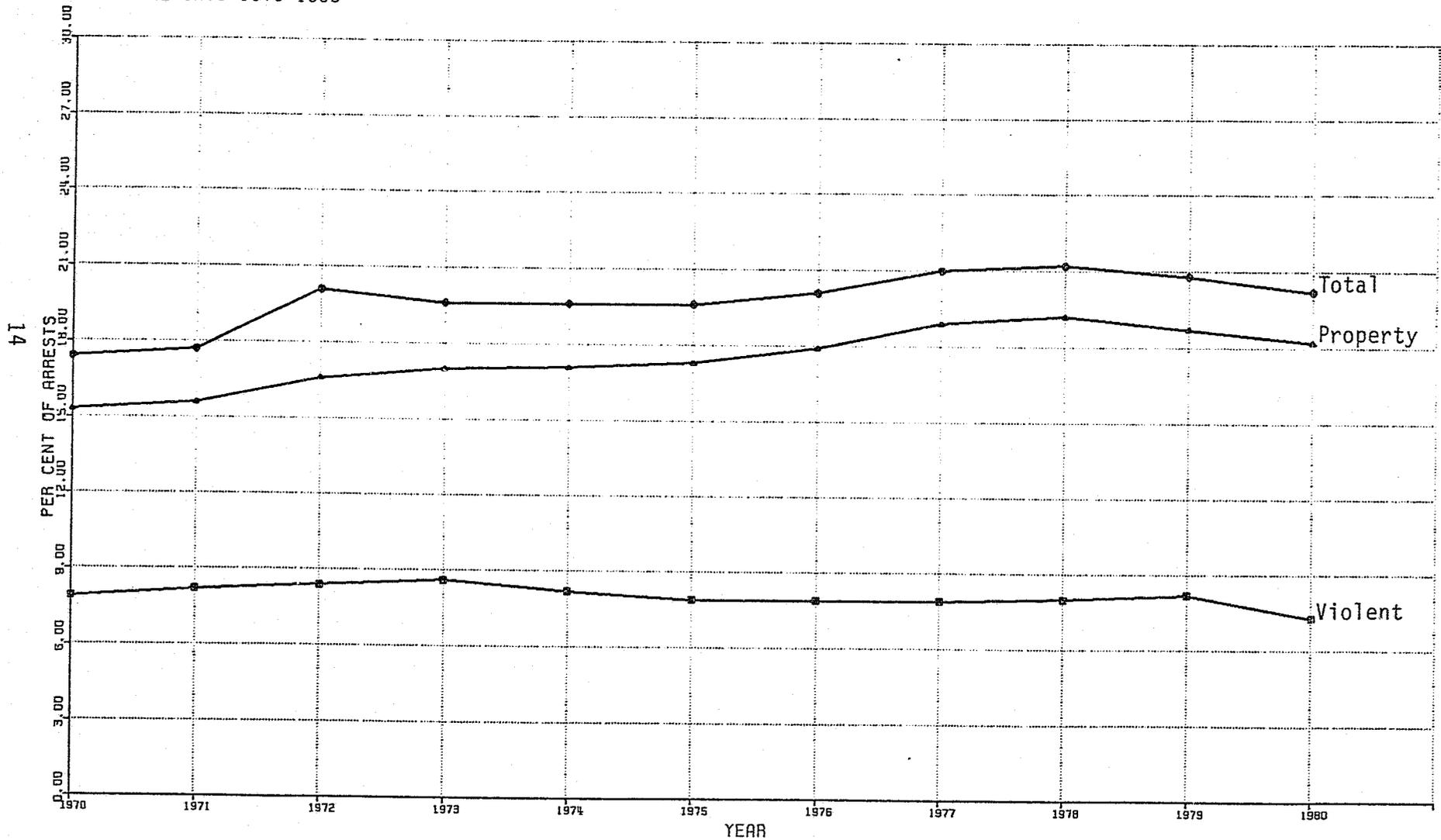


Figure 2

constant since 1972--i.e., about 20%. This is very close to the pattern reported nationally, although the proportion of women arrested for all index property crimes in Illinois is also slightly lower than for the nation. Females, as a proportion of all index arrests, have increased from 15.3% in 1970, to 18.2% in 1980. This also reflects the national trend, but is slightly lower. 7/

The Proportion of Arrests for Violent Crimes by Sex Cohort

Another way in which to assess whether arrests indicate a more aggressive and violent trend in female criminality is to calculate the percentage of index arrests which are for violent offenses or offenses against persons. That is, of the arrests for more serious crimes, what proportion are for violent crimes for each gender. Figures 3 and 4 plot the percentage of index arrests which are for violent crimes over the 1970-1980 period.

Nationally, this percentage has remained fairly constant over time for both males and females. Figure 3 indicates that this percentage has been about 21-24% for males during the 1970-1980 period. For females, the percentage has ranged from 9-12% for the same period. This trend also appears to indicate that the amount of violent and

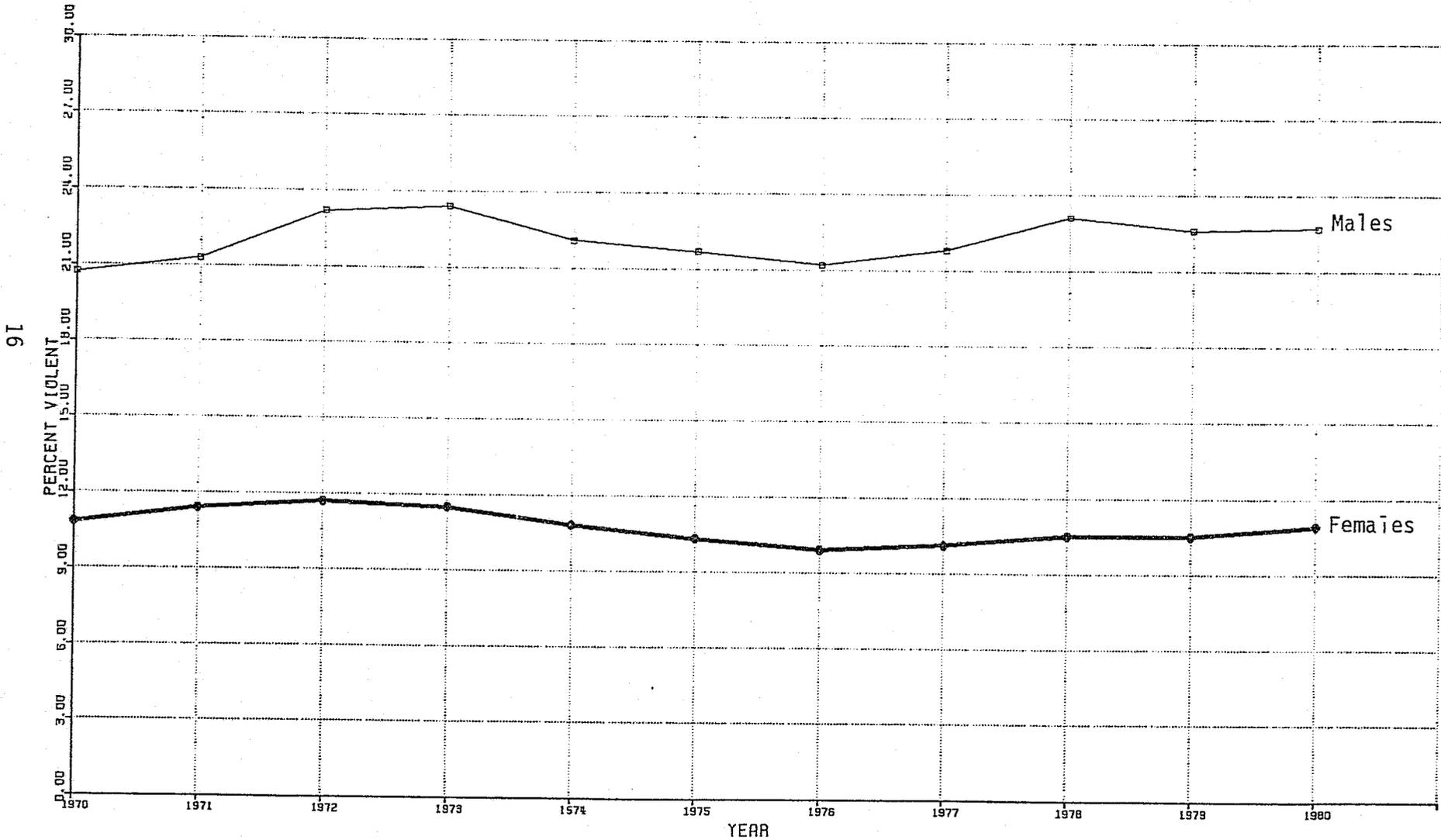
7/ In Illinois, females accounted for 8.5% of all violent index arrests, 20.4% of all property index arrests, and 18.4% of all index arrests in 1981.

PERCENT INDEX ARRESTS FOR VIOLENT CRIMES, U.S., 1970-80

MALES = □
FEMALES = ○

SOURCE: CRIME IN THE U.S., 1970-1980

EACH POINT REPRESENTS THE PERCENT OF TOTAL MALE OR FEMALE INDEX ARRESTS WHICH WERE FOR VIOLENT CRIMES.



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Figure 3

PERCENT INDEX ARRESTS FOR VIOLENT CRIMES, ILLINOIS, 1970-80

MALES = □
FEMALES = ○

SOURCE: CRIME IN ILLINOIS, 1970 AND 1971, AND
SAC EDITION OF THE ILLINOIS UNIFORM

EACH POINT REPRESENTS THE PERCENT OF TOTAL
MALE OR FEMALE INDEX ARRESTS WHICH WERE
FOR VIOLENT CRIMES.

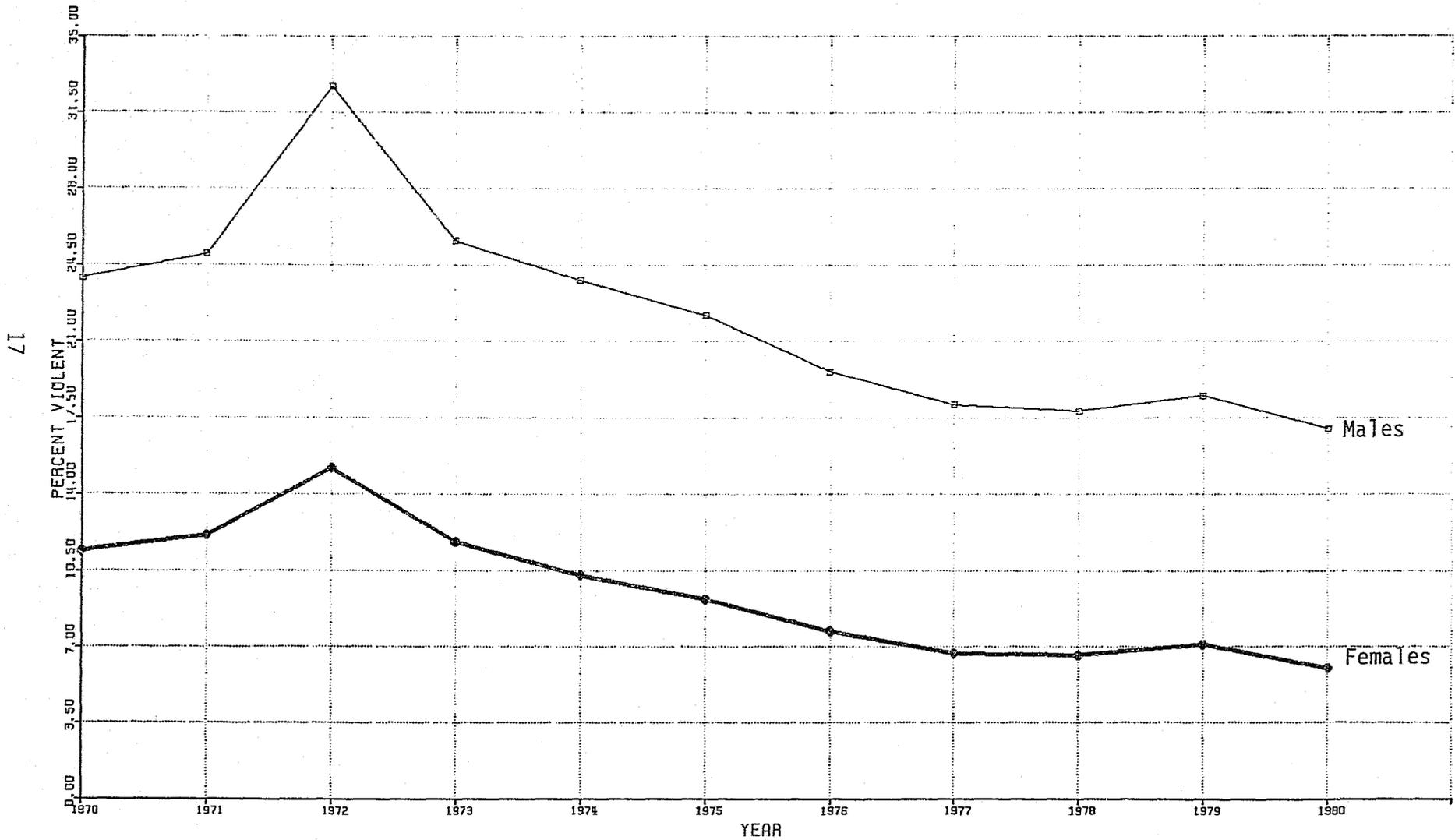


Figure 4

aggressive female crime has remained fairly stable since 1970.

In contrast to the national trend, Illinois exhibits a fairly consistent decrease in the percentage of all index arrests accounted for by violent offenses since 1972, both for males and females. 8/

This may be seen in another way, by examining figure 5, which provides a breakdown of index arrests for both males and females for the years 1970, 1975, and 1980. This figure clearly shows that as a proportion of index arrests, violent offenses have been declining. This is true for both males and females for all violent offenses, except for rape. 9/

There are two points which should be kept in mind. (1) Property crime has increasingly accounted for a larger proportion of index arrests since 1970. This is the case for both males and females, although property crime accounts for a larger proportion of index arrests for females than for

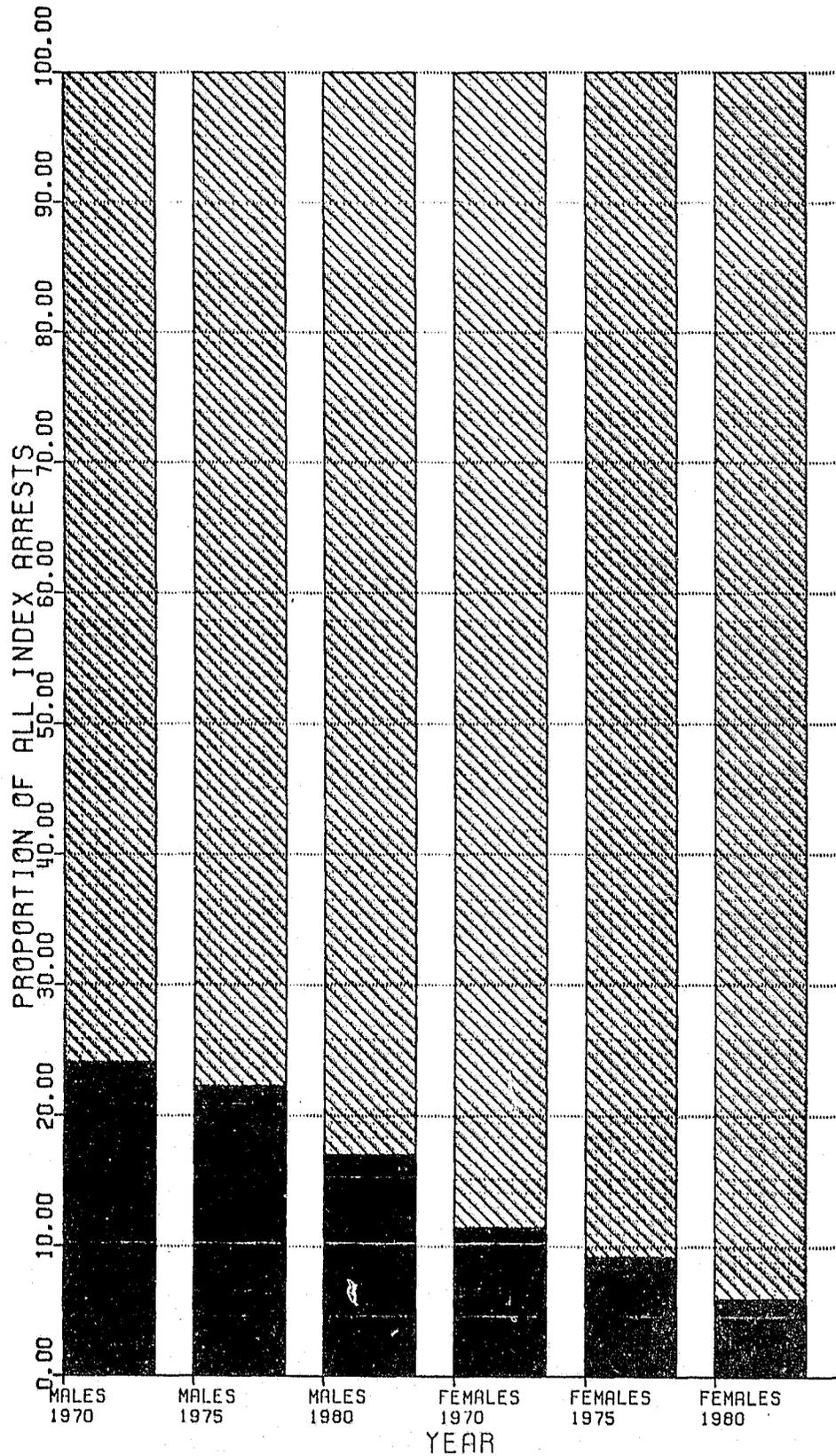
8/ The peak in 1972 appears artificially high because of the low Illinois figures for 1970 and 1971. These low figures are generally thought to be the result of underreporting prior to 1972.

9/ Male arrests for rape increased slightly between 1975 and 1980, although this is still lower than the proportion of male rape arrests in 1970.

Figure 5

BREAKDOWN OF INDEX ARRESTS IN ILLINOIS, 1970-1980

SOURCE: CRIME IN ILLINOIS, 1970 AND 1971,
AND SAC EDITION OF THE ILLINOIS UNIFORM CRIME
REPORTS ARREST DATA, 1975 AND 1980.



■ % VIOLENT CRIME
ILLINOIS

▨ % PROPERTY CRIME

males. 10/ (2) Most of the increase in index arrest rate for females is due to the increase in larceny-theft. If we look at the rate of increase for female index arrests between 1970 and 1980, nationally, 78% of this increase 11/ is due to the increase in larceny-theft arrests, as compared to 50% for males. For the state of Illinois, larceny-theft accounted for 93% of the increase in female index arrests, while accounting for only 71% of the increase in male index arrests for the same period.

This indicates that most of the increase in female arrests for index offenses is due to arrests for larceny-theft. This constitutes a much less aggressive, much less violent crime than other index offenses, such as homicide, robbery, assault, etc. It becomes apparent that women have not gained much ground on men with regard to violent and aggressive crimes.

10/ Larceny-theft accounts for about 80% of all female index arrests, nationally, and about 85% in the state of Illinois. For males the comparable figures are 43% nationally, and 50% in Illinois.

11/ This is calculated by taking the difference between the total number of females arrested for index crimes in 1980 and 1970 ($410,933 - 215,614 = 195,319$). Then, the difference between the number of females arrested for larceny-theft in 1980 and 1970 is calculated ($325,324 - 172,197 = 153,127$). We then divide the second difference by the first ($153,127/195,319 = 78.39\%$) to obtain the proportion of the increase in female index arrests which are accounted for by larceny-theft arrests.

Sex Specific Arrest Rates

Another way to evaluate the nature of female crime trends is to examine sex specific arrest rates for males and females. Table 5 provides such information for the U.S., while table 6 provides the same information for the state of Illinois. These tables are especially illuminating since they break down rates by sex and by broad crime categories.

Looking at arrest rates for females nationally, it can be seen that there has been no major increase in the female arrest rate for violent index crimes. The male arrest rate for violent index crimes is nearly 10 times greater than the female arrest rate for most of the 1970-1980 period. During the same period the female arrest rate for property index crimes has increased from 26 arrests per 10,000 females in 1970 to 36 per 10,000 in 1980.

The female arrest rate for violent index offenses in Illinois (see table 6) is about the same as it was in 1970, although it rose between 1970 and 1974, and has decreased since 1974. Again, the male arrest rate for violent crimes has been about ten times as great as that of females. At the same time the female arrest rate for index property offenses has increased greatly during this same period, from approximately 20 per 10,000 females in 1970 to nearly 40 per 10,000 in 1980, and accounts for much of the increase in

Table 5

Index Arrest Rates for Males and Females in U.S., 1970-1980*

Year	Males			Females		
	Violent	Property	Total Index	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	29.63	113.40	143.39	3.15	26.03	29.22
1971	32.47	119.95	152.74	3.62	28.16	31.74
1972	34.45	113.88	148.67	3.83	27.28	32.65
1973	34.76	113.52	148.63	3.94	30.28	34.27
1974	40.50	142.14	182.93	4.61	38.19	42.85
1975	38.07	137.13	175.52	4.39	38.06	42.49
1976	35.52	131.89	167.69	4.15	37.35	41.53
1977	35.89	128.29	164.46	4.17	37.09	41.29
1978	39.79	132.76	172.56	4.51	38.37	42.88
1979	39.26	134.21	173.47	4.44	37.89	42.14
1980	39.71	135.17	174.88	4.28	36.20	40.63

* Rates are per 10,000 population. Population estimates for intercensal years are based on linear interpolations of 1970 and 1980 census data, and the 1975 Current Population Survey. Rates have been adjusted to reflect changes in the number of reporting agencies.

Table 6

Index Arrest Rates for Males and Females in Illinois, 1970-1980*

Year	Males			Females		
	Violent	Property	Total Index	Violent	Property	Total Index
1970	31.35	99.49	130.99	2.54	19.78	22.34
1971	35.04	104.85	140.02	2.95	21.38	23.16
1972	40.26	82.79	123.05	3.51	19.62	23.13
1973	40.24	116.64	156.88	3.57	26.71	30.28
1974	43.61	139.31	182.92	3.67	31.93	35.59
1975	43.64	152.22	195.86	3.54	34.93	38.46
1976	35.20	144.36	179.57	2.86	34.16	37.02
1977	30.39	137.78	168.17	2.47	34.46	36.93
1978	31.22	144.35	175.57	2.57	36.63	39.19
1979	33.29	147.08	180.37	2.79	36.29	39.09
1980	34.39	167.89	202.28	2.55	39.89	42.97

* Crime in Illinois, 1970, 1971, and the SAC Edition of the Illinois Uniform Crime Reports Arrest Data, 1972-1980.

female arrests in Illinois, as is the case nationally (Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier, 1979).

Tables 7 and 8 provide, in summary fashion, the proportion of arrests accounted for by females for the 1970-1980 period. As can be seen from table 7, nationally, there has not been a great increase in females as a proportion of those arrested either for index or non-index crimes. For instance, females comprised 14.4% of the total arrests in the U.S. in 1970, by 1980 this figure had only increased to 15.8%. In Illinois there has been a somewhat greater increase in the proportion of arrestees who are female. In 1970, 13.8% of all persons arrested in Illinois were females, by 1980 this figure had risen to 18.9%. ^{12/} Table 8 indicates that most of this increase appears to be due to the increase in females arrested for non-index crimes.

There seems to be little, if any, basis for arguing that women are tending towards more aggressive and violent types of crime, either nationally, or in the state of Illinois. Females are less likely to be arrested than males, and when they are it is less likely to be for violent crimes.

^{12/} This figure corresponds with the number of females with records of arrest in Illinois. About 18.2% of the subjects on the CCH system are females, according to an audit currently being conducted.

Table 7

Females as a Percent of Arrests, U.S., 1970-1980*

Year	Index Arrests	Non-Index Arrests	Total Arrests
1970	16.9%	13.8%	14.4%
1971	17.2%	14.4%	15.0%
1972	18.0%	14.3%	15.1%
1973	18.7%	14.4%	15.3%
1974	19.0%	15.2%	16.1%
1975	19.5%	14.6%	15.7%
1976	19.8%	14.6%	15.7%
1977	20.1%	14.9%	16.0%
1978	19.9%	14.7%	15.8%
1979	19.5%	14.6%	15.7%
1980	18.8%	14.9%	15.8%

* These figures are from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports in Crime in the U.S., 1970-1980.

Table 8

Females as a Percent of Arrests, Illinois, 1970-1980*

Year	Index Arrests	Non-Index Arrests	Total Arrests
1970	15.3%	13.4%	13.8%
1971	15.6%	14.5%	14.7%
1972	16.6%	14.5%	14.8%
1973	17.0%	14.2%	14.8%
1974	17.1%	14.1%	14.7%
1975	17.3%	14.1%	14.8%
1976	17.9%	16.3%	16.7%
1977	18.9%	18.5%	18.6%
1978	19.2%	18.1%	18.3%
1979	18.7%	15.5%	18.6%
1980	18.2%	19.0%	18.9%

* These figures are from Crime in Illinois, 1970, 1971, and the SAC Edition of the Illinois Uniform Crime Reports Arrest Data, 1972-1980.

We have examined trends in index crime arrests for males and females. It was shown that violent offenses did not play a large role in the increase in index arrests, either nationally, or in the state of Illinois. Most of the increase in index arrests appeared to be the result of increased arrests for property crimes. It was seen that larceny-theft accounted for most of the increase in female index arrests over the last decade.

Incarceration Data

In the best of all possible worlds, the researcher would be able to trace both male and female offenders through the criminal justice system from start to finish. Since such an undertaking would be cost prohibitive, we have elected to use available data--i.e., arrest data. There are a number of shortcomings in using arrest data. ^{13/} In order to further address some of the issues concerning the violent-aggressive nature of female criminality, we shall look at some incarceration data provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

^{13/} Reliance on arrest statistics to assess female crime is due primarily to the absence of other representative data sources which include females and cover more than two years. Arrest data has two major shortcomings. (1) Arrests do not represent criminal or delinquent behavior per se. (2) Arrests constitute behavior which has been noticed and officially processed.

If the results of our analysis using incarceration data are congruent to those obtained in our analysis of arrest data, we will be somewhat more confident in our findings. By comparing the results from these two data sources, we get some idea of the reliability of our arrest data as an indicator of female criminality.

According to studies conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1980a; 1982), females have constituted only a small proportion of those incarcerated. A survey of those inmates serving a maximum sentence of one or more years in federal, state, county, and local prisons and jails (1980a: 2) indicated that women comprised about 6% of the total inmate population both in 1972 and in 1978. Another BJS study (1982), that included only those inmates incarcerated in state and federal prisons (i.e., excluding those in county and local jails), indicated that women have comprised 4% or less of the total population between 1970 and 1981.

This finding is consistent with some of our earlier findings (see table 3) which indicated there was very little change in the proportion of women arrested for index crimes between 1972 and 1978. This makes still more sense if we limit our focus to violent index offenses, since 90% of the property arrests for females were for larceny-theft. Females comprised 10.0% of all persons arrested for violent index

offenses in 1972, and 10.2% in 1978. Again, there appears to be little change in the trends for females nationally.

Like the national trend, the number of females incarcerated in Illinois has increased from 145 in 1970 to 343 in 1980 (see table 9). While this represents an increase both in terms of absolute and relative terms (a 136% increase), females comprised only 1.8% of the prison population in 1970, and 2.9% in 1980. Conversely, males accounted for better than 98% of the total prison population in 1970, and 97% in 1980.

Table 10 displays the number of male and female admissions, females as a proportion of total admissions, and sex specific incarceration rates. There has been a 478% increase in the number of female admissions between 1970 and 1980, as compared with an 83% increase for males. However, this is misleading because females initially represented only a small number of admissions, 14 and because females have never comprised more than 4% of the total admissions in any year between 1970 and 1980. Finally, the incarceration rate for males is greater by a order of magnitude than the female incarceration rate.

14 Female admissions averaged 55 in 1970. By 1980 this had increased to 318.

Table 9

Illinois Prison Population, 1970-1980

Year	Average* Male Population	Average Female Population	Average Total Population
1970	7,688	145 (1.8%)**	7,833
1971	6,916	111 (1.6%)	7,026
1972	6,215	107 (1.7%)	6,322
1973	5,841	124 (2.1%)	5,965
1974	6,057	103 (1.7%)	6,160
1975	7,210	104 (1.4%)	7,314
1976	8,923	153 (1.7%)	9,076
1977	10,052	259 (2.5%)	10,311
1978	10,297	304 (2.9%)	10,611
1979	10,535	347 (3.2%)	10,882
1980	11,168	343 (2.9%)	11,511

* Averages represent the average end of month population for males and females.

** Percentage in parentheses represents females as a proportion of the total prison population.

Table 10

Illinois Admissions and Incarceration Rates by Sex, 1970-1980*

Year	Admissions			Incarceration Rates**	
	Total	Males	Females	Males	Females
1970	4,927	4,872	55 (1.1%)	91.4	0.9
1971	4,437	4,361	76 (1.7%)	80.8	1.3
1972	4,375	4,269	106 (2.4%)	78.9	1.8
1973	3,839	3,735	104 (2.7%)	68.9	1.8
1974	4,544	4,408	136 (2.9%)	81.3	2.6
1975	6,032	5,860	172 (2.8%)	107.9	2.9
1976	6,457	6,225	232 (3.6%)	114.2	4.0
1977	6,922	6,649	273 (3.9%)	121.5	4.7
1978	7,423	7,139	284 (3.8%)	129.9	4.9
1979	8,478	8,176	302 (3.6%)	148.3	5.2
1980	9,240	8,922	318 (3.4%)	161.2	5.4

*Source: Illinois Department of Corrections Population and Capacity Report

**To calculate the incarceration rate, the number of male or female admissions is divided by the number of males or females in the state of Illinois, and multiplied by 100,000.

$$\text{Male/Female Incarceration Rate per 100,000} = \frac{\text{Male/Female Admissions}}{\text{Male/Female Population}} \times 100,000$$

incarceration rate. 15/

Table 11 shows the highest statutory class for which both male and female inmates were incarcerated as of November 31, 1981. It can be seen that males are incarcerated for more serious crimes than females. Of the males incarcerated at the time of this sample, 53.1% were charged with murder or class X offenses, as compared with 38.4% of the females incarcerated on that date. 16/ Further analysis of this sample of inmates indicated that male inmates were more likely to be committed for multiple offenses than female inmates. Male inmates averaged 2.25 charges each, while female inmates averaged 1.92 charges each. 17/

This would lend further support to our earlier findings which showed that males tend to be arrested for more serious crimes than females.

There have not been many profiles of the inmate population in state of Illinois in the past. Thus, it is

15/ It should be noted that there may be a very real "ceiling" on the number of females who can be incarcerated in the form of the population capacity of prisons. According to the Illinois Department of Corrections (1981), the population capacity of female institutions in Illinois has never exceeded 400 between 1970 and 1980.

16/ A chi-square test was conducted on this table and yielded a chi-square of 195.6 with 6 degrees of freedom with $p < .001$.

17/ A t-test for difference in means indicated a statistically significant difference between the average number of offenses for males and females with $p < .001$.

Table 11

Highest Statutory Class of Male and Female Inmates
in Illinois, 1981*

Statutory Class	Males	Females
Murder	1,908 (16.5%)	79 (21.2%)
Class X	4,218 (36.6%)	64 (17.2%)
Felony 1	320 (2.8%)	7 (1.9%)
Felony 2	3,538 (30.7%)	92 (24.7%)
Felony 3	1,143 (9.9%)	114 (30.6%)
Felony 4	111 (1.0%)	3 (0.8%)
Midemeanor A	296 (2.6%)	13 (3.5%)
Total	11,534	372

Chi Square=195.6 with 6 degrees of freedom

*Source: Illinois Department of Corrections
Correctional Information Management
System, November 31, 1981

difficult to evaluate whether females have been incarcerated for more serious crimes in recent years. However, one way to test this is to compare the highest statutory class for a sample of female inmates from 1979 with our 1981 sample. 18/ Table 12 presents such a comparison. It appears as though there has not been any substantial change in the seriousness of charges of female offenders in the last three years. 19/

Findings

Before drawing any conclusions from this analysis, it will prove useful to provide a brief summary of our findings.

- The number of females arrested for index crimes has increased between 1970 and 1980.
- This increase is not only absolute, but relative as well. That is, the number of female arrests for index offenses has increased at a greater rate than males.

18/ A 10% sample of female inmates was selected in 1979 as part of a larger study of prison inmates in Illinois. This study is described in more detail in Maier and Tapke (1979).

19/ The chi-square test yielded a chi-square=2.29 with 6 degrees of freedom with a p-value of .89. Thus, there is not a statistically significant difference between these two samples.

Table 12

Highest Statutory Class of Female Inmates, Illinois,
1979 and 1981

Statutory Class	1979*	1981**
Murder	6 (20.0%)	79 (21.2%)
Class X	5 (16.7%)	64 (17.2%)
Felony 1	1 (3.3%)	7 (1.9%)
Felony 2	8 (26.7%)	92 (24.7%)
Felony 3	8 (26.7%)	114 (30.6%)
Felony 4	1 (3.3%)	3 (0.8%)
Misdemeanor A	1 (3.3%)	13 (3.5%)
Total	30	372

Chi Square=2.29 with 6 degrees of freedom
Significance=.89

*Source: Inmate Profile Analysis, 1979

**Source: Correctional Institution Management
Information System, November 31, 1981

- As a proportion of persons arrested for violent index offenses, however, females have remained fairly constant, both at the national level, and in Illinois.
- Males still represent the majority of persons arrested for violent index offenses (about 90%) both nationally and in statewide.
- The proportion of females arrested for property index offenses, has increased slightly, both in the U.S., and in Illinois.
- The increase in female index arrests is largely due to increases in arrests for larceny-theft, which accounted for 83% of the increase in female index arrests nationally, and 93% of the increase in female index arrests in Illinois.
- Male arrest rates for violent crimes have, on the average, been nearly ten times as great as female arrest rates for violent crimes during the 1970-1980 period. This is true both nationally and in Illinois.
- Females have comprised, and continue to comprise, a small proportion of those who are incarcerated.

- Males tend to be incarcerated for more serious offenses than females. When males are incarcerated, they tend to have more charges than females.

Conclusions

While there has been an increase, both relatively and absolutely, in females arrested for index offenses, males still constitute the majority of those arrested for index offenses. Moreover, it was seen that there has been little if any relative increase in the proportion of females arrested for violent index offenses. Males have represented, and continue to represent 90% or more of those arrested for violent index crimes. This is true both in Illinois, and nationally.

Females appear not to have become more violent and aggressive in terms of their criminality in recent years. Indeed, a large proportion of the increase in female arrests for index crimes is attributable to larceny-theft. At both the national level, and in Illinois this proportion was greater for females than for males. Males are much more likely to be arrested for violent crimes than females as evidenced by the higher arrest rate for males than for females.

If one assumes that persons are incarcerated for more serious offenses, females represent still a smaller proportion of serious offenders. That is, while females constituted about 10% of those arrested for violent crimes nationally during the 1970-1980 period, and about 8% in Illinois, they comprised only 4% of the incarcerated population in the same period, and never more than 4% in Illinois.

Females do not appear to have tended toward more violent and aggressive patterns of criminality in recent years. If these patterns have changed over time, it has only been minutely.

There are a number of questions which cannot be answered by this paper. These shortcomings stem mainly from focusing on a limited number of stages in the criminal justice process, while ignoring others, i.e., the type of data which is available. Among the questions which cannot be answered are the following:

- Do male and female offenders receive the same kind of treatment from the criminal justice system?
- Do police charge male and female arrestees in the same manner?
- Are males and females who commit the same crime likely to receive the same disposition? Sentence?

- Are conviction rates the same for males and females for the same crimes?

Such questions could be more readily addressed by an offender based transaction system (OBTS), which is not currently available. Future research should nonetheless attempt to address such issues.

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