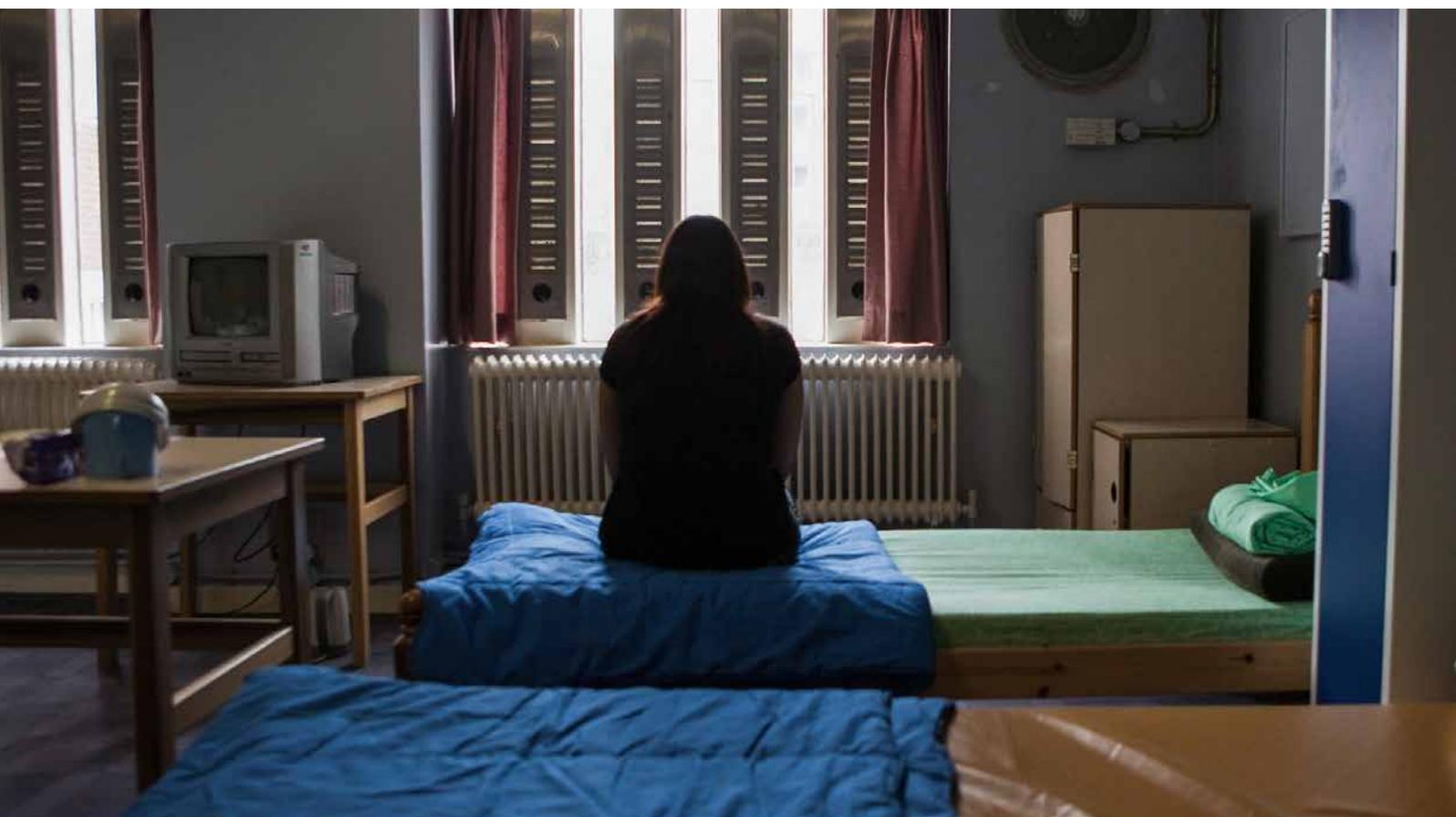


Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?

England and Wales

August 2022



The misogyny and misunderstanding in regards to women runs through the criminal justice system and the prison system.

Woman in prison

Women in prison

Women make up only **4%** of the prison population.¹

There were **3,206** women in prison on Friday 29 July 2022.²

Women were sent to prison on **4,932** occasions in the year to March 2022 — either on remand or to serve a sentence.³

97 women have died in prison in England and Wales since 2011. 37 of these deaths were self-inflicted.⁴

There was a **7%** increase in the rate of self-harm incidents in women's prisons in the year to March 2022.⁵

76% of women in prison report problems with their mental health.⁶

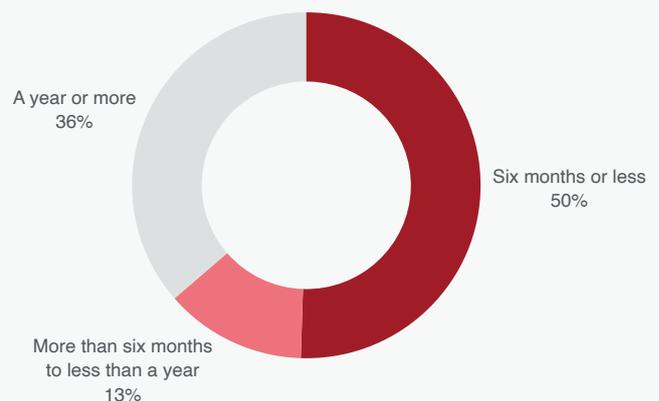
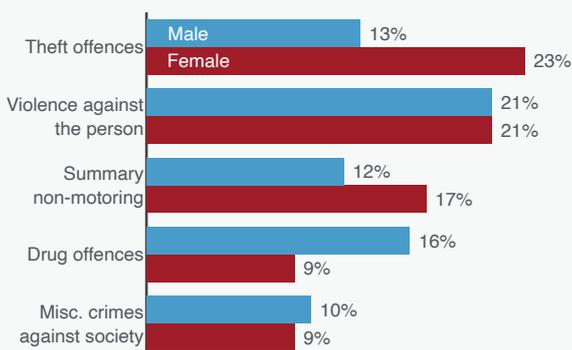
It is estimated that nearly **60%** of women who offend have experienced domestic abuse.⁷

An estimated **17,000** children are affected by maternal imprisonment each year.⁸

Women tend to commit less serious offences than men, and so are more likely to be serving a short prison sentence

Almost a quarter of female prison receptions in 2021 were for theft offences

63% of prison sentences started by women in 2021 were for less than 12 months, compared with 48% for men



Source: Ministry of Justice, Offender management statistics

Women are more likely than men to:

- Report feeling suicidal on entry to prison, **25%** to **12%**.
- Report feeling depressed on entry to prison, **55%** to **37%**.
- Report other mental health issues on entry to prison, **40%** to **25%**.
- Report having a problem with drugs or alcohol on entry to prison, **25%** to **13%**.⁹

¹ Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Population bulletin: weekly 29 July 2022, Prison population figures: 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-figures-2022>

² Ibid.

³ Table 2.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

⁴ Table 1.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Deaths in prison custody 1978 to 2021, Safety in Custody quarterly: update to March 2022*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-march-2022>

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Safety in custody quarterly bulletin: December 2021, Safety in Custody quarterly: update to March 2022*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-march-2022>

⁶ HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2022). *Annual Report 2021–22*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/annual-report-2021-22>

⁷ Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Female Offender Strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-offender-strategy>

⁸ Kincaid, S., Roberts, M., & Kane, E. (2019). *Children of prisoners: fixing a broken system*. Crest. <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/children-of-prisoners>

⁹ HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2022). *Annual report 2021–22*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/annual-report-2021-22>

Government's approach to women in the criminal justice system

The Female Offender Strategy¹⁰

The government's Female Offender Strategy, published in 2018, focuses on the importance of early intervention, community-based solutions, and delivering decent conditions for those women who do have to be in prison. A key aim of the strategy is "to reduce female prison places". Recent inquiries from the National Audit Office¹¹, Public Accounts Committee¹² and House of Commons Justice Committee¹³ have criticised slow progress in implementing the strategy, highlighting a lack of governance, no clear timetable for delivery and limited dedicated funding. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has now committed to publishing a delivery plan for the strategy in summer 2022, which "will set out ways to reduce the number of women in custody".¹⁴

500 new prison places

In January 2021 the government announced its intention to build 500 new places in the women's prison estate at existing sites.¹⁵ This is in direct opposition to a key aim of the Female Offender Strategy to reduce prison places. Modelling to support this decision was based only on prison population projections, which does not take account of the impact of the Female Offender Strategy and is largely based on the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers.¹⁶

The concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system¹⁷

The government's concordat, published in January 2021, sets out a partnership working approach to identifying and responding to the needs of women in the criminal justice system. The document includes commitments to review the government's response to vulnerable women and improve local data-sharing. There are clear timetables for implementation, however no funding is attached to these aims. Over a year since publication, progress has been slow. The government's promised 'one year on' report which is intended to outline progress is yet to be published.

Draft Mental Health Bill¹⁸

The Draft Mental Health Bill, introduced in July 2022, includes key provisions to:

- introduce a new 28-day time-limit for transfers from prison to hospital for prisoners;
- remove prison as a place of safety; and
- introduce the requirement of remand to a hospital where the only ground is concern for mental health.

These provisions are welcome and should go some way to reducing the number of women remanded to prison 'for their own protection'.¹⁹ Careful scrutiny will be needed to ensure the draft statute achieves these aims with no unintended consequences or net-widening.

10 Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Female Offender Strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-offender-strategy>

11 National Audit Office. (2022). *Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system*. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/improving-outcomes-for-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system>

12 Committee of Public Accounts. (2022). *Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system*. House of Commons. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmpublic/997/report.html>

13 Justice Committee. (2022). *Women in Prison*. House of Commons. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmjust/265/report.html>

14 Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Prisons Strategy White Paper: response to consultation questions*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisons-strategy-white-paper>; See also House of Commons written question 20299. 27 June 2022. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-17/20299>

15 Ministry of Justice. (2021, January 23). *Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-for-organisations-that-steer-women-away-from-crime>

16 Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Response to Freedom of Information request 210609004*. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/FOIA-210609004-reply.pdf>

17 Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Prison Population Projections: 2020 to 2026*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2020-to-2026>

18 Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/concordat-on-women-in-or-at-risk-of-contact-with-the-criminal-justice-system>

19 Department of Health and Social Care & Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Draft Mental Health Bill 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-mental-health-bill-2022>

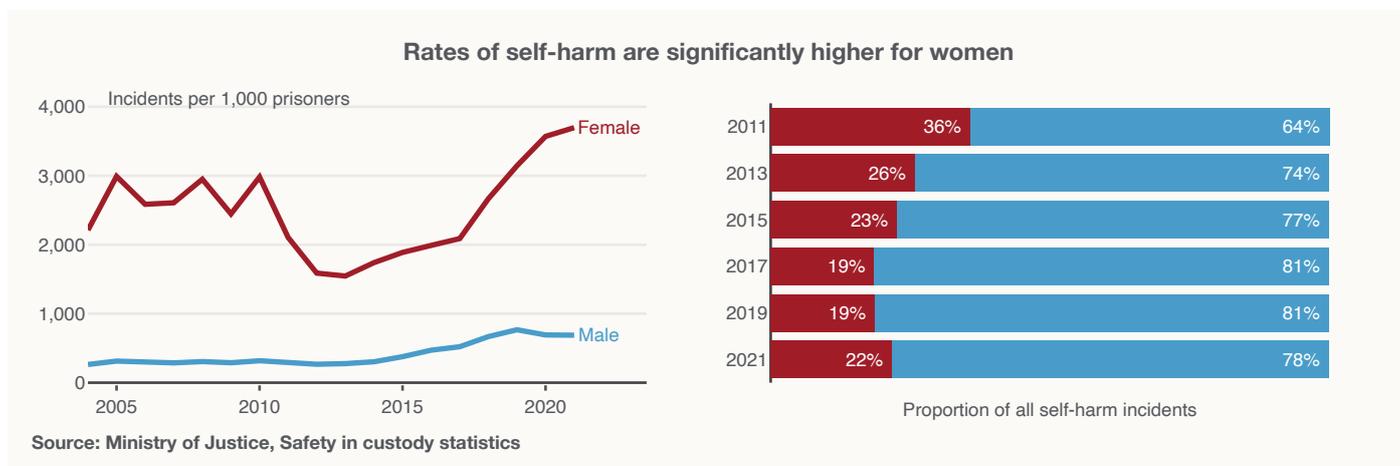
19 All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System. (2020). *Prison for their own protection: The case for repeal*. Howard League for Penal Reform. <https://howardleague.org/publications/prison-for-their-own-protection-the-case-for-repeal/>

Abuse and trauma

- Many women in prison have been victims of much more serious offences than those they are accused of committing.²⁰
- 53% of women in prison, compared to 27% of men, report experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child.²¹
- There are strong links between women's offending behaviour and their experience of domestic abuse, coercive control and sexual abuse.²²
- Research by the Disabilities Trust with 173 women at HMP Drake Hall found almost two-thirds (64%) had a history indicative of brain injury. For most this was caused by domestic violence.²³

Self-harm and self-inflicted death

- Women are much more likely than men to self-harm whilst in prison. In 2021, women made up 22% of all self-harm incidents despite making up only 4% of the prison population.²⁴
- There have been 37 self-inflicted deaths in women's prisons since 2011.²⁵



Mothers in prison

- The Ministry of Justice has recently begun publishing data which shows there were 30 pregnant women in prison on 29 March 2021, and 31 babies born to women held in prison in the nine months to March 2021.²⁶ However, prior to this publication, research estimated that every year around 600 pregnant women are held in prison and some 100 babies are born to women prisoners.²⁷
- Women in prison are far more likely than men to be primary carers of children. Research suggests around 60% of women compared with about 45% of men in prison have children.²⁸
- HM Prison & Probation Service has made changes to the Basic Custody Screening Tool to collect data on entry to prison about how many primary carers are in custody and how many children under the age of 18 are affected by their imprisonment. This data is yet to be published.²⁹
- The UN Bangkok Rules specify that non-custodial sentences are preferable for pregnant women and those with dependent children, but the law and sentencing guidance are inconsistently applied.³⁰

20 Williams, K. S., & Earle, J. (2017). "There's a reason we're in trouble": Domestic abuse as a driver to women's offending. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/theres-a-reason-were-in-trouble>

21 Williams, K., Papadopoulou, V., & Booth, N. (2012). *Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*. Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisoners-childhood-and-family-backgrounds>

22 Williams, K. S., & Earle, J. (2017). "There's a reason we're in trouble": Domestic abuse as a driver to women's offending. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/theres-a-reason-were-in-trouble>

23 The Disabilities Trust. (2019). *Making the link: Female offending and brain injury*. <https://www.thedtgroup.org/media/163444/making-the-link-female-offending-and-brain-injury.pdf>

24 Table 2.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Self-harm in prison custody 2004 to 2021, Safety in Custody quarterly: update to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-march-2022>; and

Table A1.2. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Annual prison population 2022, Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

25 Table 1.7. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Deaths in prison custody 1978 to 2021, Safety in Custody quarterly: update to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-march-2022>

26 Table 11.1 and 11.2. Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Annual HM Prison and Probation Service digest: 2020 to 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2020-to-march-2021>

27 Birth Companions. (2016). *Birth Charter for women in prisons in England and Wales*. https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/birth-companions/attachment/file/245/Birth_Companions_Charter_Online.pdf

28 Niven, S., & Stewart, D. (2005). *Resettlement outcomes on release from prison, Home Office findings 248*. Home Office. <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20110218143221/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/r248.pdf>

29 House of Commons written question 16885. 16 June 2022. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-13/16885>

30 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2011). *The Bangkok Rules: United Nations rules for the treatment of women prisoners and non-custodial measures for women offenders with their commentary*. https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Bangkok_Rules_ENG_22032015.pdf; and Minson, S. (2014). *Mitigating Motherhood: A study of the impact of motherhood on sentencing decisions in England and Wales*. Howard League for Penal Reform. <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/mitigating-motherhood.pdf>

- Only 9% of children are cared for by their father when their mother goes to prison.³¹ Yet nearly three-quarters of children live with their mother when their father is imprisoned.³²
- The 2019 Farmer review for women made helpful recommendations to improve outcomes for children whose mothers are in contact with the criminal justice system.³³ The government “committed to taking forward” the recommendations, and three years on has marked 25 of the 33 recommendations as completed.³⁴

Race and ethnicity

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic women are over-represented in the criminal justice system. They often face a ‘double disadvantage’ of being discriminated against on the basis of their gender and their race.³⁵
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic women are disproportionately more likely to be committed for trial at the Crown Court, and more likely to receive a custodial sentence at the Crown Court than white women.³⁶
- 83% of the women’s prison population are recorded as white, and 16% as Black/Black British, Asian/Asian British, mixed or from an “other ethnic group”.³⁷
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic women face racial and religious discrimination from staff and other prisoners, and report feeling less safe in prison.³⁸
- Nearly one in 10 women (9%) in prison are foreign nationals.³⁹ Some are known to have been coerced or trafficked into offending.⁴⁰
- Gypsy and Traveller women account for approximately 6% of the prison population but an estimated 0.7–1% of the general population. However, the Traveller Movement warns that the true number is likely to be higher and does not include Roma women.⁴¹ Few prisons provide adequate support according to inspectors.⁴²

Women on remand

- On 30 June 2022 19% of women in prison, compared to 16% of men, were being held on remand.⁴³
- In 2021, over half of women (52%) remanded and tried by the magistrates’ court didn’t receive a custodial sentence. In the Crown Court this figure was more than two in five (43%).⁴⁴
- Almost nine in 10 women on remand are low to medium risk of serious harm.⁴⁵
- Foreign national women make up a significant and increasing proportion of remand admissions.⁴⁶
- 25% of self-harm incidents by women in prison in 2021 were committed by those held on remand.⁴⁷

31 Corston, J. (2007). *The Corston Report: A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system*. Home Office. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/The-Corston-Report.pdf>

32 Referenced in Williams, K., Papadopoulou, V., & Booth, N. (2012). *Prisoners’ childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*. Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisoners-childhood-and-family-backgrounds>

33 Farmer, M. (2019). *The importance of strengthening female offenders’ family and other relationships to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime*. Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farmer-review-for-women>

34 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Review finds family ties ‘utterly indispensable’ to rehabilitation of female offenders*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-finds-family-ties-utterly-indispensable-to-rehabilitation-of-female-offenders>; and House of Commons written question 31831. 11 July 2022. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-07-06/31831>

35 Cox, J., & Sacks-Jones, K. (2017). “Double disadvantage”: *The experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system*. Women in Prison and Agenda. <https://weareagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Double-disadvantage-FINAL.pdf>

36 Uhrig, N. (2016). *Black, Asian and minority ethnic disproportionality in the criminal justice system in England and Wales*. Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-disproportionality-in-the-criminal-justice-system-in-england-and-wales>

37 Table 1.4. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

38 Cox, J., & Sacks-Jones, K. (2017). “Double disadvantage”: *The experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system*. Women in Prison and Agenda. <https://weareagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Double-disadvantage-FINAL.pdf>; and Prison Reform Trust. (2017). *Counted Out: Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system*. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/counted-out-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system>

39 Table 1.7. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

40 Hales, L., & Gelsthorpe, L. (2012). *The criminalisation of migrant women*. Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. <https://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/system/files/documents/criminalreport29july12.pdf>

41 The Traveller Movement. (2021). *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women in prison*. <https://travellermovement.org.uk/policy-and-publications/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-women-in-prison-2>

42 HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). *Annual report 2020–21*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/annual-report-2020-21/>

43 Table 1.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

44 Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Remands: magistrates’ court data tool; and Remands: Crown court data tool, criminal justice system statistics quarterly: December 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2021>

45 Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Female Offender Strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-offender-strategy>

46 Robson, M. (2020). *A suspect population? An examination of bail decision making for foreign national women in criminal courts in England and Wales*. The Griffins Society. https://www.thegriffinsociety.org/system/files/papers/fullreport/griffins_research_paper_2020-01_-_full_report.pdf

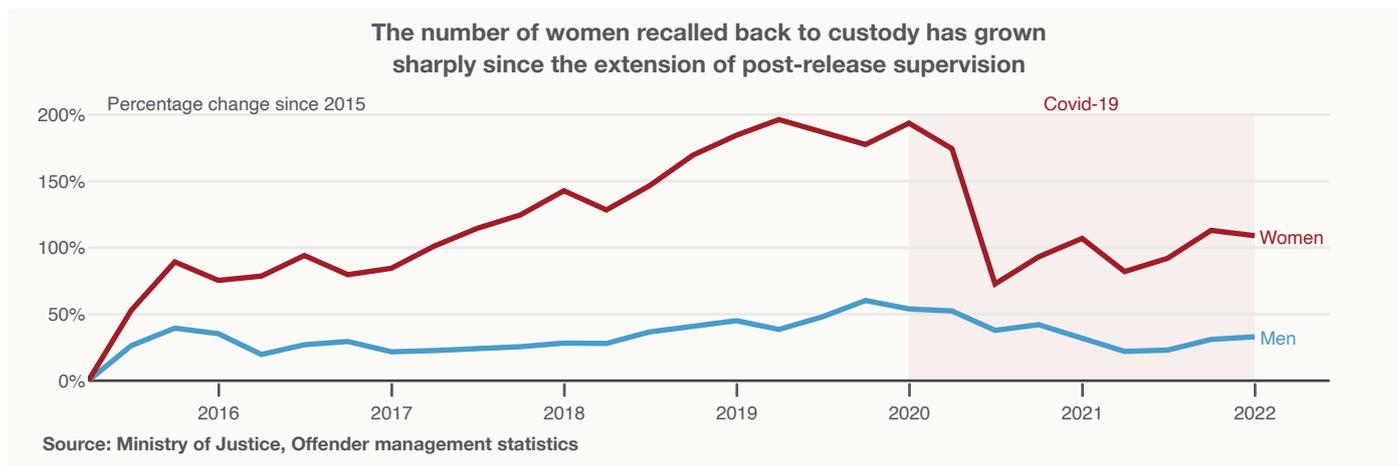
47 Table 2.6. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Self-harm in prison custody 2004 to 2021, Safety in Custody quarterly: update to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-march-2022>

Women recalled to prison

- Women recalled to prison make up around 12% of women in prison.⁴⁸
- In the year to March 2022 there were 1,513 recalls of women to custody. Women serving a sentence of less than 12 months accounted for just under half (44%) of recalls.⁴⁹
- The Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 introduced a one-year mandatory post-custody supervision period for all those sentenced to less than 12 months in prison. As women mostly receive short prison sentences, they have been disproportionately affected by this change.

“I asked probation for help, I knew I was struggling. They just ignored me, and I ended up getting recalled. I got recalled for overdosing.”

Woman in prison⁵⁰



Women serving long sentences

- Long-sentenced women are an increasing proportion of the prison population. In 2015 women serving sentences of four years or more made up over a quarter (28%) of the sentenced population (910 women). By 2022 women serving those sentences increased to a third of the sentenced population (858 women).⁵¹
- On 30 June 2022 370 women were serving indeterminate sentences; 327 were serving life sentences and 43 were serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences.⁵²
- Research shows at least 109 women have been given long or life sentences under joint enterprise laws despite often being marginal to the violent event, not being at the scene or, in the majority of cases, never having engaged in any physical violence.⁵³
- The vast majority of purposeful activity provided for women in prison caters to the short-sentenced population, leaving far more limited provision for women serving long sentences.⁵⁴
- Research on the impact of long-term imprisonment found that women reported an acutely more painful experience than men. This is linked to separation from their children and family, the loss of relationships, experiences of abuse and trauma in pre-prison life, the strain on their mental health, and the lack of control, privacy and trust inside prison.⁵⁵

“I saw my mum about four times in fourteen years. I saw my son twice. I saw my sister about four times and I saw my dad more. When I went to another prison, I was about 200 miles away from home so my dad only came once at Christmas.”

Woman serving life sentence, in the community⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Table 1.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

⁴⁹ Table 5.1. Ibid.

⁵⁰ Quotation taken from the Prison Reform Trust's Building Futures programme engagement work.

⁵¹ Table A1.1. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Annual prison population 2022, Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

⁵² Table 1.9a. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2022>

⁵³ Clarke, B., & Chadwick, K. (2020). *Stories of Injustice: The criminalisation of women convicted under joint enterprise laws*. Manchester Metropolitan University. <https://barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Stories-of-Injustice-women-and-JE.pdf>

⁵⁴ HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2020). *Annual report 2019–20*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/annual-report-2019-20/>; and Vince, C., & Evison, E. (2021). *Invisible Women: Understanding women's experiences of long-term imprisonment*. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/invisible-women-understanding-womens-experiences-of-long-term-imprisonment>

⁵⁵ Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2017). The gendered pains of life imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology*, 57(6), 1359–1378. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azw088>

⁵⁶ Vince, C., & Evison, E. (2021). *Invisible Women: Understanding women's experiences of long-term imprisonment*. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/invisible-women-understanding-womens-experiences-of-long-term-imprisonment>

Covid-19 pandemic

- In response to the pandemic, the prison service introduced an ‘exceptional regime’ in March 2020. This meant 23 hours or more behind the door every day, no social visits and other meaningful activity suspended.⁵⁷
- An End of Custody Temporary Release (ECTR) scheme was introduced but proved ineffective.⁵⁸ The latest data available shows that by June 2020, of 236 women who had asked to be considered for ECTR only six had been released; 22 were still undergoing checks; and 159 women had been deemed ineligible.⁵⁹
- Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) on compassionate grounds for pregnant women and women with their babies in custody was also introduced. As of 30 September 2020, 25 pregnant women and mothers with babies in custody had been released.⁶⁰
- An Inspectorate report at HMP Send published in May 2021 noted there had been fewer visits in the last year than there usually were in a month.⁶¹
- The Covid-19 National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services which provided a centralised approach to the way prisons operated during the pandemic was removed on 9 May 2022.⁶²
- The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a detrimental impact on the well-being of women in prison.⁶³

Accommodation and employment for women on release

- The average distance a woman is held from her home is 63 miles, but many are considerably further away.⁶⁴ This means they can have more difficulty in retaining a ‘local connection’, which is often a precondition for local authority housing.⁶⁵
- Lack of accommodation increases the risk of reoffending and jeopardises women’s ability to engage in employment, training and support services, and to care for their children.⁶⁶
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a ‘duty to refer’ where prisons are required to notify local authorities of anyone at risk of homelessness on release in good time for the local authority to meet its housing duties, but practice has been inconsistent.⁶⁷
- Less than half (47%) of women left prison with settled accommodation in the year to March 2022. One in 10 were homeless or rough sleeping, and accommodation status was unknown for one in six women (16%).⁶⁸
- Available data on resettlement outcomes continues to be a challenge and Ministry of Justice data presents a much more positive picture than the reality on the ground.⁶⁹
- Fewer than one in 20 women (4%) were in employment six weeks after release from prison, compared with one in 10 men (10%). Six months on from release, this rose to 6% of women and 14% of men in employment.⁷⁰
- Half (50%) of women who have been involved in the criminal justice system, including conviction, caution or prison sentence, are claiming out-of-work benefits two years later, compared to just over a third (35%) of men.⁷¹

57 Prison Reform Trust. (2021). *CAPTIVE: Women’s experiences of prison during the Covid-19 lockdown regime*. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/captive-womens-experiences-of-prison-during-the-covid-19-lockdown-regime>

58 HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2020). *Report on short scrutiny visits to prisons holding women*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/womens-prisons-short-scrutiny-visit/>

59 House of Commons written question 58088. 18 June 2020. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-10/58088>

60 House of Commons written question 107072. 29 October 2020. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-21/107072>

61 HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Send*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/hmp-send-3/>

62 Mullen, J. (2022). *HMPs exit the National Framework for the management of COVID19 in prisons - What the voluntary sector needs to know*. Clinks. <https://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/hmp-exit-national-framework-management-covid19-prisons-what-voluntary-sector>

63 HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2022). *Annual Report 2021–22*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/annual-report-2021-22>

64 Farmer, M. (2019). *The importance of strengthening female offenders’ family and other relationships to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime*. Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farmer-review-for-women>

65 Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison. (2018). *Home truths: Housing for women in the criminal justice system*. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/home-truths-housing-for-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

66 Ibid.

67 St Martin in the Fields, London Prisons Mission, & Prison Reform Trust. (2020). *Safe homes for women leaving prison*. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/publication/13574-2/>

68 Table 4. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Accommodation at Release, Community performance annual: update to March 2022*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-performance-annual-update-to-march-2022>

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Community solutions

- Across England and Wales, a 10% reduction in women's imprisonment could save £9.5-14.7million.⁷²
- The cost of support at a women's centre ranges from £1,223 to £4,125 per woman depending on needs, whilst a place in prison costs £52,121.⁷³
- Women's community centres can provide effective support programmes for those at risk of offending and play a vital role in reducing women's reoffending. They can provide safe, non-stigmatising settings for women to address issues that can drive their offending such as problematic substance use or access to support with abusive relationships.⁷⁴
- Out of court disposals (OOCs) can offer a simple, swift and proportionate response to women's minor offending. The proportion of women dealt with by OOCs is small and decreasing. 43,466 cautions were given to women in 2011 and only 9,582 in 2021, a 78% decrease over 10 years.⁷⁵
- The use of community sentences has dropped by 61% in a decade.⁷⁶ The drop in their usage is disappointing, as community sentences are more effective at reducing reoffending compared with short prison sentences; allow women to maintain community ties, employment and accommodation; as well as minimising the damaging impact to their families and children.
- The use of suspended sentences for women has fluctuated in the last decade, but only account for 3% of all sentences.⁷⁷
- A Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR) protocol has been introduced in a small number of areas in England. Where appropriate this should divert people from short custodial sentences and should improve access to treatment. The government has committed to roll out of primary care MHTRs to half of England by 2023.⁷⁸
- The government has recently announced a pilot of three 'Problem-Solving Courts' (PSCs). The PSCs will provide wraparound support, tailored to individuals needs such as support from recovery agencies, educational services and housing support.⁷⁹
- Academic research has shown that 55.8% of women released from prison reoffend within a year compared to 26% of those sentenced to a community order.⁸⁰

⁷² Centre for Social Justice. (2018). *A Woman-Centred Approach: Freeing vulnerable women from the revolving door of crime*.

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The Prison Reform Trust works to create a just, humane and effective penal system and has long called for a reduction in women's imprisonment.

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