**Key facts**

A round-up and latest key statistics regarding women affected by the criminal justice system.

***Women’s Prisons***

* Women are held in 12 prisons in England.
* There are no women’s prisons in Wales.
* There is one women’s prison in Scotland, with some women also held in units within men’s prisons across the country.
* In Northern Ireland women are held in a unit within a male Young Offenders Institution.

***Women’s prison population***

* Women make up around 5% of the overall prison population in the UK.
* The number of women in prison in England and Wales was 3, 831 on 26 July 2019.
* There were a total of 7,745 receptions into women’s prisons in 2018.
* Women accounted for 10% of all prison receptions in 2018.
* The women’s prison population in England and Wales more than doubled between 1995 and 2010, from 1,979 to 4,236 and has since remained around 4,000.

***Women on remand***

* In 2018, 43% of women entering prison did so on remand.
* In 2018, 63% of women remanded into prison by the magistrates’ court and 38% remanded by the crown courts did not go on to receive an immediate custodial sentence.

***Women and sentencing***

* Women serve prison sentences for minor offences; 82% of women’s prison sentences in 2018 were for non-violent offences
* Theft offences accounted for nearly half (46%) of all immediate custodial sentences given to women in 2018.
* Most women entering prison serve short sentences; 77% of prison sentences given to women in 2018 were for 12 months or less.
* Most of the rise in the female prison population can be explained by a significant increase in the severity of sentences. Between 2009 and 2013 the number of women sentenced for theft from a shop decreased by 4% whilst the number sentenced to custody increased by 17%.
* The number of community sentences for women has fallen by nearly half in the last decade.
* In 2017 TV licence evasion accounted for 30% of all prosecutions for women, but only 4% for men. 72% of the 136,550 defendants prosecuted for TV license evasion in that year were women.

***Women and Indeterminate sentences for Public Protection (IPP)***

* Despite its abolition in 2012, many women are still serving an IPP sentence, despite having passed their tariff expiry date.
* On 30 June 2019 there were 42 women in prison on an IPP sentence.
* Nearly 80% of IPP sentences for women were for offences of arson, which is often an indicator of serious mental illness or self-harm.

***Women prisoners, release and reoffending***

* Many women lose their homes and their possessions when going to prison and are consequently released homeless.
* In 2018, out of 7,745 receptions into women’s prisons in 3,262 instances women were recorded as being of no fixed abode on arrival in prison. The total figure was up 71% from 1,909 in 2015.
* Prison does not work as a deterrent; the more previous custodial sentences a woman has had, the higher the reoffending rate: the reoffending rate for women with 11 or more previous custodial sentences is 83%, compared to a 14% reoffending rate for women with no previous custodial sentences.
* Short sentences are ineffective at reducing reoffending; the reoffending rate of women serving short prison sentences is 71%.

***Women prisoners, drugs and alcohol***

* 48% of women have committed an offence in order to support the drug use of someone else.
* 39% of women report having a problem with drugs upon arrival into prison.
* 24% of women report having a problem with alcohol upon arrival into prison.

***Women prisoners, self-harm, suicide and deaths***

* Women account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm in prison; despite making up only around 5% of the population women accounted for 19% of all self-harm incidents in prison in the year to March 2019.
* 46% of women in prison report having attempted suicide at some point in their lifetime. This is twice the rate of men (21%) and more than seven times higher than the general population.
* In the last ten years there have been almost 100 (96) deaths of women in prison, 36 of which have been self-inflicted.
* In 2016 alone there were 12 self-inflicted deaths in women’s prisons.
* The risk of death is very high on release from prison; in Scotland female ex-prisoners were 5.9 times more likely to die than females in the general population.

***Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women in prison***

* The criminal justice system disproportionately impacts women who Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME):
* BAME women comprise 11.9% of the women’s population in England and Wales, but 20% of the women’s prison population.
* Within this, some groups of women are particularly overrepresented, most notably Black or Black British women who make up 8.8% of female prisoners, compared to 3.3% of the general population.
* Ministry of Justice analysis shows that black women are about 25% more likely than white women to be sentenced to custody at crown court.
* Disproportional outcomes are particularly noticeable for certain offences. For every 100 white women sentenced to custody at crown courts for drug offences, for example, 227 black women received custodial sentences.

***Foreign national women in prison***

* Foreign national women represent 8% of the general population in England and Wales, but over 12% of all women received into prison each year and nearly 19% of those remanded.
* Some foreign national women in prison are known to have been coerced or trafficked into offending.

***Imprisoned mothers and their children***

* Only 9% of children whose mothers are in prison are cared for by their fathers in their mothers' absence.
* Only 5% of children remain in their family home when a mother goes to prison
* At fifth of women prisoners are lone parents before imprisonment.
* Only half of the women who had lived with or were in contact with their children prior to imprisonment had received a visit since going to prison.
* Maintaining contact with children is made more difficult by the distance that many prisoners are held from their home area. This is particularly acute for women given the limited number of women’s prisons; their average distance from home is 64 miles.
* Imprisoning mothers for non-violent offences has a damaging impact on children and carries a cost to the state of an estimated £17 million over a ten year period.

***Women prisoner backgrounds***

* Over 60% of women in contact with the criminal justice system have experienced domestic abuse.
* 53% of women in prison report having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse during childhood.
* 31% women in prison have spent time in local authority care as a child.
* Women in custody are five times more likely to have a mental health concern than women in the general population.

***Women’s Centres and community solutions***

* Women’s Centres can offer support across a range of issues affecting women in the criminal justice system, including mental health, problematic substance use, domestic and sexual abuse, parenting, housing, finance and employment.
* Women’s Centres can be used to provide early intervention services for girls and women at risk of entering the criminal justice system, support alternatives to custodial sentencing and enable women to rebuild their lives after release from prison. Women’s Centres can play a key role in Liaison and Diversion schemes, diverting women at the point of arrest, as well as providing women with the support that helps them to complete community sentences whilst caring for their families.
* The UK is unique in having a network of around 40 specialist Women’s Centres that are ‘one-stop-shops’ offering holistic and trauma-informed support to women affected by the criminal justice system.
* A report by NEF has found that for every £1 invested in support-focused alternatives to prison, £14 worth of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society over ten years.