

Factsheet: Women in Prison

- Since 1980 the number of women in prison has increased at nearly double the rate for men.
- The number of women in state and federal prisons has increased seven-fold from 12,300 in 1980 to 96,000 in 2002.
- 43% of women prisoners are African American and 12% are Latinas.
- Women in state prisons in 2001 were more likely than men to be incarcerated for a drug offense (32% vs. 20%) or property offense (25% vs. 19%) and less likely than men to be incarcerated for a violent offense (31% vs. 50%).
- In 1997, Latinas (44%) and African American women (39%) were more likely to be incarcerated for a drug offense than white women (23%).
- Three-quarters of women in state and federal prisons report that they had used drugs regularly prior to their arrest; over 60% had used drugs in the month prior to their offense.
- In 1997, 65% of women in state prisons were parents of minor children, compared to 55% of men. Two-thirds of mothers incarcerated in state prison lived with their children prior to their arrest.
- Approximately 37% of women and 28% of men in prison had monthly incomes of less than \$600 prior to their arrest.
- Nearly a quarter of women in state prisons have a history of mental illness.
- Nationally 3.6% of women in state and federal prisons were HIV positive in 2000, compared to 2% of men. The women's figures range as high as 18.2% in New York State and 41% in the District of Columbia.
- More than half of the women in state prisons have been abused, 47% physically abused and 39% sexually abused (with many being survivors of both types of abuse).