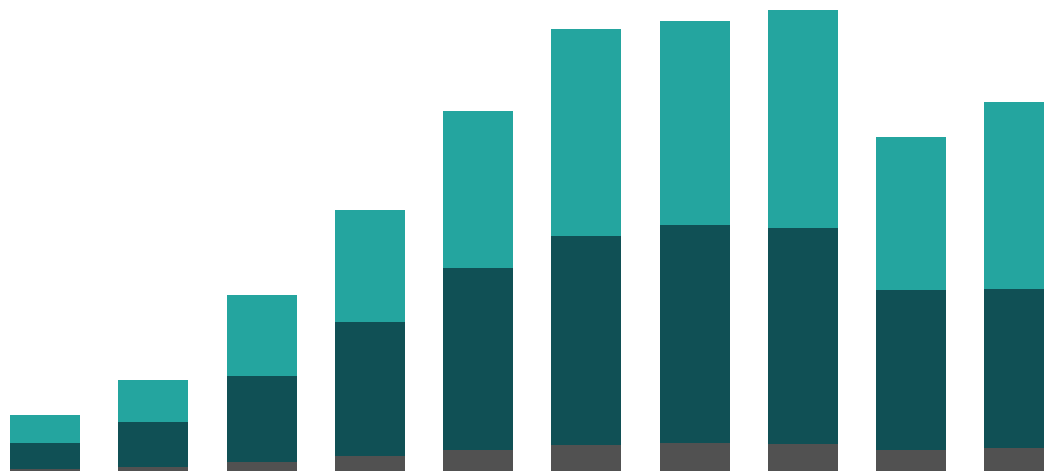


Incarcerated Women and Girls

Over the past quarter century, there has been a profound change in the involvement of women within

incarcerated population stands over six times higher than in 1980. Over half (58%) of imprisoned women in state prisons have a child under the age of 18.¹

Between 1980 and 2021, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 525%, rising from a total of 26,326 in 1980 to 168,449 in 2021. While 2020 saw a substantial downsizing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this trend reversed with a 10% increase in 2021.



Bureau of Justice Statistics: Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States 1850-1984 (1986); Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Series (1997-2021), Prisoners Series (1980-2021). Washington, DC.

Though many more men are in prison than women, the rate of growth for female imprisonment has been twice as high as for men.²

Women Under Control of the U.S. Corrections System, 2021

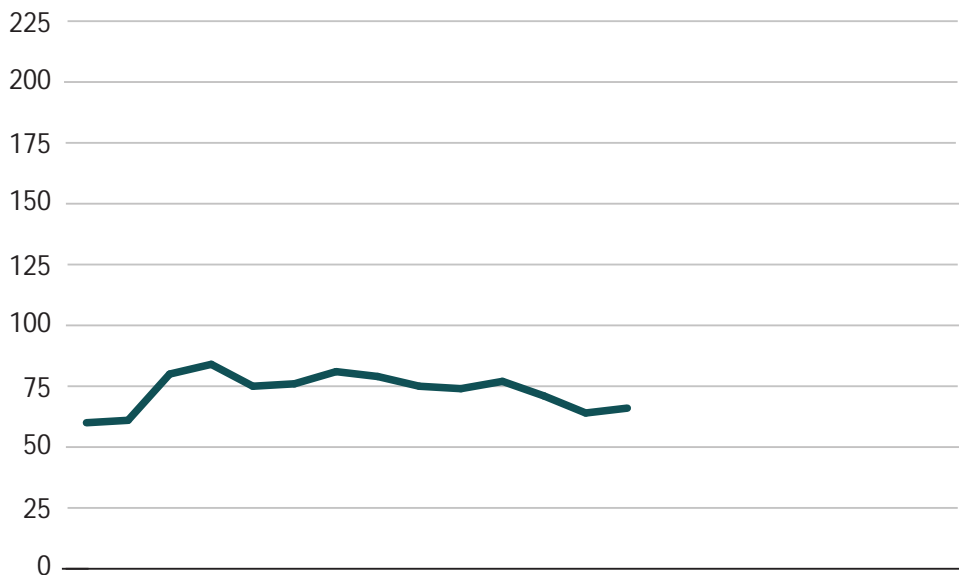


Sources: Carson, E.A. (2022). [Prisoners in 2021 – Statistical Tables](#). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Zeng, Z. (2022). [Jail Inmates in 2021 – Statistical Tables](#). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Kaeble, D. (2023). [Probation and Parole in the United States, 2021](#). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN PRISONS

- In 2021, the imprisonment rate for Black women (62 per 100,000) was 1.6 times the rate of imprisonment for white women (38 per 100,000).
- Latinx women were imprisoned at 1.3 times the rate of white women (49 vs. 38 per 100,000).
- The rate of imprisonment for Black and Latinx women has declined since 2000, while the rate of imprisonment for white women has increased.
- Between 2000 and 2021, the rate of imprisonment in state and federal prisons declined by 70% for Black women, while the rate of imprisonment for white women rose by 12%.

Female Imprisonment Rate per 100,000, by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2021



Source: [Prisoners Series](#). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Imprisonment Rates by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity per 100,000: 2000 vs. 2021

| | | 2000 | 2021 | % Change |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| White | Women | 34 | 38 | 12% increase |
| | Men | 449 | 327 | 27% decrease |
| Black | Women | 205 | 62 | 70% decrease |
| | Men | 3,457 | 1,807 | 48% decrease |
| Latinx | Women | 60 | 49 | 18% decrease |
| | Men | 1,220 | 810 | 34% decrease |

Source: [Prisoners Series](#). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

STATE VARIATION

The rate at which women are incarcerated varies greatly from state to state. At the national level, 47 out of every 100,000 women were in prison in 2021. The state with the highest rate of female imprisonment is Idaho (127) and the state with the lowest incarceration rate of women is Massachusetts (6).

Offense Type by Gender in State Prisons, 2020

INCARCERATED GIRLS

- Of the 36,479 youth in residential placement on a typical day, 15% (6,598) are girls.²

3

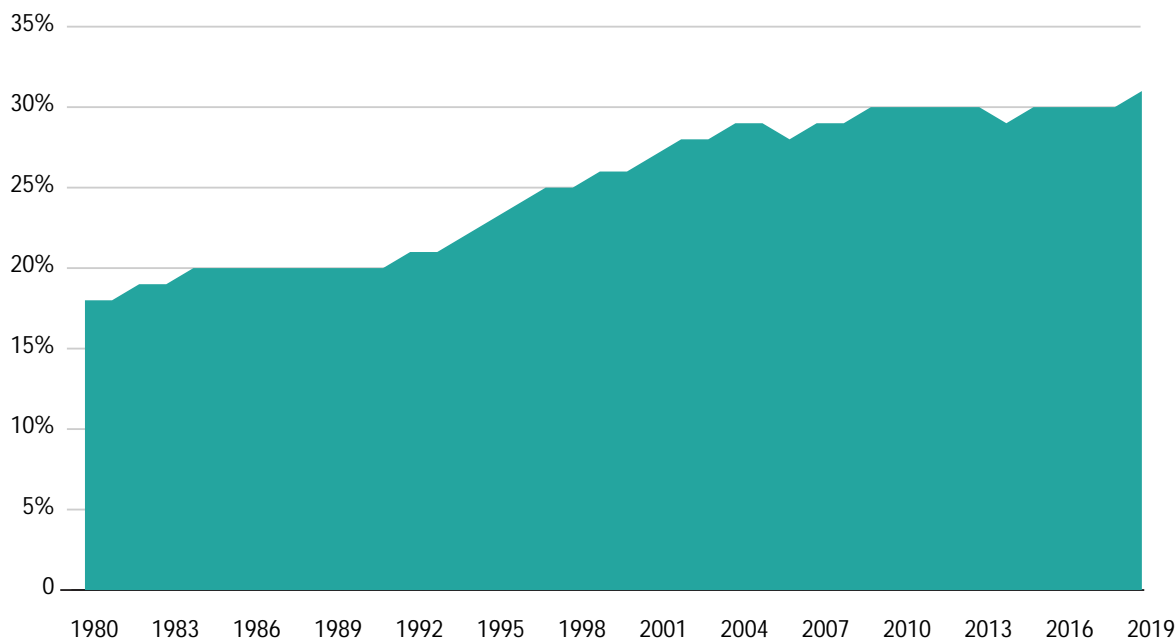
- African American and Native American girls are much more likely to be incarcerated than Asian, white, and Latinx girls. The placement rate for all girls is 35 per 100,000 girls (those between ages 10 and 17),⁴ but the placement rate for Asian girls is 4 per 100,000; for white girls is 24 per 100,000; and Latinx girls is 27 per 100,000. African American girls are more than three times as likely as their white peers to be incarcerated (77 per 100,000), and Native American girls are more than four times as likely (112 per 100,000).⁵

Highest and Lowest State Rates of Confinement for Girls (per 100,000), 2019

| Highest Incarceration Rates | | Lowest Incarceration Rates | |
|-----------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
| State | Rate | State | Rate |
| Alaska | 136 | Vermont | 0 |
| Wyoming | 111 | New Hampshire | 5 |
| West Virginia | 104 | Rhode Island | 6 |
| Idaho | 71 | New Jersey | 8 |
| Michigan | 71 | Utah | 9 |
| South Dakota | 71 | Kansas | 10 |

Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Puzanchera, C., & Kang, W. (2021). [“Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.”](#)

Girls Comprise a Growing Proportion of All Teen Arrests, 1980-2019



Source: Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzanchera, C. (2019). [“Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.”](#)

In 1990, girls comprised 18% of all youth arrests, a proportion that grew to 31% in 2019.⁸

Endnotes

- 1 Maruschak, L. M., Bronson, J., & Alper, M. (2021). Parents in prison and their minor children: Survey of prison inmates, 2016. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/parents-prison-and-their-minor-children-survey-prison-inmates-2016>
- 2 Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Puzanchera, C., & Kang, W. (2021). Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>
- 3 Sickmund, M., et al. (2021).
- 4 Sickmund, M., et al. (2021).
- 5 Puzanchera, C., Sladky, A. & Kang, W. (2021). Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2020. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>. Other rate calculations among youth in this report are based on youth aged 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction. This age is typically 17 years old, but not in every state.
- 6 Sickmund, M., et al. (2021).
- 7 Sickmund, M., Sladky, A., & Kang, W. (2021). Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2019. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/>
- 8 https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/ucr_trend.asp?table_in=1



1705 DeSales Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 628-0871

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This fact sheet was updated in March 2023 by Niki Monazzam, TSP Research Fellow, and Research Analyst Kristen M. Budd, Ph.D. It is part of our campaign, 50 Years and a Wake Up: Ending The Mass Incarceration Crisis In America. The campaign raises awareness about the dire state of the criminal legal system in the country, the devastating impact of incarceration on communities and families,

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crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.