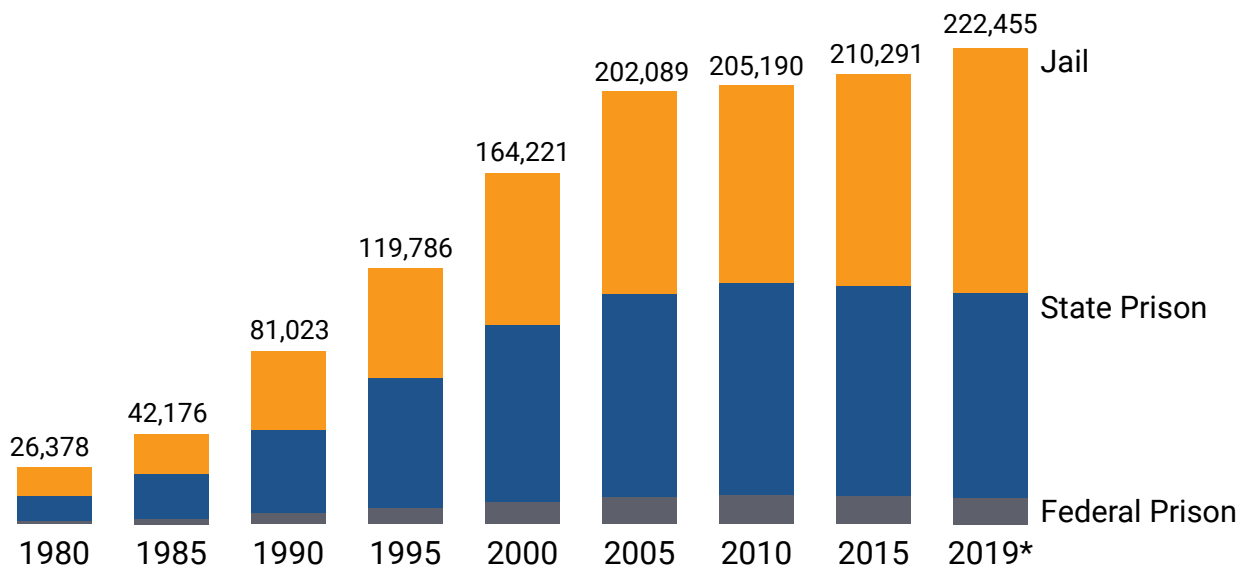


# Incarcerated Women and Girls

Over the past quarter century, there has been a profound change in the involvement of women within the criminal justice system. This is the result of more expansive law enforcement efforts, stiffer drug sentencing laws, and post-conviction barriers to reentry that uniquely affect women. The female incarcerated population stands over seven times higher than in 1980. More than 60% of women in state prisons have a child under the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1980 and 2019, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 700%, rising from a total of 26,378 in 1980 to 222,455 in 2019.

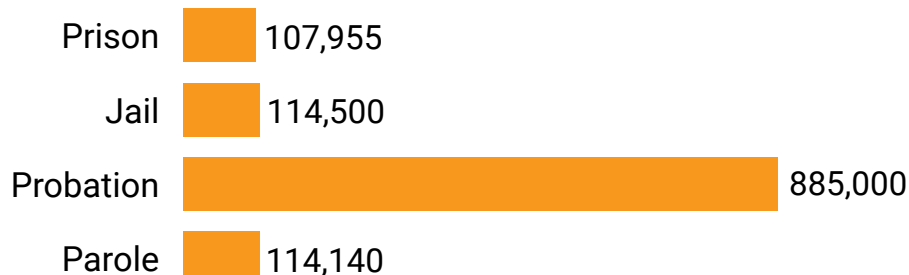
## Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2019



\* Prison figures are from year-end 2019 while jail figure is from year-end 2018, the latest available data from the sources used. Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States 1850-1984* (1986); *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Series* (1997-2018), *Prisoners Series* (1986-2019). Washington, DC.

Though many more men are in prison than women, the rate of growth for female imprisonment has been twice as high as that of men since 1980. There are 1.2 million women under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

## Women Under Control of the U.S. Corrections System, 2018-2019

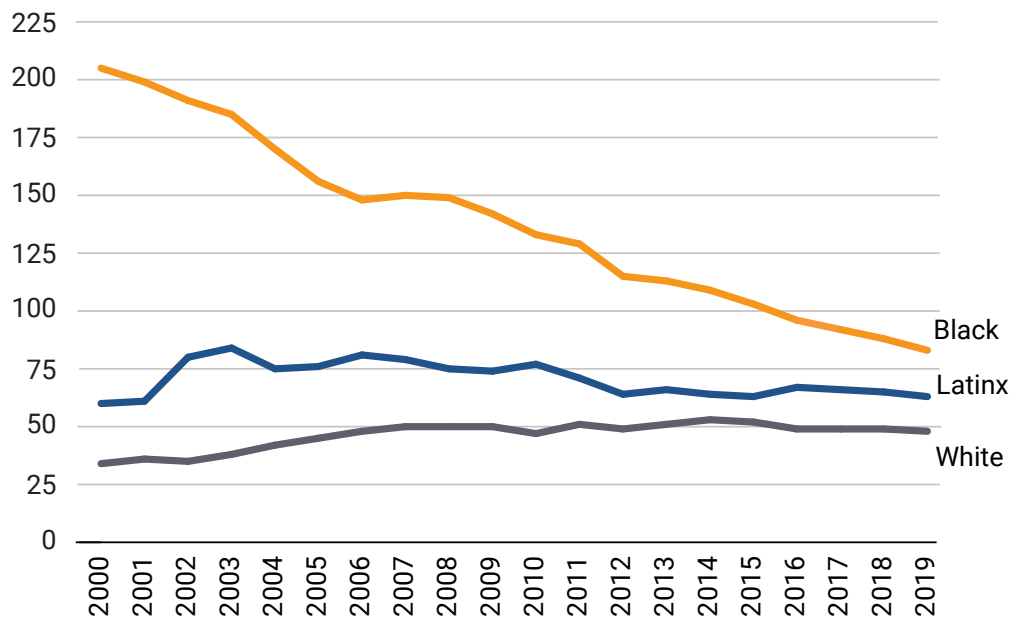


Note: Prison data are from year-end 2019 and other data are from year-end 2018, the latest available data from the sources used. Sources: Carson, E.A. (2020). *Prisoners in 2019*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Zeng, Z. (2020). *Jail Inmates in 2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Kaeble, D. & Alper, M. (2020). *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2017-2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY IN PRISONS

- In 2019, the imprisonment rate for African American women (83 per 100,000) was over 1.7 times the rate of imprisonment for white women (48 per 100,000).
- Latinx women were imprisoned at 1.3 times the rate of white women (63 vs. 48 per 100,000).
- The rate of imprisonment for African American women has been declining since 2000, while the rate of imprisonment for white and Latinx women has increased.
- Between 2000 and 2019, the rate of imprisonment in state and federal prisons declined by 60% for black women, while the rate of imprisonment for white women rose by 41%.

Female Imprisonment Rate per 100,000, by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2019



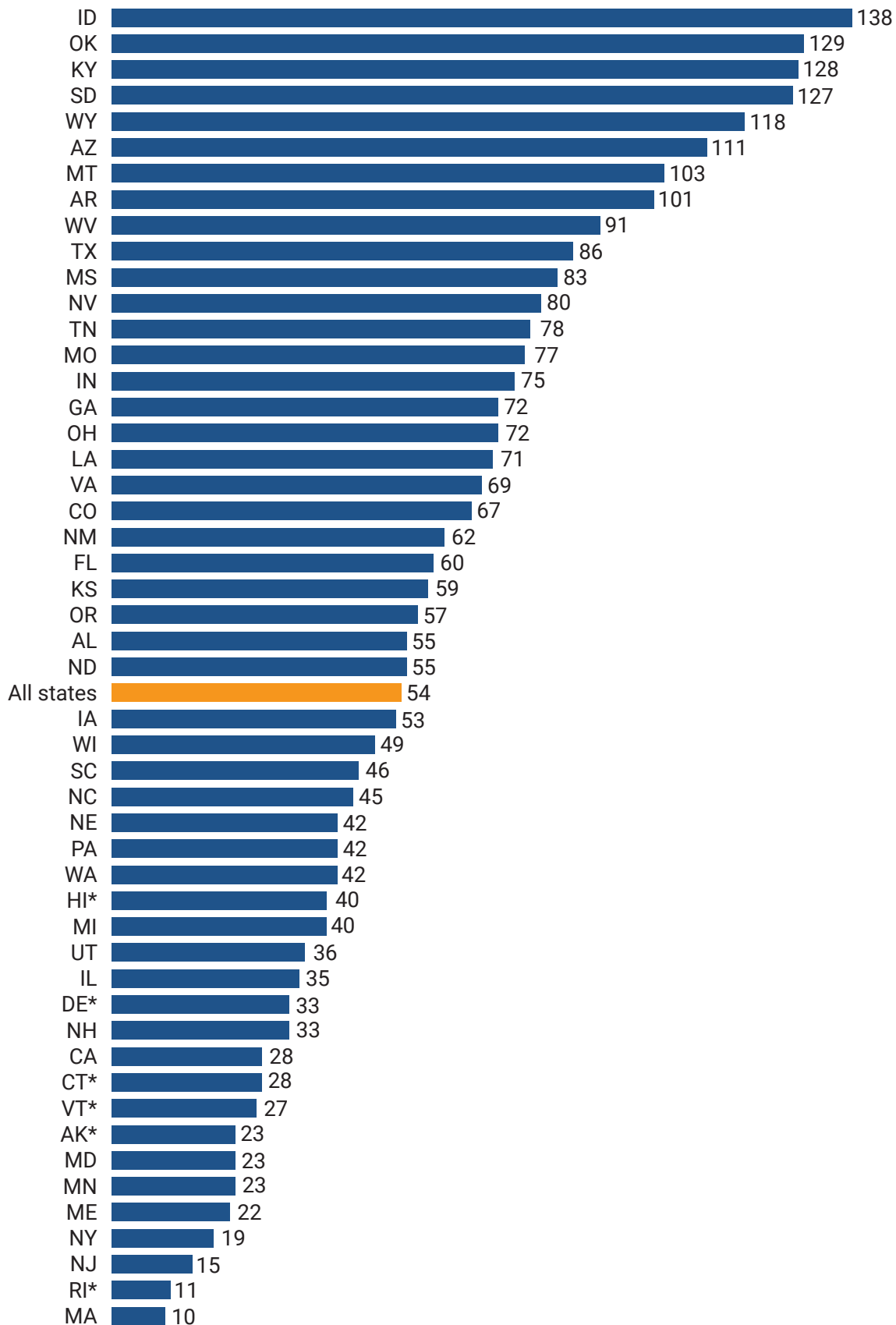
Source: *Prisoners Series*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Imprisonment Rates by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity per 100,000: 2000 vs. 2019

		2000	2019	% Change
White	Women	34	48	<b>41% increase</b>
	Men	449	385	14% decrease
African American	Women	205	83	60% decrease
	Men	3,457	2,203	36% decrease
Latinx	Women	60	63	<b>5% increase</b>
	Men	1,220	979	20% decrease

Source: *Prisoners Series*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

**Highest and Lowest Female State Imprisonment Rates (per 100,000), 2019**



\*In these states with integrated jail and prison systems, data include both jail and prison populations.  
Sources: Carson, E.A. (2020). *Prisoners in 2019*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

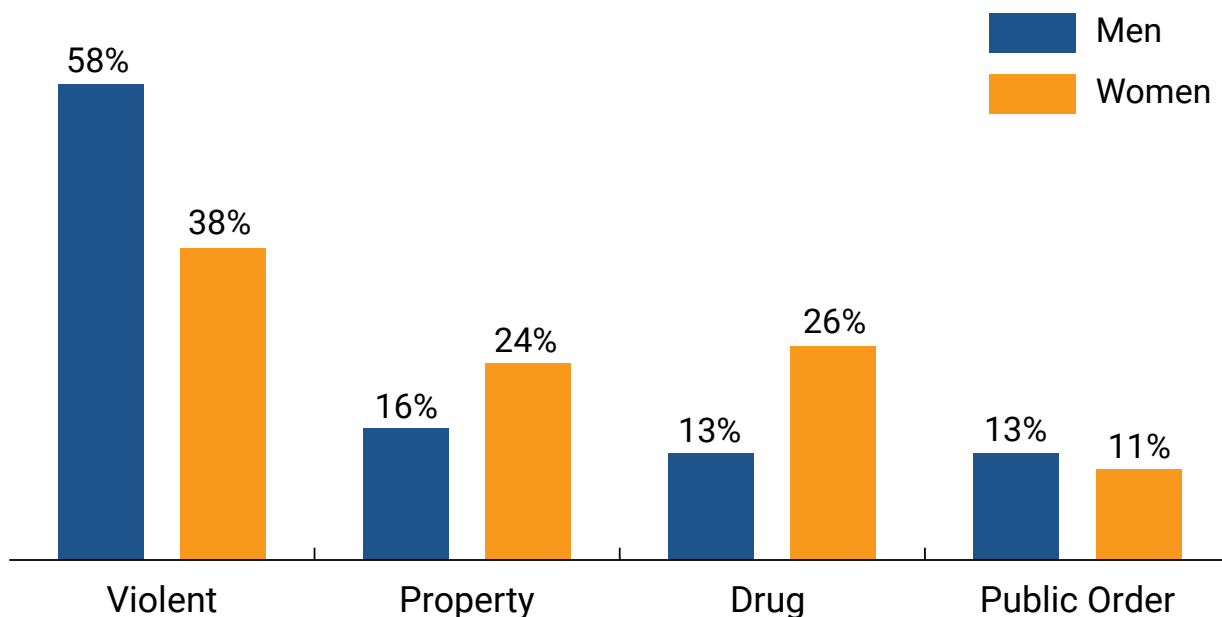
## STATE VARIATION

The rate at which women are incarcerated varies greatly from state to state. At the national level, 61 out of every 100,000 women were in prison in 2019. The state with the highest rate of female imprisonment is Idaho (138) and the state with the lowest incarceration rate of females is Massachusetts (10).

## OFFENSE TYPES FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN STATE PRISONS

- Women in state prisons are more likely than men to be incarcerated for a drug or property offense. Twenty-six percent of women in prison have been convicted of a drug offense, compared to 13% of men in prison; 24% of incarcerated women have been convicted of a property crime, compared to 16% among incarcerated men.
- The proportion of imprisoned women convicted of a drug offense has increased from 12% in 1986 to 26% in 2018.

Offense Type by Gender in State Prisons, 2018



Carson, E.A. (2020). *Prisoners in 2019*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## INCARCERATED GIRLS

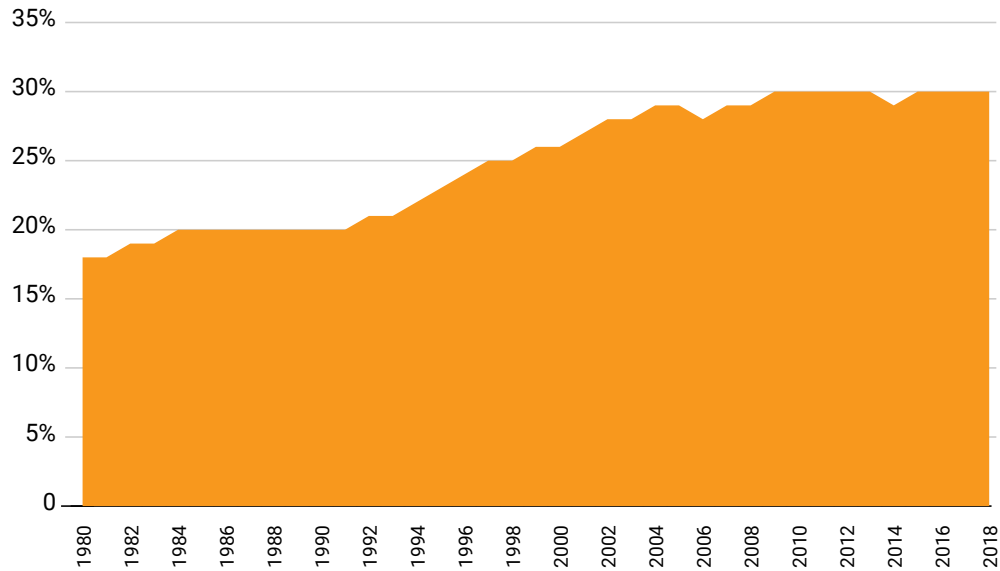
- Of the 43,580 youth in residential placement, 15% (6,598) are girls.<sup>1,2</sup>
- As with boys, girls are confined considerably less frequently than at the start of the century. In 2001, 15,104 girls were confined in residential placement settings. By 2017, this figure had been cut by more than half.<sup>3</sup>
- African American and Native girls are much more likely to be incarcerated than Asian, white, and Hispanic girls. The placement rate for all girls is 43 per 100,000 girls (those between ages 10 and 17),<sup>4</sup> but the placement rate for Asian girls 3 per 100,000; for white girls is 29 per 100,000; and Hispanic girls is 31 per 100,000. African American girls are more than three times as likely as their white peers to be incarcerated (94 per 100,000), and Native girls are more than four times as likely (123 per 100,000).<sup>5</sup>
- Though just 15% of incarcerated youth are girls, they make up a much higher proportion of those incarcerated for the lowest level offenses. Thirty-six percent of youth incarcerated for status offenses (such as truancy and curfew violations) are girls. More than half of youth incarcerated for running away are girls. Overall, one-third of incarcerated girls are held for status offenses or for violating the terms of their probation.<sup>6</sup>

### Highest and Lowest State Rates of Confinement for Girls (per 100,000), 2017<sup>7</sup>

Highest Incarceration Rates		Lowest Incarceration Rates	
State	Rate	State	Rate
Nebraska	166	Vermont	0
Wyoming	143	Connecticut	7
Alaska	102	Massachusetts	9
West Virginia	95	New Jersey	11
Idaho	81	North Carolina <sup>8</sup>	11

Source: Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., and Puzzanchera, C. (2017) "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>.

## Girls Comprise a Growing Proportion of All Teen Arrests, 1980-2018



Source: Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzzanchera, C. (2019). "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>

In 1990, girls comprised 20 percent of all youth arrests, a proportion that grew to 26 percent in 2000 and 30 percent in 2010. Since then, the proportion of all youth arrests by gender has been consistent.<sup>9</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzzanchera, C. (2019). "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/> Totals reflect data as of late October 2017. One year later, there were 14 percent fewer youth in replacement, but their genders are not reported.
- 2 Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2020). "Juvenile Residential Facility Census Databook." Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/jrfcdb/>
- 3 Sickmund, M., et al. (2019).
- 4 Sickmund, M., et al. (2019).
- 5 Author's calculations of girls' placement rate by race and ethnicity based on total US population for all girls aged 10 to 17, found at Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2020). "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2019." Online. Available: <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. (2019).
- 7 Sickmund, M., et al. (2019).
- 8 The placement rate for all states listed here, except North Carolina, is based on the population of all girls aged 10 to 17 in their respective states. In North Carolina, the rate is based on the population of girls age 10 to 15, a count taken prior to the implementation of legislation to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17.
- 9 OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Online. Available: [http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR\\_Display.asp?ID=qa05230&selOffenses=1](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR_Display.asp?ID=qa05230&selOffenses=1). October 31, 2019.