

WOMEN IN PRISON PROJECT

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Women in Prison Fact Sheet

United States

- As of June 2008, 207,700 women were in state or federal prisons or local jails, just under 10% of the total U.S. prison and jail population (more than 2.3 million).¹
- Nearly 115,800 women were in state or federal prisons alone, more than 7% of the total U.S. prison population of over 1.6 million.²
- At yearend 2007, there were more than 1.27 million women in prison or jail, or on parole or probation in the U.S.³ – over 17% of the total number in the U.S. (more than 7.3 million).⁴
- In the early 1980s, one in every 77 adults in the U.S. was under correctional supervision. Now, that figure is one in 31.⁵ For adult women, the figure is one in every 89.⁶
- From 1995 to 2008, the number of women in state and federal prisons nationwide increased by 203%.⁷
- Roughly 49% of women in state or federal prisons at yearend 2007 were white, just under 28% were African American, and almost 17% were Latina.⁸
- African-American women are incarcerated at three times the rate for white women; Latina women at almost 1.6 times the rate for white women.⁹
- As of 2005, almost 65% of women in state prisons were incarcerated for drug, property, or public order offenses.¹⁰ Nearly one in three reported committing their offense to support a drug addiction.¹¹
- 62% of women and 51% of men in state prisons are parents of children under 18. More than 64% of mothers in state prisons lived with their children before prison, compared to over 46% of men.¹²
- 4% of women in state prisons, 3% of women in federal prisons, and about 5% of women in jail nationwide reported being pregnant at the time of their incarceration.¹³
- Women prisoners are more likely than male prisoners to have histories of physical or sexual abuse.¹⁴
- In 2004, 73% of women in state prisons either have symptoms or a diagnosis of mental illness and/or were receiving treatment from a mental health professional in the past year, compared to 55% of men.¹⁵
- Nearly 30% were receiving public assistance before arrest, compared to 8% of men. About 37% had incomes of less than \$600 per month prior to arrest, compared to 28% of men.¹⁶
- More than 725,400 were released from federal and state prison in 2007.¹⁷ The federal government estimates that more than two-thirds of people released from prison are rearrested within three years.¹⁸
- Since 1982, U.S. corrections expenditures increased 660%, from \$9 million to over \$68.7 billion.¹⁹

New York State

- From 1973 to 2009, the number of women in New York's prisons increased by more than 580%. During the same time period, the state's total prison population increased by nearly 388%.²⁰
- Since 1997, the state's female prison population has decreased by more than 30%. The total prison population has decreased by nearly 13%.²¹
- As of mid-January 2009, women's facilities in New York State had over 746 empty beds.²²
- As of January 2009, 2,618 women were incarcerated in New York's prisons²³ – about 4.3% of the state's total prison population of just under 61,000.²⁴
- An additional 29,240 women were on parole (nearly 2,580)²⁵ and probation (just over 24,080).²⁶
- As of January 2009, women made up just over 8% of New York's total parole population (nearly 31,500) and almost 20% of the state's total probation population (almost 122,200).²⁷
- More than 83% of women sent to New York's prisons in 2008 were convicted of non-violent offenses.²⁸ Of women sent to prison for violent felony offenses in 2008, 84% were first time felony offenders.²⁹
- Almost 65% of women under state custody are first felony offenders.³⁰ About 35% have either never been arrested or convicted of a crime prior to their current offense, compared with almost 22% of men.³¹
- It costs \$44,000 to incarcerate a person in a New York State prison for one year.³²
- Almost 68% of the state's female inmates are women of color: more than 45% are African American, almost 20% are Latina, and more than 32% are white.³³ Women of color comprise only 30% of New York's entire female population.³⁴
- More than 62% of women on parole in New York State are African American or Latina.³⁵ For women on probation, more than 46% are African American or Latina.³⁶
- As of January 2009, nearly 30% of women in New York's prisons were incarcerated for a drug offense – 43% are serving time for first-time felony offenses.³⁷
- More than 77% of women under state custody for a drug offense are women of color.³⁸
- Just under 88% of women incarcerated in New York State prisons report having an alcohol or substance abuse problem prior to their arrest, compared to more than 82% of men.³⁹
- An estimated eight in 10 women in have experienced severe abuse as children and an estimated nine in 10 have endured physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes.⁴⁰
- As of January 2007, more than 42% of women in New York's prisons had been diagnosed with a serious mental illness, compared to nearly 12% of male inmates.⁴¹
- About 55% of women under state custody are from New York City and its suburbs.⁴² Nearly 41% are incarcerated at Albion Correctional Facility, about eight hours away from Manhattan.⁴³
- The median minimum sentence for women in New York State prisons is 36 months.⁴⁴
- Almost 73% of New York's incarcerated women are parents, compared to more than 58% of men.⁴⁵
- Almost 80,000 children have a parent in New York's prisons, including nearly 5,240 children with an incarcerated mother.⁴⁶

- Nearly 54% of women prisoners do not have a high school diploma, compared with nearly 46% of men.⁴⁷ More than 35% of women under state custody read at an 8th grade level or below.⁴⁸
- Approximately 12% of women in New York’s prisons are HIV positive, a rate of infection double the rate for male inmates⁴⁹ and 80 times higher than the rate in the general public (.15%).⁵⁰
- Over 22% of women in New York’s prisons have Hepatitis C, a rate nearly double that for male inmates (about 13%)⁵¹ and over 14 times higher than the HCV infection rate in the general public (1.6%).⁵²
- More than 27,260 people were released from state prison in 2008: 25,407 men and 1,855 women.⁵³
- Three years after release from New York’s prisons in 2003, women had a recidivism rate of about 30%. Men had a recidivism rate of about 40%.⁵⁴
- New York State spends more than \$2.8 billion annually on corrections. More than 31,000 people work for the state prison system.⁵⁵

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- ¹ Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008 – Statistical Tables*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (March 2009), at 17 (hereinafter *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*). As of June 2008, the total U.S. prison and jail population was 2,310,984: 198,402 in federal prison, 1,327,026 in state prison, and 785,000 in local jail. These figures do not include people held in “U.S. territories, military facilities, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, jails in Indian country, and juvenile facilities.” *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*, at 16. At yearend 2007, there were a total of 2,413,112 inmates in correctional institutions in the U.S, including people held in “U.S. territories, military facilities, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, jails in Indian country, and juvenile facilities.” Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, *Prisoners in 2007*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (December 2008, rev. 2/12/09), at 7 (hereinafter *Prisoners in 2007*). ² As of June 2008, the total female prison population was 115,779 and the total for men and women was 1,610,584. *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*, at 3 and 5.
- ³ The exact figure is 1,273,120. There were 207,700 women in U.S. federal or state prisons or local jails at yearend 2007. *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*, at 17. An estimated 969,533 women were on probation and 95,887 on parole at yearend 2007. Figures derived from Lauren E. Glaze and Thomas P. Bonczar, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2006*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (December 2007), at 2-6 (hereinafter *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2006*).
- ⁴ As of 2007, the total number of prison inmates, parolees and probationers in the U.S. was 7,328,200: 2,313,781 in prison or jail, 4,215,361 on probation, and 799,058 on parole. *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2007*, at 1, 2 and 4.
- ⁵ *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections*, The Pew Center on the States, The Pew Charitable Trusts, (March 2009), at 5.
- ⁶ *Id.*, at 7.
- ⁷ In 1995, there were 68,544 women in state or federal prisons or in local jails. Darrell K. Gilliard and Allen J. Beck, *Prison and Jail Inmates, 1995*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (August 1996), at 5.
- ⁸ *Prisoners in 2007*, at 3. About 33% of men in state or federal prisons or local jails are white, 39% are African-American, and just over 21% are Latino. African American men are incarcerated at a rate 6.5 higher than the rate for white men and 2.5 times higher than the rate for Latino men. Figures derived from *Prisoners in 2007*, at 3.
- ⁹ *Id.*, at 4.
- ¹⁰ Figures derived from *Prisoners in 2007*, at 21.
- ¹¹ Lawrence A. Greenfield and Tracy L. Snell, *Women Offenders*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (December 1999, rev. 10/3/00), (hereinafter *Women Offenders*), at 9.
- ¹² Lauren E. Glaze and Laura M. Maruschak, *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children* (August 2008, rev 1/8/09), at 2 and 4.
- ¹³ Laura M. Maruschak, *Medical Problems of Prisoners*, based on data from the 2004 *Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Laura M. Maruschak, *Medical Problems of Jail Inmates*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (November 2006), at 1.
- ¹⁴ See *Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (April 1999), at 1. See Tracy L. Snell and Danielle C. Morton, *Women in Prison, Survey of State Inmates, 1991*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (1991), at 5. See *Women Offenders*, at 8.
- ¹⁵ Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze, *Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (September 2006), revised on 12/14/06, at 4.
- ¹⁶ *Women Offenders*, at 8.

- ¹⁷ *Prisoners in 2007*, at 3.
- ¹⁸ Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, (June 2002) at 3.
- ¹⁹ *Direct expenditures by criminal justice function, 1982-2006*, Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts series, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.
- ²⁰ Figures derived from *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09* and Letter from DOCS Director of Public Information, 5/15/01.
- ²¹ The number of men in New York State prisons decreased by almost 12%, from 66,137 in 1997 to 58,313, as of January 1, 2009. Figures derived from *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09*, and New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Data Sheet 01/03/97, revised 02/18/97.
- ²² Figure derived from *Daily Capacity Population Report 01/01/09*.
- ²³ Figure derived from *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09*, New York State Department of Correctional Services (hereinafter *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09*). New York State Department of Correctional Services hereinafter referred to as NYS DOCS.
- ²⁴ As of January 2009, 60,931 people were under DOCS custody in New York State; 59,823 were men. *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09*. New York has the fourth largest prison population, exceeded by California, Texas and Florida, respectively.
- Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*, at 3. New York has the ninth largest population of incarcerated women in the U.S., exceeded by Texas, California, Florida, Ohio, Arizona, Georgia, Virginia and Illinois, respectively. *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008*, at 5.
- ²⁵ Figures derived from *Male and Female Parolees in Intensive and Regular Supervision Status by Self Reported Race as of 12/31/08*, New York State Division of Parole (hereinafter *Male and Female Parolees 12/31/08*).
- ²⁶ *Total Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009, Race/Ethnicity and Conviction Category, Female Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009, Race/Ethnicity and Conviction Category, Male Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009, Race/Ethnicity and Conviction Category*, New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (hereinafter *Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009*).
- ²⁷ As of December 31, 2008, there were 31,485 people on parole in New York State, 2,576 women and 28,909 men. *Male and Female Parolees 12/31/08*. As of January 2009, 122,164 people were on probation in New York State, 24,081 women and 97,359 men. *Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009*.
- ²⁸ *Table 1B: New Court Commitments by Month Received: Jan 1 to Dec 31 2008 (Women Only)*, NYS DOCS.
- ²⁹ *Table 1C: Crime by Predicate Felony Status By Gender; 2008 New Court Commitments to NYSDOCS*, NYS DOCS.
- ³⁰ Figure derived from *Table 4A: Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009*, NYS DOCS. ³¹ *Hub System: Profile of Inmate Population Under Custody on January 1, 2008*, NYS DOCS (March 2008) at 35 (hereinafter *DOCS Hub Report 2008*).
- ³² Legal Action Center, *Drug Law Reform 2008 – Dramatic Costs Savings for New York State*, at 6. The Legal Action Center reached this figure by dividing DOCS FY 2008 budget (\$2.7 billion) by the number of individuals in DOCS facilities at the time of the calculation (61,260).
- ³³ Figures derived from *Table 4C: (Under Custody Whites Only) Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009; Table 4D: (Under Custody African American Only) Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009; Table 4E: (Under Custody Hispanic Offenders Only) Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009; and, Table 4F: (Under Custody and Ethnic Status Is “Other” or Not Coded) Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009*, NYS DOCS (hereinafter *Tables 4C, 4D, 4E, and 4F, Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status 1/1/09*).
- ³⁴ Figure derived from *2000 Census of Population and Housing, Age by Sex by Race and Hisp/Latino Ethnicity (Including Median Age by Sex)*, NYS Data Center, Section 3.
- ³⁵ Of women on parole in New York State, over 44% are African American, almost 18% are Latina, and 36% are white. Of men on parole, more than 51% were African American, almost 24% were Latino, and more than 23% were white. Figures derived from *Male and Female Parolees in Intensive and Regular Supervision Status by Self Reported Race as of 12/31/08*, New York State Division of Parole.
- ³⁶ Of women on probation in New York State, over 33% are African American, more than 13% are Latina, and about 50% are white. Figures derived from *Female Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009, Race/Ethnicity and Conviction Category*, New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives. Of men on probation, more than 28% were African American, almost 22% were Latino, and almost 46% were white. Figures derived from *Male Probationers Supervised Statewide 1/1/2009, Race/Ethnicity and Conviction Category*, New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives.
- ³⁷ Figure derived from *Table 4A: Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender; Under Custody Population NYDOCS Jan 1 2009*, NYS DOCS.
- ³⁸ Figure derived from *Tables 4C, 4D, 4E, and 4F, Crime by Predicate Felony Status by Gender by Ethnic Status 1/1/09*.
- ³⁹ *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 55.
- ⁴⁰ Browne, Miller and Maguin, “Prevalence and Severity of Lifetime Physical and Sexual Victimization Among Incarcerated Women,” *International Journal of Law & Psychiatry* 22 (3-4) (1999).

- ⁴¹ Almost 40% of women inmates had been diagnosed with a major mood disorder (which includes depression, psychotic depression, and bipolar disorder), and 15% have been diagnosed with schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder. *CNYPC Patient Demographic and Diagnostic Profile, Year 2007*, Central New York Psychiatric Center (January 29, 2007), at 5.
- ⁴² As of January 2008, more than 44% of women in New York State prisons were from New York City and 10.5% were from downstate suburbs. Just under 64% of men were from New York City or its suburbs. *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 10.
- ⁴³ Figure derived from *Daily Population Capacity Report, 01/01/09*.
- ⁴⁴ Letter from New York State Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Brian Fischer, March 26, 2009. For the entire DOCS population, as of January 2008, the median sentence was 59 months. *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 24.
- ⁴⁵ Figures derived from *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 17.
- ⁴⁶ As of January 2009, women under DOCS custody report having 5,238 children. Letter from New York State Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Brian Fischer, March 26, 2009. At least 74,345 children have a father in a New York State prison. *DOCS Hub Report*, at 17. This figure is most likely lower than the actual number: DOCS reports the number of incarcerated parents with one, two and three children; the final category is defined as “four or more children.” The figure cited here was calculated by using the lowest possible number of children (four) for men reporting in this category. It is likely that at least one male in this category had more than four children.
- ⁴⁷ *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 51.
- ⁴⁸ Figures derived from *DOCS Hub Report 2008*, at 47.
- ⁴⁹ *Healthcare in New York State Prisons, 2004-2007*, Prison Visiting Project of the Correctional Association of New York. See also Laura M. Maruschak, *HIV in Prisons, 2005*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (September 2007, revised 12/20/07), at 2.
- ⁵⁰ “Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States and States, and for Puerto Rico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005,” U.S. Census Bureau (2005) and “HIV Infection and AIDS: An Overview,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) (March 2005).
- ⁵¹ *Healthcare in New York State Prisons, 2004-2007*, Prison Visiting Project of the Correctional Association of New York. See L. Smith, L. Wang, L. Wright, K. Sabin, D. Glebatis, P. Smith, *Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Seroprevalence Among Incoming Inmates in New York State (NYS) 2000-2001*, Presented at the Infectious Disease Society of America Meeting 10/2427/02, Chicago, IL (Poster #793). G. L. Armstrong, A. Wasley, E. P. Simard, G. M. McQuillan, W. L. Kuhnert, and M. J. Alter, *The Prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus Infection in the United States, 1999 through 2002*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Volume 144, Number 10705 (May 16, 2006), at 707.
- ⁵² Gregory L. Armstrong, Annemarie Wasley, Edgar P. Simard, Geraldine M. McQuillan, Wendi L. Kuhnert, and Miriam J. Alter, *The Prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus Infection in the United States, 1999 through 2002*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Volume 144, Number 10705 (May 16, 2006), at 707. See also “Viral Hepatitis C Fact Sheet,” National Center for HIV, STD & TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (May 24, 2005).
- ⁵³ Figures derived from Table 9A. (*Releases by Crime, Men Only*) *Crime by Race by Release Type by Release Type; All Releases from NYS DOCS in 2008 Due to Parole, Conditional Release or Maximum Expiration of Sentence*, and Table 9B. (*Releases by Crime, Women Only*) *Crime by Race by Release Type by Release Type; All Releases from NYS DOCS in 2008 Due to Parole, Conditional Release or Maximum Expiration of Sentence*, NYS DOCS.
- ⁵⁴ *2003 Releases: Three Year Post-Release Follow-Up Study*, NYS DOCS, at 7.
- ⁵⁵ See 2009-10 New York State Executive Budget Briefing Book, at 85. The State’s workforce estimate for DOCS as of 3/31/09 was 31,673. 2009-10 New York State Executive Budget Briefing Book, at 77.