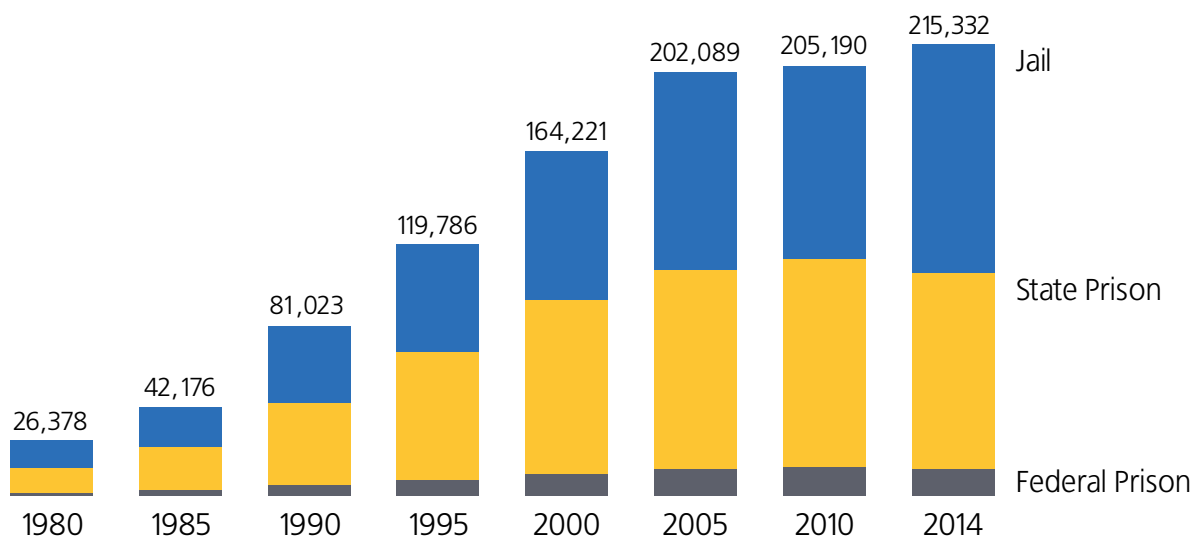


# Incarcerated Women and Girls

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. Women now comprise a larger proportion of the prison population than ever before; the female prison population stands nearly eight times higher than its population count in 1980. More than 60% of women in state prisons have a child under the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1980 and 2014, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 700%, rising from a total of 26,378 in 1980 to 215,332 in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

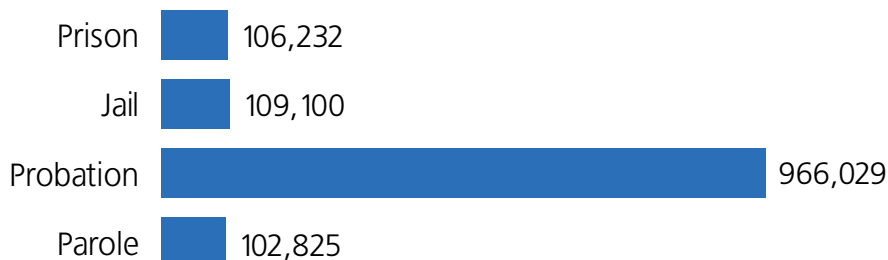
## Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1985-2014



Sources: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*. (1986); *Prison and Jail Inmates Series*. (1997-2014) Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; *Prisoners in 2014*. (2015). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Though many more men are in prison than women, the rate of growth for female imprisonment has outpaced men by more than 50% between 1980 and 2014. There are 1.2 million women under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

## Women Under Control of the U.S. Corrections System, 2014

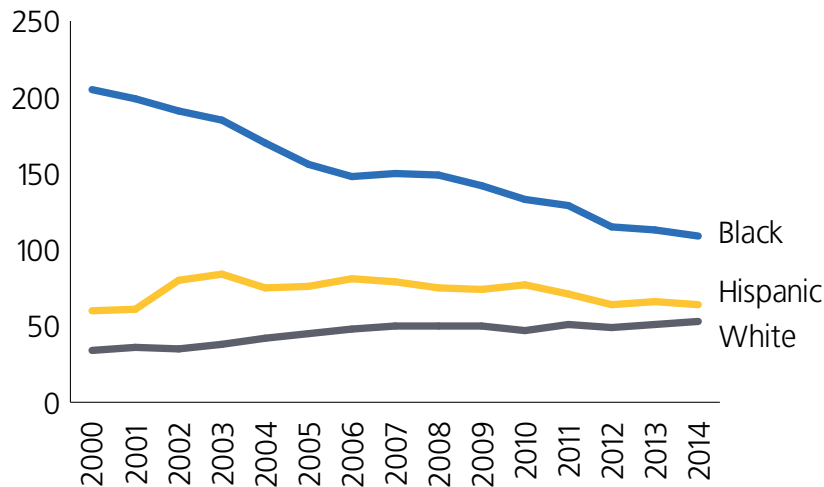


Source: Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Minton, T.D., and Zeng, Z. (2015). *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; Kaeble, D., Maruschak, LM, and Bonczar (2015). *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

- In 2014, the imprisonment rate for African American women (109 per 100,000) was more than twice the rate of imprisonment for white women (53 per 100,000).<sup>3</sup>
- Hispanic women were incarcerated at 1.2 times the rate of white women (64 vs. 53 per 100,000).<sup>4</sup>

### Female Imprisonment Rate per 100,000, by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2014



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

- The rate of imprisonment for African American women has been declining since 2000, while the rate of imprisonment for white women continues to rise.
- Between 2000 and 2014, the rate of imprisonment in state and federal prisons declined by 47% for black women, while the rate of imprisonment for white women rose by 56%.

### Imprisonment Rates by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity per 100,000: 2000 vs. 2014

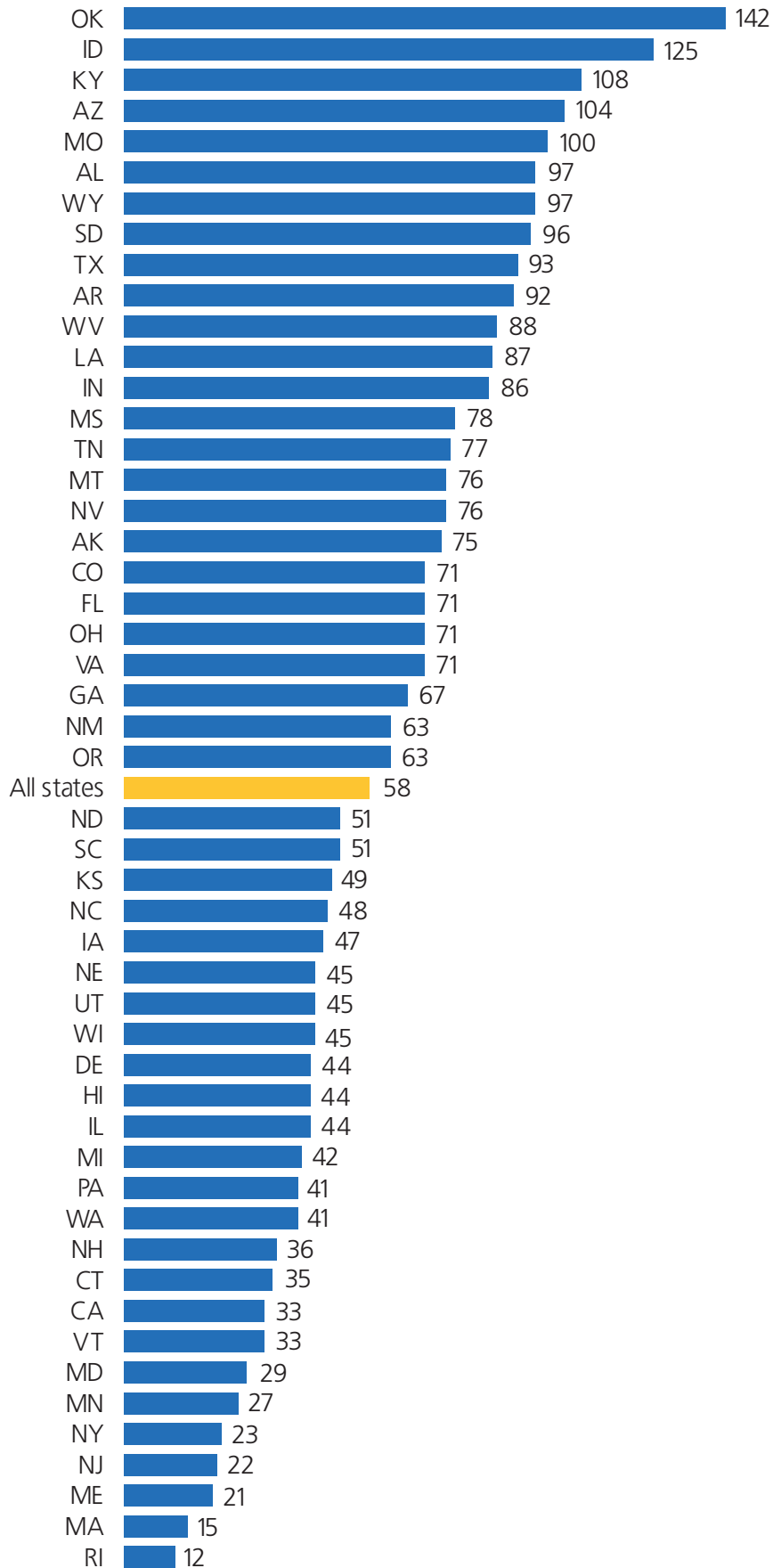
|                  |       | 2000  | 2014  | % Change            |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| White            | Women | 34    | 53    | <b>56% increase</b> |
|                  | Men   | 449   | 465   | <b>4% increase</b>  |
| African American | Women | 205   | 109   | 47% decrease        |
|                  | Men   | 3,457 | 2,724 | 21% decrease        |
| Hispanic         | Women | 60    | 64    | <b>7% increase</b>  |
|                  | Men   | 1,220 | 1,091 | 11% 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, 65 out of every 100,000 women were in prison in 2014.<sup>5</sup> The state with the highest rate of female imprisonment is Oklahoma (142) and the state with the lowest incarceration rate of females is Rhode Island (12).

## Highest and Lowest Female State Incarceration Rates (per 100,000), 2014

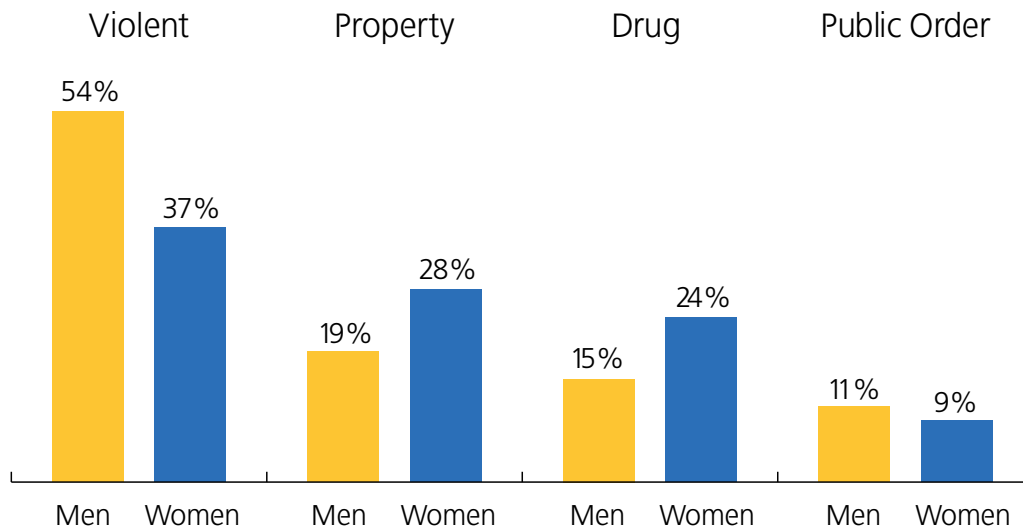


Source: Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## 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-four percent of female prisoners have been convicted of a drug offense, compared to 15% of male prisoners; 28% of incarcerated women have been convicted of a property crime, compared to 19% among incarcerated men.

**Incarceration Offense Type by Gender, 2014**



Source: Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- In 1986, 12% of women in state prisons were incarcerated for a drug offense; by 2014, 24% were incarcerated for a drug offense.

## INCARCERATED GIRLS

- Of the 54,148 youth in residential placement, 14.3% (7,727) are girls.
- As with all youth confinement, girls are confined considerably less frequently than 20 years ago. At the peak year, 2001, 15,104 girls were confined in residential placement settings. By 2013, this figure had been cut in half (7,727).
- White girls have experienced a more substantial decline in youth placements than African American girls. From 1997 to 2013, the white percentage of confined girls dropped from 49% to 41%; among black girls, however, it dropped from 34% to 31%.
- Girls represent a high proportion of those who are confined for low-level crimes such as status offenses and technical violations, behaviors that would not be considered illegal if committed by an adult (such as skipping school or running away).

## Highest and Lowest State Rates of Confinement for Girls (per 100,000), 2013

### Highest Incarceration Rates

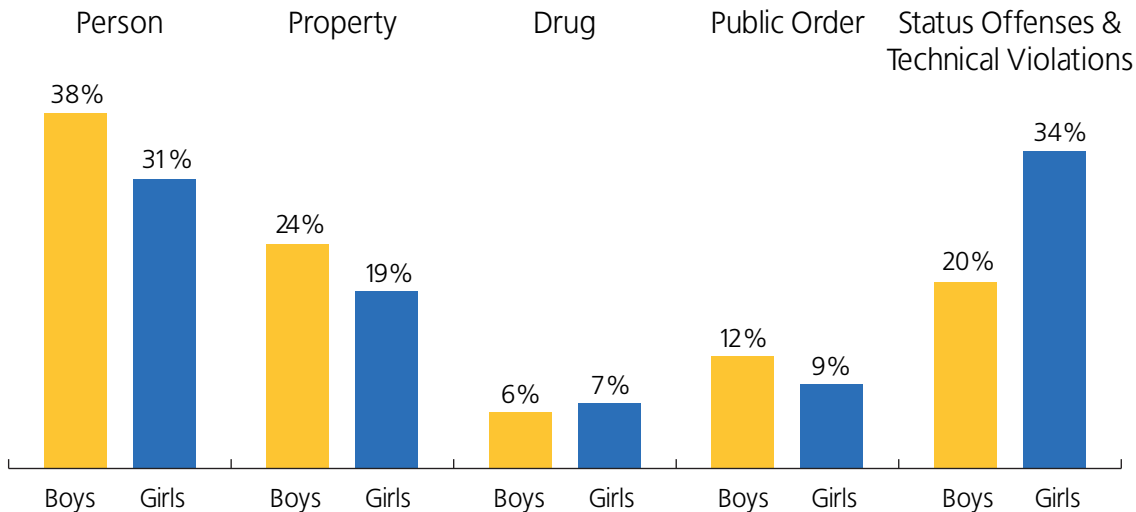
| State           | Rate      |
|-----------------|-----------|
| <b>National</b> | <b>50</b> |
| Wyoming         | 209       |
| West Virginia   | 159       |
| South Dakota    | 161       |
| North Dakota    | 136       |
| Nebraska        | 119       |

### Lowest Incarceration Rates

| State           | Rate      |
|-----------------|-----------|
| <b>National</b> | <b>50</b> |
| Massachusetts   | 10        |
| Rhode Island    | 12        |
| New Jersey      | 13        |
| Tennessee       | 15        |
| Connecticut     | 19        |

Source: Sickmund, M., Sladky, M., Kang, T.J., and Puzzanchera, C. (2015). Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

## Youth Offense Type by Gender, 2013



Source: Sickmund, M., Sladky, M., Kang, T.J., and Puzzanchera, C. (2015). Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Glaze, L. E., and Maruschak, L. M. (2009). *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 2 Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 3 Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 4 Carson, E.A. and Sabol, W.J. (2012). *Prisoners in 2011*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 5 Carson, E.A. (2015). *Prisoners in 2014*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.