



INCARCERATED WOMEN: OVERVIEW

Incarcerated women represent a significant yet often overlooked segment of the prison population. Understanding their unique circumstances and histories of trauma is crucial for developing policies and programs that address their specific needs.

Population Growth: The number of incarcerated women has increased dramatically over the past few decades. As of 2023, women constitute approximately 10% of the total prison population in the United States, with over 200,000 women incarcerated in jails and prisons nationwide.

Rate of Increase: While the overall prison population has seen some decline, the rate of increase for incarcerated women has outpaced men. From 1980 to 2023, the number of women in prison has grown by more than 700%.

1 Trauma

Incarcerated women experience higher rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences compared to the general population. Studies indicate that up to 90% of incarcerated women have experienced physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives.

2 Motherhood

A large proportion of incarcerated women are mothers. Approximately 80% of women in prisons are mothers, and many are primary caregivers. The incarceration of mothers leads to profound family disruptions. Children are often placed in foster care or live with relatives, creating long-term emotional and psychological impacts.

3 Mental Health

The prevalence of mental health disorders among incarcerated women is significantly higher than in the general population. Conditions such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety are common, often exacerbated by their incarceration.

4 Children and Families

An estimated 150,000 children in the United States have a mother who is incarcerated. These children face significant challenges, including emotional distress, financial instability, and increased risk of their own involvement with the criminal justice system..