



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

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# Women Offenders

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Population estimates from the Census Bureau for July 1, 1998, indicate that women account for more than half the population age 10 or older:

Both genders	230,861,000	100.0%
Females	119,010,000	51.6
Males	111,851,000	48.4

Table 1

The racial and ethnic composition of the general population age 10 or older varies slightly when males and females are compared. Non-Hispanic black females outnumber non-Hispanic black males by nearly 1.9 million, accounting for more than a quarter of the total difference in the number of males and females in the general population. Minorities compose a slightly higher percentage of the female population (26.2%) than of the male population (25.9%). Nearly a third of the disparity in the number of females versus males in the general population is accounted for by the larger number of minority females.

The average age of females in the general population is about 2½ years older than that of males. The largest age disparity, about 3 years, is found among black non-Hispanic females compared to black non-Hispanic males. Among females, Hispanic women have the lowest average age, 29.6 years, while white non-Hispanic women have the highest, 39.6 years.

## Highlights

Women offenders	Violent offenders	All arrestees	Convicted felony defendants	Correctional populations
Number	2,135,000	3,171,000	160,500	951,900
As a percent of each category	14%	22%	16%	16%

- Based on the self-reports of victims of violence, women account for about 14% of violent offenders — an annual average of about 2.1 million violent female offenders.
- Male offending equals about 1 violent offender for every 9 males age 10 or older, a per capita rate 6 times that of women.
- Three out of four violent female offenders committed simple assault.
- An estimated 28% of violent female offenders are juveniles.
- Three out of four victims of violent female offenders were women.
- Nearly 2 out of 3 victims had a prior relationship with the female offender.
- An estimated 4 in 10 women committing violence were perceived by the victim as being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the crime.
- The per capita rate of murder offending by women in 1998 was the lowest recorded since 1976; the rate at which women commit murder has been declining since 1980.
- In 1998 there were an estimated 3.2 million arrests of women — accounting for about 22% of all arrests that year. The per capita rate of arrest among juvenile females was nearly twice the adult female rate.
- Since 1990 the number of female defendants convicted of felonies in State courts has grown at more than 2 times the rate of increase in male defendants.
- In 1998 an estimated 950,000 women were under the care, custody, or control of correctional agencies — probation or parole agencies supervising 85% of these offenders in the community. The total equals a rate of about 1 woman involved with the criminal justice system for every 109 adult women in the U.S. population.
- Women under supervision by justice system agencies were mothers of an estimated 1.3 million minor children.
- Nearly 6 in 10 women in State prisons had experienced physical or sexual abuse in the past; just over a third of imprisoned women had been abused by an intimate in the past; and just under a quarter reported prior abuse by a family member.
- About 84,000 women were confined in prisons in 1998. In 1996 the average sentence and time served for women were shorter than for males with equivalent offenses.

**Gender, race, and Hispanic origin in the U.S. population**

	Percent of U.S. population age 10 or older, 1998	
	Females	Males
<b>White</b>		
Hispanic	8.8%	9.5%
Non-Hispanic	73.8	74.1
<b>Black</b>		
Hispanic	0.6%	0.6%
Non-Hispanic	12.1	11.2
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>		
Hispanic	0.2%	0.2%
Non-Hispanic	3.6	3.5
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>		
Hispanic	0.1%	0.1%
Non-Hispanic	0.7	0.7
<b>Total population</b>	<b>119,010,000</b>	<b>111,851,000</b>

Table 2

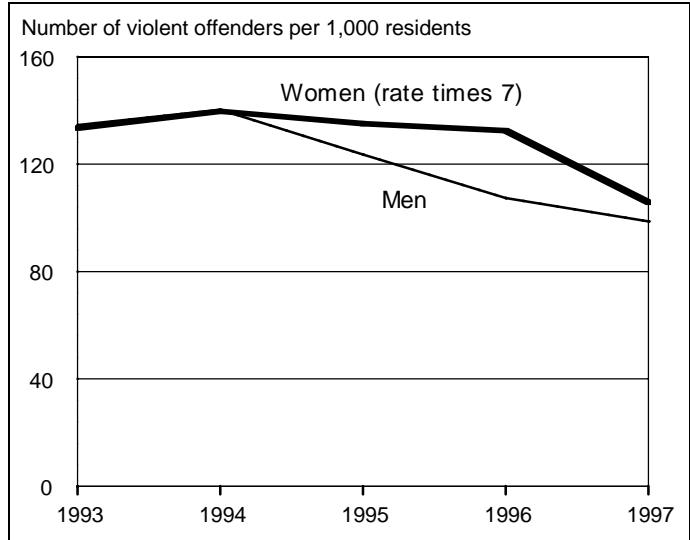


Fig. 2

**Violent crimes committed by females and males**

Offense	Average annual number of offenders reported by victims, 1993-97		Women as a percent of violent offenders
	Female	Male	
All	2,135,000	13,098,000	14%
Sexual assault	10,000	442,000	2
Robbery	157,000	2,051,000	7
Aggravated assault	435,000	3,419,000	11
Simple assault	1,533,000	7,187,000	18

Table 3

Nearly 3 in 4 violent victimizations committed by female offenders were simple assaults; just over half the violence of male offenders is described as simple assault.

More than half of female violent offenders were described by victims as white, and just over a third were described as black. About 1 in 10 were described as belonging to another race (Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, American Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo).

The rate of male violent offending translated into

about 1 violent offender for every 9 males age 10 or older in the general population; the rate of female violent offending was equal to about 1 violent offender for every 56 females age 10 or older.

Black and white offenders accounted for nearly equal proportions of women committing robbery and aggravated assault; however, simple assault offenders were more likely to be described as white.

**Violent victimizers**

During an average year, based on the period 1993-97, victims of violence attributed the crimes they experienced to an estimated 2.1 million female violent offenders and 13.1 million male violent offenders.

	Offending rates: Number of offenders offending per 1,000 residents		Ratio of rates, male:female
	Male	Female	
1993	135	19	7.1
1994	140	20	7.0
1995	124	19	6.4
1996	107	19	5.7
1997	99	15	6.5

Table 4

About 1 out of 7 violent offenders described by victims was a female. Women accounted for 1 in 50 offenders committing a violent sex offense including rape and sexual assault, 1 in 14 robbers, 1 in 9 offenders committing aggravated assault, and more than 1 in 6 offenders described as having committed a simple assault.

Per capita rates of offending among both males and females decreased from the peak rates recorded in 1994. Rates of committing violent crime in 1997 were 29% lower for males and 25% lower among females.

**Characteristics of violent female offenders**

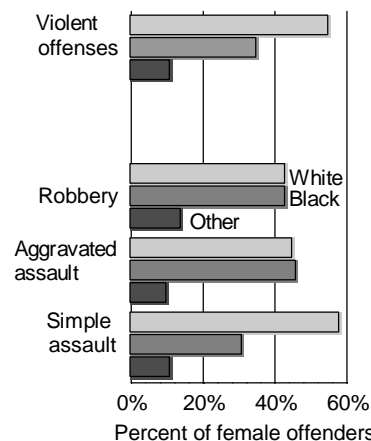


Fig. 1

Among violent female offenders, 53% committed the offense while alone, and 40% were with others, all of whom were female. Among male offenders, 47% were alone, and 51% were with other males when the offense occurred. About 8% of violent female offenders committed their offense together with at least one male offender; by contrast, about 1% of male violent offenders committed the offense in the company of a female offender.

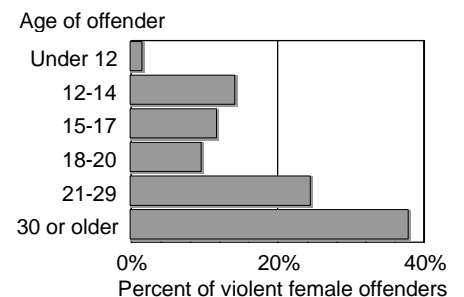


Fig. 3

Victims of violence provided very similar descriptions of their perceptions of the ages of both female and male violent offenders. For each age group — juveniles, young adults, and those 30 or older — victims reported little variation in offender age between the two genders.

Juveniles accounted for about 28% of female violent offenders, nearly identical to the juvenile percentage (26%) found among violent male offenders.

### Characteristics of victims of female violent offenders

Overall, female-to-female violence accounted for 11% of all violent offenders described by victims. An additional 3% of violent offenders were women who attacked males.

Percentage of all violent victimizations reported by victims

Gender of victim	Gender of violent offender		
	Female	Male	Total
Total	14%	86%	100%
Female	11	26	37
Male	3	60	63

Table 5

Violent offenders most often victimized persons of the same gender. More than 3 out of 4 female offenders had a female victim; about 7 out of 10 males had a male victim. About 29% of violent offenders had a victim of a different gender; 9 out of 10 of these offenders were males with female victims.

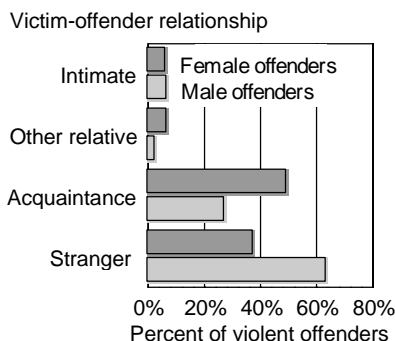


Fig. 4

Male and female violent offenders differed substantially in their relationship to those they victimized. An estimated 62% of female violent offenders had a prior relationship with the victim as an intimate, relative, or acquaintance. By contrast, about 36%

of male violent offenders were estimated to have known the victim.

Victims who were intimates accounted for an identical percentage of both male and female violent offenders.

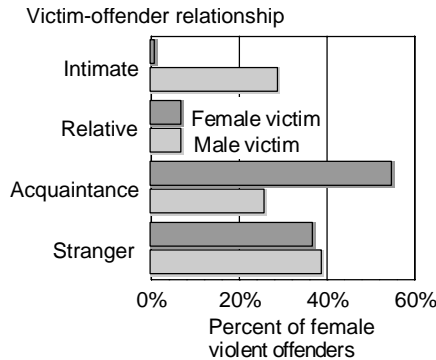


Fig. 5

When women committed their violent offense against men, 35% of the offenders attacked an intimate or relative. By contrast, 8% of victimizations of other females involved intimates or family members. For both male and female victims, the proportion of female offenders attacking strangers was the same.

### Where offenders committed violence and use of drugs or alcohol

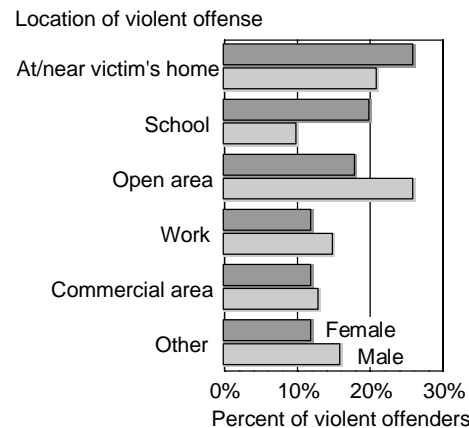


Fig. 6

For nearly half of female offenders, the violent offense took place either at or near the victim's home or at school. Less than a third of male offenders carried out their crimes in these locations.

According to victim self-reports, female offenders account for about 1 in 4 offenders committing violence at a school. Women were also estimated

to account for about 1 in 8 violent offenders in the workplace and 1 in 6 violent offenders committing the offense in the victim's home.

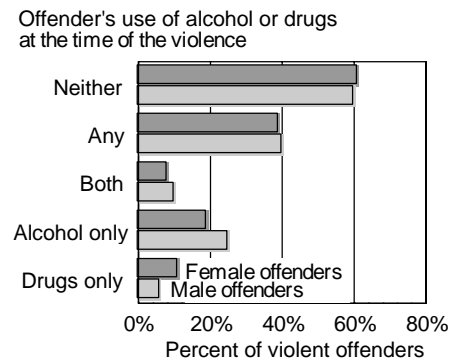


Fig. 7

There were few differences between male and female violent offenders in victim perceptions of drug or alcohol use at the time of the offense. About 4 in 10 male and female violent offenders were reported by victims to have been using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of the offense.

### Consequences of female violence

	Offenders	
	Female	Male
Use of a firearm, knife, blunt object	15%	28%
Victim seriously injured	5%	8%
Hospital treatment for victim	5%	6%
Average loss to victim	\$595	\$943

Table 6

The consequences of male violence were generally more serious for the victim in terms of weapon use, injury, and out-of-pocket losses to the victim.

Male offenders were more likely than female offenders (28% to 15%) to have used a weapon such as a blunt object, knife, or firearm in the commission of the violent offense.

Serious injuries, such as broken bones, being knocked unconscious, concussions, knife wounds, or gunshot wounds, were slightly more associated with male offenders; however, the likelihood of hospital treatment for the victims of male and female offenders was about the same. An estimated 865,000 violent offenders were responsible for crimes against victims whose injuries resulted in hospital treatment;

women accounted for about 12% of these offenders.

The largest out-of-pocket cost item for victims of female violence was medical expenses which averaged \$1,127, nearly \$550 less than victims of male violence experienced. Lost pay due to injury to victims of female violence averaged \$311 and lost pay for court appearances and other reasons cost victims an average of \$513 when the offender was a female — both of these were less than half the losses victims experienced when the offender was a male.

### Women who murder

Since 1993 both male and female rates of committing murder have declined. Rates of committing murder in 1998 were the lowest since statistics were first collected in 1976. The estimated rate for murder offending by women in 1998 was 1.3 per 100,000 — about 1 murderer for every 77,000 women. The male rate of murder offending in 1998 was 11.5 per 100,000, about 1 murderer for every 8,700 males.

The 1998 rate of committing murder by women was just over 40% of the rate in 1976. Since 1980 rates for women have been steadily declining. For male offending, the peak rate occurred in 1991, with 20.7 murderers per 100,000 males (about 1 murderer for every 4,800 males); the rate in 1998 was just over half of what it had been in 1991.

Victim	Murderers	
	Female	Male
Spouse	28.3%	6.8%
Ex-spouse	1.5	0.5
Child/stepchild	10.4	2.2
Other family	6.7	6.9
Boyfriend/girlfriend	14.0	3.9
Acquaintance	31.9	54.6
Stranger	7.2	25.1
Number, 1976-97	59,996	395,446

Table 7

The victim-offender relationship differed substantially between female and male murderers. Of the 60,000 murders committed by women between 1976 and 1997 just over 60% were

against an intimate or family member; among the 400,000 murders committed by men over the same period, 20% were against family members or intimates.

An estimated 1 in 14 murders by a female offender and 1 in 4 murders by a male offender was committed against a victim who was a stranger to the offender.

Victim	Female murderers	
	White	Black
13 or younger	0.6%	0.6%
14-17	6.4	5.3
18-24	23.9	26.9
25-34	31.0	36.5
35-49	27.2	23.1
50-64	8.8	6.3
65 or older	2.2	1.4
Number, 1976-97	26,485	35,357

Table 8

Between 1976 and 1997, juveniles accounted for just over 6% of the murders committed by female offenders, or approximately 4,000 murders. In 1976 there were an estimated 226 juvenile female murderers compared to an estimated 153 in 1997. The only group of women for whom the rate of murder offending has not continued to decrease are those age 18-24. The per capita rate of committing murder for women of this age reached its lowest point in 1995, and by 1997 had climbed 25%.

Nearly 6 in 10 female murderers are black. The age distribution of white and black female murderers is quite similar, though among older offenders (50 or older) black females account for less than half of female murderers.

	Murderers	
	Female	Male
Handgun	42%	51%
Other firearm	11	16
Knife	31	18
Blunt object	4	6
All other weapons	12	9

Table 9

Just over half of women committing murder and two-thirds of males committing murder used a firearm. Female offenders were substantially more likely than male murderers to have used a knife or other sharp object to commit the crime.

### Parents who kill

Between 1976 and 1997 parents and stepparents murdered nearly 11,000 children. Mothers and stepmothers committed about half of these child murders. Sons and stepsons accounted for 52% of those killed by mothers and 57% of those killed by fathers. Mothers were responsible for a higher share of children killed during infancy while fathers were more likely to have been responsible for the murders of children age 8 or older.

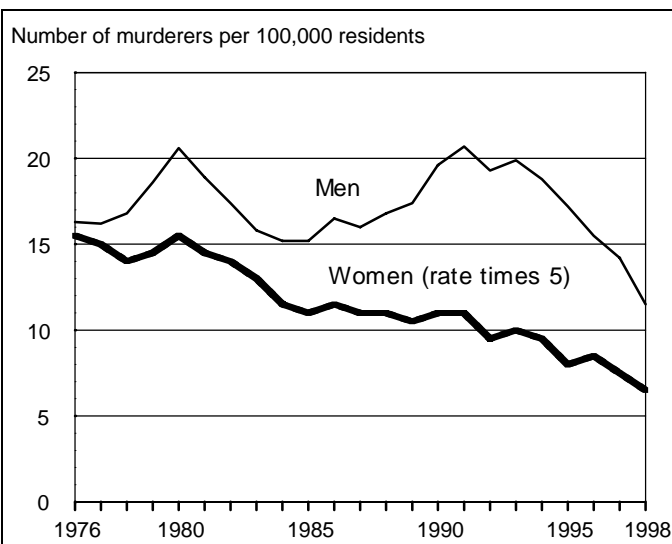


Fig. 8

## Arrests

In 1998 there were an estimated 3.2 million arrests of women, accounting for about a fifth of all arrests by law enforcement agencies. Women were about 17% of those arrested for the Part I violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and 29% of those arrested for Part I property crimes (burglary, larceny, and motor-vehicle theft). An estimated 22% of all female arrests (Part I and Part II) were of juveniles — about 700,000 juvenile female arrests in 1998. Juvenile female arrestees accounted for a higher percentage of women arrested for motor vehicle theft, liquor law violations, and vandalism.

The numbers of arrests in 1998 translate into about 1 arrest for every 22 female juveniles (age 10-17) and 1 arrest for every 42 adult women (age 18 or older). For Part I violent crimes, there was 1 arrest of a female juvenile for every 794 girls in the general population and 1 arrest of an adult female for every 1,099 adult women residents. Larceny, the offense category with the most arrests, equaled about 1 arrest for every 105 girls under age 18 and 1 arrest for every 337 women age 18 or older.

In 1998 there were more than a quarter million female drug arrests, accounting for about 18% of all arrests for drug law violations. Drug arrest rates in 1998 were 1 for every 538 juvenile females in the resident population and 1 for every 426 adult women residents.

Per capita arrest rates for Part I violent crimes among juvenile females (17 and younger) and among young adult females (18-24) have risen substantially from the early 1980's. The juvenile arrest rate for violent offenses in 1995 was about 2½ times the rate in 1985. However, juvenile rates have declined in each year since 1995. By contrast, young adult female rates of arrest for violence continue to climb with the 1997 rate about 80% above the rate 10 years earlier and at the highest level recorded.

### Arrests of females, 1998

	Arrests of females		Female arrest rate per 100,000 female residents	
	1998	Percent of all arrests	Juvenile	Adult
<b>Total arrests</b>	3,170,520	22%	4,630	2,377
<b>Violent offenses</b>	113,877	17%	126	91
Murder	1,959	11	1	2
Robbery	12,130	10	19	9
Aggravated assault	99,490	20	106	80
<b>Property offenses</b>	521,894	29%	1,109	341
Burglary	41,177	13	85	27
Larceny	453,277	35	953	297
Motor vehicle theft	23,585	16	61	14
<b>Drug offenses</b>	272,073	18%	186	235
<b>Driving under the influence</b>	219,514	16%	24	208

Note: Violent offenses, which include rape, and property offenses are the Part I offenses in the FBI Uniform Crime Reports. *Total arrests* includes Part I and Part II offenses.

Table 10

### Felony convictions of women in State courts, 1990-96

	Estimated number of women convicted of felonies in State courts				Percent change, 1990-96
	1990	1992	1994	1996	
<b>Total</b>	112,800	120,550	131,404	160,470	42%
<b>Violent felonies</b>	10,428	12,313	13,936	13,509	30%
Murder	1,051	1,205	1,289	1,005	-4
Rape/sexual assault	202	375	630	442	119
Robbery	3,047	3,142	2,854	2,920	-4
Aggravated assault	5,043	6,152	6,906	7,786	54
Other violent	1,085	1,440	2,256	1,356	25
<b>Property felonies</b>	48,206	52,230	53,649	69,536	44%
Burglary	5,593	5,830	6,603	6,847	22
Larceny	20,728	22,179	22,136	28,786	39
Fraud	21,885	24,221	24,910	33,902	55
<b>Drug felonies</b>	43,000	42,047	46,468	59,027	37%
Trafficking	24,562	23,529	25,561	33,005	34
Possession	18,438	18,518	20,907	26,022	41
<b>Other felonies</b>	11,166	13,959	17,351	18,399	65%

Note: Murder includes nonnegligent manslaughter; larceny includes motor vehicle theft; and fraud include forgery and embezzlement. Details may not equal totals because of rounding.

Table 11

### Female defendants in State courts

Women accounted for about 16% of all felons convicted in State courts in 1996. Women were 8% of convicted violent felons, 23% of property felons, and 17% of drug felons. Women defendants accounted for 41% of all felons convicted of forgery, fraud, and embezzlement. The majority of male and female felony defendants in the 75 largest counties in the United States were either charged with violence or were recidivists. An estimated 27% of male and 42% of female felony defendants in State courts in large counties had no history of prior convictions and

had not been charged with a violent offense.

State courts have recorded substantial growth in the number of female defendants convicted of felonies. Between 1990 and 1996, the number of convicted female defendants grew at 2½ times the rate of increase among male defendants.

For women defendants convicted in State courts, nearly 90% of the increase in the number of violent felons was accounted for by aggravated assault, perhaps reflecting increased

**Trends in felony convictions of women and men, 1990-96**

Felonies	Percent change in the number of felony convictions, 1990-96		
	Total	Females	Males
All	20%	42%	17%
Violent	14	30	12
Property	6	44	-2
Drug	27	37	25
Other	46	65	44

Table 12

prosecution of women for domestic violence. More than half of the increase in the number of female defendants convicted of property felonies was attributable to rising numbers of those convicted of forgery, fraud, or embezzlement.

Thirty-seven percent of women convicted of a felony in State courts in 1996 had been charged with a drug offense, about the same proportion of all convicted felons as in 1990. Over the period 1990-96, the number of drug trafficking convictions grew by 34% and the number of convictions for drug possession increased 41%.

**Adjudication outcomes**

About two-thirds of both female and male defendants pleaded guilty. Small percentages of both were found guilty after a bench or jury trial. About 3 in 10 of both were acquitted or were dismissed. The apparently larger share of women than men charged with a violent felony and gaining an acquittal or dismissal merits further study.

Adjudication outcomes for felony defendants	Percent of defendants	
	Female	Male
<b>Total, all felonies</b>	100%	100%
Pleaded guilty	66	66
Found guilty	2	5
Dismissed/acquitted	31	30
<b>Violent felonies</b>	100%	100%
Pleaded guilty	45	55
Found guilty	3	7
Dismissed/acquitted	52	38
<b>Property felonies</b>	100%	100%
Pleaded guilty	73	67
Found guilty	2	4
Dismissed/acquitted	25	28
<b>Drug felonies</b>	100%	100%
Pleaded guilty	70	70
Found guilty	2	4
Dismissed/acquitted	28	26

Table 13

For every category of major crime for the period 1990-96 — violent, property, drugs, and other felonies — the rate of increase in the number of convicted female defendants has outpaced the changes in the number of convicted male defendants.

Property felonies, in particular, have evidenced a very large disparity in rates of change; from 1990 to 1996, the number of males convicted of property felonies dropped about -2% while convicted female defendants increased 44%.

**Female corrections populations**

In 1998 there were an estimated 951,900 women under the care, custody, or control of adult criminal justice authorities. This translates into a rate of about 1 out of every 109 adult women in the United States — nearly 1% of adult women — having some kind of correctional status on any given day. About 85% of the female corrections population were being supervised in the community, and 15% were confined in prisons and jails.

Women offenders account for about 16% of the total corrections population in 1998 (5,890,300). Women represent about 21% of those on probation, 11% of those in local jails, just under

6% of those in prisons, and 12% of those on parole.

Population growth has occurred in each component of corrections. The number of women per capita involved in corrections overall has grown 48% since 1990, compared to a 27% increase in the number of men per capita. Between 1990 and 1998 the per capita number of women under probation supervision climbed 40%; the jail rate grew 60%; the imprisonment rate increased 88%; and the per capita number of offenders under parole supervision was up 80%.

Offense composition among women with a corrections status varies with the type of status. Violence and drug trafficking, for example, account for 17% of women on probation, 24% of those sentenced to local jails, 46% of those incarcerated in State prisons, and 65% of those confined in Federal prisons. By contrast, DWI offenses account for 18% of women on proba-

tion, 7% of those sentenced to local jails, and 2% of those held in State prisons.

Most violent female offenders are not confined: there are nearly 65,000

**Offenses of women on probation or in jail or prison**

Most serious offense*	Percent of women offenders			
	Probation	Local jails	State prisons	Federal prisons
<b>Violent offenses</b>	9%	12%	28%	7%
Homicide	1	1	11	1
<b>Property offenses</b>	44%	34%	27%	12%
Larceny	11	15	9	1
Fraud	26	12	10	10
<b>Drug offenses</b>	19%	30%	34%	72%
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	27%	24%	11%	8%
Driving while intoxicated	18	7	2	0
Number of women offenders	721,400	27,900	75,200	9,200

\*Based on the offenders' most serious offense. Overall offense categories are shown with selected detail categories containing larger percentages of women offenders.

Table 15

**1 woman in \_\_\_\_ adult women in the United States had this correctional status:**

	Any correctional status				
	Probation	Jail	Prison	Parole	
1985	227	267	4,762	4,167	4,762
1990	161	202	2,632	2,326	2,273
1995	124	159	1,961	1,587	1,493
1996	120	157	1,852	1,471	1,316
1997	115	151	1,754	1,408	1,333
1998	109	144	1,628	1,230	1,262

Table 14

Trends in most serious offenses

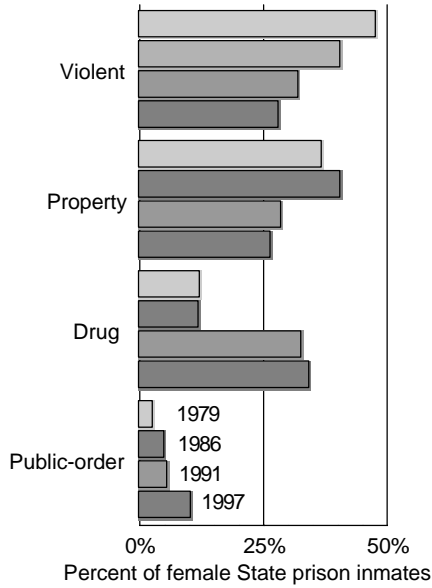


Fig. 9

women convicted of violence under supervision by probation authorities compared to about 3,300 convicted violent offenders in local jails, 21,000 in State prisons, and fewer than 1,000 in Federal prison. Similarly, among convicted female drug traffickers, an estimated 58,000 are on probation, 5,300 are held in local jails, 13,500 in State prisons, and about 5,300 in Federal prison.

The offense composition among women in State prison has been changing. The proportion who had been convicted of violent and property crimes has been decreasing while the proportion of drug and public-order offenders has been growing.

**Characteristics of women serving a sentence**

*Race and Hispanic origin*

While nearly two-thirds of women under probation supervision are white, nearly two-thirds of those confined in local jails and State and Federal prisons are minority — black, Hispanic and other races. Hispanics account for about 1 in 7 women in State prisons but nearly 1 in 3 female prisoners in Federal custody.

*Age*

Women in prison, both State and Federal, are older than their counterparts in local jails or under probation supervision. While about 1 in 5 women

**Children of women under correctional supervision, 1998**

	Estimated number		
	Women offenders	Women with minor children	Minor children
Total	869,600	615,500	1,300,800
Probation	721,400	516,200	1,067,200
Jail	63,800	44,700	105,300
State prisons	75,200	49,200	117,100
Federal prisons	9,200	5,400	11,200

Note: Only children under age 18 are counted.

Table 17

on probation or in local jails are under age 25, 1 in 8 State prisoners and 1 in 11 Federal prisoners are of this age. Nearly a quarter of Federal prison inmates are at least 45 years old.

*Marital status*

Adult women under correctional care, custody, or control are substantially more likely than the equivalent general population to have never been married. Nearly half of women in both State prisons and local jails have never been married.

*Education*

The majority of women involved with the justice system are at least high school graduates. An estimated 60% of those on probation, 55% of those in local jails, 56% of those in State prisons, and 73% of those in Federal prison have completed high school, and 30% - 40% of high school graduates have attended some college or more.

**Inmates' children**

Approximately 7 in 10 women under correctional sanction have minor children — children under the age of 18. An estimated 72% of women on probation, 70% of women held in local jails, 65% of women in State prisons, and 59% of women in Federal prisons have young children.

Women under correctional care, custody, or supervision with minor children reported an average of 2.11 children of this age. Those on probation reported the fewest, 2.07 young

Table 16

<b>Characteristics of adult women on probation, in jail, and in prison</b>				
Characteristics of women	Probation	Local jails	State prisons	Federal prisons
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>				
White	62%	36%	33%	29%
Black	27	44	48	35
Hispanic	10	15	15	32
Other	1	5	4	4
<b>Age</b>				
24 or younger	20%	21%	12%	9%
25-34	39	46	43	35
35-44	30	27	34	32
45-54	10	5	9	18
55 or older	1	1	2	6
Median age	32 years	31 years	33 years	36 years
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	26%	15%	17%	29%
Widowed	2	4	6	6
Separated	10	13	10	21
Divorced	20	20	20	10
Never married	42	48	47	34
<b>Education</b>				
8th grade or less	5%	12%	7%	8%
Some high school	35	33	37	19
High school graduate/GED	39	39	39	44
Some college or more	21	16	17	29

In 1997 an estimated 2.8% of all children under age 18 have at least one parent in a local jail or a State or Federal prison. About 1 in 40 children have an incarcerated father, and 1 in 359 children have an incarcerated mother.

	Children with an incarcerated parent		
	Total	Mothers	Fathers
<b>Estimated number of children under age 18</b>			
Jails	620,539	84,240	536,299
State prisons	1,199,277	102,448	1,096,829
Federal prisons	121,980	7,816	114,164
Total	1,941,796	194,504	1,747,292
<b>Percent of all children under age 18</b>			
Jails	0.89%	0.12%	0.77%
State prisons	1.72	0.15	1.57
Federal prisons	0.17	0.01	0.16
Total	2.78	0.28	2.50

Note: In 1997 69,898,000 children under age 18 were in the resident population.

Table 18

children per woman with children while those in State prison reported an average of 2.38 children under age 18.

These estimates translate into more than 1.3 million minor children who are the offspring of women under correctional sanction; more than a quarter million of these children have mothers who are serving time in prison or jail. About two-thirds of women in State prisons and half of women in Federal prisons who had young children had lived with those children prior to entering prison.

Male inmates in State prisons are estimated to have been fathers to about 1.1 million children under age 18, about 11 times the number of minor children attributable to female inmates. About 64% of women inmates with minor children had lived with those children prior to admission to prison; among men, 44% had resided with their minor children before imprisonment. Males in Federal prisons had nearly 15 times as many minor children in total as female Federal inmates; 8 in 10 of these men and just under 6 in 10 women resided with the children prior to entering prison.

### Economic circumstances

Female prisoners generally had more difficult economic circumstances than male inmates prior to entering prison. About 4 in 10 women in State prison

reported that they had been employed full-time prior to their arrest. By contrast, nearly 6 in 10 male inmates had been working full-time prior to arrest. About 37% of women and 28% of men had incomes of less than \$600 per month prior to arrest. While just under 8% of male inmates had been receiving welfare assistance prior to arrest, nearly 30% of female inmates reported receiving welfare assistance at the time just before the arrest which brought them to prison.

### Health issues

	Local jails	State prisons
Gynecological exam since admission?	22%	90%
Pregnant when admitted?	6%	5%
Prenatal care since admission?	3%	4%
Receiving medication for emotional disorder?	17%	23%

Table 19

In 1997 an estimated 2,200 women serving time in State prisons were

HIV-positive, about 3.5% of the female inmate population. An estimated 20,200 male inmates, about 2.2% of the male population, was HIV-positive. The percentage of the female inmate population that was HIV-positive peaked in 1993 at 4.2%.

### Alcohol and drug use

About half of women offenders confined in State prisons had been using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of the offense for which they had been incarcerated. Among these women offenders, drug use at the time of the offense was reported more often than alcohol use, a different pattern from that found among male offenders in State prisons. On every measure of drug use (ever used, using regularly, using in month before the offense, and using at time of offense), women offenders in State prisons reported higher usage — 40% of women inmates compared to 32% of male inmates had been under the influence of drugs when the crime occurred. By contrast, every measure of alcohol use was higher for male inmates than for female inmates. An estimated 25% of women on probation, 29% of women in local jails, 29% of women in State prisons, and 15% of women in Federal prisons had been consuming alcohol at the time of the offense.

Just over half of women confined in State prisons reported drinking alcohol in the year before the current offense compared to two-thirds of male offenders in State prisons. Daily drinkers accounted for about 25% of female inmates and 29% of male inmates.

### History of physical or sexual abuse

	Women		
	Probation	Local jails	State prisons
Ever physically or sexually abused	41%	48%	57%
Before age 18	16	21	12
After age 18	13	11	20
Both periods	13	16	25
Ever abused			
Physically	15%	10%	18%
Sexually	7	10	11
Both	18	27	28

Forty-four percent of women under correctional authority reported that they were physically or sexually assaulted at some time during their lives. Sixty-nine percent of women reporting an assault said that it had occurred before age 18.

Table 20



	Percent of female State prison inmates using at the time of the offense —				
	Total	Both alcohol and drugs			Drugs
		None	Alcohol	Drugs	
All	100%	48%	16%	13%	24%
Violent	100	51	17	20	11
Property	100	53	15	7	25
Drug	100	43	18	7	32
Public-order	100	41	10	24	25

Table 21

At the time of the offense, 29% of women offenders and 38% of male inmates had been under the influence of alcohol.

About 6 in 10 women in State prison described themselves as using drugs in the month before the offense, 5 in 10 described themselves as a daily user of drugs, and 4 in 10 were under the influence of drugs at the time of the offense. Nearly 1 in 3 women serving time in State prisons said they had committed the offense which brought them to prison in order to obtain money to support their need for drugs.

Substance abusing women inmates were more likely than drug/alcohol-involved male inmates to report having received treatment. Nearly 56% of women substance abusers in State prisons compared to 41% of males had ever been in substance abuse

Criminal history	Percent of State prison inmates	
	Female	Male
<b>Past convictions</b>		
None	35%	23%
Juvenile only	3	7
Adult only	46	39
Both adult and juvenile	16	31
<b>Number of prior convictions</b>		
0	35%	23%
1	17	17
2	16	16
3-5	19	25
6-10	8	12
11 or more	5	6
<b>Status at arrest</b>		
None	47%	53%
Probation	34	21
Parole	18	25
Escapee	1	1

Table 22

treatment; 20% of women and 14% of men had received such treatment since prison admission. Nearly a third of both men and women inmates with substance abuse problems indicated that they had participated in some other

type of voluntary program, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, since entering prison.

### Criminal history

About 65% of women confined in State prisons had a history of prior convictions; about 77% of men serving time in State prisons had a prior conviction record. Male inmates were twice as likely as female inmates to have had a juvenile history (38% versus 19%); 7 out of 10 male inmates and 6 out of 10 female inmates had an adult history of convictions. About 1 in 6 women inmates and nearly 1 in 3 male inmates had criminal records spanning both their juvenile and adult years.

Male inmates had also acquired more convictions than women. While about a third of women prisoners had 3 or more prior convictions, about 43% of male inmates had records containing at least 3 prior convictions.

Women in prison were substantially more likely than male inmates to have had a correctional status at the time of the offense which brought them to prison. About 1 in 3 women inmates had been on probation when their offense occurred compared to 1 in 5 male inmates.

About 40% of female first-timers and 65% of male first-timers serving a prison sentence had been convicted of a violent offense. This translates into about 20% of all women inmates and 8% of all male inmates incarcerated in State prisons nationwide as offenders serving their first sentence after conviction for a nonviolent crime.

### State and Federal prisoners

At the end of 1998, 84,427 women were under the jurisdiction of State and Federal correctional authorities. Of these, 75,241 were held by the States and 9,186 were held by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Between 1990 and 1998 the number of women confined in

Jurisdictions	Number of female inmates	
	Yearend 1998	Per 100,000 women residents
Total, all jurisdictions	84,427	57
States, total	75,241	51
Federal	9,186	5
States with at least 1,000 women prisoners		
Alabama	1,525	64
Arizona	1,780	66
California	11,694	67
Colorado	1,070	53
Connecticut	1,357	43
Florida	3,526	45
Georgia	2,474	61
Illinois	2,646	43
Indiana	1,198	39
Kentucky	1,046	51
Louisiana	2,126	94
Maryland	1,140	39
Michigan	2,052	41
Mississippi	1,213	77
Missouri	1,880	67
New Jersey	1,653	39
New York	3,631	38
North Carolina	1,932	35
Ohio	2,912	50
Oklahoma	2,091	122
Pennsylvania	1,517	24
South Carolina	1,412	63
Texas	10,343	102
Virginia	1,806	47
Washington	1,018	35
Wisconsin	1,169	42

Table 23

prisons grew by an annual average of 8.5%; over the same years, prison populations nationwide increased an average 6.7% annually. In 1990 State and Federal prisons housed 44,065 female prisoners, just over half the number held in 1998.

Among State prisoners in 1998, 44% (33,345) were held by States in the South. The incarceration rate in the South was the highest of any region — 65 female prisoners per 100,000 residents. The West accounted for 25% (18,845) of the total State prison population and had a per capita rate of imprisonment of 58 per 100,000. Midwestern States, with about 18% of female State prisoners (13,684), had a rate of 42 prisoners per 100,000 residents. The Northeast accounted for 12% of women held by States (9,367) and had an incarceration rate of 31.

In 1998 the highest per capita rate of confinement among the States was in Oklahoma (122), and the lowest was in Maine and Vermont (9 in each). The District of Columbia had a rate equal to 173 per 100,000 female residents.

Trends in the number of sentenced female prisoners per 100,000 female residents, by race:

Year	All women	White	Black
1990	31	19	117
1991	33	19	129
1992	35	20	136
1993	40	23	155
1994	45	26	169
1995	47	27	176
1996	51	30	185
1997	53	32	192
1998	57	34*	212*

\*Based on projected estimate.

Table 24

### Sentences to prison

#### Prison admissions

In 1996 women accounted for about 9% of all State prison admissions, 10% of those admitted from courts, and 8% of revoked violator admissions.

For all types of offenses except property offenses, the sentences received by women were shorter than those received by men; the average sentences for property offenses were the same. Short sentences on average may reflect overall differences in criminal background, particularly the prevalence of violence in the backgrounds of males sentenced to prison.

Women accounted for more than 10% of those admitted to State prisons for negligent manslaughter (13% were women), larceny (18%), arson (12%), fraud (31%), drug possession (14%), and drug trafficking (11%). Women accounted for about 1% of those admitted for rape and sexual assault.

About 26% of women admitted to prison following a court sentence had been convicted of larceny or fraud (including forgery and embezzlement) — offenses accounting for about 10% of male admissions.

#### Prison releases

Women accounted for just over 9% of those discharged from State prisons in 1996.

Among those released, the median time served for murder was 80 months for men and 60 months for women.

As found for sentencing, the median length of stay for women was less than that for men for every type of offense. This may be a reflection of the more extensive criminal histories of men and the higher prevalence of convictions for violence in their backgrounds.

### New court commitments to State prison in 1996

	Women		Men	
	Percent of admissions	Median sentence	Percent of admissions	Median sentence
Total	100%	36 mo	100%	48 mo
Violent	17	60	31	72
Property	36	36	28	36
Drugs	39	36	29	42
All other	8	24	12	36

Table 25

### First releases from State prison in 1996

	Women		Men	
	Percent of releases	Median time served	Percent of releases	Median time served
Total	100%	12 mo	100%	16 mo
Violent	14	20	26	28
Property	38	11	31	15
Drugs	41	12	32	14
All other	8	10	11	12

Table 26

**Death sentences**

At the end of 1997, 44 inmates, or 1.3% of the death row population, were women. During the year, two women were sentenced to death and five had their death sentences removed. States holding women under sentence of death were —

Alabama - 3	Missouri - 1
Arizona - 1	Nevada - 1
California - 8	New Jersey - 1
Florida - 6	North Carolina - 3
Idaho - 1	Oklahoma - 3
Illinois - 2	Pennsylvania - 4
Mississippi - 1	Tennessee - 2
	Texas - 7

Table 27

Of the 44 women under sentence of death, 30 were white and 14 were black. One white inmate and one black inmate were Hispanic.

For women under sentence of death, an average of 78 months had elapsed since sentencing, about 8 months less than for males.

Between January 1, 1977, and December 31, 1997, a total of 432 persons were executed including 1 white, non-Hispanic female in North Carolina in 1984. During 1998, 2 women were executed (1 each in Texas and Florida).

**Recidivism**

In 1996, women accounted for about 11% of successful discharges from parole and 8% of unsuccessful parole terminations. Overall, about 45% of women for whom parole supervision was ended in 1996 were returned to prison or had absconded. Women successfully discharged from parole

supervision had spent an average of 15 months in prison on their sentence and 20 months under supervision in the community. Unsuccessful female parole discharges had spent an average of 17 months in prison and 18 months under community supervision prior to termination.

A 3-year followup of a sample representing 109,000 persons (6,400 females among them) discharged from prisons in 11 States in 1983 found that 52% of women were rearrested. An estimated 39% of women discharged from prisons were reconvicted within 3 years and 33% were returned to prison. Prior arrest history was an important predictor of post-prison recidivism: among women with only the one arrest for which they had been imprisoned, 21% were rearrested within 3 years. Among women with 2-3 prior arrests, 33% were rearrested; those with 4-6 prior arrests had a 47% rearrest rate; among those with 7-10 priors, 69% were rearrested; and, nearly 8 out of 10 women with 11 or more priors were rearrested.

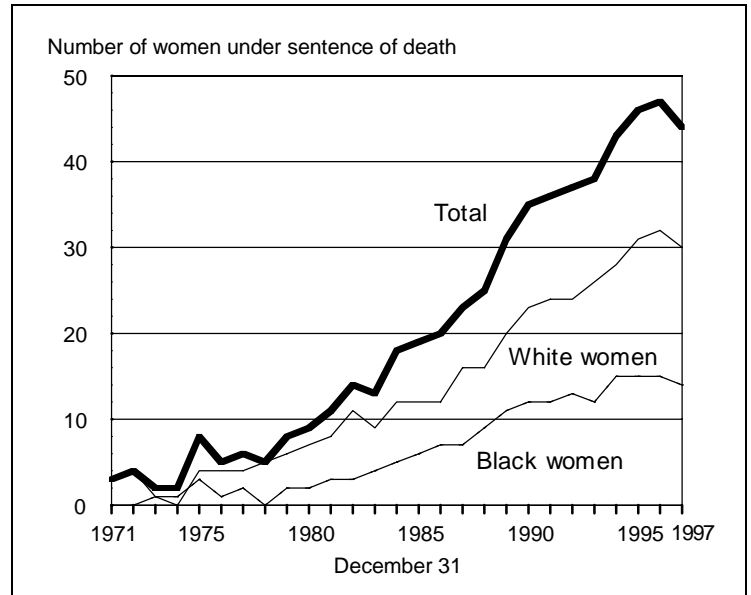


Fig. 10

**The prevalence of imprisonment among women**

The most recent BJS estimate of the lifetime chance of being sent to Federal or State prison at least once indicates that overall about 11 women out of 1,000 will be incarcerated at some time in their lives. The estimates further show that about 5 out of 1,000 white women, 36 out of 1,000 black women, and 15 out of 1,000 Hispanic women will be subjected to imprisonment during their lifetime.

For males, BJS estimates indicate that about 90 out of 1,000 males will be incarcerated during their lives; 44 white males, 285 black males, and 160 Hispanic males for every 1,000 in the general population will serve time in a Federal or State prison.

By age —	1,000 women		
	White	Black	Hispanic
20	--	3	1
25	2	11	4
30	3	20	7
35	4	27	9
40	4	31	12
45	5	33	13
50	5	34	14
55	5	35	15
65	5	36	15
Lifetime	5	36	15

Table 28

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## Basic sources for statistics describing women offenders

The information in this report was derived from the following data sources. Detailed descriptions of the methodology can be found in recent publications and can be obtained by requesting them from the BJS Clearinghouse, Box 179, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0179, or by calling 1-800-732-3277.

Most reports are also available at the BJS World Wide Web site — <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

### National Crime Victimization Survey

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is one of two statistical series maintained by the Department of Justice to learn about the extent to which crime is occurring. The NCVS, which gathers data on criminal victimization from a national sample of household respondents, provides annual estimates of crimes experienced by the public without regard to whether a law enforcement agency was called about the crime. Initiated in 1972, the NCVS was designed to complement what is known about crimes reported to local law enforcement agencies under the FBI's annual compilation known as the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR).

The NCVS gathers information about crime and its consequences from a nationally representative sample of U.S. residents age 12 or older about any crimes they may have experienced. For personal contact crimes the survey asks about the perpetrator, including gender.

One of the important contributions of the NCVS is that it permits multiple years of responses to the same questions to be analyzed, facilitating research on small subgroups of the population. For this study 5 years of NCVS data (1993-97) were combined, resulting in more than 1 million interviews, just over 40,000 of which were conducted among persons experiencing violent victimizations.

*Criminal Victimization 1998: Changes 1997-98 with Trends 1993-98*, BJS, July 1999, NCJ 176353.

### Uniform Crime Reporting program

The UCR program of the FBI provides another opportunity to examine the issue of crime and violence committed by women offenders through the incident-based Supplementary Homicide Report program and the summary compilation of national arrest data. The summary-based arrest component of the UCR provides data by gender of arrestees for both Part I crimes and the less serious Part II crimes.

In 1997, data by gender and offense were available for about 2 out of 3 arrests nationwide (about 10.5 million of the estimated 15.3 million arrests that year). Females are estimated to account for about 16% of those arrested for Part I violent crimes.

The 1997 UCR does indicate reduced reporting of arrests by gender (table 42) and that a number of jurisdictions (Kentucky, Illinois, Montana, District of Columbia, Florida, and New Hampshire) supplied either limited or no arrest data. Some of these incomplete or missing States, notably Illinois and Florida, may affect the national estimates for females.

FBI, *Crime in the United States*, selected years.

### Supplementary Homicide Reports

FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) is a part of the UCR program. Supplemental data about homicide incidents are submitted monthly with detail on location, victim, and offender characteristics. These reports include information on the month and year of an offense, on the reporting agency and its residential population, on the age, race, and sex of victims and offenders, and on the victim/offender relationship, weapon use, and circumstance of the crime. For the years 1976-97, contributing agencies provided supplemental data

for 425,012 of the estimated 464,590 murders. Supplemental data were also reported for 469,220 of the estimated 513,051 offenders.

FBI, National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, accessible through — <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/home.html> search for data (DA): 6754

### State Court Processing Statistics

State Court Processing Statistics (SCPS) (formerly, through 1994, National Pretrial Reporting Program (NPRP)) provides data on the criminal justice processing of persons charged with felonies in 40 jurisdictions representative of the 75 largest counties, which account for about half the serious crime nationwide. The program prospectively tracks felony defendants from charging by the prosecutor until disposition of their cases or for a maximum of 12 months. Data are obtained on demographic characteristics, arrest offense, criminal justice status at time of arrest, prior arrests and convictions, bail and pretrial release, court appearance record, rearrests while on pretrial release, type and outcome of adjudication, and type and length of sentence. This biennial data collection originated in 1988.

*Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 1996*, BJS, October 1999, NCJ 176981.

### National Judicial Reporting Program

The National Judicial Reporting Program (NJRP) is a sample survey of court records on convicted felons. Using a nationally representative sample of counties, NJRP compiles individual-level data on felons convicted in State courts. Data elements include conviction offense, sentence received, case-processing, methods of conviction, and a variety of other defendant characteristics. The NJRP first reported felony sentencing data for 1986 and has provided national estimates at 2-year intervals.

*Felony Sentences in State Courts, 1996*, BJS, May 1999, NCJ 173939.

## National Prisoner Statistics

The National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) data series produces annual and semi-annual national and State-level data on the numbers of prisoners in State and Federal prison facilities (NPS-1). Since 1926 the Federal government has published data annually on the prisoner count in each State, the District of Columbia, and the Federal prison system.

*Prisoners in 1998*, BJS, August 1999, NCJ 175687.

A second data collection in the NPS series yields annual national and State-level data on persons sentenced to death and those executed (NPS-8). Data collected include offender demographic characteristics, prior criminal histories, and criminal justice system status at the time of the capital offense, and time spent on death row. Data are available on executions since 1930 and sentencing since 1973.

*Capital Punishment 1997*, BJS, December 1998, NCJ 172881.

## National Corrections Reporting Program

The National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) has collected data annually since 1983 on prison admissions and releases and on parole entries and discharges in participating jurisdictions. Demographic information, conviction offenses, sentence length, minimum time to be served, credited jail time, type of admission, type of release, and time served are collected from individual prisoner records.

BJS spreadsheets for selected years accessible through —

<http://ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/dtdata.htm#time>

## Surveys of probationers and jail and prison inmates

BJS also conducts national surveys of persons under probation supervision

and those confined in local jails and State and Federal prisons. These nationally representative surveys are the principal source of information on those serving time following a conviction: their backgrounds, their prior criminal histories, and the circumstances surrounding the offense for which they had been incarcerated. Both jail and prison surveys obtain from violent offenders details about the offender's relationship to the victim.

*Substance Abuse and Treatment of Adults on Probation, 1995*, BJS, March 1998, NCJ 166611.

*Profile of Jail Inmates, 1996*, BJS, April 1998, NCJ 164629.

*Substance Abuse and Treatment of State and Federal Prisoners, 1997*, BJS, January 1999, NCJ 172871.

## Lifetime Likelihood of Going to State or Federal Prison

This BJS Special Report estimates lifetime chances of going to State or Federal prison using standard demographic lifetable techniques and assuming that recent incarceration rates remain unchanged. It describes characteristics of persons admitted to prison for the first time, compares lifetime and 1-day prevalence rates, and considers changes in admission rates since 1991. March 1997, NCJ 160092.

## Data points for the graphical figures

Figure 1, page 2

Offense	Race of female offender		
	White	Black	Other
Violent offenses	55%	35%	11%
Robbery	43	43	14
Assault			
Aggravated	45	46	10
Simple	58	31	10

Figure 3, page 2

Age of offenders	Percent of violent female offenders
Under 12	2%
12-14	14
15-17	12
18-20	10
21-29	25
30 or older	38

Figure 4, page 3

Victim-offender relationship	Female offenders	Male offenders
Intimate	6%	7%
Relative	7	3
Acquaintance	49	27
Stranger	38	64

Figure 5, page 3

Victim-offender relationship	Female offenders	
	Female victims	Male victims
Intimate	1%	29%
Relative	7	7
Acquaintance	55	26
Stranger	37	39

Figure 6, page 3

Location of violence	Female offenders	Male offenders
At/near victim's home	26%	21%
School	20	10
Open area	18	26
Work	12	15
Commercial area	12	13
Other	12	15

Figure 7, page 3

Victim's perception of offender's use of alcohol or drugs at the time of the violence	Female offenders	Male offenders
Neither	61%	60%
Any	39	40
Both	8	10
Alcohol only	19	25
Drugs only	11	6

Figure 8, page 4

	Murderers per 100,000 residents		
	Male rate	Female rate	Female rate x 5
1976	16.3	3.1	15.5
	16.2	3.0	15.0
	16.8	2.8	14.0
	18.6	2.9	14.5
1980	20.6	3.1	15.5
	18.9	2.9	14.5
	17.4	2.8	14.0
	15.8	2.6	13.0
1985	15.2	2.3	11.5
	15.2	2.2	11.0
	16.5	2.3	11.5
	16.0	2.2	11.0
1990	16.8	2.2	11.0
	17.4	2.1	10.5
	19.6	2.2	11.0
	20.7	2.2	11.0
1995	19.3	1.9	9.5
	19.9	2.0	10.0
	18.8	1.9	9.5
	17.2	1.6	8.0
1998	15.5	1.7	8.5
	14.2	1.5	7.5
	11.5	1.3	6.5

The number of female murderers per 100,000 females in the population was multiplied by 5 so that year-to-year differences could be seen.

Figure 10, page 11

	Women under sentence of death		
	White	Black	Total
1971	3	0	3
	4	0	4
	1	1	2
1975	0	1	2
	4	3	8
	4	1	5
	4	2	6
1980	5	0	5
	6	2	8
	7	2	9
	8	3	11
1985	11	3	14
	9	4	13
	12	5	18
	12	6	19
	12	7	20
	16	7	23
1990	16	9	25
	20	11	31
	23	12	35
	24	12	36
1995	24	13	37
	26	12	38
	28	15	43
	31	15	46
1997	32	15	47
	30	14	44

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., is director.

BJS Special Reports address a specific topic from one or more datasets that cover many topics.

Lawrence A. Greenfeld and Tracy L. Snell wrote this report. James A. Fox, Ph.D., the Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University, contributed data on homicides. Devon Adams, Maureen A. Henneberg, and Steven Smith of BJS provided review assistance and comments. Tom Hester produced the report, and Jayne Robinson prepared it for final publication. Priscilla Middleton and Marianne Zawitz managed the dissemination of the report and the production of the Internet version.

December 1999, NCJ 175688

Figure 9, page 7

	Percent of female State prison inmates			
	1979	1986	1991	1997
Violent	47.9%	40.7%	32.2%	28.2%
Property	36.1	41.2	28.7	26.6
Drug	12.3	12.0	32.8	34.4
Public-order	2.8	5.1	5.7	10.5

This report and others from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available through the Internet –

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>

The data from the statistical series analyzed in this report are available from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, maintained by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. The archive may also be accessed through BJS Internet site.