Women in the Criminal Justice System

##### Key statistics:

* On 12 February 2016, the women’s prison population stood at 3,820.[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Women offenders are a minority group within the criminal justice system, accounting for 15% of the current probation caseload and 4.5% of the prison population.i
* The number of women in prison has increased by 114% over the 15 years 1995-2010.[[2]](#endnote-2)
* Over 30% of women lose their accommodation, and often their possessions, while in prison.[[3]](#endnote-3)
* Six in ten women in prison have (on average two) dependent children.[[4]](#endnote-4)
* Women are more likely than men to be suffering poor mental health: 30% of women have had a previous psychiatric admission before they entered prison (compared to 10% of men),[[5]](#endnote-5) 49% of women in prison suffer from anxiety and depression and 25% report symptoms indicative of psychosis.[[6]](#endnote-6)
* 46% of women in prison have tried to kill themselves at some point in their lives – this is more than double the figure for men, 21%, and more than six times the figure for women in the general population, 7%.vi
* 31% of women prisoners spent time in care as children.vi
* Half of women in prison report having suffered domestic violence and one in three has experienced sexual abuse.[[7]](#endnote-7)
* Most women entering prison serve very short sentences: in 2014, 58% of sentenced women entering prison were serving six months or less.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* 45% of women are reconvicted within a year of leaving prison, and this rises to 58% for sentences of less than 12 months.[[9]](#endnote-9)
* Women released from prison are more likely to reoffend, and reoffend earlier, than those serving community sentences.[[10]](#endnote-10)

1. ## Notes

   [Population bulletin: weekly 12 February 2016](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2016) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Prison Reform Trust: [Reforming Women’s Justice](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Women's%20Justice%20Taskforce%20Report.pdf), p.1 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Prison Reform Trust: [Why focus on reducing women’s imprisonment?](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/why%20focus%20on%20reducing%20womens%20imprisonment.pdf), p.6 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ministry of Justice’s Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) survey, [House of Commons – Written question 117015](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120716/text/120716w0004.htm#120716w0004.htm_spnew17) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Prison Reform Trust: [Prison briefing - Party conference 2012](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/prisonbriefing%20FINAL.pdf), p.2 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Prison Reform Trust: [Bromley Briefings Summer 2014](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Prison%20the%20facts%20May%202014.pdf), pp.4-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Prison Reform Trust: [Bromley Briefings Summer 2013](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Factfile%20autumn%202013.pdf), p.7 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Table A2.1, Ministry of Justice (2015) Offender management statistics, Prison receptions

   2014, London: Ministry of Justice [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Prison Reform Trust: [Bromley Briefings Summer 2015](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf), p.6 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid.*, p.33 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)