



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

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Women Offenders

Highlights

	Violent offenders	All arrestees	Convicted felony defendants	Correctional populations
Women offenders				
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.