

Federal Corrections

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female offender

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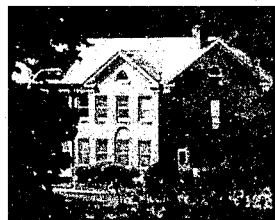
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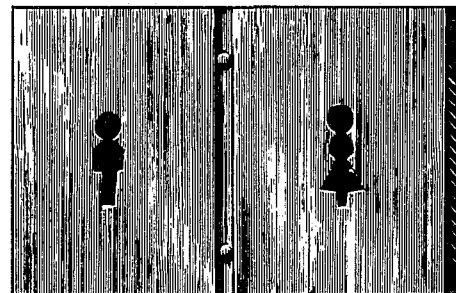
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A Profile of Female Offenders in the Federal Bureau of Prisons

Sue Kline

In the decade 1981-91, the number of females in Bureau of Prisons custody steadily increased. In 1981, slightly more than 1,400 women were held in Bureau facilities. By 1991, women inmates numbered more than 5,000, representing a 254-percent increase during the 10-year period. The rate of growth for males during the same period was 147 percent, from 24,780 in 1981 to 61,208 in 1991. In June 1992, the Bureau held 5,103 females in its facilities—7.4 percent of the 68,779 inmates then being housed.

The female prison population grew at a faster rate than the male population in 7 of the 10 years between 1981 and 1991. While the number of female inmates has been increasing, the proportion of the population they represent has also been on the rise. In 1981, females made up 5.4 percent of the Bureau's inmate population. By 1991, they represented 7.6 percent of the inmates. By comparison, in State prison populations, the proportion of women in 1991 was 5.6 percent.¹

The 5,103 women in Bureau custody in June 1992 were housed in 13 facilities—6 of which were all-female facilities, while the other 7 included both male and female units, primarily in detention facilities. The largest all-female facility is the Federal Medical Center, Lexington, Kentucky, the primary medical center for female inmates, where more than 1,800 women (36 percent of all females) are held. The next largest all-female facility is the Federal Prison Camp, Alderson, West Virginia, cur-

Recreation area, Metropolitan Detention Center, Los Angeles, California.



rently housing 809 females, or 15.2 percent of the female population. Alderson was the first institution for Federal female offenders; it opened in 1927 as the Federal Reformatory for Women.

In 1991, almost 64 percent of females were serving time on a drug-related offense—most commonly for the manufacture or distribution of illegal drugs. The next most common identifiable offenses were property offenses such as larceny or theft (6.3 percent), and extortion, bribery, or fraud offenses (6.2 percent). The offense type of today's female offender differs from that of the female offender of 10 years ago. In 1981, the largest number of women were being held for property offenses (28.2 percent).

The next most common identifiable offenses in 1981 were drug offenses (26.0 percent), robbery (11.8 percent), and white-collar offenses (7.6 percent).

The offense profile of males in 1991 shows that the majority of them (55.8 percent) were also being held for drug offenses. The next most common identifiable offense for men was robbery (12.2 percent). The male population also saw a decrease in the proportion of robbery, property, white-collar, and immigration offenders between 1981 and 1991. Both males and females showed increases in the proportion of drug offenders, and a small increase in the proportion of arms, explosives, courts and corrections, and national security offenses.

The latest offense-specific information for females housed in State institutions shows them most likely to be housed for a property or violent offense (81.9 percent). These 1986 figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) show that only 12 percent of women housed in State facilities were there for a drug-related offense.²

The female population housed in BOP facilities as of June 1992 had characteristics similar to the male. The majority of inmates were white and not of Hispanic origin. The distribution of ages was similar for males and females, the average age for males (37.3) being slightly higher than that for females (36). The latest figures from BJS show that State inmates are noticeably younger



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Federal prison population

	Female	Male	% Female
1981	1,415	24,780	5.4
1982	1,519	26,614	5.4
1983	1,722	28,492	5.7
1984	1,842	30,475	5.7
1985	2,183	33,859	6.1
1986	2,741	38,771	6.6
1987	3,058	41,911	6.8
1988	2,949	41,730	6.6
1989	3,635	48,213	7.0
1990	4,263	55,025	7.2
1991	5,006	61,208	7.6
June '92	5,103	63,676	7.4

Data for 1981–1991 are for September of each year.

Offense of inmates by sex (%)

	1981		1991
	Female	Male	Female
Drug offenses	26.0	26.3	63.9
Robbery	11.8	24.2	4.4
Property offenses	28.2	14.9	6.3
Extortion, bribery, fraud	5.1	5.2	6.2
Violent offenses	7.1	8.2	2.0
D.C. offenses	N.R.	N.R.	3.4
Arms, explosives, arson	1.0	4.2	2.1
White-collar offenses	7.6	3.4	2.6
Immigration	3.6	5.0	0.6
Courts or corrections	1.2	0.7	1.3
Sex offenses	0.1	0.5	0.1
National security	0.0	0.0	0.1
Miscellaneous	8.5	7.3	7.0

N.R.: Not reported separately. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Data a September of each year. 1981 data includes 16 unsentenced female inmates and 101 unsentenced male inmates. The listed is the one with the longest sentence length.

than those in Federal prisons. In State prisons in 1986, 72.0 percent of males and 73.0 percent of females were under the age of 35.³ Males and females in Federal prisons did differ in their security level assignments. Most females (75.1 percent) were classified as either minimum- or low-security, but only 49.8 percent of males were. Males were more than four times as likely to be classified as high-security.

In June 1992, every State in the union was represented by females incarcerated in Bureau facilities. More than 91 percent of females had as their place of residence a U.S. State, territory, or the District of Columbia, leaving 8.8 percent as non-U.S. citizens. More than 11 percent of the female inmates had California as their

State of residence. The other top States were California (11.1 percent), Texas (9.8 percent), New York (9.2 percent), and Illinois (3.5 percent). The top five States of residence for males are California (12.3 percent), Florida (11.3 percent), Texas (8.9 percent), New York (8.4 percent), and Illinois (3.7 percent).

Results from an in-depth survey of Federal inmates, conducted in conjunction with a BJS survey of State inmates in 1991, will soon provide us with more detailed comparisons for males and females across systems. ■

Sue Kline is a research analyst in the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Office of Research and Evaluation.

Notes

1. "Prisoners in 1991," BJS Bulletin, NCJ-134729, May 1992.
2. "Women in Prison," BJS Special Report, NCJ-127991, March 1990.
3. *Ibid.*

Top left: An inmate in her room, Metropolitan Detention Center, Los Angeles. Bottom left: Dental clinic, Alderson, West Virginia. Top right: A staff member assists with a computer class, Federal Medical Center, Lexington, Kentucky. Bottom right: Parenting class, Lexington.

Inmate characteristics

June 1992

Male	Age (%)	Female	Male
55.8	18-25	13.2	12.2
12.2	26-30	19.2	16.8
4.5	31-35	20.9	19.2
4.9	36-40	18.9	17.8
3.8	41-45	12.2	14.3
2.2	46-50	8.0	8.7
5.0	51-55	4.0	5.2
1.3	56-60	1.9	3.1
0.9	61-65	1.0	1.7
0.8	Older than 65	0.6	1.1
0.5	Average age	36.0	37.3
0.1			
7.9			

Inmate characteristics

June 1992

Race (%)	Female	Male
White	58.7	64.9
Black	39.1	32.5
Native American	1.0	1.6
Asian	1.2	1.1

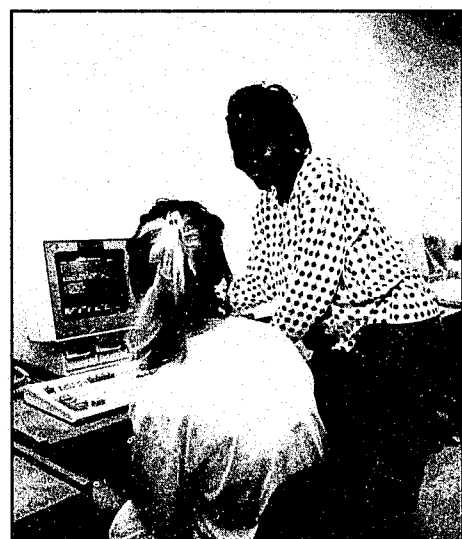
Ethnicity (%)

Hispanic	24.9	26.2
Non-Hispanic	75.1	73.8

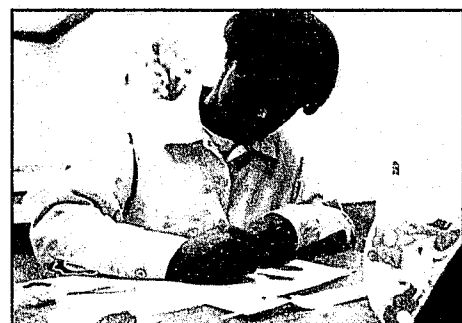
Inmates by security level (%)

Minimum	44.7	24.1
Low	30.4	25.7
Medium	15.4	27.2
High	3.1	14.0
Unassigned or old security level	6.4	9.0

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



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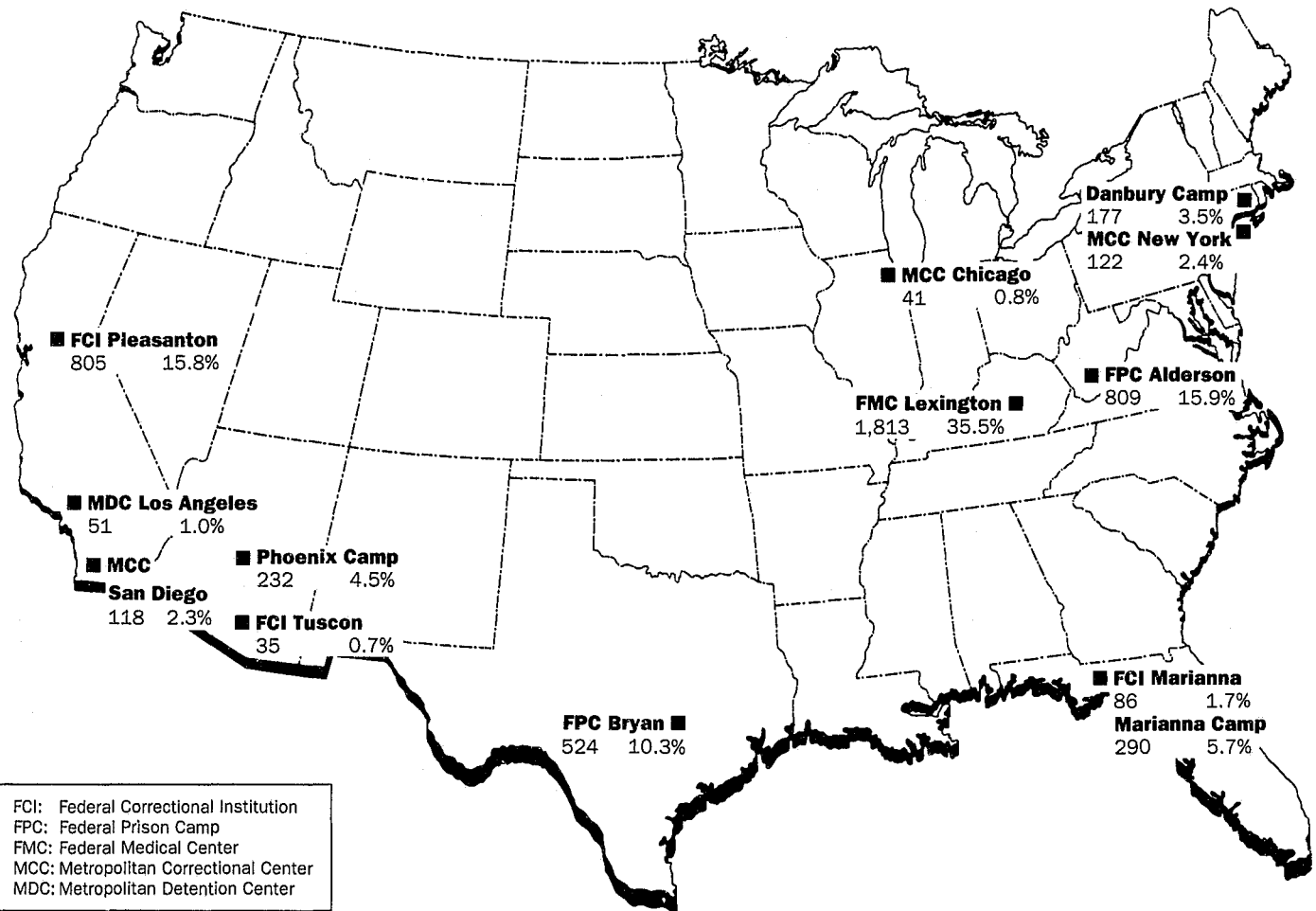


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Female institutions: location, population, and percentage of total Federal inmates

Total 5,103 June 1992



Residences of women in Bureau custody

Alabama 100	Hawaii 18	Michigan 112	North Carolina 148	Utah 9
Alaska 11	Idaho 6	Minnesota 39	North Dakota 1	Vermont 8
Arizona 93	Illinois 181	Mississippi 39	Ohio 127	Virginia 137
Arkansas 28	Indiana 35	Missouri 100	Oklahoma 71	Washington 43
California 560	Iowa 32	Montana 9	Oregon 35	West Virginia 74
Colorado 26	Kansas 17	Nebraska 23	Pennsylvania 102	Wisconsin 37
Connecticut 18	Kentucky 37	Nevada 27	Rhode Island 16	Wyoming 10
Delaware 4	Louisiana 67	New Hampshire 9	South Carolina 36	Guam 4
Dist. of Columbia 117	Maine 13	New Jersey 63	South Dakota 7	Puerto Rico 21
Florida 592	Maryland 99	New Mexico 23	Tennessee 105	Virgin Islands 12
Georgia 154	Massachusetts 21	New York 473	Texas 504	Non-U.S. citizens 450