

THE HARMS DONE TO WOMEN

Harm caused, and exacerbated, by the criminal justice system

Mental Health

- 1 in 3 women in prison self-harmed in the year to September 2024³
- 82% of women in prison report **poor mental health**⁴



Race and Ethnicity

- Women from **minority ethnic groups** are overrepresented at every stage of the criminal justice system⁵
- **Black women** make up **8.9% of the prison population**, but **3% of the general population**⁶



Mothers, pregnancy and children

- **Pregnant women** in prison are seven times more likely to suffer **stillbirth**⁷
- **95% of children** with mothers in prison leave the family home⁸



Domestic Abuse

- Nearly **60%** of women in prison report experiencing **domestic abuse**¹
- Nearly **2 in 3** women in prison have a history that suggests **brain injury**, often the result of domestic abuse²



Community integration

- **Only 10%** of women were in **employment** six weeks after release from prison⁹
- **13%** were **homeless** or rough sleeping on release from prison in the year to March 2024¹⁰
- **44%** of women leaving prison are **reconvicted within one year**¹¹



Drivers of Women's Criminalisation

Women experience the effects of structural inequalities including colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia

Structural inequalities underpin women's experiences of harms like poverty, mental ill-health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and violence, and homelessness

The multiple disadvantages women experience can sweep them into contact with the criminal justice system, which, in turn, is shaped by the inequalities women experience

1. Ministry of Justice. (2018). Female Offender Strategy | 2. Corporate report, A review of health and social care in women's prisons, NHS, Nov 2023. | 3. Safety in Custody Quarterly Statistics, Ministry of Justice | 4. Women and men comparator workbooks. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2023) Annual report 2022-23. | 5. Corporate report, A review of health and social care in women's prisons, NHS, Nov 2023 | 6. Worst Case Scenario Report, 2021, Working Chance | 7. Summers, H. & Murray, N. (2023). Pregnant women in English jails are seven times more likely to suffer stillbirth. The Observer | 8. Corporate report, A review of health and social care in women's prisons, NHS, Nov 2023 | 9. Table 4. Ministry of Justice. (2024). Employment at 6 weeks post release from custody data tables. Offender Employment Outcomes, update to March 2024. | 10. Table 4. Ministry of Justice. (2024). Housed on release from custody data tables. Offender Accommodation Outcomes, update to March 2024. | 11. 1 House of Lords written question HL1566, 30 January 2024.