

The Rising Cost of Women's Justice System Involvement

Projected Growth in System Size and Costs Through 2035

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Because women make up a small portion of the criminal justice population in the United States, the cost of their involvement in the justice system is poorly understood. Existing estimates rely on an overall per-person average that reflects systems largely designed around men, without explicitly examining whether or how costs differ for women. This limitation is especially important for imprisonment—the most expensive part of the criminal justice system—where emerging evidence suggests that per-person costs are higher for women. As a result, current cost methodologies may systematically underestimate total system costs where women are involved.

This analysis provides new estimates of the direct costs of women's justice system involvement across prison, jail, and community supervision populations. It also projects how system size and costs may change through 2035, assuming current trends continue. The projections were developed using historical population patterns across system settings, including prison, jail, probation, and parole. The report also considers selected broader economic impacts of women's system involvement. These include costs borne by families and communities as well as the loss of household production—the labor required to maintain a household and care for its members—that occurs when women go to prison.

These costs matter not only because of their scale, but because of where they fall. While women are often treated as a niche population in the justice system, they are deeply embedded in families, labor markets, and communities. Their incarceration—especially

imprisonment, which generally separates women from their households, children, and communities for longer periods than jail stays—can shift caregiving responsibilities, disrupt household stability, and generate downstream costs across multiple public systems. As a result, the fiscal impacts of women's involvement in the justice system extend well beyond correctional budgets and are likely larger than commonly measured.

Key Takeaways

- This analysis projects that **the number of women under correctional control will rise to 1.1 million by 2035**, representing an increase of 10% since 2022. The growth will be concentrated in confinement settings: **The number of women in prison is expected to increase by 27% during the timeframe, while the female jail population is projected to increase by 20%.**
- The costs of women's justice system involvement is also projected to rise about 34%, from a range of \$23 billion to \$26 billion in 2025 to **\$30 billion to \$34 billion by 2035**, due to increases in population and per-person expenditures.
- The analysis calculates that **it costs 25% to 75% more to imprison women**: In 2025, imprisonment cost about \$70,000 per person per year, while **this report estimates annual costs of \$87,000 to \$122,000 per woman**. The larger expense reflects structural and operational factors such as smaller facilities, mixed security classifications, greater healthcare needs, and heavier use of external medical providers.
- These estimates understate the full economic impact of women's incarceration because **many costs borne by families, caregivers, communities, and public systems cannot be reliably quantified**. One measurable cost is lost household production—unpaid household and caregiving labor that must be replaced when a woman is imprisoned. In 2025, **this loss is estimated at \$2.8 billion annually, rising to \$3.8 billion by 2035 as the number of women in prison grows.**

A Two-Part Analysis of Women's Justice System Involvement

This report is one of two new briefs examining women's involvement in the justice system and how policy choices influence public safety, family stability, and costs.

This analysis estimates the costs of maintaining women's involvement in prison, jail, and

community supervision under current trends. An [accompanying brief](#) examines the public safety implications of reducing the amount of time women serve in prison, using new modeling to estimate impacts on arrests, victimization, and correctional populations. Across simulated scenarios, the analysis finds that even substantial reductions in time served are associated with relatively modest increases in arrests compared to overall statewide arrest activity, while producing substantial reductions in correctional populations and costs.

Where Women Are in the Justice System

Women under correctional control are distributed across several parts of the justice system, including prisons, jails, and community supervision. In 2022,¹ approximately 992,000 women were under correctional control (Figure 1). Most of them, about 82%, were supervised in the community through probation or parole, while smaller shares were held in local jails (9%) or under state or federal correctional authority (9%).

These categories reflect different forms of system involvement. Prisons are long-term facilities operated by state or federal systems, while jails are typically locally operated and hold people for briefer periods, often pretrial or for short sentences. Community supervision refers primarily to probation and parole, which allow individuals to remain in the community under monitoring and supervision.

Not all people under state or federal correctional authority are physically confined in a prison facility; in a given year, roughly one in seven is not housed in a state or federal prison. Some are in community-based settings, such as home confinement, residential reentry centers (halfway houses), or other prerelease arrangements, while others may be held in local jails or in private facilities under government contract.

Throughout this report, “imprisonment” refers specifically to people held in prison facilities. Individuals under state or federal correctional authority but not housed in a prison are treated separately. Because available data do not consistently distinguish between those in community-based settings (such as home confinement or prerelease custody) and those in higher-cost placements (such as jails or private prisons), this analysis treats all people under state or federal correctional authority who are not held in prison facilities as part of community supervision for cost estimation purposes.

Figure 1. Where Women are in the Criminal Justice System, 2022

What Does Women's Justice System Involvement Cost?

The cost of women's involvement in the justice system varies substantially depending on the setting—prison, jail, or community supervision. Each setting serves a specific function and operates with distinct staffing models, service needs, and levels of intensity, which in turn shape per-person costs. Imprisonment is generally the most expensive form of justice system involvement, followed by incarceration in local jails, with community supervision costing substantially less on a per-person basis.

Costs also vary widely across jurisdictions. States differ in how they fund and deliver correctional programming and other services, with those differences ranging across staffing levels, healthcare provision, facility size, and the extent to which costs are borne within or outside corrections budgets. For example, some states include healthcare, pensions, and capital costs within corrections spending, while others fund these services through separate agencies. As a result, per-person cost estimates can differ substantially across states and by whether the data include all expenditures or just those within corrections.

While such variation makes it difficult to identify a single holistic “cost” of women's involvement in the justice system, this analysis draws on national data and available research to produce standardized, comparable measures of direct costs across prison, jail, and community supervision. These estimates provide a baseline for understanding current spending and projecting how costs may grow under current trends.

The estimates in this analysis reflect average per-person annual costs, which capture the full resources required to operate correctional systems. Additional detail on data sources, assumptions, and estimation methods is available in the [supplemental methodology report](#).

Understanding Average and Marginal Costs

Correctional cost estimates are typically expressed as average costs per person, which include all direct system expenditures such as staffing, facilities, healthcare, and administration. Marginal costs reflect the additional cost of supervising or incarcerating one more person. While marginal costs are often lower in the short term, they do not reflect total

system expenditures and are therefore less useful for understanding overall spending levels or long-term cost trends. In the short term, marginal costs are usually much lower because many system costs are fixed. For example, adding one person to a prison unit or a supervision caseload does not require building a new facility or hiring additional staff.

Average costs also reflect the broader resource demands of operating correctional systems. While adding one additional person may not immediately increase expenditures, it can place additional strain on existing staff and resources—such as supervision, programming, and healthcare—potentially affecting service quality and system performance. These effects are reflected in average costs but are not captured in marginal cost estimates.

State and Federal Prisons: It Costs 25-75% More to Imprison Women Than Men

There is no single, definitive estimate of the cost of imprisonment (confining someone in a state or federal prison) in the U.S. Commonly cited figures vary depending on which costs are included and how they are measured. Estimates range from about \$33,000 per person, provided by the Vera Institute of Justice² in 2015, to \$61,000 per person, a figure generated by USAFacts in 2023.³ More granular analyses, such as those published by the California Legislative Analyst's Office in 2025,⁴ produce substantially higher per-person estimates—roughly \$133,000—by incorporating costs borne across multiple agencies, though California is a high-cost state, so this figure should not be treated as a national average.

Because no national data source reports the full cost of women's imprisonment, this analysis relies on multiple estimates to establish a plausible range. Estimates based on corrections budgets, such as those from Vera, likely understate total costs by excluding expenditures funded outside of corrections systems, including healthcare, pensions, and capital costs. Many widely cited estimates are also based on older data and may not reflect changes in correctional costs in recent years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, correctional systems have experienced uneven and often accelerated cost increases related to healthcare, staffing, and facility operations, meaning that simple inflation adjustments may not fully capture current spending levels.

These sources create a range of plausible values rather than a single definitive cost. Vera provides a lower-bound estimate rooted in correctional budgets, while California illustrates how costs rise when broader state expenditures are included. For this analysis, USAFacts provides the starting baseline because it offers a more recent national estimate and captures

a broader share of correctional expenditures than budget-based estimates. Adjusted to 2025 dollars, the USAFacts estimate is approximately \$64,000 per person per year.

While this approach may overstate prison-specific costs by attributing system-wide spending to the prison population, it may also omit costs that fall outside corrections budgets, such as healthcare, pensions, and capital expenditures funded by other agencies. As a result, the baseline is best understood as an approximation of total correctional spending rather than a precise measure of prison-only costs.

To better account for these additional costs, the analysis applies an 8.4% upward adjustment to the baseline. This adjustment is based on the observed difference between budget-based estimates, such as the Vera survey, and more comprehensive cost accounting published for California.⁵ Because these additional costs are not excluded in every state, the adjustment is scaled to reflect the share of the incarcerated population in states where such costs are likely to fall outside corrections budgets. The adjustment yields a revised estimate of approximately \$70,000 per person per year, which serves as a consistent benchmark for comparing costs across populations and over time. Details on the construction of this baseline, including adjustments for costs outside corrections budgets, are provided in the [supplemental methodology report](#).

Structural Factors Drive Higher Costs for Women

Women's imprisonment is more expensive than this baseline for several well-documented reasons. First, women are typically housed in smaller facilities, which increases the per-person expense because fixed costs are spread across fewer individuals. In addition, women's facilities often house people across multiple security classifications, which reduces staffing efficiency by requiring different housing arrangements, supervision levels, and programming within the same facility. Women in prison also have higher rates of physical and behavioral health needs than men,⁶ increasing healthcare and treatment costs. These expenses may be further elevated by the need to transport women to external providers for services that are not available onsite, such as reproductive or other women's health-related treatment.⁷

Several national data sources, including the Bureau of Justice Statistics Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts series⁸ and correctional spending surveys published by organizations such as the National Association of State Budget Officers,⁹ report overall correctional expenditures. But they do not estimate imprisonment costs separately for

women and men. Given that, evidence from other countries provides useful context. In Canada, where correctional systems report costs by sex, the per-woman cost of imprisonment is 88% higher than it is for men.¹⁰ While differences in healthcare systems and service provision limit direct comparability, Canada's underlying cost drivers—including facility size, classification structure, and health needs—are consistent with those observed in the U.S.

A Range of 25% to 75% Above Baseline Reflects Variation Across U.S.

Rather than directly applying the Canadian estimate to U.S. costs, this analysis uses it as a reference point to develop a more conservative range that reflects the variation seen across systems in the U.S. Specifically, the analysis estimates that the cost of incarcerating women is approximately 25% to 75% higher than the average per-person baseline.

This range reflects differences in how states structure and resource women's correctional systems. At the lower end of the range, some systems provide more limited services—including healthcare and programming—and operate with lower personnel costs, including employee compensation and benefits. At the higher end, systems may invest more heavily in healthcare, treatment, and programming, rely on more specialized facilities or service models, and incur higher personnel costs, all of which increase per-person expenditures. These differences mirror broader variation in correctional spending across states, where per-person costs can vary substantially depending on staffing models, service provision, and compensation structures.

Based on this approach, the analysis estimates an annual per-woman cost of imprisonment of \$87,000 to \$122,000 per year, compared to a per-person baseline of about \$70,000.

These estimates apply to people physically held in prison facilities. Those under correctional authority but not housed in prison are addressed separately in the projections and cost estimates below.

Local Jails: A Major but Less Understood Cost Driver

Estimates from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) place the average cost of jail incarceration at approximately \$113 per day in 2015 dollars, based on cost assumptions used in its benefit-cost model.¹¹ Adjusted for inflation, this is about \$153 per day

in 2025 dollars. While not a national average, this figure provides a useful benchmark for per-person jail costs, especially since comparable national estimates are limited and vary widely across jurisdictions.

Because jail stays are typically short—often measured in days or weeks rather than months or years—costs are less often expressed on an annual basis, as they are for prisons. For comparison purposes, however, this daily estimate translates to roughly \$56,000 per person per year.

In practice, jail costs are driven less by length of stay than by high turnover. Frequent admissions and releases require repeated intake, screening, and discharge processes, increasing costs associated with booking, medical assessment, and short-term care.

It is not currently possible to determine whether jails incur higher costs for women than for men. Available estimates reflect average costs across populations and do not capture differences in needs or service use. However, women in jails have higher rates of substance use disorders and may be more likely to require detoxification and withdrawal management, which can increase short-term healthcare costs.¹² Because jail stays are often brief, these costs are concentrated into short periods, particularly for people entering custody with acute medical or behavioral health needs.

These dynamics suggest that commonly used jail cost estimates may understate the cost of housing women. At the same time, there is insufficient evidence to develop a woman-specific cost range comparable to that estimated for prisons.

Community Supervision: Lower Cost, Larger Scale

Community supervision, including probation and parole, accounts for the largest share of women under correctional control. Estimates from WSIPP place the cost of community supervision at approximately \$21 per day in 2015 dollars, based on administrative cost data from Washington State.¹³ Adjusted for inflation, this is about \$29 per day, or about \$11,000 per person per year, in 2025 dollars. While not a national average, this figure provides a useful benchmark, as comparable national estimates are limited and vary across jurisdictions.

Although per-person costs are substantially lower than those associated with incarceration, the scale of community supervision means total expenditures are significant. As of 2022, approximately 82% of justice-involved women were under probation or parole supervision,

making it the most common form of system contact.¹⁴ For many, supervision is not brief or episodic but rather a prolonged period of system involvement, often accompanied by ongoing requirements and instability. As a result, even small changes in supervision populations can affect total system spending.

It is not currently possible to determine whether supervision costs differ for women and men. Available estimates reflect average costs across populations and are driven largely by staffing and administrative functions, which are not reported separately by sex. At the same time, women on supervision may have greater needs related to behavioral health, caregiving, and economic and housing stability. Many of the services associated with these needs, such as substance use and mental health treatment, housing assistance, healthcare, and family reunification support, are typically funded outside supervision budgets.

As a result, existing estimates primarily capture the cost of supervision itself, including staffing, monitoring, and administrative functions, rather than the broader set of services that may support people under supervision.

What's Changing—and What It Means for Costs

The estimates above describe what women's justice system involvement costs today. To understand how those costs may change over time, this analysis also projects the number of women in prison, jail, and community supervision through 2035. Developed as part of this analysis, the projections are based on observed historical trends and system-specific models that account for how populations change through admissions, releases, and supervision patterns.

The projections provide a baseline estimate of what could happen if current policies and practices continue. They do not assume that recent growth will continue indefinitely at the same rate. Instead, they reflect gradual stabilization as system dynamics normalize following the COVID-19 disruption and move back toward pre-pandemic patterns. Additional detail on projection methods, assumptions, and model construction is available in the [supplemental methodology report](#).

Growth Is Concentrated in Confinement

Women's involvement in the justice system—including prison, jail, and community supervision—declined in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Decreases in prison and jail populations were driven in part by efforts to limit the spread of the virus, including reduced admissions, expedited releases, and changes in pretrial detention practices. Declines in community supervision reflected different dynamics; these included reductions in arrests and court activity, which led to fewer new probation sentences, as well as administrative changes that thinned supervision populations during the pandemic. These patterns also reflected longer-term trends in some jurisdictions toward shorter supervision terms, reduced revocations, and a broader shift away from supervision for lower-level offenses.

Since 2021, populations have begun to rise. In many jurisdictions, the rebound has been more pronounced for women than for men, reversing earlier declines and signaling renewed growth across system settings. The projections presented here reflect a gradual stabilization over time, as system dynamics normalize following pandemic-era disruption and populations move back toward pre-COVID patterns.

Figure 2 presents both the observed historical trends and projected population changes across system settings. In 2022, approximately 992,000 women were under correctional control. By 2035, that number is projected to increase to about 1.1 million—an increase of 10%, or about 99,000 women.

Growth is expected to vary across system settings. The number of women in prisons is projected to increase by approximately 27% from 2022 to 2035, while the jail population is projected to grow by about 20% over the time period. Community supervision is expected to increase more slowly, rising roughly 7%.

For prison populations, the analysis distinguishes between women in physical custody and those under state or federal correctional authority but not housed in prison facilities. The latter includes people in community-based settings, such as home confinement and residential reentry centers, as well as some held in local jails or private facilities. Available data do not distinguish between non-custodial placements.

Figure 2. Number of Women Under Correctional Control, 2000-2022 (Observed) and 2023-2035 (Projected)

Rising Costs Are Driven by Confinement and Compounding Increases

Projected costs reflect changes in the number of women in the system as well as changes in per-woman expenditures over time. Population projections are anchored in observed data through 2022, the most recent year available, while costs are expressed in constant 2025 dollars to allow for consistent comparison across time. Both populations and costs are projected forward to reflect changes in per-person expenditures.

Population growth varies across system components. Costs are particularly sensitive to changes in confinement, where per-person expenditures are highest. As a result, projected increases in the number of women in physical custody—rather than community-based settings such as home confinement or prerelease custody—carry disproportionate fiscal implications.

Costs are assumed to increase gradually over time, with annual growth of approximately 3% for prisons and 2% for jails and community supervision. These increases reflect rising underlying system costs and are applied on a compounding basis, meaning that each year's growth builds on a higher base. Additional detail on cost assumptions, including growth rates and scenario construction, is available in the [supplemental methodology report](#).

For cost estimation purposes, women under state or federal correctional authority who are not held in prison facilities, such as those in home confinement or prerelease custody, as well as those in jails or private facilities, are treated as part of community supervision, reflecting similar monitoring and service structures.

Because the cost of imprisoning women is estimated as a range, projections are presented as low and high scenarios. The low estimate combines jail and community supervision costs with the lower-bound estimate of women's prison costs (125% of the average per-person cost), while the high estimate uses the upper-bound estimate (175% of the average per-person cost). Jail and community supervision costs are held constant across both scenarios. When projected population trends are combined with these assumptions, total spending is expected to increase steadily over time, reflecting both growth in the number of women under correctional control and rising per-person costs (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Projected Costs Associated with Female Justice-System Involvement, 2025-2035

In 2025, total spending is estimated at approximately \$23 to \$26 billion per year. By 2035, annual spending is projected to reach \$30 to \$34 billion, reflecting about a 34% increase in the resources required to maintain current system size and practices.

What These Estimates Do—and Do Not—Capture

The estimates presented here reflect the direct costs of justice system involvement borne by correctional systems and taxpayers, costs of housing, supervising, and providing services to people in prison, jail, and on community supervision. They do not capture a broader set of economic and social costs associated with women's justice system involvement, including:

- Lost income and reduced employment opportunities
- Disruptions to housing and family stability
- Increased reliance on public systems such as child welfare and healthcare
- Long-term impacts on children, including developmental, educational, economic, and later justice system outcomes
- Community-level effects, including reduced labor force participation and weakened social networks

Some of these costs fall directly on families. Recent nationally representative survey data indicate that families with an incarcerated loved one spend nearly \$4,200 per year to maintain contact and cover basic expenses, including communication, travel for visitation, and essential items for those in custody.¹⁵ These estimates largely reflect the experiences of families supporting incarcerated men, who make up the majority of the prison population. In many cases, this support is provided by women—particularly mothers and partners—who take on the financial and logistical burden of maintaining contact.

The extent to which similar patterns apply to women's incarceration is less clear. Women are less likely to have consistent financial support from partners and are more likely to be primary caregivers prior to incarceration. As a result, there may be fewer resources available to support them directly, even as their incarceration creates new demands on family members; this includes older caregivers, such as grandparents, who may already be responsible for children. In addition, because there are fewer women's prisons, incarcerated women are typically housed farther from home—about 160 miles away, on average,

compared to roughly 100 miles for men.¹⁶ In the federal system, where there are only a small number of facilities housing women nationwide, distances can be substantially greater. This can increase the difficulty of maintaining contact, increasing costs for travel and lodging and requiring visitors to take more time away from work.

These differences suggest that while out-of-pocket spending on incarcerated women may be lower in some cases, the broader economic burden often shifts rather than disappears, falling on caregivers, families, and public systems in different ways.

Many of these costs are difficult to quantify. In particular, it is challenging to disentangle which outcomes are directly attributable to justice system involvement and which reflect underlying circumstances that often precede system contact, such as mental health needs, substance use, or prior victimization. In some cases, children may be experiencing instability or involvement with systems such as child welfare before a parent's justice system contact. This makes it difficult to isolate the independent effects of incarceration or supervision.

A growing body of research suggests that instability and volatility in caregiving arrangements are key drivers of adverse outcomes for children. While much of the literature on parental incarceration focuses on fathers, maternal incarceration may be particularly destabilizing because mothers are more likely to be primary or sole caregivers before incarceration.¹⁷ Nearly 9 in 10 incarcerated fathers reported that their children lived with the other parent during their incarceration, compared with 37% of incarcerated mothers; mothers in prison were also five times more likely than fathers to have a child placed in foster care.¹⁸

As a result, when mothers are incarcerated, children are more likely to experience disruptions in caregiving—including placement with relatives or in foster care—rather than remaining in a stable household. These disruptions are associated with developmental, educational, behavioral health, and later justice system outcomes for children. The effects are not uniform: In some cases, removal of a parent may reduce immediate harm, particularly in households that are highly unstable or unsafe. Even in these circumstances, changes in caregiving arrangements and justice system involvement can introduce new forms of instability and generate additional demands on public systems.¹⁹ These dynamics represent potential downstream costs that are not captured in the estimates presented here.

Broadly speaking, the work and resources required to support children do not disappear when a mother is removed from the home; they are taken on by other caregivers or absorbed by public systems. As a result, the economic burden of incarceration is often shifted across families, extended networks, and government-funded services in ways that are not reflected in correctional expenditures.

What Can Be Quantified: The Value of Household Production

One way to understand the broader social and economic costs of women's justice system involvement is through the loss of household production—the unpaid labor required to maintain a household and care for its members.²⁰ While many of these broader costs are difficult to quantify, household production provides a concrete and measurable example.

Household production includes activities such as preparing meals, cleaning and maintaining the home, managing schedules and finances, shopping and running errands, and providing care for children and other dependents. This work involves not only physical tasks, but also planning, coordination, and supervision—ensuring that children are fed, attend school, receive medical care, and are supported in their daily routines. Estimates of household production reflect the value of time and labor, not the cost of goods such as food, housing, or utilities.

Women in the justice system are more likely than men to be primary caregivers prior to incarceration, meaning they are often responsible for a large share of these activities. This reflects broader patterns in the general population, where women spend more time than men on unpaid household labor and caregiving.²¹ As a result, women's incarceration is more likely to disrupt household functioning and caregiving arrangements than men's incarceration.

When women go to prison, obligations at home do not disappear. The household and caregiving labor they performed must be absorbed by other caregivers, family members, paid providers, or public systems, particularly when children or other dependents are involved. That shift creates a measurable loss in household production that represents a real economic cost, even though it is not reflected in correctional budgets.

Based on estimates from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the value of household production in 2020 was \$12.71 per hour, or about \$26,000 per year.²² Adjusted to 2025 dollars using the Consumer Price Index, this equals \$15.81 per hour, or roughly \$33,000 per year. This analysis applies that annual value to the number of women physically held in prison in each projection year to estimate the annual value of household production lost to women's imprisonment. Across the approximately 84,000 women held in U.S. prisons in 2025, this translates to an estimated \$2.8 billion in household production losses associated with their prison stays. By 2035, when the number of women in physical custody is projected to reach about 94,000, these losses are expected to increase to about \$3.8 billion.

Because the average time served among women in observed release cohorts is about 14 months, the value of household production lost over a typical prison stay is higher than the annual estimate. Applying the same value over the average period of imprisonment yields an estimated \$3.3 billion in losses for women held in prison in 2025 and \$4.5 billion by 2035, assuming average time served remains similar.

These increases—both annual and per prison stay—reflect both projected growth in the prison population and a 2% annual compound inflation adjustment applied to the estimated value of household production. Details are provided in the [supplemental methodology report](#).

While this estimate captures only one component of the broader social costs of incarceration, it provides a concrete illustration of how economic burdens extend beyond correctional systems and into households and communities. It does not include other economic losses, such as reduced labor market participation or lost earnings, which may also be substantial but are not estimated here. The estimate is also limited to women in prison at a given point in time and does not account for the substantially larger number of women who cycle through local jails each year; disruptions to household production among these women may also be significant.

Conclusion

The estimates calculated for this report underscore the scale of resources required to maintain current justice system size and practices for women. At the same time, they should be understood as conservative. The analysis focuses on direct costs and selected measurable impacts and does not account for a range of additional factors that could increase total expenses, including the high volume of women cycling through local jails, differences in costs for women in non-prison placements, and broader social and economic impacts that are difficult to quantify.

While this report focuses on costs, those costs are not inevitable. The CCJ Women's Justice Commission policy report, [Stronger Families, Safer Communities: Improving Outcomes for Women at the Front End of the Justice System](#), identifies strategies to reduce women's justice system involvement earlier—before behavioral health needs, economic instability, caregiving pressures, and system responses compound into repeated arrests, incarceration, family separation, and reentry instability.

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Endnotes

¹ Estimates for women under state or federal correctional authority are based on 2022 data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) program. The *Prisoners in 2023* report and associated statistical tables do not distinguish between individuals held in physical custody and those in community-based or non-prison placements (e.g., home confinement, residential reentry centers, local jails, or private facilities). As a result, 2022 is the most recent year for which this distinction can be applied.

² Through a survey of 45 states, the average annual cost of incarceration was \$33,274 in 2015 dollars. Adjusted to 2025 dollars using the Consumer Price Index, this is equivalent to \$45,377 per year. See Table 1: Mai, C. & Subramanian, R. (2017). *The price of prisons: Examining state spending trends, 2010-2015*. Vera Institute of Justice.
<https://vera-institute.files.svcdn.com/production/downloads/publications/the-price-of-prisons-2015-state-spending-trends.pdf?dm=1568745781>

³ By dividing total state correctional expenditures by the number of people in prison, the median annual cost of incarceration was \$60,989 in 2023 dollars. Adjusted to 2025 dollars using the Consumer Price Index, this is equivalent to \$64,432 per year. See: USAFacts. (2025). *How much do states spend on housing prisoners?*
<https://usafacts.org/articles/how-much-do-states-spend-on-prisons/>

⁴ The state provides a detailed breakdown of costs, including security, healthcare, facilities and support services (e.g., food, canteen, activities, and clothing), operations, records, programming, and miscellaneous expenses such as employee pensions and retirement benefits. Based on this approach, the estimated annual cost is \$133,110 per person. See: California Legislative Analyst's Office. (2025). *How much does it cost to incarcerate a person?*
https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/6_cj_inmatecost

⁵ Estimates are adjusted using findings from the California Legislative Analyst's Office, which identifies correctional costs not captured in standard budget-based estimates (e.g., healthcare, education, and employee benefits). These additional costs were incorporated using a weighted adjustment of approximately 8.4%, reflecting both the size of the gap and the fact that such costs are borne outside corrections budgets in states representing roughly

one-quarter of the U.S. incarcerated population. See: California Legislative Analyst's Office. (2025). *How much does it cost to incarcerate a person?*
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⁶ Bronson, J., & Berzofsky, M. (2017). *Indicators of mental health problems reported by prisoners and jail inmates, 2011-12* (NCJ 250612). Bureau of Justice Statistics.
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<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/dudaspi0709.pdf>

⁷ Sufrin, C., Beal, L., Clarke, J., Jones, R., & Mosher, W. D. (2019). Pregnancy outcomes in US prisons, 2016–2017. *American Journal of Public Health, 109*(5), 799-805.
<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305006>

⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics. (n.d.). *Justice expenditure and employment extracts series*.
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⁹ National Association of State Budget Officers. (2026). *About NASBO*.
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¹⁰ Government of Canada. (2014). *Costs of crime in Canada, 2014: 3.5.1. Federal custody costs*. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/ccc2014/system-systeme.html>

¹¹ Estimates for jail and community supervision costs are based on per-unit cost assumptions from the WSIPP benefit-cost model. Although these estimates are derived from administrative data in a single state, they are widely used in policy analysis due to their methodological transparency and consistency. Comparable national estimates are not available, and reported costs vary substantially across jurisdictions. As a result, WSIPP estimates are used here as a standardized benchmark for per-person costs across system components. See: "Local Adult Jail Per-Unit Costs" on page 147: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2024). *Benefit-cost technical documentation*.
<https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/TechnicalDocumentation/WsippBenefitCostTechnicalDocumentation.pdf>

¹² Bronson et al., 2017.

¹³ See "Community Supervision Operating Costs" on page 157: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2024.

¹⁴ These figures reflect probation and parole populations and may not fully capture individuals under other forms of community-based correctional authority.

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¹⁶ Travis, J., McBride, E. C., & Solomon, A. L. (2005). *Families left behind: The hidden costs of incarceration and reentry*. Urban Institute.
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²⁰ Bridgman, B., Craig, A., & Kanal, D. (2022). *Accounting for household production in the national accounts: An update 1965–2020*. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

<https://apps.bea.gov/scb/issues/2022/02-february/0222-household-production.htm>

²¹ See Chart 3: Bridgman, Craig, & Kanal, 2022.

²² Estimates of household production are commonly incorporated into broader measures of economic activity because traditional measures of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) may understate economic output when unpaid household labor is excluded. See: Bridgman, Craig, & Kanal, 2022.