

Profile of Women in Prison

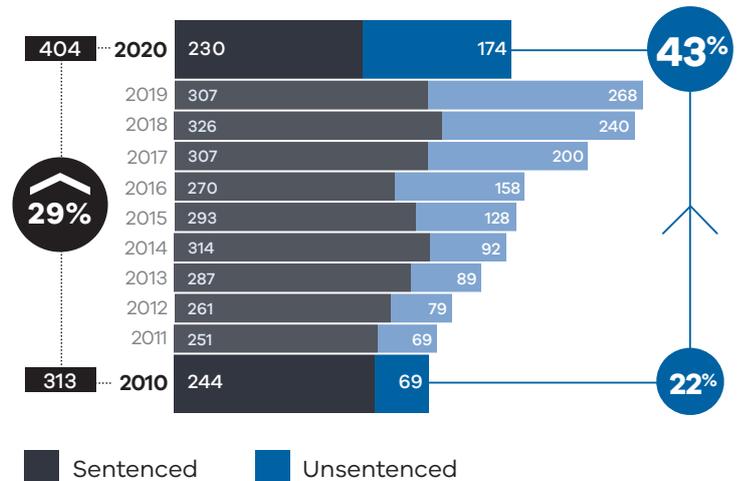
Figures as at 30 June (each year)

Over the last 10 years the number of women in prison has increased by 29 per cent. However, the most significant growth in numbers (particularly with women on remand) occurred from 2010 to 2019. From 2019 to 2020 the number of women in prison decreased for the first time (by 39 per cent) with women on remand comprising 43 per cent.

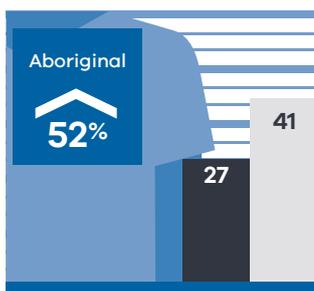
The number of women on remand has increased significantly since 2010 (152 per cent) and in 2020, 43 per cent of women in prison were on remand compared with 22 per cent in 2010. Consistent with previous years, women are more likely to be held on remand than men (34 per cent in 2020).

The rate of imprisonment has also increased (from 12.7 per cent female prisoners per 100,000 Victorian adult females to 15.1 per cent) meaning that the female prison population is growing faster than the general female adult population (which increased by 24 per cent over this period*).

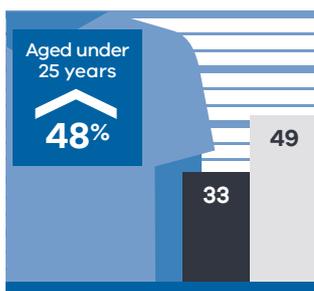
*Australian Bureau of Statistics, National, state and territory population (March 2020).



Changes in characteristics of women in prison over the last 10 years

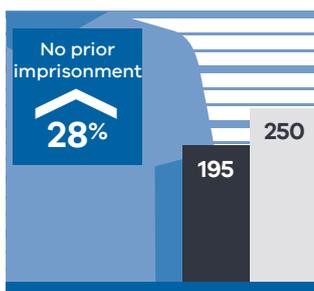


The number of Aboriginal women in prison has increased significantly and peaked at 80 in 2019, when they accounted for 14 per cent of the female prisoner population. At 30 June 2020 this number had reduced to 41, which represents 10 per cent of the total female prison population. The number of Aboriginal women in prison decreased by 49 per cent between 2019 and 2020 compared with a 30 per cent decrease in the number of all women in prison over the same period.



The average age of women in prison has decreased slightly over the last 10 years from 37.7 years to 36.0 years and remains consistently lower than the average age of males (37.7 in 2020).

The number of women aged under 25 years has increased 48 per cent over this time and this group represented 12 per cent of the women in prison in 2020 (up from 11 per cent in 2010). This is similar when compared with males in this age group (12 per cent).



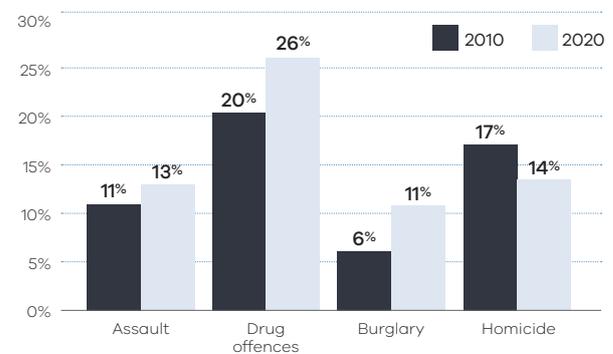
The number of women in prison who had not previously served a prison sentence increased by 28 per cent and in 2020 represented 62 per cent of women in prison.

Women are consistently more likely than men to have not served a prior term of imprisonment, with around half of male prisoners in 2020 having had a prior term of imprisonment.

2010 2020

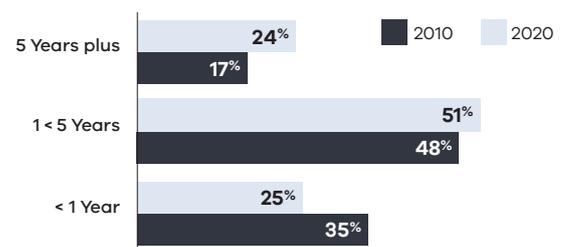
Proportion of women in prison by most serious offence or charge

There have been changes in the offence profile of women in prison, with an increase in the proportion of women with a most serious offence or charge of Assault, Drug offences and Burglary over the past 10 years. Women are more likely to be in prison for Drug offences than men, (26 per cent compared with 14 per cent at June 2020), and less likely to be in prison for Assault offences (13 per cent of females compared with 24 per cent of males). Females and males are in prison for Burglary and Other property related offences at a similar rate (22 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).



Proportion of women in prison by effective sentence length**

The proportion of sentenced female prisoners with an effective sentence length of five years or over increased between 2010 and 2020 from 17 per cent to 24 per cent. In 2020, 25 per cent of sentenced female prisoners were serving a sentence of less than one year, representing a decrease from 2010 (35 per cent).



**Effective sentence length represents the minimum period of imprisonment which a sentenced prisoner is expected to serve.