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WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION  
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## WOMEN CONTINUE TO LEAD IMPRISONMENT GROWTH TREND IN 2006

**The number of women imprisoned in the United States grew last year at a rate more than 1.5 times the rate of growth for men**, according to the Women's Prison Association's analysis of the figures released today by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. 112,498 women were imprisoned in State and Federal correctional facilities in 2006, up from 107,626 in 2005. Women represented 7.2% of the prison population last year, up from 6.2% in 2000.

**“Over two-thirds of women in prison have children under the age of eighteen,”** said Sarah B. From, Director of Public Policy & Communications for the Women's Prison Association.

**“When we see an increase in the number of women in prison, we must think about the very real effect that has on families and communities.”**

### *Southern and Mountain States Show Highest Female Imprisonment Rates; Northeastern States Dominate the List of Lowest Imprisonment Rates for Women*

The **states with the highest imprisonment rates** for women in 2006 – measured by number of women imprisoned per 100,000 women in the population – are as follows:

1. **Oklahoma (Imprisonment rate of 129 per 100,000 women in the population)**
2. **Louisiana (108)**
3. **Idaho (106)**
4. **Mississippi (103)**
5. **Colorado (97); Texas (97)**
7. **Wyoming (95)**
8. **Kentucky (92)**
9. **Nevada (91)**
10. **South Dakota (89)**

South Dakota is the only new addition to this group; it takes the place of Arizona which saw its imprisonment rate decline in 2006.

**“It's striking that eight of the ten states with the highest imprisonment rates for men are in the South. In contrast, the states with the highest rates of imprisonment of women are split between the South and the Mountain states. We have to look at what is driving the high rates of imprisonment in the Mountain states,”** From said.

Among the ten **states with the lowest female imprisonment rates** – a group unchanged since 2005 – many have actually experienced growth in the past year. Of the five states with the lowest imprisonment rates, four saw their imprisonment rates *rise* in 2006. The states with the lowest imprisonment rates for women in 2006 are:

1. **Massachusetts (13); Rhode Island (13)**
3. **Maine (20)**

4. Minnesota (22)
5. New Hampshire (23)
6. New York (28)
7. New Jersey (32)
8. Vermont (33)
9. Pennsylvania (34)
10. Maryland (35)

Eight of the ten states with the lowest imprisonment rates are in the Northeast.

### ***Over 50,000 Women In Prison For Non-Violent Offenses -- Nearly 25,000 For Drug Offenses***

Nearly 2/3 of the women in State or Federal prison in 2004 – over 50,000 women – were sentenced for a non-violent offense. This number includes nearly 25,000 women imprisoned for drug offenses. (2004 was the latest year data was available by gender and offense categories.)

**“Prison is not an effective remedy for the drug addiction and economic distress that contribute to the crimes women commit,” From said. It makes much more sense to address the root issues by providing community-based drug treatment and investing in alternatives to incarceration.”**

### ***Despite Changing Racial Composition of Women’s Prison Population, Disparities Persist***

The racial composition of women in prison is shifting, but dramatic racial disparities persist. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of white women in prison increased by 47.4 % (15,800 women), and the number of Hispanic or Latino women in prison increased by 34.6% (4,500 women). During the same period of time, the number of black women in prison decreased by 10.6% (3,400 women).

Despite the dramatic rise in white women in prison, the disproportionate representation of women of color in the prison system continues. In 2006, black women were imprisoned at a rate of 148 per 100,000 – more than three times greater than the imprisonment rate for white women (48 per 100,000). Hispanic or Latino women were imprisoned at a rate of 81 per 100,000. **“The disproportionate representation of women of color in our nation’s prisons should concern anyone who is committed to equality and justice.”** said From.

### ***Women Comprise Significant Number of People on Parole and Probation; More Data Needed***

The Bureau of Justice Statistics also released today their annual compendium of parole and probation statistics. According to the report, women make up 12% of those on parole, and nearly a quarter of those on probation. However, the Women’s Prison Association points to a need for more detailed data on women under community supervision. **From remarked, “In order to be able to really understand what is happening to women on probation and parole in the U.S., we need more detailed data – by gender, race, and state. Lacking this vital information, it is impossible to tell how larger national and state trends are affecting women under community supervision.”**

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*The Women’s Prison Association (WPA) is a service and advocacy organization committed to helping women with criminal justice histories realize new possibilities for themselves and their families. The Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, a division of the Women’s Prison Association, is a national center for research, policy, and information on criminal justice-involved women, their families and communities. For more information, please visit our website, [www.wpaonline.org](http://www.wpaonline.org).*