

The Effectiveness of Sentencing Options on Reoffending, Sentencing Council, page 56-57

7.4 Females and the impacts of disposals

Research has suggested females have different criminogenic needs. This may have implications for the effectiveness of sentencing and what works to reduce reoffending. Notably, in 2007, the influential Corston Report called particular attention to the plight of vulnerable women caught up in a criminal justice system that was largely designed for men. Accordingly, imprisonment may be a less effective sentence for women if it fails to address their needs.

Additionally, women may experience prison more harshly due to their histories of trauma and feeling greater discord at being distant (both farther away geographically than males due to fewer women's prisons and physically in a personal relationship perspective) from family and children. This different experience may also mean that custodial sentences have different effects based on gender. Concerningly, the negative effects of imprisonment may be amplified for females. Indeed, officials are concerned with the high rate of women committing self-harm in English prisons, with almost 12,000 self-harm incidents recorded in the fiscal year ended 2021. It is also relevant to the general lack of female-oriented treatment programming such that any such services typically offered to females were originally designed for men, despite there being treatment-relevant differences between the genders. A further difference is of relevance, as indicated in an MoJ report. In the two years ending in fiscal 2021, MoJ found that women were more likely than men upon release from custody to be either homeless or rough sleeping and less than half as likely as men to be employed.

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