

# Arizona's Imprisonment Crisis:

PART 3

## THE HARM TO WOMEN AND FAMILIES *Summary Brief*

Today, Arizona has the fourth highest imprisonment rate in the country, meaning it locks up a greater share of its residents than any other state in the nation, except Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi. This growth cannot be justified by a larger resident population or a growing crime rate — instead it was driven by policy choices to send more people to prison for first-time and non-violent offenses, and to keep people in prison far beyond the national average.

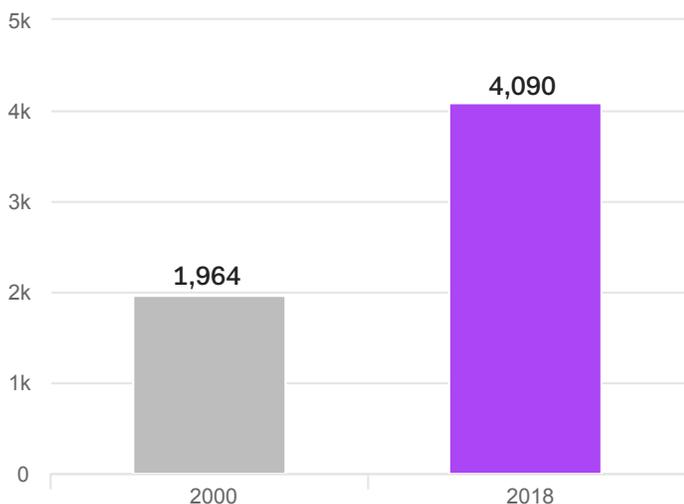
This report examines an oft-hidden cost of Arizona's imprisonment crisis — the impact on women and families. Arizona's increased use of prison for first-time and non-violent offenses has hit women particularly hard, since these are the crimes for which women are most likely to be sent to prison. It also has had a ripple effect on families, as more and more are missing a loved one and dealing with the consequences of family separation.

### The Harm to Women

As Arizona has increasingly turned to prison terms for less serious offenses, more women have been drawn into the prison system. The number of women in prison has doubled since 2000, far outpacing the growth among men or the national growth in female prisoners. Today, Arizona imprisons women at almost twice the rate of other states, at 107 women in prison for every 100,000 residents compared to 57 per 100,000 nationally.

#### The number of women in prison in Arizona has more than doubled since 2000.

Female Prison Population, 2000 vs. 2018

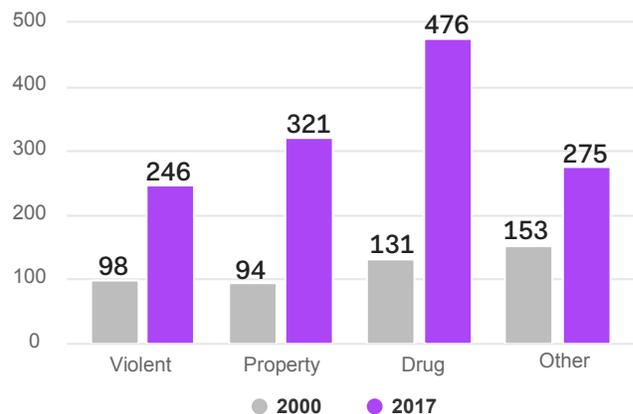


Much of this growth has come from more women being sent to prison directly from court — without an opportunity to serve a community-based sentence like

probation or drug court. Since 2000, this direct-to-prison group has grown by 180 percent. This trend has been particularly pronounced for drug and property crimes: the number of women sent directly to prison for these non-violent offenses has grown by 250 percent.

#### The number of women sentenced directly to prison for drug and property crimes in Arizona grew by 3.5x since 2000.

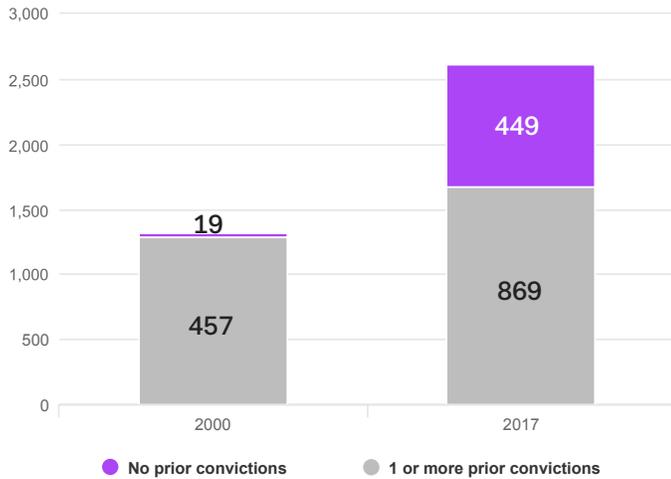
Female New Prison Sentence Admissions by Offense Type, FY2000 vs. FY2017



Alongside growth in the number of women sent directly to prison for non-violent offenses, Arizona has significantly increased the number of women sent to prison on their first felony conviction. In 2000, only four percent of women admitted to prison had no prior felony convictions. By 2017, that proportion had grown to 34 percent.

## A growing share of women sentenced to prison in Arizona have no prior felonies.

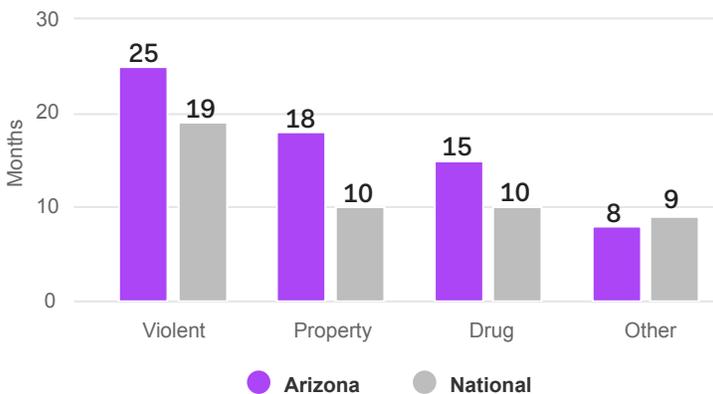
Female New Prison Sentence Admissions by Felony Conviction History, FY2000 vs. FY2017



Arizona's high female imprisonment rate is also driven by long sentence lengths. Regardless of the type of crime, women in Arizona go to prison for longer. For drug crimes, Arizona women spend an average of five more months behind bars than women nationally, or 50 percent longer. For property crimes, this disparity is even greater: Arizona's women spend eight more months in prison, or 80 percent longer sentences.

## Arizona's women stay in prison for longer than the national average, particularly for drug and property crimes.

Median Length of Stay by Offense Type, for Women, Arizona New Court Commitments, FY2017 vs. National Average, 2012



Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2013

## The Harm to Families

As the number of women and men behind bars has grown substantially over the past 40 years, in Arizona, as well as nationally, so has the number of families who have had a loved one incarcerated. Research shows that having a family member incarcerated significantly decreases household income, increases the likelihood of divorce and separation, and — for children — leads to a host of problems, including poor school outcomes. New research from FWD.us and researchers at Cornell University shows that almost one in two adults in the United States (45 percent), an estimated 113 million people nationally, has had an immediate family member incarcerated.

### Many families have had a loved one incarcerated.

**1 in 2** adults has had a family member incarcerated

Sources: Every Second: The Impact of Incarceration on Families in America

While the majority of families have been exposed to short-term incarceration, long prison sentences also affect a surprising number of families. One in seven people have had an immediate family member incarcerated for longer than one year, and one in 34 have had an immediate family member incarcerated for more than 10 years.

To learn more about the scope and consequences of familial incarceration, please see the full report, *Every Second: The Impact of Incarceration on Families in America*, available at <https://everysecond.fwd.us/>.

*Arizona's Imprisonment Crisis: The Harm to Women and Families* is the third in a three-part research series documenting the cost of the state's growing prison population. To see the full report, please visit <https://www.fwd.us/AtWhatCost>.

Unless otherwise noted, all prison figures cited in this report use data from the Arizona Department of Corrections analysed by FWD.us. See the full report for a description of the methodology and data definitions.