
The Silent 10%: The Untold Crisis of the Justice System's Fastest Growing Population – *Women*

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Panel Speakers



Kiki Farris is Assistant Chief of Probation for Contra Costa County responsible for youth and adult programs and services. For 22 years, she has engaged in a wide range of community supervision and court work, including a decade of formal leadership focused on uplifting prevention, strengthening the continuum of care, and enhancing systems for diverse probation populations.

Nicole Green, MSW, ASW is Nicole Green, MSW, ASW, is a passionate Forensic Social Worker and Project Manager who has spent 5+ years supporting the reentry population in Contra Costa County. She is the founder of a consulting company, N.M.Green Consultations, that creates specialized housing and supportive services for justice-involved women and men, and is a published author. Nicole is also the Therapy Intern for the Gemma Project and is working on her LCSW.

Cynthia Chase, LCSW is the Co-Founder & Executive Director of gender-responsive non-profit The Gemma Project, a former Probation Officer, Corrections Director of Programming, and Mayor. She's spent the last 25 years promoting and providing gender and trauma responsive programming and training local and state government in evidence-based programming and best practices.

Contra Costa County Probation's Journey



SB 129 creates a **new funding** opportunity for Pretrial Services



The **full continuum** of programs & services is examined



An awareness of **the 10% problem** emerges

THE NUMBERS

Over the past 35 years, total arrests have **risen 25%** for women while **decreasing 33%** for men

The increase in arrests among women is largely driven by drugs: from 2009 – 2018 drug related arrests **increased nearly 216% for women**, compared to 48% for men

While men's jail populations fell 8% from 2009 to 2018, women's jail populations grew 23%

Almost 90% of women incarcerated in jail are survivors of sexual violence and 80% are survivors of domestic/intimate partner violence

THE NUMBERS (CONT.)

26% of incarcerated women experienced homelessness in the year before their arrest compared to 16% of men

Women have a median annual income level 30% lower than men's making them far less likely to be able to afford money bail

Incarcerated women of color have much higher rates of unemployment and homelessness, and are less likely than formerly incarcerated men to have completed a high school education making reentry significantly more difficult

LGBTQ individuals are overrepresented at ALL stages of the legal system process

Poverty is the strongest predictor of recidivism among women

DEFINITIONS

- **Gender Specific** means you provide separate programming and services for females and for males which may or may not include transgender individuals who identify as females and males respectively.
- **Gender-informed** means you are aware that gender influences how a person moves through the world and interacts with their environment as well as how the environment and other social structures impact them.
- **Gender-responsive** means you have intentionally created an environment that demonstrates through site and staff selection, program and policy development, content, and material the important differences between men and women in psychological development, socialization, culture, exposure to trauma, and life experiences.
- **The Gemma Project specializes in gender responsive services**



Connection to Gender-Responsive Work



Gender-Responsive Strategies



Impact of Incarceration on Women



Queen's Story: A case study



CLIENT PROFILE	LEGAL CONTEXT & CONVICTION	IMMEDIATE REENTRY CRISIS	SYSTEMIC BARRIER
No Prior Criminal Record	Origin: Involved with a partner with a long felony/drug history; struggled with addiction	Lost job	No experience or familiarity with the justice system
Single Mother	Charges: possession for sale of a controlled substance possession of a controlled substance with firearm felon possessing firearm	Became homeless	Received little support or referral linkage. from probation.
Highly Educated Master's Degree)	Plea Deal: Initial felony drug/firearm charges were DROPPED . Key Conviction: Penal Code § 273a (Child Endangerment)	Family Separation: Conviction legally prevented her children from living with her.	A high-needs individual reentering society with no safety net .
Employed as Executive Leadership at Financial Institution	Sentence: 4 years formal probation + 52-week parenting class.	Safety net and network of support were gone	Left to navigate recovery, reunification, housing, and employment completely alone.

Audience Questions

- What questions do you have about this client profile?
- What additional context about the conviction/sentence might be helpful to know?
- How would you assess the client's reentry needs?
- What systemic barriers or assumptions could impact services being offered/delivered?

Meet Queen



Intergenerational Cycle

- Nearly 80% of women in jail have minor children
- Justice-involved women face the highest rates of parental rights termination, with their children being five times more likely than those of male inmates to be placed in foster care.
- Because most women are sole caregivers for their children - they have children's needs to meet which limits availability for employment, job training, education, and treatment
- 40 % of children in foster care have been exposed to parental incarceration at some point in their lives.
- While a 2016 study found that roughly 34 % of children in foster care had a parent incarcerated, those rates jump to 43 % for Black youth in out-of-home care placements
- children of incarcerated parents are exposed to nearly five times as many ACEs as their counterparts without incarcerated parents (2.06 compared to 0.41, on average.)
- Nearly 1/5 of the prison population is comprised of former foster youth

Multi-System Collaboration



The Gemma Project

The Gemma Project is a gender-responsive program that uses evidence-based and trauma responsive approaches to engage justice-involved women in programming and services that promote healing, reduce recidivism, break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration, and create healthier communities.

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THE GEMMA MODEL:

- In-custody intensive curriculum begins 3- 6 months prior to release targeting the specific needs and challenges faced by justice-involved women
- The curriculum assists women to identify their behavior patterns, their personal strengths and needs, the barriers that prevent them from achieving their goals, and the skills to access and utilize resources to help break the revolving door of incarceration
- Individualized and group Continuing Care maintains relationship with as a trusted bridge of support to the community for an unlimited amount of time post release including care coordination, system navigation, therapy, and warm handoffs

Contra Costa County – Model Site



Audience Engagement

Impact on Probation Work:

Why should this conversation matter to Probation?

From your experience, how do the specific needs of justice-involved women shape the daily responsibilities and overall approach of probation staff?

In what significant ways can justice-involved women influence Probation policies and practices?

Can you share examples of how incorporating the perspectives of justice-involved women has led to changes or improvements in probation services?

How has understanding the lived experiences of justice-involved women enhanced the effectiveness of probation programs and services, in your opinion or experience?

Why do you believe it is crucial for probation staff to engage in discussions about the unique challenges faced by justice-involved women?

What is at risk if Probation does not implement gender responsive programming?

Questions ?



Interested in learning more about The Gemma Project and our work in Contra Costa County?

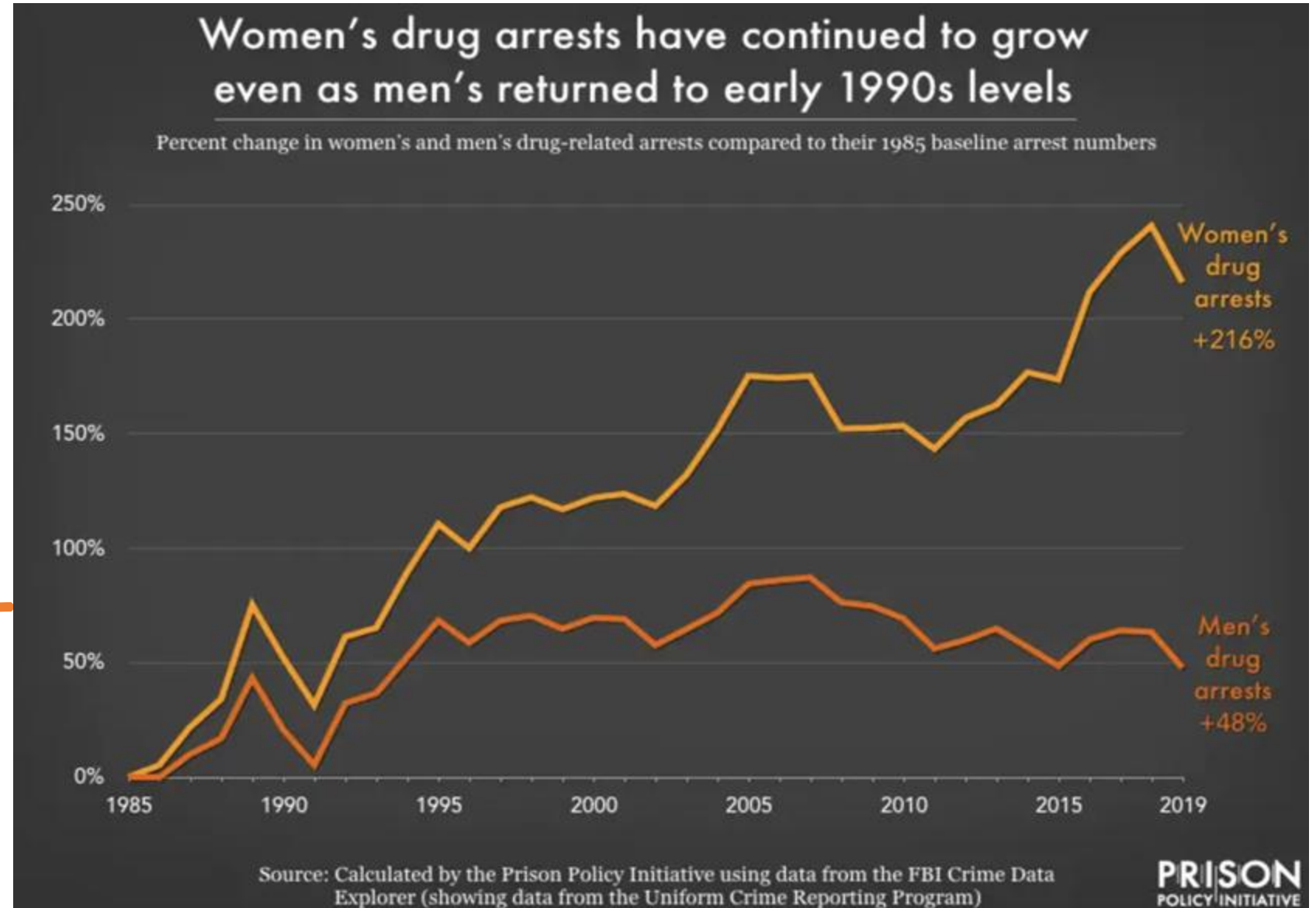
Thegemmaproject.org

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WHAT'S BEHIND THE NUMBERS?

In short, the War on Drugs



The War on Drugs & women

- More than ¼ of women in jail are held for drug crimes, both convicted and un-convicted
- Another 32% are held for property offenses, which are often linked to drug dependence and abuse
- Women's drug arrests are up in *all* county types: 25% rural, 23% urban, and 26% in suburban
- Although women and men are equally likely to develop a substance use disorder, 57% of those misusing opioids are women
- Women's rising opioid use is also reflected in an almost 600% increase in opioid overdose deaths from 1999 to 2016, compared to a 312% increase for men over the same time frame
- Women entered emergency rooms due to painkiller misuse an average of once every three minutes in 2010
- The most recent data available shows that 70% of women serving sentences in prisons and jails struggled with drug abuse and dependence
- From 2004 to 2009, drug abuse and dependence among women in state prisons grew at twice the rate of men

WHAT ELSE IS BEHIND THE NUMBERS?

- Histories of violence & trauma, substance abuse, & mental health issues are extremely high among justice-involved women & jails & prisons are ill equipped to manage or respond to these needs
- Economic disparities and a lack of social support further complicate the situation, pushing more women into criminal activities to survive and support families
- The criminal legal system's historically male-centric policies and practices were not designed for and have not adapted to the influx of women entering the system
- The justice system's response to justice-involved women often fails to address root causes, leading to prolonged incarceration and recidivism
- Programs tailored to the specific needs of women, such as trauma-responsive care and family reunification initiatives, are scarce and underfunded, further exacerbating the issue
- Corrections administration often assert that serving 10% of population is resource and logistically challenging