

Understanding and Reaching Crime Victims with Incarceration Histories

A Webinar for VOCA Administrators, Part 1

Allison Hastings & Jan Lastocy
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Welcome



Allison Hastings

Project Director

Vera Institute of Justice

Training Goals for Part I

- Build a clear understanding of the population of crime victims who have also experienced incarceration and
- Identify strategies to better support existing grantees who serve survivors or victims of crime with incarceration histories.

About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims is a one-stop shop for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice.

We are supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.

About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (2)

Our communities of focus are victims who are:

- Immigrants or Limited English Proficient,
- Men of color,
- Women of color or from other historically marginalized populations,
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning,
- Children,
- Older adults,
- People with disabilities or people who are Deaf, and
- Formerly incarcerated.

About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (3)

We are a collaboration among:

- Caminar Latino
- Casa de Esperanza
- Common Justice
- FORGE
- The National Children's Advocacy Center
- The National Center for Victims of Crime
- The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later in Life
- Vera Institute of Justice
- Women of Color Network, Inc

About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (4)

We are working to:

- increase the number of victims who receive healing supports by understanding who is underrepresented and why some people access services while others don't;
- design and implement best practices for connecting people to the services they need; and
- empower and equip organizations to provide the most useful and effective services to crime victims.

Vera Institute of Justice Center on Victimization and Safety

- Works to improve access to healing services for all victims of crime.
- Focuses on groups of people who are at elevated risk of harm, but have less access to healing and avenues to justice, including:
 - People with disabilities,
 - People who are Deaf,
 - Incarcerated people, and
 - Formerly incarcerated people.



Understanding Crime Victims with Incarceration Histories

Facts & Figures about Incarceration in the United States
A Closer Look at Who's Inside
Victimization experiences

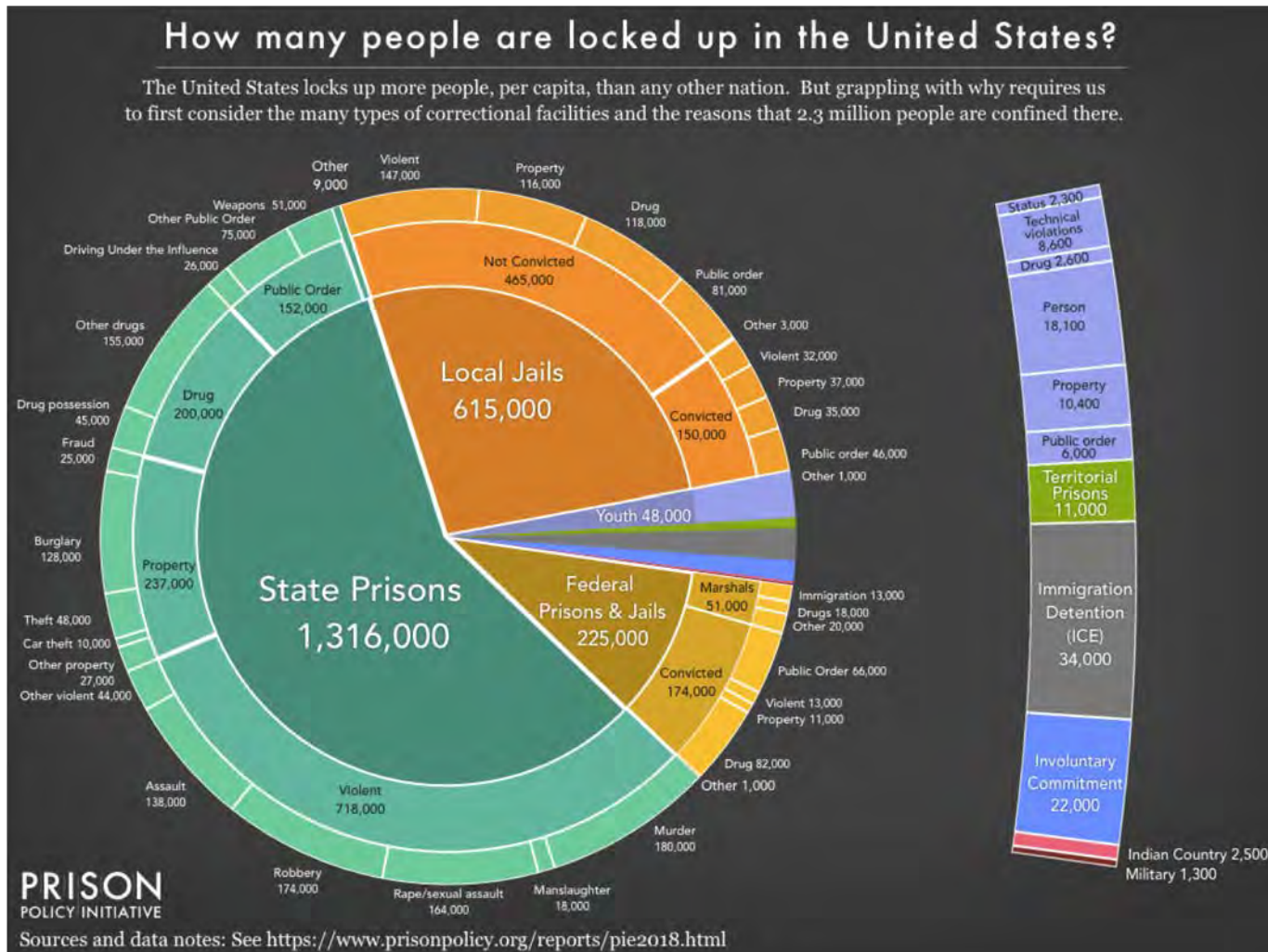
Did you know?

People with incarceration histories have higher rates of victimization and abuse than people who have never experienced incarceration.



Facts & Figures about Incarceration in the United States

How many people have experienced incarceration?



How are prisons and jails different?

Prisons

- State, federal, private (<2,000 prisons)
- Typically hold people for felony convictions
- Sentences are typically more than one year
- Locations vary, but prisons are often located in rural areas
- Services and programs are more common in prisons
- People are more likely to connect with reentry programs when leaving prison

Jails

- County, regional, private (~ 3,300 jails in the U.S.)
- People can serve time in jails while awaiting trial (pre-trial) or post-conviction
- Post-conviction sentences are typically <1 year
- Locations can be urban, suburban, or rural
- Services and programs are more likely to be basic or short-term in jails
- People are less likely to connect with reentry programs after leaving jail

What else do we know about prisons and jails?

Prisons

- On any given day, about 1.5 million people are incarcerated in state or federal prisons
- Nearly half of people sentenced to prison are there for non-violent offenses
- 626,000 people return home from a prison each year

Jails

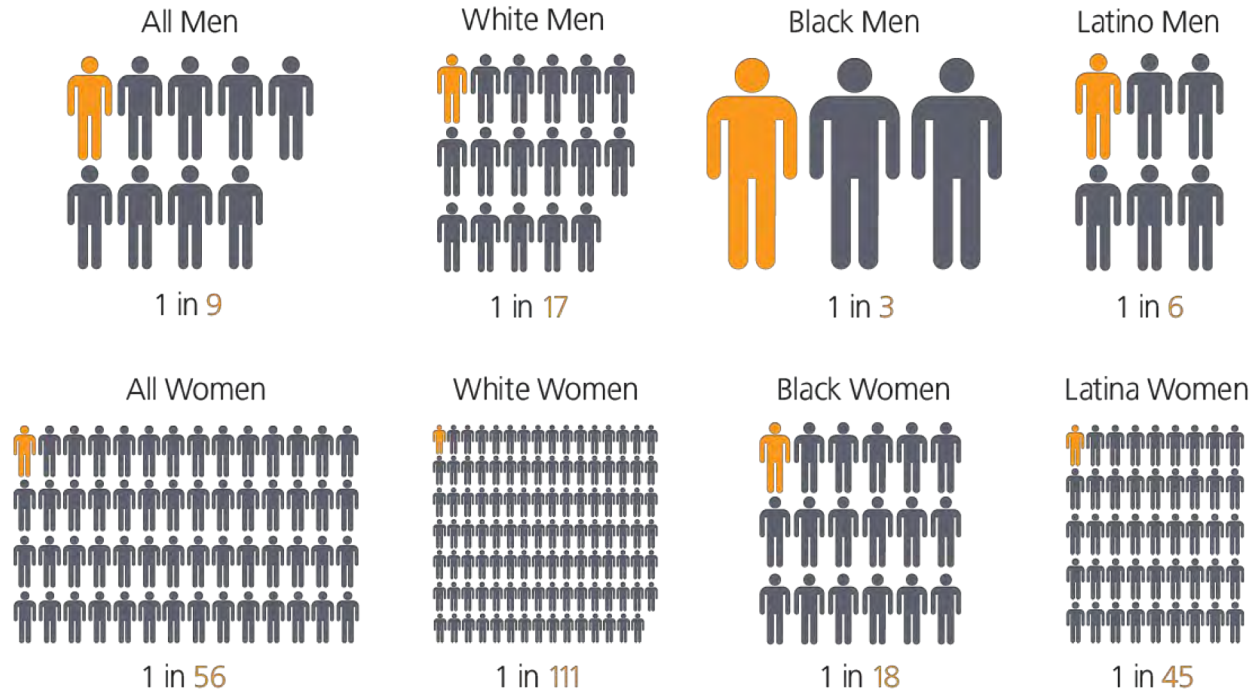
- ~630,000 people are confined in city or county jails on any given day
- 8.4 million men and 2.5 million women enter jail each year
- Average length of stay in a jail is 23 days
- Jail populations continue to rise despite declining crime

A closer look at who's inside



Racial & ethnic disparities in prisons

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment of U.S. Residents Born in 2001



Source: Bonczar, T. (2003). *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.



LGBTQ people in the justice system

- Estimated that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are incarcerated at **3.5 times** the rate of the general population.
- One large study of over 6,500 transgender people in America found that 16% of participants had been in jail or prison – an incarceration rate **5 times** higher than the national average.

People with disabilities in prisons and jails

- 32% of people in state and federal prisons report having at least one disability
- 40% of people in jail report having at least one disability



Mental illness and incarceration

- More than half of incarcerated people report mental illness
- People in jail have serious mental illnesses – also referred to as psychiatric disabilities – at a rate **4-6 times higher** than the general population

Serious mental illness in jail population vs. general population



Victimization Experiences: Before, During, and After Incarceration

Victimization experiences before incarceration

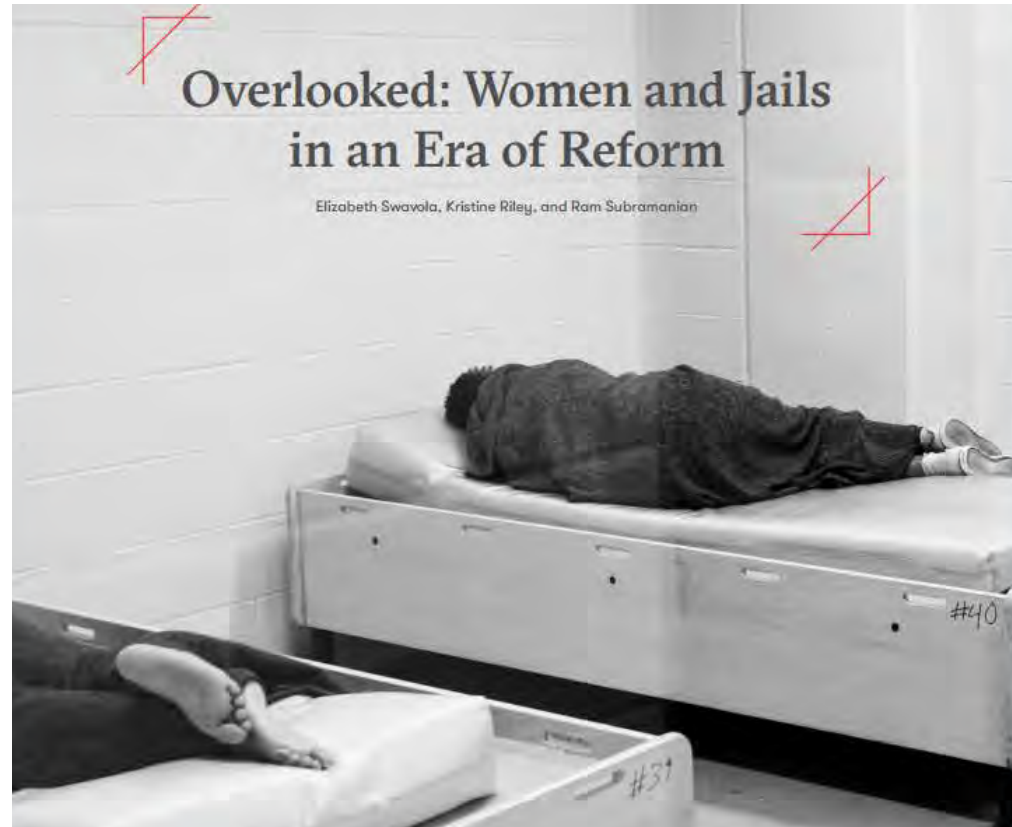
In his study of 122 (107 men and 15 women) people who returned to the Boston area post-incarceration, Bruce Western found that **prior to incarceration**:

- 40% had witnessed someone being killed
- Nearly half were beaten by their parents
- 1/3 grew up with family violence
- 16% reported being sexually abused
- Half were seriously injured while growing up

Victimization experiences of women prior to jail incarceration

Histories of victimization are nearly universal for women in U.S. jails:

- 86% have experienced sexual violence
- 77% have survived intimate partner violence
- 60% have experienced caregiver violence



Victimization experiences during incarceration: Sexual abuse



Courtesy of Just Detention International Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sexual Victimization Reported By Former State Prisoners, 2008* (May 2012).

Victimization experiences after incarceration

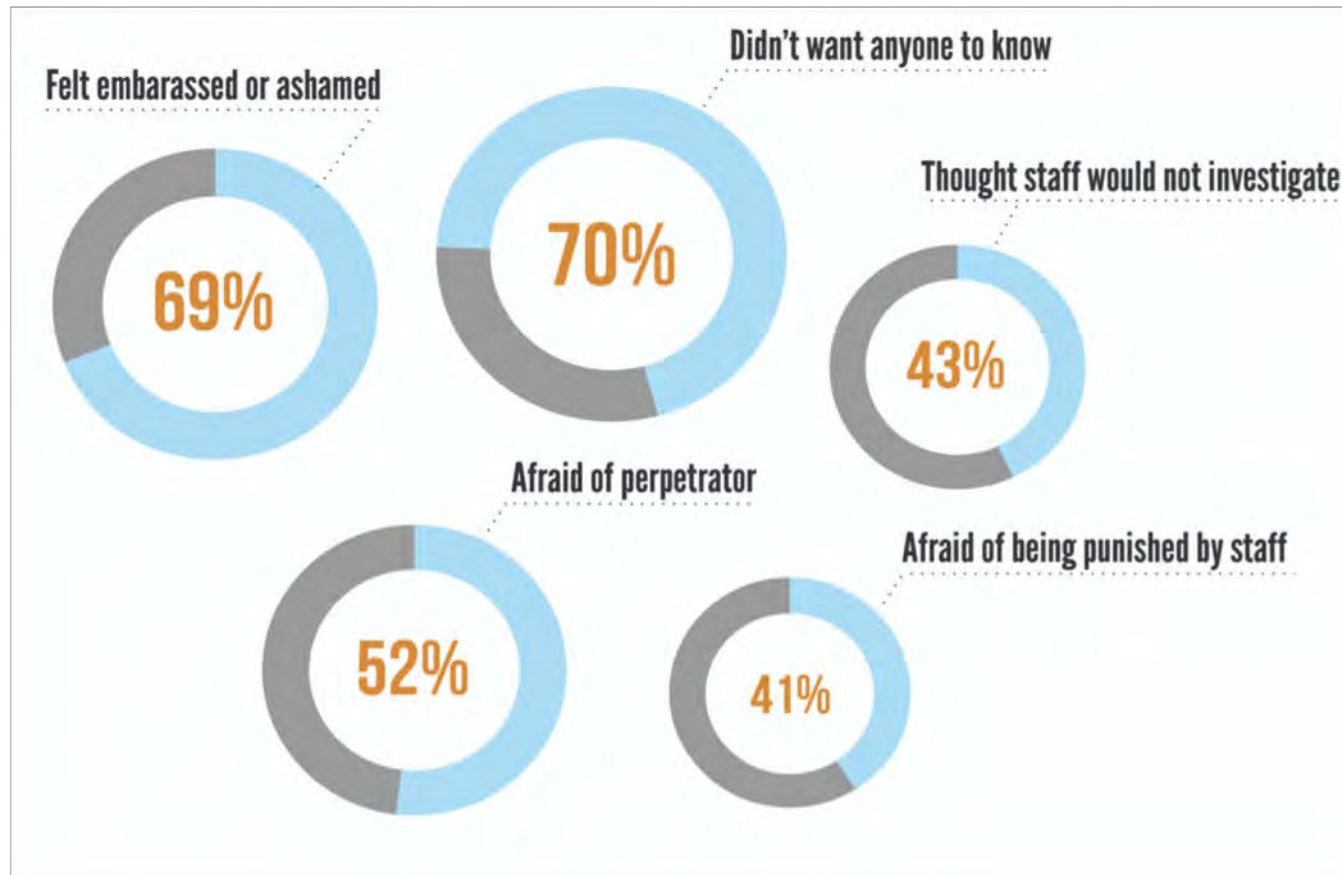
Of the 122 participants Bruce Western's Boston Reentry Study, **1/4 had been threatened or attacked since returning home.**

“As victims, the respondents were shot, stabbed, beaten, raped, and molested. But even beyond the familiar roles of victim and offender, nearly all respondents reported witnessing serious violence, and all reported fighting in which the roles of victim and offender were difficult to distinguish.”

-Bruce Western, *Homeward* (p. 80)

Many victims do not get help while they are incarcerated.

Barriers to reporting and services during incarceration



Courtesy of Just Detention International

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, "[Sexual Victimization Reported By Former State Prisoners, 2008](#)," May 12, 2012.

Even during reentry and after they have returned home, many victims do not get the services they need to heal.

Barriers to accessing victim services during reentry

- Terminology and false dichotomy of “victim” and “perpetrator”
- Stigma
- Reentry services and victim services are siloed
- Few trauma-informed service programs for victims/survivors with incarceration histories
- Professionals responsible for post-release supervision may not be trauma-informed

Learning from a formerly incarcerated survivor

A conversation with Jan Lastocy, Board and Survivor Council
Member, Just Detention International

Welcome Jan Lastocy



Jan Lastocy

Board & Survivor Council
Member

Justice Detention International

Before we get started. . .

Jan is a **sexual assault survivor**. A corrections officer raped her while she was in prison. She is going to tell us about her experience of incarceration, victimization, and the challenges she faced when she sought help to heal after returning home.

- No graphic descriptions of violence, but
- The content of this conversation may be upsetting to some, especially those who have experienced violence
- We encourage you to take care of yourself, as you need to

Tell us about yourself



Becoming incarcerated



Life inside prison



#WhyIDidntReport

Because I was a prisoner.

Because he was a jail guard.

Because the Warden said she would always believe a guard vs a prisoner.

Because I wanted to go home.

Because I thought no one would believe me.

Because I was scared for my life.

-Jan Lastocy, Posted on Twitter, September 21, 2018

Returning home



Getting help



Your life and work now

“A lot of people think, ‘You’re a criminal, you deserve whatever happens to you.’ I want people to know that we’re women first, prisoners second.”

-Jan Lastocy

'Prisoners are people first': America's inmates are ready for their #MeToo moment, The Independent, March 10, 2018



Photo Credit: The Independent

Faces of survivors



Photos courtesy of Just Detention International

Opportunities to support crime victims with incarceration histories

Cultivating projects at the intersection of reentry and healing:

- Encourage existing grantees to address the needs of formerly incarcerated victims.
- Promote partnerships between existing grantees and reentry programs.
- Fund new programs that feature partnerships between reentry organizations and victim service programs.
- Fund hybrid programs that are already working at the intersection of reentry and healing.

Key questions

- Where can you look in your state for information about reentry?
- How can you learn about partnerships between reentry and victim service programs or help bring people to the table from these fields to explore partnerships?
- How do you get the solicitation in front of people who may never have applied for VOCA funding before?
- How can you craft a solicitation to encourage work at this intersection?

Join us for Part 2 of this webinar

March 29, 2019

2:00pm to 3:30pm

Eastern Time

Part 2 will explore the perspective and insight from a VOCA administrator and a VOCA-funded community practitioner.

Presenters:



Michelle M. Garcia Ashley McSwain

Questions?

Contact information

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Citations

Slide 16:

Ilan H. Meyer and others, *Incarceration Rates and Traits of Sexual Minorities in the United States: National Inmate Survey, 2011-2012*, *AJPH Transgender Health* Vol 107, No 2, February 2017. Note: This study uses categories of “men” and “women” and does not discuss transgender or gender-nonconforming people.

Jaime M. Grant and others. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011).

Slide 17:

Jennifer Bronson, Laura M. Maruschak, and Marcus Berzofsky, *Disabilities Among Prison and Jail Inmates, 2011-12* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2015).

Citations (2)

Slide 18:

Doris James and Lauren Glaze, *Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates* (Washington, DC: BJS, 2006), <https://perma.cc/7K44-CUCM>.

Chart: Ram Subramanian and others, *Incarceration's Front Door: The Misuse of Jails in America*. Vera Institute of Justice (2015).

Slides 19 and 20:

Bruce Western, *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2018), p. 67.

Slide 21:

Shannon Lynch and others. *Women's Pathways to Jail: The Roles and Intersections of Serious Mental Illness and Trauma* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012).