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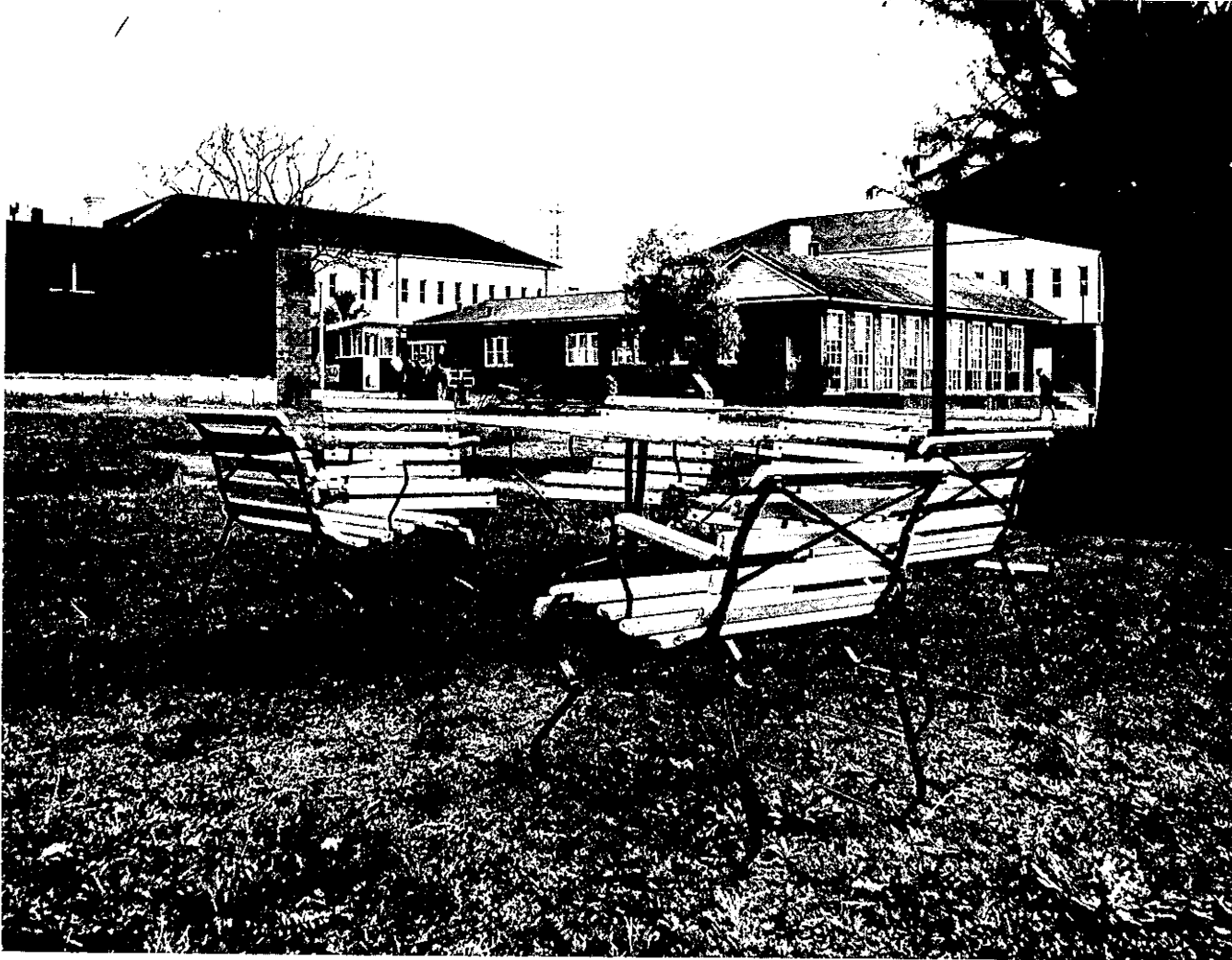
THE BACKGROUND

OF

WOMEN IN PRISON

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1. View inside the Training and Detention Centre for Women, Silverwater.

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## INTRODUCTION

Women prisoners comprise a very small proportion of offenders in custody, both in New South Wales and overseas. During 1973-74 the ratio of men to women received into New South Wales correctional establishments was 20.6: 1 and at the end of that year women comprised less than 2% of the total New South Wales prison population. Figures from overseas census data are reasonably similar. In the United States in 1970 women comprised less than 5% of the prison population <sup>1</sup> In New Zealand at the end of 1969, women comprised 4.3% of the total prison population <sup>2</sup>, and 6.9% of South African prisoners in custody at the end of 1971 were women <sup>3</sup> Approximate daily average figures from the Netherlands indicate that 4% of prisoners were women <sup>4</sup>

One result of this marked under-representation of women in prison is a lack of research into the criminality of women, the needs of women prisoners and the effects of incarceration upon women. Researchers interested in women offenders have found that small populations produce fewer subjects for study than male prisoner projects, thus making statistical analysis more complicated and lowering the generalizability of findings. Rasche <sup>5</sup> (1974) classified the limited literature on female offenders into five historical stages: prescientific, the search for constitutional causes, the multicausal approach, the numbers and the offences stage and the women's prison stage, stressing that "no research into the internal structure of women's prisons was undertaken until the 1960s."

Another result of the numerical difference between male and female prisoners is that experimental treatment programmes are introduced in male prisons but rarely extended to female prisons where there are too few potential candidates for the programme to warrant its establishment. Examples in New South Wales are the Work Release programme and the day release scheme for technical education, both of which are limited to males.

Apart from numerical factors, Rasche puts forward three other reasons for the lack of research concerning women offenders:

1. the reluctance of officials to allow the investigation of case histories of women offenders on the grounds that 'even the fallen woman must have what is left of her virtue protected'

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1. Rasche C.E. The female offender as an object of criminological research in *Criminal Justice and Behaviour* 1(4) Dec. 1974 p. 302.
  2. Annual Report of the New Zealand Department of Justice, year ending 31st March, 1970.
  3. Annual Report of the South African Commissioner of Prisons for the year 1 July 1970 - 30 June 1971.
  4. **Facts and Figures No. 13.** Criminal Law and the Treatment of offenders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands).
  5. Rasche C.E. op. cit.

2. the fact that female criminality has been viewed as essentially non-dangerous to others and merely socially offensive.
3. the general dismissal of women as important or as fit topics of research.

However, recently there have been indications of a greater interest in the problems of women offenders: for example the December 1974 issue of "Criminal Justice and Behaviour" comprised summaries from the symposium at the University of Alabama in January 1973 to plan for the female offender. In Australia, a seminar on 'Participation of Women in the Criminal Justice System' was organized in June, 1975 by the Australian Institute of Criminology. Over the last few years a number of follow-up research studies have been reported including one on women parolees and one concerning young women offenders.

At the same time, statistics indicate an increase in the rate and seriousness of female offending, particularly in the United States. From the Uniform Crime Reports, 1973, it appears that over the five years from 1967 - 72 the male arrest rate in the United States increased by 18% and for women 72%. Rasche <sup>6</sup> points out the large increase in the arrest of women for larcenies and the increase in the number of girls appearing in juvenile courts.

#### What should be researched?

The relative lack of research into female offending in comparison with male criminality, the increase in female crime and the recent upsurge of interest in female prisoners all point to the need for research but do not answer the question of which issues have greatest priority for research. Annette Brodsky, reporting on the Alabama Symposium, presented three areas of concern: entry into the correctional system (including causation, nature of the offender and alternatives to imprisonment), institutional settings (including the optimum size, location and programme of a women's prison) and community acceptance (including pre-release preparation and recidivism studies).

Very few researchers tackle the issue of causation. Chwast <sup>7</sup> views female criminality as explosive acting out resulting from unbearable tension which provide the pressure required to overcome the woman's socially accepted role of conformity and submission. Payak <sup>8</sup> examines biological, psychological and social factors, and presents the hypothesis that female criminality is a response to emotional needs, following disruption of the women's dependant role. She states that criminal behaviour violates the concept of a woman's role and results in guilt and poor self-concept in the offender. However, no recent studies of these and similar hypotheses have been undertaken.

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6. *ibid* p. 306.

7. Chwast J. Special problems in treating female offenders: sociopsychological aspects in *International Journal of Offender Therapy* 15 p. 25 - 27.

8. Payak B.J. Understanding the female offender, *Federal Probation* Vol. 27 No. 4 1963.

More investigations into the nature of female offenders in terms of personality and offences have been made. In a bibliography published by Goyer-Michaud<sup>9</sup> and covering 221 articles related to women prisoners appearing in professional journals over the last 15 years from 1959 - 1974, 90 were categorized as personality studies and 96 as covering statistics, type of offence or inappropriate behaviour (multiple categories used). However, only 9 studies dealt with typology, 10 with follow-up or predictive studies and 25 with institutions and their functions.

This neglect of the area of 'institutional setting' and 'community acceptance' in research leaves a number of unanswered questions. Some of these questions, and tentative answers which require rigorous examination, are listed below:

#### A. INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

1. What criteria should be met in a well-designed women's prison?

Ann Smith<sup>10</sup> gives three conditions for a good design: it should be aesthetically pleasing, it should provide accommodation planned to meet the needs of women in confinement — for example, individual rooms, living space for small groups, opportunity for domestic training in small units — and it should be capable of adaptation to any future changes of policy in the treatment of women offenders.

2. How can the location and design of the prison minimize isolation from family and community contacts?

Brodsky<sup>11</sup> quotes evidence suggesting that 60% to 80% of women in prison have dependent children and argues that small, local facilities should be provided within the offender's community. She argues that lack of family ties contributes to situational homosexuality as well as anxiety amongst women prisoners.

3. What programme should be implemented for women prisoners?

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9. Goyer-Michaud F. The Adult Female Offender: A selected bibliography in *Criminal Justice and Behaviour* 1 (4) Dec. 1974 p. 340 - 356.

10. Smith A.D. The Treatment of Women Offenders, *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 9, October 1969.

11. Brodsky A.M. Planning for the female offender in *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 1 (4) Dec. 1974 p. 392 - 400.

Lawrence <sup>12</sup> advocated "steady vocational programmes that will teach women something that they can do and be paid a decent salary for doing" yet Wheeler <sup>12a</sup> disagrees, saying "some of our women are not career minded and they do not really have it in mind to go out and get a job and be self-supporting." Brodsky provides a note of caution in her comments on personal development programmes, warning that these courses may result in unrealistic expectations and exaggerated notions of success.

## B. COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

### 1. How can the transition from prison to the community be eased?

Brodsky asserts that women appear to receive less post-release help than men but may well have more need for work release and other aftercare programmes. She suggests that allowing inmates to do voluntary work in the community would ease the transition.

### 2. How can criteria for successful completion of parole and stability within the community be predicted?

Spencer and Berecochea <sup>13</sup> in their study of women parolees in California, reported a 40% recidivism rate. Recidivism was positively correlated with length of the original prison sentence served. Most of the re-admissions resulted from parole rule violations; these women parolees had a history of narcotics use, prior commitments, average or below average intelligence and achievement scores and minority group membership. Those women who were re-admitted for further offences tended to have been sentenced originally for offences other than assaults and to have had extensive prior record (except narcotics offenders who often had limited prior records.)

### 3. Are recidivism measures valid assessments of institutional programmes?

Brodsky <sup>14</sup> argues that "recidivism does not present an accurate reflection of the success or failure of an institutional programme as much as it reflects the lack of control over what happens to the inmate after release" and advocates various means of fostering community acceptance of prisoners: familiarity programmes, public relations speeches, opening prisons to community visits or press coverage.

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12. Lawrence F. An Ex-offender Evaluates Correctional Programming for Women in *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 1(4) Dec. 1974 p. 388 - 391.

12a Wheeler M. The Current Status of Women in Prison, *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 1(4) Dec. 1974 p 379.

13. Spencer C. and Berecochea J.E. *Recidivism Among Women Parolees: A Long Term Survey*, Research Division, California Department of Corrections, July, 1972.

14. Brodsky A.M. op. cit. p.398.



## **Research into female offenders in N.S.W.**

Apart from one publication on the educational and vocational backgrounds of women prisoners there has been no research into women offenders in N.S.W. Thus all of the considerations outlined in A and B above were relevant to the design of the study of prisoners at the Mulawa Training and Detention Centre for Women, Silverwater. It was decided to prepare three separate studies:

### **I. The background of women in prison**

This corresponds roughly to Brodsky's "entry into the correctional system" area in that an attempt was made to analyse the nature of the women offenders in terms of social and criminal history. A statistical-historical approach was taken to determine whether there had been any recent changes in the numbers of women prisoners in custody and in the pattern of female offences.

### **II. The social atmosphere of the women's prison**

This corresponds to the "correctional settings" area, and is an attempt to describe the structure and functions of the corrective centre and to evaluate it using the women's perceptions of and reactions to their environment. Specific areas of investigation comprised the physical layout, the institutional programmes and services and the women's perceptions of the effects of imprisonment.

### **III. The female recidivist**

This was not intended as a rigorous prediction study nor as a means to advocate specific 'community acceptance' schemes; rather it was designed to provide some basic data on the extent of recidivism amongst a small sample of women prisoners and to indicate significant variables which could be included in a typology of female recidivists.

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. Aims

To describe the population of women in prison on 30th June, 1972.

To measure the social atmosphere of the Training and Detention Centre through reports of the women in custody.

To measure the recidivism of women prisoners.

To develop a profile of the "female recidivist".

### 2. Phases

The study was divided into two phases.

Phase I: Collection of information concerning women prisoners and the prison system for women, including an analysis of the social atmosphere.

Phase II: A study of recidivism of women prisoners through police and prison records during a 3 year follow-up period.

Results and discussion of findings of these two phases are published in the three publications referred to above on page 5.

### 3. Subjects

The subjects comprised 100 women : prisoners in custody at Mulawa Training and Detention Centre for Women on 30-6-72, together with women received into custody in the following two weeks.

### 4. Procedure – Phase I.

All women prisoners included in the study were interviewed during the two-weeks' period from 1-7-72 to 14-7-72 by one of two female research officers who conducted the study. Responses were recorded on an interview schedule. Information was collected on the following topics:

- age, marital status and responsibility for children
- education and occupational background
- previous experience in a women's prison
- effects of previous imprisonment on family, job and accommodation
- fine defaulters and reasons for non-payment of the fine
- number of friends and relatives in prison
- classes attended in prison
- health and health services
- contact with welfare officers and outside organisations
- general evaluation of the centre and plans for the future

Record data on all the women were obtained in terms of past criminal history and current offence and sentence, from institutional files. Other records obtained from custodial and professional officers included:

1. List of women enrolled in classes during 1971-72 and the type of course studied, from the Education Officer.
  2. List of women referred to Community Services Officer and nature of service provided, from the Community Services Officer.
  3. List of women reporting sick in the dormitories from 1-7-72 to 14-7-72, from the Wing Officers.
5. **Procedure — Phase II.**

Three years after the original study, at the end of June 1975, police records from the 100 women were searched at the Fingerprints Section of the Police Department. All convictions, juvenile and adult, were noted for the women from the commencement of their criminal activities up to 30th June 1975. The following information was collected: data of conviction, place of conviction, offence and outcome of court appearance.

Prison records were also consulted to determine the number of imprisonments experienced by the women subsequent to their release after serving the sentence for which they were in custody in June 1972. Details collected included: date of reception, offence, sentence, date and mode of release.

Thus two criteria of recidivism were examined:

- 1) subsequent convictions, obtained from police records
  - 2) subsequent imprisonments, obtained from prison establishment records.
- However, the incidence of further convictions was used as the major recidivism index.

## FINDINGS

### 1. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

#### Age

A little under half the women on the study were aged less than 25 years, with 44% aged 25 to 50 years and 11% aged 50 years and over.

Within these broad age groupings, proportions of prisoners have remained fairly constant over the period 1971 to 1974, with a slight decrease in the 25-50 group in 1974 and a slight increase in the 50 years and over group.

Other trends included an increase in the proportion of prisoners aged under 21 years, an increase in the 25-30 years group and a decrease in the 30-40 years group over the same period.

#### Birthplace

The majority of the women in the 1972 study (88%) were born in Australia with the remainder born in Europe (6%), New Zealand, Britain and Africa.

There has been a slight trend towards a decrease in Australian born women from 83% in 1971 to 76% in 1974.

#### Religion

Almost half the women in the 1972 study (46%) gave their religion as Roman Catholic, 29% as Anglican and 18% as other Christian religions.

Over the 1971-74 period there has been an increase in the proportion of Anglicans, and a corresponding decline in the proportion of Roman Catholics.

I. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

TABLE 1. Age

Age in years	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Under 21	20	24.7	14	14.0	17	30.8
21 & under 25	17	21.0	31	31.0	9	16.4
25 & under 30	10	12.3	12	12.0	10	18.2
30 & under 40	17	21.0	20	20.0	5	9.1
40 & under 50	10	12.4	12	12.0	7	12.7
50 & under 60	4	4.9	9	9.0	4	7.3
60 & over	3	3.7	2	2.0	3	5.5
TOTAL	81	100.0	100	100.0	55	100.0

TABLE 3. Religion

Religion	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Church of England	30	37.1	29	29.0	28	50.9
Roman Catholic	38	46.9	46	46.0	17	30.9
Presbyterian	8	9.9	6	6.0	1	1.8
Methodist	1	1.2	2	2.0	1	1.8
Salvation Army	1	1.2	5	5.0	-	-
Other Christian	1	1.2	5	5.0	-	-
Hebrew	-	-	2	2.0	-	-
Other non-Christian	-	-	2	2.0	1	1.8
No religion	2	2.5	2	2.0	1	1.8
Not stated	-	-	1	1.0	6	11.0
TOTAL	81	100.0	100	100.0	55	100.0

TABLE 2. Place of birth

Birthplace	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Australia	67	82.7	88	88.0	42	76.3
New Zealand	1	1.2	2	2.0	1	1.8
British Isles	3	3.6	2	2.0	3	5.5
Europe	8	10.1	6	6.0	4	7.3
Africa	1	1.2	2	2.0	-	-
Asia	1	1.2	-	-	-	-
America	-	-	-	-	2	3.6
Not known	-	-	-	-	3	5.5
TOTAL	81	100.0	100	100.0	55	100.0

## II. FAMILY DATA

### Marital status

40% of the women in the 1972 study were single, 30% married and 20% either separated or living in a de facto relationship prior to their imprisonment.

Over the period 1971-1974 there is a marked decline in the proportion of women who stated that they were married, a slight decline in the proportion of single women and a marked increase in the numbers of separated and de facto women.

### Number of children

Almost 60% of the women in the 1972 study stated that they had at least one child: 43% with three children or less, 9% with four to six children and 7% with seven children or more. The average number of children in each family was three.

II. FAMILY DATA

TABLE 4. Marital status

Marital status	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Single	39	48.2	40	40.0	22	40.0
Married	27	33.3	30	30.0	9	16.4
Divorced	2	2.5	5	5.0	2	3.6
Separated	4	4.9	15	15.0	9	16.4
Widowed	7	8.6	4	4.0	4	7.3
De facto	2	2.5	5	5.0	5	9.0
Not stated			1	1.0	4	7.3
TOTAL	81	100.0	100	100.0	55	100.0

TABLE 5. Number of children

No. of children born to women prisoners	1972 Study N=100 %
Nil	40.0
One	20.0
Two	17.0
Three	6.0
Four to six	9.0
Seven to nine	6.0
Ten or more	1.0
Not specified	1.0
TOTAL	100.0

Care of children

Children remained in the nuclear family situation under the care of the woman's husband in only 15% of cases. In almost one-third of families where the mother was imprisoned children were cared for by a relative, and in 17% of cases children were separated between relatives, foster parents and children's homes. In only one case was the child (aged under 12 months) cared for by the mother in prison.

To a large extent these arrangements reflect the situation of the children prior to the mother's imprisonment. Three categories of 'usual care of dependent children', with almost equal proportions in each category can be distinguished.

- 1) Approximately one-third of the mothers of dependent children cared for them within the nuclear family situation.
- 2) Another third cared for children as single parents (widowed, divorced, separated) or in a de facto relationship.
- 3) The remaining mothers did not have custody of dependent children. (Children were cared for by relatives, foster parents or children's homes).



TABLE 6. Care of dependent children while mother is in prison\*

Care exercised by	1972	Sample
	No	%
Husband (children's father)	9	19.1
Other relative —	19	40.4
Mother or father (9)		
mother-in-law (2)		
sister (5)		
grandmother (1)		
other (2)		
Friend	3	6.4
Foster parents	2	4.3
Child welfare/Salvation army home	2	4.3
Multiple agencies (relatives, foster parents, homes)	10	21.3
Mother in prison	1	2.1
Not stated	1	2.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* 12 mothers had grown up children

TABLE 7. Care of children prior to mother's imprisonment

Nature of care of children	1972	Sample
	No	%
Within nuclear family situation	17*	28.8
Within de facto relationship	6	10.2
Care by mother as single parent	8	13.6
Mother does not have custody of children	14	23.7
Children grown up	12	22.0
Not known	2	1.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* At least four of these nuclear family situations were unstable due to alcoholism, psychiatric illness and imprisonment of one or both parents.

### III. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

#### Highest schooling

Almost two-thirds of the women in the study completed some junior secondary schooling, while only 8% completed fourth form or higher. This level of attainment is slightly lower than that of respondents in the 1971 and 1974 censuses, where approximately one-fifth completed fourth form or higher.

#### Leaving age

The average school leaving age of the women in the 1972 study was 14 years 9 months, which is almost identical to the 14 years 8 months average for the women in the 1970 study\*.

\* "Women in Prison" - a profile study, New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, June 1970

III. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

TABLE 8. Highest level of schooling

Highest class/form completed	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Incomplete primary	11		9		3	
Primary completed	10	26.0	17	26.0	5	14.6
Form 1	7		12		5	
Form 2	10		31		11	
Form 3	24	50.6	18	61.0	18	58.2
Form 4	6		6		6	
Form 5	6		1		1	
Form 6	6	22.2	1	8.0	4	20.0
University	0		2		0	
Not known/ not applicable*	1	1.2	3	5.0	4	7.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Irregular schooling only, still at school, no schooling

TABLE 9. Age of leaving school

School Leaving age	1972 Study N=100 %	1970 Study+ N=46 %
13 years & under	11.0	19.5
14 years	29.0	26.0
15 years	31.0	32.6
16 years	17.0	13.1
17 years & over	5.0	8.8
Not stated/ not applicable	7.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

+ "Women in Prison" - a profile study, New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, June 1970

Attitude to school

Approximately two-thirds of respondents in the 1970 and 1972 studies stated that they liked school, and another 10% were neutral in their attitude.

However, almost half the respondents left school voluntarily: to earn a living because it was considered the normal thing to do to leave school at a certain level or because they didn't want to proceed any further with their studies. Approximately equal numbers of respondents indicated some element of compulsion in their leaving school, whether through pressure to look after parents, health reasons, expulsion or committal to a girls' training centre.

TABLE 10. Attitude towards school

Attitude	1972 Study		1970 Study	
	N=100	%	N=46	%
Liked school	64.0		65.2	
Disliked school	23.0		26.0	
Neutral – didn't mind	10.0		8.8	
Not stated	3.0		-	
TOTAL	100.0		100.0	

TABLE 11. Reasons for leaving school

Reason for leaving school	1972 Study		1970 Study	
	N=100	%	N=46	%
To earn a living	15.0		23.7	
To care for people at home or other family reasons (including financial)	30.0		19.6	
No desire to remain at school	19.0		8.8	
Expelled or asked to leave	6.0		8.8	
Social pressure – most people left at that age	11.0		6.5	
Completed course	2.0		4.4	
Went to Girls' Training Centre	6.0		4.4	
Health reasons	3.0		6.5	
Other miscellaneous reasons 1	8.0		17.3	
TOTAL	100.0		100.0	

1. To get married  
Never went to school formally etc.

### Post-school activities

Approximately two-thirds of respondents in both studies were employed immediately after leaving school and only 4% of respondents (and 9% in the 1970 study) commenced further education directly after they left school. Almost one-third of the women interviewed in 1972 engaged in home duties, travel or were placed on detention after leaving school compared with 20% of the 1970 study.

A little under a third of respondents in both studies completed some kind of post-secondary course, predominantly trade or business studies. However, only 20% of women in the 1972 study gained any formal qualifications, either academic school qualifications (11%) or technical/trade qualifications (10%). This trend seems to be changing slightly for women prisoners in 1974, since almost 40% gained some qualifications at school or in subsequent courses.

### Overview

The women in the 1972 study can be typified in terms of the following pattern resulting in low educational attainment:

- Enjoyed school on the whole but left at the earliest leaving age with incomplete junior secondary school
- Immediately entered employment which would necessarily be unskilled                      OR
- Engaged in unpaid home duties which would not have provided experience relevant to skilled employment.

TABLE 12. Activity after leaving school

Activity after leaving school	1972 Study		1970 Study	
	N=100	%	N=46	%
Employment	62.0		69.5	
Housework at home	16.0		12.9	
Married	2.0		2.2	
Further education	4.0		8.8	
Other: travel, girls' home, unemployed	10.0		6.6	
Not stated	6.0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

TABLE 13. Post secondary course completed

Type of course	1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=100	%	N=55	%
Business course	15.0		14.5	
Trade course	11.0		7.3	
University course	2.0		-	
General education	3.0		-	
Nursing course	-		5.5	
No post secondary course completed	69.0		72.7	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

TABLE 14. Qualifications obtained

Qualification	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=81	%	N=100	%	N=55	%
Intermediate certificate	7.4		5.0		10.9	
School Certificate	7.4		4.0		10.9	
Leaving or Higher School Certificate	1.2		2.0		5.5	
Technical college certificate	2.5		5.0		9.0	
Trade certificate	2.5		2.0		1.8	
Other diploma	1.2		3.0		-	
No qualification	77.8		79.0		56.4	
Not known	-		-		5.5	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

#### IV. OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

##### Usual occupation

One-third of the women in the study stated that they were not usually employed: they were either housewives or pensioners. The largest most common occupational group for those women who were in the work force was service, sport and recreation work in which almost one-third of the women were employed. This group includes waitresses, cleaners, caterers, hairdressers and prostitutes. The next two most common occupational groups are clerical and production work, employing just over 10% in each category.

The major trend in the occupations of women prisoners over the period 1971 to 1974 has been the increase in the proportion of women actually in the workforce.

Of the women in the study who were usually employed, 80% stated that they enjoyed their job and 2% had mixed feelings. The remaining 18% did not enjoy their job.



IV. OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

TABLE 15. Usual occupation

Occupational group	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=81	%	N=100	%	N=55	%
Professional, technical & related	3.7		5.0	1	3.6	
Administrative executive - management	-		-		-	
Clerical	7.4		11.0	2	5.5	
Sales	2.5		3.0	3	7.3	
Farm workers	2.5		2.0	4	1.8	
Transport and communication	3.7		-		1.8	
Production/process & trade workers	18.5		14.0	5	12.7	
Service sport & recreation workers	33.3		28.0	6	32.7	
Home duties	23.5		19.0		16.4	
Pensioner	3.7		15.0		3.6	
Other	-		1.0		5.5	
Not stated	1.2		2.0		9.1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

1. **Professional & technical:** Nurse, accountant, dancer
2. **Clerical:** Office work, receptionist, typist, secretary
3. **Sales:** Sales girl, model
4. **Farm workers:** Farm work, fruit picker
5. **Production, process and trades:** Factory work, machinist
6. **Service, sport and recreation workers:** Barmaid, stewardess, cleaner, waiter, caterer, prostitute, dining room maid, hairdresser.

TABLE 16. Enjoyment of usual occupation

Enjoyment of occupation	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
Enjoyed job	49.0	
Did not enjoy job	11.0	
Mixed feelings	1.0	
Not stated/not applicable	39.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Past employment

On average the women in the study worked in two different occupational areas in the past and two to six specific jobs. Over 50% of all the jobs held by the women prior to their imprisonment were in service, sport and recreation areas and process work. Another 25% of the jobs had been in clerical and sales work.

At the time of arrest, only 17% of the women in the study were employed, and over a third of these were employed in service, sport, and recreation occupations.

TABLE 17. Different types of jobs held in the past

Type of job	1972	Study
	No. ever holding job	% of total jobs
<b>Professional and technical</b>		
Dancers	2	
Nursing	12	6.6
<b>Administrative</b>		
Managing own business	2	13.2
<b>Clerical</b>		
Clerks and clerical machine operators	23	
Typists and stenographers	5	12.7
<b>Sales</b>		
Shop assistants	27	6.6
<b>Farm workers</b>		
Farm workers, seasonal workers etc.	14	4.7
<b>Transport and communication</b>		
Drivers	3	
Telephone, telegraph operators	7	23.6
<b>Production, process and trades</b>		
Factory worker	43	
Sewers, tailors, cutters	6	
Painter, decorator	1	30.2
<b>Service sport and recreation</b>		
Housekeepers, cooks, maids	30	
Launderers, dry cleaners, pressers	3	
Caretakers, cleaners	6	
Hairdressers, beauticians	2	
Photographers	3	
Waiters, bartenders	20	0.5
<b>Members of armed forces</b>		
Australian Military Force	1	
No jobs held in past	2	1.0

TABLE 18. Number of jobs held in the past

Number of jobs	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
Nil	8.0	
One job	8.0	
Two to six jobs	51.0	
More than six jobs	33.0	
TOTAL	100.0	

TABLE 19. Type of job held at time of arrest

Type of job	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
No job held	83.0	
Professional (nursing)	2.0	
Clerical (clerks, receptionist)	4.0	
Sales (shop assistant, ticket seller, model)	3.0	
Process (car factory)	1.0	
Service sport etc. (waiters, cook, cleaner, prostitute, photographer)	7.0	
TOTAL	100.0	



Attitudes to work

Of the 34 women who were not usually employed, almost two-thirds stated that they would like to work or didn't mind either way. One-fifth would have been unable to work due to age or health reasons. Only 12% stated that they preferred not to work.

The level of aspiration of the women who would have liked to work was not very high. The majority said that they would like domestic or factory work. Only four women gave typing or nursing as their preferences.

Only 26 women out of the total sample stated that they would prefer a different job. Of those, 7 preferred a change within the same occupational group, 11 aspired to professional and clerical jobs requiring more knowledge or skill and the remainder aspired to relatively unskilled occupations. In other words only 11% of the total sample showed evidence of significant vocational aspirations.

TABLE 20. Attitude of unemployed women towards work

Attitude to work	1972 Sample	
	No.	%
Would prefer to work	19	55.9
Would like to work part-time	2	5.9
Don't care either way	2	5.9
Would prefer not to work	4	11.7
Unable to work (pensioner, invalid etc.)	7	20.6
TOTAL	34	100.0

TABLE 21. Type of job preferred by unemployed women

Type of job	1972 Sample	
	No.	%
Domestic job, including live-in	8	23.5
Factory or workshop	6	17.7
Typing	2	5.9
Nursing	2	5.9
Other (wardsmaid, cashier, orphanage work, anything)	4	11.7
Part-time domestic or other casual	2	5.9
Nothing - would not like to work	4	11.7
Unable to work	6*	17.7
TOTAL	34	100.0

\* One pensioner, although unable to work, said that she would still like to do domestic work.

TABLE 22. Type of job preferred by women compared with usual occupational group

Type of job	1972 Study		Preferred occupation "No change" responses listed under usual occupations N=100 %
	Usual occupation N=100 %	Preferred occupation N=100 %	
No change from present job	N/A	40.0	N/A
Professional work	5.0	13.0 <sub>1</sub>	14.0
Clerical work	11.0	3.0	7.0
Sales work	3.0	2.0	4.0
Farm work	2.0		2.0
Transport & communication work		2.0 <sub>2</sub>	2.0
Process work	14.0	2.0	9.0
Service sport & recreation work	28.0	4.0 <sub>3</sub>	27.0
No job preferred/unemployed or not stated	37.0	34.0	35.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

1. librarian, veterinarian, kindergarten work, public relations officer, nurse, singer, stripper, designer.
2. driver, telephonist.
3. domestic, waitress, bus conductress, hospital work.



TABLE 23. Analysis of preferences of 26 women who preferred to change their occupations

Preferred occupation - No.	Actual occupation - No.						
	Profess- ional	Clerical	Sales	Transport	Process	Service, sport & recreation	Total
Professional	4	3	1	-	1	4	13
Clerical	-	1	-	-	1	1	3
Sales	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
Transport	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Process	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Service, sport & recreation	1	1	-	-	-	2	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>

Note: Figures in diagonal cells indicate change of job preferred within the same occupational group e.g. nurse (professional) preferred public relations work (professional).

V. CRIMINAL ASPECTS

1. Past criminal history

(a) Juvenile

Just under one-third of the women prisoners in the study had juvenile records with an average of almost 3 juvenile orders. Major reasons for juvenile orders were for stealing and for neglect, exposure to moral danger or uncontrollable. Two-thirds of these women with juvenile records had been given non-institutional penalties, such as fines, bonds or probation.

V. CRIMINAL ASPECTS

1. Past criminal history

TABLE 24. No. of juvenile orders received by women prisoners

No. of juvenile orders	Number
Nil	69
1	7
2	11
3	9
4 - 6	3
6 & over	1*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

\* 14 juvenile orders

TABLE 25. Types of offences resulting in juvenile orders for 31 women prisoners (multiple offences)

Offence type	Number	% of 31
Violent property offences (B.E.S., assault & rob.)	5	16.1
Non-violent property offences (stealing, false pretences)	19	61.3
Social offences:		
Drug offences	3	9.7
Drunkenness	1	3.2
Behaviour and language	2	6.5
Absconding from institution	2	6.5
Other orders (E.M.D.* neglected, uncontrollable)	19	61.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	

TABLE 26. Juvenile corrective measures experienced by 31 women prisoners

Corrective measures*	Number	% of 31
Admonished & discharged	3	9.7
Fine	2	6.5
Bond	14	45.2
Probation	17	54.8
Institution	19	61.3
Other (supervision C.W.D.)	1	3.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	

\* includes multiple penalties e.g. bond + probation  
fine + bond  
counted in each category

(b) Adult

Over three-quarters of the women had been convicted in an adult court in the past and half had received at least five convictions. The most common single offence committed by women was prostitution (29%). Over one-third had committed non-violent property offences, such as larceny or false pretences and 20% had previously been convicted of drunkenness or vagrancy.

Although four-fifths of the women with prior convictions had been given fines in the past, almost two-thirds had served a prison sentence (in many cases in default of payment of a fine). Bonds had been used frequently as a sentencing measure (57%) but only eleven women had previously been on probation.

(b) Adult

TABLE 27. Number of prior adult convictions received by women prisoners

No. of adult convictions	Number
Nil	23
1	9
2	8
3	7
4	3
5 & over*	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Range from 5 to 238 convictions

TABLE 28. Major types of offences committed in past by 77 women prisoners

Offence category	Number	% of 77
Violent property offences	2	2.6
Non-violent property offences	27	35.0
Social offences:		
- drug offences	3	3.9
- prostitution	22	28.6
- drunkenness	8	10.4
- vagrancy	8	10.4
- behaviour & language	3	3.9
Other (mixed property & social)	4	4.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

TABLE 29. Adult corrective measures experienced by 77 women prisoners

Corrective measures	Number	% of 77
Fine	62	80.5
Bond	44	57.1
Probation	11	14.3
Prison	50	64.9
Inebriate Institution	6	7.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173</b>	

## 2. Current prison episode

### Offence

The largest proportion of women prisoners (36%) were convicted of social offences: drug offences, drunkenness, vagrancy and prostitution. Almost 30% were convicted of non-violent offences against property (larcenies, false pretences etc). The third major group comprises violent offenders, with 20% convicted of offences against the person and 8% offences against property with violences (breaking and entering). Very few prisoners had committed offences against good order, traffic or breach offences (7%).

The most significant trend in offences over the period 1971 to 1974 is the increase in the proportion of violent offences against the person, which almost doubled. There has been a marked decline in the proportion of social offences, from 26% in 1971 to 15% in 1974. Other categories of offences have remained relatively constant.

2. Current prison episode  
TABLE 30. Offence

Offence	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=81	%	N=100	%	N=55	%
<b>Offences against the person</b>						
A.O.A.B.H.*	-		1.0		-	
Assault	3.7		2.0		-	
Malicious wounding	2.5		2.0		7.3	
Manslaughter	3.7		5.0		7.3	
Murder	7.4		5.0		10.9	
Robbery	-		2.0		12.7	
Other — includes abortion	3.7		3.0		-	
Driving offences	1.2		-		-	
		22.2		20.0		38.2
<b>Offences against property</b>						
<b>With violence</b>						
B.E.S.†		12.4		8.0		10.9
<b>Without violence</b>						
False pretences	1.2		4.0		3.6	
Forgery	2.5		1.0		5.5	
Larceny	23.5		18.0		10.9	
Larceny M/V ††	1.2		2.0		3.6	
Receiving	1.2		1.0		1.8	
Larceny as a servant	2.5		3.0		1.8	
		32.1		29.0		27.3
<b>Social offences</b>						
Drug offences	6.2		10.0		3.6	
Drunkenness	1.2		6.0		1.8	
Vagrancy	11.1		8.0		3.6	
Prostitution	7.4		12.0		5.5	
		25.9		36.0		14.6
<b>Offences against good order</b>						
Behavior & language	2.5		3.0		1.8	
Other	1.2		2.0		1.8	
		3.7		5.0		3.6
<b>Traffic offences</b>						
<b>Revocation &amp; breach offences</b>						
Breach of recognizance	3.7		-		-	
Revocation of parole	-		1.0		-	
		3.7		1.0		-
<b>Other</b>						1.8

\* Assault occasioning actual bodily harm

Sentence

One-third of the women in the study were serving sentences of less than three months. Half of the women were serving sentences of three months to five years. Almost 10% were serving sentences of five years to life, and the remaining 18% were unsentenced prisoners.

Corresponding to the changing pattern of offences over 1971 to 1974 there has been a change in the sentencing pattern. Almost 25% of women prisoners in 1974 were serving sentences of five years and over, compared with 10% in 1971: this corresponds with the increase in violent offences. Only 15% of women prisoners in 1974, compared with 25% in 1971, were serving sentences of less than three months, corresponding with the decrease in social offences over the same period.





TABLE 31. Length of sentence

Length of sentence	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=81	%	N=100	%	N=55	%
Under 1 m*	11.1		25.0		7.3	
1m & under 3m	13.6		7.0		7.3	
		24.7		32.0		14.6
3 m & under 6 m	12.4		4.0		3.6	
6 m & under 12 m	13.6		10.0		14.6	
		26.0		14.0		18.2
1 y & under 2 y	9.9		8.0		3.6	
2 y & under 3 y	8.6		6.0		7.3	
3 y & under 5 y	4.9		13.0		9.1	
		23.4		27.0		20.0
5 y & under 10 y	4.9		5.0		14.5	
Life	3.7		2.0		5.5	
Governor's Pleasure	1.2		2.0		5.5	
		4.9		4.0		11.0
Not under sentence**	16.1		18.0		21.7	
TOTAL	100.0		100.0		100.0	

\* m = Month y = Year.

\*\* Prisoner on remand, awaiting trial, awaiting sentence or on appeal.

#### Non-parole period

For almost 30% of women in the study, non-parole periods (N.P.P.s) had been specified by the courts. Half of these N.P.P.s were set as 1 year and under 2 years, while over 40% were less than 12 months. Only 7% of N.P.P.s set were periods exceeding 2 years.

Over the period 1971 to 1974 two trends can be seen:

- (1) increase in the proportion of women for whom N.P.P.s were specified, from 21% to 32%
- (2) increase in the proportion given long N.P.P.s exceeding 2 years, from 12% to 33%.

These two trends are consistent with the increase in the proportion of violent offenders with long sentences.

#### Period in custody

One-quarter of the women were received into custody during the two weeks of the study. Another quarter had spent less than 3 months in custody under sentence on the first day of the study. Only 12% had spent more than twelve months at Mulawa as sentenced prisoners.

Two main differences can be seen between the population under sentence on 30th June, 1971 and the sentenced population on 30th June, 1974:

- (1) 54% of the 1971 population had been in custody under sentence for less than three months compared with 38% of the 1974 population
- (2) 7% of the 1971 population had been in custody under sentence for more than 12 months compared with 18% for 1974.

TABLE 32. Non-parole period

Non-parole period	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=17	%	N=29	%	N=18	%
6 m & under 9 m	41.2		20.7		33.3	
9 m & under 12 m	17.6		20.7		5.6	
1 y & under 2 y	29.4		51.7		27.8	
2 y & under 5 y	11.8		6.9		33.3	
5 y & over	-		-		-	
% TOTAL	100.0		100.0		100.0	
TOTAL SPECIFIED	N=17 (21.0%)		N=29 (29.0%)		N=18 (32.7%)	
Not applicable, not given	N=64		N=71		N=37	

TABLE 33. Time spent in prison on current sentence

As at 30th June	1971 Census		1972 Study		1974 Census	
	N=81	%	N=100	%	N=55	%
Received during 1st 2 weeks in July	-		25.0		-	
Less than 7 days	19.7		6.0		7.3	
8 d & less than 1 m	11.1		8.0		16.4	
1 m & less than 3 m	23.5		12.0		14.5	
3 m & less than 6 m	12.4		8.0		9.1	
6 m & less than 12 m	9.9		11.0		12.8	
1 y & less than 2 y	4.9		6.0		12.7	
2 y & less than 5 y	-		4.0		1.8	
5 y & over	2.5		2.0		3.6	
Not applicable/N.U.S.*	16.0		18.0		21.8	
TOTAL	100.0		100.0		100.0	

### 3. Fine defaulting

Just over one-fifth (21%) of women prisoners in the study were in prison for failing to pay fines. The period to be served depends on the amount of the fine and is calculated at one day for every \$5 of fine. Thus a woman who failed to pay a fine of \$10 plus \$4 court costs would serve 48 hours, and a woman who failed to pay \$100 plus \$4 court costs would serve 20 days.

The total value of fines imposed on these 21 women was \$1264, with an average value of \$60. Total days of sentence in lieu of payment comprised 267 with an average sentence for defaulters of just over 12 days.

Almost 30% of fine defaulters gave 'lack of money' as their reasons for non-payment. Another 24% stated that they preferred to serve a sentence rather than pay the fine.

Of these who had served sentences in New South Wales previously, 26% stated that they had been imprisoned for fine defaulting. Main reasons for failure to pay the fine were given as lack of money (54%) and preferred to serve a sentence (31%).

3. Fine defaulters

TABLE 34. Length of sentence imposed in default of payment of fine

Length of sentence	No. of women	% of total fine defaulters
48 hours	4	19.0
5 d* & less than 10 d	5	23.8
10 d & less than 20 d	9	42.9
20 d & up to 40 d	3	14.3
TOTAL	21	100.0

\* d = Day

TABLE 35. Reasons for failure to pay fine

Reason	No. of women	% of fine defaulters
Lack of money	6	28.5
Prefer to serve sentence	5	23.8
No time to pay	1	4.8
Unable to contact person with her money	1	4.8
Able to pay but appealed against sentence	1	4.8
Didn't know had option of paying	1	4.8
Not stated <sup>1</sup>	6	28.5
TOTAL	21	100.0

1. Of these 6 respondents, five stated that they were not fine defaulters.

Whether this was through ignorance or reluctance to tell us is not known.

TABLE 36. Previous fine defaulting amongst women in study<sub>1</sub>

Previous fine defaulting	1972 Study N=100 %
Imprisonment for fine defaulting in the past	13.0
No imprisonment for fine defaulting in the past	37.0
Not applicable	50.0
TOTAL	100.0

TABLE 37. Reason for failure to pay fine in the past<sub>1</sub>

Reason	No. of women	% of fine defaulters
Lack of money	7	53.8
Preferred to serve sentence	4	30.8
Why should we pay the government?	1	7.7
Too drunk	1	7.7
TOTAL	13	100.0

1. As reported by women.



## VI. EFFECTS OF IMPRISONMENT

The women in the study were questioned as to the effects of past and current imprisonment on their families, their accommodation and their jobs. Half of the women had not been in a New South Wales prison previously, and another seven had spent only short periods on remand in a prison. Of the remaining women, 19 had previously been in custody at Mulawa, while 24 had served time at the old Reformatory at Long Bay.

### 1. Effects on family

Of the 50 women who had been imprisoned previously in New South Wales, 28% stated that their families were effected by their past imprisonment(s). This was mainly an emotional impact (families were upset) rather than separating families for most respondents. Almost half the women stated that their previous imprisonment had no effect on their families and another fifth said that their families did not know they were in prison.

Commenting on their current imprisonment over half the women stated that their families either did not know or were not affected in any way. Another quarter of the respondents thought the emotional strain on husband and parents was the major effect of their imprisonment. The remaining women reported dislocation of their families and said that their imprisonment brought shame to their parents, husbands and children.

The finding that most of the women said their past or current imprisonment had no effect on their families reflects the lack of family ties for many women prisoners: lack of a stable marriage, consistent caring for children or contact with parents (see page 12).



VI. EFFECTS OF IMPRISONMENT

1. Effects on family

TABLE 38. Effects of previous imprisonment on family

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
No effect	22.0	
Family did not know	10.0	
Family upset/emotional impact	11.0	
Children/husband upset, miss mother	2.0	
Separated family	1.0	
Not applicable/not stated	54.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

TABLE 39. Effect of current imprisonment on family

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
No effect	27.0	
Family do not know	25.0	
Severe dislocation of family <sup>1</sup>	7.0	
Worry and emotional strain for husband/parents	23.0	
Children/husband lonely, miss mother	6.0	
Shame: socially degrading for family	5.0	
Not stated	7.0	

1. Comments:

Mother very sick, not enough money.  
 Dad, crippled diabetic, would have to look after 3 children.  
 Husband won't be able to work.  
 Mother has a stroke — children don't know.  
 Husband separated.  
 Father, invalid, has to look after children until husband comes home from work: children are fretting & husband not getting enough sleep.

## 2. Effects on accommodation

Previous imprisonment had little effect on the accommodation of most prisoners: only 22% stated that they lost their flat, house or rooms because of their arrest and sentence.

Similarly only one-fifth of the women stated that their current imprisonment had resulted in loss, or threatened loss, of accommodation.

Most women prisoners depended on husbands, de facto husbands, friends or relatives to provide accommodation.

2. Effects on accommodation

TABLE 40. Effect of previous arrest & imprisonment on accommodation

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
No effect	39.0	
Lost flat <sub>1</sub>	10.0	
Lost live-in position, hence accommodation	1.0	
Not applicable	50.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

1. Comments:

Had no place to live, slept on railway station.  
 Couldn't pay rent on house.  
 Lost flat as landlord found out I was in prison and my husband and children were held to be unsuitable tenants.

TABLE 41. Effect of current arrest & imprisonment on accommodation

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
No effect	70.0	
Lost flat	9.0	
Other adverse effect <sub>1</sub>	8.0	
Not sure <sub>2</sub>	3.0	
Not stated	10.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

1. Comments:

Rent has to be paid — the guy supporting me is in Parramatta Gaol.  
 I don't know what has happened to my belongings.  
 I had to sell the furniture.  
 No one knew where I was (when arrested) so husband went to his mother's place.  
 Was in Salvation Army Hostel.

2. Comments:

Will have to catch up on month's rent & payments on land and care.  
 If I get a job, will be able to get live-in rooms (hospital work).

### 3. Effects on job

Previous imprisonments affected the jobs of 14% of women prisoners. Just over one-fifth of the women who were employed at the time of a previous arrest and imprisonment stated that their jobs were not affected, while the remaining 60% were not employed at the time of their previous arrest.

For 17% of women prisoners, employment had been affected by their current imprisonment. One-third claimed that imprisonment would have no effect on employment, while 37% were usually unemployed.

It is clear then, that most women prisoners perceived little or no effect of their prison term on their families, accommodation and jobs.

3. Effects on job

TABLE 42. Effects of previous imprisonment on job

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
Not employed at time of arrest	30.0	
No effect on job	11.0	
Lost job	5.0	
Affected earning capacity (prostitute)	1.0	
Refused to return to previous job	1.0	
Effect not known, not stated	2.0	
Not applicable	50.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

TABLE 43. Effect of current imprisonment on job

Effect	1972 Study	
	N=100	%
Usually unemployed	37.0	
No effect on job	32.0	
Adverse effect <sup>1</sup>	6.0	
Not sure of effect <sup>2</sup>	11.0	
Not stated	14.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

1. Comments:

Lost job (3)  
 Had to sell my business (1)  
 Can't go back to job (1)  
 Will affect future  
 opportunities (1)

2. Comments:

Still have job but might not  
 take it (1)  
 Employer promised to take me  
 back (1)  
 I have a chance of getting a  
 job (4)  
 Job depends on my health (1)  
 Case has been in papers so  
 could affect job (1)  
 Other unspecified (3)



4. Woman working on the lawns at the Centre.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Criminal aspects

#### a) Past history

The following three points summarize the main features of the juvenile and adult criminal histories of the women.

Juvenile	Adult
1. 1/3 of sample had juvenile record	1. 3/4 of sample had adult record
2. main reasons neglect-type and stealing	2. main offences comprised stealing and prostitution
3. 1/3 of juvenile offenders committed to institution	3. half of the women had experienced a prison sentence

One-third of the women in the study may be regarded as failures of the juvenile justice system. That is, for a third of the sample, efforts by juvenile courts to change antisocial behaviour such as stealing or to counteract the effects of parental neglect, exposure to moral danger etc., were not successful in preventing adult crime.

Two-thirds of the women were already recidivists, in terms of repeated adult convictions and half were already recidivists if return to prison is taken as the criterion for recidivism.

#### b) Current episode

Major points related to offences and sentences of the women are listed below.

Offences:	three main, almost equal groups comprising social offenders, non-violent property offenders and violent offenders.
Sentences:	half were either unsentenced or serving a sentence of less than 3 months. Of the remainder, most would spend less than 12 months in prison with remissions and parole. One-fifth were fine defaulters.

These points illustrate the heterogeneity and high turnover amongst a population of women prisoners.

Compared with male prisoners in custody on 30-6-72, women had committed a similar range of offences but in different proportions. Violent offenders comprised less than one-third of women prisoners but more than half of male prisoners. Proportions of property offenders were very similar (just under 30%) for both sexes, but women were over-represented in social and good order offences compared with males.

Marked differences in sentences imposed on male and female prisoners can be seen. Over half the women but only one-quarter of male prisoners were serving sentences of less than 12 months. One-third of the women and almost half the men were serving sentences of 1-5 years, while one-quarter of the men and only 6% of women were serving definite sentences exceeding five years. Similar proportions of both males and females (approximately 5%) were serving sentences of life or Governor's Pleasure.

In part, differences in sentencing can be attributed to differences in the types of offences committed by the two sexes. However, this cannot be considered a complete explanation since women convicted of the same offences as men often receive shorter sentences. One hypothesis suggested by Pollack<sup>1</sup> is that there are qualitative differences between offending by females and males: "female criminality differs from male in:

- 1) the ways in which women commit offences using subtlety rather than violence and the victims chosen
- 2) opportunities of which they can avail themselves because they are women.
- 3) persons with whom they co-operate
- 4) the part which they play in the actual perpetration of the crime "

From our study it is impossible to do more than point out the differences between penal measures given to male and female offenders and to guess at possible reasons.

1. Pollack O. quoted in Payak B.J. Understanding the Female Offender, *Federal Probation*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1963 p. 8.



c) Fine defaulting

One-fifth of women prisoners were in custody for non-payment of a fine. Over one-third gave financial difficulties as the reason for non-payment. One-quarter preferred to serve a sentence.

A significant proportion of the female prison population is composed of fine defaulters. Many of these women are prostitutes, drunks or behaviour and language offenders who had served numerous short sentences in default of fine payment in the past.

Prisoners received repeatedly with short sentences pose several problems for the prison administration. It is impossible to provide a constructive programme for these women and so they are simply held in custody for the duration of their sentence. Moreover a considerable proportion of the time spent on clerical procedures related to receptions and discharges can be attributed to these women.

Several alternatives to imprisonment for fine defaulters have been suggested, including a form of Periodic Detention which would involve Saturday morning community work. Non-penal alternatives would have a number of advantages:

- 1) they would result in a significant decrease in the population of women prisoners
- 2) they would significantly reduce the workload of prison staff
- 3) they would be far less disruptive to the women concerned
- 4) they would help to prevent future delinquency amongst the women's children by reducing strain on their families.

Whether alternative measures would have any greater success than short periods of custody in changing the deviant behaviour of these offenders is doubtful and beyond the scope of this study.

2. Social aspects

Important features of the women prisoners in terms of age, birthplace, marital status, religion, education and occupation are summarized below.

Age:	almost half aged under 25 years
Birthplace:	only one-eighth born overseas, half of these in Europe
Marital status:	40% never been married
Religion:	almost half Roman Catholic
Education:	average attainment junior secondary with school leaving age of 14 years 9 months
Occupation:	one-third not usually employed. Most of those working employed as cleaners, barmaids and other 'service, sport and recreation' occupations.

It is difficult to make any positive comments about these social findings. In New South Wales there is not the problem of the young, militant offender who is viewed as a disturbing element by American penal administrators (Brodsky, 1974 p.394), neither is there a racial problem within New South Wales prisons.

In addition to the generally low level of attainment has been noted. Administrators should also consider the

### 3. Effects of imprisonment

On children:	Less than half the children of mothers in prison were cared for by the mother's husband or relatives during her imprisonment. However, one-third of mothers did not have custody of dependent children before their imprisonment.
On family:	Imprisonment had no effect on family in half the cases.
On job/accommodation:	Less than one-fifth said that imprisonment affected job or accommodation.

For most of the women, imprisonment is not seen as a problem in terms of their families, jobs or accommodation. That is, a situation which could be viewed as a problem by an outsider is largely accepted and minimized through the perceptions of women prisoners. The women's comments suggest that observations made by prison administrators such as Brodsky:

"lack of family ties is a critical deprivation experience for women in prison"<sup>1</sup>

or Wheeler:

"by the time men begin to come into the reformatory institution, they have begun to lose family support. By the time they get into the maximum security male institutions, especially if they are multiple offenders, they may have lost most of their family and friends. This does not happen nearly as severely with women"<sup>2</sup>

require careful scrutiny before they can be accepted as part of the experiences of women prisoners.

Comments made by the women also emphasize the differing job accommodation needs of male and female offenders on release from prison.

This study has attempted to describe a population of women prisoners and to suggest how both observations or record data and the perceptions of the women could be used in planning correctional programmes.

1. Brodsky, A.M. op. cit. p 395.

2. Wheeler, M. op. cit. p 377..



