Who are the women incarcerated in Latin America? What are risk factors associated with their criminal history?

Risk Factors

Likelihood of Recidivism

What factors increase the likelihood that a woman will commit another crime?

- She has children
- Problematic drug use
- Family violence
- Friends who have committed crimes
- Current age and age at first arrest

Early Age of First Arrest

What factors increase the likelihood that a woman will be arrested at an early age?

- Left home before turning 15
- Friends who have committed crimes
- Criminal gangs in the neighborhood
- Her parents did not live together

Detention in a Center for Minors

What factors increase the likelihood that a woman will be detained in a center for minors?

- Parents’ problematic drug use
- Left home before turning 15
- Friends who have committed crimes

Outcomes

Importance of the Peer Group

Women prisoners with friends who have committed crimes have a greater likelihood of being recidivists, of having been in a center for minors, and of having been arrested at an early age. Analyses of the survey data allow us to conclude that the influence of a woman’s partner is relevant, as is that of her group of friends.

Influence of Other Factors

Multivariate analyses highlight the relevance of other risk factors in the socialization context. For example, leaving home before turning 15 years old has a significant influence on the likelihood that a woman will enter a center for minors and be arrested at an early age. Living in an unstructured home environment also increases a woman’s chances of being arrested at an early age. The latter finding suggests the importance of attachment and parental supervision for protecting against early criminal behavior.

Other risk factors for certain types of criminal behavior include exposure to family violence during childhood (whether as a victim or witness); having parents who frequently consumed drugs and/or alcohol; and/or growing up in a neighborhood with criminal gangs. For example, a violent family environment increases the likelihood that a woman will be a repeat offender; her parents’ problematic consumption of illicit drugs and/or alcohol increases the possibility that she will enter an institute for minors; and contact with criminal gangs may lead to her arrest at an early age.

General Conclusions

Vulnerability

Women’s vulnerability once out of prison needs to be addressed.

Policies of Inclusion

Interventions to reduce women’s vulnerability prior to arrest.

Support for Childcare

Coverage of economic needs
Empowerment of women: Reinforcing their independence
Labor Insertion

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-American Development Bank, its Board of Directors, or the countries they represent.
1. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Motherhood

- **87%** **WOMEN** have children, compared to **78%** **MEN**
- **27%** **WOMEN** have more than 3 children, compared to **23%** **MEN**
- **55%** **WOMEN** had children as adolescents, compared to **17%** **MEN**
- **24%** **WOMEN** are single parents, compared to **26%** **MEN**

Partner

- **74%** **WOMEN** have a partner, compared to **75%** **MEN**

Both men and women report being in a relationship in similar proportions, but of those who are:

- **14%** of **WOMEN** (39%) whose partner is detained due to **DEPENDENCY ON THEIR MALE PARTNER**
- **39%** of **MEN**

2. SOCIALIZATION CONTEXT

Work

- **8%** **WOMEN** never worked, compared to **6%** **MEN**
- **27%** **WOMEN** did not work during the month prior to detention, compared to **17%** **MEN**
- **64%** **WOMEN** worked in the month prior to detention, compared to **77%** **MEN**

3. SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT

Education

- **WOMEN** have more schooling than **MEN**

Both men and women have little schooling.

4. CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

The crime most commonly committed by **WOMEN** is drug trafficking and possession, with **38%** compared to **12%** for **MEN**

The crime most commonly committed by **MEN** is robbery, with **41%** compared to **22%** for **WOMEN**

**FINDINGS**

THE MOST COMMON CRIME AMONG WOMEN IS TRAFFICKING OR POSSESSION OF DRUGS

- **38%** (for men it’s robbery)

In some countries women engage more in other types of crime.

WOMEN COMMITTED LESS VIOLENT CRIMES

- Use of firearms: **11%** **WOMEN**, **28%** **MEN**
- Crimes that caused physical harm to others: **28%** **WOMEN**, **35%** **MEN**

A LARGER PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN COMMIT CRIMES WITH OTHERS

- More participants were involved in the crime committed: **65%** **WOMEN**, **51%** **MEN**