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State Imprisonment of Milwaukee County Women: 1990-2012

John Pawasarat

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, pawasara@uwm.edu

Lois M. Quinn

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, lquinn@uwm.edu

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STATE IMPRISONMENT OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY WOMEN: 1990-2012

Prepared by John Pawasarat and Lois M. Quinn, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute (2014)

This study by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute identifies the total population of Milwaukee County women who were incarcerated in adult state correctional facilities from January 1990 to January 2012 using the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) public inmate data files.

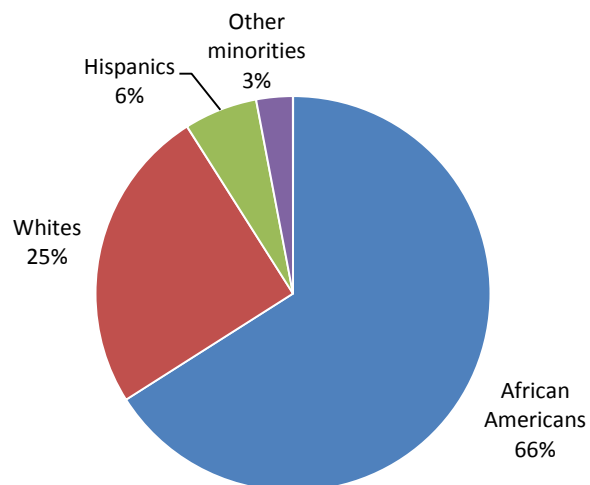
Findings

- From 1990 to 2012, 4,309 women from Milwaukee County were incarcerated in state correctional facilities, including 336 women still imprisoned as of January 2012.

Milwaukee County Women Incarcerated in State Correctional Facilities, 1990-2012

<u>Females of Working Age (18-64)</u>	<u>Still Incarcerated, as of January 2012</u>		<u>Released prior to January 2012</u>		<u>Total Incarcerated, 1990-2012</u>	
African Americans	193	57%	2,649	67%	2,842	66%
Whites	112	33%	969	24%	1,081	25%
Hispanics	19	6%	241	6%	260	6%
Native American, Asian, Other	<u>12</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>3%</u>
Total	336	100%	3,973	100%	4,309	100%

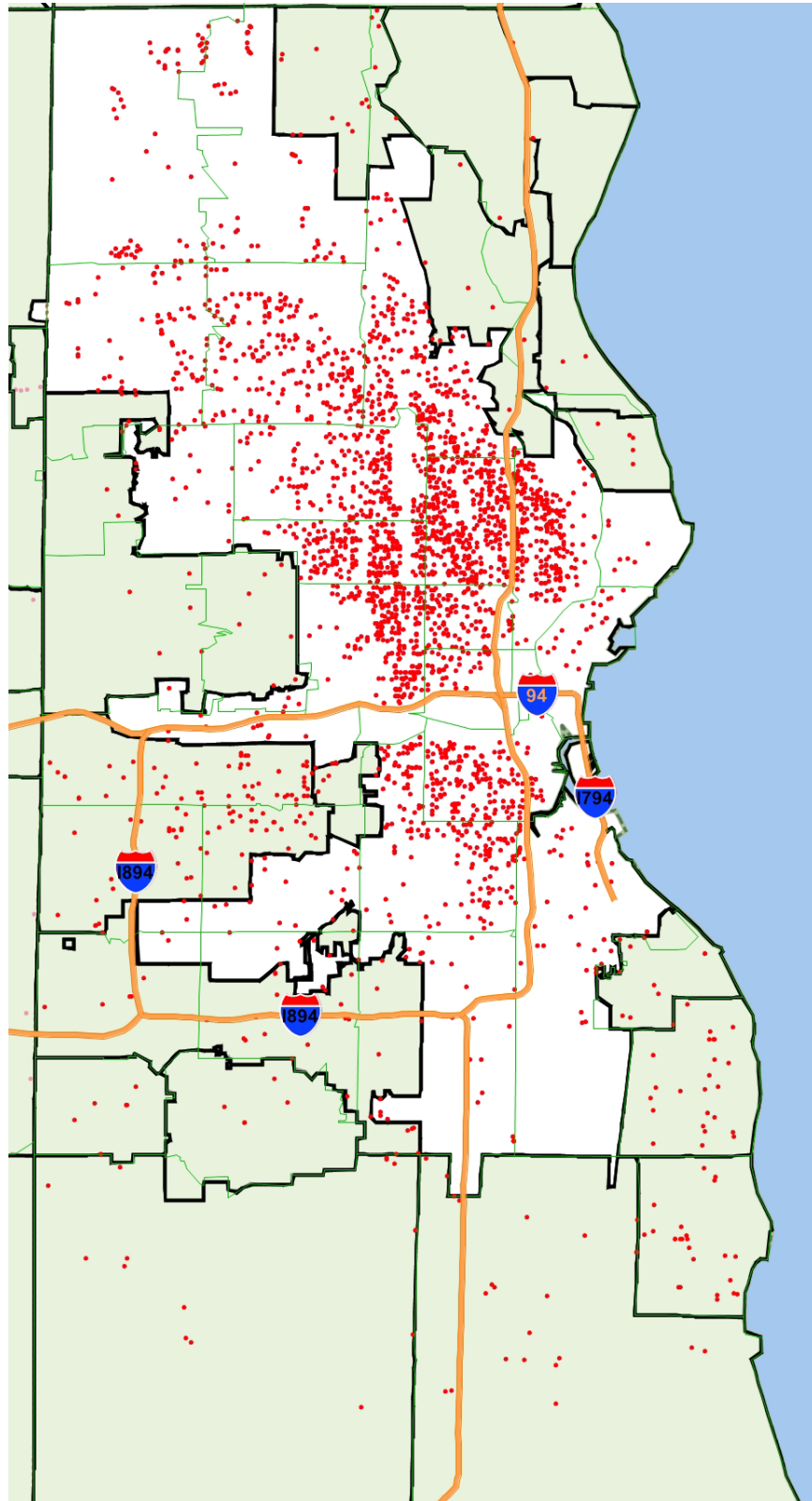
- Most (75%) of the women incarcerated from Milwaukee County were women of color, even though minority women make up only 44% of the county's adult female population.
- Two-thirds of the females incarcerated were African Americans, 25% whites, 6% Hispanics, and 2% Native American.



- The heaviest concentrations of the imprisoned women were from the poorest neighborhoods on Milwaukee's near north side and near south side. The maps below show the home residence of Milwaukee County women incarcerated from 1990 to 2012.

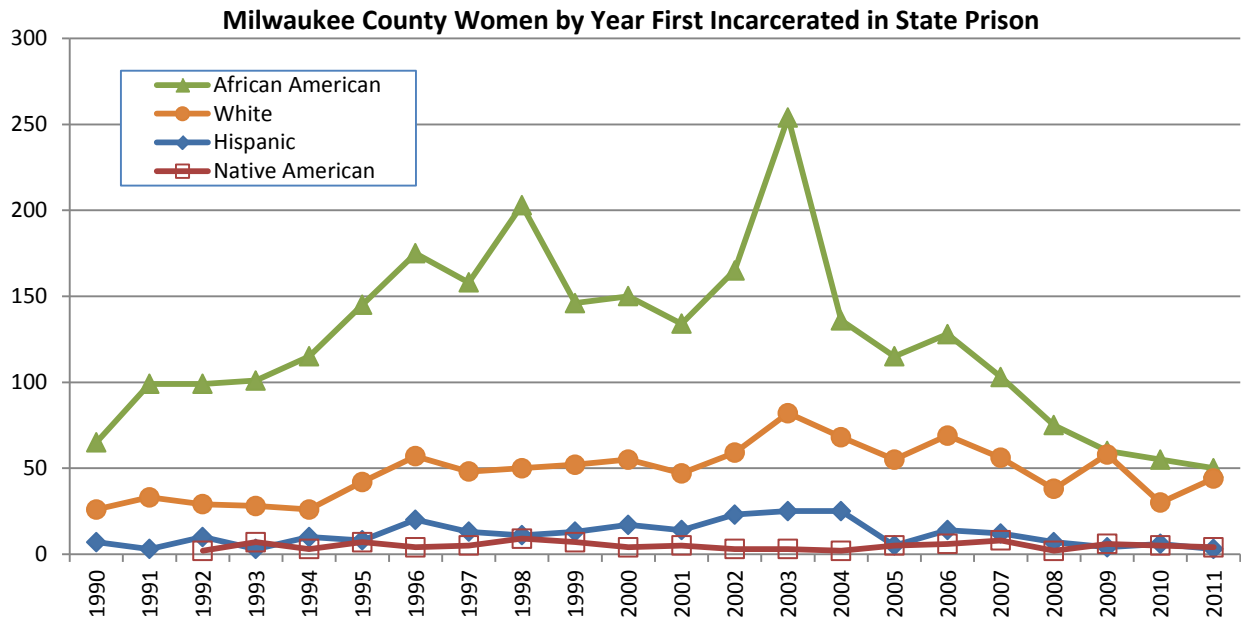
Growing numbers of Milwaukee families have parents/partners, siblings and/or sons and daughters currently or previously incarcerated in state prison (or in the Milwaukee County House of Corrections), given the extremely high rates of incarceration in neighborhoods with extreme poverty.

Home Residence of Milwaukee County Females Incarcerated in Wisconsin Prisons, 1990-2012
(Source: UWM-ETI analysis of Wisconsin Department of Corrections public inmate files, 1990-2012)

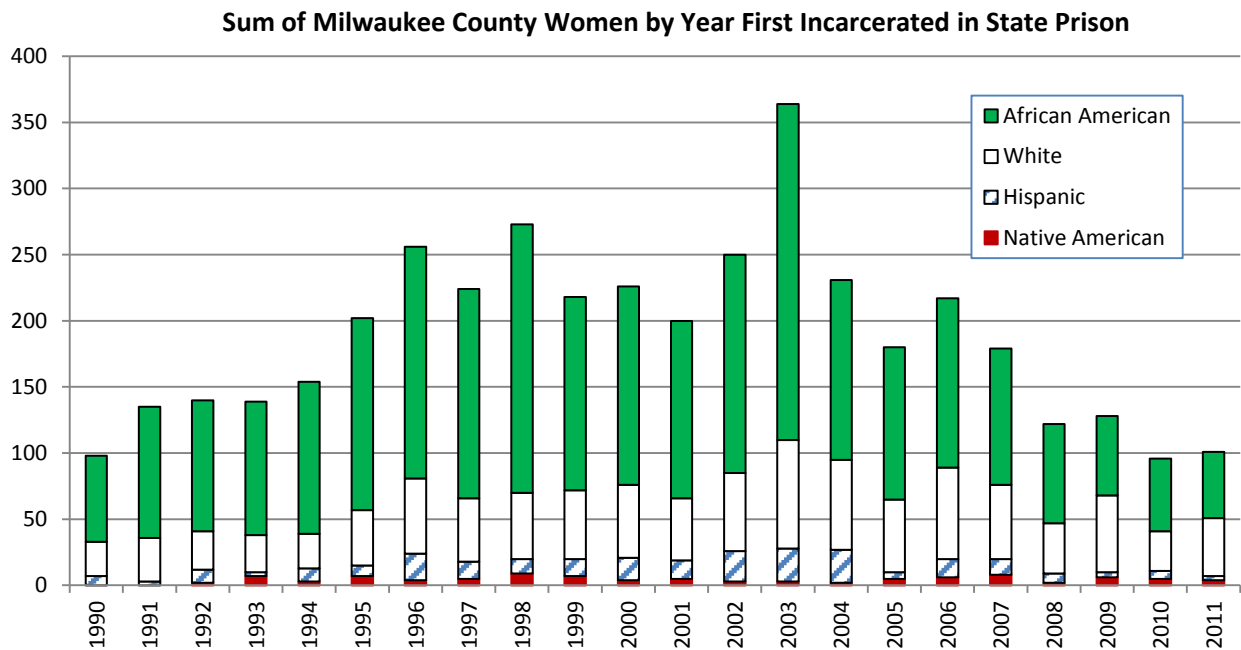


Escalation of Female Prison Populations in the 2000s

- The increases in state incarceration of Milwaukee County women has impacted African American women the hardest as the number of black women first sent to prison jumped from around 100 a year in the early 1990s to 200 in 1998 and a spike to 254 in 2003 during the height of the “war on drugs” enforcement years.

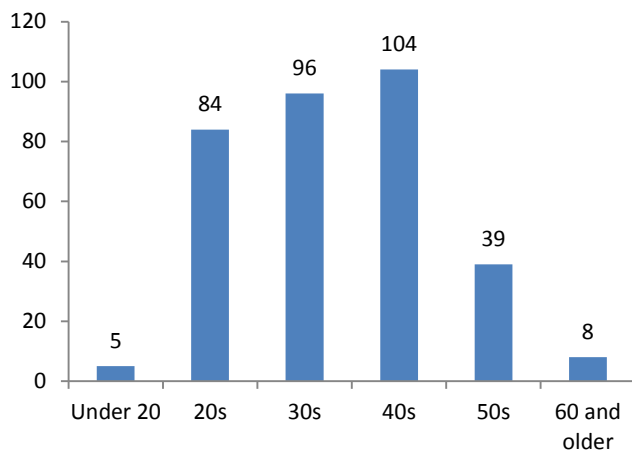


The cumulative effect of these racial trends can be seen below.

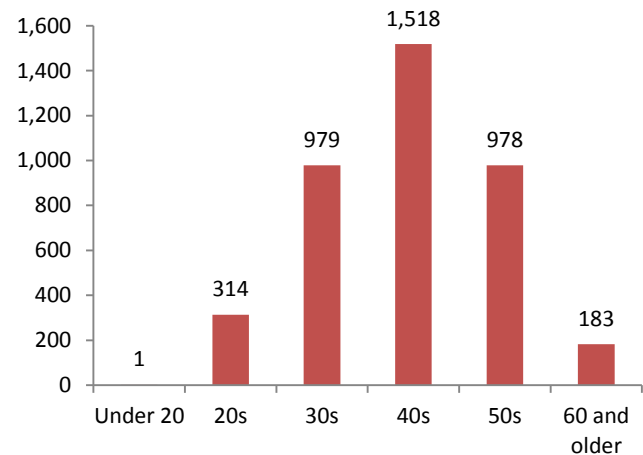


- As of January 2012, 90% of the incarcerated women had been released, while 336 were still incarcerated.
- Over half (54%) of the Milwaukee County women in prison (as of January 2012) were in their 20s and 30s. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the women released from prison were in their 40s and 50s.

Age of Milwaukee County Women Incarcerated in State Correctional Facilities in January 2012

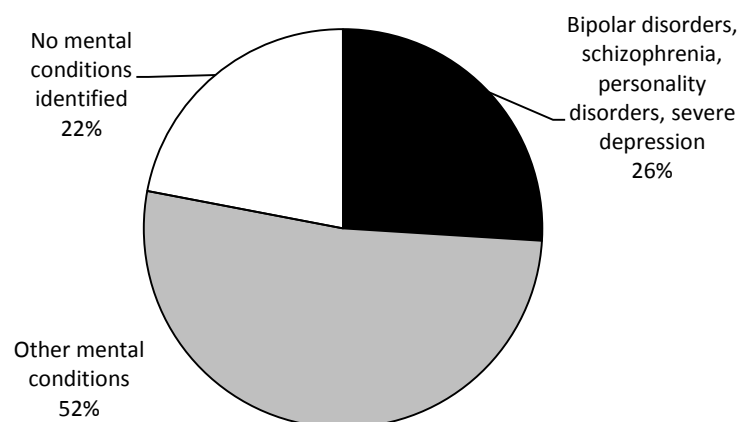


Age (as of Jan. 2012) of Milwaukee County Women Released from State Correctional Facilities from 1990 to 2012



- While data are not available separately for Milwaukee County, the state Department of Corrections reported that **78% of all Wisconsin women currently imprisoned have been diagnosed with mental conditions**, including 26% with bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, personality disorders, severe depression, or other serious mental conditions. The state DOC also reports that one out of every three men in prison have been diagnosed with a mental condition, including 7% with bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, personality disorders, severe depression, or other serious mental conditions. (Source: Wisconsin Department of Corrections, "Corrections at a Glance," Wisconsin Department of Corrections Division of Adult Institutions, as of February 2014)

Women in Wisconsin Correctional Facilities with Mental Conditions
(Source: Wisconsin Department of Corrections, as of February 2014)



Employment after Incarceration

The prison/ex-offender overlay in the lower-income Milwaukee County neighborhoods has profound implications for children and families. High poverty neighborhoods face problems of crime, drug violence, and lack of safety for children – night and day. At the same time, many ex-offenders and current prisoners are themselves parents of Milwaukee children – struggling to support their children financially and emotionally and to reattach to their families.

The ability of ex-offenders to help support their families is very limited for many released inmates. Securing employment after release is often very difficult because of the felony records, the current jobs shortage, and often lower levels of educational attainment. In Wisconsin the state courts maintain a CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Programs) website where nearly all arrests, charges (whether proven or not), and prison records are available for easy review by potential employers, landlords, and financial institutions, as well as by casual web surfers. The public dissemination of criminal records – usually for the lifetime of the ex-offender – presents continuing obstacles for ex-offenders to overcome in reconnecting with family members, their children, and the labor market.

Most residents return from prison into inner city neighborhoods that already have extremely large gaps between the numbers of active job seekers compared to available full-time work: 25 to 1 in May 2009, and 7 to 1 in May 2006 before the national recession hit. Those incarcerated for drug-related convictions face additional problems securing private and public sector employment and may have limitations placed on their access to federal aid and scholarships for attendance in vocational education classes, college, and other post-secondary education programs.

The Employment and Training of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the University of Wisconsin-Extension addresses workforce training, transportation, and education needs of low-income, unemployed, and underserved workers and families through applied research, policy development, and technical assistance. ETI studies on state prison populations and incarceration as a barrier to employment include:

Educational Follow-Up Study of Juveniles Released from Ethan Allen and Lincoln Hills Schools (1982)

Identifying Milwaukee Youth in Critical Need of Intervention: Lessons from the Past, Measures for the Future (1991)

New Indicators of Neighborhood Need in Zipcode 53206 (2007)

Barriers to Employment: Prison Time (2007)

The EARN (Early Assessment and Retention Network) Model for Effectively Targeting WIA and TANF Resources to Participants (2007)

Ex-Offender Populations in Milwaukee County (2009)

Wisconsin's Mass Incarceration of African American Males: Workforce Challenges for 2013 (2013)

Statewide Imprisonment of Black Men in Wisconsin (2014)

Cited in Milwaukee: The Cost of Unpaid Municipal Citations (2015)

For more information, see the Institute's website at www.eti.uwm.edu.