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Rising female prison population: How Gender Apartheid might be the Justice System's Silent Scandal

The number of women in prison is skyrocketing - is it really a matter of discrimination, or do women just want a get out of jail free card?

Worldwide, women are the fastest growing prison demographic, and the female prison population is rising much faster than that of men. In certain countries, it has even doubled in the last 20 years. This has sparked a heated debate questioning whether the justice system is failing its women because of discrimination, or if it is because women are just committing more crimes and being rightfully punished for such crimes.

Gender Apartheid - The definition

The term gender apartheid is being thrown around by activists, who claim that the justice system is discriminating against their women. Advocates define the term 'gender apartheid' as a systemic division where one gender is disproportionately disadvantaged. In this case, they argue that the justice system is built with men in mind. According to them, it fails to provide adequate healthcare, sufficient protection from violence, and fair sentencing to female offenders. But is this really oppression, or is it just an attempt to get softer sentencing and better treatment?



Chivalry Effect

Multiple studies show that in many cases, women tend to receive lighter sentences than men, even if they have committed similar crimes, according to a study conducted in 2019 by the U.S. Sentencing Commission,



Women typically have sentences 63 months shorter than men. Some also argue that women tend to receive more lenient treatment in the justice system because of the stereotypes that state that women are less violent than men. It's a 'chivalry effect' that can result in lighter punishments, which undermines the principle of equal justice. This sentencing gap undermines the concept of equal justice under the law.

“If they do the same job, they should get the same pay” - Donald J. Trump, 2015

This statement by US president Donald J. Trump highlights how regardless of gender that the job is performed by, the pay should be the same. Therefore, this idea should also be applied in the justice system, because fairness should be based on actions, and not on gender.



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International Perspectives At St Peter's International School's MUN - Day 1

The number of female prison inmates are rising globally, but different countries have shown many different viewpoints in today's debate at the St. Peter's International School's annual MUN conference.

'Although addressing gender-based discrimination is essential to solve the issues present in today's society, the delegation of the USA prefers to not address this issue on an international scale. There are a lot of different approaches from different countries, and it is best to let other nations decide how they want to solve this issue on their own, because of their different legal systems and national laws' – Delegation of the USA

'Over the course of the first day of this conference, very interesting points were brought up, and a fruitful debate was faced. Unfortunately, in the end only one clause was passed as a resolution, and there were many time constraints that prevented some clauses from being heard. In general, though, a great first day.' - Delegation of Argentina



In conclusion, the law should remain blind to gender. No matter the gender, the same crimes should have the same consequences. If women decide to commit crimes, they should expect to face the same consequences as men. Pushing for lighter sentences based on gender does not promote justice—it undermines equality, and it risks creating a dangerous legal double standard. Supporters of preferential treatment argue that it will fix the justice system's 'inequalities,' but in reality, it will only further disrupt the fairness.