



IPRT Briefing on **Women in Prison in Ireland**

"It is now accepted that a gender specific approach is required for women in prison"¹

Our Recommendations to the UN CEDAW Committee

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) recommends the Irish State meet its obligations under CEDAW and the Bangkok Rules, through the following actions:

1. **The Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 should be amended to remove the limit (100 euro) below which a fine cannot be paid in instalments, and include an option to pay over 24 months.**
2. **Gender-specific non-custodial options, which take into account the complex needs of female offenders, should be developed and made available on a nationwide basis.**
3. **Government should undertake a review to determine the reasons that high rates of female prisoners are detained on remand. Prison should not be viewed as a place of respite.**
4. **The timeline for the new female prison in Limerick must be met, with Mother and Baby Units included in its design.**
5. **Addictions and mental health services should be readily accessible to all women while in prison and post-release.**
6. **Prison visits should be child-friendly and take into account the needs of the child. Contact should be encouraged and facilitated, where it is in the best interests of the child.**
7. **Specific post-release services designed to meet the needs of marginalised groups in the prison system, such as Traveller women, should be developed, resourced and implemented.**
8. **More general provision of post-release supports for women, including supported step-down residential facilities, geographically spread across the country. These should include:**
 - supported accommodation;
 - intensive case management;
 - specialist addiction and mental health services; and
 - day services with structured educational and training programmes that consider the needs of women.

Women in Prison in Ireland: Facts & Figures

- In 2015, there were 3,411 female committals to prison. This compares with 155 committals in 1999.² 80% of female committals to prison in 2015 were for failure to pay court-ordered fines.³
- There has been a declining number of women on Community Service Orders every year from 2012-2015, down from 229 in 2012 to 175 in 2015.⁴
- On 31 October 2016, the number of women in prison on remand (pre-trial) as a percentage of the total female prison population was 24% compared to males at 15% on remand.⁵
- On 9 February 2017, Ireland's two women's prisons were overcrowded: Dóchas Centre was operating at 111% occupancy, while the female wing of Limerick prison was operating at 125% occupancy.⁶
- 31 female prisoners are toileting in the presence of others.⁷
- The female wing of Limerick prison is part of a male prison facility.
- There are only two female prisons in Ireland, therefore children and families of female prisoners often have long distances to travel.
- 85%⁸ of female prisoners had addiction issues and previous research has shown that sentenced female prisoners have high prevalence (60%)⁹ of mental health issues.
- Traveller women are 18-22¹⁰ times more likely to be in prison in Ireland than the general female population.
- Women leaving prison in Ireland are 4.6 times more likely to experience difficulties accessing accommodation post-release.¹¹

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2 Irish Prison Service (2016) *Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2015*, p. 29 http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/12232-Irish-Prison-Service-AnnualReport2015-v7-2.pdf

3 Irish Prison Service (2016) *Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2015*, p. 31 http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/12232-Irish-Prison-Service-AnnualReport2015-v7-2.pdf

4 Probation Service Annual Report, 2015 <http://www.probation.ie/EN/PB//WebPages/WP16000121>

5 Irish Prison Service, Daily Prisoner Populations http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/31_October_2016.pdf

6 Irish Prison Service, Daily Prisoners Populations http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/09-February-2017.pdf

7 Irish Prison Service, Daily Prisoners Populations http://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/January-2017-In-Cell.pdf

8 Clarke A & A.Eustace (2016) *Review of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services for Adult Offenders in Prison and in the Community* http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/PS_IPS_Probation_Review_of_treatment_for_offenders.pdf/Files/PS_IPS_Probation_Review_of_treatment_for_offenders.pdf

9 Kennedy et al. (2005) *Mental Health in Irish Prisoners: psychiatric morbidity in sentenced, remanded and newly committed prisoners*. http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/6393/1/4338_Kennedy_Mental_illness_in_Irish_prisoners.pdf

10 *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010. Summary available here: https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf

11 Kelly, J. & J. Brogue (2014) Gender Differences in Criminogenic Needs among Irish Offenders, *Irish Probation Journal*, p.97