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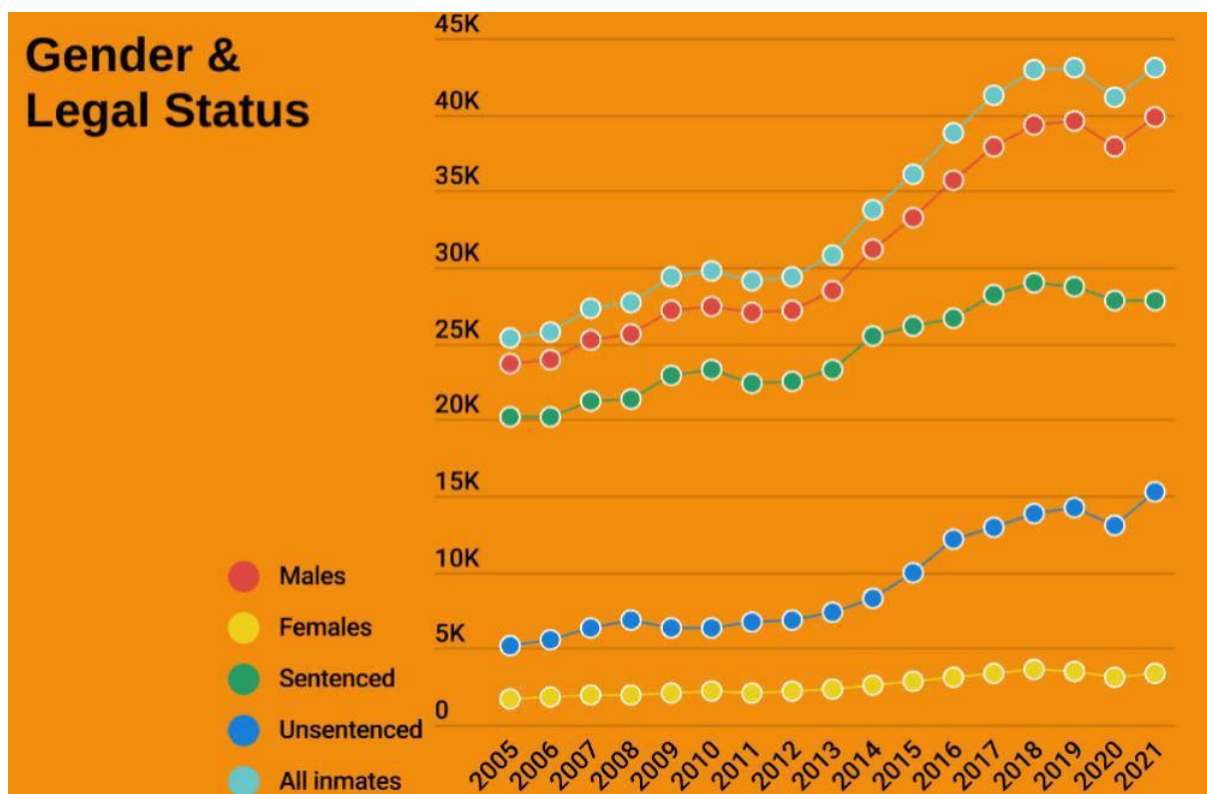
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[http://www.aprj.com.au/articles/APRJ-1\(3\)-2-Statistics-Bulletin-1.pdf](http://www.aprj.com.au/articles/APRJ-1(3)-2-Statistics-Bulletin-1.pdf)

### Abstract

APRJ shall release regular statistical bulletins relating to Australian prisons and prisoners. This first bulletin contains very general statistics (mostly as at the end of Sept 2021) to lay the groundwork.

Graph 1



From 30 June 2019 to 30 June 2020, the number of Australian prisoners decreased by 5% (1,968) to 41,060. This was the first national decrease since 2011. This decrease was attributed by the ABS and AIHW to various government COVID-19 restrictions since March

2020, which impacted criminal activity and the justice system (ABS 2020: 'Key Statistics'; AIHW 2021a: 'Impact of COVID-19 on adult prisoners data').

This was only a dip, however, and the average daily number of prisoners rose to 42,633 in the March quarter 2021, and again to 43,073 in the June quarter 2021 (which is above the pre-COVID population).

## Data 1

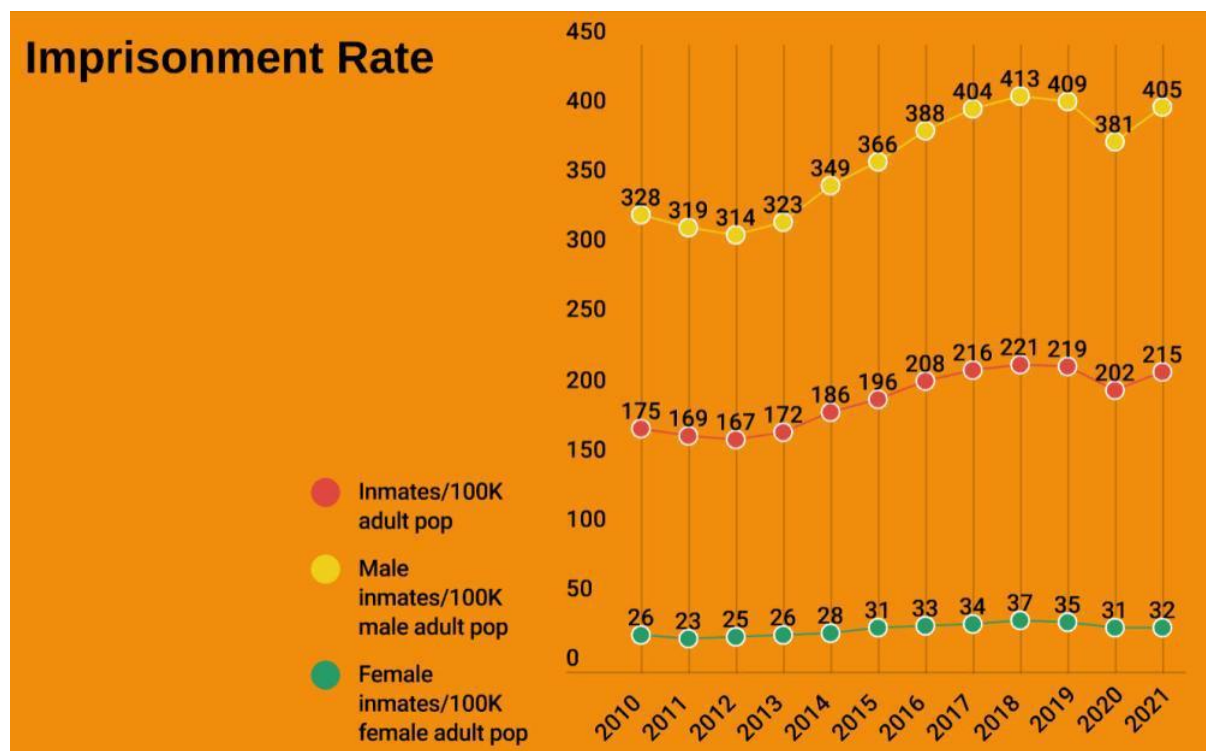
Inmates, Selected Legal Status and Prior Imprisonment									
Year	Males	Females	Sentenced	Unsentenced	Non-Indigenous prior imprisonment (no.)	Non-Indigenous prior imprisonment (%)	Indigenous prior imprisonment (no.)	Indigenous prior imprisonment (%)	All inmates
2005	23,619	1,734	20,220	5,133	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	25,353
2006	23,963	1,827	20,208	5,581	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	25,790
2007	25,240	1,984	21,266	6,340	10,455	51.28	4,926	74.31	27,224
2008	25,658	1,957	21,276	6,870	10,251	49.62	4,893	72.95	27,615
2009	27,195	2,127	22,923	6,391	10,753	49.89	5,496	74.41	29,315
2010	27,469	2,231	23,333	6,369	10,603	48.58	5,587	73.67	29,700
2011	27,079	2,030	22,382	6,724	10,202	47.61	5,693	74.36	29,107
2012	27,185	2,201	22,510	6,873	10,150	47.73	5,916	74.10	29,380
2013	28,423	2,346	23,335	7,375	11,303	50.88	6,490	76.99	30,773
2014	31,201	2,589	25,513	8,213	12,657	51.76	7,115	76.79	33,789
2015	33,256	2,876	26,163	9,898	13,220	50.43	7,628	77.18	36,134
2016	35,745	3,094	26,649	12,111	13,768	48.80	8,052	75.99	38,845
2017	37,905	3,299	28,199	12,911	14,638	49.01	8,622	76.25	41,202
2018	39,343	3,625	29,030	13,856	15,446	49.67	8,917	75.26	42,974
2019	39,538	3,494	28,721	14,210	15,414	50.04	9,480	77.74	43,028
2020	37,908	3,144	27,849	13,097	14,855	51.45	9,539	78.89	41,060
2021	39,768	3,305	27,854	15,219	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	43,073

Accessed 16-21/09/2021: Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) 'Corrective Services, Australia', June Quarter 2021  
As well as '4517.0-Prisoners in Australia' for 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

Since 2005, the Australian population has risen 27.8% from 20,176,800 to 25,776,900 (as at 30 September 2021 – ABS), but the prison population has increased by 69.9%, so 2.5 times as much. The male prisoners have increased in number slightly slower (a 68% increase), but female incarceration has risen much faster (90%).

Another trend is even more startling. While the number of sentenced prisoners has risen by 37.8%, the unsentenced number has almost tripled (an increase of 196.5%). This is a concern because more and more people are being held on remand, often for two or more years. This is due to more people being charged; more bail breaches; more people with prior convictions; and greater difficulty in obtaining bail (with changed bail laws, conditions and decision-making or lack of accommodation/bail support programs) (Bartels 2018:3). Then there are adjourned hearings (e.g. following disagreement about the statement of facts or, currently, difficulty getting witnesses to court with COVID).

Graph 2



The imprisonment rate decreased by 7% from 219 to 202 prisoners per 100,000 adult population, again due to the effect of COVID restrictions on the court system (e.g. cases delayed because of difficulty in hearing witnesses) and criminal activity (e.g. criminals being unable to travel for crime and having less vacant houses for burglary). However, the imprisonment rate rose to 213 per 100,000 adult population in the March quarter 2021 and again to 215 persons in the June quarter 2021 (ABS 2021a). These rises while people are locked down (making criminal activity more difficult) and while the court systems are clogged (Judicial College of Victoria 2021) indicate that the Australian incarceration rate is likely to continue rising rapidly as more people are vaccinated.

## Data 2

Imprisonment Rate (inmates/100,000 adults)												
(Note: Year ending 30 June)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Inmates/100K adult pop	175	169	167	172	186	196	208	216	221	219	202	215
Male inmates/100K male adult pop	328	319	314	323	349	366	388	404	413	409	381	405
Female inmates/100K female adult pop	26	23	25	26	28	31	33	34	37	35	31	32
Age-standardized Indigenous inmates/100K adult Indigenous pop	1892	1868	1914	1959	1857	1951	2039	2142	2210	2077	2081	N/A
Male Indigenous inmates/100K male adult Indigenous pop	3508	3457	3453	3549	3765	3884	4067	4219	4262	4218	4195	4395
Female Indigenous inmates/100K female adult Indigenous pop	315	292	342	343	391	432	436	442	479	444	424	458
Non-Indigenous inmates/100K adult non-Indig. pop	134	130	129	131	144	153	163	169	174	173	156	N/A
How much more likely an Indigenous than a non-Indigenous inmate	14.1 times	14.4 times	14.8 times	15.0 times	12.9 times	12.8 times	12.5 times	12.7 times	12.7 times	12.0 times	13.3 times	N/A
Accessed 16-21/09/2021:	Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) 'Corrective Services, Australia', June Quarter 2021 As well as '4517.0-Prisoners in Australia' for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020											

With prison building that has not kept pace with the rapid rise in incarceration, there is significant overcrowding in prisons (Ball 2021). Prisons are operating at 106.6% prison design capacity utilisation (Productivity Commission 2021: Table 8A.15), which means that people in custody need to be kept in unsuitable and unsafe police custody for extended periods while they wait for prison cells. It may also be noted that there have been efforts to reduce prison populations during COVID (Payne & Hanley 2020) because it was realised that an outbreak would spread rapidly given the overcrowding, transient and unvaccinated population and greater incidence of chronic health problems amongst prisoners (Wahlquist 2020; Coade 2021). Such an outbreak has occurred in NSW with 300 inmates (McGowan M 2021) and at least 51 staff (Heffernan 2021) now Covid-positive (and one officer deceased) following a surge due to the impossibility of COVID separation rules (McGowan M 2021). Health risks associated with COVID have also become a factor when considering bail applications (Murphy and Ferrari 2020).

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