

PROJECT - 176

CHILD-CARE NEEDS OF FEMALE OFFENDERS

A COMPARISON OF INCARCERATES
AND PROBATIONERS

BY

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ADMINISTRATIVE ABSTRACT

This study was initiated by the Ontario Ministry's Advisory Committee of the Female Offender to investigate whether or not incarceration creates child-care problems. The main objectives were to discover what proportion of incarcerated females have children, and to learn what child-care arrangements existed, both prior to and during the incarceration period.

An attempt was made to include all of the females who were incarcerated in provincial institutions within Ontario at the time of the study with the exception of women in jails with rated capacities of less than six females. Personal interviews were conducted with 132 of the 194 females reported in the institutional audit as of October 26, 1978. Similar interviews were also conducted by probation officers with 206 randomly selected probationers, in order to compare the child-care needs of these two groups of female offenders.

It was found that these two groups of offenders are very similar in terms of age, education, marital status, and family income. Typically, they were young, had left school in grade 10, were single or separated, and 30% of both groups of women are dependent upon social assistance for support.

The proportions of women in both groups who had borne children were not significantly different - approximately one-half of all of the female offenders. However, a significant difference was found between the proportions of incarcerates and probationers who actually lived with their children. Two-thirds (67.6%) of the incarcerated mothers, compared to only one-third (35.2%) of the mothers on probation, had one or more children (under age 18) who were not in their care prior to their present incarceration. Although similar proportions of children of both groups of offenders were living in foster homes (7.5%) or living with their natural fathers (approximately 10%), a much larger proportion of the children of incarcerates than the children of probationers had either been given up for adoption, or were living with relatives on a permanent basis.

The reason for the greater number of mother-child separations among the incarcerated women could not be attributed solely to marital or economic instability. Marital breakdowns, low family income, and dependence on social assistance was prevalent among both groups of women. Even among the mothers who were living with their children, only 27% of the probationers vs 21% of the incarcerates were married, and almost as many probationers (40%) as incarcerates (51%) were receiving some type of social assistance. These data suggest that there must be other major factors to account for the greater number of mother-child separations among the incarcerated sample.

Significant differences between the two groups of offenders were found in the employment and criminal history data. Prior to their present incarceration, almost 30% of the incarcerates, compared to only 5% of the probationers, were not employed or seeking employment, nor were they homemakers or students. The incarcerates were also more likely than the probationers to have had prior adult convictions (72% vs. 26%), previous probation orders (50% vs. 22%), and previous incarcerations (51% vs. 15%). A long history of convictions suggests extensive and on-going involvement with criminal activities. Not only does such involvement provide a potential explanation for the poorer employment histories of the incarcerated women, it also provides a plausible explanation for the greater number of mother-child separations amongst this group.

Child-care arrangements during the incarceration period did not seem to pose a major problem for many women. Although over one-half of the children had to change their residence, 84.1% of the children were cared for by fathers, grandparents, relatives or friends, during the period of their mothers' incarceration. Only 11.6% of the children who had been living with their mothers previously were actually placed in foster homes.

These data clearly indicate that the incarceration of females appear to create few immediate child-care problems. Apparently, most mothers are able to make some type of arrangements with family members to care for their children during their incarceration, although an examination of the adequacy of such arrangements was not possible within the context of this study. In assessing the child-care problems created by a mother's incarceration, there are also other major issues to be considered. Previous research has indicated that separations of mother and child in the early years may do irreparable damage to a child's social and emotional development. An equally important consideration is the stigma associated with incarceration, which is felt by all family members. However, an exploration of these complex but vital issues was not within the scope of the present study.

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INTRODUCTION

This study was initiated by the Advisory Committee of the Female Offender. To date, in Ontario, there have been no research studies investigating the child-care problems of mothers who are incarcerated. The basic problems to be considered are whether or not the children of an incarcerated female offender become a burden to society and, if so, whether or not this can be attributed to the incarceration process.

Specifically, the Committee wanted to know:

- 1) Does incarceration, in fact, create child-care problems?
- 2) How many females admitted required child-care arrangements?
- 3) What kind of child-care arrangements are made and for what period of time?
- 4) Do the child-care needs of female probationers and the means of meeting those needs differ from those of female incarcerates?
- 5) Is there any evidence of pre-existing family breakdown and consequent child-care problems in probation and institutional populations?
- 6) Is there evidence that separation of female offenders from family may have a positive effect on family members?
- 7) Is there any evidence that judicial decisions are influenced by difficulties in making child-care arrangements?

In addition to these questions, the Committee was interested in attaining data describing the female offenders with regard to the proportion with children, their criminal history, living arrangements, financial situation, and the effects of previous incarcerations.

Research in developmental psychology has demonstrated that in a normal parent-child relationship, an attachment bond is formed when the child is between the ages of six months and two years (Bowlby, 1969; Kagan & Havemann, 1972). If no such bond is formed during this period, either because institutionalization does not provide a primary caregiver or because transfers from home to home provide only shifting caregivers, the child may experience socialization problems (Goldfarb, 1955). For a child between the ages of two and five years, separation from a parent affects skills developed through intimate interaction with a stable caregiver. The severity and duration of these effects depend largely on the length of separation and on the child's age (Goldstein, Freud, Solnit, 1973).

Separation because of incarceration creates additional problems. Children not only experience the normal anxiety associated with separation from a parent, they are also faced with the stigma associated with incarceration and the mockery of their peers (Blackwell, 1959; McGowan, Blumenthal, 1978).

Reunion of parent and child may also be problematic. Newly released, the parent may experience difficulties of her own in re-adjusting to life outside the prison and may not be in a position to meet the needs of her children.

It is impossible to describe how all children are affected by their mothers' incarceration. The degree to which a child may be injured by the mother's imprisonment will be determined by the age, personality, prior relationship with the mother, the type of care the child receives while the mother is imprisoned, the length of time the child is separated from the mother, and the opportunities the child has for continuing contact with the mother or other significant persons in his/her life (McGowan, Blumenthal, 1978).

Based on the assumption that the incarceration of mothers may create problems for their children, this study investigated the potential for such problems within the families of the female prison population in Ontario.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Focus

This study describes the female incarcerates in provincial institutions in Ontario in terms of: the proportion who have had children, the number and ages of their children, and the caretakers of their children, prior to and during the incarceration period. In addition, their criminal history, current offence, and previous family stability were also examined. Similar data were also collected on female probationers in order to compare these two groups of women offenders.

B. Procedure

The major data in this study were obtained through personal interviews with the offenders. Additional information on age, race, education, charges and length of sentence (or probation) were obtained from admission data. All comparisons between the incarcerates and probationers refer to the period prior to incarceration for the incarcerated women, and the time of interview for the women on probation.

1. Sample of Incarcerates

The official institutional audit on October 26, 1978, reported a total of 194 females in Provincial institutions in Ontario. Between October 23 and November 1, 1978, an attempt was made to interview all of the women in jails, detention centres and correctional centres with rated capacities of six or more female inmates. On the basis of the institutional audit, nine institutions were selected. File data were obtained for a total of 151 female inmates, and personal interviews were conducted with 132 of these inmates, 19 women being unavailable at the time the interviews were conducted. The remaining women (approximately 43) were excluded from the sample either because they had been convicted of crimes involving child abuse or because they were not included on population lists of those institutions where interviews were conducted (see Figure 1). All interviews with incarcerates were conducted by one of eight members of the research staff. At the time of the interview, the median length of time these women had been incarcerated was 2.2 months.

2. Sample of Probationers

A sample of 354 females were randomly selected from approximately 2500 women currently on probation within Ontario. During November, 1978, questionnaires were mailed to their probation officers who were requested to obtain the data required through personal interviews with their clients. There were 206

completed questionnaires received: 177 interviews were conducted by probation officers, and 29 questionnaires were completed from the officers' file data. Seventy-eight questionnaires were returned incomplete, due to the cases being inactive, transferred or terminated, or because the probationer in question was unavailable, unwilling, or in custody; and thirteen were received too late for analysis. Only 57 (16%) of the questionnaires were not returned (see Table 1). At the time of the interview, the median length of time on probation was 9.5 months.

C. Statistical Analysis

Two statistical tests, the chi-square and the t-test of proportions, were used in the analysis of the data. In those cases where a statistical test is applied, p (probability) indicates the statistical reliability, or degree of confidence one can have in the results. A ($p < .05$) indicates that less than 5 times out of 100, such a statistic will achieve that value by chance and chance alone. Similarly, a ($p < .01$) indicates that the event will occur less than once in a hundred times by chance and chance alone. If the difference has a chance of occurring less than five times in a hundred, the observed difference is judged as being a real difference.

FIGURE 1

DESCRIPTION OF WOMEN IN STUDY

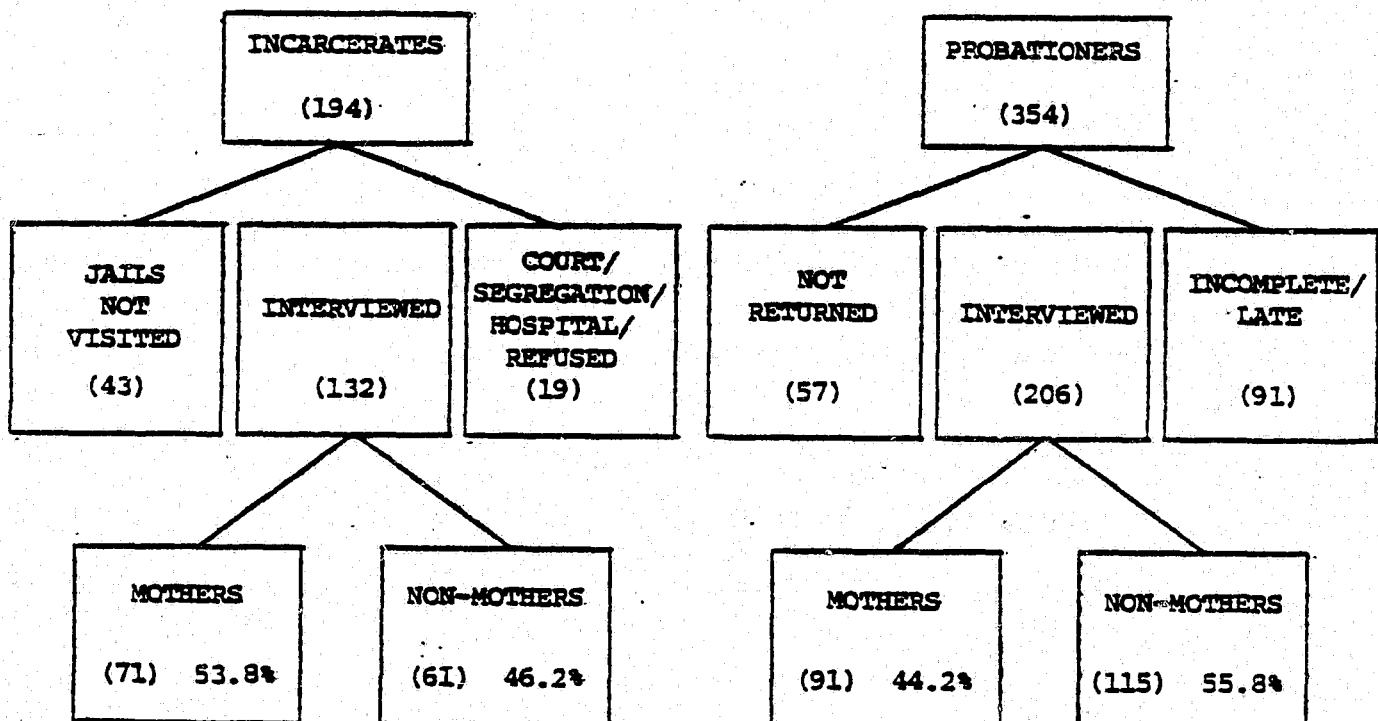


TABLE 1

COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES PER INSTITUTION/REGION

Institution	#	%
Vanier Institute for Women	75	56.8
Metro West D.C.	23	17.4
Ottawa-Carleton D.C.	5	3.8
Elgin-Middlesex, D.C.	3	2.3
Hamilton-Wentworth D.C.	6	4.5
Kenora Jail	10	7.6
Thunder Bay Jail	3	2.3
Whitby Jail	3	2.3
Windsor Jail	<u>4</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	132	100.0
Probation Regions	#	%
Western	62	30.1
Central	78	37.9
Eastern	39	18.9
Northern	<u>27</u>	<u>13.1</u>
Total	206	100.0

III RESULTS

A. Comparison of Female Incarcerates With Female Probationers

OVERVIEW

The incarcerated women and the women on probation were very similar in terms of background variables such as age, marital status, education, household income, and living situation. A notable exception was racial origin which indicated a significantly greater proportion of Indians among the incarcerated. The major differences between the two groups of women are found in the data describing employment and criminal history variables.

Prior to their incarceration, only 46% of the incarcerated, compared to 80% of the probationers at the time of their interview, were employed, full-time students, or homemakers. Although some of the incarcerated claimed they were seeking employment, almost 30% said they were not employed, not seeking employment, nor were they students or homemakers. These differences between the two groups concerning employment activities are also reflected by their primary source of income. It was found that the incarcerated were less likely than the probationers to be self-supporting and more likely to have no major source of income, apart from illegal activities.

The most striking differences between incarcerated and probationers appeared in the criminal history data. The incarcerated women were three times as likely to have had previous adult convictions. In addition, two-thirds of the incarcerated, compared to only one-third of the probationers, had been sentenced to probation and/or incarceration previously - in fact, one-quarter of the incarcerated women had actually served over six months in prison, prior to their present incarceration.

1. Personal Demography

Detailed information concerning the personal characteristics of the women in this study are presented in Table 2. The following paragraphs will present some of the highlights of these data.

(a) Age at Admission - The median age of the female incarcerated in our sample was slightly greater than the age of the female probationers (23.0 years vs. 21.5 years), although this difference was not significant.

(b) Racial Origin and Language - A majority of both groups of women were white, although the proportion of Indians among the incarcerated was three times greater than among the probationers (16% vs. 5%). Over 90% of both groups spoke English as their first language.

(c) Educational Background - More than two-thirds of the incarcerated females left school at age 16 or sooner; one-third actually left prior to the legal leaving age of 16. The probationers' school records were very similar except fewer probationers left before age 16. Only one-third (33%) of the women in either group continued beyond grade 10, which is a reflection of their early leaving age. According to the admission data, very few of the female offenders were still attending school - only one incarcerate (0.8%), and 14 (7%) probationers; however, at the time of the interview, (two incarcerates) and (20 probationers) claimed to be students.

(d) Marital Status - There was no significant difference between the two groups regarding marital status. Just under one-half of the women were single, approximately one-third were married or sharing a common-law relationship, and the remaining women (about one-fifth) were separated, divorced or widowed.

(e) Living Situation - The living situation described in Table 2, refers to the period immediately prior to the incarceration or, in the case of the probationers, the time of the interview. Again, there was very little difference between the two groups of women. About one-third of the women in both groups had children at home, and a majority of these mothers did not have a husband or partner.

TABLE 2

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS COMPARING INCARCERATES
AND PROBATIONERS

<u>Age of Admission</u>	<u>INCARCERATES</u>		<u>PROBATIONERS</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
16 - 18	32	(24.2)	61	(30.6)
19 - 21	22	(16.7)	38	(19.1)
22 - 24	20	(15.2)	27	(13.6)
25 - 30	27	(20.5)	30	(15.1)
31 Plus	31	(23.4)	43	(21.6)
Unknown	-	(-)	7	(-)
Totals	132	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

Median Age 23.0 Years 21.5 Years

$t=1.06, p>.05$

Racial Origin

White	115	(76.2)	186	(91.2)
Indian	24	(15.9)	11	(5.4)
Black/Brown	10	(6.6)	5	(2.4)
Other	2	(1.3)	2	(1.0)
No Information	-	(-)	2	(-)
Totals	151	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$\chi^2=15.67, d.f.=3, p<.01$

First Language

English	140	(92.7)	187	(90.8)
French	9	(6.0)	10	(4.8)
Other	2	(1.3)	9	(4.4)
Totals	151	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$\chi^2=2.85, d.f.=2, p>.05$

Age Left School

Less than 16	47	(32.2)	36	(20.6)
16	55	(37.7)	71	(40.6)
17 - 18	38	(26.0)	51	(29.1)
19 or more	6	(4.1)	17	(9.7)
Student	1	(-)	14	(-)
No Information	4	(-)	17	(-)
Totals	151	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$\chi^2=8.09, d.f.=3, p<.05$

<u>Grade Completed</u>	<u>INCARCERATES</u>		<u>PROBATIONERS</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Less than 9	30	(20.8)	37	(20.6)
9 or 10	66	(45.8)	88	(48.8)
11 or 12	43	(29.9)	41	(22.8)
13 or beyond	5	(3.5)	14	(7.8)
Student/no information	7	(-)	26	(-)
Totals	151	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$$\chi^2=4.23, \text{ d.f.}=3, \text{ p}>.05$$

Marital Status

Single	61	(46.2)	89	(43.6)
Married	13	(9.8)	32	(15.7)
Common-law	29	(22.0)	35	(17.1)
Separated/Divorced/ Widowed	29	(22.0)	48	(23.6)
No information	-	(-)	2	(-)
Totals	132	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$$\chi^2=3.21, \text{ d.f.}=3, \text{ p}>.05$$

<u>Lives with:</u>	<u>INCARCERATES</u>		<u>PROBATIONERS</u>		<u>z</u>
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	
Children	17	(12.9)	40	(19.4)	-1.58
Children & Partner	17	(12.9)	28	(13.6)	-0.19
Children & Partner and/or relatives	5	(3.8)	6	(2.9)	0.50
Partner	32	(24.2)	44	(21.4)	0.63
Parents	23	(17.4)	41	(19.9)	-0.58
Friends/relatives	24	(18.2)	22	(10.7)	2.00*
Alone	14	(10.6)	25	(12.1)	0.44
Totals	132	(100.0)	206	(100.0)	

2. Work Experience

(a) Employment Status - More probationers (44%) than incarcerates (30%) were employed on a part-time or full-time basis outside their homes. Probationers were also more likely to be full-time homemakers or students. If the homemakers and students are excluded, the difference between the two groups of women is even more pronounced - the probationers were twice as likely as the incarcerates to be employed (68.4% vs. 35.8%). Although one-quarter of the incarcerates claimed to be seeking employment (prior to incarceration), almost one-third (29%)

* p<.05

Note: Where n=151, data were obtained from files.

of these women said that they were not employed and not seeking employment, nor were they homemakers or students. Only 5% of the probationers fit into this "non-active" category (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

EMPLOYMENT STATUSCOMPARING INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	INCARCERATES		PROBATIONERS	
	#	%	#	%
Working (full-time/part-time)	39	29.8	91	44.4
Seeking employment	32	24.4	32	15.6
Not looking for work	38	29.0	10	4.8
Student	2	1.5	20	9.8
Homemaker	20	15.3	52	25.4
No Information	1	-	1	-
Totals	132	100.0	206	100.0

$$\chi^2=52.32, \text{ d.f.}=4, \text{ p}<.01$$

(b) Occupation - Excluding students and homemakers, there were no significant differences between the incarcerates and the probationers regarding the various types of occupational experience. Included in the 'Clerical/Cashier' category were typists, bookkeepers, cashiers, and bank tellers. The "Service/Semi-skilled" category refers to sales clerks, waitresses, hairdressers, drivers, and machine operators. Presumably, all of these occupations demand some degree of skill or job training. Based on the data, it therefore appears that 62 (57%) of the incarcerates and 92 (69%) of the probationers in this study had at least some previous exposure to job training (see Table 4). Because students and homemakers were excluded from this data, it is possible that the proportion of women without previous training is actually greater than indicated.

When the employed women were examined separately, it was hardly surprising to find that three-quarters (76%) of both the incarcerates and the probationers fell in the first three occupation categories (i.e. non-labourers). What is interesting, however, is that many of the incarcerates, in spite of claiming to have some marketable skills, were still unemployed. In the first three categories, there were 62 incarcerates, 32 (52%) of whom were unemployed. In comparison,

only 23 (25%) of the 92 probationers in these categories were unemployed. These findings seem to indicate that there are other factors, in addition to lack of job skills, that account for the high unemployment rate among the incarcerates.

TABLE 4

USUAL OCCUPATION BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	EMPLOYMENT RATE WITHIN OCCUPATION				OCCUPATION DISTRIBUTION	
	INCARCERATES n=109		PROBATIONERS n=133		OVERALL n=242	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Professional/Managerial	3/3	(100.0)	5/6	(83.3)	9	(3.7)
Clerical/Cashier	9/20	(45.0)	30/36	(83.3)	56	(23.1)
Service/Semi-skilled	18/39	(46.2)	34/50	(68.0)	89	(36.8)
Labour	8/28	(28.6)	20/32	(62.5)	60	(24.8)
Never worked/Unknown	1/19	(5.2)	2/9	(22.2)	28	(11.6)*
Totals	39/109		91/133		242 (100.0)	
Overall Employment Rate	39	(35.8)	91	(68.4)		

Note: Students and full-time homemakers are excluded from this table.

3. Income

(a) Weekly Salaries - Of the 130 employed women, 30 incarcerates and 77 probationers revealed their weekly salaries. One-half (15) of the previously employed incarcerates and two-thirds (51) of the employed probationers reported earnings of between \$100 and \$200 per week. Eight (27%) of the incarcerates and 11 (14%) of the probationers said that they had been earning \$200 per week or more, however, these proportions were only about 5% of the total number of women in each group, if the unemployed women are also taken into account. The remaining employed women earned less than \$100 per week, but in most

* A t-test of proportions was applied to each employment category to find out if there were any significant differences between the incarcerates and the probationers. The only difference was in the "Never worked/Unknown" category, which indicated significantly more incarcerates (17% vs. 7%), $t=6.04$, $p<.01$.

cases, they were part-time employees.

(b) Primary Source of Offender's Income - If the woman said that her main source of income was her own and/or her spouse's employment, she was classified as self-supporting. Sixty-one (47%) of the incarcerates and 117 (57%) of the probationers fell into this category. Similar proportions (30%) of both groups depended upon social assistance such as welfare, Mother's Allowance, or pensions, and approximately 10% of both groups depended mainly on parental support. The main difference between the two groups was that 16 of the incarcerates (12%), compared to only 2% of the probationers, claimed they had no income (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME COMPARING
INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

Source	INCARCERATES		PROBATIONERS	
	#	%	#	%
Self-supporting	61	(46.9)	117	(57.0)
Parents/Relatives	13	(10.0)	23	(11.2)
Social Assistance	40	(30.8)	61	(29.8)
No income	16	(12.3)	4	(2.0)
Unknown	2	(-)	1	(-)
Totals	132	(100.0)	206	(100.0)

$$\chi^2=15.97, \text{ d.f.}=3, \text{ p}<.01$$

(c) Total Household Income - Almost one-half of the incarcerates said that their total annual household income was under \$7,000. This is not surprising considering that 31% of the women relied on social assistance and an additional 12% had no income. The data on total household income for probationers was very similar to the incarcerates. Only one-quarter of the families in either group were reported to have incomes of \$15,000 per year or more (see Table 6).

TABLE 6

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOMECOMPARING INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	INCARCERATES		PROBATIONERS	
	#	%	#	%
Under \$7,000	51	49.0	70	42.9
\$7,000, less than \$9,000	13	12.5	18	11.0
\$9,000, less than \$15,000	17	16.4	33	20.3
\$15,000 or more	23	22.1	42	25.8
No Information	28	-	43	-
Totals	132	100.0	206	100.0

$$\chi^2=1.49, \text{ d.f.}=3, \text{ p}>.05$$

4. Criminal History

(a) Juvenile - The incarcerated women had a much more extensive criminal history (as a group) than the probationers. Incarcerates were three times as likely to have been in a juvenile training school - 24% compared to 8% of the probationers (see Table 7).

(b) Previous Adult Convictions - Three-quarters (72%) of the incarcerated, compared to 26% of the probationers, said that they had had previous adult convictions. The incarcerated were also more likely than the probationers to have had a previous adult probation order - 50% vs. 22% of the probationers. There were also more incarcerated (26%) than probationers (7%) who had had unsuccessful probation orders (i.e. further charges or failure to abide by conditions), and more incarcerated who had been issued multiple probation orders (19% vs. 5%).

(c) Previous Incarceration - One-half (67) of the incarcerated said they had been incarcerated previously. Moreover, one-quarter (31) said that they had actually served over six months in prison, prior to the current conviction. In contrast, only 31* (15%) of the probation sample had experienced incarceration, and only four probationers had spent over six months in prison. Of all the women who had served time previously, approximately one-fifth had been granted parole.

* Sixteen of these women were serving sentences which had included both incarceration and probation.

TABLE 7

CRIMINAL HISTORY

	INCARCERATES n=132		PROBATIONERS n=206		Z
	#	%	#	%	
<u>Juvenile</u>					
Probation	23	(17.4)	27	(13.1)	1.11 n.s.
Training School	31	(23.5)	16	(7.8)	4.2 **
Probation and/or T.S.	39	(.29.5)	33	(16.0)	3.02 **
<u>Adult</u>					
Previous convictions	95	(72.0)	54	(26.2)	8.36 **
Previous probation	66	(50.0)	45	(21.8)	5.42 **
- unsuccessful probation	34	(25.8)	14	(6.8)	5.06 **
- more than one previous order	25	(18.9)	10	(4.9)	4.25 **
Previous incarceration (sentenced)	67	(50.8)	31	(15.0)	7.14 **
Previous Parole	17/67	(25.4)	5/31	(16.1)	1.02 n.s.
<u>Length of previous incarceration (s)</u>					
Thirty days or less	14	(22.2)	12	(44.5)	$\chi^2=9.85$ d.f.=2 p<.01
One to six months	18	(28.6)	11	(40.7)	
Over six months	31	(49.2)	4	(14.8)	
Time unknown	4	-	4	-	
Totals	67	(100.0)	31	(100.0)	

** p<.01

5. Current Offence

(a) Type of Offence - The offence category containing the largest proportion of women was 'crimes against property'. Although there were less incarcerates (65%) than probationers (76%) convicted of property offences, their charges often appeared to be more serious (i.e. fraud, forgery) than the probationers' (i.e. theft under \$200). However, severity of offence was not actually measured, so these were only the investigator's subjective observations. In each of the remaining offence categories, the proportion of incarcerates was usually at least twice as large as that of the probationers; and for 'liquor', 'traffic' and 'public order', these differences proved to be significant. As a matter of fact, almost 40% of the incarcerates vs. only 12% of the probationers were convicted of offences of 'public order' (see table 8). Overall, the incarcerates' offences appeared to be more

serious than those of the probationers', and this is undoubtedly a major factor in the judges' decisions regarding type of sentence.

TABLE 8

CURRENT OFFENCECOMPARING INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

OFFENCE CATEGORY	INCARCERATES n=134		PROBATIONERS n=205		Z	
	#	%	#	%		
Person	19	(14.2)	16	(7.8)	1.92	n.s.
Property	87	(64.9)	156	(76.1)	2.28	*
Public Morals	2	(1.5)	7	(3.4)	1.10	n.s.
Public Order	52	(38.8)	24	(11.7)	5.92	**
Liquor	19	(14.2)	12	(5.9)	2.63	**
Drug	13	(9.7)	11	(5.4)	1.54	n.s.
Traffic	7	(5.2)	3	(1.5)	2.17	*
Totals	199		229			

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: some of the women had offences in two or three categories, therefore the totals are greater than the sample sizes.

(b) Aggregate Sentence - The length of sentence for 134 of the 151 women in the study sample is presented in Table 9. This information was not obtained for the other 17 women because they were still on remand and had not been given a final sentence at the time the data were compiled, which was approximately one month after the interviewing was completed.

The study design approximated a snap-shot portrayal of women within Ontario institutions on a typical day. For this reason, the sample was heavily weighted towards the long-term offender. This phenomenon is illustrated by a comparison of the study sample and the total annual female admissions. Only 7.5% of the women in this sample, compared to 82.6% of the total number of women admitted and sentenced in 1978, received sentences of less than 30 days. (See Appendix A for the Admission statistics presented in the Report of the Minister for the year ending March, 1978.)

TABLE 9

AGGREGATE SENTENCE FOR CURRENT OFFENCE

Length of Sentence	#	%
Under 30 days	10	(7.5)
Thirty days and under 90 days	20	(14.9)
Three months and under 9 months	48	(35.8)
Nine months and more	56	(41.8)
On remand	17	(-)
Totals	151	(100.0)

B. Comparison of Incarcerated Mothers with Mothers on Probation

OVERVIEW

Section A of this report describes the typical female offender as being young, poorly educated, and economically disadvantaged. It was found that women on probation are more likely to be employed and less likely to have prior criminal involvement than women who are incarcerated.

The present Section describes those women offenders who have had children. It compares the living situations and child-care arrangements of the mothers on probation and the incarcerated mothers (before the incarceration). The child-care needs of these two groups of women will be examined in relation to the variables described in the previous section.

The data indicated that approximately one-half (162) of both groups of female offenders have borne children. It also indicated that many of these mothers have experienced problems related to child-care. In fact, over one-half (56%) of the incarcerates and 43% of the probationers have had some type of involvement with the Children's Aid Society - adoption, wardship or counselling services.

However, it is also very clear that the probationers are more successful than the incarcerates in providing for their children personally. Only 18.7% of the mothers on probation, compared to 45% of the incarcerated mothers did not live with any of their children. In fact, two-thirds of the incarcerated mothers were separated from at least one of their children.

Among the two groups of offenders, there was a total of 342 children, 131 of whom did not live with their mothers. Some of these children lived with their natural fathers; however, 41% of the incarcerates' children, compared to only 14% of the probationers' children, did not live with either

of their natural parents. In spite of these differences, both groups of offenders had the same proportion (7.5%) of children in foster homes. The remaining children had either been given up for adoption, were living with relatives on a permanent basis, or were independent.

Among the 113 mothers (in the combined groups) who were actually living with their children, few differences were found in the social history variables between the incarcerates and the probationers. The median age of both groups of mothers was 27.3 years. Only one-fifth were married at the time of the interview, but a similar proportion were sharing common-law relationships. The remaining women were either unmarried, or were separated from their husbands. Only one-third of the mothers held part-time or full-time jobs outside their homes. Family incomes were usually less than \$9,000 per year, and many of the women depended upon Mothers Allowance.

Once again, striking differences between the incarcerates and probationers were found in the criminal history data. One-half of the incarcerated mothers, compared to only one-fifth of the probation mothers (living with children) had been incarcerated previously. Furthermore, one-third of the incarcerates had actually served over three months in prison before the current offence. However, only two of these women said that their children had become permanent wards of the C.A.S. at the time of a previous incarceration.

1. Description of All Mothers

(a) Proportion of Women Who Have Borne Children - An examination of Figure 2 reveals that seventy-one (54%) of the incarcerated women in our sample, compared to 91 (44%) of the probationers, reported that they had borne children, although this difference did not prove to be significant ($t=1.75$, $p>.05$). However, only 39 (55%) of the 71 incarcerated mothers had any of their children living with them prior to their present incarceration. This contrast with the 91 probation mothers, 81% of whom had one or more children living with them at the time of the study. Furthermore, only 23 (32%) of the incarcerated mothers had all of their children living with them. This again contrasts with the probation mothers, 65% of whom had all of their children living with them at the time of the study ($\chi^2=18.24$, $d.f.=2$, $p<.01$).

(b) Age of Offender at Birth of First Child - The incarcerated women in our sample were slightly younger than the probationers when they had their first child - but this difference was not significant. Over one-quarter (27%) of all of the mothers had had a child before they were 18 years of age, and 62% had children before they were 21.

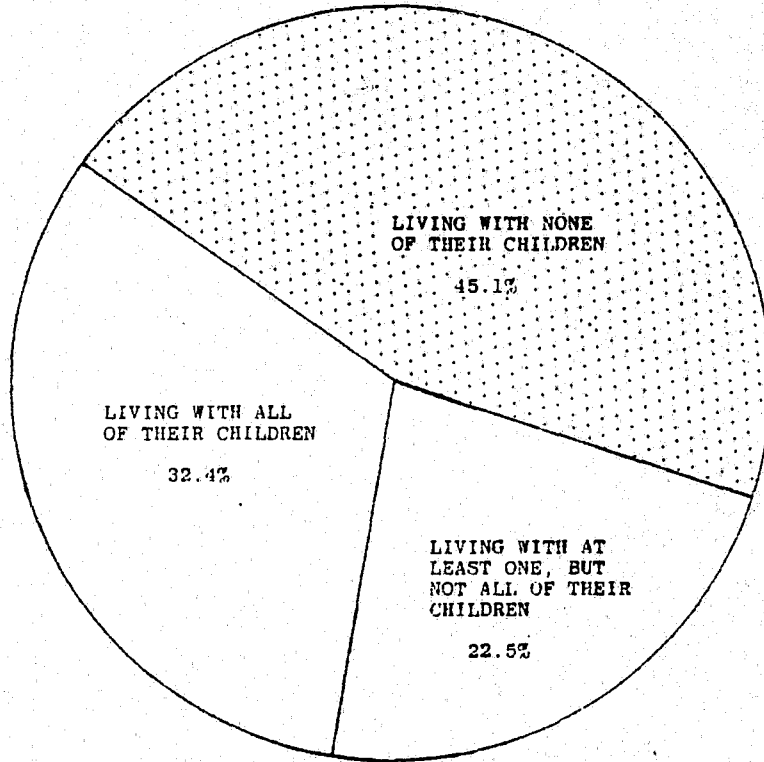
(c) Age of Mother and Living Situation of Child - Not surprisingly, the older (and presumably more mature) mothers were more likely than the younger mothers to have children living with them. Among the incarcerates, only 33% of the nine mothers under 21 had any children living with them;

FIGURE 2

PROPORTION OF MOTHERS LIVING WITH THEIR CHILDREN

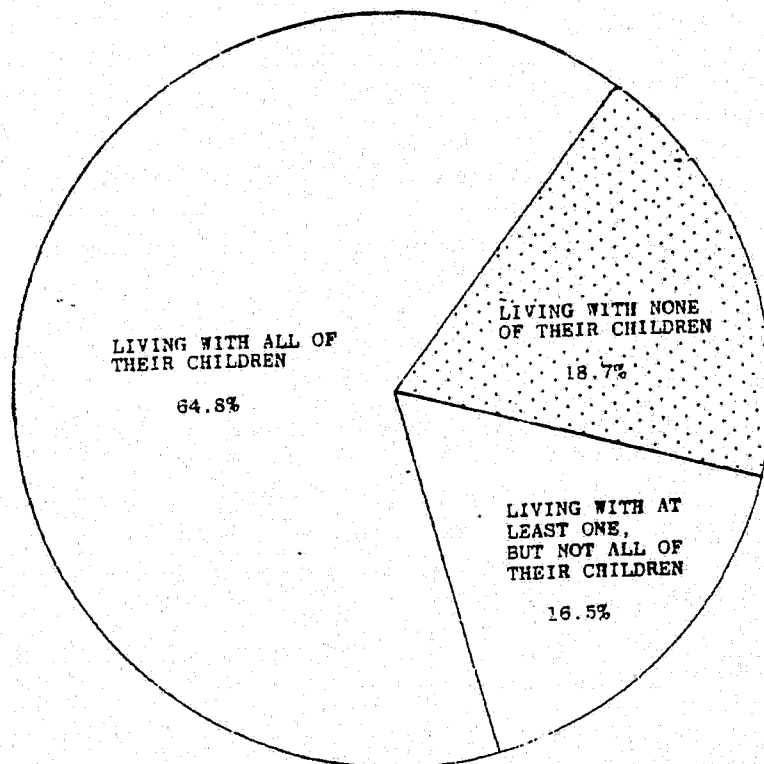
INCARCERATES

n=71



PROBATIONERS

n=91



whereas 52% of the 27 mothers, ages 21 to 26 and 63% of the 35 mothers, 27 and over, had at least some of their children living with them. Among the probationers the mother's age was less of a factor in whether or not she lived with her children. Ninety-one percent of the 11 mothers under 21, 71% of the 28 mothers, 21 to 26, and 85% of the 48 mothers, aged 27 and over were living with their children at the time of the study.

(d) Previous Incarceration Problems - Seventeen (24%) of the 71 incarcerated mothers reported having children at the time of a previous incarceration(s). Of these 17 women, two said that their children became permanent wards of the Children's Aid Society at that time. None of the mothers on probation who had previous incarcerations reported having lost their child/children during the period that they were incarcerated. Among the incarcerated mothers, no difference was found between the first incarcerates and recidivists concerning previous separations from their children. Two-thirds of the women in both of these groups were living apart from one or more of their children, prior to the present incarceration.

(e) Step-Children - Only two of the 132 incarcerates had step-children. During the incarceration, the children were cared for by their fathers and one inmate expected to continue her relationship with the father after her release. Of the 206 women on probation, only one reported she had step-children living with her.

(f) Pregnancy - Five (4%) of the 132 incarcerates were pregnant at the time of the interview, and four of these women planned to keep their babies. Of the 206 probationers, 13 (6%) were pregnant, and 11 expected to keep their babies.

2. Description of Children

(a) Number of Children - A total of 342 children are described in this study - 142 belonging to the incarcerates, and 200 belonging to the probationers. The probation mothers, in spite of being slightly younger, averaged slightly more children than the incarcerated mothers (2.2 children per probationer vs. 2.0 children per incarcerated mother), although this difference was not significant.

(b) Ages of Children - Of the 342 children described, 144 (42%) were under the age of six at the time that their mothers were interviewed, however, only 28 children were under the age of 2. Most of the infants under 2 years of age were living with their mother, prior to her incarceration (or at the time of the interview for probationers). An examination of Table 10 reveals that after the age of 2, the child's age does not appear to be a factor affecting whether or not he lived with his mother. Overall, only 69 (49%) of the 142 children of incarcerates lived with their mothers prior to their present incarceration; whereas 142 (71%) of the 200 children of probationers lived with their mothers at the time of the interview.

TABLE 10

CHILD'S RESIDENCE PRIOR TO MOTHER'S ARREST BY AGE

<u>Age of Child</u>	<u>INCARCERATES</u>			
	<u>Residence With Mother</u>		<u>Residence Not With Mother</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Under age 2	8	11.8	3	4.2
2 - 5	23	33.8	27	38.0
6 - 11	21	30.9	22	31.0
12 - 17	16	23.5	19	26.8
Unknown	1	-	2	-
n=142	69	100.0	73	100.0

<u>Age of Child</u>	<u>PROBATIONERS</u>			
	<u>Residence With Mother</u>		<u>Residence Not With Mother</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Under age 2	14	10.0	3	6.1
2 - 5	47	33.6	19	38.8
6 - 11	40	28.6	12	24.5
12 - 17	39	27.8	15	30.6
Unknown	2	-	9	-
n=200	142	100.0	58	100.0

(c) Children's Residence Prior to Current Offence - A significantly greater proportion of the inmate's children (51%) than the probationer's children (29%) were not living with their mothers prior to this incarceration ($\chi^2=17.64$, d.f.=1, $p<.01$). Approximately 10% of the children from both groups lived with their natural fathers. As a matter of fact, there were only 28 (14%) of the probationers' children compared to 58 (41%) of the incarcerates' children, who were not living with at least one of their natural parents. Similar proportions (7.5%) of children of both the incarcerates and the probationers were in foster homes. The remaining children were either living with relatives, or had been given up for adoption (see Figures 3 and 4). In most cases, these separations appeared to be permanent: 71% of these children had not been living with their mothers for at least two years.

When the women were questioned as to why their children did not live with them, they usually gave a reply such as, "he lives with his father". This type of answer was accepted by the interviewer. However, one-third of both the incarcerated mothers and mothers on probation who were separated from their children readily admitted that the reason was due to their own drug or alcohol problems.

FIGURE 3

CARETAKERS OF CHILDREN PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

n=142

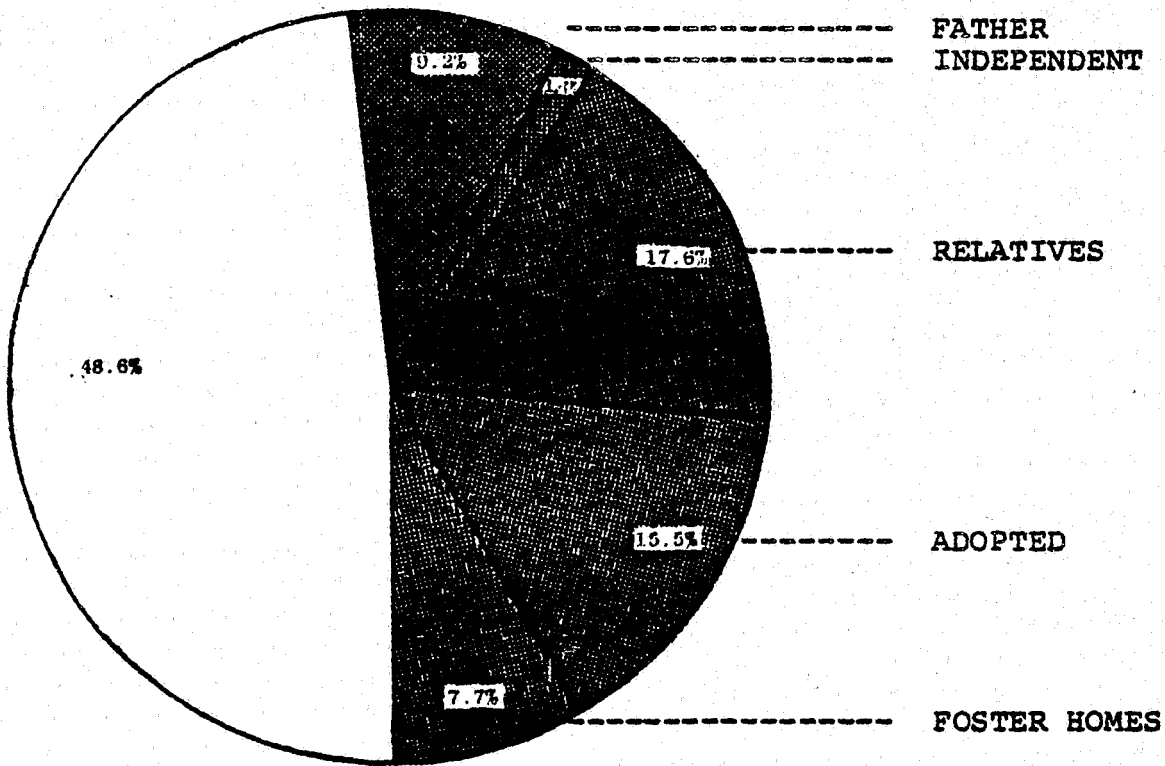
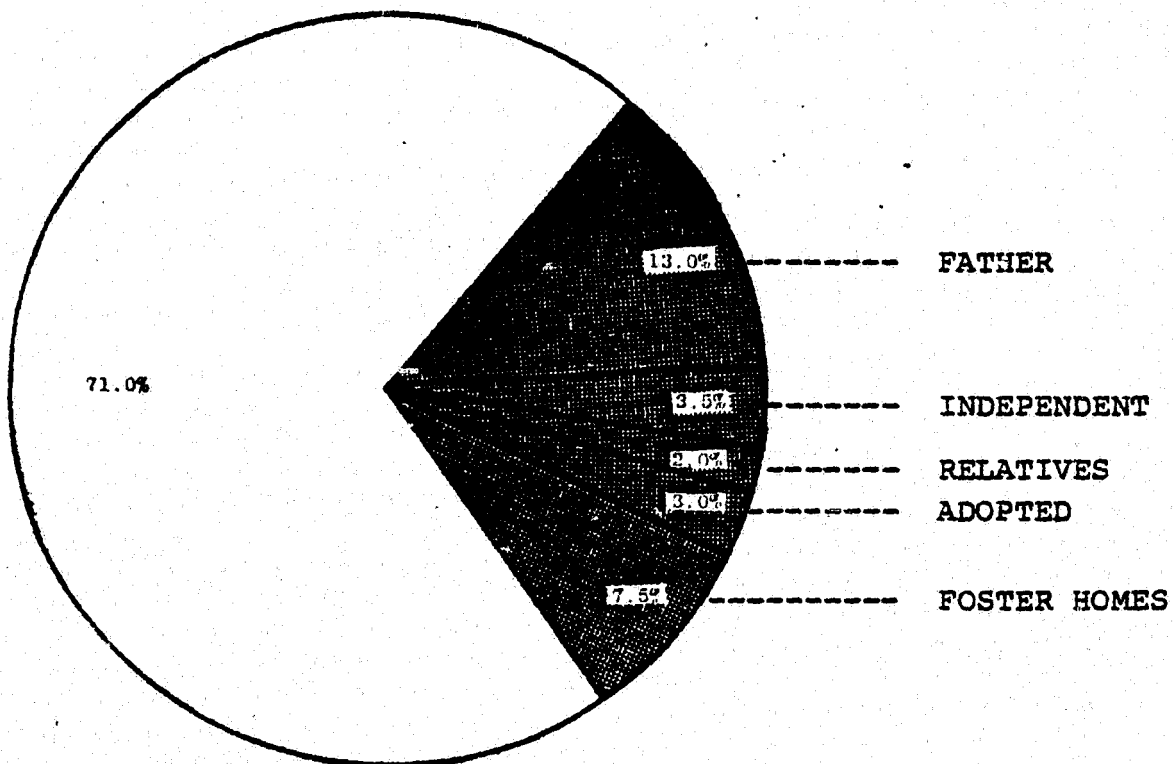


FIGURE 4

CURRENT CARETAKERS OF CHILDREN OF PROBATIONERS

n=200



Most of the incarcerates rarely or never saw the children who did not live with them - only 31% claimed they saw their children regularly (i.e. once a week or more). Comparable data were not obtained for the probationers.

In view of the number of family separations - spousal and/or children - it is probably not surprising that a large proportion (56%) of the incarcerates had been involved in some way with the Children's Aid Society. There was also a sizeable number of probationers' families (43%) who had had some type of contact with the C.A.S. Similar proportions of both groups had experienced counselling or home investigations, but a much larger proportion of the incarcerates than the probationers had been involved in adoption and wardship procedures (see Table 11).

TABLE 11

INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

MAIN REASON	INCARCERATES		PROBATIONERS	
	#	%	#	%
Wardship	19	26.8	19	20.9
Adoption procedures	10	14.0	2	2.2
Counselling	11	15.5	18	19.8
None	31	43.7	52	57.1
Totals	71	100.0	91	100.0

$$\chi^2=10.02, \text{ d.f.} = 3, p < .01$$

3. Description of Mothers Living With Children

There were 39 incarcerates and 74 probationers who had some or all of their children living with them. The median age of these mothers was 27.3 years. An examination of the background characteristics presented in Table 12 reveals that over half of the women were single parents, that is, they were unmarried, separated, divorced, or widowed. The remaining mothers were either married or sharing a common-law relationship.

Approximately one-third of both groups had either part-time or full-time jobs outside their homes. However, the probationers were more likely than the incarcerates to be full-time homemakers (57% vs. 44%). The remaining women all claimed to be actively seeking employment.

There was no difference between household incomes of the incarcerates and probationers. Over half of the mothers in both groups had household incomes of under \$9,000 per year, and many of the women (44.7% - incarcerates; 51% - probationers) depended on either social assistance or their parents for financial support.

TABLE 12

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS
LIVING WITH CHILDREN
COMPARING INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

	<u>INCARCERATES</u>		<u>PROBATIONERS</u>	
	n=39*		n=74*	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Single	8	(20.5)	12	(16.4)
Married	8	(20.5)	20	(27.4)
Common-law	11	(28.2)	10	(13.7)
Sep/Div/Wid	12	(30.8)	31	(42.5)
$\chi^2=4.47, \text{ d.f.} = 3, p < .05$				
<u>Employment</u>				
Working	14	(35.9)	23	(31.1)
Seeking Employment	7	(17.9)	8	(10.8)
Homemaker	17	(43.6)	42	(56.8)
Students	1	(2.6)	1	(1.3)
$\chi^2=2.22, \text{ d.f.} = 3, \text{ n.s.}$				
<u>Household Income</u>				
Under \$9,000	22	(61.1)	40	(61.5)
\$9,000 - \$15,000	8	(22.2)	14	(21.5)
\$15,000 plus	6	(16.7)	11	(16.9)
$\chi^2=0.006, \text{ d.f.} = 2, \text{ n.s.}$				
<u>Primary Source of Income</u>				
Self-Supporting	21	(55.3)	36	(48.6)
Social Assistance	15	(39.5)	38	(51.4)
Parents/Relatives	2	(5.2)	-	-
$\chi^2=4.85, \text{ d.f.} = 2, p < .05$				
<u>C.A.S. Involvement</u>				
<u>Before Incarceration</u>	20	(51.3)	26	(35.1)
$t = 1.66, \text{ n.s.}$				

*Note: Any total which is not equal to sample size noted has missing information..

TABLE 13

CRIMINAL HISTORY OF MOTHERS
LIVING WITH CHILDREN
COMPARING INCARCERATES AND PROBATIONERS

CRIMINAL HISTORY	<u>INCARCERATES</u>		<u>PROBATIONERS</u>		z
	n=39*		n=74*		
	#	%	#	%	
Training School	7	(17.9)	5	(6.8)	1.84
Previous Adult Convictions	27	(69.2)	24	(32.4)	3.75**
Previous Incarceration	19	(48.7)	15	(20.3)	3.14**
<u>Time Served</u>					
None	20	(51.3)	59	(79.7)	
Under 3 months	7	(17.9)	7	(9.5)	
Over 3 months	12	(30.8)	8	(10.8)	
$\chi^2 = 10.18, d.f. = 2, p < .01$					

** $p < .01$

The proportion of mothers with previous adult convictions was no different than the proportion for the entire sample - approximately two-thirds of the incarcerates, compared to only one-third of the probationers. There was also a significantly greater proportion of inmate mothers than mothers on probation who had been sentenced to previous incarcerations (49% vs. 20%). Moreover, thirty-one percent of the inmate mothers claimed to have actually served three months or more, prior to their current offences (see Table 13).

In addition to previous incarcerations, there were other indications of instability amongst these mothers who had children living with them. Sixteen (41%) of the inmate mothers and 15 (20%) of the probation mothers also had one or more children who did not live with them, and in most cases these seemed to be permanent arrangements (i.e. separated more than two years). When the women were compared for C.A.S. involvement it was found that slightly more incarcerates (51%) than probationers (35%) had been involved with the Children's Aid Society at some time in the past, although this difference did not prove to be significant.

In order to discover whether or not child-care responsibilities affected the length of sentence, the aggregate sentence of women who had children at home was compared with the remaining women in the sample. This latter group included both childless women and women who had not been living with children at the time of their incarceration. No significant difference was found between the two groups. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the women received sentences of over three months, with a median length of six months overall (see Table 14).

TABLE 14

AGGREGATE SENTENCE BY LIVING/
NOT LIVING WITH CHILDREN

n=132

SENTENCE (MONTHS)	NOT LIVING WITH CHILDREN*		LIVING WITH CHILDREN	
	#	%	#	%
Up to 3 months	33	(40.3)	14	(37.8)
4 to 9 months	22	(26.8)	12	(32.5)
Over 9 months	27	(32.9)	11	(29.7)
On remand	11	-	2	-
Totals	93	(100.0)	39	(100.0)

$$\chi^2 = 0.39, \text{ d.f.} = 2, \text{ n.s.}$$

* This group also includes women who had had no children.

C. Impact of Incarceration Upon Families of Female Offenders

OVERVIEW

Among the total of 132 incarcerates, there were 69 children who were living with their mothers prior to the mothers' present incarceration. In three-fifths of the families, the children were required to change their residence as a result of the incarceration. Over three-quarters of the children were looked after by family members, which suggests that most of the caretakers were familiar to the children. Only 12% of the children were placed in foster homes.

A few mothers mentioned that they were concerned over the quality of care that their children were receiving, but their main concern seemed to be that the separation was a very upsetting experience for both themselves and their children.

Two-thirds of the mothers had not seen their children since they were incarcerated because they were too far away, there was no one to bring them, or because the mother did not want to see them, feeling it would be too upsetting.

Ninety percent of the mothers who, prior to their incarceration, had children living with them planned to reunite with their children following their release.

1. Caretakers of Children

This section describes the child-care arrangements at the time of the interview, for the 69 children living with their mothers prior to their present incarceration. It is not known whether or not changes in these arrangements occurred at a later period of the mother's incarceration.

Three-fifths (24) of the 39 mothers said that the child-care arrangements required a change of residence for their children. Over three-quarters of the children were cared for by family members, so presumably most of these caretakers were familiar to the children. There were only six (15%) of the 39 mothers who said they had any problem making child-care arrangements; two had difficulty because their relatives lived far away, and four depended upon C.A.S. to provide foster care for their children (see Table 15).

2. Problems Related to Incarceration

Some mothers said they were concerned about the quality of care their children were receiving, and a few mentioned post-release adjustment problems. However, the majority of women did not specify any particular problem, but simply emphasized that it was a very upsetting experience for both themselves and their children. Only one mother anticipated a custody battle. According to the data, it appears that the Children's Aid Society was involved with at least ten of the

39 families during the mother's incarceration. In four cases, the C.A.S. were providing foster care, as mentioned previously, and in the remaining families, they had conducted a home investigation or provided counselling. Incarceration was not necessarily the reason for C.A.S. involvement as half of these families (5) had dealt with C.A.S. at some time in the past.

TABLE 15

CURRENT CARETAKERS OF CHILDREN
LIVING WITH THEIR MOTHERS PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

CARETAKER	# OF CHILDREN	%
Relatives		
Father, Step-father	22	31.9
Grandparent(s)	17	24.6
Other relative(s)	<u>15</u>	<u>21.7</u>
Friends	4	5.8
Foster care	8	11.6
Independent/Unknown	3	4.3
Totals	69	100.0

3. Visits With Children

Only one-third (12) of the 39 mothers living with children had seen their children since being incarcerated. Nine women (23%) claimed they did not want to see their children because it would be too upsetting - particularly within the institution; 10 women (26%) said their children lived too far away or that there was no one to bring them; and 7 women said that they had not been incarcerated long enough (i.e. only 3 - 4 days in some instances). Only one woman mentioned institutional rules as being the reason for not seeing her child.

At Vanier Institute for Women, which holds mostly long-term offenders, (3 months up to 2 years), 74 women were interviewed. Thirty-seven (50%) had borne children, and 21 (28%) had children living with them, prior to the incarceration. Eight of these 21 mothers had seen their children once or more - and four of them had had four or more visits with them. Those who had not seen their children said it would have been too upsetting, they were too far away, or there was no one to bring the children.

4. Future Plans

For the majority of inmate mothers the present child-care arrangements were seen as temporary. Thirty-five mothers said they would resume living with their children after release, with only four mothers expressing uncertainty as to whether they would be re-united with their children.

IV DISCUSSION

This study dealt with all female offenders in jails and correctional institutions within Ontario. The major focus was upon approximately one-half of these females - those who had borne children.

The background characteristics of these women reveal a number of factors, a combination of which might be expected to create difficulties for them in providing adequate care for their children. Most of the women were either unmarried mothers, or had experienced marital breakdowns. A majority left school before 17, and became mothers before they were 21. Without formal education, adequate job skills, or spouses to assist them, many were dependent upon social assistance.

Throughout the study a comparison was made between incarcerated mothers and mothers on probation. Although incarcerates and probationers were similar in terms of the factors described above, it was found that women on probation, in spite of having to cope with early motherhood and unstable marriages, were more likely than the incarcerates to be providing parental care for their children. The reason for this difference between the two groups of mothers is not apparent in the social history data, with the exception of employment. This was an area in which the probationers seemed to demonstrate more interest than the incarcerates.

The only other area where the data indicated a major difference between the two groups of women was their criminal history - the incarcerates had significantly more prior convictions, prior probation orders, and prior incarcerations than the probationers. Even among the mothers living with their children, nearly one-third had actually served more than three months in prison previously. Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the reason that the incarcerates have been less successful than the probationers, in providing for their children, is primarily related to their criminal involvement.

However, permanent separations from their children cannot be attributed to the incarceration process itself. Women with no prior incarcerations were just as likely to be living apart from their children as women who had been incarcerated previously. In fact, two-thirds of the incarcerated mothers had been separated from one or more of their children at the time of their present incarceration, and most of these separations had been of long duration. This therefore suggests that there were other factors involved in these family breakdowns.

For example, previous convictions, prior probation, evidence of drug and alcohol abuse, and lack of interest in

employment are all factors suggesting extensive criminal involvement. The existence of a lengthy criminal history is probably the single major factor that has contributed to the family breakdowns among this group of offenders.

In addition to a general profile of the two groups of offenders, this study set out to examine child-care problems of mothers who were caring for their children at the time of their present incarceration. Of the total sample of incarcerated females, 29.5% (39) were in this category. Some of these women appeared to be concerned, conscientious parents with warm, supportive families, and it is with these women that every effort should be made to maintain the parent-child relationship.

Although the major focus of this study was women with children, it should be kept in mind that the majority of women in the correctional system are of child bearing age, an important factor not to be overlooked when planning future programs or policies.

V CONCLUSIONS

1) *Does incarceration in fact create child-care problems?**

There is no clear cut answer to this question. In terms of whether or not the children of incarcerated mothers become a burden to society during the incarceration period, the answer is no - only 12% of the children in this study were actually placed in foster homes. On the other hand, research in child development has demonstrated that a secure and continuous attachment to one caregiver is critical to a child's healthy, emotional development. Irreparable damage to a child's emotional and social development may result when such a relationship is not developed or maintained. "When a father or mother is absent from the home due to incarceration, and no attempt is made to maintain the family cohesiveness, a juvenile delinquent or school drop-out may be the consequence" (Pollack and Friedman, 1969).

2) *How many females admitted required child-care arrangements?*

Thirty-nine (29%) of the females admitted required child-care arrangements for a total of 69 children. Few of these mothers appeared to have problems finding caretakers for their children, but some of the mothers were clearly anxious about the adequacy of care their children were receiving. However, the main concerns expressed by these women were related to the emotional trauma of the separation itself. These women missed their children, and they felt their children missed and needed them.

3) *What kind of child-care arrangements are made and for what period of time?*

The majority of children living with their mothers prior to incarceration were placed in the care of family members or relatives. Only a small percentage of the children (12%) had to be placed in foster homes. Although it would appear in most cases their caretakers were familiar to the children, the incarceration still necessitated a change in environment for sixty percent of these children. Whether or not these arrangements remained the same until the mother's release is not known. The length of separation between mother and child varied, but the aggregate sentence for two-thirds of the mothers was over three months, a fairly lengthy separation viewed from the perspective of pre-school-age children.

* In the fiscal year ending March, 1978, 1882 females were sentenced to imprisonment, however, only 463 women (24.6%) actually received sentences of 30 days or longer (see Minister's Annual Report, March, 1978). In the present study, the incarcerated women were living with an average of 0.52 children each, prior to their current incarceration. If this proportion is applied to the number of women sentenced to 30 days or more, it is estimated that approximately 240 children were separated from their mothers, due to incarceration, for one month or longer during the past year.

- 4) *Do the child-care needs of female probationers and the means of meeting those needs differ from those of female incarcerates?*

In order to discover whether or not the child-care needs of probationers differed from those of the incarcerates, a comparison was made between the proportions of women in both groups who had children. The child-care arrangements of the incarcerates prior to their incarceration was compared with the child-care arrangements of probationers at the time of the study.*

This comparison revealed that approximately one-half of the women in both groups had borne children. The major difference between the two groups was that probationers were more likely to be living with their children. In fact, only 14% of the probationers' children, compared to 41% of the incarcerates' children did not live with either one of their natural parents. Similar proportions of children (7.5%) of both groups of offenders lived in foster homes provided by the Children's Aid Society. The remaining children were either living with relatives, or had been given up for adoption.

The child-care needs of incarcerated women seemed similar to those of probationers (except of course during incarceration). However, larger proportions of the children of the incarcerates had been adopted out or had been living with relatives, prior to the mother's incarceration. For the children living with relatives, the picture is unclear. Little is known concerning the adequacy of these arrangements; however, most of the separations had been over two years and few mothers expected these arrangements to change in the future.

- 5) *Is there any evidence of pre-existing family breakdown and consequent child-care problems in probation and institutional populations?*

The most reliable indication of family breakdown is probably the separation of mother and child. It was found that one out of three of the mothers on probation had children (under 18) who were not living with them at the time of this study. Among the incarcerates, family separations were even more prevalent. Two-thirds of the incarcerated mothers were separated from one or more of their children prior to their present offence, and for the most part, these separations appeared to be permanent.

There were also other clear indications of family breakdown in both the probation and institutional populations. Over one-half of the mothers living with children represented single parent households. Some of these women had never been married, but most had suffered a marital breakdown. Of the

* In the present study there was an average of 0.68 children living with women on probation. Applying this figure to the 2500 women presently on probation in Ontario, it is estimated that about 1700 children are living with mothers serving probation (on any given day). Our data suggest that many of these women may indeed require child-related services of one kind or another (see Question 5).

women with partners, many were sharing common-law relationships, and these women, too, may have been separated or divorced.

A majority of the women in both groups had left school at age 16 or younger, with only one-third continuing beyond grade 10. Many of the women had a child before they were 18, and two-thirds of the mothers had their first child before they were 21. On the basis of these findings, it was not surprising to find that over one-half of both groups of offenders had to rely on social assistance. Nor was it surprising to find that approximately one-half of the mothers had prior involvement with the Children's Aid Society regarding their children.

It is also suspected that previous criminal activities could lead to family or child-care problems. Two-thirds of the incarcerated mothers living with their children had a history of prior convictions including fines, probation and/or incarceration. Although the probationers indicated less criminal involvement than the incarcerates, one-third of the mothers on probation did have previous adult convictions.

It is obvious from these findings that both groups of female offenders have experienced the kinds of family difficulties that are often associated with child-care problems.

6) *Is there any evidence that separation of female offenders from family may have a positive effect on family members?*

A definitive answer to this question would have required a direct involvement of the family in this research. As this was beyond the scope of the present study, one can only speculate upon this issue from the information provided by the inmates.

It must be acknowledged that some of these women appeared to represent inadequate role models for their children. Some had a history of drug or alcohol abuse, and most had a history of criminal involvement. However, the extent to which their families were affected by the mother's behaviour can only be surmised.

In spite of the picture presented, some of the women appeared to be concerned parents, with loving supportive families. Therefore, any positive effect on family members because of a mother's incarceration would be difficult to imagine, particularly when such a separation is only temporary.

On the other hand, the negative effects of incarceration are fairly clear. Based on child development research, it is evident that separation from his/her mother may damage a child both socially and emotionally. Also to be considered is the stigma associated with incarceration. This is generally felt by all of the family members, and for this reason, should not be overlooked. Although such psychological

damage may be difficult to demonstrate, the findings definitely indicate that the inmates' families suffered from additional pressures because of the mother's incarceration.

More than half of the children were forced to change their residence, and some were placed in foster homes. Even in homes in which the children remained with their fathers or step-fathers, the inmate usually reported that her absence had created additional stress because of the extra child-care responsibilities placed upon her husband. Mothers who had been employed also mentioned the additional financial pressures with which the family had to contend during their incarceration. One-half of the incarcerated mothers had been supporting their children alone, and many were dependent upon Mother's Allowance. It is assumed that most of these women would be unable to maintain their accommodation during their incarceration, and that many of the children changed residence seems to support this assumption. Without employment or a place to live, these mothers would probably find it especially difficult to get re-established after release.

The longer the separation, the greater the re-adjustment involved, and for thirty percent of the mothers in this study, the separation would be a fairly lengthy one (over nine months). Not only does a lengthy separation create re-adjustment problems for children, it can also be expected to create a strain upon the marital relationship.

In summary, although the data clearly suggest that some of these mothers may have been inadequate role models for their children, it is difficult to find any evidence that their incarceration would actually have a positive effect on their family.

7) *Is there any evidence that judicial decisions are influenced by difficulties in making child-care arrangements?*

It would appear from the data, comparing incarcerates and probationers, that severity of offence and previous criminal history are the major considerations in judicial decisions. Although a smaller proportion of the incarcerated mothers, than the mothers on probation, had children living with them at the time of sentence, it cannot be concluded that child-care arrangements play a major role in judicial decisions. There is strong evidence that many of the incarcerated mothers had a substantive criminal history, and this is probably the factor that accounts for both their incarceration and their inability to provide personal care for their children.

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APPENDIX A.

TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALES ADMITTED AND SENTENCED
FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 1978

	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Paid fine	659	24.8
Placed on probation	119	4.4
Under 30 days	1,419	53.3
30 days and under 60 days	252	9.5
60 days and under 90 days	67	2.5
3 months and under 4'	64	2.4
4 months and under 5'	12	0.5
5 months and under 6'	4	0.2
6 months and under 12'	19	0.7
12 months and under 15'	6	0.2
15 months and under 24'	2	0.1
Penitentiary	<u>37</u>	<u>1.4</u>
Definite Sentences	2,660	100.0
 Total Number Sentenced to Terms of Imprisonment	 1,882	 -

END