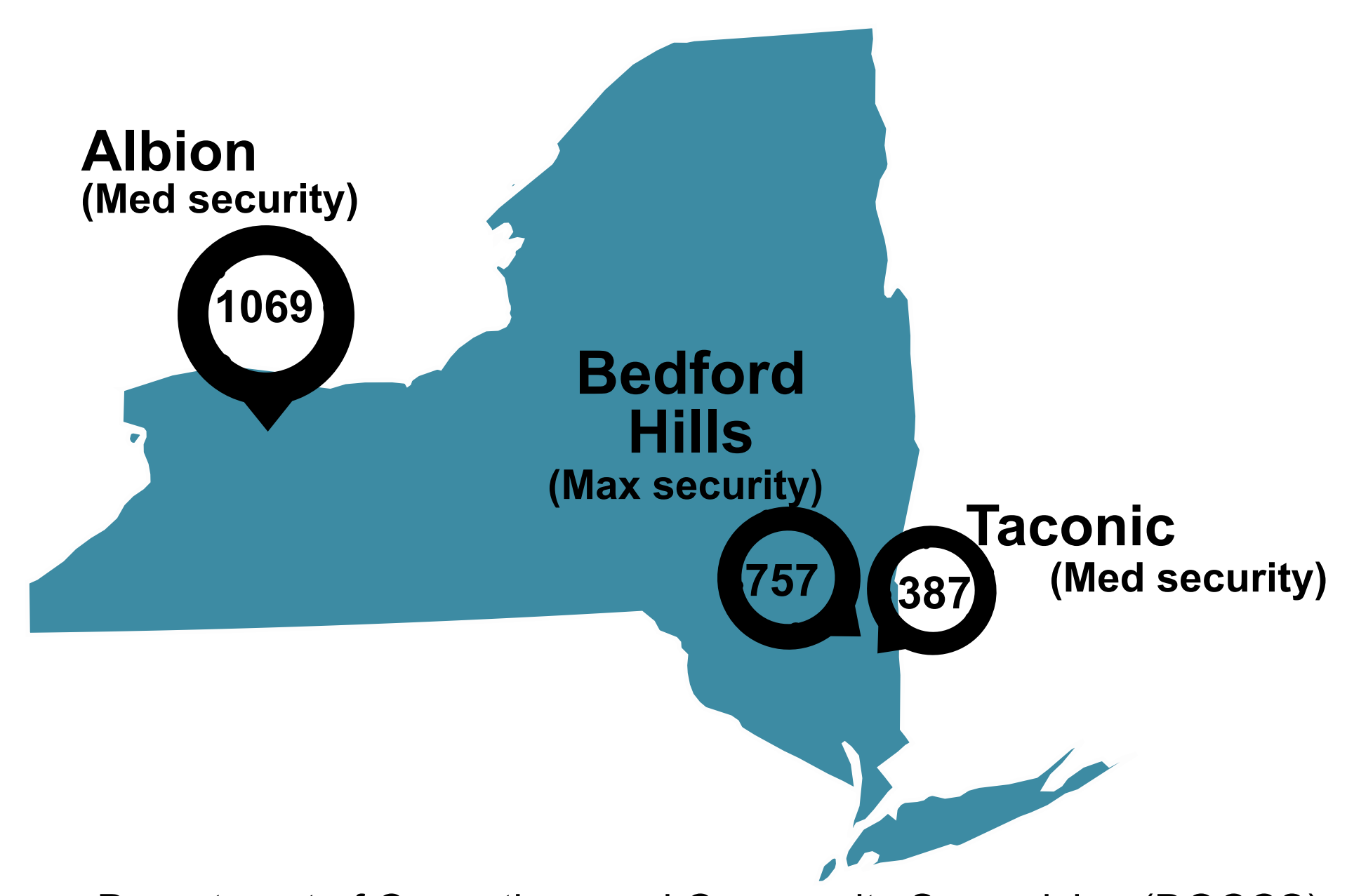


# Women's Incarceration: the experience in New York's prisons

In 2017 and 2018, CANY conducted onsite monitoring visits to Albion, Bedford Hills, and Taconic Correctional Facilities. During these visits, which are protected by state law, CANY organizes teams of staff, board members, advocates, and experts to travel to New York state prisons, conduct walkthroughs of all facility areas, and meet with incarcerated individuals and facility staff. We then conduct follow-up correspondence and in some cases one-on-one interviews with incarcerated individuals to gather additional information about their concerns and experiences in prison. This fact sheet provides some background on women in prison in New York and highlights the biggest issues we identified during our recent monitoring work.

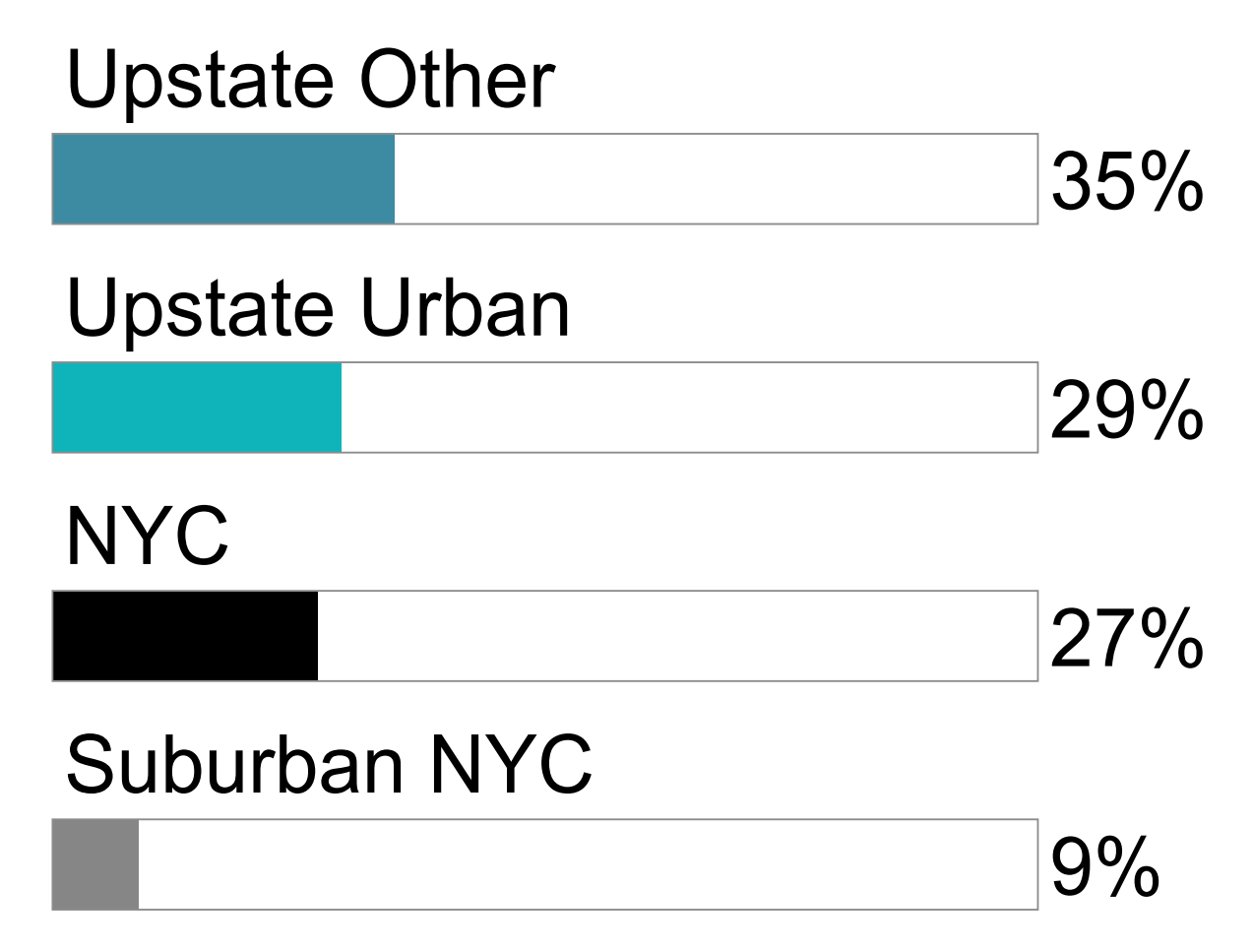
## POPULATION AND LOCATION OF NEW YORK'S WOMEN'S PRISONS

**THERE ARE THREE PRISONS IN NEW YORK DESIGNATED FOR WOMEN**



Source: Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) daily population capacity report on 1-23-2018

### Women's Region of Commitment

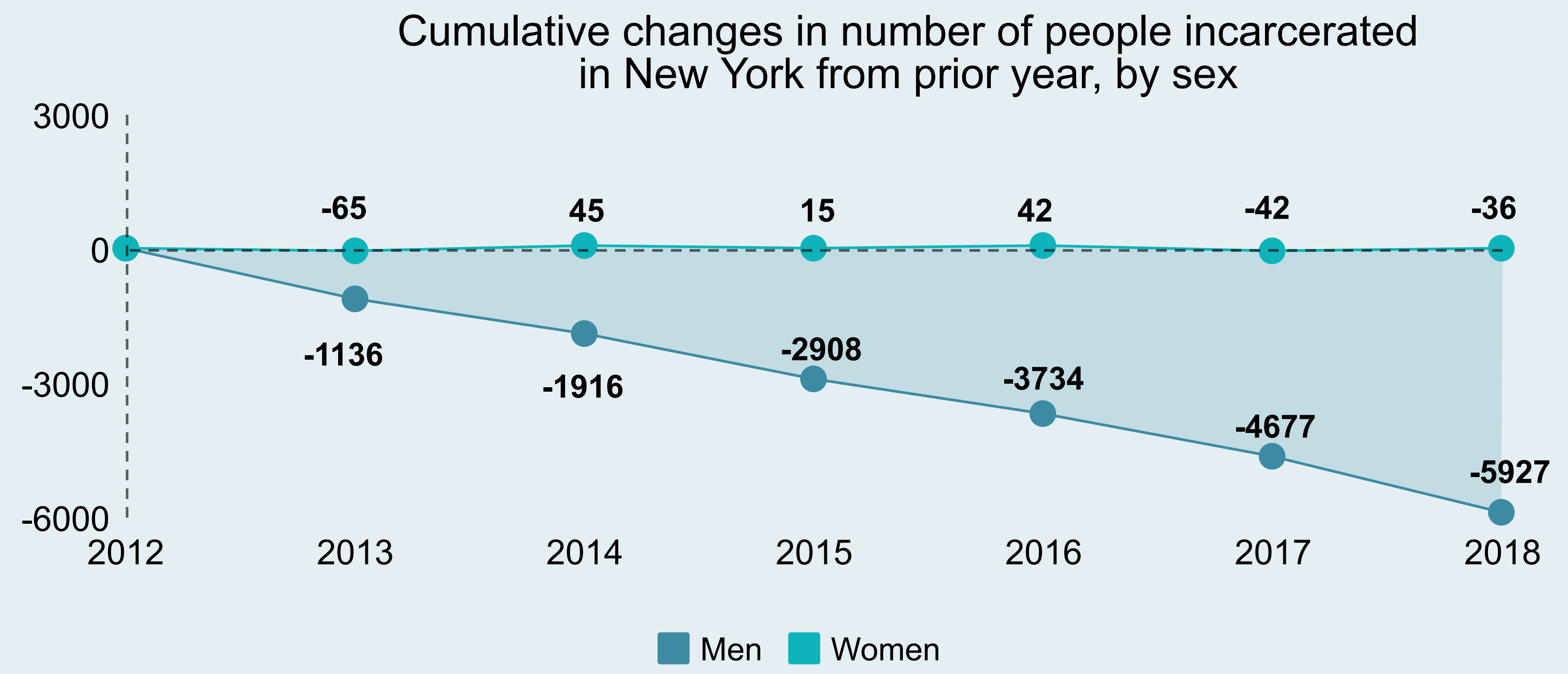


Source: DOCCS Under Custody Report 2018

## POPULATION CHANGES

**WOMEN'S POPULATION DECLINES ARE FLAT, WHILE THE NUMBER OF MEN IN PRISON IS FALLING**

- **Women are far less likely to be affected by decarceration efforts.** Since 2012, the population of incarcerated men has fallen by nearly 1000 men per year, leading to nearly 6,000 fewer men in custody. This is in stark contrast to the population of women, which has decreased by only 36 women in the same 6 year period.



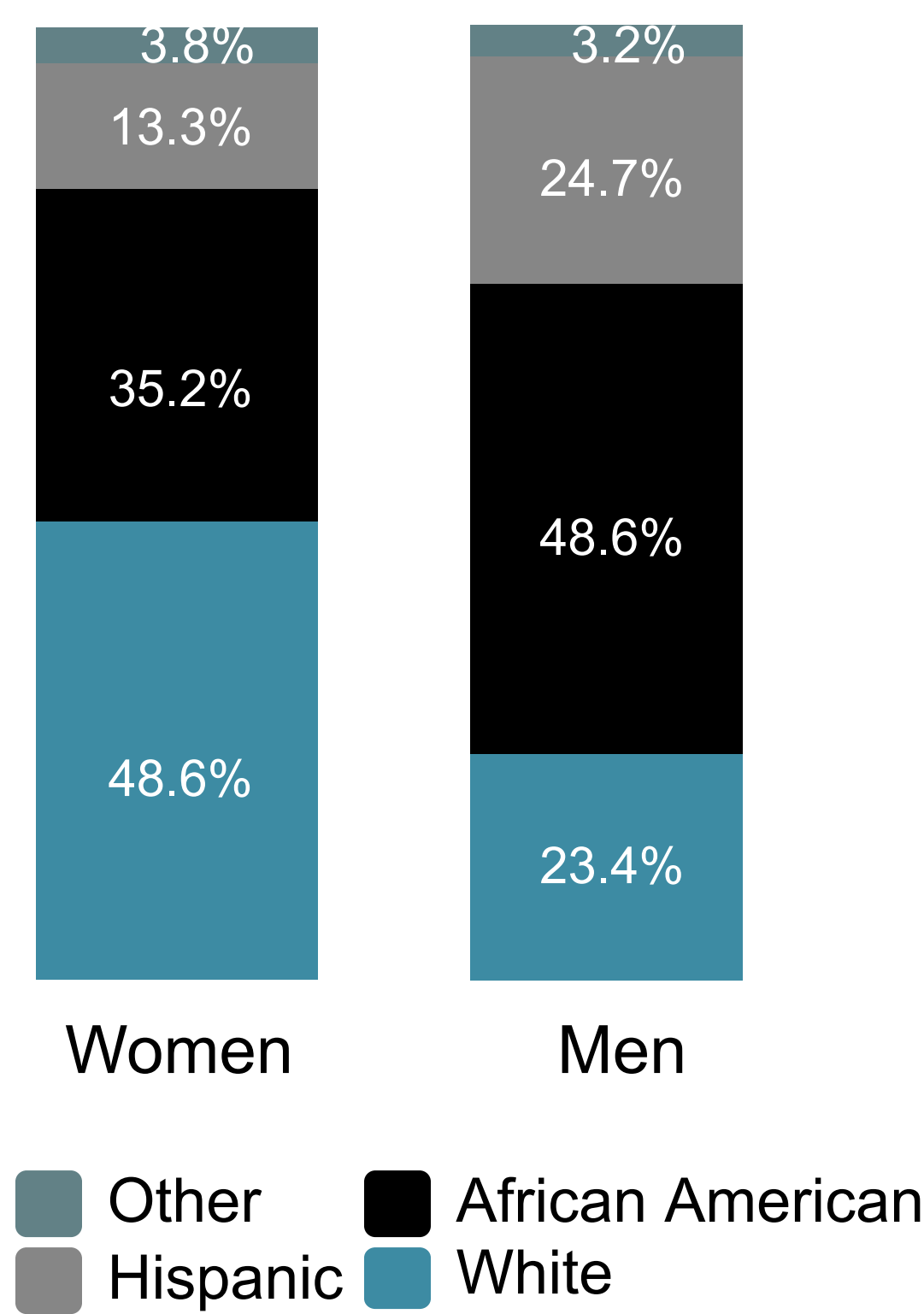
Source: DOCCS Under Custody Reports from 2012-2018

Note: DOCCS does not report data on trans and non-binary individuals in their custody. This report is limited to data collected about individuals incarcerated in New York's women's facilities; it does not speak to the experiences of trans men incarcerated at women's facilities or the experiences of trans women housed in men's facilities.

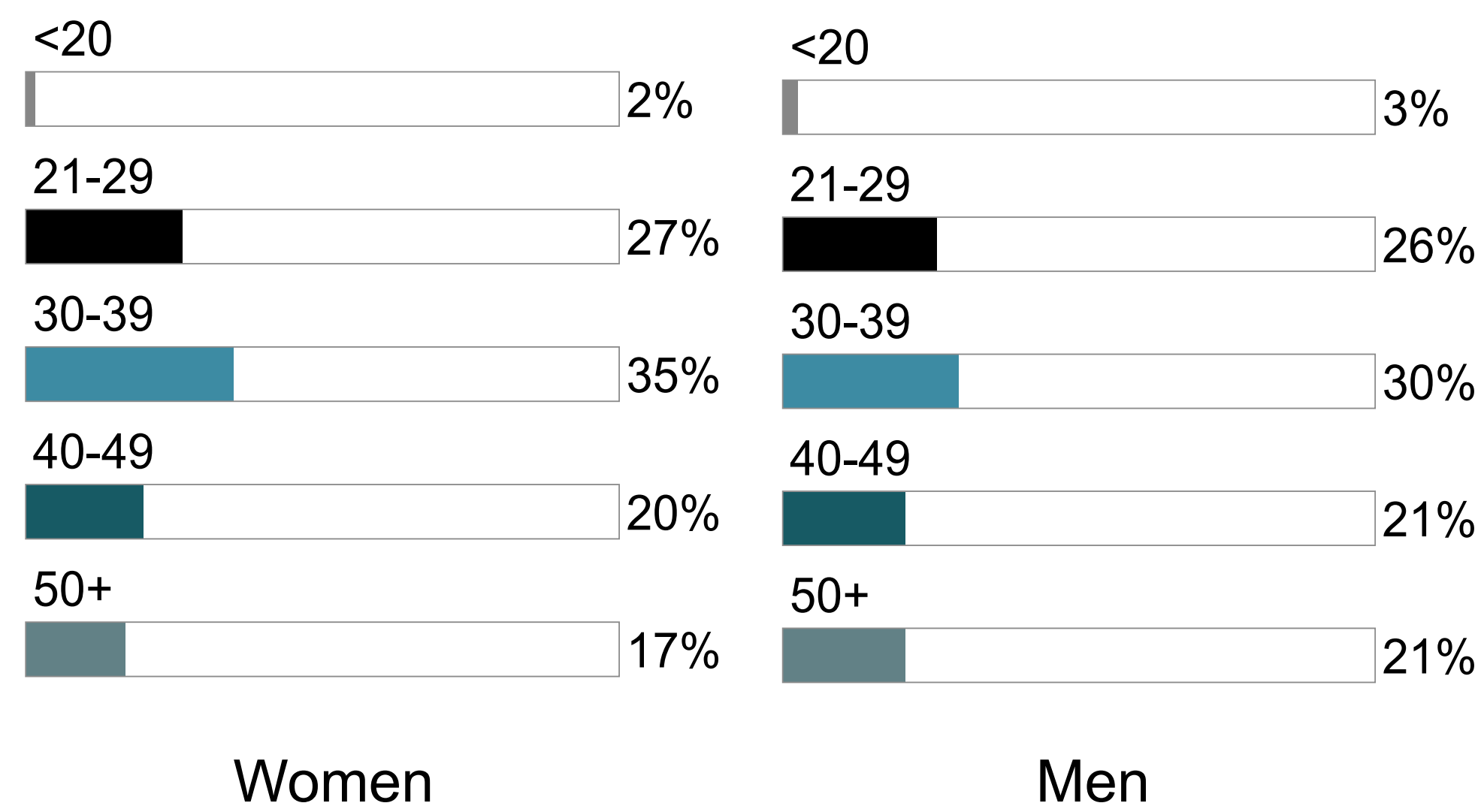
## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

**RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES ARE LESS PRONOUNCED IN WOMEN'S POPULATION THAN MEN'S, AGE DISTRIBUTIONS ARE SIMILAR**

### Race and Ethnicity

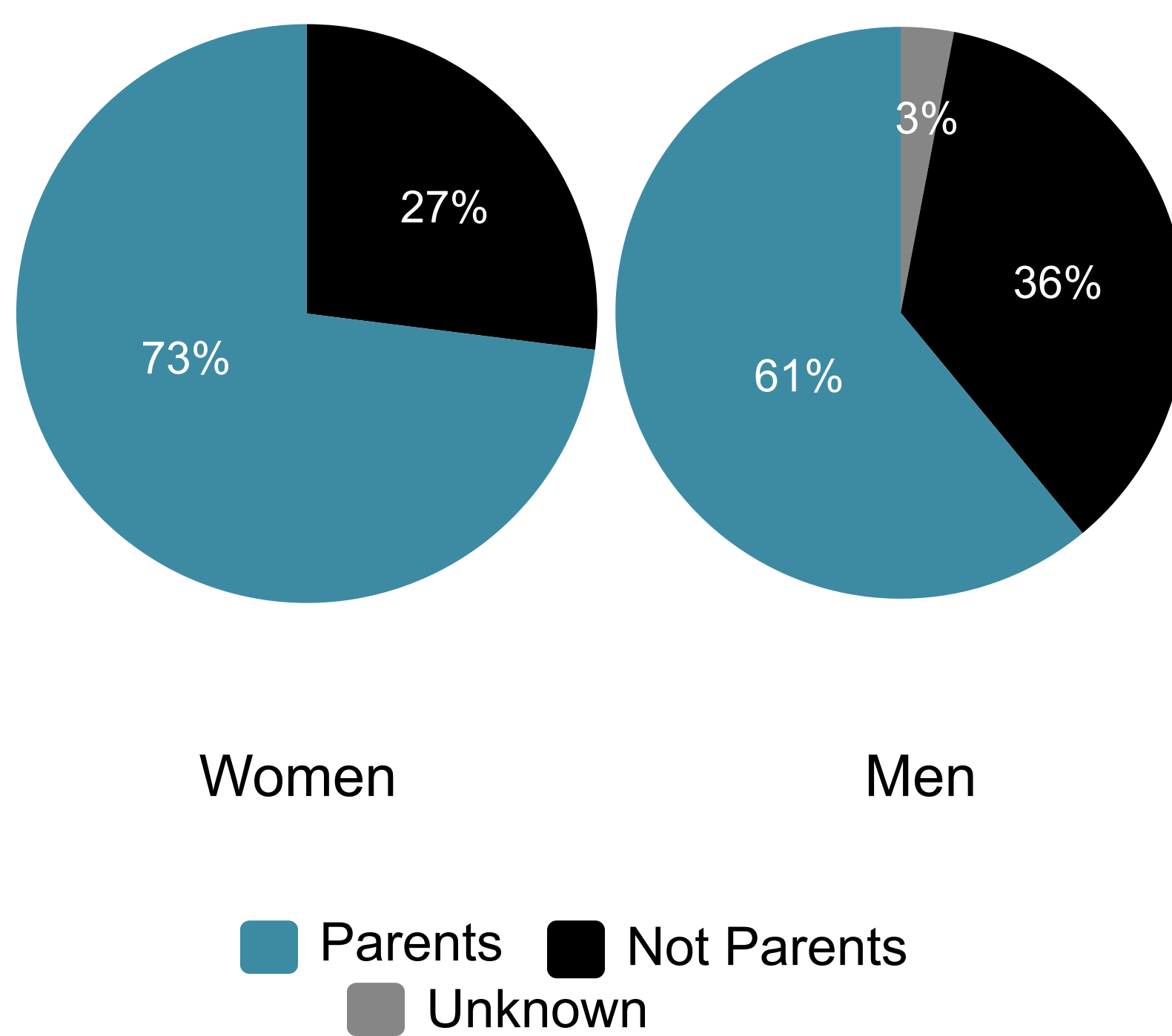


### Age

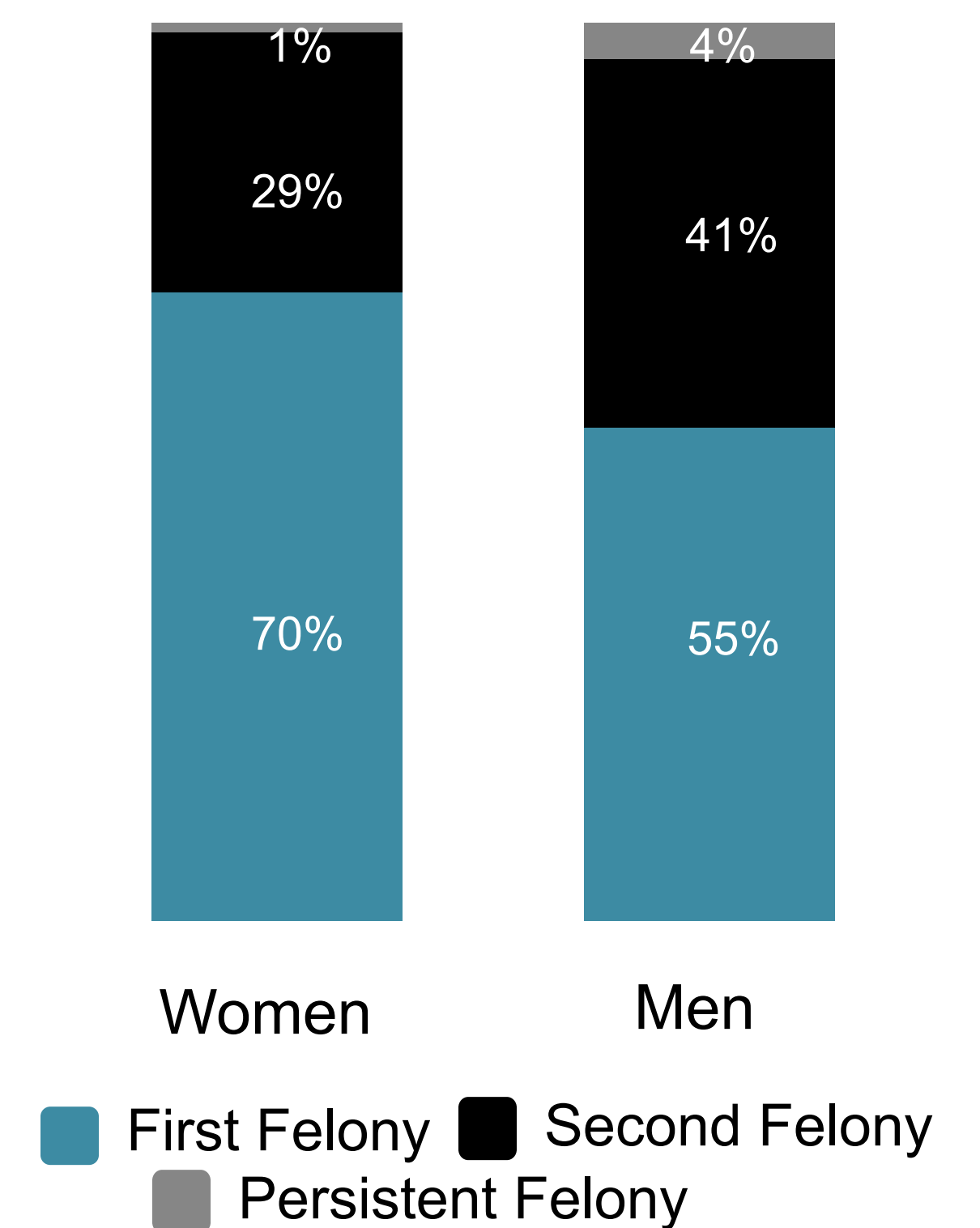


**WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PARENTS AND INCARCERATED FOR THEIR FIRST FELONY**

### Parent Status



### Felony Sentence Status



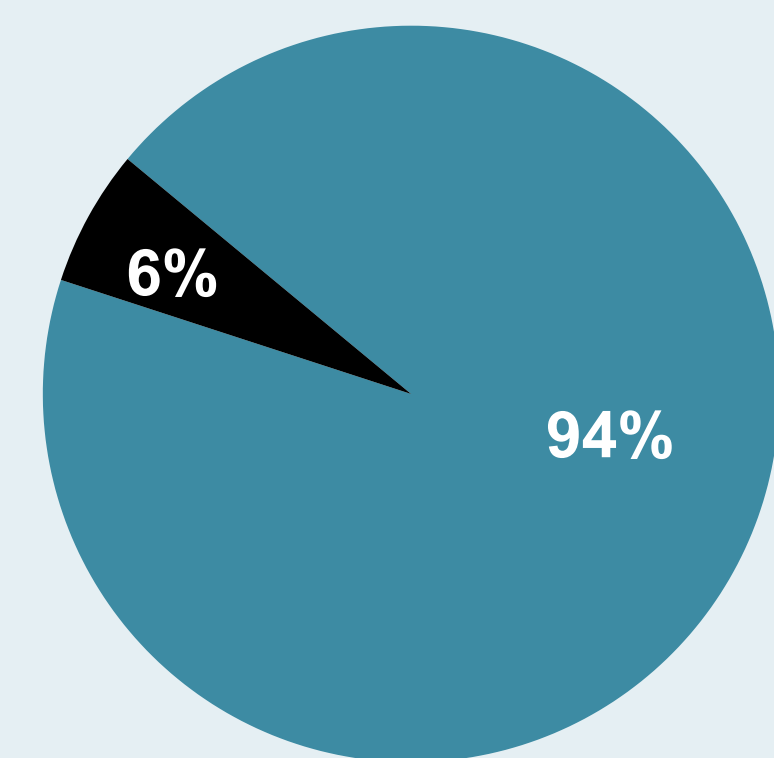
Source: DOCCS Under Custody Report 2018  
Note: we use the race and ethnicity and sentencing categories reported by DOCCS

## KEY CONCERNS

**WOMEN HAVE SIGNIFICANT TRAUMA HISTORIES AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

Incarcerated women are more likely to have experienced trauma and violence and to have mental health needs than women who are not incarcerated.

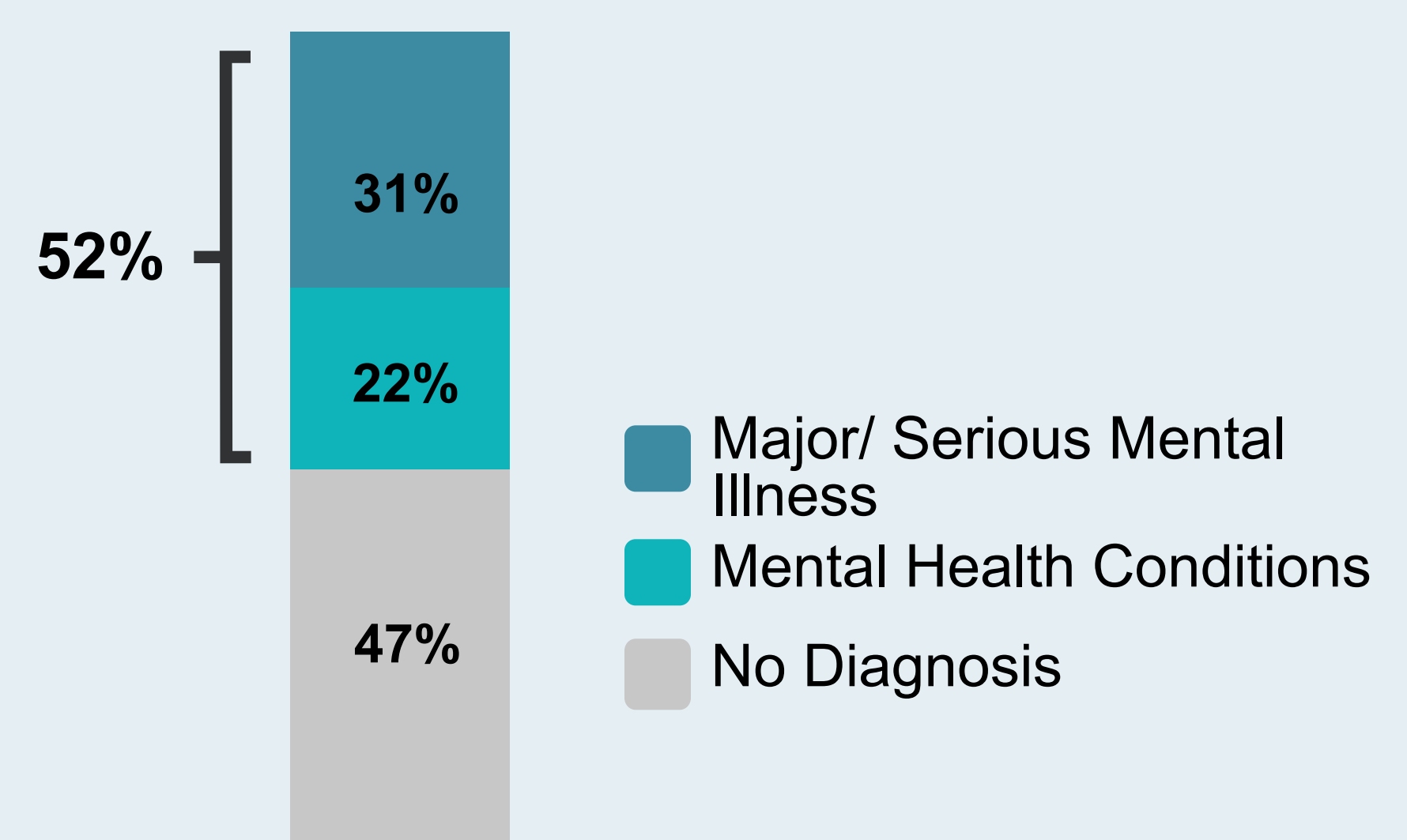
- Recent estimates are limited, but a 1999 study at Bedford Hills found that **94% of the women interviewed had experienced physical or sexual violence, and 82% had been physically or sexually abused as children.**



Source: International Journal of Law & Psychiatry, Prevalence and Severity of Lifetime Physical and Sexual Victimization Among Incarcerated Women, 1999

- Over half of women in NY prisons (52%) are diagnosed with mental health conditions by the Office of Mental Health (OMH).**
- Nearly one third (31%) of these women are in the **highest severity categories.** (OMH Levels 1, 1S, 2, 2S).

[For an explanation of OMH categorization levels, click here](#)



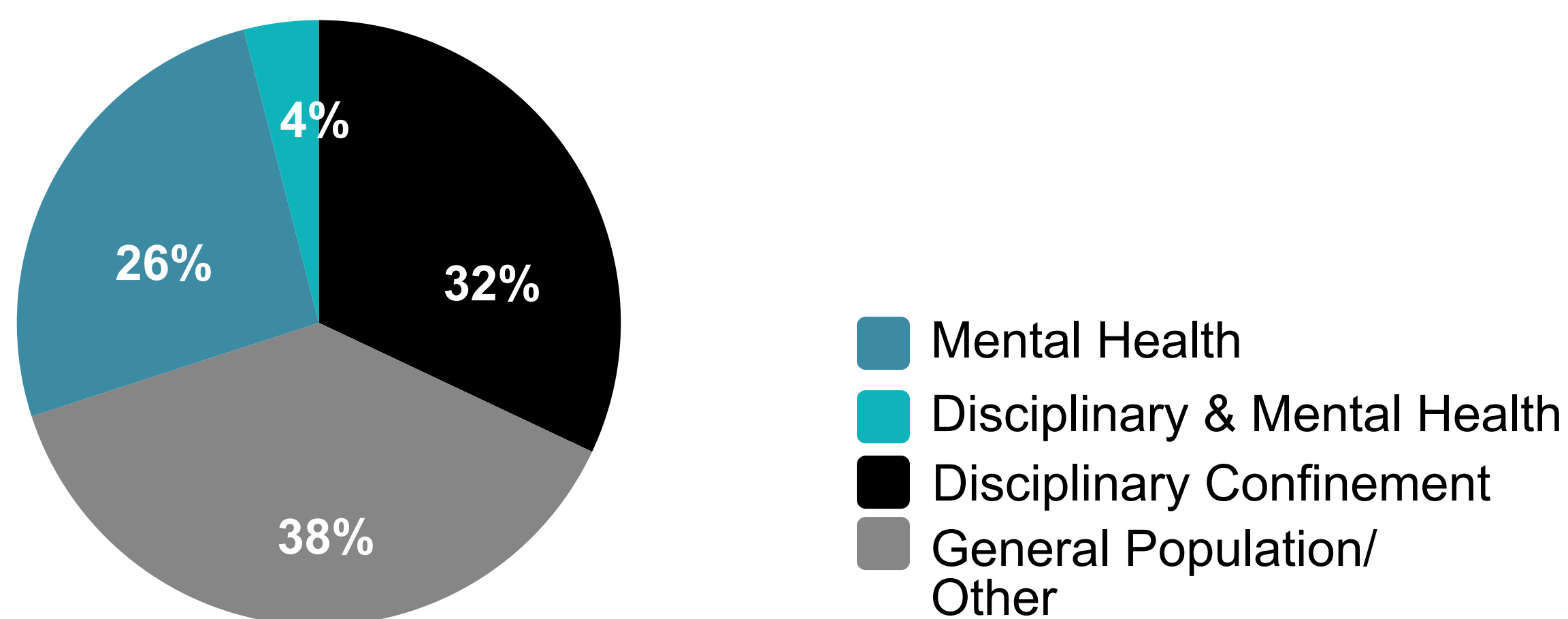
Source: DOCCS, Under Custody Report 2018

## MOST ACTS OF SELF HARM AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS OCCUR IN DISCIPLINARY AND CLINICAL LOCATIONS

There were 53 self harm incidents and suicide attempts in 2016 within the three women's facilities. **Once every seven days, an incarcerated woman self harms or attempts suicide in a New York State prison.**

- Together, two-thirds of self harm incidents and suicide attempts occur while women are **within mental health treatment and disciplinary confinement areas.**

Location of Self Harm Incidents and Suicide Attempts

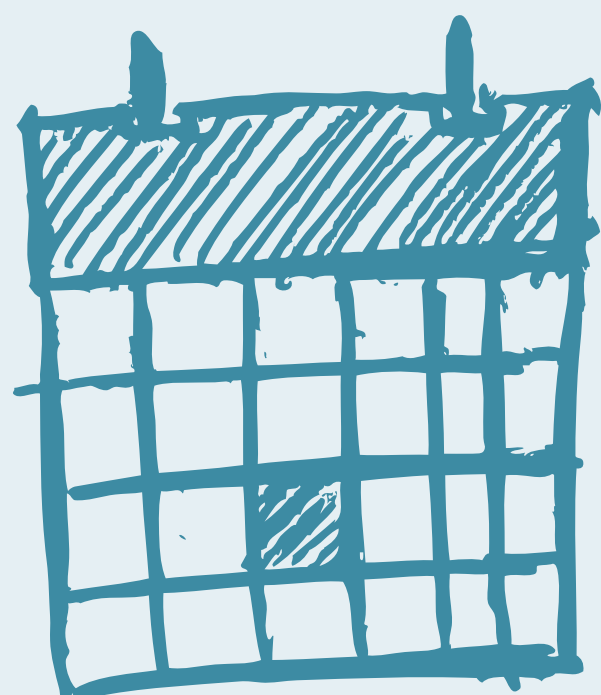


Source: CANY analysis of OMH data obtained via FOIL request  
 Note: 17 incidents occurred in disciplinary confinement, 14 in mental health service or housing areas, 2 in disciplinary mental health housing

## WOMEN REPORT ISSUES WITH BOTH ACCESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

In our monitoring, women report **insufficient access to mental health services, issues with inadequate service quality, and a lack of trauma support.**

LESS THAN HALF



75%

41%

of women rated the quality of the mental health care they receive as good.

of women said they see mental health providers once a month or less frequently.

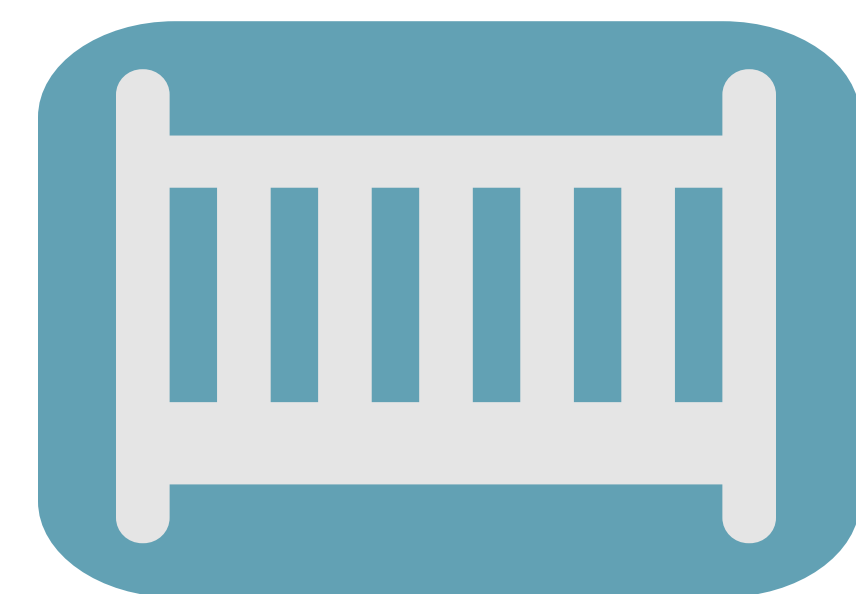
of women said they did not feel they see mental health staff as often as they need to.

Note: Surveys were sent to women who consented during our monitoring visits. Reported percents are calculated of the 369 respondents, roughly 1/6 of the population incarcerated at that time

## THE EXPERIENCE OF PRISON UNDERMINES DIGNITY

Women we spoke to experienced barriers maintaining contact with their loved ones.

- Bedford Hills Correctional Facility is one of nine prisons in the nation with a nursery for mothers and their children.
- **Women with infant children reported being denied access to Bedford Hill's nursery program.**
- **In 2017, only 22 beds of the 27 available were in use.**
- There were 71 pregnant women at Bedford Hills that same year.



Source: DOCCS daily population capacity report on 1-23-2018 and data provided to CANY by DOCCS

ONE IN FIVE

women said they have never received a visit.

54%

of women said their visitors have to wait a long time to be processed after arriving at the facility.

42%

of women said how facility staff treat their visitors is a major issue and deterrent of visits.



Source: CANY's independent surveys

[Click here to learn more about a current bill that would require incarcerated parents to be placed in facilities closest to their children's home](#)



## WOMEN REPORT SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT THE MEDICAL CARE THEY RECEIVE

On average, incarcerated people have more health problems prior to incarceration than the general public. **Incarceration tends to exacerbate rather than improve health conditions for all incarcerated people — women are no exception.**

- Grievances are one of the only ways for incarcerated people to dispute their treatment. **For women at Bedford Hills in 2015 and 2016, complaints about medical care outpaced any other category of grievances.**

**ONE IN FIVE**

of women's grievances are about medical care.

Source: DOCCS, Annual Grievance Reports for Bedford Hills 2015 - 2016, the most recently available data

- Data we gathered from our recent oversight and monitoring of the three women's prisons also highlights women's perceptions of the quality of medical care they receive.

**71%**

of women said they do not have adequate access to medical providers.

**74%**

of women said that doctors do not adequately treat their needs.

Source: CANY's independent surveys

Independent oversight is essential in safeguarding the quality of healthcare provided to incarcerated people. **CANY has been at the vanguard of monitoring of medical care in New York's prisons and advocating for improvement.**

[🔗](#) For CANY's report Reproductive Injustice, click here.

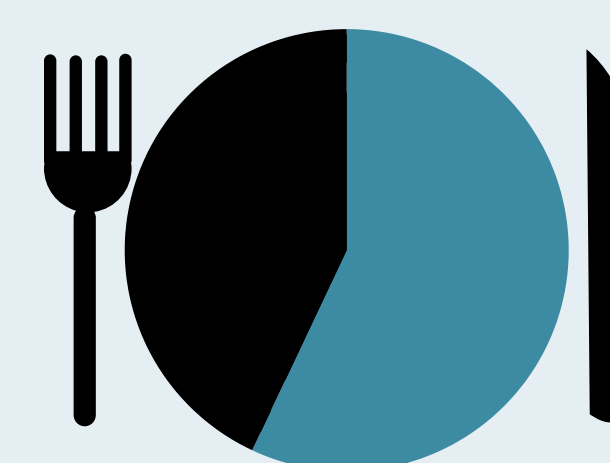
[🔗](#) For CANY's report HIV Services for Women in New York's Prisons, click here.

[🔗](#) For CANY's recent testimony on The State of Prison Healthcare, click here.

## EVEN BASIC NECESSITIES ARE UNRELIABLY AVAILABLE TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

**57%**

of women said they are not served enough food.



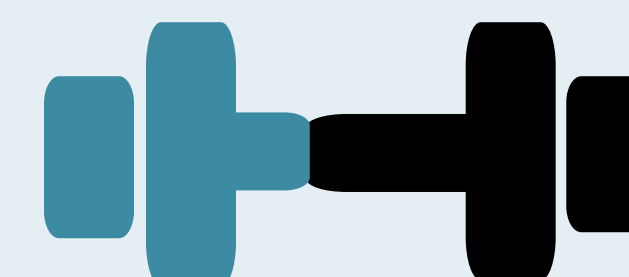
**55%**

of women said they do not have enough toilet paper.



**47%**

of women said they do not get enough exercise.



**37%**

of women said they do not have enough sanitary napkins.



Note: Since this data was collected, the NYS Legislature passed Bill 8821-2018, ensuring free menstrual products to incarcerated people.

Source: CANY's independent surveys

## ABOUT THE CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

For 175 years, CANY has been the only independent organization in New York with authority under state law to monitor prisons and report our findings to the legislature and the broader public. Our access creates a platform for people inside prison to participate in and shape the public debate.