ADVANCING CORRECTIONS
Journal of the International Corrections and Prisons Association

Article 15: Rethinking Sex-Segregated Incarceration: What Transgender Prisoners Want and Why It Matters (ACJ20-A015)

ICPA
International Corrections & Prisons Association

Scholarly Reflections on Core Considerations for Correctional Practice

Edition #20 - 2026

www.icpa.org

RETHINKING SEX-SEGREGATED INCARCERATION: WHAT TRANSGENDER PRISONERS WANT AND WHY IT MATTERS

Valerie Jenness, Sophia Castillo, University of California, Irvine
Kelsie Chesnut, and Jennifer Peirce, The Vera Institute of Justice

Abstract

Media and political attention have put a spotlight on transgender women living inside prisons designated for men and, in some cases, requesting placement in a women's prison. This, in turn, has raised questions about where to house transgender people who are incarcerated in High Income Countries, given they face high rates of verbal, physical, and sexual victimization and other harms. Some legislation and policies seeking to address the issue emphasize the incarcerated person's expressed preference for prison type and housing situation should be considered. Data from a national survey of 280 transgender prisoners in 31 states reveals 70% of transgender women prefer to be housed in prisons for women, representing a notable shift from previous research, in the direction of preferring women's prisons. More than three quarters of transgender men and transgender women prefer to be housed with other transgender people. Only about a third of transgender women and about half of transgender men reside in prison facilities that align with their preference (i.e., men's or women's prison). These and other findings emerge amid evolving legal frameworks, including the Prison Rape Elimination Act (2003) and California's Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act (2020), which mandate consideration of prisoners' gender identity and perspectives on safety and housing. Given the political prominence of this topic and the problems with the status quo, policymakers and correctional leaders must understand transgender people's preferences for prison housing reveal both patterns and variation.

Keywords: Transgender prisoners, conditions of confinement, prison housing policy, safety, civil and human rights, Prison Rape Elimination Act, Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act

INTRODUCTION

On May 29, 2014, *Time* magazine ran a cover story featuring the actress Laverne Cox, who is transgender and at the time was playing the role of Sophia Burset, a transgender woman in a women's prison, on the wildly popular Netflix series called "Orange is the New Black". The title of the article, "The Transgender Tipping Point," signaled the growing visibility of transgender people in the U.S. The subtitle of the article, "America's Next Civil Rights Frontier," communicated a focus on social progress. When the article was published, it was not the case then—and is not the case now—that transgender women are typically housed in prisons for women. Much has changed since then. Transgender people in prison and their advocates have been–and continue to be–increasingly visible in discussions about conditions of confinement, prison policy and practice, and new ways of thinking about whether transgender women should have the option to transfer to a prison for women.

Across a range of institutional settings—from healthcare to education to employment to criminal justice, for example—the growing recognition of transgender people, and more recently nonbinary people, forces a reckoning with institutional practices that remain organized around a binary understanding of gender (i.e., a system that divides people into two categories based on biological sex at birth–men and women–without recognizing other genders). Focusing on the criminal legal system in particular, Jenness and Rowland (2024) recently identified a transgender criminal legal system nexus in the U.S. structured around a binary understanding of gender that produces disparities in criminal legal system contact and incarceration for transgender people, especially transgender women of color.

Housing in prison is a basic element of infrastructure that conditions interactions and the welfare of prisoners, including and especially for those who—like transgender people—are particularly vulnerable when incarcerated (Bacak 2023; Bacak, Bright, & Wilson, 2020; Beck, 2014; Coppola, 2023; Engelberg et al., 2023; Frazer et al., 2022; Jenness, Sexton & Sumner, 2019; Jenness & Rowland, 2014; Kanewske, Hattery, & Rudes, 2023; Lydon et al., 2015; Oparah, 2012). The question of where to house transgender people who are incarcerated is a flashpoint in debates about prison safety, civil and human rights, and the responsibility of prison authorities to deliver on both. In some states it has become a litigious issue[1].

PRISON PLACEMENTS AND HOUSING ASSIGNMENTS FOR INCARCERATED TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Typically, in the United States and often beyond, prison authorities place incarcerated people in prison facilities based on the incarcerated person's sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity and expression at the time of incarceration (Cabage, 2023; Sumner & Jenness, 2014; Sanders et al., 2023). Bacak, Bright, and Wilson (2020, p. e373) identify sex-based housing determination as a key consideration in explaining "painfully widespread" victimization of transgender people in prison. However, the passage of new laws, coupled with changes in policy, have raised questions about this

1 *In California, The Women's Liberation Front (WoLF) challenged TRADA in Chandler v. California (https://www.aclusocal.org/en/press-releases/court-dismisses-lawsuit-challenging-californias-transgender-prison-policy, last accessed on October 27, 2025). In Colorado, Raven v. Polis, a 2019 lawsuit challenging the state's policies in prisons that harm transgender people led to a settlement agreement that includes policy changes and new specialized housing units for transgender people in both men's and women's prisons (https://transgenderlawcenter.org/colorado-judge-approves-groundbreaking-consent-decree-in-transgender-rights-class-action/, last accessed October 27, 2025).*

age-old practice. For example, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in the United States, signed into law by President George Bush in 2003 became a catalyst for guidelines that require thinking anew about housing sexual and gender minorities[2]. PREA Standard 115.42(c) requires placement decisions for transgender and intersex prisoners be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the incarcerated person's own view regarding their safety (Malkin & DeJong 2019). More recently, The Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act (TRADA), signed into law by California Governor Gavin Newsom in 2020, specifies that:

> An individual incarcerated by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation who is transgender, nonbinary, or intersex, regardless of anatomy, shall ... (3) be housed at a correctional facility designated for men or women based on the individual's preference... (The Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act §2606(a)(3), 2021).

These and other legislative and policy measures in some states have decoupled sex assigned at birth and gender for the purposes of facility placement and housing decisions, at least at the level of policy.

In practice, how prison managers make housing decisions and where transgender people are housed varies immensely (Cabage, 2023). In an overview of the types of prison placement and housing unit assignments for transgender women in prisons in the United States, Jenness (2021) described they are currently housed almost exclusively in facilities for men (Sumner & Jenness 2014), which is largely internationally consistent (Maycock, O'Shea, & Jenness, 2025; Tait, 2023). Within men's prisons in the United States, transgender women are generally housed in one of three ways. First, some are housed in the general population. Second, some are housed in ways that segregate them from other prisoners, for example, by being in a special housing unit designated (often unofficially) for gender and sexual minorities. Third, some are put in restrictive housing, whether as a disciplinary measure or as protective custody, which, in effect, isolates them from other prisoners (Jenness, 2024). Although researchers, advocates, and practitioners alike posit that some types of placements are better than others[3], to date there is no research that systematically assesses the prison housing situations of transgender prisoners across the country, and how these affect outcomes of concern, such as safety, discipline, and access to healthcare and programs. There is very little research about the housing situations of transgender men in prison.

As debates and lawsuits continue to unfold and correctional officials continue to face challenges related to housing transgender people in feasible, safe, and constitutionally defensible ways, the need to consider the expressed preferences for housing placement communicated by transgender people is critically necessary.

EXPRESSED PREFERENCES FOR PRISON PLACEMENT AND HOUSING ASSIGNMENT

The Vera Institute of Justice, in partnership with Black and Pink National, surveyed transgender people incarcerated in state prisons in the United States and, among other things, asked respondents about their preferences for prison placement and housing assignments. In 2021-22, the survey was

2 *"Sexual minorities" generally refers to sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, pansexual, and other categories) while "gender minorities" refers to gender identity (transgender, nonbinary, or intersex).*

3 *For example, Sharon Dolovich's (2011) work reveals that transgender women and gay men housed in a designated unit, the K6G Unit, in the Los Angeles County Jail report feeling safer there rather than elsewhere in the jail.*

sent to 597 eligible people in state prisons and yielded a 47% response rate (n = 280 across 31 states) (for details on the survey and measurement of gender categories, see Chesnut & Peirce, 2024). Most respondents identified as transgender women (73%), with other respondents identified as transgender men (9%) or gender nonconforming and nonbinary (18%). The respondents' specific choices and wording for their gender identity varied. The sample is diverse. Almost half of the respondents (46%) are white, about a quarter are Black (24%), 14% are Hispanic/Latinx, 11% are Native American, and about 5% multiracial or a member of another racial group. The mean age of the respondents is 44 years old. A plurality of respondents has a high school degree or GED (35%), more than a fourth of them have "some college" (29%), and a fifth of them (20%) did not graduate from high school. Forty percent of the respondents made less than $10,000 a year prior to being incarcerated, a simple majority (52%) engaged in commercial sex at some point in their lives, and 44% have a disability. The mean age at first arrest is 19 years old, the mean age at first incarceration is 22 years old, and the mean number of lifetime arrests is 22. Mean time on current sentence reported was 26 years, while mean time served on current conviction was 14 years.

These and other demographics were reported for the entire survey sample (n = 280) to provide overall context. In the following analysis, the focus is on preferences expressed by those who affirmatively identified as either transgender women (n = 205) or transgender men (n = 26) in their survey responses. The survey asked about respondents' placement preferences in four ways, each of which captures a different dimension of residential living in custody: type of prison, type of housing unit, type of sleeping arrangement, and being housed with other transgender people.

Type of Prison. The survey respondents were asked "If it were your decision, which type of facility would you prefer to live in while serving your time"? The response categories were "facility for men," "facility for women," and "facility for men and women."[4] As reported in Table 1, the majority of

4 *"Facilities for men and women" are typically arrangements due to temporary housing needs, such as a natural disaster, and are omitted from the analysis due to their rare occurrence.*

Table 1: Type of Prison Preferred, by Gender Identity

	Preferred Prison Type		
	Women's Prison	Men's Prison	**Total**
Gender Identity			
Trans Women	135 (70%)	57 (30%)	192 (100%)
Trans Men	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	25 (100%)
Total Valid Sample*	150 (69%)	67 (31%)	217* (100%)

Source: Advancing Transgender Justice survey, 2021–2022

*Only respondents who identified as either transgender women or transgender men are included in this table (n = 231). Of those, four respondents who reported preferring to live in prisons designated for men and women are not included in this table. Ten blank responses are omitted.

transgender women who responded to the question would prefer to live in a facility for women (70%), and nearly a third of them (30%) prefer to be in a men's facility. As for transgender men, the majority indicate a preference to live in a women's facility, but the sample for transgender men is very small (n = 25). Ten of these respondents indicated a preference to be housed in a prison for men, which is surprising as other research underscores the security risks transgender men face in prisons for men.[5]

Type of Housing Unit. The survey respondents were asked about their preferences for particular types of housing units. Specifically, they were asked "If it were your decision, what kind of housing unit would you prefer to live in while serving your time"? The response categories were general population, protective custody, mental health unit, solitary confinement, medical unit, drug treatment unit, and other (e.g., substance abuse treatment units or units for people convicted of sex offenses). Roughly half of both transgender women (49%) and transgender men (58%) who answered the question would prefer to be in a general population housing unit. Not surprisingly given the literature on the reliance on the use of solitary confinement generally in prisons in the United States (Digard, Vanko, & Sullivan, 2018) and specifically to manage transgender prisoners (Jenness & Rowland, 2024; Manson, 2019), about nine out of ten of the respondents (89%) reported having spent time in solitary confinement, but very few respondents (.5% for transgender women and 4.2% for transgender men) indicated an interest in being in solitary confinement. In contrast, 16% of transgender women and 17% of transgender men expressed a preference to be housed in protective custody.

Type of Sleeping Arrangements. The survey respondents were asked about their preferences regarding their "sleeping arrangements,"[6] as follows: "All else equal, what type of sleeping arrangement would you prefer to live in while serving your time?" The response categories were single cell, double cell, dormitory, and something else. The most common response was a preference for single cell sleeping arrangements (47% of transgender women and 48% of transgender men). The second most-preferred sleeping arrangement type was a double cell, including 38% of transgender women and 28% of transgender men.

---

5 *This finding contrasts with Rossi's (2024) work, which involved interviewing 15 transgender men housed in eight prisons in England and Wales. Fourteen of these interviewees reported preferring to serve their sentence in facilities ("estates") for women and none of them expressed an intent to apply to be held in a facility for men.*

6 *The present survey built on previous work published in Coming Out of Concrete Closets (2015), including using the phrase "sleeping arrangements" (Lydon et al. 2015).*

Table 2: Type of Housing Unit Preferred, by Gender Identity

	Preferred Housing Unit Type						
	General Population	Other[1]	Protective Custody	Mental Health	Medical	Solitary	**Total**
Gender Identity							
Trans Women	98 (49%)	49 (24%)	33 (16%)	17 (8.5%)	3 (1.5%)	1 (0.5%)	201 (100%)
Trans Men	14 (58%)	2 (8.3%)	4 (17%)	2 (8.3%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (4.2%)	24 (100%)
Total Valid Sample*	112 (50%)	51 (23%)	37 (16%)	19 (8.4%)	4 (1.8%)	2 (0.9%)	225* (100%)

Source: Advancing Transgender Justice survey, 2021–2022

*Only respondents who identified as either transgender women or transgender men are included in this table (n = 231). Six blank responses are omitted.

1"Other" types of housing units included substance abuse treatment units and units for people convicted of sex offenses.

Table 3: Sleeping Arrangement Preferences, by Gender Identity

	Preferred Sleeping Arrangement				
	Single Cell	Double Cell	Dormitory	Other	**Total**
Gender Identity					
Trans Women	94 (47%)	77 (38%)	16 (7.9%)	15 (7.4%)	202 (100%)
Trans Men	12 (48%)	7 (28%)	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	25 (100%)
Total Valid Sample*	106 (47%)	84 (37%)	19 (8.4%)	18 (7.9%)	227* (100%)

Source: Advancing Transgender Justice survey, 2021–2022

*Only respondents who identified as either transgender women or transgender men are included in this table (n = 231).

Four blank responses are omitted.

Table 4: Expressed Preferences for Living with Other Trans People, by Gender Identity

	Prefer to Live with Other Trans People		
	No	Yes	**Total**
Gender Identity			
Trans Women	39 (19%)	160 (80%)	199 (100%)
Trans Men	4 (16%)	21 (84%)	25 (100%)
Total Valid Sample*	43 (19%)	181 (80%)	224* (100%)

Source: Advancing Transgender Justice survey, 2021–2022

*Only respondents who identified as either transgender women or transgender men are included in this table (n = 231).

Five blank responses and two 'unsure' responses are omitted.

Housing with (Other) Transgender People. The survey respondents were asked to address a question designed to understand their preference for living in proximity with other transgender people (as opposed to living in general population). Specifically, it asked "If it were up to you, would you prefer to be housed with other transgender and gender nonconforming people while incarcerated"? A strong majority of both transgender women (80%) and transgender men (84%) said yes, while 19% of transgender women and 16% of transgender men said no.

Alignment Between Actual Experience and Preferred Housing Arrangement. The findings reported thus far lead to an important question: to what degree are transgender people residing in prisons and housing environments that align with their expressed preferences? As reported in Figure 1, about half of the transgender men (48%) and a third of the transgender women (31%) are living in a prison facility that aligns with their expressed preference. When the focus is on housing units, more than half of the transgender women (55%) and more than a third of transgender men (39%) are living in their preferred type of housing unit. In contrast, less than half of the transgender women (41%) and transgender men (22%) have sleeping arrangements that align with their expressed preference. A majority of transgender women (68%) and transgender men (57%) have alignment when it comes to their preference for being housed with other transgender people who are incarcerated. The largest disparity between the two groups is in alignment in sleeping arrangements (19% difference) and the smallest disparity is in preference to be housed with other incarcerated transgender people (11%).

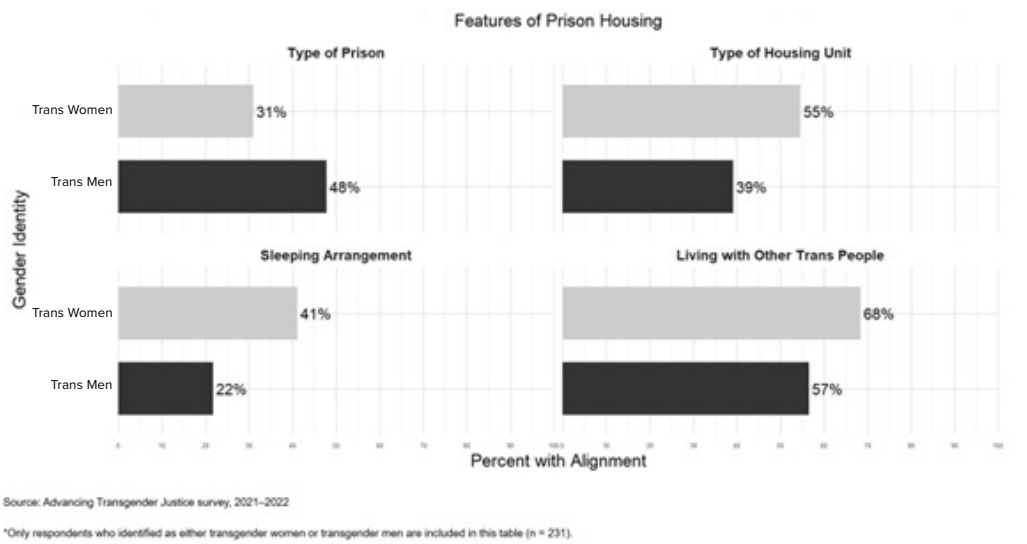

Figure 1: Alignment Between Prison Experience and Expressed Preferences, by Gender Identity

A Point of Comparison. Findings from a study that involved face-to-face interviews with over 300 transgender women in California's prisons for men in 2008 provide a point of comparison (Jenness, Sexton, & Sumner, 2011). In that work, conducted over a decade earlier, transgender women housed in 27 prisons for men were asked "In general, would you prefer to be housed in a prison for women or a prison for men?" A majority of transgender women in California prisons (64.9%) expressed a preference to be placed in a men's prison rather than a women's prison, despite fear of victimization and sexual assault. In contrast, 35.1% reported a preference to be housed in women's prisons, often referencing their identity as a woman and their affinity with other women.

Comparing the two studies above signals a shift in a key finding about expressed preferences for type of prison (i.e., a shift from a preference for men's prisons to a preference for women's prisons). This shift raises a host of questions about the differences between the studies, including when, where, and how they were conducted, and what samples were used. Also, there were changes in "the rights landscape" for transgender people, both inside and outside of carceral settings, and the changing legal policy environment. Some state correctional agencies are adjusting practices in the wake of lawsuits by transgender people and their advocates, citing safety and dignity concerns; many states rely on policies requiring a case-by-case assessment (Cabage, 2023). More recently, the executive order signed by President Trump on January 20, 2025 eliminates the option to identify as transgender in federal prisons, much less request a transfer to a women's facility[7]. These are seismic changes in the topology of policy and, presumably, practice related to housing transgender people in prison.

7 *The federal Executive Order "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" restricts how federal agencies, including prisons, collect and use data related to sex and gender by mandating that federal forms requiring an individual's sex should list only "male or female" and "shall not request gender identity." To quote the national press, "Trump Bars Transgender Women from U.S. Prisons for Female Inmates" (Dewan and Harmon 2025).*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In "Orange is the New Black," Sophia Burset was released from prison. Her time in prison, however, was marked by mistreatment by staff and prisoners alike; stays in solitary confinement, purportedly for her own protection; interpersonal conflicts with other prisoners and prison staff; and problematic access to healthcare, including access to hormone therapy. Perhaps less obvious to the typical viewer, she defied trendlines by experiencing incarceration in a women's prison in the first place. Moving forward to 2025, the hazards and harms that transgender people face in prison in the United States and often beyond continue to be well-documented, but the larger context in which they unfold has changed. The likelihood of a transgender person being placed in a facility that aligns with their gender identity, however, now depends on which state they are incarcerated in, how much a person persists in their request, and ultimately, judicial intervention. Even in states with laws enabling people in prison to transfer to a facility that aligns with their gender, the process is arduous, and approvals are case-by-case and rare. The high-profile rollbacks on these rights at the federal level put extra attention and political pressure on state governments or individual prison authorities who manage these requests and decisions.

There is no single formula for ensuring safety and dignity for transgender people serving time in prison systems that continue to operate with a reliance on sex-segregated facilities and on a gender binary. First, some transgender people would prefer to transfer to a facility that aligns with their gender identity, while others would not. We know some of the reasons for this given by survey respondents, mainly transgender women, including safety (see Chesnut & Peirce, 2024 for qualitative comments from the survey). We know far less about the reasons underlying the divergent preferences among transgender men. More research is needed that focuses on transgender men (for more along these lines, see Sumner and Sexton, 2015). Generally, however, incarcerated transgender people attempt to determine which facility might feel (relatively) safer and more accepting and/or may offer better access to medical care, social acceptance, and support.

This article highlights how the specifics of a person's housing situation are layered, from type of prison, to type of housing unit, to sleeping arrangements, and proximity to other transgender people. Transgender people in prison, like other prisoners, assess the benefits and downsides of various arrangements depending on their individual circumstances and their perceptions of alternatives. The contrast in preferences regarding living in general population settings versus in a restrictive housing setting is informative. In many prisons, these are the only choices, and some people opt for the hardships of isolation in order to escape the dangers of other people, while others opt for the social connection opportunities along with the risks of group living. Moreover, it is telling that a strong majority of both transgender men and transgender women would prefer to be housed with other transgender people, perhaps indicating a longing for space that combines social acceptance for transgender people with meaningful protection (for more along these lines, see Sexton and Jenness, 2016).

Despite the political attacks on the rights of transgender people in the U.S. and transgender prisoners in particular, advocates, policymakers, and networks of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people continue to push for better policies and better implementation of existing policies. A key element that cuts across existing legislation, including PREA and TRADA, is the premise that incarcerated people must have meaningful input into decisions about their housing situation and safety provisions. They

have crucial knowledge about their own circumstances and they are entitled to having input on such important decisions. This is not a new idea; research shows that meaningful input from incarcerated people about prison conditions and culture matter greatly for outcomes related to legitimacy and reduced future infractions (Barry et al., 2016, Shanahan et al., 2023).

The findings presented here demonstrate that people have divergent preferences and that their actual experiences of housing arrangements in prison likely shape these. While prison managers need clearly documented policies, these should explicitly allow for a range of options, without resorting to options that are known to be harmful, such as solitary confinement. Some countries, like Canada and Argentina, are further ahead on imagining and institutionalizing these options (Butcher, 2023; Hebert, 2020), even as the gender binary restricts housing choices in prisons in most of the world (Maycock, O'Shea, & Jenness, 2025).

Correctional leaders in the United States and beyond, along with researchers, lawyers, and advocates who work with them, should take bold steps to develop a range of safe housing options for transgender people. Likewise, their assessment processes should genuinely engage with transgender peoples' expressed preferences for where they reside while incarcerated. The cost of remaining committed to the status quo, especially as the political landscape becomes even more fraught for transgender rights generally, is too high. For transgender people, being truly seen and heard by institutions that govern their lives can mean the difference between safety and danger, between affirming care and systematic abuse, and, in some cases, between life and death.

Correspondence
Valerie Jenness, Department of Criminology, Law and Society, University of California, Irvine. Email: jenness@uci.edu

Acknowledgements
We appreciate the Vera Institute of Justice for making original survey data available for the purpose of this article. We also thank Black and Pink National for collaborating with the Vera Institute of Justice on the larger project of which the survey is a part. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Vera Institute of Justice or Black and Pink National. We also thank David Pitts for initiating the larger project from which this paper derives, the hundreds of incarcerated people who completed the Vera Institute of Justice's survey, and Sarah Fenstermaker for useful comments on this article.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Bacak, Valerio (2023). "Looking Back: Victimization of Transgender Persons and the Criminal Legal System." American Journal of Public Health, 113(10): 043-1045.

Bacak, Valerio, Katherine Bright, and Lauren Wilson. (2020). "Gender Affirmative Housing in Jails and Prisons. Lancet Public Health, 5(7):e373.

Barry, Monica, Elizabeth Weaver, Mark Liddle, Bethany Schmidt, Shadd Maruna, Rosie Meek, and Judy Renshaw. (2016). Evaluation of the User Voice Prison and Community Councils. University of Strathclyde, https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/65046/1/Barry_etal_NESTA_2016_Evaluation_of_

the_User_Voice_Prison_and_Community_Councils.pdf .
Beck A. (2014). "Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates 2011–2012: Supplemental Tables: Prevalence of Sexual Victimization among Transgender Adult Inmates." Bur. Justice Stat. Rep. NCJ 241399, US Dep. Justice, Washington, DC. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/svpjri1112_st.pdf, last access on October 18, 2025.
Butcher, Tom. (2023). "Human Rights, Trans Rights, Prisoners' Rights: An International Comparison." Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy 18(2): 43-73.
Cabage, Nic. (2023). "I'm Not Who I Once Was: The Policies and Treatment of Transgender Individuals in U.S. Correctional Facilities," in Handbook on Prisons and Jails, edited by Danielle Rudes, Gaylene Armstrong, Kimberly Kras, and TaLisa Carter. New York: Routledge.
Chesnut, Kelsie and Jennifer Peirce. (2024). Advancing Transgender Justice: Illuminating Trans Lives Behind Bars. A report by the Vera Institute of Justice. https://www.vera.org/advancing-transgender-justice, last accessed on October 18, 2025.
Coppola, Federica. (2023). Identity in the Era of Mass Incarceration: The Cruel and Unusual Segregation of Trans People in the United States. International Journal of Constitutional Law 21, no. 2 (2023), 649–672.
Dewan, Shaila and Amy Harmon. (2025). "Trump Bars Transgender Women From U.S. Prisons for Female Inmates." New York Times, Jan 23. https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/23/us/trump-transgender-inmates-prison.html, last accessed on October 20, 2025.
Digard, Léon, Elena Vanko, and Sara Sullivan. (2018). Rethinking Restrictive Housing: Lessons from Five U.S. Jail and Prison Systems. New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 20-26, https://perma.cc/XHZ3- P4KM.
Dolovich, Sharon. (2011). Strategic Segregation in the Modern Prison. American Criminal Law Review, 48(1), 1–110.
Engelberg, Rachel, Quinn Hood, Krina Shah, Brendan Parent, Jevon Martin, Rodman Turpin, Jonathan Feelemyer, Maria Khan, and Dorice Vieira. (2023). Challenges unique to transgender persons in US correctional settings: A scoping review. Journal of Urban Health 100(6), 1170-1189.
Frazer, Somjen, Richard Saenz, Andrew Aleman, and Laura Laderman. (2022). Protected & Served? 2022 Community Survey of LGBTQ+ People and People Living with HIV's Experiences with the Criminal Legal System. Lambda Legal and Black and Pink National, 2022). https://www.protectedandserved.org/.
Hébert, William. "Trans Rights as Risks: On the Ambivalent Implementation of Canada's Groundbreaking Trans Prison Reform." Canadian Journal of Law and Society/La Revue Canadienne Droit et Société 35, no. 2 (2020): 221-244.
Jenness, Valerie. (2021). "The Social Ecology of Sexual Victimization Against Transgender Women Who Are Incarcerated: A Call for (More) Research on Modalities of Housing and Prison Violence." Criminology & Public Policy 20:3-18.
Jenness, Valerie, Lori Sexton, and Jennifer Macy Sumner. (2011). Transgender Inmates in California's Prisons: An Empirical Study of a Vulnerable Population." Report submitted to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, State of California. Sacramento, California.
Jenness, Valerie, Sexton Lori, and Sumner Jennifer Macy. (2019). The Sexual Victimization Against Transgender Women in Prisons: Consent and Coercion in Context. Criminology 57(4), 603–631.
Jenness, Valerie, and Alexis Rowland. (2024). "The Structure and Operation of the Transgender Criminal Legal System Nexus in the United States: Inequalities, Administrative Violence, and Injustice at Every Turn." Annual Review of Criminology 7(1):283–309.

Kanewske, L. Caitlin, Angela Hattery, Danielle S. Rudes, et al. (2023). "Experiences of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals in Jail/Prison: Navigating Tensions," in Handbook on Inequalities in Sentencing and Corrections among Marginalized Populations, edited by Eileen M. Ahlin, Ojmarrh Mitchell, and Cassandra A. Atkin-Plunk. New York: Routledge.

Malkin, Michelle L. and Christina DeJong. (2019). Protections for Transgender Inmates Under PREA: A Comparison of State Correctional Policies in the United States. Sexuality Research and Social Policy 16, no. 4, 393–407.

Manson Joshua. (2019). Transgender women of color face crushing rates of incarceration, solitary confinement, and abuse. Rep. SolitaryWatch, Washington, DC. https://solitarywatch.org/2019/07/22/transgender-women-of-color-face-crushing-rates-of-incarceration-solitary-confinement-and-abuse/, last accessed on October 25, 2025.

Maycock, Matthew, Saoirse O'Shea, and Valerie Jenness (eds.). (2025). Transgender People Involved with Carceral Systems: International Perspectives. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Oparah, Julie. C. (2012). "Feminism and the (Trans)gender Entrapment of Gender Nonconforming "Prisoners. UCLA Women's Law Journal 18(2), 238–271.

Rossi, Bill. (2025). "'The Only Man in the Village'": The Lived Experience of Transgender Men Serving Sentences in Women's Prisons in England and Wales." Pp. 123-148 in Maycock, Matthew, Saoirse O'Shea, and Valerie Jenness (eds.). 2025. Transgender People Involved with Carceral Systems: International Perspectives. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Sanders, Tait, Jessical Gildersleeve, Sherree Halliwell, Carol du Plessis, Kristy A. Clark, Jaclyn M.W. Hughto, Amy Mullens, Tnia Phillips, Kirstie Daken, and Annette Bromodal. (2023). "Trans Architecture and the Prison Archive: 'Don't be a Queen and You Won't be Arrested'". Punishment & Society 25(3)742-765.

Sexton, Lori and Valerie Jenness. (2016). "'We're Like Community': Collective Identity and Collective Efficacy Among Transgender Women in Prisons for Men." Punishment & Society 18 (5):544-577.

Shanahan, Ryan, Selma Djokovic, and Lidia Vasquez. (2023). Restoring Promise: A Randomized Control Trial Examining the Impact of an Innovative Young Adult Housing on Reducing Violence. New York: Vera Institute of Justice. https://vera-institute.files.svdcdn.com/production/downloads/publications/Restoring-Promise-A-Randomized-Control-Trial-Examining-the-Impact-of-an-Innovative-Young-Adult-Housing-on-Reducing-Violence.pdf?dm=1740502308

Steinmetz, Katy. (2014). "The Transgender Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier." Time, May 29. https://time.com/magazine/us/135460/june-9th-2014-vol-183-no-22-u-s/, last accessed on October 18, 2025.

Sumner, Jennifer and Valerie Jenness. (2014). "Gender Integration in Sex-Segregated Prisons: The Paradox of Transgender Correctional Policy." The Handbook of LGBT Communities, Crime, and Justice, edited by Dana Peterson and Vanessa R. Panfil. New York: Springer.

Sumner, Jennifer and Lori Sexton. (2015). "Lost in Translation: Looking for Transgender Identity in Women's Prisons and Locating Aggressors in Prison Culture." Critical Criminology 23(1), 1-20.

About the Authors

Valerie Jenness is a Distinguished Professor of Criminology, Law and Society at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author of four books, including, most recently, *Appealing to Justice: Prisoner, Grievances, Rights, and Carceral Logic* (with Kitty Calavita), and articles published in sociology, law, criminology, and gender journals. Her work on transgender prisoners and prison grievance systems has been honored with awards from professional organizations and informed public policy. She is a Past President of the American Society of Criminology.

Sophia Castillo is a PhD student in the Criminology, Law & Society department at the University of California, Irvine. Their research centers around the role of perception in shaping interactions with the criminal legal system and experiences of victimization. Sophia holds an M.S. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Northeastern University.

Kelsie Chesnut works as a principal research associate with Vera's Unlocking Potential and Opening Doors initiatives where her research has focused on expanding access to postsecondary education in prison, increasing economic mobility among formerly incarcerated people and connecting people returning to their communities with housing. Her research has also focused on solitary confinement reform, improving conditions of confinement, and reentry program evaluation. Kelsie holds a BA in sociology and criminal justice from San Francisco State University, and an MA in social ecology and a PhD in criminology, law and society from University of California, Irvine.

Jennifer Peirce is the associate director of research for Vera's Beyond Jails Initiative, where her research focuses on county-level criminal legal systems and ways to reduce local jail incarceration. Her past research has focused on experiences of transgender people in prison, solitary confinement, and human rights and prison system reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean. Jennifer holds a PhD in criminology from John Jay College / CUNY Graduate Center.