

# Female sex offenders protected by the criminal justice system

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Female sex offenders receive lighter sentences for the same crimes than males says a study recently published in *Feminist Criminology*, a SAGE journal and the official journal of the Division on Women and Crime of the American Society of Criminology.

Embry and Lyons looked at the sentences that male and female sex offenders received for specific sex offenses and found that even after the implementation of [sentencing guidelines](#) to ensure equality in sentencing, on average male sentences were between 6% and 31% longer than female sentences for the same or similar crimes.

"It appears as if the [criminal justice system](#) actually treats women more leniently than men," wrote Randa Embry and Phillip M. Lyons, Jr., authors of the study.

The researchers explained this disparity by discussing the American idea that "women are weaker and, therefore, must be protected at all times regardless of their status as victims or offenders."

Embry and Lyons analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Justice's National Corrections Reporting Program from the years 1994 to 2004. Sex offenses included rape, statutory rape, sexual assault, child sexual assault, and forcible sodomy.

"This leads to the supposition that women, regardless of the departure from social and [gender norms](#) committed in concurrence with the

offense for which they are being sentenced, continue to be viewed as individuals who should be protected by the justice system," wrote the researchers. "Obviously, as a social institution, the criminal justice system is reluctant to break those [social norms](#) and [gender roles](#) in response to atypical gendered behavior."

**More information:** Find out more by reading the article, "Sex-Based Sentencing: Sentencing Discrepancies between Male and Female Sex Offenders," in *Feminist Criminology*. The article is available free for a limited time at: [fcx.sagepub.com/content/7/2/146.full.pdf+html](http://fcx.sagepub.com/content/7/2/146.full.pdf+html)

Provided by SAGE Publications

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