



„Leaving No One Behind: Female Criminality and Rehabilitation within the SDG Framework, national and international perspectives“

Elena Maksimova,

*Associate professor
Criminal law and Criminology
Goce Delcev University – Stip
North Macedonia*

elena.maksimova@ugd.edu.mk



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UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LAW

„Leaving No One Behind: Female Criminality and Rehabilitation within the SDG Framework, national and international perspectives“

- The Core Promise of A/RES/70/1 (the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)



- The 2030 Agenda reaffirms that **no one will be left behind**, and pledges to “**endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.**”
- It calls for inclusion of all people, irrespective of **status, identity or situation** — including the marginalized, the invisible, and the stigmatized.
- The Agenda is **universal, integrated and indivisible** — economic, social and environmental dimensions must work together.
- Means of implementation: data, capacity building, policy coherence, partnerships — to ensure that marginalized groups are included in planning, monitoring, and action.
- it is a **policy commitment** to include those who tend to be excluded.

- it is a **policy commitment** to include those who tend to be excluded.

- For **female criminality and rehabilitation**, this means that *justice systems, rehabilitation programs, data systems, and policy instruments must explicitly include women who are often marginalized* (by gender, poverty, stigma, health, caregiving roles).

- The phrase “**reach the furthest behind first**” suggests **prioritizing reforms** and resources to those in greatest disadvantage — for instance, women in pretrial detention, mothers in prison, women in remote facilities.



- **Five factors** are proposed as key to understanding who is being left behind and why:

Discrimination

Biases in laws, policies, social norms exclude groups based on gender, ethnicity, disability, migrant status, etc.

For **women offenders**, this can manifest in gendered laws (e.g. reproductive rights, survival economies), unequal access to justice, stigma, or procedural bias.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND?

UNDP discussion paper and framework for implementation
July 2018

United Nations Development Programme



- **Five factors** are proposed as key to understanding who is being left behind and why:

Geography

Physical isolation, rural/remote areas with limited services, or poor infrastructure restrict access to opportunity

In criminal justice terms: remote prisons, lack of halfway or community services in rural zones, distance from courts or legal aid.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND?

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- **Five factors** are proposed as key to understanding who is being left behind and why:

Governance

Weak, unaccountable, or exclusionary institutions and processes, poor public administration, corruption, or inadequate legal frameworks.

Gaps in participatory decision-making, underrepresentation, and laws that don't respond to marginalized groups.

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- **Five factors** are proposed as key to understanding who is being left behind and why:

Socio – economic status

Poverty, low education, poor health, lack of assets or social protection limit the capacity to compete and access rights.

A major driver of entry into criminal behaviour (especially nonviolent, survival-based crimes), as well as barriers to rehabilitation (e.g., debt, housing, lack of skills).

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- Five factors are proposed as key to understanding who is being left behind and why:

Shocks & Fragility

Vulnerability to conflict, violence, displacement, health crises, environmental disasters.

For women, shocks can exacerbate risks (e.g. forced migration, trafficking, unstable family situations) that increase justice system contact or hinder reintegration.

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- **Female imprisonment keeps rising faster than men's.**

- Globally, women are ~7% of prisoners, but their numbers have grown about **60% since 2000** (vs. 22% for men). UNODC's 2025 brief estimates **~759,000 women** imprisoned at end-2023; ICPR's 2025 "World Female Imprisonment List (6th ed.)" confirms the faster growth trend and country breakdowns.

- **Poverty + discriminatory laws = key drivers.**

- New syntheses highlight criminalization of "acts of survival" (petty theft, begging, informal work), debt-related offences, abortion, and other gendered offences as major entry points into the system for women—squarely implicating **SDG 1 (No Poverty)**, **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** and **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**.

- **Pretrial justice & fairness (SDG 16.3).**

- Globally, **about 30%** of both male and female prison populations are unsentenced—pointing to systemic delays and due-process gaps that particularly harm women with caregiving roles.

- **Children & caregiving burdens (SDG 3, 4, 5).**

- A large share of incarcerated women are primary caregivers;

- **Violence pathways (SDG 5.2 & SDG 16.1).**

- Gender-based violence is both a risk factor for offending and a common experience in women's criminalization trajectories; the 2024–2025 UN briefs record elevated levels of conflict-related sexual violence and stalled gender-equality progress, which correlate with justice-system contact.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG & Target(s)

SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

SDG 1: No Poverty / SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

SDG 4: Quality Education & Lifelong Learning

SDG 3: Good Health & Well-being

Connection to Female Criminality / Rehabilitation

- Discrimination in laws, sentencing, and justice access - Gender-based violence (GBV) as both a risk factor and outcome - Need for gender-responsive rehabilitation programs

- Equal access to justice (target 16.3) - Reducing unsentenced detention - Building accountable, inclusive institutions - Reducing violence and strengthening rule of law

- Poverty is a core driver of female criminality (survival crimes, inability to pay fines or bail) - Inequality in opportunity (jobs, education) obstructs reintegration

- Education as a preventive factor against criminal pathways - Vocational training & literacy as part of rehabilitation / reintegration

- Mental health, trauma, substance abuse as co-occurring issues - Health support inside and outside prisons (including sexual/reproductive health)

Evidence / Notes

UNODC highlights promoting access to justice for women & girls is part of its work under SDG 5 ([UNODC](#)) Violence is explicitly captured in target 5.2 (intimate partner violence, sexual violence) ([unstats.un.org](#))

Globally ~30% of prisoners are unsentenced detainees (Indicator 16.3.2) ([Sustainable Development Goals](#)) SDG 16 emphasizes that justice systems must be fair, inclusive, accessible to women ([UN Women](#))

The “feminization of poverty” is often cited as a key cause of rising rates of women’s incarceration ([penalreform.org](#))

Recent studies find that improving women’s education reduces female criminal activity and promotes sustainable development ([ResearchGate](#))

UNODC’s SDG mapping includes SDG 3 in its justice-health intersections ([UN SDG:Learn](#))

- By the 1970s and 1980s, female criminality — a subtype of criminality and criminal activity—needed a separate study
- Old theories of women's criminality were based on the existence of personality disorder and emotional maladjustment of the individual.

Stereotypes in
Gender-Based
Crime Studies

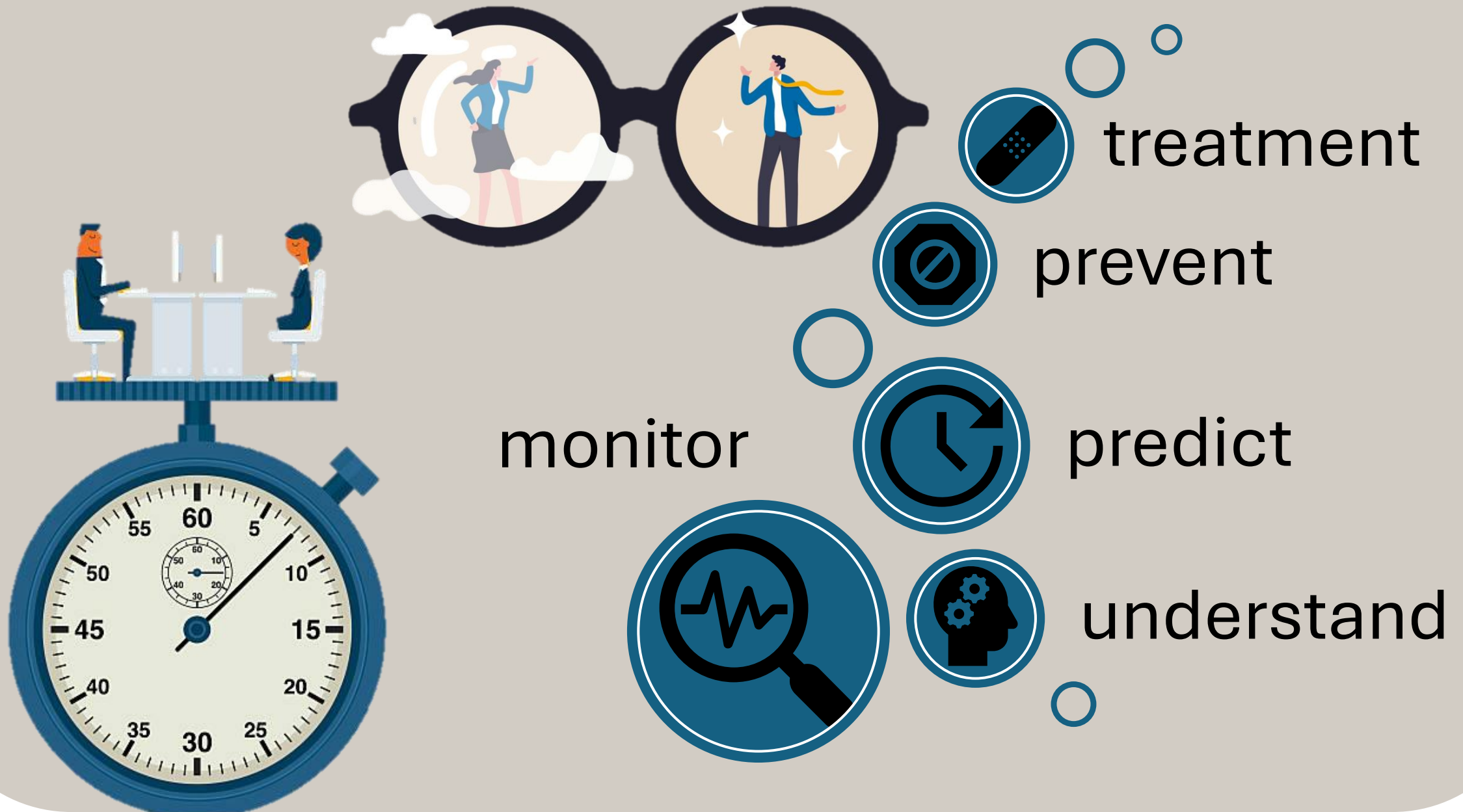
inadequate studies of
women's criminality

inadequate criminal
prevention policies

World Female Imprisonment List:

- while the number of men in prison has increased worldwide by about 20% over the last 20 years, that of women has increased by 53nc%.
- While women tend to commit mostly property crimes, their involvement has increased across all types of crime.

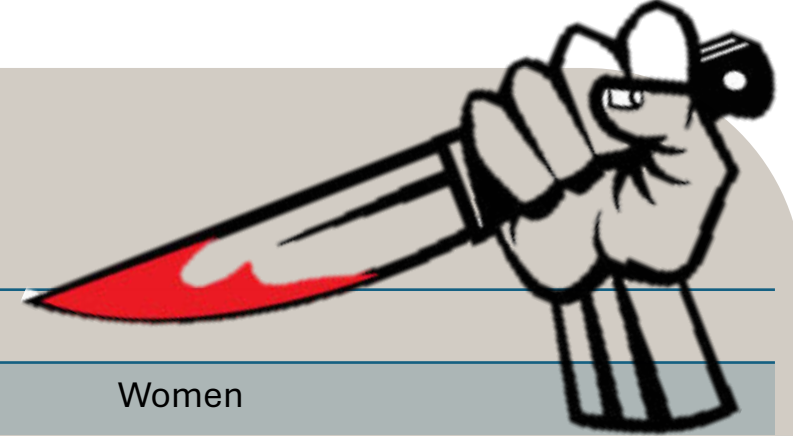






understand

Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:



VIOLENT CRIME - murders

Men

90% of murders are committed by men

70% of homicide victims are men

Over half of all homicides occur among men

Male perpetrators would kill a stranger or a casual acquaintance rather than someone close

Confrontational murders, revenge killings, cold-blooded murders, or murders for profit.

Location: public tool: firearm

Child victim - only 5% of total homicides.

Women

A woman's manifestation of abusive behaviour is mostly due to a woman's own perception of having experienced a "failure" in a particular field of life

Twice as many murder victims as perpetrators

In cases where the woman appears as the perpetrator, violence by the victim is preceded for which she often seeks medical or social help.

The most common victims are well-known and close people: partner, child, relative... A woman is 19 times more likely to commit murder against an intimate partner in self-defence than is known for men

Homicides in self-defence, revenge murders, and murders for sexual dominance and possessiveness "Bettered Woman Syndrome," homicides in affect

Location: house tool: situational, poison

Child victims accounted for 24% of total homicides.



understand

Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:

PROPERTY CRIME

Men

Dominant

Methods of execution:
Mostly with firearms

Target victim – Other Men

Motivated mainly by lack of money and necessity

Gender remains to be a silent factor in determining certain predictions or understanding them at all. The motives that drive both sexes to commit crime do not differ much

The motives coincide – the methods and method of implementation differ drastically

Women

Robbery – an increase in women's participation almost twice as high as an increase in men's participation in crime


Methods of execution
less use of weapons, and when they do, they are more often used with a knife;
A special method – in male victims – luring by creating a state of sexual availability and comfort – "viccing"

Target victim – another woman – physical constitution, if the victim is male – work in pairs with men

Motive – often women know how to do it on a whim,
Place - Street, nightclubs and parking lots,

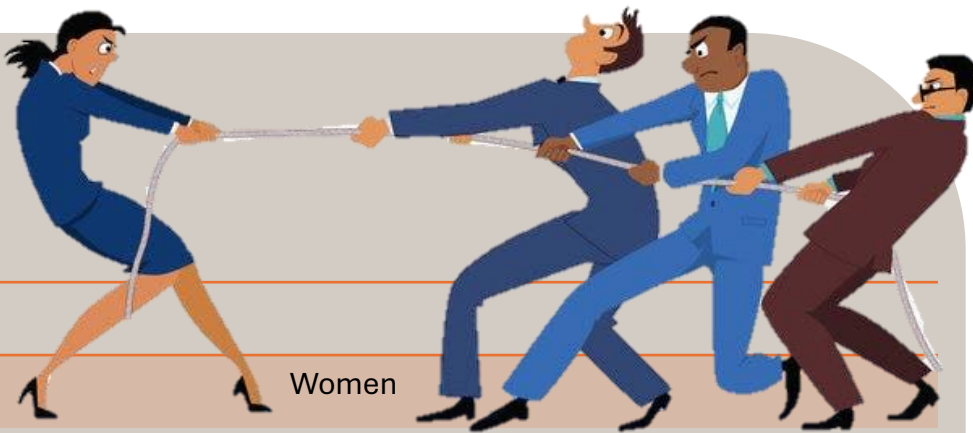
robbery and fraud predominate, less theft, concealment, and more severe forms of incrimination.





understand


Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:



PROFESSIONAL CRIME	
Men	Women
Men are still more represented in higher positions – greater opportunities to commit this crime	Women's access to powerful organizational structures is growing, however still limited, which is consistent with the theory of possibilities
Male dominance in white-collar crime	Kathleen Daly, Pink collar criminality is a counterpart to white-collar criminality — women whose office jobs can be characterized as low- to mid-level
Men are prone to association	She usually does it alone
Economic Gain Target - High Set	Economic Benefit Target – Not As High As Male Offenders
Major public and media attention	No public and media attention Absent direct victim and intriguing corpora delicty
	Female perpetrators are more likely to admit guilt and her justifications for the reasons for the initial indulgence are much stronger than those of men and are much more likely to express remorse for what she has done.

The true figure for women's participation in professional crime is obtained when one puts women in lower positions and who have not received enormous material benefit but have nevertheless caused harm.

Elena Maksimova

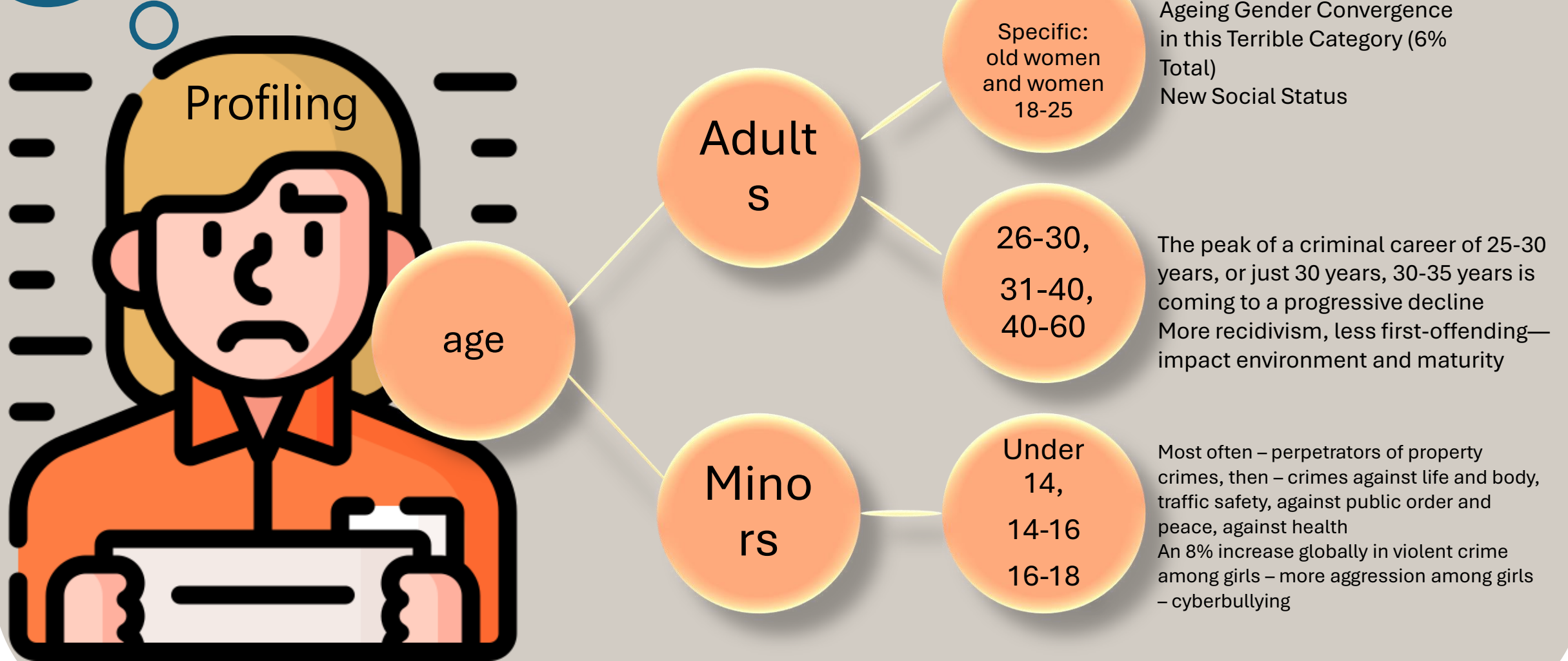


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Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:





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Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:



Complicity



Female as a perpetrator

In a pair/group

Alone

serious intrusion
into crime

never have
committed a certain
crime if there was
no person or group

fragile character -
greater dependence
on social approvals
and opinions

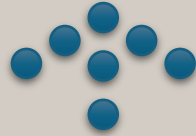
Mostly in affect / IP
murder



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Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:

Complicity Role while working together



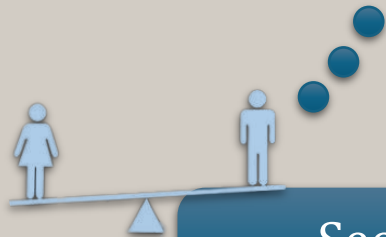
Situational crimes – in affect

Abstinence crises – committing crime in order to get to substance rarely alone

thefts (mostly street robberies), if **victim is a woman**, the woman as perpetrator works alone.



Leading position



Secondary, assisting position

mediating prostitution

→ see themselves mostly as executors of the directions given by the mediator, who is usually a man - "Stockholm syndrome"

The most common roles they get as members of a criminal group are to

- perform **espionage** actions for the group
- perceived as **sex-objects**
- "vivandiera" (supplier, provider), "postina" (postman), or "messenger" (messenger) - Italian mafia at first



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Participation of women/girls in certain types of crime:

The Labeling and Stigmatization Phase
– A Greater Impact on Women
Especially difficult to find a job



Reason

Consequences

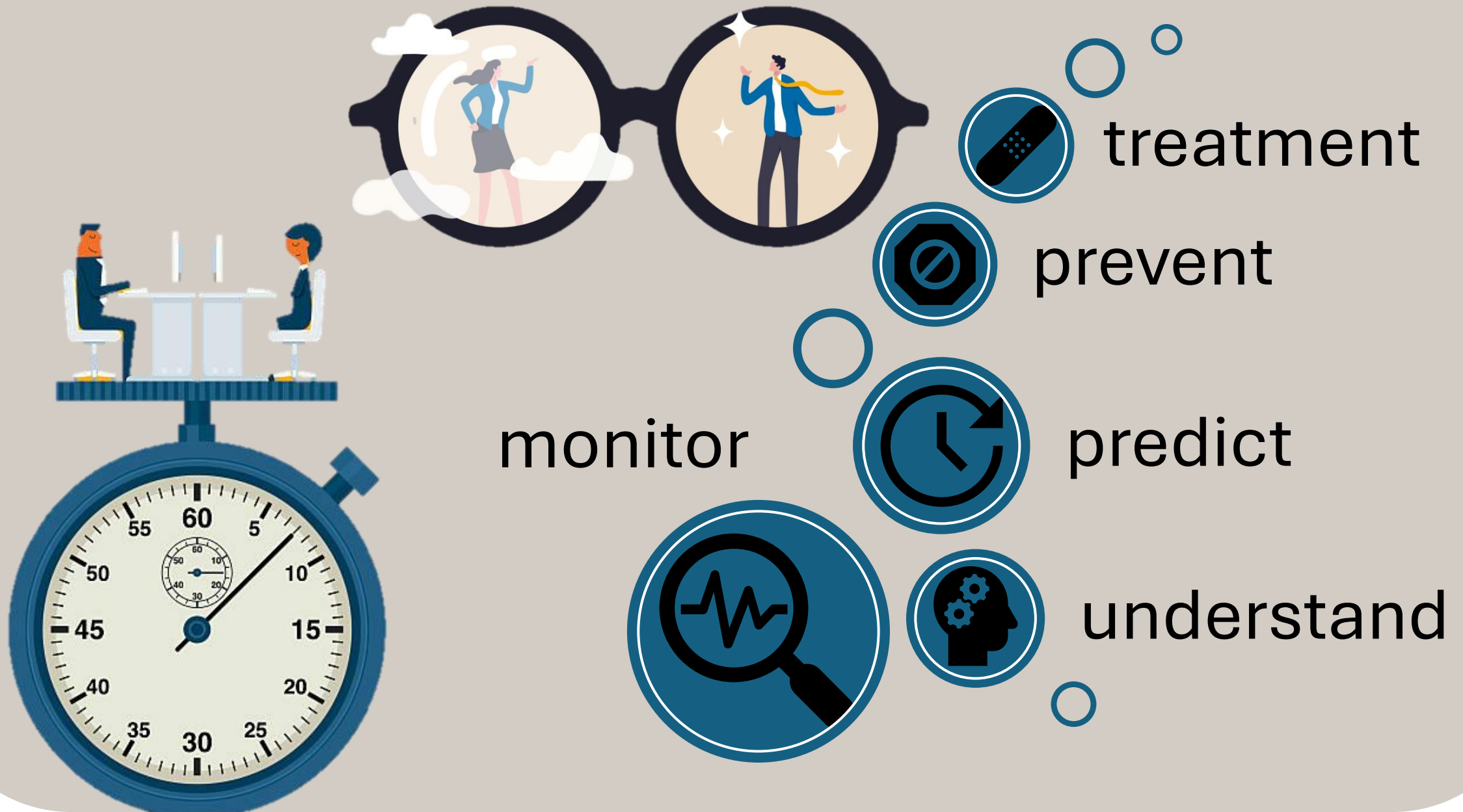
Influence of a number of factors:

Biological, psychological, sociocultural, economic terrology...

Social and professional exclusion

recidivism

Socio-isolation and implications for family life



Treatment

3-10% of total
prison population

≡ When
determining
the prison
sentence and
its length

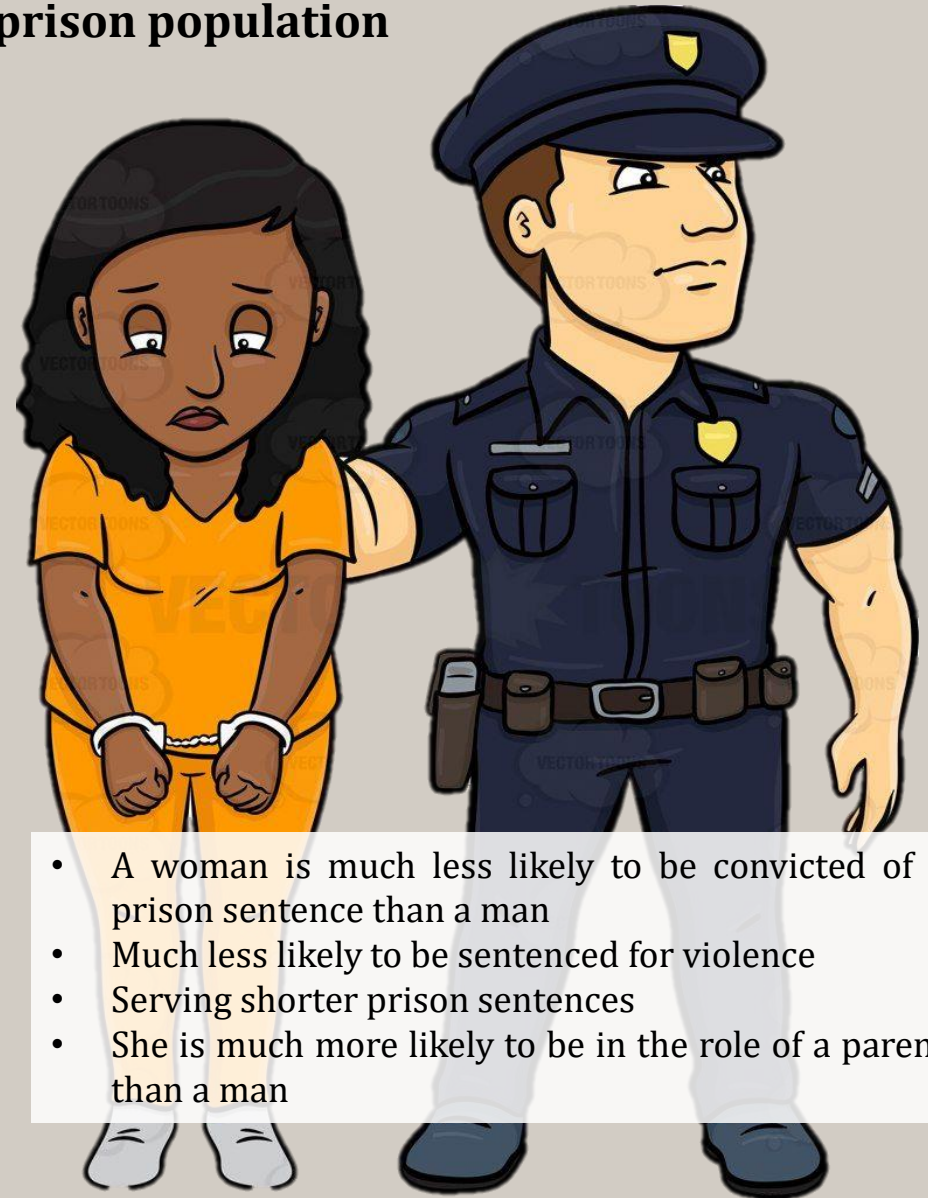
≡ In determining
adequate
treatment in an
institution and
protection
from sec.
victim.

≡ While
serving a
sentence

Usually, a mother or
caregiver =
Negative Implications for
Them – The Personal
Component Is Lost
+ Not always reaching for
prison – prior victimization?

Treatment that is not designed
according to masculinist
standards – gender-sensitized
- The specific health, hygiene and
reproductive needs of women in
prison, safety, substance abuse,
contacts with outside

More susceptible
to developing
deprivation,
contact with
loved ones



- A woman is much less likely to be convicted of a prison sentence than a man
- Much less likely to be sentenced for violence
- Serving shorter prison sentences
- She is much more likely to be in the role of a parent than a man

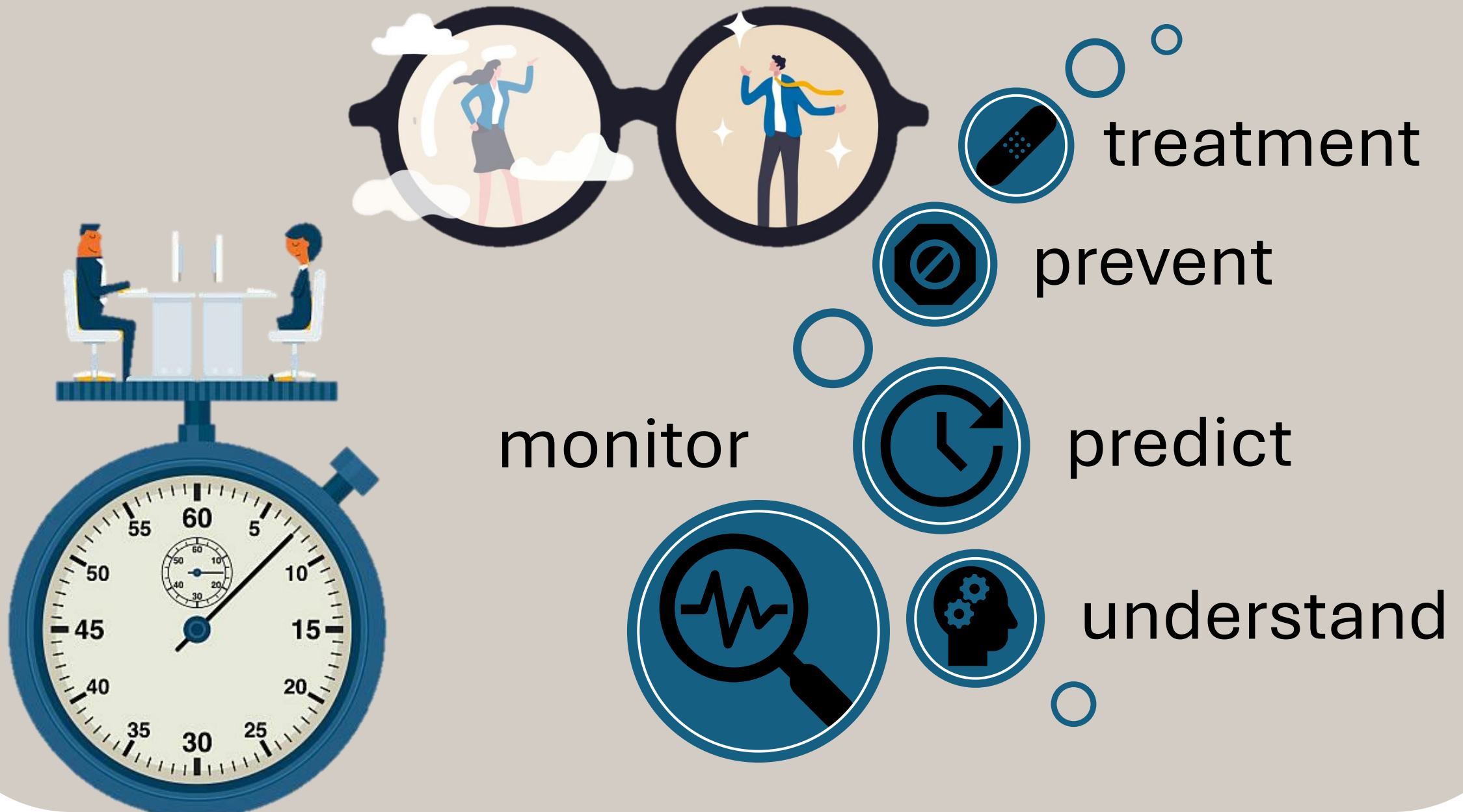
treatment

Treatment

Perceptions and attitudes of criminal justice practitioners -positive and negative outcomes for female offender-

women may be subjected to gender-based discrimination and may be at heightened risk of vulnerability throughout the criminal justice system.	those whose behaviour does not fit within traditional gender roles frequently face prejudices and biases	Women may receive harsher treatment or punishment than men for offences such as child abandonment, prostitution or assault , acts that are seen to violate what is perceived as the 'proper' role of women	In homicide cases , men who kill in response to 'provocation' may receive more lenient sentences while women who kill in response to abuse and violence may face aggravated penalties.	influence judges to award lower sentences to women , who are perceived as inherently weaker and more submissive and prone to manipulation than men and thus less responsible for their crimes.	important that judges, prosecutors, lawyers or public defenders are aware of existing stereotypes, perceptions and attitudes that can influence their behaviour
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treatment





prevent

Education and Employment Opportunities

- Ensuring equal access to quality education and economic opportunities can reduce financial pressures that often lead to crime.

Mental Health and Support Services

- Providing mental health care, counseling, and support networks, particularly for women who have experienced trauma or abuse, can prevent criminal behavior linked to unresolved trauma

Strengthening Family Support

- Promoting healthy family dynamics, parenting support programs, and family counseling can reduce the likelihood of women turning to crime due to family-related stress

Rehabilitation and Reentry Programs

- Focused rehabilitation programs tailored to women's specific needs (e.g., childcare, trauma care) can help reintegrate female offenders into society, reducing recidivism

Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse

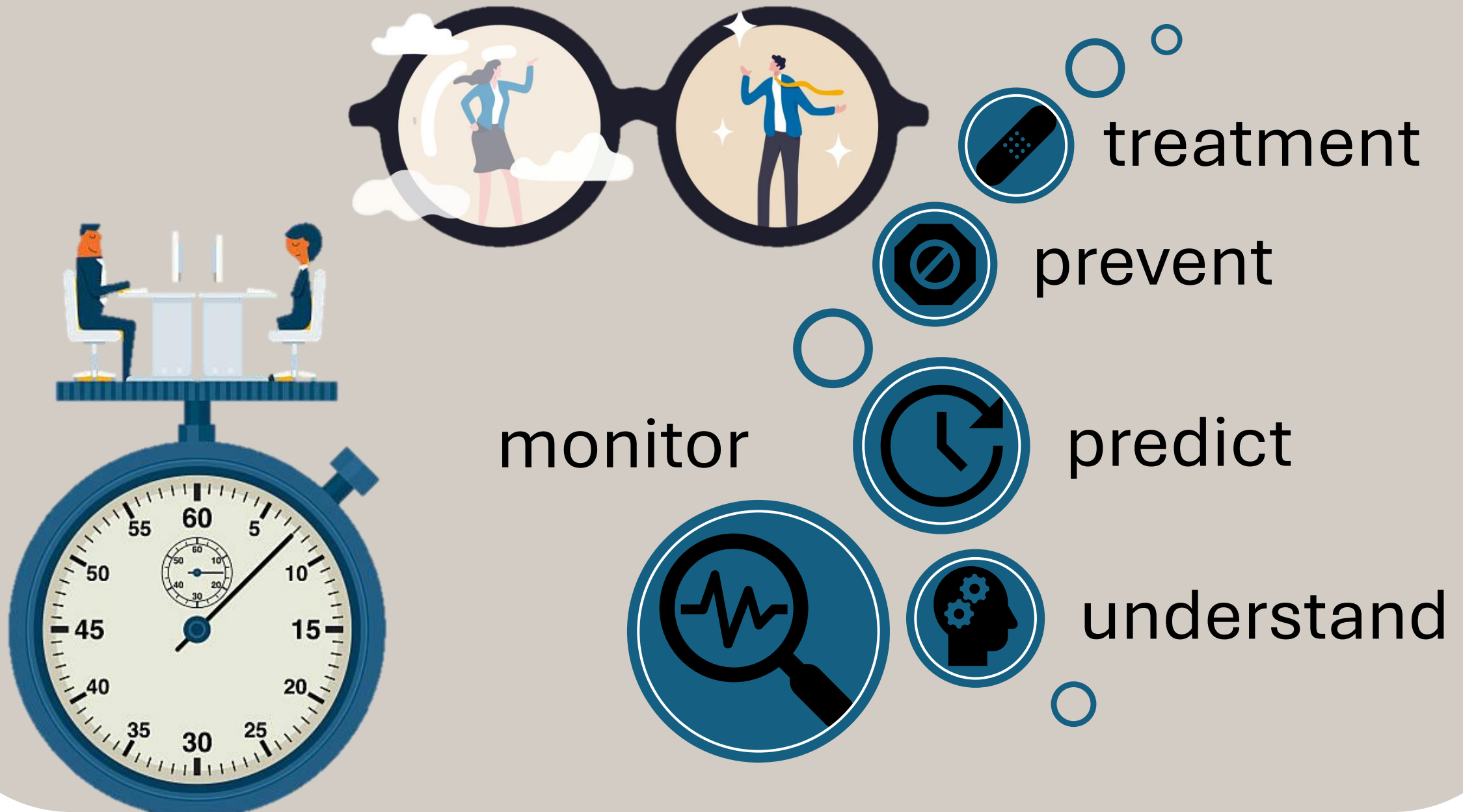
- Reducing violence against women and supporting victims through legal, social, and psychological avenues helps prevent crimes that may arise from situations of abuse or retaliation

Community Engagement and Empowerment

- Involving communities in crime prevention, creating safe spaces for women, and offering empowerment programs can provide alternatives to criminal activity

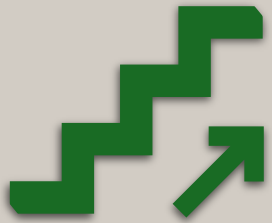
Legal Reforms

- Ensuring that laws protect women's rights and addressing systemic inequalities in the criminal justice system can contribute to reducing female criminality.



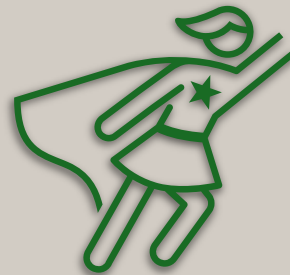


Forecasting



Men and women are increasingly moving into non-traditional roles, so forecasting and predicting the movement of crime in general is starting to get more difficult.

The trend of increasing women's overall participation in crime – expected to continue to evolve – is expected to continue to evolve



Women commit crimes and commit far more violence than in previous cases of violent crime

Greater participation of women in all social and social spheres

Her involvement in criminogenic acts is due not only to her increasing role as a criminal, but also to the fact that women are increasingly appearing in the role of victim



A decrease in self-control
no deterrence from foreseeable dangerous situations
side effects and impacts of stressful situations and changing the way they are dealt with, and the like, substance use and addiction



predict



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