

Life on the Outside for Kyrgyzstan's Female Ex-Cons

Author: [Aytunuk Nurdinova](#)

Returning to families can be as hard as finding work.

Women leaving prison in Kyrgyzstan face similar obstacles to those in other countries. Employers are generally reluctant to take them on, and it is hard to reintegrate into society without some kind of income.

Female prisoners are offered training in a range of crafts and trades in the hope they will be in a better position to earn money once they are released.

In Kyrgyz society, the social stigma surrounding a conviction means that husbands and other family members may not welcome an ex-offender back.

“Not every husband is prepared to take his wife back after she’s been in prison. Above all, they think about public opinion; they think people will talk,” psychologist Aygul Ibraeva told IWPR. “But in most cases, parents are prepared to forgive.”

There are currently around 300 women in jail in Kyrgyzstan, all housed in a single facility. At five per cent of the total prison population, this is a lower figure than the world average.

Aytunuk Nurdinova is an IWPR contributor in Kyrgyzstan.

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