

justicereforminitiative.org.au

JUSTICE
REFORM
INITIATIVE

JAILING
IS
FAILING

Adult Imprisonment in Australia 2024

An Overview





Contents

Notes on this resource	3	Rate of recidivism + proportional change	17,18
Number of adults in prison + rate of change	4,5	People in prison by gender	19
Adult flow through population	6	Male and female prison population + rate of change	20-23
Crude rate of adult incarceration + rate of change	7,8	Incarceration rate: Adult men and women + rate of change	23-25
Crude incarceration rate by Indigenous status + rate of change (First Nations people)	9,10	Total net operating expenditure	26
Proportion of incarcerated people who are First Nations + rate of change	11,12	Real net operating expenditure + rate of change	27,28
Proportion of people in prison on remand + rate of change	13,14	Cost per imprisoned person per day, year + rate of change	29-31
Proportion of people in prison with prior incarceration + rate of change	15, 16		

Notes on this resource

This resource, created by the Justice Reform Initiative, provides an overview of the state of incarceration in Australia. The aim of this resource is to allow – as far as is possible – for comparisons between different jurisdictions on a range of measures.

This resource includes the most recent incarceration statistics across Australia as well as their rates of change, indicating how measures – i.e., prison populations, expenses etc. – have changed over the last decade. To assess the influence of recent policy changes, the rate of change was also calculated separately for the 2022–2024 period, offering insight into shifting imprisonment trends.

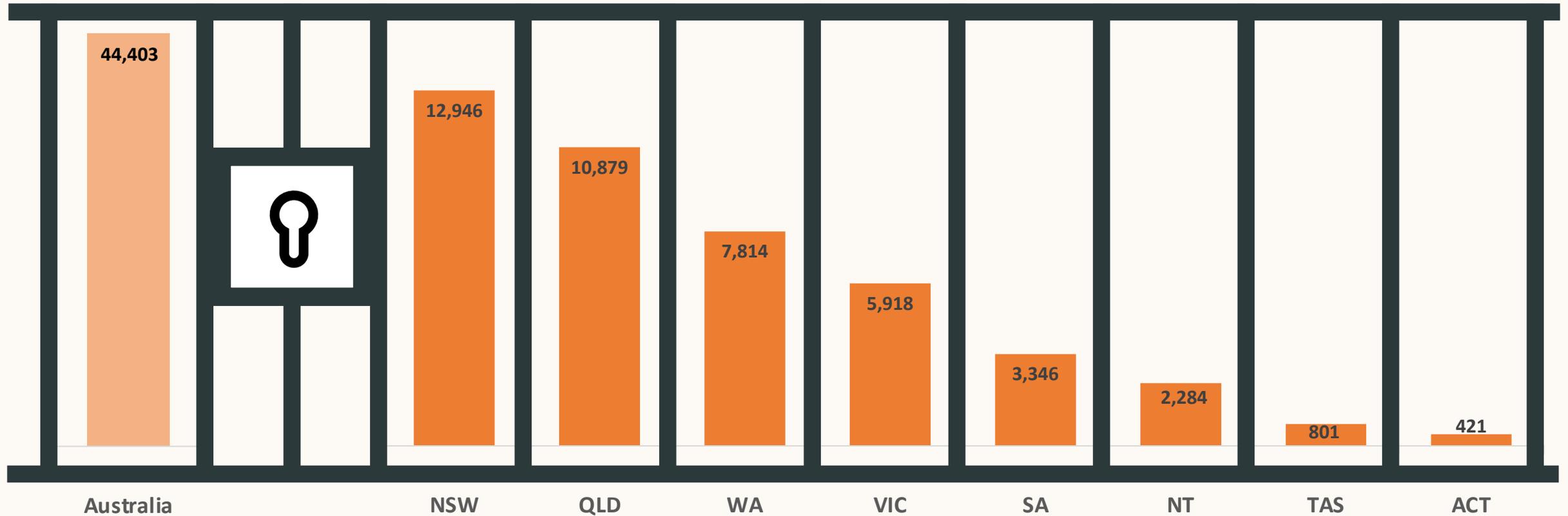
Data in this resource is primarily taken from two key sources and data sets:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) – Prisoners in Australia
- Productivity Commission – Report on Government Services (Corrective Services)

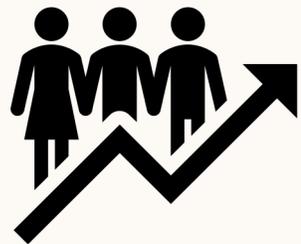
The statistics from these two sources differ due to their distinct data collection approaches. The ABS "Prisoners in Australia" publication provides a static count of prisoners at a single point in time: midnight on June 30th. Conversely, the Productivity Commission calculates daily averages throughout the financial year, offering a more comprehensive view that accounts for daily changes.

Number of adults in prison

On June 30th 2024



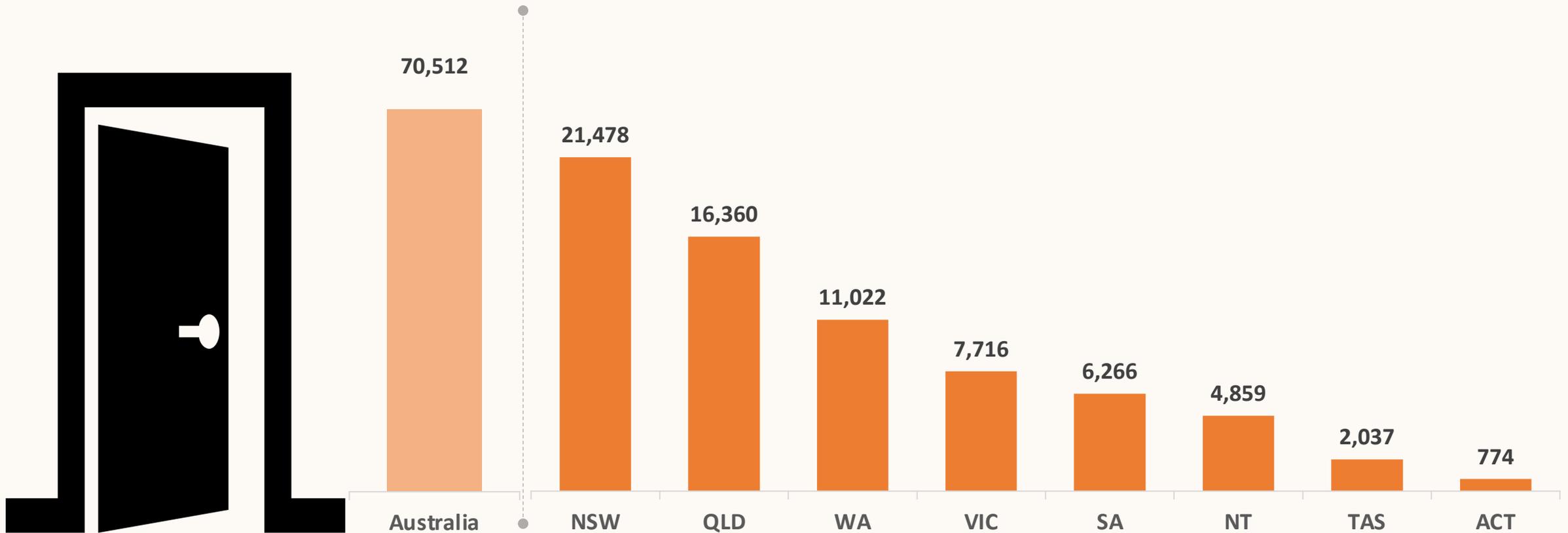
Rate of change: Adult prison population



	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	78%	27%
Queensland	54%	16%
Northern Territory	53%	18%
Western Australia	49%	25%
South Australia	34%	10%
Australia	31%	9%
NSW	23%	5%
ACT	7%	10%
Victoria	-3%	-10%

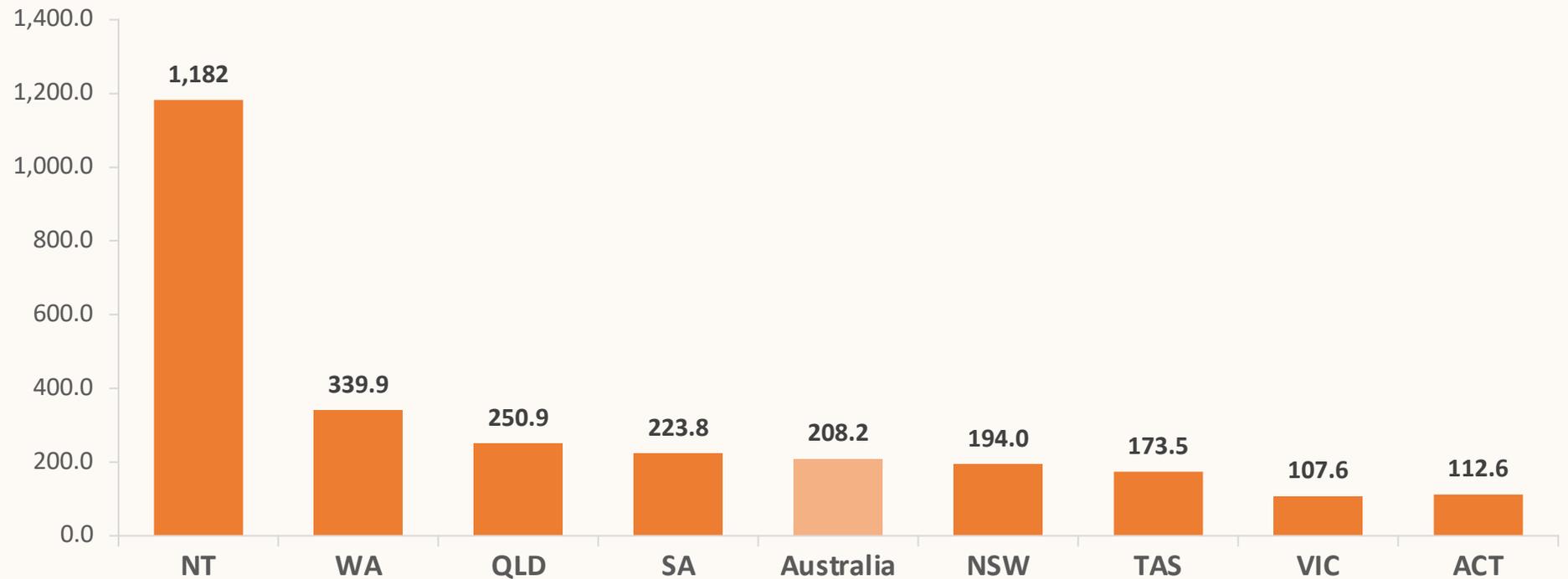
Adult flow through population 2024

Releases over 4 quarters in 2024

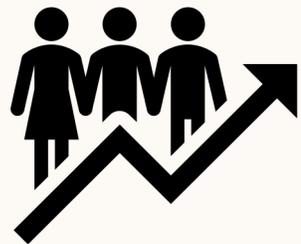


Crude rate of adult incarceration 2024

per 100,000 adult population



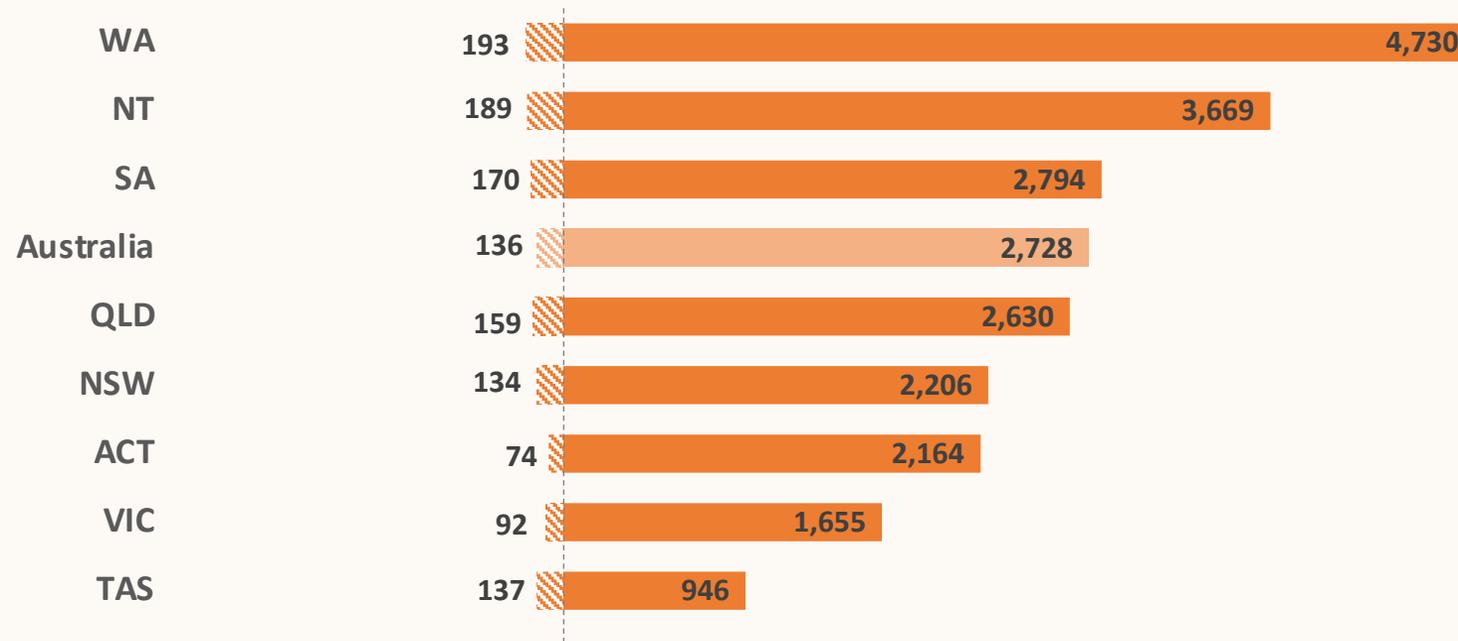
Rate of change: Crude rate of adult incarceration



	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	55%	26%
Northern Territory	43%	15%
Queensland	30%	10%
Western Australia	28%	16%
South Australia	19%	6%
Australia	12%	4%
NSW	7%	0%
ACT	-14%	6%
Victoria	-20%	-15%

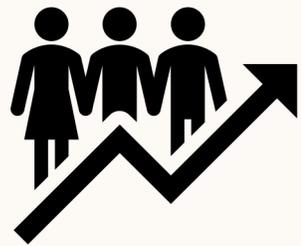
Crude incarceration rate by Indigenous status 2024

per 100,000 non-Indigenous people/First Nations people



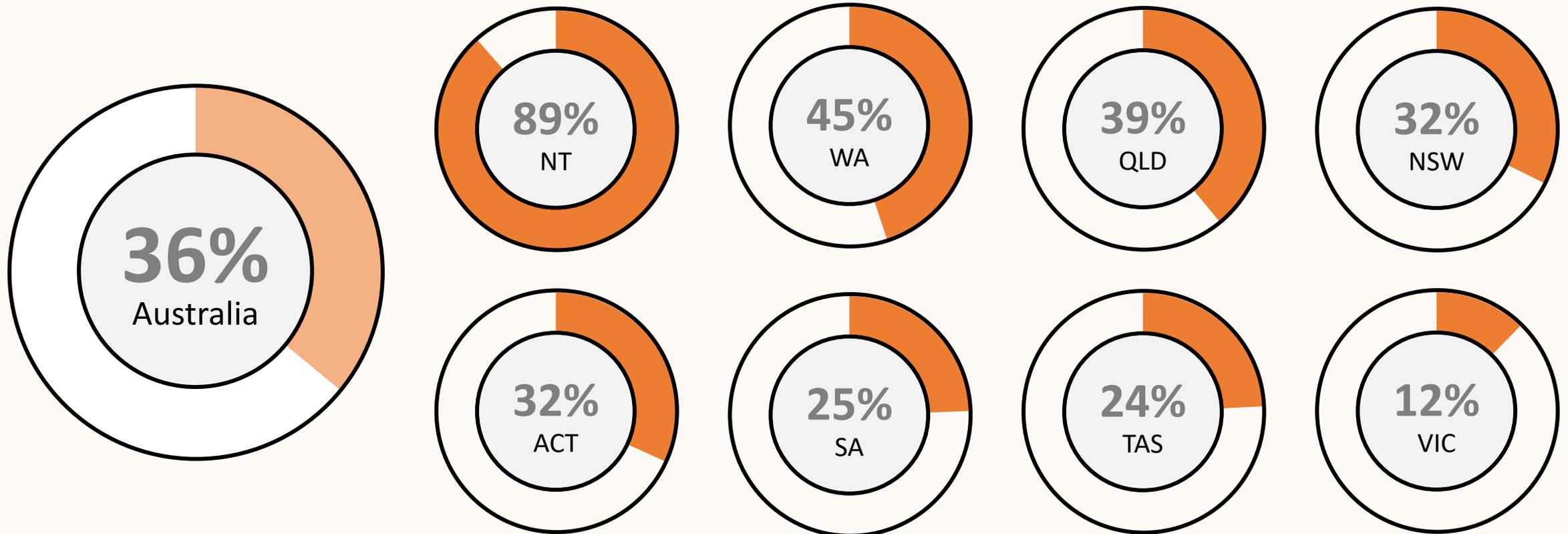
Non-Indigenous people First Nations people

Rate of change: Crude incarceration rate of First Nations people

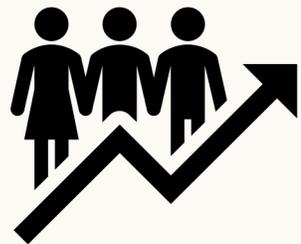


	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	108%	30%
ACT	60%	31%
Queensland	46%	18%
Australia	33%	17%
Western Australia	33%	33%
Northern Territory	33%	17%
NSW	30%	11%
South Australia	17%	9%
Victoria	15%	-1%

Proportion of incarcerated people who are First Natio 2024



Rate of change: First Nations people in prison



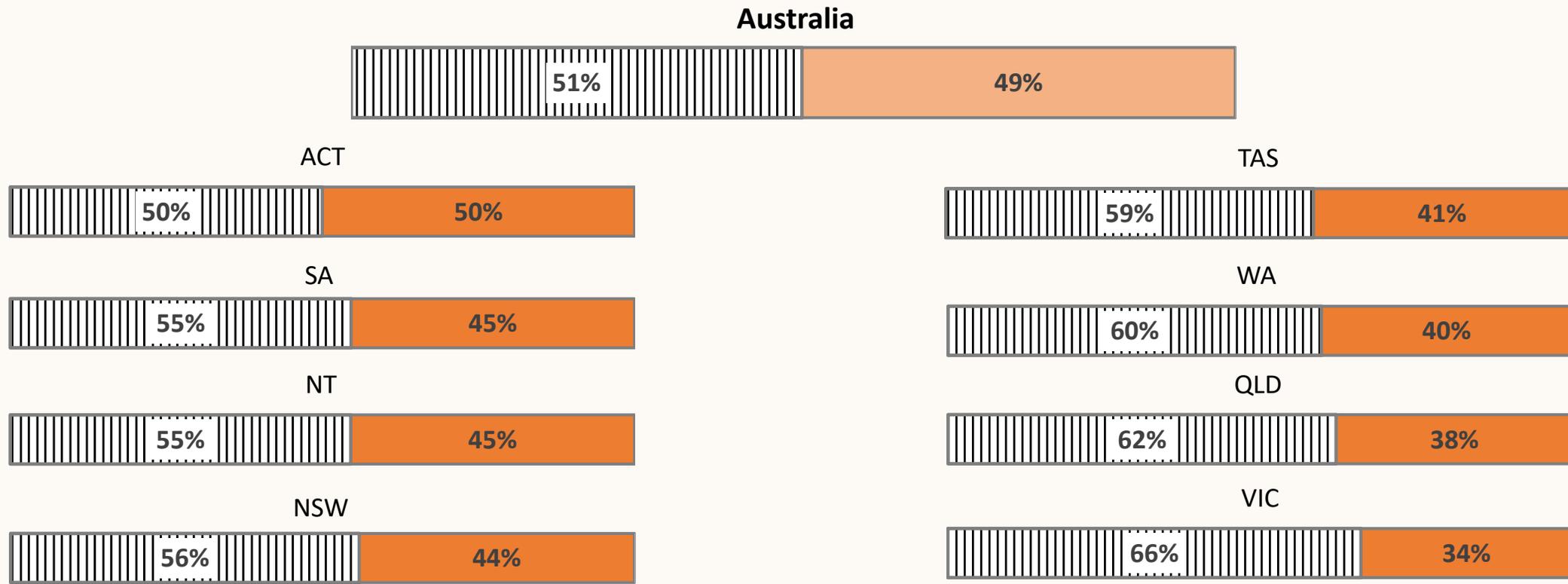
	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	165%	36%
ACT	123%	39%
Queensland	89%	24%
Australia	71%	23%
Western Australia	69%	39%
NSW	68%	16%
Northern Territory	58%	20%
Victoria	53%	5%
South Australia	51%	14%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 15.

Note: Rate of change was calculated from proportion of First Nations people in prison converted into total numbers. This data is most meaningful when compared to the increase of the prison population over the same period.

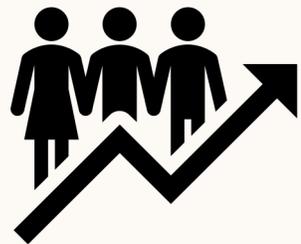
Proportion of people in prison on remand 2024

On June 30th 2024



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 14. In states where numbers add up to less than 100%, a small proportion of the prison population has still been imprisoned post-sentence.

Rate of change: People in prison on remand



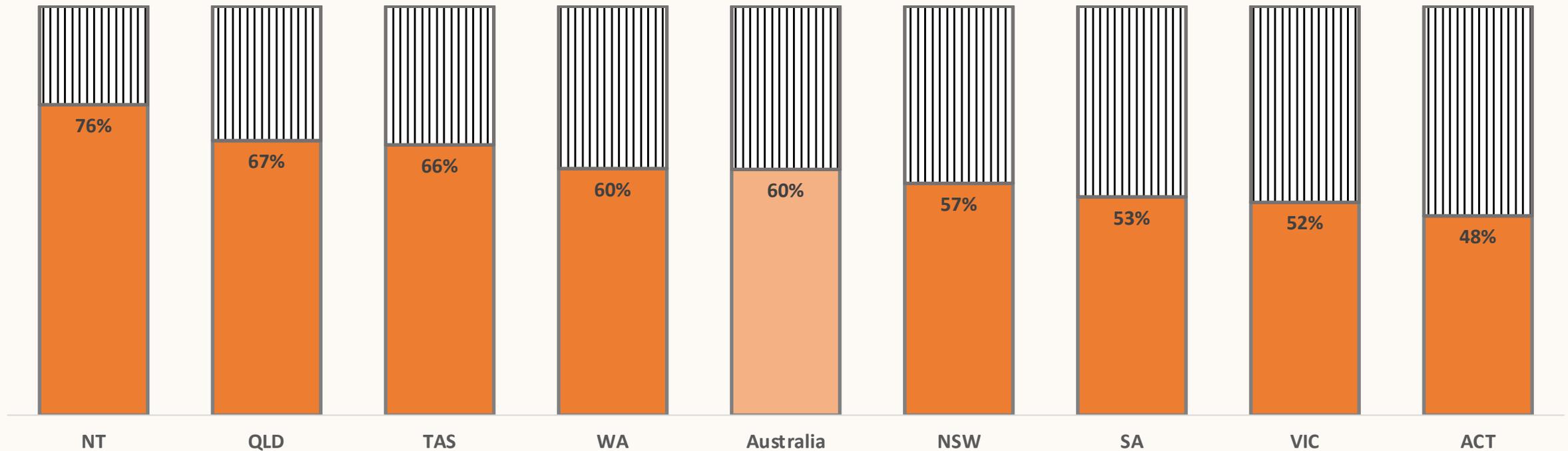
	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	236%	59%
Western Australia	166%	66%
Northern Territory	146%	50%
Queensland	146%	30%
ACT	137%	35%
Australia	120%	21%
NSW	109%	23%
Victoria	75%	-28%
South Australia	74%	10%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 15.

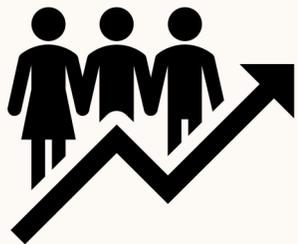
Note: Rate of change was calculated from proportion converted into total numbers. This data is most meaningful when compared to the increase of the prison population over the same period.

Proportion of people in prison with prior incarceration 2024

On June 30th 2024

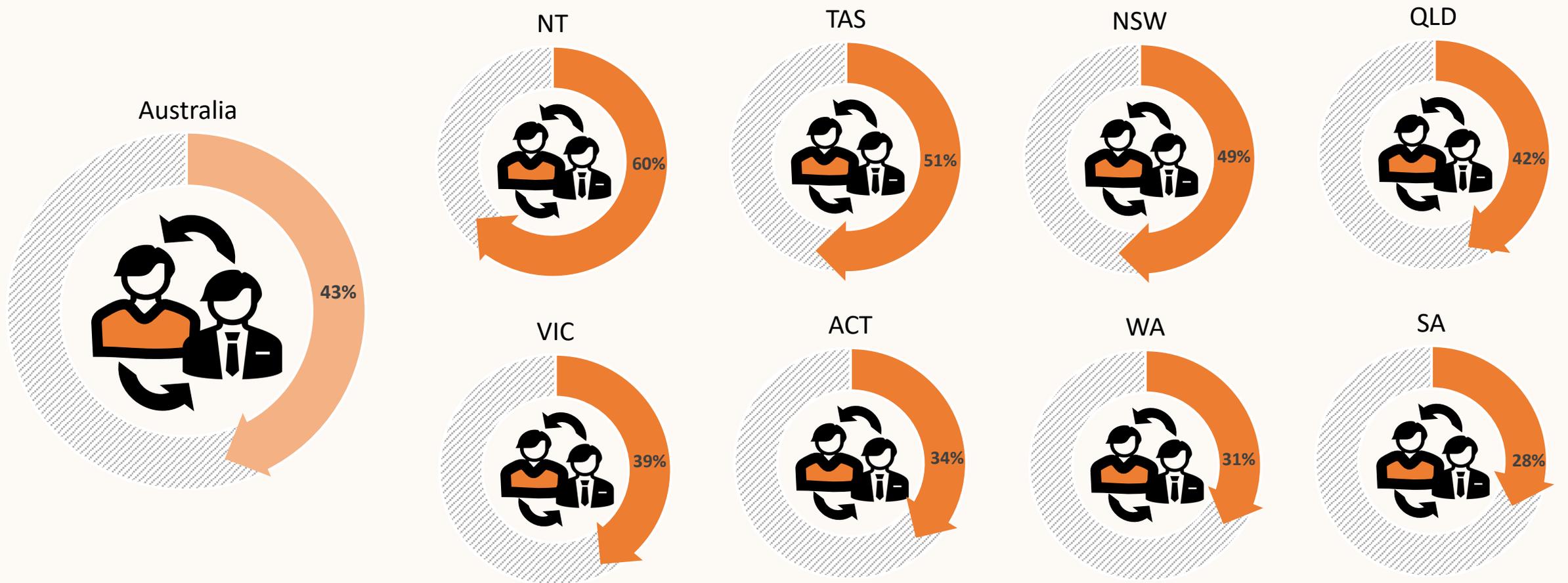


Rate of change: People in prison with prior incarceration



	2014-2024	2022-2024
Tasmania	90%	25%
Northern Territory	63%	20%
Queensland	56%	14%
Western Australia	46%	21%
South Australia	46%	10%
Australia	35%	9%
NSW	25%	6%
Victoria	-2%	-12%
ACT	-32%	-31%

Rate of recidivism* 2023-2024



Source: Productivity Commission (2025). Report on government services 2025, Table CA.4.
*Recidivism in this slide is defined as 'return prison within two years of release from custody'.

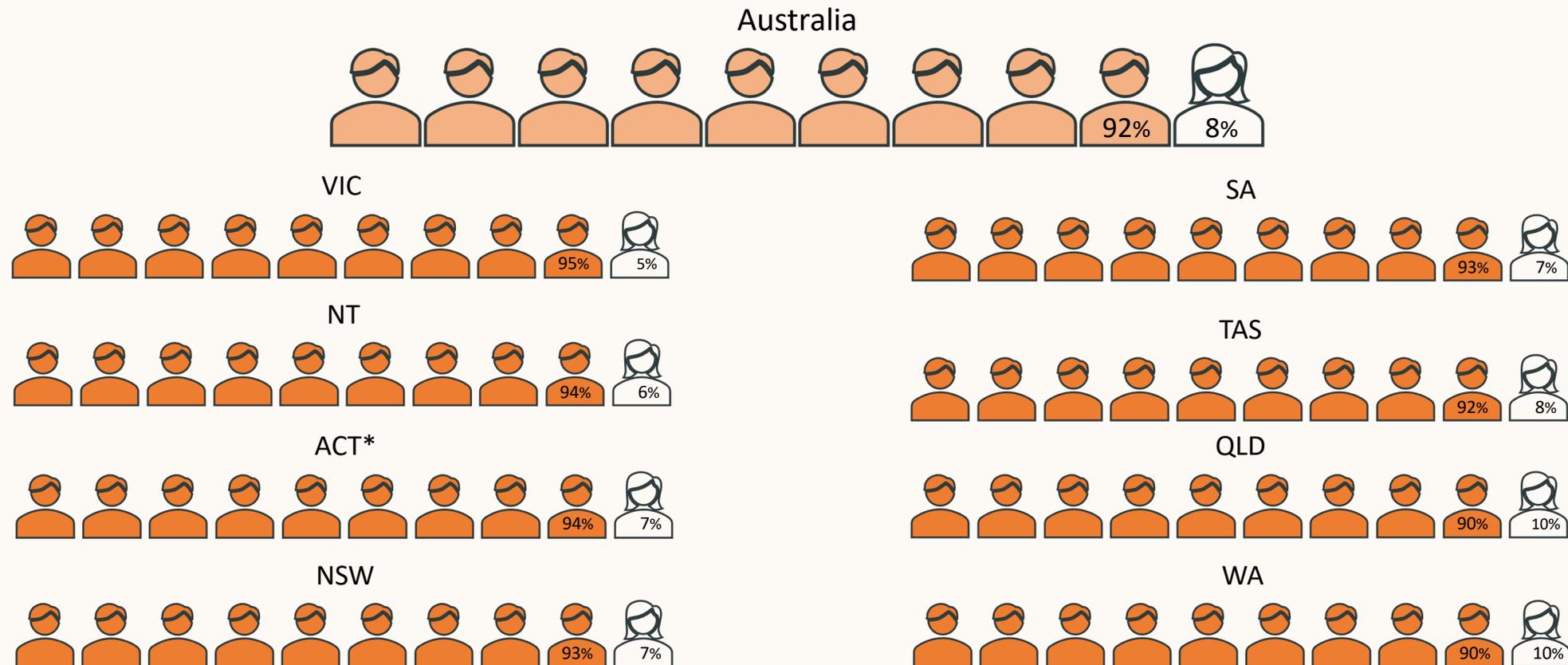
Proportional change: Recidivism* rate



	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
Tasmania	31%	0%
NSW	7%	-1%
Queensland	5%	-1%
Northern Territory	2%	7%
Australia	0%	1%
Victoria	-1%	6%
ACT	-18%	-8%
Western Australia	-21%	0%
South Australia	-27%	-17%

People in prison by gender 2024

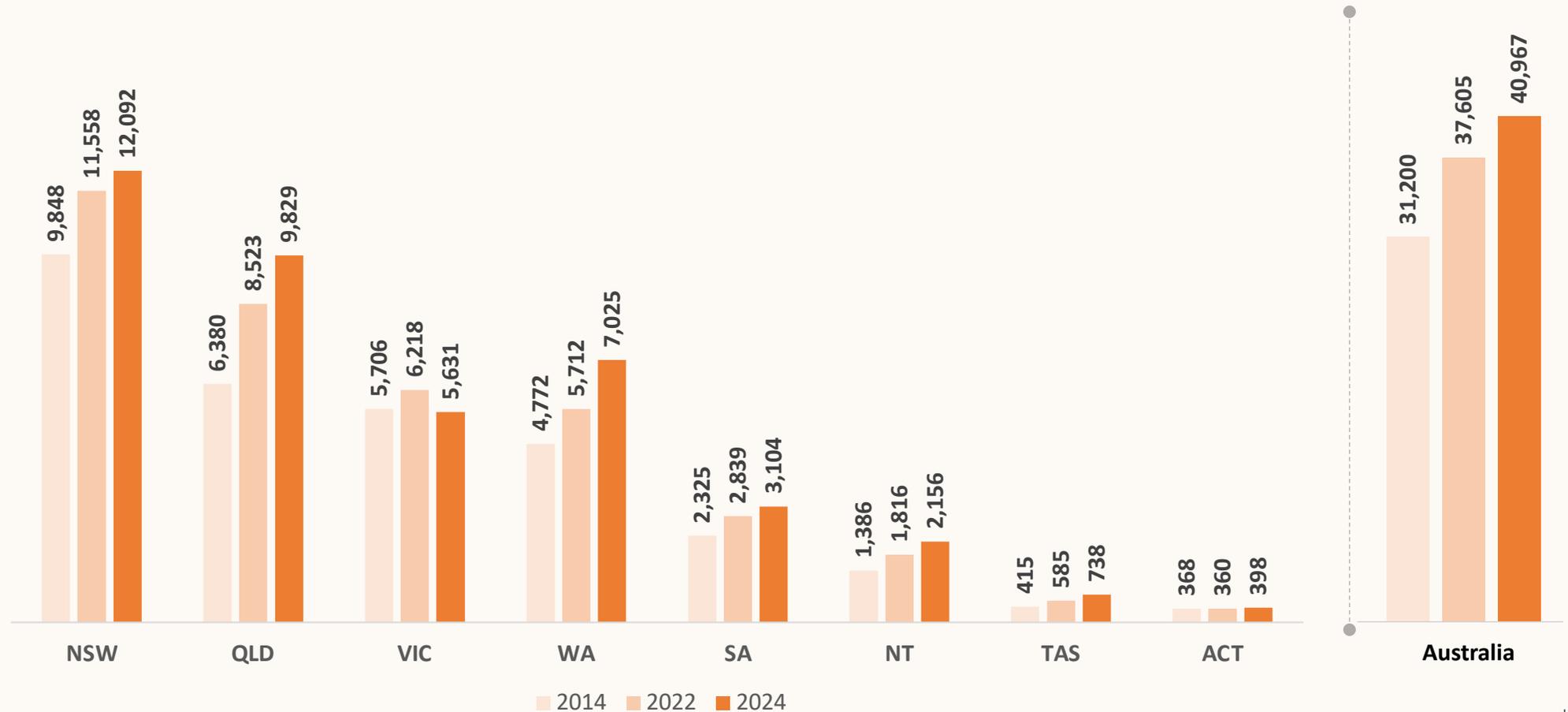
On June 30th 2024



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 14.

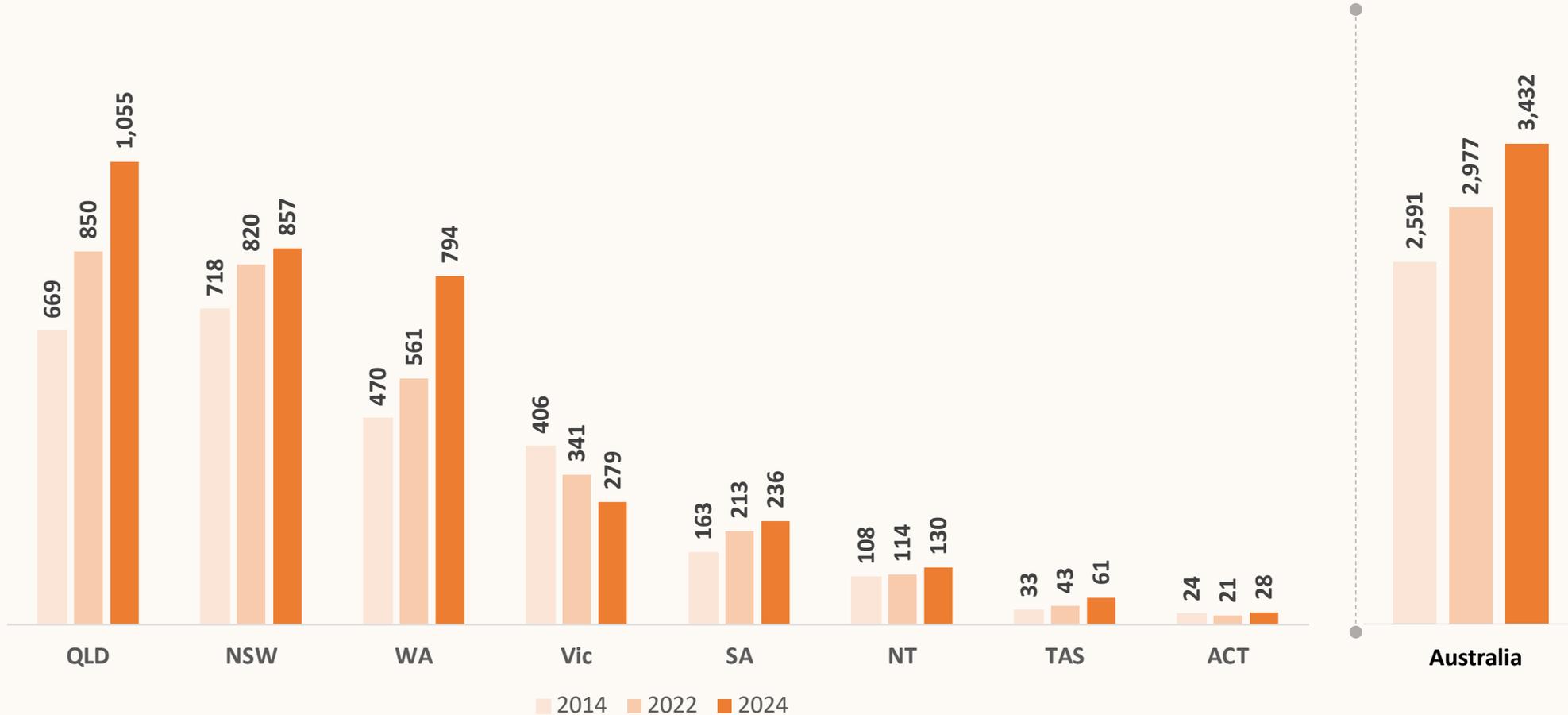
- Note: To protect the confidentiality of individuals and organisations, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) applies perturbation techniques to some data. As a result, the sum of individual categories may not equal the reported total.

Male prison population 2014-2024



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 14.;
 ABS (2022). Prisoners in Australia 2022, Table 14; ABS (2014). Prisoners in Australia 2014, Table 13.

Female prison population 2014-2024



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2024, Table 14.;
ABS (2022). Prisoners in Australia 2022, Table 14; ABS (2014) Prisoners in Australia 2014, Table 13.

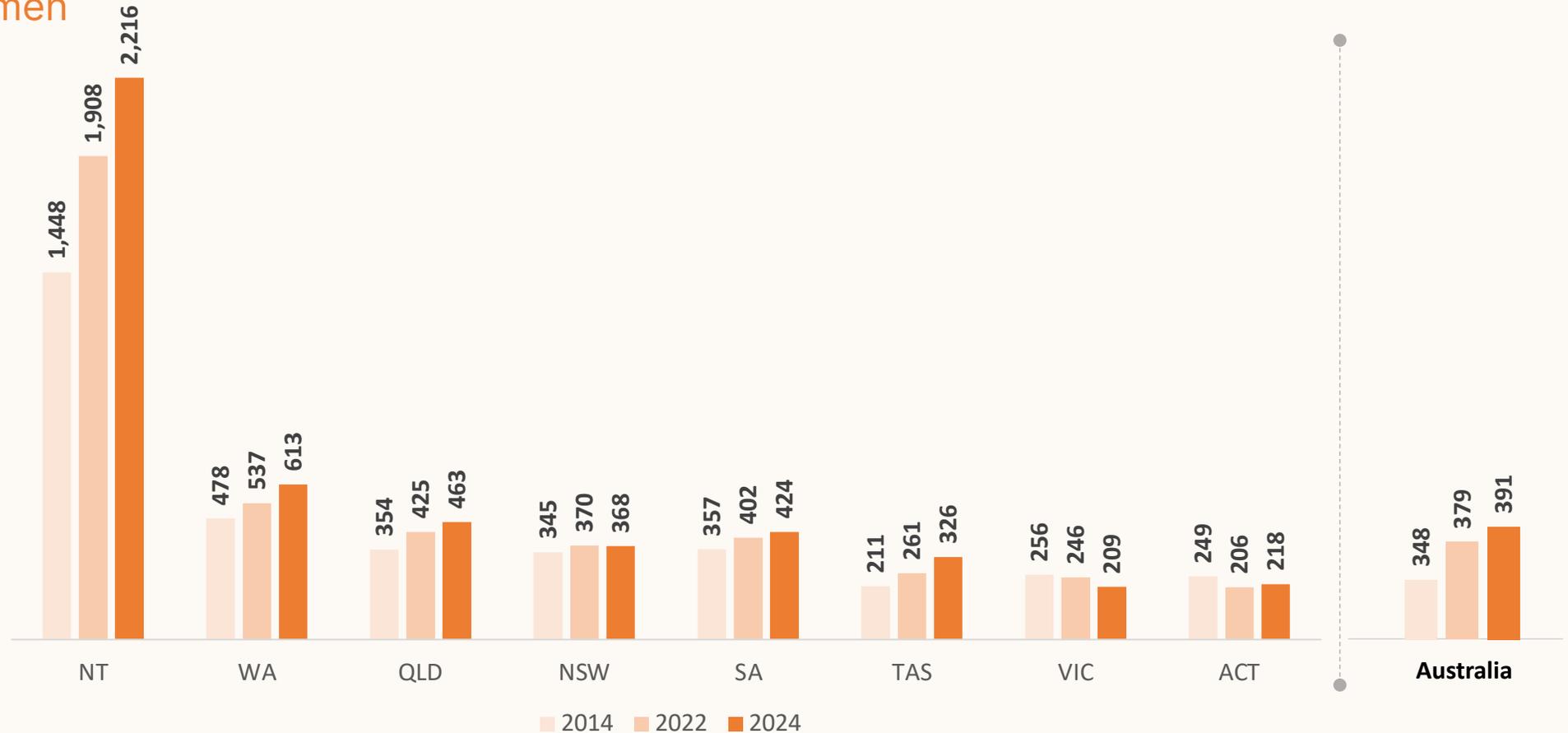


Rate of change: Prison population by gender

	2014-24		2022-24	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Tasmania	78%	85%	26%	42%
Northern Territory	56%	20%	19%	14%
Queensland	54%	58%	15%	24%
Western Australia	47%	69%	23%	42%
South Australia	34%	45%	9%	11%
Australia	31%	32%	9%	15%
NSW	23%	19%	5%	5%
ACT	8%	17%	11%	33%
Victoria	-1%	-31%	-9%	-18%

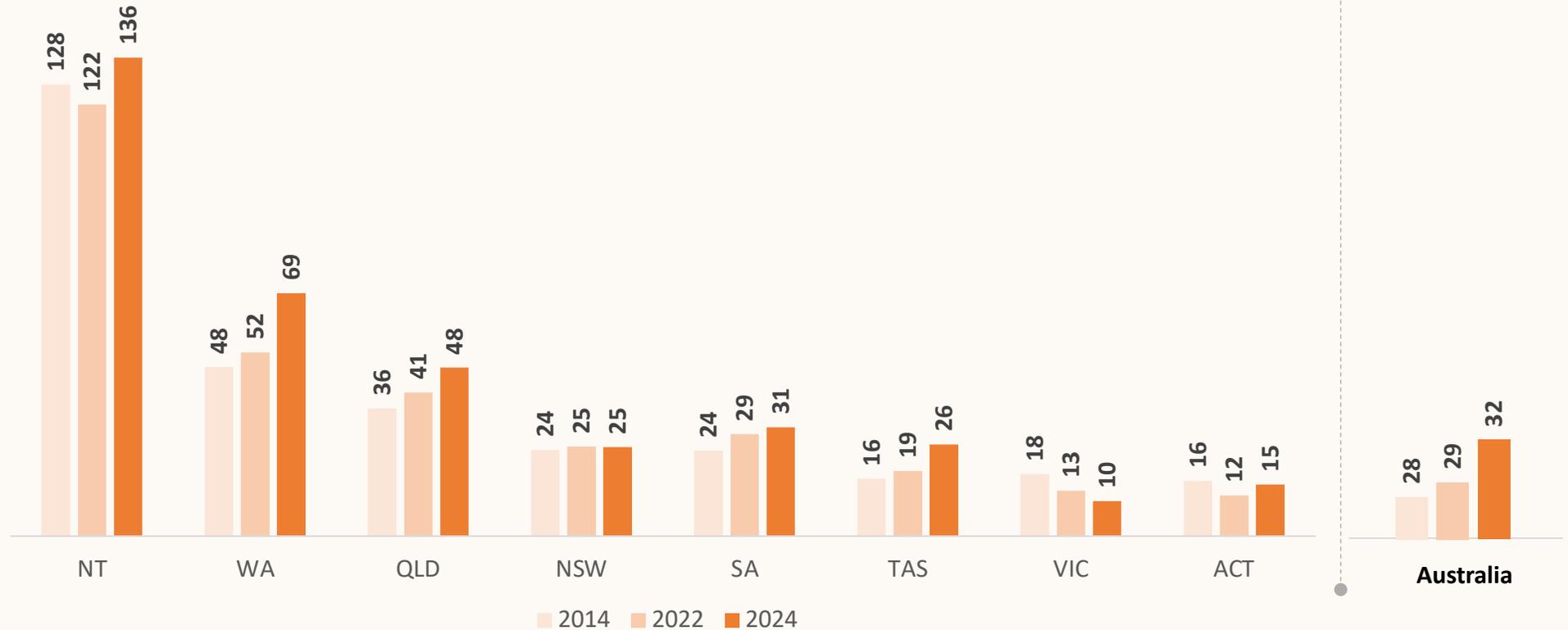
Incarceration rate: Adult men 2014-2024

per 100,000 adult men



Incarceration rate: Adult women 2014-2024

per 100,000 adult women

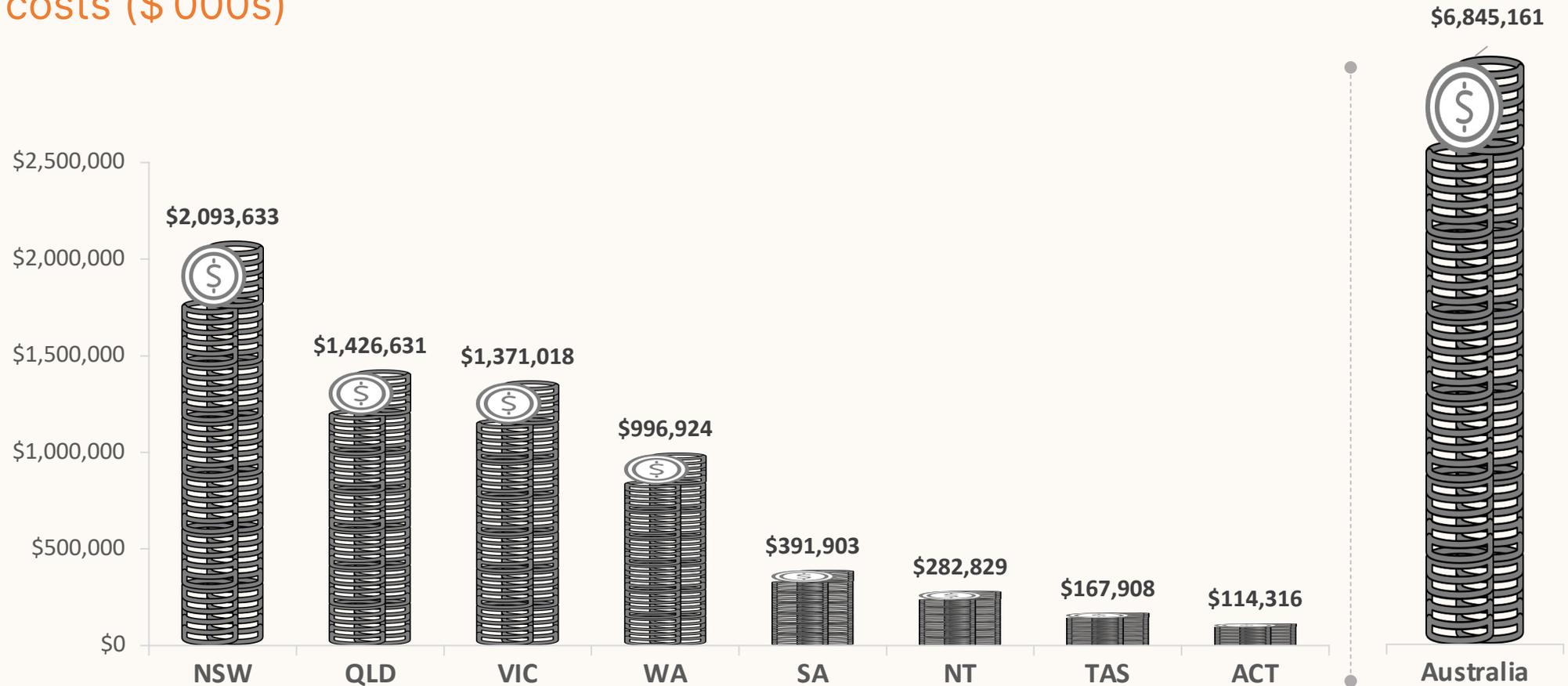


Rate of change: Incarceration rate by gender

	2014-24		2022-24	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Tasmania	55%	59%	25%	40%
Northern Territory	53%	6%	16%	11%
Queensland	31%	32%	9%	17%
Western Australia	28%	44%	14%	33%
South Australia	19%	28%	5%	7%
NSW	7%	4%	-1%	0%
Australia	-11%	12%	-8%	3%
ACT	-12%	-7%	6%	27%
Victoria	-18%	-43%	-15%	-23%

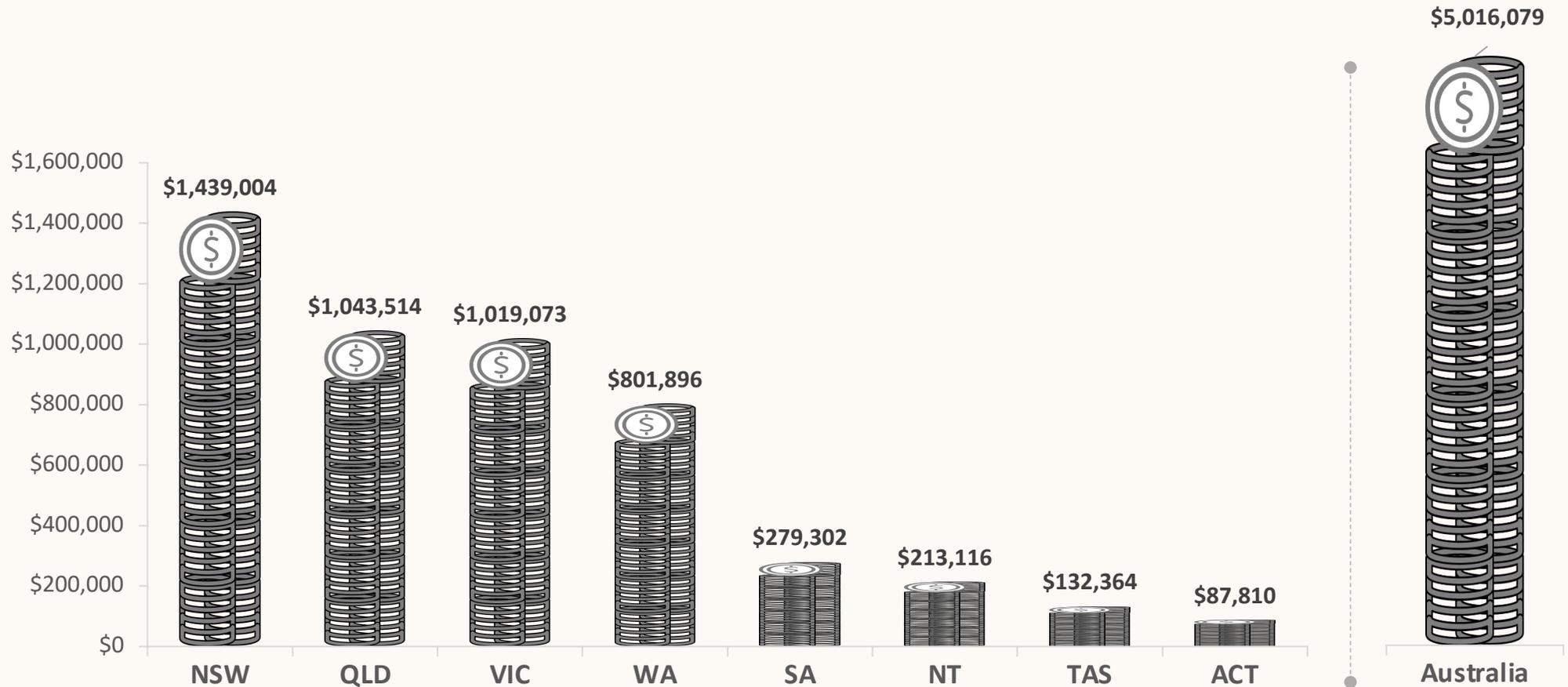
Prisons: Total net operating expenditure 2023-24

including capital costs (\$'000s)



Prisons: Real net operating expenditure 2023-24

(\$'000s)



Rate of change: Prison costs

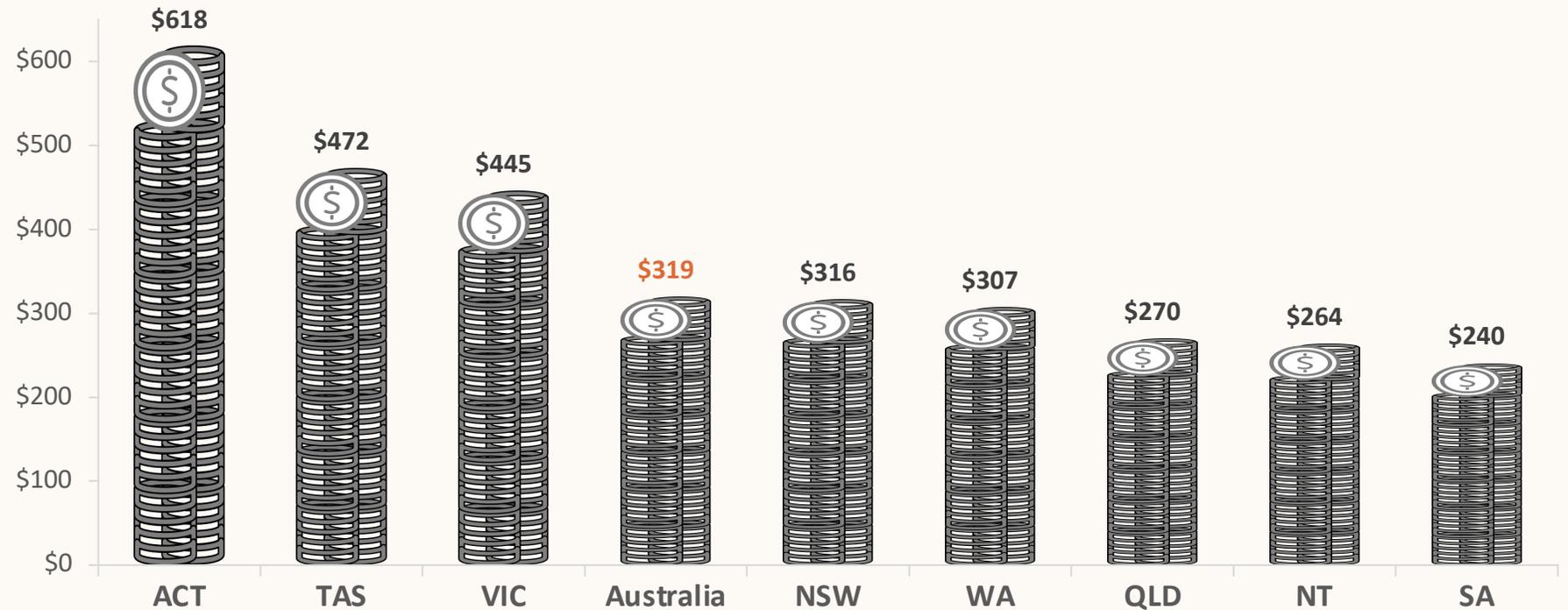
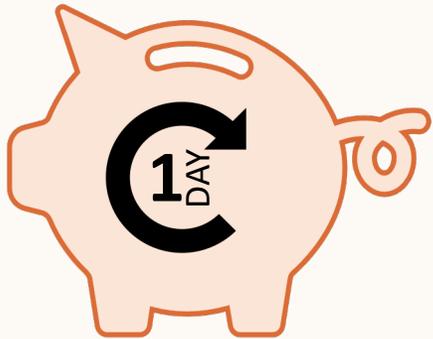
net operating expenditure



	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
ACT	125%	8%
Tasmania	117%	19%
Queensland	105%	13%
NSW	71%	0%
Northern Territory	69%	27%
Australia	69%	3%
Victoria	67%	-8%
South Australia	44%	1%
Western Australia	35%	5%

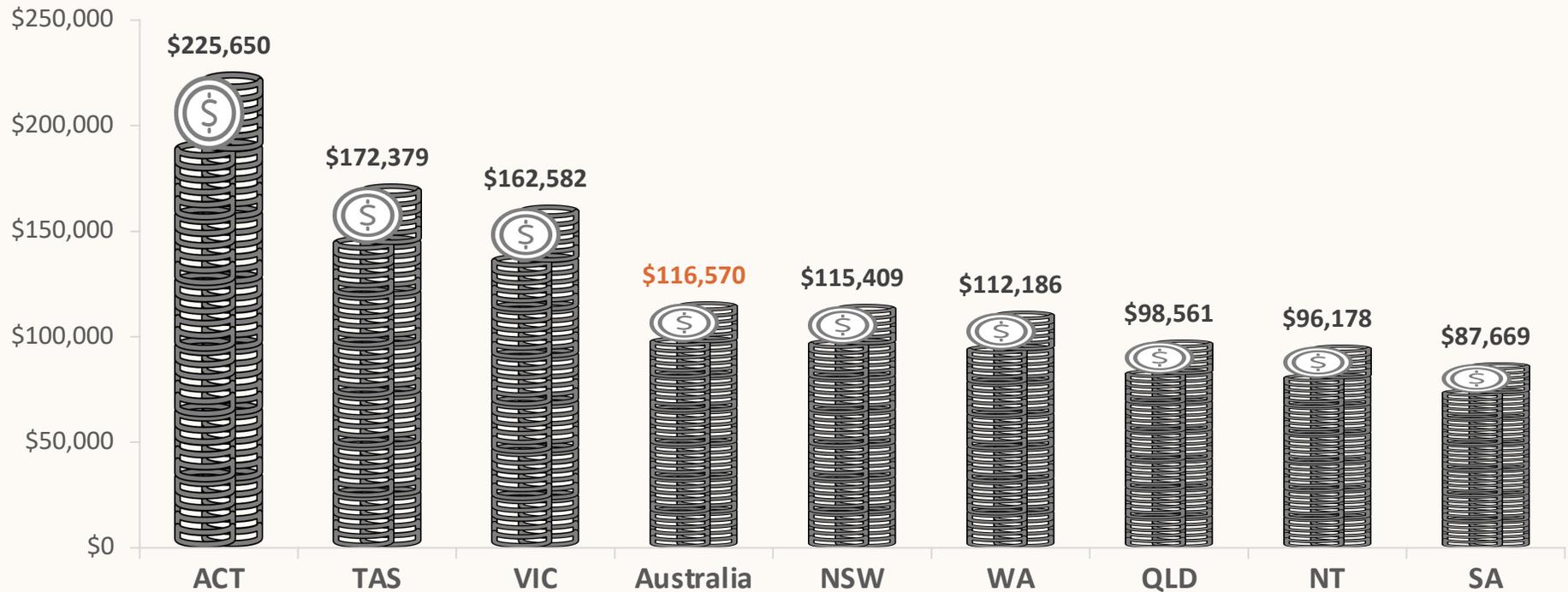
Cost per imprisoned person per day 2023-24

real net operating expenditure



Cost per imprisoned person per year 2023-24

real net operating expenditure

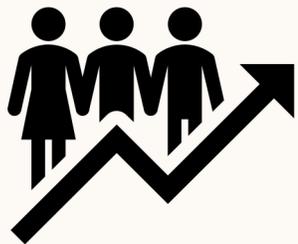


Source: Productivity Commission (2025). Report on Government Services 2025, Corrective Services Tables, Table 8A.20.

Note: Annual costs have been calculated by multiplying daily costs by 365.

Rate of change: Annual cost per imprisoned person

real net operating expenditure



	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
ACT	101%	8%
Victoria	55%	-1%
NSW	43%	1%
Tasmania	33%	0%
Queensland	30%	2%
Australia	28%	-1%
Northern Territory	15%	7%
South Australia	9%	-3%
Western Australia	-5%	-6%

Source: Productivity Commission (2025). Report on Government Services 2025, Corrective Services Tables, Table 8A.20.

Productivity Commission (2024). Report on Government Services 2024, Corrective Services Tables, Table 8A.20.

Note: Annual costs have been calculated by multiplying daily costs by 365.