

# Incarcerated Parents and Their Children



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# 2000 Estimates

- Nearly 3.6 million parents were under some form of correctional supervision:  
7.1 million minor children affected
- Less than a third of these parents were incarcerated prisons or local jails:  
1.1 million parents, with 2.3 million children
- Fathers accounted for 79% of all parents under supervision; 90% of those incarcerated

# 2000 Estimates

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Community corrections	2,457,900	4,831,300
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Incarcerated	1,096,100	2,298,900
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<b>Total under any correctional supervision</b>	<b>3,554,000</b>	<b>7,130,200</b>
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# Incarcerated Parents and Their Children: 1991-2000 Trends

- Parents in State & Federal prison:

<u>1991</u>	<u>2000</u>
452,500	737,400

- Minor children of prisoners:

<u>1991</u>	<u>2000</u>
936,500	1,531,500

# Incarcerated Parents and Their Children: 1991-2000 Trends

- The increase in parents (63%) was similar to the growth of other prisoners (69%).
- The percentage of State and Federal prisoners who had minor children (56%) changed little since 1991 (57%).

# Incarcerated Parents and Their Children: 1991-2000 Trends

- Growth in parents held in State prison:  
    violent offenders = 106,000  
    drug offenders = 56,000
- The number of mothers in prison grew 87%,  
    while fathers increased by 61%.

# Profile of Parents in State Prison

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Gender

Race

Median age

Marital status

# Parents in State Prison: Offenses

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Violent offenses

Property offenses

Drug offenses

Public-order/other offenses

# Parents in State Prison: Criminal History

- At the time of their arrest, 49% of parents were already on probation or parole
- First-time offenders accounted for 23% of parents; recidivists with only drug convictions accounted for another 4%
- 60% of parents had multiple prior convictions; nearly half (44%) had 3 or more priors

# Children of Incarcerated Parents

- 2.1% of the Nation's minor children had a parent in prison in 1999
- Racial disparity:
  - African-American children = 7.0%
  - Hispanic children = 2.6%
  - White children = 0.8%
- 58% were under 10 years old; mean age = 8

# Impact on Children: Households

- 1 in 3 parents in State prison said they were living with any of their children prior to arrest:  
Fathers = 36%                  Mothers = 58%
- In 2000, an estimated 344,100 U.S. households with children were missing a resident parent held in State or Federal prison.

# Impact on Children: Current Caregivers

- Current caregiver while father is in State prison:
  - 90% = child's mother
  - 13% = child's grandparents
  - 5% = other relatives
  - 2% = foster care / agency / institution
- Current caregiver while mother is in State prison:
  - 28% = child's father
  - 53% = child's grandparents
  - 26% = other relatives
  - 10% = foster care / agency / institution

# Impact on Children: Contact with Parents

- Most parents in State prison reported contact (phone, mail, or visits) with their children since their admission: fathers = 79% mothers = 88%
- Monthly contact: fathers = 62% mothers = 78%  
Weekly contact: fathers = 40% mothers = 62%
- A majority of both fathers (57%) and mothers (54%) in State prison said they never had visits from their children.

# Impact on Children: Prison Time to Serve

- Total time parents expected to serve (mean):  
Fathers = 6 years 10 months (55% of sentence)  
Mothers = 4 years 1 month (52% of sentence)
- Expected to serve less than 2 years:  
Fathers = 18%                  Mothers = 38%
- Expected to served more than 10 years:  
Fathers = 21%                  Mothers = 8%

# Treatment Needs of Parents in State Prison: Substance Abuse

- Any drug use in the month before offense:  
Fathers = 58%      Mothers = 65%  
Cocaine/crack:  
Fathers = 26%      Mothers = 45%
- Under the influence of drugs when committing their crime:    Fathers = 33%      Mothers = 43%
- Committed their crime under the influence of alcohol:    Fathers = 37%      Mothers = 29%

# Treatment Needs of Parents in State Prison: Mental Illness, Homelessness

- Reported indications of mental illness:  
Fathers = 13%                  Mothers = 23%
- Homeless in the past year before arrest:  
Fathers = 8%                  Mothers = 18%

For a copy of the report,  
*Incarcerated Parents and Their Children*

go to:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>