



Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children: National Statistics

Presented by:

Lauren Glaze

Statistician

Bureau of Justice Statistics

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Overview

- Trends in the number of parents in state and federal prison and their minor children
- Prevalence of parenting among state prisoners by certain attributes
- Impact of parental incarceration on minor children
- Background and characteristics of parents in state prison

Estimated number of parents in state and federal prison and their minor children, 1991-2007

Year	Parents	Minor children
1991	452,500	945,600
1997	649,500	1,362,900
1999	721,500	1,515,200
2004	754,900	1,590,100
2007	809,800	1,706,600

Minor Children in U.S. with a Parent in State or Federal Prison

- 2.3% of the Nation's 74 million minor children had a parent in prison in 2007
- Racial disparity
 - Black children = 6.7% (1 in 15)
 - Hispanic children = 2.4% (1 in 41)
 - White children = 0.9% (1 in 110)
- About half were 9 or younger

Prevalence of Parenting Among State Prisoners

Likelihood of being a parent varied by:

Gender

Age

Race (for men only)

Offense

Slightly by criminal history

Impact on Children: Living Arrangement

Less than half (48%) of parents in state prison reported living with at least one of their children either in the month before arrest or just prior to incarceration:

Fathers = 47%

Mothers = 64%

In month before arrest:

- Fathers equally likely to report living in a single or two-parent household (17% vs. 18%)
- Mothers 3 times more likely to report living in single-parent household (42% vs. 14%)

Impact on Children: Daily Care

Fathers in state prison who reported living with at least one child just prior to incarceration relied heavily on someone else to provide the daily care of their children.

Provided daily care	Fathers	Mothers
Inmate provided primary care	26 %	77 %
Inmate shared care	63	18
Someone else provided care	11	5

Impact on Children: Current Caregiver

Current caregiver of minor children varied dramatically by whether the parent in state prison was a mother or a father.

Current caregiver	Fathers	Mothers
Other parent	88 %	37 %
Grandparent	13	45
Other relatives	5	23
Foster home or agency	2	11
Friends, others	2	8

Impact on Children: Contact with Parent

8 in 10 parents in state prison reported having some contact with at least one of their children (minor or adult) since admission.

Any type of contact	Total	Fathers	Mothers
Contact	79 %	78 %	85 %
At least once a week	40	39	56
At least once a month	22	23	18
Less than once a month	17	17	11
No contact	21	22	15

Impact on Children: Time in Prison

Mothers in state prison had served less time at the time of interview and expected to be released in a shorter amount of time than fathers.

	Fathers	Mothers
Time served since admission		
Less than 12 months	21 %	38 %
12-59 months	52	50
60+ months	27	13
Expected time left to be served		
Less than 12 months	40 %	62 %
12-59 months	39	29
60+ months	19	8
No release expected	2	1

Parents in State Prison: Family Incarceration

Half of parents in state prison reported ever having a family member incarcerated.

Type of family member	Total	Fathers	Mothers
Any	50 %	49 %	58 %
Parent	25	25	31
Child	2	2	5

Parents in State Prison: Homelessness, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse

- Homelessness in year before arrest: 9% of all parents
Fathers = 8% **Mothers = 16%**
- Mental health problem: over half (57%) of all parents
Fathers = 55% **Mothers = 74%**
- Substance abuse: more than two-thirds (67%) of all parents
Fathers = 67% **Mothers = 70%**

Parents in State Prison: Treatment and Prison Program Participation

- **Mental health treatment:**
 - Less than half (46%) of parents with a problem ever had treatment; a third treated since admission
- **Substance abuse treatment:**
 - 7 in 10 parents ever received any treatment or programs; 4 in 10 treated since admission
- **Program participation while in state prison:**
 - More than half (57%) of parents attended self-help or improvement programs
 - 12% attended parenting or childrearing classes; mothers more likely than fathers

For a copy of the report,

Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children

go to:

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

Contact info:

Lauren Glaze – lauren.glaze@usdoj.gov

Laura Maruschak – laura.maruschak@usdoj.gov