



# PARENTS BEHIND BARS

*What Happens to Their Children?*

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## OVERVIEW

Children do not often figure in discussions of incarceration, but new research finds *more than five million U.S. children* have had at least one parent in prison at one time or another—about three times higher than earlier estimates that included only children with a parent currently incarcerated.

This report uses the National Survey of Children’s Health to examine both the prevalence of parental incarceration and child outcomes associated with it.

## KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on our analyses, we found that more than five million children, representing seven percent of all U.S. children, have ever had a parent who lived with them go to jail or prison. This proportion is higher among black, poor, and rural children. Our figure of more than five million is almost certainly an underestimate, since it does not include children with a non-residential parent who was incarcerated.

This is important new information. In 2007, the most recent point-in-time estimate, 1.7 million children, or just over 2 percent, had a parent (including non-residential parents) *currently* in prison.

Previous research has found connections between parental incarceration and childhood health problems, behavior problems, and grade retention. It has also been linked to poor mental and physical health in adulthood.

More than five million U.S. children have had a parent in prison. (This is almost certainly an underestimate.)

After accounting for effects associated with demographic variables such as race and income, we found that parental incarceration was associated with:

- a higher number of other major, potentially traumatic life events—stressors that are most damaging when they are cumulative;
- more emotional difficulties, low school engagement, and more problems in school, among children ages 6 to 11; and
- a greater likelihood of problems in school among older youth (12 to 17), as well as less parental monitoring.

While the best long-term solution may be to reduce reliance on imprisonment as a sanction for some categories of criminal behavior, there may also be ways to mitigate the harm of parental imprisonment for children. Research on interventions for children with incarcerated parents is limited, but work so far suggests that reducing the trauma and stigma these children experience, improving communications between the child and the incarcerated parent, and making visits with the incarcerated parent more child-friendly may alleviate some of the negative effects of this separation.

Reducing the stigma these children experience ... may alleviate some of the negative effects of this separation.

## BACKGROUND

In 2007 (the most recent point-in-time estimate), 1.7 million children younger than 18 had a parent currently in state or federal prison.<sup>1</sup> This should not come as a surprise, when we consider that, in 2013, there were 1.6 million people held in prisons in the United States.<sup>2</sup> U.S. incarceration rates, although they have been declining recently, exceed those of any other reporting country.<sup>3,a</sup>

Recently, leaders across the political spectrum have begun to re-examine the policies that led to the massive growth in incarceration over the last generation. Incarceration is costly, the evidence for its deterrence value is mixed, and it has disproportionately affected people who are poor and black, exacerbating existing social inequities.<sup>4</sup> There is also increased attention being paid to the negative effects of incarceration on already-disadvantaged communities. For example, some researchers have argued that by reducing neighborhood human capital, high incarceration rates (as well as poorer employment prospects after release) contribute to community unemployment, as well as to a decline in prospects for marriage or other committed adult relationships.<sup>5</sup>

In many communities in the United States today, considerable numbers of children may experience a residential parent going to jail or prison. The great majority of incarcerated parents (99 percent) are fathers. However, the number of women in prison and their percentage of the incarcerated population have both been growing.<sup>6</sup> Maternal incarceration can be especially hard on a child, because mothers are more likely to have been the primary caregiver.<sup>7</sup>

U.S. incarceration rates exceed those of any other reporting country.

For the large subset of prisoners who are parents, incarceration poses unique challenges. There are the obvious difficulties in maintaining parent-child relationships during the period of incarceration, but there are other problems as well, both during imprisonment and following release. These affect the incarcerated parent, their children, and the caregivers of those children. Incarceration can mean the loss of that parent's income; it strains marital relationships and frequently contributes to divorce.<sup>8</sup>

There is a substantial body of literature detailing the negative implications of parental incarceration for child well-being. Research has linked parental incarceration to childhood health problems,

<sup>a</sup> Among the countries included in this analysis are the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Canada, Spain, Germany, and Australia. Data are as reported to the International Centre for Prison Studies.

including asthma, depression, and anxiety;<sup>9</sup> acting-out behavior;<sup>10</sup> grade retention;<sup>11</sup> stigma;<sup>12</sup> and, in adulthood, an increased likelihood of poor mental or physical health.<sup>13,b</sup>

In some cases there can be positive effects when a parent is incarcerated, namely, when the parent is abusive or otherwise poses a danger to the child (through substance abuse, for example).<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, most research finds negative outcomes associated with incarceration.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to identify the unique effects of parental incarceration on children, as its occurrence tends to be associated with numerous other risk factors. As an example, people in poor communities are more likely to be incarcerated. So, if a child with an incarcerated parent has problems in school (for example), it can be challenging to disentangle the effects of parental incarceration from those of other risk factors, such as experiencing extreme poverty. Complicating matters further, parental incarceration can also exacerbate these associated risk factors, through loss of income, for example.<sup>16</sup>

There are few studies that adequately control for these factors. Most take advantage of data sets where children are followed for multiple years, a design that allows for comparison between children's characteristics before and after parental incarceration.<sup>17</sup> Relying on cross-sectional data,<sup>c</sup> as we do here, especially when the timing of parental incarceration is not specified, limits our ability to infer cause and effect. In other words, particular child outcomes may have been present before incarceration, or may have been related to the risk factors that led to incarceration. However, by controlling for confounding factors and analyzing the data within specific age blocks, we can obtain a more nuanced picture of how parental incarceration and child outcomes are associated at several developmental periods.

## RESULTS

### *Who experiences parental incarceration?*

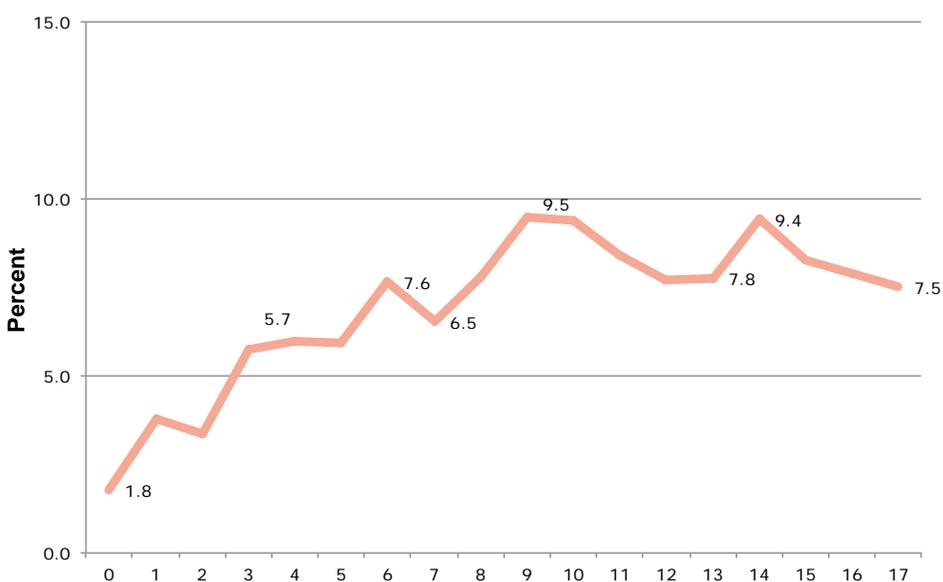
**One in 14 U.S. children.** According to their parents, nearly seven percent of children in the United States have lived with a parent who was incarcerated at some time after the child's birth. This amounts to more than five million children, ages birth through 17, as of 2011-12. Among children younger than 6, the rate is 5 percent. Among those ages 6 to 11, and 12 to 17, the rate is 8 percent each. Because the prevalence is about the same among younger and older school-age children, we can infer that most initial episodes of parental incarceration occurred before the child was 9—after which rates remain relatively stable. (See Figure 1.)



<sup>b</sup> All of the cited studies included at least some controls for confounding factors.

<sup>c</sup> Cross-sectional data provide a snapshot at a given point in time.

**Figure 1.** Percentage of children with an incarcerated parent,\* by age, 2011-12



\*Children with incarcerated parents are those who ever had a residential parent go to jail or prison.  
Source: Child Trends' analysis of the National Survey of Children's Health.

**Black children, disproportionately.** About twice as high a percentage of black children as white children have experienced parental incarceration (11.5 and 6.0 percent, respectively, or 1 in 9, compared with 1 in 17). Looking at just 12- to 17-year-old black children (born between 1994 and 1999), it reaches 13.6 percent, or nearly 1 in 7 children who have ever had a parent incarcerated. Given the high percentage of single-parent families in the black community,<sup>18</sup> this statistic is likely an underestimate of the disparity, since it does not include non-residential parents who have spent time in jail or prison.

**Poor children.** Children living in poverty are more than three times as likely to have experienced the incarceration of a parent as children in families with incomes at least twice the poverty level (12.5 versus 3.9 percent).

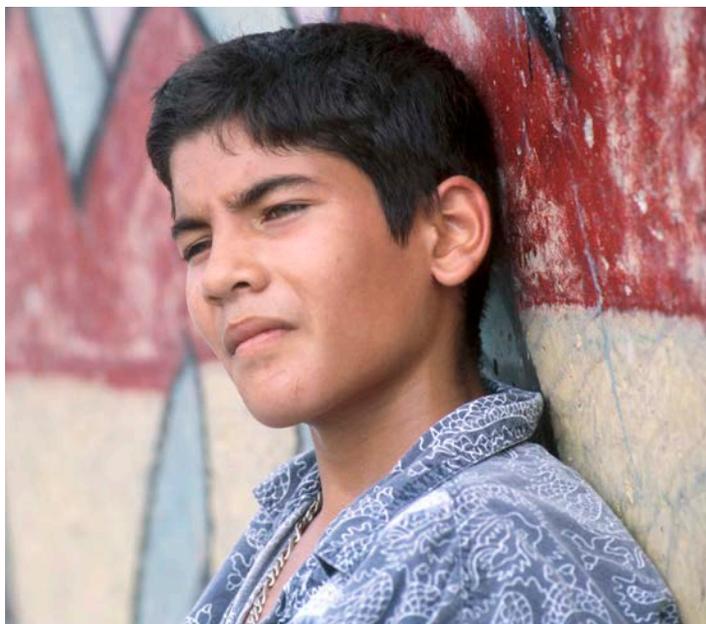
**Children whose parents have little education.** Children who have no resident parent with more than a high school education are 41 percent more likely to have experienced parental incarceration than are children with at least one parent who has had some education beyond high school (8.2 and 5.8 percent, respectively). Note that because this measure refers to resident parents only, the education of a currently incarcerated parent is not included.

**Rural children.** Children living outside metropolitan areas are more likely to have experienced parental incarceration than those living in metropolitan areas (10.7 versus 6.3 percent, respectively).

Further details for these findings can be found in Appendix 1.

### ***Children with an incarcerated parent are more likely to experience additional adverse events***

The incarceration of a parent is an event included in many lists of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), along with witnessing domestic violence, living with a person who is mentally ill or suicidal, and other negative circumstances.<sup>19</sup> ACEs are exposures that are associated with increased risk for trauma, or toxic stress, particularly when they are cumulative. While some level of stress can be manageable or even positive, sustained or extreme stress can lead to various kinds of physiological dysfunction, disease, and early mortality.<sup>20</sup>



When a child’s parent is incarcerated, traumatic stress may occur through multiple pathways. First, it involves the loss of an attachment figure, and may be particularly troubling to the child because the loss is not easily explained or understood. Second, whether or not the child witnesses the parent’s arrest, he or she may have ongoing, if sporadic, contact with law enforcement, judicial, corrections, and child welfare systems, all of which can contribute to further traumatization.<sup>21</sup>

On average, children who had ever had a resident parent incarcerated experienced 2.7 other ACEs, out of the eight included in the survey (see “Outcome Variables Definitions” for a complete listing). Children without experience of parent incarceration had, on average, 0.7 ACEs.

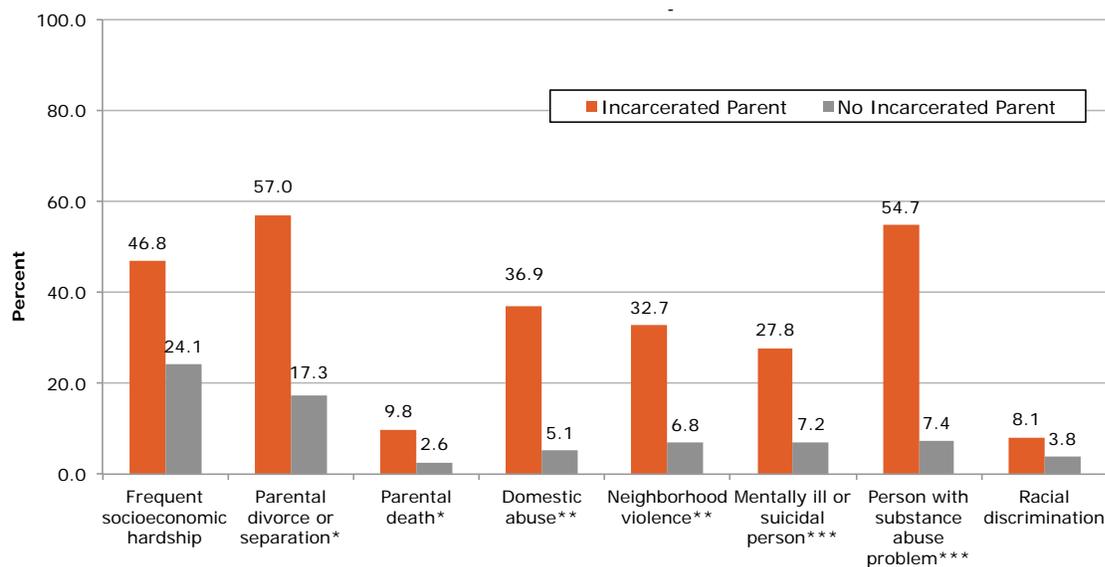
This pattern held with all age groups. Among children younger than 6, the ones with an incarcerated parent had 1.6 more ACEs than children who had never experienced parental incarceration. For children 6 to 11 the increment was 1.7 ACEs; and for children 12 to 17, 2.2.

Among children who ever had an incarcerated parent:

- More than half had lived with someone who had a substance abuse problem, compared with less than 10 percent among children with no parental incarceration.
- Nearly 3 in 5 had experienced parental divorce or separation, compared with 1 in 5 among children without parental incarceration.
- More than one-third had witnessed violence between their parents or guardians, and one-third had witnessed or experienced violence in their neighborhood. Less than 10 percent of those without an incarcerated parent had experienced either one.
- More than 1 in 4 had lived with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal, and nearly 1 in 10 had experienced the death of a parent (see Figure 2).

More than half of children who have had an incarcerated parent have also lived with someone who had a substance abuse problem.

**Figure 2.** Parental incarceration is associated with numerous other adverse childhood experiences, 2011-12



\*Resident parent  
 \*\*Victim or witness to  
 \*\*\* Residence with

Source: Child Trends' analysis of the National Survey of Children's Health.

### *What other aspects of child well-being are related to parental incarceration, after accounting for other confounding influences?*

Because this was an exploratory study, we examined the association between parental incarceration and a number of child well-being indicators. Detail on all of these measures is provided in the text box, "Outcome Variables Definitions."

For *children younger than 6*, we examined risk for developmental delay, measures of flourishing, and positive parent-child interaction. For *older children*, we examined school engagement and problems in school, participation in sports or clubs, parental aggravation, and emotional difficulties. For older children, we also looked at several indicators of positive family functioning, including the child's attendance at religious services, family meals, the responding parent's ability to "talk about things that really matter" with the child, and the number of the child's friends that the parent knows. For *all children* (through age 17), we examined the number of additional ACEs.

We examined each of the measures for older children separately for two age groups: ages 6 to 11, and 12 to 17. Frequencies overall on these measures, and separately by whether the child experienced parental incarceration, are reported in appendices 2 and 3.

For each outcome, we used a model that controlled for:

- demographic variables, including the child's gender, race/ethnicity, poverty level, family structure (two parents, single mother, etc.), and age; and
- other adverse childhood experiences,<sup>d</sup> including
  - parental divorce or separation,
  - death of a parent,
  - witnessing domestic violence or violence in the community, and
  - living with someone who had mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.

<sup>d</sup> Individual ACEs were not included as predictors when the outcome measure was "total number of ACEs."

Our approach allows us to examine the association between parental incarceration and well-being measures, *independent* of the effects of these other variables. We also tested the robustness of the model by varying which control variables were included; results were the same in all but one of the models. More detail on the methodology used can be found in “Methods,” toward the end of the report.

### What we found:

As expected, controlling for the differences in demographic characteristics between children with and without an incarcerated parent reduced the number of significant associations between parental incarceration and child well-being. However, some remained—suggesting that, even among children who face multiple difficult circumstances, having a parent imprisoned conveys added risk.

For children under 6, risk for developmental delay, the measures of flourishing, and positive parent interactions were not associated with parental incarceration.

#### FOR CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 6

The only well-being variable associated with an incarcerated parent, after controls, was the number of additional ACEs. Risk for developmental delay, the measures of flourishing, and positive parent interactions were not associated with parental incarceration. After controlling for demographic variables, children who had experienced parental incarceration had, on average, 1.2 more ACEs (excluding parental incarceration) than children without that experience. Once again, prior research suggests that the greater the number of adverse experiences, the greater the likelihood of lasting harm to the child.<sup>22</sup>

#### FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH 6 TO 17

**ACEs:** For children in this age group, parental incarceration was also significantly associated with the number of additional ACEs. After accounting for the control variables, children ages 6 to 11 with an incarcerated parent had, on average, 1.4 more ACEs than those who did not. For older youth (12-17), the average was 1.7 more ACEs.

There were significant negative relationships between school-related well-being and having had an incarcerated parent.

**School:** There were some significant negative relationships between school-related well-being and having had an incarcerated parent. Children ages 6 to 11 with an incarcerated parent were, on average, 9 percentage points more likely<sup>e</sup> to have school problems than those without (44 versus 35 percent likelihood). They also had lower school engagement. For instance, they were 5 percentage points less likely, on average, to have the highest school engagement score (77 versus 82 percent likelihood). For youth ages 12-17, those with an incarcerated parent were also more likely to have school problems (43 versus 35 percent likelihood). For these older youth, there was no significant relationship between school engagement and parental incarceration.

**Parental monitoring:** There was a small association between parental incarceration and parental monitoring. Among older youth, parents<sup>f</sup> of youth with an incarcerated parent were 4 percentage points more likely to not have met any of their friends (24 versus 20 percent likelihood). Research has found that parental monitoring is associated with a lower risk of youth engaging in risky behaviors.<sup>23</sup> There was no similar relationship in the case of younger children.

<sup>e</sup> For all analyses of bivariate and ordinal outcomes, the percent difference in likelihood is the mean marginal effect, which is based on the derivative of the probability curve.

<sup>f</sup> Strictly speaking, this refers to the respondent. In 92 percent of cases, this is a parent.

**Emotional difficulties:** Younger school-age children with an incarcerated parent were 9 points more likely to have emotional difficulties (73 versus 64 percent likelihood), as reported by parents. Older youth with an incarcerated parent were also more likely to have emotional difficulties, but that correlation did not hold up in all analyses.<sup>9</sup>

**Other measures of well-being:** Parental incarceration had no measurable effect on youth participation in sports or clubs, frequent religious attendance, meals with family, parental ability to talk about things that matter, or parental aggravation, when controlling for confounding factors.

## DISCUSSION

The incarceration of a parent affects millions of children in the United States, and it is most common among children who face other barriers to opportunity, such as those who are black, live in low-income families, or have parents with low education. Thus, the harm associated with parental incarceration can compound the already difficult circumstances of vulnerable children.

Children of all ages who have experienced parental incarceration, even after controlling for a number of characteristics, have a greater number of adverse experiences than those who have not. Nevertheless, one limitation of this study is that we cannot infer causality. For example, a parent's violent behavior could be either a cause or an effect of their incarceration—or the relationship may be more complicated.



The child's school success was an area where there were small but statistically significant negative associations with parental incarceration, after controls. For all children of school age, there were associations with school-reported problems, and, for younger children, with weaker school engagement. The social stigma associated with parental incarceration, which teachers and peers may reinforce, may be one explanation for this finding. Having an imprisoned parent is an example of a loss that is not socially approved or (often) supported, which may compound children's grief and pain, leading to emotional difficulties and problem behaviors.<sup>24</sup>

Having an imprisoned parent is an example of a loss that is not socially approved or (often) supported.

Apart from compounded exposure to adverse experiences, we found few negative effects of parental incarceration on the measured outcome variables. This may reflect the timing of parental incarceration, or it may reflect that children at different developmental stages react differently to the experience, independent of how recently it occurred. For example, significant associations with school engagement were found for younger school-age children only. Older youth may be less affected by parental incarceration, or effects may be greater when incarceration is more recent (or concurrent). Studies have shown that many children with an incarcerated parent experience a series of ongoing experiences with the corrections system (directly, or mediated through their parents) that can exacerbate their distress.<sup>25</sup>

Measures of parent-child interaction, regardless of the child's age, were mostly unrelated to parental incarceration. However, our analysis was limited to co-resident parents (or other adults). We may assume the child's relationship with the

<sup>9</sup> The relationship was significant only when the (non-significant) effect of having lived with a person who had a substance abuse problem was excluded from the model, suggesting that multicollinearity limits the model's explanatory capacity.

incarcerated parent is or was affected, but we cannot distinguish parent respondents who may have been incarcerated from those who had not. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that all measured variables were based on parents' own reports.

There may also be indirect effects of parental incarceration that are not measured in our models. Because we controlled for parental divorce and other adverse experiences, we could not identify *indirect* effects that parental incarceration may have had. For instance, if parental incarceration increased the likelihood of divorce, and divorce had an effect on an outcome, that effect would not be evident.

## IMPLICATIONS

Discussions of U.S. corrections policy do not often consider children. But the available data suggest there are more children who have experienced a resident parent's incarceration than there are currently incarcerated adults, both because of past incarcerations, and because incarcerated adults typically have multiple children.<sup>26</sup>

We need effective programs to mitigate the harm associated with having an incarcerated parent. Although in-prison training programs focused on parenting skills are common,<sup>27</sup> few are focused on meeting the needs of children directly during the time parents are in prison.<sup>28</sup>



One thing that policymakers can do is make it easier for children to maintain positive relationships with their parents during the period of incarceration. While there is often semi-regular contact (in one study, 52 percent of incarcerated parents had at least monthly mail contact, and 38 percent had at least monthly phone contact), in-person visits are relatively rare.<sup>29</sup> This is likely due to a number of factors, including the cost and time to travel to distant facilities, the burden and discomfort of security procedures, and a lack of child-friendly places to meet. Even phone calls can be prohibitively expensive.<sup>30</sup> Caregivers who are estranged from the incarcerated parent may not allow visits, and incarcerated parents are not granted parental visitation rights.

Encouraging communication between parents in prison and their children, and improving the settings for visits, are good places to start.

In-person visits can also be upsetting to children.<sup>31</sup> From children's perspective, visiting a parent in prison is likely to subject them to what has been termed "secondary prisonation," whereby they experience subtler versions of the physical confinement, elaborate surveillance, and restrictive rules typical of such institutions.<sup>32</sup>

However, this may have more to do with features of the prison setting than with the visit itself; studies that have evaluated child-friendly visiting areas and policies (such as relaxed security procedures for children) find positive results for both children and their parents.<sup>33</sup>

One researcher lists five major types of programs for incarcerated parents. These include education in parental skills, programs that provide extended special visits for children, child-friendly facilities for visits, parenting support groups, and custody services. There are also prison nurseries where very young children can live full-time with their incarcerated mothers, but these programs apply only to a small number of children with imprisoned parents.<sup>34</sup>

As policymakers grapple with alternative corrections strategies that divert adults (including many who are parents) from incarceration, they can also improve well-being for those children whose

parents are already in prison, or who have been. Encouraging communication between parents in prison and their children, and improving the settings for visits, are good places to start. Educators can help by becoming better informed about the needs of this group, and developing strategies to improve their chances of success in the school setting. In all settings, adults who interact with children who have, or have had, an incarcerated parent, can benefit from increased understanding of this experience.

In Appendix 4, we list several promising programs that offer services to this population.

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## DATA SOURCE

We use data from the 2011-12 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), a survey sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The NSCH is a telephone interview survey where a parent (or other knowledgeable adult) reports about a child in their household. The data are representative of children younger than 18, and produce valid estimates for the nation, as well as for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In 2011-12, the survey asked whether the sample child had ever lived with a parent or guardian who had been incarcerated at any point since the child was born. We lack information on whether it was the child's mother or father who is/was incarcerated, whether they are a biological or step-parent, or whether they were living with the child at the time of the incarceration. If a non-residential parent experienced incarceration, that would not be picked up by this survey. Further, the timing of the incarceration, or whether there were multiple incarceration spells, is unknown. Thus, when we refer throughout to "parental incarceration," readers should bear in mind these limitations.

## METHODS

For each well-being outcome, we used multiple regression to test its relationship with parental incarceration. Depending on the type of measure, we used logistic (for bivariate outcomes), cumulative multi-logistic (for ordinal outcomes), or ordinary least-squares regression (for the number of additional adverse experiences). We ran two regressions for each relevant age group for each outcome.

- The first regression included a number of independent variables:
- Whether a parent that the child had ever lived with had ever been incarcerated (as an explanatory variable);
- A number of demographic control variables, including the child's gender, race/ethnicity, poverty level, family structure, and age;
- Other adverse childhood experiences, including parental divorce or separation, death of a parent, witnessing domestic violence or violence in the community, and living with someone who had mental health issues or a substance abuse problem. These measures were excluded from the analysis of additional adverse experiences.

To test the robustness of the model, non-significant additional adverse experiences were removed for a second regression analysis. In all cases but one, the significance of the association between parental incarceration and the dependent variable was unaffected.

All regressions were run using SUDAAN, and accounted for the complex design of the NSCH. Analyses used the multiply-imputed poverty data released with the survey, and accounted for the resulting increase in variance.

Where we mention differences between children who have experienced parental incarceration and those who have not, the differences are statistically significant, unless otherwise stated.

# OUTCOME VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

## *Number of additional adverse childhood experiences*

Respondents in the NSCH were asked about eight ACEs (in addition to parental incarceration):

1. Frequent economic hardship
2. Parental separation or divorce
3. Parental death
4. Witnessing domestic violence
5. Witnessing or experiencing neighborhood violence
6. Living with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal
7. Living with someone who had a substance abuse problem
8. Experiencing racism

For each one of these, parents were asked whether the child had ever (since birth) experienced it. All references to parents include residential parents only. The dependent measure represents a count of the number of events that the child had ever experienced.

## *Developmental risk*

Young children (ages four months through five years) were classified as being at no, low, moderate, or high risk for developmental delay, based on a list of concerns named by the parent. More information is available at the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, at [www.childhealthdata.org/docs/nsch-docs/peds\\_scoring\\_4website-pdf](http://www.childhealthdata.org/docs/nsch-docs/peds_scoring_4website-pdf).

## *Flourishing (ages birth to 5)*

Children younger than six were considered flourishing if the respondent indicated that they usually or always:

1. Were affectionate and tender with the respondent,
2. Bounced back quickly when things didn't go their way,
3. Showed interest and curiosity in learning new things, and
4. Smiled and laughed a lot.

## *Positive parent-child interaction (ages birth to 5)*

Positive parent-child interaction is a scale from zero to three ( $\alpha=0.7$ ). A child receives one point each for meeting the following conditions:

1. A family member read to the child at least six days in the past week,
2. A family member told stories to the child at least six days in the past week, and
3. A family member took the child on an outing on at least four days in the past week. Examples of outings include going to the park, library, zoo, shopping, church, restaurants, and family gatherings.

### ***School engagement (ages 6 to 17)***

A “school engagement” scale from zero to three ( $\alpha=0.6$ ), had a child receiving one point for meeting each of the following conditions:

1. The child usually or always shows interest and curiosity in learning new things,
2. The child usually or always cares about doing well in school, and
3. The child usually or always does all required homework.

### ***School problems (ages 6 to 17)***

Children and youth were considered to have school problems if

1. They had ever repeated a grade, or
2. Their school had contacted an adult in the household in the past twelve months about problems they were having with school.

### ***Participation in sports or clubs (ages 6 to 17)***

Children and youth were considered to have participated in out-of-school activities if they participated in a sports team, or took sports lessons after school or on weekends, or participated in any clubs or organizations after school or on weekends.

### ***Parental aggravation (ages 6 to 17)***

Parental aggravation ( $\alpha=0.6$ ) was measured on a scale of zero to three; children received one point for each of the following items to which the respondent answered “usually” or “always” regarding their past-month experience:

1. Felt that the child is much harder to care for than most children their age,
2. Felt that the child does things that really bother the respondent a lot, and
3. Felt angry with the child.

### ***Emotional difficulties (ages 6 to 17)***

Emotional difficulties were measured on a scale of zero to three ( $\alpha=0.4$ ). Children received one point each for meeting each of the following conditions:

1. The child usually or always argues too much,
2. He or she sometimes, usually, or always bullies or is cruel or mean to others, and
3. He or she is usually or always unhappy, sad, or depressed.

### ***Regular religious service attendance (ages 6 to 17)***

Children were considered to have regular religious service attendance if parents reported they attended at least once a week.

### ***Regular family meals (ages 6 to 17)***

Children were considered to have regular family meals when they had had a meal with the whole household on at least six days in the past week.

### *Parental ability to talk about things that matter (ages 6 to 17)*

Parents or other guardians were asked to rate how well they and the child could share ideas (very well, somewhat well, not very well, not well at all; coded as a four-point scale).

### *Parental monitoring (ages 6 to 17)*

Parents were asked about the number of the child's friends they had met (all, most, some, or none). The few cases (n=197) where the respondent indicated that the child has no friends were excluded from the analysis.

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### Appendix 1: Children With an Incarcerated Parent, by Select Measures and by Age (Percentages)

	Total	Younger than 6	6 to 11 years	12 to 17 years
<b>All children</b>	6.9	4.5	8.2	8.1
Race				
Non-Hispanic white	6.0	3.9	7.0	6.9
Non-Hispanic black	11.5	7.8	12.3	13.6
Hispanic	6.4	4.0	8.3	7.3
Other	7.0	4.4	8.4	8.6
Highest parental education				
Less than high school	8.2	5.1	8.1	10.7
High school graduate	7.5	4.9	9.2	8.1
More than high school	5.8	4.0	7.0	6.6
Poverty level				
Poor (<100% FPL)	12.5	8.6	14.3	15.8
Low-income (100% to 199% FPL)	9.1	4.6	11.2	11.3
Not low-income (200% FPL or more)	3.9	2.3	4.6	4.5
Immigration status				
All parents native-born	7.4	4.6	9.3	8.0
Living with at least one foreign-born parent	2.9	2.2	3.0	3.6
Urbanicity				
Within a metropolitan area	6.3	4.2	7.3	7.5
Outside a metropolitan area	10.7	6.3	13.1	12.1

### Appendix 2: Unadjusted Outcome Measures Among Children Younger than 6: Total, and by Parental Incarceration Status (Percentages)

	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent
Risk for developmental delay			
High	10.8	14.8*	10.6
Moderate	15.2	22.3*	14.9
Low	13.9	21.3*	13.0
Flourishing on all four measures	73.4	66.5*	74.0
Positive parent interaction score			
0	16.3	22.1*	16.0
1	17.1	18.3	17.1
2	25.6	26.5	25.5
3	41.0	33.1*	41.4

\*Difference between those with an incarcerated parent and those without is statistically significant (p<.05).

**Appendix 3:** Unadjusted Outcome Measures Among Those Ages 6 to 17: Total, and by Parental Incarceration Status (Percentages)

	Ages 6-17			Ages 6-11			Ages 12-17		
	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent
School engagement score									
0	3.7	6.7*	3.4	1.8	2.4	1.7	5.6	11.0*	5.1
1	7.4	12.3*	6.9	5.2	10.7*	4.6	9.6	13.8*	9.2
2	16.1	21.0*	15.6	13.7	19.5*	13.2	18.4	22.5*	18.0
3	72.9	60.0*	74.1	79.4	67.5*	80.6	66.5	52.7*	67.7
Any school problems	35.9	58.4*	34.0	35.4	57.5*	33.6	36.3	59.4*	34.3
Participation in sports or clubs	73.7	65.5*	74.6	70.7	62.3*	71.5	76.7	68.7*	77.5
Emotional difficulties score									
0	72.5	55.1*	74.0	71.8	54.9*	73.3	73.1	55.3*	74.7
1	19.8	27.9*	19.1	20.5	26.7*	20.0	19.1	29.1*	18.2
2	6.8	15.0*	6.0	6.9	16.5*	6.0	6.7	13.4*	6.1
3	1.0	2.1*	0.9	0.8	1.9*	0.7	1.2	2.3*	1.0
Parental aggravation score									
0	87.7	81.7*	88.3	88.3	84.0*	88.7	87.1	79.5*	87.8
1	8.8	10.4	8.6	8.7	9.0	8.6	8.9	11.8*	8.6
2	2.5	5.2*	2.3	2.3	5.0*	2.0	2.8	5.5*	2.5
3	1.0	2.7*	0.9	0.8	2.2*	0.7	1.2	3.2*	1.0
Regular religious service attendance	52.8	48.0*	53.2	55.0	51.3	55.3	50.8	44.9*	51.2
Regular family meals	47.1	49.6	46.9	53.8	57.9	53.5	40.5	41.4	40.4
Talking about "things that really matter"	70.3	63.9*	71.0	76.0	67.3*	76.8	64.9	60.6*	65.3

	Ages 6-17			Ages 6-11			Ages 12-17		
	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent	Total	Ever had incarcerated parent	Never had incarcerated parent
Parent knows									
All friends	27.6	25.9	27.7	33.7	30.4	34.0	21.8	21.4	21.7
Most friends	48.8	45.6*	49.2	43.5	41.0	43.8	53.9	50.1	54.3
Some friends	21.4	25.8*	21.0	20.7	25.6*	20.2	22.2	26.0*	21.8
No friends	2.2	2.8	2.1	2.1	3.0	2.1	2.2	2.6	2.1

\* Difference between those with an incarcerated parent and those without is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

#### Appendix 4: Programs Serving Children with Incarcerated Parents

Organization/ Program Name	Description	Location	Web link
<b>Hope House DC</b>	Hope House DC offers programs to prisoners and their families aimed at decreasing recidivism and keeping incarcerated men connected to the community. The organization has three primary purposes including to 1) create programs that strengthen ties between fathers who are incarcerated in prisons far from home and their families; 2) advocate for and raise the level of awareness of the general public about inmates and their families and their concerns; and 3) create programs for the children and families of prisoners.	Washington, District of Columbia	Website: <a href="http://www.hopehousedc.org/">http://www.hopehousedc.org/</a>  Programs: <a href="http://www.hopehousedc.org/programs/">http://www.hopehousedc.org/programs/</a>
<b>New Hope Oklahoma</b>	New Hope provides resiliency and prevention programs for children with a parent in prison. Services include 11 after school programs in seven schools, a week long summer camp, holiday parties, retreats, and case management to assess needs and coordinate community services.	Oklahoma	Website: <a href="http://www.newhopeoklahoma.org/">http://www.newhopeoklahoma.org/</a>
<b>Pathfinders of Oregon</b>	Pathfinders of Oregon provides prevention and intervention services to individuals, families, and children at high risk for being involved in the justice system. The organization provides cognitive-based programs, education and supportive services for pro-social living to adults in the Oregon prison system and to children and families in the community. They also create and disseminate evidence based curricula and programs. Lastly, Pathfinders of Oregon aims to build community and create systems change to focus resources on addressing the full spectrum of social factors impacting the health of individuals and communities.	Oregon	Website: <a href="http://www.pathfindersoforegon.com/">http://www.pathfindersoforegon.com/</a>
<b>Promises for Families</b>	Promises for Families provides summer camp, after school enrichment programs and academic tutoring for children whose lives have been impacted by parental incarceration. Activities are led by professional instructors and qualified counselors who have experience working with at-risk, traumatized, or grieving children. They partner with organizations with host facilities to provide programs at no charge to the campers.	San Angelo, Texas	Website: <a href="http://promisesforfamilies.org/index.php/en/">http://promisesforfamilies.org/index.php/en/</a>
<b>Sesame Street-Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration</b>	Little Children, Big Challenges provides much-needed resources for families with young children (ages 3 – 8) as they encounter the difficult changes and transitions that come with a parent’s incarceration. Specific resources are available for providers and caregivers.	Online Toolkit	Website: <a href="http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topic/sandactivities/toolkits/incarceration">http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topic/sandactivities/toolkits/incarceration</a>
<b>The Osborne Association: Children and Youth Services</b>	The Osborne Association provides children and youth services to help children with a currently or formerly incarcerated parent to overcome stigma and isolations by offering a strengths-based, non-judgmental, child-friendly environment, along with support, various services, and resources tailored to these children’s unique needs and perspectives.	New York	Website: <a href="http://www.osborneny.org/index.cfm">http://www.osborneny.org/index.cfm</a>  Child and Youth Services <a href="http://www.osborneny.org/programs.cfm?programID=15">http://www.osborneny.org/programs.cfm?programID=15</a>