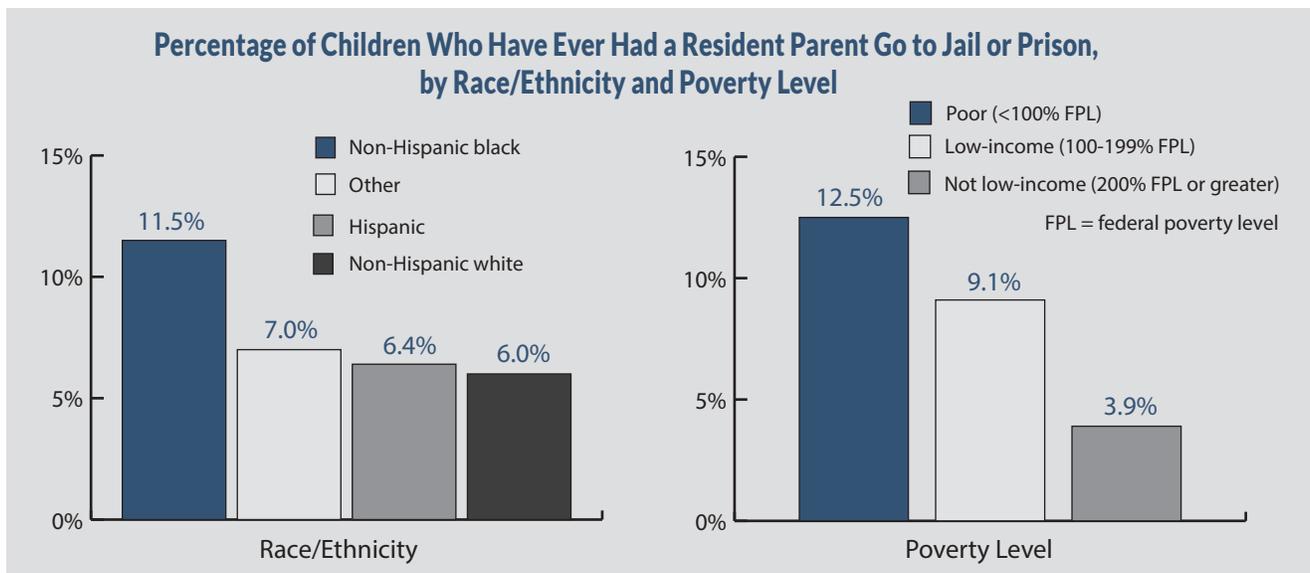




1 in 14 U.S. Children Has Had a Parent in Prison or Jail

More than 5 million U.S. children—nearly 7%, or 1 in 14—have ever had a parent they live with go to jail or prison, according to a new report published by Child Trends. Using data from the 2011-12 National Survey of Children’s Health, researchers found that children who are African-American and children living in poverty are more likely to have ever had an incarcerated parent, as well as those whose parents have little education and those who live in rural areas. The percentage of African-American children who have had an incarcerated parent is almost twice that of white children (11.5% vs. 6.0%), and the percentage of poor children who have had an incarcerated parent is more than 3 times that of their peers whose family incomes are at least twice the poverty level¹ (12.5% vs. 3.9%). Researchers also found that parental incarceration was associated with having experienced more stressful life events, emotional difficulties, low school engagement, and problems in school. In addition to suggesting a reduction in imprisonment as a sanction for criminal behavior, the authors recommend policies and programs that would reduce trauma and stigma associated with parental incarceration, improve communications between children and their incarcerated parents, and make visits with incarcerated parents more child-friendly.



Source:

Murphey, D. and Cooper, P. M. (2015). *Parents behind bars: What happens to their children?* Bethesda, MD: Child Trends. Retrieved November 16, 2015, from <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015-42ParentsBehindBars.pdf>.

Notes:

¹ The federal poverty level (FPL) is a measure of income level issued annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for the purpose of determining eligibility for programs and benefits.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to support and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, training, and consultation in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

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