

Beyond Parental Incarceration: The Effects of Household Incarceration on the Intergenerational Transmission of Disadvantage through Family Structure

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Two of the most pronounced social trends in the United States over the last 40 years are the increase in childbearing outside of marriage and the increase in incarceration. Yet, no research has explored whether having a household member incarcerated influences a child's risk of growing up to have a premarital birth. Using data on the children of mothers in the NLSY79, I find that having a household member incarcerated between ages 10 to 14 increases a child's the risk of growing up to have a premarital first birth by approximately 40%. The findings also show heterogeneity in the consequences of household incarceration, with paternal incarceration and extended household incarceration being particularly important risk factors for having a premarital first birth. These findings suggest that research exclusively emphasizing the consequences of parental incarceration has likely underestimated the consequences of the prison boom.

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