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# FP-12-01 On the Road to Adulthood: Young Men's Contact with Criminal Justice System

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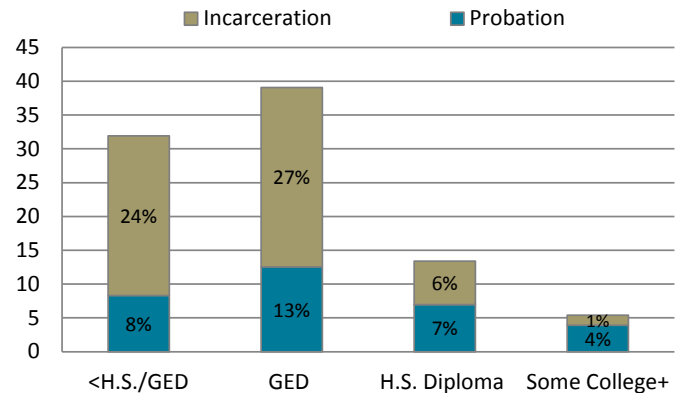


In 2008, 1 out of every 100 adults in the United States was incarcerated (Pew Center, 2008). Rates of incarceration are historically higher among men and the most disadvantaged, and these groups have experienced a disproportionate increase in their rates of incarceration from 1980 to 2008 (Western and Wildeman, 2009). Using the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), this Profile provides an analysis of young men's contact with the criminal justice system (i.e., probation or incarceration) by the age of 25. The sample is composed of 4,599 men.<sup>1</sup>

## Educational Attainment

- Figure 1 shows as men's educational level increases, the likelihood that they have had contact with the criminal justice system by age 25 declines precipitously.
  - Nearly 40% of young men with a GED have had contact with the criminal justice system followed by one-third of young men with less than a high school degree.
  - Among men with a high school degree, almost equal proportions experienced incarceration as probation.
  - Among men with some college or more, the most common form of contact with the criminal justice system was probation rather than incarceration.

Figure 1. Educational Attainment and Criminal Justice Contact Among Men



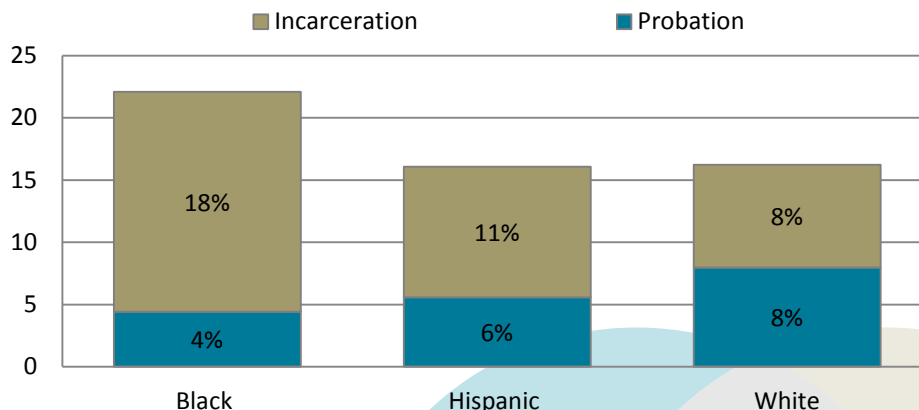
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), Rounds 1-12: 1997-2008 (weighted). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

## Race/Ethnicity

- Figure 2 illustrates Black men are more likely to have had contact with the criminal justice system by age 25 than men of other racial/ethnic groups.
  - White men are similar to Hispanic men in regard to overall criminal justice contact (16% and 17%, respectively), but White men more often experienced probation than incarceration.
  - Among young Black men, almost 18% were incarcerated and only 4% placed on probation.

Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity and Criminal Justice Contact Among Men

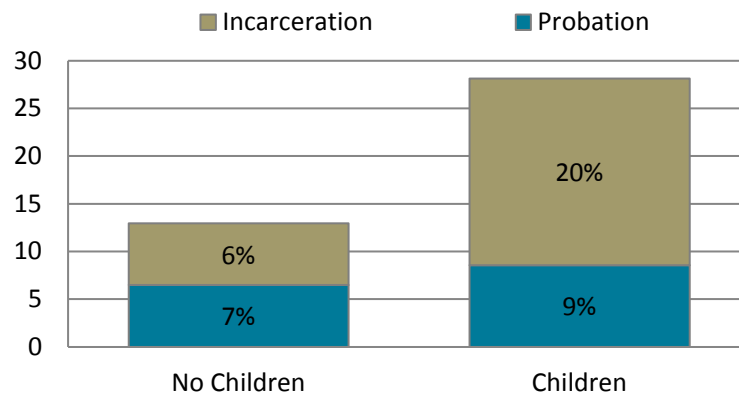


Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), Rounds 1-12: 1997-2008 (weighted). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases. Note: NLSY97's coding for Non-Black/Non-Hispanic is designated as White.

## Fatherhood

- Men who have experienced a birth by age 25 are more likely to have had contact with the criminal justice system compared to those who did not have a child (Figure 3).
  - Among young fathers, roughly 29% have been either incarcerated or placed on probation by age 25.
  - One-fifth of young fathers have been incarcerated by age 25 compared to only 6 percent of men without children.

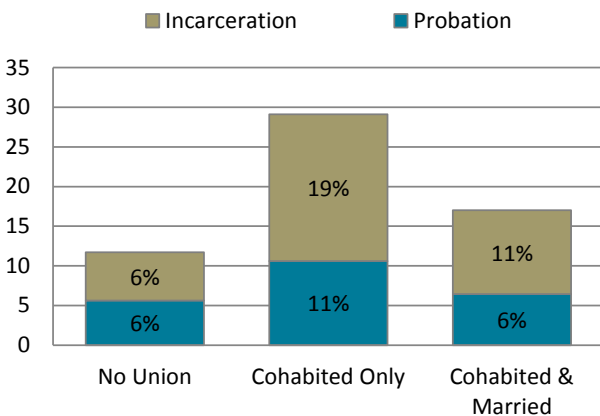
Figure 3. Experienced a First Birth by Age 25 and Criminal Justice Contact Among Men



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), Rounds 1-12: 1997-2008 (weighted). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

## Union Formation

Figure 4: Union Formation by Age 25 and Criminal Justice Contact Among Men



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), Rounds 1-12: 1997-2008 (weighted). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

- Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between contact with the criminal justice system and union formation by age 25.
  - Men who formed cohabiting relationships *only* are more likely than those who cohabited and married to have had contact with the criminal justice system by age 25.
    - » Almost 19% of cohabitators have been incarcerated compared to only 11% of those who cohabited and married and 6% of those who did not form a union.
    - » In regard to probation, of those who cohabited and married, a little over 6% have been placed on probation compared to almost 11% of cohabitators and 6% of those who did not form a union.
  - Men who cohabited and married are more likely to have had contact with the criminal justice system compared to those who did not form any union.
    - » Young men who cohabited and married are more likely to have been incarcerated than those who did not form a union.

### Sources:

- One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008. Released February 28, 2008. The Pew Center on the States.
- Western, B., & Wildeman, C. (2009). The black family and mass incarceration. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 621: 221-242.
- Wildeman, C. (2009). Parental imprisonment, the prison boom, and the concentration of childhood disadvantage. *Demography*, 46, 265-280.

<sup>i</sup>In 2008, all men in the sample are over age 25.

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