

The Growth of **INCARCERATION** in the United States

1/100

In 2012, nearly 1 of every 100 American adults was in prison or jail.

4x

During the past 4 decades, the rate of incarceration in the U.S. more than quadrupled.

2.1 million

From 1980-2000, the number of children with incarcerated fathers grew from about 350,000 to 2.1 million – about 3% of all U.S. children.

What are some causes of the growth of incarceration?

State and federal policies drove the increase in incarceration, such as:

- mandatory minimum sentence laws
- long sentences for violent and repeat offenders
- intensified enforcement of drug-related laws

Are longer sentences effective as a crime control measure?

NO. Unless they target very high-rate or extremely dangerous offenders, long sentences are an inefficient way to control crime. In fact, the experience of incarceration may foster re-offending.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE GROWTH OF INCARCERATION?

On prisoners:

As prison populations have grown, inmates have had **fewer opportunities** for educational and vocational programs that could prepare them for release. Applicants with a criminal record are disproportionately denied jobs.

On children and families:

Fathers' incarceration is linked to **family hardship, housing insecurity, and developmental problems** in children.

On communities:

The effects of incarceration's rise have been most acute in minority communities that already face significant social, economic, and public health **disadvantages**.

On society:

Incarceration has contributed to the **political marginalization** of minority communities. From 1980-2009, state spending on corrections has increased by just over 400%, reducing the funds available for other public purposes.

What practical steps can we take to **change** this?

Reexamine long sentences, mandatory minimum sentences, and policies on enforcement of drug laws.

Prepare incarcerated men and women to re-enter society.

Reduce unnecessary harm to their futures, their families, and their communities.

